MIND FOUNDATION

LUCIA N°03: Psychedelic experience induced by flickering light

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Header Image by Alex Pasarelu on Unsplash

“Everything that takes us further could be a good thing, even if it scares us at first - like everything that is big and new.”
-Engelbert Winkler1

There are many ways to alter your consciousness and encounter a psychedelic experience. Methods besides psychedelic substances include deep meditation, breathing techniques, music, ecstatic dancing, or flickering light - to name but a few.

At MIND, we offer experimental workshops and self-experiences in which altered states can be explored legally and safely. In our first experimental offering, we induce an altered state with flickering light. The light device we use is the Lucia N°03, a combination of stroboscope and halogen bulbs, which can induce a hypnagogic experience, an altered state of consciousness between wakefulness and sleep. The effect of the Lucia N°03 can also be described as a flicker-induced hallucination (FIH).

In 1819, the physiologist J. E. Purkinje2 was one of the first to scientifically describe the effect he triggered by facing the sunlight with his eyes closed and forming shadows with his hands. The neurophysiologist W.G. Walter3 also reported on this phenomenon in 1963 after stumbling across it during a diagnosis of epilepsy. His patients described patterns and colors that appeared in front of their closed eyes3. Based on his findings, the poet and painter Brion Gysin invented the dream machine in the 1960s4.

In 2009, psychologist and psychotherapist Engelbert Winkler and psychologist and neurologist Dirk Proeckl invented the Lucia light, based on findings from research into near-death experiences and hypnotherapy and the use of stroboscopes and halogen light in practice5. Since then, it has been used by artists, in the wellness industry, and by therapists, just to name a few.

In March, MIND began offering the light experience to interested parties. Lying on a massage chair, with their favorite music playing in the background, participants are safely guided through the experience by one of our 'Light Attendants'. While lying comfortably with eyes closed, the light turns on and the psychedelic experience begins. Each session starts with a two-minute and a five-minute demo session of varying intensity, after which the light traveler chooses one of the many possible Lucia programs. Each session with Lucia Light is highly individual and depends not only on the person but also on their overall attitude: mood, attentiveness, playfulness, curiosity, and openness to the experience. What experiences with the Lucia Light usually have in common is an intensity that is difficult to put into words, although some have tried.

Here are some comments from users:

> "I saw my favorite color, super intense, and it came in a pattern that reminded me of my mother's sewing machine. I feel like I'm working in a sewing factory, and I want to make clothes with all these beautiful patterns."1"I felt like I was dreaming or sleeping; I'm not sure if I was awake all the time. But I can remember beautiful patterns moving toward me, three-dimensional, and it felt like I could see 180°. I feel very calm now.""What is it good for? Well, to maintain beauty in life - what else?"1

Since MIND's clinical partner organization, OVID began offering psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy in February 2021, MIND no longer offers such experimental sessions with the lamp. Stroboscopic light sessions have become part of the preparation for ketamine-assisted psychotherapy. There, it plays the role of a low-threshold learning tool: with the lamp, people are invited to explore their mind and body in a relaxed and curious way, develop an awareness of their inner processes, gain self-confidence, and train their ability to let go and accept processes with as little judgment as possible.

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