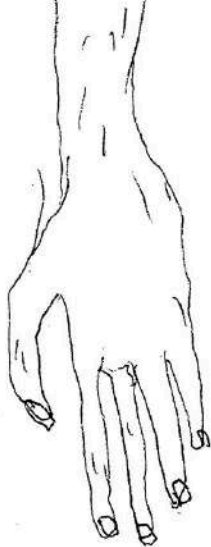
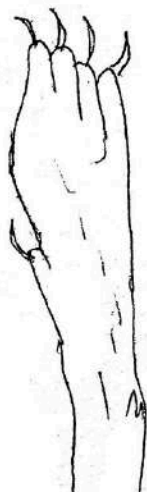


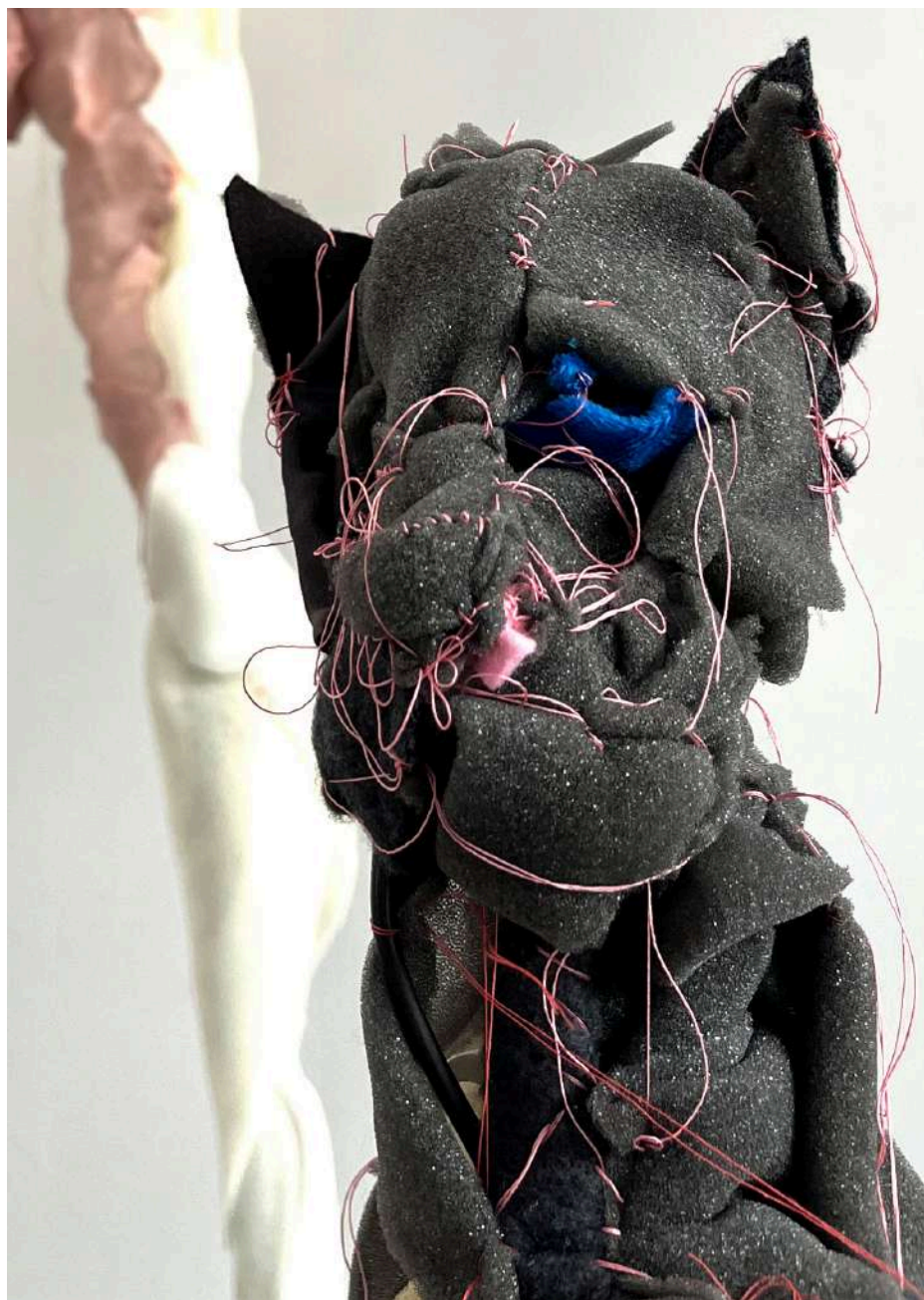


KASIA  
OLEŚKIEWICZ  
ANIMAL  
GAZE

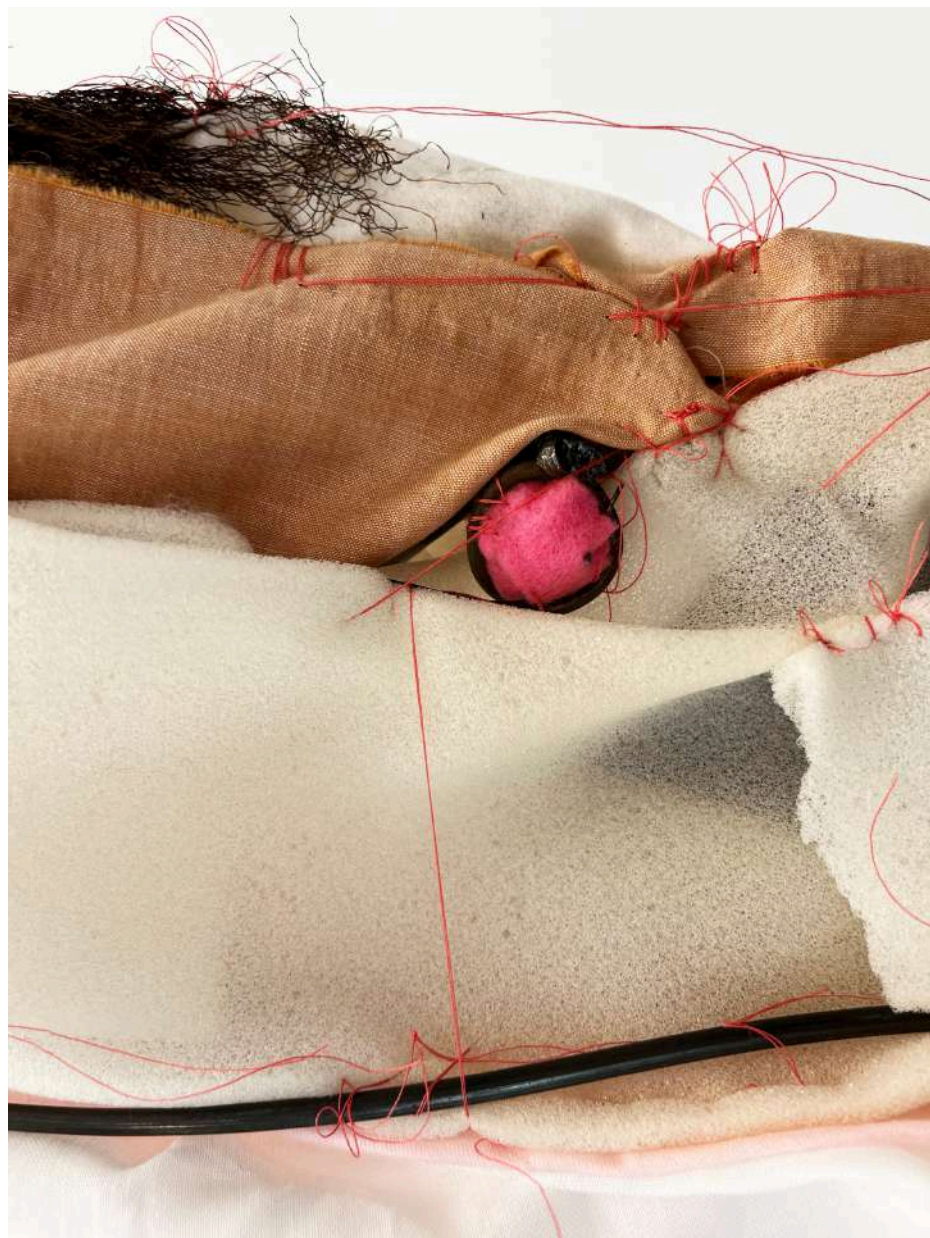


This booklet presents selected details and works  
from Kasia Oleśkiewicz's artistic research "Animal Gaze".









“Before the cat that looks at me naked, would I be ashamed like a beast that no longer has the sense of its nudity? Or, on the contrary, like a man who retains the sense of his nudity? Who am I, therefore? Who is it that I am? Whom should this be asked of if not of the other? And perhaps of the cat herself?”

-Jacques Derrida, “The Animal That Therefore I Am”

The exhibition “Animal Gaze” is a search for more than human point of view. Inspired by the oeuvre of Jacques Derrida, Kasia Oleśkiewicz takes up the hypothesis that looking for nonhuman subjective perspective and personhood is not only a compassionate and ethical act. It is also a fascinating tool for establishing connection with oneself and experiencing relief from the ego-driven reality.

This topic is a result of the artist’s long path working with animal-related issues, such as violence against nonhuman animals or bodily experience and animality of a human.

Kasia Oleśkiewicz uses the terms “animal”, “animality” in the way it is used by critical animal studies. Most commonly, we apply the word “animal” to nonhuman animals only. When referred to humans, it tends to be offensive or diminishing. In this way, language becomes a tool of discrimination.

The artist attempts at regaining this terminology. She sees “animality” hyper-positively. In this project, apart from challenging the species hierarchy, Oleśkiewicz looks for nonhuman gaze as an inspiration for humans: to get closer to our own animality. She recalls the oeuvre of Jacques Derrida, who reflected on the shamelessness represented by nonhuman gaze.

The works created within the scope of the project are twofold. The first part consists of the sculpture “Derrida and Cat” – two objects made of metal and textiles. The second part is a series of oil paintings that explore the artist’s personal relationships with nonhumans.

The series is presented for the first time as a solo exhibition at Das kleine Kunsthhaus, Bern, Switzerland (27.03 - 12.04.2025). The project is supported by: Culture & Animals Foundation, Burgergemeinde Bern and Kanton Bern.



\* \* \*

Bibi and I are sitting in the car parked in the garage. It calms her down when she gets anxious. She falls asleep. Her sleep is still shallow. We don't know why being in a car gives her a sense of security. We suppose it makes her think of the time she was rescued from a violent household where she had been hurt – and taken away with a car. Or maybe it makes her feel like she won't be left alone – ready to go.

As we sit together, she closes her eyes. Our breaths become one while I stroke her hair gently and slowly.

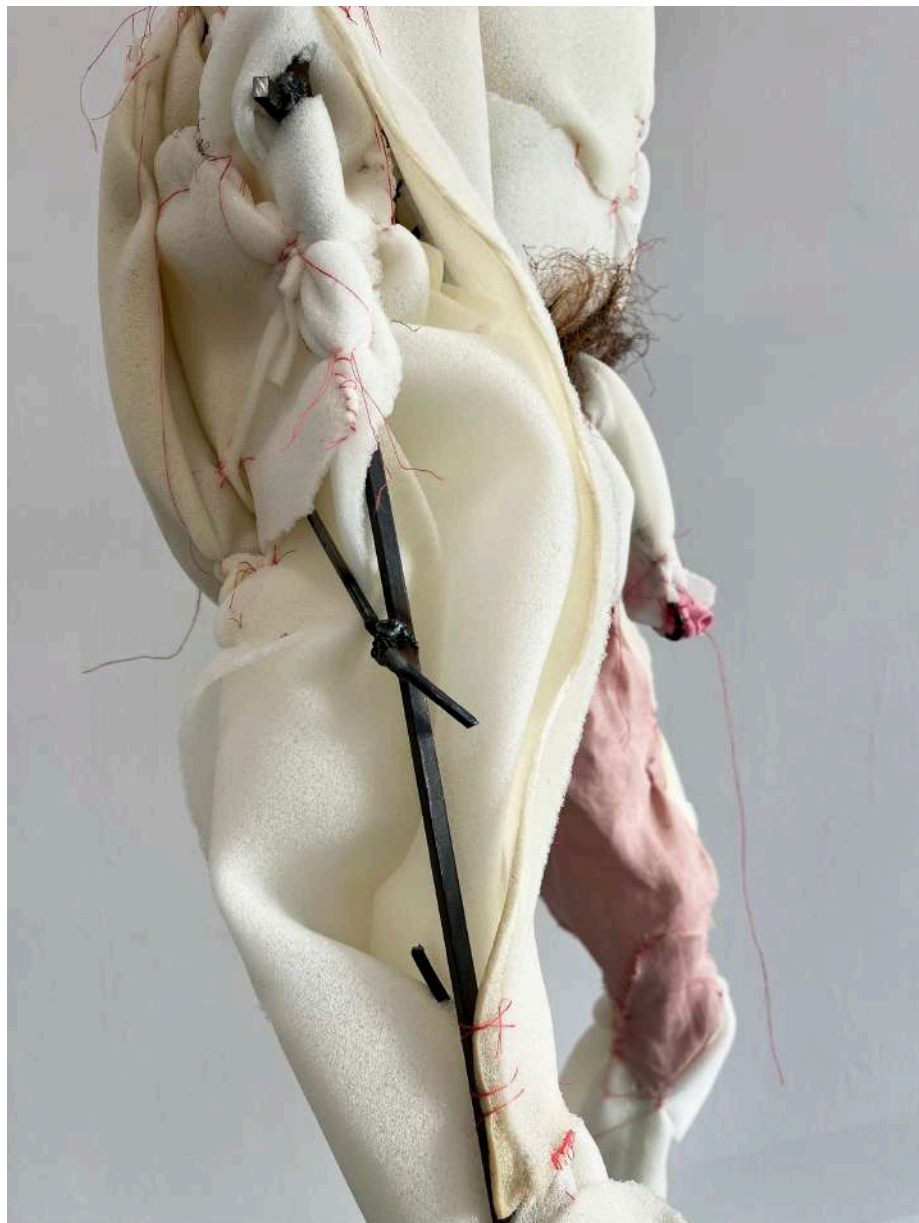
While she seems to be calming down, I leave behind all I have been thinking of – things to do, dissatisfaction, frustration. From wandering to all possible places I could be in next months, things I could get – my mind comes back here, to our breaths, to touch, to her mind.

Quite suddenly, I experience relief. My mind goes to her mind. What is she thinking? What is she occupied with? All her complicated layers of emotions, her post-traumatic fears we don't know much about. And how in touch she is with all of it. Her anxiety which increases at times, when something changes – someone new comes, someone “old” leaves or is about to. All her fear when someone makes a sudden move, when she hears a sound that frightens her. Constant caution, inability to rest. All the joy when someone she loves comes back, or just shows up to her eyes after some minutes or hours. All the joy when we are about to go for a walk or play.

All I owe to her: all she has shown me and teaches me constantly. The value of moments, some crumbs of truths. And her shameless ability to express her own needs. She doesn't want me to go. Or she wants to be alone and goes away.

\* \* \*

“If I have my time to begin or to refuse, so has she hers.”  
-Jacques Derrida, “The Animal That Therefore I Am”











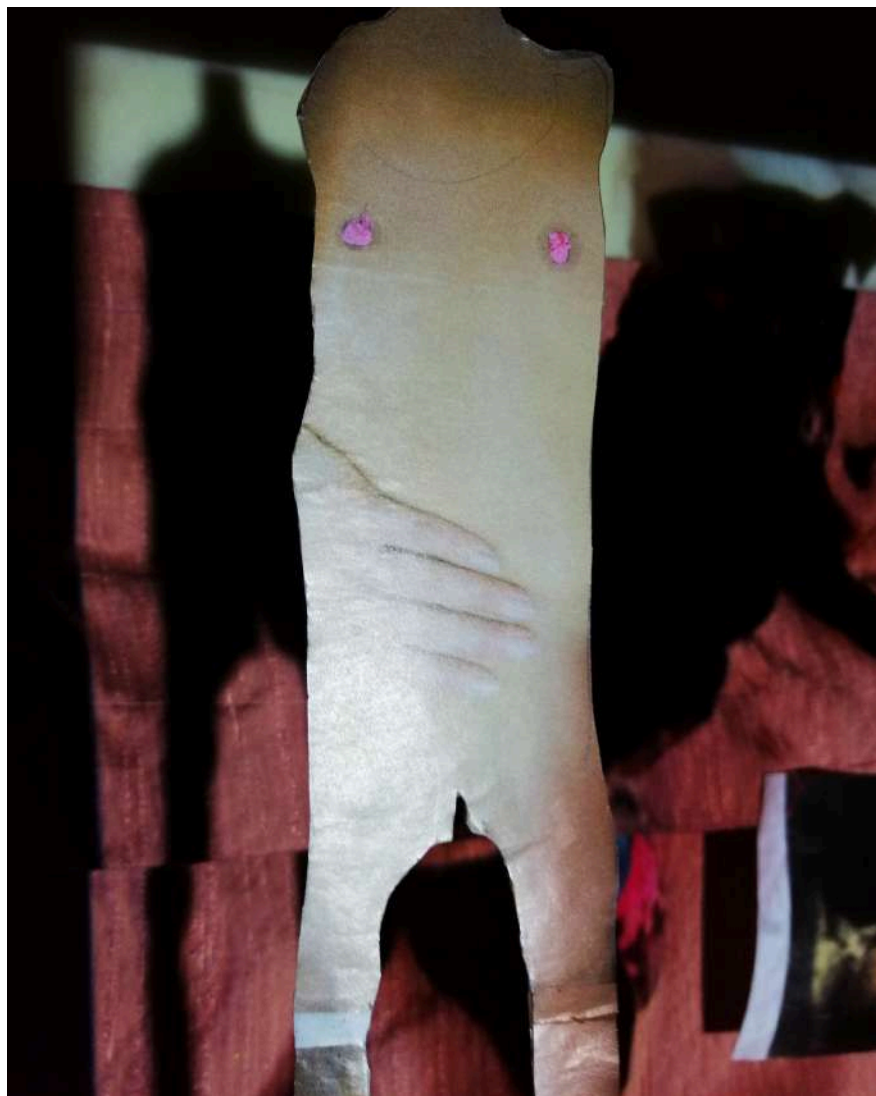


















Project supported by:



**Burgergemeinde  
Bern**



**Kanton Bern  
Canton de Berne**

Presented for the first time at:



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Part of the project was carried out during an artist residency at Houtkust Studios, Houthem St. Gerlach, the Netherlands, organised by Ri-Jeanne and Noëlle Cuppens in September 2024.



