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#### ABSTRACT

“Hijack” has etymological connotations of force. It is intended here as a purposeful turn away from expert authority and from singular authorship, towards a more expanded sphere of multiple experience in art aesthetics. If there is a hijacking force in art, it is the dynamic desire to reclaim the impossible and the unexpected. These qualities are evident in telepathy as a system of transmitted aesthetic information. Isabelle Stengers, who has investigated the role of the charlatan, might urge us to follow such a turn away from regulated forms of sensory information and repurpose telepathy as a propagated extra-sensory activity. Like the charlatan or other maligned characters of ill repute, the art writer who responds to the essence of the artwork through participation rather than judgment becomes the outsider and, in this case, the telepath. This paper addresses the work of Australian artist Jacqueline Drinkall as an aggregate of telepathic transmissions, ripe for hijacking. I argue that a telepathic hijack, as an unexpected reclamation and as a method of aesthetic experimentation, can be enacted as a speculative form of art writing. Telepathy in art and of art allows a writing with the artwork. By this I mean that a super-sensory and speculative mode of writing can exist beside the artwork, rather than in judgment of it. This is a divergence from an overt critique of art through established constructs of history, origin or relations alone. In this paper I will explore the concept of telepathy as a quality of speculative aesthetics, which is distinguished by contingent change, variable outcomes and meandering. I will focus on: telepathic art transmissions as a hijack of conventional aesthetics; Jacqueline Drinkall’s telepathic artwork as an interrupted experience; and Isabelle Stengers’ figure of the charlatan.

#### KEYWORDS

telepathy, speculative aesthetic, Jacqueline Drinkall, Isabelle Stenger, hijacking

# Hijacking Telepathic Art Experience as a Speculative Aesthetic

Prudence Gibson

There is a relationship between telepathy, hijacking and the work of artist Jaqueline Drinkall. She explores psycho-sensual transmissions of data by building UFOs and conducting live performances wherein she encourages audiences to contribute telepathic messages by writing with marker pens on the inside walls of her spaceship. She uses telepathic headdresses to navigate natural environments in performative video works. She sends and receives transmitted data by weaving computer cables into balaclavas and setting off into underwater environments to make contact with other humans, pre-humans, and post-humans, thereby inviting multiple speculative perspectives. Later in this paper, I assume the role of hijacker in my writing about her work, by interrupting and repurposing the *experience* of her artwork, and by writing it as an anecdotal, reflexive tale of an underwater telepathic excursion. The writing constitutes a participatory seizing and a re-signaling. In this

way, my telepathic rejoinder is an aesthetic hijack within the context of Drinkall's telepathic hijack of singular sensory aesthetics; a hijack of the hijack.

Before exploring Drinkall's work further, I need to articulate the role of the hijacking telepath. In an artistic context, telepathy may function as the content or subject matter of artworks as well as an extrasensory mode in which one may analyze or experience the artworks. It is a system of transmitted information that sits alongside conventional sensory experience, without exhausting the discretion of human sensations. Telepathy can be understood as a para-human aesthetic theme. It is a sensory activity of the mind, in contrast to the five physical senses. For this reason, telepathy does not fit easily into traditional disciplines of knowledge, which often rely on sensory input. If finitude is the limit of knowledge, then telepathy punctures that limit and extends along an endless radiating frequency. Likewise, if telepathy is a mode of being hyper-aware of more than one kind of fixed art experience, with multiple possibilities or outcomes, then aesthetics might evolve beyond the subject-object relationship that typically characterizes the starting point of aesthetic experience.

A telepathic mode is hyper-sensitive to all the different elements of aesthetic experience, such as the art space, the artwork's narrative, materiality, temporality, the socio-historical contexts and the multiple reactions and emanations of animate and inanimate things to and from the artwork. Those elements are of discrete and equal importance in speculative aesthetics, as are contingency, uncertainty, improbability and even the possibility of catastrophe. These qualities also characterize the telepathic aspects of art, creating a "sense" that is impossible to measure and lacks recorded evidence. Telepathy's relevance to aesthetics is its receptivity to information that can't be understood via conventional constructs, and the potential of aesthetics to participate in an ecology of speculation. The telepath, as outsider, as adventurer and as arbitrary (open to possibility) or undetermined (likely to change for no reason) function of communication, is a hijacker. To write a narrative hijack is to take over the controls of someone else's ship (of fools), in this case seizing bridge-command of an outmoded art-critical approach, and to repurpose the aesthetic messages, so that new knowledge or heightened experience becomes available. The telepathic art writer, then, sabotages the subject-object dyads of aesthetic criticism by participating, repurposing, interrupting and transmitting the energy of the artwork rather than merely conveying its meaning. To welcome this intensive aggregate of multiple

frequencies instead of filtering them out would be to open ourselves to a telepathic hijack suggestive of knowledge beyond the human. Repurposed sensory experience (in this case writing about Drinkall's artwork using qualities of telepathy) is an endeavor that potentially breaks through simplistic or reductive limits.

Conventionally the telepath is a powerful protagonist in arcane narratives, one who hears something that the rest of a given society cannot hear, who perceives something that the rest cannot perceive, who knows something that they cannot know and is consequently both leader and outcast. In this enquiry, though, the telepath is no leader. The telepath is no outcast. The telepath is one among many, who hijacks various disciplines – art, theory, performance – that exist *in tandem* with the sciences of the occult.

Science philosopher Isabelle Stengers writes about the “charlatan” in medical history as a figure who might be recast or transformed from a suspicious quack to a valuable alternative perspective.<sup>1</sup> The same might be said of the telepathic artist and art writer. The charlatan experiments with new medicine, and exhorts its worth before the testing has been completed, before the argument is proven, before the data is published. When Stengers says “the cure proves nothing,” she describes how the experiments conducted by a medical charlatan cannot be reduced to their results, because he is conducting a practice without an interest in the proof.<sup>2</sup> In the same way, art writers who write about telepathic art, using telepathic systems of shared information, suffer the same scornful skepticism, because it is difficult to prove the assessable value of the art experience beyond the anecdote.

Writing speculatively about art can become a telepathic hijack by resisting the authoritative voice of the one and allowing for multiple viewpoints. It accepts the original performance, the video, the witness, the speculative story, the headdress, the water and the writer, all of which are bound together by telepathic connections, as participatory elements in the experience of writing. The hijack resists limits by repurposing conventional modes of art writing.

## • Telepathic Art Transmissions •

Telepathy is a complex information system that can comprise the making, delivering and experiencing of art. It manifests as a network of transmissions. Telepathy is also the movement of electromagnetic waves from unknown sources and towards unknown places. Telepathy is the faint sound of “another” voice and “another” voice and “another”, piping up behind the more obvious ones. Are they the voices of the dead, of our own inner consciousness or from another realm we can never comprehend, or all three and more?

If telepathy is distinguished by its supernatural non-human otherness, can manmade transmission systems of data and information, such as radio, be telepathic? Although the messages themselves are sent and received by humans, the system also produces glitches, crossed lines and static energies that were not intended in the original radio wave transmission. These anomalies don't fall within the conventions of traditional messages. These unexpected elements are the abruptions of the hijack: the sounds of unpredictable experiences. Sending and receiving transmitted information, outside common human sensory abilities, suggests a pre- and post-human aesthetic by moving beyond the finitude of comprehension. The transmissions are thoughts and vice versa.

A defense of the unknown is more difficult than a defense of the unseen. Invisible systems of transmitted information between things are difficult to record, but create curiosity and foster narrative possibilities. “Did you hear that?” This is a question offering multiple narrative strands. “Did you see that?” Again narrative options emerge from an image or an experience of an image with hindsight. If I engage with the artwork of Jacqueline Drinkall in a way that does not conform to conventional aesthetic modes of distant critique, then I have experienced an abruption and my interaction with her work (admittedly in hindsight) is a hijack of both the original artwork and of the continuing discourse between writers and artists. Yet what happens when you tune in to a second, third, fourth, fifth radio frequency? How can those strands of story be re-organized into a palatable aesthetic pattern? The result of tuning into multiple frequencies is that there will be more than one narrative voice, a quality that will be enacted in this paper.

## • The Telepathic Field •

Jacques Derrida's 1979 iteration of telepathy referred to a series of hallucinations and receptions without fear. Theories of science have kept telepathy at bay, Derrida said, "to render unthinkable what earlier science pushed back into the darkness of occultism."<sup>3</sup> It was hard for Derrida to believe there could be a place for the unconscious in accepted psychology and yet still no place for theories of telepathy. Freud was fearful of the potential poor reception of his ideas on telepathy. He was aware of the "link between two psychic acts, the immediate warning one individual can seem to give another, the signal or psychic transfer can be a physical phenomenon."<sup>4</sup> Freud was circumspect regarding his interest in telepathy, like hiding a naughty little hobby: "the conversion to telepathy is my private affair like my Jewishness, my passion for smoking ...."<sup>5</sup> Freud decided not to publish his telepathy lectures during his lifetime,<sup>6</sup> yet his interest in telepathy was based in a psychoanalytical investigation of the unconscious and dreaming, areas of thought which have had a large impact on psychotherapy.<sup>7</sup>

Derrida, too, points out that "non-telepathy" is harder to believe than telepathy.<sup>8</sup> He approached the question of scientific legitimacy by deconstructively abstracting and fictionalizing his major telepathy text.<sup>9</sup> His essay on telepathy comprises a series of letters dated 9–15 July 1979. Derrida begins his essay in the first person, as himself writing to us, then as Freud writing to wife Marthes, then as Wilhelm Fliess (friend of Freud and fellow inventor of psychoanalysis) writing to wife Marie, then as Gustave Flaubert writing to his lover Louise and then as Plato writing to Socrates or vice versa. So Derrida is not just impersonating or channeling Freud, but using a cast of related characters. A hijacking multitude. A smaller cast of characters is enabled across this paper (Drinkall, Julian Assange, Derrida and me). Just as Derrida breathed life into his contemporaries and his Classical idols, my hijacking is an attempt to breathe life into the art writing process, to animate it, to engender its dissemination, to expand its conditions ... as purposeful sabotage, as intentional hijack.

Derrida's essay is punctuated with pronouncements of passion: it is a love letter. He says, "It is because there would be telepathy that a postcard can always not arrive at its destination."<sup>10</sup> When Derrida talks of

transference and telepoetics, he is talking to me. I've seen Derrida, by the way. He was standing by the curb, across the road from my house recently. He stood in his heavy, grey overcoat, next to the red street mailbox. His white hair was all messy and fly-away, collar turned up against the wind. His back stooped. He held an addressed letter without a stamp. Just as he reached out to push the letter through the post box slot, a gust of ocean wind whipped it out of his hand and sent it up in the air. I saw it spinning in the gust of wind, so I sprinted across the road and jumped up to grasp the letter. I caught it but when I turned back to Derrida, he was gone. As I looked down at the letter, I saw it was addressed to me. Are there many other people across the planet having the same experience, receiving the same postcard? I am only one among many, a point on a spherical map with many pins stuck here and there.

Derrida's telepathy essay is rife with references to premonitions, foreseeing, fateful visions, the seeing of his own double as an omen of death, and projections into the past and the future. Was this missive, this SOS, this postcard meant to reach me in the future, a speculative arche-fossil?<sup>11</sup> What if I received a telepathic message from Derrida, from the past? All forms of "descriptive assault" and non-critical critique should be cast aside in the appreciation of good art.<sup>12</sup> I will always prefer Derrida's "pure pleasure"<sup>13</sup> to Kant's "pure judgment."<sup>14</sup> Having said that, in the field of criticism, the engagement of art deserves more than poetic celebration or unevaluated valuations or unreflective contemplation.<sup>15</sup> Derrida's essay on telepathy is a complex entwining of Freud's curiosity about telepathy and Derrida's fictive discovery of a library book, which launched his appropriation and imagining of a "postcard" between Plato and Socrates.<sup>16</sup> I have read Derrida's telepathy essay a number of times, only to feel more unsure about who is speaking. Is it Derrida or Freud? Plato or Socrates? Michael Naas writes an entire chapter about this in his book on Derrida.<sup>17</sup> Who comes first, who lingers still?

So telepathy in art refers to the silent transmission of energy from multiple living and non-living beings to others. It is a hyper-conscious activity, it is a plea to receive the right message, from among the cavalcade of messages marching around out there. Empathy, sympathy, telepathy: the three perceptions of art.

Telepathy is a useful metaphorical apparatus for art. In the art world, a singular artwork is dematerialized or subordinated to the distributed systems of galleries and the complex elements of the artwork itself.<sup>18</sup> The maker withdraws, as surely as the artwork withdraws into its

elements and as completely as the expert human witness withdraws into her interpretation. What is left, after all this dematerialization and withdrawal? Only the faintly recorded transmission, the quiet voices from the other end of the line, the traces of the artwork and artist and viewer from the outside. All that matters is the system of transmissions between all things, that is, telepathy. This is telepathy, meant as objects' sensing of each other, without obvious forms of communication, without direct contact.

Art and telepathy dovetail well in an aesthetic domain. An art historian who keenly listens for telesthetic messages in his art writing and exhibiting is the sound art historian at University of New South Wales, Sydney, Douglas Kahn. His latest book, *Earth Sound Earth Signal*, charts the development of transmitted sound from eco-writer and transcendentalist Henry Thoreau's anecdotes of hearing the sound of telegraph lines to the sounds of wireless radio.<sup>19</sup> This is a book that affirms the existence of sounds from natural and unnatural sources and global energies. Kahn is no stranger to telesthesia and is as comfortable writing on brain waves as on the history of electromagnetic waves.<sup>20</sup> He and Frances Dyson curated and collectively wrote for an exhibition on telesthesia. They wrote threads of conversation for a catalogue text and created an installation and video work dealing with voices outside life. This was a contemplation of making contact with the dead as a form of distance-sensing. So there are several academic actants in a multi-strand of narratorial telepathic threads where radio transmissions, speculative writing and sensory experiments are undertaken.

In another example, Edward Colless embraces an interdisciplinary approach in his art writing practice. His articles and conference papers suggest his tolerance of occultism and sound a warning, instead, against phantasms of criticality. This is his "in-discipline of academe" where para-academic interests should be encouraged.<sup>21</sup>

The drift of the "transdisciplinary" is fugue-like, amnesiac and lapsing: signaled in the treacherous negation entailed in the prefix "un-" as the sinister persistence of a remainder beyond the deprivation of that thing's essential qualities or properties. A remnant and revenant of a discipline that involves its disappearance like the cat into a grinning unnaturalism, and the dispossession of its own corpus or body of knowledge. In this fugue-like drift could not aesthetics become an occult science, or (in no way symmetrically or commensurately) could science become an occult aesthetics?<sup>22</sup>



I am interested in this rejection of authoritative, authorial voices, and of expert critical opinions in an art aesthetic writing context. The telepathic hijack allows aesthetics to drift towards an occulted but scientific realm, as Colless seems to suggest here. This interdisciplinary drift supports the concept of a speculative art writing form that encourages sci-fi play or fictional interludes. Stengers has also been known to call upon occult traditions by referring to the witch goddess Starhawk in her complex iterations of force and spells of production in a capitalist society, where we consumers are spell-bound by the never-ending bounty of purchasable objects. <sup>23</sup> Stengers quoting Starhawk: "As neo-pagan witch Starhawk writes, to utter the word 'magic' is already an act of magic: the word puts to the test, compromises, exposes to sniggering."<sup>24</sup> Stengers' esoteric references support a multi-narrative voice. They are re-assemblages of experience, hijacked expositions, investigations into (un)natural forces by creating counter-spells. By listening earnestly for alternative voices and secret aesthetic messages, the charlatan, the hijacker and the telepath create fuel for an art writing subversion that moves beyond straight description or interpretive meaning.

### • Jacqueline Drinkall's Telepathic Artwork as Experience •

I met artist Jacqueline Drinkall after a Melbourne artist, Veronica Kent, urged me to make contact with her, believing our interests were in common.<sup>25</sup> When I met Drinkall back in Sydney, she was building a bespoke UFO, which was a large, person-sized (fitting about four humans at once) clear Perspex model of a conventional flying saucer spacecraft, made as part of a body of work called *Weatherman UFOlogy*, constructed during an artist residency. Drinkall says:

UFO as "irregular shelter" of utopian counterculture and emergency DIY activism, such as hex and geodesic domes, UFO as centripetal surveillance aesthetics, UFO as visibility through transparent exoskeleton, reflective surface and light-diffusion, exploring optics like it is a giant distorted contact-lens and UFO as a "mother wheel," using a term of Louis Farakhan which connects the UFO to the idea of a large breast.<sup>26</sup>

Aside from the political preoccupations that underlie all of Drinkall's work, she has conducted various telepathic experiments within this UFO. She invites art lovers inside it via a tiny hatch that requires yoga skills to enter successfully. There, visitors are encouraged to gather information via EEG headsets, transcribing their brain activity as text on the UFO walls, or by surfing the internet and writing out their discoveries on the UFO. The headsets might also send out telepathic messages to future participants. The confined environment within the UFO helps participants to access incoming telepathic information intended for those within. Drinkall creates these telepathic materials (the headset and the UFO as metaphoric telepathic travel capsule), to make a comment on surveillance-cultures but also to celebrate the pure physical forms (round and spinning like frisbees) of conventional UFOs. For me, the attractions of this work were the unreliability of the accumulated data, the precarious nature of art-space-based, non-clinical research and how much imagination and fictionalizing played into these processes.

To conduct a speculative art writing hijack requires a leap of narrative faith (and voice), that matches the esoteric elements of Drinkall's work. This refers to a point at which boundaries between academic/para-academic writing become blurred, where membranes between non-fiction and fiction are punctured. So a speculative art writing hijack re-purposes the processes of analysis of art and its experience, to accommodate multiple voices, to allow various types of information and to welcome unexpected narrative outcomes, which may or may not be true. For instance, there is more to the artist Drinkall than first meets the eye: she appears materialized but there is an insouciant quality to her physical nature, which is difficult to navigate. There is only a small gap between her unity and plurality. She smiles; she is friendly. She giggles a lot and regularly stares off into space. Don't fall for her fey ways, though, because her razor-sharp eye is assessing, inventing and aggregating. Don't fall for this author's fey ways either; the truth is not to be trusted.

### • The Art Experience, Hijacked •

I stand by her side, this artist, Jacqueline Drinkall. Yes, I am happy to write data on her UFO walls as part of the UFO performance/research project and schlepp her cripplingly heavy wooden formwork around a car

park art space for the set-up of an exhibition on Speculative Aesthetics which I curated in 2013.<sup>27</sup> I am drawn to her nature and was consequently curious to see what would happen if I inserted my "narrative self" into one of her artwork video performances, *Weather Underwater* 2009–2010, from a retrospective position. And so, it is hardly surprising that one day, I found myself by her side, at the edge of icy water. The rocks were slippery with algae and three tiny turtles paddled past. It was intermittently overcast and the creek water rushed by with hazardous speed.

Drinkall pulled a balaclava out of her high-res bicycle saddle-bag and placed it gently on her head. Her job was to locate other telepathic artists in the bush environment, to make connections and form alliances. Her balaclava was not an ordinary knitted-black one, but a pixie-style headdress of crocheted plastic telecommunication cables. She would have looked like a kindly elf, if she hadn't been wearing a Guantanamo Bay orange jumpsuit, which conjured simultaneous emotions of fear, futility, oppression and pity. "Can you read my mind?" I mouthed. She smiled at my lameness: "You're only asking if I can lip-read, not whether I can receive a telepathic message."

I was implicated in her telepathy experiment, once I began writing about it. I intended to hijack its operations and so a speculative writing mode was spawned. This speculative mode was one which moved in a parallel motion to the artist's experiment, rather than sitting in opposition to it (writing *with*, rather than writing *from*). By writing about her work, as a participant rather than as a distant art critic, I intended to avoid overt judgment and conventions of historical or biographical context. By writing with hindsight and with a fictionalizing of an "imagined interaction," the telepathy of the project has become an ongoing transmission. By discussing this process, Drinkall and I have become co-conspiratorial hijackers. This became our telepathic connection, as nothing was directly discussed or prescribed in terms of the writing interruption. It also became my hijack, as a re-purposing of her original video artwork. This is what transpired:

I urgently shoved Drinkall in the lower back and into the cool water she dived, because it is and was important to move beyond staid habits and mediocre methods. Deep, deeper into the dark green she swam, but still her orange Guantanamo Bay-style jumpsuit was easy to see.<sup>28</sup> Mossy rocks and river carp. The sound of moving water made me hum a tune. Soon an occasional kick from her feet was all I saw. If a group of jellyfish is called a smack, then the pack of us who allow for the possible capacity

of telepathy might be called a knock-out.<sup>29</sup> Soon enough Drinkall exploded up through the river surface and surged ahead with strong swimming strokes (her balaclava quivering a possible route), divining a course across the waterhole which was fed by the tributaries of the Murray River. Icy water from the higher plains trickled through the muddy basin, later to avalanche over the edge of cliffs, in thundering waterfalls.

About an hour later, she swam back. Her cheeks were flushed red from the exertion and the cold. She wriggled free of her jumpsuit, carefully put away her balaclava and pulled on a warm fleece and leggings, accepting the flask of hot coffee with gratitude.

"I saw him," she said.

"Who?" I asked, handing her a muesli bar.

"Julian Assange. He was upstream, standing under a rocky overhang. He must be camping up there. Had a tent, a fire going, a rifle."

"A rifle?"

"Yep," she continued. "It was definitely him."

"Are you sure it wasn't a trick of the eye? An illusion?"

"Maybe," said Jacque. "He said to watch out for the gaming trolls and to never divulge your guerilla tactics."

This was sound advice, however, having already exposed my hijacking processes, I knew I had already sabotaged the subversion I had hoped to create. I tried not to feel disappointed by the collapse of the hijack, mid-paper, and instead I urged the telepathic artist to drink some more hot coffee and eat some mixed nuts.

The results as proof: What was Drinkall looking for that day in the creek? She was looking for her fellow hacker telepaths. The antenna on her balaclava had twitched, causing her search, which functioned as an aesthetic preamble. Drinkall has written about her performance video. It has the narrative tenor of fiction, rather than artist statement, as can be seen in this excerpt:

Weather Underwater: Once the escapee is reunited with fellow cult members, the cult collaborates in an underwater mission to gather evidence of The Disappeared. The cult was ambiguously associated with Weather Underground during the VHS era, and more recently with the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) during the HD era, resulting in many disappearances from the media. Mainstream media does not report many recent and very real acts of sabotage by ELF upon power stations and other environmental hazards. Underwater cult magic – consisting of mutant telecommunication wiring, alternative power dressing, and fish dancing rituals – raises disappeared skeletons from amongst the dead coral.<sup>30</sup>

This frenzy of conspiracy theory, political activism and media-mania refers to the difficulty of making sense of information in a digital age. Hence her turn towards esoteric forms of communication, such as telepathy. Managing information is the greatest preoccupation of our Western lives, and this artist deals with it via a carefully labored process of making art and connecting with other politically-active artists. Drinkall's telepathic search was a metaphorical act, an exploration of possibility, the unexpected and of sending out transmissions first, in order to receive them.

Drinkall has written about telepathy as an academic, as well as enacting it as an artist. In a paper for Monash University's *Colloquy* journal, Drinkall explained:

The words telepathy and telesthesia were coined simultaneously when Frederic Myers founded the Society for Psychical Research in London in 1882. However, telepathy names an experience of distance (*tele*) feeling (*pathos*) or ideas (*thesia*) found in all cultures.<sup>31</sup>

This distance connects to my mode of hijack, where the writing occurs simultaneously at the time of the work and several years afterwards, but based on a continuity of feeling. For this artist, telepathy has emerged as a guiding principle and as also a property of the work's making, of its progress and of its function. The artist's sensory awareness of transmissions beyond spoken language manifests as both content and process, and this condition informed my repurposing hijack of art writing, as a form of critical play.

## • Telepathic Transmission as Art Writing Form or Aesthetic Hijack •

The problem for the telepath is similar to the problem for the charlatan, the sorcerer and the hijacker. They are disdained within structures of ordered authority for being mercenary, illegitimate and untrustworthy. This investigation reclaims the maligned characters and repurposes their unreliable skills as art writing tools. The hierarchy of expert voices is toppled, creating a level playing field where artist, writer, audience, historian, video screen, gallery space and random hijacking interloper are all equally important. In a telepathic system of aesthetics, any single authority is drowned out by the static of multiple transmissions.

How can we write about art in a coherent way without echoing a singular voice? The telepathic transmissions are more reliable than the author, the narrator or the scholarly researcher. The transmissions comprise all the elements of information revolving around Drinkall and her artwork. They include the possibility for misreading, the likelihood of imaginative divergences, the surprise of discovering that humor is synonymous with politics, the action of making a performance video, which runs alongside the subsequent task of writing about it. Telepathy could be understood as a metaphorical silent mouthpiece, a mode of sharing multiple strands of experience, content and story simultaneously. It avoids singular subject-object delineations due to its multiplicity of interpretations and due to its position outside conventional thought.

The hijack occurs when the art writer attempts to respond to this multiplicity, this evasive arbitration of aesthetic sensory experience. The reliability of any narrator is always in question, and the art writing hijacker is particularly unreliable. By avoiding an expert voice, by rejecting an authoritative position, the hijacker who writes about a telepathic artwork is condemned, before she starts. Fictionalizing an event, as an afterword, only works if it is not part of a commentary. Meta-fictive explanations within an academic paper, risk the ruination of the process. Did I really accompany Drinkall to the Murray River creek tributary or did I hijack her documentary evidence? Did I really push her into the water, feed her nuts? More likely, this fictioning was part of a telepathic hijacking writing process. Why? First, because it shifts the emphasis towards a decentralized egalitarian approach. Secondly because it shifts away from

singular experience and towards a shared and reciprocated system of sensorial information that is not limited in time nor is it limited to the correlation of subject-object critiques. The fictioning of the art experience allows readers and viewers the chance to trust their own imaginative dalliances, to give permission for more than one reading or experiential interpretation, and to be aware of these multiple feelings or voices. This fictioning of the art experience is not an effort to remove the social, the historical, the biographical information but to add another dimension of experience to that conventional criteria. When we visit an art space and are stimulated to respond to an artwork by writing, it's important not to be bound by a demand to locate meaning, but to also acknowledge our human desire to interact and participate.

### • Speculative Art Writing, Hijacked •

This brings me to investigate how the telepath and art-telepathic signal can be elevated from its sub-strata status, in a similar way that fictional art writing responses ought to be. If we disallow various imaginative interpretations and messages, we are left with story rather than narrative, we are left with overbearing singularity rather than the freedom of conjecture or contingency. The act of interrupting telepathic frequencies, in art writing, creates a different forceful allure.

Writing is interceptive work. Writing about artwork can generate multiple entities – the art catalogue, the Facebook quote, Twitter feed, re-quoted in online journals – adding another element to the energy from the artwork, the electricity grid, the viewer, the floor, the opening night recorded on Instagram. If fictionalizing art writing is the telepathic electromagnetic current that contributes to a reciprocal imagination shared by many and feeds back into the multi-channel telepathic transmission, will I change the status of the work? By decentralizing the experience through a fictional mode, have I diluted the original artwork's entelechy or energetic source? Has the value changed? Well, Stengers says, "imagination is not a true variable because the experimenter is not free to control the variations."<sup>32</sup> No matter how hard I work to change the subject-object dyad and to disrupt the conventions of art criticism, I remain trapped by my position as a single human writing about an object of aesthetic pleasure. Stengers is right that I am not free to control the

variations. I may not have provided an alternative, other than to remind readers to be aware of multiple alternatives.

How can I defend the experimenter when I don't know who it is? Is it the liar, the art stager, the performer, the actor, the fiction writer, "a being of scientific allure?"<sup>33</sup> In a speculative aesthetics model, all these characters would be experimenters, alongside the lie, the performance, the play, the novel and the experiment. But it wouldn't end there: the list would go on and on.

## • The Telepathic Ending •

Telepathy is a "dispatch" for Derrida and "a connection between two psychic acts" for Freud. For me telepathy is an art fictioning. Telepathy is a movement beyond finitude (the limits of knowledge), a relationship across space, across time. It links many, rather than only two. Telepathy sits well in the realm of art, where the intuitive, the in-between and the unknown are almost always explored. As Jacqueline Drinkall explains through her video and performance work, the extremes of contemporary communication need to be explored. Simply place her cabled elf balaclava upon your head and you have access to multiple connections and cross-currents of thought. This makes space for memories, the hum of static, the cross-currents of conversations along the telecommunication wires and cables. Listen closely, the message might be for you. Consider what Derrida says, "Life is already threatened by the origin of the memory which constitutes it, and by the breaching which it resists."<sup>34</sup>

Telepathy sits in the black hole of non-knowing. Telepathy is a non-reason. Can I write about telepathy and art using a sensible, academic modality? If the answer is yes, then I will continue with the next step, which is speculative aesthetics: a form of writing where possibilities and contingencies eclipse authority and expertise. Next time, I will do so as a collective, as a bureau, to further alleviate the damage wrought by the single dictatorial voice.



## • Notes •

- 1 Isabelle Stengers, "The doctor and the Charlatan," *Cultural Studies Review* 9, no. 2 (2003): 11-36.
- 2 Ibid., 11-36.
- 3 Ibid., 238.
- 4 Ibid., 241-2.
- 5 Ibid., 256.
- 6 Jan Campbell and Steve Pile, "Telepathy and its vicissitudes: Freud, thought transference and the hidden lives of the (repressed and non-repressed) unconscious," *Subjectivity* 3, no. 4 (2010): 403-425.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Jacques Derrida, 'Telepathy' in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007): 237.9 Ibid., 239.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 An archeofossil is an object that proves an existence anterior and posterior to terrestrial life in Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 16-18.
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- 13 Ibid., 43.
- 14 Emmanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement* (Prometheus Books, New York, 2000), 72.
- 15 James Elkins, *What happened to art criticism?* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 63.
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- 19 Douglas Kahn, *Earth Sound Earth Signal: Energies and Earth Magnitude in the Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.)
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