

BIRDLAND

BIRDLAND is a collection of twenty-four sculptures standing in a field of 600 red poppies. The sculptures are odd hybrid creatures, a cross between men and birds. The figures are at the same time scary and benevolent, dark and funny. They are a fragment of a dream remembered upon waking, which haunts you throughout the day.

The sculptures are carved and fired clay with oil paint and graphite surfaces. The eyes are hand painted by a taxidermist. Most of the birds have the eyes of reptiles or mammals, enhancing the surreal feel of the piece. The sculptures are elegant but slightly awkward: Men trying to fly, birds trying to talk. The installation has the feeling of a film still- a paused moment in time.

The entire project started with the eyes. I felt that the precise beauty of the eyes combined with the funky carving of the figures would create an interesting tension. This seed of an idea evolved along with a disparate group of images floating around in my mind, fragments of memory. The field of poppies in which Dorothy and her companions fall asleep in *The Wizard of Oz*, Nineteenth Century naturalist drawings, the gestures of people I know, the stuff of dreams in a far away land...Birdland.

Melissa Stern 2006