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Vanity Chamber

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Published in:
PAD Journal

Publication date:
2024

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for pulished version (APA):

Lee, N. T. (2024). Vanity Chamber: Reflections Upon Domestic Boundaries and Frontiers in a Post-Pandemic Home. *PAD Journal*, 16(25), 227-253.

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**POST-DOMESTIC
HABITAT**
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Publisher**Aiap Edizioni**

via A. Ponchielli 3 – 20129 Milano – Italy

aiap@aiap.it – www.aiap.it

PAD © ISSN 1972-7887

#25, Vol. 16, December 2023

www.padjournal.net

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DOMESTIC DEVICES

**HOW INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE
AND DESIGN REACT TO
THE CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO**

Vanity Chamber

Reflections Upon Domestic Boundaries and Frontiers in a Post-Pandemic Home

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Keywords

Dwelling Interior, Specular Devices, Thresholds, In-between Realm, Artistic Research.

Abstract

Through the development of a spatial installation entitled *Vanity Chamber*, this article reflects upon the role of specular devices within the home and asks how their increased use might affect boundaries between the domestic interior and the world outside.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns many activities previously reserved for the public domain suddenly had to take place in the home, via videotelephony platforms such as Zoom, Skype, Facetime and Microsoft Teams. Cultivated by a pre-existing *intrusion* into the home of digital specular devices, such as PCs and smart phones, which supported the increased use of videotelephony software observed during the pandemic, many people experienced a breaching of established domestic boundaries. Facilitated by these *leaky* thresholds, a simultaneous scrutiny from the *spectator* and a concern by the *voyeur* for the public display of the private interior was observed during lockdown.

An analysis of historical specular devices has shown that acts of voyeurism and vanity on the limits of the home are far from novel occurrences, and that these porous boundaries were often important liminal thresholds bridging the domestic with the public. Through the *Research by Design* method that led to *Vanity Chamber*, this article argues that the domestic interior has once again become an essential part of its surrounding neighbourhood and that it is on this *frontier*, or rather, within this *in-between realm* that we must now establish home.



Figure 1. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, *Vanity Chamber* in Designmuseum Danmark gallery, 2022. (Photo: Hampus Berndtson).

1. Introduction

The domestic habitat is in a state of constant metamorphosis, having to accommodate the needs of societies in perpetual flux, while at the same time, its architecture has often been envisioned with logic from a previous epoch, resulting in highly vulnerable built-environments. Of particular interest to this research inquiry, are the boundaries, limits, and threshold conjunctures of the Post-Domestic Habitat, which due to their increasingly diffuse character are a particularly exciting phenomena to study. Through the development of a spatial installation entitled *Vanity Chamber* (Fig. 1), this arti-

cle reflects upon the role of specular devices within the home and asks how their increased use might affect boundaries between the domestic interior and the world outside.

1.1. Diffuse Domestic Boundaries

As far back as the early 1980s, the French philosopher and prominent cultural critic of the post-war period, Jean Baudrillard identified an *intrusion*¹ into the home of technological devices, resulting in a greater porosity between the allegedly closed sphere of the domestic interior and the world outside through virtual bridges.

More recently, Anna Puigjaner, co-founder of Barcelona-based practice MAIO, has argued that the house has become an endless domestic landscape, and in turn the world has become a *grand interior*² composed from a boundless number of interconnected interiors linked together by technological networks. She writes, “The house has become part of a wider system, a system that has transformed the domestic into a generic, diffuse and continuously expanding ground” (Puigjaner, 2018, p. 113). Just over a year later, the Covid-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns radically redefined the boundaries of our domestic habitats to an unprecedented extent, expediently advancing the phenomenon previously identified by both Baudrillard and Puigjaner, resulting in a greater porosity of the

1 The French philosopher and prominent cultural critic of the post-war period, Jean Baudrillard has written extensively on the *intrusion* into the home of specular devices and their effect on the virtual relations between the outside and the allegedly closed sphere of the domestic interior. It should be noted that this intrusion has been taking place over many decades, although arguably advanced and expediated greatly by the Covid-19 pandemic (Baudrillard, 1994; Baudrillard, 2020).

2 Puigjaner's use of the term *grande interior* is a reference to Sloterdijk's earlier definition (Sloterdijk, 2013).

home through a significant increase in the use of technological devices that support communication software, such as videotelephony platforms.

1.2. Videotelephony, Vanity and Voyeurism

During the 2nd quarter of 2020 alone, 40% of Danish employees were required to work remotely from their homes, with this statistic rising to an unprecedented 75% within the capital region of Copenhagen.³ Simultaneously, a marked increase in the use of videotelephony software was observed,⁴ where platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, FaceTime and Skype became the dominant forms of communication between the domestic interior and the world outside. In addition to remote working, many activities previously reserved for the public domain, such as education, dating, fitness training, job interviews, legal case hearings (BBC US & Canada, 2023) and even balcony marathons⁵ were being publicly broadcast from the private domain of the home. As a direct result of this breach of established domestic boundaries, many people experienced a greater public intrusion into their private homes, and continue to do so as working from home remains desirable for many. This has placed greater scrutiny on our domestic interiors, décor and the personal belongings displayed within. Over the course of the pandemic, a simultaneous interest

3 Statistics quoted in are taken from Danmarks Statistik (Hohnen, 2020).

4 Zoom's sales in the last three months of 2020 were up 370% compared to the fourth quarter of 2019. Over the same period its meeting participants jumped from 10 million to 350 million per day (Molla, 2020).

5 During the first lockdown in March 2020, Elisha Nochomovitz ran a full marathon on his 7m wide balcony (The Guardian, 2020).

from the spectator and a concern by the voyeur for the public display of the private interior was observed, both in media, as well as in the evolution of videotelephony software interfaces. Suddenly, topics such as voyeurism and vanity have become highly relevant when discussing these threshold conjunctures between the home and the world outside.

1.3. Towards a Specular Home

The technological devices that support these videotelephony platforms, such as PCs, laptops, tablets, Smart TVs, and mobile phones, can be categorized as specular devices, whereby a digital interface provides one with a view of the people that one is communicating with, as well as an image of one's own reflection, often through a transfiguring filter. The observation that the pandemic had resulted in these specular devices becoming the dominant way of mediating between the domestic habitat and the world outside became the catalyst for exploring the affect that this might have on the home, and its boundaries. An artistic research method, namely *Research by Design*,⁶ involving an investigation into specular devices, including windows, mirrors, screens, and filters, on the boundaries of the domestic habitat has resulted in the development of an analogue spatial installation entitled *Vanity Chamber*, which was publicly exhibited at Designmuseum Danmark as part of *The Future is Present* exhibition between June 2022-May 2023 (Fig. 2).

6 *Research by Design* as promoted by academics such as Halina Dunin-Woyseth, Leon Van Schaik and Johan Verbeke (2014) is a systematic approach where the practice of design is utilized as the primary means to develop understanding and new knowledge. Birger Sevaldson defines the *Research by Design* method as, “a special research mode where the explorative, generative and innovative aspects of design are engaged and aligned in a systematic research enquiry” (Sevaldson, 2010, p. 11).



Figure 2. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, *Vanity Chamber* in Designmuseum Danmark gallery, 2022. (Photo: Hampus Berndtson).

2. Methodological Framework

The methodological framework for this article is based upon a *Research by Design* method, whereby a two-fold movement⁷ occurs between the retrospective analysis of historical specular devices within the home, together with the writings of Walter Benjamin (1982), Charles Baudelaire (1947), Jean Baudrillard

⁷ In the book *The City: Its Growth, its Decay, its Future* (1943), the Finnish architect and urbanist, Eliel Saarinen describes design research as being a two-fold movement which is based upon the idea of two layers working in different directions and temporalities. In this model, ideas and research are projected both forwards (present to the future) and backwards (future to the present) simultaneously.

(1994; 2020), Michel de Certeau (2011), Georges Teyssot (2005), Beatriz Colomina (2020) and Linda Stone-Ferrier (2020), simultaneously with the development of a prospective spatial installation utilising mirrors and dichroic glass.

The author was invited by Designmuseum Danmark to develop a physical installation based upon the author's current research for an exhibition entitled, *The Future is Present*. The exhibition focused on exploring what the world could look like in 10, 20 or 30 years by raising questions, envisaging future scenarios and speculative designs that addressed global challenges. Pertinent questions raised by Designmuseum Danmark's curator resonated with the author's research. These included, "Will our behavior become more socially oriented, or will we be further apart and become isolated? Which human values will be more important? What will the future look like?".⁸ The three central themes of *The Future is Present* exhibition were: *Human*, *Society* and *Planet+*. The invitation to contribute to the exhibition provided the opportunity to explore non-written forms of dissemination for academic research within a public venue with an international profile.

3. Design Development of *Vanity Chamber*

With a point of departure in exploring the role of specular devices on domestic boundaries, an archive of catoptric objects was developed, as a way to position the contemporary situation within a historical context and to develop referential

8 <https://designmuseum.dk/en/exhibition/the-future-is-present/>.

knowledge that could be explored during the development of *Vanity Chamber*. Noteworthy references that influenced the development of *Vanity Chamber* included, *Gadespejl* (Danish Street Mirrors), *Kaiserpanoramas*, Mirror Rooms, Picturesque *Claude Glass* devices, and perhaps most contextually relevant, a folding vanity mirror originally designed by the Danish architect and furniture designer Kaare Klint for *Det danske Kunstindustrimuseum's* (Designmuseum Danmark) restroom, in 1938. Due to the unpredictable nature of working with mirrors and glass in dynamic daylighting conditions, it was imperative to carry out full scale tests within the museum space itself. At this stage in the process, it was decided that the installation should be assembled from multiple freestanding modules (Fig. 8) that could be easily adjusted and rearranged in relation to one another, so as to better control the specular effects of *Vanity Chamber* on-site. During this period, the author became increasingly interested in mirrored lenses, particularly those that alter the reflection of the viewer, often with uncanny, immaterial, and mysterious effects.⁹ On discussing the etymological root of mirror, the academic, Helene Furján writes, “the *mirror* and the *marvel* are closely connected, the word *mirror* deriving from ‘*mir*, the root of *mirabilis* (marvelous, wonderful) and *mirari* (to wonder at)’ (Furján, 2012, p. 512). It is also interesting to note the common etymological root of *Spiegel* (Mirror) and *Spiel* (Play, or game) in German, and Germanic based languages, such as Danish (Teyssot, 2005, p. 101).

9 In *Histoire du Miroir*, Sabine Melchior-Bonnet writes, “The (mirror) reflection alludes to the uncanny perception of another world, immaterial and mysterious, situated behind the reflective surface, and invites the gaze to go beyond the appearances” (Melchior-Bonnet, 1994, pp. 81-94).

The author decided to experiment with both double-sided mirrors, placed at right-angles to one another, as well as dichroic glass panels as part of *Vanity Chamber*. Depending upon the position of the observer and the direction of light ingress to the dichroic glass, one side appears one color, while the reverse side appears a second color. By working with double-sided mirrors, dichroic glass and their positioning in relation to the prominent window bays of the museum space exciting visual effects started to emerge, particularly during 1:1 tests on site with actual material samples. It should also be noted that regular meetings were carried out between the author and the exhibition curator at Designmuseum Danmark to discuss the development of *Vanity Chamber*, with a particular focus on safety and security.

4. The *Vanity Chamber*

Located centrally in one of the long linear galleries at Designmuseum Danmark, the realized version of *Vanity Chamber* took the form of two semi-circular arcs facing one another and encompassing a space approximately 3 x 4 m, which could be inhabited by the museum visitors (Fig. 9). The installation was assembled from fourteen freestanding wooden frames produced in solid Ash, that supported either double-sided mirrors or larger dichroic glass panels. An inner ring of a wider frame type held twelve pieces of dichroic glass in three different color variants, while an outer ring of a higher, yet slender, frame type supported the double-sided mirrors. The sizing of the wooden frames and the dichroic glass panels directly referenced the windows of the museum gallery, while the dimensions of the double-sided mirrors were inspired by the typical width of a *Gadespejl*.



Figure 3. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, *Vanity Chamber* multiplied interior reflections, 2022. (Photo: Hampus Berndtson).

Solid steel counterweights, inspired by those used in traditional sash-windows, were introduced on the inner ring of larger frames supporting the dichroic glass panels to increase stability (Fig. 7). The relative positioning of the fourteen frames, their angle in relation to one-another and the window bays of the museum gallery was orchestrated to maximize the specular effects experienced by the museum visitors (Fig. 3).

4.1. Inhabiting *Vanity Chamber*

It was fascinating to observe the behavior of visitors to *Vanity Chamber*, that could be largely described in one of two ways, firstly, those that spent a prolonged time within the installa-



Figure 4. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, *Vanity Chamber* marvelous selfie, 2022. (Photo: Hampus Berndtson).

tion taking many photographs to try and capture its myriad of specular effects, and secondly, those that chose to pass through the space quickly, perhaps finding the multitude of self-reflections uncomfortable. As a result of this, there was an intriguing tension one experienced in *Vanity Chamber*, marveling at the ephemeral simulations of one's own reflection, while at the same time feeling an uncomfortable sense of being on public display, for all to gaze upon. While it is difficult to quantify, *Vanity Chamber* was featured prominently on Designmuseum Danmark's social media channels, particularly on Instagram, where the museum shared the photos taken by its visitors.



Figure 5. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, *Vanity Chamber* multiple self-reflections, 2022. (Photo: Hampus Berndtson).



Figure 6. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, *Vanity Chamber* close-up reflections in dichroic glass, 2022. (Photo: Hampus Berndtson).

Unsurprisingly, many images posted of *Vanity Chamber* were selfies taken in the reflections of the double-sided mirrors, or the dichroic glass panels. Depending upon the light conditions, the dichroic glass panels could have particularly uncanny effects, whereby they performed as mirrored surfaces, creating *marvelous* reflections of the observer that could seem artificial (Fig. 4). Due to the orientation of the double-sided mirrors and the dichroic glass panels, multiple reflections could be observed from any fixed position within the gallery space (Fig. 5). This resulted in a kind of *multiplication* of the museum interior, as well as the reflection of the observer, whereby the entire space could be condensed down into a single view, momentarily mystifying the viewer as to what was a reflection and what was reality (Fig. 6).

5. Domestic Boundaries as Liminal Places

We return now to a discussion relating to the boundaries between the domestic interior and the world outside.

In his text, *A Topology of Thresholds* (2005), the French architect and academic Georges Teyssot explores threshold conjunctures, particularly within the domestic realm, through a historical analysis of mirrors, windows, frames, and other specular devices. In the text, Teyssot refers to writings from the 19th Century French poet and art-critic Charles Baudelaire, who while reflecting upon the effect of specular devices on the modern home, and in particular window apertures and mirrors, identified a collapse in the threshold between interiority and exteriority, whereby the modern domestic interior became a private façade on public display, while simultaneously the person on the street became a *voyeur*.

Teyssot goes on to affirm that specular devices, including mirrors, windows and digital screens are central to a collapse in the established threshold between the interior and the exterior. He writes, “Perhaps the modernist inhabitant is not so much to become exteriorized, or nomadic, as to find the home no longer neither simply an interior nor an exterior. ‘Living’ is somehow to now occupy the space between the two, inhabiting the threshold” (Teyssot, 2005, p. 106).

Teyssot’s interest in the space between is indebted to the 20th Century French philosopher Michel de Certeau’s (2011) reconceptualization of threshold limits, as frontiers, that become voidal and interstitial, thus turning the boundary into a bridge, an in-between, or rather, a space between, which provides the opportunity for exchanges, encounters and ultimately inhabitation. It can be argued that *Vanity Chamber* creates an inhabitable liminal place, akin to Teyssot’s space between through the ephemeral specular effects created by its double-sided mirrors, dichroic glass panels and dynamic natural lighting conditions. The boundaries of the installation are porous and ambiguous, while simultaneously, the interior space defined by the specular surfaces is multiplied through numerous reflections. Strangers can suddenly find themselves intimately together in a liminal in-between place created by the mirrored views of fleeting glimpses and glances (Fig. 3). When discussing these threshold conjunctures, it is unavoidable to address the subjects of voyeurism and vanity.

5.1. Domestic Voyeurism

The increased use of videotelephony observed over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic led to a greater public intrusion into

the home, resulting in an increased scrutiny of our domestic interiors, décor and the personal belongings displayed within. Representative examples of this increased domestic voyeurism are the Twitter accounts, *Room Rater* and *Bookcase Credibility*, both established during the first lockdown in April 2020, with the latter's sub-title being, "What you say is not as important as the bookcase behind you" (*Bookcase Credibility*, 2020).

As the name suggests, *Room Rater* allows the public to scrutinize the lighting, composition and content of other peoples' videocall backdrops and then assign them a score out of 10, while *Bookcase Credibility*'s thread contains an extensive archive of screenshots from videocalls where bookcases have played a prominent role. The composition and contents of these bookcases are then meticulously studied and critiqued by an avid and loyal group of Twitter users. Over the course of the Covid-19 flu pandemic and the establishment of lockdowns globally, one could say that the bookshelf emerged as the preferred backdrop by public figures for conveying a sense of intellectual authority (Hess, 2020).

It is important to note that, a voyeuristic intrusion into the domestic habitat is hardly a new phenomenon, with Baudelaire writing about the relationship between the modern interior and the person on the street, "What one can see out in the sunlight is always less interesting than what goes on behind a window pane. In that black or luminous square life lives, life dreams, life suffers" (Baudelaire, 1961, p. 288; 1947, p. 77). In more recent times, the black or luminous square is no longer just the domestic window, but also the plethora of digital screens that have intruded our homes.



Figure 7. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, *Vanity Chamber* counterweight detail, 2022. (Photo: Hampus Berndtson).



Figure 8. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, isolated dichroic glass frame type, 2022. (Photo: Hampus Berndtson).

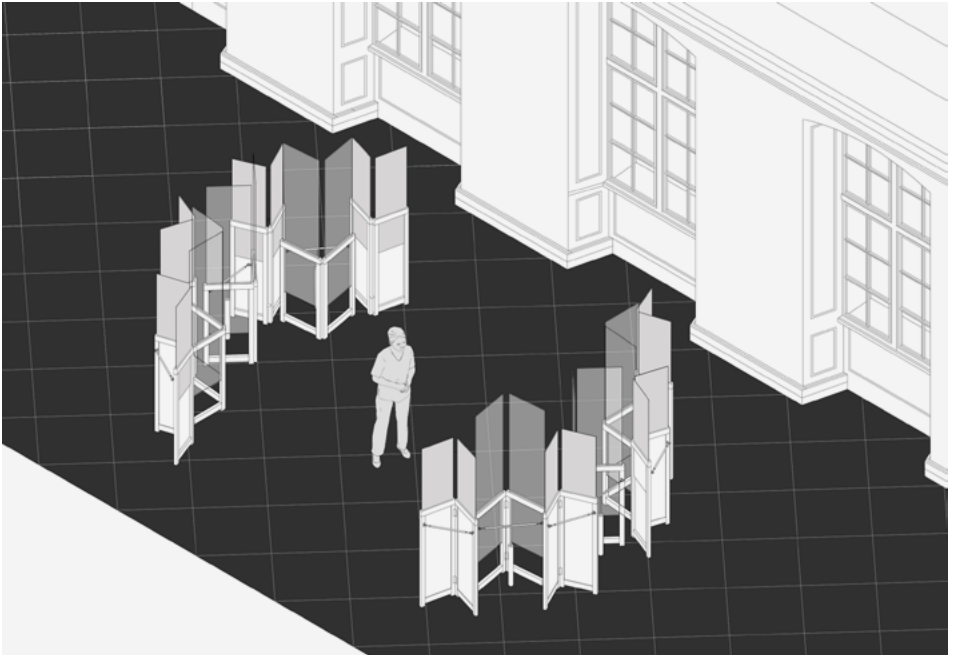


Figure 9. Nicholas Thomas Lee and Peter Alexander Bullough, *Vanity Chamber*, *Vanity Chamber* axonometric drawing, 2022.

While discussing this topic, Teyssot refers to the popular illustrations showing imagined sections through Parisian apartment buildings that were published frequently during the nineteenth century as a representation of the private interior becoming a public façade (Teyssot, 2005, p. 93).

These illustrations were often used to reveal, as if in peep-show, the sordid private lives of the metropolitan Bourgeoisie, for all the *Re-public* to see. In some ways, the gallery view of many videotelephony platforms is reminiscent of these voyeuristic illustrations, whereby a fictional building section is created by the compound composite of adjacent room backgrounds of the videocall participants, and their personal belongings contained within.

Returning to the design of *Vanity Chamber*, the positioning and orientation of the double-sided mirrors and the dichroic glass panels resulted in a multiplication of reflections that allowed one museum visitor to unexpectedly catch glimpses of another museum visitor from any fixed position within the installation (Fig. 5). This specular effect confronted the museum visitor with the uncomfortable reality of unintentionally become a voyeur, while also understanding the reciprocal consequence of potentially being viewed upon by others.

5.2. Domestic Vanity

Over the course of the pandemic, the saturation of videotelephony not only enabled domestic voyeurism, but it also encouraged vanity through the increased presence of, awareness of, and concern for, our own digital reflections. Returning to the topic of bookshelves, a number of companies emerged during the pandemic with the dedicated service of curating a client's domestic bookshelves, including the loaning of books for the sole purpose of satisfying the prying eyes of the videotelephony public.¹⁰ A concern for one's own self-image resulted in some farcical situations, for example, American political strategist Erin Elmore using a shower curtain with the printed image of a bookshelf as a videotelephony background when she was interviewed by Fox News, only being caught when avid viewers noticed creases in her apparent bookcase.¹¹

10 For example, Jessica Bowman manages a service called *Books by the Foot* at *Wonder Book* in Maryland where clients can hire her to curate their bookshelf background <https://booksbythefoot.com/>.

11 See <https://www.indy100.com/news/trump-erin-elmore-bookcase-sky-interview-b1784867>.

The theme of vanity within the domestic habitat appears in the early 20th Century writings of the German philosopher, Walter Benjamin. While Benjamin's popular description of the 19th Century bourgeois apartment as a velvet lined box for its inhabitants, such as that for a compass casing, places emphasis on the home as a means of protection, simultaneously it also highlights that the interior, and its contents are on display. On this point, Benjamin goes as far as to describe a fictional section through the home as being a façade, "[...] no matter where you open it and cut a section through it, my house remains a façade" (Benjamin, 1982, p. 4). The notion of the domestic interior and its inhabitants on public display could not seem more relevant in a post-pandemic world, where the use of videotelephony communication from the home continues to increase in popularity.

Over the course of the pandemic, videotelephony platforms were quick to evolve in order to cater to users' needs, with the introduction of sophisticated digital backgrounds, filters and even appearance altering tools. For example, VooV Meeting, a popular videotelephony platform in China, has a digital 'beauty filter' applied as default, which alters the user's appearance. Adjustable settings allow the user to smoothen skin, add blusher, enlarge eyes, adjust the distance between the eyes, alter the shape of the face, remove wrinkles, and even increase one's hairline. Perhaps interestingly, the default VooV Meeting beauty filter has no gendered differentiation. Returning to historical examples, the notion of contemplating one's own self-image within the domestic realm through specular devices has many relevant precedents.

The European 18th Century aristocratic interior was typically furnished with a wide variety of mirrors, such as pier glasses, overmantel mirrors, looking glasses, convex mirrors, vista mirrors, catoptric lenses, and so on. In the text, *The Specular Spectacle of the House of the Collector* (1997), Helene Furján writes about the myriad of specular devices found in Sir John Soane's *Lincoln's Inn Fields*, which not only served the purpose of increasing luminosity by multiplying the interior, but also offered the viewer the opportunity to contemplate one's own appearance, albeit often in an altered and more flattering form. Furján writes, "These mirrors proffer up a miniaturized (and thus *collectible*) image of the world of the viewing subject for the very *reflection* of that subject" (Furján, 2012, p. 507). The use of specular devices for vanity purposes in the 18th Century French bourgeois interior was so extensive that Teyssot writes, "So, it had been the aristocracy that had entertained itself by the multiplication of mirrors, a spectacle that would both nurture its own narcissistic drive, and create the condition of its depression and, eventually, its downfall" (Teyssot, 2005, p. 102). It is difficult at this juncture to not draw parallels with the contemporary saturation of selfies on social media. It was fascinating to see how popular on social media it was for museum visitors to take selfies, which captured the *marvelous* reflections that could be achieved when looking into the dichroic glass panels of *Vanity Chamber* (Fig. 4).

5.3. Domestic Boundaries, Bridges and Frontiers

Acts of voyeurism and vanity on the boundaries of the home are far from novel subjects when discussing the domestic interior. The academic and art historian, Linda Stone-Ferrier also

reflects upon thresholds between the domestic interior and the surrounding neighbourhood in the text, *Glimpses, Glances, and Gossip: Seventeenth-century Dutch Paintings of Domestic Interiors on Their Neighbourhood's Doorstep* (2020). By highlighting the importance of social interactions on the threshold between the home, and its surrounding neighbourhood observed in paintings from the time, Stone-Ferrier challenges the presumption that there was a firm borderline that distinguished the private from the public sphere in Dutch society. Of particular interest to Stone-Ferrier are the *voorhuis*, or front reception rooms, that supported acts of commerce with the surrounding neighbourhood and that functioned as a stage for the private display of personal belongings intended for public scrutiny. Typical of the *voorhuis* were distinctly designed windows and door openings, together with interior mirrored devices that were used to facilitate a reciprocal display, and voyeurism, between inside and outside. These open doors, windows and mirrored devices functioned as a liminal intersection, occupying both sides of the threshold, which “served as the bridge, rather than boundary, between home and street” (Stone-Ferrier, 2020, p. 29). This understanding of boundary thresholds as bridges is strikingly similar to the observations discussed earlier by Teyssot, and de Certeau. Within the context of Stone-Ferrier’s study, the thresholds between the home and the neighbourhood are reinterpreted as a vital fluid discourse, rather than as finite boundaries, where the domestic interior was an essential part of its surrounding context. Stone-Ferrier’s reinterpretation of the semi-private / semi-commercial *voorhuis* and its various specular threshold devices can provide us with a useful historical analogy to the contemporary phenomenon of remote work-

ing from home via videotelephony platforms. One could argue that *Vanity Chamber* also provided the museum goers with a liminal intersection between their private domains, based upon reciprocal display and voyeurism through glimpses and glances provided by the mirror and glass surfaces that formed the installation (Fig. 3).

6. Concluding Remarks

While the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its associated social restrictions tragically affected so many people globally, it has provided us with an important catalyst for reflecting upon our quotidian domestic practices and how they are affected by its evolving boundaries. A marked increase in videotelephony use from home and a saturation of digital specular devices that support these platforms, has made the boundaries between domestic and public, interior and exterior more porous. A perceived publicity of the private has resulted in threshold conjunctures that facilitate acts of voyeurism and vanity within our domestic habitats. An exemplary illustration of this could be the recent trend for celebrities to publicly broadcast the contents of their private fridges on social media.¹² However, writings from Benjamin, Baudrillard, Baudelaire, Teyssot and Stone-Ferrier, have revealed that the home has never been a closed private sphere and that its boundaries have always had porosity, often facilitating important social interactions, which have included acts of voyeurism and vanity.

12 Gwyneth Paltrow is a recent celebrity to join the trend of giving their social media followers the opportunity to see the contents of their private fridge. See <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gwyneth-paltrow-refrigerator-tour-products-eyemasks-b2388376.html>.

While digital specular devices have supplemented, and in some cases replaced, analogue mirrors and lenses, the bridges that they facilitate are neither unprecedented nor necessarily detrimental. *Vanity Chamber* created an inhabitable in-between place, where museum visitors could experience a porosity between privacy, intimacy, and publicity through analogue specular effects. Interestingly, the architectural historian, Beatriz Colomina has recently identified the bed, once a “symbol of intimacy”, as having the potential to become the new multi-purpose place within the home, through a metamorphosis into “a piece of public furniture” (Colomina, 2020, p. 29), by accommodating remote working, teaching, shopping and even socializing. Perhaps the domestic interior has once again become an essential part of its surrounding neighbourhood, and it is on this “frontier” or rather, within this “in-between realm” that we must now establish home.

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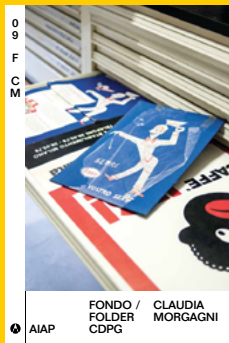
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PAD. Pages on Arts and Design

International, peer-reviewed,
open access journal
ISSN 1972-7887

#25, Vol. 16, December 2023

www.padjournal.net



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