



## Window Space

Xpace Cultural Centre  
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**Monica Moraru, *In My Bedroom Noon is the Darkest Time of Day***

January 6th- February 10th, 2017

### **Praying at the Altar of the Screen: Notes on the Aura of the Technological Object**

*The light and dark blurry shapes that show up at noon are craggy, delineated by the different surfaces that reflect the light and the trees and fire-escapes that obstruct its circuitous path of travel. This light does not illuminate things to see per se. It is instead a kind of light that transmits — in its lack — the very shape of things.*

*A light that shows by not shining; this is the light at noon.<sup>1</sup>*

The above epigraph, drawn from Paul Chan's enlightening and poetic text, "On Light as Midnight and Noon" represents a fragment of his larger consideration of the omnipresent luminous screen through musings on windows, light and shadow. *In My Bedroom Noon is the Darkest Time of Day* is a site-specific project for Xpace Cultural Centre's window space. Artist Monica Moraru's highly intertextual and interdisciplinary work was largely informed by Chan's writing, drawing on his interest in sensory experience and the potential failings of the illuminated object.

Moraru's work is structured around a tiered platform, at the base of which lies a small monitor, screening a looping video work. From the ceiling, a hemmed curtain hangs, failing to conceal a small pile of sand that lies behind the wooden steps. The video work explores the formal properties of light and shadow, recording the subtle distortions provided by glasses, windows, mirrors, and fabric transparencies. The viewer's perspective of these vignettes is mediated by the lens of the artist's camera and by the various layers of reflection

within each scene. We are introduced to an ambiguous mix of commercial and domestic spaces. Moraru has included subtitles drawn from a personal response to Chan's writings, in which she details the passage of light across the space of her apartment.

Due to the screen's position on the bottom tier of the platform, facing skyward, the viewer's experience of Moraru's work will change based on time of day. As the afternoon sun creeps across the sky towards the horizon, the westerly light reflects off the window of the gallery. Potential glare obscures the viewer's ability to see the screen properly. The video can be seen most clearly beginning after dusk, emanating a gentle glow and drawing in passersby. On the highest tier of the platform, lies a defunct projector that similarly is best seen after dark, its bulb visible from the side facing the window, through the cracks in its construction. The technological object fails to perform, fails to project.

The window has been mobilized as a symbol within cultural production for centuries, and in sitting down to speak with Moraru in her subterranean studio, it came to light that for her, the window represents a portal between two spaces.<sup>ii</sup> The window allows for the subject to traverse or transgress an assumed boundary between interior and exterior, public and private, self and other. Philosophical musings on the window are intimately tied to the history of painting, beginning in 1435 with Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura*, a relationship shifted with the twentieth century developments of photography and film. With the development of single-point perspective and illusory space, the frame of the painting presented a new way of seeing the world. The window is a portal of desire with historical connotations linking it to the sublime — if you can, in your mind's eye, imagine the iconic default computer wallpaper of Microsoft Windows XP operating system, aptly named *Bliss*.

When the conversation returns to the subject of the artist's research for the project, Moraru hands me a brilliantly colored found postcard from a butterfly conservatory in Florida, featuring a giant swallowtail butterfly perched on a cluster of tangerines. Like Chan's text, this reproduction maintained a significant position in her artistic process, as she imagined the postcard to, like the window, act as a portal into an alternate space. This postcard is further representative of a thread that can be traced back to the video work — the scenes of

commercial and domestic spaces are joined by footage shot at a local butterfly conservatory. This element can be traced by to an ongoing interest, which influences Moraru's practice: kitsch as formal or commercial waste, and replicas of form, without function.

The shape of the platform mimics the form of an amphitheater, with the surrounding tiers positioning an imagined audience gazing down at the screen, the stage. Moraru likens the medium of installation to set making, a site for an immersive experience, and theatricality. The fragment of green fabric which hangs above the platform further contributes to the transformation of the window space into a non-functional set or redundant theatre stage — it reads as a constructed element, a play about to be set, waiting for performers who will never arrive. Beyond entertainment, the steps of the platform make reference to religious ascension, ritual and worship at the altar of commercial or corporate goods. An illuminated altar, which is self-reflexive, and further, subject to its own inevitable failure.

- Katie Lawson

*In My Bedroom Noon is the Darkest Time of Day* is part of the Toronto Design Offsite Festival 2017



Presented by Keilhauer

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<sup>i</sup> Chan, Paul. "On Light as Midnight and Noon" *Paul Chan: The 7 Lights*. Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2007, 120.

<sup>ii</sup> Monica Moraru (artist) in conversation with Katie Lawson (author), December 5th, 2016. Transcription of ideas have been revised and approved by the artist.