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On the Cover: Sonya Rapoport, detail of Anasazi Series, Panel 1-A, Page 1 of 12 (1977), Prismacolor and pencil on found pre-printed perforated continuous feed computer printout paper. Courtesy Estate of Sonya Rapoport.

This Page: Alex Dodge, detail of Whisper in my ear and tell me softly (2018), oil on linen. Courtesy the artist and Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery, NY.

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Installation view of Tacita Dean and Julie Mehretu "Monotype Melody (Ninety Works for Marian Goodman)" (2018) at Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris. 45 framed found postcards with printer ink and 45 framed monotypes with printer ink and occasional acrylic, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris, London. Copyright Tacita Dean & Julie Mehretu. Photo: Rebecca Fanuele.

work for the Goodman show. Working swiftly on two Plexiglas plates at a time, she experimented with printer's ink, acrylic and airbrush to build a language of gestures with whatever objects Burnet "threw at her." Hand and body were used to produce generous works that display her fierce, flying marks—each took an average of 15 minutes to draw.¹ This speed of execution left no room for dwelling; her swiped and scumbled marks jump off the paper almost audibly. The compositions suggest a camera zooming in on details of the huge, vortical constructions for which she is known. But here she works economically, in works stripped of color that might distract from form.²

It was Dean who introduced Goodman and Mehretu in 2010. The inventive installation of "Monotype Melody" is testament to Dean and Mehretu's working partnership (Dean had produced *GDGDA*, a diptych film about Mehretu, in 2011). The two artists hung the 90 monotypes irregularly around the walls like notes dotted on a musical score, leading to a looped reading that ignored the break-points of entrance and corners. Dean's little postcards held the eye level, leaving

the upper and lower wall for Mehretu's graphically bolder works. Formal and art historical references played against one another: color pitted against monochrome, abstraction against photorealism, in a counterpoint of disparate styles that looked effortless and harmonious. Mehretu's marks may describe nothing—she studies what mark-making is in itself—but her monotypes imply postcards from emotional vista points, mental landscapes that evoke the shifting and contradictory intimations of volume on a flat surface, a pictorial and personal dialogue shared with Dean's reworked vintage postcards.³

As you entered or departed the exhibition, two Polaroid photos framed together and hung opposite the front desk were easy to miss. These photos, self-portraits taken accidentally by the artists at different moments of their lives when on holiday with their children—Dean looms large in shadow, only the edge of Mehretu's head is glimpsed—capture the importance of chance encounters and real exchanges in this exhibition. They were the images chosen for the invitation card. ■

Kate McCrickard is an artist and writer based in Paris.

Notes:

1. Telephone conversation with Greg Burnet, July 2018.
2. Mehretu found that inks sprayed with an airbrush onto the plate showed little transformation when run through the press, so airbrush marks were added after printing.
3. Concurrent with the "Monotype Melody" in the lower-floor gallery, the ground-floor space held an exhibition of nine paintings of eclipses by Dean, and a 90 x 180 inch ink and acrylic painting by Mehretu, *A Love Supreme*.

EXHIBITION REVIEW

Sue Coe's Brute Forces

By Re'al Christian

"Sue Coe: Graphic Resistance"
MoMA / PS1, Queens, NY
3 June – 9 September 2018

Sue Coe: The Ghosts of Our Meat
By Stephen F. Eisenman
118 pages, 119 illustrated in color
The Trout Gallery
Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA
\$19.95

The Animals' Vegan Manifesto
By Sue Coe
120 pages, illustrated in black and white
OR Books, New York, NY, 2017
\$17.00

Once I saw the village butcher slice the neck of a bird and drain the blood out of it. I wanted to cry out, but his joyful expression caught the sound in my throat. This cry, I always feel it there . . . When I painted the beef carcass it was still this cry that I wanted to liberate. I have still not succeeded.
—Chaim Soutine¹

From an early age, Sue Coe has had a complicated relationship with meat. Growing up near a slaughterhouse in Liverpool, close enough to hear and smell its animal tenants, she became an animal activist and staunch vegan.² It is no wonder, then, that she would be drawn to the vibrant, visceral paintings of Chaim Soutine (1893–1943), with their expressive, even empathetic depictions of animal carcasses. Coe has often cited Soutine as an inspiration, not for his painterly style, but for the intensity of his work and his understanding of the sacrificial nature of animal slaughter.³ Soutine's account of witnessing a butcher's delight in killing a chicken had a profound effect on Coe. Soutine described the silencing effect it had on him as a child, resulting in a cry of outrage that he spent the rest of his life attempting to utter. That feeling of stifled rage, curiosity and confusion is the driving force behind Coe's work. She reckons



Sue Coe, *It Got Away From Them* (1990), graphite, watercolor and gouache on board, 40 1/8 x 30 inches. Copyright © Sue Coe, Courtesy Galerie St. Etienne, New York.

with cruelty and struggles to reconcile a gut instinct to protect all life with acts of so-called justified violence.

A recent show at MoMA PS1 explored the artist's fight against animal cruelty, as well as social injustice, exploitation and other abuses of power through her prints, newspaper illustrations, drawings, paintings, and collages.

Coe once quipped, "if people are annihilated, it's a win for the animals."⁴ For her, animals are inherently innocent: they do not kill for sport or vengeance, but for survival. Humans, on the other hand, have institutionalized killing. In the 1990s, Coe began making antiwar art, focusing on ordinary citizens trapped in the crossfire. While depictions of mili-

tary conflict often demonstrate chaos and violence, works such as *War* (1991) focus on faceless mechanized violence. Created during the Gulf War, it shows a lone woman in the foreground backed by a sea of soldiers in gas masks; above a blood-red horizon, fighter jets swarm. The woman hides her face, but the subtle tension in the tendons of her hand, the wrinkle of flesh on her forehead, the crescent of shadow on her left cheek, and the shroud of black gouache that envelops her frame all separate her from the horde that surrounds her. *War* is inherently chaotic, but in this representation it is seen as an organized, unstoppable force.

An implicit dynamic between the powerful and the overpowered unites Coe's antiwar work with her animal activism, clearly visible in her best-known series,

Porkopolis. Created between 1986–1995, these drawings, paintings, collages, and prints derive from her documentation of slaughterhouses (she would visit these spaces armed with a sketchbook, as she was often banned from taking photographs). The scenes depicted in these works are deeply unnerving, harrowing reports of the retrograde conditions animals are kept in before being butchered. *Dog Food* (1988), drawn in graphite and watercolor on board, focuses on a stack of partially flayed animal carcasses lying at the bottom of a chute, immersed in a sanguineous dark liquid. The inscription provides context: "They used a mallet because it was cheaper, 8,000 cattle a day, \$8 an hour, Arizona is a 'Right to Work' state. Shift starts at 4 am . . . the stupidest cow knows fear and death."

Coe attributes this information to one of the "mallet workers," three of whom appear in the piece. The drawing *Scalding Tank* (1988) depicts six workers—ghostly and grotesque—surrounding the titular apparatus, submerging animal carcasses in a steaming bath. Describing her mixed-media painting, *Slaughterhouse Tucson* (1989), Coe wrote:

The process is concealed. Animal flesh is a commodity, along with soda pop, toilet bowl cleaner, and Wonderbread. But watch the animal bleeding into the drain. Watch it go still. Workers drag the corpse up and heave it onto a table. Listen to the sharpening of knives . . . One moment the animal is alive, looking trusting and helpless. The next moment, that animal is in pieces in old barrels.

Through noir imagery and sensitive attention to detail, these works elicit empathy not just for the animals but also for the workers. They may not have been innocent bystanders like the woman in *War*, but, as Coe discovered, many were undocumented laborers, traumatized by the conditions in which they worked, who held themselves accountable for the animals' suffering.

It Got Away From Them (1990) depicts an animal-testing lab. Our focus is immediately drawn to the cow and calf sequestered in a "glovebox"—a sealed glass enclosure fitted with rubber-gloved portholes through which technicians can handle the animals. Overhead a syringe dangles and a nozzle pumps gas into the chamber. Just outside the enclosure, a small pig lies on the floor, its haunch (like those of the cattle) marked by a vibrant red "X." In the background a man reaches into the glovebox while another observes through a window. Another figure in the foreground, wearing thick gloves and a robot-like mask and cap marked "GENOTEK," stands at a table scattered with severed heads of small animals. He looks back over his right shoulder with tools in his hands, presumably eyeing the pig. The men wear clean lab coats, shiny shoes, and neatly knotted ties that seem out of place with their gruesome setting and actions.

While often somber in tone, there is a dry humor to some of Coe's work. The scenes she depicts are often surreal, or even bizarre, but thoughtful in their treatment of each character. A



Installation view of "Sue Coe: Graphic Resistance" on view at MoMA PS1 through 3 September 2018. Image courtesy MoMA PS1. Photo by Matthew Septimus.

quintessential example is *The Animals' Vegan Manifesto* (2016–2017), a series of black-and-white linocuts illustrating an Orwellian dystopia in which animals revolt against their human captors. The manifesto, ostensibly written by those "of fur, fin and feather," examines commonplace practices—factory farming, animal testing, arbitrary killing—from the animals' perspective. The verdict is simple: these are acts of terror that will come back to haunt humanity. Some of the animals become radicalized: in *Pig Breaks Out of Chains* (2016) the titular hog stands triumphant above a sounder of pigs, a radiant aura surrounding him. Other animals have taken on the qualities of their former captors, for better or worse. *Boucherie Humaine* ("Humane" Butchery) depicts a bipedal pig and piglet gazing on the decapitated remains of various animals, including swine, in a butcher shop window. The composition of the scene, with the piglet attempting to pull away as its elder remains transfixed, speaks to something both haunting and familiar: in taking on human qualities, the

animals in this post-apocalyptic reality have become complicit in the same acts of quotidian atrocity as the "2 leggeds"⁵ they once abhorred. They have adopted language and culture, but also complacency and ambivalence. Coe wants us to ponder what other vices of mankind the so-called evolved animals will take on.

The horrors she depicts demand awareness of how we treat animals—all animals—not just the ones we domesticate. But she is no longer necessarily telling us anything we don't know. By now most slaughterhouses are understood to be synonymous with torture. So with all our awareness of the atrocities of factory farming and slaughterhouses, why do we continue to eat animals? Coe leaves us to digest that hypocrisy, but even in her animal-run, vegan utopia there is disruption and social imbalance. The broader ethical question she asks us to ponder does not have an easy answer. Why are some lives valued over others—humans over animals, some humans over other humans? Coe's vegan propaganda may appear unrealistic as a political tool, but

her slaughterhouses illuminate a core message: violence, unchecked aggression, and abuses of power come to some of us as naturally as eating meat. ■

Re'al Christian is a New York City-based writer.

Notes:

1. Stanley Meisler, *Shocking Paris: Soutine, Chagall and the Outsiders of Montparnasse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 91.
2. "All Good Art is Political: Käthe Kollwitz and Sue Coe." Galerie St. Etienne. <https://gseart.com/exhibitions-essay/1091> (accessed 1 August 2018).
3. Sue Coe, "Artist Lecture." Summer Open House at MoMA PS1, New York, NY, 3 June 2018.
4. Ibid.
5. Sue Coe, *The Animals' Vegan Manifesto* (New York: OR Books, 2017), 119.



Sue Coe, *War* (1991), graphite and gouache on board. 22 5/8 x 18 1/2 inches. Copyright ©1991 Sue Coe. Private collection. Courtesy Galerie St. Etienne, New York.