Thanks We would like to thank all the artists for contributing their work for this exhibition, and also extend our gratitude to The Hilma af Klint Foundation.

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We would also like to extend our gratitude to the curators Sidsel Christensen and Ben Judd for doing an excellent job on the exhibition and catalogue.

Thanks also to Susanne Christensen and Pandora Syperek for valuable assistance, and Outset for supporting Karen Russo’s Meditations on a Triangle.
THE EDGE OF REASON

The Edge of Reason, curated by Norwegian and London-based artists Sidsel Christensen and Ben Judd, explores notions of authenticity and belief, by inviting the viewer to have a first-hand experience of a world beyond the senses.

BY SIDSHEL CHRISTENSEN AND BEN JUDD
SEPTEMBER 2011

Christensen and Judd have invited artists whose work helps to trace a historical overlapping in the development of the empirical and scientific with the irrational and mystical. The artists in The Edge of Reason present a duality of experience, by moving in-between a sceptical enquiry and a more internalised visionary engagement to explore the unknown.

The Edge of Reason, then, is an attempt to describe the invisible. Via a supposedly rational system of understanding, the viewer is allowed to have an experience with the authority of authenticity; however the nature of this experience isn’t quantified or defined. It is still up to the viewer to decide, or allow, it to happen.

The historical and contemporary artworks included draw on traditions of expressing the immaterial through abstraction, symbolism and other forms of representation. But the works also still exist in an open space that is yet to be fully explored or described, holding the potential of becoming more than illustration, but a space of direct experience and transformation. Perhaps in a state of doubt, the viewer is left hovering between different positions, of scepticism and belief, comprehension and confusion, both immersed in a new experience, and also cautious about its validity.

Characteristic of modern occultism is its dependence on natural science: the conviction that new knowledge is generated primarily through the results achieved in experiments and tests – in short, scientific procedures. New occultism reveals itself to be a byproduct of a rationalist modernity fervently believing in progress. This self-understanding as a ‘secret science’ explains the numerous [...]. Fascinating attempts to lend aesthetic expression to the intangible. (1)


HEARING VOICES, SEEING VISIONS

The Edge of Reason has provided a fruitful opportunity for us as curators and artists to consider different approaches to exploring doubt and curiosity when engaged in both conscious and unconscious ways of looking.

The works in the exhibition, both contemporary and from the early twentieth century, address how we might respond to that which is just outside our field of vision or understanding.

One example of this tendency is Susan Hiller’s Magic Lantern (1987). The work requires the viewer to sit in a darkened room where circles of overlapping coloured light are projected onto the wall. At the same time we listen to examples of electronic voice phenomena (voices of the dead) recorded by the Latvian parapsychologist Konstantin Raudive in empty, silent rooms. The quasi-scientific notion of the unknown, after all, is not necessarily a reaction against reason, but is integral to scientific methodology and the notion of progress. In this exhibition, we are interested in the playful exploration of experiences beyond the known and rational, and how an expanded sense of perception through various methods may allow us to see the invisible.

TRUTH AND BELIEF

A useful illustration of these ideas lies in the parallel between the process of making and viewing art and that of various occult practices, as famously examined by Freud in Totem and Taboo (3), and more recently by writers such as Boris Groys (4). Art and the process of exploring the inexplicable (as in certain occult practices such as Spiritualism) are similarly bound in seemingly never-ending quests to uncover ‘truths’, both operating in an intriguingly murky place, a grey area where nothing can ever be fully resolved or proven. Correspondingly, the making and viewing of art could be seen as a magical one, in which objects, images and ideas become transformed in some way, largely through the mutual belief of the artist and viewer.

Both processes require a level of immersion, a dualistic state of mind that necessitates a leap of faith. Within this mindset, the properties of objects and images shift before our eyes, and we are required to enter a world that, from an
IN THIS EXHIBITION WE ARE INTERESTED IN A PLAYFUL EXPLORATION OF EXPERIENCES BEYOND REASON, AND HOW AN EXPANDED SENSE OF PERCEPTION MAY ALLOW US TO SEE THE INVISIBLE.

objective stance, does not exist. In both art and religious or occult belief systems, the participator is required, in order to benefit from the experience, to authentically believe in this transformative process. In relation to this transformation, Groys suggests, "(The) threshold between art and reality is given a purely spiritual interpretation: it is defined by the individual's inner, purely mental decision to see things differently. It acquires mythical dimensions. Crossing begins to resemble a religious conversion, an inner enlightenment that allows us to see the familiar from a new angle and to contemplate what is hidden below surfaces." (5)

We believe, yet with one foot still firmly on the ground. The description of the other world that we are required to enter ultimately requires a comparison with this world. It can only make sense when described using a familiar language. Thoughts and feelings have to be represented by using the symbols of the here and now.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The artworks in The Edge of Reason address an inherent paradox, by using systematic, empirical methods to explore what cannot be seen, weighed or measured. A way to understand this fusion, and potential confusion, of ideas, is to see the work in its historical context. In this light, the work appears to be a product of modernism, a project that is normally associated with the ideal systemic, empirical methods to explore what cannot be seen, weighed or measured. A way to understand this fusion, and potential confusion, of ideas, is to see the work in its historical context. In this light, the work appears to be a product of modernism, a project that is normally associated with the ideal.

The notion of correspondences, in which everything on earth mirrors the heavens and the two worlds consequently collapse into one, which emerged via the eighteenth-century Swedish scientist and mystic Swedenborg and subsequently Baudelaire, was furthered by the latter's fellow Symbolists. The loose international group of writers and artists suggested that everything had a symbolic value, which did not function in the mere form of metaphors but instead had the potential to alter states of mind. Their work was not so much intended to be read as to be experienced, using a more fundamental, primary system of understanding.

The Edge of Reason (2010) enacts the coming together of the visionary or hallucinatory and a physical reality. Taking place in the Swedenborg Society in London, performers, embedded in the audience in a séance-like arrangement, use text from the mystic's prose in an increasingly ecstatic cycle of spoken and sung phrases. Swedenborg's often outlandish descriptions of his encounters with the spirit world are mediated through his earlier incarnation as a scientist. Otherworldly experiences, for example of a spirit existing in his foot, are therefore brought back down to the here and now, and are in turn physically relayed by the performers.

Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky are historical artists who drew heavily on related spiritual movements and writers (Mondrian was a member of the Theosophical Society) and the artists' study aided their move from representation to abstraction, from depicting the physical world to describing an invisible world of vibrations, movements and sounds. The painters believed that the abstract colours and forms, more
Karen Russo, stills from Meditation on a Triangle (2010). The work explores the application of remote viewing – the apparent psychic ability to see and describe remote geographical locations, or ‘targets’.  

than simply triggering an interpretive response, but rather triggers an experience and experiences dreams of female characters within the London club scene, revealing the latent possibilities of sound, light and colour. Sidsel Christensen’s dual video installation, Spiritual in Art (1914), and in numerous karen russo, stills from geographical locations, or ‘targets’.  

Music. Christensen employs documents desires or dreams of female characters as a source other than the artist, indeed the origin of the work appears to lie elsewhere. This idea of displaced voice does not necessarily remove the authorship from the work in a direct extension of practices address the question of an artwork’s origin. We respond to the process. Perhaps we can look as far back as the Ancient Greeks and their notion that the idea for an artwork came from some other world, separate from the artist, who functioned as a medium for divine messages. Correspondingly, the Surrealists used dream diaries, automatic writing, and found poetry and Ouija boards to explore alternative and perhaps more authentic pathways of inspiration. The authors’ collaborative contribution to the exhibition, the ongoing performance Conversations with the Other Side, likewise sets up a dialogue between different positions in space and between various and unknown subjects. Staged in front of a live audience, the event begins with an attempt for a link between two spaces, the gallery where the performance takes place and a space on the other side, experienced by one of us who has been put into a hypnotic trance. As this other world and its inhabitants are being described, we attempt to convey what is being seen, as well as spatial experiences, to the audience. A chain of consciousness runs between us, the other side and the audience. Automatic writing can be seen as facilitators and mediums for the conversations, raising questions of authorship and authenticity. The Edge of Reason weaves together different voices, inviting the audience to negotiate experiences often just beyond the rational. Ultimately, the work can be seen to exist in the imaginary space between all involved, including the audience.

Karen Russo, Meditation on a Triangle (2010). The work explores the application of remote viewing – the apparent psychic ability to see and describe remote geographical locations, or ‘targets’.  

The painting Vierfigur im Dreieck (1927) by Kandinsky – remains hidden in a sealed envelope nearby, to be revealed at the session’s end. During the event, the remote viewer’s impressions were documented and then delivered to three artists whose different practices address questions of religion and spirituality, parapsychology and mysticism and their relation to art. Russo asked these artists to create new works based on the visual descriptions provided or respond to the process. The Edge of Reason in part explores this question of an artwork’s origin. You may experience a voice that comes from the spiritual realm. An intriguing aspect of Kandinsky’s production is its methodical planning in a systematic series. At times it became a popular analogy for telepathy. ‘[T]he rationalist and pragmatic ordering of enlightenment rationality has been the failure of its grand narrative to incorporate the spiritual world is said to be in correspondence with. It must be known that the natural world comes into existence and continues in existence from the spiritual world, precisely as an effect of its affecting cause. Nature and art. The Swinburne Society, 1900, no. 80. Also see Baudelaire’s poem Correspondance (1869), directly influenced by Swedenborg, and which developed his theory of synesthesia: ‘In The Flowers of Evil (Oxford, 1991), p. 327. 2) See Carel Blotkamp, ‘Annunciation Of The New Mysticism: Dutch Symbolism and Early Abstraction’ , in The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985, ed. Maurice Pointy, and Katarina Hesselink, The Web of Creation: Symbolism and Early Abstraction in The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890–1985, ed. Maurice Pointy, and Katarina Hesselink (Amsterdam, 2007). 1) Susan Miller, The Presumed Nature of Reality: Selected Talks and Texts, 1977-2007 (Zurich: SVP Berne, 2008), pp. 20-21. 2) See John Harvey, Photography and Spirit Guides: Revelations, 2007. Harvey writes: ‘Studio waves in 1844 and the photography had respectively conveyed and recorded a disembodied human voice. [ . . . ] In 1877, and proved that voices could be heard after our death. Furthermore, in 1880 telepathy was also demonstrated that sound could not pass great distances upon the air. But voices could enter the ether. [ . . . ] The telepathy became a popular analogy for telepathy’; Harvey, pp. 70-71. 3) In only a single field of our civilization has the expression of the soul been retained, and that is the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something according to the dictates of the spirit world. In this way the spirit world shows itself to us in impressive performances. – thanks to artists like Kandinsky and, I presume, there is something out there that we are not yet aware of. We are not yet aware of the influence of specific artistic styles and practices. 4) Boris Groys, ‘Simulated Readymades’ , in Art, Music, Language, ed. Brian Catling (London, 2007), p. 174. 5) See Swedenborg’s Visions and Twelve Books (1748) for an elaborate description of his notion of correspondences, in which, for example, he suggests that heaven is physically connected to the stages of man. The entire natural world corresponds to the spiritual world. Not only the natural world in general but also a very particular. Therefore whatever in the natural world comes into existence from the spiritual world is said to be in correspondence with it. 6) 7) See Swedenborg’s Visions and Twelve Books (1748) for an elaborate description of his notion of correspondences, in which, for example, he suggests that heaven is physically connected to the stages of man. The entire natural world corresponds to the spiritual world. Not only the natural world in general but also a very particular. Therefore whatever in the natural world comes into existence from the spiritual world is said to be in correspondence with it.
The artists in The Edge of Reason are connected in their attraction to the realms of the esoteric as spaces of fascination and curiosity. It is perhaps of more importance that they approach these liminal territories, situated between certainty and the unknowable, from paths that owe much to anthropological methods of observation and interpretation.

By Dan Smith

The idea of witnessing is explored but destabilized. In particular there is a rethinking of the otherwise sure processes are not purely neutral, rational and objective, but are bound to histories of the occult, the spiritual, invisible forces and the paranormal. It is clear that what is framed here by curatorial process is a combination of curiosity and a sustained, critical engagement with the objects of curiosity. At stake is the qualitative understanding of modernity as both historical form and present moment. These artists evidence that there is more to modernity than the supposedly rational forces that neo-arch rationalists who chose to take the very concept of belief as evidence of irrationality. Yet this seems to be particularly engaged with this in the work and the curatorial outline of The Edge of Reason.

The Destruction of Experience

The visionary may be extinct, but need not be viewed with nostalgia or long ing. It is a figure that can be thought about within the context of modernity. For the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, modernity is synonymous with the destruction of experience. Agamben views modernity in terms of crisis. It is a perpetual, ongoing and accelerating crisis, beset with hysteria and panic. His view of the present can be thought of as placed within an established and ongoing tradition of rethinking upon the transformation of subjectivity. This particular quality of modernity is addressed in Agamben’s book Inflexity and History, in which he is seeking to describe the groundlessness of everyday life, which he puts to the reader in the following way: Mailing their way home from work, the individual living in a Western, post-industrial society, has been betrayed by a jumble of events but however entertaining or tedious, unusual or commonplace, harrowing or pleasurable that none of them will have become experience. (1) Agamben is exceedingly prescient, writing in the late 1970s about conditions that seem to proffer and multiply today. He writes that when visiting the museum or place of tourist pilgrimage, the great majority of people have no wish to experience it, but prefer the camera to document on their behalf. Yet this is not purely a negative description of a troubling set of conditions. Agamben suggests that we take note of this, rather than deplore it, as it may demonstrate forms of future experience. The apparent emptiness of language, and the groundlessness described, presents not only a question, but an expectation from the reader or viewer, a demand that both representation and social/political forms must be reimagined. Yet this loss is not a straightforward issue of technology, mediation and alienation. Nor is it now. He tells us the last European work to be based upon integrated experience is by Michel de Montaigne. Agamben refers to Montaigne’s Essays, a work that First saw print in 1580. In Montaigne’s critique of the stability or verifiability of certainty, experience and certainty are rendered as incompatible. When scientific law dictates, there is no room for stories. Montaigne himself provides an eloquent summary of this emerging crisis. His essay ‘On the Cannibals’ opens with a beautiful reflection on changing landscape and geology on a local scale, observable over a short period of time, in contrast to the separation of lands, such as that of the New World from Europe. He then says: I wish everyone would but write about what he knows - not in this matter only but in all others. A man may well have detailed knowledge and was saturated by the presence of heaven. Yet how much of being a visionary is performative? If you pretend hard enough, does it not become who you are? Ben Judd and Sidsel Christensen seem to be particularly engaged with this idea in their work and the curatorial outline of The Edge of Reason.

We cannot know them or ourselves for certain. This lack of certainty, and the questioning of the value of the witness, illuminates the territory identified by Christiansen and Judd.

Experience and Modern Science

The historical moment is one of intersecting of the death of experience with the birth of modern science. Modern science originates in an unprecedented mistrust of experience. The experiment displaces experiences as far as possible from the individual. Observations are transformed as quantitative and exact. Traditional experience is devolved. This separation of science from experience is, according to Agamben, invisible to us. Prior to the birth of modern science, he argues that knowledge and experience were distinct, each connected to different fields. Experience was connected to a feeling of judgement and common sense, whereas science could be found in the active intellect. This was actually sepa rated into categories of human knowledge (experience) and divine knowledge (science). Modern science is distinct from this. Experience becomes verified through science in a search for absolute certainty. The great revolution in modern science was the destruction of experience as separate, making experience and knowledge the same. The place they come together is in the cogito. Descartes’ model of consciousness as the individual living in a Western, post-industrial society, has been betrayed by a jumble of events but however entertaining or tedious, unusual or commonplace, harrowing or pleasurable that none of them will have become experience. (1) Agamben is exceedingly prescient, writing in the late 1970s about conditions that seem to proffer and multiply today. He writes that when visiting the museum or place of tourist pilgrimage, the great majority of people have no wish to experience it, but prefer the camera to document on their behalf. Yet this is not purely a negative description of a troubling set of conditions. Agamben suggests that we take note of this, rather than deplore it, as it may demonstrate forms of future experience. The apparent emptiness of language, and the groundlessness described, presents not only a question, but an expectation from the reader or viewer, a demand that both representation and social/political forms must be reimagined.

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is the limit of experience; maturity is the awareness of the closeness to this boundary and the anticipation of death. Science and death, those forms of absolute certainty, are. I would like to suggest, reconfigured in this line of thinking, as historically contingent, and as spaces of as yet unrealised possibilities for alternatives. If science and experience are essentially incompatible, then what does art that addresses this kind of liminal uncertainty offer? It is an engagement with the irrational that does not negate science or verification, but complicates it, and returns it to some form of what we might call an experiential encounter. It may not be a return to lost experience, but might suggest how artworks, particularly in certain configurations, offer forms that are distinct from the non-experience of the everyday or the normative. It may not be a return to lost experience, but might suggest how artworks, particularly in certain configurations, offer forms that are distinct from the non-experience of the everyday or the normative.

RATIONALITY AS MYTH
It is important to acknowledge that these artists share with Agamben an interest in uncertainty that goes beyond either nostalgia or exoticism. But it is equally important to recognise that these impulses, like the desire for escape, should not be dismissed. Rather they need to be embraced and recovered as substantial and critical forces in disrupting normative assumptions and behaviour. Rationality is a myth. It is presented as both autonomous and the guarantor of truth. But this is always a position that is ultimately determined by ideology. When there is so little variety of ideology, exploring what might lie outside of rational and certain is invested with political agency and possibility.

For Agamben it is the shift towards the everyday, not the unusual, that determines and defines the destruction of experience. It makes all else, like the tales of travellers in distant lands, seem unreliable. The true sense of the fantastic, by the nineteenth century, had been neutralised. Instead of retaining a sense of wonder, a medieval bestiary could only demonstrate that the unusual cannot be translated into lived experience. Experience is not correlated by knowledge but by authority, by words and narration. In our modernity there is an absence of those who wield this authority, who would be able to guarantee experience. Authority in our time is, for Agamben, founded on what cannot be experienced. Authority cannot be granted based purely on experience. The maxim and the proverb thus are displaced and lost their status, replaced by the slogan. If the maxim and proverb were the forms that experience took as authority, then the slogan is the proverb for a population to whom experience has been lost. So where are experiences now? Can we ask where they have gone? Agamben suggests that they have migrated outside of individuals, to be enacted outside of any subject or person. They are observed, as in his example of the museum and the place of touristic pilgrimage, where the majority of visitors have no wish to experience it, preferring that the camera does instead. Yet this should not be the cause of despair or lamentation. The remains of experience are imprinted into technological media, and found in embodied practices. Agamben encourages us to look for grains of reason here, to identify seeds that might germinate into what is to come.


Jane and Louise Wilson, Stills from Routes 1&9 North (1994)
I’m a Believer

What happens when an artist is invited to speak from the other side?

By Ronald Jones and Liv Stoltz

On 15 July 2011 Liv Stoltz and Ronald Jones participated in a séance led by the spiritualist medium Vendela Cederholm with the hope of contacting Hilma af Klint. After a few moments of quiet meditation, af Klint came forward to Cederholm from the spirit world, and the séance began. Lasting nearly three hours, Stoltz and Jones addressed direct questions to af Klint as the medium channelled her answers. Setting aside whatever skepticism they might have held, Stoltz and Jones earnestly opened the door to the spirit world of Klint so passionately believed in, and invited her to speak for herself. They were naturally curious to see what might happen, but were certain that calling on af Klint directly was demonstrably the most meaningful way to contribute to The Edge of Reason.

Writing in freeze magazine Stoltz and Jones summarised af Klint’s life as a clairvoyant and her relationship to spirituality:

Af Klint was an old-school spiritualist who believed that she channelled psychic and ecstatic messages from the so-called High Masters – who existed in another dimension – into abstract paintings. Between 1905 and 1915 she created Paintings for the Temple (182 paintings divided into a number of different suites) in which she sought to represent the path towards the reconciliation of spirituality with the material world, along with other dualities: faith and science, men and women, good and evil. She used visions to make contact with ‘the other side’, and saw her paintings and drawings as symbolising, if not inspiring, the cosmic equilibrium the High Masters told her to seek.

For the greater part of her career af Klint worked in secret, unless she was meeting with a group of friends, all women, who called themselves The Five or The Friday Group. In séances The Five communicated directly with the High Masters. Although af Klint was raised a Christian, as a young adult she was influenced by H.P. Blavatsky, the founder of The Theosophical Society, and later in life, Rudolf Steiner who led his own spiritualist movement known as Anthroposophy. Between these influences af Klint created a completely unique visual language that traces her own experiences within the occult. When she died in 1944, af Klint left behind more than a thousand paintings, along with numerous journals documenting her experiences and mystical interpretations of her work.

What follows is an abridged transcription of the 15 July séance. What was not obvious during the séance, but became evident as Stoltz and Jones edited its transcript, was that af Klint’s own voice occasionally emerged as the medium spoke. When this happened, the medium’s voice and eyes shifted in character slightly, but distinctly. Therefore, Stoltz and Jones have interpreted certain passages in the following transcript, as belonging to Hilma af Klint herself.

Medium Vendela Cederholm: We hope that you have an open heart and that you will welcome both near and dear. Making contact with the spirit world is outside the time and space we inhabit. It does not take place in this room. It is somewhere else. We are here to welcome anyone who wishes to come, but we know that you have a particular wish that Hilma af Klint will come. I will not go into a trance, but I will close my eyes for a while, and then I will tell you everything I can. It could be that I see with the inner eye, or hear from within, or it could be that a telepathic feeling will take over. I will not withhold anything you want. We will now ‘step out of time’.

[Pause.

M: I will describe this lady, who wants to communicate with us. I do not know who she is, but maybe you will recognize her. [Pause.] She is quite small, she is lively, has alert eyes, and greying hair. She does not seem to care about us. I do not know who she is, but maybe you will recognize her. [Pause.] She is quite small, she is lively, has alert eyes, and greying hair. She does not seem to care about us.

M: She is a talented person, and an intellectual who inspires others. People are compelled to follow her. She is not interested in acquiring power or authority. She simply has ideas which others find inspiring.

M: Who are these people?

[Pause.

M: She tells me there is a close circle of friends who make her feel at ease. Between them there is no social intrigue.

Liv Stoltz: Are her friends women or men?

M: Her friends are women and they come together to discuss significant things.

Liv Stoltz: What is close to her heart? What do they talk about?

M: What is close to her heart? What do they talk about?

M: There were many instances in her previous life
She has mixed feelings. Yes. They did feel close to other artists of her time?
M: Not really. She had her friends; they did as they wished. She adds: ‘Please don’t think what we did was frivolous. There were many profound discussions and they repeatedly made contact with the spiritual world.
LS: Based on a written description of Hilma’s character by her nephew Erik af Klint, and from what we have heard thus far, it seems to be her world.
RJ: Her friends, are they The Five, and do they still meet?
M: That’s an exciting question, she answers. Yes, they still come together, but it is completely different now. They do not need to meet in secret anymore.
RJ: Can she paint in the life she has now?
M: Yes, she paints large canvases with fantastic colours. She prefers abstraction to the figurative style. [Pause.] Now she thinks we should discuss the exhibition you are apparently working on.
RJ: OK, The Edge of Reason?
M: This is something she feels strongly about. There seems to be other artists in the exhibition, not just her work. Is that correct?
LS: Yes, it is. What does she think about those artists?
M: She has mixed feelings. Yes, they should belong to… [Pause.] Difficult. She does not want her paintings mixed with other artists. She prefers to have her own wall, or at least clear divisions. It is important for her paintings to be exhibited separately. Yes. She is particular; not just about the size of her pictures, the colors, or how they are hung. It is about the feeling or the message.
Hak/M: That’s right. That is a really good point, she says. The dualities should never be merged, otherwise the world would stand still. You mustn’t analyse my work too much. It is meant to speak directly to the heart. But there will never be complete harmony; it always has to be this way. When humanity’s insight expands, people’s hearts naturally open. These large canvases depicting dualities could be seen as beautiful waves, as if expressed by music.
LS: Did music influence her paintings?
M: She says, that when she painted, she heard music.
RJ: Can she describe the music?
M: Yes, but now she tells me, it’s not music exactly. Rather sounds from the natural world. Birds, water, the kind of sounds you would have heard outside her studio. She wants those sounds to be heard alongside her paintings in the exhibition.
LS: Oh, you mean the sounds of nature that surrounded her studio in her previous life?
M: Yes, it could be different sounds in different parts of the exhibition; spring birds in one room, winter birds in another. [Pause.] Hmm… I think she had a difficult time in her previous life.
RJ: In what way?
M: Because people couldn’t keep up with her creative pace. I think she sometimes… I don’t know, perhaps she had a temper, perhaps she was annoyed, but she kept that inside. Things did not happen fast enough.
RJ: For her? Did her irritation stem from the fact that although she pioneered styles – automatic drawing for example – crucial to European modernism, they were later accredited to men, as she was written out of history?
M: No one could understand what she was doing. It was not possible, and it...
was a source of her irritation, but she couldn’t do anything about it. She was annoyed then and she is still annoyed.

LS: Did she know celebrated painters in her lifetime?

M: Not really. They did not interest her. She had her friends and when they met they provided her with a place where she could be herself. They did not fully understand her either, but they were kindhearted, encouraging and they felt a mutual respect for one another. They were not like one another, but shared something on a deeper level, a sense of sisterhood that she feeling unions.

RJ: Is she gratified by the attention that surrounds her work today?

HÅK/M: Yes. It’s about time!

[Laughter].

M: I can feel that she has a wonderful sense of humor; even though her demeanor seems serious.

LS: Did she feel early on...?

M: Wait a moment... there is something she wishes to talk about. (Pause). Yes. After your questions, she wants to talk about something else. (Pause). Yes. It’s about time!

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experience the individual’s path towards knowledge and insight. The journey through her temple would have culmi-
nated in a room at its centre where the visitor would meet the future.

M. Architecture remains important to her today, she says. Were she on Earth, she would completely devote herself to architecture. She would fundamentally change the way we think about build-
ings. They would be beautiful and speak to people’s hearts. They would contribute to reversing the pollution of the natural world, making the world ever purer. There would be gardens for growing vegetables that people could freely take. Yes. This is Utopia or at least in part. She says she has envisioned this in a letter or a paint-
ing. She says, Find the letters or papers where she mentions her buildings of the future. Do that. There may be people who will be inspired by them, and make them a reality.

Rj. We want her to know that we are writing an opera about her. What does she feel about that?

Hak/M. So exciting!

Rj. What important moments in her life would she like to see portrayed?

M. The struggle in her heart. [Pause.] And how inspiration came to her, as her knowledge and insight. The journey of the individual’s path towards spiritual growth. The duality between light and dark, perhaps in the light. [Pause.

Rj. What is the future of spirituality? Does she know she has a

M. No, she has seen it. But don’t ask me to write on my page, she says. However it is okay, if you want to post a ‘like’. [Pause.

M. Now it is time to end. We thank her so much for communicating with us, and thank you for letting me meet her. It was very pleasant, and she is pleased.

THE EDGE OF REASON

VENDELA CEDERHOLM is a spiritualist medium and founder of the Spiritual Academy in Stockholm, Sweden. She has been an established medium since 1995, and has made many public appearances. Her academic background includes studies in Theosophy and Spiritism.

LUV ROSTA is a free lance cura-
tor currently working with the Experie
n Design Group at Konstfack, University College of Arts Crafts and Design. She has worked as curator and Director of the Centre for Photography in Stockholm. She has organised several exhibitions including Auto Memorised – Photography in the Expanded Field, Small Elects of the World, La Tacha, Freedom and Treasure and Ordinary Fantastical. She has also curated exhibitions at the Liljevalchs Konsthalle, the Hasselblad Center, and Kristinahem Museum.

RONALD JONES, an art-
ist and critic, is Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Konstfack, University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Sweden. At Konstfack he leads The Experience Design Group. He contributes regularly to Art Forum and frieze and writes frequently on contemporary art and design for various inter-
national publications. He is a guest professor in Experience Design at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, India.
A VIEW FROM WITHIN

BY INGUNN SIRA MYHRÉ

The Edge of Reason challenges us to partake in and reflect on experiences that transcend our normal use of our rational faculties. Presenting such works as those of Hilma af Klint, who believed herself to be channeling psychic messages from another dimension through her paintings (from a dimension ‘shrouded from the rational’) and of Ben Judd and Sidsel Christensen, who engage in a communication with a mystical and spiritual dimension, The Edge of Reason could be seen to challenge rationality itself, manifesting experiences apparently beyond its scope. However, as I will suggest, these manifestations of occult and mystical experiences in fact foster rational enquiry when understood within the realm of phenomenology.

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ATTITUDE

What is more, the exhibition seems to share with phenomenology a certain attitude to reality, by exposing, but not judging or qualifying the phenomena underlying their art work. Judd and Christensen take up a perspective embodying the very essence of a phenomenological view, what the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls a third sight, a sight that recognizes its origin in the world and takes this situatedness as its starting point and therefore truly is a perspective from within the world. When seeing the world from within, the artist as well as the philosopher is able to reveal levels of being hidden by our day-to-day engagement with the world. When The Edge of Reason articulates the occult and mystical phenomena which the artworks draw on and lays them in front of us to experience and make sense of ourselves, instead of validating or qualifying them, it becomes possible for us to partake in the making of such phenomena. This, according to Merleau-Ponty, is an uprooting from daily life, with our habitual ways of perceiving and thinking, and at the same time it makes it possible for us to complete and conceive what is left unfinished or open by the artworks. When refraining from judging or qualifying the phenomena in question, The Edge of Reason echoes the phenomenological slogan ‘To the things themselves!’ This imperative signifies the phenomenological movement away from a scientific, objectifying perspective on the world that attempts to exhaust the phenomena in an all-embracing view from nowhere, thus reducing being to formulas and concepts. Instead, phenomenology wants to uncover the world of phenomena and our primordial, ambiguous co-existence with it, by a scrutinising but tolerant view from within experience itself. Thus, engagement with the phenomena and with experiencing subjectivity itself is the true starting point for any investigation of ‘reality.’

THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF THE WORLD

In our daily life we think and act in the world with presumptions about its being, in a way that covers it up or even distorts it. We are not aware of the world as a becoming we partake in as constituting subjects, and our daily handling and interpretations of the world hide its origin in constituting intersubjectivity. By putting our habitual, daily life modes of thinking as well as the objectifying look of science into brackets (refraining from making use of these assumptions), we discover the world and our primordial engagement with it. Phenomenology, then, steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire.
The world is paradoxical, inexhaustible and multidimensional, and it can never be exhaustively characterised in scientific concepts, formulae or judgements. As Merleau-Ponty argues, the world in which we are already engaged on a prereflexive, perceptual and affective level eludes this kind of judgement. The real is a closely woven fabric. It does not await our judgement before incorporating the most surprising phenomenon, or before rejecting the most plausible figments of our imagination. When acknowledging living reality there is no attempt to dispel any unexamined experiences as unreal by naming them irrational, mystic or occult. The world is mystical, and reality has its own pre-existing order to which rationality can only respond: the world and its method are not problematic. We may say, if we wish, that they are mysterious, but their mystery defines them, there can be no question of dispelling it by some ‘solution’. We cannot, therefore, resolve the paradoxical, mystical nature of experience. The world as experienced is of a different order from the one enforces it on us by an obtrusive, detached perspective. Instead, we can be scientific in the sense of taking upon ourselves our primal relational existence and thus perhaps reach deeper levels of being.

The artworks’ transcending of subjective experience
So, inviting us to share in the experience and articulation of mystical or occult phenomena without judging or validating them. The Edge of Reason seems to take up a phenomenological perspective. By claiming this, however, we may seem to reduce the exhibition to an investigation of aspects of experiencing subjectivity as such, leaving outside its scope the question of the existence or reality of such mystical or spiritual dimensions as the ones expressed by the artworks. Furthermore, this limiting of the theme of the exhibition to that of experiencing subjectivity wouldn’t seem to serve the intentions of the exhibition, at least not the intention of its artists, such as af Klint, who clearly perceived her work as responding to a deeper, spiritual reality. In order to respond to the intentions of the exhibition more fully, then, we are led to ask questions of the reality or ‘objective’ existence of a mystical and spiritual world. And this might seem to imply that the phenomenological perspective is of limited value in this context, and that doing justice to the exhibition requires that we move beyond such a perspective.

Interestingly, though, phenomenology does seek to make claims about reality: what is distinctive is that it seeks to make reality visible from within the depths of experience itself. In this, the philosopher imitates the artist, who stands in contact with the realm of the visible in such a way that s/he is able to experience the world in a more original manner than in daily life. (18) We could say that art makes visible what is normally hidden beneath our profane or scientific view of the world. By doing so, art opens up the ‘polyphonic Being’ (26) that hides behind the surface of things and opens up a paradoxic existence. Art holds, in the words of another phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger, the openness of the world open. (10)

ART AS AN OPENING UP OF REALITY
Art opens up reality to us in a very particular manner. In ‘Art the work, the truth of what has is set itself to work’. (11) Art places itself in the core of reality, and its very originality and openness to us unfold our thinking by following its lines and curves. Like art, phenomenology celebrates the ability to serve the productive and intimate relationship we have with the world, as physical, intellectual, sensual and mystical beings. The world is, namely, ‘not what I think, but what I live through. I am open to the world. I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible’. (12) The Edge of Reason invites us to think along the lines of this inexhaustible reality, that always eludes and resists us. This act of opening up a multidimensional world for us to partake in and make sense of, actualises our rationality in its fullest sense. Since art is the bringing into visible existence what is not fixed, but is in a state of flux. (18) And as with any other reality, the reality that art opens up is a strange, mysterious and inexhaustible reality that requires us to ‘apprehend and comprehend it in a sort of thoughtful surrender, in active thought, in re-creation’. (19) Art, therefore, sets an example for the philosopher: it introduces a mode of thinking that takes on reality rather than subordinating it to concepts and systems of thoughts. Art enjoys a phenomenologically privileged position since it enga ges us and re-establishes our communicati on with an elusive reality, by putting us at the heart of it, at the originating opening of the world. The kind of truth with which we are thus presented, is not fixed, however, one that can never be validated.

THE EXHIBITION’S HIDDEN INVITATION
Inviting us to share in an opening up of a paradoxical and mysterious world, beyond validation, those visiting The Edge of Reason might be left with confused or ambiguous feelings. This, however, could be a sign of the artworks’ success at manifesting a reality usually hidden to us in our daily life, since ambiguity is the very signature of reality and it seems that there cannot be any consciousness of ambiguity without ambiguity of consciousness. (21)

Eventually these feelings might be the exhibition’s real invitation to us and what we may learn in rational discourse is to complete and conceive what the artworks manifest, and to share in the living sense of a multidimensional world from a view within.

Rationality is precisely proportioned to which in it is disclosed. To say that there exists irrationality is to say that our perceptions blend, perceptions confirm each other, a meaning emerges. […] The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which it revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people’s intersect and engage each other like gears. (22)
The Edge of Reason presents artworks that evidence an extraordinary range of intuitive technologies: conjuring ghosts, remote viewing, past-life regression, possession, channelling and performative mediumship.

Neptune’s Epistemic Shift

By JENNIFER FISHER

Such paranormal methods access types of knowledge that exceed logical thought and the boundaries of visual aesthetics. In keeping with the spirit of the exhibition, my approach here will be to engage in a variant of institutional critique from within the spectrum of intuitive hermeneutics: that of astrology. Specifically, how might the context of an exhibition be elucidated using astrological analysis? As an interpretative art, the temporality of astrology is cyclical, mapping space and time relative to the resonating energies of the constellations and planets. While there are many populist and totalising modes of sun-sign prognostication, what I find more interesting is the precision of an actual horoscope in discerning trends within this cyclic form of history. As it is with many cultural variations both ancient and contemporary, an astrological reading can indicate incipient forces at work at a particular space and time, in this case, the invisible energies encompassing this exhibition at KINOKINO.

The analysis that follows is necessarily partial, and focuses on Neptune – the planet governing emotional attunement and spirituality – which was identified by astrologer Susan Kelly as strongly placed in the gallery’s chart at the moment of this exhibition. Significantly, the opening of the gallery on 9 September 2009 coincided with Neptune’s first complete orbit to the exact position at the time of the planet’s discovery in 1846. Soon after, Neptune entered the constellation of Pisces, as it did 168 years later. This constellatory shift, both during the nineteenth century and now, indicates cultural and affective change marked by enhanced feeling and emotion. Symbolised by water in mythology, Neptune evokes the realms of imagination and the depths of the subconscious. The aqueous nature of Neptune signals more porous boundaries, where forms flow, merge, dissolve, and feelings open into mystical and empathetic identification.

In the cultural sphere, Neptune signals collective yearning, dreams and longing. Historically, Neptune in Pisces has coincided with social upheaval characterised by global movements premised on utopian thought and new styles of living. The transit of Neptune through Pisces...
JENNIFER FISHER

Jennifer Fisher’s research examines contemporary art, curatorial practice, display culture, the affective turn in art and criticism, and the aesthetics of ‘concrete magic’. (6) For Curry, the horizon as a map of space and the planets relative to a place on earth at a particular time is but a ritual prerequisite to engage astrology as a method to read the present. Significantly, astrological methodology involves a cyclical temporality of resonant planetary forces known in astrological terms, the cultural climate of Neptune in Pisces is associated with the feeling of ‘losing oneself’ in another state of consciousness. This can indicate, on the one hand, the increased use of mind-altering substances, and on the other, new forms of technological addition, such as compulsive identification with fantasy Second Life avatars, or Facebook personas. At the same time, the altruistic tone of Neptune denotes social obligation, even to the point of feelings of collective guilt. As well, while the extreme idealism typified by all forms of fundamentalism, which during the next fourteen years, will be mobilised as ‘art drugs’ that induce more immersive illusions in the form of ‘phantasmagoric art’ that dramatically transforms ways of seeing and perceiving art, that public’s perception of the institution would be transformed. This illustrates the impact of resonant planetary forces known in the past as they are again released in the present. Significantly, astrological methodology involves a cyclical temporality that is distinct from the linear timelines of art historical progression. Examining the affective atmosphere of Neptune and aligning it to the moment of this exhibition gives a cosmological perspective on the exhibition, a sense of the atmospheres at work beyond vision and beyond reason.

Philosophy and Literature 19

On the institutional level, Pluto’s transit back and forth across KINOKINO’s ascendant over the past few years indicates feisty energy, strong leadership and tremendous change. During autumn 2011 and winter 2012, high ideals may encounter challenges contingent to larger economic, corporate and governmental realities, challenges that transform ways of seeing and perceiving art, but that the public’s perception of the institution would be transformed in ways that transform ways of seeing and perceiving art.

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1) The term ‘irrational’ is not used pejoratively by the curators of The Edge of Reason. This connects with Theodor Adorno who called astrology an ‘irrational’. His analysis of Carroll Righter’s populist astrology column for the Los Angeles Times, reduced astrological merestes to authoritarianism. See, Theodor Adorno, The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column, in Zeus (1994), pp. 57-60. For Denis Dutton, Adorno’s conflation of late capitalism, irrationalism, and personalities in need of authoritarian pronouncements, ignores that the appeal of astrology is of a more mystical order. Derek Durrin, ‘Theorising on Astrology: I. Philosophy and Literature’, in Zeus (1994), pp. 426-432. 2) Susan Kelly’s astrolurgical reading of ‘First Five’ was given during an interview with the author on 11 July 2011. I am grateful to Susan for identifying the significance of Neptune’s transit into Pisces. While I do not base space to instanced here in a certain, I am grateful to Susan for identifying the significance of Neptune’s transit into Pisces. While I do not base

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EXHIBITION ARTISTS
in alphabetical order
Played out through conversation, live presentations and video portraits, Sidsel Christensen’s work explores the subjectivity unfolding between authenticity and fictional constructs of the self. Using the camera as a social tool, Christensen engages with an intimacy that revolves around body language and narratives of subjectivity, specifically looking at different possibilities for the imagination to transform perceived reality for an individual or group.

The Curvature Singularity of Erin Hunter is a dual video installation investigating the immersive possibilities of the nightclub – seen as a space for contemporary ritualism – and how inner, emotive visions can be linked to the visual language of abstraction in art. The work is part of a series of video portraits of young women in the east London night club scene. The club, as a place of communal activity, is a setting that reveals the latent desires or dreams of female characters as they move through and experience the space, interacting with the lights and music.

The work is presented in the style of a documentary, interrogating the structures present whilst attempting to assemble the immediacy of the club and the visceral tripped state entered by the women. The narrative remains ambiguous as to the role of the artist being wholly truthful rather than embellishing or fictionalising the experience of these women. Christensen employs these documentary film devices to frame her narratives seeking to embody an affect somewhere between the journalistic and the shamanistic; what is captured through her process of documentation is neither relic nor document.

The night club is an architectural entity, its ectoplasm, its immediacy and the social ephemera of its construction is channelled and directed by Christensen’s lens creating a blurring of the fictionalised inner space with the architectural reality. The club lights become colours and shapes concerned with flattening the image in composition which seems to be in subtle relation to the concerns of abstract painters such as Kandinsky who spoke of an ‘inner necessity’ desiring of the inner spiritual experience through an outer semblance. The work seems to be in a similar state of necessity, moving towards and expanding the desire for a rhapsodic harmony even through such formal investigation.

The work follows one of the women Christensen met through her investigations within East London night clubs, the main protagonist being Erin Hunter. Observing the night club lights goes further, engaging with the artist’s own methodology via hypnosis, realising an altered or heightened state beyond the realities of the night club approaching a baptismal event horizon, an almost photonic ecstasy. The light is a source and a subject to Erin as she is enveloped by the transcendent experience her physical presence acting as a vessel for her own semi-conscious hypnagogic visions to alter her external surroundings. The visual language of the dance floor, in its abstraction of form, colour and light, begins to draw semiotic links to the physical histories of other forms of cultural transgression, merging the contemporary vernacular of the night club with the spiritual or mystical. These modern parallels’ own currency in comparison, the female transverberation in the Ecstasy of Saint Teresa or the communal ritualism of ‘the shakers’. Christensen adopts these dialects of ritualistic immersion reflecting their nature as personal and communal properties of belief. Her narratives seek to invite the viewer to question the value and knowledge of these experiences in contemporary imagination and their importance to society, is their still sanctity in these states?

Text: Francis Patrick Brady
SUSAN HILLER

MAGIC LANTERN (1987)
Audio-visual installation: slide projections with synchronised soundtrack; three carousels each with 12 35 mm slides, driven by electronic pulses. 12:00 min.

Born in Tallahassee, Florida in 1940, and emerging as an artist in the early 1970s, Hiller is one of the most influential practitioners of her generation. Her output has taken many different forms and frequently derives from a process of collecting, cataloguing and restaging cultural artefacts and experiences as a means of exploring the subconscious and unconscious mind.

In Magic Lantern, 1987, a signature work originally commissioned for the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Hiller blurs the boundaries between scientific enquiry and the unruly and irrational, as ghost stories, optics, technology and aesthetics collide. The changing colour field of projected circles in Magic Lantern is accompanied by a series of sound recordings of ‘ghost’ voices derived from the experiments of the Latvian scientist Konstantin Raudive. Between 1965 and 1974 Raudive claimed to have recorded the voices of the dead by leaving a tape recorder running in an empty silent room. Hiller’s use of these recordings, which she has combined with her own improvised vocals, is an early example of her interest in voices from ‘the other side’.

BEN JUDD

HDV 38:00 min.

Ben Judd uses performance and video to explore notions of scepticism and belief, freedom and immersion, by positioning himself, and the audience, as both participant and observer. Previous work has explored his relationship to particular occult and esoteric belief systems, such as witchcraft, shamanism and spiritualism; as a sceptic he attempts to test the extent and nature of his own beliefs and preconceptions.

Recent performance work explores how the ritualistic activities of these groups and individuals can be extended into an action realised by actors (one that itself hovers on the border between immersion and a more self-conscious, knowing state), and how, in turn, this action can be interpreted in a moving image work: Concerning the Difference Between the Delights of Pleasure and True Happiness (2010) at the Swedenborg Society, London. Further explores notions of belief and immersion by looking at the cross-over between ritual and performance. The performance examines the individual in relation to the group, and the ambiguity of whether the group offers freedom or conformity.

Concerning the Difference took place in Swedenborg Hall, and used actors and musicians positioned amongst the seated audience. Text taken from Swedenborg’s writing was developed into dialogue and music by actors and musicians, offering the potential of a group of individuals who came together over the course of the performance through a cycle of repeated phrases and movements. Projected magic lantern images act as metaphors for the visions described by Swedenborg.
Conversations With the Other Side is a collaborative performance by artists Ben Judd and Sidsel Christensen exploring the borderline experiences of the human mind and what it might mean to encounter something ‘on the other side’. From their study of traditional forms of mediumship, hypnosis and religious rituals, the artists have developed a new, playful and open ritual.

The artists attempt to bridge the gap between the actual room where the ritual is performed and the space that exists in another dimension, as a method of contacting ‘the other side’ and working collaboratively with them. A wall and the gallery floor are covered with white paper, and the audience is invited to sit on the paper. One of the artists puts the other into a trance-like state in a separate room, and a live video of the artist is projected into the main gallery space.

This attempt at describing the experiences of the person in the trance and the virtual space happens in a number of ways: A conversation takes place between the two artists in which the artist in the gallery attempts to understand the experiences of the other artist; the artist in the gallery might move the projection around the room in response to descriptions of differing spatial experiences; the projected image might become larger or smaller; he or she could also attempt to describe the experiences by drawing onto the paper around the projected image and into the audience.

Conversations With the Other Side creates a portal for the audience and gives them a chance to participate directly. Mirroring spirit séances and occult salons at the turn of the nineteenth century, this event opens up to the possibility of the impossible or fantastical as well as maintaining an interest in the rational and critical faculties and how we use these in our engagement with the unknown.
SEEING, HEARING, AND FINDING ONE’S VOICE

Hilma af Klint’s debut exhibition was *The Spiritual in Art – Abstract Painting* (1890-1985), held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1986. This exhibition presented the first major inventory of the philosophical background of abstract art. It had been generally accepted for many decades that this art had had four powerful pioneers, or forefathers: Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian and František Kupka. The exhibition led to a sensational international breakthrough for the Swedish artist, and for the first time gave modernism a powerful female leader. The mother of abstract art had finally arrived.

Hilma af Klint’s interest in spiritism was shared by other pioneers in abstract art. They all experienced a longing to pass beyond the limitations of the physical world. Abstract, non-figurative art offered such a radical possibility. Rather than reproducing an impression received by the senses, they attempted to reach a new launching point, a way of deepening their relationship with the world. It is, therefore, not surprising that they were all drawn to Theosophy, which offered just such an attractive alternative to the static approach of academic art. So let us then approach her work and try to determine the extent to which Hilma af Klint’s painting is abstract. It may be, for example, that her work in reality is decidedly concrete descriptions of very special inner experiences.

All of these male pioneers fit into the art context of their time and were members of the abstract avant-garde. They engaged with the art of their time, and showed that it had untapped possibilities. All had a capacity for self-reflection and appreciating the wider view. They were able to describe the intellectual and philosophical aspects of their pathway into abstraction, and they made a fully conscious choice. By deepening and purifying their points of contact with a given...
material, they developed individual and readily recognisable forms of expression and idioms. It seems that Hilma af Klint was not aware of her abstract colleagues, and there is no evidence that she knew about or participated in the development of early modernist abstraction. Her pathway into abstraction differs markedly from those of her male colleagues. She arrived at the content of the paintings in conversation with spiritual beings, or through distinct inner images that were granted to her. For her, it was a case of education, and thus focusing, her inner eye. It appears that the message was as palpable and as apparent as any message given through sight or hearing. These radical experiences were not new to her. She had met them previously in her interest in Theosophy and, eventually, Anthroposophy. Although her artistic expression is supremely individual, she arrived in many of the paintings at an idiom that was similar to those of the others. But she came from a completely different starting point. She never attempted herself to exhibit her paintings, since she had received strict orders from The High Guides, in particular from three spiritual guides, Gregor, Clemens and Amaliel, not to show the paintings to outsiders. It was important for Hilma af Klint, in order to avoid monotony, to divide her time between the requirements of external life and internal work as a medium. As early as the 1880s, she took part together with some female friends in séances, which were fairly common at this period, not least among the artistic community. It is Hilma af Klint who gradually came to the forefront in this circle, and the other members of the group withdrew. It appears that the exercises carried out during the séances were intended to make the participants open to receive visualising inner processes and experiences, by describing them as exactly and as precisely as possible, she arrived at a characteristic and personal idiom. It may be interesting to note that also Kandinsky started to describe his painting as ‘concrete’ after around 1910. The outer world was not identical with full reality for Hilma af Klint. There is a real inner world in parallel with the natural world, and its contents are just as real and solid as those of the physical world. It is clear that she was faced with the task of developing an artistic approach to her esoteric material through an inner process and dealing with them through her art. The knowledge she had gained during her training as an artist was fundamental to this: it gave her the tool she needed to make her intention clear. Through an intense process of working with herself, she achieved a deeper understanding of the creative process of which she was a part.

Text: The Hilma af Klint Foundation

After image delves into the bizarre and the extraordinary, exploring the myth that the last image seen before death is retained on the retina of the eye. After image uses film footage from Dario Argento’s obscure 1971 film ‘Four Flies on Grey Velvet’ (Italy) and ‘Los Manos de H H’ (Mexico) alongside footage shot by the artist. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was believed that the last image seen before death remained imprinted on the retina of the eye. This image was called an optogram and the art of photographing such an image, optography. The ‘belief’ was validated by advancements in photography and scientific experiments carried out in Germany during the 1870s. Through anecdote, reconstruction and detailed editing MacWilliam’s video works and installations consider the world of the paranormal, the tradition of psychical research, the speculative and ideas about perceptual phenomena. Her works look at the obscure and the historical and that which is on the periphery of the mainstream. They reflect on, and question how we understand, perceive and relate events, images and ideas. MacWilliam has made works based on historical cases of materialisation mediums, x-ray vision, optograms, table tilting and dermo optical perception. Her works visualise and mediate narratives from the past in to the space that we present and from the laboratory to the space of the gallery. MacWilliam’s position shifts between that of observer and participant. She works closely with prominent parapsychologists and psychical research institutions, including the Dermo Optical Laboratory of Madame Yvonne Duplessis, Paris, poltergeist investigator Dr William G Roll and the Parapsychology Foundation, New York.
Karen Russo’s works are primarily concerned with the unconscious, the unknown and the invisible. The imagery she works with focuses on the landscapes and characters that Western society assigns to the realms of the irrational, unwanted or hidden. Russo is interested in the dividing line between what is accepted as the legitimate expression of culture and civilised existence, and what falls outside of it, is excluded, expelled or repressed. Her intention is to expose what is habitually occluded and put out of sight, to reveal the dynamic continuously at work in the human world, where certain kinds of of life, society and culture take shape, and in so doing always leaves an excess, or a remainder which it cannot incorporate.

Meditations on a Triangle (2010), is comprised of a video and a three art objects. It explores the application of the technique of ‘remote viewing’ – the psychic ability to see and describe remote geographical locations, or ‘targets’ – to the exploration of outer space. The video work centres on an attempt by a Remote Viewer to psychically access an undisclosed target, using only a set coordinates as a reference. These coordinates were given to him by a monitor presiding over the Viewing session. A printed image of the target – the painting Variegation in the Triangle (1927) by Wassily Kandinsky – remained hidden in a sealed envelope nearby, to be revealed at the session’s end. During the Viewing, the Remote Viewer’s impressions were documented and these notes were then delivered to three artists, Mark Titchner, Shezad Dawood and Jeremy Millar. In different ways, each artist’s work
Remote Viewing was originally developed during the Cold War as part of the Stargate Project, a CIA sponsored research programme into potential military applications of paranormal phenomena. In a series of experiments conducted by the physicists Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff, human subjects of a range of psychic ability were asked to follow a protocol during which they had to view and then give information about remote geographical targets such as roads, buildings, and laboratory apparatus. The accuracy of the descriptions was astonishing, and far beyond what might be accounted for by coincidence. Targ and Puthoff’s results suggested that Remote Viewing is a latent and widely found perceptual ability which can be taught and practiced by anyone.

Meditations on a Triangle seeks to examine new ways of making art which are not based on normal perception and raises a number of questions about the nature and definition of the artwork, such as: Can Kandinsky’s spirit be communicated unconsciously by his contemporary successors? And if so, does it affirm his mystical and spiritual ideas? Is there an essence or a core to an artwork which can be accessed by people and can be communicated? Can that energy in time and space be captured and be articulated?

What is left of the original representation made by Kandinsky? What’s lost between the inspiration, interpretation and then the re-expression of the piece?

Russo asked these artists to create new works based on the visual descriptions provided or respond to the process.

In their responses, each artist freely projects his own preoccupations and interests: Dawood thinks the description suggests a sort of temple, atop a mountain from which issues a waterfall.

Mark Titchner’s response to the reading involves putting himself into a trance, using a ‘dream machine’, the meditation device first designed by the beat poet Brian Gysin. Jeremy Millar’s sculptural structure makes reference to the Kabalalah myth of the ‘Metatron’, a configuration of circular forms organised to produce the schema of an immaterial cube, in which geometric and ‘minimalist’ forms converge.

Karen Russo’s Meditations on a Triangle is supported by Outset.
SCREENING ARTISTS

in alphabetical order
Much of Coates’s artwork involves community. More specifically he examines small or marginal communities through disrupting social conventions with animal worlds. The performance suggests that there is an animal spirit, via the medium of recreation of a Siberian Shaman ritual, which helps the displaced citizens think outside of the known status of their fate and consider a larger economy by consulting the wisdom of the animal spirits of the Lower World. He creates an event which helps the displaced citizens think outside of the known status of their fate and consider a larger economy of relationships between humans and the non-human world.

In Journey to the Lower World, Coates bravely places himself in these circles. To the ‘sensible everyone’ to the ‘sensible everyone’. He dances with jingling car keys tied to his shoes while a cassette tape of drums plays in the background. His antennae-like antlers knock against a lamp and the non-human world.

Marcus Coates, _Journey to the Lower World_ (2004) 28:30 min, DV

The most enduring works of art create a mystical reality, which cannot refer to one’s own personal observations. (1)

Of the 10,000 feet (over four hours) of film shot by Maya Deren in Haiti in 1947, 1949 and 1954, about fifty minutes was culled and edited (images, music and voice-over) between 1973 and 1975 by the filmmaker’s last husband, the Japanese musician and composer Teiji Ito. This film, baptised by Ito The Divine Horsemen, the Living Gods of Haiti (echoing the eponymous text Maya Deren wrote on her Haitian experiences in 1953) shows several rites of voodoo cult in Haiti and the world (that the filmmaker compares to children lost in play, using sticks as rifles) is gradually felt, summoned by a community in solidarity. They prepare themselves for possession, and for some, it occurs. She films the mechanisms of inviting possession, collective dances, the horsemen-divinities as they are invoked and as they go against the filmmaker’s principles. Deren’s fundamental meeting with voodoo rites had a lasting impact on her life. Undergoing initiation rites herself, she was crowned a voodoo Grand Priestess by a New York Haitian community. During this period, and until her death in 1961, she worked on the images filmed in Haiti, without ever finding a way to edit them.

A film with no end, of which only a fragment survives. Divine Horsemen, the Living Gods of Haiti is dispossessed of its abilities, dispossessed of its conceivability. It remains a film impossible to grasp or to possess as a whole. Other ways of cutting the material together may suggest themselves. It is a body without a soul, a mind without a body.

Text: Sébastien Ronceray

Maya Deren, _HORSEMEN, THE LIVING GODS OF HAITI (1947-53)_ Documentary Film, 16 mm transferred to DV, 52 min.

**Notes**

1) _Maya Deren in Clark, Virgil A., Hudson, Michelle, and Neiman, Catherine (eds), The Legend of Maya Deren: A Documentary Biography and Collected Works, Volume 1, Part 2, (New York: Anthology Film Archives/ Film Culture, 1984), p. 324.

2) Alex Finlay, Chittacek, Pyke, _Journey to the Lower World_, ed. Marcus Coates and Alex Finlay (New York: Type-Platform Projects, Distributed By Trans-Atlantic Publications), unpaginated.

**Image:** Courtesy of the artist, Workplace-Gallery and Kate MacGarry, London
This video, recorded in a seedy American motel room, documents the process of Jane and Louise Wilson being put into a trance by an anonymous hypnotist. The artists obligeingly follow every instruction directed at them, seemingly genuinely under the hypnotist’s control. The viewer’s position may also become participatory, as they too follow the instructions, and become subsumed by the work.

Hidden Symmetry 2 is one of several recordings of ritualistic dances by followers of the mystic George Gurdjieff (1886-1949). These ‘Movements’ are attempts to act out the followers’ belief in the teachings of Gurdjieff, in a series of highly choreographed, synchronised actions, or sacred dances. The Movements were authored by Gurdjieff and taught to his students for the purpose of self-observation and self-study. The dances are still taught today, and over 250 of them have been preserved. One of the key elements to their success, for the participants and observers, are the notions of unity and commonality; the bodies of the dancers are ‘shaped in powerful geometrical abstractions that suspend any individuality,’ and it is this collectivity that is said to generate a unique experience for Gurdjieff’s followers. The dances are not only exercises in concentration and coordination, each gesture and movement also contains deep significance for followers, for whom the Movements are a kind of language.

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THE CURATORS

Sidsel Christensen and Ben Judd are artists living and working in London. They have collaborated on various projects since 2009.

SIDSEL CHRISTENSEN is engaged in moving image, live events and performance-based lectures. She maintains an ongoing working relationship in Norway, where she was brought up, as well as a BA from Goldsmiths College and an MA from the Royal College of Art. Between 2009 and 2011 Sidsel has taken part in group shows and art events in London, including the David Roberts Art Foundation, The South London Cultural Centre, Vilma Gold and The Royal Academy. She also worked with the curatorial group Five Storey Projects, and exhibited in two of their London shows. Sidsel is a founding member of the collective Hal Silver (2009) and has exhibited with them at The Russian Club Gallery, The Hospital Club and Apiary Gallery in London.


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