The Pawel Norway Dream Machine

November 17, 2016
3 minutes, 28 seconds

Speakers: Gabi Schaffzin, Sofie Hoara

Transcribed by: Sarah Fuchs

IDEAS Performance Series
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Time	Transcription
00:06	[IDEAS INITIATIVE FOR DIGTIAL* EXPLORATION OF ARTS + SCIENCES]
00:11	[THE PAWEL NORWAY DREAM MACHINE GABI SCHAFFZIN, SOFIE HODARA, AND ZACHARY KAISER THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2016]
00:14	[music] [Scrolling text] [This hybrid performance-exhibition features modern-day efforts to recreate experiments dating back to 1841 from Dr. Pawel Norway's treatise on Computable Transformation of Human Qualities to Those of a Visible Dream Memory. The treatise is an obscure but intriguing thesis on the possibility of inferring dream content from the behavior of a subject after he or she has awakened. Developed over 100 years before the discovery of REM sleep, Computable Transformation argues that human bodies produce residual energy -- a type of Cartesian molecule -- that emits all day. The scientist believed that this energy can be collected and measured, including its velocity coming off the body, temperature, etc., which could make it possible to reconstruct the prior dreams.]
00:43	Gabi Schaffzin: Dr. Pawel Norway's treatise "ComputableTransformation of Human Qualities to Those of a Visible Dream Memory" was, for some very bizarre reason, sitting in a thrift store in Mangalia in Romania in 2014. It seems like Norway spared no expense and he even used a method called anesthetic printing where you write on zinc with asphalt and you put it in an acid bath and so it allows this sort of sketched and handwritten to be printed again and again.
1:07	The entire project that he writes about is about turning dreams into visuals and so this is the type of image that came out. It's like this really lovely, quasi abstract representations of whatever he had calculated and then envisioned from his tests. Norway had this idea about where dreams exist [Sofie Hoara and a Volunteer] and he took a cue from the Cartesian conceptualization of the human, which is that the brain and the body are wholly separate. So, he grabbed this device and he put it on himself and he spent months determining how to measure, for what he deemed, the Cartesian Dream Molecule
1:39	Sofie Hoara: So, as Dobby continues to work, I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your dream history. This will help us better understand our results.

1:48 Volunteer: Okay.

1:50 Hoara: If at any point a question makes you feel uncomfortable or you would prefer not to answer it, just say pass. How many hours did you get last night, approximately?

1:59 Volunteer: Six.

2:00 Hoara: Great. On an average night [crosstalk] how long does it take you to fall asleep?

2:02 Dobby: [crosstalk] Just rest your hand right here

2:07 Volunteer: An hour.

2:08 Hoara: Very common. Generally speaking, how many times do you wake up throughout the night?

2:18 Volunteer: Twice.

2:19 Hoara: Very common. Any nightmares in the past week?

2:23 Volunteer: Probably, yea.

2:26 Hoara: When I hit this green button, the visuals on this wall are going to change. They will begin to render our attempt at a visualization of your most recent dream state. Alright, ready?

2:41 Schaffzin: Now Norway was obsessed with Descartes and after a week of particularly troublesome dreams, [Zachary Kaiser] he wondered if maybe 200 years later, he could use the technology that his modern science training provided him to reinvigorate a corpuscular visualization of mind and body interaction.

3:08 We see our responsibility as artists and scholars to empower the collective through the education of the individual. We juxtapose one pseudo-scientific with another 150 years apart and we seek to raise questions. We seek to analogize Norway's Dream Machine to our modern day quantified self-movement.

*Spelled as written. Digital may have been misspelled.