



Latti & Lady 2010 linocuts, ink and watercolour 56 cm x 38 cm each edition 13
cover: *B.B.* 2011 linocut, ink and watercolour 26 cm x 19 cm edition 23

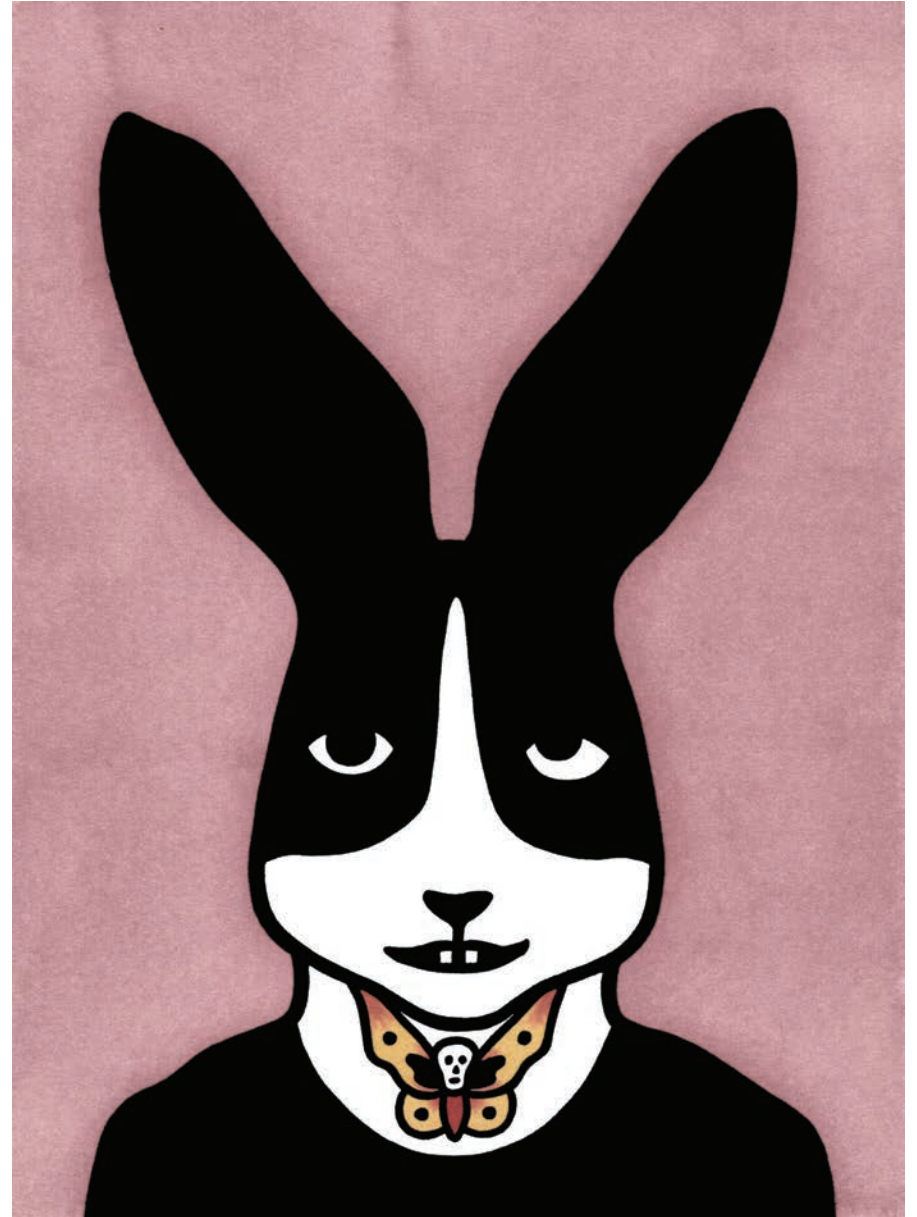
Rona Green
Losers & Winners
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Rona Green is currently undertaking a Master of Fine Arts
at the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University



Rona Green
Losers & Winners



Losers and Winners

From time immemorial human beings have striven to understand the ways of the natural world. Alongside a considerable accumulation of factual knowledge has grown a seemingly bottomless treasure trove of signs, symbols, legends, fables, myths and folklore about the animals with which we share our world. Many stories and pictures also incorporate constructive advice and good old-fashioned horse sense. These priceless heirlooms may, in sundry combinations, be shrewd, fanciful, comforting, frightening, funny, sad, gentle, violent, genteel or bawdy.

Perhaps because of our need to connect with animals, or maybe from sheer narcissism, we have a tendency to humanize them, to project our own values, expectations, prejudices and superstitions onto them, whether they inhabit our stories, the wilds or our homes. So the owl becomes the epitome of wisdom, the snake is evil, the fox is cunning, the ass is stupid, and so on.

Rona Green's street-wise *humanimals* will have none of this, however, and defiantly circumvent these clichés. There is absolutely no doubt as to who calls the shots. The slightly condescending label 'four-footed friends' does not even apply. Rona's astonishingly evolved beasties, lovingly documented in her handsome, visually arresting linocuts, are bipeds standing proud and tall. Looking at *B.B.* and his friends, I couldn't help but recall the painting seen briefly in the wonderful 1950 film *Harvey*, (1) namely a double portrait of the gentle eccentric Elwood P. Dowd (James Stewart) pictured with his best friend Harvey, a six foot three and a half inches tall white rabbit (allegedly a pooka, or shape shifter). Like Harvey and Elwood (initially the only human who will acknowledge his existence) they seem destined to be perpetual outsiders.

Once upon a time not so very long ago, the tattoo in Western society was predominately the Badge of Dishonour of disreputable sailors and other misfits who hung out on the wrong side of the tracks, like Rona's *Our Frank*, *Hud and Mugsy*, *Tomas*, *Dusty Rhodes*, and the comically sinister *Surgeon* (I daren't ask how he came by that name). Tattoos, it seemed, were for Losers, not Winners. But the former association of the tattoo with 'bowver boys' has lost something of its edge since it became a desirable, if somewhat indelible fashion accessory for certain upstanding members of the middle and upper classes. Rona's beasties have managed to restore the tattoo to something of its former glorious disrepute. Their tattoos, of the kind that usually adorn humans, suggest that they have as strong a need to connect to us as we do to them. Despite their apparent bravado, I suspect they want nothing more than our acceptance - to be treated with tolerance, understanding and respect. In a society where staid conformity is too often the norm, they dare to be different - to me they are the Winners. And if we reject them, we are definitely the Losers.

Deborah Klein
Melbourne based artist

(1) *Harvey* (1950) Directed by Henry Koster



Dusty Rhodes 2011 linocut, ink and watercolour 76 cm x 56 cm edition 23
opposite: *Our Frank* 2010 linocut, ink and watercolour 28 cm x 38 cm edition 23