

ALICE HARGRAVE

The Canary in the Lake

Educator Handout Grades 7-12

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

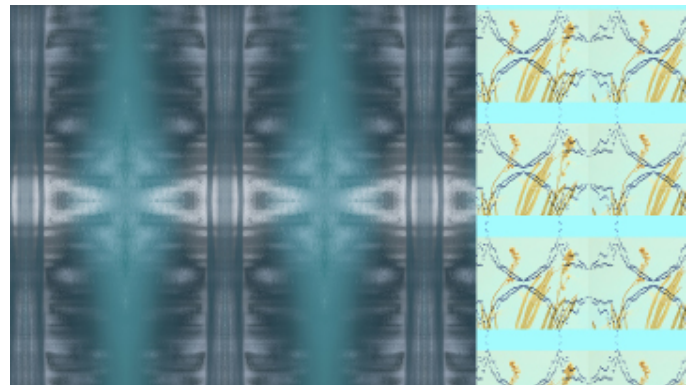
- What do you associate with the [sounds](#), colors, and imagery in Hargrave’s work?
- Is there anything in this exhibition that surprises you? If so, describe what you find surprising and why.
- After viewing the [works](#) in the exhibition, share what stood out most to you and any questions you have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

cultural frame

- How does Hargrave’s combination of visual and [auditory](#) information throughout the exhibition speak to complex relationships between plants, birds, humans, and the landscape?
- Describe ways Hargrave has combined photography with data to communicate complex information about climate change-related loss of biodiversity and habitats.
- Read the titles of the lake portraits in [The Conference of the Lakes](#) series. Hypothesize which title goes with each panel based on what you see. Then, view the [checklist](#) of images and titles. Which lakes did you guess correctly? What was surprising for you?

structural frame

- [The Conference of the Lakes, After Farid Attar](#) is comprised, in part, of 20 solvent prints on sheer, 10-foot-long fabric panels suspended from the ceiling. The imagery on each panel consists of digitally manipulated photographs and data relating to each lake. How do these materials, techniques, and display choices contribute to the messages conveyed?
- Closely look and [listen](#) to Hargrave’s work for contextual information. What do you know about the setting and subject matter based on what you see and hear?



Alice Hargrave, *Lake Zigadenus, Canada, decreasing turbidity "Losing Blue"* (detail), 2020-2021. Solvent print on fabric. Courtesy of the artist.

VOCABULARY

ALLEGORY

a story with a hidden meaning

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

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 galler@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 galler@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 galler@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

- After viewing and analyzing works in [The Canary in the Lake](#), encourage students to consider a location with personal significance and engage in research about loss of biodiversity and habitat(s) in that area. Have students create graphs, charts, and/or maps to analyze their gathered data. Then create an artwork that synthesizes their knowledge and data visualizations with personal experiences. Guide students in writing artist statements about their discoveries, creative choices, and visual communication of loss of biodiversity and habitats.
- The title [The Conference of the Lakes, After Farid Attar](#) refers to the epic poem [The Conference of the Birds](#) by Persian mystic poet—Farid Attar. The poem is a mythical tale about the birds of the world—a symbol for humankind—journeying in search of enlightenment. As a class, discuss the connections between Hargrave's work and the metaphors present in [The Conference of the Birds](#). Engage students in creating an artwork, or a series of works, that serves as an allegory for a physical or spiritual journey.
- [Tracing Audubon—1832 / 2021 \(last calls\)](#) is comprised of an [audio piece](#), framed photographs, and a wallpaper installation inspired by illustrator and ornithologist, John James Audubon's 1832 trip to the Florida Keys in search of 22 bird species. As a class, discuss how Hargrave has provided the viewer a glimpse into her experience of searching for and documenting these birds. Involve students in using photography and audio recordings to document searching for a subject of their choice. After completing their documentation, and without revealing what they were searching for, have students share their work with their peers. Can they use what they see and hear to guess what was being searched for?
- Hargrave considers [The Conference of the Lakes, After Farid Attar](#) a series of "lake portraits." Analyze this series as a class and ask students to share what they know about each lake based on what they see. How do the colors, images, and patterns contribute to their knowledge of each lake? Read the [titles](#) for each work and examine how this information impacts their understanding. Assign students to work in small groups to research the [climate change-related issues](#) presented in each [lake portrait](#). As a class, or on a shared digital document, encourage students to share their findings and to describe how Hargrave has visualized this information in each. Inspired by Hargrave's use of overlapping data visualizations, photography, and [audio](#), encourage students to create a physical or digital "portrait" of a place that is dear to them. Ask students to consider how they can combine photography with data related to this location. Provide students with the option to record sounds from their location of choice—such as bird calls, running water, or human-made sounds—or a personal narration about observations and experiences at this location to include with their artwork.