

Barb Whitney
Juror's Statement
Michigan Youth Art Festival
2017 Visual Arts Exhibit

I was honored to serve as the juror for the visual arts exhibit for the 2017 Michigan Youth Arts Festival. As I arrived for the adjudication process, I was surrounded by hundreds of impressive entries made by high school students from regions across Michigan.

The jury process, for me, was driven by an interest in student work that used the visual arts as a tool for self-expression and human interaction. The selected art showed exceptional artistry in combining skill and creative voice to render an effective visual statement.

I measured success both analytically and viscerally; some art warranted a closer look, or commanded me to gasp, or even made me laugh out loud. At more than one point I simply stood still, looking at length. Each of the above measures are difficult to achieve, as I serve as the Executive Director for Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center and am exposed to a wide array of art on a daily basis.

As a former art teacher and an arts education advocate, I recognize that in order for students to excel, they must first learn and execute skills. In the arts, just as within other subject matter, each step of learning leads to growth and serves as a building block for the next level of competence.

The art in the 2017 Michigan Youth Arts Festival showcases these important ways of understanding and creating art; students have effectively used the elements and principles as means for visual communication. Beyond representing light and shadow or rhythm and balance, they have consciously created a narrative, and they have invited interaction with their art. They have demonstrated imagination, creativity, skill, and excellence in craftsmanship.

I believe that students are irrevocably changed by their experiences in arts classrooms. Student achievements are in part due to support from stakeholders, who help students succeed in art, in school, and in life. I would like to take a moment to note the extraordinary role teachers, administrators, and parents play in guiding students through the learning process. Finally, I would like to recognize our represented students for their talent and achievement. **Congratulations!**