

PHANTASMAGORIA

Emily Jones

What is Phantasmagoria?

- It is a form of horror theatre that (among other techniques) used one or more magic lanterns to project frightening images such as skeletons, demons, and ghosts onto walls, smoke, or semi-transparent screens, typically using rear projection to keep the lantern out of sight. The word "phantasmagoria" has also been commonly used to indicate changing successions or combinations of fantastic, bizarre or imagined imagery. It is a sequence of real or imaginary images like that seen in a dream.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phantasmagoria>

Why have you chosen this subject?

- I have chosen to base my major project off dreams and dream like states. As someone with an overactive imagination and who daydreams a lot of the time, the scenarios I end up creating can be unique and strange. I feel this title relates to how my dreams work a lot as I can often remember them and they linger on my mind all day long which is unpleasant however, this will benefit me in this piece of work as I'm able to make the images more detailed. I want this piece of work to demonstrate both a dream like state and a ghost like state as to me they feel similar. I also want to use this time to explore the history and techniques of camera tricks and how they've evolved throughout the years. I studied a topic similar to this during my GCSE's and enjoyed the creativity of it so I'm hoping I can bring a sense of that into my work now.

History of Phantasmagoria

Before 1750, some ancient sightings of gods and spirits are thought to have been conjured up by means of mirrors, camera obscura or magic lantern projections. In the 1589 version of *Magia Naturalis*, Giambattista della Porta described how to scare people with a projected image. A picture of anything that would terrify the beholder should be placed in front of a camera obscura hole, with several torches around it. The image should be projected onto a sheet hanging in the middle of the nascent dark chamber, where spectators wouldn't notice the sheet but only see the projected image hanging in the air. The last decades of the 18th century saw the rise of the age of Romanticism. There was an obsession with the bizarre and the supernatural. This movement had elements of the bizarre and irrational, and included the rise of the Gothic novel. The popular interest in such topics explained the rise and, more specifically, the success of phantasmagoria for the productions to come.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phantasmagoria>



One of the earliest pictures known to have been projected with lanterns were Death, hell and monsters:

Giovanni Fontana's 1420 drawing showed a lantern projecting a winged female demon.

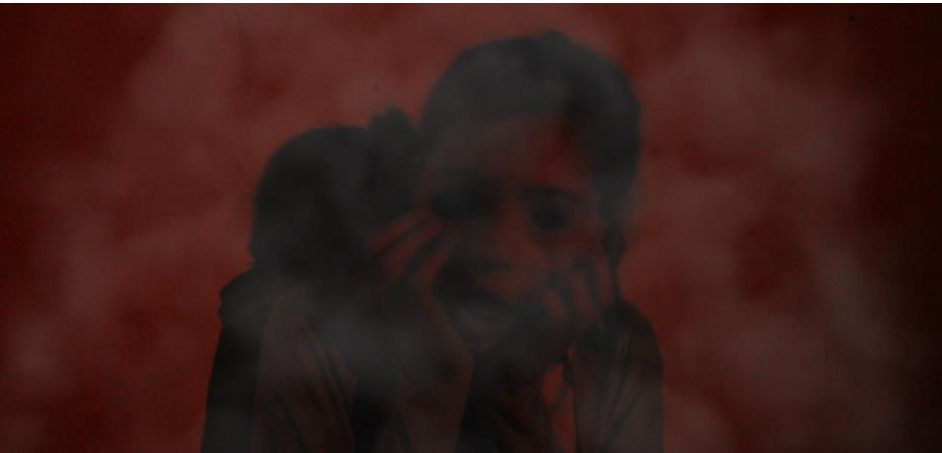


Mood board





Inspiration from past work



During GCSE Photography, one of the main topics I looked into was Peculiarity, inspired by the movie and book Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children. From this I also looked into the term 'Freaks' in the 19th century and the portrayal it had on the fourth season of American Horror Story, Freak Show. Victorians were obsessed with the peculiarities of death, and their attraction to the living eccentrics of the freak show ran just as deep. Also seen in the Musical 'The Greatest Showman' as P.T Barnum's use of 'Freaks' in his shows.



Researching into this subject gave me my first initial look into camera tricks and how they were used in the past. This also allowed me to create my own version of 'Peculiar' photographs with the resources I had at the time of this project. In a way I'm using this current project to retry this 4 years on to see if what I viewed as peculiar then is the same now.

WILLIAM. H. MUMLER



Mumler was an American spirit photographer who worked in New York and Boston. His first spirit photograph was apparently an accident—a self-portrait which, when developed, also revealed the "spirit" of his deceased cousin. Mumler then left his job as an engraver to pursue spirit photography full-time, taking advantage of the large number of people who had lost relatives in the American Civil War. Mumler was eventually taken to court and tried for fraud and larceny. Noted showman P. T. Barnum testified against him. Though the judge acquitted him, the event ruined his career and Mumler died in poverty. Today, Mumler's photographs are recognized as fakes but they circulated widely during the last quarter of the 19th century and were marketed as objects of belief and visual curiosities both within and beyond the spiritualist movement.

Robert E Jackson

An exhibition of approximately 200 snapshot photographs chronicles the evolution of snapshot photography from 1888, when George Eastman first introduced the Kodak camera and roll film, through the 1970s. During this time it became possible for anyone to be a photographer, and snapshots not only had a profound impact on American life and memory, but they also influenced fine art photography. Organized chronologically, the exhibition focuses on the changes in culture and technology that enabled and determined the look of snapshots. It examines the influence of popular imagery, as well as the use of recurring poses, viewpoints, framing, camera tricks, and subject matter, noting how they shift over time. By presenting the history of snapshot photography instead of concentrating on thematic subject matter, the exhibition and accompanying catalogue mark a new approach to the genre. The exhibition is drawn from the collection of Robert E. Jackson and from recent gifts Mr. Jackson made to the National Gallery of Art. His photographs have had a massive impact in the film industry thanks to 'Miss Peregrine's home for peculiar children'. The film has brought the photograph of the twins alive into motion picture. Before the film his photo's were featured in the book which inspired the film. His photographs keep the audience wondering as they portray a sense of uneasy.





Fairies at the bottom of the garden

The Cottingley Fairies are a series of five photographs taken by Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths, two young cousins living in Cottingley, near Bradford, England, depicting the pair interacting with fairies. Elsie was the daughter of Arthur Wright, one of the earliest qualified electrical engineers. She borrowed her father's quarter plate camera and took photos in the beck behind the family house.



When Mr. Wright, upon developing the plates, saw fairies in the pictures, he considered them fake. After the taking of the second picture, he banned Elsie from using the camera again. Her mother, Polly, however, was convinced of their authenticity. In the summer of 1919, the matter became public and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (author of Sherlock Holmes) wrote an article for a leading magazine claiming that they were authentic.

However, in the early 1980s the cousins who took the photographs admitted that the first four pictures were fakes. Speaking of the first photograph in particular, Frances has said: "I don't see how people could believe they're real fairies. I could see the backs of them and the hatpins when the photo was being taken."



THE GHOST

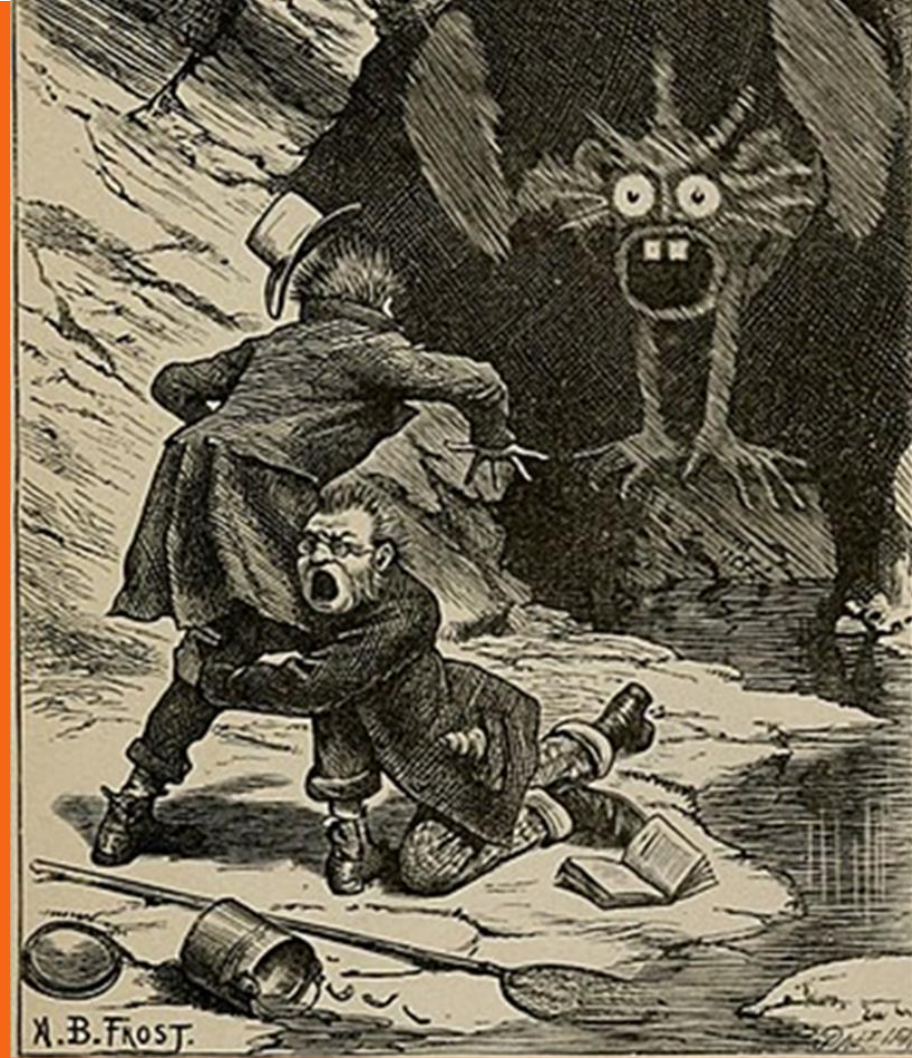


Research — Lewis Carroll

Poet Lewis Carroll wrote a poem in seven cantos entitled 'Phantasmagoria', first published in 1869. The poems are a narrative discussion between a ghost (a Phantom) and a man named Tibbets. Carroll portrays the ghost as not so different from human beings they, like us, simply have a job to do and that job is to haunt.

Ghosts, our Phantom tells the narrator, fear the same things that we often fear, only sometimes in the reverse:

"Allow me to remark
That ghosts has just as good a right,
In every way to fear the light,
As men to fear the dark."



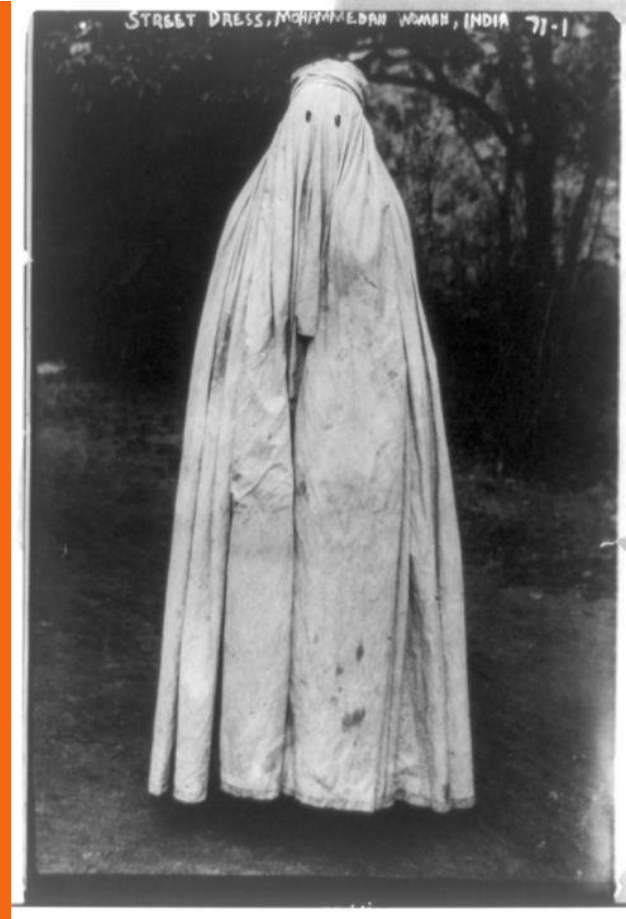
HAUNTOLOGY

Hauntology is a neologism introduced by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his 1993 book *Spectres of Marx*. The concept refers to the return or persistence of elements from the past, as in the manner of a ghost. It has since been invoked in fields such as visual arts, philosophy, electronic music, politics, fiction and literary criticism. Derrida used the term to refer to the atemporal nature of Marxism and its tendency to "haunt Western society from beyond the grave."



1900'S GHOST HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

Most commonly associated with a ghost costume is the white bedsheet. Used mainly in the 1900's for this effect, it was a cheap and quick Halloween costume for any person looking for a last minute character. I want to use this old fashioned association as I like the comedic yet effective look it gives off. Its also very unmistakable as its seen in the media a fair amount.



STEVE SCHOFIELD

Steve Schofield is an award winning photographer whose work has appeared in many of the world's leading publications and exhibited widely in Europe. Away from photographing celebrities, Schofield has documented Cosplayers (people who dress up as characters from their favourite TV shows/movies/games ect) going about their everyday life. The Juxtaposition from the neutral homely space around the cosplayer who in the photograph is dressed as Chewbacca from Star Wars, is the type of effect I want my image to give off. I enjoy the fact that it is entirely serious and not a joke to both the photographer and model which is the impression I want to have with this ghost photoshoot.



Ghost Photoshoot Trend

The ghost photoshoots have become a viral trend on TikTok. The trend involves teens dressing up in white sheets to look like ghosts and head to a photoshoot-worthy location. Some are adding sunglasses, or eye holes to their ghost getups and a vintage filter adds to the aesthetic, while the videos on the app are usually set to Jack Stauber's 'Oh Klahoma'.

I really like the look of these images especially once edited with a filter or gone to the next level by editing out limbs, making it look like the 'ghost' is floating. I will try to add these aspects into my image.



COMPARISON

The Phantasmagoria poem is written by Lewis Carroll who famously wrote the stories of 'Alice in Wonderland'. Carroll is able to give off a childish impression due to this. This also carries on into the 1900's ghost Halloween costumes as the typical white sheet costume is commonly worn by children. Where I got this idea from is the ghost photoshoot trend off of the app TikTok. Whilst the ghost photoshoot trend is being done with innocent intentions, some have said that the white sheets are reminiscent of the outfits worn by the KKK, a historic white supremacist group. Someone on twitter commented on this by saying "To be fair, before 2020 I would have looked at this picture and gone "oh yeah, ghosts, Halloween" and now I looked at it and went "KKK?.... oh... nope, ghosts, false alarm".

Planning the Photoshoot – The Ghost

How will you take it? – I will be using a 18-55mm lens as it is a universal lens that allows you to shoot at a vary of distances. As I'm planning on having this photoshoot be as free as I can with a lot of experimentation.

Location – Preferably these will be taken in the Taff Trail woods along side my house. The woods will give the images a good eerie feel to them due to the cover of the trees. There are also aspects like tunnels, bridges, pathways and off the trail areas that will help me experiment.

When should it be taken? – Due to the cover of trees in the woods time of day isn't too necessary however I'm aiming for mid afternoon.

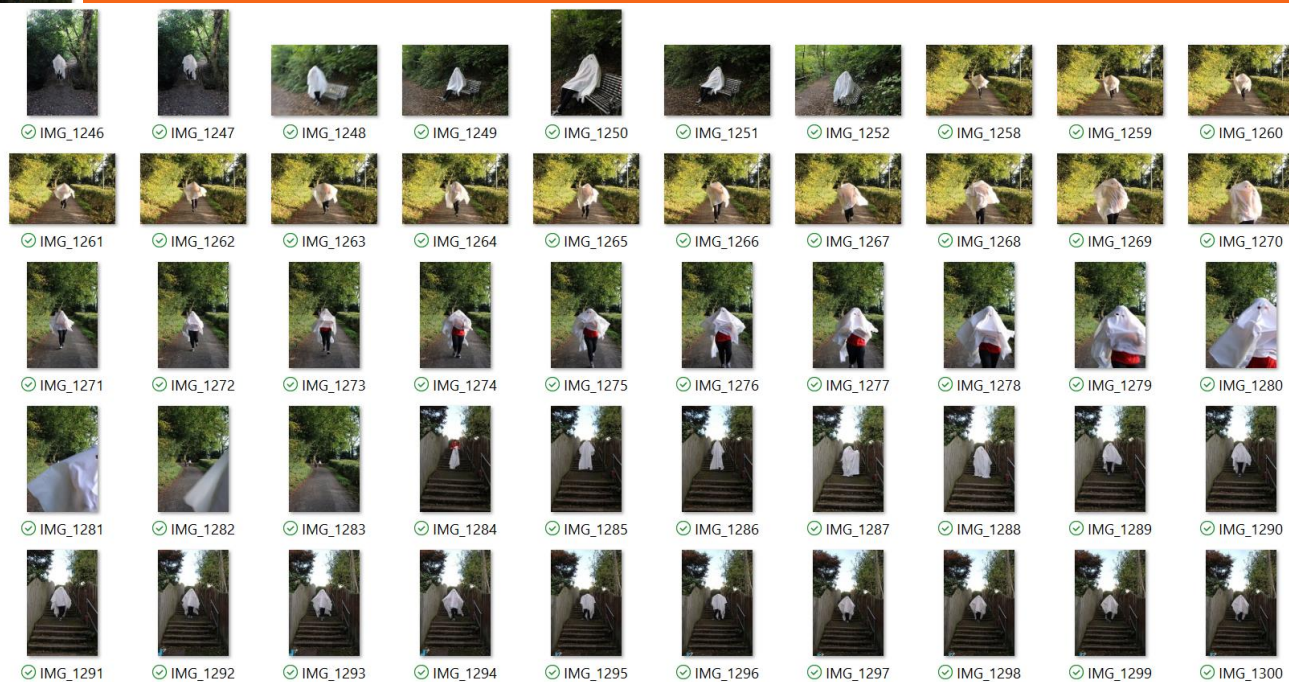
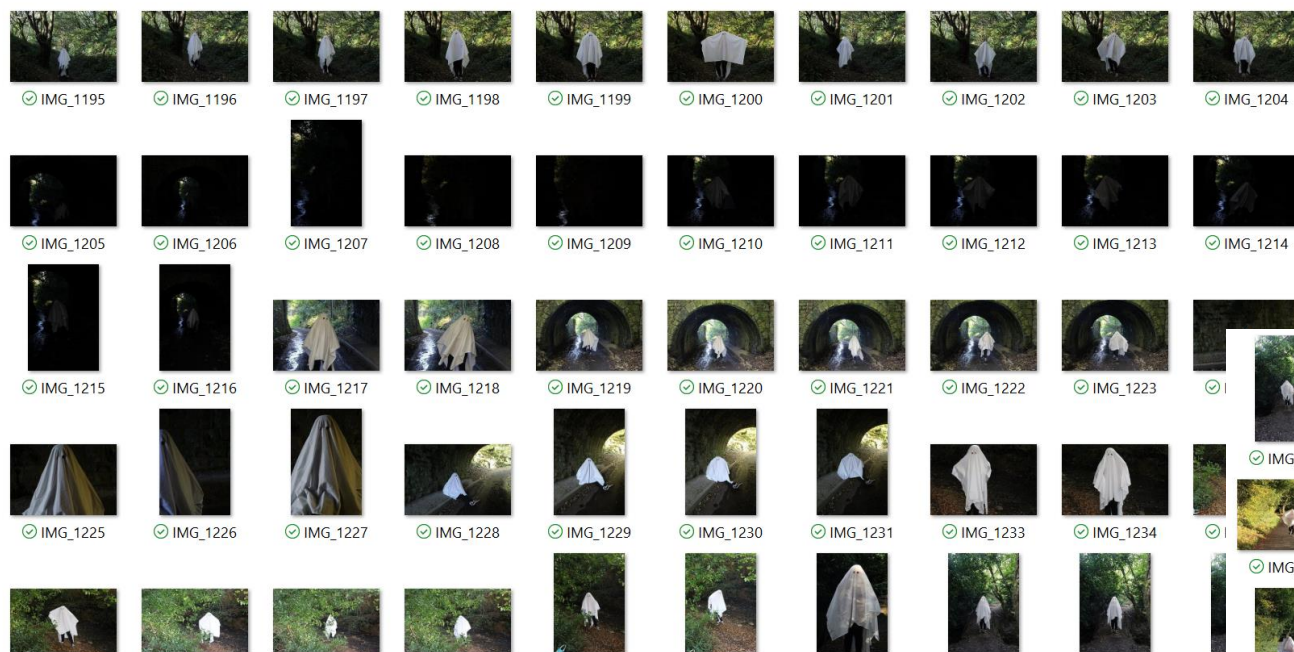
Camera angles and distance – I'll be using a range of camera angles in order to stick to experimentation. I will also vary my distance from the model to create effect. I wont be using a tripod for this as I feel it'll look better hand held.

Lighting and Flash – I would like this shoot to be in day light and without artificial lighting. I wont be using the flash.

Costume, Makeup, Hair and Props – Makeup, hair and props will not be needed in this shoot. The costume consists of a white bedsheet with eyeholes cut out in the middle.

Things to consider – I'll need to consider the people around me and the paths taken due to safety of the model and others around me.

The Ghost — Contact Sheet





Other successful shots

Whilst out shooting for my final 'Ghost' image I took and edited some that I liked the outcome of however didn't work well with the look and feel of what I wanted my final piece to look like. All of these photos are either shot in visible daylight or in a comedic sense. The only other one I would consider using is image 2 as it gives off a slight uneasy look due to the isolation and focus point onto the figure, however I feel the image is still quite light.

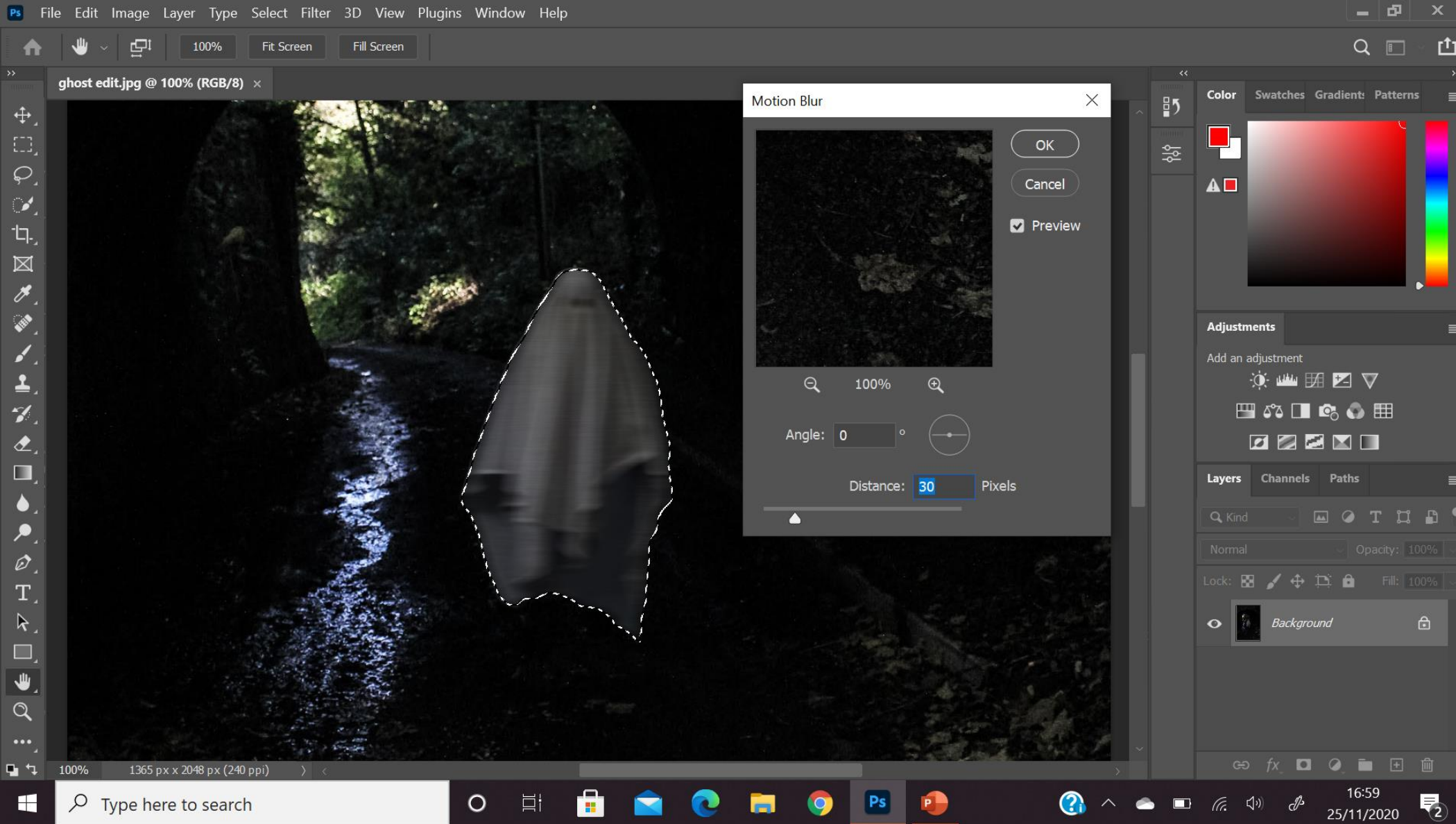
CONTEMPORARY

Whilst looking back at my other successful ghost photographs I can relate it back to Steve Schofield's cosplay work. I aimed to shoot my images in the juxtaposing way he does as the dressed up model goes about their day and I think my photographs show that. This also brings light to Comicon, an event that Cosplayers attend dressed as their favourite character. Me dressing up in the ghost costume and going somewhere filled with people unexpecting of the costume would be seen as odd behaviour yet if I went to a place like Comicon dressed in the costume it would be seen as completely normal. The ghost costume still carries a childish remark about it, especially as it uses a white sheet, I feel this will always be the case as it was one of the most common child Halloween costumes in the 1900's. With the addition of the cut out eyes as well it is seen as more playful as compared to a full blank sheet.



THE GHOST

Shot on an 18-55mm lens in 1600 ISO, 1/640 sec. f/3.5. After being influenced off the online trend I knew the best places for an effective shot would be the woods. Focusing on certain places like pathways and old bridges to certify the eeriness of the outcome. I feel this image worked better as the final image due to the location and lighting under the bridge. In editing I only decreased the brightness slightly otherwise the ghost wouldn't be the main focus point. To increase the effectiveness in this image I edited out the model's legs to appear like the figure is floating like a real ghost would. I feel this has made the image fit into the topic brief more due to the limbs being removed it has lost the fact that it's a person standing and pretending but instead it's just an object floating now. This aspect asks the viewers, how is it doing that and why are they under the bridge?



After feedback, I went back into photoshop with this image and decided to make the figure of the ghost more blurry to give it more of an effect. This helps tie this image more in with 'The Man'.

COMPARISON

After editing the blurred image I much prefer it compared to the still image. It makes the overall look of the image more eerie while the still image looked quite plain. Like 'The Man' this photograph has the element of not really knowing what the focal image is, its just blur. Doing this effect has helped tie both 'The Ghost' and 'The Man' together and helps the series flow more'



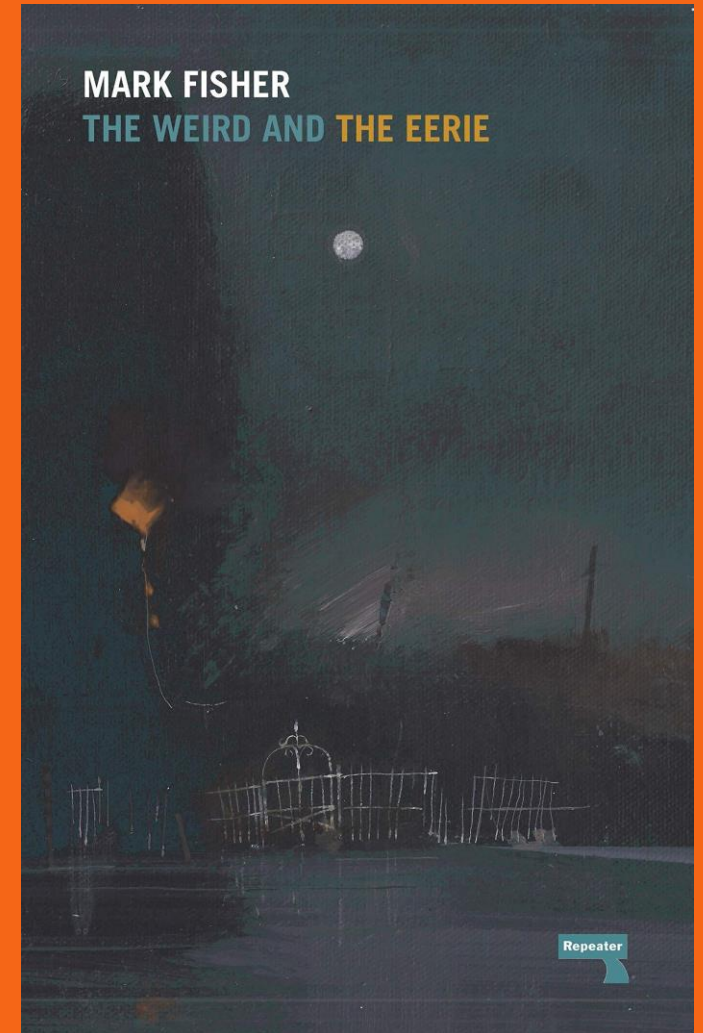


THE MAN

MARK FISHER — THE WEIRD & THE EERIE

Published in 2016, Mark Fisher argues that some of the most haunting and anomalous fiction of the 20th century belongs to these two modes. The Weird and the Eerie are closely related but distinct modes, each possessing its own distinct properties. Both have often been associated with Horror, yet this emphasis overlooks the aching fascination that such texts can exercise. The Weird and the Eerie both fundamentally concern the outside and the unknown, which are not intrinsically horrifying, even if they are always unsettling.

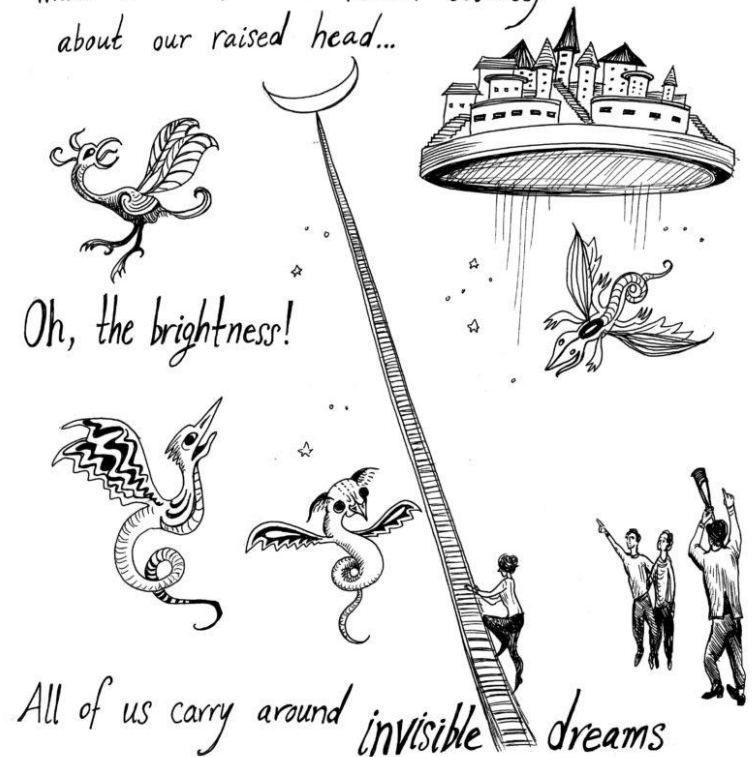
This backs up my want to keep anonymity to the model or figure in my image to carry the fear of the unknown and eeriness.



WALTER BENJAMIN — DREAMS

Benjamin released a book intitled 'Dreams', published in 2017. It highlights a dimension of Benjamin's thinking that was invaluable for his writing and thought but which has thus far received little attention. The first section, "Dream Notes," is a comprehensive and chronological collection of Benjamin's transcriptions of his own dreams and includes unpublished manuscript materials. The second section, "On Perception of Dreams: Awakening and Dream," features his theoretical reflections on dreams, ranging from short aphorisms and longer analyses of dream literature and the history of dreams to the political conception of a "dreaming collective" and its awakening.

The BALL. For the sake of what prelude do we cheat ourselves of our DREAMS? With a wave of the hand we push them aside into the pillows, leave them behind, while some of them flutter silently about our raised head...



INTROVERTED X EXTROVERTED

Whilst researching it made me think of how difficult it is to be hidden these days. Social media doesn't make this any easier as it's a lot more common now to find anything you want at a click of a button. On social media sites, especially Twitter and Instagram you can be anyone you want to be. I've seen this more often on twitter where the account is very forward and extroverted with their opinions and what they're saying yet, at the same time, they're scared of real life friends and family finding out about their account due to them being very introverted and not at all like the person being portrayed on that account. This can also happen on YouTube, although less likely as YouTube is very much has a face to face concept. Two users of YouTube that this comes under is 'Memeulous' (real name George, last name unknown) and 'Corpse' (full name not known). Both have become very successful, surpassing 4 million subscribers each without ever releasing their identity. Memeulous choses to wear a bandana around his mouth, glasses and a hat while Corpse choses to not include a face camera in his YouTube videos. There has been more speculation around George's identity as his channel has been around longer than Corpse, some possibly finding his Facebook account yet George has never clarified if it is him. The reasons for George's identity being hidden isn't really known, I don't think he feels fully confident in showing his face. Corpse on the other hand is self conscious about showing his appearance as his voice alone has become incredibly popular for being really deep and mysterious due to a health problem, he's scared people wont find him attractive if he reveals his identity.



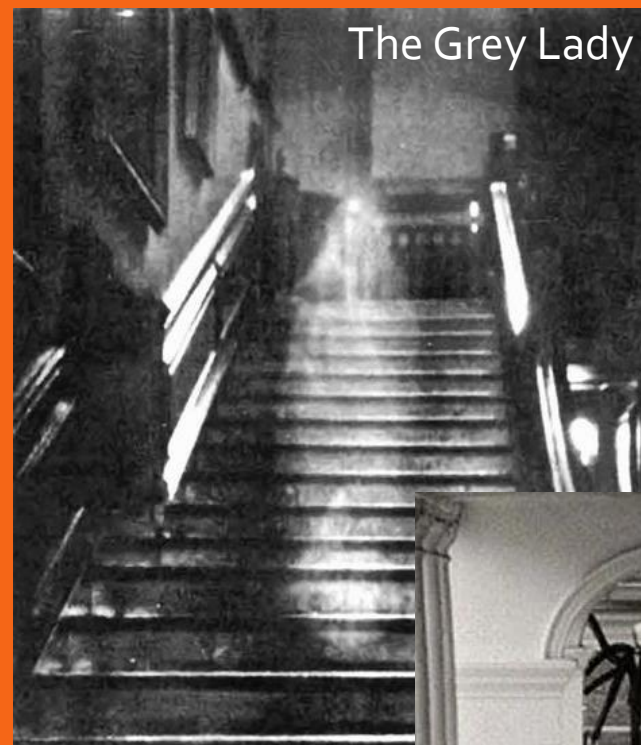
PETER LIK

When Lik describes his career as a fine-art photographer, he speaks with the satisfaction of a guy who has performed miracles, saying “I’m the world’s most famous photographer, most sought-after photographer, most awarded photographer,”. His most noticeable photograph is called “Phantom,” an image of an eerily human-shaped swirl of dust in Antelope Canyon in Arizona. In December, his company announced in a news release that an anonymous collector had spent \$6.5 million for “Phantom”.



SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Spirit photography is a type of photography whose primary attempt is to capture images of ghosts and other spiritual entities, especially in ghost hunting and has a strong history dating back to the late 19th century. During the 1850's photographers were experimenting with stereoscopic images and double exposure, both of which were completely new camera effects. It didn't take photographers long to realize that they could use this ghostly camera effect for profit, and spirit photography really took off in the United States. By 1926 30 mediums claimed to have captured actual ghosts on camera. Today's digital cameras are just as likely to create a fake haunting. Unlike analogue film, phones tend to take a photo in stages – in the same way a scanner moves over piece of paper. It is a slower process, especially in darker places where the camera phone's image sensors need more time to record enough picture information. This is called 'image aliasing'. As a result, anything moving through the shot at the time could appear distorted. You can also see ghost photography reborn in internet memes such as 'Slender Man', a supernatural character that many people have added into photos to create a chill.





THE MAN

I shot this image accidentally on an iPhone XR. Whilst at the beach with friends I was experimenting with the night mode feature when I shot this image of my friend but instead, a long exposure like effect happened unintentionally. This image also helped spark an interest in this topic as I wanted to include it in a project due to how creepy it turned out. The look of this image is very uneasy, the location is unrecognisable and looks blank. The focus of The Man is the sharpest object in this image, making out the shape of legs in the centre of the photograph. The blurred effect where the head should be reminds me of the look of the Dementors from Harry Potter who are known to be a soulless creature and the bringer of sadness. After the outcome I have tried to recreate this image with different friends, not knowing I'm taking a photo, however I cant seem to recreate it at all, this outcome was success on its first try. I feel this photograph fits in well with the rest due to its dark look, the rest of them follow that with the same eerie look which is what I'm trying to go for.

ACCIDENTAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Accidental photography is a common thing most photographers have probably experienced. Whether its just a mis-click of a button or playing about with the camera. It had happened to me a few times on both DSLR and my phone, both ending up with me actually liking the final shot. While shooting for 'The Man' wasn't entirely accidental, the effect on the photograph is. The sort of feeling this image gives off is like a ghost photograph. An example being, photographing a building normally then when in editing you end up seeing things you don't remember when you were there. The common theme in this is the blurriness from the photographs and not being able to make out what type of shape the object is.