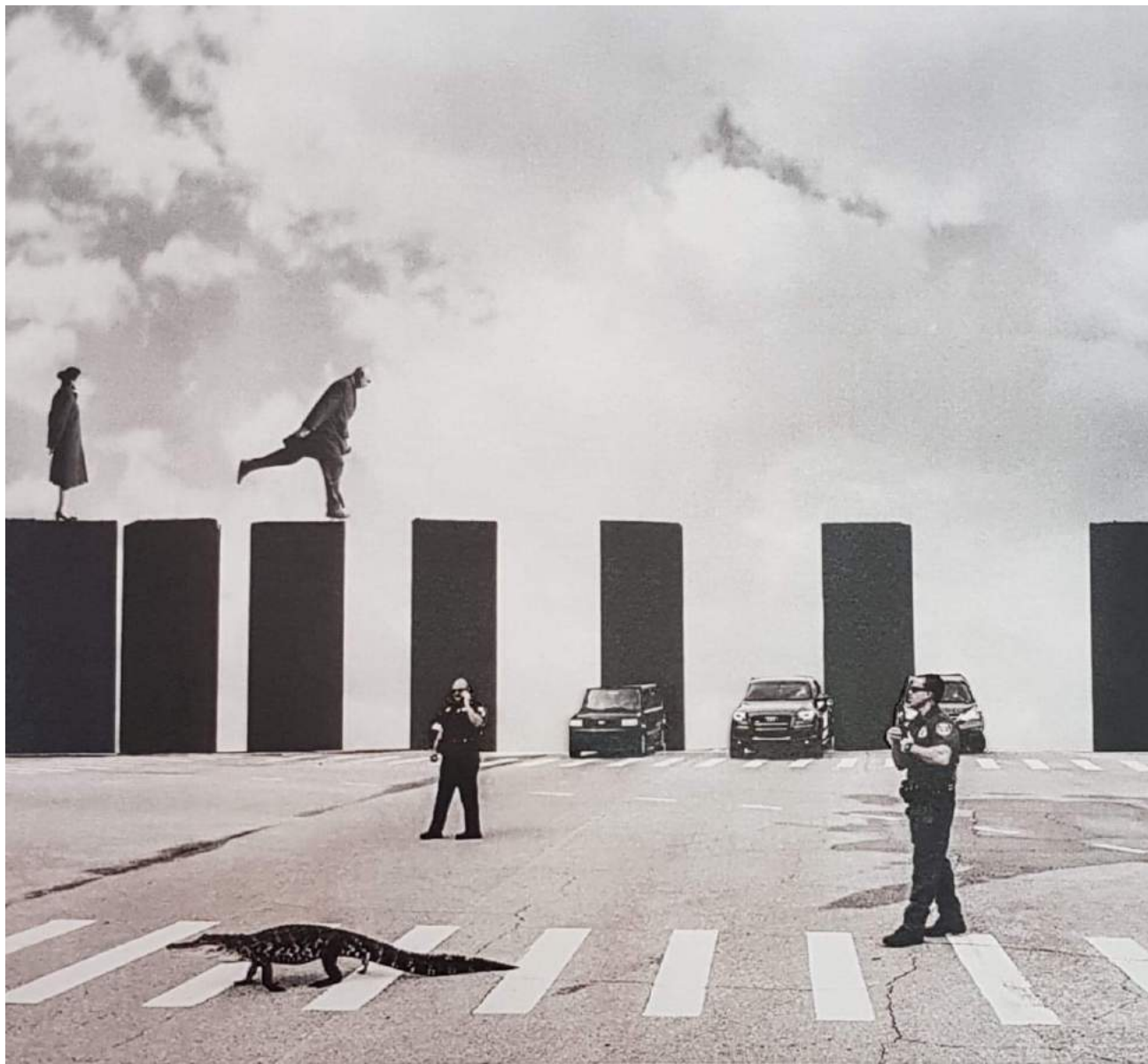


## Archeology of an empty zoo

Bergen arkitektthøgskole 2019  
Diplomaprogram  
Daniel Rydland



What will we do with the alligators in the basement?



## *Subjects*

Two pre-historic albino alligators  
and three crocodilles  
live in a basement under a palace in Paris.  
15x15 meter pit.

They circle the plastic mountain day and night.

Animals in captivity tend to bite themselves,  
Unable to hunt they loose their sense  
of meaning in the universe.  
Fall into depression  
Observed from above at all times





## *What is habitat?*

Built in 1931,  
uniquely from the finest materials  
and resources harvested in france`s colonial outposts.  
The walls richely decorated eternalising the process.  
Tea, rice, textiles,  
asia, africa, america, serving the empire.  
Us and them.

Meticilously renovated in 2007 to house the  
new museum of immigration..

Except for the tropical zoo in the basement.  
The presence of the alligators hum  
from beneath the wooden floor.  
Pre-historic, wild.  
Submitted  
Silent.  
They reflect a question back to us.

Were we ever really modern?





## *About zoo`s*

Emerging as an emblem of colonial power, where the capturing of animals became a trophy in the conquest of exotic lands.

The zoo annot but dissapoint. The public purpose of a zoo is to offer the visitors the opportunity of looking at animals.

Yet nowhere in a zoo can a stranger encounter the look of an animal.

At most the animals gaze flickers, passes on. They look blindley beyond. They scan mechanically.

They have been immunized to encounter. because nothing can anymore occupy a central place in their attention.





# Intention

“In this new type of zoo, a museum of the zoo, humans are the subject of observation”

## *The why*

The zoo as a concept is a past form of thought.

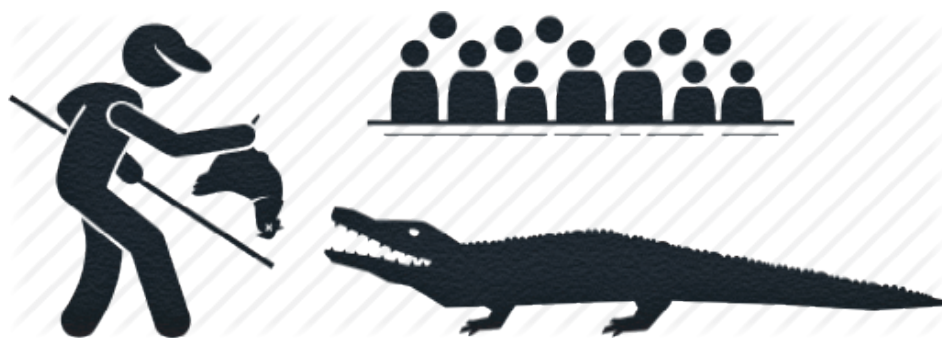
For the new museum of immigration to introduce a sense of brake from the colonial era`s attitudes towards nature and animals as mere resources to be conquered and dominated. Serving us.

The animals in the former palace of the colonies, once home of the colonial exhibiton and its human zoos must again be re-thought.

in a incresingly fragmented world,  
what is habitat?

## *The educational argument*

“Watching a wild animal in captivity in a zoo holds as much educational value as watching a man in prison”





*Reintroduction into natural habitat*





flickering



# Fragments

Its hard to locate the source of the humidity  
when descending into the tropical aquarium  
of the former palace of the colonies.

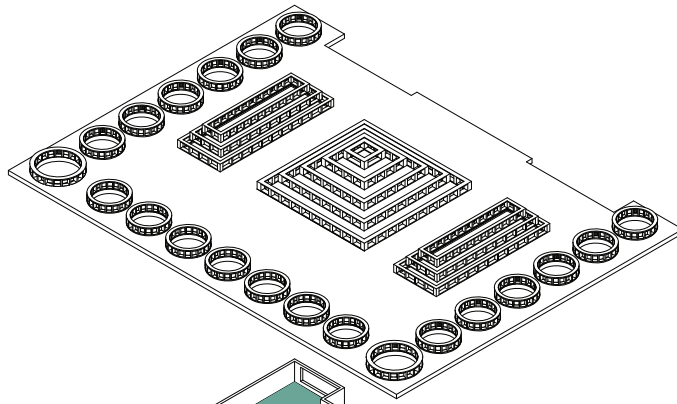
its nowhere, and everywhere.  
the keeping of water in containers produces  
a mouldy smell. Like n the showers of an  
old swimming hall.

Strings of neon blue light from the tanks in  
the walls. Inside, miniature submerged  
mountains radiate miniature bubbles of air  
The occean floor.

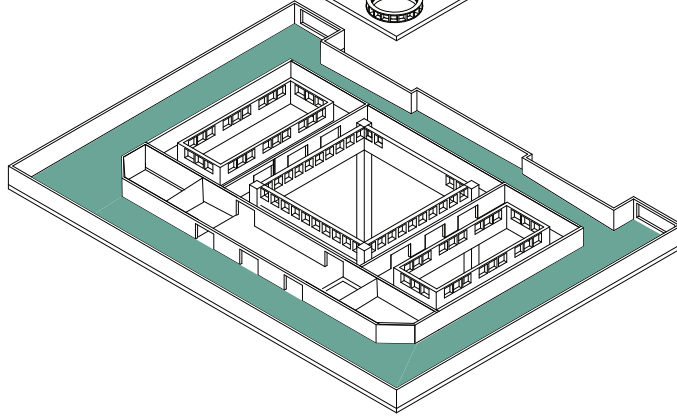
Sound of falling water into a hole in the  
ground. Whats clearly a plastic mountain rises.  
Artificial stones and plants separate  
the green muddy waters at the bottom.



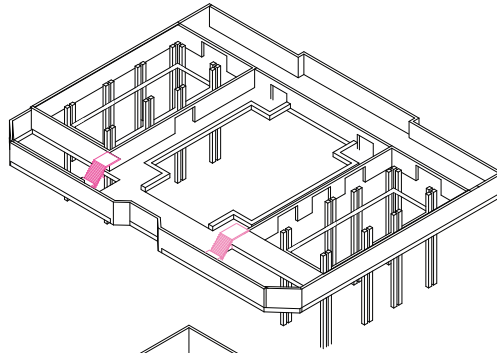
roofstructure  
overlights



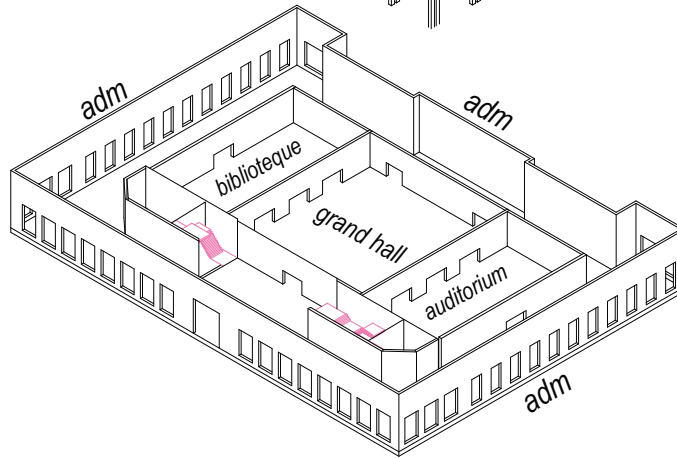
3rd floor  
immigrationmuseum



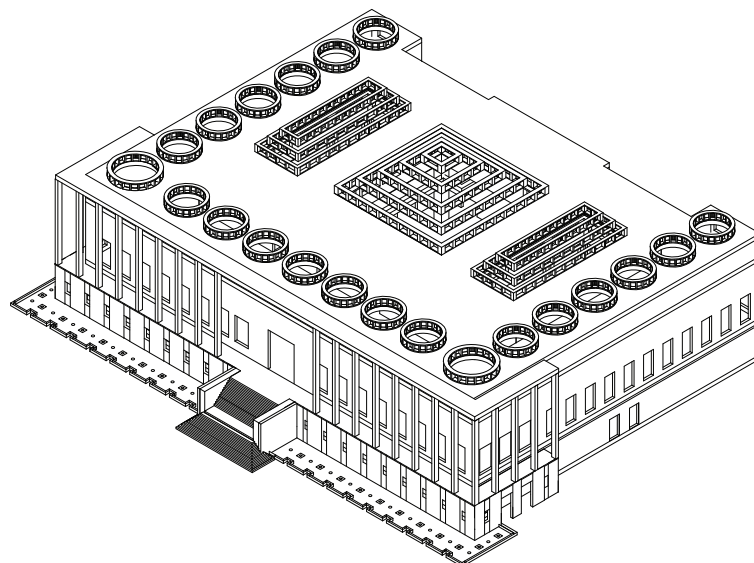
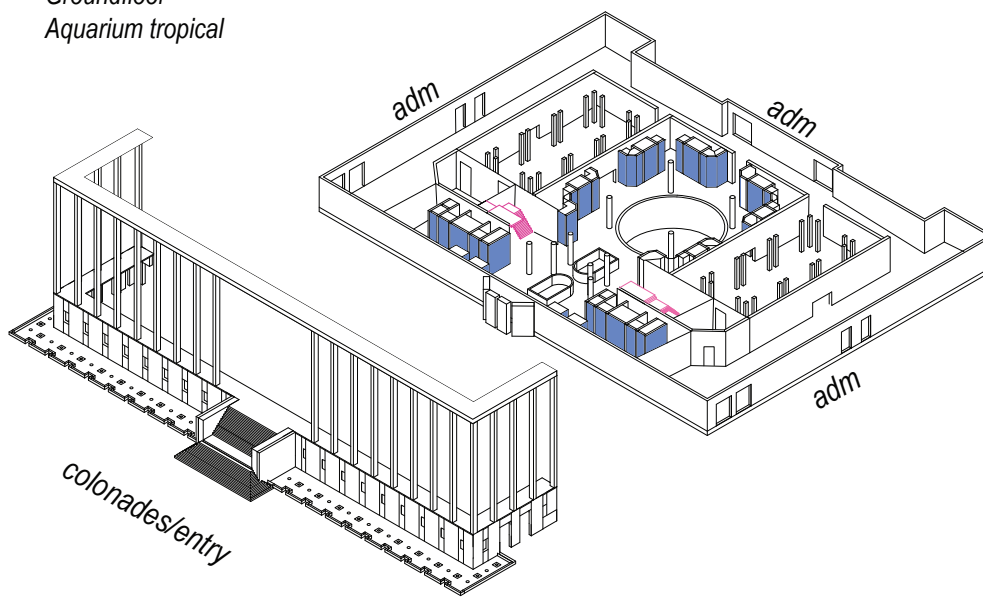
2.floor  
mezzanine



1.st floor  
conference



Groundfloor  
Aquarium tropical



Aquarium tropical & museum of immigration



## Archeology of an empty zoo



# Archeology of an empty zoo

## Project description

Two prehistoric albino alligators and three crocodiles live in a basement under a palace in Paris. A 15x15 meter pit in the floor. They circle a plastic mountain day and night. Unable to hunt they have lost their sense of meaning in the universe. Observed from above at all times, animals in captivity tend to bite themselves and fall into depression. After visiting the former palace of the colonies I was left with a feeling of the absurd. The building, converted into a museum of immigration which aspired to confront colonialism, still held captive the very emblem of colonialism. The capturing and confining of “exotic” animals. The animals’ conditions also held eerie connotations to the human zoo which was held during the colonial exhibition this palace was created for. However, the artificial habitat created for these wild and beautiful animals (and us looking down at them) created a dynamic that sparked the inspiration for this particular diplomawork. The relation between animals (man included). What is artificiality? What is habitat? Are these animals reflecting back at us our own sense of loss of place?

## Absurdity and revolt

French philosopher Albert Camus wrote in his trilogy of absurdism about Sisyphos. A figure of Greek mythology who was condemned to repeat forever the same meaningless task of pushing a boulder up a mountain only to see it roll down again. Camus claimed that his destiny was no less absurd than that of any other. He chooses to push the boulder and not to lay down. It is his revolt in pushing the rock, the absurd, that fulfills him. And that on his descent down the mountain, when he stopped for a breath at a ledge and looked out over the horizon into the starry night. That “one must imagine Sisyphos free, one must imagine Sisyphos happy, indeed)

## The empty zoo

This diploma project aspires to introduce an empty zoo, where man is the subject of observation. It is my belief that if we are to be truly contemporary. That requires looking at our relation to other species, to resources and our impact on the earth as the dominant species.

## The pastiche of styles

What is artificiality?

Michel Foucault writes in his essay “of other spaces” that the western world needed to create what he refers to as “perfect other places” after God was questioned in the era of enlightenment. We had lost something sacred and needed to replace it. He referred to these spaces as heterotopias. Like utopias, but actual real places. Somewhat of a collage of many ideas and spaces all juxtaposed into one place. He wrote;

“first category of heterotopic spaces are brothels and the colonies. The heterotopic spaces of illusion and compensation. their role is to create a space that exposes every real space in the world in which human life is partitioned, simultaneously.

Another example given is the garden. He writes that; “the garden is the smallest parcel of the world, and it is the totality of the world. Our modern zoological gardens spring from that source”

## The garden and the pit of alligators.

This diploma is particularly interested and works with the relation between the artificial habitat of the alligators and fish tanks of the zoo and the existing garden behind the museum.



*1st Conceptual model*



*Stone, gypsum*

