

27 October 2017

## A Guided Tour of Lions and Cattle at the Bishop's House in Lund

Roles/parts/attendees

The Artist - EvaMarie Lindahl

The Curator - Annie Lindberg

The Audience - 9 participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> European Conference for  
Critical Animal Studies



Cuyp, A., n.d. *Flodlandskap med boskap* (Riverbed with Cattle)

*The Collective We and I of the Cattle  
by the Riverbed*

LUND, SWEDEN

THE BISHOP'S HOUSE, THIRD FLOOR, THE 15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ROOM

The Artist is standing in front of, and with her back towards an oil painting by AELBERT CUYP (1620-1691). The year of the painting is unknown, the title of the painting is unknown and there are some uncertainties regarding whether or not the painter is Aelbert Cuyp. In the archive of Lund University, the painting is titled FLODLANDSKAP MED BOSKAP (riverbed with cattle).

The Audience and the Curator stands in front of the Artist looking at the painting, gathered in a semi-circle. The Artist starts to read from the paper she holds in her hand.

THE ARTIST READS

We are standing by a riverbed. It is a slow and hazy morning, or perhaps it is early evening? In the background we can hear shouting from the men on the boats, coming in from a long day or hurrying out, they are pushing and steering their boats through the water. All day they are capturing fish and moving cargo back and forth. There are five of us. Four of us are huddling together while the fifth of us is standing just a few feet to the left.

The Artist takes two steps to the right so that her body mirrors the position of the cow furthest to the left in the painting.

THE ARTIST READS

I have taken a small step to the side to get clean water from the stream. Separated from the group by a few feet, I am leaning my head down and forward. Drinking the water. It is as if I can hear them clearer while standing a bit apart. They are all breathing together.

The Artists takes two steps to the left and turns, facing the painting. Her position is now mirroring the cow to the second left.

THE ARTIST READS

I am looking into the vast landscape, listening to the boats by the horizon, concentrating. I am swaying my tail back and forth. I can feel the warmth from the other bodies coming from the right and the wind stroking my left side. I am leaning my hip against someone.

The Artist turns a bit to the right, still with her back towards the Audience. Now mirroring the cow in the centre of the flock.

THE ARTIST READS

I am standing with my back towards the audience. I turn my head to the right and smell another body.

The Artist turns to the left, so that her body is positioned alongside the painting mirroring the cow furthest to the right

THE ARTIST READS

I am positioned with my side towards the audience. I am resting my head against the one to my left and I am looking down into the mud. I can feel the cold slowly moving its way up through muscles and bones. I am shifting the weight between my legs. Back and forth and back again.

The Artist turns so that she faces the Audience, mirroring the cow in the back of the flock.

THE ARTIST READS

I can't see the boats in the horizon but I can see the grass and audience in front of me. Over the back of a warm body I can see the artist.

The Artist takes a couple of steps so that she is positioned in front of, and in the centre of, the painting.

THE ARTIST READS

I am guessing that today is approximately 360 years ahead of when the paint was mixed and formed into a representation of my body. Another artist has drawn a small part of the painting in the actual physical life size of the landscape. She unfolds it.

The Artist reaches her back pocket to bring forward a graphite drawing that she unfolds. The drawing is approximately 20x30 cm. She shows the drawing to the Audience.

#### THE ARTIST READS

It is impossible to see that this is a section of the clouds in the upper right part of the painting. It is impossible to be sure. Perhaps the artist is only telling us this because she believes it fits the narrative? Just as the one archiving the painting in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century cannot be sure that this is not a copy of Cuyp by Abraham van Calraet. Just as no one can be sure of who I am or has tried to figure out if I ever existed. And now, that the opportunity has occurred, there are only rumours.

The Artist folds the drawing and puts it back into her back pocket.

#### THE ARTIST READS

What I can tell you is that the representation of what could be my body, or several bodies joint and imagined together into this representation of a body, has been travelling. I have been held and stroked by humans. Unpacked, packed and stored so many times. At least I exist in the future. The birds that earlier could be seen to the left of the centre of the painting has disappeared through careful renovation by insensitive human hands. At least I am still here.



Anon., n.d. *Ladugårdsinteriör (Barn Interior)*

## *White Pigment out of Bones*

LUND, SWEDEN

THE BISHOP'S HOUSE, THIRD FLOOR, THE GRAND HALL

The Artist, the Curator and the Audience enters the Grand Hall. In the centre of the room is a long table with 16 chairs on each side. On the end of the table some objects are placed: a paper card, two milk jugs (one of them contains water) and a metal tube containing oil paint in the colour of titanium dioxide. In one corner of the room a painting lays on a table together with a pair of white gloves.

The Curator puts on the white gloves and picks up the painting. She holds it in front of her with the bottom part of the frame resting in her hands and the upper part leaning towards her body. The size of the painting and the frame is approximately 40 x 50 cm. The Audience are asked to come further and lean in close to be able to see the cow and the interior of the stable. The painting has darkened with time and it is difficult to make out the interior. The Curator tells the Audience that if they look very closely they will be able to see two more cows and a willow tree outside the stable.

The Artist sits down by the end of the table, in front of the objects, she asks the Audience to join her. The Curator is standing next to the Artist, holding the painting, so that the Audience can see the painting while listening to the Artist who starts to read.

### THE ARTIST READS

All these hands. Caressing me. Stroking me. Hitting me. Milking me. Squeezing me. Telling me when to go out. Deciding when to go back in. All because of the white fluid. Then painting me. Carrying me. Archiving me. Stealing me. Finding me. Caring for the layer of paint that is a representation of me.

The Artist picks up the paper card, placed a bit to the right amongst the objects in front of her and reads from it.

### THE ARTIST READS

More shades of white are available commercially than any other colour.  
White pigment out of led  
White pigment out of chalk  
White pigment out of titanium dioxide  
White pigment out of zinc  
White pigment out of bones

Titanium white was produced for the first time in 1820. Production in an industrial scale didn't start until one hundred years later. Titanium white is highly opaque. You can't see what is hidden underneath. It covers. At the same time as a thick opaque white surface can be painted by artists, the industrialization of cows picks up speed. Thousands and thousands of litres of white, running through pipes. Slowly as the whiteness thickens the reality at the factory becomes even more impenetrable, non-transparent, cruel and effective.

The Artist puts the paper card back from where she picked it up. She moves the two milk jugs so that they are placed in front of her on the table. She picks up the metal tube with titanium dioxide, removes the cork to squeeze the paint into one of the milk jugs before she puts the cork back on and puts the tube down. She takes the milk jugs in her hands and with her right hand she pours the water from one milk jug into the other that contains the paint. She moves the milk jug that now contains both paint and water to her right hand and pours the liquid back into the milk jug now placed in her left hand. The water is no longer fully transparent but has a very slight white colour. The Artist repeats the procedure, shifting hands and pouring the fluid from one milk jug to the other. The liquid becomes whiter. She repeats this procedure, pouring the liquid back and forth, until it turns into an opaque white. The Artist puts the milk jugs down.

#### THE ARTIST READS

I have white milk. White milk that will keep my sisters in shackles for millennia. I have white bones. White bones that can create white pigment that can shape form and sunlight and therefore landscape.

My fur is not titanium white, nor is my fur milky white. But that which turns my body into a vessel of production has named the stars above us. The Milky Way can be seen through the same stable doors as I now see a willow tree.

The doors let the light in into the room in which I am waiting to be milked. The light is created with white pigment and reflects parts of my body. It is the light that separates me from the darkness. That makes me visible. Still, light is a consequence of violent power.





Bonheur, R., n.d. *Lion (The Look Out)*

## *From Nero to Rosa*

LUND, SWEDEN

THE BISHOP'S HOUSE, SECOND FLOOR, THE LIBRARY

The Audience, the Artist and the Curator enters the library. While the Artist looks through the book shelves the Audience and the Curator sits down in a sofa and armchairs arranged in the centre of the room. The Artist finds the books that she is looking for and flicks through them before placing them on a table in front of the Audience and the Curator. The first book is Rosa Bonheur All Nature's Children. The pages 40 and 41 of the book is opened so that the Audience and the Curator can see a printed sketch of the Lion Nero on a blue piece of paper. The second book is Rosa Bonheur A Life and a Legend where pages 136 and 137 shows sketches, photographs and paintings of the Lions Rosa Bonheur kept. The Artist then turns to another shelf and brings forward a tablet showing an image of the painting Lion the Look Out by Rosa Bonheur, she places the tablet beside the books on the table. The Artist takes a few steps back to stand in front of the Audience and the Curator. She starts to read.

### THE ARTIST READS

Dear artist,

When you died in the village of Fountainblue in 1899 the town erected a sculpture in your honour, shaped as a bull. How come there was no sculpture in my honour? I died for art.

To me art is a tyrant. It demands heart, brain, soul and body. The entireness of me. Nothing less will win its highest favour. The artist is both the warden and the caretaker employed by this tyrant, feeding me, keeping me warm, caressing me but also imprisoning me and accompanying me to my death. This means the sculpture in your honour is a sculpture of oppression.

The artist named me Nero.

I find myself in a courtyard of a chateaux with walls that are heavy of animal trophies. The artist lives and works here. I am surrounded by gazelle, deer, elk, moufloun, horse, bull, goat, yak, dog, pig, monkey and birds who cannot fly. The artist has built a great studio of red brick and large windows through which she can study us all.

I have permission to walk around in the courtyard. Every morning the artist passes me by, going over the courtyard and the lawn until she reaches the wall and the white wooden gate that opens towards the forest. Sometimes she travels in a carriage that has a transparent wall on one side, it is because she wants to be able to paint even though the weather doesn't permit it. Those days I stay inside the cage.

There is a place by the wall where I can see and smell the forest that she disappears into daily. People pass by every day on the small path that runs between the trees and the wall. They walk closer to the forest when they see me. Now and then the artist comes back with prey. If it is a small animal she gives it to me, but usually she takes it to the brick house.

Behind the big house there is a pasture. It is full of sheep. I can smell them, they must be plenty. The great gate to the road is opened daily. More animals than people pass. The animals are transported on carts, are tied to donkeys and horses, are imprisoned in wooden boxes. She is collecting us, studying us for her paintings and when she is done we disappear through the gate again.

Dear artist, how come you need the bodies of animals to express what you need to tell and show the world? It is as if you need to conquer me to be able to respect me. I am a beast that is formidable only when I am feared or caged.

I have seen a painting of myself where I am standing alone in a landscape so vast the horizon is almost invisible. I am looking out into the landscape with my back to the viewer. There is so much longing in me and you have understood and portrayed this longing. You must have felt what I feel to be able to portray me like this. You felt my suffering, but you kept on causing it. You know of our suffering, of the knife that has to pierce our bodies for us to become material, still you keep on doing it.

I am living in a cage, on a courtyard of a chateaux that was once a hunting lodge and I am going to die in a cage at a zoo next to a natural history museum where animals will be imprisoned, exhibited and

experimented on for hundreds of years. Paintings of myself, and other animals who have passed the gates of this chateaux, will be filling the walls of museums all over the world. It keeps on going. I cannot see an end to it.

I am not the first lion staying in this cage. Before me was a male lion that died the first week of entering this cage that I am in. After that came a feline who tried to climb the stairs of the house while sick and fell down and died and I will be followed by your most beloved Fathma. I am told that you looked upon us as fellow creatures and that you always thought of the soul of the animal while painting us. That you loved me. That you loved us. But it cannot be love when you in the future send me away to a certain death.

For the last months of my life I was taken to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris when you left the chateaux for one of your longer journeys. The courtyard and the place where I used to sit and look into the forest is no more. The other animals that have surrounded me are gone. In the end you came to visit me and you were with me when I died. It felt good not being alone. That there was someone there who had once said that she loved me. And sometimes I believed that I loved you. But this isn't a love on equal terms. This is a "love" where someone is in control of the other, where someone is imprisoned.

You talk to me, you mourn me, you treat me differently than the lion next to me. You do that because you know that I have personality, I am an individual and you know this. You feel it. But it doesn't matter. These feelings don't give me freedom. Perhaps you are too lonely to let me go, or perhaps you don't think I deserve it. After all I am still only animal to you.

The Artist then closes the books on the table and put them, together with the tablet, back to where they belong on the shelves of the library.

15 June 2018

# A Guided Tour of a Parrot, Gees and Cows at the National Gallery of Denmark

Roles/parts/attendees

The Artist - EvaMarie Lindahl

The Audience - 48 visitors of the National Gallery of Denmark



Eckersberg, C., 1820. *Mendel Levin Nathanson's Elder Daughters, Bella and Hanna*

## *Green Feathers*

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF DENMARK, FIRST FLOOR, ROOM 217C

The Artist is standing beside the painting Mendel Levin Nathanson's Elder Daughters, Bella and Hanna with her back against the corner of room 217C in the exhibition titled Danish and Nordic Art 1750 - 1900. The audience is turned to the artist as well as the painting by C.W Eckersberg from 1820. It is crowded. The artist starts to read.

### THE ARTIST READS

Green is the dominating colour of fresh vegetation. It is also the colour of a dress in a painting by Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg. It is also the colour of me.

I am sitting in a metal cage, placed on a table, on top of a carpet, in front of a girl. The girl is raising her hand to feel the cold metal that surrounds me. This is a representation of the physical me. I have been restored and archived, studied and collected, I have been bought and I have been given and I have been surrounded by golden frames in the hands of the National Gallery of Denmark for almost 100 years.

One of the symbolic readings of this painting is that the girl, and her sister, are, just as I am, caught and confined in a cage. The sisters cage is made out of social control, expectations and youth. My cage is the fact that I am not human, but more than that it is physical, made out of metal confining my body. Art historians have told you to read my presence in this painting symbolically, which I won't let you.

The man who painted me is referred to as the father of Danish painting. Painting me gave him enough money to pursue the opportunity to get married, my body, and this painting, is therefore a transaction of value that goes beyond money. But once I was more than a transaction. Once I was alive, and somewhere along the long line of research travels departing from Denmark, I was found and studied. As many before me has experienced, my exotic appearance meant death and exploitation. Perhaps I have been alive in Copenhagen, perhaps I was even born here. I don't remember. But I do know that my feathers have a colour that most humans call green. Just as green is defined as not yellow and not blue I am defined as not human and not object.

Where I originate my colour is camouflage. Here, it is what imprisons me. My feathers are the colour of exotic leaves and it is making me painfully visible. Even though my feathers are multifaceted, it is hard to adapt to this new scenery. There is not much for me to do.

I sit. I turn my head.

The artist turns her head to the right and then tilts her head to the left.

THE ARTIST READS

I change the grip of my feet.

The artist lifts her heels from the ground, left, right, left.

THE ARTIST READS

I turn my head again.

The artist tilts her head to the left.

THE ARTIST READS

I shift my weight. I taste the sweetness of sugar.

The artist reaches into her right pocket and finds a lump of sugar. She puts it in her mouth and sucks on it for a while, before crushing it between her teeth.

THE ARTIST READS

I turn my head again. I wait... I have endless amount of time to think.

What colours are compassion and empathy? Perhaps it is green? I am made out of pigment mixed together with a binder, binding me to the canvas, forever trapped in this cage. If compassion and empathy were a colour, humans seem colour-blind to me.





Ancher, A., 1904. *Plucking the Gees*

## *The Christmas Gees*

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF DENMARK, FIRST FLOOR, ROOM 222

The artist is standing in room 222 at the National Gallery of Denmark. To her left the painting Plucking the Gees by Anna Ancher is placed. Around her the audience is gathered.

### THE ARTIST READS

We are not green. Our size is practical. Easily affordable. Easily handled. Easily killed.

We are placed over laps, hanging over knees, our necks lifeless over the edge of tables and benches. Before this a blunt tool or a rifle was raised by a human. Before that we were fed. Now the same hands pluck, scrape and pull.

Our situation is forever documented by artist Anna Ancher. With the help of binder, pigments, oils and brushes her work transforms the canvas into painting.

White is the colour of our feathers  
Red is the colour of our blood  
Red is the colour of the women's cheeks  
White is the colour of the candles on the Christmas dinner table  
Red is the colour of the tablecloth  
White is the colour of the napkins  
Red is the colour of the brick of the house where this is happening  
Red and white is the colour of the flag  
White is the colour of the window frames  
Red is the colour under their nails

We will be served at the Christmas table of Brøndums Hotel at the north Jutlandic Island. We would like for this to end differently. We wish for greenness, we wish for flight, we wish for ocean and winds and we wish to fly past this northernmost point of Denmark.



Lundbye, J. T., 1842. *Zealand Landscape. Open Country in North Zealand*

Lundbye, J. T., 1845. *Two Cows in an Open Field*



Lundbye, J. T., 1846. *A Croft at Lodskov near Vognserup Manor. Study*

Lundbye, J. T., 1847. *A Croft at Lodskov near Vognserup Manor, Zealand*

## *The Disappearance of Cows*

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF DENMARK, FIRST FLOOR, ROOM 217F

Four paintings by the Danish artist Johan Thomas Lundbye are hanging together in room 217 F of the NATIONAL GALLERY OF DENMARK in Copenhagen. They are placed in the following order, from left to right: Zealand Landscape. Open Country in North Zealand, Two Cows in an Open Field, A Croft at Lodskov near Vognserup Manor. Study and A Croft at Lodskov near Vognserup Manor. The artist is standing in front of the second painting from the left: Two Cows in an Open Field, facing the audience.

### THE ARTIST READS

I am resting in the grass. The sunburnt late summer field is itchy, but it doesn't bother me. I can feel it's last softness against my legs and my stomach. It's afternoon and the flies are fewer than earlier. The artist, with his easel, is standing in front of me. Behind him is a vast landscape of endless grass.

I am standing with my back against the artist. I am tired of humans and their curiosities. I am looking at other animals on the plain, how they look for shade, seek water. The warmth of the afternoon sun is stroking my back while I try to calculate how far away they are.

The artist takes a couple of steps to her left. She is now standing in front of A Croft at Lodskov near Vognserup Manor, furthest to the right. She looks at the cow in the painting and then looks at the audience.

### THE ARTIST READS

I am standing with my back towards the artist. The sun is low in the afternoon, caressing the fields ready for harvest. I have some sort of tool around my mouth, created by humans so that they can move me around easily. It's one of the tools that will be used when they milk me. Someone will probably call for me soon.

The artist moves across the floor so that she is standing in front of the first of the four paintings: Zealand Landscape. Open Country in North Zealand.

#### THE ARTIST READS

The artist can be seen walking across the fields. We are standing a couple of meters apart, eating grass, looking at the sun, watching him as he passes on top of a small hill. From here, if we look carefully, we will be able to see his work station, sketches that will become painting. The artist seems equally interested in us and in the landscape, even so, when another artist, 176 years later, visits the online archive of the National Gallery of Denmark these are the words describing the painting we are part of:

landscape, open country, countryside, winding road, hilly, open landscape, forest, grassy hills, countryside, landscape, nature, mossy boulders, windswept bushes, road, roads, landscape, landscape, countryside, open land, tilled field, Landscape, nature

We are not even mentioned. Again, there is not a single cow in the description of the painting.

The artist once again positions herself in front of A Croft at Lodskov near Vognserup Manor.

#### THE ARTIST READS

I am called to milking, it is time to contribute to the production systems of humans. This system is based on the oppressive use of my body, and other's. Whether it is by crushing bones for the making of white pigment to paint the skies of a landscape... or the plucking and scraping of the bodies of geese for food and clothing... or the sentence of invisibility by being read symbolically in art history... or the bodily fluids of me in a glass on the kitchen table, our bodies are consumed, slaughtered and used.

I agree with the parrot. If green is the colour of compassion and empathy, humans seem colour-blind to me.

30 January 2019

*A Guided Tour of a Squirrel, Marmot, Cat  
and a Capercaillie  
at Nationalmuseum in Stockholm*

Roles/parts/attendees

The Artist - EvaMarie Lindahl

The Audience - 24 visitors of Nationalmuseum



Bonheur, R., 1850. *Wild Cat*

## *Resting in Darkness and Perfect Humidity*

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Nationalmuseum, fourth floor, Old Director General's Office

The audience and the artist are gathered in the Old Director General's Office, a small square shaped room in the corner of the fourth floor looking over the water and bridge to Skeppsholmen. It is dark outside, but the snow gives the air an invisible light. In the dusky light the artist is passing two books around showing sketches and paintings by Rosa Bonheur to the audience. The first book is *Rosa Bonheur All Nature's Children* opened at pages 40 and 41. The second book is *Rosa Bonheur A Life and a Legend* where pages 136 and 137 shows sketches, photographs and paintings of the lions and cats that Rosa Bonheur kept. In the corner, next to the artist there is a small bookshelf with an open laptop presenting an image of the painting *Wild Cat* and a study for the painting *Lion (The Look Out)* both by artist Rosa Bonheur. The room is quickly getting darker, making it hard to see details of each other's faces and view the text and sketches in the books.

### THE ARTIST READS

I am a wild cat. I am placed within the archives of this museum, across town, waiting in perfect darkness and humidity, just like you are now. I am framed within golden frames and within those golden frames I am laying in green grass. It is sunlight and afternoon. I am resting in the shade. This is how I am depicted. This painting doesn't document the before and after. How I am hurrying away, trying to escape the attention of the artist. Almost making it, but the sound of the hooves was silenced by the dry and warm path by which she appeared. I almost managed to disappear but was caught in the corner of her eye. And now I am here.

It is the artist Rosa Bonheur that sees me. And therefore, I am now on loan to this museum, soon to



be on display again in these halls. Earlier, before the renovation, that is the cause of me being in the archives, I was found on floor 6 in the north west part of the permanent exhibition called *The Countryside*. Above me, a killed fox hanging from a tree in a snowy landscape. Below me, a sign telling the visitor, and thereby the world, that the artist is one of the most famous animal painters of her time, and that her interest in other animals was true and genuine. It also informs us that I am an excellent example of her realistic way of portraying animals. An excellent example. This means that I must be an excellent teller of truth.

The artist Anna Klumpke refers to me as a furry beast, but I am just one who rests in the grass, having a lazy afternoon, waiting for hunger or thirst, when the sound of hooves draws closer. If I were a beast I would have resisted more fiercely. If I were a beast I wouldn't be here.

I am painted three years before Bonheur paints her grand painting of the control of the horses at the horse fair in Paris. It seems like all of us that she painted up until that moment has been sketches for a masterpiece. It was the painting of the horses that gave her such success, making it possible for her to buy her chateaux next to the forest in Fontainebleau. The same chateaux where she kept her genuine interests in cages.

What if we all had resisted? If I had been a bit quicker, if we all had been faster, on the move, refusing to be still, would she then had had her success? Would she then be excellent?

Three years after the brushstrokes that became me has dried, the grand painting of horses is produced. She spends time in the stable, twice a week for a year. She must then realize what I already know. That it is hard to resist against bridle and whip. It doesn't matter how hard you try to rear when the reins and the men are holding you down.

I believe that the lions Nero and Fathma new this. And did the best they could with the cages and the fences and the walls that kept them locked inside the courtyard, forever watched, from above, by the artist from her studio. They died because of her genuine interest and her eagerness to paint. I was only in her glance for a moment, they were by her side for years.

When moved from the museum to the archive I am held by human hands in cotton gloves. No human skin has touched me for several years. It could be interpreted as care, but I choose to see it as a way to not feel, to not care, to not recognize or listen. The cotton gloves mean distance. The cotton gloves are here to stop time. To keep me alive forever.

Soon I will travel from the archive to this museum again. The ones missing me will be satisfied. They want me to always be here, on display. And I will probably be there for their always, longer than their lives. And if I start to grow dark and fade because of time, someone will make sure that I don't.

The next time I enter these halls I will resist. My golden frame will tear the glove. It is never too late to start resisting. I never asked for genuine interest.



Ehrenstrahl, D. K., 1697. *White squirrel in a landscape*



Ehrenstrahl, D. K., 1682. *Murmeldjur*

## *A Squirrel and a Marmot*

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Nationalmuseum, sixth floor, 1600s

The artist is standing in the right corner of a small room with light green-blue walls. The audience is positioned close together facing the main wall where five paintings of non-human animals are on display. Closest to the ceiling the painting *Two Turtles* by David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl is placed. Beneath, left and center, are *White Squirrel in a Landscape* and *Murmeldjur (Marmots)* both by Ehrenstrahl, with *Two owls fighting over a rat* by [Hans Georg Müller](#), to the right. Below hangs a *Study of a Male Lumpsucker (cyclopterus lumpus)* in what seems to be a natural scale, by Hendrick Goltzius. The artist points her finger to the Marmot.

### THE ARTIST READS

I am a marmot, in Swedish *murmeldjur*. Most of you have never seen or heard of my kind. But you have heard of another in my family of rodents, the groundhog, or in Swedish *skogsmurmeldjur*. And I know. It is impossible for you to not think of the movie *Groundhog Day* with actor Bill Murray, while hearing the name of my species. In three days, *Groundhog Day* is celebrated in parts of Canada and the United States. But I can assure you there is no consistent correlation between me and my shadow and the arrival of spring.

This is a study of me. From several perspectives. Painted by artist David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, a Swedish court painter, also called the father of Swedish painting. In a comment by an art historian I am called common. That I am not unusual enough for people to understand why the artist, who was obsessed by the exotic and different in the animal kingdom, would paint me. He who was fascinated by parrots and polar bears. But I think they are wrong and that he was tired of all the dogs of kings and queens he was ordered to immortalize. I think I actually was something new and exciting to him.

But nothing good ever comes out of given the attention of humans. I know this. I'd rather disappear out of this painting heading for the

sunset to the right. Not being remembered. Leaving without a trace.

The artist turns a page, then points to the painting of the squirrel.

#### THE ARTIST READS

This image of me is a fantasy. Placing me outdoors where I never again sat foot after being caught on July 27<sup>th</sup> 1696 by the stable hand Anders Ek. I was gifted to King Charles the eleventh because of his interest in nature. But I do not believe he had an interested in nature. He had an interest in curiosities.

In February of the year after my encounter with Anders Ek the king writes a letter to Ehrenstrahl with the assignment to paint me. I am such a rare animal, depicted in a landscape, beneath a tree, eating some of the nuts that has fallen down.

The king doesn't seem to be interested in a representation of reality. A reality that includes a cage. He wants to own me, in the presence as well as the future, in a cage as well as a landscape. Imagining me free, roaming around the woods. He wants to entertain his fantasy with the help of a painting. I never understand why. And he never gets to do so. Dying only two months after ordering this fantasy.

Just as the marmot in the frame beside me, I too would like to escape into the opening to the right where my white fur can blend into the sunlight, making it possible for me to disappear. Out of this painting, out of history. Never looked at again.



Cederström, G., 1884. *Bringing Home the Body of King Karl XII of Sweden*

## *A Dead King Happens to Pass by*

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Nationalmuseum, fourth floor, room: turn of the century

The audience is standing and sitting in a semicircle facing the large-scale painting of Cederström. Their semi-circle is flanked by Anders Zorn's painting *Midsummers Dance* and Peter Johansson's installation *How to cook a souvenir*. The artist is standing in front of Cederström's painting, by its left corner.

### THE ARTIST READS

Follow the wind and you will find me. The icy cold wind whips the royal standard forcing the soldier carrying the flag to struggle, holding hard with both hands. The wind lifts his coat, hurrying on, almost catching the hat of another soldier before grabbing his coat, turning it into life. Then suddenly, the wind is pushed to the ground carrying snow over the ledge pushing snow behind the golden frame and out of reach of this painting. And there you have me. In front of the snow falling over the ledge, on the back of the huntsman. Hanging upside down with my head dangling towards the humans back side. Blood dripping from my beak, leaving a small trace of red in the snow-filled footprint of the human who killed me. Here I am. And I refuse to be read symbolically.

I am what Carl Linnaeus defined as *Tetrao Urogalius*. You call me capercaillie, wood grouse or as they say in the province of Jämtland: tjäder, gråfågel or fjärrhane. Whether my name is given me in relation to the colors of my feathers or because of the relation to other birds in a never-ending organization of all that is living, the names control me.

I find myself within the golden frames of this painting by Gustaf Cederström from 1884, but you can also find me in an earlier version from 1878. Both paintings are named *Bringing Home the Body of King Charles the twelfth of Sweden*.

Just as there are two physical representations of me there are two ways for you to see and read my presence: Either as a symbol or as a once living being. I refuse to think of myself as a symbol, and therefore urge you to read me as living. Because once I was alive. Or once someone was alive for someone

else to kill and later study. Humans wants other animals to be still so that they can study. So that you can create a perfect watercolor drawing of the back feathers of someone like me. And it takes several. I am not only one. I am a series of me. I am an US.

The artist used his brother, colleagues, friends, and his child to stand as models for some of the painted humans, but to be able to paint us he had to study one of our kind, hanging upside down. To paint us we had to be killed.

Not long ago we were moved from the stair halls of this museum into this room. The two versions of us have been painted by Cederström in Paris, Florence and south of Uppsala. We have been given golden medals. We have been hanging at a marble palace in Sankt Petersburg. We have escaped a revolution, been lost, been rolled and carried. We have been moved by train, car and hands. We finally ended up in Gothenburg and Stockholm in the country of which this painting's nationalistic agenda still serves.

We are currently on display in two museums, within two golden frames, hanging on two backs. But we have also been printed in several thousand schoolbooks, telling the story of a glorious king. We have been scanned, photographed and placed on the ever-growing internet. Even if this painting would crack or burn. We would still be alive. Never forgotten, but rarely listened to.

We are stuck within this golden frame, in a never-ending freezing wind, watching the snow fall of the ledge. But this is no longer a painting where King Charles the twelfth of Sweden is passing by a hunter with a capercaillie on his back, this is a painting about a killed capercaillie who is hanging on the back of a hunter when a dead king happens to pass by. The scene that we are part of is a panorama over an icy cold landscape, with troops disappearing into the horizon. It is a romantic glorification of the return of a king. But it is also a factual documentation of us, hanging dead next to the rifle that killed.

Even though we are not carried on a stretcher but on the back of a man we are nevertheless on display. Therefore, instead of a romantic nationalist celebration of a dead king. You can choose to see the bird above us in the sky as a celebration of our lives, calling out, declaring the death of us over the landscape.