

# Я О Я Р Я И М Э Н Т

Eternal

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Genuflection

TO CONSIDER

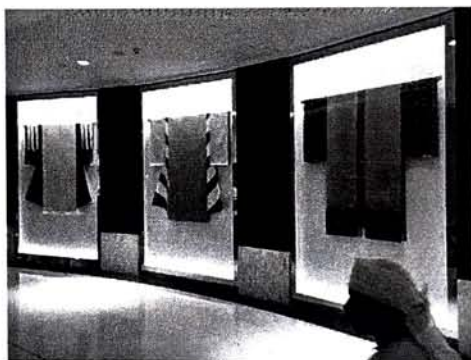


Standing in a bookshop at The Dubai Mall, leafing through the German popular culture magazine 032c, page 250 announced itself. There, a few handmade strokes of black ink obscured the body of a prostrate model, a photograph by Carlo Mollino. Local moral mediators decided that of all the pictured women amongst these hundreds of pages, this one alone deserved scrutiny. The censored image was captioned\*:

"Everything is permissible as long as it's fantastic."

The publication has value; it's presence attests. But as it travels this value must be negotiated, traversed and tailored, not accepted outright. It is an altered entity in a space of constructions, connections, and arbitrations. (\*sic)

Further into The Mall is a quiet curved walkway on the second floor where escalators connect, with few retail stores, less foot traffic. In the gap between between two nice restaurants - both too formal to attract the crowds that fill the distant food court - a wall is given over to three vitrines. Large glass panels lined with chromed metal, interiors lit from above and below, each presenting an oversized Kimono form, impeccable compositions of draped paper, hovering above head height. Coloured and patterned sheets intersecting and overlapping, violent contrast in the impression of tradition. Facing this, one faces the high-point of merchandising: how beautiful, how seductive the form could be, at once minimal and evocative.



But a semantic rift unfolds. These vitrines are towering shopfronts without a shop. To the transient customer, weary and aimless at this benign thoroughfare, the pseudo-garment is not for sale; its origin unclear, its production uncredited. A presentation made through the aesthetic logic of commerce, though divorced from product, inexplicable - in The Mall, to be without commercial purpose is to be without rationalised existence.

Mystery! Anthropomorphic sheets removed from financial imperative, a formal echo of a Japanese symbol, re-cast in paper for a global shopping audience in the Middle East, monumentalised under glass, precious and protected, dramatised and theatrical, permissible and fantastic. Perhaps in this display, the Mall suggests remedies for the problems that it so acutely exacerbates. Here, a beautiful thing that you cannot have: face it, know it.

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NON SONO SOLA

# THE MIRROR

Eternal

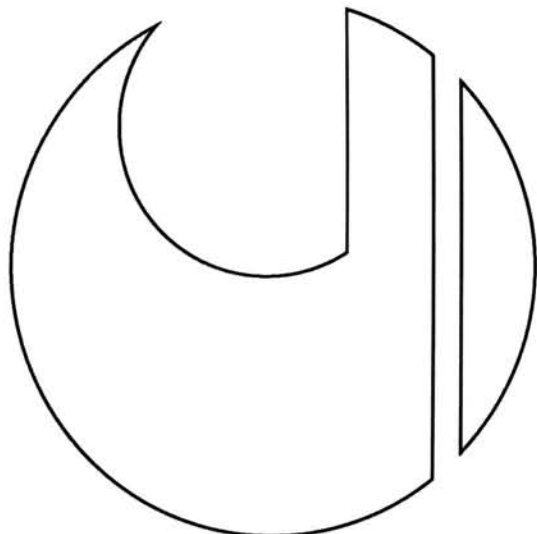
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IS TO PAY TRIBUTE

Bur Dubai is the city's Back Door. One senses a local community, and it is conspicuously al fresco. The Mall's equal opposite; prestige can not be bought, and unrestricted interaction is privileged. Indian men peddle fabrics and chaat.

Some streets in, an innocuous sports store, modestly appointed, announces itself as the Uhlsport flagship. Uhlsport: a German third-tier sports brand, better known as producer of referee uniforms, and also in charge of Kempa, the country (and possibly the world's #1 handball attire. A stretched, grainy photograph, a row of men on a field, runs the upper breadth of the storefront window, announcing:



**"Uhlsport:  
Sponsor of the Iran National Football Team."**

Uhlsport's strategic support in Iran, the world's only Islamic Republic, is a cultural crux, bridging political camps and economic systems, an olive branch of social connectivity.

This is diplomacy of sports marketing where other exchange becomes impossible. Standing before this diminutive outpost, questions form: Why does this sponsorship exist and how did it start? What are the implications if, following protracted nuclear disarmament agreements, sanctions imposed on Iran from the West come to an end? And what forces are at play when this fraught Iranian-German commercial alliance is announced and digested in the backstreets of downtown Dubai?

Some weeks later, over a light Persian lunch in Berlin, these very questions were posed to Georg Diez, a journalist for Der Spiegel, the German news magazine renowned for its extensive investigations and unwavering politics. With its relevance to Germany, its pertinent contemporary global concerns, and the crucial timing of a major socio-economic shift in Iran, this vague narrative makes for perfect news fodder. Georg agreed, and the piece was proposed to Der Spiegel's Sports Section. The article could take a line of enquiry on this sponsorship arrangement, assessing the political, cultural and financial imperatives, and asking, in the face of sanctions lifting: what comes next?



No further feedback resulted, and whether the article is written or not is of little consequence. It is proposed as hyperbole, an imagined extension of Abstract Journalism (a suggestive term conceived for an art making methodology, describing a series of "legitimate research"-based projects that privilege allegory and divergence over accountability and directness). Some cases get so serious, they must be left to the professionals, allowing the amateur to wallow in scraps of parable, content to lick the honey from the bottom of the jar.

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# THE MIRROR

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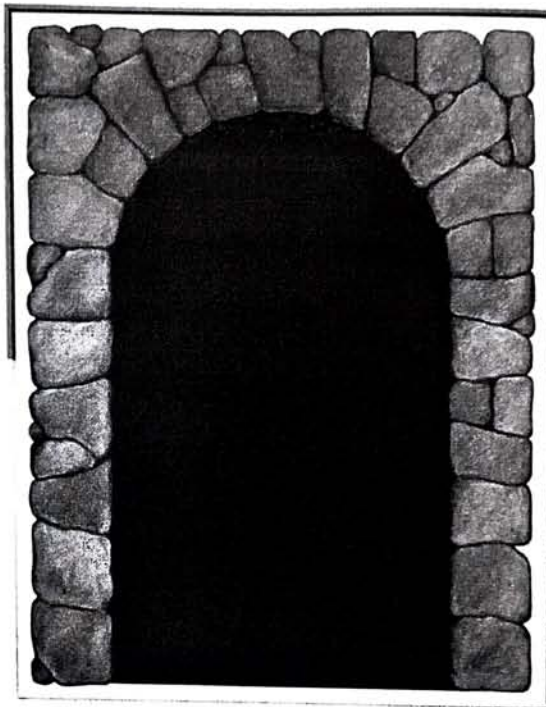
## THE ONLY PAYMENT I CAN OFFER

The censored vintage pin-up girl; the anonymous anthropomorphic paper Kimono; the branded athlete as an ideological go-between. Conflicts and conflation of morals, politics and intents, the body always at the centre, yet the feeling of absence throughout.

One recalls Christian Jankowski's film *Eye of Dubai*, where he tours the city blindfolded. In a state of conservatism, to be present at a slight remove, one prospers in disavowal. Sensory deprivation, in this case, about self-enforced naïvety, equally at once a pure critique and a coping strategy.



"TEHERAN," IN THE SHADOWS OF HAMBURG'S CENTRAL BUS STATION, A SHORT WALK FROM DER SPIEGEL HEADQUARTERS, IS ROUNDLY DISMISSED AS AN AVERAGE RESTAURANT BY THE LOCAL PERSIAN COMMUNITY



**DARKROOM (STONED)**  
OIL AND ENAMEL ON LINEN, ARTIST FRAME  
133x103cm / 2014

What Happens In The Dark: liberties of the club, senses foreshortened and expanded, only unfold under superstructure, both physical (architecture) and social (interpersonal consensus); both being cases of simple, reductive refinement

Dubai: no dance, no club, no dark. A zen approach to the body, in a place of access and excess, must hinge upon denial. But of course, to negate one of the senses is to amplify the others. In thinking through critical disengagement, its inverse is conjured: disengagement as celebration. Conservatism is perhaps a consistent fundament of navigation. But how much more these denials can mean, when everything fantastic is permissible ~



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