



The Cactus Wren·dition



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Black-throated Sparrow

Photo by Skyler Russell

Nature through the Artist's Eye: Neil Rizos



Neil Rizos in the Alps with the Northern Bald Ibis.

A professional artist for more than 25 years, Neil Rizos has lived and worked throughout the Americas and Europe, from the tundra to the tropics. Currently, he calls the Phoenix area home. He has studied raptors in Montana with the US Bureau of Land Management; Harris's Hawks in the southwest with the University of Arizona; migratory birds in Alaska with the US Fish and Wildlife Service; and has participated in other bird studies with public and private organizations in North America and Europe.

Rizos works in a wide variety of media - painting, printmaking, drawing and sculpting. He explains: "I look at the media I use as a visual artist as being equivalent to spoken languages; each has unique strengths and expressive qualities that serve my specific artistic intention."

Rizos is a member of The National Arts Club, The Salmagundi Club, and Allied Artists of America. Notable professional recognition includes the Allied Artists of America Gold Medal of Honor, for his etching, *DeWinton's Pool*, and the Marilyn Newmark award for his bronze sculpture, *Marbled Godwits*. He has been awarded numerous artist residencies, both in the US and abroad. Rizos' etchings are featured in the book, *The American Sporting Print: 20th Century Etchers & Drypointists*, which includes work by Frank W. Benson and Carl Rungius, among other prominent artists. His work is in The United States Library of Congress Permanent Collection, The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, The Acadian Museum, Quebec, Canada and other public, private and corporate collections internationally.

Rizos will have a solo exhibition of his

artwork at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, in Jamestown, New York, September-December, 2017.

Neil says: "Artists' statements can shed light on technique and possibly a thought process, if present, but Art is neither an analysis of means nor a statement of ideas; it is an experience of union with the boundless, ineffable mystery that is life. I invoke the authority of Georges Braque who said: 'There is only one valuable thing in art: the thing you cannot explain.' Great art and its power to engage remain vital across time and space, while very little commentary persists beyond the mind of the author." 🐦

See more of Neil Rizos' work at www.rizosart.com and www.birdjournaling.com
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Shorebirds at Dusk

Woodcut, 8" x 8"

I approach the medium of woodcut as the visual equivalent of haiku. A few carefully chosen words create the doorway to an experience in the wordless realm.



Marbled Godwits

Bronze on Walnut base (turntable). L18" x H13" x D13" (Life Size)

I spent two weeks in Southern California at the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History, the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, and of course, the beach, researching Marbled Godwits. The result is this bronze sculpture of a pair of Marbled Godwits.

Most of the time, Marbled Godwits move rapidly, searching for food. This constant movement and the beautiful, ever-changing shapes of their form are an exciting part of experiencing these birds in the wild. The movement of the sculpture is based on the circle and the contrasting lines of the legs and bill. So it may be enjoyed from all perspectives the sculpture is mounted on a walnut base turntable.

This big cinnamon-colored sandpiper breeds in the northern Great Plains in summer. When it leaves the prairies, the Marbled Godwit goes to coastal regions from California and New Jersey southward and along the Gulf coast.



White-faced Ibis

Charcoal 12"x16"

I do a great deal of drawing - mostly charcoal or ball point pen - because I believe drawing to be the necessary foundation of representational painting and sculpting. I frequently draw live birds, which is a good challenge and reveals opportunities for growth in both technique and observational skills. It is very effective training for seeing and accurately drawing the essential characteristics of the subject - something I emphasize in my bird journaling workshops.



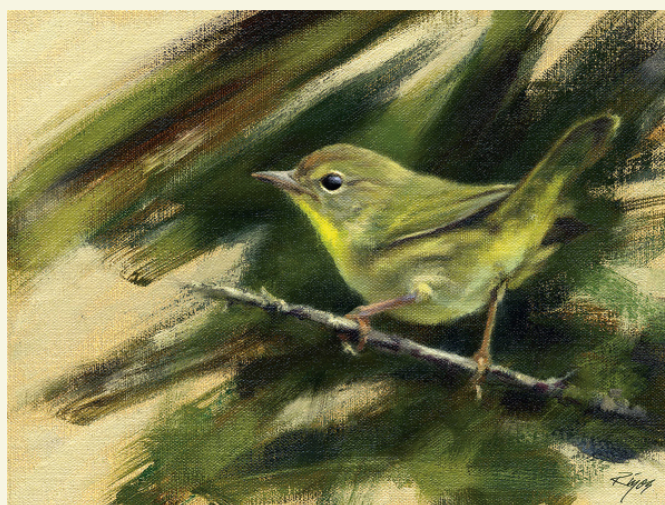
Cottontail Rabbit

Drypoint, 7" x 5"

I was struck by the natural dignity of this creature - how it fulfilled its role in the great order of things - without objections. I thought it was at least as worthy of a formal portrait as any Burgermeister or great leader.

What is a drypoint?

A drypoint is similar to an etching, but the lines are simply scratched into the copper plate manually, without the use of acid. The characteristic quality of a drypoint print is a soft line, somewhat similar to an ink pen on moist paper.



Nashville Warbler

Oil on linen, 9"x12"

Warblers are challenging not only for bird watchers - they also present real challenges for artists. Warblers are elusive, well camouflaged, and almost never remain still, so having an encounter that leaves an emotional impression and affords the opportunity for meaningful drawings and photographs takes extra effort. In terms of art, rather than picture making or illustration, orchestrating the visible and invisible elements of my experience into a single, intentional "symphony," is particularly demanding given the many subtle harmonies and contrasts of a bird, its environment, and my encounter with them.



Chickadee & Milkweed

Drypoint, 4" X 5"

I've avoided chickadees as a subject for my artwork because they are so cute that almost any image would be appealing no matter the quality, or lack of quality, of the design. But when I saw one on a dried milkweed, the similarity of shapes, sizes and values between the bird and the plant provided the design foundation I was looking for to make it more than a rendering of an admittedly cute little bird. All that aside, they are irresistibly charming creatures and that's a big part of what the print is about.



Spring Morning - Gambel's Quail

Bronze on Walnut base (turntable). L10 x H11" x D8" (Life Size)

This life-size sculpture of a pair of Gambel's Quail was inspired by my frequent encounters with these beautiful birds in Arizona and California. They are abundant and it's always exciting to see them - especially in early spring during courtship and later in the season, caring for their young. Enchanting and amazing creatures!