

A watercolor illustration of a dog and a bird on a rocky landscape. The dog is the central focus, depicted with thick, textured brushstrokes in shades of brown, tan, and white. It is lying down, looking towards the right. To its right, a small, fluffy yellow bird is perched on a rock, looking towards the dog. The background consists of layered, textured washes of light green and blue, suggesting a sky or distant hills. The foreground is dominated by dark, charcoal-colored rocks and some dry, brown grasses. The overall style is expressive and painterly.

# Descent

# Proposals

Daniel Cavey





[www.cloudartcoffee.nl](http://www.cloudartcoffee.nl)

**cloud**  
art & coffee

Cover: watercolour, ink

# Descent Proposals

*Daniel Cavey*





Human beings are devout, mankind making myths and legends that persist through time, truth and reason. And myths are myriad, carrying precious kernels of our timeworn folklore as well as the frequently misconceived consensus of our popular culture. By these we so often abide, letting our imaginations inform us, and our ignorance lead us in taking actions that shape the world, for our actions are never our own property. Instead, what we do ripples and reverberates through a world diversely populated by non-humans, humans, and hewn together by the sharing of space and resources. It is from the darkness of eyes closed to these truths that ceramic artist Daniel Cavey calls forth the animals he carves and casts in clay.

Every association with any animal he chooses – birds, boars, dogs, wolves, sheep, and lambs - is what makes each one a unique metaphor. In his latest exhibition, Cavey has chosen lemmings, best known for the myth of their mindless mass suicides, to which they were supposedly driven by overpopulation. The myth is false, but the lesson is real, and humanity has failed to learn from either fiction or fact just as often as it has failed to learn from either myth or science that to live, out of ignorance, a life out of balance, is a fool's journey to the precipice.

Today we see human beings driven progressively closer towards this edge by the politics, policies, and even personal choices that are compounding to make nations and environments uninhabitable. Cavey's zoomorphic metaphors for mankind, therefore, though learned and specific, are by no means enigmatic. Quite contrarily, they are obvious, if not overlooked, and even a minimal awareness of events happening everyday around the world can easily reveal the impetus for the artist's address and the imperative meaning of his message.

Anthony Stellaccio, IAC, ACC, AFS





# The Descent

The brown lemming, *Lemmus lemmus*, inhabits the northern Fennoscandian tundra, a dynamic high-latitude ecosystem that spans four countries, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Herds of reindeer, wolves, ptarmigan and grouse, stoats and weasels, coexist on a landscape gouged and scathed by glaciers over the millennia. The rocky summits and boulder piles, hosting a number of lichens and mosses, give way to swaths of dwarf shrub heaths and grasslands that are veiled in the winter with snow. Protected slopes and depressions in the landscape where the right type of snow accumulates during favorable winter conditions form low-density snow beds that provide the lemmings with an essential winter habitat.

Since the onset of the Pleistocene, the genus (*Lemmus*) rapidly evolved to endure such harsh conditions. Brown lemmings today boast robust jaws and continuously growing molars that are adapted for grinding a variety of flora, from tender moss to gristly dwarf shrubs. Lemmings consume vast quantities of vegetation and reports have shown that they by far out-graze reindeer. Their claws, as well, are specialized for digging in the snow and have enabled the species to clearly define its subnivean niche. The snow provides thermal insulation and, for the most part, a seasonal release from the pressures of predation. Reproduction occurs under this protective cover as winter stores are collected and grazing continues.

Man has long studied the population cycle of the lemmings, characterized by the highly evident peak, referred to as an "outbreak," which may occur at three- to five-year or more intervals. The presence of subnivean spaces, essential for winter reproduction, plays a major role in the density dependent outbreaks. Provided the winter population carries through to spring and gains momentum, it will subsequently determine the amplitude of the outbreak in the fall. Warming global temperatures have recently caused a leveling off of their cycle with far fewer outbreaks, as seen in the lemming population of alpine southern Norway. Finnmark, northern Fennoscandia, had not seen an outbreak as large as the last one, 2006/7, in over two decades. Lemming scarcity is thought to be directly responsible for fluctuations in the stoat population, a natural predator skilled at hunting under the snow. A deficient lemming population is also thought to be responsible for the drastic decline in snowy owls and arctic foxes. The lemmings are an essential link in their ecosystem and are considered "keystone herbivores."

Daniel Cavey

## References

- Tarja Oksanen et al. 2008. *Arctic Lemmings, Lemmus spp. And Dicrostonyx spp.: integrating ecology and evolutionary perspectives*
- Rolf A. Ims et al. 2010. *Determinants of lemming outbreaks*
- Erik Framstad et al. 1997. *Limit cycles in Norwegian lemmings: tensions between phase-dependence and density-dependence*
- Peter Turchin and George Batzli et al. 2001. *Availability of food and the population dynamics of arvicoline rodents*
- Kyrre Linne' Kausrud et al. 2008. *Linking climate change to lemming cycles*
- Risto Virtanen et al. 2002. *Winter grazing by the Norwegian lemming (Lemmus lemmus) at Kilpisjarvi (NW Finnish Lapland ) during a moderate population peak*
- Charles J.Krebs et al. 2010. *Of lemmings and snowshoe hares: the ecology of northern Canada*

ELDER LEMMING



ELDER LEMMING



2 LEMMING



Slip-cast porcelain, 16,5 x 9,5 x 6 cm







LADY LEMMING

LADY LEMMING



Slip-cast porcelain, 19 x 9.5 x 8 cm



BABY LEMMING



BABY LEMMING



BABY LEMMING





Slip-cast porcelain, 16 x 8 x 7 cm





LOVEP LEMMING

LOVEP LEMMING

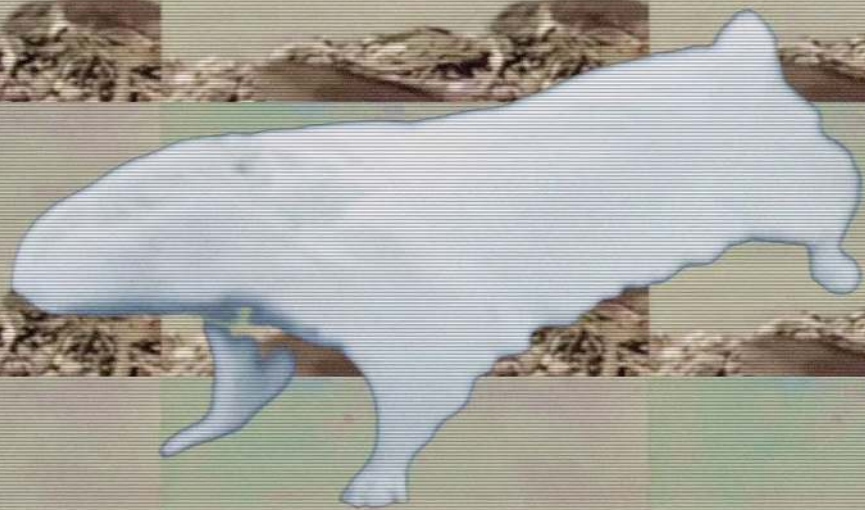
LOVEP LEMMING



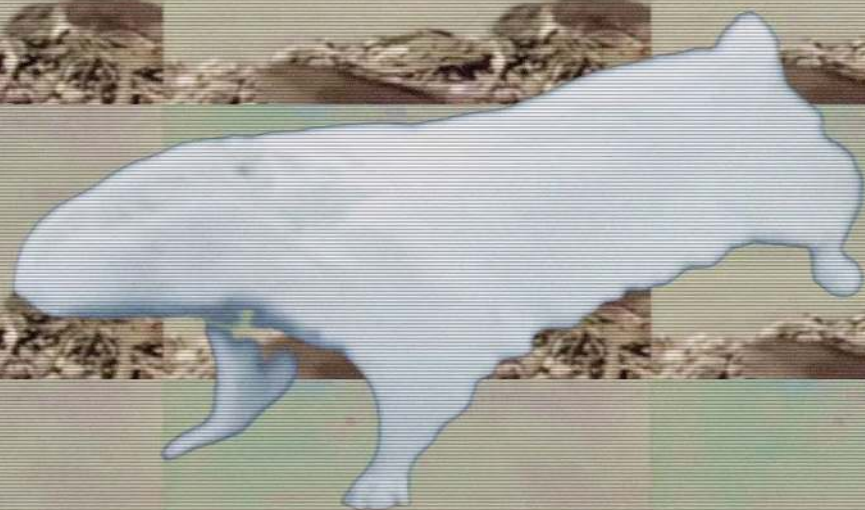
Slip-cast porcelain, 16.8 x 9.7 x 5.8 cm



DISFUNCTIONAL LEMMING



DISFUNCTIONAL LEMMING



DISFUNCTIONAL LEMMING





Slip-cast, wood-fired porcelain, 18,5 x 9,2 x 7,5 cm



Process





Pouring slip into a mould



Emptying the mould



Removing the cast from the mould



Fettling the cast



Assembling a lemming body pile

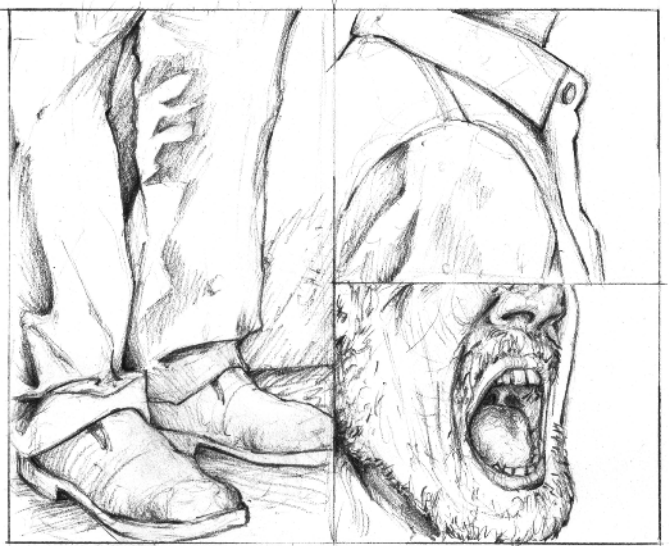




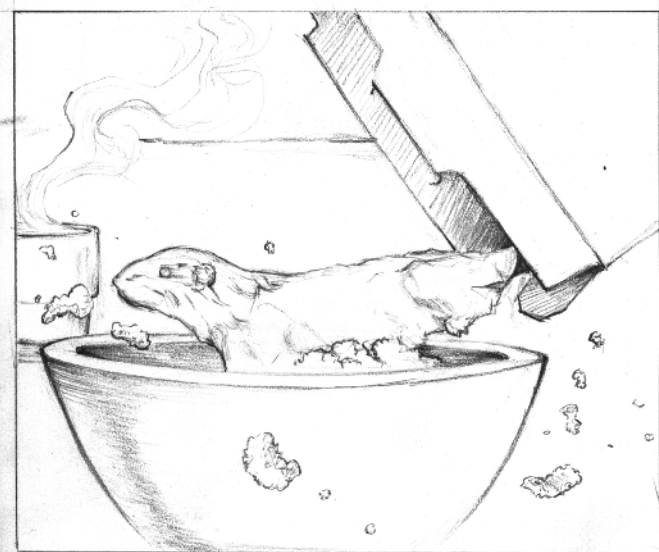
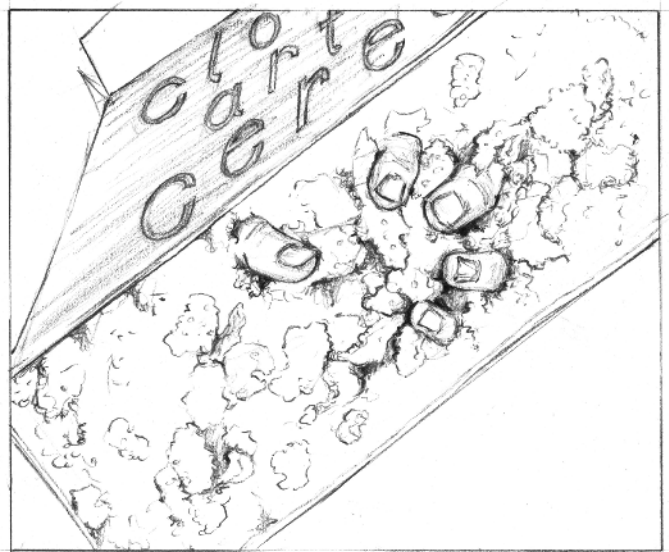
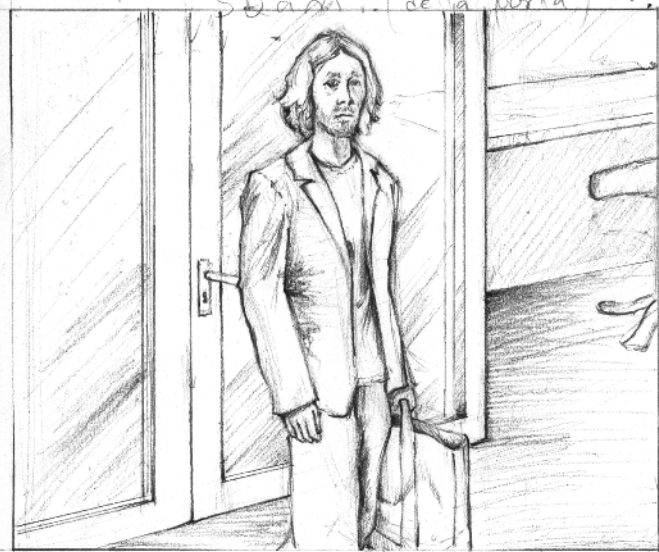


Kiln loading



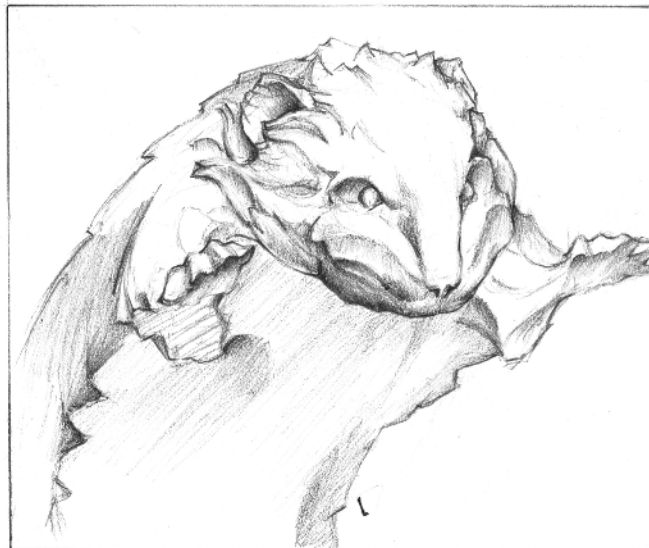
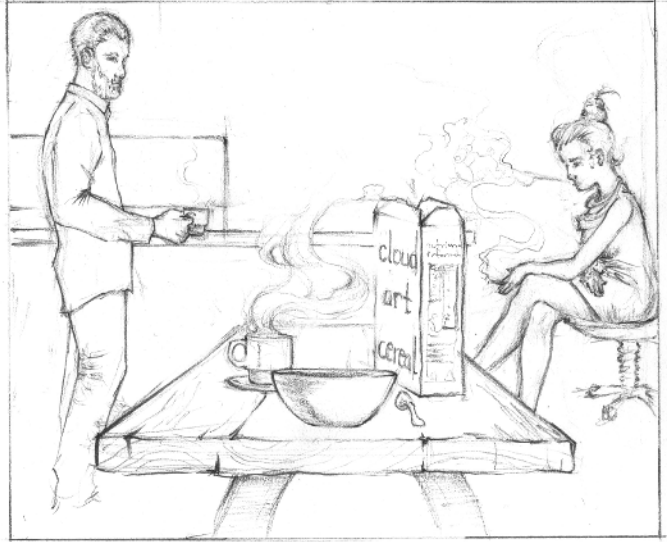


Sogno (della porta)





Zoom out



Daniel Cavey was born in Baltimore, Maryland, USA in 1977 and grew up on a small farm in an outlying county. Cavey received a BFA in ceramics from Maryland Institute College of Art in 1999. That fall Cavey accepted a formal invitation to participate in a ceramic symposium in Riga, Latvia, which he attended for two consecutive years. In 2002, eager to leave his studio in Baltimore, Cavey applied for an artist residency at La Meridiana and moved to Italy. In Tuscany Cavey began working with terracotta on a large scale at L'Antica Fornace di Montecchio, a manufacturer of garden ceramics. He began working with a landscape architect and now his architectural ceramics and sculpture can be found in a number of both public and private gardens throughout



Tuscany. Cavey currently works out of his studio near Avellino in southern Italy. He has attended symposia throughout Europe, including the European Artists symposium held in Essen, Germany. His work has been featured in Marie Claire Maison and Ceramics Monthly. Cavey has exhibited in the Museum of Foreign Art in Riga, Latvia, in the Keramikmuseum Westerwald of Hohn-Grenzhausen, in the Museu de Ceramica de L'Alcora, Spain, and elsewhere. While maintaining his life and career in Europe, he continues to teach and work in the United States.

# Acknowledgments

## Graphic Design

Pietro Beltrami

## Video Stills

Andrea Maioli

Ermanno Bonazzi

## Cloud Art Gallery

Ross Cloud

## Image Processing

Pietro Beltrami

Angela Fierro

## Technical Support

Angelica Tulimiero

Antonio Iannaccone







