WHAT DO WE SEE AND HOW DO WE SEE?
WHO IS THESEEER ANDWHOISEEN?
AND HOW DOFRAMEDOBJECTS
DETERMINE OUR EXPERIENCE OF SELF
AND OTHER, OF HERE AND THERE, IN
FRONT OF AND BEHIND?
-SABINE ECKMANN, CURATOR
CONNECTIONS

As we spend more and more time in our daily lives with computers, websites, cell phones, television screens, and handheld devices, it is important to shed some light on how the rise of these technologies impacts our place in the world—and how it can offer new possibilities for the creation and experience of art. *Window | Interface* is the second in the Kemper Art Museum’s Screen Arts and New Media Aesthetics series of exhibitions that are designed to stimulate discussion about such issues.

This guide is designed as a companion to the exhibition *Window | Interface*. By including a more in-depth look at selected artworks in each section of this exhibition, this guide is intended to provide an opportunity to expand explorations of *Window | Interface* and help make connections with new media art. The guide also presents a series of educational programs beginning this fall at the Kemper Art Museum that are designed to teach visitors more about new media art. These programs will examine the nature of artworks that respond to the increasing significance of technology in our daily lives, and how these “new media” works can help us to experience “old media” art in new ways.

WINDOW | INTERFACE

Over the last several decades, we have come to live in a culture dominated by electronic windows and interfaces. Think of our computer monitors, high-definition television screens, cell phone displays, and digital cameras’ tiny viewing windows. Think of the electronic monitors scattered across our cityscapes, airports, and transportation systems. These screens serve as boundaries and points of contact between computers and their human users, between data and perception, between the physical and the virtual.

Focusing on artworks from the 1960s to the present, *Window | Interface* explores the role of windows, screens, and interfaces in shaping our perception of and encounter with the world around us. This exhibition also highlights how our senses and aesthetic experiences are deeply interrelated. The first section of the exhibition, “Window,” brings together works of art that expand the function of the window and question its limitations as a mechanism for framing sight. The second section, “Interface,” examines a range of multimedia installations, videos, and photographs. Representing different types of interfaces, many of these works ask us to explore the role of all of our senses in the aesthetic experience.

The artworks in this exhibition encourage us to rethink what it means to relate to and experience the world, not just through sight, but through touch, hearing, and movement as well. *Window | Interface* thus invites us to think about how the window, the electronic screen, and the digital interface underscore the embodied character of human perception. It also asks us to consider how contemporary art engages the viewer in how we see and relate to our immediate environment.
Though windows come in all shapes and sizes, their shared function is that of providing, to put it simply, some kind of hole in some kind of wall. Windows connect dissimilar spaces but no window can ever fulfill its task without also separating what it brings into contact. No hole can do without its wall.

—Lutz Koepnick, Curator

Windows are frames that enable—yet often also disable—contact between interior and exterior, between private and public spaces, and between us and the world. The Renaissance relied on the metaphor of the window to anchor central perspective and define the nature of the image. For hundreds of years, images have been understood as acting like transparent windows onto the world with the viewer placed in the position of distant observer.

Recently, artists have questioned the window as a mechanism for controlling sight. Rather than providing a neatly framed view, windows function as locations of unstable, unpredictable, and multisensory encounters. The works displayed in this section of Window | Interface bring attention to the limitations of pure vision through their different uses of windows. Overall, these artistic projects further complicate the traditional notion of the window and expand what we might call a window today.

DAVID HILLIARD

In his multipaneled photographs, David Hilliard creates complex sets of images that allow the viewer to take in multiple perspectives and moments in time. Through his framing and use of focus, our attention is drawn across the images to details that would have otherwise gone completely unnoticed—such as a girl’s hand or a small makeup mirror in Home, Office, Day, Evening.

In addition, Hilliard leaves a small gap between the individual panels, emphasizing the possibility that these scenes may not have been captured at the same instant or from the same viewpoint. Each panel segment could have been made seconds, minutes, or days apart. We see multiple sides of the room, discontinuous spaces, and varying perspectives. The inclusion of mirrors and reflections further complicates and fragments our view into the spaces of these images. It is through assembling these parts that we attempt to draw relationships and decode bits of the story, yet these relationships seem to shift as we continue to explore the photographs.


—David Hilliard
For his *Blind Window* series, Jeff Wall created a series of photographs that show barricaded windows of what appear to be parts of abandoned buildings. Instead of highlighting the decayed character of these places, Wall draws attention to the visual characteristics of concrete, metallic, and wooden surfaces. The contrast of structures, textures, and colors emphasizes the windows’ physical properties and abstract beauty. Yet, Wall ultimately presents us with nonfunctional, “blind” windows that block our view and disable perception.

Over the past three decades, Wall has displayed his work as large photographic transparencies mounted on top of light boxes—a technique borrowed from urban advertising. As in his *Blind Window* series, the vivid illumination of the image makes us feel as though we are watching a plasma screen television, opening up the notion of the window to evoke different types of screens that we experience in our daily lives.

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**JEFF WALL**  
*Blind Window Series (2000)*

"The windows are—so the title would have us think—blind, i.e. we can't see them any more or see through them any more... What memories are hidden in the house? Who were the people who visited it, lived there or worked there, built it or shut it up from inside? An act of shutting up—of whatever kind—always prompts questions, questions of why, who and against who.

— Rolf Lauter, *Jeff Wall: Figures & Places*
What we call interfaces today are essentially updated versions of the window. In contrast to the conventional window that frames our view, contemporary screen culture offers a multisensory experience—engaging moving images, body movement, and at times touch and sound. This section of Window | Interface presents artworks that explore the artistic uses and historical dimensions of our contemporary screen culture.

Throughout this section, artists have transformed windows into interfaces that facilitate bodily encounters and continue to call attention to the restrictions and complications of framed sight. The range of video works and multimedia installations allows us to think of ourselves as mobile and performing spectators as we respond to continuously changing images and even alter them by moving our bodies or interacting with the work.

**What exactly is an interface anyway? In its simplest sense, the word refers to software that shapes the interaction between user and computer. The interface serves as a kind of translator, mediating between the two parties, making one sensible to the other.**

—Steven Johnson, Interface Culture

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**Peter Campus**

*Prototype for Interface (1972)*

As we approach Peter Campus’s installation *Prototype for Interface*, we are confronted with both a reflected image and a projected video image of our own bodies, cast side-by-side on a transparent glass screen. As we move side to side to overlap and unite both images, the result is unsuccessful, producing a split and unsettling doubling of our image.

Similar to Olafur Eliasson’s *Seeing Yourself Seeing*, this installation encourages us to consider the role of our bodies in our process of seeing. Campus’s glass screen questions what we normally understand as the given boundaries of bodily existence. His work draws us to think of our bodies as images themselves, and as parts of the image space that surrounds us. Activated by and totally dependent on the viewer’s participation, the work enables us to experience the role of our body as the primary medium of perception.

Peter Campus has said that his “eureka” moment came while watching the first Apollo moon landing in 1969. From a beach cottage in New England the artist experienced the dislocation generated by simultaneously witnessing the familiar sun-dappled ocean scene before him and the other-worldly event unfolding in black and white on his TV. Both were undeniably real, both were occurring at the same moment, yet each appeared to negate the primacy or plausibility of the other.

—James Trainor, frieze
Olafur Eliasson
Seeing Yourself Seeing (2001)

Suspended from the ceiling as we enter the first gallery of this exhibition, Olafur Eliasson’s Seeing Yourself Seeing is comprised of a one-meter square lattice of vertical strips of mirror tape alternating with transparent spaces in the glass surface. Upon approaching this work, we simultaneously see the reflection of ourselves and the space around us as well as the gallery space behind the work visible through the transparent spaces of the lattice.

As viewers of this window-like frame, we are recast as active participants in the work, creating a kind of fragmented image that shifts and changes with our every movement. You look at this small glass surface, and you see a mirage of yourself in an implausible space where foreground and background collapse into one. The reflected image and the view of the space beyond the work are fragmented into vertical strips, breaking up image and space from every angle. As the title of Eliasson’s work suggests, we are caught in an unsettling act of seeing ourselves seeing.

In many ways, Olafur Eliasson teaches us to see again—and to understand how we see. Our direct perception, often blunted in everyday life by the incessant flood of irritations, is permanently questioned by him. The look in the mirror, otherwise routine, wins a new meaning with him again.

—Jakob Schoof, “Seeing Yourself Seeing”

Olafur Eliasson
Seeing Yourself Seeing, 2001
(installation view)
In her touchscreen installation, Kirsten Geisler presents us with an idealized portrait of a woman, looking toward us from the small monitor on the wall. When we touch the screen with our finger, the face of the woman changes her expression. Depending upon which part of the face is touched, she may laugh, weep, look serious, or blow a kiss. It is through touching the artwork—an act traditionally forbidden in museums—that we activate the image in front of us.

Though we approach this interface with the hope for inter-human communication and physical contact, the woman’s face can only react to our contact. Geisler exposes the extent to which even our contemporary screen culture, despite its frequently seductive appeal, remains a one-directional interface—still adhering to the logic of the Renaissance window.

In Dream of Beauty—Touch Me, we use the image of the woman as the medium of our desires, but—due to what is a deliberate faking of interactivity—we never experience a transformation of our own bodies into a mobile medium of vision and perception. Nor are we ever able to displace the mark of artifice and abstraction that seems to tarnish the appearance of beauty: the woman’s baldness, reminding the viewer of the extent to which the woman’s image is computer-generated.

—Lutz Koepnick, curator
In this interactive installation, artist Jeffrey Shaw invites us to pick up the handheld LCD monitor and view the computer-generated image of a golden calf. As we move the screen around the white pedestal, the framed image of the golden calf shifts in accordance with our movements: the calf gets smaller as we bring the screen farther from the pedestal, and the viewing angle constantly changes as we rotate the monitor around the pedestal. As we engage in this activity of seeing the calf from different angles and locations, we end up performing what almost looks like a dance that invariably becomes noticeable to others in the gallery.

Through this multisensory engagement with the object and the image, we become aware that perception is incomplete without bodily encounters. Referring to the Old Testament, Shaw’s *Golden Calf* also alludes to the cult of image and object that continues to structure the history of art, the art market, and the art museum.

Digital pictures reside immaterially inside the computer, and the computer screen functions like a window through which the viewer chooses what he wants to look at. Furthermore, the computer screen functions like a cinema camera, because the viewer can pan in any direction over the surface of an image, and also zoom into the details of a chosen image. These characteristics offer the possibility to create a virtual space of imagery wherein a three-dimensional structure of relationships between two-dimensional images can be defined. This can then constitute an interactive space which the viewer explores by utilizing some kind of interface device.

– Jeffrey Shaw
In his large-scale video installation *Le Baiser (The Kiss)*, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle invites us to explore the complexities of windows and interfaces as sites of transparency, separation, social stratification, and multisensory experience.

Staged at Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House—a signature work of modernist architecture in Plano, Illinois—this video is projected onto a double-sided screen; it shows a window washer (the artist) outside and a female (performing as a DJ) inside, both fully engrossed in their work. Although separated by only a pane of transparent glass, the two fail to see, much less acknowledge, each other's presence. Rather than connecting these two individuals, the immense glass window of the Farnsworth House becomes an impenetrable barrier between their two realms—between inside and outside, male and female, sound and silence, hired help and affluent resident. As the video cuts from exterior to interior scenes, the soundtrack also changes, from soft rustling leaves and the squeaks of the squeegee to the ethereal sounds of electronic music.
Manglano-Ovalle’s video screen is presented in a darkened gallery at the center of a suspended aluminum structure—a half-scale schematic outline of the Farnsworth House itself. As viewers, we are encouraged to walk in and around the thin framework—recognizing and crossing boundaries that the characters in the video cannot. As we move through the space, watch the action on a screen, and encounter other visitors in the gallery, we are invited to consider our body as an active and unpredictable medium producing ever-shifting views of the world around us.

AS WE CIRCLE THROUGH AND AROUND MANGLANO-OVALLE’S INSTALLATION, STRUCK BY THE VIDEO’S RADIANT COLORS AND LUSH PHOTOGRAPHY, AS WE ENJOY THE WORK’S SUGGESTIVE BEAUTY WITH MORE THAN ONE CHANNEL OF OUR SENSORY SYSTEM, HOW CAN WE POSSIBLY NOT FEEL A SENSE OF DAZZLE AND MYSTERY? HOW CAN WE NOT BE ELECTRIFIED AND THEREFORE CARRIED BEYOND OURSELVES BY WHAT WINDOWS—OLD AND NEW—MIGHT HAVE TO OFFER TO US?

—Lutz Koepnick, curator

FARNSWORTH HOUSE
PLANO, ILLINOIS

The Farnsworth House, designed and constructed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, is a landmark one-room house located south of the city of Plano, Illinois. The steel and glass house was commissioned by Dr. Edith Farnsworth—a prominent Chicago-based physician—as a country retreat where she could get away and enjoy nature. The architect’s extensive use of clear floor-to-ceiling glass opened the interior to its natural surroundings to an extreme degree, leaving nearly all of the private space of the house open to external observers. The effect of this was problematic for Dr. Farnsworth, who complained of “noses pressed up against the glass” and said the house was “transparent, like an X-Ray.”

Manglano-Ovalle’s video installation is both an homage to the modernist space as well as a way to highlight the practical flaw of making an entire house of glass. The oppositions that this work constructs, according to scholar Irene Hoffman, “make reference to the troubled and often contentious relationship between Mies and his wealthy female client, Edith Farnsworth, while also reflecting the artist’s conflicted stance towards Mies and his modernist principles.”

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Farnsworth House, 1951, Plano, Illinois
Anyone can relate to new media on some level, because it is such an integral part of daily life—from cell phones to computer screens to Nintendo Wii, we are all already engaged with some facets of the new media aesthetic.

Learning @ The Kemper Art Museum

New Media Workshops

No Experience Required
Starting this fall, the Kemper Art Museum is launching a new education program to complement the Museum’s focus on new media art and digital aesthetics. No Experience Required is a series of workshops and conversations designed to explore the what, why, who, and how of new media, technology, and art—for those with little or no previous experience. Through each workshop, participants will engage in a dialogue with curators, artists, or guest speakers about particular themes, questions, and developments in new media art.

“What is New Media?”
Tuesday, September 18 @ 7 PM
Kemper Art Museum
Join curators Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick for this first workshop designed to introduce the topic of “new media” and stimulate discussion about the role of digital and new media in creating, experiencing, and exhibiting art.

“Video as Art and Interface”
Wednesday, October 17 @ 7 PM
Steinberg Hall Auditorium
Join us for this second workshop where we will view and discuss landmark works of experimental video art from the 1960s and ’70s, including selected works from the Window | Interface exhibition, examining this distinctive and expanding art form.

Advance Registration Required
Visit kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/rsvp
or email kemperartmuseum@wustl.edu to sign up.
Registration fee: $20 ($10 for Kemper Art Museum members and students with ID)
Through a new collaboration with RoundTrips, the Kemper Art Museum will be offering its first distance learning program this October in conjunction with the Window | Interface exhibition. This experimental program will allow students from schools outside the St. Louis region to take a “virtual field trip” to the Museum and actively engage with artworks on display in this special exhibition.

Through a digital learning experience, students in distant schools will be able to interact with Museum educators and curators through real-time, face-to-face interaction as well as interactive web-streaming. Facilitated by video and Internet-based technologies, participating students will be invited to experience selected new media artworks in the Window | Interface exhibition. Students will take a virtual tour of the Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle installation, for example, or see what it looks like to pick up and move the monitor in Jeffrey Shaw’s The Golden Calf.

Connecting with exhibitions in the Screen Arts and New Media Aesthetics series, this project challenges students, teachers, schools, and museums to rethink ideas of art and learning in the digital age. Engaging not only with artworks that use or explore issues of new technologies, but also with the computer-based interface of distance learning, students will be challenged to consider the world of iPhones, video games, and computer screens in a completely different way.

How do I learn more about this new program? Visit the RoundTrips website for more details: www.roundtrips.org.

You may also contact Michael Murawski, Coordinator of Education and Public Programs, at murawski@wustl.edu or 314.935.7918.

VIEW ONLINE: An archive of this distance learning program will be made available for viewing on the Kemper Art Museum’s website.
LIST OF ARTWORKS IN THIS GUIDE (ALPHABETICAL BY ARTIST)

PETER CAMPUS
(American, b. 1937)
Prototype for Interface, 1972
Video installation, dimensions variable
Collection of Pamela and Richard Kramlich
Installation photo from Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, Mexico City, Mexico, 2003
Image © Peter Campus, courtesy of Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York

OLAFUR ELIASSON
(Icelandic, b. Denmark, 1967)
Seeing Yourself Seeing, 2001
Wood, glass, and mirror, 39 x 39"
Collection of Themistocles and Dare Michos, San Francisco
© 2007 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / COPY-DAN, Copenhagen

KIRSTEN GEISLER
(German, b. 1949)
Dream of Beauty—Touch Me, 1999
Touch screen, DVD player, and DVD, 13 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 1 5/8"
Courtesy of Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin

DAVID HILLIARD
(American, b. 1964)
Home, Office, Day, Evening, 2006
C-print, 3 panels, 40 x 30" ea.
Courtesy of the artist and the Bernard Toale Gallery, Boston

IÑIGO MANGLANO-OVALLE
(American, b. Spain, 1961)
Le Baiser (The Kiss), 1999
Multichannel video installation, dimensions variable
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Sara Lee Corporation Purchase Fund, 1999.56

JEFFREY SHAW
(Australian, b. 1944)
The Golden Calf, 1995
Computergraphic installation with computer, pedestal, LCD monitor, and position sensor, dimensions variable
Courtesy of Luc Courchesne, software by Gideon May

JEFF WALL
(Canadian, b. 1946)
Blind Window No. 2, 2000
Cibachrome transparency and aluminum light box, ed. 5, 52 1/4 x 67 1/4"
Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

SOURCES


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
Support for Window | Interface was provided by James M. Kemper, Jr., the David Woods Kemper Memorial Foundation, the Hortense Lewin Art Fund, and individual contributors to the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum.

SELECTED BOOKS AVAILABLE AT THE KEMPER ART MUSEUM SHOP

The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft. By Anne Friedberg (MIT Press, 2006)

Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art. By Doug Hall, Sally Jo Fifer, and David Ross (Aperture, 1991)

Bodies in Code: Interfaces with New Media. By Mark Hansen (Routledge, 2006)

Framing Attention: Windows on Modern German Culture. By Lutz Koepnick (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007)

Video Art. Edited by Sylvia Martin and Uta Grosenick (Taschen, 2006)
Location and Parking
Located near the corner of Skinker and Forsyth Boulevards, the Kemper Art Museum is directly west of Forest Park on the Danforth Campus at Washington University. A paid visitor parking lot is located just east of the Museum.

Admission to the Kemper Art Museum is always free and open to the public.

Mon, Wed, & Thu: 11–6
Fri: 11–8
Sat & Sun: 11–6
Closed Tue and University holidays

Visit our website to sign up for the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum eNews.
WINDOW | INTERFACE EVENTS AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Panel Discussion
FRIDAY, AUGUST 31 @ 6 PM
Steinberg Hall Auditorium

Curators Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick will lead a conversation with artist Peter Campus, exploring how electronic windows and interfaces structure the experience and practice of art today.

Curator’s Dialogue
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 @ 6:30 PM
(RECEPTION BEGINS @ 6 PM)
Kemper Art Museum

Curators Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick will lead an informal and open conversation in the galleries about the exhibition Window | Interface.

Lecture: Christiane Paul
“From Display to Membrane: Screen Interfaces in Digital Art”
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25 @ 6:30 PM
Steinberg Hall Auditorium

Christiane Paul is adjunct curator of new media arts at the Whitney Museum of American Art and has written extensively on new media, net art, and hypermedia. Her talk will outline different functions of “screens” in digital art that go beyond their use as mere surfaces for image projection.

NEW MEDIA WORKSHOPS: NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED
(see page 11 for details)

“What Is New Media Art?”
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 @ 7 PM
Kemper Art Museum

“Video As Art and Interface”
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17 @ 7 PM
Steinberg Hall Auditorium

Advance registration required; visit kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/rsvp or email kemperartmuseum@wustl.edu to sign up.
Registration fee: $20 ($10 for Kemper Art Museum members and students with ID).

EDUCATION RESOURCES ONLINE
kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu/education.html

Access a downloadable PDF file of this Connections Guide, as well as links to artists’ websites and more information about the exhibition Window | Interface.

FREE PUBLIC TOURS

The Kemper Art Museum will offer free docent-led tours of Window | Interface on the following Sundays at 2 pm (no reservation needed):
September 16, 30
October 14, 28

To schedule a special guided tour for your group, class, or organization, please contact Michael Murawski, coordinator of education and public programs, at murawski@wustl.edu or 314.935.7918.