

A Dream of Flying

Franzeska Ewart





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Franzeska Ewart

Franzeska Ewart was a writer for nearly thirty years, so it is not surprising that the narrative thread in her paintings is strong. Since returning to painting three years ago, she has put together three solo exhibitions and has had work hung in the Royal Scottish Academy and the Paisley Art Institute, of which she is an artist member.

A graduate in Zoology from Glasgow University, specialising in Ethology (the scientific study of Animal Behaviour) she has always been fascinated by the natural world, and particularly the relationships between humans and animals. Through her art, she explores and heightens these relationships.

Painting in oils both on canvas and board, she strives to create mysterious, often threatening, moods. The relationships between women and birds she depicts are often ambiguous, and while one senses an attraction between them, there is also a tension. As she did when she was a writer, she uses this tension to draw the viewer into her pictures; to feel the characters' feelings, guess their motives, and predict what they might do next.

In 2017 Ewart mounted *The Birds Bear Gifts* in the Studio and Gallery, Kilbirnie and The Barony, West Kilbride. A selection of the works were also shown in the Art and Craft Collective, Edinburgh. The following transcript from the 'illuminated manuscript' which introduces *A Dream of Flying* describes how the mythology built up in *The Birds Bear Gifts* led into the current exhibition

Purporting to be an illuminated extract from *De mulieribus volantes* (Of Flying Women) found in Boulogne Cathedral in 1854 and handwritten by Sister Mary Teresa Swift, one of the 17th century English Benedictine nuns in exile, it explains:

Long, long ago, in a place of clouds and mists, there were birds who bore gifts to women. One such bird was the Jay, and another was the Tree Swift. Then the women began to dream of receiving another, greater, gift.

Or perhaps it was the other way around – for in a place of clouds the edges of facts are mist-enshrouded. Perhaps it was the birds who dreamt of giving the women the great gift. And in return they might receive a flower, or a bug, or some music.

Whoever did the dreaming, one thing is sure: a dream was dreamt, and it was a dream of flying. And since it was dreamt it must, therefore, exist.

And if it exists, it can be dreamt by anyone.
We all may dream A Dream of Flying ...



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... a Dream of Flying.

Dr. Mary Teresa Swift
Boulogne 1672

A Dream of Flying shows the various ways in which the birds made this dream come true and it is clear from many of the paintings that its realisation was a frightening, painful process. The Corvids (crows, ravens, magpies) are often seen playing a role in the collection and delivery of the required feathers, and in many of the paintings we see their claws puncture the skin in readiness to receive them.

Stones play a part in the magic too, whether as amulets, altars, or the mysterious, cloud-encircled towers on which the birds perch. They appear in the largest painting of the exhibition, *Come Fly with Me?*, in which viewers themselves are challenged to dare to dream the Dream of Flying.

Wish fulfilment is at the heart of Ewart's work, and even though this may come with a certain element of danger, the overall feeling is one of hope and positivity; a sense of the possibility of change.

In an age of postmodern cynicism, she creates worlds where dreams can come true.



Green Peace



Heron Healing



Red Venom



Manuscript




Badass Jaybird



Red Venom

Manuscript



Badass Jaybird



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We all may dream . . .



. . . a Dream of Flying.

Dr Mary Teresa Swift
Boulogne 1872



Strawberry Moon

Strawberry Moon



Raven's Tryst





Blue



Airborne

Airborne



A Little Bird told Me



Veiled in Mists



Sweet Tears



First Feathers



Feather Kiss

Feather Kiss



Come Fly with Me?

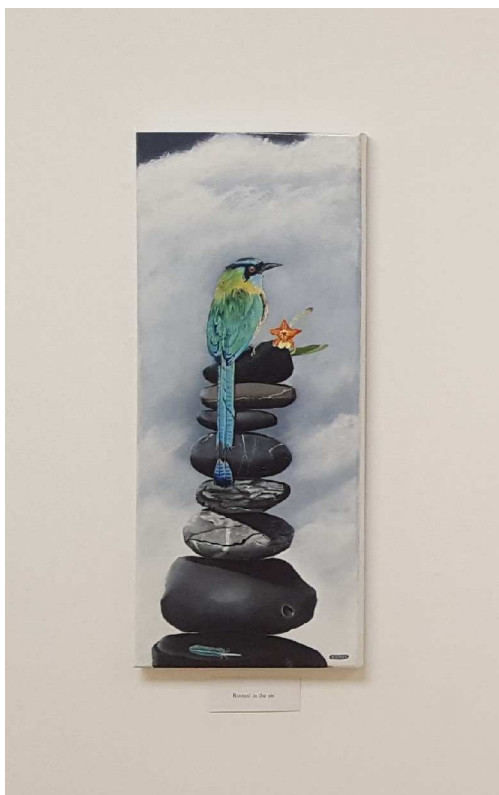


Diamond Drops



Moon Offering

Moon Offering



Rooted in the air



Offerings



Offering 1



Offering 2



Offering 3



Moonlight Lure

Moonlight Lure



Song: A Dream of Flying

Wearily earthbound, heavy and downcast
Taking my time, or was time taking me?
Slow was my pace then, leaden my footsteps
Anger and sadness was all I could see

CHORUS

*And then I dared to dream, to dream a dream of flying
Dared to let the solid ground give way beneath my feet
Felt the power of air beneath me, bearing me aloft
Up to where the only sound's my very own wingbeat*

Grey had engulfed me, veiled me with tears and
Blocked out the sun, so my day became night
Blue sky was up there, but I couldn't see it
Blue was within me, dark was my light

CHORUS

Skyward I soar now, in among rainbows
Over the clouds, where the cool breezes blow
Free as a bird and as light as its feathers
Leaving the weight of my sorrow below

CHORUS

*Because I dared to dream, to dream a dream of flying
Dared to let the solid ground give way beneath my feet
Felt the power of air beneath me, bearing me aloft
Up to where the only sound's my very own wingbeat*

Oh I love to hear the pounding of my very own wingbeat

Words: Franzeska Ewart Music: Pauline Vallance



