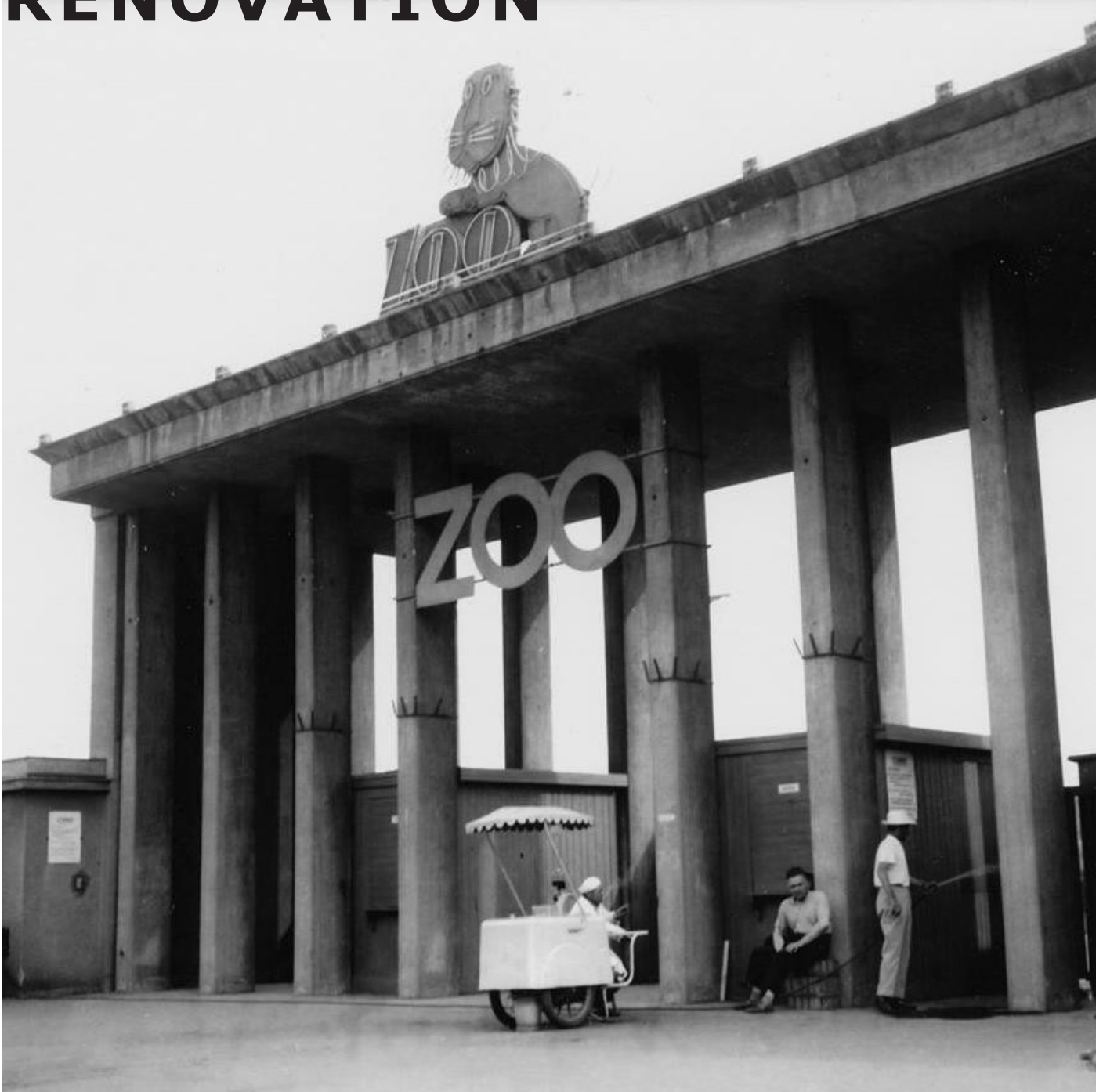


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# THE ETHICS OF ZOO RENOVATION



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# introduction

Everyone has at least once experienced the friendly and playful atmosphere of the zoo. Sunday trip during a hot summer day, the taste of ice cream, the sound of children playing and an opportunity to see and learn about fascinating animals that one does not see every day. It is evident that modern zoos are attempting to educate visitors about animals and earth sciences, as well as implementing conservation and research programs for endangered species as stated in the World Association of Zoos and Animals priorities (WAZA, n.d.). However, despite their noble intentions and friendly image, zoos have some darker moments in their history. There are records of private zoos dating back to ancient Egypt where they were an exotic addition to the owner's assets and a status symbol (National Geographic Society (U.S.), 1993). The very first public zoo appeared in the 18th century in Austria, during the Age of Enlightenment, where science and knowledge were praised and therefore the zoo had a more scientific and research-based character (Solski & Strehlow, 2015)

Despite this change, the function of a zoo was still more focused on entertainment. The zoo architecture of that time was exhibition oriented (Meuser, 2018), animals were kept in cages and displayed like objects in museums. In the 1970s, the rapid growth of animal rights movements brought a new perspective to the debate about the human-animal relationship. The new conclusions that considered the perspective of animals had a negative influence on the image of the modern zoo (Holtorf, 2008). However, zoos made efforts to rebrand themselves as places of education and conservation. The shift in ethics of the modern zoo is evident in the contrast between old and new zoo architecture, therefore a visit to the zoo established in the 18th or 19th is a fascinating experience.

A great example of this contrast can be found in The Wrocław Zoological Garden - the oldest zoo within polish borders. Since its foundation in 1865, it has constantly been expanding and building new enclosures for animals. It survived the turbulent times of the early 20th century as well as the dramatic shift in the views towards keeping animals in zoos, and to this day, allows visitors to experience the mix of old and new animal enclosures. Undoubtedly the historical buildings make the zoo more interesting, but they also create challenges. The preservation of historic buildings is a complex process and additionally, zoo buildings are carrying traces of outdated ethical approach towards animals, which make the whole operation even more intricate. The way the renovations of the older buildings are carried out raises a question: how the historic buildings of Wrocław zoo were adapted to meet the 21st-century ethics of keeping animals?

This thesis will analyze the topic of heritage architecture in Wrocław zoo from two perspectives. The first one is presenting the zoo through the lens of history, pointing out the changes that buildings and structures went through and highlighting the general trends in their preservation. This method can be considered rather conventional as it was already presented in various texts with many case studies and through different mediums such as maps (Mary et al., 2008), and single zoo buildings (Shapland & Reybrouck, 2008) or broader historical context (Denning, 2008). However, despite its complex history, Wrocław Zoo was not a subject of such analysis. The only article touching upon this subject comes from the 1986 polish journal *Spotkania z Zabytkami* (Encounters with the Monuments<sup>1</sup>). A large portion of the text is dedicated to the history of the zoo itself and only a short conclusion states that the renovations carried out after WWII, destroyed the historical character of the old zoo buildings in Wrocław. Only since 1979, when the zoo got under the conservator's protection, its historical character is being respected. The other important topic in the debate about the zoo is the ethics of keeping animals. The main points of such debate will be discussed and supported by examples from the Wrocław Zoo. This thesis will analyze the renovations of heritage buildings in Wrocław Zoo and will add a layer of discussion about the ethics of keeping animals.

By analyzing the existing literature, the generations of zoo buildings will be drawn out. Then by presenting the history of Wrocław Zoo, from its foundation till the modern-day, through photographs and publications, the characteristic buildings representative of each generation of zoo architecture will be described. Two case studies of renovation work in the Wrocław Zoo will be presented: The Bear Fortress as it is the oldest building in the Zoo and the birdhouse as it is the newest finished renovation project. Then by describing ethical views on the human-animal relationship throughout the ages, the previously discussed events in Wrocław zoo will be analyzed. Then, the discussion will focus on assessing the methods of renovation of buildings in Wrocław zoo and conclude on the direction zoo architecture has taken.

# historiography of zoo typologies

Zoos as an element of cultural heritage accompanied humanity through the ages and despite the changing ethics, zoos have managed to stay relevant. To understand the relationship between humans and animals it is important to study the zoo typologies as “(...) the architectural history of zoos is a reflection of Western humanity’s relationship with animals” (Meuser, 2018, p. 1).

The extensive study by Meuser in the article titled *Zoo Architecture The Building Typology of Large-scale Constructions in Zoological Gardens* fills a research gap by presenting five generations of zoo buildings alongside three typologies. The key element in her research is the clear correlation between zoo architecture and human attitude towards animals. According to Meuser, the first generation of zoo buildings, that appeared around the mid-19th century, were *Exhibition Structures in Colonial Style*, enclosures meant to exhibit exotic animals as trophies from foreign countries. The architecture of those enclosures was often inspired by contemporary archaeological finds. The second generation was named, *Barless Structures amid a Panoramic Landscape*, where animals were placed in pavilion-like enclosures with elements of their natural habitat, therefore were closer to the visitor. Then in the 1920s, the modernist movement inspired the third generation, *Formalism and Functionalism*, characterized by the abandonment of exotic ornaments. The fourth generation, *The Landscaping of Buildings and the Enclosure of Nature* dominated the second half of the 20th century and favoured landscaping and the creation of the natural environment while camouflaging the architecture. Finally, the fifth generation which is the prevailing trend in zoo design nowadays, *Branding through Iconic Large-scale Constructions*, is focused on the creation of experience through storytelling and theme-park like atmosphere. Those changes are visible in the architecture of Wrocław zoo from its founding to this day.

While Meuser is pinpointing the clear tendencies in the zoo design starting from the mid- 19th century, Boachá Sampaio, Schiel and Souto in the article *From exploitation to conservation: a historical analysis of zoos and their functions in human societies*, are analysing the history of the zoo from the much broader perspective. In this text, the first example of the zoo comes from as far as the Neolithic period when humans were keeping animals purely for the benefits of food and leather. A few centuries later, in Mesopotamia zoos were owned by monarchs and were meant to show power and wealth. Around the 17th

century in Versailles, the first menagerie was established, showing both exotic and local species in cages. For the first time that zoo was a place for scientific observation. The next zoo types presented by the authors, overlap with Meuser’s findings and bring up similar conclusions.

While those articles are focusing on the analysis of zoo typologies of the past, Beardsworth and Bryman are discussing the current trends in zoo design in their article *The wild animal in late modernity: The case of the Disneyization of zoos*. By discussing the modes of human engagement with animals in the zoo the authors concluded that zoos are undergoing the process of *disneyfication*. They determine four features signifying this process. The first one is *theming*, where animals are grouped thematically in buildings suggesting the region of the world or experience a person might have while visiting it. It is opposed to the simpler, archaic divisions like (predators, thick-skinned animals, reptiles etc). The other sign of disneyization is *dedifferentiation of consumption* where zoo is like a theme-park, and visitors they are exposed to a variety of experiences. *Merchandising* is the third sign, where zoos are selling products such as t-shirts, hats, mugs or mascots with the images of animals from the zoo. Lastly, the authors mention *emotional labour* where zoo workers, similarly to Disneyland employees, are expected to act cheerful and excited while interacting with zoo visitors and display their bond with animals.

While the first two articles are focused on the history of zoo typologies and the third one is discussing current trends, they all base their research on the constantly changing relationship between humans and animals reflected in zoo architecture. Despite discussing different timelines, they all conclude that the change in ethics is reflected in the architecture and the current design trends are focused on the experience of the visitor.



# the Wrocław Zoo

## the beginnings

The beginnings of the Wrocław Zoo reach back to 1863 when city government officials proposed the idea of creating a zoo. A zoo creation committee was quickly assembled and not long after, the first steps towards the creation of a zoo, such as research and establishment of main objectives, were taken. It was concluded that the main advantage of creating such a place in Wrocław, was the positive influence on citizens' education, increased entertainment as well as science and artistic development (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p.11). Despite these noble intentions, money also played a big role in the creation of the zoo. The possible investors were convinced by the examples of other German zoos, where the yearly profit could reach 5%. The idea was very popular amongst citizens and investors, therefore the committee quickly purchased the land upon river Oder and sent two members – Karl Ludecke and Friedrich Thiemann to visit zoos in Brussels, Dresden and Frankfurt, and come up with spatial arrangements and building plans (image 1) (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p.12). Not soon after the first works on-site included preparing the soil, making pathways, planting trees, and building the first animal enclosures. Amongst the buildings was an enclosure for bears called “The Bear Fortress”, a red brick building with a cylindric tower and stairs leading to a balcony that allowed to see animals from the top. Other buildings were pavilions for deer, antelopes, buffalo, camels, and kangaroos. The zoo officially opened in July 1865 and was hugely popular amongst citizens (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 19).

The big popularity brought substantial profits and allowed the zoo to expand its collection of animals with exotic species as well as its territory (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p.22- 25). The broader range of animals included monkeys, tigers, and hippos. Their enclosures were often inspired by the architecture of the country of their origin. A building representing this trend is the Monkey house, build in 1866 (image 14). With its exotic ornamentation inspired by Arabic architecture, it represents the first generation of zoo buildings.

The expansion brought the zoo its most well-known resident - elephant Theodor (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 25). Despite his fame, he had to wait for a proper building. At first, he lived in a specially modified barn. Only in 1887, after 14 years of living in Wrocław Zoo, he was moved to the newly built pavilion for thick-skinned animals (image 15). The pavilion contained a large cage for Theodor, as well as a swimming pool for Nile Hippo – Jacob (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 42). The building was surrounded by a large terrain with trees and a small lake. This environment was mimicking the elephant's natural habitat and allowed the zoo visitors to see animals behave naturally.

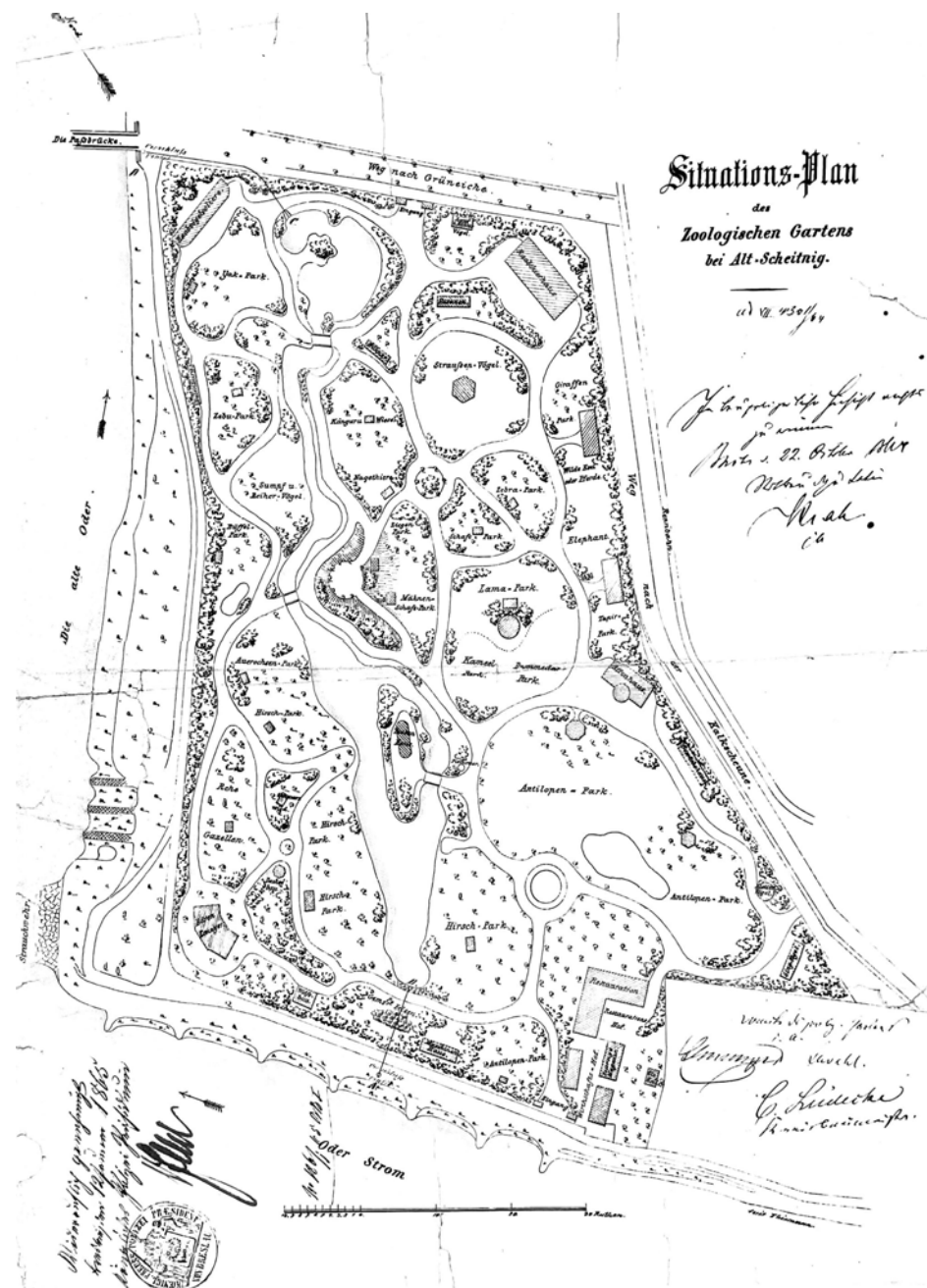


image 1 One of the first plans of Wrocław Zoo by Karl Ludecke from 1864

Therefore, the pavilion for thick-skinned animals has the features of the second generation of zoo buildings.

As the new residents of the zoo became its icons, they were a part of the advertising campaign. The successful advertisements and growing range of attractions brought more visitors and promoted further development of the zoo (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 49-51).

## **early 1900s**

In the early 1900s, the zoo continued to expand its territory and collections. A whole range of new buildings designed for visitors, such as restaurants, was built. The zoo was also having some success in breeding animals such as tapirs and Laughing Kookaburras (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 64). It was the first time when those species had offspring in a zoo. The whole process of tapir breeding lasted 13 years and was highly complicated and was described in detail, but many things failed, and a lot of offspring died. A couple of small tapirs were later sold to the other German zoos (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 55). Looking at the vast records of those procedures, one might think that zookeepers took a lot of pride in the breeding programmes (image 2).

Perhaps the breeding programme brought zoo success in the zoo community but the records of popularity amongst the public skyrocketed while Wrocław zoo was hosting ethnographic exhibitions – showcases of humans in the zoo (image 3) (Solski & Strehlow, 2015 p. 83). Tribes from German colonies in Africa including Tunisians and Beduins were presented in the zoo as they were performing their everyday activities. The whole tribe (counting even 50 people) with their livestock, everyday objects, and huts, were brought from Africa and exhibited in Wrocław.



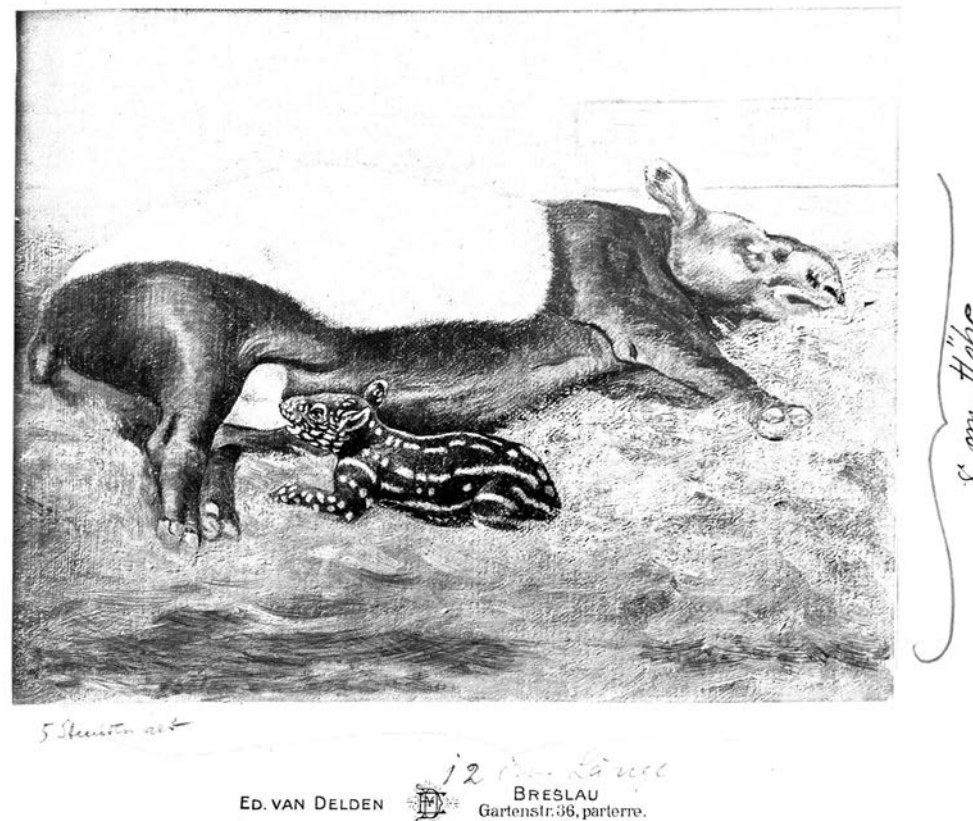


image 2 Young tapir born in Wrocław zoo, 1897



image 3 Crowds during the Beduin exhibition, 1912

## war times

As WW I came, the zoo also suffered (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 85). There were fewer visitors even though the zoo offered free entry for soldiers. Even the newest ethnographic exhibition *Rasy ludów Nilu* (The Races of the Nile Peoples)<sup>1</sup> exhibiting tribes from the Nile area, was not a success. The number of visitors was very low, therefore the zoo was not making enough profits. During those difficult times, the zoo did not expand both territory and collections.

Even after the war ended, in 1919 due to inflation, the zoo did not recover financially (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 91). The zoo was forced to ask the city of Wrocław for a loan but it was declined. In 1921, during the shareholder's meeting, the decision has been made to close the zoo and lease the buildings for 10 years. The animals were donated to other zoos (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 91). The zoo was closed, and the zoo buildings became restaurants, cinemas and a theatre. The pictures from that time show how animal architecture changed into human architecture (image 4).

After a couple of years, from the initiative of Wrocław citizens, the talks about reopening the zoo were being held. The money was collected by the membership in Friends of the Wrocław Zoo Society as well as from the loan from the city, and in 1927 the zoo finally reopened (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 97). To prepare for the opening, the zoo purchased 1850 animals and renovated some buildings. In 1929 a new bear enclosure was built. It was a pavilion where the animals could roam around in front of a stone wall which was the façade of the building. Even though it was built earlier than Meuser's timeline suggests, this hidden building can be representative of the fourth generation of zoo buildings.

With the beginning of WW II, another difficult time for the zoo came. German zoos were often endangered because of warfare. Wrocław zoo kindly took in many animals from the dangerous areas and insured their safety (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 124). As the war progressed, the food for animals was getting more difficult to collect. Additionally, the zoo workers were called to participate in war, therefore zoo was facing staff shortages. The zoo directors decided to hire staff who haven't worked in a zoo before (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 122). In 1945 the zoo suffered from bombings, even though it still housed a lot of animals. The zoo authorities feared that animals will flee into the city when their enclosures will be destroyed by bombs and become a threat to the citizens, therefore they decided to shoot

<sup>1</sup> translated by the author



down the dangerous animals in the zoo such as wild cats and elephants (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 127- 128). The rapport after the war shows the number of animals left in the zoo was 519 (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 133). The zoo was again closed, and the remaining animals were donated to other Polish zoos (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 134). Many zoo buildings, like the rest of the city, were destroyed.

In 1947 the plans for reopening the zoo were discussed and a year later it reopened (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 139). Zoo attempted to get back the previously donated animals but it only managed to reclaim half. However, after the opening, the number of animals was slowly rising while in 1956 the zoo expanded its territory. Amongst the expansion plans, the new entrance was designed. It was a modernist gate inspired by the Brandenburg Gate on top of which there was a neon sign with an image of a lion and the letters ZOO (image 15) (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 154). The gate is one of the most recognizable structures of the Wrocław Zoo and at the same time, the example of the third generation of zoo buildings.



Breslau  
Konzerthaus Zoo  
Mocca- u. Tee-Haus

**image 4** Birdhouse turned into the Cafe Mocca, 1925



# rennovations

After the reopening, the Wrocław zoo continually grew and attracted many tourists. New buildings were added but the older ones were not abandoned. It was decided to renovate the old zoo structures to preserve their historical and architectural values.

The early renovation plans favoured the practical and financial aspects, therefore many buildings in Wrocław zoo were stripped of their rich ornamentation. Only in 1979, when they gained the monument status, the proper attention was given to their architectural qualities (Klamecki, 1987).

In the 1980s the renovation of the oldest building in Wrocław Zoo – The Bear Fortress, happened (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 201). The brick enclosure for bears is an example of the first generation of zoo buildings, where animals were put behind bars and displayed as objects in the museum. During the renovation works, the elements of architecture and ornaments were preserved but the buildings’ function changed. Inside the cages, enclosures for the owls were planned. Each enclosure contained elements of greenery such as branches and bushes to mimic the owl’s natural habitat. After the 1980s renovation the bear fortress remains the same to this day (image 5).

The most recent renovation project in Wrocław Zoo is the Birdhouse. Finished in the summer of 2021, the renovation acknowledged the importance of historical architectural elements but was aiming to meet the sustainability standards by adding solar panels or heat pump (Moch, 2021). The most noticeable change is in the spaces for animals. Their number decreased from 18 small metal cages to 3 big spaces enclosed with sleek glass walls. The new enclosures contain greenery resembling a forest environment such as tree branches, plants and mulch. This green environment is contained behind the glass and interior of the building with the ornamentation and stonework remained very much the same. During the opening of the newly renovated birdhouse, the current zoo director - Radosław Ratajszczak made some remarks about the whole project. His speech concluded that the whole building was modernized, but the rich history represented in its architecture was preserved. While talking about the animal enclosures themselves, he described the old zoo practices as “outdated and ridiculous”<sup>1</sup> and confirmed that in the newly renovated birdhouse the old animal design guidelines were replaced with “modern practices which are more comfortable for animals”<sup>2</sup>. At the end of his speech, the director mentions that birds that

are going to live in the birdhouse are going to be there for a short period, mainly for mating purposes and then will be moved to the other enclosures or sold to other zoos (Moch, 2021).

The Wrocław zoo is using different methods to renovate the historical zoo buildings, however, since the 1970s their architectural qualities are respected and appreciated during the restoration process.

1 translated from polish by the author

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**image 5** Owl in The Bear Fortress , 2020



**image 6** Birdhouse, 1910-1930



**image 8** Birdhouse interior, 1910-1930



**image 7** Birdhouse, 2021



**image 9** Birdhouse interior, 2021



## new generation

Despite all the efforts to renovate the old buildings, the zoo is also focused on new projects. The biggest and most advertised new building of Wrocław Zoo is Afrykarium. It is housing multiple species from different environments, mostly from water (Mieszkańcy afrykarium, n.d.). The design of the building is focused on experience (Hajok, 2015), as the visitors can walk through a jungle-like path with butterflies flying around, go underground to see the animals swimming in the aquarium as well as go outside and see the penguins (Afrykarium, n.d.). The Afrykarium building is a clear representation of features characteristic of the process of disneyization such as theming where multiple animals from different species and environments are kept under one roof. Because of the experience-based design, the whole building might seem like a theme park full of attractions for visitors. The theme park-like features of Afrykarium, prove that the Wrocław zoo is following the trends of modern zoo design.



image 10 Afrykarium, 2014



image 11 Afrykarium interior, 2014

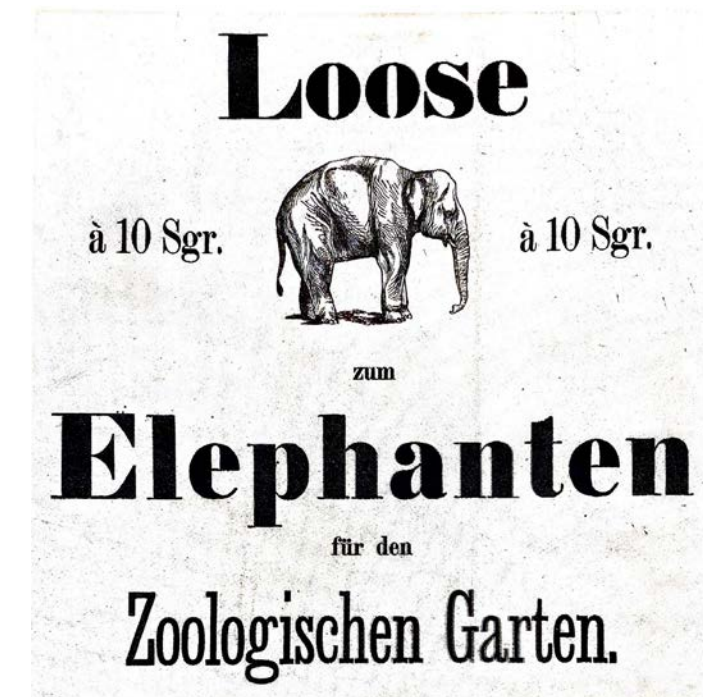


## **zoo and the public**

Because of its rich and long history, the zoo is deeply connected with Wrocław and its citizens. The zoo, since its beginning, met with a very positive reaction and to this day the citizens of Wrocław play important role in its life. They were involved in numerous activities, helping with the expansion of the animal collection, or even saving the zoo. The first elephant in the zoo – Theodor - was purchased with money collected at the raffle (image 12) to which many citizens contributed. The whole affair was very complicated and involved a lot of logistical planning as Theodor had to travel to Wrocław from London. After 2 months and a few unsuccessful tries, the elephant was welcomed warmly by the Wrocław citizens as he was travelling through the city in a cart drawn by six horses (Solski & Strehlow, 2015, p. 28-31).

However, sometimes the involvement of citizens was crucial to the survival of the zoo animals. When in 1997, Poland was hit by a flood, the zoo was in grave danger because it is sitting right on the bank of the Oder River. Before the high waters reached the city, many citizens, small business owners and even children came to the rescue and volunteered to secure their beloved zoo from the rising water levels (image 13). Men were piling up heavy sandbags provided by local bakeries and nuns, while elderly citizens prepared food for the volunteers (Kijek 2017). Thanks to their collective effort, the zoo did not suffer any major losses and was reopened soon after the flood finished (Strutyńska 2017). The continuous involvement of citizens in the life of the zoo proves that it plays an important role in the life of the city a respected and beloved place in Wrocław.

Despite the positive and friendly image, there is an extensive record of the accidents within the zoo. While numerous cases of diseases that killed many animals in Wrocław zoo, could originate from reasons not known at the time, or the unfortunate cases of animals falling or slipping, there were some incidents caused purely because of human error. A range of oversights lead to fires and the creation of unsuitable conditions for animals which was a cause of their death (Solski & Strehlow, 2015 p. 31, 78, 110). However, sometimes it's the humans who get harmed. The accident that got the most media coverage involved bears. In 1959 5-year-old boy entered the bear enclosure but fortunately was saved by one of the zoo visitors (Sokolski, 2012). It seems like the various accidents and oversights did not discourage the visitors and the zoo still maintains its friendly image (Solski & Strehlow, 2015).



**image 12** Poster informing about the elephant purchase



**image 13** Wrocław citizens building blocade with sand bags

Wrocław Zoo building typologies

According to Meuser’s five generations of zoo buildings

first generation

Exhibition Structures in Colonial Style



image 14 Monkey house, 1870

second generation

Barless Structures amid a Panoramic Landscape



image 15 Thick-skinned animal pavilion, 1904

third generation

Formalism and Functionalism



image 17 Zoo gate, 1970

fourth generation

The Landscaping of Buildings and the Enclosure of Nature



image 16 New bear pavilion, 1950

fifth generation

Branding through Iconic Large-scale Constructions

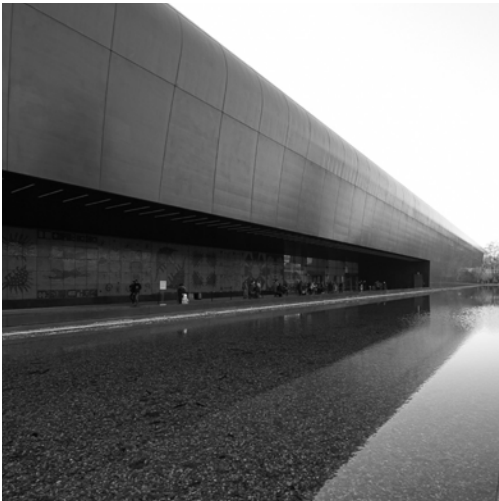


image 18 Afrykarium, 2014



# ethics

While discussing zoo architecture it is important to look at the human-animal relationship from the ethical point of view as “(...) ethical norms not only reflect who we are, but simultaneously condition how we think and act, and thereby who we may become.” (Lynn, 1998, p.281). Throughout the ages, ethicists continuously discussed the subject of human-animal relationships, therefore it is an important topic despite the changing times and views. The subject will be discussed through three lenses: moral value of animals, human-animal boundary and freedom.

## animals through the lense of ethics

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle in his work titled *Aristotle's History of Animals In Ten Books* analysed the human-animal relationship through the ages. In the 10 books, he is discussing the animal world, anatomy, and animal-human relationship. The first book is focused on the categorization of animals in groups. The urge to categorize nature, already present in 350 BC, was also reflected centuries later in the early zoo architecture when animals were categorized to better understand their nature and origins. In the following books, Aristotle compared animals and other “elements of nature” to humans and human physiology. The comparison of animals and humans is a common theme throughout the whole 10 books and reaches the extreme when he stated that animals are trying to imitate human behaviours (Aristotle, 2019, p. 240). Aristotle's observations are meticulous and the number of animals he is describing is astonishing. However, the prevailing message in the text is that the goal of his observations is to better understand animals and make them more useful for humans.

Another important view on animal ethics comes from 18th-century German philosopher – Immanuel Kant, who in his *Lectures on Ethics* tackled moral issues concerning animals. Kant frequently referred to the animal nature of humans, stating it is wrong and prevents humans from acting accordingly to the rules of society. He also described the way humans are supposed to treat animals. Firstly, he established his position regarding humans' ethical duties towards animals. He stated that humans do not have any moral duty to animals. Nevertheless, he calls for not harming animals because cruel behaviour projected on animals can result in cruel behaviour towards other people.

The modern view towards the treatment of animals is different. The animal rights movement during the 70s was largely influenced by Peter Singer - a professor of bioethics at Princeton University with a background in philosophy. In his book *Animal Liberation*, Singer is analyzing the ethics of human-animal relationships based on moral values. He acknowledged the difference between humans and animals in terms of self-awareness and stated that humans are more self-aware, however, this should not be the basis of establishing moral value. He suggested that things both humans and animals share are feeling of pain as well as the lust for life. His argument against animal cruelty is based on the saying that why one group (humans) should ignore the pain of others (animals) purely for pleasure. He calls this mechanism speciesism. By comparing it to sexism and racism he shows the absurdity of those actions and suggests that in the future current generation will be judged on this basis, just like we now see the absurdity of previous generations for racism (Singer, 1990, p. 22).



Another modern view on the human-animal relationship is presented by William S. Lynn, author of many publications on politics, geography, sustainability, and ethics. In his essay *Animals, Ethics and Geography*, Lynn talked about the moral value of animals based on intrinsic and extrinsic values. Lynn invoked modern research on animals and concluded that animals have some level of self-awareness therefore, they do have intrinsic value. Yet he pointed out that throughout the ages humans were seen animals through the lense of extrinsic value, because animals were simply useful to humans, they provided food, clothing, and safety and in the case of zoos the entertainment.

The view on ethics towards animals shifted. Firstly, the ethicists saw animals as useful assets for humans and were thinking of not harming animals because it might harm other humans as well. Then the tendency shifted to animal advocates considering animals as self-aware beings.

## human-animal boundary

The boundary between humans and animals can be defined as the freedom from instincts and culture (Wolch and Emel, 1998). Therefore, the zoo is a place of constant shifts and contradictions of this barrier as it is a part of the culture that is meant to represent the animal.

On one hand, the differences between animals and humans were emphasized when the “wild nature” of animals attracted people to the zoo. Zoos were the places of exhibiting the “exotic” (Meuser, 2018, p. 3). This fascination is reflected in architecture within the notion of ornaments inspired by exotic countries, as well as in the art, showing the wild nature of animals (image 19).

But the boundary becomes even more unclear when human exhibitions in zoos are taken into the consideration. It is no longer between animals and humans but between humans and humans.

On the other hand, zoos are trying to blur the boundary by “humanizing” animals (Anderson, 1998). Wrocław zoo is full of examples of this practice. Starting from pictures of monkeys learning to ride a bicycle or wearing a hat (image 20) to advertising posters hinting at similarities in bear behaviour to human everyday activities such as drinking milk or exercising (image 21). Even now the Wrocław zoo on its Instagram page is pointing out the human behaviours in animals living in the zoo. The story of two gay penguins stashing a pink flamingo toy in their small enclosure was presented as “decorations in their small villa”<sup>1</sup> (Instagram zoowroclaw, 2022a). And when the penguins got rid of the toy another post followed, questioning if they are doing “spring cleaning of just redecorating”<sup>2</sup> (Instagram zoowroclaw, 2022b).

The goal of processes like this is to appeal more to the human audience and create the idols of the zoo (Anderson, 1998). Some theoreticians are arguing that the changes that zoos are undergoing are dictated purely to fit human preferences (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2001). This might not necessarily be a bad thing, because it might have a positive influence on the human-animal relationship (Boachá Sampaio et al., 2020). Despite the education and conservation efforts, the main purpose of the zoo is still leisure (Boachá Sampaio et al., 2020).

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1 translated from polish by the author

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image 19 Elephant Theodor in Wrocław zoo



image 20 Poster promoting Wrocław zoo, 1931



image 21 Young orangutan on bicycle, 1929



## freedom

Freedom is an essential topic of discussion when talking about zoos because the basic concept of the zoo is the limitation of the freedom of animals. Taking an animal from its natural habitat, training and enclosing it in a cage brings benefits to humans therefore it is culturally accepted (Jamieson, 2010, p 133).

As discussed previously, the zoo was a source of entertainment for humans. The education and conservation efforts however good they might sound; also have a darker side. As Dale Jamieson in the essay *Against Zoos* suggests the education efforts in zoos are doubtful and asks a question about what knowledge zoos are trying to pass on. She quotes Stephen Kellert, who was an author of books about biophilic design and a Yale school of environment professor, who concludes that people tend to know less about animals after visiting the zoo than before. Jamieson also mentions animals behave differently in zoos than in nature therefore zoo gives a false picture of what is a “natural behaviour” of animals. In terms of conservation efforts, Jamieson suggests that they have the zoo’s business in mind instead of animals and the breeding actions are creating unwanted offspring which is often sold.

The research efforts are often carried out outside of the zoo “in the wild” and similarly to conservation, not every zoo has a research programme.

Jamieson concludes her essay by saying that reserves that are closed to the public are better for research and conservation, but they lack funding that comes from zoos with the entertainment aspect. However, the latter example does not bring many new discoveries to the scientific field but has financial resources.

Another perspective on zoos is presented by Stephen St C. Bostock in the book *Zoos and Animal Rights: The Ethics of Keeping Animals*, where he advocates for zoos. Bostock agrees that freedom is an important topic while talking about zoos, but he argues that very good captivity is not taking away freedom. The things that matter in this discussion are the conditions of the environment where the captivity is happening. Bostock claims that humans also lack freedom as they are bound by the norms of society. Moreover, he adds to this discussion by stating that animals are not free in the wild as they are bound by many factors such as climate, weather, or survivor instincts. He argues that the proper conditions can make life in captivity seem like freedom (Bostock, 1993, p. 49).

Perhaps the most mainstream work on freedom in a zoo is the cartoon movie *Madagascar*, which presents a story of 4 animals from the New York Zoo. The main protagonist in the

movie - zebra named Marty, dreams of life beyond the zoo, the freedom of natural habitat. When he finally achieves it and lands in Madagascar, he quickly realizes that zoo life had sheltered him from the dangers of nature. This is another argument presented in the defence of the zoos – they are making animals safe (McGrath & Darnell, 2005).

The discussion about the freedom of zoo animals does not have a definite conclusion as the word itself can have different meanings. Both Jamieson and Bostock define the word differently and depending on their attitude towards enclosing animals, they see the limitation of freedom either as a good or neutral outcome of a zoo. However, the mainstream wave of thinking about freedom in the zoo presented in the cartoon Madagascar inherently sees the limitation of freedom as a disadvantage.



# the ethics of zoo renovation

Despite the changing attitudes towards animals, zoos stayed relevant. From the ancient places for animals in palaces of great rulers, through menageries to the modern zoo, keeping animals fascinated humans. In the past, it was easier to justify the keeping of animals as they were mainly perceived as an asset to human culture. However, zoos have managed to survive the times of ethics advocating that animal lives in a very human world. Despite, their intentions and goals which are not always noble (Jamieson, 2010), zoos are remaining very popular places of entertainment and education in the public eyes. The Wrocław zoo is no exception as it follows the main trend in zoo design - disneyization. However, this process refers to the newer buildings.

The more complex situation of older zoo buildings is much more interesting to discuss. The overall tendency in zoos established in the 18th and 19th centuries is to cover or hide them behind new trends in zoo design. The Monkey Temple in Bristol Zoo where it now serves as an exhibition about ecology and where the architecture is covered with materials that appear eco-friendly is a clear example of that (Shapland, 2004). Another example is the Penguin Pool in London Zoo where the beloved by public modernist structure, inspired by the nature of the penguin is empty as it no longer meets the animal design standards. It is on the national heritage list, therefore now the zoo is trying to repurpose the building, but without the penguins, it is going to lose the part of its meaning as it was inspired by them, and they are part of the concept (Shapland & Reybrouck, 2008). Some of the Wrocław zoo buildings follow the same principle. The bear fortress where the structure was inspired by the strength and majestic features of the bear (hence the fortress), now lost its quality as currently, it is home to owls.

The newest renovation project of Wrocław zoo, the Birdhouse is different. Its purpose was not changed, and it was not “covered up”, but the remains of old zoo practices were abolished. It seems like the building became an empty shell since the principles that dictated its design were gotten rid of, and only the visual qualities are left. But perhaps the visual qualities are more than just ornaments. Maybe they are supposed to transport the visitor to the past and make a connection with previous visitors to the zoo. The architectural qualities also bring some knowledge and are not necessarily an empty shell.

As the ethics shifted and research about animal needs developed, the change in the cages for birds was necessary to provide them with a comfortable life. This research could not be ignored for ethical reasons as well as the reputation of the zoo would be harmed. If the

building was not renovated, it would simply be demolished and a new one would be built. Therefore, perhaps it's better to change some parts of the building to meet the new design principles and keep as much history as possible. This method adds a layer to the history of the zoo and makes the building even more valuable. The history was not abolished but highlighted by adding a new chapter. Practical matters are also very important in the case of the zoo.

The more observant visitors can still spot the historical references to the old architecture. Wrocław Zoo is not hiding the darker spots in its history. All the things that are considered not ethical nowadays, the accidents, the human exhibitions, the numbers of dead animals were presented in the book by Leszek Solski and Harro Stehlow called 150 lat ZOO Wrocław: = 150 Jahre ZOO Breslau issued by the zoo during the celebrations of 150 years of the existence of the zoo. Perhaps this is a better way of remembering history than blindly preserving every smallest architectural detail.

## conclusion

The whole experience a visitor has through The Wrocław Zoo is unique because of the mix of old and new buildings. The new buildings are following the new trends in the zoo design and the way old ones are renovated is not the same. However, the zoo does not have an identical approach to every heritage building. In the case of some buildings, their purpose is changed while others are carefully restored. Despite the differences in conservation methods, all historical buildings are treated with respect. This makes the whole experience of visiting The Wrocław Zoo even more interesting as one might not only see animals and learn (or not) about them but also spot the traces of old zoo architecture and ethics that inspired it. Perhaps these traces of outdated ethical practices could serve as a cautionary tale and prevent future generations from making the same mistakes.

## image sources

**image on the cover** Polska na fotografii. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 April 2022, from <https://fotopolska.eu/>

**image 1** Solski, L., & Strehlow, H. (2015). 150 lat ZOO Wrocław: = 150 Jahre ZOO Breslau. ZOO. p. 15

**image 2** Solski, L., & Strehlow, H. (2015). 150 lat ZOO Wrocław: = 150 Jahre ZOO Breslau. ZOO. p. 55

**image 3** Solski, L., & Strehlow, H. (2015). 150 lat ZOO Wrocław: = 150 Jahre ZOO Breslau. ZOO. p. 82

**image 4** Solski, L., & Strehlow, H. (2015). 150 lat ZOO Wrocław: = 150 Jahre ZOO Breslau. ZOO.p. 93

**image 5** WROdzice. (2020). Zoo & afrykarium. <http://www.wrodzice.pl/2020/07/zoo-wroclaw-atrakcje-dla-dzieci.html>

**image 6** Polska na fotografii. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 April 2022, from <https://fotopolska.eu/>

**image 7** Polska na fotografii. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 April 2022, from <https://fotopolska.eu/>

**image 8** Polska na fotografii. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 April 2022, from <https://fotopolska.eu/>

**image 9** Moch , Bartosz. ‘Wyremontowana Ptaszarnia w Zoo Wrocław już otwarta dla zwiedzających’. [www.wroclaw.pl](https://www.wroclaw.pl), 2021, <https://www.wroclaw.pl/portal/nowa-ptaszarnia-w-zoo-wroclaw-otwarta-dla-zwiedzajacych>.

**image 10** Polska na fotografii. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 April 2022, from <https://fotopolska.eu/>

**image 11** Polska na fotografii. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 April 2022, from <https://fotopolska.eu/>

**image 12** Solski, L., & Strehlow, H. (2015). 150 lat ZOO Wrocław: = 150 Jahre ZOO Breslau. ZOO. p. 31

**image 13** Kijek, Karolina. ‘Powódź 1997. Gdy nadciągała katastrofa, Wielka Wyspa stanęła do obrony’. [Wyborcza.pl](https://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl), 2017, <https://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/>

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**image 19** Solski, L., & Strehlow, H. (2015). 150 lat ZOO Wrocław: = 150 Jahre ZOO Breslau. ZOO.p. 31

**image 20** Polska na fotografii. (n.d.). Retrieved 14 April 2022, from <https://fotopolska.eu/>

**image 21** Solski, L., & Strehlow, H. (2015). 150 lat ZOO Wrocław: = 150 Jahre ZOO Breslau. ZOO.p. 106



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