

Hundreds of shiny windows

Hundreds of shiny windows, let them flash away at you, they're nothing to be afraid of, it's just that they've been cleaned, you can always smash them if you want.

As the story of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* begins, its protagonist Franz Biberkopf leaves Tegel Penitentiary and takes a tram into the city. He walks through the Berlin streets and is overwhelmed by the crowds, noises, and shops. The shop windows emerge as peculiar signs of the modern metropolis, with their lights and transparencies which exercise a power of attraction and repulsion on the viewer. Biberkopf has spent a long time between the four walls of a prison cell and is trying to readjust to the city, but the shop windows confuse him. They shine at him, they call for his attention, at the same time rousing his suspicion and triggering a potential aggressive reaction.

The images of smashed windows might bring to mind more recent events. During the lockdowns in 2020, crowds took the streets in several European cities and expressed their frustration for the time spent between the four walls of their private homes. Occasionally anti-lockdown protests turned violent and youth gangs targeted luxury stores, breaking shop windows and looting top quality goods from high-end retailers. Bearing cracks on their reflective surfaces, these broken windows enter into a dialogue with us and show us aspects of the society we live in. They frame the objects of our longing and reveal our obsession with commodities. They reflect societal tensions and contemporary frustrations.

The reflective property of the glass and the relationship between desire, possession and frustration are important elements in Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*. In his collection of notes *A L'Infinifif*, Duchamp defined the shop window as a "proof of the existence of the outside world". We see our image reflected on its surface, we wonder what it shows us, we project our wishes on the exhibited objects. We want to possess the object of our desire, but our expectations are eventually frustrated. After drawing a parallel with erotic desire, Duchamp concludes that "the penalty consists in [...] feeling regret as soon as the possession is consummated".

The shop window is a frame, a threshold between us and our object of desire, a mirror revealing and reflecting our cravings and dissatisfactions.

Hundreds of shiny windows is a collaborative event with artist Antonia Breme and fashion designer Verena Michels. Playing with the aesthetics of the shop window, Breme has transformed the windows of OH Studio in Pohlstr. 75 into an installation, displaying Michels' CAPEBAG, a biodegradable raincape made of plant based plastic.

Breme's sculptural work is concerned with the discipline of shop window display and explores the relationship between attraction, enchantment and the futility of desire. Breme's sculptures often make use of transparent glass panels and semi-reflective surfaces, lightweight fabrics and see through curtains, thin steel hooks hanging from self-standing metal frames. These sculptural elements evoke an atmosphere suspended between attraction and vulnerability, enchantment and precariousness, desire and vanity. Michels' experimental design label Weather Underground engages with the fields of fashion and sustainability, examining the relationship of people with materials, clothes, packaging as well as leftovers of consumption. CAPEBAG is a hybrid between a raincape and a bag. The first edition comes in a 2-tone signature look and in monochrome White or Black. Its flat tube collar has handles and folds back into itself to be carried as a plastic bag - without plastics. Collaborating with the bioplastic sector and packaging industry, Weather Underground realises fair, local and non-toxic production.

The window display combines Breme's installation and CAPEBAG, creating a dialogue between art, design and commercial display. While appearing potentially fragile, Breme's metal frames and hangers provide a solid structure for the raincape, supporting and reinforcing its shape. Made of an impermanent material, the raincape covers and offers a second skin to the sculptural pieces.