

Birds with Human Souls

In the summer of 2015, my grandfather passed away suddenly and left my family, specifically my grandmother, in a state of shock. To comfort her, we would sit together on our porch and birdwatch in the backyard. We would narrate their lives using funny voices and imagine lives for them. After laughing together, she shared this with me; "*You know, I think your grandpa is out there with them. My bet is that he's the grumpiest one, the one bossing the baby birds around until they learn how to fly.*"

This statement brought us both comfort and led me to have a curiosity about birds and how it is they relate to us, both in life and death. Since 2015, I have continued birdwatching on my own and often find myself looking for any humanlike characteristics in a bird's behavior and researching what certain species may symbolize. As time passed, I studied most of the local birds and decided to read more about species in other areas of the U.S.

Drawn to their aesthetic appearance and symbolic meanings I have created a series of portraits of The Great Horned Owl, the Belted Kingfisher, and the Great Blue Heron. Never having the opportunity to see these birds in person I am creating this body of work to have my own way of birdwatching. By carving each bird in a pose that speaks to their symbolic attributes, I hope to create prints that I can hang in my room and look to for comfort and inspiration. According to religious and mythological texts, the Great Horned Owl is seen as wise and intuitive, the Belted Kingfisher is a symbol of peace and prosperity, and the Great Blue Heron represents an ability to progress and evolve with self-determination. In many years from now I hope to be remembered with all these qualities, similarly to how my grandma created the connection between my grandfather and a cardinal.

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