

HENRY HORENSTEIN

# ANIMALIA

@SOUTHEAST MUSEUM of PHOTOGRAPHY, Daytona Beach

*10.16.15 - 02.07.16*

*www.smponline.org*



# Animalia,

a new exhibition opening October 16, 2015, at Southeast Museum of Photography in Daytona Beach, presents an elegant and engaging collection of the best of noted photographer Henry Horenstein's images of aquatic and terrestrial creatures. Described variously as evocative, mysterious, romantic, surprising, and weird, Horenstein's abstract images allow the viewer see otherwise familiar animals in a new and different light. The exhibition runs through February 7, 2016.

The rich sepia-toned prints that comprise *Animalia* represent Horenstein's distinct exploration of animal portraiture. Drawing on elements of his strong documentary background, Horenstein offers no cuddly, sentimental moments. Instead, deconstructing his subjects into ambiguous fragments of skin, scales and hair, Horenstein challenges our anticipated ways

of seeing, inviting us to pause, look closely, and think about what is in front of us. In doing so, he engages our curiosity and draws us into careful consideration of his subjects. By encouraging the viewer to really look, Horenstein's abstracted images become more truly representative than traditional animal photographs.

In her introduction to *Animalia*, Elisabeth Werby, executive

Previous spread:

*White-cheeked Spider Monkey—  
Ateles marginatus.*

Left: *Sea Pen Coral—*

*Cnidaria anthozoa alcyonaria.*

All images © Henry Horenstein.

director of the Harvard Museum of Natural History, wrote: “Horenstein’s creatures are decontextualized. They appear without the backdrop of the natural landscape, outside even the artificial world of the zoo or aquarium, and devoid of their true color. As a consequence,

the images are truly arresting; and in both a literal and a metaphorical sense, we see these animals as we have never seen them before. We notice details, and Horenstein focuses our vision on the unexpected: the foot of an elephant, the eye of an octopus, the hair on the back

of a gibbon’s head, the pattern of feathers on a bird’s neck. He plays with scale: the rear end and tail of a rhinoceros occupy the entire picture frame. We see these as if through a magnifying glass. His pictures challenge us to look more closely, to ask questions and make con-

nections. We think about form and function: the relationship between an elephant’s foot, a horse’s hoof, and our own toes. We ponder modes of sensing and communication: the signals that hold together a school of fish. Examining these photographs, we become scientists

and discoverers...The combination of the scientific and the metaphorical, the artistic and the analytical in these images is what accounts for their extraordinary power.”

“Though most photographers are driven to find a new vision, even the best fail more

“Examining these photographs,  
we become scientists and  
discoverers.”

—E. WERBY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
HARVARD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

*Domestic Pig—Sus scrofa domestica.*

Following spread:  
*Brown Sea Nettles—Chrysaora fuscescens.*



Above:  
Indian Peafowl—*Pavo cristatus*.

Right:  
African Grey Parrot—*Psittacus erithacus*.



Henry Horenstein;  
Courtesy of the artist.

often than they succeed,” said writer, Owen Edwards. “In [these images], Horenstein has succeeded to a dazzling degree, evading the abundant clichés of animal photography at every turn.”

“I am a photographer, not a naturalist,” Horenstein wrote in his artist statement. “My teachers were legendary artists Harry Callahan, Aaron Siskind, and Minor White. What they taught me was the value of traditional artistic concerns, such as good composition, interesting light, and compelling sub-

ject matter. The photographs shown here were made from 1995-2001. When I started this series, I was a bit insecure. So many great (and not so great) artists had tackled such subjects since the beginning of time. How could I add to this daunting history. One thing I did not want to do was simply document my animals, so I chose not to shoot in color and not to show their environment. Rather, I choose to look closely and abstractly—to see my subjects for their inherent beauty, oddness, mystery. For this, I shot

often with macro lenses, so I could get close, and worked with grainy, black-and-white films, printed in sepia, hoping to give them an old school, timeless feel. I worked in zoos and aquariums, not in the wild or underwater. This meant I could almost always find my subjects; they couldn’t get too far away. The other advantage was that I could isolate and freeze them in a constrained space, almost as though they were models, posing for me in a studio. Photographing animals is very different from photographing people. You can’t tell an elephant where to stand, and you can’t ask a skate to smile or a lizard to say “cheese.” Instead, you must be very patient and wait, hoping your subject will do what you want it to do, or maybe something else unexpected that might make a good picture. When animals do cooperate, you have to be ready, because most won’t stay in one position long. You have only a few seconds, and often less, to get your shot. As I watch and wait, I listen to other zoo visitors discuss the animals in human terms.

“I believe animals are their very own creatures, with unique, often surprising and altogether amazing characteristics.”

—H. HORENSTEIN







“Look at that,” they say. “He’s smiling at us.” Or, “Poor thing, she’s bored.” Or, “doesn’t that monkey look like Uncle Ike?” In some ways, animals do resemble humans, no doubt. After all, they are our forebearers. Still, I believe animals are their very own creatures, with unique, often surprising and altogether amazing characteristics. And that’s what I’ve tried to capture in these pictures.”

Henry Horenstein has been a professional photographer, teacher, and author since the 1970s. He studied history at the University of Chicago and earned his BFA and MFA

*Beluga Whale—  
Delphinapterus leucas.*

*Inset: Texas Map Turtle—  
Graptemys versa.*



Above (left to right):  
Bullnose Ray—*Myliobatis freminvillii*;  
Cownose Ray—*Rhinoptera bonasus*.

at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD).

Horenstein's work has been exhibited in galleries and museums both nationally and internationally, including the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, Washington, DC; the International Muse-

um of Photography, George Eastman House, Rochester, NY; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Photographs by Henry Horenstein can be found in many public and private collections, including the Library of Congress; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the High Museum of

Art in Atlanta, GA.

He has published over 30 books, including *Black & White Photography: A Basic Manual*, and *Digital Photography: A Basic Manual*, used by hundreds of thousands of college, university, high school, and art school students as their introduction to photography.

He has also published several monographs of his own work, including *Show, Honky Tonk, Animalia, Humans, Racing Days, Close Relations*, and many others. Horenstein currently lives in Boston and is a professor of photography at the Rhode Island School of Design. **ON VIEW**