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Animals have become the focus of much recent art, informing numerous works and projects featured at major exhibitions including dOCUMENTA (13) (2013), the 10th Shanghai Biennale (2014), and the 56th Venice Biennale (2015). Contemporary art has emerged as a privileged terrain for exploring interspecies relationships, providing the conditions for diverse disciplines and theoretical positions to engage with animal behavior and consciousness.

This interest in animal nature reflects a number of current issues. Observations of empathy among nonhumans prompt reconsiderations of the human. The nonverbal communication of animals has been compared with poetic expansion of the boundaries of language. And the freedom of animal life in the wild from capitalist subordination is seen as a potential model for reconfiguring society and our relationship to the wider environment. Artists' engagement with animals also opens up new perspectives on the dynamics of dominance, oppression, and exclusion, with parallels in human society. Animal nature is at the heart of debates on the Anthropocene era and the ecological concerns of scientists, thinkers, and artists alike. Centered on contemporary artworks, this anthology attests to the trans-disciplinary nature of this subject, with art as one of the principal points of convergence