

Gillian Wearing: Under the Influence

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Gillian Wearing gets under your skin in Paris

While Parisian art exhibitions buckle under the fuzzy palette of “*Les Années Pop*” at the Pompidou Center or the speckled surfaces of Yayoi Kusama’s five splendid installations at the Maison du Japon, at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, English artist Gillian Wearing’s mini-retrospective deploys video work that is somber, quieter, and full of a great deal of internal violence. Here nameless people offer up a grotesque compilation of traumatic childhood memories and narratives, some verging on sitcom. In *I Love You*, 1996, Wearing stages the hysteria of a desperate woman; in *Sacha and Mum*, 1996, we are allowed to witness the love-hate relationship between a mother and daughter. In *Drunk*, 2000, a wall-length video triptych, Wearing gathers local alcoholic drifters and allows them to act out their drunken lives in the pristine white cube of her studio. The work attempts to find some distance from the surrounding social misery, to save for the screen the image of an unconscious body. It’s a disturbing reality show in front of which visitors hesitate, caught between our own voyeuristic desires and Wearing’s ability to capture and present a state of mind that is profoundly altered. Full of ambiguities, we find ourselves caught somewhere between fiction and documentary, theater and reality.