



Suspended Island

Jane and Louise Wilson

Jane and Louise Wilson *Suspended Island* 22 June – 9 September 2018

Commissioned by BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art
This work is part of the Great Exhibition of the North
Access to Low Yard with kind permission of Newcastle upon Tyne Trinity House

Jane and Louise Wilson (b. Newcastle upon Tyne, 1967) began working together in 1989. They use film, photography and sculpture to create arresting and atmospheric installations that grapple with often challenging subject matter. *Suspended Island* is their first outdoor commission. The location of this work at Low Yard, part of Trinity House, is significant. A Royal Charter was granted by Henry VIII to the Corporation of Trinity House in 1514 and it has been concerned with the safety of shipping and the well-being of seafarers ever since. Ships and seafarers from all over the world depend upon Trinity House's reliable aids to navigation for their safe passage into the UK's ports and harbours.

Using filmed footage shot in 2004 documenting the now abandoned coastal fortifications on Governors Island off the coast of Manhattan, New York. The island was formerly home to the United States Coast Guard, before being decommissioned in 1995.

Suspended Island weaves together footage from Governors Island and the Palace of Westminster, Parliament alongside animation featuring the artefacts found inside Trinity House and a newly commissioned text

by the author Vesna Maric who came to the U.K. as a refugee from Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992.

The soundtrack on *Suspended Island* rifts with the Calvinist hymn *We've Sighted the Golden Gate* taken from a 1948 recording sung by the artist's grandmother and her siblings. The work uncovers a relationship between its site on the Newcastle upon Tyne Quayside, Governors Island and Parliament.

"We are particularly interested in what happens when the geography of a location takes on a porous identity, or becomes a place outside its own border and in particular this idea of 'a suspended island'."

The image of an island – as something that is at once cut off and yet connected – is particularly resonant, raising questions of what it means to British and what it means to be northern.

To access audio for the film:

1. Connect to *Suspended Island* WiFi
2. Open your browser and go to <http://geon.cloud>
3. Select a stream and press the play button

Directed by Jane and Louise Wilson
Produced by Orlan Kelly
Film Editor: Andrew George David Scotland
Colourist and Colour Editor: Sarah Eason
Sound Recording: Mark Ben Young
Post Production and Sound by: Sarah Stone
Graphic Artist: Julia Wainwright
Screenwriting: Life In Film
Recording: The Vinyl Connection Studio, Shaker Studio
Animation Produced by: Pastiche Pictures
Animation Producer: Sam Phipps
VFX: Anthony Stewart Phipps
Artwork: Chris Weaver
Photography: Jane and Louise Wilson
Sounding in UK courtesy of Al Griffin at 93 Stone Studios

We've Sighted the Golden Gate written by El Mallock, James McWhittaker
Performed by The MacLean Family
Family Recording Courtesy of Jane and Louise Wilson
Origin archived by George Giddard
Re-Recorded by Daniel John Luke Giddard
Performed by Daniel John Luke Giddard
Recording Courtesy of Pastiche Pictures
Published by Department Media, UK Ltd

Made with: Motion Street Studio; from
Governor's Island (Jane and Louise Wilson 1984)
With thanks to cinematographer Abigail Cameron, Camera Assistant: Sean Williams,
Cutter: Jerry Parnell, Color: David Smith and Joe Doughton, FIM: John Alan Gardner,
Live Producer: Peter Schindler and Sound Recording: Stuart Duggan, commissioned by
Public Art Fund and Parks in Governor's Island Preservation & Education Corporation,
and
Parliament (The Third House) Jane and Louise Wilson 1995
Cinematographer: Abigail Cameron, Camera Assistant: Jacky Maitland, Soundman: Jonathan
Deegan Hobb and Sound Recording: Jackie Bellamy, Editor: Ray Strachan

Made with: ArtV and Live Through
With special thanks to: Marlon Christian Hooley and Steven Bond at Trinity House, Public Art
Fund, Sam Eccles, Mike-Duncan and 903 Gallery New York.

Produced by BALTIC in Association with Life in Live Film

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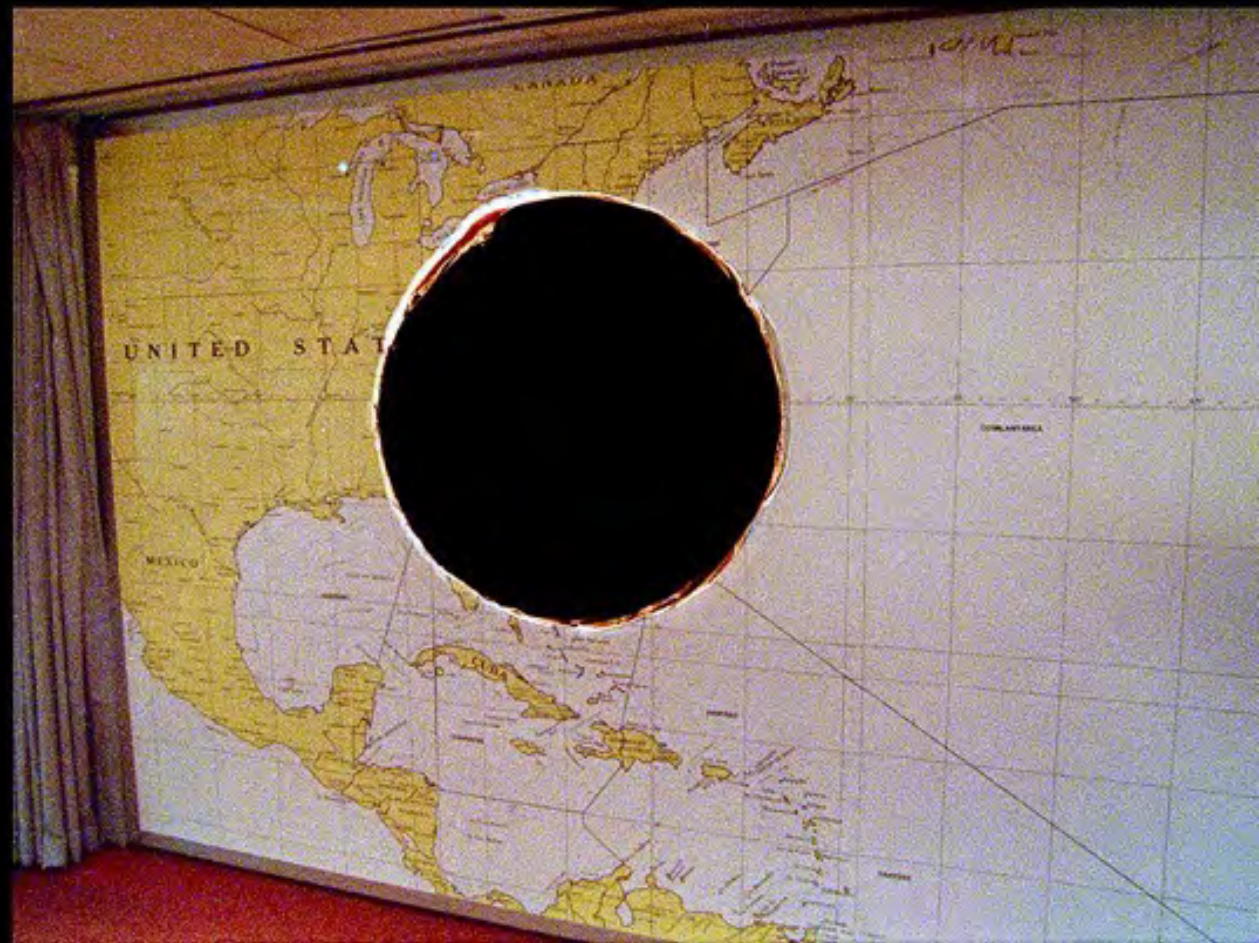
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Film still 2018

Jane and Louise Wilson *Suspended Island*



Left: Install view of artwork being constructed taken outside the gate entrance to Low Yard behind Trinity House 2018



Right: 2-D render of Suspended Island Installed in Low Yard 2018.

STATEMENT

Suspended Island (2018) was an outdoor film installation artwork by Jane and Louise Wilson exhibited at Trinity House in Newcastle upon Tyne. The work, commissioned by and made in collaboration with BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, provided a new public artwork on Newcastle's Quayside as part of the Great Exhibition of the North in 2018.

Underpinned by research undertaken over twenty years, the artwork revolves around the idea of a 'suspended island' – a location that exists beyond state borders, a place of arrival and departure, presence and absence.

The film is a composite of previously unreleased footage from the artists' audio-visual archive, brought together with a newly commissioned voice-over narrative written by the artists and read by Vesna Maric, a refugee who came to the UK from Bosnia in 1992. *Suspended Island* responds to its installation location at Trinity House – a historic quayside institution set up to regulate foreign and domestic pilotage on the River Tyne. Trinity House provided a departure point for the artists

to explore transient, liminal environments and subjects in their archive, including footage from the similarly borderland site of Governor's Island in New York, recorded in 2004, and interviews with refugees recorded in Derby in 2008. Reflecting on these subjects in 2018, the artists explore Britain at a time when Brexit was looming, and notions of borders, statehood and citizenship were a fraught part of the public discourse. Footage of the Palace of Westminster (1999) provides a looming political backdrop in the film.

In responding to the political, geographical, and historical circumstances of 2018, the artists engaged in a process of reflection and discovery in their own archive. *Suspended Island* consequently explores the notions of historical, personal, and institutional memory – and its connection with physical spaces.

OUTPUTS AND VIEWING COPY

***Suspended Island* film installation artwork**

Duration 16mins, 16mm film transfer with stereo sound.

2x LED Di Color LED Wall M-480 Plus (Outdoor)

1x 4m:3m, 1x 4m:3m.

View online: <https://vimeo.com/279051204>

(Password : ISLAND1)

The output was disseminated via installation as a public artwork on the Quayside in Newcastle upon Tyne, between June and September 2018. The film was subsequently disseminated in a series of exhibitions, screenings, and panel discussions around the world in 2018 and 2019.

Details of the dissemination and the research reach of the project are covered in the contextual information provided below.



Suspended Island 2018. 16mm film transfer, 16mins duration with stereo sound, 2 x LED Di Color LED Wall M-480 Plus (Outdoor) 1x 4m:3m,1x 4m:3m.Installation view Low Yard Newcastle Quayside, Jane and Louise Wilson 2018.

Twins Jane and Louise Wilson (b. 1967), began working together in 1989. Using film, photography and sculpture, the artists create atmospheric installations that reflect upon often challenging subject matter.

Following their earliest forays into multi-screen installations, with works such as *Stasi City* (1997), the artists have produced several installations that function as meditations on the social imagery of the postwar world. In these works, the artists have explored the photographic and cinematic representation of military, industrial, and urban architectural forms: *Gamma* (1999), *Proton Unity Energy Blizzard* (2000), *A Free and Anonymous Monument* (2003), *Sealander* (2006), *Unfolding the Aryan Papers* (2009). This background of research in the field, and the artists' growing archive of personal research materials, informed the production of *Suspended Island* in 2018.

Working with historical memory, the Wilsons' work regularly uncovers empty, evacuated sites in which the control seems to be lost or abandoned. These physical sites often focus on abandoned communities. The film installations lead the viewer on a voyage that has as much to do with psychological time as it does with the archaeology and psychogeography of place and experience.

The artists have an interest in drawing imagery and subject matter from archive materials. In the video installation artwork *Undead Sun* (2014), film sequences were based on the artists' research in the Imperial War Museum's archives in London and Duxford and in the FAST museum archives of wind flow research, at Farnborough air base. In *We Put the World Before You* (2016), the artists worked with the Wellcome Trust Archive and the BFI film archive, weaving together archival material, animation and new footage.

For *Suspended Island*, the artists further developed their interest in liminal and abandoned spaces and using archival material – though a mediation through their own film archive. Making use of previously unreleased material recorded on 16mm film in 2004, the artists remastered this onto a digital format. This edited film was then woven together with newly-animated inserts of mummified turtles – the imagery borrowed from Trinity House - and graffiti, in the form of condensed haikus based on a series of interviews with refugees from Bosnia, Kurdistan, Ukraine and Democratic Republic of the Congo that the Wilsons recorded at a refugee drop-in centre in Derby 2008.





Jane and Louise Wilson *Suspended Island*

Reference shots inside Trinity House of mummified turtles for animation sequences in *Suspended Island* 2018

Suspended Island was Jane and Louis Wilson's first public outdoor commission.











The artwork is a meditation on site, making use of previously-unreleased film material. The film weaves together the artists' footage from Governors Island (2004) and the Palace of Westminster (1999), alongside new animation featuring mummified turtles, and graffiti in the form of condensed haikus. The poetic texts were commissioned for the film from the writer Vesna Maric, who came to the UK as a refugee from Bosnia–Herzegovina in 1992.

The location of the work in Low Yard at Trinity House was significant for the artists. Since 1514, the Brethren of Trinity House have operated under a Royal Charter to ensure the safety of shipping and the well-being of seafarers. The image of the Brethren and the importance of the lights for safety navigation affected the artists on a personal and biographical level; the soundtrack incorporates the Calvinist hymn 'We've Sighted the Golden Gate' taken from a 1948 recording sung by the artists' grandmother and her siblings.

Alongside images examining dereliction, safety and community, the camera focuses on abandoned diving boards, and a discarded painting of paper boats floating over a ghost ship, beneath an image of a giant sailor holding balloons as he strides across Governors Island to Manhattan.

Suspended Island analyses the perception of presence through absence, revealing on one hand a lost urban geography in the form of Governor's Island and on the other exploring through moving image the kinetic relationship between the architecture and the three distinct sites. First, the physically visible historic location of Trinity House, where the installation was sited; alongside a deserted Palace of Westminster filmed during recess; and finally Governors Island, a now obsolete site of abandoned coastal fortifications off the coast of Manhattan.

Viewers are confronted with images of these locations, and the bleak interiors of the bowling alley, with its remnants of 'normal' leisure activities: bowling shoes and children's bantam leagues notices. The strange, out of place-ness of seeing a Burger King sign on the restaurant's floor add to these moments of tangible abstraction of material and place of an island, suspended in time.

SUSPENDED ISLAND - ANIMATION OVERVIEW - 290318			
	1B: Static shot of bench 00:26 - 00:32 ANIMATOR: FELIX Nothing on the bench		2B: Still shot of a basketball hoop. 00:29 - 01:16 FELIX: 00:56 Follow the lights We made a map by getting lost and discovering our location again
	Static shot of court 02:55 - 03:14 ANIMATOR: FELIX A red note stuck to the message board. it reads: remove this, brethren from the country. A gust of wind makes it flutter.		Panning Periscope shot of parliament interior. 02:41 - 03:04 Then 
	SI_06.31 - 06.53		3B: SI_ 06.49 - 07.02 ANIMATOR: FELIX Navigating a new language we take a dictionary to find our way around a shop. But the words we need are hidden.
	SI_08.44 - 09.00 Camera pans down. Then at 09.01 - 09.20 		4B - SI_ 08.47 - 09.22 FELIX: GRADUAL PEEL IN EFFECT No one knows what to do with us. We are alien objects. We try hard to be

	SI_09.31- 09.53 Long shot pulls back to wide. FELIX We're all a shadow in this colonial organism, indistinguishable.		natural. 09.30 - 09.41
	5B - SI_ 14.27 - 14.51		09.42 - 09.54 FELIX We're all a shadow in this colonial organism, indistinguishable. 5B - SI_ 14.15 - 14.45 GRADUAL PEEL IN EFFECT We find friends, make a group. Our slogan is We are people Without a Country. We call it Lamps of Freedom.

Animation storyboard for *Suspended Island* 2018



Suspended Island 2018. 16mm film transfer, 16mins duration with stereo sound, 2 x LED Di Color LED Wall M-480 Plus (Outdoor) 1x 4m:3m, 1x 4m:3m. Installation view Low Yard Newcastle Quayside, Jane and Louise Wilson 2018.



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The output has been disseminated via exhibitions and screenings around the world:

Trinity House, Newcastle upon Tyne as part of *GEON: The Great Exhibition of the North*, from June to September 2018.

A two-screen version of *Suspended Island* subsequently premiered at the Rotterdam Film Festival in 2019, then toured to the Hyundai Gallery, Gapado Island, South Korea in the exhibition *Homecoming* in January 2019.

Suspended Island featured at the 2018 Vila Do Conde Film Festival in Portugal, where it won the Experimental Film Award.

The output was further disseminated at a sequence of discussion panels:

Analysis: Drawing Out Practice, 9 November 2018 at the Architectural Association, London. Organized by Parveen Adams and Mark Cousins. This event featured Jane and Louise Wilson in conversation with Mark Cousins.

Jane and Louise Wilson: An Introduction to their Art practice and Video Installations from Stasi City (1997), Undead Sun (2014), Face Scripting What Did the Building See? (2011) to Suspended Island (2018), 18 November 2019 at Central Saint Martins, London.

Jane and Louise Wilson in conversation with Cherie Federico at the Aesthetica Film Festival, London, November 2019.

Suspended Island was raised at Prime Minister's Question Time in the House of Commons in July 2018, when Chi Onwurah MP (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) asked about the future of engineering in the UK and the Great Exhibition of the North. The exchange is recorded in Hansard – available online here: <https://bit.ly/2WUsJK6>



Artist Talk: Jane and Louise Wilson in conversation with Cherie Federico Director of Aesthetica Magazine in the BAFTA- Qualifying Aesthetica Film Festival a large festival taking place across 15 venues November 2019 with contributions from Film4, StudioCanal, BBC, Channel 4 to Framestore, Industrial Light & Magic, ArtAngel, FLAMIN, BFI, i-D, Vice, Nowness Friday November 8th 2019.



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SUSPENDED ISLAND

by Jane and Louise Wilson

2019 winner of the Experimental Film Award



The following slides give additional reference material for the installation and imagery employed in *Suspended Island*.



Jane Wilson pictured : 16mm archive still taken during filming inside the Palace of Westminster Jane and Louise Wilson 1999



Left: 'Doorkeepers Chair' Parliament , C-type print
Jane and Louise Wilson 1999

Right: 'Library Corridor, House of Lords, Parliament,
Jane and Louise Wilson 1999



Suspended Island 2018. 16mm film transfer, 16mins duration with stereo sound, 2 x LED Di Color LED Wall M-480 Plus (Outdoor) 1x 4m:3m, 1x 4m:3m. Installation view Low Yard Newcastle Quayside, Jane and Louise Wilson 2018.



Jane and Louise Wilson pictured in 16mm archive still taken during the filming inside the theatre on Governors Island, off Manhattan in 2004 Jane and Louise Wilson 2004



"Theatre' Suspended Island Governors Island, 2004 C-type print Jane and Louise Wilson 2004



Suspended Island 2018. 16mm film transfer, 16mins duration with stereo sound, 2 x LED Di Color LED Wall M-480 Plus (Outdoor) 1x 4m:3m, 1x 4m:3m. Installation view Low Yard Newcastle Quayside, Jane and Louise Wilson 2018.



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Plus (Outdoor) 1x 4m:3m, 1x 4m:3m. Installation view Low Yard Newcastle Quayside, Jane and Louise Wilson 2018.
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