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Front 'Seven Stories About Mirrors'

21st May — 24th July 2021

With *Seven Stories About Mirrors*, the Swedish duo Front (Sofia Lagerkvist & Anna Lindgren) proposes a new set of "mirrors" conceived from intertwined cultural and historical references, as well as drawing on traditional techniques and a variety of materials.

Whether made of blown glass following a tradition handed down since the 13th century (*Convex Mirror Vases*), or through a technique specifically developed by Front to reflect an image inserted into the thickness of glass (*Reflection Vase*), whether the form evokes the first moment humans saw their own reflection (*Water Reflection Side Table*), recalls how human ingenuity conceived the first flat glass mirrors (*Cut Mirror Vase*), or highlights the traditional know-how of a 680-year-old foundry (*Bronze Mirrors*), whether the material is similar to that of the first man-made stone mirrors created more than 8,000 years ago (*Obsidian Mirror*), or magnified by legendary Murano mirror-making (*The Secret Mirror*), each piece is the result of an astute typological and historical analysis of the mirror-object, which investigates how the value, significance, cultural meaning, and technical aspect of a specific object are constantly evolving with time.

By taking an in-depth look at the mirror-object that is both mundane and extraordinary, magical in the hands of Alice in *Through the Looking Glass* or highly symbolic in Renaissance painting, Front continues to re-enchant the objects that surround us, a practice that began with "The Magic Collection" presented in 2007 by the Galerie kreO. In this exhibition, some mirrors also become a vase or coffee table, extending their capacity of reflection.

The progeny of Front's advanced and distinctive research on the manifold history of mirrors, *Seven Stories About Mirrors* is about how one can study the evolution of humanity through the prism of the mirror, and how a single object fractures into multiple narratives: from industrial espionage in 16th-century Venice to Chinese metal mirrors, from the prowess of early craftsmanship to technological achievements, from the metamorphosis of the materiality of an object to the relationship of each one of us to our own image.

"From the first stone mirror made 8,000 years ago, the history of mirrors has been laced with magic and poetry, luxury and vanity, myth and faith, medieval industrial espionage and modern psychology, craft and technological advances, culture and self-consciousness. Seven Stories About Mirrors is our research into the history of mirrors to understand how the object changes its function, materiality, value, and status over time, each story drawing from a key step in the development of mirrors, and unique craftsmanship."—Front

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Front

'Seven Stories About Mirrors'

What is in a mirror?

Such is the kaleidoscopic question the two designers Sofia Lagerkvist & Anna Lindgren, who form the Swedish duo Front, have pondered for the last three years. Having chosen an object that was formerly exclusive, ubiquitous in contemporary society yet still conveying notions of magic and fascination, they have delved into the many facets of the object-mirror typology and its history to build links and congruencies between techniques, geographical areas, and sensibilities. Unveiled at Galerie kreó in Spring 2021, *Seven Stories About Mirrors* constitutes the first public presentation of their ongoing research. Each mirror piece in the exhibition—whether it is a mirror or transformed into a vase or coffee table—proposes to encapsulate in its materiality, production process, and formal appearance a distinctive moment in the history of mirrors, always combining cultural, technical, historical, and emotional aspects. Each mirror piece thus unfolds a specific narrative that has been meticulously investigated and translated by Front in their own idiosyncratic contemporary version—the exhibition being a new, key chapter of the way Front continues to re-enchant the objects that surround us, a practice that began with "The Magic Collection" presented in 2007 by the Galerie kreó.

“Through researching the history of the mirror, we wanted to understand how an object can transform its function, materiality, value, and status over time. From the first stone mirror made 8,000 years ago, the history of mirrors is laced with magic and poetry, luxury and vanity, myth and faith, medieval industrial espionage and modern psychology, craft and technological advances, culture and self-consciousness. Using various elaborate craft techniques, each of these seven works draws from a key step in the development of mirrors,” Front elaborate. Indeed, the pieces in the exhibition call on a variety of materials and techniques—glass is at times blown, molded, or cast; some mirrors are made from stone or metal—as well as many historical landmark episodes in the history of mirrors and our relationship to them. Moving from one piece to another, the visitors can successively experience how the first humans were reflected by quivering water (*Water Reflection Side Table*), or gazed at themselves in the first mirrors man-made of polished stone (*Obsidian Mirror*); they can appreciate some of the ancient mirror-making craftsmanship revived thanks to the excellence of some of the oldest family businesses still active today (*Bronze Mirror, Convex Mirror Vase, and Cut Mirror Vase*); they can think and dream about how the technical skill has always had deep political, cultural, and psychological implications (*The Secret Mirror, Reflection Vases*).

Being the ambiguous object par excellence as it is both a mundane and extraordinary object, a trigger for another world and a way to see, know, and recognize better, the object-mirror also offers Front the occasion to demonstrate how they envision their role as designers today. By following the numerous material and symbolic metamorphoses of mirrors through history, Front expresses the importance of material knowledge, both technical and cultural, in order to create informed design pieces; they underline how the refinement of techniques through the centuries is indeed a very long journey nurtured by political and economic motivations; they remind us how each object is constituted by its physical qualities, as well as its emotional and mental resonances.

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