



**Window  
Space**

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

January 6<sup>th</sup>- February 10<sup>th</sup>, 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>i</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, drawing on an 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 large-scale print hangs and spills over the central, sculptural element. The video work explores the formal properties of light and shadow, recording the subtle distortions provided by glasses, windows, mirrors, and fabric transparencies. Our viewing of these vignettes is mediated not only by the lens of the artist's camera, but by the various layers of reflection within each scene. The spaces we are

introduced to are a mix of ambiguous commercial and domestic spaces. While the video is silent, 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.

The viewing experience of Moraru's work will change based on the hour of viewing, due to the screen's position on the bottom tier of the platform, facing skyward. As the afternoon sun creeps across the sky towards the horizon, the westerly light will reflect off the window of the gallery, potential glare obscuring the viewer's ability to see the screen properly. From dusk into the night, the video work can be seen most clearly, while emanating a gentle glow which draws those who pass by near.

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 which would shift 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 turned to Moraru's large-scale print, she hands me a brilliantly coloured 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. The postcard is one of a half-dozen or so objects featured on the print, an uncanny collection of objects floating in space with highly stylized, drop shadows — an aesthetic reminiscent of commercial window display. 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. This postcard is further representative of a thread which 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.

The shape of the platform mimics the form of an amphitheatre, 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. 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.