

## **The Blur of the Otherworldly**

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## **The Blur of the Otherworldly: Introduction**

Dear Teacher,

You and your students are about to embark upon a journey into the strange. The paranormal. The sometimes downright weird. But it's a journey that will be fun and rewarding, and will allow your students – and you – to think about why you believe what you believe.

There is a constant fascination among adolescents with questions of the weird: whether there is life on other planets, what happens after death. These are, in a sense, the extreme versions of ontological questions asked by philosophers throughout the ages. Who are we? Why are we here? Does our essence stop when we stop breathing? The artists in this show have grappled with these questions in interesting ways, using contemporary media.

A central theme of this exhibition is how and/or why the history of the paranormal has coincided with the history of technological development. “Spirits” began to communicate with humans in our realm via rapping, just as the telegraph was invented. Apparitions appeared in photographs when that form of visual recording came into being. Now we hear strange voices in recordings. And we've always suspected that our keyboards were haunted!

One of the main objectives of this exhibition is to have adults and young people alike think about the importance of the imagination in our lives. Without imagination, we could not project ourselves beyond our own lifetimes and this planet. Without imagination, we would not have the technologies that allow us to record the otherworldly.

Or is it that the imagination allows us to create tableaux and sounds that mimic our ideas of the otherworldly?

You decide. But explore these issues, all the while, with a great sense of wonder.

We hope that you enjoy the exhibition and the enclosed lesson plans.

Mark Durant  
Adrift in the Fluidium: Notes on Believing

STUDENTS SHOULD READ THIS ESSAY IN ITS ENTIRETY, TIME PERMITTING!

This charming essay traces the co-curator's development from a child on the Mystic River, as his imagination animates the world, and the world, in turn, animates the child's soul. From voices in the basement and shooting stars, to attempts to contact Edgar Allan Poe (unsuccessful), this narrator's development as an aficionado of the paranormal is made clear.

Anecdotes are interspersed with the history of the paranormal and its documentation, from Franz Anton Mesmer's research on magnetism and the human body to his "ambulatory mesmerism" that was eventually recognized as hypnotism. The Fox sisters and their rapping tied in with the invention of the telegraph is discussed, as well as the Spiritualist appropriation of visual technologies for capturing images. Spiritualism was ultimately able to attribute its widespread acceptance to its ability to align itself with the language and appearance of science and technology.

Via some scary anecdotes about the Ouija board and communications with spirits, the essay concludes on the note that, in spite of the Age of Reason, the Industrial Revolution, the Atomic Age, Quantum Physics and Dialectical Materialism, humans are drawn, like moths in reverse, to the shadows. Out of this darkness, we make religion, science and art. Is supernatural thinking a manifestation of unconscious desires, as Freud believed? What is born of science, and what of the imagination?

This liminal zone between what we know and what is beyond us is the very place where art, science, religion and philosophy battle among themselves. From images sent to us by the Hubble Telescope to the black and white of a sonogram, there is always a place beyond our current location. We use the admixture of wonder and skepticism to keep us from feeling adrift in the fluidium.

Jane D. Marching  
Synthetic Spectres: Theses on anomalies

## I. Definitions

The paranormal is not restricted to alien births on the cover of the Weekly World News. It's on the front page and headlines of CNN and major newspapers. It may seem as if there is a resurgence of interest in the paranormal these days. It's more likely that anomalies are increasingly apparent. This essay traces the definitions and descriptions of the paranormal.

As Pope Benedict XVI was installed, an apparition of Mary was visible in a salt stain on a concrete wall in Chicago. AP and the web broadcast these images right there on our screens. People who saw the apparition claimed that the image could be seen more clearly in the camera. The Church made no official statement of the apparition, and yet people all over the world are seeing it anyway. Torn between technology and religion, people today are trying to figure out where they stand.

Like the Victorians, who wrestled with social, industrial, and cultural upheaval through obsessions with spirituality, mesmerism, and phrenology, we seem to be facing the encroachment of technology onto our bodies, homes, architecture, relationships, and every other part of the world. Stories of anomalies give us opportunities to reexamine and recast our belief systems, whether we choose to embrace or reject an experience of wonder.

## II. Fuzzy Logic

Definitions of anomaly have to do with ideas of inside vs. outside. Anomalies have no accepted explanation within a body of scientific knowledge. Words like deviation, departure, peculiar, irregular, abnormal imply a movement away from the normal or common. In the skies, there are empirically viewed objects such as stars, planets, meteors. Another class of objects is made known to us by science: quasars, pulsars, black holes. Then there are UFO's, angels, and based on earth, Area 51 of alien autopsies and perhaps Kennedy's real killer; Area 51 can now be found on Google's Maps service. State-of-the-art technology can now, paradoxically, give a certain credence to speculations about the anomalous.

This is never more so than when a central cultural figure comes out in support of ideas associated with the paranormal. Thomas Edison said, near the end of his life, that he was "inclined to believe that our personality hereafter will be able to affect matter." He saw séances, ouija boards, and voice trumpets as crude devices not taking advantage of current innovations. A techno-spiritualist, he was hailed as someone who in his ability to harness technology through invention had a unique relation with the powers of nature, even those supernatural. He lived in a time when popular was in thrall to a motley crew of charismatic mediums. Interestingly, The Edison Electric Light Company's demonstrations of their new electrical feats sometimes ended with the séance-like effects, such as flashes of lighting and glowing.

Electricity was like an anomalous phenomenon: invisible, instantaneous, unfamiliar. It led to a radical shift in experience. Light spectacles caused people to associate electricity with the

supernatural, whether God or the dead. Now, with EVP (electronic voice phenomena), things such as voices of dead mothers have been recorded. “Signal-to-noise” ratio refers to what is wanted vs. what is extraneous in the recordings: often voices appear in the noise. **The perseverance of anomalies gives us a chance to pierce the divide and recast our assumptions about information.**

### III. Borderlands

At the turn of the century, Charles Hoy Fort collected sightings of everything from showers of frogs to levitation. He attempted to overthrow our dichotomies of belief and reinstate a collective state of mind that allows the notion of in-between, that which is neither this nor that, the impossibility of fixing an unpredictable world into concrete form. Keeping us in a state of indecision, he emphasized that the problem is in definition and not in the phenomena themselves. Rather than holding Absoluteness as the universal quest, he kept ideas from all disciplines in a tangled web that is impossible to unravel.

Most of his data came from newspaper accounts. Never creating a taxonomy, Fort’s new world is one of astonishment, of rupture, and of “wild talents.” Wild talents occupy the terrain between mind and matter, including telekinesis, astral projection, telepathy, synesthesia. James Garfield, our twentieth president, appears on a list of wild talents, for his ability to write Latin with his left hand and Greek with his right. “The real, as it is called, or the objective, the external, the material, cannot be absolutely set apart from the subjective, or the imaginary: but there are quasi-attitudes of the imaginary.”

### IV. Time Travel

Thought has become nomadic. Books, manuscripts, paintings, etc., encapsulate our ideas in weight and volume, but the global communication is about thoughts in motion. The drive is toward incorporeality, as technological innovations stress the tiny, the invisible, the instant, over the palpable. The TIVO is programmed to catch our favorite shows with no need for us to know when or what channel they are on. Lists are ordered by arcs of desire rather than old-fashioned chronologies or methodological specificities.

NASA and ESA have recorded faint emissions of the sun’s corona. In some coronagraphs, paranormal researchers have seen white pathways that are evidence of space vortices, the paths in which ghosts travel. However we decipher these, the tiny balls look like the ghost orbs seen in millions of cemetery ghost images all over the web. They may be the noise of film photography, dust on the lens, negative or print, or they may be energy emissions of dead spirits. The overload of data overwhelms us; in an instant our vision is half-absorbed data and half-imagined in-betweens. Anything can become noise, or unwanted information; all that we want to suppress can be discarded in favor of hearty bits of dreary information that secure us in place.

### V. Wonder

Philip Fisher explains an aesthetics of wonder as a subset of an aesthetics of rare experiences. Though we are used to an aesthetics of fear, his idea of wonder attends to delight, pleasure, and

the impossible. This has a relation to technology. Wonder has to do with a border between sensation and thought, between aesthetics and science. In wonder we glimpse the new, the rare, the extraordinary. **If the ordinary is what we don't notice, then technologies of the apparition-like projections, artifacts in digital pictures, downloadable music, etc., are simply part of the fabric of our everyday and not something that startles us into noticing it as unusual in any way.**

The Viking Orbiter, passing by Mars in 1976, recorded a rock formation that resembles a human head. Expecting all kinds of strange aliens or futuristic spacecrafts, we got instead a plain old human face, the last thing that Cold War America expected.

Can there be a palpable experience of wonder? The relation of the extraordinary that cannot be reconciled with the ordinary makes the image of the Face on Mars persist as an experience of wonder.

## VI. Wow

In 1960 Dr. Frank Drake began to listen systematically for alien communication. His work caused the focus to shift from speculations on galactic requirements for life to mathematical formulas. Now, SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) scientists listen for signals. One had 50,000 times more energy than incoming signals considered a hit today. To this day, they have no idea of its origin. But members of the SETI Institute have revolutionized our experience of ET. Numbers can be crunched on home computers.

But none of this would have been possible without the development of radio astronomy. Jeffrey Sconce's book, *Haunted Media*, traces the phenomena of Spiritualism and other paranormal phenomena to concurrent developments in technology. Rappings on the wall of the Fox sisters' home in New York State coincided with the first telegrams.

If everything in the world is data and everything can be connected, then hokey B-movie images, JFK's moon speech, Drake's equation, and *Weekly World News* all operate on the same playing field. The Internet is a popular culture clearing center where all these ideas intermingle, without the benefit of reason. Googling has become a verb, and yet we recognize that there are often gaps in the data. Our everyday asks us to make sense of what is accepted and what is dismissed. It haunts us, beckoning us with immateriality, and asking us to live with flux.

Lynne Tillman  
The Shadow of Doubt

STUDENTS (ESPECIALLY HIGH SCHOOL-AGE) SHOULD READ THIS IN ITS  
ENTIRETY, TIME PERMITTING

Tillman's story deals with hauntings of various sorts. Thomas, the main character, has a dream predicting the circumstances of his ex-girlfriend's wedding to someone else. Psychic character confusion with his twin sister adds to the feeling of displacement and unusual forms of communication. A shadowy image in a pond that may be his own reflection, or an image of his ex-girlfriend's dead mother. The story artfully expresses the idea that "[i]t was all a dream, life is a dream, a dream is life, life disguises death, and only I can lie to myself."

Marina Warner

## I. The Eye of the Imagination

Throughout history, the notion of an inner eye has explained the human imagination. Aristotle called these thought-pictures *phantasmata*. Robert Fludd, a seventeenth-century, Oxford-educated physician, pictured the brain as having several interlinked souls, including the imaginative soul. This “*oculus imaginationis*,” it was believed, projected images onto a screen that lay beyond the back of the head.

Both Descartes and John Locke offered models of this human faculty of visualization. Locke conceived of an Inner Eye in front of which both pains and ideas could pass. Still later, communications media have made possible material projections of these ideas into the public arena, from the photographic apparatus to the cinema.

The history of “phantoms” is bound closely to the history of optics, the understanding of perception, and theories of imagination and consciousness.

Efforts over time have reflected a pervasive interest in how the mind works; these ideas have also been expressed in the fields of psychology, biology, medicine and literature. Contemporary artists have continued this pursuit, transforming the character of modern media to suit the enterprise of figuring out “fantasia.” Media such as photography, video, film, sound recording, and other scientific technologies are usually associated with objective, documentary purposes. Artists have increasingly used these media to express subjective vision and increasingly hallucinatory and spectral suggestion.

These “phantasmata” need vehicles to take form, however, and clothe themselves in metaphor: in air, light, and other qualities that are traditionally used to show the incorporeal. The paradox here is that the *incorporeal* has to use the vocabulary of the *corporeal* to make its presence known. Humans imagine in terms that make sense to our five senses. As science progresses, we are able to see even more of the natural world: gases, waves, and the quanta of particle physics are now perceptible.

## 2. The Logic of the Imaginary

The beginning of belief occurs with language: language literally *authorizes* any kind of belief. Science too expresses our belief in metaphor, both visual and verbal; through these, the “inward eye” can then express its visions.

Everyone knows “what a ghost looks like.” In the Victorian age, psychic experiments used the ancient methods of spirit communication. The intelligibility of séance phenomena, for example, depended on handed-down expressions, on habitual codes that have been learned and passed on. Even the “apprehension of mysteries” depends on the mind’s store of empirically acquired thoughts and data.

The conventions of spirits have become so familiar to us that they're virtually invisible. But their reality can then only be expressed through metaphor: poetry and poetic language give us the necessary tools in this impossible quest. No one (except for a young child seeing a depiction of an angel for the first time) finds it strange to see a naked boy hanging from heaven. These conventions, grown familiar, govern "the logic of the imaginary."

### 3. Lightness

Lightness distinguishes the spirit element, in both its aspects of luminosity and weightlessness. Spirits and souls take wing; the gravity of the world and the heaviness of flesh do not hold them down. In the classical world, the word "psyche" was used to connote both "soul" and, appropriate, "butterfly" or "moth." An Egyptian hieroglyph which means soul resembles a bird, and appears frequently in funerary painting. Both of these metaphors survive into the Christian era in the Middle East, informing the image of the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. Souls are also depicted as bees.

These traditional, religious properties of spirit still inform the uncanny and otherworldly imagery of today's artists. But the symbolism of the spirit world has been revolutionized by science. From the seventeenth century on, experiments have opened up new ways of envisioning the world, right up to the electro-magnetic field. Airy spirits – formerly angels – took form in wireless transmitters, visions of distant happenings materializing on TV monitors. Victorian science created our modern media of communication, and gave rise to a hospitable new habitat for the traditional symbolism of the spirit world. In this pursuit, human knowledge has expanded, and at the same time, human consciousness holds up a mirror to its own dreams.

### 4. The Material Radiation of Fantasy

The beginning of contemporary "haunted media" can be traced back to Athanasius Kircher, a Jesuit polymath, alchemist, and collector, who was very interested in the question of fantasy. He painted images on glass slides and projected them with a magic lantern in Rome in the 1640s; his subject matter was devils and phantoms invisible to the eyes of the body. Even then, new optical technologies were used to communicate the inner workings of the mind. Kircher used smoking lamps and lenses and slides to imitate divine light.

A 1671 edition of *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* shows magic lanterns, whose projected images are devils, souls in purgatory, dancing skeletons. Kircher used optics to probe human consciousness, to project into the world the human propensities to dream, to fantasticate, to see the invisible. This led him to study "the radiation of the imagination," the way the imagination forms objects where they do not exist. He discussed the idea prevalent at his time that a pregnant woman, startled by a goose or horse, might imprint those features onto her unborn child. He realized that his had no basis in physiology, but that it might be different in regard to psychology.

His experiments led eventually to "the Phantasmagoria," instruments of projection in the first cinematic public entertainments. In Paris after the Terror, these shadows and mirrors specialized in raising specters and producing thrills.

## 5. Action at a Distance

Showmen toured Europe with their phantasmagoria, projecting apparitions onto screens. Their popularity prefigured the popularity of spirit visitations in the home. From the 1840s on, spirit messages from other worlds, rapped by revenants on walls or “apported” at séances, was evidence of life after death. The sounds were accompanied by apparitions: veiled phantoms, dancing balls of light. Photography came to play a crucial part in verifying these experiences and then the images themselves became charged with numinous power, as artifacts made by spirit presences.

Spirit photography in the nineteenth century expanded in two connected fields, both of which had been part of the speculations of earlier thinkers such as Fludd and Kircher, Descartes and Locke. Spiritualists who wanted to summon the dead sought evidence of phantoms and spirit activity, and produced proof through technology. Psychic investigators, many of them members of the Society for Psychical Research, put phenomena to the test in laboratory conditions from a skeptical standpoint. But both groups were questing for proof of mental powers to project. Why shouldn't it be possible to transmit thought-pictures by brain waves in the same way that a radio works? Or later, television? The word telepathy was coined in 1882 by Frederic Myers.

Other instances of “radiant imagination” involved images materialized in softened wax during a séance, or images created by pressing photographic paper directly to the forehead of a “sensitive.” Early twentieth century mediums transformed themselves into living cameras, receiving the energies beyond the range of human perception to produce ectoplasmic strings and veils, which were frequently imprinted with images of faces: materialized ghosts. “Apports” materialized through mediums, giving, for example, the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning a garland of clematis.

The fundamental enterprise in these cases – to propel objects into the world through the power of thought (physicists call this “action at a distance”) has become a powerful and fruitful metaphor for artistic activity for many artists working today. Though this “psychic stuff” may have raised a smile in the past, traces of preceding generations’ endeavors have gained a new seriousness and refreshed interest. As chapters in the history of science, or as forerunners of aesthetic preoccupations today, these endeavors are useful as other branches of scientific inquiry and into human psychology in general/

Artists mirror the activity of creation in itself when they inaugurate in the world of appearances the phantasms of the mind. These developments reflect the unreliability of sense perceptions, the pervasiveness of illusions, and the rise in “liquid modernity,” which throws huge weight on individualism and undoes the bonds that used to help the self to achieve self-definition. Virtual technologies have created a different relationship between perceiver and data perceived. Julia Margaret Cameron began creating images of angels “From Life” in the 1860s. A hundred years later, artist Duane Michals staged ethereal visitations and stories; Gregory Crewdson’s tableaux look like tabloid occurrences of clips from newsreels. The weirdness of his images is intensified because he captures the enactment with effects of enhanced realism.

The camera no longer plays its conventional part as mute and objective recorder of facts. It has become an important vehicle for expressing inner fantasy, the modern dream machine. New means of speaking and of picturing have refigured the soul and the spirit: modern technologies communicate the imagination's make-believe, its desires and terrors. Yet they also continue to shape them as they deliver them into the collective consciousness.

## The Blur of the Otherworldly Vocabulary

**anomaly:** Deviation or departure from the normal or common order, form, or rule. One that is peculiar, irregular, abnormal, or difficult to classify

**apparition:** A ghostly figure; a specter. A sudden or unusual sight. The act of appearing; appearance.

**believe:** (verb, transitive): To accept as true or real. To credit with veracity: *I believe you*. To expect or suppose; think: *I believe they will arrive shortly*.

(verb, intransitive): To have firm faith, especially religious faith. To have faith, confidence, or trust: *I believe in your ability to solve the problem*. To have confidence in the truth or value of something: *We believe in free speech*. To have an opinion; think: *They have already left, I believe*.

### **Idioms:**

***believe (one's) ears***

To trust what one has heard.

***believe (one's) eyes***

To trust what one has seen.

**dichotomy:** Division into two usually contradictory parts or opinions: “the dichotomy of the one and the many” (Louis Auchincloss).

**esoteric:** Intended for or understood by only a particular group: *an esoteric cult*. Of or relating to that which is known by a restricted number of people. Confined to a small group: *esoteric interests*.

**fantasia:** A free composition structured according to the artist’s fancy. Also called **fantasy**.

**imagination:** The formation of a mental image of something that is neither perceived as real nor present to the senses. The ability or tendency to form such images. The ability to confront and deal with reality by using the creative power of the mind; resourcefulness: *handled the problems with great imagination*.

**luminous:** Emitting light, especially emitting self-generated light. Full of light; illuminated. Easily comprehended; clear: *luminous prose*. Enlightened and intelligent; inspiring: *luminous ideas*.

**numinous:** Of or relating to a *numen*; supernatural. Filled with or characterized by a sense of a supernatural presence: *a numinous place*. Spiritually elevated; sublime.

**occult:** Of, relating to, or dealing with supernatural influences, agencies, or phenomena. Beyond the realm of human comprehension; inscrutable. Available only to the initiate; secret: *occult lore*. Hidden from view; concealed.

**ontology:** The branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being.

**paranormal:** Beyond the range of normal experience or scientific explanation: *such paranormal phenomena as telepathy; a medium's paranormal powers*.

**psyche:** The spirit or soul. *Psychiatry:* The mind functioning as the center of thought, emotion, and behavior and consciously or unconsciously adjusting or mediating the body's responses to the social and physical environment.

**revenant:** One who returns after a lengthy absence. One who returns after death.

**skeptical:** Marked by or given to doubt; questioning: *a skeptical attitude; skeptical of political promises*.

**spiritualism:** The belief that the dead communicate with the living, as through a medium. The practices or doctrines of those holding such a belief. A philosophy, doctrine, or religion emphasizing the spiritual aspect of being.

**sixth sense:** A power of perception seemingly independent of the five senses; keen intuition. Keen intuition, as in *She had a sixth sense that they would find it in the cellar*. This term alludes to a sense in addition to the five physical senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. [c. 1800]. The ability to grasp the inner nature of things intuitively [syn: insight]

**taxonomy:** The classification of organisms in an ordered system that indicates natural relationships. The science, laws, or principles of classification; systematics.

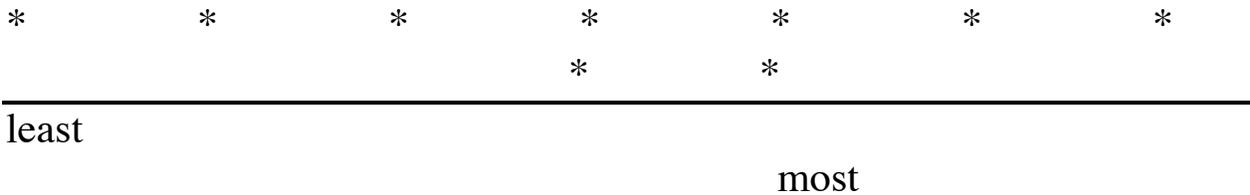
**uncanny:** Peculiarly unsettling, as if of supernatural origin or nature; eerie. So keen and perceptive as to seem preternatural.

## Paranormal Activities

Use the vocabulary list if you're not familiar with all of these "paranormal" words. Using the heat scale example, list the words along the continuum, from least strange to most strange.

Then, think about how far **you** are willing to believe. Draw a representation of yourself along the scale too.

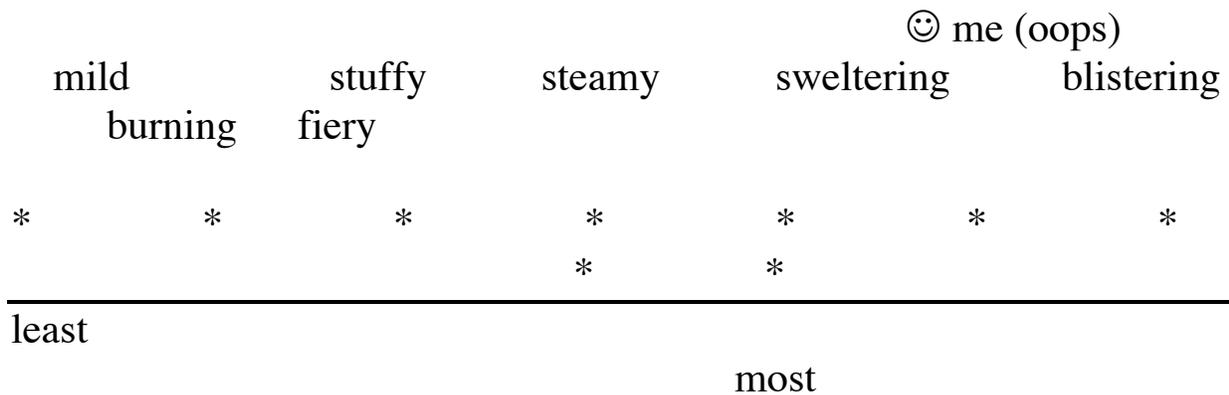
esoteric  
paradox  
uncanny  
paranormal  
anomaly  
apparition  
occult  
skeptic  
wonder



## Heat Scale

List the following words along the continuum. Use the connotations with which you are familiar to go from least hot to most hot. Then, draw a representation of yourself along the scale too. How hot is your temper?!

stuffy  
steamy  
blistering  
burning  
sweltering  
fiery  
mild



## **The Blur of the Otherworldly: Lesson Plan**

### **What do you believe?**

Goals: Students will

- examine the nature of belief and why they believe what they believe.
- interact creatively with artworks
- use visual or verbal metaphor to express their own ideas about “belief”
- apply media, techniques, and process with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity to convey student’s intentions in the artwork

**Procedure:** (Before gallery visit) Review the different meanings of “believe.” Discuss with students why they believe the things that they do believe. Share with them the definition sheet of “believe.” Note the idioms about believing what one hears and sees; discuss how that is not the only source of belief.

**Transition:** Have students fill in worksheets on belief. They should be as specific as possible. These sheets can be used in the gallery for note-taking.

## Believe

**believe:** (*verb, transitive*): To accept as true or real. To credit with veracity: *I believe you.* To expect or suppose; think: *I believe they will arrive shortly.*

(*verb, intransitive*): To have firm faith, especially religious faith. To have faith, confidence, or trust: *I believe in your ability to solve the problem.* To have confidence in the truth or value of something: *We believe in free speech.* To have an opinion; think: *They have already left, I believe.*

**Idioms:**

***believe (one's) ears:*** To trust what one has heard.

***believe (one's) eyes:*** To trust what one has seen.

**What do you believe? Worksheet**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

List some things that you believe, or believe in, because you can see or touch or taste or hear or smell them.

Example: I believe that sugar is sweet because I taste it.		

List some things that you believe in even though you can't perceive them with your senses. Do you believe in UFO's, ghosts, a God, what else?

Example: I believe there's air, though I can't always feel it		

List some things you would believe in if you had "empirical proof":

Example: if I saw someone reflected in a mirror but no one was in the room, I'd believe.		

Now, look at the pictures in the exhibition by:

Jeremy Blake  
Susan Collins  
Corinne May Botz  
Chrysanne Stathacos  
Fred Ressler  
Leslie Sharpe

Choose three of your favorite pictures.

Artist & Title of Piece	Describe the image	Describe what you think is going on in the picture

Is it real? What has each photographer found and photographed? Or what do you think about it?

For when you get back to your school:

Keep in mind the images you have seen. Working in a medium you like a lot (drawing, photography, sculpture, story, poem), create a piece that captures (or “captures”) an energy or a presence that you can’t normally see or feel or perceive with any of the five senses. Ask your teacher which medium might work best for you.

## **The Blur of the Otherworldly: Lesson Plan**

### **The Eye of the Imagination (for grades 9-12)**

Goals: Students will:

- explore the history of the “oculus imaginationis”
- interact creatively with artworks dealing with the “imaginative soul”
- will use visual or verbal metaphor to express their own ideas about the “eye of the imagination”
- apply media, techniques, and process with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity to convey student’s intentions in the artwork

**Procedure:** (Before gallery visit) Have students read Warner’s essay from the catalogue, and/or summary in this packet.

Discuss with students the history of the imagination. They may wish to do a little etymological research on the words image/imagination/magic (even magi).

## The Eye of the Imagination

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions

1. How does the mind create the magic of images of things that are not there?
2. When you were a young child, how did you explain to yourself the images in your mind? When you read a book and knew what the characters looked like? What you realized that you could call up the “image” of someone you knew who wasn’t there?
3. As an artist, you use your imagination to plan out (or at least roughly outline) what you are going to do in your project. How do you explain that?
4. In the gallery, look at the pictures of the medieval lantern shows, and of the drawings of where the imagination resides. Is this at all similar to how you envision imagination? (Isn’t it funny to *en-vision imag-ination*?)

For when you get back to your school:

Keep in mind the images you have seen. Working in a medium you like a lot (drawing, photography, sculpture, story, poem), create a piece that expresses your idea of the eye of the imagination. Ask your teacher which medium might work best for you.

**What do you believe? Worksheet**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

List some things that you believe, or believe in, because you can see or touch or taste or hear or smell them.

Example: I believe that sugar is sweet because I taste it.		

List some things that you believe in even though you can't perceive them with your senses. Do you believe in UFO's, ghosts, a God, what else?

Example: I believe there's air, though I can't always feel it		

List some things you would believe in if you had "empirical proof":

Example: if I saw someone reflected in a mirror but no one was in the room, I'd believe.		

Now, look at the pictures in the exhibition by:

Jeremy Blake  
Susan Collins  
Corinne May Botz  
Chrysanne Stathacos  
Fred Ressler  
Leslie Sharpe

Choose three of your favorite pictures.

Artist & Title of Piece	Describe the image	Describe what you think is going on in the picture

Is it real? What has each photographer found and photographed? Or what do you think about it?

For when you get back to your school:

Keep in mind the images you have seen. Working in a medium you like a lot (drawing, photography, sculpture, story, poem), create a piece that captures (or “captures”) an energy or a presence that you can’t normally see or feel or perceive with any of the five senses. Ask your teacher which medium might work best for you.

## **The Blur of the Otherworldly: Lesson Plan**

### **Psyche**

Goals: Students will:

- explore the history of the history of the mind/soul component of the human as envisioned by philosophers and scientists over history
- interact creatively with artworks dealing with the “psyche”
- will use visual or verbal metaphor to express their own ideas about the “psyche”
- apply media, techniques, and process with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity to convey their own representation of “psyche”

**Procedure:** (Before gallery visit). Read summary of Warner’s essay from the catalogue or the essay (part 3: Lightness). Discuss with students the idea of mind/soul. Review the Greek myth as retold in Warner’s essay.

**Transition:** Have students fill in worksheets on “psyche.” They should be as specific as possible. These sheets can be used in the gallery for note-taking.

**Psyche** Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

List characteristics of the human mind/soul. What is it that sets us apart from animals?

Example: intelligible, grammatical language		

Why do you suppose humans have maintained a belief in the psyche (mind/soul) when it is not something that can be directly perceived? (no right or wrong answers!)

Because we're always trying to explain ourselves to ourselves?		

The Blur of the Otherworldly  
**Psyche**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

In the gallery, find the pictures by  
Fred Ressler  
Chrysanne Stathacos  
Leslie Sharpe  
Jeremy Blake

Choose three images to look at closely.

Artist & Title of Piece	Description of Image	What's REALLY going on

Is it real? What has each photographer found and photographed? Or what do you think about it?

For when you get back to your school:

Keep in mind the images you have seen. Working in a medium you like a lot (drawing, photography, sculpture, story, poem), create a piece that captures your own feelings and images expressing the “psyche.” Ask your teacher which medium might work best for you.

## **The Blur of the Otherworldly: Lesson Plan**

### **Technology: Recording the Otherworldly**

Goals: Students will examine the Otherworldly as it has been portrayed/recorded using various technologies. Goals: Students will:

- explore the history of the interaction of the paranormal and the history of technology
- interact creatively with artworks dealing with technological representations of the paranormal
- apply media, techniques, and process with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity to convey their own representation of “psyche”

Procedure: Using the Warner and Marsching essays (and/or summaries), discuss how paranormal phenomena have been recordable by developments in technology. Rappings coincided with the invention of the telegraph. Spirit photos began to occur when photography became more widespread. Now, voices are heard and recorded with EVP.

Engage students in a discussion as to what they believe. Are “spirits” using their natural intelligence to communicate via newly developed media? Or is something else happening?

The Blur of the Otherworldly  
**Technology**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Find the pictures by

Chrysanne Stathacos

Fred Ressler

Leslie Sharpe

Zoe Beloff

Gregory Crewdson

Suzanne Triester

Paul Pfeiffer

John Roach

Paul DeMarinis

Spencer Finch

As you examine the pieces in the exhibition, think about the phenomena that are recorded using various technologies. Which ones interested you the most? Why?


Find three images that interested you the most.

Artist & Title of Piece	Description of Image	What's REALLY going on

For when you get back to your school:

Keep in mind the art you have seen. Working in a medium you like a lot (drawing, photography, sculpture, story, poem), create a piece that captures (or “captures”) an energy or a presence that you can’t normally see or feel or perceive with any of the five senses. If you can, try to create a tableau like Beloff’s or Crewdson’s. Ask your teacher which medium might work best for you.

