

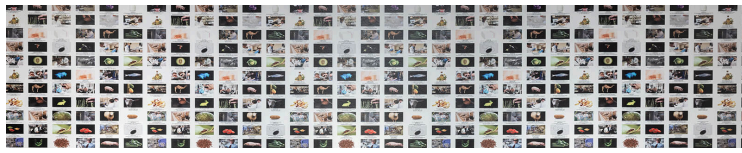


‘Why Look at Animals?’ considers art, ethics & ecosystems beyond the Anthropocene

This monumental exhibition at EMET in Greece reaffirms the experience of non-human animals as sentient beings.

by [Asmita Singh](#) | Published on : May 23, 2025

“The pervasive belief in human superiority – speciesism – has justified the violent commodification of animals and nature,” writes [art historian](#) and exhibition [curator](#) Katerina Gregos, artistic director, National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMET), in her curatorial note for the exhibition *Why Look at Animals? A Case for the Rights of Non-Human Lives* in [Athens, Greece](#). Inspired by John Berger’s eponymous 1980 essay, the [exhibition](#), on view from May 16, 2025 –February 15, 2026, sparks critical engagement on the ethical and political realities that shape human-animal relationships. Featuring 60 [multidisciplinary artists](#), it considers the social and systemic invisibility of animals and their subsequent marginalisation. *Why Look at Animals?* challenges us to see non-human animals as conscious, responsive beings and not merely as the ‘Other’.



“This exhibition and its wider programme explore – among other things – the various connections between the interconnected issues of colonialism, industrialisation and the marginalisation of animals,” Gregos said to STIR. “So one can see how animals [...] thus [disappeared] from everyday sight, become commodified products for human consumption and entertainment.” *Why Look at Animals?* encompasses smaller exhibitions, solo installations and events over nine months. The works on display across the lower ground floor of the museum show that the rise of advanced [technology](#) marked the beginning of large-scale habitat loss. Other exhibits highlight the significant barriers animals encounter in urban environments and the crucial role of animal justice initiatives in addressing these issues. The exhibition seeks to imagine a more equitable future through ecofeminism, animism and animal advocacy, among other notions.



(L-R) Installation view, *Men and Game*, 1998, Mark Dion; *Clara*, 2016, Rossella Biscotti; *L'Alalie*, 2010, Art Orienté Objet Image: Paris Tavitian; Courtesy of Mark Dion and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, Los Angeles, and Rossella Biscotti and Art Orienté Objet

The two solo showcases within the exhibition, by the Congo-born and [Brussels-based photographer Sammy Baloji](#), *Echoes of History*, *Shadows of Progress* and Greek artist Janis Rafa's *We betrayed the horses*, present [multimedia](#) artworks and [site-specific installations](#). These interventions strive to counter conventional representations of human-animal interaction, which indubitably prescribe more agency to humans than their counterparts. Rafa's visual compositions consider the dynamics of control and betrayal between humans and horses, revealing the absence of consent in their relationship. She presents a new series of works including [sculpture](#), [immersive installations](#) and [video art](#) exploring “the desire for, and domination of, the animal body”, Gregos notes. [Belgium-based interdisciplinary artist](#) Kasper Bosmans presents *The Fuzzy Gaze*, a 30-metre [mural](#) which examines the roles humans assign to animals as instruments of utility, spectacle or convenience. The installation references the animal gaze in artificially crafted contexts like the zoo or a circus. Gregos contends that such works highlight “our estrangement from animals as well as how we so easily recognise them, not in their natural habitats but in those we created in order to exploit them as product, entertainment or spectacle”.



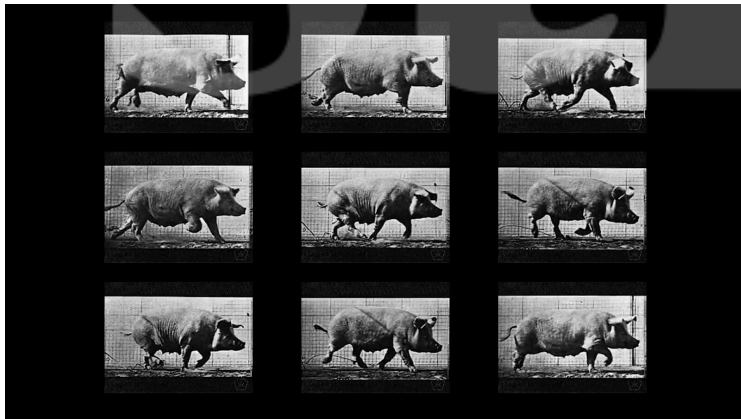
Aequare. The Future that Never Was, video still, single channel video, 2023, Sammy Baloji Image: Courtesy of Sammy Baloji and Imane Farès, Paris

[British artist Emma Talbot's](#) newly commissioned [textile installation](#) *Human/Nature* (2025) features surreal imagery, mythological and cosmic motifs, chimaeras and embodies ways of conveying layered cultural and political stories across contemporary settings. Rooted in feminist discourse, Talbot's installation is accompanied by an animated [film](#), *You Are Not the Centre (Inside the Animal mind)*, co-commissioned and co-produced by EM&T and Copenhagen Contemporary, [Denmark](#). It features a female protagonist who departs from an anthropocentric viewpoint to probe alternate and non-human ways of perceiving and experiencing reality, living through the experiences of a dog, spider, deer and a captive bird.



Human/Nature, acrylic on silk, 2025, Emma Talbot, produced by EMΣT Image: Paris Tavitian; Courtesy of Emma Talbot and Galerie Onrust

The exhibition also draws parallels between the dehumanisation of animals and the treatment of marginalised human populations, stressing in the curatorial note that both are framed as “inferior, reinforcing systems of oppression and violence”. Greek artist Paris Petridis’ *Bethlehem* (2012) is an inkjet print on archival paper, suggesting a focus on contested spaces and the aftermath of human conflict. Singaporean artist and educator Ang Siew Ching’s multidisciplinary practice spans moving image, installation art and photography. Ching’s *High-Rise Pigs* (2025) is an 18-minute single-channel video that looks at the origins of pork consumption. The film highlights the physical structures of modern pig farming and critiques the systemic objectification of animals, drawing parallels between industrial practices and broader societal issues.



High-Rise Pigs, video still, single channel video, 2025, Ang Siew Ching Image: Courtesy of Ang Siew Ching

By platforming artists who eschew human exceptionalism, the exhibition and its curated programme deconstruct and reimagine our ideas of dependency and the historic oppression of non-human lives. This violence is ancient—feeding into contemporary industrial contexts like animal farming and testing, space exploration and genetic engineering. The exhibition reveals a cycle of damage, where violence against the natural world ultimately circles back to humans. “All this is unquestionably a result of greed, as well as a moral and ethical crisis, and of [our] irredeemable inability to learn how to cohabit on the earth, and to coexist with what is simply other than us,” Gregos tells STIR.

‘Why Look at Animals? A Case for the Rights of Non-Human Lives’ is on view from May 15, 2025 – January 7, 2026, at EMΣT, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece.

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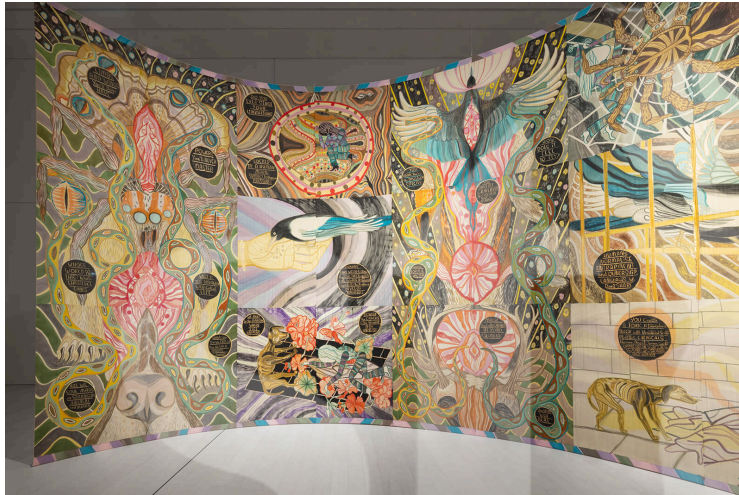


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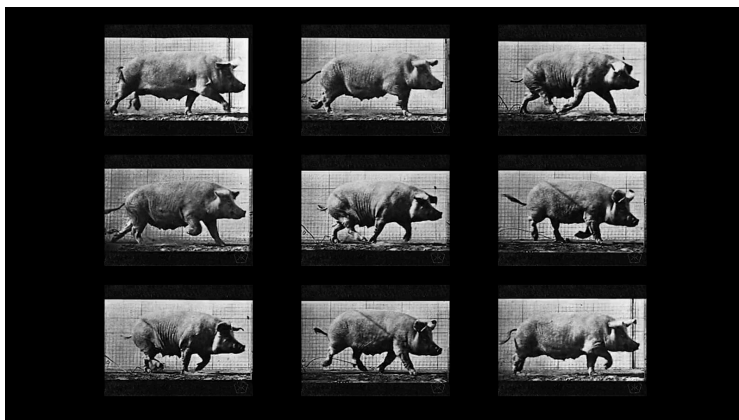


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