

# GILLIAN PEEBLES

# A JUDGE'S PERSPECTIVE



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Gillian Kaye Peebles

## ABOUT THE JUDGE:

In 1984 and 1985 Gillian was an invited guest artist of the Royal Academy of Arts in London where she studied and achieved accreditation in 'Exhibition Procedures and Artistic Studies' and 'The Judging of Visual Arts at International level'.

Gillian is the only Australian to hold these qualifications. Note: The RA no longer conducts external studies.

## CATEGORY: PLEIN AIR

An artwork executed outdoors, commenced and completed at one site, in one location.

## JUDGING PLEIN AIR, WHAT THE FINE ARTS JUDGE LOOKS FOR

Gillian uses a point system relating to the 'Categories of Visual Arts'. This can be executed mentally, or by the use of 'Judges Sheets'.

If there is no obvious winner, Gillian will examine several artworks that show areas of excellence. If at this stage there still remains uncertainty, 'Judge's Sheets' will be used. These give a numerical value to each component within the artworks.

The components include sections within each artwork's Category such as *Ground, Media/Mediums, Colour, Tone/Tonal Values, Composition, Drawing/Colour Perspectives...* (the list goes on).. each of these attract a 1 – 10 value.

The result is compared with the other entries. The outcome exposes the overall winner/s and runners up. In this way every entry, regardless of its Category, is competing on equal terms. The results also prove the where and why an artwork has won.

In the case of joint judging, where other judges work in a different manner, Gillian will adapt to accommodate but cannot divert from RA format of procedures.

**PLEIN AIR IN COMPETITION** are artworks executed **outdoors**, commenced and completed on the one site, in the one location. It is no longer Plein Air if it is touched up or worked on after leaving the site. Such artworks, if allowed in the competition, must be declared as having been touched up or completed in the studio.

**Plein Air artworks should foremost display the characteristics of being executed out of doors**, on site and on location. The challenge is to display a singular image, an interpretation of that site's collective objects and subjects.

Generally executed in a single sitting, it should show skills of spontaneity in capturing the visuals while being challenged by climatic conditions and the elements of the artist's surroundings.

This differs from the pre-planned, often academic, time consuming formats and structural procedures when working indoors in controlled studio comforts. Judges of Plein Air artworks are charged with identifying and including distinguishing these Plein Air skills when making their decisions.

**The judges will interpret the 'style'** in which the artwork has been worked accepting the ranges between traditional (meaning 'as originally created') and contemporary (meaning 'of today') representations. The more popular contemporary styles are interpretations of Realism, Representational, Impressionist, Minimalism, Modernism. Artworks in styles of Cubism and Abstraction can be used as long as the content of the artwork is accompanied with an explanation as to what the artist viewed and executed as being Plein Air.

An example may be the use of colours or shapes of clothing that the artist viewed. In Abstract the artist presents the colours but not the identifying form of the cloths. In Cubism the artist selects the different angles of the subject. The Abstract may be titled 'Colours of the passing crowd', while the Cubist piece 'Geometric angles of landscape'.

**Skills of translating moving visuals** such as capturing the ever-changing movement of objects and subjects. More particularly the movement of the '*Light of Day*', '*Night Light*' or '*Artificial Lighting*' and associated 'Shadows'. This can include *highlights, direct light, indirect light, reflected lights, deflected lights and filtered lights*. In the case of shadows you have direct shadows (on the object of the object) and *indirect shadows* (cast by the objects), *intense shadows* where the shadow colour eliminates local colour and *shadows deep* where the areas look black, where no light penetrates.

**Media selection** and the knowledge in the use of each media and its associated mediums will count in the adjudication. All will be judged on an equal basis be it *Dry Media* such as pastels, coloured leads, graphite, charcoal or carbons or *Applied Wet Media* as in oils, acrylics, watercolours, Encaustic and inks. Equally, *Mixed Media*, is fully accepted as long as the mixes are compatible and applied within the expectations of technical correctness such as 'oil over acrylic' and not 'acrylic over oil'.

**The judge will consider the levels of technical correctness but the priority will be more towards the expectation of working Plein Air.** This section will include the preparation and presentation of media, mediums and materials from the base, the *Grounds* to the overall coverage and finishing touches.

**Applied techniques and textural skills** will be scrutinised. This will include the skills apparent from the use of equipment, such as accomplished brushwork or palette knife applications.

**The judge will be sympathetic to the interpretation and visual choices of colour.** The understanding of colour technology and the artist's choices of colours will be governed by the artist's chosen '*style*'. Acceptance of varied interpretations as found in styles like '*Impressionism*' with its use of *shattered colours* and *selected palettes*, will be noted and gain points.

*Colour Perspective* is another element that attracts points. There are exceptions where the category has a specific colour choice found in *Colour Field, Monochromes, Complimentary* and *Analogous mixes*.

**Skills in Tones and Tonal Values.** Tones are just as important in the execution of Plein Air as they are in studio academia. The judges will be looking for the amounts and quantities of varied tones.

**Composition is important.** This is the placement of objects and subjects within the frame of the artwork. This shows the ability of the artist to add, subtract and present a Plein Air interpretation of the visuals before them. Good artistic composition is a learned skill but often comes naturally to some artists.

Often composition produces the difference between what is liked or disliked. Knowledge of composition gives the artist the advantage of knowing ahead what is going to assist the expression of 'self' in your artwork and how that is going to be received by an audience.

**The Artistic Triangle of (1) Artist, (2) Agent and (3) Audience,** without the three, art cannot exist. In the case of Fine Art it can be as simple as the artist creating their artwork on an agent such as paper or canvas and becoming their own audience as they overview their artwork with a critical eye.

In contrast the artist's artworks can end up in massive interactive events where agents take over, (for example the coordinating authorities, gallery owners or display venues). At this stage the artwork starts its journey of communication into its viewing audience.

**In display and competition, the Selection and Judging of formal Fine Arts commences** when the artworks are presented before appointed adjudicators. Selectors and Judges are amongst the first to view the artwork. They are charged with critiquing each individual artwork and then comparing it with other entries. Inclusive in their procedures is the appreciation, and ability to identify positive artistic excellence against negative weaknesses.

In this balance, comparisons expose those artworks that present a higher level of expectations towards the competition's themes, through the requirements of media and categories.

**The Judge's responsibilities:**

- An appointed judge must leave behind all personal preferences when they judge an art competition
- It is appropriate that they accept the appointment on the grounds that they have the knowledge to carry out the work with full understanding of the entries and their contents

- Ideally, they should be accredited with qualifications equal to, or have experiences and skilled capabilities of those they adjudicate
- They are charged with finding the best artwork among the entries placed before them without any alternative considerations or bias
- Unless stated in the Conditions of Entry the adjudicator will address all artworks equally be they from professional artist or total beginner
- If a judge recognises an artist's work, they must not give preference to the importance, or celebrity status, of that artist or their artworks
- Likewise, a judge is not there to explore or hide behind the realms of experimentation and peculiarities.
- A judge should be able to explain, and justify, their decisions to those that have appointed them, the people to which they are responsible both during, or following the judging of an event.
- Once an agreement is reached, or a Contract signed and dated, no selector or judge may enter into written or verbal interactions outside permission, preferably written, from their appointees.

The moment of decision is made as the judge views what is before them without consideration to previous or future developments. If asked, a judge should be competent in issuing a Statement or comment on entries that take out the winning entries or acknowledged results of their adjudication.

By law, a judge will not be open to corruption or bribery. A judge must make themselves familiar with the Conditions of Entry and adjudicate within those conditions and the Laws of the Land.

It is the agent's responsibility to make sure all entries adhere to Indigenous, Local, State, National and International Laws, but it is the judge's responsibility to decipher specific laws and considerations towards Categories as found in 'nudity' and 'pornography'.

In joint judging, a judge has the right to assert the justification of their own decision, especially if they feel subservient to forceful personalities.

A judge has the right to resign their position.

*Note: The skills of Selection and the Judging of Fine Arts is not taught south of the Equator. Australians rely on skilled established academics and proven award winning or successful practicing artists.*

**Plein Air can be executed in sketch, drawing or painting formats UNLESS** the Titles and conditions include one of the following. If it reads 'paint', or something similar then please 'PAINT'... if there is no such inclusion then you are free to Sketch, Draw or Paint.

**A Sketch is a linear design depicting form** – it does not include any directional or inner applied interpretation to form. A sketch can be executed in any media, wet or dry. *Note: In artistic terminology the word 'sketch' can also mean a preliminary artwork whose primary use is to be a forerunner to another, generally much larger, artwork. Often this sort of sketch is covered with the artist's instructions and noted interests. This can be presented in sketch, drawn or painted formats.*

**A Drawing presents inner graduated coverage techniques** – as seen in hatching, cross hatching and shading. It may or may not include dry media linear application. It is executed in dry media, such as pastels, coloured leads, graphite, charcoal etc in the form of powders, sticks, compressed leads, pencils, crayons and chinks.

**A Painting is an artwork where coverage involves applied liquid media** at some stage of its development and dries to a touch-dry surface on completion. It is not interpreted by the tools of application.

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## A message from Gillian

There isn't much in competitive fine arts that I haven't personally experienced. I have been fortunate to have won numerous awards, have established and coordinated major competitive exhibitions and held appointments as sole judge, or jointly on selection and adjudicating panels. This has been at Local, Regional, State, Interstate, National and International levels.

As a judge I offer integrity and the assurance that I will work at my best. I base this on the numerous decades of personal experience and the learning for accreditation in the 'Judging of Visual Arts' with The Royal Academy of Arts in London

Working Plein Air can be exhilarating and challenging. The many pleasures are balanced by the equal number of annoyances. One minute you are accommodating and enjoying your viewing audience the next you are forced to break as someone, or something, blocks your view. The elements can be your friend or foe; you can be enjoying a stretch of perfect light or running from an unexpected shower of rain.

Then there are the flies and ants that will always find you as will the birds and butterflies....the list goes on... it's all in the game of Plein Air.

Above all I hope you enjoy your experience, particularly the interaction with fellow artists, the sharing of knowledge and your individual creativity. Remember it is not the winning that is important, it is the participation. Your art of self-expression gives you the opportunity to reach out to a new audience. The results can be as clear as meeting face to face. May your creations reach the hearts of many.

I leave you with a statement that came through me, rather than from me. I was trying to encourage a rather frustrated student - "Don't dream dreams of creation, create your dreams". *Good luck to all*

**Gillian Peebles**