THE IMAGE HUNTER:
ON THE TRAIL OF
JOHN JAMES AUDUBON
The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art is pleased to present the exhibition *The Image Hunter: On the Trail of John James Audubon*, featuring work by the artist Hitnes. The exhibition and its attendant programming have been developed as a special research initiative by the Halsey Institute.

In the early half of the nineteenth century, John James Audubon spent decades tracking birds and drawing them, hoping to create a compendium of all of the birds in the United States. Nearly two hundred years later, the Italian painter and muralist with the moniker Hitnes embarked on a twenty-city road trip to retrace and rediscover the America that Audubon traversed in the making of his opus *Birds of America* (1827-39).

Traveling along Audubon’s exploratory routes, Hitnes observed, sketched, and painted what he saw, creating an updated visual documentation of Audubon’s birds. This body of work, along with objects and ephemera collected along the journey, will be open at the Halsey Institute in August 2018.
I. The Journey

Driven by an obsession to complete his collection of bird paintings, John James Audubon spent decades in the 1800s exploring the wilderness of the United States.

In 2015, Hitnes traversed throughout the southeastern United States to see exactly what Audubon saw, though a century and a half has passed. Along the trip, he sought the same birds Audubon found, making sketches of them and their surrounding environments. He transformed many of these drawings of birds into large public murals. The murals are connected to Hitnes’s longtime practice as a street artist, updating Audubon’s imagery into a more modern vernacular.

Vacillating between homage and veneration, Hitnes has assumed the mantle of the modern-day Audubon. Mimicking Audubon’s penchant for deep research, which often included eating the birds that he depicted, Hitnes has placed himself in swamps, marshes, forests, and bayous in his quest for lived experience with his subjects.
II. The Residency

In the summer of 2017, Hitnes returned to the United States for a three-month residency with the Halsey Institute. With his own studio, Hitnes started to prepare and create some of the works that will be on view in the exhibition. Using Charleston as his base, he further researched Audubon’s connections to the city. During his residency, he made use of the naturalist resources in the city, including voyages to the archives of the Charleston Museum.

During this residency, Hitnes was reunited with many of the materials and ephemera he collected on his journey in 2015. Using these materials in his work, he created tableaus that explore the new modern environments of Audubon’s birds. For instance, Hitnes has included litter he found in his work on the osprey, showing the effects of industrialization on the birds’ habitats. Furthermore, he adds other comments on the birds, in one instance connecting them to their prehistoric ancestor, the pterodactyl; in another, he riffs on the colorful plumage of ducks by including vividly patterned wall-paper. After his journey was complete, his residency allowed him to study the birds and their surroundings in order to provide an updated view of *Birds of America*. 
III. The Exhibition

Hitnes’s project culminates with an exhibition at the Halsey Institute in the fall of 2018. The Charleston debut of *The Image Hunter* is fitting as the city played a key role in Audubon’s work, connecting him with John Bachman, a Lutheran minister and naturalist. Bachman studied natural history and contributed much of the scientific text for *Birds of America*. Maria Martin, a painter who was married to Bachman, also contributed some of the backgrounds for Audubon’s drawings. Audubon spent much time in Charleston at with Bachman at Liberty Hall Plantation near Goose Creek, where they would hunt and observe specimens.

The aim of *The Image Hunter* is to examine the desire that drives people in the pursuit of their own quests, especially those that consume decades of life as in Audubon’s case, and it will aim to update the birds that he tracked. With his residency in Charleston, Hitnes will be able to explore Audubon’s connections with the city, allowing this research to inform his creative practice. The exhibition consists of drawings, sketches and other materials collected by Hitnes during his trek.
Exhibition Checklist

15 shadowbox works
   8 small: 39 3/8 x 27 1/2 inches (100 x 70 cm) each
   5 medium: 56 1/4 x 39 3/8 inches (142 x 100 cm) each
   2 large: 39 3/8 x 112 1/2 inches (100 x 284 cm) each
53 small framed etchings
   each approximately 12 x 9 inches (30 x 23 cm) framed
Ephemera and paraphernalia from the 2015 expedition
Selection of sketchbooks used by Hitnes during his journey and residency
Optional site-specific mural inside gallery
V. Touring Information

*The Image Hunter* is available for other institutions starting in late Fall 2018.

**Number of Works:** 15 shadowboxes, 53 miniature etchings, 1 book of miniature etchings, 5 artist sketchbooks, project paraphernalia

**Dimensions:** Varied

**Space Requirement:** 2,500 square feet

**Participation Fee:** $6,500 for 8 weeks

**Shipping Costs:** Venue pays for incoming shipping

**Insurance:** To be carried by venue

**Exhibition Signage:** Label and wall text provided in digital format **Supporting Materials:** Short documentary video about the artist (approximately 8 minutes), 300 copies of an educational brochure **Programming:** Artist is available for educational programming at an additional cost. Artist is also available for public art mural projects at an additional cost.

For more information, please contact:

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