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Ben Judd's recent residency in Cali, Colombia resulted in the construction of an organisation called I Will Heal You. Positioning himself precariously close to practitioners of witchcraft, Scientology, and parapsychology, as well as working with graphic and fashion designers, architects, jewellers and furniture makers – who Judd commissioned to invent an identity for his organisation through objects and designs installed within its shrine-like headquarters – the artist's project systematically sought to create a believable cult or spiritual movement from the relationships he had forged in South America.

As well as researching the visual identity of guerrilla groups and insurgent factions that are currently active in Colombia, one of Judd's main protagonists in Cali was Verónica Mardel, a local woman who had previously created her own one-person quasi-religious organisation called 'The Ministry of Universal Culture'. Mardel's position is largely naïve and idealistic, yet her aim is to unite the local population, who almost exclusively ignore her and treat her as a harmless eccentric and outsider.

Judd's interest in Mardel led him directly to construct his own belief system, which contained a similar variety of ambiguous spiritual and religious connotations. In his film, which works in the matter-of-fact yet informal documentary style of a number of other contemporary artists such as Aleksandra Mir and Erik van Lieshout, we see him immersed in a number of rites and ceremonies. In one scene, Judd is caught in a local witch's cleansing ritual; sited in a circle of unlikely props such as lemons, eggs and sugar, which are set on fire, Judd is left quivering with his eyes shut. In other clips we see local musicians perform songs written for the project, which form prophetic statements when combined with the events in the video, and the pied and eclectic objects that inhabit the world of Judd's developing cult. Judd has mentioned that the physical presence of his subsequent installation in Cali aimed at a total transformation of the space it occupied, through simple lighting and the addition of curtains, to lend his movement a sense of history and simultaneously provide the feeling that something important was about to take place.

Perhaps if we start to look for motives behind Judd's movement, we can begin to notice his desire to test the boundaries of his personal world by forcing himself to become directly immersed in the unfamiliar rites of small subcultures. The artist's focus on keeping one foot in the real world is an important one, and through this, his documentation exists as a halfway house between existing reality and the possibility of another that's full of unrealised potential.

In the past Judd's films have involved a very British concern for amateur enthusiast activities, such as trainspotting and Morris dancing. Unlike anywhere else in the world, the UK harbours a distinct pride in its own philistine attitudes, and although

these works unavoidably connect with low forms of culture and the politics of aesthetics and representation in a familiar way, they also succeed in skewing everyday activities in an unpredictable manner that takes the work beyond ruminations on taste and class. Judd's films are also anthropological in a natural way (it's interesting to note that trainspotters and Morris dancers have been demonised and ridiculed for quite some time), but the artist still operates as a genuine participant by adopting a believable persona in each context.

Much like his previous work with marginal groups who have their own communities and belief systems, Judd continues to throw himself into alien situations while keeping a distinct distance. He has started to develop a concern for a much more mysterious subject matter, and is currently making a new film in the UK with another witch, a spirit medium and a shaman. In his recent visit to the latter character, Judd attempted to go on a journey to enter another dimension as both a participant and an observer. Just as Judd puts his faith in the Colombian female witch's eclectic process and her amalgamation of belief in *I Will Heal You*, he continues to use various sources to push his own schizoid and sundry problem solving practice further.

Despite the success of this film, another convincing multi-layered healing power lies in Judd's recent stereoscopic photographs. Taken with a Russian Sputnik camera and seen through an antique Victorian viewer, these images show various figures that appear to float above the surface of each picture. Photographs such as *The Visitant* (2006), which shows a female figure on a beach, accompanied by a strange light source and a number of stones and cut logs that hover in the foreground, are initially seen in their raw state, with the bare bones of the mechanical apparatus in view. It's only when one looks through the viewer that the illusion renders itself clear. It is interesting to note that Judd has previously involved himself with a group of amateur photographers, and perhaps this time his own fascination for the photographic medium has produced a clunky duality of its own; one can see joins and the artifice of this work, but still enjoy being fooled by the misapprehension that it projects. Analogous to the position in *I Will Heal You*, where the artist takes the role of the believer and the non-believer simultaneously (even while Judd is immersed in his cult, a tension exists as the artist self-consciously keeps the camera rolling), his photographs show the fragility of human perception, together with the extent to which we enjoy allowing ourselves to be drawn in to such situations.

Through this, perhaps we can see that Judd's work deals not only with the inevitable delusional dilemma of being in the world, but also with a constant pushing of the boundaries of perception. Most important of all, the artist realises that if we are to research new, more radical forms of existence, any shifts in reality will have to take place gradually, rather than through a shear break brought about by an impossible form of romanticism. Perhaps any slippage from one world to another will take place through a measured, tentative and ongoing evolution, and as these works suggest, the beauty of this is that it will inevitably happen in forms we are yet to comprehend.