

# **INTRASPECIATION WITHIN THE ONTOLOGICAL BIOSPHERE**

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ALLAN GARDENS CONSERVATORY, 19 Horticultural Ave, April 15-18 2016  
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## ***INTRASPECIFICATION WITHIN THE ONTOLOGICAL BIOSPHERE***

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OCAD University  
Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media and Design  
Master of Arts  
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### **ABSTRACT**

*Intraspeciation Within the Ontological Biosphere* investigates the intuitive connection between human and animal. Ideas of human animality are explored through biophilia, the innate affinity between living organisms. By examining the relationships between human and nonhuman animals and vegetal/botanical life, this thesis argues for a removal of barriers from dichotomies between species to enable species interconnectivity. This artistic exploration aims to establish intimacy and animalism between the human, animal and surrounding biosphere by the use of organic and synthetic material in sculpture and drawing.

**Keywords:** Intraspeciation, biophilia, species, interconnectivity, biosphere, becoming, posthumanism, animality, sculpture, drawing

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## INTRODUCTION

*Intraspeciation Within the Ontological Biosphere* is a Master's thesis paper in support of studio-based work that investigates the innate connection between nonhuman and human animals<sup>1</sup> and the phenomena of biophilia<sup>2</sup>—an occurrence where one feels connected to species within the existing biosphere. In my research, I analyze human relationships with other species of the predetermined categories of flora and fauna. The connections and similarities I explore are either intuitive through my own experiences, behavioural, and/or anatomical in which are learned from ethological and evolutionary discoveries. From these discoveries, I aim to challenge conventional hierarchies that reflect a pre-existing dichotomy between human and animal which obscure animality,<sup>3</sup> and relations towards other species. I apply my lived experience of *intraspeciation*<sup>4</sup> and incorporate daily observations within surrounding environments and the knowledge gained through these experiences to preexisting theoretical and physical structures of human/animal studies in an attempt to understand human

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<sup>1</sup> As similarly discussed by authors such as Donna Haraway, Cary Wolfe and Konrad Lorenz, I am referring to modern *Homo sapiens* as humans who have evolved from animal ancestry but are still animal in nature whereas nonhuman animals are species that are related and are similar to the human but do not hold enough of the same characteristics to be called humans.

<sup>2</sup> The Biophilia Hypothesis is a term coined by American Biologist Edward O. Wilson to describe humanity's innate affinity for other living organisms. I discuss this notion further in ONE.

<sup>3</sup> What I mean by animality can be seen in the similar sense of Giovanni Aloï in *Art & Animals* when he states "by animality, we here mean all the biological and behavioural traits along with the complex interconnectedness with other animals and environments" (4).

<sup>4</sup> Intraspeciation is a process and term I have developed that stands as a perspective towards evolutionary theories of phylogenetic exploration where one identifies a rooted animality in their being, takes keen interest in other living organisms and rejects the hierarchical notion of humans as superior to other existences. This term is influenced by the scholarly work of Charles Darwin and Konrad Lorenz in which I will later explain in ONE.

animality and the interspecies relationships that can be drawn through contemporary art practice.

In my practice-led research, I conduct experimentations with synthetic and organic material and speculate about relationships between species that exist within human and nonhuman taxonomy. Drawing from my experience as an entry-point, I seek to challenge social dichotomies between human and animal that create taxonomic distance by producing sculptures and drawings that look beyond the human/animal divide. The context of this project unveils fundamental linkages between human, animal, and the surrounding biosphere to refocus and fuse conceptual separations. This thesis responds to two central questions: how does the exploration of relationships and similarities between species diffuse the conventional hierarchy that grants higher agency to the human over the animal? and how does the biophilia hypothesis that is represented in my artistic work contribute to the development of a visual language that is driven by the concept of intraspeciation?

I strive to address human-animal relationships and similarities between species and organisms through a speculative dialogue within the biosphere. This thesis paper addresses my combined interests in organismic biology and artistic production and speaks to biological misconceptions of what is considered human and what is considered animal. This site of inquiry and attempt at understanding connections between species raises a phenomenological inclination devoted to the biophilia hypothesis, contributing to the human animal experience in the biosphere where interactions are made and connections are explored.

In an attempt to challenge perspectives that reinforce barriers between human, animal and vegetal/botanical, I use the interconnectivity<sup>5</sup> between species to expand moral consideration towards nonhuman animals and heightened appreciation for plant life. My interest in species connectivity is expanded on through a self-reflexive and interdisciplinary framework that emphasises ethological discoveries on human and animal similarities as well as evolution theory of heritable traits passed on from species to species which is collectively projected through my artwork. Within this framework, I use post-humanist<sup>6</sup> processes of writing and creating where dialogue counteracts the objectivism of humanism. I consider animality through notions of *becoming* in comparison of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and Donna Haraway,<sup>7</sup> the biophilia hypothesis and my definition of intraspeciation. In relation to each other, I detail contrasting and complimentary elements of these theoretical approaches and draw parallels between how animals are commonly understood and relations that can be made amongst species.

I investigate species connectivity by combining materials and generating narratives that represent human and nonhuman relations. I adopt the ideology that humans are in fact animal through notions of intraspeciation by re-

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<sup>5</sup> Interconnectivity amongst species can be seen as “interconnectedness of living networks” that “transgresses evolutionary bio-proximity, connecting members of substantially different species through a communicational connection that leaps beyond anything we have thus far experienced in organic life” (Aloi 89).

<sup>6</sup> This direction of posthumanism is influenced by developments made by Cary Wolfe, which I will discuss in depth in ONE.

<sup>7</sup> “Becoming-animal” is a concept used by Deleuze and Guattari seen in the text *A Thousand Plateaus* whereas “becoming with” is a term used by Donna Haraway in the text *When Species Meet*. Both concepts will be discussed further in TWO.

acknowledging human animality and addressing similarities amongst species. Humans have conceptualized the animal as the other, however, our biological roots lie on the fact that we are animal. These areas of taxonomic exploration question and expand on the human need to connect with animals and plant life on an intuitive and phenomenological level. My thesis project responds to the lingering need for close proximities to other species while refusing to exempt the animal from my very being.

Within the vast topic of “animal studies,” Cary Wolfe in *What is Posthumanism?* expands on the complexities of interdisciplinarity and states:

So how does all of this affect our view of animal studies in relation to the question of disciplinarity, especially the disciplinarity of literary and culture studies? In my view, it means that we should *not* try to imagine some super-interdiscipline called “animal studies” (an understandable desire, of course, for all who work on cultural studies of nonhuman animals), but rather recognize that it is only in and through our disciplinary specificity that we have something specific and irreplaceable to contribute to this “question of the animal” that has recently captured the attention of so many different disciplines: not something *accurate* to contribute but something *specific* (and there is a world of difference between those two claims) (115-116).

The boundaries within the scope of my practice do not sit within a concrete sphere but rather a traversing rhizome that consists of numerous possibilities. In creating works that express the intraspeciated human animal, my art “challenge[s] the possibility of an image of the specimen as re-presented in the natural sciences in ways that express our understanding of the changing relationship between humans and the natural world” (Aloi 37). This enables me to investigate a world where divides are suspended in time and worldly similarities amongst species are explored through artistic visualization.

## **ONE**

This chapter identifies fundamental elements of the conceptual and artistic components for *Intraspeciation Within the Ontological Biosphere*. This section introduces the influence of intraspeciation and will identify what it means within the scope of study along with influence of Darwinian theory and ethological discoveries made by Konrad Lorenz. Furthermore, I will expand on the concept of the Biophilia Hypothesis developed by Edward O. Wilson and relate this investigation to post-humanist developments made by Cary Wolfe.

## INTRASPECIATION: THE ANIMAL THAT I AM

We are not just rather like animals; we are animals. Our difference from other species may be striking, but comparisons with them have always been, and must be, crucial to our view of ourselves.

—Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man*, 1979: xxi

I grew up in Northern Ontario, surrounded by the enchanting wilderness<sup>8</sup>, fresh lakes and domesticated and undomesticated nonhuman animals. As a child, my free time was spent outdoors climbing trees, playing and interacting with pets and farm animals. I spent a lot of time thinking about what it would be like to be a wild creature, playing outside running with dogs, crawling and howling in the forest around my home. This animality, along with a love for the environment<sup>9</sup> lingers within me and is forever present in my artistic practice. This has led me to identify the term *intraspeciation* which acts as a process and signifier for my thesis project, where I address the animality that is deep rooted in the human animal. The concept of intraspeciation is addressed in the series, *An Interspecies Memoir* (Fig. 1) which is a collection of animal heads embedded with my hair.

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<sup>8</sup> I am defining wilderness as my understanding of it—an unhabituated area for humans; a sort of garden that is wild and uncultivated.

<sup>9</sup> I am referring to the term environment in a similar sense of wilderness—the natural biosphere that has been affected by human activity.



Fig.1. *An Interspecies Memoir*, resin and hair, 2016

These nonhuman animal representations of a chicken, donkey, dog and bear reflect moments in my life where I felt connected to a nonhuman animal as well as my own animality. By embedding my hair in these sculptures, I address the intimate togetherness of a time and place where an interspecies exchange happened—I acknowledged the animal, and they acknowledged me.

Throughout the research process of my Master's degree, I searched for a more personal term to define the way I feel as a human animal who is intimately connected to empirical animality, intuitively connected to nonhuman animals and experiences in the wilderness. I argue that my term intraspeciation materializes a perspective towards evolutionary theories

of phylogenetic<sup>10</sup> exploration through the rejection of separation between species and categorization of singularity. I consider the taxonomy of species as a working, cycling system, that weaves in and out of each other. Within intraspeciation, I disregard ideas of anthropocentrism<sup>11</sup> and acknowledge the interconnectivity that exists amongst species. Through the realization of loss of affinity between human and species counterparts, I argue that we cannot survive as a species, without the existence of others. In this determination, I use the driving force of intraspeciation to produce artwork that reconnects the two realms of human and animal. In *The Secret Life of Plants* by Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird, IBM chemist Marcel Vogel concludes that there seems to be a life force that surrounds all living things and is sharable especially between plants, animals and humans (24).

In devising the term intraspeciation, I advocate for expanding moral concern beyond solely human conditions. Intraspeciation refers to the understanding of oneself, as a human animal, who embodies a pre-existing and conscious animality and shares an intuitive and innate connection with nonhuman animals and botanical/vegetal life. Intraspeciation is derived mainly by two terminologies; interspecies and speciation. Rafi Youatt in *Interspecies*

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<sup>10</sup> As stated in the *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary*, Phylogeny refers to a diagrammatical system of evolutionary systems and history development of various biological species (W.A. Newman Dorland).

<sup>11</sup> Anthropocentrism serves as an ideology that humans are morally more significant than other species or forms of life. "Anthropocentrism can also be understood to constitute and compound the species boundary of politics in ways that bear negatively on both human life and nonhuman life" (Youatt 208).

*Relations, International Relations* defines interspecies as “not just a human understanding of the world (though it is that) but is also an effort to map very material and biological human-nonhuman relations under a new term that is not anthropocentric” (210). While the term *interspecies* refers to the communication or occurrence between different species of animal, plant, fungi or bacteria; intraspeciation is a metaphysical and self-reflexive viewing of oneself as animal, through the prefix *intra*, who shares and embraces interconnectivity with nonhuman animals and the biosphere and intimately feels the connection within. Intraspeciation uses a holistic approach to comprehend the human biological and emotional make-up that is closely related to other species. The second term *speciation* is an evolutionary process where new biological species are created either through natural processes or hybridization. As Sobel *et al.* argue, “To Darwin, speciation was simply the end point of a chronological series of steps, beginning with variation among individuals within species to the production of adaptively differentiated varieties and eventually to new species, with extinctions occurring along the way” (297). In intraspeciation, the hybridized composite is not forced, but rather re-acknowledged through an understanding that animality is present within the human animal, along with the relationships with other species such as vegetal, botanical and mineral.

The research of ethologist Konrad Lorenz aided in my development and process of intraspeciation through his identification of similarities amongst species, which translates to animality fixed within the human. In *Motivation of Human and Animal Behaviour* by Konrad Lorenz and Paul Leyhausen, both writers use a comparative method from a phylogenetic viewpoint, to address

similar behaviours amongst species. By analyzing human and animal behavioural motivation, Lorenz and Leyhausen use a “genuine holistic causal analysis” (31) to bring transparency to misconceptions about human and animal similarity:

Very much of human behavior is simply not intelligible on the basis of the life history of the individual, but only against the background of the long history of the species *Homo sapiens*, a history which for enormous periods of time was shared with the mammals and all other vertebrates (98).

This provides insight on the phylogenetic development and animality of human behaviour that is portrayed in the notion of intraspeciation. As a prefix, Charles Darwin’s 1859 book *The Origin of Species*, uses notions of evolution through natural selection to propose that species have not been independently created, but rather have descended as varieties through a rhizomatic system from other species. Akira Mizuta Lippit in *Electric Animal* states that “Darwin tore down the barrier that had been arrogantly set up between man and beast” (76). Darwin’s research opened doors to interpretation of pinnacle relationships between species, which have been perceived by numerous theorists, artists, and philosophers. Through the influence of evolutionary discovery and ethological findings, intraspeciation is a self-defining process where an individual re-acknowledges their phylogenetic roots as a human animal.

Intraspeciation can be seen as “a neutral place between animal and human that is neither man-made nor animal-made but a third entity altogether: a place where power relationships are temporarily suspended and human and animal are equalised” (Aloi 56). Intraspeciation suggests that humans do not possess a life form of their own; it is a holistic approach to understanding the human as part of the biosphere as well as an animal species. This theory of

intraspeciation and the becoming of is pivotal to my artistic practice. It helps me situate my artwork within a realm of suspension, where all species become interconnected.

## BIOPHILIA

The effect was strangely calming. Breathing and heartbeat diminished, concentration intensified. It seemed to me that something extraordinary in the forest was very close to where I stood, moving to the surface and discovery.

—Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia*, 1984: 7

The biophilia hypothesis is used to define the innate tendency for human animals to seek connections with what we understand as nature, nonhuman species and other living organisms. Biophilia was first contextualized by German-born American psychoanalyst Erich Fromm in the 1970's within a psychological framework. Fromm uses the term biophilia in his text *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, to elucidate relations to ideas around life instinct (365). Fromm defines biophilia as “the passionate love of life and of all that is alive; it is the wish to further growth, whether in a person, a plant, an idea, or a social group” (365). Within this section, I focus on the biophilia hypothesis put forth by American biologist Edward O. Wilson, in his book *Biophilia*.

Through field-based research, Wilson proposes the biophilia hypothesis to represent the tendency of human animals to be drawn to, focus, and affiliate themselves with nature and other forms of life through a genetic basis. As Wilson explains, “The word of reflection can be summarized by a single word, biophilia, which I will be so bold as to define as the innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes” (1). Both Fromm and Wilson use the term biophilia to emphasize their focus on aspects of life. In my research and art production, I acknowledge biophilia and also acknowledge the entirety of life

processes through growth, life, death and decay. I do not refer to the term biophilia to represent specifically life, I also refer to the notion that human animals hold a speculative curiosity and innate connection to nonhuman animals, plant life, and the natural biosphere through the entirety of similar life processes. While using plants within my body of work, they wither, which results in transitional artworks that display the natural process of life and death—something every organism experiences. Addressing the biophilia hypothesis, Wilson draws an optimistic proposition: “to the degree that we come to understand other organisms, we will place a greater value on them, and ourselves” (2). I wish to extend this statement and add, through our human connections to other species, we expand ethical consideration for other forms of life and broaden our understanding of ourselves as human animals who share biological similarities beyond human animals.

Anecdotal and qualitative evidence suggests that human animals are innately drawn to nature and other species and that being surrounded by natural environments promotes health benefits. In a case study seen in *The Benefits of Nature Experience*, Gregory N. Bratman *et al.* investigate the impact of the natural environment on affect and cognition (41). The group of examiners randomly assigned sixty participants to endure a fifty-minute walk in either a natural or urban environment after completing a series of psychological assessments. The participants who were subjected to an experience in nature produced clear benefits for affect, including a decrease in anxiety and rumination, and some benefits for cognition and memory (Bratman *et al.* 41). In relation to the biophilia hypothesis, this case study furthers the understanding on how even brief

exposure to biospheric environments hold beneficial qualities. This provides an example of why we are drawn to nonhuman species as it promotes health for our wellbeing as human animals, and shows how humans have been conditioned and neglectful towards nature by showing an increase in anxiety and other health conditions. I am not suggesting here that we should use nonhuman animals and the biosphere to solely benefit ourselves, but rather suggest an increase in connective awareness and empathy towards other beings. As Bratman *et al.* explain, “If decreased exposure to nature is causing changes in mental health, one might expect the affective consequences to extend beyond stress and positive mood” (42). The more we separate ourselves from nonhuman species and the biosphere, the more detrimental this separation is to our condition as human animals.

The urbanized, modern society we currently live in has created divergences between human and animal, and in the most dramatic sense reflects “the fear of a progressive distancing from nature, bearing consequences we can barely imagine; the fear of a genetically modified nature that may get irreparably out of control” (Aloi 35). As Wilson states “[t]he inner voice murmurs *You went too far*, and disturbed the world, and gave away too much for your control of Nature” (13). The concept of biophilia that is prevalent in my artwork recognizes this unruly separation and in return, reestablishes connections as a reminder that our human curiosity of other species relies on our animalistic similarities.

Language and the symbolism located in idioms that refer to animals such as “busy as a bee”, “sly as a fox” and “blind as a bat” demonstrate biophilia tendencies. Widespread affiliations with animalistic metaphors originated in eras

where humans were much closer in proximity to nonhuman animals in the biosphere. Once human animals explore their biophilic tendencies, Wilson explains that:

it will engage more of the things close to the human heart and spirit. And if this much is true, it seems possible that the naturalist's vision is only a specialized product of a biophilic instinct shared by all, that it can be elaborated to benefit more and more people. Humanity is exalted not because we are so far above other living creatures, but because knowing them well elevates the very concept of life (22).

Unexpected evidence of biophilia can be found in *The Encyclopedia of Ecology and Environmental Management*, in which Peter Calow defines *Biophobia* as the fear and loathing of animals and wilderness. This can be seen through measurable physiological, preconditioned fears to snakes and spiders (Wilson 86). Looking back to a time where humans were constantly vulnerable to predators, environmental phenomena such as lightning and earthquakes, and poisonous plants, we, as human animals, have been preconditioned to fear what puts us at risk. Using snakes and spiders as example, may seem frightful to us for another given reason that they are so far from our human likelihood, although internally, anatomically and behaviorally, we share many similarities with these species.

Wilson believes that creativity lies within thinking and communicating and states that “both are enterprises of discovery. And the binding force lies in our biology and in our relationship to other organisms” (63); that “intrinsic emotions drive us to search for fresh habitats, to cross unexplored terrain, but we still crave the sense of a mysterious world stretching infinitely beyond” (76). The curiosity and connectivity to other species influences me to produce work that reveals the

emotionality of an intraspeciated human animal who feels connections to other species through the inclination to biophilia. This can be seen in the work *Hybrid (In)synced* (Fig. 2) which creates a dialogue between a frog, bird, fox and intraspeciated human animals who have transformed into foxes.



Fig. 2. *Hybrid (In)synced*, drawing with chia seeds and seed paper on Stonehenge, 2015-2016

While humans show a mixture of apprehension and fascination towards nonhuman species, Wilson expresses our deepest similarities to other species to lie molecularly:

What is it exactly that binds us so closely to living things? The biologist will tell you that life is the self-replication of giant molecules from lesser chemical fragments, resulting in the assembly of complex organic structures, the transfer of large amounts of molecular information, ingestion, growth, movement of an outwardly purposeful nature, and the proliferation of closely similar organisms. The poet-in-biologist will add that life is an exceedingly improbable state, metastable, open to other systems, thus ephemeral—and worth any price to keep (85).

While Wilson describes biophilia to be unique to human condition because of our specializations, despite our different qualities, we are able to experience biophilia because of our connectedness and biological affiliations with other species. In the mode of hierarchy where humans sit above others, we should take a moment to consider how dependent we are on other species—our wellbeing relies on interactions, relations and selective consumption of other species. “The goal is to join emotion with the rational analysis of emotion in order to create a deeper and more enduring conservation ethic” (Wilson 119). A deepening moral consideration and altruism will consist of a hit of evolutionary realism as Wilson states:

the phylogenetic continuity of life with humanity seems an adequate reason by itself to tolerate the continued existence of apes and other organisms. This does not diminish humanity—it raises the status of nonhuman creatures. We should at least hesitate before treating them as disposable matter (130).

How can we assume that another being is not conscious, does not suffer or possess emotion? How can we reject the fact that *we are* animal and so closely relate to other forms of life? “A stiffer dose of biological realism appears to be in order” (Wilson 131). How we protect the human spirit is in the way we affiliate ourselves with other organisms. A rejection of the animal is only a rejection of ourselves— “They are the matrix in which the human mind originated and is permanently rooted” (Wilson 139).

Intraspeciation and the biophilia hypothesis correspond to each other closely. The becoming of intraspeciation lies within biophilia. The individual who is intraspeciated feels the most connected to their animalistic biology through

innately alluring affects that draw human animals toward other living organisms. The phenomenological sensations of intraspeciation, as well as intuitive connections to other organisms and species, can be strongly felt while in the biosphere. Both areas of investigation correspond with each other to extend interconnectivity. The body of work I produced for this particular project rejoiced the phenomena of biophilia through materials and in the installation of the artworks. I displayed my work in a reproduced and enclosed biosphere—a greenhouse conservatory<sup>12</sup> where the work was on display between April 15-18, 2016.

My personal memories of the becoming of intraspeciation within a biophilic framework resonated with the scenario Wilson describes involving a naturalist:

He goes alone into a field or woodland and closes his mind to everything but that time and place, so that life around him presses in on all the senses and small details grow in significance. ... His mind becomes unfocused, it focuses on everything, no longer directed toward any ordinary task or social pleasantries. He measures the antic darting of midges in a conical mating swarm, the slant of sunlight by which they are best seen, the precise molding of mosses and lichens on the tree trunk on which they spasmodically alight. His eye travels up the trunk to the first branch and out to a spray of twigs and leaves and back, searching for some irregularity of shape or movement of a few millimeters that might betray an animal in hiding. He listens for any sound that breaks the lengthy spells of silence. From time to time he translates his running impressions of the smell of soil and vegetation into rational thought: the ancient olfactory brain speaks to the modern cortex (103).

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<sup>12</sup> The greenhouse conservatory I exhibit my work in for my thesis exhibition is the Allan Gardens Conservatory, located in downtown Toronto. I go into more detail about this location and the relation to my work in THREE.

This scene depicts the becoming of intraspeciation within the biosphere; all pre-thoughts are lost; what comes to consciousness, is the animality present in the human intrigued by the plants, vegetation, minerals, rocks, insects and nonhuman animals that surround. It is a feeling of being able to breathe again.

## **P O S T H U M A N I S M**

Looking at individual characteristics collectively, humanism is widely understood as an ethical stance or philosophy that puts emphasis on the faith, trust and superiority of humanity; valuing homo sapiens as beings of higher agency. From this perspective, humanism has emphasized an ethical divide between human and animal (Wolfe xi). Posthumanism, commonly understood as a theory that speculates on the progression of humans through technology, is used by Cary Wolfe to focus on human origin and the relation to animal ancestry. Wolfe rationalizes posthumanism through the dogma that is associated with humanism and the humanity/animality dichotomy, “namely, that ‘the human’ is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether” (xv). Humanism paradoxically extracts the idea that humans hold a biological animality and places it within the concept of anthropocentrism. Humanism affirms its place towards anthropology and stresses the importance of human race and a rejection to the animal through the development of power structures.

Wolfe explains posthumanism to be the opposite of transhumanism, which he states as an intensified version of humanism (xv). A common understanding of posthumanism is often associated with “cyborgology” but in relation to my area of research and art practice, I address the area of posthumanism that diffuses hierarchies by looking at nonhuman species as being closely related to the human animal and the linkages in between. Working within this particular area of posthumanism involves a change of thought—

posthumanism acknowledges a course of action by addressing our biological similarities to other species. This acts as a pre-humanist view in reference to a time where humans were closer to the animal. In expansion, Wolfe describes the prefix *post* as in posthumanism to not necessarily imply that it comes after humanism. “Posthumanism in my sense isn’t posthuman at all—in the sense of being ‘after’ our embodiment has been transcended—but only posthumanist, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself” (Wolfe xv). Wolfe positions posthumanism to come both before and after humanism; that the modern human animal is inextricable from its own biological animal roots, and also has adapted with a coevolution of technicity with tools, language and culture (xv). The thematic and process of posthumanism involves “the decentering of the human in relation to either evolutionary, ecological, or technological coordinates” (Wolfe xvi). With references precedent to humanism, posthumanism regards itself as the origin of human animality and evolutionary development. The notion of posthumanism involves rationality but is also instinctual and based on intuition; relating to human and nonhuman animal relations and connectivity.

Similarly to intraspeciation, posthumanism involves a moment of decentering the human from preconceived notions of eminence and conceptualizes a new way of understanding by embracing animality. Posthumanism does not reject humanism per se; rather it is an expansion on the conditions and operations of this notion. It elaborates on human ontology but does not reject the animal that is fixed within and explores our human connections to nonhuman species. Wolfe explains, “the point is not to reject

humanism-indeed, there are many values and aspirations to admire in humanism- but rather to show how those aspirations are undercut by the philosophical and ethical frameworks used to conceptualize them” (xvi). One of the qualities of humanism that posthumanism does reject is the amplification of human-centric perspectives which result in the discrimination against nonhuman animals, along with humans with disabilities (Wolfe xvi-xvii). In the attempts to eradicate dogmas presented in humanism, posthumanism addresses issues to not only diffuse dichotomies, but to reintroduce inextricable animality and relationships amongst species. Posthumanism addresses “directly the problem of anthropocentrism and speciesism and how practices of thinking and reading must change in light of their critique” (Wolfe xix). Wolfe critiques fundamental humanist paradigms in order to progress towards new methods of addressing our human relationships towards nonhuman animals.

Through posthumanism, complexities arise in the implications of human-animal studies as Wolfe states, “just because we direct our attention to the study of nonhuman animals, and even if we do so with the aim of exposing how they have been misunderstood and exploited, that does not mean that we are not continuing to be humanist—and therefore, by definition, anthropocentric” (99). To avoid this implication of humanism, I acknowledge that my work and research is from the perspective of a human, although, I address the animality within the intraspeciated human animal, who has an extensive lived experience with nonhuman animals. I express my intuitive connections to different species in order to express a posthumanist viewpoint, rather than a humanist framework

that exploits and studies “the animal”. Rafi Youatt questions whether anthropocentrism is inevitable by stating:

Is anthropocentrism unavoidable, in virtue of the fact that we are human? There is an important distinction to be made between the unavoidably human perspective that comes from being human, on one hand, and the entirely avoidable content of moral and political frameworks that are expressed through human language (210).

Because I am addressing personal feelings as an intraspeciated human animal, the majority of my work is represented by, and reproduces areas of my body. This is essential as through the process of making, I create an intimate dialogue through the materials applied, and use my body to address a posthumanist viewpoint by amalgamating and incorporating other species. Although traditional taxonomy has separated us as species, posthumanism welcomes new perceptions of being, while acknowledging that we, as humans, share similar interest, behaviors and structures. This posthumanism lens make us animal and relatable to numerous species alike.

## TWO

Within this section, I map out literature involving human-animal relationships. I discuss Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of *becoming-animal* in comparison to Donna Haraway's concept of *becoming with*. Through the literature review, I discuss Cary Wolfe, from his collection series *Zoontologies*, Carol Freeman, Elizabeth Leane and Yvette Watt in the anthology *Considering Animals*, and Ron Broglio's *Surface Encounters* as a way to look beyond the human/animal divide. I focus on representations of animals, the relationships and similarities amongst species, respective contemporary art practices, and the divide that has attempted to separate us all.

## B E C O M I N G

In general, the process of *becoming* is an imminent method of coming to be something by passing through various states and re-emerging or transforming into something new. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* define becoming as a metaphysical state of a primitive condition, revealing a relationship between the human and animal through the term “becoming-animal” (272). Deleuze and Guattari “believe in the existence of very special becomings-animal traversing human beings and sweeping them away, affecting the animal no less than the human” (237). This becoming represents our existence as human animals and reveals animality that is rooted within through the affective dialogue and exchange between species. “The objective relationships between animals have been applied to certain subjective relations between man and animal, from the standpoint of a collective imagination or a faculty of social understanding” (Deleuze and Guattari 235). *Becoming-animal* has an association with, and questions identity, as a becoming produces nothing other than itself; a body that coexists amongst many others. Deleuze and Guattari coined this phrase within a nomadic and rhizomatic framework and express becoming as a transformation with movement of progression.

Lenard Lawlor in *This Is Not Sufficient* refers to philosopher Jacques Derrida when he states “the voice of the animal is in me, and thereby I undergo the ways that animals change or become” (170). *Becoming-animal* provides implicit connections to concepts of evolution in which bring the human and animal together. This notion challenges the collective human relation to animals as Lawlor explains, “we must stop being human...we must enlarge the concept of

auto-affection" (170). Ron Broglio in *Surface Encounters* emphasizes notions of becoming by stating that this concept brings the rethinking of cultural cache and offers new concepts of "thinking about humans and animals outside the hegemony of the privileged interiority of the human subject" (85). Becoming brings awareness of how we enframe animals within our world and complicates our sense of identity and what it means to be a human animal (Broglio 71). *Becoming-animal* affirms my position as an intraspeciated human animal and is present within my body of work as it embraces our "animal nature and abysmal bodily kinship with the beast" (Broglio 45). This affirmation reinserts the animality in the human by broadening our understanding of our existence as human animals. At the transitional stage of intraspeciation, a nomadic *becoming-animal* occurs where the phenomenal experience of biophilia traverses through the human animal. Within this particular becoming, there is a shift made in the way we think about our human animality along with how we can shift our perception on the biological and emotional structures of our species. Within this concept, I created the study, *An Intraspeciated Becoming* (Fig. 3), which is a photo series of the state of *becoming-animal*; of becoming intraspeciated.



Fig. 3. *An Intraspeciated Becoming*, photograph series, 2014

This photo series provides a nomadic glimpse of the moment of *becoming-animal* through suggested movement and the amalgamation of human and animal features. Jacques Derrida in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* expresses the human tie to the animal by crossing borders, “I move from ‘the ends of man,’ that is the confines of man, to ‘the crossing of borders’ between man and animal. Crossing borders or the ends of man I come or surrender...to the animal in me...” (372). In acknowledging our predisposition as animal, our static image as human begins an un-precedented transformation through *becoming-animal* (Derrida 380).

Our very being as a species intertwines with the concept of becoming. Alistar Byth in *Becoming Within Being* explores the semantics of *becoming* in relation to *being* and states that *becoming* creates a unilateral contradiction with *being* when their meanings are not associative of each other (9). Byth believes *being* to be the heart of becoming and as an ontological anthropomorphism (381), relating to notions of *becoming-animal* through acknowledging the body, soul and spirit of being as both human and animal. “[T]he totality of becoming is open, its limitation no longer limits—Indeed, the organic, now appears, with the autonomous entities of the vegetal and animal realms” (Byth 372). With the incorporation of the concept *becoming-animal*, this gap between human, animal and the biosphere can be increasingly bridged. The fundamental aspect of instability is represented by a hierarchical system that implements we are human beings and biologically relate to nothing else. At this point, we can ask ourselves *what makes us human? And what is it like to be animal?* With the embodiment of becoming, our animalistic instinct is to question the complexity of basic laws of nature, housed between becoming and being. *Becoming-animal* introduces a new form of laws and opens the world of being.

The concept of *becoming-animal* is a state of un-humanizing and brings forth a metaphysical animality. In my artwork, I am representing *becoming-animal* and unleashing becomings that draw attention to the animality sourced in the human, as seen in (Fig.3). Steve Baker and co-writer Edwina Ashton discuss *becoming-animal* in the text *The Salon of Becoming-Animal* in relation to how animals are represented in contemporary art. They indicate that in the “role of artistic production and artistic discipline in the creative transformation of

experience: it is through a style that one becomes animal" (104). In other words, through the loss of subjectivity when considering the unconventional human, connections between artist and animal are inseparable during the act of becoming. To Giovanni Aloï, *becoming-animal* consists of:

blurring the zone of indiscernibility between human and animal and in this suffocating proximity, the opportunity for the human to leap into the animal is proposed by the becoming animal through the obliteration of boundaries and the temporary suspension of identity (67).

The concept of *becoming-animal*, while abstract in nature, brings forth a poetic metaphor for understanding human and animal relations and intertwine worlds. The investigation of this theory through artistic practice intensifies relations between species through deterritorialization and coming to know human animality.

## B E C O M I N G   W I T H

Donna Haraway takes on a more personable approach to animal lives in comparison to theorists and philosophers who tend to generalize and mundanely refer to the animal as a subject of curiosity. In *When Species Meet*, Haraway looks back to the work of Deleuze and Guattari and addresses the chapter *Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible* in relation to her concept of *becoming with*. Haraway acknowledges the attempts of *becoming-animal* to look beyond human-animal binaries but intimately approaches the concept of *becoming* by translating communication between species with the concept of *becoming with*.

Haraway begins her take on becoming by posing a question: “How is ‘becoming with’ a practice of becoming worldly?” (3). While Haraway focuses on companion species relationships and how they are continuously being evolved through the state of becoming, I interpret *becoming with* as a physical or metaphysical meeting/interaction between species. Haraway expresses a worldly meeting between organisms to be internally understood:

I think we learn to be worldly from grappling with, rather than generalizing from, the ordinary. I am a creature of the mud, not the sky. I am a biologist who has always found edification in the amazing abilities of slime to hold things in touch and to lubricate passages for living beings and their parts. I love the fact that human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all, and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm (3-4).

It is crucial to note that to become with, is to acknowledge the interconnectivity that lies between all forms of life. To consider your own animalism or to be intraspeciated is to become aware of aspects of sharing amongst all species; “to be one is always to *become with* many” (Haraway 4). When Haraway questions who do we become when species meet, I suggest we become intraspeciated from *becoming with* and follow the notion of biophilia through interaction.

*Becoming-animal* and *becoming with* have influenced my artistic practice, providing platforms of thought. I consider how I share my body with other organisms and the animality that I possess in the creation of hybrid bodies that combine organic and synthetic material. This notion can be seen in the work *Becoming* (Fig. 4).



Fig.4. *Becoming*, clay, wax, sheep's wool, moss, 2014

This sculptural work responds to *becoming-animal* by projecting a transformation where the human is being subsumed by nonhuman attributions. The enveloping

of organic substance claims that the human is an intraspeciated being. The concept of *becoming-with* is metaphorically seen in this work as through material representation, the human animal, moss, and sheep meet to become together.

*Becoming with* is a result of the “Great Divides” (9), a term Haraway adopted from Bruno Latour. *Becoming with* acts as a prognostic for the area of discomfort and division between nature and society, and nonhuman and human. *Becoming with* rejects speciesism<sup>13</sup>, as it suggests that species meet at the division in the process of becoming and co-exist in a world that is shared amongst species. Within the meet, Haraway suggests humans and nonhumans “will become messmates, companion species, and significant others to one another, as well as conspecifics” (15). In the realization that humans are not the only species that occupy their bodies, “species interdependence is the name of the worlding game on earth, and that game must be one of response and respect” (Haraway 19). This response is build upon the Great Divide and in development, creates a worldly becoming with all species. Kate James is an artist who translates the turbulent states of being and becoming through art production which can be seen in her work *The World is a Dangerous Place* (Fig. 5).

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Singer in *Speciesism and Moral Status* argues that “[w]e cannot claim that biological commonality entitles us to superior status over those who are not members of our species” (572). Speciesism is a term to define the perspective that places the moral value of human beings as superior to all other forms of life (Singer 573).



Fig. 5. Kate James, *The World is a Dangerous Place*, pegasus print, 50.5 x 68 cm, edition of 10, 2004  
<http://www.dainesinger.com/kate-james/>

This photographed performance is influential to my practice as it shows a meeting between species and reveals a passage of communication that looks beyond the Great Divide. In *Animal Stories*, Susan McHugh expresses this particular work to be related to “the concept of the human as a condition of species mixture or ‘mixed community’” to express the intersubjective bond between woman and horse (221). James’ work signifies the concept *becoming with* through materializing connectedness and communication between co-species.

In *The Companion Species Manifesto*, Haraway writes that in due cause of preexisting foundations of nature and culture, the world is in a “knot in motion” and that “biological and cultural determinism are both instances of misplaced

concreteness” (6). Biological determinism has become a humanist perspective that holds strong categorization of taxonomy and division between human and animal. In the term *becoming with* Haraway expresses meeting to be involuntary—our bodies make up of thousand interactions between organisms. “We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love. This love is a historical aberration and a naturalcultural legacy” (Haraway 16). *Becoming with* signifies a meeting between species that sheds light on the “value of the metaphysical encounter between human and animal and the resulting inter-species relation generated from this interaction” (Aloi 11). While *becoming-animal* signifies an occurrence of the transitional stage of animality, *becoming with* marks a happening between species and considers auto-affection when species meet.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DIVIDE

Until that fundamental divide is closed or at least reconciled in some congenial manner, the relation between man and the living world will remain problematic.

—Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia*, 1984: 49

In order to look past the divide that has encroachingly stripped us of our animality, an understanding of where our similarities lie need to be expressed. This section looks into academic references to expand on the Great Divide and speculates on how to bridge both worlds of animals and humans. As in the words of Jacques Derrida, looking beyond the divide speaks to the “trace beyond the human” that allows us to “move from the ‘ends of man,’ that is the confines of man, to the ‘crossing of borders’ between man and animal” (372). An opening of the human to the shared world of the animal occurs as each writer expresses correlations between human, animal and the biosphere.

*Zoontologies* by Cary Wolfe is an anthology consisting of writings regarding contemporary culture and theory revolving around the Animal and our human associations. Within this collection is the essay *From Protista to DNA (and Back Again)* by Judith Roof. Roof discusses molecular linkages between species through ideas of ontogenetic/phylogenetic architecture in relation to Sigmund Freud, and the protist<sup>14</sup>. Roof brings forth ideas around cell biology with reference to Sigmund Freud who, through a Darwinian lens, often disputed

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<sup>14</sup> Protist is a one-celled organism under the classification of Protista in which are free-living or aggregated into simple colonies. Within this context, Roof mentions protist in relation to Freud's thinking about life processes amongst different species—it is, and isn't human (101).

notions of boundary between animals and humans. Freud spoke of an evolutionary process where one complex species is plausible by the defining analogies of other species. “The leap from physiology to psychology—from body (or soma) to mind—depends on the presumed unity of life, the common rule of dynamic principles, the relation among species, and species’ presumed interrelation” (Roof 101). Roof explains that Freud’s “reliance on the protista example is an instance of the dissolution of boundaries; life can illustrate the principles of life because all life is connected” (110). Through theories provided by Freud, he “outlined not only opportunities for interspecies comparison, but also a unified theory of life processes that makes each species an example for all others” (Roof 103). The coexistence of microorganisms contributes to the make up of all species, showing developmental layers that comprise of all existences. This linkage along with notions of animality and biophilia, furthers my argument that all species are in some way connected. To Freud, the link between human and animal positions a “fundamental precept [that] parallels the phylogenetic position of the animal in the evolution of individual (psychic and physical) human development” (Roof 106). In other words, phylogenetic similarities from the nonhuman to human consists of germs that represent the primal development of all organic existence. As Roof states:

Like the protista, DNA suggests the fundamental interconnection of living things; the repetition of portions of DNA structures from species to species suggest the same kind of evolutionary phylogeny suggest by Freud’s notion of the holdover germ cells (114).

Realizing our biological structure as a human animal governs a path to the other side of the divide that separated our animality from our genetic make up.

Continuing into the collection, in *Animal Body, Inhuman Face*, Alphonso Lingis explains that all species have the characteristic of sharing genes and possess symbiotic relationships with other species. Lingis suggests that there is no species of life that does not live in symbiosis with another species by stating:

human animals live in symbiosis with thousands of species of anaerobic bacteria, six hundred species in our mouths which neutralize the toxins in all plants produce to ward off their enemies, four hundred species in our intestines, without which we could not digest and absorb the food we ingest. Some synthesize vitamins, others produce polysaccharides or sugars our bodies need. The number of microbes that colonize our bodies exceeds the number of cells in our bodies by up to a hundredfold (166).

This being said, through an interconnected system, we share symbiosis with cats, dogs, pickerel, ants, wolves, wheat, corn, berries, cucumbers, and so on. “Our bodies are coral reefs teeming with polyps, sponges, gorgonians, and free-swimming macrophages continually stirred by monsoon climates of moist air, blood, and biles” (Lingis 167). Our human animal bodies have indeed evolved, but what remains quite concretely are fundamental structures that tie us to all living organisms along with our inextricable animality.

Konrad Lorenz delineates similarities in behaviour between human and nonhuman animals in his book *Studies in Animal and Human Behaviour* where he states that “the behaviour not only of animals, but of human beings as well, is to a large extent determined by nervous mechanisms evolved in the phylogeny of species, in other words, by ‘instinct’” (xii). Lorenz has observed from an intimate proximity to other species that both human and nonhuman animals have developed instinctual similarities that guide our behaviour and co-exist in each other. While analyzing behaviours of animals, Lorenz makes connections

between human and nonhuman species and states that we collectively share attributes that make up our being and “the behavioural sequence is carried out in the same manner by *all* individuals of a species” (76). Addressing similarities between nonhuman and human species, *An Interconnected Exchange* (Fig. 6) speaks to connections between man and frog.

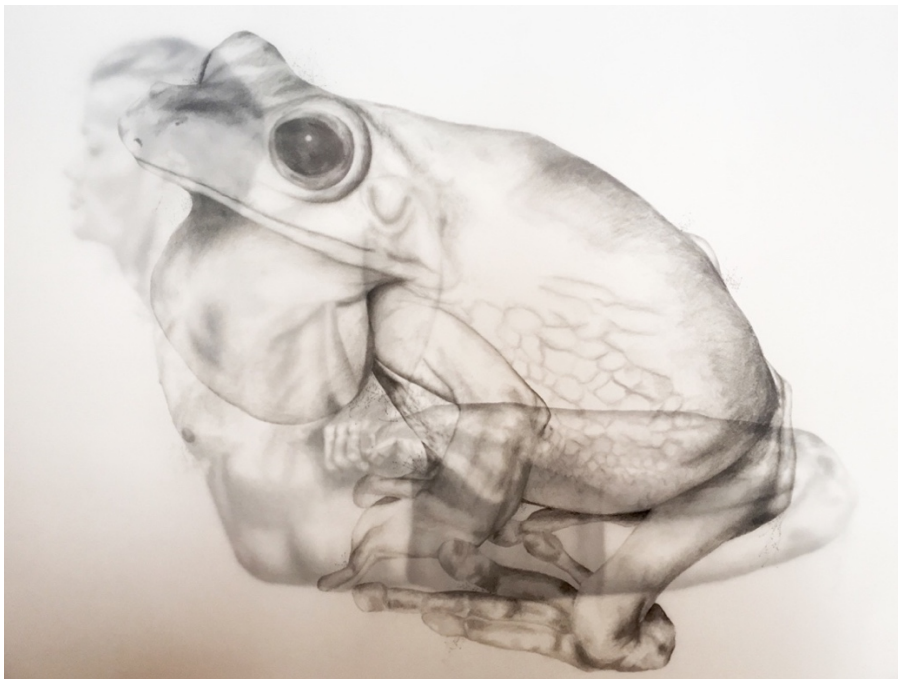


Fig. 6. *An Interconnected Exchange*, layered drawing on Mylar and Stonehenge, 2015

The man is in a strenuous yoga pose commonly understood as the “frog pose”, a practice that focuses on breath. As viewers walk by the drawing, the thin layer of transparent paper blows back and forth from the heavier paper, separating imagery when farther apart but becoming one form again when settled against each other. By focusing on the notion of breath, anatomical and respiratory similarities rest within the human animal and frog. This work vocalizes similarities

between human and nonhuman animals to bring forth human animality and investigates evaluations made by scientific discovery.

## **The Fortification**

Before science and reasoning, Lynn White in *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis* draws the history of humanism in relation to nature and the Western, Judeo-Christian tradition stemming from the old testament. White brings forth the idea that Christianity is an anthropocentric faith that has taken away from animism by the exploitation of, and dominance over nature and nonhuman animals. Through the story of creation, White states that:

By gradual stages a loving and all- powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not part of nature: he is made in God's image (1205).

The development of the human/animal divide has thus been exploited through religious faith and as influence, has bloomed into areas of more contemporary times. In *Zoontologies*, Steve Baker's essay *Sloughing the Human* addresses what we can see as the continuing development of barriers between species through a Heideggerian point of view, which can be seen in Martin Heidegger's 1946 text *Letter on Humanism*:

Heidegger had periodically addressed the relation of humans and other animals, sometimes at great length, since the late 1920s. His initial theses,

framed as a means of assessing how it was possible to know or to have access to the experience of the world, ran as follows:

1. The stone is worldless.
2. The animal is poor in the world.
3. Man is world-forming

(151)

Baker reacts by stating “this is indeed an impoverished notion of the animal. Put alongside the earlier thesis that only humans are ‘world-forming,’ it leaves the animal gazing across the abyss not only at all that is human, but also at all that is associated with thought, generosity, and creativity” (152). Wolfe refers to the human as the political animal since the hierarchical system that has prioritized the importance of human animals has projected an extreme human dignity:

The political *animal*—so that we properly understand the human being as ‘not just a moral and political being, but one who has an animal body, and whose human dignity, rather than being opposed to this animal nature, inheres in it, and in its temporal trajectory’ from cradle to grave, which involves long periods and sometimes unexpected modes of dependency and vulnerability as embodied beings (66).

What needs to be taken into action is to shift perception to look beyond the hierarchical system of agency and beyond the human/animal divide. I address consanguinity amongst nonhuman and human species in my art practice to question this very notion of the human/animal divide and in return, provide an opportunity to think differently about our own humanness.

## **The Other Side**

Carol Freeman, Elizabeth Leane, and Yvette Watt consider looking beyond the divide through contemporary studies in human-animal relations seen in *Considering Animals*. Using areas of biological sciences, humanities and social sciences, this collection of texts investigates complex relationships between human and animal and explores how we, as human animals, can look beyond divisions and embrace “animal moments” (Freeman, Leane and Watt 1). “This much-needed paradigm shift in accepting that animals are sentient, emotional, and moral beings means that we must reassess our attitudes toward them and treatment of them” (Freeman, Leane and Watt xiii). Using an intraspeciated train of thought in examining the other side of the human/animal divide consists of a retrospection towards evolutionary development. This brings the realization that our human developments were abled by our natural instincts as “human lives and human histories are constantly punctuated by such moments—individual incidents and encounters that disturb our self-contained existences and bring into focus the complexities of our ongoing relationships with nonhuman animals” (Freeman, Leane and Watt 1). Rather than discussing animals as an opposing species, we need to obstruct the disintegration of our own animality and use our speculative curiosity about other species in comparison to our own way of being as an animal species.

This speculation is addressed in my artwork through the integration of materials that represent animalistic characteristics within bodily works of the human figure. Addressing nonhuman species signals “that the future of human-animal studies is more than the theoretical, academic, and legal investigation of

animals; it requires us to more fully include them as presences in our analyses. It is time to let the dogs out—or rather, *into* the discussion” (Freeman, Leane and Watt 10). Through this proximity, we come to know ourselves as human animals and from curiosity, come to know our similarities to other nonhuman species. Looking beyond what divides us, Jonathan Balcombe in *Pleasure’s Moral Worth*, suggests keeping an open-mind and begin to focus curiosity towards other ways of being by stating that:

all members of the vertebrate animal kingdom—mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fishes—share the same basic body plan: skeletal, muscular, nervous, circulatory, digestive, excretory, endocrine, and reproductive systems...Humans and animals also share much of the same physiological and biochemical responses to sensory events (83).

The similarities between human and nonhuman animals also extend to plant life, as “indirect evidence for animal pain is also widespread in nature. Plants, for example, have exploited animals’ capacity for pain and discomfort with the evolution of thorns and bitter-tasting chemical compounds in their tissues” (Balcombe 85). With coming to know that nonhuman species hold the same characteristics that human animals possess, the very foundation of the divide is broken down and what re-emerges is a plane where we all stand as interconnected beings.

Although there has been a continuous debate in regards to our history of human-animal relationships and the dimensions of ethical concern and philosophical influence, the question of the animal is still a relatively new concern in scholarly studies and art practices. Artist Yvette Watt in *Making Animals Matter* speaks to ethical concerns by stating “this historical refusal to see animals as worthy subject matter in disciplines within the humanities, law, and sciences

extend to the visual arts, where for many centuries animals were relegated to a lowly position within the hierarchy of important subject matter for artists” (119). Watt considers the question of the animal and incorporates her personal empathy for nonhuman animals by commenting on human attitudes towards the treatment of other animals. This is done through photographic work of anthropomorphizing her own features with animals which can be seen in her *Second Sight* series (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Yvette Watt, *Second Sight* series (sheep, cow, pig, chicken), Detail, giclee print on hahnemuhle photo rag paper, 2007-2008

This fusion of features is “a gesture of association and solidarity and a metaphorical imagining of what their lives are like. By giving these animals specific human features—my features—and vice versa, giving myself animal features, I encourage the viewer to confront these hybrids as individuals” (Watt 128). In my artistic practice, I use my body to signify an interaction between my

own animality and my relations with other animals. The process of embedding fur into a mould of my body is an animal moment encounter. I am confronting the viewer with a direct visual language of human animalism. *Cerebral Soil* (Fig. 8) uses materiality to represent human animality by the use of dog fur and the implication of human flesh by the tactility of wax.



Fig. 8. *Cerebral Soil*, wax, dog fur, and soil, 2015

Embedded with soil, this work addresses our internal and external connections to nonhuman species. Rather than displaying animals as passive subjects of human ideas and actions, I am regarding our own animal embodiment, along with correlating representations of different species to create a dynamic relationship between all. Helen Tiffin in *The Speech of Dumb Beasts* addresses representations of nonhuman animals through human curiosity by stating:

We are surrounded by these consciousnesses beyond ours, beyond our limited understanding, and, with the exception of a handful of rare (human) individuals, have only recently acquired a more urgent need to attempt to understand; while at the same time being forced to acknowledge the limits that animals' potential bringing into presence necessarily exposes in ourselves. Even as animal consciousness is both 'supposed and repressed' by *our* language(s), imaginative writers are increasingly addressing the task of giving us glimpses into these realms, redrawing these animal languages in fictions which not only challenge former and formal generic boundaries, but which reach to address the question of those vast possibilities beyond our own language and understanding (151).

By investigating the human/animal divide and looking past the binary between human and nonhuman species in areas of theory, philosophy, science and visual arts, this paradigm of looking beyond what divides us opens doors to new perceptions on how we look at ourselves as human and how we embrace connectivity towards other species. Susan McHugh argues that key creative developments in animal politics narrates an inseparable comparison amongst species through cross-species companionship and contemporary fictions as she states "theories of animality as encompassed by (even fundamentally repressed within) human identity certainly account for the conspicuous absence of animal questions" (30). By disregarding historic (mis)perceptions that follow an anthropocentric guide towards animal proximities, a new foundation occurs where comparing similarities amongst species translates to intraspeciation where one recognizes the animality that encompasses their being.

In *Surface Encounters*, Ron Broglio considers contemporary artists and bypasses humanist qualities and perspectives of biological determinism in order to look beyond the human/animal divide using a metaphorical and metaphysical approach. Broglio questions what it is to be animal by exploring animal

phenomenology, languages of interspecies expression and challenges philosophical concepts of animal studies. In the approach of acting animal, Broglio uses the misconceptions of animal poverty as “other” to form a dialogue between human and animal and states that “the supposed poverty of the (animal) surface provides an opportunity for thinking differently. If philosophy is to think the unthought of thought, it will be at such limits, horizons, and surfaces where we meet the Other” (xix). On the notion of surface, Broglio presents the idea that humans and animals live on the same earth, but the surface, physically and metaphorically, differs as they both occupy different worlds or *umwelten*<sup>15</sup> (xix). In the attempts of providing a shared moment between human and animal, along with revealing an animality within the innermost human, my artistic practice and research investigates a surface in which all species are present and interconnected. Within the application of human, animal and botanical characteristics to my work, I reveal an animality that is subsumed under the act of “a ritual disorientation of the human, a loss of selfhood, and rending of flesh in the production of an art that reveals the nonhuman animal that is intimately woven within the human” (Broglio 26). This disorientation of selfhood can be seen in the work *(Intra)terior Vessel* (Fig. 9).

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<sup>15</sup> Umwelt is a term used by German Biologist Jakob von Uexküll, which translates to “environment” or “surroundings”. Uexküll, while studied communication between human and nonhuman species, theorized that organisms and species possess different *umwelten*, even if they share the same environment. Each species has a different perception of the world that they live in (Broglio 63).



Fig. 9. *(Intra)terior Vessel*, wax, dog fur, plaster, 2016

This sculptural work presents the intraspeciated body within a plane of biophilic immanence. By exploring the interior and exterior of my body, animality is brought to the surface by covering the exteriority of the body cast with dog fur. In revealing the interior of my body, “[t]he split exposes the inside as another outside, a surface for study” (Broglia 28). In disclosing the interior of the human, I reveal animality from the depths and bring it to the surface. Within this work, I convey the notion of cryptozoology<sup>16</sup> by displaying what appears to be a body of a species that has not been proven to exist. This concept draws attention to the ignorance paid to human animality by creating a grotesqueness out of what can be seen as the realist fact of our existence.

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<sup>16</sup> In the *Encyclopedia of Time*, Cryptozoology stands as “[T]he study of animals that are hypothesized to exist, but concrete physical evidence to prove their existence has not yet been found. These ‘unknown animals’ could be either undiscovered species or living specimens of species thought to be extinct. The term is derived from the Greek, and means literally ‘the study of hidden animals’” (James Birx).

In the balancing plane of the other side, hierarchies collapse and curiousness of the animal turns into an understanding of our relationships with nonhuman species and ourselves. In examining the other side, Broglio states that a “knowledge, including self-knowledge, occurs at the ‘inside’ or privileged interiority of the human becomes divided and opened” (48). My artwork allows viewers to imagine a place where the human and nonhuman exists as co-species, intertwined through interior/exterior surface and space. Looking beyond the anthropocentric divide furthers apprehension on what it is like to look beyond a human, towards a human animal.

### **THREE**

This chapter expounds the trajectory for my Master's project. Within this section, I highlight the various intersections within my interdisciplinary practice where methodologies and methods meet to encompass a qualitative research and practice-led method of inquiry. With the considerations of a self-reflexive standpoint from which the artwork develops, and the importance of site that conveys the conceptual framework of biophilia and interconnectivity, this research design reflects the direction of my thinking, observations, writing, and artistic creations.

## **M E T H O D O L O G Y**

My engagement with artistic projects is intuitive, the organic nature of my practice is supported by a sense of organization and discipline. My influences are concrete and flux within micro-interests sparked by everyday occurrences that relate to the major themes of human, animal and vegetal/botanical relations. The way my mood changes when the sun is visible, the aroma of herbal tea, the connections I feel when I am surrounded by wilderness, or how I am more likely to acknowledge someone's pet companion before them—these life moments reflect my interests in biological exploration, animal relations and biophilia that shape my artistic practice. My methodology follows a qualitative approach and a practice-led method of inquiry. I develop artworks that reference self-reflexiveness, and scientific and philosophic theories. This position gives me the opportunity to contextualize experiences and relations as well as establish progression towards rewilding humans as animalist embodiments of nature.

Within the scope of qualitative research, there are numerous conventional subcategories and countless possible methodologies in which, as proposed by Thomas Schram, “leave many of those who seek a common defining thread in a state of despair” (2). My research methods are driven by my studio practice, where I gain an understanding of possible underlying reasons and motivations for human-animal investigations. By means of sculpture and drawing, I use my experiences in the natural biosphere and interactions with nonhuman species as a mainspring for production. These areas of investigation comprise an interdisciplinary framework that embodies theories of biology, self-exploration through reflexiveness, human-animal philosophy and means of artistic

production. These speculations are represented in my artwork by the means of drawings that explore biophilia through specific dialogues or transitional hybrid drawings, sculptural work that combines bodily characteristics, and material representations of different species that constitute intraspeciation.

The seed of my art practice and research lies within my own experience as an intraspeciated biophilic. Coming from a small town, I consider myself to be intuitively connected to nonhuman species and my own animality from having a close proximity to nonhuman animals and wilderness; inducing a sense of biophilia any time I am of propinquity to forests, marshes, companion species, grass, greenhouses, undomesticated animals, etc. In *Untimely Meditations*, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche expands on communication between human and animal which sparked a childhood memory:

A human being may well ask an animal: “why do you not speak to me of your happiness but only stand and gaze at me?” and the animal would like to answer, and say: “The reason is I always forget what I was going to say”—but then he forgot this answer too, and stayed silent: so that the human being was left wondering (60-61).

I remember at a young age, I sat with my cat in a small area of cleared land at home and talked to her like she understood what I was saying and reassured her that if she talked, I would not tell anyone; secret safe with me, believing that she would respond. In investigating scholarly sources of human-animal studies, it is the memories that I hold and experiences I endured that work as an entry-point in my practice. Collectively, my art practice aims to revisualize the points of connection between the nonhuman and human animal, and vegetal/botanical life in order to denaturalize the power binaries of species.

Self-reflexivity promotes a subjective standpoint in the sense that it is open to interpretation. My artistic practice is self-reflexive but opens itself to numerous possibilities of interpretation through crossing borders of the human/animal divide. My approach to art making within the parameters of my thesis project theorizes an academic model but is primarily influenced by my intuition and speculation. Libby Plumridge and Rachel Thomson in *Longitudinal Qualitative Studies and The Reflexive Self* explain self-reflexiveness as a practicing methodology that “speaks to the dynamic process of how individuals make meaning of their lives and incorporate these meanings as a basis for future action” (214). Within the elements that comprise of my research and artistic approach, self-reflexiveness and intuition rests on and lends itself to how I feel as an intraspeciated human animal who embraces biophilia and animality.

## CULTIVATING INTERCONNECTIVITY

What is pivotal to my research method is the development of artworks that incorporate literal or representational bodies of nonhuman and human species through material use. Important to my creative process is the use of organic and inorganic material through the positions they occupy. Materials such as moss, clay, dirt, soil, seeds, plant-based material, minerals, fur, hair, and antlers are used in conjunction with synthetic materials such as latex, wax, plaster, and various plastics.

In the process of making a hybrid body that combines characteristics of both human and animal, I use inorganic materials to symbolize the synthetic human and humanistic qualities of social and technological advancements. The organic materials represent animality, intraspeciation and references to biophilia. The objective of using these elements simultaneously provide viewers with a sense of togetherness between human and animal through the tactility of the materials used. In the process of actually applying these materials to body moulds, I am physically embedding animality back into the human body which can be seen in *Untitled (Icosahedron Matter)* (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. *Untitled (Icosahedron Matter)*, plaster, acrylic, moss, dog fur, quartz and iron pyrite, 2015

This artwork reclaims organic elements and embeds them within synthetic material and through this performance, creates a dialogue between nonhuman and human species where the materials become crucial in the process of intraspeciation. The greenhouse where my artwork is displayed speaks to ideas that surround my research and art practice. The materials I use to represent animality and human ties to other organisms are intensified when the aspect of biophilia is introduced through site.

## Biophilic Conservatory

My thesis exhibition was installed in the Allan Gardens Conservatory, located on Sherbourne and Gerrard street, downtown Toronto (Fig.11).



Fig. 11. Allan Gardens Conservatory, Toronto, Ontario  
<http://torontobotanicalgarden.ca/get-gardening/public-gardens/allan-gardens/>

The Allan Gardens Conservatory is a major historic landmark developed in 1910 which was designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. This cast-iron and glass domed conservatory possesses a permanent collection of botanical, exotic plants and seasonal flowers. May Woods and Arete Warren in *Glass Houses* express the history of greenhouses and conservatories to be “a study of architecture” that has been “influenced by man’s perception of the needs of tender plants, and his desire to enjoy them” (i). With the previously discussed advantages of biospheric exposure, human developments created a false and organized wilderness in an enclosed area in order to be able to enjoy a remote reflection of the natural biosphere. In the spirit of inquiry regarding other species, the concept of the conservatory becomes a cabinet of curiosity as “curiosity, aesthetic satisfaction

and discernment were still the reasons that made the nobly born and educated collect foreign plants” (Woods and Warren 32). Despite the falsehood of the domed environment, upon entering the conservatory, there is a shift in mood and heightened senses when surrounded by the humid, earth smelling greenhouse packed with plant life. The conservatory introduces the affective phenomena of biophilia. In saying so, visitors are expected to walk through the entirety of the conservatory upon entering the exhibition space to induce a shift in perception and sensation.

In using the Allan Gardens Conservatory as an exhibition space, I have been influenced by the work of conceptual artists Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol who have created an installation that reflects the concept of biophilia. *Are You Really Sure that a Floor Can't Also Be a Ceiling?* (Fig. 12) is an installation that resembles a modern conservatory structure. The large container holds hundreds of butterflies and with scientific assistance, are situated in an appropriated natural habitat. Bik Van der Pol's installation lends itself to the duos reflection of the relationship between man and nature with the enclosed “natural” environment and incorporation of butterflies. The installation acts as a commentary on species that are sensitive to climate change while also providing an intimate experience for visitors as a limited amount of people are allowed to enter the work at a time.



Fig. 12. Bik Van der Pol, *Are You Really Sure a Floor Can't Also Be a Ceiling?*, installation, 2011  
<http://www.designboom.com/art/bik-van-der-pol-butterfly-house-at-macro/>

Within the correlation of my artwork that represents human animal connections with other species, the phenomena of biophilia and intraspeciation, displaying my work in a greenhouse conservatory not only intensifies these elements, but questions the very dichotomy that separates us all through the Great Divide. A conservatory is a place where “sunlight is free and cheering to the spirit; even on a dull day a glass room feels bright. To be surrounded by plants and flowers gives constant pleasure, especially for the gardener who enjoys watching new shoots develop and buds unfold” (Woods and Warren 198). In the aims of providing an experience of lifted spirits and heightened senses through biophilia, the body of work I display in the Allan Gardens Conservatory provides an opportunity for viewers to revisit their animalistic roots.

## CONCLUSION

And this time before world, this prehistory of man, returns to humanity as the figure of the animal. Animal being forces humanity to acknowledge the finitude of world: that is, animals tear humanity away from the imagined totality of world.

—Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal*, 2000: 71

*Intraspeciation Within the Ontological Biosphere* captures a moment; an animal moment, in which all species are interconnected. Through this body of work, I have addressed my personal experience of intraspeciation through subjective interpretation to bring intimacy to material narratives that illustrate co-species relationships. Within a theoretical, ideological and material framework, I have created a body of work that provides possible answers to the question of biophilia by reflecting on what it is to be animal. These intuitive artworks based on biophilia and intraspeciation are fabricated by my encounters and memories and are based on observations. My relationship with other species continues and my observations stay prevalent which encourages possibilities of *becoming-animal* and *becoming with*. I continue to consider relations and connections between species within biological exploration and ethological findings to further my practice as an artist.

Within this thesis project, I have come to better understand human animality by investigating relationships amongst species and have projected this understanding through material investigation. I have combined organic and inorganic material to create narrative dialogues between species in response to ethological findings made by Konrad Lorenz and evolution theories provided by Charles Darwin. This has enriched my material understanding of representations

of different species by speaking to the notion of connectivity through tactility. The original proposal for this project was to consider specific scientific developments, and to shed light on human and animal similarities as a response, and to apply these findings to the development of artworks. Although, the longer I lived in Toronto, the more I became reminiscent of my past encounters with other species and the wilderness I longed for. Introducing the biosphere as an area of biophilia and connection between human and nonhuman animals has allowed me to further my questioning and has led me to the premise of the term *intraspeciation* which acts as a process and response to the topics addressed. As the project developed, my interests became more lyrical in the sense that I was using biological exploration as a guide to investigate human and nonhuman relationships and to reflect on my emotional connection to past encounters with other nonhuman animals and the biosphere. A self-reflexive and intuitive process as oppose to using solely scientific evidence to provide affirmation on anatomical and behavioral similarities amongst species allowed me to embed and physically mould myself in my research which was reflected in the process of casting my body. This leap into body moulds and casting was an insight into new possibilities of investigation around my role as a human animal and how interspecies relationships can emerge.

My research has enabled the examination and speculation of ambiguous relationships amongst species in respect to my practice in sculpture and drawing. Pairing my art practice with my interest in biological similarities has created a dialogue that considers an ethical stance that re-evaluates human-animal relationships as well as theoretical considerations of looking beyond the

human/animal divide. This particular standpoint has been augmented by presenting my work in the Allan Gardens Conservatory. Prior to the exhibition, the more I investigated the conservatory, the more it became crucial to show my work in this particular space. As I walked through the conservatory to evaluate its impact on my artwork, it became clearer that the space would underscore the themes of biophilia and human animality. The sensations associated with the space corresponded and intensified elements of my work. Most viewers entering the space were pursuing biophilic curiosities and immediately linked the artworks to human condition and nature. A strong source of biophilia, the love and curiosity of other species are brought to the forefront in this plant cultivated dome which ultimately complimented a visual language driven by the concept of intraspeciation.

An interesting component of the investigation of biophilia was brought by the physical interaction between the surrounding environment climate and my tactile work which strengthened the notions of transformation, becoming, and animality. The particular piece *Unearthed* (Fig. 13) went through the state of transformation because of the nature of the material used and the high heat that was shining through the glass dome during the span of the exhibition.



Fig. 13. *Unearthed*, gel wax, loose leaf tea, porcupine quills, dog fur, plaster, string, silicone rubber, organic materials, before and after details, 2016

The gel foot in the acrylic box went through a transitional metamorphosis as the heat from the sun melted the gel. This provided an unintentional experience of directly viewing the process of animality as the more the foot morphed, the more it became an intriguing animalistic section of the fleshliness of intraspeciation.

Within the process of this thesis, by responding to the questions on human and nonhuman relationships and ties to the biosphere, I have contributed valuable research on human animality through the process of examining human and nonhuman connectivity. I have addressed my questioning with a holistic approach to open doors to new perceptions on how we see ourselves as animals and to look beyond the human/animal divide. I have challenged the social dichotomy that separates human from animal by investigating a plane of connectivity through the exploration and development of intraspeciation which has manifested in and through my artwork. In challenging the human/animal divide, I argue that human animals possess innate connections to nonhuman species because we, as humans, *are* animal. We are drawn to our likeness and

kinship; we are intertwined in each others being as we collectively share attributes. In exploring concepts for my thesis project, I encountered topics that fell outside of the scope of my research that would be useful as future explorations of human and animal relationships. These topics can prompt and persuade possible areas of research such as: the exploration of biophilia in enclosed areas, nonhuman animals in spaces as artistic contribution or collaborative work between nonhuman and human animals, performance as animal through notions of animality, longing for the natural world and the meaning of nature, importance of site in regards to the phenomena of biophilia, and, human and animal loss, death, and emotion. These areas of investigation stand as endless possibilities of creative approaches and multidisciplinary cross overs between areas of science and art. These possible areas of topical concern are creative engagements that correspond to human understanding of animals and the connections and relationships in between.

This body of work and thesis brings me toward further experimentation and investigation. The dimension of further exploration within my art practice will manifest in material use, site specificity, concepts regarding human and nonhuman animal relations, bio-integration, performative processes and expanding my curiosity across the other side of the human/animal divide by the suggestions of removing barriers. As this project has captured a brief exploratory investigation of human-animal connections, it is a project that will continuously develop and expand through speculative curiosity; I will bring my work one step further by questioning how as an artist, I can reach a higher degree of animality. As misconceptions and disruptions encroach on remnants of our preexisting

biosphere and the species that co-exist, I will forever allow a sense of biophilia and animality reveal itself back into my art.

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## APPENDIX: Thesis Exhibition Details

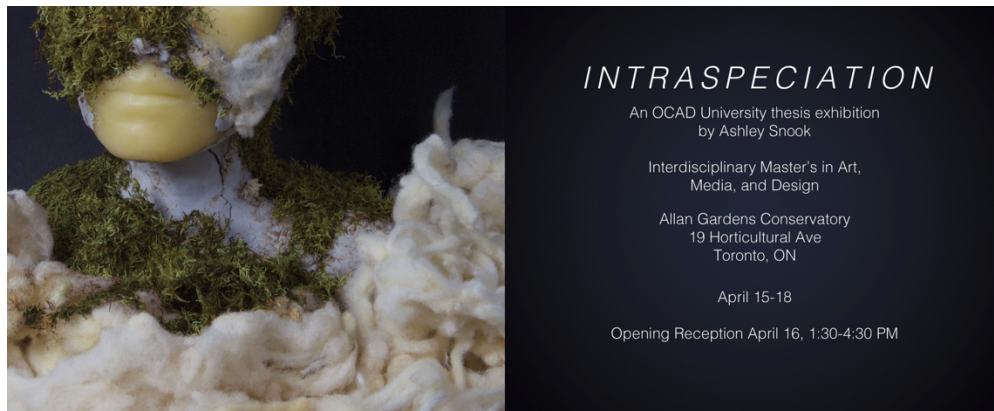


Fig. 14. *Intraspeciation*, Exhibition Promotion Card



Fig. 15. *Intraspeciation*, Exhibition Detail



Fig. 16. *Intraspeciation*, Exhibition Detail (Exterior)



Fig. 17. *Intraspeciation*, Exhibition Detail



Fig. 18. *Intraspeciation*, Exhibition Detail



Fig. 19. *Sampling Kinship*, glass test tubes, soil, chia seeds, plaster, wax, organic materials, 2015-2016



Fig. 20. *Fauna Sisters (Reborn)*, plaster, gel wax, loose leaf tea, mineral crystals, deer antler, soil, 2016



Fig. 21. *Intraspeciation*, Exhibition Detail