



Beluga Whale - *Delphinapterus leucas*, from the series "Animalia / Creatures"

Date

1995-2001

Primary Maker

Henry Horenstein

Medium

Cibachrome

Description

Henry Horenstein's Animalia series features extraordinary sepia images of animals, including this photograph of a seemingly beatific beluga whale. Horenstein intentionally focused on the animal itself, working with macro lenses and close-up filters, minimizing any sense of a surrounding habitat and printing in monochrome to emphasize the beauty and strangeness of the creature depicted. As wildlife and amateur photographers know, capturing a great image of an animal, particularly in the wild, can be challenging. According to Horenstein, he "took the path of least resistance and shot only in zoos and aquariums." He humorously notes that he appreciated the creature comforts of "a food court, bathrooms, and WiFi," but most importantly these institutions gave

him relatively close, easy access to animals. In the introduction to his book *Animalia* (2008) Horenstein wrote, "As subjects, animals are close to perfect for a photographer, especially if they live in zoos and aquariums. If it rains, or if the light is against you, you can come back the next day. Your subjects can't go far. ... Miss the shot? They will swim back your way if you're just patient." Modern Western zoological institutions tend to emphasize education, conservation, and the protection of endangered species. Nevertheless, debates continue regarding the ethics of keeping wild animals in captivity for public display. Animals have been captured and collected for exhibition since ancient times, and the title of this exhibition references the private menageries kept by wealthy individuals to demonstrate their power and sophistication. Contemporary zoos and aquariums are the descendants of the modern zoological parks and gardens that emerged in Europe in the late eighteenth century, and became increasingly popular through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. For most, they remain the only places where one might have a close encounter with rare and exotic creatures and be able to witness their behavior first-hand. In the past, circuses also enabled the public to see lions, tigers, elephants, and other unusual creatures, but modern Western circuses tend to no longer feature animals. Debates around the morals and ethics underlying zoological institutions will undoubtedly continue, with standards of animal welfare remaining a serious issue.

Dimensions

Image: 19 1/2 x 13 1/4 in. (49.5 x 33.7 cm) Sheet: 20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)