

## The five winning works in our second annual *Artists Magazine* Cover Competition are compelling compositions that may intrigue or charm, but definitely captivate.

Determining the winner of the annual *Artists Magazine* Cover Competition is a delightfully daunting task, as the editorial team discovered after pouring over nearly 1,000 entries in the second annual art competition. It's a veritable feast for the eyes as we consider visual impact, engaging composition, emotional appeal, and stellar technique and execution. This year, we're beyond pleased to serve up all five winning paintings in full-sized cover format, with Rose Anna Bain's enchanting work, *Taking Flight*, as the overall cover winner.

We asked Bain—and the four other artists who round out our top five—to share the behind-the-scenes stories of their cover-worthy paintings. Enjoy the inside scoop!



### Top Winner **ANNA ROSE BAIN**

Anna Rose Bain graduated with honors from Hillsdale College in 2007 and was the first student in the school's history to have a solo senior show. During her undergraduate studies, she also took a figure painting course at the Florence Academy of Art, in Italy. She now works full-time as an oil painter and commissioned portrait artist. She also teaches workshops, creates instructional art videos and is actively involved in the local arts communities in Colorado. Bain is a Signature Member of the Oil Painters of America—for which she won the Gold Medal at the 2022 National Juried Exhibition. She's also a member of the California Art Club and Plein Air Artists of Colorado, and is a Signature faculty member of the Portrait Society of America. Her award-winning work can be found in numerous private and public collections around the world. She lives in Arvada, Colo., with her husband and their two children.

**Taking Flight**  
(oil on linen, 30x24)

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#### **What was your inspiration for *Taking Flight*?**

I like to take my children outdoors for photo shoots in the spring and fall. I find that placing them in those settings—when the color is most vibrant and the weather is beautiful—is perfect for finding inspiration. I don't always have an idea in mind, as was the case with this particular setting.

When I saw the reference photos of my daughter with the wind blowing her hair, and the aspen leaves swirling about her, I knew it had potential. The sparrows were

an addition inspired by an earlier piece I'd done of her when she was an infant. In that painting, she was just learning to crawl, and I posed her with a fledgling sparrow. Here, she's shown with grown sparrows flying all around her, symbolizing both her independent spirit and the passage of time.

#### **Describe your typical painting process. Was there anything unique to your approach for this piece?**

When I'm preparing to paint a studio piece like this one, I spend a great deal of time

carefully looking through my reference photos (of which I take hundreds!) and stitching together bits and pieces of them in Photoshop until I have what I call a "mock-up." I'm always looking at my photos and mock-ups as small thumbnails on my computer and trying to decide if my design reads well.

I'm also choosing a color harmony for the piece and trying to determine the dominant focal point. Only when I've made these decisions do I begin the painting; however, as was the case with *Taking Flight*, there are often many different directions I might still take with a piece. In this painting, I wasn't satisfied with the gestures of the aspen branches and foliage in my reference photos, so I changed them up to create the shape and movement I wanted. Ultimately, I wanted the leaves to suggest angel wings behind the figure, without being too obvious or kitschy.

#### **What is that draws you to the human face and figure as a subject?**

I've always been interested in faces and figures because each human being is completely unique. And I can say this even though I have an identical twin sister! I love the challenge of capturing a likeness, not just technically, but emotionally. Finding that special something that makes up that person's aura or essence—the flame beneath the surface—is my favorite kind of challenge.

#### **What was it about the piece that struck you as demonstrating magazine "cover potential"?**

From a practical standpoint, I knew that the size and orientation would work. From an artistic stance, I felt that it was a perfect combination of eye-catching colors, intriguing subject matter and imagination.

#### **Tell us something about your future plans or goals.**

Currently I'm in the throes of balancing my art with raising two young children, but as they get older, I plan to pursue more things. I hope to one day teach more international workshops. I'd also love to have a solo show; perhaps in the next few years I'll be ready to take that on. Most of all, I plan to keep painting no matter what life throws my way. I have faith that all good things will come in time.