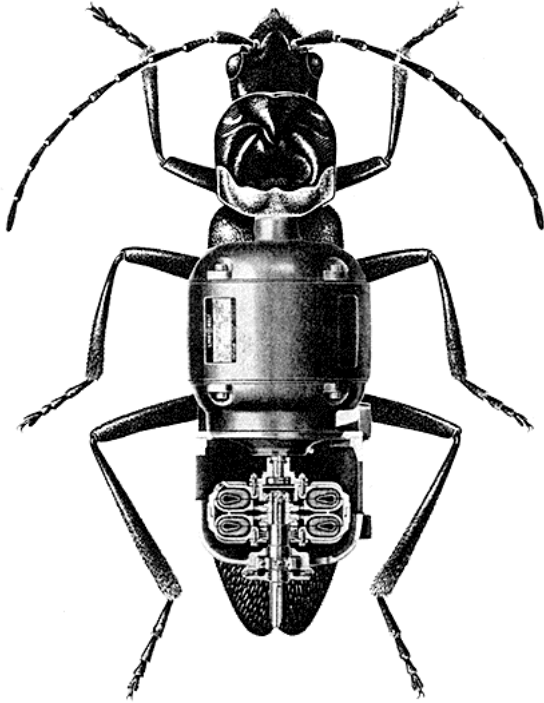


## TRANIMALS

### THEORIZING THE TRANS- IN ZOONTOLOGY

23rd SLSA Nov. 5-8, 2009 Atlanta, GA (USA)



*Machine-Animals: "Ant."* Nicholas Lampert. 2004. Mixed-media.

Co-chairs: **Lindsay Kelley**, University of California, and **Eva Hayward**, University of New Mexico. Panelists: **Prema Prabhakar**, presenting "Do Not Rest in Peace": The Obsessional Mediumship of Diamanda Galas, and from **Katie King** about her Distributed Animality. Next, **Mel Chen** will present on "The Animacy of Toxins," and finally, **Natalie Hansen** will consider "Trans-Species Embodiment: Becoming Human with Horses."

This panel emerged from thinking about how the nascent field of Animal Studies often encodes and decodes human/animal relationships with the prefix "trans-" to produce neologisms and portmanteaus: trans-species, trans-genics, trans-biology, trans-humanism, and trans-marine. As the OED teaches us, "trans-" implies movement across, through, over, to or on the other side of, beyond, outside of, from one place, person, thing, or state to another. This movement compels nuanced or even explosive changes in our understandings of the species and speciation, disrupting the notion that species (human or otherwise) are relational rather than individuated. Trans- disturbs purification practices; psychical and corporeal experiences and events are blended at multiple literal and figural levels, resulting in chimeric entities and liminal states of existence. Trans-animals, or "Tranimals," involve us in relationships that bind humans to their non-human companions, jellyfish to rabbits, virtuality to corporeality, and food to flesh. From companion species in virtual worlds to humans acting as, emulating, and becoming with animals, from human voices speaking the languages of crows and horses to the invisible effects of animated toxins, tranimals challenge and dislocate the boundaries between humans and animals as well as processes of living, dying, evolving, and transforming.

"Tranimals" shows how animals—human and nonhuman—are constitutive of each other through the spaces and places we cohabit – this includes language, visual representations, bio- and zoosemiotics, and other meaning-making registers as well as bodily contact zones, placing the emphasis on process rather than product. In an effort to articulate the significance of trans- in Animal Studies, we ask: How do we embody animals, and how do other animals embody us? How are carnal modes of incorporation, intimacy, and inhabitation kinds of encounters forged between "Tranimals"? What is the consequence of taking trans- tropes as the starting point of inquiry into questions of relationality? How do we think and write about human and animal power relations in a way that acknowledges the discursive traffic, agency, and life conditions of these differently bounded socio-historical, political populations? How do "tranimals" figure in politico-economic stories, processes, and institutions?

These kinds of questions about trans-animality or "tranimals" as examples of locations within which we can understand more closely these appearing and disappearing boundaries between the human, the post-animal, the in-human, the animal, the re-animated, the living and the undead are informed by Sarah Franklin's essay "The Cyborg Embryo: Our Path to Transbiology," Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet*, and artists Patricia Piccinini, Eduardo Kac, Sam Easterson, Dorothy Cross and David Gatten.

## Bios:

**Mel Y. Chen** is Assistant Professor of Gender & Women's Studies at U.C. Berkeley and an affiliate of the Center for Race and Gender and the Institute for Cognitive and Behavioral Sciences. Mel's former work, *Speech Lost from Speech: On the Borders of Linguistic Self-Possession*, appearing in articles and book chapters, explored the gendered, racialized, and nationalist politics of silence in language theories in order to reconsider linguistic subject and objecthood, and to lay out the stakes and workings of linguistic reclamation. More recently, the essay "Racialized Toxins and Sovereign Fantasies" (*Discourse* 29(2-3): 367-383) considers industrial pollutants as altered disease vectors and asks about the ways they can be racialized in the course of transnational migration. Mel is also tracing the ethical contours of a queer of color approach to human animality, as well as non-human animacies, and will convene "Species Spectacles", a U.C. Humanities Research Institute Residential Research Group focused on animality, sexuality and race, in Fall 2009. These projects take part in *Animacies*, Mel's current book manuscript.

**Natalie Corinne Hansen** recently completed her PhD in Literature and Feminist Studies from the University of California at Santa Cruz. Her interdisciplinary work encompasses animal studies, gender studies, and various strands of critical theory. Hansen's work on transgender/transpecies relations has been published in *Women's Studies Quarterly*. Currently, she is at work completing additional chapters for a book project based on her doctoral dissertation.

**Eva Hayward** is a visiting scholar in the Animals & Society Institute, Duke University, and an assistant professor in the Department of Cinematic Arts and Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media Program at the University of New Mexico. She has lectured and published widely on animal studies, experimental film, and queer embodiment. Her recently published essays, "Lessons From A Starfish: Prefixial Flesh and Transspeciated Selves," "Spider City Sex," and "FingeryEyes: Impressions of Cup Corals" explore the trans-soma-technics of encounters between species and senses. She is finishing a book project, *Inverts*, which takes up the concerns of these earlier works.

**Lindsay Kelley** is an artist and writer currently researching bioart, fringe foods, and uncommon modes of food preparation and ingestion. She has exhibited and published in the United States, Canada, and Australia. She recently completed a dissertation in the History of Consciousness Department at University of California Santa Cruz about food, biotechnology, and contemporary art, focusing on artists who use biological processes or "wet ware." She also holds a MFA in Digital Art and New Media from UCSC.

**Katie King** is Associate Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, and a Fellow of the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH). She received her Ph.D. in the History of Consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her scholarship is located at the intersection of feminist technoscience studies, intersectional digital cultures and media studies, and LGBT Studies. Her first book was *Theory in its Feminist Travels: conversations in U.S. women's movements*. She has two others in progress now, *Speaking with Things*, an introduction to writing technologies, and another, *Networked Reenactments*, flexible knowledges under globalization. She has been published in the journals *Writing Technologies*, *Criticism*, *Feminist Theory*, *camera obscura*, *Configurations*, *TEXT*, *Communications*, and *Cultural Studies*.

**Prema Prabhakar** is a PhD. Graduate student at UC Santa Cruz completing her dissertation on "Modalities of Touch" in 20th Century Art and Literature. Specifically, she writes on the work of Janet Frame, Francesca Woodman, Sarah Kane, Marina Abramovic and Michael Haneke. One day, she hopes to write a book on the phenomena of devil possession in film. Prema also likes to pet cats, read sturdy English novels about ghosts and write "unscholarly" things.



"Born." Kiki Smith. 2002. Bronze.