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In his chapter on "Panopticism" in the 1975 book *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault explained that Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, a central watchtower surrounded by a peripheral ring of transparent but segregated cells, is an instrument of power adaptable to virtually any institution—schools, hospitals, museums. At its most successful, the panopticon can instill in the inmate—student, patient, visitor—a sense of "permanent visibility." It was conceived as a mechanism for observation and control. Reducing the need for enclosure and physical constraints, it would be a "cruel, ingenious cage" that induces individuals to behave as if they were constantly being watched.

In *Neural Architecture No. 6* [Frist Center for the Arts; September 23, 2005—January 8, 2006], the latest in a series of site-specific installations linking neurobiology, architecture, and surveillance, California artist Deborah Aschheim investigates visibility, power, and control by invoking the contemporary pervasiveness of monitoring devices and our increasing anxiety about violent attacks and biological vulnerability. Since its inception in 2003, the *Neural Architecture* series has grown increasingly complex and cerebral; whereas the first piece responded only to motion, the work at the Frist Center included motion-, visual-, and auditory-sensing technologies.

In the two rooms of the Frist Center's Gordon Contemporary Artist Project gallery, Aschheim combined transparent vinyl tubing, light bulbs, and clear plastic bathmats with motion sensors, palm-size video monitors, and miniature spy cameras to create a suspended sculptural network whose design is loosely based on the cerebral cortex. The intertwined tubing is arranged in six clusters. Each features several bulbous pods or "cells," fashioned from bathmats sewn into shape with clear fishing line. They contain small light bulbs, activated at

differing intervals by nearby motion detectors, and tiny video monitors. This immersive installation invites the visitor to walk among the clusters to see the screens, which display live and pre-recorded footage. On these screens, one can see one's image captured by the spy cameras, time-lapse video of the artist and her assistants constructing the work, images of the building's exterior or live footage from other parts of the institution. As the piece is intended, at one level, to mimic biological organisms that expand and mutate, Aschheim also placed additional clusters throughout the Frist Center. They feed live footage while simultaneously disrupting the uniformity of the more traditional exhibition spaces.

The intricate tubing and the suspended pods work on a number of levels, recalling intravenous drip bags, cellular structures, and tentacled organisms or parasites attaching themselves at will to their surroundings. As with Bentham's panopticon, surveillance and the culture of fear are revealed as forces that act upon us both externally and internally. Adopted as protective measures, they quickly evolve into controlling mechanisms.

As an installation, *Neural Architecture No. 6* was refreshing and unusual in that it was both genuinely site-responsive and comprehensive in its institutional infiltration. Here, the motion sensors were an integral part of the experience, not a mere incidental or instrumental feature. In addition, the placement of the monitoring devices distributed the work throughout the institution—a "soft" colonization of spaces usually beyond the reach of contemporary practice. Beautiful yet unsettling, transparent yet encapsulating, Aschheim's installation interrogates the complexity behind what it means, in our culture of surveillance, to "see" and "be seen."

—Wendy Koenig