

UCL CULTURE



# The boring beasts that changed the world

A free exhibition produced  
by UCL Culture, until 22nd December  
#OrdinaryAnimals

# THE MUSEUM OF ORDINARY ANIMALS



The Museum of Ordinary Animals tells the story of the boring beasts that have changed the world: the mundane creatures in our everyday lives including dogs, pigeons, cats, cows, chickens and mice. These animals are rarely represented in natural history museum display. They are not special enough. People would rather see dinosaurs, dodos and giant whales.

However, this exhibition puts these everyday species front and centre. It investigates some of the profound impacts they have had on humanity and the natural world, where they came from, and the extraordinary things we have learned from them. We have invited them into our homes as pets; their role in our diets has changed us biologically; they are critical to modern medicine and they hold huge symbolic value in many cultures.

The Museum of Ordinary Animals gives these commonplace creatures a chance to tell their stories.

# CREATING ORDINARY ANIMALS

Before humans, there were no Ordinary Animals. We created them – either physically, through the process of domestication; or conceptually, through the ways we consider common wild species.

Domestication involves separating some members of a species from their wild ancestors for our benefit, at least partially controlling their reproduction, and caring for them.

The benefits are most obvious in the animals we farm to eat. We use Ordinary Animals to pollinate our crops and to help us hunt. We breed them for their skins and other products; use them as transport; and we've taken them into our homes for pleasure, as pets.

# ORDINARY ANIMALS IN CULTURE

Having created Ordinary Animals, we made them an integral part of our existence. Rituals and languages have been built around them as symbolic icons, we have had to establish new professions to care for them, and the role they play in our diets has changed us biologically. The success or failure of civilisations has depended on their Ordinary Animals.

Here we explore some of the ways that Ordinary Animals fit into our lives. How have they changed us, and how do we consider them as members of our society?

# ORDINARY ANIMALS IN SCIENCE

What has the study of Ordinary Animals taught us about the world?

Species that are readily found around people – including those we have domesticated – have often been used in research. In the lab, in the classroom, in the wild, and even in our gardens, Ordinary Animals have been essential contributors to scientific discovery.

This has not happened without controversy, but there is no doubt that our understanding of how the world works would be very different without the roles these species have played in science and medicine.

# ORDINARY ANIMALS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

When humans created most Ordinary Animals, we separated them from nature. They grew in number and spread – or were spread – across the planet.

Many of these species have flourished in both human environments and the natural worlds they have since re-entered. What impacts have the interactions between humans and Ordinary Animals had on these new environments?

What does our relationship with Ordinary Animals tell us about ourselves? Through discussions, a late opening, a comedy night and offsite events discover how boring beasts shape our relationship with the natural world.

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### Let's Talk About...

Ordinary Animals are rarely talked about. However, the species we encounter every day on our plates, on our laps and on our streets have profound stories to tell. The human and natural worlds have been dramatically changed by these animals. For millennia, the human story has been intertwined with their stories. Join us for a series of talks, each focusing on a different Ordinary Animal. Share your own experiences of these boring beasts and hear from people who study, care for and work with Ordinary Animals.

### Dogs

*Wednesday 18 October*  
1.30 – 2.30pm

### Rats

*Wednesday 22 November*  
1.30 – 2.30pm

### Sheep

*Wednesday 6 December*  
1.30 – 2.30pm

### (Ordinary) Animal Showoff

*Thursday 26 October*  
6.30 – 9pm

#### *Pre-booking essential*

Join us to find the funny side of the over-looked and boring beasts that have changed our world. We've invited Ordinary Animal experts to take to the stage and show their love of the mundane creatures we share our everyday lives with.

### Caring for Ordinary Animals

*Wednesday 8 November*  
12 – 4pm  
*Pre-booking essential*

Having created Ordinary Animals we were charged with looking after them. Join us at the Large and Small Animal Care Facilities at the Royal Veterinary College as they open their doors for a one-off behind the scenes visit to find out more about their work in caring for Ordinary Animals.

### Is it OK to be a Cat Guy?

*Thursday 16 November*  
7 – 9pm

Throughout history, have some species been more associated with manliness or femininity? Cats had particularly been linked with women, while more "outdoor" animals like dogs were the pet of choice for men. However, as more men are increasingly flaunting their affinity for kitties, how does our relationship with pets relate to our gender identity and gender stereotypes?

Join us to discuss whether it is ok to be a cat guy.

### Cats Broke the Internet

*Friday 1 December*  
6.30 – 9pm

One Ordinary Animal more than any other reigns supreme on the World Wide Web: cats. Small cats, big cats, grumpy cats, LOLcats. With the two million cat videos on YouTube being viewed a staggering 26 billion times, cats own the internet.

Join us for a feline-themed late opening with cat-inspired audio cinema, discussions investigating how cats became so influential and special cat video screenings.

Visit [bit.ly/ordinaryanimals](http://bit.ly/ordinaryanimals) for more information and booking details.

## The exhibition features Ordinary Animals from other museums and collections at UCL, which are open to the public.

### The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology

The Petrie Museum houses around 80,000 objects, making it one of the greatest collections of Egyptian and Sudanese archaeology in the world. It illustrates life in the Nile Valley from prehistory through the time of the pharaohs, the Ptolemaic, Roman and Coptic periods to the Islamic period.

*Open Tuesday to Saturday  
1 – 5pm*

### UCL Art Museum

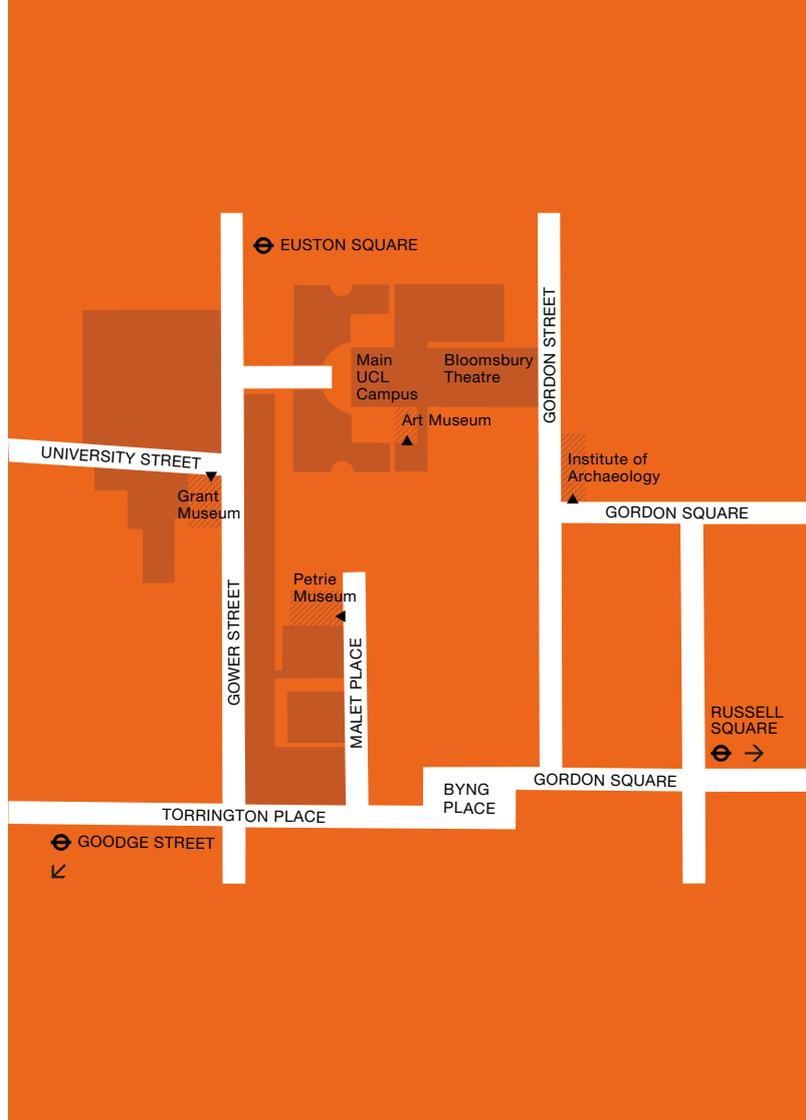
UCL Art Museum is a collaborative and experimental environment that invites interdisciplinary innovation drawing on over 12,000 works of art that date back to the 15th century. Many works focus on artistic process and modes of reproduction. The collections are accessible through temporary exhibitions, events and by appointment.

*Open Tuesday to Friday  
1 – 5pm*

### UCL Institute of Archaeology Collections

The A.G. Leventis Gallery showcases objects from ancient Cyprus, Greece, Crete, Egypt and the Levant. They highlight the cultural diversity of this region over 5,000 years and bring peoples of the past to life. These are accompanied by temporary themed displays from the Institute's wider collections.

*Open Monday to Friday  
1 – 5pm*



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## Grant Museum of Zoology

Admission free

Mon-Sat, 1-5pm

[zoology.museum@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:zoology.museum@ucl.ac.uk)

Grant Museum of Zoology

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#OrdinaryAnimals