

The Mouse and the Analyst

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A harvest mouse peeks out of a hole in a wall at an art space in North London. Startlingly, it begins to speak:

It is important to know who you are. But it is equally important, to know that... who you are now, might not be who you are tomorrow... Don't get sucked in by the commodification of who you are... The world outside of this realm, is far more interesting than the little holes that we hide in. You see, I have defined my identity. I know who I am... In my world I am a small harvest mouse, and I am also a storyteller... I would love to know what I am to you. I am very fond of interpretations.¹

In *The Storyteller: The Sense That You Are Part of a Flow of a Thing* (2025), artist Ryan Gander puts a mouse on stage. (The gallery is in a building once used as a drama school.) The animatronic mouse delivers a lengthy monologue on art's limits in this moment of identitarian retrenchment and decries the conjunction of being and saying now demanded of artists: they too must obey the logic of the *dico*,² I am what I say. The result? "You have made a world where everything is possible, but everything is beginning to look the same..."

Our little mouse speaks—but what is its truth? "I know that to you I am not real..." Even so, viewers are drawn into the implausible scenario and empathically suspend their disbelief. "What is it that makes you want to believe that I am real?" the mouse asks. Is it creativity and imagination—or the *Imaginarisation* that supports the semblant?³ The mouse's statement of identity belies the false transparency of a discourse meant to incite Narcissism. Viewers see themselves reflected in a cute mouse who reaffirms a discourse on the self and out of truisms weaves a border around a hole, offering them an escape—you be you!

The mouse reminds us of the place of comedy, which pushes toward a lifting of the repressed.⁴ Gander sets up a deliberate *semblantisation* that empties signifiers from all substance at the service of the *sinthome*'s truth. Manipulating the logic of the semblant, the work makes us look askance at the Real.

What can an analyst learn from this mouse? A way to find (a) truth in what appears as a discourse full of sense: what is said conceals its saying.⁵ Logic is a combination of semblants, Miller notes. "We can avoid it only if we use it; we can use it only if we know how to let go of our belief in it."⁶ The logic of the semblant, transparent only in appearance, belies the opacity of

¹ Gander, R., Extract from the monologue of the mouse in the work *The Storyteller: The Sense That You Are Part of a Flow of a Thing* (2025), on view until January 18, 2026. Exhibition entitled: *I have fallen foul of my desire*. Camden Arts Project, London. <https://camdenartsprojects.com/whats-on>

² Latin for to say or to tell.

³ J.-A. Miller, "The semblant and the real," *Psychoanalytic Notebooks* 9, p.21.

⁴ L. Mahjoub, "Du comique chez Freud." Journées de l'ECF.16 November 2025.

⁵ "Qu'on dise reste oublié..." J. Lacan, "L'étourdit," *Autres écrits*, p.449.

⁶ J.-A. Miller, "Semblant et sinthome" *La Cause du Désir* 69, p.130.

the symptom. The unveiling of the Real through manipulation of fictional truth and the semblant—*mimēsis*—is the power of art.