

ECOLOGIES OF PLEASURE

BONOBOS, ZOOS, AND THE POLITICS OF SEXUAL KNOWLEDGE

**MARIANNA
SZCZYGIELSKA**

14.9.

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INSTITUTE OF ETHNOLOGY
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Why did bonobos become icons of sexual pleasure? This lecture traces how the species emerged as a key model for rethinking sexual behavior and sociality. Although bonobos were first distinguished from chimpanzees through comparative anatomy in a Belgian colonial museum in 1929, their scientific significance shifted dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century. Observations in European zoos foregrounded the prominence of sex in bonobo social life. Captivity thus became a crucial site for theories separating sex from reproduction and for the emergence of the “queer zoo animals” phenomenon. Following this history of a perverse sexual economy, I ask how zoos have shaped what scientists know about animal, and human, sexuality. The lecture draws on my forthcoming book, *Queer Zoo Animals: Sexualities in Captivity*, to be published by the University of Washington Press.

Marianna Szczygielska is a feminist historian of science whose work brings queer and decolonial approaches to the study of human-animal relations. She works at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin and is an associate editor of *Humanimalia*.



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