

September Art Show Preview

Art and the Animal

The tradition continues for 52 years and counting.

This year's annual *Art and the Animal* tour opens at the Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum in Oradell, New Jersey, on September 1. The traveling juried show, which will make stops at four museums around the country, boasts an array of the nation's finest work by today's top animal artists.

The jury, consisting of nine members, has diligently selected 128 works of excellence, originality and individual style. Submissions came from artists within the U.S. as well as around the world.

Diane Mason, president of the Society of Animal Artists, is enthused about this year's show and the fresh works that it brings.

"Every year brings its own excitement because every year we have some new members and we have some people who have never exhibited before," Mason says. "Seeing the work of the new people that are coming into the organization is exciting. I like seeing that the tradition of the genre is being continued with this young generation, the tradition that so many other artists have already established."

Mason continues, "We have a lot of really good people that are using material differently than in the past, and they are pushing the boundaries of what is considered animal art. That's always exciting to see."

David Wagner, tour director for *Art and the Animal*, is equally enthused by this year's 52nd exhibition.

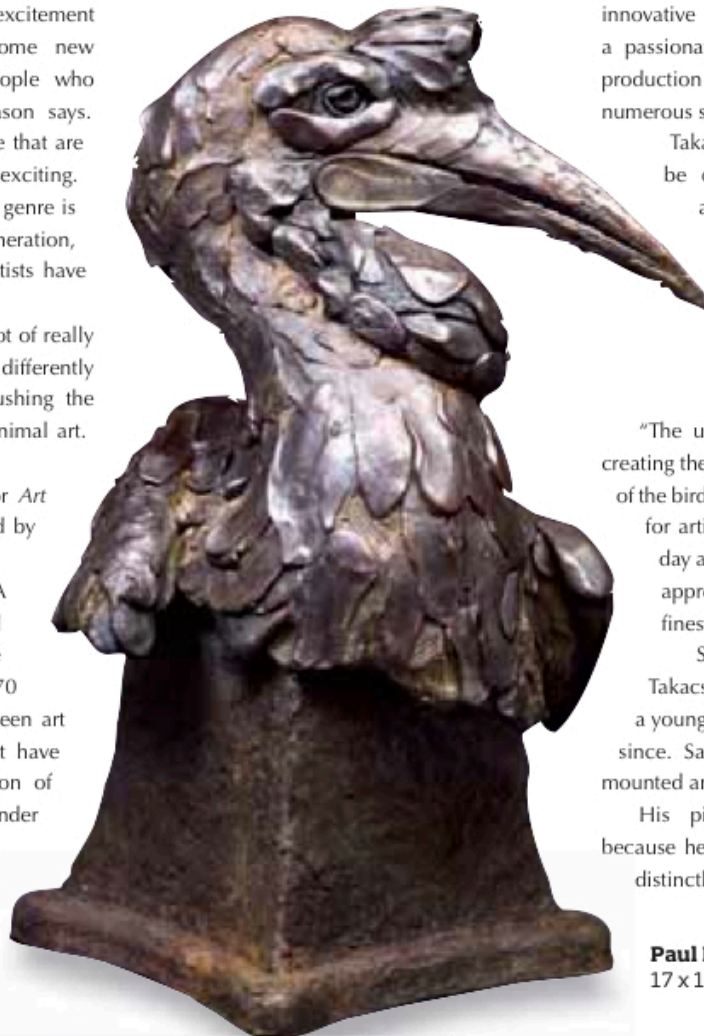
"Since 1988," Wagner says, "SAA exhibitions have been displayed some 85 times throughout the United States, with approximately 70 percent of hosting venues having been art museums or general museums that have included art as a central dimension of their core mission, with the remainder being natural history or nature-based institutions. This year's tour itinerary falls squarely within

that tradition."

After the exhibit's debut at Hiram Blauvelt, *Art and the Animal* will continue on to The Art Museum at The University of Kentucky in Lexington, the Kenosha Public Museum in Wisconsin, and The Charles H. MacNider Art Museum in Mason City, Iowa.

"The Society of Animal Artists was founded in 1960 making it the oldest active organization of its kind today," Wagner states. "Since its founding over 50 years ago, top artists from around the globe have coveted membership in the SAA..."

This year's show will include artists such as



David Kitler, Ed Takacs, Paul Rhymer, and Stefan Savides.

Kitler's work *Harpy Eagle – Talons*, a graphite and acrylic piece on Baltic birch, will display at the show.

"I work very hard at doing things differently—with all the inherent risks that brings—whether through an uncommon design, a distinctive presentation, an unusual subject, different techniques, or a combination of media," he says.

Kitler's images often include a number of poses or subjects illustrating the fact that nature is dynamic, and that different species are interconnected. Kitler's reputation as an innovative artist, an enthusiastic teacher, and a passionate conservationist, has led to the production of three instructional DVDs and numerous speaking engagements.

Takacs' work *Puffin*, which will also be on exhibit, represents the artist's ability to show motion within a two-dimensional painting. He studies reference photographs as well as his collection of wildlife reference books to ensure that every aspect of his work is accurate.

"The use of oil for this piece helped in creating the flow of the water and the reflection of the bird taking flight," he says. Takacs strives for artistic excellence in wildlife art each day as he enters his studio, and collectors appreciate his ability to represent the finest details of his subjects.

Savides, another avian artist like Takacs, has been fascinated by birds since a young age, and has not strayed from them since. Savides has raised, carved, painted, mounted and sculpted birds his entire life.

His piece *Air Africa* was completed because he wanted to create a work that was distinctly African.

Paul Rhymer, *Haile Selassie*, bronze, 17 x 10 x 9"



Stefan Savides, *Air Africa*, bronze, 31 x 13 x 38"



Rikki Saunders, *Tarka*, ed. of 7, 6½ x 38 x 12"

"Hornbills were the perfect bird to use, as they seem to be everywhere there," Savides says. "They seemed to fill the same niche, as did scrub jays in my California childhood. It was important for me to suspend them in a way to make the eye not notice their support system. The floating branch in the primitive African frame did exactly that."

Rhymer received an associate's degree in painting and drawing, and worked at the Smithsonian Institution as a taxidermist and model-maker and retired in 2010. As a result of so much three-dimensional work at the museum, his personal artwork has over the years transformed from painting and drawing into 3-D sculpture.

"My piece for this year's show is an Abyssinian ground hornbill called *Haile Selassie*. Several years ago I was in Ethiopia and saw several of these birds in the bush. They were so regal. I decided to name them after another regal leader of the Abyssinian region."

Rhymer, an avid birder and waterfowl hunter, combines his in-depth experience with model-making and taxidermy to transform his technical skills and experiences with subjects to

inspire his sculpture.

New associate member **Rikki Saunders**, who was welcomed into the Society after the jury's deliberations for the annual show, will not have work featured, but is enthused to support this year's exhibiting members and looks forward to next year as well.

"Art and nature have always been central in my life," Saunders says. "My artistic interest was nurtured by my father who taught me to hunt and fish, to carve in wood, to sit quietly in nature, to observe, and to immerse myself in the character of a wild creature."

She continues, "Growing out of such experiences, I am committed to only working from real life and spending my days with wonderful animals, observing their habits, learning their language, and studying their form, all in an attempt to convey with great honesty their grace and spirit."

Saunders' work *Tarka* displays an otter triumphing over his latest catch of fish—a picture of the real life that she strives to portray.

"I want everybody to get to know the genre of animal art as fine art," reiterates Mason. "That is what our organization is all about. Here we

are in our 52nd year and a lot of people still look down their noses and say animal art isn't fine art. I want them to change their perception. It's fine art in every sense of the word." 🐾

Society of Animal Artists 42nd annual Exhibition and Art and the Animal tour



When: Sept. 1-Dec. 31, 2013

Where: Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum, 705 Kinderkamack Road, Oradell, NJ 07649

Information: (970) 532-3127,
www.societyofanimalartists.com