

Art for animals

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Art for animals

ABSTRACT

'Art for animals' intends to address the ecology of capacities for perceptions, sensation, thought and reflexivity of animals. In cultural theory, the capacity for art is part of the rather mobile boundary line that performs the task of annihilating the animal in human and in demarcating the human from animality. The purpose of this article is not so much to legislate upon the placing of this line, but rather to suggest that the sensual and cultural capacities of various kinds of being, whether ordered into species or not, can be explored and to follow a few ways in which this has been done by a number of artists working in various ecological and technical settings. Some of this work is rightfully absurdist, whimsical, self-trivializing. But all of it moves towards setting up actual, multi-scalar and imaginal relations with animals that involve a testing of shared and distinct capacities of reflexive perception.

KEYWORDS

art
animal
sensoria
phenomenology
Coates
Bec
Jeremijenko
Perry

If art is genuine it is creative revolution regardless of who looks at it
(Laslo Moholy-Nagy)

A crowd of apes and monkeys sit clustered on a box gawping and grinning and staring at a canvas. They have seen nothing like it; or they are bored by it; or they raise their arms in delight at the general hullabaloo. They are of a number of sorts, baboons, gibbons and others; all, however, have the painting as the primary focus of their attention or reaction. What is on the canvas is hidden from view; all we see is the gilded side of a carved frame. Gabriel von Max's turn-of-the-century comedy in oils *The Jury of Apes* (1889) points at the trade of the art critic, utter monkey business, but also at the viewer of art, a mug, an enthusiast, or, in the stare of the ape (turned to address the viewer

1. Notable examples would be Jannis Kounellis' installation, *Horses*, Rome, 1969, in which a dozen horses were stabled in the Galleria L'Attico, setting up a situation in which the physical presence, movement, smell and palpability of the horses goes straight to matter conjugated by the multiple kinds of expectation and viewing accentuated in art systems. Paola Pivi's work follows somewhat in this trajectory but with an emphasis on exoticism and absurdist conjuncture: an alligator covered in whipped cream, zebras transported to a snowy landscape, a leopard prowling amongst plastic replica cappuccino cups.
2. The development of such architectural work in the London Zoo was at the initiative of Julian Huxley, then secretary of the Zoological Society. Lubetkin also worked later at Dudley Zoo, which, almost in reverse of *OOZ (for the birds)*, provided a miniature example of modern town planning. For an analysis of the development of the architecture of London Zoo, see Hadas A. Steiner, 'For the Birds', *Grey Room no.13*, pp. 6–31. *The Penguin Pool* was eventually abandoned after about seventy years of occupation, with the penguins being moved to a more 'organic' site with various kinds of surface and housings. It remains standing as a Grade I Listed building, but, as of this writing, remains unused.

through half-closed lids), a rare specimen in itself. For apes to look at a canvas makes the pretensions of those who look with a mind to judge also minds to be judged, or at least, to be sniggered at.

Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, a book that places painting and sculpture amongst an inventory of animals, plants and minerals, gives us another story along these lines. In a competition between two painters in *trompe l'oeil* technique, Zeuxis and Parrhasius face off in front of a crowd. The first artist pulls away the curtain protecting his work to reveal the most perfectly rendered bowl of fruit, so lucidly real in fact that a flock of birds immediately descends upon it and starts to peck away the paint. Impressed, Parrhasius stirs, but does not move. He simply stands and watches. The annoyed Zeuxis demands that he remove the curtain from his canvas. The second artist does indeed reveal his painting, but by stating that he has no curtain to remove, that it is a painting of a curtain. This painting has deceived the eyes of an artist, not a mere bird. Parrhasius wins the competition and perhaps brought to a temporary close a current in art that is only just re-emerging, art for animals.

Art for animals is art with animals intended as its key users or audience. Art for animals is not therefore art that uses animals as a substrate or a carrier, nor as an object of contemplation or use.¹ (Needless to say, given these criteria, it does not fall into the category of transgenic art, with its all too frequent tendency to animal abuse and naive sensationalist celebration of genetic engineering.) It is not art that, like *The Jury of Apes*, depicts animals for human viewers, or that incorporates animals into living tableau, but work that makes a direct address to the perceptual world of one or more non-human animal species. There are only a very small number of works that make such an address. This essay will make a brief survey of them and then go on to discuss their implications. Where it differs from Pliny's tale is in that it works not on the level of successful imitation, of setting up perception as a means by which one is duped, but in rendering perceptual dynamics as both somewhat more irresolved and more powerful.

A further important category of work that does not usefully fall into this current are objects such as dog kennels by celebrity architects, such as Frank Gehry (Glaister 2006) or housings for birds. Whilst some work in zoo design, notably Carl Hagenbeck's Tierpark in Hamburg by Johannes Baader, and the aviary at the London Zoo by Cedric Price does attempt to engage with animal behaviours, in a way that Berthold Lubetkin's famous double spiral ramped penguin pool at the latter zoo does not.² Thomas Schütte installed *Hotel for the Birds* (2007) on a plinth in London's war monument-congested Trafalgar Square. Made of brightly coloured layers of perspex, this was a sculpture in the style of an architectural maquette designed to catch light, and to act as a 'public space' for urban rock doves displaced by a cleansing policy established by a different branch of the body commissioning the work. Whilst being of interest, it was primarily a 'housing'. David Nash, an artist who works with the materiality of wood, and whose aim is for the work to integrate into natural processes, has made shaped blocks of oak for use in a small copse, by sheep who gather there to escape the rain. They use the blocks for 'shelter, safety and scratching' (Sutton 1993). More recently, the sociology artist Deller (2006) is using the device of an architectural competition to produce a design for a *Bat House* for the Wetlands Centre in South London. Whilst these are interesting projects, they largely address animals in terms of ergonomics, making spaces that physically 'fit' them.

At the same time, because many animals experience and shape a locale by literally inhabiting it, there is no absolute distinction between what is proposed here as art for animals and work that produces scenarios that animals live in, work on and complete, or render definitively unfinished. Equally, other projects that involve moving animals from one context to another as in the case of Hans Haacke's *Ten Turtles Set Free* (1970) or sorting systems for animals, as in Robert Morris' *A Method for Sorting Cows* (1970), are assumed to engage some aspects germane to this project, such as the categorical systems, including property, to which animals are assigned, but these fall outside the scope of this essay.³ Equally, durational performances of co-existence with animals are related but sit to the side of the present text.⁴

Other areas that would possibly suggest further development, but which are outside of the present discussion, include the production of visual material by animals (famously including paintings by chimpanzees or elephants.) Perhaps more promising research includes findings that indicate pigeons' capacity to distinguish between styles of picture making, showing that pigeons could learn to distinguish between works by Monet and Picasso and subsequently, that they were able to carry over this capacity for distinction to categorically related art by Cézanne and Braque (Watanabe 1995: 165–74).

A weakness of some of the main streams of cultural theory over the past decades is that in its emphasis on the constructive aspects of culture, biological questions are neglected or considered reactionary. At the same time, a thread of biologically based research, functioning largely by an unsophisticated positivism, makes any chance of a dialogue between disciplines and styles of research difficult. There is a certain laboriousness in getting through the clunky formulations that are dredged up by instruments incapable of finding anything but what is expected and that are proudly displayed as having 'explained' culture. Certain currents in contemporary biology have made an attempt to perform a 'land-grab' on culture, to suggest that biology provides a baseline level of explanation for all forms of behaviour. Often these are characterized as being simplistically 'Darwinian' in motivation, with characteristics of culture identified as mere epiphenomenon. It is not necessary to get locked into simply refuting the shrillest voices or those advocating the most absolute reductionism as an *a priori*. But this kind of argument has not come solely in the form of a land-grab on culture, nor has it come only from scientists. A 'recall to biology' has been a ruse often played by those in the domain of art discourse who attempt to enforce a 'shared symbolic order' of the kind once supposedly provided by religion (Fuller 1983). I would suggest that much of this work is a betrayal of the subtlety and speculative nature of the current of thought set in play by Darwin.

Much of such work prefaces its findings by a complaint. In this scenario, biological approaches to culture are refused out of hand because of a conformist consortium of Marxists, post-structuralists, feminists, queers and others who bunker culture off from questions of innateness or predeliction. When Marx has written about species being, Foucault on biopolitics, Cixous on écriture feminine, and there is a plethora of more recent research and art emphasizing corporeality, it is unfortunately mistaken to describe those primarily concerned with culture as somehow assuming that they entirely surpass biology. Dissanayake suggests that art is a refusal to 'grow up', a prolongation of the sense of exploring the world for the first time, of maintaining sensual delight in novel growth and experience, the capacity to escape from a subordinate role (Dissanayake 1988). Perhaps certain participants

3. Morris (1970). Hans Haacke, *Ten Turtles Set Free*, 20 July 1970, St. Paul-de-Vence, France, 1970. Haacke's intervention consisted of buying ten turtles and releasing them into the wild. The methods of the Animal Liberation Front have by and large improved on such approaches.
4. Joseph Beuys, *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974) a durational performance in which a room was shared with a Coyote. Bonnie Sherk's, *Public Lunch* (1971) was held at the Lion House in San Francisco Zoo, during which the artist would introduce herself to the Lion's enclosure during feeding times.

in science too are undergoing such a thrill in their discovery of culture, and their entry into culture as a previously taboo domain. If so, this is entirely to be welcomed, but perhaps they should calm down just a little. At least, in a society such as ours, for scientists to borrow the Cultural Studies ruse of presenting one's arguments as the knowledge of the oppressed has the virtue of being amusing.

Art for animals intends to address the ecology of capacities for perceptions, sensation, thought and reflexivity of animals. The capacity for art is part of the rather mobile boundary line that performs the task of annihilating the animal in human and in demarcating the human from animality. The purpose of this text is not so much to legislate upon the placing of this line, but rather to suggest that the sensual and cultural capacities of various kinds of being, whether ordered into species or not, can be explored and to follow a few ways in which this has been done. Paul Perry has installed a small robotic device to spray bobcat urine high up a tree to stimulate an imaginary of pheromone responses. Jeremijenko makes a robotic goose, the aim of which is to set up interactions with a small group of geese; in a number of other projects she sets up devices for inter-species communication. Bec attempts to set up a dialogue between two speciated parts of the same genus of fish. Anthony Hall also works on communications and perceptual reflexivity with weakly electric fish. Coates stages a series of actions with animal materials and behaviours with interaction with other species as the prime goal. Some of this work is rightfully absurdist, whimsical, self-trivializing. But all of it moves towards setting up actual, multi-scalar and imaginal relations with animals that involve a testing of shared and distinct capacities of perception.

Deleuze and Guattari, following von Uexkühl, Kafka and Maturana and Varela amongst others, have placed animal subjectivity at the core of their reinvigoration of thought. In this, they provide some dynamic formulations of conceptual personae as animal-beings and of animals as engaged in reciprocal relations of life shaped by colour, growth and habitat formation. In their book *What is Philosophy?* art and nature are described as being alike because they combine an interplay between House and Universe, the homely and the strange, and the specific articulation of the possible with the infinite plane of composition (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 184–5). 'Art for Animals' takes up such work for the category of art.

In engaging animal cultures and sensoria, these projects also make art step outside of itself, and make us imagine a nature in which nature itself must be imagined, sensed and thought through. At a time when human practices are rendering the earth definitively *unheimlich* for an increasing number of species, abandoning the human as the sole user or producer of art is one perverse step towards doing so. More widely, a core process of Guattari's writing (one that amplifies Deleuze's) is the project of understanding ecology at multiple scales, from the social, through the medial, technical and aesthetic, to that of subjectification. This text draws upon such processes to develop the question of animal-human subjectivation as a cultural and inventive process. Within a web of interconnected capacities and materials, a set of processes and instances, set-ups, ruses and devices work to establish what Braidotti (2006) has called 'affirmative interrelations' between not simply a fixed set of innate behaviours and predilections, but the capacities for becoming that might exist between different forms of life and aesthetic dynamics.

It is not the intention here to suggest that there is a necessary continuum between human and animal; a continuum is a figure that implies fixed ends and a neat metric running between them. Rather, what is suggested in this initial sketch of a possible field is a myriadic ecology of perceptual-cognitive sets, some of which may overlap or share functions and capacities. As the primatologist Frans de Waal notes in his reflections on culture, 'One cannot expect predators to react the same as prey, solitary animals the same as social ones, vision-oriented animals the same as those relying on sonar, and so on' (De Waal 2001: 55). Equally, we cannot expect sensual experience to stay the same amongst members of what is logged as the same species. Humans, for instance, have domesticated themselves since the advent of agriculture, with, at the genetic scale, changes in composition equivalent in the degree of change to that found to be involved in the transition from wild corn to domestic corn today. In certain populations such changes manifest in the ability to digest foods associated with a sedentary mode of life (such as the developed ability to digest lactose linked with the unfortunate tendency to drink cow's milk). At a sensory level, rather than a genetic one, our habituations tend towards similarly substantial changes: one recent study, for instance, suggests that it is possible, with a little retraining, for humans to acquire an equivalent capacity of smell to that of dogs (Geddes 2006). Regardless of whether this is desirable or not, or whether it might also suggest the need for an uptake of the scenting and smelling habits of dogs, art for animals does send a tingle along the edges of what we take for granted as our current capacities. It suggests that we search out and test the discontinuities and overlaps between our sensual and intelligent capacities and those of others. What would it be like, for instance, to be able to see just the very edge of ultraviolet in the iridescence of a petal or on the wing of a butterfly? How would such a change in sensual capacity re-order us, make life bulge? Is there a market for drugs that temporarily reconfigure nervous and perceptual systems to those of other species?

Deleuze laughingly describes the sensorial world of the spider: a juicy fly can be placed in front of it; it does not care. All it wants to feel are a few small twitches on the far reaches of its web. Just a few details, a muttering in the background, that is what is appetizing. This, says Deleuze, is the same sense of the world as the narrator of Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu/In Search of Lost Time* (Deleuze 2003). Deleuze himself mobilizes various non-human sensoria to his arguments: ticks, lobsters, dogs, lice, bees, wolves, bowerbirds, flies, the horse-knight assemblage. Such creatures become ethological devices to overstep what can be sensed, thought or said. They are paths of becoming, gravitational lodes of traction that pull the human out of its skin, and pull the singular animal into the multiplicity of packs, of evolution and of ecology.

There are a number of ways and particular domains in which such becoming can be seen to occur, at the scale of brains, that of bodily elements and organization, and that of means and kinds of communication, amongst other things. Rozin (2006), for instance, catalogues a number of ways in which human cultural processes and evolutionarily accrued predispositions are interwoven in the case of food. What such work reveals is that the bodies of individuals in evolutionary conditions are means by which forms of life scan for potential adaptations; they are also means by which ecosystems arrange themselves, and the platforms for cultures to articulate, be experienced, revised and produced. They are in turn worked on and produced by cultures. Ecologies emerge in a multi-scalar way. What Deleuze and Guattari argue for is that an understanding of the virtual be added as a specific scale within ecologies, as a

dimension of relationality that exists at every scale within such a system, and a diagonal that connects them.

Evolution by natural selection is often characterized as a process of the survival of the most fit. 'Fitness' is a relative, and distinctly processual, term. A whale is fit for its habitat, but, as the current representative of a mammalian lineage that re-entered the water, it is also the result of massive and quite possibly awkward adaptational change (Zimmer 1998). It cannot be understood to be perfectly fit, but rather as the ongoing result of many interlocking morphogenetic, material and adaptive capacities that may involve substantial shifts in the use or function of bodily elements. Given this, it is useful to consider the question of the virtual in relation to the way in which bodies, entities that can be regarded as their components (such as genes or organs), their aggregates, and those of their products, such as cultures, explore, adapt to, make adaptations of and co-evolve with and form ecologies.

It is a commonplace that organs, behaviours or other entities in ecologies can change or add functions over time. Huxley, in his early work on ethology, notes that the behaviour of grebes in courtship includes adaptations and appropriations of movements, such as dives, that might have primarily developed as feeding movements but which are repurposed as displays of fitness and of courtship interest. These are elaborately linked and synchronized in a distinctive and beautiful set of behaviours (Huxley [1914] 1968). In a further dislocation of signalling into mimicry across species, when showing aggression, meerkats raise and curve their long tails over their backs. In this, they are mimicking the posture of their enemy and food source, scorpions. North American Chickadees (Red-breasted Nuthatches) are able to distinguish between the alarm calls of Black-capped Chickadees, according to whether the species being alerted is likely to predate them, so the signalling of information crosses between species (Templeton and Greene 2007: 5479–82). Signs given for one purpose are used for another. Such chains of dislocation are potentially endless; the mouth, originally used for biting and eating, over time gains additional functions such as speech and, in humans and a few other primates, sexual activity. Chains of dislocation constitute a form of primary experimentation of the capacities and materials of bodies and of life. They may occur across all scales of a body or at those of individuals or populations.

Aside from adaptations and accumulations of function and behaviour, co-evolutionary assemblages, such as the wasp-orchid reciprocation machine described by Deleuze and Guattari, set up consistencies across scales and discrete objects or organisms, by means of which each probes the virtuality of the other, but also interacts more generally, as an assemblage, with wider formations and compositional dynamics. Thus, an entity, or a process, might be imagined to occur in the liver of one being, be sensed as creepy sizzle by the automatic fight-or-flight responses of another, stimulate pheromone exchange between two members of different species, determine the use of grammatical tense in an essay by a specimen of another, but exist as much more than these. There is no teleology in such occurrences, but rather a drift of reciprocal relays established more or less directly by potentially thousands of interacting and escaping entities.

The question of the exploration of virtuality within an ecology is also carried out at an experiential scale in play. The kinds of play associated with different species are equally heterogeneous. The field of comparative psychology is developing an understanding of multiple forms of consciousness: mirror recognition (a test of self-awareness); theory of mind; tool use; emotions

and empathy; the capacity to imitate; the capacity to think about thought, metacognition; language; reflection recognition; and other capacities that in turn become affordances for entities, capacities and dynamics, which almost weekly result in experimental results widening the domain of intelligence, and the distribution of skills and aptitudes once thought exclusive to *Homo sapiens*. In his landmark survey of play in a multitude of species, Burghardt states that '[...] Play with objects is behaviour in which an animal investigates not just their nature [...] but what he or she can do with them' (Burghardt 2005: 386). This would also suggest that play not only acts as a context in which animals probe potential affordances amongst their conspecifics and the things that surround them, but also count themselves amongst the things that, at multiple scales, are being so probed. Play behaviours can also be autotelic, independent of adaptiveness or function, or as such, producing a reserve of 'anticipatory adaptation'; it is at once something that is absolutely live and also a gateway into the virtual, the plethora of forces and possibilities that interact to produce the actual.

In Deleuze and Guattari's account of ecology as melody, affordances become counterpoints, relays between one set of compositional dynamics, such as the bumblebee and the snapdragon, that trip, not simply in tight co-evolutionary couples, but out, from *oikos*, home, the root word of ecology, to the cosmos (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 184–5). Extending this cosmological dimension, if we concur that 'a work is always the creation of a new space time' (Deleuze 2006: 289), art for animals also allows us a way of thinking through the processes of intersubjectivation that we experience in ecology, a move that chimes with Guattari's critique of the 'pure intentional transparency' of phenomenology (Guattari 2000: 37). He calls instead for a means of recognition of components of subjectification that meet each other by means of transits that are relatively autonomous from one another (Guattari 2000: 36). The cosmos figured here is one that moves towards openness. The works considered below as art for animals can be thought of as specific articulations of such a process of opening.

PAUL PERRY – PREDATOR MARK

In his work on the literature of wilderness, Snyder suggests that, 'Other orders of being have their own literatures. Narrative in the deer world is a track of scents that is passed on from deer to deer with an art of interpretation which is instinctive. A literature of blood-stains, a bit of piss, a whiff of estrus, a hit of rut, a scrape on a sapling and long gone' (Snyder 1990: 112). In encounters with changes in the use of land, these literatures find themselves recomposed. Urban foxes in London, for instance, are notorious for their habit of shitting on children's toys left outside overnight in gardens and yards. Their territory-marking habits have been displaced and appear as cunning acts of deposition.

Paul Perry's 1995 installation *Predator Mark* is a subtle reordering of such a literature of scents. The work consists of a device made up of an electronic timer, a compressed gas spray mechanism and a flask of bobcat urine. This mechanism was installed high on a tree in a wooded estate, Landgoed Wolfslaar, in Breda in the east of the Netherlands. Bobcats are native to North America and Mexico. Their scents are thus not part of the vocabulary of ecology of the area.

Bobcat urine is, however, commercially available in North America, along with that of other local predators such as wolves. Its commodification and

5. See <http://www.hotdoe.com/>. Accessed 15 March 2009.
6. This work is a photograph by Man Ray of the reverse side of Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–1923). It shows the glass in 1920 after having accumulated a landscape of dust.

provision for credit units over the Internet allows its dislocation from territory. Once bought by the user it is judiciously sprinkled to deter certain animals from crossing into the space that the scent suggests is inhabited as territory by another. Other scents, such as the urine of doe deer in heat, are used as lures by hunters, in this case to draw deer away from trails into the line of sight of hunters. The urine of both predator and prey animals, like other animal products available for retail, spell out a new kind of literature, one of commodification, of humans gaining the capacities of cunning shitters, and the grisly promise of meat on a stick.⁵ Whether, like mosquito repellent, these products have anything more than fetish value for men investing in quality time alone with nature remains questionable.

In *Predator Mark*, introducing the scent of any animal, predator or not, is imagined to shift the register of references to presence within the place. It suggests an openness to the possible that resingularizes experience as an event in which the dimensions of relationality surging through it require recognition. This is a speculative literature of piss, involving floods, drips and sprays of matter, energy and signs, and the intelligences they invoke to sense and comprehend them.

One form of experiment is to set things out, to wait and see what gathers or grows in the manner of Duchamp's early artificial life work *Elevage de Poussiere* (Breeding Ground of Dust).⁶ Perry did not set out to observe whether there were any differences in behaviour associated with the installation of *Predator Mark*, as would be characteristic of a scientific experiment proper, in which one variable only is isolated and probed for the conditions of its variation. Indeed, it is not even clear whether the species most drawn to the scent-marking activity of art was even aware of its existence. This gratuity of the work, that it addresses itself primarily to animals, those who read no press releases, and its operation in a way that is imperceptible, indeed, by its height from the ground and position deep within a wood, almost impossible to experience, distinguishes it from an entity operating within the normal dynamics of art systems. If, to make one comparison, conceptual art made the move towards experiencing the materiality and multiply structuring forces of ideas and language, such work suggests a means for such conceptuality in multiple species and across many means of sensing, acting in and interpreting the world.

NATALIE JEREMIENKO – OOO

Jeremijenko is engaged in an ongoing series of works called *OOO*, which test human animal cohabitation of city spaces and set up novel kinds of instruments and infrastructure for urban and feral animals. *OOO*, as a series of works, and ongoing revisions of projects, establishes situations for animal and human interaction in contexts in which, unlike that of a zoo, the animals are free to leave. The *OOO* series has involved work adopting the housing paradigm, such as an installation on the roof of the Postmasters Gallery in New York in 2006. Whilst this was largely to do with providing amenities such as houses, perches, a supply of fresh water and the growth of plants with medicinal function, there were also two other key directions to this work. One included anthropomorphic architectural organizations of space, such as a 'shopping mall', and architectural work offering ironic recognition for the benefit of human viewers, such as components testing the mechanical understanding of what is normal for animal provision by applying architectural

notions of 'luxury' to fittings and spaces. There is an air of the flea circus about aspects of this project, dinky versions of high-end contemporary architectural concerns and urban systems. To achieve these, the project involved commissioning elements from a number of architectural studios perhaps inevitably leading to a tendency towards calling card architecture. Such elements might perhaps work as lures, sparkly things that attract attention and draw humans towards them. Perhaps anthropocentrism can work as an interpretative layer for one species, whose cognition is partly organized by glamour, without ruining the primary emphasis on addressing the perceptual and experiential capacities of another. More importantly, the project tests the notion of what the feral condition implies: might there be an outgrowth of provision from urban systems in order to provide more edges, and habitats for displaced and incoming non-human inhabitants of cities? Such provision might entail the imagination of multi-scalar 'green corridors', micro-to-macro-scale affordances built on, into and through cities for ameliorating, or even improving on the kinds of ecological condition they erase, build into or establish.

A common thread between the different components of the OOZ series is that of experimental forms of communication. The Postmasters installation *OOZ (for the birds)* included a 'concert hall' space for pigeon calls. Whilst this functioned as something of an architectural in-joke, being a miniaturely scaled version of *Casa de Musica*, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture's 2005 concert hall in Porto, it allowed for the amplification of voices and calls. In another work, *Comm. Technology* (2006), Jeremijenko has set up novel devices for pigeons to amplify their vocalizations. A series of perches to be attached to buildings consists of a hollow plastic horn fitted with a small microphone and speaker. The noises made by the pigeon whilst using the perch are powered up to address the street. Jeremijenko's wager is that the pigeons will recognize this, and note the changes in reaction of humans using the street, including possible food sharing, and begin to favour the use of the perch (Jeremijenko 2006). Unlike Perry's *Predator Mark*, therefore, there is a sense that the use of the work is monitored and evaluated, even if only informally. This is in part because Jeremijenko's work sites itself very much in dialogue with design and the critical design discourse also involving Dunne,⁷ da Costa,⁸ Phoebe Sengers⁹ and others. Here, design without a direct client or a customer and with animals as its users enters a modality that is enormously suggestive.

An early component of the OOZ project was *Robotic Geese* (2005 onwards), one unit of which, in an installation with the Bureau of Inverse Technology, *Romancing the Geese*, was placed in a small stretch of water next to the De Verbeelding art centre in Flevoland. The goose, a basic plastic decoy body with added features including motorized legs, an articulated neck, a head-mounted camera, a microphone and a speaker, was remote controlled from a seat that allowed a visitor to view the eyevue of the robot, to steer it and to 'make utterances' through it.¹⁰ The idea is to stage interactions with a small population of Greylag and feral domestic geese that inhabit the area. In the projected full iteration of the work, each speech interaction will trigger the recording of short bursts of audio-visual information to a database. Once it becomes public, items on the database can be correlated so that users can gradually, through standard collaborative filtering algorithms, aggregate opinions on the semantic content of the utterances of the non-robot geese.

Communication amongst humans is increasingly configured as a means of the delivery of order words and the management of the distribution of micro-compulsions to respond, advise, participate, collaborate and to organize

7. See Dunne (1999).
8. See the *PigeonBlog* project in which tame pigeons are fitted with environmental pollution data-gathering equipment, <http://www.pigeonblog.mapyourcity.net/>.
9. See the Culturally Embedded Computing research group at Cornell University, <http://cemcom.infosci.cornell.edu/>.
10. Whilst it might be imagined that the robot is clunky relative to a goose, a number of parallel experiments in animal behaviour, including that of birds, suggest that devices of this sort can be extremely useful in establishing communication. For a survey of such work, see Emma Young, 'Undercover Robots Lift Lid on Animal Body Language', *New Scientist*, 6 January 2007, pp. 22-3.

attention. Against this figure of the regime of responsiveness, to think about communication outside of the boundary of a species sets up a number of possibilities. Perhaps *OOZ* allows us to imagine a form of taxonomy in which speciation was marked not by the matter of which animal could engage in effective genetic transfer with another, but on the basis of those that engage in semiotic (memetic) relays.

MARCUS COATES – *OUT OF SEASON, SPARROWHAWK BAIT AND DAWN CHORUS*

Coates has embarked on a body of work that maps out a certain set of figurations of interactions with animals, with birds in particular. Only a few pieces of his work fall into the art for animals current, and are early, perhaps more minor, more throwaway or institutionally undetermined than the larger-scale projects he has more recently embarked on. They may indeed be pointing towards something to which, given his continued interest in ‘animal becoming’ he will return. Before addressing these, some of the other works are also worth mentioning. In a second work entitled *Dawn Chorus* (2007), high-quality field recordings of bird songs are slowed down sixteen times until they reach a pitch easily matched by a human throat. The resulting sounds are played to volunteers who learn to repeat them. These enactments are videoed, and then played back as a projection. It seems that, at least in terms of their re-enactment, only the relative size of the vocal apparatus distinguishes the calls of the birds and humans.

In *Journey to the Lower World* (2003) the artist uses a persona suggested by brief training in the rituals of a Siberian shaman (Coates 2005). He performs a ritual for residents of a soon-to-be-demolished tower block in Liverpool, wearing the skin of a deer, mimicking the work of a shaman, apparently communing with a number of bird spirits and in so doing bringing back a vision of hope for the bemused ladies and gentlemen attending his ritual. The latter work is interesting because it knows that it is weak but makes use of this. The action is awkward, based on a relatively shabby, slightly embarrassing day of training with the kind of guru who acquires his flock through postcards in health shop windows, and carried out by a denizen of the upper world. Nevertheless, this specimen of the contemporary European, gawkily decked out in the culled, shameful trappings of authenticity, as compromised as it knows it is, attempts to get something going. There is an earnestness achieved through a reflexive mimicry, of ritual, and of animal calls, especially Coates’ constant attention to those of birds, that carries through into his work fitting more precisely into the art for animals current. Mimicry is a means to set up ruses, initiatives that skirt the edge of multi-directional fraud in which the everyday and ideas of the wild, the primitive and capacities of sensual perception that overlap between species can be mobilized. Here mimicry unfolds both as play and as learning; in bird calls with their worlds of call and refrain, or their re-mobilization of surrounding sounds; and in contemporary art and its constant reversioning of appropriation, pastiche, copy, plagiarism, found materials, how to deal with and configure what exists, what repeats, in relation to the creation of the new. These are vectors in the generation of what Coates calls ‘animal becoming’ but, partially overlapping, they also shift each other.

During a series of short live works in the Grizedale Forest, Coates set up three interactions with local bird populations. They share some of the ‘do it

and see (or imagine) what happens' approach of Perry's *Predator Mark*. The experiment is done for its experiential value rather than the extraction of unequivocal data. In *Sparrowhawk Bait* (1999) Coates makes himself the target for a predator. The corpses of a Blackbird, a Blue Tit, a Mistle Thrush, a Grey Wagtail and a Greenfinch are tied to his hair. He runs through the forest, with the anticipation that a local Sparrowhawk will be attracted by and pounce on the momentarily re-animated bodies. In *Dawn Chorus* (2001) a shaven-headed male actor enters an area of young pines and shouts English football chants, fan-versus-fan abuse in good spittle-flinging style. Taking place in a deciduous wood, another short video, *Out of Season* (2000), documents the same kind of performance, with another actor and the addition of a Chelsea shirt. Aside from its relay and remediation as a video, the primary audience is the birds whose territorial and mating calls normally fill the spaces. In the work concerned with mimicry and imitation, whether of the shaman or of birds, making these chants and calls, listening out for any response, Coates has to link himself as an apprentice to the song domain of the birds, the processes of learning and training of listening and responding, which they establish. Taking the football chants to the forest sets out not only an idea of how human communications may often be so similar in their territoriality to those of birds; it shows too how demented and dreamy the possibility of talking to the animals really is, but also makes us wonder whether it could ever really be anything more than an unreturnable 'fuck you'.

LOUIS BEC – STIMULOGUES AND ANTHONY HALL – ENKI

Bec describes himself as a Zoosystémicien, a sole participant of this discipline working with an extended conception of artificial life, an abstraction of life in more general terms, and some developed ideas as to how to proliferate interrelations between technologies of information and different biological manifestations of signification and intelligence. His work tends towards a science fiction in practice, and Bec is an adept at the time-accredited techniques of neologism, fabulation, mind-boggling and acronym usage. His manifesto text 'Squids, elements of techno-zoosemiotics' (Bec 1997: 279–311) strives for a moment in which hyperbole and a series of programmatic and poetic statements achieves a density of semantic condensation sufficient to bring a world to life.

Aside from a number of projects developing interactive animated versions of artificial life projects, Bec has worked with various species of fish that use electrical pulses released by special electric organs located in certain parts of their bodies (varying across species, generally transmission towards the tail, reception in foveal regions at the head). According to a document describing the research programme, this series, the Stimulogues project, includes:

Logognathe Artefact (an interactive customizable loop of communication between the living, artifact and interactive agent)

Logomorphogenesis (modeling by dynamic morphogenesis of information exchanges between 3 *Gnathonemus Petersii* fish)

Ichyophonie/PanGea (setting up a communication device allowing exchanges between Mormyridées in Brazil and Gymnarchidées in Africa, trying to connect two continents which are getting separated gradually with the tectonic plates).

(Bec not dated)

11. One aspect of the project that is not covered here is that Hall works informally with an acupuncturist to apply galvanic skin response sensors to places on the human body with the suggestion that the fish might respond to different currents from the human subject. Additionally, the kind of electrode used is important; carbon electrodes give a soft profile, metal ones a very hard edge, quite distinct from anything they might encounter in the wild.
12. In one sense, this distinction recapitulates the difference between lab-based cognitive psychology work with animals and ethology's insistence on observation of animals in their habitats.

These fish are nocturnal, and, as well as having good hearing, they use their electric organs over short ranges to signal mating readiness or aggression, to locate food and to navigate in the dark water. Research by the sensory ecologist Gerhard von der Emde suggests that their complex sensory system is capable of using the way in which an object resists or stores mild electrical currents to determine its shape, and that they are able to categorize what they find (Emde 2006: 601–12). The movement of the fish, and the tail bending required for ordinary motion, allows the process of electric organ discharge to effectively ‘triangulate’ objects.

Anthony Hall is leader of a related project called *Enki* (2006), which also uses a number of species of weakly electric fish including the Black Ghost Knifefish (a species that breeds quite comfortably in captivity). The technique is to place them in a tank containing sensors that pick up the electrical signalling of the fish. The signals are then converted into waves that are played for a seated user by means of sound and flickering LEDs. A lead travels from the arm of the user carrying electrical pulses from the human body to an electrode in the water in which the fish swims.¹¹

As with the *Logognathe Artefact* and *Logomorphogenesis* proposals, the fish are placed in conditions in which, compared to their native habitat, they are sensorially and behaviourally deprived. Elephantnose fish (*Gnathonemus petersii*) do not breed in captivity, and will therefore in every case of their use as a component in such projects have been captured from the wild, from areas of Nigeria and Brazil already subject to significant pillaging for materials. In terms of the development of species-specific art, the question of how markets in animals and animal products intersect with the organization of art, and with the global distribution of habitats and organisms, is essential to recognize. By comparison with the emphasis on the capacity for animals to come and go in OoZ projects, most of the work done with elephantnose fish has substantial problems in terms of its ethical composition. The one clear exception to this is a version of the *Ichyophonie/PanGea* project.¹²

In versions of the *Enki* project that also involve a human subject, it is not clear whether, from the perspective of the fish due to their modelling in the system that receives them, and their mediation by layers of devices, it might not be simpler to replace them, or indeed the human user, with an entity in software equally capable of providing aleatory stimulus to the mechanism. The latter is the approach of Bec's *Logognathe Artefact*.

Underneath the generalizations about possible therapeutic implications and pastel fractals of one early iteration of the *Enki* project website, it becomes clear that certain aspects of the project are potentially quite welcomingly dark. Bateson, in work discussed by Guattari in *The Three Ecologies*, suggests that decisions and learning may be made by systems ‘immanent in the large biological system – the ecosystem’ or ‘at the scale of total evolutionary structure’ (Bateson 2000: 466) that are analogous to or developing qualities characteristic of mind. Such minds, systems of learning, occur between interacting elements; they are not isolatable to one single entity bounded by a membrane, but arise from cybernetically describable relays of entities bound at such a scale. One spin on the *Enki* project is that what we might be seeing here is the production of a mind or mentality, a mind that is at once fish and human but not reducible to either. That the fish part at least (when *petersii* are used), in its refusal to breed, is displaying classic signs of confinement stress suggests significant questions about the ethico-aesthetic dimensions of art for animals involving captive life. Extreme doubt must be applied to any project that

involves confinement, and especially confinement with such negative consequences. And here the question of the conjunctive-form ethico-aesthetics proposed by Guattari is useful to draw upon. The *Three Ecologies* emphasizes processes of subjectification that are artistic in style and inspiration, in imaginal power, rather than being quasi-scientific. Ethics does not consist of the completion of a series of tick boxes of an approvals committee. More fundamentally, to make of the fish an instrument, even one whose cognitive and communicational processes ‘complete’ the work, is to curse it. Art for animals proposes instead that animals have a necessarily ontological world-making dimension. As such, an ethico-aesthetic approach disrupts the normal great chain of thought, which starts with ontology, proceeds through epistemology and ends with the mere implementation details of ethics and aesthetics. It suggests that each moment of each scalar state is riven through with such figurations and modes, without any gaining an *a priori* superiority or precedence to the others. Electronic art is trivial and boring when it simply confirms the interrelation between sensors and responses. Art using animals is trivial and abusive when it locks animals into devices that deplete their involvement in and creation of the world rather than supplementing it.

Given this, the last listed of Bec’s projects in this series is particularly interesting to attend to. *Ichthyophonie/PanGea* is an attempt to develop a communication network between two families of fish using electric signalling, location-finding and, more fully, echolocation. These two families, the Mormyrids located in South America and the Gymnarchids in West and Central Africa, originally sharing an early common ancestor, were split apart into different phylogenetic branches by the movement of continental plates as they broke from the early supercontinent, PanGea (or Panagea). As yet unrealized, the plan involves setting a network of sensors/actuators in the habitats of these fish that are to be connected to each other via Internet. This would allow the communicatory behaviours of these fish, at least those transferable by such means, to enter into some kind of sense of co-location with the possibility for sensorial interplay: perhaps, evoking and probing remnants of shared signalling, or perhaps simply adding a small sizzle of now meaningless noise to a particular patch of water. Perhaps too, it is something else, a paradox: something that tickles the fishes’ curiosity, changes the economy of their attention, dislocating their access to the virtual.

In this respect, *Enki* also establishes some interesting possibilities for further development. Electroreception in electric fish has some very special qualities. Electric waves move in curved rather than straight lines, and the reflections produced typically become larger the further they are from the object – so this is something rather different to the capacity for orientation via sonic echolocation or by vision. These fish can also produce concepts of the objects in the sense of abstract categories that are transferable across entities they may encounter. In other iterations of the project, Anthony Hall set up a context in which no human was attached. The fish’s signal was picked up by one or more electrodes, typically placed in the corner of their familiar tank. This signal was then fed back to the fish in a different corner of the tank. Because the fish perceive the world in waves, the effect of this can be imagined as being something similar to pushing a limb towards a mirror only to have it ‘reflect’ via a wall behind you, an experience Hall recounts as provoking much curiosity in the fish. When two weakly electric fish of either of these families meet, they go through a process of modulating the individual frequency of the current they give off in order that each can maintain their own signal

13. A summary of possible divulgations of aesthetics by means of this approach is given in Martinelli (2009).

or refrain. Interestingly, the signals produced by the fish in this context do not carry this 'handshake', suggesting that they recognize themselves in this substantially distorted context, one that they spend time in exploring.

JE WEET NOOIT HOE EEN KOE EEN HAAS VANGT/YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW A COW CATCHES A HARE – DUTCH PROVERB

One way in which art for animals might progress is along the lines suggested by biosemiotics or zoomusicology.¹³ Biosemiotics is concerned with the transmission of information as part of living processes, expanding the domain of signalling from that of DNA, to molecules, the interoperation of body parts and systems, to the function of organisms and out into other scales of ecologies. Coupled with this, it is a field that develops an idea of a more generalized domain of semiosis, such as communication, subterfuge, courtship and ludic enjoyment configured at the level of the organism or, as with Bateson's ecology of mind, in interactions between organisms. Of importance here too is a notion of aesthetics, of the configuration of beauty. This is something that has been present in a certain way in biology from Darwin's work on sexual selection, and threads through to sociobiological accounts of beauty configured as attractiveness. Amongst other creatures, Deleuze and Guattari draw upon the bower bird, whose pergola is an example of both an extended phenotype and an exuberant courtship display. It is usually taken to be a highly nuanced example of aesthetic judgement involving dimensions that are spatial, colouristic, to do with the freshness of materials and their intercomposition. For them, this constant act of the compilation, sorting and arrangement of materials epitomizes an enactment of territory as rhythm within the melody of ecology.

In many accounts of a possible animal aesthetics there is a dance performed around the threshold of functionality or expressivity configured as being demarcated as that which is gratuitous. This dance may pass through various sub-thresholds according to whether expressivity corresponds to a given stack of drives and needs, to evoke curiosity, to learn, to mate, to eat, to dominate, to play. Where this dance gets stuck is in reading these as purely obligatory functions or, in a bipolar switch, as being utterly 'free' – without interrelation with other compositional forces or constraints. This is part of the terms of their composition, but the dance around their thresholds might also usefully recognize the dance within each of these scales themselves. For instance, in a dance within the scale of play as play comes the dance of the mimicry of mimicry, one that opens out onto all other scales. Such a dance between gratuitousness and functionality needs to be recognized within the context of the general economy, the name that Bataille gave to his substantial contribution to the intellectual work of ecology in which all things and processes, drives included, are ultimately gratuitous (Bataille [1949] 1991). As such, it is a liberation and a curse that can only be remedied, or modulated, by being entered into with adequately vivid forms of life. Any point in this stack, or others not named or yet to be invented, may tip this dance into a new rhythm. Each element of this stack, whether operating as drive, function, play, may become more dislocated or increase its capacity of dislocation for a moment yet to come. Equally, in this dance between scalar function and cosmological gratuitousness, elements may exist across many assemblages functioning in different terms in each, as anchors, blocks, voids or torrents. It is in taking part in this movement,

doubling it by means of reflexivity, in this case, not simply the reflexivity of a single mind or within the scalar boundary of a compositional entity, but its multiplication by an ecology of sensoria, that art for animals emerges.

Whether it is paint, wood, chrome, text, scent, movement, sound, leaf, artworks with and through materials that are direct to hand, to thought or to experience, but which also anticipate their coming into composition, their recomposition, with, or by means of, other elements, art may require work from primary natural forces in order to become complete. Think of Edward Munch's habit of leaving his oil-painted canvases out in the rain for weeks in order that they might be worked upon by it. It may be suspected that something of the same happens in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, something that brings it closer in practice both to art and that allows it to produce itself as a receptive domain in which ecologies of texts, histories and ideas, occur, spawn and leave their traces. This is philosophy that leaves itself out in too many weathers. In doing so, they form new relays with ecologies.

Before they too become mulch, those who advocate purity of the discipline now have their turn to rain upon this work – so go the almost inevitable recalls to reason. But this is philosophy. With 2000 years worth of beard to avoid tripping over it is almost compelled to immobility. This disciplinary automatism masked up as a holy stillness allows it to position itself as a meta-discourse towards which all other fields, not simply philosophers, must measure their orbit and meet their judges. Art is in a certain way equally ambitious; it will admit of no limits. But only insofar as it provides a means by which, in a deeply amateur way, via the art methodology of unreadiness, it comes into composition with other techniques of working. Whilst other discursive frameworks cannot by these means become mastered, they can always be used. Whether this capacity really does extend to the sensual, semiotic and world-making capacities of animals is something too that needs to be left outside, to see what happens.

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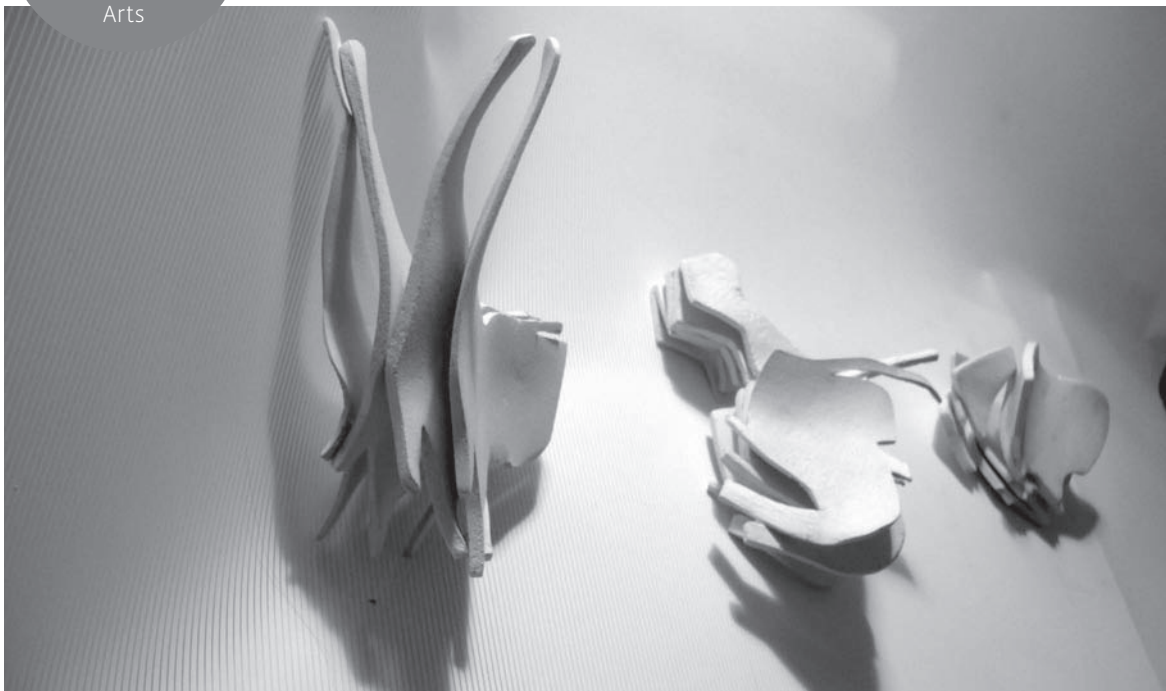
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