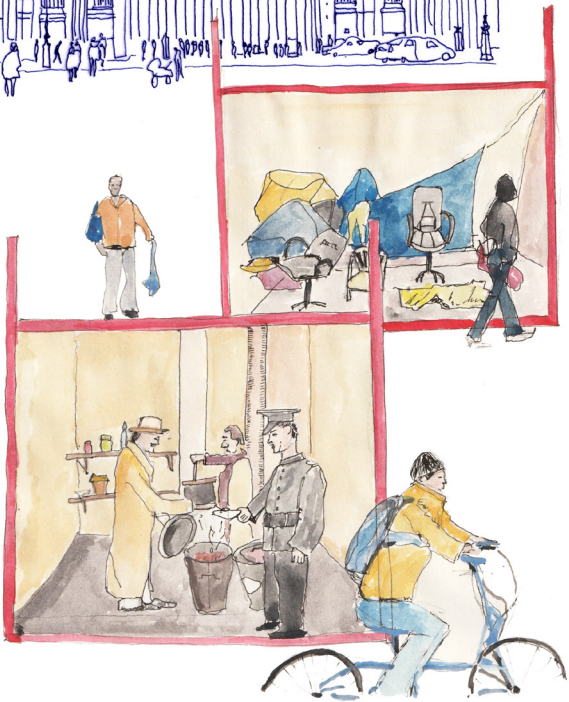


PARIS' ALTERNATE GUIDE



the DIORAMA and the MIGRATING FOLIE

Catalysing Conversations
on Refugee Portrail

by Charlotte Hermans

the DIORAMA and the MIGRATING FOLIE

Like a traditional guidebook, this booklet should help the reader navigate through unknown territory, aiding in the understanding of an unfamiliar landscape, presenting specific buildings and the influence of designs. On the other hand, the guide diverges from conventional as it focuses on challenging the readers existing preconceptions within a well-known city, Paris, presenting a stark and uncomfortable projection of the true presence of Refugee's. The itinerary prescribed follows a route, navigating the micro-architecture proposed by the Migrating Folie project.

Before the journey commences, it is beneficial to unravel the central themes and methods involved. A short essay therefore unravels the theory behind the Migrating Folie concept. To begin; the challenges of preconceptions; Memory, Sign and Symbol explores the theory of semiotics (sign process) and semantics (meaning in language). This text explains how these could serve as useful tools in progressing away from the concept of a single sign and the consequential stigma but towards a more critical outlook. The Diorama and the Refugee outlines the method proposed by the Migrating Folie, expanding on the concept of the diorama and the role it could play if juxtaposed in the city. Finally, The Folie Migration introduces the original folie proposed by Bernard Tschumi in his design for Parc de la Villette and outlines a development of the concept; positioned on a critique of why Tschumi's are currently functioning as symbolic, static, voids.

MEMORY, SIGN and SYMBOL

Specific metaphors have been used in media articles surrounding Refugees, ranging from the domestic (doors) to the apocalyptic (floods) and the ailment (parasite)¹. Associations and links are inevitably made between the metaphors used and the condition of being a refugee, conjuring unfavourable affiliations.

Jacques Derrida was a philosopher concerned

¹ Alison Jeffers, *Refugees, theatre and crisis*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 29.

with the analysis of semiotic development. He dissected the understandings and meanings of words, juxtaposing conflicting trajectories. His poetic work deliberately confuses the reader by questioning their innate presumptions and thus the semantics of specific words and phrases. Sans Papier was one phrase Derrida covertly descrambled in his work 'The Paper Machine'.² Sans Papier is a term used in France to describe those in the country without the necessary documentation; Sans Papier refugee's therefore must be approved asylum to gain documentation in order to reside in the country. Through a method of linguistically weaving new words and phrases together, Derrida suggests skewing and challenging preconceptions with new meanings, letting the reader make their own connections. Even the title of the text has ulterior intentions:

*'By effectively displacing the normal usage of the expression papier-machine to put pressure on its articulation; by juxtaposing, without a hyphen, two nouns of equal stature (paper and machine, machine or paper: neither is ever the attribute of the other, or its subject), this title is an attempt to name a singular configuration, an addition, an ordered set of metaphors, tropes, and metonymies.'*³

The deconstruction of the word Paper behind the more marked pairing of the term 'Sans Papier', allows the reader to understand what the language can implicate. Deconstruction is the act of breaking-down the associations and connections triggered from the use of the word. However, once the word paper is juxtaposed with machine, more specific relations may be made and discussed. Although not immediately obvious, links can be made between the two. More distinctly a discussion is conjured of the afterlife of the paper; and thus, one can invite a speculation of the afterlife of the Refugee after paper; or in more simple terms how the paper/document will continue to define the person.

On my computer I even have an item called a "Notebook," imitating the one you carry around with you, on which I can jot down notes; on the screen it looks like a box and I can turn its pages; they are both numbered and dogeared. I also have an item called "Office"—bureau—although this word, like bureaucracy, belongs to the culture and even the political economy of paper. Let's not talk about the verbs cut and paste or delete that my

² Jacques Derrida, *The Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, (California: Stanford University Press, 2005).

³ Jacques Derrida, *The Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1.

software also includes. They have lost all concrete and descriptive reference to the technical operations performed, but these infinitives or imperatives also retain the memory of what has disappeared: the paper, the page of the codex. Thus the order of the page, even as a bare survival, will prolong the afterlife of paper—far beyond its disappearance or its withdrawal.⁴

Memory is not prejudice of whether information absorbed is fact, fiction, or even an amalgamation of the two. Accordingly, fact and fiction can become blurred, fiction can easily be manipulated as fact. Art historian Ernst Gombrich famously spoke of the transference of knowledge in the 15th century in the depiction of the anatomy of a whale.⁵ Opposite, are two different paintings illustrating very similar features in a whale. This is vastly different to what we know a whale looks like today. It is likely through the transference of memory that the painter's ability to accurately recollect was skewed based on their own preconceptions or what was familiar to them. A distinct mark representing this is the whale's fin, drawn too far up the head it almost resembles an ear; a very human and very familiar feature. The fact that a remarkably similar whale was represented again, illustrates how the transference of knowledge can easily happen; furthermore, how the distinction between fiction or fact can be a very grey area when transformed by one's own imagination.

This blurring of fact and fiction is comparable to the illusions in human memory today, afflicted and even exploited by media news reporting. Unconscious networks connect a multitude of visual images and lived experiences, causing ambiguity and misrepresentation. Subject to repetition of visual and informative cues, a perceived authenticity is created for us. In the case of the refugee these semiotic networks indoctrinate and politicise against the vulnerable, whether that is intentionally or through unconscious bias. The refugee residing in Europe is highly stigmatised and denied any route to access the basic rights enjoyed by the citizens of France which is manifested by the possession of documentation.

It is absurd how much effect a simple document can have on the perspective of an individual and their future prospect. So much weight is put onto the object that is the passport. Passer port; meaning to go through a door. The assemblage of paper that enables a person to move through a gateway, acting as the key to a door. Only

4 Ibid, 46.

5 Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1960), 65-66.

those that hold the key can pass through. This is metaphoric, the passport has become a mentality and used as a way to police.

How useful is the physical documentation now anyway? The paper was previously used as a way to confirm identity, now it features more as a placeholder and furthermore, a symbol. Derrida expands on this:

*'(consider what happens at passport controls), but it can also be computerized for the physical-genetic identification of any individual in general (digitalized photography and genetic imprints). In this, we are all, already, "paperless" people'*⁶

So if the passport is only a mentality, it suggests that the same can be said for sans papier refugees; the state of being sans papier, is an attitude adopted as a regulation by those in charge. The passport is therefore only a notional device which divides those that hold one with those that don't. The passport acts as an easy way to censor, to categorise and control.

Above, I mentioned that the door was used in the case of passport as a metaphor. This is only half true. The concept of the passport has become more than just its physical existence, the implications of the passport spread wider, and thus past the immediate understanding of door or gate. This does not mean that the door or gate do not exist, ofcourse they do. Furthermore, the implications of a door or a gate for a person without a passport must also be different for those with one. This discussion is extremely relevant in the case of Parc de la Villette and its gated folies, which will be covered in more depth later.



6 Jacques Derrida, *The Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 61.

the DIORAMA and the REFUGEE

Definition of Diorama: a model that shows a situation, such as a historical event or animals in their natural environment, in a way that looks real.⁷

Most of us will have, at some point, experienced a diorama. Likely, on a visit to a natural history or wildlife museum. In these exhibitions, glass cabinets are often positioned with curated scenes of former times; whether that be the deceased woolly mammoth depicted in its harsh, icy terrain, or a more modern depiction of a group of wild boars huddled around a watering hole in the African Sahara. These models were historically used as a tool which had two important roles: the first, to document history, and the second to make a foreign world tangible to the ordinary person, who wouldn't otherwise get to witness such scenes. These three-dimensional models were often curated with real, stuffed animals and built outwards from a detailed painted backdrop. The key to making these dioramas appear realistic was how the blending between the two-dimensional backdrop and the three-dimensional model was curated. These scenes were designed to feel as real as possible, emanating an awakening experience of another world.⁸



At present, the attitude of stuffing animals, and exhibiting their remains in halls seems an outdated and almost barbaric practice, however the intent behind the diorama was conversely more ethical. One such curator Frank Chapman was motivated by aims to help conserve animals' environments.⁹ The museum, and diorama

7 Cambridge Dictionary, 'Diorama', May 15 2020. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/diorama>.

8 "Discoveries in Dioramas" American Museum of Natural History, accessed May 16 2020, <https://www.amnh.org/shelf-life/discoveries-in-dioramas>.

9 Andrea DenHoed "The Making of the American Museum of Natural History's Wildlife Dioramas" The New

Yorker, February 15 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/the-making-of-the-american-museum-of-natural-historys-wildlife-dioramas>.

displays were intended less as a cruel trophy but instead to depict the animals as marvelous and unique beings. The idea being that if the public could grow familiar, an affirmation and sensibility to the animals could possibly develop; a sort of undercover operation to help prevent further trophy hunting.

The way the dioramas are curated and exhibited can influence the audience's reaction. The animals in the natural history dioramas are generally shown in a situation close to their natural environment. There was not any obvious misrepresentation intended in the scenes presented, they were intended to be realistic, however there will always be a natural bias, as highlighted earlier with Gombrich's whale example. The way the dioramas are designed must therefore be carefully considered in respect of the desired outcome.

Refugees are vulnerable people, displaced from their communities and established mechanisms of security, awaiting the invitation of a institution which feels no affinity to them. Doctors, academics and musicians wait without shelter or place. Their stories, memories and achievements are not told, we hear only of their legal and economic status. The project does not seek to assign individuals with meaning through the same methods deployed by museum exhibition. Instead of reconstructing narratives the migrating folie acts to deconstruct preconceived bias or prejudice. It could provide an opportunity to present different representations of the individual behind the refugee; a platform with the ability to relate to the public with other images, challenging the ones already in use. The scenes may also be of real or historic scenes, creating both stark, uncomfortable and relatable situations.

There is a sad understanding that the refugee is currently being made invisible.¹⁰ In Paris refugees are moved from the center, to the periphery and have consequently made the Boulevard Périphérique (the ring road that divides inner and outer Paris) famous as the site of the largest camps. At the edge of the city, situated in backroads, underpasses and in the underprivileged parts of town, the Refugee fades out of sight.

The dioramas in the Migrating Folie are therefore, purposely placed in public spaces around the city. The objective is for the diorama

Yorker, February 15 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/the-making-of-the-american-museum-of-natural-historys-wildlife-dioramas>.

10 Woods Mike, "Paris NGOs warn asylum seekers are becoming invisible", rfi. April 2019.

to be stumbled upon by unassuming public members. Each location has been specifically chosen for a reason, in connection to the presence of refugees, when the location and diorama are read together a narrative can unfold.

There is a distinct difference in the motive and design of the dioramas used traditionally in a museum and in this project. The diorama's in the museum were used to depict an existing scene for a purely educational role. By contrast the diorama's in the migrating folie are used as a political device to create a focused lens on a specific topic but also designed to make the viewer question their innate preconceptions. These models can provide a platform to expose a world that would otherwise be hidden, in a highly illustrative and approachable way, accessible by the public and without the necessity of prior knowledge. The ambition is for them to become absorbed into the urban fabric of the city, to become part of its identity. This can open a platform for the inclusion of the city's new inhabitant. The diorama's could act as a catalyst for new narratives, new identities and a refreshed understanding.

the FOLIE MIGRATION

There is one more important part of this narrative, and that is of the Folie. Bernard Tschumi was inspired by Derrida's work on Semantics, which inspired the theory behind his design of Parc de la Villette. Tschumi was inspired to design buildings that did not prescribe a function, or a singular meaning.¹¹ Following this concept, Tschumi designed 26 folies which were placed on a regular grid around the park. The folies all held the same confines of fitting within the nine by nine-meter setting, composed of steel-clad frames and painted bright red. The functionality of the folie frames was intentionally left vague, each folie was designed as an empty container; some more open than others and all with a slightly different composition, aligning with the concept that the buildings could continuously change function depending on the need in that moment.

A visit to the park in the early 2020's revealed an image, quite different to that described above. Instead of acting as continuously changing facilities with no single sign, the folies appeared



policed and static. The folies with an enclosed interior had been privatised and managed independently. The rest, which were exposed, were largely left as empty voids, lacking any function, and fenced off to the public.

Derrida wrote about the folies in 'Pointe de Folie', explaining that 'it runs the risk and gives us the chance'¹². This sounds optimistic on paper; however in reality the park is controlled by the parks' management, and the government which therefore decides on the fate of the folie; making the us in the statement a questionable rhetoric. In a similar procedure fences are also found barricading refugee camps; those in use and historic sites alike.

This conversation returns to the discussion of passport; the implications of the word and the impact that it can have on the sans papier refugee. A peculiar comparison could be drawn between the treatment of the folie and the refugee, regarding the level and attitude of policing. The policing restrains both the folie and the refugee from escaping the limits of the assigned signs resulting in a commonly understood single sign. Policing happens in both a physical and mental manner. There are the physical signs of policing, as found on the folies; in the form of (port) fences, locks and gates. The concept of the word passport, transcends this violent architecture, for the policing behind the word is largely psychological. The fences, locks and gates are formulated from the deep rooted belief that there should be a selection of people who can (pass) enter and those who can not. This way of thinking has a negative effect on the perception of the refugee, which in turn effects the living situation and legal status.

Tschumi's folies had a desirable aspiration, but in some ways failed because of the giant task that was demanded of them; to repeatedly change. Without another voice dictating what the functions would be, the responsibility stayed

¹¹ Bernard Tschumi, *Cinegramme Folie Le Parc de la Villette*, (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), 7-8.

¹² Jacques Derrida, "Pointe de Folie- Maintenant l'architecture," *AA Files No 12*, (summer 1986): 75.

with the high power in the park and the folies became pitfalls of policing.

Yet, if the folies were prescribed a new function and read in parallel with a diorama, different narratives could start to unfold, alluding away from the single sign and the void; a very helpful device in respect of the perception of a Refugee. The new function could open the folies up to be useful and constructive as opposed to unuseful and policed. Moreover the diorama can create a lens of an unexpected scene in a public place, such as the presence of the refugee, which would usually be pushed out of sight.

The memorable red colour used in the folies could also become a useful tool if the folies began to act as motifs. A red folie could charge an expectation of a diorama and visa versa. Furthermore, if these folies were moved away from the park, the concept of the folie and diorama could begin to filtrate into the rest of the city.

The Migrating Folie project, consequently, acts to move parts of the unused red folies from the park, to operate in dialogue with the city and the diorama. It is an attempt to open new conversations and questions on the perception of the refugee, in the hope to go beyond the prejudices where complex narratives of identity are reduced to the single sign. A set of different dioramas, with disparate narratives are displayed within the bounds of the folie, gathering an diverse set of images surrounding the conversation of the refugee.



Tschumi's Folies, Parc de la Villette



Red: Unused Folies
Blue: Privatised

BOULEVARD
PÉRIPHÉRIQUE

PORTE
D'AUBERVILLIERS

THE CITÉ DES SCIENCES
ET DE L'INDUSTRIE
BIBLIOTHÈQUE

PARC DE
LA
VILLETTE

PORTE
D'ANTIN

GARE DU NORD

TUILERIES
GARDEN

PARC DES
BUTTES-CHAUMONT

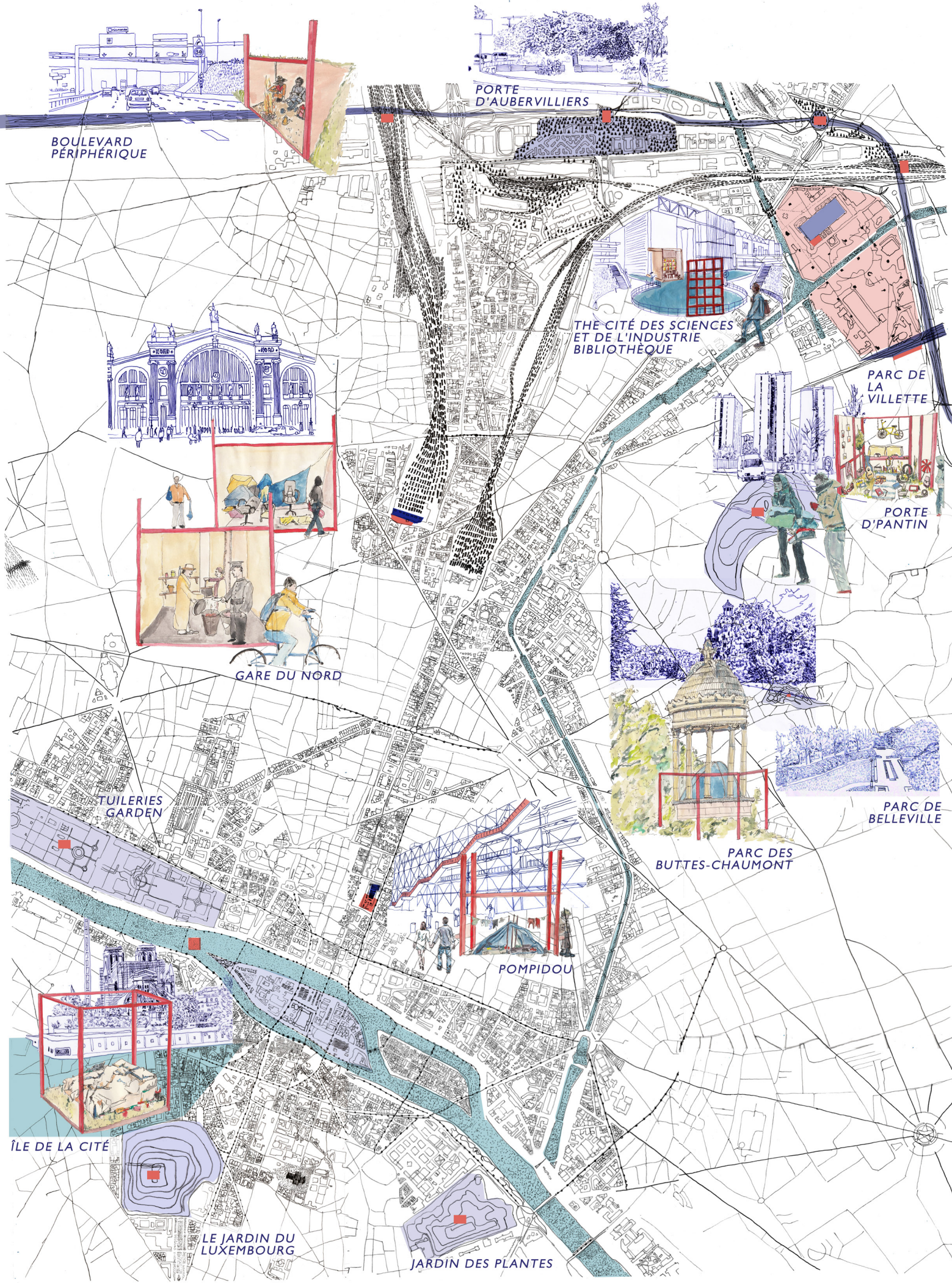
PARC DE
BELLEVILLE

POMPIDOU

ÎLE DE LA CITÉ

LE JARDIN DU
LUXEMBOURG

JARDIN DES PLANTES



CITE DES SCIENCES BIBLIOTHEQUE

AUBERVILLIERS



DESIGN: A library space, parasitic to the Science centres facade; in the public eye. Parts of Tschumi's folie made into a red gate, permanently placed to act as a window into the diorama.

Beginning at the Parc de la Villette, the origin of Bernard Tschumi's red folies. The diorama is located at the front of the science centre, hovering above the moat of waste water surrounding the centre. In the 2020's the library was used as a safe and dry space for refugee's during the day. The diorama highlights the limitations of this space but also depicts a very familiar library scene. The image of the library in an unfamiliar setting, blurs the usual with the unusual by fixing an inside space onto the outside of the building.

DESIGN: A garden made from the abandoned possessions of the refugee. Tschumi's red folie is used to construct a room with inward facing seats.

Porte de Aubervilliers and Porte de Pantin were locations of two of the largest refugee camps to be evacuated in the north of Paris. Most of the camps were found under the Boulevard Périphérique. Evacuations were quick and often lots of possessions had to be left behind or were abandoned. This diorama exposes domestic and personal artifacts in a public space.

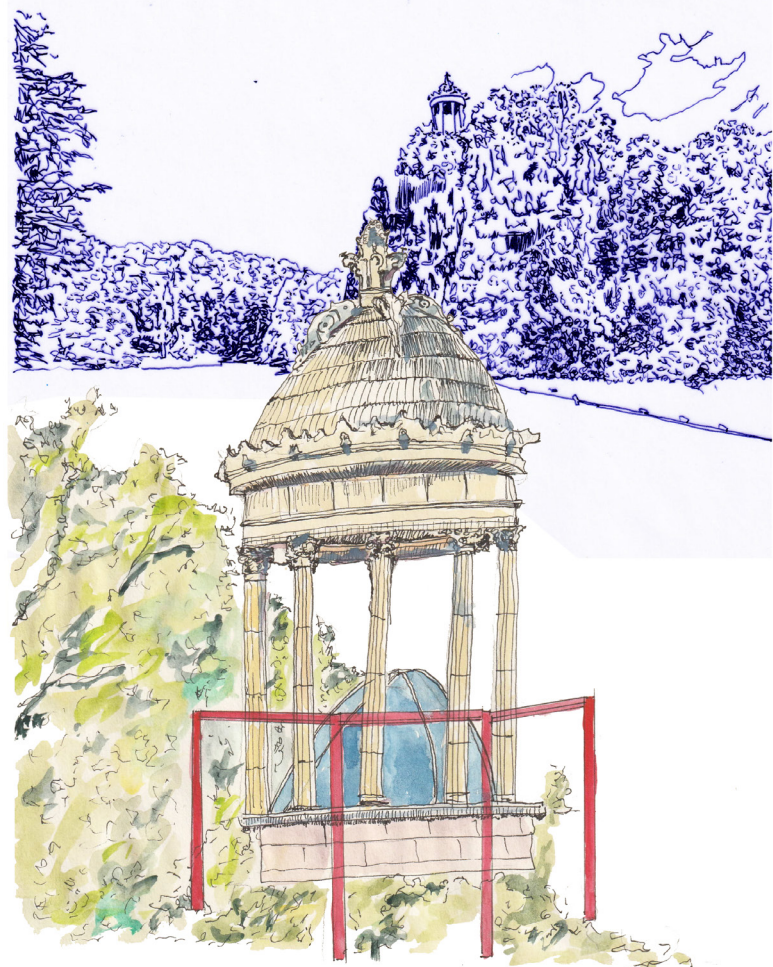
GARE DU NORD STATION



DESIGN: Two diorama's opposite each other. One of Gare du Nord in WW2 refugees kitchen, the other of Gare du Nord and refugees in the present day.

Gare du Nord is the gateway into Paris for many people, including those travelling from Calais. Calais has a major port, and has been a large access point for many refugees seeking asylum. Two dioramas are juxtaposed with one another and also with the station. One, a historic scene from WW2 depicts refugees working in the kitchen which was located at the station, serving soldiers. The second is a mock up scene of a common image of refugees seen in the present day.

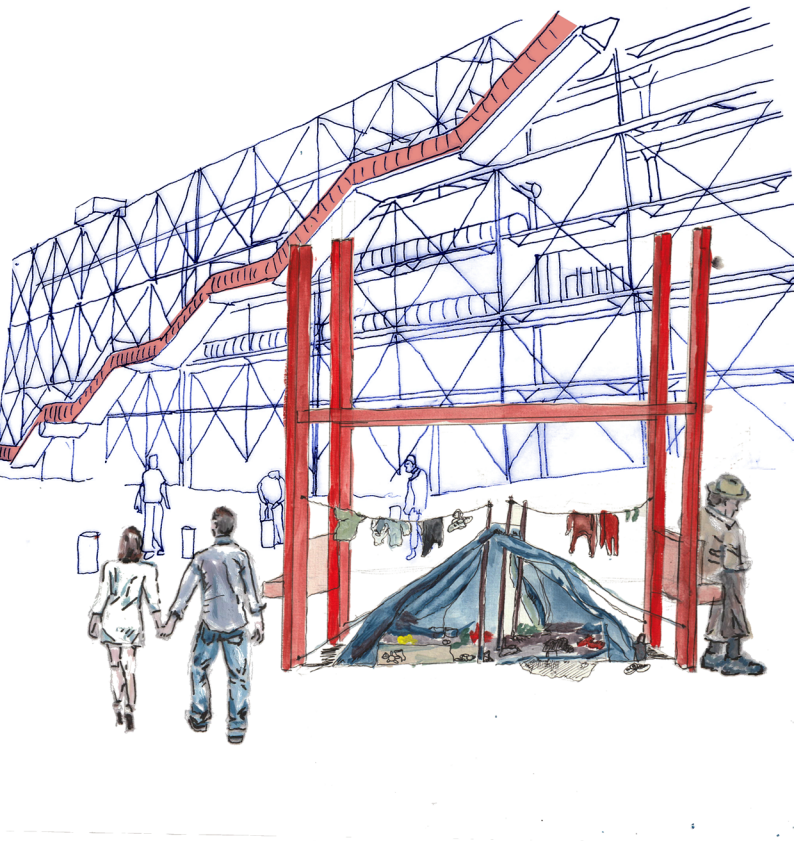
PARC DES BUTTES- CHAUMONT



DESIGN: A tent, within a folly, within a folie.

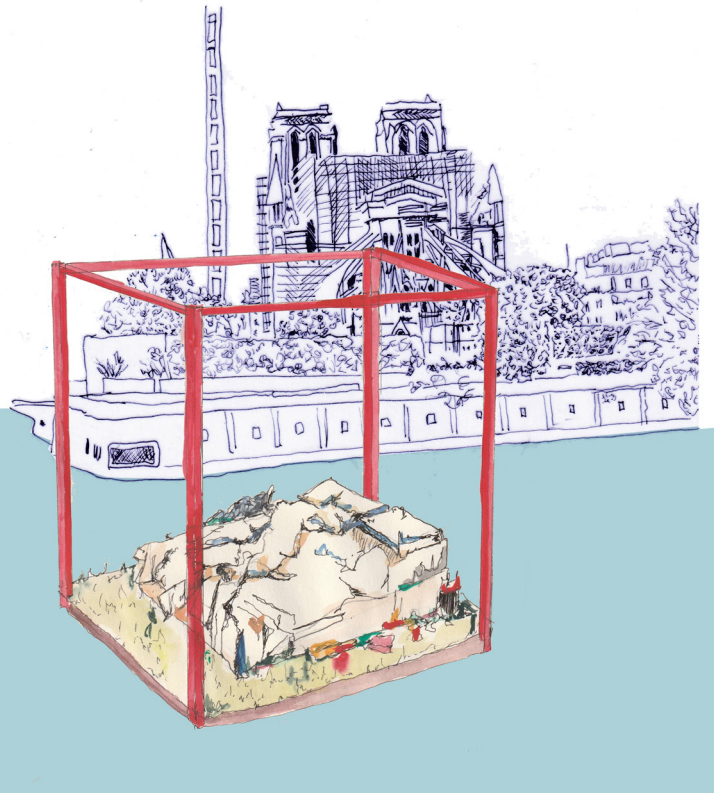
Parc des Buttes- Chaumont is one of the largest public parks in Paris and a tourist hot-spot. The ornate classical folly on the hill is encased by a frame made from Tschumi's folie. Finally, inside the two structures is a blue tent; remnant of that used by refugees's.

The public park is a prominent destination, as it is a public space, and a space refugee's can use during the day. Parks are therefore a destination for more scene's in the future, like the one at Buttes-Chaumont.



DESIGN: Inhabited tent diorama, encased in Tschumi's red folie. Built-in seats face outwards, away from tent.

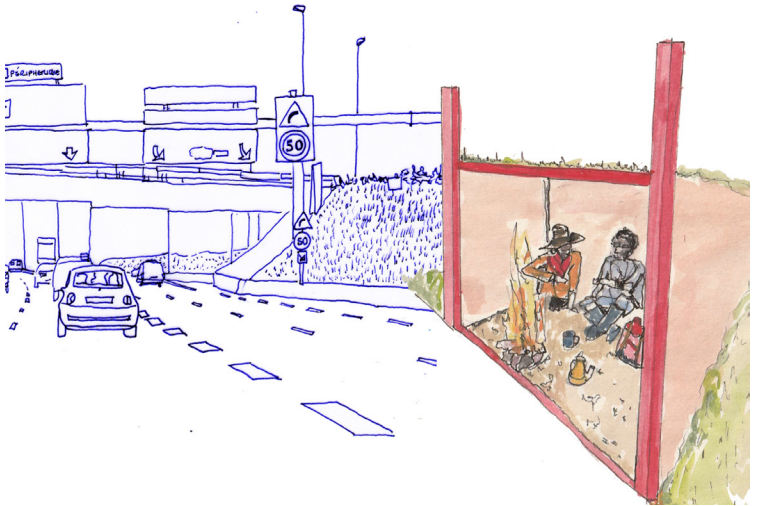
The Pompidou was the site of Bernard Tschumi's exhibition of Parc de la Villette and the folies in the 1980's. A diorama of a blue tent is presented at the front of the Pompidou. A faux lived-in scene exposes familiar domestic items in an unexpected situation. Tschumi's red folie frames the diorama and two seats face outwards, looking away from the tent.



DESIGN: A diorama of a bed that looks inhabited, framed by Tschumi's red folie. Positioned opposite the Notre Dame and Île de la Cité. The bed is sat on stilts in the river Seine, to make it look as if it is floating.

The island Île de la Cité, was the original Paris, the rest of Paris grew from the island centre. The floating bed on the Seine juxtaposes a domestic scene in a public place. A familiar object creates questions when juxtaposed in a less familiar setting. The exposed bed draws parallels with rough sleeping. In parallel the diorama comments on the concept of island, the implicated boundaries and exclusivity.

BOULEVARD PÉRIPHÉRIQUE



DESIGN: Diorama of a faux-inhabited camp fire built within the side bank of the Périphérique.

A scene of a glimpse into life under the Périphérique, projected onto the road above. The Périphérique is a large ring-road that divides inner and outer Paris. Under the ring road is home to the largest refugee camps. The Périphérique also projects a wealth gap; the road above being used by driving commuters and below refugees sleeping rough.

More of these scenes are intended to be projected of the prominent camps onto the Périphérique above.