

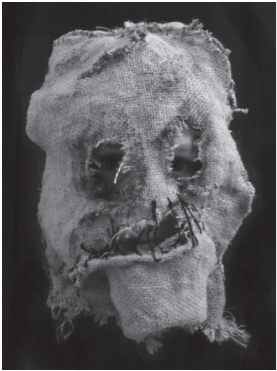




Andre Masson - Automatic drawing 1924

### EMPTINESS

The street was too empty; its emptiness had gotten bored and pulled my steps out from under my feet and clattered around in them, all over the street, as if they were wooden clogs. The woman sat up, frightened, she pulled out of herself, too quickly, to violently, so that her face was left in her two hands. I could see it lying there: its hollow form. It cost me an indescribable effort to stay with those two hands, not to look at what had been torn out of them. I shuddered to see a face from the inside, but I was much more afraid of that bare flayed head waiting there, faceless. From Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Faces*



Da man on da moon

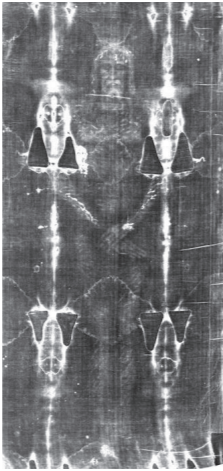
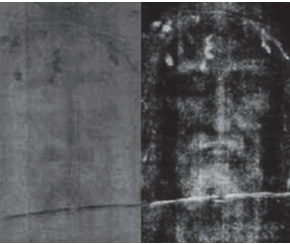
accused by the inquisitors of kissing Satan’s anus during the Sabbath, argued that even there there was a face. And it may be that nowadays the entire Earth, which has been transformed into a desert by humankind’s blind will, might become one single face.) From Giorgio Agamben’s “The Face” in *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*

### WALLS

When you look at a wall spotted with stains, or with a mixture of stones, if you have a chance to devise some scene, you may discover a resemblance to various landscapes, beautified with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys and hills in varied arrangement; or again you may see battles and figures in action; or strange faces and costumes, and an endless variety of objects, which you could reduce to complete and well-drawn forms. And these appear on such walls confusedly, like the sound of bells in whose jangle you may find any name or word you choose to imagine. -- *From Leonardo Da Vinci’s Notebooks*

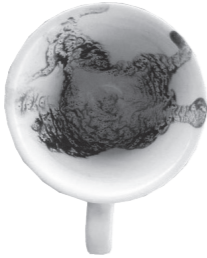
### CLOTH

The Shroud of Turin might be the most contested artifact in human history. Some say the image of the naked bearded man on the linen cloth was imprinted directly from the body of Christ when he was wrapped up immediately after crucifixion; others that it appeared miraculously after resurrection. With no trace of pigmentation to be found, one art historian has posited that photographic technology was available in the Middle Ages and it is actually a 700-year-old photograph. Oxidation and radiation have been proposed; others claim that Leonardo da Vinci faked it. Historians and scientists have not been able to reliably date the Shroud, or find any conclusive evidence for (or against) forgery.



### TEA

Tasseography is a divination method based on the interpretation of patterns discerned in tea leaves left in the bottom of a cup. As with the Rorschach test, there is no objective standardized analytic system for de-coding the results, and a mixture of intuition and convention (and possibly cold reading) is applied. Also like the Rorschach, tealeaf reading relies on the active, cognitive and projective nature of perception. Both techniques are founded on the belief that humans can make sense of seemingly random data without inherent meaning – and that the resulting signification can reveal details about one’s character and destiny. But the Rorschach test calls itself “science”.



### INK

Once the most commonly used projective psychological personality test, the Rorschach technique asks subjects to describe what they see in ten different inkblots. It was administered on Nazi prisoners awaiting trial in Nuremberg after WWII, and is still widely applied in forensic analysis in the US.



### SATAN’S ANUS

There is a face wherever something reaches the level of exposition and tries to grasp its own being exposed, wherever a being that appears sinks in that appearance and has to find a way out of it. (Thus, art can give a face even to an inanimate object, to a still nature; and that is why the witches, when

The word pareidolia comes from the Greek *para* ‘beyond’ and *eidolon* ‘image’. A psychological phenomenon where meaning is perceived in random stimulus (seeing animals in clouds, for example), it invests the insignificant with significance by *finding more than what is there*. But, as Roger Caillois wrote in his strange book about images in (and by?) rocks, “Probably no images are utterly silent.” A collaborative installation by artists Emily Hunt, Vicki Papageorgopoulos and Matthew Phillip Hopkins, *Two Dollar Pareidolia* sees expression playfully elicited from, and forcefully injected into, a disorderly array of found and assembled forms. Through painting, video, kinetic sculpture, cast shadows, shitty trinkets and unskilled ventriloquism, a world emerges where the limits of intention, expression, authorship and life are unclear, or irrelevant.

### LOOK MUM NO HANDS

*Acheiropoieta* means “made without hands” and refers to images that are said to have come into existence without human agency. Think of the people singing and weeping at the fence post that resembled the Virgin Mary at Coogee in 2003, or the decade-old, partially eaten, toasted cheese sandwich said to bear an unauthored image of the Mother of God’s face that sold on eBay for US\$28,000 in 2004. Weirdly, when the Shroud of Turin was first photographed in 1898, the negative image on the reverse photographic plate revealed the image’s positive (suggesting the positive had in fact always been a negative). Following John Berger on the “weak intentionality” inherent in photographs, might we think of photography in this instance as a mechanic archeiropoietic technique that facilitated – for the first time – the latent, unauthored image’s appearance?



### A PEBBLE

Would Duchamp be piqued if it turned out that readymade art was already made three million years before him? At the Natural History Museum in London there is a small reddish brown stone known as the Makapansgat Pebble. It was found in a cave in South Africa that was inhabited by *Australopithecus africanus*, a hominid ancestor of the human race, millions of years ago. The cave is a considerable distance away from any possible natural source, and anthropologists have conjectured that the pebble was picked up and transported because of the natural weathering on its surface that gives it the crude appearance of a face. This is the earliest known instance of symbolic thinking or aesthetic sensibility in the heritage of humanity. The Natural History Museum identifies it as “Perhaps the most ancient art object in the world.”



### A PICTURE BY A SCHIZOPHRENIC

For a stone represents an obvious achievement, yet one arrived at without invention, skill, industry, or anything else that would make it a work in the human sense of the word, much less a work of art. The work comes later, as does art; but the far-off roots and hidden models of both lie in the obscure yet irresistible suggestion in nature. [...]

The jaspers of Oregon are probably unrivaled for the almost morbid complexity of their curved designs and their range of contrasting or merging colors: a graphic madness attained by no other mineral. Each one, however small, looks like a colored lithograph, crammed and tumultuous as a picture by a schizophrenic. [...]

We have here a universe of scrolls, branches, pleura; from them flayed countenances emerge, muscles laid open in their cavities of bone. There are lopped-off breasts, the mutilation twisting the raspberry nipples aside; there are the bodies of frogs, crucified by the galvanic current, their limbs splayed out by the shock, their skin

turned blue and flabby by the violence of the spasm. Elsewhere we find a loose array of small tools, toys, and useful objects: bobbins, spools, shuttles, tops, drawer knobs. In the distance, but still quite near, are dunes, stretches of sand rhythmically modulated by the wind, a screen of hills, a host of weathered peaks with their geological strata bared, fleecy towers as still as tropical clouds. The stone may be purplish blue, lilac colored; yellow turning green; the complete range of a bruise. It may be like a swollen sea of thick, almost solid bubbles, resembling an upsurge of sinister seaweed or an eruption of boils or buboes on an infected skin.

Then again, as if by the adjustment of a viewfinder, the scattered elements let themselves be identified: we see an eye devoid of lid or lashes, or an empty socket with the freshly removed orb dangling like a wet rag or an oyster torn from its shell; gnarled and ringed phalluses, swollen and purple, without their foreskins, the glans all wrinkled; rotting shellless mollusks, the color of lichen or of gobs of spit; kneecaps and knuckle bones softened by acid to a cloudy, wobbling jelly; intestinal worms glistening with the biles and juices digesting them; a jumble of passages, rumbling innards, excited vulvas, striated tendons; pale partial globes jointed like the knees and elbows and hips of celluloid dolls.

A mauve and lunatic life, proliferating without law or limit, feverishly breeding tumors and goiters; a ravenous, shifting universe in which details are so clear it is almost endless.

Wounded flesh shows how this monstrous realm works, idly limned by imperturbable stone which neither feels nor knows.

Still, it is a charming image, full of invention and surprises, for the easy-going connoisseur who confines himself to color and composition.

*From Roger Caillois’s The Writing of Stones*

### THE BUNNY GIRL

Houston: Among the large headlines concerning Apollo this morning, there’s one asking that you watch for a lovely girl with a big rabbit. An ancient legend says a beautiful Chinese girl called Chang-o has been living there for 4000 years. It seems she was banished to the Moon because she stole the pill of immortality from her husband. You might also look for her companion, a large Chinese rabbit, who is easy to spot since he is always standing on his hind feet in the shade of a cinnamon tree. The name of the rabbit is not reported.

Edwin ‘Buzz’ Aldrin - “Okay. We’ll keep a close eye out for the bunny girl.”

*From the Apollo 11 transcripts, just before the first moon landing*