

Innovative New Museum Focuses on the Human-Animal Bond

Animal History Museum to Open in Burbank, CA

March 21, 2016

Today, the Animal History Museum announces that it will open doors later this Spring to a 5,300+ sq. ft. location at the Burbank Town Center in downtown Burbank, CA., one of the premiere shopping and dining destinations in the Los Angeles area. The newest addition to southern California's museum scene, the Animal History Museum's mission is dedicated to understanding and celebrating the human-animal bond. "Like the way natural history museums explore fossils and science, we'll explore interactions and relationships," says museum founder and Executive Director, Amy Breyer. "People throughout all civilizations have long understood that humans can and do form deep, meaningful relationships across species. For most of recorded history, that relationship has been marginalized. But that's changing. More and more, cultural norms are acknowledging – and laws are starting to catch up to – what many people have known intuitively."

The organization of exhibits is central to the museum's philosophy and makes it unique. Permanent exhibit plans include: the human-animal bond; animals & intelligence; the history of animals throughout society; animals in art, literature, TV & film as well as pop culture; the development of animal welfare, rights & law, plant-based food trends, and animals & religion. Exhibit categories are purposefully structured to recognize that human and (non-human) animal lives are inextricably intertwined. This stands in stark contrast to the way that animals have traditionally have been categorized - by their usefulness (ie: farm, research, wildlife, companion) to humans – which implicitly reinforces the notion of animals as merely a commodity. The Animal History Museum advances the national dialogue about animals because it fundamentally starts the conversation at a point where the animals-as-property paradigm is no longer the framework for the discussion. As nationally renowned animal law attorney and board member Adam Karp notes, "[s]o begins the next era in the chronicling and celebration of nonhuman animals, thanks to the painstaking and loving efforts of its dedicated human curators."

The Animal History Museum will include all kinds of animals, although nowhere is this trend toward recognizing an animal's value clearer than with companion animals. According to the latest APPA industry study, roughly 100 million U.S. households included a companion animal in 2015, and it is estimated that Americans spent some \$61 Billion on their companions last year alone. Nobody spends that kind of money on something they don't care about. Similarly, a recent editorial in the L.A. Times noted that views on wildlife are changing too: "[w]ild animals have their own reasons for existing that have nothing to do with whether they feed or entertain us, or even make us feel good about ourselves. It's not about us. Maybe we're beginning to understand that." Advisory council member and preeminent animal law scholar David Favre observes: "[t]he opening of the Museum is a great event for all who are concerned about how humans treat animals. It is an opportunity to reflect upon the past and contemplate the future. Congratulations."

Formed in May 2011, the all-volunteer nonprofit boasts a roster of board and advisory council members that reads like a Who's Who of animal-related disciplines, with several of the most exciting new LA-area museums mixed in for good measure:

Steven Wise, Esq. – Executive Director of the Nonhuman Rights Project and animal law scholar

Bernie Rollin, PhD. - University Distinguished Professor and a professor of philosophy, biomedical sciences and animal sciences at Colorado State University

Justin Jampol, PhD. - Founder and Executive Director of The Wendt Museum and Archive of the Cold War in Culver City, California

Cynthia Bathurst, PhD. – Co-founder and Executive Director of Safe Humane Chicago

Andrew Linzey, PhD, DD – Founder and Executive Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, University of Oxford, U.K.

Ken Foster – Author of the beloved *I'm a Good Dog: Pit Bulls, America's Most Beautiful (and Misunderstood) Pet*, among others, and director of the Sula Foundation

Diana Reiss, PhD. – Cognitive psychologist and professor, Dept. of Psychology at Hunter College, and the Biopsychology and Behavioral Neuroscience Graduate Program of the City University of New York

David Favre, JD – The Nancy Heathcote Professor of Property and Animal Law at the Michigan State University College of Law

Joseph Connelly – Founder of VegNews Magazine, the premier vegan lifestyle magazine

Stephen Wells – Executive Director of the Animal Legal Defense Fund

Jaclyn Sharp – Founder and CEO of IMPOSTER, one of the leading fashion design firms revolutionizing the cruelty-free fashion industry

Alan Beck, ScD – Director, Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine's Ctr. for the Human-Animal Bond; supervisor, HABRI Central, library-research arm of the Human-Animal Bond Research Initiative

Kim Koga – Executive Director of the Museum of Neon Art, Glendale, CA

Tommy Gelinis – Founder and Executive Director of the Valley Relics Museum

Russ Mead, Esq., of counsel – Vice President and General Counsel for the Animal Law Coalition

Gregory A. Zbylut, Esq., accountant – Certified Tax Specialist, tax and business attorney

Marcy I. LaHart, Secretary, Board of Trustees – animal law attorney

Adam P. Karp, Treasurer, Board of Trustees – animal law attorney

There's more. Contributing academics to just the first exhibit include Wesleyan animal and gender studies scholar Kari Weil, as well as British scholars Robert McKay of the University of Sheffield, U.K. and Claire Molloy, Founder and Co-Director of the Centre for Human-Animal Studies at Edge Hill University, U.K., among others. The exhibit, *Dearest Creature: Stories of the Human-Animal Bond*, is already in development. It's being curated in Texas by historian, author and independent scholar Mary Thurston, and is scheduled to open later this Spring/Summer. As Thurston explains, "despite all the animal-related materials held by [other] museums, their exhibits rarely touched on how nonhumans have participated and even steered the course of human development.... I am excited for the future in our first permanent display space where these kinds of stories can be told through essays, photos, artwork and artifacts."

The museum will be family-friendly, and continue to offer the sort of STEAM-centered children's programs in its new location that it has already been doing for several years at live events. For example, the start-up has already partnered with some of LA's most beloved institutions – from the Skirball Cultural Center in West L.A., to Kidspace Museum in Pasadena, to the Millard Sheets Arts Center at the LA County Fairplex in Pomona – to create fun and stimulating programs that include crafts, story times and other activities about animals from earthworms to whales.

The Animal History Museum also has a vibrant social media community. Active in the social space for several years now, its Facebook community is over 18,000 strong, with several thousand more engaging on Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. The museum also plans to develop various lecture and film series.

While *Dearest Creature* is in development, a series of soft launch events will begin in April:

Fri. April 8th & Sat. 9th 5pm – 9pm

Live from Burbank! The Premier Exhibition Benefiting the Animal History Museum

"Any time an art show involves a life-sized rhinoceros, I think you're off to a good start. This one happens to be completely covered in 1000, one dollar bills," says Los Angeles Fine Art Dealer, Chuck Wolf. Wolf, of The Wolf Fine Art, is curating the Animal History Museum's opening art reception. As Wolf explains, the rhinoceros is the contribution of Funny Zoo co-founder Bernard Scoffie. Scoffie also heads the French foundation 30 Millions d'Amis (30 Million Friends) an animal advocacy group started in 1976 by his family. Also contributing sculpture is Claudi Garzon, working in marine debris plastics, which call attention to the dangers of rising plastic levels in our oceans, and their threat to marine wildlife, like marine mammals, sea birds and Garzon's beloved sea turtles.

Both Wolf and Executive Director Amy Breyer are excited about the show. "We're thrilled that our very first exhibition features a dozen local artists" says Breyer, "and that Chuck, who's as passionate about animals as he is about art, is curating our first soft-launch event."

Wolf notes that these artists are "all working primarily in animal genres dedicated to the promotion and protection of animals from exotic to domestic. One thing the two sculptors, nine painters and a photographer all have in common is their enthusiasm and passion for animals. There will be a lot of large work exhibited with a lot of five and six foot pieces... and a lot of color. This is a contemporary show by local L.A.-based artists, and that flavor is distinct, with lively vibrancy and realism to pop and conceptual styles."

This event is free and open to the public. A portion of the proceeds from all art sales benefits the museum.

Fri. May 13th & Sat. May 14th 5pm – 9pm

Kindred Souls

History records Hippocrates as saying "The soul is the same in all living creatures, although the body of each is different." The sentiment holds just as true today as it did millennia ago, if not more so, as we – both as individuals and as societies - increasingly recognize that the perceptions of the many species with whom we share this planet are not so different from our own.

Curated by North Hollywood fine artist and fine art dealer, Hovik Kochinian, *Kindred Souls* is a collection of modern works that evoke a quiet sense of timeliness. The saturated colors and bold brush strokes that initially draw viewers into these engaging tableaus slowly give way to an unmistakable curiosity, as viewers are invited to wonder from whose point of view is the story being told.

This event is free and open to the public. A portion of the proceeds from all art sales benefits the museum.

Check our Exhibits & Events webpage for updates as events are added.

Mission Statement: The Animal History Museum is the first museum dedicated to understanding and celebrating the human-animal bond. Its purpose is to serve and educate the public through the creation of a museum in Los Angeles County, California, for the collection, preservation and exploration of the history, culture, science and law relating to the relationship between human and non-human animals;

by presenting exhibitions, lectures and other activities that are consistent with, and supportive of, the museum's educational goals and purpose.

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