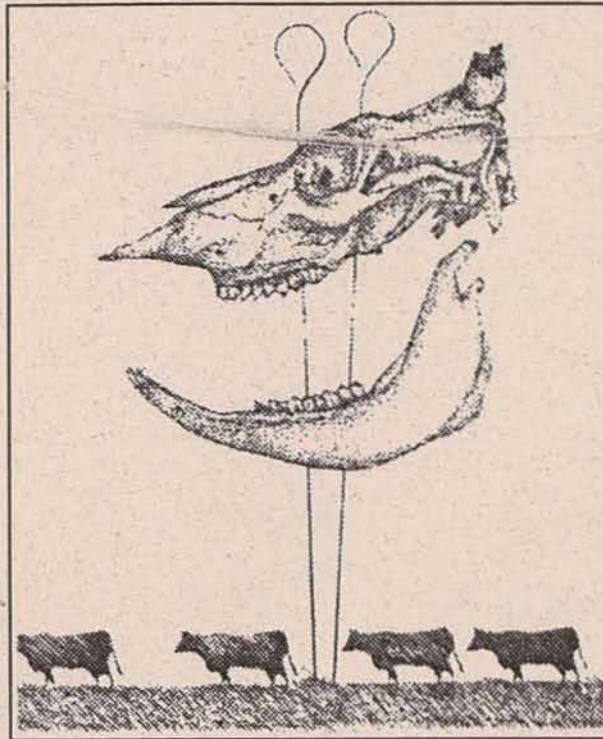


# MORE ANIMAL THAN HUMAN(E)



BARRY CLEAVIN, OBSCURITY - FRAME SPECIMENS, 1989.

*We have always liked to think ourselves less savage than the other animals. To say that a person is 'humane' is to say that he is kind; to say that he is 'a beast', 'brutal', or simply that he behaves 'like an animal' is to suggest that he is cruel and nasty. We rarely stop to consider that the animal that kills with the least reason to do so is the human animal. We think of lions and wolves as savage because they kill; but they must kill, or starve. Humans kill other animals for sport, to satisfy curiosity, to beautify their bodies and to please their palates. Humans beings also kill members of their own species for greed or power.*

Peter Singer Animal Liberation

Humane:- characterised by such behaviour or disposition towards others as befits a human being.

(a) gentle or kindly in demeanour or action; civil, courteous, friendly, obliging

(b) marked by sympathy with and consideration for the needs and distresses of others; feeling or showing compassion and tenderness towards human beings and the lower animals.

Oxford English Dictionary Vol.VII 1989

Humankind, supposedly the most intelligent and highly evolved animal species, has often treated other animals in an inhumane 'animalistic' fashion - in a manner that is, by definition, uncivilised and barbaric - less than human(e). We have deified, worshipped, sacrificed, domesticated, hunted and eaten animals for thousands of years. Such exploitation has arisen from the patently false and divisive premise; that animals are separate and naturally inferior to people and should be treated in accordance with this view. Yet as elementary biology tells us, to differentiate between animal and human is not only misleading but wholly discriminatory. The word 'animal' is derived from the Latin 'anima' meaning breath, state of possessing life or spirit and power of movement - qualities embraced by all animate creatures, human and non-human. This entrenched anthropocentrism (a legacy of the Classical and Judaeo-Christian traditions in our Western society) has condemned animals to, at best a life of confinement and servitude; at worst ruthless and wholesale exploitation.

In an effort to illustrate this thesis, images of a number of animals have

been selected, largely from the gallery's permanent collection, conveying the diverse and frequently one-sided nature of human-animal relationships. These fall into four different categories of exploitation: farmed, hunted, wild and domestic animals. This exploitation, either explicitly or implicitly apparent, is juxtaposed with photographic representations of equivalent inhumanely treated animals and stuffed trophies.

## FARMED

*So god created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."*

Genesis Ch.1:27-28.

*... Plants exist for the sake of animals, and brute beasts for the sake of man - domestic animals for his use and food, wild ones (or at any rate most of them) for food and other accessories of life, such as clothing and various tools.*

Aristotle Politics

Our country, if not our Western society was founded literally and figuratively on the backs of animals, making them an intrinsic component of human civilisation. The cultural myth of human stewardship over creation has greatly facilitated agricultural expansion, being equated with 'progress'. Farming depends upon the subjugation of nature and the domination and manipulation of living creatures. However, by and large, most of us remain ignorant or indifferent to the suffering of farm animals.

During the nineteenth century landscape artists, like the noted watercolourist Sir William Fox, helped document this emerging way of life in New Zealand. His Mt Cook and Franz Josef Glacier from Freshwater Creek 1872 reveals a scenic vista inhabited by roaming cattle; at one with the landscape, but not at all dominant. The cattle are seemingly unhindered by

fences, as they are in *A Sunny Day 1904* by British artist Bertram Priestman. Here cattle graze on marshy English farmland; the feathery brushstrokes merge the cows into this setting, creating a timeless bucolic image of farming. Prominent in these landscapes is the belief in the biblical ideal of dominion over animals. The animal input is unacknowledged in each title, suggesting that the animals are 'chattels' (derived from the Old French for cattle) to be 'harvested' in the same manner as the natural environment, for the uses of human beings.

Likewise *Trailing Mist or Stray Sheep* by J. Lawson Balfour displays indecision as to which subject is more important. The stranded sheep is overwhelmed by its surroundings and is about to be engulfed by the swirling mist. Often when a flock is rounded up by the farmer an errant sheep is left behind. This creature will probably become feral, changing its status from an animal that is farmed to one that is hunted. Sheep are brought to the fore in T. Sidney Cooper's *Twin Lambs*. A large ewe dominates the image with her two lambs nearby. She is portrayed as a noble earth mother freely donating her bounty (herself and her off-spring) for humankind.

Since the origins of farming last century, the (ab)use of animals has grown to constitute the largest single source of our gross domestic product, raising \$5.8 billion in revenue annually; through the extraction of milk, the shearing of wool and slitting of throats for meat. In *The Food is Very Delicious: 28 Days in Kiribati 1984* by Robin White the cow is an advertising motif for Ox and Palm corned beef; a visual manifestation of the animal about to be consumed, prior to its transformation into a slab of meat.

Barry Cleavin explores this process in *Obscurity: Prime Specimens 1989* from the 'Obscurities' series, inspired by the plastic cow-shaped skewers used in the presentation of meat in some restaurants. The image includes a cattle train of anonymous silhouettes moving in single file, revealing the cow in its natural setting. The foreboding presence of a cow's skull, divided in two and suspended above, represents the dead animal whose flesh is consumed under the euphemistic title of beef. Two skewers, emerge from the skull to disturb the pasture in the tranquil scene below - a direct reference to the cow's imminent demise.

*Obscurity: An Unhealthy Specimen 1989*, from the same series, studies the chicken. A skeletal chicken, pinned up above poultry, provides a doom-laden reminder of the chicken's fate as dinner. This transition from animal to meat is clearly expressed in *Marche à la volaille à gissors (The Poultry Market) 1890*, an etching by Camille Pissarro. At this sale market the lifeless corpses of chickens adorn the baskets of a multitude of chattering peasant women. In the same year, *Girl feeding poultry*, by a young Frances Hodgkins, emphasises the benevolence of humans over animals, in a romantic image of farming, where placid hens feast on the wheat thrown from a girl's apron.

Similarly, Claude Cardon's pastoral idyll *The Barn*, sees an assortment of demure farm animals in quiet communion, in contrast to the underlying brutality that lies behind their existence. With the intensive farming methods of today these same animals would be compartmentalised in separate 'farms', while Hodgkins' girl would have sole responsibility for feeding 20,000 caged birds under one roof, despite the perpetuation of the 'farm fresh' myth.

## HUNTED

Although farming has been the mainstay of society, hunting, (a relic of humankind's primordial origins, where men killed for food alone) persists today, as a past-time or 'sport' mainly for trophies. A primeval male ritual, sanctioned as instinctual behaviour. Hunters continue to convince themselves that the pursuit and torture of animals, which are often timid and sometimes incredible, is nevertheless heroic. Yet if our higher instincts constitute our humanity, is it possible that the hunter is less civilised than those who do not hunt?

The popular practice of hunting fish for trophies and for food is treated as a human right in New Zealand. *Beached Salmon* by G. Trevor Moffitt would be considered a free meal (or 'trophy') for whoever finds it, whereas its mammalian neighbour, the dolphin would evoke our sympathy. In *Flood Victim 1985* by R. Alexander a piece of driftwood placed deliberately across a fish nullifies its creature status and re-classifies it as sea debris. The title's tentative irony imposes an anthropomorphic interpretation - our perception of the dead fish is altered irrevocably - suggesting that just as humans drown in water, fish suffocate in the open air. (As fish are not believed to be animals

by some, it is thought that they do not suffer when they are caught). *Grondin à Otautahi 1990* by Alexis Hunter sees two gurnard seemingly about to be caught, while *Untitled (Still-life) 1970* by A. Nisbet-Smith displays a slit open fish whose ambiguous internal organs surge forth, fillet-like, into a waiting bowl. Its inner features impinge upon its outer features - the tail also looks like a fillet, while its aorta becomes a feature of its skin. Is this a living, feeling being or a potential meal?

The hunting of 'game', introduced to New Zealand by European settlers, has become symbolic of our rugged individualism. In the most supposedly civilised of countries, Great Britain, it is a veritable institution. Nowhere is this established more clearly than in the animal artistry of dog-lover, Sir Edwin Henry Landseer, during the nineteenth century. A deep interest in animals and knowledge of hunting is noticeable in most of his works.

The importance of hunting protocol is noted in his *The watchtower on the hillside 1868*. It bears the inscription: "It would be a shameful vanity in any man to say he would give you a shot at a deer in such a place." Implicit is the belief that as the deer - devoid of camouflage and lying half-way down a hillside - is such an easy target (a 'sitting duck'), it would be 'unsportsman-like' to kill it. The greatest satisfaction, and the least guilt, is derived from the clean kill in difficult circumstances for the hunter - a self-imposed penance.

Landseer's *Fox in landscape 1825* reminds how this ever alert creature is persecuted in the upper-class English ritual of the hunt, purportedly, like deer hunting, a sport. (To this day fox hunting continues in Great Britain with 13,000 foxes killed each year). Justification for such persecution of defenceless animals resides in Landseer's *Blood!*, where the eagle is the lethal predator, perched on a cliff with a sheep's entrails in its beak - a smug, almost human, malevolence is inferred.

The dubious thrill of hunting 'game' is revealed in his early etchings *Six Hunting Scenes and Six Wildlife Scenes*. These provide examples of the Game Cards he designed for hunters to record the extent of their bag. Images in the former include the arched contortions of a hare the instant of being shot, a twitching grouse expiring among stalks of corn, a snipe frenetically wing-beating its last. The final image relates the hunters journeying homeward with dogs and dead game in tow. The latter scenes consists of pheasant, rabbit, hares, grouse and snipe - all alive signifying no score for the Game Cards. Both etchings exemplify Landseer's penchant for the study of dead and dying game - symptomatic of the Victorian era where public cruelty was a part of everyday life, as evidenced by public executions, prize-fighting, bull-baiting, bear-baiting, dog-fighting and cock-fighting.

Therefore to Victorian eyes the carnage on display in *The Larder (In the Common Parlour at Houghton)* by Richard Earlom would have been commonplace - unlike today where we buy our meat vacuum-packed and guilt-free. An uncouth peasant proudly displays the game he has caught - wild boar, rabbits, birds, pheasant, quail, ducks and a deer suspended above a table, its hind legs impaled through a stick and jugular cut to drain away its blood. A cat paws at a line of small birds, while another peers out from under the tablecloth at an expectant dog, reminiscent of *Dog and Still-life (in the dressing room at Houghton)* by P. C. Canot. The live domestic animals in each have no apparent empathy for the dead 'game', rather they are revelling in their deaths, (both dogs seem ready to pounce on their prey, the cat). Suffering and death inflicted by humans upon animals is then seen as normal because they inflict it upon each other. This is somewhat ironic considering that humans are responsible for the carnage in the first place.

The perceived natural ferocity of animals is posed as justification for similar behaviour from people. To a large extent this explains the popularity and institutionalisation of bullfighting in Spain. Its past and contemporary history were recorded by Goya in his 'La Tauromaquia' (bullfight) series as long ago as 1816. Another way of hunting pertains to the hunting of bulls in olden times. Two men thrust their lances in the bull who, injured and weary from resistance, is about to succumb completely. The activity was ritualised in the bullfighting arena. With *The celebrated picador, Fernando del Toro* draws the fierce beast on with his pique, from the same series, the triumph of virile power and cunning over brute strength becomes a popular spectacle. This realistic portrayal of contemporary bullfighting in Spain, during Goya's time, sees the picador on a blindfolded horse, with nearby helpers brandishing a cloak, in order to distract the bull from the picador's mission. The moment before battle commences is indicated by the drawn hooves of the bull, its intent stare and alert stance. The previous picador, having just dismounted and whose horse is still on the ground, conveys the

repetition of this bloodthirsty performance. Today, approximately 30,000 bulls die each year in Spain alone, exempt from the country's animal welfare laws.

## WILD

The human hunting ethic has invariably extended to include other larger wild animals, under the title of big game hunting. Hill Leopards by Arthur Wardle epitomises the wild, and exotic, animal in its natural element. The two leopards slyly mimick the rock shapes so as not to disturb the prey that they are about to attack. They are imbued with mythological significance, as vicious animals that must be subdued - as their prey is unsuspecting, how do we know its not us? The fiercer the leopards are portrayed, the more powerful is the man who conquers them. So when a man kills a leopard he is a hero, but when a leopard kills a man, the leopard is the villain.

The aftermath of this confrontation culminates in *We Do This* 1988 by Alexis Hunter. Overlapping skins of dead leopards destined for the glamorous and lucrative multi-million dollar fur industry pulsate in an appealing, but simultaneously repellent mound of rich patterning. These noble beasts are reduced to mere accoutrements of humans - their animal status negated. Areas of splattered blood clearly lay responsibility at the feet of human beings. This wilful destruction has brought leopards to the brink of extinction in Africa and India.

Since 1600, 350 known species and sub-species have become extinct on this planet. Half of this number has been since 1900, due to the acceleration of 'civilisation' by industrialising processes.

Another potential candidate for extinction is New Zealand's indigenous parrot, the kakapo. *Avifauna III* 1991 by Denise Copland details the plight of this large flightless bird. The skulls of the birds dead ancestors reside near the creature, radiating a deathly glow, linking the bird with its dead ancestors and signifying its doubtful future due to a predators and loss of habitat.

The belief that wildlife should be preserved because they could be useful to humans or to entertain people is the basis of the zoo concept. As human 'civilisation' encroaches upon the natural habitats of many animal species it seems to some that the best salvation resides in the zoo. Here the creature is alienated from its real habitat, permanently caged, giving rise to such abnormal behaviour as pacing, self-mutilation, over-eating and self-starvation. How then can we justify breeding an animal in captivity, often from a limited gene pool (mortality rates are 7-10 times higher than in the wild) for a habitat that is ceasing to be? Surely the funding would be better spent on protecting the habitat from destruction in the first place.

An ever popular feature of the zoo is the chimpanzee, probably because it serves to remind us of our evolutionary origins. Yet for each chimpanzee that arrives in a zoo about 5-10 die, including the mother, inadvertently, in the inevitable mêlée that surrounds capture. Peter Peryer's *Chimpanzee* is an insight into the dismal and monotonous world of the captive animal. The creature peers out of his barred enclosure like an expectant prisoner. He remains an onlooker to the outside 'real' world, having to tolerate the pretense of a fake natural habitat, as shown behind him. The contrast with E. Mervyn Taylor's free-wheeling Ape, revelling in its freedom is self-evident.

## DOMESTIC

Rather than caged confinement the benevolent curtailment of freedom is the domain of the domesticated animal. Pets have a long history stretching back as far as the Australian Aborigines and the Egyptian Pharaohs. They constitute our closest link with other animals. In the case of the domestic pet, the rules that govern our treatment of other animals do not apply - they do not function for maximum productivity and minimum cost. The dog, aside from the cat, is the only animal we accommodate in our homes, in return for companionship. *Amber Rose* 1984 by Denise Copland, a King Charles spaniel, is a sympathetic rendition of the artist's treasured pet. In the pursuit of the perfect 'pure-bred' selective breeding deliberately creates babyish features (high forehead and protruding eyes) because they engender a parental response from its owner. This breeding causes crippling defects in dogs such as cardiovascular disorders, epilepsy, glaucoma and deafness.

Another part of the dog's appeal is that it is perpetually child-like and totally dependent on its owner for sustenance. Juliet Peter's *The Landlady's*

dog is such a pet, laying in wait for its owner in the foyer of its home. Similarly the canine in Landseer's *A Fishing Scene* waits for its hunting companion. Clearly each dog resides in a human centred world despite the absence of any human physical presence.

Although the dog has functioned as a pet and hunting companion, the horse, above all other animals, though its strength and speed, has provided the vehicle for the expansion of civilisation. *Timber Coming down the Mountain* by Lucy Kemp-Welch show the back-breaking toil of the work horse, shifting a load of logs. Relief from this labour is expressed in Lucien Simon's *Chevaux deteles* (Unharnessing horses). Two horses, having been freed from their restraints, nuzzle and prod each other oblivious to the darkly dressed group of humans nearby.

The horse as pet can be seen in *Sunlight through the leaves* (Mare and foal) by Kemp-Welch. Here a mare and foal rest in a lush meadow. A down-trodden and world-weary mother (possibly an ex-work horse) contrasts with her lively off-spring whose spirit is yet to be broken. This work well illustrates the ongoing cycle of toil for the horse in the nineteenth century.

Of the four groups of animals featured, each is characterised by exploitation of animals by humanity. The fundamental belief in our Western society of a distinction between animal and human, as indicative of nature's hierarchy, legitimises this exploitation. Yet the defence is often used that natural instincts dictate our need to fulfill our baser desires over animals. This argument is clearly inadmissible, for when we say in the same breath that we are their intellectual superiors we cannot have it both ways. Surely this provides us with the ability to curb our compulsions and provides us with no excuse for being inhuman.

Therefore if we are indeed a more intelligent and human(e) species, why do we inflict such unnecessary pain and suffering on animals? If we fully recognised our common nature (that we are animals) it would not occur to us to exploit other animals as we do. Then, in order to be truly human(e) humans must acknowledge their 'animalness', that is their mutual affinity with animals and the natural world.

Above all else, we must acknowledge our common bond in sentience. The sentiment is conveyed acutely by British philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1780, at a time when the French had recently freed blacks from enslavement. He places it appropriately alongside another form of prejudice, in this case racism.

*The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which could never have been withheld from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognised that the number of legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day or a week or even a month old. But suppose they were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they reason? nor Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?*

Jeremy Bentham Principles of Morals and Legislation

*catalogue essay by Meredith Hart*

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## Works in Exhibition

All works are part of The Robert McDougall Art Gallery Collection, unless otherwise stated

### FARMED

- William Greene  
1872 - 1925  
Springtime South Canterbury Riverbed 1913  
*oil on canvas*
- J. Lawson Balfour  
1870 - 1966  
Trailing Mist or The Stray Sheep  
*oil on canvas*
- T. Sidney Cooper  
1803 - 1902  
Twin Lambs  
*oil on board*
- Sir William Fox  
1812 - 1893  
Mt Cook and Franz Josef Glacier from  
Freshwater Creek 1872  
*watercolour*
- Bertram Priestman  
1868 - 1951  
A Sunny Day 1904  
*oil on canvas*
- Robin White  
b.1946 -  
The Food is Very Delicious:  
28 Days in Kiribati 1984  
from the '28 Days in Kiribati' series)  
*woodcut*
- Claude Cardon  
The Barn  
*watercolour*
- Frances Hodgkins  
1869 - 1947  
Girl feeding poultry 1890  
*watercolour*
- Barry Cleavin  
b.1939 -  
Obscurity: Prime Specimen 1989  
(from the 'Obscurities' series)  
*etching*
- Obscurity: An Unhealthy Specimen 1989  
(from the 'Obscurities' series)  
*etching*
- Camille Pissarro  
1830 - 1903  
Marche à la volaille à gisors 1891  
(The poultry market)  
*etching*
- Juliet Peter  
b.1915 -  
The Cock  
*colour lithograph*  
Collection of the Canterbury Public Library

### DOMESTIC

- Lucy Kemp-Welch  
1869 - 1958  
Sunlight through the leaves 1904-5  
(Mare and Foal)  
*oil on canvas*
- Timber coming down the mountain c.1928  
*oil on canvas*
- Lucien Simon  
1861 - 1945  
Chevaux d'étéles (Unharnessing horses)  
*oil on canvas*
- Denise Copland  
b.1952 -  
Amber Rose 1987  
*Sanguine charcoal drawing*  
Courtesy of the artist
- Juliet Peter  
b.1915 -  
The Landlady's dog  
*Colour lithograph*  
Collection of the Canterbury Public Library
- Sir Edwin Landseer  
1802 - 1873  
A Fishing Scene  
*etching*

### WILD

- Alexis Hunter  
b.1948 -  
We Do This 1988  
*oil on canvas*
- Arthur Wardle  
1864 - 1949  
Hill Leopards c.1911  
*oil on canvas*
- E.Mervyn Taylor  
1906 - 1964  
Ape  
*woodcut*
- Peter Peryer  
b.1941 -  
Chimpanzee 1981  
*black and white photograph*
- Denise Copland  
b.1952 -  
Avifauna III 1991  
(from Avifauna suite in the 'Implantations' series)  
*etching/aquatint/ various lifeground/ spit-bit/ mezzotint*  
Courtesy of the artist

### HUNTED

- Francisco José de Goya  
1746 - 1828  
Another way of hunting on foot 1816  
*aquatint*
- The Celebrated Picador Fernando del Toro draws  
the fierce beast on with his pique 1816  
(from 'La Tauromaquia' - bullfight series)  
*aquatint*
- Pierre Charles Canot  
1710 - 1771  
Dog and Still Life  
(In the dressing room at Houghton)  
*line engraving*
- Alexis Hunter  
b.1948 -  
Grondin à Otautahi 1990  
*lithograph*
- Alister Nisbet-Smith  
b.1942 -  
Still-life (Untitled) 1970  
*Brush/pen and ink*
- G. Trevor Moffitt  
b.1936 -  
Beached Salmon  
*linocut*
- Rick Alexander  
b.1956 -  
Flood Victim 1985  
*black and white photograph*
- Sir Edwin Landseer  
1802 - 1873  
Fox in landscape 1825  
*etching*
- The watchtower on the hillside 1868  
*etching*
- Blood!  
*etching*
- Six Wildlife Scenes  
*etching*
- Six Hunting Scenes  
*etching*
- Richard Earlom  
1743 - 1822  
The Larder  
(In the Common Parlour at Houghton)  
*engraving (mezzotint)*
- Chrystabel Aitken  
b.1907 -  
(Untitled) Bull 1930  
*bronze (recast 1985)*