



The Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in World Art

By Hope B. Werness

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The famous animal tale of the six blind men and the elephant, in which each of the blind men describes the elephant differently, depending on the part of the creature touched, has been interpreted in ways nearly as varied as the blind men's descriptions. In each of these various interpretations, the story demonstrates the use of animal metaphors to express important issues. As Claude Levy-Strauss famously said: "animals are good to think." The focus of the encyclopedia is on animals and their symbolism in diverse world cultures and in different eras of human history. Most entries on particular animals begin with brief zoological information, which includes the animal's scientific name and classification as well as its range, habitat, and behavior. Main, general entries on cultural, chronological and geographical areas include cross-references to specific cultures discussed in greater detail. Other broader entries address the significance of animals in their own environments (e.g., architecture of animals, tools used by animals), and still others deal with animals in the human sphere (e.g., pet animals, zoo). The ways that people think about animals and what people do to and with animals as a result are discussed in more theoretical entries, such as anomalous animal and complimentary duality. Some entries deal with the ways in which animals are depicted (composition, X-ray images). The work concludes with a Bibliography, and Index of Names, and an Appendix of Animal Taxonomy.

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"... international in scope...Overall, entries are evocative and illustrative rather than exhaustive. Virtually every page has at least one black and white drawing. At the end are a useful bibliography and an index of persons that indicates main entries in capitals. Affordably priced this volume finds a niche only partially filled by such guides as Marvin Shaw and Richard Warren's *A Viewer's Guide to Art: A Glossary of Gods, People and Creatures* (1991) Recommended. All levels." – Choice 9/04 (G.M. Herrmann *Organ Australia*)

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"Hope Werness's encyclopedia is a welcome addition to the study of animal symbolism in art.... The work is highly recommended for all academic and public libraries, and for special collections. It will also be a valuable individual purchase for all scholars who are interested in animal symbolism." - ARBA online (American Reference Books Annual), Vol. 36, 2005 (*American Reference Books Annual*)

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About the Author

Hope D. Werness is professor of art at California State University, Stanislaus. An art historian specializing in tribal, Pre-Columbian, and 19th and 20th European art, she is also a practicing artist, working in ceramics. She is the author of *The Symbolism of Mirrors in Art from Ancient Times to the Present*.

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