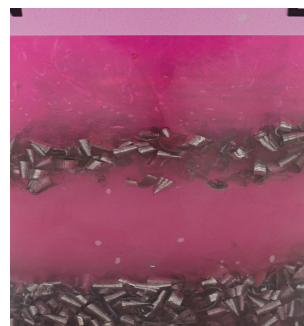


PHASE GALLERY

SCOTT BENZEL
psychomanteum

October 10 - November 15, 2025
Opening: October 10, 6-9 pm

Phase Gallery
1718 Albion Street



Phase Gallery is pleased to present Scott Benzel, *psychomanteum*, October 10- November 15, 2025.

psychomanteum The ancient Greeks consulted a ‘psychomanteum’ (oracle of the dead), such as that mentioned in Homer’s *Odyssey* where Odysseus, gazing into a pit filled with the blood of sacrificial sheep, is reassured by his deceased mother that her passing was not violent or painful. In the 1950s, an actual psychomanteum was excavated at Ephyra in the western Greek province of Epiros. Within the ruins of a subterranean complex, fragments of a giant bronze cauldron were found; possibly both its polished exterior and liquid it contained were used as reflective surfaces.

Shamanic mirror-gazing traditions are found in Siberia, Madagascar, North America and parts of Africa. In the Christian era, mirror-gazing appeared sporadically and was discouraged by religious authorities. In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, the three witches conjure apparitions from the depth of a cauldron. The English queen Elizabeth I consulted with John Dee, a polymath scholar who set up a mirror-gazing room in his house and recorded in detail the visions experienced by his guests. Goethe’s *Faust* features frequent references to mirror-gazing techniques for invoking spirits of the dead and other purposes.

A large-scale ‘Census of Hallucinations’ published by the Society for Psychical Research in 1884 includes many accounts of apparitions spontaneously observed in mirrors and other reflective surfaces.

– The Psi Encyclopedia, The Society for Psychical Research, London. online: <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/psychomanteum-mirror-gazing>

The past is never dead. It's not even past. – William Faulkner

Scott Benzel is an interdisciplinary artist living and working in Los Angeles. His work has been shown or performed at The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum Of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, LA><ART, Los Angeles, The MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los Angeles, The Palm Springs Art Museum, the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, REDCAT, Los Angeles, the Mt. Wilson Observatory, Pasadena, and was featured in *Made in L.A.* 2012 and 2023 (as part of Los Angeles Contemporary Archive) at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Benzel has organized shows at Los Angeles Contemporary Archive, The MAK Center for Art and Architecture (Schindler House and Mackey House), Los Angeles, and Welcome Inn, Eagle Rock, CA, as part of Pacific Standard Time organized by The Getty Museum. He is a member of the faculty of the School of Art at California Institute of the Arts.

Image: Hailey Strbry Glz Orgone Blaster (detail), 2025, plastic, resin, resin coloring, metal shavings, copper, quartz crystal

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