



FEATURE

Animalograms: Photograms of Animals Made in the Wild

To create these amazing life-size photograms of animals in the wild, photographer Zana Briski waits patiently for an animal to pass by on moonless nights in places where she has installed huge sheets of light-sensitive photographic paper.

Photographs and text by Zana Briski



I am enraptured by the earth and her creatures. I have spent the past 30 years traveling alone to remote wild places to photograph creatures from the smallest insect to the largest whale. My animal encounters leave me in a state of wonder and awe. It is this reverence I wish to transmit to others through my artwork.



Bearogram #3, 2019. Unique life-sized photogram of a wild black bear made in the forests of New York, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 60" x 90" © Zana Briski +



I have typically used 35mm black and white film in traditional Leica macro and Widelux panoramic cameras. I make unique prints on custom handmade Japanese papers. My process is difficult and hard-won and I work this way to honor the animals who give me their attention and who may be the last of their kind.



Civetogram #1, 2019. Unique life-sized photogram of wild Malayan civet made in the jungles of Borneo, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 40" x 60" © Zana Briski +

In the past few years, I have abandoned the camera altogether to get as close as possible to the animals I so love. From the jungles of Borneo to the forests of upstate New York, I collaborate with wild animals to make unique photograms—photographs made without a camera. As far as I know, this has never been done before.

Working patiently on moonless nights, I set up huge sheets of light-sensitive photographic paper. When I am working with American black bears, these sheets are eight feet in length. Once the paper is in position, I sit in the dark and wait for an animal to pass by. Sometimes I wait night after night. I do not use a hide and I am in full view of the animal. This takes tremendous trust, openness and stillness.



Bearogram #17, 2020. Unique life-sized photogram of wild black bears made in the forests of New York, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 60" x 90" © Zana Briski +

When an animal appears, I am in awe. I make a quick exposure with a small hand-held flash. This is so minimal that it goes unnoticed. After the animal disappears into the forest, I collect the paper, store it in a lightproof box and later develop the photographic print in a traditional chemical darkroom. The photograms—or Animalograms as I call them—are then toned with pure gold, both to affect the coloration of the print and to ensure its archival stability.

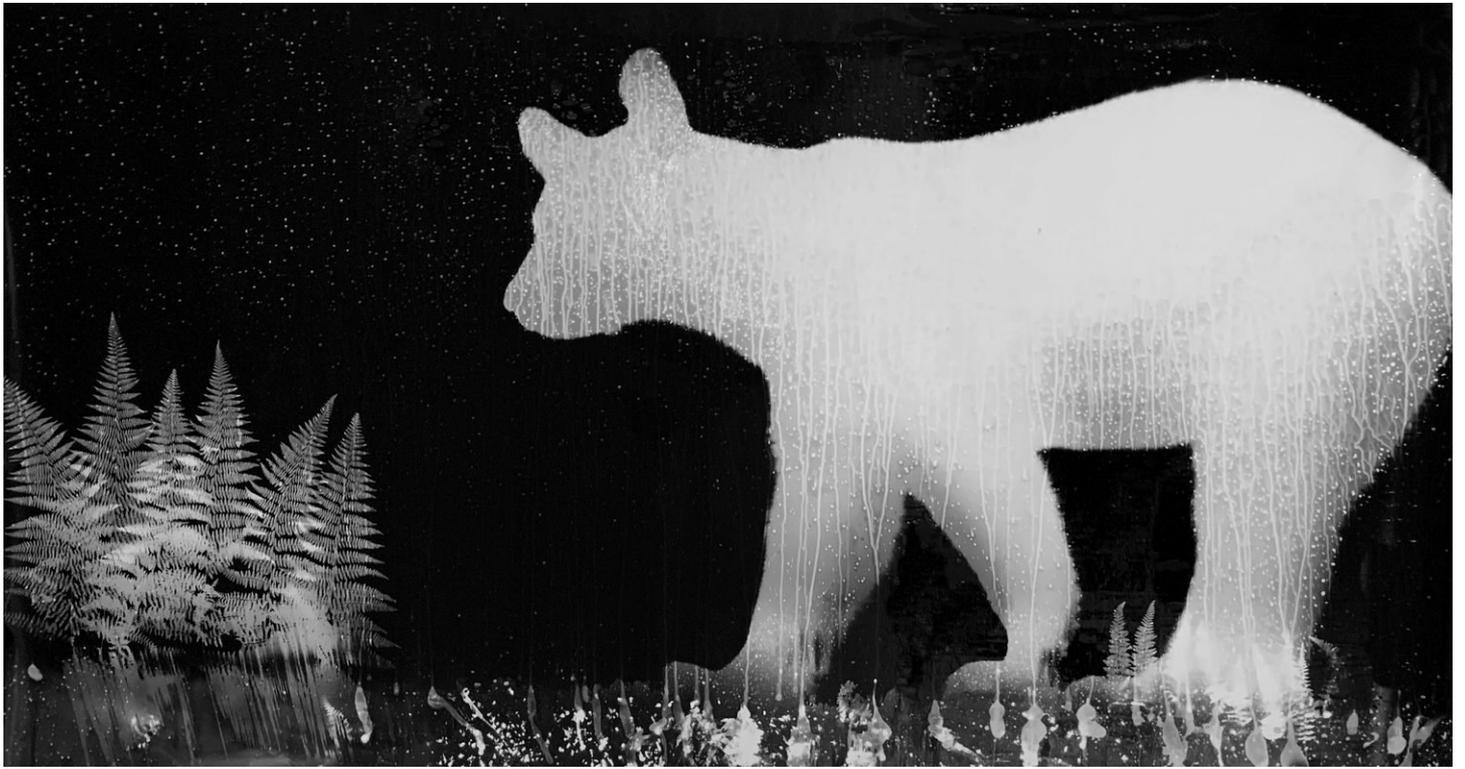
The results are unique and magical photographic artworks, each a life-sized direct impression of a wild animal onto photographic paper. A ghostly gift which reflects the fragility and majesty of the natural world.

— Zana Briski

*Editor's note: This work is one of the winners of the **LensCulture Critics' Choice Awards 2023** (<https://www.lensculture.com/2023-lensculture-critics-choice-award-winners>). Discover much more amazing and inspiring work by all of this year's winners (<https://www.lensculture.com/2023-lensculture-critics-choice-award-winners>).*



Bearogram #4, 2019. Unique life-sized photogram of a wild black bear made in the forests of New York, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 90" x 60" © Zana Briski +



Bearogram #5, 2019. Unique life-sized photogram of a wild black bear made in the forests of New York, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 60" x 90" © Zana Briski





Bearogram #18, 2020. Unique life-sized photogram of a wild black bear made in the forests of New York, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 90" x 60" © Zana Briski +



Coatiogram #1, 2020. Unique life-sized photogram of wild coatimundi made in the mountains of Arizona, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 40" x 60" © Zana Briski +



Raccoonogram #1, 2020. Unique life-sized photogram of wild raccoon made in the mountains of Arizona, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 40" x 60" © Zana Briski +



Ringtailogram #2, 2020. Unique life-sized photogram of wild ringtail made in the mountains of Arizona, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 40" x 60" © Zana Briski +



Praying Mantis, 2016. Unique life-sized photogram of a praying mantis made in the jungles of Borneo, silver gelatin photographic paper, gold-toned, 8" x 10" © Zana Briski



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Women Shaping Photography Today — 19 Artists to Discover

LensCulture Editors

To celebrate Women's History Month, we are highlighting a selection of women who inspire us through their photography and artistic vision.

(</articles/lensculture-editors-women-shaping-photography-today-19-artists-to-discover>)



Too Many Products Too Much Pressure

JANET DELANEY

Returning to one of her first projects, Janet Delaney presents a witty, warm-hearted look at labor and love, through the last days of her father's career as a salesman.

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Using the Darkroom as a Space of Abstraction, Peace—and Protest

FRANK LOPEZ



Using the chemical reactions at the heart of analog photography, Frank Lopez creates abstract prints that respond to grief, belief, and social injustice—turning the darkroom into a space of...

(</articles/frank-lopez-using-the-darkroom-as-a-space-of-abstraction-peace-and-protest>)



Eye of the Storm: Portraits of Weather and Reckoning

CAMILLE SEAMAN



Shortlisted for the "Storm" cycle of the Prix Pictet, Camille Seaman reflects on chasing supercells and icebergs, and the power of photography, as she documents fleeting reality.

(</articles/camille-seaman-eye-of-the-storm-portraits-of-weather-and-reckoning>)



Beyond the Decisive Moment: "Dislocated Presences" Rethinks Street Photography

DAVID MASOKO

Training his camera on in-between moments and gestures, David Masoko's tender take on street photography explores the tensions between visibility and privacy in an image-saturated world.

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