

WORDS

I often hear it said and see it written that language distinguishes humans from animals: forms of communication allow every human generation to achieve more than the last. The abridged idea explains that humans are capable of utilising systems of communication for self-expression, the exchange of ideas and organisation more than any other creature. It states that language is unique to humans – a defining feature of humanity.

I'm not so sure that we're the greatest communicators on this planet. Perhaps it has been the politics and international affairs of the last year, my new-born son or my quiet work painting that has made me think that human modes of communication represent an effort to counter our epic inability to exchange information well.

All animals talk. All animals talk perfectly. They speak with their bodies, with sound and with scent. They observe and listen perfectly. There is nothing that an animal wishes to say that it can't say. What is more, animals are stonkingly intelligent with it. It's a strange ego that pokes an ant hill with a stick, smokes a beehive, takes time to watch the flocking of birds and wonders how such simple creatures can achieve such perfect systems. Animals can do these things because they are searingly clever, have tremendous memories and communicate perfectly. No one can look into the eyes of an ape and not see an extremely smart brain at work. Cleverer men than I say that animals live in a state that reflects an original perfection.

I'd actually suggest that humans are officially the worst of all communicators. Our languages have lost a whole host of 'certain somethings'.

All animals but humans talk perfectly. Humans have developed many modes of articulating themselves simply because we can never say what we mean, our memories are imperfect, our intentions mangled. Everything humans need to say we cannot say. We try to explain with sound: our voices and anything we can hit, stroke or blow. We try to speak with our bodies – we build vast edifices to host the telling of stories in dance and movement – but remain fleetingly eloquent even in the most intimate of circumstances. Our sense of smell is so debased and neglected that we have only similes to describe our most basic experiences of it. We try to communicate by

making marks: the language of number, the language of letters, the language of letters to explain numbers (as in physics) and the use of numbers to explain letters (as in the Semitic languages). We don't listen either. We patently don't listen or observe. And, notwithstanding all these valiant efforts, humans exist in a state of conflict within themselves and with each other, constantly halting on the edge of being able to say or express anything that truly corresponds to the singular, unified and harmonious universe made about us. Cleverer men than I say that we do not live in a state that corresponds to an original perfection.

Into this thought, this struggle to speak, I place my small paintings.

An artist is a person who tries to listen, tries to observe and then tries to describe. Disregarding the folly of trying to speak and the impossibility of saying anything perfect, to repeatedly strive to say a simple, beautiful thing yet more simply and beautifully is the still life painter's calling. The patron of the still life painter is a person who quietly exchanges the fruits of his labours with those of the artist – an exchange of efforts. It's a very pleasant type of talking.