

ALDE VALLEY SPRING FESTIVAL EXHIBITION 2020

On a Turning Wing : A Celebration of Birds, Flight & Migration

ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE

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NESTING BIRDS BY MARCIA BLAKENHAM

Earthenware, painted slip and mixed media

Letting land be free - *rewilding* has become a hot topic in the past few years. It is a source of inspiration to some, many perhaps; and a provocation to others. The word itself implies that it is a deliberate action : that *rewilding* is something that we do *to* a landscape. But perhaps this overlooks a fundamental reality : that land of itself wants to be wild. It is the natural tendency of most soils in the UK, at least, to become forest to cover itself in trees.

More often than not, it is we humans who stand in the way of wildness and impede it. Much of farming is now about ‘crop protection’, which conjures up images of close protection teams keeping any trouble away from the ‘asset’ in their midst. Is this what agriculture has largely become : the removal of wildlife from farmland in order to allow crops, otherwise extremely susceptible to ‘pests’, to flourish - but in the absence of almost other plants and animals ?

It’s a barren prospect. Eventually, the land is progressively emptied of wildflowers, insects and finally birds, who rely upon rich flora and an abundance of insect life to feed themselves and their young. Talking to friends who grew up in rural Suffolk in the 1940s and 1950s, their recollections are of hedgerows that were stuffed with nests. Looking down a bare hedgeline in winter was almost like glancing at a complex, messy musical score. The dense silhouettes of empty nests were dotted along the tangled twigs and branches like disorderly notes. Now it feels a small triumph to find even one songbird’s nest in a hundred yards of hedge unless you count pigeon nests, which seem to offer themselves up to the wind from the flimsiest branches of overgrown hazel or ivy-clad hawthorn. But *rewilding* or *rebirding* a landscape can help. Deliberate actions that welcome the ecological potential of fields, pastures, woodland, ponds and streams and arable land certainly help.

Turning to look inwards into the house and barns during the Festival Exhibitions, Marcia’s sculptures never fail to provide a sense of reassurance : that there are nests and that there will be more in the future. Her birds always look comfortable on their nests well rooted in their own earthenware habitats. And they also make indoors feel a bit more like outdoors, which is encouraging and provides inspiration to make the real outdoors more welcoming to birds.

One of Marcia’s nesting birds is a kittiwake. In his inspiring book *The Seabird’s Cry*, Adam Nicolson writes, of the kittiwake :

“If you come close to a the bird and catch the look in its eye, perhaps as it hangs over you quizzically in the sternsheets, ask yourself again : what is the intention behind that look ? whose world are you sailing in ?”

And maybe that is at the heart of it. Maybe we should let ourselves to think “we live in their world” and then make a bit more room for birds in our lives; in our homes and on our farms and in the countryside and towns. Marcia’s beautiful nesting birds are a reminder that we can do this and also that it is a joy to do so.

For all sales, larger images and more details : enquiries@aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk



1. **SOLD** *Nesting Chaffinch*
18cm x 20cm x 15cm
£285



2. **SOLD** *Green Woodpecker*
25cm x 28cm x 28cm
£395



3. **SOLD** *Small Nesting Black-cap*
22cm x 18cm x 18cm
£285



4. *Chaffinch and nest with eggs*
26cm x 26cm x 16cm
£395



5. **SOLD** *Great Spotted Woodpecker*
24cm x 24cm x 24cm
£395



6. *Small Chaffinch on Nest*
20cm x 20cm x 16cm
£260



7. *Nesting Eiderduck*
14cm x 37cm x 31cm
£495



8. *Kittiwake*
21cm x 16cm x 20cm
£355



9. **SOLD** *Tern*
21cm x 18cm x 18cm
£355



10. *Thrush*
23cm x 23cm x 22cm
£350



II. *Crows*
43cm x 33cm x 33cm
£400



12. *Kittiwakes*
53cm x 33cm x 33cm
£545

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I work, mostly, in earthenware, and painted slip. I build, either in rolled out slabs or coils, which I then mould into shape.

I have made nesting birds before, so the theme of this year's Festival suited me well ... I like making birds, and everything they represent. Difficult, of course, to represent flight in ceramic, so I choose to see them when they have alighted, maybe having migrated from far away, and laying their eggs before setting off back again.

The Arctic tern makes the longest journey... a round trip of 22,000 miles from the Arctic to the Antarctic summer. The kittiwake spends the winter at sea. I have given my sea-birds the ledges of cliff tops to nest on, where they perch precariously, high above the sea

The 'song birds', the black cap and the chaffinch are more comfortably installed in garden and woodland trees. I have made some of the tree trunks hollow, so that, if you want, you can add your own twig or tree branch. The green and great spotted woodpecker, too, cling to their own hollow tree trunks.

Marcia Blakenham. April 2020.

End of Catalogue

For all sales or for more information about any works

Please contact : enquiries@aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk

Website : www.aldevalleyspringfestival.co.uk **Instagram :** @aldevalleyfestival