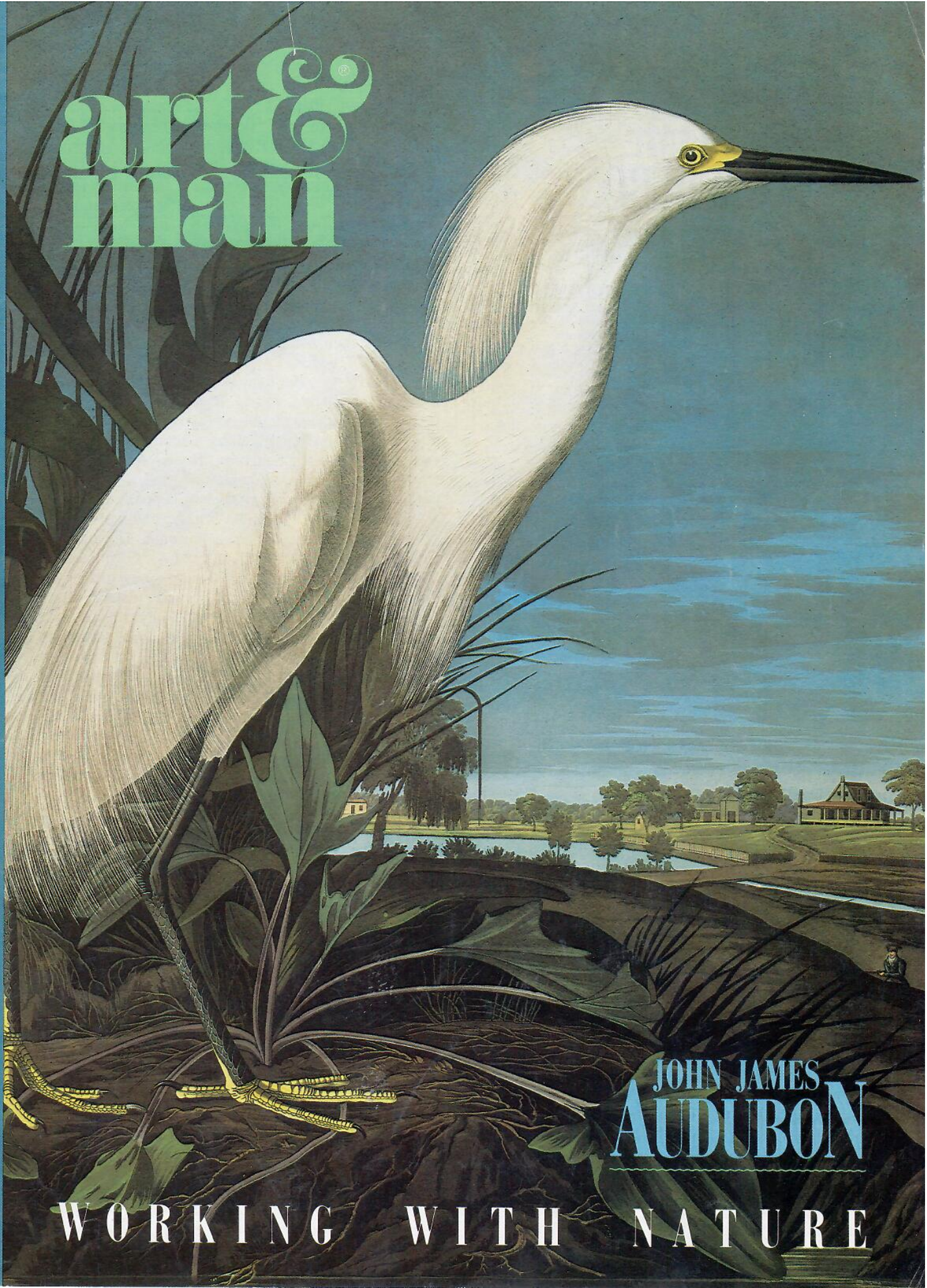


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# art & man



JOHN JAMES  
**AUDUBON**

WORKING WITH NATURE



# JOHN JAMES AUDUBON:



SELF-PORTRAIT, 1826

## ARTIST WITH A VISION



BLUE JAY: FROM PLATE CII

**H**ave you ever gotten so interested in something — a sport, music, working on your car — that you spend every minute you can at that activity, and the rest of the time thinking about it? Nineteenth-century American artist John James Audubon felt that way about birds. He spent so much of his life watching and drawing them that his wife once said, “I have a rival in every bird.”

Audubon is famous mainly for one enormous publication called *The Birds of America*. Other artists had done bird drawings before, but they were nothing like Audubon’s. There were 435 hand-colored engravings (which included 1,065 birds), and each was life-size. Every print was huge — at least six square feet, roughly the size of a large poster. However, the most striking thing about these bird prints was not just their accuracy and incredible detail, but the sense of excitement and life they conveyed. They weren’t just scientific drawings — they were works of art.

John James Audubon was born in 1785 (just a few

years after the American Revolution) in Santo Domingo (now Haiti). His father, a French sea captain, took his son home to France where he grew up in a small village outside Paris. Audubon was always interested in nature and as a teenager spent most of his time sketching in the nearby fields. In 1802, Audubon went to Paris to study art. A year later, to keep his son from being drafted into Napoleon’s army, Audubon’s father sent him to America to manage some property he owned near Philadelphia.

Charming and handsome, Audubon spent his time hunting, riding and drawing birds. In 1808, he married a neighbor’s daughter and the couple moved west to improve their fortune. They opened a general store in Kentucky which “went on prosperously when I attended to it . . . but then as now, my thoughts were ever turning toward birds.” The Audubons had two sons and a few years later, borrowed money to buy a mill. But by 1817, the country’s economy worsened and Audubon went bankrupt. He wrote, “Nothing was left to me but my humble talents.”

For the next 20 years, Audubon supported himself by doing portraits. He taught briefly, and worked for a while as a taxidermist in a museum. During this period, around 1820, Audubon got his “Great Idea.” He would produce a book containing every species of bird in America, in life-size, accurate detail. Later that year, he left on the first of the many trips he was to take in order to draw birds in their natural settings.

In a few years, Audubon had hundreds of beautiful watercolor drawings. Now he needed a publisher. He searched unsuccessfully in the United States then, in 1826, sailed for Europe. Audubon went to the right place at the right time. Mid-nineteenth-century Europeans were fascinated by science, nature, and the American wilderness. With his dramatic personality, long curly hair, tall tales, and the frontier costume he wore, Audubon was an overnight sensation. He found an engraver to reproduce his paintings and subscribers to buy the prints. For the next dozen years, Audubon traveled throughout America drawing and collecting birds. He and his wife and sons became involved in a kind of publishing business — going on speaking engagements, collecting payments, and getting new subscribers. Audubon painted the birds while his assistants did the landscapes, and floral backgrounds. In 1839, *The Birds of America* was finished.

A year later, Audubon did a small version of his now famous book, which sold well, allowing the family to live comfortably. They bought property on the Hudson River above New York City. Audubon took one more trip, up the Missouri River, and produced a book on animals. But by 1846, the artist’s eyesight began to fail and he died five years later.

In this issue you’ll learn more about the life and art of John James Audubon, you’ll discover other artists who have worked from nature, and finally, you’ll create your own unusual nature drawing. ○



"As I awoke in the morning and continued the whole day long, so full was my mind of birds and their habits that in my sleep I continually dreamed of birds."

— AUDUBON



JOHN JAMES AUDUBON (1785-1851). THE MOCKING BIRD. PLATE XXI. 1827. HAND-COLORED ENGRAVING WITH AQUATINT. 33" X 23 1/2". NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART.

Every Audubon painting tells a story. What is happening in this one?

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COVER: JOHN JAMES AUDUBON (1785-1851). SNOWY HERON, OR WHITE EGRET: PLATE CXXLII, 1835. HAND-COLORED ENGRAVING WITH AQUATINT. 25 3/4" X 20 3/4". NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.



# THE GREAT IDEA



AMERICAN FLAMINGO.  
FROM PLATE CCCCXXXI.

Think about taking a hike in the woods or a nearby park, to do some nature sketches. What would you take along? You'd probably bring a pair of high-powered binoculars, a camera, and a small illustrated field-guide. You might even be familiar with the plants or animals you wanted to draw from watching some of the many nature programs frequently shown on television.

To really appreciate the achievements of John James Audubon, it is important to remember that a century ago, none of the resources above existed. The artist may have owned one of the few available reference books on birds, but it only listed known varieties, and had hardly any illustrations. Audubon sometimes used a small telescope to observe his models more closely, but he depended mainly on his eyesight and his aim with a gun. (At the end of the last

century, the natural resources of "the New World" seemed so unlimited that conservation was a nearly unknown concept, even — except at the end of his life — to Audubon.) An admirer of Audubon described how the artist would set off on one of his drawing trips. "After spending a short time with his family, he would start out again on his lonely journey in the woods, on foot, with his knapsack on his back, accompanied only by his dog, often remaining in the open until his clothes were in tatters."

How did Audubon create one of his best-known works, *The Trumpeter Swan* (below, left)? He may have done small sketches beforehand, but to do the large painting, he would have had to decide first on the **composition**. One of the most important features of Audubon's works is their **size**. The decision to make them "life-size" often determined their composition. If the plates were not to be done to scale, the birds could have been presented in any shape and pose the artist wished. The swan, in spite of its huge size, could have been shown in flight, or standing with its long neck extended. To fit his large birds on the page, Audubon bent and twisted them into dramatic yet lifelike **simplified shapes** (like that of the flamingo on the left). The white curves of the swan's body and the black **diagonals** of its foot and bill stand out against the bright blue background. Audubon would **combine** two or more medium-size birds on one page (see birds on pages 6-7, 8-9) and again, the frame seemed to be filled with bursting life. Audubon's paintings almost always told a story, so the smaller birds (see birds on page 2) were presented in groups involved in some situation — attacking a snake, fleeing a hawk, perched on a flowering

*"As I gazed over the ice-bound river, flock after flock of loud-sounding Trumpeter Swans could be seen coming from afar...they quietly dropped on the ice and gently turned the graceful curve of their necks backward, to sleep on the softest of pillows."*

— JOHN JAMES AUDUBON, JOURNALS

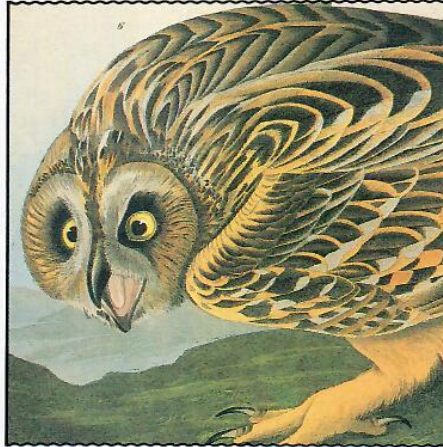
Audubon's *Birds of America* might almost be considered two works — Audubon's original paintings and the *engravings* he made of them. Which of the two swans on the right is the original watercolor painting, which is the engraved print, and what is the difference?



TRUMPETER SWAN. WATERCOLOR. NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, N.Y.



SHORT-EARED OWL. COPPERPLATE (DETAIL).



SHORT-EARED OWL. FINISHED PRINT (DETAIL).

To create the final engraved print (near left) of this owl, the engraver had to work from Audubon's original watercolor. The image was then *engraved*, or cut into a metal plate like the one on the far left. Do you know why the image was cut in *reverse*?

branch. The colors and shapes chosen for the surroundings were intended to emphasize and complement the shape and color of the bird.

To draw a bird, Audubon would make sketches and notes of its behavior, insert wires into a freshly killed specimen, which he would then arrange in a dramatic and lifelike pose. (Today he could use films or tapes or photographs as aids.) Working in pencil and watercolor, Audubon set his model against a grid background so he could draw it to scale. He selected a setting — a tree branch or landscape — which was usually drawn in by one of his assistants. When he wanted to change his composition, Audubon would use collage, pasting elements from one area on top of another. At times, he added pastel for emphasis. His background colors were carefully chosen to enhance the figure — a purple sky is the **complement** (or opposite color) of a yellow bill; an orange head

contrasts with a blue sky; a red foot with green water. Can you find examples in the magazine of any of these **color schemes**?

Once Audubon finished his watercolor, he needed to have it **engraved** so it could be printed. The painting had to be translated into lines and tones which were cut into metal plates (see copperplate above, left), then inked and printed on large sheets of special paper. Each print was individually painted by a group of "colorists." Audubon was fortunate to find Robert Havell, a gifted London engraver, to print most of his works. A comparison of the two swans below shows how important the engraving process was. Following Audubon's instructions, Havell has **composed** the bird in the frame by surrounding it with water and adding a dramatic **focal point** — the insect in the center. Together, artist and engraver have made *The Trumpeter Swan* into a work of art. ◯



TRUMPETER SWAN: PLATE CCCCVI, 1838. HAND-COLORED ENGRAVING WITH AQUATINT. 25 1/4" X 38 5/8". NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.



## MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: PREVIEW



JOHN JAMES AUDUBON, GANNETS.

# ARCTIC ADVENTURE

*"The die is cast. This season I go to the coast of Labrador."*

— JOHN JAMES AUDUBON



COMMON MERGANSER. FROM PLATE CCCXXXI.

Audubon had drawn birds nearly all his life. But after 1820, when he got his "Great Idea," he started going on long, intensive drawing trips in order to document every bird in America. He traveled down the Mississippi, throughout the northeastern United States, Florida, Texas and the Gulf Coast, and in 1833 he set out for Labrador. This three-month journey by

large sailing ship to a bleak, sparsely inhabited region in eastern Canada was probably one of the most rugged field trips Audubon ever took. In his many journals and letters home, the artist describes his northern adventure.

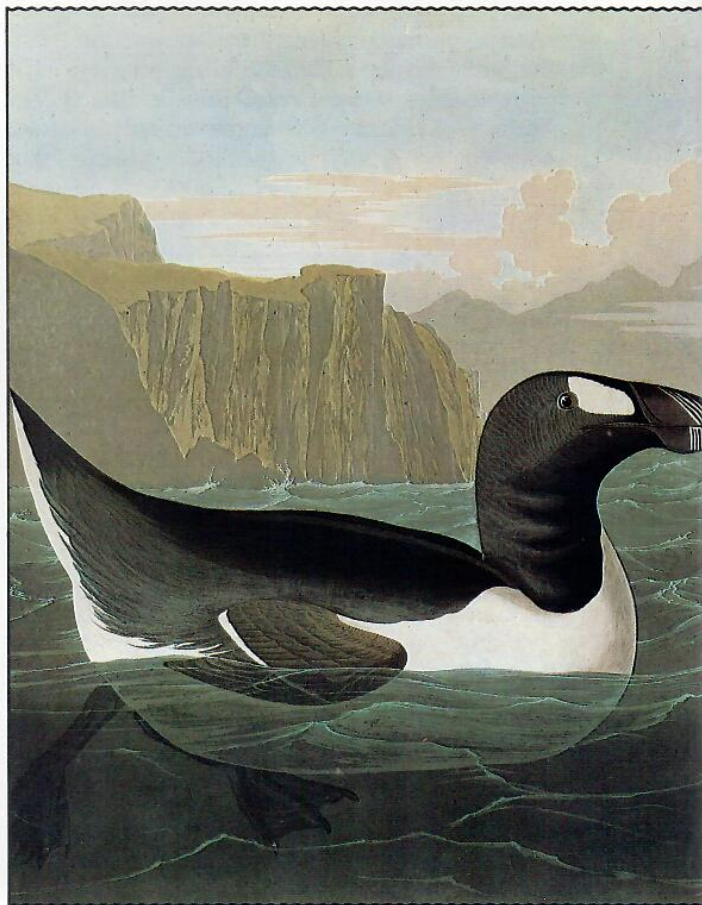
*June 4, 1833.* This morning, everyone in Eastport [Maine] came to see the show, just as if no schooner the size of the *Ripley* had ever gone from this mighty port to Labrador . . . the batteries of the fort and the cannon of the cutter saluted us, each firing four loud, oft-echoing reports.

*June 5-11.* We travelled north [along the coast of Nova Scotia] in a horrid sea. Everyone was shockingly seasick . . . as we passed through the Strait of Canso, the land rose on either side like an amphitheatre. . . . Saw some Indians in a bark canoe, then we entered the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

6 ART & MAN

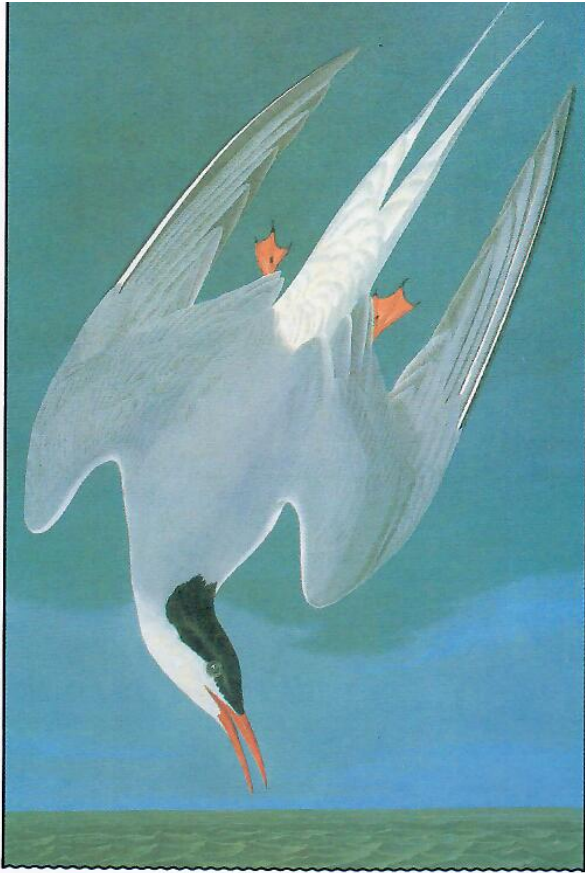
*June 14.* The wind has turned fair for our passage to Labrador . . . at about eleven today, we approached a small island, and I imagined for a time that the atmosphere around it was filled with snow flakes. When I could see the island plainly, I thought it completely covered with snow. I rubbed my eyes, took my spy-glass, and in an instant the strangest picture stood before me — it was not snow, but a mass of birds of such a size as I had never before cast my eyes on. When we had advanced to within half a mile, this magnificent veil of floating *Gannets* [left; pages 8-9] was easily seen, now shooting upwards, then descending, and again diverging toward either side and sweeping over the surface of the ocean. The whole of my party stood astounded and amazed at such a sight.

*June 17.* We are now anchored off the Labrador coast, and it is unlike anything else that I have ever seen before. . . . Its mossy, gray rocks are thrown together in the most fantastical groups, huge masses hanging as if about to roll themselves down into the depths of the sea beneath. Bays without end are sprinkled with rocky islands of all shapes and sizes where hidden in every crack is a *Cormorant*, a *Tern*, or some other wild bird. All is wonderfully grand, wild, and terrific.





ARCTIC TERN. PLATE CCL, 1833. HAND-COLORED ENGRAVING WITH AQUATINT. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.



A tern is a kind of seagull. Audubon could have shown the *Arctic Tern* (left) standing, swimming or flying, but he chose to present it in a dramatic dive. The diagonal white bird contrasts with the dark cloud behind and the horizontal water below. The sharp angles of its body are repeated in the angry, pointed waves.

*June 30.* We have been here for nearly two weeks. Each morning at four, with everyone equipped, all go off in different directions, some to the islands, others to the deep bays to look for wild life. My young friends make a curious sight when, after returning at night, all are engaged in measuring, weighing, comparing the birds and plants we have procured; operations which are carried on with the aid of dozens of candles thrust into the necks of bottles.

*July 8.* I rise with the cook at 3 in order to take full advantage of the daylight and the rare bouts of good weather. My table is set beneath a hatch fitted with a skylight, where I work as much as possible. On days such as today, disagreeable indeed is my situation. The rain falls on my drawing paper, despite all I can do. I am often obliged to close my skylight and then must work almost in darkness.

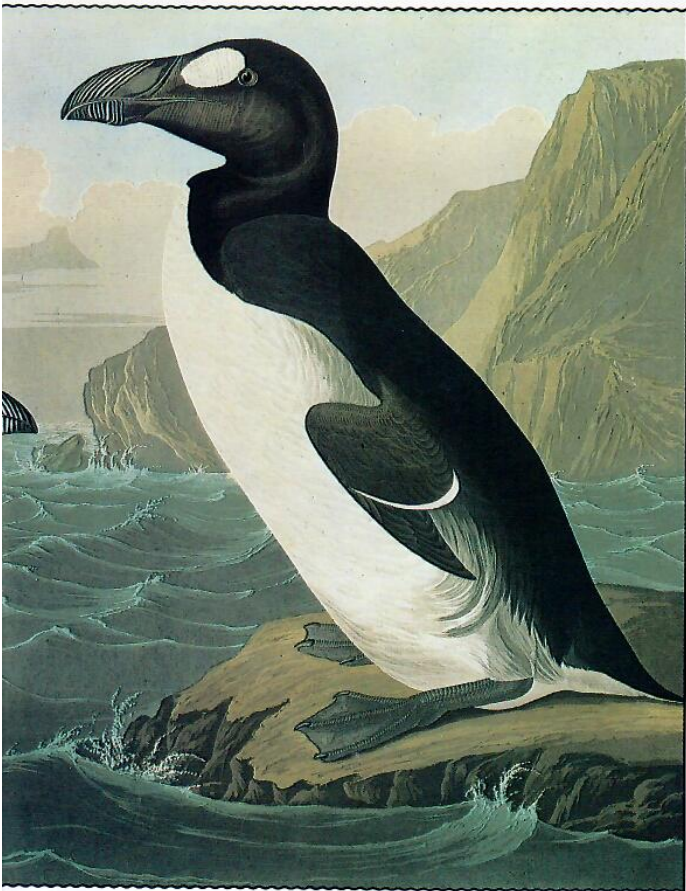
*Mid July.* Nowhere is the northeast gale so powerful as here . . . these horrid blasts seem strong enough to rend the very rocks asunder. The rain is driven in sheets so thick that all objects are lost to sight. Even I cannot draw today.

*Early August.* I notice fur animals are scarce, and every year diminishes their numbers. The Fur Company is the exterminating medium of these wild climes where greed and the love of gold can alone induce man to reside a while. Where can I go now, and visit nature undisturbed?

*August 10.* We leave at dawn tomorrow. I now sit down to post my book while a heavy gale rages around our vessel. I don't write at night because I have been drawing so constantly, often 17 hours a day, that my neck, shoulders, fingers, are almost useless. The young men think my weariness is added to by the fact that I often work in wet clothes, but I have done that all my life with no ill effects. No! It is that I am no longer young.

*August 11.* Seldom in my life have I left a country with as little regret as I do this. We are now sailing in full sight of the northwestern coast of Newfoundland. The mountains are high, with drifted snow-banks dotted over them, and cut horizontally with floating strata of fogs reaching as far as the eye can see. Twenty-three drawings have been nearly completed on this voyage, and I am content. ○

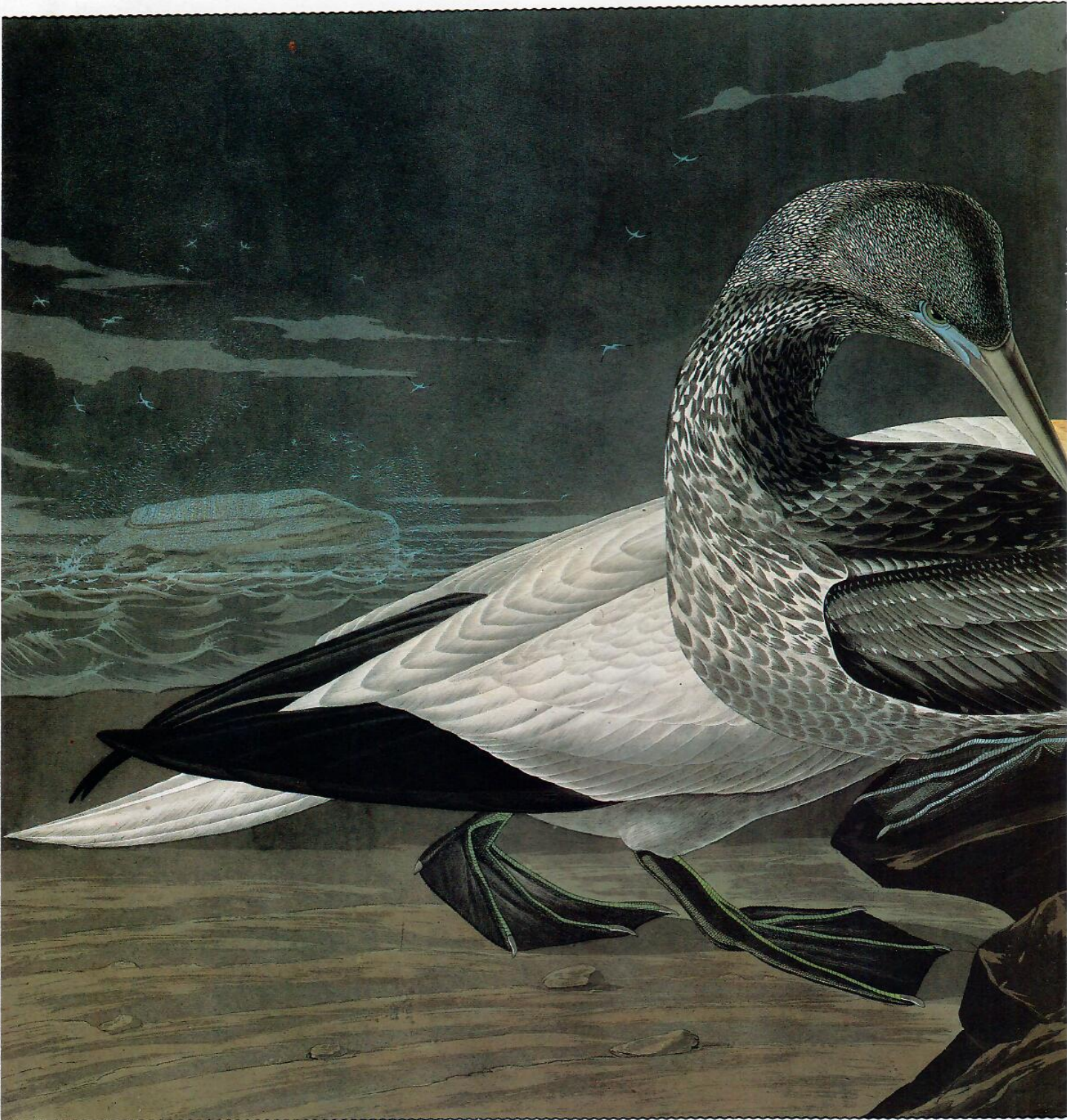
The birds on the left no longer exist. The last *Great Auk* was killed in 1844 (Audubon did this plate from preserved specimens).



GREAT AUK, 1844. HAND-COLORED ENGRAVING WITH AQUATINT. NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, N.Y.



M A S T E R P I E C E O F T H E M O N



art&  
man

A Gannet is a large, northern sea bird. Audubon has **composed** this print by filling the frame with two of these birds. A young Gannet with brownish feathers stands in front of a white, full-grown one. How do the **intersecting diagonals** formed by the two birds create the print's dynamic composition? (Imagine how they would look if Audubon had placed them side by side.) The **shapes** of the two large birds stand out against the deep blue sky while small,





JOHN JAMES AUDUBON (1785-1851). GANNETS: PLATE XXII. HAND-COLORED ENGRAVING WITH AQUATINT. NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, N.Y.

# GANNETS

*"In an instant the strangest picture stood before me—a mass of birds of such a size as I had never before cast my eyes on. When we had advanced to within half a mile, this magnificent veil of floating Gannets was easily seen, now shooting upwards, then descending and again diverging toward either side and sweeping over the surface of the ocean. The whole of my party stood astounded and amazed at such a sight."*

BY JOHN JAMES  
**AUDUBON**

distant birds **frame** their heads. Look at "Bird Island" in the background. Why does it seem so haunting and ghostly? How does the island's transparent, linear quality add to this effect? And how do the two **complementary** (opposite) colors — *blue* sky and *orange* head intensify the grandeur and loneliness of this dramatic scene? (Audubon's "Bird Rock" was said to be 400 feet high, a quarter of a mile long, and completely covered with birds.)



# REINVENTING NATURE

How can ordinary plants become great works of art?

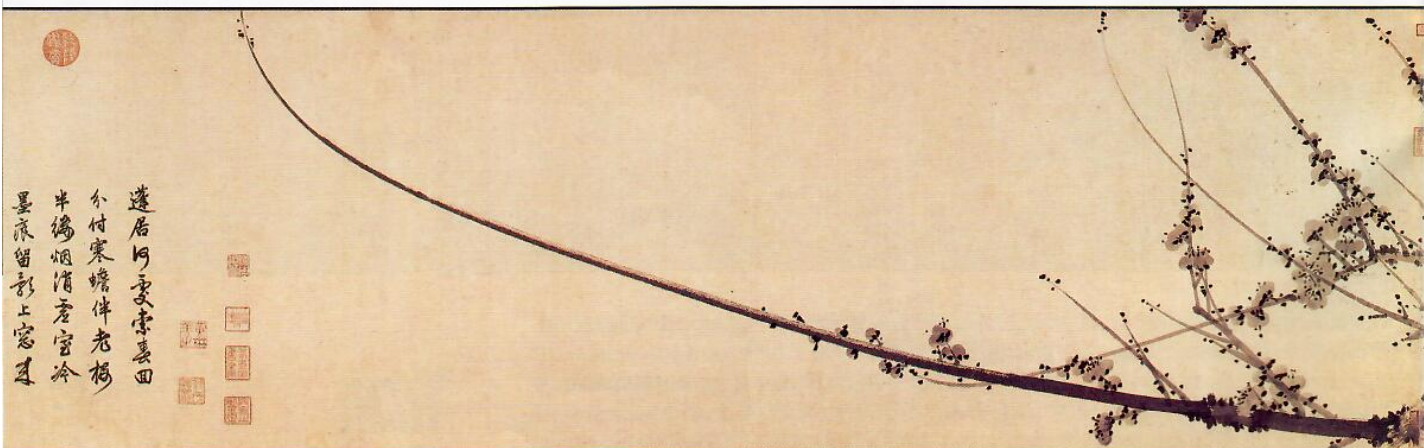
## NATURE IN BRONZE

Contemporary American artist Nancy Graves has always worked with natural images. Like Audubon, she is fascinated with science — she has sculpted life-sized herds of camels, painted maps of the moon, and constructed sculptures made out of bones. But her scientific studies are always made from an artist's point of view, "I use research to the point where I can depart from it." And, like Audubon, Graves will go to any lengths to gather authentic material (she traveled to Morocco to study the structure, habits, and movements of camels before attempting to sculpt them).

Currently, the artist is reinventing the plant world. *Zaga* (right) is made up of natural forms, but have you ever seen a plant like this? To do this kind of sculpture, Graves first collects dozens of objects that interest her — seed pods, roots, cucumbers, chicken bones, crayfish, drain spouts, wrenches — and has them all cast in bronze. She then changes and combines them to create **organic** (related to plants or animals) sculptures that seem to *grow* right out of the floor they stand on. Can you find fern shapes, leaves, sea fans, and a pair of scissors in *Zaga*? Bright, shiny enamel colors baked into the metal add to the feeling of natural "unnatural" organisms. How do all



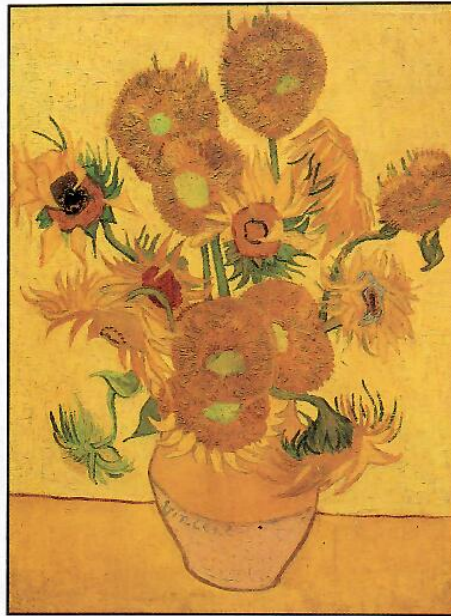
these lines, shapes, textures, and colors work together in Graves' sculpture to create the effect of a new kind of growth?





## FLOWERS OF FIRE

The work on the right is considered by many to be the most famous painting of flowers in western art. While artists like Audubon depicted nature very realistically, others like Dutch artist Vincent Van Gogh painted a private vision of the natural world that only they were able to see. Van Gogh's images of natural objects — trees, fields, flowers — were unlike any ever seen before. For Van Gogh,



color was a way of expressing emotion. The subject of *Sunflowers* is a bouquet of flowers, but it is really a painting of the color yellow. Thick, yellow-orange swirls of paint are surrounded by flame-like slashes of yellow-green. The yellow vase below sits on a golden table against a lemon-yellow wall. The one color not related to yellow stands out as a **focal point**, and seems to symbolize Van Gogh's self-expressive view of nature — his large blue signature on the vase.

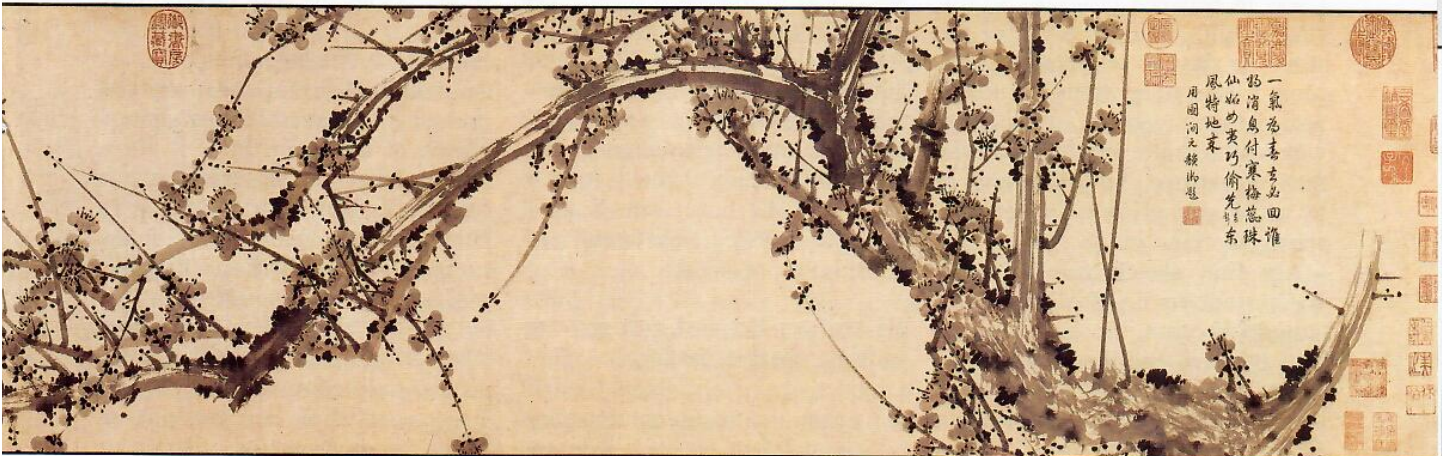
VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853-1890). SUNFLOWERS. 1880.  
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON.

## NATURAL RHYTHMS

“To paint a branch, you must first realize that you already have it entirely within yourself. Look at the paper, visualize what you are going to paint, lift your brush, and follow your vision quickly, or it will escape you.” Early 14th-century Chinese painter Tsou Fu-lei describes the way he created landscapes like the one below. Since

harmony with nature was a basic goal of Chinese life, landscape painters were interested in capturing not the details, but the **essence** of a natural scene. Plum blossoms were a favorite natural subject because they stay on branches even in snow. These round, white flowers were used a great deal in Chinese art as a symbol of hope and courage. This six-foot-long scroll painting of a single plum branch “reads” from right to left. On the

right, the older part of the branch next to the trunk is made up of short, tight, dense strokes. As your eye moves left, the strokes become longer and looser. The **natural rhythm** set up by the lines and dots of the twigs and blossoms leads the eye along the curve of the twig on the left of the scroll. Could this single, thin branch, projecting alone into empty space, stand for youth and the promise of new life?



TSOU FU-LEI. YUAN DYNASTY (1260-1368). A BREATH OF SPRING. 1360. 13 1/2" X 88". FREER GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.



# KATHY MASON



## NATURE SKETCHES

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**A** nest, fallen from a tree, mixing with pinecones and leaves on the forest floor: This was how 16-year-old Kathy Mason saw the still-life (see photo, above right) she was trying to draw in her commercial art class. Her friends thought she was crazy. This nest was clearly the hardest group of objects she could have

chosen to draw. Two months later, she was still working on its confusing jumble of lines. We visited Kathy, now a senior, at Valley Forge High School, Parma Heights, Ohio, to hear more about this Scholastic Art Award-winning work (drawing, below right). Next year, she hopes to study illustration at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

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### **Have you drawn from nature much?**

Yes, we have a whole acre of land and most of it is woods. So for years, I've gone out sketching squirrels, trees, flowers, and other things. They weren't the easiest to draw, but I felt close to them. It's what I understood the most.

### **How did you happen to do this nest?**

I was in between projects. So my teacher told me to draw one of the still-lives she had set up around the room. The only thing that appealed to me was an arrangement with shells, but everyone else was around that one. So it was almost by accident that I saw the nest and started working on it.

My first sketch was bad. "I don't want to do this" was my attitude because the nest was so hard to draw. But then my teacher started pointing out the beauty in it, and I started looking beyond its difficulty to its artistic possibilities.

### **How did you decide on the point of view?**

This view appealed to me because I could see into the nest, but also still see the outside. The nest is the center, and all the other objects — the hay and the pinecones — seem to flow around it.

### **Did you start drawing right away?**

No, I had to look at it awhile just to see where the lines were going. As my teacher says, if you put down lines that don't mean anything to you, they're not going to look like anything to anyone else. So I had to study it really hard to see where the lines were headed, how they moved, and their relationship to one another.

### **Did studying the nest give you any particular ideas or feelings?**

I tried to envision where I might see a nest like this in nature. Maybe it had fallen out of a tree and

now it's sitting on the forest floor. So I wanted to get the feeling of a forest environment.

It reminded me of times when I took walks in the woods around our house. My brother found this bird's nest and we dissected it to see how it was put together. Birds actually intertwine grass and twigs and weave them together. It's really marvelous the way they do it.

### **How did the drawing go?**

I did the nest first and then worked around it. I started with a general sketch of the main lines. It got a little easier when my teacher taught me how to use shading to show that the strands were intertwined. The nest is basically lines and how they go together.

### **When did you add the color?**

After I finished my general sketch. I spent one whole day just looking at the nest and making a list of all



the colors that I saw. Then, on a piece of illustration board, I used turpentine and oil to create a kind of wash background. To get the circle-like effects, I put down some alcohol. It resists the oil and makes it spread out. Then I tilted the board so the paints would run and mix together. After it dried, I transferred my general sketch and started in with an ebony pencil to do the details.

**What was the most difficult part?**

Trying to figure out where all the lines went. I was in the art room studying the nest with a magnifying glass every day — for two and a half months. It was mind-boggling. The hardest part was concentrating. After I looked down to draw then looked back up at the nest, I couldn't find the line I was drawing. I would go crazy. I'd ask my friends to come over and help me find the line. I was concentrating so hard my eyes hurt. The magnifying glass helped me to go into the nest. I had to see in between the lines on the outside, to the lines deeper in. I'd have to show where one line cast a shadow on another and also show the dark negative space between them. At the very end, I added colored pencil. And then at the very, very end I used a razor blade to scratch in the thinnest, highlighted lines.

**Did you make any changes in the nest from the way you saw it?**

I tried to draw it as accurately as I could, but I brought out the colors more and all the highlights. I would squint to see the large areas of light and dark and keep trying to emphasize them in the drawing.

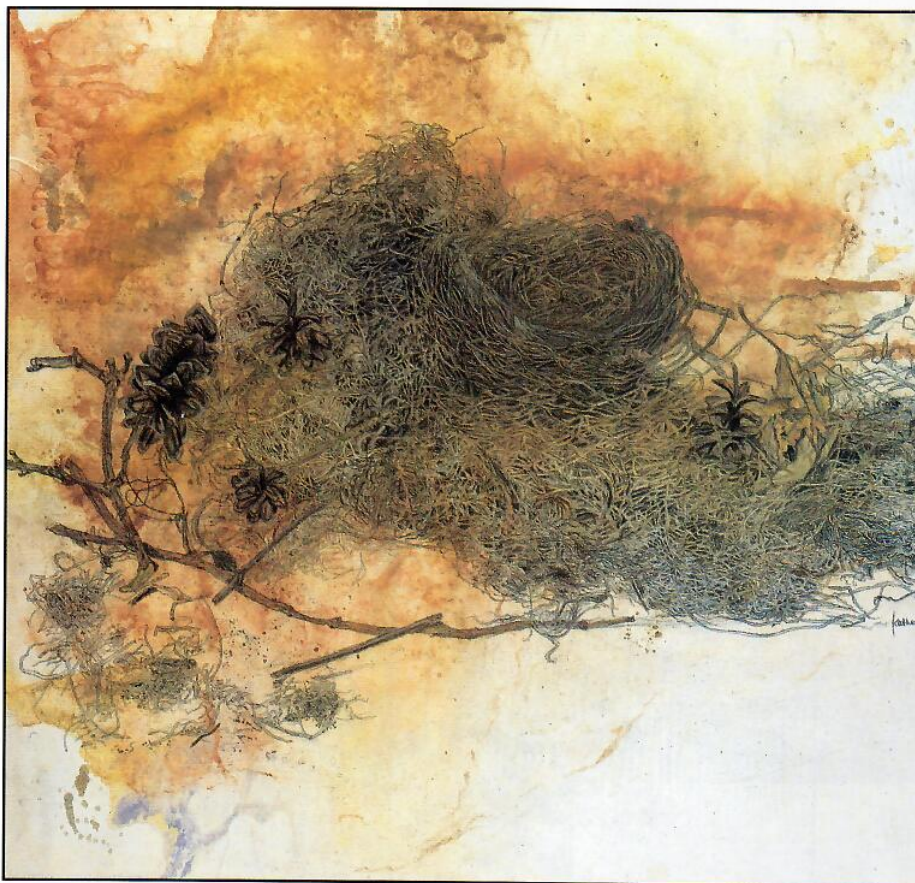
**Did you ever want to give up on it?**

Oh, gosh, yes. Every day. You should have seen me the day I finished this thing. I was dancing all over the place. My teacher brought out this big armful of straw and said, "You can start on this now." I brought the piece up to her desk and said, "I'm going to sign it *now!* It's done." I was

**"The pinecones, leaves, grasses in nature are all woven in, like the parts of this nest.**

**A bird's nest is like nature — alive, growing, changing, with everything tied together.**

**My drawing is like natural circles. Everything seems to depend on everything else."**



sick and tired of it. And when it was sent out to the Scholastic Art Awards, I didn't miss it a bit. Two and a half months is too long with the same still-life!

**Was it hard moving to a new piece?**

In a way. Because I don't like blank pieces of paper. They scare me and I start to doubt myself. That's why I try to envision the finished piece, so I can get it down on paper and stop doubting I can do it. Sometimes I can't believe I

did this piece. I amaze myself. I work from that doubt, and I try to make it not true that I can't do it.

**Now when you look at the nest, what does it tell you about nature?**

The pinecones, leaves, grasses in nature are all woven in, like the parts of this nest. A bird's nest is like nature — alive, growing, changing, with everything tied together. My drawing is like natural circles. Everything seems to depend on everything else.



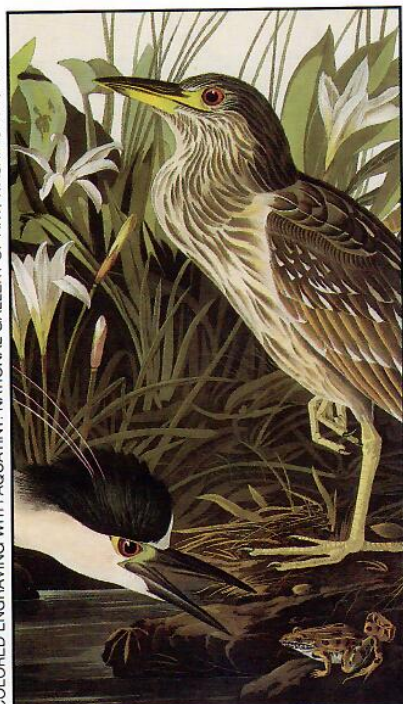
# WORKING WITH NATURE

Learn how to sketch from nature as Audubon did.

**T**ake another look at all the Audubon paintings and prints in this issue. What makes them more than just scientific studies of birds? Would these pictures be as interesting if the birds weren't seen in some kind of setting — battling a snake, surrounded by a bleak, rocky coastline, or catching frogs in a stream

(like the two herons shown on the left)? The composition and carefully rendered environments of Audubon's prints are what set them apart from those of other nature artists and make them works of art. In this project, you will be working from an ordinary natural object — a plant — to create a work of art of your own.

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON (1785-1851). NIGHT HERON. PLATE CCXXXVI (DETAIL), 1845. HAND-COLORED ENGRAVING WITH AQUATINT. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.



"When I was young, instead of going to school where I ought to have gone, I usually made for the fields and returned home at the end of the day with birds' nests, eggs, flowers, even pebbles from the bottom of a stream." — John James Audubon



## MATERIALS

- 18" x 24" 80 lb. sulfite or watercolor paper
- Pencils (9H or #2)
- Vinyl eraser
- Palette for mixing color (plastic lid, plate, any flat, hard surface)
- Watercolors — 8 colors (semi-moist or tube)
- Watercolor brushes (#3, 5, 8)
- Facial tissue or toilet paper (for picking up color)
- Paper towels
- Containers for clean water

## STARTING OUT

**1** Before doing the final drawing, do several **blind contour** drawings of various plants set around the room. Place

your pencil on the paper but imagine it is touching an edge of the plant. **Without looking at the paper**, move your eyes slowly along the edge, or contour, and move your pencil at the same speed.

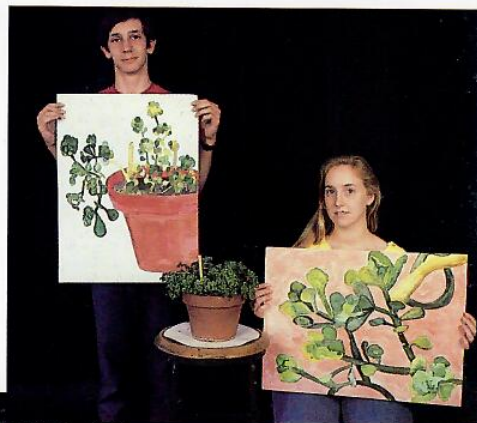


**2** Select a **section** of the plant to draw. Do final contour drawing (looking at paper briefly for accuracy; draw lightly, as drawing will serve as guide). Mix two or three colors and begin with a light, transparent color **wash** over the important areas. Work on whole painting, not just one section.



**3** Always work from light to dark. **Blotting** wet areas with tissue will create soft highlights. Build up details with a thinner brush. The drier your brush, the stronger and sharp-

er your colors will be. If you add lines to *wet* areas, they will be blurred. Use the white of the paper, work quickly and carefully, but stop when you feel you are done. Do not overwork.



#### SOME SOLUTIONS

In this project, as in Audubon's work, **composition** is very important. A small image of the entire plant, placed in the center of the paper would not make a very exciting drawing. What **section** of the plant will you choose and how will you **crop** your painting? Will you do an extreme **close-up** view of one leaf or flower; will you create an **overall pattern** of leaves and stems? Will you use **negative space**? How will you **balance** your composition — will you have an area of solid forms balancing an area of space? Are you going to leave the **background** white or



add a color? You could do the background in color and leave the plant white, putting in only a few

details. You could **focus** on a certain part of the plant by detailing *only* that section.



## ARTS ALIVE

Here are some current shows that feature famous artists who work with nature.

### "REAL" NATURE

Around the time that Audubon was creating his *Birds of America*, other American artists were also painting the natural world they saw around them. A number of these 19th-century painters did enormous landscapes, realistic down to the tiniest detail (Albert Bierstadt's *Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, California*, right, is over 10 feet wide). You can see more paintings like this one, as well as famous works by modern American artists in *Treasures from the National Museum of American Art* currently at the High Museum



ALBERT BIERSTADT (1830-1902). AMONG THE SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS, CALIFORNIA. OIL. 10 FEET WIDE. AMON CARTER MUSEUM, FORT WORTH.

of Art in Atlanta until March 29. The show will then return to the National Museum in Washington, D.C., May 7 through June 7.



### IMPRESSIONS OF NATURE

The work on the left by French painter Paul Cézanne is also of a lake in the mountains, but does it look like the lake in Bierstadt's painting above? Are the colors, shapes, and reflections at all "real" looking? *Impressionist and Post-Impressionist* artists didn't want to paint nature realistically. They were interested in expressing natural

scenes in terms of light, paint, and design. You can see this work and 50 other famous, but rarely seen, French paintings in a new exhibition *Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Masterpieces* at the Cleveland Museum until March 8. In 1987 the show will be at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City, and the Kimbell Museum in Ft. Worth. In 1988 it will go to the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City.

PAUL CEZANNE (1839-1906). LAKE AT ANNECY, 1896. OIL. 65 X 81 CM. COURTAULD INSTITUTE, LONDON.

### NATURE ABSTRACTED

Sometimes artists see nature in a completely personal way. Can you tell what ordinary natural object has been *abstracted* in the photograph on the right? (The title may surprise you.) Twentieth-century American photographer Edward Weston is best known for his photos of natural subjects — landscapes, 16 ART & MAN



animals, and close-ups of ordinary vegetables like this one. More than 200 of this important photographer's works, *Supreme Instants: The Photographs of Edward Weston*, will be on view at the Seattle Art Museum from March 12 through May 3. The show will then travel to the University of Arizona and the International Center of Photography in New York City.

EDWARD WESTON (1850-1936). ONION HALVED, 1930. ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO.