

“Besides love and sympathy, animals exhibit other qualities connected with the social instincts which in us would be called moral.” Charles Darwin

The ancient Greeks had a class of animals that were semi-divine; the Egyptians worshipped animal deities; the pre-Columbians, a feathered serpent. Animals throughout human history have been revered and reviled, treasured and feared, yet little has been established as scientific fact until relatively recently.

These images, which represent a portion of the exhibition *Art to Zoo: Exploring Animal Natures*, are drawn from the permanent photography collection at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Shared with the College of Creative Studies Gallery at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the photographs on view here and at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art\* can be appreciated as artful images, made by master photographers, but they also offer fresh perspectives on animals of different species. The works reveal the formal elegance of flocks of birds; the complex and thoughtful ways in which animals touch, see and hear the world; the moving emotional capabilities of our surrounding creatures. Animal behaviorist Vint Varga notes, “Every species has adapted their senses to view the world from a different perspective, unique from all others....there are sounds beyond [human]range of hearing, colors and details our eyes simply miss, and aromas we breathe to which we are oblivious.”

Scientists, with non-invasive imaging techniques and animal behaviorists are finding irrefutable evidence that other species know vastly more than heretofore thought, and they have now verified that fish feel pain, dogs and chimpanzees experience jealousy, zoo animals suffer depression, fire ants clump and cooperate while others ant species solve complex geometric problems, and elephants mourn their dead. There are in fact species other than humans who create cultures, wage wars and are socially astute.

The human species is beginning to grasp that all animals, whether clad in fur, scales, or feathers, share sentience and emotions. Beyond the layers of meaning embedded in these images, however, one can simply immerse oneself in the joyful, imaginative, revealing and artful expressions captured in these creature photographs.

\*The Santa Barbara Museum of Art installation of *Art to Zoo: Exploring Animal Natures* will be on view from September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 until January 4, 2015.