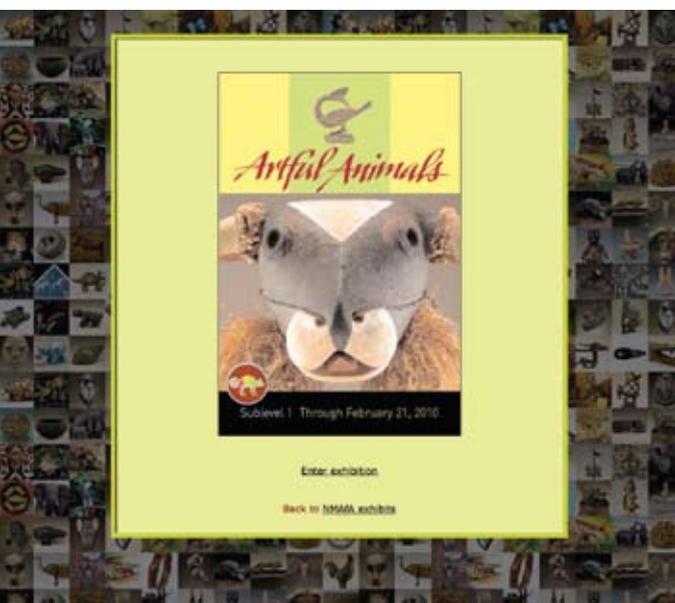


# Art of the Animal



## Craig Roland

Animals have been a favorite subject of artists throughout time. From the pre-historic cave paintings of France to the walls of Egyptian tombs, Albrecht Dürer's depiction of a young hare and, more recently, Alexander Calder's playful circus animals, the history of art is adorned with countless representations of animals. Continuing in this tradition, the following artists have been inspired by animals in very diverse ways.

Deborah Brown ([www.deborah-brownfineart.com](http://www.deborah-brownfineart.com)) explores the natural world in her paintings and public mosaics, thereby allowing her to combine her interests in history, science, culture, and education. Brown's experience walking dogs as a Humane Society volunteer led to her series *Shelter Dogs and Pound Portraits*. Brown's painted portraits of homeless dogs are based on photographs that she took of the dogs from above and at skewed angles to create dynamic compositions. Talking about Brown's dog portraits with students might focus on point-of-view as well as the importance of adopting homeless pets from animal shelters.

Sam Easterson has been collecting video footage from the point of view of animals for more than a decade. In 2009, Easterson opened a virtual Museum of Animal Perspectives (M.A.P.) that exhibits wildlife imagery captured using remote sensing cameras ([www.sameasterson.com](http://www.sameasterson.com)). On the M.A.P. site, you'll find video clips of birds, fish, a bear, an alligator, an armadillo, a green turtle, and much more, all shot in their natural habitats. The captured imagery offers students unique opportu-

nities to see the natural world from an animal's perspective.

Jason Hackenwerth ([www.jason-hackenwerth.com](http://www.jason-hackenwerth.com)) is a sculptor and performance artist who uses balloons to create large-scale invented creatures that resemble strange animals, insects, and micro-organisms. Drawing upon his years of experience as a children's entertainer, Hackenwerth creates his creatures on location by blowing up hundreds, sometimes thousands of balloons and stringing them together in unusual forms. As with all balloon art, Hackenwerth's works slowly deflate over time, which he sees as mirroring the natural life process of all living things.

Although he's a multimedia artist at heart, William Wegman ([www.wegmanworld.com](http://www.wegmanworld.com)) is best known for his whimsical yet meticulously constructed photographs of Weimaraners, usually his own,

wearing a variety of costumes and posing in unlikely positions. Wegman's dogs are more than just pets in his photographs; they are collaborative partners. Comparing Wegman's dog portraits with the dog portraits of Deborah Brown could lead to an interesting discussion with students.

Lastly, the National Museum of African Art's *Artful Animals* exhibition ([africa.si.edu/exhibits/animals](http://africa.si.edu/exhibits/animals)) looks at how African artists create works of art based on a variety of domestic and untamed animals. Students in grades three through six will enjoy using this interactive resource to learn about the significance of various animals depicted in the artworks, including antelopes, elephants, leopards, pigs, roosters, turtles, warthogs, and more. They may also listen to podcasts of story readings and a performance of an Ugandan children's song.

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