

FOREVER (BIRD-BOTANICALS)

Community Arts Space 2021 project led by
David Constantino Salazar in collaboration
with participants from **Workman Arts**

August 21 - 31, 2021

Established in 2016, Community Arts Space (CAS) is the Gardiner's incubator for arts-based projects that build community through clay making. As part of CAS2021, artist David Constantino Salazar presents *Forever (Bird-Botanicals)* in partnership with members of Workman Arts, a Toronto-based arts organization that promotes a greater understanding of mental health and addiction.

In June 2021, over twenty participants from Workman Arts were selected to participate in free online clay workshops where David led participants through the meditative practice of creating clay bird figures by hand. A number of birds created during the workshops were brought back to the Gardiner Museum and are presented alongside David's own ceramic bird figures installed in the Museum's Exhibition Hall.

Workman Arts participants

Althea Knight
Gladys Lou
Tk Workman
Amber Reid
Jean fode
Ysabel Tuason
Taryn Lee
Victoria Brecht
claro cosco
Stephanie Avery
Mei Chan-Long
Susana Meza
Gregory Fortnum
Natalie Boon
Lorette C. Luzajic
Kristine Maitland
V Vallières
Corrine Darvill
Colette Vanier
Claire Mercer
Anja Sagan
Bo Tran

“During the making of these birds, I actively thought about the many ways in which a bird is a bird, and that is why some of them were made with Donald Duck and other pop culture birds in mind; some were made while thinking about a clay hen that served as my piggy bank; and others were inspired by the swans that I saw at the Charles Bridge in Prague. The hundreds of pigeons that a Queen East neighbour of mine had certainly made an appearance. Some of the birds came from the chicken coop my grandmother had in Venezuela. There is, of course, a bird that looks like a dinosaur since, at the end of the day, that is what birds are. My favourite of the bunch, however, is the ugliest: because I am afraid of birds and this was some sort of exorcism.”

Susana Meza

When one thinks of birds, one often thinks of flight and of freedom. But in truth, once the clay had hardened into the red-brown birdlike forms, I could only be reminded of the plodding of pigeons in the streets of Toronto, not moving unless pressed to.

Kristine Maitland

I have completed 38 birds with varying results. As I went along, there was repetition, but with slight differences. I would say that I became more abstract in my presentation and let go of preconceived ideas of what it should be. Also, I tried to let the clay itself have a voice and lead me.

Jean Fode

Creating this series of small, hand-built birds in a group (without the use of any tools) was a unique experience. I am accustomed to working with tools and a high degree of realism, so being called upon to create simple shapes like this helped expand my horizons. I found myself reflecting on how small, fragile, and vulnerable birds are, and still incredible because they can fly. David Salazar showed us the birds he created. He had smashed them into things, to evoke a sense of how unforeseen circumstances shape us during our journey through life. For instance, the impact of things like the pandemic, can leave lasting effects on our psychology. The pieces will not be fired, and after the event the clay used will be broken down and reused. That reclamation echoed to me how we will someday all return to the Earth, then rise again in the cycles of reincarnation. It was a very interesting and deeply reflective experience and I was very grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in it.

Anja Sagan

The journey, experiences, relationships, and stories around birds have embraced my heart deeply over the years, and being part of this experience and journey really opened me up to further deepening my relationships and the connections I currently have. David's workshop felt like a

beautiful invitation to dive even further and beyond surface level relationships with our bird friends. My experience was diving into the unknown uncertainty of death, and to witness beauty in rubble, transform and begin many new life cycles from one that had impacted this earth in its own special way. The workshop not only allowed these experiences to unfold, it gave permission to express itself through my creative relationships with earth, the clay itself. As I molded the clay, I thought to myself how this clay I work in my hands into a bird was once perhaps a bird long ago, from a time beyond my scope of consciousness, and I have the gift to express it to live once again, even if only for a few moments, days, weeks. Thank you for this journey, experiences and opportunity.

Victoria Brecht

Reflections...resistance, resilience, recognition & revelation

I approached this process with excitement and joy, as I was to be part of contributing to another artist's dream—David's poetically titled *Forever (Bird -Botanicals)*—while collaborating indirectly with other creators in other spaces. I have long had an affinity with the winged ones—seeing them as messengers from Spirit and carriers of songs that so often brighten and lighten a sometimes weary heart from surviving the hits—mental, physical, emotional—that have come this way on my life path. Thankfully, there have also been times of great joy, and the capacity and courage to bounce back from the blows through creativity, community, and deepening self-compassion. The hummingbird came to mind, with its facility to fly in all directions, housed in its seemingly delicate and beautiful self, and I looked forward to what was to come.

With the instructions, I began to quickly craft, or at least attempt to craft, what David had instructed us to do as we talked, one to the other, of the meaning of birds in our culture and in our specific lives, and I was shocked and slightly dismayed that I could not create what was being asked of me. This brought up familiar feelings of 'not being able to get it right' or not doing it the way others do, and this process that I had thought would be a joyful one was becoming stressful and disheartening as I repeatedly tried and seemingly failed. It wasn't until after many attempts that I let my hands and heart create what they wanted to do within this task, allowing my hands to be guided by what wanted to be born, that these birds, these characters, if you will, appeared. Some seemed like old birds (sort of like me) with stories to share; a duck too, and may I say a hummingbird or two, and with each moment with the clay, joy began to rise from within, as I saw what was happening. I was now in the moment.

When I was able to let go of how I thought I was supposed to do it and trust myself, allowing my hands to move in ways that felt right for me, flow began to happen. This revelation parallels how I have felt and feel about my life and creative process as an artist and community builder. As I step out of the confines of social dictates around who I am supposed to be, how I am to act, what my life is supposed to be and look like, and what I am to create, I free up my mind and heart to live a life that is true to me...to create that which is calling out to take flight. I thank you David Salazar, Workman Arts, and the Gardiner for reminding me of this truth.

Althea Knight



Project Leads

Sama Kokabi, Programs Assistant, Gardiner Museum

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