

ISEA2024 formatting instructions for authors

Sara Gevurtz

Affiliation (s) Auburn University
Location, Country Auburn, AL, USA
Contact Emails skg0023@auburn.edu

Abstract

The piece, “Woody’s Last Laugh: Gone for All Seasons” is a video project built around the disturbing fact that the iconic cartoon character, “Woody the Woodpecker,” was modeled on the now probably extinct ivory-billed woodpecker found in the Southeast United States. There has been no confirmed sighting of an ivory-billed woodpecker since 1944 and it is only by virtue of occasional unconfirmed reported sightings that the species has not been removed from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife’s Endangered Species List as extinct.

In this video, Woody is removed from his 1941 film “Pantry Panic”—made only 3 years before the last undisputed recorded sighting of the ivory-billed woodpecker in the wild. The original animation is otherwise unaltered. In addition to removing the images of Woody, the soundtrack of the animation is edited to remove Woody’s iconic and very identifiable laugh. Thus, silence is left where Woody would have otherwise had his dialogue, much like the silence in the trees left by the ivory-billed woodpecker’s probable extinction.

Keywords

Endangered Species, Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, Disappearance, Removal, Animation, Extinct, Non-Traditional Narrative

Introduction

To broadly contextualize, my art focuses on communicating and challenging the border between art and science, with a particular focus on ecological and environmental topics. I am particularly interested in deepening the viewers’ awareness, both on an emotive and intellectual level, of the impact of humans on the natural environment and the impact of the environment on humans.

I will discuss my series of works that bring into focus the loss of animal species. These works attempt to highlight the loss of species due to extinction. The series is made up of three main elements. The keystone piece, “Woody’s Last Laugh: Gone for All Seasons” is a video project built around the disturbing fact that the iconic cartoon character, “Woody the Woodpecker,” was modeled on the now probably extinct ivory-billed woodpecker found in the Southeast United States.

Woody’s Last Laugh: Gone for All Seasons

In “Woody’s Last Laugh: Gone for All Seasons,” Woody is removed from his 1941 film “Pantry Panic.” The original animation is otherwise unaltered. In addition to removing the images of Woody, the soundtrack of the animation is edited to remove Woody’s iconic and very identifiable laugh. Thus, silence is left where Woody would have otherwise had his dialogue, much like the silence in the trees left by the ivory-billed woodpecker’s probable extinction. Following the 1941 film from which Woody has been removed, the video presents scrolling “end credits” of 21 species removed from the endangered species list due to their extinction. This group would have also included the ivory-billed woodpecker but for unconfirmed reported sightings. Whether the ivory-billed woodpecker is now or soon will be extinct, it is not alone in its fate.



Figure 1 Woody's Last Laugh (2023)

Only a Glimpse

To emphasize the impact of the loss of the ivory-billed woodpecker, which was North America’s largest woodpecker (ranging from 18-22 inches tall) I have created a six-foot tall watercolor of a silhouette of the ivory-billed woodpecker on a tree trunk. The ivory-billed woodpecker on the tree is life size (approximately 18 inches) to give the

viewer an appreciation for why the bird captured the imagination of the animators creating the Woody character. The use of silhouette is symbolic of the uncertain nature of recent reported sightings.



Figure 2 Only a Glimpse (2023)

Listed

I pair the video and watercolor with other videos that are part of a series I have titled “Listed.” Videos in the Listed

Bibliography

Websites

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 “Woody the Woodpecker in ‘Pantry Panic’, Internet Archive, accessed March 10, 2023, <https://archive.org/details/woody-woodpecker-pantry-panic>

Author(s) Biography(ies)

Sara Gevurtz is an Assistant Professor of Animation at Auburn University. Gevurtz graduated from the CADRE Laboratory for New Media at San Jose State University where she received a Master of Fine Arts in Digital Media

series list the species found in a state that are on the Endangered and Threatened Species List maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The videos scroll the names of the endangered and threatened species on the screen much like the credits at the end of a movie—symbolic of the fact that these species may soon be gone. I have reordered the names of the species appearing on these scrolling end credits to follow the date they were listed as endangered—thereby creating an effect of a memorial and perhaps to allow the viewer to ponder the trends the dates represent.

I have made these scrolling end credit lists for states in which I have lived or shown my work. I have been working on creating them for all fifty states.

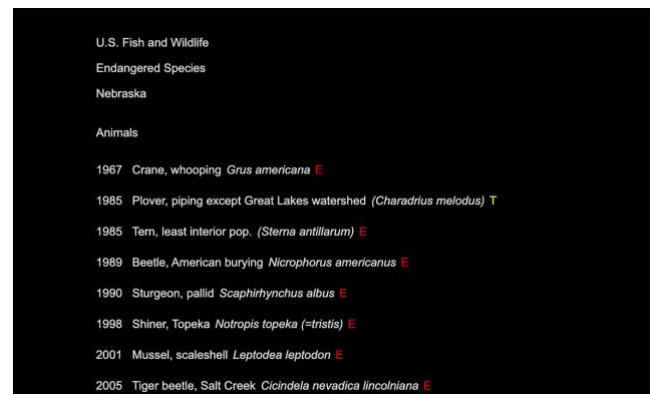


Figure 3 Listed: Endangered Species List for Florida

Art. She received her bachelor’s degree in Evolution, Behavior and Ecology Biology from the University of California, San Diego. Due to her interdisciplinary background, her artistic research focuses on ecological and environmental issues. Gevurtz has been published and shown work nationally and internationally, such as CICA Museum in Korea, Intermedial Festival in Legnica, Poland, and the Museum of Copper and Ancient Crafts in Italy. She also works collaboratively to develop a transdisciplinary project that seeks to create work around water that can exist as both data and art. This project has been presented at ISEA in Columbia, South Africa, and at the European Society for Literature, Science and the Arts hosted in Germany.