THE IDEOPLASTIC MATERIALIZATIONS OF EVA C

INTERACTIVE VIDEO INSTALLATION

Writer, director, designer, cinematographer, editor

Digital video, props, sensors, computer

45 minutes

B/W

Sound

The installation will be a reenactment of five séances held between 1910 and 1914 that took place in Paris with a young medium referred to as Eva C.

Just as Eva wreaked havoc on perception of the sitters, in a playful way I as a modern 'cinematic medium' aim to reintroduce a sense of magic and the uncanny into the perception of contemporary technology. To conjure up characters from the past, I plan to create life size stereoscopic black and white video projections that appear in different places around a room. Infra-red sensors and software will enable these video phantoms to react to the presence and position of the viewers.

My interest in these séances is psychological and feminist. I wish to show how Eva C conjured up images that challenged received ideas of artistic production, gender and class relations. On a formal level I am interested in the séance as a model to rethink modern concepts of the virtual in light of early media.
Materialization phenomena with Eva C.

Photograph by Baron von Schrenk Notzing

Paris 1913
If you are sending more than one sample, please copy this page. Sample(s) must be cued: indicate how long each sample should be viewed for a COMBINED viewing time of no more than 15 minutes. If slides are included in this application, please list the title and year of the work on this form.

Title THE INFLUENCING MACHINE OF MISS NATALIJA A (View this sample first)

Year 2001

Technical Info
Original Format

Format Submitted for Viewing

Preferred OS

Web Info (answer only if sample work is in Web format)

URL (if more than one please list them below)

Browser requirement

Plug-in requirement

This sample requires broadband connection (fast Internet Connection)

A local copy of the sample work has been included with the application

Special Information For Viewing:

1) Place the diagram on the table.
2) Put on the glasses.
3) Stand up and look down at the diagram.
(In the actual installation the viewer uses a pointer to penetrate the shapes. This action triggers video projections on a small screen suspended within the diagram.)
View 6 or 7 minutes of video on the VHS tape

DESCRIPTION OF WORK:

THE INFLUENCING MACHINE is an interactive installation based on a case history by the psychoanalyst and early follower of Freud, Victor Tausk. In 1919, Natalija A., a former student of philosophy came to Tausk complaining that a bizarre electrical apparatus, which she believed was operated secretly by physicians in Berlin, was manipulating her thoughts.
The project attempts to materialize Natalija's hallucinations for the viewer while at the same time alluding to the development of real influencing machines, in the form of radio and television in pre WWII Germany.

The installation consists of a large stereoscopic diagram inspired by the mechanics of early television. (The enclosed red/green diagram is a small demo version.) The participant, wearing 3D glasses, looks down at it. Now they see an actual three-dimensional structure. They touch a designated space in this virtual machine with a pointer, all at once movies simulating Natalija's hallucinations appear as projected video clips on a small screen suspended within the space of the diagram. The user takes the pointer away and the projection vanishes. From the moment they don the glasses, the participant enters into a virtual world invisible to those around them, very much as one would when actually hallucinating. (See enclosed tape for a sample of the video).

In this work I aimed to extend the definition of psychosis from the individual to society. Natalija believed that the apparatus controlled her by means of waves, rays or mysterious forces. When someone struck the machine she felt a corresponding blow to her body. Through interacting, the participant find themselves viscerally implicated, placed in the position of the sinister physicians/technicians whom she believed were probing her mind.

This work, is part of my on-going exploration of the relationship between imagination and the technology of the moving image both in terms of content and through rethinking the apparatus itself. I wish to show that machines are not simply tools, ideologically neutral, but grow out of our deepest unconscious impulses.
NAME: ZOE BELOFF

If you are sending more than one sample, please copy this page. Sample(s) must be cued: indicate how long each sample should be viewed for a COMBINED viewing time of no more than 15 minutes. If slides are included in this application, please list the title and year of the work on this form.

SHADOW LAND OR LIGHT FROM THE OTHER SIDE (view this sample second)

Title

Year 2000

Technical Info

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Web Info (answer only if sample work is in Web format)

- URL ________________________________ (if more than one please list them below)
- Browser requirement ______________
- Plug-in requirement ______________
- This sample requires broadband connection (fast Internet Connection)
- A local copy of the sample work has been included with the application

Special Information For Viewing:

This work is a stereoscopic 16mm film. Because it is not possible to translate 3D polarizing technology to video, you will see two images side by side. I have cued the film near the end. Please view 3 minutes.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK

The title and the narrative are taken from the 1897 autobiography of Elizabeth d'Espérance, a materializing medium who could produce full body apparitions. We discover a lonely little girl who can conjure imaginary friends that appear, to her, completely real. This remarkable ability causes her much suffering, for upon reaching adolescence, she is diagnosed as mad. Only later does she find a way to cultivate her gifts within the spiritualist movement.
SHADOW LAND traces a complex interaction between the birth of cinema in relation to both conjuring and mediumship. The phantoms are drawn from magic lantern slides, glass negatives and early cinema footage. Indeed some of the scenes themselves are stereoscopic reconstructions of films from the 1890's.

Here we get inside the experience of the medium as a kind of mental "projector" conjuring up specters. The film explores the psychological underpinnings of this psychic projection, founded on a deep ambivalence around the role of women. The female medium was considered an especially suitable conduit to the next world because of her "passive nature". Yet she produced phantoms that radically transgressed her Victorian upbringing through an extraordinarily exhibitionistic sexuality. The film shows how these phantoms can be seen as a kind of three-dimensional representation of psychic reality and relates their production to another contemporary theatricalization of the unconscious, the performances of Charcot’s hysterics.

This work can be viewed in some ways as a "sketch" for my proposed installation. I choose to shoot in 3D for similar reasons. I wished to create a kind of formal analogy to the suspension of disbelief that held sway over the séance room, a double process of knowing and not knowing at the same time. Watching stereoscopic images we know we are looking at a photographic trick yet we nonetheless see figures floating in space that are literally not there. My proposed installation will expand these ideas. Here there will be no more sense of a screen or a proscenium stage leading to another world. Instead the characters in the form of 3D video projections will appear from different parts of the room, crossing over into the real space of the audience. Through the use of sensors, they will be sensitive to the presence and position of the viewer.
ARTIST'S STATEMENT – ZOE BELOFF

In a playful spirit of philosophical inquiry, my work explores the paradoxes of technology, desire and the paranormal posed since the birth of mechanical reproduction. I aim to reinvest contemporary technology with a sense of magic that inspired its creators a hundred years ago.

I work with a variety of forms of the moving image; film, live 3D projection performance, interactive cinema on CD-ROM and installation. I think not only about the telling stories that involve the audience in new ways but how the projection apparatus itself creates meaning and shapes our understanding. Much of my art is not something I send away. Instead I travel to perform and present it. I think of myself akin to the showman in the vaudeville era that toured with his projector.

My work uses new technologies to create a dialog with the past. It investigates shadowy areas where science strays into the path of madness and becomes uncontrollably entangled with unconscious desire. Recent projects explore case histories of mental patients and mediums, whom I think of as technological visionaries. In my work their stories act as distorting mirrors that reflect back with a strange clarity, the intersection of media technology and psychology of their time. Their relevance lies as guideposts on a route towards graphically conjuring up the unconscious and at the same time inspiration for new forms of virtual reality.

My work crosses boundaries. In the last year I have shown in contexts of art, cinema and science and education; doing shows at the Museum of Natural History as part of an on going series 'Art/Science Collision', American Museum of the Moving Image and the Whitney Museum as well being a visiting artist at grade schools and colleges.
I plan to create an installation that will be, in essence a reenactment of five séances held between 1910 and 1914 described in the book, “Phenomena of Materialization; a contribution to the investigation of mediumistic teleplastics” by Baron von Schrenck Notzing. The sittings took place in Paris with a young medium referred to as Eva C. They were conducted in the spirit of scientific enquiry and extensively documented with stereoscopic cameras and a Pathé Kinematograph.

I however am not interested in the scientific aspects of the case, whether the apparitions were ‘genuine’ or ‘fraudulent’. My perspective is psychological and feminist. I wish to explore how the role of medium gave license for a young woman to conjure up apparitions that were monstrous and childlike, that I believe called into question accepted ideas about class and gender in relation to the artistic process. Or to put it bluntly, that an uneducated working class girl, has any business creating extraordinary images. These manifestations that appeared to ooze from her orifices connected in a disturbing and unruly way, virtual images with bodily substances. It is this dialog between the body and the graphic representations of unconscious desires that I wish to insert into contemporary discussion of virtual reality.

USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES TO CREATE A DIALOG WITH THE PAST

For the better part of a hundred years, moving images have been conceptualized as “a window onto another world”. Most VR applications work on the same principle, the user enters another world or immersive environment leaving their body behind as it were. My project will reverse this principle, here the virtual characters will cross over into our space and speak to us.
I am inspired by the way nineteenth century conceived of the virtual. Ghost Shows, where actors interacted with projected magic lantern slides, dioramas and stereoscopic photographs permitted virtual images to co-exist in the same space as a real audience. I am also inspired by the hundreds of extraordinary photographs from Baron von Schrenck Notzing’s invesitation. My work will be an imaginative reconstruction.

A NEW FORM OF INTERACTIVITY—PHANTOMS COME OUT TO GREET US
Just as Eva wreaked havoc on perception of the sitters, in a playful way I as a modern ‘cinematic medium’ aim to reintroduce a sense of magic and the uncanny into the perception of contemporary technology. To conjure up characters from the past, I plan to create life size stereoscopic black and white video projections that will be sensitive to and react to the presence and position of the viewers.

AN IMMERSIVE ENVIRONMENT—AN UNCANNY EXPERIENCE
Unlike the ‘game’ model, where a single user has to learn to manipulate virtual objects or characters, here the audience members are not required to manipulate anything, they don’t have to click a mouse, wear a glove or wave a pointer.

A viewer (wearing 3D glasses) enters a small darkened room. The space appears to be a scientific diorama from the early twentieth century. Walls and floor are painted black. White lines and text designate where objects and furniture were placed in the original séances. A stereoscopic camera and flash apparatus are set up facing the curtains of the so called ‘cabinet’ behind which, set deep in the shadows, is a large screen reaching to the floor.

All at once a middle-aged man appears from behind the drapes and directly addressing the spectator introduces himself as Baron Albert von Shrenk Notzing. He invites the
viewer to sit down on one of the chairs near the cabinet. The young medium appears. Her orifices are inspected with alarming thoroughness by the Baron, who does not hide his condescension towards Eva. He explains to us that he is searching for any fraudulent material that she might be trying to smuggle in. After being hypnotized, she begins to breath heavily and moan as if in pain. If another audience member enters the Baron quickly tells them to be quiet as, “mediumistic labor pains have begun”. Eva begins to expel a smoky substance from her mouth. These apparitions grow and mutate, they begin to take on the appearance of malformed heads and hands. The Baron squeezes a cord. Suddenly the real flash apparatus ignites with a puff of smoke. The medium screams. The Baron invites audience members to inspect the “teleplasm” more closely, he points out that now faces can be discerned in the whitish malleable substance that seems to ooze from Eva’s body. But as in the original séances, if an audience member does get too close, the apparitions promptly dissolve into thin air. The spell is broken.

Between séances Eva appears in a different place in the room. Her manner alternates between sullen and flirtatious. She confides to us how trapped she feels, kept in a rich women’s home, forced to perform like a circus animal. She is fully aware of how pompous the Baron is, and gullible. Yet as speaks of being hypnotized, she suddenly grows afraid, there are things she just can’t remember. It is here that the psychological elements that fuel a séance’s emotional undercurrent come to life.

A NEW FORM OF STORYTELLING—THE SÉANCE AS A MODEL
The séances aroused intense and at times chaotic interactions between sitters, entranced medium and elusive phantoms. I see these events as a model for the
construction of a new form of interactive storytelling, one that creates an intimate and emotional dialog with the audience, very different from much contemporary interactive art that is cool and formal.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**
Sensors will monitor if a viewer is present and roughly where they are in the room. There will be three separate video projections. 1) The figure of Eva between séances would actually be a series of short 3D video clips of the actress filmed against a black background. Depending on the position of the audience at any given time, different clips will be displayed showing her looking in the appropriate direction. 2) The five scenes of the medium and sitters during the séances. 3) The video projection of the apparitions that would appear at the appropriate time but be deactivated if someone gets too close.

**FEASIBILITY STATEMENT**
There are two components to the project. The first involves developing the characters with actors and shooting a series of scenes in 3D. I believe my film _SHADOWLAND OR LIGHT FROM THE OTHER SIDE_ (see sample) shows I have experience in both these areas. The second component is the interactive programming using sensors and Max/MSP software to trigger random access video clips stored on DVD disks. As I did when creating my previous installation _THE INFLUENCING MACHINE_ (see sample), I plan to hire a programmer to complete the task under my direction. Fellowship money would cover the entire cost of production and programming. As in my previous projects, I plan to write, direct, shoot and edit. The project will be photographed on 16mm reversal film since evokes much more clearly than video the imagery of the nineteen teens. Subsequently the film will be transferred to DVD.
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ZOE BELOFF – RESUME

EDUCATION
MA 1980 Edinburgh University / College of Art. Painting and Art History.
MFA 1983 Columbia University. Film Production.
985-86 Whitney Museum Independent Study Program.

DIGITAL MEDIA

THE INFLUENCING MACHINE OF MISS NATALIA A.
Interactive video installation
2001
Director, writer, 3D modeling designer, video editor
Inspired by a 1919 case history of a schizophrenic who believe that she was being manipulated by a mysterious electrical apparatus.
Selected Exhibitions:
“International Distinguished Artist Symposium & Exhibition” Joseloff Gallery @ Hartford University: (November - January 01)
“Situated Realities” Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore (February 02)
NRW-Forum Kultur und Wirtschaft, Duesseldorf (September - October 02)
“Future Cinema” ZKM Karlsruhe Germany (November – February 03)
“Phantasmagoria: Art, Technology, and The Age of Spectacle” The Butler Museum of American Art, Youngstown Ohio (January - April 04)

ILLUSIONS
Web Site http://turbulence.org/Works/illusions/index.html
1999
Director, writer, designer, photographer programmer
An interactive website site that discusses the theroretical implications of toy projection devices.
Selected presentations:
Thundergultch @ Harvestworks (June 99)
Montreal Int'l Festival of New Cinema & New Media (October 99)
The New Museum New York (January 01)

WHERE WHERE THERE THERE THERE WHERE
CD-ROM Produced in collaboration with the Wooster Group theater company.
Writer, director, cinematographer, designer, programmer
Inspired by the play Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights, this virtual world leads the viewer on a journey that playfully explores the relationships between forces of electromagnetism, language and logical torment.
1998
Acquired by the Centre Pompidou and the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki for their collections.
Presentations include:
Biennale de l’Image, Ecole de Beaux Arts Paris (May 98)
Videonale Bonn (September 98)
Panaemonium Festival: London Electronic Arts (October 98)
De Andere Film: Kino-Eye: CyberCities, Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (Nov 98)
Cyber 98, Lisbon Portugal (November 98)
Rotterdam International Film Festival (January 99)
Videoformes 99 Clermont-Ferrand, France (March 99)
Impakt Festival, Utrecht (May 99)
European Media Arts Festival, Osnabruck (May 99)
Tramvideo, Lyon France (May 99)
Melbourne Film Festival Australia(October 99)
“Zonas de Contacto el arte en CD-ROM”, Mexico City (July 99)
Word Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam (September 99)
Microwave festival 2000, Hong Kong (January 00)
Alien Intelligence Exhibition, Kiasma, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (Feb. 00)
Flaherty Seminar (June 00)
“Lo Spazio Sospeso - usi e riusi di aree industriali dismesse” Turino Italy (June 00)
Le Fresnoy Studio National des arts contemporains, Tourcoring, France (Sept – Dec 02).

BEYOND
CD-ROM
Writer, director, cinematographer, designer, programmer
1997
A mysterious virtual world, that explores the relationship between imagination and technology from 1850 to 1940
Acquired by the Centre Pompidou for their collection. Winner-Best multimedia project, Best of Show. Apple QuickTime VR competition

Presentations include:
Pacific Film Archives (October 96)
The Whitney Museum Biennial 1997
Festival International du Cinema et des Nouveaux Médias de Montréal (June 97)
"Selected Memories" Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels (June - August 97)
"The Eighth International Symposium of Electronic Arts", Chicago (September 97)
Ars Electronica Festival 97, Linz, Austria. (September 97)
"Staging Surrealism. Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio (September 97)
World Wide Video Festival, Amsterdam (September 97)
Flaherty Film Seminar (October 97)
The Video Festival of Navarre, Spain (November 97)
"Beyond Technology" London Electronic Arts (November 97)
TechnoLust: Desire and Technology, Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (November 97)
Museum of Modern Art, New York (December 97)
Rotterdam International Film Festival (January 98)
Film Forum LA (March 98)
Kaaitheater Brussels (April 98)
Biennale de l'Image, Paris (May 98)
Impakt Festival Utrecht (May 98)
Galerie VOX, Montreal (September 98)
San Francisco Cinematique (February 99)
Tramvideo, Lyon France (May 99)
“Les Mondes Inventés” Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes (April - August 00)
“Lo Spazio Sospeso - usi e riusi di aree industriali dismesse” Turino Italy (June 00)
“World Without End” Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney Australia (Dec. 00 – February 01)
Center for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne (Winter 01)
“Some Assembly Required: Collage in Post-War America” Everson Museum of Art Syracuse (Sept 02 – January 03)

BEYOND
Web Site
A serial film. This appeared in 44 weekly episodes on the World Wide Web from October 95 to December 96.
Writer, director, cinematographer, designer, programmer
Presentations include:
New York Film Festival (September 95)
Mostra de Video Independent, Barcelona (January 96),
Rotterdam International Film Festival (January 96)
Word Wide Video Festival, Den Haag (April 96)
Melbourne International Film Festival (July 96)
Artifices Biennial Paris (November 96)

FILM PERFORMANCES

CLAIRED AND DON IN SLUMBERLAND
Performance for 16mm film and stereoscopic slides
2002
Writer, director, cinematographer, editor
Inspired by two 1949 psychology films “Hypnotic Behavior” and “Unconscious Motivation, Claire and Don undergo a comic cartoon-like psychic meltdown that reveals the sad banality of American culture.
Screenings:
London International Film Festival (November 02)
Notre Dame University (November 02)
A MECHANICAL MEDIUM
Performance for 16mm film and stereoscopic slides with live sound by Ken Montgomery
1999
Writer, director, cinematographer, editor
A performance inspired by Thomas Edison’s search for a machine to communicate with the dead.
Presentations include:
The San Francisco Cinematheque (February 99)
Virginia Film Festival (October 99)
CityMorph 2000 Festival of New Media, Buffalo (March 00)
The Images Festival of Independent Film & Video, Toronto (April 00)
Roulette, NY (May 00)
The Flaherty Seminar NY (June 00)
American Museum of the Moving Image NY (November 01)

LIFE UNDERWATER
A music/film/stereo slide performance in collaboration with John Cale.
1994
Film director, cinematographer, co-writer
A man in search of his childhood. The imagery is very much inspired by the frozen landscape of 19th century stereo views, and the birth of cinema; a vain attempt to recapture those first moments when the depiction of the world began to move.
Performed at:
The Arts at St Ann’s Brooklyn NY

FILMS

SHADOW LAND OR LIGHT FROM THE OTHER SIDE
Stereoscopic 16mm film
2000
Writer, director, cinematographer, editor
A 3D film based on the 1897 autobiography of Elizabeth D’Espérance, a materialization medium who could produce full body apparitions.
Screenings include:
San Francisco Cinematheque (November 00)
Pacific Film Archives, Berkeley (November 00)
Rotterdam International Film Festival (January 01)
The Images Festival of Independent Film & Video, Toronto (April 01)
Lux Cinema London (July 01)
American Museum of the Moving Image NY (November 01)
American Museum of Natural History (April 02)
LOST
16mm film
1997
Writer, director, cinematographer, editor
A document of everyday life on New York's Lower East Side. To paraphrase Walter Benjamin; a spectacle not of life remembered but of life forgotten. Like dream images these cinematic fragments are hieroglyphic clues to a past illuminated at the very moment of its disappearance.
Screenings include:
Museum of Modern Art, N Y (December 97)
Rotterdam Film Festival (January 98)
Film Forum LA (March 98)
Kaaitheater Brussels (April 98)
Viennale - Vienna International Film Festival (October 98).

A TRIP TO THE LAND OF KNOWLEDGE
16mm film
1995
Writer, director, cinematographer, editor
A young girl escapes from her drab black and white reality into Kodachrome fantasy only to find herself face to face with her worst fears. Juxtaposing documentary footage of my old high school in Scotland with found home movies and staged melodrama, the film describes what it feels like to be an adolescent girl.
Screenings include:
Pacific Film Archives, Berkeley (October 96)
Eighth Floor Gallery, New York (November 97)
Rotterdam International Film Festival (January 01)

WONDERLAND USA
35mm Film
1989
Writer, director, editor
Lured by a lonely writer, Alice finds herself falling into a wonderland of decadence and despair set in the ruins of Coney Island and Times Square. The film brings to life the underside of Lewis Caroll's classic.
Screenings include:
Collective for Living Cinema, New York (January 90)
Sundance Film Festival (January 90)
Berlin Film Festival (February 90)
AFI Film Festival, Los Angles (April 90)
Seattle Film Festival (May 90)
Montreal World Film Festival (August 90)
New York Film Festival (October 90)
London Film Festival (November 90)
San Francisco Film Festival (May 91)
Independent Focus, Channel 13 (August 92)  
Hotel Utopia, Vienna, (October 99)

**NIGHTMARE ANGEL**  
16mm film  
1986  
Co-writer, co-director, cinematographer, editor  
A work inspired by J.G. Ballard's book Crash  
Screenings include:  
Bilbao Film Festival, Spain, winner of the Independent Producer's Prize (November 86)  
Hirshhorn Museum (February 87)  
Cleveland Film Festival (April 87)  
The Collective for Living Cinema NY (April 87)  
The Museum of Sound and Image Sao Paulo (May 87)  
Melbourne Film Festival (May 87)  
Cinema Femmes Montreal (June 87)  
National Film Theater London (July 87)  
Turin Film Festival (October 87)  
American Museum of the Moving Image (October 88)

**PUBLICATIONS**  
La vie rêvée de la technologie, *Trafic, revue de cinéma* issue 30, summer 1999  
*An Ersatz of Life*, *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative* Martin Rieser/Andrea Zapp (eds): BFI London in collaboration with ZKM Karlsruhe 2001

**INTERVIEWS**  

**AWARDS**

1986 Grant from Art Matters Inc.  
1989 Grant from Art Matters Inc.  
1992 Grant from The Jerome Foundations Inc.  
Grant from Apparatus Productions.  
1993 Grant from The National Endowment for the Arts (co-recipient with John Cale)  
1996 Individual Artist Grant from New York State Council for the Arts. Residency, Harvestworks Digital Media Arts.
Finishing Funds Award, Experimental Television Center.

1997  Fellowship from The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts
Fellowship from The New York Foundation for the Arts.
Grant from Art Matters Inc.

1998  Grant from The Jerome Foundations Inc.
Grant from The Applebaum-Kahn Foundation.

1999  A Turbulence commission funded by the Jerome Foundation.

2000  Residency, Harvestworks Digital Media Arts.
Grant from The Jerome Foundations Inc.
Finishing Funds Award, Experimental Television Center

2001  Fellowship from The New York Foundation for the Arts.
Individual Artist Grant from New York State Council for the Arts.

2002  Finishing Funds Award, Experimental Television Center

REVIEWS AND ARTICLES (on Zoe’s work)

Agnès Villette  *Le mode selon Zoé*  Bilbok: Magazine des errances contemporaines issue17, March 2002
Leslie Mcleave  *Film Medium: Zoe Beloff’s Uncanny Resurrections*  Res Magazine Vol.5 No.3
Mike Leggett.  *Beyond the Millennvms*, World Art, issue 18, 1998
Steven Ball.  *Up the Snakes and Down the Ladders*, Mesh, issue 12, 1998