In his contribution to the major exhibition, “CTRL [SPACE]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother,” held in 2001 at the ZKM (Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe), critically acclaimed German film director, Harun Farocki (b. 1944), installed two videos with the intention of exploring the ontology of real-time computer imaging: “During real-time processes we cease to exist as historical beings and become caught up in the computer simulation even though we are living creatures.”¹ He juxtaposed Auge, a video on real-time computer simulations (such as those guiding smart mis-

siles to their targets as they register the explosion of the war head) with another of his video projects, *Ich glaubte Gefangene zu sehen* (hereafter *Gefangene*). In the latter, he critically sampled the celluloid archive of “prison” films from the silent-film era along with a contemporary archive of surveillance tapes recorded by cameras scanning the carceral space of a notorious high-security prison located in Corcoran, California. Through this juxtaposition, Farocki posed a question intrinsic to the discipline of history: what logic, what libido, what disciplinarity, prior to the so-called advent of real-time imaging processes, had ever guaranteed the notion of a historical event and the presence of historical subjects in such events?

This essay uses *Gefangene* to think about the relations of event and archive through the concept of *dead time*. It first unfolds this notion of dead time as a critical concern of Farocki and then locates its historical constitution in Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon. I shall trace how Bentham linked dead time intimately with sovereignty and archive. If historians and convicts are still doing dead time, as I propose they are, how can they reimagine event and archive? The final section of the essay explores performance as a way of thinking of a non-sovereign history. It recounts the story of my participation with the convicts of Mountjoy Prison, Dublin (a panoptical-style prison opened by the British in their Irish colony in 1851 and only recently closed by the Irish Government) in developing a public installation, held during the dead time of evening lockdown (in October 2003). At the outset, I ask my readers to indulge the structure of this essay. It is intentionally designed to echo the structure of *Gefangene*. As we shall see, Farocki uses the image plane of his video to mimic the control monitor typical of a surveillance terminal in a modern prison. Operators use this control display to manipulate digitally (rotation, zoom) surveillance

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feeds when they decide that a security camera is recording an incident (some infraction of the normative prison routine). Farocki deliberately marks this control process by dividing his video monitor into two screens on which he runs footage of separate events (in several instances, sampled from the archive of silent film and the archive of Corcoran surveillance video-tapes). By anomalously framing this material and allowing the interior corners of the two “windows” to run in overlap in the center of the screen, Farocki interrogates the panoptical desire of his viewers: which screen do you want to watch and how is your desire constituted and channeled by the narrative intercutting and its overlap? This essay features two separate but overlapping screens: theoretical and performative—their overlap is intrinsic to marking and rethinking the concept of dead time as it bears on concepts of sovereignty, event, history.

DEAD TIME

One of the many black and white placards screened in Gefangene (borrowed by Farocki from the protocol of silent films) reads: “What can be accelerated or increased in prison?” A similar question troubled early cinema. What to do with elapsing time that is perceived as “uneventful” in reference to the spectacle to be filmed? Take for example, the “live” filming of the electrocution of a rogue elephant undertaken in 1903 by Edison Films (Electrocution of an Elephant). What was the camera to make of the purportedly “uneventful” time involved in setting up the execution (protracted and clumsy procedures that included binding the animal to the electrical apparatus)? In her brilliant analysis of early film, Mary Ann Doane has shown how cinematographers developed different techniques to exclude or elide what she calls such “dead time.” She argues that dead time understood as that “in which nothing happens, time which is in some sense

4 Mary Anne Doane, The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 160.
‘wasted,’ expended without product,” becomes the condition of possibility for the conceptualization of the event. The elision of dead time, either by stopping the camera on set and/or cutting out footage on the editing floor, fabricates an event as eventful.

_Gefangene_ explores dead time in two ways. First, as I have already mentioned, Farocki juxtaposes two windows on which he runs different footage and has these windows overlap in their interior corners, thus creating what I call a pixilated scrap of quilt in which the temporal moments of the two different windows touch each other (for instance, the silent film footage and the Corcoran surveillance tape). Farocki thus produces a patch or remnant of temporal montage that opens up different temporalities and questions what counts as eventful and uneventful time. He further underscores the problem of uneventful time when in one of the windows of _Gefangene_ he runs a clip taken from a Prison Corrections video in which an official analyzes the raw surveillance footage that recorded the death of convict William Martinez in a Corcoran prison yard on 7 April 1989. The expert describes how it took Corcoran guards a total of nine minutes and fifteen seconds to make their way into the yard to pacify and to aid the fatally wounded Martinez. The voice-over informs the viewer that the “process” has been condensed for the purposes of presentation and the surveillance footage is screened in fast forward to skip over dead time. Thus, the dead time of the prison yard is “accelerated” in order to get to the “event”—the intervention of prison guards in the yard and the removal of the dead body of Martinez. Farocki wants his viewers to see how the “cut”—whether it be a celluloid splice or a digital keyboard stroke—produces the notion of the eventful and the uneventful. Such cutting is intrinsic to the _archive_. The Prison Correction video becomes the archive constructed out of and at the same time eliding the dead time of the raw surveillance footage recording the

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5 Doane, _The Emergence of Cinematic Time_, 160.
death of convict Martinez (all nine minutes and fifteen seconds of dying in dead time).

The archive, so cut, defends against the traumatic threat of time wasted, expended without a product, bodies that do not matter. The archive constitutes itself out of dead time and paradoxically demands the ongoing production of dead time to guarantee the cut, the cut that constructs the status of the event as eventful. With the development of archives undertaken in the nineteenth century (especially the massive organization of national archives) and the contemporaneous dissemination of archiving media (photography, film, etc.), zones of abandonment (the space of dead time) have spread across the disciplinary landscape. By zones of abandonment, I mean those places where abandoned humans (the anthropologist, João Biehl has offered thoughtful arguments for terming such abandoned creatures as “ex-humans”) wait with death and inhabit dead time.

By this point in the argument, the historians are undoubtedly asking: is dead time simply a technological effect of media, especially cinematic media? Gefangene would suggest so and it thus shares a tendency toward technological essentialism typical of much contemporary media archaeology. Such essentialism overlooks who or what makes the decision about what counts as dead time. More than two centuries ago, Jeremy Bentham, author of the famous treatise on the Panopticon and precursor of modern optical unconscious clearly answered this question: dead time is not a self-evident category, nor is it simply the effect of media technology.

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10 *Jeremy Bentham: The Panopticon Writings*, ed. Miran Božovič
According to Bentham, it is the sovereign who decides dead time; the sovereign decides what counts as eventful. Because scholarly study has tended to reduce the Panopticon to its architectural optics, it has neglected, indeed forgotten, pan-optical temporality. In the next section, I excavate dead time in the Panopticon as a necessary step toward imagining what an unsovereign history might look like.

THE PANOPTICON’S TWO BODIES

Michel Foucault envisioned *Discipline and Punish* (1979), his great study of the Panopticon, as a lethal stroke decapitating what he viewed as the traditional study of sovereignty: “what we need, however, is a political philosophy that isn’t erected around the problem of sovereignty, nor therefore around the problems of law and prohibition. We need to cut off the King’s head: in political theory that has still to be done.” He forcefully argued that in the Panopticon, political anatomy superseded premodern sovereignty—the modern disciplinary body supersedes the twin body (political and theological) of the classical sovereign. If we return to a reading of Bentham’s treatise, we find the terms of panoptical embodiment to be more complicated than Foucault allowed. The inspector sees inmates without being seen by them and Bentham pains-takingly designed the Panopticon to materialize this optics.
What scholars (including Foucault) have failed to address adequately, however, are the crucial ways in which Bentham yoked a temporal archival machine to his panoptics—the inspector was not only the eye of the Panopticon but also its writing hand.

The inspector was to be the inscriptor who incessantly records the Panopticon. Bentham went to great lengths to preserve this dual-office (archival and optical). For instance, he had to solve the problem of how the inspector could continue to write when darkness fell in the inspection lodge. Bentham imagined a contraption, a life-sized, hourglass-shaped lampshade, inside which the inspector would sit on a stool set close to a light source. A series of small pinpricks in the shade, set at eye level, enabled the inspector to look out from the lodge at the galleries of convict cells at the same time as keeping his books by candlelight. He could be present or absent as long as the candle burned (like a camera running on a set) and produced a shadow observable by the prisoners. When he did enter the lodge for bookkeeping, he could decide on when he wished to scan activity in the cells and through which vantage among those serially provided by the spacing of the pinpricks. The pinpricks, cut into the fabric of the writing lantern, enabled the inspector to “sample” strategically the time of evening lockdown. The archive and dead time thus sutured themselves in this panoptical lantern of the inscriptor who, as its sovereign, could decide to be present and further, to decide on the eventful by choosing selected pinpricks as points of archival recording.

In so embodying the inspector/inscriptor, Bentham inhabited the Panopticon with a sovereign double body. In such twinning, the inspector/inscriptor bears uncanny resemblances to the double-body of the premodern sovereign incarnated by medieval and early-modern political theology as the king with two bodies—the first body political and mor-


As a good utilitarian, Bentham eschewed such premodern political theology; nevertheless, it returned to haunt him in the guise of the twin body he (in spite of himself) fabricated for his inspector/inscriptor. Foucault, like Bentham, also eschewed such an afterlife of political theology in the Panopticon, but in this case, he and Bentham missed their own ghosts: “[Foucault] was far too quick to abandon the politicotheological dimension of the subject’s inscription into power relations as a premodern relic that merely occludes one’s gaze on the conditions of possibilities of modernity.”

And if, as I have just shown (and others have argued), the politico-theological coexists in the Panopticon with so-called modern sovereign biopolitics (the “political anatomy” of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*), then historians need to ask what enables such persistence, such co-existence? One such locus, I have proposed, is the archive, constituted by inscriptor (the panoptical sovereign) as he samples prison time through pinpricks cut in the lantern of the inspection lodge. The sovereign inscriptor inscribes an eventful record by sampling the cuts afforded by the pinprick into the long hours (dead time) of the evening lockdown. Bentham’s treatise thus imagined an eventful archive constituted by the dead time of prison life. At the same time that Bentham was conjuring dead time in his widely disseminated treatise, Parliamentary Commissions were investigating the feasibility of founding a national archive. In the following section, I show how notions of the national archive and Bentham’s imagina-

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tion of panoptical dead time are closely bound, the implications being that historians and convicts together are doing dead time for the sovereign (surely a process to be re-imagined).

**SPECTACLES OF ABANDONMENT**

When Bentham enumerated the many applications for his inspection house (the list itemized prisons, houses of industry, workhouses, poor houses, manufactories, mad-houses, lazarettos, hospitals, schools), he left out the “archive-house.” It should, however, have had pride of place on his comprehensive list. At the very moment that Bentham was cogitating on his Panopticon, early Victorian administrators began to conceive of a centralized space in which to confine archival records. Increasingly, such reformers were coming to perceive documents as scattered and unruly objects in need of national (panoptical) supervision. The pioneering measures taken to institutionalize a centralized, national archive in Britain, under the guise of the Public Record Office, ran in tandem with other panoptical initiatives undertaken by Parliament to establish a national penitentiary board and to legislate eventually a national penitentiary system.21

Just as British prison reformers searched out the dark and disordered recesses of eighteenth-century gaols and pressed for penal reform, so did the members of the first Royal Record Commission of 1800, constituted by Parliament, create its own panoptical survey of the scattered archives of the nation and pressed for archival reform.22 By means of an amb-

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22 Peter Walne, “The Record Commissions, 1800–1837,” in *Prisca*
tious questionnaire, commissioners surveyed record depositories (300–400 of them dispersed across the country). Such archives ranged from those of the Royal Treasury and legal courts in London to parish chests stored in obscure rural churches. The commission discovered that (literally) tons of records (the national-archive-to-be) were chaotically scattered in dank buildings where they were stuffed into chests, presses, linen bags, bundles or simply heaped in unprotected piles of parchment and paper. In uncanny synchrony with parliamentary legislation (1835) to create a national inspectorate of British Prisons, Parliament passed in 1838 an act founding a national Public Record Office. In his letter of 1839 endorsing a new centralized national archive, which was included in the First Report of the Deputy Keeper of Public Records (1840), Lord Langdale conceived of such an archive along the lines of an “inspection house”: for the public service, it is necessary to provide a General Repository, consisting of a fire-proof building, sufficiently extensive, and in a central and convenient situation. With such a building, all the Records may be arranged in a regular and systematic order; the plan and management may be consistent and uniform, the number of officers required may be reduced to the lowest amount, the works to be performed may be carried on under the most effective inspection, and public convenience and economy would equally be consulted.

The keepers of the Public Records estimated that a minimum space of just under 200,000 cubic feet would be re-
quired to accommodate the newly centralized collection of records. They expected that each document transferred to the national depository (not unlike a new prisoner) would require cleaning, repairing, sorting, binding, stamping and numbering. Logistical disagreements arose over how the newly accessed records should then be stored. The first deputy keeper of the Public Records, Sir Francis Palgrave, directed that documents should be stored in presses with locked wire doors for security. Even though this plan proved impracticable (prohibitively expensive and unmanageable as a security measure), it nevertheless shows how the panoptical imaginary had produced records as objects to be incarcerated in the archival inspection house. The architectural plan for the Public Record Office incorporated a reading room with features that ensured the exercise of maximum surveillance. Modeled on the Reading Room of the British Museum, the circular, domed Literary Search Room featured an elevated desk at its center at which the archivist on duty could observe without obstruction readers handling the documents.

Given the closely intertwined histories of the Panopticon and the National Archive, the question of why Bentham did not list the Archive among his inspection houses becomes even more intriguing. At the same time that he incarnated a twin body in his inspection house, he disassociated the tactile scriptural acts of the inscriptor from the optical gaze of the inspector. By so cleaving sight and touch in the Panopticon (an oversized optical instrument), Bentham was establishing the conditions of possibility for dead time and its redefinition of the eventful as the event. Such a fundamental reorganization of vision (through the panoptical cut) would become, in the course of the nineteenth century, a fundamental reorganization of vision itself as a cognitive process:

The nineteenth-century optical devices I discuss, no less than the Panopticon, involved arrangements of bodies in

26 George Frederick Barwick, The Reading Room of the British Museum (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1929).
space, regulations of activity, and the deployment of individual bodies, which codified and normalized the observer within rigidly defined systems of visual consumption.\textsuperscript{27}

The Panopticon is thus not only about the construction of humans as objects under techniques of surveillance, as Foucault emphasized. It is just as much about the constitution of subjects of spectacles of abandonment through the cut of dead time, the normalization of vision, as elucidated by Crary,\textsuperscript{28} the implications of which have been painfully unfolded by the anthropologist, João Biehl.\textsuperscript{29} Traditionally, the timing of alignment of vision and spectacle is associated with the so-called advent of mass culture towards the end of the nineteenth century. I am arguing for a different time line, one that encompasses a neglected prehistory during which the Panopticon sundered tactility and sight and sutured that elision in the concept of dead time. My argument aligns this powerful cognitive knot of panoptical forms of overlapping sovereignties (political-theological and bio-political) on the notion of creaturely life luminously analyzed by Eric Santner: (creaturely life) is that “agitation introduced into human life” by the cuts that produce dead time.\textsuperscript{30}

**THE INSTALLATION CELL: MOVEMENT OF THOUGHT IN SPACE AND TIME**

Upon its publication, Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* received immediate praise for making the architecture of sur-


\textsuperscript{29} Biehl, *Vita*.

veillance visible:³¹

Your researches bear on things that are banal, or which have been made banal because they aren’t seen. For instance I find it striking that prisons are in cities, and yet no one sees them. Or else, if one sees one, one wonders vaguely whether it’s a prison, a school, a barracks or a hospital. Your book is an important event because it places before our eyes something that no one was previously able to see.³²

So far, I have argued that in rendering the Panopticon a major architecture of surveillance, Foucault created a consensus of knowing that foreclosed a critical understanding of the spectacle of abandonment also at stake in the panoptical project—not only for its objects of surveillance (inmates) but for subjects (onlookers). By implication, I am contending that we are not yet able to “see” prisons; they remain invisible in crucial ways and thus continue to enable the ongoing normalization of the sovereign state of abandonment. Dead time is by sovereign decision invisible time. In this final part of the essay, I ask what practices might enable us to think of panoptical surveillance and the spectacle of sovereign abandonment together in order to engage in a disciplinary critique of dead time.

I broached this methodological challenge in 2002-2003, when I collaborated with inmates and staff at Mountjoy Prison in Dublin in a site-specific installation we entitled Cell. Designed by Sir Joshua Jebb (Inspector General of the British Penitentiary System) on the extreme “isolation” model (one prisoner, one cell) of his Pentonville Prison (London, 1844), Mountjoy Prison opened in 1850 as a part of English colonial efforts (a system of national elementary schools being the complementary architectural component) to discipline the Irish.³³ During the spring of 2003 when I worked at Mount-

³¹ Foucault, Discipline and Punish.
³² Foucault, Power/Knowledge, 50.
joy, extreme dilapidation had already resulted in the closure of one of its wings—the remaining three wings were inhabited to capacity by approximately 450 male prisoners. Mountjoy Prison is often considered for closure owing to its deteriorating fabric combined with the daunting difficulties (logistical and financial) of upgrading surveillance technologies in the Victorian structure.

The project Cell unfolded during my Fulbright Fellowship (2002–2003) at Media Lab Europe (MLE) in Dublin. Some background on MLE is useful for understanding the stakes of Cell. A partnership between Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Irish Government, MLE offered a European base for expansion of the 20-year-old Media Lab in Cambridge, U.S.A. This laboratory had been founded as a hybrid academic unit designed along the lines of a Renaissance “studio” composed of cross-disciplinary research clusters intended to “prototype” creative visions of digital futures. Questions about pedagogy, archive, and post-coloniality had attracted me to MLE as my Fulbright host institution in Ireland. Since I had had the opportunity in 1991-1992 to observe the early days of the Cambridge-based Media Lab as a “historian among the scientists and engineers” (with the generous support of the Lilly Foundation), I now wanted to revisit the media lab to learn about its unfolding globalizing strategies (at the time MLE opened in Dublin, MIT also opened a partnership in India).

As I made my way through Dublin, its colonial architecture left a strong disciplinary impression. I lived in an apartment complex recently furbished out of the monumental shell of an early nineteenth-century fever hospital built by the English. When I walked down the road to do my shopping, the hulk of Mountjoy Prison loomed forbiddingly over that end of the neighborhood. In the vicinity of MLE, young children still went to school in a fortress-like schoolhouse (Inchicore National School) constructed in 1853 according to the “model” architecture for national schools designed by the English. At the edge of the old Guinness Brewery Works where MLE was housed in a beautifully renovated hop-house, lay Fatima Mansions, a deeply impoverished housing project
built in the interwar period and now scheduled for imminent demolition. Shortly after I arrived at MLE, the women’s group of Fatima Mansions had invited me to collaborate with them on a history project devoted to documenting Fatima Mansions prior to its destruction. They were deeply curious about their new neighbor, MLE, and used to tease me by asking when the “Americans” would be launching their rocket ship. I soon came to realize that the children of Fatima Mansions attended Inchicore, the century-old national school, and that many young men from Fatima Mansions ended up in Mountjoy Prison on drug convictions.

My vivid exposure to this human circuit of abandonment in the course of my multi-media work at Fatima Mansions seemed to be painfully sundered from my customary routine of archival research at the National Archive, where I pored over documents (architectural plans for Mountjoy Prison drawn up by Major Jebb; huge folio-size convict registers recording the first prisoners at Mountjoy Prison; substantial rulebooks written for the first prison officers and inmates at Mountjoy; and the endless parliamentary debates of the early nineteenth century over the appropriate physical form of confinement). The gap I encountered between archive and neighborhood recapitulated the discursive sundering of the visual and tactile staged by Bentham and Foucault. The time I spent in the archive and the time I spent in Fatima Mansions with the women’s history group seemed to be profiling for me the epistemology of dead time as constituted in the event.

A pause overtook my work and I stepped back to ask how I might conceptualize a project that would somehow link together the tactile and the visual, the panoptical and aban-

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donment, surveillance and spectacle and would also draw the “eventful” archive into its shadow temporalities of dead time. I had no desire to “fix” or close these gaps, instead I wished to problematize them, so as to “change the coordinates of what is strategically possible within a historical constellation.” I began to explore the notion of a performative “installation” at Mountjoy Prison that would unfold in dead time and bring prisoners and public into temporal contact. I experimented with the following ideas: first, an installation would involve my collaboration with prisoners, prison-staff, my MLE colleagues, and the neighborhood, thus joining together groups designed to be separated by access and architecture and time (who, precisely, is doing dead time?) As Jane Jacobs would say, I wanted to work on changing the temporal borders of dead time into seams. Conceptually, an installation performs the movement of thought through time and space and in so doing kinesthetically draws together those “bodies” whom confinement and surveillance would isolate into subject and object. Kinesthetics does not “cut” itself into dead time and event, rather, it interrupts the everyday cognitive habits of the visual and the tactile such that movement and temporality become modes of experience (and not “cuts” of representations). Because the work for any installation, especially a prison installation which involves so many layers of authorization and permission, is an emergent process (it can never be guaranteed in advance, especially in a prison), an installation demands simple fidelity to collaborative practice and to the time of that practice, however “uneventful” it might be. Such fidelity seemed to me a powerful counterpoint to spectacles of abandonment and to notions of the eventful.

With the permission of John Lonergan, Governor of Mountjoy Prison, I was able to work with a self-selecting team of inmates and staff over the spring of 2003. First, I would like to describe briefly how we developed materials for

the project and then to show how we mobilized them for a public multimedia installation, entitled *Cell*, held in October 2004. Our project began with the study of the first Mountjoy convict registers from the 1850s, pages of which I had digitized in the National Archive and then printed out for reading in our prison-staff working group. The “tabular” form of these registers, which incarcerated information on prisoners into rows and columns, viscerally struck the team and provided the subject of intense conversation. We spent time looking at how the tabular form of the register echoed the impulse of the panoptical prison to confine and isolate humans corporeally at the same time that it organized them archivally as eventful. We then asked, what would an archive drawn up by prisoners such as themselves look like? How can the paradox of the extreme exposure of the prisoner to dead time be archived: “The prisoner is exposed to the prison itself, a complex organism that consists of walls, gates, inmates, guards, and so forth.”37 In what ways did the historical convict register provide an uncanny platform for questioning the dead time of the prison through performance?

Based on these lively discussions, the team decided that they wanted to represent their own history of the prison—one that would somehow cross-cut the coordinates of the “table” of the convict register at the same time that it exposed uncanny continuities with contemporary inception of prisoners. Physically, their plan required that they construct a video during the dead time of the daily prison routine as they moved about in the dead spaces of the prison (yards, corridors, etc.). Such a proposal required very specific security permissions from the governor of Mountjoy Prison. Did his grant mean that dead time was no longer a constitutive concept in the modern prison life? Like Farocki, I do not think that the Governor of Mountjoy Prison had a solution for “dead time,” but he certainly recognized the need for its radical deconstruction with and through prisoner guards and staff, with and through performative interventions that ques-

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tioned it not just as an internal issue but as a question of the neighborhood, the public. The governor allowed the use of a video camera (a gracious loan from MLE) in the prison. The team learned how to operate the camera and how to storyboard in order to produce their own video history of Mountjoy, then and now. Although always in the company of guards (whose cooperation was extraordinary), the prison team was able to range widely around the prison with the video camera. The one space closed to this camera were the small, single Victorian cells (part of the original design) in which they were locked down from 7:00 p.m.–7:00 a.m. The team sought permission to use the video camera to record this nocturnal time of isolation, when they most marked themselves marking time in their cells. They mounted the video camera on a tripod and proceeded to film themselves narrating what I call a “cellography,” a kind of talking back to dead time. What the prisoners wanted to record was the “dead time” elided by Bentham’s inscriptor and put on fast-forward in the Corcoran Prison Correction video of the death of convict Martinez. The team screened these cell tapes in the abandoned cells that served as the location for the public installation.

Once the prison team had recorded their library of films, we began to discuss how their archive could be brought in “touch” with the outside of the prison. We slowly hatched an idea for a public installation to be held in the abandoned wing of the prison. The public could only enter that wing during the dead time of evening lock-down hours. For security purposes, the prisoners, their invited families, prison staff, and public visitors would all have to be locked together in the derelict wing. We then sought to conceptualize the installation so that surveillance and abandonment could be thought of together—just as the prisoners and prison staff had questioned issues of vision and tactility in creating their materials, so too would the public be invited to do so. The prison team received extraordinary permission from Governor Lonergan to be present with their invited families at the installation and we opened the installation, entitled Cell, to the public for two evenings in October 2003.
For security purposes, visitors to *Cell* were momentarily “imprisoned”; the installation deliberately constructed pauses to mark this momentary abandonment. Guests first passed through a security check-point at which time cell-phones were confiscated for the duration of the program. As a group, the public were then escorted by prison staff to the “eye” of the Panopticon, the inner circle, where they stood amidst the sounds, smells, sights, and touch of the locked-down prison. I had never entered a prison until I walked into Mountjoy Prison in spring 2003, but for thirty-years or so I had been haunted by what I heard and saw in 1971 when round-the-clock radio and television coverage witnessed the carnage of an uprising at Attica Prison in the state of New York. The composer Frederic Rzewski set to music the words of Sam Melville, a prisoner who died in that uprising. Those incantations came to my mind as I stood in the Mountjoy eye for the first time: “in the indifferent brutality, the incessant noise, the experimental chemistry of food, the ravings of lost hysterical men, I can act with clarity and meaning.”

In order to conjure the ghost of the classical sovereign incarnated in Bentham’s inspector/inscriptor, we projected the archival image of Jebb’s architectural ground-plan for Mountjoy (digitized in the National Archive) onto the floor of the “eye” in which the expectant visitors stood. As they milled in the eye, they literally walked through the incandescent glow of this digitized image. To mark the sense of hearing as a means of contemplating abandonment, we created an “audioscape” by stringing up a circle of speakers along the upper circumference of the “eye.” Through them we piped the recordings we had made of the prison-team and the prison staff reading their respective section of rules from the original Victorian rulebook for Mountjoy Prison. We deliberately left the playback unsynchronized in order to heighten the irrational cacophony of the rules. The “chant” of the historical rules collided with the din of the prison evening (clang of doors, screams of prisoners): we wanted to ask what is the

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sound of dead time?

Guests stood in the “eye” for at least 15 minutes before
the prison team and prison staff introduced the installation,
explained security measures, and ushered the group to the
abandoned wing where they were to be locked until it was
time for the next “shift” of visitors to file in. In the depths of
the abandoned cells, members of the prisoner team had ar-
 ranged video monitors (gracious loan of MLE), on which
their films looped. In order to view and discuss the work of
the prison teams, the public had to crowd into these clau-
trophobic, decaying cells and experience how quickly a major
architecture of surveillance becomes a minor architecture of
abandonment and dead time. We thus wanted to ask the
guests to think of a question posed by Elizabeth Grosz: “can
architecture be thought, no longer as a whole, a complex uni-
ty, but as a set of and a site for becomings of all kinds?”

Who were the guests? They were neighbors of the neigh-
borhood of Mountjoy Prison: the invited families of the pris-
on team; the newly arrived Irish Fulbright scholars shepherd-
ed by Carmel Coyle, Director of the Irish Fulbright Com-
 mission; a car-full of friends from Fatima Mansions; fellow
colleagues from MLE and faculty from Dublin colleges and
universities; the Edge from U2 who sat on the governing
board of MLE; members of the Irish Prison Reform Commis-
sion; interested Dubliners who had heard the advertisement
on the radio. It is through the encounter of the guests with
prisoners and staff that the installation dissolved the cut be-
tween dead time and event.

The installation ran for two nights in two shifts. It was
indeed only a “minor interruption” of the Panopticon, a re-
fusal of the elision of dead time. We knew that after Cell each
of us would return to marking our own dead time; but be-
coming “minor” is a powerful means by which the spectacle
of abandonment can be momentarily suspended by problematizing it by threading thought through space and time along
coordinates different from the optics and scriptures of politi-

39 Elizabeth Grosz, Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Poli-
tics of Bodies (New York: Routledge, 1995), 135.
cal theology. But for this essay, the copies of films made for the possession of the prison team and their families, the governor of Mountjoy Prison, and myself, there exists no official archive of this event. There is no expert that puts the performance of Mountjoy Prison into fast forward (as in the Corcoran surveillance tapes) or cuts them into a usable web page. The project was intended to unfold in-between the two inspection-houses (prison and National Archive) and the housing project and the prison. For a moment, Cell suspended the sovereign decision to cut the event from dead time and to incarnate in a major architecture (such as Mountjoy Prison) vision and touch as dichotomous. For a moment the panoptic trembled and the dead time of the historian and prisoner unfolded without a sovereign cut.