



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

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ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART NAMES WINNER IN *ART IN RESIDENCE* CONTEST

Leesa Thompson Wins First Place for Photograph of Bird Landings on Feeder

[For Release April 22, 2020 – Albany, GA] – A photograph that captured a bird landing onto a backyard feeder earned Leesa Thompson first place in the Albany Museum of Art's *Art in Residence* contest.

Thompson's untitled photograph received the most votes of the 18 photos, paintings and drawings that were entered into the contest, winning her a complimentary one-year AMA Supporting Membership.

Thompson said she and her husband "love art museums. We love going to them."

She and the fellow winners Allen Vanhook and Madye Carter will receive Albany Museum of Art swag bags as well. Vanhook's photograph *Taking It by the Reins* won second place, while Carter won third place for her untitled liquid art painting.

"In these days of sometimes too much quiet contemplation or, conversely, no solitude amidst a busy home life during quarantine, it is truly impressive to witness so many people get creative to produce this array of marvelous work," AMA Executive Director Andrew James Wulf, Ph.D., said. "I am honored to be a neighbor to these fellow Southwest Georgians!"

The *Art in Residence* contest challenged area residents who were sheltering at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic to paint, draw, photograph or sculpt what they saw at home. Thompson said she not only had been staying home, she had been inside because of the high pollen counts.

"That Sunday, I told my husband, 'I'm going out with my camera. I'm going to sit here and watch the bird feeders and just see if I can take some pictures.' They really love that one bird feeder, and this one bird was just coming in," she said.

Using a 600 mm zoom lens with her camera on a sports action setting, she took a series of photos of the feeder. Thompson said she didn't realize she had the image of the bird about to land until she was downloading the pictures onto her computer. Even so, she placed it and three others on her personal social media page and asked her friends to help her select the one to enter into the AMA contest. The bird photo was the overwhelming favorite.

One of the reasons for the contest was to encourage people to look at familiar objects, such as those in their backyards, in a new way.

"This contest had such an overwhelmingly positive response, it was truly a breath of fresh air," AMA Director of Education and Public Programming Annie Vanoteghem said. "I am so proud of our local artists who submitted such beautiful work. There were several participants who went out of their comfort zone to produce a work of art, a talent some did not know they had.

"We live in a wonderful community of strong and talented people, it has been so great to see them come together in this new way."

Thompson, who began painting in a Chinese-inspired style when she took art lessons at age 52, says she has long looked for art to emerge from unexpected places.

"What I always tell my grandchildren—and my children when they were growing up—is that art is around you every day," she said. "You don't have to be Picasso or Rembrandt, you've just got to look around you and see what appeals to you and what you think is art.

"Everything is art, from a welder who creates beautiful scrollwork. I never knew I could paint, but I took some lessons and started painting Chinese brush art."

Thompson said she never sees failure in art, only opportunity. That's something she reminds her oldest granddaughter who is taking photography in school, using Thompson's old camera.

"As I tell my oldest granddaughter when she's drawing, there are no mistakes in art; there is only redirection," Thompson said. "If you're trying to photograph a bird and you can't get it in view, there are beautiful leaves to the side. If you're drawing and you can't get the umbrella right, make it a sand dune.

"No mistakes in art, just redirection. That's my personal motto."

The *Art in Residence* contest is one of the ways the Albany Museum of Art is engaging people online while the museum is closed to the public in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The museum has a daily art blog for children and families at home, *Staying Inspired!*, and has encouraged local residents to recreate famous art using items from around the house with its *Life Imitating Art* challenge. Meditation and yoga sessions in partnership with Albany Yoga Project are being conducted as Facebook Live events on the AMA's Facebook page. The *AMA's Art Lovers Book Club* and popular monthly educational programs *Toddler Takeover* and *Homeschool Day* also have moved to online sessions.

The AMA accepted entries in the *Art in Residence* contest through 5 pm on April 14. All images were posted in an album on the museum's Facebook page, and visitors to the page voted by "liking" an entry. Voting was conducted April 15-17.

You can see all 18 entries at the AMA Facebook page, www.facebook.com/AlbanyMuseumOfArt, or on the museum's website, www.albanymuseum.com/art-in-residence. Click on a photo in the *Art in Residence* gallery to see a larger image of the artwork.

Find out more about these Albany Museum of Art outreach programs:

- *Staying Inspired!*: www.albanymuseum.com/kids-staying-inspired
- *Life Imitating Art*: www.albanymuseum.com/life-imitating-art
- Toddler Takeover (geared for children 15 months-3 years old): www.albanymuseum.com/toddler-takeover
- Homeschool Day (geared for children K-5thgrade): www.albanymuseum.com/homeschool-day
- Online yoga and meditation programs: Email annie.vanoteghem@albanymuseum.com

CURRENT AMA EXHIBITIONS

- *Cut & Paste: Works of Paper*, works by 11 Georgia artists, is in the Haley Gallery.
- *Looking at America and Painting How I Want, What I Want and How I See It*, works by Dean Mitchell, is in the East Gallery.
- *Do Not Hand Me Over to the Impure Whiteness of Noon: A Hemings Elegy*, works by Yanique Norman, is in the West Gallery.

ABOUT THE ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

The Albany Museum of Art is located at 311 Meadowlark Drive in Albany, Georgia, adjacent to Albany State University West Campus just off Gillionville Road. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is currently closed to the public in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com or call 229.439.8400. Be sure to follow the @AlbanyArtMuseum on Twitter, AlbanyMuseum on Instagram and AlbanyMuseumOfArt on Facebook.

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