



Walton Ford: Pancha Tantra

Bill Buford

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At first glance, **Walton Ford**'s large-scale, highly-detailed watercolors of animals may recall the prints of 19th century illustrators **John James Audubon** and **Edward Lear**, and others of the colonial era. But a closer look reveals a complex and **disturbingly anthropomorphic** universe, full of symbols, sly jokes, and allusions to the 'operatic' nature of traditional natural history themes. The beasts and birds populating this contemporary artist's life-size paintings are **never mere objects, but dynamic actors in allegorical struggles**: a wild turkey crushes a small parrot in its claw; a troupe of monkeys wreak havoc on a formal dinner table, an American buffalo is surrounded by bloodied white wolves. The book's title derives from *The Pancha Tantra*, an ancient Indian book of animal tales considered the precursor to Aesop's Fables.

This large-format edition includes **an in-depth exploration of Walton Ford's oeuvre**, a complete biography, and excerpts from his textual inspirations: Vietnamese folktales and the letters of Benjamin Franklin, the *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* and Audubon's *Ornithological Biography*.

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