

From a very early age Krista Ann Roche felt a deep connection to the natural world. While growing up in the Chicago area she spent much of her childhood exploring the Chicago Forest Preserves, natural lands winding their way through the suburbs. Here she found early inspiration in the landscape, its flora and fauna, and in the changes throughout the seasons. Even as a child she always knew she wanted to become an artist, as her early role models were artists in her family.

Her formal art education began in high school when she won a community poster contest in her hometown of North Riverside, Illinois; the prize was Saturday morning art lessons at the Art Institute of Chicago. Attending these lessons gave her a sense of art as a serious endeavor, and when class was over she spent the afternoon viewing her favorite works in the Art Institute's painting collection before taking the train home. Her interest in art also was nurtured in public school art classes from grade school through high school and by her parents who provided art materials and encouragement. After high school she studied drawing and painting in the School of Fine and Applied Arts at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. After marrying and starting a family she completed her undergraduate degree at the College of Wooster in Wooster, earning a BA with a double major in studio art and German. In Ohio she lived on a small farm in the rolling hills of Amish country south of Wooster, practicing her art and raising two children. Her watercolors, drawings, and oils of the Ohio landscape were juried into many regional and national exhibits where they often won awards and recognition. During the same period she was elected to full membership in the Ohio Watercolor Society.

Her life changed in many ways in 1985 when her husband accepted a teaching job in the Department of Geology at LSU in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. At LSU she was able to further her education with advanced studio and art history courses culminating in a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Drawing and Painting in 1992. After graduation she pursued her art, searching for direction in this very different natural environment. She continued working from the landscape, but at the same time her attention was drawn to the bird life of Louisiana. While delivering a painting to an exhibit in Jennings she was amazed by the sight of thousands of wintering Snow Geese in a rice field. As a result of this experience she and her husband enrolled in LSU Union bird watching classes taught by ornithologists from the LSU Natural History Museum. Field trips in these classes opened her eyes to the rich bird life in the swamps and coastal marshes of Louisiana. Shortly

afterwards she enrolled in a semester-long course in Chinese painting at LSU with artist Wan Ding. Inspired by the Chinese tradition of bird and landscape painting, she painted her first birds while in this class. For her birds became a magical portal into the landscape, opening up a world of imagination and creativity. As Mississippi artist Walter Anderson expressed it, "Birds are holes in heaven through which man may pass." Although she now travels the world to see birds, her work continues to focus mostly on the birds she knows best in Baton Rouge and the Gulf South.

Although birds are her subject, her paintings are not intended as bird illustration, rather the birds inhabit a world of the artist's imagination. Her most recent works are color compositions in acrylic and collage, with a combination of techniques giving her work a unique appeal. She often uses her collection of Japanese chiyogami papers in collages to add unexpected color and pattern to her compositions. Mixed media techniques such as printing into paintings with hand-carved blocks and layering add interest to more traditional painting techniques. Often her bird subjects express the artist's own emotions.

For many years she taught drawing, painting in watercolor and acrylic, monoprinting, and bookbinding to adults, both in private classes and workshops as well as in classes offered by the LSU Union. While working on her MFA she taught drawing and design classes at LSU as well as at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.

At present she is represented by the Elizabethan Gallery in Baton Rouge and Ariodante Gallery in New Orleans. Earlier gallery affiliations were with the former Metal Orchids and Wildlife Gallery in Covington, the Backwoods Gallery in St. Francisville, and the Baton Rouge Gallery. Her work is in private and corporate collections throughout the U.S. She continues to exhibit in one-woman shows as well as in state and national juried exhibits. Her work has often been honored with awards in these shows.ca