

LAWS OF REFLECTION

RANDOM INTERNATIONAL used technology and functional objects to create the installation Audience, which invites reflection.

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When someone sees their own reflection, it is very difficult not to take a peek; our own mirror image is always intriguing. Audience, an installation consisting of 64 small mirrors, plays along with this fact. The mirrors are positioned low to the ground on metal base units and each contains a computer-driven motor. The mirrors react to the images of spectators captured by a camera and follow one of the people present. Random International developed the installation in collaboration with Chris O'Shea; it was originally commissioned by choreographer Wayne McGregor. The piece has now been added to the collection at the Carpenters Workshop Gallery; they presented the work during Design Miami Basel.

Audience consists purely of functional objects and technological resources, but its meaning can easily be placed in the history of art. Up until the middle of the 19th century, a work of art was principally about the maker and what was being depicted. From the 1960s onwards, the spectator started to get involved. To begin with, members of the audience were made conscious of their own observation and interpretation. A decade later, the role of maker and spectator coincided; each had become as important as the other. In the work *Public Space/Two Audiences* (1976) by Dan Graham, for example, two groups were separated by a glass mirrored wall. The observers saw themselves and each other as part of the total picture.

Audience elaborates this theme and adds an interesting dimension. Because the

installation is computer-driven and responds to the audience, the work itself acquires an active role. The moving mirrors become small creatures which follow and manipulate; they not only place the spectator centre stage but also play a game with him. The low position of the mirrors makes it seem as though the public is on a pedestal, but at the same time the viewer sees just a very small reflection of himself. Young and old can be seen crouching down in order to get a better view of themselves and their surroundings.

The installation relates not only with the audience, but also with the space in which it is situated. That can turn out to have a very strong effect, but at the same time it's Audience's weakness. The mirrors reflect the atmosphere of the location, which is largely determined by its height, how much light there is and how it falls, and the use of colour. In the brilliant daylight at the Royal Opera House, a splendid effect was created, but at the exhibition in Basel, it was clear that the installation cannot achieve its full potential everywhere. The interaction with visitors was just as strong, but the total picture was less intriguing.

Audience consists of different layers: the image in a single mirror, the picture formed by the 64 mirrors together and the fascinating reactions of the public. The theme of seeing and being seen is more topical than ever. More and more security cameras register how and where we move; our whereabouts can be traced anywhere via mobile equipment and we also keep continuous track of each other

on social networks such as Facebook. In this constant state of watching, Audience provides a fine moment for (self-)reflection and, in so doing, balances delicately on the boundary between art and design. So, hopefully, the eight available but very expensive installations will not end up in invisible private collections, but on public display where they belong. ■■■■■

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AUDIENCE
DESIGNER: RANDOM INTERNATIONAL
MATERIAL: 64 HEAD-SIZED GLASS MIRRORS, BASE UNITS CAST IN METAL, MOTORS, CUSTOM SOFTWARE, CAMERA, COMPUTER
DIMENSIONS: EACH UNIT IS 300 MM HIGH, THE TOTAL FLOOR AREA IS 20 TO 30 M²
PRICE: € 80,000
LIMITED EDITION: 8 PIECES
GALLERY: CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY