More Than Human
Large Print Guide
11 July – 5 October 2025

the DESIGN MUSEUM

Introduction

Design is deeply associated with creating a better way of life — for humans. But we exist alongside billions of animals, plants and other living beings. Always putting human needs first has had devastating consequences on landscapes, other species and the climate. While there is urgent work being done to reduce our impact on the natural world, truly addressing the root of these crises will require a fundamental shift in outlook.

Where can we start? More-than-human design begins by acknowledging our connections with the ecosystems that give us life. This bold approach repositions design’s role, challenging us to imagine a world in which human desires no longer take precedence over the rights and needs of living systems. A new generation of designers, architects and artists is exploring how to reorient their practices for the flourishing of other species. By designing with and for the living world, they look to help our planet thrive.

Bloomberg Connects

Join the curators of More than Human, as they share insights into some of their favourite pieces from the exhibition. With our free audio guide, you'll discover fascinating stories behind the objects — going beyond the wall texts for a deeper look.

Scan the QR code to explore the guide.

Section 1
Being Landscape

The idea that humans are separate from nature has led to widespread environmental destruction. According to this logic, landscapes are a resource from which we can extract what we need, regardless of the consequences for our planet. Mass industrialisation and urbanisation have only deepened our disconnection from the ecosystems upon which we depend.

Can we relearn the ways in which we humans are entangled in living systems? Can we rediscover the natural rhythms and cycles that once governed earlier ways of life? Many artists and designers seek to dissolve the division between the human and non-human. They show through their work that we do not merely inhabit the landscape — we are landscape.

Mapa da Estrada (Seringa)
(Map of the Road [Rubber tree])
Hélio Melo
Leaf extract and ink on paper
1998

Hélio Melo was an artist and rubber tapper who navigated difficult paths through the Brazilian Amazon to extract latex from rubber trees. Melo documented this way of life in his paintings. Here, the tree branches become a map charting the tapper's route. The tree-map symbolises the relationship between human and forest — one that was being replaced by more destructive industries, such as cattle farming and mining.

Donated by Patrons of Contemporary Art
of the Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo
2021, through the Pinacoteca Art and Culture
Association - APAC, 2021

Untitled, from the Sonhíferas (Dreamers) series
Solange Pessoa
Oil on canvas
2020–21

Solange Pessoa's figures cannot be clearly read as human, animal or vegetable. They may be all three, or captured mid metamorphosis. The figures seem to reject boundaries between one form of life and another, evoking a fluid life force. Many of Pessoa's works recall the animist beliefs of Brazil's Indigenous peoples, in which all forms of life have spirit or agency.

Courtesy of Solange Pessoa and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, Paris, New York

Nature Calendar
Marcus Coates
Vinyl
2022

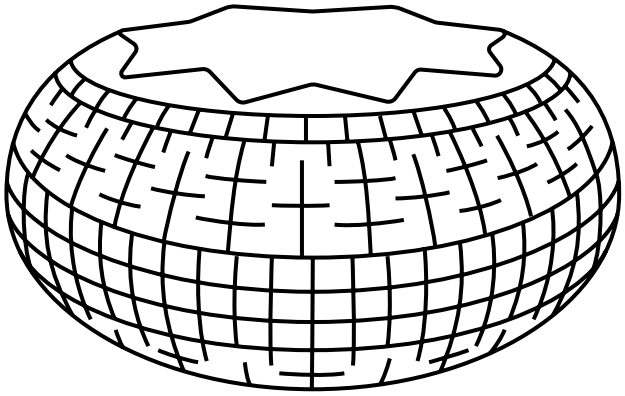
This calendar lists specific events taking place in the natural world throughout the year. Animals and plants are oblivious to our calendar days and months, but respond to shifts in temperature, light and magnetic currents that we cannot sense. Coates' work is a reminder that humans once used close observation of other species to track the movements of seasons.

Courtesy of Marcus Coates and
Kate MacGarry Gallery

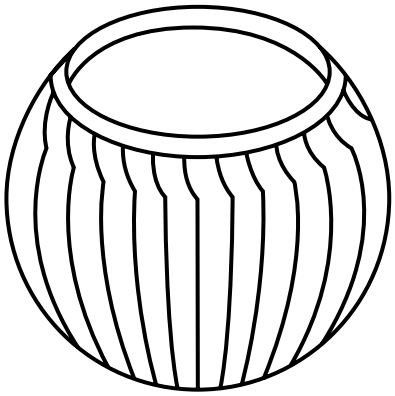
Extensions of the forest

These baskets were woven by members of the Ye'kuana people of the Venezuelan Amazon. Weaving baskets is central to Ye'kuana identity. It is a ritual process that begins with songs, asking the rainforest's permission to take the necessary materials for weaving. The Ye'kuana view baskets as sacred objects, essentially an extension of the natural world. They are often decorated with the animals of the forest. The types shown here, the small Jojo and the larger Wüwa, are only woven by women.

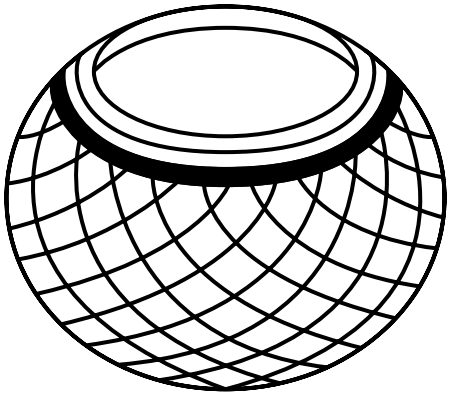
All the baskets have been produced by women belonging to the Association of Women Weavers of Caura Adooni led by the artisan Dawa (Dawanedu Emajenewa/Luz Maria García), and are courtesy of Madame Tepuy



Jojo basket
Emanejewa
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23

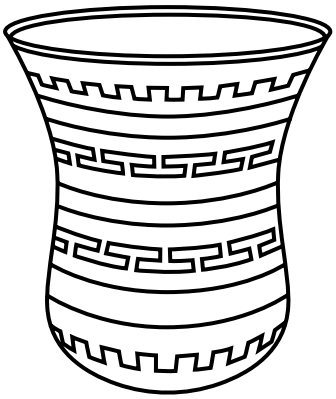


Jojo basket
Rosalinda
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23



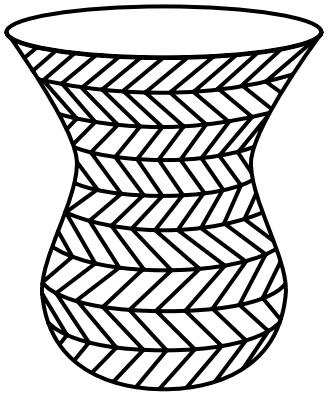
Jojo basket
Emanejewa
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23

Wüwa basket
Rosalinda
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23

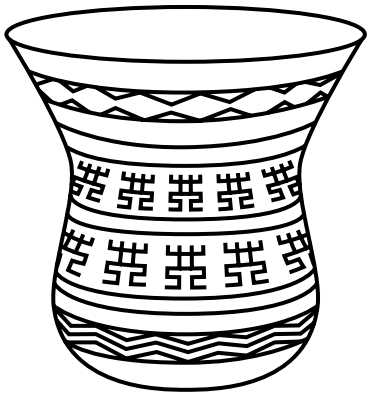


Wüwa basket
Marieta
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23

Wüwa basket
Dawa
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23



Wüwa basket
Dawa
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23



Wüwa basket
Felicia
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23

Wüwa basket
Marieta
Plant fibre and vegetable dyes
2020–23

Interview with Dawa
(Dawanedu Emajenewa/Luz Maria García)
Fina Torres
Video
2025
Duration: About 5 minutes

Weaver and activist Dawa leads a group of women weavers from her community, the Ye'kuana people of the Venezuelan Amazon. In this interview, she shares the origin myths that inform the shapes and patterns of the baskets on display and explains how the materials used are collected.

Courtesy of Fina Torres and Ana Khan

Rumita
Federico Borella, Michela Balboni
Photographic prints
2024

Every year during carnival, participants clad in leaves collected from local woodland parade into the town of Satriano di Lucania in southern Italy. Called rumiti — from the Italian for ‘hermit’ — these figures have emerged from both Christian traditions and pagan folklore. The festival was revived by younger generations of the region in 2012 to celebrate the ways in which we continue to be entangled with the landscapes around us.

Courtesy of Federico Borella and Michela Balboni

Corn Dolly I–VI
Jonathan Baldock
Bronze
2013/2023

Jonathan Baldock, who comes from a family of hop-gatherers and gardeners, researches traditions in which communities celebrate their relationship with the land. This series of masks is inspired by corn dollies like those displayed nearby, which were made throughout Europe for hundreds of years. Originally made from corn and worn for a performance, they were later cast into bronze, transforming an ephemeral, seasonal object into a permanent record of the skill of its maker.

Courtesy of Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and New York

Rural traditions

Corn dollies were traditionally made from the stalks of the last sheaf of grain to be harvested each year. Plaited into staffs, wreaths or even human forms, they were kept to preserve life through the fallow months until the following spring. The practice was widespread in Europe but died out in the mid 20th century. James Richardson made his traditional dolly in 1935 at the age of 93, while Fred Mizen's shepherd's crook design was exhibited at the Festival of Britain in 1951, a public celebration of British design and craft.

Left to right:

Strawcraft shepherd's crook
Fred Mizen
Straw, wire
1951
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading. MERL 52/78

Corn dolly
James Richardson
Wheat straw
1935
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading. MERL 51/669

Pei yono uhutipi (Spirit of the path),
Hii yao yao hoko sike riye (Ocelot stick and green palm), Masiko kekipi (Palms of spirits that fan the world), Mapari peno mayo (Another path of termites)
Sheroanawe Hakihiiwe
Acrylic paint on cotton paper
2023

Sheraonawe Hakihiiwe is part of the Yanomami Indigenous community who live in the Venezuelan and Brazilian Amazon. His paintings record details that he observes around him in the forest, from patterns used by his mother to decorate his body as a child and the surface of baskets she wove, to traces left by animals and the forms of plants and trees. Together, they form an archive of Yanomami knowledge that reflects the abundance of life in the forest.

Courtesy of Paula del Sol and Carlo Solari (Mapari peno mayo only) and Sheroanawe Hakahiiwe, Galeria Abra Caracas and Cecilia Brunson Projects (all other works)

More than Human Fellow

César Rodríguez-Garavito / MOTH

The Design Museum invited four research-based practices to develop new works for this exhibition. Through close observation of ecosystems and species in specific locations, each project seeks to address the needs of more-than-human life.

César Rodríguez-Garavito is an Earth rights scholar and field lawyer. He is the founding director of the Program at New York University School of Law, where he is a professor of law and Director of the Earth Rights Research & Action (TERRA) Clinic. MOTH initiatives include a partnership with Project CETI on the legal implications of AI-assisted translation of sperm whale communications. MOTH is also involved in a legal bid to recognise a forest as a co-author of a song (with musician Cosmo Sheldrake, writer Robert Macfarlane and mycologist Giuliana Furci).

More than Human Fellowships are commissioned by Future Observatory, the Design Museum’s national research programme for the green transition, and supported by UKRI’s Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The More-Than-Human Rights Mural
Elena Landinez, César Rodríguez-Garavito
PVC-free wallpaper, acetate
2025

This mural records the names of rivers that have been awarded legal rights by the countries through which they flow, as well as land surrounding waterways whose rights have been debated in court. These constitutional provisions, court rulings and declarations protect the integrity of rivers and, by extension, the many species (including humans) who depend on them.

To read excerpts from texts on more-than-human rights, look at the mural through the masks. For more information and to read the texts in full, go to the website futureobservatory.org.

Courtesy of Elena Landinez and César Rodríguez-Garavito

The following video is on the wall behind.

The Environmental Continuum of Genocide in Namibia
Forensic Architecture, Forensis
Video
2025
Duration: 25 minutes

This video combines oral histories with historical and contemporary photographs, cartography and gaming software to map the changes in the Omaheke region of Namibia. Humans, plants and landscapes all become witnesses to the long-term effects of German colonisation. The work supports demands for ancestral lands to be returned to the people of the region and reparations paid. It was initiated by the collectives Forensic Architecture and Forensis, in partnership with The Ovaherero/ Ovambanderu Genocide Foundation (OGF).

Courtesy of Forensic Architecture and Forensis
In partnership with the Nama Traditional Leaders Association (NTLA) and Ovaherero Traditional Authority (OTA)

Continue through the right-hand doorway.

More than Human Fellow

Paulo Tavares, studio autônoma

The Design Museum invited four research-based practices to develop new works for this exhibition. Through close observation of ecosystems and species in specific locations, each project seeks to address the needs of more-than-human life.

Paulo Tavares is an architect whose practice lies at the frontiers between architecture, visual cultures and advocacy. Earthly Memorials is part of a body of work that explores how natural landscapes have been co-created with humans. Tavares lives in Brasília, where he teaches at the University of Brasília and leads studio autônoma, a multidisciplinary agency working across architecture, art and advocacy.

More than Human Fellowships are commissioned by Future Observatory, the Design Museum’s national research programme for the green transition, and supported by UKRI’s Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Earthly Memorials: São Paulo Terra Indígena (São Paulo Indigenous Land)
Paulo Tavares, studio autônoma
Mixed media
2025

The Jaraguá Guarani Indigenous Land is the last surviving piece of Atlantic Forest in São Paulo, Brazil. This installation records the current state of this site of ecological and cultural significance through interviews, archival images, maps, 3D scans and a model of the landmark Jaraguá Peak. Tavares's project involved working closely with the Guarani Nation in support of land recognition and reparations. After the exhibition, the model will be donated to the Guarani.

Courtesy of Paulo Tavares / studio autônoma
Developed in collaboration with Jaraguá Guarani Indigenous Land, Chão Collective and Escola da Cidade

Yvyrupa language drawing
Jurandir Tupã Jekupe Mirim
Photograph
2025

In the Guarani language, the landscape is constructed from elements that all trace their root to the word for water. This schematic drawing shows the root and the nouns that develop from it, in Guarani, Spanish and English.

Photograph: Paulo Tavares

Y
Video
2025
Duration: 27 minutes 35 seconds

A video document on the forest heritage of the Guarani's Indigenous Land of Jaraguá

Direction & photography:
Richard Werã Mirim and Paulo Tavares
Research & interviews: Laura Pappalardo
Complementary research:
Amanda Klajner & Paula Marujo
Graphics and motion: Stefano Storsi
Direct sound: Fred França
Editing: Paulo Tavares & Richard Werã Mirim
Original soundtrack: Jurandir Tupã Jekupe Mirim, Paulo Tavares & Angie Lopez
Photogrammetry: Julia Veras
Production: Paula Marujo
Translation and captions: Rodrigo Hannah
Interviews with Guarani leaders Jurandir Tupã Jekupe Mirim, Márcio Werã Mirim, Irene Mendonça (Jaxuka Mirim), Daniel Werã Mirim, Cacica Ara Poty (Maria) and Antony Karaí Poty

Exit the room and continue through passage to the right.

Forest Mind
Ursula Biemann
Multi-channel video installation
2021
Duration: 31 minutes 44 seconds

What can forests teach us about the cosmos and our place within it? Ursula Biemann brings together Indigenous ritual practice and Western scientific research to answer this question. The film's voiceover, provided by Biemann, explores ways of expressing the intersections of knowledge between Indigenous medics and molecular biologists. Forest Mind stems from the artist's long-term research work with the Inga people of the Colombian Amazon and brings the forest into the exhibition through a sample of Amazonian DNA which is embedded in the painted circle.

Courtesy of Ursula Biemann

Section 2
Making with the World

For most of human history, we have designed in harmony with other species — sharing houses with farm animals or making fish traps that let young fish escape. Industrialisation changed that. Designers today are relearning how to design with and for living systems.

But what does this involve? It means designing in ways that encourage biodiversity and the health of natural ecosystems — for example, creating architecture that hosts birds and insects. It means thinking beyond human needs. Some designers may work with living materials, like mycelium or bacteria, which means they cannot fully control the final outcome. Making with the living world is a deeper, more holistic approach to the climate crisis than focusing on carbon emissions. Making with the living world fundamentally challenges the principles of design as we know it.

Continue on wall, opposite.

Making without harm

These two headpieces were created by two distinct Indigenous communities: the Bororo in Brazil and the Macusi in Guyana. However, they share an approach to the use of materials that is sympathetic, rather than extractive. Plant fibres for the woven structure were sourced locally and mature feathers were collected when they were shed by the bird, rather than plucked. As a result, these impressive objects have been made with minimal harm to the maker's environment.

Top to bottom:

Headdress with feathers
Unknown maker
Feathers, palm leaf
Made before 1958
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1960.6.3

Coronet of parrot feathers
Unknown maker
Feathers, plant fibre
Made before 1905
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1905.36.3

Animal husbandry

For thousands of years, humans have relied on animals for labour or food, often at the expense of the animal's wellbeing. In some cases, we have bred them to become dependent on us. Humans have a duty of care for these animals, and societies the world over have developed ways to make them more comfortable.

This might mean protecting their hooves with hobble-boots or sandals, building a hive with windows to check on bees without disturbing them, or providing a surrogate to comfort animals whose offspring have been removed. Favoured animals may also receive special treatment, like a special collar. The objects displayed here were made in the UK, Japan, Kenya and South Sudan.

1 Skep hive
George Neighbour and Sons of London
Straw, wood, glass
Unknown date
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading. MERL 55/346

2 Dummy eggs
HB Lucas
Ceramic
Unknown date
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading. MERL 54/371/1-3

3 Surrogate calf
Unknown maker
Cattle skin, straw, wood
Made before 1978
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. 1978.20.385

4 Collar for favourite bull calf
Unknown maker
Giraffe skin
Made before 1931
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1931.66.31

5 Hobble-boots
Unknown maker
Rubber
Unknown date
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading. MERL 89/47/1-2

6 Horse sandals
Unknown maker
Straw
Made before 1909
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1909.32.13.1

Turn around and continue on wall behind.

Common hornbeam (Carpinus betulus),
Pin oak (Quercus palustris), Persian ironwood
(Parrotia persica), Willow-leaved pear
(Pyrus salicifolia), Goat willow (Salix caprea),
English yew (Taxus baccata)
From L'Architettura degli Alberi
(The Architecture of Trees)
Cesare Leonardi, Franca Stagi
Ink on tracing paper
About 1963

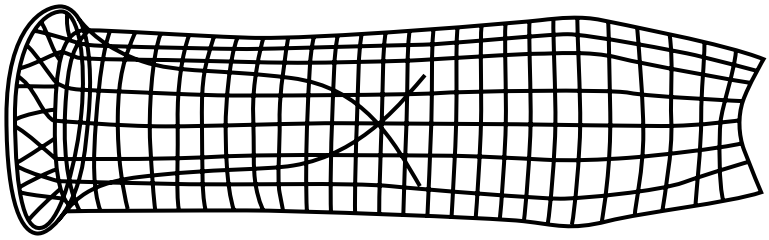
For over two decades, architects Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi documented trees across the world to produce this collection of 374 drawings. Their research stemmed from a conviction that, to design a thriving park, one must have a thorough knowledge of trees. Leonardi made scale drawings of each species to understand their forms and variations and thus centre their needs. The six tree species shown here grow immediately around the Design Museum and in Holland Park.

Courtesy of Fondazione Archivio Leonardi

Passive fishing

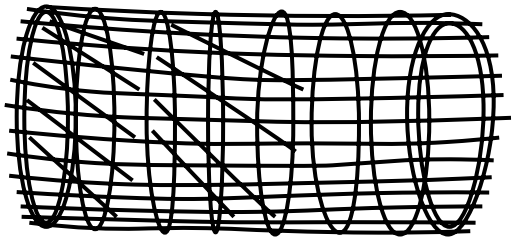
Traditional fish traps are examples of designs that embody more-than-human relationships. They use natural materials, are reusable, and minimise the impact of human needs on other species. These traps are carefully constructed to fit the adults of a particular species and allow young fish to escape. They are left in moving water to trap the fish, rather than dragging nets through water or along the seabed. This guarantees future catches and the survival of the species that humans rely on to feed themselves.

This group of baskets includes examples from England, Guyana, Myanmar, the Nicobar Islands in Southeast Asia and Tanzania.

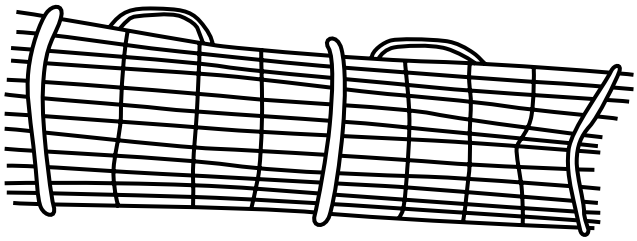


Fish trap
Unknown maker
Forest liana twine
Made before 1957

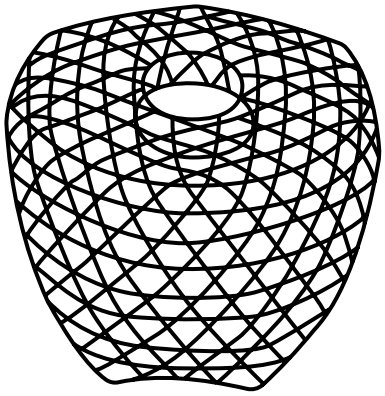
This trap would have been used along with a dam, placed across small creeks during the wet season. The second cylinder, woven inside, ends in loose strands of twine that prevent the fish from escaping through the mouth. The closed end can be unlaced to remove the fish.
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1958.3.35



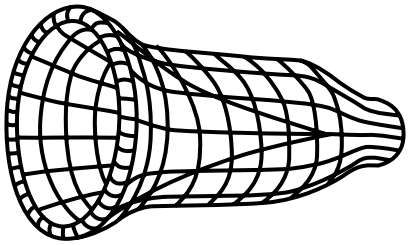
Fish trap model
Unknown maker
Bamboo
Made before 1889
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1889.9.16



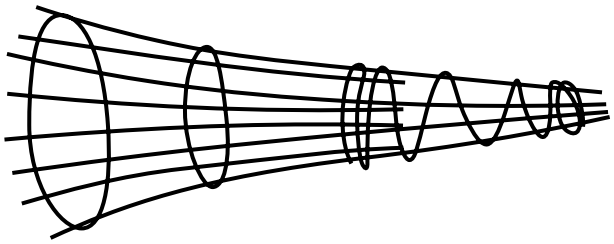
Fish trap
Unknown maker
Unknown material
Made before 1925
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1925.45.3



Fish trap
Unknown maker
Cane, coconuts
Made before 1886
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1884.11.5



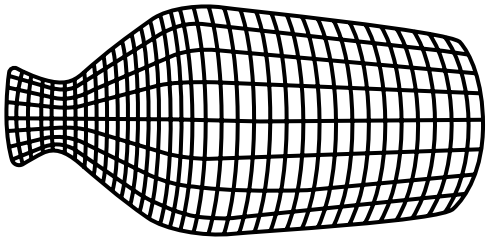
Fish trap
Unknown maker
Cane, coconuts
Made before 1886
Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.
1884.11.5



Salmon trap
Ivor Cadogan
Willow
1964

This large, open-design ‘putcher’ trap was used to catch big fish. Found in the British Isles since the 10th century, fishermen set many of them on frames across river estuaries to catch salmon as they moved with the tide.

Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading. MERL 64/22



Eel trap
Stanley Bird
Cane, steel, wire
1961
Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading. MERL 63/172

Continue to wall with video projection.

More than Human Fellow

Feifei Zhou

The Design Museum invited four research-based practices to develop new works for this exhibition. Through close observation of species and ecosystems in specific locations, each project seeks to address the needs of more-than-human life.

Feifei Zhou is an artist and architect exploring the spatial, cultural and ecological impacts of the industrialised built environment. She conducts her research through field-based observations, visual essays and cross-disciplinary collaborations with social and natural scientists. Her recent collaboration with scientists from the University of California, Santa Cruz, titled Fragmented Porosities, examines complex more-than-human histories in coastal regions. Zhou is also the co-editor of the digital project Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene (feralatlas.org), an interactive website that collates research

into the unintentional effects of human infrastructures on species and ecologies.

More than Human Fellowships are commissioned by Future Observatory, the Design Museum's national research programme for the green transition, and supported by UKRI's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

The Coast Is Not a Line, It’s a Zone
Feifei Zhou, in collaboration with Gillian Bogart
Mixed media
2025

Section of a sero
Boas Koenan
Gewang (Corypha utan) leaves
2024

Feifei Zhou challenges cartographic norms, suggesting the coast is not a line, but a complex zone that sustains a great variety of species, including humans. She uses the sero — a vernacular fish fence used by fisherfolk in Kupang Bay, Timor, Indonesia — as an example of a life-sustaining practice that works with, and not against, its environment. By allowing young aquatic creatures like fish and shrimp to escape, the sero fosters ecological regeneration and multispecies cohabitation.

Courtesy of Feifei Zhou

Special thanks to the fishing community of Kupang Bay that generously shared their insights with Zhou during her fieldwork and made this project possible.

Turn around and continue along wall.

Into the Island
DnA_Design and Architecture
Mixed media
2022–ongoing

In 2022, Beijing-based DnA_Design and Architecture were invited to submit a design for a museum on the island of Meizhou in Fujian Province, China. Instead, they proposed subtle interventions on six sites around the island, each of which supports different activities and species. Repurposing existing materials and structures wherever possible, the project is a blueprint for having minimal impact on ecosystems and promoting the regeneration of multiple species, as seen in the videos.

Drawing courtesy of
DnA_Design and Architecture
Film courtesy of DnA_Design and Architecture/
CCA Montreal

On the plinth, opposite:

Modular Artificial Reef Structure (MARS) II
Reef Design Lab
Low carbon concrete, stainless steel
2023

Coral reef destruction is a tangible consequence of climate change and intensive fishing. MARS II exemplifies how design can play a decisive role in its regeneration. This structure is composed of 3D-printed modular units that can be deployed from small boats and slotted onto a metal scaffold on the seabed, without the need for barges or cranes. The creviced surface of each module supports both transplanted and naturally occurring coral. The artificial reef also shelters fish.

Courtesy of Reef Design Lab and Alex Goad

Return to wall, opposite.

Living Seawall panels
Reef Design Lab,
Sydney Institute of Marine Science
Low carbon concrete, composite reinforcement
2018

Living Seawalls is a tiling system that transforms coastal defence walls into habitats for marine life. The tiles come in ten different, 3D-printed designs that resemble rock or reef formations and increase the diversity of a depleted ecosystem. They encourage colonising organisms, providing shelter for fish, seaweed and species such as oysters and barnacles that absorb pollutants and improve water quality. Living Seawalls has been successfully installed across shores in Europe, Asia and Australia.

Courtesy of Reef Design Lab, Living Seawalls and Alex Goad

Living Breakwaters
SCAPE Landscape Architecture
Mixed media
2013–24

This project began as a response to the damage to human infrastructure and coastal ecosystems caused by Hurricane Sandy across the Caribbean and coastal United States in 2012. The scale models on display represent two of the modules from the breakwaters that are being built off the coast of Staten Island in New York. This artificial structure will defend against coastal erosion, provide a habitat for a variety of marine species, and be the focus for education programmes in the region.
It is part of the Billion Oyster Project, which aims to rebuild and repopulate New York Harbor’s oyster reefs.

Courtesy of SCAPE Landscape Architecture
Photographs: Ty Cole

Film, interactive map
Weald to Waves
Video, website
2022–ongoing
Duration: 3 minutes 59 seconds

Weald to Waves is one of many initiatives in the UK seeking to address the loss of biodiversity in our countryside. In order to thrive, species need space to roam, locate food and find shelter. This project is connecting landowners, landscape architects, scientists and communities across Sussex in a common goal: to create a 100-mile-long wildlife corridor.

You can explore the interactive map here or go to wealdtowaves.co.uk to plan a walk and visit in person.

Courtesy of Weald to Waves

Go to pavilion in centre of room.

Partial reconstruction of Alusta Pavilion
Suomi/Koivisto Architects
Brick, wood
2025

Alusta Pavilion
Suomi/Koivisto Architects
Photographic prints
2023

This pavilion offers shelter to humans, plants, insects and fungi alike. It combines mass-produced insulating bricks with locally sourced clay and wood. The photographs record the original version of the pavilion built in the courtyard between the Museum of Finnish Architecture and the Design Museum in Helsinki. It featured additional panels made of biochar, a charcoal-like fertiliser. Over several seasons, a garden and insect community flourished around the structure, while the architects used the project as a site of experimentation, observation and learning.

Courtesy of Maiju Suomi and Elina Koivisto
Photographs: Elina Koivisto

Walk to back of pavilion.

The Chair
Marlène Huissoud
Unfired clay, natural binders, wood
2019

What does a chair look like when its intended users are insects, not humans? Marlène Huissoud offers an answer through her collaboration with scientists Robert Francis and Brandon Mak. Together, they designed a series of forms, including this chair, which provide habitats for insects such as solitary bees, wasps and butterflies. The size of each hole and the colour of the natural binder applied to the surface have been chosen to provide shelter that will be attractive to these insects.

Frac Grand Large — Haut-de-France

Return to other side of pavilion and continue along wall from left to right.

The Transspecies Rosette
Andrés Jaque, Office for Political Innovation
Mixed media
2025

Andrés Jaque envisions architecture as a dynamic, flourishing ecosystem rather than as a static container for people. This installation proposes cladding that is both beautiful and functional, with a more-than-human design that fosters mutually beneficial trans-species relationships. It is composed of ground cork and natural resin, simultaneously providing waterproof insulation for the building and a substrate for other species to grow on, including invisible microbes and fungi.

Courtesy of Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation with VIPEQ

Oase (Oasis) R1, H1, K1, W1
Johanna Seelemann
Terracotta
2023

Johanna Seelemann designed these vases in the shape of petrol cans as a commentary on the competition between plants and cars in urban environments. Made of low-fired terracotta instead of metal, they function as clay pot irrigation systems. This ancient method involves burying a clay pot up to its neck and filling it with water, which leeches out to surrounding plants. This process uses 70% less water than surface irrigation.

Courtesy of Studio Johanna Seelemann

Habitat (bird façade), Habitat (insect façade)
Johanna Seelemann
Geopolymer of recycled glass powder
and rice husks
2024

These building facades have different sized openings to attract birds or insects. They have been 3D printed using discarded rice husks and recycled glass powder, demonstrating Johanna Seelemann's commitment to reusing waste materials for the benefit of other species. The profiles of the façades have insulating properties that, when applied at scale, may reduce energy consumption. Versions of both façades have been applied to a building in Milan, Italy, to test their efficiency.

Courtesy of Studio Johanna Seelemann, with the support of Ricehouse and Arche3D, and promoted by Park Associati (bird façade)

Continue to table in centre of room.

The City of Birds
Studio Ossidiana
Mixed media, steel, artists' book
2019–22

Studio Ossidiana design spaces that encourage encounters between species. For this long-running project, they have researched the architecture of aviaries, pigeon lofts, bat towers, bird feeders, cages and traps. The variety of architectural types expressed in these models, which resemble a city for birds, reflect the different relationships that humans have formed with birds, keeping them as pets, training them to deliver messages, or harvesting their droppings for fertiliser.

Courtesy of Studio Ossidiana

Dovecote for London
James Peplow Powell
Ceramic, plywood, aluminium
2023

Although pigeons are mostly perceived as urban pests, humans actually share a history of productive cohabitation with them. Throughout the regions surrounding the Mediterranean, dovecotes have long provided shelter to pigeons and served to collect their guano (excrement), once considered the best agricultural fertiliser. Dovecote for London is a design proposal catering both to pigeons' welfare by providing them with a home in the city, and to our needs by supplying guano for urban farms.

Courtesy of James Peplow Powell
Realised as part of Future Observatory's Design Researchers in Residence Programme, 2023, funded by UKRI's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Bird-safe Building Guidelines
SCAPE Landscape Architecture
Printed graphics, glass, bird-safe tape
2007–ongoing

In the United States, between 100 million and 1 billion birds die each year from collisions with glazed buildings. This is because they do not see the glass, focusing instead on the habitats it mirrors or encloses. The Bird-safe Building Guidelines is a freely available publication presenting design solutions to prevent these deadly collisions. The images of affected species are shown here alongside a sample of film that can be applied to glass, ensuring that it becomes non-reflective or patterned to birds.

To learn more and explore the Bird-safe Building Guidelines, scan the QR code in the lower right-hand corner of the graphic.

Courtesy of SCAPE Landscape Architecture

Continue along wall.

Living materials

Artists and designers face new challenges when working with living materials. Plants and mycelia grow at their own pace and in ways that cannot be fully controlled. These two pieces of furniture rely on mycelium as part of their structure, while nearby objects turn to roots, bacterium and biopolymers as collaborators that are able to generate patterns, colourand elasticity.

Accalmie (Period of calm), Stool 18
Corentin Mahieu, Bento Architecture, Sonian
Mycelium, beechwood
2023–24

This table’s scaffold-like base was made from Belgian beechwood, while its tabletop was created by growing mycelium — the root-like part of fungi — using waste from the base as a substrate. The same method was applied to produce the two accompanying stools. Accalmie, which translates as ‘lull’ or ‘calm’, refers to the mycelium’s state. After rapid growth, it is now dormant, though it can be reactivated for future adaptations or repairs.

Courtesy of Corentin Mahieu
× Bento Architecture × Sonian

1708 - Sands of Time, 1707 - Red Flag
Jessie French
Biopolymer, natural pigments
2024

These two banners are made by combining red algae and mineral pigments. Jessie French developed this material as an alternative to the single-use vinyl used in window displays. She uses it to highlight different scales of time: the millions of years it takes to form the pigments, the few weeks or months in which algae grow and the many hundreds of years it takes for man-made plastics to decompose.

Courtesy of Jessie French and
OTHER MATTER™

NPOL Original: Exploring Jacket and Musette Bag
Faber Futures
Silk, microbial dyes
2023

Faber Futures explore ways of reducing the environmental impact of industrial production. For this jacket, which they produced under their brand Normal Phenomena of Life (NPOL), they applied a bacterium found in soil called Streptomyces coelicor to silk. The pigment that it secretes resulted in the swirls, spots and blushes visible on this design. Each garment is unique and requires a fraction of the amount of water needed for conventional dyeing processes.

Design Museum Collection

Continue on wall opposite.

Apical #6
Diana Scherer
Roots, seeds, mesh, soil
2024

This monumental wall hanging was not woven but was instead entirely grown out of plant roots. Artist Diana Scherer encourages plants to follow pathways in the structures that she designs, taking inspiration from human traces like car tracks and natural patterns such as tree rings and plant cells. The work offers a glimpse of subterranean networks otherwise invisible to us, revealing their ability to adapt to — and occasionally ignore — frameworks set up by humans.

Courtesy of Diana Scherer

Exhibition continues to your left.

Section 3
Shifting Perspective

What does the world look like to a dolphin, a goat or a bee? We will never know, though philosophers, artists and designers have speculated. Humans rarely consider the viewpoints of other species in their design projects. Yet to design for non-humans requires at least an attempt at a radical shift in perspective.

This might involve designing a garden for the pleasure of pollinators rather than humans, or an embassy to foster communication with dolphins. We have so much to learn about — and from — other forms of intelligence. And the very act of challenging human-centred design is a step towards building our kinship with the millions of species with whom we co-exist.

Continue to showcase to the left of the panel.

Learning from animals

The shelters that animals build for themselves reveal complex decision-making and ingenious material choices. Birds, wasps and ants all create nests that respond to the climate in which they live and rely on the continuity of available local materials. They act as a reminder that all species use natural resources and as inspiration for methods that have a minimum impact on their environment.

Courtesy of the Trustees of the
Natural History Museum, London

1 European wasp (Vespula germanica) nest
Wood pulp
Unknown date

Wasps chew up wood to create a pulp that hardens into fantastical structures. Layers of cells for larvae are often encased in a protective shell. To ensure that the interior maintains the right temperature, wasps build openings for ventilation.
BMNH 650942

2 Wasp (Pseudopolybia vespiceps) nest
Wood pulp
Unknown date
BMNH 013745592

3 Wasp (Agelaia angulata) nest
Wood pulp
Unknown date
BMNH 013745593

4 Ovenbird (Furnarius rufus) nest
Mud, straw
Unknown date

The ovenbird nest’s thick mud walls maintain a warm temperature that helps incubate the eggs, while its internal structure makes it difficult for predators to enter.
NHMUK N/2024.8.1

5 Weaverbird (Ploceus) nest
Grass
Unknown date

Weaverbirds select strands of grass from their environment, literally weaving them over and under other strands to ensure a strong but light form.
NHMUK N/2019.7.31

6 Red-headed quelea (Quelea erythrops)nest
Grass
Unknown date
NHMUK N/2019.7.31

7 Hummingbird (Eupherusa eximia egregia) nest
Grass, leaves, feathers, lichen, cobweb
Unknown date

Hummingbird nests use contain an incredible combination of materials, from grass and leaves for camouflage to lichen for its antibacterial properties and cobwebs for elasticity.
NHMUK N/193.724

8 Edible-nest swiftlet (Aerodramus fuciphagus) nest
Saliva
Unknown date

The edible-nest swiftlet builds its nests from thousands of strands of its own saliva. Attached high up in caves, these nests are also harvested by humans as a delicacy.
NHMUK N/78.1

9 Ant (Formicidae) nest
Mud
Unknown date

This is just the opening to a vast subterranean nest. The ants built up the mud in concentric circles to protect the entrance against flooding in monsoon season.
BMNH 650003

10 Potter wasp (Eumenes) nest
Mud
Unknown date
BMNH 650504

Continue on wall, opposite.

Sculpture for Octopuses: Exploring for Their Favorite Colors
Shimabuku
Glass, drawing, photograph, printed card
2010

Sculpture for Octopuses: Exploring for Their Favorite Colors — Aquarium in Kobe
Shimabuku
Digital slide show
2019
Duration: 2 minutes 31 seconds

Since the 1990s, the artist Shimabuku has created several works with octopuses in mind. Having observed that they appear to collect objects, he made a series of glass balls and recorded the movement of an octopus as it interacted with them. Somewhere between a scientific experimen and play, these objects are intended as a gift from one species to another.

Objects courtesy of Shimabuku and
Galerie Barbara Wien
Slide show courtesy of Shimabuku, Barbara
Wien, Berlin, Amanda Wilkinson, London and
Air de Paris, Romainville

DOLØN EMB 1 (Dolphin Embassy)
Ant Farm
2025 reproduction of a 1974 drawing
Gift of the Marie Eccles Caine Foundation. Collection of the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art. Utah State University.

Dolphin Embassy unbound book
Ant Farm
2025 reproductions of 1977 prints
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. Purchase made possible through a bequest of Thérèse Bonney by exchange, a partial gift of Chip Lord and Curtis Schreier and gifts from an anonymous donor and Harrison Fraker.

In 1974, the avant-garde architecture and media collective Ant Farm proposed the construction of a floating research station designed to study the communication between humans and dolphins. They hoped that learning and cooperating with dolphins might lead to the eventual co-creation of

a multispecies utopia. It was never built, but the drawing on the left shows the proposed scheme, composed of three wings arranged in a triangular plan and with a ‘land/water living room’, chutes allowing dolphins to swim between floors and a shared navigation pod.

Following video is on the central column.

Everything
David OReilly
Video
2017
Duration: 10 minutes 41 seconds

Everything is a video game allowing players to assume control of a seemingly infinite range of lifeforms and objects, including atoms, insects, plants and planets. The game's award-winning trailer, featuring a voiceover by philosopher Alan Watts, continuously shifts perspective from the microscopic to the cosmic. It evokes the complex interdependencies of bodies in the universe, reminding us of our entanglement with this vast more-than-human network.

Courtesy of David OReilly and
YveYANG Gallery

Return to wall opposite.

A Holiday from Being Human (GoatMan)
Thomas Thwaites
Photographic prints
2016

The GoatMan project stemmed from designer Thomas Thwaites' desire to 'take a holiday from being human' and become another animal. He embarked upon this quest by making a set of prosthetics — limbs, a helmet and an artificial external digestive system — which he wore on a goat farm in the Swiss Alps. Thwaites recounts a physically painful but meditative experience among curious goats. While his attempt at 'becoming' a goat exposed the impossibility of such a transformation, it fostered empathy and understanding towards another species.

Courtesy of Thomas Thwaites
Photographs: Tim Bowditch

Infrastructure of a Migratory Bird
Vladan Joler, Gordan Savičić, Felix Stalder
Printed graphic
2022 (updated 2025)

This diagram visualises how an endangered migratory bird, the northern bald ibis, is being rewilded. It was once thought to be extinct after overhunting and adverse climatic conditions in the 17th century. Now the bird is tracked and protected to ensure its population grows back to self-sufficiency. This work takes non-human life as its subject and as a lens through which to uncover the infrastructures required to sustain it.

Please scan the QR codes in the top left for audio descriptions of the map.

Courtesy of Vladan Joler, Gordan Savičić and Felix Stalder

More than Human Fellow

Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg

The Design Museum invited four research-based practices to develop new works for this exhibition. Through close observation of ecosystems and species in specific locations, each project seeks to address the needs of more-than-human life.

Dr Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg is a multidisciplinary artist examining our fraught relationships with nature and technology. Through subjects as diverse as artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, conservation and evolution, she explores the human impulse to ‘better’ the world. Ginsberg experiments with simulation, representation and non-human perspectives to question the contemporary fixation on innovation over conservation despite environmental crisis.

You can create your own pollinator-friendly garden by going to the website pollinator.art. You can also visit a DIY Edition of Pollinator Pathmaker designed and planted using this algorithm at St Mary Abbots Gardens, just off Kensington High Street.

More than Human Fellowships are commissioned by Future Observatory, the Design Museum's national research programme for the green transition, and supported by UKRI's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Pollinator Pathmaker: Perceptual Field
7SzzLn6GnY97DSo7hCSLMf
Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg
Wool, cotton, acrylic, polyester cotton, cashmere
2025

We are used to thinking of gardens as spaces we design for our own pleasure. Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg's long-running project Pollinator Pathmaker uses an algorithm to design 'living artworks' that cater to the needs of pollinators instead, providing them with food and shelter. The design of this tapestry has been determined by Pollinator Pathmaker's plan for a virtual garden that could be planted on the Design Museum site. The tapestry's scale shrinks human viewers to the size of pollinating insects encountering flowers across the seasons, starting with spring on the left. As insects sense the world differently from us, the colours of the tapestry reflect a pollinator's vision, rather than a human's.

Courtesy of Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg

Continue to plinth to your right.

Nobody Told Me Rivers Dream
Superflux
Mixed media
2025

Placed along the River Thames, these sensors capture environmental phenomena that humans struggle to perceive — birdsong before storms, the movement of wind on water and the rhythms of the tide as it rises and falls. Each sensor has an AI model embedded in it. The data it provides is then interpreted further, building a complex network of knowledge, a kind of ecological intelligence.

Courtesy of Superflux
With support from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)

The Ecological Intelligence Agency
Superflux
Mixed media
2023

If a river could speak, what would it say?
To find out, Superflux gathered information from scientists, government agencies and community social media reports on the River Roding in Essex. They then used it to train an Artificial Intelligence model to speak on the river's behalf. The resulting concerns about sewage, pollution and flooding are expressed lyrically, as the AI draws on the language of historical and contemporary poets to infuse its facts with emotion.

Courtesy of Superflux
Commissioned by Policy Lab Gov of UK and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA Futures)

Continue to wall opposite.

Down Under: The Curious Fall of a Child Who Knew Nothing and Became Everything
Formafantasma
Illustrations by Clément Vuillier
Graphic design by Omnigroup
PVC-free wallpaper, paper
2025

Down Under is a picture book that blends fiction with scientific research to cultivate ecological literacy in both young readers and adults.Told in two parts, the book begins with an illustrated tale about a child who, upon falling into a hole in a field, embarks on a journey through soil and rocks. He encounters unexpected lifeforms that change his understanding of the world. The second part features contributions from scientists and educators who inspired the story, offering insights that challenge human-centred thinking.

Courtesy of Formafantasma
Commissioned by C-mine with the support of the Flemish Government

Left to right:

Pole 1: Trail, Memento Figure 2,
Memento Figure 3
From the Designs for a World of Many Worlds:
After the Festival series
Dunne and Raby
Wood, resin
2023–24

What would a human body look like if you could see its smells and sounds? Dunne and Raby decided to visualise the umwelt — the worldview — of different species. These three reduced scale models show how other creatures might perceive a human figure, expanded into clouds of smell, ripples of movement or trails of hormones. As part of this project, the designers proposed a festival parade, in which the figure could be mounted on a pole and held aloft. It may well be impossible to imagine the world from the perspective of non-humans, but storytelling and celebrations are a familiar and joyful starting point.

Content warning
These videos contain sexual references and may not be suitable for young children.

Salmon, Seahorse, Spider, Cuttlefish
From the Seduce Me series
Isabella Rossellini
Video
2010
Total duration: About 7 minutes

Seduce Me is a humorous yet scientifically accurate series of short films on the reproductive lives of animals. Actor and animal behaviour expert Isabella Rossellini embodies a different species in every episode. With the help of playful scenography and costuming, she acts out their wide-ranging mating rituals. She opens each episode with ‘Is he seducing me? What am I, a...?’, inviting us to take on — or at least imagine — a non-human perspective.

Courtesy of Isabella Rossellini

Continue to wall opposite.

Clockwise from top left:

Fog Distributor, Nomadic Fog Collector,
Tree Kin-Gatherer, Algae Kin-Gatherer
From the Multispecies Inc. series
Parsons and Charlesworth
Pencil on paper
2023

Parsons and Charlesworth created the fictional organisation Multispecies Inc. to ask: what would it take for all species, including humans, to flourish? These drawings imagine the technology and tools humans might require to observe and respond to the needs of other species in the face of climate change. In these envisioned scenarios, well-intentioned research sometimes results in unwieldy or absurd interventions.

Courtesy of Parsons and Charlesworth

Continue through doorway to your left.

Kelp Council
Julia Lohmann
Soundscape by Ville Aslak Raasakka,
Julia Lohmann
Mixed media
2025

Julia Lohmann invites you to step into a council of seaweed — a gathering of species she collected in Europe and East Asia. Set within a soundscape of the rising and falling tide, this installation offers a new perspective on coastal ecosystems. The enigmatic forms reveal seaweed's properties and potential as a design material, inviting connection on a human scale.

If we consider that all living things have their own needs and agency, we might ask: what does seaweed think of us? How can we use this regenerative resource responsibly, meeting our own needs while learning to care for seaweed in return?

Courtesy of Julia Lohmann and
Ville Aslak Raasakka

Exit through the doorway at the far right end of the room.