

*Melissa Miller Nece*

Melissa Miller Nece is one of the foremost colored pencil artists in the country; she has inspired many others to try colored pencils through her classes and workshops. She began drawing in miniature in 2000 when she realized her favorite medium is perfect for working small. Colored pencils enable her to move easily between large work and small – many elements in Melissa’s large drawings are actually miniature in scale and technique. In her first miniature show, she won first place in drawing; since then, she has

won many more awards in miniature exhibitions, including a Judge’s Award of Excellence at the World Federation of Miniaturists Third World Exhibition in 2004. Her larger work also wins awards in state, national and international shows.

She served as MASF scholarship chair for several years, until she joined the board of the Colored Pencil Society of America, an international organization with over 1600 members. She was ways and means director for 8 years, and then became president of CPSA; she is committed to that position until 2020. She is both a 10-year merit signature member and a CPX signature member of CPSA. Melissa became a signature member of the Miniature Artists of America in 2008 and soon after became an MAA board member. She is also a trustee of the Professional Association of Visual Artists, and a member of the Florida Artist Group, MPSGS and the Cider Painters of America. Her drawings have been used in promotional materials and packaging by several manufacturers, and are in the collection of the Cumberland Pencil Company in the UK.

She wrote a step-by-step article, *Mix It Up*, for the October 2012 issue of *The Artist’s Magazine*. Her work is in numerous books: *Signature Showcase* of the Colored Pencil Society of America; *Modern Masters of Miniature Art in America* by Wes Siegrist; *The Best of Colored Pencil*, volumes 2, 3, and 5; *Creative Colored Pencil*; *Portrait Inspirations*; and *The Best of Portrait Painting*. She is a featured artist in *Creative Colored Pencil Portraits* by Vera Curnow, and has also been published in *American Artist* and *Drawing Highlights* magazines.

Melissa has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Lake Erie College and has been teaching drawing, colored pencil, and oil and acrylic painting at the Dunedin Fine Art Center since 1990. Her work, including portrait commissions, is in numerous corporate and private collections.

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*Judge’s Statement*

Having been on the jury for the MASF show numerous times, I always said I was glad not to be the judge. Choosing the best of the best for awards in such a large, world-class exhibition had to be mind-boggling. I considered a long time before accepting the invitation to judge the 2018 show. As it turned out, though time-consuming, it was a very interesting and surprisingly manageable process, especially with Barb Robertson’s able assistance. It was a great privilege to be able to closely regard every single piece in the show.

MASF has constantly worked to improve the way this show is run, and they have evolved a judging method that works very well. I was not concerned about knowing so many of the accepted artists – I’ve judged enough other shows that I know I can set aside any personal feelings for the artists and judge the artwork on its merits. I use the same criteria as for any art show – quality of concept (idea, composition), execution (use of media, accuracy in rendering), presentation (suitable framing, appropriately scaled signature), as well as considering the extra requirements of scale and technique for what really makes a “miniature.” For each category, I selected top pieces, plus several alternates. As the process continued, some of the top pieces were shifted around – “This artist has been selected in more than one category, which one ranks higher?” This allows other pieces to move up and an alternate becomes a winner. The less satisfying part was, as always, that there was more deserving work than there were awards. If you thought your entries deserved a prize, but you didn’t get one, console yourself that you must have been among the alternates under consideration. It was disappointing to be unable to recognize all of them. But this is, after all, one of the top shows in the world for miniature art, and the competition is incredibly strong. While there are a lot of awards, for a show this size, it is still a relatively low percentage of awards to acceptances. I congratulate all the accepted artists. I’ve seen a lot of these exhibitions, and after examining all the selected work, I must say that this is one of the best MASF shows ever.

