

FICTITIOUS ISLANDS

A project by : Eduardo Villanueva & the sightless people of Murcia;

for the new life residency Manifesta 8, Murcia Spain. 2010

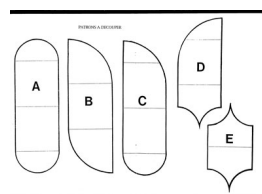
Experimenting with the consciousness and interacting with blind people is the main argument here to present this project. My proposal will try to investigate with simple means the interior phenomena in the field of vision of the blind people; the experiment will try to excitate the imagination and the faculty of the "image-making" stimulating the blind with Alpha waves produced by one device conceived by Brion Gysin in the early sixties, called: "THE DREAM MACHINE", the first object in history designed to be viewed with close eyes. In the process i will film all the flickering lights projected inside the space that are made by a new model-size of a larger-scale Dream machine . Besides i will record the voice with the perception of the blind person and what the sightless person will "see" in this experience, that they additionally will perform as a kind of a "medium", transmitting to us the personal and particular description of new images; finally the result of the film material will be projected simultaneously in another separate room, where the audience can experience the interaction between the blind person and the Dream machine in the form of a film.

Alpha waves are predominantly found to originate from the occipital lobe during periods of relaxation, with eyes closed but still awake. Conversely alpha waves are attenuated with open eyes as well as by drowsiness and sleep. They are thought to represent the activity of the visual cortex in an idle state.



Gysin theorized that flickering light, viewed with the eyes closed, can affect the brain's electrical impulses. Flicker may prove to be a valid instrument of practical psychology: some people see and others do not. The fluctuating elements of flicker support a kind of development of autonomous 'movies', intensely pleasurable and, possibly, instructive to the viewer. The dreamachine is a stroboscopic flicker device designed to be viewed with the eyes closed that produces visual stimuli. Artist Brion Gysin and William S. Burroughs created the dreamachine after reading William Grey Walter's book, The Living Brain.

Construction of the dream machine was simple a cardboard cylinder, with holes cut in it at specific intervals, is placed on a revolving turntable, and a light is lowered into it. The viewer sits in front of the dream machine with their eyes closed. In theory, the flicker provided by the revolving cylinder provokes the brain into producing alpha waves. The 'alpha waves', electrical oscillations naturally present in human brain when the eyes are closed and no stimuli are processed, when there's a relaxed and effortless alertness, and while meditating.



A dreamachine is "viewed" with the eyes closed: the pulsating light stimulates the optical nerve and alters the brain's electrical oscillations. The "viewer" experiences increasingly bright, complex patterns of color behind their closed eyelids. The patterns become shapes and symbols, swirling around, until the "viewer" feels surrounded by colors. It is claimed that viewing a dreamachine allows one to enter a hypnagogic state. This experience may sometimes be quite intense, but to escape from it, one needs only to open one's eyes.



A prolonged session in front of a Dreamachine (time may vary among subjects) can push the experience further, altering the perception of time and space and provoking a dream-like state. According to Dominic Ffytche, visual allucinations, (people do hallucinate with other senses), "are located in the world around us, not in the mind's eye.

It has been shown experimentally through the viewing of random white dots on a screen that man tends to find patterns and picture where objectively there is none: his mental process shapes what it sees. External resonators, such as flicker, tune in with our internal rhythms and lead to their extension.

"You are the artist when you approach a Dreamachine with your eyes closed. What the Dreamachine incites you to see is yours... your own. The brilliant interior visions you so suddenly see whirling around inside your head are produced by your own brain activity.

-We ran though a long avenue of trees and I close my eyes against the setting sun.

An overwhelming flood of intensely bright colours exploded behind my eyelids: a multi-dimensional kaleidoscope whirling out through space. I was swept out of time.

I was out in a world of infinite number. The vision stopped abruptly as we left the trees.

Was that a vision? What happened to me?"

-extract from the diary of Brion Gysin 21/12/1958

