

Congratulations to our first Master Pastellists, 2004.

AILI KURTIS and BARRY RICHMAN

The panel of three judges, highly qualified artists, writers and teachers, unanimously selected these two of the 17 candidates who applied. It was a strong field, and many very good artists have been disappointed to learn that they were not among those chosen, but the judges were aware that our expectations for the title are very high. Both these artists submitted 10 slides of work that was so strong that they met the stated MPAC criteria as “pastel artists who have demonstrated work of a consistently high quality, displaying originality and personal vision, a firm command of the medium, colour, composition and other formal qualities, going beyond rendering skills to evoke a response”.

It has been a difficult process for our 17 applicants – it’s not easy to put forward your work like this, and we are very grateful to them for deciding to plunge in. The judges all felt honoured to be asked to do this assessment, and to be part of the launching of our MPAC program. They worked hard for us, and were generous in their comments on the individual portfolios and the process in general.

What we can learn from the judges:

Image quality:

Through the assessment comments, it became clear that a successful representational painting must have, at the very least:

- content a story - an understanding of the subject;
- a focal point or center of interest and an understanding of the forms and depth of field within the subject of the painting, whether landscape or still-life; good observation;
- strong drawing skills strong composition - a good colour sense;
- evidence of study from life - no sign of a photo reference.

The selection of slides is very important: there is no room for a painting you’re not sure about. Every slide in a **Master Pastellist’s** portfolio submitted for assessment must also have:

- the Wow! Factor
- personality – depth – originality – imagination
- mastery of the pastel medium.

Slides:

The slides must represent your paintings well – make sure the lighting is good and that nothing but the image itself is visible. The slide mounts must conform to the specs on the application because thick mounts do not fit into projectors (why do camera stores use them???) and the judges do project every slide. Viewing on a light box isn’t good enough for a proper assessment of a painting’s merits.

And now for next year: PAC has a lot of very good artists; we are looking forward to them taking the judges’ comments to heart, having a long look at their slides, choosing carefully, and applying (or re-applying) for **MPAC 2005**. We will follow the same timeline: applications will be in the 2004 fall and winter newsletters and available by mail and email; the deadline will be a March 31, 2005, postmark, and the new Master Pastellists will be made public by the end of June.