UNKNOWN
MAKE MORE
THINK LESS
MAKING IS
EQUALLY RIGOROUS
THE SUPERNATURAL SEX
WOMEN, MAGICK & MEDIUMSHIP
ASSEMBLING A FIELD OF FASCINATION IN CONTEMPORARY ART

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“I do not claim we should mimic those practices, but maybe we should accept to ‘seeing’ them, and wonder.”

Isabelle Stengers “Wondering about Materialism” in The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism. p.380
In light of this I argue that the position of the contemporary female psychic as a channelling conduit adds a new facet to feminist challenges to the representation of the female body, re-thinking the once oppressive structure of ‘woman as vessel’ as a stance of empowerment, transformed through the contemporary re-ownership of psychic practice by women. This sets up a unique dynamic between the ‘intuitive practice’ of mediumship and the contemporary discussion of ‘unknowing’ as a methodology for creating artwork.
Q U E S T I O N S / A I M S

• How does the historical/contemporary position of the female psychic (as a channelling conduit), challenge the representation/identity of woman as ‘vessel’ within a new materialist feminist framework?

• How can the implication of woman as ‘vessel’ be rethought as a dynamic mode of empowerment?

• To interrogate atmosphere and its role in setting up a field of fascination [a term invented here]* within the practice of mediumship through a practical exploration of the logic of the senses around comfort, familiarity, prediction and expectation.

• To explore the wider question of how this field of fascination can manifest in the work of contemporary art; and to investigate through practical experimentation how a contemporary artwork can create an immersive dwelling space able to generate a compulsion to look, comparable to the psychic space.
A photograph of the photographic equipment used during séances at the home of Dr. Thomas Glendenning Hamilton. Unknown Photographer, circa 1920s. A, B, C are flash devices, always loaded with flash powder ready for action. D. Three push buttons, which, when pressed, will explode three flashes in sequence. E. A deck holding a phonograph, operated by a motor-driven mechanism, which is controlled by a switch attached to Dr. Hamilton's chair.
An enlargement of a photograph taken by H.A. Reed of the medium, Mary Marshall, with a teleplasmic mass attached to her head, nose, chin and chest that contained the face of W.E. Gladstone during a seance at the home of Dr. Thomas Glendenning Hamilton on September 22, 1929.
“Spirits are not simply captured in pictures; they communicate by a sort of picture language. The medium herself became a sort of camera, her spiritual negativity bodying forth a positive image, as the human body behaves like an uncanny photomat, dispensing images from its orifices.”

*Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations*, Tom Gunning
The R.L. and J.B. faces Oct. 27, 1929

The brilliance and beauty of this teleplasmic manifestation is indeed extraordinary. The magnitude, the dazzling whiteness, the uniformity of outline, and above all, the perfection of the faces, combine to make this phenomenon a particularly notable one.

TEN. (In lecture to B.H.A., Winnipeg, August, 1930.)
No. 36. June 10/31. Teleplasmic letters. Flammarion, the French astronomer & pioneer psychic researcher gave much mental evidence in 1927 through Elizabeth H. L.H.

No. 37. June 12, 1931. Teleplasmic spots. At this time Dawn (Mrs. Marshall) was very tired, and emotionally unstable. Her nervous condition appeared to interfere with the production of the materialising substance. L.H.
Dec. 21, 1938. 2nd C.H.E. Miniature. Here the materialized face is also surrounded by its teleplastic shell; an especially illuminating feature is the use of the disrupted fragment on the table.

This fragment on table appears to be covering a teleplastic removed from a mentalistic as a result of some future experiment. The face might be photographed in a non-circular context.
No. 33. Head Mass, Feb. 22, 1931

Note: Similar masses were photographed by Baron von Schrenck-Notzing and Dr. Gustave Geley, in their observations of the medium "Eva C." See Geley's FROM THE UNCONSCIOUS TO THE CONSCIOUS; & Schrenck's PHENOMENA OF MATERIALISATION.
Bustier de Kolta, l'Escamotage d'une Dame, 1886
Hidden Mothers c.1800s
If we view art production as knowledge production rather than formal production, we will have to develop and define a different set of properties and parameters for discussion, production and evaluation. And when we focus on art as a place ‘where things can happen’ rather than a thing ‘that is in the world’ we will see how an engagement between art production and critical theory becomes necessary and that education itself is a multi-faceted interdisciplinary field that moves in many spaces as opposed to staying within one mode of production, or form. And any change that goes beyond the knowable must engage itself with discursive formations, with truth procedures and thus with how we can change political institutions, ways of doing and knowing, how we know rather than simply what we know or do not know.
