

Notes for a Séance Towards a Technology of the Spirit

ORGANIZED BY THE 13TH SEOUL MEDIACITY BIENNALE OF THE SEOUL MUSEUM
OF ART IN COOPERATION WITH ICI BERLIN

Image credit © Jane Jin Kaisen, still from Wreckage, 2024, Single channel film. 4K. Color / Stereo sound. Duration: 12 min.

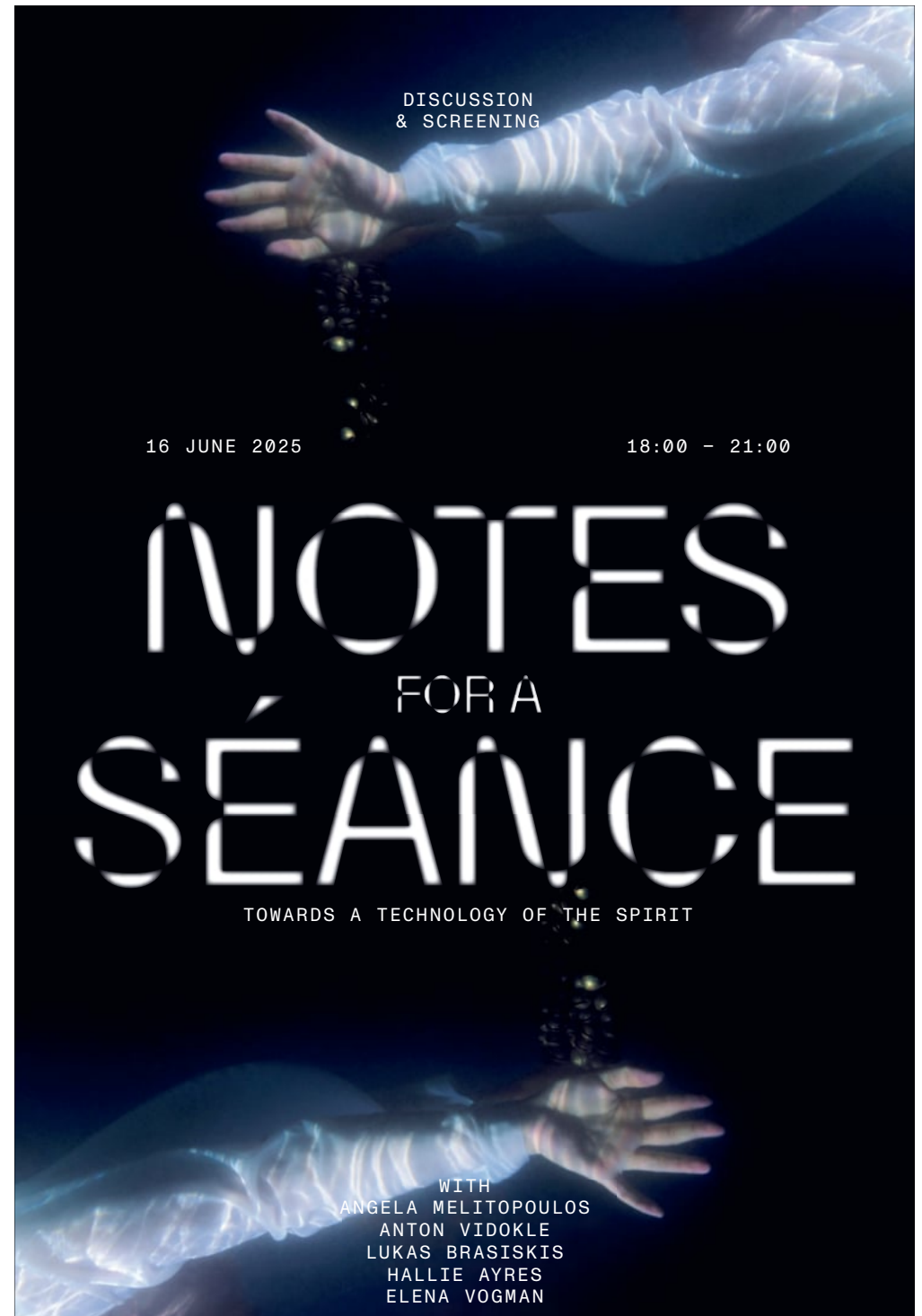


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DISCUSSION
& SCREENING

16 JUNE 2025

18:00 - 21:00

NOTES FOR A SÉANCE

TOWARDS A TECHNOLOGY OF THE SPIRIT

WITH
ANGELA MELITOPOULOS
ANTON VIDOKLE
LUKAS BRASISKIS
HALLIE AYRES
ELENA VOGMAN

Notes for a Séance Towards a Technology of the Spirit

The practice of séances — attempts to make contact with voices and worlds on different scales beyond the living, through the agency of a medium — flourished during the social transformations of the early modernist period. This was symptomatic of an explosion of popular interest in Spiritualism, the occult, mysticism, and syncretic religion as emotional and imaginative alternatives to the stress and alienation of an increasingly mechanistic, regimented, and rationalist industrial society. These practices and ideas would come to influence the work of myriad vanguard artists.

Over the course of the intervening century, formats as varied as cinema screenings, psychoanalytic sessions, and experimental theatre came to be referred to as séances (the word might literally be translated as ‘sittings’). Now — in a comparably traumatic period, characterized by the same disorientation, anxiety, and insecurity — it is not surprising that many artists are looking to make connections with other worlds. In doing so, they seek emancipation from the structures — capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy, racism — that shape lived realities. Their practices are not obscurantist or reactionary; they do not dismiss scientific inquiry out of hand so much as trouble the marriage of technology and anti-rationalism. If they are united by anything, it is their rejection of the exploitative logics of industrial capitalism, in favour of a technology of the spirit.

Along these lines, biennale artistic directors Anton Vidokle, Hallie Ayres, and Lukas Brasiskis will discuss their ongoing research for The 13th Mediacity Seoul Biennale. Elena Vogman will introduce the media experiments practiced by the reform and resistance movement of institutional psychotherapy. Angela Melitopoulos will present a cine-somatic excursus with excerpts from her Cine(so)matrix exhibition related to animism.

Anton Vidokle, Hallie Ayres, and Lukas Brasiskis are the biennale artistic directors of The 13th Seoul Mediacity Biennale (2025). In 2023, they co-curated the 14th Shanghai Biennale: Cosmos Cinema at the Power Station of Art.

Elena Vogman is a scholar of comparative literature and media. She is principal investigator of the research project ‘Madness, Media, Milieus: Reconfiguring the Humanities in Postwar Europe’ at Bauhaus University Weimar and a visiting fellow at ICI Berlin.

Angela Melitopoulos is an artist and researcher in the time-based arts, including experimental single-channel tapes, video installations, video essays, documentaries, and sound pieces. In her practice she explores the production of subjectivity and collective memory in the context of mobility, migration, and geography.

Screening Programme

Jane Jin Kaisen

Wreckage (2024, 12 min)

Wreckage is about war, its memory, and its afterlife. Underwater footage shows the ravenous sea superimposed with a propaganda film produced by the US Army. Filmed in Jeju in October 1945, it depicts soldiers loading massive piles of weapons and artillery left by the Japanese onto a large ship and dumping them into the sea. A few years later, the Jeju 4.3 Massacre unraveled under the authority of the United States Army Military Government in Korea. During the massacre, unknown numbers of civilians were killed and thrown into the sea, while others tried to flee the island by boat. Such a fate is recalled in a lament by late shaman Koh Sunahn, a survivor of the massacre whose shamanic practice Kaisen documented for a decade until her passing. The lament takes the form of a chant where Koh Sunahn interchangeably assumes the voice of a mother and her deceased son, whose body was never recovered from the sea.

Yin-Ju Chen

**,Somewhere Beyond Right and Wrong,
there is a Garden.
I Will Meet You There‘** (2023, 16 min)

Drawing on a poem by the thirteenth-century Persian poet Rumi, this film is an account of a healing process and a meditation on human suffering, reflecting on the passing of the artist’s mother. Combining found footage, documentation from the artist’s own travels, and animations of the mythological centaur Chiron (renowned as a healer and prophet), Somewhere Beyond Right and Wrong... asks how spiritual practice can help us to move beyond individual subjectivity to perceive life and death from a cosmic perspective.

Shana Moulton

Whispering Pines 5 (2005, 6 min)

In her Whispering Pines series Shana Moulton explores the nuances of the contemporary psyche, delving into the intricacies of self-help culture, the quest for spiritual meaning, and the often comedic absurdity of personal wellness rituals. Through the experiences of her alter ego, Cynthia, she writes a narrative that is both personal and universally resonant, probing the boundaries between the mundane and the mystical in the time of global digital capitalism.