



# City goes to the birds with two new art shows

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Erika Koivunen, scrap metal art welder, with her work on Thursday in Madison.



## SEE THE ART

### Birds on the Bike Path

**Where:** Law Park, John Nolan Drive

**When:** Through September

### The Owls and Other Art of Juliette Crane: Wild and Beautiful Things From the Everyday World

**Where:** ARTspace, 215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

**When:** Through Aug. 1

**Info:** [juliettecrane.com](http://juliettecrane.com)

Bird-watchers, keep those eyes trained on John Nolan Drive: A new species will roost there by the end of the month.

As part of “Birds on the Bike Path,” four new avian sculptures will soon appear along the Capitol City Bike Trail.

Meanwhile, an exhibit of delicate, almost coy-looking owls lines the halls in the Madison Municipal Building. Both exhibits were coordinated by the Madison Arts Commission, the former funded by a small BLINK! grant for temporary art.

The big birds, named King, Sing, Bing and Ying, are the creation of Madison metal-worker Erika Koivunen. Koivunen honed her welding skills during a four-year apprenticeship with Tom Every (better known as Dr. Evermor) in Sauk County.

Her apprenticeship with Evermor from 1997 to 2001 was unofficial, Koivunen said. She calls him her mentor.

“We just hung out,” she said. “It’s the way that you make friends, you know — we just happened to weld instead of go to the movies.”

Now, Koivunen’s metal work can be spotted all over town. Her metal birds have migrated from Restaurant Magnus to Paterson Street. She made 72 feet of railings at the Barriques on West Washington Avenue, benches at B.B. Clarke Beach and the light-hearted but heavy gates at the Midvale Community Garden.

Koivunen plans to add her quartet of birds to Law Park on John Nolan Drive, between two Monona Terrace signs, later this month. (Though the arts commission approved the temporary sculptures,

**Note:** Juliette Crane's "How to Paint an Owl" online course starts on Monday, July 18, and runs through Saturday, Aug. 20. Registration costs \$99.

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Koivunen must get approval from the Board of Park Commissioners. The board is expected to give the project the nod after press time.)

It's common for BLINK! temporary art to be vandalized or stolen, but in this case, Koivunen's art has an edge over Tim Browning's Grateful Dead bears, another BLINK! project that appeared on Lake Monona during a recent winter.

"You'd have to really want it," Koivunen said, gesturing to her heavy sculptures. "I put it out there, and the point is that people see and enjoy it. If somebody has to, has to, has to have it, what can I do?"

Juliette Crane, the featured artist in the city's ARTspace (in the Municipal Building) for the month of July, hopes viewers will not only enjoy her mixed-media paintings — they'll want to create them themselves.

Crane, who moves her near west studio to her backyard during the warmer months, teaches a five-week online course called "How to Paint an Owl." In

it, she coaches students through choosing materials, forming the bird's shape and embellishments, from polka dots and glitter to torn pages from novels.

"People who normally don't create artwork have a lot of fun with it because they put themselves into it," Crane said. "They teach me."

The city's ARTspace is a rent-free gallery downtown. Crane and the other artist, quilter Kent Williams, receive no payment for the show and cannot list prices on their works.

In addition to the owls, Crane is showing whimsical characters, including an elephant and lithe little girls who look like fairies. But the main focus is the birds, which Crane has loved since she was a child.

"As I was growing up, my parents had this carved wooden statue that was as tall as I was when I was 5," Crane said. "It had these awesome eyes that were jewels. I thought it was the coolest thing, because it was my height."

In her current work, she's drawn to owls because they resonate with her, especially the eyes, which have a touch of mystery and secret knowledge in them.

"I feel like I've always had a connection to birds," Crane said. "Whenever I go someplace now, inevitably I run into an owl."

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