

Psi and Anomalous Experiences in Susan Hiller's Oeuvre¹

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Abstract: Susan Hiller (1940-2019) was a contemporary artist who dealt with topics like PSI and anomalous experiences, and had a pervasive interest in consciousness. Although the subject matter of various of her works is shared with parapsychology, her way of tackling these issues belongs to an area of knowledge that offers interesting contrasts with science. In some of Hiller's oeuvre there is a coexistence of experimental framing and openness to whatever may happen, the results are less relevant than the experience- which is not exclusively mediated by language- and there is a deliberate ambivalence. Her intention as an artist was to delve into the cultural unconscious, pointing at overlooked and neglected areas, among which are a yearning for nonordinary experiences and unconventional views on culture. In this article, five of her productions that have to do with psi are shown and put in context, using Hiller's own words. Related to telepathy, *Draw Together* (1972), *The Dream Seminar* (1973), and *Dream Mapping* (1974) are presented. Dealing with psychokinesis is *Psi Girls* (1999). An artwork related to psychic automatism is also shown: *Sisters of Menon* (1972-1979). The degree of self-exposure of the artist, her position towards the subject-matter of her work, the deeper content of her oeuvre, Hiller's role as an artist and the epistemic nature of art in relation to reality are finally discussed.

Keywords: Susan Hiller, contemporary art, psi, telepathy, automatic writing, telekinesis

Several publications have highlighted the propension of artists to manifest psi (Holt et al., 2004; Holt, 2007; Cardeña et al., 2012); consequently, it has been recommended that artists should be included "as participants and researchers in psi research" (Cardeña & Marcusson-Clavertz, 2015, p. 111). Although the well-known artist Susan Hiller neither lent herself as a subject for laboratory parapsychological studies nor—only exceptionally—offered first-person accounts of her own anomalous mental phenomena, her work could be of interest to parapsychologists for various reasons. On one hand, her early production included pseudo-experiments (which were really artistic events, although borrowing some structures of formal research) around psi phenomena and nonordinary consciousness. On the other hand, Hiller's mature oeuvre often dealt with anomalous cognition in various ways, including cultural representations of psi and collections of world-wide personal accounts of psi and anomalous experiences. Lastly, in addition to treating these subjects, Hiller gave an epistemological meaning to her work. She understood art as a way to generate a specific type of knowledge, imbued with not-knowing,

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polisemic and embodied, where meaning is generated between the author and a participating audience. This way of accessing and generating knowledge could enrich the discipline of parapsychology, accustomed to the use of stringent methodologies.

This article presents five of Hiller's productions that have to do with psi, relying extensively on primary sources. These artworks are *Draw Together* (1972), in relation to telepathy; *The Dream Seminar* (1973), and *Dream Mapping* (1974), in relation to dreams and, secondarily, telepathy; *Psi Girls* (1999), related to telekinesis, and *Sisters of Menon* (1972-1979), a work originated in an experience of automatic writing. The discussion section gives a wider context to these and other works within the artworld and tackles issues of subject-matter, content and epistemology.

Susan Hiller

Susan Hiller (1940-2019) was a contemporary American-born British visual artist whose career spanned over the last 50 years. She was a figure of international relevance in the art world (e. g., she had two solo exhibitions in the Tate Gallery, in 1996 and 2011) and is considered highly influential for younger British artists, to the point that she was called "an artists' artist" (Berens, 2005), not only for her artistic production, including artist's books (e.g. 2000a, 2000b, 2010), but also for her curating (Hiller, 2000c), writing and public speaking (e.g. Coxhead & Hiller, 1996; Einzig, 1996; Hiller, 1991a, 2008a, 2011a, 2012a), mentoring, and teaching.

Art historians and critics have called her a second-generation conceptualist, a performance artist, a pioneer of installation and multimedia in the British 1980s, a feminist, a neo-surrealist, a science-artist, and, to her annoyance, have played up the importance of her former training as an anthropologist. Whilst acknowledging these sources and others (minimalism, Fluxus, surrealism, psychoanalysis, the psychology of perception, occultism, anomalous psychology, parapsychology), she often stated her malaise towards being categorized or, worse, explained away: "I suppose I wish to avoid being understood as much as being misunderstood" (Hiller, 2002, para. 3). In an attempt to offer a term that could partly do her justice, she coined *paraconceptual*, midway between conceptual and paranormal.²

Hiller's oeuvre can be divided in two main periods: the first, of an experimental character, often involving groups, and a second, more mature production, which is better known by the wider public. In her first period, broadly during the 1970s, a more conventional, minimalist production coexisted with performative, collective works that she called *group investigation pieces*,³ which question the individual

² Although the term *paraconceptual* can seem appealing to readers knowledgeable in PSI, a cautionary note becomes necessary: the scope of topics across most of her oeuvre covers unimportant, everyday objects, alongside with more appealing cultural productions, having to do with parapsychology, but also with anomalous experiences and alterations of consciousness. (For a monograph of Hiller's work in the light of consciousness studies, see Iribas Rudín, 2017.) *Paraconceptual*, in Hiller's sense, should therefore not be taken as only referring to PSI, but loosely to the works dealing broadly with non-ordinary experiences in general, and, moreover, in an even broader sense, to "all sorts of marginalized and disputed and absurd kinds of ideas [...] or objects [...] dreams and other sorts of liminal consciousnesses" (Hiller, 2012b, min. 4:43). The term was generated in order to avoid other adjectives that the artist found to be too limiting, although its definition remained lax and has not given birth to a certain artistic style or movement with ascribed practitioners. Its use, aside from sporadic mentions by the artist, has been scarce: it was the title of a solo exhibition by Hiller at Lisson Gallery, New York (2017) and was part of the title of a book chapter by Kokoli (2006) which performed an analysis not from the point of view of parapsychology but of feminism. Lastly, this neologism is not applicable to the whole of Hiller's production, since not all of the subject matter of her work belongs to this kind of phenomena.

³ The first-period line of works with groups of people involved either numerous participants (e.g. 100 invited artists, in the case of *Draw Together* [1972]) or were more intimate (with 12 and 7 participants in *The Dream Seminar* [1973] and *Dream Mapping* [1974], respectively).

identity of the artist and posit a distributed creativity. However, at a certain point⁴ she realized that these works began and ended within the group itself, with no possibility of access to anyone else, and decided to take another course of action in the form of installations. It is from the 1980s that her working method and intention bear her hallmark.

The next sections will cover four works by Hiller related to psi in its specific meaning, and one related to an anomalous experience that originated spontaneously during the process of an artistic experiment with PSI. All the works but one belong to Hiller's first, experimental period. Given the field-specificity of this Journal, other works by Susan Hiller, albeit considerably more significant to the art world and doubtless of a higher quality, will not be tackled in this article. The reader is strongly encouraged to visit the artist's personal webpage (www.susanhiller.org) to access her most relevant artworks, publications, catalogs, interviews and other materials.

Hiller's Artworks Related to Psi and Automatism

Dreamwork: *The Dream Seminar* (1973) and *Dream Mapping* (1974)

Susan Hiller probed so-called altered states, among others, the dream,⁵ trying, as she expressed in a 1993 interview, to "erode the supposed boundary between dream life and waking life" (Hiller, 1996b, p. 56). Her inquiry was experiential and intellectual, and resulted, among others, in two seminars on dreaming (in 1973 and 2011), a couple of books (Coxhead & Hiller, 1976; Hiller, 2012a), a collaborative performance (*Dream Mapping*, 1974), an interactive piece for the Internet (*Dream Screens*, 1996), and other works (e. g., *Bad Dreams*, 1981; *Lucid Dreams*, 1983).

The Dream Seminar. An Investigation into the Origin of Images and Ideas (1973) was a group investigation piece where 12 participants⁶ (artists, poets, musicians) gathered to study the dream experience, both in theory (learning about culturally alternative explanations of dreaming) and in practice (with their own dreams), and its relation to art. The discussion group extended over 12, ca. two-hour-long weekly meetings, from September to November 1973, and took place in a very small classroom in Notting Hill Gate, London. In a 1975 talk, Hiller recalled that in *The Dream Seminar* "[t]he tone of the project was intensely serious and very funny" and that there was "openness and intimacy among the members of the group." She did provide instructions and a certain structure, opportunities for things to happen, and then these art experiences evolved naturally without constraints. There was "accurate observation and recording" of the group members' dreams, "careful description [...] correlations of group dream experience and shared dreaming, analysis of the overlap between dream and waking reality" (Hiller, 2007, p. 174). As for the results of *The Dream Seminar*, although there was abundant discussion about "the relation between 'art' and 'dream'" (Hiller, 2007, p. 174), "we made absolutely no attempt to come to a

Several pieces were part of *An Investigation into the Origin of Images and Ideas* (which was the subtitle of *Draw Together* and *The Dream Seminar*). These group works "sometimes took a quasi-scientific form, but the basis was always an attempt to examine something considered to be irrational or trivial" (Hiller & Malbert, 2998, pp. 213, 215).

⁴ This awareness came after the work *Dream Mapping*, discussed later in this text, which precipitated a major shift, "since the conclusions or the feeling that these [participatory group] works create can't be communicated to anybody else, it's a very exclusive way of working, and I've tried to do works that are more open to people" (Hiller, 2012b, 00:13:58).

⁵ Actually, calling it either non-ordinary or altered would seem inappropriate, since it is such a common experience.

⁶ Susan Hiller, David Coxhead, Carla Liss, Esther Beven, Christina Toren, Amikam Toren, Rosemary Dinnage, Domingo Armengol, Suzan Arthur, Tamara Kadishman, Hugh D'Ange, and Signe Lie (Hiller, 1996, p. 174).

final conclusion” (Hiller, 2012b, min. 10:22); it comes therefore as no surprise that “new definitions and final conclusions were *not* achieved.”

Despite the lack of conclusiveness, there were episodes of shared dreams (e. g. different people dreamt of sailing on a boat)—which could be attributed to telepathy—, and a possible episode of pre-cognition told by a participant:

[T]wo weeks before the first meeting [...] I had an extraordinarily vivid dream in which, with four or five of my friends [...] we were in a classroom [...] for little children, a primary school classroom, talking to the headmistress [...]. And that was the exact prefiguration of *The Dream Seminar*. I mean, in my dream there were these paintings by little kids on the walls, you know, and little chairs, and all of this, which was exactly the way the classroom was in which we sat (Hiller, 1996d, pp. 176-177).

These remarkable instances were nevertheless of little importance to the artist. “What is interesting is the fact that on a certain night people might appear in each others’ dreams and recognize this fact. [...] [I]f you have a dream, tonight, a shared dream, and we can say to each other tomorrow that this has happened, and we are aware of it while it happened... This would be of some importance” (Hiller, 1996d, p. 176). The same participant recounts:

what we were doing in the seminar in a way was walking through each other’s dream landscapes. There was a point in this dream in which one of the people who was accompanying me [...] said something about how strange it was that the images that were in my dreams were of such and such a quality, while the ones in her dreams were not like that at all. It was extraordinary, but I didn’t think much about it [...]. Things like that happened a lot (Hiller, 1996d, p. 176).

The London group, led by Hiller, was cohesive, but this was not the case of all other subsequent collective dream projects. Hiller recalled a letter later sent to her by the conceptualist Henry Flynt:

the reason people in New York did not wish to take part in his dream piece was they found that they were walking in and out of each other’s dreams, and they [...] dropped out of this piece because they were [...] sharing dreams. And they felt that their work would be adversely affected (Hiller, 1996d, p. 177; see also Flynt, 1975).

Such experiences seem to open epistemological questions, since they provide “access to something I know to be a certain kind of order which is quite, quite different from the [...] order of my everyday life” (Hiller, 1975; Hiller, 1996d, p. 175)⁷.

In view of the questions opened in the *Seminar*, Hiller decided to invite friends⁸ (some attendees to the former piece and some new) to join another group investigation piece, this time of a performative character: *Dream Mapping* (1974) which—she said in a 1983 interview—“attempted to discover wheth-

⁷ They also encourage further exploration, in consciousness studies and in parapsychology, of state-specific communication and PSI in lucid dreamers who are practitioners of creative disciplines, such as the visual arts.

⁸ According to different sources, the numbers vary. It seems that ten were invited and seven attended.

er or not there are shared structures that underlie individual dreams” (Hiller, 2007, p. 56). In a 1993 lecture she recalled: “I saw my role as creating a structure in which certain possibilities of memory and awareness would be enabled, and perhaps a collective language would emerge” (Hiller, 2007, p. 129). The preparation for the work, during the month prior to the performance, involved the use of a notebook with a map of the location where they would get together; in this notebook, participants recorded their dreams in visual schemes or maps, as non-verbally as possible, following a set of instructions. In August 1974, they gathered in Purdies Farm, in Hampshire, UK, a place with an abundance of so-called fairy rings of *marasmius oreadis* mushrooms. These dispositions, Hiller said, are associated with special energy patterns and exist in the prehistoric monument of Stonehenge.⁹ Folklore attributes those circles to fairies and the possibility of entering their realm and losing one’s mind if they are trespassed.¹⁰ The performative aspect of the event involved dream incubation: for three consecutive nights, participants picked a circle of their liking and slept in it. The following mornings, they recorded their dreams in their notebooks and drew the corresponding schemes/maps. After, they reproduced on tracing paper the most salient graphic features of their dreams and, with those individual contributions, a daily composite map was created, in which heavier lines noted coincidences or overlaps [Fig. 1].

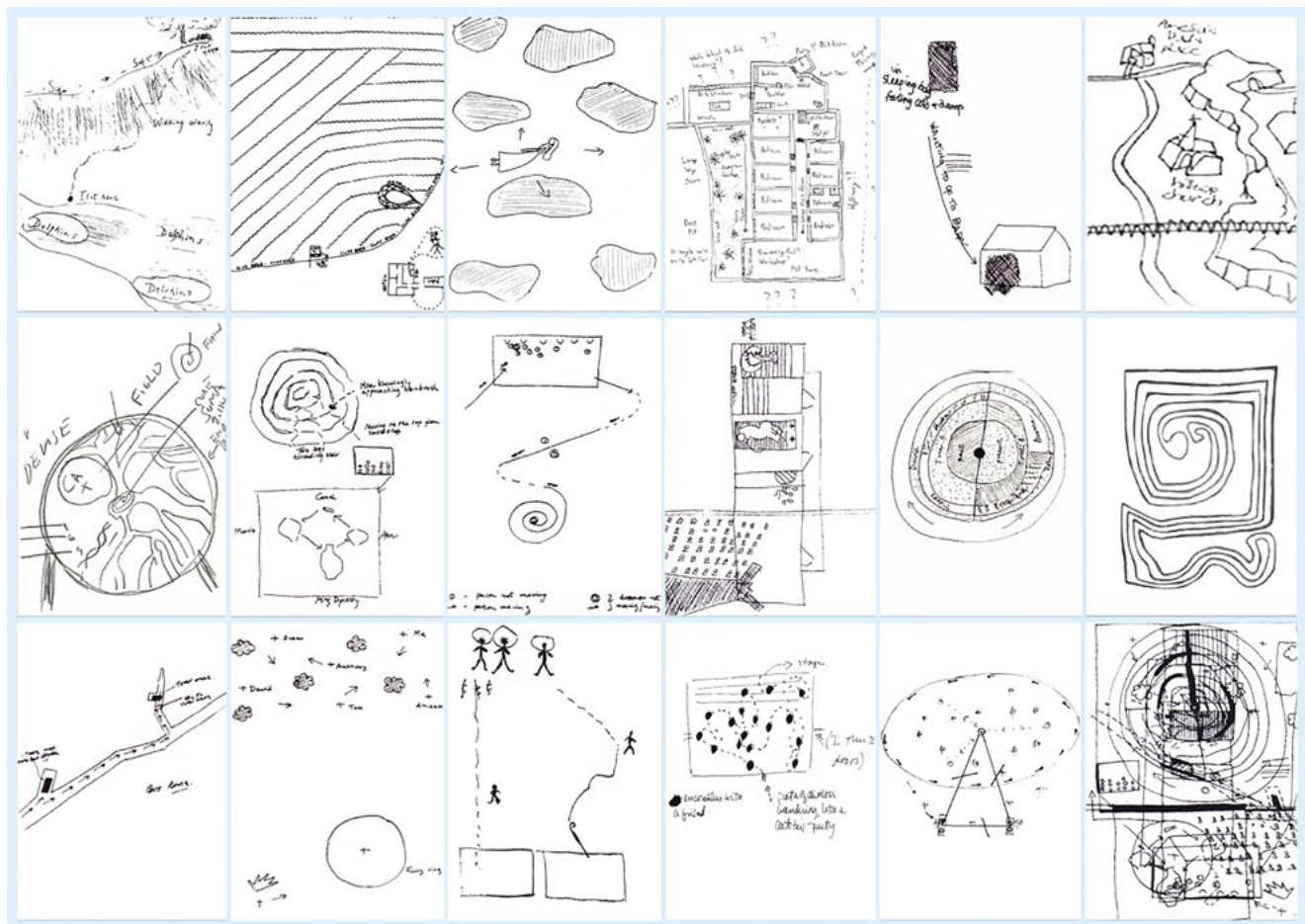


Figure 1. Dream Mapping (1974) (detail: pages of black and white maps), dimensions variable.

© Susan Hiller

9 E.g., see www.sarsen.org/2012/09/mysterious-rings.html

10 The widespread association of these circles, in England and other countries, with fairy dance was not mentioned by Hiller.

“So we had diagrams, notations, maps in order to break apart the received notion of dream as a narrative in linear time” (Hiller, 2007, p. 129). “I like these dream maps very much. There is a light-hearted struggle to make something visible” (Hiller, 2007, p. 130). For Hiller the graphic element was a key feature since she had explored at length different notations of dream space¹¹ during the research related to *The Dream Seminar* and found that “[i]n some ways it seems that ‘drawing’ might actually be better understood [than] ‘writing’” (Hiller, 2007, p. 128).¹²

After great preparation and expectations, people dreamed about one another and an abundance of circles appeared in their notations—but what else could be expected? With the stress involved, in contrast to the *Dream Seminar*, little of psychic interest issued here. Still, the work was valid since it was, above all, an artistic event. Hiller made it clear: “*Dream Mapping* was something open-ended, experiential, more like a roughly choreographed dance than a scientific experiment” (Hiller, 2007, p. 130). “[T] here is a difference between science and art—this wasn’t an experiment to prove people would have splendid dreams under those circumstances. It was just a kind of open situation that was set up. [...] this is not an attempt, in any sense, to make an equivalent to a scientific experiment. This is [...] experiential—this is a structure that invites possibilities of intensified experience. It’s not oriented toward ‘results’” (1996d, p. 179-80). “What a piece of work like *Dream Mapping* does very effectively is to focus participants on lived experience and embodied knowledge, eliminating any mind/body split ... I believe that art can allow us access to this knowledge, which will be different for each of us. In this way, art is a vehicle for shifts in understanding and behavior” (Hiller, 2007, p. 30).

Notwithstanding, although there was nothing near proven ESP, in *Dream Mapping* “there were interesting coincidences... [P]erhaps because of culturally determined limits on kinds of notations, there were very intriguing overlaps where two or more individual dream events overlapped. We all became very elated whenever this happened. For instance, on one night ‘dolphins’ overlapped with ‘clouds’ and this became the concept ‘cloud/dolphin’, which seemed to have to do with the way new concepts or ideas come about” (Hiller, 2007, p. 130). Of course, to the reader this may seem nonsensical, but Hiller assured it “was extremely interesting to do and was very interesting for the participants... That meant a great deal to us—it means nothing to you, I realize that! Which is the problem for an artist working in this kind of way, where there’s no way to convey to an outside audience what the actual experience of the participants was” (Hiller, 2012b, 00:12:52).

Telepathy pseudo-experiment: *Draw Together* (1972)

Susan Hiller, in line with the conceptualist art movement, exploited the idealist notion of a direct transmission of thought.¹³ In a 1969-1970 text, *Ideal Work* (Hiller, 1998) she proposed the direct trans-

11 Hiller examined dream representations in different cultures. One image often chosen to accompany her reflections on dream notations is a 19-century map of the Chuckchi Siberian shamanistic culture, which she commented on highlighting its psycho-topological qualities: “[t]he idea of the map is to show how not to get lost during dreams by going to the wrong place”, as well as its collective dimension, transcending the realm of the private: “[p]ersonal information obtained in a dream is made public, is shared” (Hiller, 1996c, p. 128).

12 These graphic notations can provide information not adequately conveyed by words. If coded and agreed upon beforehand, they could be a useful piece of evidence to examine in parapsychological studies and in dream studies and could be explored in depth as an experimental tool.

13 This is actually not a conceptualist invention, but rather an aspiration of earlier artistic movements, tightly coupled with abstract avant-gardes and the surrealist movement. See Rousseau (2015) for 20th century art and telepathy, and Drinkall (2011) for more recent contemporary art and telepathy. As Hiller’s method evolved, she drifted away from such purism and defended the materiality of the artwork and its non-verbal, embodied grasping. In addition, her mature work relinquished the possession of truth by the author and embraced a notion of co-creation by the participant public.

mission of thought as an artwork in and of itself:

The most interesting and possibly the most adventurous form of art is direct mind-to-mind transmission of images and ideas, without intervening objects, texts, markets, institutions, etc. Every artist wants to eliminate the duality of conception and perception, every artist wants to close the gap between intention (mine) and interpretation (yours)... Eventually it becomes clear that the quality of images and ideas delivered depends as much on the talents of the receivers as the caliber of the transmitters (Hiller, 1998, p. 76).

A couple of years later, strongly inspired by the famous Sinclairs' domestic experiments with telepathy (Sinclair, 1930), Hiller set out to structure a group investigation piece, *Draw Together* (1972), also primarily intended as an artistic inquiry on shared subjectivity and distributed authorship,¹⁴ using the avant-garde genre of mail art.¹⁵ The experiment had a formalistic character, in the sense that it had the potential to lend itself to the categorization and analysis characteristic of the scientific method. Nevertheless—implicit was her rejection of the perceived unscientific and biased anthropology she was practicing at the time she dropped off her doctoral research—, the piece was a mock, ironical, experiment, as was already patent in the letter of invitation that she sent to 100 people around the world:

Dear _____,

Would you like to take part in a genuine (SELECT ONE)

___a. art event ___b. social event ___c. psychic experience ___d. scientific experiment
___e. doesn't matter?

Here are the details:

On Friday, April 21; Monday, April 24; Friday, April 28; Monday, May 1; and Friday, May 5, at 7:00 pm (Greenwich Mean Time), Participant A. will choose at random a number corresponding to one of 100 illustrations and photographs previously selected at random by Participant B. On each of these five occasions, A. will concentrate on the designated image or picture for at least five minutes, trying to transmit its essential details to all the other participants in the event. A. may use whatever transmitting technique he/she likes.

The other participants (C. 1-100), from their respective geographical positions, will simultaneously attempt to tune in to and record what they pick up of A.'s transmission of the image, drawing or otherwise describing it in as much detail as possible. They may use whatever receiving/recording techniques they like.

Each participant will send her/his records to INFO (London), where they will be correlated, analyzed, and admired. A complete report of some kind will probably be sent to everyone involved.

¹⁴ "In the days when postal art was the current trend, I designed a postal art event" (Hiller, 2012b, 00:36:15). "It was a piece which playfully worked against ideas of the artist as a solitary genius; the idea was that everyone was a kind of transmitter for a flow of energy and ideas, and only egotists would grab an idea and call it theirs" (Hiller & Morgan, 1997).

¹⁵ See Jacob (1995).

Please let us know (soon) if you will be able to take part, and if you have any questions or comments, pass them on. Also, if you know of someone we haven't contacted who would like to participate, send his/her name and address along, too.

Could be serious

Should be fun & a chance to draw together.

Love,

ACE POSIBLE¹⁶

N.B. On each of your five reports, please include

1. your name 2. geographical position 3. local time of reception 4. date of reception

If you forget/to tune in on a designated date, or if your local time equivalent of 7:00 pm GMT is an inconvenient hour of the day/night, you may pre-receive or post-receive.¹⁷ Just remember, please, to record the date and the time when you tuned in (Hiller, 1996d, p. 180).

The actual procedure went like this: from a series of numbered magazine and newspaper cutouts, one number was blindly picked out and the corresponding image was used as a target to be transmitted telepathically, at an agreed-upon day and time, by the sender.¹⁸ The transmission was supposed to be facilitated by focused concentration and intense gazing, with the intention of reaching the participating friends around the world. The receivers were, in turn, expected to tune in and take in the target image, making annotations of their mental imagery and thoughts. The receivers send their answers back through the mail.

Up to here, things went as planned, but a timely postal strike, unforeseen by the artist, caused the delay and loss of the majority of the feedbacks, so “it again falls very nicely into the area of art and funky documentation” (Hiller, 1996d, p. 180). What played against the scientific character of the piece reinforced instead its poetic fate.

The results were, nevertheless, promising, and coherent with the findings in telepathy research:¹⁹ “there did seem to be some interesting correlations, particularly on the images that were the most vivid, and maybe had some emotional impact” (Hiller, 1996d, p. 181). For example [*Fig. 2*], when a red Navaho blanket with a zigzag pattern [bottom left] was a target, people visualized the color red, a reddish sunset, mountains, palm trees, zigzag, or triangles.

¹⁶ In her immaterial, experimental group works of the 1970s, Hiller used this pseudonym—much to her later shame and regret.

¹⁷ These options expanded the possibilities of ESP to precognition and retrocognition—issues not made explicit by Hiller, thus muddling a bit more the methodology of the experiment.

¹⁸ According to different versions of this story through time, it was Susan Hiller only or either she or David Coxhead who acted as senders. E.g., Hiller (1996, p. 180)—relatively close to the year of the events—stated both of them were senders. This, in turn, contradicts the information in the invitation, where there is only one sender mentioned (participant A.), reinforcing the methodological laxity of the piece.

¹⁹ For instance, the well-known experiments with dream telepathy at the Maimonides Medical Center (Ullman et al., 1973).

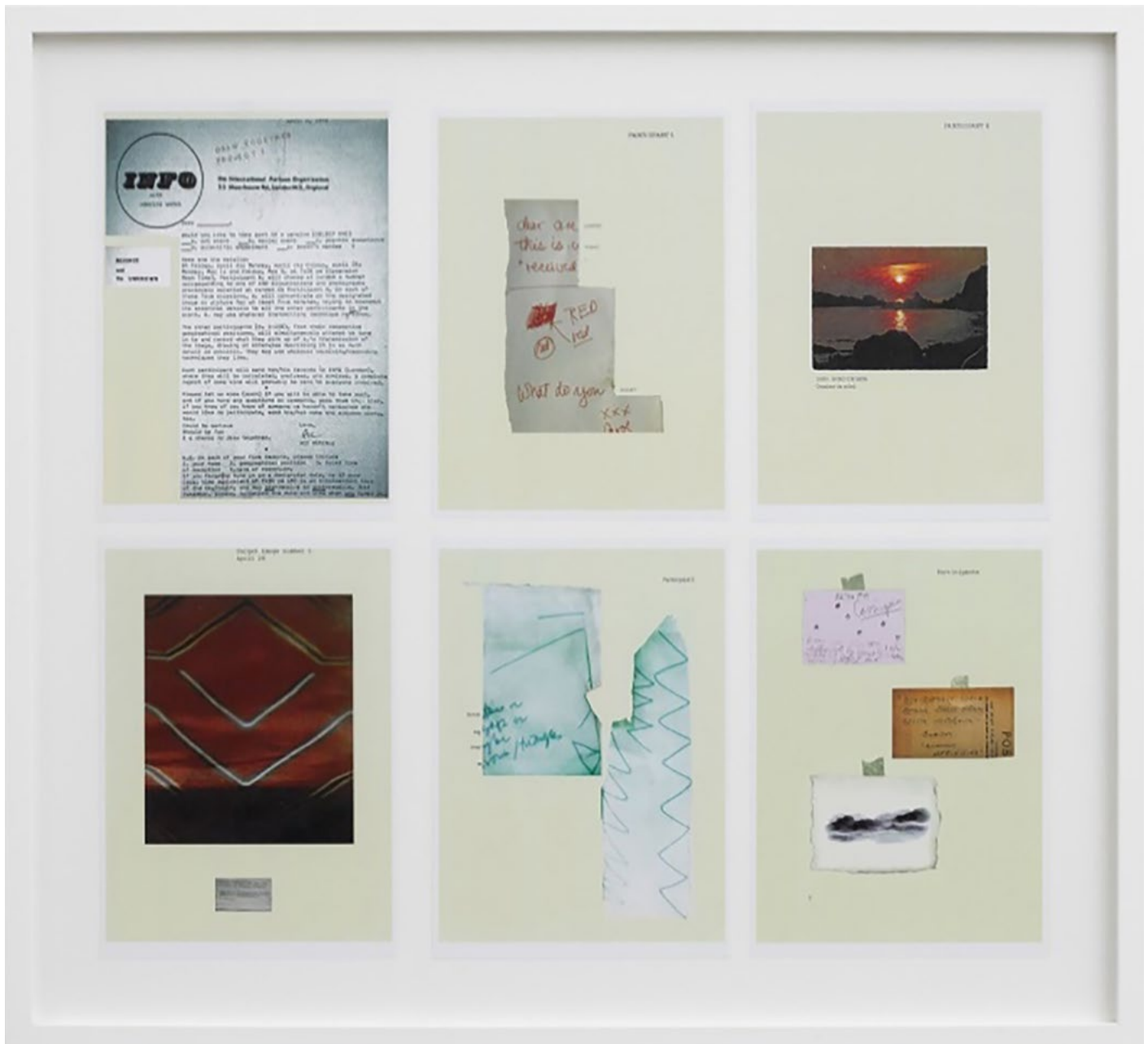


Figure 2. Documentation of *Draw Together* (1972), mixed media, 74 x 80 cm. © Susan Hiller; Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photography Jack Hems.

This piece is minor and has not received particular attention in the art world, among other reasons, for the dearth of visual documentation.²⁰ In hindsight, in a 2002 lecture, Hiller said “I don’t think *Draw Together* was in itself a very good work, but it opened up avenues for more interesting pieces [...] it was the relaxed but alert atmosphere it generated that made possible *Sisters of Menon*” (2008e, p. 243).

²⁰ In a personal communication in 2011, Susan Hiller told the author of this article that there remained no visual documentation of the piece—fortunately, this has proven wrong since some images, presented here, have been retrieved.

Automatic writing: *Sisters of Menon* (1972-1979)

There has been a historic interest of artists in occultism and mediumship, often inscribed in spiritualist beliefs.²¹ This was known by Hiller, but only in theory, until, one day in 1972, in the south of France, she was in the process of performing the *Draw Together* experiment. “I must have been in a very relaxed and slightly distracted mood” (Hiller, 2017, 00:30:00); “Admittedly, the stage was set for some altered state of consciousness, but wasn’t eerie or peculiar” (Hiller & Morgan, 1997, p. 246). She had just finished the attempt at transmitting an image.²² She put down the magazine cutout and, unexpectedly, produced her first automatic writing. On a blank sheet of paper, she recalled, “I suddenly began to write; my hand began to move” (Hiller & Malbert, 2007, para. 6); “[t]he pencil seemed to have a mind of its own”. What started as a doodle began to take shape: “at first the marks formed what looked like childish drawings I could not decipher. Then, coherent words began to appear”. Her hand “wrote page after page of text in an unfamiliar style”. “For a while it seemed an engrossing and somewhat eerie experience to step aside so completely” (Hiller, *Sisters of Menon*, 1972-9, 1979 note). She deemed it “a very uncanny experience because I was just observing my hand writing. I felt a total dissociation from the experience” (Hiller & Malbert, 2007, para. 6). But the novelty and surprise soon faded out “and then it became quite boring because my hand was just writing and writing. It wasn’t like being in an interesting trance; it was just an occurrence that had an everyday-ness” (Hiller & Morgan, 1997).

Formally, the traces of the pencil were a “combination of undecipherable hieroglyphics which turned into readable words with several puns: a sort of shape that looked like a child’s drawing of an eye for ‘I’, and a lot of mirror writing, backward, reverse writing, and so forth” (Hiller & Malbert, 2007, p. 215). The character of the text was repetitive and rhapsodic, switching from the ‘I’ to ‘we’ or ‘everyone’, and seemed to be dictated by a collective entity: the ‘Sisters of Menon’. This is the transcription of the automatic writing:

Who is this one/I am this one/Menon is

Menon is this one/you are this one/

I am the sister of Menon/I am your sister/the sister of – of everyone’s sister/I am Menon’s sister

– I live in the water/I live on the air/

I am – the sister/love of my sister/

The woman is the sister/a man is the mother of the sister/

Eye eye eye eye I live my sister

– – – – – VLant-RO zero is the silly morse/is the sister of sister of

²¹ See Durant & Marsching (2006), and Cardeña et al. (2012) for contemporary art and the paranormal. See Waldo-Schwartz (1977), and Dichter et al. (2007) for art and occultism.

²² In different sources there are incongruences when referring to this episode. E.g., in Hiller & Morgan (1997), she said it was her turn to tune in (as a receiver) and draw. In Hiller & Malbert (2007), she said she had finished staring (as a sender). The latter version is more congruent with the design of the experiment, but that does not necessarily imply that it is truer than the former.

Menon/we three sisters are your sister/this is the nothing that we are/
 the riddle is the sister of the zero/we are the mother
 of men/we are the sister of men/o the sisters
 I want the water/I
 want the air/I want the sister of Menon to become as the water/
 will you become my sister/
 I am the sister of everyone/I am your sister/we 3 sisters are
 1 sister/you are the sister/last night we
 were 3 sisters now we are 4 sisters/you are the sister of Menon/we are 3 sisters we live on the
 air in the water/
 we are the sisters of Menon/everyone is the sister/I am the sister/love oh the sisters/
 love love love to the sisters of everyone who is the sister/come to the ⊕⊕⊕⊕ to the ⊕
 – – – – – we are your sisters from Thebes Thebes/

The manuscripts disappeared. “For a long time I believed the original scripts to be lost. Then, in May 1979, exactly seven years after the original transmission, they re-appeared...” (*Sisters of Menon*, 1979 note). Hiller admitted that losing them might have obeyed an unconscious motivation: an inability to address the production with her mindset of the time. In a 2005 interview she said “[t]he problem for me was that I didn’t have the ideology of spiritualism or any other belief system that would support this kind of experience. I didn’t think spirits were dictating to me or anything of the sort. I was just left with this drawing, really, and that led me to look again at surrealism” (Hiller & Malbert, 2008, p. 215).

The reencounter with this material prompted her to study it in depth to try to decipher its meanings. Feminist and identity issues, distributed creativity, ESP, mediums, psychoanalysis, symbolism, Cathar history, and literature came in to help in the hermeneutics, but at a certain point she understood that “any commentary on them would be endless, and there have already been several versions. None of these versions is a better ‘explanation’ than any other” (Hiller, *Sisters of Menon*, 1972-1979, 1979 note). The greatest point made in this automatic writing was that identity is plural: “It convinced me of the reality of the divided self, and that one person is many voices, but there is no bounded unity which contains the voices. They could be seen as possibilities of being”, she recalled in a 1995 conversation (Hiller & Morgan, 1996, p. 247).

The final *Sisters of Menon* artwork [Fig. 3] consists of a central cross with four L-shaped arrangements of the sheets of paper with the automatic writing/drawing of 1972, and a later part, four smaller lateral modules, of transcription and commentary, of 1979.



Figure 3. *Sisters of Menon* (1972-1979), four L-shaped panels of automatic writing, blue pencil on A4 paper with typed labels (1972); four panels, typescript and gouache on paper (1979), 91.2 x 64.2 cm and 31.8 cm x 23 cm. © Susan Hiller

Later, Hiller practiced other attempts at automatic writing of the same kind that resulted in several art pieces.²³ She said: “I learned a huge amount from that automatic writing experience, and after that I was able to do it anytime I wanted to, I’d just switch to that mode”. But being anything but a mannerist artist, “I stopped doing it because my handwriting became so elegant, so practiced, so to speak, so it seemed to be losing its value for me” (Hiller & Orbach, 2013, 01h:05:00).²⁴

23 E.g., *So Don't Let it Frighten*; *Get William*; *Mary Essene*; *My Dearest* (all automatic writings date of 1975 and were framed in 1981).

24 Automatism in contemporary art has had different manifestations. It is worth to mention how Hiller took a position in relation to them. The problem with stylization was also the root of Hiller's criticism of the automatism of the New York abstract expressionists. She said: “I'm determined to insert my work with automatism within and against the tradition of the gestural in modern art—against the reactionary, self-aggrandizing gesturalism [...] and within the socially-motivated investigation of mark-making initiated by the Surrealist group” (1996b, p. 54).

Nevertheless, the automatic writing experience, according to Hiller, was decisive for her art because it “precipitated me outside the bounds of pure conceptualism” (Hiller & Orbach, 2013, 00:26:00).²⁵ After this experience, she said, “I stopped making a distinction between the rational and irrational” (Hiller & Morgan, 1997).²⁶

In subsequent works of the 1980s,²⁷ she exploited a different kind of automatism—pre-linguistic, a manifestation of pure bodily rhythm—in the form of non-significant calligraphies and/or vocalizations.

Hiller’s interest in automatism lead her to abundant readings—many of them grouped in an installation called *Lucidity & Intuition: Homage to Gertrude Stein* (2011)—and to collect automatic writing/drawing of various sources (analysands, mediums, artists—herself included—, art students, writers, and frauds). Displaying a number of photographic negatives of these productions²⁸ in light boxes, she highlighted the otherliness of such manifestations. As homage, the installation, *From India to the Planet Mars* (1997-2004) [Fig. 4], bears the title of the seminal work by Théodore Flournoy (1900) on the medium under the pseudonym Héléne Smith.

(Moreover, in relation to the wrongly attributed purity of his automatic method, Pollock spent many hours staring at already much-stained canvases and planned further actions; see Rubin, 1999.) In contrast, Hiller sided with André Masson (one of the main pioneers of surrealist graphic automatism), although she underlined that Masson’s automatism was only a first stage of elaboration, followed by the addition of figurative elements suggested by the meandering lines. She was also interested in the surrealist undermining of personal authorship: “the implications of automatism would eventually erode all notions of personal property rights and individual authorship of works [...] because everyone can do it [...] it’s unpredictable and seems to be outside any kind of individual control” (Hiller, 1996b, p. 54). Other figures experimenting with automatisms whom she felt akin to were, in literature, Gertrude Stein (for her self-experiments, see Solomons & Stein, 1986), in relation to whom she made the piece *Homage to Gertrude Stein* (2011), and, in his graphic facet, the Belgian-French poet and artist Henri Michaux, from whom the author of this article believes Hiller may have borrowed the word *élan* [momentum] for the title of one of her automatic pieces (for an analysis of Michaux’s signs, see Parish, 2007).

25 To get a better grasp on this statement it has to be understood that the first-generation conceptual art of the time was male-dominated, allegedly objective and language-centered; Hiller always considered herself to be a second-generation conceptualist, distancing herself from the conceptual art world of the 1970s, which would soon despise her, as she recalled in a 2007 interview, for “introducing pop art to conceptualism” (Hiller, 2008d, p. 131) with her postcard piece *Dedicated to the Unknown Artists* (1972-1976).

In addition to this, at the time of the automatic writing, the artist was already siding with feminists, who took an anti-logocentric position: “[W]hat’s already in language, for my generation of women, was not what we wanted to say” (Hiller, 2008d, p. 130).

Another aspect that estranged her from the formal purity and the frequent absence of physical involvement with the works in progress of first-generation conceptualists was Hiller’s emphasis on the body and the contact with objects before any conceptual clarity took shape; “[t]he ideas do not come first. That’s why I often say I have a materials-based practice” (Hiller & Orbach, 2013, 01:17:28).

26 It goes without saying that this statement should not to be taken literally. Of course she could distinguish them; what she meant was that it was possible to play with both. The duality between rationality and irrationality had already made itself patent in an earlier phase of her life: her choice to be an artist, relinquishing the believed objectivity of anthropology and becoming a creator, is patent in the *aha!* moment in which she decided to abandon the writing of a doctoral dissertation. In contrast to science, she recalled, “I felt art was, above all, irrational, mysterious, numinous [...] I decided I would become not an anthropologist but an artist: I would relinquish factuality for fantasy” (Hiller, 1991b, p. 2); instead of being an outside observer, she said, “I determined to find a way to be *inside* all my activities” (Hiller, 1996a, p. 19). Throughout her artistic career, Hiller was an intellectually sophisticated and articulate thinker but remained at the same time critical of the one-sidedness of Western rational thought and fascinated by anomalous experiences and non-normative ways of knowing. She straddled both dimensions with ambivalence, offering an inspirational example of mixed (or at least alternating) epistemologies.

27 E.g., *Élan* (1983) (for a sample of its soundtrack, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUMhl43eiJE) and *Belshazzar’s Feast* (1983-1984).

28 The sources and authors of the automatic productions of the installation are: Jean Bate (1985): *The First Three Months*; F. Blight Bond (1917, 1930): *The Gates of Remembrance*; André Breton (1933): *Le message automatique* (by Mme. Smead, ‘Max’); Nik Douglas (1977): *Book of Matan* (by ‘a young man’); Théodore Flournoy (1898): *From India to the Planet Mars* (by Héléne Smith); George M. Harper (1987): *The Making of Yeats’ ‘A Vision’* (by George Yeats); Susan Hiller (1972): *Sisters of Menon*; Hans Holzer (1978): *Elvis Presley Speaks* (by Dorothy Sherry); Anita Mühl (1963): *Automatic Writing: An Approach to the Unconscious* (by anonymous analysands); Fred Oliver (1974): *Dweller on Two Planets* (by ‘Phylos the Thebetan’); Florian Rodari (1998): *Shadows of a Hand* (by Victor Hugo); Austin Osmond Spare & Frederick Carter (1916): ‘Automatic Drawing’. *Form*, 1(1), April; volunteer art students (1996-1997), and Signe Toksvig (Comp.) (1986): *Swan on a Black Sea* (by Geraldine Cummings).

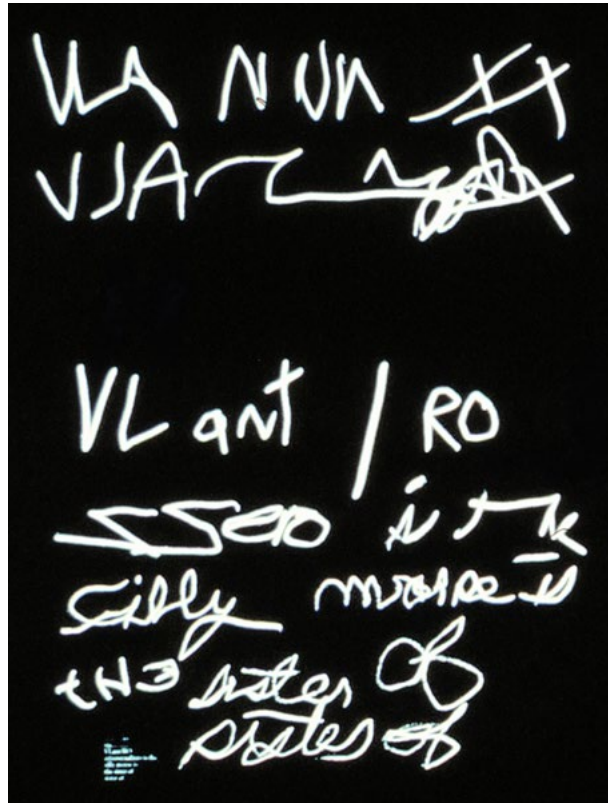


Figure 4. *From India to the Planet Mars* (1997-2004), (detail, image 26, one of Hiller's automatic writings that became part of *Sisters of Menon*), unique photographic negative in wall mounted lightbox 67.5 x 52 x 12 cm. © Susan Hiller

Representations of telekinesis: *Psi Girls* (1999)

While official religions in the West lost adepts, fiction cinema became rife with representations of secular miracles, magic, and witchcraft. Yesterday's saints have become today's ESP talents. Susan Hiller was interested in the investment of popular culture in the paranormal, and movies were an excellent example of this. Consistent with the work method of her second period—which used cultural productions instead of her personal experiences or that of a restricted group—she chose extraordinary feats performed by children for two installations: *Wild Talents*, and the later *Psi Girls*, more powerful in its greater simplicity. Hiller explained that these works explore human beings' need of myth and fable²⁹ and “represent collective dreams, cultural artefacts that form our common understanding of what is possible and our fantasies of what we wish were possible” (Grayson, 1998).

Wild Talents (1997) bears the same title as Charles Fort's (1974) collection of anomalous phenomena and psi,³⁰ and shows edited fragments of movies, mostly from Hollywood, in which children display extraordinary feats like ESP, telekinesis, levitations, religious ecstasies, etc., together with sound effects,

²⁹ Hiller drew from the view, shared by many psychologists and mythographers (e.g. Jung, 1978/1958; Eliade, 1963; Campbell, 1972; Doty, 1986), that the current Western scientifically-oriented society favours facts and reason at the expense of images and tales that speak the language of the unconscious and emotions, providing symbols of psychological unity. Deprived of religion and living myths, such a society is psychologically impoverished and hungers for another order of experience of the world, its re-enchantment and a feeling of deep meaningfulness.

³⁰ Fort contended that these abilities were of use in early stages of humankind and that they remained latent in all humans and could be trained.

a chair, votive lights and a monitor with footage of a pilgrimage. Text and voice elements appear, nostalgic of childhood and Middle Age beliefs in an enchanted world.

Psi Girls (1999)³¹ [Fig. 5] uses fragments of movies³² where girls perform telekinesis. The artist declared: “I love to see girls doing these wonderful things!” (Hiller & Orbach, 2013, 00:37:00). She was interested in the freshness of children’s worldview, where the supernatural can be experienced as natural. Another element at play in the piece is the vindication of female power—so often treated as dangerous and menacing to the patriarchal order. In addition, Hiller posited a metaphorical value to telekinesis: it “has something to do with art [...] transforming things through mental powers” (Hiller & Grunenberg, 2008, 00:00:54).



Figure 5. *Psi Girls* (1999), video installation: five synchronized programs, five projections, color with stereo sound, real-time audio processing. Program duration 20 minutes. Dimensions variable. © Susan Hiller; Courtesy Lisson Gallery.

On five large, successive screens are projected an equal number of movie scenes. All but one are edited in tempo to fit a length of ca. two minutes.³³ The images are also edited in color, so that each panel shows a different hue. This is done “to emphasize the artificiality of these constructions” and to give various emotional connotations to the images. Every two-minute-cycle is interrupted by a pattern of interference—as when TV emissions are down—and the sound of static, after which the scenes are re-

31 A video fragment of *Psi Girls* can be accessed here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MsQ0z2iHLY

32 These are: Brian de Palma (1978): *The Fury*. Prod.: 20th Century Fox; Andrew Fleming (1996): *The Craft*. Prod.: Columbia; Danny de Vito (1996): *Matilda*. Prod.: TriStar Pictures; Mark Lester (1984): *Firestarter*. Prod.: Universal, and Andrei Tarkovsky (1979): *Stalker*. Prod.: Mosfilm.

33 The only unedited fragment is the one with the sick girl in Andrei Tarkovsky’s film. The Russian’s production (removed from Hollywood language) is characterized by a slow, introspective tempo, so there would seem to be no need to slow it down any further.

played, but on different screens and with different colors. The high-volume soundtrack has been edited from a live recording of percussion and hand clapping by the gospel choir of St. George's Cathedral in Charlotte, NC. It is an overwhelming, crescendo rhythm, "very hypnotic," which "changes the way you see the imagery"—inviting credibility. But, after the break, there is a two-minute period of silence—a time for criticism and reflection. Hiller explained:

So you're looking at this Russian movie in silence, and you're scrutinizing it; you may notice some special effects and so forth. And then, when you look at it with this music, you can feel your heart-rate increasing and you might begin to feel it's a little creepy, it's a little strange, you feel disturbed by it. There's two different ways of looking at it (Hiller & Grunenber, 2008, 00:59:00).

I deliberately designed that piece so no one could walk out and say, 'Oh, Susan Hiller believes in telekinesis.' They might say 'Well, for two minutes she believes in it and for the next two minutes she does not believe in it.' The piece was intended to demonstrate the ambiguity of this whole area³⁴ (Hiller & Orbach, 2103, 00:39:00).

The replicable laws of nature leave us unsatisfied; we hunger for depictions of marvels that do not fit our classical worldview. "We know perfectly well how delicious these moments are, at the same time that we know that they are created by cinema trickery. ... yet, isn't it interesting how easily the fantasies of that as a true condition recur? (Hiller, 2004b, 00:03:42).

Discussion

This section gives a wider context to these and other of Hiller's works and deals with her work method, the degree of self-exposure of the artist, her position towards the subject-matter of her work, the deeper content of her oeuvre, Hiller's role as an artist and the epistemic nature of art in relation to reality.

Susan Hiller's work method pervaded her mature oeuvre. She claimed to proceed without a pre-conceived idea. Her starting point was a certain material (either an object or a social fact—cultural artifacts, in the anthropological sense) that she came upon, something towards which she felt both "attracted and disturbed" (Hiller, 2012a, para. 5). Far from resolving this polarity, she declared: "I want to be true to my own ambivalence" (Hiller, 2002, para. 5). Interestingly, this mixture of affects is also the hallmark of the Freudian uncanny (*unheimlich*) (Freud, 2003), which couples feelings of homeliness with an undertone of disquiet, as if something disturbing lurked within the familiar—which is indeed repressed psychic material. It is as if Hiller were particularly sensitive to hidden, disquieting meanings that go unnoticed for most of us. This is true for the less explicitly parapsychological material of her art (such as *An Entertainment*, 1990, *From the Freud Museum*, 1991-1997, or *The J. Street Project*, 2002-2005) where, in a hermeneutic impulse also akin to psychoanalysis, Hiller's work with the material intended to elucidate its hidden meaning, and give it back to society in the form of thought-provoking art. But certainly in the most renowned pieces, many of them openly dealing with issues of consciousness, it is not a matter of

³⁴ The deliberate ambivalence (a term more suitable than ambiguity) of *Psi Girls* reflects equally Hiller's fascination and critical skepticism towards these phenomena. The tolerance of contradictions and the coexistence of apparently mutually exclusive views is a hallmark of art, whereas science needs univocality, disambiguation and clear-cut conclusions. Lived experience seems in many ways close to artistic knowledge. It remains a challenge for science (parapsychology included) to study the richness of life in all its complexity.

revealing hidden meanings, but rather to present this controversial material in a way that invites suspension of disbelief, together with a contemporarily skeptical view on it.

In her artistic production, alongside everyday objects of popular culture, Susan Hiller tackled “[t]elepathy and other forms of ESP; dreams; automatic writing, drawing and speaking; dowsing; electronic voice phenomena; the human aura; ghost images seen on TV; contemporary visionary experiences; projections of all sorts” (Hiller, 2002, para. 2), which are doubtless part of the appeal of her oeuvre.

A phenomenological inquiry would expect a plethora of the author’s personal accounts about these phenomena. This opens the question of the degree of self-exposure of the artist regarding her first-hand experience with the topics treated in her work. She was certainly a woman of her time during the hippie years: “Sex, drugs and rock n’roll! I’m of that generation of the 60s-70s and totally influenced by a quest for visionary, mystical experience,” she said in an interview (Buck, 2004, p. 35), and was accordingly experienced with psychedelics, although “the most interesting experiences I’ve ever had have not been on drugs” (Hiller & Grunenberg, 2008, 01:07:00). We know that she was “ironically in love with” the occult (Hiller & Morgan, 1997), that she was acquainted with Zener cards to test psi—“validated, 1996”—, and with the Ouija board—“practiced, 1995”—(both are present in the installation *From the Freud Museum* [1991-1997]; the quotes refer to annotations to the objects displayed), that she took a course in dowsing, practiced with dreams—and, we infer, at least attempted lucid dreaming—(e. g., Coxhead & Hiller, 1976; *The Dream Seminar*, 1973; *Dream Mapping*, 1973; *Lucid Dreams*, 1981-1983; *The Dream Seminar II*, 2011). She attempted telepathy as a sender—with some putative results (*Draw Together*, 1972)—, was involuntarily subject to automatic writing (*Sisters of Menon*, 1972-1979) and purposefully trained herself afterwards in this automatism. Despite all, it is only when speaking of her first experience with automatic writing that she disclosed a truly and sufficiently extensive phenomenological account. If we presume her interest in these topics was based on personal experience, we must accept that the greatest deal of her first-hand acquaintance with psi, anomalous experiences and altered states of consciousness has remained deliberately private.

The artist’s public utterances in relation to psi and non-ordinary experiences were destined to distance her from the personal self-exposure that characterizes other artists who approach similar themes (e. g., Marina Abramovic). Although Hiller’s strategy entailed a dearth of first-hand testimonies of potential use for consciousness research, it does seem an intelligent way to take a position in the art world. As the materials for her work were social in origin, the collective experience and testimonials took center stage while she faded into the background. In this context, when she spoke of herself, it was mostly to clarify her position amidst these cultural productions and collective experiences: “I have rarely discussed the works with the more remarkable subject matter, in most circumstances not wanting to sensationalize or exoticise what I do” (Hiller, 2012a, para. 2). This, again, is a clever strategy, since it is easy to be taken as a New Age adept or as an uncritical believer—amusingly, in 2002, Richard Grayson, the curator of the Sydney Biennale, remembered her being “chased around town by Raelians” and that “they thought Susan had some inside knowledge that they needed to know” (Hiller & Grayson, 2008, 00:37:00). Despite her fascination with these subjects, Hiller was an educated intellectual with a critical Western mindset, “tolerant, but skeptical” (Cole, 2012, p. 39). When asked about the truth of the stories about UFOs collected in her most famous piece, *Witness* (2000), the influence of Carl G. Jung (1978)—stressing the psychological truth of this kind of experiences—can be traced when she answered: “Well, yes, they’re real

stories, they're social facts, they're real social facts" (Hiller & Malbert, 2007). And she stated shrewdly: "I don't believe in anything. So therefore, I don't believe these things are true... any more than I believe that they are not true" (Hiller & Orbach, 2013, 01:21:00). Her role as an artist was neither to take sides nor to prove or disprove; that is not the task of art, but of science; "I can't do the kind of thing that I do with the material if I always have to pre-censor myself by asking the kinds of questions that [...] a scholar would ask" (Hiller & Malbert, 2007).

Hiller took pains to make clear that the array of topics treated were only the surface—however appealing—of her work. The artist cautioned: "People get diverted by the subject matter in my work, and then they don't actually deal with the content. The content is not as straightforward as it might seem" (Hiller, 2004b, 00:13:00). The subject matter "is only the starting point" (Hiller & Grayson, 2008, 00:40:00).

So what is the content of Hiller's artwork? In a 1991 conversation, Hiller said: "Art is epistemological"; artists are "first-order thinkers" (Einzig, p. 155); "I think [art is] as important as any kind of academic research" (Hiller, 2012b, 00:02:53). The content of Hiller's artwork is knowledge, and it is a hybrid one, encompassing poetic intuition and unconscious processing³⁵ together with rational inquiry, as well as embodiment.³⁶ It is a questioning of the status quo through the revelation of hidden meanings of our cultural artifacts, although these meanings "will change over time and will never be fully accommodated within language or reducible to language". Rather than answers, Hiller's work offers "lines of exploration" (Hiller, 2002, para. 3). The inquiry is performed by means of a psychic and cultural archeology, "exploring the unconscious of culture" (Hiller, 2008c, p. 67). This way of knowing goes hand in hand with what Hiller considered to be the artists' job: "to represent and mirror back the values of the culture in a way that people haven't seen before" (Cooke, 2011). Art "functions as a mirror to show us what we don't know that we know" (Hiller, 1992, p. 3). Such knowledge can put the finger in the wound of social consciousness, as is the case of her critique of the children's cruel and phallogocentric puppet show *Punch and Judy* (*An Entertainment*, 1990), of the treatment of the post-Nazi management of Jewish street names in Germany (*The J. Street Project*, 2002–2005), and of many examples of apparently innocent ethnocentrism and sexism in boxes that make up *From the Freud Museum* (1991–1996).³⁷ Other works point at experiences that question the prevailing mode of knowledge, opening possibilities of alternate epistemological pathways,³⁸ setting the stage for the possibility of collective anomalous cognition, as is the case of *Draw Together*, *The Dream Seminar* and *Dream Mapping*, recording spontaneous automatic writing (*Sisters of Menon*), collecting worldwide first-person accounts of near-death experiences (e. g., *Clinic*, 2004; *Channels*, 2013) and UFO encounters (*Witness*, 2000), or dealing with paranormal abilities in the media (e. g., *Psi Girls*).

For Hiller, the popular fascination with psi, anomalous experiences, and altered states of consciousness is rooted in a yearning for transcendence that is intrinsic to the human condition. Since "art has the potential to alter consciousness" (Hiller, 2011a, 00:23:00), it can open the mind:

35 "[W]hatever 'knowledge' is generated by the work or is part of the work, is far from objective and logically arrived-at; not-knowing is built into my working methods" (Hiller, 2002, para. 1).

36 Hiller said in 1994: "When I use words I always feel [...] that I'm translating from something to something else. [...] I'm wondering whether I'm simply the kind of person who understands physically through my sensory experiences, my tactile experiences. Objects can provide me with knowledges of various kinds that I can later translate. I'm [...] talking about [...] getting your hands dirty, [...] material practices" (Hiller, 1996e, p. 237).

37 For an in-depth study of Hiller's *From the Freud Museum* see Iribas Rudín (2019).

38 See Cardeña (2018).

“I am clearly taking the side of those vernacular visionaries who witness something extraordinary, something repressed by society and misrepresented by empiricism [...]. I hope that you will all join the visionaries and enjoy your innate capacities to imagine, project, hallucinate and dream while fully awake, and at the same time, retain all your self-awareness, your consciousness and your critical ability” (Hiller, 2008b, p. 29).

Psi and radical non-ordinary experiences, she acknowledged, seem to question what we take to be real, or to point to other possible dimensions of reality: “I consider the definitions of reality are always provisional [...] we are all involved collectively in creating our notions of ‘the real’” (Hiller, 1999, p. 45).

In conclusion, Susan Hiller’s art has several points of contact with parapsychology: the subject-matter of psi and anomalous cognition, some methodological aspects of various group works and the epistemological function of her work in relation to consciousness and reality. On the other hand, Hiller was an artist, not a scientist. Her treatment of these topics does not imply a search for clear-cut answers or proving the validity of specific hypothesis. Hiller’s art poses questions, offers as-if and what-if views, provokes embodied experiences and creates ambivalent, open and participatory meanings. Such a way of knowledge has the potential to enrich parapsychological enquiries in ways yet to be explored.

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Psi et Expériences Anomales dans l'Oeuvre de Susan Hiller

Résumé : Susan Hiller (1940-2019) était une artiste contemporaine qui s'occupait de sujets tels que le psi et les expériences anomales, en montrant un intérêt soutenu pour la conscience. Bien que nombre de ses travaux portaient sur des thèmes parapsychologiques, sa façon d'appréhender ces sujets appartenait à un champ de connaissance offrant un contraste intéressant avec celui de la science. Dans certaines des œuvres de Hiller, il coexiste un cadre expérimental et une ouverture à ce qui peut survenir, les résultats étaient moins pertinents que le vécu, qui n'est pas toujours médiatisé par le langage, et qui manifeste une ambivalence délibérée. Son intention en tant qu'artiste était de fouiller dans l'inconscient culturel, pointant vers des zones négligées ou marginalisées, en quête d'expériences non-ordinaires et de perspectives non-conventionnelles sur la culture. Dans cet article, cinq de ses productions relatives au psi sont montrées et mises en contexte, en employant les propres mots de Hiller. Relativement à la télépathie, *Draw Together* (1972), *The Dream Seminar* (1973) et *Dream Mapping* (1974) sont présentés. Par rapport à la télékinèse, nous abordons *Psi Girls* (1999). Nous étudions aussi un travail artistique relatif à l'automatisme psychique : *Sisters of Menon* (1972-1979). Nous discutons finalement le degré d'exposition de soi de l'artiste, sa position sur les sujets qu'elle travaillait, le contenu profond de son œuvre, son rôle en tant qu'artiste et la nature épistémique de l'art par rapport à la réalité.

Psi und anomale Erfahrungen im Oeuvre von Susan Hiller

Zusammenfassung: Susan Hiller (1940-2019) war eine zeitgenössische Künstlerin, die sich mit Themen wie Psi und anomalen Erfahrungen beschäftigte und ein ausgeprägtes Interesse am Bewusstsein hatte. Auch wenn einige ihrer Arbeiten thematisch mit Parapsychologie zu tun haben, gehört ihre Art, diese Themen zu behandeln, zu einem Erkenntnisgebiet, das interessante Kontraste zur Wissenschaft bietet. In einigen von Hillers Werken gibt es eine Koexistenz von experimenteller Rahmung und Offenheit für alles Mögliche, die Ergebnisse sind weniger wichtig als die Erfahrung, die nicht ausschließlich durch Sprache vermittelt wird, und es herrscht eine gezielte Ambivalenz. Ihre Intention als Künstlerin war es, sich in das kulturelle Unbewusste zu vertiefen und auf übersehene und vernachlässigte Bereiche hinzuweisen, zu denen das Verlangen nach ungewöhnlichen Erfahrungen und unkonventionellen Ansichten über Kultur gehören. In diesem Artikel werden fünf ihrer Werke, die mit Psi in Berührung stehen, beschrieben und mit Hillers eigenen Worten in einen Kontext gestellt. In Bezug auf Telepathie werden *Draw Together* (1972), *The Dream Seminar* (1973) und *Dream Mapping* (1974) vorgestellt. Mit Telekinese befasst sich *Psi Girls* (1999). Ein Kunstwerk, das sich auf den psychischen Automatismus bezieht, wird ebenfalls vorgestellt: *Sisters of Menon* (1972-1979). Der Grad der Selbstentblößung der Künstlerin, ihre Position zum Gegenstand ihres Werkes, der tiefere Gehalt ihres Oeuvres, Hillers Rolle als Künstlerin und die epistemische Natur der Kunst im Verhältnis zur Realität werden abschließend diskutiert.

Psi y Experiencias Anómalas en la Obra de Susan Hiller

Resumen: Susan Hiller (1940-2019) fue una artista contemporánea que trató temas como psi y experiencias anómalas, dentro de un interés profundo en la consciencia. Aunque el tema de varios de sus trabajos es común a la parapsicología, su forma de abordar estos temas pertenece a un área de

conocimiento que ofrece interesantes contrastes con la ciencia. En algunas de las obras de Hiller existe la coexistencia de un encuadre experimental y una apertura a lo que pudiera suceder, los resultados son menos relevantes que la experiencia -que no está mediada exclusivamente por el lenguaje- y hay una ambivalencia deliberada. Su intención como artista era profundizar en el inconsciente cultural, señalando áreas ignoradas y descuidadas, entre las que se encuentra el anhelo de tener experiencias no ordinarias y puntos de vista no convencionales sobre la cultura. En este artículo se presentan y describen cinco de sus producciones que tienen que ver con psi y las pongo en contexto, usando las propias palabras de Hiller. En relación con la telepatía, se encuentran *Draw Together* (1972), *The Dream Seminar* (1973), y *Dream Mapping* (1974). *Psi Girls* (1999) trata de la psicoquinesis y *Sisters of Menon* (1972-1979) de la escritura automática. También discuto el grado de autoexposición de la artista, su postura ante el tema de su trabajo, el contenido más profundo de su obra, el papel de Hiller como artista y la naturaleza epistémica del arte en relación con la realidad.