

Eagle, or Hawk #12
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Hawk, or Eagle #4
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Eagle, or Hawk #9
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Eagle, or Hawk #8
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Hawk, or Eagle #5
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Hawk, or Eagle #1
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Hawk, or Eagle #2
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Eagle, or Hawk #11
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Eagle, or Hawk #6
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Hawk, or Eagle #3
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Eagle, or Hawk #10
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

Eagle, or Hawk #7
acrylic on paper, 9 x 12 inches, 2014

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2014

Serendipity: Williams House
Onemo, Virginia

Eagle, or Hawk

Text by
Travis Iurato

Paintings by
Travis Iurato

Airprint Press

Let it here be known in this publication and artifact that a few weeks before embarking on a journey from New York to Arizona by automobile with a new partner in my life, my dear friends Justin Allen and Lucy Kirkman contacted me asking for lodging in New York and if I would like to do a painting show in their Onemo, Virginia studio, Serendipity: Williams House. I could unfortunately not offer the lodging. I didn't live in New York City anymore and instead was living in Orange County NY at a family friends' house while working at a winery. However, knowing my departure was soon at hand and feeling quite moved that they would ask me to show some work there with them, I gladly endeavored to the task of bringing paintings to them en route to Arizona with Allison Klion. Simultaneous to their enquiry and invitation, I was, about a week before Thanksgiving, preparing to execute a painting of an eagle for my aunt Sheri's boyfriend Greg Scully. A year prior on Christmas Eve 2013 he had asked me to do a painting of a mountain lion. I held off on it for months until my cousin Janelle mentioned that Greg had changed his mind and wanted a painting of an eagle instead. This occurred around the time I was reading The Teachings of Don Juan by Carlos Castaneda and in it Don Juan explains how an eagle is a sorcerer's spirit animal of the day and a mountain lion is a sorcerer's spirit animal of the night. I held off on painting the eagle as well. It wasn't until I returned to New York in August 2014, and saw Greg at a party in New Jersey, that the idea was brought up again and I promised him the eagle by Thanksgiving. As the holiday drew near I purchased paints and a canvas and began sketches. They were not up to par, so I decided going to the zoo to see real eagles would be best for the outcome of the painting. Allison and I went to the Queens Zoo, where there were two bald eagles. Before trekking to Queens, we ate breakfast at a little diner in Clinton Hill. On the television was a show about eagles. Two handlers were preparing to release an eagle back to the wild. They put a bag over its head and sharpened its claws with a Dremel. I had never seen an eagle's feet so close up, and drew the strong claws on the spot. They later went into the painting. At the zoo that afternoon I managed to get a few small sketches but the eagles were half-hidden in some bushes and fairly quiet. They would just walk around in the leaves and share time on a stump in their pen. After the zoo, I felt I had enough material to complete the painting. When I got back upstate I started and finished the painting in an evening. On Thanksgiving, Greg was thrilled about the eagle, and kept commenting on the strength and beauty of the talons. I told him where I had seen them, and we figured out that we were watching the very same program at the very same time.....The next day Greg hung the painting in a sort of altar with my Grandfather's macramé anchor, his military medals, and a flag. The entire experience charged my senses toward eagles and birds of prey in general. While we were corresponding, Lucy informed me their last presentation in Serendipity was entitled "Fox." Immediately I wrote back that "Eagle", or "Hawk" could be good names for the show, in order to continue the animal theme. She wrote back "'Eagle, or Hawk' sounds good," and thus it became "Eagle, or Hawk."

I had 14 sheets of paper to work with but decided to use 12 because the show would be in the 12th month, and the layout of the room looked as though it would accommodate 12 works in a strong way. The day I chose to start painting, a heavy snowstorm came. I was alone in the house and enjoyed a long walk through the snowy woods, finding old trails down to a stream. The forest was only a range of whites, grays, and blacks; there was no color. When I got back it felt right to execute the series only in grisaille. They began as loosely painted winter landscapes, then acquired an ecstatic vibrating pattern--be it the sound of an eagle's cry, the beating of their wings, or their vital life force. Then, a drawing in pencil of the birds on each page, either based off of a sketch, improvised, or "seen" and executed. They made an exciting flock. Preparations for the trip overcame my time to paint. Allison needed to be moved with her belongings out of Brooklyn. The car needed a new catalytic converter, and we were held for a few days tracking one down and installing it. The first stop of the trip was around December 7th in Washington DC to visit Allison's sister, Jessica. The following morning we had coffee and I painted half the eagles in the coffee shop. That evening we arrived in Bavon, Virginia at Lucy's house. They welcomed us with a bonfire on the beach, wine, and dinner. We saw Serendipity: Williams House which was a few towns over in a big old house full of rusty antiques and stuff from the beach. The following morning the eagles were finished and we spent the remainder of the rainy day hanging the show, drinking beer, and eating steamed clams their friend James brought into the room. Justin and Lucy were the most gracious hosts and fed us delicious meals of fresh eggs from their chickens, sweet potatoes, beans, salads, and good cheap wine. We all went out on a full moon walk on the beach and the cat came along. We talked about all our most pressing ideas on art and community, and they introduced us to some delightful people, including Lucy's grandfather and a painter and his wife who served a delicious stew. The experiences before, during, and after "Eagle, or Hawk" are full of beguiling and mystifying truly serendipitous coincidences and events that took place in conjunction with the preparation of the show. Many thanks to Justin and Lucy for their commitment, openness, generosity, and feeling for radical beauty.

Travis Iurato, Arizona 2015

























