

## Artist Statement, Claire Owen

For the past fifteen years I have been painting in a figurative manner, developing ideas related to my work in the book arts. The primary theme I am exploring is that of human's relation to the animal world, as it has been interpreted through myth, fairy tale and children's literature. I am also interested in referencing Jung's ideas of the Animal as an aspect of the self, and the Child as a figure of the preconscious self, not yet integrated into the human awareness.

The work often uses a specific character, a single girl-child, who is shown in a series of interactions with animals, animal masks, or toy animal figures. The images may be seen as fragments of the child's dreams, or fairy tales, wherein animals talk, play, weep, and kill. In this exhibit the setting is specifically rendered as an interior space, one that may reference a specific time from memory. One image is framed, and shown apart. This figure is that of a woman; perhaps the grown child whose memories are recorded.

Animals may appear in the culture of childhood as wide-eyed cartoons and toys, but the creatures that inhabit these images, even in play, have both teeth and claw. The girl herself is neither hapless victim of her four-legged companions, nor the sweet-faced playmate that reassures us of nature's goodness.

Stylistically my use of bright, unmixed color with crisp detail has been influenced by my study of early book illustration especially fifteenth century books of hours. My intention is to present aspects of traditional pictorial illustration, as it may exist outside of the medium of an illustrated storybook. I have also been influenced by the painting of Edward Hopper, and Freda Kahlo, and the writing of Angela Carter, Ron Hansen and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Claire Owen is known for her limited edition artist's books, and has exhibited books and paintings nationally. She is co-founder of Turtle Island Press, a private press specializing in the production of visual artists books. Her work is represented in many public collections including: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, The Library of Congress, and Harvard University. She has been awarded travel grants to the Peoples' Republic of China, and Wales. She has been a guest artist/lecturer in universities, most recently to give the Goudy Lecture at Scripps College in Claremont, CA. She is originally from Rochester, New York and received her BFA and MFA from Rochester Institute of Technology. She currently teaches at Drexel University and Philadelphia University.