Spaces of Encounter:
Art and Revision in Human - Animal Relations

Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir

Valand School of Fine Arts
Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts
University of Gothenburg

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Abstract

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This PhD project explores contemporary Western human relationships with animals through a 'relational' art practice. It centres on three art projects produced by Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson – *nanoq: flat out and bluesome; (a)fly;* and *seal* – all utilize lens-based media and installations.

Discourses on how humans construct their relationship with animals are central to all three projects. The first one looks at polar bears, the second at pets, and the third at seals, in a variety of different sites within clearly defined contexts and geographical locations. The thesis explores the visual art methodologies employed in the projects, tracing in turn their relationship to writings about human-animal relations. This includes both writings researched in the making of the works and those considered retrospectively in the reflections on each art project.

These artworks engage their audiences in a series of 'encounters' with the subject through simultaneous meetings of duality, e.g. haunting vs. hunting, perfection vs. imperfection and the real vs. the unreal. These dualities are important in theorizing this relational space in which the eclipse of the 'real' animal in representation occurs and in formulating questions embedded in and arising from the artworks on the construction and the limits of these boundaries. The 'three registers of representation', as put forward by the artists Joseph Kosuth and Mary Kelly, have further helped to frame and develop the thinking, concerning both the mechanisms within the works and their perceived effects.

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Introduction

This thesis explores the research involved in three art projects that form the basis of my PhD enquiry, which began with exploring ideas of 'wilderness' in human relationships with animals. Through the process of the PhD, it has changed its focus into an examination of the relationship between different modes of representation of animals with a particular emphasis on lens-based media.

The process of this research has lasted just over 4 years, giving me opportunities to concentrate on the practice at the same time as I have engaged with literature from a range of disciplines connected to animal studies. It has created a space for me to reflect in detail on my art practice and to articulate the processes involved in making the work and to consider its relationship to the work of other artists and related practices, as well as furthering a personal conceptual enquiry. When applying to do my PhD at Gothenburg University, one of the main attractions was what I saw as a commitment to artistic 'practice' as 'serious' research, on a par with other academic disciplines. Although the road travelled has not always been smooth I still believe this commitment holds, along with a genuine curiosity about the relationship between artistic processes and the production of knowledge.

From the beginning of the assignment, it was clear to me that the production of artwork would be at the centre of my academic research and writing would act as an interlocutor to the artistic practice both reflectively and as a means through which the work itself would be informed. As evidence of that I consider the fact that through the process of doing this degree, my confidence in and command of visual language as an investigative research tool, has been reinforced. This is not about my own tenacity, but it has been about my study, of what have become the 'subjects' of my enquiry – the non-human-animals. Through studying non-human-animals I have come to recognize shortcomings

in human systems of communication and attendant power structures. Saying that, it is important to make clear that I consider the writing of this text for the PhD degree a fundamental tool in its delivery. I have found the demands of articulating my thoughts, my actions, my processes and influences in writing, an immersive process, which has challenged my thinking and helped to focus the artistic enquiry.

In this research I have been guided by a number of thinkers, who have contributed to an academic discourse on the representation of animals in contemporary Western culture. A particular emphasis in my reflections within this thesis has been given to what constitutes what I refer to as the 'eclipse' of the animal. Spaces of 'disappearance' in human/animal relations have been utilized to enter, by means of visual art, into the logic of these arguments around the 'eclipse' in the encounter with animals. The strategies applied in the practice use concepts such as absence/presence in the context of contemporary culture and animal discourse. Exhibiting these works in a number of different public spaces and contexts has enabled the practical application of these concepts allowing me to observe and explore consequent multiple readings. The artworks aim to engage their audiences in a series of 'encounters' with the subject through simultaneous 'meetings' of dualities/opposites e.g: haunting vs. hunting, perfection vs. imperfection and the 'real' vs. the 'unreal' and are important in theorizing this relational space and in formulating questions embedded in and arising from the artworks on the construction and the limits of the 'boundaries' between them. The challenge in our art projects is to explore such boundaries in an attempt to 'think with' (quoted in Daston & Mitman, 2005b, 143) or to constructively 'activate' the spaces of encounter between human animals and non-human animals.

The idea of the eclipse of the animal is related to the theories of John Berger about the overall disappearance of animals and how these are reflected in i.e. the décor of displays in zoos as well as in animal toys and commercial imagery in contemporary culture (Berger, 1990, 26). It is also connected to the theories of Akira Lippit, who used Berger's theories to propose that modernity enabled animals to exist in human

discourse only in a continuous state of disappearance, or "perpetual vanishing" (Lippit, 2000, 1).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines an eclipse as "an obscuring of the light from one celestial body by the passage of another between it and the observer or between it and its source of illumination" (O.E.D, 1998, 586). As the work in this research employs lens-based media, a word that describes disappearance through the mediation of light is appropriate. A further reference is Jules Janssen (1824–1907) and his research into solar eclipses and the luminous spectra that occurs, which led to the invention of what has been called the "photographic revolver"(Amalric, 1992, 41). The opening and the closing of light to imprint a substance onto a surface, was thus an instigator in capturing the movement of light through all the different stages of the solar eclipse. Such was the faith in this newly invented tool that Jansen is supposed to have referred to the photographic plate as "the retina of the scientists" (Amalric, 1992, 41).

The photograph works with the skin or the surface of the body in a similar way to taxidermy. When we (human animals) look at non-human animals, it is the surface of their body – the exterior form – that is registered (Broglio, 2008). When thinking about the inside of the non-human animal, it is seen as a carcass, often as meat for consumption whereas human animals are seen as having 'a soul' and an imagined interiority. One of the philosophical reasons given for animals existing in a continuous state of disappearance is connected to the fact that they are not thought to have a soul and are therefore denied any spiritual experience or empathy from humans of suffering in death (Lippit, 2000). In Haraway I find affirmation to continue: "staying with the complexities does not mean not acting, not doing research, not engaging in some, indeed many, unequal instrumental relationships; it does mean learning to live and think in practical opening to shared pain and mortality and learning what that living and thinking teach" (Haraway, 2008, 83). There is invariably an intention and indeed an expectation that the processes of art-making allow insights in these respects, informing and influencing the direction and substance of the work. These processes necessarily constitute not just a one way street between artists and public, but also

create a forum for these questions and discourses. The exhibited work is thus simultaneously a document and a catalyst. In the collaboration, our artistic work develops through a process of dialogue and the application of a variety of technical and conceptual skills. These are interwoven into the fabric of the work, which accommodates a wide range of readings. Although the artwork for this PhD research is part of the collaborative art practice, the focus of the PhD enquiry and the subsequent writing of this thesis is my sole responsibility.

Art projects
The three art projects that form this academic enquiry are entitled *nanoq: flat out and bluesome; (a)fly;* and *seal.*

nanoq: flat out and bluesome is a visual art project that explores meanings embedded in taxidermic polar bears and what they symbolize in the contemporary western world. The project explores the cultural constitution of nature. Through this work, the polar bear, as a 'hollow' animal body, has been examined in the context of a historical relationship between taxidermy and photography; an oscillation between life and death and the camera's capacity to transform and implant memory and construct identity.

The project, which was developed through our survey of taxidermic polar bears in the UK, raises an array of questions and issues. It sets out to unearth a series of narratives, anecdotes and fragments arising directly from the provenances of individual bears and to connect the audience to a new knowledge that the specimen could be seen to embody. The project also aims to provide insight into a rich and celebrated epoch of exploration, learning and discovery that a 'confrontation' with these specimens might unlock. Begun in 2001, the project took five years to complete and was structured around three anticipated outcomes and related processes. These were:

- The survey itself and the subsequent loaning of a number of specimens for an installation in a contemporary art gallery, Spike Island in Bristol. The installation was also the site for a one-day

conference, entitled *White Out,* organised by the artists.

- The photographing of the specimens in situ and the gathering of information relating to their history. This comprised any data available from the moment of the first encounter with humans in their indigenous environment to their current location in the United Kingdom as taxidermic specimens on display (or in storage). This was followed by numerous showings of these images combined with their provenances. The locations in the UK were the Oxford Natural History Museum, Bristol Museums and Art Galleries, Horniman Museum, London, and the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge. In Scandinavia the work has been shown at Askja Natural Science Building at the University of Iceland, at Bryggen North Atlantic House in Copenhagen, in The Nordic House in Thorshavn and the Polar Fram Museum in Oslo.
- A publication entitled *nanoq: flat out and bluesome, A Cultural Life of Polar Bears,* documents the entire project from the beginning to the end. The 192-page book, published by Black Dog Publishing in London in 2006, contains all the photographs and provenances from the archive. It provides extended information on each specimen as gathered from the collectors, as well as correspondence, with essays by the artists and the project co-ordinator Lucy Byatt and respected academics and critics, Dr. Steve Baker, Dr. Garry Marvin, Michelle Henning and Patricia Ellis.

(a)fly is a visual art project that investigates preconceptions about nature, culture, domesticity and the wild by exploring our relationship to the non-human-animals we invite to live with us – referred to as pets. The project, which was centred on a defined geographical area within the city of Reykjavík, explored the meeting point and the overlapping of territories between non-human animals and human animals. It investigated established hierarchies of classification in relation to non-human animals and proposed to draw the viewer into the non-human animal body in a momentary attempt at 'becoming animal'. The project operated in three different sites with generally separate constituencies of participants. These three sites were:

- Austurbæjarskóli – a large primary and secondary school in the inner city area of Reykjavík. The artists (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) ran a workshop in collaboration with the school. Pupils were invited to join the workshop to sculpt, paint or draw their own pet or that of a friend. In addition they were asked to write a text concerning their pets' relation to 'natural' habitats.
- A community of pet owners in one city area that responded to our advertisements for participation. These participants made up the photographic archive of the non-human animal dwellings taken within the homes of their human animal owners.
- The participants in another random survey of pets in the inner city area. This survey was conducted by a method developed by Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson and involved four ptarmigan hunters, four shotguns and four maps of the city area in question. Each hunter discharged one cartridge at a map from approximately 40 meters distance. The shots on the maps acted as markers for the survey.

The project had three outcomes, consisting initially of two exhibitions and a publication. The two exhibitions were held simultaneously in the city of Reykjavík during the Reykjavík International Art Festival in 2006, at the National Museum of Iceland and the City Library. A publication of 80 pages, published by the National Museum of Iceland, with photographic images from the artworks and essays by Dr. Karl Benediktsson, Dr. Ron Broglio and Dr. Mika Hannula, accompanied the project. The project was also shown at Gothenburg Museum in the spring of 2007 and in the exhibition *Animal Gaze* at London Metropolitan University in the winter of 2008.

seal is a visual art project that explores human relationships to the seal, an animal widely appropriated in Western culture for a variety of human representations and emotions. For the purpose of the project, the artists (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) have focused mainly on this animal in a specific geographical context, which offers access to a multiplicity of human attitudes towards the animal. The project aims to draw attention to (some of) those attitudes in an attempt to separate the 'representational' animal from the 'living' animal through the

application of an artistic method built on the idea of the three registers of representation, outlined initially by Joseph Kosuth (Kosuth, 1965) and revisited with a feminist perspective by Mary Kelly in the 1980's in terms of sociality, materiality and sexuality (Kelly, 1998). In its site-specificity, the project also explores cultural territories and the shaping of 'belonging' or nationhood. The research for this project is in three stages:

- The first stage was instigated by collaboration between seven female artists over a period of one year from mid 2006 to 2007. This collaborative research was conducted during a series of research trips in which the subject of the enquiry, i.e. the seal, was at the centre of discussions on anthropomorphism and social positionality.
- The second stage in the research process was inspired by the exhibition that was the result of the above mentioned collaboration, at the *Seal Centre* in the north of Iceland (Líndal A., 2007). We decided to continue a discursive research of the subject by conducting a series of interviews on camera with people who have had some contact with the seal through observation, caring and hunting.
- The third and the final research stages of the project were the filming of the preparation for a traditional seal hunt and in relation to this project the subsequent process of taxidermy – the 'making' of a stuffed seal.

Proposals for site-specific outcomes for this project have been considered in locations in which the contexts would enhance further enquiry into representations of the real and the symbolic and the relationship to the death and life of the non-human animal. The proposed sites are sites within a university and a church. At this stage, for the purpose of this PhD, the project is presented in a temporary form as examples of research put forward for this academic degree.

For the purposes of clarity and focus I have chosen to concentrate in the three selected projects (*nanoq: flat out and bluesome*, *(a)fly* and *seal*), on large 'charismatic' mammals and pets residing in the Northern hemisphere. Nevertheless, during the four years of my engagement

in the process of PhD research, the partnership Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson has undertaken other art projects and art works which are not included in this research degree. *Big Mouth* (2004), which concerned the supposedly extinct thylacine, was researched before entering onto the PhD programme and concluded with a solo exhibition at Tramway in Glasgow, accompanied by a publication launched later the same year. Another work, entitled *Icelandic Birds* (2008a), was exhibited as part of a group show, *Bye, Bye, Iceland* in Akureyri Art Museum. The work is a survey of imported cage birds into Iceland in the year 2006 whose image is then pasted roughly over a poster from the 1980s with images of what are called *Birds of Iceland*. A wall with the stuffed Icelandic birds is also part of the installation. During 2008, we (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) have been engaged in commissioned research, for the Storey Gallery in Lancaster, England for a project entitled *Uncertainty in the City*. This work, still at the research stage, is related to but not part of this PhD project. It also explores the boundaries in human/animal relations and our (human) notions of territory by looking at non-human animals that are 'uninvited' co-habitants in and around urban dwellings.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters arranged in a manner, which follows the methodical procedures of hunting: *Introduction, Preparation, Mapping, Shooting, Mounting, Communing* and *Final Comments*. In *Preparation,* the background to the artwork and the collaboration is discussed placing the practice into the context of contemporary art both historically and conceptually. Similarly, the relevant fields in animal studies are mapped, to highlight where crossovers into our practice occur. Sometimes there are direct references to the art practice, and at other times these are less prominent. Although a distinction is made between those projects intrinsic to this degree and those not, the boundaries will inevitably sometimes be crossed. Information pertaining to post-humanist discourse and the identity of lab animals might look slightly out of place, but considered in relation to the newly identified virtual 'animal' discovered through our research for *Uncertainty in the City,* it is of significance in an understanding of how the concept of animal might be constructed/reconstructed. The chapter on *Mapping*, as implicit in its title, maps out the area for the research;

geographically, socially and politically. This is intended to show the early engagement of context from which the work derives, as well as referencing the context in which it will eventually reside. *Shooting* is a chapter, which addresses the process of making the work often through shooting with the camera although in one work the act of real shooting is used as a method in the making of art. The chapter on *Mounting* discusses the finished work in context, including the analysis of its execution; the chapter on *Communing* highlights the emphasis we place on the art as discourse and as a platform for social and political engagement. The *Final Comments* are by no means a conclusion per se, but an honest attempt to draw together the relevant themes and concepts that the artwork and the research have revealed and explored.

This strategy is designed to direct the reader to a notional correspondence with parallel processes identified in art making and for both to be seen in the light of the observation that human relationships to the non-human animal are so commonly intertwined with its death. The poignancy of death in the hunt is brought into close juxtaposition with the poignancy or loss brought about by (mis)representations of the animal and its consequential 'eclipse'. By this means, both the activities of hunting and of art research and production are seen to be contributory in social and cultural constructions of meaning in respect of animal death and animal representation and consequent human animal, non-human animal relations.

In sports hunting, although the rules of the game in question are pivotal to the activity (Marvin, 2005b), the ultimate result is an animal body. The animal body will then act as a trophy, either through a photographic image, through a bodily residue as a taxidermy specimen, or in the form of tales as part of social communication. In order to locate the reader firmly in the environment of enquiry in this research, I worked with a Swedish elk hunter in the north of the country to construct a 'diary' from his hunt. The result is juxtaposed here with the main body of the thesis at the beginning of each chapter. The layout of this text in which the reader travels between the respective activities of hunter and artist, is constructed to challenge our understanding of

the ‘real’ and is offered as a manifestation of the spaces of difference between two species of human and animal and two different but related destinations of human desire.

Figure 01

Figure 02

Figure 03

Figure 04

Figure 05

Figure 06

Figure 07

Figure 08

Figure 09

Figure 10

Figure 11

I. PREPARATION

It's the first week in May and we're meeting in Hasse's small house in Rädbjörka. We're getting together to check on the salt-stones, the hunting stands, to look for traces and to see if there've been changes in the forest over the winter. This'll be our base for most of the time. It's also here that we'll do our shared cooking. Walking around our different stands, salt stones and our borders takes almost three full days.

It's early morning, the sun is shining. Most of the snow's gone but there are white patches of snow here and there, inbetween the trees. Now it's easier to move about in the forest and to carry the replacement salt-stones to where they're needed. The salt-stones, or saltlicks as they are called, are very popular with most of the animals out there. We know this by observing the many traces around the stones and the churned up ground. We also have axes with us, an ordinary saw, a saw on a long stick to clear branches that may be hanging down and blocking the view from from our shooting posts. In addition, I carry with me a notebook and a camera. This is for documentation in order to make additions to our hunting team website. I also usually carry a camera anyway – in case I see something interesting. But as part of the team it's my job to prepare the map for the season and the photographs will be helpful when making the necessary changes. (Boardy, 2008)

Figure 12

Art and Animals: The Context

The artwork for this PhD research is, the result of a collaborative partnership with the artist Mark Wilson. We began working together in 2001 through shared interests in the environment and human relationship to it. Our research interests are human perceptions of 'nature' explored through the relations between human and non-human animals. At the time of entering into the collaboration, my practice was mainly photographic. With the aid of a camera, I attempted to capture 'nothing'. This 'nothing', arising from configurations of snow, cloud and mist, was of a particular kind and it was 'shot' whilst walking mountains with a large format camera and tripod, paralleling the footsteps of famous male landscape photographers like Ansel Adams and Edward Weston. The process of the making was important, as hours were spent on the processing and printing of these images to bring out the delicate marks in the white surface. Prior to that, I was involved in making works with sound and objects mostly made in plaster. The concept for these works was built in an enquiry into hybrids of various kinds. The emphasis was on the 'seam' of the joint in these works – referred to as 'the space between'.

Our collaborative art practice is built on the belief that art is a social activity that needs to open new spaces, or stretch the boundaries of those already existing in our society and its perceptual frameworks. A variety of visual art forms are used to engage an audience in our concepts and enquiries. These forms have mainly become combined into installations, using different media. A particular emphasis has been placed on using a variety of contexts to further the reading of the work. Since formalizing our collaboration as "Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson", the concept of animal has been explored largely by representing the absence of the animal body and by addressing relations of humans to their own environment. There is also an interest in looking at connections between human–animal relations and notions of wilderness. Wilderness is understood as a

psychological construction (Schama, 1995) made possible by certain arrangements of elements that enable the human mind to live even just for a fraction of a second completely in the moment (that is, in a way entirely unmediated and unfettered by language and the accretions of culture). There is a social and activist dimension to our visual art practice. The aspiration is to use the artworks and the processes involved in the art practice to create debates and highlight awareness about the environments inhabited by humans and non-human animals. The aim is to create platforms for actively engaging in discourse concerning anthropocentric hierarchies in contemporary societies, with a view to opening a space for what Latour (2004) calls 'multinaturalism'. The concept of multinaturalism is proposed by Latour together with the opposite concept of 'mononaturalism', and used as a deliberate parallel to 'multiculturalism'. In this way Latour warns against the inappropriate use of 'nature' as a singular concept, as critics of multiculturalism have made about 'cultures' as bounded entities. By placing 'multinaturalism' alongside 'multiculturalism' – an already politicized term of expression – the pluralist concept of 'nature' will begin the process of rethinking the relations between human and non-human animals.

In our current visual art research, the concept of an animal is explored through its absence, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Photography is still present, but contrary to the images of 'nothing', the context in which the subject matter resides is now fully visible. It is through the juxtaposition of the object within that environment (*nanoq: flat out and bluesome*) or the lack of it (*(a)fly*) that birth is given to the idea of an absence. A photographic image is thought to 'freeze the moment' (Roland Barthes, 1990), to place the viewer in the present over here and the photograph in the past over there. It gives the impression that time is a linear movement and the images are fragments of that continuous movement of time. In my earlier works, this idea of the image being a fragment in a line of continuous time was not challenged. The images I made of 'nothing' aimed to highlight the space between the works. Sound found its way into my work as an attempt to take control of and define the space in between. The sounds from mountains in *Model for a parapet* (1998a), nesting areas of aggressive birds in *Skimming Stones*

(1999b), and different thicknesses of snowy grounds and glacial rivers in *Dances with Terminus* (1999a) merged with the rhythm of a human body during these explorations. It was however in *trace* (1998b), through the sound of the act of skating on ice, that the 'space between' found a form in a continuous movement through time. This work was set in St. Paulinus, a deconsecrated church in Yorkshire, where, as part of a sound installation, a skater circled endlessly. It is important to note, that although the work gave the impression of a skater in action, it was in fact constructed in the computer from a variety of pre-recorded skating sounds. The work had initially been recorded live but had to be abandoned in pursuit of a better quality of sound. It would however have been impossible for me to construct the work on the computer convincingly had I not had an experience of performing it live.

It is in conceptual art that we (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) find most common ground with our art practice. The work begins with an idea that takes form according to subject matter and context. The object(s) is/are only there to aid the transport of the concept into the mind of the viewer where the 'art' can be said to happen. It is therefore the viewer that defines and completes the work. Joseph Kosuth's piece *One and Three Chairs* (1965) had a huge impact on me when I first saw it in the late 1980s. It helped to develop the structure of conceptual art for my own artwork. The work defined as 'three registers of representation' (Godfrey, 1998), consisted of a chair, a definition of a chair, and a visual representation of a chair. There is an academic dryness about the project, which constitutes a basic enquiry into form and indicates the inaccessibility of reality: something that is still present in our (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson's) current art practice and is part of the subject of this PhD enquiry. Mary Kelly's critique of modernism as an 'objective' legacy is also important, as she identifies how conceptual art has operated as a challenge to its tenets, emphasizing the importance of the production of meaning above specific media; the contexts in which art is produced for and reviewed from; and finally the significance she placed on sexuality as an asset of artistic authors and audience alike (Kelly, 1998). Although we have not worked with sexuality as such in our art projects, the feminist perspective projected in Kelly's writing

and in her work on male/female relations is replaced by human/animal relations, as defined by post-humanist theories and discourse (see below). By emphasizing the production of meaning above specific media in her artworks, she introduced an understanding of materiality. Both in *Post-Partum Document* (1973-1979) and in *Interim* (1986) there is an implicit critique of the value placed in objects as opposed to raw materials. Kelly manages to shift the understanding of conventional aesthetic values by bringing into the context of the gallery everyday objects whose function is the access to its meaning, as evidenced in the relationship between mother and child in *Post-Partum Document*. The key to the reading of the work is thus in the meaning of the material in question, instead of its formal aesthetic values. Although still in line with the thinking behind conceptual art, this was in stark opposition to conceptual artists like Kosuth. In his work *One and Three Chairs* (1965), an unswerving trust in our multiple representations of objects is revealed at the same time as an impotence in providing coherent alternatives, thereby reinforcing modernist values and beliefs. Kelly, on the other hand, with her awareness of materiality/sociality/sexuality, had moved beyond modernism into a post-modern way of thinking. In relation to Kelly and Kosuth, and our own art projects mentioned in this chapter, it is important to sustain the comparison, as the differences define the respective positions of these artists in relation to art movements and the history of art. It could thus also be said that Kosuth and *One and Three Chairs* (1965) is structuralist in its approach to form and content as the object, the image, and the text are inseparable as signifiers but have arbitrary signifieds whereas Kelly, coming from the position of feminist post-structuralism, uses material fragments or ideas of multiple coding to demonstrate how the female body has been negatively inscribed in Western culture, resignifying objects and changing associations and meanings in them.

In the projects *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* (2006b) and *(a)fly* (2006a), we are (although the projects themselves extended over space and time) using the same form as that of the three registers of representation. The basic format of the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project includes the subject, that is the polar bear specimens; the object, that is the

photographic works; and the historical 'provenances' as the linguistic referent. The provenances are inserted into the photographs through two different approaches or stand as statements on their own in the website or in the book accompanying the project. What in part distinguishes *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* from Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* (1965) are the different roles of the narrative and how these differences privilege the particular and the individual and thus contradict the ambition of generic representation in which the object is the subject of its representation. Instead our work emphasizes the importance of the context in which the work resides in and is an invitation for audience participation through a physical engagement with the 'objects' of the installation and the 'subject' of the enquiry. In *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* there is a real politicized emphasis on an engagement with the narrative, as evidenced in the process of finding the bears, in their role as components within the installation and in the photographic work (image/text) as situated in the respective museums. Kosuth's chair is a chair representing 'chairness'. It doesn't invite a specific cultural narrative; it exists in the present tense. In our project, the emphasis is on the distinctiveness of the object/subject on display – here, the polar bear is no longer acting as a representative of a genre or a species, but as an individualised specimen. The triangulation in *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* is therefore mobilized not towards definition, but more towards the discursive in order to apply different lenses of representation to a subject with a history, privileging none of these views individually – but using them strategically and collectively in order to direct the engagement of the viewer towards the spaces of their non-correspondence – at different stages of the project's development.

In *(a)fly,* the format also derives from the above-mentioned three registers of representation. However unlike Kosuth, the 'object' in the work produced by the pupils of Austurbæjarskóli for *(a)fly*, that is the pets presented as drawings or paintings in the context of the Natural Museum of Iceland are obvious representations of pets, and the written texts exhibited in the City Library of Reykjavík display a diversity of cultural narratives. In support of this world of fiction, the photographic images of the non-human animal dwellings do not capture the presence

of the object in question, but its absence. Similarly, absence was also used strategically in Mary Kelly's work *Post-Partum Document* (1973–79), in which she famously decided not to represent the female body visually, in order instead to reveal other aspects of psychosocial reality (Kelly, 1998). The dwellings in *(a)fly* indicate the inaccessibility of a reality, or possibly more justly the multiplicity of realities, as we encounter the empty human environments in the photographs awaiting/inviting our projections. Similarly to *nanoq: flat out and bluesome*, the context is important, although in this instance more in relation to the execution of the work than for its exposition.

An earlier project from my collaboration with Mark Wilson, entitled *Big Mouth,* which we worked on for a brief period at the same time as *nanoq: flat out and bluesome,* also researched animal disappearance. That project was focused on an extinct non-human animal, the thylacine or Tasmanian tiger and its 'resurrection' through storytelling and myth. Science also played its part in this 'rebirth', as DNA samples from a thylacine embryo, accidentally preserved in ethanol instead of formaldehyde, formed the basis of a genetic research project at the Australian Museum in Sydney (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2004).

In contemporary discourse on environmental issues it is evident that humans continue to project their own, often prejudiced ideas about the construction of social environments onto animals. Most notably there is the notion of 'purity' in what is often referred to as the protection of native species. In Scotland, in Allerdale Estate in the county of Sutherland, a re-wilding programme for both plants and animals is in progress. The goal of what is referred to as a 'scientific experiment' is a total restoration of flora and fauna. Although the programme has received public support for reintroducing European elk and red kites, plans for the introduction of predators like wolves, lynx and wild boars are controversial (Henry, 2008). In terms of this research into human animal relations the project is of some interest, as it highlights the anthropocentric attitude also manifested in *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* where the kill made by colonial explorers became natural history collections and museums, the custodians of 'nature'. Where we live in

the north of England, the Wildlife Trust Cumbria has run a programme to raise awareness about the red squirrel (*Sciuris vulgaris*) called *Save Our Squirrels*. In 2008, with the frequent sightings of the grey squirrel (*Sciuris carolinensis*) – previously not a habitant of the north and originally a non-native species, introduced to this country in the mid-nineteenth century from North America – the programme has taken on a new dimension. People have taken up their guns, sanctimoniously aiming them at the grey squirrel supposedly in protection of the red. Furthermore, owners of land within the marked red squirrel reserves are eligible for a grant from the English Woodland Grant Scheme to cover the costs of traps and baits in the battle against the grey squirrel. Much of this is on the back of a questionable theory, blaming the parapoxvirus carried by the grey squirrel for the decline of the red squirrel. There is currently a variety of conflicting information on this matter, but most reports agree that the success of the grey over the red is connected to woodland and land management. The grey is able to inhabit broadleaved woodlands, feeding on varieties such as oak, beech, chestnuts, and hazel. The red squirrel, on the other hand, prefers conifer forests and mixed woodland of birch, rowan, ash, willow, aspen, and alder (Patterson, 1998). The decline of the red is thus connected to a change in ecology and to land management strategies and hence to some extent returns the question regarding its survival back in our own, human court.

Erica Fudge (2002a) has written a historical survey of our relationship to animals, or the history of the representation of animals in Western Culture, as a story of human domination. She demonstrates how squarely anthropocentrically humans have acted in their relationships with animals, i.e. humanity's needs and interests have come first. Even when the intention seems to be humanitarian, as in the law of 1839 prohibiting the use of dogs to pull carts in London, the result turned out to be something completely different. In fact it led to the widespread slaughter of these dogs, as their owners could no longer afford to keep them. While we associate the meaning of 'humanitarian' with social welfare programmes including both humans and animals, it actually only applies to humans and the welfare and happiness of human beings. The humanitarian act in relation to the dog law of 1839

was therefore instigated to ensure the wellbeing of those 'sensitive' human beings who got upset by seeing dogs suffer while pulling the carts. It was a reform therefore for humans and about humans. Fudge points to the anthropocentrism involved in the circumstances leading to the legislation and quotes a statement from the patron of the Animal Friends Society, who argues for there being no place to go without "encountering something to wound our feelings" (2002a, 12). Humanitarian acts may be considered declarations of anthropocentrism, but the ethical philosophy of humanism placed universal human qualities like rationality at the forefront of every possible enquiry. Humanism displays a total belief in humankind, including the ability to investigate concepts such as 'truth' and 'morality'. The non-human animal does not feature in most humanist equations: man's humanity (or lack of it) to men takes precedence.

Two feminist scholars, Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles, are at the forefront of the development of post-humanism. Post-humanism questions the traditional hierarchy of humans over animals but doesn't displace the anthropocentric perspective towards non-human animals. It is often associated with something technological – we are what we want to be (or what we have become) thanks to technology. Katherine Hayles (1999) gives an account of the development of artificial intelligence from the moment at which embodiment was erased from intelligence, making it a property of formal symbols rather than being part of the human lifeworld. One of her key references is the Turing test, a test made by Alan Turing in the 1950s which supposedly proved the capability of a computer to think. Turing's 'imitation game' was about interrogating simultaneously a computer and a human and if the interrogator did not distinguish by questioning them who was what, it would be reasonable to say that a computer had intelligence. In the more controversial 'gender game', however, a man and a woman would through a computer try to propose to a judge that both were female. Then, by replacing the male with a computer, the question became whether the judge would be able to identify the female from the machine. Later, Turing's biographer Hodges attempted to deny the importance of the decision to replace the male who posed as the female

in the experiment, with a computer. By doing so, the specifics of women's embodiment were erased from the human/machine debate resulting in a general dehumanization of the machine. In brief but counter to Hodges' suggestion about Turing's analysis, Hayles believes that it is important to see embodiment put back into the equation. She proposes that we think of the Turing test as magic. By doing so, we accept early on in the process what is later to be put in front of our eyes:

> The important intervention comes not when you try to determine which is the man, the woman, or the machine. Rather, the important intervention comes much earlier, when the test puts you into a cybernetic circuit that splices your will, desire, and perception into a distributed cognitive system in which represented bodies are joined with enacted bodies through mutating and flexible machine interfaces. As you gaze at the flickering signifiers scrolling down the computer screens, no matter what identifications you assign to the embodied entities that you cannot see, you have already become post-human (Hayles, 1999, 3).

Post-humanism, as an approach, defines a distinction between the species rather than projecting human values upon non-human animals. Because of that it is possible that post-humanist theories on virtual bodies, as proposed by Hayles, could lead to a further separation between humans and non-humans. Lynda Birke proposed, in a British Animal Studies Network seminar in London on 28th of July 2007, that continuous xeno-transplantations could result in a loss of subject-hood; a diminishing of the importance of 'difference'; a lack of bodily integrity and encourage a reading of bodies as purely texts and surfaces. Generally there are two main interpretations of post-humanism – one in which the human is dominated by genetic technology (Hayles, 1999) and the other in which the 'post' is read as philosophically oriented question about the human itself (Derrida, 2002).

Many animal rights theorists make a case for post-humanism as they encourage a discourse on species alongside promotion of co-operation and respect for different species. The concept of speciesism, as argued by the philosopher Peter Singer, unsettles the sway of humanism as it

emphasizes the specificity of the non-human animal and the breaking of a conventional understanding of the hierarchy of the species. Singer argues for equal interests of all animal species, human and non-human. According to him, we cannot assign a lesser value to animal rights due to animals' alleged irrationality, and a higher value to some humans, like infants and the mentally impaired, when neither behave rationally (Singer, 2000).

Donna Haraway (1991) and her groundbreaking work on the 'cyborg' is often mentioned along with the work of Hayles as marking the steps away from humanism. Her work is in stark opposition to the work by Barthes (1973) about the myths that circulate in everyday life and how they construct a world for us and help us locate ourselves in it. Haraway's position was that there was no need to deconstruct the human being from the outside – we are all 'cyborgs' in the late 20th century was her fundamental message, and by taking on the identity of the cyborg we can contemplate leaving behind the dualistic image that we use to understand our body and tools. It is a dream not of one language for all, but of a complex construction in which by building and destroying a multiplicity of connections and contexts between people, animals and their environments, social and political relations can take place. "Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" (Haraway, 2004, 39). In her latest book, she shifts her emphasis from 'cyborgs' to 'companion species', thus distancing herself from post-humanism and proposing a future investigation into human/animal relations. She asks herself the pertinent question: "whom or what do I touch when I touch my dog?" (Haraway, 2008, 3). I mention this here as I identify with this movement towards what has been referred to as relational theory that is the idea of a meeting point in the coming together of the species. On the other hand, Haraway not only acknowledges a notion of difference between species, but also acknowledges a sense of hierarchical superiority in her theories on 'killing and eating well', which have been relevant to my research.

In Haraway's earlier book, *Modest_Witness* (1997), she makes a point of including non-humans as socially active partners. This is in contrast to

most social theorists (with the notable exception of Bruno Latour), who consider social relations and history as something centred on the human, and even when it comes to engaging with other species it is very much from that human perspective. Haraway's work has been concerned with the touch: a touch is defined as more 'animal' than 'human' and the least intelligible of human cultural codes whereas vision is considered closer to reason and intellect. She is also concerned with the specific character of our contact with animals as a two-way exchange. As an example, Haraway talks about Jacques Derrida's work *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2002) where he describes the moment he caught his cat 'looking' back at him. The context of that 'look' is a naked Jacques Derrida in his bathroom and his consequent shame. For Derrida it is hugely important that man "summons" the animals in order to "subject, tame, dominate, train or domesticate" (2002, 384), as the animals were born before man but named after man was born. He cites *Genesis 2* in which God, having created all the animals on Earth ordered man to name them whilst watching over him. In the 'look' of the cat, Derrida acknowledges the accusation of "who was born first before the names" (2002, 386). Although it left Derrida bewildered enough to write a complicated essay about the animal gaze, shame, and male nudity, the fleeting feeling of the moment could almost have gone unnoticed. After the meeting of their respective gazes, the cat turned around and walked out of the bathroom. For all practical purposes Derrida ceased to concern himself with what the cat might have thought/felt at this moment or afterwards. What Haraway criticizes is the fact that from that moment on, for Derrida, the cat ceases to exist. Derrida gets caught up in what she refers to as 'masculine exceptionalism' focusing too much on the male organ in question and omitting to investigate what "the cat cared about in that looking" (quoted in Gane, 2006, 143). Derrida on the other hand points out that an encounter through closeness and possible contact with an animal is more important than "the bottomless gaze" (Derrida, 2002, 381) of the cat and discusses the meaning of the term 'the look' through language and how this is a human term which allows us to describe what we understand through learned codes. Berger, in his essay *Why look at animals?* points out:

> The eyes of an animal when they consider a man are attentive and wary... The animal scrutinizes him across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension. This is why the man can surprise the animal. Yet the animal – even if domesticated – can also surprise the man. The man too is looking across a similar, but not identical abyss of non-comprehension.... A power is ascribed to the animal, comparable with human power, but never coinciding with it (Berger, 1990, 5).

Thomas Nagel also examines the problem of representation and subjectivity in his article 'What is it like to be a bat?' (1974). The fact is that we can imagine as a human how it would be to be a bat, but we are unable to know how it is for the bat to experience being a bat. Nagel's point is that human experience does not translate in the move of an animal from objective to subjective position. Forty years earlier Jakob von Uexküll approached this matter differently. In an essay (1934) entitled 'Stroll through the Worlds of Animals and Men', he talked about different worlds of men and animals and tried to understand what the world is like for the animals that live in it. One of the animals he discussed is the tick. The tick responds to three signals in this world – nothing else is of significance for it: the odour of acid found in mammal sweat, the temperature of mammal blood, and the texture of mammal hair. As an example, Uexküll informs us that the tick will eat any liquid that is the same temperature of mammal blood – around 36.7 degrees C – no other property of the liquid will be registered. Uexküll unlike Nagel, suggests that to understand animals we have to look to the relationship between the subject and the environment and not in the inner relationship from the object to the subject.

In *The Companion Species Manifesto* Haraway (2003) tries to see the world simultaneously from her own position/location and from the position of the dog/"critter", Cayenne. She reduces the moment of the touch between the two of them to a fragment in which inter- and cross-worlds meet, both internally and externally. Haraway, does not attempt to adopt a position of the animal, but proposes that through a shared intensified experience, like agility training, the minds of both animal and human can 'touch' in a search for a unified goal. This reduction of

time and space is paralleled in my own research into what I have referred to as 'spaces of confrontation' between human and animal. Similarly, in this kind of situation, or in the emotional intensity of hunting, a situation from which often only one participant will return alive, a psychological meeting can occur across the abyss between human and animal. Interestingly, Haraway's term for this moment of integrated worlds is "situated becoming" (quoted in Gane 2006, 145), which is another means to reference what we refer to when we say our artwork is both relational and site specific. The creation of a liminal or neutral space through these works, by sucking out the specifics of 'human' and 'animal' and instead creating suggestions of their relational possibilities, is a further reference to Haraway's 'situated becoming'. The 'touch' between Haraway and Cayenne landed them both simultaneously in many worlds. Haraway says in an interview:

> For example, we land in the re-arrangement of biodiversity databases, dog and human genome projects, and post-genomics; we land in the inheritance of land consolidations in the post-gold rush in the western United States and its mining and ranching practices, and its food practices. We landed where dogs are part of the labour force. We land in the rodeo and its heritages around animal rights problems. We land in many temporalities. We land in what Harriet Ritvo (1987) wrote about so well in *Animal Estate*, or in what Sarah Franklin called 'breed wealth' and in contemporary breeding practices. (quoted in Gane, 2006, 145).

In contemporary society, contrary to Haraway, pets or companion animals are often considered as compromised and degraded beings. Tom Regan (2004), argues that animals, as living beings, cannot be regarded as a means to an end: whether killed for meat or kept for human companionship. However, Haraway's concept of 'companion species' as opposed to 'companion animals' offers a space to dwell in to figure out how to live 'well' with the crowd that we are. Our (Snæbjörnsdóttir/ Wilson's) project *(a)fly* can be defined as an experiment in species boundaries. It is a transformation of the domestic space and a sort of a deconstruction of the space 'home'.

Erica Fudge (2002b) raises the question of whether a pet can be considered an animal. Fudge defines the pet as different from other non-human-animals, as it lives with us humans in our homes. She proposes that, through anthropomorphism, pets can be considered both human and animal. Through an individual name, an animal is separated from 'wild' animals. There is a question mark as to whether this specifically refers to the understanding of urban human animal dwellers, as it is a known fact that farmers would name each individual in their flock or herd of, for example, sheep or cows, without it changing their status as domestic animals. We (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) have conducted research for a project (still not realized) in which we photographed around 500 individual sheep in Iceland simultaneously recording the 'name' the farmer had given each one. In the British Animal Studies Network seminar I attended on 28th of July 2007 in London, Fudge referred to a mouse that inhabited her kitchen and how, after giving it a name, territorial boundaries broke down, making co-habitation much easier – at least on the part of Fudge. Although this could be seen as anthropomorphism in action, it also highlights the positive use of empathy in relation to inhabiting Haraway's space of the meeting of companion species.

The notion of space or territory is something we (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) continue to be interested in. In other research (2007–2008) undertaken on urban foxes in the city of Glasgow, we gathered the following reports of complaints made by members of the public to staff at Glasgow City Council:

- Den in garden, 5 bold foxes. Neighbour worried about cat as the foxes chase it up to cat flap.
- Den under garden shed.
- Can't sleep due to noisy foxes.
- Digging in garden. Owner scared of the foxes and of letting children play in the garden.
- Being nuisance in garden.
- Den in neighbour's garden, foxes using his garden.

- Scared of foxes when meeting them on road (particularly at night – 8pm onwards).
- In area chasing cats, worried about safety of pets in area. Seven foxes living in his garden.
- Lots of foxes causing general disturbance.
- Foxes digging in garden. Owner put sand down to try to deter them but hasn't worked. Scared about letting grandson out.
- Fox in garden, scared will attack the cat.
- Foxes digging under patio and becoming unstable. Want to stop foxes before making any repairs.
- Fox sleeping at her front door, inside storm door. Lots of digging in back garden.
- Foxes under decking.

The research for this project, similarly to that about Icelandic sheep mentioned above, awaits further development and execution. Some of it did however spill over into *Uncertainty in the City* – the project we have been working on for the Storey Gallery in Lancaster, to be completed in summer 2009. This short list of complaints demonstrates for us the fears we (humans) nurture of the 'unknown' and how cultural myths have constructed geographical biographies of accepted human and animal cohabitation. Faced with the contradictory and often conflicting responses, like those above, we are forced to examine our own cultural make-up and the way we find ourselves simultaneously held and repelled, in a matrix comprising many threads including instinct, folklore, tradition, civilization, and now environmental consciousness.

I am interested in the meeting of the animal/human – the jamming of two worlds in a contact zone that is a site for creative thinking and the pushing of the boundaries of thought. The term 'contact zone' is borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt (1992). Pratt has explained that the word 'contact' here relates to 'contact language', which in linguistics is a term used for languages in flux like those developed by different native speakers to communicate with each other, typically and historically in relation to trade (Pratt, 1992). In such a situation, specific languages become fluid and may even cease to exist. In hunting, during a

moment of confrontation, a space is created which precludes the useful application of language. In the context of the 'natural' environment, 'nature' and 'culture' merge together into one space, one zone. Haraway (1997) introduced the hybrid made out of a machine and an organism, being simultaneously real and a fiction: the cyborg. Although Haraway has today moved away from the cyborg, this important work opened up a new way of understanding what is understood to be 'natural'. In a powerful revelation of dominant hierarchical rules, Haraway charted a binary of words. One chart, being deeply embedded in Western cultural consciousness and the other, the product of what, she refers to as "scary new networks" (Haraway, 1991, 161). The result is that through seeing the new list (Population control, Genetic engineering, etc) the old list of words (Eugenics, Sex, etc) is no longer accessible in the same way as before. The cyborg, as seen by Haraway, thus not only becomes a hybrid of nature and culture, but transcends both: it is neither one nor the other, but is constituted by elements of each and as such simultaneously puts the traditional meanings of nature and culture into question. One of the boundary breakdowns between human and animal in the formation of the cyborg is the development of transgenic organisms, where the idea of genetic integrity of the organism is destablized. (Haraway, 1991).

Transgenic animals raise questions about species and their identity and more to the point, who controls or defines that identity. To unravel this, there must be clarity in the definition of species and furthermore a clarity in respect of where a transgenic animal is located within that definition. Who – or perhaps 'what' – is seen as providing a species' identity? Laboratory animals are principally represented through historical standardization (as representatives of their species and not as individuals) in which there has been, as pointed out by Haraway, a shift from a naturalistic to an analytic animal (in terms of scientists' perception of them). The particularities of any one analytical animal are in fact both abstract and invisible. In the production of lab animals, social and political negotiation is central to the constitution of the economic, political and cultural spaces through which the transgenic animals can circulate, and to the ontological forms they take.

One route towards defining the identity of lab animals has been through genetics. The *Washington Post* reported on February 13th (Weiss, 2005), in a court case in the US, where a patent for a part-human hybrid invented by Stuart Newman was turned down on the grounds that it was too closely related to human to be patentable. Paradoxically, the 'inventor' of this hybrid, if successful, had had no intention of exercising this patent for ownership of production rights. The whole purpose of applying for a patent was ethical – to prevent others from doing the same. Another topic to consider in this query of species identity is morphology and genetic modification. Many patents have been granted which 'humanize' animals – leaving it an open question at what point is something 'too human'. It seems that as long as there are no changes to the external look of the animal, genetic modifications are not considered a challenge to human/animal species boundaries. This is interesting, considering that pigs are now being specially bred to grow organs for humans. Franklin (2006) has traced the history of Dolly the sheep and the media frenzy that made her the landmark animal she was. The year before Dolly, scientists Ian Wilmut and Bob Edwards had cloned two sheep called Megan and Morag from embryonic sheep grown in the lab. The media initially showed interest, but simultaneously the press were also covering with greater priority the story of a shopkeeper in Dunblane, who shot dead 16 primary school children and their teacher before killing himself. Details of this incident filled newspapers and television for weeks. However, when they finally reported the birth of Dolly, the scientists thought that the phenomenon had already been documented and were completely unprepared for the attention that followed (S. Franklin, 2006).

Some regulations have been passed about the rights of laboratory animals. These regulations vary internationally, but in the UK, a lab animal has the right to exercise 'normal behaviour'. An EEC regulation states that;

> (a) all experimental animals shall be provided with housing, an environment, at least some freedom of movement, food, water and care which are appropriate to their health and well-being. (EEC, 1986, 5)

A recommendation for new, much more detailed legislation is currently being processed (EUR-Lex, 2007). The environment is formative in the behaviour pattern of any animal and there is a question mark over what can constitute normal behaviour for a lab animal. How can this be fairly assessed for an animal that has been brought up in an environment totally alien to the species to which it belongs? When working with pest control agents in the city of Lancaster for *Uncertainty in the City,* our attention was drawn to a rather unusual urban animal or 'pest', which had been given the name 'cable bug'. The complainants reported symptoms of itchy legs with small red marks, seemingly identical to those of some biting insects – the typical environment was the urban office, usually an office environment with a combination of numerous computers and artificial carpet material. The fact that the cable bug has no biology is clearly no obstacle to its being identified (by means of its effect on humans) as 'animal'. This indicates an instability in the terms used for classification.

Our art projects try to explore this relational space by exploring the multiplicity of contacts between non-human and human animals. Under these circumstances, a possibility exists for creating new (hybrid) meanings, at the same time as acknowledging discrete languages (perspectives, systems) which may be under threat. It is part of a process of creation that brings together physicality and linguistic exchange in and through representations: images, texts and objects. Animals challenge familiar human patterns of language and representation; their movement challenges our logic. Deleuze suggested that:

> Representation has only a single centre, a unique and receding perspective and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything, but mobilizes and moves nothing. Movement, for its part, implies a plurality of centers, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments, which essentially distort representation[1] (Deleuze, 1994, 55-56).

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1 Quote used by Ron Broglio, at a lecture delivered at British Animal Studies Network Seminar on 28th July 2007 and thus drew it to my attention.

For these reasons and others our practice is not representational, as it deliberately establishes a multiplicity of perspectives and presents multiple viewpoints. As a communicative act, our works are fluid and not solid; fragile but not fragmented. Michel Serres refers to museum collections in order to define how to read the fragmented; proposing that it exists in self-defense, looking in on itself. In this idea fragility, however, we find weakness, which exists at the border of nothing – the space between life and death, enabling the birth of what Serres calls "the third and the fourth worlds" (M. Serres & Latour, 1995, 123).

Ron Broglio has advocated that the solution to understanding animals as 'others' may lie in the spaces of difference, rather than in the translatability of one world to another and the possible means of exchange in these fractured zones. He believes that the key is in the interaction of 'surfaces'; that we have hitherto placed animals on the surface, whilst we/humans consider ourselves as having an interior depth of thought. By transferring the centre of human thought from the interior to the surface in the creation of combined animal/human states, metaphysical privileges are flattened and the ground from which assaults are being directed towards the animal 'others' is tumbled. Art, as a method of transferring the subjective into the objective, supplies a unique and valuable contribution to this debate. It is through art, with its processes of friction and the unseemly, that boundaries may be broken down.

In relation to this study and the writing for this thesis I have considered the use of the English words 'confrontation' and 'encounter'. There is a subtle but important difference. The Oxford English Dictionary (O.E.D, 1998, 386) defines 'being confronted' as "a problem, difficulty, etc which presents itself to someone so that dealing with it cannot be avoided" whereas 'encounter with' is defined as "to meet someone unexpectedly". The difference lies in the different nature of passage – in confrontation there is often a feeling of no escape, whereas an encounter may generally be more open-ended and casual, like the encounter between Derrida and his cat, mentioned earlier. The word confrontation can easily be associated with violence and ultimately with death – it is a charged moment, often a point of no return. In my research, I am interested in the 'death' or

'eclipse' of the animal through its representation in lens-based media and consequently the meeting point of nature and culture. The word 'confrontation' continues to be appropriate. In *nanoq: flat out and bluesome*, confrontation was important. It invoked the atmosphere of colonial hunting, in which foreignness, size and aggression of the hunted animal contributed to the reputation awarded to the hunter. Inuits have a long tradition of stories and myths suggesting great affinity with the polar bear. If one considers parallels in their adaptation to habitat and the similarity of their snow-dwellings through the ages this emphasis is understandable. The Inuits have the greatest respect for any good hunter, and this includes the polar bear. To understand the respect that is applied to this animal, one has to know how the polar bear hunts and the skill and patience that is applied. It is similar to how a vulnerable, lone man sits at a breathing hole, in the middle of the white arctic seascape and waits for a seal. The intensity and applied listening, both for the sounds from underneath the ice and the steps on the ice, must be very acute. These, according to Barry Lopez (1986), are moments that keep alive traditional culture's models of esteem:

> To encounter the bear, to meet it with your whole life, was to grapple with something personal. The confrontation occurred on a serene, deadly, and elevated plain. If you were successful you found something irreducible within yourself, like a seed. To walk away was to be alive, utterly. To be assured of your own life, the life of your kind, in a harsh land where life took insight and patience and humour. It was to touch the bear. It was a gift from the bear (Lopez, 1986, 110).

As taxidermic specimens were prepared in order to aggrandize the hunter, their animal trophies were constructed in aggressive poses often stretched beyond the normal height of the animal 'donor'. Similarly, in early photography, a photographer would sometimes place himself in positions of close confrontation with a charging animal, only for it to be shot down by a colleague (out of picture) a moment after the camera shutter was released.

Certain species of animals have not disappeared suddenly – their elimination has been a slow process now evident in human consumption, environmental destruction, and even taxidermic collections. Bruno Latour refers to this as the "modernist constitution" (quoted in Brydon, 2006, 228). This is the ideological effort of modern thought to divide the spheres of nature and culture for the purposes of control by man. With the help of Latour, Brydon puts forward the claim that science is used to control nature and politics to control culture. Although spaces of hybrid relations are formed during the processes of these discourses, when it comes to decision making they are kept apart. Much of this can be traced back to modernism and the total belief in the ability of science to hold the key to controlling nature. This, as Brydon points out, is clearly demonstrated in the workings of the IWC (International Whaling Committee), where each member state has a representative deciding on laws and regulations concerning whaling. It is however only selected scientists that put forward what is considered value-free 'scientific evidence' for IWC members to build 'political' arguments and make decisions concerning whaling. Members thus challenge the different scientific decisions, but never the ability of science to speak on behalf of nature.

Similar examples can be found in political debates surrounding fox hunting in the UK, as well as in many other Western countries where science is used to represent or speak on behalf of an animal. Certain animal practices are being used to sustain power relations between dominant groups and ethnic minority immigrant groups. Elder, Wolch, & Emel (1998) describe a court case in the US, which focused on how the treatment of animals or the context of that treatment is used to devalue the groups involved. One of the cases they highlight is of four Latino men, who "immobilized a deer with a spotlight, shot the animal in the throat, and loaded the struggling animal into the trunk of a car" (Elder et al., 1998, 76). Once back in town they happened to be pulled over by police who upon opening the boot found the deer still alive. Despite emergency veterinary treatment, the deer died. All the men were arrested and one served a one-year sentence in jail. In the aftermath, a picture of all four men identified by their names appeared in the *Los*

Angeles Times (Elder et al., 1998, 89). The caption labels them as 'killers' instead of 'hunters'. Their appearance was used to distinguish them from the 'normal' white male sport hunters, as they were not wearing hunting gear, nor driving a truck. The purpose of their hunt was not to 'shoot to kill' but to 'shoot to eat'. Their necessity however was ignored. For anyone finding it difficult to advocate unnecessary pain caused to a living being, the animal suffering in this case blurs any single ethical standpoint. However, if we set aside the argument of the 'right to kill' a living being and look at this case in the context of other 'legalized' killings of animals, what unfolds is the construction in this instance of immigrants as uncivilized and preposterous 'others'. Conversely, in the case of the killing of the polar bear that arrived in Iceland in June 2008 (discussed in the chapter on *Communing),* the marksmen who shot the polar bear 'in the back' so to speak, (as it was running away from its aggressors), were portrayed as protectors from the dangerous 'other'. The fact that the polar bear was running towards the sea, where Icelandic law clearly forbids the killing of a polar bear (Alþingi Íslands, 1994) was never raised as a counter argument.

By examining specific human animal relationships and the historical shifts and adjustments in these relationships that have accrued, a legacy of inconsistencies and contradictions in our approach to animals is revealed. Parallel to these contradictions, the development of our art practice has been predicated on an awareness of how art, by locating itself within the space 'between' tropes, might nudge at and dissolve notional borders, cut into those preconceived ideas and possibly make contact with the 'other' side.

II. MAPPING

On this lovely morning we've all gathered together in my car to check our northern border. This part of the area is steep and we have to ascend from 325m to 500m above sea level, so although it's early in the day we all get sweaty. Whilst we're there, we notice a newly-cleared area close to our border. This might change the pattern of movement for the elk when coming from the east or west. Whilst we discuss this, I take notes and propose a new position for a shooting stand. We give it the name Holger-pass in acknowledgement of the owner of the newly-cut land. To mark the position of the new stand Hasse nails an orange sign onto a nearby dead pine tree. With this done we head eastward to the north-east corner of our hunting ground. There an old stand needs some clearing to give a better view for a shoot. We split the job between us according to the tools at hand. Kerstin uses the branch-saw and Hasse and I have axes and smaller bow saws. Kim stays at the stand-position and gives us orders on what to take away in order to have optimal sight in two directions. This makes us sweat again and when we're done, we sit in the sun and drink coffee and eat a sandwich.

On the second day we climb our second mountain, Rädklitt. It's not as high as Kolberget where we started yesterday, but more steep. Here we discover another new clearing, but outside our area. Even though it's outside it will affect the way the elk moves and therefore our hunt. I take notes for a revised map. We have to move our old stand (called Bärschens) about 100 meters east. Arriving on top of Rädklitt after some hours we admire the sight and have a long discussion on what implications the changes this new clearing might have on our hunt. The immediate effect will be to change the elk-movements and their tracks but in the long run this will mean more winter food for the elk. Young pine tree needles are the main food for elk during winter and a full-grown animal eats around 12 kilos of needles a day!

This year we found a new stand position on newly-made tractor tracks. This is really nice because it makes it possible to abandon a really boring and bad stand along the road to Fryksås, which goes through our hunting area. Although, the traffic on this road isn't that

heavy during the hunting period, it's difficult to negotiate with any outside traffic where a hunt's concerned, making this stand a bad and undesirable location to be posted. Beside this road there is a small beck and a creek called Rädan. It runs from north to south through our area and this site's very promising for us. The forest environment along Rädan is like a nature reserve. It's wild, untouched and dark, full of old spruce trees with fallen and dead wood. We know for a fact that 'our' elk likes this place. There are several elk tracks that follow the water all the way through the area. Rädan is also what divides our area into its western and eastern parts.

Coming home I start adding to and changing our map. It is something I do using [the image-manipulation programme] Photoshop. For the bottom layer I use an aerial photo, bought from the National Land Survey. On different layers I have borders, stands, salt stones, roads, Rädan and so on. Since last year I've also divided the map area into a coordinate system with thin white lines for exact positioning when we're communicating by radio. This is especially useful for Hasse with his dog, who covers a lot of ground and can use it to give us exact coordinates on his current position and also for his ordering us to reposition if something special happens. For instance he may say: "Göran, go to R15, the leftmost corner", and then we all know. When we meet in October I will have updated copies for everyone. (Boardy, 2008)

Travelling through Space and Place

When research for a new work of art begins, it is often followed by an invitation to a site. This site, which more than often is not an art gallery, is a place that has its own history and culture and its own specific relationships to other social and political structures. This was the case in the beginning of *(a)fly,* when researching an initial site for the unrealised version of the project in Castlemilk in Glasgow and subsequently for the actual project in Reykjavík. It happened for *seal,* in the sense that it generated a multiplicity of layers, as the work derives from several specific sites in Iceland but will be placed into another and altogether different environment. For *nanoq: flat out and bluesome,* although the site for the execution of the work was not that qualitatively different to the site of research [from a museum of natural history to a contemporary art gallery], in such a complex project it nevertheless engendered a a wide range of contextual references. Furthermore, the subject was already far removed from its geographical place of origin, the arctic.

Our understanding of 'place' has changed a lot through the last decade. In that time, flying, as a mode of travel has become economically accessible for a greater number of people. There is a downside to this, as while we move between places and argue over the seriousness of global warming, the threat escalates before our eyes in part as a result of our very mobility. Our appreciations of places change, as travelling north might not necessarily mean experiencing the cold climate previously associated with the area. The patterns of flora and fauna continue to evolve, whilst still we engage in ideological wars over the 'rightness' of so-called 'native' species.

Not so long ago, it was thought that our sense of place came from the inside, through a common understanding of nature, culture, history and ideology (Berger, 1991). An 'unknown' place was supposed to instigate uncertainty, anxieties, unfamiliarity and foreignness, while the

place that feels like 'home' gives one stability, calmness and familiarity (Lippard, 1997). It is worth considering the experience of those 'few' who maintain an historical relationship to a place, sometimes through generations, in these changing times. We (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) have for some time made a home in the middle of a farming community in the north of England. In this small community, you are not considered local unless you were born in the small district of Bewcastle. Local history and genealogy are prominent issues that give identity and lend the hardship of farming the rough local hills a sense of purpose. In the summer of 2008, the landscape was dramatically changed by heavy rain. Fully-grown grass, already beginning to yellow lay flattened, like a carpet, over the fields. Cattle and sheep created mud-fields in their enclosures. A neighbouring farmer told us that this kind of rain had not come at this time of year, in this area, since he and his father could remember – for almost a century.

Nowadays, most agree that an attachment to a place cannot come from the innate qualities of that place, but that it is in our relationships with it that such feelings about it are established. This puts the focus on us and our sense or ability to 'receive' a place. We recognize this, without realizing that often we don't have the tools to see otherwise. There is no point in going back to old models of spatial understanding and awareness. We have to move forward and take on the painful proposition that it is through 'being out of place', that we can attempt to develop new perceptual and cognitive skills in order to map the new spaces in which we are now living. Space is no longer defined in modernist terms through architecture, but through networks of systems of communications (Kwon, 2004, 35). Miwon Kwon talks about 'right' and 'wrong' places and that it is time to consider the 'wrong' place as the 'right' place.

In most of our art projects, finding a way of understanding a 'site' is part of a conceptual development from a 'site' to a 'place'. This primary and often quite basic research is hugely important to our projects. At the same time as we recognize that we as artists are most likely 'outsiders' in the locality we are working with, understanding the structures and contexts that weave together the community is crucial for finding a way to interlace our process of making and/or executing the artwork. Although

intangible, we regard many of the political and social structures that we work with as the type of spatial terms defined by Doreen Massey (2005) as a product of interrelations, predicated upon the existence of plurality and continually under construction.

> We are always, inevitably, making spaces and places. The temporary cohesions of articulations of relations, the provisional and partial enclosures, the repeated practices which chisel their way into being established flows, these spatial forms mirror the necessary fixings of communication and identity (Massey, 2005, 175).

The contexts that we worked with, in the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project, the *(a)fly* project, and in the *seal* project, have all in their separate ways come together in the creation of communities around the projects. For these, the presence of the artist(s), in the form of physical contact is crucial. Electronic communication and telephone conversation are important in terms of planning and organization of such lengthy projects, but it was only after meeting those concerned in person that actions were approved and instigated. There are two different ways in which these relations have manifested themselves in our art projects. In *(a) fly,* the meeting with relevant communities and professionals became instrumental in the development of the project and its outcome. The idea of the random survey, used in the project was a direct response to a unique local situation. Similarly the photographic works, depicting an animal dwelling and consequently the absence of a non-human animal, derived directly out of information gathered during site visits.

The project *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* is a good example of the importance of the meeting and physical contact between the artists and professionals on one hand and the artists and members of the community on the other. The tracking down of zoology specimens from all over the UK, and seeking permission to photograph and borrow them, was a time-consuming and costly undertaking. During the process of mapping polar bear specimens in the UK, we agreed to an employee from the Spike Island gallery taking on some of the work by following up the tracking of specimens and conducting some initial negotiations with zoology

curators. This, we as the artists quickly learned, was detrimental to the artistic development of the project. It was not just about surrendering power and maintaining control over the project, but more importantly about losing cohesion in the interrelations that were instrumental in the chiselling out of a variety of forms that were crucial to the practice and the project. In a similar way to the cognitive development that occurs through the process of making for many artists, for us the process of negotiation and communication highlighted attention to important details that gradually contributed to the overall conceptual and formal construction of the project, simultaneously reinforcing our conviction in the project as a work of art.

Right from the beginning we received crucial support from key zoology curators, amongst them the then editor of *NatSCA,* who invited us to publish an article on the project in their newsletter (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2003). This broke down boundaries with other museum curators and helped to instil trust in our activity and in us as professionals. Lucy Byatt, then artistic director of Spike Island, was behind the project right from the beginning. Her support, together with the contacts we had made in respective museums, was instrumental in us being able to secure the loaning of specimens for the exhibition. In one instance we were even able to inform the newly established curator of a museum of a polar bear specimen in his own collection, its existence having been brought to our attention in a conversation with another zoology curator who had taken an interest in the project. The project thus not only took information out of the museum to the public, but also instigated communication and flow of information between the museums themselves.

Later, as a result of the exhibition in the Horniman Museum and the subsequent launch of the publication *nanoq: flat out and bluesome, A Cultural Life of Polar Bears,* (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b) numerous people have contacted us, having taken on our role in identifing stuffed polar bears in their locality.

nanoq: flat out and bluesome

In 2001, we travelled to Greenland for 3 months on a Nordic Institute For Contemporary Art residency in Qaqortoq with a view to gaining insight into some of the contexts from which the subject of our enquiry – the polar bear – derives. Our intention was to do fieldwork and explore affinities between the people and animals that inhabit this often hostile environment. Halfway through our stay we travelled by boat with people from Qaqortoq in the south to Ilulissat, north of the Arctic Circle. This was an eye-opening trip, as it gave us a great sense of the distances involved in this enormous country and the smallness and isolation of the communities scattered along the west coast. During our stay in Greenland we did not see any live polar bears, but then again neither did we do anything to seek them out. We did however see polar bear skulls and various polar bear skin artefacts for sale in community shops. The iconic power of the polar bear is very visible and it is not uncommon to see the head of the animal carved in bone around people's necks – it is after all a polar bear that is Greenland's coat of arms. This was the start of our interest in the significance of the live polar bear, as the absent subject of our research.

Back in the United Kingdom, we began to explore the representation of this animal by searching for stuffed polar bears in public or private biology or zoology collections in the British Isles. Over a period of intensive work between 2001 and 2002, one hundred and fifty seven public and private collections were identified and contacted by telephone or email. Most locations were identified from the Museum Yearbook 2001. Some 'locations' came to light in public lectures given during the process of the project, or from published articles. Every possible location was recorded and given a card in our red plastic filing box. Gradually, the cards were divided into two files, for 'yes' and 'no'. Those who had been identified with a polar bear, were contacted in a second round to arrange permission to photograph in situ. The country was split geographically into areas and, when time and budget allowed, we combed through each area as systematically as we could, photographing, gathering documents and networking with zoology keepers, looking for further information. After 5 years of part-time

research we found forty-one stuffed polar bear in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Seven came to light after the publicity surrounding the project's exhibition that coincided with the launch of the publication of the book in London, as mentioned above. The thirty-four that are part of the initial survey were found in Exeter, Bristol (2), London (2), Dover, Tring, Leicester, Norwich, Suffolk (2), Sheffield, Manchester, Worcester, Somerset, Liverpool, Rawtenstall, Halifax, Hull, Leeds, Kendal, Masham, Sunderland, Newcastle, Edinburgh (2), Glasgow (3), Blair Atholl, Fyvie, Peterhead, Dublin and Belfast.

In an attempt to understand what these stuffed bodies represented we included the individual historical references of the polar bears sought in our search. This research on the bears' provenances revealed diverse routes through which the polar bears were collected:

> In the entrance to Somerleyton Hall in Norfolk in England two large bears stand on either side of the doorway. The bears were shot, by the first Lord Somerleyton, Sir Savile Crossley, in 1897 on an expedition to Wiches Land, east of Spitzbergen in Svalbard. In all, 55 polar bears were shot. Two were brought back alive, one of which is thought to have lived for several years (probably at Regents Park Zoo). The current specimens, were mounted by the taxidermist Rowland Ward of London, along with a third, which was presented to Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery. In addition to the above, several polar bear skulls and skins were also brought back. A newspaper cutting describes a talk given by Sir Savile Crossley about his Spitzbergen trip: "Then as to bears, of which there were enormous numbers, they subsist mostly on seals, though at times nothing comes amiss to them, and they will devour grass, fish or man with equal gusto. Seals often lie on the ice with their heads hanging over the water. Bears drop in and paddle along the ice edge with only a white head like a drifting ice floe to be seen until they are near the seal's projecting head; or they lie outside the round holes which seals make in the ice ready to knock them over the head with their paws when they rise. The general method of shooting bears is to stalk them, but they may be found occasionally in the round beds they make in the snow, or may be decoyed by a man lying on his back and waving his legs in the air, in which case, after getting his wind, they come

slowly at first but with a final rush on what they imagine to be their prey" (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b, 123).

By contrast, the polar bear in the Ulster Museum didn't meet his end in his arctic landscape environment, but in confinement at Belfast Zoo:

> The polar bear (named Peter), was donated to the Museum, by Belfast Zoo in the early 1970s. He was 25 years old when he was destroyed after failing to settle with two new bears at the Zoo. The bear was tranquillized using darts and finally given a lethal injection by the Head of the Biology Department there. A number of stories describe how he is thought to have recovered and either 'rampaged' through the Museum or at least alarmed security guards by moving noisily about the freezer to which he had been taken. David Erwin, who worked at the Ulster Museum in the 1970s, provides a more accurate account of what happened: Belfast Zoo wanted to get rid of 'Peter', a 25 year old polar bear, because he wasn't mixing well socially with two new bears the Zoo had just bought. They contacted the Ulster Museum who said that they would be interested in having the bear if it was put down with drugs instead of a bolt gun through the head, mainly to preserve the skull. According to the Ulster Museum any animal that is found dead or washed ashore is crown property and the museum gets first option of claiming. Joe Gracey [Head of the Biology Department at Belfast Zoo] fired numerous darts into Peter's hide until he keeled over, the animal was then given a lethal injection. It took ten men to lift Peter into a van, which then headed for the museum. En route they were stopped by an army patrol at Carlisle Circus who made them get out when they claimed they had a polar bear in the back. The army searched the van but promptly let them go because they believed the animal was still alive. Peter's cadaver was loaded into the freezer at the museum. This was the point where paranoia began to set in. Mr Erwin teased the security men about the bear before he left to go home that evening. A series of miscommunications ensued later that night. The guards phoned the head of the museum to report the bear was still alive. The head of the museum attempted to contact Joe Gracey who was not at home that night. His wife contacted the Police and an APB was put out across the city for Gracey to contact the museum. There happened to be an international press conference at the Europa Hotel

> and when they heard the story a pack of journalists from papers such as the Washington Post and Der Spiegel rushed to the museum. The next morning Gracey informed all that Peter had been dead and would remain dead for the foreseeable future (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b, 98).

Of the thirty-four polar bears in our survey, seven came from zoos, namely from Belfast, Bristol (2), Edinburgh, Glasgow (2) and Sheffield. All of these were put down due to behaviour problems, apart from a cub in Glasgow Zoo that was stillborn. The environment of a zoo, however elaborate, is completely unsuited to the 'nature' of a polar bear. The biggest factor in this is their need to roam long distances and their sense of physical territory, which is incompatible with an existence in an already small confined space. When we visited Mercedes, the polar bear in Edinburgh Zoo[2], a few years ago, she was in a temporary enclosure; a cage twice her length with a small opening at the back to another chamber for privacy. Her normal enclosure in the zoo was being modified to install a platform which, it was hoped, would encourage the polar bear to stamp with her front paws, thus imitating a natural action when breaking ice for hunting seal. The box or the platform was designed so that if the polar bear pushed on it a dead salmon would 'leap' out of the box into the water at the bottom of the enclosure. The modern zoo wants to tell us about the natural world and demonstrate our relationship to it. Its designers want to tell stories of ecology and conservation and use the animal in the zoo to help connect the viewer to similar animals living in the wild. This means that the zoo animal is both representing itself and carrying the significance of the entire species in a place that they would never normally inhabit (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 2002). The relationship between humans and zoo animals is far removed from observing animals in their natural environment. Visitors to a zoo expect the animal in front of them to entertain them or perform for them.

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2 The book, *nanoq: flat out and bluesome, A Cultural Life of Polar Bears* is dedicated to Mercedes, the last living polar bear in a zoo in Britain.

Twenty-eight of the polar bears in the initial survey were located in museums or public institutions, and six in private collections. The seven polar bears that came to light after the book was published are mostly in private collections. One of those seven was part of an auction in Yorkshire in August 2008 and we do not know the purchaser. Although we know the other six to be in private homes, we have not researched the provenances of these bears nor have we photographed them. The information that we have was sent to us by the owners of the bears or by polar bear enthusiasts who noticed them in their current locations.

One of the things we noticed when doing the site visits to photograph specimens 'in situ' was the difference in attitude by the many museums to their own collections. This was evident by the location of the polar bear specimens within the museum and from the condition they were in. Some specimens occupied pride of place in the collection, while others were hidden away in storage. This is not unusual for museum specimens as only a fragment of most collections is on display at any one time. Concern and discomfort came from seeing the condition of many individual specimens in storage and the way they were stored, which seemed to be in stark contrast to conservation policies required and honoured by the museums when we approached them for their loan. What the priorities and values were in each collection was discovered in conversations with respective museum staff. One museum had a polar bear specimen dating back to 1904, which was used to represent old disregarded objects in an attic display of Victorian junk. Museums apply taxonomy to classify and order its collection of 'nature'. In line with modernist approaches, this was considered an objective and scientific way to represent and inform the public about the natural environment. Order and 'enlightenment' were bestowed on a 'specimen' within a museum collection, by means of a careful and typically chauvinistic contextualization and taxonomy. This meant that the specimens were often displayed in aggressive poses in acknowledgement of their 'wild' being, which was in contrast to the nature of their actual killing as many of the provenances reveal. This portrayed 'wildness' of the bear as a hunter has a deep resonance with many people and embodies further symbolism of our perceptions of the 'wild'. The function of hunting in reinforcing

these perceptions is mobilised once again in this thesis by means of the insertion of extracts from the hunter's diary as preface to the chapters.

Reversing the roles of humans and animals is a well-known method of representation in the world of museums, where mammals would often be grouped in conventional family groups, with the male displayed as the protector of the family and the female holding and/or attending to the young. Despite many museums having had an overhaul with emphasis on audience and outreach strategies, not much has changed when it comes to the collections of specimens for zoology and natural history museums. For the contemporary study of zoology, this type of collection is not the primary resource to enhance knowledge, at least not in the way it used to be, nor is it acknowledged as a valuable way of learning about these species. To study a specimen from a zoology collection is today more likely on closer observation to tell us something about the history and the knowledge humans had at the time of the death of the animal concerned. There is no longer a need to go to the museum to see representations of exotic animals. For years, a trip to the zoo fulfilled that desire, providing us with living animals in contained spaces for our scrutiny. Today we have excellent natural history programmes that easily fit the whole life cycle of an animal from birth to death into a half-hour programme. Those animals, which are considered extinct, are brought back to life using animatronics, manipulated and controlled by humans (Davis, 2000).

In the process of the research, we (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) were aware of losing a few bears during the period 2001–2004. These include one that was observed standing outside a demolition ground in Glasgow. When we went to photograph it, the demolition company had meanwhile gone into receivership and we were unable to establish what became of the bear. There was also a polar bear in Potter's Museum of Curiosities, which was sold by Bonhams in 2003 as lot no. 616 – (asking price £5,000 – £7,000). It went to an anonymous bidder for £3,290. Then there was the polar bear we heard of in Alderman Richard Hallam School (Leicester), with glowing red lights instead of eyes. Although we contacted the school, we were unable to speak to anyone who was prepared to confirm its having been there.

Our initial purpose with the provenances was to give individuality to each specimen and to counteract the bears' normal role in the museum collections, where it is merely a token representative of its species. By undertaking this task we hoped to unearth a series of narratives, anecdotes and fragments arising directly from the provenances of individual bears. It was our belief that these histories would provide insight into a rich and celebrated epoch of exploration, learning and discovery. Bear mounts survive in UK private and public collections, dating from the late 18th century to modern times. Their arrival on British shores was the result of the commissions for specimens (dead) in order to supply museums; acquisitions of hunting expeditions as trophy souvenirs with machismo cachet; the commissioning of live specimens to supply zoos; and the coincidental acquisition of skins as a consequence of other types of expedition etc. The polar bear provenances, the gathering of which required so much effort, often tell shocking stories of violent and machismo colonization in the name of science. These were introduced into the project, as an intended bridge between the past and the current environments of these animals. 'Nature' does become 'culture' and our access to it is mediated through the text. The cultural life of these bears marks their history and its intertwining with human history.

The *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project, was in this way instrumental in bringing to light and gathering together information that was otherwise fragmented, not accessible or documented, and could easily have been lost forever. Examples of this can be found in the cases of the information we uncovered about the provenances of the cub in Glasgow, the polar bears at the National Museum and Galleries on Merseyside, and the Natural History Museum in London. The provenances for the National Museum of Ireland and for Manchester Museum were researched and put together especially for the purposes of this project, from existing, but obscure documentation. Sensitivity surrounds those polar bears in zoos (Bristol Zoo Gardens, Edinburgh Zoological Gardens) and although information might exist in their respective records, it is not publicly accessible. Furthermore, through our exhibition of photographic artworks, the project has instigated new

research, reconstruction and documentation at other museums e.g. the Horniman[3] and the Bristol Museum and Art Galleries.

(a)fly

The project *(a)fly* was realized in Reykjavík, Iceland, as part of Reykjavík's International Art Festival in 2006. To be precise, it was located in an inner city area geographically defined by the catchment area of an established primary and secondary school called Austurbæjarskóli, that is the area bounded by the streets Lækjargata, Hringbraut, Snorrabraut, and Skúlagata. The area has a rich mix of private residences, commercial businesses and public institutions. The main Lutheran church Hallgrímskirkja is located in the area, together with an indoor swimming pool (Sundhöll Reykjavíkur), a health centre, the National Hospital, an alternative maternity hospital called Fæðingarheimilið, the National Theatre (Þjóðleikhúsið), the coach station BSÍ and at least one veterinary practice. An established park, Hljómskálagarður, is at the edge of this area, together with the famous inner city lake Tjörnin and its well documented birdlife. The area has a mixture of housing – old detached wooden/corrugated-iron houses, terraced houses built as individual working class flats, and blocks of flats for the elderly, together with special housing for the same, and luxury apartments for the newly-established, wealthy Icelandic 'upper' class.

(a)fly was initially researched in 2002 for *Reputations*, a public art programme, that commissioned research for the district of Castlemilk in Glasgow. As part of our working strategy we mapped the area through several site visits. Castlemilk has in the last couple of decades received considerable funding for regeneration and the visual arts.

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3 The Horniman Museum, in response to the exhibition "Great White Bear", investigated the disappearance of their own polar bear, last seen on the back of a rag-and-bone man's cart sometime in the 1940s. Although the bear has not been found, the Museum has received material that they are looking at including a contact with the son of the rag-and-bone man.

Our early research and proposal relied on some of the methodologies of community projects, that is the developed relations between an artist, a community, and a social issue (Kwon, 2002). The social issue, in this instance pet-keeping, was however not only an issue, but also defined a small and hitherto unidentified community. What we wanted to do was to work with this community of pet keepers to create a photographic census of pets in Castlemilk. At the time of being invited to make a proposal for *Reputations*, the first set of polar bears for *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* had already been photographed in situ and the gathering of information, regarding their cultural life had been set in motion. An inspired engagement with space, through the exploration of time and place, was thus already a part of the practice. As an organization, *Reputations* set in motion (in co-operation with ourselves) a series of events designed to create awareness for the project and to place it in the local community. These included a photographic competition of animal images, and amongst other things, classes in dog grooming and pigeon fancying. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding, the project fell through. It was however, as evidenced above, realized in a renewed form in Reykjavík, Iceland.

The initial site research in Reykjavík, involved making contact with various institutions and individuals whose missions and ideas connected to the project and contributed in some way to its development. These were individuals in various departments of the city council – planning, environmental health, sustainable development, and pest control – as well as veterinary practices, a taxidermy workshop and pet shops. A motivation for the initial engagement with Austurbæjarskóli was that it might assist us with the placing of the project within the area defined – to create social awareness and foster links with the communities. The meetings with city council staff were very important in the development of the project. The initial contact was made to arrange access to a census, which would give us names and addresses of individuals living in the area. This proved more difficult than anticipated, due to privacy laws and regulations, but through the Planning Department we were able to get access to a high-resolution map of all properties in the area with visible property boundaries, street names and house numbers. Once

we had a record of the names and number of streets in the area, it became possible to estimate the numbers of households. The estimated number of individuals in the area was 7,350 and of these about 800 were children under seventeen years of age. It became evident that conducting a survey by going from house to house to locate pets would be too laborious and time-consuming for our means. A plan was set in motion to seek assistance to help in conducting the survey. Meetings were also organized with professional companies and consultancy services, whose business it is to conduct market research, questionnaires and surveys, in order to ensure the efficiency of the survey.

During this time, meetings were also arranged with the city council's Department of Environment and Health, to learn about official regulations regarding animals in the city and the implementation of these regulations. We were aware for example that it was forbidden to keep a dog in the city of Reykjavík, but an exemption could be applied for, if certain requirements were fulfilled (Umhverfisráðuneyti, 2002). The fee for a dog license is paid yearly and can be reduced, provided the owner has attended a course in dog management by a dog trainer approved by the city council. The dog also has to be vaccinated and wormed, micro-chipped and insured. In tenement buildings, all inhabitants in the building have to sign an agreement for a household to be able to keep a dog. There are clear regulations about where a dog can be on or off a lead in the city. All the main streets and squares in the old city centre – Bankastræti, Laugavegur to Rauðarárstígur, Lækjartorg, Austurstræti, Aðalstræti and Ingólfstorg – are no-dog areas. According to the regulations, this means that those living in these streets would find it difficult to keep a dog. Dogs are allowed to be off the lead in defined and named areas at the city periphery, as defined in article 15 in the dog regulations (Umhverfisráðuneyti, 2002, 15). If a dog is caught loose, its owner has to pay a considerable fine to get it back. Should the dog not be micro-chipped, it will be kept for one week only and after that it can be sold or given to a new owner if possible, or failing that, simply put down.

At this time in our project in 2005, a contested regulation was being adopted, which aimed to control cats in the city. Amongst other things, this new regulation (Umhverfisráðuneyti, 2005) obliged all cat owners to take a certain responsibility for their cats' behaviour, to micro-chip them and equip them with a collar bearing an address and telephone number. Also, any male cat over 6 months of age that is to be allowed to roam free outside of the home has to be neutered (Umhverfisráðuneyti, 2005, 4).

Pets are defined in a regulation issued by the Chief Veterinary Officer as dogs, cats, rabbits, rodents, caged birds and ornamental fish (Landbúnaðarráðuneyti, 2004). This narrow definition means that a number of other animals kept (unofficially as pets) in Iceland are illegal and are therefore to be destroyed if they are discovered by the authorities.

In *(a)fly,* the intention was to ask fundamental questions about what constitutes a 'pet' and to explore the constitution of identity through the legitimate process of identification, i.e. naming and registering. The idea was that the project would become a census of domestic animals living in households in the catchment area, so that a document would exist at the end of the project, connecting these non-human and human animals through a shared dwelling in an official document to be handed over to the National Registry. From conversations with the public it was clear that a number of animals in Reykjavík could be put in danger by our project if it was carried out as we had initially intended. Many owners do not register their dogs or cats and would therefore be hesitant about participating in the project, and owners of illegal pets would be putting these pets' lives in jeopardy if they were to disclose their names and addresses. At this stage we did not have direct proof of illegal pets, but later, when working with the children in Austurbæjarskóli, many references were made to animals other than those defined as legitimate pets by the Chief Veterinary Office. To begin the investigation we therefore relied on voluntary participation. We advertised the project on the web through SÍM (Union of Icelandic Artists) and also by posting a notice through the letterbox of every household in the catchment area. We also conducted a random survey over the telephone asking for names and information about animals occupying the household in question.

As described above, the project initially proposed was adapted through the research process to examine the rules and regulations regarding pets in the city of Reykjavík. This meant that we no longer felt conceptually obliged to photographically record only dwellings within the defined school catchment area. The methods we used to advertise or to invite participation resulted in responses over different periods of time. To find 'homes' for this photographic part of the project, various ways of advertising were applied. An initial letter introducing the project had gone home with all pupils in Austurbæjarskóli and later on a more detailed letter went out, explaining the project further and making parents aware that we were looking for places to photograph. A leaflet introducing the project and inviting participation was posted to all households in the catchment area and an advertisement was sent through selected internet mailing lists. Further contacts were established with selected homes by means of a random survey conducted over the telephone. All positive replies were compiled into lists of names and places, which we systematically collated. Once the list of people was compiled, we selected and negotiated with them which homes to visit and to photograph in a way that prioritized animal diversity in relation to the time available. This constituted a deviation from our approach in *nanoq: flat out and bluesome,* in which we did everything to track down every specimen and photographed all those found. Due to privacy laws, we were unable to follow up directly the homes of those pupils whom we had identified as having pets. We had to wait for the parents/guardians to come forward and contact us. Interestingly, only four households came forward in this way. This was unexpected and is perhaps to some extent a measure of how little parents are involved in the day-to-day school activity, but another reason might be the high number of immigrant families in the area and consequent difficulties of communication.

The response from the flyer, delivered to every household in the area, also took some time to be effective. The most effective method, in terms of time and direct response, was the circular we sent through various emailing lists. The final result from our enquiry and survey revealed altogether 64 non-human animals. The directory was subdivided into species as shown in the list below, which includes the pets' names:

- Cats (40)
  Mosaskeggur (Mosi), Völundur, Tómasína, Ringó, Fúsi, Systa, Branda Krús Þorláksdóttir, Snúlla, Púkapúk, Bangu, Lísa, Svala, Jóra, Gosi, Dásemd (Djása), Dúlla, Maia, Fíbý, Gátta og Skotti, Simply Red, Moli, Snotra, Skotta, Bangsi, Glanni, Glymur, Bilbó Þyrnur, Natalia, Fúsi, Friðgeir Cash, Pési, Ponsi, Sara, Simbi, Emil, Brandur, Ketill, Dimmalimm
- Dogs (17)
  Kolgrímur (Kolli), Perla, Vinur, Ljóska, Snati Thors, Askja, Depill, Dýri, Skotta, Birta, Skuggi, Lady, Gréta, Talia, Gréta Garbo, Mandla, Blíða
- Birds (5)
  Goggi, Bjartur, Birta, Skuggi, Loki
- Snakes (1)
  Jones
- Rabbits (1)
  Vita

Some of the analysis of the species from the defined school catchment area was presented in the final display. Of the non-human animals that were part of the project, fifty-one lived in the city centre. Considering that this was a small sample of households, the number of animals present but not made known to us was certainly much higher. This became clear to us through those individuals who contacted us when the project was exhibited after we had finished gathering information. As mentioned before, because of the strict pet regulations in the city, many pet owners would have been discouraged from coming forward. However, if we take the number of children that volunteered to participate in our art project in Austurbæjarskóli there was by coincidence, an almost equal number of children and animals – fifty children and fifty-one animals.

The following non-human animals were included in our project but live in areas outside of the city centre and the identified catchment area: *Askja, Bjartur, Birta, Branda Krús Þorláksdóttir, Depill, Dásemd, Fíbý, Lísa, Perla, Snati Thors, Vinur, Vita, Völundur.*

The names given to these pets are gendered in all instances apart from three, these being *Púkapúk*, *Bangua* and *Simply Red*. Altogether there were thirty male animals and thirty-one female animals, which categorized according to species were divided up as follows; cats – nineteen male and eighteen female, dogs – six male and eleven female, birds – four male and one female, one male snake and one female rabbit. Two-thirds of the names are recognized human names and one female cat has a double Christian name and a surname '*Þorláksdóttir*' and one dog has the surname '*Thors*', referencing a well known family clan in Reykjavík. About one-third have typical dog/cat names like *Branda Krús, Snúlla, Dásemd, Gátta, Skotti, Snotra, Moli, Skotta, Glanni, Ponsi, Vinur, Ljóska, Depill, Dýri, Skuggi, Lady, Mandla, Blíða og Goggi*. Other names used refer to certain characteristics of the animal, either physical (*Branda, Snúlla, Skotti, Moli, Skotta, Ljóska, Depill, Skuggi, Mandla, Goggi*) or behavioural (*Gátta, Glanni, Vinur, Dýri, Lady, Blíða). Dásemd* can be put in both categories.

Names of pets can give an indication of their social significance. In the English language, animals are not given personal pronouns like 'who' but are referred to as 'that' or 'it'. However, if an animal has a name and is gendered, it can be given a personal pronoun. In the 1960s, pets in Australia, USA and UK were frequently given dog- or cat-specific names, but are now more likely to be given human names (A. Franklin, 1999, 95), and in 1995 a survey in the UK revealed that the ten most popular dog names were the same as the most popular names for human babies. At the same time in the US, dog license applications revealed a new trend of personalized human names, like *Fag Bikini* and *Twit.* This seems to correspond with what we discovered in Reykjavík. There was an overwhelming majority of human names used, over and above specific cat or dog names and/or some personalized human names.

The history of exotic animals in captivity, like in the circus and the zoo, has brought us many popular named characters. Jumbo, the famous elephant, was originally with PT Barnum's Circus, and later sold to the US, where he was killed in a railway accident and stuffed by Charles Akeley (Bodry-Sanders, 1998). Benjamin, the last of the believed-to-be

extinct species of Tasmanian tiger, who died in Hobart Zoo in 1936 (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2004), was named after the photographer who captured it on film, but on death the animal was discovered to be female. Others include Smilie, the crocodile in the Museum of Natural History in Gothenburg, and most recently Knut, the polar bear in Berlin Zoo. The cultural life of these animals is now firmly written into the history of our relationships with them.

seal

The first part of the *seal* project aimed to gather basic information about the seal as a non-human animal, about the different species of seals, and the locations of their habitat, as well as finding out about breeding and feeding. The research for this project was initiated by an invitation to be part of a research group of seven Icelandic female artists that later assumed the name *Selínur*. The focus of the group and the subsequent research called *Blubber* was centred around the then-planned *Icelandic Seal Centre*, in a small town called Hvammstangi in the north of Iceland. Hvammstangi is a service town for the farms in the district, but as in so many coastal towns in Iceland, the local economy had also depended on fishing. The fishing is almost gone, and with the diminished significance of distance, supermarket brands in larger urban centres now monopolize the commerce. These economic changes are forcing towns like Hvammstangi to look for ways to reinvent themselves through tourism. Iceland is mainly populated along the coast and the main highway, or Ring Road (Hringvegur) connects most towns and villages apart from those in the Westfjords. The Ring Road does not however take the traveller through many of the outlying coastal towns, that are located on the edges of peninsulas. These are the ones that have the hardest time adjusting from being prosperous places with a rich fishing history to reinventing themselves through tourist industries. The peninsula that Hvammstangi is located on is called Vatnsnes. In a map from 1700, seafaring records show that Vatnsnes was once populated by an abundance of seal harvesting sites (Kristjánsson, 1980, 315). Today Vatnsnes has three main seal colonies, at Illugastaðir, Hindisvík and Ósar, which together with Hvammstangi and the *Icelandic Seal Centre* are the main attractions within the district's tourist industry.

The hunting of the seals in Iceland is first recorded in *Landnámabók* (the Book of Settlement). Written in the 12th century, its content dates back to the year 900. In *Landnámabók*, many early Icelandic characters are connected to the seal in one way or another. Skallagrímur Kveldúlfsson chose to locate his homestead at Álftanes á Mýrum because of a nearby seal colony. A fight between Þórður Kolbeinsson and a seal is described in *Bjarnar Saga,* and in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* special 'seal-boats' are mentioned (Kristjánsson, 1980, 311). The church is known to have profited from seal hunting, as many church estates and monasteries owned land where seal colonies were found, and rights to the killing of these animals followed the landownership. Sometimes the church owned farms that had seals as extra resources, and on some of these, particularly those farms that had been deserted, the church would license seal hunting (Kristjánsson, 1980, 314). Sometimes legal rights would be challenged as poachers were caught on church property. One such case is recorded in year 1300, when two farmers caught six seals in Hópsós, which belonged to the Monastery of Þingeyrar (Þingeyraklaustur). The punishment of twelve pennies (aurar) paid to the abbot is recorded in the books of the monastery, together with the value in money of the six seals caught (Kristjánsson, 1980, 344).

Three kinds of fishing stations were found in the country: first, home stations, where landowning farmers carried out the fishing themselves; second, outstations manned by people from other parts of the land; and third, mixed stations that had both local farmers and those who travelled from farther away working there. A map put together by Hrafnhildur Víglundsdóttir, at the Icelandic Seal Centre, lists the fishing stations around Vatnsnes. It shows that of the eleven stations, six (*Skipatangi, Sandvík, Langhryggja, Skarðsbúð, Örbirgð, Ergelsi*) were privately owned, three (*Hamarsbúðir, Meinþröng, Krossanesvík*) were owned by the church, and two (*Prúnkinborg, Skipagarðar*) by the king under supervision from monasteries (Víglundsdóttir, 2006). Those five fishing stations above owned by the authorities, i.e. the church or the king, are the ones closest to the three seal colonies still in existence and that are under development as tourist destinations at Vatnsnes today.

The seal species that can be found around the coast of Iceland are the harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*), the grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*), the harp seal (*Phoca groenlandica*), the hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*), the bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*) and the ringed seal (*Phoca hispida*). The only seals to pup around Iceland, and the most commonly found at Vatnsnes, are the harbour seal and the grey seal (Víglundsdóttir, 2007).[4] After the initial research trip and site visits, the group of artists (Selínur) continued communication and communal research via email and over the internet. Furthermore, several research trips to Vatnsnes were organized and for practical reasons attended by different members of the group at different times. All of us visited the Icelandic Seal Centre at least a couple of times. The Seal Centre was under construction during the research process, with most of its objects still wrapped up or in store. Our research focused on the human relationship to this particular animal. Placing the research in Iceland offered an opportunity to have direct contact with people who have had extensive first-hand experience of this animal through different means at different times.

Three Attempts, (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) is a performative video work that was made for an exhibition in the Seal Centre in Iceland in June 2007. Having been made aware of the curiosity of seals and their apparent preference for bright colors, the artist is seen kneeling down at the seashore overlooking an estuary but with her back to the camera. Our preliminary research had revealed that it was common for hunters to imitate seal sounds when trying to entice the seal pups away from the cow, suggesting that seals were sensitive to certain types of sound or sound frequencies at least (Kristjánsson, 1980). In the initial video performance, a variety of vocal sounds were used, from singing to imitating tunes from mobile phones. The result was disappointing in the sense that there was not so much luck with 'communicating' and nothing very much altered in the behaviour of the seals and there was

4 When the group 'Selínur' went to Ósar on the first research trip in June 2006, to our delight a hooded seal, a rarity in this area, was spotted amongst the group of harbour seals in the local colony.

little to see other than a human performance at the seashore – hence the title of the work. As referred to above, the work has been made again. The reasons why it was made again are not important for this text, but rather the fact that it turned out to be not a remake as planned, but a completely new work. We are very much aware of difficulties in the remaking of works and it is something we generally try to avoid. For this piece we did try however. The location was the same, as was the time of year, the clothing for the human performer was the same and the time of day. Even the weather was similar. The only thing that we could not control was the non-human animals in the water, and sure enough, their behaviour confounded our expectations. From the moment we arrived on the shore, to set up the equipment, the seals were out there greeting us, popping up from the water, looking and playing. The 'control' had shifted from us to them – it was their game now. An initial reaction was a sense of despair but slowly and convincingly it dawned on us that the only way forward was to be 'with' the seals in this moment. I as the performer soon relaxed into the role of the one being looked at, whilst visualizing the image shaping up in the rolling video camera behind me – the back of a seated human being on black sand at the shore, the rippling water revealing numerous dark heads popping in and out of view, against a backdrop of distant snow-topped mountains. The process of making this work is revealed here as it required a state both of vulnerability and acceptance in order for it to be executed. The vulnerability being referred to is manifest in an image taken in a natural environment, of a lonely figure with his/her back to 'the world'. The fragility was also further manifested in the state of mind experienced through the act of the performance itself. Finally, the unexpected behaviour of the participant animal required an acceptance of further relinquishment of control.

In the second part of the project seven interviews were conducted in Iceland. Three of these were recorded in Seyðisfjörður, a town on the east coast of Iceland. The four others were recorded in Húsey in Héraðsflói (NE-Iceland), at Ósar in Vatnsnes (where we had done the initial research with the Selínur group), in Reykjavík with an inhabitant of Skáleyjar in Breiðafjörður (W-Iceland) and at the small zoo Slakki

in Laugarás (S-Iceland). All were conducted in Icelandic and have been translated by myself into English, apart from the interview at Ósar, which was conducted in English. All interviewees gave permission for the filming during the interviews but one, Knútur Óskarsson at Ósar, asked that he should not appear on video, although we could use the interview itself and his voice. Apart from Laugarás, all the locations visited are close to the sea. Húsey, Ósar and Skáleyjar all have a history of hunting seal. Seyðisfjörður, Ósar, Slakki and Húsey are all active tourist destinations that use nature and to some extent the seal to market each place as a site for tourism.

Seyðisfjörður has about 800 inhabitants and is a popular tourist destination, despite being relatively remote. Today the Norröna ferry has its port there, connecting Iceland by sea to the Faroe Islands, Norway, Denmark, and Scotland. The town has a prosperous history. Just before the turn of the 20th century it experienced an economic boom through the Norwegian herring industry, leaving it with beautiful Norwegian-style wooden buildings, which are now part of the old town and have become popular summer residences for many living in the main capital Reykjavík. The town is surrounded by majestic mountains on three sides which at a certain period during winter completely block the sun from reaching the town. These strong natural features have if anything been an inspiration to art. Today the town boasts a rich cultural life, with active institutions such as Skaftfell Cultural Centre and the Dieter Roth Academy, to name a few. Seyðisfjörður is thus no stranger to being a meeting point or a place of merger of nature and culture. The seal, as well as many other wild animals, is a regular visitor to the fjord, to the pleasure of some but it has also become a target of abuse by others.

Ósar is a farm where seals were formerly caught. It is now run as a small farm with cows and sheep, together with a hostel and chalet accommodation. It does not market the seals for tourism other than advertising their presence on the sandy beaches approximately 500 m from the hostel. These beaches are accessible through a rough track that is fenced off, keeping it free from cattle and other farm animals. Going through the gate that takes one directly to the seashore, there is nothing

to stop humans in this open landscape from the fierce attacks of the Arctic tern that nests in and around the area. The seals can be observed across the estuary. On a high tide in June it is not uncommon to see them swimming playfully in the estuary, as there will be many pups around.

Húsey is a remote farm on the north-east coast of Iceland. It sits in the centre of a sandy bay called Héraðsflói between two major rivers; Jökulsá á Dal to the west and Lagarfljót to the east. Húsey is special in that for a long time its main resource and basis for subsistence was the seal that pups in its rivers. Today its owners have partly adapted the property to the tourist industry. An old farmstead has been converted into a youth hostel. The sheep sheds have become a centre for horse-riding. The farmer at Húsey has also continued to pursue its heritage of catching seal. Today this is not a prosperous business however, but a tradition of living with nature is being kept alive through a sustainable seal hunt. Seal meat is considered a delicacy and is offered for sale to guests at the youth hostel, together with various products that have been made out of sealskin, as well as knitted clothing made of wool from local sheep. Today, Húsey continues to be economically vulnerable, having already survived, at least for now, the collapse of the seal fur market in the 1970s. In addition, a hydropower dam at Kárahnjúkar, constructed in the mountains inland from Húsey in 2007, has changed the flow in both the rivers.

Skáleyjar are a small cluster of islands in Breiðafjörður. The property is partly (51%) owned by the local family that used to live there, and partly by the Icelandic government (49%). Today it is a family retreat, occupied for most of the year, keeping alive the old custom and heritage of seal hunting. Access to the islands is by boat from Reykhólar, but special permission has to be gained before disembarking at Skáleyjar or on Hvallátur another nearby cluster of islands. Tourism is not part of life on Skáleyjar, but the nearby island Flatey is a popular tourist spot.
Slakki, a mini-zoo in the village of Laugarás, approximately ninety minutes drive from Reykjavík, is a family operation, with a heterogeneous group of animals, a camping area and other recreational facilities. Outside there is a small park area, with miniature housing constructions, in the style of the ancient Icelandic turf houses. In these constructions one

would find domestic animals, among them puppies, kittens, geese, ducks, hens, pigs, foals, calves and rabbits. Also a rudimentary aviary is present, and an aquarium. There a seal pup was given a home together with the ducks and the geese. The animals in the park – apart from the birds – are all young. Their stay at the park is temporary, as the idea was to find the animals a permanent home with visitors. These baby animals are sold to provide funds for the ongoing upkeep of other unwanted or abandoned animals. Calves and Foals that had been born prematurely or needed special care, that their owners were unable to offer, are brought to Slakki. Slakki 'borrows' these animals, with a view to nurturing them back to health. This in turn attracts visitors to Slakki. Similarly, in the aviary, most of the birds are either on loan from owners unable to keep them and give them the space they need – like the two macaws – or they are 'borrowed', as were the bird chicks (partridge, hen, duck, goose) that were there at the time of my visit, who had recently hatched in incubators temporarily onsite before being returned to their owners and whatever life awaited them.

The interviewees in the *seal* project are all male, but from different generations. In Seyðisfjörður we talked to Ólafur Örn Pétursson, a geographer and guide at the nature reserve Skálanes. In him we found a young man who had returned to his roots after seeking an education in Reykjavík, determined to find a way to reconcile his cultural heritage with a sustainable future living with nature. We also talked to his father, Pétur Jónsson, who had a very utilitarian experience of the animal although he was no longer involved in hunting it, and also to another young local man, Hlynur Oddson, now living in Germany, but working in Seyðisfjörður in the summer as a tour guide. Hlynur's experience of the animal was almost Disneyesque, as over two summers he befriended a seal who regularly sought his company when he was kayaking in the firth. As well as the story, he had photographic documentation of the encounter, which he was keen to show and had used it to decorate a small flat that he owns in the town. In Húsey we talked to Örn Þorleifsson, the owner of Húsey, a farm where seals have traditionally been hunted, and today the site of a youth hostel. Örn is very knowledgeable about the catching of seals and a great advocate

for the rights of farmers wanting to live not 'on' nature as he put it, but 'with' nature. It was the same with Knútur Óskarsson, a young farmer at Ósar, the youth hostel and farm on Vatnsnes. Although the farm still had dairy cows, he predicted having to close this activity shortly, as European regulations would make his small scale farming too financially burdensome. His main asset was therefore the youth hostel and the view over the estuary/firth and the remaining seal colony. In the interview with him, he maintained that visitors lack a 'real' understanding of nature in so far as their interest in the nature is built on a desire to consume it – own it. We also interviewed Jóhannes Gíslason from Skáleyjar in a small flat that he has in Reykjavík together with his wife. He spends most of his time at Skáleyjar from early spring to late autumn. He is one of two brothers, descended through generations from these islands. Both were brought up there, but they left with their parents in their late teens to live in Stykkishólmur, a small fishing town on the south side of Breiðafjörður. Today the brothers and their families, together with the State, own Skáleyjar and the nearby clusters of islands. Their engagement with the seal today is through heritage and conservation, both in terms of hunting methods, food preparation and consumption.

The mapping of what could be referred to as 'situated contexts' from which the art projects developed is important not only in identifying the foundations in respect of this research but also to give the reader an insight into which aspects of a larger social and geographical picture have caught our attention as artists and thus influenced the shaping, development and resolution of the completed artworks.

III. SHOOTING

The start to our first hunting day this season is wonderful: a fantastic sunrise, the temperature is right and the wind is from northwest. We are six of us here: Hasse, his dog Abbe, Kim, Kerstin, Hörnan and me. You could say that we are seven, as the dog could be counted as two humans.

My posting is Dammhygget in the northeast area on Kolberget. I am on look out duty in the area. Hasse and Abbe have left to cross the brook further north. The plan is that if nothing happens, I will change position to the far north post, a position close to the Orsa-border. It is almost on top of the mountain Kolberget – 500 meters above sea level. Beautiful. I see the sun rise and the morning slowly waking up. From the top of a large boulder, I see the sun's rays shine on trunks of the pine trees.

I've received a call from Hasse and I have to change position. It doesn't take me long because I can use my car to take me most of the way. I hear that Hasse and Kerstin are talking about her letting out her dog, Molly, from another point and also heading north the same as me. My new position is at a place near "Holgerkojan" close to our north border. Suddenly I hear Molly's voice coming southward...?

And then a powerful red deer shows up some 100 meters south from me. It stands against the light, its full side in view, eagerly concentrating on the baying from the south not far away. I watch it for quite some time through my binoculars, before it finally strolls eastward towards the area where Kim and Hörnan are standing. At the same time as I broadcast the information in the radio I can't help thinking how I wish an elk bull would come this way in the same manner.

An hour's passed, drowsy but warmed by the sun. I eat some sandwiches and drink some coffee. I feel good, with marvellous views south across the lakes and the mountains to a distance of some 80 km. Suddenly I become aware of Hasse at the edge of the forest to the west of me, about 300 meters away. I give him a signal with my cap. Over the radio he asks if I hear Abbe the dog barking, but I don't.

I guess the mountain Kolberget has muffled or shielded the sound. His question has made me more alert and I begin again to scan my surroundings. At that very moment there's a crack behind me. Two calves bursts out through the plant forest. I try to aim my gun at them but they're too fast and there are too many plants and twigs around. Instead of pulling the trigger I realize that this is no good – it would lead to disaster. So I hold back! Both calves disappear southward at the border. From the corner of my eye I recognize the cow finally following, at least 100 meters behind her calves. OK, just run, you cow, I know about your calves.

Shit! As I report the event on the radio, I realize that was probably my chance this year. The adrenaline is still running high. Hopefully Kim or Hörnan will get the chance of shooting one of the calves.

Then: I cannot believe my eyes – at this very moment, a huge bull stands in the spot between where Hasse and I had been earlier. To make him aware of the situation I whisper into the radio '...there is a bull between us....'

I aim my gun at the bull with the aid of my aiming stick, following it slowly southward. The plant forest is somewhat high and I hesitate because of Hasse having been there just few minutes before. Just now, the bull shifts his course by 90 degrees and paces eastwards in front of me across the clearing. I draw a long, slow breath, aim thoroughly, estimating its speed – and fire. BANG! The bull takes off. I reload and fire again. BANG! There it is! It stumbles and falls! YES!

Is this real - four elks and one red deer all in the same morning? It is now five minutes to twelve. I announce over the radio that a big elk has fallen. Just then I notice Abbe with the elk. He has obviously been after the whole family all along. It must have been the baying from him that Hasse heard before. Abbe had made a turn over the Kolberget, picking up the whole family forcing them to move down to where we were. Well done, Abbe!

What a great day! (Boardy, 2008)

Acquisitions in the Wild with Guns and Cameras

In the act of looking at animals, John Berger has identified four different stages of visual engagement: seeing, looking, watching, and observing (Berger, 1990). Although these acts of viewing are connected, with one act following the other, the most intense act – that of observing – stands out, as it implies sustained attention being paid to the animal and its behaviour (Marvin, 2005a, 5). As mentioned before, in early photography the death of the 'real' animal and a photographic image of an animal often went hand in hand. In contemporary photography, there is a clear parting in a physical sense from this matter. An animal's life no longer has to be sacrificed in order to be closely photographed, although it may be argued that, in the process of transition from being present to being represented, it has been 'eclipsed'. Technology makes distance less and less of an issue, even to the extent that the presence of the photographer is no longer required to take an image, e.g. with time-lapse photography, remote photography, surveillance photography, and satellite technologies. On the other hand, where the photographer's presence is required, he/she will be required to find a way of seeing without being seen. In hunting this is also of course the case, and particularly so in trophy hunting where everything can be pre-arranged for the hunter. as shown on Louis Theroux's *African Hunting Holiday* (Theroux, 2008). The hunter never has to engage with the animal other than in the process of identifying or choosing it as a target. For others, as Marvin (Marvin, 2005b) has pointed out, hunting is an intense engagement with the surrounding environment, transforming perceptions of landscape from being something to look at to an experience of a sensuous physical feeling. Hunters commonly refer to how they become at one with nature through hunting; a stage in which the human mind 'dwells' with a heightened awareness in a state of stillness. All the things instinctive to non-human animals to protect themselves and to survive have to be mastered by human animals in the process of hunting.

When the camera was first invented, its use was regularly referred to using gun and shooting terminology (Ryan, 2000). Interestingly too, the first steps of nature photography developed hand in hand with increasing sophistication in taxidermic methods. For example, Carl Akeley (1864–1926), a U.S. naturalist and explorer, and pioneering taxidermist, invented one of the 'gun' cameras in 1914 (Ryan, 2000). His camera was a hand-cranked movie camera shaped like a gun and was famously used to shoot Robert Flaherty's documentary *Nanuk of the North*. In the film, the camera and the capturing of the hunt on film, crucially, supersedes the kill. Flaherty is supposed to have told his Inuit hosts: "... it is the picture of you hunting the walrus that I want, not their meat" (Barnouw, 1993, 36). However, the boundary was not always as clear as that. From the mid-19th century, the camera was employed to record images of animals or animal parts for purposes of scientific documentation and as evidence of hunting achievements (Ryan, 2000). Photography was practiced alongside taxidermy as a means to record samples of nature.

Making a photograph in the late 19th century involved time and proximity, something still not so easy to manage when photographing live animals using contemporary technology. The developments in the late 19th century of the new roll-film, the portability of cameras, reduction in time exposure, and telephotographic lenses, all made photographing in the wild easier to accomplish. It was in 1882 that Jules Marey developed a 'photographic gun', which was able to follow seagulls in flight and photographed their movement at 1/720th of a second (Ryan, 2000, 209). Marey's interest in the movement of animals led him to invent the technology for chrono-photography that was used to reduce the visual information in the capturing of a movement, to an abstract image of the same. What Marey focused on was to analyze the movement so it could be synthesized, which is the same principle that is used for contemporary three-dimensional computer animation. In this way the technique involved in taxidermy attempts to animate the animal and thus laid the foundation for the pioneering idea of a virtual animal (Marey, 2007).

The use of photography in bringing mass audiences 'face to face' with wild animals from exotic places was closely associated with the widespread and popular interest in natural history. Indeed the construction of wildness and wild animals went hand in hand with the representation of the wild spaces of distant lands. British colonial rule, coupled with the development of the Uganda's railway in the 1890s, opened up East Africa as a hunting and shooting ground for wealthy European sportsmen and explorers. The shooting of wildlife with a camera began to develop as a sport, although the first experiments often showed the photographer simultaneously carrying a rifle and a camera. A debate developed about the nature of the sportsmanship surrounding nature photography, particularly through the use of telescopic lenses. This was evident in many articles and books published around that time (Philo & Wilbert, 2000). However, nature photography was not considered dangerous or exciting enough and even 'charge' photographs had to be taken standing directly in front of the camera, to incorporate sportsmanship. The merit of the resulting photographs was thus judged on the spatial proximity between the animal and the camera-equipped hunter.

Susan Sontag has pointed out that the camera cannot possess, although it may "presume, intrude, trespass, distort, exploit, and, at the farthest reach of metaphor, assassinate" (1979, 13). What is important about these functions is that with the camera it can all be done remotely and with detachment. Her example from Michael Powell's movie *Peeping Tom* (1960) is particularly interesting for my thinking. In *Peeping Tom* the main character, who poses as a documentary filmmaker, lures women to be filmed, only to kill them and record on camera their expressions of terror just before their death. There is a clear difference here in the space of anticipation in this movie and in the space occupied by the camera in 'sports-hunting'. Although we are used to seeing animals suffering in films for specific effect – to the point that we may almost be desensitized – the material reality of the animal is not the focus. Instead it is the image of a hunter/cameraman with the dead animal, but not the image of a live animal, that the hunter wants for his trophy. Garry Marvin (2006) states that the main interest of the hunter is his/her immersion in attempting

to bring about an encounter with the animal. The death of the animal is only the fact that proves that the process happened. Matt Cartmill, to whom Marvin refers, further identifies that it matters what kind of animal is hunted. To kill a cow in a field would not be considered hunting. The question arises as to whether shooting polar bears, who pose no direct threat from the safe distance, qualifies as hunting? The fact that remotely (in accordance with many of the accounts gathered for the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project), and therefore deceptively, it can be seen to be so may be enough (Marvin, 2006).

nanoq: flat out and bluesome

It did not pass us unnoticed that, in undertaking the tracking down of polar bears in *nanoq: flat out and bluesome*, we were involved in a process that in some way mirrored the original acts of hunting (if not killing). It was a cultural hunt – unheroic perhaps and clearly not dangerous, but nevertheless one where the unexpected could be expected to happen. The collection of objects is a necessity for many, long after the needs of subsistence are met, but it seems unlikely that the instincts which drive the hunt to eat and clothe ourselves in skins are entirely divorced from those driving the hunt to collect. The impulses which demanded that newly-built museums be stocked like Arks with taxidermic examples of every conceivable species were fed and met by equally enthusiastic pioneers and explorers in newly-discovered territories and landscapes which were inaccessible to all but themselves. This was seen as heroic, and in case the hunger for trophies of heroism and machismo seemed not enough, it constituted a kind of cultural heroism, underpinned by the worth of 'science' and 'education'.

The polar bears that we located for the project met their end at different periods in their lives; as adults, young bears, juveniles, and even cubs.[5]

5 In the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, there was a curled-up cub, which was stillborn in Glasgow Zoo. The taxidermist, George McInnes, who later worked on assessing all the polar bears in the nanoq: flat out and bluesome installation at Spike Island, told us that this was one of his first assignments and that it has a fibreglass skull.

Before death they had their own lives, relations and achievements. They inhabited particular places and perhaps raised some young – we do not know. Even considering those who spent much of their lives in zoos, little is known of their life before the zoo and or even whilst in the zoo itself. The polar bear in Edinburgh Zoo, Mercedes, was supposed to be the last living polar bear in the UK and came to Edinburgh Zoo from Churchill in Canada. She still has a number on her thigh, something that was given to all polar bears living in the natural park at Hudson Bay. The story is that she apparently ventured into town twice, resulting in her being moved away from the territory and sold to the zoo in 1984. The information we have on the cub in Glasgow points only to its death and its value as a stuffed specimen, as it only gives the date it was handed over to the museum to be 'stuffed' – nothing about the mother, nor of the actual date of death.

The natural habitat of the polar bear is the arctic region, which includes parts of Greenland, Canada, Norway, Alaska (USA) and Russia. A total of between 20,000 and 25,000 polar bears are thought to be alive today (Rosing, 2006, 198). The arctic is characterized by distinctive polar conditions of climate, plant and animal life. Now its living conditions are under threat. A survey report entitled 'Arctic Climate Impact Science', conducted for the WWF in the UK in April 2008, predicts that climate change is having a much faster impact on the arctic than previously considered (Sommerkorn & Hamilton, 2008). The study found that changes are happening in all aspects of the arctic environment: the atmosphere, the oceans, the sea ice, the ice sheets, the snow and the permafrost. The effects were also found already in populations of species, food cycles/chains, ecosystems, and human societies. For the polar bears, this is already having drastic consequences. A decline of 22% in the Western Hudson Bay polar bear population was already recorded in 2004, but it had not declined further when studied again in 2007 (Sommerkorn & Hamilton, 2008, 85). The reason for this is thought to be the southerly geographical location of the Hudson Bay area and that it thus recorded the effects of climate change earlier than areas further north in the arctic. A study of the Southern Beaufort Sea

population of polar bears shows a similar decline to that in Hudson Bay. This study also recorded a decline in mass and body conditions of sub-adult males, together with a general decline in the growth of both males and females, and cub recruitment, meaning that there is a clear decline in nutritional status. The measurements show a close relationship between the decline and the decreasing sea ice cover of the area. What happens in the region of the Southern Beaufort Sea is relevant to one-third of the polar bears in existence, as they inhabit areas with similar sea ice dynamics (Sommerkorn & Hamilton, 2008, 86). The polar bear depends on the ice for its subsistence. The direct decline in pack ice limits their possibilities for food, and as a result increased numbers of polar bears roam the coast in search of food. The habitation of bears' dens has also changed, as the decline in pack ice is having a direct influence on the quality of dens made on the ice and thus the success rate of births among bears.

Several artists have addressed these drastic climatic changes. For example, a young British artist, Katie Paterson, has been working with how glaciers melt as the subject of her work. In June 2007, as part of her degree show at Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, she offered the audience the opportunity to phone a glacier in Iceland (Vatnajökull) and listen "to the splashes, creaks and groans as great masses of melting ice sheer off and crash into the water" (Kennedy, 2007). In an exhibition in the Nobel Peace Centre in Oslo in June 2007, called *Melting Ice, a Hot Topic,* the artist group *Icelandic Love Corporation* showed a video work called *Dynasty*, about three high-class American housewives enjoying being on one of the last remaining ice caps in the world. The work projects a life of privilege, as these women, dressed in their warm coats, are the chosen few to experience cold while the rest of the world exists in a swelteringly hot climate.

The very term 'arctic' comes from Greek 'arktos', meaning 'bear', and was used to refer to the northern constellation of the Bear (O.E.D, 1998). The polar bear is thought to be a descendant of the brown bear, that through the ages has adapted to its environment for survival. The female can weigh from 150 to 250 kg and is smaller and lighter than

the male, which can weigh from 350 to 650 kg (Rosing, 2006, 198). The male can measure 254 cm from nose to tip of the tail and the female 178–190 cm. The polar bear is considered a marine mammal, as it has characteristics adapted to marine lifestyle. In their natural environment polar bears obtain almost all of their food from the ocean. The animal is exceptionally well insulated, with a thick oily coat of fur and up to 11 cm thick blubber. The skin is black and each hair in its fur is transparent and hollow to draw in light and conserve heat. On land, the inner layer of dense wool protects the bear from cold, and the more open layer of hollow guard hairs stays erect when in water and does not mat. This makes it easy for the polar bear to shake off water when it comes on land to prevent the fur from freezing. The ears and the tail are also small, which minimizes heat loss (Rosing, 2006, 198).

In 1973, polar bear hunting was regulated by the International Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears, signed by the five nations whose arctic territory is inhabited by polar bears: USA, Canada, Norway, Greenland, and Russia (The States of the Arctic Regions, 1973). This placed restrictions on recreational and commercial hunting and banned hunting from aircraft and icebreakers altogether. Since the agreement, Norway has introduced a complete ban on hunting. Canada has the largest polar bear population and allows limited recreational hunting. Those who hunt the animals pay a substantial fee. In 2005 the Government of Nunavut increased the quota to 518 bears, with 50 being for recreational hunting. The Government of Northwest Territories maintains its own quota of 72–103 bears, some of which are set aside for sports hunters. It is however difficult to know how many polar bears are hunted for recreational purposes in Canada, as indigenous people are allowed to sell their quota to non-indigenous people. According to statistics, Greenland and Alaska each allow around 100 polar bears to be shot by indigenous peoples (Servheen, 1999).

The information that we gathered for the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project in order to compose the provenances of each bear differs in length and depth. Most state the arrival time in the collection, the donor, or the seller. Some go into more detail, with information about

the circumstances surrounding the death and passage to the UK. Most documents start with or just after the death of the animal. Garry Marvin recognised this quality in our project when he wrote: "In this sense the origin of these particular polar bears is that of an encounter with humans and it is from this encounter that begins their specific, individual, cultural life" (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b, 158).

In the book, we extended the caption provenances on the photos into factual narratives:

> The polar bear in Dover Museum was shot in Franz Joseph Land by Dr Reginald Koettlitz MD (1860-1916). He sailed as doctor, geologist and botanist aboard "The Windward" as a member of the Jackson-Harmsworth Expedition to Spitzbergen and the arctic from 1894-1897. He returned to Dover in 1897 where the stuffed polar bear (one of 60 shot during the expedition), was placed in a shop window to advertise Dr Koettlitz's lecture series in Dover Hall and Dover College his alma mater. The bear was afterwards placed in the Dover surgery of Reginald's brother Maurice, a local GP.The bear remained in the reception/waiting room of the Dover surgery until 1960 when the Koettlitz family gave it to Dover museum (along with Reginald's skis, snowshoes and expedition medical bag). It had been converted for use as a lamp stand and the light-fixing stub can still be seen clutched in its right paw. It has always been a favourite of museum visitors and stood in the entrance until 1991 when the museum moved. It now stands at the entrance to the main gallery on the top floor. It has been used as the logo of the Museum since about 1979. In the 1980s it was cleaned and restored by Malcolm Harman (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b, 101).

One of the more detailed accounts we found concerns the shooting of the polar bear now in the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin. Sir Leopold McClintock, who at the time was the First Lieutenant on HMS Assistance on the successful journey to discover what had become of the ill-fated Northwest passage expedition of Sir John Franklin, writes:

> It was our custom to sleep by day and travel by night, for the sun is constantly above the horizon at this season, and the snow-glare during the day is more than the human eyes can endure. One morning, as we were about to retire to rest, a bear approached our tents; he was, of course, saluted with a shower of musket-balls, and followed by all the men as he hobbled away, very briskly however, upon three legs. Not wishing to lose such a rich prize, I imprudently ran before, endeavouring to turn him; when, seeing all his other tormentors far in the rear he did turn, but only to make a most determined rush at me; the broken leg seemed no longer an impediment; he had only 20 yards to go, and nearly did it in a couple of springs; in turning to run, the rough ice tripped me, but providentially the bear fell exhausted at the same moment, almost within his own length of me; before the men could come up, he was up again, endeavouring, as before, to effect his escape, but time to reload had been gained, and I soon terminated his suffering. He was a huge old beast and extremely thin. I give an extract from my diary here, which explains the singular mode of his approach: Shortly after pitching our tents, a bear was seen approaching. The guns were prepared, men called in, and perfect silence maintained in our little camp. The animal approached from the leeward, taking advantage of every hummock to cover his advance until within 70 yards; then, putting himself in a sitting posture, he pushed forward with his hind-legs, steadying his body with his fore-legs outstretched. In this manner he advanced for about ten yards farther, stopped a minute or two intently eyeing our encampment, and snuffing the air in evident doubt; then he commenced a retrograde movement by pushing himself backwards with his fore-legs as he had previously advanced with the hind ones. As soon as he presented his shoulder, Mr Bradford and I fired, breaking a leg and otherwise wounding him severely; but it was not until he had got 300 yards off, and had received six bullets, that we succeeded in killing him. All the fat and blubber amounted to about 50 lbs. This, together with some bear-steaks, we took. His stomach contained portions of seal (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b, 102).

Nigel Monaghan, keeper of Natural History at the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin, has through examination of bullet holes on the skin, been able to identify the Museum's bear as being the polar

bear McClintock describes as having shot. In correspondence to us, Monaghan explains:

> The specimen on exhibition in the museum today has clearly been shot through the skull above the right eye. An examination of the skin on 20 September 2004 revealed a number of holes in the hide, each consistent with a bullet entry or exit wound. All were circular, although some had been elongated through distortions in the hide through the taxidermy process. A total of 11 holes were noted, each marked by insertion of a pencil, the specimen then being photographed. It is possible that some holes around the skull could represent exit wounds, so the total number of shots fired into the animal could be eight or nine and included the left foreleg (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b, 102).

McClintock's writings suggest that he was connected with the shooting of at least six polar bears:

> The first bear was shot on 3 June 1849 at Hummock Point, North Somerset Island. It escaped and apparently survived. The second is that described in detail above, killed in late April 1851, on pack ice between Bathurst Island and Byam Martin Island. The third was shot two days later, the animal was standing upright and took a bullet through the heart, the blubber was recovered for fuel. Four bears were merely recorded as statistics in tables of game shot. McClintock mentions two bears shot during eight months while their boat was locked in pack ice from 1857 to 1858 and a further two bears shot while based at Port Kennedy with 'The Fox' from 1858 to 1859 (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b, 102).

A good example in the book *nanoq: flat out and bluesome, A Cultural Life of Polar Bears,* of the museums' attitudes to ideal 'specimens' for the representation of a species and the necessity for 'samples' of all, is the correspondence from 17th of February 1906 quoted in relation to the Manchester Metropolitan Museum specimen to the then Museum curator:

> Dear Dr. Hoyle. I forget whether you have in your Museum an arctic wolf. One of our whaling captains has given me a skin of a male – large and with the black hairs along the back strongly marked. It has skull and feet bones. We have already three examples, which is enough for any museum so if you cared for one I can present you with this skin. Last year I was able to present our friend Howarth with a fine large arctic bear ' you, I noticed have a bear.

In reply Hoyle (amongst other things) writes:

> Also we have no bear, and your memory must deceive you when you think you have noticed one. (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b, 116).

In Bristol in 2004, one of the speakers at *White Out* – a one-day conference we organized – was a geologist-turned-filmmaker, Ivars Silis, whom we had met on a residency in Greenland in 2001. Silis fell in love with Greenland in the 1960s, having spent a year in the far north, working at a meteorology station. At the end of his post, instead of returning to his native Latvia, he gave up his career and joined the Inuit in the north, where he travelled and hunted with them. At the conference, he talked about his life with the Inuit of Thule and showed, amongst other things, his own polar bear clothing necessary for these conditions. In Greenland, polar bear shooting is allowed with special permission from the Greenlandic Home Rule. The act of hunting and killing a polar bear commands the ultimate in respect for a hunter in northern Greenland. On one of his hunting trips, Silis described being with a companion when encountering a polar bear. He talked about the space and time that existed between them seeing the bear, being able to attack the bear, and the moment when he and his companion actually attacked. He described lying on his stomach on the ground, hearing the animal approaching, to the moment he turned around, facing the animal only few meters away, looking into its eyes and then shooting it.

The hunter, in order to be successful, has to learn to be absent, both in terms of not being visible to the prey as well as excluding all thoughts from his/her mind other than the immediate task ahead. However, once the prey has been hunted, the balance shifts to triumph and in some

cases to a photograph and/or the transformation into a trophy placed within a domesticated environment. For the hunter, the spell is broken, or as Marvin puts it: "The hunter who was silent in the act of hunting is now able to indulge in the pleasures of speech, as she or he uses the animal to speak to others about how it was to have hunted" (Marvin, 2005b, 24).

In making the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project we were conscious of the parallels between shooting and photographing and the death of the animal a moment after the making of the photo. In 1908, a photographer and nature explorer called Arthur Radclyffe Dugmore published an image depicting a charging rhinoceros. This image and the account of its creation occupies a key position in my frames of reference. To capture the image, Dugmore had put himself in such a place that the animal had to be shot the moment after he had pressed the shutter. He describes this as follows: "He seemed as close as it was wise to let him come. I pressed the button and my companion, as agreed, fired as he heard the shutter drop" (Ryan, 2000, 214).

During our visit to Somerleyton Hall – the present home of two of the taxidermied polar bears we tracked down – we were given access to a box of glass slides from the expedition that led to the killing of the bears. One of the first images, entitled *Midnight stroll of bear,* frames the frozen landscape ahead of the ship. The closeness to the land is noteable. Only a short stretch of seawater lies between the ship, which one can detect from a handrail in the lower left corner, and the land. One can clearly see a roaming polar bear in the landscape. There is calmness about the posture of the bear, indicating that it is unaware of the camera or of any threat or disturbance posed by the visit. Each slide from this expedition had a title – a revealing account of the adventure and the encounter. The titles divide the slides into two categories; that of the landscape and the names of places, and that of the behaviour of the bears. Some examples are: *Two cubs eat mother*; *Pulling out dead bear*; *Bear walking on board* [climbing ladder]. The exact purpose of Sir Savile Crossley's expedition to Wiches Land is unclear, but the slides and the titles convey the twin highlights of the expedition: frozen landscapes and polar bears.

The task for the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* archive of images was to photograph the specimens and their surroundings and to cement the impression of both having equal importance. In the on-site photography, we made a decision to change almost nothing at all to make the photo. This of course was not easy in relation to the demands of conventional photography, but we decided that we would rather cope with what could be interpreted as an imperfect image than take up the possibilities of the many deceptions photography offers. We met each situation with the same equipment – the same camera (Mamiya 7), lens and film. We used a standard lens with a picture angle of 50° – the same as the human eye. This means that the focal length of the lens is the same as the diagonal measurement of the film, in this instance 80 mm as we used a 6x7 cm film. The subject, that is the bear-mount, although different in each case, was constant through the whole project. It was the environment around the polar bears that changed. What was being explored in these images was the changing relationship of the subject, i.e. the polar bear, to the environment in which it was situated. Reflection on the juxtaposition of the polar bear specimens in different locations of 'human' environments evokes simultaneously a sense of presence and absence in relation to place and identity, which can open up a possibility for providing "a metaphor for the condition of other people's identities" (Papastergiadis, 2006, 78). When showing the photographic archive from the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project in Copenhagen, the opening was attended by a large number of people from the Danish Inuit community. From the Greenlanders that we spoke to at this opening, it was evident that there was an immediate connection to the sense of dislocation embedded in the images. The polar bear is an important animal and symbol of identity for most Greenlanders. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it commands the greatest of respect as a living animal and to hunt it, historically translates as an honour awarded by the animal itself (Lopez, 1986). The Greenlandic coat of arms features a polar bear with his left paw raised, on a blue background. According to the encyclopaedia (NationMaster.com) the polar bear symbolizes the fauna of Greenland and the blue, the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. The raising of the left paw is a further marker of identity, as the Danish version in the royal arms and flag features the polar bear with the right arm raised. Greenlandic

folklore believes polar bears to be left-handed. This is otherwise recorded as an unsubstantiated myth (Rosing, 2006).

This notion of dislocation evident in the photographic works in the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project is therefore a key component in what they set out to portray. The intrinsic quality of the photographic image, to record the past and put it to us in the present, defuses the sadness embodied in the work as the process from the past to the present is concealed. Parallel to all of this is society's increased awareness of environment, the demise of which the image of the polar bear has come to symbolize. Despite the fact that a photograph constitutes an object in its own right, the subject of the photographs in the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project reference a critique of the materiality of the object pictured, i.e. the hollow polar bear body and the context or the sociality within which it exists (Kelly, 1998, 80).

As a matter of fact, the images are found by many in the first instance to be humorous, but when the text is contemplated alongside the image, a very different picture emerges. The role of the text is important, as it instigates a process of deconstruction of one's own history, and understanding of the activity and the responses the viewer is involved in. In Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs,* the text appears to be a further affirmation of the identity of the object in question, whereas in the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project the text offers an insight into normally hidden processes and consequently the revealing of an illusion. In the book that accompanies the project, the images are shown on their own. When designing it, we took great care in considering the spatial aspect of a book and its difference to an exhibition space. The experience of turning pages is ultimately more intimate than the conventional way of viewing art works in a museum or a gallery. In the book, the photographic archive is immediately followed by a section with the extended provenances, an account of the artists' encounter with the specimen at each museum and then by several articles offering different theoretical contextualizations of the project. For the photographic image-and-text artworks, their exhibition at different venues affects the reading of the works, and consequently the specific nature of the process of deconstruction.

(a)fly

For *(a)fly,* we designed an unusual random selection mechanism for our survey, which then itself became a work of art. We asked four ptarmigan hunters to fire with their shotguns at a map of the selected city area, from a distance of 40 meters. The hunters were traced through known connections and recommendations. After consulting the meteorological office, it was arranged to meet in a disused quarry, close to a shooting club on the outskirts of Reykjavík. All four participants agreed to being photographed dressed in their ptarmigan shooting gear. Each shooter had one test shot and one attempt at shooting at the map. A tripod with the Mamiya 7 camera was placed beside and focused on the shooter, and the shutter pressed to coincide as closely as possible to the moment of discharge, causing a slight blur in the images of the hunters. This was due to the sudden movement in their upper bodies caused by the recoil from the rifle. It is interesting to work with this gap between perfection and imperfection, since it challenges how we value trust and fidelity invested in the photographic image. Although consciously referencing Dugmore it is very different from the circumstances surrounding his photographing of the charging rhinoceros, described above. The roles of the shooters in *(a)fly* are reversed. The photographer is now the shooter and what was shot before, that is the animal, is now a representation of its dwelling.

In 2005, when the research for this project was underway, legislation passed by the government a few years earlier declaring a temporary ban on ptarmigan hunting, had just been lifted. The stock of this bird, a traditional Xmas dinner for many Icelanders, had been in decline and limited legislation was put in place in 1999 and extended in 2002 to protect it. Ptarmigan hunting is common practice in Iceland, and is very popular amongst young(ish) men. The Hunting Division of the Environmental Agency is in charge of obligatory courses run for those intending to apply for a gun permit and a hunting permit (Umhverfisstofnun, 2002a). The course preceding the application for a gun permit instructs applicants about the law and regulations regarding guns, land rights, hunting seasons, guns and ammunition, the handling of guns and security issues. The course to apply for a hunting permit attends amongst other things to the laws and regulations regarding hunting,

the season and ethics as well as bird identification and information regarding nature protection and conservation (Guðmann, 2004). To renew a permit and get a new card, the shooter must fill in a report of his/her shooting conduct, irrespective of him being successful or not in the hunt (Umhverfisstofnun, 2002b). Figures from a survey done by Skotveiðifélag Íslands on the ptarmigan-shooting period in 2006, which lasted 26 days (compared to 45 days in 2005), estimated that around 27,000 ptarmigans were shot during the season. The same survey conducted with 100 members showed that each shooter who went shooting during the 2006 season caught 8.9 ptarmigans on average. The number of shooters who didn't shoot a bird despite going shooting was 23% in the 2006 season (Skotveiðifélag Íslands, 2006). The Environmental Agency estimated the ptarmigan stock as being 440,000 in the year 2007 and proposed that no more than 38,000 birds should be shot (Umhverfisstofnun, 2002c).

We had arranged for the map from the Department of Land Information (Landupplýsingar) at Reykjavík City Council to be printed and mounted onto foam-board. For the survey, each shooter marked their 'shot' map with their own name, information regarding the weapon and the type of ammunition used. The households living at the addresses on the map that had been hit were then identified and written down. Some shots hit an open area and were automatically discounted; some hit public buildings like the National Hospital, also within the area, and these were also discounted. The number of households hit was 273. It turned out that of these, 161 were in a highrise building containing special flats for the elderly, where pets are not allowed (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006a). This is a relatively high number, though it perhaps corresponds with figures given to us by the city council showing a ratio of 9.2 adults for every child in this area (Hallgrímsson, 2005). With more than half of our random selection automatically disqualified, the value of our project as a scientific survey was undermined. However, an art project is reliant on the whole process being the outcome and so the above information regarding disqualification was simply incorporated into the work.

The survey itself was conducted over the telephone. A list of questions was designed to reveal if there was an animal in the household and to give information regarding what kind it was, what name it had, and if the owner would allow the environment of the pet to be photographed. The questions were designed for quick and efficient answers so as not to take up too much time for participants. The methodology used in the survey to locate respective households was not explained to participants – only that their household was part of a 'random' survey.

The dwellings within dwellings that we photographed in *(a)fly* are those chosen by the non-human animal and accepted by the human animal. When we arrived at the homes to photograph, we asked to be shown to 'the place where the animal relaxes when no one is showing it attention'. This request and focus was designed to reveal something about the animal within the context of its surroundings at the same time, as it was likely to reveal something about the human-animal relationship. The removal of the physical animal from its 'dwelling' in the photographic image was a strategy to posit questions about species and the conceptual presence the environment evoked. The only clues to the kind of animal inhabiting each dwelling came from the focal point of the image, as the camera was brought down to the approximate eye level of the pet in question and in some cases from its name, which was printed below each image. Instead of hunting, there was a 'haunting' – the images were haunted, by the 'ghost', or implicit presence of the animal. Technically our approach was also at variance to that in *nanoq: flat out and bluesome.* Where on those shoots we had deployed a standard lens and no extra lighting, here we used a wide-angle lens on the Mamiya 7 camera together with a travelling studio light kit. This we deemed necessary as we anticipated photographing in some small rooms and places in which we would need, in some instances at least, to take control of and compensate for low light conditions. The pictures were shot on 6x7 cm negatives and later scanned professionally before being printed. In *(a) fly,* the 'dwellings' as such were not intended to represent specific animal species. The aim was to open up a space to think about a non-human animal by looking at a dwelling-inside-a-dwelling and to consider the relationship between human animals and non-human animals. The

intention was also to use ideas of the post-human to question the assumption of the human. This is in correspondence with Haraway and her theories on companion species, which she proposes, encourages us to think about "the projects that construct us as species philosophical or otherwise" (quoted in Gane, 2006, 140).

We use animal imagery and representations in our daily life to reveal hidden, unconscious, unarticulated things about ourselves as 'species'. Akira Lippit (2000) proposes that animals have an abstract presence in the post-modern world, as their presence is experienced through technological media, whilst others like Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior, as quoted by Daston and Mitman in *The How and Why of Thinking with Animals,* have claimed that thinking 'with' animals can signal forms of creativity through the invention of new languages "to give animal voices to political, philosophical, and moral actors" (Daston & Mitman, 2005b, 3). It is apparent that, throughout the last century, the human population has systematically undergone a process of desensitization as a result of the constant imaging and representation of animals – in cinema and in documentary film – as well as seeing the repeated depiction of their killing, which has a surrogate symbolism as their slaughter is used to provide insight into human death and frailty. The importance of Dugmore's strategy of deceit is that in the moment of 'shooting' on both counts, for taxidermy and photography, the result is the 'killing' of the animal.

seal

One of the reasons for going to Iceland to explore human relationships to the seal was, the cyclical change of value it has had as a commodity. In Iceland, there are people who in their lifetime have experienced the seal in many different forms: as a valuable catch for subsistence; as a government-declared vermin with a bounty on its head because of its alleged role in the lifecycle of a worm that infects cod; and as an object of tourist attraction and thus, as such a living being with intrinsic value.

Farmers who have traditionally hunted seals avoid guns. The noise from shooting is likely to scare the seals away and prevent the return of the

seal colony the following year. In some of the interviews for this project, reference was made to this fact and also that once the seal has left a place, it will not return. Farmer Örn Þorleifsson at Húsey put it this way: "You don't shoot your cow in the morning to milk it in the evening" (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2008b). Contemporary seal hunters will use nets and clubs for the killing of the seal. This involves careful monitoring of the behaviour of the seal; when and where it spends time in the river or the sea and when the cows leave their pups to fend for themselves. It is only when this separation occurs that the nets are put in the estuary, taking advantage of the confusion amongst the pups. The seal pups get caught in the nets and drown – some are clubbed if still alive when the nets are brought to the surface and emptied.

At Húsey, the seal cows give birth to the pups on the sand flats where the river forks out. When we visited the place in 2007, numerous seal pups had just been killed inadvertently when large volumes of water were released through the dam at Kárahnjúkar, resulting in the river Jökulsá á Dal flooding. The young pups became separated from their mothers and were drowned in the force of the river. The water had been released without prior warning or consultation with those whose livelihood has through history depended on working and living with the natural resources in this area.

Seals are known to have been present all around Iceland and throughout its history as can be seen from recorded histories of human involvement with the animal. Unfortunately, as with many human-animal relations, records of this relationship are often bound up with the moment of death for the 'real' animal and the beginning of a 'cultured' relationship that accounts for its life from an anthropocentric perspective. When arriving in Húsey for filming the preparation for the 2008 seal hunt, we were introduced to *Silli*, a young seal pup that had been found abandoned on the seashore. The farmer Örn Þorleifsson had been informed about its situation by couple of tourists staying at the youth hostel at Húsey. In nature, abandoned pups are left to a rather cruel fate, as skuas and gulls unravel their umbilical cord and pluck out their eyes. The care these pups need to survive without their mothers is substantial,

as they have to be fed every four hours with a specially made milk mixture with fat content to match the mother's milk. At Húsey, the feeding was done either by Örn or his wife. The procedure was that approximately 20 cm soft plastic tube attached to a plastic bottle was pushed down *Silli's* throat and the milk mixture pumped into his stomach. Afterwards he would be patted and cuddled to help him burp. During the day, *Silli* would hang around the place, often in close proximity to humans, but in the evening he would be lifted into the back of an old Land Rover where he had a bed made out of newspapers. When we visited, *Silli* was approximately 5 weeks old. We were told that he would be staying at the farm until 12–15 weeks old, in mid- to late August, when he would be taken to the seashore close to where he was found, and allowed to go. In the interim between our visit and him being freed, there would still be a lot of care involved in looking after him. There is a transition from fluid to fast food (i.e. herring and/or capelin) and his learning to hunt for himself in deep waters. All these tasks are overseen by Örn, who even puts on his waders when the seal is first introduced to swimming in the local pond. *Silli* happened to be a male, and should he survive the winter once let free, he is likely to come back to this area year after year. Had the pup been female, she would return to give birth to pups that might well be caught in the nets laid by the farmer at Húsey the following year. This shift from caring to killing brings to mind a statement made by Donna Haraway (Haraway, 2008, 81): "I do not think we can nurture living until we get better at facing killing".

In our interview with Jóhannes Gíslason of Skáleyjar, he explains that in respect of the utilisation of the seal, the sealskin was of utmost importance. A good skin had commercial value. It was important that it had not taken any colour from the seaweed. Farmers who caught seal were known to have shot the occasional male seal that was considered too light in colour, as dark skin was more valuable than light, in spite of the effect of the shot on other seals in the area.

We visited Slakki with a view to observing and discussing their recent acquisition of a seal pup, which had been found abandoned on the seashore in Patreksfjörður (Vestfirðir). The discovery of the seal pup

and its subsequent transport to Slakki had made the news headlines. A national airline had flown it free of charge to Reykjavík where it was transported by car to Slakki and stories circulated about a dead female seal having been found not far from where the pup had been discovered. It was the perfect script for a Disneyesque tale about human-animal relations. The seal being an animal already heavily anthropomorphised, there was not much that needed to be done for what seemed to be a perfect fairytale in the making. On arriving at Slakki we were greeted by the owner Helgi Sveinbjörnsson, who promptly told us that the seal had died that very same morning. He also told us that this had caused him and his two daughters great sadness, especially one of his daughters who was responsible for feeding the seal. The interview with Helgi gave us an insight into what is common human behaviour towards animals, in which empathy is used to project human feelings onto them.

Figure 13

Figure 14

Figure 15

Figure 16

Figure 17

Figure 18

Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22

Figure 23

Figure 24

Figure 25

The Spaces of Empathy in Human and Animal Relations

The seal has long captured the human imagination. The history of its relationships with humans is documented in folklore and songs, often telling tales of a transformation by shedding its skin from a non-human animal to a human one (Sigfússon, 1982). It is a tale that records the relationship between land and sea creatures as reconciliation between these two forces of nature. Hayden Lorimer (2008) draws attention to some ethologists (Lorenz, Fraser Darling, Lockley) who considered human empathy with large mammals to be rooted in facial expressions and the ability to identify with these expressions and use them to explain changing moods in the animals. For Lorenz, seals were especially significant in this respect for their facial expression and ability to shed tears (Lorimer, 2008), whilst others considered the darkness in the large circular eyes of seals as suggestive of emotional depth and that it was this that fostered human affinity. The role of the eyes and mouths are well established as important factors in representation of the memory of human faces (McKelvie, 1976). Many artists working with the morphing of the human and the animal have used the eyes of either – the animal in human portraiture (Nicola Oxley) or the human eye embedded into portraits of animals (Nicky Coutts) – to explore this issue. Others have morphed them together into a photographic image (Mary Britton Clouse) as well as using digital technology to embed human facial expressions of different emotions onto animal physiognomy (Barbara Rauch). Some artists (Helen Sear) on the other hand have explored the effects of removing the eyes of an animal altogether, leaving a white circular hole in the photographic image.

In the interview with the respected farmer and seal hunter Jóhannes Gíslason from Skáleyjar, we were keen to find out how a hunter of seal pups regarded these facial affinities. Although Jóhannes was aware of the 'cuteness' of the prey, it did not seem to interfere with his need to capture and kill it. This was similarly borne out in the way Örn the

farmer at Húsey was able to nurture and care the way he did for the same 'wild' animal species that he also killed and ate. Jóhannes was brought up with the seal being the principle source of subsistence and local farm families depended on the seals. He had from an early age been given seal flippers and faces to chew on. As a matter of fact it was the favourite food of all children on these islands. The flippers and the face were first singed, the face cut in half lengthwise, then the parts were boiled and stored in whey, resulting in the bones and cartilage becoming soft and easy to bite into. Örn had a different experience, as he came to live at Húsey in his early twenties.

The 'face' has been given a lot of significance in animal discourse. It is after all the face and the name of an individual that lends him/her/it an identity. In relation to animals, it is mostly pets and/or animals that have become part of popular culture that are assigned the status of a individual. In 2001, the organisation PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) published an image on one of their posters with the heading "Did your food have a face?" The image, not really of a face but of a carcass of a face, symbolizes the 'missing' face of the animal in the meat industry. Although the campaign is several years old and is promoting vegetarianism, it is still relevant today. In popular culture, celebrity chefs have been busy putting the face back on the animal, in an attempt to reconnect with the simple truth that the neatly packaged meat on the shelves of the supermarkets is in fact from a living being which has some right to a decent life, before ending up on our plates. The philosopher Levinas once declared that non-human animals were faceless and without an ethical face could therefore not expect an ethical response (Wolfe, 2003). Although this may seem to be the case in the example given of the seal face as food, one wonders if Levinas' position is perhaps only relevant when placed in the context of a certain culture or situation. Levinas' study on the ethical face of the animal was based on the dog Bobby, whom he and his fellow prisoners got to know in a German concentration camp. The question must be asked if the ethics of animal rights may feasibly enter the picture in such a context, where human rights abuses and ethical reflections on these have been paramount in discussions of the effects of the Holocaust. The eating of

animal faces as food is by most meat eaters only acceptable as part of a culture or tradition that those in question have been brought up with. Christianity defines humanity by means of the presence of a soul. In the writings of Descartes and all the way through the Enlightenment, the difference between men and animals was considered to be that animals were likened to machines (Lippit, 2000) – a boundary line being drawn at the perceived presence/absence of the soul. With advances in the sciences, this boundary has moved again, because it rested on what was known about biological and behavioural characteristics, including intentionality and language. It was Darwin, however, who developed these Western criteria, when the difference in evolutionary progress became the tool for measuring and placing species on an evolving hierarchical scale. Different human 'races' were also placed on a scale creating a human taxonomy, where people of exotic appearance from distant lands were placed at the bottom of this hierarchy and thereby closer to animals.

Damien Hirst's work, *A Thousand Years* (1990), involves a cow head carcass similar to the one depicted in the PETA campaign mentioned above. A rotting cow's head is placed on the floor in one side of a partitioned glass case, the other side containing live maggots. The flies hatch and fly through a small hole in the partition to feed on the carcass. The section that has the carcass head also has an ultraviolet device that kills many of the flies. The work draws attention to the cycle of life and death and the many indeterminable factors involved in this equation. This work could be said to animalize human attitudes to life and death, whereas the image on the PETA poster attempts to humanize the animal as a call for humane treatment of animals. Una Chaudhuri (2007) argues that Hirst's work belongs to a posthumanist programme of re-substantialization, or what the philosopher John Gray calls "removing the mask from our animal faces" (Una Chaudhuri, 2007, 15).

The postcolonial West has used such divisionary means to retain power and maintain difference. Representations of similarities between humans and animals were used to dehumanize and racialize some non-Western cultural groups. Elder, Wolch and Emel (1998) argue that the

animal body is used to construct cultural difference and to sustain White American supremacy. They give three examples:

1. Animals serve as absent referents or models for human behaviour in a degrading and negative way.
2. People are dehumanized by virtue of imputed similarities in behaviour or bodily features.
3. The role of animals in social construction of racial difference... involves specific human practices on animal bodies. (Elder et al., 1998, 82)

It is in their third example that they touch on the issue of what parts of animals and which animals are acceptable to eat. According to Elder et al., some species such as apes are clearly unacceptable for Western human consumption. Apes are considered too close to humans to be on our dinner table, at the same time as their physiological similarity marks them as inferior to humans. Although this kind of 'cannibalism' is still considered a taboo by most people under any circumstances, the killing of those very same animals deemed unacceptable for consumption becomes acceptable in conditions of real need or starvation. This raises questions about the context and conditions in which the animal is killed.

In Ecuador and Peru it is a custom, and has been for centuries, to keep as part of the domestic household guinea pigs, or *cuys* as they are called, for eating. The animals are most often kept in the kitchen area and then slaughtered and consumed as food. This is in contrast to the Western way of thinking, where the eating of pets or household-animals is considered largely unacceptable. It may be significant here to note, that the anthropologist Garry Marvin informed the audience at the BASN seminar on 28th of July 2007 that he had witnessed the additional custom that each household would tend to kill and eat its neighbours' cuys rather than its own – nevertheless the intended outcome for the animals is unequivocal.

In the 1970s, in relation to an environmental campaign against the clubbing of seal pups in the Canadian Arctic, emotionally charged images of seal pups with their big eyes and their white baby fur were used to lend

the campaign a powerful impetus. The film that was used to advertise this activity had such a significant impact that it resulted in the complete collapse of the seal skin market almost overnight, as the farmers in Skáleyjar and Húsey told us during our interviews for *seal*. A reason for this might be the power of the image of the seal as a charismatic animal in the contemporary western world, but it is also connected to the fact that seal meat is a difficult product to prepare for food, mostly representing a specific culture, and is an acquired taste within that culture. In a TV programme on fashion entitled 'Kill it, Skin it, Wear it', Merrilees Parker (2008) attempts to trace the provenances of her fur clothes in an attempt to obtain a standard of ethical living matching the one she has regarding food. Her moral standards as a meat eater are that the meat on her plate is from an animal that has had a 'decent life'. She likes to apply the same ethics to the fur she wants to wear. After finding a kill that satisfies her standards – a beaver being trapped in the 'wild' in Wyoming – US, she discovers that the fur market has no interest in classifying skins other than by colour and quality, thus leading her to cut up her fur clothes and accessories, as she cannot be assured of the quality of life the animals would have had.

The Morphing of Animal Celebrities

What we have noticed whilst visiting natural history collections around the UK, Europe and the USA, is that they are peppered with individual animals with a popular history – that is, animals that have been local or national favourites in zoo collections for ten, twenty or more years, prior to dying and being stuffed and deposited in their local museum. Chi Chi the panda from London Zoo, Guy the gorilla, Jumbo the elephant, and many more – all public and media favourites in their time – occupy a strange but distinctive niche which cuts across the 'animal-as-representative-of-species' model and makes the animal retain more of a celebrity status befitting the former star of an emporium of popular culture (specifically the zoo). Here, where the normal course of events gives an ex-zoo animal a new and more serious currency as it passes into 'the museum', these individuals, coloured and even tainted by their unwitting colonisation of the affections and imagination of countless human admirers are destined to remain forever in a kind of limbo – neither assuming a representative role nor sustaining their capacity to delight or command affection.

Certain species have been historically singled out as lending themselves to anthropomorphism. Daston and Mitman, in their introduction to *Thinking with Animals,* refer to Stephen Gould – an evolutionary biologist who suggests that phylogeny and domestication are important components as well as neotenic features in determining which animals appeal to human animals (Daston & Mitman, 2005a). This anthropomorphic exercise has a dual edge to it. On one hand it allows humans to demonstrate kindness towards the animal but, on the other, it also shows inhumanity in that, through the anthropomorphic acts, the needs of the animal in question become secondary to what we know of humans and thus what we consider these needs to be. Despite our desire for closeness to seals and other sea mammals, the very nature of their existence in water limits opportunities for observation and thereby

any attempts at establishing intimacy. In cultures like that of Iceland, the sea was, and to some extent still is, seen as a source for food and nourishment upon which communities have depended through the ages for their survival. The ocean is furthermore considered by many to embody a history of successful dominion of man over this natural resource albeit one that has commanded respect in acknowledgment of its unpredictability and danger. Contemporary ecological concerns and the disappearance of certain species from territorial waters have forced a reappraisal of older values, highlighting more intrinsic evaluations of nature. In this respect it is of interest to explore the story of *Keiko* the celebrity 'killer-whale' (*Orcinus orca*).

In 1979, a whale then approximately two years old was caught in fishing nets, separated from its mother and captured in the seas of Iceland (Cousteau, 2007). Twenty-one years later, on 10th of September 1998, the conservation group *Ocean Futures* released it back to its native waters. After capture, the whale, initially given the name *Siggi* (abbreviation of Icelandic male name *Sigurður*), was kept in *Sædýrasafnið*, an Icelandic aquarium. In 1982 he was sold to *Marineland* in Ontario, Canada, where his training began and he was renamed *Keiko* (meaning the "lucky one" in Japanese). Three years later *Marineland* sold *Keiko* to an amusement park in Mexico City for $350,000 (Cousteau, 2007). It was in Mexico that *Time Warner*, the American-based global media giant, began filming him. He continued to be the main star in three internationally acclaimed *Free Willy* movies, the last two being used to raise funds for his release. Despite his fame after the success of the first film, *Keiko* was still captive and in poor health. This was in stark contrast to the ethos of the films, in which a young boy frees a killer whale from an unscrupulous marine park owner. The *Free-Willy-Keiko* foundation was established, and with funding in place, *Keiko's* return to the wild began with a transfer to a custom-built tank at the *Oregon Coast Aquarium* in 1996. Two years later *Keiko* was flown to Iceland to a special open-water pen sheltered in a bay in the Westman Islands. He remained there for four years, or until 2002, when the *Humane Society of the United States* took over his care and later that same year released him into the open sea, hoping that he would join a group of local killer

whales. Instead, *Keiko* roamed the North Atlantic seas on his own until he came across a Norwegian fishing boat. He followed the boat into a Norwegian fjord, where he received attention fitting his celebrity status. His American caretakers immediately set up a camp close by to monitor his progress. *Keiko* died of acute pneumonia in December 2003 and is buried on the shores of Taknes Bay in Norway.

Those who take an interest in the life of *Keiko* cannot help being touched by his story. *Time Warner* had made him a star and through their *Free Willy* movies popularized a version of animal rights specifically for whales. He became a popularized, living representative of his species. The movies were designed as 'feel-good' movies, connecting us with nature but also exploiting a complicated emotional gap between desire and anxiety in human-animal relations. In post-humanist discourse, the term 'nature' is highly contested and debated, whereas in traditional modernist thinking the separation of nature from culture conveys a host of meanings "central to ideas about human identity and collectivity, justice, knowledge, and history. While this centrality posits nature as the ground or guarantor of truth, it also produces a gap in which anxiety proliferates" (Brydon, 2006, 227). *Time Warner* used this gap of generated angst to place into the narrative a series of powerful metaphors, which in fact are also part of the living story of *Keiko* himself.

Since the opening of his pen in Iceland, *Keiko* had managed to get under the thick skin of many Icelanders. The children at the local primary school in Westman Islands had after all been given a holiday from school to line the streets waving flags on his arrival. Residues from a battle in 2005 over oceanographical boundaries and fishing rights may have caused some Icelanders difficulty in accepting that *Keiko* chose to swim to the neighboring country of Norway. This prompted a typically dry Icelandic observation of the ultimate stupidity of *Keiko* choosing to swim to Norway, which – unlike Iceland at the time – was still engaged in commercial whaling. From the beginning of his arrival, *Keiko* was welcomed and greeted with open arms at Skaalvik and in the small community of Halsa (Lillebö, 2007). His unusual behaviour and desire for human contact made him hugely popular in the whole of Norway

and people would flock to the bay to pet and play with him, leading to a ban being imposed on approaching him and ultimately his removal from Skaalvik to the quieter environment of Taknes Bay. This was in great contrast to his stay in Westman Islands, where he had been kept out of the public eye and ironically only the rich and famous had been able to visit. The reason behind him being kept out of the public eye was somewhat less ironic, as part of his training by *Ocean Waters* involved minimized human contact.

The scenario concerning this anthropomorphized living whale, alienated from his own species, then enrolled in a training program to be 'naturalized' back into the wild after having been 'denaturalized' for twenty-one years, will without doubt have surprised and possibly bewildered many. In his life, which involved moving from nature to culture and back again, he crossed different human and geographical boundaries. Whatever we think we can learn from his story, one of the biggest successes was that he, as the leading actor in his own biography, instigated a change in attitude in countries like Iceland and Norway that had hitherto relied mainly on scientific evaluation in their assessment of the possible relationships to these animals. Environmental campaigners have long used images of whales to support their cause, and although the average Icelander was familiar with seeing dead whales in the whaling station at Hvalfjörður, seeing *Keiko* as an animate living individual whale in their own country ate into their own fixed image and identity. As Brydon (2006, 256) suggests "when, figuratively speaking, Icelanders came face-to face with the Other embodied in *Keiko*, that common effort faltered…[that] what they glimpsed in *Keiko* was themselves, in all their frailties, reflected back in the mirror of nature."

Keiko embodied different things for different people, at different times. He was a specimen and representative of a certain type of animal for some, while for others he became completely individualized as a 'personality'. The transformations of *Keiko* while living – from wild marine animal in a controlled captive state, to an international film star, to being released into natural environment and being able to exercise 'free' choice – is important to this research. In death, *Keiko*

never became a specimen in the sense of zoology specimen[6]. He was given a burial in the middle of the night, away from the cameras in front of which he had spent so much of his life. Today his burial place is a popular tourist destination, where visitors are encouraged to place a stone on the mount of stones gathered on his grave. His life story is a contribution to an ongoing debate about what constitutes nature, a reminder of our shifting relationship to animals and the irreparability of human interference with nature.

6 In January 2006 a northern bottlenose whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*) swam up the River Thames in London. Despite efforts to save her life, this female whale died, a post-mortem revealing dehydration. Shortly after its death the skeleton, which became part of the reference collection at the Natural History Museum in London, was put on display.

IV. MOUNTING

I meet Hasse by the elk. We examine it and estimate its size being between 600-700 kilos. I take out the cameras and we both pose for pictures – even Abbe enjoys posing with the elk. When we try to move the elk to position it better for gutting, I get a crick in my back reminding me of my lumbago. What a giant! Hasse and I can't manage this on our own. Shortly, the others arrive prompting Abbe to protect what he sees as his prey. He barks ferociously at the hunting team from Fryksås, forcing them to transfer to other posts. They seemed to have been pretty close to us!

Usually the marksman guts his hunt, but as I have the four-wheeler at my place I have to fetch the car, meaning that others in the team will take care of this. It takes me an hour to get the four-wheeler. The winch on the vehicle helps in getting the elk into the pickup. We place two planks of wood from the back of the truck to the ground, put the winch and the rope around the neck of the elk and then it's dragged up onto the truck. The team gathers around to help shuffle it upwards.

It is a 35km drive to Hasse's barn in Rädbjörka where we hang it. There's already a hook in the ceiling to hang the carcasses. I'm driving, so when we get there I reverse into the barn and the winch in the roof is hooked onto the bound hind legs. Slowly it's raised until it hangs down freely in air. Kerstin and I have the tedious job of skinning it. We begin by cutting into the skin on the back legs and pulling the skin down. We then move onto the belly and body. It is a skilful job because, being a commodity itself, it's important that all the skin comes off in one piece. Once it's removed we put it flat out on the ground. It's covered with salt so it keeps for a week after it's sold.

For my part, as the marksman I also have the difficult job of cutting off the horns and the skull. It is the first time I've done this. Now that we have hung the elk up in Hasse's barn it's the right time to do this. It is the last part of the process – to cut off the head of the animal.

First I skin the head, then cut it and saw off part of the scull, where the horns sit. I boil it to get the meat, flesh and membranous tissue off the skull. Then put it in away in my garage for another time.

It's now three days since we skinned the elk and the meat has hung long enough for it to be good to eat. Three days is the average for this time of the year but it all depends on the weather and temperature. We arrange large tables outside for the final butchering and dividing of the meat into equal parts for everyone in the team. It's a complicated and delicate job, and no one in our team is professional at it. We take some time discussing how to divide the meat and which are the important parts. Knowing how to butcher an animal is a skill, cutting it correctly, in the right proportions and suitable pieces and to label each package for the freezer. We are outside whilst doing this and it's cold – my fingers are freezing.

The horns were tied to a tree lying in an anthill for one week and nothing happened. Actually the ants just started building a hill around it incorporating the head into their home but leaving the head untouched. This may be due to the fact that I left the head hanging for the whole winter in my garage - it became too dry. In the end I was left having to soak it in peroxide, followed by the use of brush and knives and whatever I could think of to clean the bone.

I am sitting here pondering over where I should put my trophy now it's done. Finally I decide to put it on the main wall inside my newly renovated barn. With the head clean I prepare the wooden shield. My son and I have been researching different shields on the internet but we ended up designing our own which we painted in tempera English red. The horns were then attached to the shield and it hangs now in the appointed place – in my wood workshop high up in the rafters above a shelf with old bowls. (Boardy, 2008)

Glazing the Gaze

Animals may look at human beings with a particular look that perplexes both the human and the animal (Berger, 1990) but when human beings look at animals they are in fact looking at their own power constructions that have rendered the animal completely docile, either as a stuffed specimen in a zoological collection or confined within the limits of a cage or a zoo.

The human gaze upon wild, caged/captured/dead or domestic animals is not innocent. It is complicit in a multiple set of relations. Berger proposes that;

> "animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are" (Berger, 1990, 16).

Bird watching is a game and/or leisure activity normally associated with a peaceful engagement with nature. It demands a certain kind of studied observation, alloyed with a desire to collect and record. As with all games, obsession is possible, and with it come those who violate nature in pursuit of a recorded sighting for collection. It is a fact that in terms of taxonomy and the official registration of species, a non-human animal must be killed to prove its existence. In the Culture House (Þjóðmenningarhúsið) in Reykjavík, there is an exhibition on permanent display of the development of life on Surtsey a volcanic island that was formed in an eruption in 1963–67 off the south coast of Iceland. The island has been part of a scientific experiment about how life takes hold in an uninhabited place. Bodies of dead birds are part of the scientific evidence put forward to demonstrate how life on Surtsey has developed. The

hollow skins of these birds are neatly displayed in glass cases – not only as representatives of their species, but more importantly as unique individuals that visited or attempted to settle on the island. To emphasize this point, some bird species are thus shown in large numbers with labels on their feet, revealing the date of their arrival on the island and evidently their death.

In the process of documenting the existence of species, the camera has increasingly become a recognized tool for providing evidence, despite its capacity to deceive and falsify. A photograph is considered indisputable proof that a given thing happened. We acknowledge that its content may be distorted through the lens of a camera, but nevertheless that the reality depicted did exist at least in some form similar to the one in the picture. There are of course different styles of photography across various areas of design, fine art, photojournalism, and the ordinary amateur snapshot, which adds another layer of reading to these images of animals. The following two examples show how the naming of animals anthropomorphised and individualised them, moving them away from anonymous representatives of a species into individual characters.

In the 1970s, Ian Douglas-Hamilton enlisted the help of his wife Oria, who had trained as a fashion photographer, in taking photographs of elephants to show their individual characters. These images revealed characteristic features of the ears and tusks that, amongst other things, served as reliable markers in the identification process (Mitman, 2005, 184). These kinds of image, although pioneering in that they acknowledged the individuality of animals within the same species, belong to a category of photographic images that have long served human institutions of control in the organization of constructs like nationhood and family. As founder of the organization *Save the Elephant*, Ian Douglas-Hamilton also wrote one of the first 'scientific' academic articles in which animals were referred to by personal names. These names – for example, *Mkali, Sara, Fiametta, Jane Eyre, Cuclope, Mhoja, Virgo* and *Boadicea* – were a mix of British and African human names (Mitman, 2005, 183). In another, more recent and very different study by the environmentalist Timothy Treadwell (1957–2003) on

the grizzly bears in the Katmai National Park in Alaska, the bears were also given human names: *Mr. Chocolate, Sgt. Brown, Micky, Saturn* and *Aunt Melissa*. Timothy, whose name by birth was Dexter, had lived with the grizzlies for 13 seasons when he and his girlfriend Amie Huguenard were killed and devoured by the bear(s). Treadwell, made famous in a film by Werner Herzog entitled *Grizzly Man*, was not scientifically trained, but saw himself as a protector of these animals. The film, which has brought Treadwell's study to the attention of the Western world, uses his Disneyesque choice of names and his rather feminine, idiosyncratic character to give an impression of weakness and a supposedly 'infantile' approach to nature and nature studies. In this depiction it is made clear that he crossed the perceptual lines that divide nature and culture, human and animal – thin, invisible lines, clearly understood, respected and reinforced by the filmmaker Werner Herzog and the 'native' population, who were interviewed by him for the making of the film and whose lives are portrayed within it.

Before the invention of binoculars and later lens-based media, animals and birds were most often shot and then drawn and painted. John Gould (1804-1881)[7], a gardener-turned-taxidermist, is a good example of the closeness in the relationship between the life and death of animals and their representation. A specialist in hummingbirds, having drawn them for decades, he didn't see a living one until having travelled especially to the US in 1857 for that purpose (The Australian Museum, 2004). He captured some alive and brought them back to Britain, but as he was unaware of the conditions these birds needed to survive, they died within two months of capture. Gould's representations – drawing and taxidermy epitomized the importance

7 Gould was asked to classify the bird specimens given to the Museum of the Zoological Society by Darwin in 1837. When doing so he identified 13 new finch species (now considered 9) from the Galapagos Islands. It was the realization that these species had evolved separately from their related species in South America, as well as some fossil evidence, that helped Darwin to come to the conclusion that populations of similar species when isolated from each other may continue to evolve separately (The Australian Museum, 2004).

assigned to the possession of nature at that time: wild, exotic nature exemplified by exotic food, rich textures and patterns in fur and feathers, all rendered up for public delight as a kind of cornucopia. Paradoxically, therefore, killing in this sense became a mechanism by which another life could be created through representation.

Collecting live/dead representatives of animal species is also closely connected to how humans see or think of animals. The act of collecting from nature has a long history, dating back to antiquity, when animals were gathered in enclosures around temples for the purpose of hunting and sacrifice. Later on, with the expansion of Europe in the 15th and 16th century the owning of exotic species of fauna and flora became symbolic of status and knowledge (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 2002, 17). The desire for knowledge and an attempt to make sense of the world also inspires the need to possess (Stewart, 1993). The systems of classification developed and used for the various collections added another layer of power and control to how humans saw non-human animals. The role of the museum today is no longer to display 'cabinets of curiosities' to marvel at the 'wonders of nature' but to enable an observation of specimens or samples on display as part of systems of scientific classification that humans have constructed and imposed on the world for the purposes of learning and knowledge (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier, 2002). What distinguishes a game or an organized leisure activity, like visiting and looking at zoo collections of animals, from an insignificant act of collecting, is determined by using the very same structures of power.

Carl Akeley (1864–1926) developed a revolutionary taxidermic method for the creation of 'lifelike' specimens, as part of an ambition to display exotic beasts in what appeared to be their natural surroundings. The taxidermic method involved applying skin on a finely moulded replica of the animal's body, made according to rigorously accurate measurements from a specific carcass (Bodry-Sanders, 1998). He achieved results of unprecedented realism and thus it is claimed, elevated taxidermy from a craft to an art form. His modelling led to sculpture, and he executed notable pieces, showing elephants, lions, and lion hunters. Akeley's

goal was to create a panorama of Africa and its big game in the United States. Unhappy with the current state of taxidermy, which included stuffing birds and animals with rags and wood shavings, Akeley got his first high-profile chance to demonstrate an improved technique in 1885 on Jumbo, P.T. Barnum's circus elephant, by creating a mannequin of wooden planks over which to mount the animal. Throughout his career, Akeley continued to set new standards in taxidermy. His final technique was to mount specimens on hollow, cast plaster forms.

It was not only animals that Akeley captured so realistically, but also the environment. He would record the environment with the camera and take notes on the conditions, such as season, light etc. Samples would be taken from the location and any kind or type of leaf, branch and grass recreated using wax and casting techniques. His first wife, Delia Akeley (1875–1970) – an explorer herself, became responsible for most of the reproductions of nature in the 'Four Season Diorama' in the Field Museum in Chicago. This interplay of photography and taxidermy in the production in museums of 'nature' came full circle, so that not only did the photograph serve to help invoke nature; it also functioned to re-create it.

nanoq: flat out and bluesome

For the installation in Spike Island – a large converted warehouse gallery space in Bristol – we negotiated with collectors, both public and private, to borrow ten polar bears. They were exhibited in museum display cases, as one is most likely to see them in a public collection, their plinths unaltered but made visible. Initially we had thought to exhibit the bears without casing, but conditions for the loans of some of the specimens made us reconsider our initial proposal. Furthermore, the gallery had some concerns regarding the possibility of the work being targeted by animal rights activists and thus was keen to securely protect the specimens. At the time this was something we had not considered, as we felt our intentions with the work to be more aligned with animal rights than against in that the work would create a platform for a debate about the killing of animals for display. As it happened, the exhibition at Spike Island did not

receive any animosity from organizations or individuals beyond the level of healthy debate, the opportunity for which the exhibition had been constructed around. However, we experienced this threat as a possibility again when showing seven of the large images in Oxford Natural History Museum. Shortly after the exhibition was installed, but before the private view and our artists' talk, the animal activist organization, SPEAK called for three days of demonstrations against the New Animal Research Centre, then under construction by Oxford University, resulting in the Museum's withdrawal of notifications and advertisements concerning both the opening of the exhibition and our talk. We were unfortunately unaware of this until arriving in Oxford for the event, which by then had been subjected to a complete publicity blackout. From what we were told by staff, it was not so much our exhibition as the other precious and many uncased specimens that were the concern. These could be targeted, should attention be drawn to the Museum through what might be seen as a celebration of animal death. In Spike Island, therefore, the glass cases served to unify the polar bears in the exhibition and also to create a comfort zone for the viewing of the specimens resembling what has become a conventional way of 'exploring' nature – that is through glass, be it through the camera lens and binoculars, in zoo enclosures or on TV screens.

The Spike Island Gallery is located on what used to be an island in Bristol. Today it is only an island by name, but still contains a variety of buildings that belonged to a working quay, including a shipyard and warehouses. The Spike Island art-space used to be an old tea warehouse, but today contains a gallery, workshop and artist studios. It was a site, which had at the time a respected but liminal identity somewhere between a post-industrial warehouse and the prestigious art venue it has subsequently become. The venue provided a purpose-built and therefore arguably neutralized space, but in reality its transient status from warehouse to art gallery became a mobilizing factor in the staging and the viewing of the exhibition. We were able to capitalize on the ephemeral identity of the site. The context of the project was art but the polar bears did not become art objects by being located in Spike Island: on the contrary, in part at least, they took on something of the building

and in this respect transformed the space back to its original function of a packing warehouse.

The ten polar bears in the installation presented amongst other things an effective display of the technical developments in taxidermy. The oldest specimen was the polar bear from Leeds, which was purchased in 1828 with the help of Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. It is thought to have been mounted by Gerrards in London. The Newcastle bear was acquired in 1835 and was mounted in a traditional way for that time with the actual skull included. One of the Edinburgh polar bears was from the late 19th century and was mounted traditionally by the famous Rowland Ward of London, as was the Leicester bear at a later date in 1933. The bear in Manchester was mounted in a similar manner in 1906 by Harry Brazenor and the one in Worcester – although outstanding in the installation for its diminutive size and general lack of polar bear physical characteristics – by the London taxidermist G. Masters Jr. of Westminster Bridge Road in London. The latest mounts, one from Sheffield and a second one on loan from Edinburgh, who incidentally were together at Edinburgh zoo when alive, were both mounted using Akeley's technique, with a skin wrapped around a hollow plaster cast, by Phil Howard at the Royal Scottish Museum in 1975. The last of the ten polar bears in the installation was from Liverpool and has no date other than being acquired by the museum from the Salford Mining Museum in 1970 or 1971. Some specimens in the installation and more generally in the survey were only dated by the year of the museum's acquisition but the provenance of the specimen at London's Natural History Museum was singularly vague. The official registration information regarding the origin and acquisition of this bear was thought to have been recorded on a plate attached to the specimen's plinth which over the years and through different museum displays had been removed and lost, resulting in the loss of the bear's identity; the object being separated from the record of its history.

At the Bristol Museum and Art Galleries, where our artwork was shown amongst specimens in the zoology collection, it brought about a process of deconstruction prompted by its disruption of the way the specimens

were normally understood or read. The photographic images of the polar bears in their respective locations-with-texts connected them to former living beings and the processes involved in their transformation into stuffed specimens. This called into question the anonymity of the actual individual Museum exhibits, prompting consideration of the individual histories in absentia of the specimens displayed. This meant that where before our intervention, the exhibit might be interpreted as an example of a 'lifeform', the new reading would be of an individual life that once was. This deconstruction of the object and the context in which it resides also references the three registers of representation discussed in previous chapters in this thesis. Furthermore, and in support of the above, during an artist talk we gave at the venue, a member of the audience declared that we had ruined for her the pleasure she got from visiting zoology collections. As a result of our photographic artwork she could no longer see the specimens as 'real' – she could only see dead animal remains [sic].

A notable exception to all other works on show in the zoology collection of the Bristol Museum and Art Galleries, was a tiger specimen presented in a diorama, the casing of which featured a brass plate bearing the information that it had been "shot in Nepal by King George V in 1911 and given to the Museum by him" (Hallett, 2007). Individual importance was conferred upon this specimen alone, by its association with royalty. These plates, designed in their materiality as polished golden surfaces were meant amongst other things, by means of their glow to celebrate the donors, their generosity and in instances like this, their bravery. During our exhibition at the Bristol Museum and Art Galleries, the meanings carried by the engraved texts on these plates shifted emphasis from the hunter to that which had been hunted.

Similarly, the strong ethnographic collection of the Horniman Museum, where the work was on show from October 2006 until the end of March 2007, impacted on the reading of the work as Inuit artefacts were on display at the entrance to the exhibition. Furthermore, the Horniman Museum borrowed one of the Somerleyton polar bear specimens and, with our permission, displayed it together with our photographs. In preparation for the opening of the show at the Horniman, we had several

meetings with their PR officer. This proved to be instrumental in the success of the show, as any suspicion amongst museum staff about the meanings embedded in the work could be discussed and dealt with immediately. Some of the concerns were justifiable, *as* in *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* there is an in-built critique of the museum. The emphasis in the work on the animal as an individual being, instead of as a singular specimen representing all other animals of the same kind, reflects this critique as well as the historical reference highlighted within the project that draws attention to our own (including audience and museum staff) interference in the lives of these animals. It is important, however, in our opinion and that of many working in the museum world, that the museum is able to take a critical look at its own institution, allowing for a healthy reappraisal of the collection and its functions. Luckily, the director of the Horniman was of the same opinion, unlike for instance the now-former director of Naturhistoriska Museet in Gothenburg, who replied to our enquiry about placing our artwork amongst the zoology collection by saying that "...artists come to us (the Museum) to learn, not the other way around". The exhibition at the Horniman Museum was also a watershed for us as this was the first time the whole archive of images was shown together. We used the exhibition to launch the book *nanoq: flat out and bluesome, A Cultural Life of Polar Bears* and this helped to establish what we saw as a closure of the project. Strategically, and with our agreement, the museum then organized a search for a polar bear specimen that had been in the collection, but was sold to Mr. T. Allen in 1948. The only records the museum had of this specimen was the name of the person who bought it, and two photographic images, one of which shows it with two children sitting on its back. By searching for their own polar bear, the museum was able to publicize our exhibition, at the same time as it deployed strategies from our project to gather information for their own archive and sustain an ongoing dialogue with the audience.

In the Horniman, Oxford Natural History Museum and The Bristol Museum and Art Galleries, the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project, in a subtle and quiet way, placed the process of hunting, killing and stuffing back into the exhibition of the collection. In this way, the

museum colluded in making visible the process by which the animal 'arrives' through its death into the collection and is then made to simulate a life being lived elsewhere by representing a species to which technically it no longer belongs. In many natural history museums this is further exaggerated by placing a monitor next to the stuffed animal with a video of the moving animal, often in an unidentified 'natural' environment. This juxtaposition, of an object to its representation together with written information on the biology of the particular animal, demonstrates how a 'modernist' structure once again mobilizes the three registers of representation. In this way, although it is left up to the audience to bridge the gap between the different modes of representation, the trust in the 'object' that is the animal specimen, due to the context it sits in and the readings we accept in respect of these institutions, is apparently beyond question. The audience by accepting these rules is therefore complicit in a dialogue of convenient misrepresentations.

The other different but notable venues for our photographic exhibition have been; 'Askja', the natural science building at the University of Iceland in Reykjavík, where the show opened in conjunction with a conference on art, space and the environment; and 'Bryggen' the North Atlantic House in Copenhagen (also mentioned in the chapter on shooting), whose remit is to showcase culture from former and current colonies of Denmark – Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. The context of the two polar museums, the Fram Museum in Oslo and the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) in Cambridge, whose collections hinge on polar explorers in two different hemispheres, also lends a slight shift to the reading of our photographic artworks. The Fram Museum in Oslo is literally built around the ship with this name commissioned by Fridtjof Nansen in the 1890s as part of an attempt to reach the North Pole, and in 1909 given to Amundsen for his planned attempts to reach the Pole (Huntford, 1998). Amundsen, however, changed his plans and took the Fram to the opposite end of the globe and reached the South Pole on 14th of December 1911 in a famous race with the British explorer Robert F. Scott (Amundsen, 2001). The Fram Museum provided a powerfully loaded context for our photographs,

as they sat amongst documents of colonial exploration together with graphic descriptions both as texts and images of encounters with the arctic environment and the confrontation between man and indigenous animals. The most important thing that both the shows in the Fram Museum and at SPRI were able to do was to reintroduce into their own exhibited archive a very visual and striking document of this otherwise largely forgotten by-product of such adventures. This meant that what had hitherto been peripheral was now placed centre stage. For visitors looking at the exhibits of the exploration narratives on show, the experience began to revolve around a new focus – the animal. It is worth bearing in mind that although SPRI carries the name of Scott, its research is into polar exploration both in the Arctic and Antarctic.

As a footnote, we were amused that as we were being shown around the archive of the SPRI, our attention was drawn to two chalk drawings on blackboards kept locked away in the basement. These were drawings of penguins, made during public lectures, one by Scott (1904) and the other by Shackleton (1909). The difference in these drawings was striking, one being a careful representation, demonstrating skills in observation, and the other cartoon-like and self-parodying in a caption verifying this as a penguin but adding a question mark (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2008b). As a result of our exhibition in Cambridge, we will take up a residency at SPRI in 2009/10, in which we plan to engage in further polar bear research.

In displaying a number of polar bear specimens in the same space, the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* installation in Spike Island forced the audience to go one step further than is required by the typical natural history museum display. By being able to compare one specimen to another of the same kind, the audience was able to draw out the individuality or uniqueness of each specimen. But still, as in the museum, these were precious, glass-cased specimens. Both in the museum and in the Spike Island installation, the display did not attempt to reveal the butchery involved in the process of them becoming 'specimens' and no longer – explicitly at least – polar bears. It is worth noting that for those who looked carefully, bullet holes could

be seen on the hide on some specimens, indicating the fate that they met as animals. But even so, if there was a bullet hole, it represented a history that had already been rendered abstract and 'clean', denying any visualization of the brutality involved. The word taxidermy derives from Greek, *taxis* meaning 'arrangement' and *dermy* meaning 'skin'. The O.E.D. defines taxidermy as "the art of preparing, stuffing, and mounting the skins of animals with lifelike effect" (O.E.D, 1998, 1900). It should therefore be expected that if the craft is skilful, the 'object' should demonstrate a 'lifelike effect', and this was most likely the case in the 20th century. It is a fact though that in the 21st century, with the increased scientific knowledge and the advances in technology, many of the early taxidermy specimens look awkward and out of place in their role as representatives of species in zoology collections. It is in this role, in this time that there appears the most conspicuous shortfall in the desired 'lifelike effect' and taxidermy as a method unwittingly begins to speak about 'death' rather than 'life.'

In the Spike Island installation, the clinical image of the uniform glass-cased specimens was pushed to its limits within the gallery setting. It set the scene for a utopian arctic ideal with not one but ten polar bears, standing as an allegory for human control over nature. It probed beyond the homogeneous approach found in conventional zoology displays with its 'legitimate' scientific mode of presentation towards a different understanding on a more personal level referred to as a 'deeper knowledge' (Harbord, 1998).

Now that the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project is completed, it is a testimony to our aims for the work to see elements of it continue in various forms in respective museums and venues. It has engendered collaboration between various specialists within and outside of the museum world. Venues that have exhibited the photographic archive from the project have negotiated with our help with private collectors to borrow and display a polar bear specimen (The Horniman Museum, Scott Polar Research Institute, North-Atlantic House Copenhagen). Historical data on existing specimens has been brought to light and updated, repair and cleaning of specimens has taken place, and a polar

bear skeleton was reconstructed in a collaborative effort between university and museum staff, having been destroyed as a consequence of bombing during a raid in World War 2 (Bristol Museum and Art Galleries). In short, the project became a catalyst to parallel research. Furthermore, we continue to receive correspondence from the public about polar bears in private collections in the UK, allowing us to update our survey and image bank. The project has received considerable publicity by the media.[8] The fact that the project has received attention outside the art press is in our opinion a testimony to its success and our strategy of placing it in contexts outside the conventional art space. For us, there is no doubt that the project should be read as art – it does not aim to be anything else. In as far as it occupies contexts other than that of its conception, it is in order to reach across boundaries and to enable new forms of communication and connection. For us this is a valuable function of art.

(a)fly

In *(a)fly* we wanted the survey and the shooters to draw attention to the different hierarchical categories in which animals are placed, in so far as some are invited to share our beds and sofas, others nourish us and furnish our dinner tables, whilst some are entirely unwelcome and categorized as vermin. The final work was realized in two concurrent exhibitions in two venues and in a publication entitled *(a) fly – flug(a).* The two exhibition venues were the National Museum of Iceland and Reykjavík City Library. In Reykjavík City Library, we showed the photographs of 16 'dwellings' and the text works from the pupils at Austurbæjarskóli. In the National Museum of Iceland we showed 'The shooters', (discussed below) and the art works from the Austurbæjarskóli workshops. 'The shooters' consists of a text work

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8 The publicity the project has received includes Frieze Issue 108, June – August, 2007, NewScientist 17.02.07, SAGA magazine 09.04, Time Out London 18 – 25.10.06, NatSCANews Issue 1, November 2003, Artist Newletter May 2004, The Big Issue 8-14.03.04, The Royal Photographic Society Dec-Jan 07, The Times April 25.10.06, The Daily Telegraph 14.10.06, The Daily Mail 20.10.06, The Guardian 16.10.06

together with four aluminium-mounted photographs, each featuring a male shooter and taken at the moment of shooting at a map of the City centre, and the actual shot maps themselves.

The vinyl text work applied directly on the wall read as follows:

*As part of the project **(a)fly** we conducted a random selection survey. To do this, we asked 4 ptarmigan hunters to shoot at a map of an inner city area of Reykjavík. Each shooter discharged one cartridge at a map from a distance of 40 meters. The resulting hits in the selected area formed the basis of the survey.*

Number of households 273
(Of these, 161 are special flats for the elderly where pets are not allowed.)
The survey therefore comprised 112 households.
91 households responded.

Of these, 25 had pets
16 households had cats
9 households had dogs
2 households had birds"
(Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006a)

'The shooters' and the collected works (drawings, paintings and sculptures) made by the pupils at Austurbæjarskóli were all located on the ground floor of the museum beside the museum's restaurant and shop in an area allocated for contemporary art. This siting allowed for free access to the artworks, as there is an entry charge to the main museum display on the 1st and 2nd floor. 'The shooters' were displayed on a wall that formed one half of a hexagon. The work from Austurbæjarskóli was on a wall opposite extending into the floor-space in front, disrupting direct access to the restaurant and shop. The museum shop, which incidentally is within glass walls, was thus situated in-between the two bodies of work, allowing for an observation from one art space to the other. This mutual visibility and combined use of space contributed further to the effect of the work, most notably

in its conceptual provocation and contradiction. These masculine hunters and the naïve and affectionate representations of the hunted were gathered together for the gaze of museum visitors, as a means of further nourishing their cultural desires. The close proximity of the three dimensional and two dimensional animal representations made by the school children and our work the 'Shooters' was intended to foster dialogue between two dissonant elements. The innocent/naïve-looking animal representation demonstrating the love and joy involved in pet keeping struck a resounding contrast with the uncompromising and classic pose of the purposeful hunter/aggressor. The images were shot in a disused quarry and portray a background of a desolate landscape with no prey in sight. On the ground close to the shooters' feet is a pile of cartridges, adding bright dots of colour to the image at the same time as it addresses a potentially obsessive activity of 'aiming' and 'hitting'. As the maps were mounted onto foam board, some of the pellets got stuck in the image while others passed directly through. The maps had not been framed or concealed in any way with a protective surface, in order to maximize the visual impact of the physical damage of each individual mark left by each of the steel pellets.

The transparent container, that is the museum shop, which was manned by sophisticated middle class women dressed uniformly in black, referenced in a disarming way the captivity of animals and the act of looking. Similarities sprang to mind to zoo enclosures, museum zoology displays or the view through a camera or the scope of a gun. The shop assistants and the visitors to the museum shop assumed a correspondence with animals observed in these situations, with the material of glass representing the fragile line between what is 'here' and 'there', 'outside' and 'inside'. When hunting in the wild, shooters often make use of semi-permanent man-made constructions known as shooting boxes. These are specially made to enable the hunter to observe the animal in nature without being noticed by the prey or the animal. These boxes are similar to hides – constructions in the environment designed for people more benignly to observe animals. Hides are normally enclosed spaces, which provide shelter, have benches to sit on and small openings from which to view. They can accommodate a

number of people at any one time. Shooting boxes, at least in the UK, are designed for one or at most two hunters. They provide a degree of shelter while still allowing for closeness to nature. This hidden proximity is so much a part of the game of hunting and again part of the activity of seeing or looking at animals.

As Garry Marvin has pointed out, there is a fundamental difference in hunting for food and hunting as sport (Marvin, 2006, 19). In sport hunting, rules, regulations and constraints are part of the challenge and the activity. The kill is merely the evidence of the success of having mastered these rules. Although the timing of the photographs of the shooters coincided with the season of ptarmigan hunting in Iceland, the carefully considered pose of the hunter in the image, the nature of his surrounding environment, the horizontal 90-degree levelling of the gun barrel and of course the shot maps themselves demonstrated a shift in reference from hunting for food to hunting as sport. It could also be claimed that the audience in the exhibition itself further manifested and participated in this shift, as it became a common and observable activity for local residents to look for their home on the maps in an attempt to ascertain whether theirs had been hit. It became a game of identifying and comparing shot or not-shot homes, thus extending the sport of hunting into the space of the museum.

Initially the work was intended to occupy two floors in the National Museum and to work in juxtaposition with some museum exhibits. Due to management problems in the museum, this offer was withdrawn and the work occupied only part of the ground floor. At the time of the exhibition in 2006, the National Museum had only recently opened after an extensive renovation. Significant changes had been made to the interior of the building and in the housing of the collection. The Swedish design company 'Codesign' worked with staff at the National Museum for three years on a mission to best display artefacts from the Museum's collection. There was a preciousness evident about the displays and the collection, which resulted in the *(a) fly* project being limited in its exhibition to designated contemporary art spaces within the museum.

The main museum exhibition, 'Culture and Community for 1200 years', aims to show its audience the building of a nation and to display a clear and holistic history of its culture. There are several references to animals in this display and many more in the museum collection as a whole. Most noteworthy is the display of a grave from the 10th century that was excavated in 1947, in which a human skeleton together with the skeleton of a horse was found. The horse was buried at the man's feet together with a buckle and a saddle. A sword, a shield, a spear, an axe and a knife were also amongst things found in the grave. In this exhibition, there are also several other displays using animal bones, some used as toys for children, mainly sheep bones used to represent farm animals. Depending on size, the knucklebone could represent dogs, sheep and lambs; the leg bones represented horses; the jawbones cows; and the sheep horns sheep, but the horns were only used for outdoor games whereas the other bone toys would also be used indoors during cold winter months (Arason, 2000). There are also several objects using whalebone for various tools and hand-carved horns for drinking, the oldest being from the 15th century (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2007b). On the second floor of the museum is a display of the office of Jón Sigurðsson (1811-1879), the leader in the Icelandic struggle for independence from Denmark. There, amongst the objects and artefacts, is a stuffed greenfinch. In the UK, it was common in the late 19th and early 20th century to assign animals to statues of famous people in order to soften their image or make them more interesting (Kean, 2000). The bird in the Jón Sigurðsson office is on display in a glass case together with other small objects and personal belongings. The display uses selected furniture and objects to create a 'home-office' atmosphere, but this is fragmented and displayed in an artificial and museum-like manner on a one-foot high display platform. One is not invited to enter into the space, although such entry would be required to appreciate fully some of the objects on display. At the front edge of the display platform there is a glass case housing various personal artefacts, including Sigurðsson's stuffed pet (wild) bird and a statue of a porcelain dog. The arrangement is peculiar, as the main focus is on a black memorial book with the names of Jón Sigurðsson and Ingibjörg Einarsdóttir. The book is 'guarded' by the dog and the finch, with the dog looking up over the book and the

bird on the other side looking down onto the book. It sits on a branch, mounted in turn on a small wooden platform that forms the base. It is a tiny bird, stuffed rather badly, which might be the reason why the audience is only allowed to see its back and the side of its head. There is no detailed explanation on the role of the dog or the greenfinch in the life of Jón Sigurðsson and it has no relevance directly to this text, but on the other hand the display does conform with the usage of animals for their symbolic value in 20th century art and culture in Europe. In my workspace I have a close-up photograph of the glass case display with the stuffed finch, the porcelain dog and the black memorial book. Out of context and for those not familiar with Icelandic history, the memorial book might be seen as placed deliberately with reference to the two animal representations on each side of it. However, considering the role of many animal representations in the history of art, it is more likely that the display is constructed in a conventional way to allow for any characteristics we may project onto these animals to be conferred in turn on this specific human.

The placing of the shooters in *(a)fly* into the context of the National Museum collection encouraged the audience through the 'absence' of the animal to make a link not just to the works of the pupils from Austurbæjarskóli as described before, but to animal issues in the main exhibition on the 1st and 2nd floors.

The grave appears as a kind of a 'nest' or a 'home' for the dead body to 'dwell in'. A large part of the display in the National Museum is devoted to the graves of men, women and animals. Animals as such were not interred separately but certain species would be buried beside humans and were evidently killed specifically to accompany a man to his grave. The other purpose of animals in pagan graves was to facilitate the travel of the deceased over to Valhalla, the home of the gods. This particularly applied to horses, which often could be found at the foot of a man's skeleton already prepared with a saddle and a bridle.

Numerous dog bones were discovered during an archaeological dig in Kolkuós near the ecclesiastical centre of Hólar, North Iceland

(Traustadóttir, 2006). Hólar was one of two dioceses in Icelandic history. The bones have been dated from the 12th century when Hólar was being established as a diocese. It is known that at this time, dogs of a certain kind were used in Europe to validate a position in society, and that these dogs were expensive – much more so than good hunting dogs. Some of the smaller dogs were used to provide warmth, being placed in peoples' laps or to warm up the bed (Traustadóttir, 2006). Three dog bones have been identified as being from Maltese dogs, a breed which originated from the island of Malta and which were extremely expensive during the Middle-Ages. The archaeologists also found chewed cattle bones whose teeth marks were identified as being from the black rat. This is the first proof of rats being in Iceland – an interesting fact, as the black rat is thought to have arrived in Europe in the 12th century from Asia (Zoëga, 2005, 27). That it was found at Kolkuós, the harbour for Hólar at this time in history, demonstrates a link between Hólar, world trade and culture. No less importantly, this demonstrates what human relationships to animals can reveal about our history.

(a)fly as shown in Reykjavík was a complex project, both in the processes of its development and also during the stages of its execution. The fact that we (the artists) are 'outsiders' to this island community (although each of us to a different degree) did not help. With us as managers of the project, and with virtually no support mechanism in place from the respective venues, the demands of different kinds of workload when shifting our roles between manager and artist put extra pressure on us. The opportunity to place the work in the context of the National Museum and its collection was inspirational in the process of development. Unfortunately, many promises were not delivered upon and the fact that the exhibition was reduced to being only in the contemporary art space compromised the possibility of a link being made between our work and that of the relevant components in the collection on display. A proposed plan of displaying artefacts from the collection related to the archaeological dig at Kolkuós never happened, nor did the display of artefacts relating to the history of pets and pet-keeping, including a stuffed cat recommended by the museum director. Guided tours that were supposed to be run by the education team were

run without consultation with us, because during the installation of the work, communication broke down between the respective parties.

In the City Library we exhibited the photographic work of sixteen 'animal dwellings' together with the texts written by the pupils of Austurbæjarskóli and a film *Woodmouse – life on the run* by the Icelandic film-maker Þorfinnur Guðnason. The City Library is, as the name suggests, the main library in Reykjavík. It is the largest cultural institution run by the city, with seven outlets including this. The library was established in 1919 and opened to the public in 1923. The current library building called 'Grófarhús' was opened in the year 2000 and is located next to Hafnarhúsið, a municipal contemporary art museum and one of many art museums belonging to the City. The five-floor building where the library is located also houses two other institutions – the Reykjavík Photo Museum and Reykjavík Archives. The main entrance to the library is from the street Hafnarstræti, but it is also possible to enter from another street Tryggvagata through a back entrance on the ground floor and arrive directly in the public reading area beside the exhibition space. On the left side, on entering the exhibition space from the back entrance, there is a fitted magnetic notice board spanning the entire length of that wall, and in the far right hand corner an inbuilt LCD screen and DVD player are found. When entering from the main entrance (also on the ground floor), the exhibition area is between the information desk at the front of the library and the public reading area. This is mentioned as the flow of movement through the space is important and was a key condition affecting our decisions about the mounting of the installation. The library has allocated reading areas on three floors, as well as 'hot spots' with a number of computers and wireless internet connections for people with their own laptops. It has 500,000 books and a variety of magazines, newspapers, music, musical scores, DVD's, videos and other popular media. It also has a special library of art works called Artótek which is administered in collaboration with the Icelandic Artists' Union, to be leased out for a small fee. The City Library is a popular and convenient place to visit. It has comfortable seats and tables for those wanting to work or read in the library. It has an active public

outreach programme and runs a variety of workshops for visitors from all walks of life, from children to pensioners.

The three different types of work in the City Library not only took into consideration the context of the location, i.e. that it was a library, but also more specifically the site they occupied within the library building. The photographs of the animal dwellings were hung in an allocated exhibition area. The writings from the students at Austurbæjarskóli were attached to the fitted notice board by magnets supplied. A space was also left empty on the notice board for contributions from the audience and the response to this invitation meant that the work went on developing for the duration of the exhibition. We also decided to draw the sitting area into the exhibition space by incorporating the use of tables and chairs into the work. On the tables we placed notices inviting participation together with drawing materials – paper, pencils and crayons.

The film (*Woodmouse – life on the run*) which played on an LCD screen in the space was about the lives of two woodmice named *Óskar* and *Helga,* and their seven youngsters. The viewer follows their daily life from their outside habitat in nature to their indoor dwelling in human homes. This is in opposition to what is depicted in the photographic dwellings in *(a)fly,* where animals share their homes with humans. Mice in general, and as shown in the film, are by contrast considered unwelcome parasites or vermin within human habitats. To highlight the vulnerability of mice as a species and to help the audience to empathize, the film draws attention to the many enemies they have in nature and the world of animals including cats, foxes, horses, and owls. The role of the film, beyond its drawing attention to the importance of shelters or habitat for all kinds of beings and to the hierarchical taxonomy that humans apply to animals in our environment, is also to assist in drawing out the 'ghost' animal within the surrounding photographic images of the dwellings.

The photographic images of the 'dwellings' are taken in a variety of human interiors. These cover most spaces normally associated with human homes – lounges, dining areas, kitchens, bedrooms, working spaces and even balconies. Furthermore 'dwellings' are also suggested

in the smaller spaces within these interior spaces, for instance in wardrobes and cupboards, implying and highlighting an intimacy beyond that normally associated with the relationship between animals and individual human beings. There is a sense of further haunting in the work, manifested as a kind of search or investigation as the camera moves from space to space through the series of human dwellings. The focal point of the image draws us into an unidentified area that on close inspection suggests a specific but unidentified absence by means of subtle traces – hair, the depression in soft furnishings, a mark. There is a recorded stillness present in the image suggestive and equal to that of a forensic document. The purpose of this investigation is unclear, however, as in this analogy, although the edge of the photograph can be said to symbolize the police tape marking off the scene of a crime, here there is no evidence of violence – only the occasional, subtle action demonstrated by uneven crumples in a rug or a blanket and the normal signs of wear and tear. Another important element in these images is that, although they are taken on a medium-format camera with the aid of studio lights, they convey a purpose with their unresolved focal point that goes beyond the aesthetics of a conventional photographic image subject relationship.

Figure 26

Figure 27

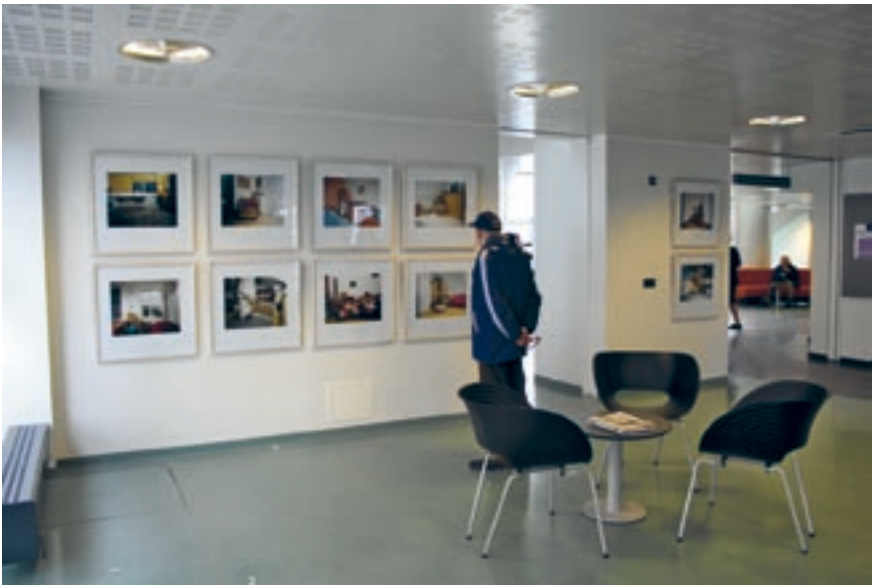

Figure 28

Figure 29

Figure 30

Figure 31

Figure 32

Figure 33

Figure 34

Figure 35

Figure 36

Figure 37

Figure 38

Figure 39

Figure 40

seal

seal is distinct from the other two projects in that at the time of writing it is a work still in progress and will not be analyzed, as were the other two, as a finished project. Given the background this thesis provides into the methodology and research behind this and the other two projects, *seal* as visual art constitutes a meaningful response to my inquiry and testament to and an enactment of art as research as an ongoing form of practice.

In relation to our (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson's) way of working, *seal* was initially proposed to be exhibited on two different but related sites, one being the main building of Gothenburg University at Vasagatan (1907) – a site symbolizing academic discourse – and the other, Hagakyrkan (1909) a church, located close to the main University building. Today the main building at Gothenburg University is used to house public events in a programme provided by the University and its faculties. Now protected by Swedish Natural Heritage, it is a majestic building, with monumental steps and great granite pillars guarded by two bronze lions. It is in neo-classical style with intrinsic gravitas, reminding one of churches, museums and temples of power typical of the period. The statues of the two lions underscore this, as sculpted lions of this kind symbolize religious and/or stately power and leadership. [9]

The University building, although in the sense of its architecture and décor imbued with history, is neither cluttered nor full of external references or objects. Upon entry, one comes into a grand foyer leading straight into the lecture hall opposite, with two large identical stairways on each side, both leading to the upper floor.

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9 Lions also feature in early Christian myths. The story about St. Jerome and the lion (Western Europe) and St. Sergey and the bear (Eastern Europe) are both thought to come from the early Christian myth about the slave Androcles removing a thorn from a lion's paw, which resulted in friendship played out in the Roman amphitheatre. The moral of this message is that saintly persons are compassionate to other species (Preece, 2002).

The upper floor, which provides access to other lecture rooms, is built around a well from which one can look down into the main entrance between the main door and the opposite lecture hall. Suspended from the ceiling above is a large metal chandelier. The plan was that one part of the *seal* work (a taxidermied seal) would occupy this space in the main entrance hall, to be seen immediately upon entry into the building and also again from an elevated position looking down the well from the second floor. Parts of the same work would also occupy the seating area arranged around the well on the upper floor. The work on this floor would be on 4 LCD screens and feature video material taken on my research trip to Iceland in 2008 showing different procedures in a human/seal relationship. The accompanying sound, also on screen as subtitles in English (and possibly Swedish), was to be from the interviews taken around Iceland in the last 18 months and discussed in previous chapters in this thesis. The plan was that one could at least look at one or two of the screens and simultaneously see from above the taxidermic seal, placed in the main entrance on the ground floor. The broad intention with this work is to place the (ex) animal into the context of academic discourse and thus enquire into the relationship between production of knowledge and the implicit reality or authenticity outside of such discourse. Here Kelly's reworking of the three registers of representation into materiality, sociality and sexuality are pertinent, as the materiality of the object that is the seal is crucial to the reading of the work. The photographic representations of the 'object/seal', or in this case the videos with the aforementioned interviewees, would demonstrate human perception and understanding of seals yet at the same time their 'real' identity is absent from the work. The context of the University building and of the Christian church would place the deconstruction of the subject matter, that is the animal, into specific fields of enquiry related to the disciplines accommodated in these respective institutions. As mentioned above, the University building hosts various lectures in a variety of disciplines, many not related to animal discourse at all. This attitude to knowledge within the site was regarded as a strength in the work, as it could place the non-human animal on a level with the human, instead of it constituting a subject-to-be-objectified for the purpose of study. At the time of

writing, before the work has been installed and in fact fully realized, a significant contribution that the site could add to the reading of this work is a sense of dislocation or detachment. As Michel Serres (1989, 55) says: "Fear comes from seeing nature unexpectedly, elsewhere hidden by labour". In a similar way to the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project, the plan was to create an encounter between the human and this particular animal in which one is forced to confront simultaneously notions of life and death. The taxidermic seal specimen, in this context would highlight the particularities intrinsic to the specimen which would also affect how the work might be read.

The other proposed site for the *seal* work was a Christian church. The reason for this particular church was mainly practical, as the close proximity between the two locations would make visiting both sites in this two-part work more manageable. The proposal for Hagakyrkan was an installation comprising two video works and a sound work. There would be a large LCD screen at the entrance showing the work *Three Attempts* (described in the section on *Mounting)*. At this stage, the work was envisaged as being located at the back of the church behind a row of seats that face the altar. The work could be seen just before the congregation or a member of the congregation commences prayer or contemplation. Linked to this work of communing with seals is a sound work of combined human and seal sounds, which will intermittently occupy the nave. This work, is still in the making, but the idea of the merger between human and animal sounds goes one step further than the first shooting of the work *Three Attempts*, in which I sought to communicate with seals in the conventional sense of communing, where one human animal responds to an other non-human animal. In this new sound work, the plan is that the sound will exist as a bridge between the worlds of humans and animals, comprehensible to the same degree by both species.

For Franz Kafka, the space and process of metamorphosis was determined as an in-between audible space where language becomes music and words translate into noise (Kafka, 2005). In his story 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk', the main character cannot

separate her perception of the world from the natural sounds around her. She exists somewhere between human and animal being. In another Kafka story, 'Jackals and Arabs,' howling mediates between human language and that of the animal, or as Akira Lippit explains: "as a literary motif, animal noises indicate a place of communication beyond the limits of language" (Lippit, 2000, 149). To my ears, the sound of seal pups has an intensity equal, although very different to, howling. However for those beings that can hear, interpret different sounds, the rhythm and pitch is not so different from human animals (and many non-human animals). When speaking to one's dogs, one is aware that information is conveyed and received through the tone of the voice, as well as the speed and the vocal emphasis put into the intonation. These are of course all learned actions, which have been fine-tuned in constant comparative dialogue at different times of one's life depending on the language one is mastering. Artur Zmijewski's work *Singing Lesson 2* (2003) breaks down the ethics of sound and appreciation. His project with deaf children as evidenced in the accompanying book and CD entitled *Tauber Bach* (Deaf Bach) in Thomaskirche Leipzig has been a great challenge to my thinking, not only about music but about sound and language. From the book one can see images of the children singing and when the work is shown in galleries the video is accompanied by the music. It is understood that this gives a significantly different way of entry into accepting the work, and this is not the reason for its reference here. Listening to the CD one is constantly thrown between a learned mode of appreciation and an experienced mode of sound production and singing. The work is conducted so the structure of the composition is maintained with the voices delivering on the scripted beat. Still, because the singers are not able to judge the relative pitch the harmonic effect is strikingly dissonant, these two factors bringing simultaneous chaos and order to what we know of the masterpieces of Johann Sebastian Bach. There is no doubt that this work operates on many levels, possibly the most controversial being the transferal of the objectified 'other' but for me its value and challenge is to be able to go beyond the conducted tone into a 'contact zone' (Pratt, 1992) where different ways of seeing and being might be encouraged.

In the church sanctuary we (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson) proposed to place a third and vertical large video screen for the projection of a b/w video work showing close-ups of the stuffing of a seal. The work, which is still to be edited, focuses on the skin, the fur and the slow process of stuffing resulting in the emergent shape of a body together with images of human hands that direct and conduct that process. Together, the works that make up the project *seal* aim to address the death or the eclipse of the animal without showing the actual moment of death as we know it. What we see are the processes leading to a sanitized or clinical 'death' and 'life' in which these have seamlessly merged into a continuum of 'being'. In this sense, it bears close resemblance to the Christian belief of resurrection. Another important concept in this context is the sacrifice. According to Christian belief, God sacrificed his only son Jesus Christ for the human race. At the altar in the Christian church, members of the congregation accepting Holy Communion embrace this notion by eating and drinking the symbolized body of Christ. In his writing on 'The Gift of Death', Derrida establishes that within the logic of the sacrifice there is only responsibility towards human beings, not non-human animals (Derrida, 1995). In this gap, beyond which the animal is forever positioned, lies the troublesome claim that every living being apart from Man may be killed by Man and can thus be sacrificed and absorbed symbolically through the logic of substitution.

One of the reasons for the slow process of making the work (*seal*) is our commitment to certain working ethics of not killing animals for the purposes of our art practice. This is in contrast with many other artists and will be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis. The suggestion that the arts should be exempt from ethics is something we are not comfortable with. Artists are products of the society they live in and as such come to art with different ethical and moral positions. To leave those morals behind when artists engage in the process of making art is to place art outside the context of a society, which is certainly not where we place our practice.

For us there is a difference between commissioning to kill and stuff an animal and to use animal bodies or skins of already dead animals. Some

artists working with stuffed animals, such as Angela Singer (1966), take this a step further and only work by recycling taxidermy, which is in fact what *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* relied on. For *seal*, we negotiated with taxidermists and museums with zoology collections to locate a specimen already dead or waiting to be stuffed. We also contacted all those interviewed for the project, enquiring about a dead seal. As it is we already have contacts in Iceland, where the Icelandic Seal Centre has two frozen seal bodies awaiting to be stuffed and put on display. A taxidermist with the World Museum Liverpool, whose professional credentials would overcome for us, certainly in this case some practical difficulties of negotiation, investigated similar possibilities in the UK. In the end we received an email from the farmer in Húsey (Iceland), informing us of a dead seal that came ashore in fishing nets. The seal, a male, approximately one and a half years old had drowned as a result of being caught in the nets. As nothing had come from other contacts, we decided to accept the offer of this dead seal and the farmer at Húsey kindly offered to keep it in his freezer until a taxidermist was found and we were able to return to Iceland. After a considerable search, we found a taxidermist who was willing to work with us on the project and the frozen seal was, together with other animal products destined for food consumption, transported to Reykjavík. It was an odd shape, wrapped in black bin liner. The head seemed to have disappeared into the body, giving it a shape of a ball with a small tail. The taxidermist assured us that it would resume a recognizable shape, once it was defrosted. The process of skinning and measuring the animal happened a few days later and was documented photographically. The next step, in the process of making this work – that of sculpting a polystyrene body, corresponding with the measurements already taken and subsequently the covering of this man-made body with the hide removed earlier from the dead seal, was filmed in December 2008.

One of the projects in this research, *(a)fly*, works with known concepts in the human/animal discourse – those of 'home' and 'dwelling'. Heidegger (1993) has written much about dwelling and what it means to dwell. He connects building and dwelling through the etymology of the word 'building', derived from Old German and the meaning of the word *buan* (bauen/building). *Buan* means to dwell or stay in place, which is then traced to the imperative, *bin* – to be/you are/you dwell, making a connection between building and dwelling. Dwelling is the same as 'being'. It includes mortality and this meaning of building/dwelling is a cultivation of several interlocking developments (Heidegger, 1993, 350). What is important in *(a)fly* is that in the photographic images the dwellings of animals/humans are morphed together into an undifferentiated unity. The social anthropologist Tim Ingold asks why the products of human building activity should be different from those of animals (Ingold, 2000, 174). His own reply is that the house as a 'home' is part of a living organism. In support of this he references the oak tree discussed in Uexküll's *Instinctive Behaviour* (1934), which shapes its form and proportion in relation to both human and animal activity. Building is in fact an ongoing process that is not fixed by a pre-formed plan and a finished product, but something developed through the process of dwelling. In this way a parallel can be drawn between the dwelling of humans and animals. When photographing the dwellings in *(a)fly,* the camera was placed at the estimated eye level of the approaching animal in question. One of the aims of the project was to bring about a meeting point between humans and animals where they share a dwelling. The placing of the camera at the eye level of the animal did not give/show the sight of the animal, but the sight of the human-turned-animal. Another example of animal species that Uexküll discusses is the spider and its web. The spider knows nothing about the fly that will be caught in its web, yet it 'decides' the length of the stitches in the web according to the fly's body, and the

resistance levels of the threads are adjusted according to the force of the body of the fly in flight. The threads of the web are 'designed' so that the fly cannot see them (Agamben, 2004). The way towards an understanding or a meeting point between human and animal is thus in the relationship to the environment that both occupy. The images of the dwellings in *(a)fly* seek to deconstruct that environment through the photographic medium. By photographing these dwellings in the way we did for this project, and by juxtaposing the images with the given name of the animal, a space is created for the projection of our own reflection onto the haunting animal absence. The represented animal in lens-based media is 'eclipsed' in the senses discussed earlier and above in the chapter on *Shooting.* By catching instead its ghost we are in fact confronted with our own desires framed in neatly organized and familiar surroundings. This absence of a photographic substitute for the 'real object', calls on a sensibility similar to that of empathy, which enables traces to become form in our psyche. In *Post-Partum Document* (Kelly, 1998), the absent 'object' was the female body but in *(a)fly,* because of the familiarity of the depicted surroundings and the history of using animal imagery for the projection of human desires, a "mnemic trace" (Kelly, 1998, 42) of human and animal was invoked.

According to Heidegger, when equating dwelling with mortals, the animal has already been removed out of the picture. For him, mortals are human beings and not animals, because only humans are capable of experiencing death as death (Heidegger, 1993, 352). Derrida has pointed out in his deconstructive essay, *Of Spirit – Heidegger and The Question* (1991), that if it is a metaphysical argument that the 'world' is of spirit, then as such the animal must have a spirit even though animals are defined as being 'poor in the world'. In this paper, Derrida also points out contradictions in Heidegger as the animal is supposed in his writing to be both 'poor in the world' and to have 'no world'. It is in the relationship to this 'world' that is also 'no world' that spirituality and a sense of world 'of spirit' surfaces. Furthermore, Derrida discusses the meaning of Heidegger's cross in crossing out (Kreuzweise Durchstreichung) and gives as an example, the lizard on the stone. The lizard is presented as an animal and is thus 'poor in the world', while the

stone has 'no world'. In accordance with this theory, the stone should be crossed out as the lizard cannot recognize the stone as a stone.

This brings us to the question of language and the inability of the animal to name (Derrida, 2002, 53). As mentioned before, the photographic 'dwelling' images in *(a)fly* had the name of the animal printed on the white border below the image. These names, mostly human given names, further enforced the anthropocentrism mobilised and called into question within this work. If Heidegger's theory of crossing out could be translated into an image, the sofa, the chair, the perch or the bed should have been crossed out, but instead what is crossed out is the animal concerned and whether it was a cat, dog, budgie, rabbit, or snake in the dwelling.

The removal of the animal from this image of familiar human surroundings, together with the addition of the human name below it, helps to enable a projection by the disembodied human self. The unconventional location of the focal point in the image, i.e. the proposed eye level of the animal in question, and the depiction of intimate surroundings of private though familiar human spaces, create a disruption in the otherwise stable image. There is a significant difference here from the conventional projection of human desires onto animals and their representations, as these anthropomorphic emotions develop from out of this void; they surface only as an absence recorded or invoked by something that is no longer there. Berger (1990) has pointed out that, because of the lack of language, animals can never be equal or compared with man. It is only in death that these parallel lives cross. In the 'dwelling' images in *(a)fly*, the space for this parallel crossing is created, not only by the general absence of the animal from these pictures but in the 'eclipsed' moment when the human gaze meets the ghost of the animal trace in the image.

Tim Ingold has identified what he defines as 'the building perspective' in some anthropological theories (Godelier 1986, Wilson 1988) where acts of dwelling are considered to be "preceded by acts of world-making" (Ingold, 2000, 179). His analysis is based on the

key anthropological proposition that there was a turning point in human evolution when people started to live in houses, followiing the distinction between hunters on the one hand, who are supposed to have "flimsy" architecture with a thin line separating them from nature, and farmers or urban dwellers on the other, who inhabit built environments or as Wilson calls them, 'architecturally modified environments, that can last after man has left. When looking at the temporality of the constructed environments of hunters' (quoted in Ingold, 2000, 179) attempts have been made to trace it back to the nest-making of animals. These studies show that there is a clear difference in the way these environments are constructed. The human 'nest' is a fixed point for several occupants and a place they can return to – it is what has been termed a 'home'. It is in this environment that the animals in the photographed dwellings in *(a)fly* do **not** dwell (because of their pictorial absence) and are also the environments which the hunters/ shooters located, but did **not** shoot within, with the pellets from their guns. Berger (1991) has pointed out that in modernity the conventional understanding of a 'home', as a shelter in which memory and destiny were intertwined, shifted to a state of chosen practices, which for many provided more of a shelter than any conventional lodging. "Home is no longer a dwelling but the untold story of a life being lived" (Berger, 1991, 64) he famously stated. It is the stable image of the dwellings within which these sets of practices and improvisations are implicit that provides the setting for this disruption and dislocation. In relation to this and the argument about the human projection in the dwelling photographs in *(a)fly,* it is worth considering Papastergiadis' observation that the basis for art and exile derive from two opposite positions. The integration of object and image that takes place in art can only occur in utopia, for in exile – the state of displacement or dislocation – it occurs through nostalgic thinking (Papastergiadis, 1993, 149).

In mounting *nanoq: flat out and bluesome,* one of our aims was to remove the bears from the ambience of the museum dioramas and indicative environments, so that viewers would be forced to observe them in a way which would make them rely solely on their own knowledge and imagination and not on the 'scientific' information

or context offered by the natural history museum. The space at Spike Island, as mentioned before, was not that of a typical pristine art gallery space with a quiet 'spiritual' ambience. It was an active space with balconies on both sides of the gallery and where artist studios existed behind green tinted, sandblasted windows. To enable us to control light, a specially designed white cotton sheet was stretched over the space to create a ceiling between the 1st and 2nd floor. At the end of the space we had designed a large sculpture, which acted as a seating area. This, together with two freestanding walls whose purpose was to hide unnecessary doorways and control the flow of people into the space, acted like elements of landscape, reinforcing a utopian 'arctic' scene complete with the polar bear specimens. The uniform glass cases with their aluminium frames and austere glass panels further emphasized the 'arctic' atmosphere. This re-location into the gallery context duly focused the viewer's thoughts onto their role as an audience in an encounter with the polar bear specimens, as much as participant in the display. Michelle Henning in response to the project has pointed out that these specimens are not polar bears – they are 'of polar bears' just as a photograph is of a subject (Henning, 2006). Although this is quite clear, I propose moreover that in this installation the objects, i.e. the polar bears, instigated a psychological shift similar to that experienced by looking at a photograph of a memento of a vanished past.

Since the beginning of photography, the medium has kept close company with death, as has been explored in this text in relation to 'nature' or 'wild-life' photography. The photographic image may be unable to capture death as such, but it has the capacity to place the subject in a frozen moment in the past and thus provide an anticipation of the subject's later trajectory i.e. death. In contemporary Western society we are more familiar with experiencing nature and particularly wildlife through a variety of representations rather than in 'real' life. The opportunity to walk into an environment, constructed by using the language of a trace or a residue that humans are adept at reading as 'real', activated albeit momentarily, the significant mental shift to which I've referred. When printing the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* archive we decided, as mentioned before, crucially to place a standardized form of

the provenances next to the image. We did this in two different ways, either photographically as a text in the white border at the bottom of the image or in the larger images on a brass plate inserted into a bevel in the frame. By putting these together we sought to create a confrontation in the interface between the present and the past. The image is (as much as an image can be) about the present – the provenance is about tracking back chronologically from the image to the moment of the fateful encounter which produced the taxidermic specimen from the bear's life. By placing the provenance in juxtaposition to the specimen, it gave specificity to the audiences' encounter, fusing provenance and image in the mind.

One of the interesting issues that became evident when amassing the polar bears in Spike Island was the glimpse it provided into the history of our knowledge of the anatomy of polar bears. Some early specimens had heads and necks that looked markedly different from what we have come to expect of polar bears (from television and photography for example) and the latest specimens similarly are placed in positions that contemporary specialists in their behaviour maintain are impossible poses. The bears mounted in late 19th century or early 20th are portrayed as vicious, menacing, fearsome, and designed to reflect the implicit courage of the hunter, whereas the most recent mounts were displayed in friendly, more anthropomorphic poses. Despite this acknowledgement of their being stuffed in a certain way to reflect the bravery of the hunter, when standing in front of a specimen one could not help being overwhelmed by the power embedded in its representation. The polar bear in Kendal Museum in Cumbria and the two at Somerleyton Hall in Suffolk are prime examples of the animal stuffed to look dangerous. Being present whilst one of the Somerleyton polar bears borrowed for the Spike Island installation was being transported out of Somerleyton Hall, made one acutely aware of its size. It was too tall to be crated inside and had to be transported upright out of the Hall but was considered too valuable and fragile to be transported lying down. Lord Somerleyton, also present at this time, had an interesting ambition for his bear. He wanted to prove that it was the tallest stuffed polar bear in the UK – something which we

can verify if the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* archive is indeed reflective of the entire collection of stuffed UK polar bears. Whilst transporting the Somerleyton specimen, we also witnessed an interesting 'encounter' between one of the removal men and the bear. Having bent down while securing the mount to the bottom of what would become the transport crate, the removal man stood up and inadvertently pushed his head into the right paw of the polar bear, resulting in a minor open wound from its claws. The blood, the scale, and posture of this grand animal all conflated in a terrifying but wonderful tremor, which momentarily eclipsed the 'reality' of the situation in support of the mythic.

In contrast, among the more contemporary polar bear mounts in the exhibition at Spike Island, was one from Sheffield Museum the pride of their collection and another from Edinburgh Museum, both mounted in rather natural-looking, playful, friendly, anthropomorphic poses. The first stands on a fibreglass 'stone' with her paws down by her side, the right one slightly stretched out as if in play and the second sitting back leaning on one foreleg as if taking a rest after recreation.[10]

One of the initial aims of the project was to investigate what these stuffed skins might actually represent, both collectively and individually. We wanted to connect to the knowledge these 'specimens' stood for. In an interview between ourselves, Dr. Steve Baker and Dr. Ross Birrell in 2008, Steve Baker, who has written many articles and books on art and animals, suggested that it did not matter if bone material was included in these bodies in attempting to come to terms with what a taxidermic animal actually is or how we read these specimens. On one level this suggestion is right, as for the ordinary person, there is little way of knowing what is involved in the process of taxidermy, what has been included and what has been left out. What one knows, at least in most

10 These female bears, although mounted by two different taxidermists, actually lived for 28 years together at Edinburgh Zoo. They had the names Queenie and Jim although Jim on his/her death in 1975 was registered as female. Both bears died at the same time and both originated from Canada and had been brought over to Scotland by Captain Koran on 25th September 1947 (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2006b).

cases so far, is that a death has happened, resulting from a confrontation or encounter of some kind. We have through the ages been used to seeing these taxidermic representations as specimens – representation of their species in museum displays. We have been taught to read them as animal bodies, including bone and muscles, frozen in time. In our installation in Spike Island, this understanding and reading of the specimen was challenged. One was no longer seeing the representative of its species, but a group of individual and different polar bear specimens. The difference was not only related to its size or sex in life but to the representational mode itself – to the developing history of our anatomical knowledge of this animal and to the skills of the individual taxidermists. The fact is however that the more knowledge we have gained, the 'truer' the representation to the body concerned is believed to be, and proportionately, the less there is of the animal itself in the construction of its representation, vis a vis the removal of skull and bones.

In conversation with Ron Broglio about the images from our archive of photographs of taxidermic polar bears in the United Kingdom, he drew attention to the space for imagination created in the awkwardness of some of the specimens in their museum displays or settings. In an image from the Kendal Museum and Art Galleries, the polar bear stands in a classic, aggressive pose, set in front of a painted arctic landscape. The romantic scene features a rosy midnight glow. The polar bear is standing elevated on a plinth on top of which is another pedestal, made to look like a small ice floe. This elevation reinforces the aggressive and overpowering effect, as the bear is not standing properly on its back legs but instead gives the impression of being just about to strike or jump. The visitor has to negotiate a narrow space between the bear and the opposite display. This awkwardness is further reinforced by the fact that the bear is not cased. The display is part of an arctic corner in which we see the painted autumn tundra extend behind a cased musk ox, snowy owls and other specimens. It is somehow an awkward, fragmented display, in that it doesn't sit convincingly as a diorama and relies heavily on token arctic references. What Ron Broglio drew attention to in relation to this image was that the imperfections create a space for the imagination and a possible 'continuum' for the construction of a narrative in the mind of

an audience. The badly-stitched-together skin allowed for a glimpse of a process of a life no longer lived. However, in the more contemporary polar bear specimens from the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project, the transfer is seamless, closing the gap between the past and the present – a demonstration of the inexorable eclipsing of the animal, through the increasing closure and integrity of its representation.

In the 12th Documenta in Kassel in 2007, the artist Peter Friedl showed a stuffed giraffe, *Brownie*. Before being stuffed *Brownie* had been living in Kalkilya zoo on the West Bank, but died from a heart attack when Israeli troops attacked a Hamas camp close by. Setting aside the huge political implications of the context of its death and the embedded symbolism of the innocent animal caught in the crossfire of war it was the crudeness of the taxidermy applied to this stuffed giraffe specimen that fixed the moment and the gaze of the audience. Capturing the imagination the effect was thus similar to the experience in the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* installation in that it made the act of dying visible. In *Brownie* all hinged on that one specimen, whereas in our installation in Spike Island it was in the number of specimens and the comparisons possible between them that allowed an unravelling of a history of human relationships to these former bears.

This gap between what we see (the object) and what it is that we read and understand this object to be, plays a crucial role in the installation in *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* in Spike Island. The singular polar bear in front of you, as well as the association of all the other 'similar' polar bears in the space, is no longer part of the mental image one has of the singular museum specimen. It is there in three dimensions as an object in its sterile glass case, as are each of the other polar bears in the space. This resonates with my own previous experience in the Kelvingrove zoology store, amongst the uncased zoology specimens, where I felt I walked inside an image instead of standing before a spectacle. I would propose that the cognitive reading of the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* installation had a similar effect on the mind. We have already established from the Somerleyton expedition that the documentation of the journey highlighted both the white arctic landscapes and the polar

bears. Nevertheless for the people 'being there' for 'real' in the landscape the experience was fundamentally optical. My proposal is that the polar bear specimens are able to act simultaneously both as representations of themselves and of their natural habitat, enabling those who had never been to an arctic environment to hold a clear and strong image of it. In this way one could say that encountering the stuffed polar bear bodies was like confronting the sublime on a microscopic level. The museum environment is very much a departure from any natural environment. There are of course elaborate dioramas, like the 'Four Seasons' in the Field Museum in Chicago. These dioramas, however, sit in the context of similar and other types of display and this accumulation constitutes the environment of natural history collections rather than anything that privileges any particular landscape. Michelle Henning referencing Didier Maleuvre has written:

> that in taxidermy the violent domination of nature is itself re-presented as nature. This can be seen most clearly in the dioramas, where a living, healthy animal is sacrificed in order to enable its perfect reconstruction as a mannequin inhabiting its own skin, for the purposes of an exhibition intended to inspire in its audience a love of nature and desire to protect it (Henning, 2006, 140).

Historically, our observation of these specimens in the context of museums or in captivity has profoundly influenced the way we have come to see or read them as animals. When we look at stuffed animals we don't read them as 'dead'. In the context of the museum we don't think about why or how they have come to be 'where' and 'what' they are.

The Unsolicited Rendezvous

In modernism, the search for a new cultural identity is typically ascribed to migrants and minority groups. It is constructed around 'otherness', identified as something that mainstream culture is not. Following Latour, a parallel can be drawn in unthinking mainstream perspectives of others outside 'itself,' with the historical constructions of animals that have also been defined through the history of metaphysics from an anthropocentric standpoint i.e. 'what humans are not'. In other words, the status of the animal could be deemed indicative of the general cultural frameworks and hierarchies of identity and identification in modernism. In recent years this type of relationship between culture and identity has been challenged and reversed. Culture is no longer seen as something meted out or imposed upon the individual, but rather something formative, developing out of a condition of immersion and accretion, leading as part of that process to a sense of identity. Identity, therefore, takes its shape from the cultural surroundings within which it develops. What still remains, though, is the construction of identity in the oscillation between past and present (Papastergiadis, 2006). We don't normally associate animals with having a cultural identity. For the polar bears in our project, it is only in their afterlife or on death that their cultural life begins. Erica Fudge's (2002a) proposal that, in order to have a more holistic view of the world, we need to recover the lost history of animals in human-animals relations, proved useful in thinking about this. The rift between a modern western identity and another, 'lesser', primitive life form – a perspective cultivated by colonial mobilisation of Darwinist theories – was of course so profound even after the abolition of slavery – even at the beginning of the 20th century – that from the far north (to keep the geographical sphere of reference consistent), Inuit peoples were brought to the United States and to Northern Europe and paraded as exotica, whilst the bones of these and others after death were put on display in 'natural history' collections (Harper, 1998).

Historically, discussions in philosophy from Aristotle to Heidegger regarding the animal have been consistently anthropocentric, primarily considering human existence in isolation from animals. It is however worth mentioning a couple of scholars who took a different stand. The pre-modern philosopher Montaigne (1533–92) thus believed animals to be the primordial possessors of language:

> As for speech, it is certain that if it is not natural, it is not necessary.... And it is not credible that Nature has denied us this resource that she has given to many other animals: for what is it but speech, this faculty we see in them of complaining, rejoicing, calling to each other for help, inviting each other to love, as they do by the use of their voice? How could they not speak to one another? They certainly speak to us, and we to them (qouted in Lippit, 2000, 52).

In contemporary readings of Nietzsche, another interpretation of human-animal has emerged. Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari saw him as a critic of metaphysics. In 'Where is the Anti-Nietzsche?' Malcolm Bull (2000) has pointed out that the act of reading requires emotional involvement often resulting our identifying with a character or a subject in the text but more importantly that reading engages us in a will to power and control. According to Erica Fudge (2002a) Bull argues that by mastering Nietzsche's text the reader will refuse to take on the position of 'Superman' instead aligning him/herself with the herd as the loser and thus embracing weakness. This way of reading "replicates interspecific relations" and fosters a parallel relationship between Superman and man – man and animal (Fudge, 2002a, 15). Fudge sees a parallel between her reading of anthropocentrism and Malcolm Bull's way of what Fudge refers to as reading 'beyond' Nietzsche (Fudge, 2002a, 14). For Fudge, this model is the beginning of a new understanding of an anti-humanist approach in which we place ourselves retrospectively next to the animal and begin to have a more holistic view of all the elements that make up human history.

In Werner Herzog's film *Grizzly man*, Timothy Treadwell is portrayed as weak. This fragility or weakness, placed parallel to an exercise of

power and control in the presence of the director, opens up a different way of looking; one in which the gaze is turned in on itself. The very particular kind of voice-over, and the consistent transparency of the opinions in Herzog's narration, contribute to revealing a binary of sane versus insane; conventional versus unconventional. Similarly these binaries also reveal the inconsistencies and gaps in a human being's authoritative rationality, on one hand declaring the deceased to have been a trespasser in the space of the other but at the same time exercising a punishment on the 'non-human animal' regarded as the other, who is not allowed to exercise power on or over human animal beings who knowingly encroach on its world. In the film, Larry Van Daele, a bear biologist, explains Treadwell's mistake and what distinguishes him from those scientifically trained, as he tried to understand the bears through attempting to be a bear. To empathize and thus anthropomorphize is a loaded emotion in human animal relations, often associated with pet keeping and the domestication of animals. Due to its 'wildness', a bear is seen to be beyond subjection to such frivolous associations. In order to empathize, one has to try to imagine how the other is feeling, be it human or animal, and this could thus be seen as the first step in a move towards a transitional space in which the species meet. It is not only Treadwell, however, who displays anthropomorphic tendencies when it comes to the grizzlies. The pilot (Sam Egli) who over the years flew Treadwell out to the Grizzly Maze, goes a step further in suggesting that the bears accepted Treadwell for so long because of his perceived slight insanity. Interestingly, Sam Egli seems to believe that the bears are able to detect whether people are sane or not, and act accordingly. He even goes so far as trying to imagine what the bear who killed Treadwell and his girlfriend Amy Hugenard was thinking. Similarly, Herzog makes reference to the 'blank stare' of the bear, anthropomorphically signifying dispassionate boredom that can "also be seen in strangers that we meet in the street in cities" (Herzog, 2005).

In an article on the making of the film, *The Disenchanted Forest* (Siegel, 2005) one becomes aware of the many layers and different interests that are behind the making of a nature documentary. One of these layers is

the voiceover, which can be used to add or reinforce a meaning when superimposed over selected footage. The voiceover in this film:

> Wherever possible in the script and interviews, I used anecdotes and comparisons that connected with the human experiences of loss of culture. Audiences see a lonely orangutan infant in diapers on a medical table, clenching its fist in a state of stress and possible despair. This image is made more effective by Anne Russon's voice-over description of the captive process. She compares the destruction of the fragile cultural systems that the infants rely upon in the forest to the shattering of Humpty Dumpty (Russon 2000b). The script of *The Disenchanted Forest* has some parallels with human stories of displaced peoples and cultural loss (Siegel, 2005, 202).

In this respect, the multiple voiceover in Grizzly Man has a double meaning. Treadwell's own anthropomorphic attempts at a narrative are not only continually interrupted in the film by interviews with a variety of interested parties supposedly demonstrating a range of perspectives on him and his life with the grizzlies, but are also on occasion overlaid in turn by the authoritative voiceover of Herzog. Herzog not only allows himself this authority by being the director and researcher of the project, but as it concludes he is also depicted in the film listening through a headset to the tape recording of the death of Treadwell and Hugenard and telling one of the interviewees, a former girlfriend, that she must never listen to this tape. It is perhaps in this very moment of assuming a paternal authority whilst objectively investigating the torturous death that the thick German accent engenders a further layer of meaning, in which issues of what is withheld and what is revealed are conflated and taken out of the hands of the audience. In so doing, there is an eclipse of life and death.

So what kind of view of nature emerges through Treadwell in the light of the above deconstructions of the film? Is it possible to simply accept that he 'loves' the bears and that he immerses himself in their environment? Could this be interpreted as a valid approach to observation and knowledge in the context of nature? Herzog himself

and his actor friend and fellow countryman Klaus Kinski are known to immerse themselves in their respective works as a filmmaker and actor. This of course is acceptable within the discipline of art, but seemingly not in nature studies, where the authority of science to speak on behalf of nature goes unchallenged. Anat Pick, in a lecture at the BASN (British Animal Studies Network) in London on 29th of September 2007, drew another parallel with Nietzsche and his writings on tragedy in this respect. According to Pick, Nietzsche proposed a way to shape one's character by observing both its strengths and weaknesses and making an active transformation into an aesthetic form. Could Treadwell's self-shot footage, in which he is both an artist and subject, be given a different reading through Nietzsche, in which a conflation of subject, object and audience is exercised (Nietzsche, 2000)? By focusing on some of Treadwell 'weaker' characteristics, like irresponsibility, naivety, and immaturity, as keys to the discourse, perhaps 'new' ethical questions on human animal relations can begin to be formulated. The question for me though is, if we abandon the process of restoration and begin to look into and dwell in the fractures between humans and animals, to what extent does that necessitate mutation? Treadwell apparently wanted to "mutate into a wild animal" (Herzog, 2005). Marnie Gaede an ecologist interviewed in the film describes this as a religious experience, "connecting so deeply that you are no longer human" (Herzog, 2005).

In *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), Joseph Beuys attempted to rekindle a lost dialogue between species, "to make contact with an America that is both ancient and nascent" (Strauss, 1990). It could be argued that the forms and rituals of Beuys's performances and works draw on prophetic actions, which although they did not have divine intentions, nevertheless were located knowingly within a religious or spiritual sphere. In his work from 1974, Joseph Beuys proposed to heal the Western world in a performative action realized in the Rene Block Gallery in New York. Beuys, as a German Shaman, spent three days in the gallery with a coyote. The American coyote is a remarkable animal with immense historical and cultural significance, supposed in native myths to have taught humans how to survive in the world. For the

indigenous population therefore, this was an animal that commanded the greatest respect, but for the incoming agrarian European population was bound up in an entirely different relationship to environment: it was a pest they attempted to eradicate. With a bounty on his head since the early 19th century and having been hunted using every possible means available, it nevertheless continues to be amongst the most resilient and thriving species in America.

For me, the symbolism of the coyote in Beuys's work and the portrayal of Treadwell in Herzog's film together provide a compelling argument for a reappraisal of the mechanisms by which we can understand and appreciate non-human animals beyond thinking of them as 'the other', and thus question the validity of our superiority on the one hand and, more importantly, the crisis of our isolation in the world.

V. COMMUNING

At the end of the day – after the successful hunt we have gathered at my place. I cook a braised liver – I had removed it from the body almost immediately as that doesn't have to hang. It's taken out along with the other intestines. The heart and liver we keep, but the rest of the guts are left in the forest for other animals in the woods to eat. The fire is burning in the living room and the cold beer's in the fridge. We begin by having a sauna. There's a lot to talk about and the night is young. Our spirits are high. We talk a great deal about the dogs – recalling every detail of their part in the hunt. How the dogs reacted when they heard one dog calling – who in the team heard the dogs, at what point and who didn't. After a successful trip – a good hunt, the dogs are a big topic of conversation in the sauna. We finally sit down for a meal to eat the liver – and our recollections continue.

The heart will be kept until next year, to be used on the sandwiches for the first day we meet again in preparation for the hunt. (Boardy, 2008)

When Species Meet and Eat in Zones of Art

As has been amply demonstrated, our artwork is site-specific in so far as it acknowledges, and is responsive to, the context of its siting. Miwon Kwon has pointed out that we are "culturally and economically rewarded for enduring the "wrong" place" (Kwon, 2002, 159) and that the difference between 'right' or 'wrong' places is less and less relevant to the construction of our identities. In this respect I differentiate between site and place, in that place has a bearing, whether it be 'right' or 'wrong', on our identity, but a site is a space that does not necessarily implicate 'self' in the same way. In Rosalind Krauss's seminal essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1979), the site of the work and the place where it is located were both fixed points. In a similar way to Kwon, Lucy Lippard (1997) distinguishes between site and place, but proposes a very different understanding of place, in that it is something known and familiar as opposed to alien, detached or dislocated. In her essay 'The Wrong Place' (Kwon, 2004) she draws our attention to the fact that a current understanding of the world is accrued from a distance through mediation and not from 'real' experiences. Nicolas Bourriaud has redefined certain site-specific practices as 'relational' or having a 'relational aesthetic', where the emphasis is on "a parallel engineering, on open forms based on the affirmation of the trans-individual" (Bourriaud, 2004, 49).

When placing our art practice into the context of contemporary art, we have identified it as socially and politically engaged as well as being relational. In further definition of these concepts, the social is understood in the sense of Haraway and Latour, for whom it embraces both human and non-human worlds. Identifying the work as political refers to us taking a moral and ethical position in relation to our subject matter, without it explicitly outlining its position to anthropocentric rules and regulations in human-animal societies. In relation to relational practice I'd like to explore further the critical contexts in which the work is placed.

The term 'relational' was first proposed by Bourriaud (1996) to identify a common denominator in the practices of artists in the exhibition *Traffic.* It was further explored in his book *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 2002), in which he proposed amongst other things the relationships of various kinds between people as an emerging international artistic form. To support his argument he uses the work of a number of artists, identified as part of this 'new' trajectory. Whilst we identify with certain aspects of those practices, amongst them an openness to collaborations with different people and communities and the attempt at establishing encounters, we do not agree that it is only in these encounters that the form of the artwork takes place (Bourriaud, 2002, 21). We see these concepts, that is 'encounter' and 'relational', as methods towards reaching across species, the goal of which is to find a meeting point where these two minds can connect. Haraway uses the word 'touch' to describe this meeting, which she proposes lands us in many "concatenated worlds in a situated becoming" (Gane, 2006, 145).

For us, taking responsibility for the context of the 'siting' of a work does not necessarily mean that the work must exist in one site only, but rather that it has the potential to be placed sensitively, and therefore differently, in a series of sites that may share the same overall conditions or function (like museums). Mark Dion's work *The Tate Thames Dig* (1999-2000), in which the artist and a team of volunteers and residents of Southwark and Pimlico undertook an archaeological dig on both banks of the Thames is a good example of a work of this kind, as it used the location of a particular museum, i.e. Tate Britain, to activate the process involved in the work, but the site for the work relies on and and provides the context for questioning the common museum language of classification and taxonomy. Thus the 'Dig' and its subsequent exposition could effectively have been undertaken on the margins of other museum venues using the same or similar methodology, but resulting in correspondingly different results.

Placing our work into different contexts, that rely on a similar methodology of collection but with different political agendas, is something we have embraced and find rewarding. The *nanoq: flat*

out and bluesome project as I have suggested is a good example. It has been shown in different collections and contexts, including those of anthropology (Horniman Museum), exploration (Scott Polar Research Institute and Fram Museum), zoology (Oxford Natural History Museum and Bristol Museums and Art Galleries), colonial history (North Atlantic House Copenhagen), and natural sciences (Askja, Reykjavík). We acknowledge that these different contexts will affect the meaning and the audience's reading of the work, inflecting it in its transference from one venue to the other. In this way one can think about a 'parallel space' – a liminal zone of possibility created by the juxtaposition of the artwork and the existing works in each museum, which brings forth new ways of seeing or new understandings. For us, it is a challenge to install the artwork in such a space, in-between and amongst other objects that form a collection. In this way we go a step further than many contextually based works that prefer a 'clear' space for the artwork within the overall context of a place. This discrete and often specially designed space for contemporary art is, however, often an easier option. Museums, in accordance with their systems of taxonomy, often characteristically make this the only option available for exhibiting on their premises.

A seminal example of a contemporary art exhibition that mixed art objects and museum objects together was *Private View* at the Bowes Museum (1996), curated by Penelope Curtis and Veit Görner. In this particular exhibition, thirty-five contemporary artists from Britain and Germany exhibited works in response to certain objects or parts of the museum collection. The Bowes Museum is in Teesdale in the north of England. On permanent display is an eclectic collection based on 18th and 19th C French decorative arts, initially purchased and owned by Josephine and John Bowes, consisting of pictures, textiles, ceramics, metalwork and sculpture. Belonging to this collection is the famous life-size automaton *Silver Swan* (1773), that moves in a 'stream' of revolving glass rods, bending its neck and picking up a silver fish. In 1996 when we visited the museum for the first time and saw this, it was activated twice daily during opening hours, with crowds of museum guests gathering before each showing. To watch the silver swan moving across his silver pond was a surprisingly moving experience. This world of silver resembled a frozen

moment and the movement a rare glimpse into what could be translated as 'dreamtime' or 'Traumzeit' (German). This experience of watching the silver swan influenced my work *trace,* made for St. Paulinus Church, and also the artist proposal for the Scottish Parliament (Finlay, 2000, 81).

Two of the artworks in *Private View* had a profound effect on me although in different ways. These were the work of Damien Hirst, *Away from the Flock (1994),* and Thomas Grünfeld's *Misfits (1989-1991),* shown in the context of the zoology collection at the Bowes Museum. The titles both imply a notion of the 'other', or difference of some kind. The *Misfits* taxidermic hybrids - *I, II, III*, combine several animal species' body parts, such as skin, ears, nose, eyes, legs, tail, teeth etc., into one. The *Misfit-I* is thus a blend of musquash (*Ondatra zibethica*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), mink (*Mustela lutreola*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and sea poacher (*Agonus cathaphracctus*) (Curtis & Görner, 1996). The *Misfits* were placed in glass cases next to taxidermied animals from the zoology collection, either displayed alone or in groups, but in single cases similar (but not identical) to the *Misfits*. This simple way of display was a powerful critique of the act of displaying taxidermic specimens and the processes involved. Richard Cork, in a review of the show in *The Times* in 1996, references "a gruesome genetic experiment" (Cork, 1996). He continues by explaining the oddity of this work of art by referring to the artist's German nationality concluding that "German artists are more willing than their British counterparts to indulge in shock tactics". In this way he washes his hands of this work by placing the artists somewhere else, while alluding to Josef Mengele and horrific Nazi medical experiments and at the same time immediately projecting the human onto the animal. Damien Hirst, on the other hand, is complimented for the stereotypical virtues of a true gentleman/Englishman – "he understands the value of restraint and deploys it with precision" (Cork, 1996).

The Damien Hirst work *Away from the Flock*, is a lone lamb in a formaldehyde-filled glass vitrine, looking upwards but facing away from the entrance into the room. The interesting thing about Hirst's work and how it influenced my thinking was that it led me to a corner in which

'oddities' were displayed, amongst them a lamb with two heads and six feet, two protruding from its back. A contemporary notice board above this taxidermic 'Siamese' lamb, displayed in a wooden and glass case, read *Marvel of the Ages*, and demonstrated how the creature had been used for entertainment purposes whilst alive. Looking at it there in the display case, the blurring of the boundaries between life and death of this and many animals became apparent, as it continued now as a zoology specimen, its showcase life. In this environment, Hirst's lamb became a critique of the contemporary art world. *Away from the Flock* did not come with a history of a life being lived; it was a normal lamb being made into an icon as part of the Hirst zoology collection of artefacts.

Herein is a clear but thin line of huge ethical importance – the reason of death. For *Big Mouth* (2004) we displayed a taxidermic sheep and from our experience of sourcing this creature, one became aware of the sheer number of sheep killed in the meat factory business and the ease of purchasing one that was being taken to slaughter, in complete contrast to our current experience of trying to locate a seal in order for us to be able to film the taxidermy process. It is not known to the author if the lamb in *Away from the Flock* was killed for the work or if it was simply drawn from those being led to slaughter. However, it is known that for the artwork *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living (1991),* a shark in a formaldehyde class container was commissioned to be killed by Hirst (Vogel, 2006) specifically for the work and so indeed was the new 'replacement' shark (2006). Apart from the ethical question of killing, *Away from the Flock* brought a new way of looking at the *Marvel of the Age* – the 'Siamese' lamb specimen. The dominant spectacle was no longer the 'artwork', but instead the zoology specimen of a once living being and its provenance. The fact that it sat in a new context provided by the presence of Hirst's lamb heightened a sense of arrogance in the contemporary artwork, while at the same time it allowed the audience to 'look' differently. There was an excuse to look without sadness and shame, sadness for the difficulty that living this life would have entailed and the shame of being entertained by something that would have endured such a life. Instead, in the context of art, an allowance was given to stare.

It is in the spaces of recognizing and respecting difference that I understand and agree with Haraway's discourse on 'companion species' (Haraway, 2008). Furthermore, it is in the act of empathizing, often seen as part of anthropomorphism (Fudge, 2002b) that art can be a tool for transferral by emphasizing 'being' with the 'other' instead of projecting onto the 'other'. Haraway gives an example in her book about a study of baboons conducted in 1975 by Barbara Smuts for her PhD in anthropology. At the time, the essential approach of a good researcher/scientist in the field was one of neutrality and the ability of researchers to render themselves invisible. Smuts, however, learned that there was no way she could be present with the baboons and pretend not to be seen. This made her interested in seeing things 'through the eyes' of the baboons. Her question thus changed from "are the baboons social beings?" to "Is the human being?" (Haraway, 2008, 24)

In our own projects there has been a desire to change as little as possible, and instead to use the opportunities and conditions that already exist in our environment. Although we engage in object-making through photography and film, the desire has been to make these to a certain extent an acknowledgement of the language of popular culture and mass media. We have therefore deliberately allowed what could be termed technical imperfections into our photographic images and to remove them from the context of professional photography in which the photograph references the intrinsic notional values of the medium of painting. In our photographic works, the image, the framing of that image and the subject matter are primary – the execution of a chosen aesthetic within a context as described above. That said, attention to professionalism should not be undermined, as we go to great lengths to produce an object of quality, with precise qualities that fulfil our criteria. There is a further significance to these decisions as, in the context of site-specificity, we are not afraid of losing the authorship of our work as art works. When we first saw the *Private View* at the Bowes Museum it was a truly 'private' view, as we were given the opportunity to see the show before it had been fully installed. That is to say, the artworks were installed but not the labels indicating what or whose they were, which subsequently were to separate them from other objects in the museum

collection, nor was there a plan as to where the art works might be found. This proved for us to be an inspirational exercise in which 'looking' was directed entirely from within, instead of being directed by means of didactic information. Being left to one's own devices in this rich context of weird and, at times, almost kitsch-like museum collection of objects, called on personal skills and experience in navigating and 'placing' through one's own knowledge and understanding. Having no previous knowledge of the permanent collection and at that time not knowing the work of many of the artists, the skill one was left to rely upon most was intuition. Intuition is not considered a part of the process of reasoning, which again is one of the main elements most often referred to when distinguishing between human animals and non-human animals.

When installing the 10 polar bears in the Spike Island art space, we similarly took away all the zoology references – the labels, the dioramas, the only visual reference relating to their previous location being the plinth they stood on, which most museums conceal. In this way we drew on the post-humanist experience of our initial viewing of the *Private View* exhibition. What happened during the 'meeting' of a polar bear specimen and a member of our audience was the collective effect of the encounter. This cyclical relationship instigated a comparative reading between the specimens, as the individual attempted to make sense of them as once-living beings, and thus brought about a sort of communication between the polar bear specimens themselves. When researching the provenances or the histories relating to the polar bear specimens, we found some that had actually been connected during their lifetime. The Edinburgh and Sheffield specimens had been together at Edinburgh zoo and were stuffed by the same taxidermist. The Somerleyton specimens and the Norwich specimen were killed in the same expedition and brought back to the UK on the same ship. The Manchester bear and the Glasgow juvenile bear were both brought to the UK by Captain Milne of the Eclipse during the same period and could possibly have been killed in the same expedition although, as mentioned earlier, the Manchester specimen was a commission for the Museum collection. Nina and Misha, although taken from different locations (the zoo and the wild), spent 12 years together in Bristol Zoo where they now continue to cohabit as taxidermic specimens

in the in-house educational centre. Nina was at Bristol for 29 years and 17 of these she spent before Misha arrived. Interestingly, when it comes to zoos, it is not common to see a single animal in an enclosure – they normally live in pairs or groups. Similarly, when looking at natural history collections, mammal specimens are often shown in 'family' groups comparable with conventional human social structures. In this instance the polar bear is exceptional, as it is almost always shown as a single specimen, although some museums have acquired two that may be displayed together. Acknowledging that most living mammals need company for their psychological wellbeing, for the polar bear this is not the case. Polar bears are by nature loners and do not prefer the company of other polar bears in their own environment. Taking into consideration the need of the polar bear to roam and the distance they travel in a day in the wild, to then be kept in an enclosure – a fraction of that space – and in the company of another of their own kind, it is not surprising that many become insane (which is indeed the fate that befell Misha and Nina).

To emphasize the relational aspect of the project, an initial part of *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* was the planning of a one-day conference that took place half way through the show in Spike Island. Four speakers were invited to address issues we considered relevant to the work. The speakers were Ivars Silis who came to talk about his experience of life and hunting in the high arctic; Dr. Garry Marvin, anthropologist, who talked about trophy hunting and the afterlife of polar bears; Dr. Steve Baker who talked about animals in contemporary art; and Michelle Henning, who talked about the relationship between taxidermy and photography. The artists talked about the processes involved and the intentions for the project. Between thirty and forty people attended the conference participating in a lively debate. Further to this, Spike Island ran a programme of daily events focusing on issues of northern and arctic environments. In consultation with ourselves (the artists), the gallery manager and curator organized this programme. We delivered the first event the day after the opening of the show, but did not otherwise attend.

The act of negotiation is important to the practice, and was particularly so to *nanoq: flat out and bluesome,* during the gathering of information, gaining access in order to photograph specimens and not least in securing the loaning of the bears. Furthermore, the act of communicating or 'being in dialogue with' is intrinsic to relational art practice and thereby the process of making our work. It can be argued that all art is to some degree relational and that this quality is intrinsic to its making. The image as such is particularly relevant as a tool to generate empathy and sharing, both qualities leading to a form of consciousness-cohesion. In this way, visual art is different to, for example, TV and literature, which draw individuals into their private space of consumption, and also to theatre and cinema, in which groups of people gather together in silence in front of specific actions or images. It is only at allocated and often mediated times that there is an interaction between individuals in groups, discussing what has happened in front of their eyes. Art in most cases allows for immediate engagement and discussion – it activates sociability (Bourriaud, 2002, 16).

Reflection on the Limits: Self, Language and Culture

Part of being able to communicate is to know the language and the rules and regulations of the locality in question. Most of us are able to adapt to certain shifts in localities without it affecting our ability to communicate per se. However, there are minor, often cultural nuances, that can imbalance this activity and slightly fracture the picture. In Kosuth's work *One and Three Chairs* (1965), the chair in question is a particular Western European chair that does not invite much narrative, in that it is a chair representing all chairs, a somewhat neutral version of a chair. However, if displayed in some non-Western cultures this chair might carry messages of a different kind. Despite the supposed neutrality of Kosuth's chair, it is defined amongst other things in linguistic terms through its dictionary definition, which in itself affirms not only modernist values of a certain faith in objects, but more importantly exposes the anthropocentric values placed on art. Pratt (1992) redefined the linguistic term 'contact language' as 'contact zone' and took her meaning from the orignal term which refers to a 'bridge' across the barrier of language that is erected when there is a need to communicate, but no communal language exists. Art utilizes this space – it exists in spaces of deterritorialization, in which displacement has been instilled into the conceptual contact between the subject and the viewer/audience (U Chaudhuri & Enelow, 2006). Where neither language nor pictorial representations, as we have come to know them, have succeeded, 'relational' art is a possible way forward as it exposes connections 'between' and points to the nature of these connections. As an example, in a post-modernist reading, the image and the text in *One and Three Chairs* (Kosuth, 1965) are as 'objects' both crucially and individually unreliable representations. The meaning is to be found in the cyclical relationship evoked when moving between the two.

During the period of *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* in Spike Island, it was a conscious decision not to use the seminar room adjacent to the

exhibition space for the conference and the gallery talks. These instead took place 'in amongst' the installation and therefore 'in sight' of the work. In that way an encounter with the polar bear specimens was sustained and brought more directly into the dialogue. For this purpose we designed a large sculpture with a landscape reference (a hill or iceberg) at the back of the gallery, which functioned both as seating and an alternative, elevated viewing area. Woollen blankets were placed on the seats for people to keep warm in the cold venue. It should be noted that the audience, when wrapped up in the off-white woollen blankets, had a visual resemblance to the polar bears and thus added to the 'performative element' mobilised in this conceptual engagement.

The 'performative element' referred to here references both Pratt's space of 'contact zone' and Haraway's query about whom and what is being touched when one touches ones dog (Haraway, 2008, 35). It is important to note that touch, as used in this connection, is not just a physical contact, but an action that acknowledges reciprocity and responsibility. Donna Haraway's influential study on 'being with' or 'becoming with' is mainly centred in practice around her dog Cayenne. Many critical thinkers and writers (e.g. Regan, Singer) will argue that any form of domestication of sentient beings is unacceptable, as it reduces them to raw materials or tools. This form of living separates man from nature placing him/her firmly in dominion above 'other' beings, assigning rights to him/herself never available to those 'others'. What Haraway proposes, and I align myself with this, is to search for ways of living together in "multispecies sociality" (Haraway, 2008, 207). It is to some extent something that has been lost in the Western world, although when interviewing for the *seal* project, we repeatedly heard those interviewees who live off the land and the sea in the north of Iceland mention the importance of knowing how to live 'with' nature. This sort of stewardship of nature is common with people who have been brought up with or have lived for some time with nature, often in isolated locations where an existence with nature has to be negotiated and living has to be conducted through attention to a changing environment. To do anything else in these contexts is considered to challenge fate or things beyond human control. Nature is often personified into the one that gives and

takes. Animals are seen as part of nature in this overall custodial trope. I have already described how *Silli* the seal was rescued from a cruel death (being torn apart by seagulls) and the enormous amount of time and care that was taken by the family at Húsey to nurture him back to health and through infancy. Despite the people in Húsey being engaged in tourism through the running of a youth hostel on the farm, *Silli* was kept away from visitors and from becoming a spectacle. One of Haraway's proposals, for a study of being together across species, is agility training with dogs in which what she proposes instigates a mutual awareness where human and animal become attuned to each other and thus better able to have a more equal and indeed enhanced way of being together. To use Haraways phrase about her dog Cayenne: "she enriches my ignorance" (Haraway, 2008, 208).

(a)fly looked at spaces of 'togetherness' in which the pet environment within the environment of their owners was merged into one picture. In the chapter on 'Mapping', it is outlined how the project was shaped during the initial stages of site research. Three venues were involved in this project, connected in two different ways. Austurbæjarskóli (the school) was located in the targeted area and was thus activated during the process of the work, but the other two exhibition areas – the City Library and the National Museum – were on the edge of the City's centre. After an initial introduction to the staff at Austurbæjarskóli and after a meeting with the main art teacher Guðlaugur Valgarðsson, who became our contact person for the project, we designed and distributed a flyer introducing the project and inviting students across the school to participate. A cross-section of fifty volunteer pupils signed up for the project, which was run every second week over the spring term from January to May. In the first class, Mark Wilson did an introductory historical lecture on animals in art. I attended and supported the art class with Guðlaugur Valgarðsson on several occasions when in Iceland during this period.

A presence by the artists in the classes and at the school was important – something we had established as valuable in other socially engaged projects. An engagement of this kind from the artists assures the build

up of trust, helps to sustain enthusiasm, momentum, and some degree of control. During this period, we achieved this with the promise of an outcome in the form of a show in two respected and highly public exhibition venues. It also gave weight to the project that it was part of the Reykjavík Art Festival.

The group of fifty students remained relatively constant throughout the project. More students wanted to join after the project started, but to keep continuity and to minimise disruption to other classes in the school, the group was closed after the initial registration period. There was a lot of activity in the group, which was split into two morning sessions during the period from 9am to 12pm. As pupils had to register for the project, it was possible to get temporary leave of absence from other compulsory classes. There was some suspicion from other members of staff that this might be the reason for the popularity of the project. Whether there was truth in that or not, the dedication, joy and enthusiasm of the pupils was clearly visible during the classes and was manifested in the final works. Works according to the brief were executed as drawings, paintings or sculptures. The scale of the drawing was fixed to a certain paper size (A2), but the size of the sculpture varied greatly.

It was our opinion that we should try and allow as much free creativity as possible and the scale of the drawing within the paper was entirely the student's decision. The scale of the sculptural pieces was connected to the choice of materials, so those using clay would make small hand-size animals but those who moulded over chicken wire armatures made larger and generally less ornamental sculptures. During the development of the project we also decided to engage the pupils conceptually in the ideas behind *(a)fly*. We asked them to write about their animals considering their origins and a life outside of the domestic home. It was a particularly pertinent engagement, as in its catchment area Austurbæjarskóli has the largest number of immigrant families of all the schools in Reykjavík. Below is an example translated from Icelandic to English:

> The Animal is not a group animal it is a loner. It is always in Iceland and never goes to visit other countries. It goes walking during the day but

> sleeps mostly during the night. Sometimes cats need to take care with dogs but not always. The cat doesn't know how to make a 'home' for itself. It would make it out of grass, stones and wood. Some cats know how to live with dogs, fish and rabbits. I used to have a cat in my own country – it loved living with dogs, fish and a rabbit. Some cats are bad and scratch you. On the other hand most cats are good. Their favourite food is cat food (Ashani, 2006).

The most direct route from the National Museum of Iceland to Reykjavík City Library would take visitors along the shores of the city centre lake Tjörnin, a well-known spot for bird life – mostly ducks, swans, geese and seagulls. Most people born and bred in Reykjavík have been brought up feeding bread to these birds at some stage in their life. Today, on a Sunday morning or at any stage during the week for that matter, one can see adults and children alike with their bags of bread, feeding the birds. For us, it is this context that is of significance, as the hand that feeds the birds at Tjörnin could very easily be the same one that pulls the trigger on a gun to shoot a bird in a location outside the city. It was exactly the thought of that potential shift in the minds of the viewer, that we mobilised with the dual location of *(a)fly,* during the journey from the 'Shooters' at the National Museum, past Tjörnin to the 'void' animal 'dwellings' in the City Library. To quote Bourriaud (2002, 21), "contemporary artwork's form is spreading out from its material form: it is a linking element, a principle of dynamic agglutinations". In this journey between the two geographical locations, we as artists hoped to take control of the shift which happens in the mind of the viewer, as a result of the cyclical relationship when moving from looking at one thing to another. It was proposed as a cognitive experiment, similar to that of placing a number of unidentified frames of related but different material into the sequence of a moving image.

The role of Austurbæjarskóli was to create a platform from which to build a community of pet owners, and also instigate a dialogue between our work and that of the community and the audience. Despite that, we recognized that the 'Shooters' and the photographic 'dwellings',

are works in their own right and can exist independently away from the work of the pupils at Austurbæjarskóli. This was the case when it was shown in the Konstmuseum in Gothenburg in 2007and in the group exhibition 'Animal Gaze', curated by Rosemary McGoldrick in London in 2008. Significantly however, the local 'development' of the show by a participating audience was invited and met by denizens of Gothenburg during its time there. For 'Animal Gaze' at London Metropolitan University, because of the context of the show, which involves other artists (also working with animals) in association with a two-day conference of the same name, audience participation or interaction beyond conventional art viewing was not part of the work. The reasons for this are to a degree practical, as the show will tour to 5 other venues in the south of England in 2009 (Exeter, Plymouth) but it has also become an opportunity for us to explore further what began as a 'performative' lecture at the 2007 Cultural Studies Annual Conference in Oregon, USA, which tests the psychological boundaries in our eating and living relationships with animals.

Responses to *(a)fly* highlight a common difficulty of contextually-based art practices, in that the work requires from the host institution, a different level of attention. In a system of a conventional institutional hierarchy, any discussion about integration into the institution could be regarded as providing new opportunities for display instead of a contributing to the way the work was understood or read. In retrospect, our position as artists in the context of other contemporary art practices should have been made more clear at meetings with the Museum director and staff. Despite an unfortunate breakdown in communication, it is important to note that when we were finally confronted with the issues, the emotions registered by museum staff were in fact proof that the work, in its reduced state, was in fact succeeding. Museum staff including the director and a cluster of employees we were told, were offended by the juxtaposition and implicit relationship between shooters and pets. The work was considered threatening to the museum visitor and a request was made for it to be 'rearranged' to make a mini-display of the whole project. This we rejected which amongst other things resulted in the aforementioned communication difficulties.

The animal 'dwellings' at the City Library received a completely different and positive set of responses. Staff and directors were delighted with the show from the beginning and it received a good deal of positive attention and engagement from the library visitors as evidenced on the much used public notice-board included as part of the exhibition. There is no doubt that the work in the library, that is the animal 'dwellings' and the stories of the pupils in Austurbæjarskóli, was less confrontational and directly provocative than that in the National Museum. On the other hand, one can also say that within the collection on display at the National Museum there was already a number of confrontational artefacts on display – more so than could be seen on the shelves of the library, at least without digging through the contents of the books. Seen from the perspective of a community or socially engaged art project, it could be argued that the many roles the artists took on in this project, the lack of support structure when dealing with the community, and the experience of working with the National Museum staff, constituted a framework still capable of challenging the dominant social order and unlocking space to more direct autonomous action for the art work (Kwon, 2002, 152).

Relationality (as defined by Bourriaud) and social engagement in our work has begun to create 'socio-political' opportunities of significance. In some literature on non-human animals that both inspires and informs our artwork, there is a growing and ever more urgent search for communication and/or understanding between the species. Donna Haraway, in an interview with Nicholas Gane, expresses this as 'landing together in parallel worlds' (quoted in Gane, 2006). The term 'species', with its Darwinist connotations, is problematic for Haraway, although she uses it in *Companion Species* and in the title of her book *When Species Meet*. In my writing I have attributed communication as a social act to both human animals and non-human animals. Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway have written about the problem with the word 'social' and how it, as a noun, is a term only relating to humans, whereas as a verb it could begin to embrace new meaning. In Latour's 'multinaturalism' and Haraway's 'worlding' we find different parallel connecting worlds that intersect at times, but challenge current systems

of classification and hierarchy. It is not a utopia of seamless connections but a worlding that embraces the formerly unseemly, weak and different in a relational becoming – a worlding, the full consequences of which remain beyond us, but that is crucially desirable in the opportunity it provides for 'rethinking' the promise.

In June 2008, when I was in Iceland to film for the *seal* project, a polar bear arrived in the north of Iceland. This is an exceptionally rare thing to happen, all the more so at that particular time of the year. The last polar bear to be seen in the vicinity of Iceland (in 1993) was caught swimming in the country's territorial waters by the crew of an Icelandic fishing vessel. The terrible death that met this animal caused a law to be passed in Alþingi (Alþingi Íslands, 1994), the Icelandic parliament, making illegal the killing of polar bears on pack ice or while swimming at sea. During the last century 71 polar bears are recorded as having visited Iceland (Pedersen & Haraldsson, 1993) with 27 arriving during the exceptionally cold winter of 1917–18. The highest number of recorded visits is in the winter of 1880–81 when 63 visits were recorded. Altogether, from the beginning of the settlement 250 polar bear visits have been recorded, with the arrival of around 500 individual polar bears (Pedersen & Haraldsson, 1993). All polar bears caught in Iceland have been killed.

Immediately after hearing on the radio that a polar bear had been sighted on Þverárfjall in Skagafjörður, I contacted the Environment Agency of Iceland and the Ministry for the Environment, voicing my concern that it would be killed and asking for measures to be taken for its protection and hopefully its live capture and transferral to the arctic, its home territory. Despite my efforts and those of other likeminded observers, it was announced on the radio shortly afterwards that it had been shot dead. The explanation given was that the polar bear was a danger to the public due to its location. Since it was impossible to block off or control access to the area, and with fog approaching, a decision was made to kill it. At this stage one began to realize that despite the legislation, how badly prepared the country is for dealing with a visit of this kind.

Before this, the last polar bear coming ashore in Iceland was in 1988 in Fljót in the same district of Skagafjörður (Pedersen & Haraldsson, 1993). After the inhumane killing of the polar bear at sea in 1993, specialists started to formulate a plan for capturing polar bears in the country instead of killing them. This plan had however not been put into action in any form whatsoever, despite the current environmental climate and the forecast by many environmentalists that polar bears would be roaming to unknown territories in their search for food. What took people by surprise was the time of year when the polar bear arrived and that no pack ice had been detected in the neighbouring waters by the Icelandic meteorological office. According to MODIS images taken of the area by satellite, the nearest pack ice was 70 sea miles or 129 km away. This was confirmed by the Icelandic coast guard that arranged a special flight for the purpose of identifying pack ice on 18th of June 2008 (Veðurstofa Íslands, 2008). Polar bears have been recorded as swimming 100 km in eleven hours (Hersteinsson, 1998), making it possible that the Skagafjörður polar bear had swum from this pack ice – a distance of approximately 129 km.

On BBC radio 4, in a programme called 'World on the Move' earlier this year, there was an interview with a Swedish scientist called Tom Arnborn about approximately 200 polar bears that normally migrate from Wrangel islands in Far East Russia to the mainland in December. This year the polar bears never arrived on the mainland, as there was no pack ice. It is a complete mystery what happened to these polar bears, as the females need to be on the mainland to create dens for giving birth to their offspring. For the local Chukchi population of Cherskiy, this was similar to a spring bird not turning up, and the first time it has happened since people can remember. Tom Arnborn's reply, when asked if this was predictable, was that the effect of climate change had been predicted, but this was no longer in the future: "the future was already here" (Forrester & Westwood, 2008).

Following the kill, shocking images of the dead polar bear, reported to be a young adult male, were shown in the Icelandic and international press. Trophy-style images of shooters with their rifles in front of the

dead animal, as well as images of a mobile phone in the mouth of the polar bear, apparently to show the size of its canine teeth, were on the front pages of newspapers (Brynjólfsson, 2008). The news on television showed the animal being dragged on its back down the slope of the mountain, its four legs tied to a rope and pulled by four men. In the same news report they interviewed the taxidermist commissioned to stuff it. For me it was the closest I have come to culture shock. Where did all this come from – this brutality in the reportage, the macho attitude, this fear of the unknown that suddenly seemed to surface in the Icelandic society? I tried to connect via the internet to people who condoned this activity and established a 'cause' called 'Keep Polar Bears Alive – to protect 'lost' polar bears outside of their territory". The three objectives of the cause are:

1. polar bears should be sedated not killed
2. polar bears should be returned to a safe environment
3. there should be an international jury for the protection of polar bears

Two weeks later on the 16th of June, having just returned from filming in Húsey, another polar bear was sighted in the same district, but this time it was at the end of the peninsula, on a farm property called Hraun. A young girl, Karen Helga Steinsdóttir, a daughter of the farmer, first identified the bear. She was walking from the house to the byre when she noticed her dog behaving strangely. When following the dog she noticed what she took to be a plastic wrapping from a hay bale in the grass amongst the eider ducks, which on closer inspection turned out to be a sleeping polar bear (Huldudóttir, 2008). This time there seemed to be real national pressure to try and save the animal – to sedate it and transport back to its 'homeland'. A local businessman came forward offering to pay the enormous costs involved in this activity, as nothing was at hand. This time it was not possible to blame lack of safety, as the police and the local rescue units could easily section off the area. There was of course the safety of the family at Hraun, whose farm was on the land that had been sealed off and the polar bear was in the middle of their eider-down farmland. There was, however, no panic to be detected from the farmer when interviewed in the press, although he acknowledged that some

damage to his resources was likely. What transpired was that there was no weapon and no sedative in the country suitable for the job.

Probably due to the short time the Ministry of the Environment had to act on this matter, it chose to look for advice to specialists in Denmark, to be precise at Copenhagen Zoo (Greenland is a former colony and now county of Denmark). A specialist was flown to Iceland, arriving with his ten year-old son – perhaps a rather unusual day at a 'zoo'. A specially designed cage was flown to Iceland later, reportedly made of steel and weighing over 250 kg. On the evening of the 16th I called the policeman in charge of the polar bear action at Hraun, Stefán Vagn Jónsson, and requested as an artist working with polar bears to be allowed to be present on site when the bear would be captured. He gave me permission to be present and a promise that I would receive the same treatment as press. It was therefore on the morning of 17th of June (The Icelandic National Independence Day) that I drove for four hours to Hraun, with my camera, video camera, binoculars and a copy of the book *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* in case I needed to verify my right to be present. On arrival, a group of approximately fifteen people including myself was kept at approximately three km distance by the rescue unit, which had used their car as a roadblock. Still it was possible to identify the animal in the distance and to see more clearly through binoculars and camera lenses.

It dawned on me that this was the first time I had seen a live polar bear in the 'wild' and the incredible oddity of this being in my own country. While we waited, an occasional car arrived, to be allowed through the roadblock to the homestead at Hraun where a team of specialists was overseeing the proceedings. These people were an expert marksman; the local vet; and of course the couriers of the cage, which arrived on the back of a pick-up with attendant police escort, lights and blasting siren. During this time I engaged in conversation with members of the press and some of the men and women in the rescue group. During a debate amongst those present I used the opportunity to show the book *nanoq: flat out and bluesome, A Cultural Life of Polar* bears and to discuss our project. From the discussions with those present, I observed that the

younger generation was much more open to a polar bear having a right to live whereas the older generation was filled with fear and engaged in personal attacks – derision instead of discussion. Just before the cage arrived, a helicopter touched down at the farm with the Danish specialist polar bear anaesthetist. Shortly after this the cage passed through the roadblock, the Minister for the Environment Þórunn Sveinbjarnardóttir and her team of specialists arrived on the scene. There was much telecommunication conducted amongst the team of men in the wake of the Minister arriving, and it transpired to my amazement that permission had not been granted for the polar bear to be taken to Greenland. What I was told was that the government of Denmark needed to be sure that the polar bear actually came from Greenland (to the west) and not Svalbard, (to the east), which belongs to Norway and could carry different diseases and have different behavioral patterns to polar bears in Greenland. Furthermore, the Danish government wanted to be sure that the polar bear did not carry a disease that it might have picked up on the way or in the area where it was now resting, i.e Hraun.

There was a lot of discussion about the fact that this area had the most recent scrapie incident in Iceland, and that the polar bear might have helped himself to a sheep or two. No one had however seen the polar bear eat anything other than (possibly) eggs from the eider ducks for the 24 hours it had been watched, and there were strict instructions from the Danish zoologist that it should not be fed by humans. This, according to information, would make it associate humans with food and make attacks on the same more likely. Around 4.30pm we noticed a jeep drive in the direction of the polar bear, where it lay and had apparently been since very early morning. Shortly afterwards another jeep drove more or less straight towards the bear whereas the other car had gone behind it and parked at some distance to its left.

When the polar bear saw the car come towards it, it ran briefly into a lagoon and then out again and away from the two jeeps that now began following it. Before long it ran onto the sand spit between another small lagoon and the sea. This set panic amongst the rescue team where we were. Suddenly there was a lot of shouting and people were being

ordered to go into their cars, turn around and drive away. Still the polar bear was a long distance away from us and I hesitated turning the car, looking at the polar bear, which by now was walking slowly.

Then suddenly there was a shot followed immediately by another and the animal lay on the ground. An utter silence was on the site amongst the press and we all hoped that it had been tranquilized, the possibility of which was supported by that fact that the third jeep with the cage arrived on site close to the polar bear and at least two other men were standing outside their jeeps. Many of the press had missed the shooting in the panic of moving cars and obeying the rather neurotic orders from the rescue commissioner, so I left the car to draw attention to what was happening. After most cars had stopped I walked to the car of the Minister and her team, the phone ringing almost immediately.

The first news we got was that it had been shot as it was wounded and was running towards the sea. It simply made no sense to me. Although there are many gaps in the overall narrative of this event, not least regarding the role of the zoologist from Copenhagen Zoo and the final proposed destination of the animal should it have been captured, from my observation I found some comfort in seeing that there were people there who had genuinely wanted to safeguard this bear. On the other hand I felt acutely aware that the specialist advice and skills to conduct such a capture were not in place at this time. At one time the Minister had turned to me and asked who I was and what I was doing there. I had used the opportunity to tell her about *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* and asked if she would allow me to present her with a book. She accepted, requested that I signed the book. A press photographer who was present recorded this on camera.

On driving home, I felt overcome by the same compulsion that had kickstarted the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project in the beginning, when seeing all the hidden zoology specimens (amongst them polar bears) in Glasgow: to find ways to use our art work to draw sympathetic attention to this animal. Back at my computer in Reykjavík I began blogging about the incident, giving my opinion on amongst other

things, the official blog of Össur Skarphéðinsson the Minister for Industry, Energy and Tourism. Össur is well informed about polar bears, as he was the Environment Minister in charge when the polar bear was killed at sea in 1993 and was responsible for proposing the law (Alþingi Íslands, 1994) banning the killing of polar bears at sea or on pack ice. As a consequence of my writing on the internet I was invited by the radio presenter Hjálmar Sveinsson to attend a weekly radio programme on the main Icelandic radio station called *Krossgötur* (Crossroads) together with Þórunn Sveinbjarnardóttir, the Minister for the Environment. This episode, a one hour programme, was broadcast on 21st of June 2008 and is called "Ísbirnir, eða vita konur ekkert í sinn haus?" (Polar bears, or are women stupid?), which was a subtle way of addressing the machismo that became apparent in the debate about what to do with polar bears that arrive in Iceland and followed the killing at Hraun (Sveinsson, 2008).

This episode with the polar bear in Iceland is in many ways a seminal moment in my investigation into the 'eclipse' of the animal. There I was a witness to the kill of this polar bear. I observed it being shot and saw it fall to the ground, still believing at the time that it had been tranquilized and not killed. When the kill was confirmed I had no interest in inspecting the dead polar bear as I couldn't imagine what either the spectacle itself or my photographic image might add to the many that would be taken and appear in the media. Reflecting back on this experience in the context of this research, I propose that for me the 'real' animal seen there for the first time as a living being was eclipsed and replaced in my mind by a constructed 'image' of a living polar bear. Some of this can be explained by identifying it, personally, in the distance as a white blob 'being polar bear' but when seen through the photographic zoom lens it became an individual with obvious polar bear characteristics. When it had been killed I continued to observe it through the photographic lens although I didn't photograph it. In this way I saw the polar bear's death as an image through the lens and did not experience it as 'live' death. I knew how it would look as an image but didn't see the need to experience it as dead, through touching and feeling it. One could of course say that it was out of respect for the

animal that I didn't want to participate in making it a spectacle in 'death' or that I didn't trust my ability to contain my own emotions, having seen press images of the treatment of the dead polar bear shot a couple of weeks earlier. This latest saga on polar bears in Iceland is clearly not art (at least not yet), but still in every moment of my presence on site, I was there as an artist with the polar bear, this framed animal, oscillating between being both the subject and object of my investigation.

In this chapter I have tried to explore the role of communication in the processes of making our artwork, from realization and display to its after effects in society connected to critical and political engagement. It is clear that without *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* I would not have been given the platform to speak nationally and with authority on the plight of polar bears nor on the importance of art as a serious tool for the investigation of social and in this instance, environmental issues.

Figure 41

Figure 42

Figure 43

Figure 44

Figure 45

Figure 46

Figure 47

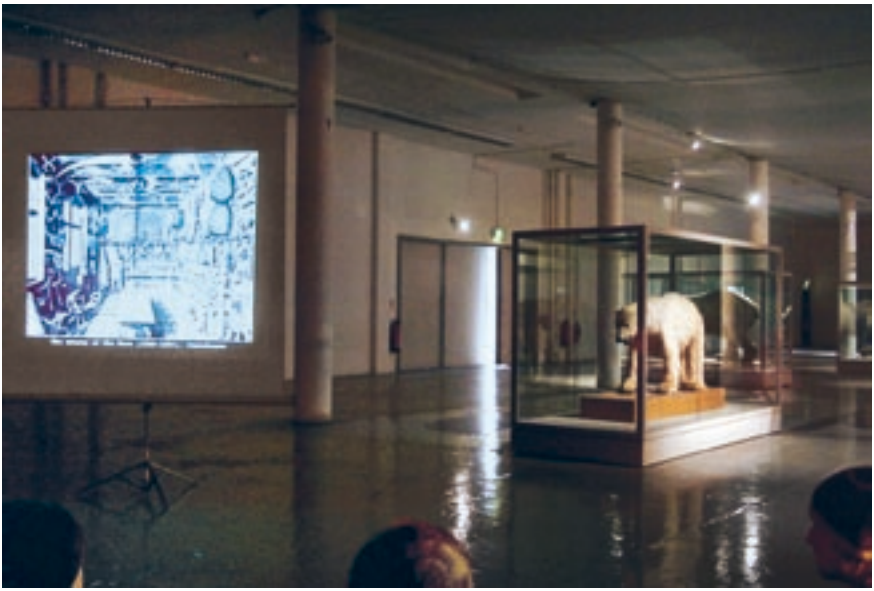

Figure 48

Figure 49

Figure 50

Figure 51


FÖRSVUNNEN!
Har någon sett denna lilla ljusa chi hua hua tik? Hon försvann från Heden fredagen den 25/
2008. Hon är ca 20 cm hög, väldigt skygg och bär
ett rosa halsband med en silverplatta. Om ni har
sett henne snälla hör av er!
Ring tel. 0736295710 eller +31653467074
Obs! Hittelön!

Figure 52


Seashorebuffet
Hamarsbúð
23.june 2007
Sealmeat
Sealbacon fresh and salted
Sealfins sour
Whalemeat roasted
Whale meatballs
Catfish dried
Catfish roe balls
Halibut smoked
Trout smoked and graved
Trout meatballs
Shark
Ray pie
Dried cod
Herring
Herring salad with red beets
or curry
Seabird
Lamb roasted
Sheep graved
Meat pie from lamb meat
Sheep testicals smoked
Lamb tongue smoked
Horsemeat graved
Chicken eggs sour
Duck eggs
Seabird eggs
Potato salad
Rye bread (sweet)
Flat cake
Wheat bread
Whole meal bread
Deepfried bread
Blood pancakes
Blood sausage with raisins
Oatmeal cookies
Whole meal cookies
Icelandic moss cookies
Milk soup with Icelandic moss
Rhubarb pudding with cream
Kolostral milk boiled
From sheep and cow
Skyr homemeade
Hambri

Figure 53

VI. FINAL COMMENTS

In the Abyss: Relational Opportunities between Reality and Representation

Throughout history, art has concerned itself with the 'real', its symbolism and different modes of representations. Kosuth's phenomenological and linguistic exploration in the 1960s of the three registers of representation made visible the discrepancies in definitions of the real, without attempting to reveal the nature of this disparity. Kelly took this one step further in challenging Kosuth's focus on the object and placing it instead on the conditional properties of the object. In our own (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson's) art practice we are in fact referencing both Kosuth's and Kelly's methodologies in order to uncover and investigate particular sets of conditions, circumstances and relationships that exist between specific objects, their pictorial representation and linguistic referents. In opposition to Kosuth but with reference to Kelly, we have replaced the object with a subject. Furthermore, in our projects *nanoq: flat out and bluesome, (a)fly,* and *seal,* it is this subject-specificity that enables the unlocking of a series of anthropocentric misrepresentations.

In the *Introduction*, I referred to the importance in this research of the relationship between the artwork and my writing. It was never my aim to offer solely a theoretical critique or deconstruction of the art practice through the writing, but rather to apply the same sense of integrity to the writing as to the practice. The O.E.D. defines integrity as "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles [and also] the state of being whole and undivided" (1998, 949). In this sense, 'integrity' as 'transparency' allows the processes of making art to be revealed, as simultaneously it reveals a strategic 'lack of integrity' implicit in the dematerialization and the fragmentation necessary in the processes of being an artist. This raises an interesting parallel to the subject matter of this research, the 'meeting' with the non-human animal in which weakness and fragility translate as strength, providing access in turn to an understanding of common lifeworlds. Haraway (2008) proposes that this 'encounter' happens in a moment in a process of change, when

many connected worlds and contexts link up or are joined together. The means by which one arrives at this state are, however, not predetermined or predictable, but as such provide the subject and direction of our practical research. Art has become a rallying point in contemporary animal studies and the consequent issue of human/animal relationships, the tools of art reaching beyond conventional methodologies and understanding made possible through language.

Broglio, in a lecture at the Glasgow Film Theatre on 28th of November 2008, proposed 'idiocy' as one of three useful preconditions for the meeting of humans and animals. His other two were surfaces and umwelts or environments, both ideas illustrated on this occasion by referencing our artworks; respectively the skins of the empty polar bear bodies in *nanoq:flat out and bluesome,* and the dwellings in *(a) fly*. In relation to idiocy, his concern was how to invoke and strategize vulnerability? To begin the task of unpacking this question, he turned to the artist Marcus Coates and his work *Finfolk* (2003). In this video work Coates, dressed in casual human clothing, is seen to come out of the sea and climb onto the pier. He paces up and down the pier whilst ranting a monologue. A close-up of his mouth gives this prominence in the performance. It quickly becomes apparent that his speech, seemingly a stream of invective, is complete gibberish. When after some time, a distant group of human beings approach, the 'selkie' climbs down the ladder and returns to the sea. The incomprehensible monologue offers the audience a clue to the key distinction that Coates is in fact not a human impersonating a seal, but a seal become human. In another work, *The Journey to the Lower World* (2004), Coates took on the role of the shaman. Living and working in a tower block as part of the 'Further up in the Air' residencies, funded by the Liverpool Action Housing Trust and the Art Council of England he offered his services as a shaman to the community, whose homes were awaiting demolition and who themselves were awaiting relocation. Coates travelled in his shamanic state down the tower block and 'below ground' looking for a 'protector of the site' as requested. Initially executed as a ritualistic performance, through our subsequent gaze, the work takes on a further layer – in viewing the video work, the new audience watches his

audience watching him perform. We, as the audience of the video work, are therefore not only watching him perform, but every bit as much, the response of the audience to his performance. Although the work is humorous, it is the vulnerability and the uncertainty in the faces of these individuals together with their dislocation on the LCD screen, within the clinical environment of the contemporary gallery, that completes the transferral of Coates's audience in the video to a condition of 'otherness', giving them animalistic faces on display, through a glass screen in redolence of zoo exhibits.

Three attempts, like Finfolk and *Journey to the Lower World,* could be said to rely on some form of idiocy to carve out a space in which the encounter with the animal goes beyond conventional human values and ideas regarding the space of the other, in an attempt to explore new connectivities. In Treadwell's own video footage from which the film *Grizzly Man* was largely constituted, he can be seen to 'encounter' the bears in a spirit of equality, landing him simultaneously in "concatenated worlds" (Gane, 2006, 145). The fact that he met his death at the claws of this species is not a desired end and does not reflect the post-humanist interspecies perspective pursued in this research. In the film Treadwell's 'idiocy' (or rash exuberance) is marginalized by Herzog and used to draw again a well recognized line in the space between those preconceived states of nature and culture. His death is used as a demonstration of the consequences that await those who cross this perceptual line. It is in fact this modernist attitude of separation between such polarities that activates the fear of the other and thus lends a particular purpose to the Herzog film. Had another perspective been drawn it might have foregrounded the achievement of Treadwell and the role that his particular, scientifically transgressive, 'amateur' approach played in challenging the boundaries between species.

Only a couple of days after the first polar bear was shot dead in Iceland in June 2008, a television news channel in Iceland announced, that "it will not be long until teddy will be standing on all four again" (Ch.2, 2008) and featured an interview with the taxidermist who had been given the task of stuffing it. He described the difficulty in stuffing such

a large animal and some of the processes involved, mainly those of skinning and preserving skeletal material. On display in the African Hall at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, is a stuffed gorilla in a display entitled 'The Giant of Karisimbi'. Haraway (2004) argues that what made the killing of the gorilla so special for Akeley, is rooted in the similarity between the human and the animal, and the need to confront "the 'other' the natural self" (Haraway, 2004, 159). Reading about the life of Carl Akeley and the gorilla hunt, which Akeley believed to be the highest achievement of his life, and subsequently its display in the African Hall, provides us with an account of the merciless killing of these animals. At one stage, in a description of the death of a four-year old gorilla, already terrified after his mother had been shot in front of him, it is proposed to the reader that this had a fundamental effect on Akeley. "In that face he saw kinship, intelligence, and sensitivity. Akeley had a growing sense of being the "savage," the "aggressor," the "murderer"" (Bodry-Sanders, 1998, 191). When standing in the American Museum of Natural History, the act of killing is not what we see – in fact we see the appearance of life, an aestheticized picture of a seamless continuum. We are so used to seeing animal sufferings and death in film as a metaphor for human-oriented emotions that we don't any longer register suffering as such and that in this process, fiction and reality collapse into each other (Burt, 2002). It is thus in this collapsed space of fiction and reality that the eclipse of the 'real' animal by the 'representational' animal occurs. If Kosuth was concerned with the discrepancies in the representation of the 'real', it could be said that Jannis Kounellis *Senza titolo* (1969)[11], in which 12 horses are placed into a gallery, demanded not only a conceptual engagement, but set the stage for an encounter in which the 'real' is experienced not only as an image, but through other senses such as smell, hearing and touch.

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11 Jannis Kounellis's, Senza titolo consisting of twelve live horses in a gallery space was staged again at Art Cologne (2006) and before that in the Whitechapel Art Gallery as part of A Short History of Performance (Part I: 15 - 21 April 2002).

In its 'confrontation between reality and representation' *Senza titolo* (Kounellis, 1969) still has relevance, as it is stimulated by the intensely mediated contemporary Western world we live in (Tarsia, 2007). A controversial, more recent work entitled *Exhibit No. 1* by Guillermo Vargas (2007) involving an emaciated and dying stray dog, tied to a short rope in the corner of the gallery, was shown in 2007 at Galería Códice in Nicaragua. Visitors were told not to feed the dog nor give it water, thereby configuring the process of its death as the focus of the exhibit. *Helena,* a work by Marco Evaristti (2000) originally shown at the Trapholt Museum of Art in Denmark, also puts death into the context of an art institution. The work, an interactive installation comprising a dining table with ten water-filled kitchen blenders, each containing a living goldfish. The blenders were operational, giving the audience the choice whether or not to switch them on and kill the fish, thus becoming active participants in the 'fulfilment' of the work. Evaristti has said that his idea for the installation was to divide the museum visitors into three groups: "The idiot, who pushed the button, the voyeur, who loves to watch and the moralist" (Hofbauer, 2007). A court case in Denmark following the showing of *Helena* declared that blending a goldfish involved no suffering and would lead to a painless death by the animal in question (Aloi, 2008). By this ruling, it is made clear that the legal system is not concerned about the death itself, but only with the possible pain caused in that 'death'. In this respect *Helena* and *Exhibit No. 1* differ at least to some extent. The question of how it might be for a fish to be placed into and to live in a blender for an unspecified period was never asked, whereas we know for a fact that denying *Exhibit No. 1* water and necessary care so obviously needed, engaged everyone concerned – artist, gallery managers, audience – in an act of cruelty. From an ethical point of view, a human animal and/or non-human animal, as a sentient or a sapient being, is considered to have intrinsic value, which is a quality indispensable in moral, political and social discourse (Lynn, 1998). In respect of a goldfish or a dog, there is no moral difference whether the living being is of a species used to sitting with us on the sofa or one residing in a glass tank on the living room sideboard.

When deciding to intersperse with this text the account of a hunt to exist in parallel with an unravelling of the processes involved in the making of art, the intention was to set up a strategy of contrasts. Written in the present tense, the role of this hunting diary is to place the reader imaginatively in the moment and place of that 'real' engagement with a wilderness environment and subject, as a foil to the analytical and cognitive approach of academia.

> At the end of the day – after the successful hunt we have gathered at my place. I cook a braised liver – I had removed it from the body almost immediately as that doesn't have to hang. It's taken out along with the other intestines. The heart and liver we keep, but the rest of the guts are left in the forest for other animals in the woods to eat. The fire is burning in the living room and the cold beer's in the fridge (Boardy, 2008).

As is evident in the hunting diaries, the death of the animal is not the end of this hunting project. It is however very clearly an end of a life experienced fully, in that what is killed, is skinned, gutted and consumed. For some carnivores it could proposes a holistic approach to living, what Haraway refers to as "knowing well and eating well" (2008, 300).

In the images of 'shooters' in *(a)fly,* we referenced the 'death' of Dugmore's rhinoceros – shot immediately after it had been captured on camera in an everlasting attack – by shooting the shooters with a camera. In common with the image of the charging rhinoceros, we may regard the portrait photographs of people from prisons or concentration camps who know they have been condemned to die – although crucially distinct in respect of their own knowledge – as being nevertheless permanently and fatefully suspended in time. Looking at these photographs one sees death in the eyes of those concerned, frozen forever, waiting to die (Sontag, 2004). The photograph thus insinuates itself in the gap between the one actively looking and the one who is the object of looking (Burt, 2008).

Katarzyna Kozyra for her graduate project in 1992 produced a pyramid made up of a taxidermied horse, a dog, a cat and a rooster apparently each having reddish fur or plumage matching the colour of her own hair (Kovac, 2000). The work attracted a lot of controversy as Kozyra decided to engage in the killing of some of the animals herself that is the horse and two roosters (as she could not decide which one she favoured for the artwork). Further to this she videotaped the killing of the horse to be shown on a monitor as part of the installation. Kozyra has disclosed that all the animals concerned were destined to die thus making the kill ethically acceptable to her and consequently the participation in the act more 'honest'. The fact that she did not apply the same principle to all the animals concerned and that only one killing was videotaped – demonstrates a resolute focus on her behalf on the components necessary for the completion of her artwork and raises the importance of precision in deciding what we as artists reveal to an audience and what we withhold.

Sue Coe is an artist who takes an ethical stand against the killing of animals. She is an artist animal activist, who has been making works with socio-political content since the 1970s. One of her more well known works is the series of drawings from US slaughterhouses – the result of years of negotiating access to slaughterhouses to draw the slaughtering of animals. She says; "the meat packers could see what I was drawing, it was being drawn on the kill floor, and was the truth, it was not my ' taking' a photo, and 'taking it away from them... if they wanted the drawing they could have it" (Coe, 2008, 57). In this way Coe places the meat packers as guarantors of her 'truth' and authenticity. For the audience however the fact that it is a drawing and not a photograph has little bearing in determining its relationship to 'truth' – if anything, as a consequence, it is likely to be read more as part of the imaginary or interpreted than the 'real'.

Torture or affliction as a spectacle has been a popular canonical subject in painting, often depicted with people in the painting acting as witnesses and others that looked somewhere else to give the impression of such torment depicted as being part of a wider continuum. One of

the most notorious and powerful series of war drawings is Goya's *The Disasters of War* (1810-1820). In this work, torment is no longer a spectacle, but by design, the atmospheric quality of the images draws the viewer into a state of numb complicity with the horrors of conflict, engendering sympathy, sorrow and ultimately a sense of impotence and bleakness. To counteract any vicarious desire to look at the images, individual captions below each one tell in words how awful this is and in that sense questioning the very activity of looking, in which the viewer is engaged (Sontag, 2004). The captions used for photographic images, on the other hand, have tended to be of a different nature where more characteristically, more prosaic information relating to date, place and name might be given. Because of the way we read photographs as 'real' representations, the inference is that there is no need to speak for or qualify such an image.

Our (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson's) ethical position in art is that we do not kill (or hurt) animals for the purpose of our art practice. We are not interested in working with the multiple processes of 'real' death, although death and eclipse as such are present and mobilized in the work. Steve Baker (2006) asks the question if contemporary art can productively address the killing of animals. He quotes John Simons and his argument that an artwork that includes a dead animal body cannot "usefully constitute a questioning entity" (Steve Baker, 2000, 9) and therefore poses' an 'epistemological problem', as in such works he can only see 'a dead animal'. One of the reasons why works like *Exhibit No. 1* and *Helena* are emotionally disturbing is that they play on our conscience through the process-based nature of the work. Simply displaying an already-dead goldfish or dog in the context of the gallery would not have engaged the moral consciousness of the audience in the same way. There is no doubt that dead animal bodies or images of dead animal bodies are highly charged objects that carry strong symbolic weight. For me, a dead body, in the context of art, may indeed constitute a questioning entity in the relationship between art and death. Steve Baker's claim that "there is troublingly little physically to differentiate the animal skins used in a fur coat, a hunting trophy head or an artwork..." (Steve Baker, 2000, 9) is to a degree put to test in this

thesis, with the addition of the transposed hunting diaries. The strong emphasis put on process in our work does not signal any renouncement of the importance to us of realizing an artwork with materiality and form. Both process and 'artwork' alike serve together to act as mediating devices in respect of social and political conditions in our relations with and to non-human animals.

One of the works in the *seal* project (Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 2008b) is a video projection showing the last part of the process of stuffing a seal. The work focuses on the hands of a taxidermist at work and the final 'clothing' of the prepared polystyrene form in its seal skin – stitching it together, infilling with clay for muscle, wire for the moveable extremities, and artificial eyes. It made me consider again our objective of prising apart preconceptions regarding the animal and the animal-other. Here we were in the taxidermist studio, following this transformation of a dead animal body to a three dimensional representation of itself as mass and form. When looking through the viewfinder of the video camera, the hands of the taxidermist filled the frame, carefully and skilfully closing seams, touching, stitching and patting the new object-animal into shape. Moving the eye away from the viewfinder one could absorb the surrounding space and the other already or partly stuffed animals and animal parts, some overlooking the table now where the work was being done. There stood the taxidermist in a white lab coat and surgical gloves, working on his creation. Several seals had occupied this table, along with puffins, foxes, salmon, deer, and various other animals. In the end it would be a perfect job configured to our specifications. We had studied the movement of seals in 'real' life and on camera and wanted our seal to appear playful, alert, even slightly and suddenly wary – and further, to carry all that was possible of the beauty of the animal when alive.

Referencing 'seamlessness' and the supposed capacity of taxidermic specimens, despite their intrinsic imperfection, to represent a glimpse of life having been lived, what would the process of the 'seams' coming together, through the use of lens-based media really convey? In the context of its execution where everything described above, bar the hands and skin exist outside the frame, what kind of questions, regarding

human and animal relations evolve from this process, which through its own means pulls focus on the very act of that 'eclipse'?

For me there is no doubt that, by shifting the focus away from representation of the 'other' to a relational focus of the human/animal encounter, the possibility is raised of a more holistic understanding of the environment around us. Part of this enquiry will involve taking wrong turns, a natural consequence of exploring 'reality' and our understanding of it through the making of art. To identify, occupy and function dynamically within a relational space involves not only contemporary perspectives. In order to understand the 'here' and 'now', as in other fields, knowledge of precedent and location are crucial, contextual tools. By preparing the ground well, both questioning and provocation may be guided intelligently to tease out and test the provenances and variable nature of ethics, so that boundaries can be contested, rendered unstable and opened to the possibility of change.

Figure 54

List of Illustrations

Figure 01 Al Holmes Taxidermy Museum, Alabama, (2007)

Figure 02 Polar bear skeleton re-constructed for our exhibition at the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery (2006)

Figure 03 Polar bear skeleton re-constructed for our exhibition at the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery (2006)

Figure 04 *nanoq:flat out and bluesome*, transport from Hancock Museum, Newcastle Upon Tyne (2004)

Figure 05 *(a)fly* – process image for *The Shooters* (2005)

Figure 06 *(a)fly* – drawing by Emil Þór Andrason as part of Austurbæjarskóli project (2005)

Figure 07 *(a)fly* – photograph of Jón Sigurðsson's pet bird, on display at the National Museum of Iceland (2006)

Figure 08 *seal* – research for *Blubber,* exhibition in the Icelandic Seal Centre (2007)

Figure 09 *seal* – *Three Attempts* still from video (2008)

Figure 10 *seal* – detail of installation in *Blubber,* exhibition in the Icelandic Seal Centre (2007)

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