

Bulletin

Alaska State Museum, Juneau • Sheldon Jackson Museum, Sitka

Photographers from Juneau, Fairbanks, and Anchorage won top honors in the recent *Alaska Positive 2002* photography competition organized by the Alaska State Museum. *Alaska Positive*, now in its 32nd year, encourages photography as an art form in Alaska.

Anne Wilkes Tucker, Curator of Photography at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, served as juror for the biennial competition.

Juneau photographer Michael Kelly won the Juror's Choice Award for his color photographs of abstract reflections on water. Tucker gave Recognition Awards to Ken Kollodge of Fairbanks and Bonnie Landis of Anchorage, and she selected Theresa Manzanara of Juneau for an Honorable Mention. The Friends of the Alaska State Museum provided cash awards.

Fifty-eight photographers from across the state submitted 208 photographs for the competition. Of these, Tucker selected 37 works by 19 photographers. *Alaska Positive 2002* opened at the State Museum on Friday, October 4, with a reception hosted by the Friends. Visitors may view the exhibition at the State Museum through February 15. The exhibition will then travel to other museums across the state. You may also visit *Alaska Positive* online at: www.museums.state.ak.us/online. ■

ALASKA POSITIVE 2002 Winners Announced



Juneau Public Library by Michael Kelly, Juneau, chromogenic print

Juror's Statement *Alaska Positive 2002*

Anne Wilkes Tucker

For each juried exhibition, the variables include the rules of submission, the vagaries of who submits works to the competition, the pictorial traditions of that locality, and the visual inclinations of the juror. Each resulting exhibition reflects the particular tastes and responses by that particular juror to those particular submissions, both to the specific images and to the whole range submitted. The individual pictures are not seen in isolation. Comparisons can be enlightening.

Almost immediately I found myself comparing what was submitted against what I had expected to see. There were, for instance, few urban views, which is not surprising for a state with fewer than a million people. Instead, most of the works were

landscapes, which is also not surprising given the natural beauty of Alaska. To this outsider, some of the plants and views were strange. I'd never seen hoarfrost or a skunk cabbage. A cabbage's large leaves floating in water seemed oddly out of proportion to everything else in Iris Korhonen's muted color landscape.

Given that landscape was the dominant genre, approaches to it varied widely. The range spread from Robert Morton's isolated close-ups to Bonnie Landis's embrace of space, light, reflections and patterns. Marge Thompson seems more attuned to the chaos of living forms coexisting in small dark patches, while both Bill Heubner and Michael Kelly found delight in abstract patterns. Kelly's sure

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Juror's Statement (continued)

handling of bold contrasting colors created by light reflections on water kept me returning to his images.

Certain photographers felt that their ideas would be best expressed in processes other than



Viewer at opening of Alaska Positive 2002

traditional color or black-and-white prints. Ron Klein works with the 19th century wet collodion process, the uneven application and develop-

ment of which seems appropriate to the subjects in his portraits. Then, he used a panoramic format to record a large family gathering. Carolyn Strand

applied light-sensitive cyanotype to fabric so that she could decorate a coat with a graphic pattern of photographs. Jane Cloe also sensitized silk so that her portrait of a monk appears more ethereal. David Job used X-ray to review a nautilus shell, emphasizing the swirl of its internal form rather than its shiny surface. Theresa Manzanares correctly felt that a softer focus, rather than sharp detail, would best capture the spirit of the poignant kiss that she captured.

Kenneth Kollodge made me laugh and I'll always be grateful for those opportunities. But his "Democracy's Essential Elements" also surprised me by his inclusion of a dictionary with the other elements: a gun, the U.S. Constitution, and a book on ethics. I happen to have a dictionary in every room of my house, but was pleasantly surprised to see someone else regard it as essential to our democracy's existence.

Alaska Positive 2002 was a pleasure to judge because of the high quality of the work from which I had to choose and because of the able assistance of the Alaska State Museum staff. My thanks for being given the opportunity.

Anne Wilkes Tucker
Gus and Lyndall Wortham Curator
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston ■

Museum survey results mailed

THE RESULTS OF THE Alaska Museum Survey 2000 have been compiled into a 14-page booklet and mailed to museums throughout the state as well as to other agencies with an interest in Alaska econometrics. The survey is based upon information from 55 institutions and is the first broad-based statistical analysis of the activity of museums in Alaska. It reflects data gathered during the years 1999-2000.

Alaska museums spent more than \$22 million dollars and recorded more than 2.25 million visitors. They employed 272 full-time and 247 part-time paid staff. Over 2,400 volunteers provided assistance to Alaska museums. The number of museums in Alaska has grown steadily since 1967, the year of the Alaska Purchase Centennial.

If you would like a copy of the survey, contact the State Museum at 465-2396. ■

Alaska Flag Exhibit materials available on CD-ROM for teachers

EIGHT STARS OF GOLD, an exhibition about Alaska's flag that was organized by the State Museum, is now touring the state. It chronicles the story of Benny Benson, a middle school student who submitted the winning design in a territory-wide Alaska flag contest in 1927. Now an educational CD-ROM of the exhibit is available that provides a wealth of information and ideas for teachers of



grades K-12. Materials include: the complete exhibition catalog, 15 classroom activities in PDF format, a video interview with guest curator India Spartz, video footage of Lt. Gov. Fran Ulmer singing the Alaska Flag Song, video footage of Benny Benson and Web links for further study. To obtain a copy of the CD-ROM, contact the Museum at 465-2396. The material is also available on the Museum's web site at: www.museums.state.ak.us. ■

Museum receives significant donations

of paintings by Sydney Laurence

The Alaska State Museum recently acquired five oil paintings by Alaska landscape artist Sydney Laurence from Carl Valentine, husband of the late Betty Valentine and niece of former territorial Governor George A. Parks. Governor Parks, who served from 1925-33, collected a number of Alaska artworks and gave them to his niece. Valentine asked her husband to make sure the art collection returned to Alaska and, after her death, he contacted the Museum from his home in California. Carl Valentine wrote "I have a sense of genuine happiness in knowing that all of the Sydney Laurence paintings are now owned—and cared for—by the Alaska State Museum."

"This is one of the most significant donations of art to the Museum in our 100-year history," said Steve Henrikson, Curator of Collections. "One of our biggest gaps in the collection has been the work of Sydney Laurence. We did not have a single example of Laurence's signature image: Mt. McKinley. This donation of five paintings, as well as a fine collection of Alaska Native ivory carvings and artifacts, is an exciting addition that will help us to better fulfill our educational mission."

The group of five paintings, the largest of which is 22 by 26 inches, includes two scenes of McKinley as well as paintings titled: *Cook Inlet*, *Eagle River Roadhouse* and *Alexander Slough*.

Governor Tony Knowles noted in a letter to Valentine: "Sydney Laurence is widely considered a premier 20th century painter of Alaskan landscapes and we are fortunate to have the opportunity to acquire the paintings. Funding for the purchase of Alaskan art of this caliber is seldom available to the Alaska State Museum and the Museum relies heavily upon donations to expand Alaska's collection of art and artifacts."

The Valentine donation follows on the heels of another donation of Laurence paintings last spring. That donation brought two paintings to the Museum, with the possible donation of a third. The

paintings, a cabin scene and a seascape, were donated by Celia Handley, of Federal Way, Washington, on behalf of the William J. Niemi family. The Niemi family has a long history in the Juneau area and in Alaska.

The paintings were first acquired by long-time Anchorage resident Helen Carlquist, who came to Alaska with her Finnish parents in 1910. She was a friend and patron of Laurence, and traded canvas



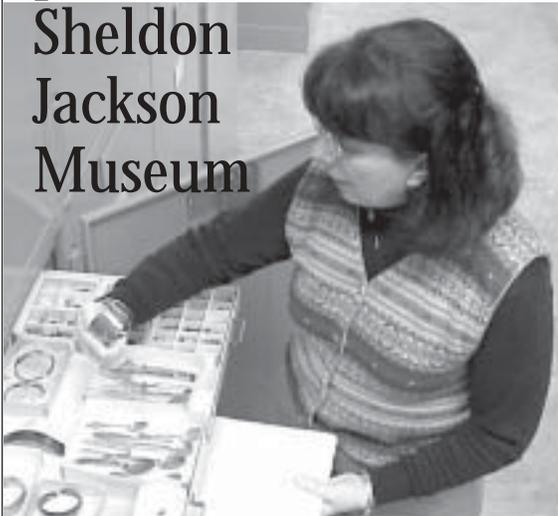
Alexander Slough by Sydney Laurence, oil on canvas

and paint for his finished works. She eventually sold these paintings to her brother, William Niemi. Handley, daughter of William and Bernice Niemi, inherited the artwork and donated it to the Museum.

"Sydney Laurence is probably Alaska's most well-known painter, but it is not that easy for the public to see his work because much of it is still in private collections. When it does come on the market, it is often at prices that Alaska museums cannot afford. We are extremely fortunate that Mrs. Handley and the William J. Niemi family decided to return these paintings to Alaska for all to enjoy," said Bruce Kato, the Museum's Chief Curator.

Previously, the State Museum had seven Laurence works in its collection, four oil paintings, one watercolor and two drawings. The combined donations this year double that body of work. The new donations will go on exhibit at the Museum this winter. ■

Rosemary Carlton assumes curator's post at Sheldon Jackson Museum



Rosemary Carlton, previously the Interpretive Specialist at the Sheldon Jackson Museum, has assumed new duties as the institution's Curator of Collections. Peter Corey, the previous Curator, retired in April.

Carlton's job is a new position combining the roles of Curator and Interpretive Specialist. She said she's excited about her new responsibilities and glad she will retain some of her old ones, too, because she enjoys sharing the wealth of information about

the Museum's artifacts with the public.

"My goals or visions for the Museum are to continue its long history of preservation and protection, and to continue to make the collection visible and accessible to the people of Alaska," Carlton said. "When possible, I hope to fill in missing pieces of the collection, too. In other words, I hope to continue [Sheldon] Jackson's mission to

keep these objects in 'the public trust,' as he put it, so the 'coming generations of Natives can see how their fathers lived.' "

Carlton studied Sheldon Jackson's mission extensively while working toward a master's degree in museum studies through the University of Oklahoma. She wrote a history of his passion for collecting as her thesis: *Sheldon Jackson, The Collector*. The Alaska State Museums published the book in 2000.

Before joining the Museum staff almost 17 years ago, Carlton worked for the National Park Service at the Sitka National Historical Park. Special training in how to conserve artifacts piqued her interest in museum work. Her final job before leaving the Park Service was cataloguing items on long-term loan from the Sheldon Jackson Museum to the Russian Bishop's House in Sitka.

The Sheldon Jackson Museum was founded in 1888 by the Rev. Dr. Sheldon Jackson, a Presbyterian missionary and the General Agent of Education. On his own and with the help of a network of agents throughout Alaska, Jackson amassed more than 4,000 artifacts from Alaska's Native cultures. Although the tally has grown to almost 6,000 items since the Museum was established, the original artifacts remain the heart of the collection. ■

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Edited by Ken DeRoux
Designed by Elizabeth Knecht

Alaska State Museum

395 Whittier Street, Juneau AK 99801
Phone (907) 465-2901 • Fax (907) 465-2976

Sheldon Jackson Museum

104 College Drive, Sitka AK 99835
Phone (907) 747-8981 • Fax (907) 747-3004

To contact Museum Services:

Toll-free: (1-888) 913-MUSE (6873)
Email: ken_deroux@eed.state.ak.us

Website: www.museums.state.ak.us

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Alaska State Museums
395 Whittier Street
Juneau, AK 99801