

Anatomy Lessons: Michele Beevors as Eco-Political Agent

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Abstract This article responds to the large scale sculptural work by eco-political artist Michele Beevors, whose work has recently been extensively exhibited in New Zealand, Australia, and Austria. She brings her audience close to the tragedies of eco-extinction and the brutalities of human interaction with our vulnerable animal co-species. The article considers her work through four frames: 1. Violence: Dissection and Restitution; 2. Death: Specimen and Requiem; 3. Grief: Solastalgia and Entanglement; and 4. Labour: Materiality and Companionship. Through these four frames, the artist's exploration of human relationships with non-human forms of life is highlighted as based in decolonial, feminist and activist values. The text includes memories and reflections from the author's life where relevant to the themes presented by the artist.

Keywords Sculpture. Eco-political. Animal ethics. Extinction. Solastalgia. Care.

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1 Introduction

The animals of the world exist for their own reasons...
Encouraging others to respect animals... is part of my
work in this world. (Alice Walker in Outka 2008, 11)

Twenty years ago, Michele Beevors moved from Sydney to Dunedin in New Zealand's South Island. She arrived at the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic as the new Head of Sculpture, an institution where we worked together for the last two decades. Beevors holds postgraduate degrees from the Australian National University in Canberra and from Columbia University in New York. She has exhibited her work in Australia, New Zealand, and Austria. Her career in Australia included tertiary teaching in art history and sculpture prior to locating to New Zealand. In a recent interview (Fox 2022) she mentioned that she set out to buy wool to knit a hat against the newly experienced cold weather of her adopted environment and then thought, "wait, I could make much more of this material and of this technique as a sculptor". The results of this epiphany is now clear to see: a body of compelling sculptural work on animal exploitation and extinction, which has variously been described as "sad splendour" and as showing "the realities of species loss" (Freeman 2022).

Looking at the sculptures one sees them range from very small (a fish, an army of frogs) to medium size (a tortoise, a koala) to very large (an elephant, a giraffe). Beevors says that scale is important in her work (Fox 2022). It brings the viewer close or closer or overwhelms them with size: different kinds of attention are invited. Research for the work took her to visit anatomy museums in Sydney, Paris, and Vienna and to focus on animal skeletons in Tūhura Otago Museum in Dunedin. The making process then included measuring, drawing, patternmaking, cutting, creating armatures and filling, sourcing wool in different colours (mindful of animal markings) and then the laborious work of knitting to cover the interior structure. Some titles reflect the scientific research, some refer to specific animals, some have a deceptively childlike quality (reminiscent of cuddly childhood toys). Emma Burns talks about the sculptured material being soft, while the subject of the works remains hard (Oktay 2022).

This article partially reproduces a limited-edition catalogue text by the author which accompanied an exhibition titled *Anatomy Lessons; Michele Beevors*, held at The Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand in 2023-24.

Author:¹ I grew up and worked in South Africa for half of my life. Seeing animals in the wild is part of my lived experience. It is not possible to explain in words the awe one experiences when feeling a parade of elephants moving the earth in slow motion amongst the trees or seeing a herd of giraffe loping gracefully across wide grassland in the Kruger National Park between South Africa and Mozambique. Currently, I am a sponsor for the Giraffe Conservation Foundation in Southern Africa. Recently, this foundation moved thirty giraffe from Namibia to their original home in Angola from where the species had been displaced due to war, poaching, and habitat loss. Executive Director Stephanie Fennessy says that reintroducing giraffe there will help to restore ecological balance as giraffes are great pollinators. (Chepape 2023)

Such respect for these animals have not always been evident. Since the time of Marco Polo's journeys along the Silk Route in the thirteenth century, giraffe were shipped from Africa as gifts to the Emperor of China, many of whom died in the process. In 2003, I cried when visiting a zoo near Christchurch in New Zealand and saw two lonely giraffe standing in the cold rain in a fenced enclosure. With Beevors, it pains me deeply to see online images of American Tess Thompson Talley posing triumphantly with a shot giraffe in South Africa, 2018. Talley said that shooting that giraffe was a life's dream come true for her. (Abraham 2018)

Beevors is quoted (Fox 2022) as saying that care is embedded in the knitting of her animals. This care has been experienced by visitors to the exhibitions held in recent times at various galleries in Vienna, Austria, and New Zealand's South Island. One of the most recent showed twelve works in a central space within the Animal Attic of Tūhura Otago Museum in Dunedin. The works - acting as a critical counterpoint - were surrounded on all sides by galleries of taxidermised animals, and cabinets of curiosities demonstrating the eighteenth-twentieth century European obsession with collecting, preserving, and continuing control over animals hunted, snared, caught, gifted, traded, and categorised. Her exhibition elicited overwhelming response. Henceforth, it will not be possible to omit her twenty-year project from discussions around art and animal ethics. The work is far more than an illustration of care for animals. Ernst van Alphen writes about

1 'Author' here - and in three further instances - indicates the voice of the writer, not the artist. These memories or reflections are inserted into the text as pertinent to the artist's themes.

...the power of art to transform ways in which cultural issues are being conceived. Art is a laboratory where experiments are conducted that shape thought into visual and imaginative ways of framing the pain points of a culture [...] thanks to art's experimenting with its limits, it is [however] not 'just' intellectual [but] in the strongest possible sense of the word *aesthetic* – binding the senses through an indelible bond between the subject and the world it tries so hard to inhabit. (Van Alphen 2005, XIII, XXII)

The following parts of this text considers Beevors' *Anatomy Lessons* through the device of four frames. With her, I agree, however, that sets (or categories) have "fuzzy borders when the terrain is definitely complex" (Beevors 2020a, 5). However, the four frames are useful in trying to untangle some of the many aspects of her work, including her legacy after twenty years as Head of Sculpture in the Dunedin School of Art. The article is conceived within the context of the environmental humanities as relevant to the visual arts. Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand points out that the environmental humanities

is a broad term for humanities disciplines as they are applied to thinking about environmental questions and responding to environmental crises [...] [they] include a wide range of disciplines, from Ecocriticism (the criticism of nature writing and the treatment of the environment in literature, Ecomedia (the criticism of media through an environmental lens), Environmental Philosophy, and Environmental Politics.²

Cecilia Novero argues that the visual arts can illuminate and crystallise the concerns of the environmental humanities in the form of ecocriticism (2018, 1).

2 Violence: Dissection and Restitution

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. (Aldo Leopold in Bogard 2023, 5)

The objects in anatomical museums and laboratories conjure up mental images of violent acts such as clamping, paring, cutting, ripping, sectioning, probing, wounding, and invasive gazing. We know

² Victoria University of Wellington/te Herenga Waka, Environmental Humanities. <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/science/schools/science-in-society/research/environmental-humanities>.

paintings such as Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632), in which we see the cadaver of an unfortunate person displayed/splayed and offered up to the viewer's intrusive gaze. A group of gentlemen (physicians) in black with white lace collars look intently at the anatomical revelations they need to bolster their knowledge of the human body via cadavers sourced from prisons or cemeteries for the poor.

We know of the *Theatrum Anatomicum* once used as a lecture room in the round but also resembling a theatre, where anatomical dissections took place as training sessions for medical students. In Padua, Northern Italy, the first permanent one was built in 1595 and is now still preserved in the Palazzo Bo for visitors to see how these spaces operated for many centuries.

Beevors encountered the results of anatomical dissection in large cities but also on a smaller scale in the W.D. Trotter Anatomy Museum of the University of Otago in Dunedin. Anatomical specimens – both human and animal – are preserved there as training material for medical students. One can also encounter the hierarchical categorisation of species – from insects on the ground floor to anatomical waxes of the human body on the top floor of the Museo La Specola in Florence, of which the name refers to observation or the scientific gaze. In the case of animals, we also know about the practice of vivisection, namely surgical experimentation on live animals, the physical results of which are rarely shown or acknowledged publicly.

We also know about the complicity of governments and corporations: money made from tourist safaris, hunting trophies, cosmetics sales, pharmaceuticals, and so forth. Beevors points out:

[...] representations of the animal [...] appeared everywhere in modern capitalism. The animal as material substance in the meat industry (and the pet food industry, who put the gelatine in silver gelatine photography) rose alongside. In advertising, animals appeared as the selling point of cars at one end (think of the brand Jaguar and the speed it implies) and, at the other, Louie the Fly as a popular brand of fly spray designed to kill poor Louie. In popular culture, the animal appeared – from Disneyfied versions of rabbits, mice and deer, to the nature documentary where the animal/camera nexus brings the violence of real life into the home. (2020b, 95)

Looking at Beevors' large giraffe works titled *Talley's Giraffe* and *Zarafa* [fig. 1], we are confronted with references to actual animals, animals who lived and breathed and freely roamed the veld at some point in time: Talley's before he was shot by the American hunter mentioned earlier, and dissected to become meat, decorative cushions and a gun case; Zarafa before she was travelled from Africa to live for eighteen years in the confines of the Jardin des Plantes in



Figure 1 Michele Beevors, *Zarafa*. 2021. Wool and mixed media, 4,400 × 2,000 × 1,000 mm. Northern giraffe, *Giraffa camelopardalis*. Classification status: Vulnerable. Courtesy of artist Michele Beevors and photographer Adrian Hall

Paris as a gift from an Egyptian ruler to King Charles X of France. Beevors shows us their skeletons and Talley's distorted and half-dis-membered limbs. The violence still haunts us in these works. However, restitution occurs, how? The skeletons are respected for their scale and anatomical integrity and also transformed into knitted sculptural surfaces to cover their humiliation. Giuliana Bruno writes: "surface matters, and it has depth [it is an] enveloping substance [...] 'feeling into' that is empathy" (2014, 4, 5, 9). I am reminded of Beevors saying that care is embedded in the knitting.

In an article titled "The Evolving Ethics of Anatomy: Dissecting an Unethical Past in Order to Prepare for a Future of Ethical Anatomical Practices" Amber R. Cromer (2022) joins a growing body of scholars who acknowledge the violations of the past while attempting to envisage a future for this practice which is based on consent

and respect. Recent publications – for example by Elizabeth Ormandy et al. (2022) – on animal dissection assert the efficacy of new technology and argue strongly for the end of animal dissection, using the three principles of replacement, reduction, and refinement (to avoid extent and pain). Beevors' work goes much, much further. In contrast with Van Alphen's somewhat cerebral approach, it seems her project aligns closer with texts edited into Paul Bogard's book titled *Solas-talgia: An Anthology of Emotion in a Disappearing World* (2023), in which Mary Annaïse Heglar is quoted:

what I truly feel is love [...] I mean living, breathing, heart-beating love. Wild love. This love is not a noun, she is an active verb. She can shoot stars into the sky. She can spark a movement. She can sustain a revolution. (2023, VII)

3 Death: Specimen and Requiem

It dawned on him that the requiem he was writing for a stranger was his own. (Durant 1967)

Whether directly juxtaposed with taxidermised animal specimens – as was the case at Tūhura Otago Museum – or not, Beevors' work conjures up the spectre of this practice as a kind of evil *doppelgänger* necessary to offset its obverse. She admits: "I'm repulsed by taxidermy, but I use the stuffed versions of animals at various museums as reference material in my own practice" (2020b, 95). In her article titled "The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy" Rachel Poliquin points out that specimens preserved through taxidermy were hugely popular at the height of British colonialism during the nineteenth century but that they are, more recently "[...] seen by many as a gratuitous spoilage, as death on display" (2008, 123). The author alerts us to the views of Donna Haraway on taxidermy, where she summarises: "Haraway exposes the racist, imperialistic, and masculinist motives underpinning the entire performance [of dioramas exhibiting taxidermy]" (123).

Death lurks for animals, from taxidermy to processes of extraction. Tortoises and turtles have been killed for their carapaces from which various items were fashioned, such as combs, frames for spectacles, guitar picks, and knitting needles. One of the works in *Anatomy Lessons*, ironically titled *Hope Floats* [fig. 2] shows the soft underside, the belly of such a creature. Its elevated position means it can only be 'dead' as live turtles and tortoises swim in water or walk on the ground with their carapace on top to protect their inner bodies. The softness of the underbelly and the flailing skeleton limbs are heart-breaking to see in its utter helpless vulnerability. We see



Figure 2 Michele Beevors, *Hope Floats*. 2014.
Wool and mixed media, 1,600 × 1,200 × 400 mm.
Green Sea turtle, *Chelonia mydas*.
Classification status: Endangered.
Courtesy of artist Michele Beevors
and photographer Adrian Hall



Figure 3 Michele Beevors, *Topsy* (2021).
Wool and mixed media,
3,400 × 3,000 × 1,200 mm. Asian elephant,
Elephas maximus. Classification: Endangered.
Courtesy of artist Michele Beevors
and photographer Adrian Hall

here the obverse, the counterpoint, of a dead specimen which has undergone taxidermy. The artist is showing us death while composing a requiem – an act of remembrance for our hapless victim, a victim which could and have been any of us as human animals. The first words sung in a requiem asks for eternal rest for the deceased. In contrast, taxidermised specimens are supposed to live on as zombies, half-dead and half-alive.

In our time of intersectional ecofeminism with its insistence on the multi-dimensional reach of the feminist project, we are reminded that the fight for women’s rights have long since been entangled with the fight for animal rights. Part Two of Carol Adams’s *Neither Man nor Beast* (2018) is titled “We Are One Lesson” and focuses on the intersection between feminism and ecology. Josephine Donovan discusses the complexities of the relationship between feminism and animal rights in “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory” (1990) and exposes the hypocrisies and complexities where feminism and animals meet in a consumer society, a field well traversed

by Beevors: In one exhibition *Hope Floats* trails an avalanche of domestic products.

Intersectional ecofeminism views feminism through an expanded lens, accepting that many identities or motivations can be in play at the same time. An example is when feminism is conjoined with ecological concerns or when women's rights and the rights of animals are equally important for an artist. One of the proponents of intersectional ecofeminism is Norrie Ross Singer in her article "Toward Intersectional Ecofeminist Communication Studies" (2020) in which she argues that this expanded lens is fast gaining momentum in the field of the environmental humanities.

As an ecofeminist, the artist laments (Fox 2022) the possibility that she might see the final demise of elephants in her lifetime. Another work by her is titled *Topsy* [fig. 3]. An elephant hovers over her dead baby calf. The slow death of the circus animal is also represented here: The large elephant is perched precariously on a Swiss ball balanced on a small set of bedside drawers covered with a domestic doily. Wild animal and its humiliation through domestication and spectacle make this work hard to experience. Again, the work pays homage to a real animal (St. Louis Republic 1903). *Topsy* was the name of an elephant electrocuted, poisoned and hanged on Coney Island, New York, in 1903. She was smuggled into the USA from Asia and forced to perform circus tricks. Due to mishandling by a drunken carer, various accidents occurred, and she was stigmatised as a 'bad' elephant and subsequently killed. The electrocution event was filmed and released to be viewed by the public in coin-operated kinoscopes. Beevors' homage does not show the brutality and horror of the event. However, the hunched-over animal with her perilous foothold under a knitted shroud of funereal blue-purple wool recalls the cruelty of her fate and the casual dismissal of her dignity through an infantilising and demeaning name.

Author: In South Africa, I used to see parts of elephants (mis-)used in domestic settings: feet and lower legs as doorstops, elephant teeth and buffalo horns strung on chains as wall decorations, elephant ears flattened as rugs on a floor. Of course, also zebra skins made into carpets, lion heads mounted as trophies, stuffed birds, severed chimpanzee hands as ashtrays... Recently - in 2023 - I walked into a rural pub on New Zealand's West Coast. The publican had thought it fit to decorate the walls all around with hunting trophies: dead victims of a 'bygone' era. No requiems for these hapless creatures, only humans laughing, eating, drinking below their glassy stares and skins and horns with dust gathered.

4 Grief: Solastalgia and Entanglement

... all critters share a common 'flesh', laterally, semiotically and genealogically... Kin-making is making persons, not necessarily as individuals or as humans. (Haraway 2016, 103)

Beevors made the point (Fox 2022) that animals also grieve, that Topsy grieves over her dead child, shown with her in the work. Mary Midgley writes:

Animals [exhibit] social and emotional complexity of the kind which is expressed by the formation of deep, subtle and lasting relationships. (1985, 60)

Barbara J. King's book titled *How Animals Grieve* explores witness accounts of animal grieving. She concludes:

Grief blooms because [...] animals bond, they care, maybe they even love - because of a heart's certainty that another's presence is as necessary as air. (King 2013, 14)

Horse and Rider: After Stubbs [fig. 4] shows us a very large knitted skeleton of a horse, in some exhibitions shown with a human skeleton - also knitted - placed horizontally on a black cloth on the floor of the gallery next to it. One could read the 'Stubbs' in the sub-title as referring to either or both George Stubbs's: A late eighteenth-early nineteenth century whaler in New Zealand or to the English eighteenth century George Stubbs, a painter of horses, often shown saddled, bridled, mounted against a manicured landscape. In Beevors' version, the horse seems presented as a memory of itself, a white sepulchral spectre or *memento mori* of an erstwhile alive and vital presence. There is grief here too, possibly also a grief for all the many horses who have been subjected to human ends: War, sports, spectacles, and the knacker's yard.

At the time this work was made, Beevors suffered personal loss and grief, of which the human skeleton - brought down, made horizontal - is a testimony. Grief for animals and humans intersect in the work. Both have been 'stripped to the bone' as it were, while simultaneously, their intricate and articulated anatomical structures are revealed and protected by knitted white wool, painstakingly crafted in acts of care and compassion.

Another kind of human grief has recently been called "solastalgia". Bogard writes that the word is made up of the Latin for *solari* (solace), *desolari* (desolation), and *algia* (pain):



Figure 4 Michele Beevors, *Horse and Rider: After Stubbs*. 2011. Wool and mixed media, 2,000 × 2,400 × 2,400 mm. Horse, *Equus caballus*, and Human, *Homo sapiens*. Courtesy of artist Michele Beevors and photographer Adrian Hall

solastalgia, about missing a loved place that still exists but to which the old birds and plants and animals no longer come [...] sadness at the ongoing destruction of the wild world. (Bogard 2023, VII)

Glenn Albrecht expands:

the existential and lived experience of negative environmental change [...] the loons gone from the lakes they have called home for centuries. (XXII)

Kathryn Nuernberger adds:

And if the elephants and giraffes never come? After a while the tree stops feeding the ants, and the ants plunder the rich ichorous sap of the heartwood. (7)

Grief and rage are close experiences. Kathleen Dean Moore rants against corporate greed and refers to Dylan Thomas's poem in her article "Rage, Rage against the Dying" and exhorts us to action: "[...] we must sharpen our sorrow into action. We must burn our grief into rage" (143).

Beevors is not paralysed by grief and rage. With dedication, determination, painstakingly, slowly – at every possible available moment – she makes and knits, and makes and knits, crafting her sculptures to bear witness, to protest, to externalise her grief and rage for us all to participate in. With regard to eco-anxiety, Sarah Jacqueline Ray writes:

Every single moment of our attention is precious, every single way we spend our time matters, and every habit we start adds up over time to the response-ability that these unfolding layered crises will require of us. (143)

In an interview, Donna Haraway urges us to always remain entangled with kin: "I have a cousin, the cousin has me; I have a dog, the dog has me" (Paulson 2019).

Horse and Rider together enact kinship, while also up-ending the humanist hierarchy between humans and animals. Adam Weitzenfeld and Melanie Joy write:

anthropocentrism [...] has narcissistically privileged humans as the center of all significance, the outcome of a distorted humanism [...] opposed to speciesism. Critical Animal Theory (CAT) scholars, including posthumanists and feminists, reevaluate the significance of dependencies, emotions, and the specificity of animal being and agency. (Weitzenfeld, Joy 2014, 3)

The use of the term 'posthuman' in the humanities stretches back to the 1990s with now well-known publications by N. Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway. There are many different strands to this philosophical stance. What they all have in common is the insistence that human beings are fluid parts of systems and do not function separately from these systems. For the purpose of this article, the post-human relationship between people and animals is predicated on the acceptance that they all share the environment and are interdependent in a non-hierarchical system. Kari Weil writes:

Animal studies bring to light the need for a new posthumanist ethics, one that does not rely on... normative hierarchies... to determine who has moral status, or who is a who, rather than a what. (Weil 2018)

In the artist's composition, *Horse* asserts agency, standing high and proud and large; *Rider* seems to have lost corporeal balance and is placed on an off-centred dark ground reminiscent of a coffin. Both are comforted by their woollen surfaces, and they share their joint demise, but their relational agency has been shifted sideways.

Author: Living in Dunedin, New Zealand, now, for another half of my life, I have learned to understand more about birds. I was gifted an imported Indonesian parrot; she had been hand-reared and in our house was a free-flying bird who often landed on my shoulder and cuddled into my neck for want of her missed flock. We named her Liefje - 'little love' in Dutch - by hook or by crook we had her and she had us, and then she was given away to a somewhat better life with other birds of her kin we found for her in a large companionship aviary.

5 Labour: Materiality and Companionship

materiality is not [only] a question of the materials themselves but rather the substance of material relations. (Bruno 2014, 1)

Beevors talked about her making process in an interview (Fox 2022). Listening, one becomes aware of the patience and time-consuming effort required to achieve the results in *Anatomy Lessons*. Research about animal ethics and the histories of specific species and particular animals is coupled with a personal experience of eco-anxiety. This research is augmented by anatomical enquiry into the physical structure of animal bodies and their surface patterning. Materials are chosen, armatures are built, knitting takes up endless time: Evenings and weekends and holidays when she is not teaching. One is reminded of Henry David Thoreau's now famous dictum about the cost of a thing being the amount of life required to be exchanged for it.

Adeptness in the handling of materials come into play and an understanding of scale and relative size and proportion. It is important to the artist to "make things perfectly" (Fox 2022). She started with some of the smaller works as a kind of warm-up before moving on to the large works. In "Manual Labour", Katve Kaïsa Kontturi writes:

in the arts a warm-up should be conceived of as part of the actual exercise, and not as preceding it: Warming up turns into

training - into 'working out' a work of art. Rehearsal, time, and patience are needed. (Kontturi 2018, 109)

One of the works in *Anatomy Lessons* presents a veritable colony of sixty frogs, each one painstakingly crafted and embraced with white knitted wool. On a recent exhibition, they seemed to swarm across a dark background. Next to them, a small, lonely fish - separated from its shoal - with its fragile, exposed skeleton was carefully articulated against the black. Frogs and fish are now endangered species. The whiteness of these works act as an indicator of their demise, again this seems sepulchral, acting in conjunction as *memento mori* of species alive in a distant time.

Author: When I lived in South Africa, frogs were part of daily life. Big toads scared us as children. Tadpoles swarmed in ponds. Frogs could be seen anywhere where water was to be found. We were often woken up by the sounds of frogs croaking. Sometimes they found their way into swimming pools and had to be dragged out with a net and deposited in other places. Now, I have been in New Zealand - a watery country of lakes and pools and eddies - for thirty years and have never seen a frog. Researching this strange phenomenon, I learn that there are no longer any significant numbers of frogs in the South Island where I live. Archey's Frog, Hamilton's Frog, Hochstetter's Frog, and Maud Island Frog are holding on by a thin thread in the North Island, Great Barrier Island, the Cook Strait, and the Marlborough Sounds. Frogs are social creatures and live in groups called colonies or armies or knots. These have been eaten by predators and decimated by environmental changes. John Muir is famously quoted: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it is hitched to everything else". (Wood n.d., n.p.)

"Part V: Take Action and Take Care" in Bogard's anthology on emotion in a disappearing world is devoted to remedies for the condition of solastalgia. He responds to Aldo Leopold's sense of a lonely experience of the wounds of the world, by suggesting that we can find a source of companionship in sharing distress and taking action (2023, XXV-XXVI). Albrecht writes in the foreword of the anthology using the new word 'symbiotude' or working with others in the face of solastalgia. 'Symbiotude' (from the Greek *symbios* which means living together) is a term used *and* created by Glenn Albrecht as part of

the tiny (but growing) vocabulary for our emotional connection to the environment... I have sensed, within humanity, a profound sense of emotional isolation. To help overcome the solitude, I have created the idea of symbiotude, thinking and working in companionship with others, to reconnect to life. (2020, n.p.)

6 Conclusion

Beevors is quoted as saying (Fox 2022) she can ‘only’ continue knitting and do her recycling. As an animal-companion she has done much more. *Anatomy Lessons* is a monumental ode in material form to the suffering of a collection of animals.

The artist has also created companionship in other, related ways. Over the two decades during which the works in *Anatomy Lessons* were made, cohorts of students have learnt how to critically confront the crucial issues of our time, not least environmental degradation and the extinction of animals. They have learnt the ‘working out’ of making art and how materials can carry signification. They have learnt to be unafraid of large scale and accepting of the patience of the labour required for making such works. At present, Beevors is continuing her knitting and is well aware of its implications. Stephanie Springgay writes about knitting as

an aesthetic of civic engagement [...] to reconceptualize collective and feminist pedagogy from the perspective of relationality and touch. (2010, 11)

In 2020, Beevors brought a group of artists and scholars together for a symposium titled “Animals at the Edge”, which also led to a special issue of the journal *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design)* with the same title. Topics ranged far and wide to highlight the many, complex problems. As editor of the issue, she wrote:

Most of the articles that appear in this issue were given as papers at the *Animals at The Edge Symposium*. The premise was to highlight some issues around representing animals and to give students a balanced view of the complexity of looking at animals. We asked for papers from local scientists involved with conservation efforts, from lawyers involved in legislation change and other educators in other institutions. To our readers, we say *that we are not done here, because when we don’t represent our most urgent thoughts, art becomes a hollow reflection of capital only, a super commodity about anything and nothing.* (Beevors 2020a, 6; emphasis added)

Absorbed into the careful precision of working with materials in Beevors’ labour intensive *Anatomy Lessons* are the deep rage and sorrow which has sustained her over many years. Long-lasting, eco-political agency through art-making in the face of grief and loss – amidst the ever-growing inroads of capitalism and its catastrophic environmental effects on the lives of animals – is central to her legacy.

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