

LENORE MALEN

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CUE ART FOUNDATION

SEPTEMBER 6 – OCTOBER 13, 2007

With a performance meeting of *Harmony as a Hive* by the New Society for Universal Harmony
Saturday, September 29, 2007

CURATED BY PEPE KARMEL

[FOREWORD]

WE ARE HONORED TO HOST this exhibition generously curated by Pepe Karmel. Mr. Karmel, a writer and Professor of Fine Arts at New York University, has chosen Lenore Malen, an artist living and working in New York. Mr. Karmel's appreciation of Ms. Malen's work demonstrates how the Foundation's discretionary selection process allows for a natural cross-pollination between differing forms of expression.

We appreciate that artists often work tirelessly without thought or concern for exhibition. CUE is pleased to recognize such commitment by affording just such an opportunity, thus celebrating the efforts of artists like Lenore Malen.

LENORE MALEN

[ARTIST'S STATEMENT]

THE NEW SOCIETY FOR UNIVERSAL HARMONY

Fact or Fiction?

The New Society for Universal Harmony is a pastoral commune, a cult for self-improvement that espouses magnetic healing. Rooted in history and utopianism, it updates and reinvents a utopian society founded in the late 18th century by Franz Anton Mesmer that employed animal magnetism or “mesmerism” for healing and spirituality.

The archives of The New Society—consisting of various prints, videos and memorabilia on display at the CUE Art Foundation—are documents of the society’s rituals and re-enactments, philosophy and science. They are evidence of its material culture.

History

Mesmer was a late-enlightenment physician caught between paradigms. His theories were wildly incorrect, but his name still resonates. His cure-all involved the passage of “magnetic fluid” from his fingertips to a patient’s body. While his followers gradually understood this phenomenon as hypnosis, Mesmerism still became a mass hysterical movement and the preeminent occult spectacle of the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The New Society

Members of The “New” Society call themselves “the harmonites” and a new Doctor Mesmer heads the new society. Mesmer never cures anyone, but believes that she does. All the while viewers are invited “in,” not fully knowing the ground rules or even the terrain.

Through the lens of the past, The New Society examines enchanting systems of belief from animal magnetism to our own culture’s techno-addictions. Are we all mesmerized? The New Society touches on the occult, the forces beyond the bounds of our understanding that we dismiss as dreams; it examines ritual behavior, something that we ascribe to other cultures, but do not perceive in our own. Some pictures offer the possibility of mystical union, undercut by a strong sense of the ridiculous. The work shows the lengths to which we go to believe and to belong.

I’ve tried to construct a social utopia like the ones that existed in the past. Have we lost the capacity to imagine such a thing—that the world could be different from the one we live in? The New Society reminds us that we must laugh at what we can’t attain.

PEPE KARMELO

[CURATOR'S STATEMENT]

PEOPLE ARRIVE AT THE HEADQUARTERS of The New Society for Universal Harmony in Athol Springs, New York, with much the same problems and anxieties found in waiting rooms off Park Avenue and Central Park West. Instead of Freud's "talking cure," however, they engage in treatments based on the eighteenth-century theories of Franz Anton Mesmer. Although Mesmerism was in fact a precursor to psychoanalysis, it expresses itself in an unfamiliar language. What Freud called libido, Mesmer described as animal magnetism. Where Freud aimed for catharsis, Mesmer spoke of correcting fluidic imbalances. A patient's excess magnetism could be drained off into a "baquet." Inadequate magnetism could be corrected by roping patients to natural sources of magnetic fluid such as trees. Other imbalances could be evened out by having patients join hands in a human chain.

The New Society for Universal Harmony is an invention of the artist Lenore Malen. Her work falls in the tradition of conceptual art extending from the simple photo-plus-text documentation of Hans Haacke and Martha Rosler to the dramatic installations of Christian Boltanski, Sophie Calle, and Ilya Kabakov. The demonstrations of treatment at The New Society are enacted by Malen's

friends and acquaintances. We see some patients straining against the ropes, slumping to the floor, or relaxing under metallic blankets. Others have electrodes clamped to their brows, or are wrapped like corpses in sheets of plastic, or are stranded in the branches of trees. As in the performances of Eleanor Antin, Vito Acconci and Marina Abramovic, bodies are pushed and pulled to their limits. The urge to giggle is stifled by the absolute seriousness of the proceedings.

One of Malen's recent videos is set against the backdrop of the 1964 World's Fair, where the dreams of the future have now become relics of the past. Nearby, vitrines present documents of the original Society for Universal Harmony—images impregnated with a utopianism we can recognize as our own. Past and present exchange places in Malen's work. It is a roundelay of science and mysticism, propelled by an insatiable craving for transformation. Invented beliefs yield real miracles.













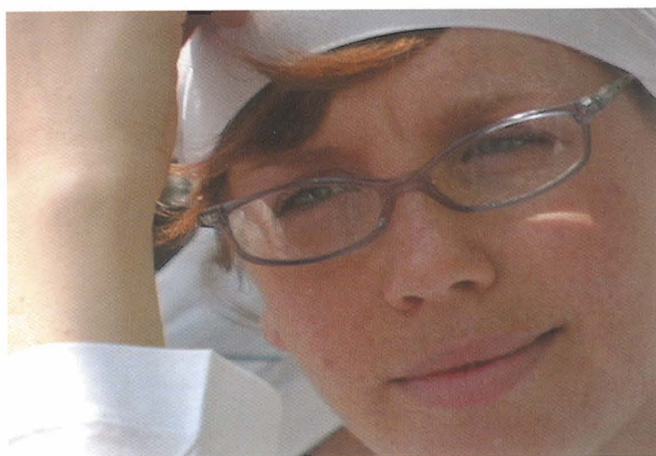


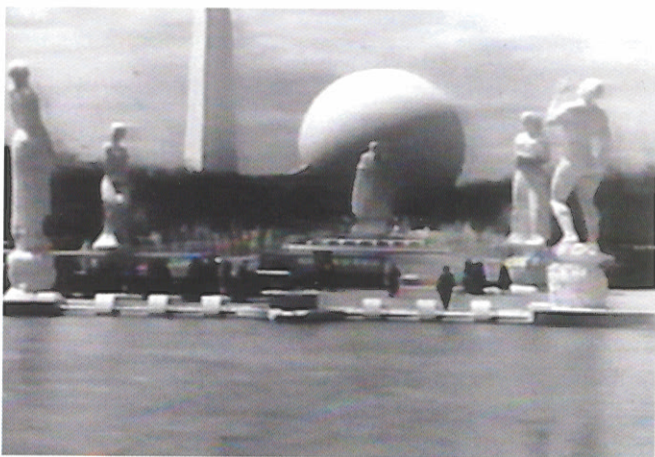












[CAPTIONS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS]

Plate 1 Dent in the Magnetosphere, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 44" x 65"

Plate 2 25000KHZ, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 67" x 34"

Plate 3 (left) What Happened, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 44" x 65"

(right) Yes, I Once Was An Astronaut, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 65" x 44"

Plate 4 Magneto-Therapy, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 44" x 65"

Plate 5 Scanning for Small Droplet Clouds, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 22" x 30"

Plate 6 (left) Likes Repel, Unlikes Attract, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 30" x 22"

(middle) We See No Further Evidence of

Our Fellow Passengers, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 22" x 30"

(right) Blocks Were Coalescing in His Head, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 30" x 22"

Plate 7 (left) The New Society for Universal

Harmony, 2000-2007, Archival inkjet print, 22" x 30"

(right) Stephen Flying, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 30" x 22"

Plate 8 Benny, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 22" x 30"

Plate 9 Portraits, 2000-2007

Archival inkjet print, 70" x 44"

Plate 10 Frontispiece from *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire et l'établissement du magnétisme animal*. By A.M. J. De Chasteney, M. de Puységur, Third ed., Paris J.G. Dentu, 1820 Courtesy of the Bakken Library, Minneapolis, MN

Plate 11 Be Not Afraid, Video Still, 2007

Plates 12-13 Be Not Afraid, Video Stills, 2007

Be Not Afraid (2007)

In 1784, the Marquis de Pusyegur, a follower of Franz Anton Mesmer "magnetized"—or hypnotized—a 23-year-old shepherd Victor Race on the village green in Buzancy, France. News of the event spread rapidly throughout the country and it soon became commonplace to be magnetized around a tree. Individuals would sit together with ropes connecting their arms or legs to the branches, allowing "magnetic fluid" to pass from the tree to their bodies. These historic events were documented for the first time in a 19th-century engraving.

In June 2006, members of The New Society assembled beside a solitary tree on the green at Flushing Meadows Park, NY, the site of both the 1939 and 1964 World's Fairs. Using the engraving as a reference, they re-enacted the moment of hypnosis.

Production

Kathryn Alexander

Lesley Dill

Catherine LaSota

Todd Erickson

Camera

Ezra Bookstein

Anja Mohn

Ilana Rein

Costumes

Ema Yamagata

Rachael Livingston

Device and Props

Brendan McGillicuddy

Todd Erickson

Editors

Lenore Malen & Ruppert Bohle

Associate Editor

Sean McGinn

Sound

Dafna Naphtali

With Thanks to all the Harmonites

Todd Erickson as Victor Race

Matt Freedman as the Marquis

de Puysegur

Kathryn Alexander

Ananda Cavalli

Andre, Deja & Xiomara Cotton

Jesse Day

Lesley Dill

Saraleah Fordyce

Jay Guerrero

Elizabeth Hamby

Rosi Hayes

Faten Kanaan

Catherine LaSota

Brendan McGillicuddy

Rob Reddy

Heather Wagner

[BIOGRAPHIES]

In her ongoing project, *The New Society for Universal Harmony*, LENORE MALEN uses pseudo-documentary photos, video and audio transcriptions, testimonials, case histories and arcane imagery to archive the functioning of her own reinvention of a utopian society, founded by Franz Anton Mesmer in 1784.

Portions of *The New Society* have been shown and performed in New York at Location One (2006), Participant Inc. (2005), and apexart (2003). *The New Society* has been installed at the Slought Foundation in Philadelphia, PA (2004); and at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY (2005). It has been featured in numerous group exhibitions and screenings, including Orion's Belt, University of Reno, NV; France Fiction, Paris and Gavin Brown's CAE Passerby, New York, NY. In 2004 and 2005 it was seen in Germany as part of Jochen Gerz's Anthology-of-Art. The work was shown in Paradise/Paradox curated by Susan M. Canning and Ann McCoy's The Ethers in 2003. The project has been documented in many media including a performance for the BBC (2004) and a 144-page book (Granary Books, Inc., 2005). A feature article on *The New Society*, "Lenore Malen's Fictions of Utopia," by Gary Indiana appeared in the February '06 issue of *Art in America*.

Malen's artwork has been reviewed and featured in *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, *Arts Magazine*, *The Village Voice*, *Art on Paper*, *Sculpture* and *BOMB Magazine*.

Malen teaches in the MFA program at Parsons School of Design. She was born in New York City, where she lives and works. Please visit lenoremalen.com and thenewsociety.org.

PEPE KARMEL is Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts, New York University. His book, *Picasso and the Invention of Cubism*, was published by Yale University Press in 2003. He organized the 1989 exhibition, *Robert Morris: Felt Works*, at the Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University and was co-curator of the 1998 retrospective *Jackson Pollock* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In 2004, he organized *The Age of Picasso: Gifts to American Museums*, at the Fondazione Memo in Rome and the Fundacion Marcellino Botin in Santander, Spain. He has contributed to numerous other exhibition catalogues, and has written widely on modern and contemporary art for publications including *Art in America* and *The New York Times*.

CUE Art Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts organization, is dedicated to providing a comprehensive creative forum for contemporary art by supporting under-recognized artists via a multi-faceted mission spanning the realms of gallery exhibitions, public programming, professional development programs and arts-in-education.

The Foundation was established in June of 2002 with the aim of providing educational programs for young artists and aspiring art professionals in New York and from around the country. These programs draw on the unique community of artists, critics, and educators brought together by the Foundation's season of exhibitions, public lectures, workshops, and its studio residency program: all are designed to be of lasting practical benefit to aspiring and under-recognized artists. The entire CUE identity is characterized by artistic quality, independent judgment and the discovery of genuine talent, and provides long-term benefits both for creative individuals associated with CUE and the larger art marketplace. Located in New York's Chelsea gallery district, CUE's 4,500 square feet of gallery, studio, and office space serves as the nexus for educational programs and exhibitions conducted by CUE.

Thanks to The CUE Art Foundation and Jeremy Adams for their support, to Pepe Karmel for believing in this project from the very start, and to my husband Mark Nelkin for playing physics with me. (With a wink to Benny Andrews (1930–2006) who saw the humor in everything.) —Lenore Malen

Cover: Be Not Afraid, 2007 Video Still

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