

## Concavity

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*Concave Door* is a cylinder made of wood and lined in felt with a revolving convex/concave panel inside. It is an immersive space with homogenous texture and the possibility for perpetual revolution. Like other revolving doors, its inside space is exactly that of its door swing.

Doors are axes between two and three dimensions. This is evident in architectural plan drawings on which generally only the graphic representation of a door swing implies a third dimension. Such door swings represent contingent space, which must be kept free in order for the door to open. Otherwise understood, this is negative space: that which exists as an impression of a harder object on a softer one – the door on the space into which it opens. The space within the curve of the door swing, contingent on the door's opening, acts like a cushion for the door. In a revolving door the swing space is enclosed, effectively turning it into a room.

The doors at Pierre Chareau's *Maison de Verre* in Paris are even more acquisitive, being convex on both sides. Here, the geometry of the door swing is exaggerated by the convexity of the door. Even when they are closed the doors of the *Maison de Verre* are taking space superfluously, since inside the hollow door it is concave on both sides. Furthermore, the wall within which the door hangs shifts outward on the knob side so the room itself seems to open to one who enters. The generosity of threshold at *Maison de Verre* demonstrates how a door's pivot can implicate a large swath of space. Like anatomical vestibules such as the part of the mouth outside the teeth, the door's vestibule is expandable. Inside the door swing one inhabits not the quantifiable space of the home but rather space being purchased by two dimensions from three by virtue of the action of the door.

Michel Leiris describes an experience of inhabiting vestibular space in his 1938 essay *Miroir de la tauromachie*. To begin to talk about the meaning of the relationships in a bullfight between matador, bull and audience, Leiris points to those 'certain nodes or critical points' in the universe 'that might be represented geometrically as the places where one feels tangency to the world and to oneself.' In the context of the bullfight, the tangency is the near miss, the pass between matador and bull that comes just shy of deadly contact. For Leiris it is this tangency that gives the pass its flavour: 'it's from this 'not quite' – from this hiatus or narrow rift whose one lip would be 'not quite there' and the other 'beyond' – that most of the pleasure is born (Leiris 23).' Similarly pungent for their slightest of discrepancies are the musical quartertone and the star that appears at the edge of a field of vision but cannot be seen straight on. As though held in space by precisely equal and opposite forces, the hybrid is neither one thing nor the other but full of potential to suddenly bend toward either 'the geometrical norm [or] its destruction (Leiris 23).'

Such a sense of potential is related to sensing the tangible in Alexander of Aphrodisias' discussion of *sunaesthesia*. *Sunaesthesia* comes about in response to Aristotle's work on *Aisthesis* (sensation) and his pointing to a faculty possessed by people to sense that they are sensing. Around 300 AD Alexander of Aphrodisias uses the term *sunaesthesia* to mean this sense that senses sensing. Alexander is careful to say that *sunaesthesia* does not have to do with self-consciousness or self-awareness or anything at all to do with cognition. Rather, *sunaesthesia* is 'a movement of the soul that involves the coincidence not of the self with itself but of an event and its potentiality to occur: the soul's sensation of a sensible thing and its ability in relation to the thing sensed (Heller-Roazen, 84).' The coincidence of an event and its potential to occur rarely comes in the bullfight,

for the matador rarely loses; but the sense of potential is present regardless. The doorswing is a spatial representation of this dynamic of contingency wherein the intersection or interference is of the second dimension with the third.

Francis Bacon's 1990 painting *Bullfighting Mirror (Study for a Bullfight #1)* locates a concave mirror inside the bullring. The concave mirror reflects an image of the audience, in effect collapsing the distance between audience and bullfight and reducing the mass of the crowd to occupy the thin space of the concave mirror, turning three dimensions into two.

The tangency of the world to itself describes the possibility inherent in any point for an other dimension to shoot out, for room to play about the line of a perceived limit, and for inhabitation within the space generated by the contingency of a moving part or players. In Leiris' detailed account of the *tauromachie*, we find the audience at the bullfight inhabiting that slip of space between the bull's horn and the matador's torso.

In his first note on *inframince*, Duchamp writes, 'the possible – the passage from one form to another – the inframince is the potential – the very space of the passage (Duchamp, 15).' The quality perceived at nodes of tangency is *inframince* – the sense of inside space, of the malleability of a boundary, of the depth within a limit. In another note, Duchamp connects *inframince* to 'the pearlescent, the shimmering, the iridescent in general (Duchamp, 27).' Iridescence results from thin-film interference, which occurs naturally when incident light waves are reflected by the upper and lower boundaries of a thin film and interfere with one another to form a new wave.

At its etymological roots film is a thin membrane, like the skin that grows over milk left out in a container. Film is equally a medium by which to capture life in the thinnest way. The film *Polygraphia* is set in the concave door on the night before Duchamp leaves for New York. Revolving around the question of an ego and its alternate, *Polygraphia* is realized by Anne Kawala and Rebecca Loewen.



*Bullfighting Mirror (Study for a Bullfight #1)*, Francis Bacon

### Works Cited

- Duchamp, Marcel. Notes. Paris: Flammarion, 1999. [translations mine]  
Heller-Roazen, Daniel. The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation. NYC: Zone Books, 2009.  
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