

The ArtsCenter

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call 929-2787 x201 or go to
artscenterlive.org



FEBRUARY - MARCH 2012 AT THE ARTSCENTER

CONCERTS

AMERICAN ROOTS SERIES

WANDA JACKSON

Friday, Feb 10 8:30 pm

Advance \$24/Day of show \$26,

ArtsClub members \$22

EXTREME GUITAR DUO: KEITH KNIGHT &
DON ALDER

Sunday Feb 12, 7:00 pm

\$17/\$19, members \$15

JOHN McCUTCHEON

Friday, Feb 24 8:30 pm

\$20/\$22, members \$18

2ND ANNUAL NC

PERCUSSIVE DANCE REVUE

feat. Cane Creek Cloggers and others

Saturday, Feb 25 8:00 pm

\$14/\$16, members \$12,

students/youth \$12

THE BOXCARS

Friday, March 16 8:00 pm

\$17/\$19, members \$15

MOUNTAIN HEART

Saturday, March 17 8:00 pm

\$23/\$25, members \$21

LEO KOTTKE

Tuesday, March 27 8:00 pm

\$30/\$32, members \$28

DARRELL SCOTT

Saturday, March 31 8:00 pm

\$19/\$21, members \$17

STAGE

TRANSACTORS IMPROV: FOR FAMILIES!

Saturday, Feb 4 6:00 pm

Advance \$8/Day of show \$10,

ArtsClub members \$7, students &

seniors \$5/\$8

David Letterman Showcase: EDDIE BRILL

presented by DSI Comedy Theater

Saturday, Feb 4 7:30 pm and 9:30 pm

(two shows) \$16, students \$12

THE MONTI'S 4TH ANNUAL HIPPO
AWARDS

Thursday, Feb 9 7:30 pm

\$20/\$22, members \$18, students &

seniors \$16/\$18

TRANSACTORS IMPROV: THE LOVE
SHOW

Saturday, Feb 11 8:00 pm

\$14/\$16, members \$12, students &

seniors \$7/\$9

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WEATHERVANE

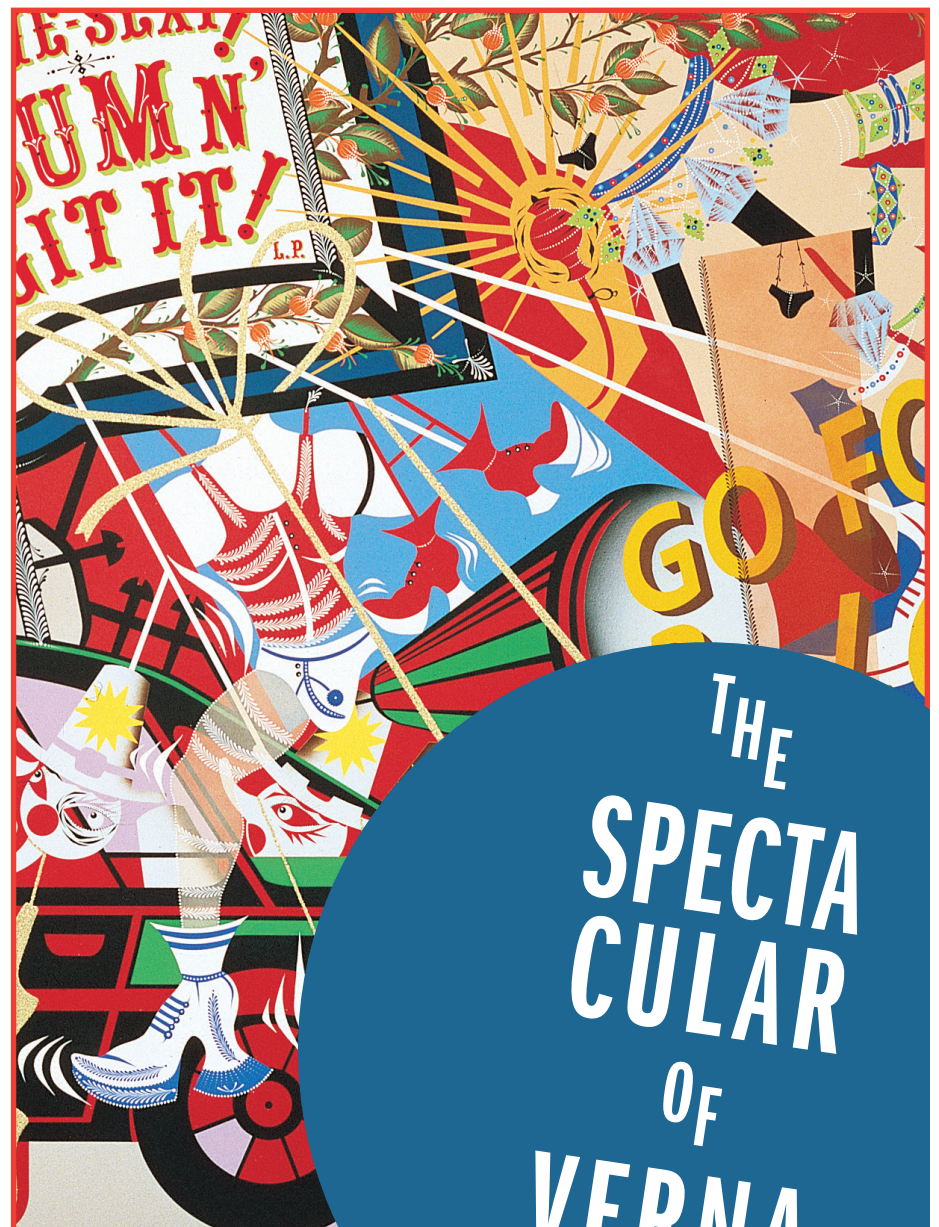
at A Southern Season



Breakfast | Lunch | Dinner | Weekend Brunch

University Mall Chapel Hill | southernseason.com | 919-929-9466

Open: Sun 10a-9p, Mon-Thur 8a-9p, Fri-Sat 8a-10p



Lari Pittman, *Untitled #30*
(*A Decorated Chronology of Insistence
and Resignation*) (detail), 1994; acrylic,
enamel, and glitter on two wood panels.
Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles.
© Lari Pittman.

THE SPECTA CULAR OF VERNA CULAR

14 JANUARY–18 MARCH 2012

The Spectacular of Vernacular is organized by Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and is made possible by generous support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Helen and Peter Warwick, and Margaret and Angus Wurtele.

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Exhibition catalogue available at the Ackland Museum Store.

ACKLANDARTMUSEUM

FREE ADMISSION

101 S. Columbia Street, just south of Franklin Street
Wed, Fri, Sat: 10AM–5PM Thu: 10AM–8PM Sun: 1–5PM

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FAUNA

BY MARY PARKER SONIS

THE BEAUTIES AT BOLIN CREEK

Where in nature can we find a creature that lives almost entirely on sweets and its own natural good looks? The cedar waxwing flits through the canopy doing exactly that. Voracious berry eaters, cedar waxwings gulp down entire trees of berries in an afternoon. The birds arrive en masse like a flock of attractive starlings and eat until they can no longer fly.

This habit was seen as a threat to fruit growers, and in 1908 a bill was introduced in the Vermont legislature that would allow farmers to shoot waxwings as an agricultural pest, despite evidence that the birds also consume vast amounts of insect pests in the summer months. The bill went to the Vermont Senate, and the bird's defenders brought in actual specimens to the hearing. The bill was ultimately defeated because the cedar waxwing was thought to be too beautiful to be shot. Today, the cedar waxwing is federally protected, and its population is robust, maybe even increasing.

The bird gets its common name from its love of the berries of the red cedar. Flocks descend on the trees in the fall to feast on the fruit. The "waxwing" part of its name is a reference to the vivid red tips of the bird's secondary flight feathers. These tips, which are actually a flattened end of feather shaft, appear to be dipped in red sealing wax.

When you see a cedar waxwing for the first time, you can't help but gasp at its beauty. It has a bandit mask of black and white on a crested head. The colors of the bird are a silky blend of fawn, brown, golden-yellow and dun, not in patches, but a velvety mélange of hues. The tail has a final brilliant edge of yellow, and the red waxwing feather tips are shiny punctuation points of color.

The purpose of the red feather tips is a subject of debate. The number of red tips corresponds to the age of the bird, which can determine its ability to forage successfully or to build a nest. It is thought

that these birds will choose an age-appropriate mate using the visual cue of the red wing tip. Cedar waxwings tend to choose mates who have wings tipped as their own – no cougars or cradle-robbers in the bunch!

As if its beauty weren't enough to endear the bird to the human population, its personality is equally appealing. Cedar waxwings are a happy lot. The sound of the waxwings in a tree is a high-pitched twitter of bird conversation. A flock of waxwings can sound like heaven. They flutter in the trees and gently pass berries to one another when only one bird can reach a particularly delicate branch. Down the line the berry is passed, each bird to the other. Sometimes you will see one waxwing grooming a friend as it sits on a branch. It is the habit of the male waxwing to woo his mate by offering her a berry, which the female then passes back to her prospective mate. Eventually, after a number of passes and a bit of a hopping

dance, the female gulps down the offered treat. They are not territorial birds in the least, nesting sometimes in groups and getting along astonishingly well.

Aside from its beauty, the cedar waxwing is best known for its voracious appetite. In the summer, the birds can be found along streams, adeptly plucking dragonflies and mayflies directly from the air and collecting other leaf beetles and caterpillars from the foliage, but it is their fruit foraging that is so intriguing.

The bird is a glutton for fruit. Fond of strawberries, raspberries, mulberries, dogwood berries, juniper berries, hawthorn berries, cedar berries and privet berries, the cedar waxwings will descend in a huge flock and eat until they are unable to fly. They swallow the berries whole and consume them in prodigious quantities. Fermented berries contain alcohol, and it is not unusual to find an inebriated bird unable to fly until it sobers up.

We may think of them as gluttons, but the behavior is rooted in biological needs. During nesting season, a bird requires a higher protein diet to produce eggs; hence, the cedar waxwing eats insects in breeding season, but when the nesting season is over, the bird reverts to a fruit diet and must consume vast amounts of berries to meet its dietary needs. A frugivorous diet is not particularly nutritious. If a parasitic cowbird happens to lay its eggs in the nest of a cedar waxwing, the young will perish before they fledge.

However, it does seem as if fortune always smiles on the beautiful cedar waxwing. Even as development lays waste to our forests, the landscapers and gardeners of our increasingly suburban environment favor planting attractive berry-producing trees and shrubbery. The cedar waxwing is a common backyard visitor.

Here in Carrboro, we can see them all over Carr Mill Mall in the winter. Two weeks ago they made a visit to the front of Townsend Bertram and Co., where employees rushed out to photograph the spectacle. That same day, Bolin Creek was host to a flock that feasted on the privet berries that grow along the creek's banks. While some birds ate and fluttered in the privet, other waxwings chattered and splashed in the sun-warmed puddles of the wetland. It was a joy to see them.

We as conservationists worry about the invasive privet that has taken such a strong hold at Bolin Creek, but the waxwings were feasting on the privet berries. In the evening, the beaver family will consume great piles of privet bark and then use the stripped branches to fortify their dam and brace their lodge.

Nature is endearingly practical in its use of what is already on the shelf, even when the shelf is a bit rickety and the contents less than perfect. Beauty is as beauty does.



Cedar waxwings often engage in a high-pitched twitter of bird conversation.

PHOTO BY MARY PARKER SONIS