

Things To Do

Brushwood Center hosts 'Avian Spirits' exhibition



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Visitation B © Steph Roberts | Image courtesy Addington Gallery

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Passenger Pigeon wearable sculpture © Julia Kemerer | Image courtesy Helen Maurene Cooper

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Thrasher 1 © Julie Meridian | Image courtesy Julie Meridian



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For Sun-Times Media

July 9 4 p.m.

FACTBOX

“Avian Spirits”

Sunday, July 13-Sunday, Aug. 31

Opening reception 1-3 p.m. Sunday July 13; there will be a tour of the exhibition led by Mercurio on Saturday, Aug. 23 preceding the 2014 Film Festival in the Woods

Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, 21850 N. Riverwoods Road, Riverwoods

(847) 968-3343;brushwoodcenter.org

Things to do around Barrington this weekend, July 25-27

July 24 2:38 p.m.

Birds have inspired artists throughout time. That relationship is celebrated in “Avian Spirits” at Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods, July 13-Aug. 31. Franck Mercurio curated the exhibit which features works by 14 artists

“Each year, Brushwood Center has a programming theme,” Mercurio reported. “This year’s theme was ‘Extinction/Survival.’ The show that I curated in March was called ‘Facing Extinction.’ For the summer show, I’m doing the flip side of the coin — the survival side. I wanted the show to be much more whimsical, much more fun. I was looking for artists who take a more conceptual approach.”

Mercurio cited the example of the birds created by artist Molly Cranch. “You can look at them and know exactly what species they are,” he said. “But there’s some sort of anthropomorphic quality to them and the idea of nesting pops up over and over again.”

He chose artists “who used bird imagery as metaphors for some aspects of the human spirit,” Mercurio explained. There are more than 40 pieces in the show, including three outdoor installations.

One of those outdoor installations, commissioned specifically for this show, is by DOEprojekts, the name used by Deborah and Glenn Doering for their joint pieces.

“They will essentially be drawing on the lawn four different symbols that represent four different ways that birds are able to navigate when they’re migrating,” Mercurio said. “One has to do with the magnetic pull of the earth. One has to do with visual landmarks. One has to do with smells.” The fourth is related to the sun.

“The interesting thing,” Mercurio noted, “is that each one of these looks like a stylized ‘H,’ a stylized ‘O,’ a stylized ‘M,’ a stylized ‘E,’ so that it will spell out ‘Home.’”

Artist Annette Barbier of Glenview is also creating an installation.

“My work has been centrally about the natural world and a lot of it has been about birds in the past five years or so,” said Barbier, who had a solo show at Brushwood Center in November and had work in the March “Facing Extinction” show.

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For the piece, which hadn't been assembled at press time, Barbier is using decoys of Canada geese, arranged in a circle with their rear ends sticking up, reminiscent of a sculpture in front of the Park Center in Glenview that shows children playing in a circle. "This is sort of a tongue-in-cheek representation of that," she said.

The piece also references the Ant Farm Cadillac Ranch piece in Texas, in which ten Cadillacs are installed nose down.

The artist chose Canada geese because, "They are ubiquitous. You can't find a place that doesn't have them and doesn't have their poop all over the place."

Barbier has done a number of pieces about Canada geese and discovered, "The reason that they're so numerous is because they were hunted almost to extinction in the middle of the last century. And then, in the '50s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided that they wanted to replenish their numbers but they didn't take into account their migration patterns. They reinstated them around the Midwest and Northeast. Now they don't know how to migrate."

Other artists represented in the exhibit are Sarah Belknap and Joseph Belknap, Cosmo Campoli, Helen Maurene Cooper, Julia Kemerer, Barbara Koenen, Marlene McCauley, Julie Meridian, Steph Roberts and Dan Streeting.

Mercurio was especially pleased to be able to include some original drawings by Campoli, the only nonliving artist in the show. "They're kind of cartoony, they're kind of whimsical. I don't think they've ever been shown before in public. They're fun and I think people will really relate to them."