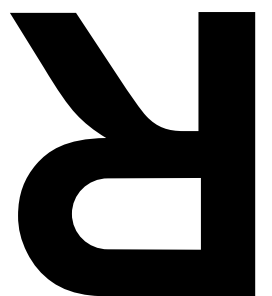


TENDING LOSS
MOURNING
BEYOND
THE HUMAN



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17.10.2026—24.01.2027

ALLORA & CALZADILLA with TED CHIANG
BRANDON BALLENGÉE
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CECILIA VICUÑA
SARA VRUGT

“Now is a time for grief to persist, to ring throughout the world.”

— Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature*¹

There are losses that arrive with a date, a name, and a body around which people can gather. Others are dispersed across seasons and generations. A bird call is heard less often until it is heard no more. A familiar landscape becomes unrecognisable after drought, fire, extraction, war, or industrial planting. A glacier thins beyond the threshold at which it can still be called a glacier. An ocean fills with plastic that will long outlive its makers and users, contaminating habitats and living bodies. Such losses are not always spectacular or immediately perceptible; many unfold gradually as part of a wider ecological unravelling. Even when one disappearance is final, that unravelling continues, with other losses already under way and more still to come.

TENDING LOSS: MOURNING BEYOND THE HUMAN begins from the recognition that ecological breakdown is also a crisis of feeling and meaning. Climate disruption, biodiversity collapse, toxic pollution, and the degradation of beloved places provoke sorrow, anxiety, anger, guilt, shame, and helplessness. A growing vocabulary has emerged for these emotions. *Ecological grief* names grief arising from experienced or anticipated losses of species, ecosystems, and cherished landscapes.² *Eco-anxiety* describes apprehension prompted by environmental deterioration.³ Philosopher Glenn Albrecht coined *solastalgia* for the homesickness one may feel while remaining at home as one's surroundings change so radically that they cease to offer solace.⁴ The words matter because they make experiences shareable. They tell us that distress in the face of a damaged world is not an individual defect but an intelligible response to conditions that threaten what we love and what sustains us.

GRIEF WITHOUT RECOGNITION

Ecological grief is therefore broader than bereavement after a discrete death. It may follow a sudden disaster, but it can also arise through slow violence: the incremental poisoning, drying, warming, or emptying of a place. It may be retrospective, anticipatory, or both. Often the object of grief is difficult to isolate because what is disappearing is a mesh of relations—a seasonal rhythm, a livelihood, a language, a sense of home, the confidence that familiar forms of life will continue. The scale may range from one tree to a planetary climate, while the loss may be personally immediate for some and largely invisible to others. Any account of ecological grief must therefore attend to these differences rather than treating all losses—and all experiences of them—as equivalent.

Yet ecological emotions remain remarkably hard to voice—and, even when voiced, hard to make adequately heard. Western societies have elaborate customs for mourning human deaths, but few established conventions or rituals for mourning the death of a river, the disappearance of a species, or the gradual loss of a forest. Although terms such as *eco-anxiety* and *ecological grief* have gained currency in recent years, their circulation should not be confused with widespread social legitimacy. Those who express such feelings are often still dismissed as irrational, oversensitive, or excessively emotional. Their feelings are thereby denied uptake: acknowledged perhaps as private distress, but not heard as consequential responses to real loss. In this sense, ecological grief remains disenfranchised: the loss is real to the mourner, but the surrounding culture withholds recognition, sympathy, or permission to mourn.

That withholding is political. Emotions do more than register private states: they communicate judgements about what matters. To grieve a poisoned river is to say that the river was not merely a resource and that its destruction is not an acceptable cost. To mourn an extinct bird is to insist that a form of life had value beyond its usefulness to humans. Conversely, when such grief is ridiculed, others learn to censor similar feelings in themselves. Suppressing public emotion can therefore operate as a subtle technique of social control: it narrows the range of responses considered reasonable and helps business as usual present itself as common sense. When people cannot publicly express their attachments, the beings and places they care about become harder to defend. What cannot be mourned becomes easier to destroy.⁵

MAKING ROOM FOR ECOLOGICAL GRIEF

There are, nevertheless, spaces where ecological grief is being expressed and cultivated. Environmental activists hold funerals and vigils for glaciers and vanished species, stage “die-ins,” form silent processions, and organise grief circles. Climate-conscious psychotherapists create settings in which distress can be acknowledged without automatically being pathologised. Scholars in the environmental humanities provide language for experiences that have often remained unnamed or overlooked, and foster more relational understandings of human life and more just ways of inhabiting a shared world. Artists, meanwhile, make images, objects, sounds, stories, and rituals through which losses beyond ordinary awareness may begin to register. Art opens a space of encounter in which new ways of attending to and remembering such losses may emerge, even when no ready-made forms exist for them.

The arts are especially important because they do not merely transmit information about ecological loss; they allow such loss to be perceived, imagined, and felt. By lingering over a trace or making an absence palpable, a work of art can make distant or gradual losses feel immediate. It can direct attention away from abstract extinction figures towards the particularity of a vanished species or way of life, or place the brevity of an individual life within the immense timescales of evolution and geology. Moreover, it can hold contradictions together: beauty alongside horror, tenderness alongside culpability, hope alongside irreversible loss. These tensions are not failures to deliver a clear message. They confront us with the emotional complexity of ecological mourning.

RELEARNING THE WORLD

This exhibition understands mourning as more than the outward expression of sadness. It is durational and relational work, with ethical and political dimensions. Grief is fundamentally about love: we grieve because our lives are attached to other lives, places, habits, and possible futures. Loss reveals how deeply these relations inhabit and constitute us—how parts of what we call the self have always existed beyond the skin. Mourning can undo us, but it can also redo us. Thom van Dooren, Blanche Verlie, and Zoë Sadokierski, drawing on philosopher and grief counsellor Thomas Attig, describe grieving as a process of “relearning the world”: adjusting our sense of who we are and how to live when an important relation has been transformed or severed.⁶ We do not return unchanged to a previous normal. We learn to live within a changed reality, wounded but still capable of connection.

Ecological mourning extends this process of relearning to our relations with the more-than-human world. It begins by recognising animal, vegetal, mineral, and elemental bodies as vulnerable—and their loss as worthy of grief.⁷ Yet such recognition does not arise automatically. As rhetoric scholar Joshua Trey Barnett argues, ecological grief is shaped through practices of naming, archiving, and making visible: acts that give neglected feelings public legitimacy and direct attention towards what requires care.⁸ Mourning therefore demands more than a general sorrow over environmental decline; it requires sustained attention to the particular lives and relationships being destroyed. Philosopher and anthropologist Thom van Dooren's accounts of threatened birds and snails trace how creatures sense, communicate, remember, and dwell with others, revealing each form of life as part of a singular web of relations.⁹ Seen at this scale, extinction is not simply the subtraction of an interchangeable unit of “biodiversity.” It is the unravelling of ways of living and relating that cannot be recreated—the loss of an entire world.

Becoming responsive to such losses requires what philosopher Vinciane Despret calls “learning to be affected.”¹⁰ Facts remain indispensable, but facts alone do not necessarily alter conduct. We also need a felt understanding of how thoroughly our lives are bound up with the more-than-human world. This does not mean projecting human emotion onto a mute nature. It means relinquishing the fantasy of human separateness and becoming more attentive to how other beings address us, resist us, depend on us, and exceed our comprehension. Making room for grief can draw us towards a more relational sense of ourselves: not masters standing outside a passive environment, but participants in densely entangled communities of life.

GRIEF, GUILT, AND HOPE

Such participation is never innocent. Ecological grief is frequently entangled with guilt because humans—unequally and in different ways—are implicated in the losses they mourn. We must grieve not only what has disappeared but also what human economies, institutions, and habits have helped destroy.¹¹ The pronoun *we* must be used carefully, since responsibility for these losses is distributed unevenly across histories of capitalism, colonialism, extraction, and consumption. Crushing personal guilt can paralyse, while vague invocations of humanity can conceal the companies, governments, and wealthy populations most able to cause or prevent harm. Accountable mourning neither claims innocence nor turns grief into self-absolution. It asks how sorrow might lead to a clearer understanding of responsibility and a commitment to changed conduct and, where possible, repair.

An apology to an extinct species cannot resurrect it. A memorial cannot restore a vanished glacier. Yet such acts may still matter when they acknowledge wrongdoing, enlarge the moral and political community, and make obligations towards surviving beings and damaged habitats harder to ignore. They can prefigure a society in which more-than-human lives matter emotionally, ethically, and politically.¹² Mourning is transformative not because any feeling automatically produces virtuous action—ecological emotions can remain private, become fatalistic, or even feed exclusionary politics—but because sustained attention can interrupt denial and reorient conduct. It can nurture the emotional literacy needed to distinguish responsibility from shame, solidarity from appropriation, and care from control.

This is why grief should not be opposed to hope. Embracing grief means reckoning honestly with the fact that much has already been lost, and that further losses are locked into the coming years regardless of what we now do. Hope that refuses this knowledge is consolation, not responsibility. Environmental communication often insists on upbeat stories and manageable tips for individual action for fear that audiences will otherwise become depressed. But optimism can minimise the severity of the situation, suggest that modest consumer choices are an adequate response to systemic crisis, and shift responsibility away from powerful institutions. A credible hope must be shadowed by loss. It can acknowledge irreversible harm while insisting that what remains—and what may still become—deserves determined care. That is the life-affirming wager of ecological mourning: grief can sharpen our sense of what is precious and bring us into more courageous relation with the living. Far from displacing action, it can both motivate action and give it direction.



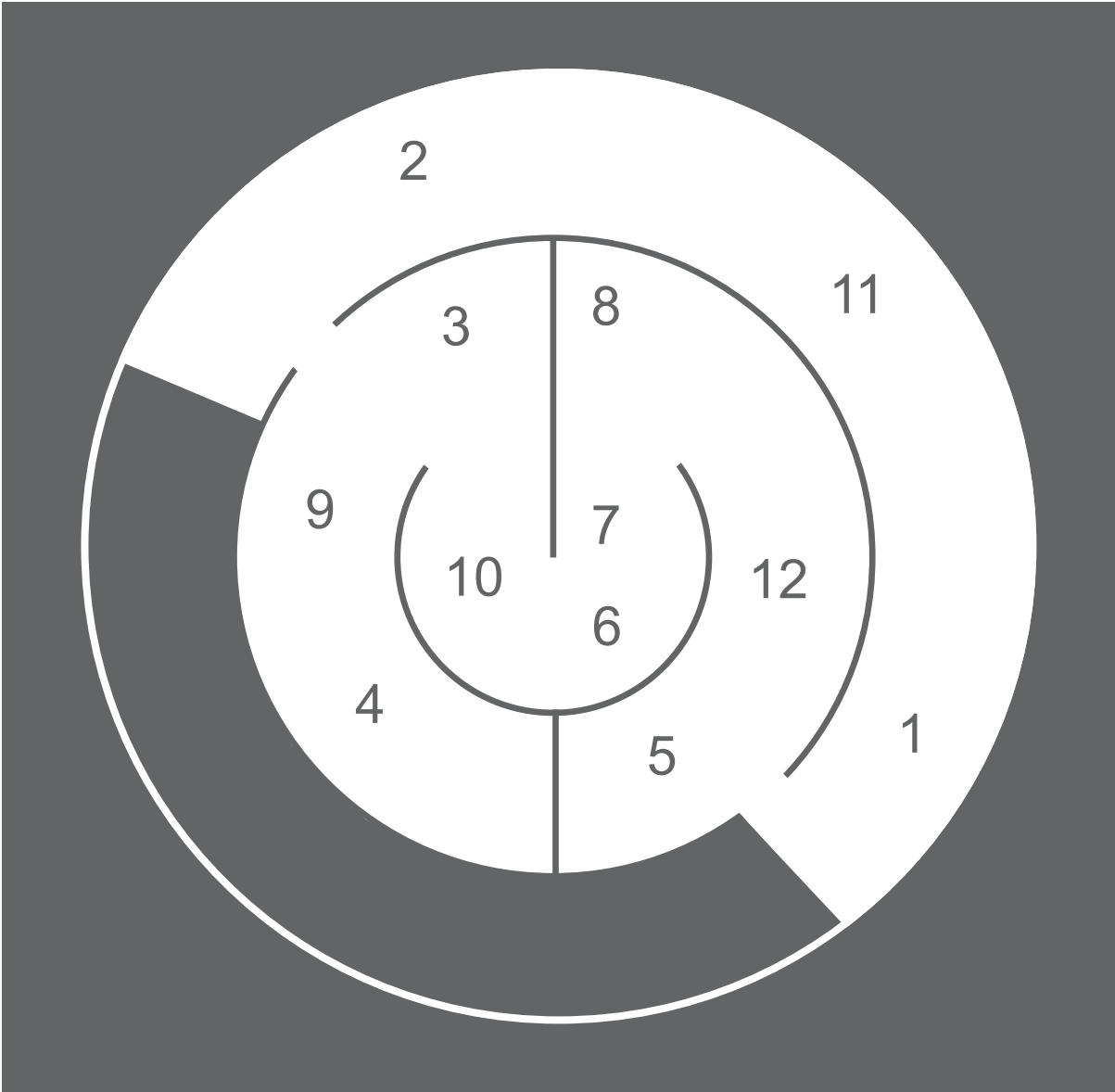


THE EXHIBITION AS AN OPEN SPIRAL

This understanding of mourning as an ongoing, potentially transformative practice shapes the exhibition itself. Rather than offering a therapeutic journey from grief to healing, *TENDING LOSS* unfolds through five movements arranged as an open spiral. Together, they propose a sequence of relations: traces invite listening, listening may expose implication, acknowledging implication can create a need for ritual, ritual may renew relations of care, and care can make further traces and voices perceptible.

The structure takes conceptual inspiration from the late philosopher and activist Joanna Macy's "Work That Reconnects," an experiential group practice that moves through gratitude, grief, renewed perception, and action.¹³ Macy describes its stages as an open spiral because they can be revisited repeatedly, each passage opening onto altered meanings and responses. *TENDING LOSS* does not reproduce this sequence, but shares its understanding of mourning as recursive rather than directed towards closure.

RADIUS's circular exhibition space, formerly an underground water reservoir, gives this recursive logic a spatial resonance: visitors move around it and may return to earlier works and concerns rather than simply advancing through completed stages. This openness also operates at the level of the works themselves. Although each is situated within a particular movement, many bear witness, lament, memorialise, implicate, and care at once. Each movement foregrounds a principal narrative function without confining the works to it, allowing meanings and affects to reverberate across the exhibition.



- 1 MAARTEN VANDEN EYNDE
- 2 MARJOLIJN DIJKMAN
- 3 RAPHAËL FISCHER-DIESKAU
- 4 ALLORA & CALZADILLA with TED CHIANG
- 5 CECILIA VICUÑA
- 6 BRANDON BALLENGÉE
- 7, 8 MARCUS COATES
- 9 DOMINIC BOYER, CYMENE HOWE, and ANDRI SNÆR MAGNASON
- 10 SARA VRUGT
- 11 ELINE KERSTEN
- 12 KATIE PATERSON

I. TRACES OF VANISHING

“We grieve only for what we know.”

—Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*¹⁴

The spiral begins with remains. Maarten Vanden Eynde's *Palaeontological Plastic IV* and Marjolijn Dijkman's *Between the Lines* ask what persists when worlds disappear and how materials and landscapes become archives of loss. Ocean plastic, damaged forests, contaminated ground, and altered terrain preserve traces of processes that unfold across generations and often exceed the span of a human life. These works disturb any clean distinction between natural and political history. In Vanden Eynde's work, the industrial history of plastic becomes entangled with marine ecosystems and geological time; in Dijkman's, war, industrial forestry, drought, and climate disruption remain inscribed in the landscape. Recognition here is an acquired skill. To witness loss, one must first learn to read residues and absences—not as evidence that an event is over, but as the continuing presence of damaged relations. Moving between geological duration and historical memory, the works carry these traces into the present and towards uncertain futures.

1 MAARTEN VANDEN EYNDE

Palaeontological Plastic IV, 2014

Behind glass, an uncanny form rises from a mass of plastic debris, resembling the branching structure of coral. The antique cabinet recalls European cabinets of curiosities, in which collected specimens were ordered and classified as a way of making the natural world legible. *Palaeontological Plastic IV* inherits this history only to unsettle it: the specimen on display is not organic but made from the synthetic waste threatening marine life.

Since the 1950s, plastics have spread through ecosystems across the planet. Their durability allows them to resist natural degradation, fragmenting and accumulating in oceans, sediments, food chains, and living bodies. Vanden Eynde assembled this coral-like formation from several kilograms of debris collected from oceans around the world. The work does not present plastic and nature as separate realms. Instead, it shows how deeply they have become entangled. Its form holds two processes together: the destruction of existing habitats and the persistent material legacy left behind.

The sculpture also imagines plastic as a *technofossil*—a human-made object capable of surviving within future geological layers. Displayed like a specimen from another age, it invites viewers to imagine a future archaeology in which plastic becomes one of the clearest records of human activity on Earth. The cabinet therefore looks both backwards and forwards: to traditions of collecting and classification, and to a time when today's waste may be studied as geological evidence. The work asks what plastic destroys, what evidence it will leave in the geological record, and how living systems will endure its growing presence.

2 MARJOLIJN DIJKMAN

Between the Lines, 2021–2026

Between the Lines examines the forests around Verdun within the *Zone Rouge* (Red Zone), an area of 120,000 hectares across northeastern France declared too devastated for human habitation after the First World War. The contaminated soil still holds an estimated twelve to fifteen million pieces of unexploded ordnance, while more than 80,000 unrecovered soldiers lie buried in the forest. As postwar restitution, Germany supplied Norway spruce trees to reforest thousands of hectares. Planted in dense, uniform rows, they restricted access to the dangerous terrain, creating a “living sarcophagus.”¹⁵

During the hot, dry summers of 2018 and 2019, bark beetles infested these spruce monocultures. The resulting deadwood created a major fire risk, forcing forestry workers to clear trees from ground still filled with buried munitions. Marjolijn Dijkman treats this landscape as a living archive in which war, industrial forestry, climate change, and infestation produce successive layers of damage.

The works presented here trace these connections through materials gathered near Verdun. *Points of Origin* (2025) reveals the internal growth structure of a spruce tree from the forest planted on the former battlefields. Disease, damage, and weathering, followed by decay and erosion, have gradually hollowed out the trunk. In *Iron Harvest* (2024), wartime shrapnel is welded into a form resembling beetle-scarred bark.

Dormant Seeds (2025) arranges cones gathered from the cleared spruce forests in orderly rows reminiscent of ammunition stockpiles. Coated with copper recovered from First World War artillery casings, the cones are preserved while their seeds are prevented from germinating, suspending the possibility of renewal. *Against the Grain* (2025) coats a wheat stem, gleaned in 2022 from a field still littered with remnants of war, with the same recovered material. Connecting this crop with fears of global food shortages following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the sculpture brings past and present conflicts together. Across the project, one history of destruction becomes entangled with the next, showing how the consequences of conflict persist—and are intensified and transformed by a changing climate—long after the fighting ends.

II. VOICES AT THE EDGE OF SILENCE

“I write as though you could understand
And I could say it”

—W. S. Merwin, “For a Coming Extinction”¹⁶

From reading traces, the exhibition turns to listening. Raphaël Fischer-Dieskau's *Concerto for Extinct Birds*, Allora & Calzadilla's *The Great Silence*, and Cecilia Vicuña's *Kuntur Ko* unsettle the assumption that humans alone possess voice, intelligence, memory, or the capacity to address others. Listening here does not presume that more-than-human modes of expression can be fully understood or translated into human terms. Recordings can make extinct calls audible again, but cannot restore the living bodies and flourishing habitats to which they belonged; other forms of communication may remain partly inaccessible; glaciers and waters make themselves felt through changes and rhythms that elude familiar language. These works reverse the usual direction of attention. Humanity, so intent on sending messages across the cosmos, appears as the species that has failed to hear the intelligences beside it. Ecological lament emerges as an encounter across difference—an invitation to become answerable to calls that may arrive precisely as their worlds approach silence.

3

RAPHAËL FISCHER-DIESKAU

Concerto for Extinct Birds, 2024

In 1987, the song of the last known male Kaua'i 'ō'ō (*Moho braccatus*) was recorded in the forests of Kaua'i, Hawai'i. Members of the species usually sang in pairs, alternating their calls. In the recording, the male repeatedly pauses for a response from his absent mate that never comes. Once part of a dialogue, his song can now be heard as a lament for the disappearance of an entire species.

Taking this unanswered call as its point of departure, *Concerto for Extinct Birds* brings together surviving recordings of ten birds that have vanished:

1. Kaua'i 'ō'ō (*Moho braccatus*)—Kaua'i, Hawai'i; last recorded in 1987
2. Kāma'o (*Myadestes myadestinus*)—Kaua'i, Hawai'i; last observed in 1989
3. Po'ouli (*Melamprosops phaeosoma*)—Maui, Hawai'i; last individual died in 2004
4. Guam flycatcher (*Myiagra freycineti*)—Guam; last seen in 1983
5. Alagoas foliage-gleaner (*Philydor novaesi*)—Brazil; last recorded in 2011
6. Cryptic treehunter (*Cichlocolaptes mazarbarnetti*)—Brazil; last recorded in 2007
7. Bachman's warbler (*Vermivora bachmanii*)—southeastern United States; last reported in 1988
8. Atitlán grebe (*Podilymbus gigas*)—Guatemala; last observed in 1989
9. Dusky seaside sparrow (*Ammospiza maritima nigrescens*)—Florida; last individual died in 1987
10. Ivory-billed woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*)—Louisiana; recorded in 1935 and now presumed extinct

Distributed across ten speakers, these voices are detached from the habitats and relationships that once gave them meaning and arranged into an otherwise impossible composition. Calls formerly exchanged between mates or directed towards members of the same species now meet only other archival sounds—or silence. Technology allows the birds to be heard again, but cannot restore the living soundscapes to which they belonged. By gathering listeners around this fragile acoustic archive, Raphaël Fischer-Dieskau makes extinction perceptible as both sound and absence. Listening becomes an act of remembrance and collective witnessing: an encounter with voices preserved beyond the lives and ecosystems that produced them.

4

ALLORA & CALZADILLA with TED CHIANG

The Great Silence, 2014

Duration: 16 minutes, 52 seconds

Until its collapse in 2020, the 305-metre telescope at Puerto Rico's Arecibo Observatory was the world's second-largest single-dish radio telescope. Developed through United States Cold War defence research, it later served radio astronomy, planetary science, asteroid detection, and the search for intelligent life beyond Earth. In 1974, it broadcast the Arecibo message towards a star cluster some 25,000 light-years away. More a demonstration of human technological capability than a realistic attempt at conversation, the transmission announced humanity's desire to make contact across the cosmos.

The critically endangered Puerto Rican parrot (*Amazona vittata*), found in the nearby Río Abajo forest, narrates *The Great Silence* through subtitles written by science-fiction author Ted Chiang. Moving between the observatory and the forest, the video places the search for distant intelligence beside the habitat of a species capable of complex communication. The parrot reflects on the Fermi paradox—the apparent contradiction between the likelihood of intelligent life elsewhere in the universe and the absence of evidence for it—and on Alex, an African grey parrot who learned to use more than one hundred human words.

Allora & Calzadilla turn Arecibo's search back towards Earth, contrasting efforts to reach distant minds with humanity's failure to listen to species already living beside it. The silence of outer space becomes entangled with another silence: that created by extinction on Earth. Giving the parrot a speculative voice, the work uses fiction to unsettle human assumptions about language and intelligence, inviting us to recognise other species as communicative beings—and to consider what may disappear before we learn how to hear it.

CECILIA VICUÑA

Kuntur Ko, 2012

Kuntur Ko gathers a body of poems by Cecilia Vicuña composed in response to the destruction of Chile's glaciers. Voice, breath, and song move through the listening station as both ritual and lament, while language winds through Spanish, English, Quechua, and Mapudungun. This entanglement of speech carries the weight of Indigenous knowledge systems and their kinship with water. Vicuña returns again and again to an Andean metaphor: the thread running between glacier and ocean, body and Earth—water as the “thread of life” itself. As her words move between the languages of coloniser and colonised, she makes legible the intertwined ecological and social consequences of colonial rule, which not only extracted resources from the land but also sought to erase the languages, relationships, and knowledge systems bound to it.

To listen here is to enter a space of reflection, held open for both personal and collective mourning: a prayer and an offering addressed to water as kin rather than as a passive resource. As Chile's glaciers retreat under the combined pressures of extractive mining and a warming climate, what disappears is not only ice but a relationship between people, land, and water—one founded on reciprocity rather than ownership. Vicuña's vocal laments carry an embodied grief for both: for water as a source of life and for the loss of the relationship through which it was understood as such.

III. ACCOUNTABLE MOURNING

“Just as grief is a felt experience of love for something we are losing or have lost, *guilt is the felt experience of care for something we have harmed.*”

—Tim Jensen, *Ecologies of Guilt in Environmental Rhetorics*¹⁷

Listening makes responsibility harder to evade. Brandon Ballengée’s *The Frameworks of Absence* and Marcus Coates’s *Extinct Animals and Apology to the Great Auk* place us in the uneasy position of mourning losses caused or accelerated by humans. Their gestures of removal, attempted reappearance, and public apology cannot restore the dead. That failure is central: remembrance must not simulate repair or convert grief into proof of human sensitivity. Instead, absence becomes an accusation and a demand. Who is authorised to apologise, in whose name, and what conduct could make an apology more than words? How can acknowledging complicity and unequal responsibility lead to changed conduct rather than paralysis or self-reproach? In this movement, mourning becomes answerable. Its measure is not emotional intensity but whether recognition generates obligations towards endangered beings, damaged habitats, and generations to come.

6

BRANDON BALLENGÉE

The Frameworks of Absence, 2006–ongoing

In *The Frameworks of Absence*, Brandon Ballengée makes extinction visible by cutting images of lost species from historical prints. Presented here are the passenger pigeon, the quagga, and the dodo. He selects prints that preserved images of these species after the animals themselves had vanished. Removed from the page, each figure persists as a void—an absence marking irreversible loss. The act of cutting out the figures forms part of a ritual of mourning: the excised paper animals are cremated in honour of their species, and their ashes preserved in funerary urns etched with their names.

Their extinctions differ, but all bear human traces. The passenger pigeon was driven to extinction by large-scale commercial hunting and the clearing of its North American forest habitats by Euro-American settlers. The quagga was systematically killed by European settlers in southern Africa as its grazing lands were increasingly given over to livestock. On Mauritius, the dodo could not withstand hunting, habitat disruption, and the introduced predators that followed Dutch colonisation of the island.

By returning to historical representations of these species, Ballengée also revisits the histories of settlement, colonisation, and exploitation that caused their disappearance. The missing figures interrupt the apparent completeness of the printed page, making extinction impossible to overlook. Loss assumes material form: the void in the page retains the outline of the life that is no longer there.

7

MARCUS COATES

Extinct Animals, 2018

Marcus Coates recalls extinct animals through the shape of his own hands. Each is embodied in a simple gesture, inviting visitors to follow: hands become wings, muzzles, ears, or horns, while shadows give fleeting form to species that have disappeared. Mimicry becomes an act of attention and empathy. Held briefly in the bodies of those who remember them, the animals return as living but ephemeral presences.

The collective ritual turns imitation into an act of remembrance, while exposing its limits: the gestures call the animals to mind but cannot bring them back. The gesture is both generous and futile: hands may suggest the movement of wings or the texture of fur, but they cannot restore what has vanished. The hand can never become the animal, nor the shadow recover its body. Yet the limits of imitation are also what give the work its force.

This embodied remembrance carries an added ethical weight: the hands that now commemorate these animals also bear witness to the forces that destroyed them—many died at human hands. Bringing human bodies and extinct species into momentary contact across the threshold of extinction, Coates makes the hand both an instrument of care and a sign of culpability. Embodiment here is a form of reckoning: through body and shadow, grief for vanished species becomes inseparable from an acknowledgement of human responsibility for their disappearance.

Extinct Animals evokes sixteen species:

- Labrador duck
- Pyrenean ibex
- Thylacine (Tasmanian tiger)
- Irish elk
- Auroch
- Steller's sea cow
- Pied raven
- Honshu wolf
- Pinta Island tortoise
- Atlas bear
- Golden toad
- Javan tiger
- Yangtze River dolphin
- Syrian elephant
- Lake Pedder earthworm
- Passenger pigeon

MARCUS COATES

Apology to the Great Auk, 2017

Duration: 7 minutes, 23 seconds

In the summer of 2017, Marcus Coates travelled to Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada, to help formulate an official apology to the extinct great auk. Once numerous around the island's shores, the flightless bird was hunted for its meat, feathers, and fat and collected by European naturalists; the species became extinct in 1844. Coates brought together a specially formed committee of residents and visitors to discuss and draft the apology. The resulting statement was ratified and delivered by Fogo Island's mayor through a megaphone directed towards the sea.

Through shared reflection and public address, *Apology to the Great Auk* asks how acknowledging past destruction might shape our obligations in the present. In the film, many voices are distilled into a single declaration carried across the open water and met only by the silence of the sea. The absence of its intended recipient makes the irreversibility of extinction palpable: the great auk can neither receive these words nor grant forgiveness.

The work gives public form to ecological grief, binding sorrow to guilt and turning both outwards—making them public and political. The address links remembrance with accountability. No apology can restore the great auk, but this one transforms belated grief into commitments to the living: to protect the bird's surviving kin, educate future generations, and prevent further extinctions. It thereby extends mourning and moral concern beyond the human, gesturing towards a multispecies community in which nonhuman lives are recognised as worthy of care, remembrance, and justice.

IV. RITUALS FOR THE UNSEEN AND UNMOURNED

“[T]here is no language to express that loss, no collection of shared symbols or rituals to acknowledge the significance of that loss, and certainly no systemic recognition that that loss might be (literally) earth-shattering for many people, akin to the death of a lover, a parent, a child.”

—Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies”¹⁸

Ecological loss often lacks a funeral, a shared symbol, or a recognised place in public life. The Okjökull memorial plaque and Sara Vrugt’s *Becoming Earth* explore ritual as a provisional container for what has been denied or left unseen. One addresses a future public from the site of a vanished glacier; the other draws the visitor into an intimate, bodily encounter with underground relations, past and future generations, and the return of one’s own body to more-than-human cycles. Neither work offers closure. Ritual makes loss present, gives feeling a form, and gathers—or deliberately isolates—bodies long enough for attention to deepen. It can validate ecological emotions and make them collective without prescribing what everyone should feel. This movement is a hinge: reconnection matters not as consolation, but as the ground from which renewed responsibility may grow.¹⁹

9

DOMINIC BOYER, CYMENE HOWE, and ANDRI SNÆR MAGNASON

Okjökull Memorial Plaque, 2019

Once a glacier crowning the Ok volcano in western Iceland, Okjökull had become too thin to move under its own weight by the early twenty-first century. In 2014, following years of observation, glaciologist Oddur Sigurðsson declared that it no longer qualified as a glacier. Although remnants of ice remained, its flowing mass had become a stagnant, dwindling patch.

Anthropologists Dominic Boyer and Cymene Howe explored the glacier's disappearance in their 2018 documentary *Not Ok*, drawing on conversations with Icelanders about its loss. They later initiated a memorial with writer Andri Snær Magnason, who composed the inscription for a bronze plaque installed at the former glacier's site during a public ceremony in 2019. Presented here is a replica of that plaque. The glacier funeral drew international media attention, carrying this act of ecological mourning to a global audience. Magnason's inscription takes the form of a letter to the future. Warning that Iceland's remaining glaciers could follow the same path within the next two centuries, it addresses future generations who will know whether those living today responded to the evidence before them.

The plaque extends the practice of commemoration beyond the human, marking the disappearance of a glacier through human-driven climate change. It transforms a process that can appear remote, gradual, and abstract into a loss that can be remembered, mourned, and understood as a matter of human responsibility. At once memorial and warning, it honours what has vanished while confronting the losses still to come. By binding past, present, and future together, the work makes climate collapse a matter of collective reckoning and asks whether knowledge of destruction can yet compel us to act.

10

SARA VRUGT

Becoming Earth, 2026

Enter the ground, cocooned by mycelium, and lie down in solitude—though not in isolation. Beneath the surface, among roots, fungi, and bacteria, life unfolds through continuous exchange. Field recordings drift through the space: Sara Vrugt's voice addresses the visitor in a whisper, accompanied by the sounds of subterranean activity. Drawing on Joanna Macy's "Work That Reconnects," she approaches mourning and gratitude not as opposites but as intertwined responses to a damaged yet living world.

Held within this imagined underground environment, the visitor enters a space resembling a grave. Yet burial appears here not only as an ending, but also as a return: the body is placed within the processes that sustain life and will one day receive it back. Between the microorganisms that decompose organic matter and the roots that draw nourishment from it, each visitor becomes momentarily aware of their place within a dense network of dependence.

To lie here is therefore to rehearse a cyclical existence. The boundary between body and environment becomes less secure as the ground bears the visitor's weight and the installation brings normally hidden relationships into sensory reach. What may initially feel like withdrawal becomes an encounter with forms of life already surrounding and sustaining us. Solitude gives way to participation; burial becomes a way of imagining continuity beyond the individual self.

Settle beneath the roots. Rest upon the soil.
Breathe with the Earth, as the Earth breathes with you.

V. TENDING WHAT REMAINS

“I believe that ecological mourning is a signature labour of the Anthropocene—a labour in which we must all engage as our species moves deeper into the Anthropocene. . . . Do we continue on as is, or do we allow ecological mourning to become a resource for ethical and political change?”

—Ashlee Cunsolo, “To Grieve or Not to Grieve?”²⁰

The final movement refuses both despair and redemption. Eline Kersten’s *All That Remains* and Katie Paterson’s *To Burn, Forest, Fire* turn towards practices of attention that do not promise to return a damaged world to its former state. Fire, charcoal, forest, incense, scent, and breath bind destruction to transformation without romanticising catastrophe. Tending means staying in relation with landscapes and lives whose futures are uncertain; it is patient, repetitive, and incapable of guaranteeing success. The damaged landscapes and enduring residues of the opening movement find echoes here in charcoal and in forests evoked at their beginnings and possible endings, so the exhibition folds back on itself. Its last question is not how to finish mourning, but how mourning might continue as care: protecting conditions of life, bearing witness when protection fails, resisting avoidable destruction, and remaining present to what still calls for a response.

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KATIE PATERSON

To Burn, Forest, Fire, 2021

To Burn, Forest, Fire uses two specially made incense sticks to evoke ecosystems separated by 385 million years. Katie Paterson calls them the First Forest and the Last Forest: one vanished in deep time, while the other remains alive but faces accelerating destruction amid the climate crisis.

The first scent is based on fossil remains found near Cairo, New York—then regarded as evidence of the world's earliest known forest. This ancient environment existed before birds or flowers, when trees grew alongside mosses, liverworts, fungi, and algae. Its incense combines the aromas of warm soil, clay, stream water, wet grass, decaying plants, and crushed leaves.

The second scent evokes the Amazon through the Tiputini Biodiversity Station in Ecuador's Yasuní Biosphere Reserve. It brings together humid earth, tree bark, resin, lichen, fermenting guava, and scents associated with animals including howler monkeys, armadillos, peccaries, and tiger beetles. "Last" does not mean that the Amazon is literally Earth's final forest. It warns of the danger facing this exceptionally biodiverse ecosystem.

Paterson developed the scents with scientists and field researchers. They were made into incense by Shoyeido in Japan. The work unfolds as a simple ceremony in which each stick burns for about fifteen minutes. A bell opens each burning: the First Forest incense is lit, followed by the Last; a final bell closes the ritual. As the scents enter the body and disperse into the air, vast ecological timescales become briefly tangible. Each environment is conjured through smoke before the scent fades and the incense is reduced to ash.

During TENDING LOSS, this ritual is performed three times—at the opening, midpoint, and finissage—creating shared moments of ecological remembrance and mourning.

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ELINE KERSTEN

All That Remains, 2025

After fire comes charcoal: wood transformed, but not entirely erased. Its cellular structure preserves traces of tree species and the conditions under which the wood burned. Anthracology, a branch of archaeobotany, identifies charred wood by examining its anatomy under a microscope. For *All That Remains*, Eline Kersten collected charcoal from former wildfire sites in Drunen in the Netherlands, the Mechelse Heide in Belgium, and mountain forests in Switzerland. Working with anthracologist Radek Grabowski, she used this microscopic analysis to identify tree species and study the encounter between forest and flame.

Kersten selected and reworked Grabowski's microscopic images into compositions that she printed with pulverised charcoal as pigment. The resulting seventy-centimetre circular silk-screen prints make the remains of the trees both subject and material. Magnified cellular patterns appear abstract—suggesting mountain ridges, dried riverbeds, root systems, or neural networks—yet remain scientifically grounded. At this intimate scale, the burned forest becomes landscape again.

Charcoal is both an archive of fire and one of humanity's oldest drawing materials. Here, a substance once used to trace images on cave walls records contemporary landscapes in fire's wake. It can also act as a regenerative substrate, helping improve soil structure, retain water and nutrients, and support microbial life. Holding these different temporalities together, *All That Remains* resists a simple opposition between destruction and renewal. It honours vanished trees while attending to the altered ecologies that follow. What survives the burn becomes a means of seeing and remembering what was lost.

LIVING WITH LOSS

The spiral has no final stage of healing or release from grief. The losses gathered here do not belong to a completed past, and the exhibition does not pretend that contemplation can substitute for action. It advances a different proposition: that holding open a space for ecological mourning is itself part of building the social and emotional infrastructure required for change. Classrooms, workshops, performances, memorials, vigils, conservation projects, therapy rooms, and exhibitions can each become places where people learn to notice, feel, share, and respond.

There will never be one correct way to mourn a species, a forest, a glacier, or a possible future. Dwelling with loss is painful, varies across cultures and communities, and is shaped by unequal exposure and responsibility. Although this work is personal, mourning is also a collective task. It requires shared languages, rituals, and institutions that give ecological emotions public recognition and connect grief to solidarity, responsibility, and action.

Tending names the ongoing work of ecological mourning: attending to the dead without abandoning the living, acknowledging irreversible loss without surrendering possibility, and caring for damaged relations that still make claims on us. Grief reveals how much other beings, places, and possible futures matter to us. That recognition can bring us back to the living world in richer, less possessive ways—more alert to its voices, more honest about our implication, and more determined to protect the lives and relations that remain.

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TENDING LOSS MOURNING BEYOND THE HUMAN

17.10.2026—24.01.2027

ALLORA & CALZADILLA with TED CHIANG
BRANDON BALLENGÉE
DOMINIC BOYER, CYMENE HOWE, and ANDRI SNÆR MAGNASON
MARCUS COATES
MARJOLIJN DIJKMAN
RAPHAËL FISCHER-DIESKAU
ELINE KERSTEN
KATIE PATERSON
MAARTEN VANDEN EYNDE
CECILIA VICUÑA
SARA VRUGT

TENDING LOSS

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Text: Stef Craps (essay & work descriptions),
Isobel Nicholl (work descriptions)
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YEAR-PROGRAMME 2026

YOU AND I ARE EARTH— TOWARDS AN EARTHLY POLITICS

How can this Earth continue to rotate? Seemingly so, the world continues to accelerate tirelessly, and the Earth lumbers on, exhausted and wholly indifferent to human actions. Although the latter does not seem entirely immune and unresponsive to the way fossil-fuel-burning-man continues to disrupt its metabolism, the biosphere. So far, Earth is the only planet known to harbour life, and whether we like it or not, for the time being, Earth is where we take our stand, as dwellers in the critical zone we call the biosphere—the ever-narrowing bandwidth in which life can persist. In short, we are Earth-bound but unable to find a position, as the late philosopher of science Bruno Latour would have said.

Against this backdrop, RADIUS presents the programme YOU AND I ARE EARTH in 2026, focusing on the central question 'Where can we land?' Through five exhibitions and an extensive public and educational programme, we will collaborate with artists and other stakeholders to explore new compositions and possibilities for life in the critical zone—the thin, dynamic layer on Earth's surface where all life is connected to rock, soil, water, and air. Beyond a purely scientific definition, this year-programme—following philosopher Bruno Latour—emphasises the critical zone as an ecological and political concept, emphasising both the vulnerability and interconnectedness of life in the face of climate change.

REKINDLING LIFE

The journey of humanity, a relative latecomer in the history of the living, is indescribable, yet can be summarised in a single sentence: making life livable and the world habitable. Recently, ecological thinking has realised, as other peoples already practice daily in their relationships with living things, that life is only livable for humans if it is also livable for the fabric of the living as a whole. That the world can only be livable for us if it is also livable for other living species, for we are nothing more than a nexus of relationships interwoven with other life forms.

With this in mind, we are developing the year-programme YOU AND I ARE EARTH, to continue the conversation about shared ground and the importance of an open society in times of geopolitical tensions and increasing social polarisation. Just when political attention seems

to be drifting away from climate change and thus from defending our diverse environment, we want to collectively lift the world with this programme, setting it back on its axis—call it an ecological lever to rekindle the flames of life. But a sense of powerlessness and despair prevails, despite civil society's strong sense of urgency to take back control. The problem lies in the intermediary between our hands and the world. We need ideas and hands, especially ideas that fit the available hands.

ON THE ROLE OF ART AS VEHICLE

In our cultural landscape, the idea that we are interdependent and related to the rest of the living world is now commonplace. But why, then, isn't the living world central to our collective attention, to the political arena of what preoccupies us as a society above all else, and sometimes even to contemporary ecological thinking? Because, in our cultural self-image, we do not see ourselves as living beings.

With the year-programme YOU AND I ARE EARTH, we aim to reconsider this lack of human connection with the environment, specifically by transcending the false opposition between humanity and 'nature.' We do this through the work of artists who—following Gabrielle Hecht's definition—use their practice and work as an 'interscalar vehicle' to create new connections between humanity and the Earth, viewed from the perspective of interdependence. The story of climate change is all-encompassing and is generally considered too vast and abstract. In this sense, art can serve as a vehicle, on the one hand, by moving between timescales, making complex systems accessible, and making events beyond our capabilities tangible and palpable. On the other hand, art enables us to move from imagination to action—without imagination, there is no vision of a desirable future.

With the programme YOU AND I ARE EARTH, RADIUS develops a counterpoint to the centripetal force of the dominant narrative of the Anthropocene—which centers on the exceptionality of a particular, detached human type—by telling centrifugal stories that acknowledge the enormous inequalities generated by the various forces changing our planet.



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