

Woodson Art Museum

in your classroom



Birds in Art
Fall 2016

Giorgia Oldano, *Above Us Only Sky*, 2016, graphite on paper

The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum's 41st presentation of its flagship *Birds in Art* exhibition features sculpture, paintings, drawings, and graphics by 112 artists from around the world. The *Birds in Art* exhibition, on view September 10 through November 27, also features the work of 2016 Master Wildlife Artist Karen Bondarchuk, including large, imposing portraits of inquisitive ravens alongside quiet, ethereal depictions of owls adorned by gold and silver leaf.



Karen Bondarchuk, *Boreal Oratorio* (left), 2016, charcoal on Rives BFK paper; *Continuum* (right), 2014, charcoal, ink, and gold leaf on Rives BFK paper

[Karen Bondarchuk's artwork](#) is realized in a variety of mediums – charcoal, ink, paint, film, fabric, even repurposed tire rubber – and is informed by art history, literature, biology, behavioral psychology, and personal experience. She is inspired by the intelligence of corvids, the identities of captive birds living within the confines of human life and order, and the forces – both natural and manmade – threatening avian populations.

In addition to the Master Artist gallery, the Museum's lower-level gallery adjacent to Art Park features the installation of [Ergo Sum: A Crow a Day](#), 365 original, small-scale works, the result of a yearlong undertaking by Karen to depict a crow of some kind each day on a handmade 7 ¾" x 5 ¾" gessoed panel. The artist developed the project in honor of her mother, who lives with dementia and is no longer able to communicate, care for herself independently, or maintain a grasp of time. Karen explains "The series is simultaneously a marker of my mother's lost time and a constant and acute reminder of my own days, my life, and an attempt to signal visually the preciousness and individuality of each day."

To see additional examples of Karen's works and to learn more about the artist's process and materials, download the [Woodson's free audio tour app](#) to view video interviews with Karen and twelve other exhibition artists.

Birds in Art 2016

Highlights Connections Themes

Making the Case for Space

Many agree that the main subject is the focal point of an artwork, but how often do we consider how artists achieve that visual spotlight? Color, location, and scale are also part of the equation. In addition, to achieve balance and unity in an artwork, a masterful use of negative space typically is required, too. Negative space can provide quiet areas on a canvas, paper, or sculpture and allow the viewers' eyes to rest and then be drawn back into areas of activity or "noise" found in the positive spaces.

Invite students to consider how each of these artworks would change if its composition was altered and the relationship between negative and positive spaces changed.



John Banovich, *The Jesus Bird*, 2014, oil on Belgian linen



Alan Woollett, *Pelican Study #3*, 2015, colored pencil on Fabriano Artistico paper



T. Allen Lawson, *New Year's Resolutions*, 2014, oil on Belgian linen



Emily Lozeron, *Bird on a Wire*, 2016, acrylic on Baltic birch panel

From the artist: “At first, I wanted to make a larger composition in which the owl is looking closely at a big moth. As I worked, the symbolism of the limited areas humans leave to nature became apparent; I decided on a small composition.” – Fran A.H. Alvarado

How does Alvarado’s composition reflect the symbolism of the relationship between the subject and humans?



Fran A. H. Alvarado, *Athene noctua*, 2014, bronze and iron

From the artist: “To simplify this composition, I removed the clutter surrounding the fence. I wanted it to be minimalistic, with just the simple sparrow and one old, crooked wire leading to the bird.” – Emily Lozeron

Emily Lozeron, *Bird on a Wire*, 2016, acrylic on Baltic birch panel

The Same but Different

The subjects in the following artworks are the same, but that's where the similarities may end. Each artist's interpretation of these bird species reveals changes in behavior, the artist's perception of the bird's personality, and experiences with the subject. Whether depicted in two or three dimensions, each work portrays familiar birds in ways distinct to each artist. To better understand artistic intent, consider how artists communicate choices such as a subject's context (environment or setting), gesture (posture or connectedness to the viewer), scale, and location (is the bird obviously positioned or discretely tucked into a composition?).

- Step one: ask students to determine, which interpretation of a subject best aligns with the adjectives listed with each set of images below.
- Step two: ask students to identify, which visual elements led to their selected descriptors of the subject.

Screech owls



Burt Brent, *Screech Owl* (ed. 30), 2016, bronze



James Coe, *Autumn Roost*, 2016, oil on Belgian linen

Describe the screech owls

Elusive	Watchful	Bold	Diminutive
Inquisitive	Shy	Sleek	Soft

Black-capped Chickadees



Julia Hargreaves, *June Peonies*, 2016, acrylic on hardboard

Describe the chickadees

Social	Active	Confident	Buoyant	Plump
Solitary	Calm	Nervous	Steady	Athletic



Kimberly Beck, *Chickadee Two Three*, 2016, oil on Belgian linen

Canada Goose



Ray C. Brown, Jr., *Fine and Dandy*, 2015, charcoal on Stonehenge paper



Tim Cherry, *Mother Goose* (ed. 18), 2014, bronze

Describe the geese

Masculine

Feminine

Proud

Protective

Alert

Peaceful

Elegant

Bold

Great Blue Herons



Ryan D. Jacque, *Watchtower*, 2016, pencil on Fabriano paper



Guy Coheleach, *The Sneak*, 2016, oil on Belgian linen



Mary Cornish, *Nest*, 2016, oil on canvas

Describe the herons

Stealthy

Relaxed

Jutting

Tense

Camouflaged

Curious

Crouched

Lofty

Bright

Content

Shape Shifting

Artists can achieve a unified artwork through the repetition of complementary shapes and lines, which yield intriguing patterns and suggestions of movement and rhythm. Whether subtle or obvious, identifying the use of repeated forms can be a rewarding exercise in visual perception and plays to our brains' strength in seeking structure and order.

After introducing the topic of repeated lines and shapes in artworks, invite students to search for evidence of this design principle in these *Birds in Art* examples.

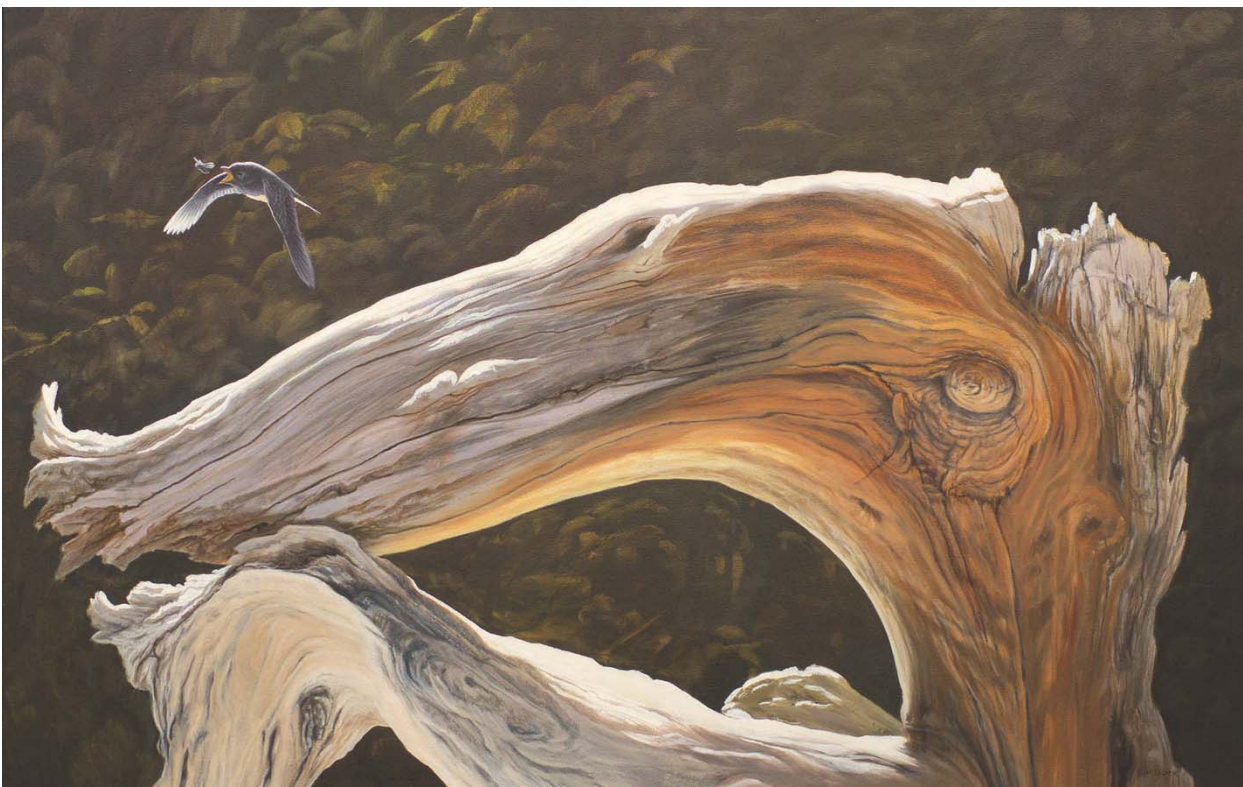


Mark A. Collins, *Tranquil Convergence*, 2016, watercolor on Arches cold press paper

From the artist: “I was struck by the beautiful colors and patterns as ducks glided across calm water. The elliptical rings that formed as one bird’s path intersected with another intrigued me. I envisioned an overlapping arrangement of ellipses as a basis for a composition echoing similar oval forms of the duck’s head and body to convey a sense of movement.” – Mark A. Collins



Sandy Graves, *Tango* (ed. 35), 2015, bronze



Martin Lasack, *Alongside Jamison Creek*, 2016, oil on canvas



Peter Nilsson, *Great Grey Owl*, 2016, watercolor on Arches paper



Andrea Rich, *Wood Ducks (1/30)*, 2015, woodcut on Hosho paper

Before or after Your Visit

The following exercises can be used in classroom environments as warm-ups or follow-up activities to enhance a visit to the Woodson Art Museum. Adapt these ideas or use them as a springboard for connecting artworks on view to curriculum and the life experiences of your students.

Portraits with Personality

The long and diverse art history of the portrait is unified by rich traditions of symbolism and allusion. Artists tap into this tradition and apply visual elements to contemporary work, sometimes making a direct reference to a particular portrait and other times utilizing a resource more subversively. Karen Bondarchuk, who teaches art at the Frostic School of Art at Western Michigan University made her allusion to Hans Holbein's portrait of Sir Thomas More a clear one by employing the background elements of a hanging rope to frame her subject and lush, draped fabric, the texture of which is echoed in More's velvet sleeves and the luminescent, flowing feathers of the raven.



Hans Holbein (1497/98-1543), *Sir Thomas More*, 1527, copyright The Frick Collection, New York



Karen Bondarchuk, *Utopia*, 2016, charcoal on Rives BFK paper

Challenge students to design a portrait that incorporates motifs from another work of art or visual reference. Ask students to select a subject (themselves, a friend, someone they know, a public figure, etc.) and pair that subject with a visual resource (artwork they're familiar with, a shot from a magazine, an artwork from *Birds in Art*, etc.) to develop an original portrait that reflects their source of inspiration.

Engaging the Senses and Unlocking Creativity

Most visual artists rely on all of their senses to create their work, tapping into their own sensory memories to inform their artwork, while stimulating the senses of viewers who can connect with the work through their own

multisensory experiences. *Birds in Art* artists often describe their aim to capture their experiences in the field in their artwork and to visually communicate those experiences to viewers in ways that stir the senses.



Hélène Arfi, *Turbulence* (ed. 8), 2016, bronze

Sculptor Hélène Arfi writes, “With *Turbulence*, my goal was to suggest movement and sound: two mallards landing fast in the marsh, in a great crash, with wings flapping and noisy quacks.” The almost unsettling positions of the two ducks, with their open bills and sharply angled wings, helps communicate the noisy crash landing about to occur upon the surface of still water.

Ekphrastic writing is a form of creative writing that responds to a work of art. Dating back to ancient Greece and Rome, authors and poets still utilize this exercise as a way to unite the visual and verbal and strengthen their own writing by seeking to capture the creative experiences of another artist.

Japanese haiku poetry traditionally features imagery found in nature and depicts these subjects through language that keys into the reader’s senses. Boiling down subjects to only three lines of prose, haiku poetry employs intriguing language in concise form; the first line contains five syllables, the second line contains seven syllables, and the third line returns to five total syllables.

Ask students to combine the concept of ekphrastic writing within a haiku structure in response to a *Birds in Art* artwork.

Painter Shawn Gould writes about *Night Herons* “[The composition’s] simplicity, like a haiku poem, contains no extraneous information.”

We may respond in haiku with:

Twin ghosts in the mist
Alert as they cut through night
Two herons in flight



Shawn Gould, *Night Herons*, 2014, acrylic on hardboard

@ the Woodson

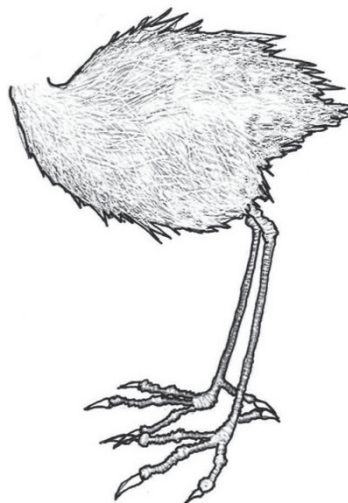
During their docent-led Experience at the Art Museum, students will explore *Birds in Art*, discuss artworks in the galleries, and have an opportunity to create an original artwork inspired by works on view. Students in Pre-K through 2nd grade will “Finish the Bird” using colored pencils and clipboards in the galleries and re-imagine subjects featured in artworks on view (see examples below).

Original Artwork



Thomas Hill, *Storklike Bird*, 2016, enamel paint on wood, steel, and copper

“Finish the Bird”



Re-Imagined Artwork



Original Artwork

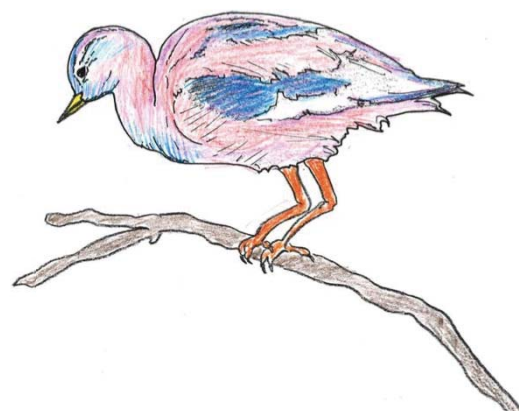


Timothy David Mayhew, *Left Side Study of an American Avocet*, 2016, natural black, yellow, and white chalk on handmade warm gray wove paper

“Finish the Bird”



Re-Imagined Artwork



Older students in grades 3rd through 12th will consider the element of composition in *Birds in Art* artworks and develop a new context for artists’ avian subjects. Students will “Rework the Scene” by sketching background imagery around the subject, positioned in the same location as found in the original artwork, using drawing pencils and boards in the galleries (see examples on next page).

Original Artwork



Barry Van Dusen, *Cardinal in Spruce*, 2015, watercolor on Arches cold press paper

“Rework the Scene”



Re-Imagined Artwork



Original Artwork



Michael Dumas, *High Summer*, 2015, oil on Russian birch panel

“Rework the Scene”



Re-Imagined Artwork

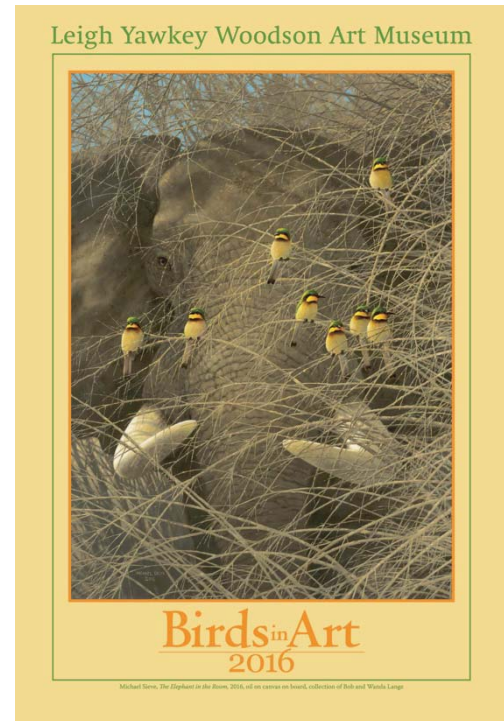
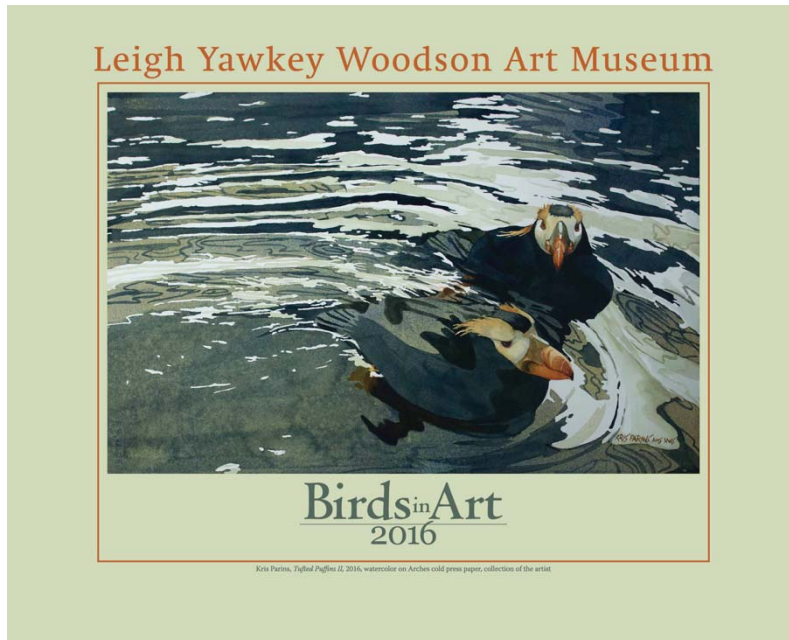


Activity Guides

Each participant on a docent-led Experience receives an [Activity Guide](#) to extend learning and enrichment beyond the Woodson Art Museum and as a way to share the visit with friends and family.

Posters for the Classroom

Classroom educators accompanying students on *Birds in Art* field trips are welcome to select a 2016 poster.



Woodson Art Museum Information

Please encourage your students to visit the Museum again.

Hours:

Tuesday – Friday	9 am – 4 pm
Thursdays during Birds in Art	9 am – 7:30 pm
Saturday – Sunday	Noon – 5 pm
Closed Monday and holidays, including Thanksgiving	

Contact:

Call the Woodson Art Museum or visit the website for more information:

700 N. 12th St.
Wausau, WI 54403
lywam.org
715.845.7010

