
The (Material) Surface and (Cultural) Depth of Animals in Indian Contemporary Art

Author(s): Priya Maholay-Jaradi

Source: *Pakistan Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Emotions, Humans and Animals (Winter 2016), pp. 102-143

Published by: Indiana University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/pjhs.1.2.04>

Accessed: 27-01-2017 18:01 UTC

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/pjhs.1.2.04?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Indiana University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Pakistan Journal of Historical Studies*

The (Material) Surface and (Cultural) Depth of Animals in Indian Contemporary Art

Priya Maholay-Jaradi
National University of Singapore

ABSTRACT: Following in the tradition to write plural art histories, I argue for a culturally informed study of animal-oriented compositions by contemporary Indian artists. Given their presence in the global art canon, these contemporary works become tools to redress the imbalance between zoocentric or humanistic animal studies and an anthropocentric Euro-American art history. The multifarious character of these works enjoys multiple frames of contemporary and historical reference which include Indic religious, mythological and folk narratives. The resultant representation of a seamless human-animal text constantly problematises the Judeo-Christian dichotomy between nature and culture. Alongside, these artworks' indebtedness to Asian crafts and a dense material culture brings a distinct materiality to the rendering of animal forms. Together, these representations, materialities and their consequent meanings make for the other socio-cultural context which simultaneously defines Asianness while nuancing the global contemporary art canon.

KEYWORDS: Animal; Indian art; craft; representation; materiality; art histories

The special volume of the journal *Antennae* on environment and animal studies brings within its ambit art-making and art-writing to redress the imbalance between both disciplines: animal studies and art history. Art historian, Giovanni Aloï, contends that recent animal studies increasingly court an archetypal centrality of animals, whereas art history continues to be characterised by an accentuated anthropocentrism.¹

The reasons for these positions may be found in the western Judeo-Christian tradition casting the human-animal narrative in a strict dichotomy, save for a few relenting punctuations and the cultural imagination of modernity which loosened this opposition to display hybridities.² One can recap this mostly essentialist tradition by starting with the book of Genesis and its two creation stories. One places humans at the top of a hierarchical ordering of all natural resources and beings; this would become the *scala naturae* to be seriously pursued by Aristotle.³ The second story regards humans as priority in the sequence of creation.⁴ A thirteenth-century Hebrew Bible and its messianic prophecy which points to a coming together of man and animal is perhaps an exception.⁵

The age of Enlightenment which paralleled travel, exploration, adventure and the cultivation of cabinets of curiosities, also witnessed the human aspiration to know, tame and control nature through processes of classification and taxonomy.⁶ Rene Descartes (1596–1650) emerges as the most significant advocate of the dualism between human and nonhuman as the latter lacks a soul, rational faculties and feelings.⁷ However, the counter-movements within natural history show a significant influence of nature and its complex aesthetics vis-a-vis a detached objectification signifying contestation to Descartes' dualism.⁸ These opposing ideas dominating Enlightenment thought shape the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which contain both the Romantic movement and rational exploitation of nature.⁹ Finally, Charles Darwin's (1809–1882) evolutionary theory proposed animals and humans as kin by diffusing hierarchies. Victorian novels mirrored this position of permeable boundaries between humans and nature.¹⁰

However, from the Judeo-Christian and Islamic perspectives, cross-species such as animal-headed gods belong to pagan religions and mythologies only.¹¹ Based on the rationale that soul, mindfulness, language and culture are human prerogatives, sociologists such as Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) imagined human beings as separate from other aspects of the natural world; this 'intellectual' divide accompanied by large scale urbanisation in

Europe separated the city far away from nature and animals.¹² Parallel developments in industrialisation, mass farming techniques and rising consumerism significantly increased the control of humans over animals. Twentieth-century philosophers such as Isadore Geoffroy, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, popularised the idea of no absolute difference within nature and argued that all aspects of nature could metamorphose or de-territorialise themselves to become the other.¹³

Animal studies have thus moved from Cartesian binaries to Deleuzian hybridities. However, art history of the monopolistic Euro-American tradition is still characterised by a totalising, flattening of anthropocentric metanarratives. We see two kinds of lacunae here: first, the non-recognition of animal-oriented compositions deserving dedicated scholarship and, second, the non-recognition of scientific findings on animal abilities to produce art.¹⁴ Here, I am concerned with the former. In the publications on methodologies and approaches to art history, animal-oriented compositions remain understudied and undertheorised.¹⁵ Art historian Steve Baker suggests that nineteenth-century art history discussed animals for their symbolic value, however, writings on modern art carefully ruled out the animal even if it was present in the works, whereas the writings on postmodern art emphasise the presence of animals to displace fixed meanings.¹⁶

In art historical literature for students and scholars, such as *The Methodologies of Art: An Introduction*, animals in art or the ability of animals to produce art are overlooked.¹⁷ Aloï points to the male vogelkop bowerbird as an example of an astute artist who collects natural and artificial objects and displays these to attract females to the nest.¹⁸ Despite such evidence, animals are excluded as producers of art in the aforementioned publication. Ron Broglio records the shorthand which summarises anthropocentric attitudes, 'animals live on the surface'.¹⁹ He articulates this visually by explaining how the animals' world is flattened into a thin layer.²⁰

The question remains that if the human-animal frame is largely essentialist and if disciplines such as art history can

barely cope with the animal question, how then in the last two decades did animal studies become heavily zoocentric? Broad philanthropic concerns for slaves, children, women and increasing recognition of the “other” across disciplines ranging from history to literature shaped the advocacy of human rights, animal rights and studies.²¹ Recent animal studies view the animal without considering the human. This reductive approach has raised issues about the mistreated animal at the cost of humans. Both positions—the advocacy for animal rights as well as an extreme zoocentric approach—are reflected in art-making and art criticism respectively.

Damien Hirst's works reflect an arena of art-production which critiques the commodified animal. His landmark installation *Mother and Child* (1993) uses one cow and calf body each, bisected into halves with the four pieces preserved in separate tanks to allow the viewer to walk between them. Through a play on the aesthetics of visibilities and invisibilities,²² Hirst brings within full view the innards of these animals to remind us of several invisible stages of preparation before meat hits the supermarket. Performance artist Marcus Coates attempts to understand the nonhuman by basing his works on the premise of hybridity of the two worlds of the human and nonhuman or ‘un-humaning, ones’ self. He dons preserved animal parts and literally becomes animal. As his art practice converges with shamanistic rituals he descends to the lower world of animals to squawk with the birds and grunt with the deer. British artists, Olly Williams and Suzi Winstanley abandon the studio and go into the wild to make animal paintings and often encourage animals to interact with the artworks by leaving their prints or stains. This artistic practice counters the conventional enculturation of animals within human culture.²³ The usage of real or live animals has become a significant trope in western contemporary art.

A broad generalisation may be that without the real or live animal body, a commentary and critique of ‘visuality’, ‘objectification’ and its consequent humanist postures might not be significant. Vision becomes an important epistemic tool in structuring

human-animal relations in the western paradigm. Visuality is seen as possessing an intrinsic ability to objectify the natural world.²⁴ Thus by becoming animal, Coates rejects the privilege of objectifying the other.²⁵ He also discounts anthropomorphism as a disservice to animals since it is a human projection of ideas and attributes on to the animal world. Instead, understanding animals, according to him, requires becoming one by literally getting under the skin or head of a stuffed reindeer or badger and going into a trance to talk to animal spirits. Steve Baker and Ron Broglio underline how Olly and Suzi's practice is also an attempt to move away from an anthropocentric representation of not only the animal world but also Enlightenment ideals of truth and knowledge.²⁶ The artists allow the experience of wonder or fear as antidotes to anthropocentrism and as instruments to shed the baggage of western thought.²⁷ Moreover, instead of being enframed by art and culture, these animals are unframed. Thus Hirst, Coates and Olly and Suzi question, communicate and seek answers through these preserved cows, stuffed badger heads or real animals in the forests. An alternative explanation for the usage of animal bodies is the artists' understanding of animal as metaphor of his/her own creativity.²⁸ It offers a sense of bodily freedom and 'unboundedness', away from the inhibiting human body.²⁹ As more contemporary practitioners use animals, art criticism leans ever more in the direction of animal studies to quickly take objection to the usage of these animals and animal materials in art.

Unlike Descartes' dualism, in Indic thought and culture, nature, animal and animal rights work together by considering animals as part of the shared terrain of all living and sentient beings.³⁰ In Hindu, Jain and Buddhist traditions, respect for animal lives is important for gaining *karmic* merit declaring an obligation on humans as opposed to an obligation to animals.³¹ Social and cultural value of animals can also be gauged from their representation in mythology or folklore. The *Panchatantra* (The Five Principles) (200 BCE–300 BCE) is a fine collection of animal fables wherein animals occupy pedagogic roles to impart lessons in political thought and moral conduct to humans. Love

poetry, such as the *Gathasaptashati* (Seven Hundred Lyrics) (200 BCE–200 CE) and *Ritusamharam* (Garland of Seasons) (400–500), draw on animal qualities. In Jain and Buddhist philosophies, animals, like humans, can accumulate good *karma* and be re-born with a strong moral perspective so as to move closer to becoming perfected souls.³² Animals' representation in Indic traditions is hardly theorised as an object of study external to the subject, it could be due to the deep Indian belief in monism (non-dualism) which does not distinguish between humans, nature and animals.³³

In the Indo-Persian literary and artistic traditions developed during the periods of Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526) and Mughal rule (1526–1857), animals and birds appear in an anthropocentric frame and show human concerns, actions and attributes.³⁴ In the Persian epic, *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings) (977–1010), horses rival human heroism and mythical birds feature as central characters.³⁵ Wise birds occupy the celebrated poem *Manteq at-Tair* (Conference of the Birds) (1200) by the Persian poet and mystic Faridud-din Attar.³⁶ These animals and birds have their own personalities in the texts often participating in mystical discourses.³⁷ The most interesting example is of the phoenix-like bird Simurgh in the *Shahnameh*. She raises the human prince, Zal, and displays proficiency as a healer and protector; Simurgh is adept at curing wounds and arranging caesarean births.³⁸ As this mythical winged creature possesses mystical knowledge, she symbolises transcendence. Attar's birds go in search of none other than the Simurgh; this avian quest for a king becomes an allegory for a Sufi's journey to discover God.³⁹

Following in the depiction of the Simurgh, sixteenth-century Indo-Persian genres especially depict composite animals which may signify the mystic Sufi meaning of the impermanence of the material world.⁴⁰ They hint at moving out of the human position to understand the other world and questions of creation and God. In addition to literary genres, recognisable or indeterminate species of animals are visually represented on material objects such as ceramic bowls, incense burners and textiles produced in the Muslim world.⁴¹ Animals and birds are

especially prolific in the highly embellished manuscript tradition which combines abstract and ornamental patterns with a degree of naturalism. By treating birds and animals as friends, guides, collaborators, and revered beings, Indo-Persian literary and visual traditions blur the boundaries between humans and animals.

Diversified South Asian animal-oriented art works, which largely draw on Indic monism or Indo-Persian imaginaries, contest the boundaries between humans and animals by employing a range of materials and techniques. As Aloï suggests interdisciplinary approaches including contemporary art practices are valid for animal studies; Likewise I argue here for engaging interdisciplinary approaches for writing art histories. By contextualising each artist's work and his/her perception of human-animal relationships, I employ the technique of visual analysis—engagement with the representational and material plane—for studying art works. I refer back to artists' statements and interviews to understand artistic intention and the continuities, divergences and new meanings marked through the critic, reviewer and viewer's interpretation of the works.

Minam Apang: Painting the Liquid World of Mythology, Folklore and Storytelling

The first suite of fifteen works in this survey of Asian contemporary art is by a young Indian woman artist, Minam Apang (b.1980) who hails from the north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh. After spending her childhood between Mussourie and Itanagar, she led a peripatetic life through Chicago, Leeds, Bengaluru and Mumbai as an art student and practitioner. Since Apang frequently found herself 'in third cultures, removed from family, oscillating between multiple worlds' she suffered from a feeling of rootlessness and chronic alienation.⁴² Apang grew up with plentiful domestic and farm animals, in her later art practice the animal form became a conduit to connect her with home. However, her visualisation of these animals goes farther than her memories. In this series, we find almost unreal, fantastic and

hybrid creatures such as the winged sphynx-like being, cat-like creatures with alien heads, or a boy-animal hybrid. Sometimes they seem to be inspired by Buddhist mythology and thangka scroll painting in which Apang trained; at other times they reference Japanese print making or comic book illustrations. These animals are drawn in different styles ranging from the illustrative to caricaturist to cartoonish and belong to no singular type. They are consolidated from what started out as playful studies.⁴³ Apang's art (read animals)⁴⁴ became an instrument for introspection.⁴⁵ Each of these animals is a carrier of human attributes and conditions, sometimes the artist's own. Hidden self-portraits reveal how animals become expressions of the artist's self and her mental states.

As art reviewer Deepanjana Pal asks discerningly in a *Time Out Mumbai* article: 'Surely the recurrence of underwater scenes and eyes hints at Apang watching herself?' The artist regards these forms as 'imagistic diary entries of the artist's mind'.⁴⁶ Oftentimes, these animals appear to have more facility and agency than humans in the compositions. In her fusion of *Alice in Wonderland* and the nursery rhyme *Mary had a little lamb*, the lamb is scaled up in size and either scolds, mocks or simply takes charge of Alice. Apang's visual frame dwells on the anthropomorphic as human attributes and capacities are manifest in the lamb.

In terms of technique, Apang exchanges the stark, sculptural quality of acrylic with the 'spontaneity, fluidity, and recklessness' of ink which eventually leads the artist to 'surrender to the medium'.⁴⁷ In place of reliance on contrasts and poster-style clarity which Apang pursued in her early works, she now favours ill-defined contours and wash-like effects. This unconstrained style is achieved primarily in series such as *Peel* which eschews pre-planning and instead courts spontaneous image-making. The artist's method or the lack thereof is keenly documented in the exhibition catalogue:

The first stage in her process involved staining the papers with accidental blots and allowing other aleatory stains (like



Figure 1. *Untitled*, 2006, ink on paper, 29.5 x 23 in. Courtesy: The artist and Chatterjee & Lal.

inks from another work seeping onto a fresh sheet of paper, footprints, or the stain left behind by a swatted mosquito) to function 'as the basis to suggest a composition and as a means of stimulating the imagination'. These early stages have been decidedly liberating and cathartic: the act of pouring the inks to stain the paper was unrestrictive and allowed her to lose



Figure 2. *Enormous little lamb*, 2006, ink on paper, 23 x 30 in. Courtesy: The artist and Chatterjee & Lal.

herself to the movement of the action. After the inks were strewn across the paper, they were allowed to play with each other: by folding the paper, wet with ink, to get mirrored blots, or throwing water, whiskey, coffee, or coke (whatever was close at hand in her immediate environment) on the surface to facilitate mixing, she prepared the ground for a chaos of smudges and colour that would then be organised and engendered.

After the inks have dried, she says 'the pen takes over, playing the role of an editor of sorts, shaping out images and forms from the marks and stains'.⁴⁸

Brought up as a Christian in the pagan, animistic and ritualistic life of Arunachal, Apang's early years were influenced by multi-religious traditions. Perhaps this upbringing also moulded her 'attitude of openness'⁴⁹ and artistic practice. Her illustrations do not give in to any single category/genre nor do her animals belong to a particular real or cultural provenance. Her medley

of materials includes whiskey, coffee or coke as reflected in her titles: *Whiskey Wash* (2007), which uses a tattoo gun as the carrier of ink and whiskey. Apang acknowledges that new experiments with everyday materials lead an artist in new directions by yielding fresh forms, lines and effects, and viewers can explore the handling of specific materials in paintings.

The writings of Marshall McLuhan and Clement Greenberg on modern art and aesthetics are insightful in explaining the medium of an art work and experiments with various materials.⁵⁰ McLuhan contends that the medium of an artwork/object constitutes a message which sometimes overrides the syntagmatic or primary content.⁵¹ In contemporary art production, James Elkins insists on the significance of materiality.⁵² Elkins' earlier analysis suggested that close-up inspections of artworks replaced historicity with materiality; in other words, close inspection hindered visibility.⁵³ In his altered judgement, he stressed the importance of materialities in contemporary art and



Figure 3. *Whiskey wash*, 2007, ink and whiskey, rendered with a tattoo gun, 65 x 74 in. Courtesy: The artist and Chatterjee & Lal.

that materialities cannot be limited to symbolic representational analysis.⁵⁴ In Apang's case, the closing in of distance between the object of scrutiny and the gaze alone reveals the inks flowing into each other and the deliberate chaos of smudges which precede the editing and creation of forms. These smudged inks represent one idea and memory flowing into the other as she recalls her childhood.

The cosmopolitanism of method shows Apang's complete rejection of visuality and objectification of the animal works. The animals are not subjected to scrutiny, observation or study; instead they are more like free-floating beings in the pictorial space. They are imagistic representations of the artist's memories, thoughts and ideas. Hence, as noted by art critic Gitanjali Dang, conceptually and compositionally, the artist avoids the pitfalls of steering these paintings in the direction of some 'topical' socio-political 'animal'⁵⁵ cause.⁵⁶ Instead, their usage is subtly interwoven as part of a collaborative human-animal text. The collaboration becomes literal as Apang's cat, Simyo, walks across the seven-foot-wide painting laid out on the floor.⁵⁷ The artist leaves her contribution to the artistic process in the form of colour stains and tearing of the sides.⁵⁸ Apang tweaks one of Simyo's inputs into a feline body reminiscent of a tiger, which is what *Simyo* means in Adi, Apang's mother tongue.⁵⁹

The animal's contributions remind one of Olly and Suzi's works. Since 1993, the artists have attempted to get as close as possible to animals in the wild across Africa, Asia and the Arctic tundra to paint their likeness.⁶⁰ Their own work becomes a performance as it is documented by the photographer Greg Williams, who travels with the artists.⁶¹ Steve Baker records:

...whenever possible the depicted animals are encouraged, without manipulation or coercion, to 'inter-act' with the work and mark it further themselves. This may take the form of bears or elephants leaving prints or urine stains on the image or of chunks being bitten off a piece by a wolf or a shark.⁶²

Olly and Suzi's works are read as surfaces which allow human-animal exchange. The human-animal and animal-animal

trademarks in this interactive performance.⁶³ Similarly, the washed-out chart papers and smudged and stained contours in *Peel* ready themselves to absorb the wonder and fear gleaned from the liquid world of mythology and folklore as seen in Apang's next series.

In 2008, Apang documents mythical tales of war between two clans in her native state of Arunachal Pradesh. This series reinforces the role of visual art in expanding the cycle of oral hi(stories), their interpretations, interpolations, commentaries and critical reviews. The epics, *Ramayana* (700 BCE) and *Mahabharata* (400 BCE) have enjoyed regional retellings and variations in mediaeval India. A plausible explanation for this is that Indians preferred adaptations over verbatim translations; the new versions were not translations, but 'transcreations'.⁶⁴ Other factors which shaped these adaptations were the literary genres within which the authors wrote their religious affiliations and socio-cultural milieus.⁶⁵

The visual repertoire of these epics include myriad sets of early manuscript paintings of the *Bhagavata Purana* (Stories of Lord Vishnu) (1400) and later sets produced at the Mughal, Rajput and Pahari courts between 1500 and 1800, as well as temple sculptures in South and South East Asia (500–1300). Likewise *Panchatantra* (200 BCE–300 BCE) of Pandit Vishnu Sharma has witnessed several re-interpretations in written, oral and visual genres across Asia. It has re-appeared in Arabic and Persian translations such as *Kalilah wa Dimnah* (Kalila and Dimna, Arabic) (750) and *Anwar-i-Suhaili* (Lights of Canopus, Persian) (1500) among two hundred adaptations in fifteen languages.⁶⁶ Apang records, 'Stories (myths from Arunachal) were traditionally conveyed orally; in extension of this gesture is my own visual telling as my contribution to this eternal flux of transmitted histories'.⁶⁷

Apang's is a hi(story) of human clans and the marking of their identities through representative symbols or totems. Nineteenth-century anthropologists explained totemism as the appropriation of nature for social organisation. As explained by Claude Levi-Strauss, totemism is a system wherein empirically observable

differences in nature are used to organise social units.⁶⁸ Emile Durkheim observed how social identity is concentrated in clans which trace descent from common ancestors.⁶⁹ Typically, each clan claims descent from an animal or plant species and sometimes even from rocks, planets, stars. Totems become markers of identity and modes of social organisation for humans, their rights to property, matrimonial alliances and other areas of social and economic life. For Durkheim, totemic societies used the natural world/animals around them to construct an understanding of their lives; thus these societies constantly problematised the orthodox and rigid opposition between nature and humans.⁷⁰

Two clans which practised totemism in Apang's native Arunachal Pradesh were identified variously as the 'fish people' and the 'star people' in a famous myth titled *War with the Stars*:

Long ago, the Stars and the Fish used to marry each other but in time they divided into clans. With the Fish was their brother Otter. One day the Star-people wanted to perform a sacrifice but they had no *mithun* or pig for it, so they set a trap and caught the Otter. They thought it would be all right as long as the Fish-people didn't find out, so they hurriedly sacrificed him. But just as they were cutting up the meat, the Bat flew by and asked what it was that they were doing. They made the Bat sit down by the fire, they flattered him and gave him beer to drink and a generous share of the meat.

'Don't tell anybody,' they said, 'especially not the Fish-people.'

'Of course, I won't,' promised the Bat.

As he spoke, the head of the dead Otter gave a jeering laugh and they were all frightened.

When the feast was over, the Bat flew away to the village of the Fish-people and found them weeping for their missing brother. He was about to go into one of their houses, but they stopped him.

'Someone has died: it is taboo.'

The Bat was annoyed and said, 'What do you know about people dying? If I were to come in, I could tell you something really interesting.'

The Fish-people let him into the house at once and said, 'Tell us quickly: what is it?'

The Bat told the story of the captured Otter and his sacrifice, and added, 'They gave me some of the meat and I ate it too'.

The Fish-people were greatly disturbed to hear this and called a council of all the Earth-people and decided to fight the Star-people. This war goes on for ever and the Fish come out to fight the Stars whenever there are heavy clouds and the Stars strike back with lightning.⁷¹

These tales were part of the folklore and pagan realms of Arunachali life. They constituted a liquid, fluid and malleable world which stood in stark contrast against the formalism of Apang's Christian upbringing. These tales belonged to that same orbit of exotic, indigenous people and cultures of the orient and aboriginal who lived in close proximity to nature. Various colonial projects documented the otherness of these Indian tribes visually and textually. Many of these projects grew meaningfully as part of national policy-making in independent India. Verrier Elwin (1902–1964), a self-taught anthropologist and Deputy Director of the Anthropological Survey of India, shaped India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's policies towards indigenous tribes. He made copious documentations of tribal cultures in central and north-eastern India, including the fish and star people.⁷² Apang was thus receiving these stories and their differing versions from oral traditions as well as Elwin's publications. Her retrieval of these stories was a way to connect with her home-state when she began to lead a peripatetic life.

The form of the fish, the star people, the otter are obvious but what lies beneath this representative plane is Apang's process of conceptualising the themes and choosing and applying the materials. Apang chooses ink, ink pen, acrylic and tea for these works. While acrylic and the ink pen define sharp lines, she entrusts the inks with the responsibility of creating the same liquid and fluid worlds of the local folklore. For her, 'characters die and re-appear *ad nauseum*, beginnings and endings are indistinguishable.'⁷³ In this world, tales freely travel and meld



Figure 4. *He Wore Them Like Talismans All Over His Body*, 2008, ink, acrylic and tea on fabiano cold-pressed paper, 54.5 x 72.5 in, Courtesy: The artist and Chatterjee & Lal.

with different versions and conclusions. They expand, abridge and are trans-created as opposed to being translated. As characters change traits and personalities her inks do not always etch them as vividly, as seen in the case of the heavily ink-smeared bat. But on a relative scale, a select character such as the otter emerges as someone with an unchangeable personality and role, being the sacrificial offer that he became. His form is rendered on a grid, akin to an architect's drawing. Also, the detailing of the fish scales bears more definite lines and a graphic quality when compared to the overall smudging in *Peel*. Once again, evoking Elkins helps understand why the painter's manipulation of materials should not be concealed from the viewer's gaze for muting the materials means muting how Apang and her community understand and retell these folk stories.

The contrasts between smudges and sharp lines bring us back to Apang's wrestling with two contrasting traditions: the pagan and the Christian.

Much of my works are an expression of this process of reclaiming my own sense of location. The disconnected, non-linear

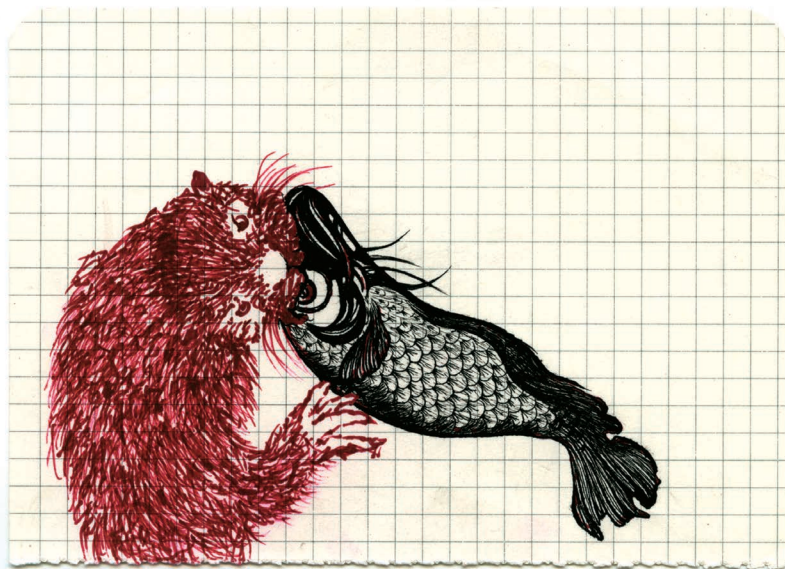


Figure 5. *Chorus for Brother Otter*, 2008, pen and ink on notebook paper, 4.5 x 4 in (each set of 29 works), Courtesy: The artist and Chatterjee & Lal.



Figure 6. *27 Martyrs*, 2008, ink and pen on handmade paper, 21.5 x 29.75 in, Courtesy: The artist and Chatterjee & Lal.

dream-vocabulary of myths and folktales offered me a form of expression ideally suited to my hybrid teleology. The fluid structure allows for inverted realities and multiple tellings.⁷⁴

While investigating animal studies in art, Ron Broglio suggests that there is no one telling of the animal world and animal phenomenology;⁷⁵ similarly, there is no one talking about the shared realms of myth and totemism, humans and animals. Apang's experiences of plural cultures may have shaped this attitude of inclusiveness which is also reflected in a caption to her work, *St. Francis Speaks to the Fish Army*. For Ashis Nandy, in the South Asian context, religious ideology is a fixed system of beliefs codified by text(s) whereas faith encompasses a non-monolithic and plural way of life.⁷⁶ If it is so then Apang possibly resolves faith (pagan realm) and ideology (Christian realm) in the malleable world of inks, washes and smudging lines to (re)claim her position as a cosmopolitan thinker-artist. For her, 'the works in this series frame a visual re-reading that draws on the liquid



Figure 7. *Saint Francis speaks to the Fish Army*, 2008, ink, acrylic and tea on fabriano cold-pressed paper, 21.5 x 29.25 in, Courtesy: The artist and Chatterjee & Lal.

worlds of myths in which the elements of the narrative are not restricted by formulaic structure or logic.⁷⁷ Likewise, perception and understanding of the interconnected worlds of humans and animals through totems and myths cannot be governed by the limits of language and human systems of understanding. This point gives value to Broglio's idea about art over philosophy: he asserts how philosophy, hitherto regarded as a more egalitarian discipline to understand the nonhuman, is also governed by the limits of language and reason but artists can create 'striking non-linguistic and asgnifying works'.⁷⁸ Similarly, Apang recognises the wide scope of Indic myths; she retains and even grows it in her paintings which are emphatically inclusive. She is aware of the simultaneous contributions of personal memory, oral traditions, community stories, printed/documented stories and the sheer scope to accommodate newer interpretations.

The Euro-American artists enjoy a default position in the 'global art' canon, while Asian artists are constantly faced with the challenge of producing works that are neither too Asian (so as to become timeless and hence not contemporary enough), nor too western (to be accused of derivation).⁷⁹ Despite these pressures, several young Asian artists have commanded critical and commercial acclaim internationally. For lack of a clear understanding (and the lack of South Asian art histories in the frame of global art history),⁸⁰ these artworks are mainly appreciated for their contemporised Asian treatment. However, Asianness is a deep-seated set of cultural values which gradually appear through the layers of visualisation of concepts, choice of materials and their treatment. The Asianness of Apang's work lies in the visual retelling of a native story and her own participation in an alternative cosmopolitanism practised by indigenous people.

The *Peel* series anthropomorphises its animal protagonists, such as the lamb, in much the same way as the *Panchatantra*, third-century Buddhist *Jataka* tales or sixteenth-century Mughal *Tutinama* (Tales of the Parrot), (originally composed in twelfth century as *Sukasaptati* in India and redacted in fourteenth-century Iran) wherein animals and birds come alive to

offer sage counsel to human beings passing through political, moral or domestic turmoil. Likewise *War with the Stars* reiterates close conversations between otters, fish, bats, humans and stars. These animals allow human cultures to frame their histories, origins and relationships with each other and with the environment. Animals occupy the same world as humans and are at once facilitators and friends. Apang's diverse tool kit and palette circumvent a narrow art-school inventory to experiment with readily available objects. Hence, while Apang's works have found a place in the arena of global contemporary art, they deftly re-territorialise Asian ideas, belief systems and practices.

Sakshi Gupta: Crafting Man-Made Metals into Animals

In this section, I argue for conceptualising the materialist critique in art historical writing. I will examine sculptural installations by a young woman artist, Delhi-based Sakshi Gupta (b.1979) to bring forth socio-economic sources of chosen materials, their skilful manoeuvring and the transubstantiation of materials into ideas. Gupta's animals are used to frame human conditions of knowing, progressing, suffering or halting due to lack/gain of knowledge, will or energy. Sometimes, issues facing animal studies are woven into her visual narratives. At other times, her nonhuman beasts possess intentions, desires and higher spiritual capacities. Clearly, Gupta crosses in and out of the worlds of anthropomorphism, animism and one that belongs to animals only.

Untitled (2009) lodges a pig in an iron shutter. From afar, the installation seems to be hinting at a helpless animal stuck in a human contraption but a close look reveals a mild and delightful expression on the pig's face and the contrast of the rear body shows up. Hair rollers move in clockwise and anti-clockwise directions with the help of a motor to make this a kinetic sculpture. This mechanisation-induced convulsion for a moment takes the viewer back to slaughter houses and their constant search for profitable, sophisticated means of killing. A constant process of generating meanings is possible since one

can enter the expanded space of the sculpture, walk around it and appreciate it from multiple vantage points (many of these vantage points being placed in close proximity of the work). This conscious and emotional immersion is facilitated by what art writer and curator Deeksha Nath refers to as the participatory aspect, which in Rosalind Krauss' terms may be understood as 'expanded sculpture'.⁸¹ It allows the viewer to step into the field of the artwork and become ensconced in its space as opposed to viewing it from a distance.⁸² This inherently collaborative principle (wherein the artwork, artist and viewer converge in the same space) allows a close viewing of materials, textures and detailed embellishments, thereby activating the entire space and actualising the artwork.

Older artworks which facilitate similar immersion by virtue of their scale, placement and artistic merit come to mind: the majestic monolithic *Varaha* (Boar) sculpture in the western temple complex of Khajuraho (950–1200), Madhya Pradesh, is placed in the centre of the hall. The numerous divine and celestial beings carved on its body can be seen closely and appreciated for the idea of divine kingship which the sculpture signifies.⁸³ A similar wondrous quality is evoked in the large scale of the *Hamzanama*, a set of 1400 folios bound in fourteen volumes. Though these paintings belong to the tradition of 'miniature' manuscript painting, they were produced on a much larger scale at the royal atelier of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556–1605) between 1562 and 1577 under the Persian master artists, Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd us-Samad. They are visual narrations of the legendary stories of prophet Muhammad's uncle, Amir Hamza. These folios accompanied the *dastangoi* (storytelling sessions) which were popular at the patron's court and were hence produced in large size to offer an engaging experience.⁸⁴

The flexible, immersive format of viewing Gupta's sculptural installation enables multiple ways of seeing. The calmness and convulsion reveal that the pig is not dying. Gupta purposely selects the animal 'to point a knowing finger at how we sometimes tend to augment our own dead-end by not only being too



Figure 8. *No Title*, 2009, iron shutter, concrete, resin, fiber, mat, hair roller, motor, 205 x 121 x 87 cm, Courtesy: GallerySKE.

stuck to our conditions but almost revelling and relishing them'.⁸⁵ This self-induced condition of being (loosely) stuck in the iron shutter mirrors a human position and the animal is only an analogous being. The pig helps to recall Donna Haraway's hybrid animal-machine or the cyborg⁸⁶ or quite simply a perverse laboratory experiment wherein both conditions of the animal, the delightful and convulsing, are controlled and engineered.

In a reversal of the anthropocentric and/or anthropomorphic strand which defines the pig, Gupta steps out of the human position to consider some higher states of being for animals. *Donkey* (2010) and *Bird* (2010) represent human states of ignorance or non-learning, followed by deeper introspection for self-realisation and knowledge. The sagging body of an exhausted donkey seems to have been through an arduous journey in search of knowledge but true to its most popular image in South Asian culture, he remains challenged to learn. Gupta's statement however defies this cliché and suggests that the *Donkey* begins by 'accepting his flaws and knowing himself' as the first steps to the path of knowledge.⁸⁷

The *Bird* (2010) on the other hand appears to have arrived at a point where it discovers the unknown. A skeletal bird, at the end of its physical bodily journey, seems to have reached the deep recesses of its own mind; it is reborn as a new, knowing being. *Bird* (2015) shows a similar moment of knowing and realisation wherein the stark iron body is stripped of its wings. It does not need these physical attributes to soar higher as it has arrived at a higher state of being. The artist regards this bird for its simultaneous heft (in the usage of a heavy metal such as iron) and vulnerability (the body laid bare).⁸⁸ Bereft of feathers, colour and texture, the body displays that moment of transition into an afterlife or enlightened moment.

Here the donkey and birds are not only metaphors for human quest but Gupta unconventionally extends the possibilities of mutability in the nonhuman world. These changes are not restricted to the physical bodies of the animals but also their inner beings. Unlike the pig sculpture where there is a reference to the human through the man-made iron shutter, these



Figure 9. *No Title*, 2010, sand, fibre matt and resin, 162 x 96 x 66 cm, Courtesy: GallerySKE.



Figure 10. *No Title*, 2010, iron scrap, cast iron, 162 x 96 x 66 cm, Courtesy: GallerySKE.



Figure 11. *Bird Work 2*, 2015, papier mache, iron rod, 38 x 127 cm, Courtesy: GallerySKE.





Figure 12.1 & 12.2, *Untitled*, 2009, metal scrap, 227.5 x 265.5 x 31.5 cm, Courtesy: GallerySKE.

spectacularly crafted birds and the donkey are stand-alone, outside of the human sphere. Gupta's artistic compositions create animals with intentions, thoughts and aspirations. Dwelling in an animistic frame, her animals are imagined, visualised and crafted as persons or entities with personhood.⁸⁹ Alternatively, Gupta's works express concern about those mutations and alterations in the natural world which are caused by the human agent. This is best evoked in a sculptural work mounted on a wall *Untitled* (2009). It represents the earth and is made of metallic sheaths. A close-up inspection reveals the laborious process of collating metal scraps to form mutant sceneries of the land and possibly the ocean. This drawing of materials from global economies is also a way of critiquing and satirising established structures.⁹⁰

The rapidly changing materiality of sculptural installations in India since the 1990s bears immense potential to transmit meaning and imaginative power.⁹¹ A fitting phrase, 'magnetism of the surface' explains the use of sensuous and diverse materials

to create and recreate new surfaces.⁹² Gupta's mining of scrap dumps and the vast range of materials to construct new surfaces is testimony to this 'fascination with the surface' in the case of sculptural installation.⁹³ Metals and industrial scrap carry fixed meanings and occupy definite locations: factories/dumping grounds; Gupta exploits the original meaning and location of metal/scrap and renews it as valuable art material which comprises new meanings, thereby undercutting its original uniqueness as belonging to the world of mechanisation and industry. The artist brings man-made metals in a seemingly untenable but profoundly meaningful continuum with nature and animals. In Gupta's sculptural work, the metals and metal scrap that are hazardous to the planet are used ironically to construct the swirling waves and geological formations in this large mass of terrestrial and oceanic layers. McLuhan and Greenberg's focus on the medium is altered in Jean Baudrillard's incisive observation of postmodern art practice, 'The medium is no longer identifiable as such, and the confusion of the medium and message is the first great formula of this new era.'⁹⁴ Baudrillard points to the importance of understanding the diverse materialities of different genres which are normally overlooked under the all-encompassing rubric of medium. As a result, the paradoxical, ironical and satirical combinations of materials and ideas of the artist are revealed.

The works of contemporary western artists such as Hirst, Coates, Olly and Suzi express the artists' engagement with real animal bodies. These bodies offer a serious opportunity to think about non man-made materiality that is nature.⁹⁵ But Gupta's works, like most Indian artists who deal with sculptures/installations, remain confined to a man-made materiality. Her utilisation of organic forms such as bird feathers is kept to a bare minimum. To that effect, her works are far from bio art which uses actual animal bodies or materials yet she crafts compelling and alternative animal bodies, skins and textures with diverse materials. *Untitled* (2009) is a metal carcass of an odd rooster with a giant body and tiny feet and head. The patterned and ridged surface of the metal recreates the feathers; thus organic

likeness is replicated within hard, often recycled material of an industrial provenance. *Some Beast* (2008) is a riveting work of an animal experiencing moulting of its skin and possibly a shedding of its delicate mesh and gauze-like wings. The numerous meanings of *Some Beast* might not shine through but for the vast materiality of the sculpture, even if man-made and non-animal. Hanging from the ceiling and expanding down towards the base as it touches the floor, the animal sheds its outer layers. Its physical placement at a height echoes the higher rank of revered birds, animals and fantastic creatures in painting and architecture.

In the case of sculpture/installation, meaning can be found in the many materials and parts which make the overall form. An up-close inspection of *Some Beast* reveals rusted scrap and soldered metal pieces representing the idea of war machines. These machines occupy esteemed positions (like the revered birds and creatures) in a world of hyper nationalisms, religious strife and impending wars. The writhing beast-war machine recreates an entire world which is tormented and aspiring to change. The work provides an aesthetic-sensory experience as the viewer walks in and around the spaces of the large beast, experiencing the multiple levels at which its parts are (dis)placed. Literally, this artwork has no fixed boundaries in terms of a start or end enabling it to engage with other themes such as war, sacred iconography and the spiritual realm, all of which go beyond the animal. The 'theatricality' of the sculpture shaped by 'symbolic' and 'narrative' dimensions,⁹⁶ along with the 'material' dimension leads the viewer to multiple meanings.

Discussions in contemporary art especially related to physical and cultural surfaces, contest the notion that animals live on the surface and argue for understanding animals from a post-humanist perspective.⁹⁷ This post-humanist perspective—other beings have their own rational, spiritual and evolutionary faculties—is enlivened in Gupta's skeletal bird and even the donkey whose final moment of looking within himself actually subjugates popular associations about the donkey in South Asian cultures. She contends what biologists and ethicists have





Figure 13.1 and 13.2. *Some Beast*, 2008, scrap iron, soldering material, 7" (diameter) x 7.5" (length), Courtesy: GallerySKE.

been suggesting: animals possess abilities for deeper thinking and perception than has been imagined. Gupta mostly represents animals as a highly independent agency living beyond and beneath the surface. For her, like Coates, Olly, Suzi and Broglio, we need to give up the humanist position to comprehend the nonhumans.⁹⁸

Western artworks visibly or invisibly use animal bodies. Examples of visible use of animal bodies are the cow used by Hirst or the badger head worn by Coates, and Olly and Suzi employ marks of the real animal body in paintings. The invisible use of animal bodies involves brushes and colour pigments containing animal body parts. For Aloï, such invisible uses of animal bodies cause a decentring of the anthropocentric gaze and also limit the opportunities for exploring more experimental approaches.⁹⁹ But Gupta's works, which do not constitute animal bodies, show a variety of experiments and strongly contest the anthropocentric gaze as examined in the sourcing and arrangement of materials, and represent plural ideas and agencies ranging from enlightened birds to tenacious pigs and

learned donkeys. The materials used by Gupta do not carry any trace of visible/invisible histories of animal violence but this is precisely the alternative aesthetic which, at once, undercuts bio art and yet retains the same impact. Ideas that Hirst projects through the visible animal body are here constructed poignantly through active rejection of real animal bodies in favour of altogether different materials i.e., metal scrap, fibre, concrete and resin. Animal matter is not only rendered invisible, it is absent altogether; hence it is up to the artist's craft, in this case the collation and treatment of hard materials to draw in the viewer. The choice of materials subverts the methodological certainty of taxidermy seen in installation or performance art and representation of animals as seen in painting or video art.

In the end, the reality is also about how the 'means' of art-making differ today between several first and third world geographies.¹⁰⁰ It does not mean that Asian artists do not work with real animals at all. Pakistani artist, Huma Mulji's taxidermied buffaloes and camels abound in galleries and exhibitions. They are used to call on issues of human identity, migration or even a trenchant critique of urbanisation. So whereas there might be access to procuring these animal bodies, it appears like the industrial and cultural economies of India offer expansive mines of assorted raw materials, hand-made objects and machine-produced goods: jewels, metals, decorative products, industrial goods, fabrics, artisanal tools, etc. Age-old craft traditions and their contemporary practitioners complement this rich offering. It must be noted that the project of empires and colonisation grew on the strength of their colonies' craft economies, in addition to agriculture and trade.¹⁰¹ Colonial exhibitions hailed Asian colonies for their high standards in hand-produced crafts, especially a marked compatibility between materials and designs.¹⁰² This astute understanding of materials was attributed to the caste system which determined hereditary occupations and consequently expanded and safeguarded knowledge of materials and their treatment.¹⁰³

Much like Verrier Elwin's protectionist policy towards tribal cultures (which has ensured retellings of the Fish and

Star People's stories), postcolonial nation states appointed specialists to champion policies for craft-promotion. These efforts have ensured continuity in most caste-based specialisations. As a result, Indian artists collaborate with specialists such as metalsmiths, weavers, embroiderers and sculptors. Their expertise can facilitate making of casts and moulds, fine textiles, inlay work, woodwork and metal welding, and they should be recognised as equal partners in the burgeoning materiality of South Asian contemporary art.¹⁰⁴ So, in addition to the arena of factories and junkyards, it is the socio-cultural domain of the crafts and handiwork, their material offerings and ideologies of labour-intensive production which inform Gupta's concepts, materials and representation.

Conclusion

Ron Broglio's deduction of two kinds of surfaces in the production of contemporary art, the material and cultural, help conclude this article. The double fold of these surfaces creates an expressive language which opens new directions to think about animals and about plural art histories. In terms of the cultural surface (or depth), Minam Apang and Sakshi Gupta access the field, primary texts, materials and practices which come to occupy their works in highly original models and combinations of content, themes, materials and methods. These underlying cultural systems define contemporary South Asian artworks and the latter need to be evaluated for these deeper differences vis-a-vis the surface difference which is repeatedly endorsed as Asian. Like the whole of art history, increasingly recognised to be a multicultural space, artworks which address animal themes are also informed by multicultural beliefs and practices. Artists from India tend to locate animals in mythological, religious and folkloric frameworks for, as examined earlier, they are a part of Indic or the Indo-Persian narrative traditions, and hence may or may not have been theorised as an object of study external to the human/cultural subject.¹⁰⁵ In fact, the body of the animal is as transient as the human body in the larger scheme of *karma*,

the endless cycles of birth and rebirth wherein one's meritorious deeds count before one is liberated. So also, Sufi Islam utilises composite beings to emphasise the impermanence of the material world and birds often take flight to lead humans in the final quest for God.

In the absence of this idea of transience, western artists' engagement with animal bodies may be explained through the theoretical emphases of postmodernism on the other; historically mediated relations with the nonhuman world are constantly questioned by the postmodern artist, sometimes with the use of philosophy.¹⁰⁶ The South Asian traditions seem to have already mediated the human-animal relation through philosophy where non-human characters are cast in anthropomorphic and animistic frames. Considering these philosophies are authored by humans, the larger gaze may be viewed as anthropocentric.

However, to counter that argument one can underline the highly imaginative manner in which the birds and animals are bestowed with their own personalities as pedagogues and enlightened beings, in Firdausi's *Shahnameh*, Faridud-din Attar's *Manteq at-Tair*, Pandit Vishnu Sharma's *Panchatantra* and the Arunachali community's *War with the Stars*. South Asian systems of thinking displayed avant garde combinations of art, imagination and philosophy which chose to address ideas beyond the realm of reason. These systems had already stepped out of humanist positions to think of the other. Hence the contemporary artists, interpreters and commentators of these philosophies tend to dispense with the real animal body for there is no heritage or baggage of Enlightenment rationalism and objectification of the animal body to be questioned or critiqued.

The conceptual and formalist boundaries of the animal are constantly pushed with the help of the material. Indian contemporary art, whether painting or installation, may be read as 'materialising (cultural)¹⁰⁷ knowledge through concrete procedures of bricolage'.¹⁰⁸ As a result many minor and major objects which may be recycled, machine-produced, hand-made or quite simply available at hand are applied to the painting or re-crafted into an installation. These materials come from a combination

of older self-sufficient craft economies and new rapidly expanding factory-style output both of which co-exist in India. The language used by contemporary Indian art does not risk trivialising the animal world as with the case of language; instead its limitless 'play with surfaces,' scales and material objects brings out the limitless possibilities of engaging the animal world without using real/preserved animal body. In fact, the wide range of non-animal materials go well beyond the cultural meaning of animal and instead display different ways of being animal. This kind of experimental art shows awareness of mutability, change and shifting positions of various beings. It challenges human interiority as the only space for thinking animals by distributing modes of thinking physically, materially and culturally. So while contemporary art in general allows a re-worlding of animals, a culturally informed investigation of animal compositions from India facilitates a re-worlding of the animal and Asian art.

Pierre Bourdieu gives his reasons for the sheer diversity of postmodern art:

both the production and consumption of works that emerged from a long tradition of ruptures with tradition carry with them a cargo of historical references, becoming simultaneously thoroughly historical and dehistoricised. They refer to a multitude of forms but truly remember none of them nor the conditions of their creation. History is reduced to a pure history of forms, laid out like a table from which any combination of options can be selected.¹⁰⁹

However, this survey of Minam Apang and Sakshi Gupta's works nuance Bourdieu's model to establish that the process is less random and more internalised than merely picking forms from a table with a vast offering. In picking donkeys instead of conventionally wise creatures, in picking factory scrap instead of precious materials and in trying to represent epics and folklore with fresh plots, there is a systematic acculturation and socialisation into Asianness; all the same, there is an equally systematic aspiration to subjugate all surface constructions of Asianness.

Notes

1. Giovanni Aloï, "Animal Studies and Art: Elephants in the Room," *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture* (March 2015): 3–5, 25–6.

2. Christoph Cox, "Of Humans, Animals and Monsters," in *Becoming Animal: Contemporary Art in the Animal Kingdom*, ed. Nato Thompson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 18–25. Adrian Franklin, "Thinking about Nature: Disciplinary Beginnings," in *Nature and Social Theory*, ed. Adrian Franklin (London: Sage, 2002), 3–26.

3. Cox, "Of Humans," 19.

4. Ibid.

5. Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1.

6. The Biblical King Solomon becomes exemplary as an investigator of nature and inspires the mediaeval European courts of the Bavarian Dukes, the Austrian Habsburgs and their Asian contemporaries such as the Mughal Emperor Jehangir to cultivate scientific attitudes and encourage natural history studies. Ebba Koch, "Jahangir as Francis Bacon's Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19, no. 3 (2009): 294–97.

7. The centrality of reason and the belief that the universe is built on reason are stressed by Plato, Saint Thomas and Rene Descartes. Immanuel Kant further narrowed down the location of reason to humans. Their understanding was that the universe is built upon reason; through the application of reason we as humans understand the rules by which the universe works. Cox, "Of Humans," 19–20.

8. Franklin, "Thinking about Nature," 20.

9. Ibid.

10. Cox, "Of Humans," 18, 20.

11. Ibid., 20, 22.

12. Franklin, "Thinking about Nature," 23–4.

13. Cox, "Of Humans," 22–4.

14. Laurie S. Adams cited in Aloï, "Animal Studies and Art," 25.

15. Most primers on art historical approaches and methodologies do not discuss animals in art as a dedicated section. Eric Fernie, *Art History and its Methods* (London: Phaidon, 1995); Gombrich E.H., *The Uses of Images* (London: Phaidon, 1999); Donald Preziosi, *The Art of Art History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

16. Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 20. In contrast, art historical writings on South Asian traditions bring the animal discussion to the fore. See note 80.

17. Adams, *The Methodologies of Art*.

18. Aloï, "Animal Studies and Art," 25.

19. Ron Broglio, *Surface Encounters: Thinking with Animals and Art* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xvi.

20. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, xvii.

21. J.M. Coetzee, Marjorie Garber, Peter Singer, Wendy Doniger, & Barbara Smuts, "The Lives of Animals," in *The Lives of Animals*, ed. Gutmann Amy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 61.

22. Industrialisation and its attendant components of the slaughterhouse, supermarket, and their chains of supply tend to play with the idea of making certain stages of procurement, slaughter and packing invisible and others such as the final presentation more visible and inviting for the viewer/consumer. Hirst tends to conflate the two stages in his art.

23. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 82.

24. Aloï, "Animal Studies and Art," 6.

25. Becoming-animal is a concept elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their seminal book, *Kafka*. In the book, animals propose to the human on how they can escape and find a way out to deterritorialize themselves. Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

26. Baker, *The Postmodern Animal*, 12; Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 82.

27. Baker, *The Postmodern Animal*, 12.

28. Ibid., 18.

29. Ibid.

30. Email correspondence with Shonaleeka Kaul, Assistant Professor, Delhi University, dated 15 September 2016. Kaul is a cultural historian of early South Asia specialising in working with Sanskrit texts.

31. Wendy Doniger et al., *The Lives of Animals*, 93–106.

32. The theory of *karma* or retributive action supposes an endless cycle of births and rebirths in various bodily forms which range from the animal to human. During these life-spans the individual accrues merit based on his actions and thoughts. Accumulation of (good *karmic*) merit finally liberates the soul from this cycle and merges it with the Supreme Reality.

33. This article uses the term 'nature' interchangeably to also mean 'animal' or 'nonhuman'. Likewise, it uses the term 'culture' interchangeably to denote the 'human'. Monism may be explained through the idea of *Brahman* (Absolute Reality); individuals, plants and animals are reflections/essences of the Brahman and can merge with its singularity. Email discussion with Shonaleeka Kaul.

34. Sheila Canby, *Islamic Art in Detail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 66.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. "Storyteller's Corner: *Shahnameh* Synopsis," <http://www.bl.uk/learning/cult/inside/corner/shah/synopsis.html/> (accessed on 27 September 2016).

39. Faridud-din Attar, *Conference of the Birds*, trans. Afham Darbandi & Dick Davis (London: Penguin, 1984). Faridud-din Attar, *Conference of the Birds: A Seeker's Journey to God*, trans. Rustom Masani (Boston, MA: Weiser Books, 2001).

40. Canby, *Islamic Art in Detail*, 66.

41. Ibid.

42. Nivedita Magar, *Minam Apang: Peel* (Mumbai: Chatterjee and Lal, 2007), 2. Pages in this exhibition catalogue are not numbered; hence the author has identified the three pages which carry the essay as text pages 1–3.

43. Ibid.

44. Author's revision and emphasis.

45. Magar, *Minam Apang*, 2.

46. Ibid., 1.

47. *Peel* continues to use acrylic but plays mostly with inks and other liquid materials.

48. Magar, *Minam Apang*, 3.

49. Gerard Delanty, "Introduction: the Emerging Field of Cosmopolitan Studies," in *Cosmopolitanism: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*, eds. David Inglis & Gerard Delanty, Vol. III (London: Routledge, 2011), 2.

50. Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message* (London: Penguin Books, 1967); Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Francina Francis & Charles Harrison (London: Sage, 1982).

51. McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message*.
52. James Elkins, *What Painting Is* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000).
53. James Elkins, "On some Limits of Materiality in Art History," 31: *Das Magazin des Instituts fur Theorie* 12 (2008): 5.
54. Elkins, *What Painting Is*.
55. Author's emphasis.
56. Gitanjali Dang, "Signs of Whimsy," *Hindustan Times (Ht Café)* (23 February 2007).
57. Deepanjana Pal, "Cat Scan," *Time Out Mumbai* (7 February 2007).
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Baker, *The Postmodern Animal*, 11.
61. Ibid., 12.
62. Ibid.
63. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 82.
64. Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature, 500–1399: From Courtly to the Popular* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2005), 132.
65. Ibid.
66. Olivelle Patrick trans., *The Panchatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), ix.
67. Minam Apang, "War with the Stars: Artist Statement," <http://chatterjeeandlal.com/shows/war-with-the-stars/> (accessed on 4 November 2016).
68. C. Levi-Strauss, *Le Totemisme Aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962).
69. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).
70. Ibid.
71. Apang, "War With the Stars".
72. Verrier Elwin, *The Oxford India Elwin: Selected Writings* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009).
73. Apang, "War with the Stars: Artist Statement."
74. Ibid.
75. As explained by Ron Broglio, animal life or animal phenomenology is a question which serves as a point of departure. Further considerations reveal different types of animals, different breeds of each animal and so on. 'Indeed each sort of animal carries itself

differently on earth and fashions a different sort of world'. To augment the different answers to animal phenomenology, one also has to move away from humanism or at least from the given animal-human dichotomy. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, xxii.

76. Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," in *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, ed. Veena Das (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 70.

77. Apang, "War with the Stars: Artist Statement."

78. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, xx.

79. Vishakha Desai, "Introduction," in *Asian Art History: In the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Vishakha Desai (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007), vii.

80. Art historical writings dedicated to South Asian visual traditions provide valuable insights into the use of animal form in Asian art and culture; however these remain quite distant from the discourses on global contemporary art which draw on Euro-American art historical writings. Key areas of scholarship are animals as anthropomorphised beings in temple sculptures, hunting scenes and trophy animals as expressions of Mughal sovereignty, and animals accruing *karmic* merit to gain enlightenment in the Jain and Buddhist traditions. For further readings see: Calambur Sivaramamurti, *Art of India* (New York, NY: H.N. Abrams, 1993); Anand Pandian, "Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 14, no. 1 (2001).

81. Rosalind Krauss quoted in Deeksha Nath, "Language of an Idealized Revolt: Sculptural Installation from the 1990s to the Present," in *Art and Visual Culture in India 1857–2007*, ed. Gayatri Sinha (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2009), 252.

82. Ibid.

83. In Hindu mythology, the boar symbolises the King saving his kingdom from enemies just as the boar saved Mother Earth from the demon Hiranyaksha in the mythology of Lord Vishnu's ten incarnations. For further reading see Devangana Desai, *Khajuraho: Monumental Legacy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

84. John W. Seyller & W.M. Thackston, *The Adventures of Hamza: Painting and Storytelling in Mughal India* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2002).

85. Sakshi Gupta, "Recent Works: Artist Statement," <http://www.galleryske.com/SakshiGupta/Sakshi2009/Sakshi09.html> (accessed on 4 November 2016).

86. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007).

87. Gupta, "Recent Works: Artist Statement."

88. Gupta's choice of factory scrap also plays with the idea of weight, heavy metals and industrialisation against the age of weightlessness or information technology. The basic idea underpinning her works has further connotations in trying to juxtapose heft with fragility or lightness. Ibid.

89. Molly Mullin, "Mirrors and Windows: Sociocultural Studies of Human-Animal Relationships," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999): 202.

90. Nath, "Language of an Idealized Revolt," 251.

91. Ibid., 250.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Jean Baudrillard quoted in Nicolas De Oliveira, Nicola Oxley & Michael Petry, *Installation Art in the New Millennium: The Empire of the Senses* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 14.

95. Aloï, "Animal Studies and Art," 10.

96. Nath, "Language of an Idealized Revolt," 253.

97. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*.

98. Ibid., xviii.

99. Aloï, "Animal Studies and Art," 10.

100. This idea is read by Deeksha Nath in Riyas Komu's work. Nath, "Language of an Idealized Revolt," 254.

101. For a discussion on how British trade exploited Indian crafts to its advantage, see Arindam Dutta, *The Beauty of Bureaucracy: Design in the Age of its Global Reproducibility* (London: Routledge, 2006).

102. Richard Redgrave, *Supplementary Report on Design in The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations: Reports by the Juries on the Subjects in the Thirty Classes into which the Exhibition was divided* (London: Spicer Bros., 1852), 708–09.

103. Ibid.

104. Nancy Adajania, "Hema Upadhyay: Sifting through the tragedy to remember a special person," <http://scroll.in/article/801317/hema-upadhyay-sifting-through-the-tragedy-to-remember-a-special-person> (accessed 20 September 2016).

105. Not to say that western artists do not have similar folkloric frames of reference; however their treatment and re-narration might be different. See the case of Marcus Coates' drawing on Scottish folklore in a performance work called *Finfolk* (2003). Baker, *The Post-modern Animal*, 108–11.

106. Ibid., 17.

107. Author's improvisation and emphasis.

108. Oliveira, *Installation Art*, 7.

109. Pierre Bourdieu paraphrased in Julian Stallabrass, *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 117.

PRIYA MAHOLAY-JARADI works at Department of History, National University of Singapore, 11-Arts Link, AS1 05-32, Singapore –117570. Her email is hispmj@nus.edu.sg