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The Chronicle

Radical Kingdoms offers new perspectives on the art of nature

January 18, 2017

From detailed ink paintings of North American birds to mandala-like flower images, the works in the Mandeville Gallery's new exhibition, *Radical Kingdoms,* offer a striking look at the wonders of the natural world.

The show opens Jan. 21, with a reception scheduled for Jan. 26, 5-6:30 p.m. in the Nott Memorial.

It juxtaposes contemporary art with works by John James Audubon and lesser-known 18th and 19th century artists who were fascinated with collecting and cultivating flora and fauna species. Their interest spawned a cadre of books by botanists and biologists containing abundant illustrations of flowers, birds and animals.

"These illustrations, which captured the attention of so many during that time period, continue to inspire visual artists drawn to nature and all of its kingdoms," says Julie Lohnes, curator of Art Collections and Exhibitions.

Contemporary artists in the exhibition include George Boorujy, Juan Fontanive, Portia Munson, Amy Ross and Anne Siems as well as Maria Tomasula and Walton Ford, whose works are in the Union College Permanent Art Collection.

Boorujy, who holds an M.F.A from the School of Visual Arts and lives in Brooklyn, is interested "in how we see animals and see ourselves as animals." His ink representations of birds and other familiar animals encourage and challenge viewers to confront both the animals and their preconceived notions about them.

Fontanive, also based in Brooklyn, creates machines that combine moving objects with moving images, aimed at exploring "the unspoken aspects of imagery related to movement, color and sound." Responding to the lack of movement found in our digital age, he says his work "longs to free images and tries to form a language to explore the vividness of living things." Fontanive holds a master's degree from the Royal College of Art, London.

Munson's images are scanned configurations of fresh flowers gathered from the garden at her home in New York's Catskill Mountains and arranged directly on a glass scanner bed, which are then printed. In layering the buds and blossoms in unique combinations of color, shape and structure, she creates mandalas that are meant to "conjure the ephemeral nature of the botanical with its innate, utopian beauty."

Boston-based artist Amy Ross's watercolors and collages are informed by her interests in religious studies, folklore and mythology. Intrigued by the idea of artist as "mad scientist," she produces fantastical hybrid creatures ("nature morphs") to examine "the interconnectedness of all life and the

vulnerability that we all share.” Ross earned a master’s degree in theological studies from Harvard Divinity School before studying painting and printmaking at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.