



MUSKEGON MUSEUM OF ART

Dear Artists,

For those of you new to the Muskegon Museum of Art, or those familiar with us but in need of more details on what we offer to the artists in our community, here is a brief description of who we are and what we do.

The Muskegon Museum of Art opened in 1912, and was quickly recognized as one of the finest small museums in the country. National media followed the museum's activities and the actions of the founding director, Raymond Wyer, who acquired many of the best paintings in the collection during his tenure. Over the following years, directors added works by then contemporary artists such as Edward Hopper and John Steuart Curry, providing the museum its most internationally celebrated artworks. We strive to maintain this tradition of excellence, to operate under the most professional standards, and to provide, for our audience and community, the highest caliber of art we can, without losing sight of the need to support all of our area arts and artists.

Here are the most significant programs that target, in full or in some part, our artist community:

1) **Exhibitions** – The Muskegon Museum of Art hosts a diverse schedule of exhibitions throughout the year representing a wide range of interests, media, and subject matter. This programming offers artists an opportunity to explore the ongoing dialogue of art and find inspiration for their own work. Our blend of exhibitions includes shows from our own collection, group and solo exhibitions by regionally and nationally recognized contemporary artists, glass exhibitions by the top artists in the field, and a range of traveling exhibitions that balance between art history and subjects with more popular appeal, such as the recent *The Art of the Brick*.

2) **MMA Regional** – This annual event began in 1928 as small invitationals, and transformed over the years into the juried event it is today. The *MMA Regional* is our opportunity to highlight some of the best work being created in our region, and to encourage and support our artist community. The competitive nature of the exhibition continues to challenge artists to create work that is both engaging and skillfully made. As our artist community is fairly small and close-knit, we deliberately invite jurors from outside the area. We seek jurors that are well versed in a wide range of subject matter and materials, and that are professionals in their own right, be it as artists, curators, museum directors, or the like. By using an outsider, we open the jurying to eyes that are responding to what is happening in the wider national art scene, and in this way inspire growth within our own region. An outside juror also avoids the uncomfortable circumstance of a juror selecting a show one year and then exhibiting in the next, or the conflict of interest inherent in having any artist select from a pool of their friends and peers. The number and quality of entries has risen steadily over the years, and we are excited with each *MMA Regional* to welcome new artists and to see what our returning artists have been creating. For our part, we strive to present the accepted works in the most professional manner possible, and have been working aggressively over recent years to increase our corporate purchase awards and to encourage sales of art during the run of the exhibition.

3) **Salon Thursdays** – *Salon Thursdays* are an offshoot of the *MMA Regional*, and are held two to three times per year. For *Salon*, artists are invited to bring in their artwork and have it installed in the gallery for one night only. (All art goes home at the end of the night.) Artists and the public are free to meet and mingle over refreshments and enjoy being surrounded by regional art. For our artists, it's a good

Muskegon Museum of Art, 296 West Webster Ave, Muskegon, MI 49440

chance to meet and network with peers and to introduce their work to both the public and our curatorial staff. The event is free and there is no juror, so it's also a great chance for artists of all skill levels to show their work without pressure. For our members and the general public, *Salons* have become a fun social event, and the chance to peruse and, if the artist is willing, buy local art. We have also added the *Postcard Salon*, a ten-day exhibition of original works of art 4" X 6" that culminates in an exciting dash to buy local art pieces for \$30 per card. Typically, 1200+ postcards are submitted each year.

4) **Guest Artists** – With our group and solo exhibitions, we invite the artists to visit the museum and speak about their work and careers. These lectures typically coincide with the opening of an exhibition and are a great opportunity for our local artists to engage more actively in the exhibition and in the dialogue that comes with making art. Guest speakers can offer new insights to established artists and for early career artists can provide a wealth of information.

5) **Contemporary Art Showcase** – Open by invitation, this space offers us an opportunity to share with the public works by artists that we feel provide a new or engaging voice to our region. Often we identify participants through the *Regional* or *Salons*, artists whose work we would like to help support and encourage. The space is limited to two seven-foot long walls for two-dimensional work, and a small ten by ten foot area for three-dimensional pieces. The MMA does not hold a reception for the space, nor do we produce any promotional materials beyond inclusion in our press releases. The artist is responsible for the costs of getting the work to and from the museum. Shows in the space run one month. Artists interested in being considered can submit images and a resume to the museum, attention: Artist Showcase. While there are no specific criteria for consideration, please keep in mind that the space is intended for works that address contemporary issues, either technically or conceptually, and that the space is limited, sometimes to no more than two pieces, depending on scale.

6) **Group Invitationals** – As a way of displaying the work of local artists within a broader regional context, the MMA from time to time develops exhibitions with a specific theme and then invites select area artists to participate. Recent examples include the 75th Anniversary Exhibition for the West Michigan Symphony in which 11 artists were chosen for commissions, *Branching Out: Michigan Woodworkers* and *Shaped in Metal*, and coming in 2016, *Studio Brew: The Colors of Beer*, in which artists will be invited to create a work of art in a color on the Lovibond beer chart! Entry criteria changes with the goals of each exhibition, but all submissions are by invitation, and MMA curatorial staff determine final inclusion. These exhibitions usually include a brochure, postcards, and an opening reception.

We hope this letter answers some of your questions and concerns, and provides you a better idea of how we endeavor to serve our artist community. Artists are always welcome at the museum, and enjoy a significant discount on our membership rate.

Hope to see you soon,
The Staff of the Muskegon Museum of Art