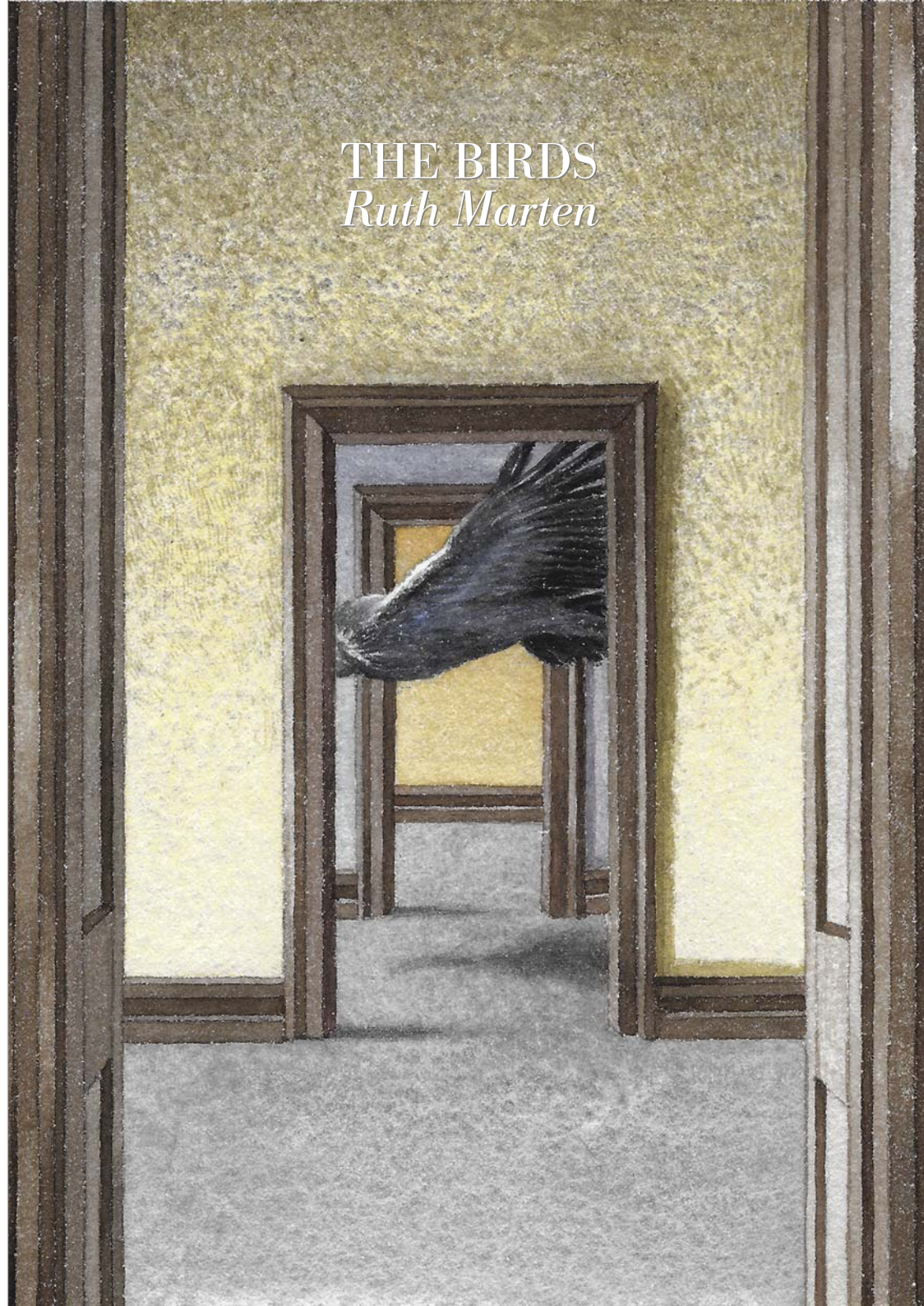


THE BIRDS  
*Ruth Marten*







# THE BIRDS

*Ruth Marten*

A John Marchant Gallery  
exhibition in collaboration  
with the Eagle Gallery, London

## THE BIRDS : *Ruth Marten*

I realize upon reflection that mine is a provincial world circumscribed by the streets and history of New York City. I love this town and decry its dissolution into anonymous and soulless architecture. One place that has stubbornly ignored this trend for its entire 90 year history is Argosy Books & Prints on 59th Street. Upon entering, one is overwhelmed by the smell of old paper, rabbit skin glue and time. That was how it was when, as a 17-year-old working after school, I handled the old prints and delivered the framed ones all over the City. I can't recall if I was fired or if I quit, though the latter seems likely as the year was 1966 and I wanted to make history, not file it. Remarkably I've returned to this place, the last of its kind, to hunt the stacks for the bizarre and for the lost.

There seems little doubt that the known past feels safer than the unknowable future. Maybe the armies of artists, illustrators, map makers and social satirists whose vivid renderings illuminate these old pages offer me a comradeship I desire. I also admit to a serious case of Ernst envy (who doesn't?), though I've chosen the 18th century for my material, I'm pressed by their industry and desire to define their known world. These copper plate engravings are beautifully wrought on handmade laid paper and were originally intended as book illustrations. They survived fires, floods, wars and disinterest until 20th-century print dealers cut them out and put them into frames for the designer trade or laid them out on tables at flea markets. There they awaited their second or third acts, their content long replaced or refuted by scholarship and technology. That's where I first encountered them and imagined a collaboration.





Nobody really wants these old pictures and I feel no guilt for my alterations. I do see it as a collaboration with artists from the past who strived to illustrate the discoveries and attitudes of their time, an often Herculean task. Sometimes they had to cobble, from hearsay, a furry mammal or translate a ship's artist's sketchbook into sensational first reports of an expedition's discovery of cannibalism! Human sacrifice! Nudity! The engravers met the ship at the dock and like all good reporters, raced to produce images for public delectation. Human curiosity fires the exact same results today.

RUTH MARTEN

Original artist's statement for *Fountains & Alligators*, Van der Grinten Galerie, Cologne exhibition, 2016













## RUTH MARTEN

Born, lives and works in New York

- 1971 Graduate of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- 1967 High School of Art and Design, NY

### Solo Exhibitions

- 2019 The Halsey Institute, Retrospective, Charleston, SC (forthcoming)
- 2017 *The Birds*, John Marchant Gallery at the Eagle Gallery, London
- 2016 *Fountains & Alligators*, Van der Grinten Galerie, Cologne
- 2013 *The Unvarnished Truth*, Van der Grinten Galerie, Cologne
- 2012 *Strange Bedfellows*, Hosfelt Gallery, NY
- 2011 *New Work*, Hosfelt Gallery, NY
- 2009 *Side-Saddle*, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco
- 2008 *Histoire un-Naturelle*, Isis Gallery, London
- 2003 *Red Planet*, New Painting by Ruth Marten, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY
- 1999 *The Hurricane Series*, Littlejohn Contemporary, NY
- 1997 *The Wavy Bang*, Littlejohn Contemporary, NY
- 1988 Bockley Gallery, NY

### Group Exhibitions

- 2017 *Erwarten Sie Wunder!*, Museum Ulm, Ulm, Germany
- 2017 *Night Jar*, Underdone Gallery, Brooklyn
- 2016 *Der Wald*, Van der Grinten Galerie, Cologne
- 2014 *Reality Sandwich*, Van der Grinten Galerie, Cologne
- 2014 *Holding it Together: Collage, Montage, Assemblage*, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco
- 2011 *Sweet and Savory*, Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NY
- 2011 *Drawing Now*, Carousel de Louvre, Paris with Isis Gallery
- 2010/11 *Animal Instinct: Allegory, Allusion and Anthropomorphism*, Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI
- 2010 *Surreal Reinventions*, (with John Hundt), Palo Alto Art Center, Palo Alto, CA
- 2009/10 *New Drawings*, Arin Contemporary, Laguna Beach, CA
- 2009 789 Gallery, Comme des Garçons graphics installation, Beijing
- 2009 *Hair on Fire*, Halsey Institute, Charleston, SC
- 2009 Museum Villa Rot, Burgrieden-Rot, Germany (travelled throughout Germany)
- 2008 *100 Stories*, Hosfelt Gallery, NY
- 2008 *Fine Line*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY
- 2008 *On Line*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY
- 2007 *Drawn To The Edge*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY
- 2006 *Under The Skin*, Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, NC
- 2006 *Twice Drawn*, The Tang Museum at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY
- 2005 *Idols of Perversity*, Bellwether, NY

2005 *Contemporary Erotic Drawing*, The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, CT  
 2005 *Words in Pictures*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY  
 2004 *Merry*, Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn  
 2004 *Innocence Found*, DFN Gallery, NY  
 2004 *Mindscapes*, Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NY  
 2004 *Headgames*, Revolution, Ferndale, MI  
 2003 *Word Works*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY  
 2003 *New Work*, New Acquisitions, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY  
 2003 *40 x 40*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY  
 2003 *Double Visions*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY  
 2002 *Hair Stories*, curated by Ruth Marten, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY  
 2000 *Summer Show*, Littlejohn Contemporary, NY  
 2000 *Quirky*, Adam Baumgold Gallery, NY  
 1999 *Marks of Identity*, American Museum of Natural History, NY  
 1999 Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MI  
 1999 *Shy*, curated by Nan Goldin, Artists Space, NY  
 1999 *Pop Surrealism*, curated by Dominique Nahas Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT  
 1998 *Four Artists in The Project Room*, Littlejohn Contemporary, NY  
 1996 The Art Exchange Show, NY  
 1979 55 Mercer Street Gallery, NY  
 1978 *Punk Art Show*, Washington, DC  
 1977 *10th Biennale de Paris*, France  
 1977 *Kunstmesse*, Cologne, Germany

## Monographs

2013 *The Unvarnished Truth*, pub. Van der Grinten Gallerie in an edition of 800  
 2008 *Histoire un-Naturelle*, pub. Isis Editions, London, in an edition of 500

## Selected Press and Publications

2013 Katie Lavers, 'The Subversive, Surreal and Irrepressibly Weird World of Ruth Marten,' *Weird Fiction Review*  
 2010 *Hautnah – Das Haar in Kunst und Kultur*, Museum Villa Rot  
 2009 *Trunk Volumen One: Hair*, Boccalatte Pty. Ltd  
 2009 *Haare*, Herlinde Koelbl, Hatje Cantz  
 2008 Carlo McCormack, *Paper Magazine*, April, NY  
 2008 Helen Sumpter, *Time Out*, London. Exhibition review  
 2004 *Paul Klee and the Decorative in Modern Art*, Jenny Anger, Cambridge University Press, NY  
 2001 *Tenderheaded*, Juliette Harris and Pamela Johnson  
 1999 Ken Johnson, 'Ruth Marten at Littlejohn Contemporary,' *The New York Times*, October 22. Exhibition review  
 1999 *The New Yorker*, October. Exhibition review

## CATALOGUE

1. *Menace* (detail) 2017  
watercolor on paper  
7 × 7 inches / 17.78 × 17.78 cm
2. *Bird of Paradise* 2017  
collage on 19th c. photogravure  
7 1/8 × 9 1/2 inches / 18.3 × 24.1 cm
4. *Exotics* 2016  
watercolor & collage on 18th c. engraving  
7 × 9 1/2 inches / 17.78 × 24 cm
6. *In Repose* 2016  
acrylic on found photo  
3 7/8 × 4 5/8 inches / 9.6 × 11.9 cm
8. *Bird's Eye View* 2017  
collage and watercolor  
16 7/8 × 13 1/2 inches / 42.9 × 34.3 cm
9. *Black Bird* 2017  
acrylic on found photo  
4 × 5 inches / 10.16 × 12.7 cm
10. *Parus* 2016  
watercolour & collage on 18th c. engraving  
10 5/8 × 7 7/8 inches / 27 × 26.9 cm
11. *The Wise Bird* 2017  
ink on 18th c. engraving  
10 × 12 1/4 inches / 25.4 × 31 cm
12. *Duckies* 2017  
acrylic on found photo  
5 1/2 × 3 1/2 inches / 13.97 × 8.89 cm
16. *Beauty* (detail) 2017  
watercolour & collage on 18th c. print  
8.5 × 10.75 in / 21.6 × 27.3 cm

All images are from a selection of work featured in *The Birds*, 2017



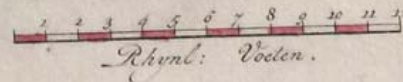
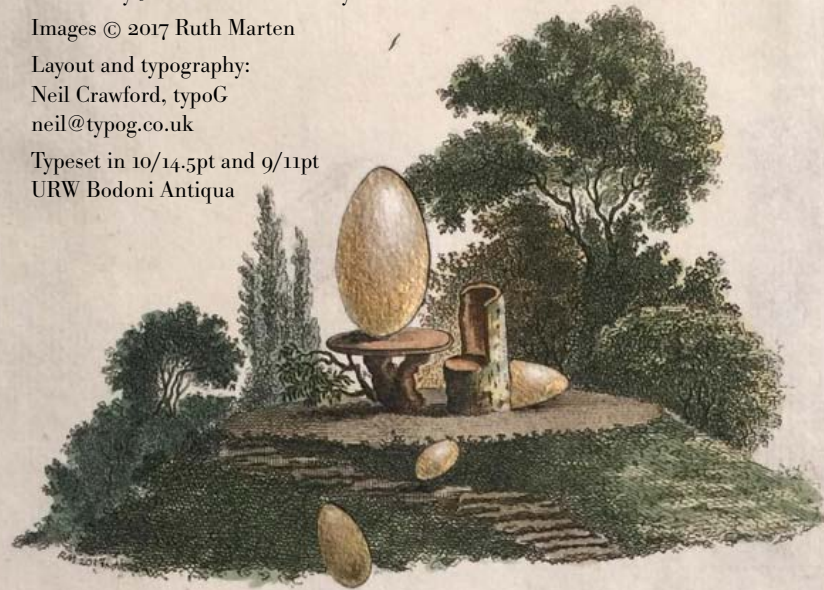
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