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# Van Gogh, Kahlo speak from beyond the grave at Frieze art fair

October 19, 2010 | By Laura Allsop for CNN

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A verbal tussle between the ghosts of Leonardo da Vinci and Vincent van Gogh has become a talking point among contemporary art fans.

A group of TV psychics and mediums "summoned" the late artists as part of an unusual panel discussion at London's Frieze art fair.

Also summoned to speak in the darkened auditorium were Marcel Duchamp, Frida Kahlo and Jackson Pollock, artists well-known for their ground-breaking art but also their colorful lives.

The organizer of this paranormal panel was American multidisciplinary artist Jeffrey Vallance, who invited five mediums to channel the spirits of some of the Western world's best-known artists.



Photo by Linda Nyland for Frieze

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The list of dead artists due to be summoned had been publicized before the event but the mediums were unaware until they entered the auditorium which specific artist they would be asked to channel.

The first question asked was: Is there art in the afterlife? And if so, could it be described. The medium channeling Leonardo da Vinci said that the afterlife could not be understood by mortal minds; Kahlo described prisms of light; and Pollock told the packed auditorium that the afterlife was "all beige."

Something of French conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp's humor came through in his mediated answer, via medium Karina: "It would be like describing the mechanics of flight to a squirrel," she said.

Though many of the answers met with muffled giggles from members of the audience, Vallance -- whose work frequently tries to find the fantastical in the everyday -- looked pleased with the spectacle, occasionally interjecting to ask questions.

It was at the end of the discussion that things began to heat up.

When the medium channeling Leonardo da Vinci proclaimed that he was a better artist than the other artists summoned for the discussion, he drew an enraged gasp from Vincent van Gogh via medium Grant Colyer, who shouted: "We are all as good as each other!"

Frights and giggles aside, the discussion-cum-performance emphasized the debt that artists working now owe to their forebears and was one of the highlights of the fair.

Art critic Brian Dillon, who chaired the event, told CNN: "The people there were confronted with something that scandalized their assumptions and beliefs about art in general and the relationship

between the artist and inspiration, quite apart from whether or not they actually believed the mediums."

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