

**A photographic enquiry into the ontology and phenomenology of images
derived from Instrumental Trans Communication**

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Abstract

The motivation behind this research was as the result of reaching a personal, existential crossroads in life. My world view was that of a materialist and atheist but caring for someone dying of cancer who approached death with no expectation of the possibility of the survival of her consciousness shocked me. Witnessing a loved one confronted by that stark and cruel expectation had a profound effect and I found myself asking 'could there be life after death'?

I read widely and researched around the topics of philosophy, psychical research, religion and the nature of consciousness and discovered that there is a wealth of evidence that potentially challenged a materialistic outlook. One compelling fact was the awarding of this year's Nobel prize for physics to Alain Aspect, John Clauser and Anton Zeilinger for proving quantum entanglement and nonlocality. The paradoxes of quantum mechanics challenge our perceptions of cause and effect and the nature of the Universe.

Another area of research is termed Instrumental Trans Communication. It is proposed that through photographic and electronic means, it may be possible to see the dead and their realm. It seemed an extraordinary claim and yet when I set up the simple, recommended equipment I was astonished to see and photograph unusual manifestations on a television screen. These pictures were confounding, interesting and exciting all at once. It appeared too simple and perhaps likely that anyone could, with a little effort engage with this methodology.

Having now taken many hundreds of seemingly anomalous images the question is raised, what is the nature of these representations? Are they the faces of the dead or is there some other possible explanation?

The essay recounts my personal exploration into the possibility of life after death. It focuses on some of the subject areas that seemed important to me along the way. It does not and cannot, within the scope of this format make a case for the survival of consciousness. Nor does it examine any cultural implications in any depth. That may need to be addressed at another time.

However, like Barthes who states 'This question grew insistent. I was overcome by an "ontological" desire. I wanted to learn at all costs what Photography was "in itself" (2000, p.3). I too wanted to know the nature of the ITC image.

This research is compelling to me as I seek to explore the depths of human consciousness and hopefully to try to find some answers or at least to provide some hope of life after death and as I enter the later stages of my own life, these questions become more insistent and I realise that this is a mountain, it is there and it is about to be climbed.

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Author's declaration.

**I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work, unless
otherwise stated.**

Introduction

This essay is not about providing proof of any particular concept. Questions around the nature of reality have been asked by humanity for millennia and perhaps will never be fully answered. Rather, the thesis will seek to lay out a self-reflective journey of enquiry, contemplation, and discovery.

I am drawn to this area of research as the result of the death of a loved one in October 2021. I was distressed at how, at times, she felt angry and bereft of hope after a terminal diagnosis. She anticipated that this was going to be the end of her existence. She had no religious beliefs and she did not countenance the possibility of the survival of consciousness after permanent bodily death.

At the start of her illness, I shared her views. However, in an effort to try to provide some hope as she approached death, I was drawn towards literature around the topics of philosophy, the nature of consciousness and the possibility of survival of the spirit. In the course of this journey, I found that my world views were to be challenged and also that my practice as an artist would take a different path. I have been perplexed by some experiences and find that many of these ideas and topics discussed are fascinating. The scope of the issues raised are wide and profound and within this essay structure it is only possible to provide a limited overview.

The abilities of modern medicine to recover people who have died have apparently improved significantly. The work and studies of Moody, (2015) and Lommel (2021),

reveal that many survivors report similar experiences of continuing consciousness while clinically dead. Although somewhat controversial, these researchers suggest that there seems to be a possibility for the survival of consciousness.

The practice of mediumship claims that some people are able to converse with and see the spirits of the dead. Academic psychical research of Swartz, (2003), Rock, (2014) and Cardena, (2018) indicates that there is apparent evidence to support claims of a non-materialist view of consciousness.

There is an area of research termed Instrumental Trans Communication (ITC) and assertions by Cardoso and others are that through ITC, the voices and the images of the dead may not only be seen and heard but also interacted with (2010). I will provide account of my own photographic experimentation and creative endeavour within this field.

I will also discuss some of the areas in and around art and science that might have resonated with me on this personal odyssey.

Near death experience (NDE)

It is perhaps helpful to briefly set out a philosophical context for what follows.

Psychical researcher Dean Radin suggests that there could be three broad positions. 'Dualism', argued by for example Rene Descartes, proposes that the spiritual mind exists apart from, but in conjunction with the material of the body. Both are primary, and non-local spirituality exists alongside a local, material Universe. These two concepts seem to be in opposition to each other and is a criticism of Dualism (1997, p.284-5).

The term 'Non-local', refers to what Einstein coined 'spooky action at a distance' where matter is linked or entangled, immediately and regardless of distance.

Localism refers to matter that is linked to adjacent material in a common-sensical, empirically measurable state of physical vicinity (p.280).

The second, 'Material Monism', or 'Materialistic Reductivism' argues that the mind is a function created from the biological matter of the brain and seems to have been a prevailing paradigm of mainstream Western medical science which broadly appears to discount anything spiritual. Materialism appears to refute 'nonlocality' in agreement with the concerns of Einstein, Podolsky & Rosen (1935) regarding quantum entanglement. Radin proposes that a problem with this kind of mechanised model is that it doesn't correspond with our lived experiences (p.285-289).

A further challenge to materialism appears to have been presented by the physics 2022 Nobel prize winners Alain Aspect, John Clauser and Anton Zeilinger who prove the concept of quantum entanglement and its implications for a nonlocal Universe. The Royal Academy of Swedish Sciences state 'This goes against all the usual ideas about cause and effect and the nature of reality' (2022).

The quantum physicist Jim Al-Khalili, while reflecting on recent scientific advances, describes the Copenhagen Interpretation of the 1920's and how for decades since, generally, science has set aside the realities of paradoxical quantum phenomena, including nonlocality, while embracing the mathematical certainties. 'Shut up, don't postulate but calculate'. He points out that the high strangeness of the quantum world, of entanglement, of uncertainty, the observer effect and super position extends beyond the subatomic and that large scale paradoxical quantum effects are

to be seen for example in the way birds navigate and in the process of rapid energy release from photosynthesis (2021).

Thirdly, Radin describes Transcendental Monism as arguing that the mind is primary and that the Universe is conscious. Materialism is challenged and matter, in a sense, is created by consciousness through observation. He points out this view is supported by, for example, the philosopher George Berkley (p.73). This perspective is potentially problematic as it 'explains the mystery of mind and matter by referring back to the mystery of the mind'. Radin believes this is circular reasoning.

According to the biologist Rupert Sheldrake, Baruch Spinoza, (1632 -1677) proposed that all in nature has a mind as well as a body and that the term 'panpsychism' denotes the idea that the Universe is itself conscious and that these concepts which challenge materialism are associated with other philosophers such as Henri Bergson, Arthur Schopenhauer, William James and Charles Sanders Peirce (2013, p.116-119).

Moody describes how as a medical doctor he became interested in NDE's. He noticed that some of his patients who were revived after dying reported consistently similar 'ineffable' experiences such as a sense of leaving the body, auditory sensations, traveling along a dark tunnel towards a light, encountering spiritual beings, meeting dead relatives who are now alive, and visiting realms that seem magical but yet familiar. They report feelings of peace, belonging and a sense of being deeply loved as well as undergoing what is described as a detailed life review, often experienced from the perspective of the person with whom the deceased engaged with on Earth (2015).

The idea that we are spiritual beings is a repeated theme throughout history, philosophy and different cultures (103-119). Moody cites the Bible, the Tibetan Book of the Dead and the writings of the Swedish philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg.

In the books of Isaiah, Daniel and Paul, it is claimed that our spirits continue to live on past the death of the body. The Tibetan Book of the Dead is described by Moody as an ancient manuscript setting out the various stages that the dying and dead person passes through. Within this Buddhist culture, death is to be celebrated and is an act that can be negotiated skilfully and with grace. Moody suggests that there are striking similarities between the Bible, the Tibetan Book of the Dead and the thoughts of Swedenborg.

Swedenborg declared, 'Still man does not die but is only separated from the corporeal part which was of use to him in the world...Man, when he dies, only passes from one world into another', (1853, quoted in Moody, 2016, p.114-115).

Open Science, (2022) reports that in 2021 American billionaire and space entrepreneur Robert Bigelow put up \$1.8 million as prize money for an essay competition around the topic of the survival of consciousness. It states that Bigelow, concerned at the lack of academic funding generally available, donated this prize fund to encourage further study into the subject.

The \$300,000 runner up in the competition was Pim van Lommel, a cardiologist from the Department of Cardiology, Rijnstate Hospital, Arnhem, The Netherlands.

Between 1988 and 1992 he conducted a study of NDE's amongst 344 patients who had been resuscitated from death for a total of 509 times. The study was printed in the Lancet in 2001 and revealed that 18% of patients reported NDE's and that their experiences are strikingly similar to the experiences described above by Moody.

Another conclusion of his findings suggests that recall of an NDE is linked to good short-term memory and that NDE's occur more frequently in those under 60 years of age. However, the neuroscientist Jason Braithwaite points out that if the NDE is real then why don't all patients who are resuscitated report these experiences (2008).

Lommel, argues that materialistic explanations for NDE's such as hallucinations or a lack of oxygen to the brain are not credible accounts for such events. To support this claim, he produces the evidence of a flat line electroencephalogram during cardiac arrest which shows greatly reduced electrical activity in the brain in just 8 seconds after the loss of a heartbeat. This suggests that there is not sufficient time for the physical brain to produce these effects. With regard to a lack of oxygen, Lommel posits that this normally results in confusion and agitation and not the kind of experiences reported in NDE's (p.13-16).

He also points out science's failure, despite many decades of trying, to identify where consciousness is produced in the human brain (p.4). He suggests that consciousness cannot be a product of brain function alone and that he favours the view that consciousness is primary within the Universe and that his conclusion is shared with the theories of amongst others, the physicist Max Planck, the cognitive psychologist Donald Hoffman and the philosopher William James (p.35).

He proposes that the brain is more like a 'transceiver' of information as opposed to the transmitter (p.20).

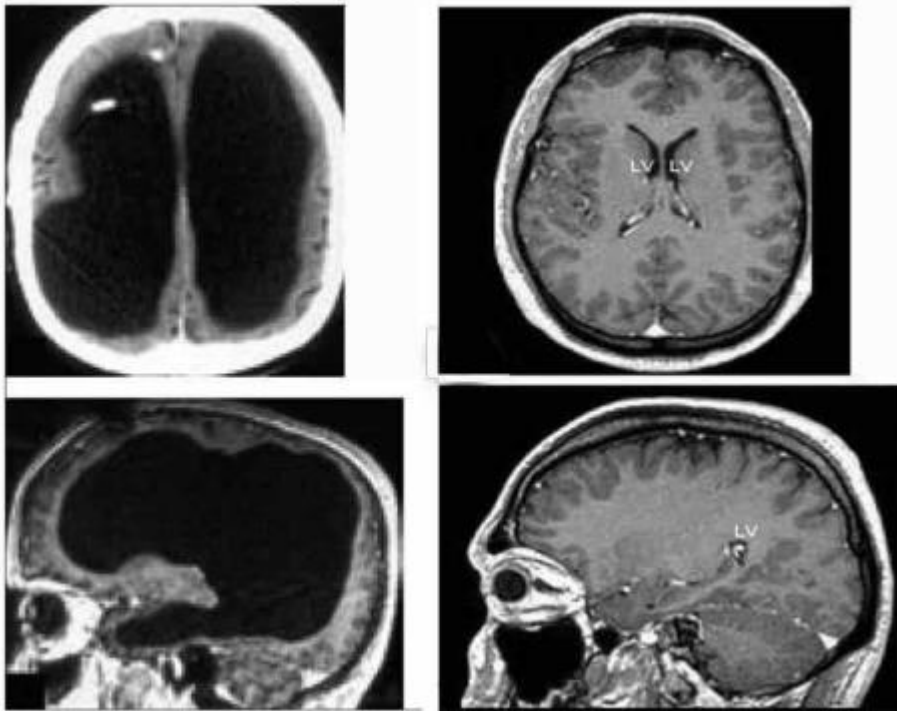


Figure 1

The author produces an image from an article printed in the journal *Science* by neuroscientist John Lorber, titled '*Is your brain really necessary?*' It shows on the right a normal brain and on the left the brain of a healthy, fully functioning young man with an IQ of 126 and a degree in mathematics. Ninety five percent of his brain cavity was filled with fluid and he had just one fifteenth of the brain mass of a normal brain (p.17).

A critical review of Lommel's study by Braithwaite states that it does not prove that the mind is separate from the brain and that Lommel's conclusions are misleading and unscientific. He suggests that survivalist claims around NDE's are not scientifically robust but remain in the realm of belief.

From a phenomenological perspective, Chene, provides a video account of Graeme O'Connor's NDE, (2002). It is one of many available on the internet and it is perhaps helpful to view these videos and see how people behave, what they describe and how believable they may seem. Like members of a jury, we can get to see the

witness giving evidence and this is surely helpful in seeking to understand the phenomenon.

More broadly, Cardena sets out a meta-analysis of academic psychical research conducted over many decades and concludes that there is compelling evidence to support a non-materialist view of consciousness (2018). However, as Braude points out, evidence of extra sensory perception (ESP), telepathy and psychokinesis are not necessarily supportive of survival (p.4, 2021).

Mediumship

The psychical researcher David Fontana sets out a history of mediumship and suggests that modern mediumship started with the Fox sisters in the mid 1800's in Hydesville, USA, (p.92-157). The three girls, aged 12, 15 and 19 were able to communicate with apparent anomalous entities by means of raps on surfaces in their home. They also developed the ability to levitate tables and objects. The young women were studied closely, first by the townsfolk and as their notoriety grew became national sensations and subject to wider scrutiny. During early investigations it was reported no fraud was uncovered. However, with the involvement of P.T. Barnum and a desire to cash in on their alleged abilities, claims of dishonesty and sleight of hand followed.

The practice of mediumship and spiritualism grew in popularity in the USA and quickly crossed over to the UK. Interest in this new religion caught the attention of scientists and scholars and led to the creation in 1882 of the Society for Psychical Research in London.

Claims of physical mediumship involve the manifestation of entities and the manipulation of objects such as table raising and levitations. This was regularly witnessed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but according to Fontana it is now rare to find evidence of physical mediumship.

More popular in contemporary times is mental mediumship where messages with the dead are seemingly exchanged via a medium either in trance or generally in a state of induced relaxation. Fontana highlights three women he considers to be outstanding mediums whose reputations for evidential robustness and sincerity were impressive: Mrs Leonora Piper (1859-1950), Gladys Leonard (1882-1968) and Eileen Garrett (1893-1970). All three were studied with strict controls by the SPR with reported remarkable results (p.122-157).



Figure 1a Mrs Leonora Piper in a trance. Mrs F.W. Myers, photographer. Dry plate, 1895.

At the University of Arizona, Schwartz sets out the controls, circumstances and results of laboratory experiments involving five well know psychic mediums in the late 1990's. The mediums were subjected to many tightly designed sessions with sitters not known to them. The results of these experiments show seemingly remarkable accuracy on the part of the mediums and their apparent contact with the dead. Schwartz emphasises that every effort and precaution was taken in trying to make the experiments as reliable and as rigorous as possible (2003).

Both physical and mental mediumship was reported to have taken place during the many sittings of the Scole experimental group at the village of Scole in Norfolk commencing in 1992 and lasting for 5 years. Solomon & Solomon give account of the early sessions where gifts from the spirit world, known as apports, materialised in the cellar where the group were working. Typically, they dropped down from the ceiling onto a table in the small room, (2006, p.44-60).



Figure 2

As well as apports, there were many orbs of light seen to dance about the space and objects such as cow bells and trumpets belonging to the experimenters were witnessed to levitate and dance. Voices, independent of the medium in trance were heard to emanate from space within the cellar and in 1995, solid bodily forms of entities began to manifest around them (p.93).

After early success in communications, they sometimes experienced long periods where nothing seemed to happen. Working with what they termed a 'spirit team', the participants were able to refine a number of approaches which yielded improved encounters (p.43-60). For example, the relationships between the personalities of the experimenters seemed important. They discovered that playing lively music as opposed to 'mournful' songs helped lift certain 'vibrations'. Meditation (p.48) and the importance of positive thought (p.212) were considered to be contributory variables.

The authors state that central to the enterprise was the fact the earthbound team worked with the 'spirit team' and that it was discovered that the spirit team were experimenting and refining methods on their side as well and that this was a collaborative effort (p.44).

Over many sessions, communications with the alleged spirit world improved. Experiments with film photography and video developed and yielded extraordinary results (plates 1-57, p.160). Solomon & Solomon provide further photographic and video evidence along with commentary on their web site (2022).

Solomon & Solomon set out the scientific scrutiny that was directed at the experiments, both from independent scientists and investigators from the Society for Psychical Research (2006, p.99-120). Regarding photography for example, controls

of marked films, a chain of custody, a sealed box and independent processing were established.

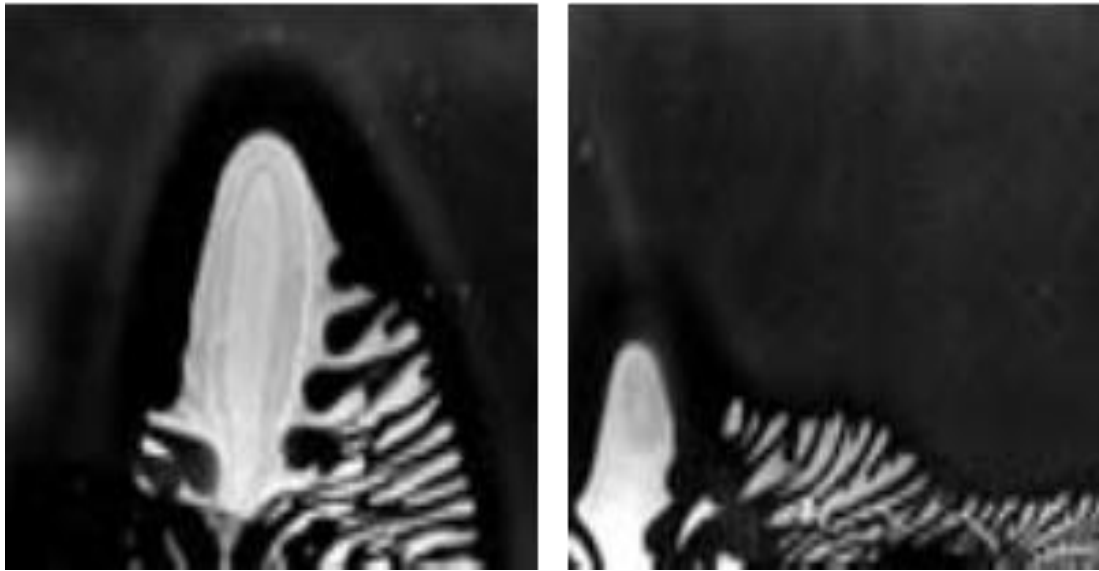


Figure 3

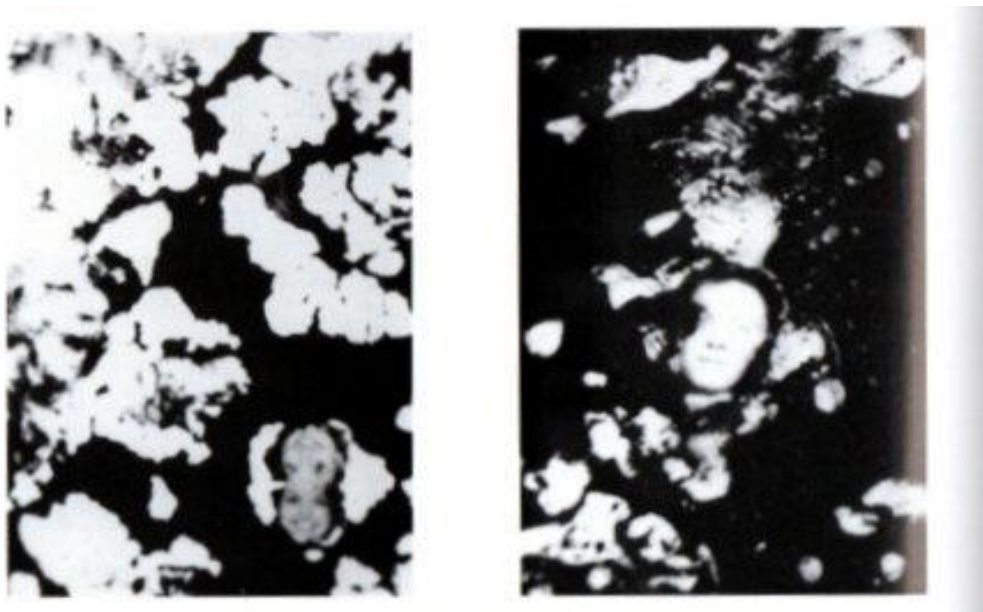


Figure 4

Keen, Ellison & Fontana (2011) of the SPR were involved and supervised many sessions over a two-year period and produced a detailed report. It contained a number of criticisms by way of peer review, one for example from Gauld, who stated that he could not exclude normal explanations (p.284). However, the authors all state that in their opinions the happenings at Scole were paranormal in nature and ruled out any fraud or deception (p.305).

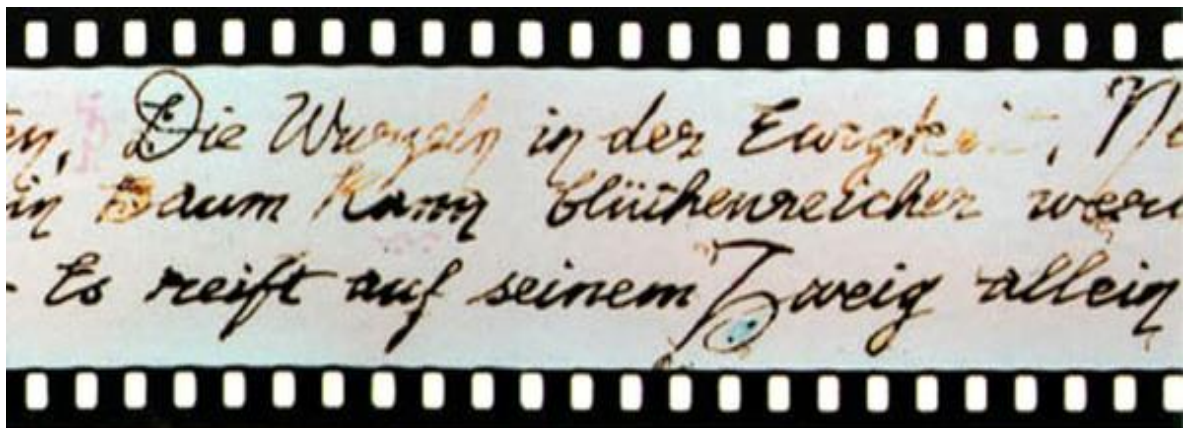


Figure 5

As above, many of the photographs were obtained with no camera. A roll of film was placed in a sealed box and held by one of the independent scientists during the cellar sessions.



Figure 6

One of the photographic methods used in the cellar was Polaroid instant film and an image claimed to represent Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was created (plate 10). It is explained that images of previously existing photographs were also capable of being formed in the experiments (p.286). Conan Doyle was deeply interested in the psychical during his lifetime, and now perhaps, beyond.

Video experiments were conducted using the 'Alice method' (p.166-181).

ALICE mirror set-up.

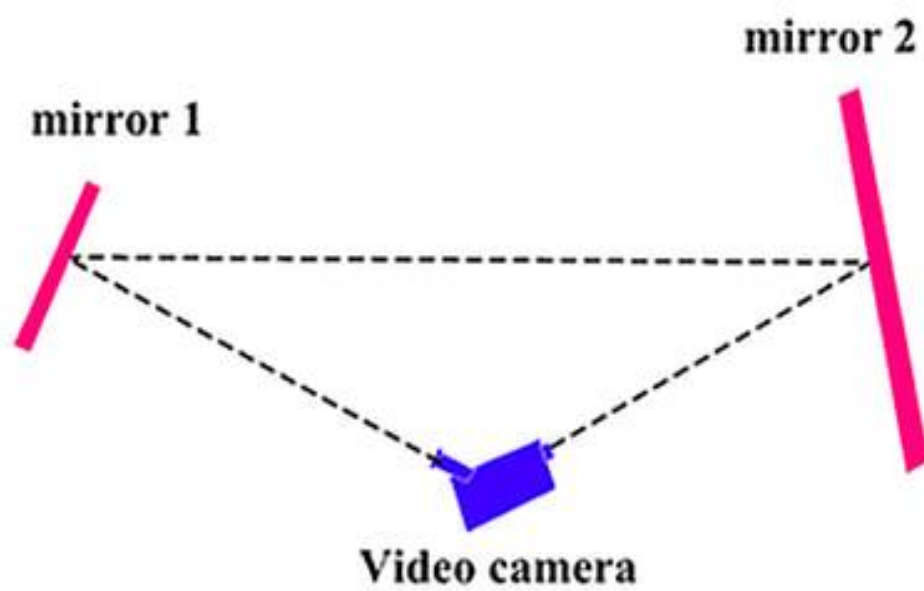


Figure 7

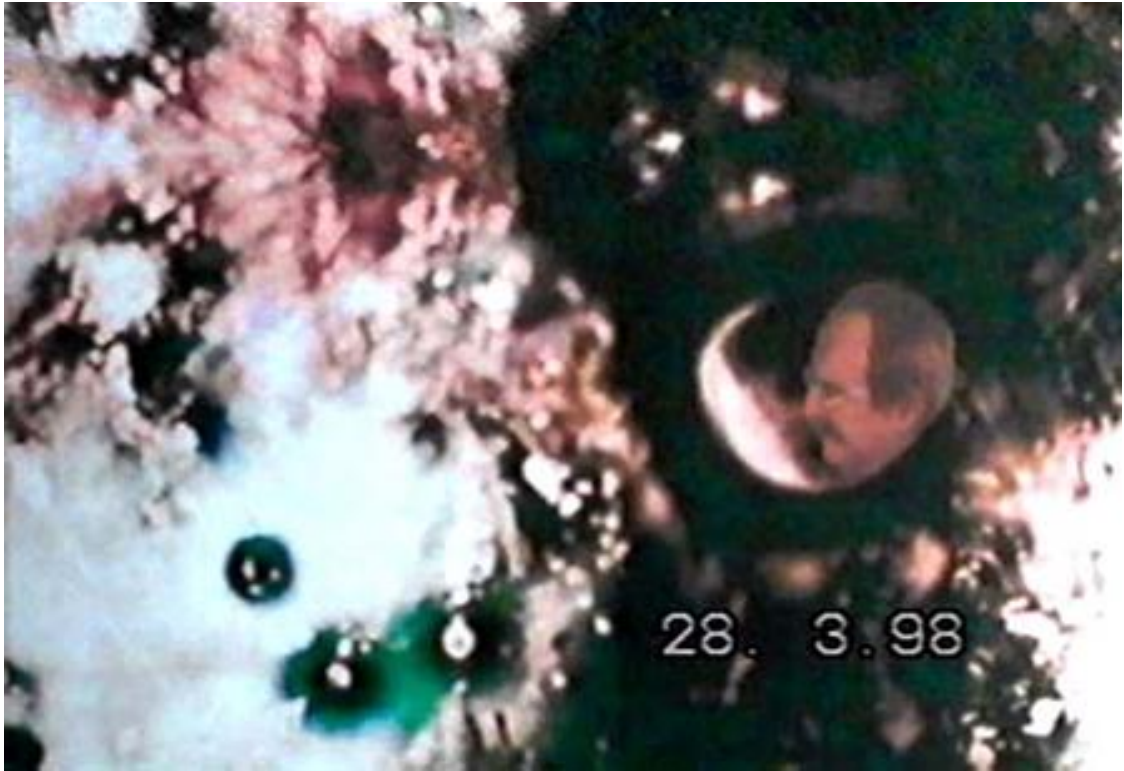


Figure 8



Figure 9

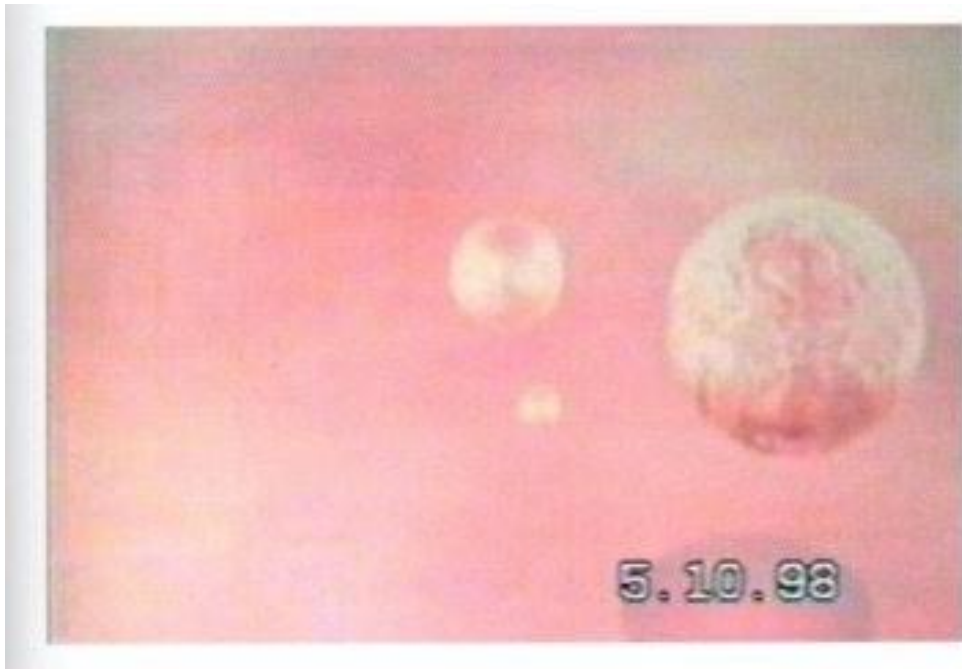


Figure 10

A sceptic might say that if these occurrences take place, then how come the public doesn't appear to know about them. However, it seems that the events were widely reported.

THE MEDIA



Figure 11

There were editorials in many of the mainstream media in the UK and internationally (p.161). Also, there was a television documentary written, directed and produced by Tim Coleman (2022).

Rock et al. provide evidence that in controlled studies, mediums are able to provide accuracy readings significantly above expected chance (2014).

Instrumental Trans Communication

Mishlove, the \$500,000 first prize winner of the Bigelow essay competition, highlights the possible evidence for survival presented by Instrumental Trans Communication (ITC), (2021, p.46-50). He reports that since the days of Thomas Eddison, people have been seeking to contact the spirits of the dead through electrical and electronic means.

One such researcher, Anabela Cardoso provides a brief history and explanation of ITC (2010, p.11-20). A pioneer of ITC research from the 1960's is Friedrich Jurgenson, a Swedish documentary film maker. He noticed that while making a production about wildlife in woodland he believed he could hear on the audio what seemed to be anomalous voices that claimed to be those of the dead. They encouraged him to use the background noise from a radio, tuned between stations to white noise.

Audio tape recordings of questions put by the researcher are apparently answered by entities and produce what has been termed Electronic Voice Projections (EVP).

Another kind of method is termed Direct Radio Voices (DRV) where a two-way dialogue may, it seems be engaged with by a radio voice or voices and the experimenter directly.

Communications are not just restricted to EVP or DRV. Cardoso reports that the German researcher Klaus Schreiber received an EVP from his deceased daughter suggesting that he would be able to obtain visual images of landscapes, people and other worlds by placing a camcorder in front of a television screen and playing it in a continuous loop (see Figure 7 for similarity to the 'Alice' set up from the Scole experiments). Cardoso names the pictures obtained as 'trans images' (p.17).

Cardoso has been active in this field of research for over two decades and she is involved with the international publication ITC Journal, also now online. Under a page titled 'Listen to messages' a number of her EVP and DRV recordings can be heard (2022).

Cardoso, along with other ITC researchers conducted a peer reviewed study over two years consisting of controlled tests at two sound proofed and shielded

professional acoustic laboratories in Vigo, Spain, and produced many 'excellent', 'very good' and 'good' anomalous voice recordings. They suggest that the messages can be clearly understood. However, it seems that the people evaluating the results were potentially not independent, nor randomly chosen listeners (2012, p.512 -513).

Fontana states that he was present at recordings while investigating Cardoso and heard anomalous voices giving cogent replies to questions asked and presents corroborative evidence of these phenomena (2010, p378).

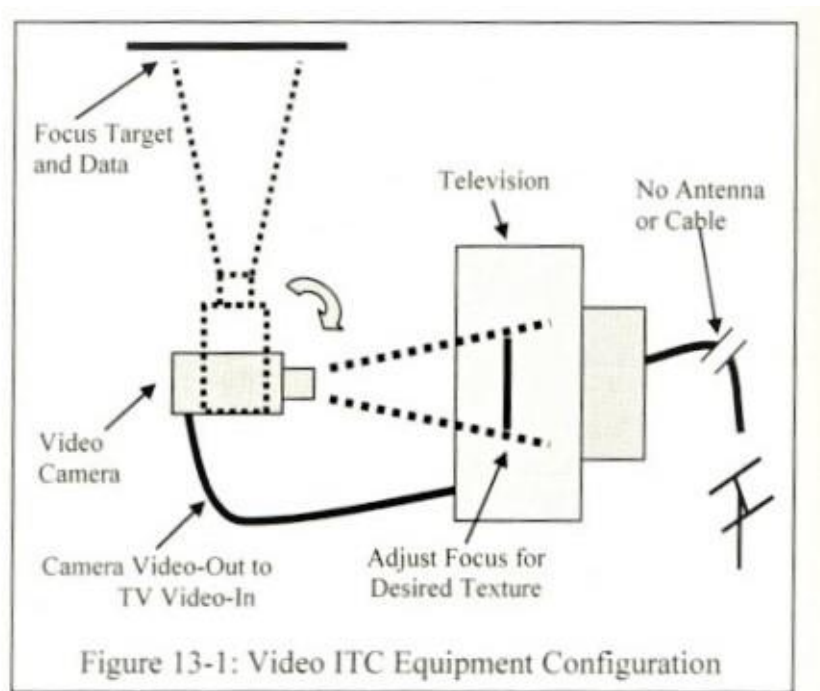


Figure 12

Butler & Butler (2004) provide a description of the Schreiber method and how they set up their equipment to obtain trans images (p.244).

A researcher since 2011, Santos states she has recorded many visual images using the Schreiber method (2022).



Figure 13



Figures 14

As a visual artist I am more interested in the possibilities of engaging with trans images as opposed to audio. It would be, I suppose a possible collaboration with the spirit world and I am fascinated by what they might have to show and say to me.

Initially, following the example of Claus Schreiber I sought to create a contact via EVP. A radio was set to white noise and a portable recorder created digital files of prepared questions and a gap of 1 minute for any answers.



Figure 15

The files were processed with Adobe Audition and almost immediately it seemed that I was receiving anomalous voices and cogent responses to my questions. Fudge, (2022) records a question to a loved one, 'Hope you have found peace' and a clear response of 'Yes' is heard. A second recording asks the question 'What is your name please or are you many?' and the response seems to say, 'We are many'. This second recording sounds to be less clear. I denote a typical ITC classification to recordings of A, B and C with A being the clearest and C the poorest.

My intentions were to seek out visual imagery and so I then concentrated on camcorder experimentation.



Figure 16

After initial efforts with a camcorder, I decided to create a variation on the Schreiber method and introduced a camera with an electric shutter release cable. My experiments showed that a shutter speed of $1/30^{\text{th}}$ or $1/60^{\text{th}}$ seemed to work best. The camcorder is in continuous loop with the television and the setup has no internet, channel cable nor aerial connections. It is just a screen. The camera is set on burst mode. The addition of the camera means that there are fewer frames to view as opposed to a video clip at either 25 or 50 frames per second (being the options on this camcorder). Also, the camera's sensor creates larger digital files than the camcorder which aids file processing with Adobe Lightroom. Interesting pictures seemed to manifest fairly quickly.

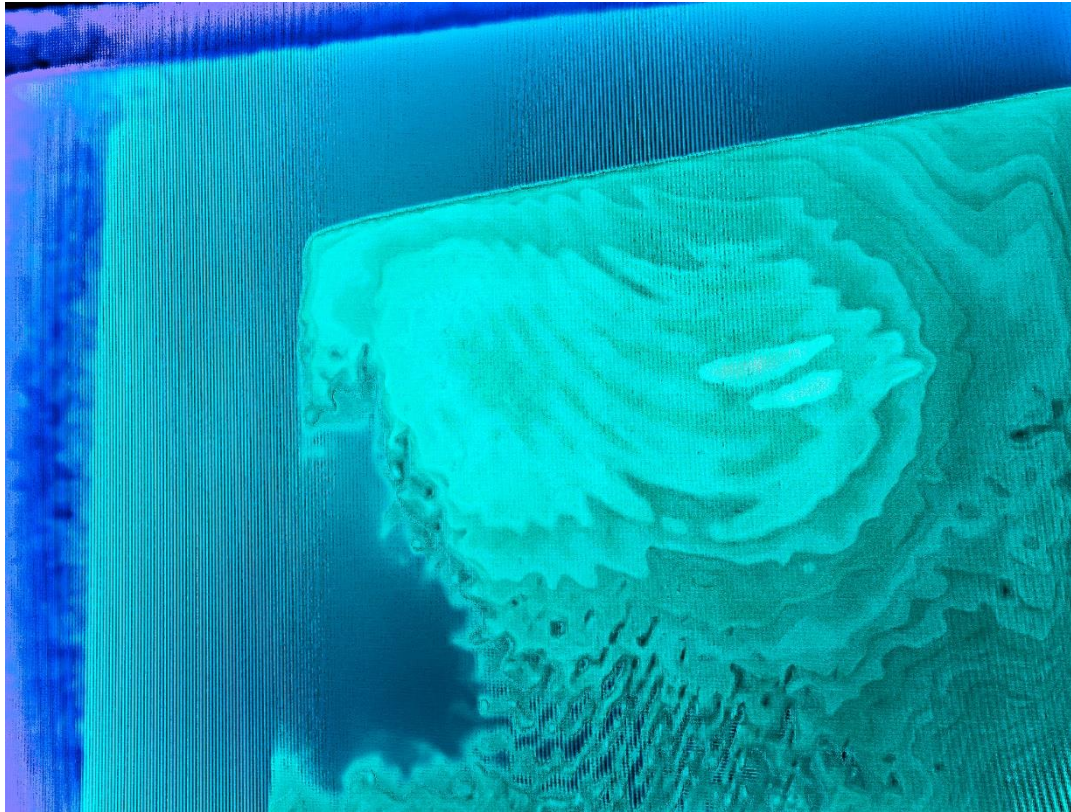


Figure 17

The herring bone like structure of the body is interesting. Leland, (2018), while recounting lucid dreams, hallucinogenic and out of body experiences depicts encountering similar body forms in what he describes as journeying in the realms of nonphysical reality (p.63).

Many images are subtle and difficult to interpret while others seem more clear. Lots of sessions reveal nothing of interest at all. Often anomalous or unusual aspects are detected but are compositionally uninteresting.

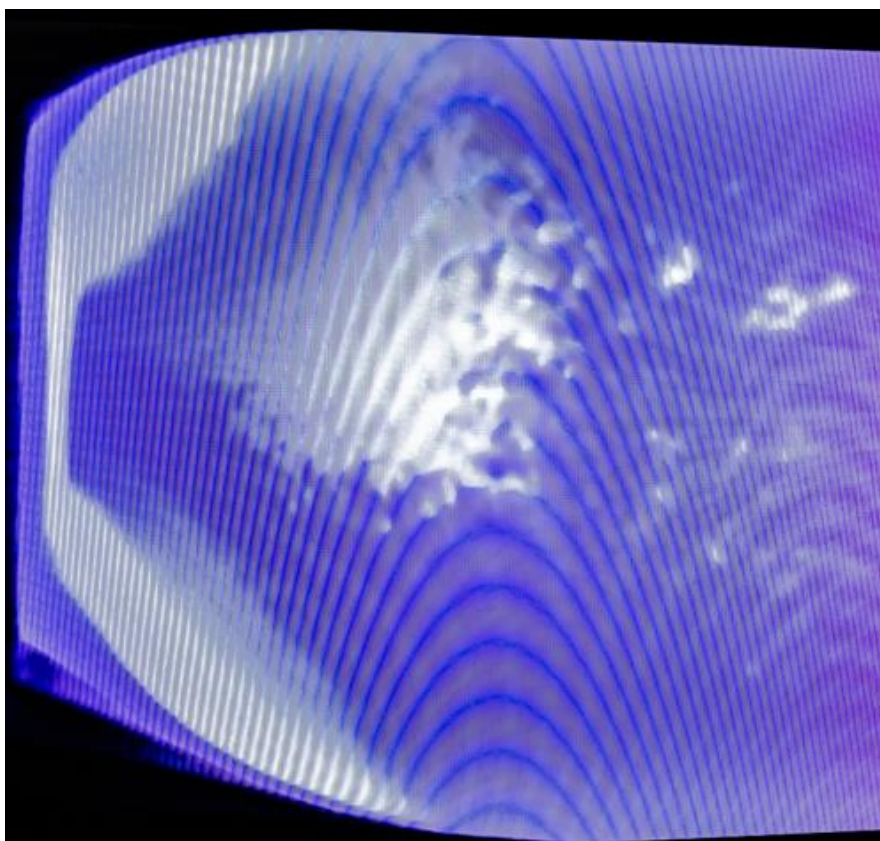


Figure 17a

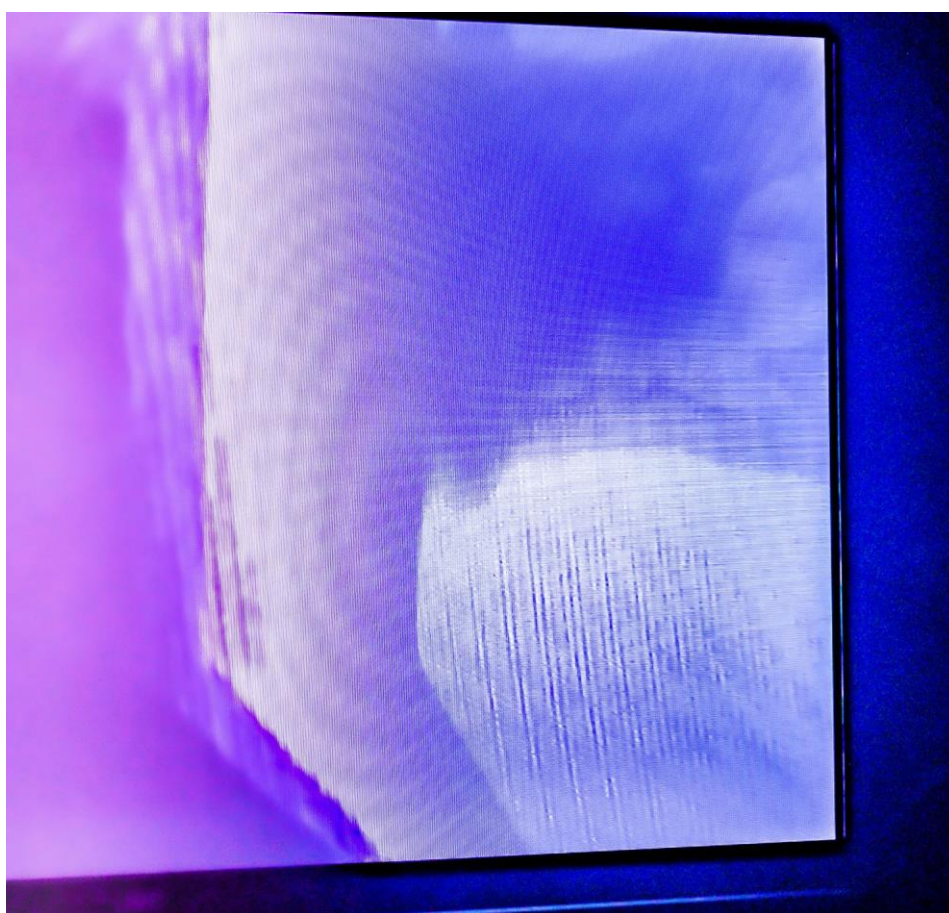


Figure 17 b

Audio ITC/EVP session	
Date	
Time	
Location	
Weather conditions	
Moon phase	
Equipment	
Frequencies	
Questions	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
Comments	

Figure 18

For each ITC session a form is created, recording a number of variables which seem to be relevant. There are many more variables that need to be tested but if too many are tried at once it becomes more difficult to isolate which variable might be responsible for what outcome. Cardoso, when asking her communicators why there

seems to be so much variability in the quality of messages was told 'We don't know' but that most of the hurdles are overcome from their side (2010, p.156-7).

What interests me in particular is what messages might be contained in the communications and if there is evidence of a sentient two-way dialogue.

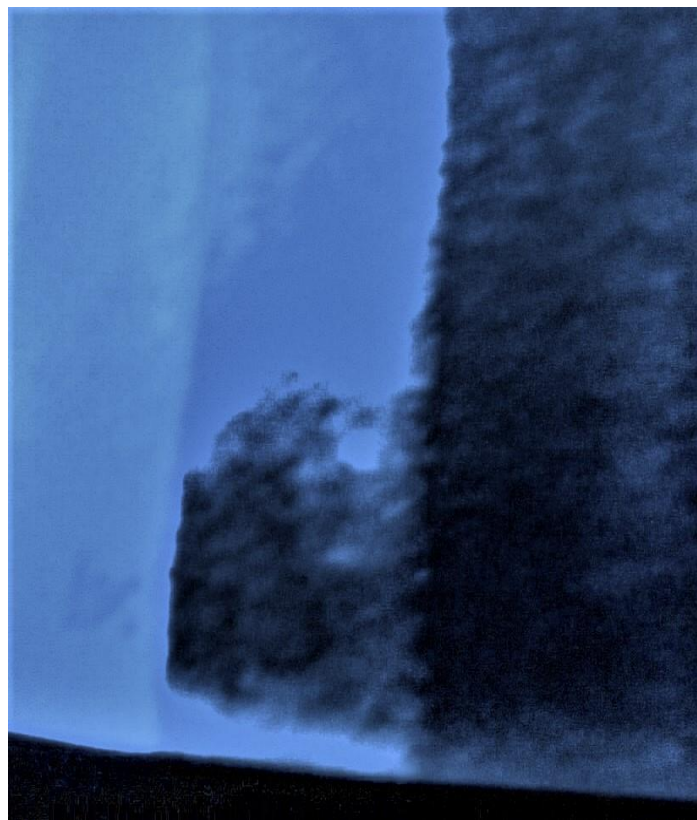


Figure 19

The picture above captivates me in a number of ways. My subjective interpretation is that there is a kind of masquerade mask on what I sense is a woman and the mask is displaced. There looks to be a crucifix around her neck and there also seems to be some sort of creature that is to her right who gives the impression of placing its hand

on her lips. The masquerade mask is a repeated theme in many of the images I have received and in figure 14, by Santos one might say that there is the suggestion of a similar mask to the right of her picture.

Frequently there might be a mythical element in an image and quite often animals feature.

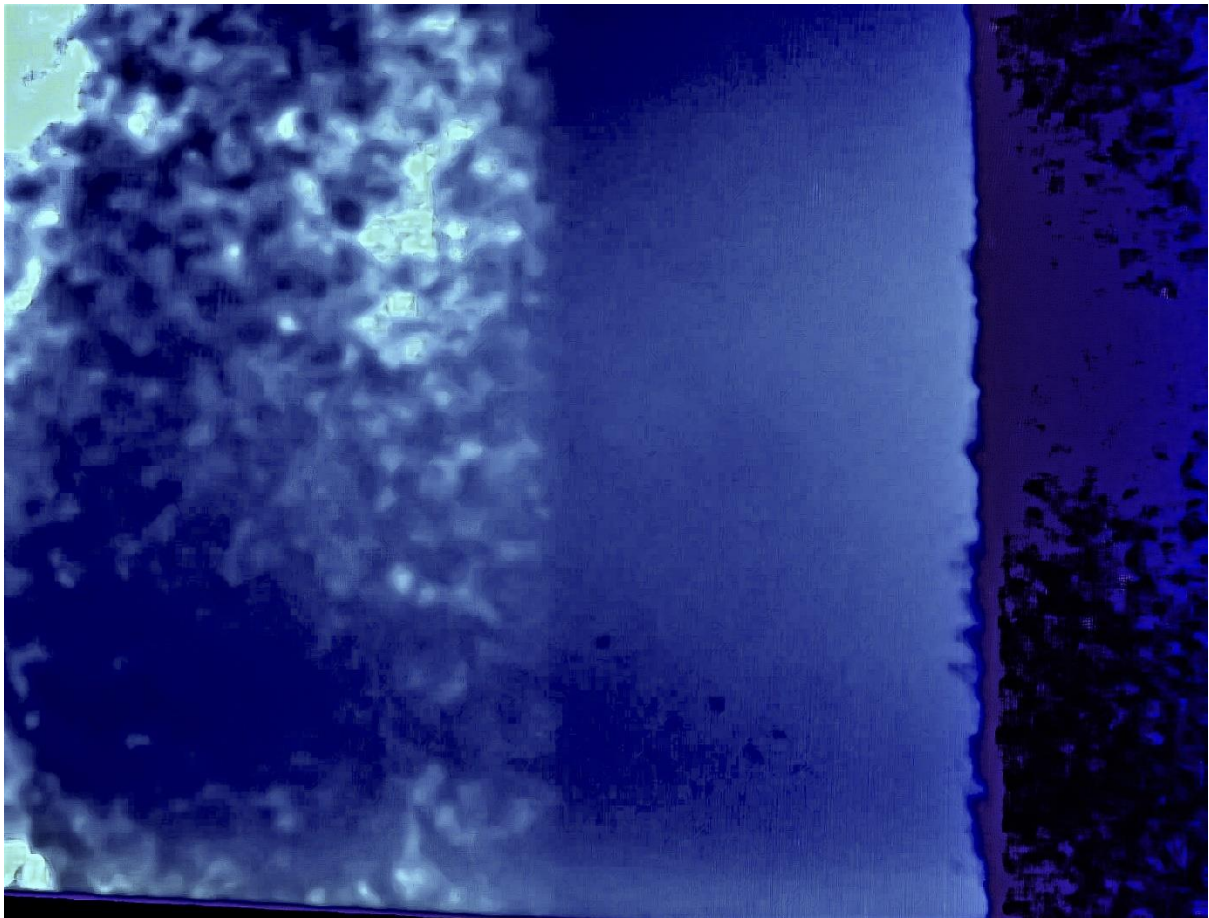


Figure 20

Some images unsettle me and here I imagine that within a larger, sad looking face there is a man with a crown who looks to be in a crucified posture while below there is some kind of bat like creature clinging to an upright trunk.

The following picture shows me reaching into the screen with my hand as it passes in front of the camcorder. I believe the man within the screen might be reaching back out to me, almost touching my hand and this may suggest evidence of a kind of acknowledgement or signal.



Figure 21

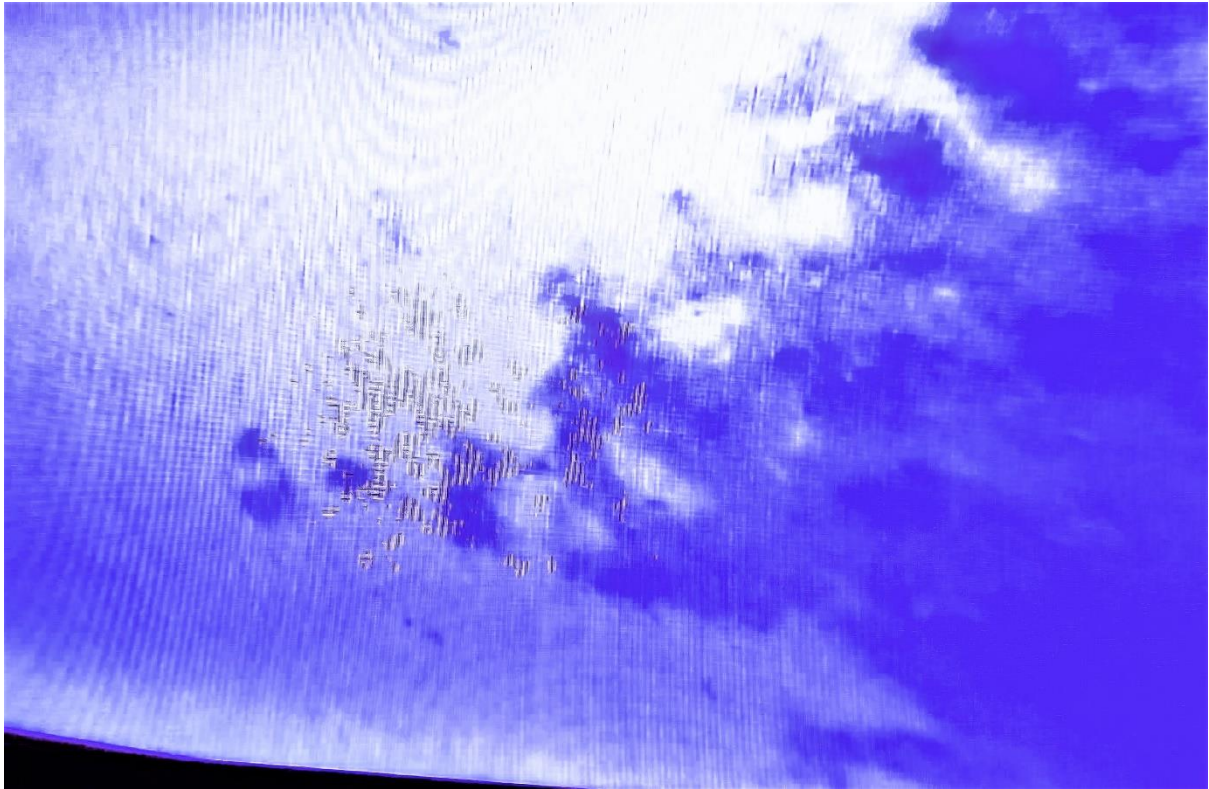


Figure 22

There is a clear structure to the left of the picture that looks like some kind of metal funnel or pipe perhaps. Although vague, I sense that there are unusual looking dogs to the right and some seem to be howling.

Fontana suggests that for some time after death, the physical desires of the body persist but that as a process of spiritual evolution takes place, bodily cravings become repressed (2010, p.460). Nevertheless, in the next image I perceive or may be fantasize that the woman to the right hints with her gait at humour and sensuality.

As in figure 8, a video still from the Scole experiments, I notice that a person seems to be wearing glasses and I have seen this in some of my other pictures also.

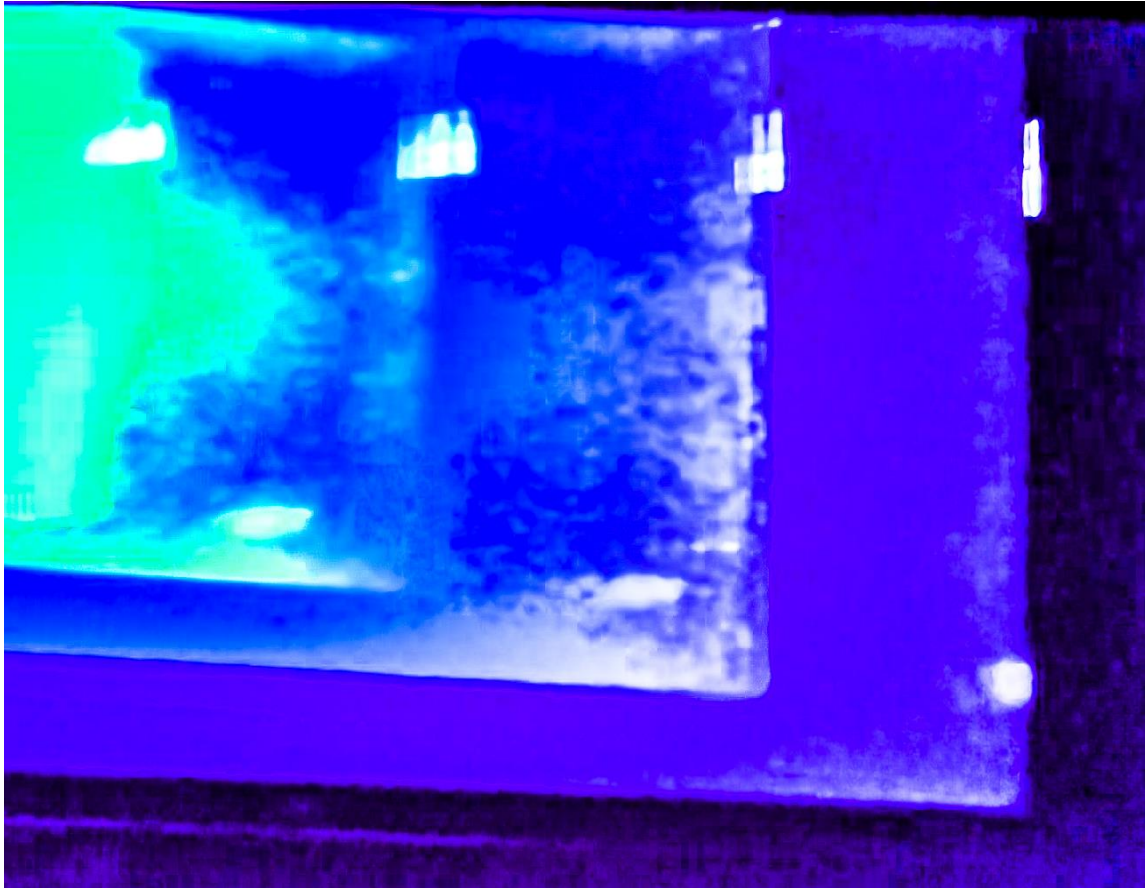


Figure 23

The following image shows that despite using the same equipment, the feel of the picture can be quite different. In figure 25 the central subject seems to be extending his hands towards me. Also, it looks to me that the style of this picture is similar in character to figure 3, a photograph obtained during the Scole experiments.

I feel the picture below, figure 24, contains elements of a surreal, animalistic sexuality and also shows a figure to the left with what look like modern sunglasses.

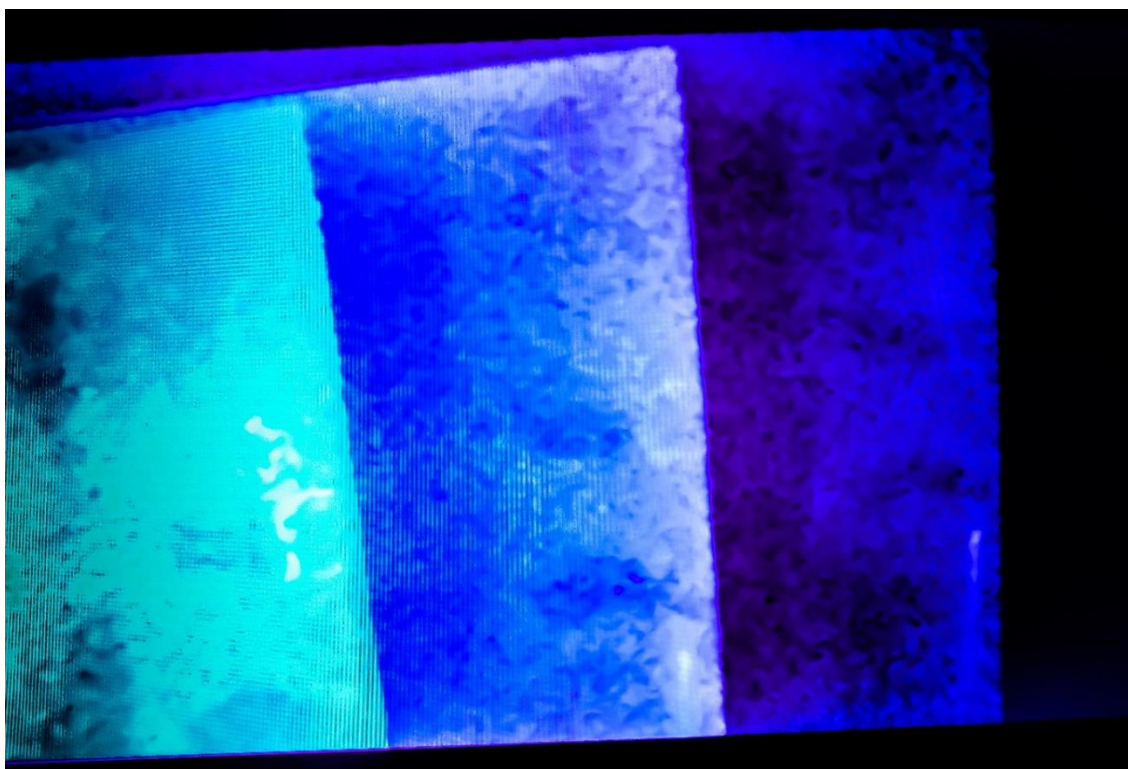


Figure 24



Figure 25

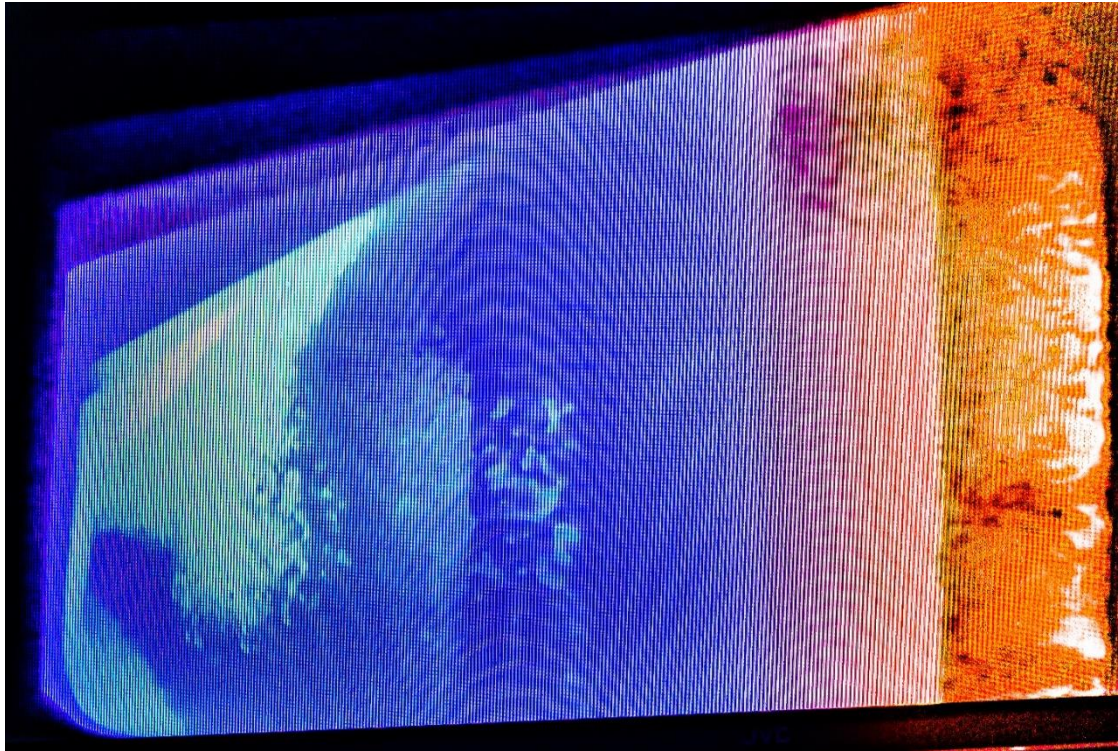


Figure 26

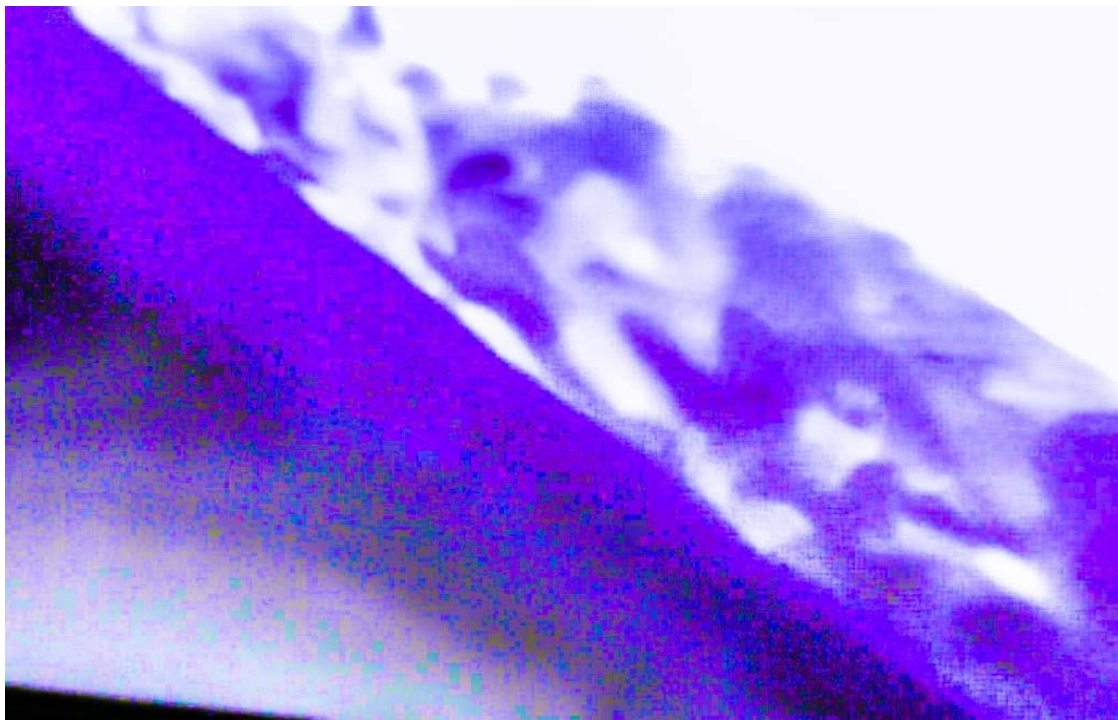


Figure 26a

It seems many images are dreamlike, even bizarre but may perhaps seek to communicate a message.

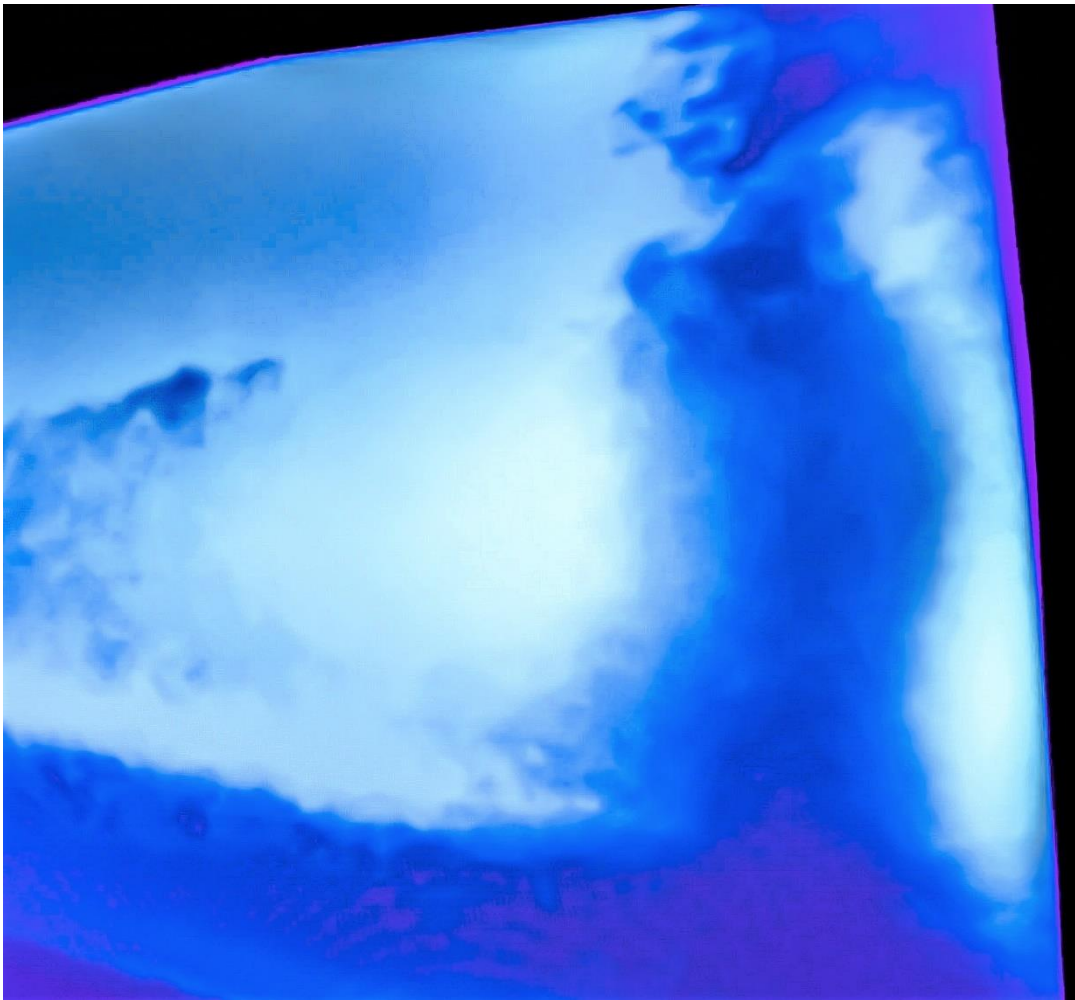


Figure 26b

Cardoso states ITC has produced 'some of the most objective and impressive proof yet obtained that life does not finish with the death of the physical body' (2020, p.9). However, the work of Eisenbud, might suggest a different possible interpretation. Over two years Eisenbud conducted many experiments with Ted Serios, a man who seemed to possess the ability to transfer his thoughts onto photographic film. He also appeared to utilise ESP and identify images hidden in envelopes and then project these onto film (1967).

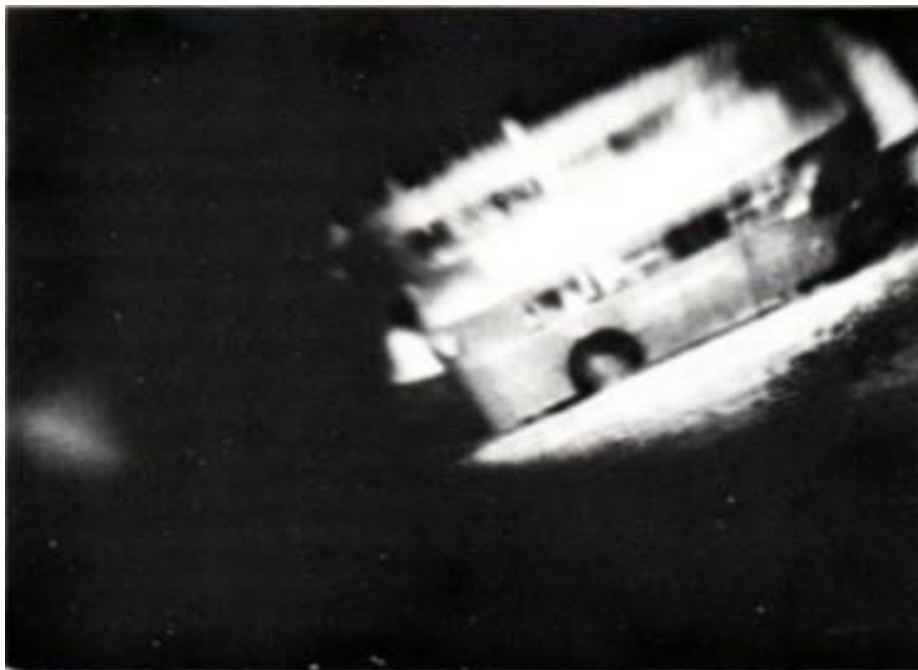


Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29

In figure 30 below, Eisenbud describes how Ted captures the essence of a building but that often the details would be markedly different (p.168). For instance, here Ted's image is elongated, the windows and doors bricked up and the masonry of stone and not brick as it is in the real-life picture shown below Ted's.

The ability of Ted to project his thoughts onto film raises the possibility of ITC images coming, somehow, from the experimenters themselves and not from an external or spiritual origin. Braude suggests that survivalists need to take note of 'living agent psi' as a possible source of these type of phenomena. He argues, (2021, p.4) that if spirits of people are able to manifest themselves in so many extraordinary ways then

why shouldn't the same phenomena be able to be produced from living people? How can we be sure it is external and spiritual?



(Fig. 67)

(Fig. 68)



Figure 30

The Art of the Spiritualists



Figure 31 Spiritual Crown of Mrs A.A. Watts, 1867. Georgina Houghton.

Grant, Aberth & Larsen, describe how even though Houghton's hand was automatically moved by hidden forces she remained in overall control of her spirit art (2020, p.25). She claimed that what she drew and painted were accurate depictions of another realm.

Larsen suggests that the tensions around mediumistic art with accusations of incredulity and fraud were seized upon by the artists as a means of shaking up the rational, scientific and patriarchal Establishment. The spiritualist movement of the nineteenth century seemed to march hand in hand with the ideas of Marx and Engels and were closely linked with women's battle for equality and other protest movements of the time. It was a non-conformist revolution sparked by the Fox sisters of Hydesville, USA (p.76).

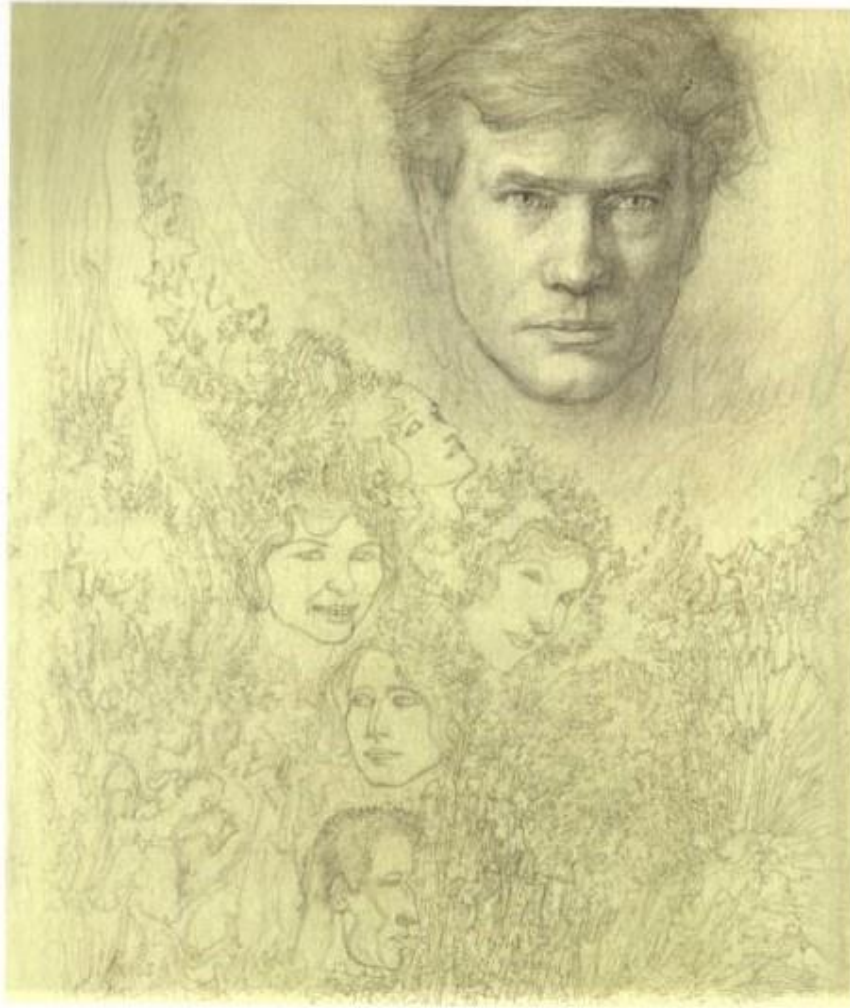


Figure 32 Austin Osman Spare Self Portrait – Subliminal Mentations, c.1927.

The head and face of a subject is a repeated theme as seen above. Some of the images from the Scole experiment, those of Simone Santos and my own work appears to reflect the importance of the individual itself but also that the image emerges from a larger whole of perhaps what might be termed a group soul.

Cardoso explains that the idea of a group soul is a concept expressed as far back as the mid nineteenth century within spiritualist literature and suggests that people with similar beliefs, characters and from kindred earthly backgrounds may be bonded together in the next life (2017, p.73). This implies that the manner in which we

conduct ourselves, our principles, ideologies and values may be important and perhaps confronts a philosophy of nihilism.

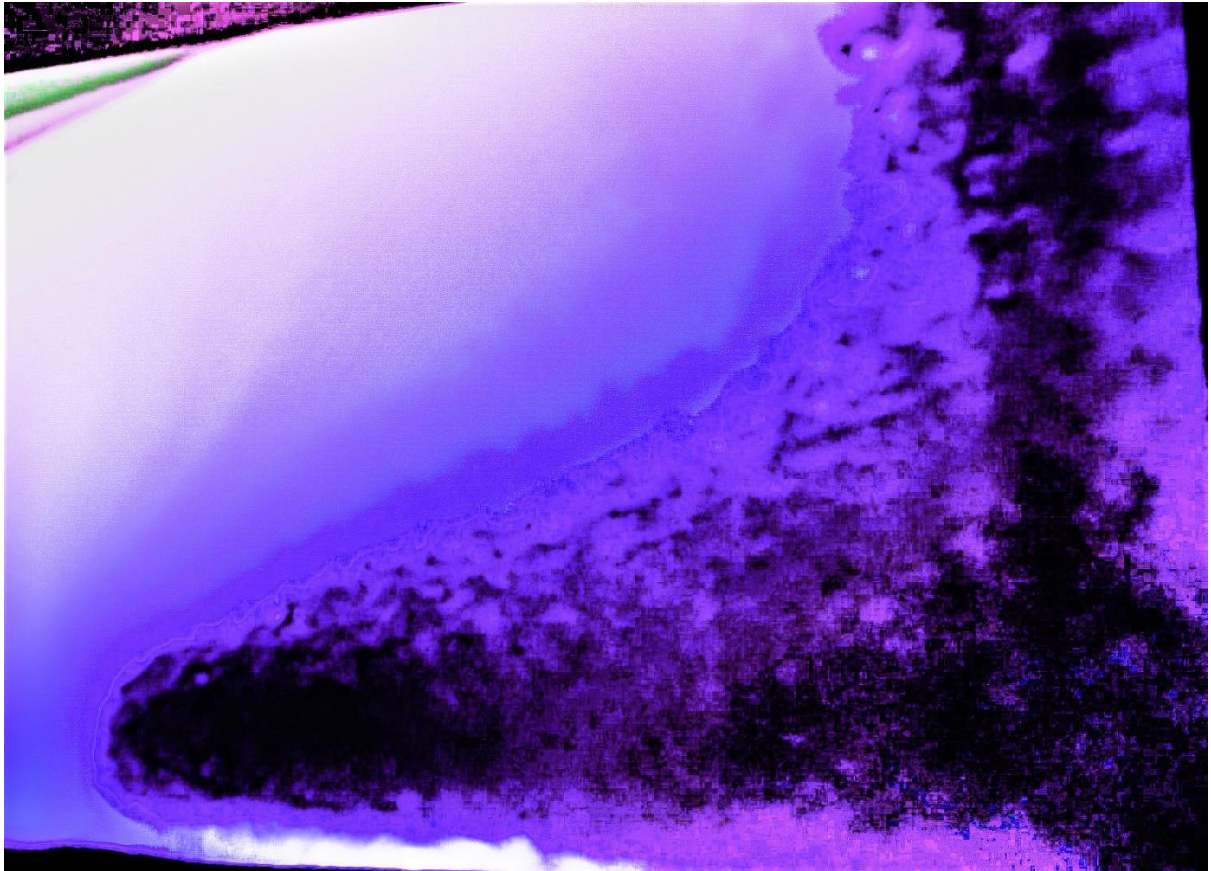


Figure 33

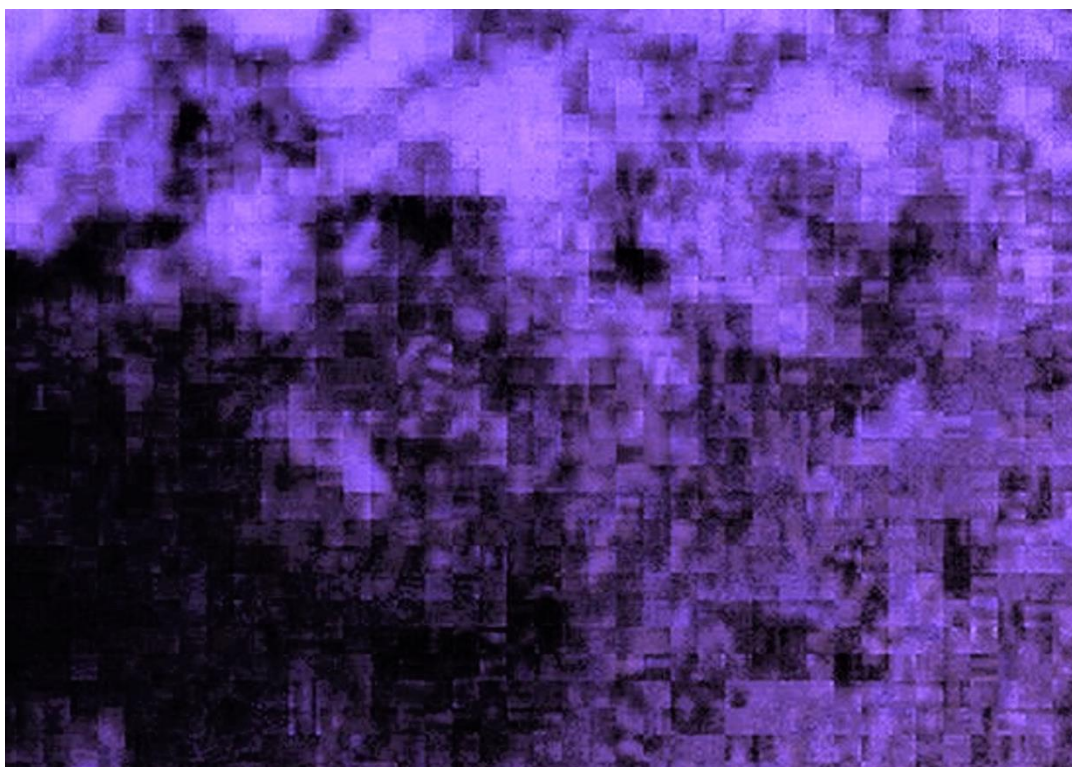


Figure 34. Close up of 33.

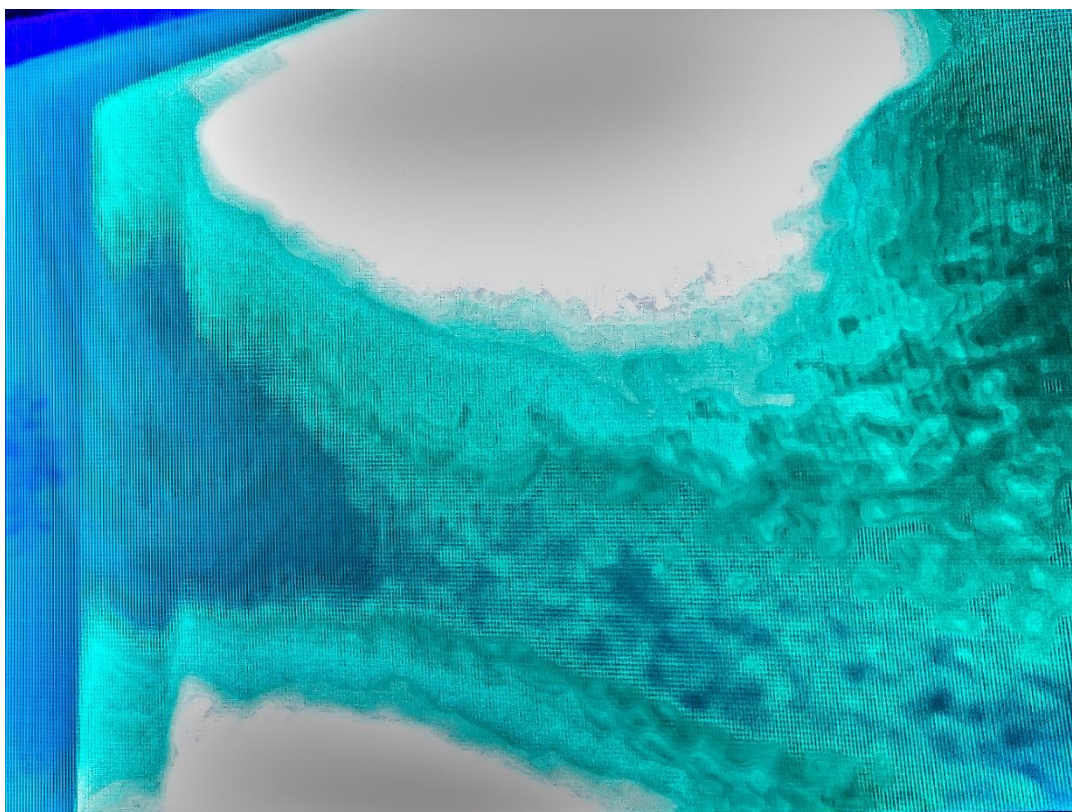


Figure 35

The sense that an individual emerges from a background of light or a suggestion of a structure of partly formed heads, faces and even animals is one that seems to be occasionally seen or implied in my work and is perhaps echoed by the art of Spare and Houghton. My audio work also suggests the possibility of a group soul with the reply 'We are many'. However, at present this theory is little more than conjecture in the absence of further and more compelling evidence.

Conclusion

Braude points out that science itself is an uncertain pursuit, exemplified by the physics 'slugfest' of different competing 'grand theories', and that absolute scientific proof of the survival of consciousness may be elusive (p.2).

This essay did not set out to prove the survival of consciousness as there is not sufficient room to attempt this. Any effort at making a case would include other areas like for example reincarnation, xenoglossy, hauntings and post-transplant personality change. Rather it is a reflection on a personal journey but inevitably, with regard to these ITC photographs I ask myself 'what are they?'

I do not think that the images received and photographed on the television screen are errant signals from commercial broadcasts. If they were, I assume that I would be seeing adverts for breakfast cereals and familiar scenes like TV station logos.

Electronics and radio communications expert Alexander MacRae confirms that from his ITC experiments over 20 years, the messages are not 'stray radio pick ups' (2004, p.30).

With regard to NDE's I believe that the work of Lommel and others is extremely interesting but neuroscientists such as Braithwaite cast an element of doubt on Lommel's conclusions.

The Scole experiments do seem compelling in terms of suggesting survival but one comes up against the possibility of living agent psi. Cardena's meta-analysis suggests that phenomena such as ESP, psychokinesis and telepathy exist and Braude argues that we can't reliably exclude these apparently human generated phenomena from any psychical experiences. The work of Eisenbud with Ted Serios indicates that anomalous images originated from Ted's living mind and were created without invoking anything spiritual.

The same living agent psi problem could also perhaps be said for ITC and even though the voices and images are ostensibly from the dead, how do we know for sure that these are not of exotic human origin, driven by a kind of wish fulfilment?

The living agent psi question is examined in detail by Fontana and he points out that as a result of 'cross-correspondence' experiments with mediums, the evidence suggests that certain verifiable information could not have come from the minds of the medium nor the sitter and are likely to have emanated from elsewhere (2010, 176-86).

However, Braude brings us back to his argument that all psychical phenomena might be, somehow, constructed by humans themselves and that absolute proof of the survival of consciousness is therefore difficult to pin down. Notwithstanding this caveat, he does point out that we might choose, on the strength of encountered evidence to arrive at a reasoned belief around a 'problem of crippling complexity' (p.52). For example, in common with Fontana above, Braude believes that the

extensive studies by researchers like William James and the SPR of mediums such as Leonora Piper go some way to providing persuasive evidence of survival (p.25).

My own judgement is that the images interpreted by me as representations of people and animals are not pareidolia but something else with a seemingly numinous quality. While one needs to be careful of reading too much subjectivity into random shapes, I believe that many ITC images are far from prosaic or misleading in nature but are representations of something unusual and deserving of continuing attention and I cannot exclude a non-materialistic explanation. The advances in our understanding of quantum paradoxes seems to compel me to take seriously the notion of a nonlocal Universe and therefore, I keep an open mind.

Science is not fixed and is evolving and it is surely foolish to declare that reductive materialism is the only viable explanation for the nature of reality. Sheldrake highlights the fact that the science of physics can account for only 4% of the energy and matter thought to be in the Universe. Humans seem to have little idea about the nature and qualities of the rest of it (p.68).

If we survive bodily death and live on in another dimension then why wouldn't we be able to engage somehow with these realms? Perhaps ITC is one way of doing so.

Finally, if I knew I was approaching the end of life, I think I would rather have a belief in the hope of survival than the desolate prospect of Heidegger's 'Nothingness'.

Words 5707

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Appendix 1

A visual diary was submitted in support of this essay.

