Species of Wonder
Human-Animal Relations in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture

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Declaration

I, Sarah Jane Wade confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

This thesis investigates wonder in contemporary art and visual culture, which interrogates human-animal relations and aims to raise awareness about various plights facing wildlife. Recognising the ethical and political potential ascribed to wonder by various theorists, it examines the role wonder plays in promoting respect and responsible behaviour towards wildlife through artistic practice at this time of ecological fragility.

Various species of wonder are identified that have human-animal relations at their heart. These are explored through three case studies, drawing on theoretical work from the fields of art history, visual culture studies, human-animal studies, anthropology and philosophy. Chapter one examines how wonder arises and what forms it takes in relation to Art Orienté Objet's exhibition at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature. Here, wonder’s potential to contribute to the cultivation of an ethical sensibility and elicit compassion towards wildlife is discussed. Next, the limits and possibilities of wonder in this regard are addressed through Isabella Rossellini’s Green Porno films, which focus on the problems facing marine wildlife. Finally, the work Marcus Coates and Tania Kovats made during the Gulbenkian Galápagos Artists’ Residency Programme is discussed in terms of what wonder might do and where it might lead in the context of the fragile ecologies on these Enchanted Isles as well as closer to home.

These artists are argued to be working in ways commensurate with their awareness of the plights facing wildlife today and their desire to treat nonhuman animals with respect. Accordingly, their representations of wildlife often avoid the use of live animals or animal derived materials. Instead, wildlife is fabricated from surrogate or more ethical materials, and even performed by the artists themselves. Such playful and poignant artistic strategies are shown to be ripe for wonder, responding to the call of Donna Haraway’s Chthulucene.
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Introduction

A New Age of Wonder

In 2009, the Danish artist-collective SUPERFLEX offered the chance to experience climate change like a polar bear (figure 1). A series of posters developed by the artists advertised hypnotherapy sessions, in which participants would be given the opportunity to encounter the effects of this anthropogenic process from the perspectives of various kinds of wildlife. In addition to polar bears, over the course of the proposed forty-one year duration of the programme, participants would also be offered the chance to experience climate change like a cockroach, a mosquito, a jellyfish, an eagle and even a mammoth — diverse wildlife that would undoubtedly elicit varying responses and catalyse different debates. The sessions were scheduled to coincide with international environmental events and the polar bear poster looked ahead to 2020, which would be the year that this vulnerable species and charismatic icon for climate change was set to be the central protagonist in SUPERFLEX’s work. At once poignant and eccentric, these posters offer the chance to experience something that ultimately eludes human grasp and evades concrete knowledge, providing a catalyst for wonder: the chance to experience the world from the perspectives of wildlife. Given the focus on climate change the project also clearly has an ethical and political agenda, raising questions about the role wonder plays in this sort of artistic approach, along with its strategic potential considering the issues at stake in this work.

Nonhuman animals have figured in contemporary art with increasing frequency in recent decades in tandem with two other significant trends — the burgeoning literature stemming from the field of human-animal studies and a marked interest in wonder in contemporary art and exhibitions. This thesis weaves these strands together to provide the first dedicated in-depth study of wonder and human-animal relations in contemporary art and visual culture. A number of scholars have identified the capacity for wonder to lead to the cultivation of an ethical sensibility and to elicit compassion, filling it with strategic and ameliorative promise as a concept. As such, this study

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1 An Artist with 6 Legs: 253 Works, 20 Years, 8 Curators, 1 Exhibition, ed. by Pernille Albrethsen (Copenhagen: Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 2013), pp. 312–313.

2 In fact the artists state that the posters also serve as tickets for the group hypnotherapy sessions, specifying the date and location on each poster. In the case of the polar bear, the artists claim the session will take place on 7 October 2020 in Møn, Denmark, ibid., p. 313.

examines the ways in which wonder and wildlife are made manifest in work that comments on, and raises awareness of, various threats facing wildlife, as well as complex entanglements of humans and other animals that equally deserve ethical consideration. How does wonder arise in this work, what forms does it take and how might it be defined? Significantly, what issues does wonder give rise to, what are its limits in this context and where might it lead? Is wonder alone enough to incite ethical and compassionate action?

Recent scholarship has observed how ‘entanglement with others makes life possible’, and that ‘symbiosis is essential to life on earth’ in today’s environmentally and ecologically troubled times. Such work stresses the imperative of taking our relationships with wildlife (and other nonhumans) into account when making decisions about how we inhabit the earth at this critical time. Recognising the complex and copious ways humans and nonhuman animals are entangled, this thesis adopts the terminology ‘wildlife’ after the environmental geographer Jamie Lorimer, who observed that:

Wildlife is everywhere. It is among us — in our bodies, our homes, and our cities, as well as in the familiar territories that concern conservationists. Wildlife is shaped by and vital to our actions. […] it is hybrid. […] Wildlife has agency […] shaping human cultural, economic, and political practices.

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5 For a recent example that will be discussed in more detail shortly, see Donna Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016).

Being precise about terminology is also essential to discussions about wonder, a word that has also had differing meanings and uses in art history. Of course wonder in the guise of ‘the marvellous’ was a central concept for the French surrealism of the early avant-garde. However since 2000, it has again thrived as a theme in artistic, curatorial and academic work, and this study explores why wonder has flourished at this time.\(^7\)

One of French surrealism’s main protagonists, André Breton, acknowledged how ‘[t]he marvelous is not the same in every period of history’, and the same has been observed of wonder.\(^9\) Various historical examinations of the concept have demonstrated how it is specific to context and circumstance, as well as being socially, historically and culturally contingent.\(^10\) The focus in this study is therefore on more contemporary


critical appraisals of wonder, on the premise that these will be most pertinent to the present moment.11

Since the turn of the new millennium, diverse topics have been explored in relation to wonder in contemporary art, including craft, curiosity, the everyday and the banal, materiality, religion, spectacle, things, the wunderkammer and the aforementioned surrealist marvellous.12 Notably, the way wonder has been invoked in this work has varied widely and the breadth of the approaches that have been adopted can be demonstrated by recalling just two examples. Firstly, the artist Irene Brown’s Gallery of Wonder on Tour (2015) was an exhibition that travelled around the north of England in a big top tent. Reminiscent of a nineteenth-century sideshow, it courted a spectacular


and sensational sense of wonder and even had a ‘barker’ outside to lure people into the exhibition. Featuring work by artists including Mat Collishaw, Mark Fairnington, Tessa Farmer and Polly Morgan, Gallery of Wonder on Tour publicity promised visitors: ‘A fifteen foot snake […] taxidermy on an extraordinary scale […] Works of illusion, deception and the bizarre’. In contrast, across the Atlantic the curator Denise Markonish recently staged an exhibition at Mass MoCA in Albany, Massachusetts, focusing on a quieter form of wonder arising through more commonplace experiences. The exhibition drew from the writer Ray Bradbury’s call to ‘explode every day’, or continually notice the wonderful in the ordinary. Pierre Huyghe’s C.C. Spider (2011) was an installation that presented two live spiders in the corner of the gallery offering one such everyday encounter. The intention was to highlight how ‘we are all moving through the same space, in concert with each other — both human and arachnid’, challenging viewers to regard the encounter anew and suggesting that wonderful things and beings surround us if only we pay close attention. These two exhibitions readily highlight the disparity in recent artistic approaches to wonder, which range from the sensational to the more subdued, therefore drawing attention to its inherent ambiguity.

Theoretical and historical accounts of wonder have widely acknowledged that it is somewhat slippery as a concept. As the philosophical theologian Sophia Vasalou has pithily remarked, ‘wonder is and has been many things’. It has been variously described at different points in history as ‘a sudden surprise of the soul’, a systole of the heart, ‘a goad to inquiry’, ‘a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life’, ‘a

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13 Text taken from the Gallery of Wonder on Tour promotional material.
15 Denise Markonish, ‘Unknown Unknowns: An Inquiry into Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Every Day Experiences’, in Explode Every Day – An Inquiry into the Phenomena of Wonder, ed. by Denise Markonish (Munich, London and New York: MASS MoCA and DelMonico Books, Prestel, 2016), pp. 24–69 (p. 64). The work of the artist Eleanor Morgan also explores the webs of human-arachnid relations, see Eleanor Morgan, Gossamer Days: Spiders, Humans and Their Threads (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2016). See also Tomás Saraceno’s Hybrid Webs, which are sculptural works that also focus on spiders and their webs and have been exhibited internationally since 2012.
16 For recent recognition of this point, see for instance, Endt-Jones, ‘Coral Fishing and Pearl Diving’, p. 179; Christian Mieves and Irene Brown, ‘Introduction’, in Wonder in Contemporary Artistic Practice, ed. by Christian Mieves and Irene Brown (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 1–16 (pp. 2 and 6); and Vasalou, pp. 5 and 20.
17 Vasalou, p. 4.
19 Daston and Park write of how in the Middle Ages, Albertus Magnus ‘described wonder as “shocked surprise […] a suspension of the heart in amazement […] before the sensible
particular level of attention, fixation, and absorption', a space between knowing and not knowing and, rather poetically, as 'a form of intoxicating imaginative 'travel' outside our sphere of comfort and familiarity'. Given that wonder has also been positioned as a mode of 'thoughtful vision', it seems apposite to use it as a theoretical tool with which to examine contemporary art and visual culture. Yet this thesis will emphasise how wonder is not only a visual phenomenon, but an affective one too.

The catalysts for wonder have been considered equally abundant, with delight, dread, the unknown, the everyday and the extraordinary being just some of the contrasting circumstances in which wonder is said to arise. Its effects are noted in literature as being correspondingly expansive and even contradictory, in that wonder demonstrates the capacity to provoke action or instil awestruck immobility; wonder 'can make us do everything or nothing'. Wonder has also been positioned as a fleeting response to surprising encounters. But given its ethical possibilities, like the philosopher Marguerite La Caze, this study advocates wonder as an attitude that results in 'a wonder that lasts'. Notably both the political theorist Jane Bennett and Sophia Vasalou have highlighted how wonder can be cultivated, making it particularly interesting in the context of creative practice. Of course wonder is made further complex since it is a verb as well as a noun — it can erupt in subjects and reside in objects. Not only this, but it is often used interchangeably with neighbouring concepts such as amazement, awe and curiosity and even shares aspects of the sublime. Nevertheless, for this study wonder differs from amazement and awe in that it has the appearance of a great prodigy, so that the heart experiences systole”, see Daston and Park, pp. 112–113.

For forays into these aspects of wonder see for instance, Fisher; Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder'; and Rubenstein.

The eighteenth century philosopher Adam Smith was quite right when he stated that: 'Wonder, Surprise, and Admiration, are words which, though often confounded, denote, in our language, sentiments that are indeed allied, but that are in some respects different also', observing that wonder has its own distinct qualities, see Adam Smith, 'The History of Astronomy' (1795), in Essays on Philosophical Subjects, ed. by W.P.D. Wightman and J.C. Bryce (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc., 1982), pp. 33–105 (p. 33).
capacity to prompt action rather than instil dumbstruck astonishment. It is also distinct from the sublime, which like wonder can arise as a result of encountering something unfathomable or infinite, but has been linked predominantly to fear and terror and more problematically, positioned by some contemporary thinkers as a response premised on humanity’s separation from the nonhuman. Conversely, for my purposes wonder is dependent on the very dissolution of such discrete boundaries. Finally, while wonder and curiosity share several features, including the ability to reside in objects as well as arise in subjects, the capacity to emerge in the face of the unknown and a history of shifting meaning and status, wonder has an affective dimension that is arguably lacking in curiosity. This may be because wonder, unlike curiosity, often needs something rather more striking in order to surface.

As a result of this ambiguity, wonder has been cast as somewhat of ‘an anomaly within taxonomies of the emotions’, resisting singular definition and taking different forms at different times. This is one of the principal challenges of working with it. Wonder is difficult to pin down, leaving it open to subjective understandings and misinterpretation anywhere it is not rigorously defined. Yet considering its ethical and political promise, it seems important to rise to this challenge. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to attend specifically to wonder, which far from being envisaged as a homogenous, monolithic or generalised concept, is instead carefully theorised in ways that make it particular and specific to each given circumstance. It is therefore imperative to clarify the ways wonder is understood and framed here, as well as to explain why wildlife in contemporary art and visual culture provides an especially relevant context for its exploration.

32 See Irigaray, p. 80, who suggests after Descartes, that astonishment is ‘a kind of stupor that paralyzes’.
33 Economides, p. 20; Fisher, p. 2.
35 Vasalou, p. 5.
36 The complexity of wonder and its multifarious forms has been observed by the philosopher Howard L. Parsons, who stated that ‘[a]n adequate philosophy of wonder would analyze the meaning of the experience of wonder and its different types […] describe the components of wonder, their relations, the subtypes of wonder, the conditions under which wonder arises, the kinds of experiences which are allied to wonder and can follow from it’, see Howard L. Parsons, ‘A Philosophy of Wonder’, Philosophical and Phenomenological Research, 1.30 (1969), 84–101 (p. 84).
Species of Wonder

In view of its plurality of meanings, this study speaks of ‘species’ of wonder.\(^{37}\) In this context the turn of phrase is indebted to the writer Georges Perec, whose ‘Species of Spaces’ (1974) offered a taxonomy of different types of spaces — be it the page, the bed, the apartment, the street, the world — viewed from different perspectives.\(^{38}\) Perec focused on everyday subject matters, drawing attention to the ordinary and carefully attending to these spaces poetically so that readers might consider them with renewed vigour. Perec observed how ‘[t]here isn’t one space’ and that ‘spaces have multiplied […] and have diversified’, in ‘malleable’ and ‘amorphous’ ways.\(^{39}\) He wrote of how he dwelt in these different spaces and even about the ways nonhuman animals inhabit these places in relation to humans: ‘Any cat-owner will rightly tell you that cats inhabit houses much better than people do’.\(^{40}\) Aligning species of wonder to species of spaces allows for classifying wonder in species-specific ways to make clear how it is understood and framed according to each particular context. Whilst Perec’s preoccupation with the ordinary might initially seem to be the antithesis of wonder, it resonates with a species occurring through close scrutiny of the ordinary details of everyday life. Furthermore, although Perec was largely concerned with describing physical places rather than intangible experiences, this poetic reference point is useful when thinking about wonder since Perec’s ‘species’ have a degree of flexibility thanks to the nuanced ways he made room for alternative perspectives within his taxonomic categories. This is especially helpful considering how nebulous wonder can be. Of course the term ‘species’ also derives from natural history and the renowned nineteenth-century naturalist Charles Darwin and others also demonstrated how species are not strictly fixed. They might evolve and mutate — with respect to where one species stops and another begins, there are ‘no such lines of absolute demarcation’.\(^{41}\) The species of wonder in this study will be described in detail, but they are also similarly amorphous and on occasion breed certain subspecies, which will be unearthed and elucidated in the chapters that follow. By being precise and particular

\(^{37}\) Varieties of wonder have been referred to as ‘species’ in several other contexts. For instance, Sophia Vasa\(^{\text{a}}\) noted how Thomas Aquinas referred to wonder as ‘a species of fear’ and how Descartes used the turn of phrase ‘species of wonder’, see Vasalou, pp. 64 and 71. See also, Descartes, p. 383, who stated that esteem and contempt ‘are merely species of wonder’ and Smith, p. 42, who refers to ‘species of Wonder’. In addition, Marguerite La Caze and Mark Sanderson have also used ‘species’ to refer to varieties of wonder. See La Caze, ‘The Encounter Between Wonder and Generosity’, p. 11; and Silke Dettmers and Mark Sanderson, ‘The Enemies of Wonder: An Itinerant Conversation’, in Wonder in Contemporary Artistic Practice, ed. by Christian Mieves and Irene Brown (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 241–262 (p. 241), where Sanderson refers to wonder as a ‘species of experience’.


\(^{39}\) Ibid., pp. 5, 6, 28 and 57.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p. 24.

within each given context, the hope is that following Sophia Vasalou, '[w]ith this linguistic anchor more firmly in place, wonder’s relationship to the notion of practice […] can then be elicited more sharply'.

Given the abundance of literature on wonder and because this study focuses on human-animal relations, the emphasis here will be on theories and texts that place nonhuman animals and encounters with difference at the heart of their analysis. It is therefore instructive to sketch out some of the existing references to wonder and wildlife in contemporary art that occur in recent texts on these topics. Significantly, in much of this literature wonder is not the writer's primary concern. Accordingly, it is often described rather than considered in terms of what it might achieve or where it might lead. This thesis differs since wonder’s ethical and political possibilities, and indeed its limits in this regard, are central to discussions regarding how artists are both responding to, and representing, wildlife today. Three species of wonder have been developed from the existing texts, which for the purposes of this study, have been loosely classified as the wonder of deranged theatrics, enchanting materials and wild wonder. Yet further ideas emerge from theorists and writers in disciplines outside contemporary art history and the realm of visual culture, who likewise place wildlife and human-animal relations at the centre of wonder.

Steve Baker, an art historian committed to investigating representations of nonhuman animals in modern and contemporary art, invoked wonder when writing about the German photographer Britta Jaschinski’s photographic series Animal from 1996. In these black and white images, the facial expressions and bodily textures of various kinds of wildlife are largely obscured by the blurred photographic treatment employed by the artist (figure 2). The wildlife is shown with soft outlines in hazy high contrast hues and specific details are difficult to make out. Nevertheless, the forms of these nonhuman animals remain recognisable as particular species, something that Baker suggested enables these creatures to retain their difference, demonstrating the artist’s ‘respect for the otherness of the animal’. Baker wrote of how the ‘looming presence’ of the wildlife depicted in these photographs ‘bludgeons the viewer but holds something back, keeping its identity to and for itself’. He discussed this aspect of how the work functions in relation to the feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray’s model of wonder, which arises when one is ‘faced with the unbridgeable distance between

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42 Vasalou, p. 7.
44 Ibid.
themselves and another. Wonder occurs in this sense when the viewer encounters the alterity proffered by the wildlife in these images and is unable to assimilate the differences presented by the creature at hand. These opaque and grainy photographs visually and conceptually reinforce how absolute knowledge of these nonhuman animal identities and lifeworlds is not only withheld from, but also ultimately unobtainable to humans. In this way, the images visually enact what the philosopher Ron Broglio has described as ‘the maddening and haunting opacity of the animal world’ and what Jamie Lorimer (after Anthony Gaston and Ian Jones) has positioned as an ‘area of darkness’, which ‘is worthy of a lifetime’s contemplation’. Indeed Broglio claimed ‘art reveals the world of the animal as a necessary lacuna in human knowledge’, suggesting that limited human understanding of these other lifeworlds might provide the conditions for wonder to surface.

The wonder of ‘deranged theatrics’ as conceived in this study is a response to the recognition of this alterity of wildlife and the persistent human and artistic attempts to get to grips with it. It takes its cue from the philosopher Jacques Derrida’s landmark philosophical foray into ‘the wholly other they call “animal”’, famously prompted when he found himself caught naked, ashamed and confounded in the gaze of his pet cat. In this text the philosopher resorted to describing perplexing encounters with the alterity of nonhuman animals — or with ‘an existence that refuses to be conceptualized’ — as ‘deranged theatrics’. The philosopher Matthew Calarco noted the aptness of this phrase, claiming that ‘[t]he scene of nonknowing in which one finds oneself exposed to the other animal is somewhat akin to madness’. While illuminating Derrida’s words, Calarco also reminded readers how the philosopher made recourse to

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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
48 Broglio, pp. xxvi and xxiii.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., pp. 9 and 11. See also Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation*, Illinois paperback edn (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. xxii, who summarised how Derrida argued ‘that a “critical uneasiness” will persist in any worthwhile exchange between the human and the nonhuman animal’ when the ‘bewildered human is confronted by what Derrida can only call the “deranged theatrics” of this thing that is wholly other’, p. xxii. Ron Broglio also suggested how ‘[a]nimals look at us, and we are confounded by their radical otherness’, see Broglio, p. 59.
the Cheshire Cat from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865): ‘We’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad’. \(^{53}\) Aptly for this study’s preoccupation with wonder and wildlife, Derrida stated that ‘I would of course have liked to inscribe my whole talk within a reading of Lewis Carroll’, and accordingly *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and Carroll’s sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), get several mentions in the opening paragraphs of his text. \(^{54}\) Notably, Derrida quoted Alice at length in a passage where she expressed her frustration with a kitten because she found it impossible to know whether the purrs uttered by the little cat meant yes or no when conversing with the creature. \(^{55}\) However, Derrida distanced himself from Alice claiming that he is more interested in interrogating what it means for an animal to offer a response, ‘what *respond* means’, and how a response can be differentiated from a reaction, rather than ‘to conclude hurriedly […] that one cannot speak with a cat on the pretext that it doesn’t reply or that it always replies the same thing’. \(^{56}\) Derrida kept this possibility open rather than closing it down, describing the irresolvable quandary of ‘the question of the animal’ as the ‘[o]ne thought alone [that] keeps me spellbound’. \(^{57}\) Derrida’s position is therefore relevant to this study since the philosopher was spellbound, or enchanted, by the deranged theatrics that his grapples with ‘the *wholly other they call “animal”*’ presented. \(^{58}\) As shall become clear, enchantment and wonder are closely allied. Of course Derrida was quite adamant about an ‘abyss’ separating humans and nonhuman animals, albeit recognising that it had multiple and indistinct edges. \(^{59}\) Like Derrida, the artists discussed in this thesis also wonder at the alterity of other animals and their unfathomable lifeworlds. However, they draw attention to how humans and other animals are entangled through their work, rather than positing an irrefutable chasm between them as Derrida does in his.

To stay with cats a little longer, an artwork that could be seen to vividly demonstrate the wonder of deranged theatrics in action, and which might also be considered a precursor to many of the works examined in this thesis, is Marcel Broodthaers’s sound piece *Interview with a Cat* (1970). Much like Alice, Broodthaers had little luck conversing with a feline pet, but unlike Lewis Carroll’s little girl, he kept his frustration in check and persisted, embracing the absurdity of the situation by attempting to coax the

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\(^{53}\) Calarco, p. 125 quoting Derrida, p. 9.

\(^{54}\) Derrida, p. 7. It seems relevant to point out that the surrealist Pierre Mabille observed how ‘mirror’ has etymological roots in ‘marvel’, making Alice’s looking glass similarly ripe for wonder, see Suechun Cheng and Richardson, p. 240.

\(^{55}\) Derrida., p. 8.

\(^{56}\) Ibid. It is worth noting that in Wonderland, when Alice can and does talk to a cat, it is in the form of the Cheshire Cat, who constantly eludes Alice by disappearing and often talks in riddles, making clear lines of communication difficult.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., p. 10.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 11.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., pp. 30–31.
creature into a conversation about the art-world, producing an audio recording of the results. ‘Is that one a good painting?’, Broodthaers asks the cat as the piece unfolds. ‘Does it correspond to what you expect from that very recent transformation which goes from Conceptual Art to this new version of a kind of figuration, as one might say?’, he prompts. ‘Miaow’, says the cat. ‘Do you think so?’ says the artist. To which the cat simply utters further miaows. Clearly this work is rather comic and this species of wonder often has humorous overtones.

The phrase ‘deranged theatrics’ has the added benefit of invoking performance, which is one of the ways contemporary artists try and get to grips with their relations to wildlife through their work. Many of the artists discussed in this thesis appear resistant to shutting down the possibilities for understanding the alterity of wildlife, as indicated by Broodthaers’s persistent performance. They strive to keep things open and even try to see from the perspectives of various kind of wildlife. In a visual register, this phrase also evokes disorder, and things in disarray — literally de-arranged. Baker has suggested that the ‘critical uneasiness’ of Derrida’s deranged theatrics is expressed in contemporary art through ‘the presentation of awkward, unfitting, flawed, or botched animal bodies whose physical integrity is tested to the limit’. The comic possibilities of this will be examined to see what role humour plays in this sort of work. Yet, the wonder of deranged theatrics will also be shown working on a serious level. A detailed theoretical investigation of why these circumstances can catalyse wonder in the way they do will take place in chapter one, but this species of wonder runs like a thread throughout this project.

The curator and writer Rachel Poliquin has also considered wonder in relation to contemporary art featuring wildlife, but focused on materials rather than the conceptual aspects of the work. *Ophelia* (2005), by a Dutch group of artists known as Idiots, comprises a taxidermy mount of half a lioness posed as if asleep, whilst the lower part of her body appears to be melting into large droplets of gold (figure 3). Poliquin described this work with reference to the literary historian Stephen Greenblatt’s understanding of wonder as ‘the power of the object displayed to stop the viewer in his tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention’.  

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Poliquin argued that Ophelia can elicit this sort of wonder due to ‘the potent materiality of half a lioness — a genuine, unfeigned, dead creature’, and also due to what she referred to as ‘the artists’ flawless construction’. For Poliquin, wonder hovers between material proof and imaginative possibility, between what the eyes say must be so and what the brain cannot believe is so and materials and the ways things are made are important factors in provoking it. Poliquin suggested that if the taxidermy in Ophelia had been poorly prepared, the work would cease to evoke a kind of ‘enchanted looking’ and would instead reference other ideas, such as ethical debates surrounding the use of wildlife for the purposes of making art. However, this study does not see enchantment and ethics as mutually exclusive, but instead intimately intertwined. Furthermore, contrary to Poliquin who suggested wonder arises when wildlife is flawlessly represented, I suggest that wonder remains possible when nonhuman animals have been ‘botched’, or when they display a ‘deliberate faultiness’. Both Poliquin, Baker and the art historian Petra Lange-Berndt in her wider work on taxidermy in modern and contemporary art, have stressed the importance of materials when considering representations of nonhuman animal bodies, emphasising that ‘materials count’. The enchanting capacity of these materials will be examined throughout this thesis.

*Enchanting materials* share the vibrant agency of Jane Bennett’s ‘enchanted materialism’, or ‘wonder-at-matter’, but instead offer a wonder brought about through materials. As the art historians Monika Wagner and Petra Lange-Berndt have noted, although ‘matter and material are difficult to disentangle in their historical usage’, in the lexicon of art history as a discipline, “material” denotes [...] that which artists are

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64 Ibid., p. 41.
65 Ibid., pp. 41 and 42. ‘[E]nchanted looking’ as used by Poliquin is Greenblatt’s term, see Greenblatt, ‘Resonance and Wonder’, p. 28.
In the context of artistic engagements with wildlife, materials might include nonhuman animal bodies — either alive or dead, materials derived from nonhuman animals, which might be blood or wool for instance, or artificial ethical substitutes thereof, with fake fur being a widely used surrogate immediately called to mind. As Lange-Berndt has suggested, paying due attention to materials, or being ‘complicit’ with them, means going beyond simply appearances and symbols, and opening out the material’s meanings ‘to their everyday or non-art connotations’, which necessitates engagement with other disciplines, depending on the topic at hand. For instance, when looking at wildlife in art, the fields of ethology, human-animal studies, anthropology and the history of natural history are just some of the disciplines that might best support this endeavour. In the case of animal derived materials, it might be animal rights philosophy. Indeed, these fields and others are all called upon to discuss the enchanting possibilities of the materials used in various artworks, the histories and meanings they proffer and their capacity to contribute to evoking a sense of wonder. This might be because they are surprising, revealing unexpected histories, or because their trickery has us fooled in the moment before we realise that these materials are not what they initially seemed. It might be that they are fragile and unstable, charming or troubling, lively or dead, or an unforeseen amalgam of these latter oppositional categories. By paying close attention to materials in this way, this study reveals how many artists strive to represent wildlife in ways that are mindful of both the current ecological state of play, and their desire to respond to nonhuman animals with due care, respect and responsibility.

In a well-known text piece, the provisional and handwritten *Some Notes Towards a Manifesto for Artists Working With or About the Living World* (2000), the American artist Mark Dion observed that:

> The variety and variability of life is a wonder of infinite complexity. There is no more curious and uncanny topic than the bio-diversity which surrounds us. The

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70 Mark Dion is well known for using fake fur to create the bears that often feature in his work, see for instance, Petra Lange-Berndt, ‘Cave Show: Mark Dion’s Sleeping Bear’, in *Mark Dion: Den*, ed. by Line Ulekleiv (Oslo: Forlaget Press, 2012), pp. 49–56 (p. 53).

objective of the best art and science is not to strip nature of wonder but to enhance it.\textsuperscript{72}

It was the flourishing biodiversity of Dion’s first experience in a tropical rainforest that Steve Baker described as provoking the artist’s ‘wonder of the wild’.\textsuperscript{73} In addition, the encounters that the artists Olly and Suzi had with wild animals in their natural habitat while drawing them, often big predators such as great white sharks, wolves or polar bears, were said to have provoked wonder as well as horror for this duo.\textsuperscript{74} The artist Megan McMillan also recently described the experience of wonder in relation to an encounter with wild animals in a way that also recognised the agency of these creatures, claiming that:

Wonder is a mix of deep admiration, appreciation, and curiosity mixed with reverence and even fear: the passage of an orca pod beneath the thin membrane of your small inflatable boat, pushing against the bottom of your feet in sliding rhythm, so you never forget they could tip you into the freezing water whenever they want.\textsuperscript{75}

In fact this sort of wild wonder has often been expressed by contemporary artists, leading Baker to surmise that ‘[s]ome sense or experience of the wild, it is clear, is still what most artists want’.\textsuperscript{76} But what is it about the wild that leads to wonder and is wildness always a prerequisite for its evocation in contemporary art? Must representations of wildlife exhibit the qualities of charismatic megafauna to be enchanting? Furthermore, what role does horror play in these encounters and is it necessarily distinct? For this thesis, all wildlife is worthy of respect. The relationships artists forge with nonhuman animals should be given equal attention whether these are with pet cats, wild tigers, feared and revered sharks or sedentary barnacles. Jamie Lorimer’s definition of ‘wildlife’ therefore becomes further compelling in this context since it is flexible enough to embrace creatures generally classified as ‘domestic’ as well as ‘wild’ or ‘feral’, offering scope to examine a range of differently conceived


\textsuperscript{73} Baker, The Postmodern Animal, p. 173.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pp. 132 and 173.


\textsuperscript{76} Baker, The Postmodern Animal, p. 173.
human-wildlife relations. Nevertheless, the stability of these terms will also be explored and contested.\footnote{77}

**The Call of the Chthulucene (or Why Wonder Now?)**

The prevalence of wonder in artistic and curatorial activity today testifies to ‘the urge for wonder in the twenty-first century’, and ‘a renewed critical relevance of wonder in contemporary art since the new millennium’.\footnote{78} In fact the contemporary works and exhibitions discussed in detail through this study have all taken place since 2000. But why should this time in particular be marked as a new age of wonder?

The art historian John Onians, who now works in the field of ‘neuroarthistory’, suggested in 1994 that ‘[t]o understand wonderment [...] we must study both its human manifestation and the parallels to it in the animal world’, claiming that ‘[i]f we are to write a history of wonder we must write a natural history’.\footnote{79} With reference to Charles Darwin’s study *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), Onians argued that ‘astonishment’, which is used throughout his text interchangeably with ‘wonder’, serves an evolutionary role in the survival of certain species. He attributed this to the wide-open eyes elicited by astonishment, or wonder, which he suggested enables wildlife to focus intense attention on predators, possible mates, or possible food (prey animals), enabling them to enact the required survival response, be this fight, flight or display.\footnote{80} Onians claimed that the sort of visual ‘intense attention’ induced by wonder, or astonishment, is similarly shared by humans, who ‘stare at something because it may be dangerous [...] good to eat or [...] a potential sexual partner’.\footnote{81} In this analogy between humans and wildlife, Onians offered a somewhat limited and biological understanding of wonder, foreclosing other possibilities by applying these narrow criteria at the same time as privileging the visual. Wonder is furthermore not clearly delineated, being interchangeable in this text with amazement and

\footnote{77 The human-animal studies scholars Garry Marvin and Susan McHugh have noted how the terms wild, domestic and feral are not only contested, but interrelated, see Garry Marvin and Susan McHugh, ‘In It Together: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies*, ed. by Garry Marvin and Susan McHugh (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1–19 (p. 3).}

\footnote{78 Mieves and Brown, ‘Introduction’, pp. 3 and 10.}


\footnote{80 Ibid., pp. 12–16.}

\footnote{81 Ibid., p. 15. Howard L. Parsons also briefly speculated on whether nonhuman animals also wonder but did so with a tenor of religiosity rather than natural history, stating: ‘Perhaps such wonder before natural powers, which is a primordial religious feeling, is at its roots a feeling shared by the live creature in nature [...]. Who of us, small man-creatures, will say that those fellow creatures of ours, the primates and maybe the mammals and more, alive and aware of a wide and precarious world around them, do not have a primitive sense of *mysterium tremendum*?’, Parsons, p. 88.
astonishment, presenting a risk in terms of how it is understood. There is much to be wary of in Onians’s text, not least the unquestioned heteronormativity he appears to have assumed throughout, the looseness of his terminology and the limited manifestation of wonder he observed (wide-open eyes), which overlooks wonder’s affective characteristics by prioritising just the visual. Nevertheless, the text offers three insights about how wonder arises that are significant in terms of its prevalence today: the recognition that wonder arises due to a ‘change in the environment’, ‘an upheaval’, or ‘when new phenomena appear’. Such are the conditions heralded by the turn of the new millennium, when it was suggested by the Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and the biologist Eugene Stoermer in the year 2000, that Earth had entered into a new geological epoch, which should be called the Anthropocene.

Still awaiting official designation by the International Commission of Stratigraphy at the time of writing, despite recommendation by the Anthropocene Working Group in 2016, this now widely used neologism serves to imply that we have entered an era where the impact of human activity has changed the course of the planet and altered the fabric of the earth. As Donna Haraway has poetically written, ‘the effects of our species are literally written into the rocks’. But more than this, the Anthropocene has been characterised by a ‘generalized instability co-produced by climate change, mass extinction, and [...] resource wars’. As a ‘charismatic mega-concept’, the Anthropocene has provided a rallying point for scientists and academics from the arts, humanities and social sciences and it has precipitated extensive activity in these

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82 Onians, pp. 24 and 26.
83 See for instance, Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, ‘The Anthropocene’, Global Change Newsletter, 41 (2000), 17–18; and Paul J. Crutzen, ‘Geology of Mankind’, in Nature, 415 (2002) <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v415/n6867/full/415023a.html> [accessed 18 October 2016]. Donna Haraway noted how the term appears to have been first developed in the 1980s by Eugene Stoermer to describe how human activities impacted Earth, but that it was later used by Paul Crutzen in 2000 who suggested that this could be the name for a new geological epoch brought about as a result of human activity, see Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, pp. 44–45.
84 See for instance Will Steffan, Jacques Grinevald, Paul Crutzen and John McNeill, ‘The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspectives’, Philosophical Transactions: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences, 1938.369 (2011), 842–867 (p. 843), where the authors claim that: ‘The term Anthropocene suggests: (i) that the Earth is now moving out of its current geological epoch, called the Holocene and (ii) that human activity is largely responsible for this exit from the Holocene, that is, that humankind has become a global geological force in its own right [...] However, the term remains an informal one’.
Indeed it has been observed that the Anthropocene appears to have ‘captured an intellectual zeitgeist’ that ‘is proving extremely generative of conversation and creativity’, as well as providing a fertile theme for exploration in visual art.\(^8^8\) It is striking to observe that the recent turn to wonder in contemporary art and visual culture since 2000, converges with this moment that heralded the possibility that Earth had entered into a new geological epoch called the Anthropocene, together with the realisation that human activities have changed the course of the planet in ways that are at times devastating, and in many instances irreversible. This creates the ‘change in the environment’, ‘upheaval’, and arrival of ‘new phenomena’ that Onians placed as catalysts for wonder. The cultural historian and curator Jill Bennett has gone so far as to suggest that the dawn of the Anthropocene represents a paradigm shift, which can have ‘world-shattering implications’, prompting widespread dispute and ‘full-blown culture wars’.\(^8^9\) Other scholars appear to be in agreement. Jamie Lorimer has written that the ‘diagnosis of the Anthropocene is revolutionary, akin to the shocking thoughts of Copernicus, Lyell, and Darwin […] for some publics the magnitude and consequences of our geological entanglements are proving hard to accept’.\(^9^0\) The researchers Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin have also claimed that ‘[t]here is no shock that could be greater than that of realizing the scope and scale of the human transformation of the world’, as represented by the Anthropocene.\(^9^1\) Following Onians, such a time of uncertainty, urgency, and we might even say crisis brought about by this upheaval, has the capacity to provoke a new age of wonder — a wonder that has arisen following the proposal for the Anthropocene.


\(^{89}\) Jill Bennett used Thomas Kuhn’s definition of a paradigm shift noting how this was ‘a revolutionary change in the basic assumptions underpinning a discipline or brand of science […] such that the foundations of subsequent work are radically changed’, see Jill Bennett, Living in the Anthropocene (Ostfilden: Hatje Cantz, 2012), pp. 6–7.

\(^{90}\) Lorimer, Wildlife in the Anthropocene, p. 1.

\(^{91}\) Davis and Turpin, p. 11.
A comprehensive historical survey and theoretical overview of the debates precipitated by this new era in Earth’s history are neither necessary nor possible in this thesis. What is key, however, is to recognise that as a term, the Anthropocene provokes much debate amongst those who seek to identify its starting point, as well as those critical of the homogenised humanity this anthropos invokes, the erasures it enacts and the limitations it imposes. These debates are manifold, but it is the re-readings and critiques of this epoch offered by the feminist environmentalist and science and technology studies scholars Eileen Crist and Donna Haraway that are especially useful here. Rather than dispute the Anthropocene theory based on its geological premise, Crist recently challenged what she calls the ‘discourse of the Anthropocene’, taking it to task for its failure to question human dominion. Her argument is that by consistently positioning humanity as a geological force capable of changing the shape of the planet, the ‘discourse of the Anthropocene’ intrinsically supports the idea of ‘human specialness’. Crist also claimed that the language employed to articulate its effects often neutralises any sense of environmental destruction by describing human impact in terms of transformation rather than devastation, thereby obscuring the loss, irreversible damage and even the death that its effects have brought to bear on diverse life forms and lifeworlds. She goes on to note how the sixth mass extinction unfolding at this time is often reported with a resigned detachment. This, Crist claims, ‘amounts to an absence of clarity about its earth-shattering meaning and avoidance of voicing the imperative of its preemption’, to the extent that it forecloses the possibility that

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92 The quotations that have been cited above are all drawn from literature that focuses on the Anthropocene in the specific contexts of art and wildlife conservation, drastically and purposefully limiting this Anthropocene literature to topics that are central to the main concerns of this thesis.
93 Davis and Turpin highlight that ‘the Anthropocene is not simply the result of activities undertaken by the species Homo sapiens; instead, these effects derive from a particular nexus of epistemic, technological, social, and political economic coalescences figured in the contemporary reality of petrocapitalism. This petrocapitalism represents the heightened hierarchical relations of humans, the continued violence of white supremacy, colonialism, patriarchy, heterosexism, and ableism, all of which exacerbate and subvert the violence that has been inflicted upon the non-human world’, p. 7. The authors go on to elaborate that one of the reasons the term is contested is because of its ‘etymological obfuscation of these forms of specific and historical violence’, see ibid., p. 7. Donna Haraway has also suggested that the anthropos to which the term Anthropocene refers, embraces ‘Fossil-fuel-burning humanity’, see Haraway and Kenney, ‘Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene’, p. 259. Three points of origin are broadly proposed for this new era: the development of agriculture and the resultant deforestation, the invention of the steam engine in 1784 and the industrial revolution it precipitated, and the first atomic bomb being dropped and the ‘Great Acceleration’ occurring in the wake of the Second World War when consumption, technological development and the population boomed, see Jill Bennett, p. 5; Paul Crutzen and Will Steffen, ‘How Long Have We Been in the Anthropocene Era’, Climate Change, 3.61 (2003), 251–257; and Davis and Turpin, p. 5.
95 Ibid., p. 17.
96 Ibid., p. 18.
humans might choose to inhabit Earth differently, rather than simply adapt to the new circumstances they have contributed to bringing about. In a rallying cry, Crist demands ‘why not choose a name whose higher calling we must rise to meet?’ Accordingly, while not wishing to deny the importance of the Anthropocene as a term and the extensive artistic and academic work it has catalysed so far, this study finds solace and playful promise in Donna Haraway’s recent proposal for the Chthulucene, as a ‘timeplace for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in responsability on a damaged earth’.

Like Crist, Haraway finds flaws with the Anthropocene as an all-embracing label and is similarly exasperated by the resigned detachment she feels the concept often appears to breed. She believes the Capitalocene provides a more accurate descriptor of these times, since it draws attention to the industrialised world’s role in bringing about this new phase in Earth’s history. However, she seeks an alternative, arguing that we should try to reconfigure the human-centric, capitalist-centric and destructive Anthropocene/Capitalocene in a way that takes into account the agency of all earthly life and strives to make a positive difference to the current state of play. Recognising the importance of entanglements of humans and other critters, Haraway recommends an alternative model, which expressly takes this into account with a view to propagating multispecies flourishing. The Chthulucene is the name she chooses to describe this moment, finding rich possibilities in the tentacular facets of this terminology.

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97 Ibid., p. 22. Crist stated: ‘The Anthropocene accepts the humanization of Earth as reality, even though this is still contestable, partially reversible, and worthy of resistance and of inspiring a different vision. Yet the Anthropocene discourse perpetuates the concealment that the human takeover is (by now) an unexamined choice, one which human beings have it within both our power and our nature to rescind if only we focused our creative, critical gaze upon it’, see ibid., p.25.

98 Ibid., p. 27.

99 For this definition of the Chthulucene, see Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 2.

100 Haraway incredulously demands, ‘[t]he anthropos—what is that? All of Homo sapiens sapiens? All of mankind? Well, who exactly?’, see Haraway and Kenney, *Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene*, p. 259. Haraway also observes her alliance with Crist’s line of argument, see Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, pp. 49–50.

101 Haraway attributes the coining of the term ‘Capitalocene’ to the graduate student Andreas Malm in a 2009 seminar, but notes how the sociologist Jason W. Moore has developed this idea in various texts, see Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, pp. 184–185n.50. See also Donna Haraway, ‘Staying with the Trouble: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene’, in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, ed. by Jason W. Moore (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), pp. 34–76 (p. 51).

102 Critters, for Haraway, embrace ‘microbes, plants, animals, humans and nonhumans, and sometimes even […] machines’, Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 169n.1.

103 Eva Hayward has also theorised the ‘tentacular’ through her research into human relations to cup corals, where she explores haptic encounters with these organisms and develops the term ‘fingeryeyes’ to explain the tentacular visuality of cross-species encounters and to name the synaesthetic quality of materialized sensation’, see Eva Hayward, ‘Fingeryeyes: Impressions of Cup Corals’, *Cultural Anthropology*, 4.25 (2010), 577–599 (p. 580).
Initially, the Chthulucene seems to evoke the writer H.P. Lovecraft’s monster Cthulhu, variously described, but always an entity possessing tentacles. Nevertheless, Haraway instead ascribed the Chthulucene’s origins to the Californian forest-dwelling spider *Pimoa cthulhu*, adopting a different spelling (through the subtle re-positioning of an ‘h’) to demonstrate her rebuttal of what she described as ‘Lovecraft’s misogynist racial-nightmare monster Cthulhu’. The spider proves to be a rich protagonist for Haraway. The creature’s web-making, thread-producing capabilities and its eight-legged form, fit neatly with Haraway’s intertwining and constantly changing *string figures* as well as her entangled, *tentacular* ones. String figures for Haraway evoke games like cat’s cradle, where threads are passed and transformed between one person and another in an activity requiring ‘becoming-with each other in surprising relays’. Haraway works ‘with string figures as a theoretical trope, a way to think-with a host of companions in sympoietic threading, felting, tangling’ and accordingly suggests that string figures can work ‘to craft conditions for finite flourishing [...] on earth’. The tentacular ones help make these string figures for Haraway, invoking humans and nonhumans involved in practices of becoming-with and intra-acting with one another in webs and ways that thwart human exceptionalism, and collapse the Nature/Society boundary often enforced by the Anthropocene. Haraway’s revised spelling of Lovecraft’s dark and otherworldly protagonist has roots in ‘chthonic’. Whilst this maintains links to the sinister underworld evoked by Lovecraft if we take the word’s meaning as ‘dwelling beneath the surface of the earth’, for Haraway, the ‘Chthonic ones’ are conceived as ‘beings of the earth [...] replete with tentacles, and

106 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 3.
107 Haraway describes sympoiesis with reference to M. Beth Dempster’s definition, as ‘collectively-producing systems that do not have self-defined spatial or temporal boundaries. Information and control are distributed among components. The systems are evolutionary and have the potential for surprising change’. Dempster quoted in Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 33. See also ibid., pp. 10 and 31.
feelers, digits, cords, whiptails, spider legs’, embracing critters as diverse as arachnids, squid, jellyfish, plant roots, fungi and humans, as well as the nonhuman in the form of nets and networks.\(^{110}\)

The Chthulucene is etymologically and conceptually complex, and to be most productive it arguably requires familiarity with Haraway’s work more broadly. It is also just one of the many alternative and ever-burgeoning ‘anthropomemes’\(^{111}\) currently on the ‘anthropo-scene’,\(^{112}\) which through alternate appellations seek to decentre the human or clarify exactly which *anthropos* is in question here.\(^{113}\) One could argue that the more widely known ‘Anthropocene’ term provides a more recognisable and readily understandable rallying point, given Haraway’s urgent call to arms. As has been observed elsewhere, the Anthropocene does not need to be understood in a way that flattens out all of humanity onto a single plane or readily accepts human domination.\(^{114}\) It can instead be used as a term to think with and prompt discussions about ‘what we humans are going to do now, in the midst of an increasingly given fate of ruination and extinction’\(^{115}\) or even used as a prompt ‘to practice the planet anew’.\(^{116}\) Yet as Haraway has observed, ‘[i]t matters what thoughts think thoughts. […] It matters what stories tell stories’.\(^{117}\) For this thesis the Chthulucene presents a playful and convincing proposition, which is particularly pertinent since it explicitly positions relationships between humans and other animals as a central component of how we might inhabit a fragile Earth. It recognises interconnections and interdependencies between beings. But it also suggests that it is possible to work towards the betterment of all earthly life,

\(^{110}\) Oxford English Dictionary [online]; and Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, pp. 2 and 32, my emphasis in both instances.

\(^{111}\) Rosi Braidotti recently presented a list of what she called ‘anthropomemes’ to highlight the diverse alternative labels this new epoch is generating within the academy, Rosi Braidotti, ‘Are ‘WE’ in this Together?’, keynote lecture as part of the Planetary Poetics workshop, Institute of Advanced Studies, UCL, 21 September 2017.


\(^{113}\) See ibid., p. 124 where Lorimer relays some of these alternatives found across recent literature, such as the ‘Capitaloscene’, the ‘Anthrobscene’, the ‘Plantationocene’, the ‘Manthropocene’ and even the ‘Anthropo-not-seen’. Lorimer himself proposed the ‘Cosmoscene’, which, like the Chthulucene, recognises that humans are entangled with the Earth and its critters, Lorimer, *Wildlife in the Anthropocene*, p. 4.


\(^{117}\) Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 35.
rather than be resigned to an ecologically catastrophic fate, or simply prioritising human survival. As Davis and Turpin have suggested, ‘[t]o think of ourselves as biological organisms first, as one type among the worlds of other critters, allows for more open and curious relations to the other beings with whom we co-compose the world’. Kinship between critters is a major feature of the Chthulucene. This might be criticised for being utopian — of course not every human-animal entanglement is positively configured for all involved. But Haraway has recognised that whilst this may indeed be the case (in relation to experimental animal research for instance), we nevertheless have a duty of responsibility and care. The Chthulucene’s promise and optimism is useful when the alternative is to feel that there is little hope, which would arguably not prompt much action. As the scholar Louise Economides has suggested, focusing solely on a negative sense of loss can impinge upon an individual’s capacity to develop more positive ways of being. However, to be effective, the Chthulucene must demand responsible and respectful behaviour from all quarters of life, including the field of visual art that is the focus here. But there is one caveat to this project’s alignment with the Chthulucene. Haraway is keen to distance herself from Lovecraft’s fictive, mythic monster and while I am sympathetic to the reasons why, these links to Cthulhu offer an opening to wonder’s dark-side, as well as a figure in which attributes of human and nonhuman animal dwell in a single entity, making this reference point and its mythical, otherworldly resonances generative for this project.

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118 Davis and Turpin, p. 13.
119 In fact Haraway developed the rallying slogan ‘Make Kin Not Babies!’ to accompany the Chthulucene, reiterating the importance of interspecies kinship at the same time as highlighting the detrimental impact the unprecedented rise in human population will unleash on the planet, see Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, p. 102. Haraway has also recognised that the Chthulucene concept can extend to artistic practice in a footnote where she refers to the work of the artist Eleanor Morgan, although Haraway does not go into any detail about this, see Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, p. 174n.5. In addition, the critic Jamie Sutcliffe recently recognised the promise in reconfiguring the Anthropocene as the Chthulucene, using it as a frame for his analysis of work by Joey Holder, Rachel Pimm and Mark Peter Wright, see Jamie Sutcliffe, ‘Art and the Chthulucene’, Art Monthly, 394 (March 2016), 6–9.
120 Donna Haraway, When Species Meet (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 72–73.
121 Economides, p. 136. However, it is worth mentioning that other scholars position more typically negative responses as being productive. Lorimer observed how ‘[o]thers defend the possibilities of dystopia and the related emotions of grief and mourning’, see Lorimer, ‘The Anthropo-scene: A Guide to the Perplexed’, p. 130. Both Lorimer and Haraway observe the relevance of Thom Van Dooren’s work on grief and mourning for instance, see Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, pp. 38–39; and Thom Van Dooren, ‘Mourning Crows: Grief in a Shared World’, in Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction, paperback edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 125–144.
122 The tale’s narrator describes Cthulhu by stating: ‘If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing’, Lovecraft, p. 141. Secondly a statuette of Cthulhu is explained as being ‘a monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers’, ibid, p. 148.
Haraway’s chthonic, metaphoric storytelling offers a kind of myth of origins for our current ecological circumstances. As the historian of religion Mircea Eliade understood it: ‘Every origin myth narrates and justifies a “new situation” […] they tell how the world was changed, made richer or poorer’. On Eliade’s terms, a myth ‘is always an account of a “creation”; it relates how something […] began to be. […] myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the “supernatural”) into the World’. Yet despite its mythic and magical resonances, Haraway’s Chthulucene is not sacred, but is instead earthbound. Secularisation, along with rationalisation and intellectualisation are the ingredients claimed to have combined to culminate in ‘the disenchantment of the world’. Haraway’s storytelling runs counter to this, even as it might simultaneously arise as a result of it. In the first instance, Haraway distributes agency amongst both humans and nonhumans, which is a possibility apparently extinguished by modern disenchantment and therefore flying in the face of it. However, through her storytelling (which recalls Lovecraft’s monster), she seems to evoke the poetics of ‘mystical experiences’ that are apparently yearned for in a disenchanted world, since they offer openings ‘into the most irrational and thereby real kernel of life, as compared with the [lifeless] mechanism of rationalization’. Haraway’s myth of origins therefore provides an opening for wonder to emerge today, refuting the ‘modern disenchantment tale’ even as it might occur in its wake.

123 Indeed Haraway notes one Greek root of Chthulucene as ‘kainos’—‘a time of beginnings’, Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, p. 2.
125 Ibid., p. 6.
126 Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, p. 55.
127 On Jane Bennett’s terms, this disenchantment of the world is said to have arrived when the ‘premodern world gave way to forces of scientific and instrumental rationality, secularism, individualism, and the bureaucratic state’, see Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 7. For Bennett, in the premodern world: ‘Nature was purposive, God was active in the details of human affairs, human and other creatures were defined by a preexisting web of relations, social life was characterized by face-to-face relations, and political order took the form of organic community’, ibid. Bennett explores disenchantment from the perspectives of Max Weber, Hans Blumenberg and Simon Critchley, however, she places most emphasis on Weber suggesting his view to be ‘the most influential’, ibid., p. 57. On Weber’s view of disenchantment, see Max Weber, ‘Science as a Vocation’, in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. and trans. by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 129–156 (p. 155); and Max Weber, ‘Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions’, in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. and trans. by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 323–359 (p. 357).
128 Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, pp. 7 and 63.
129 Bennett quoting Max Weber, ibid., p. 56.
130 According to Bennett, ‘fugitive experiences of magic are said to persist within the calculable world. This results in an increased interest among rational, calculating selves in mysticism, eroticism, and other curiosities of the “cultural” field’, see Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 65.
Other theorists similarly dispute this idea. For instance, Jane Bennett suggested that ‘in a world experienced as disenchanted, humanity figures as the primary, if not the sole, locus of agency and vitality’, something she forcefully refutes by demonstrating agency proliferating amongst nonhumans throughout the course of her argument.\(^{131}\) Furthermore, the philosopher, anthropologist and sociologist Bruno Latour also contested modern disenchantment, arguing instead that we have never been modern.\(^{132}\) For Latour, it is the hybrids of nature/culture/society that continue to proliferate today despite the modern inclination to keep these categories discrete, which work to counter any sense of the world as disenchanted. With apparently tight-lipped humour, Latour demands:

> Haven’t we shed enough tears over the disenchantment of the world? Haven’t we frightened ourselves enough with the poor European who is thrust into a cold soulless cosmos, wandering on an inert planet in a world devoid of meaning? Haven’t we shivered enough before the spectacle of the mechanized proletarian who is subject to the absolute domination of a mechanized capitalism and a Kafkaesque bureaucracy […] Haven’t we felt sorry enough for the consumer who leaves the driver’s seat of his car only to move to the sofa in the TV room where he is manipulated by the powers of the media and the postindustrialized society?! […] How could we be capable of disenchanting the world, when everyday our laboratories and our factories populate the world with hundreds of hybrids stranger than those of the day before?\(^{133}\)

Latour finds cause for enchantment in the face of the ‘imbroglios’ of nature/culture/society/science/technology — instances that blur supposedly discrete categories as conceived by the modern condition.\(^{134}\) Indeed more recently, scholars have argued for the continued proliferation of the ‘forms of monstrosity that modernity tried to extinguish’, whereby monsters are understood as ‘multispecies entanglements that make life across the earth […] flourish’.\(^{135}\) Although Latour convincingly resists the idea that the world is disenchanted as a result of being bereft of meaning and vitality, and furthermore from being couched in capitalism and bureaucracy, Jane Bennett goes

\(^{131}\) Ibid., p. 80.
\(^{133}\) Ibid., p. 115.
\(^{134}\) Ibid., p. 2, where Latour states that the daily newspaper contains ‘hybrid articles that sketch out imbroglios of science, politics, economy, law, religion, technology, fiction’ through which ‘[a]ll of culture and all of nature get churned up again every day’.
\(^{135}\) Swanson, Tsing, Bubandt and Gan, ‘Introduction: Bodies Tumbled into Bodies’, p. 2. In fact they go so far as to state that: ‘Monsters ask us to consider wonders and terrors of symbiotic entanglement in the Anthropocene’, ibid., p. 2.
a step further to demonstrate this in action. In her counter story to the disenchantment of modernity, she finds moments of enchantment in the agency of nonhumans, the vibrancy of matter, TV commercials for GAP khakis and even through the absurdity of the bureaucracy described in Franz Kafka’s novel *The Castle* (1926).  

Bennett’s work is especially useful here since she described enchantment as ‘wonder-at-the-world’, furthermore positioning one conceptual site for its occurrence at the border between humans and nonhuman animals. Specifically, she examined ‘the enchanting effect of interspecies and intraspecies crossings’ in instances when species boundaries blur and metamorphoses take hold. For Bennett, ‘[t]o be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday’. It is experienced as ‘a mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness, a sense of having had one’s nerves or circulation or concentration powers tuned up or recharged [...] a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life’. In this way enchantment has an affective tenor, but on Bennett’s understanding, it does have its limits. Bennett predominantly linked enchantment to joy and even suggested that the pleasure experienced thanks to its spellbinding effects ‘temporarily eclipses the anxiety endemic to critical awareness of the world’s often tragic complexity’. This thesis does not want to advocate wonder as being in any way a neutralising force in the face of the troubling and difficult issues at stake in various instances of creative practice. Since quite the opposite is the case, some caution is clearly needed here.

The writer George Levine drew from Bennett’s work on enchantment to describe a Darwinian species of wonder, in which human relations to wildlife play a pivotal role. Levine suggested that it was Charles Darwin’s detailed and dedicated study of wildlife that brought about the naturalist’s transfixed enchantment. Levine demonstrated that rationalisation and scientific explanation do not preclude enchantment as contended by the sociologist Max Weber’s view of a disenchanted modernity, since Darwin’s wonder arose and was sustained precisely through his scientific inquiry into natural history.

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136 Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life.*  
137 Ibid., pp. 32 and 169.  
138 Ibid., p. 17.  
139 Ibid., p. 4.  
140 Ibid., p. 5.  
141 Ibid., pp. 5 and 10.  
143 Ibid., p. 24. As Levine summarises '[a]s he tried to wrest the world from theological to scientific explanation, Darwin did not, I want to argue, wrest it away from value or from the kinds of consolations that religion has for the most part been called upon to provide. The very act of trying to understand the world materially and naturally entailed right from the outset of his
According to Levine and Bennett, wonder and enchantment are closely allied and entanglements of humans and wildlife are a prerequisite for their provocation. Levine claimed that ‘the recognition that living organisms are mutually dependent in ways that only the most delicate and careful investigation can discover […] are elements of new forms of enchantment’. While Levine considered this in terms of natural science, this study interrogates this idea through artistic practice.

Levine was more explicit than Bennett about how enchantment can endure in the midst of pain and horror. He demonstrated how wonder remained possible for Darwin, even as he coped with the grief following the tragic and untimely death of his daughter, highlighting ‘the doubleness’ of Darwin’s enchantment, where pleasure and horror dwelt side-by-side. This ambiguous tendency will be discussed as a species of dreadful wonder in relation to work by the philosopher Mary Jane Rubenstein. Levine’s argument offers convincing evidence for the persistence of wonder in contemporary life despite the turmoil and upheavals erupting every day on a global, as well as on an individual register. In fact as has already been suggested, it is actually such upheavals that might provide fertile ground for wonder’s provocation, something the case studies that follow attempt to show.

So, if wonder is rife at this time and can be brought about by interrogating human-wildlife relations or the border between humans and other animals, why does wildlife figure as a prominent theme of investigation for many artists working now? And what makes wonder so appealing and important in this context?

**Towards an Evolution of Artist-Wildlife Relations: The Strategic Promise of Wonder**

One of the notable effects of this proposed new epoch, be it termed the Anthropocene, or for this study, the Chthulucene, is loss of biodiversity and species extinction. Accordingly, calls for wildlife conservation are particularly urgent at this time. Growing public awareness about these issues appears to have run in tandem with a series of occurrences in the artistic and academic fields. Firstly, there has been a conspicuous proliferation of animals in contemporary art since the 1990s, reaching a peak at the start of the new millennium. Secondly, several academic investigations into animals in contemporary art have been published in recent years, including Steve Baker’s *The
Writing in 2001, Steve Baker observed that the insistent presence of nonhuman animals in contemporary art since 1990 was certainly ‘a new phenomenon’. However, he noted the significant precedent to this was a body of work made in the 1970s featuring live animals by artists including Joseph Beuys, Carolee Schneemann and William Wegman. The work by these artists involved what Baker described as ‘the contriving of situations in which artist and animal were engaged in some kind of creative exchange’. The nonhuman animals in these works were therefore ascribed a degree of agency. Baker noted that these artworks were made at around the same time that the contemporary animal rights movement gained momentum. Indeed, the animal rights philosopher Peter Singer’s significant text Animal Liberation was published in 1975, around the same time as Beuys’s famous performance with a live coyote I Like America and America Likes Me (1974), Schneemann’s video work featuring her pet cat entitled Kitch’s Last Meal (1973–1976) and Wegman’s commencement of various collaborations with his dog Man Ray, which began in 1970 and resulted in an on-going series of anthropomorphic photographic portraits. However, alongside Baker’s observation, it is additionally important to acknowledge how the 1970s was also the time when many feminists began to place nonhuman animals at the centre of both their activist activities and theoretical writing.

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146 Lange-Berndt, Animal Art.
150 Baker, Picturing the Beast, p. xxvii.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
this decade was also marked by a widespread awareness of an unfolding environmental crisis, which informed the work of many artists working in the vein of land art at this time. But these concerns also extended to other modes of artistic production. For instance, Robert Rauschenberg's inaugural Earth Day Poster (1970) shows an image of an endangered bald eagle set against a backdrop of imagery illustrating various ecological disasters (figure 4). The black and white photographs depict litter, signs warning of contaminated water, trees in the process of being felled and other endangered species, drawing attention to the multifaceted character of the troubling environmental issues recognised at this time.

In an article about the work of the artist and dancer Simone Forti, the art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson recently echoed Baker's sentiments, but instead traced this body of artistic activity back slightly earlier to the 1960s in Rome. She noted that live animals figured in the work of a number of artists, including Richard Serra and others associated with Arte Povera, an often cited example being Jannis Kounellis's Untitled (12 Horses) from 1969, which saw a dozen of these creatures tethered around the edge of the exhibition space for the duration of the show. Bryan-Wilson rightly recognised that the presence of nonhuman animals in the art of this time cannot be 'generalized' across work by such varied artists. However, she noted this work could be 'politically inflected', observing how the 1960s also saw the emergence of concerns for animal rights and animal welfare in the U.S. and Europe come to the fore, citing the examples of the U.S. Animal Welfare Act being brought into fruition in 1966 and developing what we now call “ecofeminism” in the 1970s, the contemporary animal rights movement was beginning to take shape.


157 Ibid., p. 34. The poster was designed to publicise Earth Day, which was initiated following a serious oil spill in 1969 with a view to raising public awareness about pollution, and was subsequently sold as an edition by Rauschenberg to raise money for the American Environment Foundation. The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation website states that by choosing to place the bald eagle in the centre of this poster, ‘the artist symbolically placed the United States at the center of a global problem’, see <http://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/art/art-in-context/earth-day> [accessed 18 October 2016].

158 Julia Bryan-Wilson, ‘Simone Forti Goes to the Zoo’, October, 152 (Spring 2015), pp. 26–52 (pp. 42–43). Bryan-Wilson does recognise that this activity was also occurring elsewhere, citing the group exhibition The World of the Zoo (1969) at Betty Parsons Gallery in New York and she observes that: ‘In the latter half of the twentieth century, many artists deployed animals in their work for a range of affective and formal effects, including Joseph Beuys, VALIE EXPORT, Ana Mendieta, and Robert Rauschenberg’, see pp. 43–44. Petra Lange-Berndt, however, has shown how taxidermy animals were featured in artworks since the time of the Surrealists, See Lange-Berndt, Animal Art.

159 Bryan-Wilson, p. 43.

160 Ibid., p. 44.
European legislation to protect nonhuman animals during transportation being established in 1968.  

It seems a convincing proposition that this body of art featuring wildlife emerged when issues relating to animal rights and welfare were coming to the fore, and when nonhuman animals were becoming prominent figures in contemporary debates as awareness about the unfolding environmental crisis was growing. This coincidence of events that Baker notes in the 1970s, and Bryan-Wilson in the 1960s, has parallels with the contemporary moment, which is marked by the crisis of the Anthropocene and marred by the sixth mass extinction, at the same time that wildlife and human-animal relations are being so vigorously attended to by a number of artists working today. Such an analogy is helpful in locating a catalyst behind the contemporary artistic interest in wildlife, and these works from the 1960s and 1970s are important precedents to those discussed in this thesis. But one must remain wary. There are also significant differences between this earlier body of work and the work being created today. For instance, the environmental and ecological influence of Beuys is no doubt evident, but is a concern that is today manifested in different ways. Furthermore, the work of Schneemann and Wegman is particularly pertinent with regards to the ways these artists interrogate species boundaries — Wegman through a crude but comic form of anthropomorphism, and Schneemann by evoking a sort of interspecies intimacy in works such as *Infinity Kisses* (1981–1988), where she photographed herself kissing her pet cats. However, the examples offered by Baker and Bryan-Wilson all feature live animals. Of course live animals continue to feature in numerous contemporary artworks, so it is not the intention to ignore or deny that this sort of artistic activity continues, but my emphasis here is rather different. This study argues that many contemporary artists are using a range of different strategies to represent wildlife in their work, interrogating human-animal relations in ways that are commensurate with their awareness of the issues of species endangerment, threats to wildlife and their desire to consider nonhuman animals as subjects in their own right. At this time of ecological instability, and when contemporary artists are mindful of the need to attend to wildlife with respect, these creative practitioners are taking up what Baker described as ‘the difficult task of continuing to reflect on animals and of figuring out how best to represent them’. In many of these works, live animals have even disappeared (at times mirroring species loss in the wild) and have been replaced with ethical representations instead.

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161 Ibid.  
To demonstrate this change in attitude and the corresponding shift in artistic strategies being used to represent wildlife, it is helpful to look back at the moment when Richard Serra presented his first solo show, *Animal Habitats Live and Stuffed* (1966) at Galleria La Salita in Rome. The exhibition presented sixteen works whereby the artist had created assemblages of both living and taxidermy animals in a series of ‘cages’ and pens fabricated from wood, twigs and other such materials with his wife, the sculptor Nancy Graves (figure 5). Amongst this ramshackle menagerie were ‘two turtles, two quail, a rabbit, a hen, two guinea pigs, and a ninety-seven-lb. sow’, as well as a taxidermy ocelot, owl and boar. These were the results of the forays into taxidermy being made by the artist and Graves, who was herself making work that has since been described as ‘skin-assemblages’ and who also produced her first well known camel sculptures in the very same year. The work included in Serra’s exhibition (the exhibition was presented as Serra’s solo show by the gallery despite Graves’s involvement) is interesting on a number of levels — not least because of the divergence it takes from the sort of work for which he is now most well known, and the fact that it has been largely omitted from the vast literature on this artist. Graves’s involvement, however, seems less incongruous considering the nonhuman animal subject matters that were preoccupying her at this time.

The art historian Benjamin Buchloh put the lack of critical and historical engagement with this body of work down to what he described as its ‘rather odd materials’. This comment is worth paying attention to in this context, since it demonstrates how nonhuman animals have been regarded as just one material amongst others in this

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163 Although this exhibition is widely attributed to Serra, Nancy Graves has stated that: ‘Serra and I collaborated on a show that was presented at Galleria La Salita in Rome [...] that grew out of an idea I had featuring live animals and animal parts that I had injected with formaldehyde’, testifying to her role and participation in the production of this body of work. See Thomas Padron, ‘Interview with Nancy Graves’, in *Nancy Graves: Excavations in Print* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, in association with the American Federation of Arts, 1996), pp. 34–48 (pp. 37–38). It is also notable that Petra Lange-Berndt has attributed the *Animal Habitats* to both Serra and Graves in her book, see *Animal Art*, p. 134.


167 What little has been written—in English at least—is limited to fleeting references in survey texts, sparse quotations found in the midst of artist interviews, a short article in the June 1966 issue of *Time* magazine and the exhibition catalogue itself, which is today hard to come by.

work. The art historian Rosalind Krauss concurred, stating that in the *Animal Habitats*, Serra’s ‘material’ — a word she admittedly placed in scare quotes — ‘was [...] biological life [...] animals, both live and stuffed’.\(^{69}\) It seems that Serra, too, regarded nonhuman animals on these terms, claiming at this time that ‘any material was as good as the next [...] bits of wood, rabbits, anything at all’, testifying to the flat hierarchy of materials in these works, whereby nonhuman animals were just another part of the artist’s toolbox, rather than his primary focus of concern.\(^{70}\) This series of comments seems to validate what the artist Allan Kaprow predicted in 1958, when he wrote of how the new art he foresaw would include and utilise not only paint but everyday materials such as chairs, old socks, neon lights and also significantly ‘a dog’, including nonhuman animals in the artist’s palette of the future.\(^{71}\)

Despite these observations, where nonhuman animals are figured as brute materials, and in view of the links that have been made by Buchloh between Serra’s *Animal Habitats* and Robert Rauschenberg’s Combines (which often featured taxidermy animals), it has been suggested that ‘Serra took considerably more interest here in animals as animals than Rauschenberg ever did’.\(^{72}\) Indeed, Serra claimed that when making the *Animal Habitats*, he was engaged in a zoological experiment with live animals, which were living in his and Graves’s apartment, where he would give the creatures barnyard materials, observe the type of habitats they created for themselves and extract anything he felt was useful for his work.\(^{73}\) While this seems to suggest that nonhuman animals themselves did figure as subjects in their own right for Serra in some way and that he recognised the agency of these creatures, the artist’s approach to nonhuman animals is ambivalent at best. On the one hand, he was shown in a photograph carefully tending to the pig in his exhibition (figure 6). On the other, Serra alluded to the fact that his preoccupation with nonhuman animals in this work was linked to merely formal concerns, stating in an interview that, ‘I’m not saying the pig is art or is not art [...] but she makes a form’.\(^{74}\) Serra also recalled a prank he played on Rauschenberg, where he tethered a chicken to a pedestal and put a box over the

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\(^{72}\) Buchloh, p. 45; and Byrd, p. 22.

\(^{73}\) Byrd, p. 24.

\(^{74}\) ‘Exhibitions: Please Don’t Feed the Sculpture, *Time* June 10, 1966’. 

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Another artist whose work demonstrates a shift of attitude and strategy when working with wildlife is Hans Haacke. In 1970, the artist created a series of works featuring live animals, which he refers to as his ‘Franciscan’ works after St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, and since 1979, also of ecology. In Ten Turtles Set Free (1970) Haacke performed a seemingly liberatory act, purchasing ten of these creatures from various pet shops and releasing them into the French woodland (figure 7). The work seems to resonate with Steve Baker’s observation regarding animal rights, these creatures having been freed by Haacke from the confines of both their cages and a life in human ownership. Nevertheless, through this work, Haacke neither ensured the survival of these domestic pets, who were undoubtedly unaccustomed to fending for themselves in the wild, nor considered the ramifications this release would have on the ecology of the local flora and fauna. In this way, the act lacked responsible forethought by the artist, since he failed to provide for the flourishing of these nonhuman animals and the local ecosystem. We can be thankful, at least, that the creatures

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179 In this way, a critique of this work mirrors the charges brought to bear on much land and environmental art, which was criticised on the grounds of its ‘interference’ with nature, see for example, Emily Brady, ‘Animals in Environmental Art: Relationship and Aesthetic Regard’, Journal of Visual Art Practice, 1.9 (2010), 47–58 (p. 48). In fact, it has been claimed that Haacke actually released the wrong subspecies of tortoise into the French woodland in this artwork, which likely ‘compromised genetically distinct lineages’ and ‘threatened the biodiversity’ of the native tortoises, see Ali K. Yetisen, Joe Davis, Ahmet F. Coskun, George M. Church and Seok Hyun Yun, ‘Bioart’, Trends in Biotechnology, 12.33 (2015), 724–734 (p. 727).
180 Donna Haraway has paid particularly close attention to the idea of multispecies flourishing and developing response-ability, see for instance Donna Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003); and Haraway, When Species Meet. ‘Response-ability’, for Haraway, is ‘the cultivation of the
released into the woods by Haacke were not turtles at all, whose life and survival depends upon the ocean, but actually tortoises.\textsuperscript{181} The fact that so little attention was paid by Haacke to basic description here seems to reinforce what the philosopher Emily Brady observed, when she stated that many environmental works like Haacke’s may ‘feature animals, but animals are not essentially their focal point’.\textsuperscript{182} The situation for many contemporary artists is very different today and human-animal relations and indeed nonhuman animals themselves are the main focus of concern.

Although many morally questionable and often controversial uses of nonhuman animals persist in contemporary art, my focus here is on artists who adopt a responsible and ethical approach to representing wildlife. Many of the artists examined in this thesis acknowledge that no human use of a nonhuman animal is without consequence. Today, the issues of species endangerment and wildlife conservation are pressing, and the artists that will be discussed are shown behaving in ways commensurate with the unfolding crises these represent. In addition to this, they also reflect on their relationships to wildlife in carefully considered ways by making human-animal relations central to their practice. But what role might wonder play in this sort of work?

Sophia Vasalou has noted how wonder might move us in such a way that it alters our world-view, motivating us to act in accordance with this transformed outlook.\textsuperscript{183} She observed how emotions may move us, but ‘the passions make us do’.\textsuperscript{184} Wonder, as ‘the first of all the passions’,\textsuperscript{185} as well as being a kind of ‘thoughtful vision’\textsuperscript{186} therefore seems strategically ripe for creative practitioners, who in the artist Runette Kruger’s words, want to ‘subvert exploitative and utilitarian approaches to the other’, or incite viewers to become more aware about the plights facing the creatures with whom they share the world.\textsuperscript{187} In recent years, theorists including Jane Bennett, Ronald Hepburn, Luce Irigaray, Marguerite La Caze and the writer George Levine have all identified the capacity for wonder to prompt the development of an ethical sensibility, elicit compassion and to facilitate the cultivation of a generous disposition towards others.

\textsuperscript{161} Grasskamp concurs, writing about how Haacke’s work featured tortoises, see Grasskamp, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{162} Brady, p. 51. See also Grasskamp, p. 42, who recognised that it was the role of these creatures within a system that was of interest to Haacke rather than the animals themselves.
\textsuperscript{163} Vasalou, pp. 20–21
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p. 136.
\textsuperscript{165} Descartes, p. 373.
\textsuperscript{166} Kruger, p. 74
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., 73.
Furthermore, Irigaray and La Caze have specifically examined wonder’s role in ethical encounters with difference or ‘otherness’. Wonder therefore harbours strategic promise in the context of contemporary art and visual culture seeking to raise awareness about various plights facing wildlife. Irigaray was specifically concerned with the encounters between members of the opposite sex, but La Caze has pushed for an application of Irigaray’s thesis beyond sexual difference, to consider other differences between humans.\(^{188}\) This thesis takes this a step further to explore the role wonder plays in encountering differences across species. Jane Bennett recognised how enchantment ‘can be cultivated and intensified by artful means’ and ‘fostered through deliberate strategies’.\(^{189}\) This study interrogates how instances of contemporary art and visual culture explore these possibilities, together with the issues and concerns that arise as a result.

In Christian Mieves and Irene Brown’s recent edited volume on wonder in contemporary art and curatorial practice, a number of essays were unified by their consideration of the ethical and political possibilities of wonder. In this way the texts both reflected and drew from this recent scholarship in other disciplines. For instance, the curator Alistair Robinson observed how ‘[a]rtists have turned to wonder […] to enrich their political and social critiques’.\(^{190}\) Runette Kruger argued that wonder plays an ethical role in encountering difference with reference to work by Hepburn and La Caze.\(^{191}\) Furthermore, the art historian and curator Marion Endt-Jones suggested in the context of the exhibition Coral: Something Rich and Strange (2013–2014), which she curated at the Manchester Museum, that wonder ‘might be harnessed to provoke an ethical sensibility […] a compassion for the plight of endangered living organisms and a commitment to protecting, conserving and restoring them’.\(^{192}\) Yet wonder in such circumstances is not without its risks. For instance, in the very same volume the scholar and author Will Buckingham warned that regarding only some things (or beings) with wonder, ‘risks breeding indifference to a large part of the world’ if we fail to notice them or pay close attention.\(^{193}\) Whilst work by various theorists has noted the ethical possibilities of wonder, its reparative qualities, and its role in encounters with ‘otherness’, caution is needed since wonder has its limits in this regard. La Caze has warned that wonder alone is not enough to facilitate the cultivation of an ethical

\(^{188}\) Irigaray, p. 74; and La Caze, ‘The Encounter Between Wonder and Generosity’, p. 8.
\(^{189}\) Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, pp. 4 and 10.
\(^{190}\) Robinson, p. 140.
\(^{191}\) Kruger, pp. 73–77.
\(^{192}\) Endt-Jones, ‘Coral Fishing and Pearl Diving’, p. 179.
sensibility, stating that although wonder is ‘a very rich concept, [it] needs to be linked to other emotions and attitudes to provide a basis for a respect for difference’.\textsuperscript{194} This is something that will be explored and discussed at various points in this thesis.

La Caze’s work gives rise to debates regarding the challenges and opportunities of wonder’s role in encountering difference and cultivating a sense of ethics, which is not all together straightforward as will be demonstrated as this thesis unfolds. In short, any ethical sensibility, respect or compassion arising out of wonder must be extended to all earthly life, including those whose alterity we cannot assimilate and those who at first glance might not induce wonder. The ways this might be cultivated and negotiated in contemporary art and visual culture, together with the limits, pitfalls and possibilities of these approaches are addressed in relation to representations of a motley crew of warm- and cold-blooded critters through three case studies.

**Wonder and Wildlife in the Museum, the Film and the Field**

This thesis revolves around three case studies chosen for their relevance to the topic of wonder and human relations with wildlife. Since these examples were not all conceived by the practitioners with wonder in mind, in this context it is more than simply a topic of investigation. Wonder is also a methodological tool with which to read and analyse these instances of artistic practice. These examples have also been selected because they allow for an investigation into three varying ways encounters with wildlife are often mediated today through museums, wildlife films and engagements with wildlife ‘in the field’. As Steve Baker has succinctly pointed out, ‘[a]ny understanding of the animal, and of what the animal means to us, will be informed by and inseparable from our knowledge of its cultural representation’.\textsuperscript{195} By looking at these different contexts, the hope is to examine wonder across a variety of circumstances to provide a broad approach to this phenomenon within the space available. In line with this project’s underlying preoccupation with promoting responsible and respectful relations with nonhuman animals and raising awareness about issues relating to the plights facing wildlife, each chapter takes up a particular threat: hunting and poaching, overfishing, and human impact on protected wildlife reserves respectively. It should be observed that many of the artworks, exhibitions and texts that I have encountered dealing with these topics are from a British, French, German or North American context. This emphasis could be indebted to the histories of collecting, natural history and cabinets of curiosities rooted in these regions, or in the French context, as a result of the legacy of surrealism and the movement’s fascination

\textsuperscript{194} La Caze, ‘The Encounter Between Wonder and Generosity’, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{195} Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, p. 4.
with the marvellous. However, this is just speculation. The selection of these case studies was driven by the discussions they give rise to rather than being based around any specific region. Although the French, British and North American context is dominant in this project, the location of these case studies has not been my concern and is therefore something that others may wish to interrogate in more detail.

The study begins by examining an exhibition by the French artist duo Art Orienté Objet, a collaboration between Marion Laval-Jeantet and Benoît Mangin, at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris during 2013–2014. Human-animal relations are the central focus of both the museum’s displays and the artistic practice of Art Orienté Objet. The topic of hunting is shown to resonate with the duo’s work, as well as with wonder in intriguing ways. Throughout this chapter, the wonder of deranged theatrics and enchanting materials are discussed in more detail in relation to specific artworks, drawing from texts by Jane Bennett and Mary Jane Rubenstein. Wonder is positioned as being a central experience facilitated by this exhibition. Art Orienté Objet’s artistic interventions are also discussed as ways to offer fresh perspectives on this historic hunting collection and even as a means to critique the displays. The capacity for wonder to provoke the cultivation of an ethical sensibility towards wildlife in the context of the divisive practice of sport hunting is discussed in relation to the artists’ interventions at this museum. The exhibition also addressed issues relating to wildlife conservation more generally. While wonder is shown to have a role to play in relation to the issues brought forth through Art Orienté Objet’s artworks presented at this museum, its limitations in this context are also recognised and discussed.

The second chapter turns to the sea to consider wonder in relation to marine wildlife, which is physically and geographically far from human. The pitfalls and possibilities of wonder’s role in encounters with difference are discussed in the context of series three of Isabella Rossellini’s Green Porno (2008–2009), which aimed to raise awareness of the threats facing sea life, particularly overfishing. Rossellini claimed that she wanted to evoke wonder through her films in order to compel viewers to protect wildlife. Wonder’s limits and opportunities in this regard are discussed in relation to work by Luce Irigaray and Marguerite La Caze, who notably claimed that wonder and generosity are both needed to provide the foundations for the cultivation of an ethical sensibility. This chapter argues that Rossellini drew from the history of the wildlife film genre to further imbue her films with wonder, discussing work by Jean Painlevé and Jacques-Yves Cousteau, who both famously focused on marine wildlife in their films. Green Porno is situated in the realm of visual culture more broadly, yet it has specific links to performance art and avant-garde film, making a valid case for this work to be
considered in terms of artistic practice. However, lest concerns be raised in this regard, wonder and generosity are additionally discussed in a contemporary art and exhibition context in relation to the shark exhibition programme, which ran at the Musée Océanographique de Monaco between 2013–2015 to raise awareness about the threats facing sharks.

The final chapter considers work by the contemporary artists Marcus Coates and Tania Kovats, made as a result of their time on the Enchanted Isles as part of the Gulbenkian Galápagos Artists’ Residency Programme (2007–2011). The ways these artists explored their encounters with wildlife and engaged with the island life during their respective trips is discussed in relation to the rich literary heritage of the archipelago. Given Darwin’s links to the islands, Levine’s Darwinian species of wonder is explored here, as is a species of ‘mirthful wonder’, which I argue offers a strategic way of drawing attention to the ecological issues facing Galápagos.\(^\text{196}\) In concluding this chapter, wonder’s dark side is interrogated in more detail. Having discussed at length what wonder is and when it occurs, this chapter focuses on what wonder can do and where it might lead.

Some final methodological points are worth noting before continuing. This thesis draws from the fields of art history, visual culture studies, anthropology, environmental geography and, significantly, human-animal studies. This mode of inquiry reflects the multidisciplinarity that marks the latter field, whilst emphasising the disciplinary specificity of scholars of art history and visual culture, this being essential, according to the theorist Cary Wolfe, for the contribution of something ‘specific and irreplaceable’ to “this “question of the animal”” from the perspective of my particular discipline.\(^\text{197}\) This project also recalls the concerns of ecofeminism, framed as it is by the feminist theorist Greta Gaard as being concerned with ‘the fundamental interconnectedness of all life’ and preoccupied with an ethic of responsibility and care.\(^\text{198}\) Gaard has suggested that the ‘failure to recognize connections can lead to violence, and a disconnected sense of

\(^{196}\) Mirthful wonder is Runette Kruger’s term, see Kruger, ‘Wonder, Subversion and Newness’.

\(^{197}\) Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 115. Multidisciplinarity, or transdisciplinarity, according to Wolfe, should be understood ‘as a kind of distributed reflexivity necessitated […] by the fact that (by definition) no discourse, no discipline, can make transparent the conditions of its own observations’, see Wolfe, p. 116. Steve Baker has also noted this imperative, see Steve Baker, *Artist Animal* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p. 179.

self is most assuredly at the root of the current ecological crisis'. Ecofeminism’s concern with disturbing binaries, whether these are man/woman, nature/culture or human/animal, also includes disrupting the reason/emotion dualism to make space for care, empathy and compassion to become central features of ethical encounters with wildlife in this context. In fact it is important to stress how ethics might even need the sort of affective mobilising force that wonder can provide if it is going to translate into action. When re-evaluating the relevance and significance of ecofeminism in the twenty-first century the writers, theorists and animal rights advocates Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen recently claimed that:

It is by now familiar to most people who have thought about the ethical and political grounds for our obligations to the other-than-human world, that reason alone cannot motivate and sustain a rejection of destructive anthropocentric practices.

Wonder therefore seems apt as an emotion, a passion no less, that might be taken seriously as a means of informing and reconfiguring responses to wildlife in the face of its various plights in creative, as well as in theoretical, practice. For the purposes of this project, ethics refers to ethical behaviour towards wildlife and is indebted to the feminist theorist Karen Barad, who stated that ‘[e]thics is […] not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part’. This particular understanding of

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200 Adams and Gruen, ‘Introduction’, p. 3. Adams and Gruen note that ecofeminism fell out of favour due to the fact that ‘ecofeminists were mistakenly thought to maintain the masculine reason/feminine emotion binary’, yet they claim that ‘[e]xposing dualistic frameworks operating in oppressive situations did not mean that ecofeminists valorized the non-dominant parts of the dualism nor viewed the characteristics of the non-dominant part as “natural”’, Adams and Gruen, ‘Groundwork’, p. 30.

201 See for instance, Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 3.


203 Whilst ecofeminism fell from favour for a time in academia, due in part to what many scholars felt to be its essentialist character and being focused on a specific strata of social class, Greta Gaard has recently charted the history of ecofeminism in an article where she convincingly argued that ecofeminism was multifaceted and in fact, widely misunderstood. She noted the renewed interest in ecofeminism in the twenty-first century and observed the emergence of what has been termed ‘New Eco-Feminism’. Whilst this attests to fresh possibilities for the ecofeminist position today, Gaard nevertheless suggested that ‘it will need to be more cognizant of its rich and prescient history’ in order to secure its future. See Greta Gaard, ‘Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism’, Feminist Formations, 2.23 (2011), 26–53 (p. 44).

204 Barad, p. 393, also quoted in Haraway, When Species Meet, p. 289.
ethics can therefore position entanglements of humans and wildlife at its heart, making it apt for this study.

This project could be positioned as broadly posthumanist in its approach, taking into account how Barad conceived such a position. For Barad, being posthumanist means ‘to signal the crucial recognition that nonhumans play an important role in natural-cultural practices […]. But also […] marks a refusal to take the distinction between “human” and “nonhuman” for granted’. However, with an emphasis on ethics and compassion, and a firm agenda to examine artistic (read ‘human’) engagements with wildlife (‘nonhuman’) it is difficult to make the case for this project being wholly posthuman since discrete boundaries are a prerequisite in this work, even as the practitioners strive to break these down. In addition, the sentiments of ethics and compassion that are discussed in relation to the artworks in this study are rooted in very human concerns. Yet the human-animal studies scholar Kari Weil has noted how Cary Wolfe ‘deftly points out the stubborn humanism at the base of most efforts to extend ethical concepts to animals’, but that ‘he also senses a necessary double bind — the need to advocate certain principles of rights or protection with the knowledge of that faulty foundation’. Indeed Wolfe identified what he defined as a kind of humanist posthumanism, affirming the possibility that you can ‘be committed to this posthumanist question in a humanist way’, a position he has observed at the root of much animal rights philosophy for instance. This offers an opening for this research to assume a somewhat paradoxical position in the posthuman landscape, catering to its simultaneous desire to focus on works and theories that de-centre the human, blur human-animal boundaries and place agency with wildlife, at the same time as advocating ethical and compassionate treatment of these very same creatures on human terms. However, like Donna Haraway, this study opts instead to playfully eschew a wholesale alignment to posthumanism while nevertheless taking heed from philosophers and theorists who work from posthuman perspectives. Recognising that ‘[c]ritters are at stake in each other in every mixing and turning of the terran compost pile’, and that ‘[c]ritters — human and not — become-with each other, compose and decompose each other […] in sympoietic tangling’, it is perhaps more important to align this research with Haraway’s humorous (or humus!) assertion, that ‘I am a compostist, not a posthumanist’. In so doing, the aim is to provide fertile ground for the consideration of the ways humans and wildlife are entangled in the instances of contemporary art and visual culture discussed in this study, and to explore some of the

205 Barad, p. 32.
206 Weil, p. 32.
208 Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, p. 97.
playful yet serious ways this is taking place. The hope is that through encounters with these sort of artistic practices and by reading them via the frame of wonder, one might feel compelled to be more responsible and more able to 'stay with the trouble' on Earth during the critical moment Haraway has reconfigured as the Chthulucene.
Chapter One
Enchanting Trophies and Infectious Wonder: Art Orienté Objet at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature

A Unique Hunting Museum
During the Art Orienté Objet exhibition at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in 2013–2014, thirty-five of the artists’ works were presented amidst the existing museum collection. Displayed in the centre of the Salle du cerf et du loup (the Stag and Wolf Room) was Le Cornebrame ou machine à faire chanter les cerfs dans la brume (2013), a preserved stag that had been manipulated to form a musical instrument akin to bagpipes. The creature’s limp body was hollow to act as an airbag, his legs substituted for pipes and a mouthpiece protruded from the lips of his taxidermy head (figures 8 and 9). Illuminated by four lamps and laid across a low level plinth, this stag looked like a sacrificial offering upon an altar. Placed nearby was a film showing this tragicomic instrument being played via a futile mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, which filled the body of the beast with breath that was pushed through the pipes to produce a sound.¹ Art Orienté Objet made the piece from the body parts of a creature discarded by hunters on the Belval Estate, a hunting reserve affiliated with the museum where the artists undertook a residency in 2012.² The work was presented amongst a permanent museum display of visual representations of stags and deer hunting from various eras, demonstrating the ways these creatures have captured imaginations throughout the history of both hunting and art. But it also highlighted the important role they have played in myths, fables and religious stories. In this softly lit room, sixteenth-century tapestries depicting mythic hunting tales, such as the story of Diana and Actaeon, furnish the walls.³ A painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553) and a print by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) both depict Saint Eustace, the patron saint of hunting, who when in pursuit of a stag had a vision of Christ appearing on an antler as if on the cross.⁴ There is also a more conventionally prepared taxidermy stag on display, which

³ The tale of Diana and Actaeon features in Ovid’s Metamorphoses (c. 8 CE). The protagonist Actaeon is hunting with his hounds when he stumbles across Diana, the Greek goddess of hunting, bathing nude. In her fury, Diana splashes Actaeon with water turning him into a stag and he flees, only to be later tracked down by the hunting party who, failing to recognise him, have him killed by his own hounds.
⁴ The stag often features in biblical stories as well as myths. Due to the annual shedding and regrowth of the antlers this creature has served as a metaphor for the resurrection of Christ.
rather than being behind glass or incorporated into a habitat diorama, instead appears to be wandering the museum’s rooms (figure 10). Art Orienté Objet’s intervention appeared to inject an anti-hunting message into this exhibit, adding another layer to the display. The work seemed to be a sorrowful attempt to reanimate a hunted stag by trying to breathe life into him. However, such a reading is ambiguous since the work’s title, coupled with the sound the instrument makes when played, act as a hunting lure.\(^5\)

The intervention was typical of the curatorial approach adopted by Claude d’Anthenaise throughout this museum, in which contemporary art is displayed amongst the collection to offer multiple perspectives on hunting and to prompt debate on the topic.\(^6\)

Today, many hunting museums face the challenge of remaining relevant to visitors when hunting for sport and hunting trophies are subjects frequently viewed as controversial, distasteful and out of kilter with modern-day sensibilities.\(^7\) The uproar surrounding the recent (and illicit) shooting of Cecil the Lion, who was part of a long-term conservation study being conducted at the University of Oxford, by an American trophy hunter, is just one high profile example testifying to the passionate responses hunting can elicit on an international stage. Nevertheless, hunting is a complex and multifaceted pursuit that the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature investigates through contemporary art and thematic displays, which also interrogate human relationships with wildlife more broadly, making this hunting museum unique.

The museum was founded in 1964 by the hunting and nature enthusiasts François Sommer (1904–1973) and his wife Jacqueline (1913–1993) as part of the Fondation François Sommer pour la Chasse et la Nature. Throughout their lives, the couple were avid hunters, naturalists and conservationists, and as part of this passion for hunting and wildlife they amassed a collection of hunting related artworks, objects, weaponry since the Middle Ages, see Marie-Hélène Westphalen, *Un Musée Singulier* (Paris: Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, 2010), p. 30.\(^5\)

The title of the work crudely translates as ‘horn bay’, combining the sound the instrument makes with that of a stag. The second title attributed to the piece translates as ‘machine to blackmail stags in the mist’.\(^5\)


It was in response to this issue that the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature organised the symposium *Exposer la Chasse?* in March 2015. Many of the museums represented by speakers at this conference recognised that contemporary, urban audiences have little affinity or interest in hunting today, observing how hunting is a highly emotive topic and discussing the challenges they face when engaging audiences with their collections.\(^7\)
and trophies that they displayed in their home. To better present their collection as it expanded and following the tragic death of their child, and therefore the loss of an heir, the couple sought to create an institution that would sustain their life-long commitment to wildlife and ensure the long-term display of their collection. The Fondation de la Maison de la Chasse et de la Nature was accordingly established with two aims in mind: firstly to support and promote so-called ‘ethical’ approaches to hunting, reflecting the Sommers’ own attitudes, and secondly to share and preserve the couple’s collection of hunting related artworks and objects in a public museum.

When the museum first opened on the 21st February 1967 in Hôtel de Guénégaud, the interior was designed to reflect the private residence of a hunter-collector in line with the Sommers’ desire that the museum be presented like a home (figure 11). Ornate floral wallpaper, opulent curtains and the display of the Sommers’ antique ceramics, decorative arts and furniture throughout the museum contributed to the domestic character of the space, providing a backdrop to their collection of artworks and hunting trophies. The way the trophies were displayed enhanced the homely feel of this museum. As is often the case with these objects, rather than adhering to any zoological classification they were presented as souvenirs to the Sommers’ travel and hunting expeditions in rooms focused on specific continents, including North America, Africa and Asia. The African room contained goat and antelope heads as well as big game trophies, including a rhinoceros head, elephant tusks and a full taxidermy mount of a lion. Interspersed in the display was an ethnographic collection of weapons that could be used to kill these animals in the wild. The log cabin-inspired American room featured moose, reindeer, a taxidermy polar bear mounted on hind legs and a wolf skin rug pinned to the wall. In addition, an archival photograph of the Asian room shows a display of four tiger trophies, one full mount and three heads on shields (figures 12–14).

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9 In addition to the museum, today the Foundation comprises a private members’ club and L’École de Belval in Ardennes, established in 1995 to offer training on hunting and forest management methods. This hunting management programme, the various colloquia on topics relating to wildlife and conservation organised by the Foundation and the funding it awards for research, demonstrate the ways it continues to uphold the Sommers’ concerns with so-called ethical approaches to hunting and their interest in wildlife conservation, see <www.fondationfrancoissommer.org> [accessed 18 January 2017]. ‘Ethical’ hunting will be discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.
10 Attributed to the architect François Mansart, Hôtel de Guénégaud was constructed in 1650, see d’Anthenaise, *Le Musée de la Chasse*, p. 4.
The collection continued to grow as a result of loans and donations. Accordingly, François Sommer identified the neighbouring building as a feasible site for expansion and in 2002 his plan was realised posthumously when the Foundation acquired Hôtel de Mongelas. This eighteenth-century building required extensive renovation before it would be suitable to house the collection. This provided an opportunity for major changes to be made to the way the collection was displayed, in recognition of evolving attitudes towards hunting and wildlife since the 1960s when the museum was founded. To this end, when the expansion and renovation was completed in 2007, two key changes had been made to the original displays. The first was the adoption of a thematic presentation based around wildlife prominent in the history of hunting in western societies. Today the museum has rooms dedicated to stags and wolves, wild boar, birds of prey, dogs and horses, where specimens of this wildlife are presented alongside various representations of these creatures from different time periods. Like the Salle du cerf et du loup, the displays in each of these rooms interrogate the ways human relationships and attitudes to wildlife have evolved throughout history, in the context of both hunting and art. The second change was the commissioning and display of contemporary art, which is today presented amongst the museum’s collection of hunting related artworks and artefacts. Whilst this activity was pursued to a certain degree prior to the renovation, it gained increased momentum following the curator Claude d’Anthenaise’s appointment at museum in 1998 and notably as a consequence of the renovation. Accordingly, today the museum is presented very differently to its earlier incarnation.

The artists invited to exhibit at this museum are those preoccupied with interrogating human-animal relations. Many involved in the exhibition programme over the years use animal-derived materials such as feathers, wool or taxidermy to create their work. Contemporary artists including Nicolas Darrot, Mark Dion, Jan Fabre and Rebecca Horn have works included in the museum’s permanent displays and a temporary exhibition programme is also in place. Recent exhibitions have included Kate McCGwire’s Covert (2014–2015), where six of the artist’s feather sculptures were positioned alongside objects from the museum’s collections and Abraham Poincheval’s performance (Dans le peau de) l’ours (2014), where the artist spent thirteen days in...
one of the museum’s rooms rather eccentrically installed inside a taxidermy bear prepared to accommodate his body. Art Orienté Objet similarly explore human-animal relations through their work and often use animal derived materials to make it. At times, the duo have even examined the subject of hunting, and their work has unexpected and surprising affinities with this practice. The interventions they made at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature were shot through with instances of what I have described as enchanting materials and the wonder of deranged theatrics. But how did this arise and how did these artworks harness wonder’s ethical and political potential in this hunting museum? Furthermore, what were the limits of such an approach in this context?

Of course, the very framing of a hunting museum demands special consideration. After all, hunting is a practice premised on the destruction of wildlife, regardless of how the sport is framed philosophically by hunters themselves.17 So how might hunting and hunting trophies be peculiarly fertile sites for the evocation of wonder? Can the presentation of Art Orienté Objet’s works in this exhibition offer conditions conducive to promoting the compassion, respect and responsibility towards all creaturely life called for by the Chthulucene despite their display in a hunting museum? If so, what role might wonder play in bringing this about?

Hunting Trophies and Dreadful Wonder

When investigating the etymology of wonder in 2008, the philosopher Mary Jane Rubenstein stressed its inherent ambiguity.18 Today, wonder’s positive meanings are more commonly recognised and used in contemporary parlance. These include: ‘to be struck with surprise or astonishment, to marvel […] to be desirous to know or learn […] to marvel at: often implying profound admiration […] to cause to marvel, amaze, astound’.19 However, listed amongst the historic and obsolete definitions of wonder are ‘[e]vil or shameful action […] evil or horrible deeds […]. Destruction, disaster. […] Great distress or grief. […] dreadfully, horribly, terribly’.20 Rubenstein reminded readers that by revisiting these ‘repressed meanings […] wonder loses much of the sugarcoating it has acquired in contemporary usage’.21 She cited a 1969 essay by the philosopher Howard L. Parsons, to reveal how one root of wonder lies in ‘[w]unde: cut, gash, wound’, suggesting that like a wound, ‘wonder is only wonder when it remains open

18 Rubenstein, p. 9.
19 Oxford English Dictionary [online].
20 Rubenstein, p. 9; and Oxford English Dictionary [online].
21 Rubenstein, p. 10.
Rubenstein recalled Hesiod’s *Theogony* (c. 700BC), a tale of the birth of the Greek Gods. According to the story, the sea god, Thaumas (wonder), marries Electra, and together they bear three daughters: Iris, the human embodiment of the rainbow who communicates between human and heavenly worlds, and two other daughters who are Harpies. These daughters also act as intermediaries between Earth and other worlds, but do so in the more fearsome capacity of taking humans to the underworld. Having recognised these contrasting spawn of wonder, one beautiful and heavenly, and another, which is terrifying, Rubenstein concluded: ‘If thinking were truly to keep wonder open […] it would have to give up all efforts to purify itself of the ugly and the monstrous; to open itself to rainbows and Harpies, the awesome and the terrifying alike’.

For the purposes of this thesis, what Rubenstein described is considered to be a species of dreadful wonder, with the ambiguous and contradictory capacity to inspire horror or reverence, to be terrible or awe-inspiring. It is interesting that in Rubenstein’s retelling of Hesiod’s tale, the Harpies are the very embodiment of a terrible form of wonder. These creaturely hybrids of woman and bird typify a transgression of species boundaries — albeit mythic — that will later be argued to catalyse wonder. However, the point here is that dreadful wonder similarly marks encounters with hunting trophies due to the conflicting responses these objects can provoke. Considering that Jane Bennett has described enchantment, or ‘wonder-at-the-world’, as ‘that strange combination of delight and disturbance’, hunting trophies seem to be objects peculiarly suited to evoking it.

Today, the subject and practice of hunting gives rise to a range of strong and contrasting emotions amongst hunters and anti-hunters alike. Devoted sport hunters avidly collect trophies to fill the walls of their homes and pro-foxhunters staunchly defend the sport as a rural tradition. Conversely, anti-hunting protesters declare the practice abhorrent, hunt saboteurs take direct action to halt hunts and illicit big game hunting regularly becomes big news. As a result of the distaste for hunting amongst many members of the public, the presentation of hunting trophies — whether remnants

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22 Ibid., pp. 9–11. See also Parsons, p. 85, who poetically writes that ‘[t]o be wonderstruck is to be wounded by the sword of the strange event, to be stabbed awake by the striking’.
23 Rubenstein, p. 11.
24 Ibid., p. 12. Sophia Vasalou also noted how wonder has been associated with both dread and delight, see for instance Vasalou, p. 6, where she observed the significance of Rubenstein’s historic insights into wonder and states that ‘wonder has often been linked, not to delight, but to the darker elements of terror or fear’.
of colonial hunting expeditions or locally hunted wildlife presented in stately homes as natural history specimens — often presents challenges to museums today. On many occasions museum professionals have even adjusted the way these hunting trophies are displayed.26 Such activity often subverts the origins of these objects, or highlights that they derive from a past when attitudes towards hunting and hunting trophies were very different due to the role they played in the advancement of natural history and their symbolic weight at a time of colonialism.27 During the nineteenth century and throughout the first part of the twentieth century, hunting and hunting trophies contributed to ordering and possessing the colonial landscape, symbolising the domination of a country’s wildlife in addition to its indigenous people.28 At that point in history, when interpreted as specimens in public museums hunting trophies embodied these ideals, and when they were displayed in the hunter’s home they attributed wealth and power to their owner, making them symbolically and politically loaded objects.29 Such displays signified the expansion of the colonial enterprise and also the hunter’s perceived bravery and prowess. At the time, the public widely received these objects with enthusiasm. Viewers relished witnessing these trophies of wildlife from far away countries in major international exhibitions and public museums, which often originated from the substantial spoils of a single hunting collection.30

Today, on the other hand, hunting trophies and hunting as a sporting pursuit — particularly big game hunting — are considered problematic by many people. This is largely due to increased awareness of the plights faced by wildlife at the hands of humans, not to mention the destructive and distressing aspects of colonialism that historic objects of this kind are tainted by. As the museum studies scholar John Mackenzie has observed, ‘a liberal intellectual tradition in the twentieth century has generally found the suspected assault upon and destruction of animals in the recent

28 Gillespie, pp. 44 and 72.
past thoroughly repugnant'.

Since this attitude has prevailed into the twenty-first century, collections with hunting trophies must contend with this sort of mind-set when being considered for presentation to the public. However, hunting trophies are also controversial objects due to what they commemorate — that is, the ‘passionate death’ brought about by a hunter who took enjoyment in stalking and killing another animal.

The challenging characteristics of hunting trophies are heightened by their partial state. The taxidermist’s ability to reanimate bodies is undoubtedly compromised when all that remains is the animal’s head. As Rachel Poliquin has observed: ‘All taxidermy makes death overt, but just heads are decidedly deader. […] Any fantasy of reanimation can only be a nightmare of a disembodied head’.

Yet in spite of all this, hunting trophies also possess a certain allure thanks to the way they offer close encounters with (albeit deceased) wildlife. For hunters themselves, these objects act as souvenirs to the experience of hunting a specific animal at a particular time, and the deep emotional and physical relationship the hunter forged with the game during the hunt. For this reason, trophies are revered in the home of the hunter, memorialising their encounters with wildlife and triggering memories, stories and reminiscences.

At the same time hunting trophies are experiencing a resurgence of popularity in other quarters, beyond the walls of the hunter’s home. They are being used as ornaments to decorate interiors, props in fashion shoots or as the materials and inspiration for contemporary artworks, attesting to a renewed interest in — even tolerance for — these kinds of objects. Vintage taxidermy in the form of hunting trophies, instead of being burned or binned, is being actively sought out as ‘reclaimed’, or ‘ethical’ taxidermy in junk shops and flea markets, and even used by artists to make new work.

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32 Garry Marvin identified a fundamental difference between what he terms ‘cold deaths’, carried out by emotionally distanced professionals in the designated space for the act, for example the slaughterhouse or the veterinary clinic, and ‘passionate deaths’, brought about through hunting as a sport and leisure activity, see Garry Marvin, ‘Wild Killing: Contesting the Animal in Hunting’, in Killing Animals, ed. by The Animal Studies Group (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 10–29.
37 Rachel Poliquin wrote of how Saffron Walden Museum burnt their Victorian taxidermy collection, see Poliquin, The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy, pp. 123–124, whilst Alexis Turner told of how a giraffe head was found in a skip outside Slade School of Art in 1990, see Turner, p. 27.
Some artists have used ‘reclaimed’ hunting trophies to make a political point. 38 For instance, Mark Dion’s Later Share Khan (1990) is a tatty tiger-skin trophy, casually folded in a battered cardboard box presented on the gallery floor (figure 15). It appears as an embarrassing relic of times past when very different attitudes were held towards tigers and hunting. The tired and faded tiger skin seems to be packed away and destined for storage. This reflects the public distaste for hunting tigers today and the move many trophies have subsequently made from display in museums and historic houses to the storerooms out of view, where their ability to cause upset and offense is felt to be diminished. 39 Dion’s work also pokes fun at the hunter of this wild beast. Rather than evoking bravery and prowess, as was likely the hunter’s aspiration, this particular trophy has been named after the author Rudyard Kipling’s fictional tiger in The Jungle Book (1894), who is now known more widely as an anthropomorphic Disney cartoon character. Such a move undoubtedly reduces the ferocity of the hunter’s kill and imbues this object with a degree of humour.

Hunting trophies are at once ravishing and revolting, revered and reviled, provoking passionate and disparate responses amongst their varied audience of hunters, artists, museum visitors and the general non-hunting public. Indeed, as a life-long vegetarian with an anti-hunting stance it is the inherent conflict of my encounters with hunting trophies that renders them such fascinating objects. It is this very ambiguity of hunting trophies that makes them peculiarly aligned to evoking, and even embodying, a form of dreadful wonder — something Art Orienté Objet’s works at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature were able to capitalise on.

**Enchanting Ethical Trophies**

The trophy room at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature contains an array of taxidermy heads on shields, full mounts of animals and weaponry (figures 16 and 17). Elephant tusks are arranged symmetrically alongside heads on shields. Two leopards are posed identically beside one another in a single vitrine. The ceiling features a painting by Bernard Lorjou (1908–1986), commissioned by the Sommers in 1967 and as such, an early example of contemporary art being displayed amongst the collections at this museum. 40 As a result, the Salle des trophées offers an aestheticised presentation, which Steve Baker claimed might have been adopted to ‘distract the

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38 Steve Baker, for instance, has written about the use of hunting trophies in the work of the artist Angela Singer, who uses these objects to both ‘honour the animals’ life’ and draw attention to the act that brought forth the death, see for instance Steve Baker, “You Kill Things to Look at Them”: Animal Death in Contemporary Art’, in Killing Animals, ed. by The Animal Studies Group (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 69–98 (p. 85).
40 d’Anthenaise, Le Cabinet de Diane, p. 147.
viewer from the deadly theme of the displays’, but can also work to draw closer attention to it. During the Art Orienté Objet exhibition, two additional trophies had been installed amongst this display. *Le Panda, Série The Year My Voice Broke* (1997) and *Le Tigre, Série Feed-Back* (2003) were knitted sculptures of hunting trophies, which Art Orienté Objet created on the premise of making violent encounters with wildlife unnecessary (figures 18 and 19). The artists suggested that:

> these knitted effigies of animals, which have an activist element, offer hunters [...] an alternative to killing and skinning the real thing. [...] art gives us a chance to leave the animals in their wild state because our curiosity is satisfied by the representations it offers us [...].

Through knitting, Art Orienté Objet produced ethical surrogates for hunting trophies. As such, they made a subtle anti-hunting statement in the context of this hunting museum, poignantly evading the use of wildlife heads and skins in these sculptures. As a historically domestic and frequently coded feminine pastime, knitting is familiar as well as familial, a craft associated with care. These characteristics make it an ideal, unthreatening media to make statements about controversial issues in an approachable way. This capacity of knitting has resulted in the craft experiencing a recent revival, where it has been used as a form of activism known as ‘craftivism’, an activity that has at its core the desire to make something that encourages debate and engagement with political, social and environmental issues. The contemporary craftivist movement involves many self-organised communities existing both off- and on-line, and although each craftivist has their own approach and cause, be it anti-consumerist, ecological, anti-war — to name a few common themes — their activities take the form of quiet yet obtrusive forms of protest such as knit-ins, charitable projects involving knitting warm clothing for those in need, and yarn bombing, a type of knitted graffiti, where craftivists illicitly display their handicraft in the public realm to make the urban landscape more colourful and draw attention to their cause. Whilst craftivism has achieved widespread popularity since 2000, craft has long been employed for social

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41 Baker, “‘You Kill Things to Look at Them’”, p. 91.
44 Ibid., p. 206.
45 Betsy Greer, *Craftivism: The Art of Craft and Activism* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2014), p. 8. Examples include the guerrilla crafters of the London-based group Knit the City, who create street art through knitting or crochet and display it in the public realm (not always with permission to do so), or the Craftivist Collective, who have created mini protest banners reflecting the plight of sweatshop workers, which they hung in public spaces during London Fashion Week. See <www.knitthecity.com> and <www.craftivist-collective.com> for more details [accessed 18 January 2017].
and political ends, as evidenced by the banners and quilts made by suffragettes, slave abolitionists and more recently, AIDS activists, for instance.\textsuperscript{46} Perhaps a more pertinent example in this context is the ecofeminist practice of ‘yarning’, whereby threads were woven through trees in an attempt to protest against, and interfere with, the logging of forests in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{47} It is this heritage of the political character of handicraft, as well as the contemporary craftivist movement, which are recalled through Art Orienté Objet’s knitted trophies. As a result of their surprising and incongruous presence amidst the museum’s taxidermy trophy collection, these works invite viewers to engage in debates about hunting and killing wildlife for sport.

Rather than the guerrilla tactics of illicit display associated with craftivism, such as knitted graffiti or yarn bombing, Art Orienté Objet’s intervention has been invited by an institution. By presenting these artworks amongst the existing display of taxidermy trophies, the museum negated a single authoritative voice either in favour of hunting or in opposition to it, introducing an element of ambiguity to the displays and leaving room for wonder as viewers explored both sides of the hunting debate to formulate their own opinions. The inclusion of ‘alternative’ and DIY craft practices in exhibitions and displays offers museums the chance to tap into popular interests enabling them to appear fresh, contemnporise their displays and engage with new audiences.\textsuperscript{48} At the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, this is one way the historic hunting collection was brought into the twenty-first century to explore the multifaceted debates surrounding hunting today.

This type of activity has also taken place in other wildlife museums. For instance, the Natural History Museum in London invited the craftivists of Stitch London to host an event as part of the public engagement programme to accompany the exhibition \textit{The Deep Sea} (2010). The collective staged a \textit{Stitch-A-Squid} event, whereby members of the public could create knitted marine creatures that were then displayed in and amongst the museum’s collections throughout the evening. The centre-piece to these activities was a giant knitted squid, created by Stitch London founder Lauren O’Farrell following her observations of the 8.62 metre-long giant squid housed in the Natural

\textsuperscript{46} For more on these issues, see Trent S. Newmeyer, ‘Knit One, Stitch Two, Protest Three! Examining the Historical and Contemporary Politics of Crafting’, \textit{Leisure/Loisir}, 32.2 (2008), 437–460.
History Museum’s spirit collections. This creature in itself is relatively spectacular due to its sheer size, far from human physiology, mythical heritage and rarity — very few people have seen this creature alive. O’Farrell knitted her own version of the squid from ‘plarn’, a yarn made from cut-up strips of plastic. The resulting humorously titled *Squidius knittius giganticus plasticus* was created from 162 Sainsburys supermarket carrier bags (figure 20). Plastic is known to be particularly hazardous to marine wildlife, with plastic bags and other plastic waste being consumed by creatures foraging at sea and on the shoreline, where this rubbish accumulates. For instance, in 2016, several stranded sperm whales were found with large quantities of plastic in their stomachs, with one young sperm whale reported to have ingested almost one hundred plastic bags.\(^{49}\) Such occurrences give O’Farrell’s squid a renewed potency — deep sea squid being a prominent source of food for sperm whales. O’Farrell’s crafted squid can therefore be read in the context of these concerns, serving as a consciousness raising exercise with the possibility of prompting visitors to become more responsible about their own plastic consumption and disposal. The project promoted re-use and recycling through the creative use of plastic waste and O’Farrell’s work facilitated engagement with environmental issues through the approachable use of craft. Furthermore, the humour and high jinx that permeated the event, where knitted creatures were surreptitiously placed amongst the museum’s collection and photographed, and the crafted giant squid was wrapped around the museum’s sculpture of Charles Darwin, contributed to the accessibility of these debates. Similarly, Art Orienté Objet’s intervention of ethical hunting trophies offered a way for the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature to update the display of the Sommers’ hunting trophies, rooted in an earlier era when very different attitudes towards hunting and wildlife held sway. In this way the museum seemed to invoke the contemporary craftivist movement to critique its own displays, which feature taxidermy trophies of various threatened species. The knitted trophies also added an element of humour to an otherwise serious subject, traversing both craftivism and *laughtivism*, in which craft and humour are deployed as activist tactics respectively.\(^{50}\) The aim of such an approach is to offer visitors an alternative way into the difficult topics at stake in this work.

Through these sculptures, Art Orienté Objet achieved what Donna Haraway recently described as ‘caring without the neediness of touching by camera or hand’, by offering


ethical stand-ins for hunting trophies that had been crafted through knitting.\textsuperscript{51} An avoidance of violence makes these knitted trophies one route ‘to craft conditions for finite flourishing […] on earth’.\textsuperscript{52} No death was necessary to create them. However, Art Orienté Objet are not the only artists to have recognised the political capacity of knitting in relation to hunting and wildlife protection. The artist Ruth Marshall also explores this possibility by knitting replicas of the skins of extinct and endangered wildlife from observations of pelt specimens in natural history museums. In this way, the artist aims to raise awareness about the threats facing wildlife, as well as funds towards the protection of certain species.\textsuperscript{53} Marshall’s knitted pelts are displayed stretched out in frames made from sticks crudely lashed together, recalling the traditional method of drying and preparing their animal skin counterparts. Marshall said she got the idea of displaying them in this way from an image she saw in the zoologist Alan Rabinowitz’s book\textit{ Jaguar: One Man’s Struggle to Establish the World’s First Jaguar Preserve} (2000), which contains an image of a live jaguar Rabinowitz was studying, and another of the same creature’s skin stretched out and drying in a stick frame, having been killed by poachers.\textsuperscript{54} The knitted pelts are often installed in the gallery in sets and from a distance the skins look convincingly real, with gradations of coloured wool used to represent the unique patterns and textures of the fur as faithfully as possible (figure 21). In one tiger skin depicted in Marshall’s Big Cat Series (2012), a single purposeful hole can be seen in the fabric, recalling the bullet wound preceding the death of the animal. Marshall writes of the inherent duality of her work whereby viewers often experience disgust upon the immediate encounter with her knitted pelts, which turns to

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\textsuperscript{52} Haraway, \textit{Staying with the Trouble}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{53} For instance, Ruth Marshall used knitting to raise money towards the protection of the Leadbeater’s possum. The artist has produced a ‘Knot Impossumable’ knitting kit, containing the instructions and materials to create two knitted possum pelts. The crafter can keep one and return the second pelt to the Knitting Nannas of Toolangi — a group who stage knit-ins and who also use the pelts to raise awareness of the predicament of these creatures in public exhibitions. A percentage of the money raised through the sale of these kits goes to The Friends of Leadbeater’s Possum charity and the Knitting Nannas of Toolangi to finance their activities, see \url{<www.ruthmarshall.com>} [accessed 18 January 2018].

\textsuperscript{54} Ruth Marshall, ‘My Journey of Knitting Wildlife’ \url{<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1712&context=tsaconf>} [accessed 15 April 2016].
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fascination once the method of construction is revealed upon closer inspection.\textsuperscript{55} Such is the shift afforded through the knowledge that these are surrogates for wildlife skins. Marshall’s knitted pelts and Art Orienté Objet’s knitted hunting trophies evoke both horror due to the difficult subject matter, and reverence thanks to the conscientious and ethical representation of endangered wildlife through knitting. In this way the works provide the ambiguous circumstances that can generate dreadful wonder.

Whilst many craftivists are amateurs, Art Orienté Objet’s trophies (and indeed Marshall’s knitted pelts) are accomplished knitted objects, demonstrating a command of knitting as a technique. While knitting is indeed a familiar and everyday handicraft, when used in this way it elicits admiration from knitters and non-knitters alike towards the skill needed to create these objects. The anthropologist Alfred Gell described this sort of admiration as \textit{the enchantment of technology}, which he suggested is ‘the power that technical processes have of casting a spell over us so that we see the real world in an enchanted form’.\textsuperscript{56} Gell suggested that the technical processes behind the creation of some objects are so difficult to comprehend that they resist material and intellectual possession, creating and sustaining desire and forcing viewers to perceive them as magical due to lack of understanding.\textsuperscript{57} It is the way such objects come into being that Gell claimed to be at the root of their power, ‘their becoming rather than their being’.\textsuperscript{58} In Gell’s terms, the fact that knitting is such a familiar craft only enhances the sense of wonder felt when encountering such expertly made objects, since viewers are well aware of the challenges the craft might present when making these trophies.\textsuperscript{59}

These two artworks were installed without labels amongst the museum’s collection of taxidermy heads on shields, emphasising the deathly nature of the other objects on display through their cute and woolly domesticity. The ambiguity arising from this display enabled the museum to promote debate by embracing the contradiction of presenting these two types of objects simultaneously, which might elicit conflicting responses in viewers. The French artist Annette Messager’s \textit{The Boarders} (1971–1972), which, among actual taxidermied specimens, comprises numerous sparrows crafted from feathers, wire and other household items and dressed in tiny knitted


\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 471.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 469.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 470.
jumpers, further demonstrates this in action. The textile historian Joanne Turney observed that the pastel-coloured jumpers that clothe the birds in Messager’s work have the effect of neutralising the horrible scene of death due to the homeliness and familiarity of knitting. At first glance it is possible to be charmed by the tiny sparrows, but it quickly becomes apparent that the birds are presented as if dead and that their bodies ‘almost fall apart’, leading to viewers being attracted and subsequently repelled by the work. As Turney stated, ‘[t]heir shrouding in knitted jumpers normalizes what is a horrific tableau in which the dead may wake from their sleep as the viewer watches — we are repelled but equally fascinated by that which is displayed’. The work shows how the familiar and familial craft of knitting can destabilise, and even neutralise, encounters with objects that would otherwise be disturbing. It is possible that Art Orienté Objet’s knitted trophies function in a similar way to Messager’s piece, with their knitted forms acting as a lure to visitors who are drawn to these sculptures. As viewers move between knitted imitations of trophy heads and taxidermy heads on shields, a rift opens up, leaving space for conflicting responses to be experienced in a moment of dreadful wonder.

The danger, of course, is that rather than advance an anti-hunting imperative, these enchanting woolly trophies lead instead to the ‘declawing’ of wonder due to their innocuous domesticity, making these trophies somewhat politically and ethically impotent. These artworks would then have the effect of neutralising the wider displays of taxidermy hunting trophies rather than imbuing them with a craftivist agenda. However, the appearance of these knitted trophies militates against this. Despite the evident skill needed to craft them, these ethical trophies by no means offer flawless depictions of a tiger or a giant panda. The bulging eyes and crooked snarl of Art Orienté Objet’s tiger and the strange proportion of the panda’s head contribute to the awkwardness of these trophies, which could be described as instances of ‘botched taxidermy’. Steve Baker used this term to describe what he observed as the fractured and ‘wrong’ look of the animal in a series of recent artworks, ‘where things […] appear to have gone wrong with the animal […] but where it still holds together’. Baker suggested that the striking and startling forms of botched taxidermy ‘render the animal

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61 Turney, p. 122.
63 Turney, p. 122.
64 Rubenstein, p. 10.
65 For more on how ‘awkwardness’ might be politically productive in human-animal encounters, see Lorimer, ‘On Auks and Awkwardness’.
Rachel Poliquin suggested that flawless representations of wildlife elicit wonder, but this study suggests to the contrary, that wonder arises when they are flawed. Art Orienté Objet’s botched hunting trophies certainly had the capacity to achieve this, since they offered an unexpected and surprising encounter in the trophy room, where things were not what they initially seemed.

Appropriating the use of the verb ‘to botch’ from the writings of the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Steve Baker used ‘botched taxidermy’ to describe a bodging or cobbling of things together, and suggested that one way this is achieved in artistic practice is through the use of the ‘wrong’ material in the representation of animal bodies. One of a series of examples used to show this in action is Mark Dion’s *Ursus maritimus* (1991), a taxidermy polar bear lying on a wooden shipping crate in a pool of tar. However, this polar bear has in fact been fabricated from white goat skin, a substitution of materials that Baker suggested had taken place ‘for reasons that are less than obvious’. Botching was positioned as a playful, experimental and provisional process, which the use of the wrong materials appears to testify to. But more than this, and given Baker’s recent questioning of the continued relevance of the term now seventeen years after it was first proposed in print, I want to suggest that by botching nonhuman animals through the use of the ‘wrong’ materials, artists today are seeking to represent wildlife in ways that are more ethically sound. These artists purposefully choose these ‘wrong’ materials to serve as surrogates for the nonhuman animal bodies they strive to represent in their work. In this way, the reasons why Dion used goat skin to make his polar bear cease to be ‘less than obvious’ and instead become glaringly so: the artist could not — and most likely did not want to — use the skin of a creature listed on the threatened species list to make this work. Instead, Dion chose to use the skin of livestock animals that are most likely to be by-products of the meat industry. Such a move resounds with Dion and the artist Robert Marbury’s recent assertion that artists should ‘[f]ind creative solutions to producing animals that are unavailable because of their protected status’, advising readers that ‘[g]oat skins make excellent

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67 Ibid., p. 62.
72 Lange-Berndt also noted Mark Dion’s tendency to use livestock skins and even synthetic fur to create the bears in his work, attributing this to the artist’s ‘ecological sensibility’, see Lange-Berndt, *Cave Show*, p. 53.
polar bears’. In a similar vein, Art Orienté Objet shirked the use of the heads and skins of endangered wildlife to craft their surrogate hunting trophies from wool instead.

The artists Ackroyd and Harvey deployed a similarly evasive strategy in their depictions of wildlife, producing representations that like Dion’s reoccurring plush polar bears, are entirely absent from any materials derived from nonhuman animals. *Living Skin* (regrown at various dates) was a depiction of a tiger skin made from grass turf. The tiger’s stripes were created by applying a stencil that masked off sections of growing grass from sunlight, so that the grass that continued to produce chlorophyll remained dark green and the areas deprived of light, yellowed. The same technique was used in the artists’ *Tiger Grass Coat* (regrown at various dates), originally produced for the catwalk as part of a campaign run by the now defunct anti-fur organisation Lynx. Ackroyd and Harvey’s works draw attention to two threats facing tigers, poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, with one ‘skin’ presented strung up like a freshly hunted animal pelt and the other manipulated into a luxury fashion item. In both works the artists express their disdain at this unnecessary use and trade of wildlife skins, actively refusing to use the pelts of endangered species and using an ethical alternative to make their point. The living plant material the artists use as a surrogate instead injects life into objects that normally necessitate a death.

Like Dion, Art Orienté Objet attempted to articulate wildlife more ethically through their work. However, like *Ursus maritimus*, which foregoes polar bear pelts and simply substitutes them for livestock skins, Art Orienté Objet’s trophies do not go far enough in the wholesale eschewal of animal derived materials. The use of wool as a surrogate material does not make these trophies ethically bullet proof. Sue Coe has produced an artist’s book examining the development of live sheep exports featuring a drawing depicting the practice of mulesing (figure 22). This process sees the rear of a sheep slashed, often without anaesthetic, to allow the wool to grow cleanly and prevent waste wool upon shearing. Despite the ethical premise of Art Orienté Objet’s trophies and the artists’ desire to make violent encounters with wildlife unnecessary, Coe’s observation reveals that these knitted trophies are not guaranteed to be absent from violence. This surprising twist contributes to their ambiguity. In addition, whilst wool is traditionally

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73 Mark Dion and Robert Marbury, ‘Some Notes Toward a Manifesto for Artists Working With and About Taxidermy Animals’, in *Dead Animals, or the Curious Occurrence of Taxidermy in Contemporary Art*, ed. by Jo-Ann Conklin (Providence, David Winton, Bell Gallery, Brown University, 2016), pp. 68–69 (p. 68).

taken from sheep, there is always the possibility that an acrylic alternative has been used. The intellectual uncertainty arising from this contributes to the instability of these works, offering space for wonder.

These knitted trophies can also work to raise awareness about endangered species and extinction in the context of this hunting museum. The sculptures prompt reflection on these topics due to the artists’ choice to depict the endangered tiger, whose numbers were grossly reduced by colonial hunting practices, and whose survival remains threatened by poaching today. By presenting a panda, the artists broadened the debate into issues relating to wildlife conservation more generally. The giant panda is emblematic of this movement rather than the contemporary hunting debate, featuring as the poster-animal of various wildlife conservation campaigns, as well as being the species gracing the logo of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, today three of the nine subspecies of tigers are extinct, with the others listed as endangered.\(^75\) Despite a ban on hunting tigers, poachers continue to illicitly hunt these creatures today due to a roaring trade in tiger derived materials in parts of the world where they are believed to aid healing and promote virility. As is well known, the number of tigers and pandas living in the wild is now incredibly low. The vulnerability of this wildlife is embodied through the precarious knitted fabric from which Art Orienté Objet’s trophies are made, since it ‘is constructed from — and is punctuated by — holes’ and held together by seams, resulting in an unstable material that evokes the fragility of these species in the wild.\(^76\) Tigers and pandas are two of the poster-animals used by charities to raise awareness about wildlife conservation and prompt donations.\(^77\) They are flagship species, eliciting wonder in people who are seduced by these charismatic mammals and as a result feel compassionately compelled to protect them.\(^78\) The tiger and the

\(^75\) The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species can be accessed at <http://www.iucnredlist.org> [accessed 29 June 2017].

\(^76\) Turney, p. 113.

\(^77\) The panda for instance is used as the logo for WWF, and money can be donated to the charity by ‘adopting a tiger’.

panda represented in Art Orienté Objet’s works therefore act as a kind of shorthand for wildlife conservation, issues of extinction and species endangerment, advancing the political agenda of these works in this hunting museum by drawing attention to the role of humans in bringing about the plight of the tiger, for instance. These knitted trophies induce affective responses thanks to their aesthetic charisma, something Jamie Lorimer has suggested has the capacity to elicit powerful emotional responses in relation to biodiversity conservation.\(^7\) Such a response is accentuated in the context of this museum since the taxidermy trophies surrounding the knitted stand-ins feature similarly endangered species — including a selection of tigers — which through this juxtaposition are ‘rendered awkward by an awareness of and anxieties about biodiversity and extinction’.\(^8\)

At the same time, Art Orienté Objet’s works draw attention to the way species conservation is often promoted using a few flagship, charismatic mammals.\(^9\) This ‘pandering to the public with pandas’ by wildlife and conservation charities is something that Mark Dion and William Schefferine also commented on in their project Wheelbarrows of Progress (1990).\(^10\) One section of this work titled Survival of the Cutest (Who Gets on the Ark?), presented a wheelbarrow overflowing with soft toys modelled on wildlife including an elephant, a panda, a polar bear and an orca, which share the cute and cuddly qualities of Art Orienté Objet’s knitted trophies (figure 23). Through this work, Dion and Schefferine comment on the problematic mind-set of trying to save a single species for the benefit of humans, when focus should instead be on conserving wildlife, habitats and associated biodiversity in and for their own right.\(^11\) Like Dion and Schefferine, Art Orienté Objet appear to recognise this inadequate attitude towards species conservation through their depictions of a panda and a tiger, two icons of conservation and charismatic mammals that humans can identify with, and as a result, feel compelled to protect. However, lacking the polemic invoked by the title of Dion and Schefferine’s piece, Art Orienté Objet’s works could fall into this very same trap as they seem to prioritise our mammalian kin for salvation and furthermore, are not specific about the subspecies of tiger depicted in their work. Yet it seems significant that the theorist Timothy Morton has argued that ‘[t]he cute still has some juice left. […]

\(^7\) Lorimer, ‘Nonhuman Charisma’, p. 918; and see also Lorimer, *Wildlife in the Anthropocene*, p. 46.


\(^9\) According to Lorimer, flagship species ‘are the highly visible icons of conservation that are most likely to trigger sympathy, awareness, and (most importantly) resources from rich Western patrons’, Lorimer, ‘Nonhuman Charisma’, p. 923. In addition, Lorimer observes that they ‘are iconic species with popular appeal, mobilized to build interest, support, and funds for conservation’, Lorimer, *Wildlife in the Anthropocene*, p. 66.

\(^10\) The artist Mark Dion quoted in *Mark Dion*, ed. by Lisa Corrin, Miwon Kwon and Norman Bryson (London: Phaidon, 1997), p. 11.

The sentimental is about feeling tenderness. Soft toys induce love. The political possibilities of this cuddly charisma should not be dismissed. It has the capacity to do important work. Of course we can agree that ‘[s]ingle-species approaches to conservation are not sufficient for an entangled world’. But donations made in the name of tigers and pandas, can be used by charities to protect biodiverse habitats and ecologies to result in work that seeks to provide for the flourishing of all earthly life. As Jamie Lorimer has observed, charismatic flagship species can ‘provide an enchanting, unifying catalyst for organizational activity’.

Although Art Orienté Objet’s knitted trophies have been created to make encounters with wildlife unnecessary and to offer an alternative to hunters, they obviously cannot be suitable stand-ins for hunting trophies in the eyes of hunters. This is because through hunting, the hunter seeks immersion in the challenge of bringing about encounters with wildlife, albeit towards violent ends. The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset claimed that it is not death that is actively sought out by sport hunters, but the process of hunting and the emotional and physical engagement this involves with wild animals in their habitat. Following the hunt, if a hunter feels they have hunted ‘properly’ according to their own rules, they will award themselves a trophy. Garry Marvin suggested trophies commemorate the relationship that developed between hunter and prey, revealing that many hunters admire the wildlife they hunt. Indeed it could be argued that the museum-founding Sommers were marked by these qualities. Their sustainable and so-called ‘ethical’ approach to hunting was the result of some attitudinal changes towards hunting and wildlife protection that occurred during their lifetimes, in recognition of declining populations of various species. François and

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85 For instance, Steve Baker recognised the political promise of cuteness when recalling an editorial piece in a newspaper that suggested the trailer for Disney’s *101 Dalmations* (1961), in which the cartoon dogs and puppies were threatened with capture due to their attractive fur, would result in children being distraught at the sight of their mothers donning their fur coats, Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, p. 231.
93 François recognised the impact of big game hunting in Africa during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries providing a short survey of the diminishing game of Africa as the march of Empire progressed, see François Sommer, *Man and Beast in Africa*, trans. by Edward Fitzgerald (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1953).
Jacqueline Sommer were ethical hunters and ‘nature hunters’, described by the ecologist Stephen Kellert in his 1978 survey into different types of hunters as individuals who hunt for the opportunity to participate in nature as a predator, and to be close to the wildlife they love in the natural habitats of these creatures.\footnote{Ted Kerasote, \textit{Bloodties: Nature, Culture and the Hunt} (New York: Kodhansa, 1993), p. 212.} Ethical hunters are described as embracing the concept of ‘fair chase’ and having a strong interest in wildlife conservation. François Sommer for instance, campaigned for national wildlife protection. He also experimented with game management techniques on his Belval Estate, as well as co-founding and presiding over the Association Nationale des Chasseurs de Grand Gibier, which places emphasis on a form of hunting that it claims treats wildlife and the environment respectfully, responsibly and sustainably.\footnote{See <www.ancgg.org/ancgg_charte.asp> [accessed 16 April 2015].} In addition to his work in France, François fought for the protection of wildlife in Africa, a country in which he spent much time travelling and hunting, bringing about the 1965 creation of the Manda reserve in Chad.\footnote{d’Anthenaise, \textit{Le Cabinet de Diane}, p. 20.} Jacqueline, for her part, additionally took to ‘shooting’ with a camera as an ethical alternative to hunting with a gun.\footnote{See François and Jacqueline Sommer, \textit{La Chasse Photographique} (France: Hachette, 1960). However, it has been noted that ‘hunting’ with a camera cannot be a suitable stand-in for hunting with a gun since it distances the ‘hunter’ from the processes of life and death, which form such a central aspect of the pursuit, see Jonathan Parker, ‘The Camera or the Gun: Photography as an Ethical Alternative to Hunting?’, in \textit{Hunting: Philosophy for Everyone}, ed. by Nathan Kowalsky (Sussex: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 161–170.}

Nevertheless, attitudes towards hunting and wildlife at the time the Sommers were active remain very different from today. The presence of multiple tiger heads in the couple’s trophy room testifies to this, indicating that tigers have not always held a privileged, protected place in European sensibilities. In the last years of the nineteenth century, tigers were hunted as vermin, feared as gratuitous killers that preyed on domestic livestock and sometimes, even humans. As a result, the Indian government continued to offer rewards for killing tigers well into the first decade of the twentieth century.\footnote{Ritvo, \textit{The Animal Estate}, p. 287.} Whilst the Sommers were hunting at a slightly later era, it remained possible for them to shoot tigers since a full ban on hunting them as a result of declining numbers did not come into force until 1970 — just three years before François’s death.\footnote{Bob Mullan and Garry Marvin, \textit{Zoo Culture}, 2nd edn (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 153. Thus, it was possible, for instance, for Prince Philip to famously hunt a tiger on a trip accompanying the Queen to India in 1961, whilst in the very same year becoming the president of the WWF, which now campaigns for the protection of this creature — a coincidence of events that might horrify contemporary sensibilities, see Baker, \textit{Picturing the Beast}, p. 179.} Thanks to their protected status, wildlife conservation initiatives and the fact
that these predators are widely regarded as charismatic mammals rather than pests, attitudes towards tigers are very different today in the west.

Whilst François strove to hunt in a responsible and sustainable manner and apparently expressed love for the wildlife he hunted through his personal mission to ensure its protection, he nevertheless retained the desire to hunt. The writer Ted Kerasote revealed this type of ‘nature hunter’ to be caught in a paradox in which they hunt the wildlife they love in order to be close to these creatures, but who ultimately must kill this wildlife in order to have hunted. Furthermore, the biological anthropologist Matt Cartmill suggested that a sense of guilt, evil and wickedness might even contribute to the enjoyment experienced whilst hunting. It is in this way that even nature hunters like the Sommers themselves might experience the conflict inherent to dreadful wonder as a result of the emotional ambiguity they experience when hunting, at once enthralled by the chase but regretful at the ultimate kill.

This discussion of Art Orienté Objet’s intervention demonstrates how hunting trophies can inspire wonder, but also invite debate about hunting and wildlife conservation, by charting the evolution of human-animal relations between the 1960s when the Sommers were hunting and founding their museum, and today. As objects, these hunting trophies assert what Jane Bennett has referred to as ‘Thing-Power’, that is, ‘the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle’. Accordingly, these objects have resonances that extend well beyond the walls of this museum. Given the desire to extend the reach and appeal of this hunting collection, the combination of wonder and resonance is important, since as Stephen Greenblatt has observed ‘almost every exhibition worth the viewing has strong elements of both’.

100 The difference between François and earlier hunters however is marked, and it is worth noting in support of the Sommers’ claim to ethical hunting that of the five tiger specimens on display in the museum’s trophy room today, according to the accompanying record cards included in the display, only one was hunted by the Sommers whilst the remaining four were hunted by one Monsieur de la Frégonnière. In addition, the same records show that of the 102 trophies on display, only 27 of these were hunted by the Sommers themselves, the others being donated to the collection from other sources.
101 Kerasote, p. 212.
103 This is something complicated by the fact that in some instances hunting has been suggested as a strategy for wildlife conservation, often with controversy.
104 Jane Bennett, Vibrant Matter, p. 6. Indeed Caroline Tisdall cited an interview with Joseph Beuys, where it was recognised in relation to the taxidermy hare featured in Beuys’s How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare (1965), that even dead animals have ‘a special power to produce’, see Caroline Tisdall, Joseph Beuys (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), p. 101.
Imitating Wildlife and the Wonder of Deranged Theatrics

One of the first artworks encountered by visitors entering the Art Orienté Objet exhibition was a reproduction of Hieronymus Bosch’s *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490–1500) (figure 24). Flanked by Edenic Paradise on the left and Hell on the right, the largest central panel of the triptych depicts a myriad of unclothed people cavorting with each other and various wildlife, as well as fantastic creatures such as griffins, unicorns and mermen. These inhabitants of the earth live side-by-side whether human, vegetable or mythic, wild or domestic nonhuman animals. Humans and a variety of aerial, terrestrial and aquatic wildlife appear at ease in one another’s company, regardless of whether predator or prey. This panel of the painting has been described as presenting an imagined realm, where humankind lives ‘in harmony with nature in a way that defies reality’. 106 Yet it is such a world that Art Orienté Objet sought to evoke at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature. 107 The artists had paid homage to *The Garden of Earthly Delights* by recreating vignettes from the painting as staged photographs, highlighting the close, creaturely coexistence they observed in Bosch’s work (figures 25 and 26). 108 Claude d’Anthenaise suggested that during the exhibition, ‘[à] travers toutes leurs interventions, les artistes poursuivent un même but: la «réintroduction» de l’homme dans la nature’. 109 Many of the interventions in the museum displays explored the philosophical and biological borders between humans and wildlife and even tried to transgress them. Of course, it is this border between humans and other animals that Jane Bennett claimed to be a site of enchantment, evoking ‘wonder-at-the-world’. 110

Art Orienté Objet’s practice has affinities with the pursuit of hunting since many hunters seek a ‘return to nature’, similarly taking pleasure in blurring and challenging boundaries between humans and other animals — even trying to dissolve them. 111 Ortega y Gasset recognised that hunting requires thinking and behaving like a nonhuman animal in an attempt to perceive the environment from the perspectives of wildlife and as a result, successfully stalking the game. 112 Garry Marvin calls this ‘hunting by disguise’, suggesting that through this mode of hunting the boundaries between humans and wildlife become blurred as the hunter attempts to close the

109 ‘Across all of their interventions the artists pursue the same goal: the ‘reintroduction’ of humanity into nature’, ibid., p. 12 (my translation).
111 Cartmill, p. 235.
112 Ortega y Gasset, p. 142.
physical and behavioural distance between themselves and their prey. Ortega y Gasset revealed how historically hunters used disguises to immerse themselves in the habitats of wildlife so that they could physically resemble their prey and get close enough to make the kill. He noted how early cave paintings showed humans hunting while wearing deerskins with the head and antlers still intact. Indeed Art Orienté Objet also took up this tactic of disguise in works seeking to facilitate close encounters with wildlife.

In *Jeter les bois* (2007) Benoît Mangin disguised himself as a stag. Wearing a deerskin and a pair of antlers attached to a motorcycle helmet, he tried to infiltrate a herd of deer (figure 27). In *Necking* (2007), the artist sat on an elevated chair next to a giraffe enclosure at a zoo, wearing a knitted giraffe head and neck in an attempt to see from this creature’s perspective (figure 28). During the artists’ exhibition at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature another piece from this body of work was displayed in the Salle des trophées. *Félinanthropie* (2007) is a photograph showing Marion Laval-Jeantet crouched on all fours beside a domestic cat, wearing prostheses to alter the posture and movement of her body so that she could walk like a cat and see from this creature’s line of sight (figure 29). The prostheses, which took the form of elongated brown leather shoes, gloves and an articulated fur tail attached to a belt around the artist’s waist, were also on display. An art historical precedent for this sort merging of human and feline is Wanda Wulz’s *Io + Gatto* (1932), a photograph manipulated in the darkroom to present a disconcerting and dream-like image whereby cat and artist appear in a hybrid portrait (figure 30). But moreover, the human-feline encounter in Art Orienté Objet’s work recalls the pivotal moment between Jacques Derrida and his pet cat which, as we have seen, prompted the philosopher’s inquiry into ‘the question of the animal’ and saw him refer to encounters with nonhuman animals as a ‘deranged theatrics’ and the ‘[o]nely thought alone [that] keeps me spellbound’. However, the reason wonder can arise in such circumstances needs to be unpacked in greater detail.

Humans have no access to the subjective experiences of other animals and can only imagine and speculate about what it must be like to experience the world from the perspective of another species. The unachievable and unfathomable nature of this

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113 See Marvin, ‘Wild Killing’, p. 22. Garry Marvin contrasts this mode of hunting with ‘hunting by disturbance’, in which ‘human presence in the natural world is clearly signalled and is openly intrusive’, ibid. Fox hunting would be one example of this.

114 Ortega y Gasset, pp. 142–143.


116 Derrida, p. 10.
knowledge is the very ground of wonder. In his examination of nonhuman animal phenomenologies in the context of contemporary art, Ron Broglio noted how ‘[t]o ask what is an animal phenomenology is to engage in an unanswerable question. [...] an animal phenomenology inscribes within itself and announces in advance its own impossibility’. Broglio elaborated that this realisation ‘becomes the productive limit from which artists find inspirational and transformational material for their work’. Although Broglio referred to a number of artists throughout his study, most pertinent is his examination of Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson’s (a) fly (2006). In this work the artists entered the homes of pet owning humans and photographed these domestic spaces from what viewers are led to presume is the perspectives of various nonhuman animals. During his discussion of this work, Broglio draws on the early ethologist Jakob von Uexküll in addition to the philosopher Thomas Nagel’s text ‘What Is It Like to Be a Bat?’ (1974). One reason it is difficult for humans to comprehend what it might be like to experience the world as a nonhuman animal is due to the ways different creatures perceive and experience the world when they interact with their specific environment. Uexküll recognised this as early as 1934, describing the subjective qualities of a nonhuman animal’s experience of an environment as a creature’s umwelt. To explain this idea, Uexküll suggested that readers imagine taking a stroll in a meadow full of flowers on a sunny day and ‘make a bubble’ around every creature living there, claiming that if we enter this bubble:

the previous surroundings of the subject are completely reconfigured. Many qualities of the colourful meadow vanish completely, others lose their coherence with one another, and new connections are created. A new world arises in each bubble.

Broglio suggested that wonder arises in relation to this aspect of Uexküll’s theory since although ‘the animal world remains a place that can be translated to the human [...] it will be distorted. [...] and parts of the animals’ worlds seem stubbornly resistant to our understanding’. In concluding his examination of Uexküll, Broglio states that ‘[t]he animal’s world creates for us a sense of wonder. It is suggestively familiar and translatable, while in crucial ways remains stubbornly remote’.

117 Broglio, pp. xx–xxi.  
118 Ibid., p. xxvi.  
120 Broglio, p. 65.  
121 Ibid., p. 66.
The philosopher Thomas Nagel likewise discussed the difficulty in understanding the subjective experiences of other animals. Human imagination, Nagel suggested, is limited to the realms of human experiences, which are informed by human senses and human perception. Seemingly frustrated, he stated:

It will not help to try to imagine that one has webbing on one’s arms, which enables one to fly around at dusk and dawn catching insects in one’s mouth; that one has very poor vision, and perceives the surrounding world by a system of reflected high-frequency sound signals; and that one spends the day hanging upside down by one’s feet in an attic. In so far as I can imagine this (which is not very far), it tells me only what it would be like for me to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat. Yet if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate to the task.122

As Broglio reiterated in relation to his reading of Nagel, ‘we do not have the conceptual schema to make sense of the subjective facts of this other creature nor to comprehend its “internal world”’.123 It is this impossibility of truly understanding the subjective experiences of nonhuman animals as indicated by Nagel, and the ‘unknown worlds’ that Uexküll reveals that they inhabit, which keep the door to wonder open since inquiry is sustained with the countless possibilities that can be imagined, rather than closed down and incorporated into our knowledge.124 Mary Jane Rubenstein recognised a difference between a wonder that keeps inquiry open through continued investigative thinking, and one that closes inquiry down through the assimilation of the object of wonder.125 She argued that wonder endures when the object, event or circumstance resists assimilation into knowledge and suggested that it is this very elusiveness that makes wonder more enduring.126 As Broglio also observed, wonder can therefore arise since conclusive understanding of what it is like to experience the world from the perspective of another animal can never be absolutely attained.127 It is the ‘conceptual discomfort’ provoked by this ignorance of another’s lifeworld that offers ‘a shock to thought, an imperative to think life otherwise to human norms’, which creates a catalyst for wonder.128

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123 Broglio, p. 62.
124 Uexküll, p. 41.
125 Rubenstein, p. 8.
126 Ibid.
127 Broglio, p. xxxii.
Whilst Nagel suggested that human imagination is ‘inadequate’ to this task, it nevertheless remains a key resource for artists working in this vein, along with imitation (or indeed disguise), which is enacted by artists through their performative attempts to get to grips with other-than-human perspectives.\(^\text{129}\) Via investigations into the lifeworlds of a cat, a giraffe and a stag, Art Orienté Objet strive to experience the world from the perspectives of various wildlife and better relate to these creatures as a result of the imaginative imitation they employ.\(^\text{130}\) These artists interrogate the border between humans and other animals, prompting viewers to speculate on nonhuman animal lifeworlds and subjectivities. As a result, these works evoke wonder at the countless possibilities that can be imagined and the very inconclusiveness of these artistic endeavours is manifested through the humour inherent to these performances. Significantly, Art Orienté Objet’s works do not simply present an ocular-centric understanding of nonhuman animal perspectives as seen in (a) fly, or through the visual hybridisation of human and cat in Wanda Wulz’s photograph, but they make an attempt to achieve a more embodied form of knowledge instead. Donna Haraway criticised Derrida for failing to ‘become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that morning’.\(^\text{131}\) She suggested that ‘[i]ncurious, he missed a possible invitation, a possible introduction to other-worlding’.\(^\text{132}\) Unlike Haraway’s criticism of Derrida, Art Orienté Objet express their curiosity in works like Jeter les bois, Necking and Félinanthropie, demonstrating their attempts to see from another’s perspective, to enter these creature’s lifeworlds and to imagine what they might be thinking or feeling. In fact they go further and try to embody these very possibilities, rather than simply philosophise upon or visualise them. This sort of curiosity seems especially important if the presentation of these artworks in a hunting museum is to hold out any political promise, considering the word’s etymological links with cura or ‘to care’.\(^\text{133}\)

Wonder arises as a result of the artists’ comedic and visually ridiculous attempts to understand the world from other perspectives, deliberately using inadequate disguises to enact their deranged theatrics through these works. ‘Deranged’ was used by Derrida to express the madness evoked by the alterity proffered by the nonhuman animal ‘other’. However, for the purposes of this thesis, it takes an additional colloquial turn to evoke the crazy and often comic ways artists perform wildlife and the disorderly and


\(^{130}\) Pirson, Art Orienté Objet: Marion Laval-Jeantet & Benoît Mangin, p. 61.

\(^{131}\) Donna Haraway, When Species Meet, p. 20.

\(^{132}\) Ibid.

\(^{133}\) Daston and Park, p. 273.
ramshackle aesthetic frequently employed to do-so. *Jeter les bois* is a case in point. Not only was Mangin’s headpiece a humorous, makeshift disguise created by attaching antlers to a motorcycle helmet, but it also recalls a kind of comedy headpiece worn by court jesters. In this work, the artist plays a stag, but also plays the fool. Against all the odds, and the ridiculous and even impossible attempts to understand the perspectives of wildlife through their imitative performative approach, the artists persist. As a result, they encourage viewers to think about things they thought to be impossible and to consider the unfathomable perspectives of another animal: To wonder ‘what it is like to be a bat’.¹³⁴

**Infectious Wonder**

In other works presented at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Art Orienté Objet interrogated the biological boundaries between humans and other animals. In fact they even tried to transgress them. *Que le cheval vive en moi! (2011) (May the Horse Live in Me!)* was an extreme performance piece investigating one such biological border-crossing, in which Art Orienté Objet’s Marion Laval-Jeantet received a transfusion of horse blood plasma. The performance began with the artist taking part in a ‘communication ritual’ with a horse, walking alongside the creature whilst mounted on specially made prosthetic stilts, which were engineered so as to make her own legs physically resemble those of the horse and enable her to walk with a similar gait (figure 31).¹³⁵ Subsequently, Laval-Jeantet received the injection of plasma (figure 32). For the final part of the performance, samples of the artist’s blood were taken at the moment when the equine cells were most prominent in her body, freeze-dried and preserved as hybrid ‘centaur blood’.¹³⁶ Documentation of the performance in action, the horse leg prostheses and specimens of the so-called ‘centaur blood’ were presented in the museum’s Salle de l’animal contemporain — a display that hardly evoked the bloodshed one might expect to see in a hunting museum.

The performance followed a lengthy research process. Although nonhuman animal to human blood transfusions have been conducted with variable degrees of success since the seventeenth century, receiving biological material from another species remains medically risky business.¹³⁷ Before nonhuman animal blood can be used in

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¹³⁴ Nagel, p. 439.
human physiological research, it needs to be rendered ‘safe’.

In the case of the horse blood, this meant removing the red blood cells, white blood cells and other elements that could be hazardous to leave the plasma, which contains hormones and proteins, including immunoglobulins (antibodies). The idea was that the immunoglobulins in the horse blood plasma would pass through Marion Laval-Jeantet’s immune system, infiltrate the artist’s blood stream, ‘bond with the proteins in her own body’ and as a result, affect key bodily functions, permitting a horse-like experience of the world. Indeed in the days following the performance, which took place at Galerie Kapelica in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Laval-Jeantet reported feeling highly-strung, alert and jumpy, yet powerful. The artist felt restless, responded too quickly to things, was unable to sit still and had trouble eating and sleeping, leaving Laval-Jeantet to conclude, ‘[v]ery possibly, my appetite, my extreme jitteriness, my fitful sleep, and my fear combined with a feeling of powerfulness, were specifically the experiences of a horse’.

Of course this response could have been simply psychosomatic or even a projection of fantasy. Nevertheless, the performance was a radical attempt by Art Orienté Objet to experience the world as another animal might. Ron Broglio has suggested that:

> Art brings something back from this limit and horizon of the unknowable; it bears witness to encounters without falling into a language that assimilates or trivializes the world of the animal. This art instead provides an infectious wonder at the animal world on the other side of human knowing.

‘Infectious wonder’ is particularly apt in the context of this performance. Marion Laval-Jeantet infected her own blood stream with biological material derived from another species, which physically affected her by providing what she perceived as a horse-like experience. Since Jane Bennett has written that enchantment is ‘a sense of having had one’s […] circulation […] tuned up or recharged — a shot in the arm’, this performance seems to be a fairly literal translation of this response. However, Bennett also suggested that inter- and intra-species crossings ‘extend the limits of one’s current

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138 Laval-Jeantet, ‘May the Horse Live in Me’, p. 255.
139 Ibid., p. 256.
140 Hauser, pp. 245–246.
141 Laval-Jeantet, ‘May the Horse Live in Me’, pp. 264–265.
142 Ibid., pp. 267–268.
144 Broglio, p. xxiii.
145 Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 5.
embodiment [...] to expand the horizon of the conceivable’, and that they ‘invoke the exciting sense of traveling to new lands [...] to postures not ordinarily associated with human bodies’. 146 Such is the effect reported following the cross-species transfusion in Que le cheval vive en moi for Marion Laval-Jeantet, both as a result of her physical reaction to the plasma and through her altered posture and movement when wearing prosthetic horse leg stilts during the performance. As the art historian Shepherd Steiner has observed of the contemporary artist Marcus Coates, ‘such prosthetic extensions of the self push the man [or in this case, woman] into proximity with the animal’. 147 For enchantment to take hold, Bennett claimed that a ‘surprising encounter’ must take place, which results from being ‘torn out of one’s default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition’ — exactly the state reported by Marion Laval-Jeantet following the performance, when she perceived her emotions and physical experiences to be horse-like. 148 However, Que le cheval vive en moi further extends the reach of wonder beyond the artist herself. The work challenges a biological boundary assumed to be unbreachable and has the capacity to spread an infectious form of wonder amongst viewers as a result. In pursuit of respectful and responsible relations between humans and other animals, this is promising since as Haraway has claimed ‘[b]odily ethical and political obligations are infectious, or they should be’. 149

Yet clearly the performance also poses some problems. The horse blood required substantial filtering before it was considered safe to use on a human subject and the ‘hybrid’ blood coagulated within twenty minutes of extraction. This seems to reinforce the biological distinction between humans and horses rather than break it down, since the mixing of these bodily fluids is unstable and even medically hazardous for recipients. This being the case, Que le cheval vive en moi would actually fail to arrive at a sense of wonder on both Broglio’s and Bennett’s terms, since neither infectious wonder, nor an interspecies border-crossing is achieved through this work. Moreover, the blood was extracted from a horse whose consent it would have been impossible for a human to ascertain, making the act ethically dubious. Human dominion over wildlife seems to be reinforced by the fact that the horse supplies the material for artistic use. The work also seems primarily focused on Marion Laval-Jeantet’s experiences of the event. As such it seems to bypass deeper considerations of the rich history of humans and horses as companion species, or even biological and medicinal instances of these

146 Ibid., pp. 19 and 31.
149 Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, p. 115.
nonhuman animals being used for human benefit. Whilst in 2003 Haraway originally explored the notion of companion species in relation to dogs, the horse offers an equivalent model. Similarly, developments in human culture have been influenced and affected through the existence and utilisation of horses, and as a result, horses have evolved in response to human wants and needs, bred to be better suited to the variety of tasks they have been used for. Haraway stresses the need to pay close attention to the details when it comes to our relations to other animals and goes to great lengths in her own work to bring these to light. Attending to the deep and many layered entanglements of humans and horses initially seems to be lacking in this performance, something only emphasised with the knowledge that the artists’ original idea was to use giant panda blood. Using the blood of an endangered species would have brought wildlife conservation to the forefront of this project. However, the fact that it was substituted with horse blood due to the difficulty of obtaining it seems to indicate that it was the interspecies transfusion itself that preoccupied these artists, rather than the species it involved. Nevertheless, an argument will be mounted against these criticisms to show how wonder remains at the heart of this work, and to demonstrate the ways Art Orienté Objet rallied against reinforcing unequal human-animal power relations, ultimately attending to the details of their entanglements with others.

Significantly, blood is a symbolically and metaphorically loaded substance at once vital and threatening to life. When another’s blood enters into our veins, it can be a symbol of loyalty or a carrier of disease. Blood offers life saving protection or contaminating infection and has resonances with family, race, ritual, religion, life and death, making it open to a plethora of interpretations and uses in an artistic context. This bodily substance also draws attention to what is common across species, namely ‘the shared capacity to bleed.’ In this way, it is an enchanting material that highlights

150 See Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* for more on the notion of companion species.
153 Laval-Jeantet, ‘May the Horse Live in Me’, pp. 250 and 255. See also Hilton, p. 490.
156 Tobias Menely and Margaret Ronda, ‘Red’, in *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green*,
'creaturely affinity' by revealing one way that humans are not so different from their mammalian kin. The curator Jens Hauser described Que le cheval vive en moi! as a manifestation of ‘a blood-brotherhood beyond species boundaries’, evoking a somewhat extreme form of kinship between humans and horses. But kinship need not only reside in the blood. Donna Haraway makes this clear when insisting that we are already kin to other earthlings, human and not, thanks to the myriad ways we are entangled.

The hybrid human-horse blood extracted from Marion Laval-Jeantet during the performance was preserved in vials, which were presented in chrome-plated cases engraved with diagrams relating to immunology (figure 33). The fourteen sanguine specimens were divided into two sets of seven and were entitled Sang-mêlé (2011), visually evoking reliquaries and referencing the seven bleedings of Christ. As such, these works recall the ‘blood wonder’ that the medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum wrote about in relation to relics, which purportedly contained Christ’s blood in the Middle Ages, albeit on a contemporary, secular level. The most significant claims for modern disenchantment have contended that the world is bereft of wonder and magic today as a result of secularisation and an absence of God. However, the fact that Sang-mêlé references holy relics can work towards reinstating this lost sense of wonder. These secular reliquaries relate to the language used by Jane Bennett, who when writing about enchanting crossings suggested that they ‘bear some resemblance to the wonderful, unlikely possibilities called miracles’. By presenting their improbable human-horse blood as contemporary relics, the enchanting interspecies crossing embodied by the hybrid fluid harbours a resemblance to the miracle of the blood of Christ as represented in holy relics. It evokes the sacred through the

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157 Menely and Ronda, p. 25.  
158 Hauser, p. 245.  
159 Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, pp. 102–103.  
162 Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 28.  
163 Pirson also considers this link to the blood of Christ and saints, see Pirson, Art Orienté Objet: Marion Laval-Jeantet & Benoît Mangin, p. 119.
secular, therefore turning claims for disenchantment on their head and making space for wonder.

Marion Laval-Jeantet tried to invert the inherent power relations of using blood from a nonhuman animal whose consent it was impossible to discern. She did so by placing herself, not the horse, as the ‘proverbial “guinea pig”’ for this experimental crossing, putting herself rather than the horse in the position of risk. As such, the artist attempted to empathise with wildlife and better understand the experiences of creatures instrumentalised for human ends. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, many artists have manipulated their bodies through prosthetics and make-up to resemble wildlife (Matthew Barney, Cindy Sherman, Corrina Korth…), manipulated their own bodies (Orlan, Genesis P-Orridge, Stelarc…), worked with their own blood (Franco B, Marc Quinn, Marina Abramović, Gina Pane…), or with live nonhuman animals (Olly and Suzi, Mark Dion, Joseph Beuys, Carolee Schneemann, William Wegman…) or even biologically sought to alter or create living organisms through bio art (Eduardo Kac, Catts and Zurr…). But it is more difficult to recall artists who have willingly attempted to biologically hybridise their own living body using material from another species. The biologist and feminist science studies scholar Lynda Birke recognised this when mounting her critique of bio art. She suggested this practice perpetuates the instrumentalisation of nonhuman animals and places humans firmly in a position of power and dominance in relation to wildlife. I am sympathetic to Birke’s view and similarly uncomfortable with bio art when it reduces live wildlife to a material for (often spectacularised) artistic use and even exploitation. As Louise Economides has been careful to observe, bio art may well evoke wonder in viewers, but it remains ethically questionable. She is quite right to highlight how ‘wonder does not necessarily prohibit unethical modes of behaviour toward non-human others’, and indeed this is one of its limits in this context. But Art Orienté Objet’s approach was rather different, since they placed the body of the artist at the site of experimentation instead. It is for this reason that the theatre and performance studies scholar Leon J. Hilton has argued that the work should be read in the tradition of ‘body-based performance art’ rather than just bio art, since this earlier art historical precedent saw

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164 Hauser, p. 245.
165 Ibid.
167 Economides, pp. 166–167.
168 Ibid., p. 167.
blood frequently appear as a material, and the materiality of the artist’s body being similarly centrally figured.\(^{169}\)

It is notable that the donor horse used in this work survived beyond the performance. Jules Adler’s painting *Transfusion de sang de chèvre* (1892) offers an earlier, French artistic depiction of a woman receiving blood from a nonhuman animal who was not so fortunate. Adler’s painting shows a pale, frail, dark-haired woman lying beneath a white sheet on a wooden bed, while a doctor is hunched over a tube inserted into her arm connected to the body of a (presumably slowly) dying goat. The formal composition of this painting appeared to be referenced in one of the documentary photographs of Art Orienté Objet’s performance (figures 34 and 35). In both images, the transfusion takes place in a white, dimly lit room with a small window in the background. In both instances, the donor creature is shown behind the human recipient along with a man wearing a white coat/white apron who attentively observes the procedure. In the foreground, a man in a brown jacket/brown top leans over the arm of the female transfusion subject. In Adler’s painting the medical staff out number the patient six to one, suggesting the procedure to be a risky and complex operation. In this way the painting conveys a similar tension to that which is palpable in the documentation of Art Orienté Objet’s piece. During the performance, Benoît Mangin appeared understandably nervous as he injected his partner with horse blood plasma. In this particular image he looks on with apparent concern while the blood samples are taken from Laval-Jeantet’s arm at the end of the performance. Despite these visual similarities, happily the horse in Art Orienté Objet’s performance was not subjected to the same slow fate as the goat featured in Adler’s painting, who is depicted laying limply across a table with blood dripping from a wound in his or her neck. Through this comparative reading, Art Orienté Objet’s work draws attention to how nonhuman animals have figured in the history of medicine and also challenges existing hierarchies in present day medical experiments, where wildlife serves as human surrogates. When viewed from this perspective, the work starts to speak to the ways humans and other animals are entangled. It pays attention to the hierarchies involved when nonhuman animals are used for human ends and speculates on the ways we might go about living and dying in responsibility as the Chthuluocene urges us to, thanks to Laval-Jeantet’s decision to take on the bodily risk herself. However, the project also sits within the context of more recent art history, where horses have been mimicked through performance. One example is Lucy Gunning’s *The Horse Impressionists* (1994), a film showing a series of women impersonating horse sounds and movements. Gunning’s work, however, is rather more comic than Art Orienté Objet’s risky performance piece.

\(^{169}\) Hilton, pp. 495–496.
Marion Laval-Jeantet further refused to display dominion over the horse in this work by abstaining from riding him during the performance, instead opting to walk side-by-side in an attempt to eradicate hierarchy and exist as equals. Yet Laval-Jeantet missed out on an opportunity for enchantment here. According to the philosopher of science Vinciane Despret, ‘enchantment arises by the grace of the attunement between living beings.’ It is precisely through horse riding that this state can be achieved, since as Ann Game has argued, rhythmic, synchronous riding results in the sense of feeling ‘with the horse’. Game refers to this state as embodying the centaur, invoking this mythical human-horse hybrid to describe this experience of synchronous interspecies movement. Art Orienté Objet’s performance therefore counters any loss of myth and magic lamented in modern disenchantment by reconfiguring a centaur for the contemporary moment. In *Que le cheval vive en moi!* humans, wildlife, bio art, mythology, medicine, biology and art history converge, creating a hybrid akin to those that Latour suggested are burgeoning to result in the proliferation of enchantment today.

The use of a domestic animal in this work reinforces — before the transfusion even took place — that the borders between humans and other animals are not so hard and fast. Ortega y Gasset suggested that the process of domestication results in the simultaneous de-animalising and partially humanising of nonhuman animals, so that they inhabit a space between wildlife and humans. However, Ann Game suggested that during the domestication of horses through training, humans also experience a subtle shift, which given Ortega y Gasset’s observation could be described as the *de-humanising* and *partial animalising* of the human. Through these understandings of domestication, any border between humans and other animals is shown to be a matter of degree rather than kind. Yet, the line between wild and domestic in this work is already fuzzy since Viny, the horse used in the performance, was apparently ‘of a character too difficult to be of use as a workhorse’. What constitutes a domestic animal becomes open to question through this work, thanks to what we might anthropomorphically interpret as Viny’s rebelliousness in the face of human intentions for his use.

170 Pirson, Art Orienté Objet: Marion Laval-Jeantet & Benoît Mangin, p. 65.
173 Latour, pp. 2 and 115.
174 Ortega y Gasset, p. 92
175 Game, pp. 1–12.
176 Laval-Jeantet, ‘May the Horse Live in Me’, p. 262.
Cary Wolfe has acknowledged that the human ‘is fundamentally a prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically “not-human” and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is’. In light of the human-wildlife entanglements called forth by Art Orienté Objet’s performance, and indeed the prosthetic aids used by the artist in this piece, we might add ‘wildlife’ to Wolfe’s list of technicity and materiality. The benefit of this, as Wolfe observed, is that ‘prostheticity […] has profound ethical implications for our relations to nonhuman forms of life’ — something Art Orienté Objet seemed to exploit in the politically charged presentation of their work in this hunting museum.

Heart of Wonder, Hearts of Glass

Horses have a special status in terms of their relationships to humans: There is no taxidermy of horses in the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature. Indeed horses have occupied a privileged place in the history of hunting as well as art, serving as a means of pursuing the wildlife that will meet its death at the hands of hunters, yet eluding this fate themselves. So well defined is the wildlife deemed fair game and killable by western hunters, that there are stories of hunters who even when faced with starvation could not bring themselves to kill their own horse for food. This close bond between humans and horses was captured in Art Orienté Objet’s sculpture, Herzen aus Glas (Cœurs de verre) (2013), commissioned by the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature on the occasion of the artists’ exhibition (figure 36). This red glass sculpture featured a human and horse heart linked by their veins and arteries to form a circulatory system, commemorating the hybrid blood that coursed through Marion Laval-Jeantet’s veins in Que le cheval vive en moi! This sculpture demonstrated the close, entangled relationships between humans and horses since the heart is metaphoric for the emotional centre of one’s being. Yet additionally, the fragility of these two glass hearts and their delicate, spindly veins, also echoed the unstable and ephemeral nature of the transfusion in Art Orienté Objet’s performance, in which the human-horse blood coagulated quickly after extraction. This glass sculpture is equally precarious and might shatter if disturbed. As early as the Middle Ages, Albert the Great had already identified the heart as a site of wonder stating, ‘[w]onder is defined as a constriction and suspension of the heart caused by amazement at the sensible appearance of something so portentous, great and unusual, that the heart suffers a systole.’

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177 Wolfe, p. xxv.
178 Ibid., p. xxvi.
179 Gillespie, p. 57.
180 For instance, Greg Gillespie relayed a story of a hunter who left it to his native guide to kill his horse for food, see ibid., p. 57.
182 Albert the Great quoted in Greenblatt, ‘Resonance and Wonder’, p. 34.
heart is sustained as a site of contemporary wonder in Art Orienté Objet’s work in a double sense.

Firstly, this fragile, glass sculpture was extremely difficult to produce, presenting a challenge to its makers. In this way it evokes the enchantment of technology on Alfred Gell’s terms. After all, it is hard to comprehend how crafting this sculpture was possible, resulting in wonder at the technical processes of glass manufacture that were used to create it. The German titling of this work further advances the perceived mysterious and ‘magical’ aspects of the sculpture’s making. It references the Werner Herzog film Herz aus Glas (1976) in which a Bavarian village famed for producing red glass is thrown into disarray following the unexpected death of the glasswork’s foreman, who had not divulged the secret of the ‘ruby glass’ before his untimely demise. The film shows the factory’s owner becoming obsessed with recreating the red glass and various glassblowers trying to achieve the desired effect to no avail. Art Orienté Objet shared this same difficulty when fabricating Herzen aus Glas due to the complexity of their sculpture.

Art Orienté Objet’s quasi-anatomical model of conjoined human and horse hearts has affinities with Christine Borland’s Bullet Proof Breath (2001), which also draws from the visual culture of these didactic objects (figure 37). This clear glass sculpture was blown to represent the bronchia of human lungs and was tightly bound with spider silk, following Borland’s discovery that the U.S. military had investigated the bullet proof qualities of this material. Borland’s sculpture has a strength that is absent from Art Orienté Objet’s fragile work thanks to the addition of spider silk. Yet humans and wildlife are entangled in both, since Art Orienté Objet’s glass representation of a horse heart was made possible thanks to human breath. The spider silk was extracted for Borland’s work, as was the case with the horse blood in the performance commemorated through Art Orienté Objet’s sculpture, ‘without consent’, making both works ethically dubious.

The anthropologist Elizabeth Hallam noted that anatomical specimens and models ‘are often difficult entities whose very substance has the capacity to provoke anxieties and

183 Pirson, Art Orienté Objet: Marion Laval-Jeantet & Benoît Mangin, p. 50.
whose form, matter and meanings are often unstable, ambiguous and changing”.

This stems in part from the fact that when in the form of preserved specimens at least, these objects make abundantly clear the fact that they have been taken from the body post-mortem. But these feelings could also arise as a result of the ethical quandaries these objects and specimens throw up. In contrast, Art Orienté Objet’s sculpture is a representation and the human and horse hearts are fabricated from glass. Nevertheless, this work can give rise to similarly ambiguous, anxiety-inducing responses as those described by Hallam, since the object opens the door to debates surrounding xenotransplantation, together with the implications of these practices for ethics and identity.

It is not until fairly recently that nonhuman animal to human organ transplants have been systematically studied and considered viable in the face of insufficient human organ donors. The first instance of a nonhuman animal to human heart transplant occurred in 1984, when a baby received the heart of a baboon. By featuring human and horse organs in a single circulatory system, Herzen aus Glas alludes to these controversial medical practices. In interspecies organ transplants, the bodies of other animals are used to stand in for the bodies of humans. This is something that the animal studies scholar Erica Fudge suggested is anthropomorphic since it demonstrates a conviction that nonhuman animal bodies respond in the same way as humans. Such biomedical practices are based on the very premise that there is a certain continuity between humans and other animals — ‘that we are sufficiently like other animals that we can use them to model human physiology, to test new products, and to supply us with spare body parts’. This interchangeability of human and nonhuman animal bodies is undeniable in interspecies organ transplants. Donor animals like pigs are even being ‘pharmed’, or genetically modified, to render their cells more readily accepted by the human bodies they are destined to inhabit. It is here that Haraway’s assertion ‘[w]e make each other up, in the flesh’ reaches its literal apex, since humans and wildlife become co-constituting in a physical sense. In such instances, the biological border between humans and other animals appears to be breached, or diluted to the extent that it is revealed to have been totally arbitrary in the first place. As Birke and Michael have revealed, ‘[x]enotransplantation […] undoubtedly

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186 Hallam, p. 9.
188 Fudge, p. 101.
189 Birke and Michael, p. 248.
191 Haraway, When Species Meet, p. 16.
challenge[s] boundaries. This possibility at once horrifies and enthralls. The heart in this artwork therefore emerges as a site of wonder, prompting ethical quandaries and drawing viewers to consider what might be at stake through the indeterminable identities created when human and nonhuman animal bodies become entangled in this way.

To return, finally, to the presentation of the documentation of *Que le cheval vive en moi!* and the sculpture *Herzen aus Glas* in the context of a hunting museum: Matt Cartmill suggested that the blurring or breaking down of boundaries between humans and other animals poses a threat to the moral basis of hunting, and further claimed anything that dissolves boundaries between humanity and nature risks undermining the very ‘conceptual foundations’ of the sport. Ortega y Gasset has stated that inequality between humans and beasts is inherently implicated through the act of hunting, without which, it would cease to be the pursuit practiced by hunters today. Taking this into account it seems that the works presented at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature by Art Orienté Objet, which variously challenge and blur the boundary between humans and other animals, somehow compromised the depictions of hunting that surrounded them, to dispute the very foundations of the sport. But to what ends?

**Towards an Ethics of Wonder: Limits and Possibilities**

The wonder observed in Art Orienté Objet’s interventions at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature undoubtedly had ethical and political potential. According to Jane Bennett, in moments of enchantment (which is also ‘wonder-at-the-world’), we feel ‘connected in an affirmative way to existence’, something that encourages us ‘to give away […] time and effort on behalf of other creatures’. For this reason Bennett is able to position enchantment as ‘an essential component of an ethical, ecologically aware life’. Indeed, through their knitted sculptures of a panda and a tiger, Art Orienté Objet were able to harness enchanting materials to evoke compassionate responses to neotenous, charismatic mammals, which humans can relate to and empathise with. Furthermore, by interrogating the philosophical and biological boundaries between humans and wildlife, the artists highlighted close creaturely affinities. It is this ‘warmth of kinship’ with other animals that the biologist and ethologist Edward O. Wilson

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192 Birke and Michael, p. 257.
193 Cartmill, p. 243.
194 Ortega y Gasset, p. 111. It must be noted that this is a specifically western attitude to hunting. In hunter-gatherer cultures there is frequently no such definite divide, since nonhuman animals are considered spirit guides and even ancestors, often resulting in a respectful and ritual killing of wildlife for food.
196 Ibid., p. 99.
already recognised in 1984 as being one ingredient that can provoke an ethical sensibility.\textsuperscript{197} Such kinship is what contemporary theorists, including Ronald Hepburn and Jane Bennett, have suggested can lead to a sense of compassion that is derived from wonder in order to drive ethics. For instance, Hepburn stated:

\begin{quote}
The nearer the object of wonder comes to having the life, sentience, and rational powers proper to moral person-hood [...] the less bearable becomes the thought […] of wantonly putting a bullet through it or crushing it with a rifle-butt.\textsuperscript{198}
\end{quote}

In light of Hepburn’s and Bennett’s positions, Art Orienté Objet’s exhibition arguably made it more difficult to tolerate killing wildlife for sport. Their works demonstrated how humans and other animals are entangled, challenging any borders between them. However, there are limits to the ethical and political work wonder can do if it is premised on recognising human qualities in the being at hand, as Hepburn seemed to claim. This sort of approach is clearly both anthropomorphic and anthropocentric. As the visual culture studies scholar Giovanni Aloi recently observed, ‘[[...]] it seems that the more animals are perceived to be similar to us, then the easier it is to anthropomorphize them, inducing us to acknowledge human-like rights to them’.\textsuperscript{199} Indeed drawing on the ethologist Konrad Lorenz and his work on neoteny, Garry Marvin and Bob Mullan also speculated that humans might express a desire to protect other large mammals because they recognise aspects of themselves in them.\textsuperscript{200}

However, to elicit compassion and empathy towards wildlife as a result of proximity or similarity to humanity does not go far enough, remembering that the Chthulucene demands respect and responsibility towards all creaturely life. Although clearly an


\textsuperscript{198} Hepburn, ‘Wonder’, p. 145. Carl Akeley, a taxidermist-naturalist who collected for The American Museum of Natural History, New York, in the first years of the twentieth century demonstrated this sentiment in relation to a gorilla he shot, stating: ‘As he lay at the base of the tree, it took all one's scientific ardour to keep from feeling like a murderer. He was a magnificent creature with the face of an amiable giant who would do no harm except perhaps in self defense or in defense of his family’, see Donna Haraway, ‘Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City 1908–1936’, in \textit{Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science} (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 26–58 (p. 34).


\textsuperscript{200} Marvin and Mullan recall how Konrad Lorenz theorised that there was an innate biological drive for adults to protect their young, arising out of recognising qualities such as a prominent forehead, large eyes positioned low down on the face, rounded body form and head, short arms and legs and a soft body surface. Marvin and Mullan observed that the neoteny exhibited by pandas, which retain aspects of their infantile appearance, could be one of the reasons humans have an ‘anthropomorphic appreciation’ of this creature, see Mullan and Marvin, pp. 24–28. See also Keith Tester, \textit{Animals and Society: The Humanity of Animal Rights} (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 21.
animal lover, Lorenz’s position offers a somewhat extreme example of the dangers of compassion and ethical treatment arising out of identification and similarity, since his links to National Socialism, Nazi party membership and work for the Nazi party’s Office for Race Policy have recently been examined.\(^{201}\) Instead of looking at Lorenz’s approach in this context then, we would therefore do well to take heed of Haraway’s warning that ‘[i]t matters what stories tell stories’.\(^{202}\) Accordingly, the work of the writer, animal rights advocate and coiner of the term ‘speciesism’ Richard Ryder seems to offer a beneficial alternative here, since he argued that the plight, pain and distress faced by various creatures should be taken into account regardless of their similarities or differences to humans, or indeed as the political theorist Robert Garner suggested, any aesthetic, medicinal or economic value they afford.\(^{203}\)

In contrast to Hepburn, Bennett ambitiously attempted to ensure wonder’s ethical possibilities could embrace other kingdoms of the natural world. She suggested that enchanting crossings might result in an ethical sensibility since ‘[t]heir magic might generate what might be called presumptive generosity toward the animals, vegetables, and minerals within one’s field of encounter’.\(^{204}\) Bennett implied that imagining and wondering at alternative perspectives results in being able to empathise more readily with the being at hand. Importantly, she includes objects and organisms fundamentally different to humans. The crossings enacted by Art Orienté Objet in their exhibition at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in artworks like *Que le cheval vive en moi!* and *Herzen aus Glas* are focused on horses, who are fellow mammals. In the context of this museum an ethical sensibility can be heightened in relation to the charismatic wildlife featured in Art Orienté Objet’s works. However, the hunting thematic of the collection makes it difficult for this approach to embrace any wildlife other than the mammals and birds with which humans can identify with anthropomorphically, since the museum displays polarise around just this sort of wildlife. Furthermore, despite their best intentions, Art Orienté Objet make recourse to various animal derived materials in their work, such as blood, wool, fur and leather, which undoubtedly impacts and interferes with wildlife in ways that reinforces the dominance of humans over wildlife at some point in its production and needs to be carefully considered.


\(^{202}\) Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, pp. 35 and 101.


The wonder arising through the artworks included in this exhibition provided a means of critiquing the displays, inviting debate and eliciting compassion, all of which might urge visitors to consider and even act towards the plight of wildlife at the hands of hunters, or perhaps adopt an anti-hunting stance if they had not already taken up a position. However, in relation to wonder’s capacity to elicit compassion towards wildlife and lead to the adoption of an ethical sensibility more broadly, it needs to be examined further to see whether all creatures can benefit from such an approach, regardless of their differences and similarities to humans and indeed the degrees to which humans think they can understand them.

So, we are left questioning the extent to which an ethics based on wonder can be cultivated through creative practice when the subjects of wonder are distanced from humans physically and geographically. Is wonder alone sufficient to give rise to an ethical sensibility towards all creaturely life through contemporary art and visual culture? The next chapter turns to the sea to consider the role wonder plays in drawing attention to the threats facing marine wildlife in series three of Isabella Rossellini’s *Green Porno* films.
Chapter Two

Aquatic Anthropomorphism and the Wonderful Wildlife of the Sea: Isabella Rossellini’s Green Porno

A lot of people attack the sea. I make love to it.
— Jacques-Yves Cousteau

Sexy Beasts and Saving Wildlife

Isabella Rossellini is a performer well known for her work in art house cinema, mainstream film and television, as well as being the face of Lancôme and the daughter of the film director Roberto Rossellini and Ingrid Bergman. What is perhaps less well known, is that Rossellini has also studied for a masters degree in animal behaviour and works with guide dogs for the blind in her spare time. More recently, Rossellini has combined her love of acting and wildlife by writing, producing, starring-in and co-directing three series of short films for the Sundance channel: Green Porno (2008–2009), Seduce Me (2010) and Mammals (2013). These films investigate the mating, courtship and maternal instinct of various kinds of wildlife respectively.

The first series of short films is Green Porno. It explores the reproductive lives of creatures such as insects, fish and marine mammals, whose physiology is far from human and whose sexual behaviour appears to be particularly curious from a human perspective. The wildlife featured in these films testifies to the various expressions of sex and gender found throughout the animal kingdom, which the biologist Bruce

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3 Sundance was founded by the actor Robert Redford, who has been an environmental activist since the 1970s. Redford was keen to dedicate screen time to films with an environmental agenda and Green Porno was commissioned as part of the channel’s ‘green-themed’ scheduling, see Sarah E. S. Sinwell, ‘Sex, Bugs, and Isabella Rossellini: The Making and Marketing of Green Porno’, WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly, 3/4.38 (2010), 118–137 (p. 122).

4 The eighteen episodes of Green Porno were produced over three series between 2008–2009.
Bagemihl observed is ‘capable of inspiring our deepest feelings of wonder’. In each episode, Rossellini performs the mating acts of male and female members of various species whilst clad in well-crafted, yet comical costumes made from Lycra and ‘a wonder of detailed paperwork’. Series one explored insects, arachnids and molluscs, in which Rossellini performed the death-inducing mating ritual of the praying mantis, the hermaphroditic reproduction of a snail and the promiscuous copulation of a house fly. Series two considered another group of creatures distanced physically and geographically from humans and focused on sea creatures. The episodes explored the sequential hermaphroditism of limpets, the asexual reproduction of starfish and the relationship between the male and female anglerfish, whereby the small male attaches himself to the larger female by a tooth protruding from his head, acting as what Rossellini described as her own ‘personal sperm bank’. Series three is entitled Bon Appétit!. Whilst it remains concerned with marine wildlife, it has a more overt environmental agenda and the episodes consider the detrimental effects of human activities on the lives and habitats of sea creatures, particularly overfishing. Through Green Porno, Rossellini claimed she wanted to ‘give people a sense of wonder about the natural world […] to make them fall in love with it and want to protect it’. The result is a blend of art and popular science, which Rossellini used in an attempt to provoke responsible and ecologically savvy sensibilities towards marine wildlife in her viewers.

In Squid, an episode from series three, Isabella Rossellini stands in a kitchen made from paper and cardboard, frying paper-engineered squid in a similarly crafted pan. ‘Yum! Fried calamari, my favourite!’ she exclaims, picking up a piece of squid that has fallen out of the pan and putting it carefully back. Then, seemingly distracted, a serious expression falls across Rossellini’s face and she looks directly into the camera to address the viewer. ‘If I were a calamari’, she says thoughtfully, ‘I would be a squid and everyone would want to eat me’. The film transitions to an indigo underwater set where

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8 If I Were an Anglerfish, Green Porno (2008), series two. See the book to accompany the series, Isabella Rossellini, Green Porno (New York: HarperStudio, 2009), [n.pag.].
paper puppets of various squid predators in the form of a shark, a marine bird and a fish appear in a quick succession of cuts, lunging for their prey. A watery, black cloud slowly fills the screen: ‘I would squirt black ink from my anus so that I can disappear and propel myself off’, Rossellini says, using her voiceover to reveal how squid evade predation. In the next scene, Isabella Rossellini stands dressed as a squid. She wears a white, translucent costume, which shimmers thanks to a torch she is waving around inside it so that light flickers across the surface of her ‘cephalopod’ body. ‘By luminescent effects, and by changing shape, I can communicate. I can say, “be careful”. I can say, “I love you”, with my whole three hearts’, she explains. The camera cuts to a close-up of three pink, plastic heart-shaped broaches flashing on Rossellini’s squid chest, accompanied by sound effects mimicking human heartbeat. Then, Isabella Rossellini performs squid sex. Embracing a fabric squid with the limp tentacles dangling from her costume, Rossellini describes how these creatures ‘give the most passionate twenty arm embrace’, when they mate. The camera cuts to a close-up of Rossellini’s face, when after pausing for comic effect and cheekily raising an eyebrow, she clarifies: ‘Twenty? Eighteen. Two are not arms, if you know what I mean’.

Concluding her performance of squid sex from the perspective of the male, Rossellini’s cephalopod ‘arm’ inserts gelatinous orange balloons into the body of the fabric female squid. At the same time, she seductively says: ‘I would slip my spermatophore, a package full of sperm, into her… spermateca’, closing the scene with a mock-flirtatious smile (figures 38–41).  

After having ‘mated’, Rossellini explains how squid live in the deep sea, but that they vertically migrate at night. At the same time, five squid puppets rise slowly upwards and out of the shot. Suddenly, sinister and discordant music sounds. The film cuts to a cardboard fishing boat, sailing on a blue and green paper sea. ‘We could be caught by fisheries!’ Rossellini cries. Rossellini-as-squid appears attached to a hook and screams as she is pulled out of the water. Squid puppets are reeled into the paper fishing boat and the screen slowly dissolves to film footage of an actual fishing boat hauling in its cephalopod catch. The film sharply cuts back to Rossellini in the kitchen, who, returning from her reveries of becoming-squid-becoming-male-becoming-captured, stands as her human self and breaks her gaze with the paper calamari to address the viewer. ‘I lost my appetite’, she concedes, ‘what to do?’ At this point, the film transitions to the wildlife conservationist and marine biologist Claudio Campagna, who is standing on a beach amongst a Patagonian elephant seal colony. Campagna features in each of the four episodes of series three in order to provide more details about the problems

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10 All dialogue taken from my transcription of Green Porno, dir. by Isabella Rossellini and Jody Shapiro (Sundance, 2008–2009).
plaguing the sea life featured in Rossellini’s films. In *Squid*, he uses imagery of squid fisheries to show how humans are fishing unsustainably. Campagna demonstrates the magnitude of the squid fisheries functioning off the coast of South America with a satellite image, in which the lights used to lure the squid appear as a patch of bright white almost overshadowing the city of Buenos Aires. The accompanying film footage shows thousands of squid piled high on a fishing boat as two fishermen add another crate of freshly caught squid to the vast quantities they have already landed (figures 42–46).

The other episodes in series three of *Green Porno* have a similar environmental agenda, and like *Squid*, aim to raise awareness about the threats facing marine wildlife. After Rossellini has examined the ways various sea creatures mate, the plight of this wildlife at the hands of humans is revealed to viewers. In *Anchovy*, Rossellini uses human-centric language to describe their mass spawnings as ‘orgies’. The film ends with Campagna explaining how the overfishing of anchovies is removing too many fish from the food chains of other wildlife. In *Shrimp*, Rossellini performs a tongue-in-cheek strip tease in which she transitions from male to female shrimp, anthropomorphically retaining the markers of a nude human female (breasts and genitals) on her naked ‘crustacean’ body (figure 47). Rossellini-as-shrimp is captured in a net along with various paper marine creatures. Campagna then discusses how shrimp fishing produces large quantities of wasted by-catch. The last film in the series adopts a slightly different format and is much longer than the others, featuring footage of live elephant seals in their habitat, a puppet show and an animation exploring the lives of these marine mammals. Rather than performing elephant seal sex, Rossellini instead resides on the shoreline with Campagna observing this wildlife in action. The film ends by highlighting the perils faced by these seals as a result of human activities such as fishing and dumping rubbish, showing graphic imagery of a dead seal strangled by a discarded fishing net and another similarly entangled seal nursing its pup.

These short films demonstrate Rossellini’s own wonder and fascination with wildlife together with her commitment to its protection. Towards this end, this final series of *Green Porno* presents imagery that recalls what Steve Baker has elsewhere described as ‘strategic images for animal rights’.11 Rossellini’s films show pictures of the abuse of marine wildlife (in the form of over-exploitation), demonstrate a ‘willing adoption of therianthropic attributes’, as she dresses up and performs wildlife in a way that

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11 Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, p. 188.

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culminates in ‘cute anthropomorphic imagery’ thanks to colourful sets and costumes.12 The political imperative behind Green Porno, whereby Rossellini seeks to promote the protection of marine wildlife is marked. However, the allusions series three appears to make to feminist performance art also speaks to a deeper conjunction of art and politics behind these films. Each episode begins with Isabella Rossellini standing in a paper and cardboard kitchen set (figure 48). The crop of the shot and the design of the cardboard kitchen set have a curious similarity to the way Martha Rosler’s performance Semiotics of the Kitchen (1975) is staged (figure 49). In Rosler’s performance, the artist parodies the format of the television cooking show in the same way Rossellini parodies wildlife film. Rossellini adopts an educational mode of storytelling in her films to inform viewers about the biology and behaviours of various sea life. Rosler’s ABC of kitchen equipment is based on a similarly didactic model, as the artist works her way through the alphabet demonstrating various kitchen utensils in action using brisk, overwrought movements. Whilst Rosler’s actions are more aggressive than those in Green Porno, Rossellini nevertheless exhibits a similar brash, over-exaggerated performance in her enactments of nonhuman animal behaviour and sex. Rosler was conveying her anger at the repressed status of women at a time when feminist concerns were being addressed through performance art. Green Porno draws on the aesthetic of this work to underline its drive towards environmental change and ecological responsibility, shifting the focus from women’s liberation to a kind of ‘animal liberation’ instead.13

Given Rossellini’s aim in these films, this chapter examines how Green Porno evokes wonder and considers the role sea creatures play in bringing this about. Significantly, Green Porno appears to be indebted to the history of wildlife film. But how does Rossellini draw from this heritage to further provoke wonder through these films?14 Moreover, is wonder sufficient to promote the care and concern Rossellini hoped to cultivate towards the marine wildlife physically different and geographically distant from humans?

Sea Creatures and Wild Wonder
The curators of the exhibition Aquatopia: The Imaginary of the Ocean Deep at Nottingham Contemporary (2013) and Tate St. Ives (2013–2014) conceived this exhibition around the notion that ‘[n]inety percent of the Earth’s oceans remain

12 Ibid., p. 232.
unexplored. Science knows more about outer space than the ocean deep’. Such is the unfathomable scale and depth of the sea that it has readily lent itself to the mythic and imaginary in art and visual culture. The scholar Graham Huggan wrote of how according to Philippe Diolé, writer and collaborator with the famed filmmaker and oceanographer Jacques-Yves Cousteau, ‘[t]he underwater world […] is a place of enchantment and wonder’. Indeed this wonder of the deep extends to the ocean's inhabitants. Tales of sea monsters, mythic beings like mermaids and the ‘astonishment’ accompanying the wildlife brought to the surface during the deep-sea dredging expeditions of the nineteenth century, are matched today by the wonder provoked by watery footage of little witnessed sea creatures in wildlife films, a recent example being the BBC television series *Blue Planet II* (2017). The sea seems so foreign and uninhabitable from the terrestrial perspective of humans, that marine wildlife can often appear radically other. Rossellini emphasises this through the behaviours she describes in *Green Porno*. Shrimp change sex before they shed their shells to mate, anchovies reproduce through mass spawning events, female elephant seals stall their pregnancies and squid communicate through bioluminescence. Each example has been carefully selected by Rossellini to present other-than-human ways of being and acting in the world. In fact, the scholar Stacy Alaimo has suggested that ‘[b]ioluminescence epitomizes animals as other worlds’, because it highlights that these creatures are ‘profoundly different from’ humans, though importantly in no way ‘inferior’.

Rossellini deliberately chose this sort of wildlife to figure as central protagonists in her films, manifesting her wonder through the deranged theatrics of her camped-up performances of sea creature sex while wearing comic costumes. She performs a kind of eccentric zoomorphism, where ‘eccentric’ alludes to the unusual or bizarre at the same time as recalling its etymological roots in the Greek *ekkentros*, or ‘out of centre’, leading to a certain decentring of the human in these works. The camp humour of

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16 In fact this was exactly the topic explored in *Aquatopia*.
19 Ibid., p. 247. Such luminosity has the capacity to elicit wonder, as Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park observed in the very first lines of their wide-ranging historical account of wonder and wonders between 1150 and 1750. They recall how the natural philosopher Robert Boyle was induced to wonder at a shining shank of luminous meat and immediately driven to investigate the cause, see Daston and Park, p. 13.
20 *Oxford English Dictionary* [online].
**Green Porno** is significant. Rossellini seeks to induce an environmental sensibility in her viewers, but does so in a comic way. The writer Susan Sontag noted how '[o]ne is drawn to Camp when one realizes that “sincerity” is not enough' and claimed that camp introduces ‘a new, more complex relation to “the serious”. One can be [...] frivolous about the serious'.\(^2^1\) It is exactly this approach Rossellini employs in **Green Porno**. As Sontag observed, '[t]he traditional means for going beyond straight seriousness — irony, satire — seem feeble today'.\(^2^2\) At a time when the drive to marine wildlife conservation is particularly urgent, Rossellini adopts a comic, camp approach. She deploys this brand of over-the-top humour to make her point, invoking Sontag’s ‘new standard' of artificial theatricality through her exaggerated performances of sea creature sex, which employ excessive anthropomorphism.\(^2^3\)

Considering the importance this thesis has placed on Derrida’s deranged theatrics, it is notable that Stacy Alaimo has also drawn from this philosopher in her examination of the creatures of the deep. She claimed that whilst the expansive ocean ‘is of an entirely different scale than Jacques Derrida’s domestic encounter with the gaze of his cat’, his ‘ruminations are already drenched in the language of the depths, as he describes the question of human and nonhuman subjectivity as “immense and abyssal”’.\(^2^4\) Alaimo’s observation regarding the magnitude of the ocean seems to suggest that sea creatures can present an intensification of the alterity the philosopher recognised in his pet cat, since they inhabit the wilds of the sprawling ocean rather than the domestic confines of the home. It appears that the sense of otherness experienced when faced with sea life is magnified as a result of the impenetrable territories of marine wildlife, the vastly different *umwelten* sea creatures inhabit and the other-than-human physiologies they possess.

When Luce Irigaray wrote about wonder in 1984, she was principally interested in exploring its role in encounters of sexual difference, but her observations can equally well apply to the differences between humans and sea creatures. Significantly, in light of **Green Porno**’s aims, Irigaray suggested that wonder can serve as an ethical basis for encountering the ‘other’.\(^2^5\) She wrote of how wonder was ‘[t]he point of passage between two closed worlds, two definite universes, two space-times […] two others’, and concluded that ‘[w]onder must be the advent or the event of the other’, that which

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\(^{2^2}\) Ibid.

\(^{2^3}\) Ibid.

\(^{2^4}\) Alaimo, ’Violet-Black’, p. 234.

\(^{2^5}\) Irigaray, p. 74.
is ‘not yet assimilated’. Marine biologists, and indeed Isabella Rossellini, may have studied the shrimp, squid, anchovies and elephant seals featured in Green Porno. However, knowledge of the subjective experiences of these creatures and the ways in which they perceive and inhabit the world remains elusive. The ultimate unfathomable nature of the experiences of nonhuman animals, despite the scientific knowledge already amassed, has affinities with Jane Bennett’s understanding of ‘wildness’. She described this as ‘the unexplored potential […] always left over from even the most reflective or relentless exploration. […] the distance never bridged between two friends, no matter how familiar and intimate’. It is this trait of being ultimately elusive and unknowable that gives rise to the wonder of deranged theatrics, but also equates to the inherent ‘wildness’ of marine life, which offers yet further grounds for wonder.

Based on Irigaray’s work, encounters with sea creatures can give rise to wonder and provide the foundation for ethics. As Marguerite La Caze helpfully summarised, the reason Irigaray believed wonder could offer a basis for ethics is because ‘[i]n regarding the other with wonder, their existence resists assimilation or reduction to sameness or self and we are able to accept differences in them’. However, it is the very differences of sea creatures from humans that have resulted in marine wildlife often being maligned with regards to ethical treatment and the extension of compassion. For instance, the animal rights philosopher Peter Singer noted how ‘[t]here is no humane slaughter requirement’ for fish caught in the wild, nor in many cases for fish that are farmed. Yet even Singer himself famously used sea creatures to denote the line where rights to nonhuman animals should be curtailed, positioning it ‘somewhere between a shrimp and an oyster’, since he believed the experience of pain in these creatures could not be confirmed. Thomas Nagel seemed to agree with this, explaining how he selected a mammal rather than a fish in his examination of the impossibility of understanding the subjective experiences of other animals, since if one deviates too far from a human baseline ‘people gradually shed their faith that there is

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26 Ibid., p. 75.
30 Interestingly, in the second edition of the book Singer had experienced a change of heart stating: ‘in the first edition of this book I suggested that somewhere between a shrimp and an oyster seems as good a place to draw the line as any. Accordingly, I continued occasionally to eat oysters, scallops, and mussels for some time after I became, in every other respect, a vegetarian. But while one cannot with any confidence say that these creatures do feel pain, so one can equally have little confidence in saying that they do not feel pain […]. Since it is so easy to avoid eating them, I now think it better to do so’, see Singer, Animal Liberation, p. 174.
experience there at all’.

Similarly, Giovanni Aloi observed that creatures such as fish and crustaceans do not express pain in ways humans can recognise, so ‘[t]heir cryptic, apparently inexpressive faces and mechanical looking bodies, make it impossible to decipher familiar traits related to pain and suffering in humans.’ He asks: ‘Is Derrida’s abyss too wide and too deep when the gaze returning ours is that of an invertebrate?’

This being the case, how can respect and concern towards marine wildlife be induced through Green Porno and what role does wonder play in bringing this about?

It is important that Marguerite La Caze recognised how wonder alone is not sufficient to serve as the foundation for ethics. She observed some flaws in Irigaray’s positioning of wonder as a crucial aspect of ethical encounters with difference, namely the danger it poses of exoticising ‘the other’. However, she nevertheless accepted the promise of Irigaray’s position, suggesting that wonder needs to be tempered with ‘generosity’ as conceived by Descartes (since Irigaray used Descartes’ understanding of wonder to inform her work) in order to offer the foundation for cultivating ethics.

La Caze described generosity as ‘a species of wonder combined with love, which involves having proper pride or rightful self-regard [...] esteem for ourselves’. Whilst wonder according to Irigaray respects difference, generosity as conceived by Descartes leads to a sense of self-value and self-respect, which in turn we recognise in others.

La Caze argued that ethics should therefore be based on both a wonder that accepts difference, and a generosity, which is predicated upon noting similarities to others. She concluded that:

Responding to others in terms of generosity is to imagine others as like ourselves. Responding in terms of wonder is to accept the limits of our imagination and accept difference. [...] In wonder we do not project ourselves onto the object but appreciate it in its otherness. Generosity and wonder combined also speak to the issue of the two sides of ethical relations: attitudes to others and attitudes to ourselves. Wonder is a response to others that accepts their differences and could be reflected back in an appreciation of oneself. Generosity involves a basic esteem or respect for oneself that is also

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31 Nagel, p. 438.
33 Ibid., p. 51.
34 La Caze, ‘The Encounter Between Wonder and Generosity’, p. 14. La Caze makes reference to the work of Iris Marion Young when making this point, ibid., p.10.
36 Ibid., p. 11.
37 Ibid., p. 12.
While La Caze suggested this type of wonder-imbued ethical encounter can extend beyond the sexual difference explored by Irigaray, this study suggests it might even transcend species. If wonder is to have the ability to drive ethics and compassion towards all creatures, it must be a wonder derived from respect of difference and a generosity based on recognition of similarity, where generosity is conceived as a species of wonder in which respect is extended to others. It is therefore by adhering to John Berger’s maxim, that humans and nonhuman animals ‘are both like and unlike’, that we might better cultivate an ethical sensibility and express respect and compassion towards marine wildlife. So how does *Green Porno* evoke both wonder and generosity in pursuit of this agenda?

**Wonder and Generosity in *Green Porno***

When acting out the lives of sea creatures in *Green Porno*, Rossellini clearly retains the appearance of a human female in costume. She speaks from the perspectives of various nonhuman animals, using human language to describe the experiences of the wildlife in her films. In *Shrimp*, for instance, Rossellini’s naked ‘shrimp’ body is furnished with comical schematic markers of a nude woman with human breasts and genitals painted onto her costume. Additionally, when captured, she cries ‘we shrimps are fished by the millions’, identifying herself as one amongst the ‘we’ of the species. Conceiving of nonhuman animals in this way is almost hyperbolic in its anthropomorphism. Yet it is through recourse to anthropomorphism that Rossellini is able to render this marine wildlife closer to humans and therefore easier to relate to, empathise with, and as a result, extend compassion towards. As the zoologist Glenn Morris suggested, anthropomorphism can present a danger in science since it can lead to misinterpreting observations, resulting in flawed research findings. However, he suggested that ‘[w]hen you are trying to persuade laypeople to care about an animal’s existence, turning them into little people is very, very effective. And of course that is what Isabella is doing so very well’. The wildlife filmmaker and scholar Derek Bousé concurred, suggesting that expressing sympathy towards nonhuman animals is reliant

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38 Ibid., p. 15. Jane Bennett likewise recognises the role wonder and generosity play in leading to the cultivation of an ethical sensibility, suggesting that enchantment might be something that can be ‘deployed to propel ethical generosity’, see Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, p. 3. On wonder and generosity and their ability to lead to compassion and an ethical sensibility in an exhibition context, see Endt-Jones, ‘Coral Fishing and Pearl Diving’, p. 187.


41 Bohannon, p. 1,620.

42 Ibid.
‘on being able to see a bit of ourselves reflected in them’. He argued that presenting events from the point of view of wildlife, as Rossellini does in *Green Porno*, is one strategy that can work to evoke the sympathy of which he writes. As the scholar Eva Hayward claimed, it seems as though an ‘organism can only receive the benefits of empathy if we can identify with it’.

It is the recognition of similarity via anthropomorphism, which can be substituted as ‘generosity’ as articulated by La Caze. Of course anthropomorphism can be problematised through its capacity to reduce wildlife to qualities that can only be understood on human terms. However, observing that ‘[a]nthropomorphism is always an uncertain undertaking’, my argument is that there are certain forms of anthropomorphism that are productive for understanding wildlife, and which retain recognition and respect for the ultimate differences of nonhuman animals.

Anthropomorphism is complex, manifesting itself in numerous ways ranging from ‘the naive projection of human experience onto other species to serious attempts to understand animals on their own terms through intimate familiarity with their behaviour and Umwelt’. Scholars have defined numerous varieties of anthropomorphism to describe these two positions, along with various shades of grey in between.

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43 Bousé, p. 99.
44 Ibid., p. 103.
46 Steve Baker, *Picturing the Beast*, p. 230. It seems somewhat significant in this context that the animal and media studies scholar Tom Tyler revealed one of the first recorded instances of anthropomorphism being employed in relation to wildlife as oppose to deities, was in George Henry Lewes’s *Sea-Side Studies* (1858) where Tyler notes that ‘the author warns against attributing ‘vision’ or ‘alarm’ to molluscs’, see Tom Tyler, ‘If Horses Had Hands…’, in Animal Encounters, ed. by Tom Tyler and Manuela Rossini (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 13–26 (p. 14).
48 Frans de Waal, for instance, described three types of anthropomorphism to include ‘anthropocentric anthropomorphism’ (the confusion between humans and other animals), ‘animalcentric anthropomorphism’ (which aims for understanding nonhuman animals ‘on their own terms’), and ‘heuristic anthropomorphism’ (based on testable identifications with nonhuman animals), see de Waal, p. 262. Randall Lockwood described four further varieties of this phenomenon: ‘allegorical’ anthropomorphism, in which the behaviour of wildlife is described on terms unrelated to biological fact, ‘personification’, whereby pets are dressed in human clothes, ‘superficial’ anthropomorphism, when nonhuman animal behaviour is read in terms of how it correlates to human behaviour (for instance ‘kissing’ equals affection), ‘explanatory’ anthropomorphism, whereby humans believe that by describing nonhuman animal behaviour in a particular way, they have determined its basis and finally, ‘applied’ anthropomorphism, where one’s own experience of the world is used to inform ideas about the other species, see Randall Lockwood, ‘Anthropomorphism is not a Four-letter Word’, in *Perceptions of Animals in American Culture*, ed. by R.J. Hoage (Washington D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), pp. 41–56 (pp. 45–50). The anthropologist Pamela Asquith has recognised that evolutionary biology demonstrates that similarities between closely related species (such as higher primates and humans) are to be expected, and as such, a certain
instance, the animal behaviourist John Kennedy observed how there is an innate human drive to anthropomorphise, which can lead to empathic responses when viewing injured mammals suffering, only to disregard anthropomorphism as a means of relating to wildlife without error. However, this thesis is concerned with the scholarship that recognises the value of anthropomorphism in promoting productive relationships between humans and wildlife. In 1979, the philosopher Mary Midgley had already contested the idea that anthropomorphism is reductive to wildlife, arguing that it does not have to diminish or assimilate what is unique and distinctive about other creatures if one is knowledgeable enough about the wildlife at hand. Twenty years later in 1999 the primatologist and ethologist Frans de Waal also highlighted that by making recourse to anthropomorphism we need not divest ourselves of critical distance, suggesting it might be used strategically. More recently, Erica Fudge suggested that a certain sense of anthropomorphism is even necessary if we are to understand, respond to and behave towards nonhuman animals ethically. Arguably, it is this aspect of anthropomorphism that is exploited through Green Porno.

Rossellini appears to empathise with Fudge’s view regarding the role anthropomorphism can play in prompting ethical approaches to wildlife. Green Porno exhibits a sense of ‘critical anthropomorphism’, as articulated by Kari Weil, in which ‘we open ourselves to touch and to be touched by others as fellow subjects and may imagine their pain, pleasure, and need in anthropomorphic terms, but stop short of believing that we can know their experience’. This offers humans a way into the worlds of sea creatures through things they might share, whilst retaining respect for the differences exhibited by marine wildlife and accepting that human understanding can only go so far. Weil’s mode of critical anthropomorphism grants permission to understand wildlife on human terms as well as on the basis of similarities, as long as

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51 de Waal, p. 264.
52 Fudge, p. 76.
53 Weil, p. 31. In relation to the anthropomorphism in Green Porno, the scholar Joshua Hall similarly recognised that the mode adopted through these films is a kind of ‘respectful, posthuman anthropomorphism’ and a ‘respectful anthropomorphism’ that takes difference into account ‘in ways that resist demeaning the nonhuman body’, see Joshua Hall, ‘(Un)Natural Provocation: Abjection, Otherness, and Nonhuman Representation in Isabella Rossellini’s Green Porno Webseries’ (unpublished Master of Arts thesis, Trent University, 2015), pp. 33, 47 and 121. He also refers to this as ‘a nonhumanocentric form of anthropomorphism’, ibid., p. 59.
the ultimate differences of wildlife continue to be recognised. Mary Midgley stressed the importance of retaining this respect for difference, stating:

We need the vast world, and it must be [...] a world constantly capable of surprising us, a world we did not program, since only such a world is the proper object of wonder. [...] wonder, the sense of otherness, is one of the sources of religion [...] but it is also the source of curiosity and every vigorous use of our faculties [...] man can neither be understood nor saved alone. \(^5^4\)

Midgley’s view flies in the face of modern disenchantment, offering an alternative, secular means for wonder to endure today through encounters with earthbound others. In addition, she suggested that recognition of difference and otherness might even be a salve of some sort, since humanity ‘can neither be understood nor saved alone’. \(^5^5\) This seems especially significant, considering the current ecological state of play and the Chthulucene’s call to place our relations with other critters central to decisions about how we should best inhabit earth at this time.

Anthropomorphism is neither reductive towards wildlife, nor should it reduce the capacity for wonder if it retains respect for, and recognition of, difference. When Rossellini performs as a squid caught on a fishing hook, one might empathise, but without assuming a conclusive understanding of the experience from the squid’s perspective. This is because Rossellini has already revealed the completely different lifeworld inhabited by this creature, which possesses three hearts and communicates through bioluminescence. In each episode of Green Porno, far from human behaviours and physiologies are examined, to reveal the male to female metamorphoses of shrimp, the mass spawns by which anchovies reproduce and the ability of the female elephant seal to stall her pregnancy. The differences of these creatures are explored, performed and above all, retained and celebrated by Rossellini. It is by recognising difference that wonder arises on Irigaray’s terms, where we might, in Bruce Bagemihl’s words, be induced to ‘cherishing unlikeness’. \(^5^6\) Yet compassion remains possible in Green Porno because wildlife has been packaged up in human form and performed by Isabella Rossellini with recourse to ‘critical anthropomorphism’. By harnessing similarity through anthropomorphism, and exploring the differences of these sea creatures, Rossellini evokes both wonder and generosity. Furthermore, through her gender-and-species-bending performances of this wildlife and their reproductive acts, Rossellini assumes the roles of both male and female members of various

\(^{5^4}\) Midgley, pp. 362–363.  
\(^{5^5}\) Ibid., p. 363.  
\(^{5^6}\) Bagemihl, p. 262.
species, queering the borders not only between gender and species but also between entertainment and education, art and environmental activism.\(^{57}\) Rossellini commented on the efficacy of the performative strategy employed in her work as a means of feeling 'other', recalling how when modelling, wearing high heels can 'give you a body posture that isn't yours' and is therefore 'the beginning of feeling “other”', which '[i]f you go with it, it grows — an attitude, a mood, a gesture'.\(^{58}\) Through her own wonder and the deranged theatries of her eccentric zoomorphic and critically anthropomorphic performances, Rossellini decentres both herself as Rossellini and as human. The fluid identity assumed by Rossellini in *Green Porno*, together with the category defying nature of these short films, also enact the sort of 'crossings' that Jane Bennett suggested can lead to ‘enchantment’ and a sense of wonder at the world.\(^{59}\) On Bennett's terms, the enchantment resulting from crossings leads to ‘presumptive generosity toward the animals, vegetables, and minerals within one’s field of encounter’, which is promising and productive considering the wildlife conservation agenda Rossellini placed at the heart of her films.\(^{60}\)

**Wonder and ‘Pornographic’ Wildlife Film**

*Green Porno* has clear visual and conceptual affinities with the work of filmmakers embedded in the history of wildlife film, which adds to its capacity for wonder. Jamie Lorimer recently proposed a typology of wildlife films based on the affective responses they can provoke in viewers.\(^{61}\) One category he identified as ‘awe’, in which '[t]he aim [...] is to evoke the overwhelming size, power, and alterity of nature to provoke admiration, reverence, and fear' and whereby '[g]reat attention is given to portraying [...] alien ecologies, unfamiliar anatomies, and inhuman behaviors'.\(^{62}\) Lorimer suggested that this type of wildlife film exaggerates and distorts the behaviour of nonhuman animals in pursuit of thrilling footage. There appears to be an acceptance in wildlife films that footage is heavily edited to result in carefully developed narrative arcs. As the animal studies scholar Jonathan Burt stated, 'most animal films are concerned with compressing animal activities to highlight their most visually interesting forms'.\(^{63}\) Even the famed British wildlife film pioneer, producer and presenter David Attenborough recognised in 1987 that 'a jungle where nothing happens is not really

\(^{57}\) Sinwell, pp. 128–130.
\(^{58}\) Rossellini, *Some of Me*, p. 62.
\(^{59}\) Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, p. 17.
\(^{60}\) Ibid., p. 30.
\(^{62}\) Ibid., pp. 131–132.
what you turned the television set on to see’. In this type of wildlife film, every effort is made to reveal the hidden lives of nonhuman animals, or indeed exaggerations of their lives, which are ‘enchantingly displayed’ to viewers through the mediation of film. As Graham Huggan noted, wildlife films ‘are a form of armchair tourism’ driven in part by ‘the commodified demand for wonder’. Indeed writing about the BBC’s recent show *Planet Earth* (2006), Louise Economides goes so far as to describe the awesome spectacle of the footage as the ‘series’ high-tech stimulation of wonder’, suggesting that it was more concerned with ‘producing heart-stopping awe’ than with being didactic.

Lorimer claimed that within the category of awe, wildlife films are marked by their tendency ‘to drift toward the pornographic’, in which viewers ‘are presented with an improbable feast of [...] exotic animals, which are forever fighting, fucking, eating, migrating, and dying for their impatient channel-surfing audiences’. Series three of *Green Porno* delivers on at least two of these counts, presenting viewers with the sexual behaviours of various sea creatures before they meet their fate at the hands of humans. Rossellini capitalised on this awesome, sensational and ‘pornographic’ tendency of wildlife film. Explaining her choice of subject matter for *Green Porno*, Rossellini is quoted as saying, ‘I've always been interested in animals and animal behaviour. Among the things you read about is their sexual lives, their reproduction [...]. And everybody's interested in sex, so I figured, let's go there’.

The apparent allure of sex-related subject matter was harnessed by London’s Natural History Museum in the exhibition *Sexual Nature* (2011). Eight of Rossellini’s films were included in this exhibition, which sought to attract an adult audience through the spectacle of its sex-related subject matter (figure 50). Other objects on display included newly commissioned taxidermy showing woodland creatures copulating (figure 51). Sex was the central concept of this exhibition, yet unlike *Green Porno*, there appeared to be no explicit eco-activist agenda. Instead it capitalised on the sensational subject matter with a view to educating visitors about the reproductive behaviour of wildlife at

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64 David Attenborough quoted in Bousé, p. 7.
65 Huggan, p. 9.
66 Ibid.
67 Economides, pp. 173 and 175.
the same time as entertaining them.⁷⁰ The ‘awe-some’ spectacle of nonhuman animal sex and celebrity presented in Green Porno undoubtedly contributes to the ability of these films to raise awareness about marine wildlife conservation, increasing the popular appeal and reach of these films.⁷¹ Indeed, after Green Porno launched at the Sundance Film Festival in 2008, it became a viral sensation, and by 2010 the films had been viewed online by over four million people, testifying to the broad reach of Rossellini’s ecological awareness raising exercise.⁷² Of course, there is always the danger that viewers are simply drawn to the spectacle of Rossellini performing nonhuman animal sex and do not get past the humour of the bizarre juxtaposition of the actress feigning intercourse with various wildlife. One cannot guarantee the response these films will ultimately elicit.

Yet the recent FishLove campaign seems to confirm the power of sex, celebrity and marine wildlife conservation when these elements are combined. This campaign involved established photographers producing images of various celebrities posing naked with fish and other sea creatures to raise awareness about overfishing. In a set of images from 2015, the photographer John Swannell shot the actress Helena Bonham Carter posing naked with a Bigeye tuna between her knees. In this image, the actresses’ seductive pose is in contrast to the surreal and ridiculous presence of the enormous fish between her legs (figure 52). Yet the image resembles Peter Paul Rubens’s Leda and the Swan (c.1598–1600), depicting a mythological and shape-shifting subject matter in which the God Zeus takes the form of a swan to seduce Leda (figure 53). The photograph recalls the kind of ‘anthropornography’ that Carol J. Adams speaks of in relation to the image of ‘Ursula Hamdress’, an anthropomorphised pig pinup wearing human panties who reportedly graced the pages of the Playboy calendar produced for the ‘pig farmer’s playboy’.⁷³ However, the FishLove campaign admittedly seems to have been produced towards more worthy ends, albeit using dead fish to do so. Whilst the use of sex in this type of campaign has been criticised due to the fact that ‘the message of care, compassion, and justice gets lost in the exchange’,

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⁷⁰ A similar entertaining approach to educating about wildlife sex can be found in Olivia Judson, Dr Tatiana’s Sex Advice To All Creation: The Definitive Guide to the Evolutionary Biology of Sex (London: Vintage, 2003), which takes the form of a sex advice column in which the agony aunt responds to the concerns of various nonhuman animals, making for a light-hearted way to communicate aspects of wildlife behaviour.

⁷¹ Sinwell, p. 126.

⁷² Ibid., p. 118.

and in extreme instances such as PETA’s *I’d Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur* campaign, for capitalising on the sexualisation of women, they nevertheless seem to be successful in extending the reach of the message they aim to communicate.\(^{74}\) This particular portrait of Bonham Carter was released in advance of World Oceans Day 2015 and formed part of a campaign to obtain commitment by the UK government to protect 20% of the world’s oceans by the year 2020.\(^{75}\) The *FishLove* website credits this campaign ‘as being instrumental in persuading the UK Government to commit to creating the largest marine protected area in the world’, demonstrating how such activities can contribute to effecting tangible change.\(^{76}\) It is this similar mix of celebrity, humour and sex that Rossellini’s films exude to promote a similar agenda.\(^{77}\) However, rather than alluding to the taboo of sexual relations across species as recalled by Swannell and Bonham Carter’s homage to *Leda and the Swan*, Rossellini’s films are rather more comic than erotic. The actress performs nonhuman animal sex as a representative of the species, eschewing any troubling allusions to interspecies intercourse. As such, Rossellini’s performances have more of an affinity with the artists Elizabeth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle’s light-hearted and activist orientated *ecosexuality*, where Earth is not a mother but a queer lover, than with the disturbing and problematic practice of bestiality.\(^{78}\) Of course Jane Bennett’s enchantment at species transgressions could equally be applied to this latter practice, meaning that there are some limits to this position — species transgressions are not always beneficial and ethical for all involved. Stephens and Sprinkle’s *Sexecology* on the other hand, recognises the human destruction of the Earth and tries instead to ‘treat the Earth with kindness, respect and affection’ using a humorous and memorable sex-related strategy — a tone and mode of delivery that *Green Porno* seems to be aligned with.\(^{79}\)

As well as the awe-inducing ‘pornographic’ aspects of wildlife film, in which sex and death prevail, Rossellini makes further references to the genre through the language she uses, as well as the setting of her final film. The wildlife film scholar Cynthia Chris has observed the heteronormativity of the sex historically presented in wildlife films, in

\(^{74}\) Adams and Gruen, ‘Groundwork’, p. 28.
\(^{75}\) The campaign was run by The Blue Marine Foundation and the organisation Oceans 5. See, <https://fishlove.co.uk/collections.html> [accessed 28 October 2017].
\(^{76}\) Ibid.
\(^{77}\) As Sinwell observed in her article about *Green Porno*, not only is it the case ‘that the juxtaposition of sex, animals and Isabella Rossellini sells’, but Rossellini’s celebrity status also makes the environmental and educational messages in *Green Porno* more accessible, see Sinwell, pp. 125–126. In fact Graham Huggan has positioned ‘contemporary celebrity conservationism as one popular expression of a chronically endangered planet’, Huggan, p. 13.
\(^{79}\) Ibid., (para. 1 of 6).
which the traditional family unit frequently serves as the narrative *modus operandi*.\(^8\)

Rossellini parodies these conventions associated with the history of the genre, often knowingly deploying the terminology of ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ to refer to the creatures represented in her films.\(^8^1\) Yet, at the very same time Rossellini disrupts these traditional tropes through her gender-bending performances, enacting creatures that are female, male, sexless, asexual or various permutations of hermaphrodite. Stacy Alaimo suggested that accounts drawing attention to the diverse sexualities exhibited throughout the animal kingdom can be used ‘to complicate, challenge, enrich, and transform our conceptions of nature, culture, sex, gender, and other fundamental categories’, which is exactly what Rossellini’s films work so well to bring about.\(^8^2\)

As such, Rossellini highlights the astounding variation in reproductive strategies, gender and sex that exist amongst various species of wildlife — something Alaimo has suggested ‘explodes our sense of being able to make sense of it all’ in ‘epiphanic moments of wonder’.\(^8^3\) *Green Porno* embraces the sort of ‘queerness’ Chris suggested has been historically ‘underrepresented’ in wildlife films despite diverse alternatives to heterosexuality found throughout the animal kingdom.\(^8^4\)

Chris observed how David Attenborough’s *The Trials of Life* (1990) presented hermaphroditic reproduction but nevertheless heterosexualised the behaviour.\(^8^5\) The last episode in the series, entitled ‘Continuing the Line’, focused exclusively on the reproductive strategies of various creatures, including exactly the sort of wildlife that fascinates Rossellini. It presented viewers with engrossing, close-up footage of the ways various other-than-human creatures procreate, including barnacles, squid and spiders. All of these nonhuman animals appear in various episodes of *Green Porno,* but are presented very differently by Rossellini who celebrates the inherent differences of their varying lives and lifeworlds.


\(^8^1\) Stacy Alaimo suggested that the use of human-centric terms such as ‘divorce’ and ‘domestic violence’ in the work of Roughgarten ‘flattens and distorts the significant otherness of animal cultures’, yet Rossellini seems to all too knowingly utilise similar terminology to her advantage. Stacy Alaimo, ‘Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of “Queer” Animals’, in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire,* ed. by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 51–72 (p. 66).

\(^8^2\) Ibid., p. 59.

\(^8^3\) Ibid., p. 67. Alaimo ends her essay by stating that: ‘Such wonder and awe, may, I hope, help foster queer-green ethics, politics, practices, and places’, of which *Green Porno* is one such example, ibid., p. 68.


\(^8^5\) Ibid., p. 158.
The final episode of *Green Porno* recalls another Attenborough film from the series *Life in the Freezer* (1993), where the presenter stands on a beach amongst an elephant seal colony, explaining their reproductive behaviour. At one point, he deftly dodges an enormous fast-moving male making his way towards him. Not only does Rossellini’s final film explore elephant seal sex whilst she and Campagna stand amongst a colony of elephant seals, but from the landscape, it could actually be the very same beach visited by Attenborough. Furthermore, at one point in her film, Rossellini and Campagna duck and run out of shot as a huge male elephant seal lumbers towards them on his way out to sea.

The wonder provoked by *Green Porno* was somewhat wittily assessed through a survey conducted amongst scientists invited to the premiere of series three. *Green Porno* scored an average of 4.3 out of 5 in response to the question ‘How well does *Green Porno* fulfill its mission of inspiring “a sense of wonder” about the natural world?’ and 3.6 out of 5 in response to ‘How well do you think a “sense of wonder” can actually translate to environmental protection or conservation?’ The survey obviously does not make clear how wonder is understood for these purposes, but one can assume it was intended in a more generic register and conducted in a tongue-in-cheek way. Given that Rossellini wanted to draw attention to issues relating to wildlife conservation, *Green Porno*’s links to the genre of wildlife film become especially important. As David Attenborough, Derek Bousé, Louise Economides and Jamie Lorimer have all acknowledged, wildlife films have the capacity to affect the emotions of viewers and encourage them to become more likely to act towards the protection of wildlife.

Furthermore, Lorimer contended that certain types of wildlife film express ‘a logic of curiosity’ which works towards ‘cultivating what Jane Bennett terms “the enchantment of modern life”’, making the genre especially appealing for this study. But what is the heritage of wildlife film that *Green Porno* draws from? And how does Rossellini harness its capacity for evoking wonder while retaining fundamental differences to these earlier precedents?

**Amorous Anthropomorphism: The Enchanting Films of Jean Painlevé**

‘[F]ilmic marvels’ and ‘odd fossils from film history’s cabinet of curiosities’, which evoke ‘a visual enchantment’ by presenting ‘wonderful and alien’ settings instilling

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86 Bohannon, p. 1,620.
'unease and wonder in equal parts'. Such is the web of abundantly wonder-filled descriptions of the wildlife films made by Jean Painlevé from 1927 onwards, often alongside his partner Geneviève Hamon. Painlevé’s associations with surrealism are well documented. For example, it has been noted how in 1924 he contributed essays to *Surréalisme*, that in 1929 his photographs were included in the surrealist publication *Documents*, and that a starfish from his aquarium appeared in Man Ray’s film *L’Étoile de mer* (1928). Nevertheless, it has been argued that although Painlevé shared many of the surrealist’s concerns, particularly the desire to uncover the marvellous, which he searched for in the natural world rather than through recourse to the unconscious, that his ‘poetic approach to science’ resulted in him fitting entirely comfortably with neither the surrealists nor scientists. Instead Painlevé forged ahead with his hybrid practice, revealing marine wildlife behaviours that had never been seen before thanks to the visual technology of film, which he used to capture footage of the creatures he kept captive in his aquariums. Painlevé shared an interest in the sort of far-from-human wildlife that would later preoccupy Rossellini. Indeed his films also drew attention to the range of reproductive strategies deployed throughout the animal kingdom. For instance, in *L’Hippocampe* (1934) he famously captured footage of a male seahorse giving birth. In addition, in *Acéra ou le bal des sorcières* (1972), Painlevé and Hamon presented viewers with what the curator and critic Ralph Rugoff amusingly described as the spectacle of ‘a mollusk ménage à trois’. Painlevé’s films are significant here, because they represent an earlier moment in the formation of the wonder-inducing amorous anthropomorphism that permeates *Green Porno*.

Rossellini has noted her debt to early French cinema, pointing to the filmmaker George Méliès as a key influence. This reference point seems apt considering the paper costumes and simple aesthetic found in the sets of *Green Porno*, which readily recall those of Méliès. One of the reasons given for the bold and relatively stark appearance
of Rossellini’s films, in addition to their short length, was that they were developed to be viewed online and on mobile devices. However, Rossellini’s interest in the films of Méliès, and the way her paper and cardboard costumes evoke those worn by Dadaists such as Hugo Ball and Sophie Taeuber-Arp for instance, suggest that the reason for adopting this styling was more knowing, rather than a mere necessity demanded of the small screen medium (figure 54).

Méliès’s influence on Green Porno is clear. Like Rossellini, Méliès performed in his films, where it has been suggested that he often acted out ‘bizarre […] events […] made even more bizarre […] by hyperbolic acting and extravagant sets and costumes’. Rossellini’s exaggerated performances of sea creature sex clad in paper and Lycra exude a similar quality. In addition, Méliès used paper sets, ‘goofy’ puppets and focused on realms that were at the time inaccessible to humans, such as outer space as seen in A Trip to the Moon (1902) and the depths of the sea, as was the case in his cinematic interpretation of Jules Verne’s 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1907). Inaccessible nonhuman animal lifeworlds are the ‘uncharted’ realms preoccupying Rossellini. Méliès’s films have been positioned as at once enchanting and ‘ridiculous’, qualities that Green Porno can be argued to share, fascinating viewers with insights to the sex lives of sea creatures at the same time Rossellini performs her eccentric zoomorphisms. In fact the film scholar Viva Paci even went so far as to describe Méliès’s A Trip to the Moon as ‘a true cave of wonders, a wunderkammer, of colors and pure movement’. Yet Rossellini’s approach of appearing to be ‘frivolous about the serious’ subject matter of marine wildlife conservation also resonates with the film scholar Jack Zipes’s observation on the overall effect of the comic in Méliès’s work, since he stated that ‘[c]lowning in Méliès’ films was always a serious endeavor’. These cues, together with the amorous anthropomorphic subject matter at the heart of Green Porno, therefore appear to be indebted to the early cinema of Jean Painlevé and Georges Méliès, which is unsurprising considering Rossellini’s career path and familial heritage.

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99 Sinwell, p. 119; and Bohannan, p. 1,620.
101 Ibid., p. 45.
102 Ibid., p. 31.
104 Zipes, p. 39.
In a comment that chimes well with the subject matter of both Rossellini’s and Painlevé’s films, Jamie Lorimer has suggested that ‘[e]xperimental, avant-garde artists and filmmakers have […] focused […] on the wild, the alien, the abject […] on disconcerting animals performing various challenging modes of radical alterity.’ Such is the case in *Green Porno* and the films of Painlevé, which show the reproductive behaviours of far from human wildlife. Lorimer suggested that these filmmakers are frequently preoccupied with ‘unlikely and enchanting cross-species encounters’. However, he also claimed that this same group of practitioners ‘tended to shy away from anthropomorphic animals’. Whilst it is quite correct that the films of Painlevé and Rossellini do not typically feature cute and cuddly wildlife, such as the pandas and tigers discussed in the previous chapter, clearly neither of them demonstrates a wholesale aversion to anthropomorphism itself. In fact they positively exploit it.

Much has been written about Painlevé’s anthropomorphic tendencies. The Love Life of the Octopus (1965), a film by Painlevé and Hamon, is a case in point. The film begins with an almost comically sinister French voiceover: ‘Eight tentacles…two thousand suckers…a 60 centimetre octopus may have 250 suckers on each tentacle…Octopus…cephalopod…horrific creature’. The opening narration taps into the rich mythic history of this creature, feared as a monster of the depths in sailors’ tales and the likely point of origin for imaginary beasts such as the kraken. Rossellini, for her part, appears to pass no judgement on the wildlife featured in her films, accepting differences and interpreting them for viewers through her eccentric re-enactments of nonhuman animal sex. As the octopus in Painlevé and Hamon’s film oozes across the shallows of the sea, the implied otherworldliness of this gelatinous creature is enhanced by the blips and whirs on the film’s electronic soundtrack. Composed by one of the pioneers of musique concrète, Pierre Henry, for all intents and purposes the music appears to be from another planet. Yet, as the octopus enters the water and becomes submerged in the aquatic realm, the creature takes on a different character, moving gracefully through the watery environment. The footage that follows shows various octopus behaviours but the central focus of the film, and the action the title alludes to, is the mating sequence.

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107 Ibid.
The film’s tantalising title is already rife with anthropomorphism. Viewers wait for the ‘love life’ of this octopus to unfold. However, anthropomorphism also occurs frequently throughout the film’s narration. As the male octopus approaches the female, the voiceover describes their encounter, making assumptions about the emotions experienced by these creatures: the male ‘violently grabs hold of a female’, but ‘she’s not particularly happy about it’. The mating acts are explained and, like the squid in Rossellini’s film, the footage shows how these cephalopods reproduce by the male inserting a package of sperm into the female with a specially adapted ‘arm’ (figure 55). The off-beat humour of the film is captured in a piece of dialogue where the narrator quips about how ‘there’s no official favourite position’ for octopus sex, providing a comic mode of delivery Green Porno shares.

In light of Lorimer’s suggestion that avant-garde filmmakers tend to focus on ‘enchanting cross species encounters’, together with his invocation of Bennett’s ‘enchantment of modern life’, it is important to remember that Bennett locates one site of enchantment at ‘the border between humans and animals’.110 In Painlevé’s films, specifically in The Love Life of the Octopus, anthropomorphism disrupts borders between humans and other animals, contributing to the sense of wonder experienced when viewing them. Ralph Rugoff observed that Painlevé’s films not only ‘substitute human characteristics for animal ones’, but that ‘they mix up our categories of human and animal’.111 This becomes visually apparent in a fleeting shot, where human fingertips are visible amongst the writhing tentacles of an octopus in the process of eating a crab. It was probably not intentional that viewers notice this trace of humanity in this scene. It occurs so briefly that the footage likely has to be paused or rewound to double check this is in fact what has unfolded. In this brief moment, human and octopus become entwined in a fleshy entanglement of anthropoid digits and cephalopod arms (figure 56). This fleeting — and probably unintentional — shot achieves Rugoff’s mixing-up of human and nonhuman animals in a very real visual sense, blurring borders between species to result in an enchanting crossing. Yet something about this footage recalls the mass of tentacles and human gloved hands in Rossellini’s Squid, especially in the scene where the male squid inserts a ‘package full of sperm’ into the female. It seems quite possible that Rossellini had also noticed this moment in the film.

Viewers are impelled to recognise human qualities in the alien aquatic life featured in Painlevé’s footage, reading human emotions into the behaviours of these creatures.

111 Rugoff, p. 54.
and recognising physical affinities with the human body. With regards to the octopus, it is the creature’s sophisticated eyelid that appears to be strikingly mammalian in this film (figure 57). However, Rugoff is careful to observe that as well as using anthropomorphism, Painlevé also highlighted the unquestionable differences of the sea creatures in his films. He suggested that Painlevé’s approach actually ‘serves as a corrective to our anthropomorphic impulses’, goading viewers ‘as if to say, “Identify with that!”’. Eva Hayward concurred, writing that The Love Life of the Octopus demands that viewers ‘attend to the extreme differences between themselves and octopuses’ and she suggested that the film ‘is about shifting humans out of center stage’ and underlining ‘both difference and familiarity, inviting us to experience — but not to identify with’ these creatures. In fact it has been suggested that in Painlevé’s films ‘[t]he charm of the natural world should produce in us a wonder and enchantment, a sense of belonging without identification, that heightens our powers of contemplation’. It is the otherness of these creatures that leads to wonder but the undeniable anthropomorphism that lends itself to generosity, recognising both difference and similarity. This clearly recalls the conceptual to-ing and fro-ing employed by Green Porno as Rossellini harnesses both wonder and generosity through her films to promote respect and responsibility towards sea creatures and their plights.

In these ways, Green Porno’s heritage can be charted back to Painlevé’s early wildlife films. Rossellini’s series interrogates a similarly amorous anthropomorphic subject matter, and like Painlevé, has an interest in communicating the essential differences of sea creatures from humans in a compelling and often humorous way. Both Painlevé and Rossellini have the capacity to evoke wonder and generosity through their filmic representations of marine wildlife. Yet there are also some fundamental differences to the ways these films function today, which are significant given the Chthulucene’s imperative to work towards the flourishing of all wildlife.

The only time Rossellini interacts with nonhuman animals directly in Green Porno is in the very last film, where she stands on the beach amongst a colony of elephant seals. Painlevé, on the other hand, collected sea creatures and installed them in the aquariums of his studio so that they could be filmed in captivity, far away from the wilds of the ocean that would ordinarily be their home. In The Love Life of the Octopus, this is evident by the way the cephalopod’s tentacles and suckers press against the glass

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112 Ibid., p. 50.
113 Ibid., pp. 51 and 55.
115 Gibbs, p. 53.
sides of the aquarium, seeming to splay across the lens of the camera. In Painlevé’s films, sea creatures are sometimes dissected, as is seen in *L’Hippocampe* where the pregnant male’s pouch is sliced open with a scalpel to reveal his tiny spawn. Then, in *The Love Life of the Octopus*, the behaviour of the octopuses has been clearly manipulated through the interference of a human hand. These aspects of Painlevé’s filmmaking processes have led Eva Hayward to claim that in these films, the ‘animals were clearly *used*’. Rossellini on the other hand, avoided the use of nonhuman animal bodies and animal derived materials in *Green Porno*. The imagery of actual wildlife featured in her films is stock footage, and her costumes are made from paper and Lycra. The only living wildlife directly included in *Green Porno* are the elephant seals that appear alongside Claudio Campagna on the Patagonian shoreline. In this way, Rossellini’s films pursue the ‘green’ agenda implied through their title. No wildlife was used or harmed for the purposes of making these wonder-inducing films.

**Menfish in the Underwater Films of Jacques Cousteau**

From the mid-1950s, Jacques-Yves Cousteau and the crew of his research vessel, the *Calypso*, brought the watery depths of the oceans to film and television viewers around the world. A significant pioneer of deep sea diving, the ‘wonder of oceanography’ and underwater wildlife filming, Cousteau is as much an influential figure in the development of sea exploration as he is to the genre of wildlife film. Like Rossellini and Painlevé, Cousteau induced wonder in his fascinated viewers, presenting them with close encounters with marine wildlife, evoking another world that they could enjoy from the comfort of their homes. Indeed Cousteau offered viewers the opportunity to become Huggan’s ultimate armchair tourists. But Cousteau is especially intriguing in this context due to the way he performed his encounters with the sea and its inhabitants, mimicking wildlife in an attempt to overcome the limitations posed by the human body in the ocean realm.

Cousteau’s films are notable for focusing on human relations to wildlife rather than featuring nonhuman animals as the sole protagonists. The crew of the *Calypso* feature as characters in the unfolding dramas along with the sea creatures they pursue. Derek Bousé recognised how this focus on human relations with wildlife and the natural world is a characteristic of films that exhibit what he calls an ‘advocacy’ or ‘amelioration’ agenda. The films comprising series three of *Green Porno* also ascribe to this ideal, since both Rossellini and Campagna appear in person during the films. Cousteau’s

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118 Bousé, pp. 22–23.
cinematic forays into the sea played a central role in contributing to shifting perceptions of marine life and promoting wildlife protection. In this way Cousteau expressed similar concerns to Rossellini, but he manifested them in very different ways. For instance, the author Wendy Williams credits Cousteau with elevating the octopus — feared and alien to many at the time — 'to the level of beloved charismatic megafauna' through his film *Octopus, Octopus* (1971). She suggested that Cousteau's footage, which showed the octopus submersed underwater as was the case with Painlevé, resulted in the creature becoming fascinating and majestic to viewers. Indeed Bousé observed how David Attenborough claimed that one of the main tasks of wildlife films is 'to persuade the public that animals are interesting and beautiful', since this is believed to promote wildlife protection and to increase the impact of conservation messages. At the outset, then, it seems that both Cousteau and Rossellini share this important concern.

The visual qualities of Cousteau's films contributed to their allure. The colour of the underwater footage has been described as both 'dazzling' and 'rioting', and the bright turquoise pervading the films is a testament to this. In fact the scholar Jonathan Crylen has noted how 'splendorous colors were essential to the wonder associated with Cousteau's films'. Certainly the bold colours Rossellini employs for her aquatic scenes in *Green Porno* recall the visual intensity of Cousteau's films, with similar deep turquoises and rich blues all figuring. These stark, bold blues recall the 'oceanic quality' and 'oceanic sensation' attributed to International Klein Blue, an aptly named 'ultramarine', which has been said to offer the kind of 'gravity-free' sensation that one might experience underwater. *Green Porno*'s use of coloured spotlighting also recalls the 'flashes of unnatural light' that frequently illuminate the protagonists in Cousteau's films. The luminous visual intensity of the watery depths depicted by Cousteau evokes the immersion of a 'virtual dive' in viewers, something Eva Hayward suggested 'produces cohabitation rather than mere representation.'

The cinema and media studies scholar Janine Marchessault has observed how the

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119 Williams, p. 163.
120 Ibid., pp. 163–164.
122 Rudolf Arnheim, 'Art Today and Film', *Art Journal*, 3.25 (1966), 242–244 (p. 244).
123 Jonathan Crylen, 'The Cinematic Aquarium: A History of Undersea Film' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Iowa, 2015), p. 71. He noted this is something that Rudolf Arnheim also makes apparent through his text.
125 Robinson, p. 144.
126 Dillon, p. 233.
128 Arnheim, p. 243.
filming and lighting techniques used by Cousteau ‘helped to reproduce the experience of being under the sea’. As such, viewers are offered a second-hand experience of Cousteau’s infiltration of the ocean realm, seemingly immersed in the enchanting depths of a cinematic sea thanks to ‘the fingery-eyes of natural history film’.

Cousteau produced numerous films, books, television series and scientific papers, additionally contributing to the development of technology to advance humanity’s exploration and filming of the ocean’s depths. His most famous contribution is probably the aqua-lung, which offered greater freedom of movement and longer durations beneath the sea, forever changing human experiences of the underwater realm as a result. Cousteau was charmed, fascinated and curious in the face of the aquatic wildlife he encountered, claiming the aqua-lung to be a ‘new key to the hidden world’ that ‘promised wonders.’ ‘The Captain’, as he was known, constantly sought new ways to better inhabit the sea, striving to achieve longer durations and unrestricted movement under water. His ambition was for the advent of Homo aquaticus, ‘a new kind of man […] who would live in the depths of the sea.’ The ultimate realisation of this phenomenon would be oceanauts born underwater, who would breathe water rather than air ‘just as a fish does’. Reading these words, it is difficult to know whether Cousteau meant this as a joke, but considering his dedication to, and fascination with, the sea, I am inclined to think he was serious. During his lifetime, however, Cousteau had to content himself not with a biological ‘manfish’, but with a prosthetic one, brought about through wearing various physical enhancements, including the aqua-lung, diver’s goggles and flippers, which combined to help infiltrate and mediate the ocean’s depths.

Like Rossellini, Cousteau imitated marine wildlife. However, his mimicry of sea creatures was performed with the aim of penetrating their underwater realm more successfully, not only to encounter the sea life dwelling in its depths, but also as a

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131 Lorimer invoking a term devised by Eva Hayward, ‘On Auks and Awkwardness’, p. 200. See also Crylen, p. 69, where he stated that the view the film offers ‘becomes the perspective of a participant in the aquatic scene’.


134 Ibid., p. 215.

135 See Crylen, p. 66, where *Homo aquaticus* is described ‘as a prosthetic, technically enhanced human body’.
means of terrestrial expansion into the oceans. In a book to accompany Cousteau’s first feature length film *The Silent World* (1956), there is a chapter entitled ‘Menfish’, in which Captain Cousteau recalls one of his dives:

I was accepted in the sea jungle and would pay it the compliment of putting aside my anthropoid ways, clamp my legs together, and swim down with the spinal undulations of a porpoise. [...] I borrowed the characteristics of a fish, notwithstanding certain impediments such as my anatomy and a ten-pound lead pipe twisted round my belt. I undulated through the amazingly clear water. Ninety feet away I saw an aristocratic group of silver and gold giltheades wearing their scarlet gill patches like British brigadiers. I wiggled towards them and got very close without alarming them. My fish personality was fairly successful, but I remembered that I could swim a great deal faster by crudely kicking my fins.

In this quote, Cousteau described his attempt to impersonate the movements of sea creatures. But he also recognised the limitations imposed by his diving equipment, which was so essential to bringing this encounter about so successfully in the first place.

The crew of the *Calypso* adopted a similar imitative tactic on numerous occasions. In an episode of *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* entitled *Return of the Sea Elephants* (1970), the crew tried to integrate with a rookery of seals, but found close encounters difficult, partly due to the aggression displayed by the dominant male, who became agitated when approached. By mimicking the seals’ behaviour, sliding along the beach on their bellies rather than walking upright on two legs, the crew found they could move amongst the seals almost undetected. Imitation offered the crew the opportunity to sidle right up beside these seals, touch and even nuzzle them. The smooth, shiny head and body of the diver, snuggly encased in his wet suit at the time of the encounter also visually reflects the body of the seal who lays beside him. As Jacques-Yves Cousteau observed in his narration, ‘after all, to make friends with the

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136 In fact Jonathan Crylen noted that *Homo aquaticus* was ‘[a]n avatar more of conquest than of conservation [...] at a time when Western industrial nations increasingly turned to the ocean, the earth’s “inner space,” to solve the problems posed by the terrestrial limits to growth [...] Cousteau, for his part, not only envisioned an alteration of the human body but boldly predicted a full-fledged domestication of ocean space’, see Crylen, p. 64. He elaborated that ‘whatever utopian transformations of the human Cousteau’s movies either depict or allow viewers to experience vicariously are underwritten by projects of ocean conquest that we now understand to be and to have been ecologically destructive’, p. 66.
137 Cousteau and Dumas, pp. 26–27.
138 See also Marchessault, (para. 10 of 18), where she noted how Cousteau was described as ‘the man-fish—who, in his efforts to connect with the ocean’s inhabitants, was learning to imitate and swim like fish’ and also observed the ‘anthropomorphic identity’ Cousteau assumed.
elephant of the sea, all you have to do is crawl on the beach as he has always done’ (figures 58 and 59). In *Voyage to the Edge of the World* (1976), the crew wanted to film penguins swimming underwater in the Antarctic. To do so, they had to enter the icy water with the penguins themselves. The scene preceding their descent into the freezing sea shows the men in red diving suits and flippers walking across the ice alongside a colony of penguins. The humorous visual coincidence between the divers and the penguins is immediately apparent to viewers as the men waddle with a penguin-like gait in their flippers (figure 60). Philippe Cousteau’s narration confirms this by describing the crew as ‘red penguins’.

In each of these examples, Cousteau and his crew are seen to be ‘setting aside their anthropoid ways’ in order to immerse themselves in the habitats of wildlife using imitation to do so — whether purposefully as was the case with the elephant seals, or serendipitously as with the penguins. Since the physical and geographic distance between humans and sea creatures appears to impede compassion and the extension of empathy, an approach where humans attempt to become more like wildlife should provide more favourable conditions for fostering generosity. In Cousteau’s quote from ‘Menfish’, not only does the Captain try to become more like the marine wildlife he encounters, but he additionally aligns these creatures with humans via anthropomorphism, comparing the appearance of the fish to brigadiers. However, in Cousteau’s films not only do humans imitate wildlife, but the wildlife is shown on occasion to be performing a similar feat. In *World Without Sun* (1964), the oceanauts inhabiting Cousteau’s underwater station are given a parrot, which serves a similar role as the canary to coal miners, but has presumably been provided to offer company too. After Falco, one of the oceanauts and a keen smoker, choking on the first puffs of his pipe after a week of abstinence, the bird parrots his cough, mimicking this human behaviour. The similarities drawn between Cousteau’s crew and the world they explore, is even extended to the habitats occupied by these humans and their creatures of study. The closing shot of *Voyage to the Edge of the World*, for instance, pans back from the *Calypso* passing an iceberg that uncannily resembles the shape of Cousteau’s vessel (figure 61). The various moments of imitation by Cousteau and his crew — avian members included — evoke ‘the enchanting effect of interspecies and intra-species crossings’.139

Cousteau and his crew imitate marine wildlife making use of anthropomorphism and giving rise to wonder and generosity on similar terms to Rossellini. Yet like Painlevé,

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their attempts to do so present quite different attitudes towards wildlife than would be expected in wildlife films today. Cousteau and the crew of the *Calypso* often engaged with nonhuman animals in ways that would simply not be common practice in so-called ‘blue chip’ wildlife films today, where the absence of humans is often *de rigueur*. Unlike Rossellini, their behaviour does not at all times exhibit the respect and responsibility for creaturely life demanded by the Chthulucene. For instance, in Cousteau’s very first film, the award-winning141 *The Silent World* (1956), a diver rides on the back of a turtle (figure 62). The perspective attained by this diver recalls the concept behind the recent U.S. television series *Crittercam*, which is premised on small cameras being fixed to sea creatures so that viewers can experience the world from the point of view of the wildlife.142 Donna Haraway explained how *Crittercam* continually highlighted how ‘special permits were obtained to harass endangered animals’ and ‘that interference was kept to a minimum and never pursued to the point of exhausting the animals’.143 Yet she observes how ‘each *Crittercam* project requires […] divers ready to jump off a moving boat and embrace a large swimming critter who is presumably not especially longing to hug a human’.144 In the case of Cousteau’s films, no such reassurance is given and riding the tide with turtles might be similarly unreciprocated. Nevertheless, it is exactly these kind of point of view shots that Bousé argued can help viewers to ‘identify emotionally with animal characters’, in turn offering an opportunity to prompt generosity.145

While Rossellini tries not to interfere with the lives of nonhuman animals in *Green Porno*, Cousteau’s team frequently show no such distance or respect. In *The Silent World*, the *Calypso* crew encounter a large grouper fish who appears to be fascinated with them, probably because they come bearing food. The crew name this friendly fish ‘Ulysses’. Ulysses is shown continually accompanying the crew on their dives and even hovers alongside them while they decompress beneath the surface of the sea. The men developed a special affection for this fish over the weeks they spent diving in the area. This close relationship between man and fish is highlighted in a scene where Ulysses appears to be ‘dancing’ with a diver, the pair spinning around one another as if participating in some kind of interspecies underwater waltz (figure 63). Through his narration, Jacques-Yves Cousteau revealed that in all his twenty years of diving, he

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141 The film won an Oscar and the Palm d’Or at Cannes, see Chris, *Watching Wildlife*, p. 42.
142 *Crittercam* was a series produced by the National Geographic Channel in 2004, see Donna Haraway, ‘*Crittercam*’, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 249–263.
143 Ibid., p. 256.
144 Ibid., p. 255.
145 Bousé, p. 116.
had never encountered a fish ‘so familiar’. The attachment the crew developed to Ulysses is evident not only through the fact he is named (somewhat mythically it must be noted), but by Cousteau’s parting acknowledgement — ‘farewell Ulysses, we will never forget you’. With a name and a recognised personality (the crew observe his insatiable appetite for instance), Ulysses became an ‘exceptional individual’.\textsuperscript{146} For the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, this can go one of two ways. The exceptional individual is either the ‘anomalous’ with whom ‘one enters into alliance to become animal’, or is instead one of the ‘individuated animals, family pets, sentimental, Oedipal animals’ with which the philosophers express disdain.\textsuperscript{147} Deleuze and Guattari recognised that there is a chance a wild animal, ‘a louse, a cheetah or an elephant, will be treated as a pet, my little beast’.\textsuperscript{148} However, it is Ulysses’s very status as the Calypso crew’s ‘little beast’ that led to the attachment the divers developed to him. Yet Rossellini is more inclusive. By not naming her characters, the hope would be that any respect or compassion could be extended to all members of a species, rather than limited to a single individual, appreciated largely due to unusually tame behaviour.

Nevertheless, in \textit{The Silent World}, attitudes towards wildlife are somewhat paradoxical, often marred by destruction rather than affection. Cynthia Chris observed that by today’s standards, Cousteau and his crew appear to mistreat wildlife in a number of instances.\textsuperscript{149} In one scene, the crew of the \textit{Calypso} are shown dragging sharks out of the water and brutally bludgeoning them to death with the blunt side of an axe in ‘retribution’ for these predators conducting a feeding frenzy on the fresh carcass of a baby whale, which — it must be noted — was shot in the head by the crew after being mortally wounded by the ship’s propellers (figure 64). Furthermore, when encountering giant tortoises, some of the crew are shown riding them, whilst others are filmed using these creatures as impromptu picnic benches, sitting on them while they eat their packed lunch (figure 65).\textsuperscript{150} Bousé suggested that whilst filmmakers may exploit animals as ‘fodder’ for wildlife films, ‘this should not be confused with exploitation of nature in the concrete sense’.\textsuperscript{151} Yet this line in Cousteau’s film seems somewhat blurred. Graham Huggan similarly observed how for Cousteau, the wildlife in his earlier

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., pp. 281 and 284–285.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., p. 281.
\textsuperscript{149} Chris, \textit{Watching Wildlife}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{150} Cynthia Chris listed these two occurrences along with a variety of other instances that support her argument for the crew’s mistreatment of wildlife, as well as their use of the sea for subsistence during their expeditions, including a scene where the \textit{Calypso’s} chef gathers flying fish that have landed on the decks, and an instance where the crew use dynamite to blow up a coral reef in order to conduct a marine census, but fail to give the results of their survey in the film, ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} Bousé, p. 192.
films was apparently seen ‘as glorified circus creatures: to be coaxed out of their corners, goaded into performance and domesticated into the human fold’. He quoted Cousteau’s son, who recently admitted that there was ‘no excuse’ for these sort of human-animal interactions in the films, but who nevertheless relayed how ‘in [the 1960s] we were not attuned to the fragility of animals and sea creatures’, observing how very different attitudes were held towards wildlife at the time since ‘the conservation and preservation mind-sets of today had not yet taken hold’.

Whilst the work of Jacques-Yves Cousteau and his crew remains pioneering, and the scientific and conservation thrust of their work is well known, scenes such as those outlined above are difficult to reconcile with attitudes towards wildlife conservation and animal protection today. In 1972, Cousteau observed that ‘the time has come to formulate a moral code which would govern our relations with the great creatures of the sea’, going on to proclaim that ‘[i]f human civilization is going to invade the waters of the earth, then let it be first of all to carry a message of respect — respect for all life’. Yet The Silent World heralds from 1956, when undoubtedly very different attitudes towards wildlife held sway, and this promise does not always seem to be enacted in ways viewers would recognise today through Cousteau’s films. They are often somewhat muddled from today’s perspective — marred by the paradox of Cousteau’s love of the sea and marine wildlife, and, on the other hand, the apparent exploitation of wildlife for entertainment along with the desire to colonise the ocean’s depths.

In contrast, Rossellini’s films utilise wonder and generosity in ways that do not interfere with wildlife in any destructive way. Rossellini largely achieves ‘intimacy without proximity’ through her performances in Green Porno. She does so in ways quite different to the encounters with wildlife captured in the films of Painlevé and Cousteau, which necessitate not only touching by camera, but also by hand. Nevertheless, the influence of these two French men can be curiously charted onto Green Porno both visually and conceptually. Furthermore, Rossellini appears to borrow from the ways these earlier films could elicit wonder to inscribe a sense of wonder in her own films. However, the use of wonder and generosity to promote marine wildlife conservation is not limited to Green Porno. This strategy was recently evident at the Musée

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152 Huggan, p. 68.
153 Jean-Michel Cousteau quoted in Huggan, p. 68.
155 See for instance, Huggan, p. 68, where he claims that Cousteau’s films ‘send out mixed messages […] caught between narratives of domination and narratives of protection in which the sea, and the astonishing riches it holds, are alternately seen as exploitable resources for human consumption and as irreducible symbols of the sanctity of all life’.
156 Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, p. 79.
Océanographique de Monaco, serendipitously the very institution where from 1957, Jacques-Yves Cousteau served as director for thirty years.\(^{157}\)

**Exhibiting Wonder and Generosity: Sharks at the Musée Océanographique de Monaco**

Built into a cliff face on the Rock of Monaco and looking out across the sea from which its contents are derived and inspired, the Musée Océanographique de Monaco was founded by the passionate and dedicated oceanographer Prince Albert I of Monaco (1848–1922). The museum was inaugurated on the 29\(^{th}\) of March 1910 to house the specimens the prince collected for study and research on 28 oceanographic expeditions, undertaken between 1885–1915 across the North Atlantic and Mediterranean, with the aim of disseminating knowledge about the sea and its inhabitants.\(^{158}\) The museum hosted regular colloquia on scientific and environmental issues and provided aquaria and laboratory space for scientists and researchers for the study of the world’s oceans, as it continues to do today.\(^{159}\) As well as displaying natural history specimens, live animals and the tools of the oceanographer’s trade, the museum also realised its founder’s vision to gather together what he claimed were ‘the two driving forces of civilisation: Art and Science’.\(^{160}\) Accordingly, the museum presented numerous paintings, housed an extensive collection of works on paper — many of which were produced aboard the prince’s expeditions — and decoratively incorporated various sea life into the interior design and architecture of the museum building itself.\(^{161}\)

In 2010 the museum celebrated its centenary. To commemorate this milestone, a series of restoration works took place and a contemporary art programme was inaugurated. This was conceived on the basis of presenting artworks amongst the existing displays in an attempt to echo the founding Prince’s vision for the museum to

\(^{157}\) See <https://www.cousteau.org/english/the-captain.php> [accessed 28 October 2017].


\(^{159}\) The museum forms part of the wider Oceanographic Institute, which was founded by Prince Albert in 1906 to advance the discipline of oceanography, see Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, ‘Chronology of the Oceanographic Museum’, in *An Illustrated Guide to the Oceanomania Cabinet and Exhibition of Mark Dion at the Oceanographic Museum and Aquarium of Monaco* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2011), pp. 12–16 (p. 13).


\(^{161}\) For more on the various decorative arts and embellishments throughout the building and about how they were recently restored, see Noëlle Bine-Muller, *Musée Océanographique de Monaco: 1910–2010* (Monaco: Éditions La Gazette de Monaco, 2010), pp. 38–41 and pp. 48–58.
house both objects of art and science. As part of this activity, today the museum frequently mounts exhibitions with an environmental agenda, with the aim of raising awareness about marine wildlife conservation. For example, as part of the exhibition Méditerranée: Splendide, Fragile, Vivante (2012–2013), the Franco-Chinese artist Huang Yong Ping created a site-specific installation entitled Wu Zei (2010). The work took the form of a huge sculptural hybrid cuttlefish-octopus, whose body engulfed one of the Ernst Haeckel-inspired chandeliers designed by the French sculptor Constant Roux, which hangs from the museum’s ceiling (figure 66). With giant tentacles wrapped around the columns of the building’s interior and others reaching out towards sea creatures, trash and other marine debris scattered across the museum floor by the artist, the piece alluded to the destruction of marine wildlife and habitats. The cephalopod also appeared to be tinged with the ambiguous traces of squid ink, tar or oil. The work’s title can be translated as: ‘wu’ meaning black, and ‘zei’ meaning to spoil or corrupt, echoing the ruinous results of an oil slick.

During 2011, Mark Dion presented Oceanomania: Souvenirs of Mysterious Seas: From the Expedition to the Aquarium, a large-scale project across multiple sites in Monaco. As part of this exhibition, the artist created a cabinet of marine curiosities containing objects and specimens from the museum’s collections (figure 67). The cabinet, a floor to ceiling installation of some 200 square metres, was subsequently retained as a permanent fixture at the museum. The institution’s conservators suggested that by incorporating Dion’s cabinet of marine curiosities, the intention was to ‘create a link with the tradition of the first natural history displays’. Yet this installation also visually recalls some recently renovated displays at various natural history museums, such as the Hall of Biodiversity at the American Museum of Natural History in New York (1998), the Wall of Biodiversity at the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin (2007) and the Wunderkammer at Venice’s Museo di Storia Naturale (2011), testifying to the visual revival of this mode of display in the context of this type of collection (figures 68–70). Unlike these contemporary natural history museum displays however, Dion’s cabinet

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162 Bine-Muller, pp. 68–69.
163 For more on the concerns of this exhibition see Robert Calcagno and André Giordan, Méditerranée: Splendide, Fragile, Vivante (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2010) and for more on the installation itself, see Wu Zei: Huang Yong Ping, ed. by Robert Calcagno, Marie-Claude Beaud and Jessica Morgan (Monaco: Musée Océanographique de Monaco, 2010).
164 Robert Calcagno, ‘Wu Zei, New Inhabitant of the Musée Océanographique’, in Wu Zei: Huang Yong Ping, ed. by Robert Calcagno, Marie-Claude Beaud and Jessica Morgan (Monaco: Musée Océanographique de Monaco, 2010), pp. 6–7 (p. 6).
— like the Musée Océanographique de Monaco — contains objects of both art and nature. It features an abundant selection of *naturalia, artificialia* and *scientifica* familiar to the early modern wunderkammer. But rather than forming a microcosm of the world, Dion’s cabinet can be viewed instead as a microcosm of the vast collections at this museum. The varied objects on display include natural history specimens in the form of taxidermy and models, scientific publications such as the bulletins published by the Oceanographic Institute, models of ships, objects worked by hand — including coral formed into jewellery and scrimshaw, a diving suit, a ‘mermaid’, large quantities of shells, fishing nets and harpoons, paintings, wet specimens, scientific instruments and a selection of books by Jacques-Yves Cousteau. During *Oceanomania*, Dion also presented some of his earlier artworks in and amongst the museum collection, demonstrating his own on-going fascination with the sea as both an artist and self-confessed amateur naturalist.167 *The Marine Biologist’s Locker (Cousteau’s Cabinet)* (1993–1998) comprised two cabinets whose open doors revealed the sort of equipment a marine biologist or oceanographer would need in pursuit of their work (figure 71). This cabinet was very different from Dion’s massive wunderkammer installation in the adjoining room, instead looking more like a storage unit from a laboratory, but it nevertheless served as a tribute to the museum’s former director.

Dion’s exhibition is significant to highlight in this context since it spoke to the various relationships humans have developed with the sea and its inhabitants throughout history, be these of use, abuse, intrigue, scientific study, as a source of artistic inspiration or as a resource for exploitation. In light of these paradoxes, it is notable that the *Oceanomania* exhibition was produced in the wake of two converging marine events — the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion, which had disastrous and deleterious effects on wildlife after a predicted 4 million plus barrels of crude oil spilled into the sea of the Gulf of Mexico, and the 2010 *Census of Marine Life*, whereby scientists from 80 nations came together to explore the biodiversity of the world’s oceans, discovering some 6,000 new species.168 The timely creation of this installation underlined these ambiguous human attitudes and responses to the sea and its inhabitants — on the one hand ‘a sense of wonder at the sea’s biodiversity’ and on the other, a feeling of dread in the face of the detrimental effects human activities are having on sea life and marine ecosystems as a result of pollution and over-exploitation.169 Rather poignantly, the author Philip Hoare suggested that the recent

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168 Ibid., (para. 2 of 10).
169 Ibid., (para. 3 of 10).
revival of the cabinet of curiosity format in gallery and museum displays ‘speaks to our own vexed relationship with the natural world, at a time when we seem bent on destroying it’.170 Dion’s work is one example of this taking place, but it seems notable that many natural history museums have also recently adopted this mode of display.

Between 2013 and 2015, the Musée Océanographique de Monaco mounted two further exhibitions in its drive to raise awareness about marine wildlife conservation. This time it focused on the threats facing sharks, particularly shark finning. Each year, 100 million sharks are killed as a result of being caught as by-catch, tangled in fishing nets or through the controversial practice of shark finning, in which fins are cut from live sharks for use in luxury eastern cuisine and the creatures are thrown back into the water. Unable to swim, these creatures eventually die.171 As a keystone species, sharks are essential for maintaining the equilibrium of marine ecosystems and as such, the reduction or eradication of sharks from the oceans will have serious and detrimental effects. It was in response to these pressing issues that the museum mounted Sharks: A Thrilling Experience (2013–2015) and On Sharks and Humanity (2014–2015). These exhibitions took place against a backdrop of a relatively recent surge in shark protection charities, conservation projects and campaigns.172 These included the high profile documentary Sharkwater (2006), which sought to raise awareness about the shark finning industry winning 40 international film awards in the process, and celebrity endorsement of shark conservation. Examples include the Cousteau Society’s project to conserve sharks and rays in the Red Sea and Isabella Rossellini’s feature length film Animals Distract Me (2011), which includes a scene on shark finning. The two shark exhibitions at the Musée Océanographique de Monaco sought to counter the fearsome reputation of sharks as vicious killers and make their far from human physiology familiar, so that visitors might be more likely to extend empathy towards them and act towards their plight. Importantly, these exhibitions appeared to use wonder and generosity towards these ends. Two components of these exhibitions are particularly notable since they adopt tactics that Painlevé, Cousteau and Rossellini likewise employed in their films. It seems that the visual and conceptual

171 Exacerbating the vulnerability of sharks in the face of depleting numbers is their slow maturity, long gestation periods and the fact that they produce few offspring. As a result, a quarter of shark and ray species are threatened with extinction, see <http://www.iucn.org> [accessed 2 October 2015].
172 For example, The Shark Trust, established in 1997 and at that time the only UK registered charity devoted to shark conservation, Sharksavers, established in 2007, which later merged with WildAid, The Shark Conservation Society, established in 2003 and The Shark Defenders, founded in 2010.
strategies deployed in these various kinds of wildlife films can therefore be readily translated into an exhibition context too.

_Sharks: A Thrilling Experience_ presented objects and specimens amidst the existing museum collection and sought to render sharks more familiar and less fearsome in various ways. The shark researcher Rick Martin noted that '[s]o long as we fear sharks from a position of ignorance and superstition, these magnificent animals will continue to inhabit a shadowy realm beyond human compassion and protection'.\(^{173}\) This is something that the Musée Océanographique de Monaco strived to counter, educating visitors about shark behaviour and physiology through various interactive exhibits, including a shark petting pool. Communities who live in close proximity to sharks find ways to tame and explain these feared and far from human creatures through stories, rituals and myths that render them more familiar.\(^{174}\) In such instances, sharks are considered variously as ancestors, Gods and even shape-shifters in stories where men and women ‘become shark’ or sharks ‘become human’, breeding respect towards these creatures and promoting harmonious interspecies relations.\(^{175}\) A photograph used in the shark exhibition collateral appeared to use a similar strategy. The image showed a woman stroking a shark in the petting pool. However, the reflection and composition is such that it seems as if the woman’s body is merging into the tail-end of this aquatic creature (figure 72). The woman appears as a kind of shark-tailed mermaid, becoming a mythic feminine counter-part to the _Homo aquaticus_ that dominated Cousteau’s films, disrupting borders between species in a similar visual sense. Accordingly, the image can be read as a visual metaphor for the museum’s attempts to blur the boundary between sharks and humans and make them more familiar, so that it becomes easier to relate to and empathise with these creatures as a result. The image evokes wonder thanks to the apparent metamorphosis taking place, but it also prompts generosity through the recognition of similarity and familiarity.\(^{176}\)

However, the very idea of a petting pool is somewhat ambiguous, since whilst it may allay fear of sharks, it does so by keeping these creatures captive. By reducing the 'wildness' of sharks by making them more familiar and similar to humans through various displays in this exhibition, there is a danger wonder will diminish. When Jacques-Yves Cousteau’s son, Philippe, expressed his wonder at sharks, it was their

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\(^{175}\) Ibid.

\(^{176}\) Bennett, _The Enchantment of Modern Life_, p. 17.
difference from humans that captured his imagination — something Luce Irigaray claimed can result in wonder. Philippe Cousteau wrote that:

The shark moves through my universe like a marionette whose strings are controlled by someone other than the power manipulating mine; he seems to come from another planet, and in fact he does come from another time.  

Yet, as the seventeenth century philosopher Francis Bacon stated all that time ago: ‘No man can marvel at the play of puppets, that goeth behind the curtain and adviseth well of the motion’. This was exactly the approach adopted at this museum. Throughout Sharks: A Thrilling Experience, encounters with sharks were based on representations that worked towards breeding familiarity and understanding, as well as live sharks in the petting pool and the aquarium. Steve Baker warned that the wildness of creatures is threatened with being tamed when presented in the domesticated setting of the museum or gallery space. Indeed, this seemed to be a real threat in Sharks: A Thrilling Experience as wild wonder waned in the face of these captive sharks. These displays offered mediated encounters with wildlife presented in human constructed habitats, negating any sense of wildness these sharks might wield.

Whilst the Musée Océanographique de Monaco was in danger of dampening the capacity for wonder, it was an ethical sensibility rather than a wondrous one that the museum was actively seeking to cultivate here. However, an artwork included in the concurrently running On Sharks and Humanity exhibition appeared more resistant to this loss, leaving space for respect and celebration of difference, as well as a generous wonder based on observing similarity. This exhibition presented work by ten contemporary Chinese artists in recognition of China as the largest consumer of shark fin. It aimed to raise awareness of the need for shark protection, bringing an end to

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179 See Baker, The Postmodern Animal, p. 172 where the author states that ‘art domesticates the wild, and domesticates the animal. Once inside the sad safe space of the art gallery, neither Hirst’s preserved tiger shark nor Beuys’s live coyote can any longer carry the full weight of its wildness’.

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overfishing in general, as well as shark finning and the consumption of shark fin in particular. The works on display considered the plight of sharks and examined human relations to these creatures through sculpture, painting, video, poetry and site-specific installations. In light of the exhibition’s aim, it is notable that its curator, Huang Do, identified Joseph Beuys’s concept of ‘social sculpture’ — the power of art to transform society — as an informing concept for the show. The exhibition sought to bring about social change, shifting perceptions and behaviour towards sharks by encouraging visitors to ‘take action through thought, dialogue, discussion and exchange’, as a result of encounters with the works on display. After the stint in Monaco, the exhibition toured to Russia and China, with the intention of bringing these issues to an international audience.

One of the largest installations in the show was The Net (2014) by Wang Luyan, a huge stainless steel site-specific work. Taking the form of a giant green fishing net, it shrouded a room of the museum during the exhibition, surrounding visitors on all sides (figure 73). The installation was conceived by the artist as an attempt to place the human in the position of a shark caught in a fishing net, in the hope that visitors would consider the experience from the perspectives of sharks and empathise with them as a result. The work functioned on the basis of a sense of ‘applied anthropomorphism’ as conceived by the scholar and vice president of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Randall Lockwood. In this mode of anthropomorphism we use ‘our own personal perspective on what it’s like to be a living being to suggest ideas about what it is like to be some other being of either our own or some other species’. In this way, the work demanded that viewers draw on their experience of being human to imagine what it must be like for the shark when caught in this scenario. This form of anthropomorphism is inconclusive and open to the multiple positions that might be imagined — it only suggests ideas about what it is like to be some other being. As such, it has affinities with Kari Weil’s ‘critical anthropomorphism’ as was harnessed by Green Porno, since it offers the opportunity to elicit wonder by recognising differences and generosity through inducing viewers to consider nonhuman animals in terms of their own experience of a certain situation.

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181 For Beuys, social sculpture referred to the way ‘we mould and shape the world in which we live’, and that to realise its capacity to transform society, everyone must be an artist, Volker Harlan, What is Art? Conversation with Joseph Beuys, trans. by Matthew Barton and Shelley Sacks (Forest Row: Clairview Books, 2004), p. 9; and Joseph Beuys in Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists (London: ICA, 30 October – 24 November 1974), p. 48. See also Tisdall, p. 6.
182 Exhibition interpretation text at the Musée Océanographique de Monaco.
184 Lockwood, p. 49.
From the forays and encounters with marine wildlife examined in this chapter, wonder and generosity clearly have a role to play in cultivating a sense of respect and responsibility towards far-from-human creatures, through contemporary art, film, performance and museum display. ‘Wildness’ as a construction also seems to be significant in contributing to the emergence of wonder, while tameness may temper it. But are wild and tame always the distinct categories that this dichotomy seems to suggest? Having considered the museum and the wildlife film, this project now turns to ‘the field’ to examine artistic engagements with wildlife during the Gulbenkian Galápagos Artists’ Residency Programme. How might artist’s encounters with live animals in the wild inspire a sense of wonder? Significantly, where might this wonder lead, what might it do and what sort of transformational experiences might it contribute to bringing about?
Chapter Three
Wonder and Wildlife on the Enchanted Isles: Marcus Coates and Tania Kovats in Galápagos

In the vastness of the Pacific there’s a place unlike any other: Enchanted volcanic islands that are home to a remarkable collection of animals and plants. Here, evolution is proceeding with spectacular speed. Black lizards that swim in the ocean and spit salt from their noses, penguins thousands of miles from Antarctica, and an abundance of unique plants. Some animals are tiny, and some have only just been discovered. This is a place of wonders: Galápagos.
— David Attenborough

Artists on Galápagos
When Marcus Coates and Tania Kovats visited the Enchanted Isles as part of the Gulbenkian Galápagos Artists’ Residency Programme (2007–2011), both artists were fascinated by the islands’ endemic wildlife and made work about the ways humans and wildlife are intimately entangled across the archipelago. One of the aims of the residency programme and the subsequent touring exhibition, Galápagos (2012–2013), was to provide the opportunity for artists to explore the social complexity and ecological fragility of the islands. The residency programme involved twelve contemporary artists visiting and touring the Galápagos Islands for two weeks, engaging with native wildlife, local communities, tourists, resident scientists at the Charles Darwin Research Station and the landscapes of this unique place, making work in response to what they found there. A partnership between the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Galápagos

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1 Quotation from David Attenborough’s narration of the opening credits of ‘Origin’, Galápagos, Sky 1, 1 January 2013.
2 The Islands reportedly acquired this name in the second part of the sixteenth century due to being uninhabited, as well as the difficulty of navigating to them at the time, see William Beebe, Galápagos: World’s End (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988), p. 341. Beebe also referred to Galápagos as ‘a wonderland’ and ‘these no-man’s wonderlands’, ibid., pp. 62 and 292.
3 The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is a charitable organisation set up in 1956 and founded by Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian who bequeathed his art collection and fortune for the purpose of establishing it, see <https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/> [accessed 13 November 2017].
Conservation Trust, the initiative aimed to raise public awareness of the social and conservation issues relating to the wildlife and communities of Galápagos via a diverse range of artistic responses to the islands and their inhabitants — whether humans or nonhuman animals. The idea was that artists would raise awareness about the challenges facing Galápagos in terms of the human impact on wildlife and habitats, encouraging viewers — and indeed themselves — to reflect on similar issues affecting their own local environments once they returned home.5

The Galápagos Islands are deeply embedded in the cultural imaginary, due in part, to the various literary expressions devoted to this unique place, the islands’ native wildlife and the fact that Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory has links to the archipelago, since he noticed variations in species across the islands. Each of these factors contributes to the allure of Galápagos. Both Coates and Kovats evoked aspects of this rich heritage through their work and both were clearly affected by the time they spent on the islands. But given the fraught and complex ecologies they encountered, what role did wonder play in the work these two contemporary artists produced as a result of their stay?

Becoming-Bird and the ‘Mirthful Wonder’ of Marcus Coates

In the film Human Report (2008), Marcus Coates wanders around the island town of Puerto Ayora dressed as a blue-footed booby. Wearing a comical costume botched from cardboard, Coates inverts the premise of a wildlife film by reporting on the human islanders from the imagined perspective of this native marine bird (figure 74). The camera’s point of view switches so that at times Coates is presented on screen, and at others, viewers see the island through his imitation booby’s ‘eyes’, looking down through the narrow channel of his cardboard beak. The film was presented on the Galápagos Islands’ family-run TV station, Channel 9, for a local audience and was subsequently presented as a video installation in international exhibitions, reiterating the links between local and global that the residency programme hoped to forge (figure 75). At once humorous and poignant, Coates used his comic bird persona to examine

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5 Siân Ede, ‘Remarkable Features, Remarkable Facts’, in Galápagos, ed. by Bergit Arends and Siân Ede (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2012), pp. 8–15 (p. 10). The programme curator Greg Hilty stated: ‘The aims of the programme are multiple: as a creative opportunity, to provide artists with inspiration and content for new work around a subject of great scientific significance and cultural interest; as part of a campaigning strategy, to provide new ways to attract attention and funds to support the conservation of the Galapagos [sic] ecosystem as it is currently threatened by rapid human encroachment; and as a social initiative, to help articulate through artistic practice the importance of the Galapagos, [sic] for the benefit of the scientific community and wider human population of the Islands’, see Greg Hilty, ‘Gulbenkian Galápagos Artists Residencies’, in A Duck for Mr. Darwin: Evolutionary Thinking and the Struggle to Exist, ed. by Alessandro Vincentelli (Gateshead: BALTIC, 2009), pp. 73–74 (p. 73).
human inhabitation and visitation of the Galápagos Islands, which gives rise to various complex social, political and ecological issues. The artist’s deployment of humour in this work is strategic, evoking a species of ‘mirthful wonder’ to comment on, and raise awareness about, the challenges facing these fragile isles.6

Marcus Coates’s interest in wildlife is often reflected in what the artist calls his ‘becoming-animal’ works. Yet he has also used these ‘becoming-animal’ skills in socially-engaged performances where he assumes the role of the shaman in search of answers to dilemmas facing various communities. Indeed, Coates’s work has been discussed extensively in relation to becoming-animal as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari.7 But since ‘becoming-animal’ also offers a way to effect the kind of ‘crossings’ and metamorphoses that Jane Bennett claimed culminate in enchantment, I suggest this needs to be further examined in this context to reveal exactly how this is the case.

**Human Report** is not the first time Coates has attempted ‘becoming-animal’ in relation to birds. For instance, in *Goshawk* (1999) the artist had himself strapped to the top of a Scots pine in order to see from the perspective of this predatory bird (figure 76). For *Self-Portrait as Sparrowhawk Bait* (1999), Coates reversed this position, running through the forest with dead song birds haphazardly tied to his hair in an attempt to empathise from the perspective of the prey. Furthermore, *A Guide to the British Non-Passerines* (2001) was a video documenting Coates imitating the calls of 86 different bird species. This body of ‘becoming-bird’ work has also extended beyond the actions of the artist himself to include other participants. This tactic was used in *Dawn Chorus* (2007), where Coates filmed members of a community choir imitating slowed down bird song. When the footage was played back at the correct speed, the singers appeared to jerk around with bird-like movements emitting a convincing rendition of bird song. A selection of ‘becoming-bird’ exercises were also included in Coates’s recent book, a

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6 ‘Mirthful wonder’ is Runette Kruger’s phrase, see Kruger, p. 77.
sort of self-help manual, which aims to show readers how to improve their imagination so that they might use the creativity of their unconscious for problem solving. One exercise is *Bird Brain*, in which Coates instructs readers to cut two eye holes into opposite sides of a cardboard box and wear it on their head, restricting their vision and resulting in the adoption of bird-like movements as they jerk their head from side-to-side in an attempt to see the world around them. Another exercise is *Becoming A Gull*, whereby Coates advises readers to walk between their lounge and kitchen like a seagull, imitating the bird’s sounds and movements in an attempt ‘to go beyond mimicry and become the animal, believing that you are a gull, even, if only momentarily’.

In this body of becoming-bird work, Coates and the various other protagonists imitate aspects of nonhuman animal behaviour, often employing a makeshift and comic aesthetic that highlights the absurdity of doing-so. Imitation is an important tool for Coates in his attempts to become-animal, which initially seems incongruous with Deleuze and Guattari’s work, since these philosophers claimed that ‘becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal’. In *Human Report*, this is precisely what Coates appears to do. Yet contrary to the view of Deleuze and Guattari, the theatre and performance studies scholar Laura Cull has argued that any total disassociation of imitation from becoming in performance practice is ‘misleading’, noting that it is the ‘being/mimesis opposition’ that these philosophers appear to refute when they claim ‘we fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are’. Accordingly, Cull suggested that performance may function ‘along a kind of continuum, with some tending further towards mimesis […] and others, like […] Coates’s […] tending towards becoming’, leaving room for some elements of imitation to inhabit Deleuze and Guattari’s model of becoming-animal. In *Human Report*, not only does Coates mimic the appearance of a blue-footed booby through costume, but he also imitates the bird’s movements. Throughout the film, the artist walks with straight, stiff legs as a result of large cardboard flippers covering his feet and cardboard tubes around his legs, which make it difficult for him to bend properly at the knee. Coates’s rigid legs when walking are reminiscent of this bird’s courtship ritual, in which the male lifts his legs with a high stepping motion in order to show off his feet. In addition, the artist regularly raises his cardboard wings in a gesture that appears to

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9 Ibid., p. 93
10 Ibid., p. 187.
11 Deleuze and Guattari, p. 277.
mimic the blue-footed booby’s display (figure 77). It is this sort of imitative performative approach that Steve Baker has argued allows artists to enter into a becoming-animal, since in such instances, nonhuman animals emerge as beings that must be ‘thought actively’ and performed, therefore approaching ‘that genuinely experimental state of becoming-animal where things “cease to be subjects to become events”’. Coates therefore retains an affinity with Deleuze and Guattari despite his choice to mimic wildlife in his performances, since he ‘establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes’. Jane Bennett suggested that wonder results from creatures that are in a constant ‘state of becoming’. She claimed that metamorphing creatures can enchant during crossings due to the ‘magic [...] in their mobility’, suggesting that the pleasure of this enchantment stems from the free and fluid movement of becoming. Moving like a bird and apparently thinking from the bird’s perspective, Coates performs an eccentric and humorous zoomorphic rendition of this iconic bird, deploying a subtle form of physical comedy. Here enchantment arises through the artist’s becoming-booby, but rather than being mythic or mystic, it is comic.

Yet becoming-animal on the terms outlined by Deleuze and Guattari might not provide the best conditions for the Chthulucene. The philosophers posited a hierarchy of wildlife that leaves little space for the flourishing of what they position as the lowly pet. All nonhuman animals are not equal according to their view, whereas the Chthulucene demands respect for all earthly life. Artists such as Art Orienté Objet and thinkers like Jacques Derrida and Donna Haraway are much more open to including pets in their examinations of the so-called question of the animal. Whilst recognising that Deleuze and Guattari’s model of becoming-animal similarly attempts to get beyond binaries, Haraway stated that her proposed model of becoming with has no truck with the fantasy wolf-pack version of “becoming-animal” postulated by Deleuze and Guattari, citing what appears as their continual opposition between notions of wild and domestic, as well as their apparent disdain for pets, as the reasons for this. Of course it was in response to human-dog relations that Haraway developed The Companion Species Manifesto (2003), where she examined human-animal relationships as symbiotic.

Coates’s performance focuses on a wild bird as opposed to a domestic pet, but the
tameness of the wildlife on Galápagos seems to foreclose this sort of polarising issue. Wild and tame are disrupted on the Enchanted Isles and the native wildlife shows no fear of humans. Criticising Coates for becoming-animal in relation to a ‘wild’ animal rather than a domestic one in his work would therefore be to miss this point.

Becoming-animal on the Enchanted Isles has literary precedents that precede Coates’s residency on the islands. These are found in diverse texts from the fiction of Herman Melville and Kurt Vonnegut to the scientific writings of Charles Darwin. Given the topics Coates takes up in his work, he seems to have been well aware of this heritage. For example, Kurt Vonnegut’s novel Galápagos (1985) is a satire about human greed and anthropocentrism, narrated from the perspective of a ghost who witnessed the million-year de-evolution of humans stranded on the islands. The novel’s central characters are shipwrecked on Galápagos having just set sail there for what was touted as ‘the nature cruise of the century’. It transpires that those marooned on the islands are the sole human survivors of twin catastrophes stemming from an insinuated infertility epidemic and an apparent world war brought about by a financial meltdown. Isolated on the islands, and as a result of an intervention by a school science teacher who endeavours to secure the survival of the human race, the shipwrecked characters procreate. The resulting offspring start to adapt to the island environment, evolving over the generations into sea creatures equipped with gills and fur like a seal.20

Another literary becoming-animal trope linked to Galápagos features in the novelist Herman Melville’s short story The Encantadas (1854). Melville wrote that early sailors believed the indigenous Galápagos giant tortoises (after whom the archipelago is named) were evil captains, which had been changed into reptiles by a ‘downright diabolical, enchanter’.21 Of the archipelago, Melville writes:

Nor would the appellation “enchanted” seem misapplied in still another sense. For concerning the peculiar reptile inhabitant of these wilds […] most mariners have long cherished a superstition not more frightful than grotesque. They earnestly believe that all wicked sea officers […] are at death (and in some cases before death) transformed into tortoises, thenceforth dwelling upon these hot aridities, sole solitary lords of Asphaltum […] 22

22 Ibid., p. 10.
Not only can Coates’s interest in becoming-animal on Galápagos be rooted in this literary fiction, but so too is the way enchantment is cast. Furthermore, by imagining his way into the bird’s mind to consider how the booby might view the human population of the islands, Coates employs a mode of relating to wildlife that George Levine positioned as being integral to the work of Charles Darwin. Rather pertinently, Levine even observed an instance where Darwin ‘thinks himself into the bird’s being’. Such empathic responses might be unexpected in scientific work, yet while Coates expresses this freely through performance, Darwin also did so consistently through his writing. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari and more like Darwin in this respect, Coates is preoccupied with imagining the perspectives of wildlife and attending to the specific characteristics of these creatures, as his carefully constructed costume and observations of the blue-footed booby’s movements demonstrate. This knowledge of the booby’s physiology and behaviour is evidence of Coates’s interest in natural history. However, for Deleuze and Guattari ‘[n]atural history can think only in terms of relationships (between A and B), not in terms of production (from A to x)’ as becoming-animal does. Furthermore, Coates has made a statement of intent that seems to contravene the fluidity inherent to Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘becoming-animal’, claiming that through his performances, his aim is ‘to try and locate what it is to be human by attempting to embody a non-human perspective’. In relation to Human Report, Coates stated:

What was important to me was that I wasn’t a human, I had to believe I was a bird in order to look at the human habitation of the Galapagos [sic] from a fresh position. To be outside of myself, in order to see myself and other humans on the island with a new perspective, with new insights […] I learned a lot about people, by being a bird.

Any dissolution of a human/nonhuman animal dichotomy is foiled by the artist’s desire to experience the world from the perspective of a blue-footed booby with the ultimate aim of arriving at a more certain sense of human identity. Coates has recognised that his ability to achieve this may be impossible, and despite the apparent sincerity of the

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23 Levine, p. 195. In fact Coates asked scientists resident on Galápagos what questions they would ask the human inhabitants on the islands if they were the bird, using their responses to inform his film.
24 Ibid.
25 Deleuze and Guattari, p. 273.
26 Marcus Coates, Journey to the Lower World (Newcastle upon Tyne: Platform Projects and Morning Star, 2005), [n. pag.].
artist’s attempts, the comic nature of his performances are a testimony to the difficulties the endeavour presents. In this way Coates’s work actually reinforces one way a differentiation between humans and other animals has been proposed, since according to the philosopher Henri Bergson ‘the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly human. […]’ Several have defined man as “an animal which laughs.” They might equally well have defined him as an animal which is laughed at’. This being the case, Coates’s performance seems to refrain from effecting the sort of crossings that can lead to wonder, since his intent is anthropocentric, primarily concerned with establishing further understanding about being human. This view contrasts with one of the main arguments of this thesis, which is that it is the entanglements of humans and wildlife that can elicit wonder when explored through artistic practice. Nevertheless, the comic strategy used by Coates ensures that wonder is sustained in other ways.

In *Human Report* Coates performs as a booby in more than one sense. The film opens with a reflection on the bird’s name by the female Spanish narrator: ‘Our name is booby, which in Spanish means ‘stupid’. In English it means a woman’s breast: You are calling me a stupid tit’. In this piece of dialogue, a British slang term for ‘idiot’ is used to refer to Coates in this performance. As such, the artist seems to proffer a knowing acceptance of the absurdity of his position in this work, in which he walks awkwardly and comically through the island town dressed as a ridiculous-looking incarnation of this iconic bird. Ron Broglio has described this aspect of Coates’s practice in terms of a ‘knowing idiocy’ in relation to *Finfolk* (2003), a work where Coates impersonated a nonhuman animal impersonating a human in a manner recalling *Human Report*, wearing an unfashionable tracksuit to comically enact the shape-shifting legend of the work’s title. The blue-footed booby’s name is said to derive from the Spanish for ‘foolish’ or ‘clown’ as a result of the birds’ bright coloured legs and what humans perceived as their clumsy movement on land. In fact Charles Darwin also recognised the booby as having a ‘stupid disposition’ in the diaries he wrote during his voyage upon the *Beagle*. In *Human Report*, Coates employs a comic strategy to critique human life on Galápagos. His choice to impersonate the booby is significant. He acts the ‘booby’ and in this way the work functions as a one-liner. As Shepherd

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28 Coates, *Journey*, [n.pag.].
32 <http://galapagosconservation.org.uk/wildlife/blue-footed-booby/> [accessed 30 March 2016]. Marcus Coates stated that: ‘We project onto them [blue-footed boobies] a comical character because they’re quite funny birds, with bright blue feet and they do a funny dance when they are courting. To us they seem like clowns’, see Marcus Coates quoted in Foulds, ‘The Big Interview: Part 1: Marcus Coates’ (para. 9 of 10).
Steiner observed, ‘[t]hough his intention is to give a straight reporting on the plight of man on these fragile islands, his cardboard outfit indelibly marks the performance as literally speaking from the perspective of a boob or fool’.34 Furthermore, despite Coates’s apparent desire to understand more about humanity, the particular brand of comedy he uses in this work is premised on the blurring of the boundaries between humans and other animals, both affirming and diluting the very boundary, as Jane Bennett put it, ‘where enchantment […] seems to hang out’.35

The philosopher Simon Critchley recalled how Aristotle stated that ‘no animal laughs save man’.36 Indeed Critchley elaborated on this idea, identifying humour as ‘a key element in the distinction of the human from the animal’.37 Whilst Critchley did bring this assumption into debate by discussing the anthropologist Mary Douglas’s essay ‘Do Dogs Laugh?’ (1971), in which she throws the possibility of drawing a dividing line between humans and wildlife via laughter into question, he gave Douglas’s thesis little credence.38 Critchley went on to observe that if humour marks out the human, it also ‘marks the limit of the human’, since:

humour explores what it means to be human by moving back and forth across the frontier that separates humanity from animality, thereby making it unstable […]. Humour is precisely the exploration of the break between nature and culture, which reveals the human to be not so much a category by itself as a negotiation between categories. We might even define the human as a dynamic process produced by a series of identifications and misidentifications with animality. Thus, what makes us laugh is the reduction of the human to the animal or the elevation of the animal to the human.39

In Human Report, Coates creates artistic conditions for this shuttling back and forth between humanity and animality. The artist simultaneously offers a crude physical imitation of the blue-footed booby and presents the bird on human terms using human language to speak for the bird, as well as making recourse to a (human) mode of delivery based on the format of the wildlife film. By occupying the ambiguous role of a human imitating a bird behaving like a human, Coates is positioned as Critchley’s

34 Steiner, p. 11.
37 Critchley, On Humour, p. 28
39 Critchley, On Humour, p. 29.
‘negotiation between categories’. Likewise, the artist performs ‘a series of identifications and misidentifications with animality’ attaining a becoming-animal on Deleuze and Guattari’s terms by enacting the ‘dynamic process’ that fluidly mediates between these two positions. Furthermore, if on Critchley’s terms the comic arises through an ‘inversion of the human and the animal’, or ‘the sudden and incongruous humanity of the animal’, Human Report becomes the very embodiment of the comic, playing as it does with this transgression in both directions simultaneously — Coates being at once a man dressed as a bird reporting as a human would from the bird’s perspective. By enacting this to-ing and fro-ing, Coates reinstates a sense of wonder that arises through crossings, since ‘wonderful creatures are […] always in a state of becoming’.

Yet this understanding of humour has its limits. Whilst Critchley suggested that when nonhuman animals become human, ‘we laugh out loud’, he tars instances where humans become animal with a sense of disgust, which he claims prompts nothing but a ‘mirthless laugh’. This is far from the case in Coates’s work, which is devoid of any abject human ‘animality’ as a result of its playful and apparently ramshackle aesthetic. Any mirthless laughter is not the result of Coates’s attempt to become-animal, but instead directed towards the very real issues regarding the conflict of interests between humans and wildlife on Galápagos that this work gives rise to. Speaking about his stay in Galápagos, Coates said that:

Galapagos [sic] has always existed to me as a sort of paradise and going there punctured some of that, there’s a lot of problems there. […] It’s more beautiful and wondrous than you can imagine, but it also has its own difficulties and problems that are relevant to us all.

There are massive conflicts of interest on the Galápagos Islands between the native wildlife, the scientists studying this flora and fauna, the Ecuadorian people who have colonised the islands to make a living from the influx of tourism, the invasive species accompanying human settlement and the tourists who drive the economy of the

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 31.
43 Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 17.
45 Marcus Coates quoted in Foulds, ‘The Big Interview: Part 1: Marcus Coates’ (para. 8 of 10).
islands, but whose damaging footprint must be managed rigorously by conservationists.\textsuperscript{46} With a population increasing from around 200–300 inhabitants in the nineteenth century to around 30,000 today, and with tourist numbers growing from 12,000 annually in 1979 to current figures of almost 200,000 each year, human impact on the ecology and wildlife of these islands is all but inevitable.\textsuperscript{47} Consequently, humans and wildlife are embroiled in manifold ways on Galápagos, scrambling dichotomies between nature and culture and bringing into being new ecologies, which both humans and wildlife play an active part in creating. Coates’s report draws attention to several challenges this situation presents, whether this is the arrival of invasive species (one islander featured in the film is shown with a pet cat), or the unsuitability of the islands’ resources for human dwelling. ‘You are parasites’, Coates’s booby says to the islanders at the close of the film:

What I don’t understand is why you colonized these islands, which lack both water and supplies of food […]. In any case don’t worry, you are not in danger. I’ve seen more like you in other places. If you all die, it will be OK. More humans will come and start another breeding colony.\textsuperscript{48}

These parting words offer a harsh critique of the human inhabitation of the islands, but are somewhat softened by having been uttered by such a comic and approachable protagonist.\textsuperscript{49} As Coates himself observed of the bird persona he assumed in this work:

Dressing up as a bird like that, is a comical thing to do, because of this people are drawn to you, they’re curious. It’s not purposefully disarming, more-so it acts as a form of protection for me and also a way of suggesting that I am not here to harm anyone, this isn’t an aggressive activity […]. I may look funny but I

\textsuperscript{46} Ede, p.10.
\textsuperscript{47} Bergit Arends, ‘Why I Won’t Go to the Galápagos’, in Galápagos, ed. by Bergit Arends and Siân Ede (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2012), pp. 40–48 (pp. 43–44); and Henry Nicholls, Galápagos (London: Profile Books, 2014), pp. xvi and 143. Some scientists have even gone so far as to suggest that human presence upon the islands is affecting the course of evolution in certain species, since birds have been observed adapting to different food sources with a change in beak size and shape. See ‘Evolution’, Galápagos, Sky 1, 12 January 2013.
\textsuperscript{49} Of his critique in this work, Coates has stated: ‘There’s no water, no food, it’s all shipped in, and there are all kinds of problems with racism and poverty. It is so unrealistic and unsustainable to live there. They live here basically for the tourists. I was very drawn to that. But I felt a responsibility not to dismiss people’s lives, although, equally, the responsibility was there to question it’, see Marcus Coates quoted in Andrew Foulds, ‘The Big Interview: Part 2: Marcus Coates’, The Double Negative, 22 May 2012 <http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2012/05/the-big-interview-part-two-marcus-coates/> [accessed 14 March 2016] (para. 4 of 10).
try to make all participants aware that I take this seriously and that they can be serious too. People usually do, which is amazing.\textsuperscript{50}

Coates is tackling sensitive issues, offering a critical view of the unsustainable and invasive islanders’ existence on Galápagos, which he then presents back to them through the local TV news. He seems to have carefully selected the moment for this pseudo documentary to be aired. The film appeared in a segment before a male news anchor gets flustered about the fact that the Ecuadorian model and former Miss Ecuador 2004, Maria Susana Rivadeneira, along with another beauty queen will be joining them in the studio. The placement of Coates’s report therefore also points to the ironical fact that it is human beauty that makes the news on Galápagos, rather than that of the wildlife there.

The use of humour becomes strategic in \textit{Human Report}, offering a sort of comic relief to the troubling aspects of human dwelling on the islands that the artist-as-bird takes issue with in this work. Coates uses this humour towards an eco agenda assuming a somewhat ridiculous-looking comic persona. The theorist Timothy Morton described ‘The ridiculous’ as one of the many layers of ecological awareness, existing as ‘a realm of satire and sarcasm’ within melancholy, and where we might ‘encounter the art of the absurd’.\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Human Report} therefore occupies this space quite comfortably. It borders on satire, evoking the genre of the wildlife film to offer a critical view of human society delivered in a humorous way from an outsider’s position — both Coates as non-island dweller and the blue-footed booby as nonhuman. Of course satire frequently sees humans presented as nonhuman animals as numerous newspaper cartoons demonstrate.

In \textit{Human Report}, Coates’s puzzled blue-footed booby asks the human islanders: ‘Why does no-one come to these islands to see you?’\textsuperscript{52} This anthropomorphic incarnation of the creature manifests his or her own wonder and curiosity through observations on the lives of the islands’ human inhabitants. The booby asks questions, expressing incredulity at aspects of human life that are different from the bird’s own: ‘Why do you feed your children with the spoon? When you can regurgitate food for them?’ and ‘I don’t understand pets’, being just two instances where the booby appears bemused.\textsuperscript{53} Charles Darwin suggested that some of the wildlife he encountered during his \textit{Beagle}

\textsuperscript{50} Marcus Coates quoted in Foulds, ‘The Big Interview: Part 1: Marcus Coates’ (para. 10 of 10).
\textsuperscript{52} Dialogue from \textit{Human Report} (2008).
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
voyage expressed ‘great wonder & curiosity’ and Coates’s booby appears to be doing just this, apparently fascinated by the lives and culture of the human islanders. The possibility that both humans and wildlife might experience wonder is a thrilling, yet untestable hypothesis. As such, attributing curiosity and wonder to Coates’s blue-footed booby exhibits anthropomorphistic tendencies.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, anthropomorphism is a complex concept. One of the many forms it takes is what Randall Lockwood identified as ‘superficial anthropomorphism’, predicated on interpreting nonhuman animal behaviour on aspects unrelated to the mechanisms behind them. To illustrate this, Lockwood referred to the instance of the space ape Ham, who was photographed apparently smiling when he returned to Earth safely from his experimental space voyage, when the expression in these primates is actually a ‘fear grimace’. Clearly there is massive room for error in this sort of anthropocentric and anthropomorphistic reading of nonhuman animal behaviour. This is something Coates draws attention to in Human Report by having the booby make erroneous observations about the human culture on the islands. For instance, the bird misunderstands the crucifix-shaped headstones in the local graveyard, claiming to be honoured by this ‘symbol of a flying bird’. This moment highlights how there might be elements of wildlife behaviour that have been similarly misinterpreted by humans. Furthermore, the booby generalises, treating humans as a species as a whole rather than as individuals, reflecting the way many people relate to wildlife. Coates’s bird observes that humans are not so different from boobies since both species are faithful to their partners — something that is not always the case in human society. This projection of the blue-footed booby’s behaviour onto that of humans reflects the ways humans have frequently interpreted and described the actions of wildlife. The booby mimics human behaviour on a level other than speech, using its own frame of existence to inform its view of human society and culture. Coates works this to comic effect, his booby observing that humans have beautiful markings, and inquiring as to whether they are categorised according to their plumage.

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55 Lockwood, p. 47.

Critchley suggested that satirical writers — and, we can assume, artists working with satire too — ‘produce a kind of shock effect that shakes us up and effects a critical change of perspective’ when they traverse the boundary positioned between humans and other animals.\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Human Report} does just this. It is through ‘mirthful wonder’ that Runette Kruger claimed ‘artists’ dangerous ability to destabilize, dismantle the given and produce the new, lurks’.\textsuperscript{58} Her observation offers promise for Coates’s critique if it is to inspire social and environmental change in relation to these Enchanted Isles. As Critchley has suggested, laughter has ethical promise, since ‘laughter in its solidaristic dimension has an ethical function insofar as the simple sharing of a joke recalls to us what is shared in our life-world practices’.\textsuperscript{59} Yet laughter’s historical links to wonder should also be observed here. According to Descartes, laughter is made possible by ‘the surprise of wonder’, something Coates’s booby can still bring forth due to the humorous shuffling back and forth between humanity and animality taking place in this work.\textsuperscript{60} Furthermore, it is notable that for Descartes, laughter could occur in the face of both joy and indignation, making the complex issues on Galápagos, as well as the unique and pleasurable encounters with wildlife that are possible there, equally capable of inspiring ‘mirthful wonder’ on these terms today.\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{Wildlife Conservation and Wild Wonder}

Coates made another film during his time on the Galápagos Islands, which interrogated the border between humans and wildlife. \textit{Intelligent Design} (2008) is an eight-minute film showing the seemingly laborious breeding efforts of two of the islands’ vulnerable giant tortoises (figure 78). Like Rossellini, Coates capitalised on the ‘pornographic’ aspects of wildlife film, presenting viewers with a mating sequence that lasts the entire duration of the film. Yet unlike the nonhuman animal sex performed by Rossellini in \textit{Green Porno}, the tortoise sex in Coates’s film becomes actually quite monotonous and banal to watch. Throughout the film, the male tortoise grunts with the effort of copulating with such a large and cumbersome physique, which appears to be far from an effective form with which to procreate. Nevertheless, Coates amusingly described how he became curious about these creatures since he felt that the sounds they made during mating sounded ‘so much like humans’ and the ‘cross-over between human and animal vocalisations, the connections across species’ got him ‘excited’.\textsuperscript{62}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} Critchley, \textit{On Humour}, pp. 35–36.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Kruger, p. 77.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Descartes, p. 371.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid., pp. 371–372.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Marcus Coates quoted in Foulds, ‘The Big Interview: Part 2: Marcus Coates’ (para. 6 of 10).
\end{itemize}
Accordingly, the work has both an anthropomorphic and humorous tenor. Firstly, it inverts the human/nonhuman animal in a way that Simon Critchley characterised one form of the comic. The giant tortoises were perceived by Coates to be making noises that sound like humans, and it is in such instances that Critchley suggests laughter occurs, claiming that ‘[w]hen the animal becomes human, the effect is pleasingly benign and we laugh out loud’. Secondly, viewing nonhuman animal behaviour in terms of how it relates to humans is clearly a form of anthropomorphism. As was the case with the idea of humans becoming-animal on the Galápagos Islands, the anthropomorphism of tortoises has literary precedents. Like Coates, the writer D.H. Lawrence was fascinated with the male tortoise’s mating cry, describing this in a 1921 poem in similarly anthropomorphic terms, writing:

And giving that fragile yell, that scream,
Super-audible,
From his pink, cleft, old-man’s mouth,

Lawrence’s series of six tortoise poems, which Deleuze and Guattari suggested result in his ‘becoming-tortoise’, are littered with anthropomorphic language. They feature a baby tortoise being excited by the sun’s touch, an irascible tortoise [...] biting the frail grass arrogantly, a tortoise’s tail being ‘tucked a little on one side [l]ike a gentleman in a long-skirted coat’ and tortoises behaving in an ‘apathetic' way, with ‘grim, reptile determination’ and ‘gallantry’. In another anthropomorphic literary representation of these reptiles, an entire novel is narrated from the perspective of Timothy, the pet tortoise of Gilbert White, the author of The Natural History of Selborne (1789). At the end of the book, the extent to which Timothy has been misunderstood is revealed when it becomes apparent that ‘Timothy’ is in fact a female — something that went unrecognised by all of the humans that encountered her throughout the tale.

63 Critchley, On Humour, p. 33.
68 Lawrence, ‘Baby Tortoise’, p. 17.
70 Ibid.
However, whilst Lawrence anthropomorphised the tortoises in his poems, he simultaneously retains a respect and recognition for their differences from humans. The writer noted the far from human physiology and behaviour of these creatures — be it their slow movement or failure to recognise their biological kin as family — and ultimately highlighted the impossibility of understanding the tortoises’ subjective experiences, imploring the creature: ‘Are you able to wonder?’ \(^73\) *Intelligent Design* permits for a similar engagement with giant tortoises. While viewers might, like Coates, find the giant tortoise’s vocalisations especially human, they are simultaneously presented with the very different physiology of the tortoise, and furthermore, reminded of the very different speed at which these huge creatures live their lives in comparison to humans. This simultaneous recognition of difference and similarity via this sort of critical anthropomorphism can lead to both wonder and generosity. Considering the endangered state of the Galápagos giant tortoises, *Intelligent Design* might therefore induce a sense of responsibility towards these reptiles.

The tortoises featured in Coates’s film live in captivity and are part of a wildlife conservation programme to re-establish giant tortoise numbers in the wild. Originally plentiful across the archipelago, giant tortoises were pillaged for food by sailors and whalers throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. \(^74\) These creatures also faced a threat from the invasive species that arrived with humans, particularly rats, who ate their incubating eggs, and goats, who decimated much of the vegetation that would have provided their food. As a result, giant tortoises became endangered and some species even became extinct on islands across the Galápagos archipelago. \(^75\) The giant tortoise therefore functions for Coates as a kind of short-hand for issues where human actions have negatively impacted the lives of wildlife. Along with the blue-footed booby, the giant tortoise is an iconic species. Gracing the logo of both the Charles Darwin Foundation and the Galápagos Conservation Trust, the giant tortoise is a flagship species, synonymous as much with species conservation as with the islands themselves.

One giant tortoise more than any other, served to bring the plight of these vulnerable creatures into public consciousness, becoming somewhat of a celebrity poster-animal for wildlife conservation in the process: Lonesome George, the last pinta tortoise, found in 1971 on Pinta Island. Lonesome George was relocated to the Galápagos Islands’ Charles Darwin Research Station to live out the rest of his days in captivity whilst

\(^73\) Lawrence, ‘Baby Tortoise’, p. 16.
\(^74\) Beebe noted a number of reports of giant tortoises being taken from islands for food in a chapter on these creatures, see Beebe, pp. 204–229; and Grant and Estes, p. 84.
\(^75\) Nicholls, *Galápagos*, p. 100.
scientists tried, without success, to initiate a pinta tortoise breeding programme. The artist Rachel Berwick made work in direct reference to this famous tortoise in her multimedia installation *Lonesome George* (2005–2007), which comprised several parts. Two screens showed close-up footage of Lonesome George. One presented the tortoise slowly inhaling and exhaling his breath and the other showed this giant tortoise retreat into his shell — like the pinta tortoise as a species, on this particular screen Lonesome George disappeared. Two sails in the installation inflated and deflated with air, simultaneously emphasising the tortoise’s measured breathing and recalling the whaling ships that whisked many giant tortoises away from the islands as an easy meal. Two casts of giant tortoise carapaces are displayed, one in black volcanic glass, recalling the hardened lava found across much of the Galápagos landscape, and another in an opalescent white material, which shimmers with the iridescence of mother of pearl in such a way that it highlights the desirable decorative qualities of tortoise shell, which also led to the capture and killing of these creatures. Finally, a black cast of a giant tortoise skull sits trapped beneath glass beakers etched with the outlines of a map. The fragility of Lonesome George in Berwick’s installation stems not just from the precarious subject matter (Lonesome George died in 2012 rendering the pinta tortoise extinct), but also from the materiality of the glass sculptures and the transience and immateriality of the film projection. Whilst Berwick’s installation focuses on the specific individual Lonesome George, it has been suggested that this artist is preoccupied with ideas of extinction in general rather than the lives of specific animals, and that as a result, Lonesome George is simply symbolic of these wider concerns. Since other works by Berwick feature the extinct thylacine and the passenger pigeon it does indeed seem that this is the case. Unlike Berwick, Coates’s work is more positively figured. His film not only draws attention to the plights facing giant tortoises, but also to the ways humanity has recognised these issues and is trying to make amends. Rather than focusing on the damage and destruction humans have caused, Coates examines one way humans are acting to try and rectify the plight of these

79 This is recognised by the online text to accompany the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s *The Singing and the Silence: Birds in Contemporary Art* exhibition held in 2014, see <https://2.americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/online/birds/artists/berwick/> [accessed 29 October 2017].
creatures through a wildlife conservation initiative. The work demonstrates the sort of attentive practices of care called for by the Chthulucene, showing one way in which humans are trying to provide for the flourishing of these tortoises across Galápagos.\textsuperscript{80}

Coates’s work features giant tortoises held in captivity in an attempt to secure their survival. These creatures live out their lives in confinement in front of scientists and a paying audience of tourists, who watch them as they eat, sleep and try to procreate. In fact in the background of Coates’s film, viewers see a female and male tourist standing in close proximity to the giant tortoises, photographing them and filming them as they try to mate. It therefore becomes clear that Coates’s film presents quite a different attitude to wildlife when compared with Hans Haacke’s 1970 action \textit{Ten Turtles Set Free}, which was discussed in the introduction. The tortoises in Haacke’s work were released into the woodlands in an attempt to liberate them from their lives in human ownership and their circulation as commodities in the pet market. Paradoxically, to try and save tortoises today, it seems that they must be held captive.\textsuperscript{81} Humans and wildlife are tightly bound in such conservation projects and, notably, notions of wild and tame become entangled as a result.

Many scholars have observed how wild and tame are not necessarily discrete or dichotomous categories. For instance, Garry Marvin discussed ‘wildness’ in his study of the Spanish Bullfight.\textsuperscript{82} He described the nature of these nonhuman animals, whose desired trait for the bullring is a sense of wildness stemming from having been specially bred for the purpose rather than having been taken from their natural habitat, as being ‘culturally wild’.\textsuperscript{83} This terminology implicates humans in the selection of breeding towards this sought after trait, implying that ‘wildness’ exists as a human ideal: the bulls become ‘wild creatures of human creation’.\textsuperscript{84} The historian Harriet Ritvo described ‘wildness’ as an ‘ambiguous’ and ‘volatile’ term, suggesting that wild, tame and domestic might exist on a sliding scale.\textsuperscript{85} Ritvo made her argument in relation to rewilding and de-extinction programmes, in which humans are involved in cultivating landscapes and species, therefore evoking the giant tortoise breeding programme

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  \item \textsuperscript{80} Haraway, \textit{Staying with the Trouble}, p. 56.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} On the ethics and challenges of captive breeding in wildlife conservation programmes, see for instance Thom Van Dooren, \textit{Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction}, paperback edn (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), especially the chapter on Whooping crane conservation entitled ‘Breeding Cranes: The Violent-Care of Captive Life’, ibid., pp. 87–122.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 43.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 46.
  \item \textsuperscript{85} Harriet Ritvo, ‘The Wild Within’, public lecture at the University of Bristol, 17 May 2016.
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featured in Coates’s film. The culturally constructed notion of ‘wildness’ was also discussed by Lynda Birke, who positioned ‘wild’ and ‘tame’ as ‘slippery’ categories, troubling this dichotomy in a tripartite argument that introduced the notion of ‘feral’, revealed how ‘wildness’ might be understood as differing by degrees and discussed instances of domesticated nonhuman animals reverting to their ‘wild’ state. Birke further dissolved fixed notions of wild and tame by drawing attention to the fact that when humans observe ‘wild’ animals, whether for science or leisure, what is actually witnessed is the creature’s behaviour under the influence of human presence. In fact across the Galápagos archipelago, where wildlife has not developed a fear of humans, wild animals appear to be extremely tame, challenging any fixed sense of ‘wildness’ here as well. In an article speculating on the impact of tourism across Galápagos, the writer Carole Cadwalladr recalled that when she visited the islands she swam with sea lions, who were behaving more like puppies to the extent that one swam off and returned with a stick. It is by embodying this sort of category-defying slipperiness that the captive tortoises in Coates’s film exude an ambiguity that could be cause for wonder.

The title of Coates work is significant: ‘intelligent design’ is the term used to describe a Creationist view that all life can be attributed to a divine source. Darwin’s theory of evolution by means of natural selection challenged, but did not completely quash this belief, suggesting that life adapted and evolved from a common origin to become more suitable to specific circumstances, resulting in the diversity found in life. Coates’s title clearly mocks the Creationist view, since the ‘design’ of these tortoises is shown to be imperfect through the evident difficulties they face when trying to mate. For instance, the film shows close-ups of the male tortoise’s feet repeatedly slipping on the shell of his mate as he fails to get purchase. In this way Coates renders Darwinian evolution similarly vulnerable to criticism, since the physique of these giant tortoises seems to be far from the perfect form with which to mate. As Coates observed:

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87 Ibid., p. 43. Birke introduces another term to further muddy the wild/tame binary at this juncture—‘habituation’, the behaviour of nonhuman animals as it occurs when they have become used to human presence and it is no longer perceived to present a threat, ibid., p. 44.
When I was thinking about all these things and the creationists [sic] theory of intelligent design, certain things struck a chord. I was spending a lot of time watching the tortoises trying to mate, rather unsuccessfully and I thought, nature isn’t perfect at all. They are the end of this evolutionary line, they’re supposed to be perfect now and actually nothing is perfect, nothing has evolved enough to be perfect. Things are just adapting, changing all the time.90

It is the constant change and mobility inherent to Darwin’s evolution by means of natural selection that George Levine suggested leads to enchantment, stating: ‘Darwin’s world of change and crossings, where essential categories are constantly disrupted, is a world that includes those spaces for enchantment that [Jane] Bennett discusses’.91 It is precisely this realisation that wildlife is constantly evolving that Coates’s remark, and indeed this work, gives rise to. The political and ethical possibility of this lies in the fact, that as the philosopher Ralph R. Acampora has observed, ‘[c]onsciousness of evolution has existential consequences in that it leads us to the self-knowledge that we are earthbound organisms — and, as such, we conduct our lives in climatic conviviality with other animals’.92 As a result of regarding ourselves as part of the ‘mesh’ of earthly life, we feel our innate kinship to other animals and realise how tightly bound we are on an evolutionary basis, which can arguably result in a generous disposition.93 Not only this, but it is the very recognition of this mesh — this interconnectedness with other living beings — that Timothy Morton suggests resulted in Darwin’s enchantment as he contemplated the ‘truly wonderful fact […] that all animals […] should be related to each other’ during his work on evolution by means of natural selection.94 Indeed Darwin observed that ‘whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved’.95

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90 Marcus Coates quoted in Andrew Foulds, ‘The Big Interview: Part 2: Marcus Coates’ (para. 5 of 10).
91 Levine, p. 43.
93 Timothy Morton uses the ‘mesh’ to describe the interconnectedness of all beings, see Morton, The Ecological Thought, p. 15.
94 Morton quoting Darwin, see ibid., p. 29
Tania Kovats and Darwinian Wonder

Tania Kovats went to the Galápagos Islands to draw barnacles. Like the islands themselves, these creatures played a significant role in the work of Charles Darwin, making them particularly compelling subject matter for Kovats whose interest in this naturalist is well known. Kovats has made a number of works paying homage to Darwin and even travelled around South America with his diary from the Beagle voyage as her guide. For instance, TREE (2009) is a cross section of a 200-year old oak tree permanently installed like a giant botanical specimen in a ceiling at the Natural History Museum, London (figure 79). The piece was commissioned to commemorate the bicentenary of the birth of Darwin and to celebrate 150 years since the publication of On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection (1859). The installation was informed by one of Darwin’s diagrams mapping out his thoughts on evolution. It took the shape of a branching tree, appearing in his 1837 Transmutation Notebook B and so in this way the installation acts as a kind of monument to the naturalist and his work.96 Other projects by Kovats have similarly tackled Darwinian subject matter. Indeed Kovats’s trip to the Galápagos Islands as part of this residency programme provided another opportunity for the artist to engage with Darwin’s work.

Darwin first visited the Galápagos Islands in 1835, when he noted the variations in species across the archipelago. However, it was not until 1859 that he published his landmark text, On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection. This twenty-four year delay was due to Darwin’s desire to gather enough evidence to support his then radical ideas. It also gave him time to gain stature in scientific circles and carve a niche in this academic community so that his theory would have credibility once published. As part of these endeavours, Darwin worked towards his doctorate, tirelessly studying barnacles for eight years to produce the first thorough taxonomic study of these creatures.97 He became fascinated with barnacles after becoming transfixed by a specimen he collected on the Beagle voyage, which he named Mr. Arthrobalanus. As a result of their link to this Darwinian history, barnacles formed the subject matter and even served as the material for the work Kovats produced as a result of the Gulbenkian Galápagos Artists’ Residency Programme.

97 See Charles Darwin, A Monograph on the Sub-Class Cirripedia, with Figures of All the Species: The Lepadidae; or Pedunculated Cirripedes (London: Ray Society, 1851) and Charles Darwin, A Monograph on the Sub-Class Cirripedia, with Figures of All the Species: The Balanidae or Sessile Cirripedes; the Verrucidae etc., etc., etc. (London: Ray Society, 1854) for over a thousand pages dedicated to a taxonomical study of barnacles. See also Stott, Darwin and the Barnacle.
Kovats recalled how her choice of subject matter surprised other people she encountered on the Enchanted Isles. Barnacles do not immediately appear to possess the same allure or exude the same sort of nonhuman charisma as much of the islands’ other wildlife, such as the giant tortoises or blue-footed boobies that fascinated Marcus Coates. In fact they seem to be the very antithesis of the creatures that have thus far been explored in relation to wonder. ‘Anthropomorphic cuddly charisma’ was discussed in relation to the panda and the tiger depicted in Art Orienté Objet’s knitted trophies, but barnacles seem to possess charisma of a different kind. Indeed, nonhuman charisma is multi-faceted. Barnacles exude what Jamie Lorimer has termed ‘feral charisma’, thanks to their far-from-human appearance and behaviour, calling forth an ethics ‘grounded in a sense of respect for the other and for its complexity, autonomy, and wildness’. Since nonhuman charisma can occasion the affective response of wonder, the feral charisma of barnacles has the capacity to inspire this response, and in fact it often has. For instance, Isabella Rossellini expressed her wonder at these creatures by comically enacting barnacle sex in Green Porno. She observed how amongst the 1,220 barnacle species there are various ways of reproducing. One is via the use of a disproportionally large penis, arising due to the creatures’ stationery existence on the rock face, and another occurs by male larvae descending into a female barnacle shell and degenerating, or metamorphosing, into a ‘sexual organ’ with the sole purpose of supplying sperm. In relation to barnacle reproduction, Charles Darwin also recognised how certain parasitic male barnacles ‘are wonderfully unlike the hermaphrodites or females to which they belong […] essentially […] mere bags of spermatozoa’, and exclaimed how one species has ‘a wonderfully elongated probosciformed penis’. Darwin frequently expressed his wonder at the anatomy and physiology of barnacles, fascinated and apparently transfixed by his study of these creatures over an eight-year period. The writer George Levine recognised how:

99 Lorimer, ‘Nonhuman Charisma’, p. 920.
100 Jamie Lorimer has classified various strains of nonhuman charisma as aesthetic, ecological and corporeal noting that it is relational and dependent on the context and individuals involved in the encounter, see Lorimer, Wildlife in the Anthropocene, p. 40.
101 Lorimer, ‘Nonhuman Charisma’, p. 920.
103 Darwin, A Monograph on the Sub-Class Cirripedia, with Figures of All the Species: The Lepadidae; or Pedunculated Cirripedes, p. 291; and Darwin, A Monograph on the Sub-Class Cirripedia, with Figures of All the Species: The Balanidae (or Sessile Cirripedes); The Verrucidae, p. 584.
the intensity, precision, and excitement of the technical language testify to a scientist who finds in the world’s least creatures grounds for wonder. […] Inside the minute sac of a microscopic organism is “a marvelous assemblage of beings.” And the only way to convey the marvel is to be as precise and particular, as scientific as possible. So while, on the one hand, Darwin doesn’t hesitate to structure the whole cluster of details inside a frame of wonder, those details are piled on with a remarkable care that requires Darwin the writer to step back from himself and his own wonder.104

Such a response is also prominent in Kovats’s encounters with barnacles, arising through the detailed observations required by the act of drawing. According to Levine, Darwin’s engagement with barnacles involved ‘detailed and intense observations’ in which ‘dissected barnacles became objects of wonder; even in their minutest details’ as ‘tiny and not very beautiful organisms […] which, in their very apparent insignificance, evoke wonder also’.105 Kovats appears to be likewise enthralled by these creatures, fascinated to such a degree that she found herself repeatedly drawing them on Galápagos. Of the act of drawing itself, Kovats has said:

The mental state when making drawings is most commonly one of total absorption, a withdrawing and removal of attention from anything other than the drawing; the sense of draw meaning to extract. The world is reduced to the piece of paper and becomes a depository for thought, speculation, observation and projection.106

This being the case, the very process of drawing barnacles on Galápagos demanded a similar attentive observation that is so central to Darwinian wonder.

Kovats was clearly affected by barnacles’ place in Darwin’s research to the extent that she devoted her time to these organisms during her residency on the islands. Both artist and naturalist were enchanted by their encounters with these creatures, but for Kovats barnacles gained additional significance due to their link to Darwin and his work, becoming as much cultural artefacts as natural organisms in this context. The category-defying character of barnacles adds to their capacity to evoke wonder due to their perceived ambiguity. Kovats herself has described barnacles as ‘between biology

104 Levine, p. 218.
105 Ibid, pp. 147 and 219.
and geology’, ‘half animal, half rock’, and as ‘in between animals and landscape’. The liminal in-between state the artist attributed to barnacles becomes visually apparent through *Colony* (2010), a drawing depicting an island-shaped cluster of these creatures, which is reminiscent of an ink drawing Kovats made as part of her *Mineralogy Series* (2005) (figures 80 and 81). In both drawings, similar circular forms cover the paper’s white surface, but in *Colony* the shaded areas are inverted, revealing the ridges of the barnacle shells, which only become apparent upon close inspection. The visual similarity of these works on paper, one representing barnacles and the other, minerals, serves to reinforce the verbal description Kovats offers of barnacles as ‘half animal, half rock’ when expressing why she finds them so fascinating.

This liminal status of barnacles is further explored by Kovats in *Colony* (2012), a sculpture made from a cluster of barnacles painted white with gesso, which the artist gathered together from a sustainable source (figure 82). The gypsum and chalk-based gesso covering these crustacean shells reiterates the ambiguous in-between state that Kovats finds so intriguing about barnacles — ‘between biology and geology’ — since the carapaces of these creatures are covered with a geologically derived material. Philip Hoare has written about wildlife becoming landscape in relation to Kovats’s research on the Uffington White Horse, a Bronze Age chalk drawing embedded in an Oxfordshire hillside. This idea resurfaces in *Colony* (2012), since the shape of the sculpture is reminiscent of a rock or island mass and because the shells comprising this sculpture are covered with a chalk-based substance derived from lithic material.

Jane Bennett wrote of how she found herself ‘responding with wonder to metamorphing creatures’. It therefore seems notable that the barnacles in Kovats’s work have undergone another metamorphosis, quite apart from the one involved in their reproduction. They have also been metamorphosed into a sculptural work of art. What Kovats found so compelling about barnacles was their natural-cultural constitution when viewed through the lens of Darwin’s work. By using barnacles to create her sculpture, Kovats has mirrored this conflation of natural organism and cultural artefact in her own work. As an artwork, *Colony* offers one of the ‘more obviously mediated sources of wonder’ that Louise Economides has suggested works to draw attention to ‘natural wonders that would otherwise remain invisible, heightening rather than

107 Kovats, *We are Always Slow in Admitting Any Great Change of Which We do Not See the Intermediate Steps*; and Kovats, ‘Tania Kovats’, p. 106.
diminishing our appreciation of what is truly astonishing therein’. Barnacles are cryptic and tiny creatures that might not readily ignite curiosity or inspire wonder when encountered in situ. Yet Darwin through his scientific work and Kovats through her artistic practice, draw attention to the fascinating and wonder-inducing characteristics of the creatures that lie beneath these shells. By elevating her sculpture from the floor on a small black stand, Kovats offers these barnacles up to viewers as objects worthy of contemplation.

The title of Colony is a significant part of the work. Kovats frequently uses concise, descriptive titles as TREE demonstrates. However, Colony is slightly different in this regard since it has a double meaning. Over time, barnacles form colonies on rocks or other surfaces such as whale skin. Kovats’s sculpture recalls one such cluster. On one register, Colony is a collective noun to describe this mass of barnacles. However, this title also politicises the work in the context of the aims of the residency programme, since ‘colony’ is additionally descriptive of an aspect of human society, defined as:

A settlement in a new country; a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up.111

‘Colony’, in the context of a residency and subsequent exhibition about the Galápagos Islands, refers to the migration and settlement of the Ecuadorian people who have moved to the archipelago and the scientists who inhabit these Enchanted Isles to profit from, and study, the unique wildlife respectively.112 The result of this influx of human inhabitants and visitors, as Marcus Coates observed in Human Report, is a massive conflict of interest between the humans and wildlife inhabiting the islands and the complex ecological and social issues arising as a result. Kovats said of Colony:

The scientific community live in a state of tension, with the growing population of the Galapagos [sic] that is swelling with people from mainland Ecuador in search of a higher quality of life. […] the town already has overcrowded shanty or slum areas on its peripheries. There are limited resources on the islands — very little fresh water for example, and many restrictions regarding fishing or

110 Economides, p. 155.
111 Oxford English Dictionary [online].
movement. These restrictions are often ignored and extremely complicated for the scientific community to negotiate and enforce. It was like seeing the world’s problems in microcosm. Colony came out of that.\textsuperscript{113}

By using barnacles to address this topic, Kovats’ work has anthropomorphic overtones, using a sculptural colony of these organisms to refer to the human population on Galápagos. Through her use of anthropomorphic language Kovats expresses further affinities with Charles Darwin. Darwin’s theory of evolution by means of natural selection is predicated upon a certain continuity existing between humans and other animals. Accordingly, much of Darwin’s writing is aligned with this idea, particularly \textit{The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals} (1872). In this text, Darwin strove to demonstrate that human emotions have a basis in the expressions and emotions of nonhuman animals, attempting to chart the evolutionary continuum between them.\textsuperscript{114} In this book, and indeed more widely in his writing, Darwin deliberately used anthropomorphism, frequently making recourse to human feelings and behaviours to describe that of other animals.\textsuperscript{115} Eileen Crist described Darwin’s anthropomorphism as a ‘language of continuity’, revealing how this naturalist did not necessarily intend to sentimentalise or be reductive towards wildlife through this mode of relating, but instead support his evolutionary theory.\textsuperscript{116} Crist recalled how Darwin wrote of insects expressing ‘anger, terror, jealousy, and love’, how he wrote that ‘Bees express certain emotions, as of anger’ and that he suggested the voice of birds ‘serves to express various emotions, such as distress, fear, anger, triumph, or mere happiness’.\textsuperscript{117} The prevalence of anthropomorphism in Darwin’s writing is made indisputable through the numerous other examples that Crist extracted from his texts.\textsuperscript{118} George Levine suggested that this anthropomorphic engagement with organisms resulted in Darwin ‘imagining’ his ‘way into the animal’s mind’.\textsuperscript{119} Levine positioned Darwin’s anthropomorphism as ‘an act of re-enchantment’, which paradoxically arose through the very same secular and scientific conditions that Max

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Charles Darwin, \textit{The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals} (London: John Murray, 1872).
\textsuperscript{116} Crist, ‘Darwin’s Anthropomorphism’, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., pp. 14–15.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., pp. 14–16.
\textsuperscript{119} Levine, p. 197.
Weber positioned at the heart of modern disenchantment. In this way Darwin shifted enchantment’s focus from the divine, to creaturely life on Earth. As the art historian Diana Donald has suggested:

Darwin had demythologised nature, and destroyed belief in any final causes working through it. Yet he expressed a sense of wonder in contemplating the prolific, beautiful, infinitely varied, delicate and complex life forms which the undirected course of natural selection had produced — a sense of wonder that the twenty-first-century observer may share.

Indeed, like Darwin, Kovats uses the language of anthropomorphism. Yet whilst Darwin attempted to understand wildlife through recourse to this mode of relating, for Kovats it is the other way around — the barnacle encrusted Colony is used to make an analogy between this wildlife and the human society on Galápagos and even to critique it. As such, the work employs the use of metaphor — a tactic Levine claimed Darwin similarly deployed to domesticate controversial ideas and register his wonder. John Berger suggested that a metaphoric relation between humans and nonhuman animals reveals both their similarities and differences, claiming that animal metaphor allows for the description of what would otherwise be ‘indescribable’. ‘Colony’ is at once anthropomorphic and metaphoric, and as a result, far from what Ron Broglio described as ‘the move from metaphor to metamorphosis’, which characterises Deleuze and

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120 Ibid., pp. 23–24 and 227.
121 Diana Donald, ‘The Arctic Fantasies of Briton Riviere: Polar Bears, Wilderness and Notions of the Sublime’, Tate Papers, 13 (2010) <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/13/arctic-fantasies-of-edwin-landseer-and-briton-riviere-polar-bears-wilderness-and-notions-of-the-sublime> [accessed 12 January 2016] (para. 17 of 17). Significantly, considering Donald’s allusion to the twenty-first century viewer, Levine equated Darwin’s wonder to enchantment as articulated by Jane Bennett, stating: ‘[Darwin] is a celebrant of the natural world who is awed and enchanted by the complexity, intelligence, and variety of the lower animals. […] The “model” Darwin I invoke […] is the enchanted one […] who found in nature the emotional and spiritual resources to give value to life, the sublime multiplicity, complexity, and unique individuality that creates that “mood of fullness, plenitude, or liveliness” Jane Bennett identifies as characteristic of modern enchantment’, see Levine, p. 69.
122 As Gillian Beer observed in relation to Darwin’s On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection (1859), a text she noted is marked by an absence of ‘man’ from the discussions, ‘[w]hen man does appear, it is to serve as the second term in metaphors — for example, illuminating the social behaviour of ants by an ironic glance at man’s class-organization’, see Gillian Beer, ‘The Face of Nature’: Anthropomorphic Elements in the Language of The Origin of Species’, in Languages of Nature: Critical Essays on Science and Literature, ed. by Ludmilla Jordanova (London: Free Association Books, 1986), pp. 207–243 (p. 216). In addition, Beer stated that: ‘Despite his [Darwin’s] decision to exclude man from his discussion, the tendency of his argument is to range man alongside all other forms of life. The multivocal nature of metaphor allows him to express, without insisting on, kinship […]’, ibid., p. 219.
123 Levine, pp. 233–234.
124 Berger, pp. 16 and 19.
Guattari’s model of ‘becoming’.

Nevertheless, anthropomorphic metaphor destabilises discrete notions of human and nonhuman animal, since a barnacle colony and a human society are conceived on common terms. Here anthropomorphism works to blur and disrupt the enchanting border placed between humans and other animals. Frans de Waal recognised that ‘[a]nthropomorphic metaphors are attempts to make sense of the world around us’ and goes on to claim (noting his debt to Mary Midgley) that ‘without reference to human experience […] there is no human understanding’.

Yet this does not have to result in an uncritical flattening out of the differences between humans and wildlife. Levine made this very point when he noted that Darwin’s enchanted anthropomorphism:

depends not on anthropocentric imaginations of the world but on anthropomorphic, imaginatively metaphorical impulses to understand it and love it, precisely in its refusal to be like us, whoever “we” may be.

Kovats’s Colony (2012) harnesses both difference and similarity. It at once stresses the otherness of barnacles by presenting the baron shells of other-than-human wildlife, whilst at the very same time equating barnacle colonies with the non-indigenous human community on Galápagos. The work is therefore capable of evoking wonder and generosity. Like Jane Bennett and Marguerite La Caze, George Levine recognised the role enchantment can play in creating attachments that propel generosity and lead to the cultivation of an ethical sensibility. Indeed Kovats’s use of dead wildlife shells has the capacity to prompt such a response in relation to the future of life on these islands.

The barnacles comprising Colony are dead, and their remains in the form of their shells are painted white to evoke a ghostly quality. The fact that this sculpture is made from the remnants of deceased wildlife, coupled with the title and sentiment behind the work, projects a negative future for the fate of the Galápagos Islands and their inhabitants. This spectral quality of marine organisms to indicate wider environmental and ecological concerns was a strategy also used by Mark Dion in his Bone Coral (Phantom Museum) (2011) (figure 83). In this work, three sculptures representing bleached corals had been fabricated from papier maché and displayed under bell jars, presenting a similar vision of creaturely lifelessness. These baron white corals evoke

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125 Broglio, p. 105.
126 de Waal, p. 263.
127 Levine, p. 251.
128 Ibid., p. 254.
129 Tania Kovats in ‘Tania Kovats at 5 Howick Place’, (para. 4 of 6).
the bleaching events brought about through climate change, pollution and the rise of sea temperatures, which result in the death of corals and the subsequent dwindling of these usually thriving and biodiverse coral reef ecosystems. As Marion Endt-Jones argued, the stand-in materials used to represent these corals contribute to the environmental message behind the work: no coral was harmed in the creation of this piece. However, the sombre tone of Colony (2012) emanates from its materiality and the traces of death that afflict this sculpture, which is made from the empty shells of dead barnacles. The work invokes a dark ecology that is both dreadful and full of wonder thanks to the melancholic uncertainty it breeds regarding our interconnections with other beings, which are not always positively configured and do not always turn out well.

Discussing Kovats’s interest in the metamorphosis of rocks and landscapes, the critic Ian Hunt wrote about how striking it is to realise that rocks themselves are not fixed, but instead subject to transformation. Indeed, other than abrasion or metamorphic processes, another way rock might change is by being colonised by barnacles, which cluster ever more tightly to its surface. In Colony (2012), however, this process of transformation is halted. No more barnacles will arrive to perpetuate this change and the sculpture is forever frozen in this particular formation. Jane Bennett and George Levine both suggested that the fluidity and mobility of metamorphosis lead to enchantment. Yet the unchanging sculptural state of Colony need not disenchant, since the deathly aura afflicting the work militates against this. As Bennett and Levine both observed, enchantment can arise even in the face of the world’s ‘tragic complexity’ and a feeling of awe can transpire to be either awesome or awful. The Galápagos exhibition co-curator Bergit Arends observed that on the islands the ‘experience of wonder and beauty is breathtaking, but a sense of tragedy also pervades some of the works’ produced during the residency programme. Levine wrote about how horror is an inextricable part of Darwinian wonder. He observed how ‘Darwin describes the natural world as an object of awe, wonder, and terror’, and further suggested that despite the tragic and premature death of his eldest daughter,

132 ‘Dark Ecology’ is Timothy Morton’s term, see for instance, Morton, The Ecological Thought, p. 17.
134 Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 10; and Levine, p. 25.
135 Arends, ‘Why I Won’t Go to the Galápagos’, p. 43.
which profoundly affected this naturalist, Darwin was still able to wonder at the natural world and its processes. Consequently, Levine, like Bennett, does not advocate an enchanted way of life, but suggests life might instead be peppered with ‘moments of enchantment’, arguing that Darwin's preoccupied study of barnacles offered an opportunity for the naturalist to try and lose himself in the wonder of his work in the difficult years following his daughter’s death.

**Deathly Wonder and Devon Roadkill**

Tania Kovats revealed that her Galápagos residency came at a ‘very dark time in her personal landscape’ since she was caught in a ‘horrific death sandwich’. Just three weeks before her trip, Kovats’s best friend died, and three weeks upon her return, her father passed away. That this unquestionably harrowing time directly informed the work Kovats made as a result of the residency programme must remain conjecture.

However, it is interesting to observe in relation to this autobiographical insight that death, and indeed dead wildlife, surfaced again in another work Kovats produced when she returned from the archipelago.

With creatures living, giving birth and dying in close proximity to human observers, Kovats claimed that she found the closeness and intimacy possible with wildlife on Galápagos shocking. The artist reflected on how this contrasts with the experience of observing wildlife in the UK where ‘you have to sit very quietly and wait for an animal to do something for hours’, or gain equivalent insights by watching animals via the mediated images of wildlife films. Kovats compared the intimacy of her encounters with nonhuman animal life and death in Galápagos with finding roadkill back home in Britain, suggesting that it allowed for a similar proximity to wildlife. Upon her return to the UK after the residency, Kovats made *Badger (roadkill)* (2011) (figure 84). For this work the artist collected a dead badger from the roadside in Devon where she lives. This creature was taxidermied and subsequently presented directly on the gallery floor during the touring Galápagos exhibitions. Whilst most taxidermists strive to enliven wildlife, applying both their skill and knowledge of animal anatomy and behaviour

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136 Levine, p. 237.
137 Ibid., pp. 205 and 230; and Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, p. 10.
138 Kovats, *We are Always Slow in Admitting Any Great Change of Which We do Not See the Intermediate Steps*.
139 In relation to Eva Hesse, Briony Fer has noted how the death of the artist’s parents undoubtedly caused an extreme sense of loss, but was cautious to observe how a biographical reading might limit an understanding of a work, see Briony Fer, ‘Bordering on Blank: Eva Hesse and Minimalism’, *Art History*, 3.17 (1994), 424–449 (pp. 436–437).
140 Kovats, *We are Always Slow in Admitting Any Great Change of Which We do Not See the Intermediate Steps*.
141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
through their craft, Kovats’s badger has been prepared to look the same as it did on the roadside — this woodland creature was mounted to look as it did in death, and not as it might have done in life. There has been no attempt to reanimate this particular animal, which according to Kovats, is ‘doubly dead’ — a doubling that becomes especially poignant considering the artist’s own dual losses.\textsuperscript{143} In fact the encounter with Kovats’s work prompts viewers to reflect upon what has been described as ‘the most awe-inspiring phenomenon of human life: its end’.\textsuperscript{144}

Considering that wonder arises in the face of the unknown, when encountering something that cannot be assimilated into the realm of knowledge, thinking about death provides ideal circumstances for it to arise. As the philosopher Françoise Dastur claimed, death presents the ‘unthinkable’, the ultimate unknown that only becomes possible by encountering the death of another.\textsuperscript{145} Alistair Robinson concurred, claiming that: ‘There can be no more universal a form of ‘nonknowledge’ than the knowledge of what happens after life ends’.\textsuperscript{146} The impossibility of conclusively understanding death, and of subjectively experiencing what it means to die until the moment it occurs, results in all of our imaginings remaining conjecture, inconclusive — by their very nature, wonderful. Wonder’s propensity to emerge in the face of darker experiences has already been explored as dreadful wonder. Indeed, this resurfaces as a species of deathly wonder in relation to the roadkill badger body in Kovats’s work. With regard to the human corpse, Dastur claimed that it ‘occupies a disconcerting intermediate position between persons and things’.\textsuperscript{147} The same can be said of taxidermy, which inhabits a space between wildlife and thing — what Rachel Poliquin described as ‘an animal-thing that […] allows you to get closer than most animals would allow, if they were still alive’.\textsuperscript{148} Kovats’s taxidermied badger affords a close encounter with wildlife like roadkill does. But unlike on Galápagos, where wildlife has no fear of humans and close encounters become possible as a result, conversely in the UK it seems that death is one way these close encounters are brought about.

Roadkill is a destructive result of humans and wildlife colliding, performing an enchanting crossing as a result of its naturalcultural constitution. Its potency in this regard has led to roadkill appearing as the material and subject matter in the work of a

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Robinson, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{147} Dastur, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{148} Poliquin, \textit{The Breathless Zoo}, p. 39.
number of other contemporary artists, including Abbas Akhavan, Peggy Atherton and Bob Braine. The ways these artists utilise roadkill in their work is varied, yet each artist draws attention to what the curator and art historian Helen Molesworth has described as ‘the banality that so many of us would rather ignore’. Kovats’s badger, which is presented lying on its side with its mouth slightly agape implores us, as the curator Bergit Arends stated in her catalogue essay for Galápagos (quoting Alain de Botton): ‘To notice what we have already seen’. Yet Kovats’s work is complex. Arends observed how Kovats’s use of a badger also speaks to the controversial and emotive issue of badger culling, which is currently taking place in the UK under the premise of preventing the spread of bovine TB, despite inconclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of this approach. Kovats’s badger therefore alludes to wildlife management programmes in Britain, which recall those taking place across the Galápagos archipelago, such as the goat cull initiated to eradicate this invasive species, which was disrupting ecosystems by decimating vegetation.

Through this work by Kovats, the Gulbenkian Galápagos Artists’ Residency Programme realises one of its principal objectives, since the artist was so affected by what she encountered on the islands that these ideas followed her home to be explored afresh in a local context. The work opens the door on to complex issues surrounding the ways humans and other animals are entangled, demonstrating how attitudes vary depending on the particular priorities, geographies and ecologies at stake. Kovats’s move from observing barnacles on Galápagos to focusing on a badger native to her home county echoes the move Darwin made from studying the exotic flora and fauna during his voyage on the Beagle, to the quiet studies he continued to make on barnacles and local wildlife upon his return. Sustaining her wonder at wildlife when she returned from her travels, Kovats recalls Darwin, whose work continued from his home in Kent but never became less wonderful as a result of being familiar and close at hand.

150 Arends, ‘Why I Won’t Go to the Galápagos’, p. 45.
152 Arends, ‘Why I Won’t Go to the Galápagos’, p. 45.
Where Does Wonder Lead?

Bergit Arends speculated on whether the work produced by the artists as part of this residency programme would ‘provoke change’, and wondered if people would ‘be inspired to take action’.\(^{153}\) For viewers, Arends suggested that this action may be ‘as simple as balancing our choices by opting for a low-carbon holiday in the British Isles rather than travelling ever more egotistically to every continent’, or even being discouraged, as she herself was, from travelling to Galápagos at all.\(^{154}\) However, many of the artists involved in the residency programme also responded differently to the world around them upon their return from the islands, or had a renewed awareness of similar issues as they arose in their immediate environment. Tania Kovats made work about local roadkill and the controversial badger TB cull. Marcus Coates had a heightened awareness of his own impact on Earth and its inhabitants more generally, recalling how:

The animal life there [on Galápagos] is so fragile, some of the islands are so small, there may be only a few hundred lizards living there, and they are the only lizards of their kind in the world. You tread on one of those lizards and you decrease the population by a considerable amount! [...] I really felt my impact on a very personal level and I felt very influential just being present there, in a lot of ways I felt I shouldn’t be there. [...] Coming back to Britain [...] it is easy to think your impact on the world is quite small. When you see it there in front of you, you see how big your impact really is, how critical the matter is and how difficult this is to sort out.\(^{155}\)

In these instances, Coates and Kovats experienced a renewed awareness regarding their impact on wildlife and habitats. Both artists explored the ways entanglements of humans and wildlife are integral to the ecology of these Enchanted Isles, but also closer to home. Moreover, wonder was shown to be at the heart of these concerns. The work these artists produced as a result of their respective Galápagos residencies was shown to give rise to various species of wonder that were ‘mirthful’, ‘Darwinian’, ‘deathly’ or an enchantment called forth by crossings, metamorphoses, becoming-animal, anthropomorphism or through the use of animal metaphor.

The philosopher Christopher Cox has observed that:

\(^{153}\) Ibid., p. 46.
\(^{154}\) Ibid., pp. 46–47.
\(^{155}\) Marcus Coates quoted in Foulds, ‘The Big Interview: Part 2: Marcus Coates’, (para. 7 of 10).
Since Darwin and ever more so today, we find ourselves in a new relationship with animals and the rest of nature. [...] the erasure or problematizing of distinctions between the human and the animal has its ethical benefits as well. If Deleuze and Guattari are right, becoming animal expands our possibilities for being and acting in the world. And [...] this process increases our sympathies with — and relationships to — our fellow creatures, who are no longer essentially other than us.\footnote{Christopher Cox: ‘Of Humans, Animals and Monsters’, in \textit{Becoming Animal: Contemporary Art in the Animal Kingdom}, ed. by Nato Thompson (North Adams, Massachusetts: MASS MoCA Publications, 2005), pp. 18–25 (p. 24).}

Accordingly, two observations regarding ethics become significant. Firstly, as Steve Baker also observed, the philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers links ethics with ‘keeping alive the sense of wonder’, with wonder for Stengers meaning ‘both to be surprised and to entertain questions’\footnote{Isabelle Stengers, ‘The Challenge of Complexity: Unfolding the Ethics of Science. In Memoriam Ilya Prigogine’, \textit{E:CO}, 1–2.6(2004), 92–99 (p. 93); and Isabelle Stengers, ‘Wondering about Materialism’, in \textit{The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism}, ed. by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), pp. 368–380 (p. 374).}. It is this state of mind that both Coates and Kovats exemplified during their time on the islands. Secondly, a comment about ethics made by Karen Barad cited in the introduction becomes particularly relevant in this context, and is therefore worth restating: ‘Ethics’, Barad suggests, ‘is [...] not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part’\footnote{Barad, p. 393.}. Barad recognises that humans are entangled with others, making Jane Bennett’s mode of enchantment all the more promising in this context. Not only is ‘[t]he experience of enchantment [...] an essential component of an ethical, ecologically aware life’, but in addition, ‘[i]n the mood of enchantment, we sense that “we” are always mixed up with “it,” and “it” shares in some of the agency we officially ascribe only to ourselves’.\footnote{Bennett, \textit{The Enchantment of Modern Life}, p. 99.}

Whilst ‘it’ for Bennett stands in for the nonhuman in the broadest sense, this should be substituted for ‘wildlife’ in this context. It follows that the works produced by Coates and Kovats with concerns for both human and nonhuman animal life and the ways these are intimately intertwined, not only provoke enchantment but also have the capacity to draw out the sort of ‘[c]ompassionate action’, which Haraway positions as so ‘crucial to an ethics of flourishing’.\footnote{Haraway, \textit{When Species Meet}, p. 134.} Indeed in his examination of the wildlife and ecologies of the Galápagos Islands, which significantly included the human life on the islands, the writer Henry Nicholls summed up these sentiments rather neatly. It is fitting to end on his
words since they demonstrate how encounters with the island life might be transformative in some way, whether artistic or otherwise:

The animals show no prejudice, no fear, but accept humans for what they are, just another species attempting to live in this inhospitable outpost. Experiencing this equanimity with nature is so moving that it has the power to alter the course of human lives, to transform the way we think about our place in the world and the way we behave towards its other inhabitants, human and non-human alike.\footnote{Nicholls, \textit{Galápagos}, p. xi.}
Conclusion

Curious Wonder for the Chthulucene!

Georges Perec’s ‘Species of Spaces’ was used as the basis for the species of wonder that have been discussed in this thesis. However, the way wildlife figures in his text is also relevant here. As has already been observed, Perec recognised how humans and other animals co-habit various spaces, albeit in different ways (‘[a]ny cat-owner will rightly tell you that cats inhabit houses much better than people do’).¹ Yet like the species of wonder that have just been examined in relation to contemporary art and visual culture, Perec also considered space by referring to representations of wildlife. Towards the end of his text, Perec encouraged his readers to ‘play with space’ by reflecting on the relationship between two different species in a quotation from the writer and satirist Jonathan Swift (1667–1745): ‘Elephants are generally drawn smaller than life size, but a flea always larger’.² Here the emphasis is not on considering space and scale in relation to these nonhuman animals themselves, but in terms of their representations as drawings. The encounter with these creatures is mediated, rather than direct, which is of course something shared by each of the case studies discussed throughout this study. In every instance, encounters with wildlife have been mediated through artistic practice via the frame of the museum, the film, the exhibition and even ‘in the field’. Accordingly, wonder has been explored in relation to representations of wildlife. Undoubtedly direct encounters with wildlife can elicit wonder, as was seen with Mark Dion’s experience of a tropical rainforest in the introduction and Coates’s and Kovats’s encounters with wildlife on the Enchanted Isles. Yet as Louise Economides has observed, ‘more obviously mediated sources of wonder’, like art for instance, can heighten ‘our appreciation of what is truly astonishing therein’.³

Tania Kovats’s barnacle works made this particularly apparent. As quiet, small and sedentary creatures, barnacles appear relatively unspectacular until one understands more about their physiology, their significant role in the work of Charles Darwin, or when prompted to consider them more deeply through striking encounters with Kovats’s contemporary artworks. It is the very mediation itself, whether scientific, cultural, or in this study, artistic, which is so integral to wonder in the face of barnacles here. Given the issues addressed by the works in this thesis, this clearly holds strategic promise. As Jane Bennett has been careful to highlight, ethics may well be based on

¹ Perec, p. 24.
² Perec quoting Jonathan Swift, ibid., p. 85.
³ Economides, p. 155.
codes and obligations, but to act on these we might need an additional affective dimension, such as wonder. The wonder of mediated encounters with wildlife in these instances of artistic practice is therefore valuable, since viewers may feel compelled to act in accordance with the issues at stake in these works.

This thesis has investigated the ethical and political possibilities ascribed to wonder in relation to a series of works, which interrogate human-animal relations particularly vividly and aim to raise awareness about various plights facing wildlife today. Although wonder has been explored as a rich and varied means to cultivate a sense of respect and responsibility towards wildlife through these instances of creative practice, my discussions have revealed that there are a few limitations to this approach. Firstly, there is always a chance wonder might arise regardless of the ethical implications of a work, as was observed in relation to bio art. It is therefore quite possible for enchanting crossings and interspecies encounters to be wonder-inducing while being ethically and morally dubious, which is clearly important to keep in mind. Furthermore, when using wonder towards ethical ends caution is needed to ensure that it neither exoticises nor excludes. In fact it transpired that wonder may even need to be paired with other sentiments to achieve its critical and transformative potential, as was revealed in relation to wonder and generosity in Green Porno.

Donna Haraway’s Chthulucene has provided a productive framework for this study, since it places entanglements of humans and other animals at the heart of how we might inhabit a fragile Earth at this critical time. It seems significant that one way in which Haraway has responded to the Chthulucene’s call is through creative writing in the form of a short story. She wrote about an imagined future world, describing the sort of creaturely co-habitings and becomings-with that could result in multispecies flourishing. Yet the Chthulucene also demands ways of inhabiting the present moment with regards to effecting more tangible change. Indeed, many artists in this thesis were shown to be sympathetic to the Chthulucene’s rallying cry. Whether ‘knitting for good’, growing grass ‘tiger skin’ coats, inverting practices associated with animal testing and medical experimentation, performing animals via eccentric zoomorphism or critical anthropomorphism, drawing critters diligently in the wild, or drawing attention to ‘big issues’ like hunting, poaching, xenotransplantation, overfishing, shark finning or

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4 Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 3.
anthropogenic habitat change and even loss, these artists are attempting to represent wildlife with both wonder and respect.

Notably, unlike the examples described from the 1960s and 1970s, these contemporary artists often purposefully eschew the use of live animals and sometimes even materials that are derived from nonhuman animals. Wildlife is instead represented through various alternative strategies, which include fabricating nonhuman animals from surrogate, more ethical materials and even instances where artists perform these nonhuman animals themselves. The reason this latter solution might be beneficial in the Anthropocene, an epoch productively reconfigured here as the Chthulucene, is made clear by Davis and Turpin who claimed that: ‘If we are to learn to adapt in this world, we will need to do so with all the other creatures; seeing from their perspective is central to re-organizing our knowledge and perceptions’. The crucial benefit of this, as Jane Bennett has suggested, is that ‘[b]y becoming more responsive to other material forms with which one shares space, one can better enact the principle of minimizing harm and suffering’. Many instances where artists were shown performing nonhuman animals have been described as enacting the wonder of deranged theatrics. The artists adopting this tactic were tackling a wide range of concerns, but they were united in anthropomorphising with a vengeance. Yet rather than being reductive or problematic, I have tried to show how anthropomorphism is actually a rather multifaceted and complex phenomenon. Discussions have highlighted how it encapsulates various ways of relating to wildlife and even harbours strategic promise when deployed in artistic practice. For instance, critical anthropomorphism emerged as a way to evoke a species of generous wonder, where differences can be respected at the same time similarities are recognised, as was shown to be the case in Isabella Rossellini’s *Green Porno*, Wang Luyan’s *The Net* and Marcus Coates’s *Intelligent Design*. The ‘botched’, comic and makeshift aesthetic where attempts to visualise wildlife seem purposefully deranged, de-arranged and in disarray, is one way many of these artworks are rendered so striking to viewers, calling forth the ‘sharp novelty’ that Howard L. Parsons placed as a central catalyst for wonder. Often these works possess a visual provisionality that testifies to the artists’ inconclusive endeavours to perform and enter into the minds of nonhuman animals and also acknowledges the limits of these artists’ abilities to represent wildlife without error. This visual approach invokes the sort of ‘ongoingness’, which Haraway positions as involving ‘nurturing, or inventing, or discovering, or somehow cobbled together ways

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7 Davis and Turpin, p. 13.
9 Parsons, p. 85.
for living and dying well with each other in the tissues of an earth whose very habitability is threatened’. The open, tentative and clearly representational character of these works leaves space for wonder. But this approach also speaks to the difficulties encountered by artists as they ‘stay with the trouble’ of trying to best represent wildlife at this critical time.

By using surrogate, more ethical materials, many of the artists discussed recognise that no human use of a nonhuman animal is without consequence. However, when materials derived from wildlife were used, artists also responded thoughtfully, as seen through Kovats’s roadkill badger and sustainably sourced barnacles. In this way, these artists might not always arrive at ideal ethical alternatives free from death or violence, but they have been thoughtful about what is at stake when choosing the materials to use in their work. As Haraway made clear, the Chthulucene insists that ‘[t]he devil is truly in the details’ and these artists respond with due diligence. Given the thoughtful and ethical ways these artists represent wildlife, they seem well aligned with the Chthulucene. Yet in other ways they differ markedly. While Haraway’s proposition is definitely a playful one, it is not overly comic. Yet many of the artworks in this study have a more overt element of humour about them, which needs to be further unpacked.

Jane Bennett stated that in moments of enchantment, we feel ‘connected in an affirmative way to existence’, which encourages us ‘to give away […] time and effort on behalf of other creatures’. To work towards the flourishing of all earthly life, we need to feel like we are ‘in it together’. Yet one of the principal challenges of wonder is that when it does arise, it is primarily experienced as a subjective and individual experience. For this reason, this study theorised wonder in different ways so that it could become a methodological tool as much as a form of experience in this context. However, if these works are going to prompt change, the inherent humour of Art Orienté Objet’s knitted trophies, Marcus Coates’s Human Report and Isabella Rossellini’s Green Porno for example, is significant. Timothy Morton has claimed that comedy is ‘the genre of coexistence’ and Simon Critchley suggested ‘the simple sharing of a joke recalls to us what is shared in our life-world practices’. The comic dimension of many of these works might therefore make us feel more connected to others in moments of wonder. Furthermore, according to Critchley, humour might also

10 Haraway, Staying with the Trouble, p. 132.
11 Ibid., p. 125.
12 Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life, p. 156.
13 Marvin and McHugh, p. 8.
be strategic since 'laughter lets us see the folly of the world in order to imagine a better world in its place, and to change the situation in which we find ourselves'. This being the case, if these works are to encourage viewers to foster a responsible attitude towards wildlife and prompt the cultivation of an ethical sensibility, the combination of wonder and humour is certainly useful.

This is not to say that the issues addressed though these artworks are laughing matters, or that the artists poke fun at such serious concerns — they are clearly sincere when it comes to the issues at stake in their work. Each of the works discussed criticises an aspect of human behaviour towards wildlife, but does so with a light touch and sometimes even with what appears as a sort of strategically deployed flippancy to engage, rather than ostracise viewers, and mobilise change. One need only recall Coates as booby and the comic approach used by the artist to broach difficult issues and uncomfortable truths on Galápagos, to see how this tactic is useful to artists. Not only this, but humour might offer a way to help us conceive of what might otherwise seem unfathomable, whether this be huge swaths of species becoming extinct at the hands of humans, climate change and human presence radically altering and even destroying habitats, or the impossibility of experiencing the world from the perspective of another. As seen with Coates’s work, a sense of the comic can deflate the tension in these kinds of circumstances and even make them more approachable. The environmental philosopher Val Plumwood made this line of thinking abundantly clear. Whilst canoeing in Australia, Plumwood had the terrifying experience of being attacked and death-rolled by a saltwater crocodile. In a book outlining her experience and the scholarly reflections it brought about, she observed the difficulty of thinking about oneself in terms of food for other animals. But somewhat surprisingly given her experience, she did so by including mention of two Gary Larsen cartoons, one where crocodiles relish their human dinner (‘That was marvellous! No hair, no hooves, no hide, just white, soft and succulent’) and another where a pair of crocodiles watch some nearby tourists while one reptile says to the other: ‘They look disgusting, but I believe they’re very good for you’. Plumwood claimed that these cartoons ‘poke fun’ at the human tendency to conceive of oneself as separate from the rest of the animal kingdom. However, the point I am trying to make here is that in this instance comedy not only performs a fundamental role in deflating human superiority as Plumwood suggests, but it also seems to work to diminish the horror of a simply unimaginable experience in a way that renders it possible to think about.

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15 Critchley, On Humour, p. 17.
17 Ibid., pp. 17–18.
Considering these observations, it is significant that Timothy Morton has noted that there are ‘different kinds of laughter on each level of ecological awareness’, which might be shameful, guilty or uneasy for instance. In this way there are species of humour as much as there are species of wonder, and importantly considering the main concerns of the works in this thesis, these need not always be joyful. For Morton, it is only after delving down into the dark and tragic layers of ecological awareness that ‘an anarchic, comedic sense of coexistence’ might evolve — after the tragedy comes the comedy. This is something apparently mirrored in a number of the works that have been discussed, which tackle ecological and environmental crises as well as the various difficulties involved in human relationships with wildlife.

Runette Kruger developed a species of mirthful wonder which she believed offered subversive possibilities, but my hunch given Morton’s comments and the issues preoccupying the artists in this thesis, is that this sort of wonder-imbued humour might instead have a slightly more mirthless tenor. These works are not always laugh-out-loud funny (Rossellini may be an exception here), but they can at the very least prompt a smile. Critchley’s work on smiling therefore becomes particularly helpful, since according to this philosopher not only is smiling a quiet and reserved expression of humour, but it ‘is the mark of the eccentricity of the human situation’. Exercises of decentring and the deranged theatrics of our encounters with wildlife have been one eccentric aspect shared by many of the works examined here. Certainly, what one finds comic is subjective just as wonder is. There is also no guarantee that a joke is always shared in a way that can bring about the solidarity that Critchley and Morton speak of, because there is always a butt of the joke. Nevertheless, this does offer some promise in the context of the works in this thesis that seem to use humour as a tool. The transformative character of wonder and humour therefore has the capacity to be heightened when experienced simultaneously. Indeed it seems significant that when Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park mined the etymology of wonder and wonders, they found them to have roots in ‘smile’. Like La Caze’s useful work on generosity, this observation starts to speculate on the benefits of combining wonder with other affective responses or sentiments when promoting compassionate action and ethical behaviour. Humour, like generosity, can play a role here.

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19 Ibid., pp. 145 and 160.
21 See Daston and Park, p. 16, where they stated in relation to wonder that: ‘In Latin, the emotion itself was called admiratio and the objects, mirabilia, miracula, or occasionally ammiranda. These terms, like the verb miror and the adjective mirus, seem to have their roots in an Indo-European word for “smile”; see also Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, p. 5, who also observed this.
Of course not all of the works that have been discussed are humorous, but another element that unites many of them is that in most instances live animals do not feature at all. One might ask how the agency of wildlife can be taken seriously in light of this absence. Vinciane Despret claimed that ‘enchantment arises by the grace of the attunement between living beings’. Yet if one were to be critical of these works, it could be argued that on Despret’s terms at least, enchantment cannot be realised since quite simply, in most instances live wildlife is not even there. Yet this absence often seems to be deliberate, part of an approach consciously adopted by practitioners to speak to the issues at stake in their work. Art Orienté Objet’s *Polar Trash* (2010) shows this in action. The film documents the artists’ expedition to Spitsbergen in Svalbard, where the pair travelled in search of a polar bear footprint in the snow. Their intention was to collect and preserve a frozen trace of this vulnerable wild animal. In the corner of the film footage, the artists replaced the time code with a counter clocking up the massive eight metric tonnes of carbon emissions resulting from their endeavour, which the artists offset by tree planting. Once back in France, the footprint, which had been carefully cut from the ice on location in Spitsbergen, was put on display in a freezer cabinet and entitled *The Ecological Footprint* (2010) (figure 85). The absurdity of the work was that a massive carbon footprint was produced to preserve just a trace of this vulnerable species in the form of a frozen one. It highlighted the precarity of polar bears in the face of climate change, since this unstable imprint could melt if not carefully managed. In fact due to a mishap in the gallery, this was the work’s eventual fate. The footprint disappeared, mirroring the worst case scenario for the species, whose numbers are set to decline as their habitats melt away. The precarious frozen footprint, which did ultimately — if unintentionally — melt, comments on climate change, rising temperatures, shrinking sea ice and the decline of arctic wildlife this will effect. The work additionally brings forth the uncomfortable realisation that human activities are implicated in bringing this about. Poignantly, this polar bear footprint seemed to be quite hard for the artists to find and the absence of the actual bear in this work speaks to their scarcity. The lack of living wildlife in many contemporary artworks is often a conscious decision made on the part of artists to make a similar point.

There are no simple solutions to the questions I began this thesis with, but it remains important to ask: what tangible change can these artworks really bring about in the current ecological state of play? Any such impact would be extraordinarily difficult to quantify without some sort of empirical study, which has not been the point of this thesis. Yet it is interesting to consider how practitioners themselves have reflected on

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22 Despret, p. 4.
The curator Bergit Arends was shown to question what the Gulbenkian Galápagos Artists’ Residency Programme could achieve in terms of concrete change. She speculated that at the very least, viewers might be dissuaded from visiting these fragile Enchanted Isles, lest they contribute to the issues that perpetuate their plight.24 In a similar vein, Margaret Wertheim, a co-founder of the international participatory craft and conservation project The Crochet Coral Reef, acknowledged the limits of her and her twin sister’s endeavour, stating ‘[o]ur efforts alone can’t “save” coral reefs’.25 However, Wertheim maintained that the resultant reef ‘installations may encourage viewers to stop for a moment and think about the power of little things’.26 The crochet coral reefs emphasise that big things can be achieved through collaboration, with each participant playing a small but fundamental part to the overall project, producing a single crocheted coral to contribute to the larger reef installation. The project highlights the cumulative possibility of the small acts of individuals and the meditative act of crafting provides space to reflect on the issues at stake in this work. As such, it invokes a similar craftivist approach to Art Orienté Objet’s knitted hunting trophies and Ruth Marshall’s knitted pelts. Finally, Tania Kovats orientated her response to this quandary towards her role as a visual artist more specifically. She stated: ‘I think artists make very good witnesses. I don’t know if they’re good change agents, but I think they are really good witnesses. And sometimes you have to be a responsible witness’.27 This comment highlights the visual orientation of artistic practice and pragmatically acknowledges that this has its inevitable limits. Yet at the same time, Kovats recognises the unique position inhabited by artists who can offer a specific perspective on the issues at hand and encourage viewers to think about them in different ways. Whilst we may never be able to absolutely evaluate the ‘impact’ this sort of work has had and what change it has genuinely brought about — or indeed that these artists’ intentions correspond to how the work is received by the audience — the role of wonder in this work is clearly significant, given the ethical and political capacity it has been ascribed by various theorists and philosophers. In closing, I therefore want to further interrogate how artworks might enact tangible change through recourse to wonder in conditions conducive to the Chthulucene.

Rather than simply attend to the multifaceted character of wonder, I have further proposed that it is helpful to consider different types of wonder as ‘species’. This

24 Arends, ‘Why I Won’t Go to the Galápagos’, pp. 46–47.
26 Ibid.
terminology provided a way to attend to the slippery characteristic of wonder in order for it to be clearly defined in each given instance, but also permitted a degree of flexibility to evolve to suit the individual circumstances discussed. As such, various species have been identified and described throughout this thesis as ‘dreadful’, ‘infectious’, ‘enchanting’, ‘wild’, ‘mirthful’, ‘deathly’ and ‘Darwinian’. Yet entanglements of humans and wildlife were central to each of these. This is not an exhaustive list and undoubtedly others could be elucidated. However, by identifying these species, the aim here has been to highlight how close attention should be paid to the way wonder is invoked and discussed in relation to artistic practice — as indeed it should be in any other field — so that its critical possibilities can be harnessed to best effect. Despite being a neighbouring concept, curiosity has been kept purposefully distinct from wonder in this study. Yet thanks to its etymological roots in ‘cura’, or to care, it seems to have much to offer the ethical and political work wonder has the capacity to achieve.\textsuperscript{28} For Donna Haraway, curiosity is ‘one of the first obligations and deepest pleasures of worldly companion species’, whereby one must pay attention to other animals and respond with respect.\textsuperscript{29} Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan, Heather Swanson and Anna Tsing have also suggested how ‘[c]uriosity is an attunement to multispecies entanglement’, making it particularly valuable as a mode of relating to wildlife in this context.\textsuperscript{30} Furthermore, Jamie Lorimer claimed that curiosity might provide ‘an affective logic for attuning to the difference of wildlife’.\textsuperscript{31} It therefore deserves further attention.

The work of Marguerite La Caze has been cited here and in other contexts with regards to the role wonder and generosity can play in prompting the cultivation of an ethical sensibility, and inducing compassion towards others. However, what has not been considered in detail, here and elsewhere, is that La Caze suggested that this is not enough.\textsuperscript{32} Instead, she claimed that wonder and generosity need to be combined with respect and love if they are to be used to incite ethical or political action.\textsuperscript{33} Again, it seems wonder needs to be combined with other sentiments to optimise its capacity to provoke change. For La Caze, ‘acting with respect involves taking an interest in the lives and problems of people’ and she stressed how ‘[n]ot treating others as a mere means to my ends involves acknowledging they have their own ends’.\textsuperscript{34} Love is useful for La Caze because it ‘provides the motivation to genuinely take an interest in

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\item\textsuperscript{28} Daston and Park, pp. 273 and 434n.7.
\item\textsuperscript{29} Haraway, \textit{When Species Meet}, pp. 7 and 19.
\item\textsuperscript{30} Gan, Tsing, Swanson and Bubandt, ‘Introduction: Haunted Landscapes of the Anthropocene’, p. 11. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing has also stated that for her, curiosity is ‘the first requirement of collaborative survival in precarious times’, see Lowenhaupt Tsing, p. 2.
\item\textsuperscript{31} Lorimer, \textit{Wildlife in the Anthropocene}, p. 17.
\item\textsuperscript{32} La Caze, \textit{Wonder & Generosity: Their Role in Ethics and Politics}, p. 34.
\item\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., pp. 35–58.
\item\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p. 41.
\end{enumerate}
other’s. On these terms, love brings about respect. The reason La Caze is so keen to position love as central to ethics is because she believes ‘love as delight in others […] has great potential as an ethically motivating and transforming force’. A species of curious wonder, where curiosity is indebted to both a loving care and a genuine sense of respect, is therefore likely to be productive in this context, since it is imbued with the ingredients La Caze deems necessary to ensure wonder attains its ethical and political transformative potential.

To further explore this idea in relation to artistic practice, it is time to again turn to cats, who have figured relatively frequently in this thesis thus far. Derrida’s encounter with his feline pet was used to develop the wonder of deranged theatrics. Lewis Carroll’s protagonist Alice was vexed by her inability to understand her kitten when it always appeared to say the same thing, mewing for ‘yes’, as well as ‘no’. Marcel Broodthaers’s absurd Interview with a Cat saw the artist being much more persistent than Alice in this sort of interspecies communication and Carolee Schneemann’s Infinity Kisses photographically documented the artist kissing her pet cats. This, together with the fact that cats emerged again in relation to Wanda Wulz’s hybrid human-feline portrait Io + Gatto, Art Orienté Objet’s Félinanthropie and Marcus Coates’s Human Report where the creature figured as an invasive species, makes it apt to close with these companion species by way of conclusion. ‘Wildlife’ does after all allow for a consideration of nonhuman animals that are both wild and domestic.

While it seems that many artists have been preoccupied with cats, Steve Baker has written about philosophers and their cats, observing these creatures to be the pet of choice amongst such thinkers. Baker suggested that it was Derrida’s encounter with a real domestic cat that enabled the philosopher to become more centrally aware ‘of the otherness of all non-human animals’ noting how this ‘cat offers Derrida access to a philosophy and a self-knowledge which is neither abstract nor self-centred, but embodied and intimately related to an other’. It is precisely this sort of feline encounter that takes place in the Dutch artist Erik Van Lieshout’s The Basement (2014). Considering the instability of discrete concepts like wild and tame, it is fitting that the felines in Van Lieshout’s film are feral. The piece was commissioned as part of Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg, Russia and arose following the artist’s encounter with the cats who reside at the Hermitage Museum. Today, around seventy cats live in and

35 Ibid., p. 56.
36 Ibid.
37 For more on companion species see Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto.
around the basement of this institution, having been traditionally ‘employed’ as mousers and rat catchers since 1745, when Empress Elizabeth (Peter the Great’s daughter) declared that the biggest cats be sent to court to control the rodents.\textsuperscript{40} Today the cats work less as rat catchers and more as marketing tools, garnering both media and visitor attention. These felines have gained notoriety. Not only do they have a website dedicated to them, but they have also had articles written about them in \textit{The New Yorker} and \textit{The Telegraph} and since 2009, they are even celebrated in the annual Day of Hermitage Cats where visitors participate in various activities and spend time with the cats in the bowels of this state museum.\textsuperscript{41} Although they have no official access to the galleries, one newspaper reported how ‘[o]ccasionally, to the delight of visitors, a cat will stray beyond its remit and escape into the galleries’, beneath a comic image of a cat posed regally on a red carpet in the opulent interior of one of the museum’s rooms.\textsuperscript{42}

The Hermitage cats are cared for by volunteers and survive on donations from animal charities, cat food sponsors and contributions from the museum’s staff.\textsuperscript{43} Today they have dedicated feeding areas, a full-time carer, a feline infirmary, and are even recognised as being part of ‘the spirit of the place’ by the museum’s director.\textsuperscript{44} Prior to this more organised and institutionally endorsed approach, Maria Haltunen,\textsuperscript{45} who serves the somewhat amusing double role of being both assistant to the museum’s director and PR liaison for the cats, decided along with some colleagues to care for the strays in addition to their daily duties. They fed the cats with leftovers from the staff canteen and eventually developed a collection, ‘A rouble for a cat’, to buy them food.\textsuperscript{46} Explaining why she felt compelled to care for these strays, Haltunen said: ‘You know how it is […] You see a problem, and then you have to do something’.\textsuperscript{47} Today the museum also runs a cat adoption programme, caring for the cats until suitable homes can be found, when they are then sent off with a certificate testifying to their prestigious

\textsuperscript{42} Levonian Cole, (para. 11 of 13).
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., (para. 8 of 13).
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., (para. 7 of 13); and McGrane, (para. 8 of 17).
\textsuperscript{45} Also referred to in news articles as Maria Khaltunen.
\textsuperscript{46} McGrane, (paras. 9 and 10 of 17).
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., (para. 10 of 17).
status: ‘It is an honor to adopt a Hermitage cat’, according to Irina Popovets, one of the cats’ principal carers.⁴⁸

Erik Van Lieshout apparently experienced a similar urge to act towards the flourishing of these creatures. As a result of his commission for Manifesta 10 he spent two months working with the cats and volunteers at the Hermitage’s informal cattery. The Basement is a film documenting the artist working on what seems to be a shoestring budget to improve the home — and effectively the lives — of the cats residing in the basement of this museum in far from ideal conditions. Throughout the film, the artist and some colleagues clean the basement by sweeping the floor, washing walls, emptying urine and faeces from the cat’s cages and strip back filthy fabric from the pipes that serve as cat perches, while wearing face masks to protect themselves from the dirt and dust that has accumulated over the years. The artist and his helpers set about making cat furniture and scratching posts, painting the basement’s walls, lining surfaces with easy-to-clean linoleum, hanging digitally printed photographic portraits of the cats around the room to celebrate their personalities, re-wrapping the basement’s ducts and pipes with new fabric, cleaning and preparing a feeding station and making little wooden cat beds (figures 86–89). All the time, the cats and the volunteers look on at the changes taking place, sometimes interfering along the way, but always met with the artist’s patience. It all looks like hard and dirty work, but Van Lieshout appears upbeat. He is shown bodging and crafting what he can from the materials close at hand in a makeshift and ramshackle way, cooing at kittens, conversing with cats and attempting to charm the cattery’s volunteers as he goes about his work.

The film often presents reckless chaos as rubbish heaps are raided, pidgin language spoken and wild gestures made. All of this is shown amongst spliced in footage of animated paintings, text and photomontages of cats constructed in a playful, naïve style. ‘Fuck the Aristocats…The Hermitage Cats’, exclaims scruffy painted text at one point in the film. Having no command of the Russian language, and apparently encountering few Russians who could communicate fluently in English, Van Lieshout is shown trying to make himself understood, gesticulating and pantomiming what he needs in pursuit of his task: ‘Nnnneiooooooooowwwwwww’, roars the artist, to a puzzled looking carpenter as he tries to ask if he can borrow a jigsaw to make some furniture for the cats. A Hermitage Museum staff member shouts ‘GO HOME…HOLLAND!’ at Van Lieshout in a way that makes it difficult to tell whether she is fed up with the artist and trying to get rid of him, or simply trying to convince him that he has spent more

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than enough of his own time and labour on account of the cats, reminding him that he
does in fact have a home of his own to return to. In another scene, the artist is shown
in a meeting with the Hermitage Museum’s director, a bemused Mikhail Piotrovsky. The
artist tries to quantify the cats’ importance to the museum. ‘15–20%?’ Van Lieshout
optimistically retorts, clearly dissatisfied with Piotrovsky’s estimation of the cats’
importance at a mere 8%.

At one point in the film, Van Lieshout is shown outside the museum filming a close-up
of his own face from below as he laughs hysterically into the camera, finally saying
something about someone or something getting ‘soaked in piss’. This scene in
particular typifies the off-kilter and irregular cinematography often employed by this
artist, a technique which has elsewhere been described as Van Lieshout’s ‘eccentric
framing’. But the scene also speaks to the effect that spending two months working
on this project has had on the artist’s psychological state. For all intents and purposes,
in this film Van Lieshout seems deranged, and his aesthetic approach de-arranged as
the basement gradually moves, with moments of comic incident, from relative disarray
into a more stimulating and sanitary home for the cats. Throughout the process, the
artist appears to use comedy in a disarming way to endear himself to the people he
interacts with, as much as the audience of his resultant film.

It has been observed how Van Lieshout’s work often focuses on ‘marginalized
individuals’, ‘the encounter between self and not-self’ and the artist’s attempts to
understand, with a sort of ‘idiot-savant brilliance’, the characters who feature in his
films. Indeed it seems this is exactly the case with the Hermitage cats. Van Lieshout
works off the back of his own wonder in the face of these felines and their caretakers,
imagining himself into their minds in an attempt to make positive changes to their lives.
Van Lieshout’s artistic practice more broadly asks what art can do to effect change in
projects where the artist frequently appears as a somewhat comic protagonist. The
Basement is no exception here. It invokes a species of curious wonder on account of
the care, respect and love that Van Lieshout expresses towards these cats through his
enrichment work and by drawing attention to the wider Hermitage cat project. On La
Caze’s terms, the artist is shown clearly delighting in the cats to the extent that he

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49 Erika Balsom, ‘Chronicle of a Zuidplein Summer’, in Rotterdam Zuid—Home, ed. by Defne
Ayas, Amira Gad and Suzanne Weenink (Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary
50 In fact, the critic Adrian Searle recently referred to this aspect of Van Lieshout’s work as a
‘kind of clownishness’ at a recent artist in conversation event at the South London Gallery on 1
June 2017.
51 Tom Morton, ‘At Your Service: Tom Morton on Erik Van Lieshout’, in Erik Van Lieshout This
Can’t Go On (Stay With Me), ed. by Rein Wolfs, Mirjam Varadinis and Susanne Gaensheimer
takes an interest in their lives and feels compelled to act in order to bring about change for the better. In doing so, the artist makes a tangible difference to the lives of these cats, but he also inspires others to effect change thanks to the issues highlighted through his film. Van Lieshout recalled how when he returned to the Hermitage after the project had finished, it transpired that the museum’s director had bought a washing machine, which had been installed in the basement for the exclusive use of laundering the cats’ bed clothes — a task the volunteers previously had to carry out by hand.

These feral felines and humans are embroiled in the history of the Hermitage Museum, stretching back almost three hundred years. First keeping the Winter Palace free from rodents, sharing the experience of the siege of Leningrad, which saw to the cats’ decline, their return to the city in the wake of the siege as rat catchers, and today, where they are used, in part, as a means of promoting the museum, but also feature as central protagonists in a work of contemporary art. Van Lieshout’s film not only draws attention to how humans and these cats are entangled, but also to how they have entered into a reciprocal arrangement — the cats work as mousers/marketing tools and the museum repays this debt by providing for these creatures, while the artist pays it by improving their home. Furthermore, he additionally inspires others to work towards this end. These cats are cared for, fed, neutered, given medical checks, played with,rehomed when possible, and ultimately, loved. As a result of his own curious wonder, Van Lieshout brings about other small but significant changes to the lives of these nonhuman animals and their caretakers by enhancing the quality of their living space. Through this project, the artist explicitly explores the wonder-inducing entanglements of humans and wildlife in conditions that are brilliantly suited to the call of the Chthulucene, paying careful attention to human-cat relations in this specific context and striving towards the flourishing of these particular creatures. The frame of the museum here serves to mediate the wonder in ways that Louise Economides claimed draws closer attention to the issues addressed in the work. It gives the artist a platform and an audience with which to engage with these ideas.

This thesis has shown some of the ways wonder inhabits or illuminates encounters with contemporary art and visual culture that draws attention to the plights facing wildlife today. The artists and practitioners that have been discussed continually

52 In fact, love has been positioned as a central feature of Van Lieshout’s work, Tom Morton, p. 187.
54 McGrane, (para. 12 of 17).
55 Economides, p. 155.
question human-wildlife relations through their work and significantly, they express their care. They recognise that their actions are not without consequence and work in ways that are largely respectful and responsible towards wildlife. Regardless of the species of wonder induced or elucidated, each case study has focused on enchanting entanglements of humans and wildlife. Of course not all of these are positive, and while the artists highlight various issues such as poaching, overfishing and the destruction of fragile ecologies, there is no guarantee these works can prompt action. Yet if passions ‘make us do’, wonder, as ‘the first of all the passions’, has much to offer in the context of these instances of artistic practice. As a result, these works harbour the possibility of inciting the ethical and political change that has been tied to the act of wondering.

This study has focused on artists who treat wildlife responsibly, with wonder, generosity, respect and love. A caring species of curious wonder, as exemplified by Van Lieshout, in all its reckless, provisional aesthetic is perhaps the most apt way to describe the complex and thoughtful processes of representation taking place in this sort of work. Finally, Haraway’s slogan for the Chthulucene, ‘Stay with the Trouble!’, might be joined by another rallying cry born from the artistic endeavours that have been considered here: Curious wonder for the Chthulucene! Through their on-going attempts to get to grips with their relations with wildlife, and by recognising the difficulties involved in representing nonhuman animals at this precarious time, the contemporary practitioners just discussed all strive to meet this call.

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56 Vasalou, p. 136; and Descartes, p. 373.
57 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 117.
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