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Bird Illustration with John O’Neill

We are thrilled to be able to offer an in-depth bird illustration class taught by world-renowned bird artist Dr. John P. O’Neill. Dr. O’Neill’s paintings have been published in Science, Auk, Audubon, and National Geographic magazines. Books have included the *National Geographic Society’s Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, *Great Texas Birds*, Richard French’s *Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*, Helmut Sick’s *Birds in Brazil*, and Reader’s Digest’s *Book of North American Birds*, and most recently *Birds of Peru*. John has made the study of the birds of Peru one of his lifelong pursuits, and has been in Peru almost every year since 1961, often to lead major expeditions into totally unknown parts of the country. He has described 13 new species of birds, more than any other living ornithologist. This class is 3 full days—21 hours of instruction. **Members of the Arboretum will be given first priority for registration in this class.**

Date: October 30, 31, 9:30am –4:00 pm, and November 1, 12:00pm –5:00pm

Instructor: Dr. John P. O’Neill

Cost: \$175 for members, \$225 for non-members

Notes: Maximum of 10 students. Ages 16 and up. Some drawing or painting experience helpful. Students will receive a list of supplies needed.



This workshop is designed to introduce the use of water-based media (mainly acrylic, but also watercolor, and gouache) in painting birds. Since the expertise of the participants will vary, there will be a discussion of supplies and materials, a time for drawing and sketching, and time for painting. Dr. O'Neill will demonstrate his techniques of producing feather texture and iridescence, and will explain certain anatomical features of birds that are often misrepresented by artists. When participants are sketching or painting, Dr. O'Neill will make suggestions and answer questions.



Harris's Hawk from O'Neill's *Great Texas Birds*

Schedule

Friday, October 30

9:30 AM – 9:45 AM

Welcome, followed by a viewing of slides of a number of Dr. O'Neill's paintings and explanations of what they are and for what reason they were created.

9:45 AM – 11:00 AM

Discussion of materials and supplies with examples and what these various options can do to help you produce a good quality piece.

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Discussion of bird anatomy that is useful to artists and on into beginning of sketching and "learning to see". One or more live birds (pet parrot, tame hawk, etc.) will be available, but we will work from a mounted bird if necessary. A selection of photographs from magazines will also be available and there will be a discussion of the use of photo references. O'Neill will circulate making suggestions and answering questions.

12:00 PM – 12:45 PM – Lunch

12:45 PM – 4:00 PM

Begin working on sketching with the addition of photographic references and some discussion about their use. Help with drawings and making sure that everyone is ready to start tomorrow doing a drawing that can be painted. We will wrap up the afternoon with a short period for questions.

Saturday, October 31

9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

This entire period will be devoted to drawing. O'Neill will be drawing something along with the group, but will be available for questions and comments, and will stop frequently to circulate and make suggestions or answer questions.

12:00 PM – 12:45 PM – Lunch

12:45 PM – 2:30 PM

John will demonstrate some painting techniques that are useful in painting birds (feather texture, iridescence, eyes, etc.)

2:30 – 4:00 PM

The students will finish drawing or even begin painting if ready. O'Neill will circulate and/or answer questions.

Sunday, November 1

12:00 pm – 2:00 PM

Paint. O'Neill will also paint, but will circulate and help or answer questions.

2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Continue painting with help when needed. During the last half hour we will also have a question and answer period (although students are urged to ask questions or make comments at anytime during the three-day workshop).

Workshop Supplies

This list is considered to be the minimum of supplies needed for the workshop. Some of you will already be painters and may need to purchase nothing; others may be starting from the very beginning, and this list is intended to give you the most basic of materials with which to get started. If you are a beginner, do not go out an over-buy supplies – Dr. O’Neill will have most of his paints and other materials and will be glad to give you a small amount of paint if you do not have a particular color. Dr. O’Neill will provide you with tracing paper should you need to transfer a drawing onto clean paper before painting. Dr. O’Neill believes that we all develop our own ways of mixing colors, applying paint, etc., and that once we decide to be serious about any painting, we will gradually expand our palette of colors. There is no need to purchase a full range of paints at this time. You are asked to have the following materials, or equivalents, for the workshop:

Pencils:

#2 pencil (fairly soft)

#3H pencil (moderately hard)

Some sort of pencil sharpener or something to point your pencils with

Eraser (I prefer white rubber ones as they leave no color on the paper, but the gray kneaded rubber ones are also good)

Brushes:

Good brushes are important! I have found that the Winsor Newton “Sceptre Gold” brushes, which are made of a mixture of natural and artificial hairs, perform quite well, and last well under the “abuse” of acrylic paint. If you already are a watercolor artist and have sable brushes, they are the best, but they are worth their weight in gold! Acrylic is very hard on good sable brushes and damages them rather quickly, therefore I recommend the “Sceptre Gold” brushes that were developed for use with acrylics. I paint in fair detail, but a good “larger” brush holds more paint and still has a good point – a poor brush is really good only to spread paint! My choices for the workshop would be at least one of each of the following:

Winsor Newton “Sceptre Gold” Series 101 (or series 202 – better point) # 6

“ “ “ “ **Series 202 # 3**

Note that these brushes are a golden brown color; I find that the “white” brushes, made entirely of “Taklon” or a similar artificial hair, do not spring back properly and just don’t work very well. A poorer quality brush of any natural hair is better than one made only of artificial hair.

Arches 140 lb. (or heavier if you wish, but the 90 lb. is a bit flimsy) **Hot Press watercolor paper** The hot press paper is smoother than cold press, and works well for the way I paint.

If possible, try to have some sort of drawing board or very heavy cardboard on which to draw and then to tape your painting paper onto. This will allow you to work at a more comfortable angle. This is not essential as you can work flat on the table. A board with a surface of approximately 20 X 30 inches is good

Paints:

I will be talking mainly about painting in acrylics, but you can also work in Designer’s Gouache or watercolor. I like acrylic because as each layer dries I can add more on top of it without damaging what has been laid down before. An excellent palette for watercolor or acrylics is the Styrofoam tray that comes with meat – they are pure white and can be discarded after use. For your paints I suggest the following colors (buy the smallest tubes possible until you are sure of what you want.

Black

White (I use acrylic gesso as my white because it is very dense and dries very flat in texture, and I will have a bottle and can give out samples)

Payne’s Gray – a good shadow color – I will have

Medium Cadmium Yellow

Medium cadmium Red

Raw Umber

Cobalt Blue

Sap Green

My preference of brands always leans toward the best and I like Winsor-Newton when it is available (but Grumbacher, Liquitex, etc, are all good). Most “regular” acrylics are fairly transparent; if you prefer to paint opaquely, I prefer “Acryla Designer’s Gouache (A Holbein product that is an acrylic based paint – once it dries you can not wet it again). If you decide upon “regular Gouache (Winsor-Newton Designer’s Gouache), it is NOT acrylic based, but is like tempera with gum arabic in it. It can be re-wet, but the undersurface can easily be damaged during over-painting. I recently purchased a set of 24 Grumbacher transparent watercolors in tiny pans and in a handy small box that would be easily transportable (it is WCT 24), and with 24 colors has almost anything one would need. If you prefer watercolors in tubes, I would get Winsor-Newton or Grumbacher, but the fact is that today’s supplies are generally so good that any brand will work fairly well. In general I always say to go for the best quality, and that usually means the best-known brands.