



# VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University  
**VCU Scholars Compass**

---

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

---

2018

## Edgelands

Anne Bujold

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Metal and Jewelry Arts Commons](#)

© The Author

---

**Downloaded from**

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/5502>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).

© Anne Bujold 2018  
All rights reserved

Edgelands

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By Anne Bujold  
BS Social Science, Portland State University, 2001  
BFA Craft, Oregon College of Art and Craft, 2008

Director: Susan Ganch  
Interim Chair and Associate Professor, Craft and Material Studies

Virginia Commonwealth University  
Richmond, Virginia  
May, 2018

## Acknowledgments

To my faculty:

My advisor, Susie Ganch, for her honesty, ferocity, and commitment.

Aaron McIntosh, for his insistence on keeping it weird.

Bohyun Yoon for quietly providing space for me to feel my way though and insisting that I get to have fun.

Lauren Fensterstock for starting me down the path and permission to use hot glue.

Steve Jones, for encouragement and support.

To my friends and family:

James Scott Stephenson for his love and support.

My mother, Lois Bujold, for helping me all along the way.

Heidi Bazille, my best rock, who walks ahead of me and shines the light.

Sam Quicksilver, without whom I would never know the fragility of being and the absolute necessity of love.

## Table of Contents

List of Images.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
The Omnipresent Animal.....	2
Animals in Contemporary Art.....	6
The Edgelands of Promise.....	19
Misfits.....	21
Color and Material.....	25
Edgelands.....	33
Conclusion.....	37
Bibliography.....	39

## List of Images

Chauvet cave, France.....	3
Robert Rauschenberg, <i>Monogram</i> , 1959.....	8
Richard Serra, <i>Animal Habitats: Live and Stuffed</i> , 1966.....	9
Joseph Beuys, <i>I Like America and America Likes Me</i> , 1974.....	10
Mark Dion, <i>Killers Killed</i> , 1994-2007.....	12
Kitty Wales, <i>Broken Sleep</i> , 2004.....	14
Miel-Margarita Parades, <i>Gnaw</i> , 2008.....	15
Myriam Mechita, <i>I'm An Animal Without Fear</i> , 2009.....	16
Tomohiro Inaba, <i>Promise of Our Star</i> , 2011.....	17
David Oliveira, <i>Fox</i> , 2016.....	18
Thomas Grünfeld, <i>misfit (swan/ nutria/ donkey)</i> , 2008.....	22
<i>Edgelands</i> , 2018.....	24
<i>Coyote</i> , 2018.....	26
<i>Doe</i> , 2018.....	28
<i>Raccoons</i> , 2018.....	30
<i>Raccoon One</i> , 2018.....	31
<i>Raccoon 2</i> , 2018.....	32
Deer on the south side of the James River, April 2018.....	36

## Abstract

### EDGELANDS

Anne Bujold, MFA

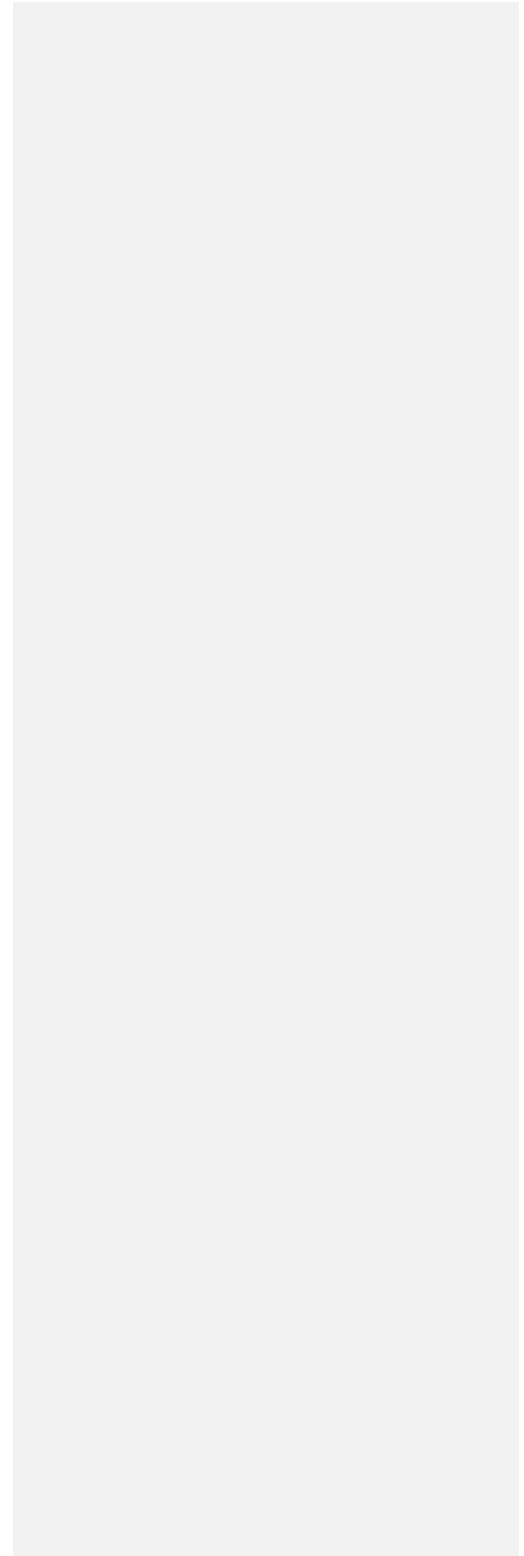
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts,  
at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2018

Director: Susan Ganch, Interim Chair and Associate Professor, Craft and Material Studies

Animal imagery has been part of the human effort to understand our place in the world since the beginning of recorded history. Through examining the role and use of animal imagery in the creation of cultural signals, I have developed a framework for my practice. *Edgelands* employs representations of feral animals as symbols for the “misfit” to emphasize the value of those who do not fit in. My experience as a woman in the field of metal work informs my material choice and process, subverting ironwork motifs and the purpose of gates and boundaries. *Edgelands* overlaps a series of material contradictions to begin the process of

questioning the validity of commonly held delineations. The intersection of environmentalism, craft, and feminism is the space in which I interject the feral animal in an effort to reconcile aspects of my own experience as a misfit and learn about the world through making.





## Introduction

*Edgelands* is informed by research into the history and contemporary use of animal imagery and utilizes feral animals as metaphor for the experience of being a misfit. The title for the exhibition is taken from Marion Shoard's essay, "Edgelands of Promise," in which she describes a space that is often disregarded, between the country and city. Edgelands become refuges for dislocated wildlife, and my interest in these interstitial landscapes is their capacity as effective spaces in which boundaries are blurred. I look to animals that are undomesticated yet live in proximity to humans as symbols of thriving despite marginalization. The use of color, particularly pink; material choices, including felt and iron; and gate motifs and fence material are primary in informing these themes. Expressing a desire to transcend restrictions and the potential to celebrate what it means to exist as a misfit are primary goals in this work.

## The Omnipresent Animal

Humans began leaving behind evidence of their existence 2.5 million years ago. Modern humans – *Homo sapiens* – began to migrate into Western Europe from Africa around 45,000 years ago. Early Europeans created images, primarily cave paintings and small sculptures, using what neuroscientist Vilayanur Ramachandran calls “the universal laws of art”: simplifying, exaggerating, and distorting images to engage the mind of the viewer.”<sup>1</sup>

Although it has been assumed that *Homo sapiens* were responsible for the development of cave art, recent research suggests that *Homo neanderthalensis* were creating images long before their arrival. *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals coexisted for a period of time and likely interbred. New discoveries suggest that the accepted historical narrative, which assigns *Homo sapiens* the role of the more biologically advanced of the hominids, is potentially inaccurate. Using uranium-thorium dating to investigate cave art from three sites in Spain, images have been identified as being created as long as 65,000 years ago, which means they would have been created before biologically modern humans arrived in Europe.<sup>2</sup> While our understanding of human evolution is constantly shifting, what we do know is that image making is the foundation of cultural construction, and that animal imagery is at the center of these activities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cook, Jill. *Ice Age Art: Arrival of the Modern Mind*. London: British Museum, 2012. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Standish, Chris, Alistair Pike, and Archaeological Sciences. "How We Discovered That Neanderthals Could Make Art." *The Conversation*. May 04, 2018. Accessed May 07, 2018. <http://theconversation.com/how-we-discovered-that-neanderthals-could-make-art-92127>.



Chauvet Cave, France

It is uncertain why image production began to proliferate around the end of the Pleistocene, near the conclusion of the last Ice Age. It may have been an adaptive strategy as, “migration into new territories and the stresses of adapting to unfamiliar habitats may have activated psychological stimuli to organize, regulate, empower, or overpower certain aspects of life through image and story.”<sup>3</sup> Approximately 40,000 years ago, rapid cultural evolution, rather than biological evolution, became the primary way in which humans adapted to the world around them.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to consider the development of image construction as a response to an increasingly stressful world, and the parallels of the climate change that we face today with the effects of the receding Ice Age.

---

<sup>3</sup> Cook, 17.

<sup>4</sup> White, Randall Keith. *Prehistoric Art: The Symbolic Journey of Humankind*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003. 12.

These caves were not domestic spaces; they were sites for cultural production. The artists utilized the existent geological formations to create dynamic murals by torchlight. As Cook describes,

By identifying the use of imagination, abstraction, composition, perspective, dimension, the perception of space, scale, and form within the painted caves and on portable works, it is possible to see the brain was functioning then as it is now. In this neurological sense, it may be said that all art is the product of the modern brain and images from the Ice Age are part of the long history of art.<sup>5</sup>

As I work to pinpoint the driving motivation for my own interest in creating representations of animals, delving into prehistory illuminates the fact that animal imagery is inexorably intertwined with biological evolution and the development of culture. Animals are firmly a part of how we, as a species, came to navigate our understanding of the world. John Berger's essay "Why Look at Animals" was vital to providing a framework for questions concerning animal representation. He considers the evolution of humans in relationship to animals, and the ways in which industrial capitalism has generated an enormous rift between us. In considering the fundamental underpinnings of the development of culture, Berger notes that,

What distinguished man from animals was the human capacity for symbolic thought, the capacity which was inseparable from the development of language in which words were not mere signals, but signifiers of something other than themselves. Yet the first symbols were animals. *What distinguished man from animals was born of their relationship with them.*<sup>6</sup> (emphasis added)

Until urbanization, animals were an integral part of day-to-day life in a tangible, physical sense as well as in a spiritual context. Animals provided food, labor, and companionship, and

---

<sup>5</sup> Cook, 13.

<sup>6</sup>Berger, John. *About Looking*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. 7.

played a central role in metaphor and myth. The advent of industrialization created an abrupt and dramatic shift from intimate daily contact with animals and our new modes of social organization have impacted how we ascribe meaning to animals as symbols. Through investigation, I found that they became even more potent through their absence.

## Animals in Contemporary Art

As the Western world ushered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the chasm between humans and the natural world widened. The development of new technologies usurped horses and other draft animals as automobiles, trains, and tractors became commonplace. Animals that were once central to humans' ability to travel, perform labor, and accomplish daily tasks were rendered obsolete. The psychic impact of this rupture, which continues to echo in our current era as we shift into an increasing virtual realm, is not easily measured. However,

...since the turn of the nineteenth century all the arts, beginning with literature, have witnessed an increase of importance attached to the representation of animals. This has occurred as a response to an uncoupling in the real world that has undermined the immemorial complicity between men and beasts – an uncoupling for which, among other reasons, the advent of machinery and the development of industrial logic have been responsible.<sup>7</sup>

Art historian Steve Baker posits that there is no modernist animal, as that “the image of the animal was further hampered by memories of the unashamedly anthropomorphic sentiment of an earlier age,” and the animal “is the very first thing to be ruled out of modernism’s bounds.”<sup>8</sup> Tracing the movement of animals in the contemporary context shows that animals were never eliminated from the consciousness of artists, although their position has shifted.

---

<sup>7</sup> Raymond Bellor, “From Hypnosis to Animals,” in *Animals*, ed. Filipa Ramos (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 91.

<sup>8</sup> Baker, Steve. *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008. 20.

In understanding the trajectory of the animal in 20<sup>th</sup> century art, Robert Rauschenberg's goat-combine *Monogram* provides a historical anchor. Considered one of his best-known combines, assimilating painting, sculpture, and assemblage, *Monogram* presents a taxidermy goat on a platform encircled by a tire. The piece has been interpreted as a monogram, an allusion to erotic themes, and to animal sacrifice.<sup>9</sup> Rauschenberg himself resisted such interpretations of the work, and asserted that, "a stuffed goat is special in the way that a stuffed goat is special."<sup>10</sup> While Rauschenberg insisted that the piece be taken for its own value, Baker recognizes that "interpretations of animal imagery usually return the works to the familiarly human."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> "The Meanings in Robert Rauschenberg's Monogram | Art | Agenda." Phaidon. Accessed May 06, 2018. <http://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2016/december/06/the-meanings-in-robert-rauschenberg-s-monogram/>.

<sup>10</sup> Baker, 80.

<sup>11</sup> Baker, 80.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Monogram*, 1959

In direct response to Rauschenberg's *Monogram*, Richard Serra produced an exhibition in Italy in 1966 that included live animals, possibly the first example of using the live animal in contemporary art. In *Animal Habitats: Live and Stuffed*, Serra arranged turtles, guinea pigs, a sow, a rabbit, and other living creatures along with found objects and taxidermy specimens prepared by his then-wife, artist Nancy Graves. Serra commented at the time that, "people didn't know whether Robert Rauschenberg's goat with a tire around it was art. Now they know. If an artist goes on making goats, though, he's hung up."<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Greg, Author. "Serra 'Designs His Works To Last.'" Greg.org. Accessed May 07, 2018. <https://greg.org/archive/2011/05/19/serra-designs-his-works-to-last.html>.





Richard Serra, *Animal Habitats: Live and Stuffed*, 1966

Serra set a precedent that was further developed by Jannis Kounellis in the 1968 exhibition *12 Horses*. The show featured a dozen live horses were tethered to the walls of the Roman Gallery L'Attico and is credited as sparking the Arte Povera movement. German artist Joseph Beuys then brought the live animal into his 1974 performance, *I Like America and America Likes Me*. Arriving in New York City, he was immediately taken by ambulance, carried by stretcher and covered in a layer of felt, to a room in the René Block Gallery. Beuys shared the gallery with a coyote for eight hours a day for three days, separated from the audience by a chain link fence. This “action” was part of what Beuys described as a series of “social sculptures”

actions intended to change society for the better.”<sup>13</sup> By wrestling with the wild animal, a symbol of the American West, Beuys sought to reconcile historical oppression through shamanistic-inspired intervention.



Joseph Beuys, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, 1974

Responsible for the taxidermy in Serra's *Animal Habitats*, Nancy Graves first came to prominence with her groundbreaking series of camel sculptures, lifelike constructions of wood, burlap, hair and wax, that resembled the animals found in natural history displays. At the end of the 60's and into the 70's she engaged deeply with the camel as a subject. She felt that “there's enough that's bizarre about the camel to allow for it as sculptural problem.”<sup>14</sup> Much of her

---

<sup>13</sup> Mann, Jon. "When Joseph Beuys Locked Himself in a Room with a Live Coyote." *Artsy*. November 03, 2017. Accessed May 07, 2018. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-joseph-beuys-locked-room-live-coyote>.

<sup>14</sup> Emily Wasserman, "Nancy Graves Conversation with Emily Wasserman," in *Theories and documents of contemporary art: a sourcebook of artists writings*, ed Kristine Stiles (California, 1996), 597.

motivation was framed in a formal context, and her work was seen as oppositional to the dominant Minimal and Pop Art aesthetics of the era. It seemed that in order to make the work relevant in an era dominated by formal concerns, her interest in the camel as subject was relegated to aesthetic terms, rather than seen as conceptually viable in its own right.

Graves explored the practice of scientific representation as a tool to understand the natural world, a process that Mark Dion mines extensively. Dion investigates how culture constructs our understanding of the natural world. He is, “quite fascinated with how scientists continue to rely on traditional techniques of drawing and painting to really understand what they’re looking at. I think that that’s a really interesting way of thinking about plants and animals as individuals and encouraging careful looking.”<sup>15</sup>

Through the development of *Edgelands*, I began to rely on anatomical reference, despite my resistance to feeling beholden to biological reality. My desire for a stronger sense of fictionalization conflicted with an effective use of animals. It seems necessary to consider the ways in which anatomy informs the viewer; too much deviation ignites confusion about what animal they are viewing, which in turn takes the viewer out of considering the potential meaning. In order to avoid these misunderstandings, taxidermy forms as models give the pieces anatomical accuracy. My process developed into a method by which to explore the natural world, by drawing to understand anatomy and reading extensively about particular animals.

Dion questions underlying cultural assumptions about our relationship to nature and our perception of ourselves as separate from natural systems. Dion sees his work as, “about an interrogation of ideas, but these ideas are also bound in things, and that these things speak,”<sup>16</sup>

**Commented [1]:** Expand or remove. Is your work interested in how culture forms our understanding of the natural world? Or is it more about how certain animals don't fit into our society?

**Commented [2]:** Why do you resist this? Expand or remove. If you don't explain this, it seems negative for no purpose

<sup>15</sup> Tyler Green, “309: Mark Dion and Anika Yi,” October 5, 2017, Modern Art Notes Podcast, produced by Modern Art Notes Media, 7:30, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://manpodcast.com/portfolio/no-309-mark-dion-anicka-yi/>

<sup>16</sup> Green, 16:38.

and he gives great consideration to the material, aesthetics, and historical context in his work. Rather than representing nature or asking us to consider nature as an entity, Dion's work has "never been "about nature" but rather concerned with ideas about nature."<sup>17</sup>



Mark Dion, *Killers Killed*, 1994-2007

In *Killers Killed*, Dion covered taxidermies of animals seen as nuisances – such as a coyote, rodents, and pigeons – in tar, suspended from a tree branch planted in a galvanized metal bucket.<sup>18</sup> In this work, Dion is looking at animals that are living in proximity to humans. These creatures that are overstepping the human-defined boundary of the civilization/wild divide are

---

<sup>17</sup> Aloï, Giovanni. *Art and Animals*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012. 138.

<sup>18</sup> "Killers Killed | Mark Dion | Take It or Leave It digital archive." Hammer Museum. February 24, 2017. Accessed March 12, 2018. <https://hammer.ucla.edu/take-it-or-leave-it/art/killers-killed/>.

particularly problematic to us. We find them distasteful, Dion proposes, precisely because they remind us of ourselves.

The kinds of things that cohabitate with us – roaches and rats and pigeons – are doing extremely well... we detest these animals, but we detest them because they exhibit the characteristics that we do, they are generalists, and opportunists, and they are able to cross borders, ecological orders, very readily.<sup>19</sup>

Primary to Dion's work is, "to go against the grain of dominant culture, to challenge perception and **convention**."<sup>20</sup> This is a mechanism through which I aspire to have my own work function. Through considering assumptions which are unexamined truths, art has the ability to shift cultural construction. Dion is interested in a strategic deployment of anthropomorphism in order to "imagine the categories of animals as one which affirms humans as being firmly a part of that category... Animals are individuals and seeing them so allows us to bestow more respect and agency to them. Our obligations to them are more complex."<sup>21</sup>

Several contemporary artists' material use informs the construction of *Edgelands*. Artist Kitty Wales use of expanded steel is particularly provocative. *Broken Sleep* uses this material to construct both the figure of a bull and the bedroom he has found himself in. Wales continued to use the expanded steel in work such as *Borders*. Wales gives agency and vitality to her animal subjects by giving them a primary position in her installations. She sometimes builds narratives around fictional projects undertaken by her dog, such as *Dog Machine with Renewable Energy*, which melds metal with found objects and mixed materials.

---

<sup>19</sup> Tyler Green, "309: Mark Dion and Anika Yi," October 5, 2017, Modern Art Notes Podcast, produced by Modern Art Notes Media, 32:02, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://manpodcast.com/portfolio/no-309-mark-dion-anicka-yi/>

<sup>20</sup> Aloï, 138.

<sup>21</sup> Aloï, 150.

Commented [3]: opportunity to connect to your own work. How does your work challenge perception and convention?



Kitty Wales, *Broken Sleep*, 2004

Miel-Margarita Paredes's series *Gnaw* features the faces of rodents in decorative wall mounted rosettes. This enameled copper repoussé work "was originally inspired by the practice of decorating one's home with hunting trophies - the use of the animal as ornamentation for interior spaces."<sup>22</sup> In depicting rodents, Paredes considers their roles as "disease-ridden vermin... they are among the animals most likely to be found within homes and buildings (whether welcome or otherwise), rodents are not often seen in architectural ornamentation or the decorative arts." As in Dion's *Killers Killed*, Paredes considers vermin species in a fine art context, upending expectations about the kinds of animals that are worth depicting. *Gnaw*

---

<sup>22</sup> Miel-Margarita Paredes. Accessed May 07, 2018. <http://www.mielmargarita.com/index10gnawseries.htm>.

situates the animal as disembodied, emerging from a wall fixture, and entering an interior space in which they are unwelcome.



Miel-Margarita Parades, *Gnaw*, 2008

Myriam Mechita uses taxidermy forms to create extravagant, fantastical vignettes. *I'm An Animal Without Fear*, features deer which are suspended and upended, somersaulting inside a space that implies the dissolution of gravity and a freedom from the rules of reality. The deer are headless and strings of glittering beads erupt from their necks, dissipating into the installation. Mechita employs graduated tones, playful glittering color, and dramatic lighting to create an otherworldly scene that implies narrative without a didactic stance.





Myriam Mechita, *I'm An Animal Without Fear*, 2009

The material approaches of Tomohiro Inaba and David Olivera are also relevant. Inaba uses thin steel rod to create ephemeral, dissipating animal forms. He depicts a variety of animals, which are sometimes fully realized, but more often are in a state of emergence or dissipation. *Promise of Our Star* is constructed from steel rods that coalesce into the solidified body of a grazing deer. There is a delicate and poignant beauty to this work, and it evokes a certain sadness and a tender regard for the depicted doe. David Olivera's integrates wire armatures with tulle to create impressionistic, nearly watercolor effects. He employs animals as well as figurative imagery, sometimes photographing the animals in outside locations.





Tomohiro Inaba, *Promise of Our Star*, 2011



David Oliveira, *Fox*, 2016

Rauschenberg, Serra, Beuys, Graves, and Dion investigate the animal through a combination of history, science, and metaphor. Wales, Paredes, Mechita, Inaba, and Olivera provide specific material cues that I incorporate in *Edgelands*. As I situate my practice in a context that addresses my own concerns, these artists provide precedents for engaging with different aspects of the animal as symbol and object.

### The Edgelands of Promise

In the essay “The Edgelands of Promise,” Marion Shoard describes the transitional landscape between the urban and the rural with the distinctly British phrase “edgelands.” Exploring the kind of mixed-use industrial spaces that are constructed with architecture of utility, Shoard explains that the edgelands are:

Characterised [sic] by an anarchic mix of unloved land-use functions ranging from gravel workings to sewage disposal plants set in a scruffy mixture of unkempt fields, derelict industrial plant and miscellaneous wasteland... However, it has important qualities: it is a refuge for wildlife driven out of an increasingly inhospitable countryside; it is a living museum of the workings of contemporary society.<sup>23</sup>

These areas are functional but manifest their own unkempt aesthetic, and “deep within these thickets lie occasional stretches of concrete track, their sides covered by carpets of bright yellow creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans* and biting stonecrop *Sedum acre*.”<sup>24</sup> Plants thrive alongside abandoned construction materials and animals build nests and burrow into industrial architecture. This kind of space resonates with the sensation of boundary-dislocation that I am interested in exploring.

It is not the geographic specificity of the edgelands, but the aesthetic and emotional quality of this interstitial space that I look to in developing the exhibition. In the edgelands,

---

<sup>23</sup> Shoard, Marion. “Edgelands of Promise.” *Landscapes* 1, no. 2 (2000): 74-93. doi:10.1179/lan.2000.1.2.74. 74.

<sup>24</sup> Shoard, 82.

anything seems possible, as it is not a defined space with rigid rules of engagement. By nature, the space between two designated areas has an aura of potential, an anarchic possibility. These kinds of spaces, ones that are not claimed by anyone in particular, provide shelter for the transient and the kind of landscape in which a misfit might find themselves at home.

## Misfits

The celebration of the misfit and of outlier identity is something I have been drawn to since my adolescence. Author Lidia Yuknavitch describes the profile of a misfit simply as “a person who sort of *missed* fitting in, or a person who fits in badly.”<sup>25</sup> This definition relocates the word misfit as a verb – not a word that explains someone’s social status, but instead a way of navigating the world.

Yuknavitch goes into further detail about the experiences and trajectories in her life that led her into the thicket of misfittery in *The Misfit’s Manifesto*. Dysfunctional family, catastrophic loss, self-destructive coping mechanisms, and art as salvation coalesce into the larger narrative arc of her story. Her conviction, courage, and fiercely tender vulnerability resonate with my lived experience, and the expression of a sense of alienation is a driving motivation in *Edgeland*s. In the introduction, Yuknavitch proposes that “the edges of culture are exactly where new and beautiful meanings are generated. The edges help hold the center together. The edges are frontiers.”<sup>26</sup> In an exploration of boundaries and borders, I am looking to find these kinds of edges in my work.

The idea that “artists have traditionally used hybrids in response to times of crisis, or to give embodiment to the irrational” in an analysis of the taxidermy sculpture of Thomas Grünfeld

---

<sup>25</sup> Yuknavitch, Lidia. “The Beauty of Being a Misfit.” *TED* (video blog), February 2016. Accessed February 01, 2018. [https://www.ted.com/talks/lidia\\_yuknavitch\\_the\\_beauty\\_of\\_being\\_a\\_misfit](https://www.ted.com/talks/lidia_yuknavitch_the_beauty_of_being_a_misfit). 00:30.

<sup>26</sup> Yuknavitch, Lidia, and Alex Brewer. *The Misfits Manifesto*. New York: TED Books, Simon & Schuster, 2017. 4.

was particularly informative to my practice.<sup>27</sup> In the aftermath of the 2017 election that saw the ascension of Donald Trump to the office of the presidency, this idea struck me as timely.

Grünfeld's *Misfits* can be thought of as a monstrous manifestation of the times we live in: the visual synthesis of the clashing of overshadowing anxiety and positivist optimism triggered by technological advancements; the fear of a progressive distancing from nature that may get irreparably out of control... This effectively is the main strength of these works, as they paradoxically assert nature as the only remaining certainty through the disturbingly credible presence of these impossible animals.<sup>28</sup>



Thomas Grünfeld, *misfit (swan/ nutria/ donkey)*, 2008

---

<sup>27</sup> Aoli, 35.

<sup>28</sup> Aoli, 35.

The idea of material hybridity to indicate the misfit is a component of *Edgelands*.

Through the blurring of both materials and the animal with the gallery architecture, the animal is both the fence and the access point, or gate. The animals I construct are not literal hybrids like Grünfeld's, but I look to material to create this sense of hybridity. By combining felt, fake fur, plastic mesh, and metal, I am seeking to articulate a persistent sense of discordant irrationality.

John Berger considers the experience of viewing an animal as an attempt to centralize something that has been marginalized. The interests of animals are almost always deemed secondary to those of humans, and in considering the act of gazing into a zoo exhibit, he muses, that,

However you look at these animals, even if the animal is up  
against the bars, less than a foot from you, looking outwards in the  
public direction, *you are looking at something that has been  
rendered absolutely marginal*; and all the concentration you can  
muster will never be enough to centralize it.<sup>29</sup>

Berger's assessment of our position in relationship to animals highlights the problematic nature of our position. Disconnected from, yet inexplicably bound to, the natural world, the human struggle to feel connected to the world around us, and to each other, is ongoing. The constant negotiation of boundaries through philosophy and cultural continues to shape our perception of our position. Sometimes, we are the misfit, and sometimes, we may be in the position of marginalizing.

---

<sup>29</sup> Berger, John. *About Looking*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. 22.



*Edgelands, 2018*



## Color and Material

The use of the color pink alongside material choices of felt, iron, and plastic are critical components in creating an otherworldliness in *Edgelands*. The use of fence materials and motifs is also integral to the installation.

Pink provided an ideal color for creating contrast when placed in proximity to the metalwork. Because of its ability to “develop unusual and ambiguous congruencies and contradictions,”<sup>30</sup> pink pushes against many of the conventions of contemporary metalwork, which prioritize an austere and formal treatment of the material. Pink is not a spectral color of the rainbow but rather the blurring of white and red.<sup>31</sup> It is not a color that appears often in nature, but when it does, it is typically in transitory moments, such as spring blossoms or “when light emerges or fades. This fleeting manifestation is an important connotation of the color.”<sup>32</sup> Pink’s appears at moment during the movement of the earth through its rotations, connecting it to the theme of transitions and boundaries.

The room is carpeted in pink fake grass with a black mulch edge against the wall that spills across the entrance to the space. In creating a fantastical landscape, pink is situated in of contrast with the black mulch to heighten the visual contrast. The hyper-falseness of the pink plastic turf that carpets the space moves the room into an alternate reality, and color serves as the key to this shift. The viewer is asked about their willingness to walk across the mulch, to engage

---

<sup>31</sup> Nemitz, Barbara, and Hideto Fuse. *Pink: The Exposed Colour in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Nemitz, 28.

with the feeling of earth beneath their feet in an interior space. The mulch operates as boundary to the space, although there is nothing that explicitly discourages the viewer from entering.

Industrial felt is derived from animal sources, and also operates as a craft material, linked to the feminine sphere of fiber arts. For the body of *Coyote*, I laser cut iron work motifs sourced from the catalog of King Architectural Metalwork, a commercially produced iron work used in construction. The use of felt in the construction of this work creates a material reference to Beuys' *I Like America and America Likes Me*. As in *Doe*, *Coyote* has solid feet and legs that start to open into negative space in the body. *Coyote* trails discarded pieces of the felt "ironwork" behind itself in the mulch, further blurring the boundary of where the animal begins and ends.



*Coyote*, 2018

*Doe* is the central element of the installation. Deer are often prescribed symbolic properties of regeneration.<sup>33</sup> Emerging from the expanded steel coming off of the wall, and coalescing into solid sheet metal, the deer is a symbol of an emergence of self. The deer challenges the architecture of the space, bridging a world beyond the gallery. The repeated effort to challenge boundaries manifests in this portion of the work by emerging from an unknown portal. *Doe* is propelled by plastic netting, filling the space around and behind the body with lush but problematic materials.

---

<sup>33</sup> Fletcher, John. *Deer*. London: Reaktion Books, 2014. 118.



*Doe*, 2018

The *Raccoons* are playful and disruptive, meant to evoke the mischievous nature of their species. *Raccoon One* is perched on a golden cardboard box. Elevated above the floor, the raccoon gains stature. The *Raccoons* have adapted to this environment. Their coloring makes them at home in these surroundings. *Raccoon Two* has made a nest in the wall that houses the air conditioner and watches the scene from this lofty perch. *Raccoon Two* stops agreeing to be constrained by the rules of the exhibition space. Unruly and feral, they make their homes wherever feels most comfortable to them. The raccoons in *Edgelands* are swathed in pink, both a pale spun cotton-candy hue and a jarring hot pink. Harnessing pink's ability connote, "the color of the fantastic. Boundaries are crossed. Pink animals become less animal-like,"<sup>34</sup> this use of color assures the viewer that these animals are not attempting to provide facsimiles of nature. Pink plays "its role as a means of achieving distance from reality."<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Nemitz, 36.

<sup>35</sup> Nemitz, 36.



*Raccoons, 2018*



*Raccoon One, 2018*





*Raccoon Two, 2018*



## Edgelands

*Edgelands* is not explicitly environmental, but I find it impossible to ignore constant reports of biodiversity decline, the integration of plastics into our food chain, and consequences of fossil fuel consumption such as global warming. In the face of emerging information about the reality that we are crafting, I think a lot about the story of Chernobyl.

The nuclear reactor that exploded in Chernobyl, Ukraine, on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1986, created the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, also known as the “Zone of Alienation,” radiation rendering it uninhabitable for humans. A surprising consequence has been the rapid rebound of wildlife in the area. Wolves, wild Przewalski's horses, bison, beavers, boar and more abound. Despite the potential for long-term, unknown consequences to the animal populations due to radiation, in the meantime they are thriving in a space without human intervention.<sup>36</sup>

In particular, I look to Chernobyl as a story of how nature carries on despite the centrality of human interests. The tenacity of life is incalculable. Now, packs of wild boars roam Southwest Germany, carrying dangerous levels of radiation they have picked up from consuming plants that grown downwind of the site. The consequences cannot be hemmed into a boundary. Nature is a system and will insist on operating as such, despite our attempts to quarantine the damage and control the fallout.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> "Animals Rule Chernobyl Three Decades After Nuclear Disaster." National Geographic. April 25, 2017. Accessed May 07, 2018. <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/060418-chernobyl-wildlife-thirty-year-anniversary-science/>.

<sup>37</sup> Broglio, Ron. "The Creatures That Remember Chernobyl." The Atlantic. April 26, 2016. Accessed May 07, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/04/the-creatures-that-remember-chernobyl/479652/>.

By believing in artificial boundaries such as human and animal, civilization and nature, city and country, humans see ourselves as outside of the system on which our lives depend. This misguided thinking fails to consider how we are enmeshed in the web of life; a Western view that sees us as capable of controlling the consequences of industrial action, the results of global consumer capitalism, and unchecked population growth. This hubris is embedded in a philosophical framework that separates us from our animal kin, and without shifting this thinking, we remain unable to move into a sustainable mode of existence.

*Edgelands* overlaps a series of material contradictions to begin the process of questioning the validity of commonly held **delineations**. When first encountering the installation, the viewer may be overwhelmed by the wash of pink; curious about the animal forms; or develop some relationship to the animals as they project an anthropomorphic lens. What might begin to feel relevant with deeper investigation is the contrast of black mulch against pink fake grass; animals made of metal, metal work made of felt, an animal material; raccoons made of fake fur, with small metal hands. The recurrence of fence components – in the body of the coyote and the deer – begin to ask about the sanctity of division. Fences keep us separated. They serve a dual function, both protecting and confining. What happens when the boundary is appropriated in another way? What is the boundary between the human and the rest of the world?

Coyote, raccoon and deer are all species that thrive in the space between the urban and the rural. They are adaptable and transgress defined geographies to thrive. They cross the imaginary boundary between city and country, in which certain animals are supposed to be on one side or the other. These feral animals are my inspirations in this strange landscape. The raccoon is a clever tool-user, with incredibly sensitive hands. The coyote has many adaptive

**Commented [4]:** great sentence. I feel like this is the crux of your thesis. Maybe work it into the abstract and/or the intro

traits that have allowed it to flourish in the wake of the European conquest of the continent. The doe is a symbol of the power of regeneration. They assemble in this moment as a community of outcasts that together create something bigger than any individual being. In their gathering, they are a family of disparate beasts, connected through material, but distinct. They don't fit elsewhere in the world, but they fit together in this space.

Deleted: group, a

When I started school in 2016, “alternative facts” and “fake news” were not part of the lexicon. In this work, the juxtaposition of the real and the fake reflect this confusion. Merging felt, an animal material, with steel, and placing fake fur against fake grass and real mulch starts to generate material contrasts that speak to the discordant reality in which we find ourselves. But despite the political and social landscape, there is a fundamental truth that remains, that nature will carry on without us.

A few weeks before my thesis work was complete, I saw three deer grazing in the train yard on the south side of the James River. In the late afternoon sunlight, I stood captivated as I watched them nibble grass and occasionally raise their heads and rotate their large ears, scanning the surrounding area. I was struck by the serene magic of these does, and was awed stumbling across wildlife, picking their way through the garbage and train tracks. Seeing an unexpected animal brings a sense of wonder, and takes me out of myself, a rare occurrence. The experience is destined to be fleeting, and any desire for some sort of connection – eye contact, or touch – are inevitably denied. There is a sweetness to this transient encounter, and a desire to bridge the gap between my world and theirs.



Deer on the south side of the James River, April 2018

## Conclusion

Animals are pervasive in contemporary art. What drives this continued desire to represent, replicate, display, and recontextualize animal imagery in an increasingly digital age? Is it driven by anxiety, created by the deepening of the chasm between our daily lives and the natural world, a sense of impending doom as concerns about global warming continue to mount, or a deeply held psychic memory from our distant ancestors?

Commented [5]: really interesting line of questioning. I enjoy this very much

Throughout history, humans have looked to animal imagery in an attempt to understand ourselves and our place in the world. My research seeks to centralize the animal through an understanding of their historical, philosophical, and cultural location. The marginalization of the concerns of animals is born of a long and complex history, and by placing the animal as my central interest, my intention is to question and disrupt larger cultural assumptions and begin to craft new narratives, born of my own experiences.

I've never felt that I fit. Despite a persistent suspicion that I do not belong wherever I find myself, I believe that it is possible through the act of making to create a space for myself. This possibility is of a space that hasn't existed before, that I can slip into, perfectly. It may not be a space that others find themselves comfortable in – and that is precisely the point. The rest of the world provides that. This space is mine, but not to the exclusion of anyone who feels a kinship to the off-kilter expression of this landscape. By continuing to carve out aesthetic and creative space for myself, I am one of many makers who can revel in the beauty of being a misfit. This

Commented [6]: So it is perfect that a lot of people didn't cross into your world! You drew a protective barrier around your world and your animal family

effort is to uplift, dignify, and celebrate difference, otherness, weirdness, creative spark and joy in becoming my unique self in a world that increasingly demands conformity and obedience.

A recent article about Studio Ghibli, the Japanese animation studio which often depicts its protagonists in conflict with the forces of mechanistic evil, provides a perspective that encapsulates the aim of my effort. Praising the ability of fiction and the power of imagination to engender social change, the message is,

...a simple one: Resist. Fantasy, dream, immaturity—these are vital tools... Wonderment isn't opting out, it's a path to empathy and self that a system that derides imaginations wants to deny you. Be a witch, be a wolf, be a pig. In the end, it's always better than being a fascist.<sup>38</sup>

I find connection with these feral animals: those who refuse to obey, follow the rules, or acquiesce to the demands of power. I am uplifted by those have the courage to thrive, build new worlds, shine brightly, and show others that it is possible to succeed despite setbacks, odds, and upbringing. The expression of these ideals is the goal of *Edgelands*. This work is about creating a space of magic and weirdness and beauty and discomfort, blurring boundaries and transgressing as an act of creative resistance.

---

<sup>38</sup> Marlborough, Patrick. "What Studio Ghibli's Films Teach Us About Resisting Fascism." Vice. September 01, 2017. Accessed May 07, 2018. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_au/article/wjy3y/what-studio-ghiblis-films-teach-us-about-resisting-fascism](https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/wjy3y/what-studio-ghiblis-films-teach-us-about-resisting-fascism).

## Bibliography

## Bibliography

Aloi, Giovanni. *Art and Animals*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012. 35, 138, 150.

"Animals Rule Chernobyl Three Decades After Nuclear Disaster." National Geographic. April 25, 2017. Accessed May 07, 2018. [https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/060418-  
chernobyl-wildlife-thirty-year-anniversary-science/](https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/060418-chernobyl-wildlife-thirty-year-anniversary-science/).

Baker, Steve. *The Postmodern Animal*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008. 20, 80.

Berger, John. *About Looking*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. 7, 22.

Bellor, Raymond, "From Hypnosis to Animals," in *Animals*, ed. Filipa Ramos (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 91.

Broglio, Ron. "The Creatures That Remember Chernobyl." The Atlantic. April 26, 2016. Accessed May 07, 2018. [https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/04/the-creatures-  
that-remember-chernobyl/479652/](https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/04/the-creatures-that-remember-chernobyl/479652/).

Cook, Jill. *Ice Age Art: Arrival of the Modern Mind*. London: British Museum, 2012. 13, 17.



Greg, Author. "Serra 'Designs His Works To Last.'" Greg.org. Accessed May 07, 2018.  
<https://greg.org/archive/2011/05/19/serra-designs-his-works-to-last.html>.

Fletcher, John. *Deer*. London: Reaktion Books, 2014. 118.

Green, Tyler, "309: Mark Dion and Anika Yi," October 5, 2017, Modern Art Notes Podcast, produced by Modern Art Notes Media, 7:30, 16:38, 32:02 accessed February 28, 2018,  
<https://manpodcast.com/portfolio/no-309-mark-dion-anicka-yi/>

"Killers Killed | Mark Dion | Take It or Leave It digital archive." Hammer Museum. February 24, 2017. Accessed March 12, 2018. <https://hammer.ucla.edu/take-it-or-leave-it/art/killers-killed/>.

Mann, Jon. "When Joseph Beuys Locked Himself in a Room with a Live Coyote." Artsy. November 03, 2017. Accessed May 07, 2018. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-joseph-beuys-locked-room-live-coyote>.

Marlborough, Patrick. "What Studio Ghibli's Films Teach Us About Resisting Fascism." Vice. September 01, 2017. Accessed May 07, 2018. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_au/article/wjjy3y/what-studio-ghiblis-films-teach-us-about-resisting-fascism](https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/wjjy3y/what-studio-ghiblis-films-teach-us-about-resisting-fascism).

Miel-Margarita Paredes. Accessed May 07, 2018.  
<http://www.mielmargarita.com/index10gnawseries.htm>.

Nemitz, Barbara, and Hideto Fuse. *Pink: The Exposed Colour in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006. 27, 28, 36.

Shoard, Marion. "Edgelands of Promise." *Landscapes* 1, no. 2 (2000): 74-93.  
doi:10.1179/lan.2000.1.2.74. 74, 82.

Standish, Chris, Alistair Pike, and Archaeological Sciences. "How We Discovered That Neanderthals Could Make Art." *The Conversation*. May 04, 2018. Accessed May 07, 2018.  
<http://theconversation.com/how-we-discovered-that-neanderthals-could-make-art-92127>.

The Meanings in Robert Rauschenberg's Monogram | Art | Agenda." Phaidon. Accessed May 06, 2018.

Wasserman, Emily, "Nancy Graves Conversation with Emily Wasserman," in *Theories and documents of contemporary art: a sourcebook of artists writings*, ed Kristine Stiles (California, 1996), 597.

White, Randall Keith. *Prehistoric Art: The Symbolic Journey of Humankind*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003. 12.

Yuknavitch, Lidia. "The Beauty of Being a Misfit." *TED* (video blog), February 2016. Accessed February 01, 2018. [https://www.ted.com/talks/lidia\\_yuknavitch\\_the\\_beauty\\_of\\_being\\_a\\_misfit](https://www.ted.com/talks/lidia_yuknavitch_the_beauty_of_being_a_misfit). 00:30.

Yuknavitch, Lidia, and Alex Brewer. *The Misfits Manifesto*. New York: TED Books, Simon & Schuster, 2017. 4.

Vita

Anne Elizabeth Bujold was born on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1979, in Columbus, Ohio, and is an American citizen. She graduated from Edina High School in Edina, Minnesota, in 1996. She received a Bachelor of Science in Social Science from Portland State University in 2001, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Craft with a Concentration in Metals from Oregon College of Art and Craft in 2008. She has taught at Oregon College of Art and Craft, The Multnomah Art Center, and Virginia Commonwealth University. She was the sole proprietor of Riveted Rabbit Studio in Portland, Oregon, from 2013 to 2016. She received her Master of Fine Arts from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2018.