

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg Showcases *Audubon's Birds of America* – A Celebrated Work of Art and Nature

Produced by National Museums Scotland, this extraordinary exhibition explores the beauty, rarity, and enduring influence of one of the world's most coveted books.

October 12, 2024 through February 16, 2025



ST. PETERSBURG, FL (September 4, 2024) — [The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg](#) (MFA), announces the opening of *Audubon's Birds of America*, a remarkable exhibition that celebrates the significant legacy of John James Audubon (1785–1851). This exhibition explores the life and work of this iconic artist, naturalist, and ornithologist, while also examining the creation and impact of one of the world's rarest, largest, and most coveted books, *The Birds of America*.

Published as a series between 1827 and 1838, *Birds of America* by John James Audubon was a landmark work that achieved international renown due to the epic scale of the project and the book's spectacular, life-sized ornithological illustrations.

Audubon's Birds of America (October 12, 2024 through February 16, 2025) is a touring exhibition from National Museums Scotland and will showcase 46 prints from their collection. Rarely seen unbound, this exhibition will be a unique opportunity to see so much of Audubon's work in one place.



"Birds of America is one of the world's most renowned and visually stunning books, and its creation is truly remarkable," said Chief Curator Dr. Stanton Thomas. "While many have encountered digital reproductions, this touring exhibition from National Museums Scotland offers a rare chance to experience a substantial collection of these prints in person. Visitors will be able to appreciate the scale and ambition of many of Audubon's 'Great Work.' The exhibition also explores the complexities of

Audubon as a figure, addressing both the myths and the realities surrounding this fascinating, yet flawed, American icon.”

Birds of America was the culmination of Audubon’s ambition to paint every bird species in North America and is celebrated for its extraordinarily animated, dramatic, and detailed illustrations. To accommodate life-sized birds, the book was printed on paper over three feet long. Even then, some larger species had to be posed in contorted positions to fit them onto the page.

While his predecessors and contemporaries illustrated birds looking stiff and unnatural, Audubon pioneered his depiction of scenes from nature, posing birds in realistic poses he had observed in the wild. He is traditionally celebrated as the quintessential American woodsman, adventurer, and naturalist, who identified over 20 species new to science. His paintings of the natural world are some of the most famous in art and natural sciences history. However, Audubon’s story is full of contradictions and controversy, and the exhibition will look at both the legend built up around him and the more complex, problematic realities. He profited from the ownership of enslaved people and showed disdain towards the abolitionist movement, aspects of his story that have been overlooked until recently. His scientific credibility is also questioned due to accusations of fabricating certain species and errors in identifying some birds.



National Museums Scotland’s touring exhibition will also explore Audubon’s links with the scientific and artistic community in late-Enlightenment Edinburgh, where the process of publishing the book began.

He visited Edinburgh six times, including research visits to what is now the National Museum of Scotland itself. The exhibition will bring the story up to the present day, looking at the conservation status of some of the species featured in *Birds of America*.

"We are excited for our visitors to not only experience the beauty of this exhibition but to engage more fully through our diverse programming," said Darcy Schuller, Chief Strategy Officer. "From the inspiring film screening of *The Last Green Thread* with Mallory Dimmitt, CEO of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, on October 24, to monthly birding excursions on the bay with the Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center, we're offering opportunities for all to connect with art and nature."



Exhibition Details:

Audubon's Birds of America

October 12, 2024 through February 16, 2025

<https://mfastpete.org/audubon>

Produced By:



Related Programs:

MFA Member-Exclusive Preview & Reception for *Audubon's Birds of America*

Thursday, October 10, 2024, 7:30-9:00 PM

Film Screening | *The Last Green Thread* with Mallory Dimmitt, CEO of Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation

Thursday, October 24, 2024, at 6:00 PM

Birding on the Bay with Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center and the MFA

First Saturday Evenings and Second Sunday Mornings monthly December through February

The Story of Art | *Bejeweled Birds* with Annamarie Sandecki

Thursday, November 7, 2024, at 6:00 PM

Additional programming to be announced. More information can be found at mfastpete.org.

Images:

Detail from a print depicting Carolina parakeets (Plate 26) from *Birds of America*, by John James Audubon. © National Museums Scotland

Detail from a print depicting a white-throated sparrow (Plate 8) from *Birds of America*, by John James Audubon. © National Museums Scotland

Print depicting a raven (Plate 101) from *Birds of America*, by John James Audubon. © National Museums Scotland

Print depicting blue-winged yellow warblers (Plate 20) from *Birds of America*, by John James Audubon. © National Museums Scotland

Detail from a print depicting Carolina pigeons or turtle doves (Plate 17) from *Birds of America*, by John James Audubon. © National Museums Scotland

Press Kit:

The full press kit is available [here](#).

Press Preview | *Audubon's Birds of America*

Thursday, October 10, 2024, at 10:00 AM

Press Preview RSVP

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, ST. PETERSBURG

The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg (MFA) has an encyclopedic collection of art from around the globe and across the centuries, with almost 5,000 years of civilization represented in thousands of objects extending from antiquity to the present. The collection includes works by Georgia O'Keefe, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Auguste Rodin, Kehinde Wiley, Jacob Lawrence, and many others, as well as ancient Greek and Roman, Asian, African, Art of the Americas, and Native American art. The museum's photographic collection is one of the largest and most well-respected in the Southeast. The museum's rotating exhibition galleries feature a diverse selection of temporary exhibitions from all over the world, as well as exhibitions curated from the museum's extensive collection. In addition to its robust exhibition program, the MFA engages the community through exciting public programs and events and serves students through youth programs and a partnership with the Pinellas County School System.

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