

**Lenore Malen**

Curated by Pepe Karmel

September 6 – October 13, 2007  
(Opening Thursday, September 6, 6-8pm)

“Past and present exchange places in Malen’s work. It is a roundelay of science and mysticism, propelled by an insatiable craving for transformation.”

■ Pepe Karmel



25000 KHZ, 2000-2007  
Ink jet print, 67" x 34."

In *The New Society for Universal Harmony*, Lenore Malen uses archival photographs, videos, testimonials, case histories and arcane imagery to document the functioning of her own contemporary reinvention of an 18th-century utopian society founded by Franz Anton Mesmer. Combining Newtonianism and astrology, Mesmer believed that a universal magnetic fluid linked all forces in nature and that an imbalance of the fluid caused illness in human beings. He initially employed magnets as curative agents and later opted for inducing altered states of consciousness in his patients through auto-suggestion—a precursor to hypnosis. Mesmerism or *animal magnetism* offers for Malen distinct parallels with the far-ranging anxieties of our time. Beginning in 2000, the artist began compositing *The New Society* as a way to critically—and humorously—address today’s enchanting belief system and fantasies about an imagined utopian past.

*Be Not Afraid*, 2007, a two channel video displayed on glass screens suspended from the Foundation’s ceiling, constitutes the most recent addition to Malen’s ongoing series. Having long been fascinated by New York’s and The World Fairs’ histories and legends, she chose to shoot a re-enactment of the first demonstration of hypnotism in Flushing Meadows Park, (the site of the 1939 and 1964 World’s Fair) with “harmonites” playing key historic roles. Modeled after an 1820 engraving depicting the momentous event, and featuring Philip Johnson’s fabled pavilion in the background, Malen’s video lovingly parodies our perennial longing for transcendence whether it be through faith or through technology. Archival clips from NASA and from the World’s Fairs interspersed throughout the video also serve to underscore this connection.



*Be Not Afraid*, 2007. Video still

Archival black-and-white photos, color prints, texts and memorabilia detailing the activities of *The New Society* will be installed thematically in cardboard vitrines placed throughout the gallery. Large scale photographs documenting the various "treatments" offered at *The New Society*, adapted from Mesmer's original practices, will be hung on the gallery walls, along with a selection of photographs that reference a range of forays into group dynamics, and also reference the prints of the 19th-century neurologist, G.B. Duchenne de Boulogne.

Using pastiche and parody often laced with irony, Malen deftly comments on our enduring need to believe and to belong. By meshing past with present, she reveals the yearning for a more perfect world as the common thread behind all these emphatic impulses.

Accompanying Public Program:

**“Harmony as a Hive”**

A meeting of The New Society for Universal Harmony

Saturday, Sept. 29, 6pm

CUE Art Foundation, 511 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street

The program includes an orientation and harmonic song followed by a lecture and demonstration based on the work of Karl Von Frisch, Charles Butler and others on the music and dance of the bee. Meeting officiated by Lenore Malen, archivist and Augusta Rue (Kathryn Alexander).

*Catalogue available.*

**ARTIST’S BIO:**

Lenore Malen is an artist and writer. She received her BA from Skidmore College, and her MA in Art History from the University of Pennsylvania. In the 1990s, she served as executive editor of Art Journal, published by the College Art Association. Recent solo exhibitions include the Slought Foundation, PA (2004), Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY (2004), among others. *The New Society* has been documented in many media including a performance for the BBC (2004) and a 144-page book (Granary Books, Inc, 2005) with essays by Pepe Karmel, Nancy Princenthal, Geoffrey O Brien, Jonathan Ames and others.

Malen teaches in the MFA Fine Arts Program at Parsons: The New School for Design. She was born in New York City, where she lives and works.

For additional information, please contact Ryan White, Programs Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, 212-206-3583, or email [ryan.white@cueartfoundation.org](mailto:ryan.white@cueartfoundation.org)

**ABOUT CUE:**

*CUE Art Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts organization, is dedicated to providing a comprehensive creative forum for contemporary art by supporting under-recognized artists via a multi-faceted mission spanning the realms of gallery exhibitions, public programming, professional development programs and arts-in-education.*

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