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Animals as Metaphor: Feminist Art and Animal Rights in the 1970s and Beyond

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Ashley Watson
Animals as Metaphor:
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The feminist art movement as it is known today is said to have started in 1970, when artist Judy Chicago established the Feminist Art Program at Fresno State College. It was the first educational program of its kind dedicated to visually expressing the experience of women, who had (up until that point) been largely ignored as being capable of producing important works of art in a male-dominated field.

The modern animal rights movement as it is known today said to have started only five years later, in 1975, when philosopher Peter Singer wrote his groundbreaking book, *Animal Liberation*.

My research explores the ways in which these two seemingly disparate movements intersect. The bodies, blood, and other remains of non-human animals feature prominently in many feminist artworks dating from the late 1960s through the early 1980s. My aim is to compile a visual survey of these works, and to explore both the positive and negative implications of such work in a written analysis. This analysis will make comparisons between various feminist artists, the ways in which they have used non-human animals in their work, and how the meaning of these works can be interpreted differently today in light of the rising animal rights and welfare movements of the 1980s.