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By Louise Selsby, who visited the art event „Kinetica“, London 9.-13.02.2012
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Light Up Your Third Eye

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A bright light shone from within a small, dark booth. I peeked in, an empty chair. Then as I looked up, three eccentric exhibitors beckoned me to sit down, so of course I did. “Close your eyes, relax and use the light.” I was handed headphones – Pink Floyd – and sat back.



Lucia No.3 is a machine that stands like a frame, its arch ending with a light which hangs directly opposite the viewer’s eyes. As you sit down you come face to face with this light which on first appearances just looks rather fancy. It’s when you close your eyes that the light gets interesting. The device is the love child of Dr. Engelbert Winkler and Dr. Dirk Proeckl and for the two minutes I sat in their booth, I had a pretty good time. Hooked up to a custom-made, computer generated programme that controls the frequency of the light pulses, Lucia No.3 creates a frenzy of strange, colourful and quite wonderful visions. This may seem impossible; because of course your eyes are closed. Ever dozed in the sun and seen random shapes moving around your eyelids? Well this art piece experiments in that

realm, only it's much better. For the few minutes I was under, I experienced billowing spheres of greens and yellows, which rose and fell to the screech of guitars. Then mountains of yellow, orange, and red ran past my vision, so quickly and inexplicably that I felt slightly uncomfortable. Then shapes and patterns I couldn't quite distinguish filtered in and out as my time came to an end and the light was gone.

It's an idea that challenges the role of art in our society upon which, "one becomes the artist who creates its content." I opened my eyes to Dr. Proeckl, looking at me through his glasses, smiling with a sort of smugness – he knew exactly how I was feeling. I re-adjusted to my surroundings, which were that of the recent Kinetica Art Fair. I had completely forgotten that just around the corner was the tinkling of Lego-made pianos, a robot that could pour you a glass of water and a host of other people looking at pieces of art.

"The development of Hypnagogic Light Experience and neurostimulator Lucia No.3 was basically a result of practical experience. To begin with, I had a near death experience myself when I was a child. During this I experienced a light, which changed my self-perception forever."

It might all suddenly sound very Hollywood, but from then on Dr. Winkler, a clinical and health psychologist, wanted to re-enact this light, a light which many others have described in similar situations, in ways which would benefit his clients – in a therapeutic way. "The next stage of my work involved enhancing the "effect" with the help of hypnotherapy techniques. Through hypnosis sessions I tried to make it possible for clients to perceive stations of the light experience more intensely." He then paired up with Dr. Proeckl, a neurologist, whose expertise in the human nervous system allowed the light experience to become practical, accessible and fully fledged.

Lucia No.3 involves pulsed, colourless LED lights in adjustable frequencies and intensities alongside a constant light source which can also be varied. "Just like tones which through their sequence are experienced as music, the sequences of pulsed light with the constant light of Lucia No.3 creates an overall experience that can be described as an optical counterpart to music." So with closed eyes, Lucia No.3 allows you to actually see music.

The device plays with the very middle of your brain, the pineal gland, which gets very excited with the lights and their differing rhythms and intensities, along with the music playing into your ears. This results in the colourful and swirling visionary reactions that differ with each individual, "No one vision is the same," confirmed Dr. Winkler, with a hint of that smug smile. He knows what Lucia No.3 does, and it does it well.

The pineal gland regularly produces melatonin, a hormone that affects the modulation of waking and sleeping patterns. Yet the pea-sized gland has also been forever used by religions throughout time as a pathway to our 'third eye' – something which is supposed to allow us to increase our understanding of time and space, accessing the most inner parts of our minds. That's all great, but why exactly do we want to travel to the deepest depths of ourselves anyway? Catherine Sinclair, a senior instructor with the Clairvision School of Meditation in Sydney, Australia, tried to explain. "When I started to work with the third eye I was amazed to experience tingling sensations not just in the area of the third eye but right

throughout my body. After only a few days of practicing my energy felt fresh and alive. A common experience that people have when working with the third eye is that there is a direct effect on their body of energy. It works a little like a form of self-acupuncture. Many people find that by getting in touch with the third eye all kinds of health problems can improve.” The qualified psychologist, who has been studying at the school for over 11 years, backed up Dr. Winkler's ideas that each viewer can find and create their own visions in a recent article about our ‘third eyes’. “Although I had reservations about any kind of spiritual theories I liked the “see for yourself, know for yourself” philosophy that the school espoused rather than a dogmatic approach. I was not being asked to believe in anything but to see for myself.”



Dr. Winkler continued to talk about his ideas amidst the buzzing Kinetica Art Fair, his enthusiasm spilling out from his mouth and into my head, “The emergence of religions and mystical cults can frequently be traced back to experiences of this sort, whose aesthetic character was expressed in a highly artistic way by different cultures throughout history.”

The professors have brought Lucia No.3 to the fair today as they hope to convert their machine from a scientific, therapeutic device to an artistic and creative machine. Unlike the cults and religions before them, they have managed to encapsulate the effects of light in a moveable and accessible way, allowing everyone to enjoy the transcendental worlds of colour and shape that they themselves create from their very own third eye.

“From the very beginning we never had the feeling that we discovered, developed or even invented the Hypnagogic Light Experience. It seemed to me as though it had captured us and exploited us for its own purposes.”

As an experience, Lucia No.3 certainly does exploit you. You can't help but believe these guys who tell you you're about to experience something visionary. And you do. It was the most unique and interesting interactive art piece at Kinetica Fair, qualities which the team behind it only heighten. Their obvious enthusiasm and complete belief in their work allowed me to let my scepticism walls fall, to believe that there could be things out there I hadn't seen or experienced. The social stigmas that seem to ridicule the ideas of meditation and the development of your own inner mind were simply blown away with the waves of brightly coloured squares and curls of circus-like big tops. It's exciting to think of what will happen next. Films were once shown in cafés and gathered crowds through the fact that these

moving images were so strange, so unknown yet so enjoyable. Now we have shelves of the things that we can watch whenever we please in our very own homes. If Lucia No.3 can make this transition, we could be making our own films at home, in our own minds, with our very own third eye.

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