

# Animals in Philosophy, Politics, Law and Ethics Speaker Series

## Film Farm: Kelly Reichardt's Gastro-aesthetics



### Anat Pick

Reader in Film Studies at Queen Mary University of London and Research Fellow at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Pick is the author of *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (Columbia University Press, 2011), co-editor of *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human* (Berghahn, 2013), and has published articles on animals, ethics and film.

A number of recent films, including Viktor Kossakovsky's *Gunda* (2020), Andrea Arnold's *Cow* (2020), and Kelly Reichardt's *First Cow* (2019) feature farmed animals at their centre. Each offers a different iteration of what I am calling "gastro-aesthetics," cinematic entanglements between the alimentary and the visual. Gastro-aesthetics thinks through cinema's dual impulse to look and to eat, to preserve and devour the world within and beyond the frame. In *First Cow*, aesthetic and alimentary pleasures converge in the figure of the titular cow as an image and as a source of milk. How should we think about the visual consumption of images of dairy consumption?

From *River of Grass* (1994) through *Wendy and Lucy* (2008) to *First Cow*, animals are ubiquitous in Reichardt's cinema. Yet while dogs display autonomy and agency, exemplifying Reichardt's aesthetics of contingency, farmed animals remain—in film as in life—sources of value-extraction. The gentle sociality at the heart of *First Cow* and the film's stylistic and narrative openness are subtended by agricultural-colonial practices that control and consume animals and indigenous people. In the face of Reichardt's attentiveness to nature and the subtleties of interspecies relations, *this* first cow remains the film's obscure object of extraction. Tracing the story of milk in *First Cow* I explore how films and farms partake in the domestication, cultivation, and processing of animal life. Could film be conceived otherwise, not as a farm but as a sanctuary?



Friday  
February 18  
1:00-2:30pm  
(EST)

*Via Zoom*

Everyone  
Welcome!

For Zoom link or other information, please email Will Kymlicka at  
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