

A Running Wolf and Other Grey Animals: The Various Shapes of Marcus Coates

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For over a decade, Marcus Coates' fascination with wildlife has been reflected in what the artist calls his 'becoming animal' works, and in socially-engaged performances where the artist utilises these 'becoming' skills to assume the role of the shaman. In these works, Coates imitates animal sounds and behaviour – often while clothed in crudely fabricated costumes – combining humour and a makeshift aesthetic to nevertheless offer earnest and thoughtful observations. Although Deleuze and Guattari position imitation as an ineffective means of *becoming-animal*, and imitation offers no genuine insight to the umwelts of other animals, it nevertheless remains key to Coates' attempts to interrogate the degree to which we can relate to non-human animals, and see the world from a perspective other than human.

Coates' monochrome sculptural installations *Platonic Spirit: Running Grey Wolf* (2012) and *All the Grey Animals* (2012) comprise seemingly formal arrangements of grey blocks in the gallery space, and initially appear to be a far cry from the artist's performative works. However, these cuboid shapes represent a menagerie of animals bound by an alternative taxonomy – that of their greyness. Whilst the colour and size of these blocks corresponds to their animal referents, they are stripped of the more characterful and tactile features of these creatures, which might ordinarily instil a sense of fascination, fear or even wonder in viewers, and are identifiable only by the labels placed beside them.

This paper will consider how human-animal relations are articulated through bodily and emotive encounters with these installations, and will speculate on why emphasis has been placed on the wolf, which is depicted in a stand-alone sculpture.

Sarah Wade is completing her PhD *Reintroducing Wonder: Contemporary artistic and curatorial engagements with wildlife* in the department of History of Art at University College London. Her research interrogates human-animal relations and representations of animals in contemporary art and museum display, exploring how these practices might evoke a sense of wonder reminiscent of responses to the early modern wunderkammer. Sarah was a co-curator of the exhibition *Strange Creatures: The art of unknown animals* (2015) at The Grant Museum of Zoology and organised the recent conferences *Transgressing Boundaries: On Wolves & Werewolves* and *Collecting the Sea 1500-2015*.