

SLEUTHING
THE MINDSeptember 17–
November 5, 2014Opening reception:
Tuesday, September 16, 6–8 PMSpecial performance of “Axial
Music” by George Quasha and
Charles Stein at 7 PM

Pratt

SLEUTHING
THE MINDSLEUTHING
THE MINDArtists:

Susan Aldworth

Jennifer Bornstein

Hans Breder

Robert Buck

Jim Campbell

Suzanne Dikker and
Matthias Oostrik

Gregory Garvey

Kurt Hentschläger

Nene Humphrey

Ellen K. Levy and
Michael E. Goldberg

Mike Metz

Warren Neidich

Patricia Olynyk

Nicole Ottiger

Jane Philbrick

Jill Scott

Special performance by:George Quasha and
Charles SteinCurated by Ellen K. LevySleuthing the Mind

Sleuthing the Mind attempts to bring some of the automatic processes of the mind/brain—through which we perceive both ourselves and the world—into conscious recognition. The artists have constructed experiences, many disorienting, in which we might intuit what it means for minds to be divided, aroused, recalibrated, or rewired. Some of the artists in the exhibition aim to reset the viewer’s focus. All engage current neuroscientific concepts. Those works that appear to be near counterparts of scientific testing generally expand into personal, social, and political domains.¹ The works in the exhibition may encourage viewers to consider more fully the forces of attention, memory, feelings, and intuition. Many of the works seemingly align the brain’s ability to change as a result of experience with cultural developments. We may sense how minds mark culture and the reverse: how culture marks the mind.² This bidirectional interchange allows us to connect with minds and creations across scales of time, thereby addressing, if only in part, why art matters.

The dynamic expansion of artistic practices through video, performance, human–computer interfaces, and virtual reality, along with traditional approaches, now offers new ways to bring adjustments of the body to conscious recognition and to explore the mind’s many facets. In **Greg Garvey’s** video installation *The Split-Brain (Dichoptic) Interface: Thomas v. Hill* (1999/2014), the observer receives conflicting sounds and vision in each separate hemifield that she attempts to resolve. Garvey enables us to experience the quandary of a divided mind. Although he was influenced by Michael Gazzaniga’s split-brain research (itself informed by Roger Sperry), Garvey has imaginatively aligned the cognitive difficulty with the political dissonance of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings. **Kurt Hentschläger’s** generative audiovisual installation *HIVE* (2011) presents an ever-changing, swarming humanlike organism, confounding viewers with an extended sense of consciousness. Hentschläger realizes his vision through stereoscopy, by utilizing 3-D glasses with a specially prepared (layered) looping playback video file. In drawings displayed in 2007, **Robert Buck** (then known as Robert Beck) involved viewers in questioning some historical medical records of psychological functioning. During the 1960s, some psychologists purported to identify their patients’ emotional states through personality assessment tests in the form of drawings. Buck’s subsequent re-drawing undermined the belief that the drawings of the patients showed “evidence” of pathology. Affect is also explored in **Nene Humphrey’s**

freestanding installation, *Mapping* (2013) that visualizes neural activity within the larger arena of our cultural world. Microscopic images of the brain (some gleaned from Joseph LeDoux’s laboratory) are coupled with Victorian mourning braids made with wire and festooned with crystal teardrops, beads, bookbinder’s cloth, and glass. The combination invokes rituals that fuse emotion and memory with the neurons that elicit such states of arousal. Similarly involved with emotion and empathy, **Susan Aldworth** uses a mixture of printing techniques in response to a friend having breast cancer in *Fragility 3 and 4* (2009). Neuroimaging offers a whole new set of possibilities to explore the architecture of the brain. Aldworth uses it to expose our vulnerability in an existential sense.

Several artists in the exhibition explore the recalibration of our senses through art. In his pigment print *Opsis I* (2012), **Hans Breder** elicits the involuntary production of complementary-colored after-images that interact with the surrounding artworks, evoking awareness that most of the processes that occur in our brains are automatic. One is made aware of intertwined physical and psychological spheres and of events that occur in normal and micro temporalities. **Jim Campbell** may make the viewer aware of some of the complexities of memory’s influence on time perception.³ In his liminal display *Illuminated Average #1: Hitchcock’s Psycho* (2000), Campbell shows a composite image of every frame from *Psycho* averaged over 1 hour 50 minutes. The result is that the viewer is invited to resolve a misty ambiguous image on the threshold of recognition. Campbell compels us to attend to the various ways time, itself, is parsed. In their collaborative animation, *Stealing Attention* (2009), **Ellen K. Levy** and neuroscientist **Michael E. Goldberg** explore “inattention blindness” to provoke recognition of how much we do not see. The distractors are images of hands with flashing cards playing the con-game Three-Card Monte, and the generally unseen images that disappear one by one in the background are of stolen antiquities from the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The animation was based on Simons and Chabris’s video, *Gorillas in Our Midst*, but included political and emotional components not in the scientific model. Viewers are invited to resolve two audio streams in **Jane Philbrick’s** *Voix/é* (2003). Philbrick recreated the *Song of Solomon* in both male and female voices and also separated out the vowels and consonants. Neuroscientist Donald Broadbent’s dichotic listening task in which the participant received different information in each ear relates to Philbrick’s work. Unlike the scientist, Philbrick’s aim was

to engineer a situation in which, when the recording is received via headphones, the words, split phonemically, would resolve themselves in the listener’s body. **Nicole Ottiger**, in *Third Person No. 1* (2011), uses a virtual reality apparatus to create conflicts between vision and proprioception, thereby recalibrating the senses. She drew herself under conditions that manipulated the sensation of where her body was located in space. The drawings made during this process thus became recordings of her new state of corporal awareness. Olaf Blanke’s research on autoscopic phenomena inspired Ottiger.⁴ In *Somabook* (2012) **Jill Scott** describes how she explores “somesthetic and kinesthetic perceptions in interactive constructions using steel, electronic sensors, and ceramics; the surface is inspired by tissue specimens photographed by the scanning electron microscope.” Audiovisual information is triggered along with dance interpretations of various movement disorders, imparting a visceral understanding of the body’s homeostatic system. Scott’s work reflects Paul Bach-y-Rita’s work on cross-sensory substitution. Concepts of rewiring are explored by several artists. In *Phantom Limb* (2009) **Jennifer Bornstein** uses 16-mm film to explore the brain’s rewiring. Her work resulted from being in a car accident that altered her ability to move. Neuroscientist Vilanyur S. Ramachandran’s mirror box treatments for phantom limb pain, enabling patients to remap their brains, have become the subject of Bornstein’s film. It portrays mirror boxes that, themselves, seem to move. In *Isomorphic Extension I and II* (2011) **Patricia Olynyk** also references Ramachandran’s phantom limb research. She portrays prosthetic limbs, presenting us with a puzzle consisting of an unmatched pair of prosthetic legs from different periods, one gendered male the other female. Olynyk has refashioned issues of prosthetics to interpret the science of cross-wiring along unconventional lines of gender identity, asking us to imagine what new kind of body might be the recipient of these prosthetic devices. **Mike Metz’s** vertical sculpture *Snared–Trapped Totem 1* (2014) also tasks the viewer to disambiguate a puzzling object. Metz explores the intersection of language and vision by constructing language-based forms that hold multiple associations that can be accessed in numerous directions. The shape is formed into structures that spell out a seemingly endless text. The inscriptions form neural-like paths across the objects, themselves resembling tensegrity-like forms that hold cellular analogies. **Warren Neidich** has constructed a glossary and embedded drawing (2014) that exhorts artists to action. Neidich looks to art as a form of resistance against the instrumentalization of the “general intellect under semio-

capitalism,” recognizing that art has the ability to rewire the mind. His mind-maps delineate the bidirectional marking of mind and culture while the glossary expounds “cognitive capitalism,” as an economic system dominated by information with (in Neidich’s words) “its emphasis on communication, affect, and cognition.”⁵ For the opening reception of the exhibition **George Quasha** and **Charles Stein** performed *Axial Music* that “follows a principle of spontaneous interpersonal composition without the intention of extending precedent or previous patterns, guided instead by radical following of actual sounds and proto-language generated in an intentional field.”⁶ The novel experience of their invented language may cause disorientation and a revised sense of one’s surroundings and self. In *Measuring the Magic of Mutual Gaze* (2011), **Suzanne Dikker** and **Matthias Oostrik** follow a reverse path from the others in this exhibition. They conduct interactive experiments about the relationship between brain synchronization and human connectedness that display influence from art to neuroscience, indicating some of the impact that art might have upon scientific research. For this exhibition, two videos are presented; one of synchronization of brain waves based upon Marina Abramović’s work “The Artist is Present.” The second video presents an overview of new projects.

Sleuthing the Mind asks visitors to explore how art focused on the body and the constraints of vision can not only impact the systems of the brain but increase self-awareness. It presents us to ourselves as if we were strangers, attempting to “re-set” our minds.

Might art and art exhibitions add new paths into the understanding of intuition, insight, and attention?

Ellen K. Levy, guest curator, PhD, artist, Special IDSVA Advisor on the Arts and Sciences, Past President CAA (2004–2006), www.complexityart.com

Many thanks to Nick Battis, Olivia Good, and to the participants.

¹ See Leonardo, Vol. 47, No. 5, 427–435 (2014).

² The knowledge that the brain is embodied, materially engaged and culturally situated has been examined in depth (e.g., Donald, 1998; Clark, 2003; Neidich, 2003; Tomasello et al., 2005; Malafouris, 2008).

³ Roger Malina, “Ensemble Averages” 2010, in *Material Light* (ed. Steve Dietz), Hatje Cantz; New York, 134. Issued to accompany the exhibition “Exploded View” held in New York at Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, April 15–May 29, 2010

⁴ Autoscopic phenomena are psychic illusory visual experiences that include out-of-body experiences.

⁵ Taken from an announcement of The Psychopathologies of Cognitive Capitalism: Part Two conference in Berlin that was organized by Neidich

⁶ Information provided by Quasha and Stein

Panel discussion:
Art, Design, and the Cognitive Shift
Wednesday, October 8, 2014, 6:30 PM, room 213
(adjacent to the gallery)

Moderated by **Ellen K. Levy**, with panelists
Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator, Department of
Architecture and Design, Museum of Modern Art;
Suzanne Dikker, artist, and others TBD.

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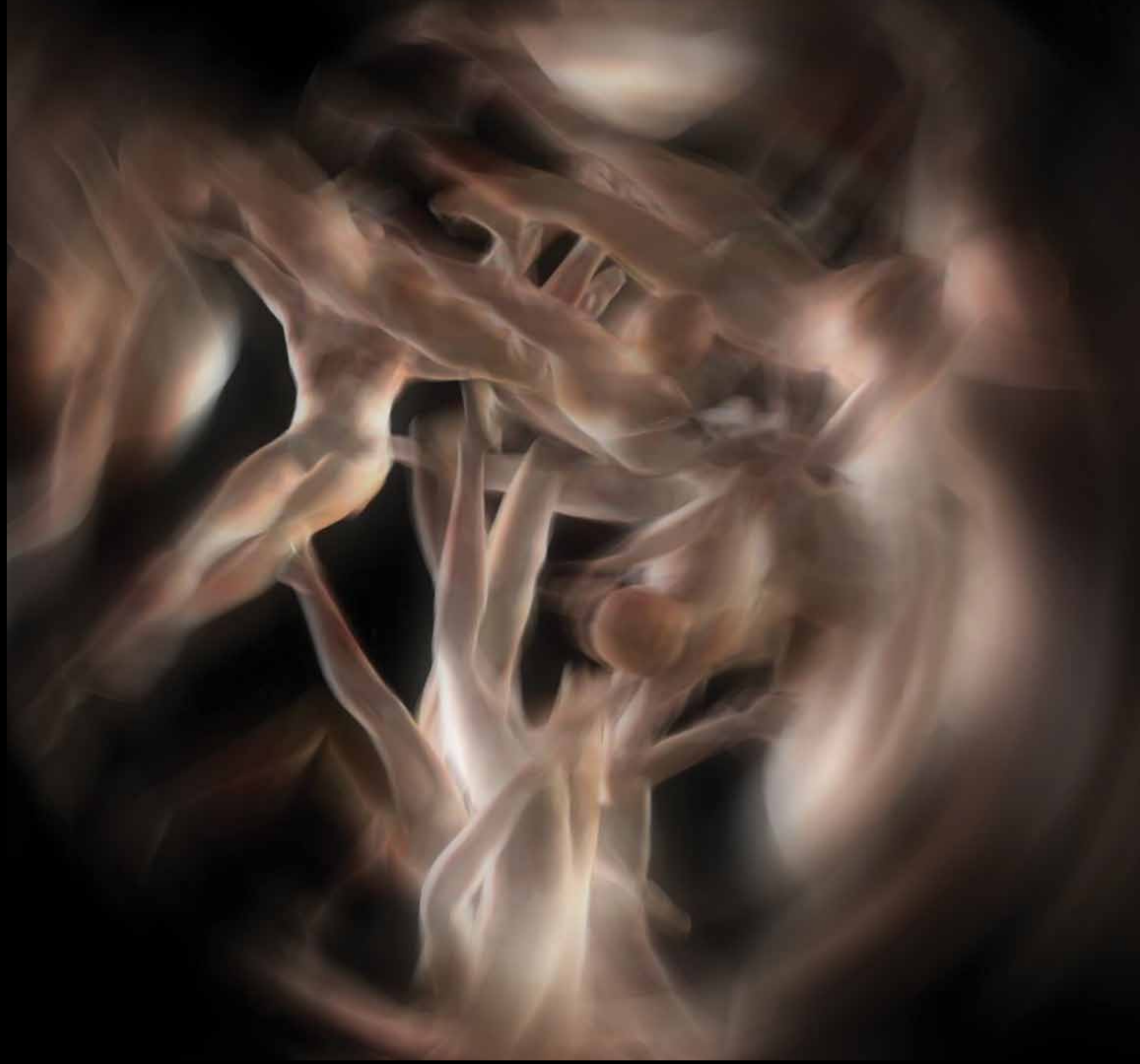
Through video, performance, human–computer interface, virtual reality, and traditional artistic approaches, this exhibition explores the mind’s many facets, presenting an expanded field of artistic practice informed by neuroscience.

This exhibition is made possible in part by a grant from the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia.

SLEUTHING THE MIND

PRATT MANHATTAN GALLERY

144 West 14th Street, Second Floor, New York, NY 10011



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