
Thinking through Extinction

Manchester Museum

What does it actually mean to people from different backgrounds and experiences to face extinction?

There are many extinct and threatened species in museum displays, and this can be a complicated and emotional subject for visitors. Over the last year, Manchester Museum has been part of the collaborative AHRC funded project, *Thinking Through Extinction*, working with academics from the University of Leeds, Corridor 8 and artists and writers from across the UK to explore how current global mass extinction event is communicated by and encountered in public spaces.

The key element of the Museum collaboration was the *Voicing Silence* residency, led by Liverpool-based artist Laurence Payot, exploring the emotional impact of extinction. Originally designed to take place in the Museum, the COVID-19 lockdown resulted in an online programme of 14 workshops being delivered from May to July 2020. Using creative writing, choreography, animation and music, over 150 participants engaged with the topic of extinction.

The final artwork, *Voicing Silence*, is a haunting, holographic video installation, co-produced by Payot and her team of collaborating artists. It draws on the content created by workshop participants while thinking about biodiversity loss and viewing extinct animals and plants in the Museum's collections. *Voicing Silence* is now on display in Manchester Museum as part of their 'We are Nature' exhibition; responding to the beauty, complexity and decline of wildlife. Alongside the exhibition, Corridor 8's publication, *Facing Extinction*, further explores and prompts reflection on biodiversity loss, recovery and features artwork produced during the workshops.

Partners: Manchester Museum, University of Leeds, artist Laurence Payot, Corridor 8 (collective)



Image caption:

Still image captured from *Voicing Silence* by artist Laurence Payot