

The Fear of Leaving the Animal Forever Forgotten under the Ground

Single-channel video, stereo sound, 12 min, 2021

by Janis Rafa

Janis Rafa's new film, *The Fear of Leaving the Animal Forever Forgotten under the Ground*, has a nightmarish claustrophobic atmosphere engendered by a fictional underworld occupied by animals where the human presence is only suggested. Her strong and visually overwhelming new short film makes a subtle reference to Beuys's early years in World War II and his traumatic life, as well as to his influential performance *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), for which Beuys shared a solitary space with a coyote for three days. The cinematographic gaze alternates between the human and the animal points of view, since the camera takes turns shifting between the position of the man and that of the dogs, while at the same time switching between the winning and defeated subject.

The untamed spirit of the dogs is juxtaposed with the enigmatic, controversial, and unseen human figure, while their confinement, depicted in this neglected post-apocalyptic location, evokes contradictory feelings, thoughts, and notions in which one can identify opposites: bestial versus human, perpetrator versus victim, hunter versus prey, submission versus power, cruelty versus compassion, wild and free versus enclosed, realistic versus mystical, and cryptic versus exposed.