AN AFTERNOON WITH RHINO PEOPLE

James Elkins

We arrived at a low concrete structure with the sign Multipurpose Building B. The foyer was windowless and grimy. On either side of us there was stainless steel shelving stocked with large plastic balls in circus colours.

"Toys for seals," Dr. Tank said. "They get tired of them, so we put them here for a while, and when they've forgotten them we bring them back."

The main room was set with collapsible metal tables. Sixty or seventy people were sitting, talking, milling around. Dr. Tank and I went through to a table on the far side where there were two empty places under a banner that read, WELCOME RHINO FORUM. Dr. Tank went to greet some people. Next to me a woman was looking over a spreadsheet. Most people in the room were apparently zoo employees. Some wore parkas over green zoo tracksuits. Some had white lab coats. Five or ten people were in business suits. At the next table over there were some unusually muscular men. One held a small book in hands so calloused and muscular that I wondered how he'd turn the pages. I imagined they were the ones who actually handled the rhinos.

Dr. Tank made her way back. People took their seats. This room, she said, had most of the world's rhino experts: directors like her, and also vets, geneticists, wildlife managers and handlers.

The woman next to me stood up. Apparently we were sitting to the left of the podium. Everyone turned to face us.

"Welcome," she said, tapping her microphone and then booming into it. "So nice to see you all here. Our first speaker is Dr. Annamaria Sampada, from the Rome zoo."

A serious-looking woman in a fitted business suit came up and took the microphone.

"We had six black rhinos," she said, with the microphone right up to her lips. "Haemochromatosis is an enormous issue. One of ours died from it, the other from liver cancer. The research still isn't there. Haemochromatosis is a human term. We're trying to get away from it. In humans, it causes diabetes, irregular heartbeat, heart attack, arthritis, cirrhosis of the liver and also impotence, infertility and depression. Rhinos get hide ulcers, anaemia, degraded muscle tissues and of course cirrhosis and diabetes. We autopsied ours. There were gross lesions, but we didn't find iron storage associated with them. We found high iron in the liver, small intestine and lung."

Someone shouted a question. I tried to look serious and knowledgeable. We were seated right at the front, so people would assume I was an expert.

"African rhinos are susceptible, but not others. The genetic proclivity is clear, and it's also known with certainty that wild populations are not prediabetic. We did a sequence analysis, and we confirmed the HFE S88T polymorphism. We thought it might be the feed. We've been monitoring feeding, and it's high quality in comparison to the scrub grasses and succulents they eat in Africa, but guess what? There's too much of it. And guess what? They don't exercise as much. And by exercise I mean lumber and snuffle along, rhino style. They do it, but not enough. That's where our management says we should focus. Questions?"

A man in a camouflage parka stood up.

"I'm in Bern, and we have a Sumatran with encephalomalacia. We got our diagnosis from the Swiss TAG, and they said it might be a related issue, but they're not sure. We could use some advice, our girl's not in good shape."

"Okay, thanks for that. Encephalomalacia is liquefactive necrosis of brain parenchyma. It's usually called softening of the brain, because the tissues become semiliquid. There is no

cure. It causes a wide range of symptoms, from hyperexcitability to hyperthermia. Some young rhinos become nearly comatose and remain that way."

"Like ours."

"It usually follows an insult. Did yours have an accident?"

"We don't think so, but she has high iron indicators, she's prediabetic."

"It's possible there's a connection. Talk to me afterward and I'll put you in touch with the authority, who's in Cincinnati."

A man with a green polo shirt stood up. "In Chicago we measure ferritin," he said. "We're assembling a database, working together with Minneapolis. We have measured over 900 blood samples, 36 animals from 14 institutions, 11 females (that is 270 samples), 25 males, 18 Southern, 18 Eastern and wild born. The results vary widely, from 85 nanograms per mil to 168 403 per mil. At first we didn't believe it. Some of the individuals have encephalomalacia."

"What's the correlation?"

"Probably low. But we're working on it."

"Other questions, please."

"We have a female with vitiligo, so we can't show her outside. She has big blotches of white skin, and she gets burned. I just want to ask everyone here, if you have facilities to show black rhinos exclusively indoors, you can have her."

No one answered.

"She's pretty."

That got a couple of half-laughs.

"Okay, thanks," the chairperson said. "Next we have Steve Farrell, from Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago."

He was one of the enormous men at the next table.

"Wait," I said, "I have a comment." I took the microphone before she could hand it to him. "I'd just like to suggest you can show your rhino in the sun, outside."

"She burns."

"Just like she would in Africa. These days it's all about diversity. People would like to see differently-abled rhinos. Visitors empathise with animals that suffer. She'd drive up your numbers."

He didn't answer. The speaker held his hand out for the microphone.

"And by the way," I said, "you can get your rhino to exercise more. You can install below-surface treadmills. Again, visitors would be interested. You could chart the rhino's heartbeat and calories so everyone could see. They'd root for them."

I handed over the microphone.

"There's no such thing," someone said. I avoided looking at Dr. Tank.

"We do a lot of bleeding," Farrell said. "We bleed our boys up to 6.7 litres. Sometimes we phlebotomise and just sample every week. It's for sampling, but also for reducing iron solute, because the fresh blood starts out low. One was over-sampled and almost died, so it's possible. Really that's a lot, 6 to 6.7 litres a pop. Two of our boys fill a PVC bucket, and it takes two people to carry the buckets over to waste." He put his elbows out and made a bucket-carrying gesture. "We recommend bleeding for your prediabetics, along with the usual meds. We have a protocol for phlebotomising, we go in under the back plates, and they hardly notice. The public doesn't see the tubes. We can give printouts to anyone who's interested."

I stood up. "I have a question," I said. He handed me the microphone. "I wonder why you don't bleed them in a public space. People would be very interested."

"Our guests wouldn't expect that. It might scare children."

"Animals should be frightening. Life is frightening. It's the new thinking in zoo welfare: full exposure."

"Sorry, who are you?"

I didn't answer.

Next there were two soft-spoken scientists from the Rhino Research Council. They assured everyone that their update on reproductive issues was nearly ready. "In rhinoland," one said, "there are many techniques for preserving genetic material. Rhino necropsy protocols are well established, and as of next year they will be mandatory."

"Where are they?" someone asked.

"On the AZA site, under Necropsy, then under the species, then the pull-down for African or other."

"I can't get there."

People shook their heads.

"Sorry," the other scientist said, "we can help afterwards. But for now, I need to report on what is collected. If your boy or girl dies in the clinic, you need samples for everyone in the TAG group. That means, first, 200 grams of brain tissue per

sample, frozen immediately. Second, 2 grams of heart tissue, ditto. Third, skin biopsies. These are punch biopsies, and they need to be analysed right away, at room temp. Fourth, testicles/ovaries, 2–5 mm sections, cooled but fresh.

"In the field it's different. You need to prepare a complete set of tissues, that's brain, heart, skin, testicles/ovaries, liver, kidney, spleen, 200 grams each, frozen at minus 80. That is ideal, but tough in the field. If you can't do that, then a complete set of formalinised tissues in a slide set, or if you can't do that, 1 mm squares of the complete set in glutaraldehyde.

"For iron profile testing, use the NDSU laboratory, they have a commercial laboratory with a ferritin assay for rhinos. Here's their own list of what they provide: 'Serum iron, ferritin, transferritin, TIBC, haptoglobin.' That's North Dakota State University Medical Centre, it's Sue Denison – where are you, Sue? Raise your hand."

A hand went up in back.

The second scientist gently elbowed the first. "Thank you, Anne. Now I will present on semen collection."

I whispered to Dr. Tank: "I think I'll give a talk too."

"It's not necessary," she whispered back.

"No trouble," I said out loud.

"Well," the first scientist was saying, "it turns out anaesthesia does play a role in successful semen collection. The boys aren't easy to control with mating blocks or milkers. Semen goes off-target, and the handlers have to be careful. We use Dave Inject rifles, with oh-four small game cartridges. That calms the boys down just enough so they can deliver into the socket. Then it's important to separate x and y sorted sperm, it works well, but you've got to get it into that female very soon after thawing, so there's a sort of a time crunch."

A person in back of the room said they were just starting up with one of their males, and they needed to know where to send their semen.

"Everyone sends ovaries to Cleveland and semen to San Diego," the scientist yelled.

Then came a grey-haired veterinarian from Berlin.

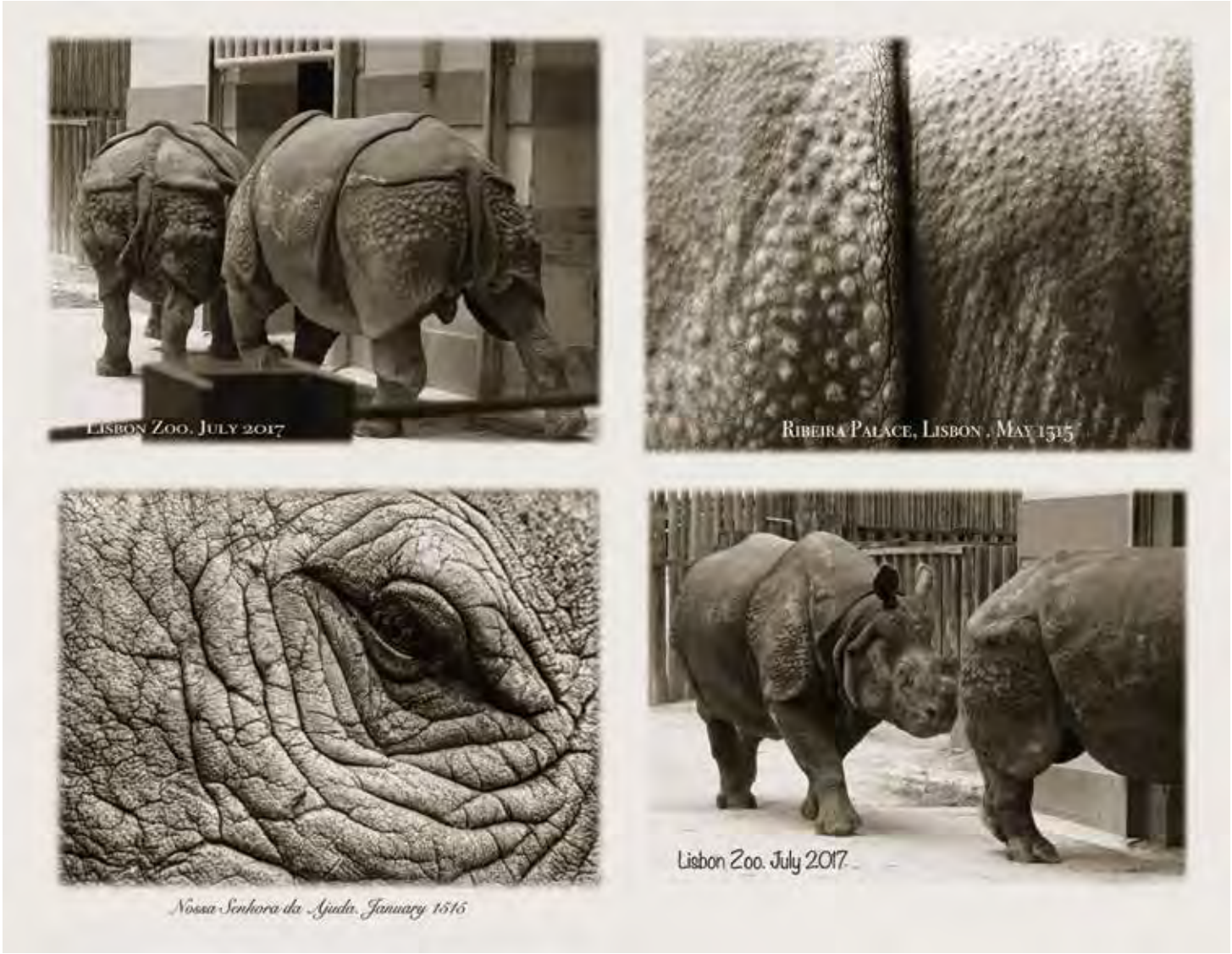
"I am going to report on ovulation," he said very quietly. "The big question is: can black rhinos be stimulated to ovulate using olfactory cues such as conspecific faeces? We think so, we're studying it. We use vanilla extract for a control." He said they spread black rhino faeces from mature males around the female's pen, and they had ovulation twice, but collection failed both times. "It is crucial that we collect more," he said. "There are relatedness issues in southern white rhinos. Using snips we get the cost of testing down to 100 dollars per animal, but it's a pressing issue."

The woman who was chairing the rhino forum stepped up and told everyone they had a special treat in store: Peter Donato, head of the rhino unit in the San Diego Zoo. He spoke with a loud American accent.

"I'm here to tell you artificial insemination is important for northern white rhinos: it's because of inexperienced males, irregular cycling, smaller exhibit and group size. In San Diego we'd like to have enough semen collection and semen banking so we can say, if your girl's ready to go, we're ready. In addition, rhino immobilisation is now a comparatively simple procedure. In February it was our priority to get our oldest female pregnant, so we got her in the barn and then we started our ultrasounds. We have been working with five of our girls. We did hymen ruptures, and in the end over two hundred and fifty ultrasounds. We're fully set up, we have warm water for enemas, chutes with full access, you can drive in herds with cats; we're equipped for nighttime ultrasounds; we even have a cable yard for quarantines. It leads down to a concrete box chute and then out to the exhibit.

"So one came in pregnant, that was a surprise. We monitored her, we got thirty-five ultrasounds. There were some weeks when the baby disappeared, but then it came back onto the ultrasound. One day we saw the heartbeat! When she showed signs of leaking some milk, we were able to get in there to get some preliminary data on electrolytes, so we predicted when she'd drop her calf to within twelve hours.

"Our youngest came in with a bullet wound, which drained continuously. We opened her up and put in a drain, we flushed her twice daily for months. Somebody from border control did radiographs, and finally we did a full body scan. We were more aggressive then – to find the source of the infection, we opened a four- by eight-inch opening, and still we couldn't find the source of the infection, and then amazing good luck! A vet came by and happened to spot something dark and shiny in there and pulled out the bullet fragment. Now she's three years



Exhibition detail.

old, looking fine, almost sexually mature."

Everyone clapped.

The chair slapped Peter on the back as he stepped down. "The next paper is from San Diego, and it's on sex appeal."

A thin elderly man stepped up to the podium. "In the US, we have full genetic profiles on all fifty-three of our black rhinos. Of course we prefer to breed naturally. The problem is sex appeal. Consider the first dozen on our roster. Metrozoo Miami has a 40-year-old, not appealing to most females. Chicago has a mismatched pair. The male is genetically valuable for diversity, but the female is an over-represented breed, so they keep them apart. Columbus has a lovely 27-year-old, but she has an unidentified health problem, and she doesn't want to breed. Kansas City has a handsome old male, but he's a carrier of vitiligo so they won't breed him. Des Moines has a genetically over-represented male, in fact his genes are so common they're sending him back to Tanzania. Racine has a good pair, but the male is not interested. We'll split them up next year if she doesn't get pregnant.

"And so it goes. When the genetic conditions are right, or one's sick, or one's old, one's not in the mood, or the lighting's wrong. This is why Atlanta is going one hundred percent artificial. No more boinking in Atlanta."

The chair said they had one more paper. It was given by a sad-looking German man, representing the Northern White Rhino Project.

"As you know there are only two left," he said, "and they're in Kenya. So the proposal is to create northern white rhino embryos that can be carried by other mothers. We have 12 northern white tissue banks; we want them to become stem cells and get them to make embryos. We have young girls who will become surrogates. We took faecal samples from our girls, and we found only one who is ovulating. She's a rock star, she pushes out her own bullets, and she ovulates on her own. We use desforelin acetate, an injectable, it's used in the equine industry. The females all responded within 24 to 36 hours. This let us set up timing for insemination. We need more ovaries, so if one of yours dies, if there's a euthanasia event, send them to us."

Thank you, the chair said, I think that might be all our talks now.

I stood up and gave her a what-the-hell expression. "Oh, I'm sorry," she said. "This is – "

I was right next to her, so it was easy to take the microphone away from her.

"Hi everyone," I said. "I'm Dr. Samuel Emmer, I'm a Canadian biologist. I specialise in stereotypical movements of captive animals. I just wanted to say I've been very much enjoying this event. I'd like to report on the latest thinking in large animal welfare when it comes to stereotypical movements. For years, people thought that when your large animals paced or stomped, or gnashed their teeth, or over-groomed, or masturbated compulsively, people used to say they were just performing behaviours and there was no reason to worry. This is your typical attitude: the animal, rhino let's say, performs *x* number of behaviours in the wild, and *y* number in the zoo. Some of the behaviours, like all-day pacing, can't be done at full scale, they have to be cut down to the size of the enclosure. Then the old behaviourist line is, 'That's pacing behaviour *x*, but instead of being a ten-mile track it's a ten-foot track.' Or here's a case from this zoo, sea eagles that want to soar, but they can only take off when the wind is so strong that it will keep them up in the air without moving forward, if you see what I mean. The behaviourist line is, 'Soaring is just a sea eagle behaviour.'

"In the literature on stereotypical movements, pacing in a figure eight is not the same as pacing in the wild. It's not just a small-scale version of the animal's normal behaviour. It's a pathology. The animals' welfare is degraded. In a word, they are suffering. And it disturbs visitors. So as you know, a lot of zoos medicate, they have large pharma budgets. That's to suppress the signs of suffering."

I searched the room for signs of annoyance. Everyone was looking at me impassively, as far as I could tell. They expected me to talk about rhinos, but what did I know about rhinos?

"Okay, so here's the new thinking. Why hide the suffering? Let visitors see the effect we're having on the animals we keep. Let the big pacing mammals wear down figure-eight grooves in their pens so visitors can see they walk the same paths all day long. Monitor sores from repetitive scraping, but don't pad the enclosures. Don't medicate to stop primates from pulling out each other's hair or eating their faeces. Let your animals perform their behaviours like the animals they are. Same when

they develop heart conditions. If they've got unhealthy spoor, put signs in front of it, telling visitors what's wrong."

A couple of people were looking at me funny. Some people in back were whispering.

"The new thinking is, let animals be animals. Let your rhinos rut around and dig up everything. Don't clean up after them, except for hygiene. Don't replace mud pits with clean gravel or concrete. Let them live with their mess. Let them crash into their pen walls, don't put up electrics. I'm just telling you what the new thinking is. Let them trample their vegetation. If your boys need tranquilising to deliver their semen, let the public know. Don't tell children, of course. Put it on appropriate signage. Put on milking shows. When you've got pre-diabetic animals, put up signage telling people their symptoms. If they're really sick, say they've got big ulcers on their hides, then put up educational material. Say, 'We're sad about this, but this rhino is very sick. Basically we made it that way. Rhinos don't exercise, but they do need to keep walking. This one doesn't have enough space. But it's okay! We're monitoring our girl very carefully, we take a couple gallons of blood from her every week, we're keeping an eye on her iron levels. We're cutting down on her diet. She really isn't any sicker than your average fat sluggish human.' Or if your rhino has encephalomalacia, like yours in Naples" – I pointed to the man in the parka, who gave me a startled look – "then you could put up a sign: 'This young rhino isn't shy. He has a condition known as "softening of the brain", which happens to captive rhinos for unknown reasons. Be nice to him. No shouting or waving your arms. He knows you're here. He just can't respond.' So…"

I stopped. I'd gotten off-topic.

"Anyway, this is the new science. I just thought you'd like to know."

There was silence, and then someone called out, "Who are you?"

"Dr. Samuel Murmur, PhD '96."

A man off to one side raised his hand.

"Yes, sir?" I called out, pointing to him with the microphone.

"What you just said is ridiculous."

"Hmm, well, don't shoot the messenger." I smiled and shrugged.

"Our boys are completely happy," one of the big handlers said, his enormous hands flat on the table.

"Our girls too," someone else said.

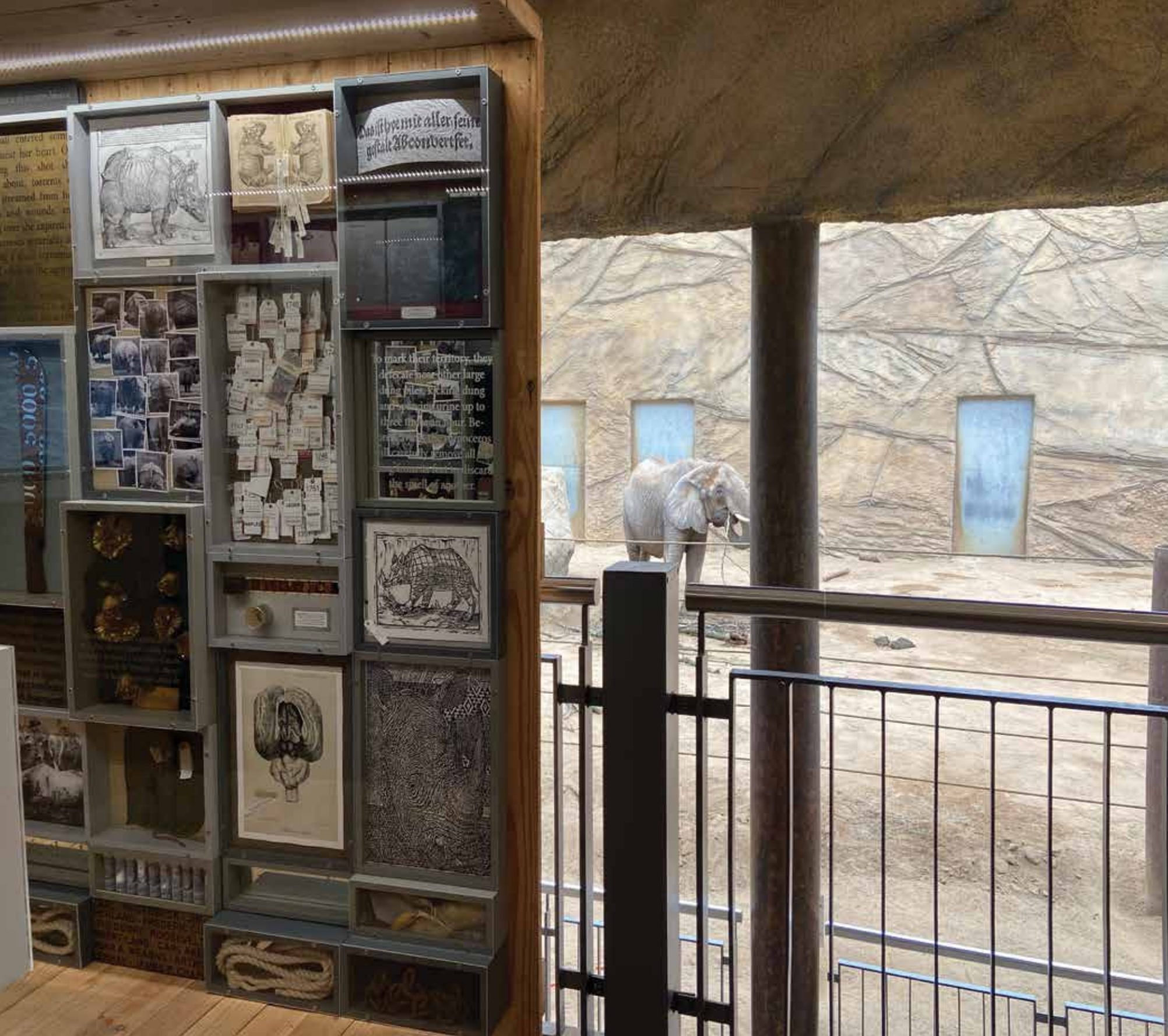
I looked at the chairperson and made a who-are-these-people gesture. Several more hands went up. I handed her the microphone. "Thanks, everyone," she said, "for a very successful meeting. The clinic starts in twenty minutes."

The meeting broke up, and I threaded my way out without meeting anyone's eyes, as if I had somewhere important to be. I didn't think Dr. Tank would follow me, but once I got away from the crowd there she was at my side.

"Interesting speech. You know that was a rhino forum. You didn't have to speak."

Author's note: this is a fictionalised report on an afternoon spent at a conference for zoo professionals. I tried to capture the feeling of the place, and the sometimes bloody talk about rhino health, all motivated by how much everyone in the community cares for rhinos. The less said about the narrator, the better.

Bessie. Bronze sculpture by Katherine Lane Weems, Bronx Zoo, New York, 1936. Modelled on the Indian rhino who was resident at the zoo until 1962.
Photograph: Fritha Langerman, 2017




OPEL 200
Kronberg im
Taunus 61476
near Frankfurt
KRONBERG
GERMANY
MARCH - NOVEMBER 2024

Harry Manners: (1917–1997). African elephant hunter. 1000 elephants shot. • P.T Barnum: (1810–
891). Founder of the Barnam and Bailey Circus that presented rhinos as performers in the 1870s
lso an exhibitor of people. • Henry Hartley: (1815–1876). African big game hunter. 1200 elephants
hot. Killed by a rhinoceros. • Major G.H Anderson: (1878–1946). African elephant hunter and guide
00 elephants shot. • Douwe van der Mout: (1705–1761). Ship's captain and rhinoceros exhibitor
lara, the Dutch rhinoceros, was exhibited extensively at European centres for twenty years. • P.G.H
owell-Cotton: (1866–1940) naturalist, explorer, hunter, collector and early conservationist. The
owell-Cotton museum contains over 16000 mammal specimens, many mounted by London taxidermy
ompany Rowland Ward. • William Cotton Oswell: (1818–1893). African and Indian big game hunter.
rederick Selous: (1886–1966). Hunter, explorer, soldier and author. (A hunter's wanderings in Africa
881). 23 white rhinoceros and 28 black rhinoceros killed. • Carl Hagenbeck: (1844–1913). Wild
nimal merchant and supplier to zoos. Credited as creator of modern zoo, the Tierpark Hagenbeck
eventeen Indian rhinos and nine African rhinos sold. In the1870s, with the market in exotic animals
eing flooded, Hagenbeck turned to exhibiting people. • Jim Sutherland: (1872–1932). Soldier
frican big game hunter and author (The adventures of an elephant hunter, 1912). 1500 elephants
illed. • Theodore Roosevelt: (1858–1919). Naturalist, African big game hunter, president and
uthor. (African game trails, 1909). Leader of the Smithsonian-Roosevelt African Expedition, 1909
910. 11400 specimens were collected, including many rhinoceros. • Herbert Lang: (1879–1957)
Mammologist and joint leader of the AMNH's Lang-Chapin Congo Expedition, 1909-15. • Carl Akeley
1864–1926). Taxidermist and biologist at Chicago Field Museum and AMNH. Famed for developing
he habitat diorama and the Akeley Hall of African Mammals at the AMNH. • Edgar A Mearns
1856–1916). Surgeon and field naturalist. Member of the Smithsonian-Roosevelt African expedition
909. • Arthur Vernay: (1877–1960). Antiques dealer and big game hunter in India. Collector for
he AMNH for which contribution the Vernay-Faunthorpe Hall of South Asian mammals is named
James Chapin: (1889–1964). Ornithologist and joint leader of the Lang-Chapin expedition to the
Congo in 1909. • Alfred Sharpe: (1853–1935). African elephant hunter and colonial administrator
Philip Percival: (1886–1966). African safari guide. Clients included Theodore Roosevelt, Ernest
Hemingway and Baron Rothschild. • Roualeyn Gordon-Cummings: (1820–1866). African big game
unter and author: (Five years of a hunter's life in the far interior of South Africa, 1950). • Richard
jader: (1869–1916). Hunter and author (The Big Game of Africa, 1910). Led the Tjader expedition
o East Africa in 1906 collecting specimens for the American Natural History Museums. • Sir Samuel
Baker: (1821–1893). Explorer, naturalist, soldier, African and Asian big game hunter and author (The
ifle and hound in Ceylon, 1853). • John Faunthorpe (1871–1929). Indian big game hunter. Took part
n the Vernay-Faunthorpe expedition, collecting Asian wildlife specimens for the American Natural
listory Museums in Chicago and New York. • J.A. Hunter: (1887–1963). African big game hunter and
uthor (African Hunter, 1952). 1000 rhinoceros killed. • Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire: (1772–1844)
Naturalist and Professor of vertebrates at the Museé National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris. • J. Alden
oring: (1871–1947). Naturalist and mammologist at the Smithsonian Institution and Bronx Zoo
A member of the Smithsonian-Roosevelt African Expedition (1909). Collected live specimens from
outh Africa in 1916 for various American zoos. • James Rowland Ward: (1848–1912). Taxidermist
ublisher and founder of the taxidermy firm Rowland Ward Limited of Piccadilly. Also specializing
n "Wardian furniture' made from animal parts. Rowland Ward taxidermied the white rhinoceros
onated to the South African Museum by Cecil John Rhodes in 1895. Rowland Ward's Records of
Big Game 30th edition was published in 2020. • Edmund Heller (1875–1939). Museum mammalogist
nd zoo director. He accompanied Carl Akeley on the Field Museum's 1907 African expedition and
was part of the Smithsonian-Roosevelt African Expedition (1909). • Major C.H. Stigand: (1877–1919)

CARL HAGENBECK - JIM
HERLAND - FRÉDÉRIC CUV
THEODORE ROOSEVELT
RBERT LANG - CARL AKEL
GAR A. MEARNS - ARTHU
VERNAY - JAMES P. CHAPIN

ÉTIENNE GEOFFROY SAINT
HILAIRE - J. ALDEN LORING
- JAMES ROWLAND WARD
EDMUND HELLER - LESLI
ARLTON - JOHN CHAMPIO
AUNTHORPE - C.H. STIGAN

ALFRED SHARPE - PHILIP
ERCIVAL - WILLIAM COTTO
WELL - ROUALEYN GORDO
MMING - RICHARD TDJADI
- SAMUEL BAKER - JOHN
AUNTHORPE - J.A. HUNTE

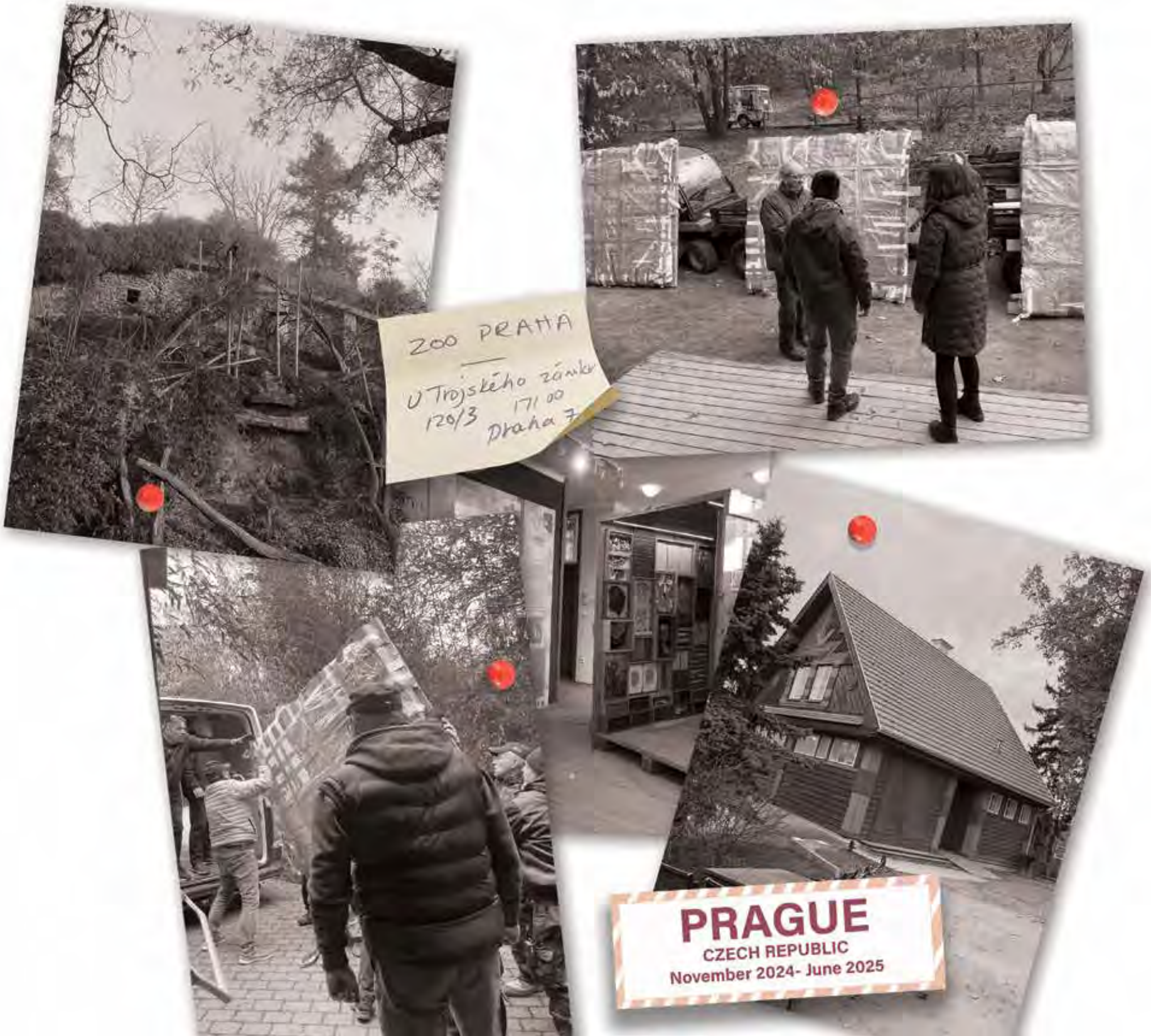
RRY MANNERS - P. T. BARN
- HENRY HARTLEY - PETER
APSTICK - G.H. ANDERSON
OUWE MOUT VAN DER MEE
P.G.H. POWELL - COTTON
FREDERICK SELOUS -


, ROMANIA
CAL GARDEN, CHINA
ÓGICO Y BOTÁNICO BARARIDA, VENEZUELA
N, GUWAHATI, INDIA
ARTIS - AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS
WROCIAW ZOO, POLAND
TEXAS, USA
GARTEN, GERMANY
, MÜNSTER, GERMANY
MAMA CITY, PANAMA
- BRÅVIKEN BAY,
MICHOACÁN, MEXICO

Photograph: Fritha Langerman, 2018

The sculpture *Rhinocéros* was produced in 1878 by Henri Alfred Jacquemart to coincide with the Paris World Fair. Initially displayed at the Trocadéro Palace, it is now housed outside the Musée d'Orsay. In nineteenth century Europe and America, racial typology emerged as a pseudo-scientific discipline, using measurement to seek biological justification for racism and imperialism. The spectacle of difference was also transformed into public amusement. The 1878 World Fair was the first to feature human zoos, exhibiting individuals from French colonies such as Tahiti, Senegal, and Indo-China. Before this, wildlife trader and zoo owner Carl Hagenbeck had staged exhibitions of Inuit and Nubian people at Hamburg's Tierpark, while Isidore Geoffroy de Saint-Hilaire, a zoologist specializing in deviations from 'normal' structure, had presented similar displays at the Jardin Zoologique d'Acclimatation in Paris. As recently as 2005, the Augsburg Zoo in Germany presented an 'African village' with cultural performances, underscoring the persistence of colonial spectacle into the modern era.

Photograph: Praha Langermost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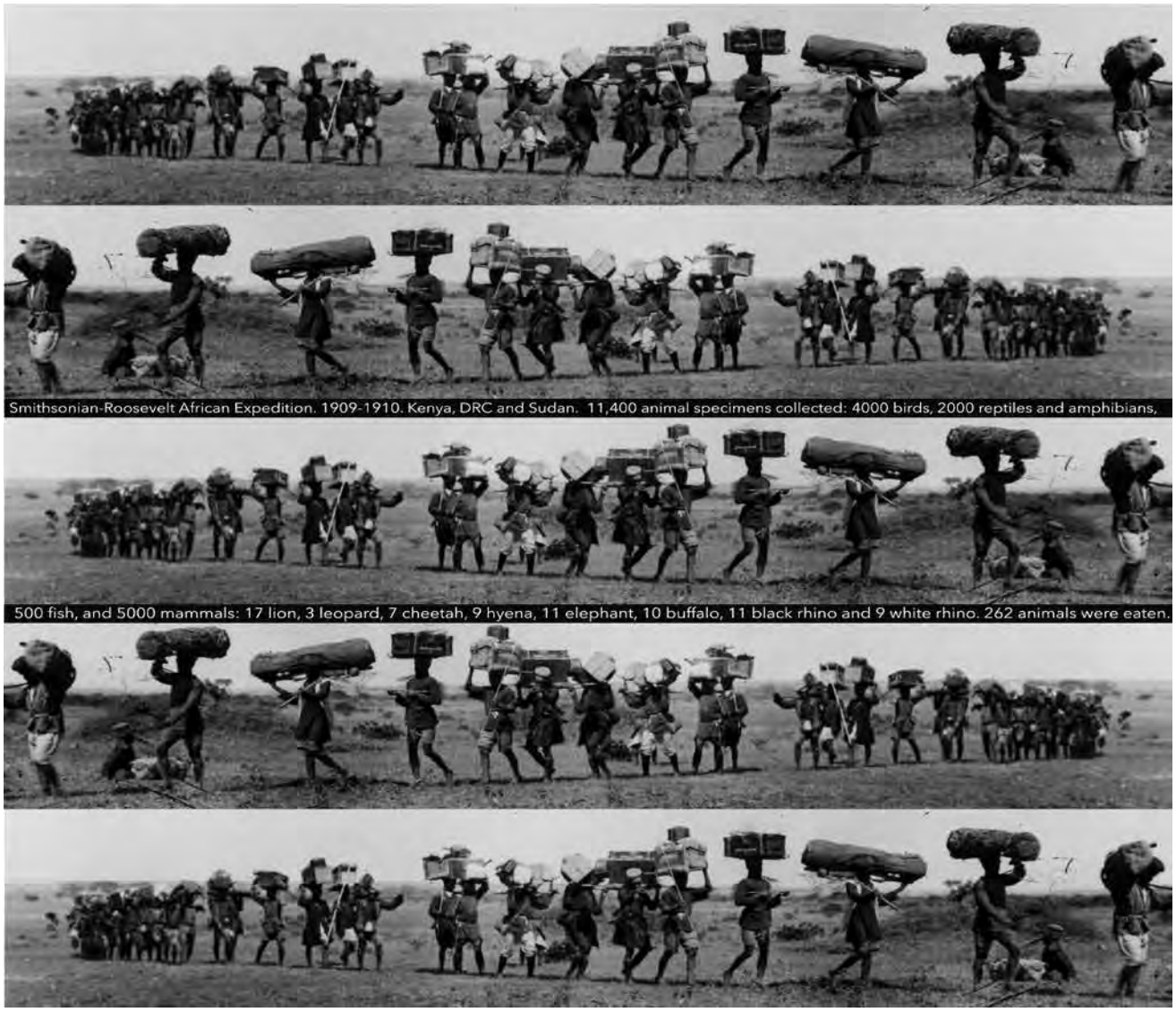
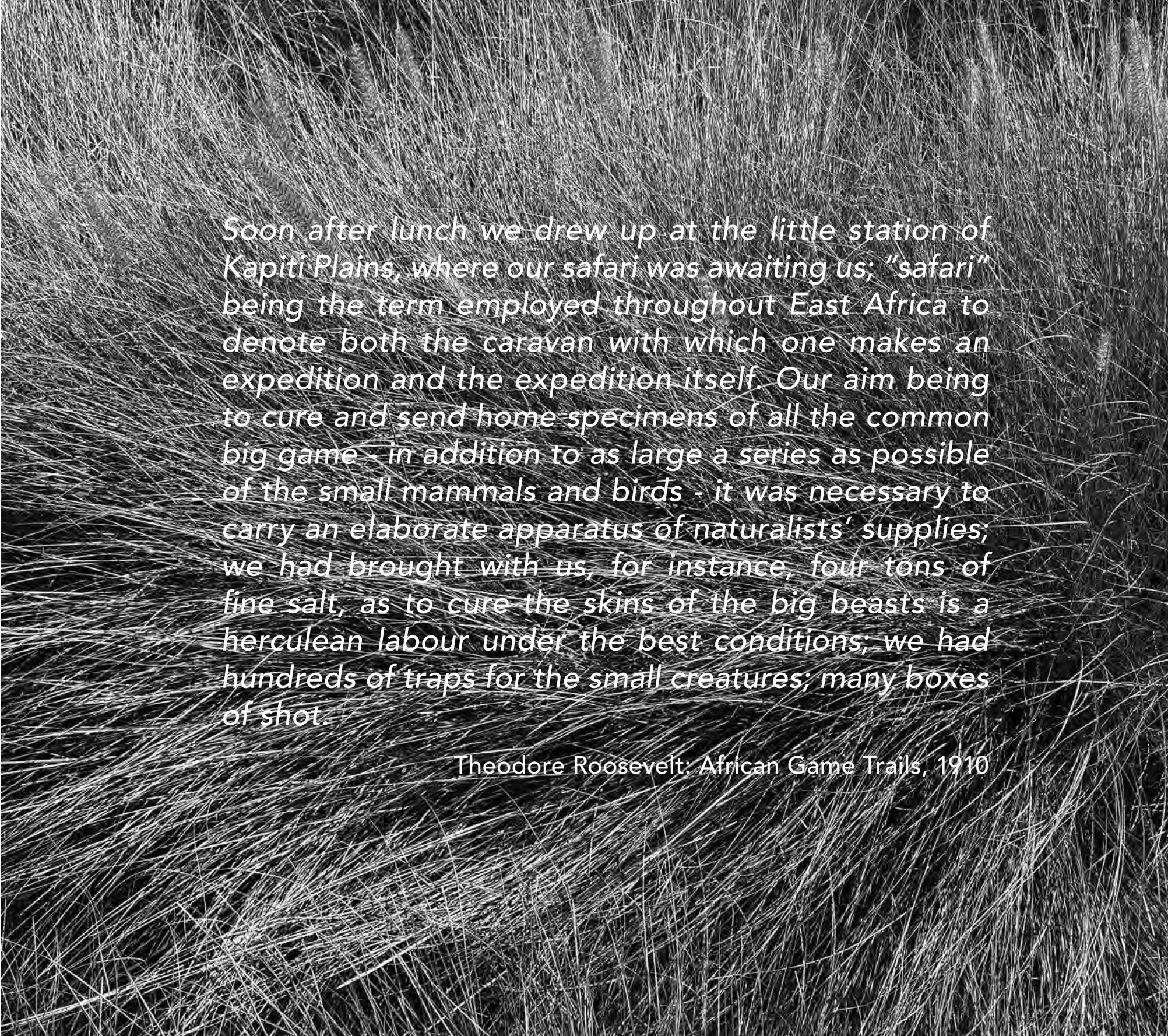
November 2024- June 2025


Smithsonian-Roosevelt African Expedition. 1909-1910. Kenya, DRC and Sudan. 11,400 animal specimens collected: 4000 birds, 2000 reptiles and amphibians,
500 fish, and 5000 mammals: 17 lion, 3 leopard, 7 cheetah, 9 hyena, 11 elephant, 10 buffalo, 11 black rhino and 9 white rhino. 262 animals were eaten.



Soon after lunch we drew up at the little station of Kapiti Plains, where our safari was awaiting us; "safari" being the term employed throughout East Africa to denote both the caravan with which one makes an expedition and the expedition itself. Our aim being to cure and send home specimens of all the common big game - in addition to as large a series as possible of the small mammals and birds - it was necessary to carry an elaborate apparatus of naturalists' supplies; we had brought with us, for instance, four tons of fine salt, as to cure the skins of the big beasts is a herculean labour under the best conditions; we had hundreds of traps for the small creatures; many boxes of shot.

Theodore Roosevelt: African Game Trails, 1910

Ceratotherium simum

White rhinos are the second largest land mammal. Two sub-species exist in Africa: the northern and southern white rhino. Southern white rhinos were thought extinct in the 19th century, but after a small population was found in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, conservation efforts enabled the growth of the population to approximately 20 000 animals in Southern Africa. The last northern white rhino, Sudan, died in 2018 in the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, Kenya. His two female descendants Najin and Fatu still survive in 2025.

Diceros bicornis

Black rhinos are the smaller of the two African rhino species and have a hooked upper lip and two horns. The population dropped in 1995 to less than 2500. They now number over 5000, but remains critically endangered.

Rhinoceros sondaicus

Javan rhinos are the most threatened of the rhino species. They have a single horn and loose grey skin, similar to the Indian rhinoceros. Approximately only 60 still live in Java, Indonesia. Vietnam's last Javan rhino was poached in 2010.

Rhinoceros unicornis

The Indian rhino is the largest of the rhino species. By the start of the 20th century, only 200 individuals remained in the wild. Today in India and Nepal populations have increased to around 3700.

Dicerorhinus sumatrenis

Sumatran rhinos are the smallest of the living rhinoceroses, are covered with long hair and have two horns. They are highly endangered and only found in Sumatra and Borneo where their natural habitat has been radically diminished. Malaysia's last male Sumatran rhino died in 2019.

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