

METAMIMESIS: The Calamity of Plato's Looking Glass

Terri Thomas is an interdisciplinary artist who uses strategies in her work that often attempt to break down the virtual barrier between spectator and performer, the viewer and the artwork, in order to generate deeper levels of social engagement and community.

For Museum of Human Achievement's exhibit, "Tap the Glass", Thomas creates a site-specific video installation, a *mise en scene*. This layered 'stage' consists of a space for the viewer and their own shadow to engage with fabricated silhouettes of spectators 'tapping the glass' at underwater caricatures within the illusory aquarium tank. These caricatures are flawed/wabi sabi impersonations of an aquatic mermaid, a clown disguised as a shark and stereotypical twins in bikinis. Opposite the simulated aquarium, a video camera filmed the entire mimetic narrative space, documenting both real and feigned spectators and the making of the art, not only the art itself.

This video installation titled "Metamimesis: The Calamity of Plato's Looking Glass" was loosely inspired by Pirholt's book, *Metamimesis: Imitation in Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre'*. Accordingly, Thomas thinks of the video component much like an underwater puppet show, focusing on duomodality whereby the "omnipotent" artist plays both narrator and actor. This is contrasted by the artist's aestheticized narrative that fluctuates between an intra and extra-diegetic gaze. Peculiarities are created through highlighting the low-tech and campy esthetic that creates a break from the mimetic and social expectations.

Intensifying Plato's rejection of Imitation, the artist created a video that documents herself in the audience, projecting her shadow beside her artificial life-sized shadow. These shadows engage with the artist and her twin's underwater performance within an illusory aquarium tank. Correspondingly, the audience's shadows participate with the artist's silhouettes on the wall. The mock silhouettes are taking photographs of the artist and her identical twin, imitating archetypes and stereotypes, as directed by the artist within the immense glass water tank. This imaginary glass reflects the mimes in both a one-way and two-way looking glass, such that the twinned-mime becomes a mirror for the spectator and the viewer becomes the pleasing reflection for the mime.