



Call for Presentations:  
***REWILDING THE MUSEUM***

ARKEN Museum of Modern Art + The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts

Conference June 1-2, 2022—Copenhagen

Abstracts due: January 15, 2022

Rewilding, as a practice of environmental restoration, involves complex retrospective and prospective constructions of nature, involving varying degrees of human involvement. Without distinguishing between modes of artifice practiced by the arts and sciences, *Rewilding the Museum* examines how ‘environments’ are imagined, represented, mediated, and produced within and beyond the gallery today. Anthropocene discourse (and its critique) collapses the distinction between nature and culture, and natural and political history. Under its sign, the artistic gaze ranges beyond the gallery to treat the dominant planetary condition as authored or impacted by human activities and social formations: capitalism, plantation slavery, industrial agriculture, urbanization, etc. From rock strata to ice cores, wastelands to wilderness, we have come to understand the earth itself as an archive of inscriptions; as a collection to be studied, inventoried, conserved, or restored; to be acquired, exhibited, and perhaps de-accessioned. This perspective posits an expanded curatorial mandate: beyond the walls of the museum, we may view Earth itself as a *total exhibition* of human influence and artifice. Contemporary art intervenes in this fraught conceptual, political and material territory to shape cultural engagements with ecological crises of our own making.

If the ancient concept of the museum as the ‘home of the muses’ is to be updated to our present times, we must follow the muses in their wandering beyond the gallery space, off-site, and into difficult terrain, as they inspire artists working with the detritus of modernity—in postcolonial landscapes of extraction and recuperation, great plastic garbage patches in the oceans, urban sewage treatment plants, burning forests, and oil palm plantations. An expanded artistic and museological praxis casts a critical gaze upon other forms of *technê* that seek to transform the earth—works of infrastructure and architecture, geoengineering, nuclear exclusion zones, shutdowns, blackouts and projects of rewilding.

This conference focuses on the museum as a microcosm of this global sphere of human influence and artifice—a world in miniature in which the dramas of the whole play out under the attentive gaze of critical

audiences. How does art and the museum mediate the impact of disordered natural and socio-technical forces upon their curated contents? What happens when floods, fires, electrical outages, invasive species (and more) impinge upon the white cube and other historical conventions of display, transforming the contexts in which artworks, artifacts, and specimens are presented? Can museums move beyond thematic engagement with images of disaster and fling open their doors to other species, processes of decay and renewal? How do rewilding projects recapitulate and/or contest colonial and other exploitative logics of land use? Should catastrophes be seen as sites for new ecological imaginaries for public institutions? What pasts do we want to conserve and what futures can rewilding bring to presence?

The conference will take place over two days at ARKEN and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art in Copenhagen. We welcome presentations in a variety of formats: academic papers, presentations of artistic research, performances and other artistic contributions. Presentations of approximately 20 minutes are invited. The main conference program will be held in person, however digital/online presentation formats will also be considered. Contributions will be considered for publication in a forthcoming issue of the *ARKEN Bulletin* devoted to Rewilding the Museum. Please submit an abstract of 250-300 words describing the format and content of your presentation as well as a biography of 200 words by January 15, 2022.

Please direct questions and submissions to [dehlia.hannah@arken.dk](mailto:dehlia.hannah@arken.dk)

**Organizers:**

Dehlia Hannah, Postdoctoral Fellow—*Rewilding the Museum*, ARKEN/Royal Danish Academy of Art  
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The conference is part of the research project *Rewilding the Museum* funded by the New Carlsberg Foundation. For more information see: <https://uk.arken.dk/research-projects/>

For news please visit the conference site: <https://www.dehliahannah.com/cfp-rewilding-the-museum/>

Images: Marguerite Humeau, *Levitation*, Lafayette Anticipations, 2021 (Installation view: Kidneyweed, *Dichondra repens* / Mayweed, *Matricaria* / Chamomille, *Chamaemelum nobile* / Pasqueflower, *Pulsatilla vulgaris* / Borage, *Borago officinalis* / Lungwort, *Pulmonaria officinalis* / Lamb's-Ear *Stachys, byzantina* / Common Liverwort...). Juliana Cerqueira Leite, *Por Um Sopro de Fúria e Esperança*, 2021, Museu Brasileiro da Escultura e Ecologia (Installation view: Juliana Cerqueira Leite, Um 6, Um 8. The Museum flooded by 120 tons of water for the duration of the COP26)

