



Animals on Display: The Creaturely in Museums, Zoos, and Natural History (Animalibus)

From Penn State University Press

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John Berger famously said that “in the last two centuries, animals have gradually disappeared.” Those who share his view contend that animals have been removed from our daily lives and that we have been removed from the daily lives of animals. This has been the impetus for a plethora of representational practices that, broadly conceived, work to fill in the gap between humans and animals. Ironically, many of these may ultimately intensify the very nostalgia, distance, and ignorance they were devised to remedy. *Animals on Display* presents nine lively and engaging essays on the historical representation and display of nonhuman animals. Looking at a wide range of examples, many of them now little known, the essays situate them in their historical and sociocultural contexts, while speaking to the ongoing importance of making animals visible for the arrangement and sustenance of human-animal relations.

Aside from the editors, the contributors are Brita Brenna, Guro Flinterud, Henry A. McGhie, Brian W. Ogilvie, Nigel Rothfels, and Lise Camilla Ruud.

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Editorial Review

Review

“From the eighteenth century’s preserved monsters to the twenty-first century’s images of zoo polar bear Knut, the authors of *Animals on Display* foreground representations—not as transparent or objective acts but as visible and palpable forces working at micro and macro levels to shape cultural understandings and relationships to animals. After this book, the reader cannot look at commonplace images and figures of animals without thinking of how they are enframed and to what ends.”

—Ron Broglio, Arizona State University

“This book provides interesting new insight into and analysis of the human-animal relationship. The different chapters show striking examples of the ways in which this relationship has been constructed through the objectification of animals on display, most powerfully exemplified through their presentation as ‘specimens’ rather than individuals. At the same time, an underlying message is the importance animals have in the lives of humans, which is one reason why their lives (and deaths) should be taken into consideration. Most importantly, though, and as the title suggests, through the analysis in this book animals are made visible as individuals with intrinsic value.”

—Ragnhild Sollund, University of Oslo

“The case studies in *Animals on Display*—on subjects ranging from early modern caterpillars to the cyber-bear Knut—remind us how real animals have been implicated in practices of display. As a collection, this volume is both unusual and praiseworthy for its success in combining an uncompromising historicity with a deft engagement of post-Berger theories of representation.”

—Charlotte Sleight, University of Kent

“*Animals on Display* explores the uncharted region between cultural studies and the history of science, between museology and animal studies. These are strange lands, and we meet wonderful beasts: monstrous pigs, tame polar bears, colossal elephants, colorful butterflies, rare seagulls, Herculean dogs, captive grasshoppers, and more. As our fearless guides, the authors shed new light not only on the physicality of animals (both peri- and postmortem) but also on their representations. With previously unpublished illustrations and energetic prose, this important volume is an insightful exploration of the relationship between the visibility and materiality of animals from the Enlightenment to the twenty-first century. Historians, anthropologists, curators, and animal studies scholars will enjoy following the editors and their lively herd on the eventful journey through the pages of *Animals on Display*.”

—Samuel J. M. M. Alberti, Hunterian Museum, editor of *The Afterlives of Animals: A Museum Menagerie*

“[*Animals on Display*] demonstrates how our cultural imaginations are tethered to the material reality of animals, insisting that such representations can never fully escape the social and cultural contexts in which they were originally created and are now viewed. It also shows how powerful connections with animals on display, like those at the American Museum of Natural History, allow visitors an intimate, if fleeting, glimpse of previously living, breathing organisms.”

—Erika Lorraine Milam, *Isis—Journal of the History of Science Society*

About the Author

Liv Emma Thorsen is Professor in the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages at the University of Oslo.

Karen A. Rader is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Science, Technology, and Society Program at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Adam Dodd is an independent researcher whose interests focus on the role that visioning technologies have played in developing conceptions of nonhuman animals.

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Jeffery Herring:

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