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# BESTIARIUM

Human and Animal Representations

Edited by

Mariaelisa Dimino, Alessia Polatti, Roberta Zanoni



**MIMESIS**  
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DANIELA MARIA HIRSCH & DAVID GAEHTGENS

## DISPLAY

### AN EXPEDITION INTO GAZING

*GZRGF KWQP TGRQTV*

An artistic field study December 2014 – January 2016

Destination: Zoological Garden Berlin, Germany

Concept, implementation and evaluation:

Daniela Maria Hirsch & David Gaehtgens

Permanent documentation: [www.gaehtgenshirsch.net/surrogates](http://www.gaehtgenshirsch.net/surrogates)

Status of expedition: Returned

Status of report: May 2017, preliminary

*Cdmucev*

Over the course of one year we have gathered longterm video recordings of roaming humans gazing at displayed animals in the Berlin Zoo, which is the oldest German institution of its kind. The setting of the zoo focuses prototypically on central aspects of the human posture towards non-human animals, but also on human organization itself: the distribution of participation, the access to and development of capabilities and the effects of shared narratives and agreements.

The zoo's phenomenology carries both historical and current information on human positions. Here, the viewing direction towards co-animals is visibly manifesting in space and embedded in the overall concept of management and application for use. Therefore the tool of the camera is directed at us humans, the other animals are mostly absent from the recordings.

The study is based on a series of full-day field trips into a semi-public institution which features models of habitats for 18,662 animals from 1,380 species on a total area of 81.5 acres (as at 2015).<sup>1</sup> It generated

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1 [https://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/produkte/Jahrbuch/jb2016/excel/JB\\_201604\\_BE.xlsx](https://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/produkte/Jahrbuch/jb2016/excel/JB_201604_BE.xlsx), accessed on 29 May 2017

a visual compendium which consists of three chapters: 'Looking In', 'Looking Out' and 'Safari'. It aims to explore and evaluate the process of gazing as a significant marker of human interests and intentions.

## *GZRGF K/QP"TGXIGY*

### *Background*

The human species has added its own peculiarities to the animal world. One unique feature is the broad array of customs mankind holds central to social organization. Human animals have developed by living as associates. The concept of collaboration is and has been central to the maintenance and evolution of the human concept. Connected to this is a manifold spectrum of social arrangements and commitments.<sup>2</sup> The packaging and coding of this information varies greatly among human groupings.

Customs are complex inventions which serve various purposes. One of them is the dealing with otherness.<sup>3</sup> The correlation between likeness and unlikeness, between similar and dissimilar is attributed with great dynamics. It concerns strategies for the provision of survival, but moreover humankind is interested in abstraction, elementary meaning and explanatory systems.<sup>4</sup> These renderings have an intrinsic impact on decision making and actions. Therefore we consider this entanglement as a central force within human aspiration. To examine this field, we have chosen a starting point in our own cultural breeding.

### *Research Area*

Our biographical backgrounds lie in central Europe. Here, as in other parts of the global human settlement, dealing with distinction is

2 Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape* (Frogmore: Triad/Mayflower Books, 1977), p. 21: 'The forest ape that became a ground ape that became a hunting ape that became a territorial ape has become a cultural ape' [...].

3 John Berger, *Why Look at Animals?* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p. 16-17: 'This – maybe the first existential dualism – was reflected in the treatment of animals. [...] The parallelism of their similar/dissimilar lives allowed animals to provoke some of the first questions and offer answers'.

4 e.g.: explanation of man's origin can be found in human cultures around the world

embedded in the effort to acquire and maintain meaningful perceptions in an apparently chaotic world. But here the interest and curiousness in other beings of nature was influenced by a specific change in the world view: gradually Europeans stepped out of the cosmological experience in which everything was part of a grand divine plan and into a more and more self-empowered position.<sup>5</sup> Human curiosity drove towards an emancipated quest for detail and context. If it was not a divine system of logic, then which correlations could there be? And if no god was ruling the course of events, why not strive for an autonomous human regulation?<sup>6</sup>

This change in self-esteem is reflected in the intercourse with objects of the natural world. The mapping of the world though travelroutes and their abstract representations via graphical systems did not only give access to many findings of otherness. This otherness stirred the imagination but also challenged the intellectual claim to find a grid through which occurrences could be handled. The system of mapping includes the method of collection. But not only was immaterial information gathered and stored, actual natural objects of all kinds were also transported and rallied. Initially, those findings represented both the powerful quest in realms of the world and the strange entertainment the universe holds.<sup>7</sup> The early storage rooms for these collected objects in the 14th century were called *Wunderkammer* (cabinets of curiosities) and they represented the fascinating experience of the world. Parallel and even preceding to this is the *ménagerie* – ‘une établissement de luxe et de curiosité’: a part of a garden or a park in which a collection of captive animals, frequently exotic, are kept for display.<sup>8</sup>

In the further course however, the indoor display of collected items expanded from a prestigious demonstration of monetary and imperial power to the question of encyclopedia: how can the collection of

5 Paul Virilio, *Der negative Horizont*, trans. by Brigitte Weidmann (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1989), p. 38: ‘Wie hat man im Tier das Vehikel, in seinem Fleisch den Motor vermuten können?’

6 e.g. Galileo Galilei’s life and work hold many examples and illustrations.

7 Eric Baratay, Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo – Von der Menagerie zum Tierpark*, trans. by Matthias Wolf (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2000) p. 29 (citation from Krzysztof Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums. Vom Sammeln* (Berlin, Wagenbach, 1998), p. 13-70): ‘Diese Kuriositätenkabinette, die nur selten spezialisiert waren, stellten sowohl vom Menschen geschaffene *artificialia* zur Schau [...] als auch natürliche Objekte, sogenannte *naturalia* [...] als Kondensierungen der wahrnehmbaren, erkennbaren Welt’.

8 Ibid p. 41: ‘1662-1664 entstand dann in Versailles eine Ménagerie, die ausschließlich für exotische, seltene und ungewöhnliche Tiere bestimmt war’.



From : "Safari", 11 July 2015, 2:11 p.m., 20:03 minutes

objects from the natural world become part of a reference system, generating and endorsing explanations? The wonder room turned into a *Kunstkammer* in which the magic of nature should be acquired for specific applications and human intention.<sup>9</sup> Work on explanation was always escorted by representation, the room itself served as a three-dimensional translation of achievement. The objects on display are no longer mere witnesses but have become accomplices in conceptual modelling. Seeing and thinking are manifested together. Ultimately this drive leads to the museum as a body of competence, a place to represent and connect seemingly valid models of realities.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of offering a view through organized presentation implies the distribution of positions.<sup>11</sup> With the development of the modern museum there comes the position of a manifestly objective institution to represent facts in categories. These categories aim to establish rational knowledge in the context of larger collections. As the

9 Horst Bredekamp, *Antikensehnsucht und Maschinenglauben* (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2000), p. 53, after Francis A. Yates, *Aufklärung im Zeichen des Rosenkreuzes* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1975), p. 203-208; R. F. Ovenell, *The Ashmolean Museum 1683-1894* (Oxford: Calendon Press, 1986), p. 1-30; Samuel Quiccheberg, *Inscriptiones vel tituli theatri amplissimi, complectentis rerum uniersitatis singulas materias et imagines eximias [...]* (München, 1565) 'Palissys und Andreaes Vorstellungen, die Kunstkammern nicht nur als passive Sammlungen, sondern auch als aktives Labor zu nutzen, entsprach der prometheischen Praxis, Sammeln, Forschen und Gestalten als Einheit zu begreifen. Schon Quicchebergs 'Inscriptiones' lassen die Einteilung der Kunstkammer in die Beschreibung der zugehörigen Werkstätten münden. Für die Fürsten und Kaiser bedeutet eine aktive Beteiligung an der Forschung [...] einen besonders sinnfälligen Ausweis ihrer absoluten Herrschaft, die nicht allein ihre repräsentative Würde, sondern und vor allem eine aktive Kontrolle der Außenwelt betonte'.

10 Bredekamp, p. 32-33: 'Als exaktes, ordnendes Instrument betont die Uhr den imperialen Gestus [...]. Die Geschicke der Welt wie nach einem verbindlichen Zeittakt zentral bestimmt laufen zu lassen, war, [...] zum sinnfälligsten Ausweis reibungsfrei gelenkter, absolutistischer Herrschaft geworden [...].' p. 34-35: 'In der dritten Abteilung sind die drei Naturreiche des Animalischen, Vegetabilen und Mineralogischen systematisiert: [...]. [...], wobei das Schwergewicht auf die Ordnung und nicht auf die Verarbeitung der Objekte gelegt ist'.

11 John Rachman, *Foucaults Kunst des Sehens in Imagineering*, ed. by Tom Holert (Cologne: Oktagon Verlag, 2000), p. 47: 'Es ist diese begriffliche Neuorganisation oder 'Verräumlichung', wodurch die Naturgeschichte 'nichts anderes als die Benennung des Sichtbaren' wurde. [...] Das räumliche Schema einer Wissensform ist nicht nur von den darin vorkommenden Theorien verschieden; oft geht es ihnen voraus und ermöglicht sie erst'.

research focuses on the broad collection of examples and occurrences, so should the visitors follow this activity – such as James Smithson longed for the founding of ‘an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men.’<sup>12</sup> With the Smithsonian Institute there is concept proof of this idea. But what are the means on the viewer’s side?

The act of looking at a display is intended to be of a communicative nature, yet the procedure of gazing carries special attributes. We aim to look at these in regard of knowledge production.

### *Expedition Area*

Long before the collecting of other animals, there is the keeping of them for nutrition or muscle power. This marks a decisive point in human development. The taming and breeding of certain species for specific purposes started around 12,000 years ago.<sup>13</sup> Not only is this a boost in self-empowerment, additionally there is a prothetic effect mankind achieved through access to more-than-man-power. This is prolonged in the association with certain types of animals to gain prestige or show prestige via trophies. The collection of live animals in aristocratic enclosures also could – like the *Wunderkammer* – encircle a little world as a seeming representation of the whole world.<sup>14</sup> And like in the ‘real’ world it was also about hunting them, sometimes in sophisticated settings of landscape architecture which equally enabled viewing and observation. There always was a special focus on exotic animals – foreign, from the outside and distinct.<sup>15</sup>

As the appropriation of the larger natural world progressed, this reflected on human exhibition culture: Zoological societies and gardens have emerged as a product of scientific progress and

12 <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/james-smithson>, accessed on 29 May 2017

13 Greger Larson and Dorian Q. Fuller, ‘The Evolution of Animal Domestication’, *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*, Vol. 45, 2014, pp. 115-136

14 Baratay, p. 44: ‘Mit Hilfe des Gartens ließ sich der [...] Wunsch nach einer Rückkehr zur kosmischen Fülle [...] verwirklichen, [...]. Gleichzeitig sollte er jedoch auch hervorheben, mit welchen Elementen und durch welche Maßnahmen dieser Mikrokosmos – das Abbild des idealen Kosmos – geschaffen worden war [...]’.

15 Ibid, p. 37: ‘Diese Tiere aus dem Ausland – Rassen die wenig bekannt und insofern ungewöhnlich waren – boten den Adligen eine willkommene Gelegenheit, sich als Landwirte zu fühlen, ohne deshalb vulgär zu erscheinen’.

application.<sup>16</sup> They carry within themselves core ideas of modern western civilization. Also they reflect on the position of industrialized man in and towards the natural world.<sup>17</sup>

This is why we chose a zoological museum as destination for our expedition. Because we wanted to start studying from our own immediate habitat, we decided on the zoo in our resident city of Berlin. It happens to be the oldest zoo in Germany. It was founded after the physicist and explorer Martin Hinrich Lichtenstein persuaded the prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm 4th in 1841 to not only give him a loan, but also to dedicate a part of his private pheasantry free of cost to this mission. Alexander von Humboldt, the prominent naturalist explorer, was a strong supporter of this cause and influenced the king, enabling the opening to a selected public in 1844. The older and ambitious predecessor in London was the first ever to use the term Zoological Garden when it opened for scientific study in 1828. Today the Berlin institution is the zoo with the highest number of domiciled species worldwide.

Since the project of becoming a civilizee is one of the human animal, we decided from the beginning to look at our own species.<sup>18</sup>

16 Ibid, p. 127 after Georgette L  g  e, *Le Museum sous la Revolution, l'Empire, et la Restauration in Histoire de l'enseignement de 1610    nos jours* (Paris: CTHS, 1974), p. 752: 'Mit der Er  ffnung der Menagerie im Jardin des Plantes waren die Utopien Bacons und Leibniz sowie die Vorstellungen der Gelehrten des 18. Jahrhunderts Wirklichkeit geworden. Es handelte sich um die erste Institution ihrer Art, die von Wissenschaftlern und ausschlie lich f  r sie eingerichtet worden war. [...] Mit ihren ehrgeizigen Programmen im Bereich der Anatomie, Physiologie, Klassifizierung, Verhaltensforschung und Akklimatisation [...] leisteten sie wahre Pionierarbeit. [...] In Berlin [...] beispielsweise arbeitet man immer wieder mit Universit  tsinstituten zusammen. Wissenschaftliche Forschung galt jetzt   berall [...] als das Gebot der Stunde [...] das da lautete: Inventarisierung, Akklimatisierung und Domestizierung zum Zwecke der Ausbeutung'.

17 John Berger, *Why Look at Animals?* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p. 30: 'Public zoos came into existence at the beginning of the period which was to see the disappearance of animals from daily life. The zoo to which people go to meet animals, to observe them, to see them, is, in fact, a monument to the impossibility of such encounters. Modern zoos are an epitaph to a relationship which was as old as man. They are not seen as such because the wrong questions have been adressed to zoos'.

18 Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape* (Frogmore: Triad/Mayflower Books, 1977), p. 26: 'The sensory equipment of the higher primates is much more dominated by the sense of vision than the sense of smell. In their tree-climbng world,



From: "Looking In", 16 March 2015, 4:03 p.m., 40:31 minutes

Furthermore we expected to look at groups and community dynamics in a semi-public space. Our visits were full-day experiences.

The area itself was known to us from previous visits – some private ones many years ago and two recent ones for researching purposes in connection with the expedition. In 2015 the Berlin Zoo had 3.3 million visitors, making it the most visited zoo in Europe.<sup>19</sup>

### *Expedition Dates*

On 29 December 2014 we bought an annual ticket to the Berlin Zoo for our first expeditional visit. Because it was the holiday season, a friendly staff member made our passes start on 1 January 2015, giving us an extra of 2 days. We made 29-day trips there over the whole year in all seasons and weather conditions. Our last visit was on 31 January 2016. Beyond being a regular visitor, we managed to receive invitations to press conferences. In this field we covered one whole event from the public relations view, namely the unforeseen birth of orangutan baby Rieke and the zoo's dealings with questions and possibilities regarding her situation from 12 January to 23 February 2015.<sup>20</sup>

### *Expedition Members*

The expedition team consisted solely of Daniela Maria Hirsch (audio recordings, drawings and camera assistance) and David Gaehtgens (camera, audio recordings and AV-data handling). We specifically decided to be a small unit, to not be distracted from the situations at hand.

Both our backgrounds are in theatre production and filmmaking. Before the expedition, we previously worked on examining the nature of artistic documentation.

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seeing well is far more important than smelling well, and the snout has shrunk considerably, giving the eye much better view'.

19 <https://www.zoo-berlin.de/de/aktuelles/news/artikel/neuer-rekord> [accessed 29 May 2017]

20 <https://www.morgenpost.de/berlin/article206912589/Happy-Birthday-Rieke.html> [accessed 29 May 2017]

### *Fieldwork & Research*

We perceive the process from recording information to working with that information as a sensitive key activity. The seemingly neutral act of capturing information already contains a lot of shaping through parameters. Who is looking at what with which means? Medium as a neuter of *medius* simply denominates the middle. In natural science it describes the materials or the empty space through which signals, waves or forces pass. Artistically, medium refers to the material and to the technique being used for the production of artwork. This overlaps the definition of medium as a format for communicating and presenting information. In this regard we perceive the medium zoo as a message itself – a communication transmitted via a messenger.<sup>21</sup> We evaluated and selected our methodical approach in reference to this context. Due to the structure of time between the day trips, we could alternate intellectual research with fieldwork.

### *Methods*

#### *Looking At People Looking*

A long time motive of our artistic interest is observing the observer. We had already developed this method in other works. Looking at the process of looking excludes that which is gazed at from the picture, but yet it is always present outside the framing as the clear direction of attention. Meanwhile the onlookers can be viewed both as an overall appearance and in the individuals' details that are beheld on each looker's side.

### *Direct Cinema*

This is a form of documentary filmmaking. It developed simultaneously around 1960 in North America and in France by the filmmakers D.A. Pennebaker, the brothers Maysles and Jean Rouche. The aim was to produce documentation which is as genuine to the

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21 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge Classics, 2001), pp. 8-9: '[...] the content of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. [...] This fact merely underlines the point that 'the medium is the message' because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action'.

objectified situation as possible. The approach tries to directly capture reality, unlike the mainstream media practice which heavily relies on *mise en scène* procedures. Key attributes are losing the commentary, working with lightweight cameras and equipment, to be a fly on the wall in a sense that there is no influence on what happens in front of the camera.<sup>22</sup> Yet, the presence of the filmmaker is always apparent. In the zoo all of our work was an embedded production, clearly visible, completely relying on the facilities at hand.

### *Long-term Recording*

We did long-term video recordings, ranging from approximately twenty minutes to over two hours. Most of the situational accounting was done with one camera but sometimes we used two simultaneously. This captured two windows of observation onto one occurrence. We deliberately took our time to grow into our questions and so our working agenda shaped itself through the working process.

In addition to the technical chronicles, we also produced personal recordings with our own organic sensory equipment. This was also influenced by the long stretches of time we spent quietly in one place at a time, standing still in the movement of groupings. We produced layers of subjective memories in regard to our different personal interests. These recollections resulted in notes and drawings, both with no specific aim other than illustrating our personal experiences.

### *Participant Observation*

This method of data collection aims at results through involvement with the observed situation. It originated in projects of fieldwork in the first half of the twentieth century. It influenced approaches in anthropology, enquiring about the qualitative aspects in field research. Bronisław Malinowski as a social anthropologist was one of the pioneering developers together with his students. His focus on the patterns of exchange stirred the review of personal contributions which are included in every process of collection.<sup>23</sup> The idea for this kind of

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22 Compare *Primary*, dir. by Robert Drew (Drew Associates, 1960), 16mm

23 Bronisław Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, (London: Taylor&Francis e-Library, 2005), Preface by Sir James G. Frazer, p. V: ' Dr. Malinowski lived as a native among the natives for many months together,



From: "Looking In", 19 March 2015, 3:26 p.m., 48:49 minutes

ethnographic research was very different to the methods common in his time, which were more in a colonial tradition of information gathering.<sup>24</sup> The original standard in the work with curiosities of otherness by foreign cultures was to conduct interviews with an authoritarian approach, regarding the culture of interest as no equal partner. In contrast to that, participating in a cultural environment and even cultivating social relationships can enable a deeper and more open learning environment. There is a striking parallel in the development of animal and wildlife observation: the early TV programmes of David Attenborough follow the tradition of the top view. Just like with human animals, the study objects were caught and then observed and brought home. Today it is interesting to hear Attenborough talk about this time and how his views on documenting wildlife have developed and changed.<sup>25</sup>

In the zoo, we were clearly visible in and with our action. We had the same visitor status as the other visitors and also the same intentions in taking pictures. This is a common activity in the zoo. In fact, for us filmmakers it was a very special place in regard of camera freedom. In the zoo there is a consensual agreement that filming and photography is integral part of this zone. Very much in contrast to the camera consciousness and media sensitivity we now often have to deal with while working in shared public spaces. Through long-term recordings, we had another level of participation: taking our own subjective notes on the situation, often being better able to read it after a certain time of observation.

## *Results*

### *Visual Compendium*

All of the gathered material compiles into a body of visual knowledge. In the course of our field trips, we noticed that our camera results fall into three chapters: *Looking In*, *Looking Out* and *Safari*.

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watching them daily at work and at play, conversing with them in their own tongue, and deriving all his information from the surest sources’.

24 e.g.: Hugo Bernatzik, *Gari Gari – Der Ruf der afrikanischen Wildnis*, (Vienna: L.W.Seidel&Sohn, 1938), p. 108: ‘Ich lasse fürs erste von meinen Leuten den Elefanten ‚besetzen‘ und teile den Nuern mit, sie sollten sich sich solange gedulden, bis uns die Lage des Schiffes ermögliche, das Zerlegen des Tieres zu beobachten. Darüber gibt es eine erregte Auseinandersetzung mit den fleischwitternden Negern’.

25 *Zoo Quest in Colour*, 00:14:20, BBC 2017

These containers refer to the viewing angle in the framing. *Looking In* and *Looking Out* present a perspective into or out of a building. *Safari* relates on the one hand to the park setting of the zoo, on the other hand, it describes the peek, the wait and hunt for the view. Since the term derives from Arabic ‘sāfara’ where it translates as travel or journey, it also enquires about the quality of the movement itself and the nature of the little journey at hand while visiting the zoo.

### *Diorama*

The Diorama originally presented a two-phase projection of images. Invented by Louis Daguerre and Charles Marie Bouton in 1822, it really was a picture-seeing device just as it literally means that which is seen.<sup>26</sup> The Diorama-experience soon took place inside purposely built and technically equipped buildings. They emulated theatres and included a revolving ground floor with the audience moving on it. In contrast to the much older Panorama, which is a wide-angled view often reaching up to 360°, the original Diorama is expanding into motion effects.<sup>27</sup>

However, popular understanding of the term later referred to something else than a building with a picture show installation. In the late nineteenth century, the newly emerged museums of natural history took to a version of the Diorama, in the aim of modelling settings of the natural world for permanent display.<sup>28</sup> These are a mix of two- and three-dimensional elements. The whole setting is equal in size to the scene it represents, the background being a painting and the foreground a lifelike sculptural replication of the original situation. This included taxidermy specimens, guaranteeing an unhindered view of the entire show case at all times.

26 Douglas Harper, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2001-2017, accessed 30 May 2017 at [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=diorama](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=diorama)

27 Sue Dale Tunnicliffe and Annette Scheerso, ed., *Natural History Dioramas: History, Construction and Educational Role* (Dordrecht: Springer Science + Business Media, 2015), Chapter 2: Rainer Hutterer and Claudia Kamcke, *History of Dioramas*, p. 10: ‘The diorama was originally focused on the representation of movements, because their absence in panoramas was felt as a deficiency’.

28 *Ibid*, p. 7: ‘the meaning of the term ‘diorama’ changed through time and is still not clearly defined’.

Our visual material from the zoo is placed in between the two types of Diorama. Like the still models, we have the effect of the camera framing, which is similar to the display in a case. Inside this frame we have an animated showroom. Because in our material we portray the zoo's settings in a series of parts, our framings also suggest to be of prototypical explanation. The question of absent properties which might be of elementary influence on the situation at hand arises. This is something we aimed at intentionally. Furthermore, there is the reference to the general technical setup needed for the zoo, in many ways equalling the efforts of the immersive spatial installation of a Diorama building.

### *Tableau Vivant*

The format of the living picture developed as a three-dimensional still life, an arranged presentation by actors which initially featured imitations of sculpted or painted statues. From the beginnings on theatre stages in the eighteenth century, it came into fashion for entertainment as well as educational purposes in the nineteenth century, when it also ventured into outdoor situations and into a broad portfolio of depicted motifs.<sup>29</sup>

While a central feature of the tableau is the art of keeping still, we perceived framings not without movement but with reduced activity. This is due to the activity range. In contrast to the intentional choice of actors in a tableau vivant to remain motionless, the capacity for acting on matters presented in the zoo's environment is slim. Therefore some parts of our material appear to be semi-motionless. This parallels the permanently moderate situation inside the models of habitat. It is especially linked to areas without majorly popular residents and hence reduced flow of audience. Also it occurs in the movement of the visitors themselves. Here it seems to be connected to the pursuit of gazing, reducing many other possible types of expression.

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29 Brigitte Peucker, *The Material Image: Art and the Real in Film* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 30: 'Tableau vivant is a meeting point of several modes of representation, constituting a palimpsest [...] overlay simultaneously evocative of painting, drama and sculpture'.



From: "Looking Out", 19 March 2015, 4:33 p.m., 8:39 minutes

### *Discussions & Conclusions*

In our results we noticed that the exhibition setup holds specific parameters. Central to its nature is, as described earlier, the allocation of roles. In the word ‘role’, deriving from French *rôle* as part or character one takes, we still have the roll of paper on which an actors part is written.<sup>30</sup> Today we also have the role model. This idea was promoted by the American sociologist Robert King Merton from 1957 onwards.<sup>31</sup> It could easily be embraced by the human frame of mind, because it is a concept the human species has been using for a long time. The distribution of designated positions is and has been the instrument of our human choice to serve as an explanatory structure in the complex universe we find ourselves in. We can compare the mythmaking in cosmological times to the reference group analysis in our anthropocentric times and find that the role is a basic dynamic in both: as a set of rights, obligations and expected behaviour patterns which are associated with a particular social status.

In the performing arts, these properties are openly scripted as a preset to the performance. They serve as an agreement on a particular plot and anchor certain qualities of commitment to a cause-and-effect relationship. Performance implies the act of constructing, producing and bringing about. Since exhibitions are public events, they imply and reflect social, economic and political developments. This is happening in real time and in a spacially manifested situation. Regarding this context, we determined that further enquiries are necessary into other formats of exhibition culture. Currently we are planning such follow up work.

The roles we recognize as central to exhibiting are:

- the Specialist = the establisher of fact-based knowledge
- the Object = the witness to the fact(s)
- the Visitor = the audience following the narrative at hand

In the situations we witnessed at the zoo, the basic characteristics of the visitor-performers were obviously clear to the audience. The actions

30 Harper, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed 30 May 2017 at [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=role&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=role&allowed_in_frame=0)

31 Robert King Merton, ‘Social Structure and Anomie’, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 3, No. 5, October 1938, p. 674: ‘The distribution of statuses and roles through competition must be so organized that positive incentives for conformity to roles and adherence to status obligations are provided for every position within the distributive order’.

we see on film are carried out in a calm and self-assured manner. This leads to the phenomenon that in the review of our material, all members of the audience often appear as if casted to participate in a commonly agreed production. And in fact, the image of the zoo is accessible in societies all over the globe. So there is a shared knowledge of the zoo's specific setting within human culture. Beyond that, the principle of the spectacle as a specially prepared or arranged display is widely in use and therefore familiar knowledge.

The part of the visitor does not hold many options for physical activity. The display is laid out for gazing, which involves mainly the eyes and the mind. Our fieldwork confirmed that the parameters to and within this exercise are of special importance. What is accomplished here?

#### *Adventurous Activities*

We attended most of the activities on offer. We expected the adventure of openly filming strangers. With experiences from other recording situations in contemporary public space, we were prepared for objection and protest. None occurred ever, not even when filming in the pets' corner where a high number of children were present. The only contact we had in connection to filming was regarding enquiries about our technical equipment, coming from fellow photographers.

No activities at the zoo demanded from us to take a brave chance, but the catering by the zoo's facilities.

#### *Administration & Logistics*

Due to our professional backgrounds, the tools we use for administering the topic at hand are all related to the discipline of aesthetics. The theoretical and practical study of receiving and processing sensory information to us seems a pragmatic starting point to inquire specific setups with a tentatively neutral stance. We look at a *phainomenon* in the etymological sense of 'that which appears'.<sup>32</sup> How does an appearance come forth through the parameters of human data-processing?

32 Harper, *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed 30 May 2017 at [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=phenomenon&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=phenomenon&allowed_in_frame=0)

The action of gazing is intertwined with perception. This in itself is a product of a complex and synergizing system. Resulting from it are recognitions, bits of subjectively validated information. In the individual human mind, these bits assemble into understanding. But before interpretation lies the absorbing of information. Here, the exercise of attention does have a large impact. The position and quality of focalization does affect the conceived information. Attention always requires concentration, but the degree and extend of concentration can vary. Also predispositions due to personal experiences interact individually within the exercise of attention.

It is already becoming clear, that the 'coming into view' is an affair of multi-layered logistics. The starting point, however, is the human optical equipment which captures samples of sight. This visual survey is concerned with physical shape and form. The reading of outline and appearance is followed by an instant query on semblance and likeness. These comparative strategies for interpretation are involved even before further evaluation within the conscious mind. Basic referencing is a necessary tool for quick orientation, something of elemental value to all animals in regard to survival.

Therefore, the human civilization project has developed the use of images as readable representatives of meanings. The *imago* also reflects a likeness, it is imitating an appearance and therefore invites recognition. At the same time, it is transcending imitation, because it holds modified or specifically manufactured elements. After inviting the gaze into an accessible visual occurrence, imagery involves the following interpretation with content stretching beyond the initial visual impulse. It is a carrier of factual information but also of attitude and sentiment. The image is capable of transferring more than words and linear logic. This medium has been of great appeal to humankind throughout the varying stages of our species' development.

The method of visual communication was further empowered by techniques for mass-reproduction. The amount of images in everyday life increased due to mechanical publishing. The visual quality of pictures was influenced by available new technology, fusing word with image and this especially by the expansion of advertising. Also 'visualization' became a term describing, in the nineteenth century, the graphical display of data as precise mechanical drawings. The diagram is an exceptional achievement of abstraction in the human generation of visual media. Also it is a powerful component within organized presentation in regard to the establishment of coherent knowledge.

### *Conclusion*

All animals use the experience of likeness for general orientation. Humankind also emphasizes otherness, addressing distinction and establishing a dualistic dynamic. This concerns human orientation in regard to affiliation and belonging.

The cultural practise of exhibiting is based on this dynamic. It draws on likeness for recognition and involvement, therefore enabling legibility. At the same time, the principle of display draws on otherness, because it creates a separation within the encounter. This separation stems from the properties of the allocated positions. I am the looker facing that which is looked at, which was purposefully chosen for display. All three positions hold different particularities, empowering certain qualities and diminishing others. For example: while the distance between the fixed positions can foster the awareness of perspective, the static setup itself increases the impression of stability and reliability. This is no purely intellectual experience. The exhibition is a medium that generates situational forms of knowledge. The way in which something is placed in relation to its surroundings constitutes an immediate quality and a departure point for all further effects. This is why the consideration of the gestalt as an overall shape and integral arrangement does matter greatly. By looking at the single parts, the functioning of the greater unit as a reciprocal structure cannot be seized.

A relevant dimension regarding exhibition culture emerges on this level. It is the dimension of the exhibit as evidence, resembling the meaning of this term in court. This is relevant because it asks about ramifications for the production of knowledge. Are we experiencing open or closed knowledge systems?<sup>33</sup> What are the systems' respective outcomes? And how important is this when the

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33 Artist Luis Camnitzer's conception of 'art thinking' describes the museum as a system for organizing and acquiring knowledge. In his keynote lecture *Where is the Genie?* at the conference *The Idea of the Global Museum*, December 2-3 2016 at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart Berlin, he refers to the dynamics in closed and open knowledge systems. He identifies as central the autodidactic processes within the viewer: a closed knowledge system is asking 'Do you get it?' and an open approach is asking 'What will you do with it?'. In the next step, the closed system asking 'Do you like it?', the open question is 'How will you carry it on your own?'.

use of designated sights has become a general standard within a more and more global human culture?<sup>34</sup>

Another holistic dynamic is the plot, the overall direction a context is driving towards. At the zoo this is a human passage from nature to culture. As in every narrative, certain signals which are shared inside a group of recipients serve as a familiar basis of anticipation.<sup>35</sup> These signals draw from habits and conventions, they confirm and consolidate meaning. They also support judgement and participate in the creation of symbols, our human tokens of joint remembrance. Here, there is room for projection, the transference of desires, feelings or intentions onto beings, objects and circumstances. In fifteenth century alchemy, projection describes the transmutation of a lesser substance into a higher form. Today we can witness the effect of projecting additional content into a given constellation, transforming or disguising the initial experience.

The exhibition format has become general situational knowledge. The rules of engagement with this format are familiar throughout human societies. Though not all parts of a society become physically involved with the rooms of exhibition spaces, they are accepted as a vehicle of human culture. This culture rather meets opposition and critical thinking from individuals actively working within this space, but never fundamentally questioned from the outside visitors. Disengagement or detachment are the silent expressions of dislike. As mentioned before, we actively pursue further questioning regarding these interrelations.

A specific characteristic of the zoo is the required level of previous engagement: because the subject of the exhibition seems to be the natural world, every visitor can easily bring some expertise. The most basic expertise is being an animal ourselves, even if this is not consciously perceived. It is a subject of low-threshold, balancing possibly educative ambitions with light entertainment. In this special atmosphere one striking property of the space almost escapes apperception – it is the

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34 Guy Debord, *Die Gesellschaft des Spektakels*, trans. by Jean-Jacques Raspaud (Luzern: Edition Libertaire 1994), No. 5: ‘Das Spektakel kann nicht als Übertreibung einer Welt des Schauens, als Produkt der Techniken der Massenverarbeitung von Bildern begriffen werden. Es ist vielmehr eine tatsächlich gewordene, ins Materielle übertragene Weltanschauung. Es ist eine Anschauung der Welt, die sich vergegenständlicht hat’.

35 Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, 8th edn. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981), p. XLVI: ‘[...] Verständnis langfristiger Prozesse, die Menschen auf der individuellen und auf der gesellschaftlichen Ebene gleichzeitig durchlaufen’.

artificial nature of the seemingly naturalistic display.<sup>36</sup> The scenery is entirely fabricated, not even falling back onto the original matter of the referenced situation. Instead a proxy is created, recreating outline and guise from different material than the original it represents. A solid stone becomes a man-made object, with a plastered and painted surface. The familiar setting of the park frames the naturalistic replica. The enclosed garden is a popular man-made naturalistic scene. The use as a zoological garden makes it difficult to decode the constellation of *Ersatz*, the artificial replacement differing in kind from and inferior in quality to what it replaces. In the zoo we are dealing, on many levels, with the concept of the substitute as something used in place of something else – gradually, we realized, this captures the transitive nature of the civilization process itself. This realization transformed our perception of the zoo into an allegory of the human civilization project, speaking about its quality and nature. And, as this is an ongoing process, so was and is the zoo exhibition practice itself in constant evolvment.

Our framings are windows for observation and as in every allegory an important move is from ‘What is it?’ to ‘What does it do?’. With the playback in installative situations we now want to find out what kind of potential the material has in this regard. A continuous re-search: to look and look again and look again.

Finally, we would like to add a personal conclusion on the zoo: to us it is also a meditation on the human culture of caging. This practise originated within humankind and is not shared by any other species. As an activity it has shaped human development on many levels. The zoo is an opportunity to register the texture and character of this pursuit of barring. At the zoo, we wish for the ‘looking at’ to be expanded by ‘listening in’. And after listening, so we dream, talk and interchange on this complex could be activated on all channels of human sensitivity, challenging the culture of gazing into motion.

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36 Baratay, p. 90: ‘Der Landschaftsgarten verfährt nämlich nach der Methode des Fragmentierens und Collagierens’.

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