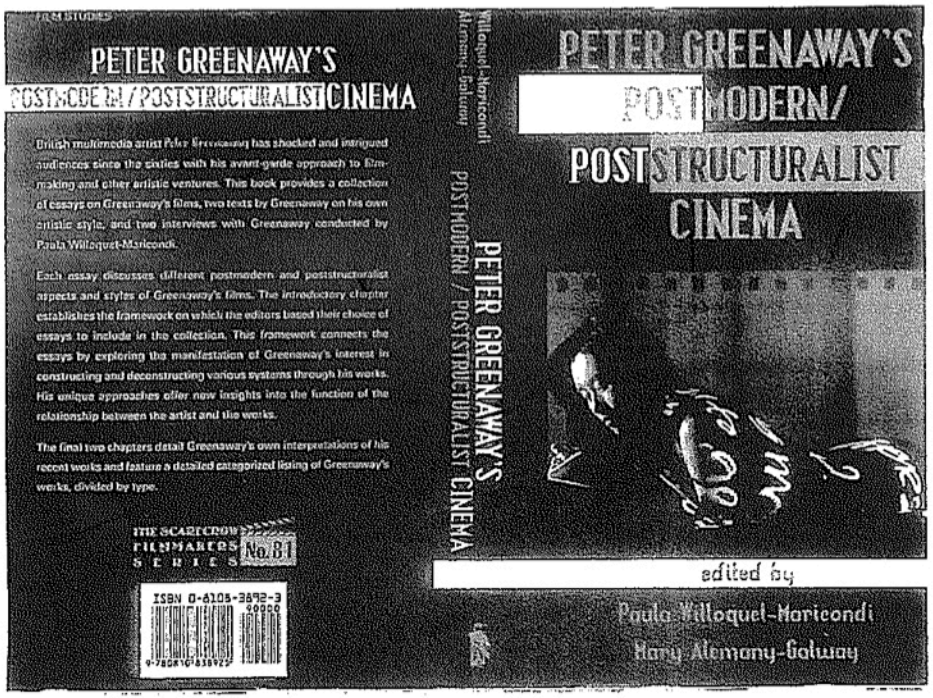

SCARECROW PRESS, INC.

Published in the United States of America
by Scarecrow Press, Inc.
4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.scarecrowpress.com

4 Pleydell Gardens, Folkestone
Kent CT20 2DN, England

Copyright © 2001 by Paula Willoquet-Maricondi and Mary Alemany-Galway

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Peter Greenaway's postmodern/poststructuralist cinema / edited by Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, Mary Alemany-Galway.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8108-3892-3 (alk. paper)
1. Greenaway, Peter—Criticism and interpretation. I. Willoquet-Maricondi, Paula, 1960– II. Alemany-Galway, Mary 1944–

PN1998.3.G73 P48 2001
791.43'0233'092—dc21

2

PETER GREENAWAY AND THE FAILURE OF CINEMA

John Di Stefano

When considering Peter Greenaway's work, it is important to distinguish between the practice of making a film and the persistence of his "cinematic vision" across celluloid and various other visual media and practices. It is useful also to define this cinematic vision as one that, although tied to moving images, has, for Greenaway, roots in the history of Western art, with a particular emphasis on painting. By examining Greenaway's visual art-related exhibitions and projects and some of the leitmotivs that surface in his films and in these projects, we may find keys to understanding both the consistency and the radical nature of his vision. This essay will consider these works in light of larger issues and notions of expanded cinema.

Peter Greenaway's cinema is a cinema of excess, characterized by a very particular visceral sense that permeates almost all aspects of his films. Many of his films are so visually and conceptually dense as to suggest that the medium of film itself is not adequately able to "contain" the articulation of his vision. This "density" is partially due to Greenaway's traditional training as a painter and a student of Western art history. Greenaway trained initially to be a mural painter, a genre of figurative and metaphorical painting that itself has a specific tradition of illustrating, illuminating, or commenting on history or on the historical in some way. Because murals are "fixed" into the architecture of a specific place, and thus literally become the material of that site, they are intimately connected to the history of that place. Due to their distinct relationship to architecture, and by extension to a practice of conceiving, activating, and creating (a) space, muralists are trained to consider scale in a particular way. Given this relationship to materiality, scale, architecture, and history, it is no surprise that mural paintings have, almost by definition, been epic. Consequently, mural painting is meant to be viewed and understood differently from other types of painting, such as portraiture, for example, because viewing a mural entails entering into a space—a depicted

space and a three-dimensional space that are one and the same. The visual depiction on a mural is created in relation to the three-dimensional space in which it is meant to be viewed. Murals are, thus, materially fixed, bound to and by history in a way that other genres of painting are not.

Although Greenaway's way of seeing, making, and understanding art is not limited solely by his experience as a mural painter, this background and training do, however, substantially inform and shape his visual culture—a visual vocabulary of images and signs and a way of reading and understanding them that is tied to the history of Western art and Western culture. For Greenaway, the filmmaker, however, the two practices and ways of thinking—painting and filmmaking—are not mutually exclusive and together may provide an important key to understanding the "eccentricities" and "excesses" of his *oeuvre,* an *oeuvre* that consists of films, drawings, paintings, curatorial projects, installations, public artworks, and writings. It is Greenaway's rootedness in more than one medium that marks him as a type of hybrid-filmmaker: a filmmaker whose practice is certainly not limited to film but is, rather, often limited *by* film.

The space between Greenaway's filmmaking and visual art, as defined and delineated by his visual art-related projects, suggests the nature of Greenaway's investment in cinema by uncovering the limits of the cinematic medium itself. Indeed, Greenaway asks us to look at how these art-related, meta-cinematic projects overlap, expand, and attempt to form a continuum between film and more traditional forms and vocabularies of visual art and culture. It is these projects, and Greenaway's future plans to produce related CD-ROMs and Internet sites, that beg the larger question: What exactly *is* the relationship between art-making, filmmaking, and the history of visual culture?

(THE) QUESTION (OF) REALISM

For almost ten years, Peter Greenaway has been involved in creating meta-cinematic art projects in the form of museum curatorial exhibitions and public artworks. The most successful of these is a multi-faceted public installation project entitled *The Stairs.* This project challenges much of what Greenaway has found problematic about film and film's relationship to images, time, and space, by suggesting new relationships between how and what we experience filmically. Prior to *The Stairs,* Greenaway created several exhibitions in various museums and sites that developed some of the important groundwork for *The Stairs.* The central thematic concern of all these

works was the conflict Greenaway identifies between the limits of the medium of film and the nature of film viewership. When Greenaway began to make films, his ambition was to see if he could make films that acknowledged the artifices and illusions of cinema itself. In films such as *Intervals* (1968–1973), his wish was to create a cinema that was not primarily interested in narrative, as most feature filmmaking is, but to create a cinema that used the same relationship to aesthetics as painting did. These aesthetic considerations included formal devices of structure, composition, framing, and, most important for Greenaway, attention to metaphor and allegory (Woods; Elliott and Purdy). Greenaway wished to explore these relationships between painting and cinema by examining their connections and differences through editing and pacing, and by studying the formal properties of time intervals, repetitions, and variations on a theme. These structural explorations of film made up not only the conceptual discourse that Greenaway wished to engage with but were very much the "content" of the films Greenaway aspired to make.

These structuralist pursuits had a somewhat oppositional relationship to ideas of realism in the cinema, a topic that many filmmakers and film theoreticians before Greenaway had attempted to articulate, define, and otherwise negotiate in some form or another. Because of its ability to represent three-dimensional objects "realistically," film, like photography before it, has been plagued with the responsibility of "representing reality." Many photographers and filmmakers, however, have resisted what they perceive to be a false responsibility and have endeavored to create a vocabulary for film and photography that is not dependent on the assumption that the camera's "true" function is to "record the world." Much of this new vocabulary was developed with particular attention to new ways of thinking about materiality, with the goal of liberating film from a unilateral relationship to "reality."

CORPOREALITY AS HISTORY

However complex the debates around film('s form) and realism may be, Greenaway has always maintained a strong relationship to a sense of history. This commitment to history is, at least partially, rooted in his traditional training in (historical) mural painting; his visual vocabulary is grounded in Western art history as well, but this is also the site where a fundamental conflict arises for Greenaway. Peter Greenaway is an artist who is profoundly rooted in a tradition of image-making and image-viewing informed by the traditional canon of Western art, and who also, as a contemporary filmmaker,

embraces a practice and theory of postmodern art that, in substantial and fundamental ways, defines itself in opposition to the very canon of art in which Greenaway was trained. For Greenaway, much of this conflict is concentrated on the idea of material and materiality as a type of fundamental and foundational prerequisite for the "validity" of an artwork. This "validity" is what guarantees for Greenaway that an artwork has a "history." This notion causes Greenaway to question the very ephemerality of the medium of film, its "materialess-ness." For Greenaway the "non-materiality" of film not only contradicts his notion of, and investment, in history but also seems to lessen film's "cultural currency":

> For me it is a frustration that cinema has no substance in the way that, for example, architecture and sculpture—even painting—have substance. As a consequence, I doubt whether cinema has any real history in the world. The passage of history effects inevitable material changes in an artifact. In that sense, cinema, or film, cannot profitably age, and it can have no intimacy with history. Even a very short history permits an object to attain provenance, heritage and cultural power. Even attain cultural magic, certainly cultural currency and usage. The physical touch of history[,] which is not necessarily inimical to the well-being of a cultural artifact, can "improve" its substance and enhance its significance. Without exception material changes in film are irredeemably disadvantageous. Film will not sustain aging processes or be made profitably resonant by them. (*Stairs/Geneva*, 3)

This view of "authenticity" certainly owes much to Walter Benjamin's discussions and formulations, but it also helps us in understanding Greenaway's choice of using the body as a "material" substitute for what he refers to as "substance." It is because Greenaway considers the medium of film somewhat impoverished, because of its "lack" of physicality, of substance, that he turns to the body as a way of counter-acting this "lack" and of compensating for it by activating the body as a type of articulation of history. The visual and aural "excessiveness" Greenaway gives to his films is what gives them body, so to speak, and history. This entails heightening how he represents three-dimensional reality to the viewer, and in turn, how the viewer engages with his films. Greenaway fills his films with depictions of often naked bodies of different types, sizes, and ethnicities, and with references to the body's functions, from different perspectives. The naked bodies on screen act as stand-ins for the materiality and the physicality that are so important to Greenaway and that are lost in film, but not in architecture, for instance.

We recognize these representations of bodies *as bodies* partly because they are naked, partly because Greenaway does not give much psychological depth to his characters. These naked-bodies-as-bodies are intended to be read as "material," as "physicality," and not so much as the bodies of specific people or characters. These naked-bodies-as-bodies have a different currency, function, and relief than those bodies-as-people that are often more involved with narrative and function as elements to drive and animate these narratives. In order for Greenaway adequately to (re)create such "physicality" on celluloid, he must resort to elaborate, perhaps excessive, even hyper-filmic "(re)constructions." Every frame, line, and sound in a film such as *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989), for example, either literally depicts or else implies corporeality. Greenaway has constructed, indeed, crafted his films so meticulously and "excessively" that they seem almost to breathe—and at some points, gasp. In films such as *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* bodies seem to be ever-present, lit, and dynamically photographed—indeed, the film's plot ends with a cannibalistic finale. In these films, Greenaway uses the body both literally and metaphorically as a means of creating a type of visceral, as well as intellectual, experience that is as close as film can truly come to a "reality" that is inescapably dependent on "materiality." This practice of hyper-reproduction becomes a surrogate for the materiality that the cinema allegedly "lacks." Greenaway's use of the body also anchors the viewer to something of a "human scale"—something that acts as a meter and, by extension, as a bridge between the actual world that the viewer inhabits and the filmic representation of time and space s/he engages with. By making films that are such intricately woven bodies of "recorded" images and sounds, Greenaway achieves a level of viscerality that may be the highest that film, as a medium, can hope to reach.

Greenaway's way of seeing and using the body as a conceptual, visual, and visceral manifestation of physicality bridges his relation to film as a product—as something that is distributed, and projected in theaters—and as a process, of writing, rehearsing, acting. The space between the material and physical experience of objects, actors, and sets as they appear before the camera during filming, and the immaterial experience of the apparatus reproducing a non-material "record" of that physicality in a theater, is where Greenaway chooses to situate himself, precisely because he feels uncomfortable with, and troubled by, this gap. Indeed, Greenaway has felt the need to dramatize the schism between making and viewing films by attempting to recreate for the audience the excitement he feels on the set. This "in between" place of film*making*, which is a process of conceiving and manifesting "material" (scripts, actors, sets, etc.) into a type of fluid and fluctuating

spectacle (with its changes, rehearsals, ad-libs, etc.) recorded by a camera, is what Greenaway finds most interesting and rewarding. He states:

> I feel, on perusal of [my completed film], that I . . . want the illusion of the moving cinematic image, but I also want the delights of the original ideas, formats, strategies and texts, the excitements of the enterprise of the collaborators, the reality of the props and the sets. And as a consequence I would wish to find ways and means of communicating to others and recommunicating to myself these fascinations. (*Stairs/Geneva,* 9)

In this acknowledgment, Greenaway reconciles somewhat his conflict with filmmaking. We might now begin to discern how this attachment to materiality—and by extension, to reality and history—functions not only as a means to activate film viewership but also as a key to the crucial moment and process of film*making.*

THE EXHIBITIONS

Despite these attempts at using the body to articulate the relationships among materiality, reality, history, and cinema, Greenaway nevertheless remains frustrated with the mimetic ephemerality of his filmic bodies—the shadows of light and dark that cannot be physically held, that have, by definition, no weight and are mere "traces" of the physical. If the depiction of the body within his films are "failed" attempts at grounding and literally giving his films body, then Greenaway's museum exhibitions, which display and have as their theme the physical, are an extension, in the real world, of the same idea. It was Greenaway's intention that these museum projects herald a type of mega-cinema that would attempt to reclaim the poverty of cinema.

In 1990, Greenaway was invited to curate an exhibition entitled *The Physical Self* (27 October, 1991–12 January, 1992), using the resources of the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam. With no other parameters than those of using the collection of the museum, Greenaway found a perfect vehicle to explore some of his ideas about film's "lack" through an exploration of viewership. The exhibition focused on the body and included objects and artifacts that were originally designed to be used *by* the body, such as "bicycle-seats molded for the comfort of the buttocks, spectacle frames molded for the fragility of the nose." The exhibition also included objects and images that demonstrated the intimate touch of the human body, such as a piece of fourteenth-century pottery that has a thumb-print embedded in it, and paintings by Salvador Dalí with his own thumb-prints (*Stairs/Geneva,* 11). In the introduction to the catalogue, Greenaway describes the exhibition as being made up of objects that "comment upon the physical human predicament":

> It is an exhibition that addresses the human body, portraying its normal mortal physical condition, its nakedness and its nudity, its various conditions according to youth, maturity, health and aging, its de-sexualised state (if that is possible), the anticipation of its future intimate presence by those objects especially designed for its comfort and safety, and, with mingled sense of humour, surprise and some nostalgia, those intimate mortal traces that consciously and unconsciously, it has left behind. (*The Physical Self,* 6)

Not only were these "corporeal" objects arranged and displayed throughout the gallery but, at pivotal locations in this arrangement, naked bodies, or live "nudes," were included, seating, standing, or lying inside glass cases. These live bodies provided a very present and real reference-point and focus for all the objects in the exhibition, which drew on the body as their source of inspiration, fascination, use, and utility. The historical objects that were fashioned by and for the body and exhibited here were given relief by the live bodies that also were on display. This recontextualization made the objects more real, more relevant, while providing the audience with a unique, if perhaps uncomfortable, opportunity—and permission—to look legitimately at, ponder, scrutinize, and think about the body without fear of censure.

These bodies behind glass offered the audience still another dimension to spectatorship by providing the audience members with a way of reevaluating their own "bodi-ness." By having the opportunity to look at and examine a body that was expressly put there for that purpose, the viewer was forced to relate that body behind the glass to her/his own (clothed) body. In addition, the body of another audience member standing nearby, also viewing the body behind glass, held possibilities for interactions in curiosity, observation, and commentary among audience members. The bodies that Greenaway put on display not only recontextualized the inanimate objects on display in the museum but also (re)contextualized the many bodies of the viewers as they moved around the museum. The bodies behind glass became a pivotal element in an exhibition that transformed the experience and space of the museum and its collection. These displayed bodies activated the historical significance of the collection by providing a bridge between the

objects and the audience, and in so doing further explored the concepts and relationships between physicality and history that so interest Greenaway.

With this first of many exhibitions, Greenaway would begin to formulate and articulate some of the deeply rooted impossibilities of the cinema that for him were problematic. Later exhibitions allowed Greenaway to reference cinema more directly by employing some of the devices particular to film to transform the space and the experience of museum viewership more dramatically:

> I was aware that if . . . [an] exhibition was to be a film, notions of sequence that were important—in so far as a journey was being made by a visitor from one section of the exhibition to another—would have to be made slave to a narrative. But only a connecting sense of sequence was necessary here. Why has the cinema associated itself with the business of story-telling? Could it not profitably exist without it? My cinema experiments with numerical systems, alphabetical sequence, color-coding, have all been attempts to dislodge this apparently unquestioned presumption that narrative is necessary and essential for cinema to convey its preoccupations. (*Stairs/Geneva,* 12–13)

Greenaway likened the trajectory of moving from one artifact to another in an exhibition to the principle of montage; that is, the exhibition space offered many isolated "frames," "views," or "images" that were ultimately seen in (various) "sequence(s)." The speed, repetition, and juxtaposition of these "images" were left up to the individual viewer to plot out. The idea that the trajectory through an exhibition amounts to a montage was further articulated in an exhibition Greenaway curated in 1993 in Swansea, Wales, aptly entitled *Some Organising Principles.* Greenaway hoped the exhibition would work as a "*Wunderkammern,*" "a room of marvels that collected together in one place, all manner of finds—natural and man-made—and juxtaposed them in such a way as to evoke wonder" (*Some Organising Principles,* 2). Here, the exhibited objects, or "images"—artifacts borrowed from the museums, a collection of "fake books" from the film *Prospero's Books,* and Greenaway's own paintings—were randomly ordered by a system of illumination that was constantly changing. Different objects, or groups of objects, were thus highlighted and favored over others at different times. This changing lighting suggested an order, sequence, and timeframe to the viewing of seemingly fragmented objects/images. In highlighting and separating out this act of "sequencing images" and making it a more self-conscious activity for the museum viewer, Greenaway questioned not only the subjective nature of "montage" but also problematized the idea of neutrality and

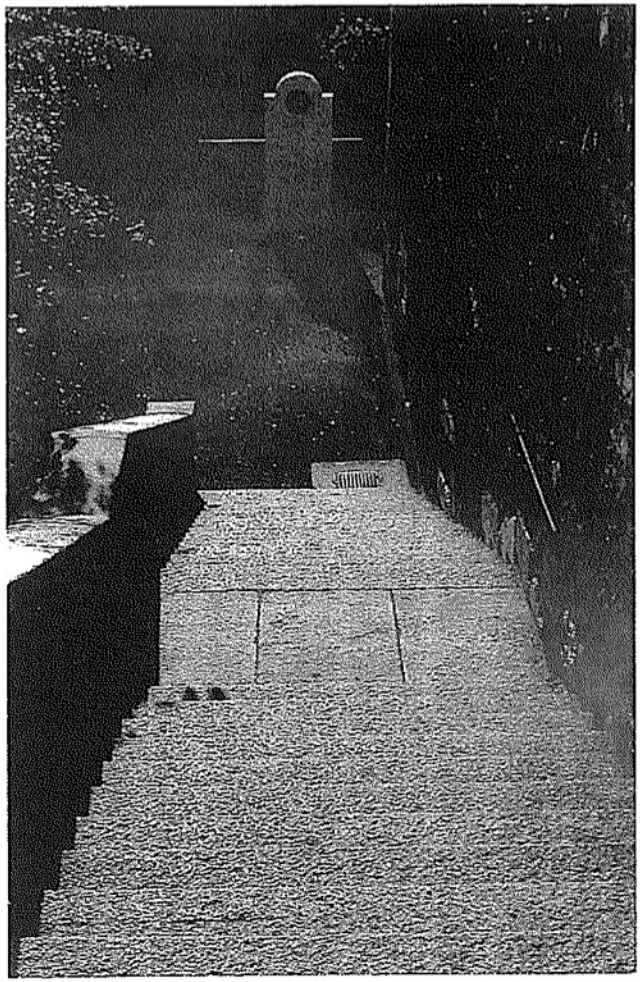

Figure 2.1 ***Stairs/Geneva.*** **Courtesy of Peter Greenaway.**

objectivity that is implied both in museum display and in the "objectivity" of the camera. This act of "montaging" objects/images and constructing "sequences" also made the viewer more conscious of the all-too-easy slippage between experiencing an object as physically present in the world and reading it as an object-as-image, further questioning the objectivity of constructions and representations of reality.

In 1992, Peter Greenaway curated a much more ambitious exhibition entitled *One Hundred Objects to Represent the World,* at three different sites in

Vienna. In true Greenawayesque encyclopedic fervor, the exhibition proposed 100 objects that would, as the title suggests, represent the world in both the physical and conceptual realms. The exhibition included a variety of inanimate museum pieces and everyday objects such as machinery, teeth, and the Willendorf Venus, for instance, but also presented, and "made physical" such things as the phallus, the kiss, the soul, sleep, a cloud, wind, and God. The scale and conceptual framework of the exhibition was grander, more epic, and more comprehensive than Greenaway's previous exhibitions and made a much more overt comparison between cinematic and exhibition languages and modes of viewership. One of the ways Greenaway accomplished this was by turning to some of the illusionistic devices of filmmaking in order to display some of the less tangible of the 100 objects. For example, "A Cloud" was "displayed"—staged and given form—by a large-scale light and sound (for the thunder) show and other props that suggested what one might find on a film soundstage. The building of sets, the use of carefully designed and executed cinematographic devices such as elaborate lighting and sound effects, became an integral part of this exhibition, which used a varied series of "display" strategies. The presentations were not homogeneous. The act and experiences of viewership of *One Hundred Objects to Represent the World* seemed to fall anywhere between a very intimate viewing situation of more traditional museum objects at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, to a larger-than-life theme-park-like experience of "A Cloud," for example, at Vienna's Semper Depot. This use of blatant artifice next to the "aura" of traditional museum object viewing unveiled the construction of each mode of viewership. However, this juxtaposition also reclaimed these modes of viewership as valuable, suggesting that the concept of the authenticity of the museum object and the reality of a constructed film set are shifting, blurred, and fluid constructions.

The exhibition in Vienna was attended by over 90,000 viewers in five weeks and produced a profusely illustrated catalogue. The exhibition held for Greenaway perhaps even greater possibilities, since he hoped to "re-create" the exhibition in other cities around the world, each time remaking it within the cultural parameters, practicalities, and ambitions of the host cities. More important, however, with these exhibitions Greenaway identified a new type of audience—or perhaps created one—that was not content with a sedentary and passive viewership but, rather, that was interested in questioning the relationship between objects, images, viewing dynamics, and constructions of reality. This audience was also a sociable one that could be presented with multiple, differing, and heterogeneous perspectives around a particular—and subjective—theme, all

"under the auspices of light and sound dealing with a large slice of the cinema's vocabulary" (*Stairs/Geneva*, 28).

THE STAIRS

In 1993, Greenaway undertook a large, and truly epic, public art-project entitled *The Stairs,* which would eventually consist of ten public installations, each lasting 100 days, to be installed in various cities over a period of many years. This series of installations treats the theme of film and its language, elaborating concepts that Greenaway outlines as fundamental elements of film language. These are: Location, Audience, the Frame, Acting, Properties, Light, Text, Time, Scale, and Illusion. The first of these public art-projects was installed in Geneva, in 1993, and the second took place in Munich, in 1995. *The Stairs* project represents a unifying work that best responds to Greenaway's concerns with materiality, multiple viewpoints, and the desire to activate the audience in a much more substantial way.

The specific theme of the Geneva exhibition was "location." Greenaway chose 100 sites in the city and framed them using a structure that consisted of a staircase leading to a partially enclosed platform area with a perforation through which one could observe a framed view of a location, or

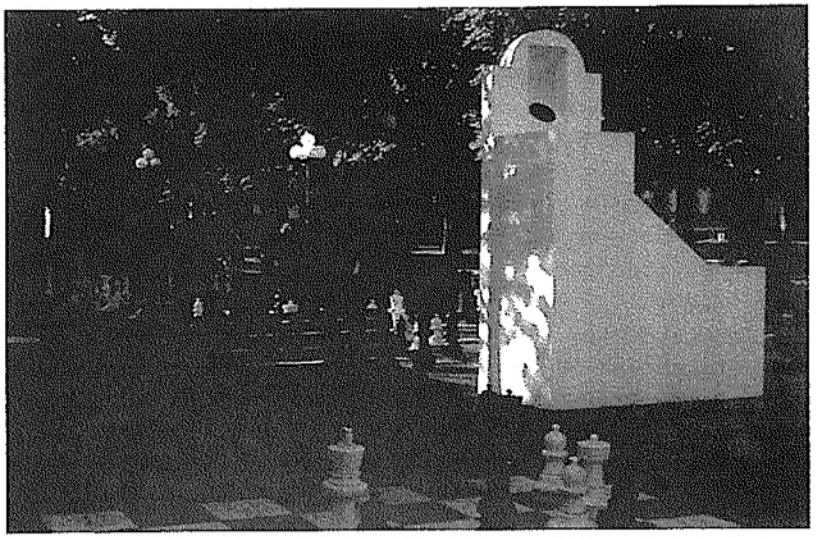

Figure 2.2 ***Stairs/Geneva.*** **Courtesy of Peter Greenaway.**

site, that Greenaway had scouted out. Directly related to this concept of the location was the idea of the frame and the act of framing—a notion Greenaway further explored with the Munich exhibition and one that has appeared repeatedly in Greenaway's films. *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) and *The Belly of an Architect* (1987) are two examples of films that explore this at length, and props that appeared in the latter inspired a prototype of the Geneva staircases. With *The Stairs/Geneva,* Greenaway attempted to move away from the use and authority of the frame in conventional cinema, which drives the audience toward an imposed and uncritical position of voyeurism. Although the viewer in the Geneva exhibit looks through a type of peephole onto a prescribed scene, s/he is conscious of performing this act of looking within the given structure of *The Stairs* project and within the larger context of the (real) city. In assuming this position *consciously,* the viewer cannot but engage with a critique of the apparatus of spectatorship. For a future *Stairs* exhibition on "the audience," Greenaway has proposed to create groups of seated audiences throughout a city, "acting" as spectators of the unstaged everyday life of the city unfolding in front of them, themselves performing "viewership." *The Stairs/Geneva* transformed the city into a collection of *tableaux-vivants* that gave us something closer to a *cinéma-vivant,* oscillating continually between fiction and fact.

The viewers of *The Stairs/Geneva* moved from one staircase to another with the help of a map pinpointing each numbered location. Of course, they could also stumble upon the staircases while strolling through the city on daily rounds. At night, the sites were artificially lit so as to provide round-the-clock access and viewing possibilities. *The Stairs/Geneva* embodied, in no uncertain terms, the idea of a "living cinema" with each viewer becoming an active participant and an intrinsic part of the exhibit. The map, which surfaces in many of Greenaway films—starting with *A Walk through H* (1978)—becomes the "script" for *The Stairs/Geneva.* This script, however, is more like a list than a narrative and is open-ended and mutable, having no ulterior purpose other than being a (non-compulsory) aid to negotiating viewing possibilities and positions; the rest is left to chance, that is, to what may or may not be occurring at a given site, and to the viewer's desire to follow the suggested trajectory further. The only suggestion of a prescribed order on the maps were the numbers of the listed sites. These numbers could be linked to the ticking away of frames or to time lapsing. The act of numbering—another signature device figuring in many of Greenaway's films—suggests not only an order but also a primitive narrative of sorts—all, in a sense, mocking the very conventions of film that Greenaway finds so limiting.

By using the real city of Geneva as a site for a "possible" or "potential" film, Greenaway engages the audience members, encouraging them to "assemble" their own "film" with chosen vantage points selected and "framed" by the filmmaker. The act and process of this assembling stresses the concept of multiplicity for, as a public art-piece, all one hundred sites/frames/staircases are simultaneously full of viewing/experiencing potentialities. In this sense it becomes interactive—the audience becomes an important participant in *The Stairs/Geneva* by the very fact that the audience is needed to activate the locations chosen by Greenaway. Thus, the experience and the event of film*making* in all their complexities, as "materialized" by the objects, the bodies, the sets, the script, script revisions, and the rehearsals, are here translated into a form that can be shared by the audience on many levels through its engagement with the 100 sites. Greenaway thus activates "audience-ness" in an unprecedented way and, in so doing, radically alters the nature of film viewership by not only making the audience an active participant in the act of looking but also by transforming that act of looking into a type of performance that becomes fundamental to the experience of *The Stairs/Geneva.* The process of negotiating a map to get from one site to another is an *act* that activates the entire city as the stage/set/site. The act of peering through a frame onto a site becomes the crucial element of a mechanism that is activated by the audience/viewer and is at par with what is taking place at the site on the other side of the frame. It transforms both sides of the stairs' frames, making them physically related and indeed dynamic.

With *The Stairs/Geneva,* Greenaway also makes a striking commentary on the nature of objectivity and realism. With the 100 framed views, Greenaway sets up a situation for the audience that both acknowledges the contrived and subjective nature of the act of framing and contrasts it with the stream of everyday ("objective") urban life. As a filmmaker, Greenaway stops at mid-point in the construction of the cinematic fiction and shares the responsibility for this construction with the viewers themselves. Greenaway's audiences are participatory audiences who, by their own accord, focus their attention on the frame, and consequently on the framed event, and acknowledge Greenaway's subjectivity as well as their own. In a sense, Greenaway mocks the concept of an oppositional relationship between objectivity and subjectivity and, by giving relief to the paradoxes and conventions of representation, he proposes a more complex and fluid notion of these.

Greenaway has stated that what is unfortunate and limiting about cinema's ability to stimulate, develop, and deploy the imagination is that, compared to literature or painting, cinema can only offer its audience one phenomena at a time and only in a time frame that is entirely dictated by the

filmmaker (*Stairs/Geneva,* 3). In his opinion, this "singularity" is a severe limitation when compared to the multiple possibilities to stop, ponder, return to, and scrutinize afforded a reader of text or a viewer of a painting. In addition, film can never truly engage with history since its images have no real materiality. This perceived impoverishment of cinema has shaped Greenaway's way of making and thinking about films; as a result, his cinema is a vast and complex weave of conventions and oppositions. His films oscillate back and forth between a rejection and an embrace of literature and its conventions, even though he believes most cinema is far too dependent on literature. He has tried to expand what he perceives to be severe limitations of cinema by simultaneously embracing and rejecting traditional canons of Western art history and of contemporary art practices that often define themselves in opposition to those very canons. This has inevitably involved a series of paradoxes, ironies, overlappings, overreachings, and contradictions that often bleed from one film into another and from film into other artistic media and practices.

It is in this sense that Peter Greenaway is a hybrid-filmmaker, and it is in this way that he distinguishes himself from most of his contemporaries. His notion of cinema expands the discourse of the medium by going beyond the strict practice of filmmaking. All this involves, among other things, challenging and attempting to redefine larger issues about visuality, materiality, and viewership. Greenaway's ambitious future project, *The Tulse Luper Suitcases,* is sure to do just that: it is being conceived as a multi-faceted project that will include a two- or four-hour film, a sixteen-part television series, two CD-ROMs, and an Internet site. Traditional cinema has failed Greenaway, and it is this failure that has shaped his unique practice—one that is best seen as a vast continuum across media and disciplines. It is with this understanding that we can best grasp Greenaway's vision and the preoccupations that drive his *oeuvre.*