It was an honor to serve as the juror for the 2011 High School Juried Show at UNCP.

As a designer and an artist, I was eager to see work that made good use of the principles of design. I also was looking for artists to present ordinary subjects in unusual ways.

Finally, I was looking for artists who knew their mediums well and handled them well.

Abby Debusk’s Cold Feet did all of the above. It is a small work but its size cannot hold back the emotional power of the well-known bridal image presented in a most unusual circumstance. Bullet Proof by Gage Benton likewise hits the mark. Here the human figure is transformed into an inhumane form as we deal with the world in which we live. Lizette Garza’s LBS was a welcome chuckle for the viewer as we all saw ourselves caricatured in our “non-public moments.”

It was difficult to pick the three top works. There were others that scored high in design, skillful use of materials, and unusual viewpoints. Billowing Silhouette (Sean Wilson) was really strong in mood; City Girl (Elliott Kiel) excelled in both design and skill with the medium; Lalaine Magat’s Smoking Cowboy was another great work in graphite; and Tate Myer’s Ommug really showed mature skill in all three categories.

Congratulations to both the students and their teachers. We paint, draw, sculpt, and print best what we know best. Yet, we do not want all of our “budding” artists to get stuck rendering only their own image. As teachers and mentors, we need to discipline ourselves to keep growing AND keep looking. We actually TEACH our students and our viewers “to see.” Therefore, get thee to the museums, the art galleries, the travel. . . .

We cannot allow ourselves as artists to dry up on the vine.

I encourage both our students and our teachers to try for greater variety in viewpoint and in mediums. We need to improve our looking skills and finally we need to improve our presentation skills. It is never acceptable to present work in mats that are soiled, cut poorly or poorly sized. Neutral mats are always preferable in competition. If shrink wrap is used, it is a really good thing. . . . unless it actually warps the work. Black mats can be very difficult to manage. Frames should always augment the art work. . . never detract and overpower that which they are intended to support.

I hope that my comments will prove helpful. . . I look forward to seeing your new work!

- Nila Chamberlain