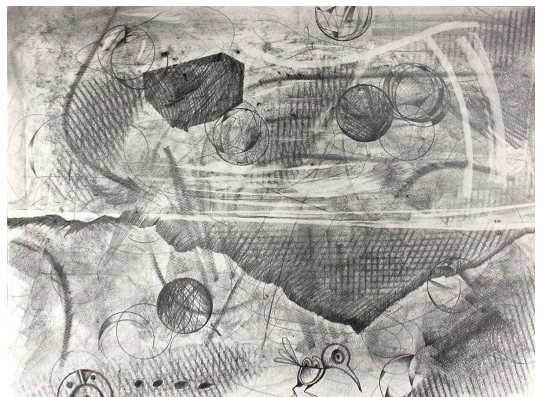


Ave Maya

The mother bird left the spaceship nest, burdened only by the six eggs on her back and the memories of her home before. In her wide, hollow eyes, she held the planet around her in a sort of regard; it was new, fascinating, yet terrifying all the same. An egg fell off her back as she took foolish step on the grated ground. The egg tumbled down to its inevitable death—and yet—all the bird could do was stare at it with her unblinking eyes. Five eggs. She knew that if she had tried to catch it, the rest would undoubtedly fall as well.

Mother had seen everything once upon a time. On her old planet, she understood everything. The sky was up. The soil was down. Yet, as she looked, she saw something “up” pointing “down” at her. A mountain. The jagged lines threatened her, staring, as the base disappeared behind the curtain of the sky. Mountains were “down” things. Down things point up, not down. She knew that. She had seen that in her home. However, as she took a step back, the grate snagged her leg; another egg tumbled down. Four eggs. She could make do with four eggs, probably. Mother sighed, her eyes heavy with the weight of the eggs that had been lifted from her back.

There had to be other birds that were up, right? Yet, as Mother turned her gaze to the sky, she could only see things that sort of looked like birds, but were not quite right. They flew like birds, but they were only smudges in the great, vast sky. Mother knew they were not birds, because birds looked like her. These were smudges, fluttering across the sky in a manner not unlike her own. Maybe here eyes were worn; she had seen so much already. There were unmistakably not-birds that were “up,” too. They were more like the spaceship: big, spherical things, that swirled in the sky like a hawk. But Mother knew about hawks, and she knew what this not-bird wanted the moment it started spiraling down—right to her and her four eggs. With no time to waste, Mother sprinted away as fast as her thin legs could carry her and her four—three—two eggs, narrowly escaping the clutches of the large not-bird. Mother knew now, that she was not going to like this place. She looked up at the other not-birds in the sky, much too many for someone like her. Maybe one of them was another spaceship nest, carrying another mother bird and her six eggs. Mother prayed that spaceship nest never landed here. With her tired, hollow eyes, she looked to the side—right at you—and in them, you could see all of the four eggs scattered on the ground. Still, Mother carried herself and her two eggs along the battered ground, hoping to find another spaceship nest to take her away from here.



-Laurel Whaley

Jesus De La Rosa
Ave Maya, 2021