The Alice Diaries
Wilma Cruise

24 JULY to 26 AUGUST 2012
CIRCA on Jellicoe
The Caucus – Rabbit and The Bird (Studio View)
2012
Ceramic
Rabbit: 105 x 45 x 65 cm, The Bird: 105 x 101 x 50 cm
It seems that I have always observed myself observing. Much as an outsider would carefully watch the behaviour of another, I note changes in my thought patterns and ideas. This act of watching finds concrete form in diaries—A3-sized pages in which I draw, scribble and muse. The pages document the progress of not so much linear time as the stuttering backwards and forwards motion of my ideas. This way I fill diary pages with sketches, annotations and exhortations to myself. In 2007 I framed 100 of these pages and exhibited them as *The 100 Page Diary*—a moveable document, since if a page was sold it was replaced with another. A number of these framed pages are exhibited at Circa as *The Alice Diaries*. But in a sense the exhibition as a whole can be read in the same way as the diary, only this time it is writ large in the form of sculptures, paintings and an installation of multiple ceramic forms.

The central theme of the Alice project has its genesis in earlier exhibitions—specifically *Cocks, Asses & ...* which debuted at the University of Johannesburg in 2007. Driven by an anxious awareness of an environmental melt down, I began (and in this I am not alone), an exploration of the interface between humans and animals. This border between human and other sentient beings is what I call the in-between space. This is a place where being human ceases to be primary, where language functions with no certainty, and thought fails to provide a safety net of reason. Yet it is a place fraught with significance. Deleuze and Gattari go as far as to suggest it is the place where a new state of being develops in the way of ‘becoming animal’.

A becoming is always in the middle; one can only get to it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the *in between* ... [emphasis mine].¹

The middle pre-supposes the eradication of the binaries animal and human, an idea that Jacques Derrida has also mooted. Re-visiting my childhood texts of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* I found not so much a dissolving of the duality of animal and humankind, but an inversion. In Wonderland it is the animals that have the knowledge. Alice, as the human, is the one who lacks the key to understanding. The animals seem to understand how the world works. Thus the White Rabbit, much like a modern corporate executive, is forever rushing off somewhere lamenting his lateness. ‘Oh my paws and whiskers’, he cries as he rushes past the bewildered Alice. His task is urgent but it is never made clear to Alice or to us, her sympathetic co-journeymers, what this urgent business is. Likewise, the Cheshire Cat appears and disappears, sometimes leaving only his

enigmatic smile behind. He knows, but just what he knows remains unclear. Like Derrida’s cat, ‘before whom [sic] the philosopher stood naked and ashamed’, the Cheshire Cat has the power to unsettle certainty. His god-like presence and his ironic smile confuse more than they elucidate. In the upside down, rabbit-hole world, all sense of whom Alice is falls away. She is not even sure of her size. ‘Who are you?’ asks the haughty caterpillar and a little later, the pigeon, who thinks she just might be a serpent, asks, ‘What are you?’ Alice does not have the answer to either question. The caterpillar’s question is significant. Who is Alice and, by extrapolation, who are we? Are we right to presume our position of superiority in relation to the animals? Do we really deserve our place on top of the Cartesian pile?

Yet, The Alice Diaries is not a didactic animal rights manifesto, although this may well be its subtext. Neither is it intended as an illustration of Carroll’s tales. Like the scribblings on my diary pages, the exhibition is a way of making sense of an increasingly confusing and seemingly dangerous world. Life can be a dream or a nightmare. Our task is to try to make sense of our place in it as we tumble through time, together with our co-travellers, the animals whose planet we share.

Wilma Cruise is an independent artist, living and working in Cape Town. She intends reading for a PhD through the University of Stellenbosch.

NOTE: Measurements throughout are given in centimetres in the following order—Height, Width, Depth. Bases are not included in these measurements.
Cradle
2011–12
Ceramic installation (detail)
1 000 objects, each 35 cm
COUNTDOWN

GAVIN YOUNGE

The curator, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, wrote that the ‘riddle’ of Documenta 2012 is that it is a paradox, a space of many secrets, a space of violence, and a space of potential healing. She could well have been writing about Wilma Cruise’s installation of 1 000 ceramic babies at Circa in August 2012. The work is soaked in such a visceral violence that one has to un-see the images at the Ntarama Church following the Rwandan genocide in order to see the piece for its compassionate view on humanity.

Cruise has long concerned herself with violence—from her early series entitled The Three Shades (now in the Durban Art Gallery collection) to her large fragmented portrait heads, and now to Cradle. This work directly references Anthony Gormley’s various ‘field’ series, and yet Cruise’s version emphasizes the human form over Gormley’s more playful, extra-terrestrial approach.

I puzzled over Cradle while the series was in production. Is this process art? It takes ages to press-mould clay into the prepared plaster moulds, and more time for the earth matter to harden, dry, and then be packed into a kiln for firing. Along the way, each cast is individualized, both in form and surface treatment. The nascent human forms are armless; this too is a Cruise trademark. In defence of this stylization, Wilma Cruise states that ‘arms are unnecessary; they actively interfere with the message. They create a visual noise … because it is the condition of muteness that I want to convey—a silence, an existential pause.’

So what is her message? Firstly, and here I paraphrase the artist again, Cruise sees art making as a form of social action—what she calls a ‘shout against the silence’. She does not accept violence, political or otherwise, as a means of engaging the world. Growing up in the aftermath of World War II and the threat of a nuclear holocaust, the execution of her left-leaning nephew in 1990, and on-going political violence in many parts of the world, Cruise has developed a kind of nihilism. Gerhard Schoeman in his essay on the artist calls this ‘a contest against nothingness’.

There is something satisfyingly decimal about Cruise’s decision to make 1 000 baby-like forms. Returning to the Documenta reference, Katherin Lutz says that ‘100 is a symbolic number for Documenta: Arnold Bode [the initiator of Documenta in 1955] called it ‘The Museum of 100 Days’; Joseph Beuys produced his ‘100 Day Office for Direct Democracy’ for Documenta 5 (1972) and Harald Szeemann called it ‘A 100-Day Event’; Catherine David organized ‘100 Days 100 Guests’ for Documenta 10

1 http://d13.documenta.de/#welcome/
2 On the 2 October 1990, a bomb hidden in a computer killed Cruise’s nephew, Nicholas. Three members of the ‘Orde Boerevolk’ were apprehended and, while awaiting trial, harnessed their ‘cause’ to the political amnesty agreement that was in effect at the time. Their demands were not met, and the three, Henry Martin, Adrian Maritz and Lood van Schalkwyk, engaged on a hunger strike to secure their release. Bizarrely, Nelson Mandela interceded on their behalf and petitioned the then president, FW de Klerk, for their release on ‘humanitarian’ grounds.
The Bird
2012
Ceramic and steel on steel base
105 x 101 x 50 cm
But what is the symbolic weight of, say, 100 or a 1 000?

Quite simply, the base-10 positional numerical system favoured by Indian and Arabic mathematicians since 14 century BCE really works, even for non-mathematicians. One can multiply with a positional system, something the poor Romans could not do. Since they were principally interested in counting bushels of wheat, this did not really matter to them. Getting back to Cruise’s 1 000 babies, we can see that the symbolic weight of the number of her ceramic objects depends on the placement of the dot. Her’s is a decimal sculpture, infinitely divisible, and yet a whole.

Cruise’s corpus of ceramic works—the animals inspired by a re-reading of *Alice in Wonderland*, and the large human figures—all evince a sense of *déjà vu* and, at the same time, a sense of wonderment at their uniqueness. For her new exhibition, entitled *The Alice Diaries*, Cruise has brought together several new sculptures in fired clay which will surround the field of clay babies. As a crowd of supporters, or onlookers, these new works, including three ‘Alices’, will act as a ‘caucus’. This is Cruise’s well-chosen term designed to harness all the works—those on paper, and those in fired clay to the cause of a deeper, ecological understanding of our degenerating planet.

Prime among the members of the caucus is a standing female form with a large metal beak, or cone. This reminds one of bullhorns or megaphones, but the mouthpiece has been inverted. Cruise says that the work started life as a ‘bird’. In keeping with her focus on the surreal, perhaps this is the Scoffle Bird—that slightly scruffy bird associated with the Helmondshire Halflings. Under Santharian logic, farmers were known to place bread babies (much like scarecrows) in their fields to ward off attacks by these voracious birds.

But Cruise’s *The Bird* is part of the caucus—part of the animal autarky that guards the cradle. Close inspection of this bed of armless babies, reveals a slow transmogrification as their pert, doll-like mouths morph into snouts and other chilling, animal-like features. This gives sense to the Orwellian notion of ‘four legs good, two legs bad’.

The appearance of the rabbit is self-inscribed with an ill-fitting robe of verisimilitude derived from our perception of the world—what the philosopher Merleau-Ponty argues as being ‘perceptually self-evident’. We ‘know’ rabbits, since the idea of ‘rabbit’ is intertwined, not only with the Lewis Carroll version, but also with our own self-reflexive remembering of lived experience (encounters with the actual mammal). Seeing Cruise’s re-envisioned rabbit entails a loss of the real and a

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5  Epic, on-line Role Play Game based on JR Tolkien’s Hobbits.
Cradle
2011–12
Ceramic installation (detail)
Dimensions variable, 1,000 objects, each 35 cm
Studio view
correlative augmentation of our sense of body since it is the body that renders perception possible. In a way, we see ourselves through Cruise’s sculptures. The thickness (perceptual overlay) of the world, coupled with a gendered view of the social surface of each work, makes Cruise’s ceramic sculptures palpable.

Cruise’s primary intention is to underline the rawness of human incomprehension, both between ourselves, and between humanity and the sentient beings with which we share this planet. No doubt, she would have preferred me to use the word ‘whom’ instead of ‘which’ in this last sentence. And indeed perhaps I should have. But this would have constituted a short cut. Animals have not yet been admitted to academe, or to ownership, property rights, IP and so on. Wilma Cruise knows this, of course, and her provisional PhD proposal notes that human/animal interaction is not anchored in language. Her mission is ‘to find that which is missing’. This exhibition, The Alice Diaries, is a significant part of that enquiry.

Gavin Younge works internationally as an artist, curator and arts writer. He lives and works in Cape Town where he is Professor of Sculpture at the University of Cape Town.

7 Wilma Cruise. 2012. The Alice sequence: An investigation into animal/human communication through art and literature with reference to the tales of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Alice Through the Looking Glass. PhD proposal, Department of University of Stellenbosch.
The Caucus – Baboon
2012
Ceramic and found object
65 x 39 x 60 cm
THE ALICE SEQUENCE

ANN-MARIE TULLEY

Down the rabbit hole—where we can talk to the animals:

So she [Alice] was considering in her mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, 'Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!' (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural).¹

Like the impetuous Alice, and those 'dear children' whom the remarkable cleric Lewis Carroll addressed in his warm and fanciful greetings to his readership,² the viewer must approach the artist and provocateur Wilma Cruise's long-term engagement with the animal subject, and now her investment in the animals of Wonderland, playfully, with childish belief, stumbling on 'truths' along the way. If it were not for this impulsive response to the spectre of a talking Rabbit, Alice might have thought twice before leaping down the rabbit hole that would lead her to the fantastical world of Wonderland. The whimsy and naiveté of this artistic offering provokes a process of engagement in the viewer that must resist reason—and this is decisively the point.

Cruise's exhibition entitled The Alice Diaries, showing at Circa on Jellicoe in July 2012, is the most recent in a series of exhibitions dealing with the topic of ‘Alice and the animals’.³ The series title for these exhibitions is The Alice Sequence. There is a key theoretical aporia in this title that bears further reflection in exploring the intentions and effects of this body of work. Because the word ‘sequence’ is aligned with notions of reasonable

² Ibid, 151.
³ The Alice Sequence has seen two previous exhibition incarnations. In July 2011 the exhibition was staged for the first time at iArt Gallery (now Brundyn and Gonsalves) in Cape Town, entitled The Animals in Alice. The second exhibition in The Alice Sequence was staged at the University of the North West in October 2011 and was entitled Alice and the Animals.
Big (Alice)
2012
Unfired ceramic
90 x 28 x 28 cm
Studio view
structured progression, it occurs to the viewer (if not at once), that this level-headed term is wholly out of place with the ‘nonsense’ world of Alice—a world in which reasonable and logical expectations are regularly upended; where animals talk, little girls shrink and cats smile. The use of the word ‘sequence’, which can be further associated with grammatical syntax, leads one further down Cruise’s rabbit hole towards the exhibition’s raison d’être. In employing this leading term the artist draws the viewer’s attention to the uncanny conflation of symbolic language and the animal beings that are central to Lewis Carroll’s tale of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking Glass (1871). In an idiosyncratic manner, Carroll’s speaking animals exhibit an unusually keen force of their own, which belies the customary outcome of the anthropomorphic representation (in word and image) of animal beings—to reference figuratively human attributes, circumstances and meaning.4 When Alice treats with the sage caterpillar over how to alter her shrunken physical size,5 the reader is not automatically compelled to look for the metaphoric resonance of this smoking insect character (as is so often the case when confronted with animal characters in literary and visual texts). Rather like Alice, the reader is arrested by the frustrating slowness of this tedious bore of a creature—his obtuse and taciturn demeanour become the whole focus of one’s thoughts, and for a time it is not unbelievable to believe in the cognisance of caterpillars.

After a time, the similarity between the slow moving characteristics of a real caterpillar and the tedious anthropomorphic behaviour of the caterpillar in Wonderland become apparent. This is the metonymic anthropocentric gesture of the author; and the rationale of all who read the text. That not withstanding, a resolved collapse into contextual anthropocentric metaphor is seldom fully realized in Lewis Carroll’s fiction. Unlike so many anthropomorphized animal characters in fictional literature, the caterpillar and his fellow creatures in Wonderland, seem to resist a reading outside of the [non]sense borders of this contemporary Arcadian territory. As such, Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and related fictions represent a unique expression of animal agency in a human framework; a fantasy to be sure, but one that can be argued to complicate the logos-centric premise of human superiority over non-human creatures. It is exactly this wilful inversion of the terms of human domination that is of interest to Cruise. In her recent doctoral proposal Cruise stakes her claim in this fraught terrain asking:

How do we begin to challenge the human/self, animal/other divide and (as a corollary) how do we do this without language? Bluntly put, how do we speak to the animals?6

4 Derrida (cited in Lippit 1998: 1113) proposes that the word ‘animals’, which has come to envelop in human understanding all the non-human creatures on Earth, can be said to be an animetaphor. That is to say that this ubiquitous word has less to do with the circumstances of the many wondrous creatures that fall under this linguistic taxonomy, and more to do with infinite anthropocentric mythologies and prejudice that find expression through the figurative vagaries of this humble word. See Lippit, A.M.1998. Magnetic animal: Derrida, wildlife, animetaphor. MLN 113(5) Comparative Literature Issue (December): 1111–1125. Derrida’s (2002: 402) further notion of the animal autobiography also theorizes the rhetorical formulation of human character, through the dialectical relation of the human to the animal. See Derrida, J. 2002. The animal that therefore I am (more to follow). Trans. D. Wills. Critical Inquiry 28(2): 369–418.


Bigger (Alice)
2012
Ceramic on steel base
121 x 32 x 32 cm
This is a far reaching question; and one that reflects significantly upon the ancient ontological conundrum of the differing nature of animal and human beings. It is important to pause here and consider the philosophical trajectory of logo-centric human and animal conceptualization, and the contemporary project of animal studies and revision with which Cruise’s art production is notably aligned. The contemporary notion of what constitutes human and animal being takes its origins from the humanist canon—a conception aligned with the idea of philanthropy, signifying a collegial spirit between humans, which excludes animals from this shared congeniality. This negation of the animal is justified through the Aristotelian elevation of the phenomenon of symbolic language (possessed by human kind) over the animals limited capacity to ‘signal pleasure and pain’. This mode of hierarchical humanism found further expression in the Enlightenment thinking of René Descartes, who positioned animals as automata functioning without sentience, thought and language, and without the capacity for reason, which is the chief value of humanist thought. Heidegger also contributed to the celebration of logo-centric reason at the expense of the animal by applying his technique of crossing through words that are simultaneously written and erased to animal subjects. This technique is evidenced in his oeuvre in relation to words such as ‘being’, pointing to the mutability of life and death. In relation to discussions of non-human creatures, Heidegger crosses out words such as ‘world’, proposing that although the lizard sits on the rock and therefore inhabits the world, the lizard’s inability to name the rock renders him ‘poor of the world’ (weltarm). Linguistic poverty is not referenced here in sympathetic empathy with animal creatures, but rather as a notion that points to the fortunate position of humanity through the veneration of reason, so exemplified in the ‘feat’ of symbolic language.

In mining the fraught and embattled inter-species frontline of human and animal differentiation, Derrida (whose work is integral to animal studies circles) explored at some length the destructive and telling properties of the tendency to sublimate the human story in animal guises—pointing to the ‘animetaphor’ and the ‘animal-autobiography’ as examples of such colonising gestures. This exploration highlighted the imperial gesture of subsuming animal beings into symbolic forms.

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7 Matthew Calarco (2008: 2) has described animal studies as comprising ‘a wide range of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, biological and cognitive sciences … And yet despite the disciplinary differences and multiple theoretical approaches in animal studies, there are at least two recurring and structural questions that undergird much of the work being done in the field. One question concerns the being of animals, or “animality”, and the other concerns the human-animal distinction.’ See Calarco, M. 2008. The question of the animal. Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida. New York: Columbia University Press: 1–14.


10 Ibid, 805.

11 Ibid, 796.


The artist outside her studio, June 2012
Cruise proposes that an answer to the question of how we may communicate with the animals lies in the liminal mode of the pre-linguistic—the subliminal receptivity of signs in the world.\(^\text{14}\) Through this investment in the pre-linguistic Cruise aligns herself theoretically with the ideas of the French literary theorists, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous.\(^\text{15}\) These theorists employ the unutterable and unsightly, the personal and the fictional in a divergent register that challenges the normative masculinist models of academic expression. In expediting these gendered concerns Cixous foregrounds the relationship between language and the body, rejecting what she terms as ‘critiques that persist in a logo-centric Cartesian discourse that posits the mind as the source of writing’.\(^\text{16}\) In its formulation as a feminist mode of critique and expression écriture feminine is not to be understood as proof of the incapacity of women to possess reason—traditionally the preserve of men—but rather as an attempt to ‘speak’ in opposition to the ideological limitations on feminine identity that are embedded within the grammars of traditional letter and verse.\(^\text{17}\) Écriture feminine often employs a pre-conscious bodily register rather than a ‘mental’ and linguistic approach (aligned with Cartesian notions).\(^\text{18}\) With this pre-conscious and physical index in mind Cruise argues that although Cixous spoke in relation to the human-animal, the extension of this model of alternative expression is relevant to the reformulation of interspecies communication and discourse.\(^\text{19}\) Extending the application of the counter-hegemonic notions of écriture feminine into the project of writing and representing the animal in a critical-humanist framework is particularly relevant. As so much literary and representational scholarship on the animal’s rhetorical role in anthropocentric formulations demonstrates, the grammars of language are saturated with Cartesian conceptions that foreground the reasoned capacity of human beings over the supposedly non-reasoned capacity of animal beings.

Cruise notes that the articulation of the body as a means of communication is an existing concept present in the field of equine studies, in which the work of Monty Roberts, the so-called horse whisperer, is seminal.\(^\text{20}\) But the

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\(^{19}\) Ibid, 18.

\(^{20}\) Cruise, W. 2012. The Alice sequence: An investigation of animal rights through the metaphoric lens of Alice in Wonderland. Doctoral proposal for the Department of Visual Arts, University of Stellenbosch: 18. See also Paul Patton on the pre-linguistic, physical model of horse/human
Biggest (Alice)
2012
Ceramic on steel base
180 x 60 x60 cm
The Caucus – Pig
2012
Painted ceramic on wooden base
44 x 35 x 30 cm
idea of the animal’s capacity to respond in physical and vocal manners is not a new one. Matthew Calarco asserts the way in which companion animals adjust themselves to the lives of their human companions as evidence of variable and wilful non-human phenomenology.  

The seventeenth-century philosopher, Michel de Montaigne also put forward the capacity of the animal to respond through bodily communication. Montaigne considers the exchange of signs evidenced in his game with his cat, and muses ‘when I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?’

Lewis Carroll’s animal characters often confound Alice with their apparently ‘backwards’ use of language and reason. These tainted dictums are an ideal vehicle for Cruise’s questioning exploration of the human conception of linguistic and cerebral superiority over animal beings. The artist notes that:

In Wonderland the animals have agency. They speak. But Alice does not always understand what is happening. She is pushed and pulled hither and thither in a confusion of understanding.

Cruise goes on to mention the incident in the book, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865), when the Caterpillar and then the pigeon ask Alice who she is, to which Alice has no answer. Cruise contends that the caterpillar’s question can be read in a broader ontological sense—questioning Alice’s status as a human being; and by association the right of human beings to consider themselves superior to animal beings. In this sense the animals that Cruise extracts from Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) are the harbingers of questions and pre-conscious meanings that assail the dominance of logo-centric reason and ideological human supremacy.

Cruise’s artistic realisation of the fantastical animal figures from the œuvre of Alice, in relation to the dislocated samples of Carroll’s text that she writes on the gallery walls in staging these artworks, enacts the disparity between image and text and suggests the failure or difficulty of language to reconcile or meaningfully reflect on animal/human interactions. This awkward juxtaposition of text and image also offers an unexpected literary insight within the theoretical discourse of Cruise’s conception of these exhibitions. Cruise literally enacts the ‘nonsense’ aesthetic of Alice’s world by confusing and dislocating the audience through the disarticulation of signifiers. This ruptured expression and reception is reminiscent of the disjointed and obscure literary devices and effects of the project of écriture féminine. A strikingly similar unsettling impulse to lay bare the limitations and construction of language is realised eloquently in Carroll’s frequent use of illogical conundrums and nonsense phraseology, such as ‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe: All mimsy were the communication employed by Monty Roberts, which also foregrounds the inequity of this exchange: see Patton, P. 2003. Language, power and the training of horses. In C. Wolfe (ed.). Zoontologies. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 83–99.

23 Ibid, 375.
26 Ibid, 31–32.
borogoves, and the mome raths outgrabe—pointing to a shared spirit of revolutionary linguistic enquiry with the exponents of écriture féminine. Both these literary phenomena, set apart by time and context, assert that language is a mutable and contextual tool that should not be understood to have only one voice or one intention; nor should one conception of language and the nature of communication and agency take precedence over all other forms of communication and subjects.

On ‘waking’ from her adventures in Through the Looking Glass (1871), Alice angrily shakes the mischievous Red Queen, who unexpectedly transforms (through her implied shift between states of consciousness) into Alice’s kitten. Having recognized the passage between dream and reality, Alice speaks candidly to this kitten saying

You woke me out of oh! Such a nice dream! And you’ve been along with me, Kitty—all through the Looking-Glass world. Did you know it dear?

Lewis Carroll goes on to note Alice’s annoyance at the ‘inconvenient habit of kittens’, who make no symbolic differentiation between ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the manner of their ‘purring’ response. However, this linguistic impediment is no obstacle to Alice, who continues questioning the suspected kitten about its role in her mysterious dream (which she believes to be real). Alice’s interrogation of the kitten is reminiscent of Montaigne’s exchange of ‘signs in play’ with his cat. Despite being overshadowed by the ‘symbolic lacking’ that accompanies a human encounter with a non-human being, Alice, like Montaigne, places her faith in the bodily communication of the animal. In a recap of these perplexing events to her sister, Alice notes that on confronting the kitten with the chess figure of the Red Queen and asking this obtuse creature, ‘Confess that was what you turned into’, the kitten simply turned its head away. Alice surmises from this that the kitten appeared ashamed and, as such, must have been the Red Queen.

Cruise’s mixed media drawing on paper, Alice: Self-Portrait I (2011) depicts a

27 Ibid, 14.
29 Ibid, 324.
32 Ibid, 325.
child-like female figure, whose squint eyes peer intrusively beyond the viewer from beneath an unruly fringe, while two cat figures float as if embedded in her chest—an image of human and animal co-mingling. This atypical Alice’s lips are static, suggesting the absence of linguistic dialogue between the animal figures and the human figure. Carroll’s Alice questions the kitten’s awareness of her discourse with them, but rambles on anyway in defiance of such pesky inter-species limitations, while Cruise’s Alice is confident and introspective. The result of this combined rendering of inter-species bodies is the impression of a pre-conscious communicative exchange. Unlike Carroll’s doubting protagonist, Cruise’s Alice has no misgivings about her discourse with these feline subjects. Most important to note in this scenario is that the notion of inter-species dialogue is heralded as inherently physical and non-linguistic. This is a distinctly anti-Cartesian figure that undermines the human conceit of symbolic language by stressing the physical interactivity of human and animal bodily forms and gestures. Derrida muses on his awkward and naked confrontation with his cat’s penetrating gaze, thereby asserting the shared animality of the naked state. Cruise’s Alice is a similarly transformative figure caught up in the realization of her combined and contested animal and human phenomenology. Amidst the silence of specifically human and symbolic language, this hybrid Alice reminds us of the shared platitudes of animal and human being.

Ann-Marie Tully is an artist, curator, writer, and Research Associate at the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg.

33 Ibid, 324.
The Caucus – Puppy
2012
Ceramic
45 x 84 x 33 cm
The Caucus – Rabbit
2012
Ceramic on wooden base
105 x 45 x 65 cm
Opposite: *The Travelers (Rabbit, Cat, Dog)*
2012
Ceramic, found object
Tallest item 48 cm

Above:
- **Child – Pookie**
  2011
  Ceramic (on steel base)
  108 cm

- **Child – Rabbit**
  2011
  Ceramic (on steel Base)
  105 cm
The Pig
2011
Beeswax, wax crayon, charcoal and oil stick on paper
135 x 138 cm
The Hare
2011
Beeswax, wax crayon, charcoal and oil stick on paper
135 x 138 cm
She drowned swimming in her own tears
2012
Oil on canvas
200 x 200 cm
Would you like cats if you were me?

2012
Oil on canvas
200 x 200 cm
SELECT EXHIBITIONS

Solo exhibitions
2008  SPLIT LON.NY.JHB. David Krut Projects, Johannesburg.
2000  rapRACK. Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, 10 June–1 July.

Group exhibitions
2011  Le Quartier Français is Art and Ebony: Literary Festival Exhibition. Franschhoek, 13–21 May.
2010  L’Origine du Monde—This is Not a Porn Song. Curated by Paul Boulitreau. Aardklop National Art Festival, 27 August–2 September.
2001  Biennale Internazionale Dell’arte Contemporanea. Florence, 7–16 December.
2000  Manuscript II. Boekehuis, Melville, Johannesburg (September–October); Centre For the Book, Cape Town (December); Olievenhuis National Museum, Bloemfontein (February–March 2001).
1997  *Havana Biennale*. Cuba, April–May.
1994/5  *Havana Biennale*. Cuba.
1994  *FNB Art Vita Now. Johannesburg Art Gallery (Quarterly Award)*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Johannesburg.

**Curatorial assignments**


**Site-specific works**

2008  *The Cape Town Slave Memorial*, in collaboration with Gavin Young. Church Square, Cape Town.
2006  *Ancestor*, in collaboration with Gavin Young. Department of Science and Technology, Pretoria.
2004  *The Right to Life*. Constitutional Court, Johannesburg.
1998  *Speaking Loudly: Listening Intently*. MTN.

**Public and corporate collections**

- Iziko (South African National Gallery)
- Durban Art Museum
- Pretoria Art Museum
- University of South Africa Collection
- Corobrik Collection
- Polokwane Municipal Collection
- Billiton
- MTN
- Constitutional Court
- Standard Bank Gallery
- Sasol
- Sasol University Museum, Stellenbosch
- University of Johannesburg
- Rand Merchant Bank
- University of the North West
Cover image:
*If you turn into a pig I will have nothing more to do with you*
2012
Ceramic on steel base
112 x 44 x 44 cm

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Gavin Younge: 2

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