

Doublings Sébastien Cliche

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- A) Someone comes in here and wonders
what he or she has to do
- B) YOU (in this story)
- C) Protocol
- D) The Doubles' Log (excerpts)
- E) Charles Guilbert
Of the Spectator as Material

A



Someone comes in here and wonders what he or she has to do

We arrive at a contemporary art exhibition with our expectations and our apprehensions. We move about, look around, listen, read, shifting between real interest and attention deficit. Among our thoughts are things that preoccupied us before entering the gallery and others that await us when we leave. Where are we, precisely? And how does the experience mesh with our daily lives? Of consent and resistance, which movement is more active?

The installation *La doublure* was presented at Galerie de l'UQAM in Montreal, from October 19 to December 8, 2012. The work's performative nature is not limited to the presence of a performer in the space, but encompasses all of the visitor's movements. This book project certainly did not start out with the intention of replicating the highly contextual installation experience. We summon the reader to another gaze entirely, an omniscient point of view that gives access to what happens in front of and behind the stage set: an immersive scenography, a text addressed to *You*, a performance protocol, and narrative accounts of the experiences. The whole set was designed with several points of entry, like a hybrid object that was part archival document and part instructions for possible recreation. But beyond such factual aspects, we propose to approach this book as an experience in its own right, as the mental reconstruction of a system based on its objective data and on subjective traces of its implementation.

In the last part of the book—or the first, depending on your reading habits—author Charles Guilbert draws a transverse perspective that brings all these elements together in a personal itinerary. His thoughts open onto the psycho-cognitive processes that are at play in the installation, exploring, for instance, the role

of language in the work. The questions that Guilbert raises will not be the last, since *La doublure* is a multi-level system the objective of which is not to utter observations so much as to provide a space for meditation. It is a place to be in, a lab, an observation room, a space to meditate, a decoy.

Every visitor enters with his or her own priorities and availability.







B

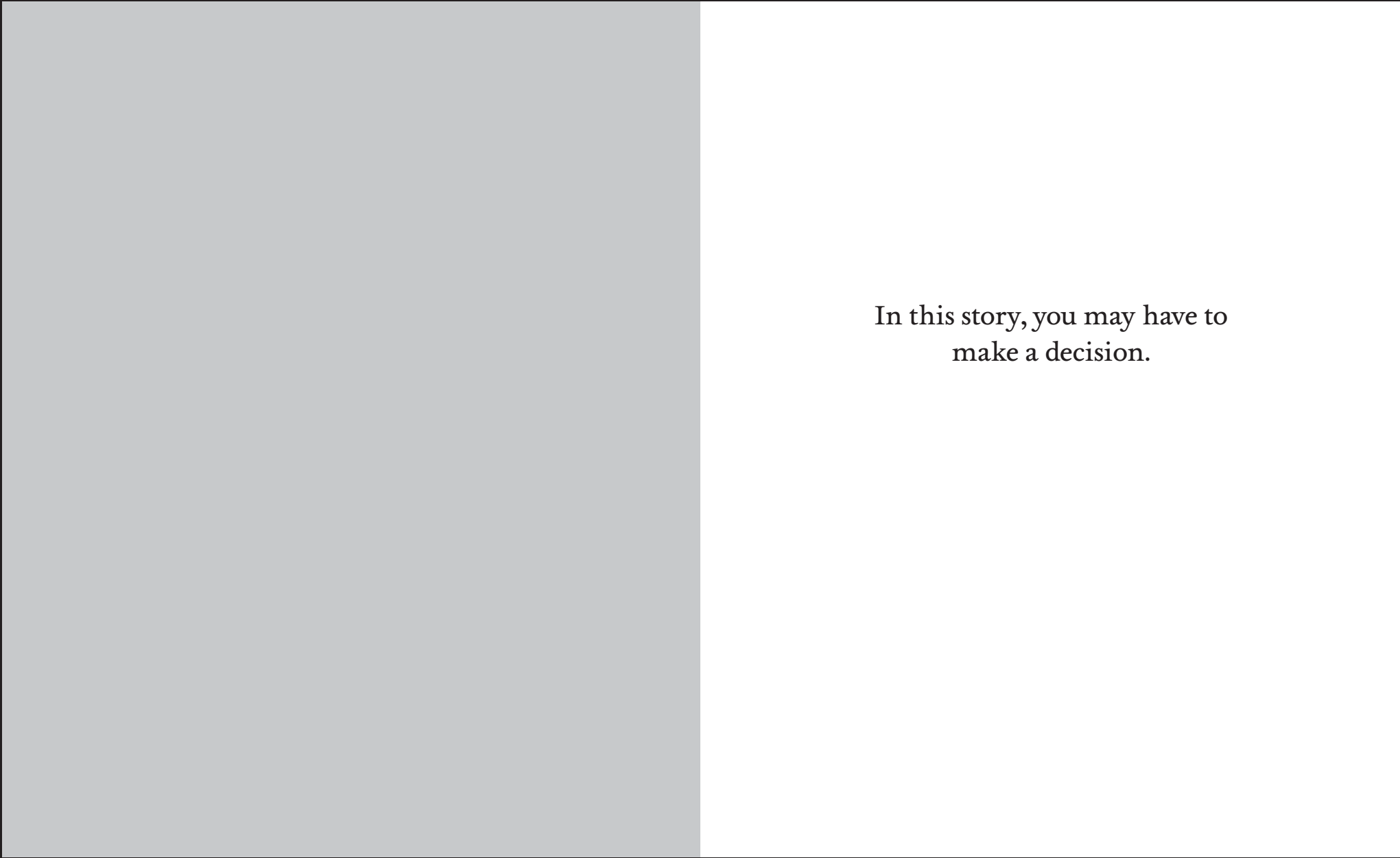


YOU
(in this story)

Every day, someone comes in
here and wonders what he or
she has to do.

It could begin here.

It could end here.



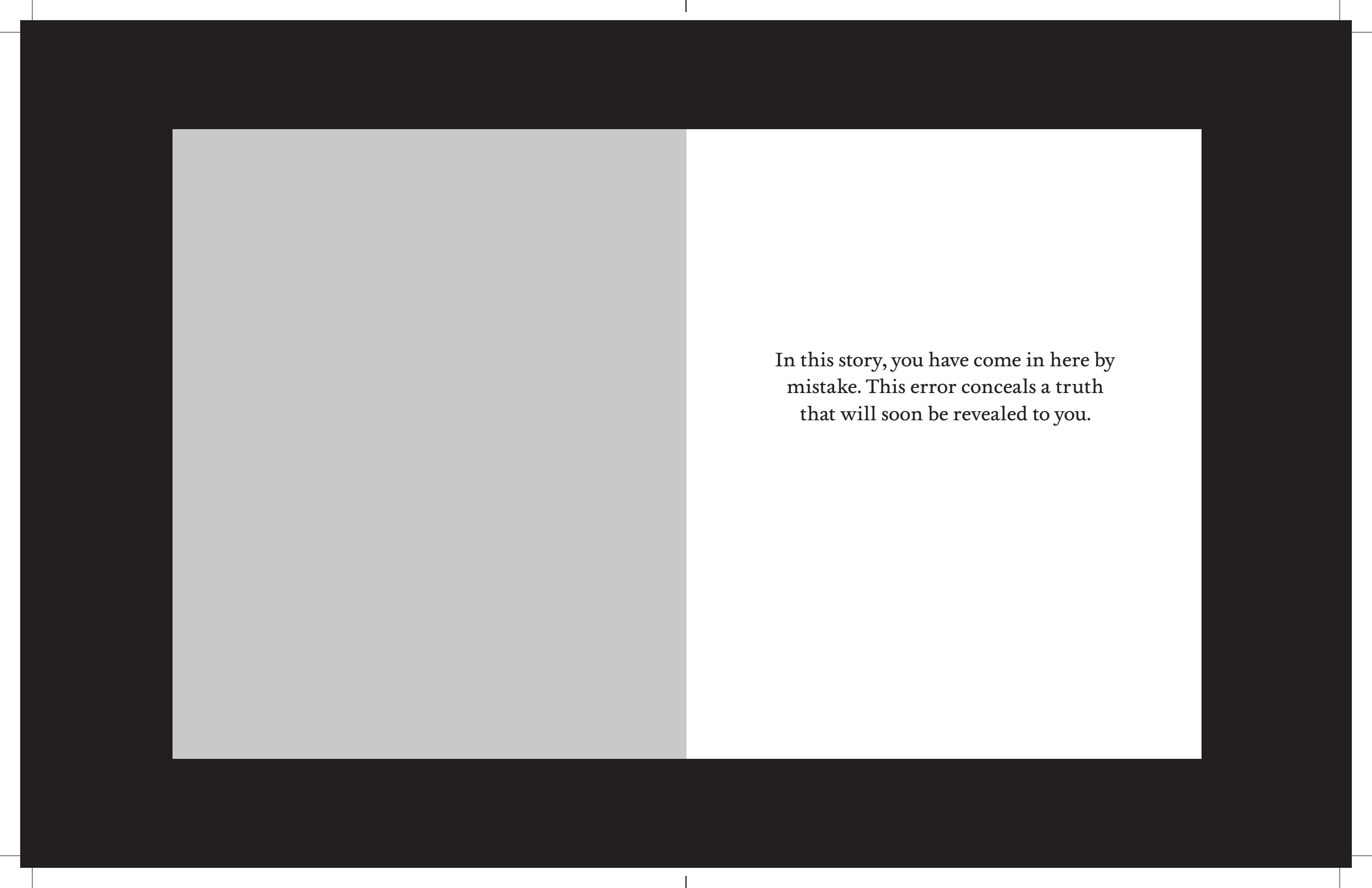
In this story, you may have to
make a decision.

Close the book and simply walk around
the room. Perhaps it would be better to
think about something else.

After a minute or two, at the very most,
go out and continue the normal course
of your activities.

Time passes.

They say that each second could be
a new starting point in your life.
You know this isn't true.



In this story, you have come in here by
mistake. This error conceals a truth
that will soon be revealed to you.

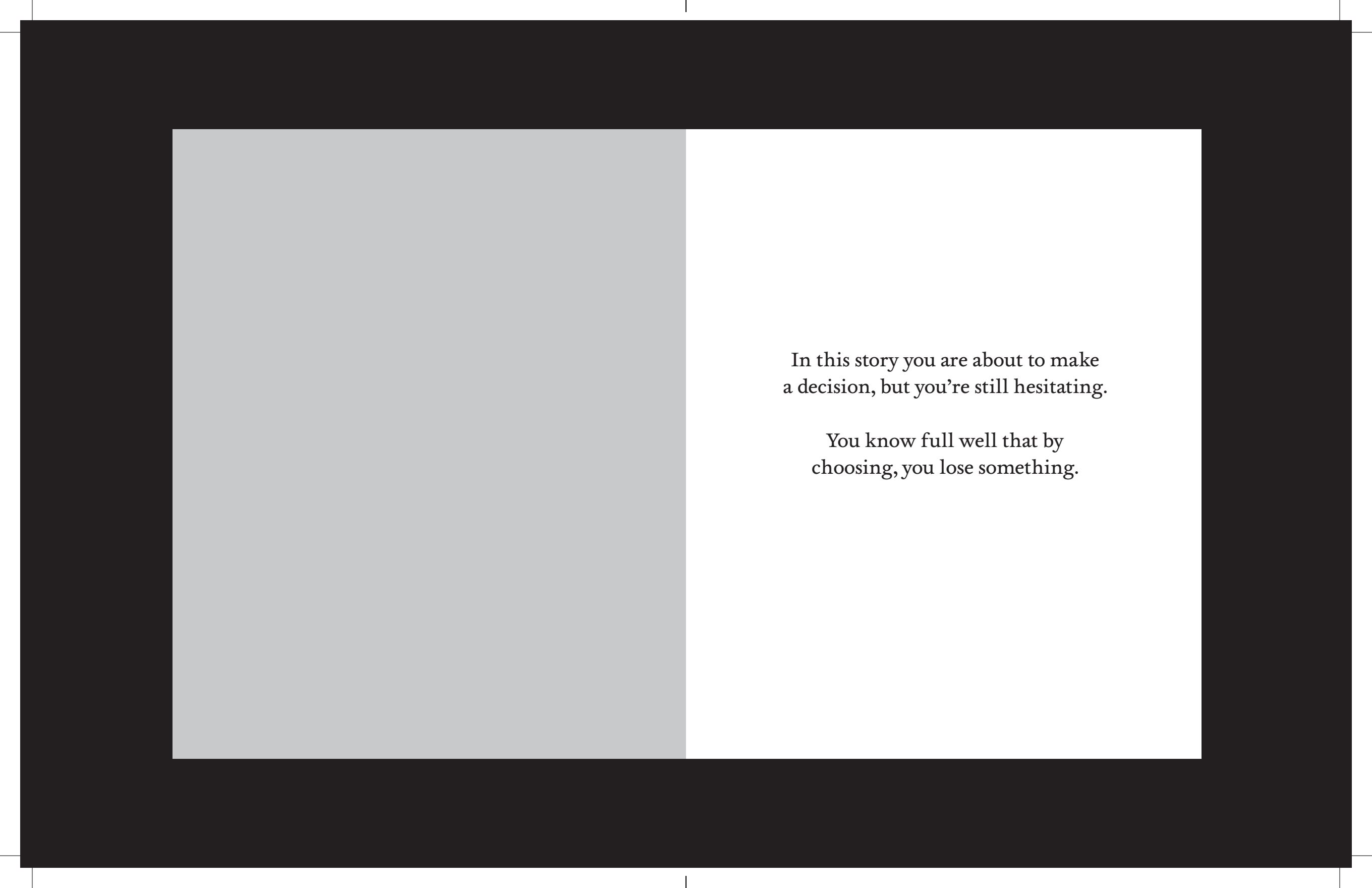
A file has been opened in your name.
Your approval wasn't necessary.

Don't worry, nothing will happen to you.
This situation is partly fictional.

It's possible that you're here
but that your thoughts are elsewhere.
You don't have to choose.

Orange peels, a book on astronomy,
seashells, a small ceramic lamp, a wicker
basket, a Mayan-inspired carpet, a plastic
snake, a backgammon game, an exotic
plant, a spilled glass of milk, a magnifying
glass, an African mask, track shoes.

Tomorrow, perhaps,
you'll think of all this.



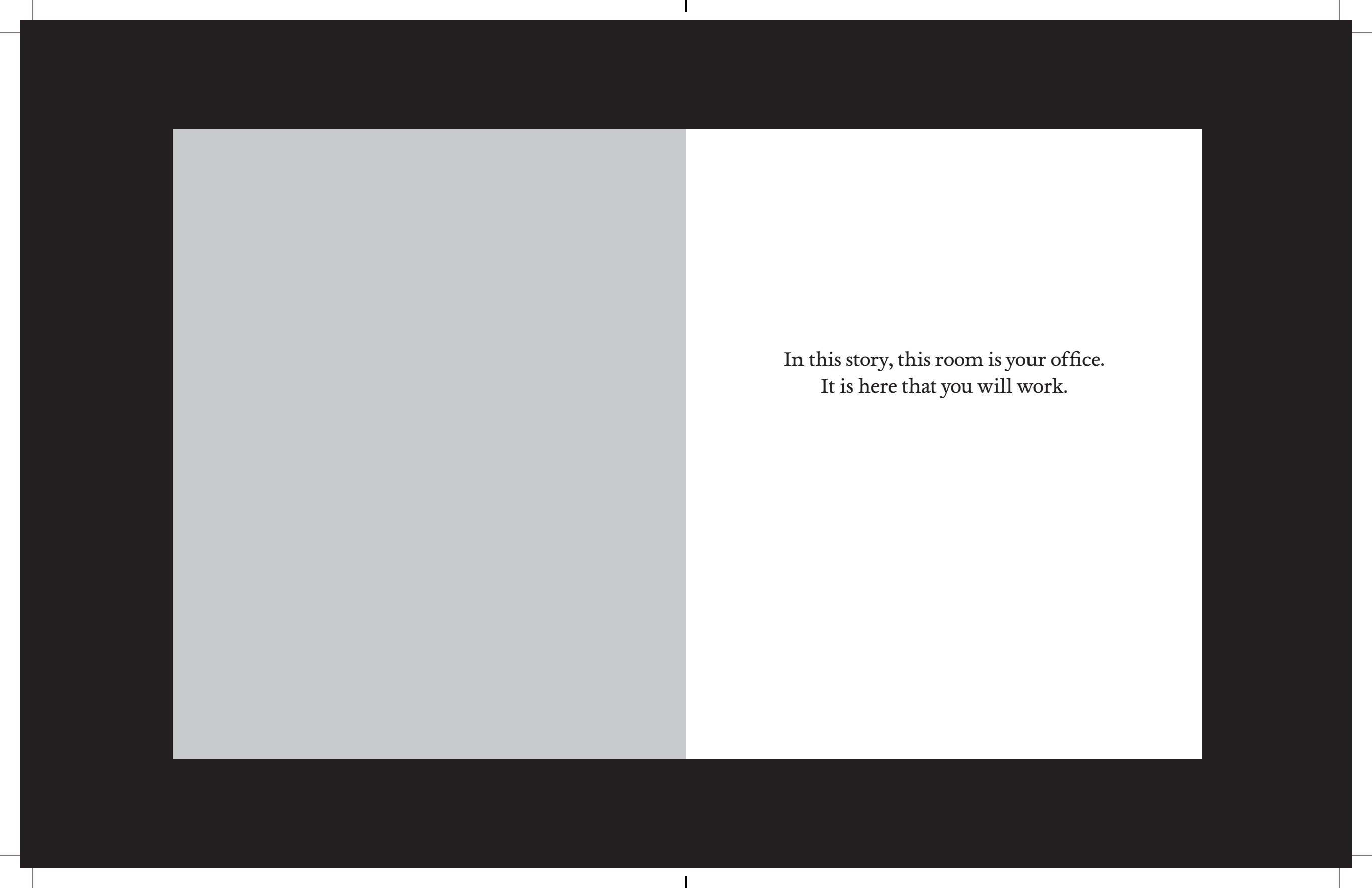
In this story you are about to make
a decision, but you're still hesitating.

You know full well that by
choosing, you lose something.

You may have decided not
to resolve the problem, but are
you sure that this decision
is yours to make?

We're not suggesting that we're trying
to control everything.

Maybe you'd prefer to keep turning
the pages simply to avoid having to
look at that person in the other room.



In this story, this room is your office.
It is here that you will work.

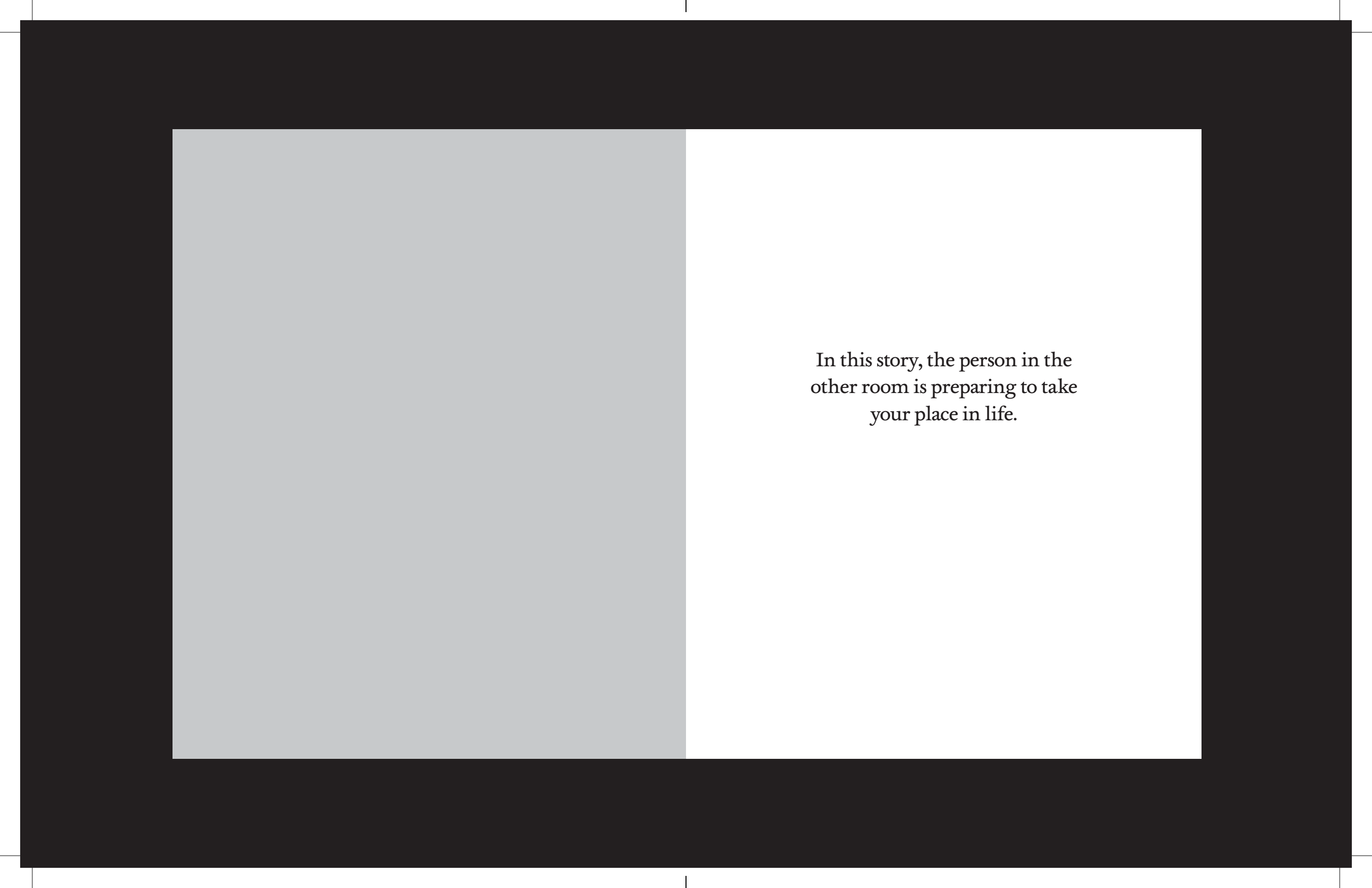
You are being filmed.
But you already knew that.

You're not the only one
who makes mistakes.

To assuage your guilt, you may
decide that everything that
happens to you over the next
few days will be due to what
happened here.

There is no action that is not
useful to the story that you are
in the process of constructing.
But some are more relevant
than others.

At this moment you feel
a great weariness.



In this story, the person in the
other room is preparing to take
your place in life.

Don't be afraid, the wall is a simple
device, but effective.

In any case, it's unlikely that you are
who you think you are.

You're beginning to feel more
and more at ease.

In this story, there is only one room
with a mirror in front of you.

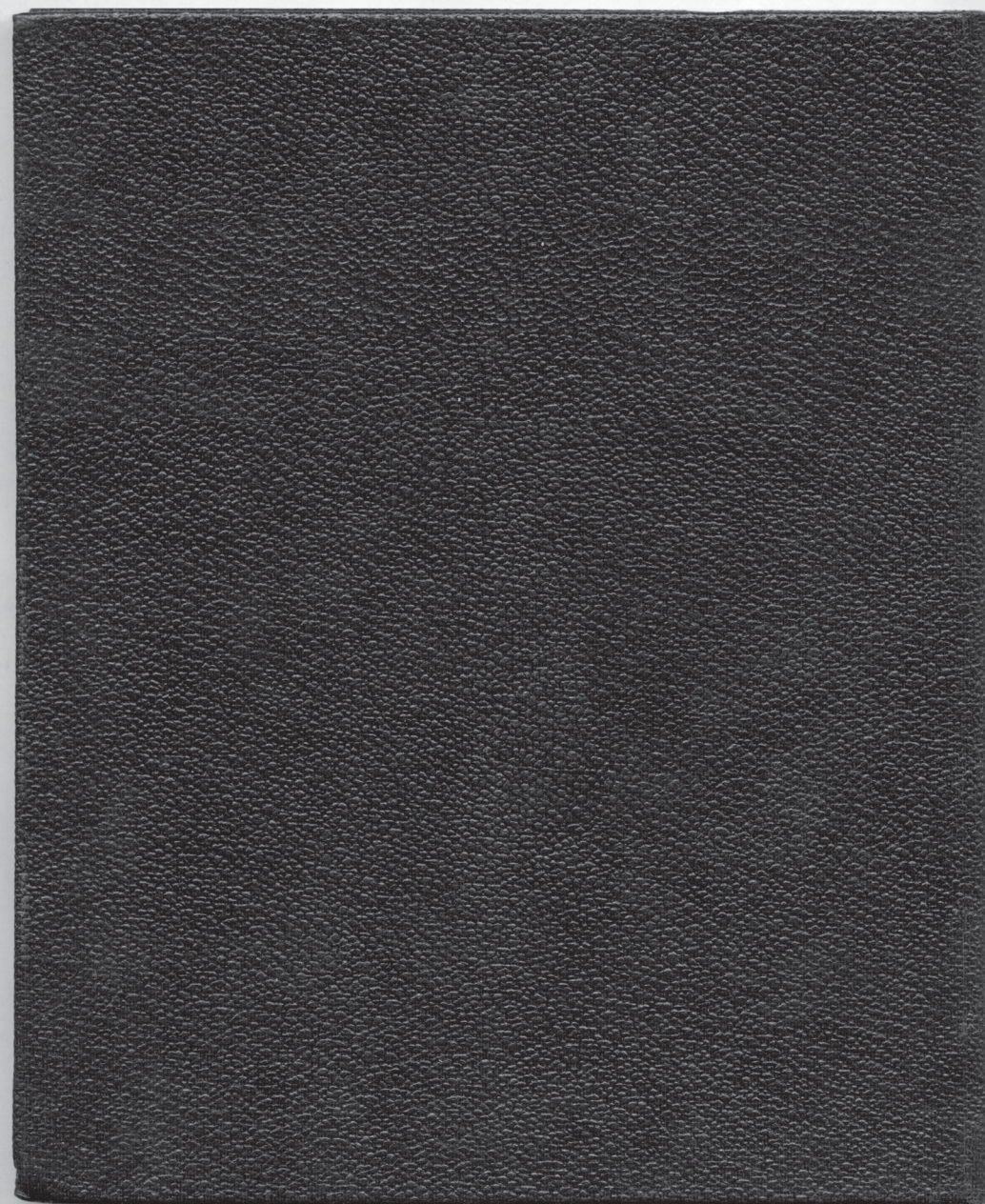
No one, however, is forcing you
to do anything at all.

You're simply being asked
to be transparent.

While reading these lines,
you're thinking of something else,
of the problem that's been
haunting you for days.

Don't worry, we're watching
your every move.

You're safe here.



C



Protocol

The **Doubles' Protocol** is a set of guidelines given to the performers to structure and guide their activity, which consists mainly of observing the visitor's movements, memorizing them in the form of a sequence, and creating from them repetitive motifs that we shall call routines. The purpose of this mirror play is to provoke a sense of recognition in the spectator and an expectation of feedback. The control exerted by the double lies in the way that he or she may arouse, satisfy, or disappoint this expectation by making the system fluctuate between the predictable and the unpredictable

Doubles are an integral part of the installation, which is incomplete without them. Performers must see themselves as belonging to this system and not as characters developing in a stage setting.

The protocol consists of this introduction, diagrams of the installation, basic instructions, and a guide for the construction of routines. Rules that the doubles must follow are very precise but leave great leeway for execution strategies. The protocol, then, does not prescribe a linear scenario, nor does it describe a predictable set of interactions with the visitor. One may compare this approach to an evolved computer program in which the coded object is endowed with a structure that defines its behaviour and its engagement with the surroundings. This paradigm contrasts with so-called procedural programming, which can be summarized as a series of steps to be completed.

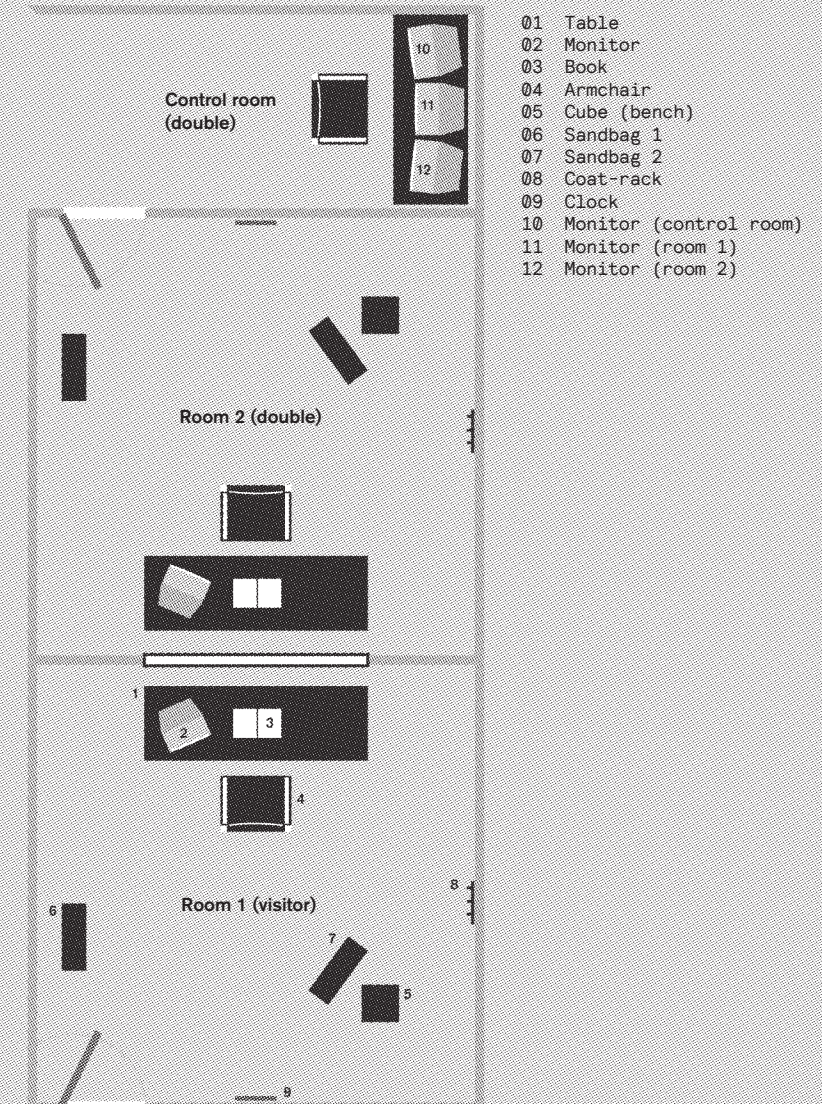
In this protocol, routines are built live by the performer who reproduces some of the visitor's movements. As we shall see, doubles retain a high degree of independence with respect to

the parameters of these routines, which they can assemble, replay, or interrupt as they wish. They are called upon to develop new reflexes and hone their strategies for capturing visitors' interest without resorting to entertainment or communication.

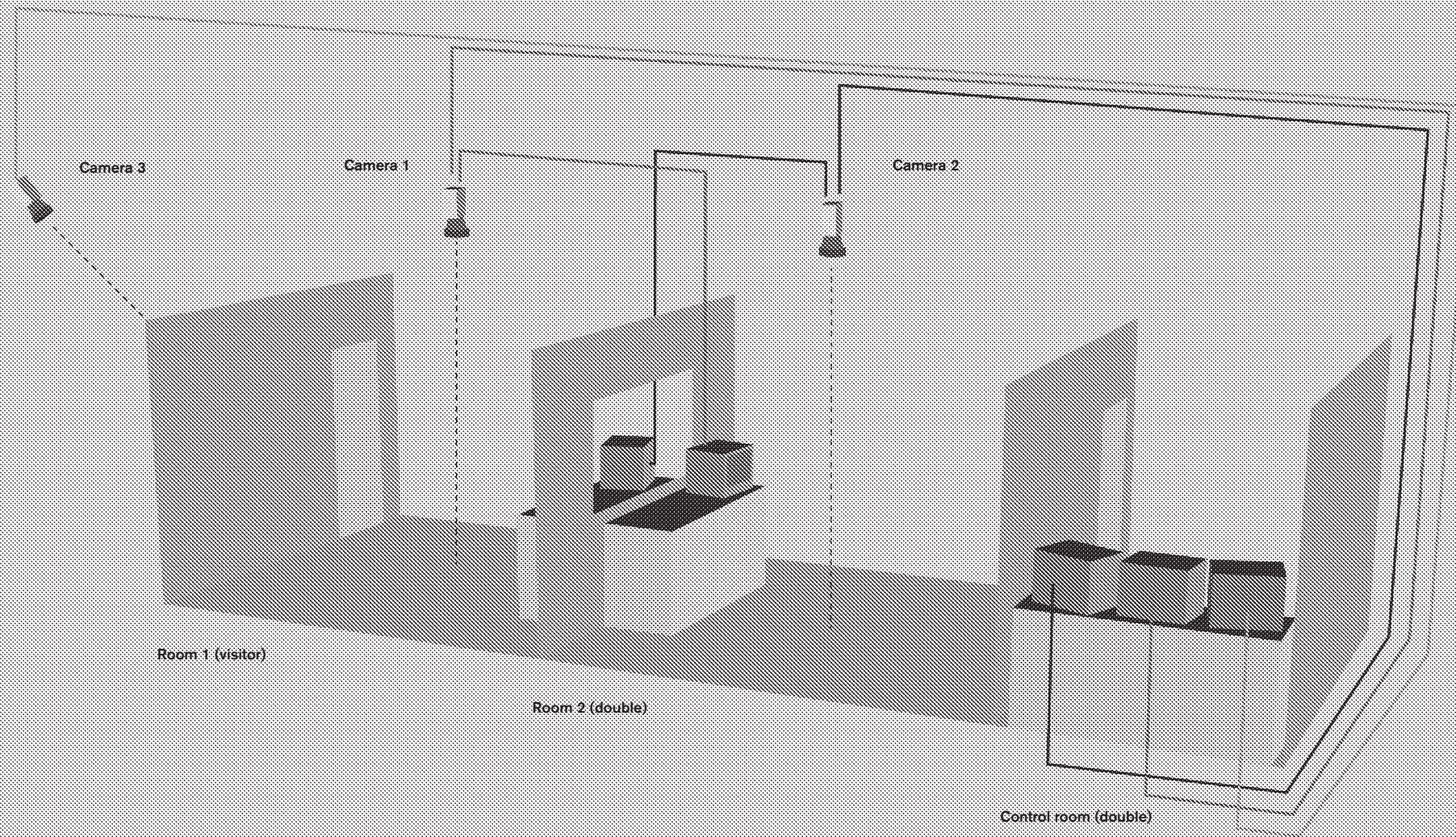
The Double: Absent Presence

Doubles embody a paradox. They are fully aware of the place their bodies occupy in the space, but they are out of sync with the present, acting at once as an echo of the past and in anticipation of forthcoming actions. They are always attentive to the visitor, but they suppress their own social reflexes by avoiding any eye contact or communication, whether through speech or gesture. In this sense, the double may be said to be both present and absent.

INSTALLATION DIAGRAM



NETWORK OF SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS AND MONITORS



INSTRUCTIONS

1 - COMPLIANCE

- For the sake of consistency, the double must rigorously follow the protocol.

2 - DRESS CODE

- The double's uniform consists of simple, neutral-or dark-coloured clothes (black, grey, dark blue, brown) with no pattern, text, or brand label.

3 - RESTRICTIONS

- The double must not make direct visual contact with the visitor.
- He or she must not seek to communicate with the visitor (or with another double, as the case may be), whether by speech, by sound, or by any other means.

4 - MONITORING

- The double follows the visitor's movements at all times by way of the surveillance monitors located in the control room and in room 2.
- When this is not possible, he or she uses peripheral vision while avoiding any eye contact with the visitor.

5 - AUTONOMY

- When in room 2, the double's only "autonomous" movements are:
 1. Entering the room.
 2. Leaving the room.
 3. Sitting on the cube.
 4. Using a sandbag to mark a visitor's position.
- All of the double's other movements are echoes of the visitors'.

6 - ENCODING

- In the process of memorization, the encoding of information in a new material is an important step. For the double, execution of the movements becomes the final stage of this encoding. It enables a more lasting memorization through conscious and physical reproduction. From that moment on, it isn't the visitor's movements that doubles remember, but the routines they have themselves produced.
- The visitor's gestures and movements are reproduced in a transformative process. It is a matter, then, not of mimicking the visitor's actions, but of interpreting them and placing greater

emphasis on formal characteristics than on their symbolic or affective content.

7 - TIME LAG

- Except on rare occasions, the double avoids replicating the visitor's movements in real time, but must establish an interval between the visitor's production of the gestures and their reproduction.
- The encoding in real time is used only for short periods in order to reinforce a linkage based on recognition between the visitor and the double.
- The interval between the moment of recording and that of reproduction is elastic. It can be extended, or shrunk to a few seconds.

8 - NEUTRALITY

- In the performance of the protocol, the double must always strive for neutrality by freeing movements of their emotional charge: no smiling, no dramatic gestures. The double performs a protocol, not a character with a personality.
- The double must avoid exaggerating the mechanical nature of the movements and, instead, focus on performing them as "ordinary" operations executed in a conscientious but detached manner. Moreover, as concentration may provoke involuntarily dramatic expressions, the double will strive to keep a relaxed face.
- Although the sequence of the double's movements may constitute a kind of choreography, it is important not to "dance" the movements.

9 - TRANSITIONS

- The string of movements or sequences must not be executed abruptly in reaction to the visitor. Doubles must mentally allow for a buffer zone to allow them to calmly interrupt or change the routine, if need be. They must not give the impression of hurriedly reacting to the visitor.

10 - MULTIPLE VISITORS

- If there are several visitors in the room, the double must follow only one visitor at a time while building the routines.
- It is possible to drop the recording and reproduction of one visitor's gestures to turn one's attention to another, or even to combine sequences of movements from several visitors within a single routine. However, this transition must be done only after completing a sequence with the initial visitor.

11 - MULTIPLE DOUBLES

- The installation can accommodate several doubles at a time. In such circumstances, each double builds his or her own routine independently. This does not preclude being attentive to other doubles' strategies to create effects of repetition or contrast.
- When there are also several visitors, doubles may choose to follow either different visitors or a single visitor.
- The doubles do not interact, do not look at each other, and avoid any physical contact. They act as if oblivious to the presence of the other and focus exclusively on their own actions.

12 - PERTURBATION

- If a visitor tries to provoke (or involuntarily provokes) a dysfunction in the system, or makes inappropriate gestures that cause the double to lose his or her concentration to the point of not being able to correctly follow the protocol, some procedures come into play. In ascending order, these reactions are:
 1. Stop moving; look up at the screen and study the situation.
 2. Sit on the cube, facing away from the visitor, and wait at least 30 seconds before going back into action.
 3. Leave the room and return to the control room. Wait at least 30 seconds before returning.
- If they think it is necessary, doubles may warn gallery officials of behaviour they deem inappropriate or offensive. Unless there is no other option, they do not intervene directly.

13 - RESTORATION

- At the end of a visit, the double must move the furniture and objects to restore symmetry between rooms 1 and 2. This must be done when there are no visitors.

BUILDING THE ROUTINES

- A routine is composed of one or more sequences of movements, which may be repeated.
- In developing a routine, the double may reproduce gestures belonging to different time frames, regardless of chronology.
- The double may also decide to simplify or omit movements and is not obliged to methodically reproduce the visitor's every move and gesture.
- The routine must be seen as an evolving modular set. It can be identically repeated, but each repetition can also be an opportunity to add or take out a sequence.
- A routine may result from the assembly of more than one visitor's movements (see MULTIPLE VISITORS).

CONSISTENCY AND CHANGE

Spectators may be expected to try to understand the operation of the system and, to help them identify recurrences, doubles must show consistency in the type of routine they create and ensure some constancy in their strategies.

Paradoxically, the double must choose the right moment to break with his or her strategy and thus disrupt the predictability. Establishing a subtle balance between these two poles –consistency and change–is one of the most important abilities that doubles must seek to develop.

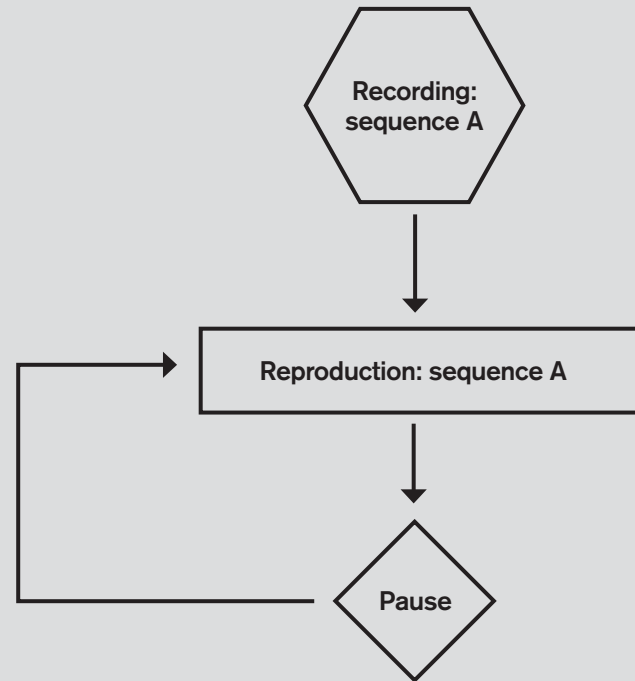
VARIATIONS IN APPROACH

Some visitors may be intimidated by the surveillance system, the closeness of the space, or the performer's presence. The double may adopt a progressive approach that allows spectators to familiarize themselves with the surroundings, for instance, by letting them explore the space on their own or by keeping some distance from the window. The distance may be gradually reduced, but also restored if the double detects signs of uneasiness. The double may also exit room 2 and leave the visitor alone for a while.

Conversely, the double may choose to enter at the same time as a visitor so that he or she is immediately engaged in the reproduction process. The double can also emphasize moments of physical proximity to provoke tensions in the system, for instance, by repeating sequences in which a visitor approaches the window.

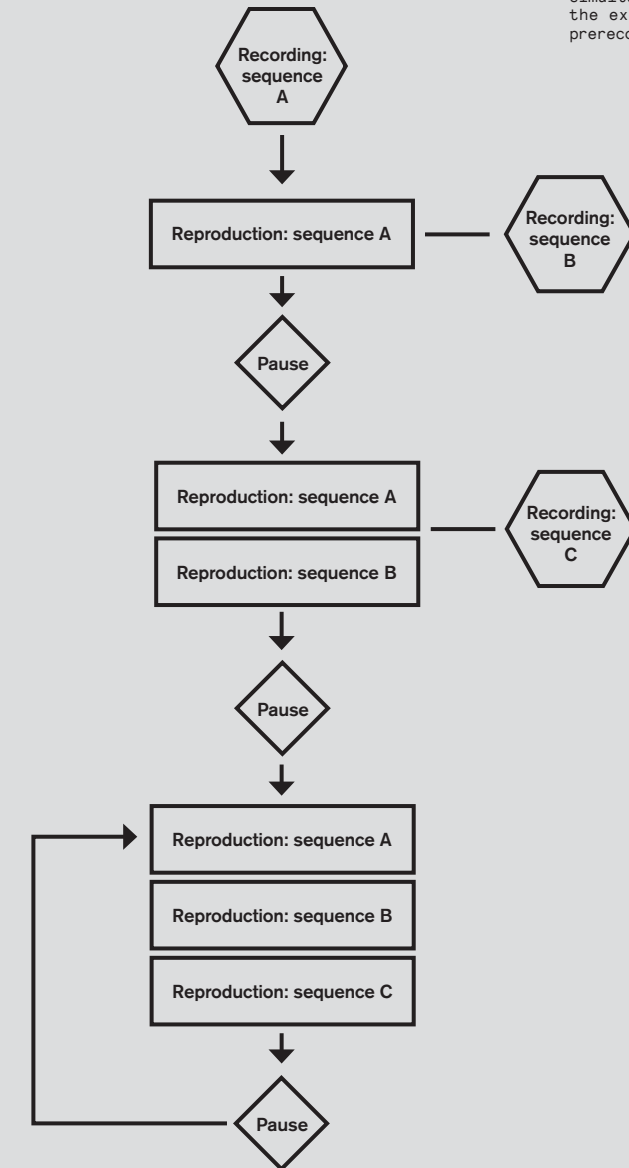
Doubles take an experimental approach and strive to test their own assumptions. By varying approaches with different types of visitors, they will come to identify some of the constants that can serve as a basis for honing their strategies.

ROUTINE BUILD DIAGRAMS



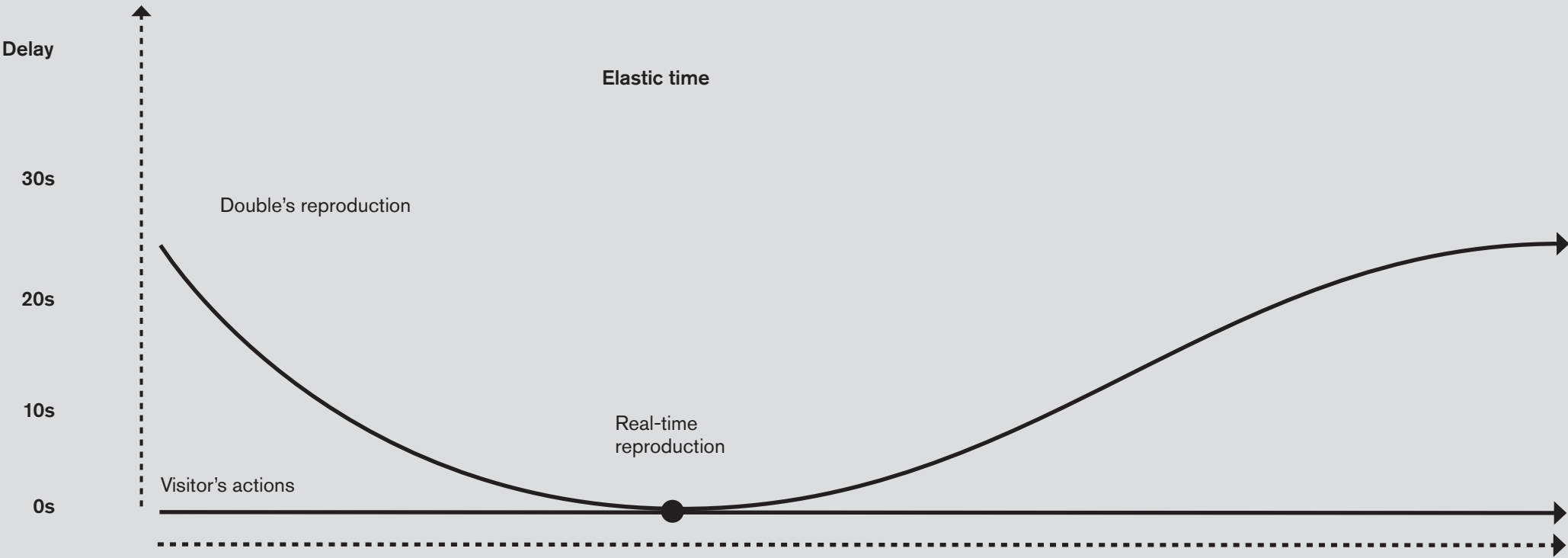
01 Basic Routine

Note - New movement sequences are recorded simultaneously with the execution of prerecorded routines.



02 Routine through Insertion

Note - For this routine, the recording and reproduction of the visitor's movements are continuous. The time gap between the spectator's movements and the double's reproduction is gradually reduced. When the recording and the reproduction are occurring together in real time, the interval gradually increases again.



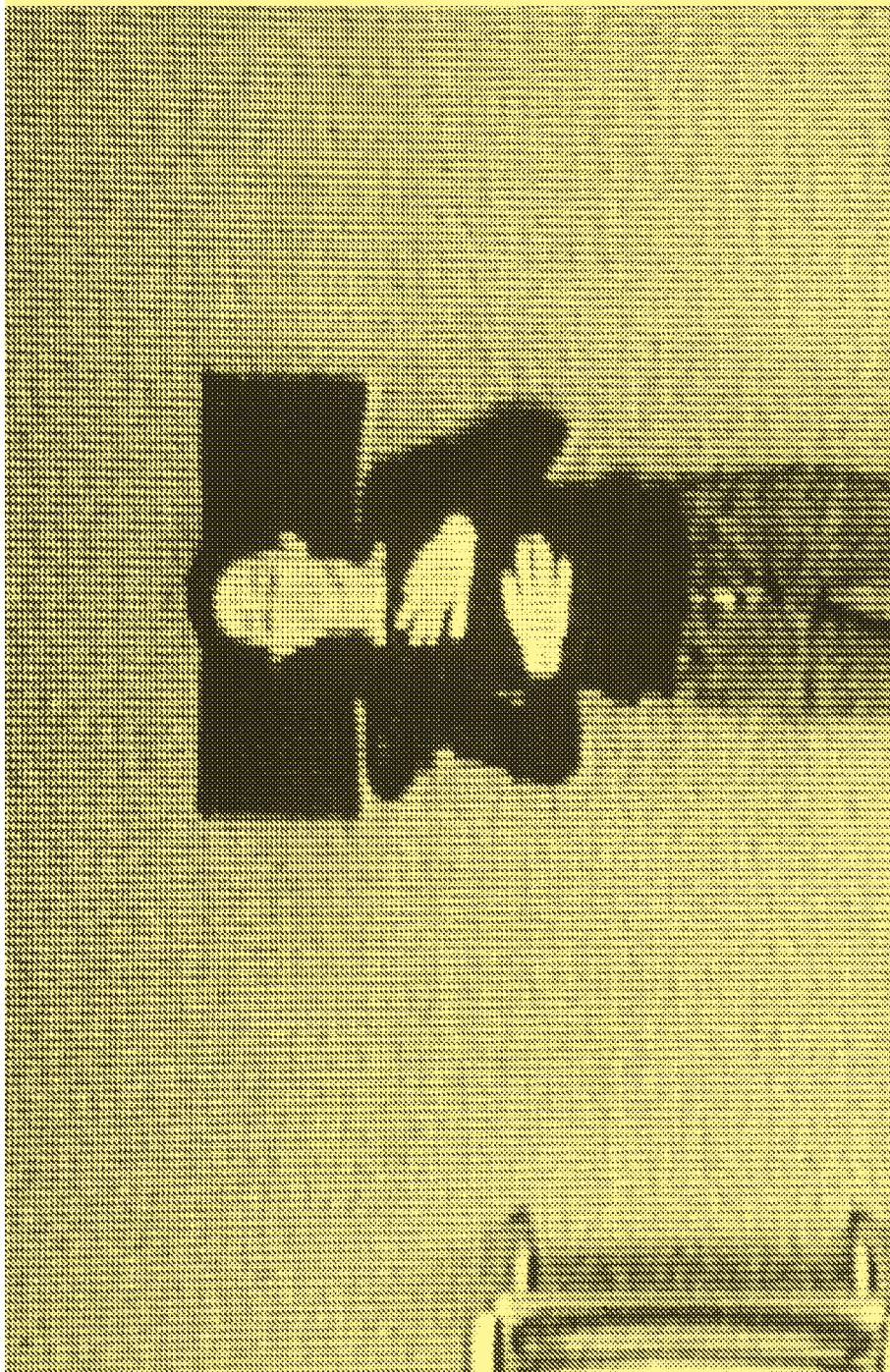


High-angle view of the installation



View of the doubles' control room

D



The Doubles' Log (excerpts)

Throughout the project, the eleven performers participating in the installation were invited to record their observations in a shared notebook. The collective memory they built up through this log enabled them to vicariously experience a broad variety of situations. By the same token, it allowed them to take full cognizance of a project that they had lived through alone and intermittently. This diary was the place where the performers could fully express themselves, something they could not do while following the Doubles' Protocol. Moreover, by setting down significant moments of these visits, it was possible to integrate these experiences in a narrative mode.

Of the 335 entries, we have selected those that offered short narrative accounts of the visits and that provided the performers' point of view on the array of spectators who visited the installation. While some notes may suggest that the doubles had read spectators' thoughts, it must be said that these were often intuitions, but also the result of information drawn from conversations among the visitors. It should be remembered, too, that performers ensconced in the control room could use the surveillance system to monitor visitors before they entered the installation.

Log Excerpts

19.10 — 08.12 2012

Oct 19 — (006)

She opens the door, crosses the room diagonally, approaches the window, then settles down to read at the table. Another visitor hesitates before entering; he asks if this is really an exhibition. The woman invites the newcomer to join her and they begin to talk. At that point, I enter and perform a routine based on the first visitor's movements. The man leaves, but she stays in the room to finish reading the book; she watches me as she does so, then leaves the installation.

Oct 19 — (010)

Doesn't open the door. Doesn't enter.

Oct 20 — (018)

Three young women who call the experience "strange" have exaggerated and theatrical reactions: screams, giggles, sudden movements. They leave the room and come back in again, but one at a time, to experience the installation individually while the other two pace excitedly behind the door.

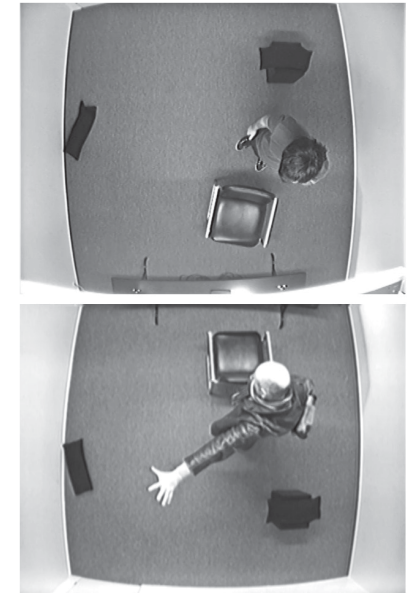
Oct 23 — (033)

A woman alone pretends to ignore me, but she walks around the space and moves all the objects. She stays in the installation for about ten minutes. Just before leaving, she forms a triangle with the armchair, the cube, and a sandbag.

Oct 23 — (034)

A young woman receives a phone call and starts telling her caller what she is experiencing at that very moment. She hangs up and continues looking at the book

that she had begun reading before the phone rang. She seems intrigued by my presence, and though her attention is directed at the book she casts furtive glances in my direction, as if she were intimidated. Oddly, while on the phone, she had looked at me unabashed.



Oct 23 — (035)

A father and his two children. The little girl sits nonchalantly on the chair. When I enter and reproduce her movements, she gets frightened and asks to leave.

Oct 23 — (039)

Intrigued, two young adults test me and start to imitate me when I reproduce their movements. One of them, curious, throws a scarf onto my side of the wall.

Oct 26 — (060)

Various experiments with this young woman, including a long period during which we both lie on the floor with a sandbag for a pillow. Our gaze wanders between the monitor (on the table) and the camera (attached to the ceiling). Direct exchange remains impossible, but a strange relationship develops in this situation, at once intense and peaceful.



Oct 26 — (063)

We read the book together.

Oct 30 — (074)

A female visitor tests the system through various gestures and movements. In one of her experiments, she lies face-down in the centre of the room and does a series of push-ups. I integrate this movement into my routine, but when I do the push-ups, I perform a movement that's similar but requires much less effort.

Oct 30 — (091)

A young woman is startled and screams when she sees me. She leaves, slamming the door behind her.

Oct 30 — (093)

Somebody leaves the book on the floor when he goes out. Subsequent visitors find it quite normal to sit on the floor to read it.

Nov 1 — (101)

A visitor attempts to climb onto the table to put her head over the other side of the wall. It's a dangerous move, but I stay calm though ready to act. In the end, her friend discourages her and she drops the endeavour. After a time, they leave the room and I do as well. They come back a little later, as if they had something else to check out, but I stay in the control room and let them leave without coming out again.

Nov 1 — (102)

Someone leaves the book open propped against the window on a page that reads, "In any case, it's unlikely that you are who you think you are."

Nov 2 — (107)

We are two doubles and we are visited by a group of four people who voice different theories on how the system works. Once they have left, a man comes back into the space alone and starts to get undressed, beginning by taking off his hat, then his shirt. Obviously, he wants to see if the double will do the same. His friends return and convince him to stop the experiment.

Nov 2 — (109)

A group of four. One of them asks if we (the doubles) exist "for real."

Nov 3 — (125)

A woman with a strong presence reads the book and watches me as I loop through the movements of her arrival. She gets up to add another gesture and follows the development of the routine while watching me closely. There are long periods during which we remain motionless. She tries several times, unsuccessfully, to make eye contact. At the end of the visit, she approaches the window and stares at me for a long time, then leaves the installation. One of the most intense and touching experiences up to now.

Nov 6 — (130)

A young woman enters and goes directly toward the book. She seems to know what is going to happen. When I make my entrance she greets me and asks if we are going to read together. Getting no answer, she begins to read to me, speaking in the form of questions, obviously attempting to communicate. She gets up, approaches the window, then sits down again and puts her feet on the table, expecting me to do the same. She seems disappointed that communication isn't possible, but she says goodbye nonetheless when she leaves.

Nov 7 — (148)

A young woman examines the room from a gap in the doorway, then slowly opens the door just enough to slip her head in. She looks at the floor, closes the door again, and leaves.

Nov 7 — (153)

Two young men crash into the room. They appear tense and intoxicated. They're restless, move objects and furniture around, enter, leave, and re-enter several times. They are unruly and talk loudly, but they are curious. All this makes for dynamic



choreography (we are two doubles in the installation). Moving around erratically, each in turn trips over the cube. We integrate these incidents into our routines. Like many others, they want to get into the other room and assume that they can't be heard. They knock on the wall in an effort to communicate.

Nov 8 — (158)

A man enters alone, closes the door behind him, and walks to the table. I enter only with the arrival of another visitor, whose gestures I reproduce in near real time. The newcomer leaves fairly quickly and I follow suit.

The first visitor, still seated, book in hand, seems perturbed by what has just happened. Dubious, he continues reading. I come in again, reproducing from his entry up to when he reads the book. He gets up to make a few moves and experiment with the setup. Then he comes back to the table, takes a kind of notebook out of his bag, tears out a page, and writes a note

that he places on the black cube before leaving. On the piece of paper, a single word: “hi.”

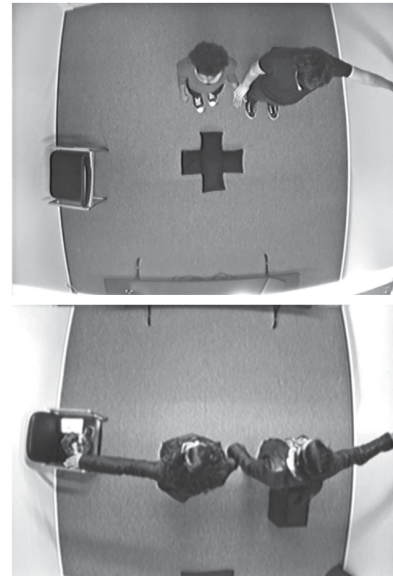


Nov 9 — (161)

We are two doubles in the installation and are visited by an inquisitive and active couple. They make copious use of the objects and raise their heads several times toward the camera trying to “look” through the surveillance system. Dynamics are quickly established between the visitors’ actions and our delayed “echoes.”

As we are each following one of the visitors, they try to make us move together. They stand upright and hold hands. We face them, but without touching. The couple then improvises coordinated arm movements, which we reproduce, but in unsynchronized fashion, as if we were functioning in different temporalities. After many repetitions side by side, we end up synchronizing a sequence in which the couple hold hands and raise their arms.

We perform this action, but our hands don’t touch.



Nov 10 — (177)

I reproduce one of the spectators’ movements: looking up at the ceiling. This always leads other spectators in the room to do the same.

Nov 13 — (193)

A woman arrives with a baby in her arms. Upon entering, I take a sandbag and perform the routine while holding it, but without reproducing the emotional aspect of the relationship with the child. I carry it around like an inert weight.

Nov 13 — (197/198)

A male visitor is seated in the chair and reading the book. A woman enters and I make my entrance at the same time. She moves slowly about the room, passing behind the chair, trying to look over the man’s shoulder, while he, undeterred,

remains concentrated on the book. Despite their proximity, the two visitors hardly look at one another.

We later learned that both visitors had gone on their own to speak to the clerk at the gallery desk, who told us that each thought the other was a performer and part of the project.

Nov 14 — (200)

A man in his sixties enters and makes himself comfortable: he sits, adjusts the lamp, blows his nose, begins reading the book. When I enter, he reflexively backs up his chair. When I sit down in turn, he springs to his feet and leaves the room laughing.

Nov 14 — (203)

He hesitates at the door, then knocks and waits patiently for someone to open it. After a “reasonable” delay, he enters. I wait for him to sit down at the table before entering. A series of movements with the book in hand follows. When he is just about to leave, he thanks me. Taken by surprise, I instinctively want to respond to this courtesy, but I suppress the reflex. My gesture is interrupted a fraction of a second and I squint in a strange grimace.

Nov 16 — (220)

Two young adults. When I enter, the man asks loudly if I work here.

Nov 16 — (222)

As soon as she enters, she starts testing the system. She raises her arms to form a cross with her body, as if to challenge me to keep the pose as long as her. She then takes off her shoes and puts them on the monitor. She places her bag on the chair; I use a sandbag to do the same. She traces several trajectories through the

space, climbs onto the cube, hides in a blind spot, knocks on the window. She also starts playing the part of the double by reproducing my gestures—which are in fact her own.

I leave. It’s 2:53 p.m. The other double is already in the control room, and she takes over. Later, I also enter and redo the whole first sequence. The visitor, unabated, continues to experiment and move furniture around, imitating the double in fast motion and adding additional moves. She also piles the objects in the centre of the room. Before departing, she leaves a little picture of the Madonna that bears the words “thank you.”



Nov 16 — (226)

A couple are asking each other: Do I see them through the window? Or only through the monitor? They perform a few experiments in the space. When I reproduce a sequence in which they come very close to the window, the woman is startled, as if I had just crossed a line that had ensured a degree of safety.

Nov 21 — (240)

We read, facing each other, in a meditative atmosphere. After a few minutes, I began thinking of something else and, for those few seconds, I forgot that I was in the installation and paid no attention to the visitor. I returned to the present with a strange sense of confusion.

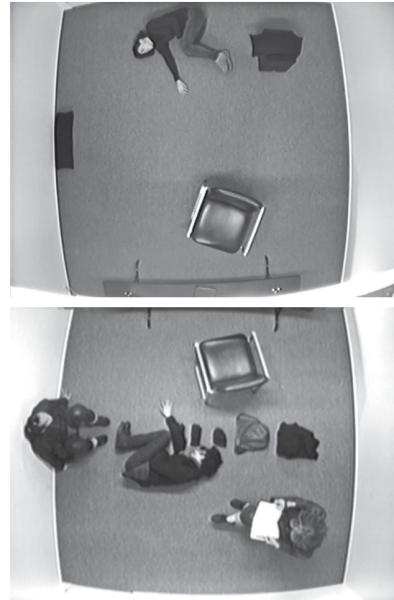
Nov 21 — (242)

We are two doubles in the installation and are visited by a trio—two men and one woman—in one of the longest and most complex visits that I have experienced. The small, inquisitive group goes through some simple motions. The woman reads the book aloud, translating simultaneously into English for her colleagues. Highly creative, they move the objects and spread their personal belongings (coats, bags, gloves) on the floor, as if they, too, are making an installation into which they are integrating the book.

More than once, they lie down on the floor and quickly reproduce the doubles' movements, creating a complete feedback loop. Like us, they try to decode the movements by looking at the monitor. The longer they stay, the more comfortable and relaxed they become as they occupy the space. They leave after about forty-five minutes, hurried on by another group waiting to enter the installation.

Nov 21 — (243)

A man of about sixty spoke to himself as he tried out the installation: "What if I do this? . . . Or this?" He tested the system for a long time. It was touching. When he was about to leave, I went to sit on the cube and I felt that it held him back. He hesitated to leave because he saw that I was staying.



Nov 22 — (250)

A young woman entered, sat down, read the entire book, and then left. The entire time, she pointedly ignored my presence.

Nov 22 — (251)

A very long visit during which a man settles into the room to meditate and engages in writing. Objects and furniture are moved around to rearrange the space. We perform various movements, but we are also motionless for long periods, sitting in a lotus position. Another man enters during this meditative period and doesn't seem to understand why we are sitting on the floor in these twin rooms. He walks slowly around the room and then leaves. At the end of his visit, punctuated by periods of spatial and physical exploration, the initial visitor performs an Asian bow and leaves.

Nov 23 — (261)

A security guard enters, scans the room, and leaves at once.

Nov 27 — (279)

A man curls up into a ball under the table.

Nov 29 — (294)

A young woman begins to read the book, and then she begins to move about the room while continuing to read. Two men enter the room; she explains what she understands of the installation. She introduces me as "a memory" and invites the newcomers to experiment with the project, then gives them the book and leaves. "It's disturbing," she says just before leaving.

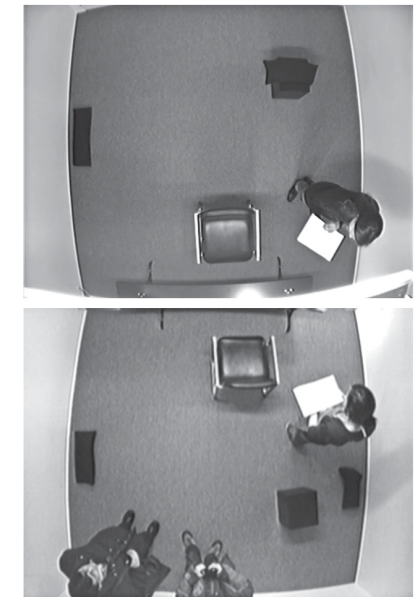


Nov 22 — (255)

A woman with a very strong presence. My eyes met hers involuntarily. The ephemeral contact lasted only a fraction of a second. Troubling. Invigorating. I continued with my routines while avoiding a recurrence, but she "trapped" me a second time. After having avoided any visual contact for hours on end, the experience is gripping.

Nov 23 — (257)

I'm in the control room and, through the surveillance monitor, I see a man enter, look up at the clock, and go toward the table. He takes the book and begins to read while walking, then, to my surprise, he leaves with the book before I've even made an entrance. The gallery clerk informs him that the book must remain in the installation. He responds that he prefers to read outside. She allows him to do so as long as he stays in the gallery. As I know that sooner or later he will have to bring it back to room 1, I quickly retrieve the copy from room 2 and return to the control room to await his return. When he does, I synchronize my own entry with his, meticulously reproducing his every gesture. Strangely, he hardly looks at me as he goes to put the book back where it belongs, which I precisely reproduce. He leaves the room closing the door behind him, which I do as well in exactly the same way.



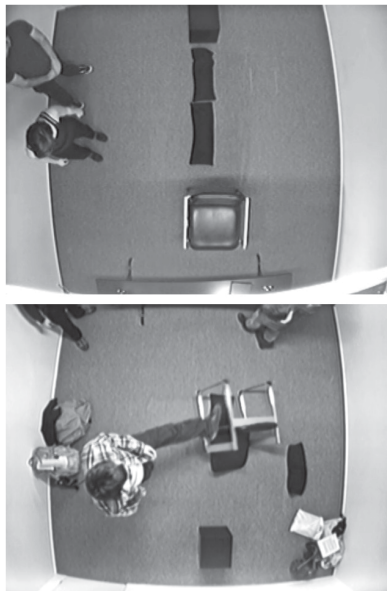
Nov 30 — (299)

A mother with her two children. I enter, pick up a sandbag and place it on the chair and sit next to it, thus taking up the position of the two children sharing the arm-

chair in the other room. A second double arrives a little afterward and constructs a routine from the mother's gestures. While the mother wants to leave, the children, not satisfied with the delay in the reproductions, insist on continuing the experience. Amusing sequences then follow as the children exuberantly generate ever more absurd repetitions.

Nov 30 — (301)

We are two doubles in the installation. A large group of very expressive students tests the system in various ways. One of them keeps saying he could stay here for hours, even all day. He starts frantically moving objects about and even kicks the armchair. This action immediately triggers protective measures. I leave at once, and the other double goes to sit on the cube and stays motionless. This break quickly calms things down, after which we can go into action again.



Dec 6 — (323)

A woman enters and notices that the sandbag on the cube isn't symmetrically aligned with the one in the other room. She arranges it to correct the "anomaly."

Dec 7 — (325)

"It disturbs me, I can't stay"... "It disturbs me!" she says again, speaking to her friend, who's on his second visit. They talk for a long time outside the room. I can see that she anticipates something and that the room itself worries her.



Dec 7 — (326)

In this sequence there are three doubles in the installation. By turns, we each take up the visitor's entrance, the movements by which she settles in, hangs her coat on the rack, puts her bag down, and sits down to read. There follows a series of visitors coming and going, but with an average of

four people in the room at any given time. Our routines engage various temporalities, and the resulting "choreographies" are complex but fluid. One can really feel the effect of multiple echoes, each double playing a loop that falls in and out of sync with the others.

Dec 8 — (332)

A man crawls on the ground to go from one end of the room to the other, hoping to avoid the surveillance. He hasn't understood that I see everything.

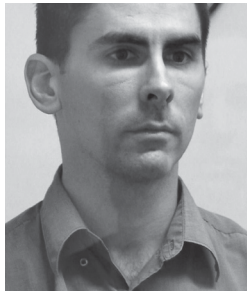
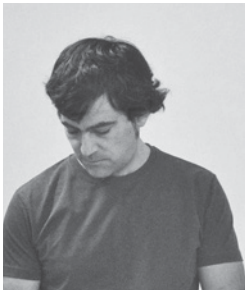
Dec 8 — (335)

He throws the book on the floor. Instead of reproducing this action, I start the cycle over again.

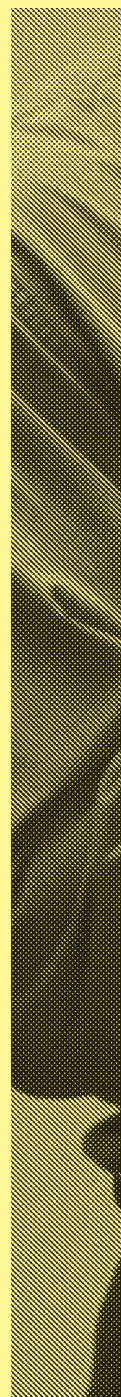


Performers / Doubles

Julia Barrette-Laperrière
Catherine Cédilot
Sébastien Cliche
Anne-Flore de Rochambeau
Marilyne Fournier
Claudine Hébert
Marie-Reine Kabasha
Oliver Koomsatira
Emmanuelle Martin
Gabriel Painchaud
Manon Tourigny



E





Charles Guilbert Of the Spectator as Material

Sébastien Cliche's installation *La doublure* revolves around the spectator's movements. To return to the source of the experience it afforded me, I would have to speak of the fall day in 1979, in Quebec City, when Mrs. Cossette, the mother of a friend of mine, brought me to an art museum for the first time. But if one finds back-tracking thirty-five years somewhat extreme, I could start by describing the meal I rushed through on December 4, 2012, so that I could drop into Galerie de l'UQAM during my lunch break, or begin with that door I opened to exit CEGEP du Vieux Montréal, where I teach, letting my feet gradually take me away from "real" preoccupations toward "invented" ones. Or else, I could merely select the few steps I took from UQAM's dull corridors to the gallery's hushed interior, the initiate's nod that I gave to the clerk, and the stroll toward the closed structure and movie-set decor that housed the installation.

How far back do I go, then, to depict the horizon of my expectations as a spectator? And how do I locate the end of my relationship with the work? These are questions, among others, that Cliche raises by proposing an artistic experience that begins—without my knowledge—before I have entered the closed space of the installation and lasts well after my departure. To render as best I can the particularity of *La doublure*, I here describe my itinerary (divided into five stages) twice, once by keeping to the immediate experience, and a second time by delving into attendant reflections.

First Run

[1]

Substitute Reflection

Opening the door to the installation, I discover a closed office space. A large rectangular mirror reflects everything in the room, including the door that I have just opened. I take one or two steps inside, and then I am stunned. Things are so confused at this point, even today, that I can hardly describe what happened to me. To dispel the haze, my brain urgently produces all kinds of theories, including the following ones:

The mirror I see is rigged. It truly reflects the objects in the room—clock, coat-rack, wooden cube, sandbags, table, lamp, book, video monitor—but not the people, since the one I see reflected before me. . . is not me. By what sleight of hand has the artist enabled the mirror to distinguish between objects and people? *I must have been replaced by a virtual character by way of a video projection,* I tell myself. A quick glance at the ceiling prompts me to drop that idea. After a moment (interminable fractions of a second), I manage to think, *This mirror may only be a window.* And I'm struck by the fact: the being in front of me—tall, thin, young, dark-haired—is a flesh-and-blood man, behind a window pane, standing in an adjacent room where the objects, identical to those in the one in which I stand, are positioned to create a mirror-like symmetry. The disbelief leaves me only when I start moving again and I finally sense the all-too-human aspect of the gap between our two bodies.¹

¹ While reading the log maintained by the doubles (which the artist allowed me to read for the drafting of this text), I discover that the visit occurs differently for each visitor; the double's entrance is not always simultaneous with the spectator's. However, several spectators seem to have experienced a stupefaction comparable to mine, though differently and in other sequences.

[2]

Gaze Deflected

As I slowly approach the black table set against the wall that separates the two rooms, I see that the young man reproduces some of my gestures, but in delayed and mechanical fashion. I try to make eye contact, but he never turns his face toward me. I don't insist. Like him, I turn toward the monitor placed on the table, hoping for a kind of deferred visual contact. But the video image I have of him—and likely the one he has of me—is an extreme high-angle shot that makes his face even less accessible.



[3]

Staggered Tale

On the black table I discover a black-covered book. It is titled *YOU (In This Story)*. I sit down at the table and read it at one go. A strange restiveness comes over me: I seem to hear a voice other than mine in my head spouting off randomly about what's happening at this very moment, utterances at once true and contradictory. Having read the book, I get up to leave and head toward the door, without the least concern for the young man.

[4]

Time Deferred

As I go, I glance at the clock and am surprised that my visit has been so short. I check the time on my watch and notice that the clock is fifteen minutes behind, just like the one in the adjacent room. I have to rush to my next appointment. I step out, close the door, leave *La doublure*.

[5]

Mixed Feelings

After my departure from the installation, I have a strange feeling: that of having failed as a spectator, of not having measured up, even of having left without wanting to. I tell myself that the work is quite puerile: I was simply tricked, mimicked. But the farther I go from the installation, the more what occurred there seems mysterious. The intense feeling of being out of step is not a coincidence, as everything in *La doublure* has “moved from its place.”²

² I borrow the expression “sorti de sa place” from Théophile de Viau’s Baroque poem “Ode,” in which he conjures hell: “Fire burns in the ice; / The sun has turned black; / I see the moon about to fall; / This tree has moved from its place” (my translation—*trans.*) From *Le livre d’or de la poésie française: des origines à 1940*, edited with introduction and commentary by Pierre Seghers (Verviers, Belgium: Gérard, “Marabout Université” series, 1968), 132–133.

Second Run

[1]

I Am Not Me

Cliche has long nurtured a fascination with displacements, both physical and figurative, having begun his exploration of human angst through works inspired by flight safety rules and constantly led us into itineraries studded with disturbing loci, conjuring such emotions as desertion and failure.³

³ One finds this notion of the itinerary as much in his interactive Web pieces as in his installations and writings.

In *La doublure*, the locus does more than conjure emotions: it provokes them. One is confounded by this inverted trompe-l'oeil (since it induces us to take reality for a reflection) in part because it brings to light our entirely contemporary inclination to first suppose that things are virtual. More interesting, however, is that superimposed on the blurring of reality and fiction in this false-mirror experience is a confusion between self and other that takes us back to the source of our being and of our relationship with the world. We sense therefore something quite profound being shaken in us. But what?

To answer this question, it seems obvious to return to the mirror stage, the stage during which, according to Lacan, the ego is formed, the child jubilantly anticipating its unity, and for whom the ego is constituted as an other and through the gaze of the Other (in this originary scene, someone is in the reflection with the child and confirms its identity). In the installation, however, the mirror-stage scenario is a failure, since no match is made between the “I” and the reflection, the latter having been replaced by a double. The ambiguity is reinforced and extended by the fact that the double does not systematically reproduce all my actions, or their sequence, and strips them of their precision and of any emotion. Thus, I can neither see myself as myself nor see the double as truly “other.” In this confusion, which impedes any identification, neither the self nor the Other may come to be. According to Lacan, such a failure would have serious consequences for the child’s development, since the Other is “the locus for the deployment of speech.”⁴ Without the function of alterity, access to language is blocked. This impediment lies at the heart of the anti-relational lab that is *La doublure*.

4 Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Lacan* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003), 64 (my translation—*Trans*). It is interesting to recall how important space-related metaphors are for describing psychological dynamics. Freud, who had a passion for archaeology, chose, for instance, the word *topiques* (topography) to describe instances of the id, the ego, and the superego.

[2]

I Am Untuned

I soon notice that the double—my reflection—acts “inappropriately.”⁵ In such a closed space, it is inappropriate, even stressful, to not at least glance at the person one shares the space with. By keeping his face turned to the video monitor, the double effects a cleavage that recalls the initial experience of the false mirror. Here, visual contact is replaced by a surveillance relationship devoid of humanity. Only by recognizing the double’s imitation of

my gestures do I know that I am being watched. Looping through these movements, the double exacerbates the mechanical aspect of my presence and refers me to the image of an unemotional, fragmented body. This new obstacle—the denial of the face⁶—refers me again to that which constitutes me as a subject.

5 It is important to mention the polysemous nature of the word *déplacé*, which originally meant “removed from public space.” One remarks that the adjective associates public space with behaviour that is proper to it. *Translator’s note: the author’s original term, déplacé, has the dual meaning of “inappropriate” or “uncalled-for,” the meaning reflected in the translation, and “displaced” in the physical sense, thus tying in with the notion of movement (déplacement) operative throughout his discussion of the installation.*

6 The protocol that performers must follow is unequivocal on this point: “The double must make no direct visual contact with the visitor.”

In recent years, child psychiatrists and psychologists, particularly Daniel Stern and Jerome Bruner, have understood the major role of eye contact between mother and child in the development of both cognition and subjectivity. Self-described “developmentalist” Daniel Stern called the communicative activity that takes place in the first months of a child’s life “affective tuning,” and he discovered that deprivation of pre-narrative dialogue hinders language acquisition.⁷

7 Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

The uneasiness felt as a result of this non-relationship with the double would seem, then, to have a more profound basis than a breach of decorum: it derives from a panicky fear of falling back into pre-linguistic existential limbo. Thenceforth, and until the end of my visit, my defence mechanism consisted of categorically ignoring the double. Unlike me, many visitors (as revealed in doubles’ accounts of these visits) desperately tried to tune in, by throwing an object into the other room, for instance, or by attempting to reel the double into an action and feedback loop, waving hello, leaving written messages, or presenting the double with a page from *YOU (In This Story)*.⁸ For my part, I only read the book, alone, and put all my attention there.

8 Some, in their utter simplicity (“hi”), echo like cries for help.

[3]

Reading What I Experience

Like the door, the window, and the video monitor, the book invites me to an elsewhere. Theoreticians of possible worlds say that literature is an experience of immersion in another world and that by such means it strives to speak of “the individual captured in the difficulty of inhabiting the world.”⁹ Following this definition, *YOU (In This Story)*

would in some sense be an archetypal book. But since the location of this reading is itself invented, one may say that it speaks of the difficulty as much of inhabiting the world as such as of inhabiting a fictional world.

9 Marc Cerisuelo and Antoine Compagnon, "Critique littéraire," *Encyclopædia Universalis* [on line at <http://www.universalis-edu.com/encyclopedie/critique-litteraire/>], accessed October 20, 2013. Thomas Pavel developed his theories in *La pensée du roman* (Paris: Gallimard, "NRF Essais," 2003).

It is at once surprising and logical that *La doublure* should lead to a reading experience. Surprising because, after having endured two events that I would call anti-linguistic, here I am immersed in a world made solely of words—what is more, in an art gallery. And logical because in *La doublure*, as in all of Cliche's work, a relationship with words is fundamental.¹⁰

10 This relationship is particularly and insightfully explored in the interactive Web work *Gravity Principles* (based on provocative aphorisms) and the publication *Surveillance* (which contains narratives written by the artist).

I open the book hoping that it might provide the key to freeing me from a sense of disorientation; on the contrary, the reading



exacerbates it. Each page contains barely a sentence or two, some of which are clearly aimed at disturbing me as a subject: "In this story, the person in the other room is preparing to take your place in life," or "In any case, it's unlikely that you are who you think you are." Here and there, the reader's inability to control his or her own destiny or to avoid mistakes is called to mind: "You may have decided not to resolve the problem, but are you sure that this decision is yours to make?" The artist reinforces this sense of doubt by juxtaposing utterances related to the real situation ("Maybe you'd prefer to simply keep turning the pages to avoid having to look at that person in the other room.") with others that are clearly fictional ("In this story, this room is your office. It is here that you will work."). Especially disrupting, though, are the narrator's abrupt changes in tone: careful at times, in claiming to name the emotions you feel,¹¹ confident at others,¹² and sometimes outright authoritarian.¹³ In these disorderly fragments and their cascade of pronouns—"someone," "it," "you," "no one," "one," "we"—the narrator's intention of displacing the reader becomes obvious. Once again, a sense of disappropriated speech prevails.

11 "It's possible that you're here but that your thoughts are elsewhere." Note the abundant use of the word *perhaps* and of such impersonal constructions as "it's possible," "it's likely," "it may be."

12 "At this moment you feel a great weariness."

13 "After a minute or two, at the very most, go out and continue the normal course of your activities."

[4]

I Have Come Out of Time

When I noticed *La doublure*'s fifteen-minute time lag in relation to the real world, the delay seemed incidental, but in hindsight I see that it had much greater importance. Lagging behind the real, *La doublure* takes us on a sort of plunge into the inexpressible that one can relate to an absence to language.¹⁴

14 This delay leads us on the path at once of a regression and of a non-concurrence with the here-and-now, which sheds light, by contrast, on the "progress" constituted by the mirror stage, in which the subject—in extreme concurrence with the here-and-now—imagines his or her ipseity (sameness), a crucial stage in language acquisition.

The entire installation may, in fact, be read as a metaphorical evocation of the artist's desire to appropriate "speech"* (his own and the spectator's); to do so, it must draw time away from the visitors by keeping and controlling them without their knowledge. Spectators know that they are under video surveillance in the installation; what they don't know is that they are being watched before they even enter—otherwise, the simultaneous entry of

spectator and double would not be possible. The visitor's experience thus begins before his or her consent is given, and continues, as we shall see, well after he or she leaves the room.

* The author's original phrase is *prendre la parole*, which usually means "to speak," referring to the act of speech generally, or, in a public context, "to take the floor;" but here with the added sense, based on the literal meaning of *prendre*—to take—of appropriation or disappropriation. *Trans.*

Moreover, this distended relationship with time is called to mind several times in *YOU (In This Story)*: "It could begin here," "It could end here," "Tomorrow perhaps, you'll think of all this." Yet also, "To free yourself of guilt, you can decide that everything that may happen to you in the next few days will be a consequence of what will have taken place here." Though ironic, with its ambiguous future perfect, this sentence does signify the artist's desire to see fictional time spill into real time.

[5]

I Enter through the Exit

On the way back to the work, I constantly replay in my mind the path I have just taken, as if I had an unresolved problem to deal with. I realize that, intimidated by the double in the installation, entangled in his presence, I had not been able to formulate a single idea about what was happening. I had had the intention of gazing on an object, and here I became the object of the gaze. Me? Rather, my physical movement in the space. If I briefly thought *La doublure* childish, it's likely because it reduced my existence to such stupefying simplicity. By restoring the act of "visiting an exhibition" in its extreme materiality, it made me see its utter strangeness.

Surprisingly, it was after making this observation that I began to find words to meaningfully describe what had happened to me. Thus, only long after leaving the space of the work do I finally enter it, in a sort of time regained. I finally manage to transform the relational failure I experienced into a narrative, thanks to a process of displacement the importance of which Jean-Marie Shaeffer had described in *Pourquoi la fiction?*¹⁵ : "What counts in the role of fictional devices in the affective mental economy is not so much the content of the imaginary representation as the very fact of the passage from a real context to a fictional one. One of fiction's main functions on an affective level would thus reside in the fact that it allows us to reorganize our affective fantasies on a field of play—to stage them—which enables us to try them out without being



subjugated by them.”^{**} Conversely, because it does subjugate us, *La doublure* reveals the fundamental value of fiction, which founds us as subjects, lets us accede to language, makes possible the encounter with the Other, and, in the world of creative work, becomes the object of an intense and mysterious apportionment of power between an artist and a visitor.

¹⁵ Jean-Marie Shaeffer, *Pourquoi la fiction ?*, (Paris: Seuil, 1999, "Poétique" series), 324.

^{**} My translation—*Trans.*

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