



The Sleep Paralysis Project

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While in REM sleep a sleeper's muscles are effectively paralysed to prevent them physically acting out their dreams. This usually ceases before the sleeper wakes. Sometimes, however, the process falls out of sync. A sleeper may become conscious while still in a state of paralysis, finding themselves awake and aware, but trapped in a sleeping body that will not respond to commands. This can be accompanied by hallucinations visual, auditory, tactile, even olfactory – often including a strong sense of a presence in the room. It's as if a door to the dream-state has been left open, and some elements are allowed to leak out into what feels like the 'real' world.

The Sleep Paralysis Project seeks to explore

and express the experience, cultural history and scientific background of sleep paralysis across film, live events and an online resource. The project was launched at London Short Film Festival in January, with an event at the Science Museum's Dana Centre, featuring short films and discussion with psychologist Professor Christopher French (Goldsmiths, University of London) and neuropsychologist and writer Dr Paul Broks among others. The project includes a short experimental animated film inspired by science documentary, 1920s surrealism, Hammer horror and musical theatre. The Sleep Paralysis Project is supported by a Wellcome Trust Arts Award. For more information go to: www.thesleepparalysisproject.org