
Senior Projects Spring 2018

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Spring 2018

Blueprints and bird food

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Bard College

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Recommended Citation

West, Finn D., "Blueprints and bird food" (2018). *Senior Projects Spring 2018*. 387.
https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2018/387

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Senior Project Artist Statement

Finn West

Studio Arts

02.05.2018

BLUEPRINTS AND BIRD FOOD is the feral result of my attempts to become a bird. It is also the result of my attempts to tie knots and draw up architectural plans to project into the future. As I tried to become a bird, to tie knots, and to draw up plans, I found myself tangled in the knots already tied by others. Looking up at the sky, I was confronted with many human birds, looking down on me from above and drawing and redrawing their plans to interject new forms into the world. In response, I decided not to draw my own plans or tie my own knots, but to consume, ingest and excrete the knots already tied and the plans already drawn.

To become a bird, in this case, is not to grow feathers or to flap wings. It is, rather, to adopt the perspective of a bird. Seen from the position of an airborne bird, the world takes on flattened form, an image in which architects can superimpose their blueprints and fictively replace what was once there with plans drawn for the future.

Imagine you're walking on a beach. You raise your chin to the sky and see a bird circling below the curved edges of cloud. Imagine how you look in the bird's eye. You, the beach, the shifting line between wave and sand, the entire scene flattened into an image. You bend down and try to draw the scene, as seen from a bird's eye view, in the sand beside you, using your finger to trace lines, pinpoint coordinates, and render planes. As you push fingers and sand, the tide washes a wave over your drawing. The water recedes and reveals an image whose lines have become tangled and tied together, losing the synoptic view you sought to render. The lines become a liquid knot. You look up at the circling bird in foiled hope that the winged creature becomes your mirror image, that you become a homo-avian.

The bird stoops, disappearing into the water and emerging with a fish in its beak. You stoop, driving your head into your sand-water image, drawing up a mouthful of tangled knot. Swallow and dive again. Bite by bite the image enters the stomach. Heave. Grasp. Just as a mother bird bending over a nest, you regurgitate the eaten image, spewing the sand back onto the sand and the water.

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Imagine you're walking on a beach. You look up and see a bird circling below the clouds. Imagine how you look in the bird's eye. You, the beach, the shifting line between wave and sand, the entire scene is flattened into an image. You bend down and try to draw the scene, as seen from a bird's eye view, in the sand beside you, using your finger to trace lines, pinpoint coordinates, and render planes. As you engrave into the sand, the lines become tangled and tied together, losing the synoptic view you sought to render, and become a liquid knot, making the legibility of the image impossible. Accepting this failure, the sorry attempt to see like and become a bird, you bend down and eat the sand, eat your illegible image. Ingesting it, feeling it twist and turn making its way towards your bowels, you change your mind. You heave and gasp, regurgitating the sand drawing you ate, just as a mother bird regurgitates food for her young. BLUEPRINTS AND BIRD FOOD is the result beach story.

What is the difference between a knot that we tie and a tangled knot? We tie rope into knots to hold things together at the same time as we find ourselves entangled in a mass of knots already tied or being tied. BLUEPRINTS AND BIRD FOOD makes a connection between eating food and the bird's eye view used in maps and architectural schematics.

BLUEPRINTS AND BIRD FOOD is the feral result of my attempts to become a bird. The objects and images are feral because they have escaped my grasp. I'm no longer sure of what I'm looking at.

To become a bird, in this case, is not to grow feathers or to flap wings. It is, rather, to adopt the perspective of a bird. Architects become birds when they look at the plan view drawing of a building. To see the 'plan' of a unbuilt building, we need to look down at its flattened shape. Not a specific bird, but any bird that flies high and looks down on me while I look up at it. It is the bird's gaze that intrigues and horrifies me. Its gaze turns me into miniature and sets my coordinates amidst a flattened world.









