

The Factual Animal: Audiovisual Representations of Real Other-than-Human Animals

The research group CULIVIAN (“Culturas Literarias y Visuales del Animal” / “Animals in Literary and Visual Cultures”) is hosting the international conference **“The Factual Animal: Audiovisual Representations of Real Other-than-Human Animals.”** The conference will be held face-to-face at the Facultat de Filologia, Traducció i Comunicació at the **Universitat de València (Spain) on November 29 – December 1, 2023.** The conference is organized as part of the CIGE/2021/100 research project, funded by the Conselleria d’Innovació, Universitats i Societat Digital, and is additionally sponsored by the Departament de Filologia Anglesa i Alemanya at the Universitat de València, and the Friends of Thoreau Program at the Instituto Franklin (Universidad de Alcalá).

In recent years and as part of the so-called “animal turn” in humans’ approach to the study and understanding of other-than-human animals, the notion of *representation* has become of utmost importance. Contrary to reproduction, which focuses on the fidelity of repetition, the semiotics of representation seek to add values and meanings through different rhetorical formats. As documentary scholar Bill Nichols once described, representation is judged “by the nature of the pleasure it offers, the value of the insight or knowledge it provides, and the quality of the orientation or disposition, tone or perspective it instills. We ask more of a representation than we do of a reproduction.” Animal Studies and Critical Animal Studies scholars have greatly advanced theories and discussions as to how other-than-human animals are represented in human cultures and the ethical implications behind such forms of framing. Following John Berger’s thesis that modernity is marked by the “disappearance” of animals and their recontextualization in the artificiality of our own cultural and technological spaces, humans’ encounters with other animals have become increasingly mediatized, to the point that, as Akira Mizuta Lippit contends, they are perpetually trapped in a state of undeadness that confronts their historical vanishment. This, of course, has ethical implications with regards to not only what it is that humans make of other animals, but also with regards to humans’ gaze over them, and the preclusion of any possibility of response. Highly relevant work has been produced exploring the representation of other-than-human animals in postmodern art (Steve Baker), popular culture (Claire Parkinson), zoos and visual cultures (Randy Malamud), film and television (Derek Bousé, Jonathan Burt, Cynthia Chris, Brett Mills, Gregg Mitman), and media (Núria Almiron, Carrie P. Freeman) – all of which delve into the ethics and aesthetics of these artificial spaces where other-than-human animals are situated.

This international conference seeks to continue exploring these issues by focusing on the representation of *real* other-than-human animals in visual and audiovisual contexts. We are interested in addressing the rhetorical methodologies of different discourses of audiovisual representation through which humans are instructed and guided into looking at and listening to in specific ways, and the ethical dilemmas that these apparatuses awaken. Mediations may be technological or involve performative spaces. Notwithstanding the fact that all representation involves some level of process, convention, norms, fictionality and story-telling, this conference’s focus on the *factual* aims to foreground the simultaneous analysis of other-than-human animal bodies and their representational embodiments.

The conference aims to explore the following topics:

- The ethics and/or aesthetics of the representation of real other-than-human animals in technological media (film/television/video/photography/journalism, etc.).
- The ethics and/or aesthetics of framing real other-than-human animals in spaces of captivity (zoos, aquaria, menageries, art exhibitions and proposals, etc.) and performances.
- The ethics and/or aesthetics of representing real other-than-human animals in the wildlife tourism industry (safaris, whale watching, etc.).
- The ethics and/or aesthetics of representing real other-than-human animals in sports and spaces of exploitation.
- Audiovisual representations of ethology and other-than-human animal behaviors.
- Audiovisual representations of animal death, suffering and the absent referent.
- Reflections on the use of categories such as species, gender, age, race, breed and/or ability in audiovisual representations of real other-than-human animals.
- Using real other-than-human animal sounds: rhetorical and editing strategies in the creation of soundscapes and their relation to other-than-human animal silenced voices or other vocalizations.
- The use of humor in audiovisual representations of real other-than-human animals.
- The ethics and/or aesthetics of representing real other-than-human animals in activist media (animal advocacy documentaries and films, in social media, audiovisual campaigns and propaganda, etc.).
- Educating the 'gaze', learning to listen, and acknowledging other sensory approaches beyond the human.
- How to disrupt anthropocentrism and work towards more animal-centered forms of representation.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Paula Casal (Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

<https://www.upf.edu/web/cae-center-for-animal-ethics/board-members-paula>

Randy Malamud (Georgia State University)

<https://cas.gsu.edu/profile/randy-malamud/>

Jo-Anne McArthur (Award-winning photographer and photojournalist)

<https://joannemcarthur.com/>

Brett Mills (Edge Hill University)

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/person/dr-brett-mills/staff/>

Claire Parkinson (Edge Hill University)

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/person/claire-parkinson/staff/>

SUBMISSIONS: We invite the submission of 250-300 word abstracts for 20-minute presentations. We also accept proposals of panels formed by 3 presentations (please include an abstract of each), roundtables and workshops. Please also include a short bionote of 150 words. All proposals must be sent to correo@culivian.es. The official language of the conference is English. However, we are also open to receiving proposals in Spanish and Valencian.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS: June 26, 2023 (acceptance of proposals will be notified by July 10).

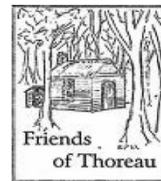
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Brett Mills

LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

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Vicent Cucarella Ramón

For more on the CULIVIAN research group, please visit: www.culivian.es



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