

In Good Company

Though forecasts of an evening snowstorm left some uneasy with memories of the blizzard of 2003, the 16th annual NICHE Awards were blessed with good weather, a nearly full house, and plenty of new and promising talent.

The awards show, held Feb. 20 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, was emceed by Rebecca Cason, general manager and show director of the Buyers Market of American Craft, and Merle Honey Porter, director of advertising for NICHE magazine.

A touch of humor was evident in many of the winning pieces, with the audience giggling when some of the projected images were shown. Lighthearted pieces such as "Staple Yourself" by Abigail Saak, student winner in Fashion Accessories, "A Few Grains of Salt" by Nisa Blackmon, student winner in Functional Metal, and "Flower Lady Teapot" by Lidija Tkalcevic, professional winner in Teapots, were examples of true success in blending talent and jest.

Presenters included renowned glass artist Paul Stankard, ArtBaltimore producers Mary Bronson and Anne Brown, and Walter Hazzard and André Morin, owners of 2004 Top Retailer of the Year Topeo Galleries, all of whom served as jurors for this year's awards.



In addition to celebrating the evening's winners, emphasis was also placed on the bright outlook for tomorrow's artists. "Let's have a round of applause for educators and schools," suggested emcee Cason at the conclusion of the student awards. Louis Colombarini, who won the professional award in Hand-Built Ceramics for his "Textured Leaf Pitcher," urged all in attendance to "never stop dreaming."

"I'd like to encourage everyone here ... to mentor someone in the younger generation," said Lynda Bahr, professional winner in Jewelry—Gold with Stones for her "Mosaic Bracelet."

Perhaps presenter Rodney Whitacre, co-owner of Mind's Eye Craft Collection in St. Michaels, Md., said it best when he honored award winners for serving "the most important function of all—they satisfy our souls."

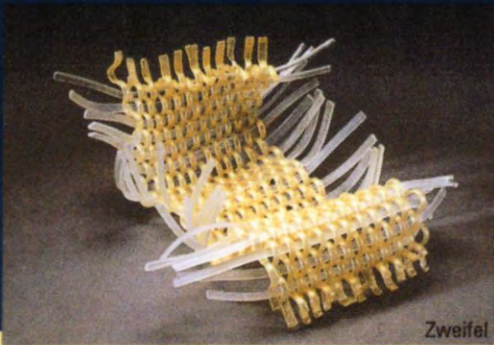
In all, 38 winners in 36 professional categories were selected from a pool of over 800 applicants. Nineteen winners in 14 student categories were chosen from 800 entries.

—Sara Jerome



Emcee Rebecca Cason spoke of the high caliber of the work of both the professional and student 2005 NICHE Award winners, some of whom joined NICHE publisher Wendy Rosen for a group picture after the ceremony. Rosen is also pictured with Brian Whittington, student winner in the mixed and miscellaneous media category, and with Laurie and Bob Kliss, professional winners in the blown glass category.





Furniture

Alain Bélanger
Montreal, PQ, Canada
Mathilde

Glass—Blown (tie)

Bob and Laurie Kliss
Fresno, CA
Tall BOBtanical

Randy Strong

Sebastopol, CA
Bonsai Bowl with Multi-Tails

Glass—Flat

Robin Evans
Sedona, AZ
Now and Zen II: Asian Chromatherapy Tower

Glass—Fused

William Zweifel
Elkhorn, WI
Fray

Glass—Lampworked

Roger Parramore
Waynesville, NC
Eclectic Set

Goblets

Steve Sizelove
Richmond, IN
Neoclassic Goblet

**Jewelry—
Gold with Stones**

Lynda Bahr
San Gregorio, CA
Mosaic Bracelet

**Jewelry—
Silver with Stones**

Cynthia Eid
Lexington, MA
Pearly Ends

