

Imogen Cunningham  
American, 1883-1976  
*Snake*, 1929  
Gelatin silver print  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Jay Keystone  
1986.92.3

Quintessential California photographer Imogen Cunningham highlights the form and abstraction of a snake undulating in the California landscape. Her iconographical approach to detailed patterns in black and white prints amplifies the snake's elongated body against a marbled earth. During the late 1920s Cunningham began to compartmentalize her visual world, allowing each photographic subject to be just as pertinent and interesting as the other. This mysterious reptile winding across her photograph made an intriguing portrait of form, just as her later focus on the human figure illuminated various body parts. The geometrical and repetitive patterning of the snake scales, which helps facilitate its flexible movement, clashes against the angled lines of the background. The limbless snake form is then outlined as it moves towards the camera. Cunningham reframes the feared creature by focusing on the graceful body rather than a perception of evil, venom, and constricting death.

Henry Dixon  
English, 1820-1893  
*Cougar On A Rock In The London Zoo*, ca. 1885  
Carbon print  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by Howard Stein  
1996.71

Seated atop a rock in the London Zoo this cougar—thousands of miles from its native habitat of Western North America, parts of Florida, and South America—stares soulfully into the camera. Her powerful and agile limbs, capable of jumping up to 18 feet, appear relaxed as 19<sup>th</sup> century photographer Henry Dixon captures a resting pose. Dixon, in fact, built a photographic reputation with his carbon printed animal photography. As most photographers avoided this printing process because of its difficulty, Dixon excelled, even writing essays on the production of carbon prints. His fine techniques detail the thick fur of the cougar, no doubt needed for the London cold, an environment completely unfamiliar to this displaced animal. Though the cat may appear relaxed, the erect ears, rigid neck, and intense eyes suggest the posture of an alert hunter, constantly aware of its surroundings.

Animal behaviorist Dr. Vint Varga writes about the sentiment between human and animal: "What I see in their eyes is my own reflection and a sense that we share more than we recognize." Perhaps what Dixon captured was an animal waiting, listening, and ready for freedom, an experience not shared in these circumstances, but longed for in the gaze of this shy, solitary cat of the mountains.

Larry Fink  
American, b. 1941  
*Cameo Portrait, Praying Mantis*, 1978  
Gelatin silver print  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Arthur and Yolanda Steinman  
1985.50.122

MAYBE BEGIN WITH HOW HUMAN THIS INSECT LOOKS? THE REFLECTION AND TILT OF THE MANTIS FACE HERE, ARRANGED AS FORMALLY AS A FASHION PORTRAIT? For over 45 years, Larry Fink has captured the emotional spirit of his photographic subjects. Particularly well known for his street photography of celebrities and social settings, Fink briefly moved away from his *oeuvre* and spent the summer of 1970 photographing mantids. His black and white snapshots with a handheld flash were brought down to the level of the majestic mantis, the graceful body of the long-limbed creature towering above the photographer and the viewer. Whether a European praying mantid or a Chinese mantid, the immaculate posing of this mantis announces its typically camouflaged form. During that summer Fink captured a unique population growth of the insect, often commenting on the plump figure of the well-fed females in the gardens of his Pennsylvania farm. Though regal here their perched authority, mantis females are known to devour the males during copulation. The 2,300 species of the mantis can range from half an inch to 10 inches and are known to use their claws to quickly grasp a wide range of insects and small animal prey. Fink's portrait encourages quiet study of the complex and intimidating mantis, demanding our attention and respect.

Yuichi Hibi

Japanese, b. 1964

*Hibi's Me-chan*, 1993 (printed 2008)

Gelatin silver print, ed. 1/15

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by Lorna Hedges

2009.27

Darkness accentuates the stunning mane of Yuichi Hibi's *Me-Chan*. From the same family, *Felidae*, as lions, panthers, jaguars, and 37 other cat species, this domestic cat allows Hibi to create a powerful portrait of the fluffy and mischievous urban pet cat. Hibi seamlessly transitioned from his longtime study of New York's streets at night to a study of the mysterious domestic cats of Japan. Little is still known about these long-worshipped creatures, whose presence and unique attitudes make for excellent artistic subjects. Hibi walked the New York streets between midnight and 4 a.m., capturing the beauty, menace, and mystery of the urban landscape; upon his return to Japan, he translated these interests to the cat, who exhibited the same serene, brutal, and cunning as he once saw on the New York sidewalks. Hibi last photographed New York in 2002, concerned that the streets he once wandered had lost their dark aesthetic. Yet with hope he might continue to capture the ancient elegance and ferocity of the domestic. Humans may attempt to one day understand such a supreme and privileged presence as that enjoyed by the domestic cat.

Gregori Maiofis

Russian, b. 1970

*We Like Your Toys But We Don't Trust You*, 2013

Bromoil print

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by PhotoFutures

2013.9

Russian-born artist Gregori Maiofis creates images that are derived from, and deeply rooted in, the timeless philosophical issues that confront *homo sapiens*. Inspired by his study of literature and history, both Russian and Western, he posits difficult truths often using circus animals as metaphor. Framed with wit and humor that transcends cultural and geographical boundaries, Maiofis works

with trainers – though both photographer and trainer are often surprised by the unbidden and unplanned response of the animals. In *Toy Story*, a huge bear has selected the Disney doll Woody from a stack of toys, holding the figure carefully in his huge claws. His gaze is one of possession and suspicion as though someone or something will wrest the toy from him. Maiofis sees this as a metaphor for rampant Russian consumerism of all things Western, though there remains a deep distrust of America.

Technically, Maiofis is a superb craftsman who has mastered difficult photographic processes such as bromoil which requires a hands-on approach to produce unique prints. His bromoil images have a painterly quality with their textured surfaces and subtle palette.

Ted Orland

American, b. 1941

*Gate and Guard Dog*, 1975

Gelatin silver print

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Arthur and Yolanda Steinman

1983.69.127

Ted Orland's long photographic career began under the tutelage of Ansel Adams in the mid-1960s. Since then he has transitioned from the traditional purity of black and white landscape photography to build an *oeuvre* characterized by clarity, simplicity, and humor. *Gate and Guard Dog* caught Orland's eye for the abnormal, dramatically enhanced by the classic influences of his early career. The irony of the dog, peering over the gate of his fenceless yard makes for an entertaining and comical photograph; however, considered through a scientific lens, dog intelligence appears to be a second subject.

As Darwin once noted, "Dogs may have lost in cunning yet they have progressed in certain moral qualities, such as affection, trust- worthiness, temper and probably general intelligence." The loyal guard dog is committed to his post, demonstrating his instinctual desire to cooperate with the master's command. It is rare for most species, other than humans, to form attachment as adults, yet dogs do, an important part of the remarkable social attachment between humans and canines. Orland's quintessential capture amuses the viewer but reminds one of a trustworthy companion, making the hard choice of loyalty over freedom.

James Balog

American, b. 1952

*Chimpanzee with Curtain*, 1991

Chromogenic print

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Arthur B. Steinman

2000.50.10

*Anima*, a title derived from famed early 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologists C.G. Jung and James Hillman, is James Balog's challenge against human superiority. Included in this series is an introspective look at the chimpanzee, whom Balog notes is our closest link to the animal kingdom: a species with genes 98.4% identical to *homo sapiens*. The intimate portrait of *Chimpanzee With Curtain* reveals the personality of a creature aware of self and the photographer. The distinct personalities of the

chimpanzee have a direct effect on their success in life; the cultures created, the wars waged, and the general intelligence behind their social interactions.

Balog asks his viewers to reframe their ideas about chimpanzees and to reevaluate general human relationships with nature. Chimpanzees are not only capable of human social orders but often surpass humans in certain abilities: scientists have proven chimpanzees have picture eidetic memory, an important aspect of their observational learning. If these astute animals sympathize WITHfor their ill or crippled, and grieve for their dead, humans, a kindred member of the animal kingdom, surely can emphazise with these fellow creatures.

Richard Salas

American, b. 1955

*Four Tenors*, 2012

Inkjet print, ed. 1/5

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by Tim Walsh and Ken Anderson

2014.36

Richard Salas has dedicated his over 35-year photographic career to worlds beneath the ocean's surface. As if he brought the underwater world into his studio, Salas captures uncanny and intimate moments with sea life. Whereas most humans rarely catch a glimpse of pelagic diversity, color, and life, Salas devotedly waits for hours in hopes to capture oceanic personalities. The entertaining *Panamic Green Moray Eel* of *Four Tenors* is just one image in Salas' quest to photograph underwater worlds of the Pacific Ocean from Washington to the ends of Baja California. Salas' underwater models make their way with vivid personality into his three-part book series showcasing a vast universe just off our shores.

Camille Solyagua

American, b. 1959

*Jellyfish #9*, 2000

Gelatin silver print

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Joseph Bellows Gallery

2000.44

The billowing grace of a floating jellyfish eludes the awed viewer no longer. Camille Solyagua photographs the magic of this creature as part of her investigation into natural wonders, the fragility of life, and the mysteries of our natural world. The graceful movement of the *medusae* jellyfish is astonishing but one would do well to remember that this type of jellyfish has stinging tentacles capable of injecting venom through our skin. Solyagua captures the elegant dance of this gelatinous plankton (from the Greek word *planktos*, meaning to wander or drift) as it seems to effortlessly drift along ocean currents. The fascinating worlds of Solyagua's photography blend art and science in prints of lyrical beauty and intriguing factual discoveries. Each jellyfish may only wander the waters for a lifetime of 1 day to 1 year, but through *Jellyfish #9* we may contemplate their delicate form forever.

Doug Starn  
American, b. 1961

Mike Starn  
American, b. 1961

*Attracted to Light #1*, 1999-2000

Gelatin silver print on Thai mulberry paper

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by PhotoFutures  
2002.37

Twin photographers Doug and Mike Starn gravitate toward light, their symbol for spiritual awakening. **In seeking these luminous revelations, the brothers became fascinated by the light obsessive moth.** Moths use light from the moon and stars to navigate by transverse orientation: to maintain a constant angle relative to a distance source of light. Unfortunately, man-made lamps and lights are artificial sources, enticing the moth into their harmful shine, resulting in the common fluttering and fluttering of moths in lamps and near light bulbs.

The Starn brothers effectively give afford moths the glory that their cousin the butterfly so often receives. By printing the moth portraits in monumental scale the images retell the story of an attraction to light. Fascinated by the moth's "dust" (actually thousands of tiny hairs and scales) the twins spent two years refining a technique that allows silver emulsion to lift off of the Thai Mulberry paper, effectively mimicking the fragile and brittle wings of the moth. According to the photographers, "light is power, knowledge, it is what we want, it is what we need, it is satisfaction, fulfilment, truth, and purity." *Attraction to Light #1* captures the essence of the fragile moth: a delicate form for flight humbly navigating the night skies through an ancient celestial partnership.

Kunie Sugiura

Japanese, b. 1942

*Hoppings I Positive 2*, 1996

Toned gelatin silver print

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by the Wallis Foundation  
2003.70.2

Using camera-less techniques, Sugiura captures the poetic movements of nature. Allowing the frogs to hop across the paper, Sugiura then exposes the light sensitive paper, forever marking the spirit and presence of the buoyant amphibians. The paper is effectively painted with light and then completed with Sugiura's toner and developer to enrich the blues of a waterless aquatic scene. Known for her lyrical photograms of flowers and nature, Sugiura creates simple photographs that capture the moving spirit of her subjects. Frogs absorb water through their skin, always keeping it moist lest they should die; suggesting these frogs indeed left liquid traces with each touch to the paper. Sugiura playfully caught these movements of nature, but she also captured the physical presence of life itself.