



From One Side of the Glass to the Other

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Se mettre en vitrine
Photo : Idra Labrie

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Since Alice, the glass is no longer an obstacle, but a membrane for transition and passage. But this membrane contains in itself a strange dynamic that changes the world and the perception we have of it, depending on which side of the window we stand. In hospitals, the glass cages are antivirus spaces, closed in places that nevertheless condemn everybody therein. In shops, windows separate contemplative aesthetes from compulsive consumers. In homes, they are protections from the storm, yet at the same time invitations to explore risk.

Regardless of its location and its primary function, the glass always involves the possibility of a choice. In a real or symbolic exchange, it marks a split with the world, first of all as a dichotomy: inclusion / exclusion; intimacy / extimacy; mad / not mad; attending staff / patients, and so on. But depending on the effects of light, the window contains images that are reflections of each position in function of the angle of perception, thereby destroying the separation from the world from a binary point of view. If I can go from one side to the other, I can also change my understanding of each world. Thus, according to my place on one side or the other of the window, what power do I have, what becomes of my autonomy when I am suddenly alienated and confined to a function that is proper to each side of the window? Just like at a zoo, the question arises of the observer who through the window, is also being observed. In this game of mutual observation, one's place on one side or the other opens up leads however, to different relationships in regard to power and especially in regard to the actual involvement in the world of the other.

Based on this idea of "from one side of the glass to the other", Folie/Culture invites its close friends to explore this game open to others, alone in this glass cage on the other side of the picture window, living together on the same side of the window or part of a dynamic exchange. There are illusions of passage,

but also of the reflection of the mirror image, which merges with its evanescence into the tangible world of "the other sideⁱ." Based on the idea of the flow of a rigid world into the fluidity of the image on the other side of the glass, can we shake the certainty and the false security of isolation? Because in real life, the mad and non-mad coexist; objects of trade are mythologized in the windows, but also lie around in dumps; artists and non-artists rely on similar sensibilities in their relationship to the aesthetic experience. As a working hypothesis, we are presenting that liminal space, the moment of transition from one side of the glass to the other. This could take the form of formal visual propositions, but also of urban manoeuvres that could be immediate reactions to the city, where both sides of the glass are always available.

By Alain-Martin Richard
For the programming committee

ⁱ We think right away of Jacques Tati's *Playtime*, and especially the scene in which it is impossible to determine on which side of the sheet of glass he is.