



Islands display at the Design Museum, photo by Felix Speller

Dovecotes and the deep-sea, language and laundry: Design Museum's new display offers innovative thinking on climate crisis

23 June – 24 September 2023

the Design Museum

[PRESS IMAGES](#)

- **New free display opening today explores thought-provoking ideas on how design can help address the climate emergency**
- **Research included in *Islands* display covers lost climate language and knowledge, the ecological impact of deep-sea mining, why laundry should be a public problem, and the reintegration of pigeons into city life**
- **Display is part of the museum's flagship *Design Researchers in Residence* series and the Future Observatory programme in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)**

The Design Museum today opens *Islands*, a new display that showcases innovative thinking and varied responses to the climate crisis.

The thought-provoking display looks at broad ideas surrounding the climate emergency, such as the language we use to describe the environment, our relationship with other animal species, the next frontier of resource extraction, and the privatisation of public issues.

These ideas are presented as part of the museum's *Design Researchers in Residence* programme, which annually supports a group of design-led thinkers to spend the last year developing ideas at the museum to respond to the climate emergency. The programme forms part of the Design Museum's Future Observatory initiative launched in partnership with the AHRC, part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The free display – which runs from 23 June to 24 September 2023 – sees each of the 2022/23 Residents reveal concepts from one year of funded research. Tasked with responding to the theme of 'Islands', each Resident has explored design-based approaches that look at isolation and interdependence in the context of climate breakdown. Drawing together diverse projects, the display invites visitors to move from an 'island mentality' towards 'archipelagic thinking'.

Visitors will discover new ideas that help frame the way we think about the defining crisis of our time, with researchers presenting explorations of: lost climate language and knowledge, the ecological impact of deep-sea mining, why laundry should be a public problem, and the reintegration of pigeons into city life.

Islands is designed by Msoma Architects, led by Bushra Mohamed, prioritising waste prevention and sustainable materials.

The Design Researchers in Residence for 2022/23 are: Marianna Janowicz, Isabel Lea, Rhiarna Dhaliwal, and James Peplow Powell.

Marianna Janowicz explores how the act of drying laundry has evolved to become an individual rather than a communal practice. Housing providers in London often stipulate that laundry cannot be hung outside, resulting in clothes being dried in homes that lack adequate space and ventilation. The hanging of washing indoors contributes to internal air pollution, the effects of which are reportedly three and a half times as harmful as external air pollution. Marianna's research into this problem is embodied by an installation, 'D.A.M.P.', that illustrates the inevitable and cyclical frustrations

of drying laundry inside the home. The display also includes a crowdsourced visual survey on laundry, visualising the various ways people adapt this domestic task to their flats and houses. This is presented alongside archival photographs of communal laundry facilities once used across London. Her display asks whether the isolated way we dry our laundry more broadly reflects the way we live, and urges against private solutions to public problems.

Isabel Lea looks at how language can reconnect us to the environment. Her research into endangered Celtic languages spoken across the British Isles uncovers words that signify our lost understanding of the environment, with no equivalent in the English language. Inspired by the calligraphy of these ancient languages, Isabel has developed a new typeface - 'Ogma' – that she uses to introduce visitors to this vocabulary. Providing the basis for a new terminology to both describe the environment and define our relationship to it, she presents words such as *Cynefin*: a Welsh term that refers to a profound sense of geographic belonging and knowledge. The display details the development of this typeface, which is showcased through a pair of tapestries. Her research reflects the importance of considering linguistics and graphic design when developing responses to the climate crisis.

Rhiarna Dhaliwal presents the ecological consequences of deep-sea mining. Although only 0.0001% of the sea floor has been explored so far, the presence of precious metals and minerals has already attracted the interest of mining companies. Such materials are used in the production of green technologies, such as solar and wind power. Yet their extraction results in damaging consequences for the organisms that live in the depths of the ocean, presenting a tension between developing green energy and preserving marine ecosystems. Rhiarna's display includes a selection of drawings, objects and short films that introduce visitors to the long-term consequences of deep-sea mining on these microscopic life forms.

James Peplow Powell proposes a new future for the cohabitation of humans and animals in urban spaces. His research explores the breakdown of this relationship through pigeons, tracking their evolution from ally to pest. Around 1 million pigeons live in London, despite the array of hostile architecture designed to deter their presence. Rather than relegating pigeons to the margins of urban life, James proposes a more constructive relationship. His display includes 'Dovecote for London': a prototype to integrate pigeons into the city's agricultural system. Blending into London's landscape, the dovecotes would be used to collect guano which can then be distributed to urban farms as fertiliser. Through his display, James invites visitors to rethink their relationships with other species, advocating for care and collaboration.

Justin McGuirk, Director of Future Observatory at the Design Museum, said: “We humans are rather susceptible to the ‘island mentality’, and often behave as if we are detached from the landscapes and species that we depend on. All of this year’s Researchers in Residence are exploring our interconnectedness within larger systems, whether it’s landscape, language or laundry. As ever, they are perceptive and original, finding ways into the amorphous climate crisis through the highly particular. We hope visitors will be inspired to think about how even seemingly minor things, like pigeons and tumble dryers, connect us to planetary environmental issues.”

The Design Researchers in Residence programme supports emerging design thinkers at the start of their careers to spend a year developing a new research project in response to a theme. It builds upon the Design Museum’s flagship designers’ residence which has supported emerging designers since 2007. Previous alumni include Asif Khan, Adam Nathaniel Furman, Jade Folawiyo and Lawrence Lek. It is part of the museum’s Future Observatory programme, a national design research programme based at and coordinated by The Design Museum and supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, part of UK Research and Innovation.

Islands is accompanied by a limited-edition print publication edited by George Kafka with Lila Boschet and designed by Plan B.

-Ends-

Notes to Editor

PRESS ENQUIRIES:

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Info

Design Researchers in Residence: ‘Islands’

24 June – 24 September 2023

Location: Residency Studio, 2nd floor

Tickets: Free (no booking required)

About Future Observatory:

Future Observatory is a programme coordinated by the Design Museum in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council that aims to accelerate how we find solutions to the most pressing issues. It brings design researchers together with the networks that can help them have an impact on achieving the nation’s environmental goals.

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About Arts and Humanities Research Council:

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation, funds internationally outstanding independent researchers across the whole range of the arts and humanities: history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages and literature, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and much more. The quality and range of research supported by AHRC works for the good of UK society and culture and contributes both to UK economic success and to the culture and welfare of societies across the globe. ahrc.ukri.org



Design Researchers in Residence is supported by the Idlewild Trust.

Idlewild Trust

About the Design Museum:

The Design Museum is the world's leading museum devoted to contemporary architecture and design. Its work encompasses all elements of design, including fashion, product and graphic design. Since it opened its doors in 1989 the museum has displayed everything from an AK-47 to high heels designed by Christian Louboutin. It has staged over 100 exhibitions, welcomed over seven million visitors and showcased the work of some of the world's most celebrated designers and architects including Paul Smith, Zaha Hadid, Jonathan Ive, Frank Gehry, Eileen Gray, Dieter Rams, Margaret Calvert and Yinka Ilori.

On 24 November 2016, the Design Museum relocated to Kensington, west London. John Pawson converted the interior of a 1960s modernist building to create a new home for the Design Museum giving it three times more space in which to show a wider range of exhibitions and significantly extend its learning programme. Since opening in Kensington in 2016, the Design Museum has hosted major exhibitions including Stanley Kubrick: The Exhibition, Moving to Mars, Amy: Beyond the Stage, Sneakers Unboxed: Studio to Street, Electronic: From Kraftwerk to The Chemical Brothers, Charlotte Perriand: The Modern Life, Football: Designing the Beautiful Game and Waste Age: What can design do?

In 2021, the Design Museum launched Future Observatory, a national programme for design research supporting the UK's response to the climate crisis. The three-year programme is coordinated by the Design Museum in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

In April 2023, the museum opened a landmark exhibition with globally renowned artist Ai Weiwei. Ai Weiwei: Making Sense is the artist's very first design-focussed exhibition and is his largest UK exhibition in eight years.

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Researchers Bios:

Rhiarna Dhaliwal is a British-Indian architectural designer, researcher and educator based in London. Her work investigates global environmental and political systems that affect the future of landscapes and ecosystems. Rhiarna currently co-leads the bachelors design studio, Studio Digital Native at the Design Academy Eindhoven, is the co-founder of the all-female design collective, Xcessive Aesthetics and is part of the current cohort of the New Architecture Writers programme.

Marianna Janowicz is an architect, writer, educator and a member of feminist design collective Edit. Her project about foraging and rights to land was selected for the main exhibition at the 2019 Oslo Architecture Triennale and her writing has been published in the Architectural Review, New York Review of Architecture and e-flux Architecture. She teaches design and architectural history at Central Saint Martins, Welsh School of Architecture and the London School of Architecture. Marianna also created an architectural walking tour which she runs regularly for the charity Open City.

Isabel Lea is a creative director, graphic designer and researcher based in London. She is the co-founder of multidisciplinary design agency ATYPICAL. In 2018-2019, she was Adobe's first UK Creative Resident. She has previously worked with agencies in the UK, USA and Scandinavia for

clients including Panasonic, Adobe, Bang & Olufsen and The Danish Embassy. Isabel has a fascination with the social side of design and has an MSc in Culture and Society from LSE.

James Peplow Powell is an architect and researcher. He is co-founder of the design collective Feral Partnerships and has worked as a specialist in sustainable and ecological design at Gort Scott since 2019. His design and research agendas are focussed on reclaiming more-than-human social, material and design practices in the context of ongoing climate and ecological breakdown. He has a background in architectural practice in London and studied at the University of Cambridge and Royal College of Art.