

Ann Craven

Birds We Know



GRADE LEVEL

Preschool - 1

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Looking closely at the style of painting in *Birds We Know* exhibit featuring Ann Craven, paint and draw a scene of birds in motion emphasizing gesture.

GOALS

Students will understand:

- How close observation is a tool for learning and discovery
- How to incorporate movement into art practice
- Gesture as a painting technique

ARTIST

Ann Craven | Cushing, ME

Craven is renowned for her lushly colored, mesmerizing portraits of the moon, birds, flowers, and other iconic images which she revisits in serial fashion.

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 is 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 found under our virtual tours. Looking closely at the style of painting applied by Ann Craven, paint and draw a scene of birds in motion emphasizing gesture.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

What are the different areas of the painting you notice? What colors stand out to you? What types of marks did the artist create and how? What areas are moving in this painting? What painting techniques did Craven use in her work?

CELEBRATE YOUR WORK

Share your process and art work with family, friends, and us via email, Facebook or Instagram @cmcanow!

VOCABULARY

Orientation: how the image is displayed, vertical (tall) or horizontal (long)

Gesture: quick drawing/painting to captures artist and subjects movements

Contrast: arrangement of opposite art elements to create visual interest

Blend: technique used to create soft transitions between colors and values

Overlap: placement of one on top of another

Shape: a flat enclosed area formed by line(s)

Line: a sometimes continuous mark that is made by a pen, pencil, marker, brush onto a surface

MATERIALS

- Image of a bird (optional)
- Large sheet of paper
- Paints
- Variety of brush sizes
- Oil pastels
- Pencils / pens

TEACHING TIP:

- This activity encourages large movement and motion, combining observation and imagination encourage artists to work outside.



INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 1

Step outside and listen, what do you hear? Take a few minutes and close your eyes, igniting your sense of sound and listen for the birds. What type of bird do you think makes this tweeting, flicking, or chirping? Is it just one or many? Set up a large piece of paper, choose an orientation that allows your to fit your bird(s) comfortably.

STEP 2

Grab a painting or drawing tool and stand above your artwork, using a single gesture create the shape of the head. Add another gesture to create the shape of the body, then wings, and additional features. Repeat these gestures to create the outline of your bird(s) overlapping lines and shapes.

STEP 3

Add a variety of marks, textures, and movements to bring life to the bird(s). All while standing above your paper. Referencing Ann Craven, think about how her hands moved to create different types of feathers. Mix, overlap, and build the colors to add dimension to the bird(s). Let dry if using paint.

STEP 4

Choose a different medium to use in the background. Observe the bird(s) and think about the where. Begin to draw/paint the background making the paper as if you were a birds walking across the page. Blend the marks together, creating a muted background and drawing the bird(s) to the foreground.



Ann Craven

Left: *Barred Owl (Howl)*, 2009

Oil on canvas

64" X 51"

Left Below: *Farah Fawcett Bird (after Picabia)*, 2006

Oil on canvas

60" X 48"

Right Below: *Portrait of a Bird #2 (after Picabia)*, 2006

Oil on canvas

60" X 48"

