



As we sat drinking at The Prince, a Victorian-pub-turned-Korean-restaurant in Los Angeles that seemed to me quintessentially LA, I turned to my friend Ronni and asked: “Do you know somebody in the city, ideally an artist, who can hypnotize people?”

“Maybe this guy,” she said after a short pause, and passed me her phone with a number. I sent him a text message:

**Hello, I am curating an exhibition where the audience is hypnotized and experiences the exhibition under hypnosis. Let me know if you would be interested to discuss a possible collaboration to make this exhibition happen.**

The guy, it turns out, was Marcos Lutyens, an artist and hypnotist deeply immersed in neuroscience, cognitive bio-machinery, artificial and animal intelligence, eco-dreams, self-educational complexes, bacterial visualization techniques, and all kinds of knowledge of the world at large. He speaks several languages, cracks jokes that make people of different countries laugh at the same time, and, among other things, practices post-Ericksonian hypnosis as a way to access what he calls the unconscious mind. He believes that people have been repressed by various systems—economy, belief, the morals and tastes of their social class—and as a result have become highly automated, desensitized, violence-prone individuals driven by greed, function, and reason. To access the unconscious mind means activating other ways of sensing and being, and this is where he inserts himself: at the interstices of the possible.

Before working with me, Marcos worked with artist Matt Mullican, neuroscientist Vilayanur S. Ramachandran, and Def Leppard drummer Rick Allen on a variety of pursuits involving hypnosis in one form or another, so invitation to address a group of people at an art gallery was more or less business as usual.

(Raimundas Malašauskas)

Cover: A pair of zeros from the cover of the author’s recent book *Memoirs of a Hypnotist: 100 Days* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), designed by Goda Budvytytė. With thanks for permission to use them, as well as Raimundas’s words above, which are slightly rewritten from the introduction to the same publication.

Over the past few years, I have found myself increasingly distracted by a series of hypnosis-based art projects conceived together with my friend Raimundas Malašauskas. When he last visited me in Los Angeles recently, I had planned an itinerary designed to allow him to zoom in on what he calls the city's "unparalleled knot of incompatible realities and regimes of truth."

Cut to: Universal Studios, lot entrance. After checking his ID at the gate, the guards took his phone and camera away, then briefed him on how memories may only be stored in the mind and not shared under any circumstances. They call this a "privacy disclaimer," since the tour was made exclusively for insiders. The golf cart driver, Frank, duly recited his script: "Although in LA, we have physical streets and buildings like any other city, the REAL urban fabric is made up of stories. The place you've come to visit is a factory of narratives that have been running for generations ..., " and so on.

In a sense, Raimundas was being \*induced\* into worlds most of us can only access through the so-called silver screen—even though the lenticular silver that gave the screen its name was actually ditched not long after the beginning of the motion picture industry. "Induced" is the term used in hypnosis to guide someone into a state of trance. It derives from the Latin *in-ducere*: is a compound of *in-*, "into," and *ducere*, "to lead." The form of induction I usually apply is an amalgamation of stage hypnosis and a type of therapeutic hypnosis, otherwise known as hypnotherapy. Although my work as an artist using hypnosis is not intended to have therapeutic effects, being directed instead towards experimental investigations, understanding the therapeutic basis for hypnosis is essential in knowing how best to work with the mind, and what to avoid at all costs, such as treating pain without a doctor's consent, which may mask an underlying ailment.

I learned these processes at the American Institute of Hypnotherapy (AIH), a now-defunct academy in Irvine, California, founded by Dr. A.M. Krasner, who implemented Milton Erickson's approach to hypnosis. Erickson was a controversial figure in the world of medical hypnosis and family therapy, having generated inductive processes that often involved shocks and ordeals that drove people deeper into their phobias or

neuroses in an effort to find a way out of them. He developed most of his own methods, formulated during a childhood of paralysis caused by polio. During this time he became preoccupied with observing the contradictory behavior of his many siblings, particularly their body language. By focusing deeply on their daily habits and rituals, he discerned that we are naturally predisposed to go in and out of various states of trance.

Likewise, Raimundas was being driven deeper into the birthplace of familiar narratives. From the comfort of the cart, he found himself passing slowly through the liquid membrane of the cinema screen, surrounded by all the physical relics stereotypically used to animate the movies.

Here we are at Stage 28, the set of the 1924 silent film *The Phantom of the Opera*, an undulating marvel of balconies built of lath and frail plasterwork that happens to be the oldest preserved film set in the world. But that was already two years ago; it has since been demolished. Its memory remains in only a handful of minds. And then we are up the hill, wandering past the Bates Motel, a.k.a. the *Psycho* house, which was built as a two-walled set. 3D screen realities are only ever made up of partially rendered truths. The mind fleshes out the missing parts, as usual.

My own relationship with Hollywood has often been entangled in the twilight zone between reality and fiction, the technical term for which is “paramnesia.” Once I found myself designing the set for a video to accompany the Red Hot Chili Peppers track “Look Around.” The video comprised four discrete spaces shot with four cameras simultaneously in cinematic 360°, in which each band member followed a separate narrative trajectory, intermittently overlapping with one or more of the others. The four spaces were set out like a saltire or mandala, and it strikes me now that Hollywood is always conditioned by this quartet of fundamental stories, or what Jung would call “the quaternity” — a four-fold structure that describes how the conscious mind operates. The division of our mental functioning into four sectors may also be what’s called “apotropaic,” which means that it contributes to the mind’s ability to prevent its own collapse. In other words, the quaternity enables the mind to perpetually return to its own center. With this in mind, perhaps Hollywood functions as a similar kind of salve to prevent society from imploding.

In the video, the first quadrant of the set belongs to The Liberator, with singer Anthony Keidis dressed in old prisoner garb. He throws it off and becomes the only character who can move freely from his native space into the other three. His role is somewhat akin to a joker in a deck of cards. The second quadrant is occupied by guitarist Josh Klinghoffer as The Administrator. This is a stark space with no frills, a place of order, perhaps a court of law. The third quadrant represents The Dark Side, occupied by bassist Flea. This is a place of conflict and madness, as Flea and his companion tussle and fight in a kind of Dantean inferno. And the fourth quadrant is a pure blue space of The Immaterial, reserved for drummer Chad Smith. This is a refuge, a place of intimacy; some kind of source, yet ungraspable as water.

Usually, I begin a hypnosis by saying “and whenever you’re ready now...,” to give the sense that you yourself are in control of a particular narrative flow that appears to be already underway. I often ponder the fuzzy zone between public speaking and hypnotic induction — a state where the usual edges between here and there, then and now, me and you, inside and outside seem to melt away.

In fact, the more I become a conduit with clear, shiny sides facilitating the seamless flow of words, the better the impression that the words are forming themselves inside your own mind, not merely being heard outside of it. Of course, public speakers generally like to be noticed, to attract and hold an audience’s attention, but you will find me gradually fading away, supplanted by your own sensations, like stepping stones across a pond, or skittles at the end of a bowling alley, in the middle of a chance meeting that you had been longing for.

And, so, whenever you’re ready now, let’s start with the idea that we are in the center of Hollywood. Perhaps we already are. It’s always good to induce doubt into a situation you know to be true, because then the fiction has a better chance of coming across as equally valid. This is precisely when a story can begin to unfold.

And now, as you’re listening to the sound of my voice, perhaps while looking at a screen in front of you, you may just begin to feel a sense of relaxation descend through you. Perhaps the screen is on the surface

of your retina, or perhaps it's hovering in front of you tonight in a dark room with a packed audience, red velvet curtains, dimmed chandeliers. The color has faded out of your eyes, so the film and everything around has desaturated to black and white.

35 sound start.

A beat.

Picture start.

Another beat.

Then, with a progressively slower cadence:

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three ...

And now the beep of the 2-pop leads you into the opening credits.

I always thought it strange that movies traditionally start with the same countdown we use in hypnotic inductions, and with each number you may begin to relax back further into your seat. Perhaps now, by the same token, you'll find yourself inside or behind the screen as a character through which the story unfolds, and each time there is a countdown you'll begin to find yourself immersed deeper and deeper into the story with a heightened sense of feelings and sensations, more and more relaxed. As the story progresses, you may find that words have weight and taste and flavor, and that they move through and inside the different parts of yourself, just like the text you may be reading right now, or just listening to, with all its slopes and angles and curves.

I'm sure you've had the experience of being in a room, such as the one you're in now, and realized that whereas real-world rooms generally have four walls, a film set actually has three-plus-one walls, and that actors rarely look at that fourth one so as not to break the conceit of a hard-won parallel reality, or expose the viewer as a voyeur.

Perhaps our script has four distinct plots to follow, or maybe there are even four screens in the multiplex playing simultaneously — onto which we can project those four compartments of the conscious self, a quartet of archetypal narratives playing on a loop, over and over and over again.

And you might find it surprising to discover that the structure of these four repeating narratives, so similar to the idea of the quaternity, was itself derived by Jung from the fourfold structure of Greek drama: Contest, Defeat, Lamentation, and Redemption.

As you continue to read, or listen, you will probably notice these four different narratives surfacing over and over again, like a combination lock that reflects how your mind processes the flow of events in your own lives, and only \*clicks\* when the right sequence slowly comes up on the rotating discs. The four basic stories that recur in every movie you have ever seen are the same stories that are already ingrained in you, ready to project onto your inner screen.

You may also begin to feel how each section resides in a certain part of your body, as happens when you reach deeper into this hypnotic state, and the innermost schema start to appear more and more heavy and concrete.

At the same time, the memories triggered inside may make YOU the author of the stories you thought you were reading. And in a kind of reversal, I, as the author, may be reading your thoughts as they are slowly fed onto this page.

Ideally, you should close your eyes while reading the following text, just as the blind envision a narrative while reading braille, because touch and visualization use separate cognitive channels.

Whenever you're ready now, let's give it a try.

The first story's title appears on the screen.

. . .

## 1. THE LIBERATOR

(Outside a Greyhound bus station early in the morning.)

Ten. Walking down the steps of the station, just off the Lucky Streak after a long, overnight journey.

Nine. Dawn, the stillness of time.

Eight. Unevenness under your feet, tripping on the train tracks.

Seven. Streetlights and the smell of rotten vegetables.

Six. Thinking of home.

Five. The fog of time, each footstep a second.

Four. The heavy duffel bag across your shoulder.

Three. Apartment buildings passing by: the Gaylord, Los Altos, the Asbury, Ravenswood. A thousand dreams inside dreams under the burnt out neon signs, tired sheers, peeling paint.

Two. I have come here to break the rules, the codes, the laws.

One. Suddenly, I reach out through the screen and pull you in. My voice passes by like a Doppler effect inside your mind.

And as we go deeper in now, perhaps we can sense the second story:

. . .

## 2. THE ADMINISTRATOR

(Inside a courtroom in the middle of the afternoon.)

Ten. Evening sunlight pouring across the empty desks and seats.



Nine. You look down at your watch: the second hand slows.  
Eight. Under the fluorescents: the ceiling fan slowly grinding.  
Seven. Typed words on paper. Dust particles hanging in the air.  
Six. Solid, impenetrable sounds behind walls.  
Five. Blinds, curtains, two-way mirrors, surveillance screens.  
Four. Time as a physical entity: divided, rationed, weighed, withheld.  
Three. Bringing down the gavel.  
Two. Shackles, shuffling.  
One. The abyss of stopped time.  
Cut to the third story.

. . .

### 3. THE DARK SIDE

(Deep in the interior of Stage 27 late in the evening.)

Ten. Faded stars and famous quotes as muffled whispers in the catwalk above.  
Nine. Hair and make-up in the green room.  
Eight. Walking across cables through a forest of C-stands.  
Seven. The seat conforms around you: beyond the cockpit, the bright blue chroma-key sky.  
Six. Bright lights in your eyes

Five. And Action!

Four. Furious, seething, blood boiling, jaw clenched.

Three. Explosion: fragments fly past you.

Two. The set disintegrates.

One. Rage and fury.

And then the fourth and final story fades in.

. . .

#### 4. THE IMMATERIAL

(Hovering above Griffith Park Observatory in the middle of the night.)

Ten. Do you remember it now?

Nine. High above the city.

Eight. Floating over by the observatory in the skies beyond Mulholland.

Seven. Distance expands as an infinite grid of lights below.

Six. The residences, trees, canyons dissolving away.

Five. Love affairs of unspoken passion, vendettas, soaps, sitcoms, game shows, horror shows, musicals.

Four. You are the narrative behind my words.

Three. Under your breath, I hear the thread of sounds upon which stories take form.

Two. An indefinite gradation with no steps, boundaries or contours.

One. A bubble of phrases formed for an instant and released into the dark night sky. The dew of redemption.

The actors and their mouths move slowly, meaning dissolving like melting make-up. As the words sink, your body feels lighter and lighter, so translucent and clear, and with every breath, each word becomes lighter and lighter. The discs turning until you hear that “click.” Scripts tumbling away across the desert and sounds left floating in the ether.

Dreaming and drifting away, lighter and lighter.

Awake, wide awake.

\*

