

Phantasmagoria

Audio guide

Introduction

HENRY MOORE
INSTITUTE

Stop 1.

Welcome to *Phantasmagoria: Folkloric Sculpture for the Digital Age* at the Henry Moore Institute.

Hello, my name is Sean Ketteringham and I'm the curator of this exhibition.

There are in total 13 audio guide stops throughout the galleries, and each track lasts about four to six minutes.

Phantasmagoria brings together ten contemporary artists working across sculpture, installation, video, performance and gaming and they confront how digital technology is reshaping culture today. United by a distinctly sculptural sensibility, the artists share an interest in folklore, twisting traditional structures of storytelling and communal beliefs through digital processes ranging from AI manipulation to 3D printing.

In recent years, folktales, traditional customs and occult practices have returned with new cultural force, even as digital technologies increasingly shape how we see, communicate and imagine. The works presented here show that these tendencies are not opposed and instead reveal that folkloric themes and narrative structures are ever-present in the online and digital spaces that we inhabit daily.

The exhibition's title refers to a late 18th century form of theatrical spectacle in which projected light, smoke and mechanical devices were used to conjure ghostly apparitions.

Later, Karl Marx and Walter Benjamin used the term to describe the seductive illusions of commodity capitalism. Many of the artists in the exhibition are similarly attuned to the enchantments of contemporary technology and the forms of belief and fiction it generates.

Artworks by Nina Davies and Joey Holder, alongside Steph Linn and Philip Speakman engage with conspiracy theories and speculative futures. Sculpture by Isaac Lythgoe and Jürgen Baumann reflect on the collision of artifice, illusion, contemporary technology and mythology. Joe Moss and Most Dismal Swamp capture the chaotic nature of contemporary visual and information economies. Rustan Söderling and Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley turn to the animated natural world and the spectral power of ancestral knowledge.

By emphasising the sculptural qualities of these works, *Phantasmagoria* explores how digital experience changes our relationship with the world around us. Far from being immaterial, digital technologies – our devices and the server farms which support them – are a physical apparatus and have a vast impact on our wider material world. Sculpture is uniquely well-placed to help us understand such connectivity between our physical, virtual and digital realms.

As you entered the building, you may have seen a bold new artwork displayed on our building's black granite façade. This is *Cazimi* by Joey Holder. The work is a collective sigil conceived by Holder to bring together elements from each of the artists exhibited in *Phantasmagoria*. A cazimi is a celestial event that occurs when a planet appears to pass through the exact heart of the sun in direct motion: a rare alignment understood in astrology as a moment of exceptional clarity and grounded materialisation. The work was completed to mark the Mercury cazimi of 14 May 2026, at 23° Taurus, the moment of the exhibition's opening. Its three-part triptych structure is historically a devotional form recalling an altarpiece designed to

open a threshold between the viewer and a sacred or supernatural realm. Its surface emulates ancient stone suggesting a Mesopotamian tablet, votive object or alchemical diagram.

Please ask an Information Assistant for further details.

And please do not touch the works on display.

This is the end of Stop 1.

This is a transcript of an audio guide produced by Henry Moore Institute for the exhibition *Phantasmagoria*, on display from 15 May to 30 August 2026. For more information visit henry-moore.org/phantasmagoria