

CSPWC Membership Application FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What do I need to get accepted?

A Jury of 9 CSPWC Elected Members will independently look carefully at your work. The majority of the 9 Jurors (5/9) need to feel that you are ready for Elected Membership. All 6 of your paintings must be deemed excellent for the juror to vote to elect you. That means that one or more weaker paintings would prevent you from being elected at this time.

Are there certain styles or subjects of work that are more accepted in membership; eg: abstract / high realism / loose, painterly / portraits / landscape?

The Jurors are chosen carefully, representing all regions of Canada and representing diverse styles. They are instructed to evaluate the work for excellence, following the CSPWC definitions of watercolour, and embracing all styles of watercolour painting. Our members are honoured to be on the volunteer jury and do the task diligently. It is not a matter of their personal like or dislike, it is a goal of excellence.

Can I submit a painting I did a few years ago?

We require you to submit recent paintings. Work completed in the last 3 years is acceptable.

Are there size requirements for my submissions?

At this time we do not have size requirements for your work. It is often recognized that a successful large or very large painting requires more preparation, skill and effort than small works. It is to your advantage to include some larger pieces if you can. Work larger than full sheet, 22"x 30" cannot be handled in the Diploma Collection.

Do all of my 6 paintings have to be of the same subjects; eg: landscape / figurative / abstract ?

No, your paintings do not have to be of the same subjects. However, it is strongly advised that you demonstrate a consistency of a well developed style in your work. That is often easier with similar subjects, but not impossible with diverse subjects. A consistent approach to different subjects demonstrates versatility.

Can I submit a painting that I did in a course, workshop, video / online course or from a how-to book?

You may not submit a painting done under instruction. Limits on coursework include inperson instruction, online courses, videos and how-to books. Your paintings must be your own from conception to completion, and not part of course work.

Can I use photos as references for my painting?

If you use photos, they must be your own. Photos from another photographer or the internet are not permitted for your application paintings.

Will I get detailed feedback from the Jurors if I am not accepted?

No, unfortunately we cannot provide specific feedback from the Jurors. If the Committee does receive constructive comments, they will be passed on to you. We ask that you read this document in detail, and use what information is relevant to your own painting needs. Some of the advice here could make the difference in your application. It is our experience that the Jurors would strongly encourage you to keep painting.

Analyze your Work. Ultimately, your own analysis, ongoing throughout the painting processes will lead you to doing your finest work. Ask yourself as you finish a painting “what bothers me?” Make your work “intentional”, that is each artistic decision is made deliberately. Your self-critique as you paint will improve your work.

Transparent: Watercolour paints and the application techniques used by the artist can create a transparent character unique to watercolours. The Jurors will look for the artist’s ability to create images while retaining the nature of watercolour. Body colours (opaque) should be used minimally or not at all, leaving the unpainted paper as white.

Composition: Basic rules of composition can help avoid problems with balance and space, and they can serve to direct the eye to the intended focal points.

Draftsmanship: Drawing, proportions, perspective, anatomy (if applicable). Are the shadows and reflections logical? (Creative distortion is quite acceptable if well done.)

Value: Values can make or break a painting. Many artists will do a black and white sketch or painting to establish the values before they start a painting.

Colours/Palette: Do your colour choices enhance the painting?

Focal point What is the focus of the painting? Where is the detail? What do you want the viewer to focus on? Have you simplified the extraneous?

Subject: Paint subjects that you are familiar with and passionate about. A simple object painted well is more interesting than trying to paint a whole view in infinite detail.

Luminosity/Light: As you plan and execute a painting, consider “light” as an essential design element. Where is the source of light, what are the colours of light, how do the shadows delineate the light? Many watercolour artists intentionally seek luminosity as an essential element of their work; the transparency of watercolour makes this all possible.

CSPWC Diploma Collection

The Diploma Collection is an important National Collection, representing Canadian watercolour artists since the conception of the CSPWC in 1925. It includes one painting donated by each Elected Member at the time that they are elected. It’s an incredible resource for all watercolour artists.

We strongly encourage you to explore the Collection online in detail. Ask yourself if each one of your application paintings could hang comfortably beside those works? Makes notes of what you like, why, and how it enhances the work.

“Yeah, I’ve been elected!” What should I know about my Diploma Collection Painting?

Your 3 paintings offered as potential Diploma pieces should be your very best work. Though you are donating one, that painting will represent you in a National Collection - forever! As we adapt to online access, this makes the Collection even more visible. Members may not switch paintings in the future; that painting represents you at the time of being elected. Even as your skills and style change in the future, you want an example of your best work in this collection. Please consider this when you make your application.

The Diploma Collection began in 1991 with paintings donated by more than 80 members. In addition, it has about 100 paintings collected from earlier members dating back to 1926. In all, there are more than 400 paintings in this incredible collection.