

~~DEATH~~ TO PIGS

# DEATH TO PIGS

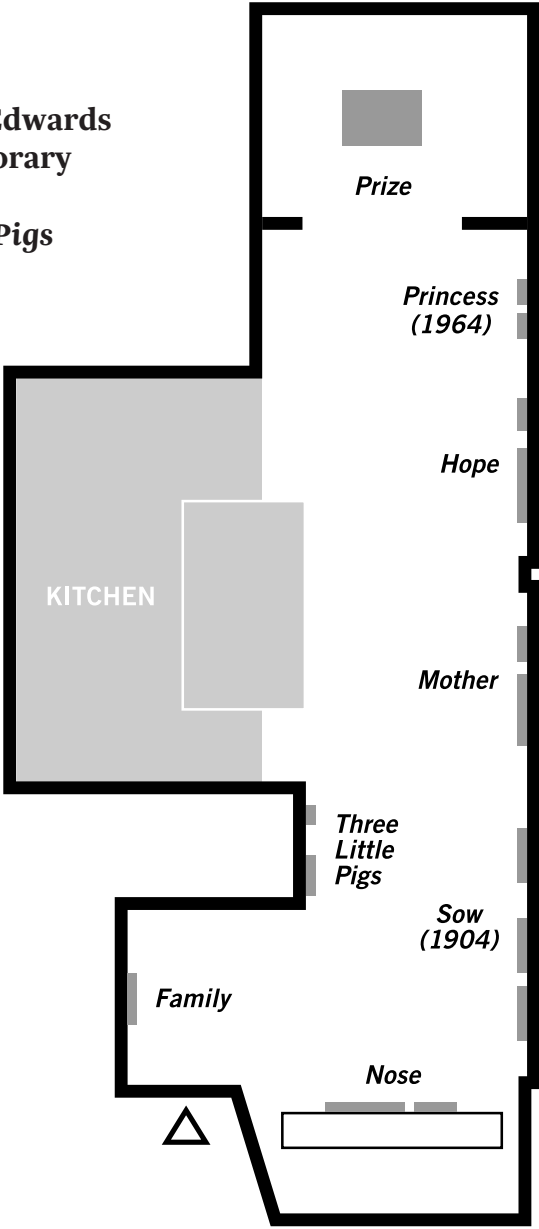
Ydessa Hendeles

Notes

Presented at  
Barbara Edwards Contemporary, Toronto  
7 October – 25 November 2016

**Barbara Edwards  
Contemporary**

**Death To Pigs**



## **Death to Pigs** **Ydessa Hendeles**

### **Barbara Edwards Contemporary, Toronto** **7 October – 25 November 2016**

*Death to Pigs* opened during the period of Jewish High Holy Days that began October 3 in the Christian/Gregorian calendar year of 2016, with Rosh Hashanah (1 Tishrei) ushering in year 5777 of the Jewish/Hebrew lunisolar calendar, the official calendar of Israel.

My art occupies a fluctuating netherspace between documentary and fantasy. While my own history inevitably informs my work, the artworks are not illustrations of my biography. My interest is in imagining and telling new stories that comment on our common inheritance and experience.

I do not provide an essay that interprets what I have assembled. I don't try to mediate between my work and viewers. Instead, because I take elements from outside the arena of contemporary art, I provide "Notes" that contain all a thoughtful viewer needs to experience the works without being a connoisseur in the various disciplines represented in the components of my work. They can then move to the level of metaphor and meaning more easily without being told what to think.

### **Prize, 2015**

**Oil painting suspended from painted steel chains, anatomical model, child's table**  
**Installation dimensions: 116 (h) x 36 x 24 inches, 294.6 (h) x 91.4 x 61.0 cm**

**Farmer with Prize Pig (English Naïve School), English, ca. 1860**

**Oil painting on stretched canvas in custom frame**

**Canvas: 20 (h) x 29 7/8 inches, 50.8 (h) x 75.9 cm**

**Frame: 25 5/8 (h) x 35 x 1 1/2 inches, 65.1 (h) x 88.9 x 3.8 cm**

English Naïve School images of farm livestock were popular in the 19th century, with some exponents making a living as itinerant artists travelling to fairs, markets and estates to paint prize-winning animals, sometimes with their proud owners standing by. Pigs were rare as subjects compared to cattle, horses and sheep, perhaps reflecting the animal's perceived status as unclean and living in its own filth. While some religions have specific objections to the consumption of pork, including both Islam and Judaism (though for different

reasons), the animal's bad reputation is more pervasive through popular culture, to the point that it is a primary metaphor for bad human behavior and a common source of insult across multiple cultures and ethnicities.

The pig's reputation, however, masks its real qualities. Contrary to popular belief, pigs are relatively clean animals in their habits, never eating or sleeping in their own waste, for example, if given enough room. And you can't sweat like a pig because pigs don't sweat. Moreover, numerous studies suggest that pigs are at least as or even more intelligent than dogs or cats and equally capable of empathetic behaviour. Disregarding or ignoring the pig's real qualities is perhaps a mass rationalization that helps us accept the prominence of pork in diets around the world.

As mammals, pigs share numerous characteristics with humans, but recent research also concludes that pigs are genetically more closely related to primates than previously thought. It has even been hypothesized that humans might be descendants of a cross between a pig and a chimpanzee, the latter long thought to be our closest relative in the animal world. This exhibition, in part, explores a metaphorical anthropomorphization of pigs.



### **Anatomical teaching model of a domestic sow, German, ca. 1930**

**Hand-painted plaster, fixed to a wooden base with steel supports**

**Maker's label on base: "Louis M. Meusel, Sonneberg, Thüringen, Germany"**

**17 3/8 (h) x 33 x 11 1/2 inches, 44.1 (h) x 83.8 x 29.2 cm**

The model is approximately half life-size, with the right side showing the sow's natural surface anatomy and the other its muscular system. Both the model and the base are bisected along their lengths and the two halves separate to reveal a third layer that contains the sow's internal anatomy. (The two halves can be locked together with a pair of brass hooks and eyes.) The left side of the interior section carries the thoracic and abdominal organs as removable three-dimensional models, while the other side holds the thoracic and abdominal organ covers. The model is comprised of eight parts: two body halves, two removable ears, lung, heart, heart valve unit and abdominal digestive organs.



**Child's table (catalogue no. 639), designed by Gustav Stickley  
(American, 1858–1942), ca. 1904**

**Quartersawn stained oak**

**Custom-fabricated from an original antique fumed-oak example in the collection of  
Ydessa Hendeles by Michael Buchanan, Toronto, 2012**

**22 (h) x 24 x 36 inches, 55.8 (h) x 61.0 x 91.4 cm**

The Arts and Crafts Movement adopted a utopian, “back-to-the-land” aesthetic that stressed solid, plain and simple design in high-quality, hand-made furniture for Everyman as it was made in the era of guilds. It was a reaction to the forces of industrialization and mechanization that drove society in the later 19th century. These high-minded, decorative-art furnishings expressed a wistful longing for an earlier age that valued individual craftsmanship and a lifestyle that was more in harmony with the natural world.

The furniture was made with sturdy hardwoods in geometric and vernacular forms that primarily served function. Decoration was often limited to the natural look of the materials or to the details of construction—for example, the large key tenons and exposed joinery seen on the sides of this table.

The practical design philosophy was derived from the Socialist writings of William Morris (1834–1896) and embodied down-to-earth precepts, such as “fitness for purpose” or “truth to materials.” Such quasi-moralistic precepts have been compelling through history, though they have their dark complements in dystopias, such as the National Socialists’ “Arbeit macht frei” (“Work Makes You Free”), placed on the gates of Auschwitz and other concentration camps, or “Four Legs Good, Two Legs Better,” the self-aggrandizing motto of the corrupted leader pigs in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*.



## **Princess (1964), 2015**

**Pigment print on archival paper and first-edition copy of *Animal Farm* (1945) by George Orwell, both framed in hand-painted white poplar frames**

**Frame dimensions: 14 ½ (h) x 12 x 1 ⅜ inches, 36.8 (h) x 30.5 x 3.5 cm each**

**The book support is marked with a custom blind deboss**

**Installation dimensions: 14 ½ (h) x 24 ⅞ x 1 ⅜ inches, 36.8 (h) x 62.4 x 3.5 cm**

### **Leslie Van Houten as Homecoming Princess**

**Source material: page 129 of the 1964 yearbook of the Monrovia High School (Monrovia, California)**

**Printed image dimensions: 8 ¼ (h) x 5 ¾ inches, 21.0 (h) x 14.6 cm**

**The original yearbook is in the collection of the artist.**

The photograph shows Leslie Van Houten (b. 1949) as a Freshman Princess presiding over Homecoming celebrations at her high school in November 1963. Van Houten later became associated with Charles Manson (b. 1934) and the notorious “Manson Family” of young, mostly female “flower children” who sought a more meaningful lifestyle. Under Manson’s control, they became a pseudo-family and a cult that aspired to a communal, hippie, free-love philosophy on the Spahn Ranch north of Los Angeles. Initially, this counter-culture movement had utopian back-to-nature aspirations. However, in July and August 1969, the experiment took a murderous turn. Reputedly inspired by the song “Piggies” on the Beatles’ *White Album* (1968) and perhaps triggered to some degree by his own lack of success in the music business, Manson masterminded a series of gruesome killings. Undertaken by followers he assigned, the victims included Sharon Tate, the actress and model married to film director Roman Polanski, who was butchered in a house with four friends on August 8. Van Houten was not involved in that, but on the following night she asked to be part of the group that murdered Leno and Rosemary LaBianca at their home in the Los Feliz district of Los Angeles. Both victims died from multiple stab wounds, and “Death to Pigs” was smeared on the living-room wall in their blood. For her role in the killings, Van Houten is currently serving a “life sentence with the possibility of parole” in California.

After denying her petition for parole 19 times, the state Board of Parole granted it in April 2016. However, California Governor Jerry Brown vetoed that decision in July, citing in part Van Houten’s failure to explain her transition from model teen to brutal killer. “Both her role in these extraordinarily brutal crimes and her inability to explain her willing participation in such horrific violence

cannot be overlooked and lead me to believe she remains an unacceptable risk to society if released,” he wrote. Prior to the 2016 parole hearing, a petition was presented with 140,000 signatures opposing Van Houten’s release. Van Houten’s lawyer, publicly characterizing Brown’s decision as the result of “political pressure,” said he would appeal the Governor’s decision in the courts.

The photograph is taken from the 1964 yearbook of the Monrovia High School in Monrovia, California, where Van Houten was a pupil. She was a 14-year-old freshman at the school that year and was evidently an active and popular student. In addition to her student photograph, she appears as a Freshman Class Officer, as a member of the Senior Band and as a Homecoming Princess, chosen by the boys in her year. Van Houten and her fellow Homecoming Princesses appear in a double-page spread of photographs under the title “ROYALTY,” the text reading in part:

November 1, 1963, was a day of thrill and excitement for twenty Monrovia High School co-eds. Chosen by the boys of their class to reign over Homecoming festivities, they enjoyed being known as Royalty for one week. Midnight, Friday, found some very tired Cinderellas with very tired feet.

The yearbook, now in the collection of the artist, originally belonged to Mark Hoffmann, who was a member of the 1964 graduating class and appears with Van Houten in the photo of the Senior Band. The pages of the book are filled with notes of goodwill from Hoffmann’s friends and classmates, recalling their time together at school and looking ahead optimistically to future endeavours. Hoffmann earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Master’s at California State University, Fullerton. Considered an expert in rain-forest and desert ecologies, he taught life sciences at Santa Monica College until his death, at age 40, on September 25, 1986, from complications due to cystic fibrosis.





***Animal Farm: A Fairy Story*, George Orwell (born Eric Arthur Blair, British, 1903–1950), Martin Secker & Warburg, London, 1945, First Edition**

**7 3/8 x 5 1/8 x 3/8 inches, 18.7 x 12.7 x 1.0 cm**

**92 pages**

The subtitle “A Fairy Story” was left off the first U.S. edition in 1946 and subsequently omitted from all but one known translation. In some later editions, the subtitle became “A Satire.”

The copyright page states that the book was “First published May 1945,” which was also the month my parents were freed from Auschwitz. Due to paper shortages and other factors, however, the book’s publication was delayed until August 1945. The book was printed and bound in accordance with the Wartime Economy Standard mandated by the British Government in the Book Production War Economy Agreement of 1942. As a result, this first edition was made with thin paper and boards and the fragile paper book jacket is usually in pieces or missing altogether.

Orwell wrote his satire on the Russian Revolution and its devolution into the Stalinist Soviet Union in the few months between November 1943 and February 1944. As a democratic socialist, he was disillusioned by what had happened to the ideals of the Revolution, though at the time of writing Britain and the U.S. were close allies of the Soviet Union in the fight against Hitler and Fascism. Publishers on both sides of the Atlantic were, as a result, reluctant to publish Orwell’s critical text, including his London publisher, Victor Gollancz. Although not a universal critical success on first publication, it sold well. Shortly after publication, however, political attitudes changed and the book would be promoted for its prescience when the Iron Curtain was drawn rigidly to separate communist and non-communist blocs at the outset of the Cold War. Today, *Animal Farm* figures prominently on rosters of the greatest English-language novels.

Orwell cleverly limns Russian and Soviet history in his tale of downtrodden animals who rise against their drunken human master and take over the farm. The political consciousness of the animals is first raised by the Marx-like figure of Old Major, an old boar, though after his death the revolt itself is led by two younger pigs, Snowball (Trotsky/Lenin) and Napoleon (Stalin). The new order is established on egalitarian principals (“All animals are equal” is a primary

maxim) and adamant in its refusal to compromise with the farm's previous owners ("Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy" is another maxim). Though things go well at first, Orwell's story parallels events in the course of Russian history after the Revolution, including the German invasion and Great Patriotic War (Battle of the Windmill in the book). The emergence of Napoleon, the Stalin figure, is the major satirical focus, however, and the way his increasingly autocratic rule debases the ideals of the original revolution. The maxims start to change under Napoleon's leadership. "No animal shall kill any other animal" becomes "No animal shall kill any other animal without cause" (which allows for the disappearance of dissenters) and the fundamental principal that "All animals are equal" becomes "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others." Increasingly, Napoleon and his sycophantic followers assume the characteristics and behaviour of the humans they overthrew, to the point where, in the end, the other animals can't tell the difference between the humans and the ruling pigs. The most graphic sign that the smarter pigs have become like their former oppressors is that they are seen to be walking upright on their hind legs like humans. The first maxim of the revolution had been: "Whatever goes on two legs is an enemy." This is replaced in the failed utopian community by: "Four legs good, two legs better!"



### **Hope, 2015**

**Five pigment prints on archival paper, framed in hand-painted white poplar frames**  
**Frame dimensions: 15 1/8 (h) x 17 1/8 x 1 1/2 inches, 38.4 (h) x 43.5 x 3.8 cm (four frames)**  
**and 17 5/8 (h) x 14 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches, 44.8 (h) x 37.1 x 3.8 cm (one frame)**  
**Installation dimensions: 30 3/4 (h) x 53 x 1 1/2 inches, 78.1(h) x 134.6 x 3.8 cm**

**Five photographs of Paddy's Pride (model no. 130), Walter Stock, Solingen, Germany, ca. 1925**

**Key-wind clockwork tin toy; lithographed, with additional homemade, hand-painted markings in red**

**Toy: 5 1/2 (h) x 8 x 3 1/2 inches, 14.0 (h) x 20.3 x 8.9 cm**

**The original antique toy is in the collection of the artist.**

The toy depicts a butcher seated on a two-wheeled butcher-barrel cart drawn by a pig. Wearing his apron, the butcher grips a whip (also suggestive of a pigsticker, the traditional sharp knife used for slaughter and letting blood from the animal's throat) in his right hand and braided cloth reins attached to

the harnessed pig's ears in the other. The toy may be taken to show the pig fleeing from the butcher and the boiling barrel he intends to use to render the animal. The irony is that the pig is harnessed to his pursuer and cannot easily escape; but despite the seeming hopelessness of its condition, the pig still has the will to flee and live.

The maker's logo and "Marke Stock" are printed on both sides of the pig's decorative harness. The logo is also printed on the barrel, as is "Made in Germany" and the German design patent mark "D.R.G.M." (acronym for *Deutsches Reichs Gebrauchsmuster*). The red paint applied to the cart's wheels and also to define the lips and eyebrows of the pig was probably added by a parent of one of the toy's owners.

When the key to the clockwork mechanism is wound, the wheels turn and propel the cart forward. The butcher raises and lowers his arms, thus pulling and easing the reins and causing the pig's ears to move back and forth.



### **Mother, 2015**

**Seven pigment prints on archival paper, framed in hand-painted white poplar frames**  
**Frame dimensions: 15 1/8 (h) x 17 1/8 x 1 1/2 inches, 38.4 (h) x 43.5 x 3.8 cm (six frames)**  
**and 17 5/8 (h) x 14 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches, 44.8 (h) x 37.1 x 3.8 cm (one frame)**  
**Installation dimensions: 46 5/8 (h) x 55 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches, 118.4 (h) x 141.3 x 3.8 cm**

**Photograph of handmade, painted ceramic figure of Alice holding a pig,**  
**English, ca. 1894**

**Figure: 4 (h) x 2 x 2 inches, 10.2 (h) x 5.1 x 5.1 cm**  
**The original ceramic figure is in the collection of the artist.**

The figure captures a scene in "Pig and Pepper," the sixth chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the novel by English mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–1898), written under the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll and published in 1865 by Macmillan and Co., London.

In the chapter, Alice gains entry to the chaotic, pepper-filled kitchen of the Duchess's palace to find a cook, the Cheshire cat and the Duchess, who is nursing a wailing, sneezing baby. There's a constant undertow of violence in the scene, with the cook throwing kitchen tools and dishes at the Duchess and

the baby and the Duchess physically abusing the child as she sings a mock lullaby (“Speak roughly to your little boy/And beat him when he sneezes/He only does it to annoy/Because he knows it teases”). When the Duchess leaves the kitchen, she flings the baby to Alice to nurse it. Alice barely manages to hold on to the “queer-shaped little creature,” but resolves to carry it away to safety: “If I don’t take this child away with me, they’re sure to kill it in a day or two: wouldn’t it be murder to leave it behind?”

As she carries it away, the grunting baby begins to take on the anatomical features of a pig. “If you’re going to turn into a pig, my dear,’ said Alice, seriously, ‘I’ll have nothing more to do with you. Mind now!’” When, shortly after, Alice realizes that her charge is unmistakably a small pig, she releases it and it trots off. “If it had grown up,’ she said to herself, ‘it would have made a dreadfully ugly child: but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think.’ And she began thinking over other children she knew, who might do very well as pigs..”

The idea of the flying pig, in popular speech often a metaphor for the practically impossible, also figures in Carroll’s Alice stories. In “The Mock Turtle’s Story,” chapter nine of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, the following exchange occurs with the Duchess:

‘Thinking again?’ the Duchess asked, with another dig of her sharp little chin. ‘I’ve a right to think,’ said Alice sharply, for she was beginning to feel a little worried.

‘Just about as much right,’ said the Duchess, ‘as pigs have to fly..’

And in the sequel, *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (Macmillan & Co., London, 1872), there is the following stanza in “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” the poem recited by Tweedledum and Tweedledee in chapter four:

“The time has come,’ the Walrus said,  
To talk of many things:  
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—  
Of cabbages—and kings—  
And why the sea is boiling hot—  
And whether pigs have wings.”



**Six photographs of an anatomical teaching model of a domestic sow, German, ca. 1930**

**Hand-painted plaster, fixed to a wooden base with steel supports**

**Maker's label on base: "Louis M. Meusel, Sonneberg, Thüringen, Germany"**

**Overall: 17 ¾ (h) x 33 x 11 ½ inches, 44.1 (h) x 83.8 x 29.2 cm**

**The anatomical model is a component of Prize (2015), also in this exhibition.**



**Sow (1904), 2015**

**One black-and-white and two colour pigment prints on archival paper, with custom blind deboss (1 ½ x 2 ½ inches, 3.8 x 6.4 cm), mounted on museum-board, in ebonized ash frames**

**Source material: *The Story of the Three Little Pigs with drawings by L. Leslie Brooke*, Frederick Warne & Co., London & New York, 1904**

**Frame dimensions: 32 ¾ (h) x 26 ½ x 1 ½ inches, 83.2 (h) x 67.3 x 3.8 cm each**

**Installation dimensions: 32 ¾ (h) x 88 ½ x 1 ½ inches, 83.2 (h) x 224.8 x 3.8 cm**

L. (Leonard) Leslie Brooke (English, 1862–1940) was an artist, illustrator and author of children's books. Although he launched his career as a portrait painter, he is remembered mainly as an illustrator of children's stories, rhymes and fairy tales. Beginning in the 1890s, Brooke was engaged to illustrate books by many authors, including the popular Victorian children's novels by Mrs. (Mary Louisa) Molesworth and Andrew Lang's *The Nursery Rhyme Book* (1897). By 1903, Brooke was writing and illustrating his own stories, including *Johnny Crow's Garden* (1903), *Johnny Crow's Party* (1907) and *Johnny Crow's New Garden* (1935).

In 1904, he illustrated a retelling of the familiar fairy tale, *The Story of the Three Little Pigs*, published as a "Shilling Book" by Frank Warne & Co. in London. The issue included eight full-page colour illustrations (halftone prints of Brooke's watercolours) and more than 15 black-and-white illustrations. The story was republished the following year in Brooke's popular collection, *Golden Goose Book*, which also included *Tom Thumb*, *The Three Bears* and *The Golden Goose*.

Brooke's version of *The Story of the Three Little Pigs* begins when an old mother sow sends her three offspring into the world to seek their fortune and continues through each young pig's encounter with a predatory wolf.

The first pig built a house of straw, but the wolf knocks it down and eats him. The second pig built a house of furze (shrubbery branches), but again the wolf knocks it down and makes a meal of the pig. Each encounter begins with a rhyming refrain as the wolf demands entry to each pig's house:

Wolf: "Little pig, little pig, let me come in"

Pig: "No, no, by the hair of my chinny chin chin"

Wolf: "Then I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!"

The third little pig built a house of brick, which the wolf cannot blow down. He makes three attempts to trick the pig into going outside, but is outwitted each time. Finally, frustrated and angry, the wolf climbs down the chimney to reach his prey, but the pig, after learning of the wolf's plan, has prepared a cauldron of water over a fire in the hearth. When the wolf falls into the cauldron, the pig quickly covers it to cook the wolf, eats him for supper and "lived happily ever after."

Brooke's source appears to be Shakespearean scholar James Orchard Halliwell (1820–1889), who included the first known printed version of *The Story of the Three Little Pigs* in this form in a later edition of his *The Nursery Rhymes of England*, first published in 1841 though not then including this tale. The origins of the folktale itself are unclear, though the plot is common in oral traditions. A version appears in *The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids* (*Der Wolf und die sieben jungen Geißlein*) by German brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who included it in their 1812 collection, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (commonly known in English as *Grimms' Fairy Tales*). In English, one of the earliest printed versions is a variant, *The Fox and the Pixies*, which was included in *English Forests and Forest Trees: Historical, Legendary and Descriptive* (Ingram, Cooke, & Co, London, 1853); in this, the houses are built of wood, stone and iron, and the wolf finally falls victim to a pixie spell. Another early English variant is *The Fox and the Geese*, included in *A Treasury of Pleasure Books for Young People*, ed. J. Cundall (Sampson, Low & Son, London, 1856). In some variants, the two pigs whose houses are destroyed are not eaten, but take refuge with their smarter sibling.

The three panels of *Sow* (1904) tell a new story. Using one black-and-white and two colour panels, this artwork shows the wolf threatening just one pig, and that pig outwitting the wolf to neutralize the threat. Like the leader pigs in

Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the pig here has distinguished herself by learning to walk on two legs. She has found her feet to stand up for herself, survive the threat and do away with the predator.

The wolf in fairy tales is traditionally an undomesticated wild beast. German Shepherd dogs, renowned for their intelligence, capacity for work and aggression as guard dogs, were first bred in Germany in 1899 by Max von Stephanitz from stock that was known to have partial wolf or wolf-dog parentage.



### **Nose, 2015**

Seven pigment prints on archival paper, framed in hand-painted white poplar frames  
Frame dimensions: 15 1/8 (h) x 17 1/8 x 1 1/2 inches, 38.4 (h) x 43.5 x 3.8 cm each  
Installation dimensions: 46 5/8 (h) x 55 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches, 118.4 (h) x 141.3 x 3.8 cm

Three photographs of a cast and chased Sterling silver, key-wind clockwork bell in form of standing pig, William Edward Hurcomb, London, 1912  
Body cast in halves, but with snout and tail cast separately; chased fine detail; fixed brass key on underbelly; internal bell (rung by pressing pig's nose or curly tail); hallmarks on all components  
Overall dimensions: 3 1/4 (h) x 6 1/8 x 2 5/8 inches, 8.3 (h) x 15.6 x 6.7 cm  
Total weight (including mechanism): 644 g, 20.7 oz t  
Provenance: Passmore family, England. The original bell was given to a member of the family as a christening present.  
The original bell is in the collection of the artist.

Two photographs of a key-wind clockwork, walking toy pig, Roulet & Decamps, France, ca. 1890  
Covered in pigskin, with glass eyes; painted snout, eyes, ears, mouth and hooves; curly tail; activation lever on underbelly, with original key  
When activated, the pig moves forward on serrated wheels under each hoof, its head moving from side to side and emitting grunting sounds.  
Pig: 5 1/4 (h) x 11 1/4 x 3 1/4 inches, 13.3 (h) x 28.6 x 8.3 cm  
Key: 3 1/8 inches in length, 7.9 cm  
The original toy is in the collection of the artist.

Two photographs of a handmade and painted terracotta sow, Neapolitan, 18th century  
Figure from a crèche (Christmas nativity scene), with painted glass eyes  
Overall dimensions: 3 3/4 (h) x 6 1/4 x 2 1/4 inches, 9.5 (h) x 15.9 x 5.7 cm  
The original crèche figure is in the collection of the artist.

## **Family, 2015**

Pigment print on archival paper, framed in hand-painted white poplar frame  
Frame: 16 ¾ (h) x 19 ⅛ x 1 ½ inches, 42.5 (h) x 48.6 x 3.8 cm

Photograph of three small bisque porcelain dolls, Germany, ca. 1930

A child figure with sculpted hands and hair and two pig figures without hair; each with wire-jointed limbs and hand-painted facial features (the child also with painted hair)

Child: 5 ¼ (h) x 2 ¾ x 1 ¼ inches, 13.3 (h) x 7.0 x 3.2 cm

Large pig: 4 ⅜ (h) x 2 ⅛ x 1 ½ inches, 11.1 (h) x 5.4 x 3.8 cm

Small pig: 3 ½ (h) x 2 ¼ x 1 ⅜ inches, 8.9 (h) x 5.7 x 3.5 cm

The original figures are in the collection of the artist.



## **Three Little Pigs, 2015**

Sound video housed in custom-made, wall-mounted ¼ inch steel plate box with key-lock door and antique chain; cast-bronze sculpture on wall-mounted steel shelf  
Installation dimensions: 22 ⅜ (h) x 35 x 4 ¾ inches, 56.8 (h) x 88.9 x 12.1 cm

Cast-bronze sculpture of a pig lying on its side displayed on wall-mounted ¼ inch steel plate shelf

“Death to Pigs” and edition number stamped on the bottom of the pig

Source of form: Two-part tin chocolate mould made by Anton Reiche, Dresden, Germany, ca. 1920s

Steel shelf: Stephen Richards

Bronze sculpture dimensions: 1 ⅝ (h) x 3 ¾ x 2 ⅜ inches, 3.5 (h) x 9.5 x 6.0 cm

Steel shelf dimensions: 1 ¾ (h) x 5 x 4 inches, 4.4 x 12.7 x 10.2 cm

The original chocolate mould is in the collection of the artist.

Video with found documentary footage and custom-mixed soundtrack using original documentary audio, Jewish liturgical music and additional found digital audio elements

Steel box housing for video: Stephen Richards

Video duration: 00:01:34

Steel box dimensions: 10 ½ (h) x 10 ½ x 4 ¾ inches, 26.7 (h) x 26.7 x 12.1 cm

Antique chain length: 19 ¼ inches, 48.9 cm

Video screen diagonal dimension: 7 inches, 17.8 cm

Video fragments: copyright Aussie Farms Inc. Used with permission

Excerpt from “Kehilot haKodesh”: copyright Cantor David Weinbach, Israel

(Telephone: 050-412-0040; Email: weinbach3@gmail.com). Used with permission

Video editor: Yoav Bezelali, Tel Aviv

Sound editor: Isabelle Noel, Toronto



The *Three Little Pigs* video is presented in a wall-mounted, key-lock steel box accessed by a hinged door. The box opens to reveal a 7-inch (17.8 cm) LCD screen above a push-button controller and volume-control knob. The audio for the piece is heard through a single set of wireless headphones stored on the interior of the door. The viewer puts on the headphones and pushes the button to play the video through once. By limiting the audio playback to one pair of headphones and presenting the video on a small screen, *Three Little Pigs* offers the viewer a private, immersive audio-visual experience.

In 2014, Aussie Farms Inc., a not-for-profit animal-rights organization based in Glenside, a suburb of Adelaide, South Australia, released a 13 ½-minute video of hidden-camera footage documenting the stunning of pigs by asphyxiating gas, known in the animal-farming industry as “controlled-atmosphere killing.” When performed properly, the method is touted as more humane than electrical or mechanical stunning, with the animals, supposedly unaware of the gas, falling into unconsciousness due to lack of oxygen prior to slaughter. *Three Little Pigs* includes fragments from the Aussie Farms video.

Setup for the “controlled-atmosphere killing” process, as depicted in the video, consists of a vertically rotating system of side-entry gondolas. At the top of the rotation, pigs are forced into a gondola, which then descends into a gas chamber filled with Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). As the pigs are lowered into the chamber, the video shows them in immediate and continuous physical distress. They desperately and noisily try to escape, throwing themselves with flailing trotters against the caged sides of the gondola, scrambling over each other and thrusting their snouts between the bars in a frantic effort to breathe. The struggle can last 30 seconds before the pigs finally lose consciousness, though unfortunately, some do recover from the stunning before being hung on one hind hoof to drain the blood. If the pig is flailing about and the worker is unable to slit its throat, the animal will be carried to the next stage and boiled while conscious.

Argon is recommended for the gassing of pigs because it is inert and undetectable when inhaled. However, the most common agent used in “controlled-atmosphere killing” is CO<sub>2</sub>, which is aversive to pigs (as it is to humans at concentrations in excess of 8–15 per cent). There is evidence that pigs exposed to concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> of up to 20 per cent show few signs of distress, but for reasons of commercial efficiency, farming operations around the world

routinely use concentrations greater than 85 per cent, which triggers an immediate suffocation response.

In the same year Aussie Farms released its video, Toronto's last pork-processing plant and pig abattoir, Quality Meat Packers Ltd. and Toronto Abattoirs Ltd., closed their doors. Prior to closing, Toronto Abattoirs had introduced "controlled-atmosphere killing" in an operation that had the capacity to slaughter 6,000 hogs in one day and that accounted for 25% of Ontario's pork production. Indeed, the large scale of pork production through much of Toronto's history gave rise to the city's nickname of "Hogtown" according to some accounts, although others suggest the name was coined more to describe the rapacious appetites of Torontonians. As an editorial in the *Globe* newspaper put it in 1898:

The remark originally had no relation at all to our friend the hog, but was merely intended to convey an impression that the citizens of Toronto were porcine in their tendencies and had their fore feet in anything that was worth having... This is Hogtown and growing more hoggy all the time.

Whatever the origin, the name stuck, and Toronto was at one time the largest pork producer in the British Empire, in North America surpassed only by Chicago in the number of pigs slaughtered and processed. Until they closed, Quality Meat Packers and Toronto Abattoirs operated together on a four-and-a-half-acre complex at Tecumseth Street and Wellington Street West in a historically mixed industrial and residential neighbourhood on the western edge of the city's downtown. Pork production had begun on the site in 1914 with the establishment of the Toronto Municipal Abattoir, operated by the city until 1960, when it was sold to Ontario Meat Packers Ltd. The complex was just a block away from the former uniforms factory at 778 King Street West, where the Ydessa Hendeles Art Foundation presented its exhibition programme from 1988 to 2012. The gallery was well within the multiple-block radius routinely enveloped with the pungent odour of pig manure and slaughter-house smells emanating from the abattoir and from the dozens of trucks loaded with hogs that navigated neighbourhood streets heading to the facility.

Two principal streams make up the audio track of *Three Little Pigs*: sound from the original video, recorded, inside the Australian abattoir as the pigs were gassed but edited for this artwork; and a recording of David Weinbach, an Israeli tenor cantor, singing the Jewish liturgical dirge, "Kehilot haKodesh"

“Holy Communities”), with organ and chorus. The soundtrack also includes added elements, including the heartbeat heard at the beginning and end, and other effects created to put viewers into the same space as the pigs.

The lyrics to “Kehilot haKodesh” come from the memorial prayer “Av haRachamim” (“Father of Mercy”), recited to honour Jewish martyrs and persecuted communities. The video uses the opening lines of the prayer:

The Father of mercy who dwells on high  
in His great mercy  
will remember with compassion  
the pious, upright and blameless  
the holy communities, who laid down their lives  
for the sanctification of His name.

The origins of “Av haRachamim” date back to the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries, following the destruction of Jewish Ashkenazi communities along the Rhine valley by Christian crusaders in the early phases of the First Crusade (1095–1099). In 1095, Pope Urban II had called for a Christian conquest of Jerusalem to free the city from Muslim control under the Seljuk Turks. In response, groups of poorly organized and ill-equipped peasants banded together under dubious leadership in France and throughout the Holy Roman Empire to undertake the crusade. As these forces moved along the Rhine in the spring and summer of 1096, the Jewish communities in such centres as Speyer, Worms and Mainz were repeated targets of Christian violence. The renegade crusaders pillaged the communities for money and supplies, forcing the Jewish population to convert to Christianity and murdering thousands who resisted.

“Av haRachamim” first appeared in prayer books at the end of the 13th century. Traditionally, the prayer is recited as part of mourning services, most notably on the Shabbat before Shavuot, which celebrates the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai, and that preceding Tisha B’Av, the annual fast day that commemorates a number of disasters through Jewish history, including the destruction of the Temples.

# DEATH TO PIGS

An exhibition by Ydessa Hendeles

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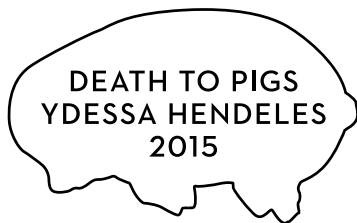
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