

A book cover featuring a parrot with blue, red, and brown feathers perched on a dark, gnarled branch. The background is a vibrant pink damask pattern. The title 'BIRDS OF A FEATHER' is written in gold serif font across the center, and the author's name 'CLAIRE ROSEN' is at the bottom.

BIRDS

OF A

FEATHER

CLAIRE ROSEN

B I R D S

OF A

F E A T H E R

CLAIRE ROSEN

B I R D S
O F A
F E A T H E R

PARTICULARLY

Parrots, Songbirds, Raptors, and Fowl



PHOTOGRAPHS BY

CLAIRE ROSEN

FIRST EDITION

WARWICK EDITIONS

CHESTER COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA

2025

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COPY EDITORS

Lillie Rosen and Bob Rosen

CREATIVE DIRECTION

Beth Taubner, MercuryLab

DESIGN DIRECTION

Caleb Cain Marcus, Luminosity Lab

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For my feathered friends

SPECIAL THANKS

To my dear feathered subjects and their devoted caretakers, I offer my sincere gratitude for the time and trust you have bestowed upon me. To the countless kindred spirits—family, friends, and colleagues—who have lent their hands and hearts to this work, whether by holding backdrops, poring over my words time and again, captioning obscure wallpaper, identifying proper bird names, or championing this project with encouraging support, I am ever in your debt - thank you. Tom Pisano, Ron Haviv, Peter Henry Bergh, Erin Human, Royal Shaheen Falconry, Gulf Photo Plus, Hank and Tracy Chalmers, Chantal de Lange, Molly Toth, The National Aviary, Laura Soder, Elmwood Park Zoo, Macaw Mountain Bird Park and Nature Reserve, Walton House, Frank Blanco, Andrea Camaliche, National Geographic, Elizabeth Krist, Mike Dupuy, Elie Hobeika, Adham Alshami, Kai Pedersen, Jennifer Ficklin & Brendan O'Connor, Morgan & Lori Moore, Lauren Malamed, Holly Tatreau, Wesley Noonan-Sessa, Stacey Moore and Justin Stailey of Fujifilm USA, Bec Manson & Lee Faircloth of ThePostOffice.nyc, Bob Tursack, Peter Philbin & Peter Croteau of Brilliant Graphics, Beth Taubner of MercuryLab, Caleb Cain Marcus of Luminosity Lab, Sam Barzilay, Laura Roumanos and Dave Shelley of Photoville, Paula Wallace and the Savannah College of Art and Design, Steve and Heidi Aishman, Bryn Larsen, Geoffrey Koslov, Bob Rosen, Lillie Rosen, Edward Rosen, Margaux Kent, Emma Mierop, Sarah Bourne Rafferty, Kate Hinkle and Lee Olson of Yoma Textiles, Tracy Taylor, Femke Speelberg, Joel Sartore, and my best cheerleader Dolly Rosen.

NATURE VERSUS ARTIFICE IN ORNAMENT AND ORNITHOLOGY

by FEMKE SPEELBERG

Curator of Historic Ornament, Design, and Architecture
Department of Drawings and Prints
Metropolitan Museum of Art

On December 10, 1881, the prolific British designer William Morris (1834-1896) gave a lecture at the Working Men's College of London. Humbly entitled "Some Hints on Pattern Designing", Morris carefully outlined his design philosophy regarding ornament for the interior. Above all, he cautioned aspiring designers to practice restraint in composition, color palette, and subject matter. He deemed nature an ideal source of inspiration but noted that scientific representation should be avoided at all costs, for the benefit of both artist and viewer. He explained: "It is impossible to imitate nature literally. The utmost realism of the most realistic painter falls a long way short..." It would, moreover, disrupt the peaceful tranquility of the home by bringing into it the outward face of the world in all its force. For the same reason, he noted, it was best to avoid exotic flora and fauna. Species unfamiliar to the artist could easily cause mistakes on their part, while the viewer's mind may well be led to unrest by the daily confrontation with things "outlandish". While Morris did not go into specifics, in making these remarks, he likely had in mind the contemporary vogue for *Japonisme*, which inspired European artists to try their hand at the depiction of a range of exotic plants and birds, as well as more fantastical creatures conjured by the minds of the artists themselves (Fig. 1). In Morris' opinion, good patterns for the domestic British market should, instead, be suggestive rather than imitative and be composed of "the rose, the lily, the tulip, the oak, the vine, and all the herbs and trees that even we cockneys know about...if we cannot be original with these simple things, we shan't help ourselves out by the uncouth ones". True to form, for Kelmscott House - his own family home in London - he designed a pattern based on the familiar but abstracted silhouettes of birds commonly found in the British landscape (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Vase with Aesthetic Japonisme Birds
Minton(s) *British* 1879
Metropolitan Museum of Art | 2018.62.58

Fig. 2. Bird
William Morris *British* 1878
Metropolitan Museum of Art | 23.163.15



Fig. 8.
The PEACOCK PHEASANT
A Natural History of Uncommon Birds
Printed for George Edwards, at the College
of Physicians in Warwick-Lane, 1743
vol. II, plate 67

Morris’ conservative approach might be considered rather astounding when we think that he presented his ideas in the same cosmopolitan city that, not long before, had been the stage for some of the most revolutionary ideas about evolution as presented by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), inspired by their close and prolonged study of exotic birds and other species. Both traveled to the most remote places on the planet to gather information and source specimens, which they brought back to London for further investigation. More than a century earlier, moreover, their predecessor and amateur ornithologist George Edwards (1694-1773) demonstrated that there was little need for travel to fill the pages of his four-volume publication *A Natural History of Uncommon Birds (1743-1754)* and its successor *Gleanings of Natural History, Exhibiting Figures of Quadrupeds, Birds, Insects, Plants (1758-1764)*.



Fig. 3. Trade card of J Thompson, taxidermist, at No. 16 Castle Street, Long Acre, London; c.1786 Etching with engraving

Fig. 4. Trade card of Joshua Brookes, bird seller c. 1762

© The Trustees of the British Museum



In fact, most of the exotic species he described and illustrated were available to him in or near the city of London proper, where he drew them from life in the houses and menageries of both nobility and tradesmen. In the introduction to the first volume of the book series (1743) he explained, for instance, that he had been able to improve his description of the green goldfinch through his “meeting” with a living example in the collection of “the most obliging Mrs. Clayton” who had in her possession several “curious living birds”. The bird was brought to her from Lisbon, but it was said to have originally come from “The Brasils” (Fig. 5). The most serious 18th-century “birders”, among whom Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), often owned both an aviary of living birds and a collection of taxidermied specimens, which they obtained through their extensive trade networks in Asia, Africa and the Americas, as well as specialized local dealers (Figs. 3 & 4).

Already a skilled draftsman, Edwards taught himself how to etch to ensure the quality of the illustrations for his book project. He professed: “Art and nature, like two sisters, should always walk hand in hand, so they may reciprocally aid and assist each other.” It is also for this reason, that he readily confessed to the detriments of drawing after deceased birds. In numerous entries he observed that their eyes and beaks had lost all natural colors, leaving him to guess as to what they might have looked like when the birds were still alive. He also showed keen awareness of the fact that not all creatures thrived when taken out of their natural environment. Ahead of the Darwinian theory of evolution, he explained: “Each animal seems to have its appointed Climate, out of which, if he be removed to one far different, his generation ceaseth or loseth its first properties; whereas such creatures as continue where nature placed them, vary hardly at all from the species from which they sprang, preserving the same magnitude, form and colours throughout all ages.” Edwards keen awareness of environmental impact is further illustrated by the emphasis he placed on those cases in which foreign birds *did* survive for many years in their new surroundings (the pelicans in the menagerie of the palace of Versailles), or even reproduced while in captivity (the Black and White Chinese Cock Pheasants, kept by Sir Hans Sloane in Fig. 6).

Despite Edwards’ sincere aims at accuracy, his illustrations are far from truthful. While he saw the birds in cages, immersed in spirits, or on display at local coffee and ale houses, he disguised these unnatural surroundings by suggesting a more natural setting. Most are therefore perched on branches, often surrounded by patches of grass and other plants or a body of water and, for good measure, he sometimes introduced life-size illustrations of insects and

“Art and nature, like two sisters, should always walk hand in hand, so they may reciprocally aid and assist each other.”

butterflies on the ground and in the sky. In his text, he gives away hints of this staging process. In his discussion of the Blue Grosbeak, for example, he mentioned that he placed it on the branch of a cherry tree to introduce contrasting colors (Fig. 7). The flowers he added to his depiction of a Peacock-pheasant were drawn from life (Fig. 8), but nowhere near the bird itself. He had studied them in the conservatory of the estate of Thorndon Hall in Essex, while the pheasant was in the possession of a London doctor named James Monro when Edwards drew it, but had since been gifted to none other than Robert Walpole (1676-1745), who kept it at Downing Street 10. Meanwhile, Mrs. Clayton’s green goldfinch from “The Brasils” by way of Lisbon was accompanied by a Chinese butterfly owned by another doctor named Robert Nesbit, whom he knew through the Royal College of Physicians. Edwards himself also owned a sizeable collection of butterflies, many of which had been brought to him from China by his friend Captain Isaac Worth of the East India Company. Edwards freely made use of this valuable stock of colorful models to enliven the illustrations in his book, regardless of whether the different species originated from the same country or continent.

Each in their own way and for their own reasons, William Morris and George Edwards thus opted for forms of disguise to avoid alerting their viewers to any signs of discrepancy. Edwards hid artifice with nature, while Morris hid nature in artifice. In this book of photographs, Claire Rosen does the exact opposite by creating the very moments of disruption Morris warned against. In confronting nature with artifice by capturing exotic birds in ornate interiors not unlike those found in the times of both Edwards and Morris, she invites the viewer to think about questions of displacement and belonging. At first glance, the pictures convey a sense of homogeneous beauty, almost as if the birds belong in or naturally emerged from their patterned backgrounds. In truth, they are anything but ornament. Upon closer inspection, they seem to display quiet acts of rebellion by turning their heads or even their whole bodies away from the camera. Others are caught hanging upside down, or taking a bite from the tree branches upon which they are placed. A naughty macaw may or may not have just launched an attack on its wallpapered background and smugly glances at the resulting tear. By following their natural instincts in this manner rather than posing as perfect subjects, Rosen’s birds seem to raise the question George Edwards already posed in his insightful work of 1743: “Whether or not nature designed the beautiful forms and colourings we perceive (...) as things to delight and please the sense of those animals [themselves] (...) or whether they were designed principally for the delight and contemplation of Man (...), is a question.” In the almost 300 years since, that question has only gained in urgency and deserves to remain at the forefront of all our interactions with the wonders of the natural world.



Fig. 5. The Green GOLD-FINCH



Fig. 6. BLACK and WHITE CHINESE COCK PHEASANT, with its HEN kept by Sir, George Edwards, vol. II p. 66

"In confronting nature with artifice by capturing exotic birds in ornate interiors not unlike those found in the times of both Edwards and Morris, she invites the viewer to think about questions of displacement and belonging."

Fig. 7. The Blue GROS-BEAK from Angola George Edwards, vol. III p. 125





On this spread: *Birds of America* by John James Audubon; *Natural History of Parrots* by Jacques Barraband; *A Natural History of Uncommon Birds* by George Edwards; *Sealy Breasted Parakeet* by Mary Parker; *Bird Wallpaper* by William Morris; *Our Birds of Prey, or the Eagles, Hawks, and Owls of Canada* photographs by William Notman; *Birds through an Opera Glass* by Florence A. Merriam



Fig. 1.
Verdure with Château and Garden
Katharine Ghuys, the Widow Guillaume Werniers
French 1738–1778

Amidst lush greenery, a frisky spaniel startles two large birds. One bird extends its wings about to take flight. Behind this bird, a rose bush leads upward to a fig tree attracting exotic birds to its ripening fruit. Tapestries showing scenes of gardens and wooded hillsides, known as "verdures" because of their rich green (or "verdant") tones. The hangings effectively brought "nature" into the home and were popular with prosperous customers who could afford luxurious decor.

Fig. 2. Fragment of a Mosaic with Birds
Roman 3rd or 4th century A.D.

The J. Paul Getty Museum Open Collection



THE ENDURING MUSE

ARTIST STATEMENT

Nature is the original and enduring muse.

Over centuries, few things have captivated the human imagination quite like birds. The myth and symbolism of birds appear often in human creative expression, serving as metaphors for freedom, beauty, and transcendence. *Birds of a Feather* — an extensive series of portraits of live birds photographed on location against opulent historically inspired backgrounds — builds on this fascination.

Inspired by nature and with admiration for our feathered companions, the imagery hopes to draw viewers in with color, form, and pattern; these providing the backdrop for the birds to charm as they mirror the self-conscious poses of humans in unexpected ways and reveal their unique personalities. The aesthetic of the series is intentionally layered. Vibrant colors and intricate patterns captivate the eye. It's about the birds, but not solely about the birds — the richly ornamented background becomes a character in its own right, amplifying the themes of beauty, domestication, and the human desire to weave nature into daily life.

The human desire to be surrounded by images of birds and the natural world has been reflected in household ornamentation throughout time and across civilizations. Birds have been immortalized in cave drawings dating back 40,000 years. Frescoes in Ancient Rome were adorned with images depicting lush flora and fauna. During the Renaissance, Rafael reinvented this ancient style through his 'Grotesques', paintings and tapestries that depict birds, fruits, and plant life. Carefully crafted representations of the natural world were later re-imagined in 19th century Britain when William Morris featured wild birds and vegetation in richly ornamented wallpaper that would decorate Victorian homes.

As William Morris was designing his flora and fauna motifs, Europe unleashed colonization across the globe and with it, the brutal domination of faraway places, creatures and cultures. As 'discoveries' were displaced to Europe and the Americas, they fueled aviary collection and display as part of an impulse to collect and catalog the natural world.

Such human fascinations are often perilous for the natural world.

The intersection of art and scientific study created a new genre of avian art, made mainstream by John James Audubon whose highly collectible folios brought the natural world into the home as decor. Though his name is synonymous with bird conservation today, Audubon himself was responsible for the deaths of thousands of birds — all sacrificed in the name of art and knowledge.

While scientific study during the Victorian Era generally disregarded the value of the lives of birds, there were voices that advocated a different way of being with and representing birds. Ornithologists — interestingly, mostly female — from Graceanna Lewis to Florence Merriam Bailey advocated the quiet observation of birds in their natural environment as yielding a greater wealth of knowledge at a lesser cost to the environment. Recognizing the importance of the birds’ home lives and habitats, these women were early advocates for protection and conservation at a time when the recognition of animals as sentient beings was just beginning to dawn in European and American society.

In our own time, the desire for closeness to animals is manifested in the beloved family pet bird. While the impulse is driven more by affection and desire for companionship than the status symbol of the Victorian aviary, is the result inadvertently not the same? Are we enhancing these creatures’ lives, or imposing a domesticity that is unnatural and unintentionally cruel?

Birds of a Feather is an exploration of the aesthetic and ethical lineage of these traditions. The series originated from a fascination with the beauty of parrots and song birds. It grew to include a wide variety of birds, from majestic raptors to farm-dwelling ducks and chickens. The project nods to historical styles while its contemporary approach creates an intriguing dialogue between past and present.

This intersection of art, history, and ornithology invites viewers to consider not just how we depict birds, but why. What does our enduring fascination with avian beauty say about our relationship with the natural world and its creatures? How do these representations shape — or distort — our perceptions of nature?

And as we admire what nature has inspired in art, what might art do for nature in return?

by CLAIRE ROSEN





Birds! Birds!
Ye are beautiful things,
With your earth-treading feet
and your cloud-cleaving wings!

ELIZA COOK

Eliza Cook (1818-1889) was a poet in Philadelphia who wrote about the lives and concerns of the working class. Her poems were often political — intended to inform and reform. Beyond her interest in the natural world, Cook was a supporter of political and sexual freedom for women, and she believed in self-improvement through education.

N° 7681 & 7711



SPOTTED EAGLE-OWLETS



№ 7261

DAMASK TEXTILE

SPOTTED EAGLE-OWL





INDIAN RUNNER & CAYUGA DUCKS

TOILE PAPER



BLUE-EYED COCKATOO

DAMASK MOTIF PAPER



BUDGERIGAR

DAMASK PAPER

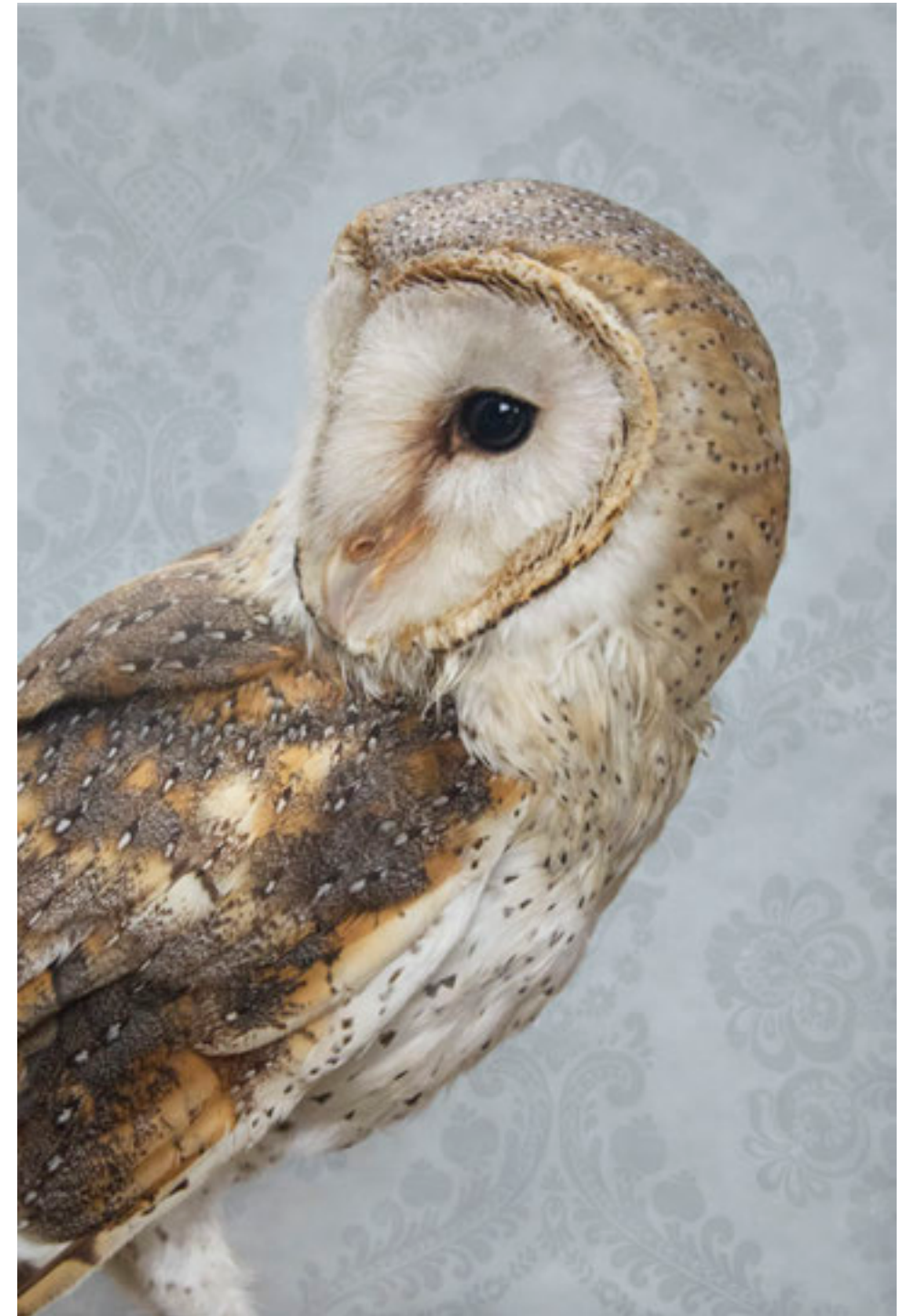


INDIAN RUNNER DUCK

TOILE PAPER



Nº 7276 & 7275



DAMASK TEXTILE

WESTERN BARN OWL



BLUE-AND-GOLD MACAW

NEOCLASSICAL EMPIRE BEE MOTIF PAPER





BLUE-AND-GOLD MACAW

ACANTHUS LEAF PAPER





*The sanity and serenity of spirit that comes
when we step aside from the turmoil of the
world to hold quiet converse with Nature.*

FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

Florence Merriam Bailey (1863-1948) was an animal rights activist and one of the first nationally recognized female ornithologists of her time. She authored the first American field guide to birds, *Birds Through an Opera-Glass*, which introduced the practice of modern bird watching as an ethical alternative to hunting, and a richer learning methodology for the study of birds. Her work popularized bird appreciation through non-invasive observation.



BUDGERIGAR
ARTS AND CRAFTS PAPER



HYACINTH MACAW
ORNAMENTAL NEOCLASSICAL PAPER

Nº 9947

FLORAL DAMASK TEXTILE

BUDGERIGARS



Nº 2929



RED LORY
SCARLET MACAW Nº 8048







RED JUNGLEFOWL

TOILE PAPER



INDIAN RUNNER DUCK

EARLY ENGLISH VINTAGE PAPER



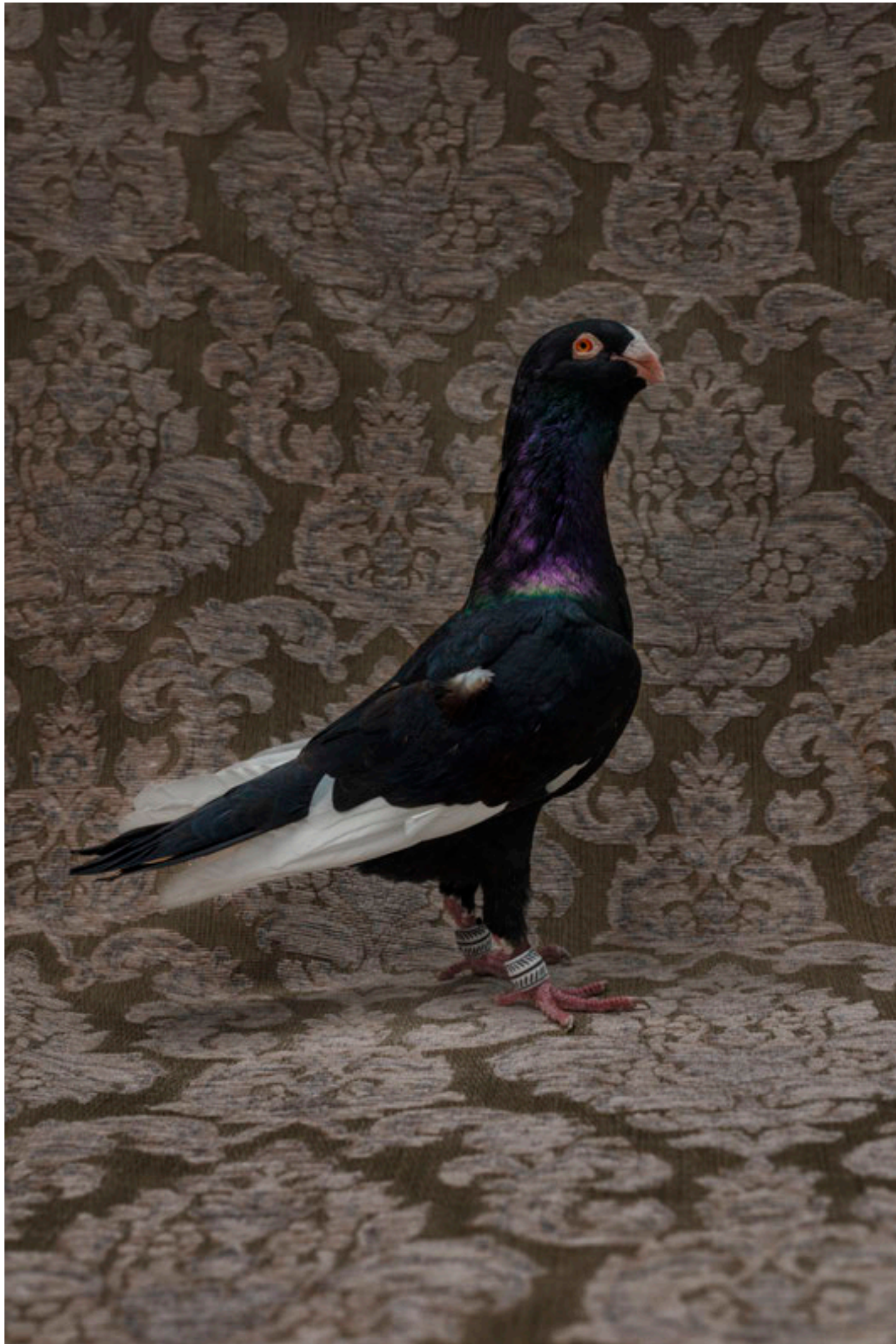
*Spring now comes unheralded by the return
of the birds, and the early mornings are
strangely silent where once they were filled
with the beauty of bird song.*

RACHEL CARSON

Rachel Carson (1907-1964) was a groundbreaking biologist, writer, and environmentalist whose work sparked the modern environmental movement. Her book *Silent Spring* exposed the dangers of pesticides, inspiring global awareness and leading to significant changes in environmental policy and conservation practices.

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL





ROCK PIGEON

DAMASK TEXTILE



JACOBIN PIGEON

DAMASK TEXTILE

Nº 0114



INDIAN RUNNER DUCK
SPECTACLED OWL Nº 7206









WESTERN BARN OWL



DAMASK TEXTILE

KEEL-BILLED TOUCANS

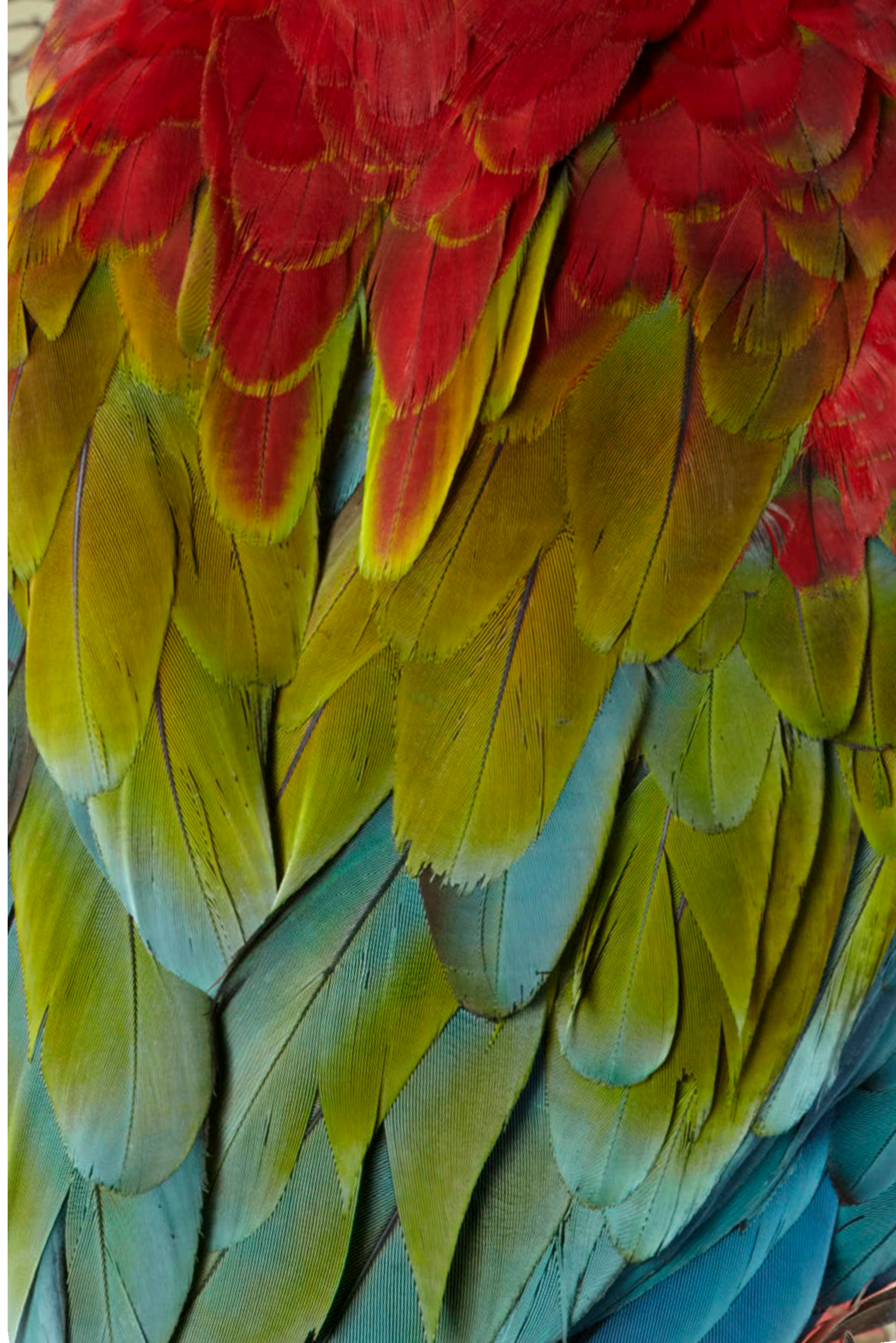






RED-AND-GREEN MACAW

ENGLISH ARTS AND CRAFTS PAPER









*How can you expect the birds to sing
when their groves are cut down?*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was an American essayist, poet, philosopher, and naturalist. He was a strong believer in self-reliance and spirituality, best known for *Walden* (1854), a book that reflects on simple living in nature — documenting his two years living alone in a cabin by Walden Pond.



Nº 7866

COT VELVET DAMASK MOTIF TEXTILE

AMERICAN GOSHAWK





EURASIAN EAGLE-OWL

BRCADE TEXTILE



BLACK VULTURE

EARLY AMERICAN DAMASK TEXTILE



WESTERN BARN OWL
FORTUNE INSPIRED PRINTED DAMASK TEXTILE

GYRFALCON



SPOTTED EAGLE-OWL

BATIK INSPIRED PRINTED TEXTILE



*There is much ignorance among us regarding
the creatures which held the land as their
own long before our forefathers trod the soil,
and many of which are still moving about
us, living accessories of our existence, at
the present hour.*

SUSAN FENIMORE COOPER

Susan Augusta Fenimore Cooper (1813 – 1894) was a nature writer, amateur naturalist, and advocate for environmental preservation. Known for her detailed observations of nature, Cooper observed how bird populations reflected the health of the natural world. Her influential 1850 book, *Rural Hours*, was one of the earliest works of environmental literary nonfiction, predating and influencing prominent figures like Thoreau and Darwin. Her observations highlighted the environmental consequences of human activity and called for a deeper respect for bird life as part of preserving the American landscape.





AFRICAN WOOD-OWL

BATIK INSPIRED PRINTED TEXTILE



WESTERN BARN OWL

BATIK INSPIRED PRINTED TEXTILE

Nº 0172

DAMASK TEXTILE

CAYUGA & SWEDISH BLUE DUCKS



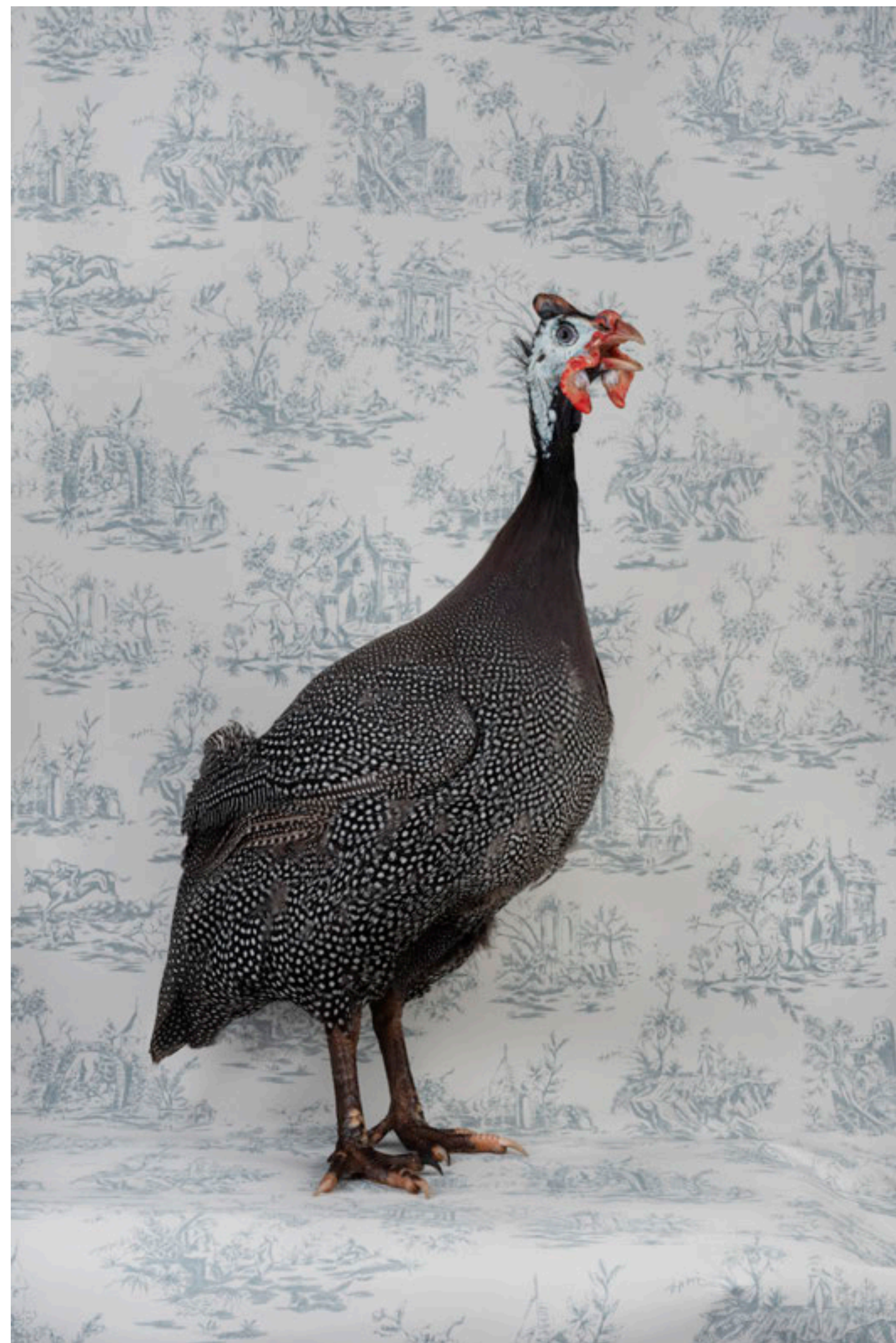


Nº 949º



INDIAN PEAFOWL
SNOWY OWL Nº 3346





HELMETED GUINEAFOWL

TOILE PAPER



ENGLISH POUTER PIGEON

VICTORIAN FLORAL TEXTILE



WHITE-FACED HURLED COCKATIEL
ENGLISH FLORAL PAPER



SAKER FALCON
FLORAL BROCADE TEXTILE



EASTERN SCREECH-OWL

DAMASK MOTIF PAPER



SALMON-CRESTED COCKATOO

DAMASK PAPER

№ 3028



DAMASK TEXTILE

BALD EAGLE



GREAT HORNED OWL

PRINTED FLORAL TEXTILE

Nº 7419



DAMASK TEXTILE

HARRIS'S HAWK

Nº 7157



GRAY PARROT
SOUTHERN WHITE-FACED OWL Nº 7214







BALD EAGLE

TOILE TEXTILE

Nº 0068

TOILE TEXTILE

CAYUGA DUCK





JAVA SPARROW
BOTANICAL PAPER

GYRFALCON
HERRINGBONE TEXTILE





Thousands of people who had within them a yearning toward nature, a deep-seated need to preserve its beauty, had been in very truth asleep...

I know, for I was one of them.

ROSALIE EDGE

Rosalie Edge (1877-1962) was a trailblazing conservationist and activist who revolutionized bird and wildlife preservation in the United States. Known for her bold and uncompromising advocacy, she founded Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania, the world's first refuge for birds of prey. Edge challenged established conservation organizations to take stronger action against habitat destruction and species decline, focusing on protecting raptors, old-growth forests, and endangered species. Her tireless efforts reshaped the modern conservation movement, blending grassroots activism with scientific priorities, and leaving a lasting legacy of environmental stewardship.



BLUE AMERICANUS CHICKEN

TOILE PAPER

Nº 0125



INDIAN RUNNER DUCK
GALAH COCKATOO Nº 7461

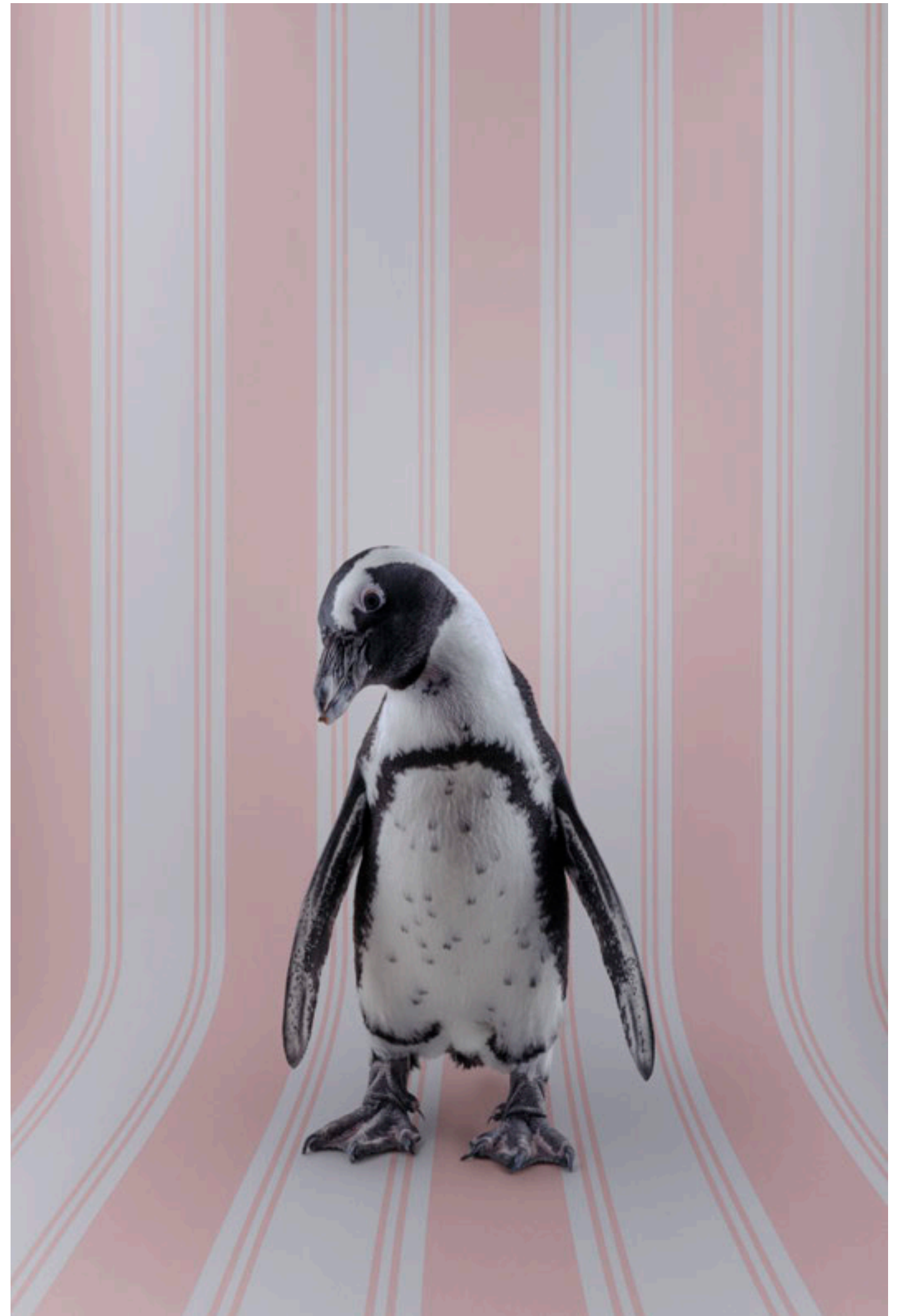






EASTERN SCREECH-OWL

DAMASK TEXTILE

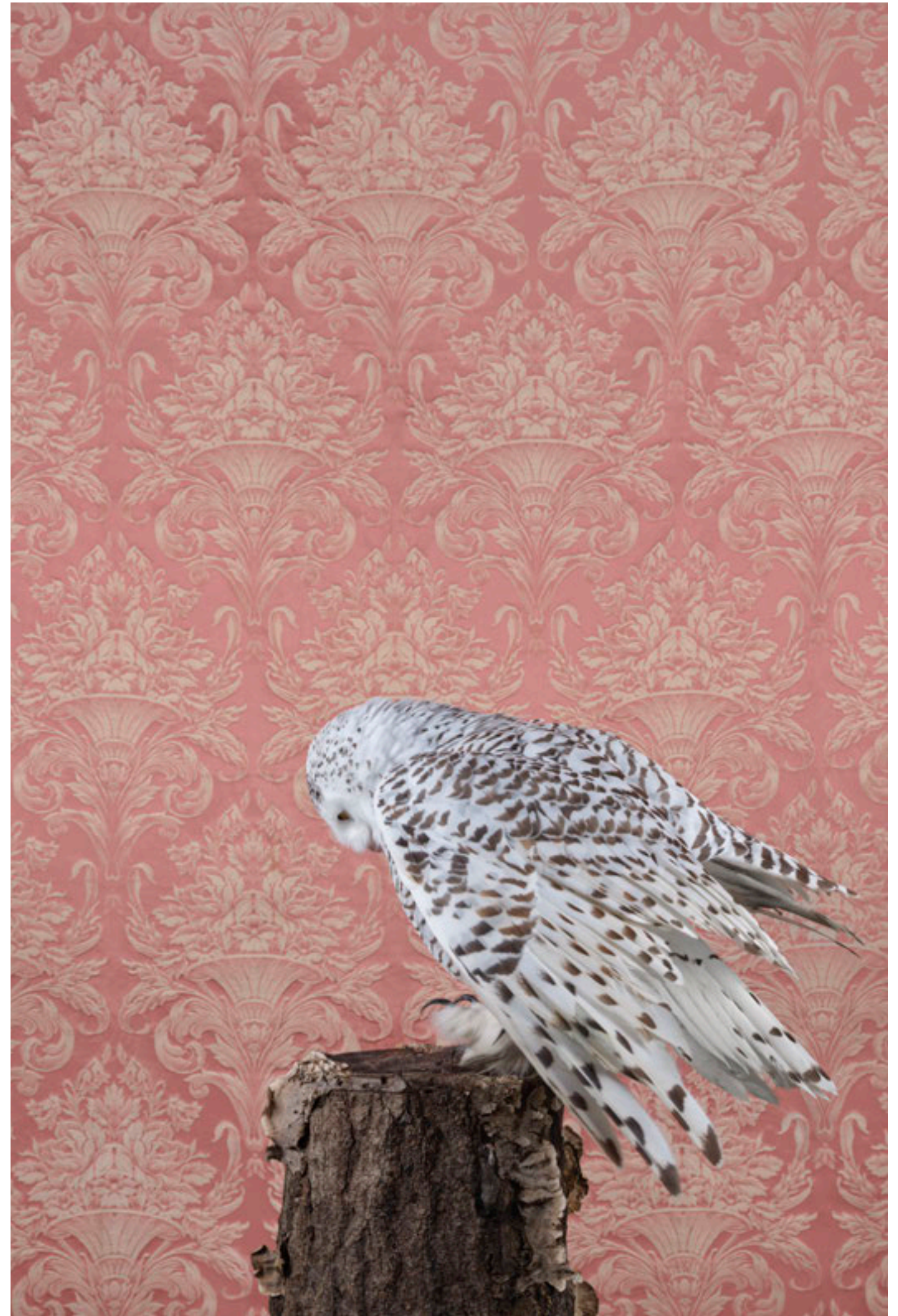


AFRICAN PENGUIN

STRIPED PAPER



SNOWY OWL



DAMASK TEXTILE





I think of what wild animals are in our imaginations. And how they are disappearing – not just from the wild, but from people’s everyday lives, replaced by images [...]. The rarer they get, the fewer meanings animals can have. Eventually rarity is all they are made of. The condor is an icon of extinction. There’s little else to it now but being the last of its kind. And in this lies the diminution of the world. How can you love something, how can you fight to protect it, if all it means is loss?

HELEN MACDONALD

Helen Macdonald is a British writer, poet, and naturalist best known for the award-winning memoir *H is for Hawk*, weaving together themes of nature, history, and the human experience with lyrical prose and sharp insight. A keen observer of the natural world, Macdonald brings a fresh, deeply personal perspective to writing, whether exploring falconry, ecology, or the complex relationship between humans and the wild.



Nº 7376 & 7367



MEYER'S PARROT







BUDGERIGAR



DAMASK PAPER

ORANGE-WINGED AMAZON









*Once we understand the wild things,
we understand ourselves.*

RODNEY STOTTS

Rodney Stotts is a master falconer, environmental educator, and advocate for wildlife conservation — even in urban settings. Through his inspiring work, he connects disadvantaged communities with nature, empowering youth and adults to find purpose and healing through falconry and environmental stewardship.



Nº 7507

DAMASK TEXTILE

SPOTTED EAGLE-OWL





DUSKY PARROT

DAMASK MOTIF PAPER





EURASIAN EAGLE-OWL

ART NOUVEAU INSPIRED PAPER



What is it, this urge to own another living creature? And why is it that we understand so well the universal symbol of the bird being set free from a cage?

*It's we who have made the cages.
It's we who must open them.*

GRAEME GIBSON

Graeme Gibson (1934–2019) was a Canadian author, conservationist, and advocate for the natural world. Known for his novels and nonfiction works like *The Bedside Book of Birds*, he explored the deep connections between humanity and nature.

RED JUNGLEFOWL







SAKER FALCON
DAMASK TEXTILE



PHARAOH EAGLE-OWL
DAMASK TEXTILE





GOLDEN EAGLE



ENGLISH ARTS & CRAFTS INSPIRED TEXTILE



Nº 7391



AFRICAN WOOD-OWL
GREAT HORNED OWL Nº 2482



Nº 7874

DAMASK MOTIF PAPER

COCKATIEL







RAINBOW LORIKEET

DAMASK PAPER





ROMAN PAPER EMPIRE & MEDALLION BEE MOTIF PAPER

BUDGERIGARS

Nº 7234

ACANTHOS LEAF PAPER

LANNER FALCON







GREAT HORNED OWL

CUT VELVET DAMASK MOTIF TEXTILE



*Could my hand unlock the chain,
How gladly would I watch it soar,
And never regret, and never complain
To see its shining eyes no more.*

EMILY BRONTË

Emily Brontë (1818–1848), renowned author of *Wuthering Heights*, had a fierce bond with nature and her pet Merlin hawk, Nero. Their connection reflected her wild spirit: she identified with the caged bird, which inspired her poetic and literary works.

THE PROCESS BEHIND THE PICTURES

From a young age, I was drawn to animals, their presence sparking a deep curiosity and fondness that has carried into my artwork. Photography became an avenue for me to construct a world of my own — a lens through which I could be around the creatures that fascinated me.

This particular series began as a desire to capture the beauty and wonder I had experienced when observing some colorful chatty parrots. I was eager to photograph them but didn't have a clear approach in mind. While researching wallpaper for an unrelated assignment, I was struck by designs featuring birds. Why not set my avian portraits against wallpaper backdrops?

I started with test images of my pet parakeet, using wallpaper remnants from another project and a lighting configuration that made the images appear more like illustrations than photographs. I was pleased with the proof of concept. I next visited a wallpaper warehouse, spending hours on the floor rummaging through mountains of discontinued swatches. Seduced by color and pattern, I accumulated quite a heap of historically-inspired Victorian motifs. I left with more than two hundred samples in hand — feeling as if I had just found the golden goose.

I persuaded a bird shop to allow me to photograph their birds. With help, I transformed the lobby into a makeshift portrait studio, complete with light-boxes and interchangeable backdrops. As the birds were brought in, I paired each one with a background, aiming to complement their colors and personalities.

The process was enthralling. Each bird revealed a unique personality: some were curious and inquisitive, others playful and dramatic, while a few seemed indifferent to the entire endeavor. The unpredictable nature of the shoot kept me engaged, as did the trial and error of matching backgrounds to my feathered models. By the end of that first session, I was exhausted and deeply fulfilled — I had experienced a truly magical collaboration.

I took great pleasure in making this imagery and as other people came to enjoy the work, the series saw some success. Coupled with the positive press, the series also generated some scathing commentary posted by animal rights activists who were critical of the pet industry, and by association, me, for having collaborated with it.

This was an eye-opening experience for me, and the comments led me to investigate the issues facing these feathered creatures. Parrots are intelligent animals that need proper care and companionship or their mental state deteriorates. Sadly, far too many birds are surrendered to shelters when their owners become unable or unwilling to care for them.

This fundamentally shifted the meaning of the project. I began to see the wallpaper as a symbol for the man-made interiors these birds inhabit when we acquire them as pets. The series seeks to capture that desire to possess the beautiful, wild and exotic — a possession that permanently changes the object of desire through its dislocation. While the birds may appear in harmony with their carefully curated backgrounds, it is a far cry from the environments they call home.

With this framing in mind, the series expanded as I encountered different birds all over the world. In Dubai I was introduced to the fascinating world of falconry. I was captivated by owls at a rescue center in Stellenbosch, South Africa. In Jordan, I marveled at fancy pigeons, pheasants, and a dazzling white peacock. Florida brought me beautifully hued but indifferent flamingos, and a local Pennsylvania

falconer provided an elusive goshawk and a pair of the fluffiest wide-eyed owlets. Visits to the National Aviary and Elmwood Zoo introduced me to birds that could no longer be returned to the wild, but who offered great value serving as educational ambassadors. During the height of the pandemic, I remained close to home, photographing my neighbors' chickens and ducks. These sessions were filled with humor as I discovered the quirky personalities of these endearing fowl in makeshift outdoor sets.

Each encounter reaffirmed the thrill of connecting with animals through my art. Whether capturing the elegance of a falcon or the playful antics of a backyard duck, I feel incredibly fortunate to share time with these creatures, allowing their natural behavior to inspire and guide my work. I've come to think of the process as a collaboration, with both parties contributing their own special magic unlocked by mutual trust. These images are an invitation to explore the interior lives of these exquisite creatures, and how they fit into our own pursuit of home, happiness and diversion.

The years I have worked on this project, have also inspired many other collaborations with a wealth of other animals — from echinoderms and insects to reptiles and mammals. This has also led to several other long-term projects — including a more widely known series of animals feasting at banquet tables - ranging from starfish and honeybees to cobras and cheetahs.

Understanding the impact of our modern world on these creatures is the motivation that drives my work. Whether inadequate care in captivity, habitat loss, the impact of light pollution on migration patterns, illegal wild trappings, chemical and plastic pollution, animal testing, or the brutality of factory farming, each creature is uniquely impacted by human society. I have seen the deep connection and care that we can have for non-human creatures and how our empathy can extend to the most unusual of animals. But modern society has made it incredibly difficult to avoid doing harm to creatures that we would never wish to hurt. The chain of events that is connected to the purchases we make and the way we live are often invisible to us, the impact hidden from our view. These impacts are entangled in the basic necessity of housing, infrastructure, affordable food and goods, and can be obscured by green-washed marketing tactics that lend the appearance of ethical practices to appease consumers.

I feel most fulfilled when my work extends beyond the purely decorative, when it can spark dialogue, shift perspectives, and serve as a fundraising tool with a small portion of print sale profits going to animal rescue organizations. I hope for us all, myself included, to be more mindful of our actions and aware of the consequences of our choices: how can we collectively lessen our negative impact on the natural world and be more kind, creative, and resourceful as we seek solutions? I hope my photographs can be part of the conversation about how we can do better to preserve, protect, and restore our natural environment and its inhabitants. And I do believe that we can always do better, from our smallest daily decisions to our greatest aspirations of how to live mindfully in this entangled world.

by Claire Rosen

EVERY ANIMAL IS A LIVING WORK OF ART

by JOEL SARTORE

National Geographic Photographer
Founder of the Photo Ark

It’s been said that we all stand on the shoulders of others. But now and again, someone comes along who seems to be blazing a new path.

Take Claire Rosen, for example.

I first became familiar with her work several years ago, thanks to a web feature on National Geographic. I was immediately intrigued. Her images were unlike anything I’d ever seen before, and that’s saying something. I’ve seen a lot of pictures.

So just how does one get a group of turtles, gibbons, parakeets, or even bears to come together for a formal banquet? Or get the most beautiful birds in the world to stand still in front of wall coverings that match their plumage?

The answer is...it’s a lot of work.

Through painstaking planning and effort, Claire builds elaborate sets to create another world. Once the stage is set, she invites in animals of various sizes, colors, shapes and energy levels. Claire photographs it all, then moves on to a new location to get the next species. She’s been doing this for years.

As I look through the photos, I see a love of nature, and an understanding of animal behavior. Patience is required as well. These subjects pretty much do what they want, when they want.

The results are often humorous, thoughtful, and simply beautiful. Many are serene, lyrical and messy, all at the same time. Each photograph tells a different story, but to me, each and every animal is a living work of art. We stand guard in museums over mere paintings, yet we’d dare let a single one of these animals be lost to extinction?

And for those who might criticize these photographs as being too anthropomorphic, I say no way. We humans finally need to realize how similar we are to the rest of the animal kingdom. All of us need the same things; clean air and water, plentiful food, and a stable climate. Claire’s pictures can help us connect those dots.

But we better hurry. With the world’s human population at 8 billion and counting, the clock is ticking. It’s now a race to convince everyone why other species and their habitats are so important and worth saving; as they go away, so could we.

I often think of this great quote by T.S. Eliot, “For us there’s only the trying. The rest is not our business.”

To me this means we animal photographers must do the best work we can, hoping to inspire positive change in others. And while we want to make the world a better place, there are no guarantees.

One photo at a time, Claire Rosen shows her love for all creatures, great and small. Let’s hope the rest of the world is not far behind.

The National Geographic Photo Ark uses the power of photography to inspire people to help protect at-risk species before it’s too late. Joel Sartore, explorer, photographer, and founder of the Photo Ark has taken portraits of 16,000 species — and counting — in his quest to document our world’s biodiversity. The goal is to document all of the approximately 20,000 species living in the world’s zoos, aquariums, and wildlife sanctuaries. “It is folly to think that we can destroy one species and ecosystem after another and not affect humanity,” he says. “When we save species, we’re actually saving ourselves.”

www.joelsartore.com/photo-ark

BIRD CREDITS

Bird Paradise, Birds by Joe, Yogyakarta Bird Market, Royal Shaheen Falconry Dubai, Jordanian Pigeons, Walton House, Mike Dupuy Falconry, and The Great Marsh Institute.

Macaw Mountain Bird Park & Nature Reserve is a bird rescue, rehabilitation and release center located in Copan Ruinas, Honduras.

The National Aviary is home to more than 500 birds representing more than 150 species from around the world, many threatened or endangered. The National Aviary leads, innovates, and contributes to important endangered bird breeding programs while working to preserve important bird habitats. Educational programming brings the fascinating world of birds to diverse audiences, and instills a conservation ethic that teaches the responsibility we all share in being stewards of our planet.

Elmwood Park Zoo is owned and operated by the Norristown Zoological Society, a non-profit organization whose mission is to foster an appreciation for wildlife and the environment that will inspire active participation in conservation. Elmwood Park Zoo currently maintains a collection of over 100 species. A number of species in the collection are managed pursuant to an international Species Survival Plan. These programs aim to maintain and increase the size of animal populations that are under the largest threat of extinction.

Eagle Encounters was a non-profit wildlife rehabilitation, conservation, education and eco-tourism center based in Stellenbosch, South Africa.

CONSERVATION RESOURCES

Eleanor of Arborea, Lady Judge and national heroine of Sardinia, who in 1392, under the jurisdiction conferred by the Carta de Logu, became the first ruler in history to grant protection to hawk and falcon nests against illegal hunters.



American Bird Conservancy is a non-profit membership organization with the mission of conserving wild birds and their habitats throughout the Americas. Its focus is on threats to birds in the Western Hemisphere – threats which include overuse of pesticides, urban sprawl, habitat destruction, and invasive species.

www.abcbirds.org

The National Audubon Society is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to conservation of birds and their habitats incorporated in 1905. The first Audubon Society was organized by Boston environmentalists Harriet Hemenway and Minna B. Hall, in response to the widespread slaughter of waterbirds, the gorgeous feathers of which were used to make women's hats. Audubon's work continues across the hemisphere in the form of scientific research, policymaking, education, community engagement, and the conservation and management of 300 million acres of bird habitat.

www.audubon.org

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology studies birds and other wildlife devoted to interpreting and conserving the Earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Cornell Lab is conducting original research in behavioral ecology, conservation, evolutionary biology, information systems, and population genetics. Cornell Lab also develops hardware and software tools used in researching bird and animal communication and patterns of movement.

www.birds.cornell.edu

BirdLife International is a global partnership of non-governmental organizations that strives to conserve birds and their habitats. BirdLife International's priorities include preventing extinction of bird species, identifying and safeguarding important sites for birds, maintaining and restoring key bird habitats, and empowering conservationists worldwide.

www.birdlife.org

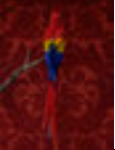
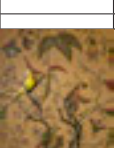
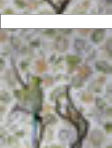
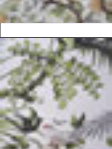
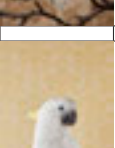
The Peregrine Fund is a non-profit organization founded in 1970 that conserves threatened and endangered birds of prey worldwide.

www.peregrinefund.org

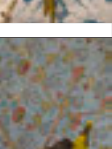
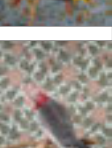
The Hawk Mountain Sanctuary was the world's first refuge for birds of prey founded by conservationist, Rosalie Edge in 1934. Hawk Mountain conserves birds of prey worldwide by providing leadership in raptor conservation science and education, and by maintaining Hawk Mountain Sanctuary as a model observation, research and education facility.

www.hawkmountain.org

PARROTS. TROPICAL BIRDS & SONGBIRDS.

Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE	Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE
8048	Scarlet Macaw <i>Ara macao</i>		6997	Pied Cockatiel <i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>	
7859	Rainbow Lorikeet <i>Trichoglossus moluccanus</i>		7613	Orange-winged Amazon <i>Amazona amazonica</i>	
2929	Red Lory <i>Eos bornea</i>		7034	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	
7301	Red-and-green Macaw <i>Ara chloropterus</i>		7024	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	
7523	Peach-faced Opaline Lovebird <i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>		7771	Yellow-chevroned Parakeet <i>Brotogeris chiriri</i>	
7548	Rosy-faced Lovebird <i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>		7746	Yellow-chevroned Parakeet <i>Brotogeris chiriri</i>	
0019	Budgerigars (Parakeets) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>		7755	Yellow-chevroned Parakeet <i>Brotogeris chiriri</i>	
9852	Yellow-naped Amazon with Budgerigars <i>Amazona auropalliata</i> and <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>		0965	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	
6977	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>		0970	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	
9718	Budgerigars (Parakeets) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>		0983	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	
7874	Lutino Cockatiel <i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>		0857	Java Sparrow <i>Padda oryzivora</i>	
7212	Blue-Eyed Cockatoo <i>Cacatua ophthalmica</i>		7799	Red-bellied Parrot <i>Poicephalus rufiventris</i>	

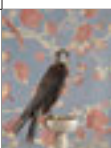
PARROTS. TROPICAL BIRDS & SONGBIRDS.

Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE	Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE
7367	Meyer's Parrot <i>Poicephalus meyeris</i>		7677	Hyacinth Macaw <i>Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus</i>	
7957	Keel-billed Toucan <i>Ramphastos sulfuratus</i>		7078	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	
7975	Keel-billed Toucans <i>Ramphastos sulfuratus</i>		1024	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	
7991	Keel-billed Toucans <i>Ramphastos sulfuratus</i>		7042	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	
9962	Budgerigars (Parakeets) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>		7866	White-faced Hurled Cockatiel <i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>	
9947	Budgerigars (Parakeets) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>		7125	African Penguin <i>Spheniscus demersus</i>	
0943	Budgerigar (Parakeet) <i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>		7095	Gray Cockatiel <i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>	
7429	Blue-and-gold Macaw <i>Ara ararauna</i>		2969	Javan Green Magpie <i>Cissa thalassina</i>	
7418	Blue-and-gold Macaw <i>Ara ararauna</i>		0350	Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	
7406	Blue-and-gold Macaw <i>Ara ararauna</i>		7696	Salmon-crested Cockatoo <i>Cacatua moluccensis</i>	
3066	Black-naped Oriole <i>Oriolus chinensis</i>		7720	Dusky Parrot <i>Pionus fuscus</i>	
7461	Galah Cockatoo <i>Calophus roseicapilla</i>		7157	Gray Parrot <i>Psittacus erithacus</i>	

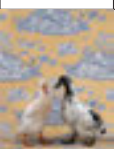
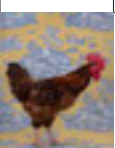
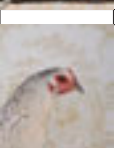
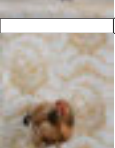
BIRDS OF PREY.

Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE	Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE
7419	Harris's Hawk <i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i>		7414	African Wood-Owl <i>Strix woodfordii</i>	
2514	Great Horned Owl <i>Bubo virginianus</i>		7315	Western Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	
4820	Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		7711	Spotted Eagle-Owlets <i>Bubo africanus</i>	
4810	Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		7681	Spotted Eagle-Owlets <i>Bubo africanus</i>	
7391	African Wood-Owl <i>Strix woodfordii</i>		4794	Pharaoh Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>	
2482	Great Horned Owl <i>Bubo virginianus</i>		4300	Western Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	
7482	Harris's Hawk <i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i>		4296	Western Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	
7495	Harris's Hawk <i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i>		3028	Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	
7206	Spectacled Owl <i>Pulsatrix perspicillata</i>		3274	Snowy Owl <i>Bubo scandiacus</i>	
4309	Saker Falcon <i>Falco cherrug</i>		3282	Snowy Owl <i>Bubo scandiacus</i>	
2573	Great Horned Owl <i>Bubo virginianus</i>		7773	Eastern Screech-Owl <i>Megascops asio</i>	
7496	Spotted Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo africanus</i>		7632	Northern Saw-whet Owl <i>Aegolius acadicus</i>	

BIRDS OF PREY.

Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE	Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE
5234	Great Horned Owl <i>Bubo virginianus</i>		3346	Snowy Owl <i>Bubo scandiacus</i>	
7990	Eurasian Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo bubo</i>		7351	Gyr Falcon <i>Falco rusticolus</i>	
7278	Eastern Screech-Owl <i>Megascops asio</i>		3130	Bald Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	
7866	American Goshawk <i>Accipiter atricapillus</i>		4481	Gyr Falcon <i>Falco rusticolus</i>	
5324	Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>		4250	Western Barn Owl <i>Tyto albas</i>	
7234	Lanner Falcon <i>Falco biarmicus</i>		4602	Gyr Falcon <i>Falco rusticolus</i>	
4338	Saker Falcon <i>Falco cherrug</i>		7975	Eurasian Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo bubo</i>	
7276	Western Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>		2236	American Barn Owl <i>Tyto furcata</i>	
7275	Western Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>		2227	American Barn Owl <i>Tyto furcata</i>	
3191	Eastern Screech-Owl <i>Megascops asio</i>		2794	Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	
7261	Spotted Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo africanus</i>		7507	Spotted Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo africanus</i>	
7214	Southern White-faced Owl <i>Ptilopsis granti</i>		2935	Black Vulture <i>Coragyps atratus</i>	

FOWL.

Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE	Nº	COMMON NAME <i>Scientific Name</i>	IMAGE
0233	Domestic Ducks <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>		0172	Domestic Ducks <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>	
9392	Red Junglefowl <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>		0197	Domestic Ducks <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>	
0125	Indian Runner Duck <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>		9564	English Pouter Pigeon <i>Columba livia f. domestica</i>	
0248	Domestic Ducks <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>		9490	Indian Peafowl <i>Pavo cristatus</i>	
9429	Red Junglefowl <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>		9976	Indian Runner Duck <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>	
0166	Brahma Chicken <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>		0276	Indian Runner Duck <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>	
0114	Indian Runner Duck <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>		9443	Helmeted Guineafowl <i>Numida meleagris</i>	
9379	Red Junglefowl <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>		0008	Swedish Blue Duck <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>	
9380	Red Junglefowl <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>		0068	Swedish Blue Duck <i>Anas platyrhynchos domesticus</i>	
6259	Brahma Chicken <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>		9590	Lady Amherst's Pheasant <i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>	
6279	Brahma Chicken <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>		9643	Jacobin Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	
6178	Blue Americanus Chicken <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>		9646	Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



Claire Rosen is an award-winning artist known for her imaginative photography — which explores the intersection of art, history and nature. Her hallmark images include animals presented in fantastical anthropomorphized settings. Her visual style was shaped by the early influences of Beatrix Potter, the Victorian era, natural history museums and the Dutch still life tradition, with her compositions blending the enchantment of children’s illustrations and the refinement of classical painting. Her work utilizes these visual traditions to spark conversation around contemporary themes. Her lifelong love of all creatures has led Claire to a distinctive approach that integrates live animals into her creative process — engaging viewers to reflect more deeply on the nature of animals and our connections to them.

She was twice named to Forbes’ “Best 30 under 30” list for Art & Design. Her work has also received accolades from industry publications and has been featured in *Architectural Digest*, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *PhotoVogue*, *NPR*, *Refinery29*, and *The Washington Post*. Claire’s artwork has been exhibited widely, from New York to Seoul, and has been included in both solo and group shows at venues such as AIPAD at the NYC Armory, Annenberg Space for Photography, Aperture Gallery, SCAD Savannah Museum of Art and The Center for Maine Contemporary Art.

Claire is also a sought-after educator, public speaker and author. Her book, *IMAGINARIUM: The Process Behind the Pictures*, offers insight into her creative practice and presents tools for the artistic process. She is profiled in the book, “*Why We Photograph Animals*” by Huw Lewis-Jones. And as a brand ambassador for FujiFilm USA, she continues to influence and educate within the photography community.

Since graduating with a B.F.A. in Photography from Savannah College of Art and Design (and with an earlier degree from Bard College at Simon's Rock), she has continued to evolve her practice. In 2017, she and her family moved to Warwick Furnace Farm in rural Chester County, PA, an 18th-century historic property they have since transformed into a picturesque lavender farm — which provides a setting for Claire’s artist studio, an art gallery and a growing guest artist residency program — reflecting her continuing commitment to community engagement through the creative arts.



