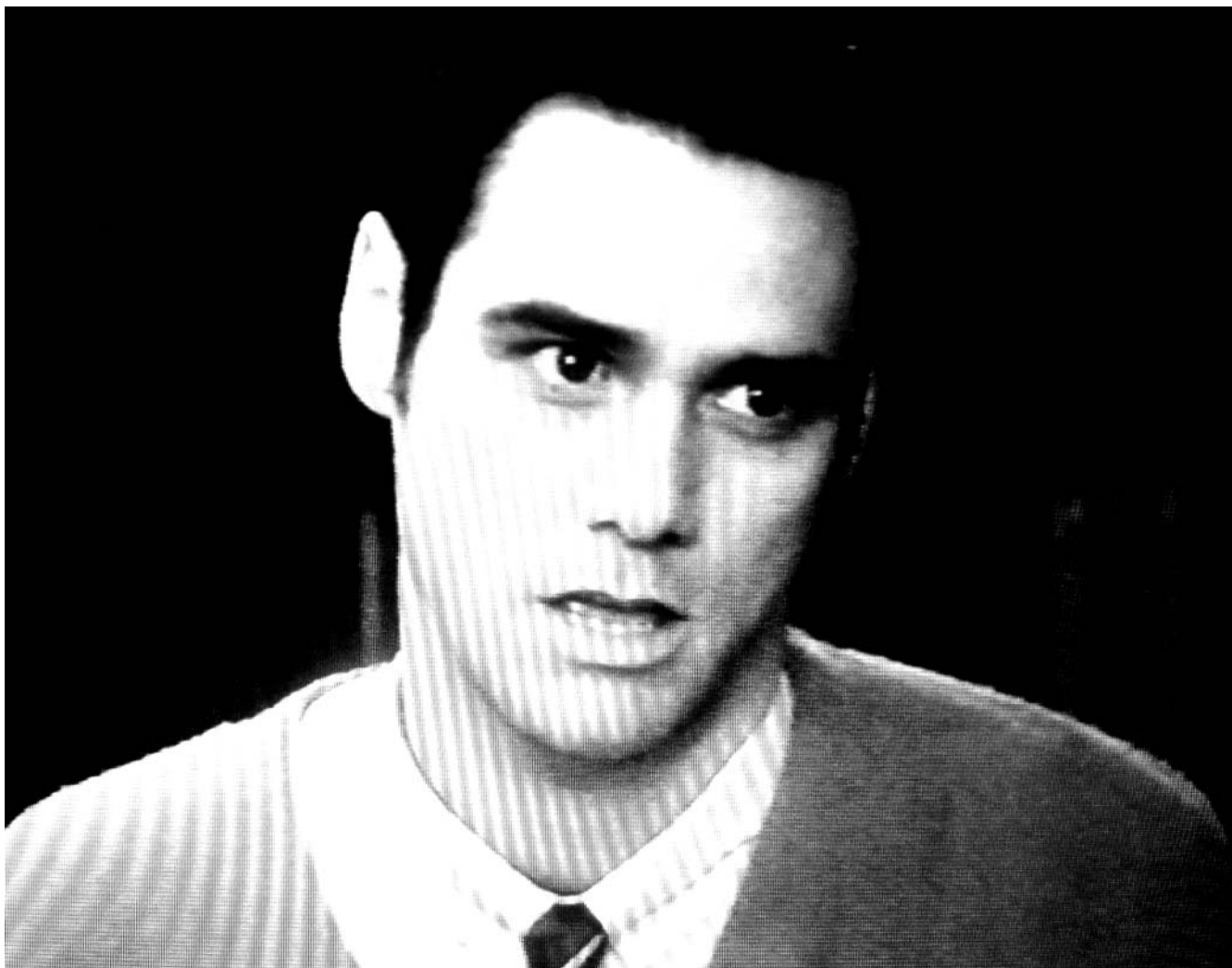


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NOWISWERE invites personalities to talk about their creativity with a subjective involvement. The passing of the 'nows' and the accumulation of the recent 'nows' does not only produce an urge to grasp and evaluate and understand but also to feel the unexpectability of the future.

NOWISWERE aims to actively involve in the production of the 'now' through taking each now and then into account.

A Leopard, Some Monkeys, Numerous Butterflies, Dozens of Peacocks and a Sublime Vista

Part One *Tails from the Zoo*

In the spring of 2007, I visited Rotterdam Zoo, expecting to find animals in cages presented for me to stare at. Assembled from every corner of the globe, they would be confined in small, bare, barred cages and pointed at by wide-eyed children armed with ice-cream and candy apples. I found that the animals, cages, children and ice-cream had a very different effect on me than I'd anticipated. I was intrigued, and to my surprise wholly enjoyed walking around, captivated by the experience. There were no bars on the cages, no sawdust on the floor; the enclosures appeared spacious, suggesting the natural habitat I would have imagined for each animal. The enclosures were not lined up in a row along a path, nor integrated into the landscape, but together they *formed* the landscape.

During the subsequent weeks I returned time and again, observing, trying to understand the illusion and extract what I found so fascinating about it. The physical structure of the illusion became quickly visible, but knowing how the architecture that created the illusion was built, is not the same as knowing how the illusion works.

I continued to visit and observe the way visitors reacted to each situation. Some behaved in the most unsympathetic manner, banging on the glass boundary of an enclosure to attract an animal's attention. Others meandered along talking with friends, seemingly oblivious to the zoo. Some looked immersed in the experience, mesmerised. Patterns of behaviour became visible and it seemed certain locations attracted particular reactions, even conditioned particular modes of behaviour.

Over the course of this essay I want to examine architectural tableaux as the material embodiment of political discourse. The seemingly perceivable effect, of the differing enclosures architecture, on the zoo's visitors, compelled me to journey from one architectural tableau to another, in search of an answer as to how these constructions possessed such control over their users. Beginning with observing the manipulation of the observer in the zoo, I soon became attracted by a potential promise of equality of power, between the architecture and its user, I sensed in the English landscape garden. There the effect of the architecture on me became both the subject and object of study. This shift of focus led me in search of an architectural tableau where I thought the effect of its construction would determine the relation of power between me and its other occupants.

Foucault's general understanding of discourse as having a material effect on the technologies of power and discourse as a set of material practices that shape reality and the subject, affords me a starting point to begin to deconstruct the power structures at play in these tableaux and compare their effect on the spectator. As Foucault starkly concludes in "The Means of Correct Training", a key chapter of *Discipline and Punish*: "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an ideological representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I call 'discipline'. [...] In fact power produces; it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production." (Foucault, 1995[1975] p.194)

Order In the Leopard Den

A winding path leads around the leopard den. Along the entire length of the path it is possible to see inside the enclosure, though not very clearly due to the dense vegetation, in which the fence is hidden. There are two points where the vegetation is cleared and the fence replaced with a large pane of glass. From these points the enclosure is designed to be seen, its typography rising in a semi-circular form that creates a spectacular landscape, the end of which cannot be seen. You hold the position from outside looking in – from an impossible, all encompassing, viewpoint. Despite this vantage point, I did not feel in any position of control or mastery; the staging required nothing of me. I felt disconnected from what was happening on the other side of the screen, though everything was laid out in front of me.

I often sat at a bench, adjacent to the viewpoint, and almost half of the spectators I observed stood with their noses to glass, banging and waving their hands, in a futile attempt to provoke a reaction from the leopard. The glass was smeared with blotches and stains of greasy hands.

In "Techniques of the Observer" Jonathan Crary theorises a fundamental change that occurred during the 19th century, in the construction of the viewer, whereby the "modern observer" incorporated his own subjectivity into viewing: the individual's physicality became part of perception. "Modernity, in this case, coincides with the collapse of classical models of vision and their stable space of representations. Instead observation is increasingly a question of equivalent sensations and stimuli that have no reference to a spatial location."(Crary, 1992 p.24) This could be compared to the previous modal of the construction of observer, the era of 'classical observer'. The Camera Obscure, by isolating the viewer's senses from the subject, in a space of only visual projection, is the characteristic technology of the 'classical observer' because it denies the subjectivity of the body, in favour of a monocular Cartesian certainty of absolutes where truth can be measured. In terms of the way the observer is positioned there are certain parallels between this 'classical' mode of attention and the technology of display in the leopard den.

Manipulating its viewer, the den first builds up intrigue by shrouding its mysteries behind a line of trees, before delivering a sense of wonder within the careful choreographed landscape that unfolds as you address the window into the den. Looking through this window provides a spectacular diorama like cinema-scope image. It's here that the den begins to mislead you, supplying you with an all-seeing vantage point, the position of Olympian-eye, and at the same time disconnecting all other senses than the visual, from the den's interior. You are made to feel in a position of power and control over the den, yet nothing you do will change anything on the other side of the glass. I did not feel engaged nor enchanted by the image I saw through the screen despite its attempts at seduction. Perhaps this dissatisfaction came because the relation between observer and object was constructed in such an artificially 'classic' manner that I felt an attack on my 'modern' sensibilities. I too felt like the visitors who feel the need to bang on the screen in order to provoke a reaction on the other side. The den in control of its reading because it controls not only what, but how you will see in the moment of encounter, provoking discontent and a sense of powerlessness in the zoo's audience.

Mutiny On the Monkey Island

Something different appeared to be happening at the Monkey Island. The visitors did not attack the enclosure, nor were they even compelled to look at it; more often they seemed content to continue chatting as they passed by. A narrow strip of water separates it from the land, with a path leading around the island. Looking away from the island the ground slopes steeply up in rocky, sparsely vegetated outcrops, becoming dense as they rise. There is an open view onto the island along almost the entire length of the path. There is nowhere what you could call a 'viewpoint', rather there is an open view spanning three hundred and sixty degrees of the island's perimeter. I mostly observed people meandering around, stopping intermittently and looking toward the island. What was it that made the difference - surely the same people visited both attractions?

Obviously the danger associated with leopards heightens the excitement of looking at the animal; the technology of observation embedded in the architecture exaggerates this, acting as a catalyst. The primary difference between the two is in the mode of looking that each architectural configuration demands. The leopard garden requires a *spectacular form of vision* where the event unfolds before you through the frame provided by the screen. The monkey island is a *social form of vision* where one chooses the point from which to observe, and viewing involves moving, walking around the island, hearing the noises, smelling, feeling the same breeze as the monkeys, mirroring Crary's description of the 'modern observer.' There is no vertical barrier between you and the island, no desire to permeate the boundaries because they are invisible. It is social because neither the display nor viewer exerts a subjugating force over the other. In this way the monkey island allows the visitor to experience it within their sovereign subjectivity: at one's own pace. In contrast, the leopard den subjects the viewer to a predetermined visual experience.

Bewilderment In the Butterfly House

The third location, the butterfly house, seems to have elements of both the active spectatorship around the leopard den and the rather melancholy passive viewing of the monkey island. It is a large traditionally constructed glasshouse. The planting is so dense it practically obscures the glass walls. The fleeting butterflies are the space's attraction, innumerable yet almost invisible their presence fills the enclosure.

I first visited the butterfly house on a quiet day. A young boy, about eight years old, stood in the middle of a path just inside the entrance. He held his arms out in a manner that looked a little like he was sleep walking. He looked happy, immersed in the space, enjoying the experience of letting the butterflies flutter around him. I found some kind of relief in this, and frequently returned looking for others so immersed in this experience; it wasn't hard to find them. But this was not the only repetitive behaviour I noticed: there were many who would stalk the butterflies, sneaking up on them to get as close a look

as possible, without the butterfly flying off. How does this relate to the previous locations?

The fundamental difference between the butterfly house and the leopard den or monkey island, is that here one is inside the enclosure. The creatures 'on display' are so numerous and distributed so diffusely, there is no scopic hierarchy. Perception is *fully immersive*. The hierarchy of display, the relation between viewer and object, is broken so completely that it is impossible to know *where* to look. Everywhere you look flickers with activity, yet as soon as you focus on one point that activity has moved. The architecture neither determines from where you will look, nor onto what. The breaking down of a fixed visual positioning allows for various reactions: with *immersive vision* the viewer determines the activity or passivity of their spectatorship, entirely on their own terms. Some attempt to take control by using their camera to fix a viewer subject hierarchy. Others refrain from trying to master the space and stand mesmerised by the eerie stillness of the constant activity around them.

Part Two

Island Discoveries

My experiences at the zoo made clear to me the manipulative powers an architectural construction holds over its users, and pointed out the possibilities in manipulating the hierarchies of power from one space to another. The spaces in-between displays at the zoo seemed, somewhat like the monkey island, not to subject any controlling force over me. They reminded me of an English landscape garden with their winding paths and distant follies.

In "Suspensions of Perception" Jonathan Crary shows that material discursive practice has shaped successive *scopic regimes* through the construction of various modes of observation. One's *mode of attention* is constructed by a particular discourse of looking. Modern "Attention implied that cognition could no longer be conceived around the unmediated given-ness of sense data. [...] it made a previously dyadic system of subject-object into a triadic one, with the third element constituted by a 'community of interpretations': a shifting and intervening space of socially articulated physiological functions, institutional imperatives, and a wide range of techniques, practices, and discourses". (Crary, 2001 p.45/46)

The English landscape garden's end as a contemporary style coincides with Crary's proposed shift to a *modern mode of attention*. Visiting the Pfaueninsel, the epitome of an isolated 'English' landscape garden (though situated in Germany), a 19th Century Xanado located on an island in the river Havel, I meandered freely along its many paths. I tried briefly to take pictures on the way, but somehow it did not seem right. Initially unimportant, this inability to stop and make a photograph began to puzzle me.

As I wandered along winding paths happening upon events, my journey around the island felt like a real adventure. The landscape was clearly completely artificial: the follies, especially the castle, were so crudely built they looked almost amateurish. This type of illusionary architecture I usually find utterly contrived. Yet the further I moved into the island the more 'real' it became. Had I become more willing to suspend my disbelief? Had the setting become more convincing? Had the durational experience of being on the island created a new logic in my perception of reality?

Although the buildings looked out of place at first, the way one approached them, like a new discovery each time, seemed entirely natural. How did these proscribed paths that are perhaps more contrived than the follies, make the experience of wandering around the island appear so natural and enjoyable? I did not feel in any way subject to any form of power from the garden, it felt more like I was being encouraged to collaborate with it in a game of interpretations.

The French Formal Garden

If the English landscape garden embodied a 'modern' attention then what of its predecessors. The French formal garden is the direct predecessor to the English landscape garden. On a trip to Paris I visited the gardens of Versailles, the paradigmatic French formal garden. Despite the vastness of its scale, the formal patterning of the garden is repeated into the tiniest details.

Walking around it was quite bewildering: the control over nature deployed over such a vast area was awe-inspiring. Yet the experience was often exceptionally boring, with every path straight and usually lined by dense borders. It was never a surprise to reach something after twenty minutes walking towards it; still, there were moments of amazement. Sublime vistas, overwhelming by their scale and the power in cultivating such an enormous area. Sublime in order, so regular, neat and formal that it even felt soothing to gaze upon them. Subjected to this sublimity, it was almost as if the park controlled

the very experience of it. Walking around in the garden was merely to become part of it. It could not to be experienced as a subjective eye exploring and discovering what it found. My experience of the garden was twofold: both soothing and imposing. Leaving the park felt like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders, and yet it was mentally more strenuous. Perhaps this dual response, of being both subject to and pleased by the garden, was connected to a feeling of being under its control, or the one who sat in the castle above the park, presiding over it.

The Photographic Need

When I walked around the grounds of Versailles I instantly felt the need to photograph. I had taken my camera but had not expected to use it after the unwillingness to photograph I had experienced at 'Pfaueninsel'. This need began as I was walked through one of the maze like areas to the left of the central axis. I took about sixty images, though I knew at the time I would not use them. It is not the images that are interesting, but the need to photograph as apposed to the unwillingness I experienced on 'Pfaueninsel'.

Why did one of the gardens produce a need, and the other an unwillingness to photograph? Is it related to the garden's political construction and specific positioning of the viewer? In Versailles I somehow needed to mediate my viewing with the camera. The act of photographing establishes a new power relation between subject and maker, giving the subject a degree of ownership over his surroundings. My reaction to the imposing force of the sublime grandeur experienced in the gardens of Versailles was to photograph them, to create a new relation between myself and my surroundings through the camera.

Certain objects and situations expect to be photographed. 'Pfaueninsel' is one of these situations. Its design begs to be photographed, even staging the images for you. As an artist working within photography I also feel an expectation to photograph, an expectation coming both from within, and from a cultural presumption that I should photograph. But despite these imperatives, I did not photograph on 'Pfaueninsel'. The landscape felt incomplete, its illusion was not hermetic and I was deeply engaged there. In fact the degree of open-endedness allowed me to use my imagination as I wandered around. I even tried to photograph but it did not feel necessary. I had lost myself within the garden, it had annulled this imperative, I felt satisfied by just experiencing the garden. There was no need for me to negotiate my position in relation to the landscape through a camera, no need to assert my position in the landscape by taking photographs?

Part Three

Peepshows and Panopticons

The landscape gardens shifted my attention away from abstractly observing the reaction of spectators to varying architectural constructs. The experience led me to perceive my own attention as historically constituted and as a material practice. My attention and its reactions to my changing environments had become my subject of study. In search of a concrete location in which to examine the effect of a given situation I became attracted to the idea of visiting a peepshow, as there the construction of power would not only relate to me and my environment, but also to directly to other people. In terms of the politics and architectural construction of visibility and visual pleasure, the peepshow is exemplar of the most extreme contrivance of power relations.

The peep show consisted of a large central cylinder formed by multiple narrow doors, each numbered with a small cubical behind it. One third of the far wall was covered in a sheet of opaque glass, below which was a slot to insert money. A two-euro coin turns the light off and the glass becomes transparent, revealing the center of the cylinder. This room is larger than the cubicles, and contains a circular rotating bed, lit by spotlights. The artist performs on the rotating bed, allowing them to address each spectator individually.

The similarity between Bentham's Panopticon and the peepshow is striking and fascinating, particularly in their subtle differences. In the peepshow it is clearly possible to see the performer at the center of the cylinder, they are spotlighted for spectators lurking in the shadows. This construction performs a reversal of the panopticon, where the surrounding rooms are lit so that the person in the center may see in to them, without being seen themselves.

As a spectator I was physically disconnected from the event happening before me. This separation of the visual stimuli and the body of the observer is reminiscent of the division the camera Obscurer makes. I looked from a darkened room through a void onto an object of desire, a super display, the performer. The performer absorbed my gaze yet when I took my eyes off them, I could make out, secluded in darkness, other spectators like myself. I found the reflection of my position as spectator startling. Suddenly it is possible to see myself from outside. This double separation of the visual and the visceral

reminds me of Žižek's description of the real. The moment I saw myself from outside, the thing I had been looking at, the performer, itself became a void. According to Žižek "the Real is not the pre-reflexive reality of our immediate immersion into our life-world but, precisely, that which gets lost, that which the subject has to renounce, in order to become immersed into its life-world – and, consequently, that which then returns in the guise of spectral apparitions". (Žižek, 2008 p.17) And he, reading Hegel, describes "a split which cleaves the One from within, not into two parts - but between Something and Nothing, between One and the Void of its Place.- And it is in this gap that the Real emerges: the Real is the "almost nothing" which sustains the gap that separates a thing from itself." (Žižek, 2008 p.26) Looking away from the performer of the peepshow, the object of my gaze began oscillating "between One and the Void of its Place".

The performer occupies the position of the panopticon guard, yet by being on display, the power they relinquish in becoming visible is recuperated through their visual attraction demanding the spectator's attention. The rotating performer looks at each spectator, using their gaze to compel each one to keep watching. One reading of the situation, would put power firmly in the hand of the performer who is able to see everyone and control their view. Yet Žižek illuminates the mechanisms at play in this complex viewing situation, when the object of the spectator's gaze becomes a void, and the rotating body on display is overlooked. This reading puts power in the individual choice of where to look, and is not tied to the positions defined by the apparatus. It challenges my earlier analysis of the zoo's power structure, presenting the possibility that there can be 'an outside' to the constructions determinism.

In the peep show I felt the controlling gaze from the performer, and was confronted with an uncomfortable feeling where I had to choose between a whole host of socially accepted gazes in return, none of them adequate. This inadequacy made me look away and in doing so I saw the other spectators, at this moment the performer now inhabited a spot at which I could not look. Here in this apparatus of display where I had imagined the architectures subjecting force to be the most controlling of all the tableaux I had investigated, the relation of power rather than being produced by the architecture, as in the zoo, was now a negotiation between the performer and me. Could an understanding of one's gaze as a political tool provide a key in subverting architectures determinism?

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