

## Amanda McDonald Crowley, Executive Director Eyebeam Art and Technology Centre, New York City

*Luke Jerram is an inventor, a researcher, an amateur scientist, an artist: a chameleon of sorts. Like artists and scientists before him, Jerram is interested in exploring the world. He interrogates knowledge, explores ideas and wants his audience to share his enthusiasm and his wonderment at the world around us.*

*To explore big ideas, Jerram collects people: the production of his works require conversations with people with a broad range of skills, knowledge, and expertise. Jerram is expert at drawing people in; getting them excited about his ideas. And although he enlists scientists, artists and musicians, his approach is less about gathering specialists from divergent fields to inform his work than it is a gathering and sharing of knowledge and experience: his practice is inherently collaborative.*



*With a background in sculpture and performance, his interests extend from research in visual perception in early works, Retinal Memory Volume and Matrix, for which he collaborated with optometrists, to the gravitational pull of the moon and sun on the earth in Tide, where resonating spheres of glass create a chorus of sounds which fill the gallery space. For Tide, his collaborators and consultants included astronomers, Medieval musicologists, Clear Night Sky campaigners and a 17th Century glass harmonica maker.*

*Since 2003, he has been investigating the affects of sound on sleep. First, with the beautifully poetic Sky Orchestra delivering a seven channel sound work to sleeping audiences at dawn (though I have to admit that when I experienced the work, the temptation to wake and view the sight of hot air balloons floating above the town of Yverdon les Bains as I listened to the soundscape was too great!).*

*The Dream Director, the third work in this series, promises to be an exciting progression not only as an extraordinarily complex experiential artwork, but also for its potential scientific research outcomes.*

*Luke's practice makes manifest my firm view that the space that artists provide for an interrogation of a creative (public) imaginary provides real possibilities for informing scientific enquiry; art has the potential to provide a forum in which to examine scientific and intellectual inquiry in very real social and cultural contexts. Working with Chris Alford (sleep psychologist,) Oliver Humpage and Dave Boulbee*

*(technical experts), as well as Dan Jones (composer who has worked with Jerram on several works including the Sky Orchestra), Jerram in effect operates as Creative Director of a core team of extremely creative individuals where each brings their particular expertise, but all gain amateur knowledge of one another's field.*

*In addition to the sleep pod installations, sound composition and complex computing solutions developed to deliver The Dream Director, for this installation, the team have also developed sleep masks fitted with electronics for the audience to wear during the sleep 'performance'. In the Clark Bursary blog, Jerram has written that he "found something really nice about sewing electronics into material, which make the wearer look a bit like a cyborg which is fun!"*



*Artists are increasingly drawing from a vast range of disciplines to develop new work. A field increasingly understood as (new) media art, Christiane Paul has suggested that the art form itself "...is by nature hybrid and participatory... The artist often becomes a mediatory agent and facilitator-both for collaboration with other artists and for audiences' interaction with and contribution to the artwork. The public and audience often turns into a participant in the artwork - a notion that runs counter to our idea of the museum as a shrine for contemplating sacred objects." [22]*

*So, now it is over to the audience: without you, the work is little more than a nice idea. You are its activators. So will Jerram and his team curate your dreams, or will you participate in that process? Whether The Dream Director is research, art, or science, it is a cultural experience that has been informed and developed by drawing a vast array of creative and scientific knowledge and expertise. At the installation, you will be the key players!*

[22]  
Christiane Paul,  
Collaborative  
Curatorial Models  
and Public Curation,  
Switch Journal, 2002.  
[switch.sjsu.edu/  
nextswitch/switch\\_  
engine/front/front.  
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July 2007

## Participant's Dreams Directed, Bristol, UK, July 2007



On Saturday we held *The Dream Director* sleepover at Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol. We had a participant (a warehouse manager from Bristol) who, in the morning, spoke about his dream of an empty 'Teletubby' landscape. But it was huge and the sky was blue and the space was vast, serene and empty with no trees or hedges. He was hovering high over this space.



When he then read his log of sounds for the night that he had been played he was amazed. That night, he had slept in a pod which only played sounds of vast echoic empty spaces - canyons, distant trains in the landscape and an empty cathedral. We had made this bank of sounds specifically to promote this type of dream. I love dreams where one can see for miles and get a sense of a vast empty space surrounding your body.



It could be complete chance, but I feel *The Dream Director* shaped not only the content but also the mood of his dream. He said he'd never had a dream anything like it. If this is the case and we had sculpted his dream and delivered this experience, what is the artwork? Is the artwork his dream, the memory of the dream or the physical firing neurons? Is it the physical installation, the concept or each participant's twelve hour experience? And what if other people had similar dreams but couldn't remember them, does their dream artwork still exist?

*"I was hovering over a huge empty 'Teletubby' landscape. The sky was blue and the space was vast, serene and empty with no trees or hedges."*

### Pod4

*"I think the biggest place I'm normally in, in my dreams is a field, but this place was enormous and there were elephants"*

### Pod6





## Dr Tom Rice, Sleep Anthropologist



*Malinowski, the founder of British Anthropology, complained bitterly in his fieldwork diaries about being kept awake at night by pigs and chatting natives. Other anthropologists have been similarly disturbed by nocturnal singing and storytelling among the groups they study. Still, others have had to adjust to sleeping in the daytime. Evidently, just as language or religion varies from culture to culture, sleeping practices do too. The Dream Director event in June represented a significant change from my own usual sleeping arrangements, and those typical in Western culture. I have very seldom slept as part of large group, but here were a group of twenty of us all bedding down together. It was funny to see what kind of pyjamas people were wearing, what kind of duvets they had brought for themselves. It felt like a childhood sleepover, or an inventively-themed party.*

*But The Dream Director didn't only bring about a re-configuration of the practical aspects of sleeping. It also created a new kind of engagement with dreaming. The Dream Director seeks to harness the activity of the sleeping brain, bringing it into an engagement with an artwork. It is an adventure in dream aesthetics, the artist and the sleeping subject collaborating in the production of a positive dreaming experience. As the experiment ran, I lay in my pod listening to the snoring of the other participants. But it was not the noise they made which kept me awake. It was the noise in my head telling me that if I didn't sleep I would be wasting the whole occasion. Like other anthropologists, I felt I needed a chance to adapt to this new, proactive way of sleeping. But there was a louder voice, too, namely the realisation that The Dream Director was waking me up to a new concept of sleep. It was no longer a state of intensely private secluded darkness, but had become a space to explore and in which to interact. Sleep was undergoing a cultural transition.*

*July 2007*



## The Big Sleep Experiment, Juliet Rix

### Article published in The Times newspaper

*In an experiment to see if music and other sounds can influence our slumbers, Juliet Rix pulls on her pyjamas and snuggles up to a computer called 'Bertha'.*

*The room is darkened. Along the walls of this hushed space in Bristol are 20 sleep pods in two rows, each with a neat airbed emerging from its silver head. We are about to let Luke Jerram, an installation artist with an interest in science, attempt to direct our dreams as part of a trial run for a public event called The Dream Director Sleepover later this month.*

*At one end of the room stands a desk with a mass of wires, on which sits 'Bertha', the computer that Jerram will use to control the proceedings. The atmosphere is more space-age spa than science lab. The 20 of us stand a little awkwardly for a moment then, like kids at camp, we throw our sleeping bags down on our chosen pods.*

*The pods are part of Jerram's new Dream Director experiment at the Arnolfini Gallery, in which participants are played sounds during the night to see how these affect their dreams. When we hear horses, will we dream about horses? Or might the sounds affect our dreams in more subtle ways? The idea came to Jerram when he was staying in a desert town in the Middle East. Early in the morning the call to prayer started from the town's minarets. "I was lifted into that space on the edge of sleep," he says. "First one minaret started on the far side of town, then another on the opposite side, followed by more around the town. The layers of sound built up creating a sound map of the town in my head. It was a beautiful experience." Jerram has already tried to influence an entire city's slumber. A chance meeting with a hot-air balloonist led to the Sky Orchestra: seven hot-air balloons carrying loudspeakers that play music as they fly over people's homes – most recently in Sydney – in the early morning, delivering to the semi-somnolent residents what Jerram hopes is "a sculptural, visual experience through sound".*

## Many of our dreams involve threats

*Jerram followed that up with a couple of 'sleep concerts', run in conjunction with sleep scientists at Bristol's University of West of England (UWE), in which up to 120 people slept in one room to an intermittent and varied soundtrack.*

*The great majority of people at the concerts reported pleasant dreams, which is far from normal, says Dr Chris Alford, a UWE sleep scientist. About two thirds of dreams are usually anxiety-ridden, he says, with many involving a threat of some kind. At the sleep concerts, there was evidence of people incorporating the sounds they heard into their dreams, Jerram says. To take the research farther, Jerram, with the help of a Clark bursary (for digital arts) and the UWE scientists, set about designing the Dream Director, which allows a more individual experience of the dream experiment. He and his team hope that it might one day prove useful for helping traumatised people who have recurrent nightmares. For the moment, though, my fellow guinea-pigs and I are about to try the Dream Director.*

*I climb into my sleeping bag and settle my head into the pod. I like it in here. It is cosy without being claustrophobic, private but not isolated. The walls are padded with soundproof foam and subtly placed speakers. A sleep mask hangs from a wire. It is like the ones that you get on aircraft, only with a small circuit board over one eye. This is an infra-red sensor that detects when your eyes are moving, telling the Dream Director that you are in rapid eye movement (REM) – or dreaming – sleep. Bertha is thereby informed that you are ripe for dream direction and a sound is sent to your pod.*

*In early trials, the team found that having a wide range of sounds left the sleeper exhausted, so now each pod is themed. I put on my mask and make myself comfortable to listen to a lullaby by the composer Dan Jones that begins the night. Jones's wonderfully relaxing collection of sound and music is like an auditory massage that stimulates images in your head. The more figurative sounds conjure pleasant pictures before I drift off into the abstract.*

*The dreams of participants in Dream Director events will be analysed by Jennifer Parker, one of the few scientifically respectable dream researchers in the UK and a lecturer at UWE. Traditional dream analysis looks at what happens in dreams and especially at recurring events, says Parker. But her research suggests that we should focus more on how particular emotions recur, even within different storylines. She says: "I believe that one of the functions of dreams may be to deal with our emotions in a way that we can't during the day."*

## **Women dream of sex with people they know**

*Men and women dream differently, too, adds Parker – and quite stereotypically. Research in America, and her own work with British students, has found that men’s dreams are more physical, more aggressive, more about other men, and any sexual content often involves a stranger. Women dream more of verbal than physical abuse, more about family members, have more indoor settings, and sex tends to involve known individuals. Above all, Parker has found that women’s dreams contain more emotion – especially negative emotion – and can be more psychologically disturbing, leaving a greater residue on waking.*

*We in the pods are woken by the Dream Director’s “wake-aby” and gather in a nearby café to eat breakfast and chew over the night’s events. Despite being beautifully lulled by the lullaby, I didn’t sleep very well. I think I must have been worrying subconsciously about recalling my dreams because when I did finally dream it was of waking up in my pod, getting up with all the others and explaining that I hadn’t heard anything or dreamt anything!*

## **Pod 4 listened to forest sounds**

*I went on to dream of going into a shop to collect a piece of clothing that I had ordered and having to admit that I had ordered it ages ago and forgotten to come in for it. Another of the participants had had a very similar “false waking” - also to dream of himself saying that he hadn’t dreamt.*

*Discussion becomes animated: Pod 4, who has been played forest sounds, says: “I did dream of forests, but what worries me is the Polish crucifix I was carrying over my shoulder.” Pod 9’s watery soundbites came together as a beach, but he also dreamt “lots of weird stuff”, while Pod 10 (forests again) heard bird-song and helped a burns victim. Pod 15 recounts his dream of discovering a huge forest hidden under the Thames outside Tate Modern, apparently built by Ken Livingstone in the 1970s and then forgotten by all.*

*This dream – and its dreamer – began a heated (and friendly) debate about whether you can create art in the subconscious, in Jerram’s “space between waking and sleep”. Had I experienced art? During the lullaby, possibly, yes. During the night, no. And was it science? Not strictly, but with careful analysis of the results it may well have a contribution to make. Was it an interesting experience? Yes, it certainly was.*

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