

Nonhuman Subjectivities
On Animals. Cognition, Senses, Play

Maja Smrekar & Rachel Mayeri

Opening: 27 May, 2016, 8PM

Artists talk: 29 May, 2016, 3PM

Exhibition runs: 28 May– 17 July, 2016, Fri-Sun 2-6PM and by appointment. (24 June open until 9PM)



Left: Maja Smrekar, *I Hunt Nature, Culture Hunts Me*, 2014, performance and video; right Rachel Mayeri, *Apes as Family*, 2012, Film

The exhibition ***On Animals. Cognition, Senses, Play*** investigates two groups of animals that are closest to us. Primates, our nearest 'relatives', have a complex cognitive proximity to humans, but also differ radically in certain areas. While dogs, with whom we have made a symbiotic contract, have evolved alongside us over the last 30,000 years. The works in this exhibition share Donna Haraway's concept of "cooperative actions": overcoming conventional dichotomies of nature/culture, human/animal or subject/object is all about joint action. The artists, **Maja Smrekar** and **Rachel Mayeri**, make use of certain narrative strategies and the phenomenon of immersion, to approach the perspective of a nonhuman counterpart. The works of both artists place the instinct and the senses of the nonhuman at the centre of artistic research, while aiming to translate the nonhuman cognitive ability by means of the performance, film and art/science collaboration.

Maja Smrekar's performance *I Hunt Nature and Culture Hunts Me*, created during a research residency, investigates the phylogenetics of the wolf, the wolf-dog-human relationship and animal ethics. The implied risk and intimacy of Smrekar's performance with hybrid wolfdogs is contrasted by the reading of cultural texts from Joseph Beuys, Oleg Kulik and Smrekar. A documentary film also explores the complex evolutionary story of the canine.

In her work *Ecce Canis* she explores the metabolic pathway processes that trigger emotional motifs which bind humans and dogs and let them successfully coexist together. The installation contains serotonin from both the artist and her Scottish border collie Byron, which has been transformed by chemical protocols into an odour - the chemical essence of their human-canine relationship.

The films of **Rachel Mayeri** are the result of years of collaboration with primatologists. In her series *Primate Cinema*, Mayeri has made films for (and about) chimpanzees and other primates. In *Apes as Family* we watch a drama based on a tale of both chimpanzee social customs and domestication. While, as humans, we find the plot emotionally compelling, we also become caught up with watching the reactions of a chimpanzee audience watching the same film on a large TV. Indeed the film is both an example of 'Primate Cinema', that is a film made for nonhuman primates, and the complexities of cross-species understanding. Mayeri's film *Baboons as Friends* juxtaposes footage of baboons with a film noir reenactment by human actors, who translate a tale of lust, jealousy and deceit from the animal to the human.

Regine Rapp & Christian de Lutz (curators)

Kooperationspartner:



Medienpartner:



Besondere Danke an:



Ermöglicht durch eine großzügige Unterstützung von Michael Schröder.