

The Eyes of Ayn Rand

A performance with spatial interventions, video and sound.

The Eyes of Ayn Rand draws on certain aspects of Constructivist and Deconstructivist architecture, placing them in dialogue with Ayn Rand's Objectivist philosophy.

Rand is associated with architecture and especially the public perception of architects through her novel 'The Fountainhead'. The main character, Howard Roarke is an Objectivist superman, a visionary Modern architect who refuses to compromise his designs. The user reviews for the book on Amazon.com reflect its continued influence, with many of them taking the form of testaments to the book's life-altering properties.

In 1958, Rand, who at that point was already a controversial figure, appeared in a TV interview to explain Objectivism, a philosophy she developed which advocates 'rational self-interest' or selfishness. Watching the clip now, one of the things that stands out is the way her eyes wander as she answers the interviewers questions, repeatedly surveying her environment before returning her gaze to him. She speaks of her conception of reality as something that exists independently of us, of our senses as a way of gathering information about it and of the rational capabilities of our minds, which have the potential to process this information objectively. And in this context, her ever shifting eyes begin to take on a greater significance, black pools that somehow embody the point of translation between these two modes of understanding - a sensory-empirical experience of the world beyond our skin and the rational mechanisms by which we process it internally.

The Eyes of Ayn Rand considers the time-span of Rand's life as framed by two separate but related architectural styles; the Constructivist architecture that was current in Russia when she emigrated to the US in 1926 at the age of 21 and the Deconstructivism which was being formulated in the US when she died in 1982. These architectural movements and some related ideas, constitute the material from which the performance takes its cues. The piece begins as a kind of lecture, but it soon becomes evident however, that the form is being twisted, buckled, and split open to reveal other possibilities.

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