

MAMMALS IN CAPTIVITY

TRANSCRIPTION

Performers/Co-creators: Danica Clayton, Bennett Cullen, Sabrina Duke, Jenny Fairman, Laila Franklin, Hunter Glenn, Michael Landez, Julia Miller, Stephanie Miracle, Ramin Roshandel, Alyssa Simpson, Mariana Tejada, Anna Wetoska, Dorothea Yu

Archival recordings from museum exhibitions including voice of Donald Wanatee, esteemed elder of the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa (Meskwaki), used with permission from the Museum of Natural History.

(Regal music of brass instruments, birds and misc. animal sounds)

Multiple Voices:

Welcome to this participatory podcast performance.

We want to invite you to hang your coat on the coat rack, but for this performance you are welcome to keep your coat on or off, jump into your cozy pajamas or step into your sneakers for a run.

ALYSSA:

All that is required of you is your imagination and your curiosity.

BEN:

There will be occasional moments you are asked to follow our instructions. You may pause this recording at anytime and

ALYSSA:

come back to us.

Multiple Voices:

We will still be here.

SABRINA:

Go find the oldest book in your house. Give it smell. That is the smell of the museum. Go feel the tiles of the bathroom. That is what the floor feels like. Go find a water glass and run your fingers on it. That is what the cases feel like.

Multiple Voices:

Take a deep breath. Take a deep breath. What do you see? What do you see.

JENNY:

This piece would take place in a natural history museum,

Multiple Voices:

any of them.

(upbeat piano music)

STEPHANIE

Ok, let's take a pause right here. This piece was originally intended to be a wander site-specific dance theater performance constructed for the Museum of Natural History in MacBride Hall at the University of Iowa

. Due to the coronavirus pandemic our shows were cancelled. This audio experience is not to replace the live performance but is rather a complete reimagining of the piece.

Our piece was especially created for the University of Iowa Musuem of Natural History.

MICHAEL:

This particular museum is on land which was home to the Ioway and Otoe people. Today the Red Earth People, the Meskwai Nation or the Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi River maintain their sovereignty on their land in the state of Iowa. This is the land between two rivers.

ALYSSA

We are here in between this two benches, in this building in between two buildings, in this city in between two rivers, we stand between two worlds in between two cultures that are in between two kingdoms. In between two spaces, in between two states of being, We are here in between the in between.

Multiple Voices

Take a deep breath. Close your eyes. What do you see? What do you See?

SABRINA

(echoing voice)

As you walk into the museum you are greeted with a Mammal Hall sign and a hard, wooden bench. As you continue through the museum you will

discover three more wooden benches. They are not exactly comfortable.
In fact, there is not really a place one can get comfortable.

(atmospheric sounds of museum and door opening)

Danica:

Thick doors lead into the hall. The weight of the doors feel like you have to soften your body into them for them to open. The doors and display cases are made of a similar dark, rich colored wood, like the richness of a chocolate mousse. The height and structure of the ceiling makes sound travel like in a colossal cave.

(footsteps)

As a voice rises in volume the echoes increase. It always feels like you need to wear a second jacket. Placing bare skin on the floor feels like dipping a toe in a chilled pool. Behind the glass animals are placed. Some lounge, rest, frolic, or are on edge as if they had just been pricked by a pin they can't find.

Old Museum Display Recording:

This tenderly balanced ecological system was demolished by the insertion of one wrong cog in the machinery of that system and it was torn apart.

STEPHANIE:

Pause here.

(soft voice coming in as if speaking to herself)

LAILA:

Hope...but I am going to keep walking... and now this exhibit has a little hut...

STEPHANIE:

Freeze your body in space. Imagine that you are no longer flesh and blood but painted plaster. Your hair is nylon and the plants around you are made of fabric and plastic. Don't move.

LAILA:

...there are two people. No three people. There is one in and two outside the hut. And there are trees...

(sound of button clicking)

DONALD WANATEE ARCHIVE RECORDING:

This scene shows a group of my people living along the Iowa River during the Fall of 1845..

STEPHANIE:

Glue your feet into the floor. Try not to breathe.

LAILA:

...there's a really cool cut out to my left as I walk towards the case with the clothing...

DONALD WANATEE ARCHIVE RECORDING:

Hundreds of other Meskwaki were being captured by the army and being forced to move to a reservation in Kansas because of the treaty of 1842.

LAILA:

... I don't know are these instruments, or tools

STEPHANIE:

The days of the week pass but you are still stuck here in time.

DONALD WANATEE ARCHIVE RECORDING:

Ten years after this scene took place and after much hardship for my people, a law was passed that allowed the Meskwaki to buy land in Tema County...

LAILA:

...Looks like some feathers and a bow.

DONALD WANATEE ARCHIVE RECORDING:

Around you are many of our artifacts that were produced during the early days of this settlement period...

MICHAEL:

What questions are coming up for you?

Hold on to them.

STEPHANIE:

Unfreeze and breathe out.

JENNY:

Walk around the corner and make your way back to the bench at the front of the museum. Look underneath it and push the button to continue on this wandering adventure.

(sound of button clicking)

FEMALE VOICE:

Lion.

(Funky sounding beat and lion roar)

BEN:

HI everybody if you didn't know already name is Jake, and my charming smile and I will be your tour guide for this section of the hall...hold on ... sorry my blonde bang was in the way as you can see, I'm sporting a nav blue polo and pair of choice corduroy slacks. Wow you guys are at least two buffalo away come a little closer, I promise I won't bite, can't say the same about my other friends here. I am so surprised at the turnout today there are so many of you! Shoot I just looked at my watch, we better get moving, its already

The best view of these guys is getting right up to the glass. But the hall I totally recommend is the moose. Just remember as you groom and jam down the hall they are all watching.

(Funky beat)

(Sound of metronome ticking and layering of multiple voices describing what they see of a museum. Goes on for 1 minute)

ALYSSA:

Do you hear that? There are eyes everywhere.

CHOIR:

We are looking at you?

(layered audio interweaving multiple voices describing what they see and a choir of voices singing "We are Looking at you?")

ANNA:

Eyes everywhere. You feel watched. Left to Right. Up to down. Above and below.

JULIA:

Strepsirrhini

Lemuridae

Haplorhinni

Rhinocerotidae

Equus quagga

Odobenus rosmarus

*(choir of voices continue singing We are Looking at you in background
with fading metronome)*

MARIANA:

Odobenus rosmarus

RAMIN:

(sung in a Gregorian chant style)

Odobenus rosmarus

(drum roll gently building to crescendo)

Multiple Voices:

I am perched on two high legs my body is still and my eyes are alert
and shifting to the right left up left up down right up down up. I am
wearing _____ and _____, we use all our might to pretend
all our colors are fading and softening into dusty camouflage fur. I
hope to God you don't see me. We take little sips of breath in and out
from my nose. Our calves are taught and elegant as if in high heels,
head angled over my shoulder with my elbows bent and arms retracted
in, we look best in three quarter view. Wait for it, wait for it. 3,
2, 1

*(big crash of drums and cymbals as voices in Gregorian Chant style
return)*

RAMIN:

Lemuridae

(Abrupt break)

BEN:

Do a jazz square as if taunting a gazelle in the distance.

(Latin beat, voice describing the actions of a jazz square)

ALYSSA

Hi there! Hey, no, you....look to your left. Oh, your *other* left.
By the giant door! Why hello. It's me Janet, an official Mammal Hall
tour guide. I'm 5'2" with a jet-black ponytail on the crown of my
head. I'm wearing a navy-blue polo and a green skort with light grey
thigh-high socks and black ballet shoes. I'm so excited you're here!
Most people won't stroll in until the afternoon. I love coming to the

museum early in the morning. The sun just starts to rise above the horizon as I walk here. And everything is so quiet! The smell of dew is soft on the rim of my nostrils. The animals' eyes slowly open as their breath fills their body with each inhale. I will admit it can be a bit creepy to be in here all alone. But once the animals have warmed up to the fluorescent light, their presence becomes quite comforting, even magical. Come on, let's say hello to my otter friends down this hall. ...Did you see that? I swear the panda just winked at us. Good morning honey! ...Good morning otters! Look at how that one stands on his hind legs sniffing up at us. Go ahead, say hello.
(layers of voices describing animal movement mix with the Latin beat)

(sound of footsteps walking down hall.)

Multiple Voices:

(sung a cappella)

Rino, Zebra, Rino, Zebra, Rino, Zebra busting at the seams.

Walrus, Walrus, Walrus.

The American Buffalo, Large American Buffalo, Small American Buffalo.

Ungulate hoofed Mammals. Hoofed Mammals. Ooo wha. Hoofed Mammals. Do whop. Hooded Mammals.

MARIANA:

Pause for a second. Breathe. Feel the silence surrounding you. The history of the building whispering at you, distant echoes from all the visitors who have been standing in this same spot you are standing right now. Now press that blue button at your right.

(button click)

OLD MUSEUM DISPLAY RECORDING:

Whales, like other mammals, are social animals. They live in groups and interact.

(button click, Wolves howling)

OLD MUSEUM DISPLAY RECORDING:

His mission was to collect specimens of the larger Artic mammals, particularly Musk Oxen, for the Museum of Natural History.

MICHAEL:

What questions are coming up for you?

Hold on to them.

(abrupt funky beat)

SABRINA:

Go for a walk around your room. Take a little jog. Sprint. Run in place. Get out of breath. Breathe.

(sound of footsteps running. Layering voices reading museum labels. Sounds of running feet build with the addition of animal hooves. Builds into a large energetic frenzy of sound for about 1.5 minutes)

(Abrupt cut)

STEPHANIE:

(upbeat piano track from earlier)

How do you feel now? Are you out of breath? Touch the top of your head. Can you feel the mass of your skull? Feel the boney quality of your elbows. Now your knee caps. Imagine all your skin and muscles suddenly get blown away with a gust of wind. Only your beautiful bones remain. What kind of shape does your skeleton want to make for this scene? Are there any other animal skeletons you would like to add to your tableau?

Now push the button on the wall to your right

(button click)

SABRINA:

Hello, and welcome to the last part of your tour. My name is Jane, and yes, I too am wearing that lovely navy-blue polo you've come to love. Please let me know if my dark blonde curly hair blocks you from seeing anything. Well, let's get on with the tour, for I don't want to keep you here past midnight and its already 6:11. I'm sure you all are famished. Well, we'll just go through this door. Alrighty everyone, make a circle. Now, close your eyes. Just ignore the other people and pretend like your alone. Close your eyes. Now, count to three. 1, 2, 3. Open your eyes. Come-on now, do it with me, open your eyes.

Multiple Voices:

Blackout

DANICA:

A single beam turns on.

(button click)

(sounds of whales and minimal electronic music)

The suspended Northern Right Whale is illuminated by this beam, and you are underneath its spine. Turning slowly in a circle you see its expanse. It fills the bus-sized hole in the air above you.

The flashlight beam draws the length of the whale, from head to tail. The beam paints the whale's skeleton onto the ceiling, giving the jaw, ribs, vertebrae, scapula, and fin bones motion.

Close your eyes. Pour organs, flesh and blood into the ribcage. Give the skeleton massive muscles to heave it through water. Put on its dark gray-blue skin.

Close your eyes harder. It flies from the grips of the threads suspending it to the ceiling, and lands in the ocean. See it move through the water. See it.

Let out all of the air from your lungs and open your eyes and point them upward. The flashlight is off, so no longer the whale is seen or moves. It is tethered to the ceiling.

The whale sings a song in the darkness, a lonely song that only another whale could understand.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I am so sorry.

Multiple Voices:

The lightbulbs blaze to life. The flashing has stopped. The humans are behind the glass. The animals are watching, parading around the humans.

Close your eyes. Breath in, breath out.

Imagine being watch not seen, confined, and a stamp of history. Breath in, breath out and remind yourself you live in a world where you are permitted to grow and evolve as time passes.

The lights are on. The flashing has stopped. The humans are behind the glass. The animals are watching, parading around the humans.

Close your eyes. Breath in, breath out. Imagine being watch not seen, confined, and a stamp of history. Breath in, breath out and remind yourself you live in a world where are permitted to grow and evolve as time passes.

You are living history. Huh so what are you going to do with that?

DANICA:

You are living history. Huh so what are you going to do with that?

OLD MUSEUM DISPLAY RECORDING:

..Here is the sound of a Right Whale herd through an underwater microphone.

(sound of whale)

MARIANA:

Odobenus rosmarus

(singing of Latin in a Gregorian chant style)

Mammal's in Captivity was directed by Stephanie Miracle in collaboration with Ramin Roshandel, Michael Landez, and Mariana Tejada.

This piece was performed and cocreated by Alyssa Simpson, Anna Wetoska, Bennett Cullen, Julia Miller,

Danica Clayton, Sabrina Duke and Jenny Fairman.

We want to acknowledge original cast members Laila Franklin, Hunter Glenn and Dorothea Yue.

Thank you to the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History and Pentacrest Museums staff Liz Crooks, Jessica Smith, Cindy Opitz, Shereena Honary, and Elizabeth Fouts and the UI Department of Dance.

Multiple Voices:

Thank you for participating in this podcast performance. If you hung your coat up, remember to take it on your way out. We hope you enjoyed your tour, and we hope to see you again sometime soon.

(big trumpets ending)