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### Terraria Gigantica: The World Under Glass

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## Terraria Gigantica: The World under Glass

Photographs by Dana Fritz

In a new approach to environmental photography, Dana Fritz explores the world's largest enclosed landscapes: Arizona's Biosphere 2, Cornwall's Eden Project, and Nebraska's Lied Jungle and Desert Dome at the Henry Doorly Zoo. In these vivaria, plants are grown amid carefully constructed representations of the natural world to entertain and educate tourists while

also supporting scientific research. Together, these architectural and engineering marvels stand as working symbols of our complex relationship with the environment.

Giant terraria require human control of temperature, humidity, irrigation, insects, weeds, and other conditions to create otherwise impossible ecosystems. While technical demands inform the design of these spaces, the juxtapositions of natural and artificial elements generate striking visual paradoxes that can go unnoticed. Here Fritz turns away from visitors' prepared sight lines, revealing alternate views that dispel the illusion of natural conditions. Inviting questions about what it means to create and contain landscapes, *Terraria Gigantica* inspires contemplation of our ecological future.

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

**Dana Fritz** is a professor of art at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Her work has been exhibited widely in the United States and Japan and is held in several public collections worldwide.

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*Terraria Gigantica:*  
*The World Under Glass*

Photographs by  
Dana Fritz

*Terraria Gigantica* examines the world's largest indoor landscape complexes: Biosphere 2 near Tucson, Arizona; the Desert Dome and Lied Jungle at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska; and the Eden Project near St. Austell, Cornwall, UK. The project's title refers to these enclosed structures that permit near-total control of temperature, humidity, insects, weeds and irrigation to allow the cultivation of species and creation of a landscape that would otherwise be impossible in that particular climate. Each an architectural and engineering marvel when built, they continue to stand as working symbols of our current relationship with the natural world. These giant high-tech terrariums draw from a rich lineage of public conservatories cultivating the exotic but also serve as large-scale laboratories for research on plants, animals, complex ecosystems and the effects of climate change. While these spaces are often crowded with visitors, my experience is more solitary as my attention veers away from the carefully constructed exhibits and educational materials and into the corners and edges of the biomes where façades crumble or illusion fades. In these liminal spaces, the natural and artificial elements often collide, overlap, bleed together or become indistinguishable. Small details lead to big questions about what it means to create and contain landscapes and whether they supplement or replace experiences on the outside. The continued interest in facilities that enclose and display plants and animals in simulated natural environments seems to indicate a palpable concern for the future of nature as we know (or knew) it. Under the glass, I frame images and ideas, ponder the distinctions between natural and artificial, and examine the evolving "nature" of nature.



*Painted Clouds, Biosphere 2*





*Canyon, Desert Dome*





*Curious Cactus, Biosphere 2*





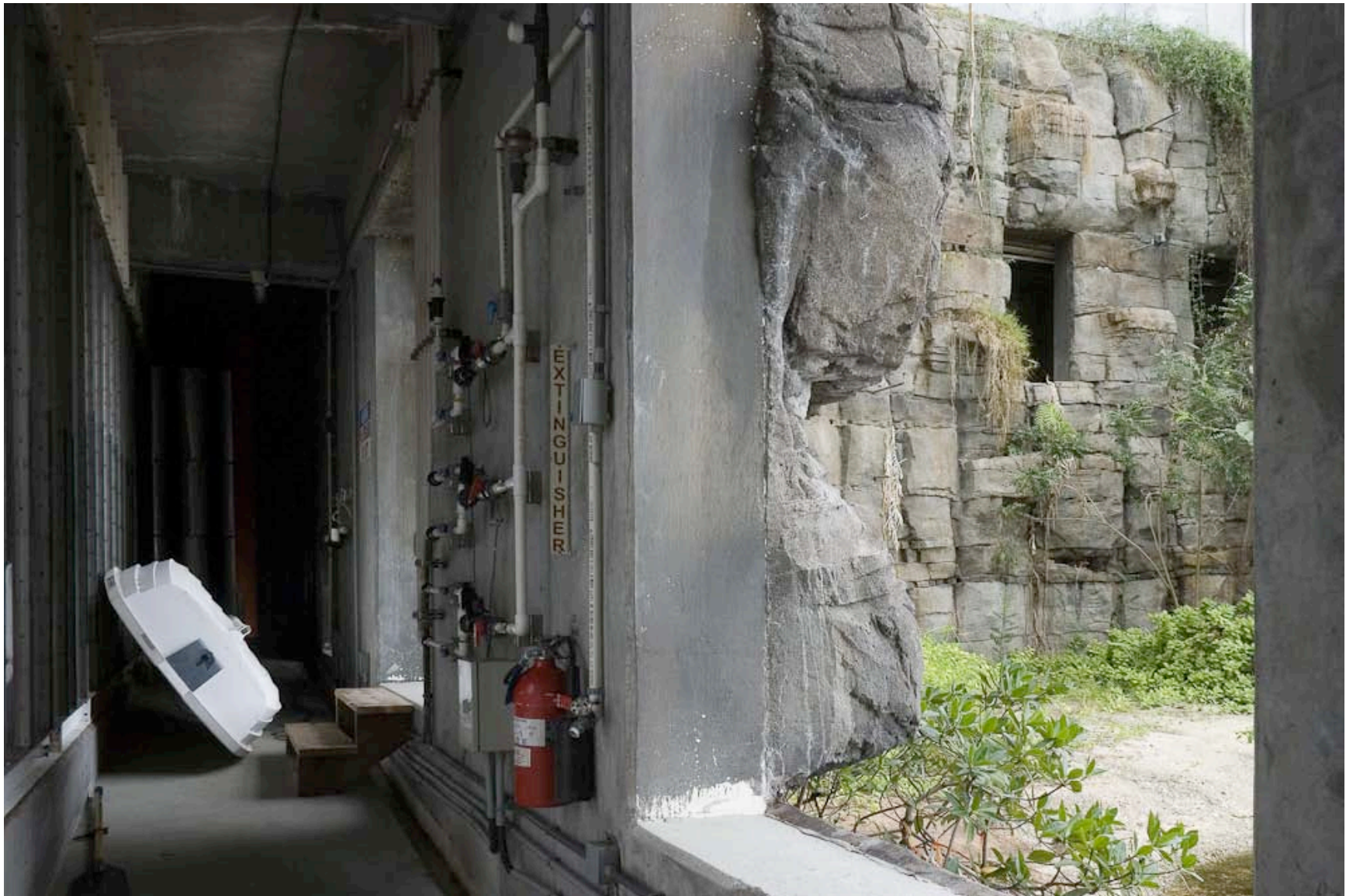
*Exit, Desert Dome*





*Rain Forest Wall, Biosphere 2*





*Rowboat and Beach Window, Biosphere 2*





*Beach, Biosphere 2*





*Humid Tropics, Eden Project*





*Green Ductwork, Eden Project*





*Banana Conveyor, Eden Project*





*Condiments, Lied Jungle*





*Mop, Biosphere 2*





*Painted Leaves and Dripping Moss, Lied Jungle*





*Nest, Biosphere 2*





*Palm Stump and New Tree, Desert Dome*





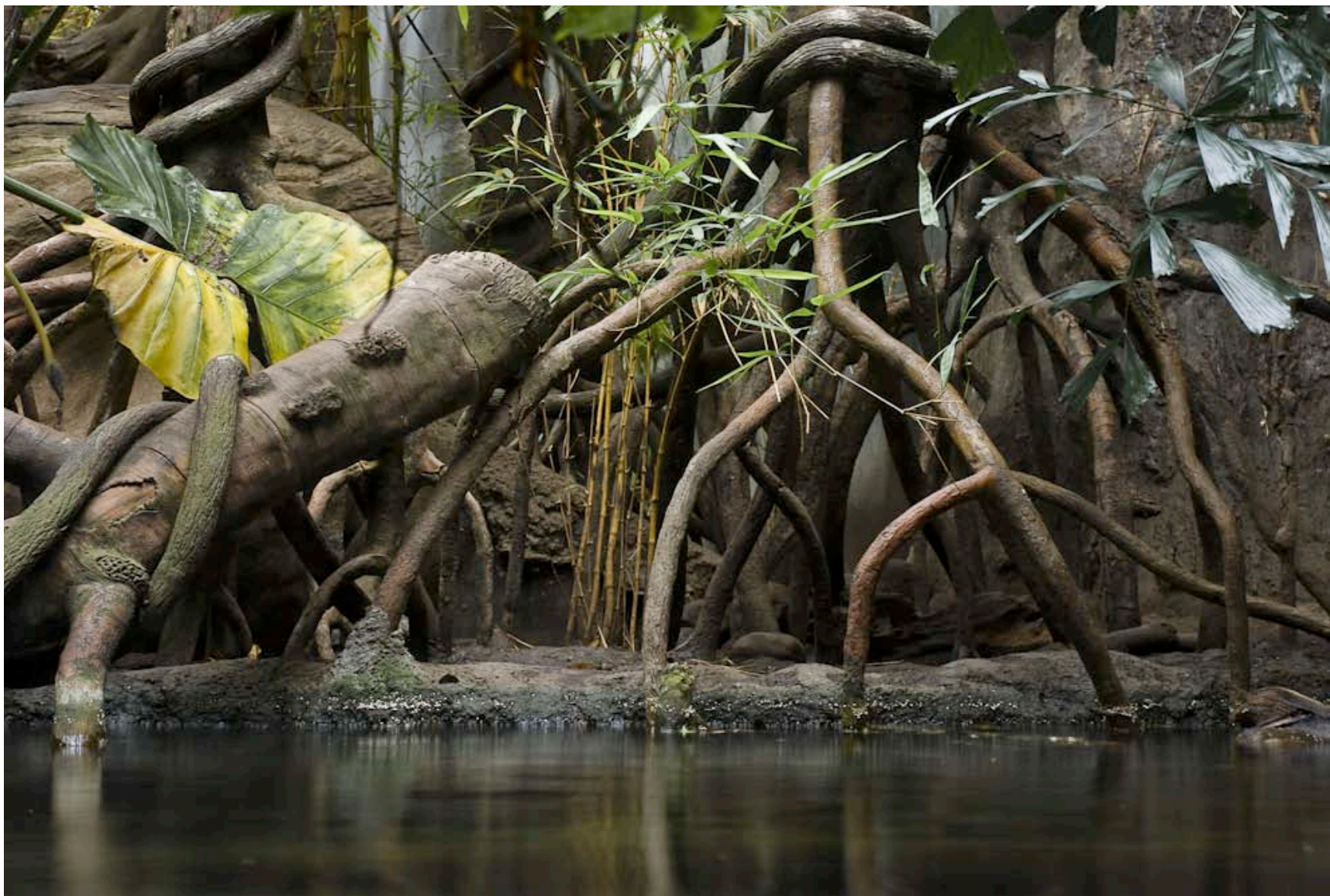
*Stair, Eden Project*





*Rain Forest Mist, Biosphere 2*





*Pond, Lied Jungle*





*Shovel, Biosphere 2*





*Rain Forest Back Room, Biosphere 2*