

# HITNES

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## THE IMAGE HUNTER: ON THE TRAIL OF JOHN JAMES AUDUBON



**HALSEY INSTITUTE**  
OF CONTEMPORARY ART  
at THE COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON



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## 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.

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 debuted in an exhibition at the Halsey Institute in Fall 2018.



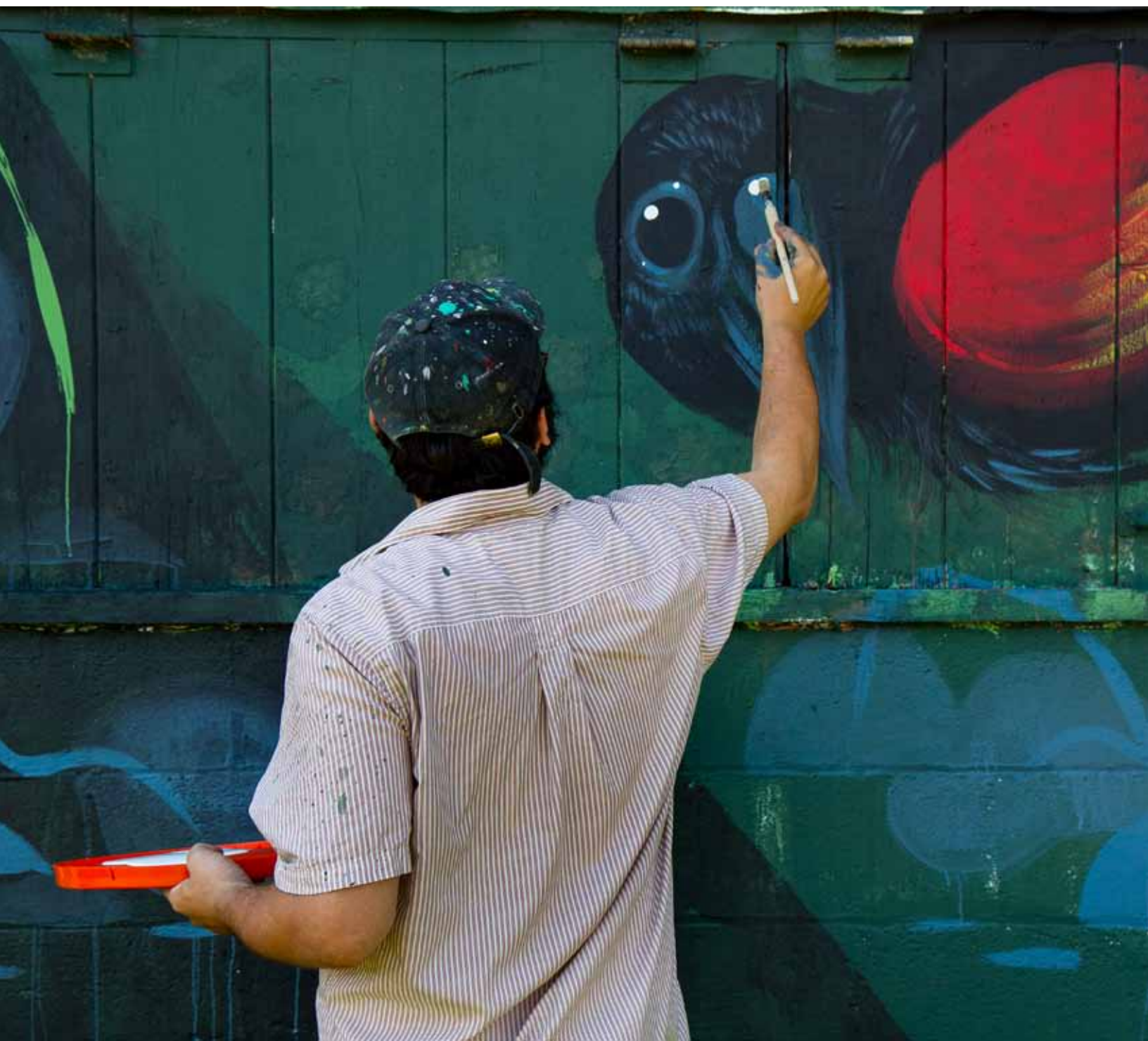
# *I. The Journey*

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 many of the works that are included in the exhibition.

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 culminated with the exhibition at the Halsey Institute. 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. The exhibition also updates the habitats of the birds Audubon tracked. 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 framed miniature etchings

each approximately 12 x 9 inches (30 x 23 cm) framed

2 books of miniature etchings

5 sketchbooks used by Hitnes during his journey and residency

Ephemera and paraphernalia from the 2015 expedition







## *V. Touring Information*

*The Image Hunter* is currently available for tour.

**Number of Works:** 15 shadowboxes, 53 miniature etchings, 2 books 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.

### **Tour Schedule:**

Historic City Hall Arts & Cultural Center

Lake Charles, Louisiana

February 22 - April 26, 2019

Provo City Library at Academy Square

Provo City, Utah

October 4 - November 27, 2019

High Desert Museum

Bend, Oregon

October 17, 2020 - January 3, 2021

For more information, please contact:

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