

KEVIN KILLIAN

At the door of the Silverman Gallery you had to sign two releases before being allowed entry. “Basically this one says you waive liability in case you get possessed by a demon while within these walls,” explains the gallery girl, “and *this* one’s stating you won’t sue if the dream machine gives you an epileptic seizure.” Possessed? Dream machine? We were positively fibrillating by the time we took seats in the dimly lit gallery space on Sutter Street. Job Piston and I sat warily, cameras in our laps, ready to snap any sign of ectoplasm or wrathful spirits, but apparently this was just part of curator Raimundas Malasauskas’ Barnum-like showmanship, and when he promised a “séance of hypnosis,” he was using “séance” as a metaphor, as one might say, “a *whole bunch* of hypnosis,” or, a “*quiet evening* of hypnosis.” I don’t know how they say it in Lithuanian, but the philosophy of the studio heads of Hollywood’s golden age was, get those *asses into the seats* by any means necessary. Malasauskas might well be the William Castle of modern curatorial projects.

I never felt that I was actually going to be possessed by an incubus, but artist slash hypnotist Marcos Lutyens certainly had us all going pit a pat as he entered and prowled through the space, dividing the audience into two groups, those who were volunteering, and those like myself afraid to participate, who wanted merely to watch. Malasauskas had commissioned hypnosis scripts from a group of international artists, and Lutyens had worked four of them into a running spiel. The ring of chairs was soon deep in a trance, the sitters nodding and blinking like rabbits, while he spoke on in a velvety, Michael Ondaatje baritone redolent of summer, with a poignant tang of autumn surprising some of his labial consonants. Like I say, he worked the space, reaching out here and there to clasp shut a pair of hands a –trembling on a knee, to

touch a supplicant's forehead with his thumb, all the while counting us down, five, four, three, two, one. At one we were in the deepest possible trance state, and then he'd have us count down yet again, from *ten* to one, deeper still. One girl wound up so out of it her hair touched the ground in front of her, I've never seen anything like it, not even back in college when we took massive doses of animal tranquilizers to get over the outrage of having Nixon as president..

Meanwhile Lutyens was droning on in that intimate, simpatico way, walking us into Joachin Koester's script about a park, a sidewalk, a civic building called the "Department of Abandoned Futures," after which we crossed the threshold and descended a stairway, entered a hall, found a box filled with—with what? We each were invited to imagine what lay within. Deric Carner's script was more ominous, I thought, a dark, cloudy horizon along which an unimaginable object began to evince itself—in a color we could not name, as it was not a color we had ever seen before—and the name of the large object came to us little by little as its Lovecraftian shape began to struggle in shadows and gleams across the sky. I called my object "Zephyr." I don't know why. You'll gather that my status as a spectator did not prevent me from joining into the general trance; Marcos Lutyens' voice is so seductive that, were you in that room that night, you too would be dreaming these dark visions. He leaned on some catchphrases that, perhaps, judged objectively, he used too often ("went back to the well one too many times," as my dad used to say), but I never got tired of hearing him say, "And you're drifting and dreaming—drifting and dreaming." Indeed I'm now engaged to Marcos Lutyens and cheerfully I am bearing his children without anesthesia. I'll just be drifting and dreaming in a bower of erotic bliss somewhere, bent to the floor, my hair soapy and washing his high-instepped feet.

Before I knew it we were waking up, one, two, three, four, five. Kylie Minogue had that song on her LP, *Body Language*, which I should have listened to before exposing myself to *Hypnotic Show*.

Count backwards 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Before you get too heated and turned on (and turned on)

You should've learned your lesson all in times before

You've been bruised, you've been broken

And there's my mind saying think before you go

Through that door that takes me to nowhere (yes boy)

I stopped you all romantic crazy in your head

You think I listen, no I don't care

The truth is, I do care, and when Raimundas Malasauskas proposed hypnotism as an avenue of total interaction, a room full of mirrors in which objects create themselves from the swept floorboards of the Silverman Gallery—the birthplace of the golem—I went there. You know how Susan Sontag coined that expression, “Don’t go there.” Well, I went there, ignoring Sontag, thrusting myself in a post-Sontag space of risk, interpellation, and impending childbirth, drifting and dreaming, drifting and dreaming, in the Alterjinga of the Australian aboriginal people—the dreamtime.