

Zooland

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Irus Braverman

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This book takes a unique stance on a controversial topic: zoos. Zoos have their ardent supporters and their vocal detractors. And while we all have opinions on what zoos do, few people consider how they do it. Irus Braverman draws on more than seventy interviews conducted with zoo managers and administrators, as well as animal activists, to offer a glimpse into the otherwise unknown complexities of zooland. Zooland begins and ends with the story of Timmy, the oldest male gorilla in North America, to illustrate the dramatic transformations of zoos since the 1970s. Over these decades, modern zoos have transformed themselves from places created largely for entertainment to globally connected institutions that emphasize care through conservation and education. Zoos naturalize their spaces, classify their animals, and produce spectacular experiences for their human visitors. Zoos name, register, track, and allocate their animals in global databases. Zoos both abide by and create laws and industry standards that govern their captive animals. Finally, zoos intensely govern the reproduction of captive animals, carefully calculating the life and death of these animals, deciding which of them will be sustained and which will expire. Zooland takes readers behind the

exhibits into the world of zoo animals and their caretakers. And in so doing, it turns its gaze back on us to make surprising interconnections between our understandings of the human and the nonhuman.



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