

# AUDUBON

## Encountering the Forest, One Tree at a Time

*To understand Jason Covert's work, you need to get close.*

By Emily Silber

June 19, 2015

Some people say you have to zoom out to see the full picture. Artist [Jason Covert](#) wants you to zoom in. His new collection, *The Forest Through The Trees*, invites people to take a break from daily concerns and get lost in his spectacularly detailed black-and-white drawings of trees, branches and leaves. In doing so, the Brooklyn-based multimedia artist hopes viewers will be entranced by the beauty of nature and become motivated to



protect it. The collection, which until mid-June was on display at New York's [Gitler & \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#) gallery, includes 11 pieces, each of which took between 10 and 80 hours to complete, depending on the level of detail. Other than the two largest pieces, which Covert started years ago, the entire collection was completed in about two and a half months. *Audubon* talked to Covert, who is also a contributor to the [Audubon Mural Project](#), about his work and his inspiration.

***Audubon:*** Describe your vision for the *Forest Through The Treescollection*.

**Jason Covert:** There are two ways to look at it. On the one hand, it's a very detailed, hopefully aesthetically pleasing set of pencil drawings on paper. But on the other hand—and this was what was truly important to me—it's a comment on the state of the relationship, as I see it, between humankind and the environment that supports us.

**A: Why did you decide to call it *The Forest Through The Trees*?**

**JC:** It is a nice play on words. A majority of the drawings are of trees, but it also reflects people's relationship with the state of the environment right now. Whenever I talk to people about the environment, they say, "Oh, I can't worry about that, I've got my electric bill to take care of; I've got to get my kid to school; I've got this and that..."—you know, the minutiae that make up anybody's life.

This body of work forces you to look closely; to enter into a very intimate relationship with one drawing, just for a few minutes. And in doing so, you block out everything else that is going on around you.



**A: What message are you trying to send through this work?**

**JC:** When you scold people they tend to respond poorly, but if you can get them to see that we are all a part of the whole and that sometimes they have to step back to take in that whole, it is more effective.

My wife and I just welcomed our daughter and that really hit home; it changes the way you look at the world. I don't want to leave her a lousy place to live.

**A: How does this collection compare to other work you have done?**

**JC:** The main theme that runs through everything that I have done is the idea of loss. Everybody has experienced loss in one form or another because it comes in so many different ways: loss of information, loss of friendships, loss of history, and the loss of control and comfort that comes from our environment falling apart.

**A: You also did a mural of a Brown Pelican for the [Audubon Mural Project](#). How does this project compare?**

**JC:** Aesthetically they are pretty similar, which I think has something to do with the mindset that I was in—because I was working on them at the same time. But the pelicans that I did were very graphical and they popped a little bit more (they were going to be displayed on the side of a building) But, like *The Forest Through The Trees*, there's no background, it's just the natural wood of the board they were painted on.

I really wanted the pelicans to be the star and didn't want any unnecessary imagery detracting from them. I think these birds stand on their own; just their natural beauty is enough to make them stand out.

**A: What sort of feedback have you been getting from viewers of *The Forest Through The Trees* collection?**

**JC:** I think when faced with that idea that the environment is falling apart, we can all universally agree that it shouldn't be happening; that it's bad. So it's one of those rare projects that I think everyone can get behind.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

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