

MURDER IN THE HAMPTON SHIRE (2014)

By Walt Wright

This painting is best viewed at a distance between four and five feet. As in most of my paintings the sense of distance (or depth) is quite prevalent. Although the large red barn draws the viewer into the scene, it is the event itself that holds the true focal point of the painting. As a threatening sky moves in from the left, the viewer finds themselves in a horrible scene. A large crow has killed a young mockingbird fledging as the parent birds fight for its release. The "Hampton Shire" landscape is purely fictional but the event was all too real.

While sitting on my back porch with my dearest friend (Kentucky Colonel Kenneth Epling from Abingdon, Virginia), we witnessed this traumatic event unfold. His name "Ken" is hidden within the painting. Together we watched as a great variety of birds quickly filled the sky and forced a crow to the ground shortly after it had captured its prey. This gave the parent birds a chance to free their offspring. As the other birds settled around the area to prevent the crow's escape the mother bird danced frantically around the crow to distract it while the father made daring dives at their adversary. Suddenly in an act of defiance, the crow killed the little one as we all looked on. The birds that had set up the blockade realized the helplessness of the situation and soon began to break up their assembly. Seeing his opportunity to flee with his meal the crow left with the parent birds still in pursuit. A sense of loss filled the air as was a touch of admiration for all the birds that attempted to help the mockingbird couple. Knowing the crow's diet and ability to survive on a vast number of eatable items, the event presents two questions... If murder is so wrong for humanity, why does it occur so frequently in nature? Also, why is a gathering of crows called a "murder"?

