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ArtReview

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DREAM,
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COUNT?



Venice Biennale

6.50



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Patrick Goddard *Pedigree*

Seventeen Gallery, London 4 March – 16 April

To watch *Animal Antics*, the 2021 film that forms the centrepiece of Patrick Goddard's exhibition, viewers have to find themselves a seat in an installation-cum-viewing enclosure constructed of straw, logs and metal caging in the backroom of Dalston's Seventeen Gallery. Huddled in this darkened animal enclosure, they find their situation reflected in the onscreen action, where talking-dog Whoopsie, a pedigree Bichon Frise, visits a zoo with her owner, Sarah, sometime in a near future where Florida is flooded and the 'wild' has ceased to exist.

Providing a sharp tonal contrast to the film's wistful black-and-white footage of animals in captivity, Sarah and Whoopsie's debates offer a barbed and very funny commentary on a series of related topics – including extinction, animal consciousness and the resonances between

speciesism and xenophobia. A furry fascist, Whoopsie continually argues that her pedigree as an English-speaking animal separates her from the other species she mocks in their enclosures. But nestled among the straw of their own zoo, viewers are not permitted to distance themselves from other animals. They are situated as part of a constructed environment where there is no 'outside' left, a model Anthropocene where human and nonhuman life is terminally entangled.

Such lurking awareness of the ways ecological systems confound human attempts to control or even conceptualise them echoes throughout the show's other pieces. It's most striking in the large installation *Plague (Downpour)* (2022), where 200 unique lead-cast frogs tumble down a wall. This storm of

contorted amphibians draws in a whorl of references that augment Whoopsie's musings: frogs as the biblical plague visited upon Egypt as punishment for enslaving Israelites; as markers of the swarms of invasive species and novel zoonotic diseases engendered by anthropogenic habitat change; as vulnerable bodies that, like humans, are susceptible to the toxic lead that seeps into their bodies from decaying infrastructure.

This is one of the heavy-metal chords of apocalypticism humming below Goddard's playful animal capers. He presents plagues as the counterpoint to pedigrees: they are the resurgent force of modified-but-untamed ecosystems striking back against any misplaced sense of a superior cultural or biological inheritance. *Samuel Solnick*



Animal Antics, 2021, single-channel 4K video with 5.1 sound, 37 min 54 sec.
Courtesy Seventeen Gallery, London