

MIRRORS (2015)

Clint Enns

Mike Hoolboom: How do you choreograph rhythm in your films?

Ingmar Bergman: Rhythm is conceived in the script. All forms of improvisation are alien to me. If I am ever forced into hasty decisions, I grow sweaty and rigid with terror. Filming for me is an illusion, planned in detail.

MH: Without improvisation, how do you ensure that an actor performs without appearing rigid?

IB: One of the greatest actors of all time, a brilliant portrayer of innumerable heroes and fools, was suffering in his seventy-seventh year from circulation trouble in his left leg. An operation was deemed necessary, but he refused. After a performance, I thanked him. He looked at me in the mirror with cold contempt and said, “To hell with your damned ingratiating. I know what you’re up to.”

Of course, the most important task of an actor is to focus on and respond to his fellow player. With no *you*, no *I*.

MH: Spiritualist Michael Stone once said, “Awareness is like a mirror that doesn’t take the shape of what’s reflected.” How do you see mirrors in your films? What do you see reflected?

IB: Mirrors serve as existential portals, akin to the reflection of Stone’s awareness. They carry that most called-upon and least desirable virtue: honesty.

The mirror is a space where the self unravels and the boundaries of identity dissolve. It reflects not just physical appearances but the profound interplay between external reality and internal conflict. In other words, it reflects what isn’t there. It shows what we have taught ourselves to ignore.

MH: Cinema can be an elusive mirror, one that makes it difficult to recognize our own face.

IB: During the production of *The Seagull*—a play which helped shape *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961)—my then-wife Ka’bi and I moved into a handsome villa, two people chasing after identity and security. We wrote each other’s parts, which we both accepted in our great need to please each other. The masks quickly cracked and fell to the ground in the first storm, and neither of us had the patience to look at the other’s face.

MH: What do you think about the *supercut* as a cinematic form?

IB: Like the fleeting summary images of my own life I saw just before dying, the supercut is death. It signals that something is over. A life, a project, a point of view. Now it's time for the archive. Let's call it: *the archive of archives*.

MH: Why did you stop making films?

IB: My anxiety slowly and imperceptibly disappeared. My life's most faithful companion, inherited from both parents, the very centre of my identity. Not only the torment, the anguish, and the feeling of humiliation faded, but the driving force of my creativity also fell away.

