

Karl Bergström

Art dealing with the phenomenon of unexplained phenomena.

Masters Essay for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in Fine Art VMASEX, Spring
2017. Presented to Valand Academy at University of Gothenburg in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Art.

Introduction

Doing research for my master thesis exhibition, I found the *Journal of the Society of Psychical Research*¹ and their publications. A strand of their effort is to find and debunk false positive indications of apparition sightings. A false positive is a result that indicates that a given condition exists when it does not. The article, *The Ghost in the Machine*², states the source of a haunting to be, not paranormality but infrasound. As I am interested in color and perceptual philosophy I was amazed to read that the apparition was described to have a color. The color gray. This raised the following questions: How can an infrasound transmit colour? How are we to understand our perception if apparitions can be triggered by physical events? Interrogating these questions as I was making a work that recreated the acoustical conditions in the article, a 19.8 Hz standing wave, would lead me to how the world as it appears is connected to how the world is constituted in terms of the clash between phenomenology³ and the scientific method⁴. The clash I am referring to here is that it seems to be ambiguous how to match up data and phenomena when conducting an experiment that relies on observational evidence⁵. The variant of phenomenology referred to is influenced by Martin Heidegger's concept of *fundamental ontology*⁶ in which, how the world is constituted is explored from a position of existing within the world, described in *Being and Time*⁷. As opposed to Edmund Husserl in his use of

¹ Journal of the Society for Psychical Research.

URL: <https://www.spr.ac.uk/publications/journal-society-psychical-research> (Accessed 2017-18-8)

² Tandy, Vic. *The Ghost in the Machine*. *Journal Of The Society For Psychical Research* Vol.62, No 851. April 1998.

³ Smith, David Woodruff. *Phenomenology*. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

⁴ Andersen, Hanne and Hepburn, Brian. *Scientific Method*. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

⁵ Bogen, James. *Theory and Observation in Science*. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

⁶ Wheeler, Michael. *Martin Heidegger. 2.2.1 The Question*. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

⁷ Heidegger, Martin. *Varat och Tiden*. 2nd ed. Udevalla: MediaPrint Udevalla AB. Bokförlaget Daidalos AB 1992.

method of *epoché*⁸ where the ontological status of the world is fully set aside. As I let *epoché* do some work in this essay, I want to move away from the transcendental idealism⁹ implicit in an Husserlian *epoché*; the idea that vital parts of how the world is constituted is beyond access from a phenomenological standpoint.

Working within the field of art to interrogate areas of phenomenology and science I looked at other artists working in the same field. I conducted an interview with artist Peter Eccher on his long term research on the unexplained phenomenon of mysterious soot in apartments. An unexplained phenomena that has undergone attempts to be explained scientifically, by state and private sectors, since the 1970s. Both my attempt to recreate the ghost frequency and Peter's interest into the venture of finding scientific answers to unexplained phenomena, sets a scene for artistic process and a way of negotiating production of art. The way I imagine the artist's role is as a third party to science and the unexplained. Negotiating two incommensurable worlds I discuss the artistic process and the field of fine art's ability to give and take to and from both worlds in order to produce presentations and understanding. The discussion part of the essay circulates around how the distinctions we make seems to create gaps which the body-mind split, the world of phenomena and the unexplained falls into. In the conclusion I describe how we seem to be able to grasp the unexplained with the phenomenological methods of *fundamental ontology* and *epoché* in combination with artistic process. I put forward an understanding of the unexplained in the process where it refuses to stay defined as it shifts between the analysing world of science and the unexplained world of phenomena.

⁸ Beyer, Christian. *Edmund Husserl. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

⁹ Stang, Nicholas F. Kant's Transcendental Idealism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

About the work Boo!

The work *Boo!*¹⁰ consists of two 21" base speakers, an amplifier and a tone generator. The speaker stack is black and about 2 meters in height and one meter wide. Above the speakers a print is mounted to the wall showing a venn diagram. The amplifier is visibly plugged into a wall socket. Cords running to and from the speakers and the amplifier lay coiled on the floor next to the speaker stack. The speakers emit an infrasound at the frequency 18.9 Hz. They are set up in the room so that the infrasound wave will travel a multiple of its wavelength and then reflect against the opposite wall back onto itself creating what is called a standing wave. This means that the traveling wave becomes static and doubled in amplitude at certain spots in the room. It is under acoustical conditions like these that psychical researchers have reported¹¹¹² apparition sightings. In the article *The Ghost in the Machine*¹³ reports of the correlation between 18.9Hz standing waves and apparition sightings mention the apparition as gray. The article describes how a presumed haunting is debunked and explained as being caused by the presence of an infrasound creating a standing wave. The article is published in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*¹⁴ and situates itself within that context of how to eliminate false positives when investigating claimed ghost sightings or other unexplained phenomena. Finding and eliminating such false positive accounts is a part of the work that the society does in order to make a distinction between ghost sightings caused by paranormal activity and sightings caused by normal activity.

Vic Tandy, the author of the article describe his experience of the phenomena as follows:

¹⁰ *Boo!*: artwork show at the Gothenburg Konsthall, April 29 to 22 May, part of the Masters Exhibition of the class of 2017 from the Valand Academy in Gothenburg.

¹¹ Tandy, Vic. Something in the Cellar. *Journal Of The Society For Psychical Research* Vol. 64.3, No 860.

¹² Tandy, Vic. The Ghost in the Machine. *Journal Of The Society For Psychical Research* Vol.62, No 851. April 1998.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The Society for Psychical Research (SPR) is a non-profit organisation in the United Kingdom. Its stated purpose is to understand events and abilities commonly described as psychic or paranormal. It describes itself as the "first society to conduct organised scholarly research into human experiences that challenge contemporary scientific models." URL:

<https://www.spr.ac.uk/publications/journal-society-psychical-research>

“[...] he became aware that he was being watched, and a figure slowly emerged to his left. It was indistinct and on the periphery of his vision but it moved as V.T. would expect a person to. The apparition was grey and made no sound.”¹⁵”

The idea of the work circles around whether the conditions of haunted locations are reproducible and what it does to the understanding of perception, if sound can trigger visual stimuli. Why is the ghost gray, as it is sound, not light, creating the phenomena? Furthermore what is the relation between physical manipulation, that a vibration constitutes, and the mind?



Image shows: How *Boo!* is situated in the Gothenburg Konsthall. Photo: Karl Bergström, 2017.

By creating and exhibiting an infrasound that triggers phantom sightings became a way for me to dissect and question the body-mind problem. How should we think about the connection between mind and body if we accept the Mind-Body

¹⁵ Tandy, Vic. The Ghost in the Machine, Journal Of The Society For Psychical Research Vol.62, No 851. April 1998.

separation?¹⁶ This essay will focus on two questions¹⁷ concerning the Mind-Body problem, *The ontological question*: what is the mental and what is the physical? And *The causal question*: how does the physical influence the mental. Is there a switch, a knot, a gland that ties the body and the mind together? What kind of results do we get when we shake, vibrate or disturbed that switch, knot or gland? The venn diagram is the part of the work that further explains my thought on this to the audience. The center of the diagram represents the mixture of processes needed to trigger the phantom sighting in the world of phenomena. The venn diagram shows three circles overlapping to form seven sectors.

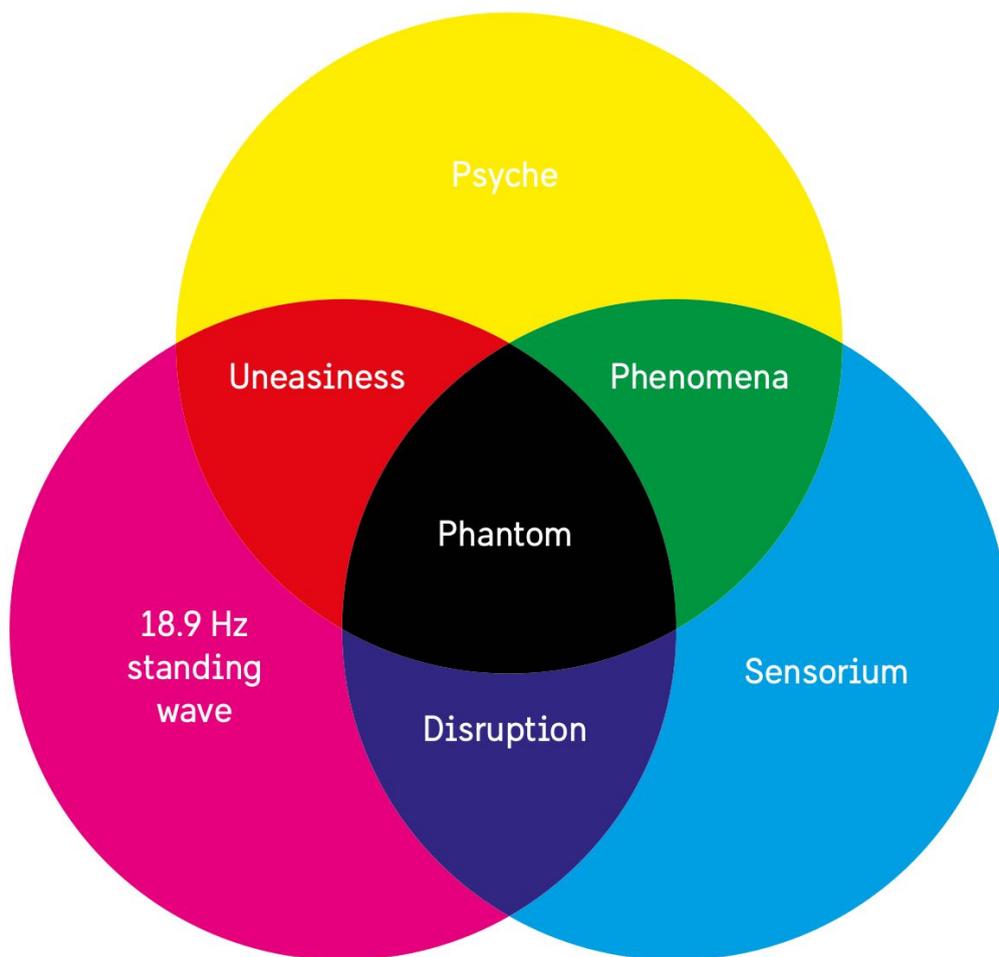


Image shows: "Untitled" a Venn Diagram showing colour mixing with the volumes of color mixing correlated with my analysis of the parts making people experience apparitions. By Karl Bergström 2017.

¹⁶ Robinson, Howard: 1.1 The Mind-Body Problem. Dualism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). forthcoming.

¹⁷ Robinson, Howard: 1.1 The Mind-Body Problem. Dualism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). forthcoming.

The sectors show the relation in color mixing of cyan, magenta and yellow overlapping to give red blue and green with black in the middle as all the sectors and colors overlap. The three circles and its overlapping area at the same time represent how I imagine six processes to interact for the phantom to appear for the viewer. The diagram puts the following processes into relation and assigns each a color: the human sensorium (cyan), the human psyche (yellow) and an 18.9 Hz standing wave (magenta). Elements in the overlap of the circles are: uneasiness (red), disruption (blue) and phenomena (green). In the center as all the sectors overlap is the element: phantom (black). To assign each process a color helps to visualize and make distinctions clear of how the processes interact with each other.

While printing the diagram I found that the printer only manages to print the black center as a brown or gray color if it is set to mix the black colour from cyan, magenta and yellow. It achieves a full black only when using the black cartridge. The failure of the printer to mix black is an example of, as I see it, the gap between theoretical planning and practical realisation of that planning. While planning theoretically both the mixing method and the full black method should yield black and that is what is indicated on screen. However, when the two methods are practically tested only one results in the full black being printed. I chose to let the printer try to mix black so that the *not quite black* result and the text phantom coincide thus making the diagram doubly significant. It becomes an example shown in pigment, the world of physics, of the very thought the work tries to investigate. When the phenomenological world where the phantom appears is divided up into its constituents, related in the diagram to color mixing, the ghost disappears. It falls apart into cause and effect.

When all the volumes that I have divided the ghost phenomenon to consist of overlap with their assigned colors the printer runs into a bug or a difficulty. When carrying out something that is possible in theory the printer cannot get the color mixing quite right. The black or brownish part of the venn diagram represents the phenomenological world which is unstratified and undivided, the stream of consciousness. We do not know what it is made of but we know how it appears. I look at the history of science

as a process that divides the world of phenomena into parts so that we gain more specific knowledge of the things we see in those parts, such as what they are made of. When we do this we lose the grip of the phenomena as we move out to the branching sections of division. The venn diagram with a brownish/black center is a representation of the dialectic of moving from phenomena to trying to see the parts of a phenomena in greater detail. An example of what attempts to define, stratify and divide the world can result in comes from the history of the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* is self. The society was formed in 1884 in London and was then comprised of researchers from a broad spectrum of disciplines. I entered the discourse through the article *Ghost in the Machine* published in 1998. At this time the journal speaks elsewhere about the societies dwindling membership and lack of trust from other branches of science. This, I imagine, is due to there being less distinction between the different strata of scientific disciplines, in the 1880s, than today. Many disciplines and areas of research that are today considered as unscientific had not yet been proven false and been abandoned by the canonical branches. I am imagining a point in time where chemistry and alchemy had recently split, religion and social sciences was closer tied, over all the church was a great framework for research. Psychology was yet to be truly established as a separate discipline. As the different disciplines crystallized psychical research was abandoned as a field of research. Even seemingly similar fields such as parapsychology is today differentiated from psychical research.

Making this work in a conceptual tradition I chose to adopt a minimalist way of showing in the exhibition space. As I see it the rich variety of materials I had gathered could stand a much more expressive installation. If we look at artists working with the invisible as is the case with Olafur Eliasson when he works with the slow yet increasing vanishing of glaciers he filled an entire gallery space with rocks gravel and traces of brooks, to make it look like a riverbed.¹⁸ This is something invisible being shown in a monumental way, presumably to latch on to the potential monumental impact that global warming has on our environment. My decision to keep the

¹⁸ Riverbed, 2014 Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark, 2014

installation minimal trails back to the way I want the installations to resemble experiments conducted along the lines of the scientific method¹⁹ and how I think its methods of reproducibility and simplicity of an experiment is best represented. An experiment must have a reasonable chance to be repeatable by anyone who attempts it under the same circumstances . This aligns with the idea that scientific experiments should be generalizable. Had I filled the room with, for instance, the interior of a ghost house or made it mimic a haunted location, the conceptual effect of dragging the ghost into a light white cube would vanish. It would vanish through employing more than the essential tools in analogy with the scientific method, in my mind, making it less generalizable. I chose not to overly aestheticize the way the cables were shown I wanted to keep the balance between laying my hands on every detail on the one hand, and treating the speakers as a found object on the other. Every step I take to develop any parameter of the work, like cleaning of the speakers, adding screens with technical data and so on, I felt, was a way to leave the original idea of vibrations distorting perception. I wanted the main part of the work to take place in the realm of the phenomenological world of the viewer. That is to say: I wanted the work to be the experience of the distorting frequency not only or necessarily how the installation looked. How then did I manage to get beyond making this work an instruction piece, printing it and nailing it to the wall like Sol LeWitt and Yoko Ono might do? Since what I want to show is the disruption in the sensorium, I am as close as I can be to something “just nailed to the wall” it's just being shown in an other primary medium than text. In this case I would call the medium infrasound and perceptual distortion. I say that this concept of sensory and phenomenological blurring is best shown through actual exposure to the blurring frequency. Instead of showing a text that reads: “imagine a phantom”.

The installation of *Boo!* had the unexpected consequence of a safety net being installed in the ceiling of the konsthall. To prevent glass from potentially breaking and falling, injuring the visitors. The installation of this net was a product of long meetings

¹⁹ Andersen, Hanne and Hepburn, Brian. 7. *Conclusion. Scientific Method. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

with the institution. The institution could not easily permit something that would potentially cause uneasiness or some thing that could potentially, however small the risk, cause injury to the visitors. A work discussing among other things irrational fear and fear of the unknown has as a consequence that fear of this work drives an institution to adopt a series of safety precautions. So less is more as states the minimalist proverb, but adapting the work to its physical site caused events that added more objects in the installation space.



Image shows: safety net installed in the ceiling of Gothenburg Konsthall, a prerequisite for showing the work. Photo: Karl Bergström, 2017.

I imagine myself encountering the same problematic as the printer, discrepancy between theoretical instructions and practical instantiations. During the times that the work was active all the other rooms of the konsthall were closed off to visitors for fear of falling glass in the rooms without a net in them. Also people were advised to leave the exhibition space if they felt uneasy. The konsthall was pampering the visitors against potential threats. This in accordance with rules and regulation applying to public institutions in the City of Gothenburg.

Among the health and safety rules taken into account was the limit of disturbing sound and individuals exposed per hour as well as the vibrational effect on the structure of the house. Also, the union's regulations for workers working within such environments were employed. The implementations of the health and safety rules had the effect that the work became more of a performance piece. Every day at the time of activation visitors looking at other works would be interrupted and instructed to move into the main hall by the konsthall staff. *Boo!* would be activated after a short introduction, by me, to the work and the venn diagram, described above, showing its theoretical aspects. People were then asked to move around the space to feel how and if the experience changed depending on where in the soundscape they were standing. A series of hot spots were identified. Places where the vibration felt extra intense or in other ways affected people positively or negatively. As people walked around they sometimes clustered at these points in the room. After the duration of the work people asked me questions and told me stories of how they felt and what their thoughts were. None of the visitors reported any gray phantom. No visual hallucinations of any kind were reported. I experienced my eyes vibrating and ever so slightly blurring my vision. One of the visitors was an organist in a nearby church. He told me that the vibration resembled one of the lower base notes of the organ. He further told me of a church that burnt down so that only the arches were left standing. In order to test the structural integrity of the arches they installed a full-scale organ and had an organist play it full blast daily for a number of days. The vibrations of the organ were utilized to stress the structure as a benchmark to see if the arches would remain unaffected. They did and were deemed safe to construct the new church around. Stories like these, spurred by conversations around this work gave me ideas and fuel to further develop my practice and ideas to my next work. This proved to be a positive side effect of the performative and social part of the work forced by the limitations of the konsthall.

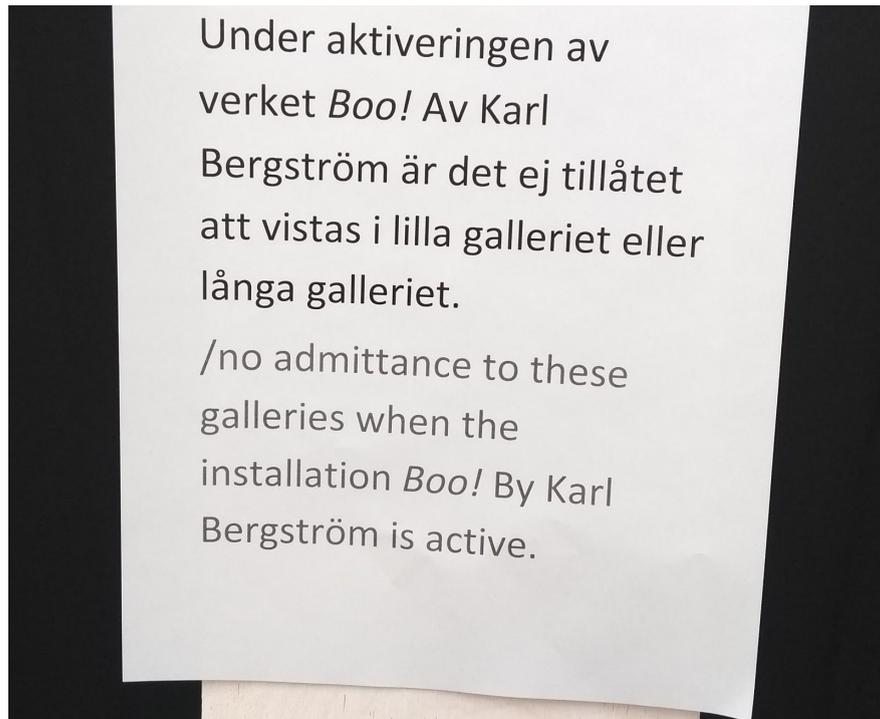


Image shows: Sign made by gothenburg Konsthall staff to permit visitors access to galleries during the time *Boo!* was active. Photo: Karl Bergström, 2017.

What *Boo!* does is use the venn diagram to show how I think the unexplained phenomena of a ghost sighting disappears as it is taken apart in order to understand it. This is how *Boo!* signifies a clash between observation in science²⁰ and phenomenology. Problems of observation in science question if looking at the gauges of an instrument can be said to be a kind of observing. How do we gather data of an event from observations? When we observe speed on a speedometer do we observe the speed or the dials on the dashboard? At what length can we aid our senses with instruments and still call it observing? What *Boo!* attempts is to apply the reading gauge problem to all phenomena by bringing into question the reliability of our sensorium and our mind as instruments to observe the world. *Boo!* shows how science as a tool to explain unexplained phenomenon fails. The failure of science to do this, questions what value we can assign the phenomena of unexplained phenomena if we take it in as it appears. Thinking about what science can and cannot do by ways of applying its methods to areas where the process, of using the

²⁰ Bogen, James. Theory and Observation in Science. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

method itself, yields unexplainable results. The work is filled with instances where theory breaks when it is applied in practical reality. The failure to produce the phantom phenomena. The failure of the printer to print black. The failure of the work to be installed without a range of limiting safety precautions to take effect. It involves the audience and exposes them to a soundscape as a part of an effort to show an event as close to the original event as possible. By having an essential part of the work take place in the visitors' private stream of consciousness. As I do this I situate myself among and am inspired by other artists working with showing the effects of the invisible like Olafur Eliasson. I see myself working in a minimalistic tradition like Yoko Ono. I neighbour Anish Kapoor in his work *Anxious*²¹. And, as I am in a clash between everyday life, science and the mystic I am inspired by Marcus Coates and his work *Journey to the Lower World*²².

²¹ *Anxious* shown at Lisson Gallery November 2012. The work is reported to contain the same frequency as has been recorded in haunted locations. The main difference between *Boo!* and *Anxious* is that as I understand Kapoor's work it is meant to create anxiety in the viewer and does not specialize in the phenomena of visual distortion.

²² URL: <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/collections/installations/item-473278.aspx>

About Peter Eccher's work with mysterious soot.

I have been looking at artists whose work is about or neighbours unexplained phenomena. I have been looking especially at Peter Eccher who is an artist who has had the unexplained phenomena of soot in apartments as a subject area for his artistic work. Soot in apartments is a phenomenon when suddenly a part of, or an entire apartment, or a home is covered with fine soot. Over night or during a couple of hours actual soot has appeared where there was none before. It taints and by doing so causes damage to the belongings of the people affected. Cases of soot in apartments have been reported both in Sweden, in the U.S. and in Norway. The soot in apartments had become so frequent during the 70s that a joint Swedish and Norwegian attempt to explain the phenomena was undertaken by state and private organisations. An explanation of the phenomena would help determine who should compensate who for the damaged property. In 1977 a report, "*Nedsvärtning i bostäder slutrapport 1977:1*"²³, containing the results of the investigations into 1000 cases of mysterious soot in apartments was published with the Swedish Consumer Agency as the main instigator.

²³ Konsumentverket. *Nedsvärtning i bostäder : Slutrapport* (Rapport / Konsumentverket, 1977:1). Stockholm: Konsumentverket. 1977.

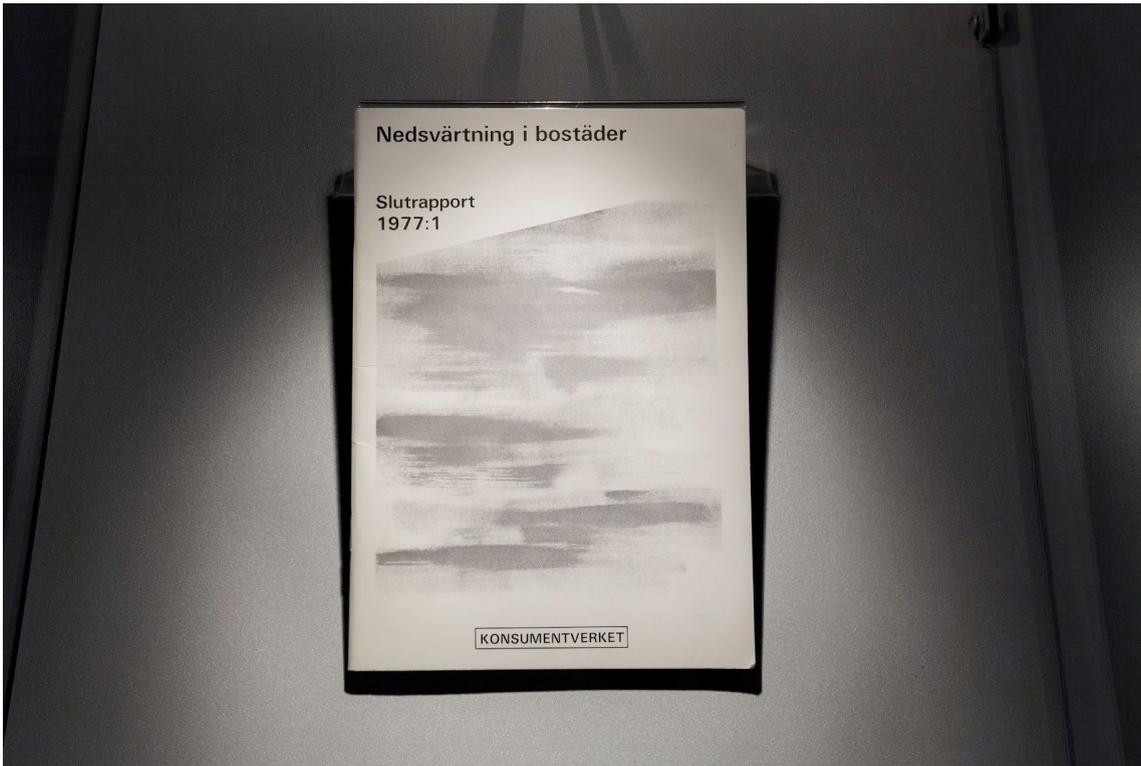


Image shows: copy of document *Nedsvärtning i Bostäder Slutrapport, 1977:1* from group show at Galleri Box: PETER ECCHER MED FLERA – RAPPORT 2012:1 Photo: Hendrik Zeitler, 2012.

In the report the Norwegian and Swedish investigating parties are listed along with the expenses and the methods and working theories applied. Methods used are documentation of tainted apartments and interviews with occupants. Soot samples are analyzed along with samples of the interior of the apartment's wallpaper, furniture textures, fabrics and paint. Draughts and heating installation is analyzed and controlled. Full scale burning of candles in enclosed spaces with similar ventilation, as affected homes, is conducted. The working theory is that the burning of candles and improper ventilation in combination with new materials, used in that decade in wallpaper and paints, may be responsible. One by one the parts of the working theory proves insufficient to explain the soot invasion. The conclusion is that since no cause of soot is found in the technical research and no cause can be tied to construction flaws, little or no compensation can be granted to victims of mysterious soot. This causes a lot of hardship and raises a lot of questions among the people afflicted. While the state has no opinion, does not know why the soot happens, the

victims feel untrusted and betrayed. It is not your fault but it is yours to clean up even if you did it or not, is the hovering feeling of many of the victims Eccher interviewed:

"I came into contact with a person who had suffered it twice, it had been really hard for the person because it had not happened to the neighbors. Imagine how stigmatized you must feel if you live in a semi-detached house area where everyone has equal fashioned homes and it happens to you alone, twice! The person did not want to even talk about it."²⁴

Eccher's reading of this document is how it, from a governmental authority together with the private business sector, tries to scientifically pinpoint the cause of suffering to be due to unexplained phenomenon happening to private citizens. Eccher investigates the dynamic of power between people who had been subjected to a mysterious event, suffering disbelief and accusation of being mad and a governmental entity investigating their private phenomenon. Eccher does this in dichotomies of science on the one part and paranormality on the other as he works in the split between science and the unexplained he is neither relying on scientific methods nor does he have to put the validity of his experience at stake like he would have done had he been a soot victim. In this position he was a third party operating in a third space, separate from the parts he investigated. It is the freedom gained by using the artistic process that enables Eccher to keep the path of investigation open into a subject area that is rendered unexplained by the way natural science processes it.

I conducted an interview with Eccher on how he situated himself in relation to on one hand the scientific government and the victims of paranormal events on the other.

²⁴ Eccher, Peter: Gothenburg based artist. Interview 2017-04-28.

Eccher describes how he in the process of replicating the soot environment in a studio began to show the same symptoms as the victims of mysterious soot he had been in contact with. Transferring and attracting the same anxieties.

“When I attempted to recreate mysterious soot in a studio on the Royal Institute of Art, in order to produce images, I redecorated a room and sprayed glue on all the furniture, walls, floors and in the ceiling. I then put soot on all of the adhesive surfaces. By doing this reconstruction I contracted the same problematic as my interviewees had reported. I managed to transmit symptoms to me through the reconstruction of the environment. I was worried that the soot would spread to neighboring studios and destroy other students' work. Just as the interviewed had reported: "no matter how much you clean it never goes away it, drives you crazy.”²⁵

Eccher, however, was neither looking for scientific results nor had he been a true victim of the soot. Instead he can be said to have been a hypochondriac or suffering from a *by proxy* illness of an unexplained event due to exposure to the same stress and environment as soot victims. He was committed to a psychiatric ward and met with disbelief from the staff there. Part of his adaptation of the symptoms was due to the fact that he felt alienated from the people who had phenomena happen to them and that the scientific report was inconclusive.

²⁵ Eccher, Peter: Gothenburg based artist. Interview 2017-04-28.

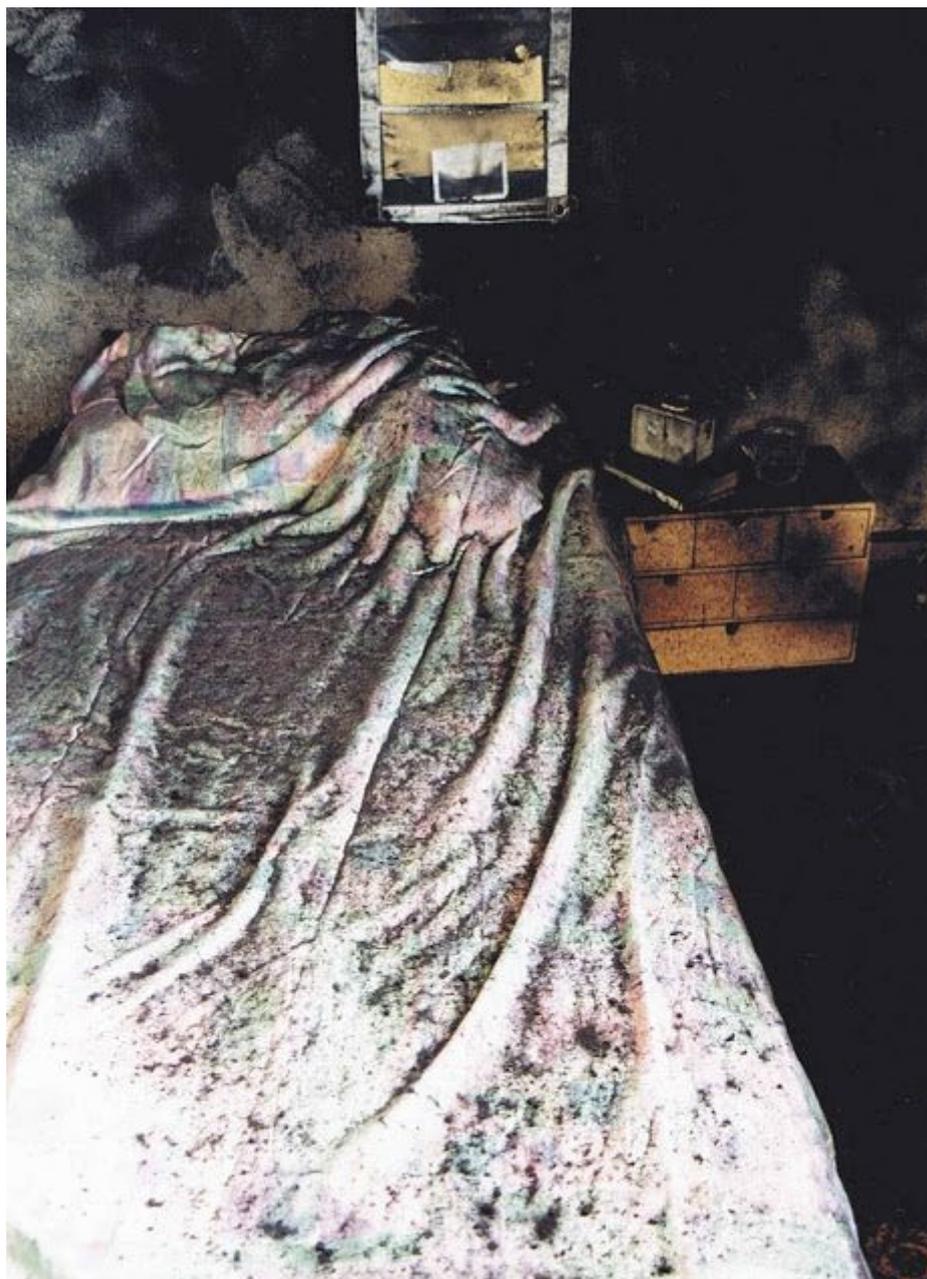


Image shows: recreated environment tainted with soot. by Peter Eccher, 2002.

What my discussion with Peter Eccher seems to reveal is that in this case when state and other organisations want to provide answers they fail by going into detail. The composition of tapestry, the amount of candles being lit per hour and so on, did not yield any detailed conclusion on why the mysterious soot happened. Therefore, the affected people suffered economically and socially.²⁶ Not being able to hold the phenomenological overview in place without the detailed desiccation that scientific

²⁶ Konsumentverket. *Nedsvärtning i bostäder : Slutrapport* (Rapport / Konsumentverket, 1977:1). Stockholm: Konsumentverket. 1977. Page: 1.

evaluation requires. This inability makes the whole venture of investigating a case as missing the point; people have certain experience and need acknowledgement economically, emotionally or otherwise. Eccher's insight into the experience of victims and the fact that the report was inconclusive made Eccher an unofficial expert on the subject. Eccher was the last person to touch the subject. As time went on people started to contact Eccher asking him to hold lectures on mysterious soot as his name was mentioned when searching the subject. This renewed interest in the subject led Eccher to eventually continue his art working around the subject by inviting poets, writers and artists to a group exhibition at Gallery Box in Gothenburg²⁷.

How I situate my work with Eccher's is that both of us are interested in testing conflicts in liminal areas and how they hold up when they are re-engaged and re-constructed. We both interrogate potential areas of failure. Eccher explores the power dynamic between individual and state when the state tries to solve unexplained phenomena scientifically or in my case, if science can explain ghost hauntings does that mean that we can perceive color via vibrations? There is a failure of explanation when we cannot explain scientifically what is happening and a failure of perception and ontological reality when we see gray phantoms when exposed to an infrasound. We both have one foot in the realm of science and one in the stories of paranormality. We both explore what happens when we, through the artistic process, make the areas overlap. We are trying to bring aspects of paranormality and science into play at the same time. Being artists we have tools to do this that are not reliant on either side we are investigating. How we do this is relatable to phenomenology. We can, through adopting a phenomenological vantage point, let both science and the experience of soot victims be enabled at the same time whilst they no longer exclude each other. In this setup we engage an artistic process that lets us find other ways to interrogate liminal subject areas and present the results in ways that can continue to deepen the complex relation between the generalized operations of natural science and the subjective nature of the unexplained.

²⁷ Review URL: <http://www.expressen.se/gt/kultur/den-mystiska-nedsvarningen/>
Exhibition Documentation URL: <http://galleribox.se/peter-eccher-20121117-20121216/>

Figur 1. Nedsvärtningens spridning över landet.

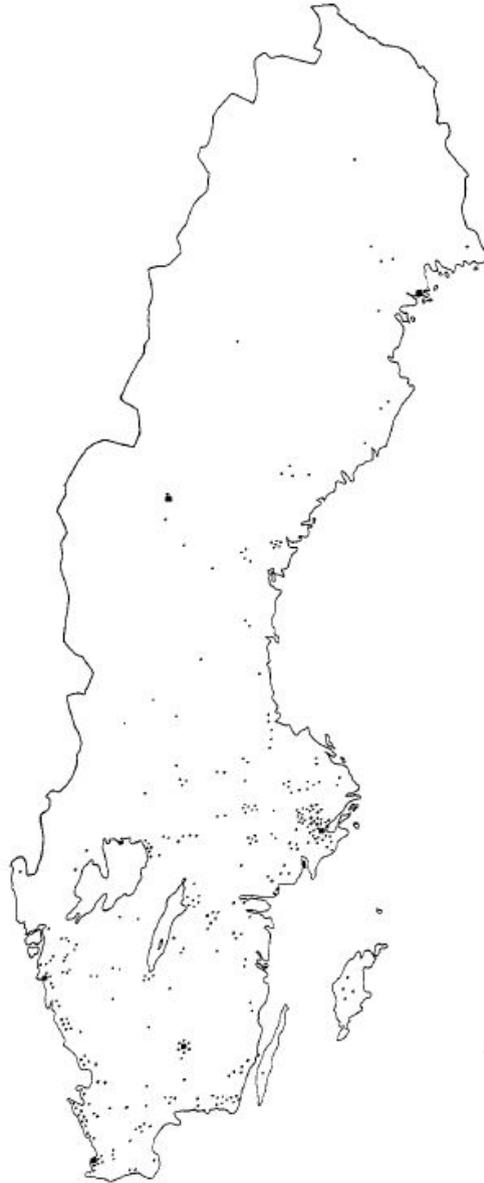


Image from *Nedsvärtning i Bostäder Slutrapport, 1977:1* showing reported cases of mysterious soot in Sweden.

Discussion

I will discuss how art is free from teleology. How that freedom from teleology makes art compatible in use with phenomenology. I will describe what the scientific method seems to do to unexplained phenomenon. How phenomenology in combination with artistic processes can better handle unexplained phenomena.

Why is fine art and the artistic process especially suitable for handling unexplained phenomena? Fine art may focus on detail and at the same time not rely on veridical proof to falsify or rectify an inquiry, get stuck in a loop looking for measurable results. As we know from looking at art it is neither true or false. An exhibition is not deemed to succeed nor fail in describing a measurement, or a state in nature. This, I argue, is due to the field of fine art being inherently free from teleology. In claiming this I align myself with thinkers such as David Hume and his challenges to the Teleological argument²⁸. You may apply fine art to whatever you like without committing to any ontology. Ontologies such as the existence of deities. Its strength lies in that there is not one ultimate goal to the entire field of fine art. To be free from teleology means that a given process is not on its way to fulfill any particular suitable form in accordance to a relation to something. In a world with teleology, the final state of acorns is to shade humans with their leaves by becoming an oak tree, or be made into building material and so on. Teleology explains why things change by introducing an inherent final form that a process, or being, gravitates towards. Imagining a statement that supports that art has teleology might look like: all art inherently strives to be political thus all art either fails or succeeds in being politically, engaged as it fulfill its predetermined form. What I want to do here is to say something more than art does not have to be political. Or for that matter art doesn't have to be anything. Statements like these forward the idea that art is a tool that has a particular use, a function by which art's best potential would operate. It is the same

²⁸ Russell, Paul and Kraal, Anders. Hume on Religion. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2017 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/hume-religion/>>.

thing to say these are all the materials you can drill through using a drill and then listing a number of materials. Art not being a tool with a handle ready made for human hands like a drill, art seems to be more like a method for creating handles.

What I want to stress is that art is not a drill, or any tool, since its free from telos. It is a process through which we can deal with the world of phenomenon. If it is anything in that analogy it is closer to the rotation that powers the drill. For fine art to be free from teleology means that fine art and artistic processes may be used to do certain specialized things but does not have as a predestined final form to do any of them. As such fine art and the artistic process do not gravitate towards any final design, does not aim to please or disrupt any one. The lack of aim and final utility of the fine art field enables practitioners to keep focus on phenomena, the world as It appears, and detailed focus at the same time concerning a given subject. This is due to its unbound relation to process and presentation. The field of fine art may grasp the world of phenomena without violating any crucial parameters inherent to art's way of doing research or presenting results. which it seems like the scientific method can not. Fine art can present detailed accounts of the world of phenomena at the same time as it allows for a meaningful interrogation of the unexplained phenomena as a whole. Phenomenology and the artistic process have crucial things in common that makes art especially suitable for dealing with unexplained phenomena.

In phenomenology theories of what things ultimately consist of ontologically, steps back to give way to how things appear. This method is called 'bracketing'²⁹ as proposed by Edmund Husserl it suspends judgment about how things are constituted to focus on how the things are experienced as phenomena. Which things are bracketed? Well since the world of phenomena takes place between a human and the world the things usually bracketed are the deeper understanding and division of what the world is made of and what a human is. We do not know the sender nor the receiver but we constantly intercept a signal as a stream of consciousness. This approach seems to be opposed to stratifying processes that lose the grip on phenomenological accounts of the world and ways to handle unexplained

²⁹ Beyer, Christian. 5. *The phenomenological epoché. Edmund Husserl. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

phenomena. Examples of stratification can be when the scientific method is applied to a subject but fails to gather measurable data. An example of this is when the scientific method is to account for ghost sightings, with little or no satisfying result. How does the scientific method handle reports of psychic ability, ghost sightings and premonition? I imagine a movement that is undertaken from (1) a phenomenon is experienced as a phenomenon, moving towards: (2) the phenomenon is explained as being caused by something, being embedded in a chain of cause and effect. During the movement, from unfocused unity of these subjects, as focus is achieved, the unexplained phenomenon slips away into the cracks of distinction. This movement, this dialectic from whole to fraction, from experiencing something as a phenomena to dividing it into parts can, for the artist, be reversed. This means, that the result of an inquiry does not have to focus on what the division of a phenomena yielded. While the scientific method seems focus too much on the divisions of the phenomena, fine art is free to move to and from the whole to parts of phenomena. It is when using this method of traveling back and forth along a scale of analysing a phenomena that fine art manages to grasp and present both the dialectic and the phenomenon. This is something that other sciences have a hard time encompassing. I can in my work *Boo!* make the work about how the work is made, it is made in a framework of testing the scientific method and its reproducibility, a sort of meta level of the work. The work is at the same time about the subject of ghost hauntings without trying to debunk or falsify any experience. The work functions as a discussion starter for sharing experience of the unexplained. This is the way it may grasp the dialectic from whole to part and the phenomenon. The way the work presents the phenomena is by introducing the question of how color is transmitted and what perception is. By grabbing and holding on to any one of the three parts, the interrogation of reproducibility, the discussion of the unexplained and the interrogation of perceiving color we can nicely shift what is grasped and what is explained. I can not explain the unexplained just as science cannot but I can continue to handle it and rearrange it. I

do not need to reject it just because it is unexplained. Art in this way deals³⁰ with subject areas rather than explains them.

Any explanation of the unexplained phenomenon by definition destroys the phenomenon and turns it into something else. But the phenomena still appeared to you and as such it looks and feels very different from the explanations. Fine art can operate on the same phenomenological level with the bracketing of world and human intact and provide answers in a format native to both phenomenology and art: the world of phenomenon. What you do not get to keep is the cause and effect chain or any divisions in the understanding of ontological conditions. What you do get to keep is a validation of what your stream of consciousness reports.

The phenomenological world, the world as it appears for you as an individual is analog to an undivided sense, one where few distinctions are made. The ability to divide the world is, as I see it, indeed available to every human. We seem to sometimes do this by categorizing the world, assigning phenomena categories that fit into, and become, our language and culture. One of the big communal projects doing this is science. As branches of thought and science appear the base of all evidence, our sensorium is divided, stratified into categories. The input we get is then valid or invalid according to these categories and not according to the phenomenological world.

There seems to be a gap between the phenomena of the world and sciences. Things are not what they seem, it seems. As I see it the five senses individually do not register any gray phantom. We cannot make any division in us or in the world that contains the phantom. It is when the sensorium of the viewer, the psyche and the standing wave is overlapping that the body as a whole registers a phantom. The phantom can not be said to occur visually or any other part of the combined sensory apparatus it occurs within the undivided mind body complex.

³⁰ Wheeler, Michael. 2.2.2 Modes of Encounter. Martin Heidegger. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/heidegger/>>.

How do you reconcile mind and body and if you do so what happens to the ghost? To remedy this gap, I in a way choose sides, I do not describe a ghost but I say phantom the difference is in that a phantom may be defined as:

*“an appearance or illusion without material substance, as a dream image, mirage, or optical illusion.”*³¹

A ghost has connotations to after life and the soul. While the phantom belongs to the body side of the mind-body split. This makes my work function entirely on a mechanical level if we were to describe it in a dualistic context. The work does not rely on claims of a dualistic world view. I keep my hand off the existence of a soul and any sort of deity. It is not what this work is about. Yet I do not go all that way to yield to mechanism, that we all are flesh robots. What I imagine doing in the venn diagram is not dividing a dualistic person into its two basic parts but to divide a monistic being-in-the-world into two unlikely and counterintuitive parts that we inherited from dualistic thinkers such as Descartes and paradigms such as Christianity. I, rather, use the Leibnizian idea of the monad³² being the one and only substance folded to make up the plurality of substances we see around us. This in contrast to substance dualism where every thing in the world is said to be comprised of two substances, extended matter and thought matter. In monadism all substances like minerals thought and emotion, for example, are in this framework viewable as folds in one substance.

The two unlikely parts divided from the being-in-the-world³³, the body and the mind, are subjected to, what breaks the division apart, the physical manipulation that is the 18.9Hz vibration. I imagine an embodied mind that in order to fit an outdated format

³¹ phantom. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged.* URL: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/phantom> (Accessed 2017-28-8)

³² Look, Brandon C., 5.1 Monads and the World of Phenomena. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2017 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/leibniz/>.

³³ Wheeler, Michael. 2.2.3 Being-in-the-World. Martin Heidegger. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/heidegger/>. (Accessed 28-8-17)

has been divided in sensorium and psyche. Therefore the mechanical level on which the 18.9Hz vibration functions is actually another aspect of the mind or vice versa. I use the failure of concept of dualism as an argument to prove my point. By doing this I can focus on the interplay between the world as it appears and what we project back to the world of phenomena. The merit of the Body-Mind split is that it enables me to look at where it collapses in order to advocate an embodied mind, and further to put it into 'brackets'. The place of interest for this is when we imagine things, hallucinate and apply mind content onto the world. Within the field of fine art is where I can perform this operation without it breaking the field in which I test it. Fine art, in synergy with phenomenology, contains both a method and gives a scene, a place for presentation, for the result of the artistic process. The scene is the world of phenomena. The world as it appears; not as it is explained to you to be constituted.

Conclusion

Making the work *Boo!* led me to questions about how theoretical planning affects the world and how the world affects the planning in processes of realization of an idea. Exploring the relation between world and idea, through the case of a ghost haunting being debunked, caused by an acoustic environment instead of a paranormal event, I enter into a discussion about how the world as it appears is linked to how the world is constituted. I evaluate the artistic process as a tool to handle two hurdles: the division between mind body and the division between body and world. The variant of phenomenology I choose to work with is based in Martin Heidegger's *fundamental ontology*³⁴ where phenomenology can deal with ontology. In combination with Husserl's idea of bracketing according to which phenomenology works we may leave ontological inquiries behind. These two different approaches, Heidegger who pulls everything into the grasp of the perceived world and Husserl who prefers to separate idealized aspects of things out, works to situate the conversation.

I conducted an interview with artist Peter Eccher who has been working with how state organizations deal with people who have been victims of mysterious events. After evaluating my own and Eccher's work it seems like the subject of fine art and the artistic processes in combination with phenomenology can yield interesting and different results than if we use natural sciences and the scientific method. I discuss how art and phenomenology both can be said to be free from teleology, and how this is an important factor in their synergy. Other things suggested as important factors in this synergy is a step away from substance dualism and adopting a Leibnizian Monadology. Discussing how and what these different results may be I find that both fine art and phenomenology share a vital mode of presentation, or arena, that is the phenomena as they appear in the stream of consciousness. With an acute focus on what we perceive as a result of an inquiry, contrasted to: what that we see consists of art and phenomenology, together provides a tool for use of a greater range of

³⁴ Wheeler, Michael. *Martin Heidegger. 2.2.1 The Question. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

material use in presentation, a way to describe phenomenon in a phenomenological way instead of only writing and how the artistic process freely can present both analysed phenomenon yet still rely on presentations of the world as it appears whilst the scientific method cannot. I speak of this mobility and dialectic movement as a key function of the artistic method when examining unexplained phenomenon. Art and phenomenology, because of arts way of presenting and producing phenomena can continue to make inquiries where the scientific method yields unexplained results.

Works of art and art practices dealing with the unexplained continually perform the dialectic movement from perception of phenomena to detailed view. Incorporating the entire world of phenomena as it appears; not compacting understanding into existing paradigms like substance dualism³⁵ or searches for evidence. Fine art employs other and a richer set of variables in order to avoid missing the point by finding out. Fine art allows you to keep two things in mind at the same time. It allows for a result of an inquiry to contain two or more conflicting results. This mobility is granted by freedom from teleology. It is this unspecificity that seems to make the field of art a good candidate for handling, presenting and debating the blurry, the unexplained and the complex. The scientific method seems to blind researchers to a certain degree when they divide the world of phenomena into parts, un-divided, the parts show an aspect that is lost as they are taken apart. It is possible to use strategies to avoid conclusions that forbids or strictly disqualifies the world as it appears.

Artistic modes of presentation may not yield the same results as other branches of science but it can cause debate, help deal with difficulties that other modes of research may effectively lose in the process of satisfying certain formats. Phenomenology and art synergize in that art supplies a process and phenomenology an output that can coexist with the use of 'bracketing'. By being free from teleological attribution art as experienced does not need to involve itself in ontological hierarchies

³⁵ Robinson, Howard. Dualism. 2.3 *Substance Dualism*. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). forthcoming URL: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/dualism/>>.

and is therefore open for 'bracketing'. Phenomenology and art share the same scene, the same focus on the world of phenomena. Art and the artistic process works with the manipulation and editing of phenomena. While altering phenomena art does not rely on an ontological explanation, neither a cause and effect relation nor teleological attribution.

It is exactly this independence that art shares with phenomenology that enables it to handle unexplained phenomena with a different result than the scientific method. Why then couldn't we use only phenomenology to explain the unexplained phenomena? You can. But art has an other process than philosophy. The artistic process brings in and makes available, and reasonable, all of the physical world of object and materials, beyond text and thought examples. It allows for other modes of presentation. This is why something interesting happens when the artistic process is added on to phenomenological methods. This points phenomenological research in another direction than reading and producing text as a manifestation of thought.

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