

National Touring Exhibitions



Printed in England

*Dream Machines* explores the theme of altered states of consciousness: reverie, dreams, trance, hallucination, spirituality, visions and psychological extremes. Based on an exhibition selected by the distinguished artist Susan Hiller, it brings together the work of over forty artists from Europe, South America and the United States.

In this fully-illustrated catalogue, Susan Hiller introduces her selection of works and invites us to experience the diverse and exciting possibilities offered by an art of altered states. An insightful and thought-provoking essay by the cultural commentator Jean Fisher situates the works within a theory of dream states and the role of the imagination.



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Dream  
Machines



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Selected by  
Susan Hiller

Dream  
Machines



This work, filling two video monitors, shows a serious young man and his mirror image reading aloud to plants. The plants are marijuana plants, the readings are from Walter Benjamin and Charles Baudelaire. The artist's reason for reading to the plants is that the texts' references to the narcotic properties of hashish will stimulate them and improve their concentration of THC, the active ingredient of cannabis. The piece subverts the genre of artists using themselves as guinea-pigs in experiments with altered states of consciousness. Here the drug-producing plants rather than the artist are the subjects of the experiment – we are asked to study them

rather than him for signs of change.

'Now the hashish eater's demands on time and space come into force. As is known, these are absolutely regal. Versailles, for one who has taken hashish, is not too large, or eternity too long. Against the background of these immense dimensions of inner experience, of absolute duration and immeasurable space, a wonderful, beatific humour dwells all the more fondly on the contingencies of the world of space and time.'<sup>1</sup>

'Luckily this apparently interminable fancy has lasted only for a single minute – for a lucid interval, gained with

a great effort, has enabled you to glance at the clock. But a new stream of ideas carries you away: it will hurtle you along in its living vortex for a further minute; and this minute, too, will be an eternity, for the normal relation between time and the individual has been completely upset by the multitude and intensity of sensations and ideas.'<sup>2</sup>



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