

**Saving the Ark:
Artists, Biologists and Architects Collaborate**

Wednesdays, 1-3 pm
17 January—7 February 2024
1995 University Ave, Berkeley, CA

Pamela Blotner

“Saving the Ark” will explore how artists have worked with biologists, architects, and local communities to protect threatened and endangered animals around the world. It will also highlight efforts by artists to create artwork that will attract and educate children about what they can do to cultivate and protect our wildlife. Each class will begin with a lecture and slide presentation and conclude with a discussion.

SYLLABUS

Week One

Artists and Animals

Livestream slide show and lecture

History: History of the many ways that artists have portrayed animals and their environments. These artists will include:

- Albrecht Durer (Rhinoceros, 1471 -1528), fascinated with animal behavior.
- Sarah Stone (Primarily birds, 1760 - 1844) natural history illustrator and painter.
- Andy Warhol (1928-1987), his print portfolios and “Endangered Species” series.
- Ami Vitale, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, northern Kenya.
- Sue Coe, prints and drawings a variety of animals used in food and industry.
- Doug Aitkin, filmmaker, a variety of wildlife.

Week Two

Artist and Animals: Migrations

Slide show and lecture, class discussion

Japanese Pond Turtles: In the Nara Prefecture, Japan, the West Japan Railway Company and Suma Aqualife Park have installed tunnels under their railway tracks to enable Japanese Pond Turtles to migrate across safely. Concrete underpass “dugouts” beneath the tracks allow turtles to make their way to ponds on the other side of the tracks.

Leatherback Turtles: Working with the nonprofit Leatherback Trust, Pamela Blotner sculpted a life-size, female Leatherback Turtle bronze sculpture that now welcomes and educates visitors to a turtle preserve on the western coast of Costa Rica. Children enjoy climbing onto the sculpture to be photographed by their parents who then post their photos and videos on social media helping to spread the word that we must all work together to preserve a threatened species.

Week Three

Artists and Animals: Habitat Restoration

Slide show and lecture, class discussion

Golden Lion Tamarind Monkeys: Brazilian architects and engineers build steel bridges to help endangered Golden Lion Tamarind monkeys safely cross a busy highway and regain access to their habitat. Artists and conservationists have covered the bridges with trees and plants which encourage the monkeys to cross the bridges. Saving Nature's partner, the Golden Lion Tamarin Association, is reforesting a corridor to connect a protected area to the south and forest fragments to the north of the bridge.

Raptors, Butterflies, Salmon, Wild Ducks, and More: Eco-artist Lynne Hull makes sculpture that doubles as wildlife habitat. Using natural materials, she has made safe roosts for raptors in Wyoming, butterfly hibernation sculptures in Montana, salmon-spawning pools in Ireland, and nesting sites for wild ducks and geese. Her carved hieroglyphs capture water for desert wildlife, and her floating art islands also offer an inviting habitat for numerous aquatic species, including turtles, frogs, ducks, herons, songbirds, swallows, and insects. Animals who build and use their own structures for transportation and food production, such as bees, ants, and wasps.

Week Four

Artist and Animals: Habitat Restoration II:

Slide show and lecture, class discussion

Bat Towers: Joyce Huang builds Bat Towers to nurture and protect these vulnerable creatures. Huang's monumental Bat Tower sculpture in Buffalo's Griffiss Sculpture Park provides a colony of bats with a structure that they can cling to and hang from. At the base of the tower, she has planted a rich array of insect-attracting plants to provide the bats with food. The sculpture has a prominent and attractive presence that attracts humans, emphasizing the importance of these creatures which many see as pests. In her videos, Huang will demonstrate how she makes various sculptural habitats suited to different sites.

Coral Reefs: Overfishing and pollution, warming waters and ocean acidification are threatening coral reefs worldwide. Sculptor Collen Flanigan welds and submerges steel sculptures in the ocean and runs low-voltage electricity through them. This technology, called Biorock, creates a zone of higher pH that attracts minerals to accrete on the steel sculptures. Once the sculptures are completed, she attaches coral fragments that eventually attract Coral larvae and other organisms to grow on her sculptures creating beautiful colors and textures.

Similarly, Los Angeles artists Margaret and Christine Wertham combine their art and coral reef activism on land, stitching "Crochet Coral Reefs" and teaching numerous communities how to crochet woolen seascapes. They have created both wildly colorful sculptures of coiling, waving, and branching yarn forms, as well as soft white and pastel "reefs" that tell the story of coral bleaching.

Suggested Readings:

Elizabeth Eleanor and Jacqueline Atkinson, *Animals and Artists: An Exploration of Impossible Encounters* (Intellect Books: Bristol, United Kingdom)

Roni Gren, *The Concept of the Anima and Modern Theories of Art* (Routledge: New York)

Ed Yong, *An Immense World, How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us* (Random House: New York)

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)
University of California, Berkeley
1995 University, Suite 365
Berkeley, CA 94704