

A Contemporary Art Magazine with a Focus on the Los Angeles Art Scene

[Home](#) [Contributors](#) [Shoebox PR](#) [Shoebox Projects](#) [L.A. Artist Resources](#) [Contact us](#) [Art Blog](#)

Author / 1 day ago



Beall Center for Art and Technology on the UCI campus in Irvine.
Through May 26

By Genie Davis

Birds – the grace of their flight, the joy of their song, their symbolic freedom. Closing at Beall Center for Art and Technology on the UCI campus in Irvine May 26th, *It Passes Like a Thought* is a joyous and thoughtful exhibition featuring the work of Lynn Aldrich, Juan Fontanive, Ian Ingram, Richard Ross, Susan Silton, Victoria Vesna, and Anne Walsh.

The works here are as beautiful as they are soaring, some whimsical, some carefully even studiously detailed. On view is the emerald head of Ian Ingram's robotic bird, "The Woodiest," both charming and amusing, crafted from electronics and plastic and mounted on a birch. You will also see the large-scale collection of Lynn Aldrich's "Flying Lessons: The Birds of America," found book pages painted over in gold leaf, arranged in a fluttering grid, a work both haunting and elliptical.

I was reminded several times in the exhibition of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, *The Nightingale*, in which an emperor prefers the song of a jewel encrusted mechanical bird to that of a real nightingale. But when dying, it is the real bird that comes to sing and offer succor. Our substitutions and experiments with mechanized birds cannot replace the real thing.

Much of the work here is pure poetry, even the title, culled appropriately from John James Audubon's description of a single bird in flight: "When an individual is seen gliding through the woods and close to the observer, it passes like a thought..."

Curated graciously by David Familian, the exhibition offers works in a variety of mediums, and encompasses birdsong, flight, habits, and endangerment in a cohesive, immersive space.

The robotic wonder of Ingram's "The Woodiest" is a double-headed woodpecker that effectively imitates the ritual used by a real North American woodpecker to lure its mate. A video is projected next to the piece showing the work attached to a tree in a forest; the reaction of a real woodpecker is seen in the video. It seems like a lighthearted prank in a way, as well as an homage to the real bird.

Victoria Vesna's "Bird Song Mimic," is a beautiful installation with a sound dome that allows viewers to listen and respond to recordings of bird song. It's a magical experience, produced by Vesna's collaboration with a biologist, a physicist and an engineer. Interactive in nature, the piece allows a computer program to evaluate the accuracy of participants' responses to the bird calls.

Perhaps my new two favorite pieces in the exhibition – not that each wasn't quite absorbing in its own winged way – are Juan Fontanive's "Ornithology" and Lynn Aldrich's, "Flying Lessons: The Birds of America." With "Ornithology," Fontanive has created a small stainless steel box, mounted on the wall, with illustrations of birds from the 18th and 19th century powered in to motion by a clock mechanism. The illustrations are spun in the fashion of a flipbook, speeded so that in seeing the bird's wings in flight, the viewer also hears a fluttering sound, as if the wings were flapping.

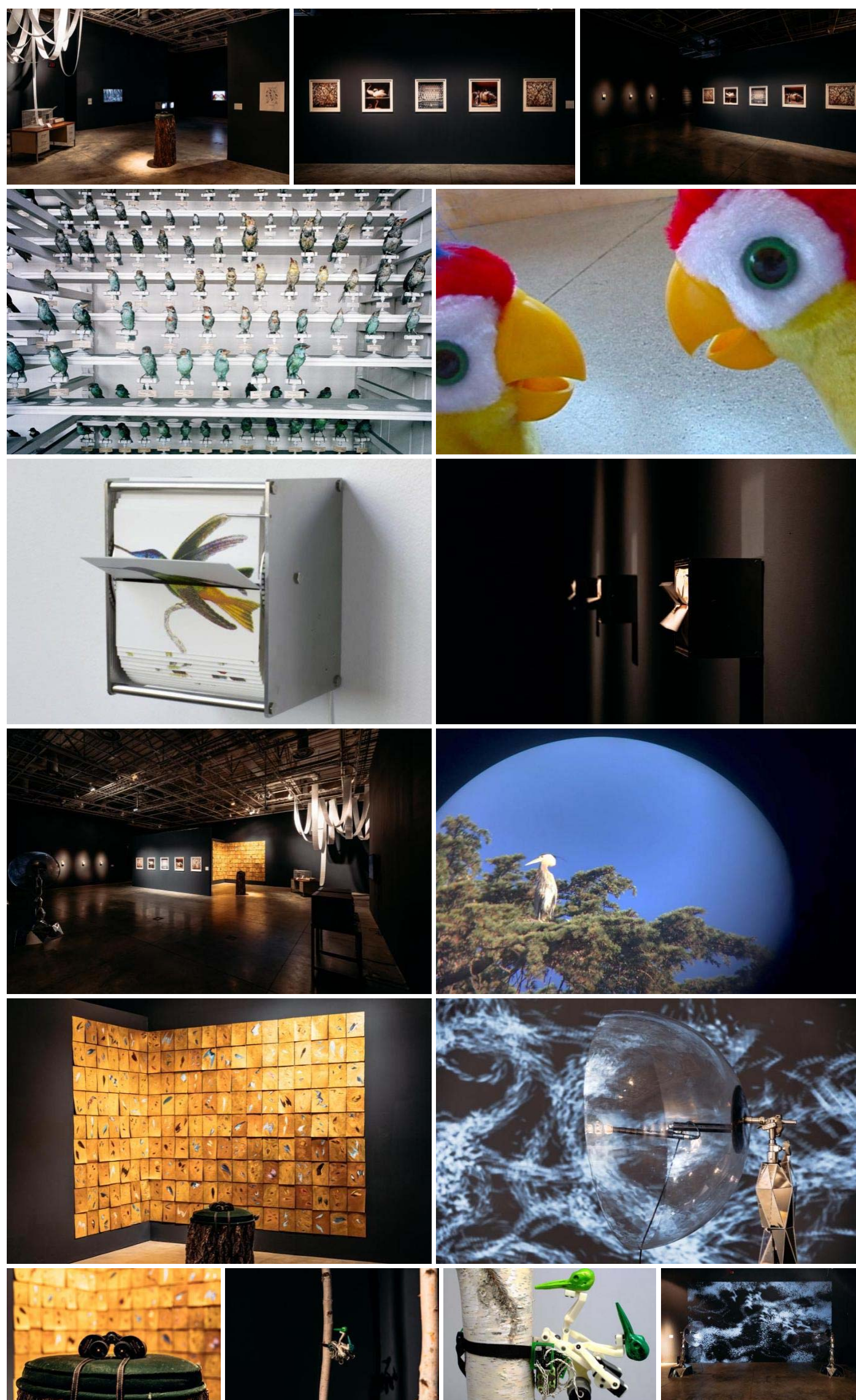
Aldrich's work is a fascinating revision. She is also using illustrations, here, pages from John James Audubon's *The Birds of America*, which she has painted over entirely, with the exception of the birds' wings. The beautiful feathers seem fragile and haunting, so impermanent and yet magnificent set against the gold. Another work by Aldrich uses computer printouts in swooping strands. Suspended from the ceiling, they drop into an empty bird cage; the printouts contain lists of endangered and extinct birds.

Other works in the show include a film by Susan Siltan documenting a whistling language based on birdcalls; Anne Walsh's "Parrot Suite," a video which depicts a plush robotic parrot and an ultimately amusing exploration of mimicry; and the truly lovely yet somber photographs of Richard Ross, depicting taxidermied birds, a memorial of sorts to their stilled flight.

The exhibition gives us a stark reminder, there are 9,000 avian species, many are endangered. It also serves as a potent reminder of just how precious and really wondrous birds are, and how – just as the Emperor learned in "The Nightingale" – a mechanical bird is no substitute for the real and beautiful being that passes like a thought.

While birds may well arrive more quickly, this exhibition is well worth the drive to Orange County.

<http://www.beallcenter.uci.edu>



Be the first to like this

May 24, 2018 in art and cake. Tags: abstract, Anne Walsh, art, art and cake, Art and Cake LA, Art and Culture, Art and Technology, art exhibition, art gallery, art opening, artist, artists, assemblage, Beall Center, Beall Center for Art and Technology, california, contemporary art, drawing, exhibition, genie davis, lan Ingram, installation, Juan Fontanive, los angeles art, los angeles artist, Lynn Aldrich, mixed media, photography, Richard Ross, southern california, Susan Siltou, UC Irvine, UCI, University of California, University

Deleted posts



What's Hot in L.A.? Art Events You Should Check Out



What's Hot in L.A.? Art Events You Should Check Out



What's Hot in L.A.? Art Events You Should Check Out

[← Kim Abeles Curates Powerful Exhibition Focusing on the Mother/Child Dynamic](#)

31. A. 11; B. 6; C. 3

Leave a Reply