

# BIRDS IN ART 2023



Sean Russel, *Coot Scootin' Boogie*, 2023, gel-transfer, gold leaf, acrylic, plywood, and glitter on wood panel



Rick Pas, *The Comic Wood Duck*, 2022, acrylic on PVC panel



Kelly Radding, *Triad of Primaries*, 2023, dry brush watercolor on Roycroft calfskin vellum



Mark Dedrie, *Down Under*, 2022, wood and bronze

Leigh Yawkey  
**Woodson**  
Art Museum

## About the Exhibition

Three simple words - birds in art - took on a life of their own when they became a Woodson Art Museum exhibition title. Approaching the exhibition's milestone 50th anniversary, *Birds in Art* is recognized globally as the exhibition setting the standard for avian art.

Since 1976, the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum has organized *Birds in Art* annually, seeking to present the best contemporary artistic interpretations of birds and related subject matter. Two- and three-dimensional artworks in all media other than crafts and photography are eligible. Approximately 100 works are selected by a three-person jury; see [\*Birds in Art Prospectus\*](#) for details. Artwork for the annual *Birds in Art* exhibition is selected in May and opens to the public on the first Saturday following Labor Day. See this list of 2023 *Birds in Art* artists' names whose work is included in the 2023 exhibition.

### *Birds in Art* 2023 Exhibition Fast Facts

- **Total entries:** Over 1,000 entries submitted by over 650 artists
- **Master Artists featured:** 22 (Plus 2023 Master Paul Rhymer)
- **Total juried artists featured:** 89 artists
- **Total number of artists featured:** 112 artists

### Jurors:

- Julie Pierotti, Martha R. Robinson Curator, Dixon Gallery and Garden, Memphis, Tennessee
- Laura Jacobs, author of *The Bird Catcher*, editor, *AIR MAIL's* "Art Intelligence Report"

### 10 Wisconsin Artists

- Craig Blietz, Sister Bay, second year
- Shelley Breitzmann, Foxboro, third year
- Gary Eigenberger, Green Bay eighteenth year
- Robert Martin, Appleton, second year
- SV Medaris, Mount Horeb, thirteenth year
- John Miller, Madison, sixth year
- Katie Musolff, Stoddard, sixth year
- Don Rambadt, Milwaukee, twenty-third year
- Jan Stommes, Owen, fourteenth year
- Bruce Urben, Pulaski, first year

### 27 International Artists Representing 11 Countries (*determined by artist's current residence*)

- Australia (Tony Pridham, Hank Tyler, William Ritchie)
- Belgium (Mark Dedrie)
- Canada (Chris Bacon, Robert Bateman, Patricia Pepin)
- Great Britain (Robert Cook, Andrew Haslen, Chris Lodge, Jeremy Paul, Derek Robertson, Johnathan Sainsbury, Darrell Warner, Alan Woollett)
- Germany (Ute Bartels, Eugen Kisselmann, Harro Maass)
- India (Manisha Padhye)
- Italy (Frederico Gemma)
- Japan (Jim Hay, Nobuko Kumasaka)
- Netherlands (Elwin van der Kolk, Marcel Witte)
- Spain (Fran A.H. Alvarado)
- Sweden (Peter Nilsson, Lennart Sand, Gunnar Tryggmo, Lars Jonsson)

## **17 First Time Artists**

- Mary Apikos, Illinois (graphite)
- Jennifer Bain, New Mexico (acrylic)
- Jan R Carson, Colorado (textile)
- Taimur Cleary, Michigan (mixed media)
- Nikita Coulombe, Texas (oil)
- J.C. and Sheila Fontanive, New York (paper)
- Nancy Hamlin-Vogler, Florida (charcoal)
- Chris Lodge, England (oil)
- Hilary Pfeifer, Oregon (wood)
- William Ritchie, Australia (oil)
- Wayne Salge, Colorado (bronze)
- Sarah Siltala, New Mexico (oil)
- Doug Stapleton, Illinois (collage)
- Michael C. Thorpe, New York (textile)
- Bruce G. Urben, Wisconsin (wood)
- Monique Wales, California (linocut)
- Darrell Warner, England (watercolor)

## **21 Past Master Artists and 2023 Master Paul Rhymer**

- Tony Angell, 2001
- Chris Bacon, 2004
- Larry Barth, 1991
- Robert Bateman, 1982
- Karen Bondarchuk, 2016
- Carl Brenders, 2002
- James Coe, 2011
- Guy Coheleach, 1983
- Cindy House, 2018
- Nancy Howe, 2005
- Walter T. Matia, 2007
- Timothy David Mayhew, 2020
- Terry Miller, 2013
- James L. Morgan, 2008
- Don Rambadt, 2017
- Paul Rhymer, 2023
- Andrea Rich, 2006
- John T. Sharp, 1996
- Kent Ullberg, 1987
- Barry W. Van Dusen, 2014
- Alan Woollett, 2019

## ***Birds in Art 2023 Touring Exhibition Venue Schedule***

### **Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum**

Wausau, Wisconsin

[www.lywam.org](http://www.lywam.org)

715.845.7010

September 9 - November 26, 2023

### **Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art**

Shawnee, Oklahoma

[www.mgmoa.org](http://www.mgmoa.org)

405.878.5300

June 14 - August 11, 2024

### **Forest Preserve District of Will County, Plum Creek Nature Center**

Joliet, Illinois

[www.reconnectwithnature.org](http://www.reconnectwithnature.org)

708.946.2216

January 2 - February 25, 2024

### **Wichita Falls Museum of Art**

Midwestern State University

Wichita Falls, Texas

[www.wfma.msutexas.edu](http://www.wfma.msutexas.edu)

940.397.8900

September 7 - December 7, 2024

### **Newington-Cropsey Foundation**

Hastings-on-Hudson, New York

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

914.478.7990

March 22 - May 19, 2024



## 2023 Master Wildlife Artist Paul Rhymer



Maryland-based artist Paul Rhymer's dynamic sculptures take center stage in *Birds in Art* as Rhymer was named 2023's Master Wildlife Artist. Thirteen works comprise Rhymer's Master Artist exhibition — not including those already residing on the Museum's grounds — showcasing Paul's talents for capturing the personalities of his wildlife subjects with anatomic accuracy, emotion, and humor.

In announcing the 2023 Master Wildlife Artist, director Matt Foss said, “Besides being an engaging and generous person, Paul's artwork — celebrated in the 2023 exhibition — is sophisticated, anatomically correct, and accessible due to his years of field study as well as his formal background in taxidermy and model making. He is a fitting selection as one of only forty artists to receive this distinction from the Museum.”

*“Participating in **Birds in Art** and seeing and meeting many of my artistic heroes, being in those rooms with that incredible art, is inspiring. With so much talent in that exhibition, being named Master Artist was, and is, inconceivable to me. It is the biggest honor of my career.”*



Paul Rhymer, *The Candidate*, 2017, bronze

Art is in Rhymer's blood. Born in Maryland to a family of artists, it seems as though Paul was destined to become the renowned sculptor we know him as today. As a child, Paul's father worked as a taxidermist for the Smithsonian, foreshadowing Paul's eventual position with the same institution. His mother and grandmother were both painters. Throughout his young life, Paul loved to explore the outdoors through hunting, fishing, birding, and finding beauty and joy in the natural world around him. These experiences helped him connect to the feelings and experiences of the animals inhabiting the world around him, and played a pivotal role in the art he would later create in his adult life. After receiving an associate degree in 1984 focused on painting and drawing, he began an entry-level position at the Smithsonian Museum, and the rest is history.

In the 1990s, Paul moved from the illustrator position and began his career as a taxidermist and model-maker for the Smithsonian.

During his Master Wildlife Artist presentation, Paul focused on the transition from the rigidity of taxidermy to the expressive and explorative form of sculpting. Paul utilized pictures of animals he has mounted, including panthers, okapis, orangutans, and vampire bats to illustrate how detail oriented and anatomically correct the art of taxidermy must be. A portion of the presentation shared a scoring sheet for taxidermy competitions to illustrate that while the knowledge and skill taxidermists have is in and of itself an incredible art form, artistry and creativity is only worth a single point when showing the work they have created. There is no room for interpretation when you are recreating a creature as it once was, especially when recreating beloved creatures like an orangutan Paul mounted for an Ohio zoo after its passing. While it may be true that artistry as a qualification does not exist at the forefront in the taxidermy world, Paul's work would not be what is today without the wealth of knowledge on animal anatomy, sculpting materials, and reverence for the natural world that he gained through the decades he spent at the Smithsonian.

As a self-described "Impressionist sculptor" Paul has his own take on traditional sculpting methods like the lost wax process. This process starts with the subject being sculpted in clay, molded in silicone rubber, and then cast in wax. After the cast is made, the wax is dipped into a thick ceramic mixture. Once the wax is melted out, the artist is left with a ceramic mold. Finally, molten hot bronze is poured into the mold and cooled quickly. After it has hardened, the ceramic mold can be removed to reveal the final sculpture. Paul adds a special signature with his sculptures when using this technique. Rather than smoothing out the clay before it is molded, Paul leaves traces of his fingerprints scattered throughout. Literally leaving his mark on each sculpture he creates.

The joy in Paul's art comes from his connection not only to the animal subjects he is sculpting but also his connections to the people viewing the finished work. In his introduction to Paul Rhymer for the 2023 *Birds in Art* catalogue, longtime colleague and friend Paul Ruther states "[Paul] has insights in multiple worlds. As such, he does not tell us what to think, but asks us to carefully consider the science of understanding and beauty of appreciating the natural world." As you look through *Birds in Art* this year, examine the artwork with students, and dive into Paul Rhymer's sculptures, make sure to take the time to consider this. Slow down, as Paul does while he is sculpting, and carefully observe and appreciate.



Paul Rhymer, *Mama Bear*, 2020, bronze



Paul Rhymer, *Africa*, 2020, barn wood and bronze



## Before or After Your Visit

### Artist Voice Videos

Check out the collection of Artist Voices featuring 2023 *Birds in Art* Artists who share stories and insights behind their exhibition artwork via the [Woodson Art Museum YouTube channel](#).

### Visual Analysis and Art-Inspired Conversation

*Birds in Art* artworks are well-suited for exploring the building blocks of [visual analysis](#) — the [elements of art](#) and the [principles of design](#).

### Slow Looking

Take 15 minutes with your class to explore Doug Stapleton's *Ordinary Time* in this exercise. Avoid telling students the name of the artist, title of the piece, or the medium. Instead allow them to explore what questions they have. Next, encourage students to dive deeper with the [Elements of Portrayal](#).

How does facial expression and clothing impact what you think of the work? Why do you think the artist chose the colors or objects that are included? What story does this artwork tell?



Doug Stapleton, *Ordinary Time*, 2023, collage and ink on board



Charles Compos, *Swan Lake*, 2023, oil on canvas

### Puzzle

Students will need to carefully consider a small portion of an image before seeing how it fits into the whole. Photocopy Charles Compos's *Swan Lake* and cut it into pieces. Divide students into pairs or small groups, each with a piece of the puzzle. Ask students to study their piece so that they can describe what they're seeing to the other groups, then have students assemble the puzzle and discuss.

## Creative Writing

It can be difficult to convince someone to buy something! You need to think of interesting reasons and present those reasons persuasively. Think about the last time you saw something online that you knew you had to have. How did you convince yourself or someone else you should buy it?

Look at the artworks below and pick one that interests you most. Then follow the Look, Write, and Share steps to complete this activity. For a creative twist, give the students time to present to the group and see if they can convince you that you need this artwork for your classroom or home.

### Look

What makes this artwork interesting? What do you like best about it? How is it different from other artworks on the page? What information can you learn from the label?

### Write

Convince someone to buy this work. Describe the object so it seems like the most fantastic thing you've ever seen. It's okay to exaggerate a little for this activity!

### Share

Read your description out loud to your partner or group. Have you made your case? Can you convince your teacher?



Hilary Pfeifer, *What I Think About When I Think About Walking*, wood and mixed media  
Varied thrush, pine siskin, bohemian waxwing, nuthatch, purple finch, chickadee, and western tanager



Jim Hay, *VULTURES ON PARADE*, Nature's Cleanup Crew, Hybrid Angels Dance Team, Jailbird, Flying SchoolBUS #86, 2023, machine-sewn kimono and mixed cloth  
Vultures



Thomas Hill, *Victoriana*, 2023, wood, steel, paint, gold leaf, flocking powder, and brass  
Hummingbirds



## Creative Writing - Poetry in Art

Share the image of Spencer Tinkham's sculpture (below) "*Hope*" is the Thing with Feathers with students and then read Emily Dickinson's poem (below) - how does Tinkham's sculpture respond to

Dickinson's poem? Does the writing describe how the sculpture looks or the feeling it creates? Based on Dickinson's poem, why do you think Tinkham chose shades of grey and white for the sculpture?

Explore Spencer Tinkham's narration about his art making process through his Artist Voice videos from [2020](#) and [2022](#) on the Woodson Art Museum channel. Listen to a reading of Dickinson's poem via this link: ["Hope" is the Thing with Feathers](#).



Spencer Tinkham, *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*, 2022, oils on basswood, dogwood, electrical wire, and roof flashing

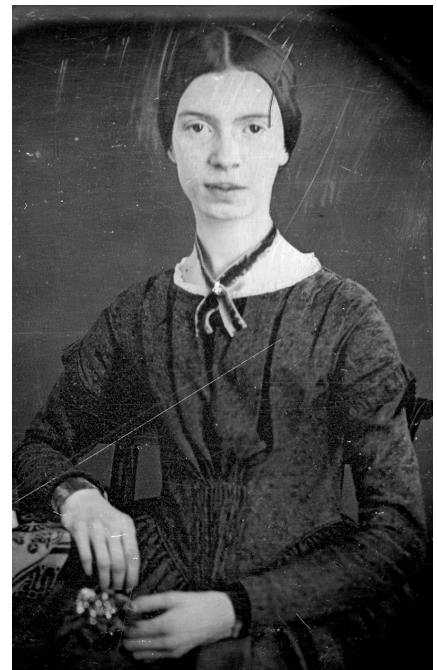
### "Hope" is the Thing with Feathers"

"Hope" is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

Source: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson Edited by R.W. Franklin* (Harvard University Press, 1999)



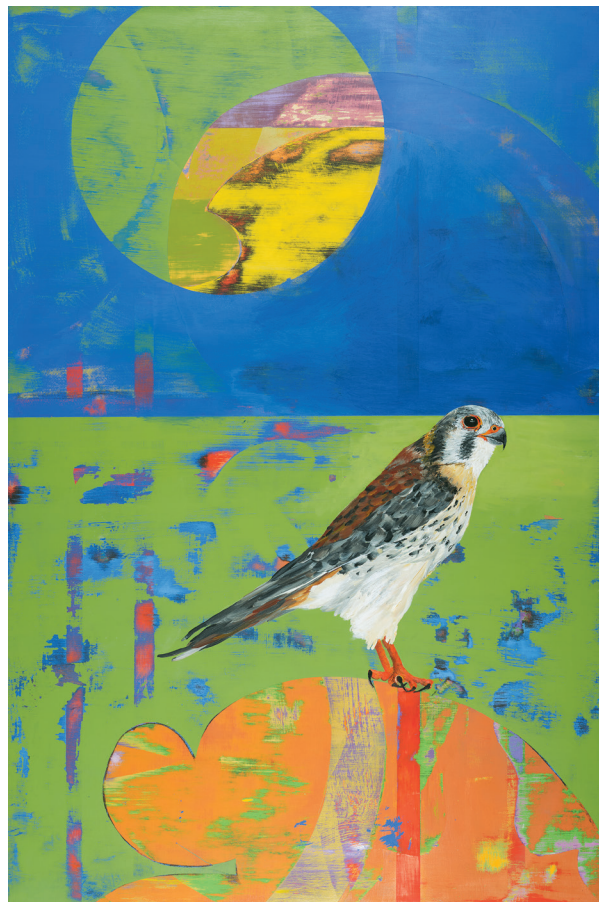


## During Your Visit

During a docent-led experience of *Birds in Art*, students will observe art on view, share their impressions during guided conversations, and explore hands-on objects and art materials designed to illustrate and illuminate exhibition artwork.

Following their time in the galleries, students in PreK — 2nd grade will participate in collage creation inspired by Jennifer Bain's acrylic artwork *Night*.

Students 3rd grade — 12th will explore creating abstract artwork through watercolor exploration inspired by Charles Compo's *Swan Lake*.



Jennifer Bain, *Night*, 2023, acrylic on wood panel

## Schedule Your Visit

Schedule a docent-led *Birds in Art* visit for your class by connecting with Museum visitor services via email, [scheduling@lywam.org](mailto:scheduling@lywam.org) or by phone, 715.845.7010.

## Woodson Art Museum Information

Please encourage your students to visit the Museum again.

## Contact

Call the Woodson Art Museum or visit the website for more information:  
715.845.7010; [www.lywam.org](http://www.lywam.org)

700 N. 12th St.  
Wausau, WI 54403

## Hours

Tuesday - Friday	9 am - 4 pm
Thursdays during <i>Birds in Art</i>	9 am - 7:30 pm
Saturday - Sunday	Noon - 5 pm

Closed on Monday and holidays, including Thanksgiving.