

**Screening Nature:
Flora, Fauna,
and the Moving Image**

Symposium and Screenings
Saturday 18 – Sunday 19 May 2013

Queen Mary, University of London,
& the Whitechapel Gallery

Flora

When leaves fluttered in the wind in the first moving images, the early cinema audience of *Feeding the Baby/Repas de bébé* (1895) was more astonished by the movement of the leaves in the background than by the commotion of the humans in the foreground. The audience was used to the theatre, where everything was staged by a human director, so were startled by the uncontrolled action of natural forces on the screen. What was on the screen was supposed to be controlled by humans – but who moved the leaves? That things ostensibly without consciousness (which now is debatable)¹ should move undirected by humans onscreen was astounding, even if it was regarded as normal that leaves move without human help in life. Already in the reaction to these first moving images of moving nature, there was a separation between what was regarded as natural – and therefore as objects – and the human agency of subjects. Subsequently, leaves in the wind have been a recurring theme in the cinema. Whereas in the *mise-en-scène* of narrative fiction, non-narrative documentary images of 'nature' are often cast as supernatural, the Flora programme explores the question of who or what moves plant and elemental nature in the image with respect to the relations between the artist, the work and the world.

Whilst the distinction between 'Flora' and 'Fauna' is artificial, the Fauna films are more concerned with the nonhuman individual, and Flora with assemblages of human and nonhuman matter in what is often referred to as 'the environment.' Water and wind are collective forces of moving materials. There is not one individual wind. At the level of matter, distinctions between human and nonhuman give way to vital forces. Flora investigates the interface of human and nonhuman living matter. It finds humans in minor interactions – or perhaps rather in *interpassion* – with natural matter, for instance in the diverse ways in which humans negotiate the rain, the snow, the ice and the sea which through their materiality affect human actions and passions. Flora observes small assemblages of human-made things and nonhuman nature in a sprinkler, a fountain or a sewer and notes how the connections between leaves, wind and planes are depicted in moving images. It celebrates the singular event of one leaf gliding bravely on a journey of endurance in a prolonged gust of wind, and windsurfers not gliding, but hopping and whizzing, as their movement and that of the sea is played with by the speed of the film.

The emphasis on singular relations of matter, and human and nonhuman material diversity is also reflected in the array of media presented in both Screening Nature programmes. These come with different traditions and ideologies of usage, from experimental filmmakers working only with celluloid to artists using digital files. While in current political and sociological thought a vital materialism has emerged (most notably in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*, 2010, and Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, 2010), these new materialisms have yet to be considered with respect to moving images. Film in the context of art is still predominantly read in terms of the old materialisms: either historical materialism (which was also once a 'new materialism')² or that of the film material, which reduces the materiality and complexity of relations in front of the camera to that of the medium. When Stan Brakhage stuck the wings of dead moths and the petals of flowers on the filmstrip of *Moth Light* (1963), their materiality was utilized to explore the materiality of celluloid. Here, nonhuman nature is cast as dead matter – only the material of the medium lives. In this emphasis on medium specificity, film assumes

a position separate from the relations of the world and does not look beyond its own materiality. In pure film, aesthetics are separated from their environment.

Some of the films in the Flora programme can be seen in this tradition of experimental film, but they go beyond a mere self-reflexive exploration of human aesthetics. In Helga Fanderl's films, for instance, the decision not to leave her spot and to edit in the camera, shows an insistence on the relation of the human to her environment she (and we) cannot escape – of the human as part of the world, struggling to see and understand it from one mundane location of 'testimony,' without any large claims or consequences. The artist or filmmaker, the work and the 'context' or the 'environment,' all belong to the same material world. Documentary images are not separated from what is depicted in them. Images are not merely visual, but a part of the world. We cannot make images of a burning nuclear reactor from nearby without being affected by its radioactivity. Our materiality and that of our images are part of the environment. Post-environmentalists convincingly argue that 'if humans are part of the environment then the concept of environment is meaning-less.'³ As David Suzuki pointed out: 'we are the environment.'⁴ Documentary eco-aesthetics bring together the two separate planes – that of ecological materiality and that of art and the moving image. For an eco-aesthetics, we have to leave the avant-garde's aesthetics of disconnectedness as well as a phenomenological stance of the artist as recording mere impressions. Images cannot merely be about pure aesthetics any more. Images and their makers (or takers) are part of the world. Images can only be impure.

Silke Panse



Pure Life in Impure High Definition (Image: Silke Panse)

This essay draws on my chapter 'Ten Skies, 13 Lakes, 15 Pools: Structure, Immanence and Ecoaesthetics in *The Swimmer* and James Benning's *Land Films*,' in Anat Pick and Guinevere Narrayay (eds.), *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013.

1 See Michael Marder, 'If Peas Can Talk, Should We Eat Them?', *New York Times*, 29 April 2012.

2 See the chapters 'A New Materialism (1): Practice' and 'A New Materialism (2): History' in Peter Osborne, *Marx*, London: Granta Books, 2005, pp. 22-44.

3 See Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, 'FAQ: Post-Environmentalism,' in Max Andrews, (ed.), *Land, Art. A Cultural Ecology Handbook*. London: Royal Society of Art and Arts Council, 2006, p. 198.

4 David Suzuki says this in *Force of Nature*, directed by Sturla Gunnarsson (Canada 2010).

Fauna

In her 1996 acceptance speech of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Wisława Szymborska said the following:

*'The world – whatever we might think when terrified by its vastness and our own impotence, or embittered by its indifference to individual suffering, of people, animals, and perhaps even plants, for why are we so sure that plants feel no pain; whatever we might think of its expanses pierced by the rays of stars surrounded by planets we've just begun to discover, planets already dead? still dead? we just don't know; whatever we might think of this measureless theater to which we've got reserved tickets, but tickets whose lifespan is laughably short, bounded as it is by two arbitrary dates; whatever else we might think of this world – it is astonishing'*⁶

Astonishment and ordinariness go hand in hand for Szymborska, superimposed like Spinoza's God-or-Nature. In her poetry, life's materiality and fallibility are inseparable from an appreciation of the world. Our appreciation of film, too, should attend to the fragility and finitude of cinematic fundamentals: film's living subjects, its natural resources (including human and nonhuman labour) and production materials. These are an essential part of relating, politically and ethically, to the world, that 'measureless theater' through whose sentient and non-sentient props mortality itself reverberates.

Film programmes, especially those about animals, usually shy away from confronting ethics. Screening Nature was put together with explicit nods to the ethics of production, reception and form, keeping in mind the living contexts in which film happens. This is why we are running this as a vegan event (in which animals are consumed without being eaten), while drawing attention to those material facts that are rarely acknowledged: the animal-derived ingredients of the film stock and plastics that are part of the moving image apparatus.

Tender, cruel, exuberant, the three Fauna programmes (out of five strands over the weekend) are precisely not generic depictions of wildlife. I hope they honour Szymborska's sense of the universe, and humans within it, as simultaneously big and small. Astonishment for her does not disavow terror or anger or anguish, and it isn't elevated or academic so that only professional philosophers (or astronomers) can claim it. Amazement belongs to all who have tickets to this greatest – and only – show on earth.

The Fauna films explore different elements of our relations to other animals. The separate strands, 'Love,' 'Observation and Spectacle' and 'Political Animals,' reflect the forces at play: desire, looking, and the operations of power. The screenings are not organised chronologically but thematically. In mixing old and new, I avoided presenting a history of the animal film. I was interested instead in the contemporary meeting and chaffing of past and present.

The programme pushes back against a number of assumptions about animal imagery. There is a tendency to think of filmic animals as ciphers of human concerns. Jonathan Burt described this as the dominance of the 'textual animal' over the 'visual animal.'⁷ But, as the films here show, the visual animal is in excess of any symbolism we may wish to ascribe it. Another assumption is that the animal is fast becoming a technological simulation. Whereas it's important to appreciate the relentless controls placed over animals' bodies,

including their active 'screening' from daily life, the films in the programme also assert animal presence and plenitude, communicated through the technologies of image and sound. Third is the trope of anthropomorphism, so often used to safeguard our encounters with nonhuman animals. Many of the films exist on the cusp between naïve response and mental projection. It is intriguing to see what we can make of screen encounters with animals outside of the mantra of anthropomorphism. Dropping the anthropomorphic disclaimer gives the gift of uncertainty, with new risks but also better returns. Accepting 'projection' (non-species specific) as a one possible mode among others in an altogether messy encounter reduces the pressure to frame animals symbolically. This is put to the test most acutely in the films about insects, where mammalian conventions of mutual recognition and sentience are not guaranteed, something that makes for unnerving but still moving viewing.

The question of animals, real and represented, is inextricable from the question of ethics. Ethics – and I don't believe there is a specific ethics of film, or of science, a 'bio-ethics,' beyond the fact that different practices have their own way of staging the ethical – is the awkward movement of pressing down without weight, sovereignty without muscle – not the absence of power exactly, but the double negative of 'nonpower.' Simone Weil described it as a 'falling towards the heights.'⁸ This has a special, even unique, resonance for animals who disproportionately bear the brunt of human pressure. An ethical relation to animals is not one that simply eschews 'unnecessary harm,' whatever that means. To relate ethically to nonhuman beings is to not exercise power over them simply because we can. When a suspension of power powerfully asserts itself, we fall up. This applies to what we do with animals' bodies, and with their images. Images that replicate the order of power that consigns animals to endless servitude are not only aesthetically boring, but ethically flawed. Complex, transformative work tends towards reconfiguring relations of power in directions that are less exclusive, less domineering, less genocidal: working within and beyond the gravitational – falling towards the heights.

Short films are like poems or essays, or, indeed, acceptance speeches, not because they are lyrical or romantic or ingratiating, not because they are overtly 'experimental' either. The films in the programme are concise expressions and explorations of a relationship to the world at once simple and complex. Concision suggests both ambition and modesty, a doubling of scale, like the title of one of Szymborska's anthologies, *View with a Grain of Sand*. Visual animals belong to a mixed human and nonhuman realm, bound together and brokered by technology. Animals expose our cruelty and benevolence. They remind us, too, that what we call history, or culture, or ethics is always also a matter of biology. Seeing animals is therefore looking low and high – looking down at the stars.

Anat Pick

1 Wisława Szymborska 'The Poet and the World,' Trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh, http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1996/szymborska-lecture.html

2 Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film*. London: Reaktion, 2002, p. 88.

3 Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (1947), Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr, Trans., London, Routledge, 2004, p. 4.

Saturday 18 May 9.30am – 4.30pm
SCREENING NATURE SYMPOSIUM
Queen Mary, University of London, Art One Lecture Theatre

The Screening Nature Network: Flora, Fauna, and the Moving Image is an AHRC-funded project, organised by Anat Pick, Queen Mary, University of London, and Silke Panse, University for the Creative Arts, in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery and the Goethe-Institut London. Screening Nature addresses the relationship between the natural world and the moving image. Eschewing spectacular, cuddly, or purely aesthetic depictions of nature, the project considers politically and ethically engaged work on our place in the world.

9.30am	Registration
10.00am	Introduction (Anat Pick and Silke Panse)
10.15am	Keynote: W. J. T. Mitchell (University of Chicago) 'The Nature of the Screen and the Screening of Nature'
11.15am	Coffee and tea break
11.30am	Jody Berland (York University) 'A Visitor's Guide to the Virtual Ménagerie'
12.10pm	Rose Lowder 'Interpreting Nature at the Present Time Within an Ecological Context'
12.50pm	Lunch break
2.00pm	Keynote: Claire Colebrook (Penn State) 'Sex and the (Anthropocene) City'
3.00pm	Coffee and tea break
3.15pm	Silke Panse (University for the Creative Arts) 'Planes in the Plane of Immanence or: Who or What Moves the Leaves?'
3.45pm	Roundtable Q&A
4.15pm	Travel to Whitechapel Gallery for the 5:30pm screening programme

Screenings, Whitechapel Gallery
(Zilkha Auditorium)

WASP SYMPHONY

Mike Blow, GB, 2011, looped sound
 A multi-channel sound piece composed by Oxfordshire wasps greets visitors on their way in and out of the Zilkha Auditorium.

FLORA (Curated by Silke Panse)

5.30pm – 6.30pm

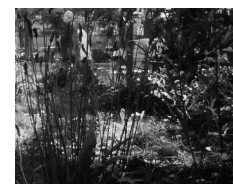
Programme 1: Leaves in the Wind

This programme presents a variety of relations between the movement of the images and of the movement of the leaves – between the human artist, the medium and what it depicts. It reflects historical differences in approaches to filmed plant nature as well as in the use of celluloid – often silent and edited in the camera – or digital video. The programme is inspired by one shot in James Benning's digital video *Ruhr* (2009): of airplanes filmed through leaves where the wind in the trees is generated by the planes. It presents a couple of films of planes shot through plants. The 'Leaves' of the title are sometimes loosely interpreted as petals.



LE REPAS DE BÉBÉ (BABY'S DINNER)

Louis Lumière, France, 1895, DVD (35mm), bw, 1', sound.
 A famous example of early cinema. The leaves' action in the background triggered far more excitement in the audience than the human action in the foreground.



PASSANTEN (PASSERS BY)

Helga Fanderl, Germany, 2000, DVD (Super 8), bw, 3'15, sil.
 The shrubs in the foreground provide the anchor. We are watching the passing humans from the shrubs' perspective.



BOUQUET 1

Rose Lowder, France, 1995, 16mm, colour, 1', sil.
 Here the flowers and the humans share the same space only on the celluloid strip and are merging exclusively in our vision through montage.



FÜR M. (FOR M.)

Helga Fanderl, Germany, 2008, 16mm blow-up (Super 8), colour, 3'13, sil., 18fps
Psychedelic flowers present themselves.



LES TOURNESOLS (SUNFLOWERS)

Rose Lowder, France, 1982, 16mm, colour, 3', sil.
A crowd of sunflowers assumes a twitching presence. Their movement in the wind is enhanced by the animation in the camera.



BOUQUET 2

Rose Lowder, France, 1994, 16mm, colour, 1', sil.
Flowers are moving furiously as if to catch our attention. Their action is generated by the speed of the wind and the camera.



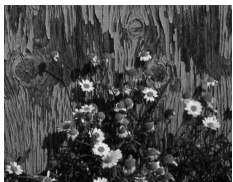
FILTER BEDS

Guy Sherwin, GB, 1990/98, 16mm, bw, 8'09, sound
A phenomenological view of planes seen through long grass and branches. Nature is shot self-consciously and fragmented in the artist's impressions with an emphasis on the medium.



FLUGZEUGE II (AIRPLANES II)

Helga Fanderl, Germany, 2001, DVD (Super 8), colour, 3'20, sil.
More airplanes shot through trees. Because the film is edited in the camera, we are aware that each plane flying behind the trees is a different one and that these are not copies of the same shot. The stuttering images are like repeated attempts to get looking at the world right.



BOUQUET 4

Rose Lowder, France, 1994, 16mm, colour, 1', sil.
In a non-epic struggle between plant and fence matter, camomile flowers wrestle with a mural painting and other things over their dominance of the image we see. The sea air of the Carmargue has contributed to the fence mural by stripping off some of the paint.



LEAVES

Susanne Bürner, Germany, 2009, Blu-ray (HDV), colour, 8'20, sound
The wind in the trees is generated by a wind machine in a park similar to the site of a murder in Antonioni's *Blow-Up*. In *Leaves* we only see plant action – or do we fill the space devoid of human narrative with projections of nature's plotting to dispose of humans?



LEAF AND WIND

Edward Chell and Jason Creasey, GB, 2012, mobile phone DV, colour, 4'08, sound
One leaf is very moved by the wind in autumn. The sound recorded in spring imbues its fate with optimism.



IMPROMPTU

Rose Lowder, France, 1989, 16mm, colour, 8', sound
The artist is in control of the movement of the leaves. A tree stops being animated when people enter the frame. Humans are presented in their 'natural' pace, while the trees assume artificial movement.



A PRISM SPLITS LIGHT

Mike Marshall, GB, 2011, HDV, colour, 8'39, sound
An olive grove in Cyprus is tended by two Vietnamese labourers. Work on the land is depicted in beautiful images with the pleasing glow of shallow focus. Manual labour provides a content background for the plants which populate the areas that are in focus. A worker saws off some branches of an olive tree.

Total running time: 53mins

Screening to be followed by filmmakers, speakers and audience discussion

Drinks reception at the Whitechapel Gallery, 7pm – 8pm

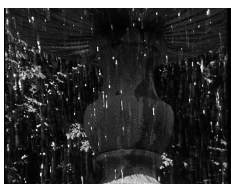
FLORA (Curated by Silke Panse)**11am – 12.10pm****Programme 2: Water**

This programme looks at water in its different material compositions, from 'natural' states such as rain, snow, ice and the sea, to its distribution through human-made sprinklers, fountains and sewers. It observes water in its interface with humans and how it affects human motion in relation in its diverse states. The 'Flora' screenings end with a sober nod to 'Fauna.'

**REGEN (RAIN)**

Joris Ivens and Mannus Franken, Netherlands, 1929, 16mm (35mm), bw, 14', sil.

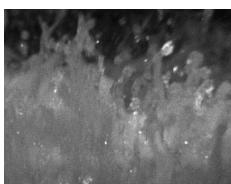
In this early silent film, water from the sky produces different assemblages with human and nonhuman surfaces.

**WASSERFALL (CASCADE)**

Helga Fanderl, Germany, 2000, DVD (Super 8), colour, 1', sil.
Water drops are cascading from a fountain in the light.

**EAUX D'ARTIFICE**

Kenneth Anger, Italy/USA, 1953, 16mm, colour, 13', sound
More fountains with camp water in queer nature – shot when it was deemed liberating to view water as artificial.

**WASSERTANZ II (DANCING WATER II)**

Helga Fanderl, Germany, 2007, 16mm blow up (8mm), colour, 1'30, sil.
Splashing water gets the close-up treatment.

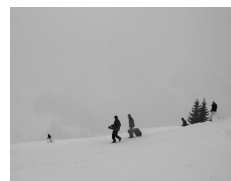
**DAYS LIKE THESE**

Mike Marshall, GB, 2003, HDV, colour, 3'20, sound
A sprinkler unceremoniously waters the plants in a very green garden.

**SCHLITTSCHUHLAUFEN (ICE SKATING)**

Helga Fanderl, Germany, 2002.16mm blow-up (Super 8), colour, 3'20, sil. 18fps

Ice skaters glide across the image tracked through leaves by an inquisitive camera. The leaves prevent a full view on the ice-skaters, who on occasion seem to merge with their image.

**SNOW BUSINESS**

Silke Panse, GB, 2012, HDV, colour, 5', sound

There's snow business like show business! Human figures make their way across the frame through the snow in manifold ways. In this snowscape, it is the snow that shapes (scapes) human movement, not the other way round. The sound is also directed by the snow, which made the microphone wear a cap.

**VOLUME AND FREQUENCY**

Mike Marshall, GB, 2009, HDV, colour, 6'40, sound

The wind is in the trees, but also in the waves. Surfers have to submit to the rhythm of the sea and wait to catch a wave.

**BOUQUET 8**

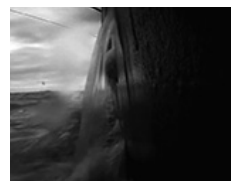
Rose Lowder, France, 1994, 16mm, colour, 1', sil.

Sails apparently operated by windsurfing humans are sped up in their movement in the water through the pace of the film in the camera. A tranquil holiday scene is transformed into a scene of frantic activities of non-organic movements.

**AM SIEL (BY THE DIKE SLUICE)**

Peter Nestler, West Germany, 1962, Blu-ray (35mm), bw, 12'11, sound

Narrated from the perspective of the water: 'If you cast your eye on the little stream that is me, me the sewer.'

**LEVIATHAN (Trailer)**

Verena Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor, USA/France/UK, 2012, HD, colour, 4'10, sound

One shot of the effect of human intervention through consumption into sea life leads over to the 'Fauna' programme on a sombre note.

Total running time: 65mins

12.10pm – 2pm LUNCH BREAK

FAUNA (Curated by Anat Pick)**2pm – 4pm****Programme 3: Love**

Animal films often deal with empathy and care in human-animal relationships. But affection is frequently rooted in unequal power relations between animals and their human companions. This collection of shorts explores the different encounters between humans and animals that cinema manufactures, captures, or records. The slippage between power and love that humans and animals experience is a recurring theme. The title of this programme is, at least in part, ironic.

**MADAME BABYLAS AIME LES ANIMAUX
(MADAME BABYLAS LOVES ANIMALS)**

Alfred Machin, France, DVD (35mm), 1911, bw, 9', sound.
Madame Babylas loves animals too much. As her house slowly transforms into a domestic zoo, her frustrated husband plans his revenge. This is the first of two films by Machin, the neglected pioneer of animal cinema, included in the 'Fauna' programme.

**MON CHIEN (MY DOG)**

Georges Franju, France, digibeta (35mm), 1955, bw, 15', sound (Image: Gaumont)
The sad tale of an abandoned dog in a Paris dog pound. As in his 1949 Blood of the Beasts, Franju includes animals in his bleak reflections on postwar France.

**PRO IYUBOV (ABOUT LOVE)**

Vladimir Tyulkin, Kazakhstan, 2005, Beta SP, colour, 26', sound
A woman lives with seventy abandoned dogs in her one-bedroom flat.

**V TEMNOTE (IN THE DARK)**

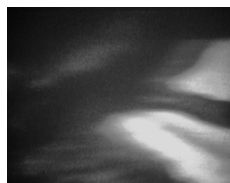
Sergei Dvortsevov, Russia, 2004, digibeta (35mm), colour, 41', sound
An elderly blind man lives alone in the suburbs of Moscow. His sole companion is a white, mischievous cat.

**IVERET (BLIND)**

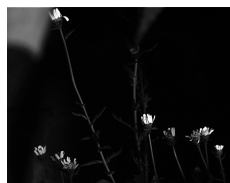
Chen Sheinberg, Israel, 2001, DVD (8mm video), colour, 3'19, sound
A blind stray cat navigates her way by sound alone in a back yard of Tel Aviv. The cat's sightless gaze 'sees' us.

**HAYONA HAILEMET
(THE MUTE DOVE)**

Chen Sheinberg, Israel, 2012, HD file (mobile phone DV), colour, 3'49, sound
A mute, earthbound dove observed crossing a Tel Aviv street.

**PASHT**

Stan Brakhage, USA, 1965, 16mm, colour 6', silent
'In honour of the cat, so named, and the goddess of all cats which she is named after (that taking shape in the Egyptian mind of the spirit of cats), and of birth (as she was then giving kittens when the pictures were taken), of sex as source, and finally of death (as this making was the salvage therefrom and in memorium)' (Stan Brakhage).

**ELEGY**

Anthea Kennedy and Ian Wiblin, GB, 2001, Beta SP (miniDV), bw, 3'25, sound
'A film in memory of a cat, depicting her nocturnal space as imagined by us. This space is our "garden," a dank and decaying backyard full of weeds and wildlife, a place that belonged more to her than to us. Various creatures join in the process of mourning, on and off screen' (Ian Wiblin and Anthea Kennedy)

**DOG ROSE AFTERNOON**

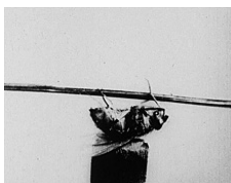
Bev Zalcock and Sara Chambers, 2004, Beta SP (8mm), colour, 4'30, sound.
Birds and bees provide the soundtrack. 'Made on a zero budget, it is a tribute to Maisie the dog star and to the spirit of nature and the underground' (Bev Zalcock).

Total running time: 112mins

Screening to be followed by filmmakers, speakers, and audience discussion

4.30pm – 5.30pm**Programme 4: Observation and Spectacle**

The programme begins with a selection of early shorts made during, or just after, the period Tom Gunning called the 'cinema of attractions.' Here, living animals are the spectacle, performing tricks, used to shock, or reinforce cinematic authenticity. The films reveal the key role of animals in the development of the medium. In the latter part of the programme, we shift from spectacle to observation, a more interrogative and reflective approach to looking that questions the spectacular value of cinematic animals as well as viewers' assumptions about them.

**THE ACROBATIC FLY**

Percy Smith, GB, 1908, Beta SP (35mm), bw, 3', sil.

Smith's trick film in which flies are engaged in virtuoso feats of juggling was an early sensation.

**LA PEINE DU TALION (TIT FOR TAT)**

Gaston Velle (Pathé Frères), France, 1906, DVD (35mm), colour, 4'40, sound.

One of Pathé's 1905-6 colour films, this trick-féerie film uses the polychrome stencil colouring process to depict a ballet of insects. The film includes a comical 'insect revenge' against human dominion.

**DOG OUTWITS THE KIDNAPPERS**

Lewis Fitzhamon, GB, 1908, DVD (35mm), bw, 7', sil.

The sequel to Cecil Hepworth's 1905 hit Rescued by Rover is arguably more vibrant than its better-known precursor. The film reunites Blair the dog, and Hepworth's daughter Barbara in a fast and furious adventure.

**NUIT DE NOËL (CHRISTMAS EVE)**

Pathé Frères (director unknown), France, 1908, digibeta (35mm), bw and colour, 13', sil.

The film proceeds as a light-hearted comedy until the last shot. Though it falls outside the period of the 'cinema of attractions,' the film's coda combines animal spectacle and shock.

**EISBÄR (POLAR BEAR)**

Helga Fanderl, Germany, 1992, DVD (Super 8), bw, 2', sil., 18fps

A captive polar bear swims in the zoo's little pool.

**PIRKUS (CONVULSION)**

Chen Sheinberg, Israel, 1998, miniDV (35mm), colour, 3'30, sound

A dung beetle struggles to flip itself over, and cries out for help. The sound in the film is the original sound of the insect.

**LEAHAR MITKEFET HAARBE (AFTER THE LOCUST ATTACK)**

Chen Sheinberg, Israel, 2013, HD file (HD), colour, 3'37, sound

Rumours of a locust attack were greatly exaggerated. In place of the menacing 'swarms,' Sheinberg encountered a lone, injured locust, looking directly at us.

**TRUE-LIFE ADVENTURE I & II**

Erin Espelie, USA, 2013, Blu-Ray (HD), colour, 8', sound

The world premiere of True-Life Adventure parts I & II. The first was seen here in last year's London Film Festival. Espelie trains her camera on the myriad life forms that coexist within a small area around a mountain creek. 'When nature writes the screenplays, she doesn't abide by crescendos' (Erin Espelie).

Total running time: 45mins

Screening to be followed by filmmakers, speakers, and audience discussion.

6pm – 7.30pm**Programme 5: Political Animals**

Although unacknowledged as political subjects in their own right, animals have been intrinsic to our understanding of politics. This programme looks at animals' place – as agents, victims, symbols, or pawns – in a variety of political enterprises, from colonialism to revolution. Animals' role might seem incidental or allegorical, but the films suggest, explicitly or in subtext, that politics is never exclusively human. The programme proposes opening up politics to ecology, ontology, and ethics beyond the human.

**LA CHASSE À LA PANTHÈRE (PANTHER HUNTING)**

Alfred Machin (Pathé Frères), France, 1909, Blu-ray (35mm) bw and colour, 8', sil. (Image: Gaumont Pathé archives)
The second Alfred Machin film in the programme. In one of Machin's series of hunting films, white hunters proudly display their spoils in a lush African landscape. The film is shot in Pathé-colour. Its unabashed attitude towards its human and nonhuman subjects is an example of the colonial underpinnings of many early travel and safari films.

**VÖGEL AM CHECKPOINT CHARLIE (BIRDS AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE)**

Helga Fanderl, Germany, 2001, 16mm blow-up (Super 8), bw, 3'20, sil, 18fps
Bird formations above the invisible line between the eastern and western parts of Berlin.

**UNSERE AFRIKAREISE (OUR TRIP TO AFRICA)**

Peter Kubelka, Austria, 1966, 16mm, colour, 13', sound
Images of a European hunting safari are intercut with the bourgeois travellers merrily chatting. The mismatch between sound and image delivers a powerful critique of colonialism.

**KLEINKRIEG (WAR IN MINIATURE)**

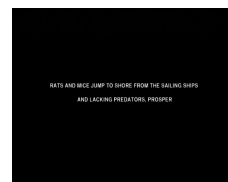
Kurt Blank-Kubla, Germany, 1938, 16mm, bw, 14', sound
A 'kulturfilm' about pests that threaten Germany. The solution to the problem is the use of the cyanide-based pesticide Zyklon B gas. A thinly veiled National Socialist allegory on the extermination of 'undesirables.'

**ANIMALI CRIMINALI (CRIMINAL ANIMALS)**

Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, Italy, 1994, Beta SP (16mm), colour, 7', sound
'Oh nature, where is your providence, where is your beauty? You that armed the animals, one species against another, and man against all' (Diderot)

**RAT LIFE AND DIET IN NORTH AMERICA**

Joyce Wieland, Canada, 1968, 16mm, colour, 16'18, sound (Image: CFDC)
Rats, often seen as 'vermin,' are representatives of the oppressed and dispossessed in the American prison system (governed by cats). The rats rebel and set up a free, just, and ecological community in Canada.

**ONWARDS AND UPWARDS**

Lucy Powell, Germany, 2009, DV, bw, 3'30, sil.
A film with no images, only text, depicting the ecological devastation of the sub-Antarctic island of Macquarie.

**HARK 2**

David Chapman and David Cottridge, GB, 2007, 5.1 surround sound, colour, 8'8
A combination of animated macro-photographic images of tree bark, lichens and mosses and bio-acoustic and environmental sounds recorded in the Lee Valley. The audio composition responds to the textures, shapes and patterns within the images.

**ONLOOKER'S DOUBT**

Johanna Hällsten, Sweden/UK, 2009, 5.1 surround sound, looped, 9'9
A dialogic sound piece in which human, bird, and other environmental sounds like engines and sirens converse. The result is a 'naturecultural' sonic mesh of expression.

Total running time: 84mins

Screening to be followed by filmmakers, speakers, and audience discussion

Bar will be open until 8.00pm

The next Screening Nature events will take place at the Goethe-Institut London in autumn 2013. Details will be available at www.goethe.de/london and the Screening Nature blog <http://screeningnature.com>. Follow us on Facebook, <http://www.facebook.com/ScreeningNature>, and twitter @GI_London1, @Screening-Nature.

Venue Details and Tickets

Symposium: Saturday 18 May 9.30am – 4.30pm

Venue: Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS, Arts One, Lecture Theatre

Tickets: Admission free, booking essential: <http://screeningnature.eventbrite.co.uk>

Screenings: Saturday 18 May 5.30pm – 8pm Sunday 19 May 11am – 7pm

Venue: Whitechapel Gallery, 77-82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Tickets: Sat 18 May, £8 (£6 concs.), Sun 19 May £11 (£8 concs.) for the morning or afternoon programme, £20 (£15 concs.) for the full day.

Booking: info@whitechapelgallery.org, 020 7522 7888

Food & Drink

Tea, coffee and snacks will be provided at the Symposium. Please make your own arrangements for lunch. The refreshments we offer are vegan, and all the tastier for it.

A drinks reception will follow the screening at the Whitechapel Gallery on Saturday night. Food and drink can be purchased at the Gallery's Dining Room and bar, as well as nearby cafés. Please note that no food and drink is allowed inside the Zilkha Auditorium.

Credits & Acknowledgements

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(Image: *Dog Rose Afternoon*,
Bev Zalcock and Sara Chambers, 2004)