

**JOSEPH ROSSANO**

For how long has humanity's valuation of human life and lifestyle, over that of other animals, justified a collective behavior that is untenable for all living creatures? *IVORY.125* marks one eighth of the journey to *IVORY*: an exhibition that explores this question and others, particularly the predominant hand of humans in animal extinction.

Throughout existence, humans have vanquished beasts. The most powerful among us killed lions, tigers, and bears, seeking through the wearing of their hides, teeth and claws to embody and portray--to appropriate--our own power. *IVORY.125* engages viewers in the troubled power relations and devastating effects of the global trade in illegal animal parts as an entry point to the broader extinction crisis. The exhibit features a gallery groaning under the visual and physical weight of 60 life-size blown glass tusks---just 25% of the average amount illegally harvested every day. A monumental slab of ancient Douglas Fir grounds complementary objects in a time scale spanning human sociocultural evolution. Portraits of imperiled megafauna from the Holocene, our current geological epoch, and those extinct since the Pleistocene, stalk the gallery walls. Sensitively rendered in ash and tar on wood panels harvested from the very forests that have served as their homes for over 9,000 years, these creatures stare down the viewer and the massed ivory.

Humans still cultivate the belief that it is our right to prevail over and dictate the fate of all creatures on this planet, taking at will whatever we desire. Using a sculptural rendering of the fossil record, *IVORY* in all its iterations reveals how our legacy as a species is inseparably tied to behaviors and values driven to ensure human survival. Only by acknowledging our collective culpability may we move to rightly repair our cumulative destruction of the natural world, and begin acting to insure that the remnants of this planet's wildlands and inhabitants can survive for epochs to come