



# SPECTRAL SCIENCE

## VISIONS OF THE WORLD BEYOND

### SPECTRAL SCIENCE CONJURING THE INVISIBLE WORLD

Wed | 10.23.24 | 6 p.m.

Friends of the USC Libraries Lecture Hall  
Doheny Memorial Library 240

### PHANTASMAGORIA LIGHTING THE WORLD BEYOND

Wed | 10.30.24 | 7 p.m.

Los Angeles Times Reference Room  
Doheny Memorial Library

### THE MAGIC CASTLE

Sun | 11.17.24 | 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The Magic Castle, Hollywood  
Open to current USC students only

Presented by USC Visions and Voices. Organized by Rebecca Corbett, Tyson Gaskill, Anne-Marie Maxwell, Derek Christian Quezada Meneses (USC Libraries), and Franziska Kohlt (USC Libraries Carrollian Fellow).

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- This event series is presented in conjunction with the exhibition *Spectral Science: Visions of the World Beyond*, drawn from the collections of the USC Libraries and the Academy of Magical Arts.
- The exhibition gathers photographs, rare books, magic lantern glass slides, and other evidence that blurs the line between the logical and illogical, the natural and supernatural.

### MAGIC LANTERNS AND PHANTASMAGORIA

**Magic lanterns** are an early type of projector invented in the 1600s. The first models were illuminated by candles, later oil lamps, and then various other forms of light before electric illumination was introduced in the twentieth century. They were a popular form of entertainment and education through many eras, until the slide projector was introduced in the mid-twentieth-century. Magic lanterns were used in traveling shows and, especially in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for science education.

In the late eighteenth through nineteenth centuries, magic lanterns were used to project frightening images such as ghosts and demons in **phantasmagoria** shows, a form of horror theatre. The “cultural moment that gave birth to the phantasmagoria” was a time when “the rational spirit of the Enlightenment gave way to a taste for heightened emotions and otherworldly drama,” as described in the introduction to the exhibition *Phantasmagoria* held at MFA Boston in 2018.

Magic lantern shows were precursors to motion pictures and are an important part of the history of cinema.

## SPIRITUALISM AND ACADEMIA

**Spiritualism**, a movement based on the belief that the living can interact with the dead, emerged in the nineteenth century in Europe and America. Séances where mediums attempted to interact with spirits became a popular pastime in the Victorian era. Spiritualism prompted the rise of “psychic research” to try and understand and assess claims of psychic or clairvoyant experiences. Attempts to communicate with the dead precede the Spiritualism movement and have occurred in cultures around the world.

Author and physician **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**, who created the character Sherlock Holmes, was one of the most well-known believers in Spiritualism of his time. He wrote a two-volume collection of essays called *The History of Spiritualism* and lectured around the world about Spiritualism. He was a founding member of the Hampshire Society for Psychical Research and a member of The Society for Psychical Research in London, of which *Alice in Wonderland* author **Lewis Carroll** was also a member. They and other artists and writers of the time were interested in how new scientific discoveries and technologies might enable access to “other worlds” beyond known human perception.

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What distinguishes the aesthetic of magic lantern projections? Think about color, type of illumination, movement of images, and other formal elements.
- What do you believe about “other worlds,” or communication with those who have departed from this world?
- How do your cultural or religious beliefs shape your thoughts about psychic phenomena or communication with the dead?
- How do spectacle, trickery, and manipulations of reality shape politics and culture today?

## IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

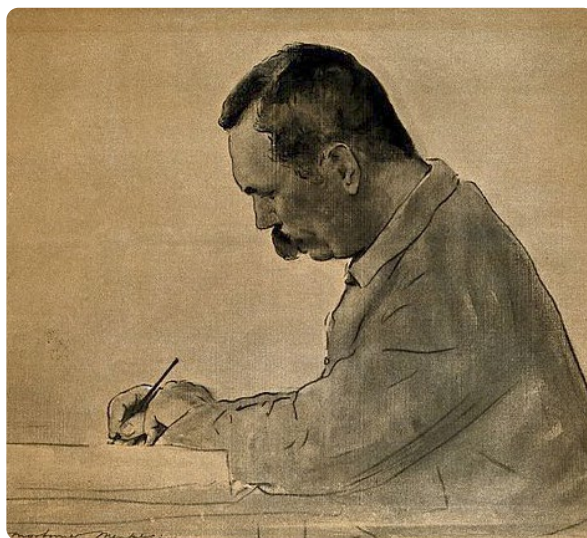
- USC Magic Association on Instagram | [@uscmagic](#)
- The Academy of Magical Arts and the Magic Castle | [magiccastle.com](#)
- Melissa Ferrari online | [melissaferrari.com](#)
- Upcoming Visions and Voices Events
  - 10/27** [Gloria Molina Grand Park’s Downtown Día de los Muertos](#)
  - 10/29** [Drag Me to Hell: Demonic Drag Performances and Costume Contest](#)
  - 10/30** [Phantasmagoria: Lighting the World Beyond](#)
  - 11/17** [The Magic Castle](#)



Fantasmagorie de Robertson dans la Cour des Capucines en 1797.



Melissa Ferrari



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Pastel drawing by M. Menpes, 1901



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## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

Tyson Gaskill of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu) but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

### ARTICLE

- Library of Congress Blogs, "[Hollywood, Houdini and the Halloween Seance of 1936](#)," October 30, 2020

### BOOKS

- Mike Caveney and Jim Steinmeyer, [Magic: 1400s-1950s](#) (Cologne: Taschen, 2016).
- Milbourne and Maurine Christopher, [The Illustrated History of Magic](#) (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996).
- Owen Davies, ed., [The Oxford Illustrated History of Witchcraft and Magic](#) (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2017).
- J. Arthur Hill, [Spiritualism: Its History, Phenomena, and Doctrine](#) (New York: Doran, 1919).
- Gustav Kuhn, [Experiencing the Impossible: The Science of Magic](#) (Cambridge: MIT, 2019).
- Barbara Stafford and Fran Terpak, [Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen](#) (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001).

### STREAMING MEDIA

- [Occult Voices—Paranormal Music, Recordings of Unseen Intelligences 1905-2007](#)

