

**Creatures in (and outside)
the mumok Collection**

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museum moderner kunst stiftung ludwig wien



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THE ANIMAL WITHIN

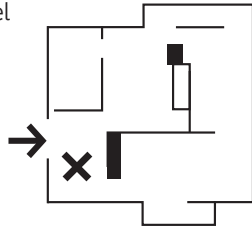
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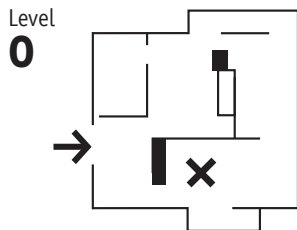
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Creepy Crawlies

All sorts of animals share our living space, beloved pets and cuddly toys but also a variety of insects. Tiny and faceless, insects are beyond our control and are not the kind of animals who obey our commands. For the bats in Walter Dahn's photography, they may be a welcome source of food, but for

humans their presence is often associated with disgust or fear. Pino Pascali's *La vedova blu* (The Blue Widow) looks at first glance like an oversized stuffed animal for children, and yet it also summons feelings of arachnophobia. In humans' involuntary coexistence with insects, we also become part of the food chain, for example for the millions of microbes that populate our bodies or for the mosquitoes that seem a mere nuisance but in many parts of the world carry disease and even bring death. Chéri Samba stages the hopeless fight against the bloodsuckers in the bedroom as a defensive game trying to simultaneously cover the "left" and "right." Insects are also active agents in the decomposition of human corpses. In her *Action "Death Control,"* Gina Pane lets maggots crawl all over her face, exposing herself (and us) to notions of death and decay. The menacing superiority of insects is clearly apparent in Peter Kogler's animated film, in which an endless column of ants marches onward, parading not only their uniform dominance in terms of numbers but also their organization, an uncanny parallel to our own world, governed equally by regulations and laws.

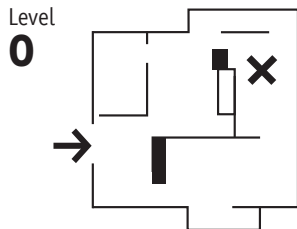


Meat Eaters

The consumption of meat is part of how we are socialized, while cannibalism looms as a horror scenario in Greek and Roman mythology, the founding legends of European culture. Chronos even devours his own children. This atrocity has never been depicted more forcefully than by Francisco de Goya, whose composition Marcel Pouget interprets in

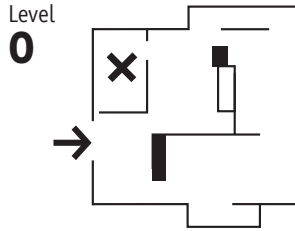
Der Fleischesser (Meat Eater) as a faceless swell of color in cold-warm contrasts. Like a cloak, the blue envelops an orange-red victim, who has been reduced to mere flesh. Capturing and killing is part of consumption. What exactly was once trapped in nets can only be guessed from Bruce Conner's *Catch*. In modern consumer industry, animals are simply commodities to be processed efficiently. In photographs taken in Paris slaughterhouses after the Second World War, fashion and society photographer Madame d'Ora casts a sober eye on the cold machinery of killing—consumer society serving here as a metaphor for war. Artist Bonnie Sherk dines at a table set in the zoo while the big cats are being fed in the cage next door, thus aligning human customs and conventions with those of “wild animals.” Carnality not only stands for the dark depths of our civilization, however, but also denotes our instinctual appetites. In Carolee Schneemann's performance *Meat Joy*, animal and human flesh is conjoined in a sensual, orgiastic experience transcending all “propriety.”

The Living Room as Hunting Ground



Animals both dead and alive are part of the bourgeois domestic interior, with knickknacks and décor in many cases manifesting a longing for far-off, exotic realms. By contrast, Ingeborg Strobl's tableware is devoid of any sentimental embellishment: Her hoof-shaped cups are modeled on slaughterhouse scraps. In Cagnaccio di San Pietro's *Still Life with Octopus* a red stain on the tablecloth disturbs the neat order, while in his *Zoologia* (Zoology) the book included in the picture exposes violence in the bedroom as animalistic drive. Animals serve as proxies for a "battle of the sexes" in Herman Prigann's *Begegnung* (Encounter). The humanoid faces of a female and male dog

are wedged into each other as the fighting animals, painted in aggressive red tones, tug at their taut leashes. Peter Weibel is likewise put on a leash, by VALIE EXPORT, who leads him through the streets of downtown Vienna like a submissive quadruped. Anna Jermolaewa's video *Mutterschaft* (Motherhood) deals with a similar chain of dependencies. While a female dog suckles her puppies, her attention is fixed not on them but on a man who is feeding her table scraps. Animals may be beloved companions, but we often keep them in cages. Joe Jones's musical *Bird Cage* and Nam June Paik's *Sonatine for Goldfish* attest to the confinement of animals for our personal entertainment in our living rooms. In Candida Höfer's series *Zoological Gardens*, animals imported from foreign countries are part of metropolitan entertainment culture, as made evident by the high-rise buildings behind the concrete architecture of the polar bear enclosure. The *Meerschweinchen-Experiment* (Guinea Pig Experiment) by Günter Brus exaggerates domestication into a bizarre outgrowth of sexual desire. Factual drawings illustrate how an erect penis can help to bring about the death of the cute rodent.



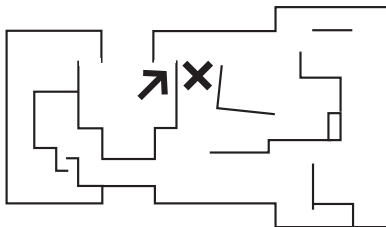
Children and Animals

On the way from the living room to the nursery, Werner Büttner's painting *Kaspar Hauser-Enten folgen einer Attrappe* (Kaspar Hauser Ducks Following a Dummy) reminds us of the effects of imprinting and education, and of the controversial experiments conducted by behavioral scientist Konrad Lorenz. In a sculpture by Büttner, an inverted wooden rabbit greets us with the sign *System Says Welcome*, indicating that even in the nursery there are rules and structures. The phase preceding human socialization is depicted in Ull Hohn's paintings of infants. They scream and kick, looking defenseless and

vulnerable. In this developmental stage before language and sexuality, the animalistic side of “bare life” is exposed. This connects the newborns with Gudrun Kampl’s stuffed white creatures. Like a swarm of blind embryos, fauna has broken free of the red mantle of Diana, goddess of the hunt and of birth: Without protection, they are released into the eternal cycle of life. *Der Kinderkäfig von Nathalie* (The Children’s Cage of Nathalie) documents early childhood regulation in a direct manner. The playpen, considered a safe place to “keep” small children, has been put up on the wall by Daniel Spoerri as a “snare picture,” with everything fixed in place just as he found it: the childhood world of animals in the form of cuddly toys and ABC books, but also with black dolls displaying racism as it is already present in the nursery. Toy animals readily come to life in a child’s imagination, and cuteness can quickly transform into creepiness. Germaine Richier’s nature creature *Le Griffu* (The Clawed Creature) is one such difficult-to-gauge figure: somewhere between animal and human, at once vulnerable and threatening, in any case a nightmarish apparition in the nursery.

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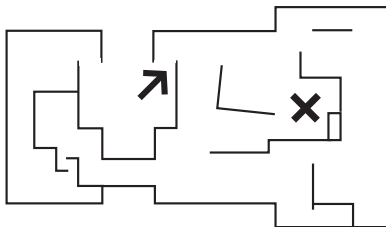
Fake Ladies

The *Snake Lady* at the entrance fixes visitors with her wide-eyed gaze like a Medusa. Jann Haworth's hybrid animal/human is at once a weird Hollywood prop and a fetish object. Fetishes sometimes involve slipping into the skin of an animal: Kiki Kogelnik presents a *Triangle* in which two women seem to be caught up in such a process of transformation—underlined by the presence of the third figure, a snake. Literally clad in snakeskin is one of the stelae in Gloria Friedmann's *Lascaux*,

which forces nature into a geometric form and references prehistoric cave paintings in its title. People seem especially tempted to identify with unpredictable and dangerous animals, such as the smoothly gliding snake with its lightning-fast strike, or the predatory big cat, whose fur—real or fake—is a fashion perennial. By donning the camouflage-patterned animal skin, wearers can express their identification with the clawed wildcats. Elly Niebuhr's fashion photographs stage women as self-confident fur wearers who appropriate male domains and macho gestures. And in the film *The City and the Secret Panther Fashion* by Gülsün Karamustafa, women secretly dress in outfits with feline patterns to explore a self-determined eroticism behind closed doors. The predatory cat fantasy in Maria Lassnig's *Mit einem Tiger schlafen* (Sleeping with a Tiger) instead imagines the male tiger as a potent sexual partner that overwhelms the artist with its prowess. Heimo Zobernig's tiger costume hanging limply on the wall, by contrast, seems like a parody of animalistic stagings of masculinity, reduced here to nothing more than the skin of a harmless kitty cat.

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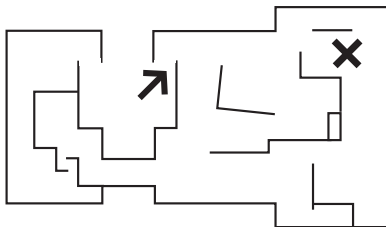
Of Animals and Humans

Many cultures have stories in which animals stand in for humans, but the great narratives of European modernity are an exception. There, animals tend to appear only in the marginalia of art and literature, in children's books, fables, fairy tales, comics, and manga. The dog in Linda Bilda's *Dog – Papusa rennt* (Dog–Papusa Running), a glass painting that is projected into the room, is based on a story in which street dogs become the animal leaders of a political uprising

in Argentina. In Ulrike Müller's monotypes, animals are hidden in abstract forms, making them difficult to fathom. Erika Rutherford, too, plays with ostensible legibility: Viewer expectations remain unfulfilled when contemplating her decoratively arranged stenciled letters coupled with illustrative elements such as images of a cat and a doll and instead themselves become the theme. Under the friendly gaze of dog and shaman, whimsical beings share bodies and outlines in the art of Alfred Klinkan. The decorative, teeming mass of non-hierarchical figures has no foreground or background, no volume or perspectival depth, preventing the eye from gaining purchase and getting things under control. You literally never know exactly what you are seeing, and you keep discovering something new. The picture demonstrates a working method that does not think from large to small or from top down but rather simply places one thing next to another—similar to the way children's drawings seem to come together organically. Instead of striving for "correct" renderings, artists can use animals to tell stories that go beyond the logic of time, space, and domination.

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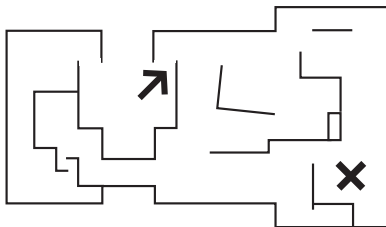
Batman versus Butterfly

Pop-culture heroes often expand their capabilities by taking on animal attributes. Batman transforms himself into a superhero by donning a bat costume and then takes off in the Batmobile, an animal-like machine. Mel Ramos shows how

the modern comic-book fairy tale fuses animal, human, and technology to rescue the world. In Tetsumi Kudo's works, the disaster has already happened. Nature, hopelessly exploited and contaminated by radioactivity, has fought back and forced humans into assuming a new form of existence. Hybrid creatures, half snail, half penis, inhabit the birdcage, indicating that male expansionism and aggressiveness have literally been cut off and trapped behind bars. With her unchaste butterfly, Renate Bertlmann humorously counters the force of masculinity by means of a whimsical sex toy in hot pink. In Margit Palme's aquatint etchings, the feminine enters into a symbiosis with the animal: In *Bienenstich* (Bee Sting), glaring green eyes sparkle menacingly with a piercing gaze while zebra stripes donned as a green dress envelop the elegantly curved body in a camouflage pattern. Christian Ludwig Attersee's self-portraits *Zebranähe* (Zebra Proximity), by contrast, can be read as an ironic fusion of animal and human, although it remains unclear here why a zebra's head, of all things, becomes the object of libidinous games.

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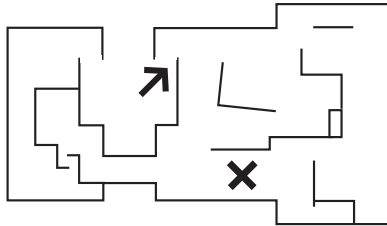
Animals as Hinges

Across cultures, animals serve as hinges to spiritual worlds. In Wifredo Lam's depiction of a priestess with a horse's head, disparate artistic influences collide. Applying the formal language of European modernism, which in turn draws on the aesthetics of African art, the artist searched for a form of

expression for oppressed black identity in pre-revolutionary Cuba. Born in Austria, Susanne Wenger immigrated to Nigeria in the 1950s. Faced with the colonial reality of her new homeland, Wenger, who was initiated as a Yoruba priestess, embraced the pantheistic tradition and thus contributed with her works to its survival. In the 1980s, Brigitte Kowanz and Franz Graf responded to the imagery of the new computer art and video games by conceiving an archaic-looking visual language. Floating in space against a transparent ground, their painting on display here renders animals as shadows and silhouettes, shy images that we must approach cautiously by circling or stalking them. The artists thus revive a spectrum of perceptual modes that pre-dates the time when central perspective fixed our gaze on a single point of view. Dominique Knowles's painting follows equally instinctive premises. His sweeping painterly gestures are based on movements made when grooming a horse. The result is a monumental yet intimate painting in earth tones in which the interaction between human and animal is marked by equality and inter-permeability.

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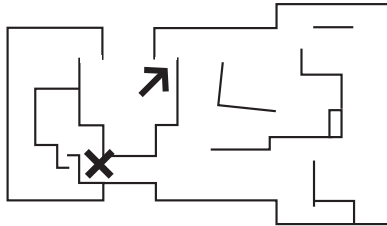
Federal Eagle and Vulture of Bankruptcy

For Joseph Beuys, animals opened doors to another world. On a printed sheet of paper destined to become sugar packets, he circled the image of a hare as if on a ballot, and titled the work *A Political Party for Animals!* In actual politics, other kinds of animals are often used as symbols of power and

strength, representing imperialistic and territorial goals. Jörg Immendorff's federal eagle has risen from the German coat of arms and shown itself to be ready for battle. In *Cape Canaveral*, Isolde Maria Joham links the American cowboy myth of freedom and independence with the imperialist aspirations that the US advanced through expansion into space. In the Western genre, the wild horse challenges the (male) subject to tame it; in Joham's work, this becomes an allegory of political dominance. Napoleon, who stands for megalomania and striving for power, made the imperial eagle part of his self-staging as a general. Niki de Saint Phalle puts a spider on his woolly head in *Napoléon, Napoléon, tu as une araignée dans le plafond*, using a French expression connoting insanity to degrade the self-proclaimed Emperor of the French to a figure of ridicule. The camels and crocodiles entangled in the threads of his face are a reminder that colonial expansion also brought animals from other parts of the world to Europe—in zoos, as trophies, and as toys for the nursery.

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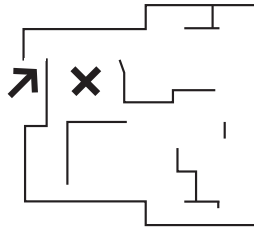
Foreign Feathers

Thinking about colonization raises questions about the origins of things that are also part of our everyday lives. In *Niederösterreichers Kolonisierung* (Lower Austrian's Colonization), Kurt Talos focuses his lens on things that are considered normal parts of the home region. And yet these animals, agricultural equipment, consumer products, and

religious images seem “foreign” when seen through the distancing gaze of the camera—have they really always been there? In Lothar Baumgarten’s installation, we step into a mysterious world. A slide projection shows a lush nature scene and we hear bird calls from offstage. In some places, however, the illusion starts to fade, because as soon as we hear airplane noises and odd objects shine out from the greenery, we realize that we are not gazing at a jungle but at a filthy stretch of German wasteland. *El Dorado* is a montage made up of set pieces, a land of pure imagination, and thus reflects colonial fantasies of the exotic that still exist today. In Maria Lassnig’s *Insektenforscher* (Entomologist), the “other” is the object of scientific investigation. Settling on the arm of the scientist, the robber fly assumes the status of an equal in an unusual double portrait—who is observing and researching whom? Margherita Spiluttini’s photographic works lend a historical dimension to the colonial relationship with nature. Her images reveal the baroque illusion of the rooms Johann Wenzel Bergl painted in Melk Abbey—an idealized magical world of exotic plants and animals—to be nothing but colonial propaganda.

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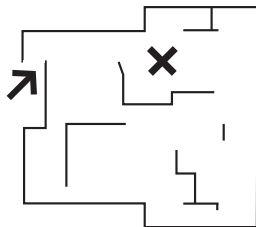
Nature Morte

Animals are traditional motifs in still life painting. Dead, killed on the hunt, or alive, as insects crawling on overripe fruit, they are meant to give us pause and make us think about mortality and decay. Thus frozen in time, animals become a means for reflecting on death. In *Fox Wheel*, Bruce Nauman cast dead

nature in aluminum using forms based on taxidermy molds and mounting them to form an endless cycle, each empty fox shell seeming to grow out of the previous one. A carousel of animal fragments can likewise be found in Helen Chadwick's *Glossolalia*. Amidst fox skins, a tower of severed lambs' tongues cast in bronze rises up as a multi-phallic form: a multitude of tongues that remain silent. Here, hard meets soft, the caressable the potentially repulsive. Chadwick presents a similarly ambivalent juxtaposition in her *Meat Abstracts*, still lifes for which she arranges body-related materials ranging from silk to entrails into medleys. Franz Sedlacek takes his cue from the Old Masters in his painting *Stilleben mit Echse* (Still Life with Lizard), painted on the eve of World War II. Bizarre flowers form spikes and claw-like shapes that suggest an uncanny species kinship with the ghostly reptile. Formalized in a different way but just as alien to nature are the flying creatures in Erika Rössing's pictures. Interlocked in an abstract surface pattern, birds and butterflies become part of geometric grids, their bodies merging with a planar logic.

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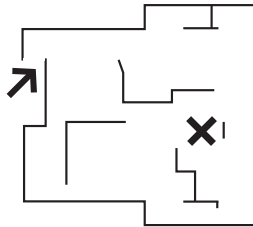
Tracking Nature

Science (re-)constructs history and stories from found objects of dead nature. Nancy Graves handcrafted the skeleton of a prehistoric camel that was native to North America millions of years ago. She proposes reintroducing

camels as a way to halt the onset of desertification. A dead thing also comes to life in Susan Rothenberg's *Mr. Bear*: a teddy bear as mighty as a grizzly—too big to be a toy but with the wrong shape to be a real bear. The history of the teddy bear, named after President Theodore, “Teddy,” Roosevelt, is interwoven with the colonial history of the USA, the oppression of the First Americans, and the destruction of nature. Eileen Quinlan's deliberately flawed processing of the found negative of an otter draws attention to the discrepancy between the creature itself and our image of it—it is no coincidence that we refer to “shooting” a photo and “capturing” something in a picture. Literally captured are the paper butterflies pinned on the wall and waiting to be sold in Kamen Stoyanov's slide projection *Underground Butterflies*. The grid of objects is reminiscent of the taxonomic categories imposed on natural science collections and brings to mind the fact that every form of classification is at the same time an act of violence.

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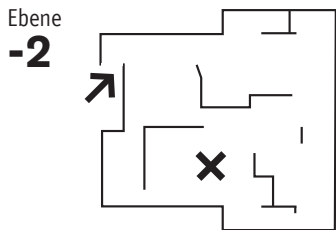
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Farewell to the Village

As early modernism ventured into abstraction, it drew inspiration from animals. Their shape, movement, and dynamics, their sounds and other sensory effects gave rise to visually advanced formal experiments. André Beaudin's *Les Papillons* (Butterflies), Johannes Itten's *Vogelthema* (Bird Theme), and Erika Giovanna Klien's *Vogelflug* (Bird Flight) tell

of chirping, of flapping wings, and of fluttering in abstract pictorial worlds. More concrete are the animals in Béla Kádár's *Village Departure*, where leaving seems to be painful not only for the people involved but also for the dog and the horse. The sentimental view of "nature" common in Europe tends to overlook production conditions and harsh colonial realities. In Frida Orupabo's collages, by contrast, the systematic exploitation of animal and human bodies takes on nightmarish dimensions. Julian Opie's farm animals scattered around the room make do without depth (or bodies). They have become abstractions—decoratively arranged playthings. Maria Lassnig's *Landleute* (Country Folk) from Carinthia tell of farming and a life that is supposedly lived close to nature. But their gentle yet imperious poses complicate the tourist image of the bucolic countryside. More drastic still is Dušan Makavejev's experimental film *Nova domaća životinja* (New Domestic Animal), which portrays technological modernization in a Yugoslav village: The tractors move in while the draft horses are being led to the slaughterhouse.



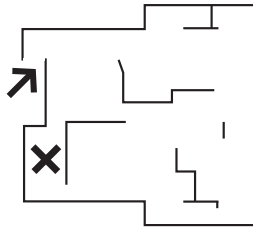
Figures of Figures

The *Phantasia* animal building kit was conceived by Friedl Dicker and Franz Singer in the 1920s in the spirit of the Bauhaus and progressive education. A cat, camel, or kangaroo can be built out of geometric blocks. In order to foster a sense of interconnectedness in nature, this gender-neutral

toy uses technical means to recreate things that are organic. The childishly naïve animal-human chimeras depicted by Alois Fischbach, Fritz Opitz, and Erich Zittre are rooted in subjective decision-making. These proponents of Art Brut, who were patients at the Gugging psychiatric hospital, were among the first to artistically render the unconscious forces and repressed thoughts that psychotherapy brought to light. As close confidants of children, stuffed animals carry a considerable emotional charge. When Mike Kelley hides them under a giant crocheted blanket in *Lumpenprole*, however, the repressed makes its presence known as eerie humps on the surface. Turning animals into kitsch, whether in the form of stuffed toys, at the cinema, or in comics, is intertwined with commercial interests. Paul McCarthy's *Bambi* recalls one of the most successful Walt Disney productions. In the story by Felix Salten, Bambi's idealized childhood ends abruptly when his mother dies. To increase viewers' identification with the animal characters, in this tragic tale and others, animated film made their faces more "human" by lending them the proportions of a child's face.

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Bloody Remnants

Not infrequently, man's encounter with the creature fatefully leads to its death. *Wo sind die Rehe geblieben?* (Where Have All the Deer Gone?) asks Maria Lassnig, and places a hunting trophy in the form of antlers on the head of a living

animal. Ingeborg Strobl confronts us with an emphatically unsentimental view of the relationship between nature and culture when she shows a hare not as a cuddly toy or an Old Master subject but lying in its own blood—a nature morte that is oddly contrasted with a backdrop of modernist abstract forms. *Love* by Adam Fuss challenges us in a similar manner, with a photogram in which a decorative heraldic motif is staged using the symmetrically arranged bodies of two slaughtered rabbits and their entrails. Lois Weinberger's *Chinesisches Haus für zwei Hasen* (Chinese House for Two Rabbits) transfers the requirements of small-animal husbandry to the museum space in a sculpture that is at once an “exotic” rabbit hutch and a modernist object. Lastly, paintings and drawings by Oswald Oberhuber and Otto Muehl depict dogs and pigs in a simplified and “primitive” fashion: the artists toy with the “animalistic” while flirting with Art Brut and an outsider role in the art world associated with it.

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In the Shadow of the Night

Hans Arp called his biomorphic form a “flying skull,” breathing linguistic life into a dead object. High above our heads, Couzijn Wessel’s bronze sculpture unfurls its wings, a dark creature somewhere between bird and primeval

lizard. Anne Speier's *Trinker* (Drinker) bends its shaggy, ghostly frame over a floor slab that resembles a puddle, a disembodied outline—what might it be drinking? Gloria Friedmann's *Nocturne* beckons like a black door, a raven-feathered entrance into a dark world. For decades, Karel Havlíček drew nightmarish creatures and scenarios during nocturnal séances. Here the „last earthling“ meets up with humans “after the flooding” and animals “before slaughter.” Among the mysterious hunters of the night is the bat. Paul McCarthy stages his own body upside-down the way these animals typically hang—spitting as he does so. Lois Weinberger's self-portrait with a mummified cat found on his parents' farm refers to ancient folk rituals for warding off evil. Cats are silent observers of our everyday lives. At night, when their eyes suddenly glow in the darkness, we may feel as though we had been caught red-handed. The outline of a cat emerges from the abstract planes of Ulrike Müller's rug. Lowering its head, it furtively returns our gaze, seeming to ask: And you?

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Exhibition

The Animal Within Creatures in (and outside) the mumok Collection

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Mural Painting: Ulrike Müller, executed by
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Exhibition Management: Lisa Schwarz
Exhibition Installation: Tina Fabijanic, Wolfgang
Moser, Gregor Neuwirth, Andreas Petz, Helmut Raidl,
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