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Karen Bondarchuk Named Woodson Art Museum 2016 Master Artist

WAUSAU, WISCONSIN: The Woodson Art Museum announces Karen Bondarchuk as its 2016 Master Artist who will be honored during the Museum's 41st annual "Birds in Art" exhibition this fall.

Bondarchuk, the Woodson's 35th Master Artist, will receive the Master Wildlife Artist Medal during the "Birds in Art" opening weekend, September 10 and 11.

In announcing the 2016 Master, director Kathy Kelsey Foley said, "Karen is an artist of exceptional talent, originality, and profound thought, whose diverse, yet focused, body of work comes from an academic tradition. Working two dimensionally, Karen has produced magnificent charcoal drawings of corvids that pursue questions of language and animal-human communication. Her sculptures created from highway-salvaged tire scraps raise timely and thoughtful environmental questions. As an educator, Karen mentors students, encouraging them to work to their fullest potential as she has done in achieving the richly deserved Master Artist honor."

Bondarchuk's work has been selected for inclusion in "Birds in Art" seven times since 2008, her first year in the exhibition. Many attributes of "Birds in Art" make it "nonpareil, both as an exhibition and as an experience," she said. "I have exhibited my artwork for nearly thirty years, and the 'Birds in Art' exhibitions I have attended top the list in their excellence."

Being named the 2016 Master Artist elicited “a sense of surprise bordering on disbelief, given that I see so many other wonderful artists around me whenever I attend the opening of ‘Birds in Art’ at the Woodson,” Bondarchuk said. “Without question, I am deeply flattered to have my creative oeuvre considered in this way.”

Bondarchuk noted the importance of the Master Artist recognition. “The work we do as artists is largely a solitary pursuit, meaning that the art is often created in a vacuum, and yet receiving feedback from the outside is an important element in substantiating what we do,” she said. “Public recognition, since exhibitions take place in scattered locations and over disparate times, is seldom focused in such a way – the positive feedback is intermittent, whereas this award represents some more permanent quality of judgment that I am exceedingly humbled to have bestowed on me.”

Bondarchuk – a visual artist whose work ranges from sculpture and drawing to video and bookmaking, employing a broad range of materials and processes – is well known and admired for her extraordinary, large-scale charcoal portraits of ravens, crows, and owls along with the aforementioned larger-than-life corvid sculptures created from tire scraps salvaged along Michigan highways.

“In sum, my sculpture and drawing work explores the artificiality that often defines our relationship with the wild, and the reality that many close encounters with wildlife are by human design – zoos, roadsides, galleries, natural history museums, etc . . . ,” Bondarchuk said.

For several years, Bondarchuk’s work has included thematic elements of animals and language, examining linguistic and physiological connections between animals and humans.

“Language happens to play a central role in the human-animal divide, often serving as the singular distinguishing trait that elevates “us” above “them” (despite the fact that they communicate with vocalizing of their own),” Bondarchuk said. “While scientific perspective on the nature and magnitude of animal consciousness is in flux, the most recent research suggests that animals are capable of higher-order reasoning than previously understood or imagined. Chief among those creatures at the cutting edge of scientific scrutiny are corvids (mainly crows and ravens, but also including jays, rooks, choughs, jackdaws, etc.). The magnitude of their intelligence never ceases to astound me.”

Recently, Bondarchuk finished her year-long “A Crow-a-Day” endeavor. On August 1, 2014 she began an ambitious mixed-media project “Ergo Sum: A Crow a Day,” as an homage to her mother, who has advanced dementia. Bondarchuk set and accomplished her goal to complete a crow drawing every day for one year as a way to mark a time frame her mother could no longer recognize, while also serving as a reminder of the preciousness of each day. “Ergo Sum,” in its entirety, will be among the artworks comprising Bondarchuk’s Master Artist “Birds in Art” exhibition at the Woodson Art Museum this fall.

In addition to her work as an artist, Bondarchuk is an associate professor and foundation area coordinator in the Frostic School of Art at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, where she lives with her partner, Art Winslow. Her son, Ari Solomon, is a junior in the Lee Honors College at WMU.

Born in 1964 in Canada, Bondarchuk received her bachelor of fine arts degree in sculpture and video from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, and her master of fine arts degree from The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

Her artwork has been exhibited widely in the United States, as well as in Canada, France, England, Italy, and India. Bondarchuk has been the recipient of several fellowships, including residencies at the Moulin à Nef in Auvillar, France, the Virginia Center for Creative Arts in Amherst, Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, and Ragdale Foundation in Lake Forest, Illinois. Her artwork has received honors and awards in New York, Virginia, Michigan, Illinois, and Maryland and is in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Canada, the Woodson Art Museum, and several other public and private collections.

The 2016 “Birds in Art” exhibition, on view September 10 through November 27, will feature more than 100 original paintings, sculptures, and graphics created within the last three years by artists from throughout the world and a selection of approximately a dozen two- and three-dimensional works by Bondarchuk. The exhibition’s full-color catalogue, featuring an essay about Bondarchuk, will be available for purchase in September at the Woodson Art Museum.

For more information, visit www.lywam.org/, e-mail the Museum at museum@lywam.org, call 715-845-7010, and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Woodson Art Museum

Hours:	Tuesday – Friday	9am – 4pm
	First Thursday of each month	9am – 7:30pm
	Thursdays during Birds in Art	9am – 7:30pm
	Saturday – Sunday	Noon – 5pm
	Closed Monday & holidays, including New Year’s Day, Easter, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas	
Admission:	Always Free Admission	
Phone:	715.845.7010	
E-mail:	museum@lywam.org	
Location:	Franklin and 12th Streets, Wausau, Wisconsin 54403-5007 (700 North Twelfth Street)	
Online:	www.lywam.org	