

*fauna & flora*

# BETH VAN HOESEN

Essays by Bob Hicks



*Pike (State II)*, 1988. Artist's Proof II/V. Aquatint, hardground etching, and drypoint with roulette, handcolored with watercolor, 13<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 16<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (35.2 x 42.9 cm)

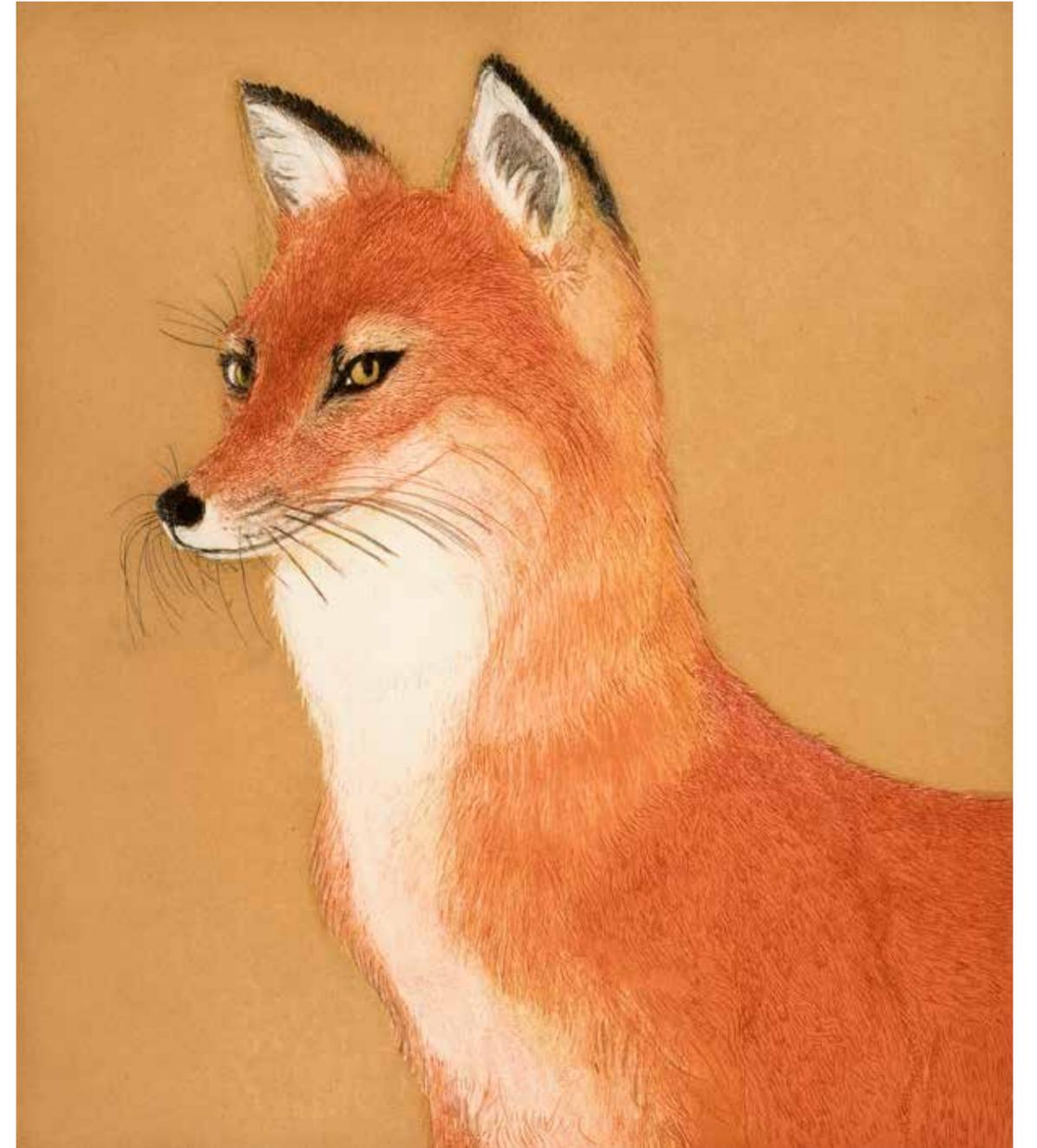
## Fauna

At first glance, Beth Van Hoesen's affinity for the animal kingdom might seem surprising. For most of her life she was a devoted urbanite, about as far from the realm of wild animals as a lifelong westerner can be. She went to college at Stanford University, at a time when Palo Alto was still a small college town, but in the mid-1940s moved to San Francisco, which except for a few breaks for travel and study was to be her home for the rest of her life. In 1959 she and Adams bought the old Engine No. 44 firehouse near Castro Street. The neighborhood now hosts the highest concentration of gay male couples in the United States but at the time was a much grittier blue-collar part of the city. Less than a decade later, nearby Haight-Ashbury would become the mecca of America's hippie movement. The two artists lived and worked in the firehouse for almost half a century, surrounded by social ferment and well aware of it, but also occupying a kind of protective, timeless bubble that they constructed around themselves.<sup>5</sup> They lived a settled, almost cloistered urban life, broken by jaunts into the countryside, vacations, and occasional foreign sojourns. Van Hoesen spent periods studying in Mexico City and Paris before she and Adams met; later they traveled together to work and study in France.

Yet Van Hoesen's roots were in a much more rural West, in a time and place where the relationship between people and nature was both close and casual. She was born, in 1926, in Boise, Idaho, a small city surrounded by rich, dry farmland and, not too far away, rugged wilderness. She and her family lived for a time in Walla Walla, Washington, now the center of a thriving upscale wine region but in the 1930s a little, isolated farm town with a state penitentiary. And they spent time in the then-modest-sized coastal city of Long Beach in Southern California, where she could find sea mammals only a short walk away.



*Sally*, 1979/1981. Edition of 100. Artist's Proof 2/4. Aquatint, drypoint, and etching with roulette, inked à la poupée, 11¾ x 13¾ in. (29.8 x 34.9 cm)



*Jezabel*, 1977/1982. No edition. Studio Proof. Aquatint, etching, and drypoint, 13⅞ x 12 in. (35.2 x 30.5 cm)



*Albert's Poppies*, 1991. Edition of 50. Aquatint, etching, and drypoint, handcolored with watercolor and gouache, 16 x 16 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (40.6 x 41.6 cm)



*Little Poppies*, 1975. Edition of 25; *édition variée* of 10. Aquatint, etching, and drypoint, inked à la poupée, handcolored with watercolor, 10 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 10 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (27 x 27.6 cm)

*fauna & flora*  
BETH VAN HOESEN

Essays by Bob Hicks

*When I first saw [Maharani], she was being led down the walk among the visitors. . . .  
Rani had been raised in captivity with a leopard and was used to being handled by trainers.  
She had that graceful languid appearance of most cats. But her powerful body reminded  
one that her effortless relaxation could turn to aggression in an instant.*

—Beth Van Hoesen

From her firehouse studio and home, printmaker Beth Van Hoesen (1926–2010) made a career from observing creatures, casual moments, and overlooked things with sensitivity and diligence. She worked from life, drawing nudes and newborn babies, landscapes and buildings, vegetables, fruits, flowers, wild animals, and family pets.

Raised in the American West, Van Hoesen settled with her artist husband, Mark Adams, in San Francisco, where she would spend more than fifty years making traditional prints with a modern approach to the arrangement of space on a plane. She continually sought the elegance and economy in the refined line, never content until a print was just right and the essence of her subject had been perfectly, cleanly expressed.

*Beth Van Hoesen: Fauna & Flora* devotes two essays to the renderings of animals and flowers for which Van Hoesen is best known. Using curator, artist, and printer interviews alongside quotations from Van Hoesen's unpublished 1981 journal, Bob Hicks examines her work within the context of the contemporary art world and the history of figurative printmaking. More than ninety prints and drawings illustrate Van Hoesen's mastery of color and line in her effort to intimately and meticulously document the tangible world as she saw it.

### About the Author

Bob Hicks has written about the art of Beth Van Hoesen in two previous books, *Beth Van Hoesen: Catalogue Raisonné of Limited-Edition Prints, Books, and Portfolios* and *Beth Van Hoesen: The Observant Eye*. His reviews and cultural essays have been published in *Biblio*, *American Theatre*,



*Prologue*, *Art Scatter*, the *Oregonian* (where he was a staff critic for many years), the *Oregon Journal*, and elsewhere. He is a senior writer and editor at the online cultural journal *Oregon ArtsWatch*. He lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife and children.

**Below:** *Purple Iris*, 1994  
Graphite and colored pencil  
15¾ x 15½ in. (40 x 39.4 cm)

**Cover:** *Maharani*, 1988  
Aquatint, etching, and  
drypoint with roulette,  
handcolored with watercolor,  
15½ x 13 in. (39.4 x 33 cm)

144 pp., 8⅞ x 10 in.

Smyth-sewn casebound,  
with jacket

More than 90 full-color  
reproductions of prints  
and drawings

Includes Index of Artworks

A232 ■ ISBN 978-0-7649-6850-1  
\$40.00 US (\$48.00 Canada)  
Available September 2014

© 2014 E. Mark Adams and  
Beth Van Hoesen Adams Trust

Essays © 2014 Bob Hicks

Photographs by M. Lee Fatherree  
Photography, Oakland, CA

*Pomegranate*

**Pomegranate  
Communications, Inc.**

19018 NE Portal Way  
Portland OR 97230  
800 227 1428  
www.pomegranate.com

**Pomegranate Europe Ltd.**

Unit 1, Heathcote Business Centre  
Hurlbutt Road, Warwick  
Warwickshire CV34 6TD, UK  
[+44] 0 1926 430111  
sales@pomeurope.co.uk

Printed in China