

1. The Beginning



The Beginning...

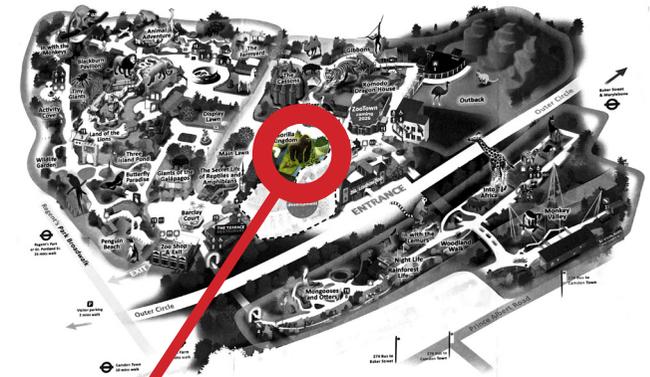
To begin Unit 1, I started by exploring how Graphic Communication Design can act as a systematic method of investigation — a way of uncovering new and unexpected patterns within a chosen physical site.

I wanted to understand how my own perspective as a designer could shape a new way of seeing and interpreting a familiar space.

For this project, I chose to explore **London Zoo (ZSL)**, focusing specifically on the **Gorilla Kingdom**.

As the theme of this unit revolves around the “ways of seeing,” I was drawn to spaces that embody both the act of seeing and being seen. This immediately reminded me of **Guy the Gorilla**, a taxidermied gorilla displayed behind glass on the second floor of the Natural History Museum, where I currently work. Surrounded by curious visitors every day, Guy exists in a state of permanent observation — a symbol of how we frame and preserve nature for human eyes.

Curious about the contrast between Guy’s current display and the place he once lived, I decided to visit the **Gorilla Kingdom at London Zoo**, tracing the layers of gaze, distance, and design embedded within that space.



Methods of Investigation

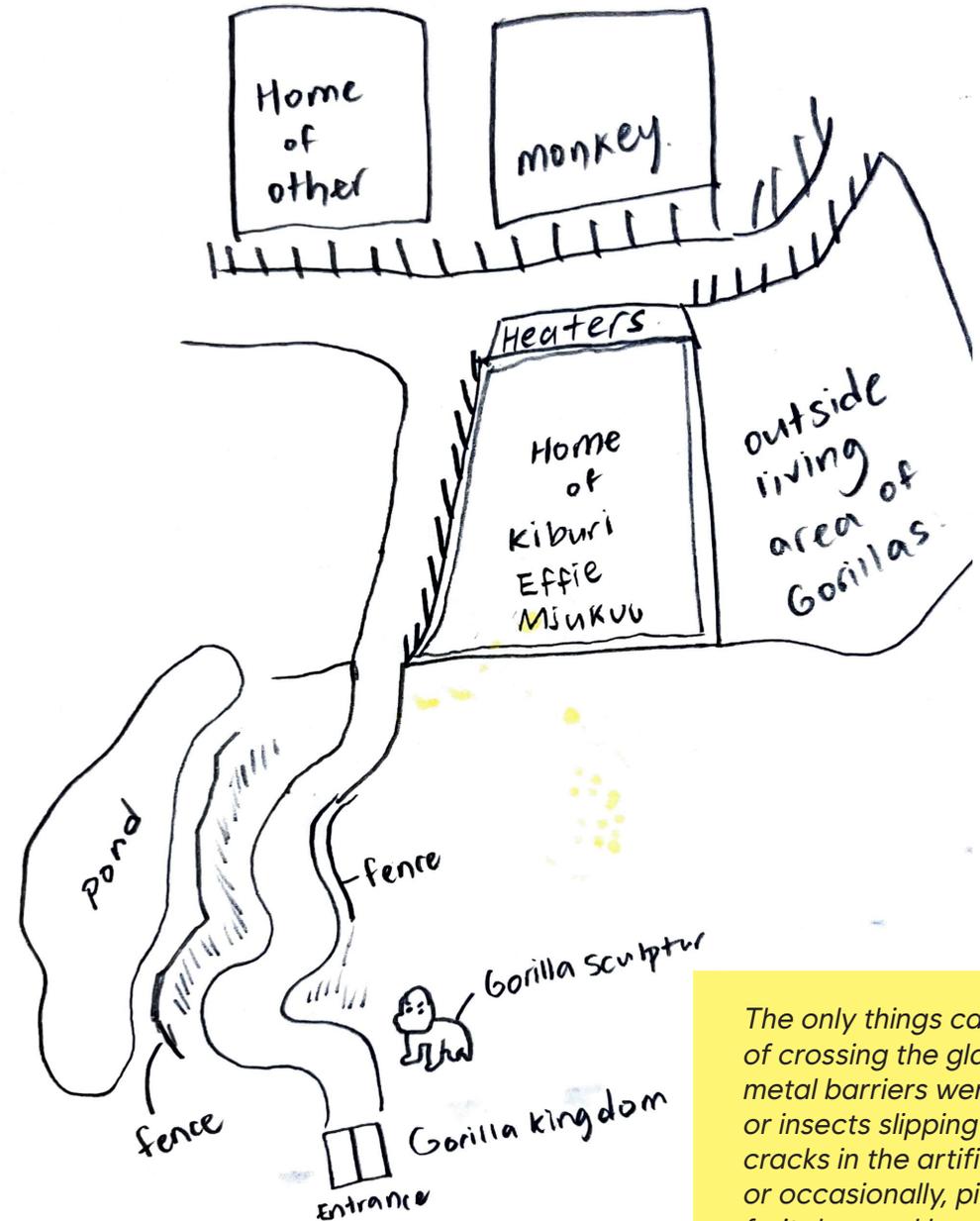
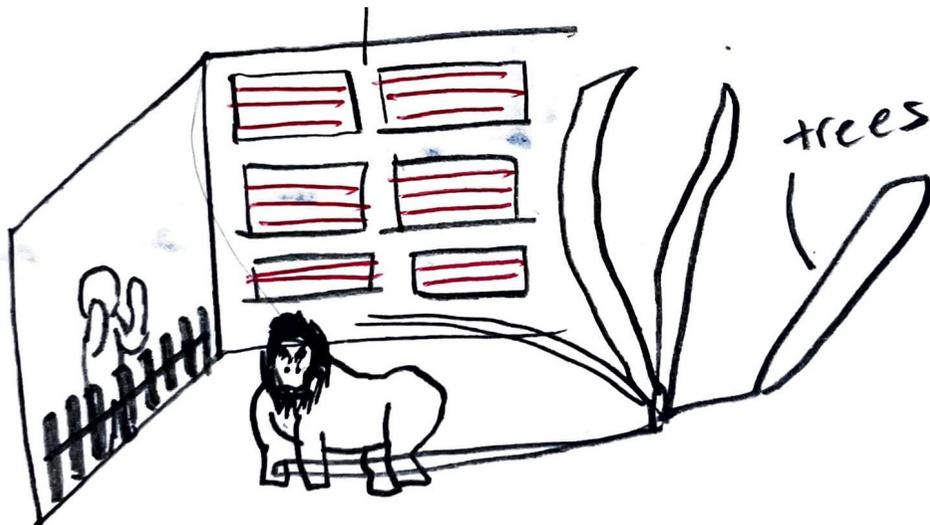
On the 24th of September, I visited the Gorilla Kingdom, located in the Blue Zone of the London Zoo. Within this site, I employed two main methods of investigation: note-taking and photography.

1. Note taking

The first method I used was note-taking, documenting both the physical environment and the subtle relationships between humans and gorillas.

The Gorilla Kingdom is divided into two large enclosures.

Each is surrounded by reflective glass walls, with an additional layer of tall fencing in front. Visitors move along a path that cuts between the two enclosures and circles the glass, giving them constant views of the gorillas.



The only things capable of crossing the glass and metal barriers were ants or insects slipping through cracks in the artificial ruins or occasionally, pieces of fruit dropped by visitors.

One side of the large enclosure was lined entirely with heaters and humidifiers, transforming London's cold air into a humid, forest-like microclimate that mimics Kiburi, Effie, and Mjukuu's original habitat.

Note taking in different aspects...

time: 12pm
date: 23/09/2025

what I saw: Gorilla Kingdom

- kiburi**: Lying down on top of potato sack, (wooden chips are all over the floor, maybe they are too itchy for him) scratching his arms, facing audience.
- Effie**: Fixing the shape of potato sack to sit on it, once its properly shaped, sit on it leaning against the glass window. (turned her back on the audience)
- Mjukuu**: Lying down side way on top of the playing shelf, looking down kiburi while licking her finger.

* can't spot other Gorillas: Gernot, venus and Juno.

The street: mainly green, wood, cement floor.

people

- childrens with grandparents eating sandwiches on benches.
- group of moms & children lots of buggies! buggies everywhere!
- mostly families with very young children. (from 1-5 yr old?)
- School groups in uniform. Primary - middle school. All wearing animal ears.
- Elders on wheeled chair with carers. (discounts maybe?)

Ropes, potato sacks, wooden infrastructure. Heaters are placed inside the cage to modify the weather. A lot of CCTVs. Cage → barriers. A lot of signage telling people to shut up + No flash.

CARS

- mainly golf carts for staffs. All has walky talkies.
- trucks for removing big trees.
- I can hear the car sounds near giraffe, zebras, penguins because they are right next to the roads. (quite big sounds)

buildings

- Actually, they are all residential buildings for animals but without any privacy.
- lots of small ice-cream shops
- one big terrace cafe.
- one big merchandise shops. selling animal toys.
- children comes out of the gift shop at least one thing.
- terrace cafe filled with people because its 2 storage cafe, where you can view all the animals from the second floor.

Rhythm:

1. People enter the Gorilla Kingdom. → stop in front of kiburi's cage. → take a picture. → Stop by Effie's cage → take a video. → leave the Kingdom.
2. People press green button to enter 'in with the monkey' → push the door when the green lights turns on, → push another button → push the door, to enter → say hi to the staff → Staff tells you there is ten monkey in total → find them, take a picture. → exit the place by pressing two green buttons and two pushing

what is written

No flashing! Photo.

Please don't knock on the window! we are sleeping

Be friendly!

Gorilla Kingdom was opened by... HRH The Duke of EDINBURGH on Thursday 29th March 2007.

Keep hold of tools. Do not feed. Monkey bites will slow your work.

Who seems local?

Animals came from all over the places. But they are the main residents here. Here to be seen. I notice this from texts.

audiences came from all over the places I hear different languages. They are here to see.

Time passes...

How has it changed after it first opened?

smash everything!

- replace animals to humans.
- Although humans are wearing fake animal ears around the Zoo.

Animals glaze to be aware will they visit zoo to entertain? or will they visit to feel safe. Will they actually visit?

bag check area, will they detect guns/weapons?

more like a prison if humans are in the cage.

반영과 거리가 서로를 이어주고, 음악은 거라면 우리와 거리는 서로를 서로로부터 보호하는 걸까? 눈을 보호하는 걸까? 눈을 위하는 걸까? 풍요의 위험해서? 안과 근대 근대기인 모든 signage가 안의 위험성을 경고하러는?

동물원의 이웃 이웃과 친척일까? 정말 다른 곳에서 살다운 이웃친척? 고갈하는 forest에서 조깅하는 인도네시아에서 아플른 이 Town에서 태어난 애기들도 있긴 태

Death of neighbourhood. Guy?



The town

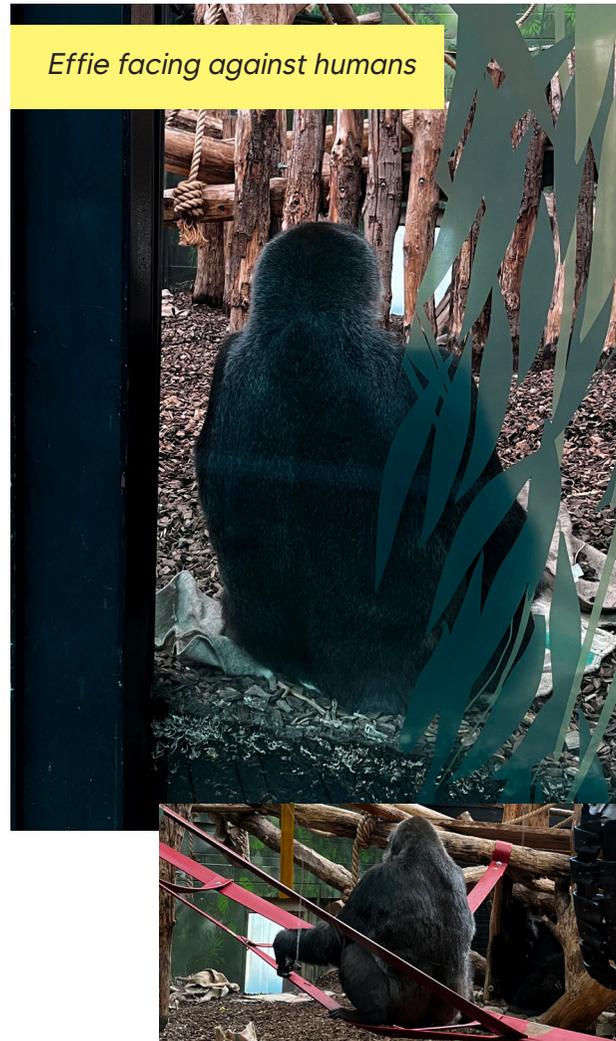
농시도, 밭농도 다 다른 이상한 Town. 이거거리 서로 볼 수도 없는. 반시도 안되든 보여질 수만 있는 거리를 누릴 수도 없는. 관광객만 가든 이상한 Town.

2. Photographing

The second method I used was photography, focusing on how visual framing within the Gorilla Kingdom influences the act of seeing — what is shown, and what is hidden.



Kiburi scratching his arm.



Effie facing against humans



What Effie facing against.

Be quiet and respect their home, you're entering their world now!

signage warning audiences

Meanwhile, people pressed their faces against the glass, raised cameras, and waved their hands, eager to catch the gorillas' attention.

The images I captured reveal this quiet tension between control and curiosity — a choreography of gazes where humans become the restless performers, and the gorillas, indifferent and still, remain the observed subjects of an invisible stage.

BE GORILLA FRIENDLY!

Stay quiet

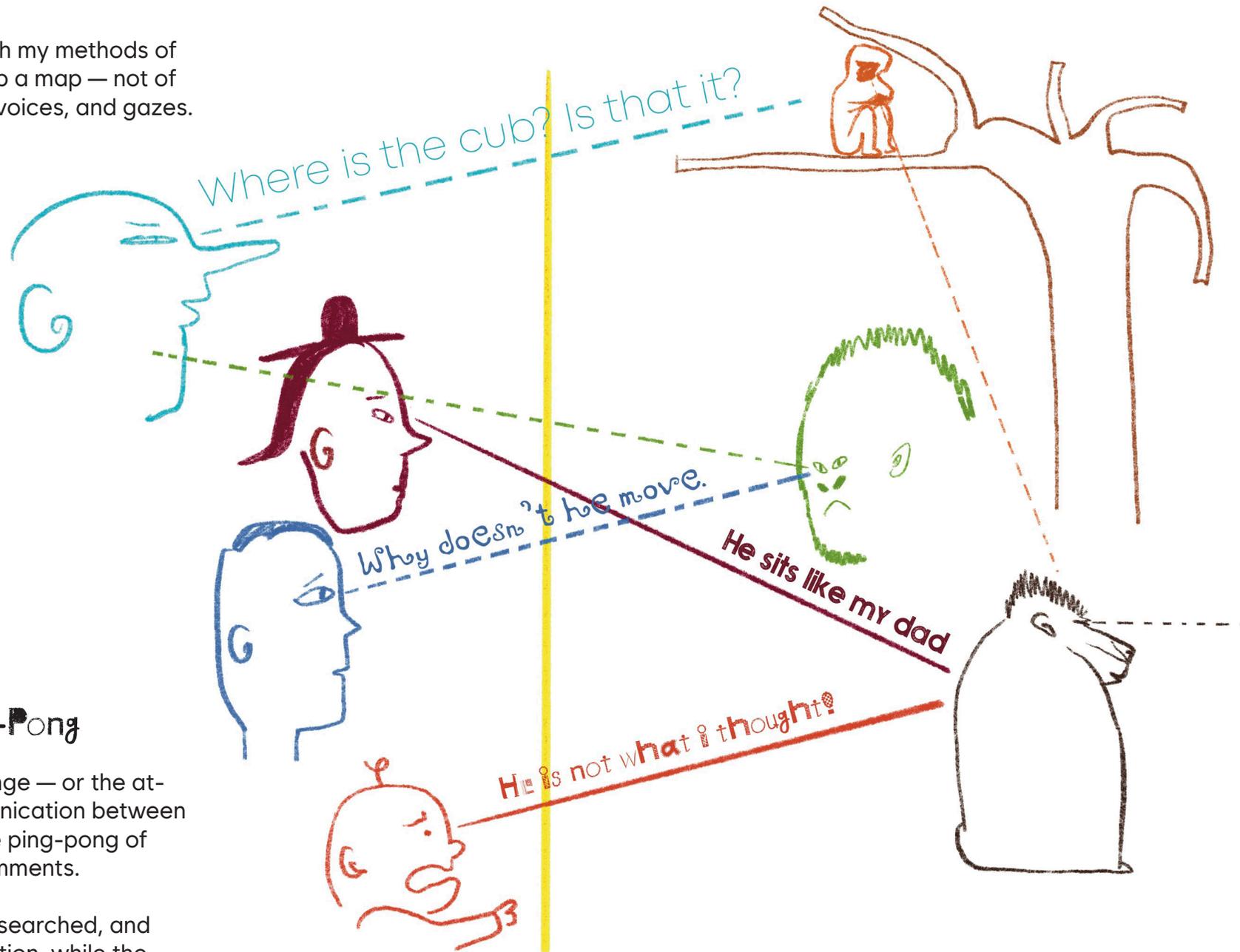


No flash photos



Mapping by Listening

Using the data collected through my methods of investigation, I began to develop a map — not of geography, but of interactions, voices, and gazes.



Version 1: The Ping-Pong

I first mapped the subtle exchange — or the attempted exchange — of communication between visitors and gorillas. I traced the ping-pong of gazes, recording overheard comments.

I visualised how people looked, searched, and tried to catch the gorillas' attention, while the gorillas, unmoved, rarely looked back.

Version 2: Turning the Perspective Around

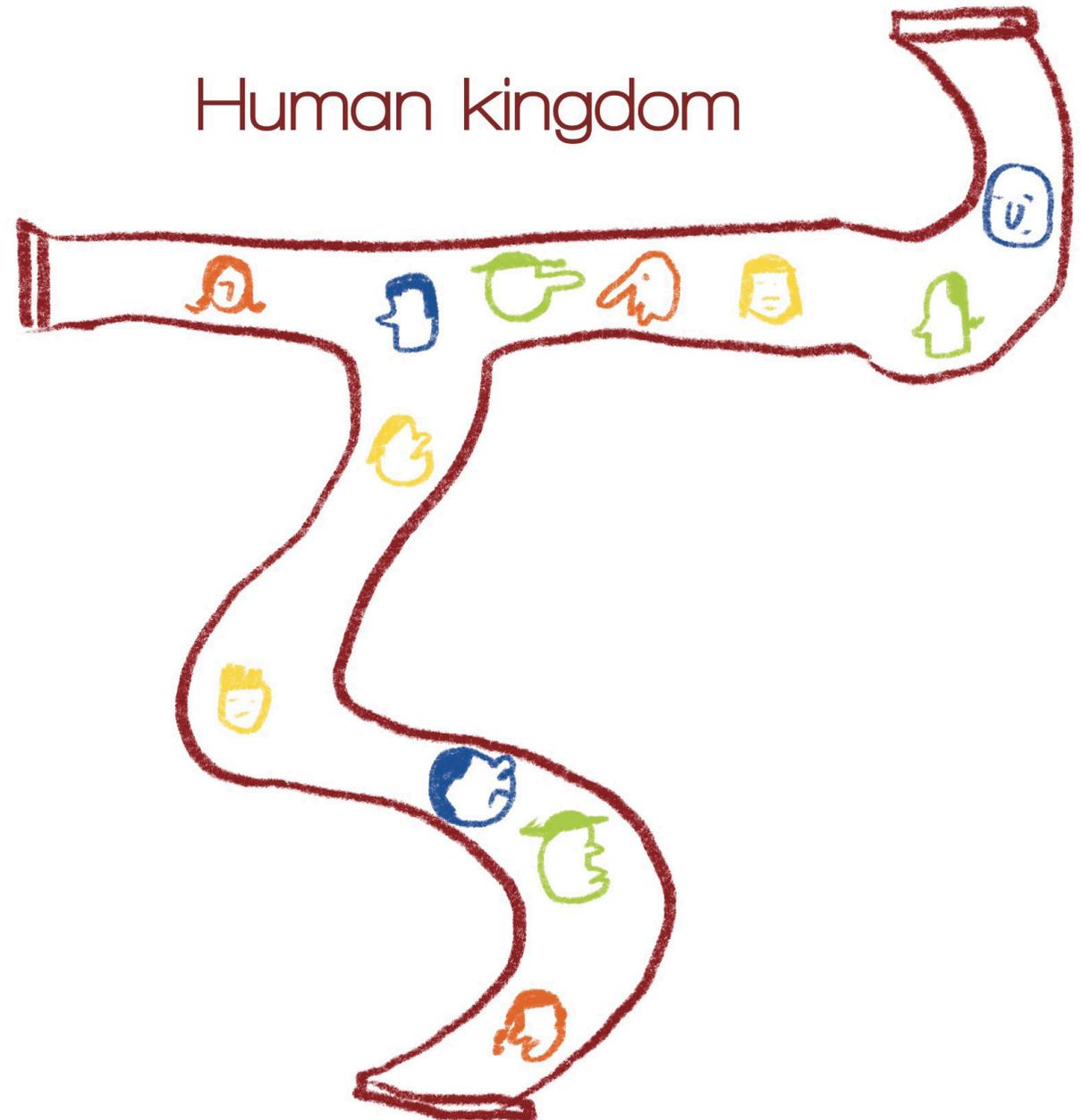
As I continued mapping, I realised that the ping-pong never truly happened — the gaze remained one-sided.

In this unreturned look, even the crowd of visitors began to seem like an isolated species themselves: restless, repetitive, and caged by their own behavior.

So I decided to **invert** the perspective.

In my second version, I mapped only the walking paths permitted for humans — the viewing routes, photo spots, and waiting zones — grouping them into a new enclosure: the “Human Kingdom.”

In this diagram, it is no longer the gorillas who are exhibited, but the visitors themselves, contained by the invisible architecture of their curiosity and the choreography of their gaze.



Feedback

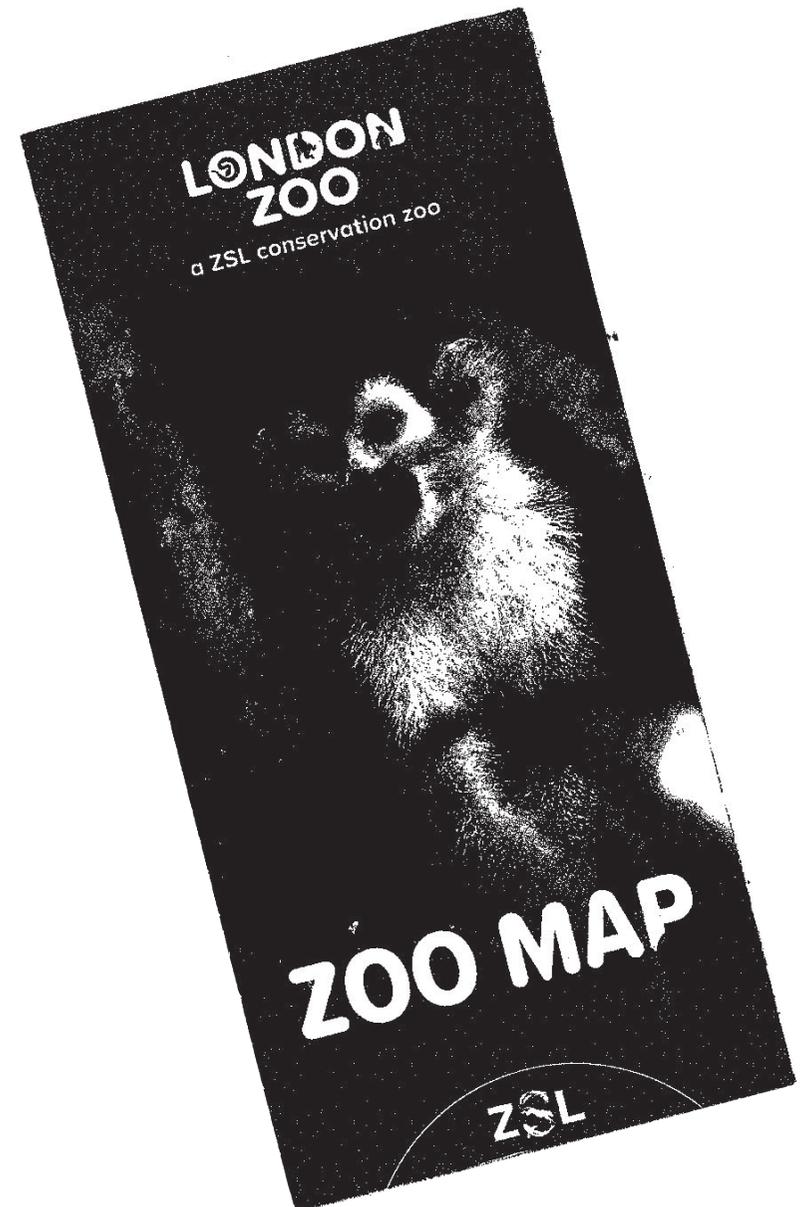
At the end of the week, I presented my methods of investigation to my tutor group and received several insightful feedback.

My tutor Tomi encouraged me to refine the clarity and purpose of my chosen methods — to ask not only what I was investigating, but why I selected those specific approaches, and how they could be applied more rigorously.

Tomi suggested that mapping should grow directly from my critical findings, rooted in what I have genuinely seen, heard, and experienced in the field. Mapping, they said, should not exist as an isolated outcome but should emerge from the process of observation itself — prompting me to consider what “testing” might look like in mapping, and how the method could evolve through iteration.

Another key point was to reflect on context and framing: without its context, the same place can appear completely different. Therefore, attention to scale, proximity, and detail becomes crucial when communicating what I observed.

Finally, Tomi encouraged me to think about making as a form of investigation — to explore how my work is experienced by others. For instance, how differently might people interpret the same project when it appears on Instagram, on a website, or within a physical exhibition? Each platform provides a distinct kind of encounter and shapes the audience’s understanding in its own way.



Reflection

The conversation during the feedback session made me question whether I had been framing the zoo through a narrow, pre-shaped lens — observing it not as an open system, but through my own assumptions about captivity and spectacle.

Perhaps my earlier investigation revealed more about **what I already believed, rather than what the site itself was trying to show me.**

This awareness prompted me to step back and approach the site again with fresh eyes, allowing the environment to speak first — before deciding how to contain or represent it. I began to see that I had been using my existing knowledge to construct an investigation, rather than using investigation to generate new knowledge.

To challenge this, I decided to return to the zoo — this time without any prior assumptions or contextual information about the site.

My aim was to observe the Gorilla Kingdom purely through what I could see, hear, and feel, letting unexpected moments and sensory details guide my understanding.

By revisiting the site with a more open and unfiltered mindset, I hope to uncover a less biased, more creative, and genuinely investigative way of seeing — one that transforms observation itself into a design method.

