

Woodson Art Museum

in your classroom

Birds in Art and Art of the Natural World
Fall 2013



Dominique Salm, *Rubbernecking*, 2012 (ostrich)

Introduction

The Woodson Art Museum's annual exhibition cycle always begins with the ever-evolving *Birds in Art* exhibition presented each fall. The start of a new school year marks an exciting time of fresh starts and big changes. Similarly, the Woodson is filled with new spaces and transformations, which generate the energy and excitement of a fresh start. This past summer, a series of renovations throughout the Museum's public spaces aimed to align all facilities with the contemporary and clean design aesthetics of the 2012 building addition. Among the renovations are an expanded and remodeled Art Park – the Museum's family interactive gallery on the lower level, new family restroom, new gallery adjacent to the main entrance (also renovated), redesigned decorative arts gallery, and updated visitor services area.



Elegant new spaces are complemented by fantastic artworks in the galleries. *Birds in Art*, on view September 7 – November 10, features fresh artistic takes on birds by some of the world's most talented artists, portraying unexpected perspectives, amusing poses, and majestic bearings. *Birds in Art* presents 125 all-new paintings, graphics, and sculptures created by artists who bring a global perspective to their passion for birds. The exhibition features fourteen artworks by Master Artist Terry Miller, who works solely with graphite, yielding stunning shades of black, white, and gray.

This fall *Birds in Art* is enhanced by a residency with sculptor Paul Rhymer. During a six-day residency, October 21 – 27, Paul Rhymer explains how his twenty-five year career as a second-generation Smithsonian taxidermist has informed his bronze sculpture. He will lead bronze-sculpting demonstrations for school children during class visits to the Museum (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; note the availability of Monday tour times during this residency due to school closures later in the week), public programs for all ages, and adult workshops, as well as offer taxidermy tips and judge a taxidermy contest during the residency. For more information about Rhymer's residency see the residency flyer at the end of these materials or connect with a Museum educator at 715.845.7010.

Visitors to the Museum this fall also can look forward to the newly installed permanent collection galleries, which showcase the diversity and quality of the Woodson's holdings.

Birds in Art

Birds in Art is the Woodson Art Museum's annual flagship exhibition, which grew out of the inaugural *Birds of the Lakes, Fields and Forests* exhibition that introduced the Museum to Wausau in September, 1976. Owen Gromme served as curator of the inaugural exhibition and is considered the "father of *Birds in Art*." That successful first exhibition featured works by masters of avian-themed artwork such as Roger Tory Peterson and Arthur Singer.



Bart Rulon, *Chatterbox*, 2011 (Marsh wren)

The 38th edition of *Birds in Art* continues the tradition of excellence and features ninety-three accomplished artists – selected from a pool of more than 600 artists. Also featured in the 2013 *Birds in Art* exhibition are eighteen past Master Artists – honored by the Museum for their exceptional artistic talents – including two artists who have participated in every *Birds in Art* exhibition since its inception: Guy Coheleach and Maynard Reece. While many artists will be familiar to regular visitors, there also are the fresh faces and styles of first-time artists – fourteen this year to look forward to. The international scope of *Birds in Art* is noteworthy, too; thirty of the 112 artists hail from outside the United States.

Over 900 wild bird species in North America alone, and a wide range of artistic styles, mediums, and artistic perspectives ensure the dynamic and individual works featured in *Birds in Art*. Although there may be an abundance of potential subjects, unique themes often appear within the exhibition, and some artists create work to meet a need greater than a pure aesthetic one. Some artists identify conservation efforts and threatened habitats as inspiration for their work, and tell their stories through changing landscapes and endangered bird species. Consider Tom Altenburg's intimate view of a scarlet macaw, entitled *Scarlet Blues*, about which the artist said: "*Scarlet Blues* may sound like the title of a song, but large scarlet macaw parrots truly are experiencing the blues as a result of habitat destruction and aggressive capture efforts."



Tom Altenburg, *Scarlet Blues*, 2012 (scarlet macaw)

While the consideration of environmental issues is a common *Birds in Art* theme, Altenburg's work also illustrates two other coincidental noteworthy trends found in the 2013 exhibition: a focus on the eyes of a subject and colorful parrot portraits. Artists Karen Bondarchuk, Giorgia Oldano, and France Tremblay emphasize and make note of the importance of their subjects' eyes, challenging viewers to connect on a perhaps more equal and more profound level with the avian species portrayed. By highlighting the eyes of birds, artists draw attention to the human connectedness associated with eye contact, creating sophisticated depictions of individuals. Italian artist Giorgia Oldano says it well, "the eyes are the window to the soul."



Giorgia Oldano, *Bufaga on Giraffe*, 2013 (red-billed oxpecker)



France Tremblay, *The Great Singer*, 2011 (tropical mockingbird)

Artist France Tremblay wrote about encountering her subject in the Caribbean and aiming to accurately portray the bird's active and endearing manner, saying: "I wanted to represent this state of mischievous agitation, the bird's curiosity and exuberance. As it winked its orange eye at me before investigating something more interesting, I understood that the eye would become an essential element in my composition, an irregularity to enhance the design."

In her quest to portray the extreme intelligence of the Coridae bird family, which consists of ravens, crows, and jays – the Einsteins of the bird world, Karen Bondarchuk made the ever-watchful eye of the common raven central to her work. In writing about *Portent*, Bondarchuk explained the powerful observational skills of the raven: "I used layering to suggest complexity: the universe that exists behind the viewer but is within the raven's

sight (visible in the corneal reflection) The complexity ultimately connotes animal – and particularly corvid – intelligence, which current scientific research is proving to be far more intricate than previously assumed or imagined.”



Karen Bondarchuk, *Portent*, 2012 (common raven)

The clever ravens featured in *Portent* may possess superior problem-solving skills but the vocalizations and curiosity of parrots continuously charm pet owners and artists. An abundance of colorful feathers and endearing expressions have a strong presence in the 2013 *Birds in Art* galleries; you can almost “hear” the squawking. Invite students to compare and contrast the parrots portrayed in the artworks from the exhibition illustrated here:



John C. Brasaemle, *Blues Conservancy*, 2012 (blue-throated macaw)



Anne Senechal Faust, *A Difference of Opinion* (1/13), 2013, (orange-cheeked parrot)



Lynn Waltke, *Tribute*, 2013 (white-eyed conure)

Master Artist Terry Miller



Terry Miller, *Swan White*, 2013 (mute swan)

Terry Miller, the Woodson’s 2013 Master Artist, works exclusively in various grades of graphite portraying textural contrasts of wood, stone, water, fur, feathers, and other natural elements, to bring depth, dimension, and emotion to his artworks. “I portray what I see in the world around me in shades of black, white, and gray,” said Miller, who will receive the Master Wildlife Artist Medal during *Birds in Art* opening festivities, Saturday, 7.

Miller, who lives in Takoma Park, Maryland, was born in Iowa, spent his school years in northern New Jersey, and graduated from The Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts with a degree in design in the late 1960s. After working for several years as an architectural draftsman in Manhattan, he spent the next decade as a special education teacher near Atlanta, honing his graphite drawing skills in his spare time before pursuing art full time in 1990.

Four decades of extensive travels throughout the mountains and coastal areas of western North America and in eastern and southern Africa have yielded reference material, sketch books, and inspiration for his work. Scenes from central Maryland, Miller’s home since 2001, also surface in his depiction of barns, landscapes, and domesticated animals.



Terry Miller, *Steam Fitters*, 2013 (house sparrow)

Miller's mastery of the pencil inspires awe. The artist's technical abilities create lifelike textures and truthful animal portraits that are simultaneously intimate and highly graphic. Striking compositions and contexts for his subjects – like the house sparrows featured in *Steam Fitters* – create lush gray-scale worlds for viewers to slip into, which often consist of understated moments made grand at the hand of the artist.

Permanent Collections Exhibitions

Every gallery within the Woodson Art Museum has been re-installed for the fall. While *Birds in Art* fills the temporary exhibition galleries, five additional permanent exhibitions feature collection highlights. The Museum's collection focuses on art of the natural world, a collecting concentration with broad appeal, diverse subjects, and a rich history of styles and mediums.



Owen J. Gromme, *Blue Jays Harassing Screech Owl* and *Blue Jay Study*

A dozen large paintings by Owen Gromme are juxtaposed with more than thirty pencil drawings and watercolor studies to provide a peek into the artist's creative process. Gromme, a Wisconsin legend, is known as the "father of *Birds in Art*" because he served as a curator of the Museum's 1976 inaugural exhibition. A re-creation of Gromme's studio is part of this presentation; it enhances the experiences of viewing the artist's paintings and preparatory works.

Gromme's love of the outdoors is complemented by *Dawn to Dusk: The Sporting Spirit in America* in the adjacent gallery space. More than two-dozen paintings by Ogden Pleissner, Lynn Bogue Hunt, Frank Benson, A.L. Ripley, and others demonstrate the wide-ranging influence of the many facets of hunting and the sporting life.

Selections from one of the Museum's founding collections is on view in the decorative arts gallery. *Dorothy Doughty's Royal Worcester Porcelains* features birds seen in Wisconsin. The delicately modeled and painted porcelains were designed by avid birder and artist Dorothy Doughty and manufactured in England by Royal Worcester Porcelain factory.

Natural Wonders: Celebrating Twenty Years brings together a selection of small-scale artworks drawn from a larger collection of more than 150 paintings, graphics, and sculptures that were donated to the Museum in 1993 in honor of Museum founder John and Alice Woodson Forester.

Follow the Light: Selections from the Collection explores how artists skillfully harness the power of light in their work. *Follow the Light* includes historic works from the Museum's collection by artists such as John James Audubon, Martin Johnson Heade, Jasper Cropsey, and Andrew Wyeth.

Museum Gardens Grow with Sculpture Additions

New sculptures were added to the Museum's gardens and grounds this summer. Six life-size bronze sculptures by California artist Gwynn Murrill present striking feline and canine poses. From seemingly passive cougars poised to pounce and a saluki playfully portrayed on its back to a languid cheetah peering over its shoulder, inviting yet menacing, these sculptures will charm and delight.

Murrill's large-scale outdoor sculptures are complemented by an indoor exhibition of forty-nine maquettes – small-scale models – also created by Murrill either in preparation for larger bronze pieces or miniature studies. The maquette menagerie is arranged in precise groupings, which convey a sense of narrative and playful communication amongst the animal subjects holding court opposite the wall of windows in the Museum's recent addition.

The sculptures by Gwynn Murrill are on loan and will remain at the Museum until spring 2014. Two other sculptures recently installed are permanent collection acquisitions.



Dan Ostermiller, *Boys Will Be Boys*, 2008

Dan Ostermiller's *Boys Will Be Boys* and Geoffrey Dashwood's *Prince Marvin* depict a boisterous pair of wrestling bears and an oversized frog, respectively. Prince Marvin, located near *The Heavyweight* affectionately known as the "Happy Hippo" is now the second sculpture – in addition to the hippo – that can be appreciated through touch.

Before Your Visit

Above and below the waterline

Birds interacting with water present fascinating compositional possibilities and behaviors for artists to capture; *Birds in Art* is filled with aquatic encounters. Share these examples of avian subjects with your students and discuss each bird's relationship to water – what are the birds up to and how can your students tell?



David Rankin, *Warp Speed*, 2013 (pied-kingfisher)



Johannes Nevala, *Three*, 2013 (snipe)



Camille Engel, *Floating between Two Worlds*, 2013 (pigeon guillemot)



Sherrie York, *Coot du Jour (1/10)*, 2013 (American coot)

How are these birds interacting with the water in their environments?

These birds are searching for a meal within the water – some are just breaking the surface of the water; others scan from above while on the hunt. Which bird do you think will be most successful in its quest for a catch?

The drama continues below the water's surface as artists convey the diverse ecological connections between birds and fish. In David Gallup's *Vortex in Silver and Green*, birds called shearwaters dive into the swirling chaos of a bait ball, the aquatic equivalent of a chaotic all-you-can-eat buffet. What's on the menu? A large school of Pacific anchovies. Richard Smith's *Duck Soup* may appear ominous with the huge pike visible just below the mallard duckling, but no need to worry, these species peacefully coexist.



David Gallup, *Vortex in Silver and Green*, 2011 (pink-footed shearwater)



Richard J. Smith, *Duck Soup*, 2013 (mallard)

A bird for all places and spaces . . .

Birds in Art artists offer accurate portrayals of bird species in varied habitats, with many artists working out in the field and studying live birds. Webbed feet for efficient paddling, long legs for above-water fishing, camouflaged plumage for an easy escape, or exaggerated feather crowns to attract a mate are just a few examples of the ways in which birds are so keenly adapted to their diverse biological requirements. Follow the suggested exercise below and invite students to create their own well-adapted bird using artworks as inspiration.



Peter Elfman, *Balance*, 2012 (sora)

Consider how a bird's anatomy and plumage may relate to its mode of transportation, feeding, and breeding.

Discuss amongst classmates the types of environments where birds live, and brainstorm the type of ecosystem that will be home to your students' created birds.

Design a well-adapted bird based on its ecological requirements – either inspired by an artwork or environment students are interested in.



Linda Besse, *Easter Parade*, 2013 (grey crowned crane)



Julia Hargreaves, *A Warm Afternoon in May*, 2013 (calliope hummingbird)

@ The Woodson

During your visit to the Woodson Art Museum, a docent will lead your group through the galleries offering insights and encouraging thoughtful dialogue inspired by the artworks. All docent-led Art Museum Experiences involve opportunities for hands-on art-making for students eager to replicate a favorite artwork on view or an idea discussed. Students will work in the Museum's classroom to create their own homage to birds and inspiration using collage as inspired by two *trompe l'oeil* (fool the eye) artworks featured in the exhibition.

Like a decorated locker at school or corkboard over a student's desk, these artworks capture the enthusiasm *Birds in Art* artists have for their subjects, which, in the case of Jan McAllaster Stommes, can also inspire poetry. The small piece of lined paper in her painting features an original poem by the artist about the birds she's painted on her *trompe l'oeil* corkboard:

*Bright colored
birds
Are most apt to
impress
Yet a white bird
Is radiant like
a bride in her
dress*

Students wishing to write a poem or visual description of an artwork during their visit instead of or in addition to creating a collage will be encouraged to do so by Museum docents.



Cathy Strapp, *A Tribute to Bird Lovers*, 2013



Jan McAllaster Stommes, *Trompe l'Oeil Series: The Art of Inspiration*, 2013

Activity Guides

Each student receives an Activity Guide to extend learning in the classroom and at home. When students leave the Museum with an Activity Guide in hand, they are able to share their Museum visit with friends and family outside the gallery walls, along with their newfound expertise and enthusiasm.

Woodson Art Museum Information

Please encourage your students to visit the Museum with their families and share what they've learned. Admission is ALWAYS FREE! The Museum is open 9 am – 4 pm, Tuesday – Friday, and Noon – 5 pm on Saturday and Sunday. Every Thursday during *Birds in Art* the Museum stays open until 7:30 pm. On the first Thursday of every month – Night Out @ the Woodson – the Museum offers hands-on art for all ages from 5:30 – 7 pm. Call the Museum or visit the website for more information:

Woodson Art Museum

700 N. 12th St.

Wausau, WI 54403

www.lywam.org

715.845.7010

Casting Call

Paul Rhymer Works in Bronze

Monday – Sunday, October 21 – 27

Birds in Art artist Paul Rhymer successfully melds his work as a taxidermist and bronze sculptor. A second-generation Smithsonian taxidermist, Paul worked for twenty-five years as a model-maker and taxidermist at the National Museum of Natural History. He recently served as a judge on the AMC TV series “Immortalized,” a competitive taxidermy reality show. Rhymer also is an avid birder and bird hunter, pursuits that inform his mounts and his sculpture. During his residency, Rhymer shares insights from his dual careers, including lost-wax bronze casting demonstrations, taxidermy tips, and programs for a range of ages.



October 22 Tuesday 4:30 – 6 pm

Little Masters & Young Artists

Clay Play

Youngsters, 5-12 years, learn about bronze casting, focusing on the all-important preliminary work in clay with Paul. ☎

October 24 & 25 Thursday & Friday 9 – 4 pm

October 26 Saturday 1 – 5 pm

Bronze Boot Camp

Adults and teens are invited for a three-day crash course in bronze casting. Participants create their own original bronze sculpture under Paul’s guidance (available for pick up following the conclusion of the class) – an incredible, hands-on learning opportunity. Supplies included; dress for working outdoors and for bronze pouring; and bring a bag lunch. Fee: \$135 for members; \$175 for non-members. ☎

October 24 Thursday 5:30 – 6:30 pm

Rhymer Time

Join Paul for a two-part presentation – half talk, half demo. Learn about his years as a Smithsonian taxidermist and gain an understanding of the bronze-casting process.

October 26 Saturday 10:30 am – Noon

Art Beyond Sight

A multisensory gallery tour and hands-on art experience for individuals with low vision and blindness, led by Paul and Museum educators. ☎

October 27 Sunday 10 am – Noon

Taxidermy Tips

Watch Paul in action – from start to finish – as he creates a bird mount. A former Smithsonian taxidermist and nationally recognized competition judge, Paul offers pointers and demonstrates his skills.

October 27 Sunday 1 – 2:30 pm

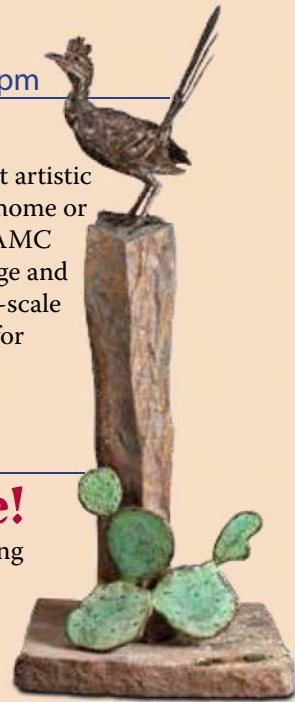
Taxidermy Contest

Calling all area taxidermists: bring your most artistic representation of bird taxidermy from your home or showroom for the Museum’s version of the AMC TV series “Immortalized.” Paul serves as judge and awards the winner an original Rhymer small-scale sculpture and a Museum membership. Call for details and to register. ☎

October 27 Sunday 3 – 5 pm

Bronze Casting: Live!

Paul demonstrates the lost-wax bronze casting process under the big top in the Museum’s parking lot.



“Casting Call” funding comes from a Community Arts Grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin, with funds from the Wisconsin Arts Board, Community Foundation, and the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation.

