

Adaptation

Between Species

Allora & Calzadilla
Francis Alÿs
Cory Arcangel
John Bock
Olaf Breuning
Marcus Coates
Robyn Cumming
Mark Dion
FASTWÜRMS
Shaun Gladwell
Lucy Gunning
Nina Katchadourian
Louise Lawler
Hanna Liden
Hew Locke
Sandra Meigs
Rivane Neuenschwander
and Cao Guimarães
Jeff Sonhouse
Javier Téllez
Michelle Williams Gamaker

19 June–12 September, 2010

The Power Plant

Curated by Helena Reckitt

Adaptation

Between Species

Published in conjunction with the exhibition
'Adaptation: Between Species'

The Power Plant, Toronto
19 June–12 September, 2010

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Shaun Gladwell, *Apologies 1–6*,
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Director's Foreword

Gregory Burke

Since 2007 The Power Plant has presented major summer group exhibitions exploring key issues in the discourse of contemporary art and culture. These exhibitions also endeavour to present the work of Canadian artists alongside their international peers, and to engage with the widest possible public. Following our 2009 summer exhibition 'Universal Code,' which focused on artists' reflections on time, space and the cosmos, 'Adaptation: Between Species' casts an eye on our place within the ecosystem of planet Earth, responding to the contemporary desire to go "back to nature" by highlighting interspecies encounters.

Featuring the work of over twenty Canadian and international artists, 'Adaptation' explores what happens when human and non-human animals, plants and the natural world meet, and the myriad forms of communication, miscommunication, intimacy, and exchange that ensue. Delving into the intimate and uncanny fusions that result from our urge to observe, touch, live with, and mimic other species, 'Adaptation' encourages us to think differently about where the human ends and other living creatures begin.

While many of the artists' names are familiar, others are just at the beginning of their careers, including the young Toronto photographer Robyn Cumming and British video artist Michelle Williams Gamaker. Meanwhile, artists such as Mark Dion, FAST-WÜRMS, Marcus Coates, and Nina Katchadourian have devoted their oeuvres to themes of interspecies coexistence and communion. We are also pleased to welcome back Javier Téllez to the gallery following his 2005 solo exhibition, 'La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc (Rozelle Hospital),' as well as Allora & Calzadilla, who participated in our 2005 group exhibition 'Dedicated to You, but You Weren't Listening.'

With work in photography, film/video, sculpture, and painting, the diversity of artists represented in terms of geographic location, age and sensibility testifies to the cross-cultural and cross-generational interest in this topic and the urgency of what is at stake. As the industrialized world further encroaches on the natural world, species live in ever closer proximity. Yet while we

share 90 percent of our human genome's DNA with other species, and examples of non-human forms of intelligence and emotion are abundant, our relationships to Earth's cohabitants are marked by an unbalanced and exploitative power dynamic. Coinciding with the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity, the exhibition considers how adaptation functions as a form of biological as well as cultural survival.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the artists, lenders and donors for their support of 'Adaptation,' and in particular to acknowledge the work of Helena Reckitt, The Power Plant's Senior Curator of Programs, on this exhibition. I would also like to note the support of the Hal Jackman Foundation and [Now Magazine](#) that allows us to extend All Summer, All Free gallery admission to our many visitors over the summer months.

Between Species

Helena Reckitt

1 Jacques Derrida, [The Animal That Therefore I Am](#), ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills, Fordham University Press, New York, 2008, p. 9.

Civilization notwithstanding, we live with and among nature and animals. Cultural followers such as pigeons, rats, foxes, and – in Canada – bears, live off our refuse, while bacteria reside in our guts. The industrial world eats further into natural habitats, but micro-environments flourish in urban and exurban sites. My resident felines patrol the eternally fascinating run connecting the backyard, the front porch and adjoining gardens. A lost, stray or (I suspect) abandoned Siamese cat, whose dinged-up ears attest to nights spent enduring Ontario winters, eats the leftovers that these indulged house cats yesterday declined. When my cats return, they bring information with them. As I nuzzle the black furry belly of my five-year-old, smells tell me that unneutered toms and other creatures (skunks? raccoons? opossums?) live close by (and that she likes dark, smelly spaces). Her arrival a year ago alerted us to a mouse colony nestling in the spice cabinet (something the cats-in-residence failed to notice). Meanwhile, the cats have learned from me. When I go to a certain cupboard, they recognize that it means food treats (kitty crack). When I get up from the sofa, one of them immediately takes my place, knowing it's the warmest spot in the house.

But can companion animals teach us more? Jacques Derrida wrote eloquently about learning from his cat (this little cat, his cat, not any *cat/chatte*). How disconcerting to stand naked before this animal, a creature that understands neither that state nor its shame and the shame of experiencing it. Even more, though it may not understand mortality, the cat teaches lessons there, too. “[I]t signs its potential disappearance,” he writes, every time “one of us leaves the room.”¹ We may live among animals, but we still are estranged from nature and our own animal natures – and we look to animals to show us the way back.

Citations of Derrida aside, any exhibition concerning animals and nature is bound to tread a fine line between seriousness and kitsch, a liability that ‘Adaptation’ knows all too well. Certainly many works here seem solemn and dignified, from Shaun Gladwell’s burial rituals for slain kangaroos, to Javier Téllez’s blind people encountering an elephant, and Allora & Calzadilla’s meditation on

a house devastated by Hurricane Katrina. However, probably more of the artworks included hover between seriousness and absurdity, embracing the potential for fantasy, childish antics and regression at the core of human/non-human relations, and revelling in the transgression of both social acceptability and human identity that interspecies encounters can engender.

Take Marcus Coates’s attempt to “tackle social issues” – that mantra of community art – by channelling animal spirits. In [Journey to the Lower World](#) (2004), Coates invites the residents of a condemned Liverpool housing estate to witness him summon up the spirit of a stag, to their barely disguised amusement and bewilderment. (Thanks to Coates, I have included artwork featuring reindeer imagery in an exhibition, something that I swore I would never do, and that I might never live down.) Coates is, and knows himself to be, a buffoon – a man by possessed by animal spirits and, in the process, unmanned. The shaman of Joseph Beuys’ performances with animals, which form a backdrop to Coates’s work and that of several other artists’ in the show, here becomes a sham-man. Yet something about Coates’s ardent, straight-faced efforts to make himself a conduit between the human and the non-human realm suggests that he believes in his project. Absurdity and sincerity comfortably – or uncomfortably – coexist.

Giggles also threaten to undermine the performances in Lucy Gunning’s [The Horse Impressionists](#) (1994), in which five women trot, gallop, whinny, bray, and neigh explosively, almost orgasmically. Their focused efforts occasionally give way to laughter as they seem to recognize the absurdity of their actions. Here we are in the realm of what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari termed “becoming animal,” ecstatic communion with another creature that overturns and extends human identity. Steve Thomas, author of [The Postmodern Animal](#), describes this openness toward other species as lying beyond symbolism or metaphor. With “nothing to keep the animal-as-other at a safe and comfortable distance,”² the animal is *performed* rather than represented. Gunning’s nicely-turned-out women and ladies indulge in childish play – which is always grounded in

2 Steve Baker interviewed by Gregory Williams, “Where the Wild Things Are: An Interview with Steve Baker,” [Cabinet Magazine Online](#), Issue 4 (Animals), Fall 2001.

imitation and role-playing – and in the delights of not making sense.

What could be more kitsch and ridiculous than online footage of cats, the most ubiquitous visual content (along with pornography) to fuel the web? Cory Arcangel's [Drei Klavierstücke op. 11](#) (2009) riffs on cats' online pervasiveness, and their associations with cuteness, femininity and curiosity, by presenting snippets from amateur videos of felines "playing" pianos and electronic keyboards. Arcangel's YouTube borrowings soon emerge as being far from casual as we realize that he has edited them into a rendition of Schoenberg's atonal tour de force as performed by Glenn Gould. So the sentimental interest in fluffy animals fuses with an icon of the avant-garde in a work that niftily comments on the age-old division between nature and culture.

Several other works worry at the slippage between natural and cultural products. Nina Katchadourian's [GIFT/GIFT](#) (1998) nimbly captures human/insect relations as it depicts a spiderweb, helpfully "repaired" by the artist with red thread that spells out the word "GIFT," which the spider painstakingly removes. The insect does fine by itself, the video suggests, and the metaphors of spiderly weaving and spinning that fascinate Western culture are our concern, not theirs. Who is intruding on whom is a question also explored by John Bock in [Gast](#) (2004). The video depicts a hare running rampant in the artist's apartment and eating from a device that Bock has attached to his foot. The contraption resembles a sculpture, and the rabbit becomes Bock's unknowing artistic collaborator. Again Beuys is a reference point; Bock, like Coates, treats Beuys' legacy as one against which to rebel playfully.

Of course, where there's a rabbit, there has to be a fox – in this case, named Bandit and meandering through London's National Portrait Gallery at night, caught on the museum's surveillance system in Francis Alys's [The Nightwatch](#) (2004). This perennial symbol of stealth and slyness tracks through the space, fixating on invisible smells, defecating at will. Such tracks and traces fascinated Derrida, and he often enquired about the animal that he saw himself following. Coming after animals, following their scents and trails, he

proposes a form of stalking that upsets traditions of hunting and trapping to evoke another kind of following, concerned with succession and inheritance instead of dominion.

But animals also follow us, as Annie Dunning – who is creating a performance with whistle-bearing homing pigeons as part of the public programming for 'Adaptation' – reminds us with her works made about, and with, animals that thrive within human environments. And sometimes when they follow us, they clean up our mess, as in [Quarta-Feira de Cinzas/Epilogue \(Ash Wednesday\)](#) (2006) by Rivane Neuenschwander and Cao Guimarães, in which ants "tidy up" the confetti refuse from the last day of the Brazilian *carnaval*, taking the honey- and fat-soaked remnants that the artists have prepared back to their colony.

Together with the interest in smell and taste noted above, the question of what it means to touch and be touched by an animal recurs throughout the show. In Javier Téllez's [Letter on the Blind, for the Use of Those Who See](#) (2007), blind people learn about an elephant by touching it. Their image-rich descriptions reveal how blindness does not necessarily deprive individuals of a strong visual sense. Shaun Gladwell in [Apologies 1–6](#) (2007–09) picks up a succession of slain, roadside kangaroos that he then hugs to his chest, as if to comfort them and intuit their secrets. In Michelle Williams Gamaker's [Sunday Afternoon II](#) (2001), roles reverse as we see the artist being touched by her dogs. As she lies on the floor, they traverse her face and body with their tongues in ways that are undeniably, yet unconsciously, erotic. [Sunday Afternoon II](#) was inspired by newspaper accounts of elderly people who are found dead with their pets. Starved and abandoned, good pets turn bad as they revert to primal behaviour and consume their former masters. Even more intimate than touching, though, is the merging in Sandra Meigs' paintings, where girlish figures seem to fuse in a kind of interspecies mutual suckling with swans, rabbits and ducks.

But if touching, teaching and collaborating all seem to be plausible interspecies interactions, what of speech? Apparently animals don't have access to language, so what should we make of Jessica,

3 Hal Foster, "The Return of the Real," in *The Return of the Real*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp.164-165.

the parrot in Lucy Gunning's 2006 work of that name? Verbal mimicry turns on its head in Louise Lawler's witty sound piece *Birdcalls* (1972-81). Lawler parrots the names of prominent male artists of the day as so many birdsongs, mimicking the rote repetition that secures their names in both the market and canons of art history.

However, nature is flora as well as fauna, and many works in 'Adaptation' encourage us to wonder about the boundaries between people and botanical forms. A yearning to merge with nature, explored through camouflage and disappearance, characterizes the work of Hew Locke, Jeff Sonhouse, Robyn Cumming, and Hannah Liden. In the frontal poses of Locke's and Sonhouse's portraits, camouflage operates as a form of hybrid identity that subsumes the individual into the background. Locke's *Tyger, Tyger* (2007) courts camouflage while lurking malevolently in the shadows. A similar veiled threat marks Jeff Sonhouse's mixed-media portrait. Interested in the double bind in which black male subjects find themselves in the U.S., where their presence alone can cause alarm, Sonhouse explores camouflage as a mimetic adaptation that offers protection against a hostile environment.

Questions of visibility vs. invisibility also concern Cumming. The photographs in 'Lady Things' (2008) reveal only a glimpse of her mother's body—a hand and, in one instance, a portion of her breast—as she vanishes beneath ladylike accoutrements and signifiers of death and memorial. Hannah Liden's female figures also court disappearance. Hiding beneath masks, following rural trails and sinking into lakes, they flirt with their own erasure. The early-twentieth-century writer Roger Caillois, an associate of the Bataillean Surrealists and an influence on Jacques Lacan's theories the mirror stage, identified camouflage and "defensive mimicry" in nature as part of a "drive to indistinction" in his 1937 essay *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*. The "paradoxical desire to be desireless, to be done with it all, a call of regression beyond the infantile to the inorganic"³ that Hal Foster identified in Caillois' theories also fascinates these artists.

Allora & Calzadilla address the threat of all-consuming nature in their meditative film *A Man Screaming Is Not a Dancing Bear* (2008). Combining footage of the interior of a building devastated by Hurricane Katrina with that of a local hip-hop poet drumming insistently on the venetian blinds outside the windowless apartment, the film suddenly cuts to the lush Mississippi River. The work reminds us of the natural forces that seem poised to return a city and its inhabitants to the primeval swamp. While in a lighter register, in Olaf Breuning's poster "*Why can you not be nice with nature? What is wrong with you?*" (2008), a flock of birds spells out the words, absurdly articulating the desire of the carbon-footprint-generating tourist to find unspoiled lands that nourish his fantasy of communing with nature.

The undercurrent of violence in these works hints at the unbalanced power dynamics that define our relations with animals and nature in this age of genetically enhanced farming, environmental crisis and mass production of animals for human consumption. I suspect that the rampant pet ownership in our culture, coupled with the anthropomorphism that has flourished in literature and visual culture since the Victorian age, correlates directly with our discomfort around the history of human dominion over the natural world. Mark Dion has explored these uneven power relations since the mid-1980s. Borrowing tropes of ordering and classification from natural history, museology and archaeology, Dion's installations reflect the human desire to classify the natural world, an urge and a set of practices that often destroy that which they set out to study and preserve.

However, where Dion mimics the impulse to tidy up human/animal relations, FASTWÜRMS complicate things by overturning them completely. Their art reflects a life lived with animal companions, from the many cats who share their rural Ontario house to the feral cats who thrive in the barn on the property and who star in their video *Cats vs Dragon* (2010). The artists have also welcomed vultures into their work as artistic collaborators who they attracted with roadkill to join them in staged performances. Practising Wiccans,

4 Donna Haraway, [The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness](#), Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago, 2003, p.50.

their work is informed by a consciousness of the shared fate of cat familiars and the socially marginalized “witches” they lived with. FASTWÜRMS embody what it means to live with other species, not on their terms, but on their own – an evolving form of coexistence that the biologist Lynn Margulis calls “symbiogenesis.” For, as Donna Haraway notes, “one cannot know the other or the self, but must respect for all time who and what are emerging in relationships. That is true for all true lovers, of whatever species.”⁴

‘Adaptation’ emphasizes cross-species encounters – what happens “when species meet” (to borrow the subtitle of Haraway’s valuable book on this subject). The exhibition concerns an absorption in the natural and the animal realm, a deep engagement that enables us to lose ourselves among these non-human “others” while becoming more conscious of our humanness. What do we learn by sharing our lives and this planet with other species? What forms of communication and miscommunication, intimacy and exchange, ensue from these exercises in proximity? Recognizing that all life forms on earth descend from a single cell, the exhibition affirms our kinship with other beings and species. Might recognizing these cross-species affinities have an environmental or ecological dimension? Or will animals and the natural world suffer the fate of so many other primitive or primal “others” that Western culture has systematically co-opted? Impersonating and identifying with the natural world and the animal kingdom might be a symptom of the messed-up relations we have with both. But such encounters might also contain the seeds for radical change, as we affirm our links with other species, recognize our animal natures and experience the liberation of feeling wild at heart.

Works in the Exhibition

Allora & Calzadilla

[A Man Screaming Is Not a Dancing Bear](#), 2008

Super 16mm film transferred to Blu-ray disc
11 min., 15 sec., colour, sound
Courtesy the artist, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, Gladstone Gallery, New York, and Lisson Gallery, London

Francis Alijs

[The Nightwatch](#), 2004

Video documentation of an action, National Portrait Gallery, London
17 min., 30 sec., colour, sound
Collection of Jay Smith and Laura Rapp
Courtesy the artist, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich, and David Zwirner, New York

Cory Arcangel

[Drei Klavierstücke, op. 11](#), 2009

Projection from a digital source, colour, sound, 16 min.
Courtesy the artist and Team Gallery, New York

John Bock

[Gast](#), 2004

Video, colour, sound, 12 min.
Courtesy the artist, Anton Kern, New York, Klosterfelde, Berlin, and Sadie Coles HQ, London

Olaf Breuning

[The Band](#), 2007

Print on photo paper, 60" x 75"

[Spaghetti Dog](#), 2005

Print on photo paper, 60" x 75"

[Mammoth](#), 2008

Print on photo paper, 60" x 75"

[Why can you not be nice with nature](#), 2008

Print on photo paper, 60" x 75"

[Good News, Bad News](#), 2008

Mural, 18' x 25'

Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

Marcus Coates

[The Plover's Wing](#), 2008

Single-channel HDV video, colour, sound, 22 min.

[Journey to the Lower World](#), 2004

Single-channel video, colour, sound, 30 min.

Courtesy the artist and Kate MacGarry, London

Robyn Cumming

[Untitled](#) (triptych from the series 'Lady Things'), 2008

Chromogenic prints, 40" x 50" each
Courtesy the artist

Mark Dion

[Maquettes](#), 2008

Mixed media
Dimensions variable

Collection of Drs. Paul Marks and Shawna Granovsky, Toronto

Courtesy the artist and good-water, Toronto.

FASTWÜRMS

[Endless Cat Column](#), 2010

Cat furniture and mixed media
Dimensions variable

[Cat vs Dragon](#), 2010

Digital Video, colour, sound, found text with custom illustrations, enamel on polytarp, digital prints on polytarp, 10 min., 36 sec.

[PANT POLLEN](#), 2010

Interspecies exchange/performance

Pant Pollen: catnip, fabric, velcro

Pegboard display with digital video: 4 min., 16 sec., colour, sound

Courtesy the artists

Shaun Gladwell

[Apologies 1–6](#), 2007–09

Video, colour, sound, 27 min., 10 sec.
Courtesy the artist, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Sydney, and Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto

Lucy Gunning

[The Horse](#)

[Impressionists](#), 1994

Video, colour, sound, 7 min., 30 sec.

[Jessica](#), 2006

Video, colour, sound, 19 min., 47 sec.

Courtesy the artist, Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, and Matt's Gallery, London

Nina Katchadourian

[GIFT/GIFT](#), 1998

Single-channel DVD, colour, sound, 11 min., 55 sec.

Courtesy the artist, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

Louise Lawler

Birdcalls, 1972-81

Audio recording, 7 min., 1 sec.

Courtesy the LeWitt Collection, Chester, Connecticut

Hanna Liden

Bird Totem, 2006

Chromogenic print mounted on sintra, 32" x 42"

Hairface Highway, 2006

Chromogenic print mounted on sintra, 32" x 42"

Spinning Anti-Clockwise, 2004

Chromogenic print mounted on sintra, 27" x 41"

Courtesy the artist

Hew Locke

Tyger, Tyger, 2007

Chromogenic print, 91" x 71.25"

Collection of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO

Bebe and Crosby Kemper Collection, Museum Purchase made possible by a gift from the R. C. Kemper Charitable Trust, 2008.28

Courtesy the artist and Hales Gallery, London

Sandra Meigs

Ride. Girl Pulling Swans by the Neck. Red., 2004

Oil & gesso on canvas on board, 33" x 30"

Ride. Girl Rubbing Noses with Mouse. Indigo., 2004

Oil & gesso on canvas on board, 60" x 48"

Ride. Girl Kissing Ducks. Blue., 2004

Oil & gesso on canvas on board, 37" x 37"

Courtesy the artist and Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto

Rivane Neuenschwander and Cao Guimarães

Quarta-Feira de Cinzas/

Epilogue (Ash

Wednesday), 2006

Video, colour, sound, 5 min., 44 sec.

Courtesy the artist, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, and Galeria Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo

Jeff Sonhouse

2 4 You and 1, 2 For Me., 2009

Mixed media, 55.25" x 17.75"

Courtesy the artist and Jack Tilton Gallery, New York

Javier Téllez

Letter on the Blind, for the Use of Those Who

See, 2007

Video installation, Super 16mm film transferred to high-definition video, black and white, 5.1 digital Dolby surround sound, 27 min., 36 sec.

Commissioned by Creative Time as part of Six Actions for New York City

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich

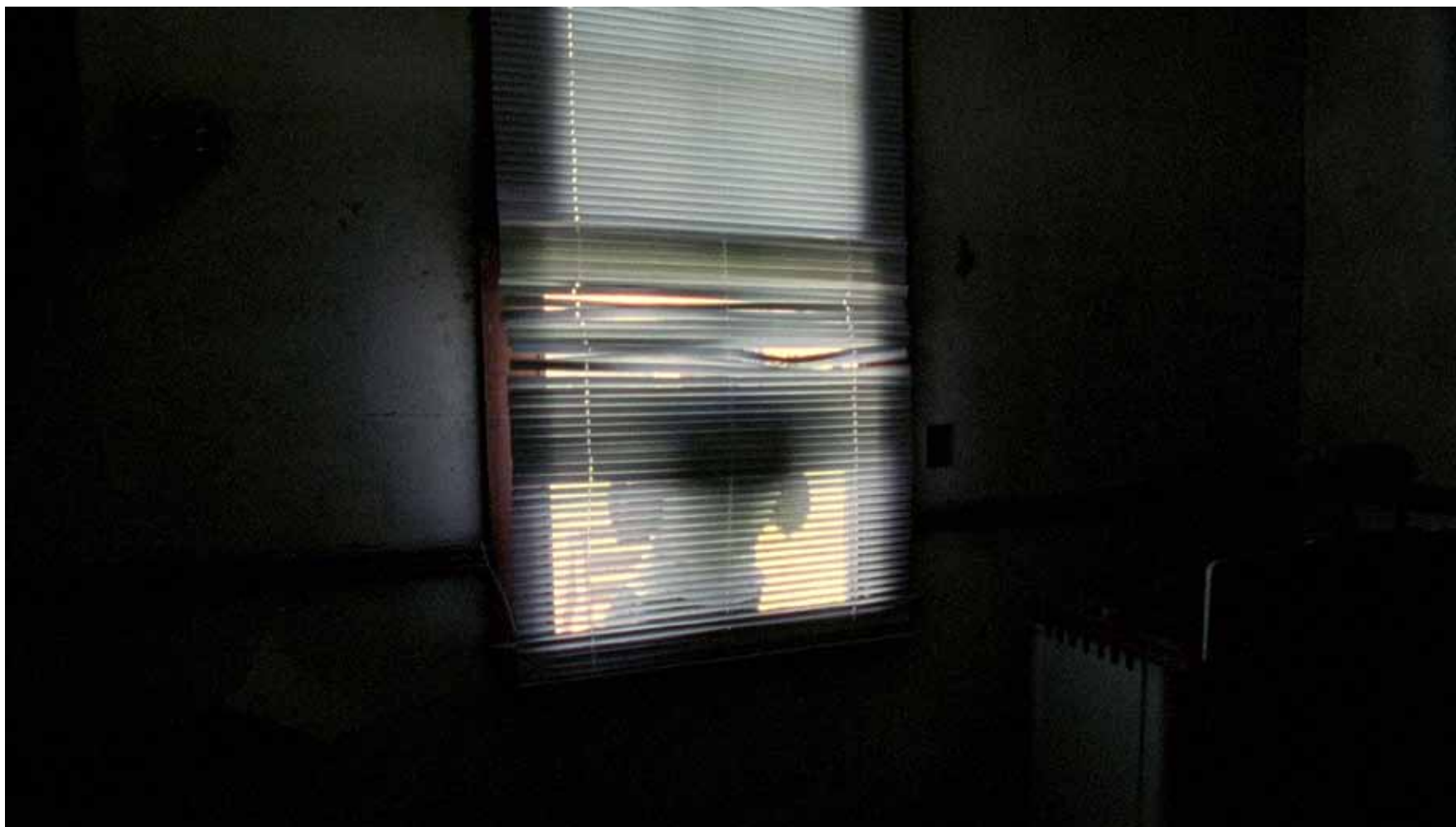
Michelle Williams Gamaker

Sunday Afternoon II, 2001

Video, colour, sound, 6 min., 13 sec.

Courtesy the artist

Allora & Calzadilla
[A Man Screaming Is Not a](#)
[Dancing Bear](#), 2008
Courtesy the artist, Galerie
Chantal Crousel, Paris,
Gladstone Gallery, New York,
and Lisson Gallery, London



Francis Alÿs

[The Nightwatch, 2004](#)

Collection of Jay Smith and
Laura Rapp

Courtesy the artist, Galerie
Peter Kilchmann, Zurich, and
David Zwirner, New York



Cory Arcangel

[Drei Klavierstücke, op.11,](#)

2009

Courtesy the artist and Team
Gallery, New York



John Bock

[Gast](#), 2004

Courtesy the artist, Anton Kern, New York, Klosterfelde, Berlin, and Sadie Coles HQ, London



Olaf Breuning

[Mammoth](#), 2008

Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York



Marcus Coates
Journey to the Lower
World, 2004
Courtesy the artist and Kate
MacGarry, London





Robyn Cumming
Untitled (triptych from the series Lady Things), 2008
Courtesy the artist



Mark Dion

Maquettes, 2008

Collection of Drs. Paul Marks
and Shawna Granovsky,
Toronto

Courtesy the artist and
goodwater, Toronto



FASTWÜRMS

Endless Cat Column, 2010

Courtesy the artists



Shaun Gladwell

Apologies 1-6, 2007-2009

Courtesy the artist, Anna
Schwartz Gallery, Sydney, and
Georgia Scherman Projects,
Toronto



Lucy Gunning

The Horse Impressionists,

1994

Courtesy the artist, Greene
Naftali Gallery, New York, and
Matt's Gallery, London



Nina Katchadourian

GIFT/GIFT, 1998

Courtesy the artist, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York



Louise Lawler

Birdcalls, 1972-81

Courtesy the LeWitt Collection, Chester, Connecticut

VITO ACCONCI
CARL ANDRE
RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER
JOHN BALDESSARI
ROBERT BARRY
JOSEPH BEUYS
DANIEL BUREN
SANDRO CHIA
FRANCESCO CLEMENTE
ENZO CUCCHI
GILBERT and GEORGE
DAN GRAHAM
HANS HAACKE
NEIL JENNEY
DONALD JUDD
ANSELM KIEFER
JOSEPH KOSUTH
SOL LEWITT
RICHARD LONG
GORDON MATTA-CLARK
MARIO MERZ
SIGMAR POLKE
GERHARD RICHTER
ED RUSCHA
JULIAN SCHNABEL
CY TWOMBLY
ANDY WARHOL
LAWRENCE WEINER

Hanna Liden
[Bird Totem](#), 2006
Courtesy the artist



Hanna Liden
[Hairface Highway](#), 2006
Courtesy the artist



Hanna Liden
[Spinning Anti-Clockwise](#),
2004
Courtesy the artist



Hew Locke

Tyger, Tyger, 2007

Courtesy the artist and Hales
Gallery, London



Sandra Meigs

Ride, Girl Pulling Swans

by the Neck. Red, 2004
Courtesy the artist and Susan
Hobbs Gallery, Toronto



**Rivane Neuenschwander
and Cao Guimarães**

Quarta-Feira de Cinzas/
Epilogue (Ash Wednesday),
2006

Courtesy the artist, Stephen
Friedman Gallery, London, Tanya
Bonakdar Gallery, New York, and
Galeria Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo



Jeff Sonhouse

2.4 You and 1.2 For Me,
2009

Courtesy the artist and Jack
Tilton Gallery, New York



Javier Téllez

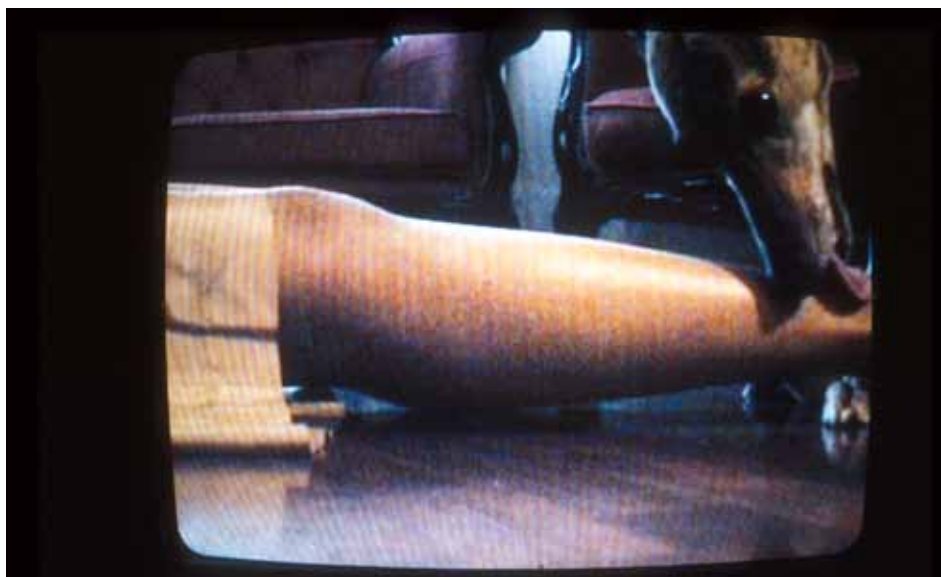
Letter on the Blind, For the
Use of Those Who See,
2007

Commissioned by Creative Time
as part of Six Actions for New
York City

Courtesy the artist and Galerie
Peter Kilchmann, Zurich



Michelle Williams
Gamaker
[Sunday Afternoon II](#), 2001
Courtesy the artist



Artists



[A Man Screaming Is Not a Dancing Bear](#), 2008

Courtesy the artist, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, Gladstone Gallery, New York, and Lisson Gallery, London

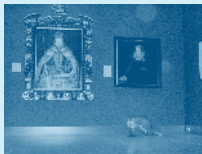
Allora & Calzadilla

Jennifer Allora (b. 1974, Philadelphia, Penn.) and Guillermo Calzadilla (b. 1971, Havana, Cuba) have worked in collaboration since 1995. They have been the subjects of several solo shows on an international scale, recently exhibiting at the Gladstone Gallery, New York (2009), the Temporäre Kunsthalle, Berlin (2009), and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008). In October 2010, their latest solo exhibition will open at the Lisson Gallery, London.

[A Man Screaming Is Not a Dancing Bear](#), 2008

The interdisciplinary practice of Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla takes seriously the artist's role as a politicized member of local and global communities. Often evoking the communicative nature of music as a tool of revolution, propaganda and transformation, Allora & Calzadilla use their work to deconstruct social inequalities in various contexts.

Shifting abruptly between scenes (a lush Mississippi riverbank, a New Orleans apartment devastated by Hurricane Katrina, and a young man who drums on the Venetian blinds from outside the building), [A Man Screaming Is Not a Dancing Bear](#) (2008) is named for Aimé Césaire's [Notebook of a Return to My Native Land](#) (1939). That poem acted as a call to arms for colonized subjects to resist degradation by affirming their connection to a communal, ancestral homeland. Given the large black community in New Orleans and the disproportionate number of African-American casualties of Katrina, the title reminds us that the racial inequities noted by Césaire are alive and well in the U.S. today. Juxtaposing images of the natural world as both peaceful and calm and destructive and formidable, the video depicts a city and its people abandoned to the forces of nature and on the brink of returning to the primeval swamp, with the rhythmic drumming sounding an urgent SOS.



[The Nightwatch](#), 2004

Collection of Jay Smith and Laura Rapp

Courtesy the artist, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich, and David Zwirner, New York

Francis Alÿs

Francis Alÿs (b. 1959, Antwerp, Belgium) studied architecture in Belgium and Italy before moving to Mexico City, where he continues to live. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Tate Modern, London (2010), and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2009). A major solo show of his work is being organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, for 2011.

[The Nightwatch](#), 2004

Francis Alÿs studied architecture but soon decided he didn't want to add objects to the cityscape—he wanted to add stories. While his work takes many forms, the 'situation' of the street has been a central concern, along with a prevailing interest in the chance encounters and everyday aesthetics of walking.

[The Nightwatch](#) (2004) is part of Alÿs's five-year series of performance-based works, 'Seven Walks,' which centered on traversing London neighbourhoods. The work depicts a fox as it meanders through London's National Portrait Gallery at night, an itinerary that is recorded on the museum's closed-circuit TV cameras. The title references Rembrandt's 1642 painting, which is in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. A perennial symbol of mischief and slyness, the fox (here named Bandit) becomes a freewheeling snoop as well as a nocturnal flâneur. But in contrast to the urban stroller who is seduced by sights and sounds, the fox is stimulated primarily by smell. As Bandit roams the gallery's corridors and dogleg turns, peeing and shitting where it pleases, it threatens the sanctity of this institutional space and its artistic treasures. Yet [The Nightwatch](#) could only have been made in cahoots with the museum, so Alÿs's project is less about trespassing on the museum than about the complications of collaboration. It also speaks to the ubiquity of video surveillance in the U.K., and London's role as the world's most heavily surveilled city.

Cory Arcangel

Cory Arcangel (born in Buffalo, N.Y., 1978) was educated at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio and lives in Brooklyn, N.Y. His work was the subject of solo exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2009) and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami (2010). Arcangel has participated in group exhibitions at the New Museum, New York (2009) and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2008–09).

[Drei Klavierstücke, op.11](#), 2009

Celebrated for his audacious piracy of computer games, Cory Arcangel is less concerned with technology itself than with how users experience and transform new media. His work collapses fine art and popular culture in ways that reflect his training as a classical musician as well his background as a computer hacker.

[Drei Klavierstücke op. 11](#) (2009) recreates Arnold Schoenberg's 1909 composition of that name through edited YouTube footage of cats playing pianos and other keyboards. Credited as a forerunner of atonal music, which abandoned a tonal centre or an established key, Schoenberg's work was considered degenerate by the Nazis and derided by the musical establishment of the day. Arcangel's piece makes light of stereotypical criticisms of avant-garde art ("My kid/pet could do that!") as the ubiquitous cute cats of the online realm perform the once degraded, but now rarefied, work of art. In reflecting on our obsession with the "cuteness" of our non-human companions, [Drei Klavierstücke op. 11](#) also ironically demonstrates how the free and curious play of pets inadvertently puts us into a relationship with cultural forms that are alien to the animals themselves. The fact that many animals do, however, enjoy music may make us question what is "natural" and what "cultural" in our pursuits and pleasures.



[Drei Klavierstücke, op.11](#), 2009

Courtesy the artist and Team Gallery, New York

John Bock

John Bock (b. 1965, Gribbohm, Germany) lives in Berlin. Solo shows of his work have been held at institutions including the Frac Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Marseille (2005) and the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2000). Bock has participated in numerous group exhibitions including at the Barbican Art Gallery, London (2010) and PS1, New York (1999).

[Gast](#), 2004

A prankster who frequently implicates himself in his work, John Bock constructs wild mini-universes out of eclectic materials. Dramatic conventions and multiple languages as well as diverse handmade and readymade props are thrown into action in his lecture-performances and installations with the energy of a mad scientist. Mixing all varieties of pseudo-scientific, aesthetic and political commentary in a logic-defying frenzy, Bock's works dazzle and confound.

Considering the image of a hare running from one corner of a room to another, Joseph Beuys famously declared that this creature could do more for political progress than a human could, and that animals should receive the same status as people. In [Gast](#) (2004), Bock both updates and makes merry with Beuys's politically and spiritually charged oeuvre. He riffs on Beuys's landmark 1965 performance [How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare](#) by filming a rabbit as it roams through his apartment and eats from a DIY feeding apparatus. Shaped like a medieval ramrod, the device is fastened to Bock's slipper—a reference to the boots that Beuys wore in his 1965 performance, where an iron slab attached to his foot made him walk with a limp. Where Beuys cradled a dead hare and carried it through a gallery, Bock allows a live animal to run rampant through his home, free to graze, both a *gast* (guest) and an unwitting artistic collaborator. Like Beuys, Bock maintains an ambiguous relation to pedagogy and human intellectual endeavour and turns, through invented ritual, to the animal world in search of inspiration, renewal and perhaps even secret wisdom.



[Gast](#), 2004

Courtesy the artist, Anton Kern, New York, Klosterfelde, Berlin, and Sadie Coles HQ, London



[Mammoth, 2008](#)
Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

Olaf Breuning

Olaf Breuning (born in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, 1970) lives in New York and works in photography, video, drawing, and sculptural installation. He has had solo shows at spaces including Chisenhale Gallery, London (2005), migros museum für gegenwartskunst, Zürich (2007), and the Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney (2007).

Mammoth, 2008

Trading in vernacular imagery, Olaf Breuning forges a nomadic art practice and a brazenly adolescent aesthetic. His work displays a fascination with cultural detritus, artifice, performance, and the ways in which we navigate through a globalized culture.

From his explorations of cowboys and metalheads to aliens and skaters, Breuning explores how individual identity becomes subsumed into the mass. [The Band](#) (2007) portrays a musical group whose instruments have morphed into monstrous insects, while [Spaghetti Dog](#) (2005) depicts two people transforming their friend into a shaggy canine with a grotesque heap of noodles. Also documenting a transformation, [Mammoth](#) (2008) is part of a body of work in which Breuning “intervenes” in the landscape – the eponymous beast is crafted out of a hill and assorted objects. Such mischief is animated by Breuning’s interest in cultural performance, mimicry and trespass; rather than adapting, his jet-setting tourist persona only sees himself reflected in the places he visits. Veering from exotic location to exotic location, lifestyle to lifestyle, Breuning and his cast of characters stick out like a sore thumb rather than attempting to blend into the environment.

[Good News Bad News](#) (2008), Breuning’s large-scale photographic mural, is located on the south facade of The Power Plant and presented as part of the 2010 Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival.



[Journey to the Lower World, 2004](#)
Courtesy the artist and Kate MacGarry, London

Marcus Coates

Marcus Coates (born, London, 1968) lives in Gateshead, U.K., and works in performance, video and photography. His work was included in ‘Altermodern: Tate Triennial,’ London (2009), and he has had solo exhibitions at Kunstthale Zurich (2009) and the Serpentine Gallery, London (2010).

Journey to the Lower World, 2004

Self-styled shaman and naturalist Marcus Coates accesses the spirit realm to address contemporary social problems. The effects of his visceral performances – for which he enters a trance-like state and emits bellows and screeches as he communes with animal spirits – inspire a mixture of nervous laughter and bewilderment in his audiences. While offering a humorous and self-deprecating take on the cultural tendency to equate animals with spirituality, Coates’s rituals nonetheless convey a desire for social healing; he has claimed that, while skeptical of his antics, participants in his work ultimately have valued the sense of being listened to.

In [Journey to the Lower World](#) (2004), Coates channels a stag before the bemused residents of a Liverpool housing estate slated for demolition, while listening to their concerns. [The Plover’s Wing](#) (2008) shows Coates communicating with a plover – a bird known for distracting predators away from its nest by feigning injuries – in an effort to solve the problem of youth violence described to him by the mayor of the Israeli city of Holon.

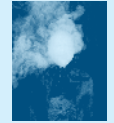
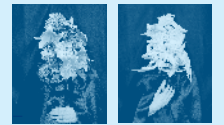
Robyn Cumming

Robyn Cumming (b. 1981, Burlington, Ont.) received a BFA from Ryerson University, Toronto, and an MFA from York University, Toronto. She has had solo exhibitions at Latitude 53, Edmonton (2009), Gallery 101, Ottawa (2009), and Harbourfront Centre, Toronto (2008), and participated in group exhibitions at Galerie Push, Montreal (2008), Blackwood Gallery, Mississauga (2009), and the CONTACT Photography Festival, Toronto (2007).

Untitled (trptych from the series Lady Things), 2008

In-between moments of intense emotion and physical vulnerability are approached with nostalgia and humour in Robyn Cumming’s images. Her tightly composed, staged photographs suggest how personal narratives are formed through barely-remembered moments and interactions.

[Lady Things](#) (2008) is a series of portraits of the artist’s mother. Yet the only parts of her body that are visible are her hands and, in one instance, part of her breast; she is cloaked in black silk and her face is subsumed beneath ornate flowers or taxidermied doves, or gone in a puff of smoke. These signifiers of memorial and magic riff off the *memento mori* tradition, prompting thoughts of mortality. Evoking the visibility/invisibility of the ageing female body, they signal both ruin and release. Cumming’s triptych assimilates the traditional bird and flower motifs of the “feminine arts” such as needlepoint and flower arranging. Evoking the classical poses of Van Eyck, David, and Dürer, her figure’s frontal stance also recalls high-street studio portraiture.



[Untitled \(trptych from the series Lady Things\), 2008](#)
Courtesy the artist

Mark Dion

Mark Dion (b. 1961, New Bedford, Mass.) lives in Pennsylvania. He has exhibited internationally since the mid-1980s, with solo exhibitions at the Natural History Museum, London (2007), Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (1997), and Deutsches Museum, Bonn (2002). Dion has made commissioned works for institutions including the Aldrich Museum of Art, Ridgefield, Conn., Tate Modern, London, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Maquettes, 2008

Mark Dion’s research-based practice references and interrogates the fields of natural science, archaeology and museology. Often collaborative and frequently site-specific, his works expose the fears and desires we project onto the natural world as we construct systems to classify and record it. Dion’s work often attempts to rescue and preserve the artifacts and life forms that our machinery of knowledge plows over in a relentless forward march. He reminds us that history is an accumulation of fragments, a work-in-progress that sometimes ends up breaking and burying that which it tries to remember and collect.

With [Maquettes](#) (2008), Dion has assembled a portable museum in miniature: whimsically scaled models that reproduce and reference his earlier projects, including his 1999 archaeological project outside the Tate Modern, [Tate Thames Dig](#), and his [Mobile Wilderness Units](#) of 2006–07. As with Marcel Duchamp’s [Boîte en Valise](#) (1934–41), Dion’s diminutive works pack up easily and are displayed on the shipping crates that transported them.



[Maquettes, 2008](#)
Collection of Drs. Paul Marks and Shawna Granovsky, Toronto
Courtesy the artist and goodwater, Toronto



[Endless Cat Column, 2010](#)
Courtesy the artists

FASTWÜRMS

FASTWÜRMS (formed Toronto, 1979) integrate time-based media, performance and visual art into immersive installations, social interactions and public events. FASTWÜRMS has exhibited internationally, including in Ireland, Iceland, Brazil, and Korea. Exhibitions include the retrospective 'DONKY@NINJA@WITCH' at the Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (2007), and solo shows at the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2008), and Plug In ICA, Winnipeg (2008).

Endless Cat Column, 2010

The shared authorship of Kim Kozzi and Dai Skuse, FASTWÜRMS' practice can be seen as a kind of cosmology or art/life system that spans pagan spirituality and subcultural expressions drawn from Wiccan, queer, youth, and working-class spheres. Spreading their philosophy of "Do what you will, harm unto none," FASTWÜRMS practise an animistic rejoinder to the restrictions of civilization and its burdens of guilt, shame and self-doubt. FASTWÜRMS' voracious videoing, photographing, mark-making, crafting, and scavenging of objects and materials forms a radical, ethical body of work that is rooted in desire, pleasure and reciprocity.

Bast Is Best (2010) comprises a sculpture, two videos, posters, banners, and texts. **Endless Cat Column** (2010) is a custom-painted, floor-to-ceiling sculpture constructed from modular units of commercial cat trees. Collapsing Brancusi's modernist transcendentalism into the cloying mass production of the pet mart, the work becomes a monument to the cat-human continuum and the intimacy of interspecies play and display. A sci-fi glitch-hop remix of the famous Cordwainer Smith story 'The Game of Rat and Dragon,' **Cat vs. Dragon** (2010) is made from video footage of the artists' barn-cat family and samples from popular sci-fi films. **Red Tooth and Kaw** (2010) combines painted text banners that quote fragments of the Empedocles poem 'Purifications.' A master of Pythagorean radical self-knowledge, Empedocles wrote against killing and consuming ensouled beings, and signalled the implications of karmic retribution.



[Apologies 1-6, 2007-2009](#)

Courtesy the artist, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Sydney, and Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto

Shaun Gladwell

Shaun Gladwell (b. 1972, Sydney, Australia) lives in Sydney. Since the early 2000s he has exhibited internationally with solo exhibitions including Art 41 Basel, Switzerland (2010), and the Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, N.Y. (2006). In 2009 Gladwell represented Australia at the 53rd Venice Biennale.

Apologies 1-6, 2007-2009

Working in performance, video, painting and sculpture, Shaun Gladwell fuses personal history and memory with pop cultural references. He frequently draws on his background as a skate boarder, break-dancer, BMX biker rider, hip hop and graffiti artist to make works that reflect on contemporary Australian cultural identity.

Part of the 'MADDESTMAXIMVS: Planet & Stars Sequence' (2009) exhibition, which debuted at the Australian Pavilion in the 2009 Venice Biennale, each segment of **Apologies 1-6** (2007-09) shows the motorcycling artist pull up beside a dead kangaroo, drop to his knees, scatter flies as if wafting incense, and scoop up the roadkill. As Gladwell cradles and nuzzles the animal, he performs a little dance and burial ritual that brings to mind Joseph Beuys' gallery performance **How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare** (1965). Gladwell shares Beuys' intimacy with another animal, seeming to whisper to the dead creature. Yet where Beuys coated himself in the symbol-rich layer of honey and gold leaf, the Mad Max-like Gladwell is clad in protective helmet and biker gear and the setting is the stark Australian outback. Heat rises in waves, and the viewer suppresses thoughts of the smells produced by decomposing bodies in 40°C heat. What, we wonder, is Gladwell trying to explain to these slain marsupials? Probably not pictures, as in the Beuys piece, but perhaps something of the Australian attraction to speed and its devastating impact on the thousands of animals — mainly indigenous species like kangaroos and wallabies — that die each year on the road.

Lucy Gunning

Lucy Gunning (b. 1964, Newcastle upon Tyne, U.K.) lives in London. She has had solo exhibitions at Tate Britain (2001) and School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1996), and has participated in group shows including Pratt Institute, New York (2002), the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2004), and the Images Festival, Toronto (1999).

The Horse Impressionists, 1994

Employing a transgressive rhetoric that aims to reorient systems of identification and misidentification, Lucy Gunning culls themes that typify the consequences of "acting out" from prescribed physical and social morays in the pursuit of a more nuanced self-examination.

Taking out ads in a local paper, Gunning sought out women with the ability to mimic horses. She eventually selected five from the many respondents to make this video in which we see well-presented women trotting and galloping, neighing and whinnying, in various London parks and streets. As symbols of phallic power, and beloved by teenage girls everywhere, horses occupy a special place in the female imaginary. Channelling horses via mimicry, Gunning's work allows women to transgress their prescribed social roles and access a particular kind of non-linguistic agency, pleasure and release. **The Horse Impressionists** (1994) also embodies what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call "becoming anima"; Gunning's subjects seem to elude simple impersonation and become wholly contaminated with horse-ness in an ecstatic and deeply embodied merger with animality.



[The Horse Impressionists, 1994](#)

Courtesy the artist, Greene Naftali Gallery, New York, and Matt's Gallery, London

Nina Katchadourian

Nina Katchadourian (born in Stanford, Calif., 1968) lives in New York, N.Y. She works in photography, sculpture, video, and sound. Katchadourian's recent solo exhibitions have been organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (2008), Public Art Fund, New York (2006), and the Frances Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, New York (2006).

GIFT/GIFT, 1998

Classification systems, the failures and confusions that rupture them, and the miscommunications that occur between species are the underlying themes of Nina Katchadourian's work. Appropriately enough, she divides her art into six subjects: maps, language/translation, uninvited collaborations with nature, confusing animals, charts and systems, and miscellaneous.

GIFT/GIFT is from Katchadourian's **Mended Spiderweb** series, begun in 1998 on the small Finnish island of Pörtö where she has spent time every year since childhood. The series entailed her delicately repairing with red thread the broken spiderwebs outside her house. Katchadourian discovered that her every altruistic attempt to mend was quickly undone by an ungrateful spider, in a battle to control the web. The work is also inspired by an old Swedish nature guide that Katchadourian found on the island. The book describes how spiders wrap "gifts" of dead prey in their thread. (The Swedish word for "gift" also means "poison.")



[GIFT/GIFT, 1998](#)

Courtesy the artist, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York

VITO ACCORNI
 CARL ANDER
 RICHARD ANTONIASSIAN
 JOHN BALDRICH
 ROBERT BARRY
 JOSEPH BEALS
 GABRIEL BONITO
 FRANCESCO CLEMENTE
 RANDY COOPER
 DEBBY AND DENISE
 CONSTANCE
 HANS HALACIC
 MEL HENRIK
 DONALD JONES
 JACQUES-LÉVY
 JACQUES LOFFLER
 BILL LURTY
 BREWSTER LOUIS
 GORDON MATHIACLANE
 MARCO NERI
 RICHARD PIERCE
 STEPHAN REXNER
 ED RUCINA
 JULIAN SCHWABEL
 ST THOMAS
 ANDY WARHOL
 LAWRENCE WINTER

Birdcalls, 1972–81

Courtesy the LeWitt Collection, Chester, Connecticut

Louise Lawler

Louise Lawler (born 1947, Bronxville, N.Y.) lives in New York, N.Y. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at the Dia Art Foundation, New York (2005), and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2006). Her work was included in the 'Whitney Biennial' (2008) and 'The Pictures Generation' at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2009).

Birdcalls, 1972–81

Since the 1970s, Louise Lawler's work has examined questions of authorship, commodification and the reception of art. Her photographs of other artists' works in the places they are displayed—galleries, museums, private collections—turn the lens on how art is presented and exchanged, received and revered.

In *Birdcalls* (1972–81), Lawler intonates the names of twenty-eight male artists—including many of the leading figures of the time—as if they were bird calls, replete with overlapping warbles, chirps and tweets. Calling attention to the all-important "name of the artist," especially when that artist is a man, Lawler mimics a hunter who uses bird calls as a form of dominion: she derives power (as well as humour) from this act of feminist mimicry.

Birdcalls originated when Lawler was working on the Hudson River pier public art projects in New York City. While women undertook most of the manual labour, Lawler recalls, "the work shown was only by male artists."¹ Walking home late with her friend Martha Kite, Lawler started to hoot out the names of the male art stars of the time, an act that was both self-defensive and antagonistic.

¹ Deutsche, Rosalyn, "Louise Lawler's Rude Museum," *Twice Untitled and Other Pictures* (looking back), Wexner Center for the Arts and MIT Press, 2006

Hanna Liden

Hanna Liden (b. 1976, Stockholm, Sweden) has exhibited internationally since the early 2000s. Her work has been presented in group exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2007) and Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland (2008), and in solo shows at the Rivington Arms, New York (2006) and Half Gallery, New York (2010). She frequently contributes to *Purple* magazine as a fashion photographer.

Bird Totem, 2006/Hairface Highway, 2006/Spinning Anti-Clockwise, 2004

Hanna Liden's photos exhibit a fascination with horror movies, fashion photography and heavy metal aesthetics, putting a countercultural spin on the imagery of Romantic landscape painting. Fusing the sublime and the amateurish, Liden combines the brooding, melancholic vision of Ingmar Bergman with a contemporary, tongue-in-cheek gothic sensibility that casts a black rainbow over the Scandinavian landscapes of her birth.

Liden depicts denim-clad young women performing rituals and creating makeshift altars within wild, desolate spaces. Dubiously self-aware, her personae play with the comedy and kitsch of pop-pagan mysticism. In a darker, more serious turn, they also recall the church burnings and murders associated with 1990s Scandinavian black-metal culture. Her youths revel beneath their masks, rejecting society and inviting nature to claim them. They commune with the same sublime yet unforgiving natural world imagined by the nineteenth-century painter Caspar David Friedrich, whose majestic vistas Liden's work is indebted to. Darkling mirroring 1960s utopian, back-to-nature iconography, her outdoor rites offer an absurd yet disconcerting image of identification with nature as a potentially hostile force—evoking destructive teenage angst rather than youthful renewal.



Bird Totem, 2006



Hairface Highway, 2006



Spinning Anti-Clockwise, 2004

All courtesy the artist

Hew Locke

Hew Locke (born Edinburgh, U.K., 1959) lived from 1966 to 1980 in Georgetown, Guyana, before returning to the U.K. He lives in London. Solo exhibitions have taken place at the Luckman Art Gallery, Los Angeles, and the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta (2003), and the Institute of International Visual Arts, London (2008). His work has been included in group exhibitions including the 'Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art,' Greece (2009) and 'Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art' (2007–2008) at the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Tyger, Tyger, 2007

Hew Locke's mixed-media practice, which includes installation, three-dimensional wall works, as well as public projects and photography, addresses the aesthetics of power, nationalism and exoticism. His figures emulate the poses of authority through a collision of iconicity and disposability, dynasty and decay.

From the portrait series 'How Do You Want Me?' (2008), *Tyger, Tyger* (2007) references William Blake's poem 'The Tyger' (1794), which concerns the creation of violence alongside benevolence. Like Blake's tiger/tyger, written at the height of British colonialism, Locke's figure is both tantalizingly exotic and frightening. A kind of self-portrait—the artist poses for all works in this series—*Tyger, Tyger* explores machismo and hubris, including the video statements of terrorists and hostage takers, which Locke cites as inspiration.

Another touchstone is the studio work of African photographers like Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé, in which people pose and perform against decorative backdrops. Locke camouflages himself in the trappings of archetypal and racial stereotypes, not to hide within or from them, but to make them visible. People often ask, "How do you want me?" when they are posing for a high-street photographer. "How should they pose in order to be acceptable?" asks Locke, "OK—if this is how you see black men—then I can play up to that image if you want."

¹ Locke, Hew, "How Do You Want Me?" <http://www.hewlocke.net/howdoyouwantme.html>, 2007

Sandra Meigs

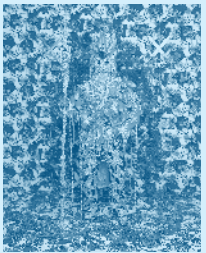
Sandra Meigs (b. 1953, Baltimore, U.S.) lives in Victoria, B.C. Her paintings have been exhibited across Canada, most recently at the Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa (2009), and in group exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2005), and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2009).

Ride. Girl Pulling Swans by the Neck. Red., 2004

Sandra Meigs frequently explores the nature of painting, complicating both formal and narrative capacities. She employs deceptively simple techniques, relying on flat forms and colour blocks that often evoke outsider art and stage design. However, her haunting choices in subject matter and media compel the viewer to take a second look.

The Ride (2004) series blurs the boundaries between human, animal and surrounding space. Meigs' girlish figures interact with mice, swans and ducks, yet as their bodies dissolve in blocks of colour, the opposition between human and creaturely anatomy becomes precarious. These bodily connections parallel Freudian notions of the oral stage of infant development, the gratifying connection between the bodies of mother and infant that appear to exist outside the external world. Meigs rethinks this desire for blissful merger as an inter-species encounter.

White and coloured forms lock together in an abstracted puzzle, allowing foreground and background to impose their contours upon each other: a subtle exchange that accentuates the relationship between humans and non-human inhabitants. Just as her girl-creatures are shaped by negative space, so human identity is formed in relation to beings encountered and spaces moved through.



Tyger, Tyger, 2007

Collection of the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO

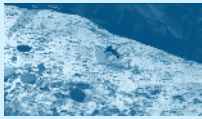
Bebe and Crosby Kemper Collection, Museum Purchase made possible by a gift from the R. C. Kemper Charitable Trust, 2008.28

Courtesy the artist and Hales Gallery, London



Ride. Girl Pulling Swans by the Neck. Red., 2004

Courtesy the artist and Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto



[Quarta-Feira de Cinzas/ Epilogue \(Ash Wednesday\)](#), 2006

Courtesy the artist, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, and Galeria Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo

Rivane Neuenschwander

Rivane Neuenschwander (b. 1967, Belo Horizonte, Brazil) lives in Brazil. Recent solo exhibitions of her work have taken place at the New Museum, New York (2010), and the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh (2007). She has participated in such group exhibitions as 'The Quick and the Dead,' The Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis (2009), and 'The Shapes of Space,' Guggenheim Museum, New York (2007).

[Quarta-Feira de Cinzas/Epilogue \(Ash Wednesday\)](#), 2006

The "ethereal materialism" of Rivane Neuenschwander draws upon the legacy of the Brazilian Neoconcrete movements of the 1950s and 1960s to investigate randomness and control, communication and exchange, in a globalized world. Attuned to sensations of taste, touch, smell, and hearing, as well as metaphors of digestion, her work often incorporates everyday materials like Scotch Tape, spices and rice paper. Neuenschwander has also "collaborated" with animals in various works, including snails and insects.

For [Quarta-Feira de Cinzas/Epilogue \(Ash Wednesday\)](#) (2006), Neuenschwander partnered with Brazilian filmmaker Cao Guimarães to make a short film on Ash Wednesday _ the final celebration of the four-day Brazilian Carnaval, which is celebrated with excessive confetti-throwing. Saturating confetti in pork fat and honey, the artists litter the brightly coloured refuse among an ant colony. Insects usually considered pests, especially in tropical climates, here become unwitting artistic collaborators and sanitation workers as they assiduously transport the confetti to a crack in the ground. The soundtrack combines fragments of samba, including the Monsueto and Ayrtton Amorim song *Me deixa em paz (Leave Me in Peace)* with field recordings made during the shoot and the rhythmic sound of matchsticks hitting the ground.

Jeff Sonhouse

Jeff Sonhouse (b. 1968, New York) lives in New York City. His solo show 'Paw-nography' was at Tilton Gallery, New York (2008) and he has participated in group exhibitions at the New York Historical Society (2006), the Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Los Angeles (2006), and the Muller deChiara Gallery, Berlin (2004).

[2 4 You and 1, 2 For Me](#), 2009

The figures in Jeff Sonhouse's mixed-media portraits camouflage themselves in an array of symbols associated with stereotypical African-American male identity. Balaclava-like masks obscure his subjects' skin and recall classical portraiture as well as the frontal poses of police lineups. Caught in a double-bind where they cannot blend into the background even if they wish to, his characters attempt to disappear while also making themselves hyper visible. Their identities seem to fragment across various versions of "blackness."

Sonhouse's use of camouflage and masks recalls Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) which considered the alienation of black subjects in a colonial world. Black people imitate "whiteness," Fanon speculated, in order to defend themselves against feelings of disconnection and inadequacy. Sonhouse considers the power dynamics and historical discriminations within visual vocabularies of "race," and the burden of visibility on the black male, who is seen as guilty until charged.



[2 4 You and 1, 2 For Me](#), 2009

Courtesy the artist and Jack Tilton Gallery, New York

Javier Téllez

Javier Téllez (b. 1969 in Valencia, Venezuela) lives in New York City. He has had solo exhibitions at institutions including the Kunsthaus Baselland, Muttenz, Switzerland (2009), and the Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York (2005). In 2006 The Power Plant presented his film installation *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc (Rozelle Hospital)* (2004). His work has appeared in group shows at Insite, San Diego and Tijuana (2005), Queens Museum of Art, New York (2003), and PS1, New York (2001). Téllez represented Venezuela at the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001.

[Letter on the Blind, For the Use of Those Who See](#), 2007

The son of two psychologists, Javier Téllez investigates the borders of society, identity and perception in his works. He typically works in close collaboration with the subjects of his art, individuals who have experienced social stigma or marginalization.

Taking its name from Diderot's influential 1749 essay that queried the role played by the five senses in the development of reason and knowledge, [Letter on the Blind, For the Use of Those Who See](#) (2007) explores the tactile responses of five blind people to an Indian elephant. One at a time, the individuals make their way to the surprisingly docile mammal, who waits in a disused Brooklyn swimming pool. "You're beautiful," says one, while another likens the animal's ears to "curtains in a mansion." The work builds on the Indian fable 'The Blind Men and the Elephant,' in which a small band of blind men touch an elephant and then disagree about their reactions to the animal; the story stands as a lesson in the impossibility of an absolute truth. In Téllez's work, blindness is merely a physical impairment that neither arrests nor restricts vivid visual images.

Michelle Williams Gamaker

Michelle Williams Gamaker (b. 1979, London, U.K.) received an MA in visual anthropology from Goldsmiths College, London, where she is pursuing a PhD in visual art. She lives in Amsterdam. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at Camden Arts Centre, London (2007), and de ateliers, Amsterdam (2004). Her work was included in 'New Contemporaries' at Camden Art Centre, London (2001).

[Sunday Afternoon II](#), 2001

Concerned with the formal qualities of film and its capacity to manipulate space and time, Michelle Williams Gamaker frequently uses herself as a model in her videos. Recently she has started to work in fiction and with actors on her first feature-length film, made in collaboration with Mieke Bal.

Inspired by a newspaper article about elderly people found dead in their homes with their pets, for [Sunday Afternoon II](#) (2001) Williams Gamaker filmed herself with her two greyhound dogs. As she plays dead, her pets explore her prone, passive body with their noses and tongues. They paint her flesh with saliva, probing with unselfconscious eroticism her mouth, neck, and thighs as she slowly twists her head. Williams Gamaker slows down the video slightly to exaggerate the dogs' lingering licks and the unsettling scuttling of their claws on the wooden floor. The video's jewel-like quality evokes the lush colour and texture of post-war films such as Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) and *Black Narcissus* (1947). The work follows [Sunday Afternoon](#) (2000), an even more overtly erotic video with a more documentary feel, in which the artist pleads with her dogs to do we know not what. [Sunday Afternoon II](#) queries what happens when domesticated animals are left to fend for themselves, and how good dogs might turn bad. Suggesting that pets give us access to our own animal natures, and to corporeal pleasures that overstep social and sexual boundaries, the work evokes the closeness of death and desire.



[Letter on the Blind, For the Use of Those Who See](#), 2007

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Courtesy the artist and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich



[Sunday Afternoon II](#), 2001

Courtesy the artist

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Adaptation: Between Species

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