

The Animal Exhibition

- Ⓐ Iona Robertson, Metarialist, Nathaniel Coe
- Ⓑ AMP Gallery, 1 Acorn Parade, SE15 2TZ
- Ⓒ animalexhibition.com
- Ⓓ Private view 31 July 6—9. Open until 2 August 11—6

The Animal Exhibition presents a series of sculptural works that imitate recognisable forms: plinths, cameras, shoes, rugs, foot stools, stanchions, and windows. These objects appear familiar, yet their materials unsettle. Constructed from animal products such as hide, wool, fur, feathers, ants, and taxidermy, they resist utility. They are fragile, shedding, and often unstable. Their forms suggest function, but their surfaces refuse it.

The Animal Exhibition does not concern itself with animals as subject, nor does it celebrate the sculptural object in isolation. Instead, it investigates the misapplication of form, the sincere but imperfect act of imitation. The works are not ironic. They are proposals made in the wrong language.

This impulse toward substitution recalls the cognitive structures of childhood. It is the logic of learning through mimicry, of making with what is near to hand, before material and meaning are fully aligned. Within this framework, failure is not a collapse but a method. The child draws in the mud, plays with worms, recreates the world with unfit tools.

These concerns unfold through an accompanying text titled **The Animal Text**, a fragmented sequence of episodes in which children, animals, and objects miscommunicate, misidentify, and misunderstand. A child barks at school. A man feeds a fish noodles and it grows legs. A laboratory rat believes it has trained its scientist. These are anecdotes shaped by repetition, misalignment, and the blurred edges of memory.

Repetition figures throughout **The Animal Exhibition**. Certain forms recur, slightly altered. Alphabets reappear, not as systems of order, but as organic processes—unstructured, open-ended, and porous. What is repeated is not perfected but rehearsed. Memory is structured less by chronology than by return.

This logic extends into the promotion of **The Animal Exhibition**. The performer, Kel Felmer, was flown in from New York City, an act of misplaced grandeur. A podcast was recorded, simulating the importance of trivial conversation. Teddy bears are sent to curators without explanation.

These gestures are neither parodic nor strategic. They follow the same structures of naive intentionality and dislocated sincerity that defines the works themselves: attempts at significance staged through the wrong material.

The Animal Exhibition draws upon the spirit of Joe Brainard's *I Remember*, a memoir that dissolves the boundary between childhood and adulthood through a series of recurring, affectively flat recollections. Like Brainard's writing, the works here avoid clear narrative. They refuse to resolve. Instead, they propose memory as accumulation without hierarchy. Recollection becomes material.

The works in *The Animal Exhibition* are not complete objects. They are attempts. They are propositions formed through care, misdirection, and reiteration. They remain caught between what they are and what they are trying to become.



The Animal Text

- Ⓐ The Child shows their parent a drawing and is frustrated when the parent cannot decipher whether it is a dog or a crocodile.
- Ⓑ The Animal undertakes a shareable, organic alphabet. It accepts implants and new limbs.
- Ⓒ The Animal is an alphabet much like alphabet soup is an alphabet.
- Ⓓ The Parents come home and the child is immediately in trouble. Not for doing something wrong but for doing something messy. Ruining the garden.
- Ⓔ The Child goes to school for the first time. Within an hour, the parent gets a phone call telling them that the child is barking.
- Ⓕ The Child thinks they're a dog.
- Ⓖ The deepest sincerities are often the most naive.
- Ⓗ The Man is scared that the barking dog has rabies, even the small little white fluffy one that looks like a stuffed toy.
- Ⓘ When the Child sees a cockroach for the first time, their parents' reactions teach them disgust. The Child was thinking about how its antennae were waving.
- ⓵ The Child throws a tantrum and finally gets the pet fish they've always wanted. The fish's name changes every week, depending on who the most popular kid in school is that week.
- Ⓚ The Man is lazy and feeds the fish noodles and the fish grows legs, and becomes landborn.
- Ⓛ The Man cannot deal with the fish anymore and flushes it down the toilet.

The Animal Text

- Ⓜ In adulthood, the naive can be synonymous with the absurd.
- Ⓝ The Parents love the pet so much they will spend thousands on cosmetic face lift surgery and cat anxiety medication, but the pet doesn't know what it looks like.
- Ⓞ The Man takes his dog on a walk, but the dog runs away. The man looks for a while, and eventually gives up. When the man gets home, the dog is on the porch.
- Ⓟ The Dog understands being told off.
- Ⓠ My Friend's Dog has the most beautiful eyelashes and will spend hours looking out the window in New York City.
- Ⓡ The Child goes on holiday and leaves the window open. When they come back there is an egg and some twigs on the windowsill. The child thanks the cleaner for the gift, and the cleaner is confused.
- Ⓢ The pigeon comes back every day to check on its nest but the window is now shut.
- Ⓣ These absurdities aren't jokes, they're earnest missteps.
- Ⓤ A Laboratory Rat says, "I have that scientist trained. Every time I press this lever, he gives me a pellet of food."
- Ⓥ Experiments often test the experimenter more than the subject.
- Ⓦ The Child, the Animal, My Friend's Dog, the Dog, and a Laboratory Rat meet up.
- Ⓧ [Together] We are no longer bored, nor in a hurry.
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