

# Art, artistic research and the animal question

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Recent developments in cultural studies and other areas of the Humanities and Social Sciences point to an ‘animal turn’ (Armstrong & Simmons, 2007). An increasing interest in posthumanist, non-anthropocentric approaches toward exploring the multiple roles and meanings of animals in human lifeworlds. As a creative area of expression, reflection and critique, art, (both practice and theory), is equipped with particular and effective tools to posit new questions and approaches to human-animal studies. This essay focuses on areas of contemporary art that place “the question of the animal” (Wolfe [ed.] 2003) centrally and engage in the practice of human-animal boundary work, identity production, and meaning. We conclude with a discussion on possible implications for artistic research.

## Representing the non-human

Visual imagery and other forms of representation of animals with diverse purposes including commercial, instructional, aesthetic or entertainment are encountered everywhere in Western society. These representations are not merely passive visual artefacts; they have an effect on both the viewer and the referent (i.e. the animal). Our production and consumption of visual representations of animals has a profound bearing on both what animals and humans are and can be in the world, and helps structure our perceptions and relations. Through representations of animals, not only are animal identities and positions in human society constructed, reconstructed and mediated, our space for action is also regulated in relation to these positions.

In representations as well as in 'real life', oscillation between the animals' radical alterity and their perceived 'humanness', (in which we may imagine reflections of ourselves) creates the grounds on which our visual consumption of animals gains meaning. Central to this meaning-making process is a simultaneous confusion and reassertion of human-animal species boundaries (Desmond, 1999).



Tim Flach  
Punk  
Courtesy of artist

In her analysis of Tim Flach's animal photography, Kramer (2005) makes this point very clear. She sees Flach's images as a visual fabrication of emotion, making his animal models vehicles for anthropomorphic projection in the spectator. Flach's bat portraits, for instance, were described by the Press as the most 'human' photographs of the year, at the 2001 awards ceremony of London's Association of Photography (ironically a competition in which most other entries actually showed human beings). While Flach's photographs temporarily blur species-specific frames of reference, they also consolidate a separation

between the human spectator and the animal model, by “a distancing mechanism that instrumentalises the animal form for the sake of momentary emotional gratification” (Kramer, 2005 p.166). The emotional effect elicited by Flach’s anthropomorphically coded animal images actually relies, paradoxically, on a *discrepancy* between human and animal, making the affective relation taking place not mutual, but one-sided on the viewer’s part. (Kramer, 2005; cf. Desmond, 1999). Kramer argues that the visual strategy of Flach’s pictures is consonant with the corporate agenda of the agency to which he is affiliated, with the ultimate goal of “boosting consumption through emotional manipulation” (Kramer, 2005 p. 167). To Kramer, Flach in his artistic process is engaged in a reification of a web of power arrangements where his photographic disciplining of the animals aids the agency’s aim of manipulating consumer emotion and behavior.<sup>1</sup> This visual strategy of power attempts to structure, not only our symbolic relationships with animals, but also their material basis and the space within which we may respond.

The dialectical process of relating to animal representations as simultaneous assertions of anthropomorphic identification and anthropocentric separation, is facilitated by the image of the animal face as a surface open to inscription of any human idea, condition, or act (cf. Baker, 2001). The referential indeterminacy of the animal face is used in the visual and textual rhetoric of commercial messages of animal industries, where the image of the (ostensibly ‘cared-for’) animal has been appropriated; indeed, almost fetishised, and infused with a very different idea of reality other than what is materially provided. Here, the image of the animal *face* often acts as a cover-up for how the animal *body* will be put to use in human institutions and enterprises. The animal image is turned into a false metaphor for human benevolence, with all contradictions disavowed.

Art has the capacity to expose the impossibility of representing the animal *as* animal, free from human presuppositions and intentions. This is not necessarily an issue of anthropomorphism. A literary work that emphasises this point is Deborah Levy’s BSE tale *Diary of a Steak* (1997). Written during the course of the BSE crisis in Britain, *Diary of a Steak* tells the story of BSE from the perspective of an infected cow who has been transformed into a chunk of meat. Its allusions to psychoanalysis, uncontrollable emotional states, and distorted communication, recast as a theatrical, textual performance, connected on one level to Jane Calow’s essay in *ArtMonitor* 1/07 on the structures of trauma and artistic work. The fragmentary, almost dadaistic writing style of *Diary of a Steak* underlines one of Calow’s points, that some fundamental problems of representation: in McKay’s (2006) interpretation, the radical textuality of *Diary of a Steak* (based on, in McKay’s apt formulations, grazing, rumination, digestion and excretion of its main literary source of inspiration<sup>2</sup>) renders animals ‘essentially unreadable’ (p. 166). Representations of animals in art may play around with, and indeed mess up notions of authenticity, while at the same time ask questions about how animals can be addressed and *given voice* in the act of visual and textual representation (as well as material utilization).

While the extraordinary prose of *Diary of a Steak* can be read as an experimental literary attempt to reconstruct the biography of a cow destined for slaughter, the research work of Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson in nanoq: flat out and bluesome (2006a) approaches a similar objective from a different perspective. In this art project the artists located, photographed and gathered

1. For an analysis of different forms of human-animal power relations, see Pedersen (2007).
2. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady* (London: Virago, 1987)





nanoq: flat out and bluesome  
©Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson



William Wegman  
Dog Walker, 1990  
Courtesy of the artist



histories on all the stuffed polar bears found in the UK during the period of their research. The objective was to unearth a series of narratives, anecdotes and fragments arising directly from the provenances of individual bears. There was a belief that these histories would provide insight into a rich and celebrated epoch of exploration, learning and discovery. The polar bear provenances often tell shocking stories of violent and machismo colonisation in the names of science and learning. These were introduced into the project as an intended bridge between the past and current environments of these animals. 'Nature' does become 'culture' and human access to it is mediated through the text. The cultural life of these bears constitutes their history and its intertwining with human history.

Fudge (2002) draws attention to the fact that animals in the traditional understanding of the discipline, don't have 'history'. She points out that if we can equate the history of animals instead to the history of human attitudes toward animals, there is in fact plenty of documentation available. This perspective opens new possibilities for a revised, posthumanist historiography.

The role of provenances in the *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* project 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. The documents gathered, differ 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 bear's death and passage to the UK. Most documents as such start with or after the death of the animal. "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, 2006a p.158)

Biographies or provenances are devices to ascribe unique characteristics to individuals and to situate them in specific historical settings (Phillips, 1994). While the device of biography is applied very differently by Levy (1997) and Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson (2006a), each uses it to reconstruct the history of individual animals, and in this way, to reclaim their visibility.

### **Artistic agency: Animals as actors and co-actors**

The 'animal question' has more recently been addressed in art from quite different perspectives than that of the animal as simply a passive object of representation or surface for human projections. According to Schlosser (2006), there is a tension between the desire to portray the inner states of animals and the impossibility of doing so, and this tension becomes a driving force in the production of some contemporary artists. Some seem to engage animals in art simply in order to document their encounters with them, yet others create situations in which the animals become collaborative contributors in the production of the artwork.

Animal subjectivity and agency, a current topic in human-animal studies generally, are far from new notions in artistic practice. While Tim Flach relies on meticulous control and manipulation of his animal models and fine calibration of the photographic environment (Kramer, 2005), artists like William Wegman have chosen a radically different approach. From the 1960s, Wegman interlaced human and animal engagements with the art-making scene by using his own Weimaraner dog, Man Ray, in his photographic and video-based works. The open narrative structures of Wegman's videos are equally

dependent on the artist's actions and on the dog's interaction with the situations that unfold. McHugh (2001) argues that Wegman's early pieces decentralised the conventional authority of the artist by creating a context in which canine-human interaction helped form a cross-species collaborative artistic process. Thus in a sense, the dog became a co-actor in the artist's projects. By involving living and acting animals in the artistic process, Wegman explores different ways of mediating the relationships among humans, animals, and the institutions of art, raising questions about subject/object binaries (McHugh, 2001).

Joseph Beuys took another approach toward exploring the human-animal 'interface' in his performance *Coyote: I like America and America Likes Me* in New York in 1974, when he locked himself inside the René Block gallery together with a coyote, Little John, for one week. During the performance Beuys carried out a choreographed series of movements directed towards the coyote, letting the animal regulate the timing and the mood, and acted out the limits of his own control of the situation (Baker, 2003; Tisdall, 1976). Undoubtedly the coyote was initially there as a representation and signifier of his species; the figure of the coyote symbolising a mythical animal in Native American thought (Tisdall, 1976; cf. Haraway, 2004a). But the coyote marginalises this representation as soon as he starts interacting with the situation in which he is involved:

*Sometimes he took over the show completely, ranging up and down the space, stopping now and then to stare back at the staring visitors, suddenly turning on the mean look his audience might have been expecting. Now and then he would remember the windows and the world outside, and stare out in amazement at New York and the bustle of the street below. Then he would go to town on the Wall Street Journals, clawing at them, chewing them, dragging them across the space, pissing and shitting on them. And every so often, with uncanny wolf rhythm, he would circle back to his mute felt-swathed companion. (Tisdall, 1976 pp. 6-7)*

Beuys's performance raises a number of questions: Where did 'Little John' come from? How was his life affected by the process of relocation to the art gallery, and what happened to him after the performance? The radical re-contextualisation of the animal body from its conventional habitat to the art gallery can be a way of achieving a 'shock effect' (Desmond, 2002). Damien Hirst's exhibits of butchered animals preserved in formaldehyde in his *Natural History* series from the 1990s, for instance, easily provoke reactions. Commenting on this artistic approach, the artist himself explains in a Swedish newspaper interview, that he sees his installations as "a zoo with dead animals, since zoos with living animals are so repugnant" (Opitz, 2007, our translation).

While cross-species interaction and communication in a human-defined environment is the theme of both Wegman's and Beuys's works above, the British artists Olly & Suzi have chosen instead to situate their artistic process in the animals' own habitat, as closely as possible to the whereabouts of their wild animal subjects. In the final stages of their projects, they "offer up the finished portrait to be paw-printed, tooth-marked, or otherwise marked by the animal for authentication." "[T]heir collaborators have included anacondas, crocodiles, polar bears, and great white sharks. Of course, occasionally a leopard decides to

rip apart its own image, or a rhino devours the canvas whole.” (Williams, 2007) While the interaction between the wild animals and the paintings is meant to bestow a sense of authenticity on the completed artwork, it also has an ephemeral dimension to it since it documents “the habitat or passing of a creature that is here now but may not be for much longer.” (Olly & Suzi, 2007).

Making animals’ active involvement part of the artistic process is a way of conceiving of the artist-animal relation as ‘unlike, but joined’ actors (Haraway, 2004b p. 87) tangled up in each other’s affairs. The presence of the animal brings a sense of immediacy to the process and emphasises its improvisatory and unpredictable character, where the artist, and in some cases, also the animal, has to learn how to operate alongside the other (cf. Baker, 2002). It also raises questions about whether anything such as unmediated encounters with animals can actually be said to exist, and what positions art may assume in this inquiry, invoking as it does, a further stage-managing of the animals in question. And as such could be said to provide another anthropocentric representation.

### Acts of resistance and critique

In a society where violence toward animals has been normalised as an accepted dimension of human existence, and the animal has been made invisible by its incorporation into a variety of commodifying processes, art can create counter-hegemonic spheres where objectifying practices and institutions are challenged and the animal’s visibility is in some way restored. Art may comment on the assumption of the animal body as accessible to human manipulation and violence, and as a site of struggle between different interests (including the animal’s own). But what are the limits to art as an act of resistance?

In her book *Dead Meat*, Sue Coe (1995) reports in artwork and diary entries about her six-year-long journey to North American slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants. In her efforts to be allowed access to the sites, the artist found that her sketchbook was considered largely harmless, while cameras and video cameras were usually prohibited. She used the sketchbook to depict the machinery of the slaughterhouse as: “the day of judgment, with no heaven, only the purgatory of the feedlot, and the hell fires of death” (Cockburn, 1995 p. 29).

*Sheep bleat even after their throats are cut. They writhe. Every part of my being says to stop it, save them, which is impossible. I think of “art” and how I am going to draw it all. Will anything change when people see? This “art” thought comes so quickly after the failed rescue thought, as an attempt to comfort myself, like the idea of the “spirit” of the animal going on to another place. I feel sick and my legs are shaking – my hands too – I concentrate on acting “normal.” Various animals are killed. I look for a way out. (Coe, 1995 pp. 96-100)*

The death in Coe’s artwork is a death *shared* by animals and humans. Confronted by her graphic images of both animal agony and the desensitising and alienating conditions of the slaughterhouse workers, Regan (1995) remarks: “There is a kind of death that can occur before the body dies[,] [...] not only animals die in slaughterhouses.” (p. 3) The human-animal entanglement takes on a different shape and message here as compared to the works of artists such as: Wegman;



Beuys; Olly and Suzi; and Coe. The human being and the animal are bound together primarily through the inhuman structures to which they both are subjected and exploited (Baker, 2001; 2002).

When Marco Evaristi in 2000 displayed ten water-filled kitchen blenders with a living goldfish swimming in each one, he gave the visitors to Denmark's Trapholt Museum of Art the choice to switch the blender on and kill the fish, thus becoming active participants in the 'fulfilment' of the work. According to Hofbauer (2007), Evaristi's idea with 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." Evaristi's brutal tactics of forcing the spectator face-to-face with the ethical dilemmas of human-inflicted animal death radically differs from Coe's. Yet still, like her, he leaves the spectator with a feeling that there is essentially no way out – neither for the animal nor for the human.



Helena, 2006  
Marco Evaristi  
Courtesy of the artist

Artistic comments on our contradictory relations with animals in contemporary society may have complex consequences. Baker (2001) tells the story of the project *GFP Bunny* by Brazilian-American artist Eduardo Kac, who in 2000 created a transgenic, fluorescent albino rabbit, Alba, in the National Institute of Agronomic Research laboratory in France. The rabbit glows bright green when illuminated with blue light. Kac created Alba by adding an enhanced version of a jellyfish gene to the unborn rabbit's DNA – an already established procedure in medical research. According to the artist, the transgenic art project examines notions such as normalcy, heterogeneity, purity, hybridity, and otherness and attempts to navigate the terrain between science and culture. Public respect and appreciation for the emotional and cognitive life of transgenic animals and an ongoing dialogue between professionals and the public on cultural and ethical implications of genetic engineering are also included in the project's purposes (Kac, 2000). Kac's initial plan was to liberate the rabbit from the laboratory and bring her home as a family pet, but according to Kac himself, the director of the laboratory censored his work. This led him to start a public campaign around his project.



Eduardo Kac, *GFP Bunny*, 2000, transgenic artwork. Alba, the fluorescent rabbit. Courtesy of the artist

More subtle artistic expressions may have more impact than critical works directly confronting oppressive practices. Losche (2001) remarks that in her work on the human-simian connection, the Australian artist Lisa Roet has spent as many hours with primates as many professional primatologists. Still, her knowledge of these animals, gained from her encounters with them in a variety of sites during her artistic research and practice, is invalidated by (some) scientists. The hierarchy between different forms of knowing, positions knowledge based on personal experience, bodily inter-connections and a sense of shared lifeworld, outside the sphere of *qualified* insight. This may be viewed as a protective response to the destabilising effect art may perform on certain authoritative scientific *and* commonsense forms of knowledge about animals. What does it mean to 'know' an animal, and what does the answer tell us about ourselves? In Baker's (2003) view, contemporary art's exploration of the animal generally unsettles all claims to know the 'nature' of the animal and to make it meaningful in human terms. Rather, art acts out the instability of such endeavours, including the instability of preconceptions and identities.

## Zooësis: Animal spaces in artistic research

How can artistic, practice-based research illuminate or interrogate the diverse presences of animals, and the meanings of these presences, in art projects and other areas of visual culture? Traditionally, through literature and Twentieth Century film, the mode of the animal as 'other' has been compounded to the

extent that our cultural dislocation from the animal is more or less complete. Una Chaudhuri proposes the term *zooësis* to talk about how culture uses the figure and the body of the animal in the making of art and meaning. In her article *(De)Facing the Animals: Zooësis and Performance* (Chaudhuri, 2007) she references for this purpose the history of Western literary and dramatic tradition as well as the periods covered in film (Muybridge's 1879 'zoogyroscope' to Herzog's *Grizzly Man* in 2005), and in popular culture (Mickey Mouse to Animal Planet). In each of these cases the human-constructed animal takes precedence. In the absence of the animal's own voice we speak for it, and in that moment the animal is lost.

This proposed 'death' of what we know as 'animal' is a consequence of the way lens-based media have been utilised to explore a variety of anthropocentric meanings through the visual representation of animals (cf. Burt, 2002; Lippit, 2000). The actor Elon Rutberg used an image entitled "Dying Elephant, Day One" (1955) from Arthur Shay's book *Animals* (Chaudhuri & Enelow, 2004) to locate his performance. The image depicts a one-tusked elephant that, according to the accompanying caption, has been poisoned by poachers. What is striking about this image is that the non-aggressive elephant seems to stare directly at the camera, his gaze observant and non-confrontational. In the foreground and at the bottom of the image, two blurred dots signifying the back of two human heads, transform the meaning of the image. Thus it not only captures the dying elephant but also the onlookers, the tourists participating in the process of that death. A well-known image taken by Arthur Ratcliffe Dugmore half a century earlier (1908) of a charging rhinoceros has a different point of reference. What has survived from this encounter is the photograph of a charging rhinoceros fixed and endlessly alive in his aggressive mode of attack. The fact is that in order to achieve this image a rifle shot was fired by an assistant immediately after Dugmore had pressed the shutter release on the camera. The death therefore is a consequence and by-product in the production of this image, no longer the object itself or its remains, as would have been the case before photography. This particular point of reference can therefore constitute a symbol for a 'new' life given to animals through technology and lens based media in which an image of the animal body is tailored for human consumption.

Juxtaposed with the idea of the animal as 'other', there is, paradoxically, a blurring of physical and metaphysical boundaries between human and animal identity and corporeality that finds common ground in philosophy and art. This is not a new phenomenon. *The Open: Man and Animal* by Giorgio Agamben (2004) begins by drawing attention to the Old Testament, and particularly to images in a Thirteenth Century Hebrew Bible, that show the end of the world. An image depicting the conclusion of the history of humanity shows the 'righteous' with animal heads instead of human faces. According to Rabbinic tradition the images are not interpreted as a form of death for the righteous in question, "on the contrary, the representatives of the remnants of Israel, that is, the righteous are still alive at the moment of the Messiah's coming". (Agamben, 2004 p. 2) In this case the evocation of some kind of 'continued' life as a merger of the animal and human body is of interest. The condition of *becoming animal*, a notion invoked by Deleuze and Guattari, is an anti-essentialist response to the human-animal divide otherwise found in authoritative Western philosophical (and other) discourses. Embracing multiple and fluid identities, it affirms the anarchic and transformative within the





Shooting shot map  
©Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson

human animal and the nonhuman animal (Smith, 2007). In the exploratory collaboration between theatre and critical animal studies called *The Animal Project* (2004), the pivotal challenge was in becoming animals. Elements like continuity, flexibility and the “destabilising of familiar spatial contours and boundaries” (Chaudhuri & Enelow, 2004 p. 6) were identified as key in the process of becoming-animal.

The beginning of this essay introduced Desmond’s (1999) analysis of a simultaneous confusion and ultimate *reassertion* of human-animal species boundaries, as a ground on which our visual consumption of animals gains meaning. This meaning-making mode can itself be addressed or even disrupted by the artistic process. To allow the ontological security of the human (Simmons, 2007) to be moved, provoked, and messed up by the animal, and to make space for problematisation of the preconceived material and symbolic accessibility of the animal body (Pedersen, 2007), is all part of the practice (process) of zooësis – the animal question in artistic research.

In *(a)fly* the artists Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson (2006b) engaged with pet owners in the inner city area of Reykjavík. Through a variety of strategies, two strands of representation were developed. In the first a random survey was conducted from which textual information was placed next to images of hunters at the moment of pulling the trigger on their respective rifles. The cyclical relationship embedded in this work, the target being a map of the inner city area of Reykjavík which again was the basis for the survey of pets, conflated and exposed two dissonant instances of human-animal relations: of pets on the one hand and prey on the other. The intention was to signify the inconsistencies in

our attitude to animals, and to draw attention to the unwritten laws of hierarchy that Western culture has applied to animals. Whilst some are invited to share our sofa, others we objectify, kill and consume at our dinner tables for our welfare and vanity. The other part of the project was to photograph pets' environments in the respective homes of their owners. The animal itself was absent from the image. The environments were identified by owners as the place where the animal 'hangs out' when no-one is paying it any special attention. In each instance as little as possible was changed although studio lights and a wide-angle lens were used in most instances. The only broad indication of the kind of animal inhabiting each space came from the focal point, as the camera was brought down to the approximate eye level of the pet in question. In these images there is an evident trace of the animal. Some reveal physical traces whilst others are left with the aura of something. Instead of a hunting therefore, there is a *haunting*, the images are haunted by the ghost (or *implicit presence*) of the animal. This sense of absence, further emphasised by the notion of past as integral part of the photographic image, helps to pull focus on an 'unseen' incident, or a moment of *potential* encounter/confrontation.

This attempt of representing the animal, without depicting or fixing it, is further explored in *Three attempts* by Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir (2007). Here there is a clear physical division marked by water, between the human world, where the camera is placed, and the animal world of the seal colony. The camera is placed behind the artist capturing her non-confrontational kneeling attitude at the same time as it frames the distant community of seals. The distance involved denies any individual representation or clarity, thus reducing the seals to 'unknowable' features in the landscape. Occasionally a movement can be detected, reminding us that this is not only landscape but one comprising living organisms. The video documents a performance where the artist attempted to communicate with seals by producing various vocal sounds. It is a representation of an attempt to make contact and an endeavour to establish even ground – a place where two worlds might meet or interlock.

When exploring the space that opens with the 'fixing' or the 'death' of the animal, the seal is a rewarding subject. Long before the camera and the world of media it had a history in old folklore, crossing between animal/human states. Elín Anna Þórisdóttir (2005) explores the idea of the mermaid in a series of video-works. The work, a contemporary reappraisal of mythic hybridity (the mermaid) focuses more on environmental immersion than particular narrative or mythology. In the video footage we see a woman passing through a cultured environment by foot before disappearing, without ceremony, into the sea. In all the performances the woman is dressed in the same outfit – black top, red skirt and white high heeled shoes. She exudes femininity, confidence, a matter of fact sense of purpose and destiny. In *Venice – Drangsnæs* (Þórisdóttir, 2005) the scene is Venice, a historical place suggesting through its architectural splendour, the cultural state of the main character. But when she leaves the edge of the pier and dives into the water she enters our imagination as an alien creature. In this transition, not only is she transformed, but as a consequence, so too is the water and architecture, which at this moment become equally mythical and alien.

Marcus Coates, in his video work *Journey to the Lower World* (2005), invites a gallery audience to watch him perform a shamanistic ritual in front of inhabitants from a high-rise building in Liverpool. Coates cleverly constructs a representation of man/animal image as he places his head inside the head and





Marcus Coates  
 Journey to the Lower World (Beryl),  
 2004, Courtesy of the artist and  
 Workplace Gallery

hide of a stag. It is an inner journey in search of the 'sacred' animal that will guide and protect the soon-to-be fragmented community. What makes the work compelling is not the naïve and desperate belief in the supernatural, but the multilayered human attempts at becoming animal(s), and the ability of the moving image to allow us to extrapolate a world or worlds from a linear series of 2D images.

The *Seal-maiden* (Nordal, 2007), is at first glance another attempt at direct representation, albeit the hybrid body of the human/animal the woman/seal. In most documentary animal films and natural history programs, the animal image is fixed in a space representing a perfectly constructed 'wilderness'. This embodiment of the actual animal eclipses all possibilities for the existence of the 'real/life' animal and in so doing renders it 'dead'. In the *Seal-maiden* there is conversely, an opening, a new beginning created by the imperfection implicit in the image itself. What we see is neither an animal nor a woman. It is a creature with no head and therefore no brain, thought or language. It seems to be the embodiment of presumed female sexual possibility, and as such the only role this creature seems to have been given is to reproduce and maintain the 'species'. The work therefore appears to be an animal representation, but crucially hybrid and importantly, intrinsically and fatally flawed. By being so it deconstructs, or interrogates the representation of the animal other. It is an inquisitive attempt – indicative of its own imperfection and therefore the imperfection of mechanisms of representation itself. Another important component in relation to this work is that whilst it addresses new technology (and the way that through



technology 'new' forms can be given to dreams and ideas), counter to most digital animations and imaging, the artist writes into it technology's own limitations.

Where cultural deployment of animal representation has sought to frame and delimit our understanding of the animal, the above examples force open our preconceptions regarding the animal (and the animal other), privileging instead, questions regarding the human-animal relation. To further our understanding through artistic research, there is great value in considering and giving significance to our specific encounters with individual animals as a *relational* encounter, the circumstances of which shape and provide insight into our behavior and interconnectedness to other beings.

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