

Introduction

Strange Powers began with a dream of transforming an unoccupied tenement with temporary site-specific drawings and installations in the bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, and hallways, as if to summon the lives and memories of past tenants and suggest the presence of future dwellers. Along the way, we faced constant hurdles in locating the ideal site—between real estate speculation and community tensions associated with gentrification, it was a process fraught with challenges. While we struggled to find the perfect location, we had more fortuitous experiences in the development of our curatorial approach thanks to our friend and colleague, Laura Hoptman.

Laura had just finished the 54th Carnegie International and had not yet begun her job as Senior Curator at The New Museum; I hoped the time was at last right to have her develop a project with Creative Time. When I shared our ideas, I found that Laura was coincidentally talking with artist Trisha Donnelly about curating a show of art that conjures a mystical

experience. Laura was interested in the notion that visual art has the power to invoke the invisible or to embody a presence. She found that a number of artists were incorporating the magical directly into their broader practice in reaction to present world conditions.

I was hooked—not only did Laura’s proposal dovetail perfectly with our interests, it was harmonious with our belief in art’s fundamental power to transform our emotions, our experiences, and even our beliefs. The idea also seemed somehow timely with our nation’s growing attention to spirituality and religion at a time of governmental ideological impoverishment.

Early in the process, Laura invited Creative Time curator and producer Peter Eley to co-curate the exhibition. Peter was (and remains) by all accounts a skeptic, or as one critic described him—“Agent Scully” to Laura’s “Agent Mulder,” referring to the duo of the Television show “The X-Files.” As a result of their disparate approaches but mutual interests, Laura and Peter have assembled a dynamic and

thought-provoking mix of artworks from talismans to summoned apparitions. The show features objects, drawings, videos, photographs, installations, performances and spells that exude a special presence. The works chosen are sincere in their embrace of magical possibility and their attempt to conjure an experience, and they encourage us to examine our own spectrum of belief. According to Peter, “our hope is that the exhibition encourages a moment of belief for visitors—for many, a leap of faith—rather than a suspension of disbelief.”

We had hoped to find a haunted space for the exhibition, and were lucky to come across an old East Village building rumored to be inhabited by ghosts. The location in Teatro IATI’s building on East 4th Street had a number of interesting coincidences for us. After choosing the space, we discovered that Creative Time had actually worked in this very building sixteen years ago, collaborating on a performance with Dixon Place. And this very block is the location of Creative Time’s future

home (59–61 East 4th Street) and where Christian Cummings will create séance drawings during *Strange Powers*’ opening night.

As always, we are grateful to the artists for their extraordinary contributions to the show, as well as to their galleries, estates and representatives for the loans to the exhibition and support of the artists’ involvement. In particular, we wish to thank Justine Birbil of Michael Werner Gallery; Michael Clifton of Anton Kern; Jimi Lee and Nadia Gerazouni of Stuart Shave/Modern Art; Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw; Friedrich Jürgenson Foundation; Andrew Kreps; Carol Greene and Jay Sanders of Greene Naftali; Casey Kaplan, Joanna Kleinberg and Chana Budgazad; Kate Spalding of Cohan and Leslie; Mari Spirito of 303 Gallery; Alex Tuttle of John Connelly Presents; John Giorno; Giovanni Garcia-Fenech of The Project; and Kara Vander Weg of Gagosian Gallery.

We would also like to thank Panasonic for allowing us to extend the East Village show to the massive crowds in

Times Square by simultaneously showing Euan Macdonald's video portrait of a psychic healer on *The 59th Minute: Video Art on the NBC Astrovision* by Panasonic.

I am grateful to the co-curators of the exhibition, Laura Hoptman and Peter Eleey, who also join me in thanking the Creative Time Board and staff, especially producer Gavin Kroeber and our marketing team of Maureen Sullivan and Brendan Griffiths; our dedicated interns and volunteers; site manager Tyler Sinclair; chief preparator Art Domantay; lighting designer extraordinaire Pat Dignan; and graphic designer Willy Wong, who brought a wealth of intelligence to the design process. Our deepest appreciation goes to the visionaries Vivian Deangelo at Teatro IATI and José Oliveras at Teatro Circulo who magically saved the day by inviting us into their building for the summer; and to all those who helped in our search for the exhibition location including Amy Chin, Bruce Allardice, Linda Chapman, Ellen

Stewart and her team at La MaMa, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Jeffrey Manzer and Carolyn Clevenger of the New York City Economic Development Corporation. We raise a glass, and a plate, to Michael Gruenglas for generously hosting the artist dinner. And finally our deepest gratitude to the major donors who made the presentation of this exhibition possible: the National Endowment for the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Altria Group, Inc., and the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation.

Anne Pasternak
President and Artistic Director
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Virtual tours of the exhibition at
www.creativetime.org
Audio tours are available on site.

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