

# Objective Earth: Living in the Anthropocene

The Valais Nature Museum presents "Objective Earth", a pioneer exhibition that thematizes the idea of the Anthropocene and renders it perceptible. The immersive, dynamic and colourful staging created by the artist Marie Velardi harmonizes perfectly with the messages conveyed. A balance of form and content that enhances the originality and appeal of an exhibition that invites all visitors to question how they view nature.

## The Anthropocene: a new geological age

Humanity is in the midst of a new geological age: the Anthropocene. For the first time, and in the space of only a few centuries, Man has become a force that is capable of radically transforming the natural environment. The environmental problems that result from this go well beyond the sole issue of the climate. The stakes involved in escaping this dead-end are not merely scientific and technological, but above all cultural and anthropological. The Anthropocene can be seen as a welcome opportunity to rethink our relationship to nature, to create bonds with it and become full-fledged inhabitants of the Earth.



The segmentation of the territory is a direct threat to biodiversity. It cost this stag (Central Valais) its life, for its antlers got hopelessly entangled in the poles and nets.

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Tasmanian tiger, Museum d'Histoire Naturelle de Neuchâtel

The Tasmanian tiger, or thylacine, is considered extinct as a species as a result of hunting and the occupation of its territory by humans.

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### **What is our place on the Earth?**

This exhibition aims to speak to our visitors, to offer them reliable and reasoned information, to enrich them with new and stimulating thinking about timely topics and to encourage them to participate in the construction of our common future. The tour spans the three floors of the old penitentiary, each of which answers a specific question concerning the Anthropocene: why do we speak of "Anthropocene"? What are the causes of our present situation? How to live during the Anthropocene? In the last section, visitors are invited to complete the exhibition by participating and offering new and creative solutions, as well as reconsider their place on and proper relationship to the Earth. A fresh and more acute awareness of this relationship and the protection of our environment is necessary in order to rethink the shared habitat of human beings and animals. Therefore the need for action is cultural, political and social rather than technological. In the Age of the Anthropocene, Man has to turn his attention to this planet above all else. That is why we say: Objective Earth!



Tellurium, Musée d'histoire des sciences de la Ville de Genève.

The modern age saw the development of the idea of a mechanical world governed by universal mathematical laws.

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### **Museography by Marie Velardi**

Lines run along the walls and floors of the exhibition space, from the staircase all the way up to the last floor of the former penitentiary of Sion, passing through the exhibition rooms. These lines upset the patterns of the architecture and offer a dynamic tour for visitors to the exhibition "Objective Earth".

They are loose at the beginning, crossing and participating in the contents of the rooms, addressing the topics in their own way. For example, in the room on modernity, two perspective grids create an effect of vertigo and a loss of frames of reference: this is a way of creating the experience of a mathematically ordered space and the distance characteristic of modernity. In the room "Conquest", one line becomes a path to the top of a mountain painted on the wall to thematize the conquest of the Alps, and in the room "Fences", the lines become a fence.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, some of the lines run straight to the walls, as if they were prolonging the modern "project" to the point of disintegration, while other lines connect to form a fabric and create ties. It is a space of potential that develops in a modular fashion, and will continue to be elaborated throughout the exhibition according to the suggestions for resources put forward by the public.



Partial view of the modernity room of the exhibition  
Objective Earth

During the age of modernity, the West developed a relationship to the world characterized by taking distance from the natural milieu. The latter was considered mostly as an object that could be modeled in terms of mathematical language.

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Bones of a dodo, Musée cantonal de géologie, Lausanne

The dodo is a species that died out on the island of Mauritius less than a century after the arrival of European colonists in the 16th century.

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Cross-section of soil, Agroscope, Changins

Human activities disturb many chemical cycles on the Earth. The use of nitrogen and phosphorus as fertilizers is a threat to food production in the future.

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photo M. Martinez

## **Practical information**

### **Objective Earth: Living in the Anthropocene An exhibition at the Valais Nature Museum**

**From 18<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to 8<sup>th</sup> January 2017  
Le Pénitencier – Exhibition Centre of the Cantonal Museums  
Rue des châteaux 24, Sion (Parking: La Cible)**

**Open Tuesday to Sunday from 11:00 to 18:00 (17:00 starting 1<sup>st</sup> October)  
Free admission on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month**

### **Around the exhibition**

#### **First Sunday of the month:**

- 4<sup>th</sup> December, 14:30: Guided tour in French with Nicolas Kramar, director of the Nature Museum and curator of the exhibition
- 8<sup>th</sup> January, 14:30: Guided tour in French with Nicolas Kramar, director of the Nature Museum and curator of the exhibition

Guided tours for groups upon request

Cultural mediation programme for school groups: information and reservations:  
027 606 47 30 or [sc-museesmediation@admin.vs.ch](mailto:sc-museesmediation@admin.vs.ch)