

Signal Cascade – George Bularca

April 1st - April 12th 2024

Opening on Thursday 4th from 6pm-9pm

The exhibition culminates George Bularca's residency at WIPSpace/Steamworks.

It centres around the 18th century medical technique of 'mesmerism' or 'animal magnetism', popularised by Franz Mesmer. In search for less painful and invasive medical procedures he theorised the existence of a magnetic fluid propagating through the human body. In his view illness was the manifestation of a problem in the ebb and flow of this fluid, which could be made to flow correctly again with the help of magnets, or with the expert touch of the mesmerist's hand.

Many of his patients only seemed to find relief to their ailments while at Mesmer's clinic, or during one of his group therapy sessions where the patients were encouraged to touch the parts of their bodies in pain with magnetic rods, all connected to the 'baquet'. A wooden tub filled with magnetised water.

As word spread his practice was investigated and later debunked. Disparate elements of his technique — like the playing of the glass harmonica during the sessions, were used as the beginning of the study on the placebo effect and the power of suggestion.

As soon as the belief in mesmerism fell apart so did any effects it had on its patients. His name, however has become synonymous with the complete capturing of someone's attention.

Building on this, the works in the exhibition focus on the oral and aural qualities the mesmeric ideologies of our time might have.

Below is an excerpt from 'Propositions of Animal Magnetism' by Franz Mesmer (1779)

1. A responsive influence exists between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and animated bodies.
2. A fluid universally diffused, so continuous as not to admit of a vacuum, incomparably subtle, and naturally susceptible of receiving, propagating, and communicating all motor disturbances, is the means of this influence.

[...]

13. Experiments show that there is a diffusion of matter, subtle enough to penetrate all bodies without any considerable loss of energy.

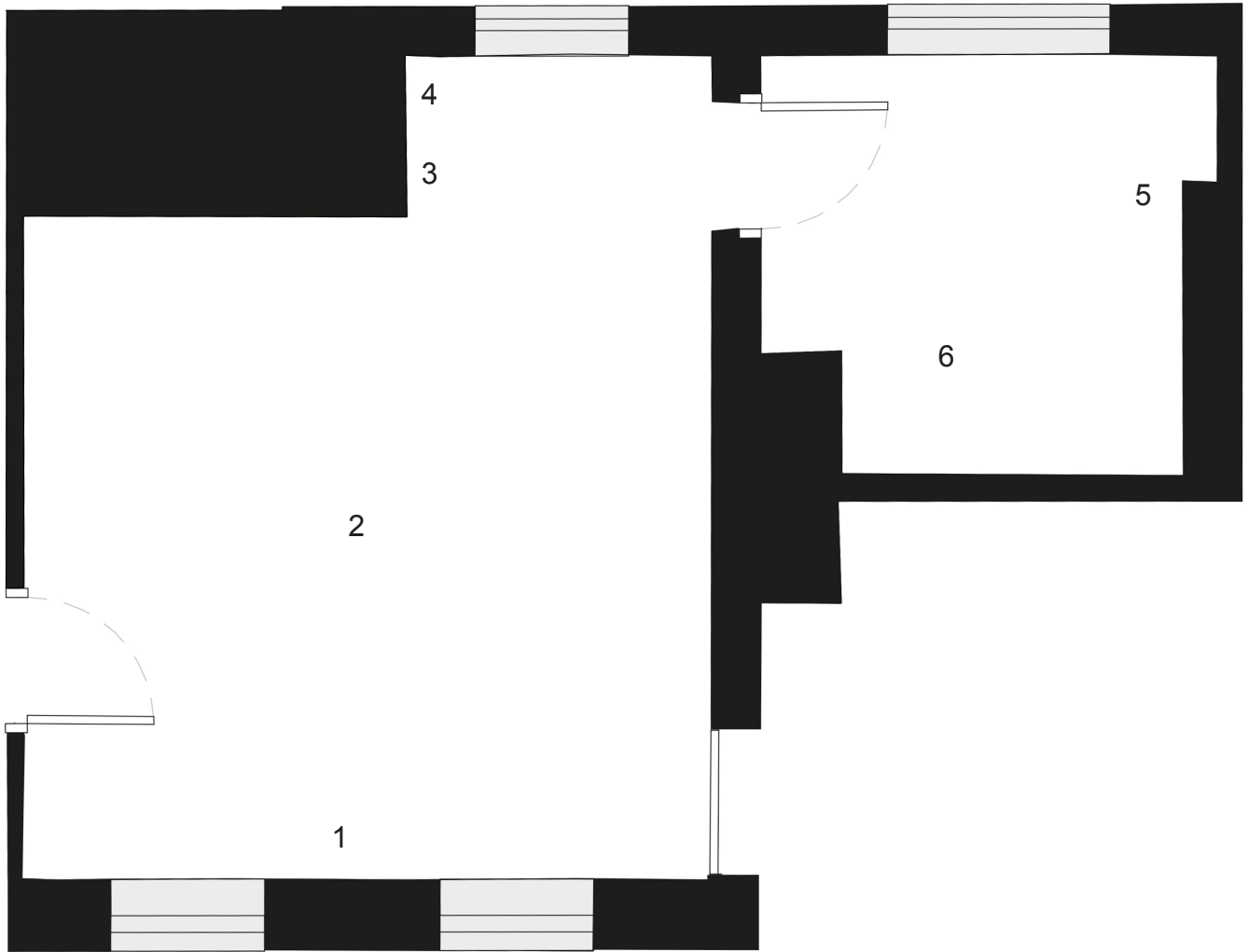
[...]

15. Its action takes place at a remote distance, without the aid of any intermediary substance.

16. It is, like light, increased and reflected by mirrors.

17. It is communicated, propagated, and increased by sound.

18. This magnetic virtue may be accumulated, concentrated, and transported.



List of works

1. *Come to me*. US Patent Number 5,793,980 Aug.11,1998. Acetate, ink, PVA.
2. *Energumen*. Found object, infrared controller.
3. *Untitled*. Ink and PVA on canvas
4. *Untitled*. Ink and PVA on canvas
5. *Inner circle*. Plasterboard, ink, 1:50 human figurines.
6. *Your mouth is my mouth (Bitcoin Binky)*. Plasterboard, found object.