



LAWRENCE WELLS
Paintings 2023

Lawrence Wells

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<https://lawrencewells.com/>

EDUCATION

Resident – Meetfactory, Prague, Czech Republic - 2007–2008
University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS MFA in Painting - 1992
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN BFA in Painting - 1987

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2023 “She Sells Seashells”, The White Room, Prague, Czech Republic - curator
2021 “KO-laborace”, Galerie Pragovka, Prague, Czech Republic - group show
2018 “Konec večírku”, Galerie Na shledanou, Volyně, Czech Republic- solo show
2018 “Nahá opice”, Galerie Pragovka, Prague, Czech Republic - solo show
2017 “Opice a Muži”, Galerie Hřivnáč, Opava, Czech Republic - solo show
2017 “See No Evil”, Galerie Ve dvoře, Litoměřice, Czech Republic - solo show
2016 “Chains”, Dark Matter Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic - solo show
2016 “Naked Ape”, Rebel Art Space, Palm Springs, CA - solo show
2015 “Bohemian”, Yalo Studio, Water Valley, MS - solo show
2014 “Ghosts”, Galerie Prokopka, Prague, Czech Republic - solo show
2014 “Konec/The End”, Galerie Kytka, Prague, Czech Republic - solo show
2013 “Kulturní událost/Cultural Event”, Berlinskej model, Prague, Czech Republic - solo show
2013 “Global Locals”, Galerie NTK, Prague, Czech Republic - group show
2013 “Moon Monkey Candle”, Galerie AM180, Prague, Czech Republic - solo show
2012 “Astronauts”. Galerie Ve dvoře, Litoměřice, Czech Republic – solo show
2012 “My Wildlife as an Animal”, Abrazo Interno Gallery, New York, NY– group show
2012 “Ape and Essence”, Berlinskej model, Prague, Czech Republic – solo show
2004 Alternatiff Gallery, Prague, Czech Republic – solo show
2001 “Fuji Fox Freedom”, Millenium Film, New York, NY – group show
1997 Mermaid Gallery, New Orleans, LA – solo show
1996 Two Painters, Positive Space Gallery, New Orleans, LA – group show

PUBLICATIONS

Interview: Lawrence Wells Konec Večírku, Noviny Na Shledanou, 2018
Lawrence Wells: Bohemian, Paintings 2011-2014, Yoknapatawpha Press, 2015
<http://www.amazon.com/Bohemian-Lawrence-Wells/dp/0916242781>
Interview: Lawrence Wells Returns to Oxford for Book Signing, Art Exhibition, 2015
Interview: Enter the Far Off Universe of Lawrence Wells, 2012

on cover: **Shell Dream**, 2023
oil on canvas, 80 x 65 cm

Shells of Ourselves

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare famously placed the Czech lands by the ocean with long rocky coasts to explore. The fantasy of the sea, due to its absence, inhabits a space in the Czech imagination that longs to travel, to escape, like the poet Konstantin Biebl, for example, to distant shores "on the ship bringing tea and coffee". Seashells and exotic objects are visitors from faraway lands. We collect them as they evoke worlds beyond our everyday lives. Hold a shell to your ear and you hear the distant sea rushing in your veins. That ocean is inside us and we map its depths in our dreams.

Seashells are beautiful treasures built instinctually by mollusks. In form, they resemble both female and male genitalia, reflecting the erotic vitality of nature. And yet, like bones, shells are the skeletal homes of dead creatures, made of calcite. They are a key aspect of the carbon cycle, the circulation of this primary element enabling life on Earth. Many seemingly static materials produce their own agency in humans and other species which are vital to our continuing coexistence. And yet these cycles are under threat due to rapid industrialization, the economic resistance to decarbonization, and mankind's inherent blindness. The oceans, unable to store more carbon, become acidic, endangering biological diversity.

Informed by natural processes, this exhibition contains both representational and abstract poetic responses to the current moment, full of crises, in which we struggle to find a post-human solution to halt or even reverse the effects of the anthropocene. Like mollusks, we filter elements of the environment, both physical and psychic, to build objects that we leave behind after we die. We spread out like archipelagic constellations, island hopping from one world to the next. We walk Shakespeare's coasts of Bohemia discovering treasures cast up from the depths.

Lawrence Wells (b. 1965) studied painting at Indiana University, and received his MFA from the University of Mississippi (1992). He has lived in Prague for more than 20 years. Recent projects include curation of a group show, *She Sells Seashells*, and the site-specific project *End of the Party*, curated by Jan Freiberg. He works in a studio in the Prague quarter of Vysočany and exhibits in Europe and the USA.



Conch, 2023
oil on linen, 120 x 120 cm



On the Shore, 2022
oil on linen, 80 x 65 cm



Shells and Cables, 2022
oil on linen, 100 x 100 cm



Rock Pool, 2022
oil on canvas, 120 x 80 cm



Rock Pool, 2022
acrylic on paper, 130 x 160 cm



Shells, 2022
acrylic on paper, 70 x 50 cm



Reliquary, 2022
oil on linen, 80 x 60 cm



Shells and Eyes, 2022
acrylic on paper, 50 x 70 cm



Shells and Head, 2022
acrylic on paper, 80 x 60 cm



Shells and Cable, 2022
acrylic on paper, 60 x 80 cm



Shell Shrine, 2022
mixed media on paper, 70 x 51 cm



Shells of Ourselves, 2021
oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cm



Osiris, 2021
oil on canvas, 120 x 80 cm



Shapes of Birds, 2021
oil on linen, 100 x 100 cm

Shapes of Birds

The Covid pandemic has slowly influenced my art practice in the sense that the human element is engaging less with the figure and more with the landscape. Society or rather social relations are limited and cultural currents seem to be drying up. This could also relate to the increasing “virtualization” of experience in which we all exist in parallel spaces bereft of a common culture. The masks were inspired by carnival masks in Austria, but I am not relating them specifically to folk traditions, but rather as echoes of a lost or transitional humanity within a highly simplified and reduced natural space. Certainly painting, as a record of touch and thought, remains integrally connected to human activity. I am not imagining a post-human experience of nature because I can’t imagine the role painting would play in such a space. Rather I am intrigued by notions of Amerindian “perspectivism” relayed by the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro in which all beings consider themselves to be human while at the same time considering all other beings as animals. By placing a mask on a bird, I ask about the human nature of birds. I refer to their thought processes, to their individual identities. If the masks populate the trees, then the masks themselves become birds, or even the trees begin to have human attributes. At the same time, our humanity becomes like trash blown in the wind, lives caught among the branches. The images work on multiple levels.

And yet masks also conceal something. Working in the past with monkeys, astronauts, ghosts, etc, I have long dealt with silent figures who have trouble communicating. The use of masks grows out of this struggle, out of the sense of miscommunication that accompanies my life as a foreigner or outsider. These personal, psychological aspects to the work are unavoidable, but I don’t want them to become central to it. The way the public reacts and interprets my work remains outside of my control. As a foreigner, I feel this aspect even more. The Czech public reacts to me generally on stereotypical lines. As I am not “u nas”, I am seen as something difficult to understand. And yet all stereotypes do contain some truth. I cannot deny my “Americanness” or not be a foreigner. In this sense I can’t wear a mask myself. Perhaps that’s another reason I am drawn to the symbol.



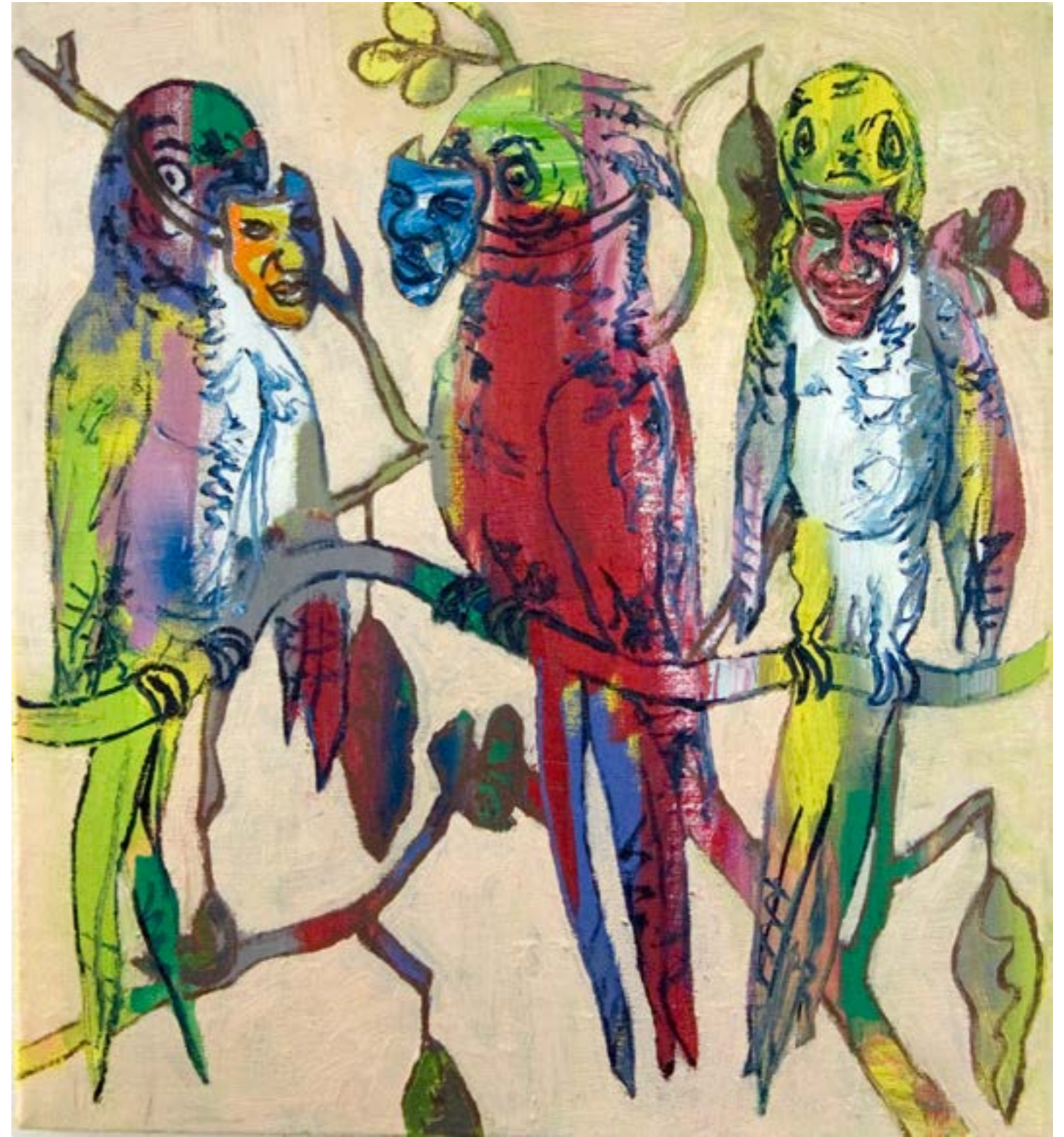
Parrots with Masks, 2021
acrylic on paper, 70 x 50 cm



Parrot with Mask, 2021
acrylic on paper, 70 x 50 cm



Birds with Masks, 2021
oil on canvas, 80 x 65 cm



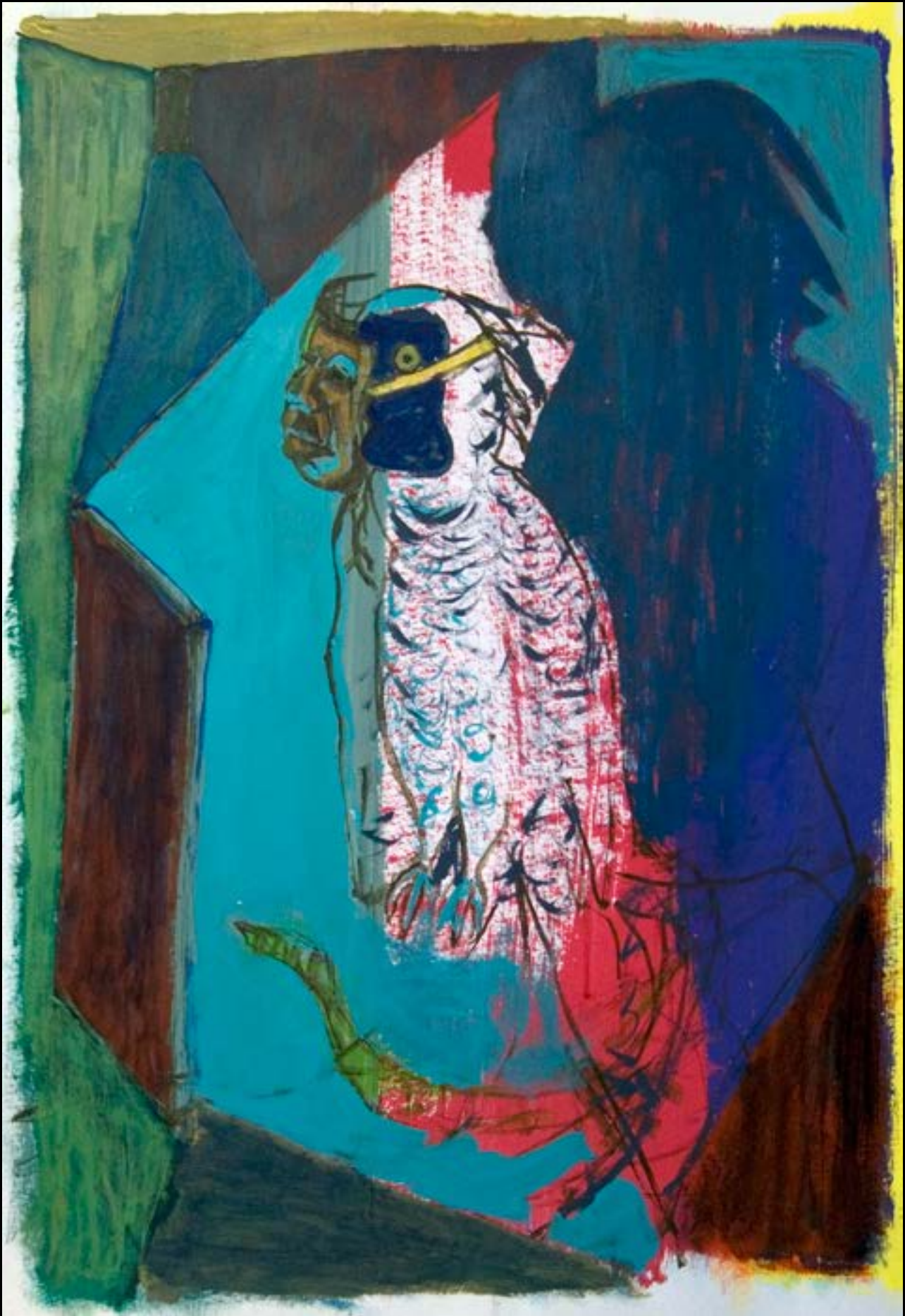
Parrots with Masks, 2020
oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm



Parrots with Masks, 2020
oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm



Seven Birds, 2021
oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cm



Parrot, Mask and Phone, 2020
acrylic on paper, 84 x 59 cm