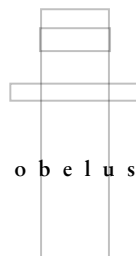


If Tomorrow's Sun Finds You Within My Boundaries

Clemente Ciarrocca and James Krone at Obelus 2, Berlin

by Reya Guts





An etching from Banier's *Les metamorphoses d'Ovide*, 1737. Medea is shown in a chariot drawn by dragon-serpents on a cloud. She points to the scene of murder; her two sons by Jason lie dead before the building from whose doorway floods fire and smoke. Inside but not seen, are Glauce and her father King Creon, burning alive.

The object seeks you. It sees you, penetrates your defenses, begins to consume you. You just want to be it. Everything you want, everything it takes. Just to be it. Contemporary viewers find themselves caught in a world-space where looking has become a fully compromising relationship. As today's hypervisibility continues to blend the roles of witness and accomplice, we ourselves are transformed into objects by the very act historically engineered to affirm our subjectivity. And it is precisely by holding us too close to this disorienting experience that art may be made, configured, or simply well positioned to invite us to perceive its inner mechanisms. To learn (through) the steps of our glancing dance.

Offering a piercing investigation into the fraught dynamics of this lesson, *If Tomorrow's Sun Finds You Within My Boundaries* brings together works by two Berlin-based artists sharing a common, pivotal interest: the at once personal and institutional process of subject formation that takes shape through sight. Working within the frame of the experimental project Obelus' second location in the city, Ciarrocca and Krone interact to evidence the conventional viewing experience as a liminal system where looking has become a reciprocal exchange. Through strategic juxtapositions of digital and analog processes, contemporary technologies and ancient references, the artists create a charged environment that gracefully pushes us to consider how our current modes of visual consumption stand in stark contrast to earlier, more ritualistic or manual relationships with objects and images. What emerges is a critical meditation on how today's rapid-fire viewing practices have fundamentally altered the consequences of and around seeing.

At its core, Ciarrocca's and Krone's collaboration navigates a clear set of questions: How does the act of display itself transform what is being displayed? What happens when objects stare back? And—perhaps most provocatively—in what ways has the contemporary system of visual consumption begun to consume the viewer? James Krone's *The Tarporley Painter's Mixing Bowl* (2025) sits as one of many conceptual pivots to a set of tentative answers. An online-ordered, mass-produced reproduction of a Classical Greek vessel collapsing time and function into a singular bundle of ready-made gestures (a mouse click and a central placement on a plinth) this contemporary replication of an ancient artist's tool hosts a spatio-temporal impasse, connecting algorithmic mass production with the ritualistic practices of antiquity. The gazing frenzy imbuing today's art world somewhat screeches against the mostly lost craftsmanship that was so widespread up to just a few billion seconds ago (1 billion seconds amounting to approximately 37 years). Divorced from utilitarian purpose yet maintaining its formal integrity essentially intact, the ready-made embodies the exhibition's fundamental inquiry: how does the subject-object relationship transform when it is almost entirely determined by the violent exposure system that is viewing?



If Tomorrow's Sun Finds You Within My Boundaries, installation view. Courtesy of the artists and Obelus, Berlin. Photo by Max Eulitz

The objects presented in the exhibition speak and answer this question across different spatio-temporal registers. Neither authentic nor entirely false, Krone's vessel delineates a liminal space where silence becomes a form of eloquence. The cringe paradox of objects placed on view is that they simultaneously reveal and conceal: exposure itself becomes a form of encryption, a privilege which necessarily coincides with the instantiation of a space of power. What is made visible creates a new form of invisibility, a calculated withholding that generates desire precisely through what it refuses or fails to show. This ouroboric logic plays a key role

within the exhibition and is perhaps most explicitly articulated in Ciarrocca's *Hr: 88, Rr: 39, Sc: 19, Pd: 57* (2025), a large, complex piece featuring grey plexiglass screens screwed onto a black surface originally stumbled upon by the artist on the streets of Berlin. Once a work table presumably used for cutting, aligning, designing, then an object simply noticed, picked up, and now re-placed for contemplation, this surface exists in direct conversation with the tradition of the ready-made. The table's literal erection (its rising and hanging on the wall) performs a conceptual elevation that fetishizes the marks and traces discovered and intentionally maintained onto its plane. The 16:9 plexiglass screens deliberately reference standard video format, with the top screen positioned to match most visitors' eye level and remaining deliberately 'empty', offering a second, reflective surface that captures the viewer's own image. Below this reflective screen are some of the marks on the found surface, products of anonymous labor now framed as art, a set of focal points established by the authority of a delimitation. Thus the screen is revealed to be also a framing device for the marks, which now carry a soft ambiguity: do they belong to the screen, or to what is being screened?

The bottom gray plexiglass is mounted on a second opaque white screen, which is sharply engraved with what, one learns in conversation, are the outlines Ciarrocca's bedroom walls as they can be seen from lying on his bed. The result of gazing at once out of and into place, the engraved lines essentially compose a private cartography at once disclosing and concealing a dailiness so specific it eventually comes across as unrelatable, and thus abstract. In the bottom right corner of this projected room, a steeple rose blurs, printed on vellum leaflets cut and torn to form a sort of portal, appearing as a fragmentary vision, and we are left to guess the rose what elevates us to the fantasy of the top screen. Oscillating between religious iconography and sexual symbolism, paradoxically hinting at salvation through the ephemerality of sensorial arousal, this flower is the site a flight that remains plummeting at all times because held up only by the pressure of a screen.



Clemente Ciarrocca, *Hr: 88, Rr: 39, Sc: 19, Pd: 57* (2025), detail. Courtesy of the artist and Obelus, Berlin.

Such hold is really a precarious liminality that threads throughout the show, to begin with its title. A rephrasing of Creon's early and doomed threat to Medea in the eponymous tragedy (verses 353-354 of the original text by Euripides), "if tomorrow's sun finds you within my



James Krone, *Pigeon (Brancusi)* (2023). Courtesy of the artist and Obelus, Berlin. Photo by Max Eulitz

boundaries” functions simultaneously as warning and invitation. In this room, it gets to be experienced from both Creon’s and Medea’s perspectives: both the artists and visitors are, at all times, makers and viewers, objects and subjects, privileged witnesses bound to the psychotic break a world of consumption bestows upon its consumers. Suggestive of consequences of transgression while acknowledging the inevitability of presence, Krone’s series of pigeon photographs (2023) moves off center in adding a somewhat humorous and lighter edge to this

insight. The three exhibited prints each capture a different bird from precisely the same angle, with each pigeon perfectly aligned with the camera eye and looking in the same direction. The technical difficulty of achieving these shots (the bulging eyes of pigeons provide them with an almost 360-degrees field of vision, at 340°) speaks to Krone's persistence in rendering these commonly overlooked urban subjects visible in an unusual way. Birds traditionally symbolize freedom and transcendence, yet pigeons occupy an ambivalent position in urban consciousness: at once ordinary to the point of invisibility, repulsive in their connotations of uncleanness, harboring of a history of outmode communication, and persistent in their omnipresence. Krone's repetition of these subjects within a formal framing creates a subtle disorientation, as if the viewer's perception itself were being reflected and refracted across the birds' rich plumage. Each in presence only of itself, subject and object remain near yet closed for each other.

The repetition of identical framing across different subjects suggests we may not be seeing the birds themselves as much as contemplating the very apparatus of sight, a technology promising revelation while actually only revealing our own desires to acquire an impossible knowledge. Each photograph functions both as window and mirror, instantiating sight as a holding dynamic that provides for a sort of under-texture to reality. Morbid, delicious and compromising, this same texture weaves Ciarrocca's *Untitled (Crown)* (2025). A sculptural gesture combining silk, nacre, plexiglass, and steel, nothing in this piece is stuck together, everything remaining easily displaceable as we view: indeed, it is our very act of viewing to at once distinguish the piece within its graceful setting by one of the windows, and assume its components into a whole. Evidences of an embrace and a burial of a foreign body performed by the mollusk, as well as of a lack of nucleus causing their irregular, 'monstrous' shapes, a set of Keshi pearls are gathered together in form of a crown, historically emblematic of sovereignty and authority. The pearls are positioned behind a pink plexiglass screen, chromatically flirting with the linden tree flowers that can be seen floating across the window panes, the screen both flattening the nacre's reality into a shadow and turning it into a sort of mystery, deepening its liminality. Like Krone's vessel, Ciarrocca's crown is a signifier devoid of its function, deployed in a context that has no use for it—so it may be seen, and contemplated, inviting speculation about power relations and the way these might be grounded in a pervasive will to crown before and beyond the material conditions and needs of a struggle.



Clemente Ciarrocca, *Untitled (Crown)* (2025). Courtesy of the artist and Obelus, Berlin.

As one moves further along the perimeter of the room, a second set of biometric data encoded again as title for Ciarrocca's second wall work fully establishes a dimension at once institutional and personal, clinical and visceral to the exhibition's exploration of viewing and consumption. Representing Heart Rate, Respiratory Rate, Skin Conductance, and Pupil Dilation, these titles quantify physiological states associated with pre-action arousal and post-orgasm comedown. The data was predicted by a neural model provided with the artist's physical, professional and emotional profile at the time of the works' assembling. Such numerical codification of bodily responses hosts another cringe paradox in generating the feeling of an almost institutional intimacy, which reduces complex somatic experiences to data points while simultaneously unveiling the body's involuntary (or voluntary?) responses to stimulus. Upon close inspection, one realizes the bottom half of this second, post-orgasm work, *Hr: 71, Rr: 26, Sc: 12, Pd: 43* (2025) overlays an image from the Piazzale Loreto events of 1945 (where Mussolini's corpse was publicly displayed and mobbed by the crowd, almost exactly 80 years prior to the exhibition's opening) over a stock image of a darkened, undone bed, set within the contours of a generic bedroom traced in graphite. Like all haunting images, this one manifests in the shape of a trap, or a trigger pulled through nuanced observation, creating an unsettling yet intuitive juxtaposition between political and intimate rationale, between historical momentum and personal libido, between liberation and the utterly compromising indulgence in violence and injury. Like any other *petit mort*, Ciarrocca's overlay conduces pleasure and death drives along a single, throbbing bundle of rawness.



Clemente Ciarrocca, *Hr: 71, Rr: 26, Sc: 12, Pd: 43* (2025), detail. Courtesy of the artist and Obelus, Berlin. Photo by Max Eulitz

There's something both coldly scientific and unnervingly intimate about these quantifications and qualifications of the body's behavior and holistic withstanding, something of a tension, a

contradiction sustained by the materials employed in Ciarrocca's assemblages, whether in their natural or artificial, yet always materic connotation. And neither fully artificial nor natural but indeed materic is the nature and role of light in the exhibition. The gallery's conventional ceiling lights were uninstalled by the artists, the electric wire dangling sculpturally from above. Natural light is the only source of illumination for the works during the day, allowing their appearance to shift with the passage of time and atmospheric conditions; from dusk onward, Berlin's public lighting begins to peek into the room, unobstacled by the clear glass of the windows. The artists' decision removes the artificial constancy of typical exhibition lighting, refusing the controlled, consumable (and consuming) viewing experience typical of contemporary art spaces and inducing our sensitivity to tune into temporality and environmental contingency within the act of viewing. It is not the subject but the gaze to lead here, imposing its own cycle, its own time. Poetically, and perhaps melancholically, we are left to imagine tomorrow's first sun coming through the space's windows at dawn, the room empty of visitors yet full of their needs.

Emanating from a locked closet positioned by the gallery's entrance, *Politics in the Closet* with *Enchanted Mirror* (2025) provides the exhibition's theoretical and emotional ground. A collaborative piece, this is a 54-minute sound composition that visitors experience as a disembodied dialogue emerging from behind closed doors, beyond a clear boundary. Featuring AI-generated voices transferred from text through neural text-to-speech models, this composition extends the exhibition's exploration of ready-mades into the realm of sound and personality. The artificial voices stage a conversation between five figures (identified only as A, L, G, D, and J in the transcript) who have locked themselves inside a closet "to get sober, forget the world (too big, too much anyway) and experience total darkness." Working as a sort of epic literary reference to the material world of the room, their dialogue weaves together etymological investigations of pornography, reflections on sovereign power, and intimate confessions, creating a dense theoretical fabric that both explicates and complicates the exhibition's visual components, in a fashion typical of Ciarrocca's practice that Krone taps into smoothly.

The density of *Politics in the Closet* rewards sustained listening. Voice A traces pornography's evolution from ancient documentation of courtesans to modern consumption, noting how in antiquity "explicit imagery always had a tighter, narrower function than personal, pre-confessional arousal," for the world did not know this most general and abstract trope that is consumption. There was a magic to objects, a magic rooted in an object's necessity to be designed, crafted, and made almost entirely individually and manually, a necessity to be interacted with on a vital, creative level. Voice A connects porn's historical trajectory to the establishment of the "Secret Museum" in Naples in 1819, where sexually explicit artifacts from Pompeii and Herculaneum were segregated for viewing only by "persons of mature age and respected morals" i.e. white male of the upper class, thus establishing the close tie between pornography and censorship. Clearly drawing on the work of scholars such as Lynda Williams and Walter Kendrick, voice A concludes that "over the 150 years that followed the opening of the Secret Museum, censorship gradually gave way to consumption as a control technique. Today, the image, the object, the consumed looks back at you. Holding its gaze, and staring, it has begun to consume you."

The fold in which the consumed becomes consumer resonates with Krone's placement of the figure of Medusa represented in both the original and the ready-made *Tarporley Painter's Mixing Bowl* as a central exhibitional trope. Considering the gaze as a violent act of exposure as well as the superstitions surrounding intersubjectivity, by engaging with the figure of monstrous Medusa Krone demonstrates a particular interest in what happens when a subject cannot be isolated by looking; when the act of looking itself creates a contradiction. In representing the impossibility of viewing without being not only implicated but inhibited,



Clemente Ciarrocca and James Krone, *Politics in the Closet with Enchanted Mirror* (2025). Courtesy of the artist and Obelus, Berlin. Photo by Max Eulitz

neutralized by what is viewed, Medusa's relationship to a viewer is akin to the world's relationship to the contemporary subject. For Krone, this condition resembles a conflation between subject and environment similar to a psychotic break, a condition that recalls the final, warning line of the exhibition text handed out to gallery visitors, which reads as a mental-visual procedure completing the title's sentence and inviting the viewers to imagine themselves

walking into the room and noticing the differences between themselves and this newcomer. “This may become a very psychotic experience.” The procedure is phrased and broken down in a way that is strongly reminiscent of a Bruce Nauman score from 1974, *Body Pressure*, incidentally (or perhaps, naturally) completed by Nauman just a couple of years after Lovelace opened the world of porn videography with *Deep Throat*, in 1972.

Within *Politics in the Closet*, the psychotic fold merging subject and environment finds a varying expression in voice L's extended final monologue on sovereignty and monstrosity. Paraphrasing Agamben's theory of the state of exception, L observes that “when returned to its true place beyond punishment and sacrifice, the monster shows us the first form of life taken into sovereign power, and keeps alive the memory of the first distinction becoming the first exclusion, which is precisely the birth of the realm of politics.” This theoretical framing illuminates the exhibition's ready-mades (the mixing bowl, crown, and AI-generated voices) as objects that have been simultaneously excluded from their traditional contexts and included in a new symbolic order, mirroring the paradoxical position of “bare life” within sovereign power. It also mirrors our present times as a set of (al)ready-made and automatic, political and personal exclusions, severances and barriers, inherited through history and, thus, inescapable if insistently read by history itself, disguised as historically complacent, redemptive subjectivities. And yet the dialogue's conclusion, where the five voices collectively whisper two words—*ever want*—while gradually softening “to the smallest degree of sound, without ever stopping,” evokes desire's persistence (and tempering) beyond logic and articulation. In this sense, through a collaboration that is really about holding a series of pressure points between viewer and viewed, subject and object, consumption and contemplation, the artists offer no resolution. They instead commit to these tensions by insisting on their productive discomfort—a discomfort that holds potential to prompt recognition of our own participation in the economies of attention and desire that define contemporary existence. In an era dominated by constant visual stimulation, Ciarrocca and Krone's exhibition creates a space for contemplating the boundaries that both separate and connect us to what we see, what we want, and what ultimately risks consuming us, knowing that the sun inevitably finds us all within its boundaries.

—Reya Guts

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