

# Naturalizing offshore oil structures in aquarium exhibits

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Gulf of Mexico exhibit at the Aquarium of the Americas, New Orleans, Louisiana. Photo by Dolly Jørgensen

Aquariums play a key role in shaping how offshore environments and structures are perceived culturally. This research investigates how aquariums in the Gulf Coast region of the US present the ocean life of the Gulf of Mexico. One common feature is that in displays of the Gulf of Mexico offshore ecosystem, fish swim around and through downscaled versions of offshore oil jackets. The accompanying educational displays of text, pictures, and videos show the vibrantly colored sea life growing on and around steel structures in the Gulf of Mexico. The same image of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem comes out in educational material about the offshore environment, including written school lessons, webcasts, and educational films.

*How did this display of naturalized manmade offshore oil structures come to be?*

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