

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Finite and Alive*, drawings by Rebecca Clark, on view at Adkins Arboretum
Reception to meet the artist is Sat., Aug. 15**

Finite and Alive, Rebecca Clark's show of new drawings, is filled with wonder and curiosity about the natural world coupled with a poignant sense of loss. On view through Oct. 2 at the Adkins Arboretum Visitor's Center, this Hyattsville artist's exquisite drawings of birds and animals are remarkable for both their skill and their sensitivity. There will be a reception on Sat., Aug. 15 from 3 to 5 p.m. to meet the artist.

Wings angled and strong against the air rushing past them, beak razor sharp, eye clear and bright, Clark's "Kestrel 1" is the very image of the speed and unrelenting focus of a bird of prey. It's rare these days to find an artist who has the technical ability and patience to draw so beautifully. Clark's attention to detail is scrupulous. Every muscle of the kestrel's compact body is engaged and every intricately patterned feather precisely angled for swiftness and accuracy.

"I've been an artist my whole life and studied art and art history," Clark said. "But it wasn't until I took a botanical illustration course at the Corcoran College of Art with Leslie Exton that I really learned how to draw. She taught us very



Rebecca Clark, "Kestrel 1 (Again, Alive, for Richard Skelton)," graphite on paper, 16" x 20"



Rebecca Clark, "Oyster 11," graphite, colored pencil, watercolor, pastel and oil pastel on paper, 11" x 14"

particular techniques, and it opened up a whole new world for me.”

Clark draws primarily in graphite, making full use of the nuances of her pencils, but occasionally, she introduces touches of color to focus on a detail or enrich her subject. In “Worlds without End,” she uses varied hues of red to highlight the subtle relationships and contrasts between the colors of rose hips and the feathers of a pair of cardinals. Borrowing its title from Allen Ginsberg’s desolate lament on the nature of contemporary life, “Howl” is a riveting drawing of a howling coyote with a tiny patch of angry red deep in the shadows of its open mouth.

Luscious and tactile, Clark’s drawings of oyster shells were created especially for this show at Adkins Arboretum and acknowledge its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay. Fascinated by their varied shapes and sizes, she drew the oyster shells’ graceful contours and sketched in their subtle colors with colored pencil, watercolor, pastel and oil pastel.

“The oysters are just so symbolic of my childhood in Annapolis and on the Chesapeake Bay. I collected and drew them way back,” she explained. “I also wanted to draw attention to them because of their dwindling population and their crucial value to the health of the Bay. Plus, I’m so mesmerized by their subtle beauty—the concentric rings and build-up of growth, the irregularities, the vibrant colors and iridescence and the stains from algae and bay residue. They’ve been incredibly fun to make.”

Clark’s oysters, as well as her animals and birds, are drawn absent of any background. Their isolation on the stark white of the paper emphasizes the rich textures and forms of their shells, fur or feathers and the pure sense of aliveness of each one. But curiously, it also creates an eerie feeling of separateness.

No living being can exist without its natural environment. Surrounding these creatures with empty space, Clark creates an underlying tension. The creatures she depicts are imperiled, cut off from the environments that created and sustained them. In doing this, she intimates not only the effects of pollution, habitat loss and climate change on individual species but, even more significantly, the loss of human consciousness of our intimate connections with the delicate balance of life on earth.

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through Oct. 2 at the Arboretum Visitor’s Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

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Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. Open year round, the Arboretum offers educational programs for all ages about nature and gardening. For additional information about Arboretum programs, visit adkinsarboretum.org or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.

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