

Fauna:

an Anthropocene Penny Press

a project by Shaun Slifer & Stuart O. Anderson

Fauna is an all-ages interactive mechanical sculpture that engages the public about extinction and wildlife adaptation in the Anthropocene.

Fauna is an elaborate, kinesthetic hand-operated “penny smasher.” Participants insert a US penny and turn a large wheel, easily pressing the penny with great force and, in the process, embossing unique illustrations on *both* sides. One side depicts animals that are critically endangered or even extinct, and on the other side are the tracks of animals currently adapting to urban environments. The person turning the wheel chooses the animals that they will pair up on their coin, which they get to keep: a unique souvenir that will become a long-term reminder of how we relate to the ecology around us.

Influenced by roadside souvenir penny press machines, *Fauna* is the first such machine created by artists. Artist Shaun Slifer has been developing and fabricating the machine for the last five years in collaboration with robotics engineer Stuart O. Anderson. The design and mechanisms are entirely original, and the machinery is fully custom-built. The original, interpretive animal illustrations for the pennies were created by Slifer and eight other printmaker/activists.

Rather than exhibiting in art-focused venues, *Fauna* will tour natural history museums where visitors will interact with the project in installations created in collaboration with museum curatorial staff. These immersive exhibits will extrapolate on the themes and questions inherent in the pennies by showcasing the institution’s collection of artifacts - taxidermy, tools, etc - to create an experience unique to each city and bioregion. While penny press machines are culturally associated with souvenir shops and roadside attractions, often positioned in gift shops and near the exits, *Fauna* is integrated into the museum exhibition space as its natural “habitat.”

Fauna is a placemaking sculpture that inspires people to deeply contemplate their experience with the animal world while also enjoying the experience of creating. This project will reach people of every age and background who may only know Nature as Pigeons and Squirrels, and who may never encounter a Jaguar or a Red Wolf. *Fauna* will help them to begin to know those animals as crucial players in a bigger web of ecology that they themselves are an integral part of.

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