

S U S A N M A Y T E L L

Photographs of Space, Silence & Solitude

SOHOPHOTO 2013, 16th Annual Members' Exhibition
Judged by Susan May Tell
Juror Statement

It was an honor to have the opportunity to look at the excellent work being done by members of Soho Photo Gallery. Congratulations! The work you are producing today follows and belongs in the long and storied tradition of this historic cooperative.

It was wonderful to see so many processes being used by the photographers, including gelatin silver, alternative, R-prints. Even digital :) And to see the prints themselves, the objects created from the images--and not just images on a computer, iPad, or iPhone monitor. About half the awards are for B&W photographs and half for color.

Some of the photographs that weren't selected will surely be seen on the walls of other galleries--and belong there.

Judging is a very personal, subjective, experience. It reflects the vision of the judge just as the work created reflects, or should, the vision of the photographer.

I walked the gallery, up and downstairs, by myself, for close to two hours before even trying to make selections. When I look at a photograph I want to feel something. And I am not referring to its content. Poet John Ciardi asked "How Does A Poem Mean?" Not "what" does it mean. The same can most certainly be asked of a photograph. How does a photograph mean? And "how" means everything within the photograph's frame. A photograph can only be measured by what lies within that frame. Everything within is where it should be. Nothing is there that does not belong.

Some photographs kept drawing me in, drawing me back, for longer and longer times. Sometimes the composition; occasionally the print quality or process; maybe the content or feeling. Those elements, taken separately, are necessary but not sufficient. Ultimately, the photographs selected increased the tension between those distinctive elements, simultaneously highlighting and blurring them, creating something marvelous and new.

First Place: Peter Agron, "Untitled" (pigeon). When looking at this photograph it is difficult to know where to look first--the unremarkable pigeon, made remarkable by its size, shape and soaring movement--in just the right place within the frame; or maybe the musical play between the empty chairs and their shadows; later one sees that the lines of the stairs mirror the slats on the chairs. Then one notices the similar angles, marrying the right and left sides within the frame. All the while aware of the feeling of isolation. No matter where one looks, one is satisfied.

Second Place: Marilyn Fish-Glynn "Red Coat" The red coat, delicate from the beautiful light shining through, with different degrees of translucence. The color red has its echo beside it. The window frames, coat seams and hanger all work together. The upright collar of the coat seems to make playful contact with the window behind it. This is simultaneously a direct yet mysterious photograph, making one wonder whose it is and why it is there. The red is full yet not overly saturated. A beautiful print.

Third Place: Norman Borden "Time" So much is happening in this photograph. Two people, isolated, each lost in their own moody reverie. One is centered, the shape of his arm repeated by the shape of the bridge outside. The gesture of the woman on the lower right captures our attention. As do the words "Coney Island" on the upper left. The word "TIME" etched onto the subway car window off center demands, too, our looking. Were the gestures less compelling, the form would take precedent. Were the shapes within the frame less powerful, the gestures would overpower them. This is a wonderfully seen and felt photograph.