

THE STAGED FACE

*"It is a passage between the gaze and the image, during which 'I see', from the Latin **video**, translates into a paradoxical movement that consists in taking the necessary distance from what we want to see in order to better grasp it: "to see is **to have distance**". Maurice Merleau-Ponty's intrinsic link between vision and mobility gives substance to the invisible process of seeing. It tells its own story in every resulting version of the world, in every image."*

Stéphanie Dauget in her book **Video, I see** (2017, p.7)

Play

I can still remember the first time I watched the trailer of **The skin I live in** by Almodovar (2011). It was many years ago, and I knew already that I would let quite some time pass before I take the courage to watch it for real. By knowing Almodovar's polished aesthetics I assumed that the images I would see would not fill me in with disgust, as if it had been some remake of **Saw** where the main character has to cut or sew back members of their own body together. Nonetheless already, the fact that the word "skin" appears in the title, combined with the movie poster where the main character [Elena Anaya] appears with a silicone mask on her face, red marker traces thoroughly dissecting her upper body into geometrical shapes, her terrified eyes and this man [Antonio Banderas] close behind her, looking determined and as cold as one's eyes can be, I did not trust in a light evening watch. I have to add, that watching horror films [some might argue this movie isn't horror] is not a strong asset of mine, nor do I take pleasure in scaring myself through fiction. However, they leave me intrigued by the reactions and emotions they trigger in me.

I eventually ended up watching it many years after, while the reasons why this movie had been intriguing me this much and popping in and out of my mind consistently over time remain unknown.

From the very beginning of the movie and the first words pronounced by each main character, I had made up my mind about who I was going to root for, who is the bad guy, who is the unfair victim, who am I planning to hate and project my anger towards, or empathy at, throughout the movie. Of course this first approach was relatively naive of me and it turned out very much different than what I had imagined. Instead, it left me all emotionally and morally confused. I ended up playing imaginary trials for each of the characters in my head for days, to make sense of my own feelings towards them, each of them, as my moral compass was being challenged and contradicted with my emotions.

As a spectator, the story is not presented to you in a linear way, but rather a puzzled riddle, offering you flashbacks and clues here and there which participates to the development of your own confusion.

You follow Vera, a mysterious woman presenting, who's held in a very specially designed, high-tech, highly minimalist but somehow luxurious looking room, by herself [most likely against her will yet the beginning leaves you doubtful]. We additionally meet Robert, a gifted plastic surgeon who has been developing a type of skin resistant to any damage, and his house keeper Marilia who, until quite late in the film you do not know her role in the plot.

THE STAGED FACE

It is quite rapidly understood that Vera is kept there by force, while we do not know how long she has been there for, and why, we, as spectators, are also unsure of her thoughts and point of view on the situation she finds herself in, since she appears compliant and kind to her oppressors [nothing new to this kind of dynamic psychopath/victim but in this case it does work well with keeping informations from the audience].

As the past unfolds together with the present story, you understand the reasons behind Robert's obsession to create a skin which resists damage. We flashback together with him as ghosts are haunting his present life. As the surgeon's brother [Zeca] had ran away with Robert's wife named Gal, they had a car accident, which Zeca fled from, for Robert to find Gal terribly burned but still alive. Robert desperately and obsessively attempts to develop a new skin which could save burned victims from being disfigured, and save the love of his life. Their house is plunged [literally] into darkness for years in order to prevent any mirror effect from the light, just so that she would not be able to see her own reflection, until one day she does, cannot bear her disfigured self, and tragically throws herself out of the window.

Already there, I could sense that these informations about Robert were feeding my compassion card towards him. I start now to notice more vividly his weak and awkward spots, showing a less despicable personality. I sense, that my mind is magically highlighting aspects of his personality which accords him sympathy. I remodel his coldness into insecurity, reshape the sickening and toxic gaze he has onto Vera into a desperate call for affection and love, for hope, all of that against my own conscious will. I feel, for him.

I am guided into seeing what makes him human and less monster-psychopath-kidnapper, yet I don't want to feel this way. It makes me take a look at myself, my thoughts, moral compass, and emotions indeed. I am filled with discomfort, shame and the feeling that I cannot, and shouldn't trust my own feelings in order to be aligned with my values.

Didi-huberman (1992)

In the book essay *What we see, what is looking at us* (1992), Georges Didi-Huberman writes about the experience of the night while referring to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which I projected sincerely into the experience of my opinions and emotions throughout the movie. Merleau-Ponty writes :

"When, for example, the world of clear, articulated objects is abolished, our perceptive being, deprived of its world, draws a spatiality of things. This is what happens at night. It's not an object in front of me, it envelops me, it penetrates all my senses, it suffocates my memories, it almost erases my personal identity." (Georges Didi-huberman, 1992, p.)

In that sense, my perception of the characters got blurred, became confused and obscured my own mirror, my own identity towards what was happening. The blur that occurred with my own experience of the characters abashed my vision as if I was plunged into the darkness of a night while feeling intensely emotionally, yet disoriented.

Now when Didi-Huberman (1992) writes that *"What we see is only worth - is only alive - because of what is watching us"* (p.9) , the darkness within the characters's stories is felt, the cruelty too, yet empathy and compassion are penetrating through, leaving me blinded. Though within the night, I still feel a set of eyes watching me from far, as if checking I don't loose complete sense of moral balance.

While the tragedy continues to unravel, you start to understand the true identity of Vera. You get informed of the brief existence of Robert and Gal's daughter, who, as tragically as her mother, committed suicide after being subjected to a rape by a young man named Vicente.

Then, we are confronted to a truth which again will confuse it all. Here comes Vicente, and if you discover the story of this film through my words, spoiler alert :

THE STAGED FACE

Vicente is Vera, Vera is Vicente. Vicente is what drove their daughter to death. The twisted and disturbing plastic surgeon has attacked to fulfil his revenge and kidnapped Vicente, to turn him into a physical copy of his late wife Gal against his own will.

Vera/Vicente has been kept there for many years, and without being sure of their motives and true feelings regarding the situation I continue to witness the characters mature, together with the relationships between them. For a big part of the film you are left unsure whether everything that has happened has left V/V brainwashed or if V/V is manipulating Robert in order to one day escape, perhaps both at once. Regardless, a twisted relationship between V/V & Robert is growing.

You witness an almost love story unravel between them, and here, I catch myself almost wishing for a happy ending, yet not the happy ending you would imagine with the plot I just described. I see myself, seize hope and desire of love in both of their eyes, which naively drives me to the next obvious [to me] consequence : love between them.

I wonder then how deep did I get in their reality [yet the reality the director has helped me shape in my mind] to feel inclined of wishing them a happy in love forever together. In what world have I let myself fall, and get fooled to project onto this sickening story an other romantic drama film which adopts the codes of a genre. Have I watched too many romantic dramas which, no matter how problematic and disturbing the characters are towards each other, make me still wish for them to end up together? How much can one get fooled by an idealised and romanticised projection while being in possession of the strict and cold blooded facts?

As the title claims, I sense that I went under each character's skin, I was placed under their skin, willingly or not, which in a way deprived me of my reasoning beliefs. As a spectator, you are seeing these characters who all have done something terrible, yet they are being depicted through their emotional weaknesses and traumas, which in this case has given them full access to my own emotional window.

When Georges Didi-Huberman (1992) is analysing "*the dilemma of the visible*" in his eponymous chapter, he is using the example of an art critic to express his thought : "*By giving himself the constraint, or the troubled pleasure, of making quick judgments, the art critic prefers to make a cut rather than damage his gaze in the thickness of the slice. He prefers the dilemma to the dialectic*" (p44).

Which naively reminded me, that I do not have to choose a side, but indeed search in the breach for the reasons why I am uncomfortable with what I am seeing and how I am feeling.

Could it be that because I'm well aware of the fact that it is fiction, I therefore allow myself to feel empathy towards the monsters, and set aside certain elements that I wouldn't if it wasn't ? Do I create this space/stage where I can be able of trying to understand them because I know it is not real? If this specific story had been a documentary I somehow presume my moral sense would completely take over my judgment and I would not even allow my heart for any sentiment into trying to understand what has brought this person to act in such horrific ways. There would be a straight and strict path to walk for my opinionated self which I would not trespass. Or would it?

Pause

THE STAGED FACE

Play

Entering another fictional realm, I plunged into ***Holy Motors*** (2012), film by Leos Carax, which in terms of confusion for the spectator reaches an other level, but brings doubts of a different sort, it raises questions from a similar order as the ones asked regarding ***The skin I live in*** (2011), simply I believe from a different angle.

In ***Holy Motors***, you follow a mysterious man called Mr. Oscar [Denis Lavant], who is driven in a limousine all around Paris by Celine [Edith Scob]. They drive to different locations for the spectator to enter a new universe for each of them, and the main character Mr. Oscar to embody a new role, go from life to life, each time.

Throughout the film you therefore encounter many characters and brief stories, as for example Monsieur Merde [Mr. Shit directly translated], a deranged and aggressive red-haired inhabitant of the sewers of Paris, he engages in the kidnaping of a magnificent model [Eva Mendes] during a photoshoot in a cemetery. You can also witness the adventures of a motion capture actor, hired to create a sex scene for a video game where snake-like creatures make love, a beggar which everyone passes by without acknowledgement, or even a gangster hired to murder a man who looks exactly just like him. With this succinct and non-exhaustive description you may now have an idea of the adventure you're in while watching this movie if you have not previously.

About ***Holy Motors*** (2012), critic Jean-Sébastien Chauvin in ***Les cahiers du Cinéma*** (2012) wrote "*The film forces the spectator to question the reason why they can identify to a character*" (p.42). It becomes then clear to me that as you follow the development of the movie, you can quickly understand that you won't have access to a back story for each new character you get to discover, which in a way has the effect of forcing the viewer into making rapid connections to the depicted parts in a completely different way than in ***The skin I live in***.

Stéphanie Dauget (2017) analyses the signification of a moving image and their impact on the audience. When talking about Ryan Trecartin's video practice and the multifaceted-invasive-all over-the-place type of characters in them, she says :

"The artists take full advantage of the schizophrenic nature of the videography medium, carving out a seemingly random, rhizomic story on the surface of the screen. By stirring up a dissociated and alienating parallel universe before our very eyes, they question the notion of reality at a time when hypermediatization and invasive virtuality are raising growing doubts about the integrity of the human being himself." (p.140)

In that sense, ***Holy Motors*** (2012) could not be more related in its treatment of characters to Ryan Trecartin's approach with story telling, and able my way of analysing the images that I am seeing shaped by Leos Carax by his many characters.

THE STAGED FACE

I went into the film without any informations or prior research and therefore watched the movie as an unfamiliar witness of Leos Carax filmography and personal history, which had a prominent importance in how I have been able to perceive how I feel about it all, including in its relation to Almodovar's movie.

The first time I watched it, I remember being mesmerised by the universe, understand close to nothing but nonetheless trying to make sense of it, though, my own way. My first encounter tickled a more intuitive experience, admiration and excitement, attention without awareness, alertness without reflection, scrutinisation and hypnotised stare lacking realisation. I completely let myself be driven by each character and story just as Mr. Oscar in his limousine, just like the tainted glass, without asking any questions, going everywhere, anywhere, just going.

As calm and contemplative some scenes can be, most of the movie felt to me rather action-packed, because of the lack of background story for each character, I saw myself very involved and ready for anything to happen in terms of action. Since you don't know how much time you will spend with the new persona introduced to you, you need to get on quick, understand what they are about to comprehend what is happening in front of your eyes. I felt this urge inside of me waiting for the next clue, the next action, since it seemed to me there was no limit anymore to the plot, the main character could be killed by gunshot right through his brain, and once the scene over stand up and move on to the change to scene to play an other role. Anything could happen, because it doesn't have to make sense, yet.

Now what stroke me during this first experience, was the distance there was between me, and what was happening in the film. If there is one thing that **Holy Motors** isn't lacking, it is drama and the tragic countenance of certain scenes and roles. I wondered why, a cry-in-two-seconds type of spectator like me did not blink once during theses scenes. Of course, I am well aware that not having the time to get emotionally attached to a character plays the biggest part in my apathy towards their fictional destiny, yet I felt there was something else here I needed to investigate.

I therefore started to explore and scrutinise everything I could read and watch about it to understand my veiled confusion.

That is when I discovered the substantial weave between the stories told in **Holy Motors**, and the reality of the director's real life story which obviously changed my experience and perception of the film together with its many characters. As in the first scene of the movie, where Leos Carax himself is opening a hidden door from the bedroom wall with a strange metal tool replacing his finger, I opened the door to an entire new world, just as if I had not entered it once before. I plunged in it, without any emotional backup shield and just like his hand shaking while slowly opening the door, my heart trembled in apprehension of what I'm about to encounter with a new set of eyes.

I am wondering if perhaps the first scene in the film, could resemble my first entire experience of it all.

As the door incrustated in the wall of his bedroom has been opened by Leos Carax, he enters a cinema by the emergency exit, to be the observer of its room full of inert spectators, who remain soporific even after the sound of somebody begging for their life, followed by a noisy and turbulent gunshot.

For the reason that I had no emotional connection to the characters and no time to develop one during the interchangeable character focus, my emotional playground remained untouched during the film, and I continued watching it only for the thrill, curiosity of the plot and my admiration for its aesthetic values.

An additional and most significant attribute to my emotional passivity would perhaps go to the fact that for each swap of role, you witness the setting up for the next in line in the endless limousine. I am in the backstage, the changing room, I am witnessing the superficiality of what is about to happen, the gaps between the fiction within the fictions are revealed. I know, for a fact, that the following scene will be staged by Mr. Oscar, which feels silly in retrospect since I am

THE STAGED FACE

watching a movie already, I should be aware of that, without it affecting me this much and changing completely my experience of it all. Nonetheless, the effects of it are present and have generous impacts on my own perception and retrospection, and there was nothing I could do to change that for the time being.

Considering that I have now unearthed some background story from the director's life himself, things have changed, and to continue on the subject of confusion within the realm of storytelling I would like to highlight a particular scene which in antagonism to the first time I saw it, brought me to heavy tears eventually.

Driving together with Mr. Oscar and Celine [the driver], Oscar has fallen asleep.

The images displaying the road we are passing through in the cemetery are getting distorted, it feels as if we're falling through some glitch, breaking down reality together with them. The images are digital looking, it seems that we are entering or leaving a video game, it is indeed difficult to tell what is what, yet I follow through, not knowing whether I am now in Oscar's dream, a new character's reality or if the whole movie so far was a dream. The fragmented fictions make you lose complete sense of the context, place, the roles involved, the story we follow, and it is specifically now that I am going to understand its saddening, heart-breaking and poignant blend with reality [one of them].

The limousine suddenly experiences a small accident, bumping into another limousine just like the one they are driving around with. The driver of the other limousine looks just like Oscar, simply with an obvious different hairstyle. The accident wakes him up, for him to realise who is inside this other limousine, her name is Jean. This time, he has not changed clothes before getting out of the car. He comes out with the same costume that he was in to play an old man on his death bed. I feel that perhaps now, what is about to happen is the closest I will get to authenticity, the closest to Oscar's reality, the one thing that isn't staged as much as the rest. The closest to the Leos Carax's life. The old man died on this bed, perhaps to make space for reality.

Jean and Oscar agree that they can spend 30 minutes together, before each of their next appointment has to be handled, so here, we are in the gap of fiction, it seems. They enter an abandoned mall, and you understand that the role Jean is playing [Kylie Minogue] is a stewardess, who has decided to end her life on the roof of that mall. She has a husband, and kids, but clearly as well a love story together with Oscar. Here comes, the aching reality that Jean is Katerina Golubeva, Leos Carax's former girlfriend who, one year earlier has committed suicide after a long battle with depression. You see Oscar, Leos Carax alter ego, powerless, knowing what is about to happen, ineffective, helpless, weak, defeated and broken. He has to face the reality, the harsh reality that she is gone. He's replaying her death, he's saying goodbye, he's piercing through the screen with his own ghosts and open wounds, for us to enter.

Once I knew that, it was over for me and I transformed into the Niagara falls. Since then, I have rewatched **Holy Motors** many times, for each time to be more attentive to the short interludes with Mr. Oscar. I have seen myself be each time more attentive to the moments he is not in a peculiar character, to see through and perceive Leos Carax, attempt to intercept and perceive reality I guess, or what I think to be reality perhaps. I saw my own fascination for figuring out what is real what is not, and wonder why does that awakens my curiosity this much.

Oscar said goodbye to Jean, from the roof. He gets out of the mall for his next appointment and to reach the limousine again, he suddenly walks out on Jean and her smashed body onto the ground right next to the car. Oscar screams, a scream which pierced right through me, right through the screen, right through the stage. An unbearable scream, since bearing so much true pain in it.

That specific scene became to me one of the most heart-breaking film scenes I have ever watched, because of its entanglement with reality, because I have been investigating this person's private

THE STAGED FACE

life online, because it feels that I know enough to feel close to Leos Carax in a strange way, while watching it for the first time without the informations left me as cold as my freezer.

I find out additionally that one of the characters played by Mr. Oscar as a sad middle aged father picking up his daughter from a party could not be more real than it is. The daughter is played by Katerina Golubeva's real daughter, whom Leos Carax adopted after her death. During that scene, the acted father is a harsh, bitter, and sad character who completely fails at understanding his daughter's struggles. As she's crying describing the experience of the party which did not go well, he blames her for being her, he's cold, severe and insensitive. Perhaps the most honest, vulnerable and truthful confession on screen from a director, a confrontational truth to the audience, to himself, which took the shape of a mirror towards the audience.

Am I facing reality, at any point, in any case? Can it only be the truth linked to real events piercing through to make me feel and relate? Is it only when I feel somehow close [however that might be] to the wounds [whatever those are] that I'm able to feel and connect for it to crush my heart? Is fiction so much part of reality that it has been distorting my sense of empathy/apathy? How can I then trust my own judgment upon things? Am I just watching, or actually seeing?

But simply, what makes me see?

I had to get closer [to the informations of the director's life] in order to feel that my perception was clearer, less superficial, and more human. While being able to look at it from far at the same time, including looking at myself from outside, in order to grasp what I perceive to be a better understanding of the images. The "*paradoxical movement*" (Dauget, 1992, p.7) she is talking about, is perhaps the only condition, and requires almost to be constant, in order for me to see.

Pause

Play

Now opening a third and final door to a fictional moving universe, I would like to bring you into the film ***Hidden*** (2006), by Michael Haneke, where reality is manipulated in a peculiar way which allows me to approach perception from an other angle, again.

The first even image of the film brings confusion over whether you are looking at a still image, or moving image. I thought perhaps my internet connection or my computer was crashing, but I quickly realised it wasn't the case. I understood already then, that a manipulation of my thoughts through the image would be attempted on me. As a viewer, you think that you are looking at an image of the present, where in reality we are looking at a pre-recorded video tape, that the content of is being watched by the two main characters about to be introduced to the audience.

THE STAGED FACE

The uncertainty that is introduced to the viewer from the very beginning, will be leading us throughout the movie, help us question our own certainties, and furthermore.

You are first the witness of a view in a street, the camera is looking at houses for a rather long moment, you wait patiently, it is a daily life type of scene, nothing special so far. You suddenly hear voices over this visual content, though the voices don't seem to belong to the street decor, they are loud, seem close to us.

The camera angle changes for you to see the main character Georges, come out of his house to the street, looking distressed. Now the sound belongs to what we are seeing. The sound led us to what seems to be the present, as if the screen broke, to show what is actually going on behind the scenes of that first scene. He's looking for something, he's looking for what was looking at him, at their house, without their agreement.

Throughout the film, we follow Anne and Georges, an upper class couple and their child living in Paris. A stranger is sending them anonymous tapes showing them filmed from outside of their house. We, as the audience tag along in their investigation of finding out who is the author of the intrusive tapes, which soon transform into frightening and threatening letters giving out clues on the potential identity of this person. It seems that Georges's past ghosts are coming back to catch up with him.

As the audience, you understand that the camera has been placed there, there is no one actively live recording it, it feels therefore empty of presence, at least physical presence. Yet someone is looking, you feel the eyes, but rather than frontally, I feel the eyes behind my back. It feels, as if this camera created a stage for me to be watched while I'm watching, while Anne and Georges are watching themselves being watched, by me, being watched watching them.

This disposition, forces the emptiness and the silence onto the spectator, and just like the long and empty corridor of the installation **Robots** by Lutz Bacher where visual and sonic silence dominates, it forces the creation of a space for reflection, literally and metaphorically speaking. About this piece, Dauget (1992) has written "*Lutz Bacher offers nothing but absence and loss to the public, and constructs a reception time based on frustration, even paranoia.*" (p.91)

The camera angles made me feel like it was me. I felt like the intruder, I entered their privacy, and they are looking for me. The pre-recorded tape melted with the present moment of the film. As viewers, we jump back and forth between the present and the recorded. That specific dynamic, made me from the start feel that I was part of this whole set up. It created awareness, hyper awareness, as if I was standing in front of a stage full of mirrors, giving out infinite ways of watching myself from the outside, yet the mirrors take as well the shape of eyes of an other, not only myself.

About the dynamics of a video installation, Stéphanie Dauget (1992) writes : "*By sowing confusion in the mind of those who come to meet it, leaving them to believe that they are being watched, spied on and unwanted, the video installation transcends the visitor's time on the move into a showdown with their own situation. All the intensity of the present reception is deployed to make the visitor, who would have liked to pass by as a simple stroller, realize that they have a share of responsibility in the existence of the work of art*" (p.91).

I have now no other choice, but to look, and see, able myself to see my own reflection, and responsibility in the act of seeing.

Beside the framing of the image, and format of it which displays particularities and have an impact on the audience, the content the frame puts on view is as much malleable of the spectator's impressions and understanding of the integrality of the package.

THE STAGED FACE

In that sense, in the context of the movie *Hidden*, the realistic aesthetic of the images, the decor and display of their everyday life invited me into thinking that what I am seeing is trustworthy, yet it seems to also be a warning from the director : don't believe what you see, even if it certainly borrows the codes of a genre that resembles a linear and trustworthy image in its storytelling.

From the second intrusive package received already, Georges seem to have an idea where this is all coming from. He pretends that he doesn't, yet as spectator we have access to very short extracts of flashbacks/dreams/memories [hard to tell], which his wife doesn't. Something has happened long ago, and he does not seem to want it to resurface, even so the truth is unraveling before our eyes.

I will not contextualise as much the story in this specific film simply because here, the story is not about finding out who is sending the tapes and why but rather about highlighting something of an other nature : facing your own consciousness, seeing what you don't want to see, facing reality. Simply, which one exactly?

As a child, Georges did something extremely cruel and egoistic, which from his point of view should blend in the forgotten sewers of memories for the reason that he was indeed a child and did not understand or see the terrible consequences it could have on someone else's life. For him, the so-called innocence of a child washes him off his heartless acts, even now as an adult.

As Georges is forced to face the reality of his pasts acts, the cinematic language used here is forcing us too, to face our own reflection in the mirror.

The director here, is manipulating the audience as much as Georges is trying to fool his own mind into thinking he is innocent, and you wonder whether he will succeed in believing his own lies. When for long lasting sequences, we do not know whether we are looking at flashbacks from Georges's memories, video tapes, or dreams/nightmares coming from him or the other implicated characters, it forces us to question our sense of reality, and what we decide to see, or to obscure to ourselves. How to trust an image? How to trust the reflection I get from it? Am I always manipulated into thinking something? Even if I am aware of it, it still impacts my mind so how can I even steer clear of it? How should I be sure of what I believe and what I see?

Stop

As perhaps the logic of my thought's development has been successfully understood throughout this text, it may be important nonetheless for me to mention the link between the three films I chose to develop my reasoning with. They all have one specific trajectory which revolves around acting as a mirror towards its audience and force the spectator to question their own perception, reflection, interpretation, feelings, consciousness and values.

In his publication *To Invert One's Eyes (An Attempt Against Narrowness)* Miloš Trakilović (2020) writes about the proliferation of images and our "conflicting relationship between seeing, knowing, imagining and representing" (p.2). Trakilović (2020) writes : "*As they proliferated [the images], more worlds proliferated and truth became lost in a succession of metamorphic images*

THE STAGED FACE

that garbled the internal workings of the eye and the mind. Sight was replaced by sightlessness. Suddenly there were too many images in the outside world” (p.2).

In a world dominated by the image and the spectacle, our minds continue to shape themselves according to what they are surrounded by and subjected to, which has been the purpose of my questioning throughout this text. I humbly wished to get closer to understand the treatment of a sequence of images and its interplay with sound and time through my own subjective lens. I have attempted to use myself as a guinea-pig to be able to grasp my own perception and the reasons behind the interpretation of what I see, my empathy versus my apathy, my sense of reality or fiction and their impacts.

As Mr. Oscar tells Jean when saying a last and final goodbye to her “*time is playing against us*”, I wish to underline this quote to let us acknowledge the times with live in and the path that is shaping our future, endlessly filled with images.

If only the industry of fashion was a romanticised and idealised version of reality, I would perhaps not have gone this far in my questioning, unfortunately embellishment, distortion and reshaping of reality expand way beyond only one industry selling dreams. Though, the particular frame in which fashion imagery shapes, re-shapes, and distorts in order to amplify a version of reality capable of drawing desire from an audience to the image, the product and a romanticised idea which isn't necessarily according to extremely inclusive laws, draw my attention and pull my practice to extract from it. I wish to underline the importance of taking responsibility in what we see, question more than ever what is being seen and why it is being seen this way.

As for my own practice within the making of clothing, I make use of the distortion and reshaping of images, dive for a certain type of image which I believe have a [negative] impact on my thought processes and perception of myself and the world around me. As a certain reality is being shaped for me to see, I attempt to exploit these [literally speaking] shapes, in order to transpose them in the making of garments as a way of acknowledging their impact on me and perhaps work through them, with them, in a hopefully uplifting and aware manner.

“All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify.”

Erving Goffman

THE STAGED FACE

*Jack knows he does not know.
Jill thinks she knows what Jack does not know, but
she does not know he does not know it.
Jack does not know
Jill does not know he does not know,
and thinks she knows what he knows he doesn't.
Jack believes Jill.
Jack now does not know he does not know.
One happy ending.
Jack thinks Jack sees what he does not,*
and that Jill sees what she does not see.
Jill believes Jack.
She now thinks she sees what Jack thinks Jack sees
and that Jack sees it too.
They may now both be completely wrong.*

* This is ambiguous. Jack thinks he is seeing an illusion;
is he right or wrong? Jack thinks he is not under an illusion.
Is he right or wrong? Try it anyway.

THE STAGED FACE

SOURCES :

The Skin I Live In (2011) , directed by Pedro Almodóvar, Spain, produced by El Deseo.

Holy Motors (2012), directed by Leos Carax, France, produced by Pierre Grise Productions.

Hidden (2006), directed by Michael Haneke, France, produced by Les Films du Losange.

Didi-Huberman, G. (1992) , ***What we see, what is looking at us.*** Paris : Les Éditions de minuit.

Dauget, S. (2017), ***Vidéo, I see.*** Paris : Artes PRESSES UNIVERSITAIRES DE BORDEAUX.

Trakilović, M. (2020), ***To Invert One's Eyes (An Attempt Against Narrowness), ALLUSIONS.***

Laing, R.D. (1970), ***Knots.*** Vintage Books A Division of Random House NYC.

Goffman, E. (1959), ***The presentation of Self in Everyday Life.*** New York: The Overlook Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945), ***Phenomenology of perception,*** Paris : Gallimard.

Les Cahiers du Cinema, (2012) , numéro 680, Paris.