

The Center for Maine Contemporary Art (CMCA) will present a major exhibition of artist Ann Craven's paintings beginning June 29 and continuing through October 13, 2019. The exhibition, *Ann Craven: Birds We Know*, will be the first show of the noted artist's work in Maine, where she has been a seasonal resident and has been painting for more than 25 years.

Ann Craven is widely known for her lushly colored, mesmerizing portraits of the moon, birds, flowers, and other images, which she revisits in serial fashion, as well as her painted bands of color, which document her process. Craven says, "My paintings are a result of mere observation, experiment, and chance, and contain a variable that's constant and ever-changing—the moment just past."

*Birds We Know* will present a comprehensive selection of the artist's work, and will be accompanied by an illustrated, hard-cover catalog with an essay by Christopher B. Crosman, founding curator, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and former director, Farnsworth Art Museum.

In the essay, Crosman states, "...Ann Craven's birds, moons, trees, and her stripe and palette paintings all enforce the hard stop our mind and eye make before inexplicable paintings, paintings that affirm an inseparability of beauty, truth and virtue. This is painting at its most authentic and original, at its most memorable and tenderly remarkable."

Craven began painting in Maine in the early 1990s. First in a borrowed barn near Slab City Road in the mid-coast village of Lincolnville, then from her own barn that she converted to a studio on a farm she purchased nearby. Lincolnville and the surrounding region has harbored artists for decades, beginning in the 1950s when Neil Welliver, Alex Katz, Lois Dodd and other New York-based artists started summering in the area. It was on Lincolnville beach, a small strip of sand anchored by The Lobster Pound restaurant, that Craven painted her first "Moon" painting in 1995. The experience, she says, "gave me my subject matter, I was literally chasing the moon."

For Craven, painting serial versions of the moon on site was a way to conflate the momentary with the constant. The moon became for her a symbol of time and memory, themes that remain the primary focus of her work. The paintings of birds soon followed, inspired by color-plates found in her Italian grandmother's vintage ornithology books. Like the moon the birds serve as a touchstone for memory, each repetition of the image a revisiting of a moment, a recalling of loved ones.

In 2008, Craven moved from Lincolnville to an historic house on the banks of the St. George River

in Cushing. The property had an old garden shed that became her new studio and, importantly, a majestic purple beech tree hugging the shore. This 100-plus-year-old tree is Craven's newest motif. "It reminded me of the moon," she says, "because it was round and because of all the life it had seen. Families coming and going, life lived. Like the moon it's a constant that ebbs and flows, but the opposite of the moon in that it changes with the day and becomes a silhouette against the sunset."

Craven is a diarist, each of her paintings is inscribed with the date and time of its 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."

In addition to numerous group exhibitions worldwide, Craven had her first retrospective, titled TIME, at Le Confort Moderne in Poitiers, France, in 2014. Other recent major solo exhibitions include Promise (Birds for Chicago), Shane Campbell, Chicago, 2019; Sunset Moon, Karma, NY, 2018; Snowbirds, Nina Johnson, Miami, 2018; Animals 1999-2017, Southard Reid, London, 2017; Hello, Hello, Hello, Maccarone, NY, 2016, and Ann Craven, Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles, 2014.

Her work has been reviewed in publications including The New York Times, Modern Painters, Art News, LA Times, Art in America, Artforum, Flash Art, The New Yorker, Frieze, among others. Craven's paintings are in the public collections of The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The New Museum, The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and private collections worldwide.

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