

Jan Harrison is an American painter and sculptor whose work, which primarily features animal imagery, centers on the animal nature as it relates to human existence and the collective psyche. Her art is informed by the philosophy of deep ecology. A monograph detailing her work describes it as "excavat(ing) the arcane kingdom of the human psyche, so long tyrannized by the repressive and oppressive forces of socialization." She has exhibited widely in the United States and abroad. Harrison speaks and sings in a language, *Animal Tongues*, which she performs. Her work is considered to be an influence in the investigation of the animal/human interface in art.

Jan Harrison was born in West Palm Beach, Florida, and has lived in Georgia, California, Ohio, and New York. In 1989 she moved from Cincinnati to New York's Hudson Valley. Her art has been in over one hundred and seventy solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States and internationally, including *Animal.Anima.Animus*, c: Linda Weintraub and Marketta Seppälä, which opened in Finland and was exhibited in Holland, Canada, and at PS1 in New York.

*Arcana Mundi*, a monograph, was published in 2001 by Station Hill Press. In 2003, a chapter regarding her art was published in the book, *In The Making: Creative Options for Contemporary Art*, Linda Weintraub, D.A.P., New York, NY. In 2010 an article and interview about her work was published in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, New York, NY. Her work has been featured on the covers of books, including *Divinanimality: Creaturely Theology*, Stephen D. Moore, Laurel Kearns, Drew University, *Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth*, Laurel Kearns & Catherine Keller, Fordham Press, and *The Animals Look Back at Us*, Sara Lynn Henry, catalogue for the exhibition. In 2018 a feature article and interview, *Life or Death*, by Brainard Carey, about Jan Harrison's 1993-2018 series of paintings, "*Animals in the Anthropocene*," was published in *Praxis Center for Aesthetics*, Yale.

#### ESSAYS:

"Jan Harrison beckons viewers to embark on a voyage. But instead of leaving home to explore exotic sites and sounds, we are guided into equally foreign territory – our innermost selves. We journey downward, circumventing our personalities and our individual life stories, passing our accumulated recollections and our acquired attitudes, crossing beyond spoken and written histories and even beyond human ancestry. Ultimately we disembark in the wondrous galaxy we carry within each gene. Its constellations are measured in units of shudders, murmurs, gasps, and shivers.

On this primal level, we discover our common animal ancestry, a vestigial remnant here awakened and made observable as pastel drawings, porcelain sculptures, and recorded voices."

Linda Weintraub, excerpts from essay, *Genus Fusion*, *In The Making*, *Creative Options for Contemporary Art*, and *Animal.Anima.Animus*

"The stuff of dreams... slithering reptilian creatures, soulful dogs, enigmatic cats, poignant and terrifying primates, all reflecting and sharing our deepest imaginings and cravings, our primal fears and pain. These are the images and emotions we keep hidden, but they steal into our dreams unannounced, emerging at our most vulnerable moments—the anima/animus—our shadow figure, our soul. These archetypes are deeply rooted in the indelible beauty of the paintings and sculpture of Jan Harrison.

Harrison's pastels, encaustic paintings and animal sculptures explore the essence of being both animal and human. She delves into the obscure depths of our collective psyche and melds the two worlds with a searing intensity. Her work has a strangely exquisite, eerie charm as it stuns us with its beauty.

There is a powerful purity, an intimate authenticity in the primacy of her work. This is the natural world, our inner truth, a world that captivates us and elucidates the duality of existence. Startling us, we descend into a primeval plain—a hidden place that still exists somewhere deeply buried in our sensibility. The effect is profoundly personal, a mysterious journey into the self."

Donatella de Rosa, excerpts from essay, *Anima / Animus; the strange and beautiful world of Jan Harrison*, Roll Magazine

"Harrison's work explores origins. Her large primate heads, part of the "Corridor" series – a term that relates both to the eco-passageways into which much of the world's wildlife is being squeezed as well as a cloistered psychological space – seem to be seeing more of us than we do of them. They gaze at us out of a velvety darkness, the details of their fine, bristling fur and rounded faces barely visible, creatures of ancient memory tangibly, palpably present, whose eyes seem to follow us as we move past. The frontal composition and fine scrolls of whiskers drawn in gold ink suggest a Byzantine icon, while the soft atmosphere suggested by the smudged veils of color is naturalistic: it's the combination of the two that perhaps imbues the creatures with their uncanny presence."

Lynn Woods, excerpts from article, *Beauty of the Beast*, Kingston Times

"Occasionally an artist embodies the full manifold, a many-folding mind field, a replete and monstrous sheath turning out an underside of mind and, as Blake said, "the infinite which was hid."

This is liminal being with highwire intensity – and no more human vs. animal, and especially no more diminution of the animal as something sub-human, rather than the essential reality of any other in the natural mystery of its primacy.

Somehow its magic is to release us from our dying images, to set us out on our journey of the precariously beautiful, with its unlimiting energy and self-secret identity, and we are, to transpose Yeats, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born."

George Quasha, excerpts from essay, *Crossing Over to Jan Harrison*

"Harrison combines elements from animals we all know and love in a way that honors their innate otherness while also speaking to the non-human and intuitive inside everyone .... all quite beautiful and bewitching ... Her pieces tend to emerge, with a resulting sense of mysterious origins, otherworldliness, to all she does. .... Deeply personal and pioneering work."

Paul Smart, excerpts from articles: *Painting in the Language of Animals*, and *Fine Furred Friends*, Ulster Publishing's Almanac

"Childhood memories of drawing huge mermaids and animals on the sidewalk, surrounded by the swaying and shimmering of plant life and ocean of south Florida where she grew up, she created art, even as a child, out of an intense feeling of deep connection to life...."

Lorna Tychostup, excerpt from article, *Speaking in Tongues*, Chronogram

"In talking about her work, the artist states a desire to 'live and see clearly, in a world that is brutal and uncaring, yet nurturing and joyous.' Harrison's paintings, self-portraits of her own interiority, her own animal nature, depict a world filled with chaotic struggle between what the sociobiologists have termed our basic 'altruism' and what Darwin identified as our 'reptilian brain.' Harrison is able to depict her struggle, her obsession, with artistic power and an unflinching self-referential style.....we find a center of personal calm and cosmic balance in the aesthetic maelstrom provoked by Harrison's desire to communicate and her awesome technical facility. "

Steven Kolpan, excerpt from article, *Beast of Eden*, Woodstock Times

"Sometimes exuberant with joy, but almost always eerie in their psychic allusion to mankind's archaic affinity with nature, Harrison's canvases seldom leave the viewer without some lingering impact like a half-remembered dream. In Harrison's pictorial allusions to our archaic past we see, also, modern man's new interpretation as he wrestles with his ancient, dormant instincts."

Ann Pollak, excerpt from essay, *Myths for Our Time*, Dialogue Magazine