

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: James Gentile

Reflections, Refractions, and Remembering: A Look at 1-Way Mirror

by Madeline Shuron

Halfway through *1-Way Mirror*, Mimi Doan struts around the stage in a suit of rubber abs and a muscular chest. They say, “Looks like her father, sounds like her mother.” They lick their fingers and place them on the rubber nipples, a hard sizzle coming from their mouth. They are at the peak of manhood: you are watching, and they know it, and you like what you see, and they know it. The peak of perfection.

What—or who—is the idealized self?

“I am Gabriella. I am twenty-three years old,” chant choreographers and performers Mimi Doan and Cole Stapleton in unison, adorned in white dress-tunics and baby-faced makeup. They stare blankly at the audience. “I live in Clinton, Connecticut, and this is my mom. I’m Catherine. I am—do I have to say how old I am? Let’s say thirty-five. Let’s say thirty-nine.” As they worm their way through parallel space, bodies smushed together, they continue to recite the story of a mother and daughter duo that bathe in celery juice to keep themselves young. “She’s my mini-me,” they conclude, staring at each other’s lips, nose to nose.

Can you really lose yourself in another?

There are subtitles projected onto a mirror, and they dance—Stapleton’s fluidity and Doan’s solidity stand out. We hear stories of the miracle of coincidence: of hazy memories of sneaking into jackets, of wanting to—having to—be older than you were. There are snippets of skin being projected, but all I can see is the red of the projector light reflected in the mirror alongside the subtitles, making everything gory and horrific.

When you look in a mirror, who do you see?

On their back, Stapleton inches their way across the marley on a diagonal, with small mirrors balanced on their bare torso. A second body—dressed in baby-faced makeup and a red bobbed wig—comes onstage as Stapleton exits, crawling on all fours and shaking. It's Doan, right? But...the tattoo is missing? *It's Doan, right?* Slowly, the actual Doan walks onto the stage. The doppelganger—Sacha Vega, director of the piece—looks up in fear.

Why wouldn't you want to be anyone other than yourself?

Doan, Stapleton, and Vega weave a complex tale of identity and the safety of you-as-other in this forty-five minute show. Through themes of emotional incest they glide and throw themselves around the floor, rolling and cavorting with one another through vignettes of figures: idealized younger selves craving attention, idealized present selves dancing on mirrors. It's a creepy, unsettling piece that navigates identity and relationships in beautiful, fractured ways.

[1-Way Mirror](#), Mimi Doan and Cole Stapleton, Icebox Project Space, Philadelphia Fringe Festival, September 27-28.

Article Image Description: *Two performers (Doan and Stapleton) stand on mirrors. Doan's chest is out to the audience, their arms expanded to their full width. Stapleton bends and twists at the waist, their arms expanded as well. The lights reflecting off the mirrors cast a watery shadow on the wall and ceiling.*

Homepage Image Description: *Two performers (Doan and Stapleton) stand cheek-to-cheek as they stare in confusion at the audience. They wear bright cherry-red wigs and garishly applied makeup along with white baby-doll overshirts. Behind them is a long mirror; a flash goes off.*

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