

Judge's Statement:

Myths & Folktales: the 2nd Miyuki Delica Challenge, 2000

Diane Fitzgerald

Imagine there are 147 pieces of beadwork before you. Each is the result of hours of patience, love, and skill. As you examine them, the winners begin to emerge. They draw you to them; they engage your thinking. They are like verbs that communicate action, being, or state of being—not nouns or adjectives that just exist or even exclamations that shout.

Visual presence is what I looked for. It's the power of a work to compel your attention, a masterpiece that stops you in your tracks. A masterpiece—a winner—is about strength of form, about lines that guide your eye in viewing the piece, about texture that makes you want to touch it. But somehow, through all these elements, it's the spirit of the piece that moves you. Somehow the winning piece must speak its message silently, soul to soul, to tell you its secrets.

The piece must hold up under close examination as well. Does the beader use a stitch appropriate for the desired effect? Has she selected beads in colors, sizes and shapes and used them in a way to enhance her vision? Is her work neat? Does the thread color blend or is it used to shift the color of the beads? In beadwork, execution does count.

Fortunately for the judges, many contests have a "Judge's Choice" award so that the personal eccentricities of a judge can be accommodated and she won't be inhibited in making her selection of the strongest piece by her personal taste. For the **2nd Miyuki Delica Challenge**, we agreed on the Grand Prize Winner and the First and Second Place winners in each of the three categories: Body Adornments, Sculpture, and Wall Hangings. But for me, the piece that moved me with its poignancy was the little Frog Prince. He called out, "Kiss me!" as he snuggled in my hand. If he had been larger, I might have ignored him. But there he stood, the gold beads in his belt already slightly worn, beckoning with his little golden mask, suggesting there might be something else behind the mask of red eyes and ugly frog lips. He spoke to me in a way the other entries never would, and I said, "Yes!"

Diane Fitzgerald is a bead artist who works in a variety of contemporary bead assemblage techniques using seed beads and larger glass beads. Since 1989, Diane has taught a wide range of bead classes at her shop, Beautiful Beads, in Minneapolis, Minnesota and around the country. Additionally, her work has appeared in several major exhibits. Diane has traveled to the Czech Republic, Germany, South Africa and other areas to learn about beads and beadwork. Diane is the author of Beads and Threads: A New Technique for Fiber Jewelry, (with co-author Helen Banes), Counted and Charted Patterns for Flat Peyote Stitch, Sea Anemone Beadwork, Zulu Beaded Chain Techniques, More Zulu Beadwork, and Beading With Brick Stitch, to be published in early 2001 by Interweave Press. She also writes for several magazines including Beadwork, Jewelry Craft, Lapidary Journal, and others.