

FONDAZIONE PRADA PRESENTS "EXTINCT IN THE WILD", CURATED BY MICHAEL WANG, FROM 9 FEBRUARY TO 9 APRIL 2017 IN MILAN

Milan, 23 January 2017 – From 9 February to 9 April 2017, Fondazione Prada in Milan will present the project "**Extinct in the Wild**" curated by Michael Wang. The press preview will be held on Wednesday 8 February from 10 am to 12 pm. A preview of the show, open to the public, will be held on the same day, from 7 to 9 pm.

"Extinct in the Wild", conceived by American artist Michael Wang (1981), brings together **flora and fauna that are no longer found in nature**, but persist exclusively under human care, **within an artificial habitat**. Labelled with the officially designated term "extinct in the wild", these species have left nature behind to fully enter the circuits of human culture. In this project, natural beings such as plants and animals are transplanted into an exhibition and cultural space. In the age of extinction, such displacements are not only aesthetic devices but stand for actual **strategies of survival**.

Michael Wang conceived an exhibition in which three **glass and aluminum enclosures** with artificial lights accommodate these extinct species within the space of the Nord gallery, where **a selection of photographs** is also exhibited. Some of those species, such as the ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) are common in cultivation. Others, like the blue cycad (*Encephalartos nubimontanus*), are some of the rarest species on earth. Some animals have persisted in artificial conditions for many years, like the aquatic axolotl (*Ambystoma mexicanum*), which was known only from the Aztec canals of Mexico City, most of which have long been drained. Angel's tears (*Brugmansia suaveolens*), a plant with fragrant white flowers, disappeared from the wilds of South America with the extinction of the species that distributed its seeds. Nonetheless, its religious significance as a potent psychoactive drug insured its survival in traditional cultivation. Several species have survived only through heroic human efforts. The Hawaiian ōlulu (*Brighamia insignis*), for instance, whose last specimen was recorded in 2014, was rescued from extinction thanks to a team of botanists who hand-pollinated the very last individuals and collected seeds, by rappelling into the steep ocean cliffs on the island of Kaua'i.

The exhibition is completed by a series of 20 photographs, taken by Michael Wang from 2014 to the present day, which portray different extinct in the wild species and the original habitats where they lived prior to their extinction in nature.

For the duration of the show, exhibition staff will tend to these living organisms, joining the ranks of gardeners, zookeepers, scientists and hobbyists who are the species' only lifeline. The curators become **caretakers**, returning the practice of curation to its ancient roots in **cura**, meaning "care."

“Extinct in the Wild” is one of the three ex-aequo winning projects (along with those conceived by Evelyn Simons and Adnan Yldiz) of “Curate Award”, an international competition promoted by Fondazione Prada and Qatar Museums. Launched in May 2013, “Curate Award” aims to find new curating talent and to bring about original perspectives in exhibition making. The international jury selected the three winning projects in August 2014 among a large number of submitted proposals from 63 different countries.

Michael Wang – biographical notes

Born in 1981 in Olney, Maryland, Michael Wang lives and works in New York City. He uses systems that operate on a global scale as media for art: species distribution, climate change, resource allocation and the global economy. His works include “Invasives,” the controlled release of invasive species, “Carbon Copies,” an exhibition linking the production of artworks to the release of greenhouse gases, “Rivals,” a series that connects the sale of artworks to corporate finance, and “Terroir,” monochrome paintings made from the ground bedrock of world cities. He has exhibited in Europe, Asia, and the US, most recently at Foxy Production and Andrea Rosen Gallery (both New York). His theoretical writings have appeared in Mousse, Texte zur Kunst, Artforum, and Cabinet, among others.

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