

# MODELLING THE ANIMAL

## some images about animals and us

Modelling the Animal is an exhibition of photographs which consists of new work made by Liza Dracup, Kate Mellor, Charlie Meecham, Terence Wright, John Darwell and Charlotte Mellor Meecham. The work focuses on the physical representation of and interaction with animals often positioned between art and science. The project combines the artists' individual ideas and experiences of the archive or of personal encounter with animals in a way that is both accessible and Informative. The work will encourage younger people to think about their environment and question their own interaction with animals both domestic and wild. This project adds to this debate and is an ideal format to make these visual ideas and experiences available to a wider audience.

Modelling The Animal, curated and hosted by Foldworks, is currently at Dean Clough in their main gallery in Halifax until April 26 2020 after which we intend to tour the show for a minimum of 4 years.

The exhibition consists of 59 A2 framed prints plus additional text panels. A flat screen is required for the John Darwell presentation (headphones are supplied). The photographs can be edited to fit smaller spaces if required and tour venues are encouraged to include additional taxidermied material from their own collection. The hire fee is £500.00 per month (including one way transport) but this fee is negotiable for independant spaces.

We welcome the opportunity to link this exhibition to educational projects. We believe that we are at a critical point when we need to revalue our relationship with nature.

## Charlie Meecham - DODOQUEST

This photography project considers the varied depictions of the Dodo as exhibited models in natural history collections and questions the changing nature of object and image as representing fact. I question how this image and style of representation sits within the collection which is increasingly accessed through digital portals.

There are a number of exhibits in Britain and worldwide which I have photographed that show a wide variety of renditions and contexts in which the Dodo story is told. The models contain no original material but are often covered in feathers from other existing birds to create a subjective sense of reality and scale.

The story of the Dodo remains embedded in our minds as representation of extinction while at the same time, its visual representation, appears fictional and often unscientific. The design of the model continues to evolve.



## Kate Mellor - GUILBERT AND KATE: A COLLABORATION

This project presents artworks made by the team Guilbert and Kate, pet cat and fine art photographer, which centres on the topic of animal domestication. Their work addresses issues about human and animal communication, and explores the potential of affiliative, and anthropomorphic, relationships.

Guilbert and Kate's work intends to open up questions about animal-human sameness and difference, and queries the nature of collaboration itself. At first the work appears to be the result of straightforward manipulation of the animal's instincts by Kate. Yet the situation becomes more complex as making the original artefacts for play was brought about by Guilbert who, too old for hunting, demanded a replacement exercise. The concept that the cat is capable of establishing aspects of the relationship is supported by Driscoll et al's theory that cats are "delightful...profiteers" that originally initiated their own domestication in relation to agricultural patterns.



## Terence Wright – STILL LIFES

These “Still Lives” aim to question and play upon Victorian notions of classification, specimens, analysis and vitrine display. The chickens in the photographs were bred purely for show creating a tension between individual living creatures and examples of human conceptions of idealised types. The camera’s ability to freeze the image creates the superficial appearance of a taxidermied animal situated in a curio cabinet. Some of the chickens are presented in correct poses according to the requirements of poultry shows. While others have deviated from the set standards displaying their natural tendency to ‘misbehave’ and/or react to unconventional backgrounds or the presence of inanimate objects.



## Liza Dracup - RE: COLLECTIONS

This reference material held by the Bradford Museums and Galleries allow us to reflect on the preserved specimens and consider the paradox of their reworked 'natural' form. The work resides both in an artistic and scientific context and questions our personal relationship to the British wildlife and its conservation.

The photographs present us with a series of birds and mammals, made timeless by both the taxidermist and the photographer. Each specimen is presented on a black background, reminiscent of the Dutch still-life painting tradition; this recurrent motif aims to focus the attention of the observer.



## Charlotte Mellor Meecham - LOVED TO DEATH

My work considers the stuffed animals that are given to children. For many people it is their first introduction to the idea of animals. The “cuddlies” become a friend and confidante, providing comfort. Often, over time, they lose limbs, and become very shabby but this does not deter the child from loving her animal.

These photographs are of toys so valued that they have not been discarded by their adult owner.



## John Darwell – SHARKS IN MY BATHROOM

In 1963 I was eight years old and like many boys of that age had a fascination with dinosaurs, monsters and particularly sharks. On one auspicious day that year my mum returned from a shopping trip and handed me a present. It was a book, apparently, so I was told, on special offer at Boots the Chemist, entitled 'Shadows in the Sea'. The book was a natural history of all things shark related, where and how they lived, their evolution and physical structure, and their global distribution. All very interesting to me but what stirred my imagination were the chapters 'The Shadows Attack'. Within these two chapters were case histories of shark attacks ranging from the 1916 New Jersey terrors that were the inspiration for Jaws to contemporary attacks in the 1940s, 50s and 60s.

This fascination with the shark remained with me and resulted in an ongoing body of photographic work that reflects not only on this fascination but also on the overlaps within my own home environment as the stories of my Mum and Aunty Jean become a part of the research process.

