



Olly & Suzi

Our art-making process arises from our immersive journeys; it is a collaborative, mutual response to nature at its most primitive and wild. We paint on location and in close proximity to predator animals. During the course of this film, we're focusing on two different animals from two extreme environments: wild dogs of the African bush and polar bears of the arctic. These animals are endangered predators whose dwindling numbers signal an instability in an ecological system. Whether we place the 'animal as icon', singular, primitive and large upon the paper or paint the heard, migration, or movements of a predatory pack we attempt to integrate clarity and ambiguity in the same painting. When possible we incorporate the track, print, spoor or bite of the animal in our work, documenting the habitat or the passing of a creature that is here now but may not be for much longer. This interaction is evidence to an event, a form of primal investigation, a physical performance of the senses.

We've painted together for two decades. We paint hand over hand on the same painting at the same time in extreme environments. Such work means negotiating between our lives and families in London and our art in the bush and, when possible, in our studio.

Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson

In our cities animals share our constructed environment, some invited, some not. Increasingly commonplace are the uninvited visitors that meet with our ambivalence according to their species. For some urban dwellers, the presence of these creatures—pigeons, starlings, rats, mice, foxes, and myriad insects—is a threat, a kind of leakage and therefore a representation of the fragility of our insulation from the 'wild', the unpredictability and chaos of 'nature'. For others, the enfolding of human and animal habitats is a source of fascination and pleasure. Urban animals have lost their fear and see new opportunities in the streets, on the wharves and in the subways. They choose to be dependent upon us whilst remaining independent of us, demonstrating opportunistic tendencies and adaptability, but above all, the ability to survive in changed conditions and environments.

We are a collaborative team arriving at decisions through research, fieldwork, interviews, conversation, drawing, and a distillation of ideas. Our work is site-specific using installation, photography, and video but the nature of outcomes will be determined by the findings in the field. For this project we are working under a commission by the historic Storey Institute in Lancaster, England with an art opening there in fall of 2008.



Steve Baker and Kate Downhill

We've 'hunted down' a range of now dusty and unconsidered stuffed specimens from Victorian curio collections and are intent on 'freeing' them from their mounts and installing them in one or more site-specific garden or forest artworks where they will be allowed to decay naturally, unburied, over 100 years after the animals' actual deaths. The natural process of decay will be recorded over time and the artists are considering how to work further with animal bones and other materials once the process of decay is well-advanced. The post-decay stage invites opportunities for bringing the project back into the "domestic" environment of a gallery space, further skewing the aesthetic life-cycle of traditional taxidermy. We'll record the ritual and performative dimensions of the project, such as the smashing of Victorian glass domes encasing taxidermic specimens.

Unearthing (working title) is our first collaboration. Living on opposite sides of the country presents a challenge. We work both in person and through phone and email conversations. We are guided by materials, spaces and sounds rather than meanings: by what it is like to work with animal skins, trees, undergrowth, walls, earth, birdsong, background traffic noise, and other local materials. The project will begin decaying and unfolding in fall 2008.



Ron Broglio and Chris Pair

What drives us is capturing on film thought and creativity as it unfolds. We're disillusioned with documentaries about art already hung on gallery walls and artists globally famous for decades. We're interested in where the brush meets the bush, where the camera meets the unexpected swarm of vermin, and where art presents the fur of the animal jamming the gears of our well oiled social systems. Throughout our filming and interaction with these select artists, we've been struck by their ability to represent cultural anxieties and wonder at the foreign world of the animal. We want this film to give viewers a window onto the world of art in process where artists fashion and refashion their concepts through handling their materials.

Shooting and editing this film has become our own experimentation in collaboration. We're working with the variables of three groups of artists and their syncopated timelines toward their gallery shows as well as the wonders and unpredictability of each group's process based art. Ron Broglio is a professor of literature and culture at Georgia Institute of Technology and author of *Technologies of the Picturesque*. Chris Pair is an assistant producer at CNN and former partner of Aquatic Films where he filmed and produced technical and adventure dives and outdoor sports shows.



Animality (n.) – the world of the animal that is inaccessible to human knowledge, including the inability to grasp our own animal nature.

Follow three groups of British artists as they seek ways of representing human interaction with the non-human world. Their art ruptures our common way of seeing our surroundings and exposes a swarm of other worlds at our doorstep. Viewers watch the struggles and triumphs of artists fashioning ideas into material form and then presenting the work in galleries.

Animality is filmed for a general audience and is of particular interest to environmental, art, and cultural studies viewers. Filming began in the summer of 2007 and will run until Spring of 2009 when each artist partnership presents work in various gallery shows. Release date is 2009.

We are currently seeking funding for production and distribution. Interest and queries should direct to Ron Broglio at ron.broglio@lcc.gatech.edu or mail Ron Broglio, 686 Cherry Street, Skiles Building room 327, Atlanta, GA 30332 USA. This is an Animality LLC production with all rights reserved.

"The work of art, for those who use it, is an activity of unframing, of rupturing sense."

- Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*

"All primitive expression reveals the constant awareness of powerful forces, the immediate presence of terror and fear, a recognition and acceptance of the brutality of the natural world as well as the eternal insecurity of life."

- Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko



Animals from Concept to Gallery

Animality is designed to reveal the creative process which artists undergo in developing and making their work. The complexity is both heightened and made more visible in this film by focusing on artists who work alongside each other rather than alone and who work with the wild card willfulness of animals. *Animality* investigates three established artists' partnerships: Steve Baker and Kate Downhill, Olly and Suzi and Snaebjornsdottir/Wilson. The conversations and exchanges of ideas by means of words, gestures, and the manipulation of materials allow thought to be made palpably visible and thus, captured on film. Viewers watch thinking and art evolve as each group takes a work from initial concept to a final gallery show. Baker describes the task as "trusting in the process of what was being done, which of course involved botching a lot of stuff along the way, and was itself the manner in which the work was emerging." Rather than simply have artists discuss their finalized work, the film reveals the fragility and adventure of art as it unfolds.

Each artist-partnership is working on a related problem: animals and their representation through contemporary art. While creativity is distributed through collaboration, the artists must also take into account the willful, stubborn and resistant animals, their worlds and their relational effects. The

artists work with animals and materials in unique ways – from painting to photography to video and even taxidermy. Practices range from studio art to process-based investigations and fieldwork in the thickets of nature.

Animality shows unique couplings. Bryndis Snaebjornsdottir and Mark Wilson have lived together and made work together since 2001. They operate from their studio in England's picturesque Lake District, as well as on site at locales in the UK, Scandinavia and beyond, choosing wherever possible, to deploy site-specific strategies in the development and presentation of their work. Olly and Suzi have collaborated since the early 1990s. Each has his/her own spouse and family which adds to the negotiation of space for thinking and working. They have traveled globally from African deserts to the Arctic tundra and the Pacific Ocean all in order to encounter animals in their environments. Baker and Underhill have forged a collaboration out of friendship and shared interests. While Baker is known for his writing and complex philosophical reflection on contemporary animal art, evidenced in *Postmodern Animal*, his partnership with artists creates a tension between academic and artistic methods that results in a rich dialogue and multivalent work.