

Ridgewood High School Art Club Students Place in State Competition

Members of the Ridgewood High School Art Club chapter of the Rembrandt Society, along with their sponsor, Mrs. Machaj, joined other Illinois art clubs at the I Hotel in Champaign, Illinois for the Rembrandt Society State Art Convention on March 24, 2023.

The theme for the convention, *Out of This World*, explored the collaboration of science, science fiction and art. The convention opened with the introduction of the student state board, a sci-fi group puzzle activity and setting up of artwork for judging. The students attended three hands-on workshops.

The first workshop was presented by Monica Aiello, an artist known for her mixed-media works which blend her love of art and planetary science. She often consults with noted NASA mission scientists to construct her astro-geologically inspired work. Monica Aiello and her husband, sculptor Tyler Aiello, have received national acclaim for their many public practice initiatives launched by their organization EUREKUS. The Aiello's robust programs, such as Pastel Art & the Cosmic Connection, explore the intersection of the arts, sciences and communities with audiences of all ages. They are pioneers in the STEAM movement, uniting the arts with STEM education, and partner with NASA, museums, schools, colleges and companies nationally.

Ms. Aiello ran a chalk pastel workshop incorporating the use of the elements of art as a tool to investigate and interpret the mysterious surfaces of our celestial neighbors. Students learned to analyze images of planets and smaller bodies such as moons, comets and asteroids with basic art concepts which parallel scientific practice. The students really enjoyed the in-depth exploration of this workshop!



The second workshop was presented by Sarah Machaj, an art teacher and Art Club sponsor from Ridgewood High School. Mrs. Machaj led students through an acrylic paint workshop using the work of American illustrator and designer, Peter Thorpe, as inspiration.

Peter Thorpe is an American illustrator and designer with a life-long love of space exploration, space science and science fiction. Thorpe is well known for the rocket paintings he began producing in the 1980s. He started the rocket paintings as a way to use paint left over from commercial jobs that he would have otherwise thrown away. Thorpe creates abstract art for the background of his work & then paints a space feature (e.g. rocket/planets) in the foreground. The students had a blast exploring abstract mark-making techniques!



By Peter Thorpe

The third workshop was presented by Emmaline Fleener, a designer and photographer who combines both traditional and digital methods to create work that explores the whimsical and nostalgic side of life. She believes design should be a little quirky, a little serious, and a whole lot of magic.

Ms. Fleener ran a polymer clay workshop. She taught students the Mokume-gane technique, an ancient Japanese metalworking technique, translated to mean wood eye or wood grain, where layers of contrasting colored metals are fused together with heat and pressure and worked to produce a patterned mixed-metal laminate. Ms. Fleener demonstrated how to use the technique with polymer clay and then students designed their own “Out of This World” creations to be made into pendants and magnets. The students really enjoyed learning this beautiful technique!



During the convention, students entered artwork for Regional judging in the Rembrandt Art Competition. The following Ridgewood High School students placed in Regional competition.

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Thurraza Enazeh | - a first place |
| Joseph Gonder | - two first places and a second place |
| Lainey Le | - a second place and a third place |
| Emily Nowak | - two second places |
| Anna Lozynska | - a third place |
| Emily Nowak | - two first places and a second place |
| Nathan Ola | - a first place and a second place |
| Natalia Palandiuk | - two first places and a second place |

The Ridgewood Art Club had three students place in state judging.

Joseph Gonder placed 1st in state in the Sculpture category.
 Emily Nowak placed 1st in state in the Graphics category.
 Thurraza Enazeh placed Best of Graphics!

Emily Nowak entered her portfolio in the Senior Scholarship Competition and won a \$1000 award. Emily will be attending the School of the Art Institute of Chicago next year!



Artwork by Emily Nowak

The whole day was a wonderful opportunity for Ridgewood students to interact with art students from all over Illinois, have their artwork critiqued and to learn new art techniques. Ridgewood’s Art Club students are already looking forward to next year’s convention! For more information about the Rembrandt Society, check out their Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/rembrandtsociety or contact Sarah Machaj at smachaj@ridgenet.org.