

# SAA 2025-2027 Board Candidates

- There are **13** candidates. We have **12** available seats.
- Please return ballots as soon as possible and before **September 15th**
- <https://www.societyofanimalartists.com/ballot/> - ONLINE BALLOT
- Or, if you prefer, email ballot/votes to Wes at [admin@societyofanimalartists.com](mailto:admin@societyofanimalartists.com)

*The SAA Board diligently works hard for you, always striving for excellence. Each Board member is significant, and you have the opportunity to elect the people you want to represent you; people you consider progressive thinkers and the best members to propel the SAA into the future. Please take the time to read each candidate's statement, then carefully make your selection.*

***Thank You** for taking the time to vote for your Board!*

Reneé Bemis  
SAA President

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*NOTE: Candidates are listed alphabetically*

       **Kim Diment** (Current Board Member, Member since 2007)  
[www.kimdiment.com/](http://www.kimdiment.com/)

I thank you for your past support. I hope you will consider re-electing me as an Executive Board member. I would like to be re-elected as a Board member for several reasons. The first would be to continue to push for animal art to be accepted as a serious art genre. I feel strongly about helping SAA push back against the bias that art depicting animals is trite and illustrative. Secondly, I want our organization to continue to move into the future as the world's most prestigious art guild that promotes wildlife and nature. On a more personal note, I would like to continue to serve on the Executive Board as a member that our Artists can come to voice their complaints, suggestions and satisfactions. I would like to be available for future workshops (teaching or planning). I would also be willing to serve at a higher level if needed.

As a member of the Board, hoping to get re-elected, I feel I have experience to offer the Board. Being a past secretary and a Board member has given me insight into where we have been and where we want to be heading. I am open to input and suggestions. I want our Annuals to be fun. I like organizing mixers and get together activities so old and new members have ample chances to get acquainted in person. Before I was a full-time artist I was a High School/Junior High Art Teacher. I really liked this job. It taught me, on a small scale, a lot about planning, group dynamics, critiquing and motivating. I feel these experiences have helped me as a Board member. Another aspect of my life that gives me some insight is co-owning a small nature art gallery and running it with my business partner Ken Wright. This has taught me aspects about business, displaying art, social media and art trends.

There are a few things I have done while serving on the Board:

\* I was secretary for 3 years.

\* I organized the Great Lakes Regional Society of Animal Artists show for 2017. I am hoping to organize another.

\*I was part of the SAA and SKB foundation, Texart workshops. While there, I took workshops and also offered one.

\* I did not miss a spring or fall meeting since I joined the Board in 2013.

\*Currently I am on a committee that would like to give access to instructional videos put together by our talented SAA members for our SAA website. I believe we can learn all lot from each other whether it be art techniques, personal experiences or advice on the art world.

The Society of Animal Artists means a lot to me. I have been a nature geek ever since I was very young. I found drawing and painting animals to be a necessity in my life. In talking to many of you, I know you have similar life experiences. As soon as I found the SAA with all my wildlife artist heroes, I knew I wanted to be a part of it. This prestigious group embraces my great passions in life: Animals and Art. I am so happy it exists. I believe the Society of Animal Artists is a great organization that represents the best wildlife and naturalist artists in the world, past and present. Thank you for your consideration.

           **Yelena Lamm (Member since 2023)**

[www.yelenalamm.com](http://www.yelenalamm.com)

My dedication to the arts, combined with a deep passion for animal subjects, aligns seamlessly with the mission of the SAA. I am eager to contribute my experience, skills, and enthusiasm to the organization's ongoing success and growth.

With a professional background in graphic design and extensive volunteer experience, I bring a wealth of skills and a strong commitment to the arts. From 2009 to 2020, I volunteered as a designer for the Pittsburgh Society of Illustrators, where I was responsible for putting together a monthly newsletter. Additionally, my work on the exhibition committee of the Pittsburgh Watercolor Society from 2021 to 2023 has provided me with valuable experience in organizing and curating art events. These experiences have equipped me with a comprehensive understanding of the creative and logistical aspects involved in running art organizations.

As a member of the SAA Executive Board, I would bring a unique blend of artistic talent, practical experience, and a collaborative spirit. I am particularly interested in exploring ways to promote the appreciation of animal art, enhance member engagement, and expand our outreach efforts. My experience in designing promotional materials, logo design, and event signage would be valuable assets in these endeavors.

Being accepted as a Signature member of the SAA in 2023 and having my works selected for three juried exhibitions has been an incredible honor. I am eager to contribute more to this esteemed organization and help further its mission.

Thank you for considering my candidature. I am enthusiastic about the possibility of contributing to the Society of Animal Artists and working alongside esteemed artists who share my dedication to the arts and the natural world.

           **Jhenna Quinn Lewis (Member since 2018)**

[www.jhennaquinnlewis.com](http://www.jhennaquinnlewis.com)

Why would I like to serve the board? The short of it is that I love this organization!

I am grateful to be part of such a group of artists as this. The talent of this group and everyone's dedication to preservation and education for the creatures on this earth is truly inspiring. It motivates me to dig deeper into my passion for the natural world and I love sharing this passion with others.

Through our art and advocacy, we share and show how we are all connected and that it is imperative we defend, support, love, and care for animals and their habitats. I have felt this for my whole life. It is inherent. It would be an honor to serve an organization that resounds with my beliefs. I would be grateful to give back to SAA in this small measure as serving on the board.

I can offer who I am to the board. I have a background in the hospitality business. It is ingrained in me as my parents had a 5-star restaurant in which I worked in since I was in third grade, starting as a napkin roller and putting tin foil on potatoes, to being the dessert girl, to working as a hostess and waitress. I have a passion for serving others.

I am a people person and I have a history of facilitating successful connections between those I know and meet. My daughter calls me a matchmaker - connecting artists with other artists, galleries, scientists. I love getting to know people and their stories and then when I see connections or crossovers with others who I meet which might help them both move forward on a project or perhaps even just be a positive connection, I help make it happen.

I generally love to make things move forward the best I can. Being of service is a joy for me.

Finally, SAA is integral to who I am as an artist. I waited years before I applied for membership. I felt my work had to be of the best quality in order to represent this society. When I was received into SAA it truly filled my heart and I have taken the responsibility of being a member seriously. Our mission statements concur. It is a wonderful and talented group of artists that are included here, and I am very proud to be counted as one.

This society represents so much to me. One of the most important is education through art and advocacy for the natural world. I feel we create our art in the hopes that it will capture the viewers' attention to realize the value, beauty, individuality, and interconnectedness of all living creatures and the environment. To spark interest in individuals enough to change their behaviors of consumption toward protecting what needs to be protected; if nothing else even to have people start in their own backyard.

Joining the board would be a way for me to give back to this community of artists in gratitude for all their contributions and concerns toward conservation, preservation, and admiration for the animals, landscapes, and spaces we are all so passionate about.

           **Terry Miller** (Current Board Member, Distinguished Signature Member, Member since 1993)

[www.terrymillerstudio.com/](http://www.terrymillerstudio.com/)

As the Chair of your Exhibition Committee, it has been my pleasure to work with the other committee members to put together interesting, informative and educational presentations/program offerings during the opening weekend events associated with the annual members' exhibition. I've also been involved in putting together additional opportunities for the membership to show their work in various ways throughout the year and continue to suggest ways that the SAA can offer educational experiences, especially aimed at our younger and

Associate members, to encourage growth and development of their talents and skills to enable movement to a higher level of creativity and Signature membership. There have been many challenges over the last two years that your Board has had to deal with, not least of which the necessity to meet more often than in the past as well as to do so remotely. We've had to make some difficult decisions, always with the best interests of the membership front and center and I'd like to be able to continue to be involved in moving the Society ever forward as there are some very exciting opportunities on our horizon and I believe I still have plenty of ideas to offer to those discussions.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Lisa Nugent** (Signature Member since 2023)

I have only had the privilege of being a Society of Animal Artists (SAA) member since January 2023, so the thrill of joining the ranks of some of the most skilled and distinguished artists in the world is still very fresh for me.

I feel truly honored and exceptionally proud to be a part of a preeminent organization like the SAA. One that successfully and globally aggregates people who share the same passion for furthering animal art as fine art and creating opportunities for its members to share that mutual enthusiasm with each other and the world. Providing us the means to do so, through not only our art but advocacy and education as well. As humanity encroaches evermore upon our animal counterparts' habitats and continues to do things that reduce their numbers sometimes to extinction, advocacy and raising awareness become paramount. The fact that SAA provides a viable platform to affect all of that is what I find most compelling about being a member.

However, getting things together and running efficiently for an organization like SAA takes some serious doing. I applaud the founders whose remarkable efforts got the SAA established and successfully underway and the significant work of all those since to bring the SAA to the high measure of success and notable status it bears today.

My healthy respect for all this stems from my past experiences as the Co-founder, President, and Board Member of three different non-profits. One of which, the Central Mass Pastel Society, is also art-based. As with all fledgling organizations, as Co-founder and President, I did whatever needed doing. I have done everything from drafting articles of incorporation to sweeping up after an event and everything in between. Inevitably wearing every hat possible has bestowed upon me a veritable plethora of relevant skills and a multi-faceted perspective. Also, indelibly impressed upon me is how critical member involvement is to keeping things going favorably for these types of organizations.

In summary, I genuinely believe that what the SAA stands for and accomplishes, year after year, is significant and yields a profound, positive impact well beyond the community it is comprised of. I would welcome the opportunity to offer my support to the SAA as a Board Member and potentially in other capacities as well, as different needs arise.

Thank you all for your consideration. As a final note, I would like to add that the artists I have had the chance to engage with so far have been wonderfully receptive and welcoming. I look forward to continuing to meet fellow SAA peers in the future. I love seeing everyone's gorgeous work. It is truly inspirational.

\_\_\_\_\_ **David Rankin** (Current Board Member, Distinguished Signature Member, Member since 1990)

davidrankinwatercolors.com/

In 1990 I was elected to the SAA Board. For the last 34 years I have been honored to be part of such a prestigious group of artists and to have the opportunity to contribute to the reputation and growth of SAA and animal art.

Once on the board, my initial effort was to raise the professional stature of the SAA by creating a more professional exhibition catalog. I also worked with the various presidents of the organization to come up with ways to use the catalogs to promote the organization - using them to help set up interviews, press releases and ultimately with David Wagner more museum partnerships. I produced our catalogs for the next 20-25 years. We created a pdf version as well. For the last 10 years of our catalog efforts I was able to get our printer to take on the enormous task of shipping & mailing copies to our membership. For many years we did an annual Art and the Animal exhibition poster as well.

As a Board member, one of the highlights was the Annual exhibition and Conference SAA held at Roger Tory Petersen Institute. I created an Awards program. I called up the major Art Print companies like MillPond and Greenwich and got them to donate \$35,000 for Cash Awards for our annual award winners... \$3500 for each Award of Excellence. I did this for 2 years.

Additionally, I worked with Dorcas MacClintock on our SAA in-house Newsletter for about 10 years. I did the layout and design and eliminated the mailing cost by creating it as a pdf.

As the new digital technologies began to evolve, I tried in numerous ways to create ways to make the Annual more accessible on a global scale. I created a believable realistic 3D exhibition online. We did that for 3-4 years.

I assisted with the partnership with the SKB Foundation and the 2016 Tex-Art workshop at Schreiner University, Kerrville, Texas, and with the (2019) "In the Audubon Tradition" Exhibition at the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History & Science. I created the interactive online exhibition for it as well as a special Educational Wikipedia link for every species.

As a result of the pandemic, I created an online professional exhibition format with additional enhanced features to hopefully assist our membership by having their website and social media sites included—hoping to actually create sales rather than just exhibit the artwork. The first of these was directed to our international members as I realized shipping costs might make it more difficult for them to participate. These were followed by Special Exhibitions for New Members and another dedicated to Birds. I also added a link to information about each species depicted in the artwork helping to fulfill our educational mission as well.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Cathleen Savage** (Member since 2016)

Dear fellow Signature members,

Now that I have (very happily) earned Signature status, I want to participate in the leadership activities of the organization in a way that will add value to the membership. My career as an

executive in several nonprofit organizations will prove useful, as will my volunteer work for art organizations. These roles have prepared me to make sound decisions, even when they are difficult, for the betterment of the organization. I look forward to serving the Society in a new capacity. 1990-1998: The Urban Institute, Washington, DC Director, Human Resources and Facilities – Responsible for all aspects of recruitment, employee benefits, employee relations, and government compliance for this 435-person organization of public policy researchers, including the on-site library and mailroom. Notable projects included negotiating and implementing a \$3M self-funded medical plan, overseeing a major computer system conversion, and hiring employees and consultants for overseas assignments. Other duties included preparing materials for Board of Directors meetings, including resolutions and agendas.

2000-2010: National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois and Washington, DC (Vice President, Human Resources & Administration) – Responsible for all aspects of Human Resources and Facilities management for this 4,500-person organization with a large field staff. Notable projects included implementing a new pension plan and establishing a workforce in Doha, Qatar.

2019-2021: Pikes Peak Watercolor Society Colorado Springs, Colorado (President) – Oversaw activities of this 150-person art organization, including annual tax preparation, dues collection, a bi-annual international open exhibition, monthly in-person meetings with guest speakers and social activities, and a large lending library. Notable projects included bylaws revision and transition to remote meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2016 to present: Admin for Facebook Group Realistic Watercolors (51,000+ members) – Monitor, with two other Admins, daily activity for this large online group. Notable projects have included establishing criteria for membership and rules for posting and group interactions, growing the group from 10,000 to 50,000 over several years.  
Thanks for your consideration.

           **Rachelle Siegrist** (Current Board Member, Distinguished Signature Member, Member since 2001)  
[www.artofwildlife.com/](http://www.artofwildlife.com/)

I enjoy serving the Society as a member of the Board. I am currently producing and editing videos for the Society and serving as the Chair of the Hospitality Committee. I strive to help make our opening a fun-filled, memorable weekend. Since my husband Wes is the SAA's Executive Director, I attend every meeting and the Annual Exhibition Opening Weekend. I have served on SAA exhibitions and new member juries, written critiques to declined applicants, and posted our SAA blog.

I have previously served on various art organization boards, taught art classes and workshops, and worked as a gallery manager arranging and installing shows. I was deeply honored to be elected to the SAA and I believe it's important for us as animal artists, as it allows us to show our work in prestigious museums throughout the U.S. and brings an awareness of the natural world to the public, which I feel is increasingly more important than ever. Thank you for considering me to continue to serve you, as an SAA Board member.

**Heather Soos** (Member since 2007)  
<https://heathersoos.ca/>

The SAA is important to me because of the level of excellence that it consistently aims for and maintains. This world-class standard of excellence brings out the best abilities in members and draws the best artists from around the world to our membership. As a member of such an esteemed organization for over 16 years, I am grateful for the numerous ways I have benefitted, including learning and growing as an artist and meeting and interacting with amazing artists from around the world!

My time on the Board (2021 to present) has benefitted me personally as a challenge and a new learning experience. It has given me the opportunity to work with and get to know other board members and learn about the huge amount of work involved in an organization like ours. I have thoroughly enjoyed working on the Board and would like to continue to contribute to the SAA as a Board Member in whatever way I can.

Following is my general experience and contribution as a Board member:

- accredited courses towards a Diploma in Adult Education
- experience teaching students
- 2D artist with experience in acrylic, oil and scratchboard
- 16+ years as a Canadian member (11+ as a Signature member)
- 3 years as a Board member
- juror for the New Members Jury
- critique writing (as a juror for New Members Jury)
- Juror for Special Show Jury
- proofreading/corrections for the Art and the Animal catalog

I believe in the importance of the SAA as a conduit for members to develop personal and professional relationships, reach their artistic potential with their chosen 2D or 3D medium, and share their love of art and animals with the world.

Through continuing to work with the SAA Executive Board, I look forward to assisting in growing our organization and providing more opportunities for all SAA members to reach their personal goals. Thank you for your consideration.

           **Amy Stauffer** (Member since 2018)  
[www.amystauffer.com](http://www.amystauffer.com)

It is an honor for me to be considered for the board of the Society of Animals Artists. This organization has always represented to me the pinnacle of achievement among professional wildlife artists of the highest caliber. It was a dream come true to be awarded membership in 2018. Since that time, my membership in the SAA has been an invaluable resource for furthering my career by fostering valuable relationships and providing professional opportunities that

would have otherwise been closed to me. I could not be more thankful for the knowledge I have gained or the kindness that has been shown me.

As one of the younger artists in the membership, it is of utmost importance to me that the SAA continue to be a vibrant and dynamic organization for the generations to come. In today's age of media saturation, our role as educators and ambassadors for wildlife via world class fine art has never been more important. The world needs artists to thrive to bring depth and fullness to our culture and I am passionate about bringing up and mentoring younger artists towards this goal. I believe that organizations like the SAA are instrumental in this by promoting excellence, education, and building robust partnership with the public.

The SAA represents scientific rigor and artistic excellence, two of my life's greatest passions. By joining the Executive Board of the SAA I hope to be part of the future evolution of this remarkable organization, to raise awareness of our professionalism, and promote wildlife art as a vital part of our human legacy. Thank you for your consideration.

           **Leon White** (Member since 2011)  
[www.leonwhitestudio.artspan.com](http://www.leonwhitestudio.artspan.com)

All functioning organizations need a functioning board to keep the organization organized with protocol of rules and regulations in all aspects to keep it running smoothly, productively, and positive for members and for society to know the importance why such an organization exists. Hopefully my years of experiences can add to enhance the running of the SAA.

My years of experiences on Art Organization boards, committees have taught me the importance to have organization skills to handle the needs and functioning and enhancement of such groups.

A. Learning the do's and don'ts, protocol, process myself from a teenager to be a professional artist by pursuing all art endeavors to gain knowledge of the Art World.

B. Served on the Board while operating a successful Artists Co-Op.

Served on the Board of The Puget Sound Group of Northwest Artists. Assist with the functioning, art exhibits, annual auctions for major operating expenses. Scholarship Committee awarding financial aid to art students at local Colleges, Art Institutes. A juror for this group and local art competitions.

Served on the board, committees with The Northwest Stone Sculptors Association for thirty years. Assisting with our annual local and international stone carving symposiums. Exhibit Chair; Finding, Organizing, Curator for Member Exhibits.

On the committee for a local neighborhood arts group. Arts North. (North Seattle) Arrange, advertise, for Open House Studio Tours.

I wish that I had known of this organization long before I found it! It is so important for producing Artists to be in a group of likeness themed subjects to share with peers the endless creativity in all mediums in the animal world. I so enjoy seeing the inventiveness of including an animal in environments and situations that are unexpected. Exposures by being in the society which all artists need to fulfill OUR purpose for doing artworks. For having



the exposure, opportunities available not only for sales, but to greatly enhance the world on the importance to protect all one-of-a-kind species with our exhibits!