

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### **Animal/Language: An Interdisciplinary Conference**

*Held in conjunction with the art exhibition “Assembling Animal Communication”*

**Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX**

**21-23 March 2019**

Animals and language have a complicated relationship with one another in human understanding. Every period of history evinces a fascination with the diverse modes of communicative exchange and possibilities of linguistic community that exist both within and between species. Recent critics of anthropocentrism are far from the first to question the supposed muteness of the “dumb animal” and its ontological and ethical ramifications. Various cultures have historically attributed language to animals, and we have developed an increasingly sophisticated scientific understanding of the complex non-verbal communicative systems that animals use among themselves. New research complements millennia of human-animal communication in the contexts of work, play, and domestic life.

Some people have extensive experience with real, live animals. Some primarily encounter animals as products of the food industry. Some focus on animal representations in text or image, or deploy the abstract figure of “the animal” as limit or counterpart of the human. These interactions condition different ways of “thinking with animals,” including: using them in and as language or in experimentation, recruiting them as symbols and metaphors, incorporating them into idiomatic expressions, projecting moral values onto them, and ventriloquizing them for purposes of cultural critique. A vast archive of literary, artistic, philosophical, historical, religious, and scientific explorations testifies that the boundaries and complementarities relating animals and language have always captured the human imagination.



*Animal/Language* aims to create an interdisciplinary dialogue on the relationship between “animals” and “language” that considers both what connects and what separates these two key terms. The conference hopes to generate new scientific inquires and creative synergies by initiating conversation and exchange among scholars in the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social

sciences. We therefore invite researchers from all fields, periods, and geographical areas to propose contributions engaging questions such as:

- What are the real, imagined, or potential relationships between animals and language(s)?
- What are animal languages?
- What spaces or functions does the animal occupy within human language and cultural representation?
- What is the role of animals in aesthetic or artistic meaning-making processes?
- How do our interactions with animals shape our conceptions of animals and language?
- How and why do we communicate with animals?
- How and why do animals communicate with us?
- How and why do animals communicate with one another?
- What philosophical, ethical, and political questions are raised by different ways of affirming and denying connections between animals and language?
- How should any of the above questions be historicized?

**Confirmed Invited Speakers:**

Catherine Chalmers, Stanford University  
 Temple Grandin, Colorado State University  
 Adrienne Martín, University of California, Davis

**Proposal Submission Deadline: September 30, 2018**

Proposals for 20-minute papers should be no more than 300 words long and include 3-5 keywords identifying your discipline and topic(s). All abstracts will be reviewed anonymously; please provide author name(s) and affiliations in your submission email, but omit them from your abstract itself. Please submit all proposals (in .docx or .pdf form) and questions to [animallanguage2019@gmail.com](mailto:animallanguage2019@gmail.com). We plan to inform participants in early November.

With many thanks,

The Conference Organizers

*Dr. John Beusterien (Spanish), Dr. Belinda Kleinhans (German), Dr. Katy Schroeder (Animal & Food Sciences), Dr. Lucas Wood (French), Dr. Pamela Zinn (Classics), in collaboration with Joe Arredondo (Landmark Arts) and Dr. Kevin Chua (Art History)*