

AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART

Author: David J. Wagner, Ph.D.

Hardcover with jacket

424 pages

280 color and 30 black-and-white illustrations

Released in 2008 by Marquand Books

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SYNOPSIS

Bookshelves abound with accounts of wildlife artists and their artistry, but no book is truly comparable to *American Wildlife Art*. In *American Wildlife Art*, scholar and curator David J. Wagner tells the story of this popular genre's history, shaped by four centuries of cultural events and aesthetic and ideological trends, from its beginnings in colonial times to the monumental works of the present day. In his insightful accounts of the artists, events, and trends at the heart of this uniquely American art form, Wagner explains how the aesthetic idioms and imagery of American wildlife art have evolved, how its ecological ideologies have changed with changing circumstances and ideas about animals and their habitats, and how artists and entrepreneurs developed and influenced the market for wildlife art.

Wagner's history begins with the works of John White and Mark Catesby, artists who documented the flora and fauna of the New World and presented Europeans with a view of both the economic potential and the natural wonders of the then sparsely settled continent. After the American Revolution, as the new nation grew, artists such as Alexander Wilson and especially John James Audubon caused the course of American wildlife art history to turn and advance, setting the stage for Arthur Tait's collaboration with Currier & Ives, which brought wildlife art to the masses, and the work of Edward Kemeys, whose impressionistic sculpture captured the essence of disappearing wildlife like the wolf and buffalo at the same time that prominent Americans like John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt promoted wilderness preservation and the ethics of sportsmanship. As Wagner's narrative moves to the twentieth century and beyond, it embraces in revealing detail the lives of artists Louis Agassiz Fuertes and Carl Rungius, painters who were among the most influential wildlife artists of their time. Wagner's account concludes with portraits of recent and contemporary wildlife artists such as Ray Harm, Robert Bateman, Bob Kuhn, Roger Tory Peterson, Stanley Meltzoff, and Kent Ullberg—artists whose work at once departs from and embodies the legacies, traditions, and innovations that informed and preceded it.

Through a rich array of illustrations and its incisive text, *American Wildlife Art* will appeal to collectors, conservationists, and artists—to everyone who already enjoys wildlife art or who is learning about it for the first time. Wagner's authoritative and even-handed prose brings this compelling art form to life, reminding us of the treasures found on America's wild lands.

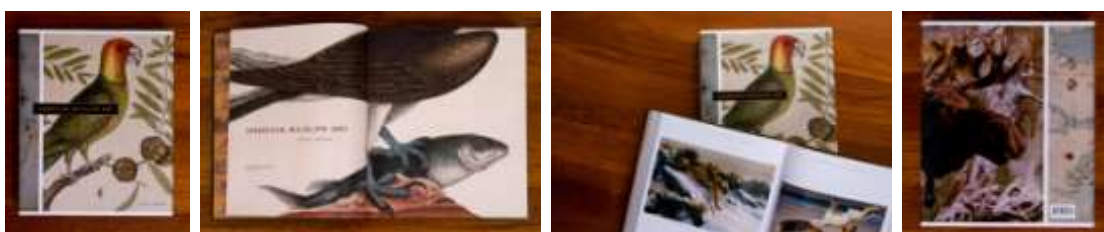


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ENDORSEMENTS, TESTIMONIALS

“David Wagner is a distinguished curator and art historian whose scholarly and informed contributions to the field of art, particularly wildlife art, have set standards for excellence, innovation, and thoroughness.”

J. Brooks Joyner
Director, [Joslyn Art Museum](#)

“I knew it [*American Wildlife Art*] would be good but this is beyond my expectations! It is incredibly well researched and very informative. This volume will stand as the definitive work on the subject for years to come, perhaps forever ... David Wagner is the number one intellectual in wildlife art certainly in America, maybe in the world.”

Robert Bateman, Painter
www.robertbateman.ca

“Wildlife art could not have a more eloquent or knowledgeable spokesperson than David Wagner, and I’m sure that all artists working with wildlife today feel the same gratitude that I do for his dedication of so much of his life and talent to our field.”

Kent Ullberg, Sculptor
www.kentullberg.net

“David J. Wagner, PhD is the preeminent academic authority on the subject of Wildlife Art in America. Early in his career, he served as director of the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, where he established Birds In Art as the world’s most prestigious annual exhibition of animal art. He also served as executive director of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, and was a museum-studies adjunct faculty member at the Graduate School of New York University, Colorado College, and University of Wisconsin Extension. Today he combines working as a freelance consultant with duties as Tour Director for the Society of Animal Artists, and curator of numerous traveling shows, including current One-man Shows for Robert Bateman, Kent Ullberg and yours truly. (He also wrote the introduction for my book: www.rigorvitae.net). Dave’s Ph.D. dissertation was on the history of wildlife art in America, and he continues to lecture widely on the subject. He’s been working on his Magnum Opus for several years, and the project is finally complete. *American Wildlife Art* will be released early in the new year by Marquand Books. At 424 pages, with over 300 illustrations, it promises to be the most complete history of representative animal art in North America to date.”

Carel Pieter Brest van Kempen
Artist and Author
<http://rigorvitae.blogspot.com>

"Congratulations on all the great press for your book! I'm not all the way through it yet (SO hard to find the time to read anymore) but I'm enjoying the heck out of it. It's rare to find works of nonfiction told with both the non-threatening, compelling lucidity of an armchair storytelling and the rigorous, scholarly detail of a historical discourse, but you've done it with *American Wildlife Art*."

Andrew Denman
Artist

"David Wagner offers a holistic look at the American history of wildlife art and guides us toward a renewed purpose for this unique art form. He provides the historical insight of the past and presents a satisfying exploration of the dynamic artists who continue this highly regarded tradition of documentation through art. Read it and enjoy a fascinating perspective on how wildlife art is changing the way we see the world around us."

Susan T. Fisher
Director, Art Institute
[Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum](#)

"David Wagner's prodigious research ability has produced what will undoubtedly prove to be the definitive work on the history of American wildlife art. While others have written on particular facets of the subject, Wagner ties all the strands of the story together and presents it to the reader in a beautifully written illustrated synthesis."

John F. Reiger, Professor
[Ohio University—Chillicothe](#)
and Author, *American Sportsmen
and the Origins of Conservation*

"Dr. Wagner is eminently qualified to write this historically important book on the genre of wildlife art. For the aficionado of this genre, this book is a must-have. Well-written, well-documented, and supported with beautiful imagery, the book eloquently conveys the author's devotion to his subject matter."

Pam Dean Cable
Executive Director
[Susan Kathleen Black Foundation](#)

"We recently had the pleasure of hosting a lecture by Dr. Wagner at the Booth Western Art Museum in Cartersville, Georgia. Loosely based on the outline of this book, Dr. Wagner's talk was an authoritative overview of this expansive topic. It is rare to have the opportunity to hear from someone who has literally written "the book" on a topic as broad as this. I highly recommend the inclusion of this book in any art library."

Seth Hopkins, Executive Director
[Booth Museum, Cartersville, GA](#)

“*American Wildlife Art* takes readers on a journey through the cultural, social, and artistic progression of this art form. Scholars, art enthusiasts, collectors, and naturalists will reference this beautifully illustrated and eloquently written text for years to come.”

Lora Bottinelli
Executive Director
[Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art](#)

“American Wildlife Art is a must have for everyone. For older generations it allows reflection on this genre’s journey over their lifetime and before. For the young it is the history of artists deeply concerned over the well being of the earth and all her creatures. David Wagner’s book is informative, inspiring, sobering, and in the end encouraging.”

Leslie Delgyer
President, [Society of Animal Artists](#)

“With critical insight David Wagner traces the evolution of wildlife art in America, from early naturalist studies of John White and Mark Catesby to contemporary artists working in the genre.”

Dorcas MacClintock
Author of *Animals Observed: A Look at Animals in Art*
Editor, [Society of Animal Artists Newsletter](#)

"Avec ce livre, vous embarquez sur un navire qui vous conduira à la découverte du nouveau monde et de son histoire à travers l'évolution d'un art ancestral et séculaire: l'art animalier. Vous marcherez sur les traces des premiers découvreurs et des premiers artistes naturalistes qui avec une recherche et une patience infinies retranscrivaient au travers de leur art leurs émotions et leurs ressentis vis-à-vis de nouvelles espèces animales et botaniques jusqu'alors complètement inconnues.

Au 18 et 19ème siècle, l'histoire des artistes animaliers (Alexander Wilson ou encore John James Audubon) se conjugue avec celle des Etats-Unis. D'énormes changements rythment la vie des hommes de cette Nation naissante. John James Audubon, par son travail absolument remarquable de finesse et de réalisme, est considéré comme un des premiers ornithologues du Nouveau Monde. Il peint des centaines de planches où souvent les oiseaux sont représentés dans leur milieu naturel. Cette manière de faire contraste avec celle de ses contemporains. Avec lui, une nouvelle page de l'histoire de l'art animalier américain fait son apparition.

Au 19ème siècle, l'art animalier dépeint le plus fréquemment des scènes de chasse. Le Continent est vaste, les zones sauvages où le gibier prolifère nombreuses. Les scènes de chasse qui illustrent ce livre sont d'un réalisme fascinant. Arthur F. Tait fut un des artistes qui contribua à la démocratisation de l'art animalier. Avec la révolution industrielle, l'art animalier allait prendre un nouveau tournant.

A la fin du 19ème siècle, Edward Kemeys, sculpteur de grand talent, montre pour la première fois des animaux dans un style différent ; la sculpture doit avant tout capturer l'esprit même de l'animal pour sublimer l'impression de mouvement ou appuyer une attitude. Beaucoup d'autres artistes s'engouffreront dans cette voie.

Au 20ème siècle, les artistes animaliers continueront à faire évoluer le travail artistique dans ce sens. Malgré la grande dépression, les problèmes économiques, ou les guerres, nombreux seront les artistes de grand talent qui feront de leur passion et de leur art une profession.

Certains iront encore plus loin. Robert Bateman, figure emblématique de l'art animalier, s'engagera dans la préservation des espaces sauvages, des espèces en danger et sera, avec le photo réalisme, un des pionniers dans la manière de peindre et d'appréhender cet art,. Avec lui, le voyage se termine et nous ramène au port car c'est lui qui justement a écrit l'introduction de ce merveilleux livre.

Découvertes, histoires, illustrations. David J. Wagner maîtrise avec brio son sujet. Ce livre est un véritable régal pour les yeux et l'esprit et m'a apporté de la fierté à d'exercer ce métier d'artiste animalier hyperréaliste."

Laurence Saunois
Jammery, Figeac
FRANCE

“ . . . Thanks for [personalizing the copy of] American Wildlife Art I purchased . . . Believe it or not, I have now read it.. every page.. well, at least ALMOST every page. I must say that it's a wonderful representation of wildlife art and history. I'm not an art history major or art history buff, but I can appreciate the herculean effort it took to produce the book. Your book is a great read with lots of terrific facts, stories, and details of the different schools and styles that developed over the years. The writing style and integration of the figures made for a well-done flow without being too wordy. . . .”

David J. Gautereaux
Thomas D. Mangelsen, Inc.

“Dr. Wagner has provided a scholarly, yet readable text that is both thorough and comprehensive. I had the pleasure of reviewing the chapter on Alexander Wilson, and John James Audubon, before the book was published, and was thrilled by both Wagner's accuracy and humanity . . . The tragedy of Wilson's untimely death before completion of his 10-volume, “American Ornithology,” contrasts dramatically with the success of Audubon's work, “Birds of America.” Their stories are especially inspiring when one considers the hardships presented by living and working in the hostile environment and great natural beauty of the wilderness that comprised the American frontier of the early 1800's. These factors are not lost on Dr. Wagner's rousing account of the influence of these two American heroes.”

DeVere Burt
Audubon Scholar and Director Emeritus
[Cincinnati Museum of Natural History](#)

REVIEWS

“From New World biological sketches to modern sculpture, David J. Wagner's *American Wildlife Art* compiles the images created by some of the nation's most important wildlife artists, including John James Audubon...more than a hundred works reveal an age-old appreciation for wildlife that is magnified through today's lens.”

Shawn Query
Audubon Magazine

“Perhaps the book’s greatest contribution is that it gathers in one place over 300 illustrations of some of the most important wildlife art ever produced by North American artists. This collection of paintings, drawings and sculpture provides us with a comprehensive account of the origins of our wildlife art, as well as an historical record of its evolution to its present form.”

Dan Small

Host/Producer of [Outdoor Wisconsin](#)
[Read entire review](#)

“Collectors, conservationists, artists and anyone interested in wildlife art will be enthralled by a new retrospective from a leading curator and lecturer. Authored by David J Wagner and published by Marquand Books, “American Wildlife Art” is the culmination of years of research bundled into one gorgeous, definitive reference... It’s a thorough, engrossing study that should find a home on many a coffee table, appealing to art aficionados, animal lovers, and anyone in between.”

Jeanne Kolker

Wisconsin State Journal

“Many critics and curators have dismissed wildlife as a subject beneath serious consideration. David J. Wagner hopes to change that perception with *American Wildlife Art*, published earlier this year by Marquand Books. A massive volume beautifully illustrated with more than 300 pictures, most of them in color, *American Wildlife Art* offers an erudite survey of the development of the genre in North America from the 1580s through the present day. . . . Wagner has dedicated his professional career to rehabilitating the reputation of his favorite genre.”

Mary Manion

Wildlife Art: Finally Getting Respect
[Antique Trader](#)

“The moment I gazed on the book and opened its pages, the word that immediately came to mind was ‘sumptuous’...this is a definitive history of the evolution of endeavors by American wildlife artists. From pioneers such as Mark Catesby to the most prominent animal artists of the 21st century, Wagner covers the wildlife scene with literary grace, careful research and the insight provided by a lifetime spent studying the subject.”

Jim Casada

[Sporting Classics](#)

“In his illuminating book *American Wildlife Art*, David J. Wagner argues that the painting of wildlife developed in a far different manner in North America than in Europe. England, he points out, had a tradition of ‘sporting art,’ including images of the hunt, or paintings that focus on ‘species often targeted as game by sportsmen.’ Another tradition of animal painting was the scientific: the attempt to catalog species visually.”

Edward Rothstein

[The New York Times \(view entire article\)](#)

“This book is important for wildlife art today. It covers everything you need to know about the genre. Anyone who is interested or involved in wildlife art, whether an artist, collector, conservationist, dealer, student, or teacher, will be inspired and educated.”

Paul Montag
[Wildlife Art Magazine](#)

“Although many works chronicle the development of natural history illustration and wildlife art, few provide such a concise, thorough, and scholarly examination of the topic. As one would expect, this work by independent scholar Wagner is handsomely illustrated with carefully selected examples of the evolution of American wildlife art in paintings, prints, and sculpture. Since the 19th century, wildlife art had been ubiquitous in the US, appearing as illustrations in books, magazines, calendars, and other forms of print media. These images and representations of wildlife have helped shape the American perception of the variety and abundance of the nation’s natural world. Often disdained by art critics and the national arbiters of fine art, wildlife art has always been popular with the American people. Although this volume is chronological in its organization, the author provides both additional contextual information and particularly salient information concerning the methods of reproduction of wildlife art and the significance of its mass distribution. Especially useful for students are the meticulous delineations of influences upon each artist, as appropriate, and the detailed notes that appear at the end of each section.”

P.D. Thomas
Wichita State University
Choice Magazine, September 2008

[AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART] “is more than just magnificent; it is essential. This writer predicts that a century from now when scholars want to educate themselves about wildlife art, this will be the work they will consult. It’s that good and that comprehensive. “American Wildlife Art” is an example of first-rate scholarship marked by even-handed prose, breathtaking illustrations and an accessibility that is to be celebrated. Simply put, ‘American Wildlife Art’ is a joy.”

Larry Cox
Tucson Citizen

Click [here](#) to read *Wildlife Art Expert speaks Saturday at Desert Museum*, by Larry Cox of the Tucson Citizen, November 26, 2008

Click [here](#) to read an interview with David Wagner by Valerie Vinyard of the Arizona Daily Star, November 21, 2008

American Wildlife Art

<http://www.wildlifeartjournal.com>

Premiere Issue, Summer 2009

Author David Wagner Makes Case For Why Wildlife Art Matters

Written By Wildlife Art Journal Staff, Todd Wilkinson

Constantin Brancusi, Anna Hyatt Huntington, Georgia O’Keefe, Winslow Homer, Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt, Maynard Dixon, Frank Benson, Jamie Wyeth, Picasso, Landseer, Rembrandt, and Michelangelo: They are among a long

list of individuals whose credentials were never checked by St. Peter while passing through the vaunted gates of art history. Each one painted or sculpted animals.

David J. Wagner's new 424-page, coffee-table sized book *American Wildlife Art* is unprecedented in its scholarship, certainly in the way it explores the history of wildlife art on the North American continent.

In this whale of a book, Wagner presents the strongest case yet for why animal imagery commands not only contemporary relevance for our time, but as fine art, scientific documentation, popular decoration for the masses, and yes, as icons, corporate logos, sports team mascots, and political expressions, it is the genre that perhaps most transcends social classes, national identity, age, religion and province.

Wagner is in a position to make a commentary. For a decade between 1977 and 1987, he served as director of the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin where he helped establish the museum's Bird In Art Exhibition as an international event. Moreover, today he serves as a consultant for a number of traveling exhibitions, including a multi-venue event for Robert Bateman.

For a long time, the (primarily) Eastern art establishment in the U.S. has dismissed wildlife art and its practitioners as crude, undeveloped, and prosaic—unworthy of comparison to other art movements and the masters who spawned them. Critics demean wildlife art as little more than superficial documentation, though an exception is always unexplainably granted if a master from another genre, say, chooses to insert an animal image into a scene or motif as allegory.

Wagner answers the casters of aspersions and the defenders of minimalism and demonstration art with evidence of wildlife art's validity. Ironically, given the title of the book, he sets out to erase the artificial boundaries between wildlife art and fine art. As a foil, he invokes the story of Carl Rungius. The German-born painter who spent his most productive years in Canada's Banff National Park also explored Wyoming's Wind River Mountains early in his career and won acclaim as a landscape painter. Around the turn of the 20th century, Rungius, who today is recognized as one of the finest painters of North American big game animals scenes, came under criticism for putting portraits of wildlife, which he sometimes hunted and killed, between the frame. Some claimed he was less of a painter as a result.

Rungius responded by deliberately painting a series of pure landscapes that were hailed for their technical virtuosity and won him academician status with the vaunted National Academy of Design. The triumph proved that it is not subject matter that makes the painter, but the painter who chooses to apply his skill to whatever line of visual reference point he or she sees fit.

"The thesis of *American Wildlife Art* is that American wildlife art evolved not merely out of aesthetic advances, as many would simplistically believe, but out of four centuries of aesthetic, ideological, and entrepreneurial appropriation, and that the forces at play were symbiotically shaped and fulfilled," Wagner explains. "My purpose in writing this book has been to account for the evolution of the genre, and in doing so correct misconceptions that might exist."

It's an academic way of saying wildlife art deserves a place at the table of discussion about American art history and its reflection of Western culture and society. For us in the 21st century, wildlife art does not assume a fleeting presence; it is a modern totem.

Todd Wilkinson
Wildlife Art Journal

From cave dwellers' murals to Winslow Homer watercolors, representations of flora and fauna comprise the oldest, most enduring form of visual art. Yet today, they are too often dismissed as the sentimental stuff of calendars and greeting cards rather than being valued as worthy of serious study.

Scholar and curator David J. Wagner hopes to restore credibility to such images. He makes a strong case for their renewed appreciation through a new book and a touring exhibition, now on view at the U.S. Department of the Interior. "*American Wildlife Art*," published in February by Seattle-based Marquand Books, surveys naturalistic art from Colonial-era book illustrations to present-day public sculptures. In this comprehensive, well-illustrated tome, Mr. Wagner reaches beyond the usual talents to expose the richness of the genre.

As he makes clear, documenting the nation's wildlife started well before John James Audubon's seminal work, "*Birds of America*" (1826-39). In the late 1500s, English explorer John White painted watercolors of the crabs, pelicans and turtles discovered during expeditions on the southeastern coast.

Another Englishman, Mark Catesby, made the next significant contribution in the 1730s with the first color-plate reference book on the species of the New World, titled "*The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*."

During the 1800s, prints and drawings of native birds by Audubon were followed by more expressive likenesses of predatory beasts. Edward Kenneys, the first wildlife artist born in this country, sculpted lions, panthers and bears for public buildings and parks in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago.

By the 20th century, wildlife art coincided with a growing interest in outdoor recreation and sports. One of the major talents of the era was German-born Carl Rungius, who based his dramatic, loosely brushed paintings of moose, elk and bighorn sheep on sightings during hunting trips to the West.

Much of this art was part of an effort to record the unfamiliar creatures of a continent still being settled. Today, the Animal Planet television channel and popular documentary films such as “March of the Penguins” have taken the place of paintings and sculptures in revealing the wonders of the natural world. Traditional wildlife art has lost much of its didactic purpose to become merely illustrative.

Not entirely so, however, as shown by the drawings, paintings, prints, photos and sculptures of rare species now on view at the Roosevelt-era Interior Museum. The exhibit, organized by the Wildling Art Museum in Los Olivos, Calif., puts a face on native animals and plants threatened by extinction.

The images in “Endangered Species: Flora & Fauna in Peril” depict the beauty of well-publicized creatures in peril, like the northern spotted owl and bald eagle, as well as more obscure plants and animals. They portray about 47 species listed as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, making an effective case for their preservation through colorful, detailed portrayals.

Mr. Wagner served as consulting curator and tour director of the traveling show of 50 artworks, which veer from delicate botanical drawings to kitschy animal sculptures. The images are arrayed in the 1938 galleries below lighting coves decorated with zinc silhouettes of scenery illustrating the Interior Department’s mission (the museum is worth a visit on its own).

One of the more interesting aspects of the show is the inclusion of statements from the 40 artists, explaining the challenges of finding live examples of threatened species to sketch.

At the suggestion of a botanist at the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, artist Lotus McElfish scoured the banks of the San Marcos River to discover some of the last remaining wild rice growing in a fish hatchery. Miami-based Oscar Famili sketched his image of a Florida scrub jay, a bird once common to the Everglades, at a rescue center. Californian Chris Chapman couldn’t locate a jewelflower in its native habitat so he copied its delicate leaves and flowers from plants in a botanical garden.

Much of this wildlife art fails to advance the genre in stylistic terms, but several pieces are leavened with humorous touches to poke fun at tree-hugging earnestness. “Lunch Counter” pictures a grizzly bear sitting with his paw atop a rock as if ordering his next meal. “American Burying Beetle ... Going” shows a line of insects emerging from a sheet of paper soiled by coffee cup rings and Oreos cookie crumbs.

References to the wildlife art traditions outlined in Mr. Wagner’s book are evident in other works. Colorado artist Shane Dimmick borrows the fool-the-eye style of 19th-century artist William Hartnett to create the illusion of a drawing of a gray wolf taped to rustic wood paneling. Next to the animal sketch is an image of a geyser in Yellowstone National Park where the wolves were reintroduced in 1995 after decades of extinction.

From tiny snails disappearing from Hawaii’s volcanic ridges to Texan ocelots now confined to wildlife preserves, the small and big creatures depicted in the exhibit serve as reminders of nature’s precariousness in an artificial world. They underscore the increasing draw of wildlife art as environmentalism moves from the fringes into the mainstream.

In his introduction to Mr. Wagner’s book, Canadian-born wildlife artist Robert Bateman summarizes the continuing appeal of the wild kingdom: “As nature becomes more threatened and more precious, the longing for images of it will increase.”

Let’s hope the quality of wildlife artworks does, too.

Deborah K. Dietsch

[Washington Times](#)

Sunday, December 28, 2008

<http://www.doi.gov/interiormuseum>

Wildlife Art As Modern (and Eternal) Totem

Reviewed By Todd Wilkinson

Author, freelance writer

Bozeman, Montana

With David J. Wagner's handsome and voluminous *American Wildlife Art* (Marquand Books, Seattle), millions of people around the world can now cheer, for wildlife art has a new towering champion. But first consider what, on the surface, appears to be a rather strange and formidable contradiction: Forever, or at least for as long as we have been a species and even in the dimmer twilight before *Homo sapiens* walked distinctly on our own, we have lived side by side with wild animals.

In turn, as an act of veneration, remembrance and humility, "wildlife art" has existed on our walls and shelves in the dwellings we inhabit, from caves to fireplace mantels in modern 21st century McMansions. Wildlife has been our sustenance, our stalkers, our companions, and our bellweathers for gauging the health of the environment around us. Our relationship with wildlife is age-old and yet, only relatively recently, has the art which celebrates animals and our own place in nature, achieved formal recognition as its own valid subject matter.

In some ways, the battle to achieve respect from the self-proclaimed fine art intelligentsia continues unabated. And yet in this whale of a book Wagner presents the strongest case yet for why animal imagery commands not only contemporary relevance for OUR time, but as fine art, scientific documentation, popular decoration for the masses, and yes, as icons, corporate logos, sports team mascots, and political expressions, it is THE genre that perhaps most transcends social classes, national identity, age, religion and province.

As someone who has written about wildlife in art for a quarter century, I am left daunted by the depth of Wagner's scope. This book establishes the author as the foremost authority on wildlife art in the Western Hemisphere and his credentials were not earned overnight. "David Wagner is the number one intellectual in wildlife art, certainly in America, maybe in the world," proclaims Canadian painter Robert Bateman, who himself is the best-known contemporary wildlife artist on the planet with millions of his reproduced wildlife art paintings in circulation around the globe.

Simply put, the seven-pound *American Wildlife Art* is unprecedented as a work of academic study. But more than that, for a general audience, it is an entertaining journey that should sit on living room coffee tables and have a spot in university and family libraries as THE definitive resource. Not merely does Wagner impressively impart the history of wild animal art in North America, but also as an art book, it is, in its own way, a work of art filled with dazzling examples of the finest paintings and sculpture ever portrayed of wildlife on this continent.

What makes *American Wildlife Art* noteworthy, though, is that as an art historian, Wagner refrains from academic platitudes and he does not pander. Rather than causing reader's eye to glaze over, he asks us to widen our vision. The arc of his half-millennia story and the art he chooses to feature is immediately familiar. Why? Because wildlife is engrained in the identity of North Americans in a uniquely North American way. One does not need a highbrow interpreter.

A grade-schooler could peruse these 424 pages and become inspired to pursue a career in art or field biology. A college student could find endless fodder for term papers. A professor would find a term's worth of lectures. A birder (beginning with the cover jacket image of a Carolina parrot by frontier painter Mark Catesby) will feel a kindredness to the high tradition of commemorating avifauna in the New World. A hunter or angler who collects Duck Stamps and wooden decoys will flit through the pages and gain more confirming insight into the role that wildlife art has played in conservation. A businesswoman, who has chosen to decorate her corporate board room with an original painting or bronze, will better understand why, for the discriminating collector, wildlife art can provide a compelling, enjoyable escape to the daily grind at the office and also be a shrewd investment (if recent auction records are any indication). *American Wildlife Art*, at \$75, is a good investment.

For a long time, the (primarily) Eastern art establishment has dismissed wildlife art and its practitioners as crude, undeveloped, and prosaic—unworthy of comparison to other art movements and the masters who spawned them. Critics demean wildlife art as little more than superficial documentation, though an exception is always unexplainably granted if a master from another genre, say, chooses to insert an animal image into a scene or motif as allegory. But here's the real gist of the paradox: Does the fact that artists like Constantin Brancusi, Pablo Picasso, and Andy Warhol chose to feature animals in their work substantiate the premise of critics or undermine it?

Wagner answers the casters of aspersions with evidence to the latter. Ironically, given the title of the book, he sets out to erase the artificial boundaries between wildlife art and fine art. As a foil, he invokes the story of Carl Rungius. The German-born painter who spent his most productive years in Canada's Banff National Park also explored Wyoming's Wind River Mountains early in his career and won acclaim as a landscape painter. Around the turn of the 20th century, Rungius, who today is recognized the finest painter of North American big game animals scenes, came under criticism for putting portraits of wildlife between the frame. Some claimed he was less of a painter as a result. Rungius responded by painting a series of pure landscapes that were hailed for their technical virtuosity and won him academician status with the vaunted National Academy of Design. The triumph proved that it is not subject matter that makes the painter, but the painter who chooses to apply his skill to whatever line of visual reference point he or she sees fit.

Wildlife, as subject matter, has indeed entered into the esteemed portfolios of the ancients as well as those avant-gardists pushing the cutting edge and who intend to provoke a response from a numbed, perpetually distracted urban society. If one has an open mind, as Wagner suggests is necessary, a person will find that works featuring animals are hung in the Louvre, the Prada, and the Hermitage (and any great American art museum), as well as, unsavory as it is to some, down at the local bait shop, café, and barber parlor in middle America. Millions of international tourists make pilgrimages every year to see wildlife in national parks or embark on photo safaris in Africa. Millions more crowd urban zoos. In his pop art, Warhol grasped the iconographic power of animals, but so, too, have U.S. presidents, European and Asian royalty, people who wear religious cloth, and marketing geniuses on Madison Avenue.

Along with his narrative portraits of Audubon, Rungius and Bateman, who is not only featured but makes his own written contribution to the book, Wagner offers a lengthy examination of Swedish-American sculptor Kent Ullberg who today is regarded as the foremost creator of wildlife monuments in the world. A bronze man who divides his time between Corpus Christi, Texas and Loveland, Colorado, Ullberg has works that can be found in public spaces on four continents and although he is notably a contemporary sculptor, his work follows within the classical tradition dating back to the ancient Greeks who held up art as a prominent, utilitarian focal point in daily life.

Wagner will surely stand accused of being a wildlife art propagandist. However, he readily addresses what critics have called the schlock and kitsch element, as well as the capitalistic phenomenon of some artists pandering only to markets for commercial reasons and dubious profiteers attempting to hoodwink gullible collectors who approach hoarding of wildlife art reproductions the same way some financial investors court junk bonds. Art as an investment, after all, no matter who the creator, can be risky. Time and again, Wagner notes that the best reason to purchase a piece of art is because the individual likes it and wants to live with it.

If I have two modest quibbles with this book, they can be summed up this way: First, I would have liked to see Wagner dig into Native American wildlife art, which wields its own influence and helps to set North American art in general apart from the “Old World.” Second, Wagner navigates through a minefield of not WHAT to include, but WHO to include, in contemporary terms. Surely, there will be some living artists with hurt egos who feel left out, which is impossible for the author to avoid when a book like this has to name names.

One of the tools that Wagner uses for connoting inclusion is a list that emerged from a study he conducted as part of his exhaustive PhD dissertation at the University of Minnesota that forms the background for the book. Wagner surveyed artists, collectors and publishers. He asked artists, in particular, to identify colleagues or predecessors who had most influenced them. Here is the top 15 listed in order: 1. Robert Bateman; 2. Louis Agassiz Fuertes; 3. Carl Rungius; 4. Francis Lee Jacques; 5. Robert Kuhn; 6. Winslow Homer; 7. Andrew Wyeth; 8. N.C. Wyeth; 9. Roger Tory Peterson; 10. John James Audubon; 11. Lynn Bogue Hunt; 12. Maxfield Parrish; 13. Ogden Pleissner; 14. George Miksch Sutton; 15. Owen Gromme. It’s a notable list, but one that is sure to be seized upon by critics of wildlife art who say it only confirms that a complete fine art discernment is lacking in the perspective of contemporary painters. The late wildlife painter Bob Kuhn, for instance, was a graduate of the Pratt Institute who cited abstract expressionist Mark Rothko as an inspiration in his 60 years behind the easel.

Auspiciously, the value of Wagner’s book is heightened by a statement that emanates from the cornerstone of American Democracy and the halls of political power, Capitol Hill. In 2008, Congress passed an act, signed into law by the president, that formally recognizes the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole, Wyoming—an important reference point in Wagner’s book—as THE official wildlife art museum in the United States. The NMWA, a novel institution designed to exude the appearance of an ancient Southwest desert cliff dwelling, is an architectural wonder.

For the same reason that artists like Audubon, Homer, N.C. Wyeth, Anna Hyatt Huntington, Edward Kemeys, Arthur Tait (who collaborated with Currier & Ives), Paul Wayland Bartlett, Frederic Remington, Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, and Karl Bodmer, are considered national treasures whose works are worthy of exhibition at the National Gallery, they are equally esteemed when displayed at the NMWA. *American Wildlife Art* is today a featured book at the NMWA book store and has been adopted as a text at a number of colleges.

“The thesis of *American Wildlife Art* is that American wildlife art evolved not merely out of aesthetic advances, as many would simplistically believe, but out of four centuries of aesthetic, ideological, and entrepreneurial appropriation, and that the forces at play were symbiotically shaped and fulfilled,” Wagner explains. “My purpose in writing this book has been to account for the evolution of the genre, and in doing so correct misconceptions that might exist.” It’s an academic way of saying wildlife art deserves a place at the table of discussion about American art history and its reflection of Western culture and society. For us in the 21st century, wildlife art does not assume a fleeting presence; it is an urgent modern totem.

Todd Wilkinson
Author, Freelance Writer

AMAZON.COM

Reviews on the book American Wildlife Art on Amazon.com

(All 5.0 out of 5 stars)

An Indy Fan (Chicago, IL) It was my good fortune to have known and cover as a member of the media the many accomplishments of author David Wagner when he served as director of the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin. Under Wagner's astute direction, Leigh Yawkey earned acclaim worldwide for championing Wildlife Art, highlighted annually by the spectacular Birds In Art exhibit. Since Wagner is a leading scholar in the field, it comes as no surprise that his gorgeous and impressive American Wildlife Art reflects not only the majesty and wonder of the subject matter but also the passion and insight of the author. This is a work to savor and celebrate, which I plan to do for years to come.

Glenace Metcalfe (Pelican Rapids, Minnesota) This book is just awesome...I think the cover illustration may not do the book justice as the book is a large coffee table book with almost 400 pages. Many wonderful illustrations of wildlife art from the past to present. Simply love the book!

A Wealth of Information, March 17, 2012 K. Duffek (Tucson, AZ) American Wildlife Art is a well-written history of how naturalist artists have brought to life the native flora and fauna of North America. The book transports the reader back to the days of early exploration where documentation of the life in a unique and new country through illustrations brought understanding to those afar. It traces the evolution of wildlife art from the practical to an art form. All the highlights in American wildlife art are here under one cover. It is an important read for wildlife art enthusiasts, artists and naturalists alike.

Wonderful lecture at Adirondack Museum By LimekilnLaker (Baltimore, MD) David Wagner presented a program, which included mostly images from this book, at the Adirondack Museum at Blue Mountain Lake, New York, which covered American Wildlife Art from the Roanoke Colony's John White to the Quintessential Adirondack Artist Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait to artists and sculptors of the late 19th Century. Wagner presented a comprehensive discussion of the types of wildlife art and the purposes behind the artists' works as well as how they differed. He also presented the importance of lithography for the promulgation of works of art for the general public at low cost. Mr. Wagner was able to provide this information under the handicap of the short time allotted for his program. Regardless, I heard enough to purchase the book at the Museum store and have been pleased with the quality and lucidness not only of his text, but also the quality of the reproductions of the artists' works, often not represented as well in clarity in other publications of this type. The book is well worth the price and Mr. Wagner's lecture certainly surpassed our expectations in excess for that evening.

Seth Hopkins (Cartersville, GA): We recently had the pleasure of hosting a lecture Dr. Wagner at the Booth Western Art Museum in Cartersville, Georgia. Loosely based on the outline of this book, Dr. Wagner's talk was an authoritative overview of this expansive topic. It is rare to have the opportunity to hear from someone who has literally written "the book" on a topic as broad as this. I highly recommend the inclusion of this book in any art library.

L. Albright Ratnavira "Lis" (San Diego CA): It is our pleasure to recommend David Wagner's excellent book on American Wildlife Art. The book is designed into three parts: Early Art of Natural History, The reappropriation of American Wildlife Art and American Wildlife Art in the Twentieth Century. Dr. Wagner brings a lifetime of studying, supporting and immersing himself into wildlife art. He is the travel director for Society of Animal Artists and handles many wildlife art museum tours throughout the country. The book is an excellent example of his thorough knowledge of the subject matter, the love of nature, the immersion of knowing and representing the artists, and his extensive research and knowledge of the American wildlife genre. The artists represented Bateman, Peterson, Fuertes, Rungius, Kuhn, Wyeth, and Audubon to name a few exemplifies the talents of this genre and the artistic images are breathtaking. This book is a must for every art course in colleges, art collectors and enthusiasts, today.

A Much Needed Book – Californiaboy (Orinda, CA): It's rare to find works of non fiction told with both the non-threatening, compelling lucidity of an armchair storytelling and the rigorous, scholarly detail of a historical discourse, but David Wagner has done it with American Wildlife Art. Given the long history of animals in art, the extreme popularity of

animal subjects in recent history, and growing environmental consciousness across the globe, this is a book long overdue. While specialty books focusing on individual wildlife painters have been available for years, Wagner's impressive book is perhaps the first thorough exploration of this broad and sweeping art form as a whole. A must read for the fan or practitioner of wildlife art.

A wonderful Read – right down to every page – David J. Gautereaux (San Diego, CA): During the process of reading Dave Wagner's American Wildlife Art I converted myself from someone who appreciates wildlife art to someone who appreciates not only the art, but also the elements of art and the history of the art. Long an admirer of all media of wildlife art and long an admirer of the talent it takes to create wildlife art, I found that insight into the lives and experiences of the artists adds more layers to the appreciation. Dave Wagner has created a 400 page book filled with interesting facts, stories, and supporting figures that made for a wonderful Read.

Superb book – George Bumann (Yellowstone Nat'l Park, WY): I was very delighted to see David's book hit the presses. Obviously the fruit of much labor – and a labor of love at that: we are all the benefactors of this great endeavor. As an aside, following a recent trip to Chicago, I was absorbed in the section on Edward Kemeys whose bronze lions we admired in front of the Chicago Art Institute's entry way. American Wildlife Art is one of the most comprehensive, if not the best, reviews of one of our least heralded American sculptors. I truly enjoyed David's ability to weave a vivid picture of not only one artist's life but the world, social, artistic, political, economic events of the day that shaped it. Well done and thanks for educating us all.

Better him than me – R. Kent Marisa (NY, NY): David Wagner triumphantly conquers the daunting challenge of tracing the roots of Wildlife Art in America. As an avid collector of paintings, I have been deeply enlightened on the critical milestones and epochs of the art genre I love most. This book will certainly become known as the definitive history of Wildlife Art in America through the 21st Century.

Inspiring – Kelly Dodge (Ontario, Canada): "American Wildlife" art is much more than just an ordinary art history book. As a self-taught professional nature artist, I feel like I've just received the art history education that I never went to school for. "American Wildlife Art" will soon become, if it is not already, a treasured volume in the libraries of all who love our natural heritage and the wildlife art inspired it. Awareness of nature has increased tremendously in recent years no doubt helped along the many wildlife artists faithful to present their perspectives of creation. People of all ages and kinds enjoy nature and are to some extent knowledgeable about it. "American Wildlife Art" is timely. Every reader, expert or not, will be delighted this unique combination of chronological text and superb reproductions which offers to inspire all who read it.

Wonderful resource for wildlife art! – Paul Rhymer (MD): David Wagner's book, American Wildlife Art, is a wonderful resource, both for wildlife artists and admirers of the art form. His in depth research and rich illustrations are a great source of information for artists such as myself looking to the masters for inspiration and knowledge, and an equally good record for learning about the roots of wildlife art and how it's evolved. I highly recommend it for the artist and art history fan alike. I can think of several friends and family that will be receiving this for Christmas!

A MUCH NEEDED BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF WILDLIFE ART – A Reader From Southern California (Orange County, CA): American Wildlife Art David Wagner belongs in the library of any one interested in the representational art of North American Wildlife. This book gives the entire history of the genre and does so with thoroughness and authority. In fact, this book could easily be the text for an entire semester class in the art history of wildlife art. Honeycombed with beautiful images to support the text, the book gives the viewer a look at rare illustrations from the past as well as those from modern Master's. Two sections that I found particularly fascinating was the introduction Robert Bateman on the "state of wildlife art today" and the thorough section that deals with Carl Rungius. American Wildlife Art is one of a kind.

Exceptional comprehensive work on wildlife art – Jan McGuire (Bartlesville, OK): David Wagner has long been recognized as the leading expert and art historian on the wildlife art genre. For the first time a totally comprehensive work has been done on the entire history of this popular art form. David spent 15 years researching this amazing book, which is truly a work of art in and of itself. A must for collectors, artists, gallery owners or anyone else interested in the field.

Susan T. Fisher (Tucson, AZ): The Art Institute at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is always looking for books to add to our library about wildlife art. American Wildlife Art is the most comprehensive book on the subject that we have come across. It is thorough in its scope and fills a gap in the history of wildlife art in the US, because the information is comprehensive and all in one book. More than just facts; it gives an historical context for this genre of art that is actually interesting to read. It is a large book and cannot be read over a weekend but the information it contains makes it a must-have tome for any library. We have chosen this book as the textbook for our program. It serves as both a reference and adventure story helping students see the role that wildlife art has played in forming our national perception of our wildlife heritage...and the pictures are pretty terrific too.

An Exceptional Book – JM (Baileys Harbor, WI): David Wagner did much of his research in our small public library. Now that his book has been published and in our collection, I am pleased to say that it is checked out almost continuously, and for good reason. American Wildlife Art is a wonderful example of excellent research, exceptional writing and breathtaking illustrations. Although I am neither an art historian, nor an artist, I do recognize and appreciate beautiful art, and good writing presented in a clear, concise, interesting manner. This is an exceptional book written an author who obviously knows and loves his subject. I highly recommend it.

The first exhaustive history of American wildlife art – C. P. Brest Kempen (Holladay, UT): In the interest of full disclosure, the author is a friend with whom I have a professional relationship. That said, no one is better equipped to write this book, and the finished product is a testament to his deep knowledge. The entire history of wildlife art on the North American continent is here, beginning with the first European invasions and the work of such early Euro-American artists as the 16th-century Jaques Le Moyne, to Robert Bateman and the other 20th century artists whose work served as a foundation upon which was built the marketing phenomenon that is contemporary wildlife art. Between those bookends, I'm at a loss to find anything missing, from the explorer-artists like Cates and Audubon, through the naturalist-illustrators like Fuertes and Jaques, the sporting artists and everything in between. The stories are rich in detail, describing the trials and motivations that shaped the works that would inspire future artists and movements. Throughout, the book is illustrated with plates that are well selected and well reproduced.

MUST HAVE FOR ANY WILDLIFE ART COLLECTOR!! – Diane D. Mason (CO): “American Wildlife Art”, David J. Wagner, is a truly remarkable achievement. The scope of this book is unprecedented, as it covers nearly four centuries of artists, works, trends, and significance to the conservation movement. As a Signature Member of the Society of Animal Artists (and also a current member of the Executive Board), and a life-long fan of wildlife art in general... I couldn't wait to add a copy to my library. As expected, “American Wildlife Art” is packed with information and wonderful photos of artwork... but I was delighted to find that it is also very reader-friendly. David Wagner has done a masterful job of putting together huge volumes of information into a lively and interesting text, which makes thoroughly enjoyable reading. “American Wildlife Art” is more than simply a great resource, or a coffee table book full of pretty pictures – this book is a MUST HAVE for every individual that loves wildlife art.

A book to Treasure – Marianne Scheele (WI): David Wagner has produced a magnificent book for aficionados of American wildlife art, for researchers, for libraries, and for book lovers. The illustrations are gorgeous and numerous, making the book a pleasure for casual browsers as well as serious readers. The text is lively and easy to read, well researched and presented. If you love Audubon, this book will broaden your knowledge and introduce you to so many more artists and styles. This is a book to add to your collection and treasure as a fine example of a genre, which expresses the great artistic variety, and skill of American wildlife artists across the span of centuries.

Enhance your library! – Wes & Rachelle Siegrist (Townsend, TN): We feel like kids at Christmas now that this book is finally in our hands and a treasured part of our library. The illustrations and color plates fill the pages and call to mind the historical books we hold on to and pass down through the generations. Just like the artwork this book highlights, the pages are visual treats reinforced with comprehensive information on the development of wildlife art. Thank you David for such a fabulous book!

Above and Beyond – Mark A. Kelso (IN): David's latest book “American Wildlife Art” provides a comprehensive look at the general history of animal art, and how it became what it is today. Filled with knowledgeable insights and beautiful full color plates, it stands alone (at least to my knowledge) as the first book to offer such a remarkable overview of the genre. I don't say it often, but for anyone interested in wildlife art, whether you're a serious collector, enthusiast, or artist, this is a “must have.”

Magic Carpet Ride – Leo E. Osborne: David J. Wagner has surely rooted himself now as a “touchstone” to the contemporary world of ART. This new book AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART signals this passage. Knowing David since 1984 as the then Director of Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum and their prestigious Birds In Art Exhibition, I have observed him as a ‘rare bird’ in the intellectual pursuit of defining the evolution of wildlife art and the artists who attend to that tradition. Journey now with him as David’s deep understanding of the past and its great influence on those artists whose own spiraling, star studded travels have crossed paths with his. This well documented book reaches within the deeply woven tapestry of wildlife art to reveal the threads spun a great host of artists throughout history. This tapestry reveals and unravels that evolution into this moment where David resides. Here now among the planetary visionaries who feel entrusted with the care and stewardship given them to hold this beautiful place of belonging in peace and harmony David shares with us some of these many personal friends who are along with him on ‘this magic carpet ride’. Whether artist, researcher, student or simply another lover of the still, wild places, you will receive much from this book and marvel at the beautifully chosen photographs of paintings and sculptures that illustrate this message and the passion of David J. Wagner for this ‘wild and crazy’ evolution, which he so loves to investigate.

A magnificent volume for the art world to cherish ... – Paul Montag (Minneapolis, MN): “American Wildlife Art” David Wagner should, literally, knock your socks off. I am a book collector, avid reader and art lover (and collector, when I can afford it), and, I must say, this volume is one of the most impressive I have seen in the art world. Nowhere else can you find as much inspired knowledge about wildlife art than in this book, from its origins to the present. Plus, the images in here are beautiful. If you didn’t read one word and just looked at the pictures, it would be a worthy buy. But, gratefully, the writing is engaging, interesting, informative and, well, very readable, so the whole thing comes together with fine taste and gives reason for excitement. It’s something to look forward to when you come across a work that is done with this much dedication because it doesn’t always work that way. Any wildlife art enthusiast or collector would enjoy this volume in their collection. But anyone interested in history, nature or art should also pick up a copy. Oh, and don’t let me forget about conservation-minded folks, too. Anyone concerned about our environment would do well to find out more about how art has depicted the wild in such supreme ways over the years. It will enhance your appreciation for nature and wildlife and open your eyes as to how art has portrayed and, hence, helped out, our natural world. In addition to the quality content, the book itself is pretty to look at – designed and laid out with much thought. Don’t miss it ...

P. Dean Cable (CO): At long last the lovers of wildlife art have a scholarly, well-written, fully documented reference tome. The author, David J. Wagner, has done a superb job of bringing together a comprehensive history while educating the reader through the imagery that has brought wildlife art to its proper place as one of the most important genres in art. This genre has stood the test of time and is deserving of the credibility the author brings to his subject. Highly recommend this book for anyone- artist, teacher, museum, curator, publisher, gallery, etc with an interest in wildlife art.

PRESS LINKS

Western Art Collector – [“Wild America” Review of American Wildlife Art \[PDF File\]](#) [Animals In Art](#)

[Western Art and Architecture: Bookshelf](#)

[Sitka Center for Art and Ecology](#)

[Wisconsin Public Radio, Larry Meiller \(Episode 080828F\)](#)

Western Art and Wildlife Magazine

Green Bay Press Gazette – [Wisconsin](#)

Peninsula Pulse – [Wisconsin](#)

Door County Style Magazine – [Wisconsin](#)

Lexington Herald-Leader – [Kentucky](#)

Estes Park Trail-Gazette – [Colorado](#)

The Daily Times – [Salisbury, Md](#)

Bayside Gazette – [Maryland](#)

Audubon Magazine

[Artists for Conservation](#)

[Rigor Vitae: Life Unyielding](#)

[Rigor Vitae](#)
[Wes & Rachelle Siegrist](#)
[Morten Solberg](#)
[North American Wildlife Encounters- A celebration of art and nature!](#)
[Tucson Lifestyle Magazine](#)
[Wildlife Art Journal- Bookshelf](#)

EVENTS, RADIO, TELEVISION

AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART featured at
[The Dancing Star Foundation](#) Fundraising Reception with Host William Shatner
and Musical Entertainment by Jesse Carmichael of Maroon 5/1863
in the beautiful Santa Monica home of Ms. Kara Fox
Sunday, May 6, 2012
<http://dancingstarfoundation.org/>

AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART featured at the 2011 National Wildlife Federation Washington, D.C. Gala honoring Robert Redford as Conservationist of The Year and First Lady Michelle Obama for the Special 75th Anniversary Conservation Award. **AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART** was distributed as a kind of educational party favor at the 75th Anniversary Gala of the National Wildlife Federation on April 13, 2011 at the Hyatt Regency Washington, at which The National Wildlife Federation honored Robert Redford as its Conservationist of the Year, along with seven other National Conservation Achievement Award recipients including First Lady Michelle Obama for the Special 75th Anniversary Conservation Award, and Senator Richard G. Lugar (R-Indiana), among others. Previous honorees have included former Vice President Al Gore, author Thomas Friedman, former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, former President Jimmy Carter, Lady Bird Johnson, Ted Turner, the Anheuser-Busch Companies, and other distinguished recipients. Distribution of **AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART** at the National Wildlife Federation Gala was made possible by the Susan Kathleen Black Foundation, James E. Parkman, Chairman, who personally sponsored design and printing of the book. Initial research and writing of **American Wildlife Art** was sponsored through a lead grant to Cornell University Press for a post-doctoral fellowship for David Wagner from Robert S. and Grayce B. Kerr Foundation, with additional support from the Newport Wilderness Society from the Peninsula Arts Association and The Wisconsin Arts Board.

[Click here to listen to an interview of Author, Dr. David J. Wagner and Wildlife Sculptor, Kent Ullberg, by Larry Meiller of Wisconsin Public Radio about Ullberg's sculpture as featured in AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART.](#) (11/12/2008 @39 minutes → Real Player required: www.real.com- free download/ available online in two formats – RealAudio and MP3)
[Click here to listen an interview of Author, Dr. David J. Wagner, by Larry Meiller of Wisconsin Public Radio about his book.](#)
(8/28/2008 @39 minutes → Real Player required: www.real.com – free download/ available online in two formats – RealAudio and MP3)

[Click here to listen to David Wagner and Robert Bateman speak on KPBS radio, 89.5 FM San Diego with Alison St. John.](#)

Read a short summary [here](#), titled, “Wildlife Artist Discusses His Passion For Natural World“. Click here for the scanned PDF article from “Wildlife Artists Interpret Environment, History”, as published in *The Resorter Reporter*, August 2008 [Page 1](#) [Page 2](#)

Watch Outdoor Wisconsin, Milwaukee Public TV, March 2008
Dan Small Outdoors, LLC
<http://dansmalloutdoors.com>
dansmalloutdoors@gmail.com
Blog: <http://blogtheroad.dansmalloutdoors.com>

Watch Outdoor Wisconsin every Thursday night on Milwaukee Public TV, Wisconsin Public TV and other stations around the Midwest. For information, go to www.mptv.org. Listen to Outdoors Radio with Dan Small on 11 stations in WI, including Newstalk 1130 WISN, Milwaukee at 6:00 a.m. Saturdays and 24/7 @www.lake-link.com/radio, @www.itunes.com, www.hardwater-angler.com or www.dansmalloutdoors.com. Outdoors Radio is also streamed twice daily @www.theradiofactory.com

THE EXHIBITION

Based on the book of the same title

AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART

ALLENTOWN ART MUSEUM

September 29 through December 29, 2013

David J. Wagner, Ph.D., Curator

LENDERS

(alphabetically)

Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA
Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, NY
Art Renewal Center, Port Reading, NJ
Bell Museum of Natural History, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet, SC
Dr. Gary & Mrs. Lyn Sherman, Short Hills, NJ
Gallery Jamel, Waldorf, MD
John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove, Audubon, PA
Gigi LaBudde and Michael Whaley, Spring Green, WI
Montgomery County Parks and Heritage Services Regional Office
at Lower Perkiomen Valley Park, Oaks, PA
The Schiele Museum of Natural History, Gastonia, NC
Silverfish Press, La Jolla, CA
Rockwell Museum of Western Art, Corning, NY

Kent Ullberg Studio, Loveland, CO
U.D. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV
Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, Salisbury, MD

THE ARTISTS

(alphabetically)

Agnew, John
Audubon, John James
Barth, Larry
Bateman, Robert
Bell, Julie
Benson, Frank
Bishop, Richard
Brest van Kempfen, Carel Pieter
Catesby, Mark
Darling, Ding
Deming, Edwin Willard
Denman, Andrew
Fuertes, Louis Agassiz
Godin, Pat
Harnett, William
Huntington, Anna Hyatt
Jaques, Francis Lee
Jennewein, Carl Paul
Kemeys, Edward
Laessle, Albert
Lathrop, Gertrude Katherine
Manship, Paul
Meltzoff, Stanley
Miller, Terry
Proctor, Alexander Phimister
Russell, Charles
Schultz, Marcus
Sharp, John
Shonnard, Eugenie Frederica
Shrady, William
Siegrist, Rachelle
Siegrist, Wes
Susinno, Mark
Sweet, Francis
Tako, Jason Lee
Tait, Arthur Fitzwilliam
Ward, Lem
Ward, Steve
Williams, Wheeler
Wilson, Alexander

EXHIBITION SYNOPSIS

*Adapted From The Book
by the Author/Curator*

The book, AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART, traces the history of a genre shaped by four centuries of aesthetic and ideological appropriation, from its beginnings in colonial times to works by influential artists of the present day, and explains how aesthetic idioms and imagery have evolved, how its ecological ideologies have changed with changing

circumstances and ideas about animals and their habitats, and how artists and entrepreneurs developed and influenced the market for wildlife art. The book serves as a foil for the exhibition.

The exhibition begins with the works of John White and Mark Catesby, artists who documented the flora and fauna of the New World and presented Europeans with a view of both the economic potential and the natural wonders of the then sparsely settled continent. After the American Revolution, as the new nation grew, artists such as Alexander Wilson and especially John James Audubon caused the course of American wildlife art history to turn and advance again. They set the stage for Arthur Tait and his collaboration with Currier & Ives, which brought wildlife art to the masses and re-focused the genre on sport. Edward Kemeys' seminal sculptures captured the essence of disappearing wildlife like the American bison at the same time that prominent Americans like George B. Grinnell, William Hornaday, and Theodore Roosevelt were promoting wilderness preservation and the ethics of sportsmanship. Works by the second generation of sculptors who followed are also featured in this exhibition.

Contemporaries Louis Agassiz Fuertes and Carl Rungius, were extraordinary painters who professionalized the genre and brought it into the Twentieth Century. Rungius introduced an aesthetic of impressionism which was shaped by the introduction of modernism in America through the Armory Show of 1913, while Fuertes, whose mentors were painter Abbott Thayer (who pioneered art of camouflage) and ornithologist Elliott Coues, introduced a new penetrating kind of imagery that Roger Tory Peterson subsequently described as "wildlife art gestalt."

The exhibition continues with federal duck stamps and duck stamp prints, decorative carvings by the Chesapeake Bay's Ward Brothers and carvers who followed, diorama-like paintings of Francis Lee Jaques, plus contemporary artists including Stanley Meltzoff (progenitor of dive art), Robert Bateman and Kent Ullberg whose work at once departs from and embodies the legacies, traditions, and innovations that informed and preceded it.

EARLY NATURAL HISTORY ART

Really great, sixteenth-century American wildlife art is hard to find and rare. Of work that remains today, the subtle watercolor drawings of John White are the best. Symbolized by its famous and, sometimes, infamous explorers, the sixteenth century was a time of European discovery and territorialization in the New World. In 1513, Ponce de Leon landed in Florida and claimed it for Spain; in 1534, Jacques Cartier landed in the eastern Gaspe region of what is now Canada and claimed it for France. Fifty years later, in 1584, Sir Walter Raleigh outfitted a reconnaissance expedition that foreshadowed a new epoch in America's history. The purpose of the expedition was not merely to discover and lay claim to new lands. Raleigh was searching for a location for an English settlement on North America's eastern seaboard that could be economically driven by the exportation and consumption of abundant natural "commodities," as furs or salted fish, for example, were called then. John White was among the members of that expedition, and subsequent expeditions.

Later colonial American wildlife art, produced during the Enlightenment when Williamsburg was the capital of The Virginia Colony, is represented at its best by the didactic, hand-colored etchings of Mark Catesby that were published for scientific documentation and study of natural history. By then, America's mid-Atlantic seaboard had been populated with permanent settlements. The first of these was established in 1607 and named Jamestown. Founded further north in 1620, Plymouth became the first permanent settlement in New England. New Amsterdam, as New York was called, was established in 1624. In 1632, Middle Plantation was settled not far from Jamestown and renamed Williamsburg when it was made the capital of Virginia in 1699. Not long before that, in 1680, Charles Town, later Charleston, was founded as the capital of the new colony of Carolina, and John James Audubon would work there some 150 years later.

EARLY COLONIAL AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART

JOHN WHITE

Early colonial American wildlife art is exemplified, at its best, by the subtly alive watercolor drawings of John White. Not much is known about White. Biographers have determined that he was born between 1540 and 1550 in London, and died in England around 1606. In addition to taking part in Raleigh's 1584 reconnaissance expedition and the attempt to plant a colony there in 1585–86, White he set sail for a third time in 1587, this time not as an artist but, rather, as governor of what would become the fabled Lost Colony of Roanoke.

To create his watercolor drawings, White drew outlines of his subjects on paper in black lead and filled in the resulting shapes by shading and stippling them with watercolors. As a draftsman, White was particularly adept at outlining the shapes of his subjects and rendering them in proper proportion. As a watercolorist, one of White's special talents was using small brush strokes to capture the detail and texture of fur or fish scales or the markings of a given species. He was also able to evoke three-dimensional form by delicately modulating colors. White's subtle and restrained use of watercolor created a sense of immediacy and freshness that made his remarkable early works come alive.

LATER COLONIAL AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART MARK CATESBY

Later colonial American wildlife art, produced during the Enlightenment, is represented at its best by Mark Catesby (1682/83-1749) and his hand-colored etchings. Catesby made New World wildlife and plants available for science in Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands, the first color-plate book on American natural history. Catesby can take credit for five notable accomplishments: he searched for and discovered numerous New World species previously unknown to science; he wrote the text for his book without the aid of formal training in science; he composed the imagery for his book without the aid of formal training in art; he learned the process of etching in order to bring his book to market; and, along the way, he became his own publisher. This kind of enterprise, in which a single mercantile entrepreneur carried out virtually every phase of production, would be increasingly replaced by commercial specialization in the nineteenth century. Mark Catesby is significant in the history of American wildlife art because he founded practices upon which others would establish themselves later on.

THE NEW U.S. MILIEU AND THE RACE TO PUBLISH BIRDS

The next episode in the story of American wildlife art did not begin until the first decade of the nineteenth century, more than fifty years after Mark Catesby completed his Natural History. This episode unfolded as a race of sorts to discover and portray birds. It resulted in the publication of two new works. The first, American Ornithology, contained 320 portraits of birds attributed to Alexander Wilson. The second, the incomparably more lavish publication Birds of America, contained 457 bird portraits attributed to John James Audubon. In reality, however, this episode was more complex than a simple race. It reflected the enormous changes that had occurred in America since Catesby published his work, notably, the American Revolution, which consumed the attention of people on both sides of the Atlantic, and coast-to-coast exploration and settlement.

THE FATHER OF AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY ALEXANDER WILSON

American Ornithology, by Alexander Wilson (1766 –1813), was the first color-plate book of American wildlife art ever printed and published in the United States. By focusing the systematic scientific methods that grew out of the Enlightenment on American birds, Wilson earned the epitaph, “father of American ornithology.” Wilson studied and knew the existing literature on American birds and the art that it contained, and he observed, dissected, described, and interpreted birds with greater breadth, depth, and precision than anyone else had before him.

Wilson drew and described 264 American bird species during his lifetime, and added 48 new species to those already known. By publishing bird species that had been discovered by Lewis and Clark, Wilson extended the territory documented by American wildlife art across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. He initiated printing and publishing of wildlife art on North American soil; established ornithology as one branch of the biological science of natural history in America; and was the first to do all of this in the new nation of the United States. He also precipitated, as a catalyst, the unsurpassed accomplishments of John James Audubon.

THE EPISODE OF JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

The accomplishments of John James Audubon (1785 – 1851) culminate the epoch of exploration and appropriation that began with John White and were extended by the art, science, and enterprise of Mark Catesby and Alexander Wilson. Audubon was blessed with exceptional talent, but without his strength of character and his flair for showmanship, he would not have achieved greatness. Audubon distinguished himself as a creative and prolific artist, an insightful and

inquiring naturalist, an entrepreneurial publisher, and the tenacious force behind Birds of America. Considering that North America has some 654 species of indigenous birds and that Audubon never made it to the Rocky Mountains, the fact that Birds of America represents 457 bird species (not to mention that Audubon painted 1,069 separate images for his book), is remarkable. But that's not all. Audubon prolifically documented his findings in writing, and published Viviparous Quadrupeds in collaboration with Reverend John Bachman of Charleston.

As a publishing entrepreneur, Audubon transcended his times by developing and perfecting enterprising marketing and production methods, which gave rise to and, in fact, became hallmarks of publishing during the Industrial Revolution. A self-reliant woodsman who drew on his wit and experience rather than on fashionable ideologies like Manifest Destiny, Audubon was a visionary who observed and expressed concern that wildlife depletion went hand-in-hand with national expansion. Above all else, however, Audubon was the gifted artist and inquiring naturalist who was the force behind Birds of America, the greatest wildlife art publication in history.

MID TO LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY:
DEMOCRATIZATION AND RE-APPROPRIATION
PRINTS FOR THE MASSES OF WILDLIFE AS GAME FOR SPORT

Between 1850 and 1852, several events took place that profoundly affected American wildlife art. These events occurred as New York was emerging as the center of art for the nation, as outdoor recreation, particularly hunting and fishing, and much of that in The Adirondacks, was emerging as a leisure pursuit among masses of increasingly affluent Americans, and as an affordable print culture emerged out of the technology of lithography. In 1851, a thirty-nine-year-old publisher who had a knack for being in the right place at the right time noticed a painting by Arthur Tait. The publisher's name was Nathaniel Currier. Five years later, he would partner with his bookkeeper, James Ives to form a company that they advertised with slogans such as "Print-Makers to the American People." From 1852 to 1864, their chief supplier of wildlife imagery was Arthur Tait. As a consequence, expensive natural history folios such as those produced by John James Audubon would be eclipsed in the marketplace by cheap and affordable prints that portrayed wildlife not for the sake of science but as game for sport. Underlying this context and the democratization of American wildlife art was the Industrial Revolution.

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART
ARTHUR F. TAIT

On September 3, 1850, a struggling artist named Arthur F. Tait (1819–1905) disembarked a ship from Liverpool and set foot in New York. Enjoying the twilight of his life at the rural northern tip was John James Audubon. He was sixty-six years old. Tait was thirty-three. Although Tait was adept at painting and printing bucolic landscapes and images of domestic animals and hunting parties, he came to American because he had no hope of breaking into a market dominated by the likes of Edwin Landseer, a favorite of the British public and Queen Victoria.

Arthur Tait played a central role in the democratization of American wildlife art by painting species such as white-tailed deer, bear, grouse, mallards, quail, and trout as game for sportsmen, and by collaborating with lithographers who made his and other's work affordable to the American people. In addition, Tait placed his subjects in replete landscapes like those painted by members of the Hudson River School. By portraying relationships between wildlife and sportsmen, Tait distinguished himself from Audubon and his predecessors. Before Tait, human presence was not part of the imagery of American wildlife art. With Tait, sportsmen became a part of its iconography. In all, Arthur Tait produced approximately seventeen hundred paintings of which fifty-two were published by Nathaniel Currier, Currier & Ives, and L. Prang and Company.

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART
EDWARD KEMEYS

In 1870, Edward Kemeys (1843–1907), an American by birth with no formal training in art, modeled two sculptures of wolves that were subsequently cast into bronze. These works were likely Kemeys's first castings and the first by an artist who produced a body of sculpture devoted to American wildlife. Two years later, Kemeys distinguished himself by installing the first public wildlife sculpture in the United States. Entitled Two Hudson Bay Gray Wolves Quarreling Over the Carcass of a Deer, it was cast life-size in bronze and installed in Fairmount Park in Philadelphia.

With these sculptures and the body of work that followed, Edward Kemeys initiated a diversification of American wildlife art. He added sculpture as a format, depth as a dimension, and bronze as a medium. Kemeys also diversified American wildlife art by modeling predators—alone and with their prey—in addition to nonpredatory species, particularly those that inhabited the American West.

Kemeys worked without rival for about twenty years. His apotheosis came in 1893 with a body of work that adorned the grounds of the World's Columbian Exposition and the Art Institute of Chicago the year after that. By this time, a second generation of sculptors such as Edward Demming, Anna Hyatt Huntington, Albert Laessle, Paul Manship, Alexander Phimister Proctor, Charles Russell, and Henry Shrady, had emerged, and they would propel wildlife art into The Twentieth Century.

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY TO PRESENT

By the time Arthur Tait died in 1905 and Currier & Ives was liquidated in 1907 (the same year that Edward Kemeys died), more American wildlife paintings and sculptures of a diverse range were being produced than ever. American wildlife art at the turn of the century was also characterized by the emergence of professionally trained artists, two of whom – Carl Rungius and Louis Agassiz Fuertes – helped fully develop the genre's principal styles – realism and impressionism – and, by the 19-teens, bridge the art of natural history and sport into the twentieth century.

In the second half of the 1920's, Francis Lee Jaques brought diorama painting to a threshold at the American Museum of Natural History after Frank Chapman recruited him from Minnesota to New York in 1924. Duck stamps emerged in the 1930's as a manifestation and agent of the Conservation Movement, while decorative carvings evolved out of service decoys in the 1940's after the Great Depression. In the second half of The Twentieth Century, Stanley Meltzoff became the progenitor of so-called "dive art," while Canadian painter, Robert Bateman blended the genre with the ideology of environmentalism, and Swedish-American, Kent Ullberg advanced wildlife sculpture within the new, broad aesthetic of Post Modernism.

THE ART AND INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARIES CARL RUNGIUS AND LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES

Of influential and important American wildlife painters, Louis Agassiz Fuertes (1874-1927) was the first born in the United States, and the first who enjoyed success at a young age as a prodigy. While Fuertes' predecessors were self-taught, Fuertes received training from professionals in art and science. His style endures in a significant body of work by younger artists such as Roger Tory Peterson who described Fuertes artistry in psychological terms, saying he captured the "gestalt" of the birds he painted. Fuertes modernized the art of natural history by portraying birds with a higher level of integrity than previous wildlife artists, painting characteristic attitudes, postures, behaviors, and ecology of birds in a penetrating style that revealed the inner character of birds.

CARL RUNGIUS

Carl Rungius (1869-1959) modernized American wildlife painting by freeing it from a style and technique of tight delineation and brushwork. Like Cézanne, who was influenced by classical balance, order, and permanence, Rungius constructed his signature paintings as carefully as if he was building them from blocks of color. Rungius fit details together to create structural solidity and stability. He sacrificed individual details to design as a whole, concentrating on basic shapes and over-all composition and design, which he painted impressionistically in broad-brush strokes. His easel paintings, sculptures, and etchings were made from the perspective of a sportsman, and sportsmen were his primary market. In addition, the paintings commissioned by the Bronx Zoo for its Gallery of Wild Animals promoted education and appreciation of wildlife among the general public.

ART OF THE DIORAMA
FRANCIS LEE JAQUES

Francis Lee Jaques (1887–1969), a commercial artist from Minnesota, brought diorama painting to its highest threshold after Frank Chapman hired him to work at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City in 1924, and then after that, when Jaques returned to Minnesota to produce dioramas at the Bell Museum of Natural History.

Jaques' aesthetic was one of ecological didacticism; that is, he depicted wildlife against land, sky, and seascapes to reflect the interrelationships of species and their ecosystems with special attention to form and color. In contrast to Fuertes' characterizations or Rungius' painterly impressionism, Jaques' wildlife images were hard-edged silhouettes, often backlit and flatly colored. By providing ecological clues such as topography and foliage, Jaques heightened viewers' perceptions about the environment as well as wildlife ecology. Another of Jaques' special contributions to American wildlife art image making was the depiction of wildlife within eyesight of man-made structures such as railroad tracks and farm yards—a pictorial device that reminds viewers that they are also part of the ecosystem.

AMERICAN WILDLIFE ART
DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

In 1934, Roger Tory Peterson's A Field Guide to the Birds was published by Houghton Mifflin Company. It promoted the recreational value of bird-watching and, through multiple editions and reprints in languages worldwide, became the most far-reaching book containing wildlife art in the twentieth century. The same year, Walt Disney created the cartoon character Donald Duck.

THE FEDERAL DUCK STAMP

Another milestone in 1934 was the enactment of the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act. A special committee appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose members included Aldo Leopold and J. N. "Ding" Darling, conceived of the federal duck stamp, as the program came to be known colloquially, to address the depletion of waterfowl populations. With it, wildlife art became a source of funds for federal game management and a powerful agent of conservation. Defined by its foremost proponent, Aldo Leopold, as "the art of making the land produce sustained annual crops of wild game for recreational use," game management relied on the notion of ecology, or "the study of the interrelationships of organisms to one another and to the environment," to resolve the nation's wildlife resource dilemma. The first federal duck stamp print featured Richard Bishop's 1936 federal duck stamp design of three Canada geese and was published that same year by Abercrombie & Fitch, an upscale sporting goods in New York City.

THE EMERGENCE OF DECORATIVE CARVING

The second quarter of the twentieth century also gave rise to a type of wildlife art known as decorative carving. It began largely through the artistry of decoy carvers such as Lemuel T. Ward (1896–1984) and Steve Ward (1894–1976) in Crisfield, Maryland, on Chesapeake Bay, and Charles Perdew (1874-1963) and Edna Perdew (1882-1974) on the Illinois River and Mississippi flyway. By the end of the Depression, the Ward Brothers had begun to take their decoys to a new level by creating innovative designs that transcended traditional service decoys. After the Ward Brothers entered and won "Best of Show" in New York in 1948 at one of the nation's first early decoy- carving competitions, they began to embellish the shapes and painted surfaces of their carvings. Decorative carving mushroomed in the second half of the twentieth 20th Century and became part of the wildlife art genre's modern history as evidenced by The Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art Annual World Championship Carving Competition and the collection of decoys and decorative carvings which the museum has amassed.

MARINE WILDLIFE ART
STANLEY MELTZOFF

An altogether different development in American wildlife art emerged a decade after mid-century: the painting of fish from photographs taken underwater. Credit for this development belongs to Stanley Meltzoff (1917-2006). After Meltzoff earned an MFA from NYU and taught art and art history at City College for two years, he enlisted to serve as a World War II artist-journalist and art editor with Stars and Stripes magazine and served in Africa and Italy from 1941 to 1945.

After the war, Meltzoff returned to New York to teach and illustrate magazines. From 1950 to 1955, he taught at Pratt Institute, but he gradually abandoned teaching to paint full time.

For a while, Meltzoff made a living illustrating feature articles in Life and Saturday Evening Post, as well as National Geographic and other main stream magazines. In his spare time, Meltzoff pursued his other passion, diving. As noted years later in his obituary in the New York Times, “. . . even as a child in the 1920s, Mr. Meltzoff had been an avid skin diver, mainly off the New Jersey coast. By the 1940s, he was keen on spear fishing and scuba diving and, starting in 1949, he added underwater photography.” As magazine assignments waned from competition from photography, necessity became the mother of invention, which led, not surprisingly given his passion for diving, to an extended career painting marine wildlife subjects.

NEW AND RENEWED TRENDS IN PAINTED
WILDLIFE IMAGERY AND IDEOLOGY
ROBERT BATEMAN

Like any other Canadian boy with an interest in art and nature, Bob Bateman (b. 1930) idolized Canada’s Group of Seven; not only were its members household names, but their legendary travels and their robust aesthetics were celebrated in curricula taught at leading Canadian art schools across the nation. After college, Bateman set struggled with other idioms of artistic expression. “. . . I became interested in the work of Picasso and Braque and I found myself using these techniques of perspective and distortion to depict my own world . . .” An end to his search for an artistic identity came in 1963, when, after attending a retrospective exhibition of the work of Andrew Wyeth (b. 1917) at the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo, New York, Bateman rediscovered the possibilities of representational painting, so much maligned by the art world in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. By adapting Wyeth’s technique for his own portrayal of nature’s dramas, and by employing modern styles to shape composition and design, Robert Bateman not only found his artistic identity but advanced the aesthetic of American wildlife art yet again. Bateman also contributed to the ideology of the genre by creating hard-hitting environmental paintings in opposition to industrial-scale commercial fishing and clear-cut forestry.

MODERN WILDLIFE SCULPTURE
KENT ULLBERG

The principal American wildlife sculptor who has worked in the postmodern idiom is Kent Ullberg (b. 1945). Ullberg also pioneered stainless steel as a medium for sculpture. Ullberg’s seminal post-modern work was Lincoln Centre Eagle, a 1981 monument commissioned for a Trammel Crow development in Dallas. Heightened inspiration came in 1984, when he heard an address by architect Philip C. Johnson while attending the annual meeting of the National Sculpture Society in New York. In May 1986, The National Wildlife Federation commissioned Ullberg to produce a sculpture fountain for a plaza formed by the addition of two buildings to the organization’s headquarters in Washington, D.C. Ullberg proposed whopping cranes as a subject to express the federation’s mission. Drawing on his love of music and the fact that cranes perform mating dances, Ullberg titled the installation Rites of Spring, after Igor Stravinsky’s radically rhythmic and dissonant ballet. Subsequent commissions have included Deinonychus Dinosaurs, a 25’ monument on Logan Square in Philadelphia; Sailfish in Three Stages of Ascending, the centerpiece of The Broward Convention Center Marine Fountain, a 120’ by 150’ installation of bronze, granite, and water, in Ft. Lauderdale, FL; and his First National Bank Spirit of Nebraska’s Wilderness monument in Omaha.

INFORMATION

For information, about the exhibition, lectures, or book signings, contact:

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