

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, School of Philosophy,
Department of Philosophy & Hellenic Pasteur Institute - Interdepartmental
Postgraduate Program - Animals: Ethics, Law and Welfare

Foteini - Despoina Beka

«Artistic Forms of Activism: Representations of Animal Rights and Veganism
through the Arts and their Psychological Reception»

Master's Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Supervisor: Georgios Arabatzis, Professor at the School of Philosophy,
Department of Philosophy of the National and Kapodistrian University of
Athens

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Athens, February 2026

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
School of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy
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2. Abstract

The present thesis seeks to investigate the role of artistic expression as a vehicle for activism in the domain of non-human animal rights and vegan ethics. Art, in its manifold forms, music, visual arts, street art, cinema, and literature, has historically functioned not merely as an aesthetic experience, but also as a potent medium of cultivating empathy, promoting social critique and personal and social transformation. Within the contemporary discourse on antispeciesism and ecological responsibility, artistic practices increasingly embody ethical imperatives, challenging prevailing cultural norms and inviting audiences to reconsider their relationship with non-human animals.

This study is situated at the intersection of moral psychology, aesthetic theory, and activist praxis. It aims to elucidate how psychological mechanisms such as empathy, identification, and cognitive dissonance are activated through artistic encounters, thereby fostering attitudinal change and moral reflection. By analyzing selected artistic works and conducting qualitative interviews with creators whose oeuvre explicitly incorporates animal rights and vegan themes, the thesis attempts to highlight the transformative potential of art as a catalyst for ethical awareness and social engagement.

The research is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the ways in which artistic forms communicate and embody vegan and antispeciesist values.
2. To explore the psychological processes through which audiences receive and internalize such messages.
3. To assess the broader implications of art as a medium of moral education and cultural activism.

Ultimately, this thesis aspires to contribute to the academic dialogue on the cultural dimensions of animal ethics, while simultaneously emphasizing the vital role of art in shaping collective consciousness and advancing social justice.

Key Words: Animal Rights, Animal Ethics, Art, Activism, Veganism, Philosophy, Psychology, Aesthetic Theory

3. Introduction

Art has always been a space where people confront injustice, question inherited norms, express empathy and envision alternative modes of a more compassionate way of living and coexistence. From protest songs to documentary cinema, artistic expression has historically provided a framework through which ethical concerns, often difficult to express in conventional discourse, can be explored and communicated. This thesis emerges from that tradition and from a personal recognition of the profound capacity of art to shape our understanding of non-human animals, our relationship with them, and the moral responsibilities, that such relationships entail. As public awareness of animal suffering and environmental degradation intensifies, artistic practices engaging with vegan ethics, animal rights, and ecological responsibility have become increasingly visible and indispensable.

My interest in this topic developed through observing how powerfully artistic works can convey truths that empirical data or rational argumentation through campaigns alone, often fail to communicate. Whether through music, visual imagery, or narrative, art possesses the ability to reach audiences affectively, to unsettle entrenched assumptions, and to create openings for ethical reflection. These qualities render it a compelling medium for antispeciesist critique, which challenges the hierarchical value systems that position human interests above the lives of other beings. Despite the growing presence of animal-rights themes in contemporary culture, however, the artistic dimension of this activism remains comparatively underexamined. This thesis seeks to address that gap.

The theoretical framework draws upon moral philosophy, aesthetic theory, and psychology. Thinkers, such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan, articulate ethical foundations for understanding human obligations toward animals, while scholars like Theodor Adorno underscore the transformative and critical potential of artistic expression. Integrating these perspectives allows the study to examine how ethical messages are not only communicated but also embodied and emotionally processed through artistic media.

Methodologically, the research employs three complementary approaches:

- Qualitative analysis of artistic works that explicitly engage with themes of animal rights, pro environmental acts and veganism.
- Interviews with artists, providing insight into their intentions, creative processes, and reflections on the reception of their work.
- Qualitative research regarding audience reception of artistic activism, designed to capture their comprehension of the message, their emotional responses, and any potential shifts in attitudes toward animals and ethical responsibility.

The study is, generally, guided by the following research questions:

- In what ways do artistic forms communicate and embody values related to veganism and antispeciesism?
- How do audiences psychologically and emotionally respond to such artistic messages?

- What broader implications does art hold as a medium of moral education and cultural activism?
- Can artistic activism challenge and alter social norms and personal life choices?

4. Art, Ethics, and Activism: Theoretical Perspectives

4.1. Philosophy and Animal Ethics

Throughout history, philosophers have shaped the way humans understand their relationship with animals, ethics, and society. Their ideas provide the foundation for contemporary debates on oppression, rights, and justice. From ancient thinkers who emphasized compassion and spiritual purity, to modern voices who questioned human superiority or defended animal sentience, each perspective reflects the cultural and moral concerns of its time. By revisiting these philosophical positions, we can trace how notions of justice, exploitation, and activism have evolved, and how they continue to inform artistic and ethical movements today.

4.1.1. Antiquity and Early Foundations

Across ancient and medieval thought, ideas about animals and ethics developed through diverse traditions. Pythagoras¹ linked human and animal life through metempsychosis, promoting vegetarianism and a way of life grounded in purity, moderation, and non-violence, influencing later thinkers such as Porphyry and Plutarch. Aristotle², by contrast, placed animals in a teleological hierarchy in which they lacked reason and existed “for the sake of man,” a view that legitimized their instrumental use and shaped centuries of anthropocentric thought. Later, Porphyry³ revived vegetarian ethics by arguing that killing animals is morally corrupting and disrupts cosmic harmony, influencing Christian and Renaissance debates on ethical diet, while Plutarch⁴ condemned meat-eating on the grounds that cruelty coarsens human character, anticipating modern concerns about desensitization and embedding animal ethics within discussions of virtue. In medieval theology, Thomas Aquinas⁵ denied animals rational souls but maintained that cruelty harms human virtue, reinforcing anthropocentrism while still promoting kindness. Beyond the Western canon, the Ikhwan al-Safa⁶ portrayed animals demanding justice in the *Epistle of the Animals*, reflecting Islamic ideas of stewardship and offering one of the earliest non-Western articulations of animal rights.

4.1.2. Early Modern Shifts

Early modern thought marked a decisive shift in how philosophers understood animals and their moral status. Montaigne⁷ challenged human superiority by highlighting animal intelligence, emotions, and social bonds, opening space for skepticism toward

¹ Pythagoras, *Fragments*.

² Aristotle, *Historia Animalium* (350 BCE).

³ Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Animal Food* (3rd c. CE).

⁴ Plutarch, *On the Eating of Flesh* (c. 100 CE).

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (13th c.).

⁶ Ikhwan al-Safa, *Epistle of the Animals* (10th c.).

⁷ Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (1580).

anthropocentrism and preparing the ground for more empirical attention to animal experience. Descartes⁸, by contrast, described animals as unconscious automata, a mechanistic view that justified their instrumental use and enabled experimental science, even as it provoked strong opposition and later arguments for sentience. Later, Locke⁹ departed from Cartesian denial by acknowledging that animals feel sensations, a recognition that supported early welfare views without granting rights and introduced the idea that perception itself carries moral relevance.

Kant¹⁰ maintained that humans have no direct duties to animals, yet argued that cruelty corrupts moral character; his indirect-duties framework shaped humane movements and later Kantian reinterpretations that sought to extend moral consideration more directly, while Bentham¹¹ transformed the debate by centering ethics on suffering, famously insisting that the key question is whether animals can suffer; his utilitarianism underpinned early anti-cruelty laws and remains foundational in contemporary discussions of sentience. Schopenhauer¹² offered a contrasting ethic grounded in compassion, condemning cruelty as a failure to recognize shared suffering and influencing later thinkers such as Tolstoy and modern care-ethics traditions. Finally, Darwin¹³ provided scientific support for moral extension by demonstrating evolutionary continuity between humans and animals, showing that cognitive and emotional capacities exist on a spectrum and undermining claims of absolute human superiority.

Together, these thinkers reshaped the intellectual landscape, gradually expanding the conceptual space for considering animals as morally significant beings.

4.1.3. Radical Voices in the 19th Century

Radical nineteenth-century thinkers expanded animal ethics by linking it to broader struggles for social justice. Peter Kropotkin¹⁴ challenged the Hobbesian view of nature as competition, arguing in *Mutual Aid* that cooperation is a fundamental evolutionary force. His anarchist commitment to solidarity, communal living, and anti-hierarchy extended to animals, influencing ecological anarchism and later liberation movements. Élisée Reclus¹⁵, another anarchist, defended vegetarianism and respect for all life, grounding animal ethics in ecological awareness and social emancipation. His integration of geography, ecology, and moral philosophy made him an early figure in environmental and animal ethics, and his simple lifestyle prefigured modern green anarchism. Leo Tolstoy¹⁶ advanced a moral philosophy of non-violence, insisting that harm toward animals is inseparable from harm toward humans. In works like *The First Step*, he framed vegetarianism as essential to moral progress and compassion. Tolstoy's ascetic life and writings inspired humanitarian and animal-welfare

⁸ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637).

⁹ John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (1797).

¹¹ Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789).

¹² Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality* (1840).

¹³ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (1871).

¹⁴ Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1902).

¹⁵ Élisée Reclus, *Essays on Vegetarianism and Ecology* (Paris, 1892).

¹⁶ Leo Tolstoy, *The First Step* (Moscow, 1891).

movements, positioning him as a moral exemplar who connected animal ethics with broader commitments to peace and justice.

4.1.4. 20th Century Transformations

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries brought major transformations in animal ethics, shaped by utilitarian, deontological, feminist, political, and posthumanist approaches. Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*¹⁷ reframed ethics around suffering, arguing that the capacity to suffer, not rationality or language, is the morally relevant criterion. By introducing *speciesism*, Singer compared discrimination against animals to racism and sexism, grounding a pragmatic, reformist approach aimed at reducing suffering even within existing systems. Critics, however, argue that utilitarianism risks sacrificing individuals for aggregate welfare. Tom Regan¹⁸ offered a contrasting deontological view in *The Case for Animal Rights*, insisting that animals are “subjects-of-a-life” with inherent value. His rights-based framework rejects sacrificing individuals for the greater good, though critics find it rigid in complex ecological dilemmas. Carol J. Adams expanded the field by linking feminism and animal ethics in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*¹⁹, introducing the “absent referent” to show how patriarchal culture erases animals when they become meat. Her ecofeminist, intersectional analysis connected speciesism with sexism and racism, influencing contemporary social justice movements. Gary Francione²⁰ advanced an abolitionist critique, arguing that as long as animals are property, they cannot have meaningful rights. Rejecting welfare reforms as inadequate, he emphasized veganism and non-use as the only consistent ethical stance.

A political and institutional turn emerged with thinkers who sought to embed animal ethics into governance and law. Martha Nussbaum extended her capabilities approach to animals in *Frontiers of Justice*²¹, arguing that justice requires enabling animals to flourish according to their species-specific capacities, such as movement, play, and social interaction. Her framework has significant implications for policy, though critics note its demanding institutional requirements. Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka's *Zoopolis*²² proposed a political theory of animal citizenship, treating domesticated animals as citizens, liminal animals as denizens, and wild animals as sovereign communities. Their work reframed animal ethics as constitutional design, influencing debates on guardianship, representation, and multispecies governance. Alasdair Cochrane's *Sentientist Politics*²³ grounded rights in sentience and developed practical models for integrating animal protection into political institutions. Oscar

¹⁷ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1975).

¹⁸ Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

¹⁹ Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (New York: Continuum, 1990).

²⁰ Gary Francione, *Animals, Property, and the Law* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

²¹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

²² Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²³ Alasdair Cochrane, *Sentientist Politics: A Theory of Global Inter-Species Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Horta²⁴ expanded the field by focusing on wild-animal suffering, arguing that anti-speciesism requires intervention to alleviate harms such as starvation, disease, and predation. His work challenges romanticized views of nature and pushes animal ethics toward welfare biology and public policy. Lori Gruen's *Entangled Empathy*²⁵ offered a relational ethic centered on empathy, care, and shared vulnerability, emphasizing attentive engagement rather than abstract rules. Her approach highlights the moral significance of relationships and interdependence.

Posthumanist and critical perspectives further reshaped the conceptual landscape. Jacques Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am*²⁶ deconstructed the category of "the animal", challenging the human/animal binary and exposing the ethical implications of vulnerability and the gaze. His work opened space for critical animal studies and philosophical critiques of anthropocentrism. Christine Korsgaard reinterpreted Kantian ethics in *Fellow Creatures*²⁷, arguing that animals are ends in themselves and that humans have direct duties toward them; the very reasons that constitute us as moral agents commit us to regard animals as subjects of a good. Sunaura Taylor integrated disability studies with animal ethics in *Beasts of Burden*²⁸, showing how ableism and speciesism intersect and emphasizing embodiment, dependency, and mutual aid. Donna Haraway²⁹ reframed human-animal relations through her concept of companion species, emphasizing co-evolution, shared practices, and reciprocal responsibilities that resist simplistic binaries such as exploitation versus liberation. Finally, Rosi Braidotti's³⁰ posthumanism dissolved human exceptionalism and proposed a zoe-centered ethics that values the generative flows of life across species. Her affirmative politics reframes justice as relational, dynamic, and responsive to living systems, expanding animal ethics beyond suffering or rights toward shared vitality and creative coexistence.

4.1.5. Contemporary Developments

Contemporary animal ethics has been shaped by thinkers who expanded its philosophical, narrative, and legal foundations. Mary Midgley³¹ challenged reductionist accounts of animals and argued for moral attention grounded in everyday life, drawing on ethology and shared vulnerabilities to show that obligations arise from lived relationships as much as from principles. Mark Rowlands³² blended analytic philosophy with memoir, using his relationship with a wolf to illustrate friendship and shared life as ethical foundations and demonstrating

²⁴ Oscar Horta, "Debunking the Idyllic View of Natural Processes: Population Dynamics and Suffering in the Wild," *Télos* 17, no. 1 (2010).

²⁵ Lori Gruen, *Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for Our Relationships with Animals* (New York: Lantern Books, 2015).

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

²⁷ Christine M. Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to the Other Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

²⁸ Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (New York: The New Press, 2017).

²⁹ Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

³⁰ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

³¹ Mary Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983).

³² Mark Rowlands, *The Philosopher and the Wolf* (London: Granta, 2008).

how multispecies relationships enrich philosophical reflection. Steven Wise³³ translated philosophical arguments into legal strategy through the Nonhuman Rights Project, pursuing habeas corpus petitions for great apes, elephants, and other cognitively complex animals, advancing legal personhood as a tool for animal rights and bringing unprecedented attention to animal rights within jurisprudence. Together, these thinkers broadened the field by integrating public philosophy, narrative experience, and legal innovation.

4.2. Crossroads of Animal Ethics and Other Movements

Animal ethics does not exist in isolation but intersects with broader struggles for justice, equality, and ecological sustainability, revealing how systems of domination such as patriarchy, racism, ableism, and speciesism are mutually reinforcing.

Feminist and ecofeminist thinkers like Carol J. Adams³⁴, Greta Gaard³⁵, and Josephine Donovan show how patriarchal structures that objectify women operate similarly against animals, with Adams' concept of the "absent referent" exposing how language erases individuality when beings are turned into "meat." Ecofeminism³⁶ emphasizes empathy, relationality, and embodied ethics, challenging dualisms such as male/female, culture/nature, and human/animal, and offering a holistic vision that links gender justice with ecological and animal justice.

Civil rights and anti-racist perspectives extend this critique: Peter Singer's³⁷ notion of speciesism parallels racism and sexism, while Angela Davis³⁸ highlights how animal liberation is inseparable from human liberation, insisting that struggles against racial and species oppression must be understood as part of a unified critique of systemic violence.

Environmental and ecological movements further connect these concerns, with figures like Élisée Reclus³⁹ and Peter Kropotkin⁴⁰ linking animal liberation to ecological balance and solidarity, and Martha Nussbaum's⁴¹ capabilities approach demanding institutional changes that integrate animals into broader frameworks of ecological justice. These perspectives

³³ Steven Wise, *Rattling the Cage: Toward Legal Rights for Animals* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 2000).

³⁴ Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (New York: Continuum, 1990).

³⁵ Greta Gaard, *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions* (New York: Continuum, 1997).

³⁶ Stavros Karageorgakis, ed., *Οικοφεμινισμός* [Ecofeminism] (Athens: Eutopia, 2022).

³⁷ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1975).

³⁸ Angela Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

³⁹ Élisée Reclus, *On Vegetarianism* (1895), in *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: Selected Writings of Élisée Reclus*, ed. John P. Clark and Camille Martin (Oakland: PM Press, 2013).

⁴⁰ Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (London: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1902).

⁴¹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

underscore that exploitation of animals is inseparable from ecological destruction, requiring multispecies justice and sustainable institutions.

LGBTQ+ and queer theory add another dimension, with Sunaura Taylor⁴² showing how ableism and speciesism intersect, and queer theorists critiquing binaries of “normality” and “naturalness” that justify exclusion. Queer ecology emphasizes fluidity, hybridity, and multispecies kinship, situating animal ethics within broader critiques of normativity and oppression.

Labor and economic justice movements also reveal intersections: industrial exploitation of animals is tied to exploitation of workers in slaughterhouses and factory farms, echoing Leo Tolstoy’s⁴³ claim that violence against animals habituates humans to violence against humans. Contemporary activists highlight how animal liberation must be linked to fair working conditions and economic equality, making justice multispecies and intersectional. Thinkers like Singer provide comparative tools across forms of discrimination, Regan⁴⁴ offers a rights-based framework that extends to all oppressed subjects, and Nussbaum opens paths for institutional integration of animals into multidimensional justice.

Taken together, these intersections show that animal ethics is not a marginal concern but part of a comprehensive vision of social justice, enriched by feminism, anti-racism, ecology, queer theory, and labor movements, and expanded through art, philosophy, and activism into a field that challenges domination and reimagines liberation across species.

4.3. Aesthetic Theory and Animal Ethics

Aesthetic theory provides a crucial framework for understanding art, not merely as an object of beauty and entertainment, but as a medium of ethical and political intervention. Since the 18th century, philosophers of art have examined how artistic forms cultivate empathy, challenge social norms and inspire transformation. Within the discourse on animal ethics, aesthetic theory allows us to see how art functions as a catalyst for reimagining human-animal relations, offering new modes of moral imagination and cultural critique.

Theodor W. Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*⁴⁵ views art as resistance to commodification, preserving a space of “non-identity” where contradictions and suffering are expressed beyond utilitarian logic. Genuine art unsettles and provokes reflection, exposing hidden social truths. Applied to animal ethics, artworks depicting factory farming as violence disrupt complacency.

⁴² Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (New York: The New Press, 2017).

⁴³ Leo Tolstoy, *The First Step* (1891), in *Tolstoy’s Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence*, ed. David Stephens (London: Sheed & Ward, 1967).

⁴⁴ Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

⁴⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

His *Negative Dialectics*⁴⁶ emphasize art's role in revealing contradictions rather than offering solutions, aligning with activist art that challenges speciesist norms.⁴⁷

Herbert Marcuse's *The Aesthetic Dimension*⁴⁸ highlights art's utopian potential, projecting images of liberation and alternative futures. Unlike Adorno's focus on negation, Marcuse stresses art's affirmative power to cultivate empathy and imagination. In animal ethics, this framework shows how literature or film portraying animals as companions inspires visions of coexistence beyond exploitation⁴⁹. Aesthetic experience suspends domination, resonating with vegan art practices that invite audiences to imagine egalitarian multispecies communities⁵⁰.

Martha Nussbaum's *Poetic Justice*⁵¹ argues literature fosters "moral imagination," allowing readers to inhabit new perspectives and cultivate empathy. For her, art is central to justice, training citizens to recognize vulnerability and extend compassion. Applied to animal ethics, novels, films, and children's stories depicting animals as protagonists expand the moral circle⁵². Storytelling humanizes—or "animalizes"—ethical concern, aligning with campaigns that use narrative to inspire compassion and inclusion for animals⁵³.

Jacques Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics* introduces the concept of the "distribution of the sensible." He argues that art reconfigures what is visible, audible, and thinkable in a society.⁵⁴ In animal ethics, this perspective highlights how art can make animals perceptible as political beings, not invisible resources.⁵⁵ For example, performance art that stages animals as co-participants challenges the human monopoly on visibility. Rancière's framework underscores that aesthetics is inherently political: by redistributing attention, art can destabilize hierarchies of species.⁵⁶

Arnold Berleant's *Aesthetics of Engagement* rejects detached contemplation and emphasizes active participation. He argues that aesthetic experience is immersive, involving the body, emotions, and environment.⁵⁷ In contrast to traditional aesthetics that treat art as an object separate from the viewer, Berleant insists that art is relational. Applied to animal ethics, this suggests that encountering art about animals is not passive but implicates the audience ethically.⁵⁸ For example, immersive installations that simulate factory farming environments

⁴⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973).

⁴⁷ David Cook, *Adorno, Habermas, and the Search for a Rational Society* (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁴⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

⁴⁹ Douglas Kellner, *Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁵⁰ Steven Best, "Marcuse and Animal Liberation," *Critical Theory and Animal Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (2009): 45–67.

⁵¹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

⁵² Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁵³ Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

⁵⁴ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

⁵⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

⁵⁶ Heather Davis, "Animals and the Distribution of the Sensible," *Journal of Critical Animal Studies* 11, no. 2 (2013): 23–41.

⁵⁷ Arnold Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field: A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1970).

⁵⁸ Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics of Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

force viewers into embodied confrontation with animal suffering. Berleant's emphasis on engagement highlights how art can move audiences from spectatorship to moral involvement, bridging aesthetics and activism⁵⁹.

4.4. The Psychological Dimension of Art Reception in Animal Ethics

The reception of art is not a neutral process; it engages psychological mechanisms that shape how audiences perceive, interpret, and internalize ethical messages. Within the context of animal ethics, art functions as a catalyst for emotional and cognitive processes that can foster moral reflection and behavioral change. This subchapter explores how empathy, identification, cognitive dissonance, and attitudinal transformation are activated through artistic encounters, thereby linking aesthetic experience with ethical awareness.

Empathy

Empathy is one of the most powerful psychological mechanisms activated by art. It involves the capacity to feel with and for others, extending emotional resonance beyond the human sphere.⁶⁰ Artistic representations of animals, whether in literature, film, or visual art, invite audiences to imagine the lived experience of nonhuman beings.⁶¹ For example, cinematic depictions of animal suffering can elicit visceral responses that exceed abstract ethical arguments. Empathy, in this sense, becomes a bridge between aesthetic experience and moral concern, fostering recognition of animals as subjects of value.⁶²

Identification

Identification refers to the psychological process by which audiences project themselves into the perspective of another being.⁶³ In art, this mechanism allows viewers or readers to inhabit the standpoint of animals, experiencing the world through their eyes. Children's literature, for instance, often anthropomorphizes animals, enabling young readers to identify with them and thereby cultivate moral sensitivity.⁶⁴ Identification is not merely imaginative; it can reshape ethical boundaries by destabilizing the human-animal divide.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Emily Brady, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).

⁶⁰ Martin L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁶¹ Susan Lanzoni, *Empathy: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

⁶² Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁶³ Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁶⁴ John Simons, *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁶⁵ Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance occurs when individuals experience psychological discomfort due to conflicting beliefs or practices.⁶⁶ Art can intensify this dissonance by confronting audiences with representations that challenge their everyday habits. For example, a painting or installation that sets side by side images of factory farming and scenes of domestic companionship forces viewers to reconcile their affection for pets with their consumption of animal products.⁶⁷ This confrontation can provoke moral reflection, compelling audiences to reconsider entrenched cultural norms.⁶⁸

Attitudinal Change

Ultimately, the activation of empathy, identification, and cognitive dissonance through art can lead to attitudinal change. Art does not simply inform; it has the power and potential to transform.⁶⁹ By engaging audiences emotionally and cognitively, artistic encounters can shift perceptions of animals from objects of utility to subjects of moral consideration.⁷⁰ This transformation is not instantaneous but cumulative, as repeated exposure to animal-centered art deepens ethical awareness and strengthens commitment to social change.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

⁶⁷ Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁶⁸ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

⁶⁹ Melanie Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* (San Francisco: Conari Press, 2010).

⁷⁰ Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

⁷¹ Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1975).

5. Analysis of Artistic Works

5.1. Literature and Poetry

Literature and poetry have long served as powerful vehicles for expressing ethical concerns about nonhuman animals. From ancient fables and religious narratives to modern novels and activist poetry, literary works provide unique lens through which audiences can reflect on the moral status of animals. Unlike philosophical treatises, literature often engages readers emotionally, cultivating empathy and moral imagination through narrative and metaphor. This subchapter explores a diverse corpus of texts (classical, modern, and traditional) that explicitly or implicitly address animal ethics, veganism, and antispeciesism.

5.1.1. Classical and Traditional Narratives

Aesop's Fables⁷²

Aesop's Fables (6th century BCE) are among the earliest literary works to give animals a voice as moral agents. In these short allegories, animals embody virtues and vices, teaching lessons about justice, cunning, and humility, collapsing the human-animal divide and suggesting that wisdom and folly are shared across species. By presenting animals as narrators of truth, Aesop anticipates later traditions that use animal voices to critique human society and ethics. Some notable works are, 1. *The Dog and the Wolf*, where a starving wolf envies a well-fed dog but rejects domestication when he learns it requires wearing a collar. The fable contrasts freedom with comfort, suggesting that liberty is worth more than security under domination. In animal ethics, this story critiques domestication and exploitation, highlighting the cost of human control over animals. It anticipates modern debates about captivity, autonomy, and the right of animals to live free from human-imposed constraints. 2. *The Lion and the Mouse*, in which a lion spares a mouse, who later rescues him by gnawing through ropes when the lion is trapped. The moral "kindness is never wasted" underscores mutual exchange and empathy across species. This fable challenges hierarchical views of strength and weakness, showing that even the smallest beings have value and the power to act. It resonates with animal ethics by affirming that compassion toward animals fosters mutual benefit and moral growth, undermining anthropocentric hierarchies.

⁷² Center for the Greek Language, *Aesop: Myths*, Digital Library of Ancient Greek Literature, accessed November 15, 2025, https://www.greek-language.gr/digitalResources/ancient_greek/library/browse.html?text_id=75&page=3.

Jataka Tales (Buddhist Tradition)

The Jataka Tales are ancient Indian stories recounting the previous lives of the Buddha, often in animal form. These narratives emphasize empathy, compassion, non-harm (ahimsa), and the interconnectedness of all beings, by portraying animals as moral exemplars. Their enduring influence demonstrates how traditional literature can embed animal ethics within spiritual and cultural frameworks, offering a vision of multispecies justice that transcends time and geography. Some examples are, 1. *The Banyan Deer (Ruru Jataka)*, that depicts a compassionate deer who saves another from sacrifice, even at great personal risk. The Buddha, incarnated as the deer, demonstrates empathy and courage, persuading the king to abolish animal slaughter. This narrative directly critiques ritual sacrifice and affirms the intrinsic value of animal life, while exemplifying how literature can challenge cultural norms, transforming cruelty into justice through moral imagination and leadership⁷³. 2. *The Selfless Hare (Sasa Jataka)*, in which a hare offers his own body as food to a hungry beggar, who is actually the god Śakra in disguise. The hare's willingness to sacrifice himself embodies ultimate generosity and compassion. Rather than glorifying suffering, the story emphasizes the ethical depth of selflessness and the recognition of animals as moral exemplars. The hare's image was said to be immortalized on the moon, symbolizing eternal remembrance of animal virtue. This narrative challenges human superiority by presenting an animal as the highest model of ethical conduct⁷⁴.

Native American Folk Tales

Native American oral traditions present animals as kin, teachers, and spiritual guides. Through figures like the buffalo, coyote, and bear, these tales embed respect, reciprocity, and humility into cultural identity. They challenge anthropocentrism by situating animals within networks of community and cosmology. Some notable mentions are: 1. *Coyote the Trickster (Navajo Tradition)*, where a coyote steals fire to give it to humans, embodying both mischief and generosity. His dual nature highlights the complexity of animals as moral agents, capable of wisdom and error. Coyote's antics remind audiences that animals are not passive symbols but active participants in moral teaching. These stories resist simplistic hierarchies, portraying animals as teachers who reveal truths about human behavior. Coyote's role demonstrates how Native traditions use animals to critique social norms and cultivate humility.⁷⁵ 2. *The Origin of the Bear Dance (Ute Tradition)*, that recounts how bears taught humans a ceremonial dance to honor renewal and community. The Bear Dance, still performed today, symbolizes the cyclical rhythm of nature and the kinship between species. By attributing cultural practices to animals, the story affirms their role as teachers and spiritual guides. It emphasizes reciprocity: humans

⁷³ Tim Bewer, *Ruru Jataka (#482)*, The Jataka Tales, accessed November 15, 2025, <https://thejatakatales.com/ruru-jataka-482>.

⁷⁴ Tim Bewer, *Sasa Jataka (#316)*, The Jataka Tales, accessed November 15, 2025, <https://thejatakatales.com/sasa-jataka-316>.

⁷⁵ Barre Toelken, *The Dynamics of Folklore* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996).

honor bears through ritual, acknowledging their wisdom and power. The tale situates animals as cultural co-creators, embedding respect and ritual into human society. It exemplifies how oral traditions sustain ethical relationships with animals across generations.⁷⁶

African Folk Tales

African folklore often portrays animals as clever tricksters or moral exemplars. Stories of the hare, tortoise, and Anansi highlight intelligence, humility, and the dangers of greed. These narratives use animals to critique domination and affirm communal values of justice and resilience. Some notable African folk tales are: 1. *The Hare and the Lion (West African Tradition)*. In West African folktales, the hare often outwits stronger animals like the lion, symbolizing intelligence over brute force. One story recounts how the hare tricks the lion into falling into a trap, saving weaker creatures from harm. The moral emphasizes that wisdom and cunning can protect the vulnerable, challenging hierarchies of strength. From an animal ethics perspective, the tale affirms the agency of small animals and critiques domination, showing that justice can emerge through solidarity and clever resistance.⁷⁷ 2. *Anansi and the Wisdom of the World (Ashanti Tradition)*, where Anansi the spider attempts to hoard all wisdom in a pot, believing he can control knowledge. However, his son points out his clumsiness, and the pot spills, dispersing wisdom across the world. The tale critiques selfishness and affirms that wisdom must be shared. Anansi's failure demonstrates that animals, even tricksters, embody moral lessons about community and justice. From an animal ethics perspective, the story situates animals as carriers of cultural truth, showing that knowledge and morality are collective rather than individual possessions.⁷⁸

Japanese Folk Tales

Japanese folk tales weave animals into spiritual and everyday life, emphasizing reciprocity and compassion. Cranes, hares, and sparrows embody generosity, vulnerability, and gratitude, teaching ethical lessons through myth and ritual. They reflect a worldview of interdependence between humans, animals, and nature. Some worth mentioning tales are: 1. *The Grateful Crane (Tsuru no Ongaeshi)*, in which a crane repays a man who saved her by weaving beautiful cloth from her own feathers. When he discovers her secret, she departs, leaving him with sorrow. The story emphasizes reciprocity, compassion, and the dignity of animals. It critiques human greed and intrusion, showing that relationships with animals must be based on respect rather than exploitation. The crane's sacrifice and departure highlight the fragility of trust between species, underscoring the ethical imperative of care.⁷⁹ 2. *The White Hare of Inaba (Shinto Tradition)*. This ancient tale recounts how a hare tricks crocodiles to cross the sea but is punished for deceit. Later, a kind deity heals the hare's wounds, teaching compassion and

⁷⁶ Omer C. Stewart, *Ute Indian Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990).

⁷⁷ Harold Courlander, *A Treasury of African Folklore* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1975).

⁷⁸ Peggy Appiah, *Tales of Anansi* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1970).

⁷⁹ Keigo Seki, *Folktales of Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

forgiveness. The story situates animals within Shinto cosmology, portraying them as moral beings who participate in divine narratives. It emphasizes that kindness toward animals is a sacred duty, linking ethics with spirituality. The hare's vulnerability and redemption resonate with themes of empathy and justice central to animal ethics. The tale demonstrates how animals embody both fallibility and virtue, making them mirrors of human morality.⁸⁰

5.1.2. Modern Literature

Anna Sewell - Black Beauty

Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877), the Autobiography of a Horse, is a landmark in animal-centered literature, narrated from the perspective of a horse. The novel exposes the cruelty of human practices such as harsh harnessing and overwork, while advocating for compassion and humane treatment. Sewell's narrative strategy, giving voice to the animal itself, was revolutionary, fostering empathy by allowing readers to inhabit the lived experience of a nonhuman being. The book influenced animal welfare movements in Britain and beyond, demonstrating the power of literature to inspire social change. Its legacy persists as a foundational text in animal ethics and advocacy.⁸¹

Leo Tolstoy - The First Step

Tolstoy's essay *The First Step* (1891) connects vegetarianism with moral progress, arguing that abstaining from meat is essential for cultivating compassion. He insists that violence against animals habituates humans to violence against each other, making dietary choices inseparable from broader ethical commitments. Tolstoy's ascetic lifestyle embodied his philosophy, reinforcing his role as a moral exemplar. His integration of spiritual discipline, nonviolence, and social justice situates animal ethics within a larger vision of peace. The essay remains a touchstone for ethical vegetarianism, linking personal practice with collective transformation.⁸²

Rainer Maria Rilke – The Panther

Rilke's poem *The Panther* (1902) captures the psychological imprisonment of a caged animal, evoking empathy through vivid imagery. The panther's gaze, dulled by confinement, symbolizes the crushing of vitality under human domination. Rilke's modernist sensibility transforms the animal into a metaphor for alienation, yet the poem also insists on the reality of

⁸⁰ Donald Keene, *Japanese Literature: An Introduction for Western Readers* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1981).

⁸¹ Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty* (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1877).

⁸² Leo Tolstoy, *The First Step* (Moscow, 1891).

animal suffering. By portraying captivity as a spiritual death, Rilke challenges readers to confront the ethical implications of zoos and human control over wildlife. The poem exemplifies how lyric poetry can cultivate moral imagination and critique anthropocentrism.⁸³

Pablo Neruda - Ode to the Cat

Neruda's *Ode to the Cat* celebrates feline individuality, independence, and mystery. Written in his signature style of elemental odes, the poem elevates the cat as a figure of dignity and autonomy, resisting human attempts at domination. Neruda's playful yet reverent tone highlights the cat's refusal to conform, making it a symbol of freedom and resistance. By situating the animal within a poetic framework of wonder, Neruda affirms its intrinsic value beyond utility. The ode exemplifies how poetry can honor animals as subjects of admiration and respect, challenging cultural erasure.⁸⁴

George Orwell - Animal Farm

Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) is a political allegory that uses animals to critique authoritarianism and exploitation. While primarily a satire of Soviet communism, the novel also raises questions about the instrumentalization of animals in human political struggles. The pigs' rise to power mirrors human hierarchies, showing how domination corrupts ideals of equality. From an animal ethics perspective, the novel illustrates how animals are symbolically mobilized to expose injustice, while simultaneously reminding us of their vulnerability to human exploitation. Orwell's work demonstrates the dual role of literature: critiquing human society while revealing the ethical stakes of animal representation.⁸⁵

Gary Snyder - Turtle Island

Gary Snyder's *Turtle Island* (1974) is a collection of ecological poetry that integrates animals, nature, and spirituality. Drawing on Buddhist philosophy and Native American traditions, Snyder situates animals within a vision of interdependence and ecological justice. His poems celebrate wildness, critique industrial exploitation, and call for a return to harmony with the natural world. Snyder's work exemplifies how poetry can function as activism, embedding environmental and animal ethics within cultural expression. By blending lyrical beauty with political urgency, *Turtle Island* became a foundational text in eco-poetry and remains influential in environmental movements.⁸⁶

⁸³ Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Panther," in *New Poems* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1907).

⁸⁴ Pablo Neruda, "Ode to the Cat," in *Odas Elementales* (Santiago: Editorial Losada, 1954).

⁸⁵ George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1945).

⁸⁶ Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island* (New York: New Directions, 1974).

Matsuo Bashō - Haiku

Bashō's haiku, such as those in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1689), often highlight animals in harmony with nature. His minimalist style captures fleeting moments, frogs leaping into ponds, birds in seasonal migration, revealing the interconnectedness of all beings. These poems embody a worldview of interdependence, where animals are not separate from human life but integral to the rhythms of existence. Bashō's haiku cultivate attentiveness and reverence, encouraging readers to perceive animals as companions in the shared fabric of nature. This poetic tradition exemplifies how brevity and simplicity can evoke profound ethical reflection.⁸⁷

Jonathan Safran Foer - Eating Animals

Foer's *Eating Animals* (2009) blends memoir, investigative journalism, and philosophical reflection to confront the realities of industrial farming. By weaving personal narrative with factual accounts of slaughterhouses, Foer engages readers emotionally and intellectually, provoking cognitive dissonance. His exploration of cultural traditions, family meals, and ethical dilemmas situates animal ethics within everyday life. The book challenges readers to reconsider the moral implications of consumption, emphasizing that dietary choices are inseparable from violence and ecological destruction. Foer's hybrid style exemplifies how contemporary literature can function as activism, bridging personal experience with systemic critique.⁸⁸

J.M. Coetzee - The Lives of Animals

Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (1999) presents fictional lectures by the character Elizabeth Costello, who confronts audiences with the moral urgency of animal suffering. Through narrative fiction, Coetzee dramatizes philosophical debates, highlighting the tension between rational argument and emotional appeal. Costello insists that empathy, rather than abstract reasoning, is essential for ethical transformation. The text blurs boundaries between literature and philosophy, showing how narrative can embody moral reflection. Coetzee's work has become a cornerstone in animal ethics, demonstrating the power of literature to challenge complacency and provoke attitudinal change.⁸⁹

Vegan Sidekick

Vegan Sidekick⁹⁰ is a UK-based comic artist whose satirical panels dismantle common arguments against veganism. By using humor and stark juxtapositions, Vegan Sidekick's

⁸⁷ Matsuo Bashō, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (Tokyo, 1689).

⁸⁸ Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009).

⁸⁹ J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁹⁰ Vegan Sidekick, Instagram profile, accessed December 12, 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/vegansidekick>.

comics transform everyday debates into ethical confrontations, making animal activism accessible to mass audiences online. In one panel, a judge arbitrarily assigns value to different animals: pigs, cows, and lambs are sentenced to death, while dogs and cats are granted protective custody. When a character suggests sparing all animals, the judge accuses them of being judgmental, a biting reversal that critiques moral inconsistency. Another strip features two figures, one violently grinding chicks, stabbing animals, and inseminating cows, all justified as “my way of life”. When the other character gently suggests stopping, they’re accused of “forcing” beliefs, a satirical inversion that exposes how violence is normalized while compassion is framed as aggression. A third panel shows an alien condemning human factory farms, only to later shoot “free-range” humans, mocking the ethical loopholes used to justify animal exploitation. In another, a person prepares to kill a lamb while claiming to “love animals,” accusing the vegan of being hostile for intervening. Finally, a comic critiques biblical justifications for animal harm, showing a dog being killed in the name of “dominion,” while contradictions in scripture are selectively ignored. Together, these panels dismantle cultural, religious, and personal excuses for violence, centering animals as visible, sentient victims.

5.2. Visual Art (Paintings, Photography, Sculptures) and Street Art

Visual art and street art have emerged as powerful vehicles for activism, particularly in the realm of animal ethics. Through painting, photography, installations, and public murals, artists confront audiences with the realities of exploitation while celebrating the dignity and resilience of nonhuman animals. These works transform galleries and urban spaces into sites of resistance, cultivating empathy and sparking dialogue. By merging aesthetic innovation with ethical urgency, visual and street art challenge cultural norms and invite collective reflection on our responsibilities toward animals and the environment.

Sue Coe – Dead Meat

Sue Coe’s *Dead Meat* (1996)⁹¹ is a landmark in activist art. Her paintings and prints depict slaughterhouses with stark, almost grotesque realism. Coe’s use of heavy lines and dark palettes transforms industrial violence into a visual indictment of systemic cruelty. Rather than aestheticizing suffering, she confronts viewers with the hidden realities of meat, dairy and clothing production, forcing moral reflection. Her work bridges art and journalism, functioning as both testimony and protest. By placing animals at the center of her compositions, Coe challenges anthropocentrism and insists on empathy as a political act.

⁹¹Sue Coe, *Dead Meat* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1996). [Porkopolis/Dead Meat](https://www.porkopolis.com/Dead-Meat/) | www.suecoe.com

Helen Barker – Animal Rights Collection⁹²

Helen Barker is a contemporary British artist whose practice is explicitly rooted in animal rights activism, by transforming documentary events and systemic exploitation into visual narratives of empathy and resistance. Barker's art is not decorative, but testimonial; each piece functions as both memorial and protest, foregrounding the lived experiences of animals subjected to human domination. In her artwork *Tyke's Freedom (1994)*, a linocut print that memorializes Tyke, the circus elephant killed in Honolulu after her escape in 1994, Barker's lightly inked style echoes the grainy texture of newsprint, underscoring the documentary basis of the image. Yet the composition reframes Tyke's story from her own perspective: ships, bullets, and stop signs become symbolic of captivity and violence, while doves and trees evoke freedom and return. The print functions as both elegy and indictment, transforming a tragic incident into a catalyst for activism against the use of wild animals in circuses. Another notable work is *The Unheard Screams (2019)*, where Barker interprets the image of a dragnet capturing millions of marine animals. While the target species is shrimp, the print emphasizes the suffering of "bycatch", fishes and other beings discarded as waste. Barker critiques the selective empathy of media and audiences, who mourn charismatic mammals while ignoring trillions of fishes suffocating in nets. Her stark imagery conveys panic and terror, challenging the depersonalization of marine life. The work insists that fishes feel pain and deserve moral consideration, expanding the scope of animal rights discourse.

Ruth Killoran

Ruth Killoran, a Christchurch-based vegan artist, creates paintings and sculptures that confront speciesism and animal exploitation. In *Backlash of the Carnist*⁹³, she depicts human figures entangled with animals, symbolizing the violence embedded in carnist culture, while *Let Them Be*⁹⁴ portrays animals in fragile, dreamlike settings, emphasizing their right to exist free from human interference, and in *Why Dad*⁹⁵, a child questions meat consumption, exposing generational contradictions and the normalization of animal killing. Her piece *Speciesism Kills*⁹⁶ uses watercolour and graphite to highlight the systemic harm caused by human hierarchies over animals, while *You Are What You Eat*⁹⁷ contrasts two human figures whose bodies reflect their dietary choices. One is grotesquely fused with animal flesh, embodying the violence and suffering inherent in meat consumption, while the other appears in harmony with plant forms, suggesting a more ethical relationship with food. Through this juxtaposition, the artwork underscores how eating habits shape both physical identity and moral responsibility. Killoran's art blends surrealism with activist urgency, inviting viewers to reflect on empathy, justice, and the interconnectedness of all beings.

⁹² Helen Barker, *Animal Rights Art*, Helen Barker Art, accessed November 16, 2025, <https://www.helenbarkerart.co.uk/animal-rights>.

⁹³ Ruth Killoran, *Backlash of the Carnist*, 2018, watercolour and acrylic, Christchurch.

⁹⁴ Ruth Killoran, *Let Them Be*, 2019, watercolour and ink, Christchurch.

⁹⁵ Ruth Killoran, *Why Dad*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, Christchurch.

⁹⁶ Ruth Killoran, *Speciesism Kills*, 2023, watercolour and graphite, Christchurch.

⁹⁷ Ruth Killoran, *You Are What You Eat*, watercolour and ink, Christchurch.

In an interview for this thesis, Ruth Killoran shared her thoughts about pro-animal activism in her art. She views art not simply as a matter of aesthetics but as a language of activism, a medium through which symbolism and intuition can challenge entrenched perspectives. For her, the creative process is fluid and instinctive, often beginning without a plan and evolving into stories that mirror human behavior. Over time, this practice became a natural form of activism, offering audiences a chance to reflect on their choices and the broader consequences of their actions. Central to her work is the idea of interconnectedness: she employs recurring symbols, ribbons, trees, streams, bird-like forms, and stylized landscapes, to emphasize that what affects one species inevitably affects all. By inviting viewers to recognize these connections, she underscores the ethical imperative of treating all beings with the same respect we desire for ourselves.

Her art has sparked unexpected debates, particularly around animal agriculture. Killoran notes that many people, conditioned by marketing narratives, resist the idea of living without animal products. Yet she sees value even in negative reactions, recalling an exhibition where a viewer initially dismissed her painting as “too dark” but later purchased it, compelled by its lingering impact. Such moments affirm her belief that art can plant seeds of thought, provoking emotions that lead to deeper reflection. Unlike traditional advocacy campaigns, which can trigger defensiveness, activist art allows for quiet absorption. Images can bypass confrontation, offering space for viewers to arrive at their own conclusions, while still carrying the emotional weight of cruelty and liberation.

Emotion is central to her practice: by blurring distinctions between species in her imagery, she challenges the arbitrary hierarchies humans impose, asking why a dog should be cherished while a sheep is exploited and she hopes these emotional provocations linger in the minds of viewers, reshaping their perceptions over time.

For Ruth, two paintings stand out as emblematic of her vision of justice for animals. *You Are What You Eat*, that juxtaposes a vegan and a meat eater at a shared table, highlighting the shame and hidden violence behind animal consumption, and *Time for Change*, that conveys the urgent need to recognize our shared existence with animals, critiquing the ongoing exploitation that harms health, environment, and the animals themselves. Together, these works encapsulate her mission: to use art as a subtle yet powerful force that unsettles, inspires, and ultimately calls for transformation in the way humans relate to other beings.

Sonny Sundancer – To the Bone

Sonny Sundancer’s *To the Bone* (2017)⁹⁸ is a global street art and gallery initiative that confronts audiences with the fragility of endangered species. This global mural tour that brought some of the world’s most iconic and endangered animals into urban environments around the world, is making an impact both on the streets and in the media. These ten large-scale murals, located in seven countries all around the world (Canada, Netherlands, America,

⁹⁸ Sonny. *To The Bone Project*. Accessed November 17, 2025. <https://sonnyonline.com/tothebone>.

England, Ireland, Russia, South Africa), honour the true beauty of these animals, while encouraging people to protect them for future generations. The animals' faces break away to reveal raw skeletons underneath, a symbol of how their numbers are quickly fading. Ethnic patterns from the animals' home country adorn the exposed bones, driving home the message that in losing them we're losing a part of ourselves too. The artist's creative vision was largely self-funded but also received support from wildlife organisations such as the International Foundation for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Far Eastern Leopards, and Discovery's Project C.A.T.

Jo Frederiks

Australian painter Jo Frederiks creates large-scale canvases exposing brutality of factory farming⁹⁹. Her body of work functions as a sustained visual indictment of the ways humans normalize violence against animals, and she achieves this through literal, often shocking imagery that collapses the boundary between historical atrocity and contemporary practice. In *Every.Day.*, sheep march along railway tracks toward a factory adorned with a Nazi swastika, a chilling reminder that mechanized killing, whether of humans or animals, relies on conformity and denial. *When Will We Ever Learn* intensifies this parallel, showing cows in striped prison uniforms, one marked with a yellow Star of David, chained beneath dripping red paint, a direct echo of Holocaust imagery that asks why humanity repeats cycles of cruelty.

The vulnerability of life is further underscored in *Male Chicks*, where fragile yellow chicks stand on a conveyor, one tumbling toward a blood-stained surface, a literal depiction of the egg industry's mass culling. Frederiks also confronts cultural hypocrisy in *Why Love One and Kill the Other*, where the severed heads of a pig, dog, chicken, and cat rest on a flaming grill, collapsing the arbitrary distinction between "food" and "friend." Her *War on Injustice (Today's Guernica)* reimagines Picasso's anti-war masterpiece with mutilated animals as victims, equating factory farming with wartime atrocity. In *Tools of Torture*, a cow is surrounded by scissors, bolt guns, and knives actively inflicting harm, while *Blind to the Hypocrisy* depicts a woman in an "I LOVE ANIMALS" shirt pushing a cart filled with dead animals, exposing denial and cognitive dissonance in everyday consumerism.

Finally, *The Future of Humankind* shows a child hanging above a burning Earth labeled "ANIMAL AGRICULTURE," a stark warning that the exploitation of animals imperils not only them but humanity itself. Taken together, these works are not simply illustrations of suffering but a coherent visual manifesto, insisting that ethical failure toward other species is inseparable from our own moral and ecological collapse.

⁹⁹ Jo Frederiks, *Animal Rights Paintings – Jo Frederiks*, accessed December 12, 2025, <https://www.jofrederiksart.com/>.

Raj Singh Tattal

Raj Singh Tattal, known professionally as the Pen-tacular Artist, is a dedicated vegan artist whose primary mission is to bridge the emotional disconnect humans often have regarding animal suffering. Working exclusively with hyper-realistic graphite and charcoal, Tattal spends over 100 hours on a single drawing. His prominent works in this theme effectively challenge societal norms and personal choices. *Silence of the Lambs* is perhaps his most stark piece, featuring a poignant contrast where innocent children are seen playing affectionately with lambs in the foreground, while through an open doorway behind them, the reality of a slaughterhouse is depicted. This drawing forces viewers to confront the hypocrisy of loving certain animals while consuming others. Another powerful artwork, *End of the Road*, addresses the fear and trauma animals experience during transport to slaughterhouses. Tattal symbolizes this suffering by depicting a human figure behind the vertical bars of a transport truck, giving a "voice" to the voiceless and highlighting their final moments of distress and confusion. Lastly, his *Beauty and the Beast* series target the cosmetic industry, specifically animal testing. These works¹⁰⁰ expose the hidden cruelty inflicted upon mice, rabbits, and guinea pigs, encouraging people to reflect on the ethical cost behind their beauty routines.

Philip McCulloch-Downs – Moving Pictures

Philip McCulloch-Downs blends activism and art in his Moving Pictures series¹⁰¹, portraying animals in captivity and rescue. His paintings combine vivid color with emotive expression, dignifying abused animals while celebrating activists' compassion. By documenting vigils and rescues, Downs situates animal rights within broader struggles for justice. His art functions as testimony, honoring both victims and advocates. His provocative painting *MEAT*, features human babies, rendered in pinkish, raw flesh tones, placed alongside other animals' meat packages in a supermarket freezer display, forcing the viewers to confront the reality of meat consumption, highlighting the core idea that, all the meat we eat was once a baby, and inviting the viewer to apply the same emotional and ethical standards they have for humans, to animals. Some other notable paintings, such as *See How They Grow*, *The Wonderful World of Dairy* and *Daege* (an old word for female servant/milkmaid) depict, in an allegorical way, all the atrocities happening behind the closed doors of the dairy industry. By replacing baby cows and female cows with human babies and women, Philip tries, successfully, to highlight the forced impregnation of female cows, the separation of the calves from their mothers, and the murder of male cows, considered useless for reproduction, inviting once again the viewers to take, for a moment, each animals' place in the slaughterhouses and meat and dairy industries.

In addition to his visual works, Mc Culloch shared his perspective in an interview conducted for this thesis, providing valuable insight into the motivations and challenges of vegan activism.

¹⁰⁰ Raj Singh Tattal, Facebook profile, accessed December 12, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063594195722>.

¹⁰¹ Philip McCulloch-Downs, *Moving Pictures* series, mixed media, 2014–present, available at Philip Downs Art.

He recalled being “deeply affected” and influenced by Hillside Animal Sanctuary in Norfolk, describing it as “like being in a perfect world, with non-human and human animals living in complete harmony without fear.” Shortly afterwards, Jo-Anne McArthur’s *We Animals*, with the brutal and brilliant photos, inspired him to paint *The Ghost Camera*, a portrait of McArthur with all the animals that she had photographed surrounding her, that changed his life literally overnight, when shared online. McCulloch emphasized that his art is “both activism and personal expression in equal measure,” a sincere and unfiltered response to his emotions - “if I feel fury and disgust, my paintings are disgusting, and if I’m affected by the beauty and kindness of a scene, my paintings are celebratory and positive.” Surrealism and symbolism, he explained, allow him to “catch and hold the viewers’ attention... and then (the most important part) think and feel, without having to use brutal images.”

Works such as *MEAT*, *Best of British*, and *Marketing Myths* have provoked tears, praise, outrage, and debate among viewers, reactions he interprets as proof of success. He acknowledged challenges such as ensuring images are instantly understood, avoiding misinterpretation, and crafting precise titles, noting that “a bad title can destroy the integrity of an image.” His recent project, *ACTIVISTS – The Art of Empathy*, created during COVID lockdowns, gathered portraits of campaigners worldwide and was celebrated at the International Animal Rights Conference in Luxembourg, where he was “profoundly moved” to see activists recognize friends and heroes in its pages, the “truly humane humans.” Ultimately, McCulloch hopes his oeuvre will be remembered as “a record of the worst crimes of humanity, perpetrated against the animal kingdom,” while his later works serve as “a celebration of the beauty and wonder of nature” and “a guide to how we can evolve out of the current ‘dark age’ of human cruelty into a world where we live in harmony with all creatures.”

Mark Cawood

Mark Cawood is a UK-based painter and digital artist whose work often critiques animal exploitation and environmental destruction¹⁰². In his artwork series *Beef Holocaust (I, II, III, IV)*, Cawood depicts the same cow with a gradually changing background, starting from a peaceful scenery with green land and ending at some unsettling and disturbing backgrounds with flames and smoke, using intense red and dark colours, foreshadowing the global warming and the total destruction of the environment, trying to warn and awaken the viewers, calling them for immediate action. In some other notable works of his, such as *Stop Whaling* and *Wish You Were Here*, Mark criticises the exploitation of marine life, by depicting, in the first artwork, a human hand emerging from the sea squeezing a whale, while on the second artwork the criticism pertains to the isolation and caging of marine life, by portraying a goldfish trapped in a bowl, set right by the sea, its, under normal conditions, natural habitat.

¹⁰² *Mark Cawood Art for Sale* | *Fine Art America*, accessed December 13, 2025, <https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/mark-cawood>.

Dana Ellyn

Dana Ellyn is a prominent vegan artist whose work serves as a “hard slap” to societal myths, specifically challenging the ethical disconnect in how humans treat different species. Her animal rights art focuses on “speciesism”, asking the central, provocative question: “Why do we love some animals and eat others?”. By blending social realism with raw expressionism, Ellyn creates narratively rich paintings that force viewers to confront the reality behind their food choices, moving from an aggressive early style to more nuanced pieces that use humor and childhood nostalgia to expose the violence of the meat and dairy industries.

Some notable artworks with pro-animal rights and animal liberation themes are: 1. *Baby Back Ribs*¹⁰³, an unsettling piece of art, which depicts a human baby served on a plate with its back broken, showing its ribs, substituting a pig, that is traditionally served. With this artwork Dana challenges the psychological distance consumers maintain between a living being and a slab of meat on a plate by highlighting the arbitrary value humans place on different lives. It asks why we view a human infant as a symbol of pure innocence and protection while viewing the ribs of a pig, who was also once a vulnerable infant, simply as a commodity or meal. 2. *Meet Your Meats (Keeping with Tradition)*¹⁰⁴, a painting, inspired by a photograph of Ellyn’s grandmother-in-law with apple pies. Here Dana replaces most of the apple pies with traditional American meat dishes, in order to “break the illusion” that food is separate from killing, by depicting some of the animals as still alive and walking among the serving plates, critiquing how cultural traditions keep factory farming hidden in plain sight. 3. The *(All Animals Are Equal), But Some Animals Are More Equal Than The Others* series, inspired by George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* saying, that consists of three paintings. The first painting¹⁰⁵, created in 2010 and shown at the ‘BANNED’ exhibition at the MLK Library, depicts a butcher’s shop, where costumers are shopping with their kids and companion animals, wearing clothes with animal fur, while at the back are shown hung up dead ducks, pig heads, chickens, and generally ‘food animals’. The second painting¹⁰⁶, created in 2016, moves around the same theme, by depicting a woman holding, in one arm, her baby and the leash of her dog, and on her other arm carrying shopping bags, with labels like I LOVE ANIMALS, containing a dead fish and a baby pig. The third painting¹⁰⁷, created in 2025, depicts a young girl holding a worn out teddy bear, while other toys, some pristine and others likewise damaged, are ignored, with a pink wallpaper of pig silhouettes at the back, to highlight how we learn from an early age to favor certain lives over others. With these paintings, among other, Dana Ellyn successfully manages to highlight the cognitive dissonance embedded in human logic that treasures cats, dogs and

¹⁰³ Dana Ellyn, “Baby Back Ribs,” *Dana Ellyn: Prints*, accessed January 2, 2026, <https://www.danaellyn.com/prints/baby-back-ribs.html>.

¹⁰⁴ Dana Ellyn, “Portfolio 177,” *Dana Ellyn: Official Website*, accessed January 2, 2026, <https://www.danaellyn.com/portfolio177.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Dana Ellyn, “BANNED,” *Dana Ellyn: Press*, accessed January 2, 2026, <https://www.danaellyn.com/press/banned/banned.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Dana Ellyn, *Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others*, accessed January 2, 2026, <https://imananimaltoo.com/2016/06/30/power-art-change/attachment/some-animals-are-more-equal-than-others/>.

¹⁰⁷ Dana Ellyn, *Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others*, accessed January 2, 2026, <https://new.danaellyn.com/equal/>.

human babies, but doesn't think twice about eating cows and pigs or wearing the fur of a rabbit or fox.

Anticarnist – Activist Prints

Anticarnist, a UK-based vegan artist, produces garments and posters with bold prints carrying uncompromising anti-speciesist messages. Her designs use stark contrasts, slogans, and symbolic imagery to challenge carnism and normalize vegan ethics. By distributing her work through accessible mediums, such as prints, stickers, clothing, she democratizes activism, embedding animal rights discourse into everyday life. Anticarnist exemplifies how contemporary visual art merges with grassroots activism, transforming design into cultural intervention.¹⁰⁸

Jo-Anne McArthur

Jo-Anne McArthur¹⁰⁹ is a pioneering Canadian photojournalist, author, and educator whose work over the past two decades has transformed the field of animal advocacy. Through investigations conducted across multiple continents, she documents the hidden realities of animal exploitation and challenges dominant cultural narratives that frame animals as resources rather than sentient individuals¹¹⁰. As the founder of We Animals Media¹¹¹, she has been instrumental in establishing Animal Photojournalism as a distinct documentary practice, one that centres animals as subjects of news and moral concern. The organisation's open-access archive, used by advocates, educators, and journalists worldwide, has become one of the most influential visual resources in contemporary animal rights work.

McArthur's authorship further expands this impact. Her books *We Animals*, *Captive*, and *HIDDEN* examine the structural conditions of captivity, industrial farming, and human–animal relations, while her psychological journey—marked by PTSD from years of witnessing systemic cruelty—was documented in *The Ghosts in Our Machine*. Recent investigations have taken her to Brazil, Czechia, Poland, and research facilities worldwide, often in collaboration with NGOs such as Te Protejo. In 2025, her work was featured at the European Parliament's exhibition “Factory Farming: Unveiling the Hidden Costs,” where her images were used to challenge dominant agricultural lobbies and inform policy discussions.

¹⁰⁸ Anticarnist, Instagram, accessed November 16, 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/theanticarnist>.

¹⁰⁹ “Jo-Anne McArthur,” Wikipedia, last modified November 30, 2025, 17:59 (UTC), [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jo-Anne_McArthur#:~:text=Jo%2DAnne%20McArthur%20\(born%20December,and%20recognize%20female%20animal%20activists.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jo-Anne_McArthur#:~:text=Jo%2DAnne%20McArthur%20(born%20December,and%20recognize%20female%20animal%20activists.)

¹¹⁰ Erik Ruiterman, “Animal Photojournalist Jo-Anne McArthur about How We Fail to Help Animals,” *Nature Photographer of the Year*, December 8, 2020, <https://naturephotographeroftheyear.com/interview-with-jo-anne-mcarthur-npoty-contest/#:~:text=Jo%2DAnne%20McArthur%20is%20a.know%20her%20a%20bit%20more.>

¹¹¹ “About – We Animals,” We Animals, accessed December 14, 2025, <https://weanimals.org/about/#:~:text=We%20empower%20campaigners%2C%20writers%2C%20researchers.in%20more%20than%2080%20countries.>

Beyond fieldwork, McArthur is deeply committed to education and movement-building. Through mentorship programs, workshops, and humane education initiatives, she trains emerging photojournalists and fosters critical engagement with multispecies ethics. Her Unbound Project highlights the contributions of women in global animal advocacy, further bridging art, activism, and social justice. Across all her work, McArthur urges viewers to look directly at the lives we are conditioned to ignore, using the camera as a tool for ethical storytelling and political transformation. In doing so, she has shifted from a solitary documentarian to a central figure in a global movement for animal justice.

In an interview for this thesis, Jo-Anne McArthur, shared her views on activism. Her reflections trace the evolution of a photographic practice grounded in bearing witness and shaped by early humanitarian interests that eventually converged with a deep concern for nonhuman animals' suffering. In response to questions about her motivations and early career, she describes realising that animals, like humans, needed their own conflict photographer, someone willing to enter hidden spaces and document systemic violence with professional rigour. Her decisions about which species and stories to prioritise have shifted from personal passion projects to a strategic, collaborative model through We Animals Media, where investigations are chosen for their potential to support campaigns, influence policy, and reach audiences across geographies. When asked about the tension between aesthetic composition and ethical responsibility, she emphasises that images must be engaging enough to hold viewers' attention, especially when depicting brutality that people instinctively turn away from. Technical skill, speed, and compositional awareness allow her to create photographs that are both truthful and visually compelling, while maintaining the dignity of the animal even in moments of extreme suffering. This ethic of care extends to her physical presence: staying small, quiet, and gentle around distressed animals, and stepping back when her presence adds to their stress.

Her answers to questions about audience impact, emotional resilience, and the role of open-access archives reveal a practice shaped by both vulnerability and strategic clarity. She has received countless messages from viewers who "didn't know" until they saw her images, some of whom changed their diets or activism as a result. Yet she also acknowledges that the true reach of her work is largely untraceable, as images circulate globally through education, media, and advocacy. Sustaining this work requires boundaries: while she allows herself to be emotionally open in the field—one reason her images feel so intimate—she protects her long-term resilience by choosing when to process grief and when to conserve energy for action. Open-access documentation, she explains, is essential for future advocacy because strong visuals must be available to those who cannot afford licensing fees; at the same time, We Animals Media works to ensure photographers are compensated fairly. Collaboration with investigators, NGOs, and artists has taught her that art must be integrated from the beginning of campaigns, not added as decoration at the end, because creative insight shapes strategy and broadens political impact. Reflecting on moments that shifted her understanding of human–animal relations, she contrasts the hidden brutality of industrial farming with cultural practices—like bullfighting or rattlesnake roundups—where violence becomes spectacle, revealing how deeply normalised domination can be. Finally, when asked about the future of ethical storytelling, she emphasises the enduring power of strong narratives and the expanding

possibilities offered by new technologies such as drones, hidden cameras, and ethically used AI. For her, the task remains constant: to craft stories that keep audiences engaged, prevent them from looking away, and make visible the lives that industrial systems work so hard to conceal.

Jada Fabrizio – Animalia Installations

Jada Fabrizio is a contemporary visual artist who blends surreal photography with sculptural storytelling and theatrical staging to advocate for animal rights and habitat preservation. Her work is characterized by the creation of “visual fables”, intricate, hand-built dioramas featuring toy-like animal figures that she meticulously lights and photographs to evoke complex emotional responses. This approach is central to her *Animalia* series¹¹², where she uses minimalist, theater-like sets to portray animals in conflicting or antiseptic environments, reflecting on their treatment as mere objects to be collected, farmed, or exploited. Notable works within this series include *Cry Wolf*, which uses a toy-like wolf to soften the weight of its message, and *Lamb Chop*, a poignant commentary on the commodification of farm animals¹¹³, while her limited edition print *Derailed*, featured in the “*Art and the Environment*” exhibition, serves as a stark metaphor for the fragility of non-human life in a world dominated by human activity.

Fabrizio’s activism is deeply rooted in her belief that artists have a moral obligation to protect their subjects, often speaking out against the historical use of live animals in art for shock value or entertainment. In projects like *Broken Home*, she employs a journalistic lens to document the displacement of species due to climate change and pollution. By endowing her sculptural creatures with human-like personalities in works like *The Conqueror Pig*, she invites viewers to recognize animals as individuals rather than resources. Other significant pieces include *Fragile*, which highlights the vulnerability of the natural world, and *Enemy*, a work that explores the often-adversarial relationship humans maintain with wildlife. Through her art, that celebrates the diversity of species and the essential role they play in the global ecological balance, she seeks to inspire tangible advocacy, encouraging her audience to consider ethical lifestyle changes such as supporting local shelters and reducing meat consumption¹¹⁴.

¹¹² “*Editorial (Animal Rights)*,” Jada Fabrizio, accessed December 14, 2025, <https://www.jadafab.com/editorial-animal-rights.html>.

¹¹³ “*Contributor Spotlight: Jada Fabrizio*,” *Split Rock Review*, November 17, 2019, <https://www.splitrockreview.org/news/spotlight-jada-fabrizio/#:~:text=Jada%20Fabrizio%20on%20%E2%80%9CCry%20Wolf,CaseyNathan%20Manley%20%E2%86%92>.

¹¹⁴ Kirsten Bengtson-Lykoudis, “How Jada Fabrizio Creates Fictional Realities Based on Memories and Dreams,” *NOT REAL ART*, July 20, 2022, <https://notrealart.com/jada-fabrizio/#:~:text=Jada%20studied%20at%20the%20School,landscape%20during%20these%20unusual%20times>.

Banksy

Banksy is an anonymous British street artist whose work combines stenciling, satire, and sharp social commentary. Emerging in Bristol in the 1990s, he has become one of the most influential contemporary artists, using public spaces as canvases to critique politics, consumerism, war, and exploitation. His anonymity amplifies his message: the focus remains on the art and its social impact rather than the artist's persona. Banksy's works often employ animals, children, or everyday symbols to expose hypocrisy and provoke reflection. Banksy can be positioned as a bridge between satirical street art and animal rights activism, because his use of animals (monkeys, rats, elephants) aligns with the theme of art as activism.

Some famous and worth mentioning works are: 1. *Radar Rat (2004)*¹¹⁵, in which a stenciled rat holds a radar device, scanning its surroundings. The rat embodies the overlooked yet resilient underclass, critiquing surveillance culture and systemic oppression. Rats recur throughout Banksy's oeuvre, functioning as alter egos for the artist himself: creatures dismissed as vermin yet capable of infiltrating and enduring within hostile environments. Banksy frequently uses rats as symbols of survival, marginalization, and resistance. 2. *The 2024 London Animal Murals*.¹¹⁶ In August 2024, Banksy unveiled a nine-day series of animal murals across London, including: a mountain goat balancing precariously on a pillar, two elephants reaching trunks through blocked windows, three monkeys swinging from a railway bridge, a rhinoceros mounting a car with a traffic cone, a wolf howling at the moon, a gorilla freeing animals at London Zoo and many more. These works collectively critiqued animal captivity and human domination, sparking debate among activists and organizations like Born Free.

A more detailed analysis of some of these murals:

1. *Goat on Ledge (Richmond, August 2024)*: Banksy's first mural in the series depicted a mountain goat precariously perched on a ledge near Kew Bridge, surrounded by falling rocks. The goat's unstable position symbolizes the fragility of wild habitats and the precarious survival of species under human pressure. By placing the animal in an urban environment, Banksy highlights the dislocation of wildlife from natural ecosystems. The piece functions as both ecological allegory and urban satire, reminding viewers of the instability created by human exploitation of nature.
2. *London Zoo Gorilla (London Zoo, August 2024)*. Perhaps the most provocative of the series, Banksy painted a gorilla lifting the entrance gate at London Zoo, while birds flew away and a sea lion waddled toward freedom. The mural dramatizes liberation, portraying animals as agents of their own escape. Three sets of eyes peering from the darkness inside the zoo underscore the hidden suffering of captive beings. This work directly confronts the ethics of zoos, suggesting that confinement is unnatural and unjust. By staging an imagined jailbreak, Banksy transforms the zoo wall into a site of resistance and hope.

¹¹⁵ "Radar Rat, 2004 – Banksy Explained," *Banksy Explained*, accessed December 14, 2025, <https://banksyexplained.com/radar-rat-2004/#:~:text=May%2015%2C%202021-,Radar%20Rat%2C%202004,Spraypaint%20on%20cardboard.>

¹¹⁶ Banksy, *London Animal Murals*, street art series, London, August 2024.

Praxis VGZ

Praxis is a Colombian-born, Latin American stencil artist whose work explicitly confronts speciesism and animal exploitation. Influenced by punk rock culture and activist traditions, he uses public walls as canvases to amplify vegan ethics. His murals often feature animals in defiant, liberated poses, juxtaposed against urban backdrops that symbolize human domination. Praxis democratizes activism by situating art in everyday spaces, ensuring that ethical messages reach diverse audiences. Some notable works are:

1. *Empathy Center Mural (Los Angeles, 2023)*¹¹⁷. In 2023, Praxis painted what may be one of the largest animal rights murals in the world on the PETA Empathy Center. The work critiqued the wool and leather industries, depicting animals stripped of their natural coverings to highlight systemic cruelty. By merging graphic design with monumental scale and slogans, such as ‘LEATHER KILLS’, ‘WOOL IS CRUEL’ and ‘WEAR VEGAN’, Praxis amplified the urgency of ending animal exploitation in fashion.
2. *Farmer John’s Mural*¹¹⁸. In January 2024, Praxis proceeded with a graphic and meaningful artistic intervention to the pre-existing mural on the building of Farmer John’s abandoned slaughterhouse, located in Los Angeles. The original mural was initially depicting, with soft pastel colors, ‘happy pigs’ frolicking in green pastures in an idyllic farm, in an attempt to romanticize and normalize the suffering that took place every day inside the slaughterhouse. Praxis intervened with stencils and graffiti sprays, uncovering, once again, the truth behind slaughterhouses and exposing the violent reality, by drawing flames around the depicted farm, including slogans like ‘PIG KILLING CONTEST’, while red spray paint was used to portray blood spilling from the pigs’ slit throats and spreading all around the ground. These additions altered animal figures, transforming the mural from propaganda into protest, highlighting how art can be used both to conceal and to reveal exploitation. Praxis’ work reclaimed the mural as a site of resistance, confronting passersby with the truth behind the imagery.

Rembrandt Bugatti

Rembrandt Bugatti was an Italian sculptor whose activism was rooted in a profound, tragic empathy for animals that transcended mere artistic observation. Unlike traditional animaliers who often depicted animals as heroic symbols or prey, Bugatti treated them as individual sentient beings with distinct personalities. Encouraged by his mentor, the vegetarian and animal lover Paolo Troubetzkoy, Bugatti spent over a decade living among animals at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris and the Antwerp Zoo. He was known for his “direct modeling” technique,

¹¹⁷ Madison VonSosen, “Meet Praxis: The Rebellious Latino Artist Standing Up Against Speciesism,” *PETA*, May 12, 2022, last modified November 20, 2023, <https://www.peta.org/news/meet-praxis-the-rebellious-latino-artist-standing-up-against-speciesism/>.

¹¹⁸ Praxis (@praxis_vgz), Instagram, accessed December 14, 2025, https://www.instagram.com/praxis_vgz/.

working in plasticine right in front of his subjects to capture their “soul rather than the skeleton”. His work and life became an unintentional testament to the ethical obligations humans have toward animals¹¹⁹. Some notable artworks that reflect this deep connection include: 1. The *Pit Ponies*, that capture the visible pathos of overworked horses standing with bowed heads at the Antwerp quayside, serving as a rare, early 20th-century critique of animal labor, 2. The *Lionceau et Lévrier (Lion Cub and Greyhound)*, This piece immortalized a real-life bond between a lion cub and a dog at the zoo, highlighting interspecies companionship. 3. The *Walking Panther*¹²⁰, where he captured the feline mid-stride, emphasizing muscular tension and predatory grace, 4. The *Antelope Group*¹²¹, that conveys intimacy among three antelopes, their bodies intertwined in a naturalistic rhythm, and, 5. The *Lionne de Nubie*¹²², where Bugatti sculpted a lioness with poised strength, highlighting her elegance and latent power. These works exemplify his Impressionist approach to sculpture, translating movement and vitality into bronze. Bugatti’s art not only immortalized animals but also reflected his deep emotional bond with them, making his oeuvre a cornerstone of early 20th-century animal sculpture.

Tragically, his activism through art reached its most poignant climax during World War I. While serving as a Red Cross volunteer, Bugatti was devastated when the Antwerp Zoo was forced to euthanize his “beloved friends”, the very animals he had spent years studying and immortalizing, due to food shortages and air raids. Overwhelmed by this systemic cruelty and the trauma of the war, he committed suicide in 1916. His legacy lives on not only in his bronze works but also in the *Dancing Elephant Mascot*¹²³ adopted by his brother Ettore for the Bugatti car brand as a permanent tribute to Rembrandt’s gentle genius.

Lynda Bell

Lynda Bell leverages the power of magical realism to advocate for animal rights, creating vibrant "visual fables" that envision a world defined by interspecies harmony rather than exploitation. As a key member of the *Art of Compassion Project*, her work often centers on "Godmother" or "Guardian" figures—celestial protectors who shield animals from human harm¹²⁴. In her iconic painting *The Protector*, she depicts a maternal deity safeguarding creatures typically used for food or research, while *Arzhela the Bear Godmother* specifically honors the dignity of bears long exploited for entertainment. Bell’s activism is uniquely hopeful; rather than focusing on the trauma of the industry, she paints the joy of liberation.

¹¹⁹ “7 Things to Know About Rembrandt Bugatti,” *Christie’s*, October 10, 2025, <https://www.christies.com/en/stories/7-things-to-know-about-rembrandt-bugatti-2af5eacfbf1b448db440ee3fb38e2bc0#:~:text=The%20range%20of%20animals%20sculpted,be%20taken%20to%20the%20slaughterhouse.>

¹²⁰ Rembrandt Bugatti, *Walking Panther*, 1904, bronze, Paris.

¹²¹ Rembrandt Bugatti, *Antelope Group*, 1910, bronze, Antwerp.

¹²² Rembrandt Bugatti, *Lionne de Nubie*, 1909–1910, bronze, Paris.

¹²³ Anastasiia Kirpalov, “Rembrandt Bugatti, the Sculptor Who Captured the Soul of Animals,” *TheCollector*, October 31, 2025, <https://www.thecollector.com/rembrandt-bugatti-sculptor-animals/>.

¹²⁴ Lynda Bell (@lyndabell_art), Instagram, accessed December 14, 2025, https://www.instagram.com/lyndabell_art/?hl=en.

This is evident in *Doorways to Freedom*, which serves as a symbolic portal for animals escaping captivity, and *Country Dreamer*, a piece inspired by Paul McCartney that illustrates a utopian future where humans and animals coexist as equals.

Her work also addresses specific ecological and regional concerns. In *The Guardian*, she highlights the vulnerability of New Zealand's native species, and in *The Hero*, she turns her attention to marine conservation, portraying a guardian of the sea to foster a sense of responsibility for aquatic life. By frequently including children in these scenes, Bell taps into the innate, unconditioned empathy humans feel before societal "carnist" norms take hold. Through her detailed narrative paintings, she challenges viewers to reject the commodification of sentient beings and instead embrace a "post-speciesist" worldview where every individual is recognized as a "Hero" or a "Caretaker" of the natural world.

5.3. Audiovisual Art – Performance Art

Audiovisual media has become one of the most powerful tools for animal rights activism. Unlike static art forms, films and documentaries combine narrative, sound, and moving images to immerse audiences in the realities of exploitation and liberation. By blending investigative journalism, allegory, and cinematic storytelling, these works cultivate empathy, provoke outrage, and inspire ethical transformation.

Earthlings (2005)

Directed by Shaun Monson and narrated by Joaquin Phoenix, *Earthlings*¹²⁵ is widely regarded as the “vegan maker” documentary. Using hidden cameras, it exposes exploitation across food, fashion, entertainment, and scientific research. Its structure divides human use of animals into categories, underscoring systemic cruelty. The stark footage and emotive narration confront viewers with normalized violence, transforming private suffering into public testimony. *Earthlings* remains a cornerstone of activist cinema, frequently used in outreach campaigns and screenings to catalyze ethical reflection.

Lucent (2014) and Dominion (2018)

*Lucent*¹²⁶ was Chris Delforce's first major documentary, focusing on Australia's pig farming industry. Using hidden and handheld cameras across more than 50 facilities, the film exposed routine practices of confinement and slaughter, that are legally permitted, yet rarely seen by the public. Often described as the ‘Australian *Earthlings*’, *Lucent* sparked national debate and laid the groundwork for Delforce's later project *Dominion*, expanding the scope from pigs to

¹²⁵ Shaun Monson, dir., *Earthlings* (Nation Earth, 2005).

¹²⁶ *Lucent*, directed by Chris Delforce (Australia: Aussie Farms, 2014), documentary film.

all farmed animals. Chris Delforce's *Dominion*¹²⁷ expands on *Earthlings*, focusing specifically on modern animal agriculture in Australia. Using drones and hidden cameras, it documents factory farms, slaughterhouses, and transport systems. Its unflinching style immerses viewers in the scale of suffering, emphasizing systemic cruelty rather than isolated incidents. Narrated by prominent activists, *Dominion* situates animal exploitation within global industrial systems. The film has been widely used in vigils and activist screenings, reinforcing its role as both educational resource and rallying cry for reform.

Louie Psihoyos Works

Louie Psihoyos's body of work exemplifies how documentary cinema can merge investigative journalism, visual spectacle, and ethical advocacy. His Academy Award-winning *The Cove* (2009)¹²⁸ exposed the dolphin hunts in Taiji, Japan, combining hidden-camera footage with emotional storytelling to provoke global outrage and policy change. Building on this success, *Racing Extinction* (2015)¹²⁹ expanded his focus to mass species extinction and climate change, using undercover investigations and monumental public projections, such as endangered species illuminated on the Empire State Building, to dramatize ecological urgency. In *The Game Changers* (2018)¹³⁰, which he co-produced, Psihoyos highlighted plant-based diets and athletic performance, bridging animal rights with mainstream health and sports culture. As executive producer of *Sea of Shadows* (2019)¹³¹, he supported efforts to expose illegal wildlife trafficking threatening the vaquita, the world's most endangered marine mammal. Taken together, these works demonstrate Psihoyos's commitment to mobilizing audiences through artful activism, cultivating empathy while challenging complacency toward animal suffering and environmental destruction.

Cowspiracy (2014)

Directed by Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn, *Cowspiracy*¹³² investigates the environmental impact of animal agriculture, particularly its role in deforestation, water use, and greenhouse gas emissions. The film critiques the silence of major environmental organizations, suggesting complicity in ignoring animal agriculture's destructive footprint. Its activist style blends interviews, statistics, and investigative journalism, positioning veganism as a solution to ecological crisis. *Cowspiracy* reframes animal rights within climate discourse, broadening the ethical argument to planetary survival.

In an interview for this thesis, Keegan Kuhn describes his turn to filmmaking as the natural outcome of a lifetime in activism. He recalls being "deeply impacted by films growing up,

¹²⁷ Chris Delforce, dir., *Dominion* (Voiceless Films, 2018).

¹²⁸ Louie Psihoyos, dir. *The Cove*. Oceanic Preservation Society, 2009.

¹²⁹ Louie Psihoyos, dir. *Racing Extinction*. Oceanic Preservation Society, 2015.

¹³⁰ Louie Psihoyos, co-prod. *The Game Changers*. Directed by Louie Psihoyos and produced by James Wilks, Game Changers Film, 2018.

¹³¹ Richard Ladkani, dir., Louie Psihoyos, exec. prod. *Sea of Shadows*. Terra Mater Factual Studios, 2019.

¹³² Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn, dirs., *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* (A.U.M. Films, 2014).

particularly a documentary called *Hearts and Minds*,” and after trying many forms of activism, he chose cinema because “films had such a tremendous impact on me.” His early documentary *Turlock* gained recognition, but *Cowspiracy* marked a decisive turning point: its release on Netflix gave his work unprecedented reach and “opened more doors for funding and distribution of my subsequent films.” Across projects such as *What the Health*, *Running for Good*, and *SLAY*, Kuhn notes that audiences respond most strongly to “the mixture of hard hitting facts with a hero’s journey,” where a protagonist uncovers shocking truths. He emphasizes the importance of structure and tone and the essential role of humor to lighten dark subjects in films, while answering every question an audience might have while watching the film is one of their main goals. Kuhn also assesses impact across his films. While “*Cowspiracy* undoubtedly had a strong impact around the conversation of environmentalism and meat,” he believes “*WHAT THE HEALTH* had the largest impact because vastly more people saw it and more people changed their lifestyle because of it,” adding that “more people are interested in their own health than they are interested in the environment sadly.”

Kuhn also reflects on the risks of activist filmmaking, citing “death threats, home invasions, government surveillance” and industry pushback, but insists that “there will always be inherent risk speaking truth to power and exposing dirt industries... the risk is so much greater if we stay silent.” His films have sparked profound transformations, such as farmer Jimmy Videle’s journey from “our biggest hater to one of our biggest fans,” ultimately becoming vegan and a promoter of veganic agriculture. Later on, Kuhn emphasizes the interconnected nature of social justice struggles, arguing that “all movements towards total liberation are intertwined.” He identifies food systems as a particularly impactful site of oppression, noting that their reform is linked to many of the world’s broader crises. His stated aim is to inspire audiences to critically examine their relationship with the world and “to question what we are fed, both literally and metaphorically.” For Kuhn, the motivations that lead individuals to reject animal agriculture, whether concern for cruelty, personal health, or environmental sustainability, must be applied consistently to human contexts. As he explains, if people stop consuming animals because of animal suffering, they should also reject industries that exploit humans; if they adopt plant-based diets for health reasons, they should oppose the use of food as a weapon against marginalized communities; and if they avoid meat for environmental reasons, they must also confront consumerism and other lifestyle practices that harm the planet. He hopes this recognition will be reciprocal, so that those fighting against human oppression also acknowledge the oppression of non-human animals and “make the necessary changes.” In this way, Kuhn frames his work within a holistic vision of justice, encapsulated in his call for “one struggle for liberation.”

He stresses that community is essential, with interviewees, grassroots organizers, and celebrities all contributing to awareness campaigns. Looking ahead, Kuhn hopes his films will one day be “irrelevant... historical documents of how bad things used to be,” though he acknowledges their continued urgency today. In this way, his work stands both as a critique of current systems and a call to imagine a more just and sustainable future.

Seaspiracy (2021)

Ali Tabrizi's *Seaspiracy*¹³³ focuses on industrial fishing, exposing overfishing, bycatch, and ocean destruction. The documentary critiques "sustainable seafood" labels, arguing they mask systemic exploitation. Its shocking footage of dolphin and whale hunts echoes *The Cove*, but expands to global fisheries. By situating marine exploitation within ecological collapse, *Seaspiracy* challenges viewers to reconsider seafood consumption entirely. The film sparked global debate, with activists and scientists engaging its claims, amplifying discourse on marine animal rights.

Blackfish (2013)

Gabriela Cowperthwaite's *Blackfish*¹³⁴ investigates the captivity of orcas at SeaWorld, focusing on Tilikum, an orca involved in trainer deaths. Through interviews and archival footage, the film exposes psychological trauma and violence inherent in marine mammal captivity. *Blackfish* catalyzed public outrage, leading to declining attendance at SeaWorld and eventual policy changes restricting orca breeding. Its success demonstrates cinema's power to effect tangible change in corporate practices and public opinion, making it one of the most impactful animal rights documentaries of the 21st century.

Tracks. Investigations

Founded in 2006, Tracks Investigations¹³⁵ is the world's longest-established undercover agency dedicated to exposing animal exploitation. Over nearly two decades, they have conducted over 300 investigative film and photo projects across Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia. Their work has documented cruelty in factory farms, live animal exports, laboratories, puppy mills, and the fashion and entertainment industries, often revealing practices hidden from public view.

Among their most impactful projects was the exposé of live animal exports, which contributed directly to the UK's historic 2024 ban on live exports for slaughter and fattening. They also investigated the illegal puppy trade in the UK, exposing networks of breeders and sellers who profited from animal suffering. In laboratories, their undercover teams have filmed the treatment of animals used in experiments, while in fashion they have revealed the realities behind fur and leather supply chains. Tracks works closely with NGOs, journalists, and legal teams to ensure their footage is not only seen but actively used in campaigns, lawsuits, and legislative debates. Their "Eco Spooks" team has become known for combining investigative journalism with activist art, producing award-winning films that amplify campaigns to a global

¹³³ Ali Tabrizi, dir., *Seaspiracy* (Netflix, 2021).

¹³⁴ Gabriela Cowperthwaite, dir., *Blackfish* (Magnolia Pictures, 2013).

¹³⁵ Tracks Investigations, *About Us*, accessed November 20, 2025, <https://tracksinvestigations.org/about>.

audience. In 2024 alone, they carried out eleven in-depth investigations across twelve countries, collaborating with some of the largest animal protection organizations worldwide.

By embedding their investigations into broader advocacy efforts, Tracks has become a crucial bridge between evidence-based activism and public perception, showing how visual storytelling can drive both ethical awareness and legal change.

Gemunu De Silva, Executive Director of Tracks Investigations, shared his views in an interview for this thesis. He stated that Tracks Investigations emerged from more than three decades of undercover work and a conviction that visual evidence can expose systemic cruelty and drive structural change. In response to the first question -what motivated the project- the founder explains that many organisations needed independent, ethical, cross-border investigative support, grounded in strategy rather than sensationalism. Tracks was created to fill precisely that gap, offering credible documentation that strengthens campaigns, media work, and legislative reform. When asked how they choose what to investigate, the founder emphasises that projects are never isolated actions; they are selected for their potential to contribute to long-term political impact, focusing on large-scale harm, hidden practices, and cases where evidence can meaningfully shift public or institutional understanding.

The interview's ethical core emerges in the questions about filming and representation. Tracks operates under a strict principle: animals are not props, and their suffering must be shown truthfully, without staging or exaggeration. Editing is careful, contextual, and avoids gratuitous imagery, aiming for clarity rather than shock. This approach also shapes how they balance exposure and audience care; the goal is not to overwhelm viewers but to inform them in ways that foster reflection and action. In response to the question about transformative moments, the founder describes early experiences inside factory farms, where the overwhelming sensory environment revealed that cruelty is not exceptional but structural, normalised, and built into industrial systems. This insight continues to guide their understanding of exploitation. Addressing the emotional and logistical challenges of undercover work, he highlights the discipline required -legal, practical, and psychological- and the sustaining belief that footage must be released into the world where it can contribute to change.

The later questions turn toward impact, movement strategy, and the future. Tracks measures success not only through public awareness but through legislative and policy outcomes, noting contributions to fur-farm bans, restrictions on live exports, circus bans, and reductions in animal testing. Visual evidence, he explains, is foundational across the movement because it removes denial and anchors advocacy in documented reality, even though it works best when embedded in a broader ecosystem of activism. While the founder has personally avoided severe backlash, he stresses that rigorous methodology and integrity are essential protections for investigators. In response to the final question about future directions, he describes Industry Standard, a sonic art project built from field recordings gathered during undercover work. This initiative reflects a growing interest in using evidence in new aesthetic and cultural forms, reaching audiences who may never watch investigative footage. By inviting listeners to confront the acoustic reality of industrial spaces, the project expands the political reach of investigations while maintaining the same ethical commitments. Across all answers, the

mission remains constant: to make the invisible visible, ensuring that the realities of animal exploitation continue to provoke reflection, empathy, and structural change.

Okja (2017)

Bong Joon-ho's *Okja*¹³⁶ critiques industrial farming through allegory. The story follows a genetically engineered "super pig" raised lovingly by a girl in South Korea, only to be reclaimed by a multinational corporation. Combining adventure, satire, and dystopia, the film exposes the cruelty of factory farming while emphasizing the bond between humans and animals. *Okja* reaches mainstream audiences by blending entertainment with ethical critique, demonstrating how fiction can advance animal rights discourse. Its global release on Netflix amplified its impact across cultures.

Studio Ghibli

Studio Ghibli occupies a distinctive place in global animation, consistently foregrounding ecological consciousness, interspecies relationships, and non-anthropocentric worldviews. Although not explicitly framed as animal-rights activism, many of its films articulate a deeply ethical stance toward non-human life, challenging dominant narratives of human exceptionalism and industrial exploitation. Through richly layered audiovisual storytelling, Ghibli constructs worlds where animals, spirits, and ecosystems possess agency, voice, and moral significance¹³⁷.

The *Princess Mononoke*¹³⁸ stands as the studio's most overt eco-ethical text. The film presents a landscape where animal gods, wolves, boars, and the Deer God, are political actors resisting human encroachment. Its audiovisual language emphasizes the dignity and emotional depth of non-human beings: close-ups of wounded animals, the rhythmic breathing of the Forest Spirit, and the sonic contrast between industrial noise and forest soundscapes. Rather than framing nature as passive scenery, the film positions the forest as a living subject whose suffering demands ethical attention, aligning with multispecies justice frameworks and ecofeminist critiques of extractivism.

In *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*¹³⁹, Miyazaki develops an even more explicit vision of interspecies empathy. *Nausicaä's* relationship with the Ohmu, giant, intelligent insects, embodies a radical form of cross-species communication. The film's color palette and sound design reinforce this ethical stance: the Ohmu's bioluminescent blue signals calm and trust,

¹³⁶ Bong Joon-ho, dir., *Okja* (Netflix, 2017).

¹³⁷ Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc, *Studio Ghibli: The Films of Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata*, updated ed. (Harpenden: Oldcastle Books Ltd, 2024).

¹³⁸ *Princess Mononoke*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Tokyo: Studio Ghibli, 1997), film.

¹³⁹ *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Tokyo: Topcraft/Studio Ghibli precursor, 1984), film.

while red signifies pain and ecological imbalance. Nausicaä's refusal to harm the Ohmu positions her as an advocate for non-human life, challenging militaristic and anthropocentric logics and anticipating contemporary discussions on biocentrism. Furthermore, *Spirited Away*¹⁴⁰ extends this ecological sensibility into the realm of animism. The film's spirits, many of them animal-coded, embody polluted rivers, forgotten creatures, and neglected ecosystems. The "Stink Spirit" sequence, where a contaminated river spirit is cleansed, visualizes environmental restoration as a moral imperative. Through sound, pacing, and visual metaphor, the film frames ecological care as an act of respect toward sentient landscapes and non-human beings.

In *Howl's Moving Castle*¹⁴¹, the anti-war narrative intersects with ecological themes through the figure of Calcifer and the enchanted creatures who inhabit Howl's world. The film critiques the destructive entanglement of militarism, industrialization, and environmental degradation. Animals and magical beings function as casualties of human conflict, reinforcing the ethical argument that violence against the environment and violence against bodies, human or non-human, are interconnected. Miyazaki's latest work, *The Boy and the Heron*¹⁴² brings Ghibli's ecological vision into a metaphysical register. Animals, particularly the heron, act as guides through grief, transformation, and moral choice. The film's surreal imagery blurs boundaries between species, suggesting that ethical growth emerges through encounters with non-human alterity.

In *My Neighbour Totoro*¹⁴³, the ecological message is gentler but equally significant. Totoro and the forest spirits embody a childlike, non-instrumental relationship with nature. The film's slow pacing and ambient soundscapes cultivate an affective ecology of care, modeling everyday coexistence with the more-than-human world. And finally, *Porco Rosso*¹⁴⁴, though not centered on animal ethics, contributes to Ghibli's broader exploration of species identity. The protagonist's transformation into a pig foregrounds themes of otherness and social perception, inviting reflection on how societies construct hierarchies of value among different bodies.

Collectively, these films demonstrate how Studio Ghibli uses audiovisual storytelling to cultivate ecological awareness and interspecies empathy. By presenting animals and natural forces as subjects rather than objects, the studio offers a subtle yet powerful form of visual activism that resonates strongly with contemporary animal-ethics discourse.

Jacqueline Traide

Jacqueline Traide is a performance artist whose most notable work directly confronted the cruelty of animal testing. In *Fighting Animal Testing*¹⁴⁵, staged in 2012 in the window of a Lush Cosmetics store in London, she endured a ten-hour performance, simulating laboratory procedures inflicted on animals. Bound, force-fed, and subjected to mock injections, Traide's body became a stand-in for nonhuman victims, exposing the violence hidden behind cosmetic

¹⁴⁰ *Spirited Away*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Tokyo: Studio Ghibli, 2001), film.

¹⁴¹ *Howl's Moving Castle*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Tokyo: Studio Ghibli, 2004), film.

¹⁴² *The Boy and the Heron*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Tokyo: Studio Ghibli, 2023), film.

¹⁴³ *My Neighbor Totoro*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Tokyo: Studio Ghibli, 1988), film.

¹⁴⁴ *Porco Rosso*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Tokyo: Studio Ghibli, 1992), film.

¹⁴⁵ Jacqueline Traide, *Fighting Animal Testing*, 2012, performance, Lush Cosmetics, London.

and pharmaceutical industries. The performance shocked passersby, drawing attention to the suffering of animals in laboratories. By embodying their pain, Traide transformed performance art into a visceral protest, collapsing the distance between human empathy and animal exploitation. Her work remains a landmark in activist art, demonstrating how endurance and public spectacle can mobilize awareness and resistance against systemic cruelty.

5.4. Music in the Form of Animal Rights Activism

Music has long served as a vehicle for social critique, mobilizing audiences through emotional resonance and cultural reach. For animal rights activism, music has been especially potent; lyrics confront normalized violence, while videos juxtapose entertainment with exploitation. This chapter explores how music functions as activism, analyzing artists across genres who have explicitly engaged with animal rights through their songs, performances, and public statements.

The Smiths

Formed in Manchester in 1982, The Smiths quickly became one of the most influential alternative rock bands of the decade. Beyond their musical innovation, The Smiths were culturally radical: Morrissey's outspoken vegetarianism shaped their second album *Meat Is Murder* (1985)¹⁴⁶, which directly confronted animal exploitation. At a time when vegetarianism was still marginalized in the UK, the band's stance was groundbreaking. Their music fused personal angst with political critique, making them a bridge between pop culture and activism. Some notable songs with strong animal rights content are:

1. *Meat Is Murder* (1985, Album: *Meat Is Murder*)¹⁴⁷. The title track of *Meat Is Murder* is The Smiths' most explicit animal rights statement. Morrissey equates meat consumption with murder, singing: "The flesh you so fancifully fry, is not succulent, tasty or kind. It's death for no reason, and death for no reason is murder". The song's slow, dirge-like rhythm underscores its moral gravity. Live performances often included projected slaughterhouse footage, intensifying the confrontation between audience and message. The song transformed cultural discourse, inspiring countless fans to adopt vegetarianism. Its legacy endures as one of the most famous musical interventions in animal rights.
2. *Barbarism Begins at Home* (1985, Album: *Meat Is Murder*)¹⁴⁸. This funk-infused track critiques domestic violence and authoritarian control. The title suggests that cruelty is learned in intimate spaces before being projected outward, a theme that resonates with

¹⁴⁶ The Smiths, *Meat Is Murder* (Rough Trade Records, 1985).

¹⁴⁷ "The Smiths – *Meat Is Murder* Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/The-smiths-meat-is-murder-lyrics>.

¹⁴⁸ "The Smiths – *Barbarism Begins at Home* Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/The-smiths-barbarism-begins-at-home-lyrics>.

animal rights discourse, where normalized violence in kitchens and farms perpetuates systemic exploitation. Morrissey framed the song as part of a continuum of cruelty, linking human oppression with animal suffering. In this way, *Barbarism Begins at Home* functions as a cultural critique of violence as a learned behavior, reinforcing the ethical message of *Meat Is Murder*.

Rise Against

Emerging from Chicago's hardcore punk scene in 1999, Rise Against blends melodic punk with socially conscious lyrics. Known for their activism, the band has consistently addressed issues of war, environmental destruction, and animal rights. Frontman Tim McIlrath is vegan and has collaborated with organizations like PETA, while bassist Joe Principe has spoken about straight-edge ethics. Rise Against's music videos often incorporate activist imagery, transforming their songs into multimedia campaigns. Their ability to reach mainstream audiences while retaining activist credibility makes them one of the most important contemporary bands in linking punk energy with ethical causes. Some notable songs are:

1. *Ready to Fall* (2006, Album: *The Sufferer and the Witness*).¹⁴⁹ One of Rise Against's most iconic activist songs, *Ready to Fall* merges environmental destruction with animal exploitation. The official video, directed by Kevin Kerslake, intercuts band performance with stark footage of factory farming, hunting, animal experimentation, animals in captivity, deforestation, and pollution. This juxtaposition transforms the song into a multimedia manifesto. The song's combination of melodic punk energy and uncompromising imagery made it a rallying cry for environmental and animal rights movements, often used in outreach campaigns such as PETA and the documentary *Earthlings*.
2. *The Eco-Terrorist in Me* (2014, Album: *The Black Market*)¹⁵⁰. The song directly references themes relevant to animal and environmental activism, such as the criminalization of activists (often through the agricultural-gag laws¹⁵¹ that hide and protect animal cruelty and aim to prevent undercover investigators, activists, and journalists from documenting and publicizing the practices within agricultural facilities, particularly factory farms and slaughterhouses), and the idea of fighting back against systems where "business and suffering is one and the same".

¹⁴⁹ "Rise Against – Ready to Fall Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/rise-against-ready-to-fall-lyrics>.

¹⁵⁰ "Rise Against – The Eco-Terrorist in Me Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Rise-against-the-eco-terrorist-in-me-lyrics>.

¹⁵¹ Jordi Casamitjana, "What Is Happening with the Ag-Gag Laws?" *Vegan FTA*, May 3, 2023, <https://veganfta.com/blog/2023/05/03/what-is-happening-with-the-ag-gag-laws/#:~:text=In%20several%20states%20in%20the,still%20do%20is%20quite%20fluid>.

Conflict

Conflict, formed in London in 1981, epitomized anarcho-punk's militant ethos. Unlike other punk bands that flirted with politics, Conflict fully aligned themselves with the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), openly supporting direct action campaigns. Their concerts often doubled as activist rallies, with speeches, literature tables, and fundraising for animal rights groups. Conflict's lyrics are uncompromising, merging anti-capitalist critique with calls for animal liberation. They represent the radical edge of music as activism, where art is inseparable from political struggle. Some worth mentioning Conflict's song are:

1. *This Is the A.L.F. (1986, Album: The Ungovernable Force)*.¹⁵² This track is Conflict's most explicit alignment with the Animal Liberation Front. The lyrics openly celebrate direct action: sabotage, raids, and liberation of animals from laboratories and farms. In interviews, vocalist Colin Jerwood defended the song as a necessary call to arms, arguing that traditional protest was insufficient against entrenched exploitation. The track exemplifies anarcho-punk's fusion of music and activism, where art is inseparable from political struggle.
2. *Meat Means Murder (1983, Album: It's Time to See Who's Who)*.¹⁵³ Released before The Smiths' *Meat Is Murder*, Conflict's *Meat Means Murder* directly denounces slaughterhouses and meat consumption. The song's raw punk energy amplifies its uncompromising message, while lyrics such as "You moan about the seal cull, about the whale slaughter. But does it really matter whether it lives on land or water? You've never had a fur coat, you think it's cruel to the mink. Well how about the cow, pig or sheep, don't they make you think? Since the day that you were born you've never been told the missing link.", highlight the cognitive dissonance bearing and sustaining speciesism. At live shows, Conflict often paired the track with speeches about animal rights, turning concerts into activist gatherings. Its bluntness reflects anarcho-punk's ethos: no compromise, no euphemism, only confrontation.

Paul McCartney

A lifelong vegetarian, McCartney has consistently used his platform to critique animal exploitation, from vivisection to factory farming. His solo work, particularly the song *Looking for Changes* (1993), directly addresses animal testing. Beyond music, McCartney has collaborated with PETA and narrated documentaries like *Glass Walls*. His activism demonstrates how mainstream artists can normalize compassion, reaching audiences far beyond punk or underground movements. McCartney's blend of pop accessibility and ethical conviction makes him a unique figure in the cultural history of animal rights. Some worth mentioning songs are:

¹⁵² "Conflict – *This Is the A.L.F. Lyrics*," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Conflict-this-is-the-alf-lyrics>.

¹⁵³ "Conflict – *Meat Means Murder Lyrics*," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Conflict-meat-means-murder-lyrics>.

1. *Looking for Changes (1993)*.¹⁵⁴ From his album *Off the Ground*, *Looking for Changes* is McCartney's most direct protest against animal experimentation. The lyrics vividly describe cruelty: "I saw a cat with a machine in his brain... I'd like to see that man take out that machine and stick it in his own brain.". This blunt imagery confronts vivisection head-on. While, lyrics such as "Looking for changes. Changes in the way we treat our fellow creatures. And we will learn how to grow.", depict McCartney's hopes and dreams of a better world, changed, without animal exploitation and cruelty. During his 1993 world tour, McCartney projected graphic footage of animal experiments while performing the song, transforming concerts into activist interventions. McCartney later donated the song to PETA campaigns, reinforcing its activist purpose. It exemplifies how mainstream pop can carry uncompromising ethical critique.
2. *Wild Life (1971)*.¹⁵⁵ The title track of Wings' debut album critiques zoos and animal captivity. Lyrics such as, "Wild life (Wild life). What's going to happen to (whatever happened to, whatever happened to). Wild life (Wild life) The animals in the zoo?" reflect McCartney's disillusionment with human exploitation of animals for entertainment. The song's loose, improvisational style mirrors its raw ethical urgency. In interviews, McCartney linked *Wild Life* to his growing vegetarianism and his rejection of cruelty in everyday practices.

Earth Crisis

Earth Crisis, formed in Syracuse, New York in 1989, pioneered the militant vegan straight-edge hardcore movement. Their militant lyrics and uncompromising stance made them icons of a subculture that fused sobriety, veganism, and resistance. Frontman Karl Buechner often described veganism as central to their identity, with songs explicitly advocating direct action against animal exploitation. Earth Crisis influenced countless bands and activists, embedding animal rights into hardcore culture, while at the same time they played numerous shows to raise money for animal rights and environmental organizations, like the Animal Defense League and Farm Sanctuary, and publicly supported the actions of groups like the Animal Liberation Front, Earth First!, and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Their music is not just art but a manifesto, positioning veganism as both a lifestyle and a political struggle. Some songs with strong pro animal rights context are:

1. *New Ethic (1995, Album: Destroy the Machines)*¹⁵⁶. This track functions as a manifesto for a new moral code that rejects speciesism (the "anthropocentric falsehood"). It explicitly links veganism to compassion and peaceful living, framing the non-human animal as a sentient being whose life must be respected, not a commodity. Lyrics such as "This is the new ethic. Animals' lives are their own and must be given respect. Reject

¹⁵⁴ "Paul McCartney – Looking for Changes Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Paul-mccartney-looking-for-changes-lyrics>.

¹⁵⁵ "Wings – Wild Life Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Wings-wild-life-lyrics>.

¹⁵⁶ "Earth Crisis – New Ethic Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Earth-crisis-new-ethic-lyrics>.

the anthropocentric falsehood. That maintains the oppressive hierarchy of mankind over the animals”, are a core statement of the band’s philosophy; challenging the human-centric worldview that justifies animal exploitation, and lyrics like “To end the enslavement and slaughter, the antidote is veganism”, indicate the one-way solution/response to systemic violence; veganism, as a moral imperative.

2. *Vegan For The Animals* (2022, Album: *Vegan For The Animals*)¹⁵⁷. With this track, from their latest album, Earth crisis reasserts their long-standing belief and commitment to veganism and fight for animal liberation. Beginning with lyrics like, “The misery of confinement, The anguish of separation, The loneliness of isolation, It's incremental destruction, The agony that they're forced to endure”, the band emphasizes on the detrimental psychological effects that animal exploitation in farms and slaughterhouses causes on the animals, while lyrics such as, “No more archaic mindsets, Leave it in the past, Let us be the generation that breaks the mold And then recasts”, criticize, on the one hand, the systemic cultures that endorse and justify the animal cruelty and the degradation of animals, from coexisting sentient beings to mere disposable objects to satisfy humans, while at the same time, call the new generations to break this cycle of abuse and exploitation.

Moby

Moby is one of the most outspoken vegans (since 1987) musicians in mainstream culture. To show his dedication, he has tattoos that read “Vegan for life” on his neck and “Animal rights” down his arms. Moby has consistently used his platform to advocate for animal rights, environmentalism, and compassion. His activism extends beyond music: he has written essays, produced documentaries and donated proceeds from his restaurants and albums to animal charities. His 1996 album *Animal Rights* marked a radical departure from his earlier electronic work, blending punk and ambient influences with ethical urgency. Moby’s career demonstrates how electronic and alternative music can carry radical messages into mainstream consciousness, making him a cultural bridge between underground activism and global audiences. Some of his most influential songs are:

1. *Someone to Love* (1997, Album: *Animal Rights*)¹⁵⁸. The song's core theme, like much of the album, is a cathartic expression of anger and frustration. While the lyrics are largely obscured by distorted guitars and Moby's screaming vocals, the song channels the intense emotional pain he feels about the world's cruelty toward animals and people. The title “Someone to Love” can be interpreted as a poignant, almost sarcastic, commentary on the lack of compassion in the world, where countless sentient beings are denied love and instead subjected to cruelty. The raw, unfiltered sound is an

¹⁵⁷ “*Earth Crisis – Vegan For The Animals Lyrics*,” Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Earth-crisis-vegan-for-the-animals-lyrics>.

¹⁵⁸ “*Moby – Someone to Love Lyrics*,” Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Moby-someone-to-love-lyrics>.

expression of his belief that “everything is wrong” and that intense emotion is a valid response to systemic injustice.

2. *Don't Leave Me* (2016, Album: *These Systems Are Failing*, Moby & The Void Pacific Choir)¹⁵⁹. This song gained attention for its powerful accompanying music video, which uses a combination of abstract animation and compelling undercover footage provided by Mercy For Animals to expose the realities of animal agriculture. The abstract lyrics are paired with visuals designed to shock the viewer into confronting the cruel realities of factory farming, making the entire piece a potent animal rights anthem. Moby strategically uses his platform to force the viewer to see the “tragic horrors” he often speaks about, making the music a vehicle for documentary-style activism rather than a narrative in itself.

Iskra

Iskra, formed in Victoria, Canada in the early 2000s, are pioneers of “blackened crust”, a fusion of anarcho-punk and black metal. Their name means “spark” in Russian, symbolizing revolutionary ignition. Unlike many extreme metal bands that focus on nihilism or fantasy, Iskra’s lyrics are explicitly political, addressing capitalism, fascism, colonialism, and speciesism. They align themselves with anarchist and liberationist movements, including solidarity with the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and Earth Liberation Front (ELF). Their music is uncompromising, both sonically and ideologically, situating animal rights within a broader struggle against systemic oppression. Some of their most influential songs are:

1. *Prisoners of Conscience* (2004, Album: *Iskra*)¹⁶⁰. Their song Prisoners of Conscience, from their self-titled album is a solidarity anthem dedicated to activists imprisoned for animal liberation. Lyrics such as, “Denied basic rights and no hope for parole”, “In moral innocence, will they die alone? will anybody know?” and “The Black Panthers, A.I.M, and MOVE... Earth Liberation Front, Animal Liberation Front. Fighting to stop the continued destruction of life on this planet”, humanize the “prisoners”, framing them as martyrs for a just cause who are suffering in isolation, while denouncing the state’s persecution of those who act for justice and explicitly connecting the animal rights struggle to broader social and racial justice movements within their total liberation framework. The song’s ferocity mirrors the rage against systemic repression.
2. *Massacre of the Innocent* (2004, Album: *Iskra*)¹⁶¹. The title itself is a direct and provocative statement, referring to the large-scale slaughter of animals for consumption and other human uses. The band views these animals as innocent victims of systemic oppression and speciesism. The song uses highly charged language and the intense musical backdrop of blackened crust punk to evoke anger and sorrow. The lyrics are a

¹⁵⁹ “Moby & The Void Pacific Choir – Don't Leave Me Lyrics,” Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Moby-and-the-void-pacific-choir-dont-leave-me-lyrics>.

¹⁶⁰ “Iskra – Prisoners of Conscience Lyrics,” Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Iskra-prisoners-of-conscience-lyrics>.

¹⁶¹ “Iskra – Massacre of the Innocent Lyrics,” Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Iskra-massacre-of-the-innocent-lyrics>.

call to awareness, aiming to force the listener to confront the hidden violence that underpins everyday human life. It fits within their “total liberation” framework by emphasizing that this “massacre” is just another form of “unjustified control” that must be resisted. The message aligns with the belief that all sentient beings deserve to live free from exploitation.

Propagandhi

Propagandhi, formed in Winnipeg in 1986, are one of the most openly vegan and politically radical punk bands. Their music blends sharp satire, blistering riffs, and uncompromising critique of capitalism, nationalism, and speciesism. Unlike many punk bands that gesture toward politics, Propagandhi embed activism into every aspect of their work: they run benefit shows, collaborate with organizations like PETA and Food Not Bombs, and use their platform to promote veganism and animal liberation. Their lyrics often expose hypocrisy in consumer culture, while their interviews emphasize solidarity across struggles. Propagandhi’s unique contribution lies in their ability to merge biting humor with serious ethical critique, making them both accessible and uncompromising. Some notable songs are:

1. *Nailing Descartes to the Wall/ (Liquid) Meat is Still Murder (1996, Album: Less Talk, More Rock)*¹⁶². This song, a foundational Propagandhi animal rights anthem, is a direct challenge to speciesism and the philosophical idea (usually attributed to philosopher René Descartes) that non-human animals are non-sentient machines. The title itself is thesis statement; rejecting the notion that animals’ lives are less valuable. The lyrics use powerful language to link animal liberation with a broader struggle against oppression, arguing that once one recognizes one form of injustice, they are obligated to recognize the rest. Key lyrics like “meat is still murder. Dairy is still rape” use confrontational, explicit language designed to remove the “mythology and marketing” from animal product consumption and force the listener to confront the reality of the violence. It is a defense of militant veganism and personal accountability.
2. *Purina Hall of Fame (2001, Album: Today’s Empires, Tomorrow’s Ashes)*¹⁶³. This track satirizes the pet food industry’s marketing campaigns. The lyrics, being a stark description of the conditions animals endure, such as chicks being “stomped flat at a hatchery” or cows in distress, challenge the ethical double standard where people love their pets but consume other animals and expose the hypocrisy of celebrating animal companionship while profiting from exploitation, using the music’s aggressive energy to underscore the horror of normalized animal abuse. The song’s sarcastic tone highlights the contradictions of consumer culture.

¹⁶² “Propagandhi – Nailing Descartes to the Wall / (Liquid) Meat Is Still Murder Lyrics,” Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Propagandhi-nailing-descartes-to-the-wall-liquid-meat-is-still-murder-lyrics>.

¹⁶³ “Propagandhi – Purina Hall of Fame Lyrics.” Genius. Accessed December 15, 2025. <https://genius.com/Propagandhi-purina-hall-of-fame-lyrics>.

Gojira

Gojira, formed in Bayonne, France in 1996, are one of the most influential progressive heavy metal bands of the 21st century. Frontman Joe Duplantier has spoken openly about environmental activism, veganism, and the band's commitment to using music as a platform for awareness. Their albums, especially *From Mars to Sirius* (2005) and *The Way of All Flesh* (2008), embed ecological and ethical themes into extreme metal, making them unique in bridging brutality with compassion. Their most famous songs with strong pro-animal and pro-environmental content are:

1. *Flying Whales* (2005, Album: *From Mars to Sirius*).¹⁶⁴ One of Gojira's most iconic tracks, *Flying Whales* imagines whales soaring above the Earth, liberated from human exploitation. The lyrics "Waters of chaos have invaded all space. The flood on earth again. I have to find the whales, that once did guide us to the dry lands of life", situate whales as symbols of resilience, transcendence and connection to the nature. The protagonist in the lyrics is describing the life on a completely destroyed post-apocalyptic earth, trying to find the whales, the only thing left to reconnect him with nature, hoping to bring back balance to the earth. The slow, atmospheric intro builds into crushing riffs, mirroring the majesty and power of these beings. While there is no official video, live performances emphasize its epic, almost spiritual quality, often accompanied by visuals of whales and oceans. In interviews, Duplantier explained that whales represent "life's grandeur and fragility," critiquing whaling and humanity's disregard for nonhuman life. The track resonates deeply with animal rights discourse, offering a poetic vision of liberation and empathy.
2. *Toxic Garbage Island* (2008, Album: *The Way of All Flesh*).¹⁶⁵ From *The Way of All Flesh*, this track critiques pollution and consumerism. Lyrics like "Plastic bag in the sea", "The great pacific garbage patch is exhausted" and "Cities are burning, the trees are dying. My heart awake, but still" evoke the devastation of ecosystems. Duplantier explained in interviews that the track was inspired by the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, symbolizing humanity's disregard for nature. While focused on pollution, the song resonates with animal rights by highlighting how human waste directly harms marine life. Its relentless riffs embody rage against exploitation, making it both ecological and ethical protest.

Dawn Ray'd

Dawn Ray'd, formed in Liverpool in 2015, were a UK anarchist black-metal band whose music explicitly fuses radical politics with extreme soundscapes. Unlike traditional black metal, which often indulges in nihilism or apolitical aesthetics, Dawn Ray'd position themselves as anti-fascist, pro-anarchist, and supportive of animal liberation. Their lyrics consistently

¹⁶⁴ "Gojira – *Flying Whales Lyrics*," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Gojira-flying-whales-lyrics>.

¹⁶⁵ "Gojira – *Toxic Garbage Island Lyrics*," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/20504099>.

denounce oppression, while their interviews emphasize solidarity across struggles, from anti-racism and feminism to vegan ethics. By embedding activism into black metal, they challenge the genre's history of reactionary tendencies and reclaim it as a space for liberationist art. Some worth mentioning song are:

1. *Salvation Rite* (2019, Album: *Behold Seditio Plainsong*)¹⁶⁶. This track is their most direct lyrical engagement with animal rights. The lyrics focus on the plight of animals within the current environmental crisis and human systems of control, being a poignant reflection on animal sentience and our moral responsibility to them. Lyrics, such as, "I wonder if the animals know something's wrong, at least the ones we haven't enslaved", "One by one, the beasts and creatures resignedly turn to exit. This plain which every second, is less worth the fight of saving" and "The absurdity, the terror. The reluctant understanding. The actions we must make", powerfully critique human complacency and highlight the distinction between wild animals and those systematically exploited by humans, while connecting this suffering of innocent victims with the need for radical, committed action.
2. *Go As Free Companions* (2023, Album: *To Know the Light*)¹⁶⁷. While primarily a general anarchist/anti-fascist anthem, the accompanying music video makes its animal rights message explicit and integral to the song's meaning, while promoting solidarity among various revolutionary and activist groups, with people shown holding messages such as "NO ONE IS ILLEGAL", "TRANS RIGHTS NOW", "FIGHT FASCISM" and "LIBERATE ANIMALS". Powerful lyrics, such as "If you free animals from a cage", "If you help those stolen by jail" and "You the still unafraid to love", that directly refer and support the actions of activist organisations like the Animal Liberation Front, create a bridge between immediate action and love and respect for other living beings.

Heaven Shall Burn

Heaven Shall Burn, formed in Saalfeld, Germany in 1996, are a melodic death metal band whose music consistently fuses extreme sound with radical politics. The band members are openly vegan and have long aligned themselves with anti-fascist, ecological, and animal-rights movements. Their lyrics denounce exploitation, oppression, and violence, while their interviews emphasize solidarity and compassion. Their discography, especially albums like *Antigone* (2004) and *Veto* (2013), situates animal rights within a broader struggle for justice, making them one of the most important voices in politically engaged metal. Some famous activist songs of theirs are:

¹⁶⁶ "Dawn Ray'd – *Salvation Rite* Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Dawn-rayd-salvation-rite-lyrics>.

¹⁶⁷ "Dawn Ray'd – *Go as Free Companions* Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 15, 2025, <https://genius.com/Dawn-rayd-go-as-free-companions-lyrics>.

1. *Hunters Will Be Hunted* (2013, Album: *Veto*).¹⁶⁸ This track is an explicit anti-hunting anthem. Lyrics like “Hunters will be hunted, until the slaughter ceased to be. Believe me, you’ll regret your deeds” directly confront the violence of hunting, reversing the predator/prey dynamic. The song’s relentless riffs and harsh vocals embody rage against cruelty, while the official video features stark imagery of animal hunting and the hunters’ deadly fate, reinforcing its activist message. In interviews, guitarist Maik Weichert explained that the track was written to “give voice to those who cannot defend themselves,” situating it as solidarity with animals. Its uncompromising stance makes it one of the clearest examples of animal rights in extreme metal.
2. *Voice of the Voiceless* (2004, Album: *Antigone*).¹⁶⁹ From *Whatever It May Take*, this track is inspired by vegan straight-edge culture. Lyrics such as “For the weakest of the weak, for the lowest of the low, my voice for the voiceless, my fists for the innocent”, emphasize solidarity with oppressed beings, while lyrics like “No grave for millions - tortured creatures, but a common grave for our morals. This slaughter - an ethic I deny”, criticize the human morals that have legalised and normalised animal abuse and slaughter. The song’s aggressive style mirrors its activist intent, transforming music into a rallying cry. In interviews, the band explained that the track was dedicated to animal liberation and human liberation, explicitly linking their vegan ethics to their art. Live performances often include speeches about animal rights, reinforcing its activist function. The track exemplifies how Heaven Shall Burn embed veganism into their identity, making it inseparable from their music.

Cattle Decapitation

Cattle Decapitation, formed in San Diego in 1996, are pioneers of death-grind who use grotesque imagery and extreme sound to critique human exploitation of animals and the environment. Most members are vegan or vegetarian, and their misanthropic lyrics often reverse perspectives: imagining humans subjected to the same violence inflicted on animals. This inversion shocks listeners into empathy, forcing them to confront the brutality of factory farming, slaughterhouses, and consumerism. Their albums, especially *Monolith of Inhumanity* (2012) and *The Anthropocene Extinction* (2015), situate animal rights within ecological collapse, making them one of the most radical voices in extreme metal activism. Besides lyrics, Cattle Decapitation’s merchandise has consistently extended their activist message into visual culture, featuring grotesque satire, such as cows expelling waste onto human skulls, apocalyptic landscapes, mutated hybrids, and slogans like ‘Bring Back the Plague’, transforming their shirts and posters into wearable critiques of ecological collapse and human exploitation of animals. Some worth mentioning songs are:

¹⁶⁸ "Heaven Shall Burn - Hunters Will Be Hunted Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://genius.com/Heaven-shall-burn-hunters-will-be-hunted-lyrics>.

¹⁶⁹ "Heaven Shall Burn – Voice of the Voiceless Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://genius.com/Heaven-shall-burn-voice-of-the-voiceless-lyrics>.

1. *To Serve Man* (2002, Album: *To serve Man*).¹⁷⁰ This song (and album title) directly references the classic *Twilight Zone* episode (based on a short story) where aliens “help” humanity with a book titled *To Serve Man*, which turns out to be a cookbook. The lyrics and concept twist the meaning of “serving man” from “providing a service to humanity” to “serving humans as food”. The song’s graphic lyrics are a quintessential example of their role-reversal tactic, depicting humans being farmed, processed, and consumed, much like livestock.
2. *Forced Gender Reassignment* (2012, Album: *Monolith of Inhumanity*).¹⁷¹ Perhaps their most controversial track, *Forced Gender Reassignment* uses shocking allegory to critique systemic violence. The lyrics depict humans subjected to brutal surgeries, mirroring the mutilation inflicted on animals in factory farming and animal testing, while at the same time they carry a strong message against homophobia and transphobia. The official video, banned from many platforms, graphically portrays this reversal, forcing viewers to confront cruelty. In interviews, Ryan defended the track as “an allegory for the violence we normalize,” arguing that shock is necessary to provoke reflection. While disturbing, the song exemplifies Cattle Decapitation’s strategy: using extremity to expose hidden realities of exploitation.

Napalm Death

Napalm Death, formed in Birmingham in 1981, are pioneers of grindcore — a genre defined by extreme speed, brevity, and political urgency. From their debut *Scum* (1987) onward, the band has consistently addressed systemic violence, capitalism, war, and exploitation. Unlike many extreme metal bands that focus on nihilism, Napalm Death embed radical politics into their art, aligning themselves with anti-speciesist and animal-rights movements. Vocalist Barney Greenway has spoken openly about veganism and the band’s support for animal liberation, situating their music as both cultural protest and ethical manifesto. Their relentless sound mirrors the brutality they critique, making them one of the most important voices in politically engaged extreme music. Some famous songs throughout their career are:

1. *Scum* (1987, Album: *Scum*).¹⁷² The title track of their debut album is a foundational grindcore anthem. Its lyrics critique systemic exploitation, cruelty and inequality, resonating with animal rights discourse by exposing how cruelty is normalized. The track’s brevity and intensity embody grindcore’s ethos: no compromise, no euphemism, only confrontation. In interviews, Greenway explained that *Scum* was written as a “total rejection of oppressive systems,” including speciesism. The song situates animal rights within a continuum of struggles against domination, making it a cultural landmark.

¹⁷⁰ “Cattle Decapitation – *To Serve Man* Lyrics,” Genius, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://genius.com/Cattle-decapitation-to-serve-man-lyrics>.

¹⁷¹ “Cattle Decapitation – *Forced Gender Reassignment* Lyrics,” Genius, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://genius.com/Cattle-decapitation-forced-gender-reassignment-lyrics>.

¹⁷² “Napalm Death – *Scum* Lyrics,” Genius, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://genius.com/Napalm-death-scum-lyrics>.

2. *Cesspits* (2015, Album: *Apex Predator-Easy Meat*).¹⁷³ This track, being more modern, targets the apathy and deliberate ignorance of the general public when it comes to the sources of their food and goods, and critiques systemic cruelty, with lyrics denouncing humanity's descent into violence. The song title itself refers to the literal and figurative "cesspits" created by an industry built on suffering, where the public actively chooses to ignore the reality of factory farming conditions to maintain their convenient lifestyle. Barney Greenway often critiques the "out of sight, out of mind" mentality around meat consumption. The relentless riffs and blast beats mirror the urgency of resistance. In interviews, Napalm Death emphasized that their music is about "naming violence wherever it exists," including against animals. The track exemplifies their intersectional approach, embedding vegan ethics within grindcore's radical critique.

Fall of Efrafa

Fall of Efrafa, formed in Brighton in 2005, was a crust-punk/post-metal collective whose entire discography is inspired by Richard Adams' *Watership Down*. They use the novel's allegorical framework — rabbits resisting authoritarian rule — to critique human oppression, speciesism, and ecological destruction. The band members are openly vegan and anarchist, situating their music as both art and manifesto. Their trilogy of albums (*Owsla*, *Elil*, *Inlé*) allegorizes liberation struggles, with rabbits symbolizing marginalized beings and the oppressive society of Efrafa representing authoritarianism and human supremacy. Their long, atmospheric compositions combine ferocity with narrative depth, making them one of the most unique voices in activist music. Some notable songs are:

1. *Pity the Weak* (2006, Album: *Owsla*).¹⁷⁴ From *Owsla*, this track critiques exploitation through allegory, condemns the way the powerful (humans) treat the vulnerable (non-human animals) and encourages empathy and action against those who misuse and abuse their power. Lyrics like "Parasitic ape, spills his black blood, blotting out the sun, wither to sallow flesh" criticize intensely the catastrophic invasion of humans (parasitic apes), destroying the ecosystem and systemically abusing all other life on earth. The song's relentless crust-punk energy mirrors the urgency of resistance. In interviews, the band explained that the track was about "naming oppression in all its forms," including speciesism. Its allegorical framework makes it accessible while embedding vegan ethics into narrative art.
2. *Dominion Theology* (2007, Album: *Elil*).¹⁷⁵ This track is a cornerstone of Fall of Efrafa's second album *Elil* (2007) and serves as a scathing, direct critique of the Abrahamic religious doctrine that humans were granted supreme authority over all other life on Earth. The song is a powerful example of the band's post-metal/crust punk sound. It

¹⁷³ "Napalm Death – *Cesspits* Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://genius.com/Napalm-death-cesspits-lyrics>.

¹⁷⁴ "Fall of Efrafa – *Pity the Weak* Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://genius.com/Fall-of-efrafa-pity-the-weak-lyrics>.

¹⁷⁵ "Fall of Efrafa – *Dominion Theology* Lyrics," Genius, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://genius.com/Fall-of-efrafa-dominion-theology-lyrics>.

typically builds slowly with atmospheric, melancholic guitar melodies and driving, heavy rhythms. The track is characterized by moments of intense, aggressive crust punk verses followed by expansive, crushing post-rock crescendos, perfectly matching the intensity of its subject matter. The lyrics directly attack the concept of human exceptionalism and the moral justification for exploitation. The Core Critique: The song argues that the belief in human “dominion” has led to our species acting as arrogant tyrants over the natural world and its inhabitants. It highlights the hypocrisy of a “loving” creator giving permission for widespread suffering and destruction. The lyrics employ vivid imagery to describe the consequences of this ideology, portraying scenes of slaughter, environmental ruin, and the shedding of innocent lives in the name of this perceived “divinity”. Ultimately, the song is a call to reject this self-serving theology, urging listeners to recognize the interconnectedness of all life and the moral failure of speciesism.

Vegan Queen V

Vegan Queen V¹⁷⁶, a UK-based solo pop singer-songwriter and activist, represents the intersection of music and animal rights advocacy. Her work emerged from the conviction that “music and animal rights collided,” leading her to compose songs explicitly offered for use by activists in campaigns and outreach. Through albums such as *Freedom Warrior* and *In Dog We Trust*, she integrates traditional instruments with contemporary activist lyrics to create emotionally resonant soundscapes. Beyond her solo work, she co-leads the Animal Rights Choir, inviting collective participation and amplifying the communal voice of resistance. Vegan Queen V’s contribution demonstrates how artistic practice can extend beyond visual or cinematic forms, mobilizing sound and performance as tools of empowerment and ethical persuasion. Some very inspiring songs are:

1. *Dominion* (2022, Album: *Freedom Warrior*).¹⁷⁷ Vegan Queen V uses haunting piano lines and traditional instruments (pipes, violin, cello, bodhrán) to create a layered soundscape that mirrors the gravity of systemic animal exploitation. The lyrics juxtapose everyday human detachment with the stark reality of animal suffering, asking why only some can “see the fear and pain in their eyes.” The repeated refrain of “Dominion” critiques humanity’s abuse of power, framing it as both a moral and ecological collapse. By embedding activist content into a folk-rock idiom, the song becomes a rallying cry for awareness, echoing the documentary’s call to action.
2. *What Hell Is Like* (2022, Album: *Freedom Warrior*).¹⁷⁸ This song, inspired by the documentary *Land of Hope and Glory*, confronts the brutality of animal agriculture by evoking visceral imagery of confinement and suffering. The composition blends melancholic melodies with urgent lyrical delivery, creating a sense of both mourning

¹⁷⁶ Vegan Queen V, official website, accessed November 23, 2025, <https://www.veganqueenv.co.uk>.

¹⁷⁷ “*Vegan Queen V – Dominion*,” Bandcamp, released March 20, 2022, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://veganqueenv.bandcamp.com/track/dominion>.

¹⁷⁸ “*Vegan Queen V – What Hell Is Like*,” Bandcamp, released March 20, 2022, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://veganqueenv.bandcamp.com/track/what-hell-is-like>.

and resistance. Vegan Queen V positions the listener in the perspective of the animals, describing their lived reality as a form of “hell” engineered by human systems. The track’s emotional force lies in its ability to collapse the distance between human and nonhuman experience, insisting that empathy requires recognition of shared vulnerability. As part of the Freedom Warrior album, it underscores the central theme that liberation for animals is inseparable from human freedom, situating music as a medium of ethical witness and activist solidarity.

Vegan Queen V, in an interview for this thesis, describes her turn toward animal-rights music as an organic and unavoidable response to the shock of discovering what happens in the dairy, egg, and meat industries. After watching documentaries such as *Earthlings*, *Cowspiracy*, *Dominion*, and *Land of Hope and Glory*, she felt devastated by the violence she witnessed. Songwriting became a way to process the trauma, which soon evolved into a deliberate form of activism aimed at raising awareness and giving voice to animals. She emphasizes that music functions differently from visual art or film: vibration, melody, and the human voice transmit emotion directly into the listener’s body, allowing truth to be felt even before it is intellectually processed.

Creating explicitly activist music brings challenges, particularly the need to balance honesty with compassion. She has moved from early anger at humanity toward a more measured approach that still names violence clearly while choosing language capable of opening hearts rather than shutting listeners down. Among her works, she highlights “LEADER,” a song rooted in her own ethical awakening and the belief that personal responsibility, over one’s choices, life, and values, holds transformative power. She also cherishes its music video, in which she shaves her head, symbolizing renewal and commitment. One of the responses that stayed with her came from a woman who, after hearing “LEADER” at a festival, was inspired to volunteer with a local animal charity, an affirmation of the impact music can have.

Although her track “Dominion” shares a title with the well-known documentary, it was inspired instead by her months living in a church while writing her first album, surrounded by imagery of sin, heaven, and hell. This environment led her to question what “dominion” truly means in a world humans are destroying. “What Hell Is Like,” one of her earliest animal-rights songs, emerged after watching *Land of Hope and Glory*; she sat at her piano and let the chord progressions guide her, using songwriting as a form of therapy to translate unbearable images into a message the world needed to hear.

Collective projects such as the Animal Rights Choir amplify this work by offering activists community, hope, and rejuvenation in a world where being vegan can feel isolating. Ultimately, she wants audiences to understand that peace is impossible while unnecessary violence persists, and she hopes her music encourages self-love, forgiveness, and the courage to change. Despite criticism and the risks associated with activism, she trusts her intentions and continues her work, developing her third solo album, expanding ARC into new UK chapters, and creating an animal-rights musical that will weave together past and new material.

Plumes

Plumes¹⁷⁹, a French singer-songwriter, has gained international attention for his unconventional performances directed not at human crowds but at animals themselves. Armed with his flamingo-pink guitar, he serenades cows, horses, parrots, rhinos, giraffes, and even the elusive okapi, creating viral moments that highlight the emotional responses of non-human beings. Although Plumes does not compose songs with overtly activist lyrics, his practice embodies a subtle yet powerful form of animal-rights advocacy: by treating animals as audiences, he affirms their sentience and challenges anthropocentric norms of performance. His work demonstrates how music can transcend species boundaries, offering a poetic and accessible form of activism that resonates with both human viewers and the animals he engages.

In his interview for this thesis, Plumes shared that his journey began when, feeling disconnected from human listeners while busking in the subway, he read that cows enjoy music. At his grandmother's countryside home, he sang for nearby cows and was astonished by their response: they ran toward him, listened attentively for nearly an hour, and rubbed their heads against him. This moment not only gave him the connection he had been missing but also transformed his perception of animals, leading him first to vegetarianism and later to veganism.

Later on, he emphasized that his performances allow audiences to meet animals as individuals rather than abstract species. By showcasing personalities like Oscar the bull, rescued from the meat industry, he helps human viewers dissolve the disconnect that often obscures empathy. His videos, which frequently go viral online, extend this impact by linking viewers directly to animal-rights organizations, thereby combining emotional resonance with practical activism. One of the most powerful stories he shared involved animals so weakened by industrial exploitation that they could barely move. Yet, upon hearing his music, they gathered their strength to approach him, underscoring both their sensitivity and their desire for connection. For Plumes, such moments reveal the purity and vulnerability of animals, and the injustice of their suffering. Plumes situates his work as both art and activism. He explained that he no longer cared about being “just an artist,” since activism gave his life greater purpose and meaning. Performing in sanctuaries remains his favorite context, where he witnesses animals — even those heavily mistreated — showing forgiveness and curiosity after only a few minutes of trust-building. These encounters inspire him deeply, reinforcing his belief in animals' willingness to connect with humans despite past harm.

Social media plays a crucial role in amplifying his message. While live performances create intimate interspecies exchanges, online exposure allows him to reach global audiences and embed activist resources directly into his videos. This dual strategy transforms his gentle, poetic gestures into a broader advocacy tool. Although he describes few logistical challenges,

¹⁷⁹ “Plumes (@plumesofficiel),” Instagram, accessed December 16, 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/plumesofficiel/>.

Plumes admitted that realizing animals are “exactly like me” is emotionally painful, as it forces him to confront the scale of suffering perpetuated daily for human pleasure. His reflections highlight the tension between compassion and urgency: while he hopes the world will become vegan, he believes change must be pursued in a poetic, non-forceful way to avoid counterproductive resistance. Yet he also feels the urgency of systemic cruelty pressing on him every day. Plumes’ contribution demonstrates how activism can operate through gentleness and interspecies recognition rather than confrontation. His work expands the spectrum of artistic activism by showing that music can transcend species boundaries, offering a form of advocacy that is accessible, emotionally resonant, and quietly radical. In the broader context of this thesis, Plumes exemplifies how art can mobilize compassion not only by speaking *about* animals but by speaking *to* them, creating a poetic bridge between human and nonhuman worlds.

Although not foregrounding animal rights in their songs, many artists use their platforms for pro-animal rights advocacy. Brian May, guitarist of Queen, has become one of the UK’s most visible advocates for animal welfare. In 2010 he co-founded the Save Me Trust with Anne Brummer to oppose fox hunting and badger culling, drawing symbolic resonance from his song “Save Me”¹⁸⁰. Through this organisation he has defended the 2004 Hunting Act, coordinated the Team Badger coalition, and fronted public campaigns challenging government wildlife policy¹⁸¹. He has repeatedly condemned the badger cull, and used media such as the BBC documentary *The Badgers, The Farmers and Me* (2024) to raise awareness¹⁸². In 2024 he resigned as RSPCA vice president over concerns about factory-farming standards, reinforcing his commitment to systemic change. Similarly, mainstream artists like Billie Eilish¹⁸³, Ariana Grande¹⁸⁴, and Joan Jett¹⁸⁵ use their visibility to normalise veganism and compassion, even when their music is not explicitly activist. Their advocacy demonstrates how celebrity influence complements grassroots efforts, showing that music culture can advance animal-rights ethics not only through lyrics but through public voice, platform, and example.

¹⁸⁰ Brian May and Anne Brummer, *Save Me Trust*, founded 2010, <https://www.save-me.org.uk>.

¹⁸¹ ‘Save Me (animal welfare)’, Wikipedia, last modified 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Save_Me_\(animal_welfare\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Save_Me_(animal_welfare))

¹⁸² Brian May, *The Badgers, The Farmers and Me* (BBC Documentary, 2024).

¹⁸³ Billie Eilish, interview with *Vogue*, June 2021, on veganism and animal agriculture.

¹⁸⁴ Ariana Grande, “Ariana Grande Honored by PETA for Promoting Vegan Food and Animal Adoption,” PETA News Release, 2024.

¹⁸⁵ Joan Jett, “We Are All Sisters Under the Skin,” PETA Campaign Statement, 2013.

6. Survey Methodology and Data Collection

6.1. Research Design

In order to explore how activist art influences perceptions of animal rights and veganism, this study employs an online questionnaire, in Greek and English language, as its primary research tool (Appendix A and B). This survey method was chosen because it allows the collection of diverse perspectives from a broad audience, capturing both emotional and cognitive responses to artistic activism, by combining quantitative data (rating of emotional impact, frequency of exposure to activist art) with qualitative insights (open-ended reflections on memorable artworks). This dual approach makes it possible to analyze not only the prevalence of certain attitudes but also the depth of personal experiences. The questionnaire was designed to be accessible, concise and anonymous, ensuring that participants could respond freely without pressure. Ultimately, the survey serves as a bridge between theory and lived experience, providing empirical data to support the thesis argument that art functions as a powerful medium of activism, capable of shaping ethical awareness and emotional connection to animals.

The questionnaires consisted of four main sections. The first gathered demographic information, including age, gender, country of residence, occupation, and dietary preferences, the second section explored attitudes and experiences with activist art, asking participants to evaluate the perceived power of different art forms (such as music, literature, painting, film, and street art) and to indicate whether they had ever been emotionally moved or behaviorally influenced by such works, the third section addressed abuse, oppression, rights, and social justice, inviting participants to reflect on parallels between human and animal exploitation, while the final section focused on responses to activist art in practice, presenting participants with images/paintings created by vegan activist Philip McCulloch and a short documentary clip provided by Mercy For Animals. These stimuli were chosen to elicit immediate emotional and cognitive reactions. Participants were asked to describe the emotions evoked, assess the effectiveness of the artworks as activism, and reflect on whether the materials influenced their own attitudes or behaviors.

The survey was hosted on Google Forms to ensure accessibility and anonymity and was distributed on SurveyCircle, SurveySwap, Reddit (r/SampleSize), Facebook groups and Instagram. The estimated completion time was approximately thirty minutes, balancing depth of inquiry with participant convenience. This design allows for the integration of quantitative data (Likert scale ratings, multiple-choice responses) with qualitative insights (open-ended narratives). Together, these elements provide a comprehensive view of how activist art is received, how it shapes ethical reflection, and how it may inspire social or behavioral change.

6.2. Sampling Strategy

The survey employed a non-probability, convenience sampling approach, reflecting both the practical constraints of online distribution and the exploratory nature of the study. The target population included individuals with varying degrees of exposure to activist art, ranging from general audiences to those actively engaged in artistic or activist communities. By keeping participation open, the study aimed to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives on how art functions as a medium of activism and how it influences ethical awareness regarding animals. Furthermore, the inclusion criteria were minimal, requiring only that participants be at least eighteen years old and willing to engage with the questionnaire. This openness allowed for responses across different age groups, occupations, and cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, a total of 114 responses were collected across both language versions. The two datasets were later merged into a single spreadsheet for analysis. Because Google Forms does not allow merging of summary statistics, the raw data were combined manually, and frequencies and percentages were calculated by hand to ensure accuracy and consistency.

6.3. Limitations

While this approach maximized accessibility, it also introduced limitations, such as potential demographic imbalances and self-selection bias, since individuals with stronger interest in activism or art may have been more likely to participate. Although the sample of 114 participants cannot be considered representative of the general population, it offers valuable insights into the reception of activist art among diverse participants.

6.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis of the survey data followed a mixed-methods approach designed to capture both measurable patterns and the nuanced emotional and ethical reflections expressed by participants. Quantitative data from the multiple-choice and Likert-scale items were processed descriptively, focusing on frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, aiming, not to generalize to a wider population, but to identify tendencies in how individuals perceive activist art and its ethical implications. Likewise, qualitative data from the open-ended questions were analysed thematically. Responses were first read holistically to gain an overall sense of participants' emotional tone and interpretive frameworks, and then, a second round of coding identified recurring emotional themes such as empathy, discomfort, moral conflict, inspiration, and perceived contradictions between human and animal rights. This iterative process allowed for the emergence of both expected and unexpected patterns, reflecting the diversity of participants' experiences with activist art. Throughout the analysis, reflexivity was maintained by acknowledging my own engagement with activism and ethical concerns, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in participants' words rather than preconceived assumptions.

7. Survey Results

7.1. Demographic Profile of Participants

The final dataset included 114 participants, representing a diverse range of ages, occupations, and dietary identities. The age distribution showed that 41 (35,96%) respondents were 18–25, 35 (30,70%) were 26–35, 26 (22,80%) were 36–50, and 12 (10,52%) were 50+. This spread indicates that the survey reached both younger adults, who are often highly active in digital activism, and older participants with more established ethical frameworks.

Gender identity was similarly varied. From the total, 84 (73,68%) identified as female, 28 (24,56%) as male, and 2 (1,75%) selected non-binary and genderfluid. This diversity supports the broader aim of the study: to understand how activist art resonates across different social identities.

Participants came from multiple countries, with the majority residing in Greece (40 participants) and England (18 participants), followed by India (10 participants) and USA (13 participants), while the rest resided in other European and Asian countries. Occupations ranged widely, including students, academics, artists, activists, educators, healthcare professionals, and manual/technical workers, reflecting a broad cross-section of social backgrounds.

Dietary preference was a particularly relevant variable for this study. From the total 52 (45,61%) identified as omnivores, 12 (10,52%) as vegetarians, 12 (10,52%) as flexitarians, 7 (6,14%) as pescetarians, 28 (24,56%) as vegans, while 3 (2,63%) followed other diets. This distribution allowed for meaningful comparisons between participants with different relationships to animal ethics.

7.2. Engagement With Artivism (Artistic Activism)

Participants were asked which artistic forms they considered most powerful for activism. The results showed a clear hierarchy of perceived impact. From the total of 114 participants, 88 (77,19%) selected documentaries/film, making it the most influential medium. This aligns with existing research on moral shock and the persuasive power of audiovisual storytelling. Following, music was chosen by 61 (53,50%), reflecting its emotional immediacy and accessibility. Paintings were chosen by 58 (50,87%) participants, while street art was selected by 52 (45,61%), highlighting its disruptive presence in public space and its ability to reach audiences outside traditional cultural institutions. Literature followed with 50 (43,85%), while Performative Art and Stand Up Comedy were suggested by 2 (1,75%) participants, respectively. These findings suggest that participants view activist art as most effective when it combines emotional intensity with narrative clarity or public visibility.

7.3. Attitudes Toward Art's Ethical Influence

In this section, participants were asked to respond, through a likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree), to the following statements:

1. Art can influence social and ethical change. The answers here were distributed as follows: 1=0, 2=3 (2,63%), 3=15 (13,15%), 4=42 (36,84%), 5=54 (47,36%)
2. Music can raise awareness about animal rights. Here the participants answered: 1=3 (2,63%), 2=11 (9,64%), 3=18 (15,78%), 4=50 (43,85%), 5=32 (28,07%)
3. Art can make me reconsider my relationship with animals. The participants' answers varied as follows: 1=2 (1,75%), 2=8 (7,01%), 3=21 (18,42%), 4=42 (36,84%), 5=41 (35,96%)
4. I feel more connected to animals after experiencing activist art. Here the participants answered: 1=5 (2,63%), 2=11 (9,64%), 3=29 (25,43%), 4=37 (32,45%), 5=32 (28,07%)
5. Have you ever changed your opinion/behavior and/or felt emotionally moved after seeing a work of activist art? The participants here answered: Yes: 77 (67,54%) and No:37 (32,45%)
6. In the last question of this section (optional and open-ended), *If you answered yes in the previous question, would you like to share your life changing experience?*, 25 participants (21,92%) responded with sharing their personal experience with life changing art, mentioning mainly well-known film documentaries such as Dominion, Earthlings, Okja, famous artists' songs, such as Meat Means Murder from The Smiths, Feminist Art and Activist Street Performances.

Ultimately, the high concentration in the upper end of the scale indicates that respondents generally believe in the transformative potential of art. This supports the theoretical framework of the thesis, which positions art as a catalyst for ethical reflection and emotional engagement.

7.4. Oppression, Rights and Social Justice

Participants' views on oppression and justice, also revealed clear patterns. From a total of 114 people, 32 (28%) described themselves as politically active, 40 (35%) as sometimes politically active, while 42 (36,84%) declared that they don't participate in any form of political activity (protests, campaigns, social movements). Furthermore, through a Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree), 36 (31,57%) strongly agreed that they actively support human rights and oppose human oppression, 31 (27,19%) chose number 4, 35 (30,7%) were moderate (no.3), while 9 (7,89%) and 3 (2,63%) participants denied their support for human rights and their involvement in fighting human oppression (they chose no.2 and no.1 in the Likert Scale, respectively).

When asked whether the treatment of animals in farms and slaughterhouses constitutes a form of oppression, 81 (71%) agreed, while 22 (19,29%) were neutral/not sure and 11 (9,64%) disagreed. Reflection on ethical contradictions, was also common: 67 (58,7%) reported having considered the tension between advocating for human equality and rights while consuming products derived from animal exploitation, 18 (15,78%) thought about it sometimes in their life, while 29 (25,43%) have never reflected on this contradiction. Furthermore, when asked to share their thoughts on this contradiction (optional and open-ended question), 37 participants answered, mentioning their need to start adopting a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle as the most ethical, some others connected speciesism, sexism, fascism, colonialism, racism and abuse with capitalism, as a direct result of this specific economic system, while others suggested the

continuation of consuming animal products with more respect to the animals and by eliminating the abusive practices of farms and slaughterhouses.

Finally, when selecting which practices they consider forms of exploitation or rights violations, participants frequently chose both human-directed and animal-directed examples: 97 (85%) chose the option All of the above (Forced impregnation, Sexual violence/Rape, Locking someone in a cage or confined space, Physical abuse (beating, harming, injuring), Killing someone, Denying freedom of movement, Taking away their children/Family separation, Using someone for profit without consent, Psychological abuse (fear, intimidation, trauma), Forced labor/Child labor, Political oppression, Discrimination based on gender, race, sexuality etc.), emphasizing in Physical and Psychological Abuse, Denial of Freedom of Movement and Rape.

All these results indicate that many respondents recognise exploitation across species lines, even if they differ in how strongly they connect human and non-human justice issues.

7.5. Emotional Responses to Activist Art

In this section, participants were exposed, with their consent, to some images of paintings and a short documentary clip (Appendix A), that depicted the practices taking place in farms and slaughterhouses. When asked about the emotions these two types of activist art evoked for them, the majority (107 participants (93,85%) for the paintings and 81 participants (71%) for the documentary clip), expressed feelings of sadness, disturbance, anger about the humans, disgust, repulsion, realisation, pain, empathy, shock, self-disappointment in their personal life choices and grief, while 7 (6,14%) participants reported that the images didn't evoke any feelings for them and 33 (28,94%) participants reported that they couldn't watch the video at all, or continue watching it because of the graphic footage.

Furthermore, when asked if they considered that the paintings could influence someone's attitude toward animals and whether the clip could influence social and ethical change, 64 (56,14%) answered yes, 42 (36,84%) answered maybe, and 8 (7%) answered no for the paintings, while 75 (65,78%) were positive, 36 (31,57%) answered maybe and 3 (2,63%) were negative, regarding the clip. As for the level of understanding the messages the two artists wanted to convey through their art, the majority of the participants clearly stated that the artists wanted to raise awareness about the animal cruelty and the horrors in food industries and challenge people to rethink their dietary preferences, realise that animals are conscious and deserve rights.

Concluding, when the participants were faced with the statement that they felt emotionally affected by the images and the clip, in a Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree), 56 (49,12%) strongly agreed with the statement, 40 (35%) mildly agreed, 13 (11,40%) were moderate, while 4 (3,5%) mildly disagreed and 1 (0,87%) participant strongly disagreed. In the second statement, 'The images and clip made me reflect and reconsider my relationship with animals', 46 (40,35%) strongly agreed, 29 (25,43%) mildly agreed, 21 (18,42%) were moderate, while 10 (8,77%) mildly disagreed and 8 (7%) strongly disagreed. In the following

statement, 'The images and clip increased my awareness of animal rights issues', 54 (47,36%) participants strongly agreed, 34 (29,82%) mildly agreed, 15 (13,15%) were moderate, while 7 (6,14%) mildly disagreed and 4 (3,50%) strongly disagreed.

Ultimately, in the last two statements, 'The images and clip motivated me to consider changing my behavior toward animals' and 'After viewing the images and clip, I have reflected on the possible contradiction between supporting human rights and consuming products from animal exploitation', the participants answered in the following ways: 41 (35,96%) and 52 (45,61%) strongly agreed, 35 (30,7%) and 31 (27,19%) mildly agreed, 22 (19,29%) and 17 (14,9%) were moderate, 6 (5,26%) and 8 (7%) mildly disagreed, while 10 (8,77%) and 6 (5,26%) strongly disagreed, respectively.

8. Discussion On the Survey Results

The survey findings offer a nuanced picture of how diverse audiences engage with activist art and how such engagement intersects with broader ethical, emotional, and political orientations. Across demographic groups, participants demonstrated a strong belief in the capacity of art to influence ethical reflection, with documentaries, music, and visual art emerging as the most impactful forms. This aligns with the academic literature on moral shock and affective persuasion, which suggests that emotionally charged artistic media can disrupt habitual thinking and prompt reconsideration of entrenched practices.

A central theme emerging from the data is the emotional intensity with which participants responded to activist art. The overwhelming majority reported feelings of sadness, empathy, anger, or discomfort when exposed to the paintings and documentary clip. These emotions are not incidental; they reflect the mechanisms described in moral psychology, where affective responses often precede cognitive shifts. The fact that nearly half of participants strongly agreed that the images and clip made them reflect on their relationship with animals suggests that emotional activation may serve as a gateway to ethical reconsideration. This is further supported by the high percentage of respondents who reported having previously changed their behaviour or opinions after encountering activist art.

The findings also reveal a significant degree of ethical tension and self-reflection among participants. More than half acknowledged having considered the contradiction between supporting human rights while consuming products derived from animal exploitation. This tension echoes the concept of cognitive dissonance, where individuals experience discomfort when their actions conflict with their values. The open-ended responses deepen this picture: some participants expressed a desire to adopt a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle, while others attempted to reconcile their consumption habits with a belief in “respectful” or “less abusive” forms of animal use. These divergent strategies illustrate the complexity of ethical negotiation in everyday life and highlight the role of activist art in making such contradictions visible.

Importantly, the survey also sheds light on how participants conceptualise oppression and justice across species lines. A substantial majority agreed that the treatment of animals in farms and slaughterhouses constitutes a form of oppression, and an even larger proportion selected both human-directed and animal-directed practices as examples of exploitation or rights violations. This suggests that many respondents intuitively recognise structural parallels between human and non-human oppression, even if they differ in how strongly they endorse an intersectional framework. The open-ended comments referencing speciesism, sexism, racism, colonialism, and capitalism further indicate that some participants situate animal exploitation within broader systems of domination. At the same time, the presence of participants who rejected or questioned these parallels highlights the ongoing contestation surrounding the political status of animals.

Dietary identity played a notable role in shaping responses. Vegans and vegetarians tended to report stronger emotional resonance, greater ethical alignment, and higher motivation toward

behavioural change. Omnivores and flexitarians, by contrast, displayed more ambivalence or discomfort, which may reflect the psychological distance required to maintain practices that conflict with emerging ethical concerns. Yet even among omnivores, a significant proportion agreed that activist art can influence ethical change, suggesting that emotional engagement may precede, and potentially facilitate, shifts in behaviour.

Taken together, these findings underscore the transformative potential of activist art. Art does not merely communicate information; it creates emotional openings, exposes contradictions, and invites viewers to reconsider their ethical positions. The survey demonstrates that activist art can function as a catalyst for reflection across diverse demographic groups, even among those who do not identify as politically active or who have not previously engaged with animal-rights issues. At the same time, the variability in responses, particularly around the intersection of human and non-human oppression, highlights the need for nuanced, context-sensitive approaches to art activism that acknowledge differing ethical frameworks and levels of readiness for change.

Ultimately, the survey supports the broader argument of this thesis: that activist art occupies a unique space at the intersection of emotion, ethics, and social justice. It has the capacity to disrupt moral complacency, evoke empathy, and illuminate the structural nature of oppression, making it a powerful tool for animal-rights advocacy and for reimagining relationships between humans and other animals.

9. Conclusion

This thesis examined how artistic activism shapes public understandings of animals, ethics, and social justice by combining close analysis of activist artworks, interviews with activists, and a mixed-methods audience study. The visual and audiovisual works analysed in the thesis revealed how artists use symbolism, emotional intensity, and strategic disruption to expose the hidden realities of animal exploitation and challenge viewers' moral assumptions. These artistic strategies were echoed in the interviews, where artists described their work as a deliberate intervention into systems of invisibility, aiming to provoke empathy, discomfort, and ethical reflection.

The survey findings reinforced these insights. Participants responded strongly to the artworks, reporting emotions such as sadness, empathy, anger, and moral discomfort—responses that often led to reflection on personal behaviour, dietary choices, and broader structures of oppression. Many recognised parallels between human and non-human exploitation, while others expressed tensions or contradictions that highlight the complexity of ethical change.

Taken together, the analysis of the artworks, the artists' testimonies, and the audience responses show that activism can bridge the gap between emotion and ethics, making visible the structures that shape human–animal relations and inviting viewers to reconsider their own positions within them. While responses varied, the overall evidence suggests that activist art holds significant potential as a tool for social transformation, capable of unsettling moral complacency and opening space for more just, compassionate futures.

Ultimately, this thesis argues that activist art is not merely an aesthetic practice but a social and ethical force. It can unsettle, provoke, inspire, and mobilise. It can illuminate the structures that shape our relationships with animals and with each other. And, perhaps most importantly, it can create the emotional and cognitive conditions necessary for imagining more just and inclusive futures.

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11. Appendixes

11.1. Appendix A: English Questionnaire for the Survey

Artistic Forms of Activism: Representations of Animal Rights and Veganism through the Arts and their Psychological Reception

This survey is part of a Master's Thesis exploring how art, in the form of music, documentaries, visual art and literature, can influence our views on animals, ethics, and social change. Your answers are anonymous and will help me understand the emotional and ethical impact of artistic activism.

1. Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. Please answer honestly; there are no right or wrong answers.

I agree to participate in this survey.

Demographics

2. Age Group * 18-25 26-35 36-50 50+
3. Gender * Female Male Non-Binary Genderfluid Prefer not to Say
4. Country of Residence *
5. Occupation (You can choose more than one options)* Student Academic Artist Educator Healthcare Professional Office Worker Manual/Technical Worker Activist Self-Employed Unemployed Retired Other.....
6. Dietary Preference * Omnivore Pescetarian Vegetarian Flexitarian Vegan Other.....

Attitudes and Experiences with Activist Art

This section asks about your attitudes and personal experiences with activist art. Please answer honestly; there are no right or wrong answers.

7. Which forms of art do you consider most powerful for activism? (You can choose more than one options)* Paintings Music Literature Film/Documentary Street Art Other.....
8. Art can influence social and ethical change. * Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
9. Music can raise awareness about animal rights. * Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
10. Art can make me reconsider my relationship with animals. * Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
11. I feel more connected to animals after experiencing activist art. * Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
12. Have you ever changed your opinion/behavior and/or felt emotionally moved after seeing a work of activist art? * Yes No

13. If you answered yes in the previous question, would you like to share your life changing experience? (Optional)

Oppression, Rights and Social Justice

This section asks about your views on activism, human rights, and how they may relate to animals. Please answer honestly; there are no right or wrong answers.

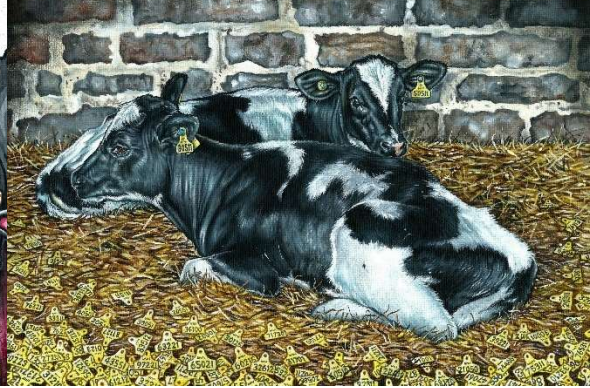
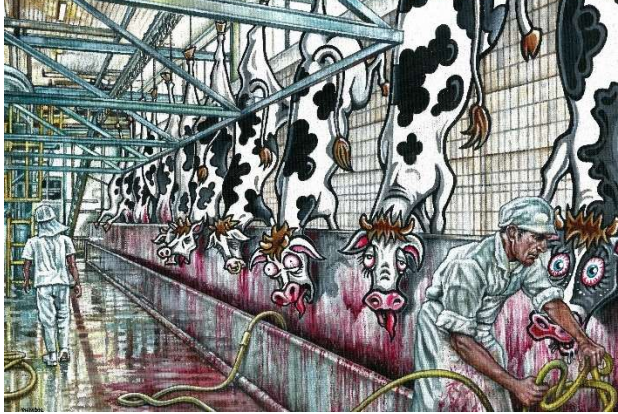
14. Do you consider yourself politically active (e.g. participating in protests, campaigns or social movements)?* Yes No Sometimes
15. I actively support human rights and fight against human oppression. * Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
16. Do you consider what animals experience in farms and slaughterhouses to be a form of oppression?* Yes No Not Sure
17. Have you ever reflected on the contradiction between fighting for equality and human rights while at the same time consuming products that come from animal exploitation?* Yes No Sometimes
18. If yes, how do you personally think about this contradiction? (Optional)
19. Which of the following do you personally consider as forms of exploitation, abuse, or form of stripping someone of their rights? (You can choose more than one options)*
Forced impregnation Sexual violence/Rape Locking someone in a cage or confined space Physical abuse (beating, harming, injuring) Killing someone Denying freedom of movement Taking away their children/Family separation Using someone for profit without consent Psychological abuse (fear, intimidation, trauma) Forced labor/Child labor Political oppression Discrimination based on gender, race, sexuality etc All of the above Other:.....

Responding to Artistic Activism

In this section, you will be shown a series of images and a short documentary clip related to animal rights and activism. Please look at them carefully and then answer the questions that follow.

Note: All images in this section are provided by Philip McCulloch (Vegan Artist) and are used with the artist's permission for educational research purposes.





20. What emotions or thoughts do these images evoke for you? *

21. Do you think these images could influence someone's attitude toward animals? * Yes

No Maybe

22. How effective do you find these images as a form of activism? * Not effective at all 1
2 3 4 5 Very effective
23. Would these images make you reconsider your own choices or behaviors? * Yes No
Maybe

Disclaimer: The following video contains graphic footage of animal farming and slaughter practices. It includes scenes of mistreatment, confinement, forced impregnation, and killing. This material may be distressing to some viewers. Please proceed only if you feel comfortable watching. You may skip this section at any time without penalty.

Note: If you would like to follow the narration with text, please enable subtitles by clicking the "CC" button on the video player.

Video courtesy of Mercy For Animals, used here for educational research purposes.

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=THIODWTqx5E>

24. What emotions did you feel while watching this clip? *
25. Do you think this clip could inspire social or ethical change? * Yes No Maybe
26. What messages do you think the creators, of these two forms of activist art, wanted to convey?*

Final Reflections on Art and Activism

Finally, I would like to hear your overall thoughts about art, activism, and animals, after you've seen the images and the documentary clips. Please share how they affected you overall, sincerely.

27. I felt emotionally affected by the images and the clip. * Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Agree
28. The images and clip made me reflect and reconsider my relationship with animals.*
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
29. The images and clip increased my awareness of animal rights issues. * Strongly
Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
30. The images and clip motivated me to consider changing my behavior toward animals.*
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
31. After viewing the images and clip, I have reflected on the possible contradiction
between supporting human rights and consuming products from animal exploitation.*
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree
32. If you'd like, please describe in your own words how the images and clip influenced
your feelings or thoughts. (Optional)

Thank you so much for participating in this survey, I appreciate your time and openness in engaging with it. Some of the material may have been challenging, and your willingness to reflect is deeply valued.

If you feel affected by the content, please take a moment for yourself before moving on.

11.2. Appendix B: Greek Questionnaire for the Survey

Καλλιτεχνικές Μορφές Ακτιβισμού: Η Εκπροσώπιση των Δικαιωμάτων των Ζώων και του Βιγκανισμού μέσω της Τέχνης και η Ψυχολογική τους Πρόσληψη από το Κοινό

Αυτή η έρευνα αποτελεί μέρος της Διπλωματικής μου Εργασίας και εξερευνά το πως η τέχνη, με τη μορφή της μουσικής, των ντοκουμαντέρ, των εικαστικών και της λογοτεχνίας, μπορεί να επηρεάσει τις απόψεις μας σχετικά με τα ζώα, την ηθική και την κοινωνική αλλαγή. Οι απαντήσεις είναι ανώνυμες και θα βοηθήσουν στην κατανόηση του συναισθηματικού και ηθικού αντικτύπου του καλλιτεχνικού ακτιβισμού.

1. Η συμμετοχή είναι εθελοντική και ανώνυμη. Παρακαλώ απαντήστε με ειλικρίνεια· δεν υπάρχουν σωστές ή λάθος απαντήσεις.* Συμφωνώ να λάβω μέρος στην έρευνα.

Δημογραφικά Στοιχεία

2. Ηλικιακή Ομάδα * 18-25 26-35 36-50 50+
3. Φύλο * Γυναίκα Άντρας Non-Binary Genderfluid Προτιμώ να μην Απαντήσω
4. Χώρα Κατοικίας*
5. Επάγγελμα/Απασχόληση (Μπορείτε να επιλέξετε περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις)*
 Φοιτητής/τρια/τό Ακαδημαϊκός Ενασχόληση με τις Τέχνες Εκπαιδευτικός
 Επαγγελματίας Υγείας Εργαζόμενος/η/ο σε Γραφείο Χειρωνακτική/Τεχνική Εργασία Ενασχόληση με τον Ακτιβισμό Αυτοαπασχολούμενος/η/ο Άνεργος/η/ο
 Συνταξιούχος/ο Other:.....
6. Διατροφική Προτίμηση* Παμφάγος/α/ο Pescetarian Χορτοφάγος/α/ο (Vegetarian)
 Flexitarian Ακραιφνής Χορτοφάγος/α/ο (Vegan) Other:.....

Αντιλήψεις και Εμπειρίες σχετικά με την Ακτιβιστική Τέχνη

Αυτή η ενότητα αφορά σας στάσεις και σας προσωπικές σας εμπειρίες με την ακτιβιστική τέχνη. Παρακαλώ απαντήστε ειλικρινά· δεν υπάρχουν σωστές ή λάθος απαντήσεις.

7. Ποιές μορφές τέχνης θεωρείτε πιο ισχυρές για την ακτιβιστική δράση; (Μπορείτε να επιλέξετε περισσότερες από μία απαντήσεις).* Εικαστικά/Πίνακες Ζωγραφικής
 Μουσική Λογοτεχνία Ταινίες/Ντοκιμαντέρ Street Art Other:.....
8. Η τέχνη μπορεί να επηρεάσει την κοινωνική και ηθική αλλαγή. * Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1
2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα

9. Η μουσική μπορεί να συμβάλει στην ευαισθητοποίηση γύρω από τα δικαιώματα των ζώων.* Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
10. Η τέχνη μπορεί να με κάνει να αναθεωρήσω τη σχέση μου με τα ζώα. * Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
11. Νιώθω μεγαλύτερη σύνδεση με τα ζώα μετά από μια επαφή με ακτιβιστική τέχνη.* Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
12. Έχετε αλλάξει ποτέ την άποψη/στάση σας ή/και έχετε νιώσει να συγκινείστε μετά από την εμπειρία ενός έργου ακτιβιστικής τέχνης;* Ναι Όχι
13. Εάν ναι, θα θέλατε να μοιραστείτε αυτήν την εμπειρία που σας άλλαξε τη ζωή; (Προαιρετικό)

Καταπίεση, Δικαιώματα και Κοινωνική Δικαιοσύνη

Αυτή η ενότητα διερευνά τις απόψεις σας πάνω σε θέματα ακτιβισμού, ανθρωπίνων δικαιωμάτων, και πως αυτά ίσως συσχετίζονται με τα ζώα. Παρακαλώ απαντήστε με ειλικρίνεια· δεν υπάρχουν σωστές ή λάθος απαντήσεις

14. Θεωρείτε τον εαυτό σας πολιτικά ενεργό (π.χ. συμμετοχή σε διαδηλώσεις, καμπάνιες ή κοινωνικά κινήματα);* Ναι Όχι Μερικές Φορές
15. Στηρίζω ενεργά τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα και παλεύω ενάντια στην ανθρώπινη καταπίεση.* Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
16. Θεωρείτε ότι όσα βιώνουν τα ζώα στις φάρμες και τα σφαγεία είναι μια μορφή καταπίεσης;* Ναι Όχι Δεν είμαι σίγουρος/η/ο
17. Έχετε αναλογιστεί ποτέ την αντιφατικότητα μεταξύ του να μάχεστε για την ισότητα και τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα, ενώ την ίδια στιγμή καταναλώνετε προϊόντα που προέρχονται από την εκμετάλλευση των ζώων;* Ναι Όχι Μερικές Φορές
18. Εάν ναι, ποιές είναι οι προσωπικές σας σκέψεις σχετικά με αυτήν την αντιφατικότητα; (Προαιρετικό)
19. Ποιά από τα παρακάτω θεωρείτε εσείς προσωπικά ως μορφές εκμετάλλευσης, κακοποίησης ή/και ως μορφή αφαίρεσης των δικαιωμάτων κάποιου; (Μπορείτε να επιλέξετε πάνω από μια απαντήσεις)* Εξαναγκασμένη γονιμοποίηση/εγκυμοσύνη Σεξουαλική κακοποίηση/βιασμός Κλείδωμα κάποιου σε κλουβί ή περιορισμένο χώρο Σωματική κακοποίηση (ξυλοδαρμός, τραυματισμός) Δολοφονία Στέρηση/άρνηση ελευθερίας κίνησης Αναίτια αφαίρεση των παιδιών από τους γονείς/Οικογενειακός χωρισμός Χρησιμοποίηση κάποιου για κέρδος χωρίς συναίνεση Ψυχολογική κακοποίηση (φόβος, εκφοβισμός, ψυχικό τραύμα) Εξαναγκασμένη εργασία/Παιδική Εργασία Πολιτική καταπίεση Διάκριση βάσει φύλου, φυλής, σεξουαλικού προσανατολισμού κλπ Όλα τα παραπάνω Other:.....

Η Στάση μας Απέναντι στον Καλλιτεχνικό Ακτιβισμό (Οι εικόνες και ο σύνδεσμος του βίντεο έχουν αναφερθεί στο προηγούμενο παράρτημα, Appendix A και για λόγους οικονομίας θα παραλειφθούν στο παρόν παράρτημα)

Σε αυτήν την ενότητα, θα δείτε μια σειρά από εικόνες και ένα σύντομο ντοκιμαντερ σχετικά με τα δικαιώματα των ζώων και τον ακτιβισμό. Παρακαλώ παρατηρήστε τα προσεκτικά και στη συνέχεια απαντήστε στις ερωτήσεις που ακολουθούν.

Σημείωση: Όλες οι εικόνες σε αυτήν την ενότητα παρέχονται από τον Philip McCulloch (Vegan Artist) και χρησιμοποιούνται με την άδειά του για ακαδημαϊκούς σκοπούς.

20. Τί συναισθήματα ή/και σκέψεις σας προκαλούν αυτές οι εικόνες; *
21. Πιστεύετε πως αυτές οι εικόνες θα μπορούσαν να επηρεάσουν την στάση κάποιου απέναντι στα ζώα; * Ναι Όχι Ίσως
22. Πόσο αποτελεσματικές θεωρείτε αυτές τις εικόνες ως μορφή ακτιβισμού; * Καθόλου Αποτελεσματικές 1 2 3 4 5 Πολύ Αποτελεσματικές
23. Θα σας έκαναν αυτές οι εικόνες να αναθεωρήσετε τις στάσεις σας και τις επιλογές σας;* Ναι Όχι Ίσως

Προειδοποίηση: Το βίντεο που ακολουθεί περιλαμβάνει γραφικά πλάνα από πρακτικές εκτροφής και σφαγής ζώων. Περιλαμβάνει σκληρές κακομεταχείρισης, περιορισμού, εξαναγκασμένης γονιμοποίησης/εγκυμοσύνης και θανάτωσης. Το υλικό αυτό μπορεί να είναι δυσάρεστο ή οδυνηρό για ορισμένους θεατές. Παρακαλώ συνεχίστε μόνο εφόσον αισθάνεστε άνετα να το παρακολουθήσετε. Μπορείτε να παραλείψετε αυτήν την ενότητα οποιαδήποτε στιγμή χωρίς καμία επίπτωση.

Σημείωση: Εάν επιθυμείτε να παρακολουθήσετε το βίντεο με υπότιτλους (διατίθενται στα αγγλικά), παρακαλώ ενεργοποιήστε τους πατώντας το κουμπί 'CC' στη λεζάντα του προγράμματος αναπαραγωγής βίντεο.

Βίντεο με την ευγενική παραχώρηση του Mercy For Animals, χρησιμοποιείται εδώ αποκλειστικά για ερευνητικούς και εκπαιδευτικούς σκοπούς.

24. Τί συναισθήματα σας δημιουργήθηκαν κατά τη διάρκεια προβολής του βίντεο;*
25. Πιστεύετε πως αυτό το βίντεο θα μπορούσε να εμπνεύσει και να προκαλέσει μια κοινωνική ή/και ηθική αλλαγή;* Ναι Όχι Ίσως
26. Ποιά μηνύματα πιστεύετε ότι θα ήθελαν να μεταδώσουν οι δημιουργοί των δύο αυτών ειδών ακτιβιστικής τέχνης;*

Τελευταίες Σκέψεις Πάνω στην Τέχνη και τον Ακτιβισμό

Ολοκληρώνοντας, θα ήθελα να ακούσω τις συνολικές σας σκέψεις σχετικά με την τέχνη, τον ακτιβισμό και τα ζώα, αφότου παρατηρήσατε τις εικόνες και το βίντεο. Παρακαλώ μοιραστείτε τις σκέψεις σας σχετικά με το πως σας επηρέασαν συνολικά, με ειλικρίνεια.

27. Ένιωσα συναισθηματικά επηρεασμένος/η/ο από τις εικόνες και το βίντεο. * Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
28. Οι εικόνες και το βίντεο με έκαναν να αναλογιστώ και να αναθεωρήσω την σχέση μου με τα ζώα.* Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα

29. Οι εικόνες και το βίντεο αύξησαν την επίγνωσή μου για τα ζητήματα σχετικά με τα δικαιώματα των ζώων.* Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
30. Οι εικόνες και το βίντεο με κινητοποίησαν ώστε να σκεφτώ να αλλάξω την συμπεριφορά μου προς τα ζώα.* Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
31. Αφότου παρατήρησα τις εικόνες και παρακολούθησα το βίντεο, αναλογίστηκα την πιθανή αντίφαση ανάμεσα στο να υποστηρίζω τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα, ενώ ταυτόχρονα καταναλώνω προϊόντα που προέρχονται από την εκμετάλλευση των ζώων.* Διαφωνώ Απόλυτα 1 2 3 4 5 Συμφωνώ Απόλυτα
32. Αν το επιθυμείτε, παρακαλώ περιγράψτε με δικά σας λόγια το πως οι εικόνες και το βίντεο επηρέασαν τα συναισθήματά σας ή/και τις σκέψεις. (Προαιρετικό)

Σας ευχαριστώ θερμά που λάβατε μέρος σε αυτήν την έρευνα, εκτιμώ τον χρόνο που αφιερώσατε και την ειλικρίνεια με την οποία απαντήσατε. Ίσως κάποια από τα θέματα να ήταν απαιτητικά, αλλά η προθυμία σας να προβληματιστείτε πάνω σε αυτά, είναι ιδιαίτερος εκτιμητέα.

Εάν αισθάνεστε ότι το περιεχόμενο σας επηρέασε, παρακαλώ αφιερώστε λίγο χρόνο στον εαυτό σας, πριν συνεχίσετε με τη μέρα σας.

11.3. Appendix C: Interview Questions with Artists

Interview Questions for Philip McCulloch Downs (Vegan Artist)

1. What first inspired you to connect your art with animal rights?
2. How do you see the role of surrealism and symbolism in conveying activist messages?
3. Do you consider your art primarily as activism, or as personal expression that becomes activism?
4. Which of your works do you feel has had the strongest impact on viewers?
5. How do audiences usually respond emotionally to your works of art?
6. Do you believe art can change people's ethical choices (diet, lifestyle, awareness)?
7. What challenges do you face when creating art with explicit activist themes?
8. What is your favorite artwork of yours, and why?
9. Can you share a story of how someone responded to your work in a way that stayed with you?
10. What message would you like future generations to take from your work?

Interview Questions for Keegan Kuhn

1. What first inspired you to use film as a medium for activism, particularly in addressing animal rights and social justice issues?
2. *Cowspiracy* was a turning point for many viewers. How did that project shape your path as a filmmaker and activist?

3. Across your films — *Cowspiracy*, *What the Health*, *Turlock*, *Running for Good*, *They're Trying to Kill Us*, *The End of Medicine*, and *SLAY* — what common threads do you see in how audiences respond to your work?
4. Which of these projects do you feel had the strongest impact on public awareness, and why?
5. Your films often balance hard facts with emotional storytelling. How do you decide which narrative strategies best reach audiences without overwhelming them?
6. Have you faced challenges such as censorship, criticism, legal threats, or even risk of arrest because of the activist content of your films? How have these experiences shaped your approach to filmmaking?
7. Can you share a story of how someone responded to one of your films in a way that stayed with you?
8. How do you see your work contributing to broader movements for justice — not only animal rights, but also health, environmental sustainability, and racial equity?
9. What role do collaboration and community play in your filmmaking process, especially when working with activists, athletes, or organizations?
10. Looking forward, what legacy do you hope your body of work will leave within the animal rights movement and in shaping cultural conversations about justice and sustainability?

Interview Questions for Plumes

1. What first inspired you to perform music directly for animals rather than only for human audiences?
2. How do you see your performances as contributing to animal rights or welfare activism?
3. Can you share a story of how an animal responded to your music in a way that stayed with you?
4. What emotions or messages do you hope animals — and human viewers — take from your performances?
5. Do you consider your work a form of activism, art, or both? How do you balance these roles?
6. How do you choose which animals to perform for, and what do you learn from their reactions?
7. Your videos often go viral online. How do you think social media helps spread your message compared to live performances?
8. What challenges have you faced in creating music that speaks across species boundaries?
9. How do you see the relationship between compassion, art, and activism in your work?
10. Looking forward, what impact do you hope your music will have on audiences and the broader animal rights movement?

Interview Questions for Ruth Killoran

1. How do you see the relationship between aesthetics and activism in your art, and why did you choose this particular form of art as your way of engaging in activism?
2. In your experience, what kinds of images or symbols resonate most strongly with audiences when addressing animal issues?
3. Has your art ever sparked dialogue or debate that surprised you? What did you take away from that moment?
4. Do you feel that activist art can reach audiences differently than traditional advocacy campaigns? If so, how?
5. How do collaborations or exchanges with other artists and activists influence your creative direction?
6. What role do you think emotion plays in motivating people to reflect on animal liberation through art?
7. Looking back, is there a particular piece of yours that is your favourite or that you feel best captures your vision of justice for animals?

Interview Questions for Vegan Queen V

1. What first inspired you to merge music with animal rights activism?
2. How do you see music functioning differently from visual art or film in raising awareness?
3. What challenges have you faced in writing and performing songs with explicit activist messages?
4. What is your favourite work so far, and why?
5. How do you balance emotional resonance with factual accuracy in your lyrics?
6. Can you share a story of how someone responded to one of your songs in a way that stayed with you?
7. Your track Dominion was inspired by Chris Delforce's documentary. How did you translate the film's message into music?
8. In What Hell Is Like, you confront the brutality of animal agriculture. What was your creative process for this song?
9. How do you envision the role of collective projects like the ARC Animal Rights Choir in amplifying activist voices?
10. What message do you want audiences — present and future — to take away from your music?
11. Have you or your collaborators ever faced risks or criticism for the activist nature of your work?
12. How do you respond to those who say activist art is “too emotional” or “biased”?
13. What keeps you motivated to continue producing music in such a challenging and emotionally heavy field?
14. How do you see your music fitting into the broader movement of animal rights artists and activists?
15. What projects or initiatives are you currently working on, and how do they build on your previous work?

Interview Questions for Tracks.Investigations

1. What motivated you to create Tracks Investigations, and how did the project first take shape?

2. Your work relies heavily on undercover documentation. How do you decide which facilities or practices to investigate?
3. What ethical principles guide your approach to filming, editing, and releasing investigative footage?
4. How do you balance the need to expose violence with the responsibility to avoid retraumatizing viewers or desensitizing audiences?
5. Can you describe a moment during an investigation that fundamentally changed how you understand animal exploitation?
6. What challenges—legal, emotional, or logistical—do you face when conducting undercover work, and how do you deal with them?
7. How do you measure the impact of your investigations on public awareness, policy, or activist mobilisation?
8. In your view, what role does visual evidence play in the broader animal-rights movement compared to other forms of activism?
9. Have you ever faced backlash, threats, or attempts to silence your work, and how do you respond to such pressures?
10. What future projects or directions do you envision for Tracks Investigations, and how do they build on the work you've already done?

Interview Questions for Dana Ellyn

1. What first inspired you to use painting as a vehicle for confronting the normalized violence toward animals, and how has that motivation evolved over time?
2. How do you navigate the balance between creating emotionally provocative imagery and maintaining accessibility for viewers who may not share your ethical commitments?
3. Many of your works juxtapose “food animals” with companion animals; what artistic strategies guide these choices, and what do you hope viewers experience in that moment of comparison?
4. Can you describe how your personal memories—especially childhood experiences with food and animals—shape the visual language of your paintings?
5. How do you think about the emotional journey you want viewers to experience when encountering your work, especially when your imagery challenges comfort or familiarity?
6. How do you see your art situated within the broader landscape of contemporary animal-rights activism, especially in relation to artists who use different mediums or tactics?
7. What does “making the invisible visible” mean in your practice, and how do you decide which moments, bodies, or systems to illuminate through your art?
8. How do you respond to viewers who feel confronted, defensive, or emotionally overwhelmed by your work, and do these reactions influence your future pieces?
9. Can you share a story of how someone responded to your work in a way that stayed with you?
10. Looking ahead, what themes or ethical questions are you currently exploring, and how do you imagine your art evolving within your ongoing commitment to animal advocacy?

Interview Questions for Jo-Anne McArthur

1. How did the earliest stages of your career shape your commitment to bearing witness through photography, and when did you realise this would become a lifelong project?
2. In *We Animals* and *Unbound*, you document animals across vastly different contexts. What guides your decisions about which stories and species to prioritise in your work?
3. Your photographs often balance beauty with brutality. How do you navigate the tension between aesthetic composition and ethical responsibility when documenting suffering?
4. Many viewers describe your images as transformative. What have you learned about how people emotionally process visual evidence of animal exploitation?
5. You frequently work in high-risk, emotionally demanding environments. What practices help you sustain long-term resilience and psychological care in this work?
6. Your approach emphasises dignity and individuality. How do you ensure that animals are represented as subjects rather than symbols in your photography?
7. The *We Animals* Archive has become a major resource for activists, educators, and journalists. What role do you see for open-access visual documentation in shaping future advocacy?
8. You've collaborated with investigators, NGOs, and artists. What have these collaborations taught you about the relationship between art, activism, and political change?
9. Looking back, is there a moment in the field that fundamentally shifted your understanding of the human–animal relationship or your purpose as a photographer?
10. As visual culture evolves, what new directions do you imagine for ethical storytelling and multispecies representation in your future work?