

ENDANGERED SPECIES

ARTISTS ON THE FRONT LINE OF BIODIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER 8, 2018 – JANUARY 6, 2019



Nick Brandt, British, b. 1964; *Line of Rangers Holding the Tusks of Elephants Killed at the Hands of Man, Amboseli*, from the book *Across the Ravaged Land*, 2011; Archival pigment print; 44 x 78 in. Courtesy of the artist.



Martin Johnson Heade; American, 1819 – 1904; *Cattleya Orchid, Two Hummingbirds and a Beetle*, c.1875 – 1890; Oil on canvas; 24 x 31.5 x 4 in. framed. Courtesy of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art Bentonville, Arkansas, 2010.67. Photography by Amon Carter Museum of American Art.

Nearly Two Dozen Programs Focus on Intersection between Art and Science in *Endangered Species* Exhibition

***Whatcom Museum's* groundbreaking exhibition opens September 8, 2018**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Bellingham, WA, August 1, 2018—The Whatcom Museum presents *Endangered Species: Artists on the Front Line of Biodiversity*, an interdisciplinary exhibition featuring 80 works of art, from rare books to cutting edge video, that span the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. It opens September 8, 2018 in the Museum's Lightcatcher building and closes January 6, 2019.

Offering a unique perspective of the critical work that artists are contributing toward natural science and environmental issues, this exhibition represents an international group of 60 artists who celebrate biodiversity's beauty, interpret natural and human-caused extinctions of plants and animals, and focus on species from diverse ecosystems under stress. While the exhibition features artwork that represents vulnerable species and human activities that threaten biodiversity, it also includes the work of artists whose projects contribute to the revitalization of habitats and reconnect people to the rich tapestry of life.

"We often read news headlines with alarming statistics and then turn the page," said Barbara Matilsky, exhibition curator and Curator of Art at the Whatcom Museum. "Artists take this information and create images that inspire emotional and thought-provoking responses. Hopefully, *Endangered Species* will stimulate visitors to help preserve the planet's environment and biodiversity."

Related programming aims to explore exhibition themes. In conjunction with the exhibition, the Museum will offer close to two dozen lectures, slideshows, and films

supporting the exhibition themes. Through collaborations and educational programming, the Museum will help visitors understand topics related to biodiversity and offer community dialogue and discussion within the Museum setting. The programs aim to educate people from different age groups about the importance of biodiversity. They relate to the Museum's mission of stimulating curiosity about our cultural and natural landscapes.

"The works comprising this exhibition are powerful; visually stimulating and thought-provoking," said Susanna Brooks, Director of Learning Innovation at the Museum. "They will unsettle and challenge visitors of all ages, and because we believe that how we learn is as important as what we learn, our programming lineup was selected with different learning styles in mind. We encourage visitors to enjoy, engage, and exchange ideas during their visit."

The Whatcom Museum is partnering with various organizations to host speakers and special events, including Humanities Washington, Conservation Northwest, the Hancock Wildlife Foundation, the North Cascades Audubon Society, Bellingham Parks & Recreation, and the Whatcom County Historical Society, among other organizations. Additionally, Western Washington University Gallery, Allied Arts of Whatcom County and Make.Shift Gallery will host concurrent exhibitions related to *Endangered Species* and biodiversity. A number of film screenings will be shown at the Museum that highlight the effects of plastics on ocean habitats, as well as the important work being done to protect wildlife along Washington State's I-90 corridor.

About *Endangered Species'* themes

The exhibition will focus on five interconnecting themes presented in multi-layered interpretive formats: illustrated text panels, object labels, a timeline of conservation milestones, a cosmic calendar, quotes by notable scientists, authors and environmentalists, and a gallery guide. The first theme, *Celebrating Biodiversity's Beauty and Complexity: From Landscapes to Microscopic Imagery*, focuses on artists who illuminate biodiversity's stunning variety on its most grand and intimate scales. By examining the shared practices that inspire artists and natural scientists, such as exploration, observation, and documentation, visitors can learn what biodiversity is about and why it is important.

The second theme, *Mammoths and Dinosaurs: Interpreting Natural Extinction*, introduces the concept of the complete loss of an animal or plant species. When natural scientists first discovered fossils of prehistoric life, early artists presented convincing visions of animals roaming primeval habitats in best-selling natural history books and panoramic murals commissioned by museums. The exhibition will showcase illustrated books and preliminary paintings for these majestic landscapes as well as contemporary interpretations.

In the third theme, *Portraits of Loss: Extinction by Human Actions*, visitors can explore how artists transform scientific documentation about early human-induced extinctions of the Dodo, the Great Auk, and the Passenger Pigeon, among others, into stirring portraits and still life paintings. Their artworks reflect meticulous research and the analysis of specimens from natural history museum collections. By reviving past life in sometimes startling ways, artists imprint their memory on our consciousness and spark awareness about the contemporary extinction crisis.

The plants and animals interpreted by artists in the fourth theme, *Endangered Species: Plants and Animals on the Edge of Survival*, symbolize the threatened ecosystems in which they live and the global decline of biodiversity. The artworks call attention to a small group of the 10,000 "endangered" and "critically endangered" species classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Contemporary artists not only portray animal and plant species at risk, they also interpret the human actions that lead to their precarious status: habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, population growth, and overhunting and fishing. These issues will be explored in the final theme, *At the Crossroads: Destruction or Preservation of Biodiversity*. Within this area, the challenges facing several biodiversity hotspots, such as tropical rainforests and coral reefs, will be highlighted.

An uplifting narrative is interwoven throughout this section by including examples of how artists collaborate across disciplines to revive habitats and engage humans with the natural world. These multi-media projects serve as inspiring models for individuals and community grass roots efforts towards environmental restoration and education.

Endangered Species has been organized with the intent of impacting public discourse about biodiversity while advancing the artist's pivotal role in building awareness. By tracing links between contemporary and earlier artists, the exhibition examines art's contribution to an enduring cultural legacy of nature conservation. Much like the Whatcom Museum's visionary 2013-14 exhibition, *Vanishing Ice: Alpine and Polar Landscapes in Art, 1775-2012*, this new exhibition will help visitors make connections with local as well as global environments. It will also highlight the impacts individuals have in affecting the diversity and health of various ecosystems.



Isabella Kirkland, American, b. 1954; *Gone*, from the *Taxa* series, 2004; Oil and alkyd on canvas over panel; 48x36 in. Private Collection.



Brandon Ballengée, American, b. 1974; DFB39 *Priapus*, from *Malamp: The Occurrence of Deformities in Amphibians*, 2013, Cleared and stained Pacific tree frog collected in Aptos, California, in scientific collaboration with Stanley K. Sessions; Unique Iris print on Arches watercolor paper; 46x34 in. Courtesy the artist & Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, NY

Featured Artists: Julie Andreyev and Simon Lysander Overstall; Canadian, b. 1962 and 1969, Sara Angelucci; Canadian, b. 1962, John James Audubon; American, 1785 – 1851, Brandon Ballengée; American, b. 1974, William P.C. Barton; American, 1786 – 1856, Antoine Louis Barye; French, 1796 – 1875, Daniel Beltrà; American and Spanish, b. 1964, Nick Brandt; British, b. 1964, Edward Burtynsky; Canadian, b. 1955, George Catlin; American, 1796 – 1872, Catherine Chalmers; American, b. 1957, David Chancellor; British, b. 1961, Xavier Cortada; American, b. 1964, Mark Dion; American, b. 1961, **Dornith Doherty; American, b. 1957**, Michael Felber; American, b. England, 1946, Madeline von Foerster; American, b. 1973, Nicholas Galanin; Tlingit/Aleut, b. 1979, Penelope Gottlieb; American, b. 1952, Ernst Haeckel; German, 1834 – 1919, Martin Johnson Heade; American, 1819 – 1904, Patricia Johanson; American, b. 1940, Chris Jordan; American, b. 1963, Harri Kallio; American, b. Finnish, 1970, Sanna Kannisto; Finnish, b. 1974, Darius and Tabitha Kinsey; American, 1869 – 1945 and 1875 – 1963, Isabella Kirkland; American, b. 1954, Charles Knight; American, 1874 – 1953, Adam Kuby; American, b. 1961, Garth Lenz; Canada, David Liittschwager; American, b. 1961, John Martin; British, 1789 – 1854, Courtney Mattison; American, b. 19, Daniel McCormick and Mary A. O'Brien; American, b. 1950 and 1952, Susan Middleton; American, b. 1948, David W. Miller; American, b. 1957, Macoto Murayama; Japanese, b. 1984, Edouard Riou; French, 1833 – 1900, Alexis Rockman; American, b. 1962, Christy Rupp; American, b. 1949, Joel Sartore; American, b. 1962, Preston Singletary; American Tlingit, b. 1963, Brian Skerry; American, b. 1961, Carl Strüwe; German, 1898 – 1888, Jason deCaires Taylor; British, b. 1974, Fred Tomaselli; American, b. 1956, Tom Uttech; American, b. 1942, Roman Vishniac; American, b. Russia, 1897 – 1990, Jason Walker; American, b. 1973, Andy Warhol; American, 1928 – 1987, Yang Yongliang; Chinese, b. 1980, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun; Canadian First Nations (Coast Salish and Okanagan), b. 1957

www.whatcommuseum.org/exhibition/endangered-species/.

A fully illustrated catalogue will be available for purchase at the Museum Store this fall.

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ABOUT THE [WHATCOM MUSEUM](http://www.whatcommuseum.org)

Located in Bellingham's cultural district, the Whatcom Museum, a non-profit organization operated jointly by the City of Bellingham and the Whatcom Museum Foundation, offers a rich variety of programs and exhibitions about art, nature, and Northwest history. The Museum's collection contains more than 200,000 artifacts and art pieces of regional importance, including a vast photographic archive. The Whatcom Museum is accredited nationally by the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian Institution Affiliate.

The Museum's multi-building campus is located in the heart of Bellingham's downtown arts district. The Lightcatcher building, 250 Flora Street, and Old City Hall, 121 Prospect Street, are open Wednesdays – Sundays, Noon – 5 PM. For more information about our exhibitions and admission visit www.whatcommuseum.org.

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