

The series *Dwelling: In this space we breathe* (2017) by Khadija Saye (1992–2017) can be conceived as a reference to the nineteenth-century obsession with the documenting of apparitions.² In a series of eight tintypes, British-Gambian Saye investigated the migration of Gambian spirit practices. In each of the images Saye holds objects that are regarded as sacred, which came into her possession through a process of prayer and exchange with Gambian spiritual healers. The ritual objects are laden with spiritual significance and derived directly from the diaspora of which Saye was part of. Saye wrote that the tintypes had become sacred objects for her too. The process of making them had itself become a ritual of which Saye was the initiator.³ In the performative acts carried out by Polish artist Filip Berendt in creating his series *Monomyth*, the camera is also a tool. The immersion in mysticism, prompted by the shamanic, plant-derived drug ayahuasca and the ‘journey within’, has its origins in a deep interest in a spiritual realm beyond the phenomenological worldview.

Does the popularity of consuming ayahuasca or DMT amount to a new form of seeking contemporary spirituality? *Dimitri, or the Silent Orgasm* by French photographer Jean Vincent Simonet, in collaboration with DJ and producer Trippin Jaguar, is a reflection on the psychedelic state created by DMT, a molecule found in many plants and animals that has historically been used by indigenous peoples in rituals, and for purposes of healing. It can produce vivid hallucinations and, for that reason, is illegal in most countries. In Jean-Vincent Simonet’s work, bodies and places, nature and artificiality are submerged in a celebration of image-fetishism. Trippin Jaguar’s musical style and persona are likewise inspired by the ritualistic use of hallucinogens and psilocybin, found in magic mushrooms. Trippin Jaguar’s immersive soundscape complements the ebb and flow of emotions and visions in Simonet’s projections. Visitors are completely surrounded by the work and they figuratively step through the door to another world, a door the artist has already passed through. As a viewer you are challenged to put yourself in a space that opens up and enables you to see the world in a new way.⁴ The work of Saye, Berendt and Simonet can be seen as the material residue of spiritual rituals initiated as part of their own inner journey.

Not represented here, but very much worth drawing attention to in this context, are artists who, by means of their photography, attempt to give their audiences a spiritual experience (or something close to it) by creating ritualistic spaces. For his 2016 exhibition at Foam called *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (a reference to the 1981 album by Brian Eno and David Byrne), Dutch artist Paul Bogaers created an overwhelming space in which the viewer was completely immersed. Ever since the start of his career in the mid 1980s, he has sought ways of escaping the most forceful conventions of photography. He couldn’t identify with the use of





Under the Influence, 2015 photographic installation
view © Dominic Hawgood, courtesy of the artist

photography as a dry representation of reality, intended purely to show what things looked like. Instead, he wanted to use photography as a tool to call up associations that went beyond the flat surface of the photograph and indeed beyond anything observable in it. Through the visible he tries to make contact with something invisible, something he calls inspiration. In the exhibition he presented a series of photosculptures and 'heads' made of papier-mâché, with photographs on them that were recognisable as the insides of masks. The illusion of depth was created by a flat photo and enhanced by the shape of the head.

Bogaers is fascinated by the inspiration seen in African masks and images, because of both their power of expression and their significance. They have a concrete form but they always represent something im-

material, whether ancestors, forces or ghosts. Making the invisible visible is, in his view, the essence of the artistic calling. The unfinished nature of the masks and sculptures is another feature that attracts him. They are used in rituals, and in the process all kinds of things are added: objects, rope, sacrificial blood. The sculptures change continually, as they need to if they are to remain 'alive'. Every addition, as long as it is the right one, reinforces the power of the sculpture. No piece is ever completed, therefore, but always in transition.⁵

During his graduation exhibition for the MA in photography at ECAL, Switzerland, Calum Douglas presented a ritual space in which spirituality and the internet are closely connected. With *Arcana* Douglas intends to offer visitors a multi-sensory experience, central to