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Two-Way Mirror / Hedge Arabesque by Dan Graham _ Fondazione Zegna _ Trivero _ Italy ART DESTINATION

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"All my work, you have to walk. They're about time," begins Dan Graham as he discusses his latest work, *Two-Way Mirror / Hedge Arabesque*, which comprises a free-standing pavilion made from steel and glass dissected by a high hedge of yew. It is installed at the entrance to a valley filled with thousands of rhododendrons in the foothills of the Italian Alps, as part of the Fondazione Zegna's *All'Aperto* art and ecology initiative. "As you walk around the piece," the 72-year-old artist says, "the sky changes, and your body changes, and you can see the body changing and other people's bodies changing."

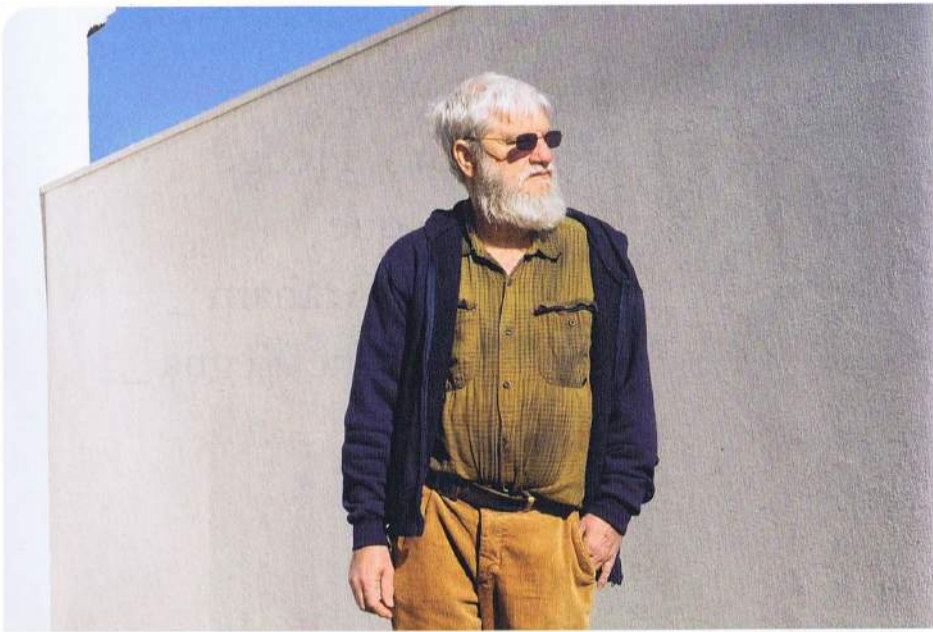
The pavilion is dedicated to "peace and Mies [van der Rohe]." One side of its curved glass is transparent; the other reflects and distorts light. "I never realized it, but my work is very impressionistic and optical," says Graham while sitting on a bench in Trivero, surveying the rice paddies of the Piedmont plain, 1,800 meters below. "These two-way mirrors are like Seurat's painting of the circus, with the audience looking at the performers who are looking back at them."

His pavilions can be found in places ranging from Brazil's Inhotim Institute, the Wanås Castle

in Southern Sweden, or Vågan in Norway's Sami north — perfect spots for a weekend break. But Graham's decision to exhibit in the outdoors was not inspired by hemispheric extremes, but by a 1970s journey down the Italian coast, during which he researched Renaissance gardens. "They were the first museums," he says. "And they were like theme parks, with water features and sculptures, designed as allegorical walks through philosophy and poetry."

If that's the case, his pavilions find their dynamic of reflection, deception, and seduction rooted in Lacan's theories of the mirror stage of a child's development: "It's about the child having a sense of self by observing somebody who observes them at the same time." Then there are also Foucault's heterotopias, in that Graham's mirrors depict a space of otherness that is simultaneously physical and mental, one that is neither here nor there, a space that juxtaposes several views of those reflected within the work, as well as the flowers, pine, and beech trees of its surroundings.

Yet Graham doesn't intend *Two-Way Mirror / Hedge Arabesque* to inspire such highfalutin musing from its visitors. "It's like a fun house for children," he says. "My work is populist; it's like an antidote to Disney." And indeed, at an hour's drive from Milan, it makes for a much calmer family excursion than the Magic Kingdom. "In my opinion, all art is about



childhood memory," he continues, giving examples of his early fascination with curved glass: "When I was 10, I used to set fire to insects with a magnifying glass. As a teenager, I used to try to pick up girls with my telescope out in a park at night."

As bees flitter from flower to flower and a small lizard skitters along one of the stone pathways that meander through the late Alpine blooms, Graham's thoughts wander: "I don't believe in the 'white cube.' The most important part of a museum is the lobby — they're romantic pick-up places." If that's the case, what kind of encounters does he imagine his new installation to inspire? "Girls love my work because they can dance in front of it. But boys are sometimes frightened by it, just as they're afraid to meet girls... My work is always on a human scale."

— *Two-Way Mirror / Hedge Arabesque*
by Dan Graham in the Valley of Rhododendrons of Oasi Zegna, Trivero, is best visited in late spring and early autumn.

— www.fondazionezegna.org

