

ARTslant



The Smooth and the Striated

by Andrea Alessi

The Smooth and The Striated

Nieuw Dakota

Ms. van Riemsdijkweg 41 b, 1033 RC Amsterdam, Netherlands

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The Smooth and the Striated, a dual-sited art exhibition presented in the context of the [Third International Deleuze Studies Conference](#), doesn't require intimate knowledge of the French philosopher's theories. I'm no Gilles Deleuze scholar myself, though I've read the essay (written with Félix Guattari) from which the exhibition derives its name. I found I appreciated the project more as an exploration of communicating and quantifying space (as the exhibition text suggests), rather than an exercise in teasing out the fluxuating binaries of smooth and striated in particular artworks.

The exhibition presents eight artists, each with works at both sites. The choice of Huize Frankendael and Nieuw Dakota as venues was particularly inspired, and is certainly as important to the exhibition as the artwork itself. Both sites are urban (and thus, typically striated) buildings reincarnated as art venues. Huize Frankendael is a seventeenth century country-style house in an affluent part of East Amsterdam. Its restored building is home to a cafe, rentable meeting spaces, and occasional [art](#)

exhibitions.



Nieuw Dakota is in the Noord (North), a former industrial area across the waters of Het IJ from the Central Station. This is a space in transition, (the striated into the smooth and then back again perhaps?), and the once rundown neighborhood is transforming with artist studios, cafes, and galleries. Nieuw Dakota and the adjacent Motive Gallery reside in renovated warehouses on the NDSM Pier.

Despite their differences the two venues play on the unresolved binaries in urban spaces. The unkempt wood behind Huize Frankendael is as carefully planned as the manicured English-style gardens that yield to it; the funky and edgy Noord, a ripe place for squatters and subculture is undergoing a purposeful remodeling from the city. Waves of striated planning and smooth resistance characterize these two types of urban environment.

The artwork in *The Smooth and the Striated*, for its part, doesn't directly address Deleuze, though one can see why the curators might have made specific selections. Some works attempt to quantify, like Tom Tlalim's infographic video and sound piece at Nieuw Dakota. Tlalim uses specific numerical census-type data from Jerusalem, creating something abstract and indecipherable. His quantifications resist comprehension, seemingly rejecting the notion that mere numbers can reveal truths about humanity.

There is a nomadic level of resistance against the grooved and organized State and its visual cultures. Jasmijn Visser's narrative drawings in both venues are iconoclastic, and seemingly investigate the relationships between visual symbols like architecture and monuments, and power. Sjoerd Westbroek also questions architecture and lived experience. His works in Nieuw Dakota ask viewers to recognize the ways our bodily encounters are mediated by architectural forms. A freestanding metal pergola-like form directs one to walk a certain way, opening onto a set of drawings in which Westbroek reproduces a patent for a maze of mirrors.



One set of works that I think particularly benefits from the Deleuzian context is Pieter Paul Pothoven's ongoing *Chromakey* project, based around the social, political, and visual properties of the semi-precious stone Lapis Lazuli. His seemingly simple blown-up photographs of stone surfaces at Nieuw Dakota and haunting images of pitch black mine shafts at Huize Frankendael map minerals onto landscapes and vice versa. The enlarged surfaces of the stones look like satellite images of lush, watery environments, while the almost indiscernible cave photographs remind viewers of the harsher realities of jewel acquisition. The dark, smooth environments of the caves are territorialized by demanding markets via miners who can identify the cavernous spaces by the colors and structures of their stones.



The double-sided nature of the exhibition itself makes one aware of the different spaces of the city and how architecture and careful city planning mediate our experience of those environments. Canals and hedges in the parks around Huize Frankendael encourage certain ambulatory paths. The trip to Nieuw Dakota is best made by a free ferry which connects central Amsterdam with its rapidly developing North. These spaces have been gridded, quantified, and structured; our journeys have been planned. Nevertheless, a bit of worn down grass cutting through an East Amsterdam park, a wooden plank thrown across a narrow canal, or a surreptitiously opened gate in a Noord construction site all recall the interplay between the smooth and the striated in the urban everyday.

[~Andrea Alessi](#), a writer living in The Netherlands

(Images: *Installation View*; Courtesy Edward C. Thomson; *Exhibition view*; Courtesy Huize

Frankendael)

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