

# OUR PROGRAM AND PHRASEBOOK

## I. EXHIBITION

*"We now convene our Exhibition. Our first exhibitor, please take the stage. All others, please be seated."*

Used by the overseer to formally begin the Exhibition.

*"Title of form: [name]."*

Used by an exhibitor before presenting a relic that has been investigated prior to Exhibition.

*"The form is revealed."*

Announced once a relic's known form is revealed via the apparatus.

*"Unidentified form."*

Used by an exhibitor before presenting a relic that has not been investigated.

*"Hold."*

Interjection of assembly member to pause an exhibitor's manipulation of a relic, and call attention to a possible form upon the VEIL.

*"Form has been identified."*

Used by an exhibitor if a new form is revealed for an uninvestigated relic.

*"Resuming investigation."*

Used by an exhibitor when a possible new form is rejected and manipulation of the relic continues.

*"The form is hidden."*

Announced by an exhibitor at the end of an investigation that does

not reveal a conclusive form for their relic.

## 2. FORUM

### 2a. Interference

*"Those who encountered interference with relics, the apparatus, or exhibition: raise a hand."*

Used by the overseer to open the Interference section of Forum.

### 2b. Revelation

*"Our assembled body has shared in revelation."*

Used by the overseer to open the Revelation section of Forum, with discussion of their relic (if any).

*"Now we contemplate another relic."*

Used by the overseer (or current speaker) to choose another exhibitor and relic for discussion.

### 2c. Archive

*"Which of us volunteers to collect and archive the records from our assembly's observations?"*

Used by the overseer to open the Archive section of Forum.

## 3. CONCLUSION

*"Our assembly has concluded. May we carry memory of these phantoms with us as we resume our phantom life."*

Used by the overseer after Archive is complete, to conclude the assembly.

# NEW FORMS <sup>7</sup>

MANIFESTO AND ORIENTATION

**The world is not as it appears to be. Nothing is solid: all is impermanence. The earth beneath us drifts on molten currents. Black oceans roil and grind down the coasts. Stars in the cold so-called "firmament" whirl and die. All bodies— all notions— all forms— are bound to the same pattern.**

Believing what we see, touch, and experience to be real is either the height of ignorance or arrogance. Change, the rot of existence, is the only constant. By trapping ourselves in material thinking we numb ourselves to greater truths.

Unmasking the world's lie of permanence is possible. To do so, we assemble and employ a simple apparatus to glimpse behind the curtain of the corporeal to what lies beyond and above it, squinting in the face of glaring, tidal, inchoate darkness.

Still, we are creatures more comforted by our blinders than by truth. We cannot expect to overcome our crooked miseducation all at once. Habits forced upon us by our rotten, sun-hungry bodies are not easily unlearned. Our flesh is knit in darkness, and our expulsion from the fluid blindness of the womb prompts our first screams. So it should be.

Light is the lie. The visible is what the physical rejects and reflects upon our fickle orbs. Yet as the saying goes, seeing is believing. Here is exposed the root of our earliest betrayals. From birth, we are retrained to reject basic principles of reality we intuit before



we can even speak. Ideas as simple as "object permanence" are minor half-truths that disguise a deeper fiction. And which are, in the end, overridden by sublime ultimate Truth.

Our star will die, as all stars do. Our bodies will die, as all bodies do.

We need not speed any of these eventualities on their way, just as we need not labor at the impossible of delaying the inevitable. Time's mocking parade of grotesquerie will see to each revelation in its own time. It has no need for our permission or consent.

The explorations we therefore undertake are pursued for the sake of something we lack the language to express. What sobriety is to the drunkard, or wakefulness to the dreamer. We strive for a solemn, clear-minded embrace of the nature of existence, freed from the urge to flinch or shudder in the face of what we have been taught to dread.

## OUR MOTIVE FOR ASSEMBLY

We convene to manifest and investigate realities otherwise hidden from the perception of the human mind and body. We do this knowing the sensory limits of the flesh and conceptual limits of the brain cannot be flensed away. Whatever realities we manifest and wisdom we find will thus reflect our limitations. Yet even a crumb of truth will outmatch a feast of lies.

Darkness is a fundamental truth, but such is our brokenness that we cannot perceive the forms of darkness without intermingling its vacant purity with the profane. We turn light against itself to scour away light's fictions and explore the lingering dark that light cannot erase.

## PROPER USE OF OUR APPARATUS

The apparatus used for our explorations is not a "device," though it is more than the sum of its parts. Likewise, it is not a ritual, but incorporates elements of ceremony. Its parts are simple and few. Just as important as what is included is what is intentionally neglected. By selecting an appropriate space and focusing our attention on the gathered components, ignoring everything else, we strive to widen our screwed-shut eyelids open a sliver, and perceive something of what lies beyond.

### Components

A darkened room must be procured, large enough for our assembly of observers to gather comfortably. Ideal

The world is rich with debris, forged from the bones of a universe that died in the instant of its birth. Others project a scheme of reason upon this realm of trash, clouding their view of its nature. Therefore in the world's cast-off, forgotten, mislaid things, we find the keys—more truthfully, the keyhole—through which to peer behind the world's locked door. These are our relics.

In caves our ancestors made firelight to dance upon the walls, and so too do we, after our fashion. The light cannot be trusted, and so we cannot rely on dancing flame. We instead employ a simple apparatus to enact our shadow-play, translating mere matter into strange yet discernible forms.

settings include theatres, lecture halls, laboratories, classrooms, basements, church sanctuaries, attics, boiler rooms, and abandoned or condemned buildings. Whatever else the space may be, it must be dark, and have room to construct and use our apparatus. The room should also contain the following:

- ◆ adequate seating for the assembly of observers.
  - ◆ a table to hold relics, placed at the rear of the room or along one side.
- Our apparatus itself consists of:

- ◆ a screen, hereafter called the VEIL, on a raised platform or stage if possible.
- ◆ a light source, hereafter called the LIGHT. It is best if the illumination from the LIGHT is unfocused or blurred, as

### CORPOREAL

**Form:** carving of two long-necked animals (similar to giraffes, yet not identical) with heads side-by-side, mouths/lips touching or tongues intertwined

**Function:** sculpture/art object

**Dimensions:** 4 inches wide, 7.5 inches tall, 2 inches deep

**Material:** polished stone

**Color:** mottled dark gray-green

**Texture:** mostly smooth, subtly pitted

**Source:** second-hand store

**Manner of acquisition:** purchased

**Emotional impressions:** unsettling. The animal heads are indistinct, and each has a furrow running the length of its face that suggests a withered, cadaverous aspect.

### UMBRAL

**Description:** side view of a small creature with a prominent eye

**New form:** innocent newborn

**New function:** helpless witness to a world defined by existential terror

**Emotional impressions:** the small, hapless thing seems on the verge of tears, or struck with a wide-eyed fear. Its pose is defensive and withdrawn; wary.

**"Name":** "Dew-eyed Hatchling"

### INTEGRAL

**Relationship between forms:** possibly transposed? The corporeal form of the relic has more of the qualities and hallmarks endemic to the other realm, and the umbral form looks equally as unsettled as its observer.

**Philosophical implications:** Is it possible in some way for umbral forms to manifest as corporeal relics? And if so, for an umbral form shifted into the corporeal to become a relic, is that relic's *present* umbral form a reflection of the original corporeal artifact imprisoned within the other realm, or a sign of a new "deeper" meaning? Or is there some subtler deception or interference at work?

**Avenues for further study:** identify sculptor, if possible, and locate any additional similar works

**Current assessment:** unclear



## CORPOREAL

**Form:** carving of a dove on the bough of an evergreen tree

**Function:** decorative wall-hanging

**Dimensions:** 11 inches wide, 9 inches tall, half an inch deep

**Material:** wood, plastic/resin eye

**Color:** light and dark brown

**Texture:** mostly ridged, but not rough; smooth in spots

**Source:** second-hand store

**Manner of acquisition:** purchased

**Emotional impressions:** rustic, homespun, and cozy. Simple and unassuming. Easily overlooked. Evokes rural settings, both for subject matter and type of residence where such decoration would best fit: remote log cabins, a far-away relative's home, etc. Vaguely wintry associations due to juxtaposition of dove and pine bough.

## UMBRAL

**Description:** gaunt, knobby profile of an animal head

**New form:** skull (or emaciated head) of a draconic creature

**New function:** avatar of mortality

**Emotional impressions:** macabre, due to dual death symbolism: of the dead, via skull-like appearance, and of the death-bringer, in the form of a starved, ravenous dragon

**"Name":** "Skeletal Drake"

## INTEGRAL

**Relationship between forms:** both indirect and inverted. The dragon relates to the dove only slightly, in that both are creatures capable of flight. The potent death imagery functions as a partial inversion of the "evergreen" tree branch's associations with immortality and eternal life.

**Philosophical implications:** Suggests that death lurks within all life; even in the promise of eternal life. If there is an afterlife, does death stalk its hallowed halls as well? What becomes of heaven's dead?

**Avenues for further study:** locate more relics with literal or symbolic links to eternity, immortality, afterlife, etc.

**Current assessment:** truthful



shadows with sharp or well-defined edges conflict with proper functioning of the apparatus. A desk lamp on an articulating arm is good. A flashlight will also function well, if it can be held by an assistant, or mic stand, etc.

- a pedestal, plinth, stool, or similar on which to place a relic.

- darkness.

The ideal arrangement is thus:



Which is to say, the screen should be backlit, similar to the setup for a shadow play, as long as space allows. (See *fig. 1* below.) These instructions assume a backlit apparatus.

If space does not allow, this arrangement will suffice:

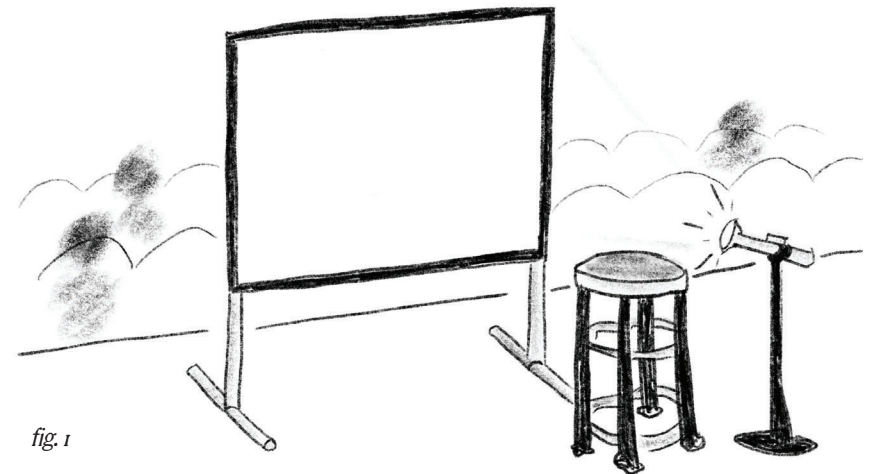


If possible, observers in the audience

should not be able to simultaneously see both a relic and its shadow upon the VEIL. A backlit apparatus is ideal for this reason. If the apparatus' arrangement is not backlit, placing the LIGHT and pedestal at the rear of the audience, as in a movie theater, achieves this. (See *fig. 2* on the following page.) Alternately, the audience might be side-by-side with the LIGHT and pedestal, separated by a curtain.

## Exhibition

When our apparatus is in place, and our body of observers has assembled, exhibition of collected relics may begin. Whoever has handled the assembly's arrangements (space, apparatus, and so on) is the overseer, tasked with a few extra duties. Determine an order for each observer to present their relic; this can be done randomly, as assigned, or on a volunteer basis. When this is ready, the overseer will announce "*We now convene our Exhibition. Our first exhibitor, please take the stage. All others, please be*



*fig. 1*

seated." Each observer in turn will pass behind the VEIL, then manipulate their relic and the LIGHT so as to cast a shadow—a form—upon the VEIL. This process of presentation and observation bears a passing resemblance to "show and tell" from schoolchild days.

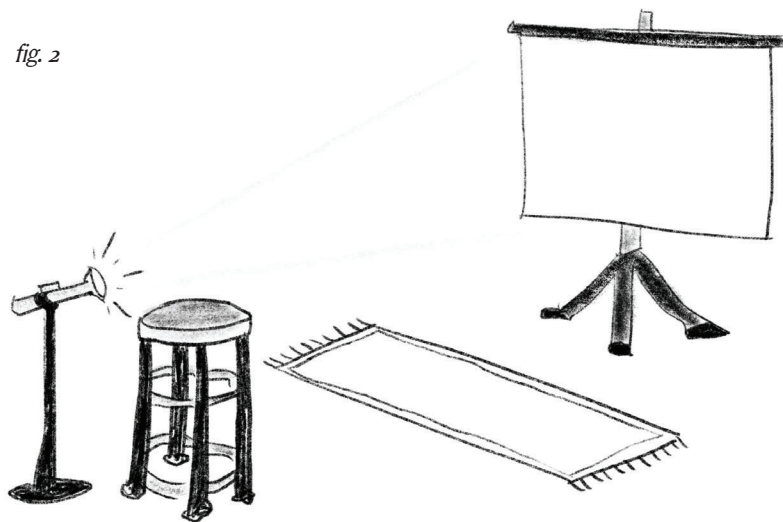
A relic should be manipulated to cast shadows that bear as little resemblance as possible to the relic's mundane physical form; shadows should suggest *other* forms as strongly as possible. The hands of an exhibitor should also be kept out of the cast shadows as much as is reasonably possible. Due to the limits imposed by the fleshy instincts of the mind, shapes resembling faces, creatures, and so on will often make the strongest impression on us. This is expected, but any strange or evocative form is sufficient.

For relics that have been investigated prior to public exhibition, the exhibitor will announce "*Title of form: [name]*," substituting the name they have given the previously discovered form. Once

the relic has been manipulated within the apparatus, and the intended shadow is achieved, the exhibitor of the relic will announce "*The form is revealed*," and describe the features they perceive within the shadow form. The revealed form is documented by sketch if possible, or instant photograph, by a designated clerk with a copy of our observation sheet (later in this pamphlet).

Attendees may exhibit unexplored relics as well, for group investigation. If the assembly uses a printed list or program, the relic should be listed as "(Unidentified #X)" with the "X" replaced with a unique number or code, to avoid confusion with any other unexplored relics. When taking the stage, the exhibitor announces "*Unidentified form*," before engaging the apparatus. The exhibitor will then begin manipulating the relic directly, adjusting the LIGHT or the apparatus as needed in order to produce various shadows. Audience observers discerning a compelling form must interject "*Hold*," in a loud, clear

fig. 2



## CORPOREAL

**Form:** mounted antler rack

**Function:** decorative wall-hanging

**Dimensions:** 6 inches tall, 8 inches wide, 10 inches deep

**Material:** metal, likely aluminum

**Color:** metallic silver

**Texture:** ridged (antlers) and smooth (mounting plaque)

**Source:** second-hand store

**Manner of acquisition:** purchased

**Emotional impressions:** sterile, artificial. Shabbily modern take on a traditional "trophy." Homogenized, and mass-produced façade of organic matter; a forgery. Reminiscent of common rocks dipped in paint to resemble gold nuggets. Inspires feelings of alienation and detachment.

## UMBRAL

**Description:**

side-view of oversized head, attached to a body with many short limbs

**New form:** multi-legged, solitary megafauna

**New function:** ambling, grazing consumer; formidable prey animal

**Emotional impressions:** strong, tranquil. Calm until provoked. Wary of and prepared to contend with dangerous predators. Inspires sympathetic feelings of strength, serenity, and resilience. Secluded and withdrawn, yet not actively anti-social.

**"Name":** "Hammerhead Beast"



## INTEGRAL

**Relationship between forms:** extremely direct. Corporeal form is a synecdoche for a wide swath of horned & antlered prey animals (cattle, deer, antelope & so on); umbral form is a complete instance of such an animal, yet on a massive scale.

**Philosophical implications:** relationship so direct as to evoke suspicion. Correlation between forms is essentially one-to-one, therefore sparks little revelation. Too too comfortable & reassuring.

**Avenues for further study:** repeat observation with organic trophy

**Current assessment:** deceptive

## SELECTIONS FROM OUR ARCHIVE

### CORPOREAL

**Form:** holiday elf figurine

**Function:** mantelpiece decoration and stocking-hanger

**Dimensions:** 5 inches wide, 6 inches tall, 3 inches deep

**Material:** hard plastic, paint

**Color:** dark red, forest green, blue-green, mustard yellow, blue, light pink, white

**Texture:** smooth, matte finish

**Source:** elderly relative? (unsure)

**Manner of acquisition:** found? handed down? (unsure)

**Emotional impressions:** festive jollity, contrasted with out-of-place lewdness (due to elf's pose, so positioned in order to maintain center of gravity for a hung stocking, which causes groin to protrude). This contrast creates a humorous effect, since the child-like holiday elf seems both vulgar and smug.

### UMBRAL

**Description:** three-quarters profile of a head, with nose and shoulders visible

**New form:** spindly creature with long, thin ears (or antennae)

**New function:** lowly servant to more powerful forces

**Emotional impressions:** fragility bordering on the pathetic. Airs of mischief, furtiveness, and secretiveness. Creature is tragic, servile, and downtrodden.

**"Name":** "Gremlin Lackey"



### INTEGRAL

**Relationship between forms:** inverted— the happy helper-elf becomes the dejected, subjugated gremlin

**Philosophical implications:** in the other realm, creatures and hierarchies exist resembling those we know, but stripped of artificial cheer. Presumably the subjugated are bound to some task?

**Avenues for further study:** seek out more Christmas holiday decorations, especially elves or St. Nicholas

**Current assessment:** truthful

voice. Any manipulation should pause. The interjecting observer will then briefly describe what they discern. If the exhibitor concurs with the interjector's description of the discerned form, they will announce "*Form has been identified.*" If the exhibitor does not concur, they will announce "*Resuming investigation,*" and once again set to work casting various shadows upon the VEIL. If more than five minutes pass without the identification of a form judged acceptable by the exhibitor, the investigation is inconclusive. The exhibitor will announce "*The form is hidden,*" and exit the stage. The next exhibitor will engage the apparatus and present their relic, until no exhibitors are left.

At the conclusion of Exhibition, dismantle the apparatus, and rearrange furnishings as needed for Forum to follow. With the LIGHT from our apparatus removed, adjust the ambient lighting as needed. Do not yet indulge the desire to banish darkness. Minimal light, enough to illuminate our assembly of observers but little more than that, is recommended.

### Forum

With Exhibition ended, our assembled body convenes for a period of discussion and reflection, dubbed Forum. Forum is subdivided into three sections: *Interference*, for individual reflection on inconclusive investigations and obstacles during or prior to Exhibition; *Revelation*, for group analysis of forms discerned from relics and conjecture on meaning, plus discussion of any objections or contrary findings; and *Archive*, for the addition of sheets, notes, and any approved relics to our assembly's

permanent collection.

**Interference.** To begin, instruct the assembled: "*Those who encountered interference with relics, the apparatus, or exhibition: raise a hand.*" In turns, each of the assembled who raised a hand will share the nature of the interference they encountered, as well as any thoughts as to the cause of the interference, and potential solutions. If none of the assembled raise hands, or if all who did have spoken, conclude Interference.

**Revelation.** To begin, tell the assembled: "*Our assembled body has shared in revelation.*" Describe the discerned form of your relic, if any, as well as your thoughts of what the form implies about the reality that underlies what we perceive. Other attendees may voice their support or objections to these theories. When ready, announce, "*Now we contemplate another relic,*" and direct another attendee to begin. Repeat this until none remain.

**Archive.** To begin, ask the assembled: "*Which of us volunteers to collect and archive the records from our assembly's observations?*" If none do, take this task yourself as overseer. Gather sheets, notes, sketches and so on from the assembled. If any wish to donate their relic to the archive, collect it as well. Relics without a discerned form, catalogued in an accompanying sheet, cannot be added to the archive. If any such relics are collected, dispose of them.

### Conclusion

Once done with Archive, Forum has ended. Tell the gathered body, "*Our assembly has concluded. May we carry memory of these phantoms with us as we resume our phantom life.*"

Date of observation:

Observer:

== CORPOREAL ==

Form:

Function:

Dimensions:

Material:

Color:

Texture:

Source:

Manner of acquisition:

Emotional impressions:

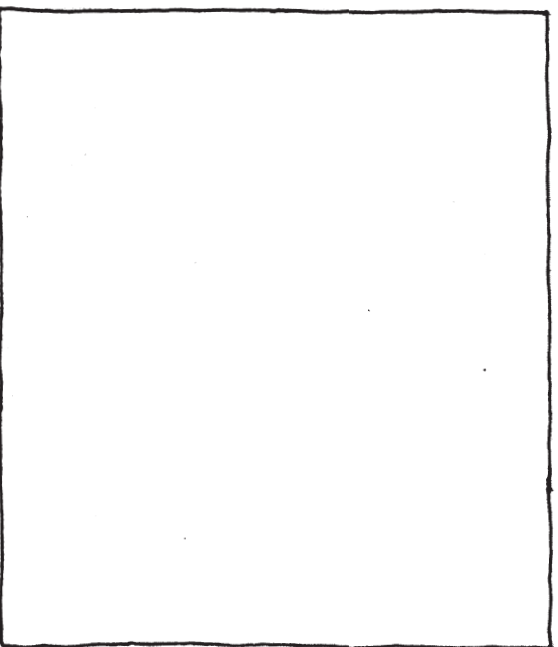
Description:

New form:

New function:

Emotional impressions:

== UMBRAL ==



"Name":

Relationship between forms:

Philosophical implications:

Avenues for further study:

Current assessment: ( ) truthful ( ) deceptive ( ) unclear

== INTEGRAL ==