

# Desiring Diagrams: Aesthetic Practices of Cartographic Fragmentation and the Deleuzian Erewhon

Helena Shaskevich, Stony Brook University, New York, USA

*Abstract: The first portion of the paper focuses on two particular works of art, Guy Ernest Debord's Naked City and Jane and Louise Wilson's A Free and Anonymous Monument, and examines the ways in which both works, despite their different contexts and media, employ an aesthetics of fragmentation and reconfiguration. Debord's Naked City, first published in 1957 by the MIBI (Mouvement Internationale pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste), displays a generic Plan de Paris cut up into nineteen different sections, scattered on a piece of paper, and connected to one another only through red directional arrows. With an absolute disregard for both spatial and directional relations, The Naked City disrupts the false continuity of the Plan de Paris and, in so doing, exposes the violent, homogenizing logic of capitalist aesthetics. This paper argues that Jane and Louise Wilson's 2004 video installation, A Free and Anonymous Monument, utilizes a similar aesthetic of fragmentation and reconfiguration, deconstructing maps and cartographic practices (envisioned very loosely here), as a means of criticizing the homogenizing logic of capitalist constructions of space. The second part of the paper, takes into account Marcus Doel's critique of "slice and stitch" methodology as a means of articulating difference employed very literally within both works and argument for the enactment of a moving and mobilized non-representational theory, depicted as performance. In opposition, but also alongside Doel, I argue that a work of art can maintain a "slice and stitch" method while also being performative. Examining Debord's Naked City and Jane and Louise Wilson's A Free and Anonymous Monument, the paper links the performative nature of both works to Gilles Deleuze's concept of the Erewhon - "an originary 'nowhere' and the displaced, disguised, modified and always re-created 'here-and-now'". The paper contends that the nature of the Erewhon, as simultaneously One and Multiple, is dependent upon the various foldings that take place. Consequently, I argue that the aesthetics of fragmentation and reconfiguration are bound up with the performative folding, and allow for criticality and potentiality to function alongside one another in a work of art.*

Keywords: Guy Ernest Debord, Situationist International, Jane and Louise Wilson, Performative, Gilles Deleuze, Erewhon, Folds, Foldings, Marcus Doel

"In the course of Time, these Extensive maps were found somehow wanting, and so the College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point."

-Jorge Luis Borges,  
"Del Rigor en la Ciencia",  
1946.

**I**N 1946 THE Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges first published "Del rigor en la ciencia". Compounding fantasy with philosophy, the paragraph long story recounts the tale of a group of cartographers whose exaggerated, neurotic need for precision drives them to construct a map just as large as the territory it represents. Deemed cumbersome by the

succeeding generations, the map is abandoned “to the rigours of sun and rain” and eventually disappears. Only on rare occasion can its tattered pieces be spotted, having been re-appropriated to shelter “an occasional beast or beggar”.

As a master of spatial-temporal confusion Borges formulates a world in which the fiction becomes so real that it undermines reality itself. Borges’ story not only plays with the slippage between fact and fiction, but also points toward the productive potentiality of the simulacrum. In his text *Difference and Repetition*, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze describes the simulacrum as “not just a copy, but that which overturns all copies by also overturning the models: every thought becomes an aggression.”<sup>1</sup> He maintains that this transformative and productive simulacrum, or rather the “monstrous double”, can be found throughout art and literature.

This paper examines a set of maps, or rather works of art that are map-like, that similarly pose questions about the slippage between fact and fiction. Like Deleuze’s simulacrum, they are copies of copies, whose efficacies lie in overturning the models. As any good cartographer would point out, the idea of the map is utilized loosely here, very loosely. The first of these works is Guy Ernest Debord’s 1957 work titled, *The Naked City* (Fig. 1) and the second is Jane and Louise Wilson’s 2003 video installation, *A Free and Anonymous Monument* (Fig. 2). As one can easily ascertain from the images, neither one of these works actually functions as a geographical tracing. They are instead works of art that insist upon critique and experimentation. Although they may initially appear dissimilar, the two works do, in fact maintain a number of significant similarities. Both works appropriate and subsequently fragment an original object in order to expose it as an illusion. Unlike the map in Borges’ story, the two maps examined in this paper actually reveal the map itself to be a work of fiction.

## Map #1

In 1957 three different groups, the MIBI (Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus Imagines), the International Letterset and the Psychogeographical Society of London joined together in order to establish the Situationist International. Motivated by a revolutionary spirit and a Marxist philosophy, the members of the Situationist International refused a separation between art and politics. The artists utilized their works in an attempt to both critique and escape the degradation of life they believed to have been caused by advanced capitalism. Published that same year, *The Naked City* was one of the very first works of art to express the ideas of the Situationists. While the work was actually published by the MIBI and not the Situationists, as art historian Thomas F. McDonough points out, the “map acted both as a summary of many of the concerns shared by the three organizations, particularly around the question of the construction and perception of urban space, and as a demonstration of the directions to be explored by the Internationale Situationniste in the following years.”<sup>2</sup> Credited to one of the most prolific artists of the Situationist International, Guy Ernest Debord, *The Naked City* displays an absolute disregard for both directional and spatial relations. The artist scatters nineteen different cut-up sections of a generic *Plan de Paris* and links them to one another with red directional arrows. Unlike the original map, however, Debord’s

<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xviii-xix.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas F. McDonough, “Situationist Space: Guy Debord’s *The Naked City*,” October no. 67 (Winter 1994) 58-60.

*Naked City* does not attempt to display the entirety of Paris. It is instead, offered as a challenge to 'official' cartographies of the city. By fragmenting the *Plan de Paris*, *The Naked City* exposes its inadequacies. *The Plan de Paris* is presented as an illusion; an omnipresent view of the city that conceals, rather than acknowledges various forms of difference. In his essay titled "Situationist Space", Thomas F. McDonough elaborates on this critique stating,

Structuring *The Naked City* through synecdoche and asyndeton disrupts the false continuity of the *Plan de Paris*. The city map is revealed as a representation: the production of a discourse about the city. This discourse is predicated on the appearance of optical coherence, on what Henri Lefebvre called the reduction of the city to 'the undifferentiated state of the visible-readable realm.' This abstract space homogenizes the conflicts that produce capitalist space; the terrain of the *Plan de Paris* is that of Haussmannized Paris, where modernization had evicted the working class from its traditional quarters in the center of the city and then segregated the city along class lines. But abstract space is riddled with contradictions; most importantly, it not only conceals difference, its acts of division and exclusion are productive of difference. Distinctions and differences are not eradicated; they are only hidden in the homogenous space of the *Plan*. *The Naked City* brings these distinctions and differences out into the open, the violence of its fragmentation suggesting the real violence involved in constructing the city of the *Plan*.<sup>3</sup>

As McDonough points out, even as the *Plan de Paris* attempts to represent the totality of a space, it inevitably erases any possible disruptions of that totality. Debord's *Naked City*, on the other hand, interrupts the artificial continuity of the *Plan de Paris* and endeavors to reintegrate the subjective experience of urban space into its representation.

*The Naked City* foregrounds the individual and the subjective. Not only does the work function as a visual display of the Situationists' "experimental behavior", it also mimics that behavior and even expands it outwards. *The Naked City* actually provides a guide to the derive. The red directional arrows that link the fragmented sections of the *Plan de Paris* are referred to by Debord, as "plaques tournantes". Ordinarily, this term would denote a railway turntable. As McDonough writes, within *The Naked City* the arrows "describe 'the spontaneous turns of direction taken by a subject moving through these surroundings in disregard of the useful connections that ordinarily govern his conduct.'" <sup>4</sup> *The Naked City* thus provides a map of the derive. It "denies space as context and instead incorporates space as an element of social practice. Rather than a container suitable for description, space becomes part of a process: the process of 'inhabiting' enacted by social groups."<sup>5</sup> In addition to functioning as a guide for the experimental behavior of the Situationists the form of the work also mimics that experimental behavior. While the derive took place within contested space in order to disrupt that space, *The Naked City* utilized the representations of that contested space and disrupted and fragmented those representations. As a detournement *The Naked City* takes the original form of the *Plan de Paris* and fragments that form in a way in which it ultimately critiques itself. Most importantly, *The Naked City* foregrounds the individual viewer within its process of experimentation and thus allows the ideas present within the work to expand outward.

<sup>3</sup> McDonough, "Situationist Space", 65.

<sup>4</sup> Asger Jorn, "Quatrieme experience du MIBI (Plan psychogeographiques de Guy Debord)" quoted in McDonough, "Situationist Space", 60.

<sup>5</sup> McDonough, "Situationist Space", 68.

The work does not function as a reformulated map of Paris, but rather as a continually expanding superimposition of maps. McDonough notes, “Debord’s map [. . .] foregrounds its contingency by structuring itself as a narrative open to numerous readings. It openly acknowledges itself as the trace of practices of inhabiting rather than as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions.”<sup>6</sup>

But *The Naked City* is even more complex than that. In qualifying the work as a tracing, albeit an expansive one, McDonough re-situates the work as representation, ultimately refuting precisely what Debord was attempting to do with *The Naked City*. *The Naked City* is more than a mere representation of the multiple possibilities of “drifting” through the city of Paris. It also maintains a reciprocal relationship with its viewer. The viewer’s interaction with these spaces gets mapped from but also onto Debord’s *Naked City*. The work is given meaning through its encounter with the viewer. In doing so, difference is continually reinserted into these spaces that further fragment and transform a homogenous system.

Fragmentation, however, as both a formal artistic practice as well as a method of formulating difference can be problematic. Focusing primarily on the field of geography, Marcus Doel offers a noteworthy critique of fragmentation. In his essay, “Proverbs for Paranoids: Writing Geography on Hollowed Ground”, Doel warns against what, borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari, he terms a “slice and stitch” methodology. He writes, “Another name for geography is Frankenstein: a botched amalgam of decomposing parts or, perhaps more obliquely, a synthesis of difference. And yet the whole enterprise is not even monstrous; it’s banal – AND, AND...AND you’ll never know when to stop the repetition of slice and stitch.”<sup>7</sup> Doel’s critique marks practices of fragmentation and separation as inevitable failures in the production of difference. He argues that a “slice and stitch” methodology merely produces parts-objects, and therefore, cannot create novelty. Additionally, according to Doel, this methodology attempts to escape representation, but ultimately ends up functioning within it. He writes, “This is the point to grasp: what mattered to modern human geography was the principle of separation, and not at all whether or not this gap in the order of things could be successfully crossed. [. . .] In short, the presupposition of difference *as* separation ensures that everything takes place within REPRESENTATION.”<sup>8</sup> Of course, Doel readily accepts the postmodern crisis of representation. Following Deleuze, Doel argues that representation merely arrests and essentializes a continually moving world, and thus is incapable of articulating difference in itself. Rather than articulating difference itself, the “slice and stitch” methodology simply conflates difference with separation, or the void in between. Consequently, according to Doel, the geographer’s failure to account for difference stems from his failure to grasp its *movement*.

It appears as if in his critical assessment of geographic fragmentation, Doel could easily have had in mind Debord’s *Naked City*. Not only does Debord’s work use geographical practices, namely cartography, but it also uses a process of “slice and stitch”. The original *Plan de Paris* is literally cut, scattered, and stitched back together not with thread, but rather directional arrows. Furthermore, it is through fragmenting his original object - the *Plan de Paris* - that Debord attempts to make difference visible. As McDonough had noted earlier,

<sup>6</sup> McDonough, “Situationist Space”, 69.

<sup>7</sup> Marcus Doel, “Proverbs for Paranoids: Writing Geography on Hollowed Ground.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18, no. 3 (1993): 377.

<sup>8</sup> Doel, “Proverbs for Paranoids”, 378.

the homogenous space of the *Plan* does not eradicate difference; it merely conceals it. Thus, for Debord the act of fragmenting the *Plan de Paris*, of separating it into “unities of atmosphere”, functions as a means of bringing the concealed difference to the surface. Doel, however, very explicitly critiques the geographic practice that conflates separation with the production of difference. And yet, both Doel and Debord maintain similar goals. Both aim to resist the homogenizing and essentializing space of representation.

In addition to his critique Doel offers a possible solution. He writes, “However, the messy method of endless differentiation suggests that difference has nothing to do with separation. Instead, infinite differentiation means that difference is INVOLUTION AND EXTENSION (a turning or coiling inwards which nevertheless spreads outwards).”<sup>9</sup> “INVOLUTION AND EXTENSION”. These are the terms - the processes rather - Doel offers his readers as a means of escaping the banality of the slice and stitch. It is through involution and extension, particularly as they are manifested in performative practices, that Doel contends difference can be enacted. Arguing for a performative geography, Doel writes, “Performance aspires to become an event in the universe it inscribes.”<sup>10</sup> In becoming an event in the world, performance not only grasps the movement of difference but also continually produces it.

While Doel’s suggestion for a performative geography is interesting, it is also far beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I would like to consider some of his ideas in relation to artistic practices and in particular the two works of art mentioned earlier that explicitly utilize cartographic practices. In their application to art, Doel’s arguments become more complex. In an expansive understanding of artistic practices, performance and fragmentation are not positioned in opposition to one another, but rather alongside one another, each continually expanding the other. This expansive understanding of artistic practices follows art historian Simon O’Sullivan’s own Deleuzian project. In his text, *Art Encounters: Deleuze and Guattari*, O’Sullivan argues for a rhizomatic understanding of artistic practices. Referring to them as the performative and ‘knowledge producing’ aspects of a work of art, O’Sullivan argues that a rhizomatic understanding of artistic practices takes into account both the actual and the virtual. Furthermore, a rhizomatic understanding of art expands the object outwards. The art object is transformed into an object / event in which its’ relation to its viewer becomes an integral part of the work. O’Sullivan states, “To paraphrase Massumi, meaning is figured as the envelopment of a potential, a contradiction of the past, and the future, in an event / object that has the capacity to affect or be affected. Here it is the work of ‘interpretation’ to unravel these ‘virtual’ processes encapsulated in the object.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, meaning is determined by the encounter that occurs between two or more forces. Its formation is an event that occurs in the world as a result of this encounter. O’Sullivan provides an example specific to the creation of the work of art. He writes, “We might think of the artist’s ‘meeting’ with his or her materials [ . . . ] This is a confrontation between a specific artist-subjectivity and specific materials, each of which themselves are already the envelopment of a potential.”<sup>12</sup> O’Sullivan takes this one step further and discusses the encounter between the finished work of art and the viewer. He writes, “We might also move away from Massumi a little and think about the ‘finished’ art work’s encounter with a beholder who again is the envelopment of a poten-

<sup>9</sup> Doel, “Proverbs for Paranoids”, 378-9.

<sup>10</sup> Doel, “Proverbs for Paranoids”, 128.

<sup>11</sup> O’Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> O’Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, 21.

tial, a set of capacities to affect and be affected.”<sup>13</sup> The viewer is not only necessary for constructing the meaning of the work of art, but also in expanding the art work outwards in to the world. Massumi’s “thinking-perceiving body” is continuously entering “new circuits of causality” in which the affects of the original encounter with the work of art are transformed and transferred. In order for the performative component of the work of art to take place, however, it must begin with the representational. As O’Sullivan remarks, “We are, if you like, representational creatures with representational habits of thought. [. . .] Representation is the condition of our subjectivity and as such has to be ‘gone through’ as it were.”<sup>14</sup> Fragmentation offers a means of ‘going through’ representation. While fragmentation still functions within representation it also leads outwards, away from representation and toward the performative.

Although the fragmentation in Debord’s *Naked City* is posited as a means of escaping the homogenization of representation, it nevertheless still functions within it. The fragmentation does, however, open up a space in which the performative can take place. Fragmenting the *Plan de Paris* not only re-articulates the city of Paris as a space of continual becoming, but it also allows for the *Naked City*’s expansion outwards into the world. It is the integral role of the viewer that transforms Debord’s piece from an object into an object /event that takes place in the world. By fragmenting the *Plan de Paris* Debord opens up the work to a multiplicity of readings, or ‘drifts’. It is the encounter between the work and the viewer, however, that allows for the performance of these ‘drifts’ to take place. In the encounter between work and viewer, *The Naked City* gets unfolded and re-folded into the viewer. The viewer then unfolds and re-folds portions of the work elsewhere in the world. These unfolding of *The Naked City* take place both consciously (for instance, if the viewer sets out on a derive), or unconsciously. All of these unfoldings and refoldings expand *The Naked City* outwards into the world, re-situating Debord’s project as a rhizomatic one.

O’Sullivan’s espousal of rhizomatic artistic practices brings together the virtual and actual, and in turn, appears to succeed precisely where Doel’s own theories founder. Nevertheless, both authors focus on re-orientating their objects as events that continually take place in the world. This re-orientation posits an interactive relationship between an object and its viewer. It furthermore suggests that that relationship alters both the object and the viewer. O’Sullivan points out for instance,

Art mirrors back an apparently reassuring image of our own subjectivity (an outer form and an inner content). As such, a transformation in how we think about art will necessarily alter the topology of how we think ourselves and vice versa. It is in this sense that the crisis of representation is also a crisis in typical subjectivity. It is also in this sense that Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome is not just a critique of representation, but also an active attempt to think our own subjectivities differently.<sup>15</sup>

## Map #2

In 2003 British artist Jane and Louise Wilson, twin sisters with a penchant for video installations, received a commission from the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead,

<sup>13</sup> O’Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, 21.

<sup>14</sup> O’Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> O’Sullivan, *Art Encounters*, 16.

England. Having been nominated for the Turner Prize in 1999, the sisters had already established their artistic careers by the time of the Baltic Centre commission. The commissioned installation, however, turned out to be their largest and most complex work to date. Titled *A Free and Anonymous Monument*, the work continues the Wilson Sister's fascination with the psychological effects of degenerative architectural spaces and failed utopias. Comprised of 13 double sided screens, the massive installation occupied an entire floor of the Baltic Centre. Its colossal size served as far more than a gesture of the sisters' continually expanding artistic prowess. The colossal size of the piece marked the artist's construction of a monument, albeit a "free and anonymous" one, while simultaneously paying homage to Victor Pasmore's *Apollo Pavilion*, which served as its inspiration. Pasmore's *Apollo Pavilion*, is in fact, the central component of the Wilson's work. It not only informs the structural layout of the installation, but is also featured in several of the videos the Wilsons' project onto their screens. In addition, the social histories of pavilions situate the structures as both a point of origination and intersection for the other sites featured in the installation. More importantly, however, the themes of the specific history of the *Apollo Pavilion* are woven not only through the other sites, but also through the installation itself.

Built in the English town of Peterlee in 1959 and designed by Victor Pasmore, one of the leading proponents of abstract art in England, the *Apollo Pavilion* was already anachronistic at the time of its construction. Named after the Apollo Space Program, the *Pavilion* consisted of large, flat geometric planes of whitewashed concrete fastened together in order to form a bridge across a small lake. With almost no ornamentation, Pasmore utilized a modernist language of architectural form at a time when modernism had not only declined, but also been scorned by the artistic community. Reinforcing the anachronistic identity of the work are Pasmore's own ideological beliefs about the structure. He described the work as "an architecture and sculpture of purely abstract form though which to walk, in which to linger on which to play, *a free and anonymous monument*<sup>16</sup> which, because of its independence, can lift the activity and psychology of an urban housing community on to a universal plane."<sup>17</sup> Infused with the notion of an artwork as a force of salvation, Pasmore's comments articulate the universalizing utopian visions so often ascribed to modernist abstraction. However, the *Apollo Pavilion* never seemed to accomplish what Pasmore had originally intended for it to do. The residents of Peterlee, feeling neither saved nor lifted up by the modernist abstract forms, objected to what they saw as its monstrous, imposing presence. Giuliana Bruno writes,

In July 2000, the *Sunday Telegraph* happily announced the potential success of a campaign to demolish the Apollo Pavilion, despite its status within English heritage as 'an internationally important masterpiece.' The *Telegraph* labeled the Apollo Pavilion a 'concrete bungle'. Less than charmed by its modernist material, the paper reported that people around here think of it as just a heap of dirty, slimy concrete which youths climb up to have sex and urinate on passersby.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Italics are my own.

<sup>17</sup> Victor Pasmore, Aycliffe and Peterlee *New Towns 1946-1988* (Cambridge, Publications for Companies, 1988); quoted in Paul Usherwood, Jeremy Beach, and Catherine Morris, *Public Sculpture of North-East England* (Liverpool University Press, 2000), 267.

<sup>18</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 54.

Having been neglected and left to deteriorate over more than four decades, ultimately, the *Apollo Pavilion*'s very existence was threatened by those whom it was meant to save.

Revived once again in the Wilsons' video installation, the *Pavilion* forms the core of *A Free and Anonymous Monument*. The placement of the screens in the installation mimics the structural layout of the *Apollo Pavilion*. Bruno points out, for instance, that, "The entry to the installation re-presents this idea of the passageway that opens itself to view. It even closely reconstructs the walkway of the pavilion, actually reproducing the promenade underneath the structure that one could take on the ground floor of the original."<sup>19</sup> In addition to imitating the structural layout of the pavilion, the screens also imitate the actual function of the pavilion. Bruno writes,

In transparent way, the Wilsons' installation formally recasts the pavilion's itinerant status as passageway while visually constructing its function as viewing platform. The installation – a multiple space of image traversal – is a permeable viewing field of circulation. Because the screens have no frame and appear suspended in space, there is clear vision across the field. The texture of the screens reinforces this openness. Indeed, the double-sided screens have the same image resolution and provide equal clarity of vision from both sides. As a result, no matter where you stand in the installation, you can see clearly.<sup>20</sup>

The *Apollo Pavilion* is made present not only in the structural quotations of the installation, nor even in its imitation of the pavilion's field of vision, but also in the very images themselves. Upon walking underneath the promenade and entering the installation some of the very first images the viewer encounters are of the *Apollo Pavilion*. The monumentality of the *Apollo Pavilion*, made visible through the monumentality of the installation, is barely discernible in the images of the structure. Instead of encountering Victor Pasmore's artistic utopia the viewer comes across images of an abandoned and dilapidated structure. Overgrown with weeds and covered in graffiti, the once whitewashed concrete of the *Apollo Pavilion* has not only lost its pallor but has also started to crumble. Giuliana Bruno claims, however, that the Wilsons' images of the pavilion actually revive Pasmore's own intents for its use. She writes, "Reappropriation is the name of the game here. The memory of the pavilion's public use as the architecture of amusement and leisure is recalled as we are shown how the local youth have repossessed the dilapidated pavilion for their own use."<sup>21</sup> And in fact, not only is this re-use marked by the graffiti scattered across its surfaces – the youth's transformation of the pavilion's walls into their canvases – but also a group of young boys is featured in the Wilsons' films using the platforms of the pavilion as climbing surfaces.

While the *Apollo Pavilion* is central to *A Free and Anonymous Monument*, the general history of pavilions also plays a significant role. Giuliana Bruno recounts a summary of this history. She writes,

The pavilion was an important element in the design of modernity, employed most significantly in world exhibitions and fairs. A large, open construction conceived to display and to house activities and movement, it presented a public use of architecture.

<sup>19</sup> Bruno, *Public Intimacy*, 53.

<sup>20</sup> Bruno, *Public Intimacy*, 59.

<sup>21</sup> Bruno, *Public Intimacy*, 58.

A parent of such nineteenth-century venues as arcades and department stores, which were often shaped in its form, the pavilion of exhibition halls was itself a place of public ‘passage’ (the term for an arcade in French). A site of circulation made to display the goods produced by the industrial era, the pavilion of world expositions exemplified the very architecture of the modern era.<sup>22</sup>

Bruno relates the construction of the pavilion to the very beginnings of not only modernity, but also the modern subject. The function of the pavilion, as a site of passage, a space of movement, is echoed in its very structure. The *Apollo Pavilion* is a particularly accomplished example of this. As the spectator walks across the pavilion, that also functions as a bridge, s/he is not only mobilized but also offered different views with each new step. *A Free and Anonymous Monument* re-articulates these components of modernity. It not only features a passageway that presents new and different views with each new step but also features fragmented, fractured, and split images. Modernity is also on display in the various sites filmed by the Wilsons. Bruno writes, “As various sites of modernity are displayed (a factory, an oil rig), we are reminded of the pavilion of exhibition halls and international expositions, with their capacity to display – assemble – not only the products but the very essence of modern life.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, modernity and the history of pavilions are thread throughout the installation.

The story of the *Apollo Pavilion*, of its failed utopian visions, of its degeneration and re-appropriation is a story that threads through all of the other sites featured in the Wilsons’ work. Continuing on a journey through the space of the installation the viewer comes across a filmic monster; a disjointed and fragmented compilation of modernist ruins. The Wilsons use split-screens, mirrors, and double images in order to juxtapose the films of various sites of industrial degeneration throughout Northern England next to one another. The screens no longer contain whole objects or sites, but rather part-objects “slice[d] and stitch[ed]” back together again. In the catalogue for the installation Giuliana Bruno describes these juxtapositions as a form of “creative geography”. She writes,

The sister’s inventive industrial topography is an assembled geographic history, a chronicle that covers the whole spectrum of the industrial age, from mechanical reproduction to digital representation. In this installation we travel from a vision of engine making and the mechanics of oil drilling to digital engineering as we move from the Cummins engine-works in Darlington to a high-tech lab Atmel in North Tyneside. We journey, that is, from the inner working of actual engines to a factory that designs modern-day engines: the computer microchips that drive the machines of our technologically defined digital life.<sup>24</sup>

Also included in the installation are images of the brutalist Gateshead car park in Trinity Square, most famous for its role in the 1971 film *Get Carter* and an offshore oil rig. While Bruno links the sisters’ “creative geography” to the Russian filmmaker Les Kuleshov’s notions of montage and filmic history in general, this linkage fails to take into account the very

<sup>22</sup> Bruno, *Public Intimacy*, 55.

<sup>23</sup> Bruno, *Public Intimacy*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> Giuliana Bruno, *Jane and Louise Wilson: A Free and Anonymous Monument* (London: Film and Video Umbrella, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and Lisson Gallery, 2004), 15.

specific temporal and geographic subject matter of *A Free and Anonymous Monument*. While the sister's geographic compilation certainly is a creative one, its' creativity is entirely articulated through and bound up with the spaces of a post-industrial Northern England. Thus, what Bruno's poetic exposition of *A Free and Anonymous Monument* fails to do is take into account the political critique manifest within it.

Despite the manifold degrees of separation (temporal, geographic as well as technological) that exist between *A Free and Anonymous Monument* and Debord's *Naked City*, the two works, nevertheless, maintain a number of important parallels. Like Debord's *Naked City*, *A Free and Anonymous Monument* utilizes fragmentation as a means of exposing the homogenizing constructions of capitalist spaces. All of the sites filmed for the work engage with the recent social and economic transformations that have occurred throughout Northern England. In the late 1950s the industrial-manufacturing economy in England began to decline. Slowly at first, but increasingly more rapidly, the industrial economy was replaced by one based on the services-sector. Northern England, which had been almost exclusively dependent upon manufacturing and industry as its economic base underwent long periods of poverty and massive unemployment. By the late 1980s, with industry all but vanished from the Northern English landscape several larger metropolitan areas began to very consciously re-invent and re-brand themselves. This re-branding oftentimes included commercial ventures such as the construction of multi-million dollar shopping centers or amusement parks. Yet another component of these re-brandings included the transformation of various abandoned industrial sites. Thus these sites were either transformed into spaces of leisurely commerce, as is evidenced in the recent conversions of the canals, or into museums and historical artifacts.

The regeneration in Northern England, like Haussmann's Paris, created spaces of consumer comfort for its bourgeois audiences. In both Paris as well as Northern England, the formation of these spaces required multiple erasures of all things "dirty". In Paris this resulted in the displacement of the poor and the history associated with the displacement much the same way that in Northern England it resulted in the displacement of an industrial past as well as the people associated with that past. This furthermore provides yet another link between Debord's *Naked City* and the Wilsons' *A Free and Anonymous Monument*. While Debord's work refuses the neat, standardized space of Haussmannized Paris, the Wilsons' installation refuses the cleaned-up, artificial spaces and history of Northern England. Like Debord's *Naked City*, the fragmentation in *A Free and Anonymous Monument* exposes the recent re-inventions and memorializations of British industry as an attempt at formulating an artificial continuity. The violence inherent in the act of fragmentation mirrors the violence of capitalist aestheticization. Thus, the aesthetics of fragmentation and reconfiguration in both Debord's *Naked City* and the Wilsons' *A Free and Anonymous Monument* become entirely new objects while simultaneously haunting the original objects as monstrous doubles. In replicating but also critiquing their original objects, both works are revealed as productive simulacrum - copies of copies that overturn the originals.

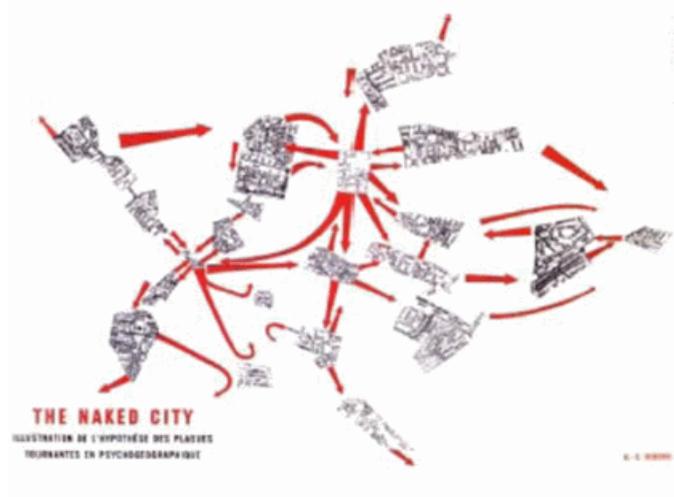


Fig. 1: Guy Ernest Debord and Asger Jorn. *The Naked City*

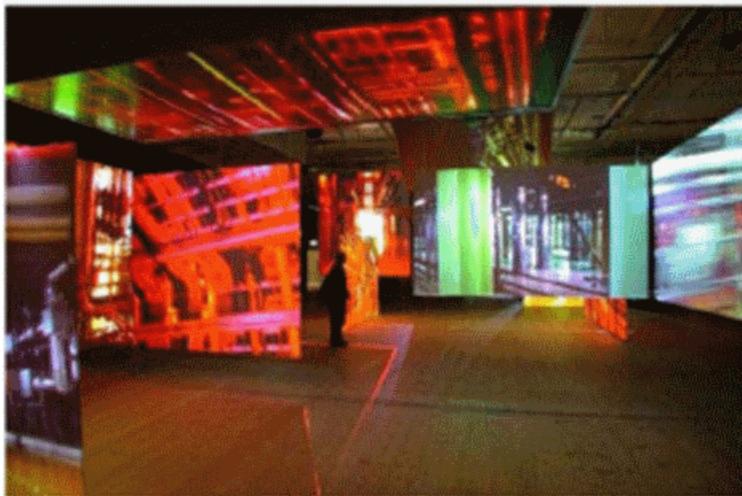


Fig. 2: Jane and Louise Wilson, *A Free and Anonymous Monument*

## References

- Bruno, Giuliana. *Jane and Louise Wilson: A Free and Anonymous Monument*. London: Film and Video Umbrella, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and Lisson Gallery, 2004.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts*. MIT Press., 2007.
- Crinson, Mark. "Manchester and the 'Hypocritical Plan': Architecture, Shopping, and Identity in the Industrial City." In *Thinking Northern: Textures of Identity in the North of England*, ed. Christoph Ehland, 193-216. London: Rodopi Publishing, 2007.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. trans. Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Doel, Marcus. "Proverbs for Paranoids: Writing Geography on Hollowed Ground." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18, no. 3 (1993): 377- 94.
- McDonough, Thomas. "Situationist Space: Guy Debord's *The Naked City*," *October* no. 67 (Winter 1994): 58-77.
- O'Sullivan, Simon. *Art Encounters: Deleuze and Guattari (Thought Beyond Representation)*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan Publishers, 2006.
- Usherwood, Paul, Jeremy Beach, and Catherine Morris, *Public Sculpture of North-East England* Liverpool University Press, 2000.

## About the Author

*Helena Shaskevich*

Stony Brook University, USA

Copyright of International Journal of the Arts in Society is the property of Common Ground Publishing and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.