

Ohio Watercolor Society

November/December 2026 Newsletter

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Message from the Executive Board

Last year (2025), the Board made several recommendations (see Nov/Dec 2025 Newsletter: https://www.ohiowatercolorsociety.org/blog), some of which were implemented and resulted in a better financial situation for the Society:

- Funding of the annual exhibition with entry fees
- Printing of the exhibition catalog in a smaller format
- Elimination of the travel exhibition

At that same 2025 meeting, the Board began a preliminary discussion of other issues:

- Ways to increase our footprint in the art world
- Use of technology to promote our exhibition artwork
- Holding additional exhibitions, notably online.

On Sunday, November 7, 2026 the Board met to discuss the topics remaining from 2025 and to address exhibitions during the next two years. Recommendations and additional issues are presented in this Newsletter in two other articles:

- *Fifty/Fifty: 50 years of the Ohio Watercolor Society*
- *Where do we go from Here*

As you read these articles, consider YOUR role in the future and success of the Ohio Watercolor Society. Rather than impose a top-down approach to dealing with our future, the Board encourages members to step up and initiate changes moving forward. Such matters do not need to be resolved immediately or drastically—evolution is probably better than revolution.

Fifty/Fifty: 50 years of the Ohio Watercolor Society



The 50th Annual Juried Exhibition will be held in fall 2027

While there are details still to be settled, Janealla Killebrew has secured The Works Gallery in Newark, Ohio for Watercolor Ohio 2027. The exhibition will be displayed September 28 through November 17, 2027. We anticipate about 70 paintings with online entries to be handled in the normal way through Online Juried Shows during February-April 2027. The exhibition Prospectus will be posted on the OWS website sometime in January.

Even though the 50th annual exhibition occurs in 2027, the year 2028 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the OWS (July 3, 1978). To mark that milestone and as preamble to the next phase in the life of the Society, the Executive Board has recommended hosting an Ohio Watercolor Society National Watermedia Exhibition: Celebrating 50 Years of the OWS in the fall of 2028.

For the venue of this historic exhibition, the Board is considering the Medici Museum of Art (MMA) in Warren Ohio. The MMA is a publicly accessible educational institution dedicated to enriching lives through the visual arts. This spacious facility is an ideal place to host a sizable national exhibition that will number 90-100 paintings. Along with this showing, we also plan to display the complete OWS Permanent Collection of 45 paintings.

This unique opportunity in our history provides a way to raise the visibility of OWS nationally and perhaps pave the way for future regional or national shows. For those unfamiliar with OWS history, the OWS held a national exhibition in 2001 in addition to its usual annual exhibition. We may hold a members-only online show during 2028, or perhaps use the online option for displaying members' works not displayed in the gallery. There are obviously many details to resolve. The undertaking will require good volunteer turnout to deal with shipped paintings and other logistics, but we're certain that issues that are routinely handled by other art groups will not be an impediment to the success of this commemoration.

Where Do We Go from Here?

As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, the Executive Board has outlined plans for 2027 and 2028. But then what?

The first question for our members to consider is crucial:
"Does Ohio need a statewide watercolor society?"
If **no,** then It is probably time to disband and put our efforts into enriching local groups.
If **yes,** then the Society needs to make changes that best serve the needs of its members and artists throughout Ohio.

First, some context

Both the Central Ohio Watercolor Society (1964) and Western Ohio Watercolor Society (1974) existed before the OWS was founded. In 1978, *Don Getz* and *Hal Scroggy* approached the director of the Canton Art Institute, Joseph Hertzi, with concerns about the lack of watercolor paintings in the "All Ohio Exhibition" that had been held there. Mr. Hertzi offered to host a watercolor show that year and the OWS was subsequently born.

If those events in Canton had not transpired, however, watercolor art in Ohio would not have disappeared, but it might have been less prominent. The stature of the OWS—long known to many of us—was validated by our exhibition juror Ratindra Das this past summer as he recalled the reputation of our society's founders and leaders, whom he said were called the "Ohio Mafia" for their outsized influence in the larger national watercolor community.

One of the leaders was *Marilyn Hughey Phillis* who actually lived in West Virginia. Without the OWS, her "Creativity Seminars" might not have been launched or at least not with any link to Ohio. That program, started in the 1990s, had national prominence.

Another bonus for the OWS is that F&W Publications, based in Cincinnati, became a major publisher in the 1980-90s of art books and magazines (North Light Books, Watercolor Magic, Artists Magazine). Even without a formal connection to the OWS, a possible link in the minds of watercolor artists outside the State likely benefited the reputation of the OWS.

Second, some possible changes

Assuming that OWS is to continue in some form as a statewide organization, the Board has identified a number of items for consideration:

- Should OWS host an annual National (or biennial) exhibition instead of limiting entries to Ohio residents? This is the plan for 2028—its success/limitations will undoubtedly provide valuable input.]
- If a biennial national show is preferred, should it alternate with a physical, Ohio-only show? Could the alternate show be online to save efforts for the biennial national show?
- Should we offer an annual online associates show?
- If the exhibition situation changes, what should be the criteria to earn Signature membership?
- Do we keep the current application process for Signature membership? (The Watercolor Society of Indiana gives signature status automatically to those with 2 acceptances.)
- Would out-of-state residents qualify for signature membership?
- What criteria would govern officer and trustee positions—Ohio residents only or also out-of-state (using digital meetings)?
- Should there be another level of recognition for signature members [similar to the Dolphin Fellow in AWS]?
- Should members of another Ohio art group (COWS, GCWS, etc) be able to join OWS as Associates for a reduced fee (say, $10 vs. $40). Or perhaps designated as something else ("Adjunct"?) but with same benefits as Associates?
- Should the Society hire a part-time "executive director" to handle business matters (finances, membership, website)? This would allow members to focus on art-based programs, exhibitions, etc. (It would also require fund-raising.)

Third, some options

There are at least a couple of ways to proceed:

The default option is for the Executive Board (or a committee within) to discuss the foregoing issues, solicit input, modify existing protocols as needed, and revise the bylaws.

A more proactive option is that a handful of dedicated members convenes (as they did in 1978) and define what a statewide watercolor society should be and do. This vision could not only build on the foundations of the OWS and those of existing regional or national groups but also incorporate use of the best aspects of digital technology. This new organization does not have to be like the current OWS—it just needs to serve the watercolor artists of Ohio.

In any case let your thoughts be known to members of the Board.

Member News:

News which may be included: awards, publications, solo or small group shows (*other than our OWS exhibitions*), serving on juries, additions to permanent collections, signature membership in *other art societies,* participation in art festivals and other unusual art adventures. Please make sure news is briefly and clearly expressed...but please send news to your reporter!



NEWS from the SOUTH

Thomas Schroeder reporting

Top awards at the Miamisburg Art Gallery's Annual Juried Art Show this summer:
1st Place in Mixed Media by **Rose Schultz**, for *Spring Sentinals*. This painting also won a 2nd Place award recently at the Middletown Arts Center Area Art Exhibition.





1st Place in Water Media by **Tessa Kalman**, for *Sunset and Steel*.



Connie Gifford, provided a demonstration of her watercolor pour technique to members of the Western Ohio Watercolor Society in October. The transparent, glowing colors of her paintings are created by successive layers of three primary colors, mixing and blending in both a planned and spontaneous manner. Awards at the 2026 Piqua Arts Council Fine Art Exhibition, held at the Apple Tree Gallery in downtown Piqua:

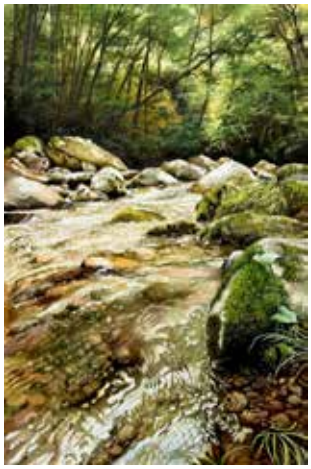
Yuki Hall, received Best of Show award for her painting *Church of St. Philip Neri Barcelona*.



Yuki also won an Honorable Mention award at the Piqua show for her painting *In The Shadow of the Cathedral*.



Jeanette Ferguson, won 3rd place for *Ripples and Rocks*.



The following were accepted into the Kentucky Aqueous USA 2026 Show:

Marcia Hartsock – *Morning Jewels*
Adele DiMinno – *Tippenhauer Road*
Gary Brooks – *Afternoon Light*
Keith Shebesta – *Scavenger Hunt*
Tom Schroeder – *Sedona Wadi*
Chris Krupinski – *Feeling Left Out*

The following were accepted into the Pennsylvania Watercolor Society 2026 International Juried Exhibition

Gary Brooks – *Another Man's Treasure*
Tom Schroeder – *Boynton Canyon Terminus*
Keith Shebesta – *Tight Wads*

Honorable Mention Awards at the Joyce Young Center's 5th Annual Centerville Washington Township Adult Art Show:

Connie Gifford, *Grazing in the Grass*



Carol Edsall, *Timeless Southern Oak*



Shirlee Bauer, *Hula Hoop Girl*



WOWS held their 2026 Members' Fall Exhibition "The Color of Water" at the beautiful Troy-Hayner Cultural Center in Troy, Ohio. The exhibit was juried by painter Michelle Walker who this past year also provided a very informative demonstration on her plein air sketching and painting techniques.

First: **Tessa Kalman** - *Flamingo Fracas*



Second: **Connie Gifford** - *Toma Cinco*



Third: **Jeanette Ferguson** - *Reflections in Crimson*



Honorable Mention:
Lori Meyer -
Revelation and Reflection



Honorable Mention: **Yuki Hall** - *Third Street View*





NEWS from the CENTRAL AREA

Pam Hartford reporting

Rick Mock was awarded Signature Membership in the National Watercolor Society (NWS). His painting "Bluegrass Boys" was in the National Watercolor Society Annual show in San Pedro, CA.



Central Ohio Watercolor Society Fall Show is currently at the Upper Arlington Lutheran Church-Mill Run in Hilliard, OH. The show closes, Wednesday, November 25, 2026. On Sunday, November 1, 2026, an awards ceremony was held at the opening reception. OWS members who's paintings won awards are as follows:

Best of Show - *Drove my Chevy to the Levee* by **Rick Mock**



1st Place - *Millstone with Flowers* by **Jim Gerkin**



2nd Place - *Cornwall Coast Boathouse* by **Charles Rowland**



Honorable Mention: *Snow Covered Tracks #2* by **Howard Wood**



Blue Beyond Blue by **Pat Edwards**





NEWS from the NORTHEAST

Mary Pat Oliver reporting



Suni Lopez Ortiz is honored and excited to have been juried into the Watercolor Society of North Carolina's (WSNC) annual juried show. The opening reception at the Griffith Fine Arts Museum and Red Oak Brewery in Whitsett, NC took place on Sunday Oct 4. The piece is titled, *Abandoned Studio*. "Thank you to the juror, Michael Solovyev." Suni also took part in his very inspiring 3-day workshop.



Brian Asquith's watercolor, *Cramer's 88 Butterfly* (22" x 15"), has been accepted into the 87th Area Artists juried exhibition at the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, from-December 13, 2026 through February 28, 2027.

In September one of **Kathy Sabbath Oravecz's** paintings was accepted into Watercolor Society of North Carolina's 2026 juried exhibition. The juror was Michael Solovyev. The painting entitled *Wine and Roses* also received the Color Spectrum Aritist of Merit award for the most compelling use of color-harmony, complemenents, and temperature.

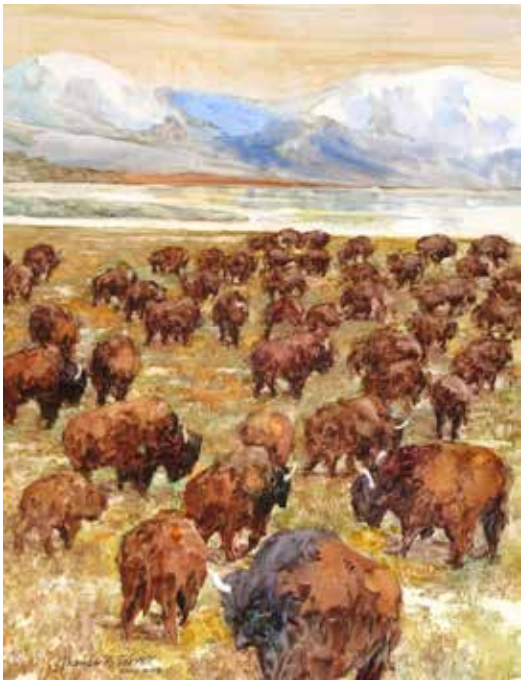
Kathy has a solo show of 25 paintings in Valdese, North Carolina hosted by the Rock School Arts Foundation. The show runs from November 20th to December 18th.



NEWS from the NORTHWEST

Micki Ansberry Brown reporting

Tom Sorrell's painting, *Range Rovers,* received the M. Graham Award at the 53rd Annual Rocky Mountain Watermedia Show in Evergreen Colorado.



Jennifer Sowders was awarded third place in "The Best of Acrylic", a special issue presented by *Artists Magazine* and *American Artist*, (which hosts the annual competition: "AcrylicWorks 13") In the August 2026 BoldBrush Painting competition, Jennifer was winner of Outstanding Acrylic and in September 2026 BoldBrush Painting competition, she was awarded an Honorable Mention.

OFFICERS (Terms vary)

President	Vacant	**Treasurer**	Aileen Cave
1st Vice President	Tom Sorrell	**Recording Secretary**	Connie Gifford
2nd Vice president	Janealla Killibrew	**Corresponding Secretary**	Lynne Rosati
3rd Vice President	Jen Sowders	**Membership Secretary**	Lynne Rosati

TRUSTEES (Term Runs January 1 – December 31 of the given years)

2025-2027 TERM	**2026-2028 TERM**	**2027-2029 TERM**
Thomas Schroeder *Cincinnati*	Howard Wood (AS) *Dublin*	George Kocar *Bay Village*
Sharon Stolzenberger *Kettering*	Kevin Buckland *Lewis Center*	Rick Mock *Powell*
Rob VanNatta *Walnut Creek*	Thomas Harwood AS) *Niles*	Tessa Kalman (AS) *Beavercreek*

PAST PRESIDENTS

Don Getz, 1978-1988
Homer Hacker, 1988-1990
Marilyn Hughey Phillis, 1990-1996
Jean Deemer, 1996-2000
Beverly Reiley, 2000-2004
Theodore W. Vassar, 2004-2008
Chris Leeper, 2008-2012
Barbara Rollins, 2012-2016
Tom Sorrell, 2016-2020

Immediate Past President:
Mike McEnroe, 2020-2024

Exhibition Travel Show Coordinator
George Kocar

Permanent Collection Curator–Open

Newsletter Editor/Exhibition Catalog
Nancy Notarianni

Angel/Patron Coordinator
Jeanette Bill-Cole

Regional News should be addressed to the following correspondents.
Please use the reporting forms on the OWS website's newsletter page.

Northeast	Mary Pat Oliver	Southeast and Southwest	Tom Schroeder
Northwest	Micki Ansberry Brown	Central	Pam Hartford

Next Newsletter – March/April 2027
Deadline: March 15

This Newsletter accepts NO paid advertising.

The Ohio Watercolor Society Newsletter is a publication of the Ohio Watercolor Society, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation, and is mailed free to all members, patrons, art centers, museums, and universities in Ohio. The OWS Newsletter is published quarterly.

www.ohiowatercolorsociety.org