

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Beautiful Vagabonds
Birds in Contemporary Photography, Video and Sound
July 21 – August 26, 2011

Opening Reception Thursday, July 21, 6-8pm
Gallery hours Monday – Friday, 10am-6pm



"The very idea of a bird is a symbol and suggestion to the poet... The beautiful vagabonds, endowed with every grace, masters of all climes, and knowing no bounds -- how many human aspirations are realized in their free, holiday-lives - and how many suggestions to the poet in their flight and song!"

John Burroughs, 1887

"Birds, to me, are wonderment. A flash of color, a song."

Barbara Bosworth

The Yancey Richardson Gallery is pleased to present our summer group show – *Beautiful Vagabonds* – an exploration of birds as enduring objects of mystery and fascination. The exhibition is comprised of photography, video, and audio works and features Richard Barnes, Barbara Bosworth, Terry Evans, Jitka Hanzlová, David Hilliard, Jodie Vicenta Jacobson, Simen Johan, Kahn & Selesnick, Sanna Kannisto, Louise Lawler, Needa Madahar, Esko Männikkö, Paula McCartney, Alex Prager, Leslie Thornton, Sebastiao Salgado, Bertien van Manen, and Masao Yamamoto.

As with any object of fascination, a desire to capture the essence of birds persists in contemporary art making. Several artists in the exhibition work at the intersection of science and art, while others use birds to explore the relationship between nature and artifice, and still others create images suggesting the fragility, beauty and ultimate mortality of human life.

Barbara Bosworth makes portraits of researchers holding birds in a rare moment of stillness, their gentle calm exuding a quiet reverence. Terry Evans tightly frames a drawer of thirty-four Meadowlarks, labeled and lying quietly side by side, specimens gathered by 19th century amateur ornithologists seeking to understand a species through a few of its members.

Sanna Kannisto photographs exotic birds in a portable field studio, creating a space delicately balanced between the natural and the constructed environment. The artist includes her staging in the frame – draped black curtains and a metal stand securing the branch on which the radiantly colored bird is perched – lending a subtle artifice to her naturalistic eye. Similarly, Needa Madahar stages a naturalist's blind on the back balcony of her Boston apartment, her flash-lit photos freezing birds in a sort of live action diorama. By contrast, Simen Johan and Paula McCartney have placed brightly colored,

realistic-looking artificial birds in natural settings. In these works the birds become symbolic constructions presented as romantic gestures complementing an idyllic landscape.

Not all of the artists present birds in such a benign manner: Alex Prager and the collaborative duo Kahn & Selesnick pay homage to Hitchcock's noir classic, *The Birds*, by showing a human figure under attack by aggressive birds. In her derisive sound piece *Birdcalls* (1972/1981), Louise Lawler vocalized the names of male artists as sounds that mimic birds, transforming names synonymous with success into mating calls.

Leslie Thornton's video pairs two circular images as if seen through binoculars: straightforward documentary footage of the artist's parrot plays next to an abstracted mandala-like kaleidoscope of the same shot. The work, from a series entitled *Binocular*, offers two simultaneous perspectives of vastly different realities, as the simple movement of the parrot is transformed into a surreal cosmic stew.

As miraculous as individual birds appear, their social interaction also fascinates. Richard Barnes's photograph and Jodie Vicenta Jacobson's video capture the swirling swarm of starlings in flight, whereas Sebastiao Salgado documents a vast colony of penguins on the march.

For visuals, please contact Walker Waugh at wwaugh@yanceyrichardson.com.

