

**Media Release**  
June 1, 2000

## Gallery



June 17 – July 30

### FAUNA SECRETA

JOAN FONTCUBERTA AND PERE FORMIGUERA

We live in a world where biotechnologies offer the possibility of altering life forms to suit specific circumstances, creating new, extraordinary, living creatures. This mix of idea and form, fantasy and reality, has been around forever, though in a less clinically determined way. Satyrs and nymphs, gods and monsters have always danced around the edges of our picture of the world.

*Fauna Secreta* is an exhibition that adopts the characteristic appearance of a dusty nineteenth century zoology and natural science museum, presenting photographs, radiographs, outdoor sketches, maps, recorded sounds, and more, as evidence of the permeable lines between fantasy and everyday life, "evidence" and fiction. It purports to represent the work Dr. Ameisenhaufen who had died in a car crash in 1955. The Doctor's discoveries provoked great controversy during his time. *Solenoglypha Polipodida* is a snake-like creature with twelve feet that can paralyze its prey with a high-pitched whistle. There are the teeth fragments of a male griffin. The photographs attest to the existence of these creatures in the realm of the ordinary, alongside the image of Aunt Maria, from Dortmund, feeding her goat. *Fauna Secreta* explores ideas of scientific truth and the 'objectivity' of photographic enquiry.

Spanish artist Joan Fontcuberta's artistic and theoretical activities focus on issues of truth, representation, knowledge, memory, science, ambiguity and appearance. In 1993 the I.V.A.M. museum released the most comprehensive publication of his work, *Historia Artificial*. He is author or editor of a dozen books on aspects on the history, aesthetics and pedagogy in photography. In 1988 he received the *David Octavious Hill Medal*, awarded by the Fotografisches Akademie GDL in Germany to acknowledge his significant career in photography. In 1998 he was awarded the *National Prize in Photography* given by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. Fontcuberta was the artistic director for the International Photography Festival in Arles in 1996.

*Fauna Secreta* is curated by Sylvain Campeau and circulated by Occurrence, Montreal. It previously toured internationally to galleries and museums including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Museum of National Science in Barcelona. The show is accompanied by a comprehensive book on the *Fauna Secreta* project, published by Photovision in 1999. The book will be available in the Gallery Bookstore.

**On Saturday July 29<sup>th</sup>, at 2 pm, Joan Fontcuberta will give a talk about this astonishing project at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Granville Island Lecture Theatre, Room 328, South Building. Free and open to all. The Gallery would like to thank ECIAD, School of Media Arts for their support of the artist's talk.**

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Operated by the British Columbia Photography and Media Arts Society