

That Which Appears

it is the ache
of looking
perceives
behind appearances
that which
appears¹

A window is a curious object. It occupies a thickness and a physical surface, yet its purpose seems to be to disappear. It catches dust, rain, reflections, fingerprints and condensation, and alters what passes through it. It can be looked through, looked at, or looked back from. The window is already an image-making device, a machine for seeing in which the surface and what lies beyond continually occupy the same field.

This double nature shapes Cole Swensen's *The Glass Age* (2007), particularly her sustained attention to Pierre Bonnard. Swensen writes that, in Bonnard's work, "the window is where we actually live," describing it as "a vivid liminality poised on the sill, propped against the frame". Swensen identifies Bonnard's "double fixation" as "saturated colour and utter transparency," an apparent contradiction, an "immanent collision" through which the present becomes tangible. The window remains an object even when it permits vision to pass through it.

This luminosity and double vision resonate directly through the works in *That Which Appears* at Sid Motion Gallery. Mike Silva's painting *Lounge Windows* (2024) embodies Swensen's observation of Bonnard's transparency. Silva renders light filtering through veiled curtains to reveal the structural grid of secondary windows behind them, catching the world at the exact threshold of emergence and disappearance.

Olivia Bax approaches the window as a portal and a physical armature. Inspired by looking out from Borromini's Chiesa di San Carlino in Rome, where ancient history and contemporary graffiti coexist on the glass, Bax constructs sculptures that act as frames to host other objects. In her wall work *Vista* (2025), she takes a discarded polystyrene box to function as a window casing. By cutting apertures through the back of the box and arranging internal compositions, she establishes multiple layers of depth. A screen of wire netting on the front operates to frame and disrupt vision simultaneously.

Glass also constructs complex, overlapping realities through reflection and containment. In Yasunari Kawabata's 1937 novel, *Snow Country*, dusk turns a train window into a mirror: Yōko's reflected face appears over the moving evening landscape as two superimposed films, creating a third image from their coexistence. This layered, staged encounter is also revealed in Milly Peck's zoo studies (2020-25). Peck frames synthetic enclosure habitats through glass where the animals themselves are absent. The window becomes a surface where reflection, artificial landscape, and the viewer's expectant gaze overlay one another, turning the pane into a site of waiting and spatial tension.

¹ Thomas A Clark from *that which appears*, Paragon Press (1994)

I aimed at similar tautness in my painting *Towards Bruco* (2025), structured around a specific event of looking. Watching from a window in Siena toward the Basilica di San Francesco, a scene of cloistered nuns tending a terraced garden shifted unexpectedly when I discovered the figures directing their gaze back through binoculars. That sudden, reciprocal act of attention disrupts the assumed distance, causing the painted space to break down: the terraces, street, and basilica fragmenting while imagined forms intermingle on the picture surface.

The physical mechanics of the frame have long disrupted pictorial space. In Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), the landscape surrounding the bather functions as a painting within the painting, registered through a distinct density of paint handling, a lower horizon, and edges softened by foliage. As the reclining man's body reaches across this boundary, his torso enters a secondary scene while his legs remain in the primary plane, rendering the physical surface spatially unstable. Lucy Gunning's video *Intermediate II* (2001) creates a strikingly similar spatial folding. Filmed from the street on York Way (coincidentally, the location of the first iteration of Sid Motion Gallery), young dancers drift through the architectural grid of an upstairs window. The window frame functions like Manet's internal boundary, creating a secondary stage where body and architecture interlock.

Cathy Hawley's selection from *Drawing Matter* extends these architectural questions and alter how the contemporary works are encountered. They establish a history of looking in which perspective is an instrument for testing bodily and spatial experience. The exhibition moves within that history, where objects become ways of holding a moment in suspension. "Every window implies a blind spot" Swensen argues, "- it's the percentage of air in every scene; the portion that can't be seen lying over everything. The unveiled veil."

For example, Charles Hewlings translates architectural views and spatial memory into sculpture. In *Episodes in a View: the path, the treasure, bird in the valley* (2020), constructed from wood and steel, he responds to the vista framed by a window overlooking Conques in France. His small, intimate works in air-drying clay, such as *Window 2* (2025) and *Awake 3* (2025), record the immediate sensation of looking through one's own hand upon waking, or model the imagined geometry of crypts and doorway thresholds.

Across the exhibition, what appears is never simply what is there. It arrives through a frame, within a layer of light, memory and material. The window opens onto another world, but it also brings that world back onto its own surface. Somewhere in this movement something becomes apparent, but that which appears is always in the process of appearing, held for a moment on the thin membrane between seeing and being seen through.

By James Fisher

Through and Beyond

The drawings kindly loaned by the Drawing Matter collection place us in a series of spaces where our eye travels through and beyond; to a wall, a garden, an apparent dead end, a sparse monumental landscape. Even John Hejduk's *Extro-Intro House* (1975), a mirrored dwelling turning inwards under the moon and out under the sun, and where the drawing projection situates us as external observer, locates us physically with its tripartite form and intimation of landscape and horizon. The drawings are mostly perspectival, a distorted perspective in some cases, and their apparent intent is to explore or communicate spatial experience rather than provide any instruction or intimation of construction. They are design tools nevertheless, testing ideas of symbolism, symmetry, abstraction and relationships between the body and architecture; complete in themselves but referring to a potential physical manifestation.

The drawing *Perspective Interior* (1935) by Mies van der Rohe uses a horizontal symmetry, the viewpoint almost equidistant between floor and ceiling – a panoramic equivalence – a floating, just as the recessed detail at a junction in his architecture allows columns and walls to float in what has been described as a 'gravitational indifference'.² *Travel Sketch (Study for a Mural Based on Egyptian Motifs)* (1951-3) by Louis Kahn contains volumes and voids in a harsh light, his reflection on timeless monumental space with a more than human scale. This impression is reinforced through the depiction of the ancient form of the pyramid. It was one of a series of such sketches as well as a precursor to a pyramidal mural in Kahn's Weiss House (1947-50 Philadelphia, USA). In *Corridor Storefront* (1966-7) by Christo there is a tension and ambiguity between interior and exterior. He described his storefront works from the 1960's as relating to the architectural space of the street. Turned inward and veiled or rendered opaque the transformed and simplified storefront element becomes the enclosure of a new interior, whilst retaining an intimation of its original purpose as a shop window framing a view to another inside. The physical works described in the drawing were exhibited in a large warehouse interior themselves, heightening this sense of ambiguity, and were a precursor to projects altering whole buildings and landscapes. The drawings by James Gowan from his *Sketchbook* (1976-82) show a series of perspectival interiors with one missing wall framing a flattening of the world beyond. An itinerant vertical element subdivides both external world and interior. Notes written by Gowan, a Scot, elsewhere in the sketchbook suggest a play on the "English landscape, flattened perspective and a reminder of the vanishing point with a simple building type". All these works appear to reflect upon visual and bodily experience, on the composition of architectural space and its ability to organise and reinvent our relationship to the world around us.

By Cathy Hawley

² Inaki Abalos *The Good Life: A Guided Visit to the Houses of Modernity* (Second Edition; 2019) Zurich:Park Books 42

Acknowledgments

That Which Appears has been put together by Olivia Bax, James Fisher and Sid Motion. This first exhibition at Sid Motion Gallery (18 September – 31 October 2026) shows work by Olivia Bax, James Fisher, Charles Hewlings, Mike Silva, Lucy Gunning and Milly Peck alongside a selection of architectural drawings from Drawing Matter selected by Cathy Hawley. This exhibition will tour to the Millennium Gallery, Sheffield Museums in Spring 2028. The artists in this exhibition will be joined by loans from the Graves Collection, Drawing Matter, Leeds Art Gallery and the Tate Collection including a work by Philip Guston and 9 drawings by Pierre Bonnard. Ahead of the exhibition in Sheffield, there will be a book published next year.

We would like to thank: Sid Motion for her dedication and time to this project. This is her last exhibition in this space in South East London but we are grateful she will continue to work on the publication and the exhibition in Sheffield. The artists in the exhibition for their work and conversations. Niall Hobhouse, Kendra Johnson-Matchett and all of Drawing Matter for loaning work. Cathy Hawley for her selection and text. Alison Morton, Kirsty Hamiton and Katie Irwin for supporting this exhibition in Sheffield in 2028. Cole Swensen whose book has been instrumental to this project. Thomas A. Clark who kindly let us use the title 'That Which Appears' from his book of poetry, and The University of Gloucestershire for funding to make it all possible.