

STATION

see you through
by Emma Finneran

When crossing the road we're told to look 'both ways', left and right. So we do. But have we seen everything? What about when you have a question or a query or a general 'huh' and someone replies, 'I'll look into it'. Look into it? In looking both ways, we demonstrate actively looking out for each other, left and right, front and backwards. This forms a square in my mind. Or a rectangle. There are edges and corners. An invisible perimeter drawn, in silent contract, that what needs to be seen, or looked into, can obediently transpire in a terrain we collectively have capacity for. A grid. A box. A canvas. Tick. But, when I look into myself, I don't see right-angles, or symmetry, I see a nebulous chaos that bubbles like sweaty gravy: *soft reserves*. So when I look into others, I wonder if I'm actually seeing them too? Or is it in the demonstrative act of looking that denotes that I've seen what there is to be seen? To what extent do my perceptions of others bring my projective baggage along? One thing's for sure, I feel more at home in my reflection in a puddle than I do in someone's face, because it's not the me anyone else knows, it's a temporary me, between being looked into and being seen: a *tricky mirror*, just for me.

In 1974 Joni Mitchell describes a party to an audience desperate to know her. It was in a room, floor to ceiling, wall to wall, tiled by mirrors. It was a party promoting 'reflecting'. *mental spender*. The dinner table was clear plastic, as were the chairs; the dinnerware, glass; and the food and drink, completely see-through. "Take a long, hard look in the mirror" she thought, now or never kinda inspo, but found it impossible to focus on just one 'her', because there she was, on the floor, the walls, and the ceiling in endless multitudes, "I got the feeling that I was sort of transparent and not seen." I think about this party a lot and how Joni felt when she sang the lines, "bring out the best in me and in you too", because isn't the 'best' of us actually the 'worst' in us? The worst being the parts that are dirty, cross-eyed, stained and unpalatable. The parts that only get shared with people who really know you, really see you: a relationship that insights more than just faces in places like shiny rectangles, but is dexterous, scandalous and, even ouchy. I've lost many eyeless friends thanks to Joni.



Our yearning to be seen and reflected is basic and innate—watching is a way of life; as children we're encouraged to learn about ourselves through the reflections of others. Actors do this all the time; they're showing us how they're feeling though their bodies and we instinctively know how to read that—shoulders down, bereft; shoulders up, illustrious. That person's body is talking to mine. Maybe that's what Joni couldn't survive. There was no rest, or safe stare-spots away from her floating faces, cleavage of gazes: a *slow ghost (blend in or disappear)*. But what about her body? Her limbs and appendages? The things that aid in our reach for escape.

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Tom and I were walking away from a room full of art, stinky chair-air, and wafting gossip one time in Summer. He remembered oranges, I remembered dust, we both remembered the sad woman in the corner. We deduced that the entire evening was a loveless, loose-limbed attempt at people trying to fulfil each other's desires to be seen: *divide in the dark (no less, no you)*. High-five! Handshake! What's your @? I told him I'd been in a conversation with someone who was wearing their reflective sunglasses inside, so essentially spent the evening with my reflection, limbs akimbo, contained by the edges of a stranger's rectangular frames: a one-way mirror. Tom said, "imagine what they saw."

I can. Think of psychology, reality television (namely, Big Brother), interrogation scenes from movies, movies themselves (!), these all use one-way mirrors in a bid to look into human behaviours. But it's in the illusion of familiarity created by the one-way mirror, or reflective sunnies, or puddles, or my body stretched over a moving-bus-window that irks me—who's on the other side? For the mirror to work, the perception of one-way transmission is achieved when one side of the mirror is brightly lit and the other side is dark. But if the light changes to both sides being equally illuminated, the mirror dissolves into the function of a window. What if the light switches: The once light, now dark and vice versa? It seems rare that this should happen, that the interrogator or voyeur or the reflective-sunny-wearer be observed. Maybe on a molecular level, we are in fact very similar to one-way mirrors—only letting a loose few into our dark inner-spaces, where our worst (best) bits are in plain view: *don't forget to let go*.



Paintings, like mirrors, are intensely psychological. Being face-to-face with oneself in a mirror is considered essential for our social and emotional development (my body is speaking to me) but they can also be towering and stifling—am I really this? A body. A container. *Lelelelelegs?* A reminder that even though I wasn't thinking about the past, the past was thinking about me—old skin slumping down my body like a slow-motion avalanche. Paintings can emancipate us from our collective capacity to see what we're supposed to. Buoy a limb-less, eye-full escape: I'm not moving yet I'm moved. They are a way to view ourselves as though looking from the outside—like shadows rubbing off on us. As Ruth Bernhard said, "If you are not willing to see more than what is visible, you won't see anything." Seeing only with our eyes makes us fools.

If Yves Klein painted rectangles, in his blue, to then call them windows, "an open window to freedom" he called them, then in Tom's case, adept with light switches, his paintings act as mirrors for me to see me (and you, and her, and him) in and then some. Tom said to me, after discussing how to catch each other's essence, that we all have post-scripts. Like footnotes? I said, yeah, like appendages he confirmed. I felt see-through. Maybe we are more transparent than I thought—bad copies, or visible reflections of our figural realities, trying our best to look into each other in order to look out for each other: *bloom (other sides of you)*. Perhaps the perimeters we set, four sides and four corners, left and right, help us ferry our feelings without having to confess them directly. Tom, wearing reflective sunglasses, knows this already. But me? I'll have to look into it.