

ALICE HARGRAVE

The Canary in the Lake

Educator Handout Grades K-6

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

[*The Canary in the Lake*](#) presents more than 40 new photographic, video, and audio works by Chicago-based artist [Alice Hargrave](#). The exhibition centers on two new series relating to birds and lakes that continue her exploration of climate change-related loss of biodiversity and habitat. The exhibition title references both new bodies of work and alludes to the “canary in the coal mine,” because freshwater lakes function as sentinels of climate change.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Alice Hargrave is a photo-based artist working in Chicago. She incorporates sound and video within layered installations of her photographic imagery. Her work reflects on impermanence, environmental insecurity, habitat loss, and species extinctions.¹ Her work has been exhibited at Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven; Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, Minnesota; Newspace Center for Photography, Portland, Oregon; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; Filter Photo, Chicago; Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago; Center for Fine Art Photography, Fort Collins, Colorado; and Lianzhou Photo Festival, Lianzhou, China; among many others. She has an M.F.A. from University of Illinois at Chicago and a B.A. from Tulane University.

subjective frame

- What do the [sounds](#), colors, imagery, and materials in Hargrave’s work remind you of?
- Is there anything in this exhibition that surprises you? If so, describe what you find surprising and why.
- After viewing the works in the exhibition, share what stood out most to you and any questions you have about the artist, the artwork, or both.

cultural frame

- What references to plants, birds, humans, and the landscape do you see and [hear](#) in these works?
- Why do you think Hargrave chose to focus on endangered and extinct birds and lake data to talk about climate change? How are these things connected?
- Look closely at the fabric installations in [*The Conference of the Lakes, After Farid Attar*](#). Describe where you think each lake is located and what climate change-related issue is happening there based on the colors, images, lines, and other contextual information in the work.

structural frame

- Hargrave’s work combines photography, video, and [audio](#) in a variety of ways. Choose an [artwork](#) to focus on. Describe the materials and techniques used to create this work. How do these materials and techniques add to your understanding of the work? For example, [*Roseate Spoonbill, calls*](#), in [*Tracing Audubon*](#), depicts repeating patterns of calls from the Roseate Spoonbill, a bird with pink feathers that lives in the Florida Keys.
- What do you know about the subject matter and setting based on what you see and hear throughout the exhibition?
- How are the works in this exhibition displayed and why do you think Hargrave chose to display them this way?



Alice Hargrave, *The Conference of the Lakes, After Farid Attar*. 2020-2021. Installation view at University Galleries of Illinois State University, 2021.

VOCABULARY

BIODIVERSITY

the variety of life on Earth, or in a particular area or ecosystem

DATA VISUALIZATION

a visual representation of information in the form of a graph, chart, or map

CONTEMPORARY

something that belongs to the present or current time

CONTEXT

the situation in which something happens

FORMAL QUALITIES

refers to elements and principles of design such as line, shape, color, balance, movement, contrast, and unity

INSTALLATION

often large-scale mixed-media works created to fit a specific space

ORNITHOLOGY

the study of birds

SUBJECT MATTER

what is being depicted in an image or artwork

SUBJECTIVE

something that is open to interpretation; up to the viewer to decide

TECHNIQUES

processes used to create an artwork

THEME

reoccurring ideas, materials, or subject matter

¹ Hargrave, A. (2020). Bio. Retrieved February 05, 2021, from <https://www.alicehargrave.com/bio>

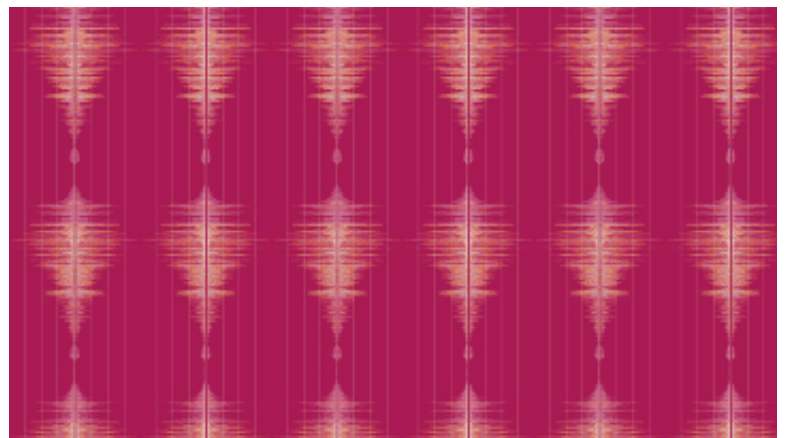
EVENTS

- Virtual exhibition tours are available for classes, community groups, and individuals by appointment. Contact galleries@IllinoisState.edu or (309) 438-5487 to schedule.
- Alice Hargrave, Dr. Catherine O'Reilly, and Kendra Paitz will conduct virtual class visits during the exhibition. Contact galleries@IllinoisState.edu to request a visit.
- Educator resources, activities for children and youth, and art lesson videos are available on the exhibition [web page](#).
- March 13 at 1:00 p.m. Art Around You with CDM Participants (ages 7-10) can register for this free program at childrensdiscoverymuseum.net.
- An online panel discussion and reading lists will be announced via University Galleries' [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#) accounts.

You can find [University Galleries](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive email updates through the [newsletter](#). Please contact galleries@IllinoisState.edu or call (309) 438-5487 if you need to arrange an accommodation to participate in any events related to this exhibition.

ART-MAKING ACTIVITIES

- In *Tracing Audubon – 1832 / 2021 (last calls)*, Hargrave photographed her experience of retracing the footsteps of illustrator and ornithologist John James Audubon in search for 22 bird species in the Florida Keys. Engage students in a photographic “quest,” searching for an item or object of their choice. After documenting their search, encourage students to analyze their images. Ask students to consider how looking at these images feels compared to the act of searching? Do they have new memories tied to specific images and objects photographed in their series?
- Invite students to explore resources at the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#), and as a class, learn about actionable steps to support endangered bird species in your area. Then involve students in creating artworks that highlight and inform viewers about what they learned.
- As a class, analyze patterns in the bird call-soundwaves on Hargrave’s [wallpaper](#). Ask students to try interpreting these calls based on what they see. Explore making and recording sounds with software that produces sound wave visualizations (such as [Audacity](#)). Consider having students record bird calls or other nature sounds around them. Then create artworks using a variety of mediums, focusing on textures, lines, and shapes that illustrate the sound patterns.
- Analyze works in *The Canary in the Lake*, looking closely for ways that Hargrave has referenced the interconnections between humans, animals, bodies of water, and land. As a class, learn about the source(s) for your local drinking water. Guide students in researching the plants and animals found around the body or bodies of water. Then engage students in creating “portraits” of these local ecosystems using collaged images and information from their research.



Alice Hargrave, *Lake Tovel, Italy, magenta algal bloom loss (detail)*, 2020-2021. Solvent print on fabric. Courtesy of the artist.