Commercial Street
5152 La Vista Court

Eli Coplan
Disney Plus
January 21 - March 4, 2023

Liquid crystal displays are backlit panes of glass coated with chemicals and laminated with flat, plastic light filters. The outermost layer, the surface, is a polarizing filter. This is what you're really looking at when you watch TV, use a computer, or do anything on your phone. You can touch it with your fingers. It's laminated to a thin sheet of glass with a nasty optically-clear adhesive. Between this glass sheet and a second, equally-thin glass sheet is a liquid layer, a toxic mixture of liquid crystals suspended in chemical medium. Behind the second glass sheet is a second polarizing filter with a transmission axis perpendicular to the first. Polarizing filters allow light waves vibrating along a single axis to pass through them. When two polarizing filters are aligned with perpendicular axes of transmission, light travelling through the first filter is blocked at the second. A pure, opaque black is formed between them in the negation of transmissive light. LCD screens default to this negation. The liquid crystals between the glass sheets are yoked to an array of thin-film transistors that make each red, green and blue-tinted subpixel into an electronically-controlled gate, twisting the backlight's rays to cross through the filters and out into the room. This process is similar to that of a more rudimentary device called a polariscope, which is used in factory production to visualize stress points in transparent media and simply consists of two polarizing filters between which materials pass on the assembly line. The liquid crystals inside LCDs make these material deformations into images.

The BitTorrent protocol allows large networks of individuals to share files cooperatively. Because peers in a BitTorrent network upload and download pieces of data from each other rather than relying on centralized servers, the system is vastly more efficient than what consumer streaming services can offer in terms of speed, scale and quality. Significantly, BitTorrent networks also make possible the distribution and preservation of alternative media. There exists a worldwide, underground, organized network of pirate groups that specialize in obtaining and distributing copyrighted digital media to clandestine networks for free. *Silent Movies* is a collection of a little over one hundred such movies, released in theaters and on streaming platforms between late 2022 and early 2023, played in full, without audio, in computationally-randomized sequence. The vast majority are in the .mkv format, an extensible, open source multimedia container designed for preservation. Apple's QuickTime media player will not play .mkv files by design. The files in this exhibition are played off a hard drive using VLC, a free and open source multimedia player distributed by VideoLAN under The GNU General Public License, a free, copyleft license for software and other kinds of works. The movies are each in Full HD resolution at the highest bitrate available. All told, the files are close to two terabytes in size and have a combined duration of about eight days. Movies were downloaded as they were advertised to me while making this show, or as they came up in conversation or just came to mind—which are other forms of that advertising.

The camera filter can be used to block polarized light, to look at the screen without looking at the movie.

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Silent Movies, 2023
Movies, television, computer; silent
Edition of 3 + 2 AP

Landscape, 2022
Polarizing filter
23 1/2 x 41 1/2 inches

Delamination, 2023
Polarizing filter
11 13/16 x 21 inches
Framed with polarizing filter applied to plexiglass
15 11/16 x 24 7/8 inches

Delamination, 2023
Polarizing filter
11 13/16 x 21 inches
Framed with polarizing filter applied to plexiglass
15 11/16 x 24 7/8 inches

Claude Glass, 2022
Polarizing camera filter
52mm x 52mm