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ARTISTS
MAGAZINE
AND
AMERICAN
ARTIST

THE BEST OF Acrylic

FALL 2025

**SPECIAL
ISSUE**

12th Annual
AcrylicWorks
Competition
Winners

**WINNING
FORMULAS**

The Creative
Choices Behind

125

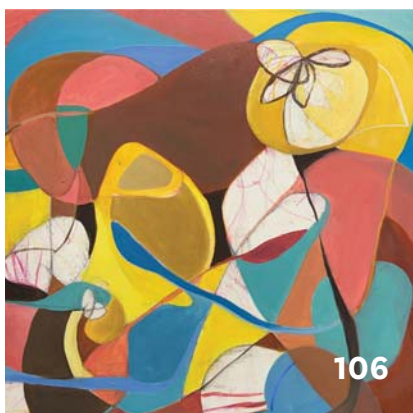
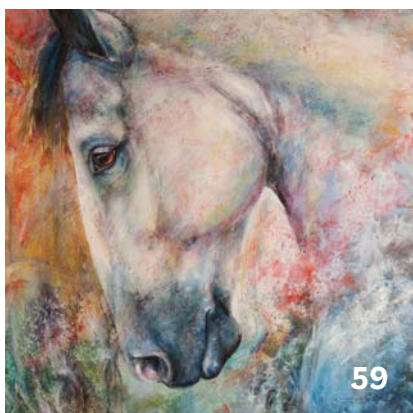
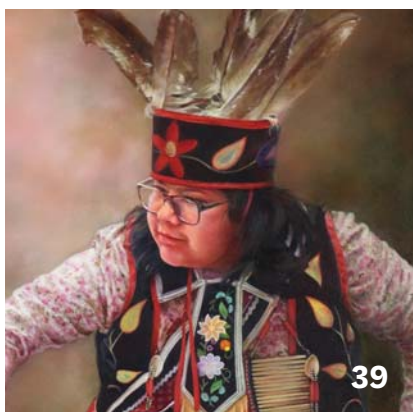
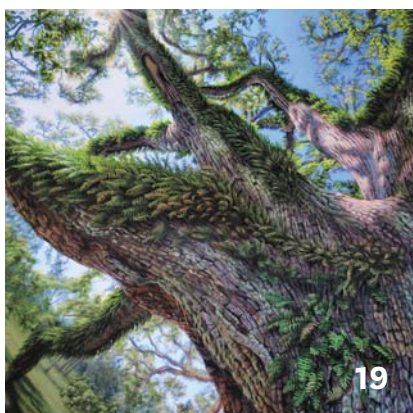
Exceptional
Works of Art!

**HONORING
INTENTION**

Juror Insights
on the Rewards
of Risk-Taking
and Invention

**BOLD &
BRILLIANT**

An Inspiring Showcase of Artistic Talent,
Technique and Unlimited Creativity!



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[ON THE COVER]
AUTUMN MOSAIC
 Sam Paonessa
 (detail; acrylic on cradled
 panel, 14x18)

Editor's Note



For the past 12 years, the AcrylicWorks art competition has challenged artists to submit their best paintings created in this unique and versatile medium. From these submissions, our editorial team selects a group of approximately 125 finalists to be part of this annual salute to excellence. This year's Juror of Awards, artist Mary C. Carroll (page 4), had the difficult task of selecting, from these finalists, three top award winners and 10 honorable mentions. On pages 8 through 19, we're delighted to share the stories of

these prizewinners and the processes behind their knockout works of art. In addition, this special issue features full-color reproductions of the 10 honorable mention winners as well as all 112 paintings that were named finalists, creating a beautiful 112-page collection of exceptional paintings, compositional talent and high-powered creativity sure to set your own imagination in motion.

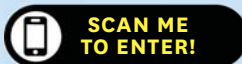
What makes this annual publication extra special, however, is that you won't just see the winning art, you'll hear from every artist. Their illuminating stories describe a wide range of artistic techniques and strategies for painting in acrylic, so that you're sure to encounter new ideas and discoveries that you can explore in your own work. You might be inspired, for instance, to employ a complementary underpainting in your next piece after seeing that technique used to great effect in Janet Felts' *Stopping at the Rest Stop* (page 66). Or, you may want to try working in small spots of color—like touches of red—to add energy to a composition, as Kathy Dana did in her painting *As the Crow Flies* (page 74). Perhaps Alex Ramos' decision to revisit a 5x7-inch painting and recreate it on a 2x3-foot canvas (page 54) might be the nudge you need to attempt a larger format.

So, even though *The Best of Acrylic* is a celebratory showcase of artistic skill and creative talent, it's also an idea book and instructional guide, with information about road-tested techniques and original approaches to this magical medium that you love.

Anne Hevener

BE A PART OF ACRYLICWORKS 13

The AcrylicWorks art competition offers a unique opportunity for acrylic painting enthusiasts to participate in a medium-specific competition with winners celebrated in this annual publication, *The Best of Acrylic*. Look for information and entry details about the next competition, AcrylicWorks 13—featuring Juror of Awards Marc Hanson (see page 112)—as well as Call for Entry announcements for all of our fine art competitions at artistsnetwork.com/art-competitions.



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Second Place Winner **Michael Goettee**

A lifelong fascination with Western imagery inspires an award-winning work of art.

BY STEVE AUST

Many Baby Boomers grew up hooked on Western-themed TV programs such as *The Davy Crockett Show* and *Gunsmoke*, among others. For Michael Goettee, the stark, sun-baked imagery resonated especially deeply, evoking the mythology of the American frontier. Eventually, this youthful fascination would dovetail with the artist's exploration of Western fashion as a painting subject. The creative outcome has inspired a series of paintings, including *Guadalupe*, winner of this year's Second Place Award.

As for his style, Goettee describes it as "Western art with a salted rim and a quirky twist of lime." In other words, he takes the imagery of the bygone frontier and gives it a makeover with some flair, wit and whimsy.

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

Goettee has two bachelor's degrees from the University of Florida. After earning his first B.A., in advertising, in 1969, he enlisted in the Navy and served on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations, at the Pentagon. During his free time, visits to Washington D.C.'s many art galleries and museums provided a source of creative inspiration. "It fueled my dream of becoming a fine artist," he says.

After completing his naval service, Goettee used his GI Bill benefits to return to college and obtain a second B.A., in design. He then moved to Atlanta and spent the next year working as a commercial artist in an advertising firm, but quickly became disillusioned with the industry. "I was able to hone my skills as an artist and visual storyteller," he says, "but I didn't care for the manipulative nature of the advertising world."

He migrated to art direction and worked at various Atlanta-area magazines, in addition to an eight-year stint at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* newspaper, where he "got acclimated to working on deadline." All the while, Goettee continued to evolve as an artist by showing his work at the Stanley and Schenck Gallery. In 2009, he leaped headlong into embracing a career as a fine artist.

Around the same time, the director of curatorial services at the Booth Western Art Museum, in Cartersville, Ga., discovered Goettee's work online. This led to a meeting with the Booth's executive director, which paved the way for a long-standing relationship that has provided a showcase for the artist's work and a springboard to commissions and exhibitions around the world.



Michael Goettee attended the University of Florida, where he received bachelor's degrees in both advertising and art. In 1976, he moved to Atlanta to begin a career in graphic design, magazine art direction and illustration, and eventually became a staff artist for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. He has been pursuing fine art painting full time, since 2008, and his work hangs in the collections of several renowned Georgia museums, including the Booth Western Art Museum; the Columbus Museum; and the Savoy Automobile Museum. Visit michaelgoettee.com to learn more.

GUADALUPE
(acrylic on canvas, 36x24)





A COUPE. A COFFEE. (acrylic on canvas, 30x30)

Another Cartersville institution, the Savoy Automobile Museum, provides an outlet for artwork that integrates Goettee's passion for Western culture with another enthusiasm: classic cars. His first painting sold to the Savoy, *A Coupe. A Coffee.* (left), depicts a 1939 Ford Coupe cruising past a Golden West Coffee billboard.

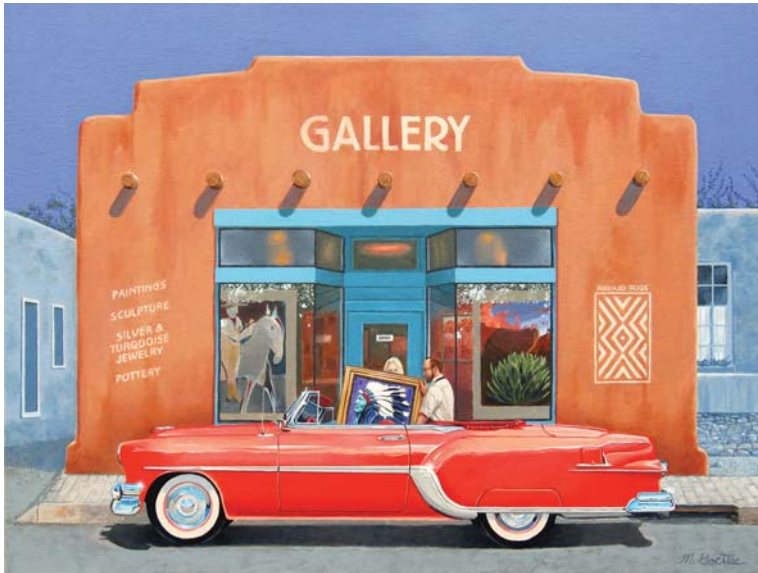
Perfecting what he sees in reality to complement what he conjures through his imagination is an ongoing evolution that has kept Goettee's work vibrant, exciting and engaging. "My brain is like a junk drawer, and I've found surprising ways to convey imagery," he says. "Working in a deadline-driven field for years has helped me stay sharp and resourceful in finding solutions."

MASTERING THE PROCESS

A 1995 trip to Santa Fe, N.M. and parts of Arizona rekindled the artist's childhood memories and accelerated his creative impetus. "I saw skies that I didn't think were possible," he says, "and I discovered firsthand how all of these diverse cultures—Latino, Native American and cowboy—weave



CROSSING GUARD (acrylic on canvas, 18x36)



STAR CHIEF (acrylic on canvas, 18x24)



ROADRUNNERS (acrylic on canvas, 36x24)

together to create a unique cultural tapestry. I could paint forever inspired by what I saw in those places.”

Goettee took notice of a classic piece of fashion in Santa Fe—prairie skirts—which capture the vibrant hues found in Southwest scenery. These skirts often present a landscape motif to pay tribute to the desert-scapes that bedeck the region. Rendering a prairie skirt without a figure wearing it was a calculated decision. “Hopefully, it creates a connection by inspiring the viewer to picture themselves wearing it,” says the artist.

During subsequent Western junkets, Goettee has captured the breathtaking landscapes that serve as his source material on a Canon Powershot camera, including his current SX60 HS. “My experience as an art director helped me perfect my skills in capturing images and using the optimal photo resolution to depict a hyperrealist, surrealist or any other kind of vibe I want to convey,” he says.

Goettee refines his imagery using the same programs—Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign—that he used as an art director. Photoshop massages colors and positioning, and Illustrator printouts enable precise line drawings that provide a painting template. When it’s time to paint, he works on smooth, primed canvas, which he attributes to his illustration background, as he doesn’t want his realistic drawings to compete with a rough canvas texture.

MYSTERY AND “MAKING IT”

In assessing *Guadalupe*, Juror of Awards Mary C. Carroll said of the work: “Along with the cultural and folkloric richness in symbol, I appreciate the powerful sense of presence in this painting. It feels like it’s honoring a memory, a spirit or a personal story without any need for words. As a viewer, I like that I’m asked to fill in the blanks.”

Although Goettee is quick to point out that he has never intentionally set out to produce a painting with a sense of mystery, he can see how it happens. “It seems to me to be less about viewers wanting to know the mystery behind the work than it is about being able to step into the painting to create their own mystery,” he says.

Sometime after establishing himself as a professional artist, Goettee remembers being asked what it felt like to “make it” as an artist. “Making it wouldn’t count for much if I weren’t still inspired,” he says. “An artist must continually look for things to convey and still have the passion to use their skills to do so. Even though I’ve never missed a deadline, I’m not ‘growing up’ any time soon. When I retired from my career in advertising and publications, I brought the kid out to play.”

Steve Aust is a Cincinnati-based writer.