
TOURING YEAR OF THE DOG

May 19 – October 14, 2018

This introduction emphasizes experiential learning. Information in the packet complements this inquiry based approach. Expertise on every work is not necessary.

With Visitors: Walk through this exhibition

- ASK: **Do any of these artworks remind you of any relationships in your life (animal or human)?** accept all answers
 - The purpose of this question is for the audience to establish a personal connection to the exhibition.
- ASK: **What emotions did the artist capture through the dogs' body language and environment?** Maybe: happy, excited, curious, hungry, anxious, tired (accept all answers)
 - **What do you see that makes you say that?**
- ASK: **How is a dog's value sometimes determined?**
 - Maybe: pure-breeding, grooming, training, physical ability, likability (accept all answers)
 - ASK: **How is this similar to the way we value other possessions, people, or the environment?**
- ASK: **In what ways do/did these dog's stories rely on how humans value(d) them? (accept all answers)**
 - Examples:
 - Whether they're adopted or euthanized – If a dog in a shelter is not selected for adoption, or accepted by a rescue organization, they are euthanized.
 - Remembered or forgotten in death – A portrait, a eulogy of shared memory and love, a cyanotype, or left in a landfill.
- ASK: **Dogs are often referred to as "man's best friend"; What characteristics do you think make dogs good friends to humans?**
 - Maybe: loyal, unconditional love, protective, tolerant, patient
 - ASK: **If the way dogs treat us is the model for how we want to be treated, how can this inform how we treat animals, other people, and our world?**

IF VISITORS WANT MORE INFORMATION

Concept of Exhibition

Year of the Dog deeply examines the profound human-animal bond, from a cultural obsession with our canine companions, as well as the opposing attitude of disposability and disregard for the very same creatures. Featuring six highly renowned American

artists working across media and each addressing a different facet of the theme, *Year of the Dog* asks us to examine the psychology of our sometimes contradictory relationships with animals. Through the power of visual art, it opens an opportunity for dialogue surrounding the ways in which we can all strive to live more compassionately for the benefit of all sentient beings and the world in which they inhabit.

Exhibition Wall Text

Introduction

Americans have a complex and contradictory relationship with dogs — they are cherished as family members by some and neglected, abused, and abandoned by others. Recent statistics show that 65% of Americans own at least one animal. Products to pamper our pets abound, ranging from the sublime (doggie ice cream) to the ridiculous (fake eyelashes for your cat), driving the pet industry to generate nearly \$63 billion in 2016 (<http://tinyurl.com/ceygc>). In that same year, however, an estimated 2.5 million animals were taken in by American shelters (<https://shelteranimalscount.org/data/Explore-the-Data>). What are the roots of this contradiction? How might our treatment of our canine companions reflect the complex social and environmental issues we currently face?

Evidence suggests that domestication of non-human animals began some 14,000 years ago, and that the first was likely *canis lupus*: the wolf, ancestor to and contemporary relative of the modern dog. Our contemporary human relationship to dogs carries the weight of that long history. Dogs have served as guardians, have worked alongside humans to ensure mutual survival, and have been loved as family members. If humans have intentionally domesticated, trained, bred, and loved their dogs, how is it possible that so many dogs are treated as utilitarian or disposable objects to be abused or neglected?

2018 is the Year of the Dog in the Chinese Zodiac, and we have taken this opportunity to investigate our relationship with these beloved companions. Through the diverse artistic expressions of our six featured artists, we may begin to understand the dog as a metaphor for the examination and consideration of the broader implications of these contradictions on an interpersonal and global scale. Examining our relationship to dogs specifically can open a window into a deeper understanding of how we think about resources more broadly. What connections sustain us? What (or who) do we treat as disposable? Considering multiple points of view that range from the intimately personal to the broadly political, these artists ask us to consider our own complicity in the treatment of and responsibility for all living beings, as well as the earth that we share. As a whole, the exhibition asks us to consider: how can we take better care of each other and the world in which we live?

Nick Cave



There is a consciousness in the work that speaks about the economic world we live in, about waste and greed, the opulence of it all and the fauxness. —Nick Cave

In his *Rescue* series, Nick Cave focuses each sculpture on a found ceramic canine that has quite literally been rescued from destruction—very much like an adopted shelter pet. Perched on flea-market thrones, these dogs act as the benevolent royalty of their self-contained worlds. Notice how Cave has isolated and elevated the figure under a canopy of similarly discarded items or natural found objects. *What values might this treatment of*

the figure convey? Through the specific qualities of its presentation, Cave infuses these small bits of kitsch with the canonical noble attributes of dogs. It embodies fidelity, protection, and playfulness, while shining a light on the forgotten and cast-aside. In an incisive, yet subtle culture commentary, Cave contrasts these traditionally white Western concepts of social status with the contemporary use of the word “dawg,” prevalent in Hip-Hop culture and a moniker for brotherhood, respect, and power.

Eliciting glee from viewers, the excessive and outrageous *Rescue* sculptures merge the common positive attitudes towards dogs – such as unconditional love and loyalty – with notions of property, decoration, and history. By drawing a connection between adopting pets and repurposing secondhand objects, Cave reveals our society’s seemingly arbitrary hierarchical distinction between trash and treasure, between breeds, and between social and racial groups, all the while questioning positive and negative presumptions.

Mary Shannon Johnstone’s *Landfill Dogs*



Below the surface at “Landfill Park” there are more than 25,000 dogs buried. I think of this park as a burial ground. These photographs offer the last opportunity for these dogs to find homes. However, this landscape offers a metaphor of hope. It is a place of trash that has been transformed into a place of beauty. I hope the viewer also sees the beauty in these homeless, unloved creatures.

So far I have photographed 192 dogs—165 have found homes or been sent to a rescue, six are still waiting, and 21

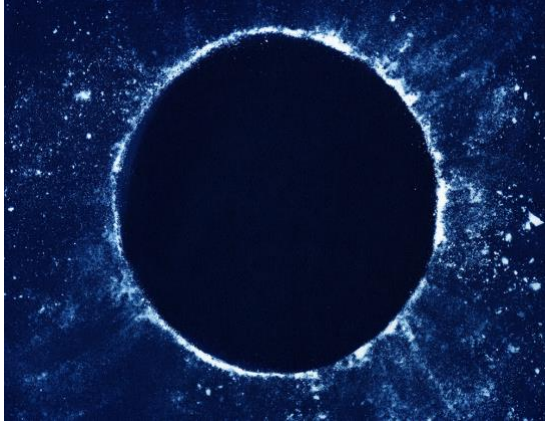
have been euthanized for various reasons.

—Shannon Johnstone

For the past decade, Shannon Johnstone has been working with homeless pets and exploring ways to visualize the tragedy of animal overpopulation. Her portraits of abandoned dogs give individual faces to these forgotten animals, transforming statistics into flesh and blood. The intention of the portraits is to offer one last chance for these otherwise anonymous victims to find homes by focusing on the individuality of each dog. *Notice the personalities conveyed in the images—the expression of the eyes, the tilt of the head, the attitude of the tail. Can you imagine this dog becoming part of your family?* *Landfill Dogs* is more than a series of charming photographs of our canine friends; these are dogs who have been homeless for at least two weeks and face euthanasia if they are not adopted. Each week, the artist brings one dog from the county animal shelter and photographs them at “Landfill Park,” a former landfill converted into a public park.

The backdrop of “Landfill Park” is used for two reasons. First, if the dogs do not find a home, they will be euthanized and their bodies disposed of in the landfill among our trash. The second reason for the landfill location is because the county animal shelter falls under the same management as the landfill. This government structure reflects a societal value; homeless cats and dogs are just another waste stream. As the project continues, we see the landscape change with the seasons while the constant stream of dogs remains the same.

Mary Shannon Johnstone’s *Stardust and Ashes*



I create these cyanotypes with the ashes of euthanized homeless animals from an animal shelter's crematorium. These animals died with nobody to mourn their passing, except maybe a few overwhelmed shelter workers. I hope these images serve as a memorial to these animals—who were nobody and nothing. Turned to dust and returned to the cosmos, they become everyone and everything. Just as we all will

someday.

Using my own breath and fingers to manipulate the ashes, I work the ashes into celestial configurations while the sun exposes the cyanotype turning the negative space Prussian blue. With these images I hope to mourn the passing of thousands of our forgotten companions, and remind us that we are all connected and headed for the same fate—reduced to dust and returned to the stars.

—Shannon Johnstone

Following the critical and popular success of *Landfill Dogs*, Shannon Johnstone's newest series takes the next step by examining the outcome of pet overpopulation, relating it directly to the cycle of life that will one day come to all beings. All living creatures are united by the cycle of life and the fundamental components that comprise our bodies, the "starstuff" that Carl Sagan famously outlined in *Cosmos*: "The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies were made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of starstuff." *In what ways might we connect the traces of a once-living being to our ethical responsibilities to the new life that continually emerges around us?*

Whether we are considering the literal subject matter of *Stardust and Ashes* and its source material—the remains of shelter animals—or expanding our vision to encompass human relationships with each other or with the governance of planet Earth, we have a certain responsibility to care for the future. Understanding that responsibility comes with the unpleasant realization of our own complicity in the suffering of others. But that understanding also empowers; each of us has the power to exert positive change through our thoughts, our words, and our actions.

Monique Crine



Dogs, especially senior dogs, remind me of what matters in life—friendship, forgiveness, and love.

—Monique Crine

Working from her own photographs, Monique Crine creates arresting paintings that explore diverse American archetypes such as cowboys, military personnel, former beauty queens, and NFL players. Most recently, she focused her attention on senior dogs—creating both tender and noble representations of these much-adored companions. Her paintings function as a meditation on life, death, and humanity. At the same time and at the most fundamental level, they are also about pets—our relationship to them, the lessons they teach us, and how we are mirrored in our interactions with them. Ultimately, Crine believes that these paintings are about love.

Painted in 2018, this new series captures the distinguished nobility of elderly dogs, initially photographed in the comfort of their homes with the people who adore them. Unlike Shannon Johnstone's *Landfill Dogs*, these animals are the luckiest ones, cherished and cared for through their golden years until the very end. Though many of them are no longer living, they have made an indelible mark on the hearts of those closest to them. *What are the challenges and rewards of long-term relationships?* Like the Romeros, Crine's work begs us to consider our own relationships—whether with a person, animal, or object. *How might we continue to engage thoughtfully, to nurture, to behave compassionately, and to demonstrate respect toward those we have known longest?*

Ralph Scala



In our intertwined moments of vulnerability, we are caught in some repose, looking at us, looking through us, we then become dogs. In this state always hungry, always searching beneath the surface, we result to our more primal nature. It is in this tension through materiality, this process of covering up or alluding to what may be hiding beneath the surface, then revealing through the washing away of the accumulation of history and layers, that we can be in the moment. This is how we can sit with ourselves.

My most successful relationship is with a dog. Our perros are the barometers to our souls.

—Ralph Scala

Ralph Scala's *Perro* (Spanish for 'dog') series is inspired by an old desert Chihuahua named Grouch, who was in most cases unapproachable with the exception of interactions with the artist. Though these works are not portraits of Grouch, they communicate some of the life-altering lessons learned from this particular animal—the power of raw intuition and living free of inhibition, sitting in the moment, and the futility of language. Transformed by their time together, Scala continues to honor his late friend by focusing on materiality and intuitive process to create charged, ambiguous objects that are difficult to describe using words. He seeks to create a felt experience that defies singular interpretation. Scala's *Perros* may communicate feelings of melancholy, fear, joy, or tenderness, shifting meaning from viewer to viewer and perhaps from moment to moment. *How do Scala's Perros make you feel?*

Frank and Sharon Romero



Dogs have been our companions for many, many years. We have always been dog lovers and often prefer dogs to humans. These works are all of our favorite Dalmatian, Pablo, a rescue who lived in our studio. He had such beautiful markings, we couldn't help but paint him over and over again.

—Frank and Sharon Romero

Year of the Dog investigates the human-animal bond as a metaphor for interactions and attitudes in all arenas of our lives. This series of works by Frank and Sharon Romero paints a portrait of their relationship with their dog Pablo, and in so doing, invites us into a privileged space of intimacy. A beloved rescued Dalmatian, Pablo provided the artists with an endless source of entertainment and drama. From Pablo's time on a psychotherapist's couch, to an incident with the dog catcher, to moments of quiet repose, this series of loving portraits produced over the course of his life reveal the ways in which Pablo was tenderly honored by his people. *What do these repeated images help us understand about the way that relationships grow, change, and endure?* Though he was not an easy dog to live with, unconditional love transcended the challenges he presented, and make the Romeros' memories of Pablo even more sweetly sentimental with the passage of time.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NICK CAVE

Nick Cave is an artist, educator, and foremost a messenger, working between the visual and performing arts through a wide range of media including sculpture, installation, video, sound, and performance. Cave is well known for his *Soundsuits*, sculptural forms that camouflage the body, masking and creating a second skin that conceals race, gender, and class, forcing the viewer to look without judgment.

Cave said of his project *HEARD•NY*, a large-scale performance in Grand Central Terminal organized by Creative Time, “I was really thinking of getting us back to this dream state, this place where we imagine and think about now and how we exist and function in the world. With the state of affairs on the world, I think we tend not to take the time out to create that dream space in our heads.” This is relevant to his practice as a whole.

Cave has received several prestigious awards including the Americans for the Arts 2014 Public Art Network Year in Review Award in recognition of his Grand Central Terminal performance *HEARD•NY* (2014), the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award (2008), the Artadia Award (2006), the Joyce Award (2006), Creative Capital Grants (2002, 2004, 2005), and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2001). Cave, who received his MFA at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, is Professor and Chairman of the Fashion Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

MARY SHANNON JOHNSTONE

Mary Shannon Johnstone received her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and an MFA in photography from Rochester Institute of Technology.

She is the recipient of numerous awards including “Pause, To Begin” artist, Critical Mass Top 50 (2009, 2010), and Honorable Mention in Lens Culture’s International Exposure Awards (2010). Johnstone is a tenured Associate Professor at Meredith College in Raleigh, NC.

Johnstone’s *Landfill Dogs* became a 2013 Critical Mass Finalist, received “Best in Show” at *Puppy Love* exhibition in Georgia, and is one of the 2014 Review Santa Fe 100. *Landfill Dogs* has been featured in national and international exhibitions and magazines, was on *ABC World News with Diane Sawyer* in December 2013, and CNN’s website in November 2014.

<http://www.shannonjohnstone.com/>

FRANK AND SHARON ROMERO

A high-profile figure in the Los Angeles arts community, Frank Romero was a member of the 1970s Chicano art collective “Los Four” — who used wall murals, graffiti, and street theater to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. His brightly colored paintings include subjects as varied as police violence in minority communities to highways and lowrider culture. A keen observer of the world around him, Romero’s

images of his “ordinary” dog Pablo draws from his practice of *rascuache* — the art of making something beautiful out of the ordinary.

Digging beneath the surfaces of the observable world, Sharon Romero uses her interest in psychoanalytic theory to explore behavior and relationships in her paintings. The repeated images of Pablo in a variety of situations provide a nearly endless source for her investigations. Also working with a highly saturated palette, she explores themes of desire, distraction, and the culture of artifice — with subjects that continually shift to the artist’s current obsession.

MONIQUE CRINE

Monique Crine was born in Heidelberg, Germany. She obtained her BA from San Francisco State University and her MFA from Cornell University. She is the recipient of many awards including a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, CCA grant, and the Bank of America Award in Fine Arts. Since her first show in 1996, Crine has exhibited across North America with solo shows in New York, Colorado, and California. Her most recent solo exhibition, *Critical Focus: Monique Crine*, ran at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver during the summer of 2015. She has been lecturing annually at Harvard University Graduate School of Design since 2014.

<http://www.moniquecrine.com/>

RALPH SCALA

Ralph Scala maintains a studio with ChuCho (the chihuahua) in Santa Fe, NM where he produces sculpture, paintings, and functional ceramics, as well as hosts visiting artists. Teaching, leading workshops, and kiln construction are also part of the practice. With a focus on painting and sculpture, Scala received his BA from Evergreen State College in 1995. From there, he went on to serve as studio director at Lillstreet Art Center in Chicago (1995–2000), followed by studio manager at Santa Fe Clay (2000–2005), and studio coordinator at Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Colorado (2005–2016). Scala’s work can be found in numerous private collections around the country.

MORE INFORMATION

COMPANION ESSAYS

Year of the Dog is an appropriate title for this exhibition. Not only is 2018 the Year of the Dog according to the Chinese Zodiac, but we also seem to be living in a time marked by ever-growing awareness of the ways in which the lives of human and nonhuman animals intertwine and intersect. With each passing day there seems to be more and more attention focused on the ways in which nonhuman animals share traits with us — how pigs play, for instance, or how the bond between a mother and her child is as significant to cows as it is to humans. These

kinds of realizations, of course, are not neutral and they call in to sharp focus the ways in which we treat nonhuman animals.

What is the role of the dog in these conversations? In a recent *Psychology Today* article, cognitive ethologist Marc Bekoff argued that dogs can play an important role in “bridging the empathy gap.”¹ Meaning that caring about the wellbeing of all nonhuman animals — from so-called “wildlife” to those animals who live and die in the industrial “factory farms” that supply a seemingly endless supply of meat to our supermarkets — often can be sparked by the emotional bond we form with our companion animals. If we love and care for our dog, Bekoff reasons, then it is not much of a stretch to consider that a sheep, goat, or chicken could also be capable of forming deep emotional bonds. If we recognize that our canine companions become afraid when a summer thunderstorm rolls in, we don’t have to extend our imaginations too much further to consider how other animals may also be capable of feeling fear. *What kinds of ethical responsibilities come with these realizations?*

The work in this exhibition is part of a long history of visual imagery in which artists turn their attention to dogs. While each of the artists takes a distinctly different approach, their work is linked beyond the obvious similar subject matter. In each case, the artist also asks us to see these dogs as animals. Much art historical writing has reinforced the long-held belief that nonhuman animals in art are always a symbol for human ideas, emotions, politics, etc. While there are important symbolic connections to be made when we consider visual representations of nonhuman animals, it is important to also think about the very real lived lives of those who are depicted. Imagery of nonhuman animals can be much more than symbols for human lives and ideals. And, as Bekoff points out, a deep consideration of the lives of dogs can open up new ways of thinking about many different kinds of nonhuman animals.

We are at an important moment where we are witnessing massive shifts in how we think about and interact with the species with whom we share the planet with. Exhibitions like this play an important role in this dynamic.

—J. Keri Cronin

J. Keri Cronin is an historian of visual culture at Brock University’s Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine & Performing Arts. Her most recent book, *Art for Animals*, considers the role of visual imagery in late 19th and early 20th century animal advocacy campaigns.

Footnote:

1. Marc Bekoff, Ph.D., “Everyone Wants a Lost Dog Found: Bridging the Empathy Gap,” *Psychology Today*, accessed May 09, 2018, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/animal-emotions/201805/everyone-wants-lost-dog-found-bridging-the-empathy-gap

Reflecting on the relationships we have with dogs covers a wide spectrum of attitudes and beliefs on the value they have in our society. Their unconditional love, unwavering loyalty, and companionship brings joy into our lives, yet their dependence on people also makes them

vulnerable to being abused, neglected, and abandoned. When the human/animal bond is broken, a dog may be objectified as property 'to get rid' of at a shelter.

The Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region provides the second chance for these dogs to heal their wounds, both physical and mental, and find a loving home — as reflected in Landfill Dogs. We believe that animals and people are 'better together.'

The art in Year of the Dog provides a prospective on society's complex relationship with our canine companions. Look through the dog's eyes and you will see the need to cultivate a compassionate society — where both animals and people are cared for and valued.

—Jan McHugh-Smith
President and CEO Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region

ABOUT THE CHINESE ZODIAC

Year of the Dog/Earth Dog

February 16, 2018 welcomed the Year of the Dog in the Chinese Zodiac, a repeating cycle of 12 years that assigns one animal and its attributes to each year, starting more than 2,000 years ago.

“In Chinese symbolism, dogs are considered a harbinger of friendship, and are symbols of loyalty, obedience, and prosperity. The legendary Fu Dog (or Chinese guardian iron) embodies concepts of protection of scared spaces and imperial China.”

—Hong Jiang, Ph.D., Professor

Department of German, Russian, and East Asian Languages Colorado College

WANT TO LEARN MORE OR GET INVOLVED?

Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region: www.hsppr.org

Shelter Animals Count: www.shelteranimalscount.org

Harley's Hope Foundation: www.harleys-hopefoundation.org

Barkabull: www.barkabull.com

All Breed Rescue and Training: www.haveanicedog.org

National Mill Dog Rescue: www.milldogrescue.org

Southern Colorado Animal Coalition: www.socoanimalcoalition.org

A Voice for Lil Olive: www.avoiceforlilolive.com

