

The Eye's Ray

Vision and sight are central in "The Eye's Ray" by the Italian novelist and essayist Italo Calvino. In this text, he goes back to early scientific theories. For early scientists, vision was both a mental and physical process. According to them, sight started inside the brain and came out of the eyes as beams of light. This illuminating power can nowadays be found in cinema and photography, like the beamers in this exhibition that are beaming light until they find a surface that can make the light concrete - and thus can make something visible. In line with Calvino's essay, Sefer Memişoğlu's exhibition "The Eye's Ray" shows different views on light, sight and the illuminating gaze.

Have for instance a look at portrait of the French philosopher Guy Debord. As the founder of the Situationists, he is most well-known for his book, "The Society of the Spectacle", an example of Marxist critical theory published in 1967. On this drawing by Memişoğlu, Debord looks at us frontally, as if he is illuminating the spectator to see who is in front of him. Despite the very realistic representation, the drawing has an elusive quality. The face is depicted as a frozen mask; the gaze is somewhat absent. Memişoğlu compiled and combined many photographs of Debord to serve as the model for this drawing. The presented subject is thus not taken from reality, but is a representation of a photographic reality. Debord is transformed into a layered mask, looking at all the artists or photographers that were once in front of him. He is looking at these people, who want to capture his images and his gaze, hiding behind a camera or paper. The drawing of Debord is one of a man looking at so many, that we don't see him anymore. In "The Society of the Spectacle", Debord warned us for an overload of the spectacle. We here see a demonstration of what this causes: a permanent state of alienation.

This brings us to another important figure in this exhibition: Medusa. The beams of light that comes out of her eyes don't only enable her to see, it is a gaze that can turn anyone into stone: the darkest light is spread from the eyes of Medusa. But if Medusa encounters her own gaze, all that is left is darkness. So, where there is light, there is darkness too. Too much light can eventually bring darkness. But don't be afraid that this will be a merely dark exhibition. "The Eye's Ray" doesn't plead for darkness nor light, it mostly shows how much one can't exist without the other. The trick is not to be scared of the dark, but embrace the beauty of the interplay between light and shadow.

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