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During the summer months of 2014 I made weekly visits to Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo and filmed the humans and other animals that made their way through the displays. I thought about presentation, captivity, and what it means for one being to live as spectacle for another. I read work by anthro-zoologists, fiction writers, washington lobbyists, trans theorists, Angela Davis and bell hooks.

I learned about "stereotypic behaviors," or the repetitive actions that animals engage in when they develop captivity induced psychosis. An animal lover, I still thought the Lincoln Park captives would not, for the most part, display these behaviors; perhaps a fleeting moment of psychopathology would flutter before my camera before subsiding. Expecting to wait for these moments, camped out in front of enclosures, I brought sweaters, tea, good shoes. I found instead that once I looked, it was as if a sea of silent sighs were welling up around me, a constant high tide. The giraffe walking in circles, head skyward. The jaguar pacing his cage, stopping to embrace a fake boulder. A hippo that swims into a glass wall, nose pressed, for hours. The pack of african wild dogs running a dizzying figure eight, like a carousel ride they can't get off of.

Summer turned to fall. I read about Ota Benga, a Congolese man put on display in the Bronx Zoo's monkey enclosure. I remember an old student, jaw dropped, astonished upon realizing I was trans, his classroom exclamation still haunts me, lurking in my mind like some sleepless eel. "Wow! I've never seen a real live one-of-you-all before! Could you stand up and turn around for me?"

September went. October came. I futzed around the kitchen in my underwear, eating coconut ice cream, watching the neighbors' construction through the window. I wrote letters. I got a job. I kept on filming. While I passed my daily paces, returning to the zoo, I saw humans posing for pictures, tapping on the seal enclosure, enthusiastic solicitors that keep on calling. Construction workers chiseled away at the new macaque enclosure. I imagined the path their noise took, raking through the seal pool, like some