

# Ann Craven

## *Birds We Know*



### GRADE LEVEL

2-5

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

Become an expert on birds and Ann Craven's painting process. By observing her artistic diaries and spending time with her show *Birds We Know*, artists will create a set of bird portraits.

### GOALS

Students will understand:

- How close observation is a tool for learning and discovery
- How to express emotion using color
- Process of creating a set of artwork that are simply repeated, but can be viewed differently because of your own style

### INTRODUCTION

Craven is a diarist, each of her paintings is inscribed with the date and time of making, and she meticulously inventories and records each year's work. Recently she began exhibiting her extensive series of Untitled (Palettes), ranging from 1999 to present. Painting wet on wet in oils, she mixes her colors on light-duty pre-stretched canvases. "The Palettes are my indexed color inventory," she says. "They are a way for me to hold on to what I just painted—a moon or flower or bird. I sometimes tag the top of the palettes with a quick drawing of what I just painted. I always date and title the palettes the same as the paintings that they came from. After that the paint is physically useless. The abstraction in the palettes and stripes informs the figuration in my work, and vice versa, and further brackets how they work together, in the context of how my exhibitions are conceived and installed."

Ann Craven | *Birds We Know* is the artist's first exhibition in Maine. It will be accompanied by an illustrated catalog with an essay by Christopher B. Crosman, former founding curator, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and former director, Farnsworth Art Museum.

### LESSON

Experience the Center for Maine Contemporary Arts exhibit *Birds We Know*, by Ann Craven. Thinking about Ann Craven and how she changes her backgrounds or colors to add contrast, emotion, and depth— create 2-3 artworks that repeat a bird portrait. Observe how each repetition is different because of your own style, use of materials, and growing understanding of the subject and background.

### CRITICAL QUESTIONS

What are the different areas of the painting you notice? What colors stand out to you? What painting techniques did Craven use in her work? Compare and contrast *St. Louis Cardinal* and *St. Louis Cardinals*. Find another work of art that has a similar color palette, or a contrasting palette— discuss what emotions the artist is evoking when changing colors.

### CELEBRATE YOUR WORK

Curate your own bird exhibition at your school and share your artwork with us throughout the process.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Become an expert on birds and Ann Craven's painting process. By observing her creative processes and spending time with her show *Birds We Know*, artists will create a set of bird portraits.

## VOCABULARY

repetition, contrast, blend, overlap, background, foreground, depth, shape, line, movement

## MATERIALS

- Bird images/drawing
- 8X11 colored paper
- Transfer paper (precut)
- Tracing paper (precut)
- Oil pastels
- Chalks
- Masking tape
- Pencils / pens
- Black sharpies for details



## INSTRUCTIONS

### STEP 1

Have each student choose an image or line drawing of a bird.

### STEP 2

Trace the bird onto various colored background 2-3 choosing where the bird sits on the page.

### STEP 3

Fill in the area around the bird using the oil pastels and chalk. Begin to layer the colors and blend/smudge them to create the effect of motion or movement. Arrange the birds in order and mark the backside on the bottom 1-3. Make sure to title and sign your work.

## TEACHING TIPS:

- For older artists challenge them to stick to a certain color palette, and to blend the pastels to create different textures.
- Younger artists may need assistance with tracing, feel free to tape the edges of the tracing paper down to keep it from moving.