
Klaipėdos kultūrų komunikacijų centras (KKKC) pristato tris pasaulinio garso brūtį meno kritiko Edwardo Lucie-Smitho* projekto „3 worlds in 1“ parodas: „Tarptautinis Londonas“, „Polemiškai maža“ ir „Naujas Ispano menas“.


E. Lucie-Smitho projektas, pristatomas KKKC, išskiria kelis esminius šiuolaikinio meno pasaulio fragmentus, būdingus margam ir eklekтиškam Londonui.


Paroda „Polemiškai maža“, pasak E. Lucie-Smitho, kreipia dėmesį į du dalykus: tapybos atgimimą Londone ir miniatiūros strategiją, kaip priešstatą išspūdą šiuolaikinio meno retorikai. 26 autorių ekspozicija yra parengta bendradarbiaujant su Londono kuratoriumi, galerininku Zaviera Ellisu. Revizuodamas tradinės tapybos sampratą, E. Lucie-Smithas klausia: „Ar mažaja forma galima atskleisti konceptualiu dalykui taip pat įtaigiai kaip ir didelio formato paveiksliais ar šiuolaikinių medijų kūriniais?“


Ketvirtaja Londono paralele būtų galima pavadininti KKKC pristatomus stakistus (Stuckism**). Londono stakistų matote parodoje „Polemiškai maža“, o Teherano grupuotės kūrinis – „Naujojo Ispano meno“ parodoje.

Ignas Kazakevičius
3 WORLDS IN 1
The aim of this exhibition is to give a snapshot view of two very different contemporary art worlds — the one that now exists in London, and the one that has grown up in Iran in the years since the fall of the Shah in 1979. London is now undoubtedly one of the world capitals of contemporary art, rivaled in this respect only by Berlin, since both Paris and New York seem to be losing their attraction as centers for young artists. It owes its pre-eminence to the rise of what are now called the YBAs (Young British Artists) in the 1990s. However the YBA group are not so young any more — they are in their mid 40s — and several generations of artists have made their appearance in London since then. My concept here has been to show a few selected artists on a larger scale, and many more in a section entitled Polemically Small. Polemically Small stresses two things — first the strong revival of painting and collage in London, and second the return to small, sometimes miniature scale, which is a revolt against the inflated rhetoric that seems to have overtaken so much contemporary art. This section has been chosen in conjunction with Zavier Ellis, who is not only a practicing artist, represented in the other section of the show, but a gallerist (www.charliesmithlondon.com) and curator well known for a series of innovative survey shows under the title The Future Can Wait (www.thefuturecanwait.com). For help with this section special thanks are due to Jason Zeloof.

Iran has produced an astonishing quantity of interesting art in recent years — it is undoubtedly the creative powerhouse in the visuals arts of the Middle East. It has been particularly strong in photography. The photographs shown here emerged from a competition for young Iranian artists run on Facebook last year, where I had the honor to be chairman of the jury. The works by Hojat Amani, who lives and works in Luristan, stress the way Iranian contemporary art draws on age-old roots. His subject-matter — angels — is something deeply rooted in Iranian and Islamic tradition. There are also some works by artists from an Iranian Stuckist group — Stuckism being a deliberately retro response to conventional avant-gardism that was pioneered in Britain and that has now given birth to more than 200 affiliated groups in 47 countries, bound together by the enormous website www.stuckism.com. That is to say, it is a supposedly retro impulse that is expert in the use of the most modern means of communication. The Iranian section owes a great deal to my friend and colleague Janet Rady (www.janetradyfineart.com).

Taken together, these two sections demonstrate both the importance of local traditions and at the same time the inexorable growth of artist internationalism. It is worth noting, for example, that the Iranian photographs shown here have passed all frontiers electronically. They arrived as picture files, and were printed in Klaipeda.

The third world of the title is of course Lithuania itself. Lithuanian art is represented by a small group of Polemically Small works, to demonstrate how the idea works in a Lithuanian context. The most important thing, however, is the Lithuanian audience. How will these works impact on Lithuanian culture? This exhibition has been made for a Lithuanian public. Their response will be very much part of the show.

Edward Lucie-Smith
“Licking Dogs”. Performance to video. 6’. 2007
„Laţantys šunys”. Performansas, video. 6’. 2007

Angela Bartram

Born: 1969
Education: 2002- Cur, PhD in Fine Art Middlesex University
1996—1998 MA in Fine Art BIAD
Gimė: 1969
Išsilavinimas: 2002—dabar Midlesekso universitetas: Vaizduojamojo meno aspirantūra
1996—1998 BIAD: Vaizduojamojo meno magistras
THE FUTURE CAN WAIT

NEW LONDON SCHOOL
15. – 19.10.2008
CURATED by
Zavier Ellis
& Simon Rumley
With SPECIAL THANKS
to Werner Grub
and THANKS
to our sponsors

Andeman
ADVISORY SERVICES

☆ BANQUE HERITAGE

inside
contemporary culture magazine
www.inside.it
The Future Can Wait evolved from a series of talks in 2006 and 2007. We came together because we had independently collected or exhibited a core of artists over the previous five years: Gavin Nolan, James Jessop, John Stark, Alex Gene Morrison and Hugh Mendes to name a few. It was clear that we had similar interests and were moving in the same circles, despite having met each other only once before. At that point there was a great deal of activity around the Rockwell Project, Rosy Wilde, Sartorial and CHARLIE SMITH London, where an absolute synergy was developing. It became clear that we wanted to do something together and we wanted to do something bigger than we had done before.

We launched the first show last year on a grand scale. By taking some of the good points of the art fair format like scale, impact and duration, and realizing that the public were eager for a return to curated exhibitions as an alternative, we developed our model. The inaugural event featured 43 artists in a 15,000 sq ft space in Brick Lane’s Old Truman Brewery and we decided to focus initially on London based or London educated artists. We wanted to make this a survey show of London’s most exciting up and coming talent, which is where our core interest really lies. And as we did this we soon realized that most of the artists had an exciting sense of independence that matched our own. The show opened with a massive 3000 people at the private view, thus launching Frieze week with a bang. The reception was exceptional in every sense and lead to invitations to curate gallery shows in Rome, Naples and LA. We are also in talks with galleries, curators and museums in Hong Kong, Berlin, Frankfurt and Munich about other potential projects.

This year’s event sees us scale up substantially. We have taken on a 22,000 sq ft space, again in the Old Truman Brewery, and will exhibit 48 artists. Many of these were with us last year, but we are really excited to introduce a number of new names, some of them recent graduates, and one who is actually still schooling at the Royal Academy in Tim Ellis. We really like to introduce young artists to reflect the wealth of talent consistently coming through the schools in London. Combined with more established names, we hope to make this show an essential overview of the space between emerging and mid career. Reflecting on 2007, artists like Tessa Farmer, Gordon Cheung and Stella Vine were a great combination with recent graduates like Sam Jackson, Chia-En Jao and Simon Cunningham, all of whom continue to go from strength to strength.

As well as introducing a large amount of new artists 2008 also sees a slight shift in emphasis. Approximately half of them work in mediums other than painting including video, performance, installation and sculpture as opposed to two thirds painting last year. Still though, we maintain our focus on generally challenging subject matter. Horror, beauty, violence, death, sexuality and psychological intensity continue to be the main bastions of our curatorial bent.

Zavier Ellis & Simon Rumley
## THE ARTISTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>001</td>
<td>ANGELA BARTRAM</td>
<td>025</td>
<td>RUI MATSUNAGA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>002</td>
<td>KEI BENGER</td>
<td>026</td>
<td>KATE MCCGWIRE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>003</td>
<td>EMMA BENNETT</td>
<td>027</td>
<td>SARAH MCGINITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>004</td>
<td>KIERA BENNETT</td>
<td>028</td>
<td>MARK MCGOWAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>005</td>
<td>APPAUKYE YIADOM JR</td>
<td>029</td>
<td>HUGH MENDES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>006</td>
<td>GORDON CHEUNG</td>
<td>030</td>
<td>ALEXIS MILNE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>007</td>
<td>CHRISTOPHER DAVIES</td>
<td>031</td>
<td>JOCK MOONEY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>008</td>
<td>HELEN DOWLING</td>
<td>032</td>
<td>ALEX GENE MORRISON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>009</td>
<td>TIM ELLIS</td>
<td>033</td>
<td>RICHARD MOON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>010</td>
<td>NADINE FEINSON</td>
<td>034</td>
<td>TAMSIN MORSE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>011</td>
<td>ANDREA GREGSON</td>
<td>035</td>
<td>GAVIN NOLAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>NEIL HAMON</td>
<td>036</td>
<td>MARGARET O'BRIEN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>013</td>
<td>DAVID HANCOCK</td>
<td>037</td>
<td>JANAK ODEGRA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>014</td>
<td>AISLING HEDGECOCK</td>
<td>038</td>
<td>KIM RUGG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>015</td>
<td>ALEXANDER HODA</td>
<td>039</td>
<td>JAMES RUSSELL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>016</td>
<td>LUKE JACKSON</td>
<td>040</td>
<td>MIHO SATO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>017</td>
<td>SAM JACKSON</td>
<td>041</td>
<td>PIERS SECUNDA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>018</td>
<td>MONICA URSINE JÄGER</td>
<td>042</td>
<td>DOMINIC SHEPHERD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>019</td>
<td>CHIA-EN JAO</td>
<td>043</td>
<td>JOHN STARK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020</td>
<td>REBECCA KIDSON</td>
<td>044</td>
<td>ERIK TIDEMANN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>021</td>
<td>GAYLE CHONG KWAN</td>
<td>045</td>
<td>GAVIN TREMLETT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>022</td>
<td>ADAM LATHAM</td>
<td>046</td>
<td>WILL TUCK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>023</td>
<td>JULIANA CERQUEIRA LEITE</td>
<td>047</td>
<td>JAMES UNSWORTH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>024</td>
<td>ROBIN MASON</td>
<td>048</td>
<td>MIRANDA WHALL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2007 Five Years. Artsadmin. London

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
I Am Your Worst Nightmare. Arnolfini. Bristol
Les Carnival des Animaux. The Embassy. Edinburgh
2006 12th International Sample of Performance Art. Ex Teresa Arte Actual. Mexico City
Beauty and the Beast. Fieldgate Gallery. London
Sensitive Skin. Future Factory. Nottingham
Body Parts 2. Royal Scottish Academy. Edinburgh
National Review of Live Art. The Arches. Glasgow
2004 Inport. Von Krahl. Estonia
Britney’s Smears. Catalyst Arts. Belfast
Sensitive Skin. Future Factory. Nottingham
Field of Vision. The Lab Gallery. New York
2003 East End Collaborations. QMUL. London
Brief Interludes. Angel Row Gallery. Nottingham

Closeness is a condition that impacts on the individual. A trace is left as corollary of the sufferance we feel at having an unwanted other close by: the metaphorical stain that is left by an unwelcome approach reminds us that we are mortal and physical beings. Unsolicited and personal, this serves to remind us that we are essentially animal: we wear the effect on our skin. It questions where humanity begins and animality ends.
EASTinternational 2009
selectors
Art & Language and Raster Gallery
Preface

EAST is a deliberately provocative and allusive name, in the sense that it has many meanings. Eastern Europe, the Middle East, India, China and the Far East, and politically it means the opposite of West. Of course, it is just a simplification of our location in East Anglia. Both the pluralist meanings of the name EAST and our regional location have inspired the development of the exhibition that has become the most respected international exhibition of new art in Britain over the last two decades.

EAST has always exploited Norwich’s traditional links with Europe across the North Sea. In recent years artists have become an increasingly mobile group spread across European cities. The reputation of EAST as a democratic, open, serious opportunity has travelled with them. The Gallery retains contacts with the 500 artists we have worked with here in Norwich and the emails and post from them suggests hardly an exhibition takes places, that does not have at least one EAST artist in it. This includes the Turner Prize, the Tate Triennial the Platform for Art and dozens of dealer spaces.

This is my first year at NUCA but I already knew of EAST as a project sustained by a regional arts University College. It has been a remarkable event from the start for Norwich University College of the Arts staff and students and for the interest and enthusiasm of people in Norwich for Contemporary Art. Successive years of students have benefited from the experience of working alongside the selected artists as assistants. Other arts organisations in the City have also felt the benefit. It now means something rather special in the world of contemporary art to say you ‘come from Norwich’.

People remember the grand north light Riverside Studios of the St Georges and Gunton’s buildings in the heart of the city as some of the most beautiful exhibition spaces in England. This year we are working with Raster Gallery from Warsaw and the conceptual art collective, Art & Language.

In 2005 Contemporary Art Norwich was launched by the Arts Council as a festival in the city. CAN is a biennial event and EAST has now also become a Biennale. CAN became part of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival in 2007 and this EAST has been produced with the support of CAN as part of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival. I would like to thank Jonathan Holloway, Alison McFarlane and their staff for their help. EAST could never take place without the help and support of staff throughout NUCA and the 40 strong EAST team lead by Lynda Morris, Kaavous Clayton, Eleanor Cherry and Rob Filby.

Professor John Last
Norwich May 2009
CONTENTS

Preface Professor John Last 3

Chapter 1 'Now is an interesting moment at which to be an artist'.
A Place to Work Art & Language 8 - 12
Introduction Lynda Morris 13 - 18

Chapter 2 'The sites and institutions of the culture of context are with us'.
Jonathan Wood 20 - 21
Mark Wilsher 22 - 23

Chapter 3 'Your strategy might be such as to intensify an internal dialogue'.
Hiromi Kawasaki 26 - 29
Anna Okrasko 30 - 33
Agnieszka Kurant 34 - 37
Corin Sworn 38 - 41
Grace Schwindt 42 - 45
Andrew Cranston 46 - 49

Chapter 4 'What are the conditions wanted or unwanted that seem to bear upon you?'
Andrea Büttner 52 - 55
Stuart Whipps 56 - 59
Julie Masterton 60 - 63
Barbara Walker 64 - 67
Kate Corder 68 - 71
Marlene Haring 72 - 75

Chapter 5 'What then is it like to be an artist in the condition of the present?'
Angela Bartram 78 - 81
Gernot Wieland 82 - 85
James Hopkins 86 - 89
Mervyn Arthur 90 - 93
Elizabeth McAlpine 94 - 97
Olaf Brzeski 98 - 101

Chapter 6 'Capital and power has had very little to fear from contemporary artists. Have they anything to fear now?'
John Russell 104 - 107
Laure Prouvost 108 - 111
Ewa Axelrad 112 - 115
Ursula Mayer 116 - 119
Adam Burton 120 - 123
Robin Tarbet 124 - 127
David Jacques 128 - 131

EASTprojects 136 - 137
EASTarchive 138 - 155
Acknowledgements 156

EASTInternational
Angela Bartram

*The Exterminating Angel Speaks Unto the Politik*
Claire Pajaczkowska

Angels figure a lot in art. Before the Renaissance all art was part of ritual worship to invoke favour or to protect from harm. But when religion began to cede to other forms of power, suddenly the art became full of angels. Paul Klee’s beautiful monoprint ‘The Angel of History’ was Walter Benjamin’s favourite artwork. He owned it and kept it. The image, in Klee’s characteristic graphic style of hand drawn line, depicts an angel, which faces backwards, reviewing history.1 Klee’s ‘The Angel of History’ speaks unto us asking we consider the question of which form is most appropriate for political art. The angel is messenger, and more significant than the signifier, it asks us to consider the signified, which is danger. If realism offers us angels of annunciation, glad tidings and benedictions, then modernism offers us ‘Exterminating Angels’ bearing the unwelcome news of the end of the empire of the ego.

Over the past decade it has become familiar to find groups of people standing watching something that is not in any ordinary sense, spectacular. The genre of site-specific installation art has taken root in our urban centres. Not only authorised by galleries and museums, or the recognisably theatrical mime of the ‘human statues’ that thrive wherever drama students inhabit, but in the most unexpected spaces of what the Situationists called ‘everyday life’ in the quotidian world of the undramatised, do we find artworks of extraordinary intensity and meaning. Today’s site-specific installations are, perhaps, descendents of the performance art movement, the ‘happenings’ that characterised the Agitprop of counterculture in the age of ‘Expanded Cinema’ and boundaries transgressed. The site-specific art of installation may include human action, or may be composed of the trace of some human intervention that has already taken place and has left its indices, like tracks, or materialised memories.

The role of the catalogue is thus important in recording the installation, and in providing historical information that enables the viewer to register their experience as a response to an artwork. For years Art & Language made work within the gap that existed between artwork and catalogue, so that the latter could no longer be seen as the accompanying notes to the ‘real thing’. Since the advent of conceptual art the writing might lay claim to have the same status as the art, and the artist might claim to have no further need of the critic. The division of labour between inarticulate artwork and loquacious critic was renegotiated, and the artwork, the angel of extermination, spoke for itself with its unwelcome news. Angela Bartram’s pieces are such works, sometimes taking the spectator unawares and sometimes existing on the margins of what might be considered to be art. The pieces that Angela enacts with dogs or with inanimate objects all refer us to our mammalian origins. The mammals are distinct from all other species by the fact that they lactate and feed their young. This generates the oral universe of sense and fantasy that underwrites the entire human culture. All forms of perception are variants of the primal act of oral ingestion. To see is to devour, suggested the early ‘Freudians’. Thus optic relationship becomes an embodied relationship, in which the eye is not only located within the cranium at the top of the spine, as in an ‘anatomically correct’ diagram of the position of the organ of sight, but is, metaphorically, positioned within every organ of reception. This, ‘experientially correct’ diagram of the body is one which is not easily reconciled with anatomy. The fact that the body is inhabited in infancy and that this experience is laid down in the memory as neural traces, which can be reactivated in adult experience, is the basis of most psychoanalytic concepts of fantasy.

It was French Structuralist Julia Kristeva who first mapped out the political significance of this. In her book ‘The Revolution of Poetic Language’ (1974) she notes that the relation between form and content is analogous to the relation between Oedipal and

---

1. Exhibited at the ‘Documenta 12’, Kassel, 2007. Curated by A Kovac as a comment on the history of Kassel, a town in which the most violent of Nazi pogroms against the Jews took place, and thus a place which seeks expiation every five years through the ritual worship of art as a protective force.
Pre-Oedipal (maternal feminine) knowledge. Suddenly the whole formalist project of Modernism took on gender significance alongside the idea that form must be made visible in order to acknowledge the significance of labour.

Angela Bartram’s work operates entirely within this problematic. She uses our most mammalian of instincts, the oral and the optical, to conflict with our innate human nature of reaction formations of disgust and shame. The artwork as a performative installation, occupies the space in which is described the relations between instinctive and human responses. Kristeva has named this space ‘the abject’ and Angela Bartram works with the material of abjection, mouths without edges, unknowable spaces that defy classification as public or private, animals that are too close to be pets, the performance of acts of random intimacy such as sucking at a sugar tongue in her piece ‘Tonguing’ (2006), or spitting at the face of an accomplice then licking off the spit from her face, washing her mouth out with soap and water in a public bathroom.

Amongst the responses that Angela elicits in her viewers are the visceral disgust and repulsion that usually accompany the transgression of thresholds of decency and shame. The video work that shows her exchanging sloppy wet drooling licking ‘kisses’ with her dogs focuses attention on animal and human saliva. Saliva is abject as the instinctive drooling that indicates excitation of appetite. Saliva is fine when it is kept within, but is abject when it trickles down the face or is spat at another (only babies and the elderly escape our derision towards the drooling). Because saliva has this function of indicating the state of the body boundary and of giving material presence to an imaginary entity (the boundary is always an idea, not a thing), saliva symbolises the immateriality of the imaginary. It is a sort of demonic and yet magical element. Kristeva has noted the proximity of the antithetical meanings of the sacred, which in French language is simultaneously a term of abuse and a term of reverence. Saliva connotes both purifying water and dirty semen. Its sexual significance is just one of the meanings with which Angela Bartram’s work plays. Think of the magical status of human body liquids, as Edmund Leach does. The body liquids that seep, trickle, ooze or squirt from the many sphincters of the body are symbols of the fact that we are not in command of the apertures within the body politik. A body liquid is to the organ of excretion as the ‘alien’ is to the ‘home’, and all substances that signify schism, loss, separation and extinction of mastery also signify sex. The act of mixing the saliva of woman and dog evokes a complex abjection which connotes bestiality, the excess of British sentimental attachments to their domesticated species as ‘friends’, and the ambivalent fear of all ‘wild things’. When watching Angela’s work it is interesting to note that the Islamic prohibition on contact with dogs relates not to the animal itself, but to the dog’s saliva. It becomes clear, through Angela’s rituals of abjection, that religious prohibitions are expressions of unconscious sexual and social fantasies.

Unless the political theory of art can begin to understand the depths from which these fears arise it is doomed to atrophy into the archives of art criticism. If we want art theory to remain alive and kicking we better start thinking way before language. Let the ‘Exterminating Angels’ of abject performativity speak unto us and remind us of the origins of art and religion in the same place as sex and violence.

Let us listen to the unspoken voices of the angels from that most unwelcome of other worlds, the unconscious.

(This essay is dedicated to the life and work of Charles Harrison, art history lecturer at Watford School of Art and Design 1973)

2. Edmund Leach ‘Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse’ in E. Lennemberg New Directions in the Study of Language (1967)
"Ut pictura politeia"  
Manuela Antoniu

"Woman getting intimate with four male dogs", "Inter-species French kissing", "Heavy licking" – any such subtitle to the pithy Licking Dogs, the title of Angela Bartram’s video (2007), would only further point to the undeniable, deliberately provocative act of hubris the work is serving up for its viewers.

In modern English usage, ‘hubris’ denotes any outrageous treatment, encompassing the exhibitionist flouting of moral norms. Etymologically, it is the Greek ‘hybris’ – a surfeit, the excess impetus that so often animates humans, an overflow, a spillage over the brim of any restrictive receptacle. It is also cognate with ‘hybrid’, from the Latin ‘hibrida’ (or ‘ibrida’), meaning mongrel, a fusion of species, a composite being. In Angela’s video piece, all three valences of the word find their resonance.

The notion of a hybrid creature has long exercised the human imagination, in some cultures well before Homer mentioned the Chimera in his Iliad as the grafting of three distinct animal parts into a coherent yet frightful body. In time, hybrids avowed themselves to be carnal canvases on to which to project, and therefore by the Middle Ages the Chimera became associated with lust or amoris fluctatio, the creature’s tripartite body mapping what were considered to be the corresponding stages of casual love: from titillation through consummation to remorse. The erotic charge in Angela’s performance piece seems to emanate, conversely, from an intoxicating and sustained indeterminacy that compels the viewer to keep on watching, wet kiss after passionate wet kiss, the blurring of boundaries between woman and beast.

Mythological precedents of the morphing of animal and human into a single being can be found amongst centaurs, sirens, fauns, sphinges, to name but a few. In his City of God, St Augustine mentions the cynocephalus (XVI.8), a humanoid whose dog head and whose barking, however, earn it the appellation of monster, alongside entire races of monstrous humans (monstrosa hominum genera) believed at the time to people some unreachable stretches of the earth. Etymologically, the function of a monster is to show (monstrum monstrat), to point up, to portend what is to become visible.

Questions of visibility and identity abound in Angela’s work in general, and in this piece in particular. Just like in the Middle Ages, here the animal fulfils a specular function, although the specularity is of a different order. In medieval bestiaries the animal world – real or imaginary – would exert a strong influence on human self-reflection by virtue of its graduated allegorical role. However, whereas this was achieved largely by endowing animals therein with human behaviour, through a process of inversus mundi (a reversal of gravity poles), in Angela’s video it is the human who adopts and mirrors the animals’ behaviour, in all four instances (this becomes quite explicit with the last dog).

In the Renaissance manner of a cynophile Titian or Veronese, but especially that of a Piero di Cosimo², here we have – through monstirification, through the specularisation of self in an other – the portrait of the artist as a German shepherd dog (pace, Dylan Thomas), as a Rottweiler, a St Bernard, a Patterdale terrier. With each of the four dogs the dynamic sits forms a pair of animate gargoyles, those human/animal hybrids defined primarily by their mouths’ effluvia. But whereas in the architectural bestiaries the gargoyles spout drainpipe rainwater, their video counterparts eject oral fluids and tongues –
pink fleshy axes on which one life form is spun round the other, where the struggle for ascendancy between anthropomorphism and cynomorphism is transacted in a tight lingual duel, sexually charged.

Acquiring an almost independent existence as two disjecta membra, the two tongues in each of the responsive exchanges are frenetically released and reclaimed by the mouth, that locus of essential trans-substantiation. On the human side of the mirrored image, licking her way into a non-human corporeality, sculpting with her tongue a private desideratum of self-replication through canid doubling, Angela becomes a female Cerberus guarding against any possible return from her own cynomorphosis, once the Styx of transformation has been crossed. On the animal side, her serial partners m) mutter their nuptial vows to her, by turns: "With this tongue I thee mute; with it I lick off all traces of your mother tongue from your tongue. Then shall our free lingual embrace be language-free. Then shall you resemble me, your reflection. And then shall our heraldry be one."

A tongue that is poignantly devoid of speech is the privileged organ of expression in Angela Bartram's performances, often acting as a cipher for her whole body, as happens in Tonguing (2006). There, she uses it as an inverted paint brush with whose applied strokes she builds down rather than up, dematerialising, methodically licking to near-annihilation an exact replica of her own tongue cast in hard-as-rock, edible sweetness.

In both performance pieces other people's language forms an exoskeleton to her art; an emphatically a(nti)linguistic - though heavily lingual - art. A contemporary urgency in the performative arts has been discernible in the seeming prevalence for extravasation of the self, an imperative to use either the body or one's intimate history as an inside-out glove, revealing (with perhaps tragic ostentation) its entrails, down to the minutest particle - a modern-day hepatoscopy of ancient portents, sacrificially obtained, proffered to the haruspex maximus (the modern wordsmith cum audience) for divination.

As we have seen, in the Middle Ages monsters were expressions of fear of a topographical unknown. A vestige of medieval apprehension (however incongruously), the Cartesian conceptualisation of creative imagination later relied precisely on the figure of the monster in art as a paradigm. Perhaps the modern conditions for the emergence of creative hybrids are not obscure zones of the unconscious, but unhurried acts of splicing phoneme with phoneme and depositing them, candy-like, on to an outstretched, agile tongue.

1. Adapted for a contemporary context, Horace’s famous axiom from his Ars poetica, with a nod to H. Borggreve et al., Der gemalte Fürstenstaat : Moritz der Gelehrte und das Bildprogramm in Eschwege (Marburg: Jonas, c2000)

2. His mythological paintings were populated with animal/human hybrids and he himself, owing to his eccentricity and predilections, was said by Vasari to have been more beast than man.

3. Evolutionary psychology offers the notion of assortative pairing, an unconscious seeking of various criteria of similarity or dissimilarity with the being in whom one is reflected.