

Logbook task Museum Field Trip

The Natural History Museum of London



Visiting the butterfly section of the Natural History Museum in London, I was surrounded by a mixture of emotions. The display cases were lined with rows of butterfly specimens that looked perfect with their wings open and their colours vibrant. However, this beauty is static, immobilised in death. The display case was closed with glass, and each butterfly was threaded through a fine needle and arranged in order, as if it were subsumed into some vast, dispassionate system. I felt a contradiction in this scenario: on the one hand, I was attracted by the diversity of the butterflies and the delicacy of their forms, but on the other hand, I couldn't ignore the fact that they no longer belonged to nature, that they had been transformed into an "object to be seen".



The exhibition seemed to be about the wonders of nature, but I began to realise that it was more about how humans transform nature into "knowledge" and "collections". Butterflies are categorised, named and numbered, reflecting the logic of science to control and explain the world. The cabinets allow visitors to get up close and personal, but the glass also creates a sense of distance - we see the details of the butterflies, but we can't really touch their life force.

Among the visitors, there were many children who were amazed by the colours and shapes of the butterflies, while parents took photos. The whole scene made me think that the exhibition is not only "science popularisation" in the educational sense, but also a kind of visual consumption - we are used to appreciating the beauty of nature, but seldom reflect on the stories behind these beauties.

This visit made me rethink the meaning of "exhibition": the butterflies in the museum are not only a microcosm of nature, but also a microcosm of the relationship between human beings and nature. It reminded me that protecting nature is not only about preserving its shell, but also about respecting its original state of life.