

Compound Lenses

Sofia Duchovny, Nancy Lupo,

Marina Pinsky, Gianna Surangkanjanajai

24.04 - 31.05.2025

“She spoke about the way when your eyes go out of focus you know things are there but you don’t quite see them, and how her mind is like that. It is out of focus. I said: ‘But in the dreaming that accompanies sleep the mind is out of focus because it is not focusing on anything unless coming round to the sort of dream that can be brought forward into waking life and reported.’ I had in mind the word ‘formlessness’ from the last session, and I was applying it to generalized dream activity, as contrasted with dreaming.”

Playing and Reality

D. W. Winnicott

“This is why the transitional object does not only concern the child and mother: it is also, as first *pharmakon*, the origin of works of art and, more generally, of the life of the mind or spirit in all its forms, and thus of adult life as such. It is, finally, the origin of all objects, because an object is always that which, once upon a time, appeared to a mind that *projected* it.”

What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology

Bernard Stiegler

D.W. Winnicott introduced the concept of the transitional object, as the first “not-me” possession, enabling the child to navigate between inner reality and external, shared reality – starting with the parent/mother. As one grows, it forms a constitutive relationship between an individual and culture as such.

Bernard Stiegler expands upon these relations, invoking Plato’s *pharmakon*, which is both medicine and poison *at once*, to describe the dependency the mother and infant have on this external object. This *at once* is the pharmacological situation where he locates the *Krisis* (or decision) in culture that “haunts planetary consciousness and the planetary unconscious, just as it haunts the immense loss of trust that inevitably results from the loss of care.”

For Winnicott, the transitional object is activated by the mother and child in *a state of play*. He recounts several sessions with a patient who is trapped in a dissociative state, unable to complete any creative tasks because she is perpetually day-dreaming. This patient has a creeping feeling she has, since early childhood, been “patterned” by others because her early play was not allowed to be form-less.

The patient describes her state with a visual analogy, of an eye (as lens) out of focus. Following this logic, both the dream and lived reality would then go into focus. But how does a lens go into focus? When its precisely curved elements are at the right distances for the world to project through these parts onto a screen (or retina). A lens has no subjectivity of its own, yet it can form the basis of one. Its form is only consequential in the distortions it makes in its mediation between objective reality and the individual user.

In this exhibition, the relations between viewer, artist and object reflect those of the transitional object. Gianna Surangkanjanajai’s work acts in this way – it is a container for and filled by the material making up the surface of its immediate surroundings. Taking its formal parameters from the volume of liquid contained inside, this plexiglass cylinder is made-to-measure for

the volume of leftover wall paint stored by the gallery. The work is therefore established by the conditions of its presentation. With its plexiglass “frame”, the work bestows care onto the overlooked surplus of the gallery’s essential feature, its white walls.

The liquid surplus returns in Surangkanjanajai’s Xerox booklet of photographs taken of the rooftop of her apartment building in New York City. These close-up compositions are seen with forensic detail, zooming in on reflective tar or paint droplets that ooze and swell. Perhaps akin to mid-20th century abstractions (such as those in the photographs of Aaron Siskind), they use the now-obsolete chemical process of the Polaroid. Yet the images they produce are distinctly of the present moment. Traces of the contemporary skyline dot the backgrounds of the image, the architectural structure on which the camera stands dissolves into formlessness.

Sofia Duchovny’s not yet titled sculptures perform the rigid formality of the display device that closes in on itself. The work is made up of a series of vitrines in dark wood and glass inside one another, like a set of nesting dolls. The viewer is caught in the recursive logic of the work, looking inside the layers of the vitrine into this self-contained and self-mirroring world that blurs the presence of a “subject”.

On the wall, her untitled work shows a grid of abstracted light effects rendered in simple cross-hatched color gradients, separated by borders of fake pearls and rhinestones. The “cheap” methods of creating light illusions come to cancel each other out by the gridded structure of the work, that playfully blocks out any entry point into any attempted mimetic perspectives.

Nancy Lupo’s *Wind Spinner* mirrors the recursive logic of Duchovny’s vitrine sculptures, and Lupo plays the fake pearls out from the scale-less pictorial space of Duchovny’s drawing onto the horizontal plane of the gallery floor. The pearls collect around and drape over her *Valentine’s Tellers*. These oversized forms are enrobed by a glue glaze, blocking utility or chance from drifting through them as in the children’s game the work references.

As a backdrop for the exhibition, I am presenting my own “portable murals” made on lightweight synthetic material. Made using thin layers of acrylic paint, these images are diagrammatic representations of compound lenses used for cameras. However, their individual elements have been stretched and distorted and the distances between them adjusted to fit in the narrow format of their substrate, stretched between the room’s floor and ceiling. Any utility of their referent lenses is denied – rather the murals turn the room into a portal for a kind of viewing apparatus, in a simplified and abstracted way.

The works in this show could perhaps all be considered compound-lenses, being ways of seeing through themselves, and through the spaces they form in parts. Multiple artworks overlap in their recursive structures and fold in on themselves, pointing to the types of thought-loops and logical formations found in dreams. But this dream-logic is pulled through each object into waking life.

Marina Pinsky, 2025

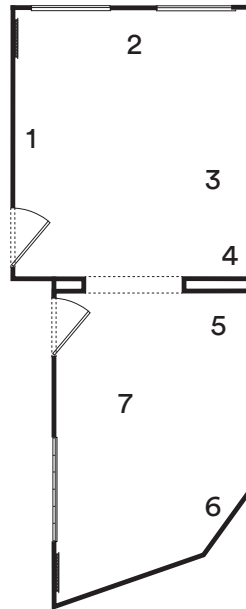
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| 1. | Sofia Duchovny
<i>Untitled</i>
2025
Pencil on paper with rhinestones
42 × 59,4 cm | 5. | Nancy Lupo
<i>Untitled</i>
2025
Wind spinner, disco ball motor,
D-battery
100 × 26 × 14 cm |
| 2. | Gianna Surangkanjanajai
<i>Untitled</i>
2025
Paint, acrylic glass
100 × 10 cm | 6. | Marina Pinsky
<i>Compound Lense Mural 1</i>
2025
Acrylic on tyvek
300 × 91 cm |
| 3. | Nancy Lupo
<i>Valentine's Tellers</i>
2025
Toilet paper, paper towels, iridescent
pigment, wood glue, matte medium,
balsa wood
2 units: 29 × 100 × 50 cm, 28 × 115 × 90 cm | 7. | Sofia Duchovny
<i>Not Titled Yet</i>
2024
Glass, wood
64 × 64 cm |
| 4. | Nancy Lupo
<i>Pearls</i>
2025
Plastic pearls
Dimensions Variable | | |