

the art of elias friedensohn

1924—1991

**This monthly newsletter is
produced by the Estate of
Elias Friedensohn.**

Among our goals are to showcase
the originality and diversity of the
artist's work and to circulate
comments on the paintings and
sculpture by critics, artists, friends
and fans.

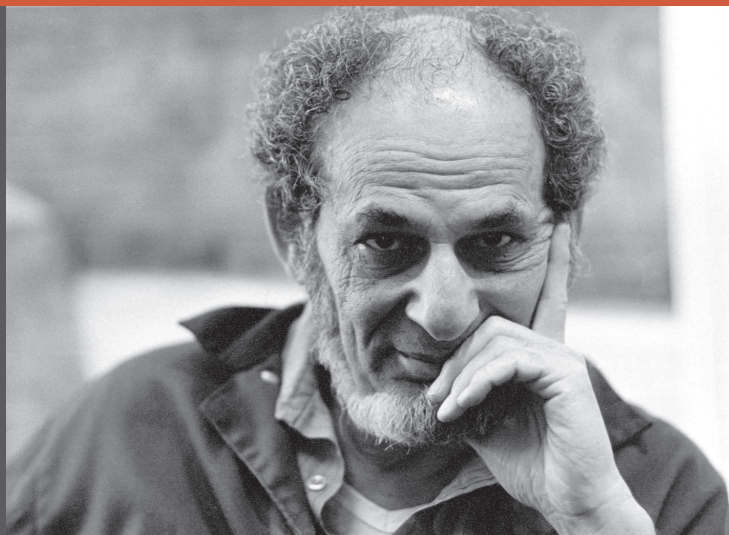


PHOTO BY CAROL KITMAN

About the Artist and This Issue

A native New Yorker and long time resident of Leonia, NJ, Elias Friedensohn began exhibiting in 1951. He joined the Queens College, CUNY, Art Department in 1959 and retired as Professor Emeritus of Art in 1987.

Over the course of four decades, he had more than 40 one-person shows of paintings and sculpture. In addition to solo exhibits in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Berkeley, his work has appeared in major national shows at the Corcoran Gallery, The Whitney Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago,

the Smithsonian Institution, and many others. Articles on his work have been published in *Art News*, *Art Forum*, *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine* and many other newspapers and magazines.

Issue #5 of the Newsletter focuses on the artist's paintings of crows. When a flock of cawing black birds arrived on our lawn early one spring morning, Friedensohn paid attention. He researched the habits of crows and the more he learned, the more "human" they seemed. Or maybe not. Let the viewer decide.

Upcoming gallery show: **Hat Block Sculptures and Crows**

Works by Elias Friedensohn



Luise Ross Gallery

547 West 27 Street, #504
New York, NY 10001

Dates:

8 March – 9 April

Opening:

Saturday, March 19, 3 – 5 p.m.

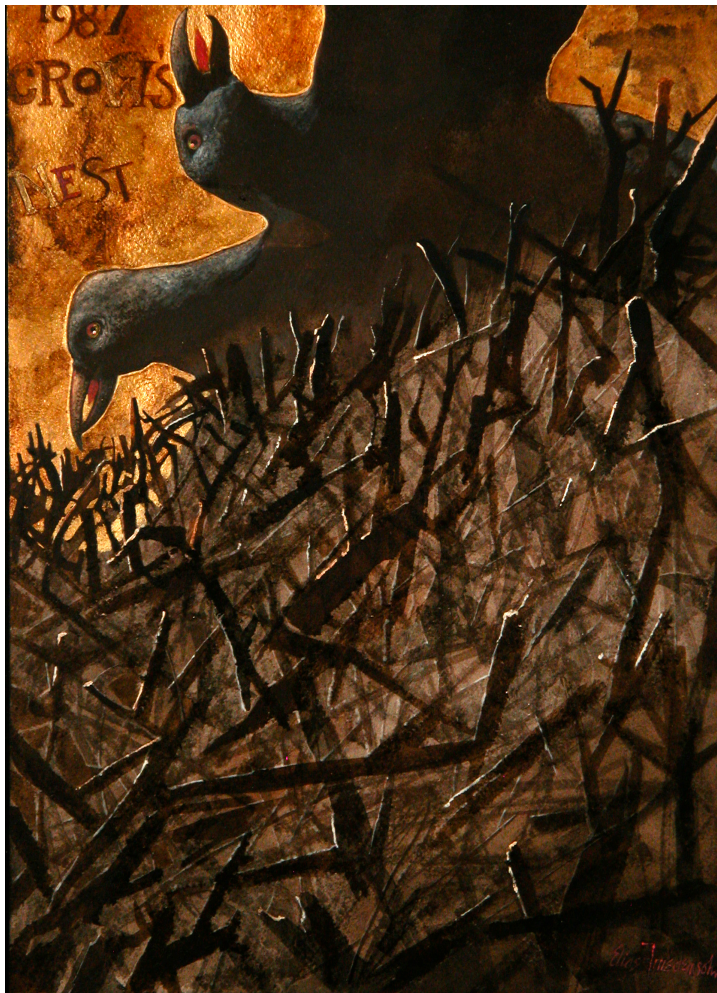


Crows

Crows, Elias Friedensohn liked to say, are our emblematic bird. He profiled them, in works on paper and his unpublished “True Book of Crows” (1988), as gregarious and violent, tribal, xenophobic, and guilt-free. He imagined them loving war and enjoying sex; also hustling and ridiculously vain.

Crows—in love and battle, alone and in groups—offered the artist a fresh vocabulary of images and a trove of narrative possibilities. Focusing on crows (and his invention of the Crow), he explored some of the nagging contradictions in human experience—including our fears, bravura, deceptions and lies. Laugh if you can, this work exhorts us; but steel yourself against angst and a bloodied landscape.

The quotes below are all excerpted from Friedensohn’s book.



“The crow is the earliest breeder of the season and has a high reproductive capacity. Its massive nests are abstract-expressionist agglomerations of twigs lined with grass, feathers, old eggshells, buttons and discarded contraceptives.”

Crow's Nest

Watercolor with gilt background
14 1/4" x 10 1/4"
1987

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“The crows have suddenly invaded our street. At five in the morning their strident, gritty caws rip the silence till it hangs in shreds from telephone wires. Their black shapes are ominous. Prospering, they will soon be as large as ravens. Ugly by choice. Parasites. Nest robbers. Hustlers. Always making out. Like the rest of us.”

Caw Caw

Watercolor with gilt background | 12”h x 16”w | 1987

“The sexual politics of the crow are very advanced. Well before any other birds, both of its sexes dressed identically in black feathers. The crow has no problem in the selection of a mate. S/he feels free to choose solely on the basis of proximity: the nearest, not the dearest, will do nicely.”

Crows in Love

Watercolor | 12 3/4”h x 20”w | 1987





The Tree of Death

Watercolor with
gilt background

14 1/4"h x 10 1/4"w
1987

“The crow is our emblematic bird, the Hannah Arendt bird of banality. It is our familiar. We become excited when we are told that eagles have their aeries on the rooftops of buildings around Central Park, from which they swoop down upon hapless pigeons. We may weep for the poor pigeons or attack with the eagles. But what do we do with a crow? Nothing! The eagle doesn't prey on the crow. Nobody likes to eat crow. It has a bad taste.”

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Contributing to this issue:
Text and images by Elias Friedensohn
from “The True Book of Crows,” 1988.