



Celebrating Creativity —with a Capital

Colorful, curious, clever—these are just some of the adjectives used to describe the envelopes that arrived earlier this year at P.O. Box 3688 in Merrifield, Virginia, just outside of Washington. The best were chosen as champions of the 2008 Graceful Envelope Contest, which had “C’s the Day” as its theme.

Participants from around the world designed, hand-crafted and mailed their small masterpieces in a competition that celebrates the art of written correspondence and, by extension, the letter carriers who deliver it. NALC sponsors the annual contest in collaboration with the Washington (DC) Calligraphers Guild.

Entrants interpreted this year’s theme with words and phrases that begin with the letter C. Submissions included everything from cartoonish cats to carnivorous captors (illustrated by a Venus fly trap). The envelope honored as “Best in Show” recreated the image from an American Clock stamp with a level of craft that impressed the judges, using cut-outs, foil-wrapped artwork and calligraphy.

“Every time we looked at the envelope, we saw something new,” said Mike Shea, one of the judges. “So many different techniques were used effectively on an idea that embraced not only this year’s theme, but also the

The Graceful
Envelope



Some of this year's envelope entries. Opposite page: Julie Gray (left) from Sandia Park, New Mexico; and Jenny Muffler from Rockville, Maryland. This page: Yukimi Annand (top) from Torrance, California; Jeri Hobart (middle) from Iowa City, Iowa; and Margaret Snyder from Louisville, Kentucky.

spirit of sending envelopes through the mail.”

The panel of judges, made up of Shea, designer/web editor for the NALC; Sheila Waters, internationally known master calligrapher, illuminator, teacher and author of *Foundations of Calligraphy*; and professional designer and calligrapher Lee Ann Clark, whose clients include the Washington Ballet and the Prince of Wales Foundation, selected 10 additional envelopes as “Winners” and awarded “Honorable Mention” to 17 entries in the contest’s adult division. A striking envelope intricately depicting a crossword puzzle of calligraphy terms was honored as “First Place” among the winners. The judges also selected winners in the junior and children’s divisions.

Some of the winning envelopes are reproduced here and on the inside back cover, and all adult division winners are on display in the lobby at the Vincent R. Sombrotto Building, the NALC’s headquarters in Washington. (Winning entries in all categories can be viewed online at calligraphersguild.org.)

Each entry was required to pass through the mail “as is”—the entry was, itself, an envelope—and had to interpret the theme in a creative and artistic way while using hand-executed lettering for the address. Many incorporated the postage seamlessly into the designs.

Information about the 2009 contest will be announced early next year. ✉

