HUM**AN**IMAL

by

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DEDICATION

To my children: Zoe, Oliver & Finn.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is part of a project that includes a physical body of work in which I investigate ideas about cultural narratives and hierarchies of power. I discuss how animal imagery in the stories that we tell at multiple levels in our culture has been used to communicate societal norms and rules. Thus, the paintings explore the notion of power in contemporary culture. The language of 18th and 19th century portrait painting is employed to draw a comparison between depictions of people in power and animal stereotypes. Childhood games are utilized as a way to demonstrate how social hierarchies are constructed and ideas of power are reinforced. Games are juxtaposed with the paintings as sculptures and are included to draw a comparison between the two.

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INTRODUCTION

Animal imagery is often used as a way to explain the human condition or the behavior of someone else. For example, to communicate how dirty someone is, one only needs to add "like a pig" to get the point across; this is why animal similes pepper our language. These expressions are often created and perpetuated regionally and can change from one state or country to the next. The ideas conveyed about animals say more about humans than animals, as they become our reflection. It is my aim with this work to explore this human to animal projection.

Animals become symbols when people simplify the behavior of animals as a way to define their own. In Chapter One, I write about semiotics as defined by Charles Sanders Pierce who wrote that semiotics can be broken down into three principles of signs: "icon," which resembles the thing; "index," which points to the existence of the thing; and "symbol," which must be learned to be recognized as a way to communicate a thing.[1] With semiotics in mind, I discuss how fairy tales comprise a recognizable set of symbols, which impart lessons about growing up.

Philosophical debate about what makes humans separate from animals has led to disagreement regarding that relationship. Where many see a clear separation, others see a clear connection. Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory has spawned arguments, which continue to this day. Some people believe in a spiritual creation of mankind while others

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[1] Parmentier, *Signs in Society*, 3

believe in a slow progression through evolution. Spoken language is also a dividing factor in this debate about man's relationship or dissimilarity to animals. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who explored the "nature of being," believed in a clear distinction between man and animal based upon words, while Darwin believed the existence of words were a part of a healthy, "natural" ecosystem because of language's ability to morph, change, and die.[2]

In Chapter Two, I explore the Animal stereotype. Since we are unable to view ourselves without looking outside of ourselves, the separation of them and us can become problematic, as it can lead to a failure to empathize or a lack of connection. But how stereotypes are created is also a reflection upon those who are doing the defining.

The definitions created to codify our cultural understanding of things are not always based in facts but rather feeling. This has led to quantifiable harm to animal species by actions that are a product of the misconceptions that are a direct result of the mischaracterization of them. Two animals I will discuss at length to illustrate my arguments are the Tasmanian tiger and the wolf.

In Chapter Three, I examine how animals are portrayed in fables, stories, novels, and movies and how they contribute to our cultural understanding of them. I consider some of these conventions from the serpent in *The Bible* to the animals in *The Jungle Book*, and how cultural ideas are communicated through the story.

In Chapter Four, I examine artistic conventions and how they impart ideas to the viewer. Portraiture is discussed in the sense that it communicates something about the

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[2] Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 56, 135, 136

sitter and how it is essentially collaboration between the artist and the subject. I write about how painting and drawing conventions were used to convey ideas about other cultures and the existing differences. The ideas formed about other people and how they live subsequently lead to a belief system, which encourages stereotyping.

My body of work is discussed in Chapter Five. I write about how the use of animal imagery and the sculptural additions of games are used to relate to both cultural points of view and contemporary issues.

CHAPTER ONE: ANIMALS AS SYMBOL

Animals are being removed from our urban and suburban environments as the human desire to control every aspect of our world increases. In the book *Electric Animal,* Akira Lippit writes that the fewer interactions people have with wild animals the more they are characterized to fit into an understanding based on human behavior. Lippit suggests: "Modernity can be defined by the disappearance of wildlife from humanity's habitat and by the reappearance of the same in humanity's reflections on itself."[3] This simplification of animal behavior to a metaphor for a human can be seen in how animals are represented in movies, books, and music. When a specific quality is assigned to a musical composition and to a specific animal (such as was done in *Peter and the Wolf*), that musical composition can be used to represent the animal. For example, if light and airy is assigned to the flute when it is played quickly and light and airy is assigned to a hummingbird, the flute can stand in for the bird and becomes part of a "sign system." To be clear, the word "bird" is also part of a sign system as it is not the bird, but instead is a device to direct our thinking to the concept it signifies.

Semiotics is the study of signs and explains the cognitive process of communication through types of signs and how they function. According to Richard J. Parmentier in his book *Signs and Society,* "sign systems are structured according to reciprocally mirroring semiotic devices that create a sense of wholeness to people's

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[3] Lippit, *Electric Animal,* 3

experience of reality."[4] Sign systems make sense of, and communicate about, the world. Marcel Danesi wrote about Charles Sanders Pierce, the father of modern semiotics, in "On the Metaphorical Connectivity of Cultural Sign Systems":

> All knowledge at a given cognitive or historical moment must be about something with which the knower is already acquainted to some degree and in some respect. Opposed to this presupposed object are forms of representation, (verbal, graphic, gestural, etc.) which stand for, substitute for, or exhibit the object in such a way that the next stage of comprehension will consist of a further developed representation of the same object. For Pierce the class of phenomena which can function as signs is extremely broad.[5]

To Pierce, the "symbol" is the relationship between the sign, the object, and the person. "Pierce envisioned the triad of icon, index, and symbol to form a nested hierarchical set." To Pierce, "the index directs the mind to some aspect of reality and the icon provides information about it. And a symbol must embody an icon and an index."[6] Icons resemble the thing you are asked to think about, such as the image of a figure in a dress on a bathroom door. An indexical sign makes people think of the object through cause and effect. The smell of smoke, for example, makes us think of fire. A symbol must be learned and cannot exist without the object. Words are an example of a symbol where they need to be learned and linked to meaning to exist.

Games

Childhood games can give insight into semiotics because all three divisions of signs can be observed. In most board games, "icons" are used to represent a thing. In *Monopoly,* houses are property and paper money is currency. The icon very directly

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[4] Danesi, "On the Metaphorical Connectivity of Cultural Sign Systems," 34
[5] Parmentier, *Signs in Society,* 3
[6] Ibid, 7

represents the thing they are representing. In *Hide n' Seek*, the game where one person is "it" and must find all the other hiding participants, "indexical" signs are observed in the footprints of those hiding. When the footprints are observed, the automatic reaction is to think of the person who made them and the direction they went. In *Rock, Paper, Scissors*, the hands are used in the gesture of the three objects mentioned. These signs are "symbols" of the actual objects and must be learned for a clear understanding. There is flexibility in these definitions though and some of these are made more complex with more thought. For example, once the rules to *Rock, Paper, Scissors* are learned, the hand gestures can also be thought of as icons because in the context of the game, the gestures represent the objects.

Games "have important implications for children's . . . social and cognitive development."[7] The difference between play and games is the way in which rules are used. In play, a set of rules might be determined but are flexible. In play, the imagination is engaged to pretend to do or be something else, but the rules can be altered to fit a purpose. This is not true with games. Games have a set of rules, which remain the same with varying levels of complexity. In games, others who are playing, or a referee, usually keep rules in place. Scientists have observed that social hierarchies are determined during these games and are typically those who "initiate, maintain, and terminate games. Case studies indicated that these children are likely to be popular and to be seen by peers as

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[7] Pellegrini, Kato, Blatchford, Baines, "A short-Term Longitudinal study of Children's Playground Games across the First Year of School: Implications for Social Competence and Adjustment to School," 991

group leaders."[8] The lessons learned during recess activities carry over into how the child participates in other aspects of social life.

> We considered games as an important developmental task for children and especially boys, entering primary school. They used their facility with games as a way in which they could achieve social competence with their peers and adjust to very early schooling. This finding is consistent with the theoretical assumption that the social rules and roles that children learn in one niche (with their peers on the school playground) should predict competence in related niches, with their peers and in school in first grade. Bothe niches are similar to the extent that they encourage rule-governed behavior and cooperative interaction with peers.[9]

The things learned at an early age are what guides understanding of social cues later. This study investigated how lessons learned from games in early education dictated later behavior and social interaction in school. These experiential lessons also become building blocks for adult understanding. Some of the things learned include leadership, winning/loosing, cooperation, observation, fairness, and much more.

One artist who has used the ideas of games and semiotics in his work is Canadian born artist Marcel Dzama. Dzama often taps into the language of fables to tell narrative stories. His images often seem inviting and whimsical until you get a closer look as the subjects are generally carrying out odd tasks while wielding guns and riding bicycles. In his 2011 short film *A Game of Chess* (Plate 1), Dzama incorporates dance with a game of chess. There is an antiquated feel to the film as it draws inspiration from Surrealist and Dada artists and uses the black and white silent format. *A Game of Chess* has a dream like feel and is reminiscent of Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel's 1929 film *Un Chien Andalou*.

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[8] Pellegrini, Kato, Blatchford, Baines, "A short-Term Longitudianl study of Children's Playground Games across the First Year of School: Implications for Social Competence and Aductment to School," 995

[9] Ibid, 1009

"Chess occupied a central role for the early twentieth-century avant-garde, who drew explicit analogies between the game (with its intricate balance between improvisation and predetermination) and artistic practice."[10] Dzama uses the film as a metaphor for larger social implications such as "free will, destiny, and technological determinism." The exhibit also included iconic statues and drawings of chess pieces as symbols for these larger questions.

Animal as Symbol

Like chess pieces, iconic images of animals have become symbols in which people learn to assign meanings that are separate from what they are. The whale in Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* is not so much a whale as he is a metaphor and has been interpreted in many ways. The white whale lurks in the dark and is elusive, it can't be seen or heard, yet he can strike at any time. Some examples of how the whale has been understood include fear, anger, vengeance, and obsession. Images of whales now occupy a symbolic place in our minds as they become linked to the metaphor. This link may be why Melville wrote so much of his book just unpacking the idea of "whale" and cataloging its course in literature. Stories and fables add to ideas about animal characteristics and the less contact with the actual animal, the more understanding of their behavior falls in line with those stories. In *Electric Animal*, Akira Lippit writes: "At precisely the moment when the bond between humanity and animal came to be seen as broken, humanity became the subject and the animal its reflection."[11] Because of limited

[10] http://www.worldchesshof.org/exhibitions/exhibit/marcel-dzama-the-end-game/
[11] Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 19

personal experience from which to think about the animal, understanding becomes more about the thinker than the animal.

The metaphorical meanings of animals have become so embedded in our cultural stories that it is sometimes difficult to unravel the physical being from the tale. Some of the ways people understand animals and form belief systems about them are handed down from parents and movies like those made by Walt Disney and Warner Brothers. The things learned as a child become easily passed down to the next generation of children through stories and games. Tales in themselves seem harmless enough; it is in the translation back to human relationships that interpretation can become problematic. The Brothers Grimm story of *Little Red Riding Hood,* a tale about a young girl who is followed and tricked by a wolf who eats her grandmother, is about more than what it seems on the surface. Susan Brownmiller wrote in her book *Against Our Will:*

> Rape seeps into our childhood consciousness by imperceptible degrees. Even before we learn to read we have become indoctrinated into a victim mentality. Fairy Tales are full of a vague dread, a catastrophe that seems to befall only little girls. Sweet, feminine Little Red Riding Hood is off to visit her dear old grandmother in the woods. The wolf lurks in the shadows, contemplating a tender morsel. Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, we learn, are equally defenseless before the male wolf's strength and cunning . . .The wolf swallows both females with no sign of a struggle. But enter the huntsman—he will right this egregious wrong . . .
>
> *Red Riding Hood* is a parable of rape. There are frightening male figures abroad in the woods—we call them wolves, among other names—and females are helpless before them . . .[12]

In a fairy tale world, there are essentially two possibilities for the male subject; they can be the danger lurking in the dark like the wolf, or the strong hero like the huntsman. This

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[12] Brownmiller, *Against Our Will,* 309-310

tale warns girls to stay on the path, not to trust men because the essential role for the female is victim.

Philosophy

Animal archetypes are reflected back onto human stereotypes. Once an attribute has been assigned, it remains and becomes an intrinsic quality, a way to simplify others that can be seen in both what people believe an animal's behavior to be and the reflection of human behavior. For many, there is a distinct separation between the animal and the human and for some there is not. Nietzsche wrote in *Homer's Contest*:

> When one speaks of *Humanity*, the idea is fundamental that this is something that separates and distinguishes man from nature. In reality, however, there is no such separation: "natural" qualities and those properly called "human" are indivisibly grown together. Man, in his highest and most noble capacities, is wholly nature and embodies its uncanny dual character. Those of his abilities which are awesome and considered inhuman are perhaps the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity . . . can grow.[13]

In this, Nietzsche suggests that humans are part of and participate in ecosystems; they are not separate from it. When people view themselves as something both separate from and responsible for nature, they aren't seeing the whole picture. The impact humans have on our world, good or bad, doesn't separate us from it.

When Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1851, the discussion about the relationship between humans and animals changed forever.

> Darwin's discovery of natural selection and the properties of biological adaptation had introduced new possibilities for the conception of a subject and its environment, or *Umwelt*. Not only did Darwin challenge the foundations of religious orthodoxy (among may controversial extrapolations, Darwin's findings pointed toward the historical inaccuracy of Biblical creation, the essential relationship between human

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[13] Maltby, "Fundamentalist Dominion, Postmodern Ecology," 130

> beings and primates, and the dynamism of species), they also assailed many of the tenants of metaphysics, not least of which insisted upon a rigid distinction between humanity and animal.[14]

For many philosophers, the greatest distinction between animals and people is the use of words, which seems so distinctively human. According to Lippit, Heidegger's philosophy about animals is that:

> . . language establishes the gulf between human beings and animals. The animal, in Heidegger's account is held to be incapable of developing the greater faculty possessed by humanity for language. The concept of the world, which motivates much of Heidegger's writing, denies a place for the animal, unless that place can be defined as a space of exclusion.[15]

To Heidegger, when considering the world, humans belong to one scope of understanding because of the ability to communicate with the verbal and written word and animals are not considered at all. When the animal is placed into a category that is outside the realm of humanity, and therefore below it, it becomes subject to interpretation. Darwin's evolutionary theory suggested a human relationship to animals and was a challenging concept for many who eagerly dismissed a connection. To create distinctions between humanity and animal based on human language is a way of denying the natural occurrence of language and the forms of communication that animals possess. Languages morph and change and are a way to distinguish one group from another.

> Darwin's supposition that languages are a type of dynamic organism and thus behave no differently from any other class of organic entities—that they struggle, evolve, and ultimately succumb to extinction—modifies the conventional view of language as humanity's first acquisition. Languages are not just effects of humanity's existence, Darwin argues, but they possess lives of their own. Darwin's remarkable gesture appears to transport language from the register of artifice to that of nature.

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[14] Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 75
[15] Ibid, 56

> Languages, according to Darwin, like animals and plants. Are consigned to the sequences of a morphological existence: life, struggle, selection, change, and death.[16]

Words aren't what separate humans from nature; it's what binds them to nature. Just like Nietzsche's theory that humans are part of the environment, Darwin is arguing through his metaphorical construct of language as organism that language itself is a part of an evolving ecosystem. As human languages are alive, in a manner of speaking, they morph, change, and die.

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[16] Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 135, 136

CHAPTER TWO: ANIMAL STEREOTYPE

Descriptions of animal characteristics can be easily simplified into human traits because of our limited exposure to a variety of animals. Although people have relationships with animals that are classified as pets on a daily basis, interactions with beings considered to be livestock or wild are limited for many people. Those animals that have been introduced into the homes of people as pets, such as cats or dogs, are thought of as both individuals and reflections of the humans who "own" them. Farm and wild animal characteristics have less complexity in the minds of many. Because of a lack of intimacy with the animal and inversely because of people's overly intimate and one-sided relationship with our "pets," ideas about what they are capable of or how they behave become exaggerated.

The act of separating and creating categories of "us" and "them" has negative effects, often resulting in cruelty. To view another person and distinguish differences as a means for self reflection and evaluation can help create more insightful cultures. Hierarchies of better or worse get in the way of true assessment, however, and people can only view the other person in relationship to themselves. When animals are thought of as separate from people, people can't look past their expectations of who they want the animal to be or how they expect them to behave. Instead of accepting the animal on their terms, there is an attempt to get them to conform to stereotypes.

Often stereotyping has a historical precedent based on shared stories or imagery. The idea of the Canada goose as a migratory animal stems from experiences and imagery of the flying V. Stereotypes do not need to be accurate to exist, for example, even though not all Canada geese migrate, the ideas surrounding their migration becomes difficult to ignore. Currently, the Canada goose is one of the first images to appear when entering the word migrate, migration, or migratory into an online image search engine. *South Bound* (Plate 2) by Richard E. Bishop is an etching of Canada geese in their recognizable flying V formation. The image, along with the title, reinforces ideas about this bird's behavior. The behavior of stereotyping exists about humans as well and the same line of reasoning about how stereotypes are reinforced can be seen across gender, social, and racial lines.

The Thylacine

The thylacine, also known as the Tasmanian tiger, was a marsupial that fell prey to the human imagination in the late 19th and early 20th century. Because of their large size and striped fur, they were mistakenly thought of as a danger to livestock and people. Due to them being nocturnal and having a predatory appearance, fear and bias led to a campaign of suppression. A price was paid for every thylacine killed in order to control their numbers. Stories spread about their ability to kill livestock and large game, which ultimately led to their extinction around 1930. Current research suggests that they only preyed on small animals weighing no more than 11 lbs. Their large but weak jaw couldn't kill larger mammals. For the thylacine, the misconception that they were voracious

predators based on their appearance proved to be much more persuasive than their actual behavior or biological capabilities.[17]

Walton Ford, an American artist who references natural history in his work, brought together ideas about how other species are subject to the human imagination in his painting *The Island* (Plate 3). The painting consists of three panels, each 98 inches tall. The image is of an island made of thylacine with small lambs in their mouths, some in pieces and some whole. They are snapping at each other and the lambs, while they seem to be sinking into the water. Although the animals seem active and in motion, there is something about the landscape format and the color palette that gives the image a calm feeling. The following is an excerpt from *The New Yorker* and is an interview with Walton Ford about his painting *The Island*:

> This animal scared the hell out of the settlers . . . It looked like a wolf, but with stripes, like a tiger, and they could get up on their hind legs, which made them even scarier. The settlers were sheepherders, and they built up this myth of a huge, bipedal, nocturnal vampire-beast that sucked the blood of sheep. The settlers put a bounty on these animals and began killing them off in every possible way—poison, traps, snares, guns. The last known one died in captivity in the nineteen-thirties, but they lived on in people's imagination.
>
> . . My idea was to make an island out of thylacines and killed sheep—they're not on an island; they *are* the island—and to have it sinking beneath the waves. I want it to be a brutal picture of thylacine bloodlust, a blame-the-victim picture, a sort of fever dream of the Tasmanian settler alone in the bush with these animals, although there was never any evidence of one killing a human being, and very little evidence of their eating sheep.[18]

Ford's "blame the victim" approach to this brutal history is poking fun at our past. By taking a subject that is uncomfortable and making it ridiculous, Ford is forcing the viewer

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[17] Paddle, *The Last Tasmanian Tiger: The History and Extinction of the Thylocine.*
[18] Tompkins, 2009 "Man and Beast."
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/01/26/090126fa_fact_tomkins

to deal with his or her own human nature. The thylacine was a symbol of death and destruction to the settlers in 19th century Australia. The thylacine, in Ford's painting, is a symbol of man's ignorance and destructive ability.

The Wolf

The thylacine's demise was partially due to the limited exposure people actually had with the animals and the fears and prejudices that fill up voids of information. Even though having interactions with animals on a regular basis can expand knowledge about a species, understanding is still filtered through expectations that are often developed through folklore, literature, and contemporary media. The image of the wolf is instructive in illustrating this point, as it has been used in countless tales to represent danger. It is so engrained in us that wolves are dangerous "man-eaters" with no redeeming qualities that, much like the thylacine, wolf culling practices were common in the United States, Canada, and Russia until nearly prompting the animal's extinction.[19]

Farley Mowat, in his 1963 book *Never Cry Wolf*, wrote of his 1948 experience as a wildlife biologist sent to Canada to study the disappearance of caribou. Mowat wrote of wolves as sensitive pack animals that mostly feast on rodents for sustenance and showed no aggression towards humans. His words, though controversial and described as fictional by some of his colleagues, would forever change the way wolves are viewed by many.[20] Wolf culling ceased in Russia following an outcry by wolf advocates and conservation biologists began a process of "rewilding," which is the reintroduction of a predator into an area where one was removed. This conservation act has been most

[19] Graves & Geist, *Wolves in Russia: Anxiety Throughout the Ages*, 222
[20] Pimlott, "*Never Cry Wolf* by Farley Mowat," *236*

successful in the National Parks of the United States. George Monbiot writes in his book, *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding,* that:

> Rewilding recognizes that nature consists not just of a collection of species but also of their ever-shifting relationships with each other and with the physical environment. It understands that to keep an ecosystem in a state of arrested development, to preserve it as if it were a jar of pickles, is to protect something, which bears little relationship to the natural world. This perspective has been influenced by some of the most arresting scientific developments of recent times.[21]

Monbiot is suggesting that reintroducing an ecosystem's main predator (the wolf of the Northwest or the Mountain Lion of the Grand Canyon) is essential to a healthy environment. Unlike some of his colleagues, he suggests that the main goal isn't to work towards a system that forever remains the same but that any healthy ecosystem changes and is often in flux.

Mowat's efforts split conservationists and hunters on the controversial subject of animal control even to this day. In 2013, the state of Idaho attempted to eliminate wolf packs in the Frank Church—River of No Return Wilderness Area[22] but was met with protests and controversy much to the surprise of policy makers.[23] In the minds of many conservationists, the wolf is much like the canines depicted in Mowat's book, a predator that brings balance to the ecosystem. To hunters and members of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission, the wolf has a boundless appetite with little or no benefits, much like the wolves from our fairy tales.

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[21] Monbiot, *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding,* 1

[22] Barker, 2013, "Idaho Fish and Game Turns to Hired Hunter." http://www.idahostatesman.com/2013/12/17/2931287/fish-and-game-turns-to-hired-hunterpetition.html

[23] Barker, 2014, http://blogs.idahostatesman.com/hunters-animal-lovers-speak-out-respectfully-at-fish-and-game-wolf-hearing/

Representation and Use

Much like the wolf, the representation of an animal that is rarely seen in person but is prevalent in art and literature has a tendency to replace the actual living being in the imagination of humans with a construct of the author's imagination. Few people have actually seen a sperm whale first hand even today, though many have seen photographs and illustrations of them. When people would have first read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, there was an even greater dearth of images of the actual animals so the photographed images, and interpretations through drawing, painting, and prints are what they would have imagined. When looking at an image of a sperm whale, the story of *Moby Dick* is transferred back on to that form because of the literary reference. There tends to be a romantic relationship with the whale because of our inability to have personal interactions with them. From Jonah's whale in The Bible to Yūnus's whale in the Qur'ān, the whale is used as a metaphor for revenge and spiritual decay.[24]

The difference that exists between animals and humans is a social construct with a flexible definition. While the human biology is animal, people have created an intellectual separation. One such example exists in creation narratives in The Bible. In *Ethics and the Environment,* Paul Maltby writes that:

> Christian fundamentalist hostility to environmentalism typically finds its endorsement in the book of Genesis. A literal reading of the injunction that "man" should "fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Gen 1:28) has ratified the view of nature as a God-given resource for unlimited human use.[25]

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[24] Afsar, "Comparative Study of the Art of Jonah/Yūnus Narrative in the Bible and the Qur'ān," 333

[25] Maltby, "Fundamentalist Dominion, Postmodern Ecology," 119

The belief that "man" controls the world and all living things in it has led to the belief system that animals only exist for man's use. This position places the animal in the category of being separate form humans.

Another example of the animal being placed in a position separate from man is seen in science. In an article from *The American Biology Teacher*, author Adrian Morrison breaks down what he considers the "first principles" of using animals in research, they are:

1. Our first obligation is to our fellow humans.
2. All human beings are persons.
3. Animals are not little persons.
4. We have a great obligation to the animals under our control.
5. Good science requires good animal care, but bureaucracy does not necessarily equate with increased welfare.[26]

Just as Christian fundamentalists theologize that animals exist for the use of humans, science is in agreement through both the action of animal testing and the list of "first principles." Morrison suggests a separation between humans and animals, which allow exploitation by the one of the other for scientific research by setting up their first obligation towards fellow humans.

A counter to the Christian belief that animals were made by God for humans to dominate comes from Buddhism. Many Buddhists view animals as sentient beings, capable of human traits like thinking and feeling. Any animal could be a relative of a

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[26] Morrison, "Ethical Principles Guiding the Use of Animals in Research," 105-107

person because anyone can be reborn as an animal on the path to enlightenment. All animals must be treated with respect for this reason. The Buddhist view is to do no harm, even in regards to the use of animals for research purposes.[27]

The Real vs. the Imagined

In contemporary culture, animal imagery is ubiquitous with the use of cute creatures to sell everything from cereal to soft drinks. The media has misrepresented animals so much that they are no longer viewed as dangerous in some cases. The outcome of such a belief system has led to injury and death. In 2008, a college student was bitten by a panda bear several times after climbing a barrier into its enclosure. "Speaking from his hospital bed, the injured man said the panda had looked so cute he had just wanted to hug it."[28] The perception of the panda as a gentle creature played a part in his poor decisions. "Yang Yang was so cute and I just wanted to cuddle him," he said from his hospital bed. "I didn't expect he would attack… I don't remember how many bites I got." [29] As incredible as it may seem, this student is not the only person who has suffered injury or death due to ignorance.

In 2005, Werner Herzog directed *Grizzly Man*, a documentary about Timothy Treadwell, a man who lived among grizzly bears in the Alaskan wilderness for 13 summers. Treadwell was discovered dead and partially devoured, along with his girlfriend, in the fall of 2003. Herzog used Treadwell's own film, which displayed him anthropomorphizing the bears to a dangerous degree, naming them, touching them and

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[27] Lecso, "To Do No Harm: A Buddhist View on Animal Use in Research"
[28] "Panda Attacks Man in Chinese Zoo." 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7743748.stm
[29] Ibid

talking to them like they were his cuddly friends. Treadwell's desire to feel welcome and accepted led to his death.[30] Paul Theroux from Smithsonian magazine explains what causes people to anthropomorphize in his article *Living With Geese:*

> Animal lovers often tend to be misanthropes or loners, and so they transfer their affection to the creature in their control. The classics of this type are single species obsessives, like Joy Adamson, the *Born Free* woman who raised Elsa the lioness and was celebrated in East Africa as a notorious scold; or Dian Fossey, the gorilla woman, who was a drinker and a recluse. "Grizzly man" Tim Treadwell was regarded, in some circles, as an authority on grizzlies, but Werner Herzog's documentary shows him to have been deeply disturbed, perhaps psychopathic and violent.[31]

This quote illustrates that when a person has problems relating to other people, turning to animals seems simpler. This is certainly not true of all animal lovers, and the same can be said of some who don't relate to animals at all. In Treadwell's case, *Grizzly Man* showed him to have had lost touch with others, making up an Australian past with a fake accent and talking to the grizzlies like they were people because he needed them to be. His inabilities to feel comfortable with other people made him believe that he could understand or be understood by another species.

Objective reality often becomes replaced with its representation in the minds of people. In the convention of natural history paintings of animals, the paintings becomes the image that is thought of when people have had little or no interaction with the actual animal. Albrecht Dürer translated textual representations of a rhinoceros into a woodcut print in 1515 (Plate 4). "The importance of Dürer's image can hardly be overstated, since it had a lasting effect on the representation of the species in illustrated natural histories as

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[30] Herzog, 2005, *Grizzly Man*

[31] Theroux, 2006, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/living-with-geese-139853490/?page=1

well as in more popular publications for centuries."[32] Culture creates tales from the writings and images created by a select few, which are infused into our visual language. In the case of Dürer, his image was used in Sigismando Ticci's *Historia Senensium,*[33] a ten-volume encyclopedia and was believed to be an accurate representation by those who had never seen an actual rhinoceros.

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[32] Monson, *The Source for the Rhinoceros,* 51
[33] Ibid, 39

CHAPTER THREE: ANIMAL MYTHOLOGY

Fairy tales and animal fables have traditionally been a way to communicate a cultural narrative to children. A difficult or frightening event to the reader is made safer when animals are used in place of human characters. When narrative clarity is necessary, an animal can be essentialized to serve this function. When a wolf is used as a villain, motivation no longer needs to be asked. The wolf eats Little Red Riding Hood and grandma because he is a wolf, but when replacing the wolf with a person, questions about how he can harm someone else is raised. In the imagination, the wolf can stalk and eat people because most people have limited knowledge of actual wolves.

In 1936, the Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev was commissioned to create a work, which would cultivate the musical taste of children. The composition, *Peter and the Wolf*, tells the story of a young boy named Peter, a duck, a cat, and a bird and how they captured a wolf after it swallowed a duck. Each character was represented with a particular instrument and musical score, with each intended to capture the behavior and attitude of individual characters. The string instruments represented Peter and helped the audience imagine a playful young boy, the oboe was a sad duck as the score was fairly slow, an up-tempo flute represented a bird, the clarinet played in a low register represented the cat, the French horn played slowly and deliberately was a dangerous wolf, the bassoon was the grandfather, and drums were the hunters, most likely

representing guns.[34] Walt Disney later reimagined *Peter and the Wolf* in an animated film in which each animal character became further anthropomorphized to more clearly communicate the human qualities of each animal to an American audience. *Peter and the Wolf* is an example of how animals can represent humans and music can be used to symbolize animals.

Silvia Levenson is an artist who divides her time living between Italy and Argentina. Her work uses iconic images from fairy-tale animals and the human figure to speak to ideas about family as well as the conditions of women and children. In her sculpture *The Chosen* (Plate 5), Levenson has created an image made up of the head of a calf and the body of a girl. The head is made of kiln-fired glass and is achromatic and transparent. Her use of glass gives the appearance of something that is both ghost-like and brittle. Levenson chose transparent glass as her material to link to thoughts about preciousness and fragility. Glass breaks easily like the psychology of children who are always at risk. The child is dressed in an all white gown and white shoes, evoking ideas about purity and innocence. There is a large red X on her back that is suggestive of blood. This red X and the title of *The Chosen* communicate ideas about the victim; she *is* the victim. Her use of the wolf in her other works and our recognition of the wolf in fairy tales offers us the potential reading that she is the victim of rape.[35]

Religion

Narratives of the animal world end up shaping our understanding of both animals and ourselves. The use of stories to communicate ideas about right and wrong is one of

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[34] Prokofiev, 1936, "Peter and the Wolf," https://archive.org/details/PeterAndTheWolf_753
[35] Levenson, 2012, http://www.silvialevenson.com/index.php/texts.html

the things which bind cultures together and the telling of stories using animals as a means to communicate morality is not unique to one culture.

In Judeo-Christian mythology, the tale of Adam, Eve and the serpent is perhaps one of the most prevalent anthropomorphic tales. The serpent, for its part, is representative of seduction and was depicted as a woman in some early Christian art.

> The artistic tradition of the serpent with a human head began in the thirteenth century . . . The woman-headed serpent as Eve's twin was the type favored in *Temptation* in Florence.
>
> It is in northern art that the serpent with Eve's likeness becomes transformed into a half-human creature with one snake tail . . .on the base of a fourteenth-century French *Enthroned Virgin and Child*, now in the Louvre: the lowest segment shows a creature female to the waist with a broad lower serpentine extremity that seems to undulate with subaqueous rhythm.[36]

The snake embodies a trickster and is both tempting and cunning; it is the snake that turns Eve into the temptress. When depicted as a woman, the snake is a mirror to Eve; she makes Eve question God and desire knowledge. Eve offers the apple to Adam who takes it without much coaxing but when God confronts Adam, he blames Eve who blames the serpent.[37] God punishes all three as a warning to people not to blame others for their own misdeeds. This myth has also been a model of how to think and feel about women. Although Eve was made from Adams rib, she was more or less an equal in the Garden but when they were cast out, she became subordinate to Adam.

Buddhism has been using tales of animals to communicate ideas in Jātakas, which are tales of the past lives of the Buddha and express a moral dilemma that the Buddha had solved with great morality; he is often an animal in these tales. These Jātakas have

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[36] Schuyler, "Michelangelo's Serpent With Two Tails," 26
[37] Higgins, "The Myth of Eve: The Temptress," 645

been represented in a visual form on silk scrolls called thangka and on rock pillars around Buddhist temples called Stupas, they serve not only as a reminder of the Buddha, but also of morality. Each Jātakas's hero, "often an animal or bird, was the Buddha in a previous life."[38] Each tale where Buddha was an animal illustrates how he was able to escape his animal nature and rise above it to teach a moral lesson, so that in death, he could be reborn into the next life, one step closer to Nirvana or enlightenment. The range of animals that Buddha was in his past lives includes a monkey, an elephant, a golden swan, and many more.

While I find it tempting to include more religious mythologies as a means to illustrate how animal stories are used to communicate a cultural narrative, I acknowledge that the study of animal iconography in mythologies is complex and it alone could fill volumes, in fact Joseph Campbell did just that. For this reason, I chose only two faiths that express different views on animal-to-human relationships.

Tales and fables have been told throughout history and are linked not only to ideas surrounding faith, but to narratives and morality as well. *Aesop's Fables* are some of the earliest recorded and employ animals to represent human characteristics.

> . . Aesop employs animal surrogates to expose the moral mechanisms of the human world. Aesop's fables, which are generally considered a precursor of the literary genres of fiction and pedagogical writing, rely heavily upon the satirical posturings of animals to depict various aspects of human nature.[39]

Through the use of animal imagery, Aesop was able to communicate something bigger to the greater audience about themselves. In *A Portrait of Aesop,* Howard Baker breaks

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[38] Dehejia, *Indian Art,* 61
[39] Lippit, *Electric Animal,* 12-13

down some of *Aesop's Fables* to paint a portrait of the person he might have been. "Ugly on the outside, beautiful on the inside."[40] The stories told about animals are used to create a portrait of the creator of the tales. Baker's theory was that Aesop might have used animals in place of himself in many stories. Like the Buddhist Jātakas, which use multiple animals over multiple lives and tales to help us understand the Buddha, these tales use multiple animals in different tales, which together paint a picture of the storyteller.

Allegory

Published in 1945, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell was an allegorical tale written in response to the 1917 Russian Revolution. This tale was his first to "fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole."[41] The story takes place on a farm as the animals stage a revolution. As the story progresses, the pigs take on the personalities of humans until no difference can be distinguished. The characteristics of historical figures like Karl Marx and Joseph Stalin are not only placed on the animals, but the characteristics of the pigs are metaphorically used to describe their human counterparts.

To replace the human character with the animal in a historical narrative does two things. First, it boils down archetypes and creates easily recognizable characters. When reading *Animal Farm,* it is apparent that all the pigs belong to one group and other animals belong to another. Second, it creates an experience where the reader is not responsible for checking the story for historical inaccuracies. The author is allowed to use

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[40] Baker, " Portrait of Aesop," 583
[41] Morse, "A Blatancy of Untruth," 85

some embellishments if the main premise is outside the realm of possibilities. The use of the animal makes the story more enjoyable yet it doesn't dilute the premise.

Sometimes the use of animal imagery is used in place of the human figure to help tell a visual narrative, which would have been misrepresentative if people were used. This is certainly true of Art Spiegelman's *Maus,* a graphic novel that uses the images of "oppressed mice and evil cats" to tell the story of Spiegleman's father's account of Nazi Germany.

> The reason was, if one draws this kind of stuff with people, it comes out wrong. And the way it comes out wrong is, first of all, I've never lived through anything like that . . . and it would be counterfeit to try to pretend that the drawings are representations of something that's actually happening. I don't know exactly what a German looks like who was in a specific small town doing a specific thing. My notions are born of a few scores of photographs and a couple movies. I'm bound to do something inauthentic.[42]

Although Spiegelman is telling the events from the perspective of his father, he himself wasn't present. The use of the animal in place of people helps to illustrate the separation from the actual events from the author. Spiegelman's only visual reference to the German's doesn't come from physical interactions; it comes from movies, pictures, and tales from other people. If he had used the human figure to illustrate his ideas in *Maus,* he would have had to resort to stereotype.

Francisco Goya was a Spanish painter and printmaker whose work employed animals as metaphor for anything from nightmares, ideas, politicians, and groups of people. In *Elephant* (fig. 3), from his series *Los Disparates,* Goya's aquatint . . .

> . . shows a monstrous elephant, his back arched like that of a cat, confronted by four gesticulating men in oriental garb who seem to do their most frantic best in

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[42] Ewert, "Reading Visual Narrative: Art Spiegelman's "Maus"," 92

> attempting to keep him within the vast arena-like space where the action is taking place, one of the men in holding out to the beast a collar of bells, while another is displaying before him a large open book.[43]

Because of Goya's inclination to create political allegory with animal imagery, this print can be read as political too. The caption reads "other laws for the people" where the men in "oriental" garb are identified as politicians and the elephant is the people. Before the 19th century, the majority of people viewed the elephant as clumsy but "endowed with human qualities and virtues, such as patience, temperance, chastity, memory, gratitude, benignity, and piety: the elephant . . . comes closest to possessing a human soul."[44] Goya may have used the animal to depict the Spanish people who are big and awkward and controlled by their politicians. The elephant "confronts the laws" while the priests are forcing him to "keep his position ascribed by status."[45]

Walt Disney

Disney is one of the largest producers of anthropomorphic imagery in the United States and the world. Images used and created by Disney affect the way people view American culture and animals globally. The characteristics of animals, which become cultural stereotypes, become imbedded into the minds of children and adults alike and color the view of both the other and the self. A particular worldview is communicated through animations and documentaries.

In the 1958 Disney documentary *White Wilderness*, lemmings are filmed jumping cliffs into the Artic Ocean in an apparent mass suicide. From this documentary, a myth

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[43] Levitine, "The Elephant of Goya, An Emblematic Basis for a Political Interpretation," 145,147
[44] Levitine, *The Elephant of Goya, An Emblematic Basis for a Political Interpretation*, 145
[45] Ibid, 147

was born about the inherent nature of lemmings as followers, even to death. To be a lemming metaphorically means to follow blindly and is used in language today despite the fact that lemming suicide is a falsehood. Lemmings were pushed off cliffs by the Disney production team to obtain footage of these small rodents jumping into the sea, perhaps as a method to rationalize why some lemming populations have big surges in populations only to be followed by a year with diminished numbers. [46]

This is a time in history with easy access to information, yet some information is rarely questioned. The lemming mythology is so imbedded in the imagination and language of our culture that few even think to question its origin. Even those who know this story to be false find it hard to not perpetuate this myth through language.

Documentaries weren't the only way in which Walt Disney communicated his belief system to people. Even movies and animations, which are clearly viewed as works of fiction can be used to push a cultural agenda. There are many examples of how the characters used in Disney films create cultural norms, but a particularly clear example is the animated film, *The Jungle Book.*

The Jungle Book was the last animated film that Walt Disney took part in and was released shortly after his death in 1967 to rave reviews. While it strays from Kipling's tale of the same title, it was loved both in its day and today. But what point of view does this film suggest? Because the animal personalities and characteristics of Disney's version are so different from Joseph Rudyard Kipling's, I will be writing about Disney's version.

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[46] Childs, "Biological Myths: The Lemming Legend" 660-661

Walt Disney was conservative in his beliefs and attitudes towards social norms. He both perpetuated and believed in the culture depicted in his films of that time. Each character in the film was carefully placed to elevate the dominant culture. Mowgli, for example, is the Indian boy found in the jungle. His coloring may appear Indian but characteristically Mowgli resembles the illustrations of other Caucasian Disney young boys. "Disney's Mowgli is a little boy who, though nominally Indian, shows every sign of being a modern American Caucasian."[47] In affect, Mowgli has the accent of other Anglo boys where the other characters in the film have accents and mannerisms that are culturally different from Mowgli. It is in the main character that the Disney audience recognizes itself.

Each animal character represents a one-dimensional representation of Disney's point of view about 1960's America. Bagheera the panther was a firm and level headed parental figure while Baloo the bear was a lenient parental figure that later discovers that the leadership offered by Bagheera was a more effective way to raise Mowgli. Each character was carefully placed to display attitudes about American culture. The strict elephant Colonel Hathi leads the Dawn Patrol and does not exhibit proper balance between work and home. The orangutan, King Louie, desperately wants to fit into the dominant culture only to show his animal nature when disappointed. Kaa the snake becomes a manipulative molester and the vultures are fair-weather hippies. "(Disney's)

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[47] Metclaf, "It's a Jungle Book Out There, Kid!," *88*

version repeats the message of many Disney films: Everyone has a place to belong. Know your place and stay there."[48]

Mowgli's jungle is depicted as a boy's world where only males are important in the journey of a young boy finding his place. The only scene that includes a female character is the end. With the tiger gone, the boy can now choose between the jungle and the man village, a decision made easy due to the flirtations and tricks of a young girl as she sings

Father's hunting in the forest
Mother's cooking in the home
I must go to fetch the water
Till the day that I am grown
Then I will have a handsome husband
And a daughter of my own
Then I'll send her to fetch the water
I'll be cooking in the home
My own home
My own home.[49]

In this song, the young girl lays out the idea of a "normal life," a path that would have been encouraged by Disney, where women stay home and cook while men work for food.

[48] Ibid, *96*
[49] Metclaf, "It's a Jungle Book Out There, Kid!," *95*

CHAPTER FOUR: CONVENTIONS

Cynthia Freeland is a philosophy professor who has written books and articles about art and portraiture. According to Freeland, portraiture has a long history of communicating meaning about the sitter, and is collaboration between the subject and the painter. The painter must both fulfill his or her own aesthetic desires and those of the person to communicate meaning about their "person-ness" and Freeland has developed a "typology of four different things that can be meant when speaking about an image's power to show a person: accuracy, testimony or presence, emotional characterizations, or revelation of the essential 'air.'" [50] Portraiture has been used to communicate social origin or "group membership of important individuals." According to Norbert Schneider in *The Art of the Portrait,* portraiture "came into its own" between the late Middle Ages and the seventeenth century when people from a variety of social groups began to have their images painted. Hegel thought that a portrait "should emphasize the subject's general character and lasting spiritual qualities." [51] Freeland writes:

> The painter seeks to convey the subject's unique essence, character, thoughts and feelings, interior life, spiritual condition, individuality, personality, or emotional complexity. Just how this is done involves use of the varied techniques of portraiture to show many significant external aspects of a person, such as physiognomy, in addition to the depiction of features such as status and class through the use of props, clothing, pose and stance, composition and artistic style and medium. But ultimately

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[50] Freeland, "Portraits in Painting and Photography," 95
[51] Ibid, 97

> we expect a good portrait to convey the person's subjectivity. The sitter should appear to be autonomous and a distinct person with unique thoughts and emotions. [52]

The goal of the artist is complicated when creating a portrait. The painter must convey a list of ideas and aspects about the sitter to communicate important aspects of the person. Objects and clothes must be used to construct an understanding and convey meaning about a status, and ideas about them as an individual should be clear.

"Portraits provide us with details of facial topography, an indication of status through costume and setting, and occasionally allusions to personal interests and occupations through associated paraphernalia."[53] There is more to portrait painting than collaboration and communicating an agenda from the sitter. It has also been historically used to communicate a larger agenda or to push boundaries about social issues.

In Goya's painting *Portrait of the Family of Charles IV,* Goya was able to communicate much more about the royal family than just their appearance. Through their pose and lack of common focus, he hints at "the uneasy state of European monarchies after years of revolution."[54] Though this work has been read many different ways, from intentional mockery of the monarchy to communicating a personal agenda, what is clear is "Goya's portrait satisfied its sitters' sense of self. It reflected the artist's priorities, and it met the social expectations of the picture's audience." Renoir is quoted as saying that:

> Every artist puts something of himself into what he does, whether he wants to be a Realist of not. Look, take Velázquez and Goya, who were both of them Realists. But when Velázquez paints the members of the Royal family, they all become noblemen, because Velázquez himself was a nobleman. But Goya, when he painted the Royal Family—he made them look like a butcher's family in their Sunday best, like

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[52] Freeland, "Portraits in Painting and Photography," 98
[53] Olszewski, "Exorcising Goya's "The Family of Charles IV"," 176
[54] Ibid, 177

> savages, dressed up in gilded costumes with epaulettes. Everyone puts something of himself (into a painting). What survives of the artist is the feeling which he gives by means of objects.[55]

The artist's intention might be to depict something but they can never escape themselves. The portraits painted by both Velázquez and Goya became ideas about themselves as well. Even unintentionally, artists always leave something personal in the work created.

Lindsey Carr is an artist from Glasgow, Scotland who is working with ideas about portraitures. Her interest lies primarily in the realm of natural history and the merging of two distinct cultures. Carr's interest in the past creates interesting juxtapositions of images, which seem both contemporary and linked to the past. *Thinkspace Gallery* wrote:

> Lindsey Carr's beautifully executed animal portraiture of birds and primates takes the 19th century conventions of natural history printmaking and painting, from the likes of Audubon and Redoute, and transforms them into distinctly contemporary revisitations of this meticulous representational tradition . . . Her appropriation of this natural history tradition engages the historical conventions of taxonomy and categorization with a contemporary appreciation of their uncanniness. Her work examines the proximity of the animal to the human, and intuitively explores the indelible hold of that link.[56]

In her 2013 painting *Who Am I?* (Plate 6), Carr depicts a large golden primate holding a smaller version of itself in its lap. The monkeys are positioned as if sitting for a portrait together and are both wearing robes of red, gold, and black. The way the monkeys are dressed and their pose create the idea of "person-ness." Carr has mentioned in several interviews that she is interested in the imagery presented by 19th century traders from Chinese artists and their collaborators. Her body of work is loosely based on the naturalist and tea inspector John Reeves and the anonymous Chinese artists who were

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[55] Olszewski, "Exorcising Goya's "The Family of Charles IV"," 182

[56] Carr, 2013, http://www.littlerobot.org.uk/#!Who-am-I/zoom/c3op/imagex4g

asked to paint animals in the western scientific convention. Because two cultural canons were combined in one body of work, it ended up stiff and often described a fictional disease or politics.[57] Chinese writing is presented on both sides of the larger monkey's head and on his robe as well. It is easy to read the robes on the monkeys and the crown on the head of the larger monkey as belonging to powerful Chinese figures. On the bottom of the robe of the larger monkey is a white swan wearing a crown, reminiscent of the Russian story of *Swan Lake* by Pyotr llyich Tchaikovsky. According to Carr, the monkey figures create an uneasy feeling. The combination of two cultures in it's depiction isn't simply about a voyeuristic observation of another culture, but can be a reference to how so many cultural ideas are combined to create one.

[57] "Back Talk: A Conversation With Lindsey Carr." 2011, http://www.juxtapoz.com/current/back-talk-a-conversation-with-lindsey-carr

CHAPTER FIVE: THE WORK

My body of work consists of six paintings of animals on wood panels. Each painting ranges in size and are between three to five-and-a-half feet tall and three to five and a half feet wide with a depth of three inches. Each animal has been carefully chosen from those living in and near the urban environment. The mammals and birds depicted are those that live amongst human populations but are not typically domesticated by people and are often described as pests. The associations people have with these animals are loose and varied depending on individual interactions and literary expectations. The work consists of a crow, a Canada goose, a squirrel, a rat, a raccoon, and a fox. Many people have a special relationship with the animals that live among them but are not domesticated. With the desire to control environments, these neighbors are a reminder that not everything can be controlled.

Each painted panel has a disruption introduced to the surface and either takes the form of a box cut into the painting or a three-dimensional object. The introduction of boxes and sculptures is included to draw attention to both the two-dimensional surface quality and the construction of the imagery itself. The work becomes structures that straddle the line between sculpture and painting through depth and size. The three-dimensional objects that are added to the paintings bring attention to the illusionistic qualities of painting through contrast.

The compositions of the paintings draw attention to the animal in urban spaces. The animal figures are large and sitting or standing in profile. This strategy is used to mimic the compositions of 18th and 19th century European portraiture. The animal figures within the painted portraits are also gazing out at the viewer, maintaining eye contact. The animal figures are stylized to draw attention to my presence as the author of this world. Each is a painted idea, of an animal icon in a constructed reality, much like those that form a society. Each painting shows an animal in a space occupied by humans through the depictions of houses, playgrounds, cityscapes, or objects, which are painted as indexical signs of people.

Childhood games are juxtaposed with each painting to communicate the ideas surrounding the animal simile. Each game teaches a lesson or a skill to those that play where the desired outcome is often to win. The games are each created in a separate medium or are themselves physically present, which adds to both the idea of game and the larger issue being discussed. The games employed in this body of work are nostalgic in nature although most are still played today in schoolyards across America. The nostalgic nature of these games also lends themselves to a belief in their origins as American, yet most were created elsewhere. Each game also requires more than one player and has led to instructed behaviors in contemporary adults.

For this body of work, the animal portraiture and the game sculptures are equally important to each other and content is explored through the use of their relationship. While creating these paintings and sculptures, I understood that I needed to merge the ideas of one to the other to communicate thoughts about larger issues yet I didn't want to add anything that closed the work to only one line of reasoning. Initially my plans for

sculptural objects were more didactic in nature and I wrestled with ideas. Although the notion of merging paintings and games was not part of the original process, the idea of using objects was. Some might feel like it's a stretch for me to ask them to think about larger cultural issues with this body of work but for others the openness of content and playfulness of imagery works not towards clarity but towards discourse.

Crow

Ornithologists today consider crows to be one of the most intelligent birds because of their capacity to learn. There are aspects of the crow and their close relative the raven that humans find frightening at times, as they are used in tales like Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*. Poe used the bird imagery as a means to communicate something frightening because of the stories in which he was familiar with and their close association with witchcraft. Crows can use tools and recognize the faces of people. 7 to 14 crows were pestered and taunted by people in masks in 5 sites near Seattle, Washington in a study released in 2012. The researchers discovered that not only did the crows remember the masked faces of the people who pestered them; other crows that had not been pestered were alarmed by and attacked the same masked people. To the researchers, this proved that crows have the capacity for "horizontal social learning."[58] Horizontal social learning means that they teach each other. Crows are more likely to live in cities and well-populated areas while ravens typically live in forests and the countryside. The crow tends to be less fearful of men and have even learned to use our technology. An example of this is from a discovery in Japan that crows had learned to use

[58] Cornell, Marzluff and Pecoraro, *Social Learning Spreads Knowledge About Dangerous Humans Among American Crows.*

the stoplights to crack walnuts. The birds would place the nuts in the path of oncoming traffic and wait for the nuts to be run over, they would then wait for the light to turn red so they could safely retrieve their snack.[59] With these differences in mind, crows and ravens are interchangeable in mythology and share a physiology and the capacity to learn. In Norse mythology,

> Two Ravens, Huginn and Muninn, perched on the God's (Odin) shoulders and reported to him each day's observations made flying over the embroiled battlefields of men. The ravens, whose names have been interpreted to mean *animus, cogitation* and *mens* (courage, cunning, and wisdom), came to be seen as animations of Wontan's spiritual qualities.[60]

Seen as both a connection to death and a symbol of intelligence, as a friend and an enemy, our fascination with the crow elicits a complex relationship. The crows' intelligence makes them a desired pet to some though it's illegal to keep one.

Tin Can Telephone (Plate 8) is an oil painting on wood panel and is five-and-a half feet tall by three feet wide. An image of a crow is painted on a telephone wire and positioned to display the back feathers of the bird. One foot barely touches the wire while the other holds on tightly. The crow is looking over its left shoulder at the viewer and a city scene is painted below. I have chosen to paint a crow instead of a raven because of the crows close proximity to the urban environment. The sky and the city are depicted as a sunny daytime scene and new leaves grow on a branch between the viewer and the crow.

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[59] Davies, Gareth Huw, "The Scene: A Traffic Light Crossing." http://www.pbs.org/lifeofbirds/brain/

[60] Witte, "Wotan and Ted Hughes's Crow," 39

This painting is not disrupted on the surface but a string runs through the sides of the panel to the top where they end in two tin cans. Tin can telephone is a game played by children and is one that I played personally. A string is attached to the base of two tin cans and held taut. When one child speaks into one can, the sound waves turn into vibrations and then into sound again on the other end where another child is listening. Each child must take their turn and cooperate with the speaker to hear clearly. The game is not just depicted in this image; it is actually present and exists to communicate contemporary issues about listening. The use of this childhood game juxtaposed with the painting of the crow creates a connection between the two. The social implications of listening are called into question with larger social issues implied. 2013 was a year that opened the eyes of many people when Edward Snowden exposed his discovery that the NSA was collecting phone data from American citizens. The discovery has sparked a debate about ethical implications of spying.[61]

The viewer is implicated in two ways; one is through the size of the bird that is exaggerated to be about human sized. The second is the game where the cans and string are real and almost invite the viewer to play if they were not attached to the painting.

Canada Goose

Canada geese fill parks, yards, and golf courses and are both loved and hated in the communities they are part of. They are a source of recreation for bird watchers and hunters. There are two types of Canada geese, resident and migratory. Goslings live with

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[61] Savage, 2014, "N.S.A. Program Gathers Data on a Third of Nation's Calls, Officials Say." http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/08/us/politics/nsa-program-gathers-data-on-a-third-of-nations-calls-officials-say.html

their parent for up to a year and are taught to migrate. If they don't learn migration from their parents, they become resident geese. Their recognizable V form when flying uses the lift from the bird in front of it to save energy and fly longer distances. [62] In my opinion, there is a correlation which allows a parallel to be drawn between people and geese in that each year the migratory patterns of people are tracked to understand employment and educational opportunities just like the migratory patterns of geese are tracked to make sense of the increasing numbers of resident geese and how they relate to migratory geese.

Red Rover Red Rover (Plate 9) is a painting of a goose standing in an "alert display."[63] The format is five-and-a-half feet tall by three feet wide. The goose is standing on a field of grass and a small playground lies in the background of a brightly lit day scene. In the upper left hand side of the face of the painting there is a black box cut into the surface, where inside there is a human figure in profile in the running position made of beeswax. On the top of the painting is a line of human figures grasping each other by the arms, positioned in a stance to absorb impact and are also made of beeswax. The human figures are being used to suggest the game *Red Rover, Red Rover*. The position of the figures to the painting acts like a comic book where the one removed and placed in a box communicates an action that is separate from the ones on top. Despite the fact that the figure in the box is not facing the line of figures on top, the viewer can surmise that one action leads to the next. The game is played with two lines of players, the "east" and the "west" and the object of the game is to send one player from one side

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[62] Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, "Living With Wildlife: Canada Geese." http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/canada_geese.html

[63] Ibid

over to the other. The runner tries to break the links of hands but if he/she fails, they must join the opposing team. If they win, they must then choose one member from his/her team to join them on the other side. Once all members from one team have joined the other, the game is over. I chose beeswax for the figures because I believe that for those who know and understand bees, their wax is seen as work. The use of *Red Rover, Red Rover*, beeswax, and a goose is placed together to make the viewer think about migration. State to state related migration is largely due to employment and educational opportunities and immigration is a divisive issue that seems particularly relevant at this moment in our country's history.

Rat

Rats haven't been able to shed their reputation as dirty and the source of disease since the bubonic plague of medieval Europe. "Plague is a rodent disease; in humans it is overwhelmingly a by-product of rodent infection, transmitted by an insect bite."[64]

> In Europe, the second cycle of epidemics started with the Black Death of 1347, and continued into the eighteenth century. Rats were particularly dangerous 'amplifying' hosts because of their proclivity to associate with humans and the ability of their blood to withstand enormous concentrations of the plague bacillus. When rats die form the plague, their fleas are forced to seek the blood of other hosts, including human, and the fleas regurgitate the rats' bacteria-loaded blood into the new hosts.[65]

Because they are well adapted to life with humans our existence became intertwined. Human activity, food storage, waste disposal, and our interaction with the environment have a direct association with rat populations, which also has a direct

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[64] McCormick, "Rats, Communications, and Plague: Toward an Ecological History," 1
[65] Ibid, 2

relationship with plague.[66] Even though there is fear about the rat, some people have a favorable view of the animal and keep them as "pets." Because they have a similar physiology to humans but with a shorter life span, they have been used by scientists to test the effect of drugs, toxins, and diet in hopes of discovering a correlation in humans.

Cat's Cradle (Plate 10) is a painting of a brown rat in a landscape format; it is five-and-a-half feel long and three feet tall. This animal figure is resting on the floor, inside a home, taking ownership of it. The rat is in full profile and is looking out at the viewer. Rats live in a kind of collaboration with humans. Where human populations exist, rats thrive with them. For this reason, I have chosen the game *Cat's Cradle* to be juxtaposed with the painting of the rat. The disruption of this painting isn't on the surface but beside it and is of the game demonstrated in string on map pins. The objective of *Cat's Cradle* isn't to win but to collaborate. One person holds string with their fingers in one position. The next player grabs the string from the first player in such a way that another position is demonstrated. The string goes back and forth between the players changing form each time. In juxtaposing the idea of *Cats Cradle* with the rat, I am asking the viewer to consider balance and collaboration. When one side is out of balance, there is a disruption on the other side.

Raccoon

Raccoons are nocturnal scavengers and make messes while most people are asleep, and while it's rare for many people to catch a glimpse of them, what is left is the mess. The raccoon easily finds its meals in the trash heaps of our towns and cities. As

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[66] Ibid,2

they grow accustomed to people, they no longer fear them. All of these characteristics combined with their bandit like mask lead people to see them as thieves. Many are attracted to their human like hands and dexterity. I grew up around raccoons and have memories of them scavenging for dog food which they would wash in the pond. As they moved rocks around, they would set the pond filter aside, which would flood the yard and basement. When sitting outside in the dark, I could be surrounded by them and not realize it until one would step on a stick or some dry leaves. Even though there is something I find so appealing about their appearance, these memories and images of cartoon raccoons as thieves led me to stereotype them as bandits.

Rock, Paper, Scissors (Plate 11) is a painting of a raccoon on a fence. It is a night scene but the raccoon is illuminated as if light is shining on him, his right front paw is lifted, as if taking a step. The raccoon gazes out at the viewer and is painted life sized. A box is cut into the bottom left hand side of the painting where two plaster human hands are shown in the gesture of paper covers rock. In the game, rock is brute force, it destroys scissors and the only way to beat rock is to cover it up. There are many ways in which paper beats rock metaphorically. In recent events, the United States has seen an increase in bank bailouts, income inequality, and mortgage crisis and some have gained from the loss of others.

Squirrel

The squirrel is an animal that humans have a more complex relationship with. To children, they are cute and fun. As a child, I loved squirrels and was once was a caretaker for a nest of baby squirrels who lost their mom. To many adults, they are pests. They raid bird feeders, gnaw on wires, nest in insulation, and mess up gardens. As an adult, I can

understand why friends and family are annoyed with them but am always entertained by their acrobatics as they discover ways to collect food. Their fastidiousness and diligence has earned them the saying “to squirrel away,” which is about stockpiling something. As they collect and stash food to get them through the winter, they must collect more than they need because they lose so much.

Jacks (Plate 12) is a painting of a squirrel on a tree branch above a home. The viewer takes on the position of being in the tree with the squirrel as we are viewing this scene from above ground. Our gaze meets that of the squirrel, which sits on a budding branch. There is stylization in the depiction of the squirrel to emphasize the gaze and it is painted larger than life. Five boxes are cut into the surface of the paining and are in a line on the left. The boxes contain the game *jacks*. The top box contains hundreds of jacks and one red ball suspended in the middle and emphasizes the hording aspect of this game. The next box contains about a dozen in a pile. The third box contains just a couple jacks with the fourth box containing just one and the last box holding nothing. There is a progression that takes place in these boxes, which mimics the one in the game played. To win the game, a player must grab all the jacks with one ball bounce. The game begins with each player grabbing just one jack with a bounce, then two, then three and so on. Although a gathering of jacks is required to win, the player must adhere to a set of rules.

CONCLUSION

The way culture is understood is complex. The tendency to believe in a right and wrong and to see things in black and white terms can be almost overwhelming but ultimately the world is much more nuanced. One can fully believe they know the absolute answer if they can ignore the fact that knowledge is limited by experience. The world is divided where each side of critical debate is unwilling to converse diplomatically with the other. If I am absolutely right, then you must be absolutely wrong.

When we fail to recognize our biases, we become prey to them. This is evident in the treatment of nature. When people become separate from a thing instead of part of it, they destroy it. I intend to analyze my own biases to better understand my own tendencies and perhaps change through awareness. Did I smash the spider because it posses harm to me or because I learned to smash it?

Anthropomorphizing the animal figure is a way of dealing with our own “animal” nature without owning it. This can be both good and bad, right and wrong. This body of work was created with this in mind, each painting points to cultural events and allows the viewer to be the reflection in the work. Each game within the paintings asks the viewer to assess what was learned from it such as fairness, secrecy, action, inaction, and cooperation. What did you learn from the games you played?

APPENDIX

Plates

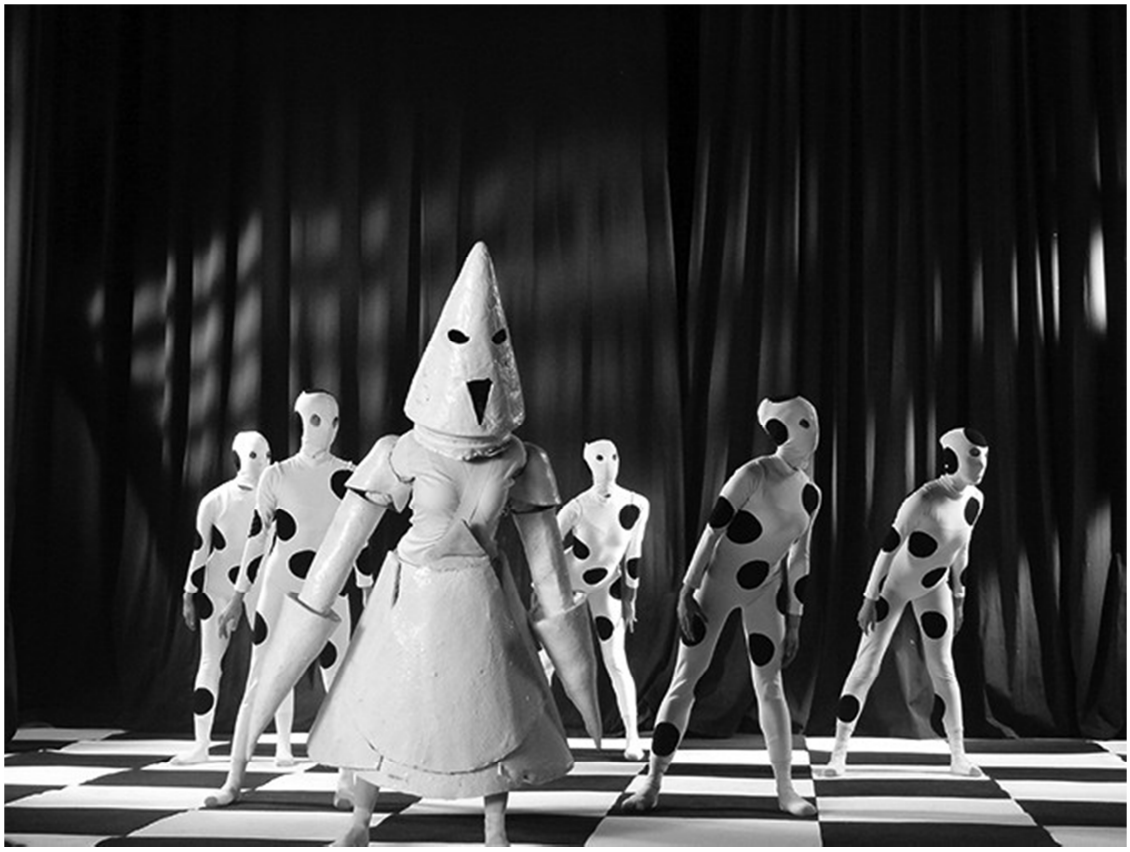

Plate 1: Marcel Dzama: *A Game of Game (Film Still), 2011*, Projection, 14:02 min (http://www.worldchesshof.org/exhibitions/exhibit/marcel-dzama-the-end-game/)

Plate 2: **Richard E. Bishop, *South Bound,* 1889-1975, Etching on paper, 9.75 x 14 in.**

Plate 3: **Walton Ford, *The Island*, 2009, Watercolor, gouache, pencil, and ink on paper, 98 x 138 in.**

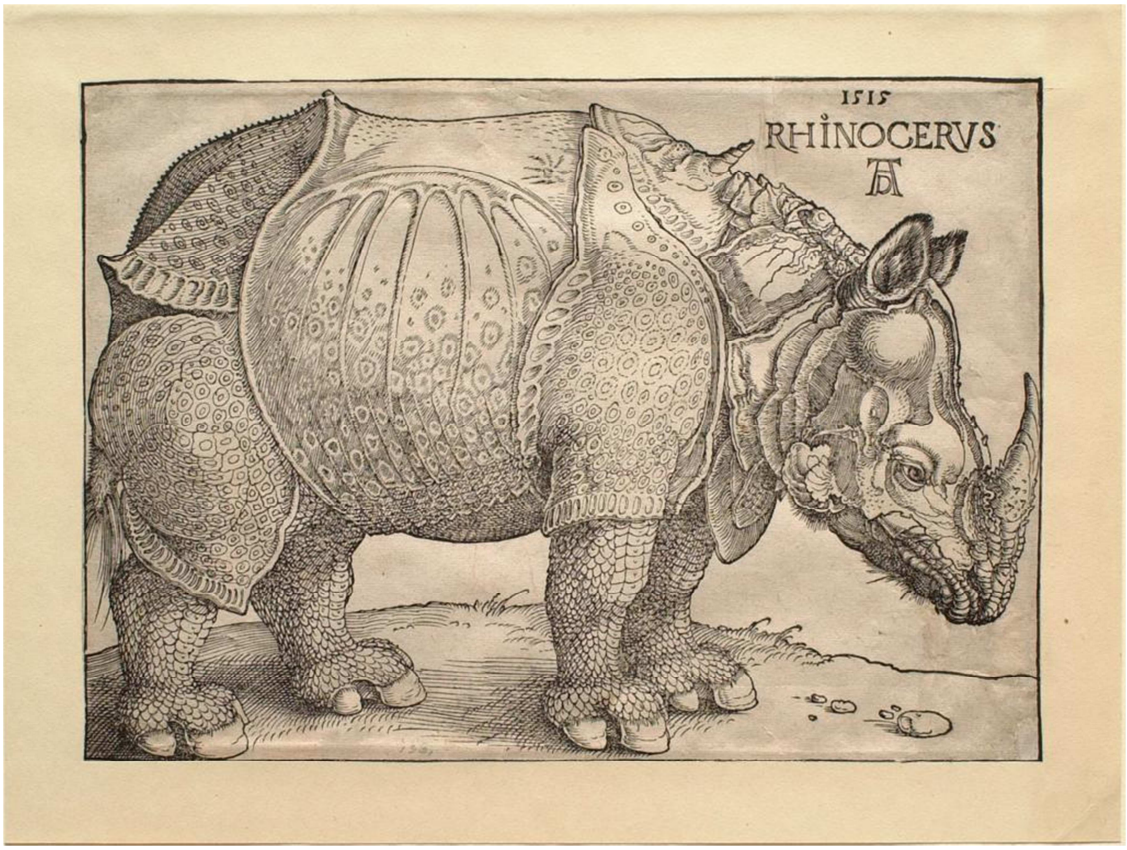

Plate 4: Albrecht Dürer, *The Rhinoceros,* 1515. Woodcut on Paper, 21 x 29.6 cm.

Plate 5: **Silvia Levenson, *The Chosen*, 2012, Kilnformed glass, mixed media, 130 x 30 x 30 cm**

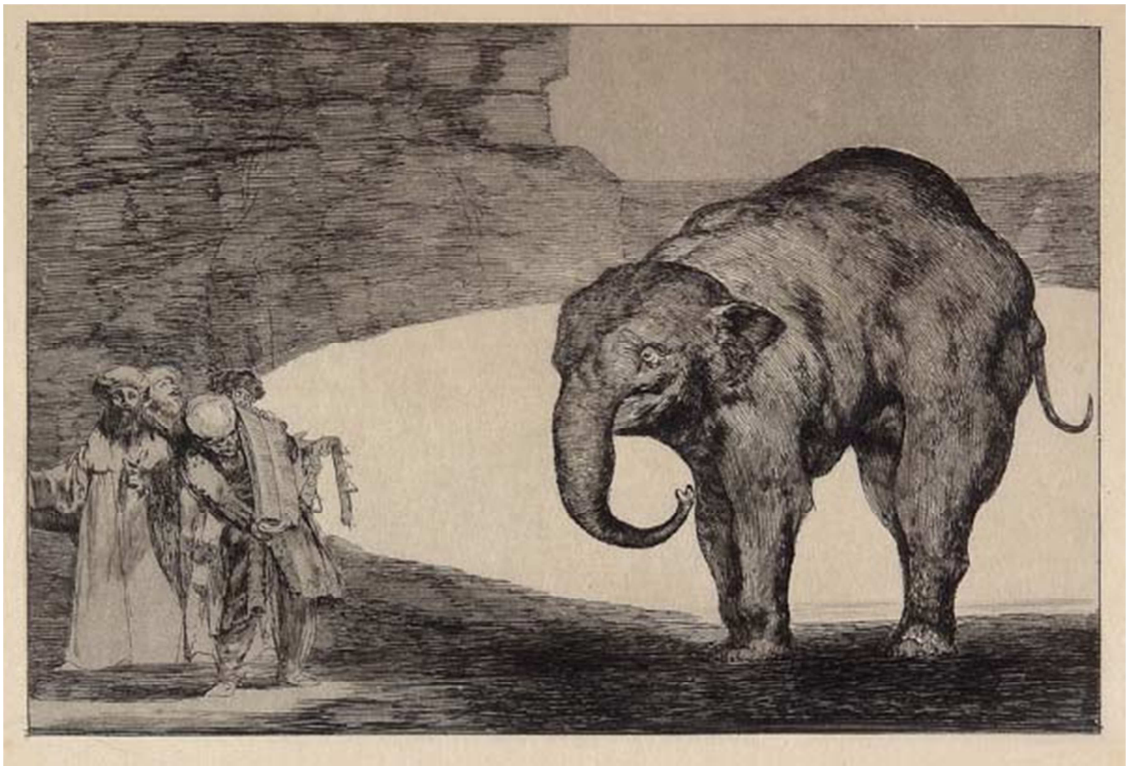

Plate 6: **Francisco Goya, *Elephant, 1824,* Aquatint and drypoint on paper, 24.5 x 35 cm**

Plate 7: **Lindsey Carr, *Who Am I?*, 2013, Acrylic and Gold Ink on Paper, 12 x 48 inches**

Plate 8: ***Tin Can Telephone,*** **2014, Oil on Panel Tin Cans, String, 5.5'x3'**

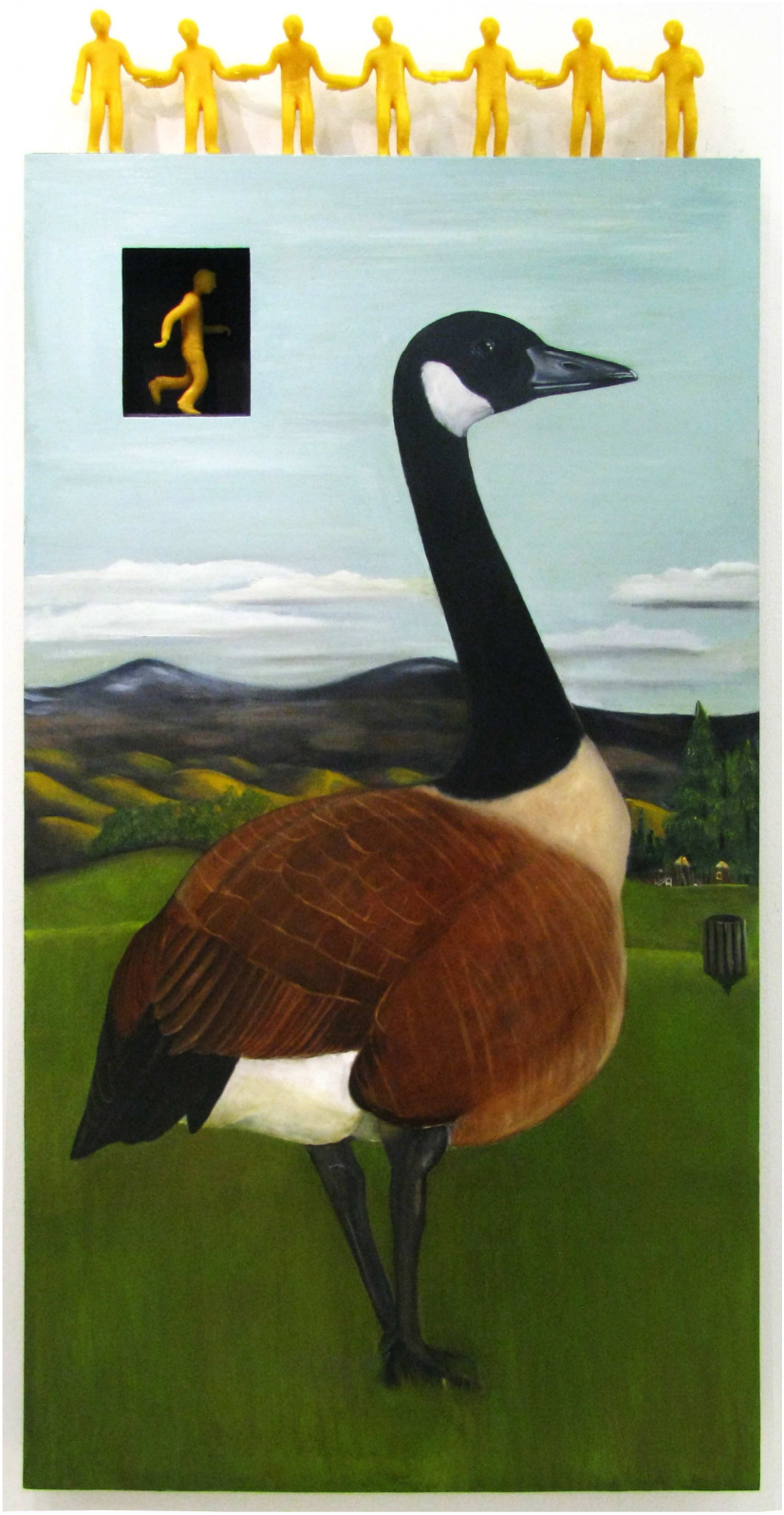

Plate 9: ***Red Rover Red Rover,*** **2014, Oil on Panel and Beeswax, 5.5'x 3'**

Plate 10: ***Cat's Cradle,*** **2014, Oil on Panel and string, 3'x 5.5'**

Plate 11: ***Rock Paper Scissors, 2014,*** **Oil on Panel and string, 4'x 3'**

Plate 12: ***Jacks, 2014,*** **Oil on Panel, jacks and ball, 4'x 4'**

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