

EYES WIDE SHUT

To move through the present is to move through a labyrinth. A labyrinth without exit, where images, narratives, and crises multiply, shift, and collapse into one another. Some paths are brightly lit, others are concealed in shadow; some walls are built of spectacle, others of silence. The deeper we wander, the more we realize that vision is never neutral: what we see is conditioned by the systems that frame it, and what we do not see is often hidden by design.

EYES WIDE SHUT gathers seven artists from Switzerland, Poland, Italy, and France whose works invite us to examine how we look, and why, so often, we choose to look away. The title names the paradox of our time: eyes wide open, flooded with images of disaster, injustice, and collapse, yet shut to their reality, their implications, their call for response. In this state of simultaneous exposure and blindness, perception itself becomes a site of complicity.

The journey begins with Vaste Programme's "It's all fun and games". At first, the familiar shape of a peep-board suggests amusement: an invitation to insert one's face, to step into someone else's life for a moment of comic relief. But here, the painted bodies are not carnival figures or exotic stereotypes; they belong to people displaced by catastrophe. To see the exhibition at all, one must peer through their silhouettes. The gesture is uncomfortable, even shameful. The work confronts us with the very mechanism of spectacle, how suffering becomes a backdrop for play, how the line between empathy and voyeurism is crossed without us noticing.

From here, the path stretches into Gabriel Orłowski's "Bedlam". His photographs line the wall like fragments of a world that resists comprehension: overcrowded, overheated, chaotic. Infrastructure cobbled together from scraps, commerce conducted in improvised markets, labor unfolding in impossible conditions. At first, the images overwhelm, inducing the same confusion one feels when stepping into a place where the rules of survival are unfamiliar. But as the gaze lingers, another rhythm appears: hidden systems of exchange, repair, and resilience. Order emerges from apparent disorder, challenging the assumption that chaos is failure. Orłowski's lens reminds us that our blindness is often a refusal, a refusal to see alternative logics of survival, because they unsettle the dominance of our own.

The eye is suddenly pulled away, caught by a mound of soil, where a television glows with uncanny light. Daniel Martínez's "Still Life" loops endless images of catastrophe: floods, wildfires, storms, landslides. The images carry the authority of news footage, yet they are entirely artificial, generated by an algorithm. Their fictionality leaks at the edges: glitches, green-screen remnants, seams in the spectacle. Here, technology is not just a window onto disaster; it produces disaster, consumes earth. Viewers are trapped in the uneasy awareness that our relation to crisis is mediated, staged, and absorbed as spectacle, leaving us spectators rather than witnesses.

Deeper into the labyrinth, Chiara Bertin's "We will leave the weeds" creates a space of listening. Cyanotype prints hang like shadows of memory, through headphones, the voices of Italian "Mondine" women fill the air, singing ballads of labor and resistance from the rice fields of the 1920s. The songs, almost lost to history, echo into the present, resonating with struggles that persist today: the fight for dignity, the refusal to be erased. The installation insists that forgetting is never neutral. What we no longer see, what history leaves in the margins, continues to live beneath the surface, like weeds that resist eradication.

Emerging from this threshold, we are submerged in the iridescent world of Océane Jacob's "Camouflage". At first glance, the canvases are dazzling: fragments of fins, shells, and scales enlarged into kaleidoscopic detail. The effect is hypnotic, a celebration of oceanic beauty in microscopic form. Yet, as the eye adjusts, something else emerges - plastic waste, carefully blended into the patterns, almost indistinguishable from the natural colors. Their discovery produces a pang of recognition: this paradise is already contaminated. What appears pristine is in fact poisoned; what dazzles is also corrupted. The longer one looks, the more difficult it becomes to unsee the intrusion.

The path tightens, funneling toward Aleksandra Cegielska's "Tuesday Never Come". Suspended from above, an enormous silver vulva hovers above a pedestal of pink fur. From a distance, it dazzles with its scale, its theatrical shimmer, its unapologetic presence. Yet up close, a red seam appears, stitched discreetly into the pedestal's side: a scar, a wound, a labor mark invisible until one draws near. The work collapses monumentality and

intimacy, parody and reverence, confronting the misogyny embedded in language and culture while insisting on a new kind of monument, one that demands dignity for what has long been ridiculed or denied.

At the far end of the labyrinth stands Matthias Amsler's "See You Again". The pesticide cabinet functions as a quiet but forceful witness. At first glance, it appears as a mundane artifact of farm life, yet it carries layered histories — personal, cultural, and global. Untouched since Amsler's father's death from cancer in 2002, the cabinet embodies loss, inheritance, and the silent legacies of industrialized agriculture. The empty packaging of banned pesticides hints at complicity: substances outlawed in Switzerland continue to circulate abroad, leaving traces of harm in distant landscapes. Placed within the exhibition, the cabinet becomes more than a personal relic, it asks viewers to confront the hidden networks that link individual lives to broader ecological and economic systems. It invites reflection on what remains unseen: the slow accumulation of toxic residues in land, bodies, and memory, and the ways everyday objects can carry the weight of global consequences.

EYES WIDE SHUT is not an exhibition to be consumed at a glance. It needs duration, unease, recognition of complicity. The labyrinth of works mirrors the labyrinth of the present: overwhelming, distorted, fragmented, yet insistent in its demand to be seen. Each work holds a mirror to our conditioned vision, exposing the selective blindness through which we navigate contemporary life.

To leave the exhibition is not to exit the labyrinth, but to realize that we already live inside it - eyes wide open, yet too often shut.

Exhibition: EYES WIDE SHUT

Artists: Matthias Amsler (CH), Chiara Bertin (CH), Aleksandra Cegielska (CH), Océane Jacob (FR), Daniel Martinez (CH), Gabriel Orłowski (PL), Vaste Programme (IT)

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