

(un)spoken

by

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Abstract

Through my art, I present a critical view of nonhuman animals as emotional beings that mourn and also grieve. The inspiration for my thesis came from an across Canada drive that I took from Kelowna, British Columbia to Windsor, Ontario during which time I saw 140 animals dead on the highway.

The installation entitled *(un)spoken* uses motion sensors, video, photography, and mapping to address mourning, grief, “entangled empathy”, and “rewilding” through the symbolic representation of my journey and the crows that followed me on my way. I see my installation as an entry point for individuals to start to rethink their relationships with nonhuman animals in their daily lives.

I base the foundation of my creative work around the theoretical concepts from the ideas of Barbara King, Angus Taylor and others who examine nonhuman animals mourning and grief. The idea of “entangled empathy”, which is at the heart of my work, is taken from the research of ecofeminist philosopher, Lori Gruen. Biologist Marc Bekoff’s ideas around compassion and reconnecting with nature through a process that he refers to as “rewilding” is what I seek to explore with the imagery I have chosen to work with. The aim of the work is for the audiences to recognize possible ways of reconnecting to nature and to encourage them to grow more conscious of the fact that human activity has a significant impact on the animal world.

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Dedication

To Scrappy for teaching me the love and grief a nonhuman animal feels when losing someone close.

And

For all animals that have died before, during and after this thesis, you may be gone, but you will never be forgotten.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout my creative work, I present a critical view of nonhuman animals and how they are emotional beings that mourn and also grieve. In this paper, I introduce the artwork I have completed over the past two years and present a detailed description of my final creative thesis, which is an interactive video installation set in motion by the movements of the viewer. The paper provides insight into the development of my creative work and how I have incorporated a wide range of methodologies. The inspiration for the final thesis came from a drive that I took across Canada from Kelowna, British Columbia to Windsor, Ontario during which time I saw 140 animals dead on the highway.

Chapter one of the paper acquaints the reader with the art installation *(un)spoken*, and discusses the roots of its inspiration.

Chapter two, focuses on the nonhuman animal as a thinking being and provides a historical insight into the way animals were viewed as creatures with no emotions, starting with Judeo-Christian beliefs and Aristotle's claim that animals were not capable of higher thought on par with humans. It also counters such claims and explains how animals can feel grief, by showing examples provided by scholar authors Barbara King, Angus Taylor, and Dr. Lori Gruen, who believe nonhumans to be emotional, caring beings. Their studies provide a context for my work in considering animal sentience and emotional complexity. In referring to animals and sentient, I regard nonhuman animals as conscious and feeling emotions; sentience is the combination of reflexive needs like hunger as well as complex needs such as comfort and community. These studies argue for the sentience of animals and focus on mourning and grieving. To support such claims, I provide firsthand examples of animals grieving the loss of a loved one.

In Chapter three, I use the term "entangled empathy" as used by animal ethics and feminist philosopher Lori Gruen, who argues that we are already in relationships with nonhumans (Gruen, *Entangled* intro). This section also examines my art installation *(un)spoken* and relates it to my research in animal studies and the struggle to explore my entanglement.

Chapter four focuses on compassion and Marc Bekoff's idea of "rewilding" oneself (Bekoff, *Rewilding*). Through rewilding, we realize we are not the only beings on this planet

but that we need to learn to live with others in a healthy, empathetic, compassionate world. This directly connects with the art installation, as the work is my way of showing and encouraging compassion towards all the nonhuman victims in the world.

Chapter five and the conclusion focus on my process and creative production. I highlight selected artworks that I have created over the past two years, which have helped me to develop the final thesis installation and interactive environment, *(un)spoken*. I then summarize my argument regarding the concepts researched and my creative production.

Chapter 2: Inspiration

The inspiration for this creative body of work came from an article entitled, “Stains, Drains, and Automobiles, A Conversation with Steve Baker about Norfolk Roadkill, Mainly” in which Susan McHugh, an English professor and animal activist, interviewed artist Steve Baker on his work *Norfolk Roadkill, Mainly* (McHugh). Baker’s work was influenced by his daily bike ride, where he would often encounter animals that had been killed by vehicles. During one of these rides, he decided to go back and photograph the dead animals. The resulting work juxtaposed these photographs of the animals with pictures of the landscape he passed through during his daily rides. My work was inspired by a drive I took across Canada from Kelowna, British Columbia to Windsor, Ontario, a trip during which I too witnessed the deaths and careless loss of animal life on the highway. I use roads and highways in the installation to symbolically represent a path and gateway to better understanding how nonhuman animals are caring, nurturing emotional beings.

The installation *(un)spoken*, is introduced by life size cut-out crows scattered on the hill in front of the entrance to the building. These crows represent all of the 140 dead animals I encountered on my drive. The crow will reappear as the main protagonist in the exhibition’s interactive video. Upon entering the building, the viewer first encounters large photographs of my dog grieving the death of his brother. The intent is to have these images introduce the exhibition in order to connect the argument that animals do mourn the loss of another nonhuman animal to the viewers in a more personal way. Since so many people can already closely identify with the sentience of a beloved pet, often considered to be part of the family, the objective is to make them more receptive to the idea that all nonhuman animals, rather wild, domesticated, or livestock are capable of feeling and are emotional creatures. In

addition, before entering the main installation, the viewer will see my journal, which documents and bears witness to those animals whose lives were lost to cars along the roadways from Kelowna to Windsor and are represented by the crows they first encountered outside of the building.

When the audience enters the gallery they will walk through the space treading over the vinyl mapping on the floor. They will also hear the expressive sounds of crows calling in the background. Alongside the linear representation of the highway are colored letters that spell out the identities of the 140 animals recorded in the journal. They are placed onto the floor map according to the locations where they were found. There are videos of Ojibway Park in Ontario and of the burnt forest in Rock Creek, British Columbia projected onto the opposing walls of the gallery. The movements of the viewer will activate the space bringing the installation to life as the crows fly symbolically across the miles from one side of the room to the other casting their shadows over the map of my journey depicted on the floor as they move from Ontario to British Columbia and back again.

The overall objective of my creative thesis is to combine all of the elements I have researched (to be discussed in the following chapters) and to suggest that the nonhuman animal is a feeling being, to encourage participants to grow more conscious of the fact that human activity has a significant impact on the animal world, and to be more purposeful in their actions toward nonhuman animals.

Chapter 3: Sentient Beings: Mourning

The sadness in the outcry was unmistakable; having heard it, I will never doubt that an animal can suffer emotions that we humans think belong to our species alone.

(Masson and McCarthy, ch. 5)

The historical, Judeo-Christian attitude towards animals makes its first appearance in Genesis 1:26. This passage states that everything on earth was placed there for man [sic] to use: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’ (*The New King James Version* 2).

Human belief in anthropomorphism projects human traits onto nonhuman animals and considers humans to be the most significant life on the planet. The theological belief that animals are intended to serve humans is deeply rooted in Western culture. Even Aristotle believed that animals were for human use and that they lacked reasoning: “Aristotle’s emphasis on rationality as the distinctive human quality, and the related claim that animals are on earth for our use because they lack reason, have been echoed by most philosophers until well into the twentieth century” (Taylor 35).

Like Aristotle, philosopher René Descartes also saw animals as lacking reason, that they did not experience emotions beyond reflex and were mere machines without a soul, and that their suffering was thus not theologically unjust (Singer 200-201). This gave some scientists justification to experiment on nonhuman animals. Peter Singer explains the impact of Descartes’ beliefs by quoting eyewitness accounts of animals being experimented upon by scientists studying their blood flow and other anatomy:

They administered beatings to dogs with perfect indifference, and made fun of those who pitied the creatures as if they felt pain. They said the animals were clocks; that the cries they emitted when struck were only the noise of a little spring that had been touched, but that the whole body was without feeling. They nailed poor animals up on boards by their four paws to vivisect them and see the circulation of the blood, which was great subject of conversation. (Singer 201-202)

The description above shows how some scientists and philosophers of the time believed animals to be lower beings, lack reasoning and capacity to feel pain. In 2004, Bekoff quotes researcher John Capitanio, an Associate Director at UC Davis California National Primate Research Center answering on the topic of nonhuman animals having emotions; “a neutral palette on which we paint our needs, feelings, and view of the world.”(qtd. in Bekoff, *Emotional* 25). Capitanio was later quoted by Bekoff, making the claim, “Do animals have emotions? Most people are willing to say they do. Do we know much more than that? Not really” (Bekoff, *Emotional* 127).

Research now acknowledges that mourning is not limited to humans but rather is shared across species lines, showing us all sentient beings possess conscious awareness, which allows them process of the emotions they are experiencing. Because animals, like humans, are sentient it needs to be said, and research has shown, they have the ability to experience a range of emotions such as, joy, fear, depression, sadness, grief, love, anger, and mourning. This work focuses on how animals, like their human counterparts experience these emotions. Leading research and evidence in this area has enabled humans to have a better understanding that the nonhuman animal is an emotional being. In *The Politics of Species*, a group of scientists at Cambridge University declare now they believe animals to be conscious

beings. “They produced a long overdue document they called *The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness*” (Corbey and Lanjoux ch. 1). After experiencing the death of another, some animals will go without eating, appear lost, cry out, touch the bones of the dead, and even return repeatedly to where their loved one died. As anthropologist Barbara King explains:

A wide variety of animals – chimpanzees, elephants, ravens and geese, dogs and cats, maybe even turtles – respond differently to dead companions than injured ones; express deep and prolonged sadness at the loss of a loved one; and in some cases participate in ritual behaviors around death. (King, intro)

There have been many studies and publications relating to the idea that animals can suffer and experience other emotions. Angus Taylor writes,

Most people believe that mammals, birds, and perhaps other kinds of animals can suffer; these animals can experience pain as the result of various physical stimuli, and perhaps can experience depression, anxiety, grief, or other emotions. (Taylor 88)

An example of animals showing mourning is in a story told by my aunt about a fawn and a mother, doe, who was killed. For several days she witnessed a fawn waiting by the highway. She asked others at work if anyone else had seen the fawn’s mother to which one of her co-workers responded by stating that the doe had been hit by a car. The fawn, dependent on her mother, returned to the site of the doe’s death with no external reason to return, such as food or shelter. The drive must have been an internal need for comfort. This exemplifies the bond two animals have for each other and that the fawn has a need other than physical.

There are a growing number of contemporary scholars, writers, activists and artists whose works respond to the notion and belief that nonhuman animals are emotional beings. Jeffery Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy authors of *When Elephants Weep: The*

Emotional Lives of Animals, present another example of animals demonstrating mourning in which they explain the importance of animal grief:

A history of human affairs in which fear, anger, love, pride, and guilt played no part would be strangely inadequate. It would be neither believable nor accurate. It would be called inhuman. To describe the lives of animals without including their emotions may be just as inaccurate, just as superficial and distorted, and may strip them of their wholeness just as profoundly. To understand animals, it is essential to understand what they feel. (Masson and McCarthy ch. 1)

The quote above explains how it would be inaccurate to say that humans do not feel emotion just as it would be wrong to do the same for animals. In the *Three Little Pigs*, we assign human traits to the animals in the children's story (Golden). We anthropomorphize them by giving them clothing, houses, and speech. Obviously, those do not reflect reality as pigs do not talk or build houses out of brick. But the emotions in the story may be accurate – wolves do feel frustration, pigs do feel fear. Without addressing those emotions, the story does not make sense or feel complete. In *(un)spoken* I am reflecting on each animal's death in the hopes that we may reflect on those lives; their bodies may be long gone but through this project each one of their deaths is remembered.

In *(un)spoken* there are photographs of Scrappy, the family dog, sitting at his brother's gravesite in much the same way humans go to visit their loved ones at a cemetery. Lori Gruen explains how nonhuman animals are feeling beings by outlining how they stay with their companions in troubling times:

many species of non-humans have rich social relationships, are known to sacrifice their own safety by staying with sick or injured family members so that the fatally ill

will not die alone, grieve their dead, respond to emotional states of others, engage in norm governed behavior, manipulate and deceive, understand symbolic representations, pass along culture, etc. (*Emotional* ch. 18)

This project is aligned with the quotation above where Gruen's highlighting the ways nonhuman animals are emotional beings, in showing that they mourn and grieve for those they have lost.

2.1 Sentient Beings: From Mourning to Grieving

We humans don't just study the phenomenon of animal grief. In a broad sense, we cause animal grief as well. We bring about conditions in the wild and captivity that lead animals to feel a sort of self-grief, and at times to feel empathy for other's suffering.

(King 123)

Traveling across the country, I witnessed on the roadside the bodies of 140 nonhuman animals, which led me to reflect upon all the ways humans kill animals every day and how we use nonhuman animals for our benefit. Society's actions point towards a disregard for animals as emotional beings, some people do not think of our use of animals in our everyday life.

When researching the topic of grief and animals, I discovered a story about four magpies told by Marc Bekoff and recounted in David Alderton's book *Animal Grief-How Animals Mourn*. The story gives an incite to how the companions' to the dead magpies on the highway may have reacted:

Four of these magpies were observed by Dr. Bekoff in the vicinity of a companion that was lying on the ground, having recently been killed by a car. One of the group approached the dead individual, and gently pecked at the body, rather in the way that an elephant will touch the corpse of another, according to Dr. Bekoff, and then flew off. He then noted how another member of the group behaved in a similar fashion, after which one of the birds left, returning moments later with some grass in its bill, which it laid gently alongside the deceased magpie. Another bird did exactly the same

thing, with all four standing briefly around the body, before finally flying off.

(Alderton ch. 3)

Barbara King explains some of the signs of grieving among nonhuman animals:

“Should the animals become separated for some reason, including by death of one of the pair, both animals, or the survivor, if only one remains, suffer emotionally in some visible way”

(10). The explanation King gives for visible grief is significant to the project and research because it explains the different types of mourning that nonhuman animals may go through when losing a loved one and what we as viewers may witness. Even if we do not actually see the partner mourn, it does not mean they are not. King describes some of the physical and social changes that may occur when nonhuman animals experience loss. King's definition of grief is a set of specific behavior:

Refusing to eat or eat adequately, losing weight, becoming ill, acting listlessly, being uninterested in social interactions or other normal activities, and/or exhibiting body languages that conveys sadness or depression. When one or more of these symptoms is seen in a survivor following an animal's death, the definition of *grief* has been met.

(8)

Experiencing loss is difficult and differs from nonhuman animal to nonhuman animal. Some exhibit what King explains above, while others show signs of different emotions. For example, I have witnessed a family companion, Scrappy, lose his brother Ruben to cancer. Scrappy and Ruben were Bouvier puppy littermates that arrived at our home together. From the moment of their arrival they were inseparable. They both enjoyed being outdoors in their pen where they had a double joining doghouse (figure 1) to let them each have their own space. However, when they wanted to take their afternoon naps they never slept apart always

sleeping in one of the doghouses. When they were back in our house they would lay together always touching either their paws or noses. Ruben's passing showed visible effect on the behavior his brother.



Figure 1. *Dog Houses*, 2016

Scrappy would go outside in search of his brother always checking the doghouses, when his brother was nowhere to be found he would walk back to the house with his head lowered. When the family adopted Izzabella, a German Shepherd, the companionship that Scrappy had lost was replaced but the effect of Ruben's absence can still be clearly seen. Even though that physical void has been filled by the presence of Izzabella, it is instructive to see how he still goes out to check his brother's pen and how he still frequents the gravesite everyday, and stays there for some time before returning to the house. This suggests a continuing mourning

for his companion, as this behavior was never present prior to his brother's death. In *How Animals Grieve*, King explains that each nonhuman animal is unique and may grieve in their own way: "we must always keep in mind the possibility that some animals love or grief will look quite different from our own love or grief, or the emotion of other group - living primates like chimpanzees whose actions may resonate with us more readily" (10). King believes there are two parts to the emotion of grief; if one grieves they also loved. This is an important aspect in supporting *(un)spoken* thesis regarding the frequent loss of nonhuman animals on highways. They leave behind their loved ones, children, partners, or other family members who, as a result, may well have suffered the emotional hardships connected with grief. King also tells the story of Tina an elephant that ended up living at the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee where she met and bonded with three other elephants. Each one of them had their own traumatic histories of being kidnapped young, abused and put in circuses before ending up at the sanctuary. King explains the death of Tina and how the other three responded:

the next day, sanctuary caretakers gathered to bury Tina. Tarra and Winkie stood at the edge of the grave, where they remained joined by Sissy, throughout that evening and the next day. Once again, distinct individual differences in mourning were apparent: Tarra was vocal and asked for attention from her human caretakers, Sissy stood vigil, and Winkie paced stiffly around. (62)

Each elephant had his or her own way of mourning the loss of a dear friend. After the burial, Sissy displayed her emotions by placing her beloved tire, a source of comfort, onto Tina's grave. Although one may never know exactly what was going on in Sissy's mind when she presented her tire; it may suggest she was not only mourning for her beloved friend but was

also paying tribute by offering a treasured object. As the story above describes a friend's mourning of the loss of a dear companion, there are likely to be other nonhuman animals who do not know if their partner has passed or has gone for a short trip away from the group.

One day Mom left the pack and never again returned. The pack waited impatiently for days and days. Some coyotes paced nervously about like expectant parents, while others went off on short trips, only to return alone. They traveled in the direction she had gone, sniffed in places she might have visited, and howled as if calling her home. For more than a week, some spark seemed to be gone. Her family missed her. I think the coyotes would have cried if they could have. (Bekoff, *Emotional* ch. 1)

Some may not grieve the death of their partners right away, but may wait to see if they will return as included examples plus my own illustrate. Similar to my pet dog Scrappy, who continues to visit his brother's gravesite, some animals may grieve for days, weeks, months even years. The following study done by Bekoff and his students demonstrates this. While observing coyotes in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming the group witnessed a female, who they referred to as Mom, coming and going from the pack over a period of time.

Bekoff makes it clear that the coyotes were distressed when their mother did not return. His description might give us some insight into the distress and grief felt by the companions of those who died on the highway. Like the coyotes, the partners or offspring from the highway victims may have waited days, even weeks to see if they would return, possibly resulting in their own deaths from waiting. The story of the coyotes goes on to state that over time the pack moved on and ended up accepting another female as their mother, however Bekoff continued to believe that her pups still missed her. He continues:

Every now and again it seemed that some of the pack members still missed the original Mom-maybe she was lost; maybe she would return if we went to look for her. The coyotes would sit up, look around, raise their noses to the wind, head off on short trips in the direction that Mom last went, and return weary without her. (*Emotional* ch. 1)

This story can provide insight into Scrappy's behavior, as it is observed amongst different animals. Scrappy showed what King references to John Archer explains the term "separation response", "when two animals that matter to each other find themselves apart for some reason, [it] involves distress, protest, and behaviors directed toward reuniting with the lost partner" (qtd. in King 49).

During the road-trip across Canada, I saw many different types of animals dead on the side of the road. The largest of all was a moose. In her text *How Animals Grieve*, King writes about a biologist Joel Berger, who tells his story of two different moose he witnessed: "One frightened moose orphan ran for more than half a mile when Berger wanted to put a radio collar on her, then halted at the precise spot where her mother had died" (138). King goes on to quote Berger who explains how another moose reacted after the death of her calf: "Another moose, this one a mother, returned repeatedly to the spot where her calf had been struck by a car, 'apparently searching for her missing calf'" (qtd. in King 138). These accounts support the idea that the dead moose seen on the highway may have had family members mourn him. As there was no obvious physical reason for them to revisit the location.

How Animals Grieve also provides examples of nonhuman animals showing compassion and concern for other animals. One story that stands out the most to me is of a

chicken rescued from drowning that took place in a suburban home of a woman named Jeane:

One day, in her kitchen, she heard alarmed calls from the backyard, and the chickens rushed up onto her deck. “They were knocking furiously on the sliding door with their beaks,” she remembers. “I ran outside immediately and they rushed off with me behind, trying to keep up. Straight to the pool we dashed. There I saw Cloudy, everyone’s favorite hen, flailing her wings in the swimming pool. I reached in and lifted her out. Jeane is certain Cloudy’s life was saved only by the resourceful action of her flock. (King 5)

This story caused a recollection of an experience on a farm where I witnessed a turkey about to be slaughtered. Arriving at a friend’s farm, I entered the yard where all the chickens, turkeys, and geese were kept. As we approached, they moved around and were joined by a barn cat seeking affection. The farmer grasped a turkey by the throat, and proceeded to hang her with rope for the slaughter. I looked at the other farm animals because I did not wish to witness what was about to take place. As I watched, the chickens, turkeys, geese and cat all started to walk to the other side of the yard and looked in the opposite direction away from the barn where the turkey hung upside down (figure 2).



Figure 2. *Sketch of Farm, 2016*

The pleasant sounds that once welcomed me into the yard were now gone. The enclosure was completely silent; even the friendly cat gazed away from the place where the turkey was hanging. After the slaughter was finished, the other animals in the yard remained silent and when the turkey was removed from the area the animals walked around noiselessly picking up the feathers of their dead friend in their beaks. This experience reinforced the idea that, like me, those animals knew what was taking place and did not want to witness one of their members being slaughtered. One could not help but feel empathy towards the turkey, and also towards all the animals in the yard that had also witnessed the slaughter.

If a greater number of us were to have compassion for nonhuman animals and thought more about the lives of the animals we consume, use for research, or watch for entertainment, perhaps we would be more conscious in our treatment of them and more thoughtful of those

who are killed on the road. Small steps can be taken to help alleviate many of these avoidable deaths. In a number of places across Canada, for example, wildlife highway overpasses have been designed to enable safe passage for the area's animals.

Chapter 4: From Grieving to Entangled Empathy

My first encounter with the notion of entangled empathy came from research done for a paper I wrote for a course entitled *Eco-Feminism, Post Humanism and Critical Animal Studies*.

Entangled Empathy (en ‘taNG ld’ emp THē): a type of caring perception focused on attending to another’s experience of wellbeing. An experiential process involving a blend of emotion and cognition in which we recognize we are in relationships with others and are called upon to be responsive and responsible in these relationships by attending to another’s needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities.

(Gruen, *Entangled* intro)

The focus of that paper was on the animals used in scientific research. The intent of my essay, *A moment of Si(l)ence*, was similar to the goal in my thesis *(un)spoken*. I want to foster a conscious experience of entangled empathy through the installation by encouraging the viewer to acknowledge the suffering and deaths of nonhuman animals that take place on the roads throughout Canada.

While conducting research for this project, I realized that my goal is to have others look around and reflect on the effect that their actions may have in the world and realize that animals are emotional beings. Lori Gruen argues “As we destroy the homes of billions of nonhuman animals, forcing them into closer, often fatal, contact with humans who themselves don’t have their rights acknowledged, we need to address more adequately the growing conflicts that are leading to the demise of our planet and all of her inhabitants”

(*Entangled* preface). I used the same mode of transportation that killed all of those animals even if I did not actually run them over. In a way I am entangled in their deaths. We share this planet with other beings, including nonhuman animals: insects, plants, trees, lakes, rivers, oceans, and so on. Each person has their own experiences with nonhuman animals, and nature, that shape their perspective on the human and nonhuman animal relationship.

The aim of my installation is to evoke a unique experience in each viewer while they are in the gallery space, hoping that they may come to envision a new way of looking at the natural world and its inhabitants. Gruen writes, “I started to have the idea that if we really wanted to make a positive difference for other animals we needed to acknowledge that we are already in relationships with other animals, and for the most part, they aren’t good relationships” (*Entangled* intro). The human footfall often destroys the land nonhuman animals inhabit, either killing them in the process or forcing them to relocate. In Gruen’s paper *Facing Death and Practicing Grief*, she explains “The system we live in, work in, play in, and benefit from (or at least make our way in) is built on the backs of other animals. And it is important to get perspective on our complicity in the pain and death of others and think about how we can address that loss” (*Facing* 133).

The installation connects to empathy and it is important for the viewer to have a growing awareness of how human interventions affect animal lives. Empathy is significant in the relationships we have with all other humans and nonhuman animals. For example, Colombian installation artist Doris Salcedo works with concepts of loss, mourning and empathy. Her work focuses on human loss in the devastating history of the modern day Colombia and on marginalized people in the United States. Salcedo’s use of objects like chairs and furniture in large installation spaces represent human victims and serve to provide

the viewer with a symbolic experience enabling a space for reflection and empathy (Salcedo “*Art 21*”). In my work, I use the symbol of a journey and the encounter with crows in a room size installation to symbolize tragic animal deaths. The journey is a motif in my work because it was the road trip that opened my eyes to the deaths of animals along the highways. The journey allowed me to research not just about those that died but also the lives affected. I correspondingly bring audience members on a journey when entering the gallery space through mapping the drive on the floor and labeling all the nonhuman dead animals witnessed on the side of the highways. I too am providing a space for reflection and empathy in my work by creating an environment that symbolizes my journey and having the audience also bear witness to the deaths.

Much research acknowledges that animals feel emotions (Bekoff; King). Giving emotional beings respect will help not only them but also humans. Linda Vance explains the joy of being in relationships with others. In *Beyond Just-So Stories: Narrative, Animals, and Ethics*, she discusses ecofeminist narratives and how these accounts can highlight lived experiences and context:

But instead of presenting humans as compulsive destroyers who can control our bad impulses only with great effort, they should emphasize the pleasure we take in relationships and in identification with nature and animals, and the importance of caring, attention, kindness, playfulness, trust, empathy, and connection. They should demonstrate that ethical behavior toward the nonhuman world is a kind of joyfulness, an embracing of possibility, a self-representing and respectful humility” (181).

I agree with Vance and the way she explains the pleasure we take in relationships and how we should use ethical behavior towards other animals. The relationship we have with animals

explains a lot about who we are as individuals and our need to focus on our actions and how those actions affect nonhuman animals. When ethical behavior towards animals is practiced, they are not only treated with respect but also show other humans the joy we can feel from that behavior.

The response towards nonhuman animals can be connected to our past experiences and relationships with animals. To respect all living things one must first acquire a better understanding and knowledge about them. Gruen explains, “This is the entanglement of entangled empathy. We are not just in relationships as selves with others, but our very selves are constituted by these relations” (*Entangled* ch. 3). Once we accept that we are always already entangled with other beings then we can focus on *how* to make those relationships positive for all. How we treat other living beings is a reflection of who we are. Having knowledge and a better understanding of our entanglements with the nonhuman animal will help us by allowing us to predict their behaviors when we have interactions with animals that occur in our daily lives.

The video artist Diana Thater works with many ideas that address human and animal relationships. Thater designs floor to ceiling size video projections, which create immersive environments in large installation spaces. For example, in her work *gorillagorillagorilla* the gallery becomes a wilderness environment covered in projected images of gorillas in their natural jungle world (“Aspen”). My work uses similar media techniques by projecting large-scale images of the woods from Windsor and the forest from Rock Creek, BC into an immersive experience within a gallery space. My videos are controlled by motion sensors, which are activated by the simple movement of a viewer walking into the space. This symbolically represents how our movements can have far reaching consequences.

Each time I go through my journal and read about the individual animal fatalities that I witnessed on my journey from British Columbia to Ontario I recall each one and reflect on the personal impact of their deaths and feel empathy towards them. Gruen's thoughts on empathy give insight into my own experience:

More apt empathy would allow the empathizer to imagine more thoroughly the situation of the one with whom they are empathizing. Empathy of this sort enables the empathizer not only to grasp the other's state of mind or preferences or interests, but to ascertain the features of the situation that affect her and information about what led to the object's being in that situation in the first place. (*Entangled* ch. 2)

Empathy of this sort also asks us to research and gain knowledge of situations leading us to the recognition of entanglement with other beings and the issues they face. We are all entangled because we share this land.

Each audience member will have their own experiences and opinions when they enter *(un)spoken*. This will affect their initial thoughts about the show. By having the viewers' movements through the gallery space cause a disruption in the scene they will see that their presence affecting the projections and movement of the imagery in the space. Gruen explains, "Entangled empathy is a process that involves integrating a range of thoughts and feelings to try to get an accurate take on the situation of another and figure out what, if anything, we are called upon to do" (*Entangled* ch. 4). The participation of the audience is important for the installation to be successful. The motion sensor videos I created were designed to remind audience members of their relationship to the natural world and how their actions affect others. The work seeks to promote the idea that we are all connected. We are

all entangled and need to learn more and understand more about the nonhuman animals and how they are emotional beings and not just assume they are here for only our benefit.

Chapter 5: Rewilding Oneself

Rewilding is a pact we make with nature: to do no intentional harm, to treat all individuals with compassion, and to step lightly into the lives of other beings and landscapes, including bodies of water and the atmosphere.

(Bekoff, *Rewilding* 50)

Bekoff writes: By creating this body of work, I am rewilding my own heart. Rewilding is a process that begins in each person's heart and expands outward, one that heals our own connection to nature even as it heals the wounds of our one and only planet. Rewilding can give legs to a new social movement and paradigm shift for much-needed change.

(*Rewilding* 39)

During the process of making *(un)spoken*, I had to go out and walk in the woods and listen to the birds in Windsor, Ontario. I also went to investigate the burnt forest in Rock Creek, British Columbia, where I noticed the stillness and silence around me. When someone goes out into the wild, they are experiencing nature, but when they enter the gallery, no matter how similar it may be to the natural world outdoors, it can only ever be a representation. One of the intentions is for the viewer to enter the gallery, experience my fabricated natural environment, and to begin to think about their impact on animals and the landscape.

In *Rewilding Our Hearts: Building Pathways of Compassion and Coexistence*, Barry Commoner, one of the founders of modern ecology, is quoted as saying, “Everything is connected to everything else. Everything must go somewhere. Nature knows best. There is no such thing as a free lunch” (qtd in Bekoff, *Rewilding* 11). There is a cost with every

decision that is made. This is important to think about. Often we are not even aware of how connected we are to nonhuman animals or to the natural world, for that matter. Our decisions can cost animal lives. All these situations have secondary impact for example deciding what to eat, a chicken or veggie burger; where to go for entertainment SeaWorld or bowling; or what clothes to wear, either leather or canvas. These decisions may cause deforestation, resource extraction, and pollution. It would be easier if we did not think about these animals as feeling beings or about the pain they undergo in the service of humans, but that is not the answer for a compassionate world.

When we spend the majority of our days indoors in large buildings or houses we are unwilding ourselves. Unwilding wears away a caring connection to the natural world. Bekoff explains, “As we unwild we lose compassion and empathy for other beings and for nature as a whole” (*Rewilding* 34). Rewilding oneself is extremely important and could change the way we think about others and the planet.

Chapter 6: Process and Creative Production

Victim was the title of the first project and exhibition I completed after beginning my MFA studies at UBCO. This project, which was exhibited in December 2013 in the *FINA* Gallery on the UBCO campus, was done as a partial requirement for a course entitled *Eco-Feminist, Post Humanism and Critical Animal Studies*. In this course, I was inspired by Jonathan Safran Foer's book, *Eating Animals*. The text has a chapter on how many animals in the United States are consumed yearly in factory farming. In a visual explanation, the book has a five-page spread, with only the words "influences" and "speechless", typed over and over creating a wallpaper effect on the pages. The number of letters used in the repeated words is meant to represent the number of animals that one person would eat throughout his or her lifetime in a carnist society. At the end of these pages Foer writes, "On average, Americans eat the equivalent of 21,000 entire animals in a lifetime – one animal for every letter on the last five pages" (122).

At the time, I was researching the use of animals in scientific laboratories throughout Canada. My research revealed that in 2010 there were 3,375,000 nonhuman animals used in Canadian laboratories (according to the Canadian Council for Animal Care) (*The University*). Even then, not all animals used in research are accounted for in these numbers. What drew my attention was the fact that the University of British Columbia, my educational institution, had used 202,500 animals in 2010. This constitutes 6% of the total number of animals used in experimentation in Canada that year. With these numbers in mind, I envisioned the *FINA* gallery walls covered with the word "victim". This was the first large-scale projection installation I completed. The word "victim" was repeated hundreds of times, with each letter being one inch in height flowing from floor to ceiling covering one entire wall of the gallery

and part of the two joining walls (Figure 3). In total, the letters represented the 3,375,000 animals that died in the year 2010. When the audience walked into the space they saw the word “victim” in white and in yellow. The white represented the numbers of animals across Canada and the yellow represented those animals used in research at The University of British Columbia. Once the audience member moved closer to the wall the projected letters would cover their bodies like tattoos, thereby implicating or “entangling” the viewers in the deaths of these animals.

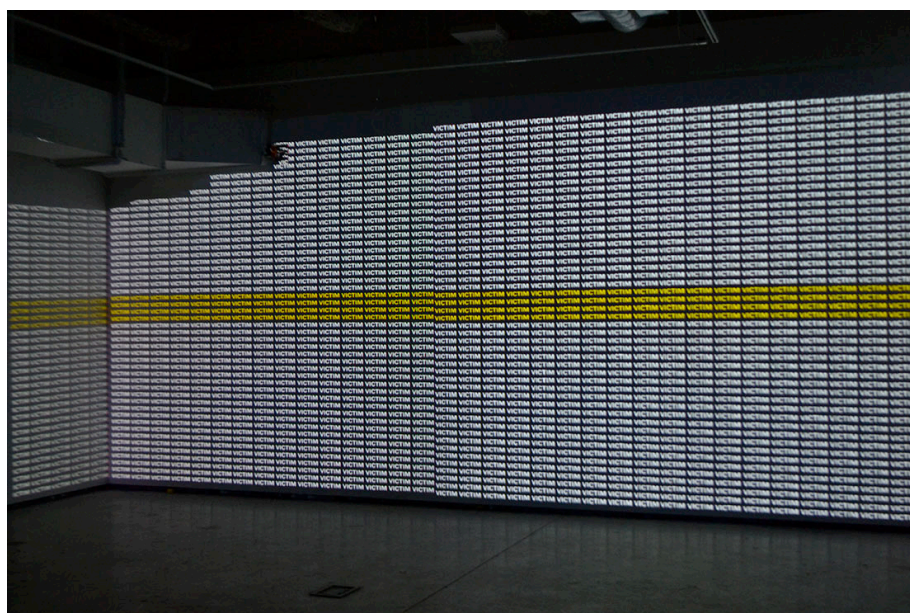


Figure 3. *Victim*, 2013

The process I used in the first body of work involving the word “victim” developed further while creating the next artwork entitled *A Moment of Si(l)ence*. This time, the work would include a video representing dogs and cats being tested on in laboratories throughout Canada. The images were displayed within the letters of the word “victim” set against a black background (Figure 4). In order to have the video play through the text, I learned to use

the program Processing, which allowed me to manipulate the moving images in combination with the words. At the top of the video, text appeared that said, “Every 9 seconds in Canada a non-human is used in a lab experiment totaling 3,375,000 per year. 6% of that total (202,500) occurs at The University of British Columbia” (Auffret). At the bottom of the video there was a count and time stamp that said UBC, Canada and the date and time the video was playing. When the audience members would go into the space and sit in front of the video, they would see that the count was in real time.

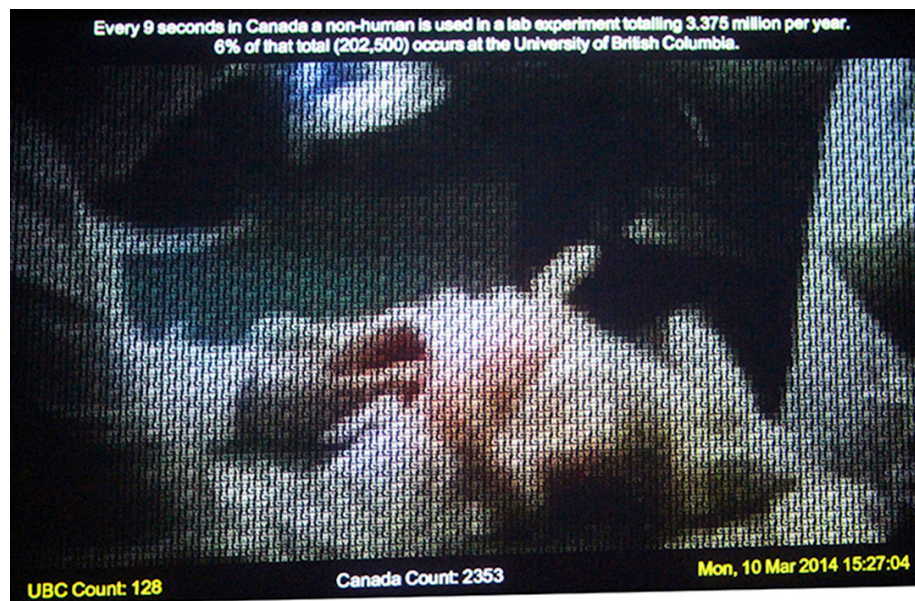


Figure 4. *A Moment of Si(l)ence*, 2014

The paper and artwork for *A Moment of Si(l)ence* are informed by the work of feminist philosopher and animal advocate, Lori Gruen, whose thoughts on entangled empathy were key to the installation. Gruen regards “Entangled empathy [as] a process whereby individuals who are empathizing with others first respond to the other’s condition (most likely but not exclusively, by way of a pre-cognitive empathetic reaction” (*Entangled* 228). It is important not to project your ideas or thoughts onto what nonhuman animals may

be going through, even when having an empathetic realization about what is happening to the individual or group.

I was invited to exhibit *A Moment of Si(l)ence* and to give a paper on it during *Interactive Futures 2014: More-Than-Human-Worlds* at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver. While presenting the paper, the video of cats and dogs being tested upon played behind me. As I read, I looked up at the audience and noticed some of their behavior. A few audience members, looked right at me not paying any attention to the video; some closed their eyes while others looked around the space. It seemed to me that it might have been difficult for the audience to witness, but the video was necessary gesture of respect for those that perished in laboratories and experiments. Human action, whether intentional in laboratories, or unintentional on the road, can cause large-scale suffering and loss of life for nonhuman animals.

On my first drive from Ontario to British Columbia, I saw many animals lying dead on the side of the highways. This experience created a lasting impression on me and became the basis for this thesis. I wanted to create a symbol that could represent mourning, life loss, and sadness similar to how some people would put a cross or flowers at the edge of the road where someone died. I did not want to use a symbol such as a cross, so I decided to use the figure of a crow. The crow is a significant creature in my work because the bird appeared to be everywhere on my drive. I chose the crow to symbolize the animals that died, because crows like others, mourn the loss of a family member. Crows are birds that stay with their families. As I wrote in Chapter One, when one crow dies, the others are known to return to the site by the hundreds, fly in quietly, stay for a few moments then fly off without leaving a trace (King 95).

On my next drive back to Windsor from Kelowna, I decided to document each place where I encountered a dead animal by placing a wooden crow beside it. In preparation, I laser cut over 200 close to life size crows, and attached them to small stakes, which would enable them to be inserted into the ground. The goal was to have a crow next to each dead animal body as I drove through Canada back to Ontario. The first animal I saw on the side of the road came so quickly I could not stop my truck without getting into an accident. I then realized that stopping quickly every time I saw a dead animal could become very dangerous. Instead the safer way would be to have my partner record the animal, location (in kilometers) and place the animal was near (coming out of a town for example). I thought about the following: the last moments before his/her death, what would happen to any offspring, and if s/he had a partner that would go looking for them? Upon reaching Windsor, I counted all the animals that we had listed; there were 140 of them.

After I came back, I installed all 140 crows in a field and documented them all together. During this project I noted reactions from viewers, including those who wondered out loud if the crows were real. From a distance, the crows looked real and I realized it was a powerful image. I was interested in seeing what others would think and how they may experience and understand these representations. This project became the bases for creating an interactive video installation using these 140 crows. When I returned to Kelowna, I had the opportunity to exhibit this work in an art exhibition entitled *Beyond the Invisible*. It was held in the enormous rooms of the old B.C. Fruit Packing Plant in Kelowna. My installation had all 140 crows displayed in two piles of earth and stones that were approximately 8 feet high and 15 feet wide. (see figure 5,6,7) When viewed from the entrance 100 feet away, the crows looked real. Upon closer observation, it became apparent that they were cut outs some

floating above others on transparent acrylic glass rods. I saw this as a metaphor for how we interpret the dead on the highways because we see them from a distance and drive by without thinking about the closer details of that nonhuman animal as an emotional being.

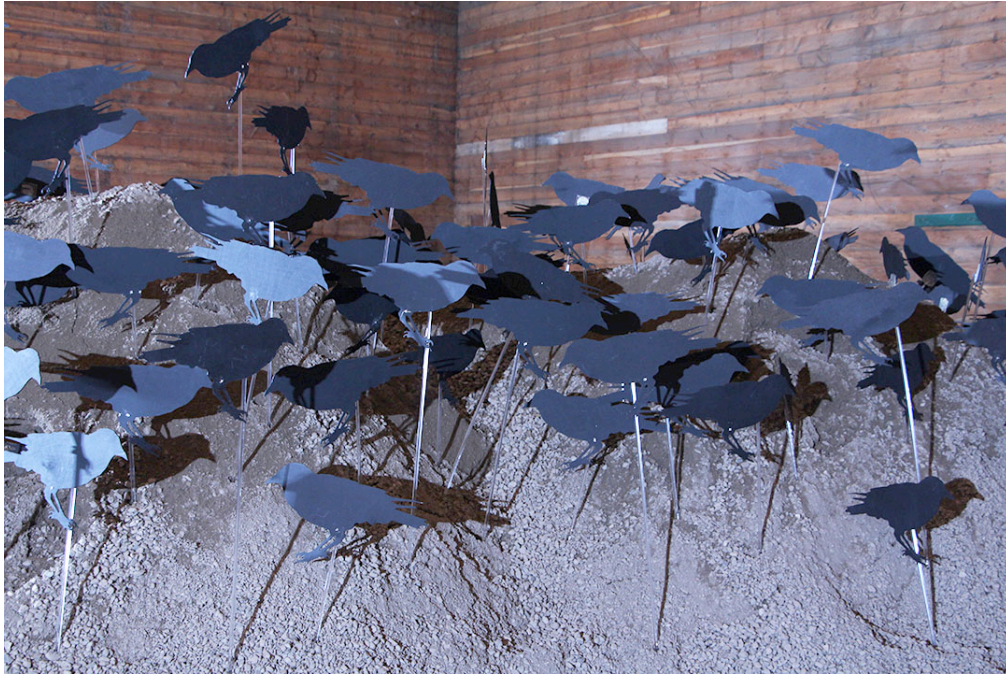


Figure 5. *Untitled*, 2015



Figure 6. *Untitled*, 2015



Figure 7. *Untitled*, 2015

I received an invitation from a curator in Lisbon, Portugal to show a body of work in an exhibition entitled *Just 40*. For this exhibit, I designed a motion sensor video, which had the 140 crows overlaid with an animation of a single crow. When the audience members passed the sensor, it would cause the crow to fly off the screen, returning a few seconds later. Through this installation, I hoped to see how others would respond to the motion sensor video. While researching interactive art, I came across the artist Scott Snibbe who has designed work that includes interactive art, music, digital video, and gestural user interfaces. In one of Snibbe's exhibitions, he uses projected digital images of jellyfish¹. When the viewer stops moving the jellyfish will attach onto his or her shadow and when the shadow moves the jellyfish swim away (Snibbe). This is similar to my work *(un)spoken*, where the crows fly off the wall in response to audience movement. What I learned from my first interactive installation was that I needed to create a fully immersive environment that included a more comprehensive representation of the journey to convey the intent of my work.

¹ James Cameron *Avatar* Exhibition (2011), Interactive video, jellyfish creatures attach to shadows of audience members when still, the slightest movement scares the jelly-fish away.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

During the past two years of being engaged with readings in Animal Studies and reflecting on my own personal journey, I have gained a new perspective on issues that I had been thinking about for many years. For example, I had witnessed my dog, Scrappy, continually going out into the yard and sitting at his brother's gravesite. If it were not for the research that I had done on animal mourning and grieving, written by Barbara King, Angus Taylor and David Alderton, I might never have realized that my dog was actually grieving his brother and it made me look at animal emotions in more depth and in a new way.

I also came to realize, that I engage with the notion of entangled empathy, the concept discussed by Lori Gruen. I am entangled with the decisions that I have made during my lifetime. Through my artwork *(un)spoken*, which is a symbolic depiction of one of my motoring trips across Canada, I posit through the interactivity of the installation that each individual should be aware of their actions and how those actions impact the environment and the animals that live in it. I am conscious of the fact that I too drive a vehicle that can be a weapon of death and that I too drive on those roads where so many animals are killed. Each of the 140 deceased animals I encountered are represented by their names in text, which I placed gently and respectfully, thinking of each one as an individual, onto the map depicted on the floor of the gallery.

Through Mark Bekoff's writings on Rewilding I became aware of how important it is to go out into nature. This led to my exploration and documentation of the natural environments in Ontario and British Columbia that I used as the interactive videos in my installation. It also inspired me to go out and experience the sound of birds and crows in the wild and to record them to add an audio element to the experience in the gallery.

One of my goals is to have people that normally dismiss road kill as a nuisance, and to see animals killed on the roadways to be sentient beings worthy of our compassion, rather than merely “roadkill”. This thesis is about taking the audience on my journey and providing insight into the way I have come to think about nonhuman animals, influenced by my research into Animal Studies. At the end of the journey my goal is to have convinced the viewers to feel compassion towards nonhuman animals they encounter on a daily basis.

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