

## NEWS RELEASE

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(RIDGELY, MD—November 29, 2016)

### ***Bird Chronicles, Watercolors by Kevin Garber, on View at Adkins Arboretum***

Standing handsome and debonair in his eccentric plumage, Kevin Garber's "Gambel's Quail" is alert and aloof amid sweeps and spatters of brilliant watercolor and touches of colored pencil. In his show *Bird Chronicles*, on view at Adkins Arboretum's Visitor Center through Jan. 27, Garber's deep understanding of birds, born of 40 years of drawing them, partners with his unabashed joy in experimenting with paint and pencil. There will be a reception to meet the artist on Sat., Dec. 3 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Garber has developed a remarkable skill in capturing the quick movements and quirky personalities of birds from grosbeaks to crows to eagles. Although his colorful brushstrokes are as loose and energetic as an Expressionist painter's, the power of his artworks comes from the confident expertise of his drawing as he precisely catches the unique character and habitual stance of each of his birds.

Now working from his studio in Bozman near St. Michaels and teaching at Easton's Academy Art Museum, Garber is a master printmaker who earned an MFA from the University of Nebraska and went on to teach printmaking and drawing at Washington University in St. Louis.

At a glance, his birds hark back to historical bird illustrations such as John James Audubon's famous paintings, but with considerably more animation and mischievousness. Curiously, none of them are flying. Perched on branches or on the ground, each is remarkably vigilant and focused. It's their tiny, bright eyes that grab you. You can tell they're up to things.



"Gambel's Quail," Kevin Garber, watercolor, 20" x 13"

“The eyes are very important for getting the feeling of it,” Garber said. “That and the environment they’re in.”

“I’ve always enjoyed the birds,” he continued. “In the past, they were more about freedom, but birds are very vulnerable. They’re a fragile part of our environment and, like insects, they show quickly what’s happening. So really, these newer paintings especially are more concerned with the environment and this whole debate about whether or not it’s an issue.”

Pointing out “Red Sky at Night,” a small painting of a blue-black crow beneath a glowing orange-red sky, Garber noted, “There are a lot of red skies. ‘Red sky at night, sailor’s delight,’ but the truth of the matter is, it’s pollution. The more red in the sky, the more pollution.”

There’s another bright-eyed bird in “Stella’s Crow,” but the blocks of red and yellow tumbling through dripping streaks of brown behind it weren’t painted by Garber.

“The background was done by my friend Stella. She’s eight,” he said. “She and her sister Anna are always coming to my studio and doing watercolors and then leaving them, so I decided to just draw right on top of it. I didn’t ask her, but she thought it was fun when I told her I did that.”

For Garber, keeping his work fresh and adventurous is extremely important, so he experiments with working with found surfaces and found objects and loves trying out the effects of paint on many different kinds of paper, museum board and even iPad boxes. Although he also paints other subject matter and creates assemblages, he finds that birds always offer him inspiration.

“If I’m having issues with creating, the easiest I can get back into it is if I’m drawing birds,” he said.

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through Jan. 27 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](mailto: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 is the region’s resource for native plants and education programs about nature, ecology and wildlife conservation gardening. For more information, visit [adkinsarboretum.org](http://adkinsarboretum.org) or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.*

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