

The ART of the MAIL honors INNOVATION

LETTER carriers know a little something about pushing envelopes, but not normally ones that look like these.

"Pushing the envelope" was the theme of the 2017 Graceful Envelope Contest and the entries showed many interpretations of that well-trod phrase. From manually shoving a postal biplane to the evolution of mail delivery technology, from a consideration of art in general to a woman giving birth to an actual envelope, nothing was out of bounds for the artists and calligraphers who created this year's masterpieces.

Christy Robb of Morning Sun, IA, received the "Best in Show" prize for her simple and elegant rendering of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. With corresponding architecture-themed stamps, impeccable calligraphy of a quote from neo-futuristic architect Eero Saarinen (who designed the arch), and the slight extension of the arch beyond the edge of the envelope's border helped Robb's artwork connect with the judges, who gave it the contest's top prize.

The envelope was one of more than 100 entered into the adult division of the 23rd annual Graceful Envelope Contest, a celebration of written correspondence sponsored by the National Association of Letter Carriers in conjunction with the Washington Calligraphers Guild.

Entrants from Hawaii to Hong Kong sent the envelopes through the mail stream, per the competition's rules. The three judges looked for creative interpretation of the theme, skill in lettering and illustration, clever incorporation of postage and effective use of color and design, among other criteria. The judges were freelance calligrapher Sammy Little, whose clients include the U.S. Capitol, the Supreme Court and the National Gallery of Art; Special Awards calligraphy studio owner Mary Lou O'Brian of Gaithersburg, MD; and longtime NALC Designer/Web Editor Mike Shea.

In addition to the top prize, 10 more envelopes were selected as "Winners" and 11 were given the distinction of "Honorable Mention." The judges also picked student winners from nearly 700 entries in grades 1-4, grades 5-8 and grades 9-12 youth divisions.

Some of the winning envelopes are shown on these pages and the inside back cover of this magazine. All winning and honorable-mention adult entries are on display in the lobby of the NALC Headquarters building in Washington, and winning entries in all of the categories can be seen at calligraphersguild.org. PR



