

Aspen Art Museum
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Educator Notes



T. Glendening Hamilton, *The T'Zan Teleplasm*, 1933. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Spirit Photography

July 17–November 1, 2015

About the exhibition

This exhibition explores the emergence of spirit photography as a cultural and historical phenomenon, and photography's relationship to documentary and the pursuit of truth. Consisting of images produced between the 1860s and the late 1970s, *Spirit Photography* focuses on photographs of the occult and paranormal, presenting a survey of images that are both eerie in their believability and reveal early methods of photographic trickery.

“Spirit photography first emerged in the nineteenth century in response to industrialization: the explosion of technology seemed downright frightening, prompting many to seek consolation in the ineffable, the intangible, and the world of spirits.”

—Russell Lord, “The Ghosting of Photography,” *Arts Quarterly*, New Orleans Museum of Art (Fall 2012), 7.



Unidentified Photographer, “We seem to be covered by a whirling field of energy”, July 1977. Courtesy Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco



Photography by Underwood & Underwood,
1645 Broadway, New York, Chicago, Toronto, Ottawa, Kansas City, St. Louis, Tex.

Littleton View Co. Publishers
Littleton, N.H.

Copyright, 1893, by Littleton View Co.

1645 The Haunted Lovers.
Los amantes frecuentados.

Underwood and Underwood, *The Haunted Lovers*, 1893. Courtesy George Eastman House

Questions for discussion

- | There are stories of students at Aspen Country Day School befriending a ghost who lives on campus as well as tales of Aspen's founders still appearing around town. Why do you think people tell stories about spirits and ghosts?
- | Have you seen a photograph that you think has been manipulated? Why might a photographer do this?

Suggested activity

Mystery collage

Gather magazines and newspapers and have students bring in photographs that they are happy to use as art materials. Ask students to choose one photographic image that they are curious about. Have a group discussion about each chosen image, and what is both known and unknown about their image. Who is the subject and what might they be experiencing?

Next, invite students to use other collage materials to create a new artwork in which their chosen image takes on a new meaning. Perhaps they add a cutout image of a figure or an object that seems to be a ghostly relative of the subject of their chosen image.

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email education@aspenartmuseum.org