

League of NH Craftsmen Jurors' Handbook

v. 3/26/2024

I. Overview and Context: Mission

A. The League's Mission

The League of NH Craftsmen's mission is to "advance, cultivate and champion excellence in fine craft."

B. The Standards Program Mission

The jury process seeks to **promote excellence in fine craft** in three ways:

1. **Education:** Jurors are, in part, educators. Both jury and critique applicants should come away from the process with affirmation of their strengths, greater understanding of professional standards, and encouragement and tools to attain higher levels of craftsmanship and artistry.
2. **Rigor:** Jurors are, in part, guardians. The jury process preserves and sustains the League's tradition of and reputation for excellence. Jurors are expected to adjudicate *work* (not the applicant!) as objectively as possible according to the League's aesthetic and technical standards.
3. **Pathways:** Jurors are, in part, resources. We seek to foster applicants' professional success by offering connections to programs and/or people who may be able to further their artistic growth through mentoring and education.

We approach jury and critique sessions as an opportunity to nurture and encourage a colleague.

II. What is Expected of Jurors

The duties of the jurors include evaluating the work of applicants applying for juried membership, participating in product reviews, and being available to answer questions about media standards, in a mentoring capacity.

1. As representatives of the League of NH Craftsmen, jurors conduct themselves professionally.
2. Jurors are sensitive to situations and conversations that might cause the applicant to feel uncomfortable or discouraged.
3. Jurors do not express amusement toward or contempt for the work of an applicant.
4. An applicant should leave the session feeling better informed and encouraged.
5. Jurors are attentive to the applicant.
6. Jurors consciously suppress personal aesthetic preferences.
7. While it is appropriate to discuss with the applicant why one technical method may be preferred over another, the reason should be objective and specific.
8. Respect for fellow jurors is fundamental.
9. Jurors give consideration to a minority opinion, and a dissenting juror must articulate their reasons during deliberation.

III. The Jurying Process

A. Pre-Jury Preparations

In advance of the jury session, the jurors will receive the following:

1. Schedule of applicants
2. Applicable standards guidelines
3. Applicant applications
4. Images of the applicants' work
5. Jury evaluation and critique forms

In advance of the jury session, the applicant will receive the following:

1. Juror evaluation guide
2. Applicable media guidelines complete with the Spirit of the Maker language

The League of New Hampshire Craftsmen consider three primary areas of expertise for Juried Member status.

1. Technical proficiency
2. Aesthetics
3. "Spirit of the Maker"
 - a. *Spirit of the Maker is what makes each craftsperson's work truly their own.*
 - b. *Spirit of the Maker goes beyond technique and shows attention to detail in every aspect of the work.*
 - c. *Spirit of the Maker is the catalyst that brings technical proficiency and aesthetics to life.*
 - d. *Spirit of the Maker is respect; respect for materials and tools; respect for those who have helped nurture and inspire you and for those who you will help nurture and inspire in the future.*
 - e. *Spirit of the Maker is part dedication, part humanity, part personal vision and all important.*
 - f. *Spirit of the Maker is the heartfelt need to simply make good art. Your creations must come from the heart if you want them to work.*

It is important that you reach out to the Jury Session Manager prior to jury day if:

1. You feel uncomfortable jurying someone for any reason
2. You feel like the applicant's work is derivative of another artist

The applicant will be shown to the jury room by a staff member and invited to unpack and set up a display of their work. When the applicant is ready, the Jury Facilitator and jurors will enter the room. The Jury Facilitator will greet the applicant and introducing themselves and the jurors. The Jury Facilitator will provide a brief outline of the structure of the jury session for the applicant.

B. Introduction of the applicant to the jurors

Realizing that some applicants are at the beginning of their journey, and this may be the first time their work is being juried, jurors should strive to:

1. Make the applicant feel as comfortable as possible.
2. Make contact – greet, smile, acknowledge that all present have been through this process, etc.

3. Be supportive and encouraging.
4. Refrain from immediately touching or grabbing the applicants work until after the preliminary conversation is complete. Ask the applicant's permission before handling work.

C. Preliminary conversation/interview

Set the tone for a conversation, not an interrogation.

For example:

1. Start your questioning with language such as "May I ask you a question"?
2. Tell us about your work; how would you describe it?
3. What feelings or spirit do you intend to convey in this work?
4. What adjective do you think describes your work?
5. How did you decide on your design, colors, shapes, etc.?
6. What do you feel passionate about? (Does it influence your work?)
7. Why do you want to join the League of NH Craftsmen?
8. Where do you see yourself going with your craft?
9. What have been your struggles and your highpoints to get your work to this point?
10. Are there any areas or aspects of your work that you have questions about?

D. Review of the body of work

1. Jurors share with the applicant their observations, appreciations, and questions about the work.
2. At the conclusion of the review, the applicant will be asked to leave the room so jurors can discuss the work further among themselves. The Jury Facilitator will escort the applicant to the Library or Exhibition Gallery to wait.

E. Jury Deliberation and assessment

1. Technical craftsmanship is evaluated as objectively as possible following the established standards guidelines and the "Juror Evaluation Guide."
2. Of equal importance is the evaluation of expressed personal vision, signature style, and artistic/aesthetic merit, referred to as "the spirit of the maker".
3. Jurors are encouraged to consider for acceptance work that can be described by such adjectives such as: engaging, beautiful, enriching, excellent, exceptional, exciting, provocative, noteworthy, cohesive, elegant, thoughtful, focused
4. Jurors are encouraged to consider deferring work that can be described by such adjectives as: ordinary, tacky, kitsch, plagiarized, cute, or anonymous – **while never using those words to describe the work to the applicant, as they are derogatory and would take away from a respectful educational experience.**
5. It is the jury's responsibility to make one of the following decisions regarding the applicant's work:
 - a. **Juried Membership:** Applicant is meeting League Standards and displays a clear "spirit of the maker". Unanimous decision that no further reviews are required.
 - b. **Conditional Acceptance:** Applicant is somewhat meeting League Standards, 1 or 2 product reviews are required to advance to Juried Membership.
 - c. **Deferred:** Applicant does not yet meet League Standards. Eligible to re-apply to re-jury within 2 years for no fee.

F. Discussion with the applicant

1. Upon rejoining the jurors, an applicant must immediately be told of the jurors' decision. The Jury Facilitator will do this.
2. Jurors always take into consideration the emotional situation of the jury session when communicating results to the applicant.
3. Jurors are kind, courteous, honest and respectful when communicating the decision.
4. Jurors are clear and articulate. The decision and reasons for the decision are clearly described to the applicant.
5. Jurors begin on a positive note, identifying and discussing strengths first.
6. Criticism is balanced with positive suggestions.
7. Jurors educate, provide encouragement, and seek to inspire.

G. Post-jury follow-up

1. Before the jury disbands, one of the jurors should be identified to follow up with the applicant in a mentoring capacity. In the case of accepted applicants, this is done to congratulate the artist and see if they have questions or concerns. In the case of deferred applicants, this is done to answer questions, provide encouragement, suggest resources if appropriate, etc. Staff will follow up with all other logistics.
2. Communicate the jury's decision and all documentation to the supporting staff member who will then meet with the applicant to go over the results and any associated paperwork.
3. The applicant will receive a copy of all juror evaluations. Ensure that your written comments carry the same positive and respectful tone as your spoken comments and that the juror evaluation forms are filled out completely.
4. Results of the jury session should be unanimous and consistent across all jurors involved in the session. The number of product reviews required, and any specific items that need attention need to be clearly indicated on the juror evaluation form.

H. Critique procedures that differ from a jury session

1. The critique facilitator will ask the applicant if there is anything specific they would like to achieve in the critique and ask if the applicant is interested in eventually becoming a juried member.
2. Critiques are more of a conversation
3. Applicants stay in the room during the duration of the critique
4. The Critique Form focuses on strengths and weaknesses with educational recommendations for growth on technique and concepts.

I. Mentoring critique applicants, deferred applicants, and conditionally accepted applicants

1. Jurors are highly encouraged to offer mentoring to applicants if the juror can offer specific skills that the applicant needs assistance with.
2. This is usually in the form of the applicant visiting a juror's studio for a set amount of time, typically for one hour. If that isn't preferred by the mentor, other meeting options include a virtual meeting, meeting at Headquarters, etc.
3. Mentoring an applicant is a rewarding and often mutually beneficial experience.

IV. Product Reviews

Conditionally accepted members must complete 1 OR 2 successful product reviews to become fully accepted juried members, with the exception that outstanding work may be deemed

sufficient by the reviewing juror and the second review can be waived. The work included in the reviews must meet or exceed the standards of the work brought to jury.

A. Product Review Process

1. Verify the work is similar to what was brought to the original jury session.
2. Evaluate whether the cautions, comments, and suggestions from the initial jury session have been applied to the work.
3. Ensure the standard seen at jury has been maintained. All jurors need to be vigilant about standards guidelines.
4. Feedback should be positive and encouraging, especially if any required refinements or changes have been made
5. Any continuing problems should be addressed in this review
6. Feedback must be explicitly detailed to maximize the benefit to the craftsman
7. Jurors are provided with product review forms and the narrative of the jury notes for reference. Notes should be written by the juror performing this review to assist those doing subsequent reviews and League staff.
8. Jurors will completely and clearly complete the product review form and clearly indicate one of 3 possible results:
 - a. PASS, NO further review(s) required
 - b. PASS, further review(s) still required
 - c. NO PASS, work needs additional attention

Addendum: Juror Evaluation Guide (Interpreting the Form)

Spirit of the Maker

To what degree can the work be described as:

1. A singular human expression of the world around us
2. A means of self-expression that exhibits unique aesthetic vision as well as technical skill
3. Work that elicits an emotional appeal and/or response from the viewer

Clarity of Intent

1. Is this work focused? Is the applicant presenting a cohesive body of work?
2. Does the work successfully function for its intended purpose?
3. Is the material used appropriate for the design and function of the work? Would it be better if made of something else or in another way?
4. Is there a clear personal vision expressed?
5. Does the applicant's "adjective" fit the body of work? (Refer to suggested conversation starters)

Design Decisions:

Integration of elements

1. Does the use of the elements line, tone, texture, shape and color successfully support the applicant's intent or adjective? (Refer to suggested conversation starters)
2. Is there a successful use of any of the principles of balance, rhythm, flow, focus, similarity, and contrast?
3. Is there evidence of thoughtful decision making in every aspect of the work?

Command of medium

1. Does the work demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the medium and necessary techniques, and exhibit skill commensurate with the detailed standards guidelines that have been established within each medium?
2. Does the work also demonstrate that every aspect is intentional?

Additional thoughts

1. Would I want my work to be next to this person's work in a gallery or at the Fair?
2. Would I want my work to be in an exhibition with this person's work?
3. Would I want to see a League of NH Craftsmen link on this person's website?