

The Domesticated Animal: Reconfiguring Human–Animal Relations through Contemporary Art

An exegesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Yifang Lu

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Abstract

My interest in painting animals led me to explore human–animal relations through contemporary art. By examining the role of the domesticated animal in the broad history of the human–animal relationship and the history of the representation of animals in Western art, I see domestication of animals as expressions of human culture. I explore my own perspective on our common bonds, of compassion and co-existence with pets through my studio research and invite viewers to interact with my two- and three- dimensional paintings.

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Introduction

My interest in animals and art¹ led me to explore human–animal relations as a subject for art practice. Given the time frame of three years for this doctorate, I have narrowed down the subject for my exegesis, which provides a brief history of domesticated animals in Western art. For my art practice I have concentrated on paintings of domesticated animals, using the transparency and reflective quality of acrylic as my medium and installation as my means of showing the works.

In Chapter One of this exegesis, I examine the role of the domesticated animal in the broad history of the human–animal relationships: from the distant past to contemporary relationships. From the early modern period animal subjects began to appear in various art forms, and especially in paintings. Increasingly, art has become an important means of understanding the role of animals in society and how they have gradually become integrated as part of family life.

1. In my Master of Visual Art degree (2009) I focused on popular culture subjects and nature scenes produced artificially in contemporary art. Animal paintings were included in installations of artificial environments. My selection of animals, while including pets, also represented farm animals more broadly. Research covered Eastern and Western art.

In my second chapter I focus on the iconography of the pet in the history of Western painting, which is essentially the content from which I have developed my own project. I show how, from medieval times, domestic animals were used as symbols or as key figures in cultural narratives. In particular, hunting was often represented in classical antiquity, and was an aristocratic tradition that emerged as a theme of medieval art. This tradition lasted into the eighteenth century, during which we start to see close relationships represented between humans and animals. Following the establishment of a Western culture in which it became increasingly common for people to keep pets, artists began to comment on the intimate relationships they observed developing between humans and their pets. In particular, domestic scenes of children with pets were widely represented in eighteenth and nineteenth century painting. From the late nineteenth century, artists such as John Sargent Noble (Figure 20) also used images of dogs as a form of social commentary, which is a social adaption of a long tradition whereby animal images are used to represent anthropocentric thoughts and feelings. This tradition has extended into twentieth century and contemporary art.

My third chapter investigates the relevance of the animal image in the contemporary field, which leads to a discussion of my own studio practice.

Influenced by Wim Delvoye's use of animal subjects to reflect social issues, I look into the human–animal relations that continue to be represented in contemporary art. I compare art practices that include painting, as well as photography, sculpture and installation, to define my own practice.

My research questions, in relation to the above chapter outline, that guide my project are:

- What are the contemporary relationships we have with animal companions?
- How can these relationships be investigated through studio-based research?
- How can we better raise the social awareness of animals through artwork in general?

Chapter One:

A General Survey of the Role of the Domesticated Animal in Human-Animal Relationships

THE DISTANT PAST

Apart from the provision of food, the most important function of human-animal relationships is mutual companionship. The wolf was the first animal to be domesticated and it was probably not for its meat, but either as an object of affection, as a helper in the hunt, or as a useful scavenger of human debris – most likely it was for all three reasons. (Clutton-Brock 1989: 2)

Following the long period of hunting and gathering in human development, the domestication of animals was one of the most important and influential processes in pre-history. Evidence of animals as domesticated pets can be traced back to roughly 14,000 years ago, and over time the human relationship with companion animals has developed to the one we are familiar with today.

With the appearance of agriculture approximately 10,000 years ago, the domestication of animals produced a fundamental change in the relationship between humans and the non-human world.

In the distant past, human populations derived all food and raw materials from wild animals and plants. Then, as tribal societies settled in the Middle East, the domestication of plants and animals formed the foundation of the earliest agricultural societies in settlements, villages and towns. This process of domestication has been the nucleus of human culture for the past 10,000 years.

Domesticated species can be divided into two major categories. One category includes species that have been domesticated for food or work, which are now commonly referred to as livestock or farm animals. The second category includes those species used for companionship with people, which we now refer to as pets or companion animals.

The domestication of animals for their labour, or as a food source, was a highly significant development in human history. The domestication of selected species as companions was also significant in the development of modern humans. The origins of companion animals can be traced back to the pre-agriculture period around 400,000 years ago, when man and wolf shared the same hunting grounds and habitat. There is evidence to suggest that dogs were domesticated at least 14,000 years ago (Germonpré & Sablin 2009). Hence, the most ancient human–animal relationship is the collaboration

between humans and canines. Dogs were also important to the development of agriculture, as they were used as guardian animals and work companions.

From the time animals were first accepted into human tribes and family groups, human relationships with companion animals could in some ways be compared to the relationships of human parents with their children, especially with respect to how humans provided food and shelter for such animals and accepted them into their family groups. This parental relationship, however, raises important questions about the emotional bonds that developed between humans and animal companions, since parental responsibility also implied human authority over the animals that were accepted into human groups. Despite such questions, the intimate bond—that had characterised the relationship between humans and animals from the beginning—remained undiminished. Evidence of this bond was discovered at the Natufian site of Ein Mallaha in Northern Israel, where skeletons were found of a puppy buried with a human 12,000 years ago (Pickeral 2008).

The early pre-historical and historical developments in animal domestication are made clear in the table below.

Animal category	Time	Origin
Wolves	17,000 years ago	Various
Dogs	14,000-10,000 years ago	Europe
Sheep & goats	10,000 years ago	Fertile Crescent (Middle East)
Cattle & pigs	9000 years ago	Asia
Cats	4000 years ago	Egypt
Horses, asses, camels & water buffalo	3000-4000 years ago	Various

Table 1 – Animal domestication timeline

Through the practice of hunting with wolves, it is likely that prehistoric peoples believed that children who had pets could become better hunters, and that humans began to adopt animals into human groups in order to better understand the capacity and skills of the animals. From initially taming animals to eventually bonding with them, people formed a range of emotions and relationships within which human authority existed simultaneously with bonds of affection. This contradiction, along with the way some species were accepted as pets while others were exploited for produce or as a source of labour, was gradually integrated into the complex relationships we have with animals today.

Steven Mithen remarks:

People have a remarkably rich and varied set of relationships with animals: we use them for food and for sport; we use them as companions and loved ones; we use them to entertain and to educate us. Throughout history and throughout the world, animals have played central roles in mythologies and religious beliefs; they have been used as symbols of power and authority, as beasts of war and as gifts of friendship. Indeed our day-to-day lives involve such a variety of interactions with animals that we hardly spare this remarkable phenomenon a second thought. (Mithen1999: 117–118)

Though cats, like dogs, are now very popular as companion animals, the history of their domestication is shorter than the history of the domestication of wolves. The first written account of cats appeared in Egypt in a book from 3,500 BC (Bugler 2011), and there were also cats represented as a companion species in the scenes of daily life and hunting in wall paintings of the Nile marshes in Egypt in 1,600 BC. Cats preyed upon rats and mice and were valued in Egypt as guardians of the grain stores. They later continued to earn their place in towns and cities by killing mice and other creatures that consumed human food. In Egypt, cats were worshiped, and Egyptians used their images in jewellery and hieroglyphs. Unlike dogs, cats do not respond well to discipline and continue to keep some of the independence that they had in the wild. Hence, many owners expected less from them as cats did not need to submit themselves to do any work, and people were grateful if cats could catch a few mice every now and then. Their principle function was, and still is, to

give and receive affection as companions to people. As cats are also regarded as beautiful or decorative additions to households, Edward Hyams (1972) suggests that they now typically adopt a sinecure role in the household.

This privileged status of cats was not always the case, however, especially for black cats during European history. Throughout a large part of Central Europe, it was customary during Lent to kill or to bury as many cats as possible (Darnton 1985). During the festival of Easter, cats were regularly burnt or thrown into the bonfires alive. Hyam (1972: 43) remarks:

Even later than that most base period of abject superstition cats had a shocking time of it. In the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, all over Europe and in America, there was a practice of immuring cats alive, to die, desiccate and remain even on guard as a warning to the Devil – or perhaps, to local rats; or they were killed, mummified by drying, and put into hollow walls or under floor-boards, sometimes with a dead and desiccated rat in their mouths, apparently as a rat-scare.

Nonetheless, cats, like other animals, must have been valued as companions even during the Middle Ages, when common domestication practices formed everyday alternatives to superstitious beliefs.

There were also early discussions about the rights of animals. In classical antiquity, for example, during the first century, Porphyry of Tyre had argued that justice is owed to all animals because people share comparable physical

attributes, appetites, emotions and perceptions with animals (cited in Sorabji 1993). In the sixteenth century, Michel de Montaigne demonstrated advanced attitudes towards animals and argued that a civilised response to animals required respect (Montaigne 1969). In so far as the modern period ushered in a less anthropocentric view of reality, it provided the grounds for a more egalitarian view of the natural environment and animals to emerge. It is important to note, however, that this less anthropocentric view continued to develop in a context where the exploitation of certain species continued, especially those animals selected for human consumption.

The development of modern environmental thinking has helped people to question the role of animals in society and the implications of domestication the quality of life of animals. Even in the contemporary context, however, this development remains contradictory as farming techniques have become intensively industrialised.

THE MODERN WORLD

Though the more moderate differences between humans and animals in classical thought had a broad influence on Christian theology, especially the scholastic tradition of the Catholic Church, by the mid-nineteenth century most people still believed that humans were well 'above' all others and that the difference between humans and animals was essentially a difference in kind, since the dominant view was that only humans had a soul.

In Aristotle's essays on zoology in *History of Animals* (350 B.C.), he described the psychological characteristics of animals, noting that some attributes, such as intelligence, differ only by a matter of degree with those possessed by humans. Aristotle is well known for his description of nature as a procession from lifeless things to plants, in a progressive natural order that includes a range of animal species with their own natural graduated differences. However, Aristotle is also known for his denial of reason in animals, a proposition that has been recast over the centuries as a denial of human kinship with animals and eventually transformed into a rigid hierarchical natural system known as the "Great Chain of Being", a ladder-like system with God at the top, humans below God, other animals below humans, and the rocky earth at the very bottom (Kalof & Fitzgerald 2007). The belief

that humans have dominion over “lower” animals is a problematical consequence of this concept, which exaggerates the distance between humans and other animals and is thus used as a rationale to minimize human ethical obligations to them.

As is clear from the history of Western art, domestic animals gradually became a sign of social status amongst the aristocracy and royalty of the early modern world. Companion animals were a sign of luxury, symbolising wealth and power, particularly in times when the common people struggled to support their own families. It was a privilege to be able to maintain the life of ‘lesser’ creatures as companions for pleasure. In palaces, domesticated animals were often used as entertainment, sometimes showcased during celebrations or parties. From the 1400s, dogs in particular gradually assumed more importance as subjects in their own right; princesses and other privileged people began to treat them as prized companions and as facilitating a form of recreation.

Many people adopted the belief that, by keeping a pet, such animals would become more human or at least possess semi-human characteristics (Serpell 1996). This belief gradually developed into further consideration and empathy towards animals. This was evident in the sixteenth century, when the

philosopher and essayist Michel de Montaigne argued that cruelty to animals was wrong in itself, and that such cruelty was a telling indication of how one would treat other humans. He encouraged his reader to think about the rights of animals, particularly whether or not it was ethical to domesticate or rule over animals that are biologically similar to us; he states that '[i]t's humankind's duty to respect all life, not only animals have feelings but even also trees and plants'(1603; 1969: 318).

The English royal families were well known in the seventeenth century for keeping companion animals at court, which influenced the fashion for companion animals amongst the general public. In particular, the Stuarts were fond of spaniels and one breed became known as the King Charles Spaniel, following a fondness for the breed by Charles II. By the late eighteenth century, the aristocratic privilege of pet-keeping had become more widespread, with pet dogs becoming immensely popular in England (Pickeral 2008). However, this led to other issues—such as city streets becoming over populated with stray canines, which brought about major health risks, such as rabies. In a 1796 attempt to control this vicious disease, a tax for pet ownership was introduced in England. Additionally, successive governments began to focus their efforts on educating the public with respect to animal

control and vaccination. Subsequently, the rabies virus was largely eliminated in England by the early twentieth century.

Following the European exploration and colonization of the world from the sixteenth century, by the nineteenth century a range of exotic animals, such as parrots and monkeys, were imported into Europe (Kalof 2007). In 1828, the London Zoological Garden was established for the scientific study of animals. Public interest in exotic species was heightened when the venue opened to the public in 1847, an engagement with the public that set the precedence for modern zoos. Zoos attracted great interest from the masses, as they housed exotic wild animals which were so different from familiar domesticated species. Facilities such as zoos also provided for the study of animal anatomy and behaviour which further contributed to medical advancements for wild and domesticated animals alike. From the early modern period, animals had also been used in experiments for comparative anatomy, a tradition that continues today in the use of animals in experimental laboratories.

The use of animals in scientific experimentation was one of the practices that, by the nineteenth century, led to legislation for the protection of animals in Britain. Nineteenth century thinker Jeremy Bentham is now

widely recognised as one of the earliest to raise basic questions of animal rights when, in 1780, he asked: “The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?” (Bentham 1789: 283).

The questions raised by Bentham continue to be central to contemporary thinking on relationships with animals. As Linda Kalof and Amy J. Fitzgerald (2007) observe:

scholars have contested the rigid hierarchical view of nature, humans and animals, with the link between the oppression of animals and the oppression of certain human groups becoming a major theme in the philosophical and ethical discourse on the animal question. In the eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham contended that abuse based on species, like abuse on race, is unjust and that moral consideration should be extended to animals because, like humans, they are capable of suffering (Kalof & Fitzgerald 2007: 3).

Early advocates of animal rights were also influenced by their social context, in which the consideration of companion animals was a part of everyday life. Shifts in the understanding of animal rights became a milestone of the modern age, when humans began to adopt a new perception of human–animal relationships.

There were, however, other more traditional influences in the mid-nineteenth century, such as when the Roman Catholic Church, guided by Pope

Pius IX, refused permission for the establishment of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals. Pope Pius deemed it a theological error to suppose that man had any duty toward animals at all and said that “[a]nimals have no souls” (Passmore 1975).

Nonetheless, this deeply traditional view continued to be undermined, not only by moral essayists such as Bentham but also by the gradual acceptance of Darwin’s theory of natural evolution. Darwin remarked that “[a]nimals, whom we have made our slaves, we do not like to consider our equal” (Darwin 1871), and argued that humans were different only as a matter of degree rather than kind, thus bridging the evolutionary gap between humans and animals. Darwin observed that “[m]an is developed from an ovule, about the 125th of an inch in diameter, which differs in no respect from the ovules of other animals” (Darwin 1871; 2005:618).

Darwin also observed the process of variation in animals and plants under domestication, which led to his later general theory of evolution. During the process that he called “pangenesis”, the evolutionary scheme of animals is just as complicated as those of man. Furthermore, in his later work, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1871; 2005), Darwin emphasised how animals have feelings very similar to our own, which led to

ethical implications for how humans should treat animals: “there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher animals in their mental faculties [...] The lower animals, like man, manifestly feel pleasure and pain, happiness and misery.” (1871; 2005: 688)

Through the findings of his research, Darwin unveiled a theory on the fundamental laws of nature that continues to shape the contemporary understanding of human–animal relationships.

CONTEMPORARY HUMAN–ANIMAL RELATIONSHIPS

Towards the end of the twentieth century, most societies were familiar with the concept of animal welfare, at least in Western culture. Due to the legacy of animal welfare legislation, the English were considered leaders in the field when it came to the humane consideration of animals. Yet the notion that animals are now considered in more humane ways, compared to the days of bear-baiting or blood sports in classical antiquity and early modernity, is in fact still based on a number of contradictions. While it is generally true that many individuals keep pets and show great affection for animals, they also continue to exploit and consume other domesticated animals that are not generally categorized as companions.

In relation to the first major research question, "What are the contemporary relationships we have with animals?" it is also important to consider why humans continue to keep pets, despite the obvious inconveniences they may often represent. Anthropologist Stephen Hugh-Jones once said that '[p]eople do it because they seem to derive genuine pleasure and enjoyment from the acts of caring for, and interacting with, animal companions' (cited in Serpell 1996: 71). As with most species, caring for others is instinctual for humans, and in the present day it is common for people to

own pets as an alternative to children, as pets provide an avenue for them to experience the satisfaction and positive emotions derived from nurturing other living beings.

For the most part, looking after a pet is certainly less of an emotional and financial responsibility than looking after a human child. In some ways, companion animals can even provide their owners with a special kind of support which is lacking, or at least uncommon, in relationships with other people. As the nineteenth-century writer George Eliot once wrote, '[a]nimals are such agreeable friends – they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms' (1906: 177). Yet this is a statement that also points to the selfish and egotistical nature of humans.

Animal companionship has become a big part of people's lives. Thirty years ago, there were half as many pets in the United States as there are today. Recent surveys indicate that over 80% of Australian families have owned a pet (Animals Australia 2008). This has largely been brought about by people who live busy and lonely lives in the cities, and this urban demographic tends to indicate the development of very close relationships with companion animals. Studies on animals since the 1950s have shown that animals *do* give calming

effects, with pet owners often experiencing improved health and happiness when compared with those people without any pets (Serpell 1996: 100).

Humans display dramatic emotional attachments to pets, and this burden of human love has become one of the central issues of contemporary human–animal relationships. James Serpell suggests that animals are often the ones to suffer when humans begin to show obsessive behaviour: “As George Bernard Shaw once lamented, pet animals sometimes ‘bear more than their natural burden of human love’” (Serpell 1996: 32). For example, people frequently ask animals to behave in an unnatural way, often in an unnatural domestic environment that strips the animals of their natural instincts. People also favour certain breeds, and choose how they want them to look.

Humans also dominate the biological selection of companion animals by artificially breeding species that we find most likable. For instance, we tend to favour the friendliest and cutest animals, such as dogs with infantile canine characteristics including large eyes, round foreheads and short muzzles. This process of selective breeding for infantile traits is also called neotony, and is evidenced by the fact that many contemporary small breeds of dog have large eyes, short muzzles and the soft ears of wolf puppies rather than the characteristics of mature wolves. Trut observes:

Domestication has involved selection for behavioural characteristics that characterize young animals so, since "behaviour is rooted in biology", domestication has resulted in an array of similar neotenous physical traits having arisen in various domesticated animals. Such neotenous physical traits in domesticated animals such as dogs, pigs, cats, and recently foxes are floppy ears, changes in reproductive cycle, curly tails, piebald coloration, fewer or shortened vertebra, large eyes, rounded forehead, large ears and shortened muzzle (Trut 1999: 160–161).

Given such human tendencies, it is not surprising that these more infantile types of animals tend to have higher rates of adoption in animal shelters. Large amounts of public funds are spent on the maintenance of animal shelters, and the pet industry accounted for \$48 billion in the United States, \$10 billion in Australia and \$20 billion in the United Kingdom in 2010 (American Pet Products Association 2011). This growth is partly due to the development of a lifestyle that has increasingly incorporated pet ownership as an integral component. Families that have previously owned pets tend to continue doing so, since they often feel an unfilled void in their lives which would remain unnoticed by those who have never owned pets. Due to general economic growth, combined with the strong relationships that are formed with pets, animals have now become a familiar part of our families and people are willing to spend money on quality pet food, luxury toys, expensive medical bills and medical insurance for their pets.

The preference for animals with neotenuous physical traits also extends to popular culture. For example, Harvard biologist Stephen Gould (1980) suggests that the cartoonists at Walt Disney are well aware of these attributes and have designed their characters for maximum appeal by exaggerating their infantile features. This has allowed their products to be popular and successful. The process of infantilizing animals is also seen in pets and companion animals being considered part of the family, yet there have also been recent critiques of this approach. For example, Donna Haraway writes:

The means is a kinship-making apparatus that reaches into and draws from the history of 'the family' in every imaginable way, literally. Proof of the effectiveness of the companion-species, family-making apparatus is to be found in a little narrative analysis. Adoption success stories regularly refer to siblings and other multi-species kin as mom, dad, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, cousin, godfather, etc. Purebred adoption stories do the same thing, and these adoption/ownership processes involve many of the same documentary and social instruments before one can qualify to get a dog. [...]

I resist being called the "mom" to my dogs because I fear infantilization of the adult canines and misidentification of the important fact that I wanted dogs, not babies. My multi-species family is not about surrogacy and substitutes; we are trying to live other tropes, other metaplasms. We need other nouns and pronouns for the kin genres of companion species, just as we did (and still do) for the spectrum of genders. (Haraway 2003: 95)

Some people might own a pet as an alternative to a child but, when we consider our pet as a child in the family, we humanize our companion in ways

that are problematic. In contemporary Western societies, companion animals have become a substitute for the traditional relationships we have had with our family and the broader community, and this is perhaps why the death of companion animals seems to activate similar signs of grief to that caused by the loss of human family members. Animals clearly play an important role in contemporary urban life, not only as members of the family but also in filling the voids within traditional social relationships that may be in our lives. Likewise, most animals, especially those that we have chosen to domesticate, depend upon humans for their very existence (Ritvo 1988). This process of mutual dependence has been an important part of contemporary Western culture and has subsequently influenced the culture of Western painting.

In this first chapter we have considered a brief survey of how the role of the pet is important to the history of human–animal relationships. The following chapter focuses on the cultural dimensions of these relationships by discussing the iconography of pets in the history of Western painting. Later, in Chapter Three, I will relate these themes to contemporary art and how it has impacted my studio work.

Chapter Two:

The Iconography of the “Pet” in the History of Western Art

The primary focus of this chapter is the subject of domesticated animals in paintings and the iconography of pets from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century in Western art history. Given the vast and comprehensive nature of iconography in art, the following sections will focus on European art, in particular the image of pets in England and France.

In Chapter One I discussed how, in the distant past, companion animals became an important and integral part of human life. Here I explore how animal subjects began appearing in various forms of public media, including written documents, poetry, sculptures and, in particular, painting. In pre-modern times, people found pride in the possession of animals and this became increasingly popular from the fifteenth century onwards, when keeping animals as companions became a sign of social status. Animals were included in the portraits of those in a position to commission artists, signifying the social standing of the patron.

From the early medieval period, dogs were considered as inappropriate for religious painting, unless they were used as a symbol² or as a key figure in the narrative. On the other hand, companion pets and working dogs are common in medieval paintings, which often portrayed hunting scenes featuring hunting dogs as part of this important aristocratic pastime. While hunting was an important, but not the principal, source of food at this time, hunting dogs were also used for social interaction and warfare as a privilege of the nobility. Greyhounds were the common hunting dog, but there were many different breeds in the Middle Ages. As can be seen in illustrations of daily life from this period, the purposes of these dogs in the Middle Ages were very similar to those of our modern breeds. In the fourteenth century book illustration by Gaston Phoebus (Figure 1), for example, the dogs are given a prominent position and privileged with a larger scale than the figures of the servants. This gives an indication of their importance in the hunting narrative and also of their value to their aristocratic masters.

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Figure 1, **Gaston Phoebus** *Livre de La Chasse* 1387-89, viewed 12 November 2014, France, <<http://classes.bnf.fr/phebus/livre/index.htm>>.

-
2. In many paintings a cat may be shown as a peaceful, domestic animal, but a stealthy cat about to pounce suggests that trouble is lurking. A black cat often is associated with witches and evil. Faithfulness is the virtue most frequently associated with the cat's traditional adversary: the dog. Dogs can also be guardians, or symbolise greed (Carr-Gomm 2001: 237).

In medieval times, the dogs were kept in kennels, inside or separate from the main domicile. In aristocratic kennels, the dogs would often have oak beds to sleep on and there were spaces where dogs could go when the ground level became too hot or cold. Care of the dogs was the responsibility of servants such as pages, valets, aides and huntsmen. Pages, often young boys, would sleep with the dogs in the kennels, in order to care for them when sick or keep them from fighting. Although it seems harsh for the servant boys to stay in kennels, these warm dog houses could often be much more comfortable than the sleeping quarters of other medieval servants (Woolgar 1999). The difference in scale between humans and animals in the *Livre de La Chasse* may represent the small physical scale of the boys, as well as representing the 'smaller' lower class status of servants. Significantly, the larger scale of the dogs reflects their important role in feudal social structure. In a fourteenth-century print reproduced in the manuscript *Manners, Custom and Dress During the Middle Ages and During the Renaissance Period* (Figure 2), dogs are being cared for with intimacy. Yet here the dogs and those engaged in healing their ailments are depicted on a more naturalistic scale. Perhaps the development of such care for dogs in medieval times closed the gap between man and animal, as such illustrations do suggest a more intimate stage in the human–animal relationship.

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Figure 2, **Paul Lacroix** Reproduced in *Manners, Custom and Dress During the Middle Ages and During the Renaissance Period*, Wikipedia, viewed 14 November 2014, <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/7/77/Medieval_hounds2.png>.

When domesticated animals became common in society, animal images appeared regularly in portraiture and art. Through shifting trends in art, we can see the development of cultural and social shifts in attitudes towards animals. It is valuable to look back and study the pattern of those harmonious human–animal relationships and understand the bond we formed with animals through paintings.

In an early fifteenth century painting, Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) (or *The Arnolfini Wedding*) (Figure 3), a dog stands in the middle of a newlywed couple. Unlike the couple, the dog looks directly towards the gaze of the viewer. In secular iconography, one sees a dog posing mostly as a faithful friend of man especially in portraits. Impelluso (2004) argues this dog represents a symbol of loyalty to its owners and by inference fidelity between the couple. It may also represent a gift from the husband to the wife, especially since many wealthy women at this time had lap dogs as companions. As such, dog ownership could also represent the wealth of its owners and their social position, and alludes to the purity of conjugal love.

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Figure 3, **Jan van Eyck** *The Arnolfini Portrait* 1434, The National Gallery, London, United Kingdom, viewed 14 November 2014,

<<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/jan-van-eyck-the-arnolfini-portrait>>.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The iconography of hunting in the aristocratic tradition continued from medieval times and lasted into the seventeenth century, as more people were able to own dogs and started to have their portrait painted with them. This may be seen in Alexander-Francois Desportes' *Self-Portrait as a Hunter* (1699) (Figure 4), which is a classic portrait of the hunter surrounded by his hunting dogs. In this painting, Desportes shows great understanding of the canine anatomy and captures the dog's sense of delight in the man's touch. The two dogs keep their owner in sight, demonstrating the loyalty they have towards him.

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Figure 4, **Alexander-Francois Desportes** *Self-Portrait as a Hunter* 1699, Louvre, France, viewed 14 November 2014, <<http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/self-portrait-hunting-dress>>.

From the seventeenth century, however, animals were also more commonly represented in domestic interiors, especially the dogs that are now identified as companion animals rather than working for their masters in the hunt. From this time, as pet-keeping became more common, paintings featuring the middle classes began to portray common household animals such as dogs and cats in domestic environments, focusing on their activities and

interactions with people and thus adding elements of human and pet narratives.

In the seventeenth century, Dutch artists included dogs in genre paintings of everyday life. Through paintings in the seventeenth century, artists commented on the intimate relationship between children and their pets. In Gerard ter Borch's *A boy caring for his dog* (1655) (Figure 5), the boy has the dog on his lap and is showing care for its wellbeing by concentrating on inspecting its fur with both hands. Fleas were a common condition of domestic life at the time and ter Borch records the day-to-day life of a household. The artist depicts the trusting and mutually beneficial relationship between the boy and the dog, even if the dog is slightly uncomfortable with its treatment for fleas.

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Figure 5, **Gerard ter Borch** *A boy caring for his dog* 1655, page 23, Gerard ter Borch a resource for educator, National Gallery of Art, Washington, United States of America, viewed 14 November 2014, <http://www.afaweb.org/education/documents/TerBorchTPSinglePageNoFolder_003.pdf page 23>.

Dutch painter Jan Steen specialized in the domestic genre scenes of chaotic households; his pictures were widely popular and inspired a number of followers. In the painting, *The Cat Medicine* (1663) (Figure 6), three children

are playing with their pet cat, while the girl with the cat on her lap is attempting to spoon feed it as though it were a baby or doll. It is difficult to gauge from the cat's face whether or not it is in distress, but the children appear to be enjoying themselves and take pleasure in their pet. Scenes of similar children appear in Steen's paintings along with pet cats, where pet cats are fed or encouraged to dance or entertain. These paintings illustrate how pet cats became not only domesticated, but also how they became sources of home entertainment.

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Figure 6, **Jan Steen**, *The Cat Medicine* (n.d.), San Diego Museum of Art collections, United States of America, viewed 14 November 2014, <<http://www.sdmart.org/collections/Europe/item/1940.14>>.

Following the inclusion of dogs in aristocratic portraits in England, pet dogs became a common feature of scenes of family life in eighteenth-century English art. In a royal portrait by Sir Antony Van Dyck (1635) (Figure 7), the spaniel depicted to the right of the young Prince Charles emphasises his confidence and strength, augmented by the way his little sister holds his hand and arm which also indicates his reliability and protectiveness. The King Charles Spaniels are presented as the guards for their owners, both the humans and animals have a relaxed composure.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 7, **Sir Anthony Van Dyck** *Portraits of the Three Eldest Children of Charles I, King of England* 1635, Government Art Collection, United Kingdom, viewed 14 November 2014, <<http://www.gac.culture.gov.uk/work.aspx?obj=15988>>.

Cats also were commonly represented in Western paintings from the seventeenth century. In Barent Fabritius's painting *Sight* (n.d.) (Figure 8), the child shows the cat a mirror and the cat is very intrigued by its own image. Both the cat and the child show curiosity by exploring themselves from new perspectives. This painting also illustrates the gentle but teasing affection of the owner towards his pet.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 8, **Barent Fabritius** *Sight* (n.d.), Bugler, C 2011, *The Cat: 3500 years of the cat in art*, New York: Merrell, London, pp. 16–17.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

William Hogarth's *The Graham Children* (1742) (Figure 9) is an example of a more informal approach to the portraiture of children and animals in the eighteenth century. In this picture the children all seem very relaxed in a comfortable upper middle-class environment. The gaze of the cat is facing the bird and children delight in looking at their pets. The children are enjoying the playfulness of their domesticated animals, even though the hunting instinct persists in creating tension between the two species.

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Figure 9, **William Hogarth** *The Graham Children* 1742, The National Gallery, London, United Kingdom, viewed 17 November 2014,

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/william-hogarth-the-graham-children>.

In another of Hogarth's paintings from the *Marriage a-la-mode* series, *The Tête à Tête* (1743–45) (Figure 10), the artist made pointed critiques of upper-class eighteenth-century society, showing the disastrous results of ill-considered marriages designed to benefit from money and power. He portrayed a chaotic domestic household within which the dog plays an active role. The husband and wife appear uninterested in each other and the confused servant holds a stack of unpaid bills, indicating the general disarray

and mess of the household. The small dog pulls a lady's cap from the husband's coat pocket, indicating that there might be an affair going on and perhaps further problems in the marriage. In this painting the artist uses the small 'knowing' dog to emphasise the state of affairs in the household.

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Figure 10, **William Hogarth** *Marriage a-la-mode: The Tête à Tête* 1743–45, The National Gallery, London, United Kingdom, viewed 17 November 2014,

<<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/william-hogarth-marriage-a-la-mode-2-the-tete-a-tete>>.

John Singleton Copley's painting *Young Lady with Bird and Dog* (1767) (Figure 11) is, by contrast, a less morally instructive example of how domesticated animals were included in upper-class family portraiture. What the work does reveal, however, is another facet of English society in the context of world exploration and British colonialism, as numbers of exotic animals were imported into Europe for private ownership and public display. In this picture, a well-dressed girl holding a ribbon plays with a small parrot, which was quite an exotic species in England at this time. The red velvet curtain frames the now familiar breed of the King Charles Spaniel, heightening the profile of a breed that first gained popularity by the royal patronage evident in seventeenth century paintings.

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Figure 11, **John Singleton Copley** *Young Lady with a Bird and Dog* 1767, Toledo Museum of Art, United States of America, viewed 17 November 2014, <[http://classes.toledomuseum.org:8080/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/People\\$00402452/0?t:state:flow=91627fdb-2995-4db2-b881-9fe209e47699](http://classes.toledomuseum.org:8080/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/People$00402452/0?t:state:flow=91627fdb-2995-4db2-b881-9fe209e47699)>.

Pierre Subleyras' *The Falcon* (after 1732) (Figure 12) shows a couple with a dog and cat in a confined setting. The dog looks up at the couple captured in an intimate moment, but the cat seems oddly impassive, staring towards the viewer. In its role as pampered pet, the cat could be seen as the knowing one while the dog represents faithfulness. In this example we can see the painter's use of animals as symbols to describe human relationships, thoughts and expressions (Bugler 2011: 91). Complex tensions in human relationships are thus revealed through the imaging of domestic animals.

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Figure 12, **Pierre Subleyras** *The Falcon* after 1732, The Artchive Web Gallery, viewed 17 November 2014, <http://www.artchive.com/web_gallery/P/Pierre-Subleyras/The-Falcon,-illustration-from-the-Fables-of-La-Fontaine.html>.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

An amusing example of a domesticated dog portrait is Phillip Reinagle's *Portrait of an extraordinary musical dog* (1805) (Figure 13), in which a spaniel sits on a chair playing the piano. Perhaps the dog has seen his human companion playing the instrument and therefore learns to mimic his actions. In this painting, the dog does not look at the music sheet or the piano, and instead stares with intense eyes straight at the viewer. It is extraordinarily unnatural. The dog is posing for the picture, or perhaps the painter is jokingly referring to how we can domesticate our pet animals to do the same daily activities as us. This suggests that the training of canines to emulate human behaviour was rather extreme in late eighteenth-century London (Bowron 2006: 56).

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Figure 13, **Philip Reinagle** *Portrait of an extraordinary musical dog* 1805, Wikipedia, viewed 17 November 2014, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_an_extraordinary_musical_dog_by_Philip_Reinagle_1805.jpg>.

While animals may have appeared in paintings throughout the ages, it wasn't until the nineteenth century that animal portraiture became immensely popular (Bridget & Somerville: 11). During the nineteenth century, English

artist Sir Edwin Henry Landseer was famous for giving animals human characteristics. The titles of his paintings have a tendency to emphasize a human overlay of emotions on the animals. For example, a picture of dogs is entitled *Trial by Jury or Laying Down The Law* (1840) (Figure 14) and a picture of a dog with a girl is called *Saved* (1856) (Figure 15). Landseer's animal portraits were a significant component in his popularity and success as an artist. His works were generally well received and he was knighted for his work in 1850. It was a long tradition in upper class families to have their family portrait painted, often including aspects of their collection and favorite animals. When pet keeping became popular, animal portraiture became a symbol of affluence and also became popular, particularly in Victorian England.

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Figure 14, **Sir Edwin Henry Landseer** *Trial by Jury or Laying Down The Law* 1840, Wikipedia, viewed 17 November 2014,<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laying_Down_the_Law>.

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Figure 15, **Sir Edwin Henry Landseer** *Saved* 1856. Wikipedia, viewed 17 November 2014,<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwin_Henry_Landseer#mediaviewer/File:Landseer_Saved.jpg>.

In Robert Braithwaite Martineau's intimate portrait *A girl with a cat* (1860) (Figure 16), the girl holds the cat on her chest and puts her face on the back of the cat. Her fondness for her little companion and their mutual trust and affection captures the close nature of human and animal relationships common at that time (Bugler 2011: 28). The focus on physical proximity in this picture is also emphasised by the close relationship between the house and the garden in the background, an approach to nature very popular amongst painters and followers of the Pre-Raphaelite School.

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Figure 16, **Robert Braithwaite Martineau** *A girl with a cat* 1860, Art.com, viewed 17 November 2014, <<http://www.art.com/products/p22111536810-sa-i7610174/robert-braithwaite-martineau-a-girl-with-a-cat-1860.htm>>.

In Pierre Bonnard's *The Checked Blouse* (1892) (Figure 17), Bonnard portrayed his sister Madame Claude Terrasse and her cat. In the painting, we can see how Bonnard's observations of daily life were translated into a carefully structured composition filled with paint strokes. Perhaps the cat is playing with the food on the plate; nonetheless it is an intimate moment of his sister with her cat in a domestic setting. He captured a moment of the relationship between pet and owner in this daily dining situation, a notably permissive scenario in terms of the social position of the domesticated pet.

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Figure 17, **Pierre Bonnard** *The Checked Blouse* 1892, Musée d'Orsay, France, viewed 17 November 2014, <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/painting/commentaire_id/the-chequered-blouse-7161.html?tx_commentaire_pi1%5BpidLi%5D=509&tx_commentaire_pi1%5Bfrom%5D=841&cHash=cf8797f9b7>.

Arthur John Elsley's *Her First Love* (1894) (Figure 18) is a sentimental picture of a little girl hugging her big dog on her lap. It was commonplace to depict children with dogs or cats among the middle-classes in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. During this period, pure-bred pets became popular and valued due to the prestige of owning something rare and new. As a result, different dog and cat breeds continued to emerge into the twentieth century (Pickeral 2008: 225).

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Figure 18, **Arthur John Elsley** *Her First Love* 1894, Bridgeman images, viewed 17 November 2014, <<http://www.bridgemanimages.com/en-US/asset/67766/elsley-arthur-john-1861-1952/her-first-love-1894>>.

Australian painter Rupert Bunny's *Mrs Bunny and her terrier* (1902–05) (Figure 19), bears similarities to the work of English painter Elsley. Bunny was in France when he painted this work, which may be influenced by his prior studies at Calderon's art school in London during 1884 and 1885. The painting depicts Mrs Bunny holding her terrier like a baby, her face next to the dog and

with both her and her pet appearing to have posed patiently. The closeness of the pet to the owner in domestic households was clearly becoming an accepted behaviour in Europe.

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Figure 19, **Rupert Bunny** *Jeanne with her terrier (Mrs Bunny and her Terrier)* 1902, Australian Art Auction Records, viewed 17 November 2014, <<http://www.artrecord.com/index.cfm/artist/10949-bunny-rupert-charles-wulsten/medium/1-paintings/>>.

In nineteenth-century England, the rise of the middle class and greater personal wealth enabled many people to purchase and maintain luxury animals, including a large number of exotic species such as monkeys and parrots brought back from distant parts of the British Empire. Artists began using domestic dogs and cats as visual means of dramatizing social commentaries, such as the differences between the wealthy and the working classes.

John Sargent Noble's *Pug and Terrier*³ (1875) (Figure 20) depicts a purebred pug quite literally looking down on a terrier cross. The well-fed pug stands freely on the higher step, on the other hand the terrier is tied by a string

4. The pug was well established in England by the eighteenth century and continued to be associated with royalty in the nineteenth century. Queen Victoria was a great lover of the breed and had both fawn and black pugs at her kennels at Windsor. By 1875 the pug was a recognized show dog, but it was still associated with the upper classes (Secord 2006: 128-129).

with a tin on his chest. Characterising human social status, the cross-bred lower class dog is depicted in a pose that suggests he must beg before the purebred higher classes.

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Figure 20, **John Sargent Noble** *Pug and Terrier* 1875, Encore Editions, viewed 17 November 2014, <<http://www.encore-editions.com/john-sargent-noble-pug-and-terrier-1875>>.

Many art movements of the late nineteenth century, such as Impressionism, Expressionism or Symbolism, and Fauvism, transformed the way painters represented the world. The pet was to be found in each of these movements and into the art in the twentieth century.

In Edgar Degas' *Place de la Concorde* (1876) (Figure 21), the Impressionist artist used vivid colours and bold brush strokes for which he was well known, especially for capturing open air scenes. The dog and its little master are aware of the gentlemen nearby as he moves in a relaxed manner with them in this urban street scene. Degas' painting illustrates a civilised sense of order in the city and implies an equality between people and their pets in the social order of Paris.

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Figure 21, **Edgar Degas** *Place de la Concorde* 1875, Wikipedia, viewed 17 November 2014, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_de_la_Concorde_\(painting\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_de_la_Concorde_(painting))>.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

‘Dogs are a common visual motif in Western art and have been called the ‘artist’s best friend’ for their role as companion and life model’ (Bowron 2006: 1). Edgar Peters Bowron’s observation of the dog as a motif is clearly exemplifies the predominance of dogs over other animals in twentieth-century painting.

By the twentieth century, in movements such Expressionism, Surrealism, Cubism and Futurism, then later seen in Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, modern art departed from tradition and artists continued to include animal images, often as snapshots depicted in less detail with looser and bigger brush strokes. The focus here is largely on the form of the pets rather than social iconography or observation.

In Janos Vaszary’s *Woman with Cat* (1900) (Figure 22) and John Alton’s *Green’s Cat* (1900) (Figure 23), you can clearly see the form of the cats with bigger, bolder brush strokes. The apparent spontaneity is also markedly different to the fine details of eighteenth-century paintings or the moral narratives of the nineteenth century. Expressionist style overtakes the representational style, as you can see in Vaszary’s *Woman with cat* (1900)

(Figure 22). The artist chose to capture the interaction of cats and the woman in a spontaneous way which indicates some kind of game is playing out between the woman and her two feline companions. Vaszary's representation of casualness is typical of human–animal relationships of a more expressive painting style.

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Figure 22, **Janos Vaszary** *Woman with Cat* 1900, Art 7D, viewed 17 November 2014, <http://www.art7d.be/images7/SCHvdW2014_Vaszary.jpg>

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 23, **John Sloan** *Green's Cat* 1900, Wiki Art, viewed 21 November 2014, <<http://www.wikiart.org/en/john-french-sloan/green-s-cat>>.

Giacomo Balla's *Dynamism of a dog on a leash* (1912) (Figure 24), is an iconic painting of modern life, well known for its dynamic sense of movement and wit. The work is influenced by contemporaneous developments in chronophotography and film, and captures the day-to-day activities of walking a dog in a city. Balla may have also adapted the recent invention of the X-ray to enable the viewer to feel the rhythm of the dog's movements. The painting captures the rapid movements of the dog on the leash, with no less than eight tails representing the rapidly wagging tail and the rise and fall behind a blur of

moving legs. As Bowron remarks, in this work Balla combines the charm of painting with science and technology (Bowron 2006: 76).

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Figure 24, **Giacomo Balla** *Dynamism of a dog on a leash* 1912, Wikiart, viewed 17 November 2014, <<http://www.wikiart.org/en/giacomo-balla/dynamism-of-a-dog-on-a-leash-1912>>.

Edvard Munch's expressive painting *Head of a dog* (1930) (Figure 25) is like a portrait of a human head. Rather than just a dog portrait contained within a domestic setting, the dog seems to confront the gaze of the viewer in a way that often recurs in human portraiture. After all, humans and animals share the domestic environment, and as such artists also use animal subjects to observe the human much in the way that companion animals observe us in everyday life.

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Figure 25, **Edvard Munch** *Head of a dog* 1930, Wikiart, viewed 17 November 2014, <<http://www.wikiart.org/en/edvard-munch/head-of-a-dog-1930>>.

Francis Bacon's *Man with dog* (1953) (Figure 26) is a mid-twentieth-century example of a highly expressive painting of a man with a dog in the dark (Bowron 2006:84). The sense of horror and blackness in the painting is representative of many canine images created during and after the Second World War, as a wartime shadow of terror and loneliness fell across the art of

the 1940s and early 1950s. Human primal behaviour dominates and the use of the dog represents these human feelings through art, rather than focussing on the close and warm relationships evident in earlier art.

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Figure 26, **Francis Bacon** *Man with dog* 1953, Tate Britain, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/francis-bacon/room-guide/room-3-apprehension>>.

Art movements affected the representation of the pet in Western painting, and images of pets also multiplied outside the world of art. As advances in printing led to a wider use of coloured imagery for publicity purposes, pets, long associated with home and the domestic environment, began to appear in advertisements for such household products as milk, soap and canned food. This proliferation of pet imagery has continued into the contemporary world. We don't need to look far to find an image of a dog or cat on stationery, or in cartoons, television and film animations, illustrated books and websites. Many of the best-known artists, such as Pablo Picasso, have been great pet lovers themselves, and therefore naturally wished to use their art to shine the spotlight on their pets (Bugler2011: 248)⁴. While Picasso worked, he would often be accompanied by Lump (Figure 27), a Dachshund.

4. *Famous Artist Photographed with their Dogs* by Emily Temple. Other dog lover artists are pictured on this website, including Andy Warhol and Archie, William Wegman and one of his famous pooches, as well as David Hockney.

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Figure 27, **Pablo Picasso** Games in a silent studio, Duncan, DD 2006, *Picasso & Lump: a dachshund's odyssey*, Bulfinch Press, New York, pp. 44–45.

Picasso used to put Lump in his paintings when he needed something to make them lighter and more amusing (Figure 28). In fact, Picasso's life was full of dogs; he had many, of many different breeds. As he said in an interview with Stanley Coren, 'I do not usually get the same breed of dog again. I want each to be individual and I do not want to live with the ghosts of the other dogs.' Picasso is described as having had five passions: 'his art, his ego, his image, his women and his dogs'⁵.

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Figure 28, **Pablo Picasso** *Las Meninas* 1957, Wikipedia, viewed 20 November 2014, <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lump_\(dog\)#mediaviewer/File:PabloPicasso_Meninas.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lump_(dog)#mediaviewer/File:PabloPicasso_Meninas.jpg)>.

The second chapter of this study has examined paintings, illustrations and prints to see the development of pet iconography in the seventeenth to twentieth centuries. While I identify with twentieth century artists who lived with and incorporated pets into the work in the studio, I can also identify some hierarchies that are present in seventeenth to nineteenth century Western art

5. *Picasso's Dogs: Muse and mascot: the artist's life-long affair with his canine companions* by Stanley Coren. <http://www.moderndogmagazine.com/articles/picassos-dogs/20275>

that emerge in my own work. I have a new awareness of scale and positioning of pets that assists in considering how I place these works in the gallery context to challenge previous historical orders. I have also made a decision to avoid using domestic animals as metaphors for human social interaction. The following chapter investigates the contemporary field in the twenty-first century and discusses its relevance to my own studio-based research.

Chapter Three:

The Contemporary Field and Practice-led Research Project

Following the genealogy of paintings from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, contemporary artists have continued to seek and establish a new visual language that would engage with a twentieth-first century audience. Besides painting, a new emphasis on photography, multimedia and performing art has influenced artists in new treatments of the human–animal relationship. This is a wide field so, in approaching the reconfiguration of human–animal relationships through contemporary art, I will discuss selected contemporary artists that have influenced me in my practice.

In my doctoral research, I investigate the role of the domesticated animal in human–animal relationships along with the iconography of the domestic animal in the history of Western painting. In my current practice, I frequently use photographic documentation to capture animal images to generate paintings. Most recently I have used found images from animal shelters which have been posted on internet sites to help unwanted dogs and cats find new homes. Examined carefully, many such online photographs of

pets can be problematic, as exemplified by ambiguities in Petrina Hicks' photography (2008) (Figure 29).

In Hicks' *Lambswool*, the tenderness of the young girl with a wolf-like Siberian husky creates a tension for the viewer with respect to this human–animal relationship. In this image, a young girl lowers herself to the level of the dog and surrounds it with her open arms. Perhaps the dog is just having a gentle bite on her arm as a sign of affection but, from an adult's point of view, it is a worrying image. Even though we have welcomed dogs into homes for millennia, every now and then we do witness media accounts of canine attacks on children or adults. Dogs are known as man's best friend but we also know that there is a part of their natural instinct that we have not entirely removed from our animal companions.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 29, **Petrina Hicks** *Lambswool* 2008, Petrina Hicks, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://www.petrinahicks.com/descendants/1.html>>.

I am particularly interested in this kind of tension between humans and pet animals. We may love them like our own children and treat them like our family on the surface, but fundamental questions of trust still remain. This still remains an open question in our society.

In Hick's work *Jackson and Tiger* (2005) (Figure 30), the boy surrounds his dog with his arms in an apparently effortless gesture to control the dog and forcefully open its mouth with his two fingers. However, the dog's facial expression suggests behaviour we may associate with wild dogs such as the ancestral wolf. The posture of the boy stays calm as he looks towards the viewer, whereas the dog shows discomfort in a way that highlights the common problem of an assertion of power between owner and pet.

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Figure 30, **Petrina Hicks** *Jackson and Tiger* 2005, Petrina Hicks, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://www.petrinahicks.com/untitled2005/2.html>>.

At the risk of oversimplification, the roles of animals may be divided into two broad categories: animals as objects and animals as companions. People keep animals as ornaments, status symbols, avocations, assistants, friend, family member, and as an expression of oneself (Hirschman 1994: 616) which shows that there are various human–animal relationships, and some relations we have might be more distant while some might be seen as intimate. When examining the relationships in our social patterns; human–animal relationships may be characterized by having a level of social interdependency between the animal and the owner. The notion of social interdependency and how it is revealed in animal portraits, where there is an absence of the owner

can be further explored by examining the notion of faithfulness and abandonment as portrayed in animal portraits.

The concept of social interdependency coupled with faithfulness in human–animal relationships has been identified by Kathleen Kete, who states that in France ‘during the nineteenth century, a faithful dog took the place of faithless people’ (1994: 25). Consequently, for some people the relationship between humans and animals were reliably trustworthy. Dogs were the dominant figurational animal during the nineteenth century Victorian Age, symbolising values of loyalty, obedience and collaboration across most social levels (Williams 2006: 260). In Kete’s writing she also talked about the characteristic of pet keeping representing certain emotional qualities: ‘For men and women alike, the quality of pets – vulnerability and sensitivity, qualities long identified with femininity (1994: 19)’. As I discuss in chapter one – contemporary human–animal relationships, as Haraway states, the relationship we have with a pet may be an alternative to a child. As a result the vulnerability and sensitive qualities of a pet, can be easily identified with dependency and it may awaken the parental instinct of humans. In animal portraiture we see dependence, co-dependence, obedience (Figure 31), subservience (Figure 53) and various characteristics between the animal and the owner.

Through animal portraiture it is possible to record and reveal the relationships between the animal and the owner, and how we see other species. Ranging from keeping animals as an ornament to including them as a family member, the inherently domesticated relationship between pets and humans has shifted tremendously. In Wilhelm Trübner's *Crossing the Rubicon* (1878–79) (Figure 31) there is a mixture of still life painting with an image of a companion dog. The dog raises his head high to sniff the tempting smell of the sausages on the table. While a cropped depiction of a dog mixed with still life detail was not common at the time, Trübner portrays the realistic situation of living with animal companions (Rosenblum 2006: 75). Even though humans have had domesticated animals for centuries, we still cannot remove the natural instincts from animals any more than we can from humans. The title *Crossing the Rubicon* is a classical reference to someone committing themselves irrevocably to a risky or revolutionary course of action, similar to the modern phrase 'passing the point of no return'. There is a decision for the dog to make and it knows the consequences if it should cross the line, even if ruled by instinct. In Trübner's work, the dog shows a great level obedience in the domestic environment while the owner is not in view.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 31, **Wilhelm Trübner** *Crossing the Rubicon* also known as *Dog with Plate of Sausages* 1878, Museum Dogs: Dogs in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. <<http://museumdogs.tumblr.com/>>.

And to some extent, we may project our ideals and thoughts onto them. Often we project our thinking onto animals, just as artists express their thoughts of how we see them onto the canvas. Similarly, animal portraits can be analysed according to the environment and the setting around them, as well as by examining the type of animal, its posture, and the expression on its face. Furthermore, analysis of the brush strokes used by the artist in conjunction with an examination of the above mentioned details can assist us to identify the status of the animal and its relationship to the animal's character. Together with various human forms of expression, we can scrutinize and reveal the relationship between animals and their absent owners.

In my case, due to my subject matter being about homeless dogs, the very fact is there are no owners. Between animals and humans we may share a common ground, but we don't speak the same language, therefore we cannot understand each other fully. Due to the language barrier, there is always a distance between them and us. For that reason and to express the notion of abandonment, I chose to portray animals on reflective Perspex on individual

panels. Consequently, I chose to keep my animal portraits away from human viewers by positioning them on a different level, to draw a distinction between them and us by creating a space in between. I made a choice to only capture animal images in my work, and made a decision to emphasise the absence of the animals' owners. I invite viewers to be close to those animal portraits on the floor and walls, and to walk around my installation, in order to represent the inherently dependent and trusting relationship we often have with domestic animals. As a result, the absent owner can be replaced by the viewers and they can be the potential owner of those homeless animal subjects. Moreover, when viewing the installation of the dogs from the outside of the gallery when there is no viewer, the installation may represent the unbalanced and relinquished relationship between the abandoned animals and their absent owner within a gallery space.

Through my animal portraits I have revealed my desire to keep memories of my animal companions. Through portraiture, it keeps alive various emotions that I treasure. Portraiture is a genre of painting that has traditionally depicted human subjects. By shifting the main focus to animal portraits, it expresses the current role of animals in our society. An animal companion is part of our life and usually becomes one of our family members. According to tradition, we capture family portraits in paintings and

photography. We also love to keep a record of our lifestyles and what we own, therefore animal portraiture allows us to maintain the memories we have of them endlessly. Although the death of an animal can be very difficult for people to bear, the memories which are captured in portraiture can enable us to relive the life we had with our companions.

Animal portraits can reveal much about the relationship between the animal and the absent owner in terms of both the level of dependence between the animal and the owner and the social context in which the owner and animal live. In particular, the inherently common characteristic of social interdependency can be visible in many animal portraits, however, an equally strong sense of abandonment can exist.

The image below (Figure 32) is an image of my pet and me taken by a friend. I was petting and stroking Miso the rabbit on the sofa. From my point of view, I was showing affection to my beloved pet, yet there is a strong sense of domination in this image that was entirely unintentional. Perhaps it is the gesture of my hand and arm pressing on that small, fluffy rabbit. There might also be an expression of anxiety on Miso's face as he looks a bit tense and his open eye suggests wildness. Such images reveal that in many instances pet owners do not deliberately try to create hierarchies in their relationship but it

may often be an unconscious act of domination. The interdependency may be my need to express my love and domination and the vulnerability of Miso's needs for food and shelter. I will discuss anthropomorphism later in the Chapter.



Figure 32, **Hugh Wilber-Ham** *Miso with a red Scarf* 2011.

In Mike Kelley's *Petting Zoo* (2007) (Figures 33–34), the artist restages the biblical legend where Lot's wife was transformed into a pillar of salt. In the story, Lot's wife disobeyed the angels by looking back while she was leaving Sodom and Gomorrah. Kelley extends the scene to a petting zoo, inviting the visitors into his enclosure. Studies have demonstrated that petting animals can relieve stress and improve long life in humans, yet the same cannot be said for

animals in petting zoos which have to be changed frequently due to the effects of stress.

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Figure 33, **Mike Kelley** *Petting Zoo* 2007, Art for the World: The Expo, viewed 20 November 2014, <http://www.artforworldexpo.com/InitialProject/works_37_MikeKelley.html>.

In Kelley's work, sheep, goats and ponies are crowded with visitors around the pillar of salt which, like the salt-licks put in fields by farmers, the animals lick. As they were patted and fed by the visitors, videos were shown of three rock formations named after Lot's wife: one in the Dead Sea, one in New South Wales and the other at St. Helena. This installation questions our relationship to the established order and our dependence on animals. The installation allows us to expand our thoughts on the natural environment, relations between animals and humans and their multiple connections with human mythologies.

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Figure 34, **Mike Kelley** *Petting Zoo* (detail), Art for the World: The Expo, viewed 20 November 2014, <http://www.artforworldexpo.com/InitialProject/works_37_MikeKelley.html>.

Installation art is an important influence on my art practice, and opened up my awareness to the many forms of art. Painting allows the viewer to have

a visual experience but installation art adds a more spatial dimension to the visual sensation that extends into the viewer's sense of hearing, taste, smell and touch in three-dimensions. I seek to adopt this concept of using three-dimensional works to transform perceptions of painting, and open up people's senses to a new experience that might stay with them.

In relation to the second major research question informing my work, how can human–animal relations be investigated through studio based practice? my purpose in utilising acrylic sheets as a medium is to explore several desired properties of my paintings and associated installation work that would have otherwise been limited if I had used conventional mediums such as canvas.

During the early phases in the conceptualisation of my work, I prioritised key visual objectives and design cues that subsequently resulted in my selection of and application on to acrylic sheets.

The use of oil paint on Perspex/ an acrylic panel may seem to have a connection to the process of the monotype and to printmaking. But my objective is to immerse my animal paintings into their surrounding environments. The transparency of an acrylic sheet allows the audience to view the animals from multiple perspectives; providing constantly variable

vantage points for the viewer, simply by altering either the view angle, distance, height or the ambient light conditions.

I deliberately extended the use of acrylic sheets by incorporating multiple visual planes; and taking advantage of transparency, including how animal portraits and background scenery could be layered and strategically placed to provide a virtual environment for both the animals and the viewers alike. This was effective in communicating the concept that in today's world there is an artificial unification of animals, humans and the environment.

Another focus of my work was to create a three-dimensional installation, rather than confining my work to the gallery walls. While exploring my options for painting and installing my artwork, I learned to cut and bend acrylic sheets. This helped me transform my animal images into objects and sculpture; by allowing them to stand on their own without requiring visible brackets or attachments. When installed on the exhibition floor, this allowed the viewers to walk around them. The sculptures were sized to an approximate one to one scale; providing a sensation for the viewers that they were surrounded by real dogs.

In recent work I have also introduced the use of an acrylic box (Figure 35); with natural scenery painted on one face and animals on the opposite panel. Whilst this may initially seem similar to placing two acrylic sheets near each other, the box structure was chosen to represent and emphasise the idea that domesticated animals are sometimes close to, but distinctly separated from their true natural environment and habitats. The box shape also replicates a shelter or kennel form. Even though humans are absent pictorially, the structures of human control are present.



Figure 35, **Yifang Lu** *Fantasy Getaway #1 and #2* 2013.

These acrylic box works can also be viewed from both the front and back and from perpendicular angles the animals appear to be at one with the natural scenery, but by taking one step to the side it is evident that this is not

truly the case. The acrylic boxes were also placed at ground level, highlighting the perspectives from which we tend to view animal companions on a daily basis, rather than bringing those images up to eye level as I did in the portraits. With the Perspex boxes on the floor level it is also possible for the viewer to see the legs and feet of other viewers, rather than an animal in a natural environment, thus the viewer's legs can be seen as the human cause of separation of the animal from its natural environment.

In addition to the transparency of an acrylic sheet; its visual surface properties allowed further enhancements of my work. When placed on the wall, the inherently reflective nature of the sheet allows viewers to see their own reflections, providing visual feedback of their own facial emotions when viewing the work. I hoped that this would lead the viewers to consider how they themselves have been involved in animal domestication and whether or not they are indifferent to the subject.

Furthermore, the multiple perspectives of the sheet could be used to provide a certain degree of visual illusion. A clear acrylic sheet, historically referred to as "acrylic glass", is understandably similar to glass and has often been used as an alternative. Aside from being safer, lighter and easier to

manipulate than real glass, the acrylic sheets are particularly suitable to allow both translucency and the build-up of material surface paint.

This provided me with the choice of letting the paint sit flat or to leave strokes and contours on the surface. In addition to this, the choice of thickness provided an additional degree of freedom to alter the effect of depth in my paintings. In some cases, choosing thicker acrylic sheets subtly enhanced the shadow and three-dimensional fields of my paintings. Even when hung on the wall, an offset would be created between the paint and the wall, allowing the shadows to introduce more life into the animals.

Lastly, in many cases I chose to also apply some light brush strokes to the back of the acrylic sheet. These tended to be loosely dispersed and provided a somewhat ghostly feel when viewed from the back; in some cases giving the impression that the portrait was of another creature. The paint also further enhanced the three dimensional feel by consolidating the thickness of the acrylic sheet.

Ultimately, the use of acrylic sheets allowed the viewers to interact with the work by providing a sensation of false realism despite the coarse and gestural nature of my brush strokes. Manipulating the acrylic sheets enhanced

the form and general silhouette of the sculptures to involve the audience and better connect with the underlying concepts of my research work.

In my research, there are three key questions related to animal portraits. Firstly, what are the contemporary relationships we have with animals? Secondly, how can these relationships be investigated through studio-based research? And thirdly, how can we better raise the social awareness of animals through artwork in general? By investigating these research questions, I was able to relate how the painterly gesture contributed to my aim.

In exploring the contemporary relationships we share with animal companions, in my early developmental paintings I chose to represent my animal paintings in domesticated spaces. Animals are like an alternative version of our family and friends in contemporary society; as such, I wanted to allow viewers to be as close as they can to the animal paintings to experience a heightened sense of intimacy and mutual fondness. Later, the gallery environment becomes the habitat for my animal paintings. In this rarified context I present my subjects in an exclusively human domain.

In investigating human–animal relationships through studio-based research, I visited animal shelters to closely study caged dogs and cats. This was supplemented by searching for images of stray dogs and cats in the library and also on the Internet. At the other end of the scale, my research also involved examining the pets of my acquaintances. Together this allowed me to identify the similarities and contrasts between animals that are actively being cared for versus those that have become unwanted or abandoned, whether intentionally or un-intentionally.

While translating the homeless dog images into paintings, I focused on finding and capturing the essential qualities of the animals' experience. My painterly approach is influenced by the aim to grasp the essence of the personality of the subject, often resulting in the painterly abstraction of an animal image. As animals are less rational and have strong emotions; I felt paintings of them required less control and rationality when deciding each stroke, consequently I focused on the accumulated form of all brush strokes as an overall representation.

For instance, when perusing a dog's image at the lost dog home shelter, I was interested in how this picture could be transformed into my paintings. I questioned how to reconfigure the image away from photography into

paintings. Through instinctive brush strokes, I translated and reconfigured everyday images of dogs that would potentially appeal more closely to the hearts of the viewers and their prior pet memories.

I often used images found on the Internet when I painted dogs; each of these images was of an individual dog needing a home. And in capturing the essence of these live animals I studied the subject well and immediately followed this by adopting a spontaneous series of fast brush strokes to capture the movement and spirit of the animal.

Through my art, I hope to raise general social awareness of animals particularly in domesticated, or urban settings. From my research it became clear to me that humans are not ready to take full responsibility for their pets, and allow them to reproduce without considering the consequences of unwanted puppies and kittens. While this may be associated with a general lack of education in society; my findings indicate that the public can become more aware of the issue by continuing to discuss the topic, and perhaps by considering my images.

Similarly, from an artist's point of view, limiting the representation of dogs and cats to their head and shoulders in compositions like human portraits,

I can encourage viewers to see the animals as sharing characteristics which are common with humans, and thus arouse feelings of affection and sympathy for the animals. In addition, human-like portraits of animals can fire the imagination of the viewers in relation to animal welfare issues. These loose painterly gestures assisted me in capturing the form of the dogs and cats and allowed the viewers to be aware of those animals; their challenges and issues, such as pets becoming unwanted and abandoned, and how we can gradually improve the world, one life at a time.

In summary, the studio-based research conducted as part of my investigations into contemporary human–animal relationships and companionship allowed me to generate a list of defining rules for the series of works. The contribution of this work to my aim was significant, and my hope is that this body of artworks has contributed to raising social awareness about unwanted animals through the painterly gestures and reflective surfaces of my work.

In my last group show, *Us and Them – Umwelten*, I installed my works in a way that engaged the viewer in a three-dimensional environment. This exhibition developed the idea of the *umwelt* in which animals are understood

in the context of their own world view. Linda Williams writes in the catalogue essay:

The concept of *umwelten* is a term derived from the work of the early 20th Century biologist and ethnologist Jakob von Uexküll. In the German *umwelt* means 'surrounding world', or 'self-centred world' and for von Uexküll *umwelt* conveyed the idea of the vast range of creatures occupying worlds whose meaning could be understood from their specific point of perspective. Within myriad *umwelt* then, diverse creatures experience their *umwelt* differently, yet von Uexküll's finding led him to conclude that communication, or semiosis, as a process of interaction common to the *umwelt* of all organisms: whether human or non-human. (Williams 2012: 1)

I transformed my dog paintings (2012) (Figure 36) into sculptural forms on Perspex stands. My aim was that removing paintings from the walls would allow them to stand up on the floor in the manner of a real dog. I also wanted to draw attention to the opacity of paint whilst still allowing the transparency or reflexivity of the Perspex ground to call attention to the context of the constructed human world. The aim of this installation was to represent the ways we look at dogs, reminding the viewer that dogs are lower than us in height and in social status as well. In this way I emphasised the social gap between 'us and them', the curatorial theme of the show, and in this sense the installation was well placed to remind us of the interdependencies, albeit unequal, of the human and non-human world.



Figure 36, **Yifang Lu** untitled 2012.

Andy Warhol says, *"The moment you label something you take a step – I mean, you can never go back again to seeing it unlabeled"* (1962). With reference to the homeless animal subjects in my paintings they are not labelled so as to indicate that they are not privileged like other companions to humans. Labels are often used in the identification of a product, and are the means by which a personal name identifies a unique and identifiable individual person. As our society is used to seeing things being labelled and named, I chose not to give my portraits a name and title in order to emphasize the fact homeless animals are on the periphery of our society.

Portraiture is usually applied to the depiction of human subjects, and is often used as a way of keeping important state and family records, as well as for remembrance. Traditionally historical human portrait paintings primarily commemorated the rich and powerful. Over time, it became more common for the middle-class to commission portraits of their families and colleagues. Today, portrait paintings are still commissioned by governments, corporations, groups, and individuals. Hence, titled portraits still affirm the authority of important individuals in our society.

In contrast to human portrait paintings, my portraits are generally related to the illustration of an animal theme. In the seventeenth century, the French philosopher Rene Descartes (et al. 1984:188), claimed animals cannot feel pain and he denied that animals had reason or intelligence. He argued that animals' sensations or perceptions to pain are experienced mechanistically. And since his time researchers have remained unsure until recently whether humans are the only creatures capable of thinking and feeling.⁶

Although Descartes' thinking influenced Western concepts of animals, in the twentieth century many of his claims were questioned. In 1970, Richard

⁶ Dr. Bernard Rollin- Professor of philosophy, animal science and biomedical science, he talked about animal and pain in *The superior Human* documentary, 2011.

Ryder coined the term speciesism to describe prejudice against other species. "Instead of treating the other species like objects, we should be treating them as our evolutionary cousins, as our kindred." And he stated that speciesism was an unintelligent, out-of-date sort of prejudice.⁷ In an article in *Psychology Today* Marc Bekoff (2011)⁸ claimed, "nonhuman animals are magnificent and amazing beings. They clearly have wide-ranging cognitive, emotional, and moral capacities. We can learn a lot from them if we open our minds and hearts to who (not what) they really are. We should be proud of our citizenship in the animal kingdom." Ryder and Bekoff are both influenced by Darwin's thoughts, Darwin thought it was absurd to think of some animals as higher than others. "*Man in his arrogance thinks of himself a great work, worthy the interposition of a deity. [Yet it is] more humble and, I believe, true to consider him created from animals.*" (Darwin 1836–1844; 1987: 300)

In a recent documentary, *The Superior Human?*, McAnallen et al. (2011) examined various reasons that cause humans to feel more superior than others in an ironic way. We may think that our intelligence, being on the top of the food chain, culture, language, and a huge human population make us better

⁷ "Speciesism Again: The Original Leaflet", *Critical Society*, Issue 2, 2010, http://www.criticalsocietyjournal.org.uk/Archives_files/1.%20Speciesism%20Again.pdf.

⁸ Marc Bekoff is professor emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He has published numerous books on animal behavior, animal emotions, and animal protection. *Animal Emotions*
Do animals think and feel? <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/animal-emotions/201107/animal-minds-and-the-foible-human-exceptionalism>.

than other animals. But the truth is, we are more rational beings, not necessary more evolved beings. Nonhuman animals are extremely well adapted to their environments, whereas human beings have done a great deal to change the natural environment. This documentary exposes the arrogance of humankind and the destructive results of the domination of human. And I will incorporate a reflection on human domination in my visual art works. I have represented a group of homeless dogs on the scale of actual dogs standing on the gallery floor space. By looking down on them, the viewers are reminded of how humans often look down on other animals, which can create the impression that humans have a higher status, and remind us of human empowerment in human–animal relations.

Yet, a human portrait is also often titled with a person's name. And I deliberately chose not to title my homeless animal portraits so as to emphasize human-centeredness, and to express the disconnection of homeless animals from our society. I used to name each of my animal paintings, like "*Chris the Chicken*" when I was painting farm animals. Not naming the painting signifies that the animals have no form of identification in our society, and my point is, once those homeless animals become a human companion, they will be named.

In Jeff Koons' large outdoor installation *Puppy* (1992) (Figure 37), the artist created a different situation to the way we usually see dogs. All visitors needed to do was look up at this gigantic 13 metre high West Highland White Terrier puppy, made from 20,000 plants. Koons surprised the public with the scale of the plant sculpture: a familiar animal yet as non-human as the plants from which it was made.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 37, **Jeff Koons** *Puppy* 1992, Art by Jeff Coon, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://artbyjeffkoons.blogspot.com.au/2009/11/puppy-1992.html>>.

While the 1995 version of *Puppy* in the town of Arolsen in Germany (Figure 38) had 20,000 plants, the Sydney version was composed of around 60,000 plants and was installed outside Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art in 1995 as part of Project 10, celebrating 25 years of Kaldor Public Art Projects. *Puppy* stood 12.4 metres high on the harbour side, carpeted in flowering bloom like a monolithic topiary. It was created as a symbol of love and happiness.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 38, **Jeff Koons** *Puppy* 1995, Kaldor Art Projects, Australia, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-archive/jeff-koons-1995>>.

Though his works do not focus on domestic companion animals, Wim Delvoye was also a great influence for me because he raises many fundamental contradictions regarding how we relate to animals. We love our companions, yet consume other species without thinking. From Delvoye's *Marble Floor* (1999) (Figure 39) to *Art farm* (2005) (Figure 40), I love the brutality in his work that reflects human culture. In many cultures, we eat salami regularly but often do not notice the beauty of the patterns in pig fat, which can resemble the patterns of marble. In this *Marble Floor* work series, he photographed various patterns of marble floor constructed with salami. The pink and red colour of the meat is vivid and easily recalls the appearance of pig flesh. It is a beautiful representation but at the same time it reminds the viewer of the brutality of the meat production chain.

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Figure 39, **Wim Delvoye** *Marble Floor #85* 1999, Olga Korper Gallery Inc., Canada, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://www.olgakorpergallery.com/collection/329>>.

In Delvoye's *Art Farm, Yang Zhen (Beijing)*, he tattooed a group of pigs in Louise Vuitton and Disney trademarks that created considerable controversy at that time. Many regarded it as cruel to tattoo pigs, and to confine them in the gallery space. Personally however, I believe the installation serves to highlight the cruelty of the human treatment of animals; farm pigs are

frequently numbered by tattoos once born, yet this action is not judged as readily or as widely as were Delvoye's tattooed pigs. Just as the market transforms pigs into all sorts of products, should it be considered cruel if Delvoye sells the tattooed pigskin after the animal is dead? The reality that we buy pork from a butcher and leather handbags from Louis Vuitton is not normally judged to be morally ambiguous, yet we are repelled by Delvoye's pig products. Is this because our society is uncomfortable with seeing the reality of how we treat pigs, or is it that art is an 'unnecessary' form of cruelty, whereas other forms of cruelty are accepted because they have a clear use value? While my practice does not critique the killing of animals, such art works do relate to my concerns about the poor treatment of pets.

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Figure 40, **Wim Delvoye** *Art Farm, Yang Zhen (Beijing)* 2005, Painting Performance Paint, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://paintingperformancepaint.wordpress.com/2012/06/07/wim-delvoye-art-farm-yang-zhen-beijing-2005-live-tattooed-pigs/>>.

While Hicks, Kelley, Koons and Delvoye reflect key issues that connect contemporary art to human–animal relationships, I have selected a number of both contemporary and historical artists to compare similar and divergent approaches to my practice.

In Viola Dominello's *Dog* (2007) (Figure 41), the artist uses a big palette knife to capture the form of the dog in ways that are similar to my method of painting. In my own work loose, bold brush strokes in ways that seem to me to capture the character and gestures of dogs.

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Figure 41, **Viola Dominello** *Dog* 2007, Miller, S 2012, *Dogs in Australian art: a new history of antipodean creativity*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia, pp. 111.

In my view, sometimes it is not necessary to be realistic with painting (see Figure 42), as photography can provide the detail. I enjoy capturing the form of dogs in a more immediate way that recreates personal interaction with animals. Following a period of close examination of animals and photographs, my paintings are produced quickly and spontaneously in ways that are inspired by memories of these personal interactions with the animals.



Figure 42, **Yifang Lu** untitled 2011.

Cherry Hood is an artist well known for the nuances of sadness in her watercolour works. In *Daisy* (2004) (Figure 43), she captured the sadness and confusion of the dog. The running watermarks suggest the associations between human tears and sadness, despite the fact that dogs express sadness differently. When combined with the direct gaze of the dog engaging with the viewer, these emotional suggestions work to establish a strong connection between the image and the viewer.

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Figure 43, **Cherry Hood** *Daisy* 2004, Diane Farris Gallery, Australia, viewed 20 November 2014, <http://www.dianefarrisgallery.com/artist/hood/Harolds_End/exhibition_pieces.htm#>.

As in human portraiture, I have emphasised the face and its expression in my work. And in both animal and human portraiture, artists often share the same intention to show the likeness between the portrait and the subject and the personality and the mood of the subjects. In human portraits we often see the subject looking directly at the painter or photographer, in order to more successfully engage the viewer with the subject. For this reason, I create the same composed image of an animal, mostly in a still position as in human portraiture.

When we look at a traditional portrait painting, the eyes and hands are often the key characteristics of the painting. I chose to use the gaze of the animal's eyes to be my key feature of communication with the viewer. Eye contact has always been a great means of connection, often enabling a person to interpret the mind of another. Often when we look into someone's eyes, we think we can see the emotions of that person and very often the experiences that can touch the heart. Furthermore, the gaze of the subject in a portrait can sway our sentiments. Therefore the gaze can be used as a powerful tool in

painting, and can reflect a complex range of human–animal and human-pet relationships.

In Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (1997:113), he notes that there "is nothing so expressive as the eyes of animals", because an animal's eyes demand our continued concentration in front of paintings. In Norman Bryson's *Vision and Painting: The logic of the gaze* (1983:119) he wrote, "...in the Gaze, the image is both the depth of the founding perception, and the flatness of the picture plane."

According to Emmanuel Levinas, a face-to-face encounter with another being brings about an ethical demand. What such a meeting of gazes calls for, is a non-violent, non-reductive understanding of the Other in his or her otherness, without projecting any pre-existing ideas onto that other being⁹. In relation to my animal portraiture, the notion of the 'meeting of gazes' is an important aspect of my work because I believe in animal welfare and rights, particularly in the sense that for many people the more we learn and know about other species, the kinder we are likely to be to them.

⁹ Hansen, R 2008, *An Animal Gazes*, viewed 23 May 2014, <www.rikkehansen.com/upload/R_Hansen%20Animal%20Gazes.doc>.

In his book, *About Looking* John Berger noted (1980:24), how in a zoo, animals fail to return our gaze: 'They look sideways. They look blindly beyond'. It often remains as a one-way encounter, but our desire for the gaze to be returned remains. In this desire for reciprocation of the gaze from an anthropomorphic perspective, human characteristics can be attributed to animals and to animal portraiture. In relation to my animal portraiture, I believe there is room for imagination when the viewer meets the gaze of my animal portraits. It is because the animal can be seen to be relaxed, timid, alarmed or scowling, mirroring a small selection of our emotional range. In addition, the viewer projects their own emotions which suggests that the viewer can have a sense of the power differences in human-pet relationships.

In the *Looking at looking: the photographic gaze* (Finch 2011:3), Michel Foucault wrote of the gaze as a way of controlling, collecting, and quantifying through his discussion of the dispersal of power and surveillance in modern societies, which he argued, is derived from various social institutions such as prisons and schools (see Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the "I"', in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, Norton, New York and Routledge, London, 1977). With reference to Emmanuel Lévinas' thoughts on human sociality about people, who are responsible to one-another during face-to-face encounters, such a dynamic may be applied to human-pet

relationships. We use the gaze to collect information, to see and understand the situation around us. Often when our gaze meets a domestic animal, we use our look to demand obedience from our pet, therefore the gaze can easily be regarded as related to the means which by pet owners exercise power over their pet.

In the analysis of painting and the gaze, we may notice that we are often easily attracted to a returning gaze in a portrait. In particular, in animal portraiture, often we find that the nose and the eyes of the animal are the main focus. Perhaps they are in the centre of the painting, but the reason behind this is that, our eyes are analysing the returning gaze. Through collecting, and analysing the information of the animal's gaze, we can understand the context. In addition, by linking the information we gather we create thoughts that we project back to the image. It is often said, "What we see is what we choose to see", and our mind is selective and filters out the information it receives based on what we are really looking for. Consequently, in an anthropocentric way we may interpret the return gaze from the pet as love, affection, obedience, submission or dependence.

In untitled (Figure 44), I choose to display my art works to meet the eye level of the viewer. Eye level display can be the most comfortable position for

viewers to view the works and therefore provide face-to-face interaction¹⁰. As suggested by Schement and Ruben (1993:436), this is explained due to the fact that face-to-face communication engages more human senses than mediated communication. I choose to adopt those concepts in my work and my intention is to create a most effective form of animal gaze to communicate and persuade the viewer¹¹. In my dog paintings, there may be some tendency to anthropomorphise the animals – some of the dogs look sad, some look demurely to the viewer, some look up adoringly or expectantly while others avert their gaze with timidity. I found those animal images from lost dog adoption websites, and while some animals have a direct gaze with the camera / viewer, some are more shy and avoid a direct gaze. The diversity of the postures and the gazes of the animals are like a miniature group of people with different characteristics: alarmed, fierce, cowed or just plainly scowling. And those personality traits relate to homeless animals which are on the periphery of human-pet relationships.

¹⁰ Despite the advent of many new information and communication technologies, face-to-face interaction is still widespread and popular. Bonnie A. Nardi and Steve Whittaker (2002:83) noted that "many theorists imply that face-to-face communication is the gold standard of communication", particularly in the context of the media richness theory where face-to-face communication is described as the most efficient and informational one.

¹¹ Jean C. Helms Mills, John Bratton and Carolyn Forshaw (2006:369) noted that "face-to-face interaction is the most effective form of verbal communication when the sender wants to persuade or motivate the receiver".

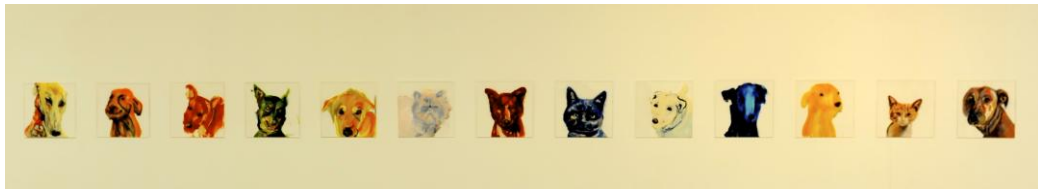


Figure 44, **Yifang Lu** untitled 2011–13.

In untitled (Figure 45), I decided to arrange my dog portraits on acrylic panels with an open two-dimensional compositional plane on a wall, position at human eye height. Those dogs 'are untethered by leash or love, in command of the immediate place in his/her world'¹². In a way, similar to Deborah Williams's dog etchings, I also wish to depict the dog as a dog and invite the viewer to do the same¹³. The open space composition allows my painted dog panels to stand in their own space, even if at human height. The white background means it can become an imagined space. The absence of background can also bring focus to the gazes of this group of dogs, which are mostly looking towards to the viewer, and some may seem more cheerful, confident, in a waiting relaxed position, while some may seem more tense or sad. Consequently, in relation to the power differences in human-pet relationships I believe my animal portraits convey a more equal relationship.

¹² Heres Me About, <http://deborahwilliams.com.au>

¹³ Deborah Williams (2011:41) *Picturing the dog*, thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master degree of National Art School, Sydney Australia.

Like Deborah Williams' aim to 'depict the dog as a dog'¹⁴, my animal portraits address the power relations in human to pet relationships by aiming to portray the dog as a dog.



Figure 45, **Yifang Lu** untitled 2012–13.

In the *Making a Stand* (Figure 46), a group of 14 dogs, I chose to paint on bended acrylic panels. And my decision for choosing bended acrylic panels is to enable them to stand freely on the floor like a real dog. I chose to bend those acrylic panels to 60 to 80 degrees, to represent the common way we view dogs. Therefore it can better meet the gaze of the viewer and better communicate with the audience.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp.41.



Figure 46, **Yifang Lu** *Making a Stand* 2011–13.

Norman Rockwell was a twentieth-century American illustrator, famous for everyday life scenarios and popular reflections on American culture. In this painting *Common Problem, or Waiting for the vet* (1952) (Figure 47) he illustrates the relationship between the animal and its human master in the vet's waiting room. It shows how popular pet ownership is in America and the level of care attributed to pet animals.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 47, **Norman Rockwell** *Common Problem, or Waiting for the vet* 1952, *Fur the Love of Pets*, viewed 20 November 2014, <<https://amcnyc.wordpress.com/tag/melanoma/>>.

Rockwell uses almost cutout shapes in his painting, and I take this visual device one step further in my own work by literally making cut-out paintings. Like Rockwell, I use an architectural context for installation and make room for the audience, in my case, I turn my paintings of dogs on Perspex into a three-dimensional installation.

In my untitled dog painting (2011) (Figure 48), I mixed bold brush strokes with hand manipulation to create the dishevelment of the dog. I have made the same choice as Hood in painting the bust of the dog; it is a statement of the dog's character as a subject in its own right.



Figure 48, **Yifang Lu** untitled 2011.

George Earl's *Champion dogs of England* (1870) (Figure 49), is a five dog head study depicting individual dogs of five different breeds (Yorkshire Terrier 'Huddersfield Ben', the Blenheim Spaniel 'Charlie', the King Charles Spaniel 'Hylas', the Italian Greyhound 'Molly' and the Pomeranian 'Tiger').

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 49, **George Earl** *Champion dogs of England* 1870, The Kennel Club, United Kingdom, <<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/our-resources/the-art-gallery/?alttemplate=PictureViewer>>.

Though all of these portraits are painted on one canvas, Earl's work inspired me to think about individual components in a single work of art. I have chosen not to create multiple portraits on one canvas but have sought to create a more flexible installation of images in ways that create different dynamics when individual characters are separated.

My *Six of my companion animals* paintings (2011) (Figure 50) is a study of the different images of dogs and cats that I found on animal adoption centre websites. In contrast to Earl's painting, my work was on six individual acrylic panels, and I found more freedom to arrange different configurations in ways that could accommodate various exhibition spaces.



6 of my companion animals 2011
oil on perspex
30x30 cm

"Look deep into the eyes of any animal, and then for a moment, trade places, their life becomes as precious as yours and you become as vulnerable as them. Now smile if you believe all animals deserve our respect and our protection, for in a way, they are us, and we are them." -Philip Ochoa Board Member, ALL FOR ANIMALS

Figure 50, **Yifang Lu** *Six of my companion animals* 2011. Extract from Seminar

PowerPoint presentation.

In one of his earliest suburban etchings, the artist and dog owner Ron McBurnie (1994) (Figure 51) studies the image of the pet subject closely. While living in Brisbane and Townville, McBurnie illustrated daily scenarios of pet encounters and explored the common issues between the pet dog and its owner. In his images, based on the northern areas of Queensland, some interactions might be more brutal than what we are used to seeing in suburban Melbourne.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 51, **Ron McBurnie** *Dog walk* 1994, Ron McBurnie, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://www.ronmcburnie.com/html/suburban-pets.html>>.

Like McBurnie, my portraits of animals include scars which may have been caused by their previous owners. There is a story behind each scar but the possibilities of these stories are left to the viewer to think through.

In my untitled work (2011) (Figure 52), I painted a dog that had lost one eye. In pink and orange palette the ghost-like brown brush marks create a contrast to the pastel pink dog itself. Though in this simple image the dog appears to be contented, the marks around his eye show that he has been through some traumatic experience that remains unknown, though disturbing to the viewer's imagination.



Figure 52, **Yifang Lu** untitled 2011.

My current work, while extending on previous interests, continues to explore the identity of companion animals in our society. As with the case of farm animals, there are many unresolved controversies pertaining to our relationship with companion animals. I continue to paint animals on acrylic, using the transparency and reflective character as a medium to communicate with my audience. In recent works I have introduced a layer of natural scenery as a backdrop that separates it from the exhibition space behind my dog/cat portrait, which is intended to create the impression of a controlled studio photographic shoot. This is consistent with the complexities of society and our

desires to return to a 'lost' nature even though we live in largely artificial, human-controlled cities, far away from the natural world.

I explored painting animal subjects in a domestic setting as a background on canvas in 2010, before my practice shifted to painting on reflective acrylic. By using Perspex I incorporated reflections of the human environment on the animal portraits, with the aim of projecting the contemporary human world onto the animals. In 2013, I decided to again introduce the domestic background into my painting. I was influenced by photographer Stephen Dupont's Papua New Guinea project (see Figure 53).

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 53, **Stephen Dupont** untitled 2012, Stephen Dupont, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://stephendupont.squarespace.com/exhibitions/stephen-dupont-papua-new-guinea-portraits-and-diaries/>>.

In exploring traditional culture in the modern world, Dupont separates his portraits from the background context. By using similar pictorial devices, I choose to separate the animal from its natural environment, while also acknowledging it. We set animals up in our domesticated environment and block them away from nature. It suggests a cultural shift and the dominance of Western human control which may apply in many different ways. Therefore, I

aim to introduce a natural environment as a backdrop behind my animal subject to suggest that the domesticated animal is dislocated from the natural world and reframed as a cultural construct (see figure 54).



Figure 54, **Yifang Lu** untitled 2013.

Portraiture can capture an animal as dependent, fearful, guilty, friendly or able to persuade and it can therefore be used to convey certain feelings to the viewer. Here follows a number of photographic portraits of cats and dogs from animal shelters that I used as a source for my work.

These appeals to potential owners are designed to provoke an emotional response in the viewers. For example, the description of “Tom” (Figure 55) is aimed at a potential owner who might value an animal with

character and “street” appeal, as a result the descriptions strongly associate the animal's character with perceived human behaviors.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 55, **Tom** *Half Way Home* 2014, viewed 15 June 2014, <<http://www.halfwayhome.org.au/adoptions/cats/adopt-tom.htm>>.

Tom, Domestic Short Hair

“If you want a character then Tom is your boy. This boy talks, chirrup, sneezes, coughs and cuddles. He even enjoys watching the footy. He loves the company of people but gets a bit anxious around other animals.

He has had a rough start to life, as he was a stray on the streets before ending up in the pound - as you can tell from his pictures, but he's a lover not a fighter so unfortunately he seems to have come off second best.

He may not look perfect but we think he is perfect in every way.
If you would like to give Tom a new home then please apply online at www.halfwayhome.org.au”.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 56, **Ms. Teddy Bear Jolson**, *Pet Rescue* 2014, viewed 15 June 2014, <<http://www.petrescue.com.au/listings/269569>>.

Ms. Teddy Bear Jolson, Small Female Maltese, 14 years

Teddy is a wise old soul. This beautiful creature is very observant. She is always watching and listening, which is surprising considering she is a very heavy sleeper. Teddy is happy lying on your lap or by your feet. When you're walking around the house, she won't be too far behind.

Teddy would suit a home where she gets plenty of love and lap time. Having rarely been inside, her house training is ongoing, but making good progress after only a short time. She accepts change well, and doesn't take long to settle into a new environment. Teddy is a wonderful girl who will light up the world of her forever family.”

A charming portrait of an animal with a human narrative can easily tug at our emotions. A close up of a face with the direct gaze of the animal in a domestic setting that we familiar with can often relate to a human portraiture. In figure 58 the dog, Ms. Teddy Bear Jolson is neatly groomed and dressed up in a sweater sitting on a chair, and the information in the image indicates it is a civilized dog. The text next to the image, the use of friendly human-like language and references to the animal as 'she' or 'he' all aim to bridge the gap between humans and animals. By further referring to Teddy by way of 'She is always watching and listening' it creates an image of a well behaved girl for the reader. Furthermore, the descriptions 'If you would like to give Tom a new home' and 'Teddy is a wonderful girl who will light up the world of her forever family' are similar expressions for people who are looking for another family. Domesticated animals have become part of our society, consequently animal images commonly appear in portraiture and art. We can see the development of cultural and social shifts in attitudes towards animals. It is important to study the various patterns of those human–animal relationships and recognize the bonds we form with animals through portraiture.

Overall, due to the natural emotive connections we have with animal subjects, viewers may sense anthropomorphism within my work. Anthropomorphism appears to have its roots in the human capacity for so

called “reflexive consciousness”—that is, the ability to use self-knowledge, knowledge of what it is like to be a person, to understand and anticipate the behavior of others (cited in Serpell 2003:84, Humphrey 1983). With the way I place animal images on reflective Perspex, as light illuminates and travels through the transparency of the Perspex, it inevitably has the potential to imply a human presence. Undoubtedly it is hard to avoid adopting an anthropomorphic perspective towards my animal subject portraiture.

James Serpell (2003:83) defines anthropomorphism ‘as the “attribution of human mental states (thoughts feelings, motivations and beliefs) to nonhuman animals” – which is an almost universal trait among companion animal caretakers (pet owners)’. Since I was a child, I have been deeply influenced by anthropomorphic fables and fairytale stories, and the influence accompanies me. Whether it is conscious or subconscious, my companion animal subjects include anthropomorphism to some extent. As Mithen (1996) claims that anthropomorphism is one of the defining characteristics of anatomically modern humans (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) and that it probably evolved no more than 40,000 years ago. From the beginnings of human behavioral modernity in the late Stone Age about 40,000 years ago, examples of zoomorphic (animal-shaped) works of art represent the earliest evidence we have of anthropomorphism.

Wendy Grossman notes, “[Since] the dog has shared its life with humans, from prehistoric times to now, they have been depicted in carvings and paintings in early Egyptian, Greek, Mesopotamian and Roman art.” (cited in Alcock 2012, para 8). “Giving human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects or natural phenomena is a human trait called ‘*to anthropomorphize*.’” (Nauert 2010, para 1). Although we like to anthropomorphize, we do not assign human qualities to each and every single object we encounter. One entity is more likely to be anthropomorphized if it appears to have many traits similar to those of humans, for example, through humanlike movements or physical features, such as mammals.

Anthropomorphism has had a strong influence on animal portraits in terms of the attribution of human forms. Anthropomorphism also affects many other parts of our culture, including popular visual culture and literature. Animals are often anthropomorphised in film, television, art, video games etc. Countless fables, fairy tales and stories are also based on anthropocentrism. For instance, an anthropomorphic rabbit features in the first chapter of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice Adventure in Wonderland*. The rabbit wears a waistcoat and mutters “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!”. This image has become a mass-produced icon in art and design and is now a familiar image in popular culture.

Human beings have a tendency to believe they are the centre of the universe. This causes them to project their own emotions and perceptions onto all elements surrounding them, from inanimate objects to animals. Subsequently, we often refer to animal portraits as projections of human thoughts; this is typical reflection of human thoughts to a certain extent, as it is we, the humans, who often reconfigure animals through art. Humans pursue various identities through the images of animals; that is, we all want to understand more about ourselves. Painting animals, in this sense, for me, has in fact provided a medium to explore my own values more deeply. For example, the range of emotions aroused makes me feel happy, and they revive childhood experiences and interests of mine. Pets in the past have provided me with comfort and friendship. This prompts me to consider how and why this is the case, and raises questions about the moral values we bring to our relationships with animals, and whether this influences our relationships with people.

My intention was to remove my personal emotions, and to embed the animal's stories, identity, emotions and specific experiences in the portraits, but I inevitably and intentionally include my emotional response to these characters. The notion of anthropomorphism and its presence within animal portraits can be widely defined according to the perspective of the artist and

the viewer. In terms of the conscious decision to include such a feature it can be partly because of the artist's intention to express their own emotions through other subjects. However for me, each animal is an individual subject; they stand on their own feet and possess their own character, even if they are addressing a human audience within a gallery context.

As a comparison with my approach to painting animals, Deborah Williams 'depicts the dog as a dog and invites the viewer to do the same'¹⁵. In her works, dogs are always untethered from a leash, hence: 'Her subjects are captured in a moment, untethered by leash or love, in command of the immediate place in his/her world'¹⁶ (Figure 57), yet they are contained by the picture frame. Through printmaking, she builds the image of a solid black silhouette of a dog. Through the format and medium she amplifies respect for the form and character of dogs.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 57, **Deborah Williams** *Selfhood* 2012, Australian Galleries, viewed 20 November 2014, <<http://www.australiangalleries.com.au/9-artists/328-deborahwilliams>>.

¹⁵ Deborah Williams (2011:79) *Picturing the dog*, thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master degree of National Art School, Sydney Australia.

¹⁶ Heres Me About, Op Cit.

In her *Picturing the Dog* essay¹⁷ (2011), she outlined her process of how she used to leave stones and etching plates in her car boot to create organic scratch marks on a plate. This process assists her to create a non-specific space before she etches the silhouette of a dog image onto a plate. In her work, the minimal details of the dogs can be associated with shadow puppetry-like images. She states that her artistic decision is centred on the idea that, 'As the dog is removed from a world of details, so the dog itself can lack detail and display a certain degree of abstraction: we see less, so we imagine more'¹⁸. Her working process is to directly work on the surface of an etching plate. The method of working is sculptural in process and the making of the image is similar to the three dimensional construction of a dog¹⁹. She is interested in bringing awareness and a subjective experience to the subject of a dog and seeks to explore the isolation of mongrels and mutts²⁰.

While Williams and Kelley approach the third dimension in different ways, I always maintain two-dimensional planes within a three-dimensional delivery. My painting history informs this approach. In addition to this, the historical convention of painting on glass is revived through the reflective mirror surface relating to the gloss of acrylic sheets. Paintings at times appear

¹⁷ Deborah Williams, Op Cit.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp.68.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp.69

²⁰ Ibid, pp.66.

through the glossy back of the sheet or on the exposed surface. Both painted and unpainted sides and in some cases the background on one side and the portrait on the other are utilized with the intention of examining the relationship of the subject to its audience. I seek to transform my floor-based paintings into an installation to bring the viewer closer. At the same time, by enabling my dog paintings to stand freely on the floor as an installation, the subjects are presented as unique and identifiable individuals.

While Williams' backgrounds have an activated but undefined environment, my backgrounds are sometimes blank, relying on the gallery as the background, or have the backdrop of a landscape. In my earlier paintings on Perspex, I painted small-scale portraits, and used the wall itself behind the clear Perspex as the background to emphasize the portraiture because I wished to focus on the animal subject only. Consequently the portrait is either trapped behind the surface glazing to create a sense of distance and isolation or it is exposed on the surface, making the most of impasto and gaze of the subject to connect with the audience. In my later works, I incorporate landscape painting to comment on how animals have been extracted from the landscape and as an enquiry into a disconnect with nature.

Conclusion

In my Doctor of Fine Art practice-led research, I looked into representations of domestic animals in human history. The lives of animals have been entwined with ours for thousands of years and they have been documented throughout Western art history in various forms extending to the contemporary period. My interest in animals and art led me to exploring the deeper, often contradictory issues of human–animal relations as a subject for my art practice

Owing to the fact that my research questions have guided my project during my investigations into the role of the domesticated animal in human–animal relationships throughout human history, I have identified some profound cultural shifts in these relationships from the distant past to the contemporary world. Animal subjects are a constant in art, especially in painting, and I have shown that domestic companion animals have an iconographic legacy in Western painting from medieval times until the twenty-first century.

Through animals we get to know ourselves and due to their consistent presence in art and popular culture, animal images surround our lives. In my exegesis I have discussed some of the contemporary artists who have influenced my art practice and selected a number of both contemporary and historical artists to compare similar and divergent approaches to my practice.

I have sought to show how my own work expands on many of these examples, yet has also made an individual contribution to the field, particularly in reframing domestic animals to have a voice with which to communicate with the human audience. My use of reflective surfaces and gestural painterly delivery also serve to add to the understanding of the complex emotional and historical links that bind human-animal relations. As an artist, I was mainly looking from a studio-based research perspective, but there is still so much more to be investigated, researched and discussed around the topic of domesticated animals in human–animal relationship.

Therefore, further research can be expanded into looking at the role of domesticated animals including farm animals in our society. Understanding the close bond people have with domesticated livestock could complement and develop a bigger picture in terms of investigating domesticated animal and human relationships.

This exegetical essay accompanies a body of work in which the viewer is encouraged to reflect on many of the issues in our relationships with companion animals that are raised in the exegesis.

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Appropriate Durable Record

Yifang Lu

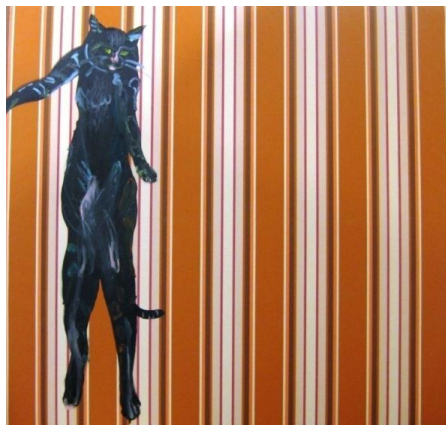
Contents

2010	developmental works	page 134-136
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Dimensions are listed in centimetres in height before width before depth.

2010

Developmental works



Oil on canvas 142 x 142 cm, 2010.



Oil on canvas 101.5 x 76 cm, 2010.



Oil and oil pastel on paper 150 x 110 cm, 2010.



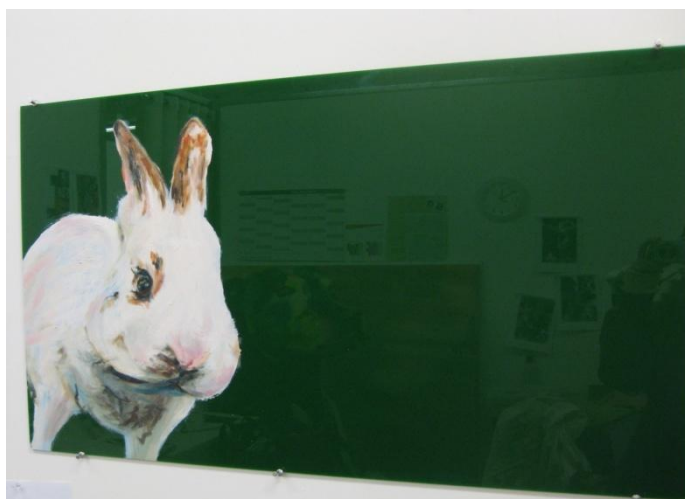
Oil and oil pastel on paper, 55 x 78 cm, 2010.



Oil on acrylic, 60 x 60 cm, 2010.



Oil on acrylic, 30 x 30 cm, 2010.

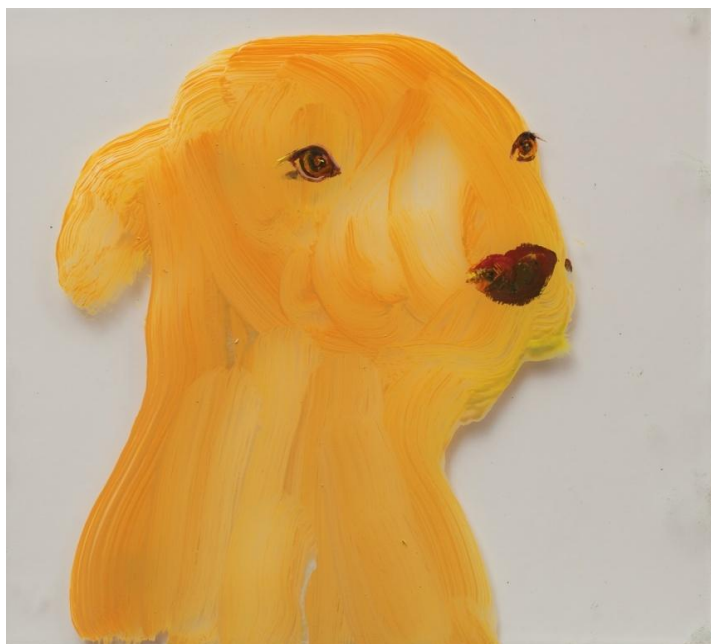


Oil on acrylic, 50 x 120 cm, 2010.

2011



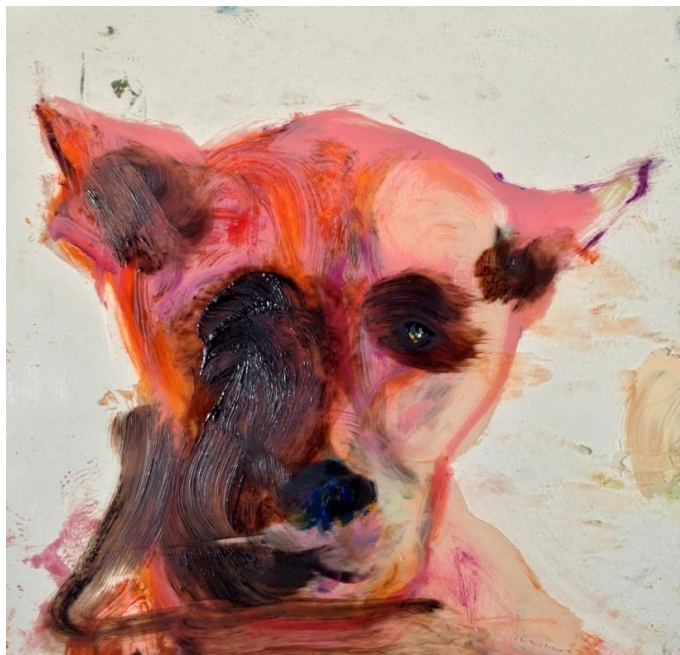
Oil on acrylic, 30 x 200cm, School of Art gallery May 2011.



Oil on acrylic, 30 x 30 cm, 2011.



Oil on acrylic, 30 x 30 cm, 2011.



Oil on acrylic, 30 x 30 cm, 2011.



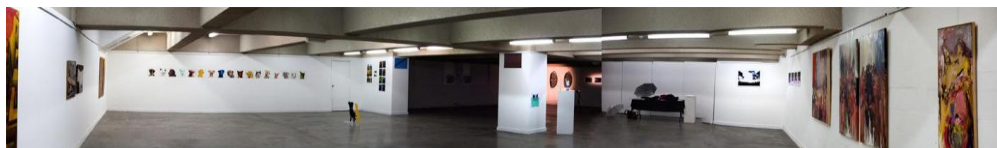
Oil on acrylic, 30 x 30 cm, 2011.



Oil on acrylic, 30 x 30 cm each, Eckersley Open Art Space gallery August 2011.



Detail, 68 x 38 x 30 cm each.



The over view of *On Periphery* exhibition in Eckersley Open Art Space gallery August 2011.

2012



Studio installation 260 x 200 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 52 x 25 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 61 x 49 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 60 x 30 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 61 x 42 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 42 x 26 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 45 x 20 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 39 x 37 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 41 x 25 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 44 x 20 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 39 x 30 cm, 2012.



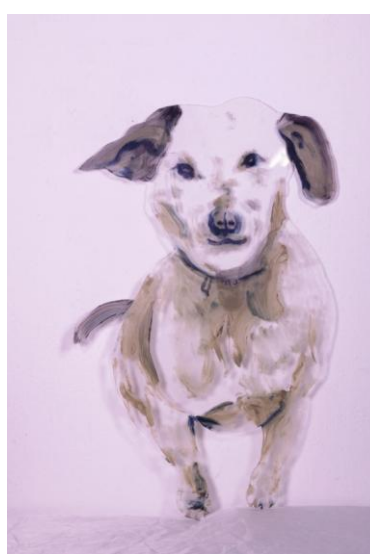
Detail, oil on acrylic, 67 x 32 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 43 x 31 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 60 x 28 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 57 x 38 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 76 x 76 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 82 x 63 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 45 x 47 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 45 x 60 cm, 2012.



Detail ,oil on acrylic, 34 x 30 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 43 x 61 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 65 x 38 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 66 x 36 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 71 x 40 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 62 x 35 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 78 x 33 cm, 2012.



Detail, oil on acrylic, 63 x 29 cm, 2012.



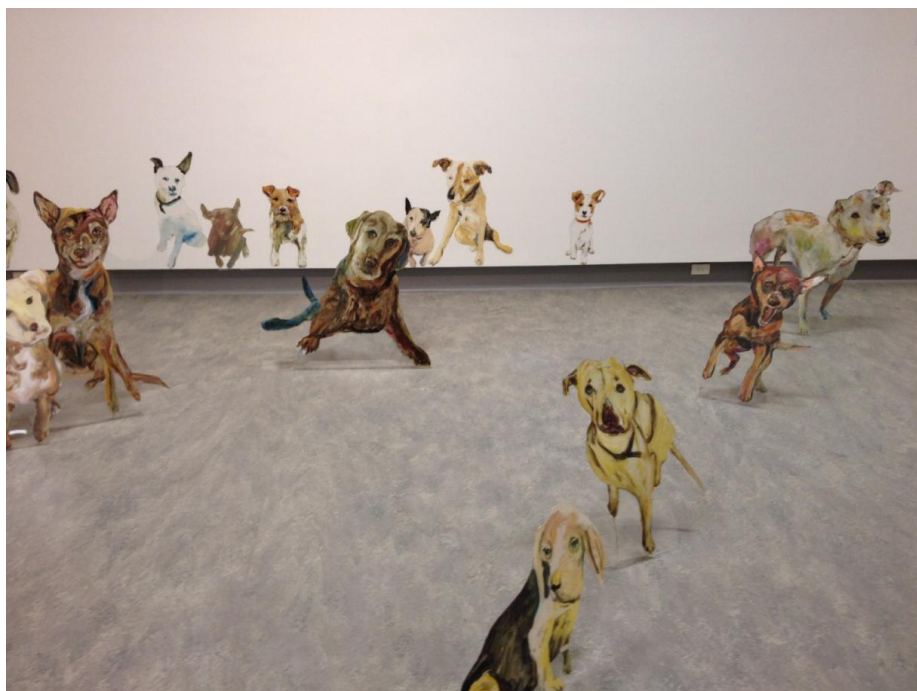
Umwelten exhibition in Project space, June 2012.



Umwelten exhibition in Project space, June 2012.



The over view of *Us and Them – Umwelten* exhibition in Project space, June 2012.

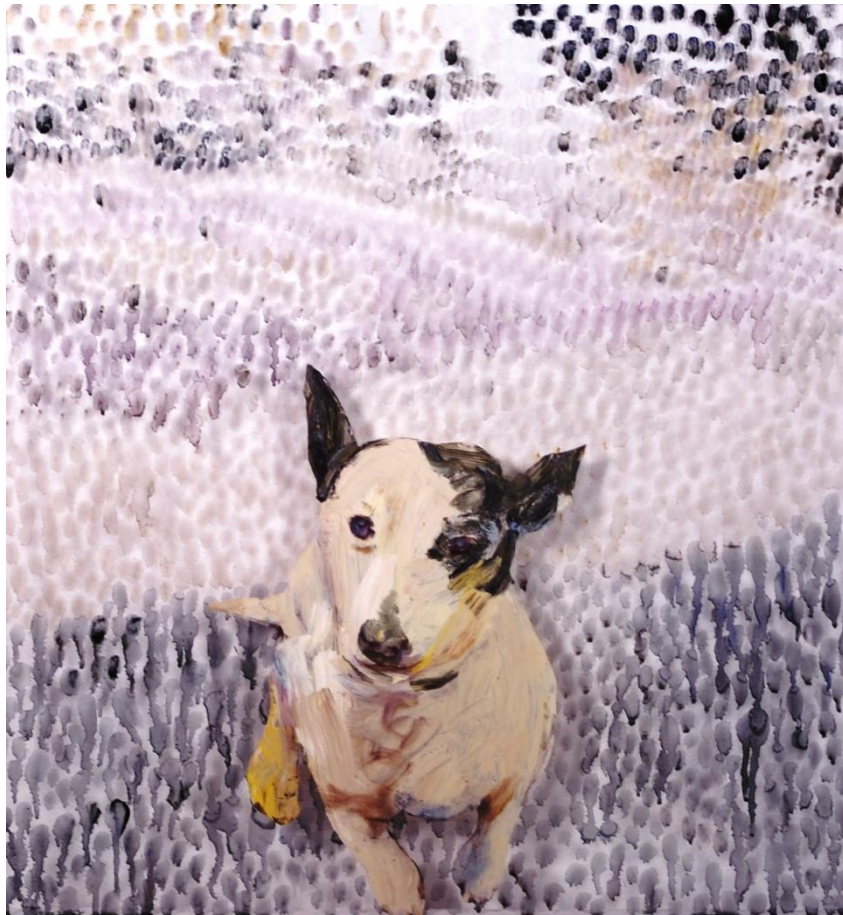


The over view Doctoral seminar exhibition in School of Art gallery, May 2012.

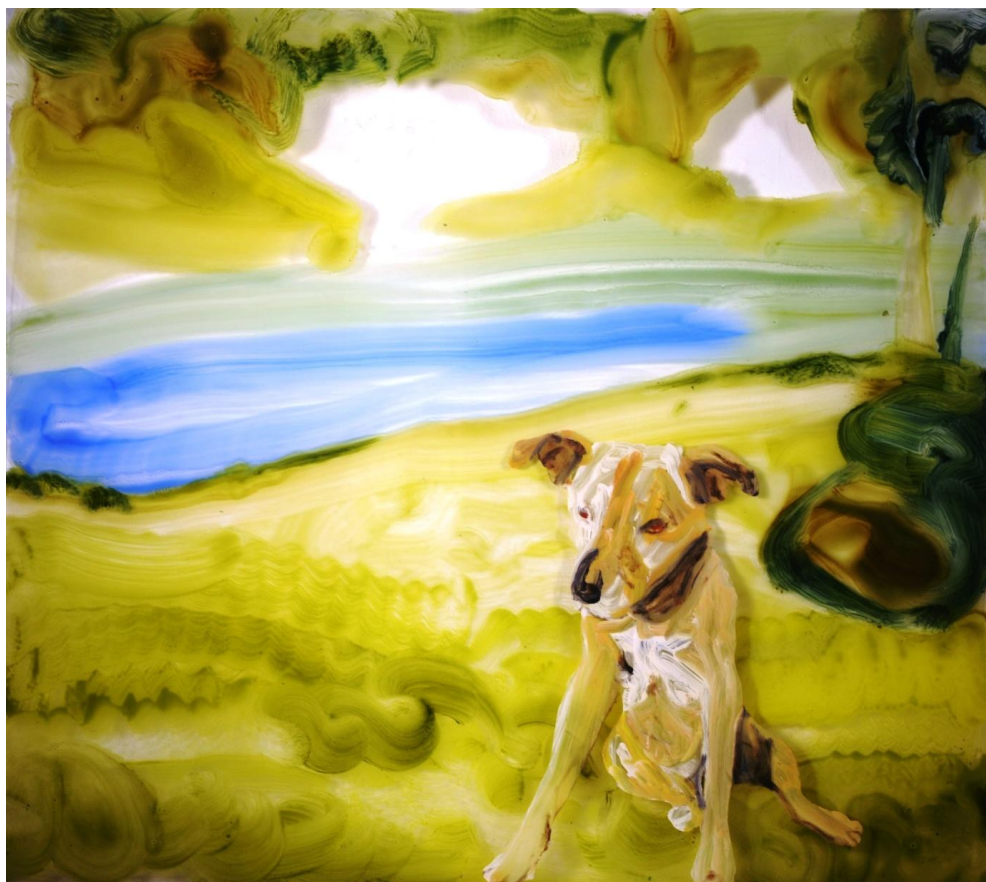


The over view Doctoral seminar exhibition in School of Art gallery, May 2012 with guide dog visitor.

2013



Oil on acrylic, 65 x 60 x 20 cm, 2013.



Oil on acrylic, 155 x 130 x 20 cm, 2013.



untitled, 13 oil on acrylic panels, 30 x 30 cm (each), 2011-13.



Making a Stand, 14 oil on acrylic panels, 90 x 680 x 100 cm (approximate), 2011–13.



Terrainier #1 and #2, oil on acrylic panels, 129 x 105 x 16 cm (each approximate), 2013.



13 oil on acrylic panels, 120 x 420 cm (approximate), 2012–2013.



Fantasy Getaway #1 and #2, oil on acrylic panels, 120 x 90 x 65 cm (each), 2013.



Fantasy Getaway #1 and #2, oil on acrylic panels, 120 x 90 x 65 cm (each), 2013.

Yifang Lu

Born in Taiwan 1983; arrived at Australia in 2002

EDUCATION:

2010 -14	Doctor of Fine Art, RMIT University
2009	Master of Visual Art, Victorian College of Arts, the University of Melbourne
2008	Postgraduate diploma of Visual Arts, Victorian College of Arts, the University of Melbourne
2008	Australians Studying Abroad: VCA Visual Arts Program: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou & Singapore led by Norbert Loeffler
2005-07	Bachelor of Fine Art, Painting, Victorian College of Arts

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

2012	<i>Pursuit</i> Delhi, India Art Fair, India <i>Us and Them-Umwelten</i> , Project space, Melbourne Doctoral Seminar exhibition, RMIT School of Art gallery, Melbourne
2011	<i>On the Periphery</i> , Eckersley Open Art Space Gallery, Melbourne <i>Reader in Birdbrain</i> , Screen Space, Melbourne
2010	<i>Mammalade</i> , solo exhibition, Yarra Sculpture Gallery, Melbourne <i>Substance</i> , Guildford Gallery, Melbourne
2009	<i>Farm Box</i> , Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
2007	<i>Proud- to be standing</i> , Victorian College of Arts Student Union, Margaret Lawrence gallery, Melbourne <i>Arrived</i> , Victorian College of Arts international student exhibition, VCA School of Art gallery, Melbourne

- 2006 *Her Light in Native Colours- Her Presence in Colours VII*, Australian Chapter, International Women Artists' Association-Australia Inc., Manningham Gallery, Melbourne
- Parked*, Fridge Festival, Collingwood community car park, Next Wave Festival, Melbourne
- The Final*, C-Cubed Gallery, Melbourne

AWARDS:

- 2008 Galloway Lawson Acquisitive Prize, Victorian College of Arts, the University of Melbourne
- 2007 National Gallery Women's Association Undergraduate Encouragement Award, Melbourne

WORK EXPERIENCE:

- 2008-14 Volunteer at the Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
- 2012-14 Gallery assistant, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne (casual)
- 2012 Translator for Chinese artist Chong Lu Bai, *A Brush with Nature* workshops, Cultural Exchange Art Activity, Warrandyte Uniting Church, Melbourne
- 2011 Translator for Chinese artist Xu Xiaoyan, *Nv Yishu Series V: Viriditas* artist talks Manningham Gallery, Melbourne
- 2010 Floor talk in Chinese and English for *Li Gang: in the grey scale* exhibition, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
- 2010 -11 Installation staff, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne (casual)
- 2010 Acting gallery and curatorial assistant, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne (one month)
- 2009 Acting programs and operations coordinator, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne (one month)
- 2006-07 International Representative of the Victorian College of Arts Student Union, Melbourne
- Private drawing tuition for children, Melbourne
- 2004-05 Assistant to artist Fung-Zi Lin in "Fung-Zen" art class, Taiwan

Exhibition Catalogues



ON THE PERIPHERY

ECKERSLEY'S OPEN ART SPACE GALLERY

OPENING NIGHT: 6PM - 8PM WEDNESDAY 17 AUGUST 2011

ARTISTS:

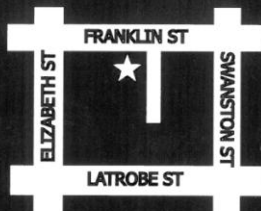
YIFANG LU
OHM PATTANACHOTI
MOHAMED ABUMEIS
ERNESTO RIOS
SHARMIZA ABU HASSAN
PAUL KELLER
ACE WAGSTAFF
SAMIRA GHASEMPOUR

OPENING NIGHT
17 AUGUST 6 - 8 PM
17- 21ST AUGUST 2011

ON THE PERIPHERY IS AN EXHIBITION THAT BRINGS TOGETHER A GROUP OF RMIT DOCTORATE AND MASTERS OF FINE ART STUDENTS WHO EXPLORE THE NOTION OF EXISTING ON THE FRINGE OF SOCIETY AND ITS IDEALS. FROM DESOLATE LANDSCAPES DEPICTING THE HINTERLAND OF SUBURBIA TO IMAGES AND INSTALLATIONS EXPLORING CROSS-CULTURAL CONCEPTS, THE ARTWORKS IN THIS EXHIBITION ENCOMPASS A RANGE OF MEDIA INCLUDING PAINTING, PHOTOGRAPHY, SCULPTURE AND INSTALLATION

**ECKERSLEY'S OPEN
SPACE GALLERY**
97 FRANKLIN STREET
MELBOURNE

GALLERY HOURS:
WEEKDAYS 9 - 6PM
SATURDAY 11 - 5PM
SUNDAY 10 - 4PM





PROJECT SPACE/SPARE ROOM



Us and Them – Umwelten

STEVE BAKER

CATHERINE CLOVER [Co-curator]

YIFANG LU

REBECCA MAYO

JEN RAE [Co-curator]

FLEUR SUMMERS

DEBBIE SYMONS

JASMINE TARGETT

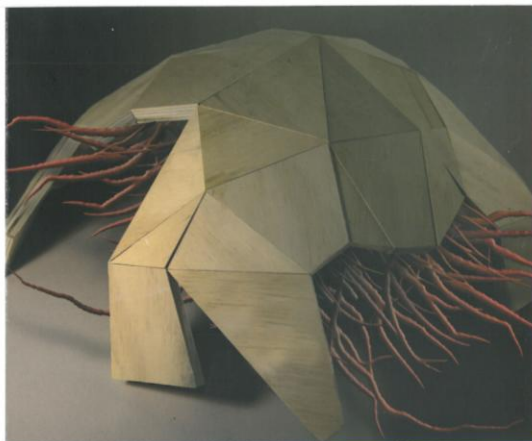
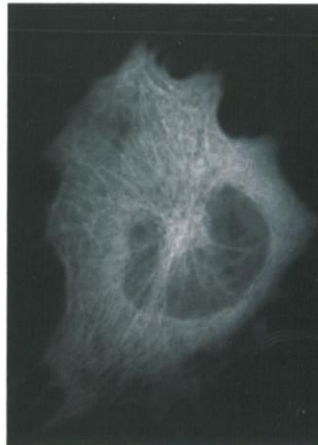
Essay by LINDA WILLIAMS

To be opened by LINDA WILLIAMS and KATE RIGBY

FRIDAY 11 MAY TO THURSDAY 7 JUNE 2012

OPENING THURSDAY 10 MAY 5-7PM

FLOOR TALK THURSDAY 24 MAY 1-1.30PM



**New perspectives in environmental art:
Us and Them - Umwelten**

The concept of *umwelten* is a term derived from the work of the early 20th Century biologist and ethologist Jakob von Uexküll. In the German *umwelt* means 'surrounding world', or 'self-centred world' and for von Uexküll *umwelten* conveyed the idea of the vast range of creatures occupying worlds whose meaning could be understood from their specific point of perspective. Within myriad *umwelten* then, diverse creatures experience their *umwelt* differently, yet von Uexküll's findings led him to conclude that communication, or semiosis, was a process of interaction common to the *umwelten* of all organisms: whether human or non-human. The study of these processes of communication formed the basis of biosemiotics, of which perhaps one of the best-known studies is the 'information dance' of bees.

Performed in order to communicate to others in the hive on how they might find sources of pollen or nectar, each dance has been shown to convey surprisingly precise directions performed by individual bees based on their specific experiences of the *umwelt*, yet engaged with shared social codes of communication. They convey quite complex information about the specific distance and direction to pollen, nectar or water referenced through the position of the sun.

This code of shared information can, however, vary according to the experience of others in the hive, as Dorion Sagan² notes in his introduction to von Uexküll's *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, when the bees return to perform the 'information' dance the intensity of their communication depends considerably on how enthusiastic the others are feeling at that moment to receive the information. Hence the dancing bees are not simply programmed like little machines to 'deliver' information, but rather participate in

complex and subtle forms of social communication and contextual meaning. Thus the biosemiotic process for bees is deeply relational, and for von Uexküll this was a process common to all organic life, including the life of creatures we have largely held to be mundane such as the flies, grasshoppers, ticks or even simple sea limpets occupying *umwelten* that von Uexküll brought alive into the anthropocentric limits of human awareness.

In the context of global ecological deterioration, not least in the lives of bees, it is not difficult to see the appeal of von Uexküll's work on the experiential worlds of non-human animals, and the artists in this exhibition have recognised how fruitful a foray into the worlds of non-human others can be for the human imagination. The title chosen by the artists, *Us and Them: Umwelten* refers to imagined reality of these other worlds, whilst also acknowledging the inescapable context of the human world, and hence, in other words, to the 'us' in the title, and by implied extension to the anthropogenic causes of detrimental change to the fragile ecological relations between all *umwelten*.

The artworks conveying the complex interactions between such *umwelten* are presented here in a diverse range of media including the photographs of English artist **Steve Baker** taken from his pushbike in his *Roadside Series* (2011). The view of the road is closer from a bike than a car, and this perspective is evident in the glimpses of the shadow of a bicycle wheel or edge of a pedal in the photos. From Baker's world view, as it were, from the bike, differences in the temporal scale of fast moving cars as against the more lumbering gait of animals is also thrown into relief. The slower cyclical movement of organic motion is also conveyed through the repetitive loop of images that records instances of the violent collision of these adjacent life-worlds on English country lanes. We view these collisions from Baker's perspective, which unlike the typical exclusion of the human presence

in canonical landscape photography, is represented as standing inside human spheres of agency yet is sufficiently detached to bear witness to the impact of the human presence.

Taiwanese artist **Yifang Lu** presents images of domesticated animals painted on Perspex and mirrors in ways that draw attention to the opacity of paint whilst still allowing the transparency or reflexivity of the ground to call attention to the context of the constructed human world. For domesticated creatures of any kind the human world is transcribed consistently across their experience of *umwelt*, often from the moment of conception to death, yet these are non-human worlds that interconnect with ours on a daily basis, and in this sense are uniquely well placed to remind us of the interdependencies of the human and non-human worlds.

In *A Storytelling of Ravens* (2012) **Catherine Clover** (UK/Australia) uses the built environment of the gallery, particularly the large windows facing onto Cardigan Street in Melbourne's inner city, to draw attention to the proximity of the human world and the worlds of wild ravens (*Corvus mellon*) who also live along this street. Clover's work comprises vinyl lettering covering the window and legible both from indoors and the street. The text is based on the artist's numerous encounters with ravens in the months leading up to the exhibition in May 2012. It refers to their vocal calls and bodily movements, and to the weather that shapes their worlds. Clover 'translates' the evocative calls of ravens into text by means of the phonetics used by naturalists which is then combined with audio works that, like the text, may be interpreted indoors and also on the street – and hence, into the *umwelten* of the ravens themselves. As such, this work is highly innovative insofar as it extends its semiotic range beyond the human world.



Above
Jan Yae
Awaken! Flag, 2012
Photocollage and Installation

Right
Four Summers
Feelings, 2012
Mixed Media



Debbie Symons, on the other hand, has the human sphere and the anthropogenic causes of ecological degradation clearly in her sights in her video *World Species Market* (2012). Symons co-opts the format of a share market board by replacing financial data with data from the IUCN 'Red List' of endangered species from the years 2000 to 2011. By 2011, the Red List had identified a further 8,524 species since the 2000 list, which represents an increase of a serious threat to 2.1 entire species each day. Symons' unemotional and graphic visual approach is strategic insofar as it emulates the dry presentation of data in global market fluctuations in ways that evoke sense of potential collapse in the barriers between the abstracted world of capital and organic *umwelten*.

Canadian Métis artist **Jen Rae** extends the artistic adaptation of contemporary technology in a large QR Code installed on the gallery wall in flocking fibres in *Awaken! Flag* (2012). Rae's QR Code can be accessed by a mobile phone and QR reader/scanner in order to read the message behind the flock wallpaper to draw attention to an 'us and them' scenario: those equipped with technological knowhow and those who are not. This in turn refers to the content of the artwork, which draws parallels between artists as translators and Jen Rae's understanding of her Métis cultural heritage and its alternative world-view to mainstream western culture.

Fleur Summers' biomimetic sculptural works *Feelings* (2012) are comprised of common, industrial objects. Inspired by Darwin's studies of the barnacle, these imaginary creatures mimic the biosemiotic processes of tiny biological colonies whose 'antennae' reach out from their *umwelt* to probe the ecological complexities of the wider world. In this case, a wider world inhabited humans whose movements interact with these magnified worlds of invertebrates in ways that draw our attention to the alternative realities of other lifeforms.

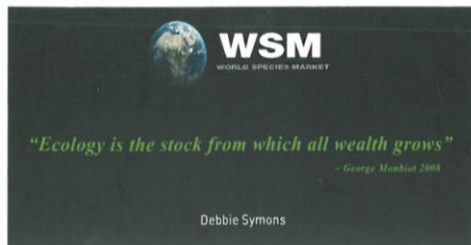
Jasmine Targett's *Indivisible* (2012) also magnifies fragments from different worlds, in this case through large photographic prints of microscopic images of a single human cell and an animal cell. Working with Dr Judy Callaghan from Monash Micro Imaging, the way Targett's images are juxtaposed acknowledges the parallels between cellular appearance and function in humans and animals whilst also serving as a reminder of the fragility of ecological connections and interdependency where radical change in one *umwelt* has the potential to reverberate across complex systems.

While most of the artists in this exhibition focus on the intersecting worlds of human and animal, **Rebecca Mayo** extends the notion of 'Us and Them' to plant species, and to the invasive weeds introduced by humans to local ecologies that have evolved over time into complex, finely balanced biological systems. Mayo's *Gorse Gloves* (2012) are pairs of connected gloves stained with the gorse that has invaded the local environments along the Merri Creek. They refer quite literally to the human hand of intervention in the introduction of non-indigenous species, yet also attest to the role of human hands in environmental restoration work.

Like all the works in this exhibition, Mayo's gloves are also a reminder of the hand of the artist in revealing the semiotic connections between *umwelten* – which is to say, between us and the myriad others whose world views are connected to ours, yet in all their wonderful variety are acknowledged for their indelible differences.

Linda Williams

- 1 This can be seen on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j4g4jg>
- 2 The son of well-known actor/producer Carl Lumbly and the gifted biologist Lynn Margulis.
- 3 First published in the German in 1934.



- Cover
Rebecca Mayo
Fieldnotes (Gorse gloves) (detail), 2012
Artist book
- Outside Pages, Left to Right
Debbie Symons
World Species Market (still), 2012
Digital video
- Catherine Clover**
Excerpt from artist's book *Tell Me Something: A Field Guide to the Voices of an Unkindness of Ravens*, 2011
LED digital billboard projection
Portchartrain Expressway New Orleans USA
- Yifang Lu**
Untitled, 2011
Oil paint on perspex
- Steve Baker**
Roadside XVII, 2011
Photograph
- Jasmine Targett**
Indivisible: Portrait of Humanity, 2012
Photographic print

<http://usandthem-umwelten.blogspot.com.au/>

PROJECT SPACE/SPARE ROOM
BUILDING 94: 23-27 CARDIGAN STREET, CARLTON

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List of artists:

Colleen Ahern
Janelle Arena
Cath Barcan
Paul Borg
Paul Borg
Paul Borg
Paul Borg
Paul Borg
Paul Borg
Paul Borg
Paul Borg

On
Portraits (1-6)
Night vision (1-2)
Bubble breath
By the pond
Feeding time
Fish reflected
Goldie
Hide
Pinku
Snow White

Peter Burke
Caroline Cardinet
Caroline Cardinet
Irene Crusca

Scrabble Top Scores (1-4)
Found
Forgotten
Mirror to the Hegemony of
the Masterpiece (1-2)
Hard work
Artwork inside
Requiem for a pumpkin
Red bird
Snowman
Sequence and simultaneity
front and side (1-4)
Hairy 8 & Lint 9

Sue Dodd
Kim Donaldson
Juan Ford
David Glenister
David Glenister
Michael Graeve

Hari Haritos

Grant Hill	<i>Apples</i>
Grant Hill	<i>Landscape</i>
Bridget Hillebrand	<i>Wimmera I</i>
Bridget Hillebrand	<i>Wimmera II</i>
Bridget Hillebrand	<i>Wimmera III</i>
Tassia Joannides	<i>Peephole series (1-6)</i>
Damon Kowarsky	<i>Wozir Khan (1-II)</i>
Damon Kowarsky	<i>Chicago</i>
Damon Kowarsky	<i>MO12 St</i>
Damon Kowarsky	<i>Hippo</i>
Damon Kowarsky / Kyoko Imazu	<i>Ipslue</i>
Damon Kowarsky / Kyoko Imazu	<i>Fish</i>
Damon Kowarsky / Kyoko Imazu	<i>Chameleon (I-II)</i>
Raj Narrawarramingi	<i>Delhi metro</i>
Louise Lavarack	<i>A Small Splash I</i>
Louise Lavarack	<i>A Small Splash II</i>
Brendan Lee	<i>Bogan</i>
David Lowry	<i>Bridge</i>
David Lowry	<i>Love/Hate</i>
Yi-Fang Lu	<i>Give a dog a home</i>
Sue Kneebone	<i>Hirsute</i>
Jason Maling	<i>Untitled</i>
John Neeson	<i>Red apple</i>
John Neeson	<i>Green apple</i>
Annabel Nowlan	<i>The clove-hitch</i>
Annabel Nowlan	<i>Plant fossil symbol</i>
Louise Paramor	<i>Astrobingo Club (1-6)</i>
Nusra Latif Qureshi	<i>Untitled</i>
Naeem Rana	<i>Untitled</i>
Phil Roubin	<i>Back and forth</i>
Phil Roubin	<i>Transporter</i>
Vin Ryan	<i>Completed meal 3.9.11</i>
Vin Ryan	<i>Completed meal 10.10.11</i>
Chico Volante	<i>Red button</i>
Chico Volante	<i>Safety pin</i>
Irene Wellm	<i>Chair of ambivalence</i>
Irene Wellm	<i>Apocalyptic figure (1-2)</i>
Irene Wellm	<i>Momentum of evolution</i>



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Peter Burke
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