The motive of the window belongs to the classical topoi of early image construction, such as painting, that framed the 'world' into a format understandable to humans. The framing function of the window produces an out-cut that does not appear to be an arbitrary fragment, rather it connects the view outwards with the visibility of the intimate inner. With regard to the genre of landscape painting and the interior, that means that "a space open in many directions must 'close' itself, in order to be comprehensible in any picture that we label landscape. In the same way, the presentation of an interior includes a projection outwards, a closed structure from the inner to the outer. The rooms of houses or buildings must 'open' themselves, in order to be understood as interior".* In this sense the window produces primarily the opposition of interior and exterior. The inner space constructs itself through the outside that is visible through the window, in reverse the outside is perceived as something different to the interior.

In the filmic and photographic work of Martina Wolf the motive of the window in the art historical tradition of finestra aperta is once again taken up and thematicised as the frame between inner and outer. Her photographs, produced in Dresden, of windows in differing living situations show the multiple possible framings of the view through curtains and blinds and the transformation of the outlook into its own picture format. Steamed up window panes filter the light and softly blur the outside. Buildings opposite block the view, drawn curtains allow only a guess as to what is to be seen outside the flat. Wolf's studies of the window as an architectural element show not only how it directs our perception, but also how much it says about our dealings with each viewing convention that controls in- and outlook. One can shut oneself off from one's surroundings and prevent or reduce the view inwards through curtains. The more open the view outwards, the more others can look in. Through such simple adjustments the private appears in the both factual and serially arranged photographs. The window always takes the same position in the photograph, the rooms are always empty of people. Nevertheless, the handling of the window as a transparent connection to the outside, a threshold of visibility, reveals much about the inhabitants of the block of flats, and their relationship to privacy.

An important aspect of the video works of Martina Wolf is to bring the apparently private into the public sphere, to capture outlooks and to re-present them in other places. They show realistic window situations where no, or at least no such, windows are and lay them as an illusionistic foil over real architecture, whose function they confuse. They suggest transparency towards the outside where closed buildings are, and place frames that one otherwise does not perceive. Offices in the inner city receive projected windows that look out over summer landscapes, panoramic views from a glazed lift are projected onto the inner space. In this crossover game between outer and inner, landscape and interior shift scale and perspective, making the apparently known into something strange. In her video project, 'Window Images', for example, the reflection of a DDR prefabricated building on a slowly opening window pane moves past the viewer. With each degree of window movement a further piece of the grid-structured functional building of the Dresdner Robotron slips into view. The actual architecture, however, can only be seen as a mirror image that, on the other hand, manifests itself as a video image. The curious poetic of this manifestation stands in clear contrast to the plain architecture of the Robotron that fleetingly rotates inside the room.

Martina Wolf's work is almost always produced in relation to such concrete places, whose visual potential she transforms by translating actual perceptions into medial images. The work she has developed in Frankfurt is the result of an intensive examination of the architecture of various bank buildings in the city and views from them out over the skyline. For the most part

it is concerned with these bank buildings as a representative form of architecture, with their glazed outer skin they take on a transparency and yet at the same time a view favouring the panoramically arranged outlook is avoided. With some views the tendency is to deal even with a panoptic outlook that appropriates the surroundings and targets, through looking, the mastery of space.

For this reason Martina Wolf goes a roundabout way and avoids views where real windows are, and introduces windows where none exist. She blocks viewpoints and changes outlooks into 'inlooks'. Thus her blinds, painted trompe-l' œil on the window panes, arouse the desire for an outlook that is, however, not fulfilled. They point to the possibility of a view outwards over the panorama of the city but, however, artificially destroy it. Some panes are almost completely painted over, leaving only a small viewing area free, but are so high up that they, too, offer the promise of a view that they do not fulfil. The window – a classic motive for longing – denies, as if covered by an opaque curtain, visual contact with the outside world and throws the viewer back on himself and his imagination.

In her photographic works, too, Martina Wolf uses the potential of this painting over of window panes to alter reality. Her minimal intervention in the actual field of perception radically alters the view of the city's topography. The photographic views of Frankfurt's inner city, taken from an elevated perspective, look as if parts of the city have been rubbed out of the picture. However, it actually has to do with the view from a window, the panes of which have been partially covered in various places so that the, in itself always the same, outer view repeatedly offers different fragments of the cityscape. According to where the houses are blocked out, the urban structure of Frankfurt appears to have grown organically or to be planned as a grid. What is, is here transformed into an image of what could be. What is becomes finally a model of reality that introduces other levels of potential perception into this reality. The city of Frankfurt with its historic living quarters and neighbouring exposed skyscrapers, its vaulting eaves and only seldom unified blocks of buildings transform themselves, depending on one's focus, into an other version of the constructed modern.

The topography of Frankfurt also stands in the middle of the video work, 'Fahrstuhl', which shows a 30-minute ride in the glazed elevator of the inner city Galileo skyscraper, and unfolds a precise panorama of potential views between the storeys. One sees the city from a perspective that appears to be familiar and yet, with each subtle change in the camera's position, turns out to be completely other. Varying levels of light through windows partially darkened by venetian blinds, play here as important a role as the view, sometimes open, sometimes blocked by buildings, of the surroundings. From the upper storeys the city expands itself over the field of view, a few seconds later, on the other hand, only the surroundings of the next building are visible. The sky softens the façades of other houses, near and far views alternate. The view from the elevator at the top of the building of this obviously distanced perspective of the city becomes an abstracted outlook that has little to do with our 'natural' perception. A coherent image of the city only evolves in this procedural capture of spatial structures through the addition of perspectives that theoretically accumulate degree by degree. Actually, our perception allows itself to be led astray by vertical suction and perceives only that which actually happens – each journey with the lift functions as a separate film. Martina Wolf is interested here not in the single image, rather in the multiple, supplementary impressions that the viewer must organise in his own imagination. Space and time are directly connected to each other, yet uncouple themselves in the subjective experience. It is images taken from a particular place over a particular period of time that constructs a filmic space on the other side of the concretely measurable.

In the outer space this illusion once again arises, the suggestion of actual rooms where none exist, this time in a public sphere that does not usually concern itself with such interventions in reality. Martina Wolf has developed a work, 'Angleichung', for the LED wall of the Dresdner Bank in Theodor-Heuss-Allee in Frankfurt. The covering of the bank with 112 sq.m. of LED panel becomes apparently negated through this projection, while the façade retains windows which as a projected image, however, deny a view into the rooms behind. Layers of reality and perception are thereby displaced. Doubled office windows, views negated by blinds and illuminated offices at night overlay the actual window front with an image of these windows. The size changes, and the question of what is real and what is not, hangs for a moment in the air. Here, too, reality itself is the material for a staging that sharpens the view of this reality through denying a direct access to the known.

People play a role in this work only as absences behind the windows. And even if Martina Wolf lets them walk directly into the image, they are not individuals, rather shots of assembled crowds, as in 'Manifestationen', that bring to the fore the sense of individuality and mass, isolated gestures and collective appearance. Her panoramically structured montages of shots from a Paris demonstration transfer the relationship between space and movement, anonymous mass and socially engaged protest into a form that constructs an alternative in the 'scanning' eyes of the viewer. This scanning look that is directed to the apparently everyday is, however, – and this is confirmed not only in this photographic work – never documentary, rather it is always driven by a knowledge of the many other possibilities of the adoption, and finally an interpretation, of a reality that, in the acceptance of some things and the rejection of others, not only deeply imprints our perception but also self-reflectively confirms its power of judgement.

When things recognisable only as shadows, covered by curtains or all sorts of blinds, are deprived of immediate perception, a kind of haziness slips into the picture which then serves as the actually visible. Even though many works from Martina Wolf appear to be studies of the relationship between people and architecture, real and imaginary spaces, they are mostly about a deep understanding of the economy of the image. For example, the video sequence, 'Treppe' (2003), shows, in strongly contrasting black and white, people walking down stairs. Before one actually sees them, their long shadows thrown by the low-lying sun are visible. And this scene, structured by the strong horizontal of the steps, is more than a sequence of the everyday, it is at the same time an apparently choreographed movement. One is immediately reminded of the famous scene from Sergej Eisenstein's 'Battleship Potempkin', which also contends with the tightly constructed vertical, steep steps downwards on which citizens are being fired at by soldiers. 'Battleship Potempkin' is constructed from a whole range of contrasts which represent the opposition between revolutionaries and czarist organs of state. Close ups and the whole picture alternate, movements upwards and downwards stand for antagonistic principles. Against the background of this film historical reference the anonymous people in Wolf's video, almost recognisable only as silhouettes, become individuals who assert themselves in opposition to the influential, almost monumental architecture. They appear to be just shadows, but they stand in the light.