

2. Returning with fresh eyes



Returning with fresh eyes...

After last week's reflection, I returned to ZSL London Zoo, this time emptying my head of any fixed conceptions.

I tried to ignore any prior knowledge or context of the area and instead investigated the Gorilla Kingdom purely based on what I could see, hear, feel, and experience.

Once inside, I started questioning why I chose the zoo in the first place. What was I truly curious about? And, more importantly, what were other visitors curious about — what made them come here? What were they feeling as they entered?

During my first visit, I remember feeling uncomfortable and critical of the zoo as an institution. This time, I tried to step aside from that negativity and focus instead on how others were feeling. Were they excited? Nostalgic? Curious? Detached? I found myself eavesdropping on conversations, reading expressions, sensing emotions — observing the emotional atmosphere as much as the physical space.

Usually, when people enter a zoo, they already know what to expect. They bring assumptions — including myself — about what animals, cages, and spectatorship mean. But this time, I tried to build my understanding from the ground up, using only what I experienced in the moment.

Through this, I aimed to generate new knowledge about the space by testing different methods of investigation.

Methods and Timing

I initiated the investigation by taking notes on everything I could perceive: what I saw, heard, and felt within the space. Without context, these acts — seeing, observing, watching, hearing, listening — began to overlap, each recontextualising how I understood the zoo.

I visited the site during peak visiting hours, observing the Gorilla Kingdom at 30-minute intervals throughout the day.

My methods remained consistent with my initial approach:

- **Note-taking** and sketching what I saw in real time
- **Photography** to capture framing and atmosphere
- **Mapping** to record human movement and spatial rhythm

Within my notes, I divided my attention into two categories:

a) **Seeing → Watching → Observing** — sketching on the spot to visualise the evolving layers of looking.

b) **Hearing → Listening** — recording ambient sounds, overheard dialogues, and emotional tones that shaped the experience.

“Seeing”

Tree, grass
 나무, 풀 spiderweb cut wood ropes x100,
 dead leaves, hinge, metal bars
 nails shadow, zooming in locks
 thrown away map, gorillas
 small insects, gorillas monkeys uniforms
 가래 벌레, potato chips keepers
 Signage.

It is almost like a **three stages of looking:**

- a) Seeing — noticing what is there.
- b) Watching — taking time to watch what I have seen.
- c) Observing — taking time to observe what I have watched.

“Watching”

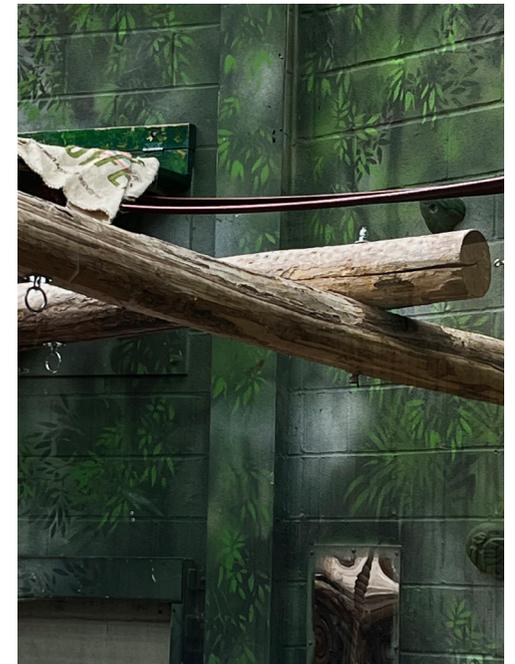
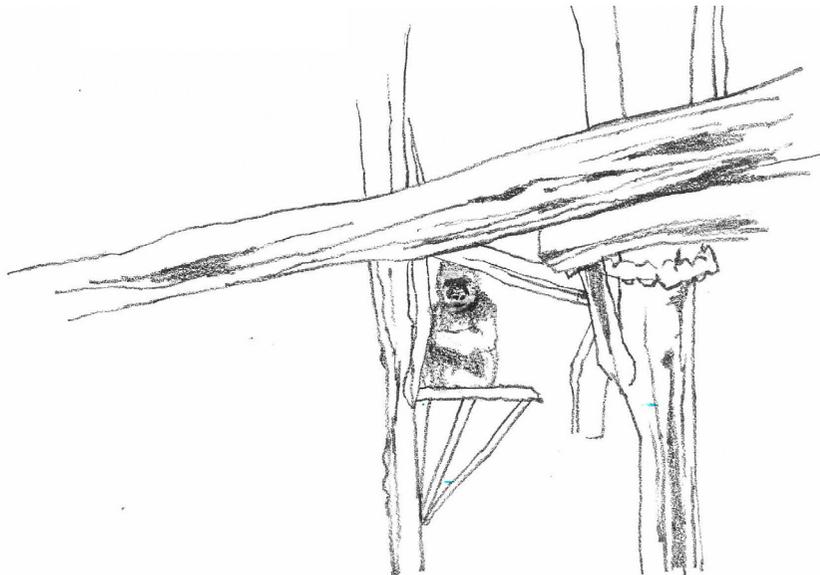
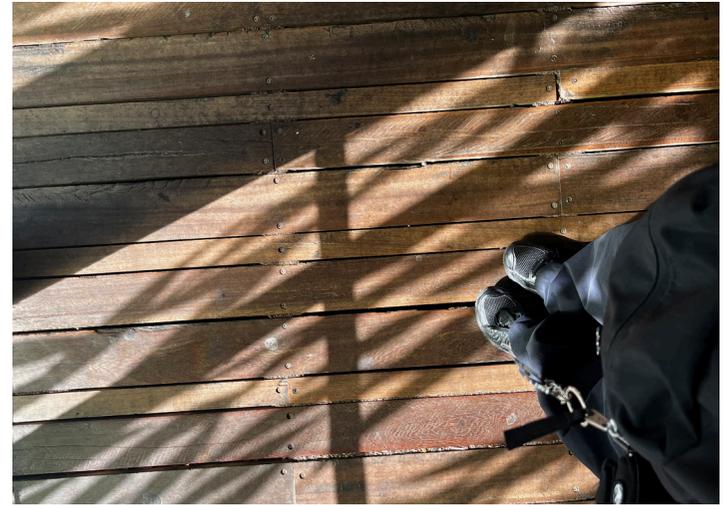
Shaking Swings (monkey left)
 흔들리는 윙크 (원숭이가)
 camera zooming in Adults taking pictures
 jumping upto see better fingers pointing Adults reading signages.
 Strolling buggy. reading map.
 waving at gorillas checking time.
 Child looking at a rat, keeper noting gorilla's behaviour.
 child leaning against the fence.

“Observing”

Texture = soft / fluffy monkey's fur,
 보들보들 원숭이 털,
 damp Gorilla backside,
 젖은 고릴라 엉덩이,
 coating worn off by visitors' hands,
 scratchy wooden fence
 가슬가슬 나무 fence (레지된 기둥질이 벗겨진)
 Smooth glossy window.
 깨끗해준 유리창문 Puffy jackets / coats
 muddy rubber boots
 Smudged finger prints on the glass.
 sticky little fingers.
 rope rope!
 거칠거칠 rope!
 frayed rough
 Crispy dry twig / wood chips.
 바삭바삭 나뭇가지,

Through these gradual layers of attention, I created simple on-the-spot sketches of what I saw, capturing fleeting gestures, body language, and spatial tension between humans and gorillas.

As an extension of (a), I began sketching and photographing what I had witnessed — not just to record what I saw, but to capture the emotions and sensations I felt on site.



Coming?

Yes, thank you.

THEY ARE MOVING NOW! LOOK! LOOK! LOOK THERE!

They are moving come over here please.

Oh, its weeing...

She is just sitting there like "Yo, Richard! What are you doing?"

Mommy here!

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Where is mommy?

Mommy is over there.

where is mommy!

Mommy is up there, LOOK!

That's lovely, now lets go somewhere else.

LET'S GO SEE THE PENGUIN.

it's got a little baby up there isn't it!

See there? Hello, say hello! Hello gorilla!

HE IS BUSY EATING. HE MUST BE HUNGRY.

We came in the wrong way.

Uh oh.

It is a fun day today!

Once this process was complete, I began weaving the colourful sound strips with the photographs I had taken of the gorillas, allowing my ideas to come alive visually.

This experiment revealed a method that successfully expressed the multiple layers of experience within the space — the sounds, movements, emotions, and distances all intertwined.

Coming?

Yes, thank you.

She is just sitting there like "Yo, Richard! What are you doing?"

They are moving come over here please.

Oh, its weeing...

THEY ARE MOVING NOW! LOOK! LOOK! LOOK THERE!

I felt that this approach captured the atmosphere I had been trying to communicate, so I decided to develop this method further as the foundation for my next stage of work.



Once I realised that this method worked, I picked up a yellow sheet of paper — a colour that, to me, represented the lively and excited energy of the visitors within the space. On this surface, I began weaving together the photographs and the sketches I had drawn of the gorillas, taping them into a single constructed space.

Through this process, the Gorilla Kingdom gradually transformed from a site I observed into a site I could physically recreate and inhabit through making.

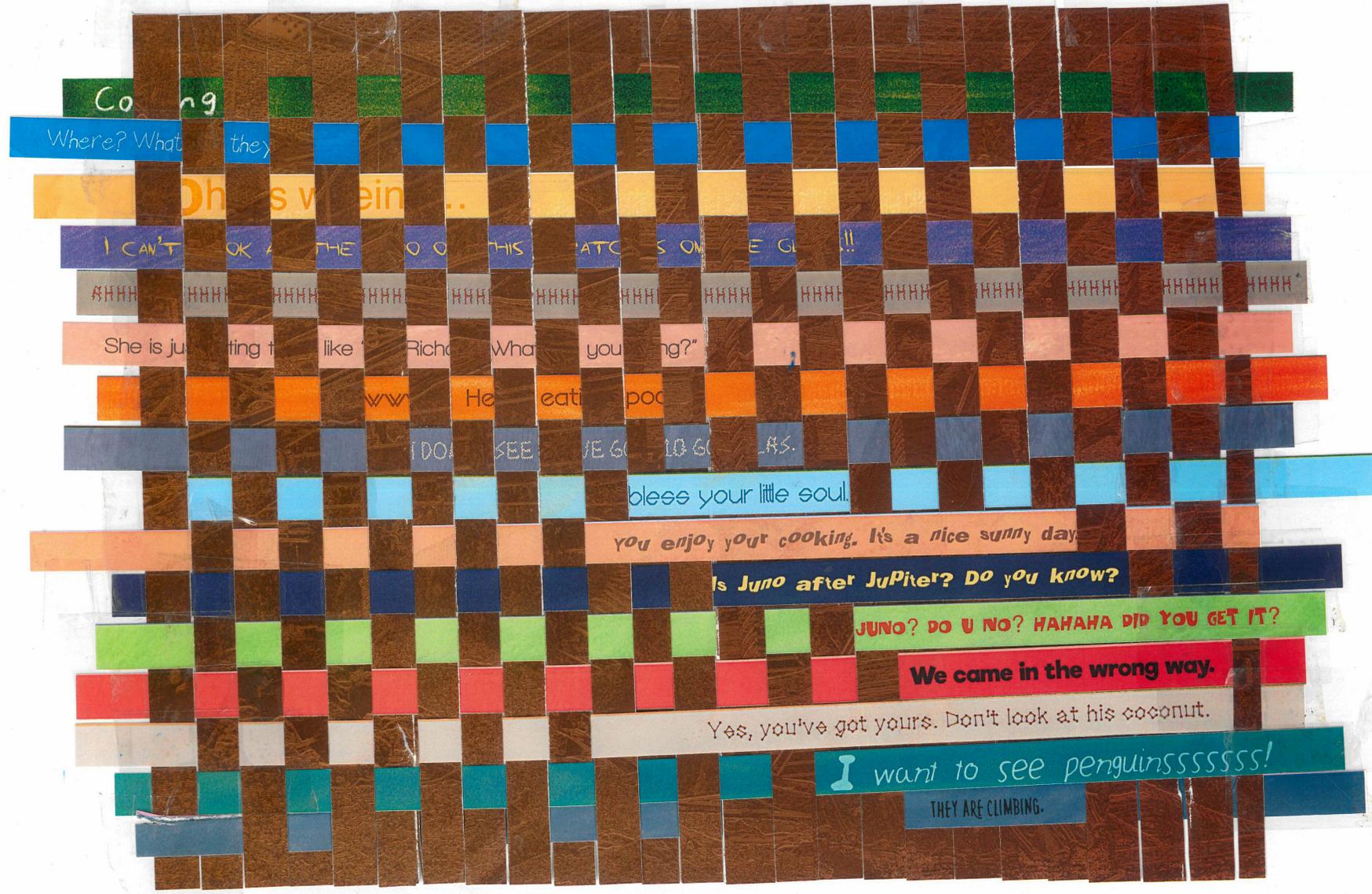


I also experimented with a traditional weaving technique, using a collaged image of different gorillas in the enclosures, which I had photoshopped into a single brown-toned flat image, running vertically, and my favourite recorded sounds running horizontally.

However, as I began weaving, I realised that the tight and intricate structure of traditional weaving made it difficult to recognise both the photographs and the sound strips.

The visual and textual elements became too compressed, losing their individuality and rhythm.

Towards the final section of the weaving, I decided to break away from the traditional pattern, adjusting the method so that the text and sound could be read more clearly — allowing the woven surface to breathe and communicate more openly.



Feedback

On the 3rd of October, I presented my development to my tutor group. I received very positive feedback from both Tomi and my peers.

They found the weaving idea to be a strong and poetic method for visualising the intersection between sounds and observations. They also mentioned that my sketches complemented the weavings well, giving life and rhythm to the overall composition.

Tomi pointed out that it was a **great decision to step backwards in order to move forwards** — to revisit the site and rebuild my process from genuine observation. This reflective loop made the work more grounded and conceptually stronger.

Our group members suggested that I should experiment with different weaving patterns, papers, and materials — perhaps even found materials rather than only using paper — to explore a more tactile and unexpected expression.

Tomi & peers also offered several insightful observations:

- * For humans, sound is language, but for animals, it is noise.
- * While languages are exchanged among people, the gorillas remain silent — **just there**.
- * In weaving, sounds like “ahahahhhhhh” could appear behind the photographs, as they are easily recognisable even when obscured, whereas spoken phrases like “Let’s go see the penguins!” might work better in front, since their meaning depends on being read.
- * Peers also suggested varying the pattern size — irregular and mixed scales would create a more dynamic rhythm, avoiding the flat, tile-like effect of uniform weaving.



Reflection

Stepping backwards took a lot of courage for me.

But hearing from my tutors that it was actually a good decision — decision that allowed me to move much further forward — felt incredibly rewarding.

Among all the feedback, the comment that stayed with me the most was Tomi's remark: **"the gorilla is just there."**

It made me think deeply about how I could visually express this sense of isolation — the quiet, almost invisible presence of the gorillas within the overwhelming human noise.

I began to wonder whether I could push my work beyond two dimensions, perhaps by creating a three-dimensional model or structure that could dramatise and enhance the delivery of this message even further.

I also felt that now might be the right moment to begin a contextual research on the Gorilla Kingdom — to understand its background, history, and purpose more critically.

At the same time, I want to return to the zoo again, to speak with both the staff and visitors, and to take part in these shared dialogues myself — becoming not just an observer, but an active participant in the experience that forms this space.

This process will allow me to conclude my investigation and start shaping my own visual language — reinterpreting what I've found and reforming it into new ways of seeing.

