

# Monkey in the Self-Portrait – The Non-Human Animal and the Question of Self-Representation

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*The article examines self-portraits taken in 2011 by Indonesian crested black macaque monkey Naruto with wildlife photographer David Slater's camera. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) filed a lawsuit against Slater to request that the monkey be assigned copyright and that PETA be appointed to administer proceeds from the photos for the benefit of Naruto and crested macaques in the reserve on Sulawesi. With this provocative lawsuit PETA wanted to stimulate discussion about expanding legal rights for non-human animals. These photographs, the discussion concerning them, and the court case shed light on the embodied agency of a non-human animal and human-animal relations in visual culture. In this article, I examine what it means when an animal points a camera at himself and takes a picture. I argue that the knowledge that the picture of the monkey is taken by the monkey himself causes the picture to be seen in a new light and raises questions as to the animal's status as an object and an Other. Furthermore, it urges a thorough re-examine of the agency, power, and embodied consciousness associated with photography and the practices of self-representation.*



Image 1. One of the photographs in the dispute. Slater, David. The Monkey Selfie, 2011.

## Introduction

British wildlife photographer David Slater travelled to Sulawesi Island in Indonesia in 2011, to photograph crested black macaque monkeys; currently, a nearly extinct species because of human actions such as hunting and the clearing of the rainforests. Excited by the noise of the shutter release and their reflections in the camera's lens, the monkeys took over 300 photographs, of themselves and each other, with the camera Slater set up.<sup>[1]</sup> One of the results of this unusual photo session was a perfect shot: a monkey called Naruto grinning in a wonderfully cropped and sharpened image. The photograph, which looks like a happy selfie taken by the monkey, spread rapidly in both social and traditional media after Slater licensed several images from the same shoot to the Caters News Agency and the photographs were published as “monkey self-portraits”. (Wikipedia, n.d.)

The rest of the story is well known; court proceedings were initiated against David Slater by the animal rights organization PETA over the copyrights of the photos. These photographs, the discussion concerning them, and the court case enlighten the value and valuation of a non-human animal in visual culture. In this article, the court case is not discussed in detail and the primary interest is not the copyright issues. My principal interest is in analyzing the embodied agency of a non-human animal in visual culture using Naruto's well-known self-portrait as my example. I examine if it is possible to question the power relations constructed in the practices of visual representations and presenting oneself with self-portraits. The theoretical background is provided by feminist visual culture studies and human-animal studies with an emphasis on new materialism and posthumanism.

Based upon an affective and embodied reading of Naruto's self-portrait this paper examines what happens when an animal points a camera at himself and takes a picture. In self-portraits the physical, material body of the photographer is in front of the camera when s/he takes the photo of her/himself. A growing number of feminists studying materiality, particularly bodies and natures, argue that we need a way to talk about the materiality of the body itself as an active, sometimes unruly, force (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 1–4). I strive to point out, with the example of Naruto's selfie and the discussion around the image, how the non-human animal's corporality and its materiality is in fact an "unruly force", active in ways that cannot be explained only in terms of consciousness and signification.

The so-called "affective turn", which emphasizes the carnal ways of being in and experiencing the world, is often considered a reaction towards the linguistic models of post-structuralist theorizations (Liljeström and Paasonen 2010, 1–2). For instance, Sara Ahmed explores how emotions work to shape the surfaces of individual and collective bodies and circulate between bodies, moving, sticking and allowing us to distinguish an inside and outside in the first place (Ahmed 2014, 1–10). In my reading of this picture of Naruto I analyze how we respond to Others through emotions and create surfaces and boundaries. When examining the materiality of the world and the body, the point of view of human-animal studies implies not making a categorical difference between human and non-human bodies.

Human-animal studies is a cross-disciplinary field, which examines the complex relationships between humans and animals. It places the animal at the center and sees the animal as an active

subject and agent affecting the human-animal encounters studied (Nyman and Schuurman 2015, 17–18). My emphasis is on posthumanism, which displaces the dialectical scheme of opposition, replaces well-established dualisms with the recognition of egalitarianism between humans and animals and offers a language with which to study self-portraits photographed by a non-human animal. This vital bond is based on the sharing of this planet on terms that are no longer so clearly hierarchical. Rosi Braidotti (2013) writes about how the dialectics of negative difference define the animal as the necessary and familiar other of the human. She describes the “oedipal relationship” between humans and animals as unequal and framed by structurally masculine habit of taking for granted free access to and the consumption of the bodies of others. (Braidotti 2013, 67–73.) It is essential to perceive human agency equal in relation to other agencies in order to be able to renounce a human-centered worldview. Karen Barad (2003, 2007) challenges the difference seen between a human subject and a non-human object with her theory of agential realism, which bypasses the binary between the material and the cultural and concentrates on the process of their interaction (Braidotti 2013, 158).

I am not a specialist in monkey behavior or wildlife photography; however, issues concerning Others have interested me because of my background in gender studies. Intersectional examining of human-animal relations emphasizes the meaning of species in producing social constructions, categories dividing animals, and inequality. Kirsi Laurén and Nora Schuurman (2017) wrote that the implications of feminist research are essential for human-animal studies in social sciences and humanities. The posthumanistic perspective, conceptualizing the subject position and agency of animals, and analyzing the hierarchies and power structures between humans and non-human animals evolve from feminist discussions, in which these questions are crucial (Laurén and Schuurman 2017, 67). Naruto’s self-portrait reveals the hierarchical power structures of visual culture: when an animal points a camera at himself and takes a picture it urges to re-examine the agency, power and embodied consciousness associated with photography and the practices of self-representation.

## Who has the right to copyright?

Copyright law grants the creator of an original work exclusive rights for its use and distribution. The financial benefit from the creative work goes to the author, the active agent who made it. In

the picture above, the crested black macaque monkey Naruto poses just like humans in selfies on social media: an arm-length from the camera, with a wide smile on his face with big teeth showing and with brown eyes staring straight at the camera.<sup>[2]</sup> In the background, green leaves of trees are visible and disclose the Sulawesi jungle. At the time the photograph was taken Naruto was (according to PETA's complaint concerning copyright infringement) a 6-year old wild male macaque and primatologist Antje Engelhardt and her group had been observing him since the day he was born.

The self-portrait photographs taken with David Slater's equipment were uploaded from The Daily Mail to the multimedia repository Wikimedia Commons by the webpage's editor. Wikimedia Commons is a collection of images and video files that are free to use by anyone online. The website listed the photographs as being in the public domain on the grounds that they were the creation of an animal, and not a person. According to Slater the income from the photographs belonged to him and in 2014 he stated his intention to sue Wikipedia for a loss of earnings. On December 22nd 2014, the United States Copyright Office clarified its practices, explicitly stating that works created by nature, animals, or plants are not copyrighted and listing "a photograph taken by a monkey" and "a mural painted by an elephant" in its compendium as examples of the types of work it would not register. The same, they stated, applies to works produced by divine and supernatural beings. In addition, the owner of the camera does not have the rights to the image. Accordingly, Wikipedia did not have to remove the photographs or pay copyright fees.

In contrast to these stakeholders, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) believed that the copyright of the image belonged to the monkey who took it. In 2015, PETA filed a lawsuit in the U.S. federal court in San Francisco against David Slater and his company, Wildlife Personalities Ltd. to request that the monkey (whom they named Naruto) be assigned the copyright and that PETA be appointed to administer proceeds from the photographs, which appeared in a book entitled "Wildlife Personalities", for the benefit of Naruto and other crested macaques in the reserve on Sulawesi. "If this lawsuit succeeds, it will be the first time that a non-human animal is declared the owner of property (the copyright of the "monkey selfie"), rather than being declared a piece of property himself or herself. It will also be the first time that a right

is extended to a non-human animal beyond just the mere basic necessities of food, shelter, water, and veterinary care”, stated the press release by PETA.

During a hearing in January 2016, US District Judge William Orrick III said that the copyright law does not extend its protection to animals. In March 2016, PETA filed a notice of appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In September 2017 PETA and Slater finally reached a settlement in the case. PETA’s last appeal was dismissed, and Slater agreed to donate 25 percent of the gross revenue from the monkey selfie to charities dedicated to protecting the crested macaque and its habitat. “PETA and David Slater agree that this case raises important, cutting-edge issues about expanding legal rights for non-human animals, a goal that they both support, and they will continue their respective work to achieve this goal,” claims a joint statement from the artist and the animal rights group (PETA Statement: “Monkey Selfie” Case Settled, 2017). The copyright dispute concerning Naruto’s self-portrait raised interesting questions related to the human-animal relations in visual culture (in which animals are often represented but rarely credited), for instance, questions of authorship and the agency of the author.

## “But first, let me take a selfie”



Image 2. “But first, let me take a selfie” – an Internet meme based on “the monkey selfie”. Source: Pinterest.

A selfie is the most popular type of self-representation in today's digital media-scape. It can be considered a subgenre of self-portrait photography and is now a well-established form of self-expression. A selfie is usually taken at arm's length or in front of a mirror with a digital camera or a smartphone and posted in social media. (Pargana Mota 2016, 36.) There were over 300 photographs taken when the monkeys played with David Slater's camera and in some of the images a monkey's hairy arm is in the image, which is, according to Anna Munster (2016), "an instant mark of a selfie"[3], Munster sees the self, although bordered with representational politics, as an extended field reaching toward other subjectivations and continually in flux. Naruto's image is a selfie and went viral because when the monkey took his own picture he stepped into an area reserved for humans by subjectivating and individuating itself. The picture also participates in the Internet animal visual culture, in which animals play with camera apparatus, and emphasizes the complexity of the relationships that constitute the production of the self-image, human and animal, play and intent. (Munster 2016.)

After becoming acquainted with the topic for some time, I discovered the Internet memes commenting on selfie culture based on Naruto's and hundreds of other monkeys' self-portraits. These pictures expose the attitudes towards both monkeys and people taking selfies. A large proportion of the jokes comment on how silly it is to take selfies ("Girls trying to take a selfie", "Tag your selfie addict friend"), prioritizing it before anything else ("But first, let me take a selfie") or how the monkey resembles a despised person (like an ex-partner). Selfies provoke media commentators and the blogosphere to describe their takers as suffering from, for instance, "grandiose exhibitionism, inflated self-views, superficial personalities and shameless self-promotion" (Pargana Mota 2016, 36).

Theresa Senft and Nancy Baym write that a news story appears every month in the popular media that associates selfies with narcissism, body dysmorphia or even psychosis. Selfies are also considered dangerous since preoccupation with the camera over one's surroundings causes accidents. Senft and Baym argue that the stereotype of selfies as only the activity of young girls making duck faces in their bathrooms is inaccurate. (Senft and Baym 2015, 1589–1590.) "... The gendered characterization of selfie-taking enables the selfie to be used to indicate particular qualities and habits that are culturally associated with women, such as a preoccupation with one's appearance. Once the selfie is established as connoting narcissism and vanity, it

perpetuates a vicious circle in which women are vain because they take selfies, and selfies connote vanity because women take them,” writes Anne Burns (Burns 2015, 1720). In the 1970’s, critic John Berger wrote that in the history of Western art, women have had little control over how their body and subjectivity are depicted in art. “Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at”, Berger stated (Berger 1973, 47). Many researchers think self-portraits reverse this situation.

The discussion around Naruto’s self-portrait is an instructive example of the fact that animals are mainly only seen from the point of view of the human. The photograph’s ability to delight the viewer is related to its anthropomorphic features: we see the monkey pointing the camera at himself and this resembles us and gives him human characteristics in our thoughts. Accordingly, the animal is not at the center of the discussion, but rather the center is the human being reflecting his or her feelings towards nature (see e.g., Lummaa 2008, 60 and Sihvonen 2015, 91–92). I argue that the picture Naruto took of himself underlines the agency and the subjectivity of the animal. In this image, a monkey plays the main part. This fact seems to have been forgotten in discussions about Naruto’s selfies, which focus mainly on the lawsuit, copyright issues, and money.

## **Distinguishing animals from humanity in visual culture**

The “monkey selfie” case is a rare example of a dispute over an animal as the copyright owner of an artistic work, but certainly not the first example of an animal as an object of art. Animals have been represented in visual arts throughout history. When humans first began to express themselves through art, they sketched hunting pictures of animals on cave walls and rocks. Animals were seen as threats, competitors or food. For instance, the Lascaux caves in Southwestern France exhibit strikingly realistic animal depictions from 25,000 BC. Since then animals have functioned as symbols and have illustrated myths and beliefs, but they also have been included in the everyday life of humans as sustenance, friends and pets. Pets have sometimes been represented as individuals, but wild animals have been depicted as exemplars and symbols of their species. Animals represent people in stories and it is more a rule than exception that animals are interpreted as symbols of human activity and interaction.

The history of photographing animals has gone hand in hand with the history of shooting animals, writes Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir (2009). The first steps of nature photography developed together with an increasing sophistication in taxidermic methods. Photography and taxidermy were both used as a means of recording samples of nature. Still today, in “sports hunting” the photograph of the dead animal shows that the encounter took place. Snæbjörnsdóttir associates the craving for trophies like taxidermic examples stocked in museums, with colonialistic heroism and machismo: newly found territories and landscapes were discovered and researched in the name of science and education (Snæbjörnsdóttir 2009, 80–82).

“With regard to the concept of the animal, the modern age could be characterized as an epoch of human exception,” Roni Grén writes (2017). For most of the preceding time man’s spiritual abilities were considered unique, for example, the human ability to make art (Grén 2017, 6). Artist Donald Judd stated in the 1960s: “If someone says his work is art, it’s art” (Baker 2013, 10). But what about art made by animals? How does one define it and what does it mean? The majority of the articles, I have read about the topic, ask: “Is it art?”

There are numerous kinds of creativity in the animal kingdom, such as the beautiful decorated structures bowerbird males build to woo the females and also the constructions created by spiders, bees and beavers can be considered beautiful and creative (Goldman 2014; Cembalest 2013). However, art is associated so strongly with humankind that in most cases non-human animal creativity is only considered art if the animals use stereotypical art equipment such as brushes, paints, pencils, cameras (like in this case) and so on. It is mostly the animals in captivity that have access to art equipment.[4]

Ben-Ami Scarfstein analyzes (1988) those activities of birds and monkeys resembling art.[5] Earlier interpretations of the communication of birds offer a perfect example of denying animals the abilities we consider the characteristics of humans. The typical counterargument related to animals and art is that it is impossible to use the term “art” if the creature cannot consciously reflect its own experience. Scarfstein argues that research has weakened the claims supporting human superiority. The complex reactions of animals that are considered automatic or instinctive are actually not very well known and cannot be explained with mechanisms constructed from a human point of view. Human art would not be possible if we were not

intelligent and self-aware. However, Scarfstein believes art would not be possible if our actions were only based on awareness, without “intuition” or the “instinctive”. (Scarfstein 1988, 45–47.)

Scarfstein compares art to play: it is difficult to give an exhaustive definition of either one as they are both transforming and diverse and based on curiosity. The most important biological aim of play is to exercise pleurably everything a grown human or animal must master. A playful ability to try and modify communicative behavior is common to monkeys, in birds it helps them find individually suitable mates and in humans to find compatible partners.

(Scarfstein 1988, 75–80.) “The human selfie shares something with the animality of play”, Anna Munster says. Play exceeds survivalism: the monkey in the selfie cannot be reduced to a mere instrument, instead he enacts expressively with the technical apparatuses via play. (Munster 2016.)

The question of animals and art is deeply related to the idea of human uniqueness and how the concept of art, often criticized as Western and masculine, has excluded and hierarchically been defined in relation to its Others such as handicrafts, art made by women and non-Western art (and also at some point photography). In addition to visual arts, the lack of language has been one of the key criteria for justifying the distinction between humans and animals. I searched the web extensively for information on the subject to obtain the details of the “monkey selfie” case. I found a considerable number of short articles from different online medias with almost the same content. The lawsuit has been reported as a comical case commenting on its special nature. Reporters have enthusiastically invented witty headlines when covering the case, for instance “No More Monkey Business: Court Rejects Monkey Selfie Copyright Case” and “The “monkey selfie” battle heads back to court — and gets even more bananas”. (Duan 2016; Moyer 2016.)

The underlying feature in the articles is the question of how we can possibly understand an animal when we do not speak the same language. Since animals are unable to speak, it is argued they are not capable of rational thinking either (Rojola 2015, 151). By examining the behavior of animals for decades, however, the languages of non-human animals have been discovered and the false belief in the muteness of other species has been questioned.

The lawsuit has raised issues concerning the agency of animals, raised awareness of endangered species, led to a debate on animal rights and sought to question the special status of the human being. The transgression of conceptual borders and the provoking contesting of the human-

centeredness of authorship and art has prompted heated debate in the Internet and wide news coverage. Ari Adut (2008) writes that a scandal derives its force from publicity, plays a central part in the transformation of norms, and reveals cultural divisions in society (Adut 2008, 4–9). Transgressive images have the possibility to profoundly affect their audiences and affect the norms of visual culture (Adut 2008, 224–226).

Art made by animals had already been used to provoke and to problematize human visual culture decades before Naruto’s self-portraits and the lawsuit. For instance, in February 1964 four works by a previously unknown avant-garde artist Pierre Brassau were exhibited as a part of a group exhibition in Göteborg, Sweden. The audience and the critics agreed that Brassau’s works were among the best pieces of the show. Only one critic disliked Brassau’s paintings and declared “Only an ape could have done this.” In fact, Pierre Brassau was a monkey, a 4-year-old chimpanzee called Peter from Borås Zoo. A journalist at the Göteborgs-Tidningen, Åke “Dacke” Axelsson, had perpetrated the hoax. He wanted to find out if art critics could tell the difference between modern art and art made by a monkey. (Museum of hoaxes, n.d.)

I argue that on top of the question if the art made by animals really can be art or if their art is better or worse than art made by humans, the topic of conversation should be how to account for the various ways in which animals participate in visual culture without doing it with the same goals or purposes as humans.



Image 3. Chimpanzee Peter, also known as artist Pierre Brassau, at work. Source: Museum of Hoaxes.

## Visual justifications for oppression

In the history of European cultures in particular, human societies have associated other groups of people with animals and thus justified the subjection of these groups. Feminist theorists have repeatedly shown that the concept of humanity as universal and non-gendered is a so-called naturalized truth that masks white, heterosexual male power. Western thinking is structured by a gendered and hierarchical body-mind distinction: a man/subject/human who strives to master a woman/object/nature. Associated with nature, woman has been seen as the object of science, art and technology, and man their dominant subject (see e.g., Kontturi 2006, 33–34).<sup>[6]</sup>

Representations of similarities between humans and animals have been used in the postcolonial West to dehumanize and racialize some non-Western cultural groups. Elder, Wolch, and Emel (1998) argue that the animal body is used to construct cultural difference and to sustain White American supremacy. One of the most common manifestations of dehumanization as a means of racist discrimination is comparing humans with apes and monkeys. In fact, this is so common that it has its own name: simianization. It is still a part of everyday racism today and used to offend athletes as well as politicians, like the previous President of the United States or the Ministers for Integration in Italy and of Justice in France. At the end of the year 2014, North Korea captured the global headlines by comparing the President of the USA to a monkey. This was not an exceptional attack since after his election Obama was compared to an ape even in Japan. Moreover, a Belgian newspaper found it hilarious to portray the President and the First Lady as apes. (Hund, Mills, and Sebastiani 2015, 9–10.)

Philosophers of the Enlightenment had already tried to shift Africans nearer to the ape species than Europeans. In addition to black people, simianization has also been related to sexism and anti-Semitism among other things. Overall, the ape stereotype represents elements of a canon of de-humanization which is a part of larger verbal and visual metaphoric systems linking the Other to objects or animals, dirt or germs, i.e. things that require managing, cleansing, or elimination. Because the question concerning the places of apes and men in the chain of being, or the process of evolution, was a significant part in the development of modern race science, everyday simianization could, partially at least, count on scientific complicity. Because the ape stereotype allowed the *mise-en-scène* of monstrous fantasies, simianization was commonly accompanied

and reinforced by works of art. In the course of a flood of ascriptions and assumptions, the ape stereotype evolved into a persistent marker of otherness. (Hund, Mills, and Sebastiani 2015, 12–18.)

As Terike Haapoja and Laura Gustafsson write: “Throughout history, declaring a group to be nonhuman or subhuman has been an effective tool for justifying slavery, oppression and genocide. Conversely, differentiating humans from other species has paved the way for the abuse of natural resources and other animals” (Museum of Nonhumanity, n.d.). Racism traces its psychic roots to the fear of the Other and to phobic attitudes toward nature and the body, according to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994). Racism has a discursive dimension, but it is not just a discourse: “...a police prod is not a discourse, even though discourses impinge on public perceptions of why and how police prods are used” (Shohat and Stam 1994, 22). Symbolic representations have had concrete material effects on human and non-human bodies.

## Why look at Naruto?

In the image the sow is enormous in size and in front of it stands a brisk looking woman. The woman makes notes on the form she has in her hand. I do not know what the woman writes. I wonder how the woman can withstand the eyes of the pig, its gaze. The pig doesn't speak any human language, but it sees, it witnesses. How does a person bear the pig's eyes, the eyes that see what humans do? ...After seeing the pig Anni cannot think of anything else. I cannot either. The picture fills my mind horribly uncontrollably: it reoccurs against my wish again and again. I compare my own situation and the situation of the pig. This turmoil inside me when the child turns and kicks – the pig feels the same. Waking up once in a while every night – the pig feels the same. Aches and pains – it feels the same. I also feel the need for nesting, the need to prepare. It doesn't matter if it is culture or biology, I know, it feels the same. Everything that it feels, I also feel and vice versa. The only difference is that I can choose everything. (Silfverberg 2013, 127–129.)

When I was pregnant with my daughter I read Anu Silfverberg's book about her experiences of having her first child. One paragraph in the book, which I loosely translated above, still haunts me and I interpret it as a powerful description of animal gaze and face. Silfverberg writes about being 8 months pregnant and having a strong physical reaction to seeing a picture in a newspaper

of a pregnant pig suffering in a cage no larger than its own size. I remember clearly having a heavy feeling on my chest and feeling nauseated every time I thought about pigs and cows, their eyes gazing at me, and how their young are taken from them. With all the bodily changes, the hormones, instincts and aches I remember feeling very close to other mammals and identifying with them.

John Berger discusses the animal gaze in his well-known essay “Why Look at Animals?” (first published in 1980): “... animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the farther away they are”. (Berger 2009, 27.)

The face and the eyes play the most important part in Naruto’s self-portrait in my interpretation. It is the face and the name of an individual that lends him/her an identity, observes Snæbjörnsdóttir (2009, 110–111). In the book quoted above Anu Silfverberg tries to understand how the brisk looking woman can face the eyes of the pig who witnesses everything she does. The eyes, the gaze and the face make the Other a subject and separate it from the mass. In my opinion, this is the most important thing visual culture can do: at its best it makes you identify, understand and acknowledge the Other. Donna Haraway (2008, 88) asserts that “Respect is respere – looking back, holding in regard, understanding that meeting the look of the other is a condition of having face oneself”.

These affects cross the traditional hierarchical boundaries in science, such as mind/body, reason/feeling, objective/subjective, and masculine/feminine. Naruto returning my gaze from the photograph touches me, breaks the illusion of objectivity and the distance between the researcher and the subject. It questions the position of the monkey as an object and reveals our “likeness-in-strangeness” (Baker 2013, 79, 111–116). Ron Broglio (2011, 58) writes that in theory today animal agency has been described as the look of the Other, which reverses human optical supremacy and concedes that animals look back at us from their own world and selfhood. It is impossible to know what the world looks like from the point of view of an endangered monkey. However, it is important to realize that such an experience exists (e.g., Gustafsson & Haapoja 2015, 132). Although copyright issues are probably not very relevant to Naruto, he is a subject, not just a representative of his kind or a symbol for human actions.

## Conclusions: The Others crossing borders

“...the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as *I appear* to the Other”. (Sartre 1969, 222.)

Naruto’s self-portrait has now led us from the Sulawesi Jungle to courtrooms, and on to the history of photography, and then to the connection between apes and racism, gender, and othering. I believe that the picture raises very topical questions and crosses borders between “us” and “them”. The art made by animals threatens the uniqueness of human culture and the borders between a human and an animal. It is easier to laugh at the “monkey selfie” and the court case than to question our conceptions about non-human animals and hierarchies that have been presumed to be true.

Naruto’s self-portrait questions a worldview engaged to the human framework and the assurance of human omnipotence compared to other beings, objects and powers, according to Karoliina Lummaa and Lea Rojola (2015, 8). By taking the self-portrait Naruto symbolically refuses to stay as the object and rather appears as a subject in the photograph. The knowledge that the picture of the monkey is taken by the monkey forces a reconsideration of old values. Art and visual culture have the possibility to make visible new and non-hierarchical ways of existing alongside animals.

To conclude, I would like to reverse John Berger’s question: Why should animals look at humans? Pictures like Naruto’s self-portrait, in which the animal individual’s eyes gaze at us, are important reminders in this age of mass extinction and environmental change, that we humans need to look the endangered animal in the eyes and acknowledge the fact that we are responsible for our actions for Others as well.

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## Notes

[1] During the court case David Slater has emphasized his authorship and role in taking the well-known picture. Slater recounts in his webpage how he created the “monkey selfie”. He says he found the macaque monkeys amazingly photogenic due to their very human-like characteristics and was fascinated by their piercing red eyes. In his effort to get good photos he followed a group of monkeys with the help of a local guide in the tropical forests in the far north of Sulawesi. Slater decided to put the camera on a tripod with a wide-angle lens to get pictures of the monkeys’ faces. He then moved away from the camera and the monkeys started fingering the lens and pressing the buttons. They played with the camera and some images were taken. (DJS Photography, n.d.). PETA claims in their Complaint for Copyright Infringement, “The Monkey Selfies resulted from a series of purposeful and voluntary actions by Naruto, unaided by Slater, resulting in original works of authorship not by Slater, but by Naruto”, (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, n.d.). There has also been dispute about the identity of the monkey in the picture and its sex. However, as mentioned above, my objective is not to analyse the court case.

[2] However, as notified by a member of the audience in a human-animal studies conference (Eläintutkimuspäivät, 24–25 April 2017 in Helsinki, Finland) where I presented a very early version of this paper, the expressions of monkeys and humans are not at all identical: what looks like smiling and laughter to us humans might mean fear and/or aggressivity to members of other species.

[3] Other photographs from the same photoshoot, including the one in which the monkey’s arm is visible while taking the photo: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2016/03/15/david-slaters-monkey-selfie-photoshoot—the-unseen-pictures/selfie-of-a-macaque-monkey/>.

[4] Art supplies are offered to a wide variety of species in zoos to keep animals physically and mentally stimulated and to reduce stress levels (Cembalest 2013). At least one scientific study has been conducted on painting by zoo elephants, and the results show that even though the benefits vary from individual to individual, art did not raise the elephants’ well-being (Goldman 2014).

[5] For instance: dance-like movements are a part of birds’ mating display and the birdsong of some birds is harmonic and includes complex overtones (Scarfstein 1988, 38–41).

[6] All translations from Finnish are mine unless stated otherwise.