

## PERSONALIZE YOUR FIELD GUIDE

NAME:

ADDRESS:

DATE OF BIRTH:

SOCIAL SECURITY/INSURANCE NUMBER:



EMILY HORNE &  
TIM MALY

**THE  
INSPECTION  
HOUSE**

**AN IMPERTINENT FIELD GUIDE  
TO MODERN SURVEILLANCE**

COACH HOUSE BOOKS, TORONTO

copyright © Emily Horne & Tim Maly, 2014

first edition



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO  
an Ontario government agency  
un organisme de gouvernement de l'Ontario

Canada

Published with the generous assistance of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. Coach House Books also gratefully acknowledges the support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund and the Government of Ontario through the Ontario Book Publishing Tax Credit.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Horne, Emily, 1979-, author

The inspection house : an impertinent field guide to modern surveillance / Emily Horne and Tim Maly.

(Exploded views)

Issued in print and electronic formats.

isbn 978-1-55245-301-8 (pbk.).

1. Electronic surveillance. 2. Social control. 3. State, The.  
4. Privacy, Right of. I. Maly, Tim, 1978-, author II. Title.  
III. Series: Exploded views

JC596.H67 2014

323.44'82

C2014-904401-1

*The Inspection House* is available as an ebook: ISBN 978 1 77056 389 6.

Purchase of the print version of this book entitles you to a free digital copy. To claim your ebook of this title, please email [sales@chbooks.com](mailto:sales@chbooks.com) with proof of purchase or visit [chbooks.com/digital](http://chbooks.com/digital). (Coach House Books reserves the right to terminate the free download offer at any time.)

## Contents

A Note from the Authors	7
1. Millbank Prison	11
<i>Twenty-One Letters</i>	13
<i>A Word on Book Titles</i>	18
<i>Surveillance Studies</i>	24
<i>Pseudo-Panopticons</i>	27
2. The Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution	31
<i>Ten Chapters in Four Sections</i>	38
<i>Security Bulletin: Reportable Information</i>	46
3. Camp Delta	49
4. Port Newark Container Terminal	61
<i>Wall Street</i>	62
<i>Shop for Freedom</i>	63
<i>The Official Seal of the Department     of Homeland Security</i>	66
<i>Non-Human Agents Don't Care How     Vigilant You Pretend To Be</i>	82
<i>An Incomplete Design History     of the Jersey Barrier</i>	86
5. London's Ring of Steel	89
<i>Please Empty Your Pockets and     Place the Contents in the Tray</i>	109
6. Oakland	111
<i>Panopticon Valley</i>	130
7. Our iPhones	133
Sources	144



## To Whom It Ought to Concern,

This is a field guide to the rich terrain of the panopticon. Can you correctly identify a panopticon? Knowing more about surveillance enhances our experience and helps us to share encounters with friends and family.

### Getting Started

*Who's watching you?* Make a list of all the people or institutions that are tracking you. Are you being observed directly? Are there CCTV cameras in your neighbourhood? Are your whereabouts and purchases being logged by your phone provider? Do you use a computer to access the internet? Are you carrying any credit cards or smart cards? Did you have to fill out a time sheet or report to a supervisor today? Did you hand in any assignments? Have you interacted recently with the police or emergency services personnel? Does your country conduct domestic surveillance operations? Do any other countries on your planet conduct foreign surveillance operations? Do you have friends or family who wonder where you are? Has your region been mapped? Do you ever pay bills or taxes? Do you use local utilities? Do you have any subscriptions? Do you have a to-do list? Do you track your fitness or diet goals?

*Can you watch back?* Once you have completed the activity, go back over the list and mark which of those agents you can observe in return. Can they see more about you, or can you see more about them? Is there anyone you can talk to about your experience of being watched?

## About This Book

A field guide is a book designed to help the reader identify wildlife, architecture or other objects and networks of natural or human occurrence. It is designed to be brought into the 'field' or local area, where such objects and networks exist to help the reader distinguish between similar objects and networks.

In general, serious and scientific field identification books feature keys to assist with identification. This book does not include identification keys. Nor does it include drawings or paintings to assist the reader with a visual inspection. A visual inspection is hardly the point. This is a field guide to a conceptual terrain.

## About This Terrain

The world is webbed in vast physical and virtual networks. The world has always been webbed in networks, but the latest networks are particularly vast and particularly fast.

Telecommunications and electronics (now cheap, thanks to robust global logistical networks) have mixed with business needs and an atmosphere of fear around real and imagined threats from activist, criminal and terrorist organizations (illicit networks) to encourage the implementation of sprawling surveillance networks. A significant proportion of the population regularly carry devices that, as a matter of regular operation, log their locations and activities. An even greater proportion conduct their daily affairs across a network of services that also log everything as a matter of course.

When people reach for a metaphor to understand our present condition, many grab hold of the panopticon. Often, their usage doesn't go much deeper than the meaning of the word (in Greek, *pan* meaning *all*, *optikon* meaning *seeing*). This book will help you explore further.



*The Inspection House* has three central players, none of which are human. The first is a collection of letters written by British philosopher Jeremy Bentham, describing his initial design of the Panopticon. The second is *Discipline & Punish*, a book written by Michel Foucault that reinterprets Bentham's Panopticon as an emblem for a particular way of organizing society. The third is our strange present condition. We will use each of these characters to try to understand the other two.

Following in the footsteps of our first two players, this book is architectural, though it contains very little architecture. Both Bentham and Foucault treat buildings as machines for disciplining, tools for altering behaviour. Their descriptions tend to be idealized or vague. We have chosen specific sites to illustrate the messy interface between power and history. Yesterday's ideologies are frozen into today's architecture. Today's ideologies must contend with or replace that inherited built environment.

### How to Use This Book

The structure of the book is: seven longer chapters, each focused on a particular site and organized in a way that loosely mirrors the argument of *Discipline & Punish*. Within and between the chapters are enriching asides and related material. You do not need to read the book in order.

Use this guide to help you identify, classify and resist the panopticons and pseudo-panopticons you come across in your daily life. An understanding of the genus is critical to understanding the ecology of surveillance culture.

We wish you luck,  
Emily & Tim

'Morals reformed – health preserved – industry invigorated – instruction diffused – public burthens lightened – Economy seated, as it were, upon a rock – the Gordian knot of the Poor-Laws are not cut, but untied – all by a simple idea in Architecture!'

– Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon; or, The Inspection-House*

'Bentham was surprised that panoptic institutions could be so light: there were no more bars, no more chains, no more heavy locks; all that was needed was that the separations should be clear and the openings well arranged.'

– Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*

## Millbank Prison

The 1850 *Hand-Book of London*, a traveller's guidebook, describes Millbank Prison like this: 'A mass of brickwork equal to a fortress, on the left bank of the Thames, close to Vauxhall Bridge... It was designed by Jeremy Bentham, to whom the fee-simple of the ground was conveyed, and is said to have cost the enormous sum of half a million sterling.'

Millbank was still under construction when it opened in 1816. It was built on the marshy banks of the south side of the Thames, close enough to London for convenience but isolated enough to avoid complaints from neighbours. The layout was complex: a central tower was surrounded by a hexagon of walls, each segment of which was the base of a further pentagon of walls, with open exercise yards inside them. Each yard was watched over by its own four-storey tower. Seen from above in maps of the day, the prison resembles a barbed flower with six pentagonal petals, surrounded by a wall and moat that enclose the full sixteen-acre site.

It was a troubled project. The soggy terrain caused severe delays and cost two lead architects their jobs between 1812 and 1815. Budget overruns nearly doubled the original estimate of £259,700. Work was finally finished in 1821, but the prison didn't last long. Harsh conditions and surrounding marshland caused disease to sweep through the population, and an epidemic led to a complete evacuation in 1823. Even when people weren't getting sick, the design itself was fatally flawed. The labyrinthine network of corridors was so confusing that the prison's own warders sometimes got lost, and the echoing ventilation system transmitted sound so well that prisoners used it for illicit communication. By 1842, a newer prison, Pentonville, had been built to serve as the national penitentiary,

and Millbank became a holding cell for convicts being shipped to Australia. It closed in 1890.

## Bentham

The 1850 *Hand-Book of London* is wrong. Bentham did not design Millbank. As built, Millbank was designed by William Williams, drawing master at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. It was the winning entry in a contest held to replace Bentham's design, the final insult after two decades of failed effort on Bentham's part to get his own revolutionary ideas set in stone.

It is true that Bentham tried to build a prison on the site. In 1794 he was paid £2,000 by British prime minister William Pitt for preliminary work on the project. Selection of the intended site ran into technical and legal problems that seemed to be resolved when Bentham, using government money, bought the land at Millbank in 1799. But the project faltered again, Pitt resigned from office in 1801 and in 1803 the new administration decided not to proceed. Hope was briefly restored in 1811, when the government returned to the idea, but Bentham became convinced there was no real commitment to the proposal. While Millbank was being built, Bentham was suing the government for wasting his best years. He settled for £23,000.

In Bentham's proposal, there was no labyrinth of corridors to get lost in, and no echoing ventilation system to allow for covert communication. His design – which he called the Panopticon – was an altogether purer affair. The complete idea was described over the course of twenty-one letters written from White Russia in 1787 to his father, an attorney back in England. They were collected and published as a single volume in 1791.

Bentham imagined a circular building, with the inspector's tower (or 'lodge,' as he preferred to call it) in the centre and the cells arranged radially around it. The central tower houses the

prison warden and his family. Each four-sided cell is completely cut off from its neighbours. The interior side facing the lodge is open (aside from floor-to-ceiling bars) and the exterior side has a view to the outside world through a window on the outer wall. These windows are large enough that they light not only the cells, but the inspector's lodge as well. The play of darkness and light is important here: the windows of the lodge are protected by a fine metal grate that will allow the inspector to see into the lit cell, but prevents the prisoner from seeing into the relatively low-lit inspector's area. Blinds and partitions

### **Twenty-One Letters**

- LETTER I. Idea of the Inspection Principle
- LETTER II. Plan for a Penitentiary Inspection-house
- LETTER III. Extent for a Single Building
- LETTER IV. The Principle Extended to Uncovered Areas
- LETTER V. Essential Points of the Plan
- LETTER VI. Advantages of the Plan
- LETTER VII. Penitentiary-houses – Safe Custody
- LETTER VIII. Uses – Penitentiary-houses – Reformation
- LETTER IX. Penitentiary-houses – Economy – Contract – Plan
- LETTER X. Choice of Trades Should Be Free
- LETTER XI. Multiplication of Trades Is Not Necessary
- LETTER XII. Contractor's Checks
- LETTER XIII. Means of Extracting Labour
- LETTER XIV. Provision for Liberated Persons
- LETTER XV. Prospect of Saving from This Plan
- LETTER XVI. Houses of Correction
- LETTER XVII. Prisons for Safe Custody Merely
- LETTER XVIII. Manufactories
- LETTER XIX. Mad-houses
- LETTER XX. Hospitals
- LETTER XXI. Schools

further obscure the presence of the watcher. At night, artificial lights outside each window replicate the light of day so as to preserve this proto—one-way-mirror arrangement.

*Panopticon; or The Inspection-House* is a weird mixture of grand schemes and fine details. One moment, Bentham is talking about the distribution of profits from prison labour, and the next he's spending a half-dozen paragraphs working out how to run a system of gears through bent speaking tubes in order to drive a flag that will signal to prisoners that they're being talked to. Sometimes he's a salesman, sometimes a philosopher and sometimes a crank. He opens the letters with a bunch of hand-waving about the kind of stone and arches that would ensure the building will stay standing, and ends with a fanciful flight into imagining how the isolation systems of the Panopticon will allow you to raise and educate perfect virgin daughters to be ready for marriage. Not only the workings of light, but those of sound, heat and ventilation, are described in exacting detail.

Born in 1748, Jeremy Bentham was an English philosopher, social reformer and sometime lawyer, best known for his promulgation of the philosophy of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism preaches a moral framework based on encouraging actions that produce pleasure and discouraging those that produce pain. Acts that produce net pleasure must be good, and acts that produce net pain must be bad and ought to be avoided. Classical utilitarians like Bentham and John Stuart Mill (born 1806) were obsessed with the quantification of both joy and suffering, with the aim of producing institutions and social structures that minimized the latter.

Bentham – particularly in his later life – was a radical, advocating for women's equality, animal rights, separation of church and state, and the decriminalization of homosexuality. He was a fan of transparency and wanted people to be responsible for their own actions. He puts it like this in 1834's *Deontology*: 'It were to be wished that every man's name were

written upon his forehead as well as engraved upon his door. It were to be wished that no such thing as secrecy existed – that every man’s house were made of glass.’ With transparency came accountability. ‘The more men live in public,’ he writes, ‘the more amenable they are to the moral sanction.’ The Panopticon was designed to make one particular class of people – convicted criminals – live very publicly.

Bentham’s Panopticon is not just an exercise in radical transparency, it’s also a labour-saving device. He’s quite explicit on this point:

I flatter myself there can now be little doubt of the plan’s possessing the fundamental advantages I have been attributing to it: I mean, the *apparent omnipresence* of the inspector (if divines will allow me the expression,) combined with the extreme facility of his *real presence*.

A collateral advantage it possesses, and on the score of frugality a very material one, is that which respects the *number* of the inspectors requisite. If this plan required more than another, the additional number would form an objection, which, were the difference to a certain degree considerable, might rise so high as to be conclusive: so far from it, that a greater multitude than ever were yet lodged in one house might be inspected by a single person; for the trouble of inspection is diminished in no less proportion than the strictness of inspection is increased.

From a central position of power, the unseen watchers potentially see all. The inmates, subjected to the whims of their guards and at peril of brutal reprisal for any wrongdoing, must assume they are being watched at all times. Because they are kept isolated, they are unable to coordinate any kind of resistance. They become their own jailers, forced into docility by clever construction techniques.

With such conditions persuading the prison's charges to self-discipline, fewer paid guards would be needed. It was also, Bentham believed, a less cruel solution than the alternative. In a classic win-win pitch, he argues that the Panopticon would reduce the costs of running the place (perfect security would allow you to get by with the thinnest of walls) while ending the need for restraining mechanisms like chains and irons.

If you were to be asked who had most cause to wish for its adoption, you might find yourself at some loss to determine between the malefactors themselves, and those for whose sake they are consigned to punishment.

In this view I am sure you cannot overlook the effect which it would have in rendering unnecessary that inexhaustible fund of disproportionate, too often needless, and always unpopular severity, not to say torture – the use of *irons*. Confined in one of these cells, every motion of the limbs, and every muscle of the face exposed to view, what pretence could there be for exposing to this hardship the most boisterous malefactor?

It must have galled Bentham to watch Millbank be built and fail as he pressed his suit against the government. That prison turned out to be essentially the anti-Panopticon. The thick walls and confusing layout weakened the warders' ability to monitor their charges, a problem only exacerbated by the badly designed ventilation system, allowing the convicts to coordinate and take liberties. Those liberties would have been met with the excesses of force from the guards and other unnecessary cruelties, leading to the harsh conditions that in turn led to the outbreak that caused the prison's evacuation.

No disease would have been allowed to proliferate in Bentham's Panopticon, like it did at Millbank. Bentham was certain that the Panopticon would have made an excellent hospital. In fact, Bentham saw the Panopticon as a one-size-



fits-all solution for any institution. He had big dreams for his pet project, imagining it used for asylums, hospitals, factories, schools and workhouses:

No matter how different, or even opposite the purpose: whether it be that of *punishing the incorrigible, guarding the insane, reforming the vicious, confining the suspected, employing the idle, maintaining the helpless, curing the sick, instructing the willing* in any branch of industry, or *training the rising race* in the path of *education*: in a word, whether it be applied to the purposes of *perpetual prisons* in the room of death, or *prisons for confinement* before trial, or *penitentiary-houses, or houses of correction, or work-houses, or manufactories, or mad-houses, or hospitals, or schools.*

The Panopticon was conceived as a universal instrument, endlessly flexible and able to mould its inhabitants in any way the administrators required.

## Foucault

Michel Foucault elevated the panopticon from failed scheme to governing metaphor. Foucault was a French thinker, particularly interested in the structures and dynamics of power and knowledge. In 1975, he published *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, known to us as *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

Examining Bentham's plans, he saw those same labour-saving power structures woven into the fabric of 1970s society. In turn, academia followed Foucault, and the term *panopticon* was picked up and adopted in surveillance studies (a field of study that didn't truly begin until after Foucault's death, with Canadian sociologist David Lyon's work in the late 1980s), and eventually bled into common discourse. It is now more closely associated with Foucault than with Bentham, the idea's

## A Word on Book Titles

*Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* is better known to English speakers as *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. It's a funny kind of translation, given that we have *surveillance* in English. But for the 1977 English edition, translator Alan Sheridan decided that *surveiller* as used by the French had no exact Anglo equivalent. Sheridan rejected the most literal translation – *to surveil* – since *surveillance* was too technical and restricted a term. He also turned down *supervise* and *observe* for not having sharp enough teeth.

The French title is itself the child of translation. Foucault had translated Bentham's *inspect* as *surveiller*, but the new connotations Foucault gave to the Panopticon project don't really jive with *inspect* anymore. *Discipline* was Foucault's own suggestion, and Sheridan went along with it.

With the contemporary prevalence and ubiquity of *surveillance*, we suspect Sheridan might have made a different choice if he'd been translating in 2014 instead of 1977.

originator. Foucault brought the metaphor to bear on his own society and opened the door for generations of surveillance scholars to do the same.

For Foucault, the panopticon is the pinnacle of what he called the disciplinary society, the ideal that the Enlightenment rationalists of the eighteenth century were attempting to achieve. At the time, the outmoded practices of yesteryear were being rethought and replaced with new, rational solutions. The panopticon is the symbol for the shift from public punishment of criminals to the confinement and training of inmates, moulding them into good citizens. It has remained one of the most recognizable touchstones of Foucault's work, and consequently the most familiar part of Bentham's own

philosophical output (with the possible exception of his willed request to have his skeleton mounted, clothed and displayed at University College London, which is pleasingly wacky).

In *Discipline & Punish*, Foucault traces the gradual changeover of penal practices in the eighteenth century. He contrasts the *ancien régime*'s public punishment with the disciplinary regime of confinement in prisons. (For historians, the *ancien régime* refers to the political and social system in France before the Revolution of 1789. Confusingly, Foucault borrows the name and reapplies it to mean European society in general during roughly that same period – this is just one of the reasons Foucault makes historians cranky.) In the *ancien régime*, punishment, torture and even death were meted out upon the criminal body, often before the observing masses. Foucault connects this type of practice to the former sovereign regimes of France, as the punishments were carried out under royal authority. The public execution is the ultimate expression of this system of administration. Punitive practice was performed in public to discourage further crime, and punishments were devised specifically to suit each crime. In the eighteenth century, Foucault says, there was a transition to a disciplinary society, where punishment was regularized and universalized. No matter what the crime, the punishment is always confinement in a prison for a fixed duration of time. Now, rather than the body being punished directly, the body is imprisoned and it is the 'soul' of the prisoner that is submitted for improvement.

The panopticon is the inflexion point and the culmination point of this new regime. It is the platonic ideal of the control the disciplinary society is trying to achieve. Operation of the panopticon does not require special training or expertise; anyone (including the children or servants of the director, as Bentham suggests) can provide the observation that will produce the necessary effects of anxiety and paranoia in the prisoner. The building itself allows power to be instrumentalized, redirecting

it to the accomplishment of specific goals, and the institutional architecture provides the means to achieve that end.

The operation of carceral power is not simple to apply, however. 'For this operation,' Foucault writes, 'the carceral apparatus has recourse to three great schemata: the politico-moral schema of individual isolation and hierarchy; the economic model of force applied to compulsory work; the technico-medical model of cure and normalization. The cell, the workshop, the hospital. The margin by which the prison exceeds detention is filled in fact by techniques of a disciplinary type. And this disciplinary addition to the juridical is what, in short, is called the "penitentiary."'"

For instance, a boarding school relies on isolation and hierarchy, as well as compulsory work (the cell and the workshop). An asylum works on the technico-medical level, as well as hierarchy, so it combines the hospital and the cell. A prison factory covers all three of the categories: inmates are confined and isolated from the general population, they are required to work, and their behaviours and health are monitored and normalized.

## Power

Anyone reading Foucault will at least come out with this digestible nugget of his thought: power is a diffuse force, enacted and embodied by its users, existing in discourse. In Foucault's conception, power isn't concentrated in moments of coercion or domination, it is exerted constantly by everyone. Power is not applied only by leaders to ensure cooperation by underlings, it is practised by all.

His concept is so radical, it takes some effort to apply it to the panoptic prison. At first glance, it seems like the director in the panopticon clearly must have all the power: he is the one who looks. The prisoners are merely watched; they cannot even communicate amongst themselves. This looks like a

classic, top-down coercive power structure. But Foucault thinks it describes the break from punitive 'sovereign' power and the shift to 'disciplinary' power. The objective of disciplinary power is to produce a docile, regulated and predictable body. Once someone is properly disciplined (by a combination of the physical architecture of the building and the surveillance it encourages, in the panopticon's case), she acts as her own jailer; she monitors herself.

Foucault was definitely opposed to the idea that power was concentrated in the specific people at the top of the pyramid. In *Discipline & Punish*, the power of the panopticon is distributed, and much of it resides in the building itself: 'Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up.'

So for Foucault, power is invested in the structure of the panopticon, rather than in the individuals who operate it. It makes the operation of power automatic, which in turn means that it's efficient to operate. It is the 'machinery' of the building that ensures the dissymmetry of visibility (and, thus, knowledge) that is required for its operation as a disciplinary institution.

## Architecture

Foucault comes across as a pretty architectural thinker – *Discipline & Punish* is full of references to architectural forms: camps, mines, schools, hospitals, churches, prisons, squares, scaffolds. He's describing a world where the physical layout of buildings and institutions are used to modify behaviour. Architecture is crystallized power, and Foucault traces the emergence of this new purpose for architecture to the eighteenth century:

A whole problematic then develops: that of an architecture that is no longer built simply to be seen (as

with the ostentation of palaces), or to observe external space (c.f. the geometry of fortresses), but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them. Stones can make people docile and knowable.

An interest in the tumultuous period around the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France informed Foucault's work until the end of his life, and ideas of space and architecture kept re-emerging. In a 1982 interview, Foucault said he found that discussions of architecture began to appear in political and governmental treatises (and even police reports!) in the eighteenth century. The shape of buildings and cities could help avoid epidemics and revolts, and even encourage morality. It was the opinion of those post-Napoleon reformers that architecture could solve the wider problems of the city, as well as the problems of the prison.

However, Foucault is clear that spatial reorganizations – even grand architectural plans – are not enough, that a building alone won't solve social problems. The plans of the architect must correspond with the practices of the people who inhabit that architecture, or the desired effect won't be achieved. 'I think that it can never be inherent in the structure of things to guarantee the exercise of freedom,' he writes. 'The guarantee of freedom is freedom.'

## Surveillance

The guarantee of discipline is surveillance. For both Foucault and Bentham, the layout of space is a starting point, a technology that enhances a practice. Surveillance allows those in

authority to know what is going on and to take steps to ensure ever finer degrees of control. The disciplinary society is typified by records, ledgers, performance reviews and logbooks. These make the bodies under the authority's care knowable.

'What is also of importance is, that for the greatest proportion of time possible, each man should actually *be* under inspection,' writes Bentham. 'This is material in *all* cases, that the inspector may have the satisfaction of knowing, that the discipline actually has the effect which it is designed to have: and it is more particularly material in such cases where the inspector, besides seeing that they conform to such standing rules as are prescribed, has more or less frequent occasion to give them such transient and incidental directions as will require to be given and enforced, at the commencement at least of every course of industry.'

In a disciplinary society, uniformity of outcome (be that education, military training, factory assembly or healing) requires a high personalization of intervention. 'It is not a triumphant power, which because of its own excess can pride itself on its omnipotence,' writes Foucault, 'it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy. These are humble modalities, minor procedures, as compared with the majestic rituals of sovereignty or the great apparatuses of the state.'

When a disciplinary society is operating at full potential, its members take on much of the work themselves. For Bentham, that meant prisoners coming to behave as if they were under constant observation, whether they were or not. For Foucault, that meant hierarchies of examiners, supervisors, monitors, tutors, foremen, clerks and similar functionaries efficiently gathering and transmitting information up and down the pyramids of power. Practice and surveillance become indistinguishable and individuals internalize the demands of the system in which they live.

## Surveillance Studies

Surveillance studies is an interdisciplinary academic practice that tends to focus in the social sciences. Foucault is generally regarded as its source thinker. Of his many books, *Discipline & Punish* is the one most closely associated with surveillance culture, and the panopticon has been seized upon as a founding metaphor. Some expansions of the idea include: the 'Banopticon' (invented by professor Didier Bigo to describe profiling used to determine who deserves surveillance), 'electronic panopticon' (commonly used to describe today's surveillance technologies), 'myopic panopticon' (describing how CCTV detects only certain types of crime and may prevent even fewer), 'synopticon' (the surveillance of few by many) and, inevitably, the 'post-panopticon.'

Any time there is a leading thinker in a field, there is an intellectual backlash. Foucault's work has provoked ire from intellectuals across the spectrum, notably from Noam Chomsky, who holds a rationalist view of human nature as opposed to Foucault's anti-essentialist one; Jürgen Habermas, who had a problem with Foucault's amorphous conception of power; and Gertrude Himmelfarb, who in 1994 contested Foucault's reputation as a historian. (Foucault, for his part, had plenty of problems with historians, preferring to call his approach a genealogy.) Speaking specifically to surveillance, some academics are concerned about whether the panopticon metaphor still works for societies awash in surveillance from all directions rather than proceeding from a single, state-identified observer. Some surveillance scholars would rather see Foucault *and* his metaphor dead and buried.

However, as surveillance technologies proliferated throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, not only surveillance scholars but journalists and popular writers seized upon the panopticon as a metaphor. To the everyday reader, it matters little that many in the academic world of surveillance studies have moved on from Foucault.



The architecture serves to enhance these relationships, but it's the surveillance that makes it all work. Given the tools of the day, a tower inside a ring that allowed easy line-of-sight observation was Bentham's best bet. Contemporary surveillance technologies permit a broader range of building layouts.

## Schemes

No architectural project makes it to reality in its pure form. For speculative architects with utopian ideals, this can be a boon. Keeping such plans at the abstract, dreamlike level means never troubling yourself about whether something actually works. For Bentham, the Panopticon was intended to actually work, and he constantly refined its workings, relentlessly attentive to detail. That he was never permitted to actually build and run one was a bitter failure.

The fact that Bentham came close to building a panopticon is as important as the fact that he didn't. The various near-panopticons built around the world are a testament to the allure of his idea. Bentham himself would have predicted the failure of these buildings, including Millbank, as they ignored the details he had so painstakingly worked out. But in all likelihood, a panoptic institution built to Bentham's specifications wouldn't have worked as advertised, either.

'The Panopticon,' writes Foucault, 'must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use.'

## Now

Most of the evidence of Millbank Prison's seventy years of operation have been effaced. The site is currently occupied by

the Tate Britain art gallery, which opened in 1897 (as the National Gallery of British Art), some seven years after the final closure of the prison. Some ghosts do remain: the underground isolation cells – called ‘the Dark’ – were uncovered during a gallery renovation, and the original outer perimeter walls and moat are discernible in the backyards of nearby turn-of-the-twentieth-century neighbourhoods.

More disturbing are the echoes of the panopticon in the daily life of the twenty-first century. Since Foucault’s embrace of the panopticon as metaphor for surveillance and control, the mechanisms and prevalence of surveillance have run rampant. Everybody knows about the cameras, the National Security Agency monitoring and the drones. But the panopticon is about more than watching. We’d like to take you to a number of other instructive sites of contemporary control and power, and consider the relevance of Bentham’s design and Foucault’s ideas to their present operation.

This is a book about what Bentham was selling, what Foucault bought – and says we all bought – and why Foucault seems especially relevant today.