Hello and welcome! Thank you all so much for joining me today to talk about my thesis project. This is a project I have been developing for the past two years and I'm so excited to finally share this iteration with you all. I would like to extend my gratitude to my mentor Rory Sparks who has been such a grounding force in this work and who has been such a delight to work with.

I am holding David Eckard in my heart as I develop this project. David was a huge pillar in my experience at PNCA and, like so many others present here today, I am grateful to have been able to learn from him.

I am also grateful for the dozens of professors, faculty and peers that I've had the privilege to work with over the past three years, who have shared their expertise and insight and who have witnessed both myself and this project transform into the stage that it is currently in, there is both empowerment and liberation in being witnessed and to that, I thank you.

To give some insight on how this talk will go, I will first be sharing what this project is about and how it ties into my creative practices, followed by line of inquiries and conceptual research, the roles I've played in this work, then I'll give some insight into the physical work you see here today, moments of growth while developing this installation, what the future may hold and a Q&A at the end.

What is this project about

Endangered Tarot is a transdisciplinary career-spanning installation project that reimagines the Tarot as a framework for ecological reflection. By embedding endangered and threatened species within archetypal cards I aim to merge symbolism, mythology, and conceptual research to create a space for dialogue on extinction, resilience, and interdependence. Over time, the project will expand into a complete Tarot deck representing red listed, threatened and endangered species from five countries, bridging global ecological narratives through art.

Just in the last 50 years globally, we have lost two thirds of our wildlife according to the World Wildlife Fund. In an effort to narrow down the vast amount of flora and fauna that are consistently impacted by climate catastrophe, capitalism and human interactions, the Major Arcana, also known as the Fool's Journey that consists of 22 cards, will focus on the Pacific Northwest.

There are four suits in a Tarot deck, referred to as the Minor Arcana, which typically consist of cups, wands, swords and pentacles. I intend to build these suits in four different countries, building a global narrative through the lens of this project.

As an artist whose practice is cultivated through a desire to share knowledge and passion for the intersection of art, ecology, and social systems, this project is helping me develop a research practice that prioritizes the urgency of our climate crisis by composing visual testaments to the interconnectedness of humanity and nature.

Endangered Tarot aims to synthesize my understanding of scientific knowledge and ecological crises into more accessible visual language, referring to the Tarot as an enduring symbolic system through the lens of threatened and endangered more-than-human life.

By weaving together conceptual research, symbolism, and collective participation, this project and each of its iterations become both a personal act of stewardship and an invitation for audiences to confront loss, imagine resilience, and recognize our place in the shared story of survival. This project does not assume the position of a solution, rather it aims to invigorate questions and curiosities.

What is Tarot?

To give a brief overview of Tarot, the decks most known today were invented in Italy in the 15th century by adding to the existing four-suited pack, a fifth suit of 21 illustrated cards called trionfi ("triumphs") and an odd card called il matto ("the fool"). And a side note - the fool is not the origin of the modern joker, which was invented in the late 19th century as an unsuited jack in the game of euchre.

The adaptation of tarot use for divination purposes first occurred in France in the 18th century. For fortune-telling each tarot card is ascribed a meaning. The cards of the major arcana refer to spiritual matters and important trends in the questioner's life.

In the minor arcana wands deal mainly with business and career ambitions, cups with love, swords with conflict, and coins with money and material. The tarot deck is shuffled by the questioner, and then the fortune-teller lays out a few of the cards (either selected at random by the questioner or dealt off the top of the shuffled deck) in a special pattern called a "spread." The meaning of any card can change based on whether it is reversed, its position in the spread, and the meaning of adjacent cards.

What you see here today is the first iteration of this project. I decided to work with a method of card pulling called the Planetary Spread (also known as a layout) as I felt this would give a good general reading. A spread is a pre-selected pattern where the cards are placed on the surface in front of the reader.

The placement of the cards is part of the interpretation for card reading and can also include proximity from one card to another, types of cards that seem to dominate the spread like a majority of Major or Minor Arcana, a predominance of a suit or numbers, and general impressions that arise in the reader's mind.

Because I am working on the Major Arcana portion of this deck first, this is not representative of the full potential for a reading, rather a snippet of what is to come. I've pulled these seven cards to develop into the works you see before you.

The Moon, The Magician, The Lovers, The Empress, The High Priestess, The Hanged Man, and The Wheel of Fortune.

The planetary spread consists of 8 total cards, creating room for the audience to pull the last card to personalize a collective reading with the deck in the altar of curiosities. The Herbcrafter's Tarot deck was my first deck which is why I've chosen to include it in today's reading.

How it ties to my personal & professional practice

This project ties to both my professional and personal practice as an artist by using it as a means to learn about the Tarot, develop my practice as a printmaker through illustration and process, deepen my understanding of materiality through sculptural applications all through building relationships with more than human kin by learning and talking about them through conceptual and field research.

I think a lot about materials and resourcefulness, what's around, what can be used, what can be made?

These considerations surged last fall when I had the opportunity to study abroad in a rural village in Western Ireland thanks to the Gilman scholarship. Much of Ireland has sustained deep kinship with their ecology, imparting this knowledge onto those who inquire. Because of this, my connection to material-narratives has expanded, deepening my relationship with intentionality as an art practice.

Lines of inquiry and conceptual research practice

I've mentioned some of the lines of inquiry that I have for this iteration of this project. A snippet of my never ending list of curiosities I have for this project are:

How can the archetypal structure of the Tarot serve as a narrative framework for recontextualizing endangered species as emotionally resonant, symbolic figures rather than abstract ecological issues?

In what ways does the symbolic language of tarot enhance the communicative power of sculpture and printmaking when addressing themes of extinction, biodiversity, and environmental grief?

How might the spiritual and psychological dimensions of tarot create space for viewers to process ecological collapse through personal reflection, emotional intimacy, and ritualized engagement? In what ways have both the context and implications of the curved archway/portal been utilized to emphasize surrealism, liminality and as a threshold between more than human worlds?

There are dozens of artists, movements and fields of knowledge that I continue to reference within my art practice. I am passionate about wildlife conservation and exploring the symbiosis within nature, which brings me to this project and thus this research.

Heavily inspired by the ecological impacts of material and sustainability, Indigenous knowledge, and alternative ways of navigating an artistic practice under empire, I call on the works of Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass and Gathering Moss*, T.J. Demos, author of *Decolonizing Nature* and Timothy Morton, author of *The Ecological Thought and All Art is Ecological*.

As a botanist and member of the Potawatomi Nation, Kimmerer shares Indigenous knowledge of the connectivity and responsibility we as humans have within nature such as ways to repair our relationship with the earth and methods towards healing. Braiding Sweetgrass is a book I come back to often as it holds a space for grounding and reconnecting with the natural world in tangible ways.

As professor and founding member of the Center for Creative Ecologies, T.J. Demos writes about the global scale of decolonizing nature through case studies in Mexico, India and the Arctic and gives numerous examples of different measures artists, activists and community members have taken to interrupt and bring to light the imbalances perpetuated by colonialism and white supremacy.

Through my studies in Ireland last year, I was introduced to the works of Timothy Morton, a professor and philosopher who discusses ecological critique through multiple books, one of which is deemed more accessible to the average reader, titled, *The Ecological Thought.* From Marxism to Queer theory, this book takes a deep dive through a lens of speculative realism that deconstructs different methodologies of thinking within the ecological framework of “the interconnectedness of all living and nonliving things”.

Composing the imagery for these cards requires a multitude of paths for research to gain the best understandings of the symbolism within the cards, the animals and the plants included in each. Wanting to pay respect to original designs by recreating or carrying over symbols into my own illustrations, flirting with the hierarchies and binaries, etc.

Using my background in recipe development to create a similar structure to art making and developing stronger research methods to maintain the integrity of symbolism.

There are four driving concepts for this work, Symbolism, Ethnobotany, Conservation & Animism. These concepts are intertwined by Storytelling, Ancestral Medicine, Collective Consciousness & Sustainability.

Historical studies of the Tarot de Marseille, alongside works by Dummett, Penco, and contemporary Tarot scholars, deepen the symbolic and structural grounding of these cards. Additional resources, including wildlife conservation listings from multiple states and federal agencies, help this project stay current with the shifting species classifications. Consultations with Tarot scholars further develop my interpretive lens through which these cards are designed. Together, these sources support a practice that weaves art, ecology, and divination into a cohesive, research-driven framework.

As Robin Wall Kimmerer states in Braiding Sweetgrass, “Action on behalf of life transforms. Because the relationship between self and the world is reciprocal, it is not a question of first getting enlightened or saved and then acting. As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us.”

Printmaking and Sculpture combined

This project has accelerated my curiosities of the combination of printmaking and sculpture. Throughout my process in this project, I’ve realized I won’t find all the answers to the questions I am asking as they have just led me to more questions.

Through studying the language that can exist between these two distinct methods of making I’ve learned there is a lot of room for dynamic interplay, thinking in terms of the matrix, if we're thinking about relief - the woodblock, vs or in conversation with the substrate - the paper.

Printmaking has a flatness and involves repetition, precision, and some graphic design, qualities that lend themselves well to the formal structure of Tarot. Sculpture, on the other hand, offers a multi-dimensional space that can be tactile with a physical presence. This allows the species depicted to emerge from this flatness and become more lifelike and immediate.

My role in this work

My role within this work is one with many hats. With a background in cooking for nearly two decades, I've become a recipe developer as an artist, using this method of making to build cut sheets, to do lists, and general planning. Figuring out the ways I enjoy learning and building has felt pretty rewarding.

Using art as a tool for education, I've felt like a teacher while also deeply in my role as a student, by passing on information I'm receiving through my own language.

At times I've felt like an actual copper distiller, taking research and data and slowly synthesizing it into works like the ones you see here today.

I am often bouncing around from work station to work station, medium to medium, not because I've felt I've reached a limit with one path but that I anticipate all of the paths to eventually connect. Over this past term I've had a lot of pots cooking on the stove, now we get to see what landed on the plate.

By using sculpture as a way to embrace the print, I am also inspired by and very curious about the anonymity of frame crafters in most museums and galleries. I find there to be such an importance on the frame of a work, as I find they could be considered works of art on their own, and I think about my connection to the desire to know who created them.

Drink Water

GROUP READING:

Now I'll read a brief group reading for you all

The seven cards before you create a symbolic pathway: beginning with The Moon on your right, which guides us into the past and the cyclic, intuitive origins of life; moving through The Magician, The Empress, The High Priestess, and The Hanged Man, who speak to creation, gestation, regeneration, and suspended transformation, and meeting The Lovers, who remind us that relationship, both human and more-than-human is always plural and expansive. We end with The Wheel of Fortune, a turning point toward the future and the cycles we inhabit.

The numerology embedded in this layout, patterns of 1, 4, 6, and the infinity of 8 echo themes of union, stability, renewal, and the interconnectedness of all beings. These cards form a counterclockwise circle, moving from memory to possibility, anchored by the animals who inhabit them and who ask us to reflect on ecological fragility and our shared responsibility.

At the eighth position, left intentionally open, you are invited to pull the final card at the Altar of Curiosities. This card personalizes the collective reading, reminding us that each of us contributes to the story of this place, this moment, and this larger ecological web.

Drink some water or just pause

The physical work you see here today - material and process

I'll start with talking about the Moon piece. That is a woodcut blind emboss print featuring a mezzotint of the moon chine-colléd at the center surrounded by Umpqua Mariposa lilies going through the cycles of a bloom. I wanted to use wood to emboss with because I wanted to capture a more natural chatter, I embossed the print rather than printing with ink because I wanted to have the moon be what is seen from a distance, inviting you all to take an intimate look of the wolf dancing up towards the sky. The Gray wolf's protections have been in limbo historically and again more recently. There are people who want to protect their livestock and people who want to protect the wolf.

Next we have the Magician. That is a screenprinted image of a linoprint pasted into a wooden frame with a glass butterfly pinned to the center as if found in the wild and preserved. The Fender's blue butterfly is a species from the Willamette Valley in Oregon that was named after mailman Kenney Fender who noticed them fluttering around in 1937, a couple of years later, they were declared extinct until they magically reappeared in the 1980's. A side note - someone related to Kenny Fender stumbled upon a posted image of my print and shared that he passed away before witnessing their return and was excited to see this piece.

Following this is the Lovers piece. Two screenprint monotypes sandwiched between glass, with 6 porcelain pendants hanging below. These pendants represent methods of love and care. At the center of this image is a triangle, adding a queer emphasis to this card. The Cascade Head Catchfly's survival depends on the delicate choreography of pollinators and soil, the relationship, essential, each a vow renewed with the returning season.

Subsequent to the Lovers is the Empress. A paper vessel with an offering to the pygmy rabbits below, circling in an echo of the number three. In their desert habitats are the invasive western juniper tree who drinks nearly five thousand gallons of water each year from the dry earth, water that might have nourished the sagebrush, the rabbit, and the many unseen beings of the desert. Fire pushes out and destroys these populations with climate change consistently elevating this to a new degree. Water is represented as glass to symbolize its precarity and gold as light.

To my left is the High Priestess piece. Using misprints I've collected from the past two years, I blended a paper clay to sculpt into a culvert of a dam, representative of the crumbling of the dams along the Klamath river that we witnessed in 2024. At the center is a hanging etched copper plate with a vinegar patina. Using copper as a metaphor for power, the power of the water flowing, the power of the fish swimming. The Salmon can now run free through these waters.

To my right is the Hanged Man. A woven copper vessel featuring a lithoprint encased in glass and a photopolymer plate printed onto porcelain holding a bouquet of porcelain primroses blooming out with copper leaves. The Hoary bat's population demise is in majority due to wind turbines, these contain a lot of copper, which was the basis for my material consideration of using copper as a symbol of power. The hanged man invites us to try new things, and I decided to work with a material I am familiar with in a new way. This vessel is hung upside down as the card itself entails, with a wolf's head peaking out though one of the flowers.

The last card I've developed in this iteration is the Wheel of Fortune. By screenprinting etching cream onto thin glass I am able to deepen my connection to using glass as a symbol for precarity in this body of work as every part of the process for making that piece required a delicate and slow regard. The charms, like rocks the otter holds onto - consist of pebbles from the Oregon coast - painted with hard ground, which is a petroleum product. Flame painted copper flames, two porcelain vases stained black - and two pieces of oil slick dichroic glass all acting as depictions of the oil spilled into the ocean, met in the center with a metal portal, blue tinted vase and blue glass representing the efforts and people in place to prevent more pipelines, ocean pollution and invasive purple sea urchins from inhibiting the Sea otter and so many others, to survive.

The final piece in this show is the altar of curiosities. This altar of curiosities explores curiosity as both a design principle and a form of care. Centered around the construction of a cabinet of curiosities & altar hybrid, this work functions as a piece of parafunctional furniture that aims to invite engagement while questioning its own utility. To divert away from the curiosity cabinet as a tool of colonialism by incorporating the spirit of an altar as a space to hold companion literature, altar objects, an altar cloth and a tarot deck. Inside this cabinet are objects that are able to be taken and space allowed for objects to be offered as a reciprocal altar for everyone here today.

Intended audiences

This work is intended for a vast audience. From people who rely on the Tarot as a divination tool, to those who aren't familiar with the tarot, or ecologists, people concerned about the environment, teachers, practitioners, people who utilize pedagogical and spiritual tools, those seeking information, and those who are curious.

the shifts that occurred for me from proposal to defense

Since I first proposed this work, I've really had to hone in on how to become more flexible with needing to change designs and compositions based on external factors such as cancelled classes, broken machines, things just not working out, etc. I've also learned how not all of the plants and animals within this deck are able to be "saved" some are past their timeframes of return, some have resources listed in the companion literature to how we can work to replenish their environments and some will hopefully return to considerable populations, but not on their own.

I've learned a lot about myself through this project - I struggled with the Empress card for instance, the original illustration being one that emphasizes the destruction of the Pygmy rabbit's environment, and I noticed I hadn't done that with any other card, so I took some time to get out into their environment and went to Tygh Valley and redrew this image to make room for a more hopeful outlook. I learned stronger research methods through the good folks at our library and with books such as *Fieldwork for Future Ecologies.*

What the future may hold

The future feels both bright and bleak. A duality many artists are often faced to confront and it feels specifically poignant now. In any case I have been working on steps to support my future self. I applied for the Fulbright Iceland award, ideally pursuing graduate studies through the continuation of this project, highlighting their redlisted species through the suit of cups. I am hoping to show this exhibit in a gallery in the Pacific Northwest one more time before potentially departing the states.

Not all iterations of this project may be sculptural, I am aiming to do the cups as large scale wood blocks, but this project (and myself) are flexible and I plan to work with what is accessible and around to help inform the methodology of these works. I would love to create editions with groups of people for works like the Wheel of Fortune. Creating more editionable sculptural works to include more people and more voices in the conversation.

Some ideas I have for future cards of the Major Arcana include the Fools card as the Columbian White Tailed Deer as a chandelier, the Emperor as the Grizzly Bear, the Hierophant as the Wolverine, the Chariot as the Sei Whale. Justice as the Western Spotted Skunk, the Hermit as the Woodland Caribou. Strength as the Canada Lynx. Death as the Northern Spotted Owl, Temperance as the California Condor & Pumice Moonwort, the Devil as the Northern Spotted Leopard Frog. The Tower as the Checkerspot butterfly & Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, the Star as the Sunflower Sea Star, The Sun as a cyanoprint, Judgement as the Western Bumble Bee and the World as the Orca.

There is always the possibility of the death of this project, which I feel important to name. Currently, I am hoping to get all 72 cards illustrated and printed in some capacity over a vague period of time. I want to honor this goal and my capacity for things to change. I dream of being able to pull from my own deck to offer readings. I believe my definition of what “finished” means will change over the years. Just as ecological cycles don’t have hard stops, I plan to allow space for this project to enter dormancy, shift forms, or leave behind fertile ground for future works. “Death” can be a transformation rather than an end.

Thank you all so much for taking the time to sit here and ponder with me. I truly appreciate it.