

# Wayne E. Smyth

## A personal look at a bird lover and artist

By Lyrae Perry

**T**he seemingly simple act of looking at artwork with our own eyes is bound to elicit feelings. In fact, it is the precise intention of the artist to make you feel something! You may be moved to tears, joyfully happy, repulsed, thrilled, angry, appreciative or perhaps you'll just feel peaceful. Any variety of feelings with subtle emotional shades may result from your visual or tactile engagement of the work. This is true engagement with the art.

Most often engagement is linked to the interest of the viewer in a particular subject area. When the skill of the artist, subject matter and viewer meet on common ground, there's a thrill that is almost electric in its intensity for both parties. It's nearly impossible to describe the connection we feel to the artwork and the artist who clearly has shown us something that speaks to our hearts and minds in a language without words.

We are often moved to talk to the artist to learn more, confirm our thoughts about a mutual connection or understanding. When an artwork mirrors feelings, we want to purchase the art so we can enjoy those feelings again and again. The best parts of our lives revolve around shared experiences and connections to the ideas and things we're passionate about or love.

Wayne Smyth is a premier artist who goes beyond creative skill and moves us with his beautiful renderings of birds. His particular interest and focus is tropical birds. However, Wayne's art has a depth and breadth covering many areas beyond the beautiful bird art he's shared with AFA over the past two decades. We are so fortunate to know this man and benefit from his generosity in the gift of his artworks to AFA. His work speaks to us about our shared appreciation and love for the birds.

Wayne's a regular at our annual AFA conventions most years and we're lucky enough to be able to pin him down in a chair at the AFA Store where we make him sign his name over and over on all kinds of goodies! Wayne graciously visits with everyone at these events. He personalizes and signs the annual convention t-shirts for anyone who asks too. Then there are all the other items created with his theme bird images on them that have to get signed. We keep him very busy and well stocked with coffee and water. So far, he hasn't complained.

As a special treat for us, Wayne agreed to answer personal questions about his life, views and his art inspirations and aspirations posed by some AFA members. Get set for a "no holds barred" interview with a great artist. I think you'll find his answers fun and insightful. Enjoy!



Wayne E Smyth

### FROM GEORGIA HAYES

1. Who is your favorite artist?

**WS:** John Singer Sargent. Believe it or not, we were born on the same day 100 years apart.

2. What do you look for when choosing a subject?

**WS:** Usually the subject chooses me. About 95 percent of my work is commissioned. Over the years there have been a lot of 'Match the Drapes' pieces. I think that is one mistake that way too many people make. Art should never match the drapes but stand on its own. But hey, if it's a \$200–\$300 commissioned piece, I'll match anyone's drapes.

3. What is your favorite medium to work with and why?

**WS:** I like them all. When I'm in the field and with limited space to schlep everything around, a sketch pad and a small set of watercolors does just fine. In the studio I love working with oils. I love the smell, I love the feel, I love the results. I like to work up a painting in a series of glazes and acrylics lend themselves best to that method because of the drying time.

### FROM FRED SMITH

1. How did you become involved in the restoration project? (I don't remember what building it was) How long did it take to complete?

**WS:** Fred, it was the restoration of the wonderful, old Pantages Theater in Hollywood. It was originally conceived and built by the great impresario, Alexander Pantages, in 1930

Wayne E. Smith



and used as one of the nation's top vaudeville houses. For a number of years it hosted the Academy Awards ceremony. In 2001, I was contacted by a large firm in New York asking if I would be available to work on a big project for about six months in Los Angeles. When they told me what it was I jumped at the chance. I'd seen various venues there and had always been fascinated by the architecture and the lush art deco interiors. A team of 60 artisans were gathered from almost as many countries, it was like working in a mini U.N. Very few of the decorative elements remained undamaged. In the mid-'50s the

marvelous ceiling of the outer lobby was completely covered over causing yet more damage. I restored and replicated the three large paintings above the Proscenium working from Heinsbergen's (the interior designer) original layouts. Also the two large ceiling deco panels in the Grand Promenade and we all worked on applying new gold, silver and copper leafing to the 'miles' of ceiling elements. It was one of my favorite projects that I have ever worked on.

### FROM MARK MOORE

1. Is there anything you've always wanted to paint but haven't?

**WS:** Nope. I have been lucky. Every project that I've worked on I totally enjoyed. In fact, many of them I wish that I could have kept.

2. What was the first commissioned piece you did?

**WS:** Hmm. When I was at the Naval Medical School in Bethesda I was studying medical Illustration. One of the other interns asked me to paint a couple of large canvases for his

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living room; sort of impressionistic versions of a hot summer and a cold winter. I wonder where those ever ended up?

3. What was the most challenging subject you've painted?

**WS:** Not necessarily the most challenging artistically but certainly one of the most difficult. It was a penthouse living room in New York for one of the Marcus clan (Nieman-Marcus). I painted two 25' X 9' walls, beige silk panels that were painted in the studio. Large over scaled oriental tree peonies, Mrs Marcus knew that I liked birds so she said just paint your favorite ones and I did: Birds of Paradise, Hummingbirds and Asian Pheasants. That was the fun part. The killer was a 25' X 20' sisal carpet that the designer wanted me to paint asymmetrical Japanese mons (family crests) on and the pastiche of an oriental border. I had to work on the floor and in order to get the paint to adhere to the carpet, it had to be pounced in with a small, stiff brush.

4. Where is your favorite destination, and why?

**WS:** A couple of years ago I was in Papua New Guinea for a month. It was one of those magical places that I have wanted to visit all of my life. My grandmother worked with the cultural anthropologist, Margaret Meade ("Coming of Age in Samoa," et al), and she used to regale us with tales of "the wonderful peoples of the South Pacific down under the equator." Why? The Birds of Paradise. They eclipse anything any of us could possibly imagine. Of the 43 known species, I found 26.

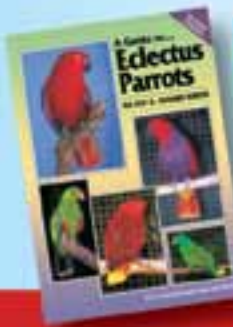
Their plumage and courtship displays are dazzling

5. If you were to do anything else, what would it be?

**WS:** Secretly, I have always wanted to dance my butt off on



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the Broadway stage and belt out a song like Joel Grey as the MC in “Cabaret.”

#### FROM LYRAE PERRY

1. What is your alias for your other works?

**WS:** For a while, maybe 15 years ago or so, a buddy of mine and I did a whole series of soft porn cards, paintings, the lot. Laurent said that I couldn’t sign my name because they’d come back to haunt me so I said, well, come up with something, a one word name like Elvis or Cher. He christened me Mikonos. Actually we did quite well. We had a rep here and one in Europe.

2. Do you have any artwork saved from your childhood?

**WS:** I don’t know of any. For a long while there were a lot of things stored in the attic of our country home in Michigan but they weren’t properly stored so a lot got damaged or just disappeared.

3. You’re one of the lucky artists who’s been able to make a decent living working at something you love. What were the most important choices you made to make that happen?

**WS:** Who can say? Yes, I have been lucky. My whole family is in medicine. My grandfather came over from Ireland during the potato famine when he was 17, put himself thru Harvard Medical School and ended up as Chief of Staff at St. Luke’s in Chicago. I’m the oldest, and with parental pressure, tried my hand at medical school. From there I morphed into medical illustration for a while and then went back to school and got a degree in advertising design. I ended up as a hot shot art director with a big international ad firm on Madison

Avenue. I was transferred to our Oslo office and then to Rome. I went through a rough divorce and decided to just bum around the world for a couple of years. When I was in East Africa I used my fraternity brother and his wife’s place in Kampala as a base for travel there. I was doing a lot of sketching and painting and Susan put together a swell show at the Kampala International Hotel. She invited all of the expats and Embassy people and it was a big hit, I sold out. One of the people who came to the opening was with Far Horizon Travel in London. Long story short, he asked me if I’d like to work for them on safari and I was soon thereafter a registered guide/lecturer with the governments of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, a permanent resident of Kenya and out on safari with my first group of British tourists a couple of weeks later. I continued to paint and had paintings in the Tryon Galleries in Nairobi and London and worked there for 10 years. In the early ’80s Kenya had a nationalization policy and gave me the choice of Kenyan citizenship or leaving. I couldn’t give up my U.S. citizenship so I came back to the States and just painted full time. Whew!

#### FROM NANCY SPEED

1. When did someone recognize you had a talent for painting? And who was that?

**WS:** My grandmother Leland, my Mom’s mother, the one that was down in the South Pacific. She was quite a good artist in her own right and studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. She always used to give me the shirt cardboards that came back from the cleaners to draw on.





2. Where did you receive your education involving art?

**WS:** Even when I was a kid I was always sketching and painting. A bit of it came from my medical illustration phase, a bit from my art director days in advertising and the rest from who knows where?

#### FROM CAROL LEE

1. What subject do you enjoy painting the most ?

**WS:** My birds of course. That's how I ended up with you guys.

2. How did you choose your subjects, and have you ever painted them in their natural setting ?

**WS:** For the most part I have always painted the species that hold my interest, and that would be the whole realm of tropical birds. When I'm in the field I do a series of sketches, take notes and shoot reference photos. With birds it is all but impossible to 'paint on location', just envision: humidity at about 95, temps hovering in the same range and they don't call it the Rain Forest for nothing.

#### FROM RICK JORDAN

1. What was the brightest moment in your career?

**WS:** The brightest? I'd like to think that I am, for the most part, ego free. A number of years ago *Architectural Digest* did a very flattering article about me and ran some good photos. I was amazed about the mileage that I got out of that. Suddenly it was like the hand of the designing gods tapping me on the head and giving me validation. Who knew?

2. Of all your subject matter, what is your favorite?

**WS:** I did a fun nursery once for Goldie Hawn's daughter (Kate Hudson). They gave me free reign. I painted a wide, pink ribbon that wrapped around the room like a wainscoting. Out of that sprang all of the wonderful flowers of an English garden and, tucked in and hidden amongst the blossoms and leaves were lots of little fairies, wood sprites and elves. I found a luminescent and transparent paint that I used to paint 'Fairy Dust' around all of their heads and on their wings. When the lights went out they all sprang to life! Sharing that when I finished with Goldie, Kurt and the kids was really a kick.

3. Given a choice between brie and good Texas goat cheese, what would you choose?

**WS:** Difficult choice, you know how I am when I get around some really good, really fresh TGC. In fact, just the thought of it all now makes me more than a bit verklempt.

#### FROM JULIE CORWIN

1. Of all the places you have visited, which inspired you most?

**WS:** Curiously, I have never visited Japan, at least in this life any how, but I have always had an affinity for the Japanese aesthetic. They begin with a thorough understanding of nature and then transcend it. Their ability to analyze, reconstruct and improve upon the sublime beauties of nature are so characteristic of their work. What really gets me is their desire to remake natural forms that delight the eye and are more beautiful than true. Envision the magic of Japanese gardens that you have seen or the remarkable subtlety and nuance of an old bonsai tree.

2. Of all your artwork, which is your favorite, and what inspired you to create it?

**WS:** One of my all-time favorites, not necessarily because of the subject matter but because it took so long to paint and was so physically demanding, was a commissioned piece for a large shopping mall down in Orange County, the Main Place. It measured 85' X 20'. We painted it in three sections in the studio on gessoed, theatrical-width muslin. They latched on to my first comprehensive layout immediately, I simply painted the classic three views of the mountains: fairly near (darkest), not so near (a bit lighter) and farthest (lightest). In the sky I painted a large, realistic sort of Salvador Dali orange with the rind unpeeling as if it had been pared. What inspired me? Oh boy, you guys are going to jump on me for this one—paying the outrageous price that I asked for it. I didn't really want to do it because it involved so much time and space, but I thought, hey, If they go for this thing then we'll do it. And we did!

3. What is the most noteworthy thing you have done?

**WS:** For me it was the Pantages restoration.

### FROM MARY ROSE

1. I'd like to know about the murals you've done.

**WS:** There have been many which went in all sorts of directions. For example: the lobby of the Plaza Athenee in New York. We did faux Goblan tapestries in the manner of the mid-1600s. Another: a 30' x 9' 12-panel Japanese screen for the lobby of a large condominium here in L.A. over on Wilshire Boulevard. A large flock of Japanese Sarus Cranes, bamboo and water on a silver leaf ground with a border of antique Japanese brocade (c. 1850).

2. What drew you to the AFA and to produce art for AFA?

**WS:** Years ago Bob Berry asked me if I could recommend someone who could produce art for the annual convention's image. He showed me what had been done in the past and it was terrible. I said, "Why don't you let me have a crack at it." I did a pair of Greater Indian Hornbills. That was a long time ago. Remember when Jean Hessler and Aletta Long ran the store? It was fairly chaotic but we had fun.

### FROM CAROL WOODSON

Tell us about your Hollywood history! On which movie sets has your work been shown?

**WS:** A couple of films: "Someone to Watch Over Me," both of the "Oceans Eleven" films and a couple others that I can't remember, plus some TV shows. It is great for the artist. They come in to my gallery, pick out what they want and then give the artist usually about \$1,500 a week just for using it on the set and then they return it.

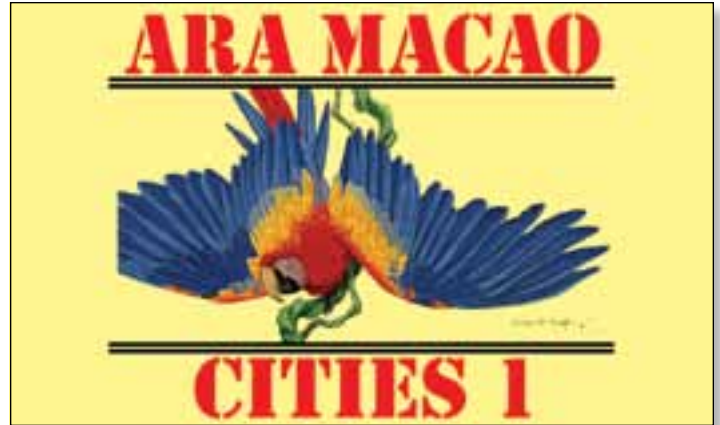
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## EXHIBITIONS

- 1969 East African Wildlife Gallery, Kampala, Uganda, group show  
 1970 "Kenyan Wildlife," Tryon Gallery, Nairobi, Kenya, group show  
 1971 "Animals In Art," Frankfurt Germany's Zoological Society's traveling exhibition for the World Wildlife Organization, group show  
 1972-1976 Tryon Galleries, Nairobi, Kenya and London, England  
 1976 "Wildlife in Art," Pace Galleries, Houston, Texas; and New York, group show  
 1977 "Art On The Wing," Haggenmacher Gallery, Beverly Hills, Calif., group show  
 1978 "Tropical Birds," Dubose Gallery, Houston, Texas, solo show; "Avian Art," Weisemann-Stuart Gallery, San Francisco, Calif., group show  
 1979 "The Art of The Animal," Americana Gallery, Carmel, Calif., group exhibition; "Four Continents: Birds, Animals and Their Environments," Tryon Gallery, London, group exhibition  
 1980 "Wildlife Art," Wings Gallery, Beverly Hills, Calif., group show  
 1981 "The Art of the Bird," Avicultural Society of San Francisco, group show; "Directions of the Los Angeles Artist," Ross Lawrence Silver Galleries, Los Angeles, Calif., group show  
 1982-1986 Kneeder-Fauchere, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland and Denver, group show  
 1983 "Wildlife Art," Wings Gallery, Beverly Hills, Calif., group show  
 1984 Greater Los Angeles Zoological Association's Invitational "Wildlife Art Exhibition," group show



- 1985 International Council For Bird Preservation, "Saving Endangered Psittacines," fundraising exhibition for the St. Vincent Parrot, London  
 1988 "Birds In Art," Traveling exhibition organized by the Leigh Yawkey Woodsen Art Museum, Wausau, Wisc., group show; Frye Art Museum, Seattle, Wash.; Natural History Museum, Santa Barbara, Calif.; Bernice Panahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu; Beijing Natural History Museum, Beijing, China  
 1990-91 "For Birds Only," Caesar Bonilla Galleries, Los Angeles  
 1993 "Wildlife Art," Houston Audubon Society, Houston, Texas  
 1985/96 Randolph & Hein Galleries, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York



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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Member #: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Club Delegate or name of AFA office held: \_\_\_\_\_ Check here if you have special needs: \_\_\_\_\_

Qty	Description	AMOUNT	TOTAL
	Special registration for House of Delegates Includes Banquet: _____ Vegetarian _____ Nonvegetarian		
	Full registration (AFA Member, adult) Includes Banquet: _____ Vegetarian _____ Nonvegetarian		
	Full registration (child) Banquet: _____ Vegetarian _____ Nonvegetarian		
	Full registration (Non-member) Includes Banquet: _____ Vegetarian _____ Nonvegetarian		
	Daily registration: _____ Thursday _____ Friday _____ Saturday		
	Wednesday off-site San Antonio Zoo trip		
	Extra banquet ticket _____ (enter quantity) _____ Vegetarian _____ Nonvegetarian		
	Conventions proceedings CD		
	T-shirt Enter quantity: _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ XXL		
	Polo shirt Enter quantity: _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ XXL		
	AFA Membership New _____ Renewal _____ Membership level: _____		

**Include check payable to AFA or provide credit card information below.**

**TOTAL: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

Name as it appears on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card #: \_\_\_\_\_ (circle one) MC Visa AmEx V-code: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Registration

**House of Delegates registration includes** lectures, exhibits, specialty meetings, and a banquet ticket. One copy of Convention Proceedings is included if HOD meeting is attended. **Full registration includes** lectures, exhibits, specialty meetings, and a banquet ticket. **Daily registration includes** lectures, exhibits, and specialty meetings for a specific day only.

## Refunds

Full refund if postmarked on or before **June 17**. Fifty percent refund if postmarked on or before **July 1**. All refund requests must be in writing and mailed or e-mailed to the address below. **Super Early** and **Early Bird** registration **MUST** be postmarked by **June 18**.

## Hotel information

The convention will be held at the Omni Colonnades. Accommodations are NOT included in registration fees. Call (210) 691-8888 for reservations. Mention AFA when making reservations to secure convention rates of \$109 per night for single/double occupancy.

All minors attending the Convention must be accompanied at all times by a registered adult participant. AFA is not responsible for minors who attend the Convention without proper adult supervision.	Early Bird Rates		Normal Rates	
	AFA Member	Non-member	AFA Member	Non-member
Special registration fee for House of Delegates	\$200		\$220	
Full registration	\$225	\$255	\$265	\$295
Daily registration (per day)			\$75	\$75
Children 16 and younger, when accompanied by an adult (banquet and off-site trip additional)			\$85	\$110
Wednesday offsite trip to San Antonio Zoo				\$55
Extra banquet ticket (each), indicate (V)egetarian or (N)onvegetarian				\$50
Convention Proceedings CD Pre-convention: \$10 / At convention: \$12				
T-shirts / Polo shirts, sizes M–XXL, to be picked up at the convention: T-shirts: \$25 / Polo shirts: \$35				
If you are not yet a member, join now for full privileges! Individual: \$40 Family: \$45 Supporting: \$75 Commercial: \$125				

**SEND COMPLETED FORM & PAYMENT TO: AFA Convention ★ P.O. Box 14923 ★ Humble, TX 77338**

email: Convention@afabirds.org Telephone: (281) 217-0614 **Duplicate this form as necessary. Use only one form per person.**



# AFA 4 Kidz Essay Contest

Submit your essay by **May 15** for a chance to win one **FREE** youth registration\*, plus one banquet dinner and registration, and dinner for one adult to the 2012 AFA Annual Convention.

(\*Non-transferable. Youth registration must be accompanied by a registered adult.)



PHOTO BY SHANE HANCOCK

## Rules and essay questions:

For ages 6–10, essays must be 300–500 words. For ages 11–16, essays must be 500–1,500 words. Contestants are encouraged to include photos. Three categories:

1. Pet bird essays—Include a description of your bird. How has it enhanced your life? What is your favorite bird? Why?
2. Conservation essays—How can pet owners help with conservation? Why is conservation important?
3. Breeding bird essays—Which birds would you like to breed? Why?

## Submit essays to:

**AFA Essay Contest, P.O. Box 91717, Austin, TX 78709**

All entries will be judged by the AFA Education Committee. Winner will be announced June 5. The winning essay may be published in *Watchbird*.



Details at <http://afabirds.org/afa4kidz.shtml>, or call 206-772-1730 or email [blconnection@hotmail.com](mailto:blconnection@hotmail.com)

The American Federation of Aviculture is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, educational organization.