

trip

the journal of psychedelic culture



Alex Grey

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Editorial

life in the first person

Nobody's life is perfect, not even mine.

Sure, I have a huge mansion in Beverly Hills, a fleet of designer sports cars, fancy clothes, beautiful women throwing themselves at me, and more money than I can ever burn in ten lifetimes. Whenever I get bored I can just hop in my Lear jet and go jam with Beck live in London, spin old disco records to a sold-out crowd at Eden in Ibiza, or just check out my up-river shaman peeps in the deep Amazon for a weekend of high-octane ayahuasca voyaging through the center of the universe. What could be missing?

Okay, so I made all that up. My life is far from glamorous; in fact, it's horrifyingly average. I have a modest home in Seattle, a wonderful wife who I've been with for twelve years now, a rambunctious two-year-old son who's the light of my life, two cars, two cats, a fireplace and a TV to curl up in front of on cold winter evenings. Most of the time I'm just Dad, a normal guy who changes diapers, cooks dinner, does the dishes and the laundry, fixes things around the house, and goes out to the park to climb on the jungle gym and play on the swings with my son. I don't have designer clothes; in fact, I've worn the same blue jeans and brown wool knit sweater for about five years now. From a distance I'm kind of boring, and in an age where "alternative lifestyles" are the going trend, we come close to being the most average American family you can find. All right, maybe with a few small exceptions.

So I publish a magazine on psychedelics, big deal. Does that make me public enemy number one? Not really, I just have unusual interests. Is it so odd that I seek out the occasional entheogenic experience so I can take a good, deep look at my life and see what's working, what needs work, and how my fate might unfold in the future? I don't think so, and in some ways I think I might even be lost without these moments of neuro-charged clarity. Does my experience with psychedelics make me a better person? I don't know. I hope it does, but there's really no way of telling. It's just who I am and what I find interesting, so I've made it an avocation.

But not every psychedelic experience is a walk in the park. In fact, the older I get, the farther away I get from that divine jewel of creation I discovered on my first LSD trips so long ago. Instead of allowing myself to just be awed by the wonder of this world, I now find myself mired in its mundane complexities, struggling with issues of what it means to be alive and human in this snake pit of a survival school we call planet Earth. For many years now my entheogenic voyages have become increasingly heavy. Not only do I grapple with the horrors of human suffering, runaway capitalism, and environmental decay — the normal gamut of social issues any thinking person might encounter — but lately I've also been burdened by the heavy weight of unresolved issues with my parents. This is, unfortunately, a trend which I don't see ending any time soon.

THE REALLY IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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About the cover:

This issue's cover is an original artwork, *Cosmic Christ*, 1999-2002, by **Alex Grey**.

At least the cat's out of the bag now and I can move onto a
whole new set of messy issues.

Correction:

In our last issue, we mistakenly stated that the Israeli army conducted massacres at Sabra and Shatila in 1982. In fact, these massacres were committed by Lebanese Christian militiamen, with the collusion of the Israeli army. Israeli defense minister Ariel Sharon was forced to resign over the event. *Trip* regrets the error.

My parents come from a conservative, Republican, law enforcement background. My father was a career FBI agent for 30 years, while my mother worked in a variety of public service jobs from senate clerk to Narcotics Enforcement agent, and ultimately became a Federal Marshall, personally appointed by George Bush, Sr. (how's that for a mind blower?). Until recently, my parents had no idea that I had ever even tried drugs — not to mention that I publish a special interest magazine about them — and most of my interaction with them involved deception and withholding of information about my life to protect them from the truth. You can imagine how such a bizarre family dynamic might color the tenor of some of my entheogenic experiences. Not only did I routinely battle the demon paranoia, but more often I struggled over the fact that I could never share my deepest interests with my own parents, I could never let them know who I really was, and that my whole relationship with them would be forever based on lies. Or would it?

After much tortured laboring over the pros and cons, I finally decided to come out to my folks. I could not live with the lies any longer, and since they have both been retired for a few years now, they had no official obligation to go all cop on me and bust my ass. I told them during a two-day family visit to my aunt and uncle's place last summer, and despite the awkwardness of the situation, it went down pretty smoothly. There were some tears, some anger, some high emotions, but mostly they just listened and tried to cope with the shock. They expressed disappointment and concern and tried to "educate" me with every line of drug-scare propaganda in the company handbook, but it ultimately came down to the fact that I was an adult now and this was something I had decided was important in my life. They could not stop me, punish me, or talk me out of it, so they could either support me or find some other way to deal with it, which they did.

Things have been touchy with my parents since that day. I don't think they can ever really understand why I feel the way I do about psychedelics, and to them it may always seem like I'm just "throwing my life away" on drugs, which is fine. That's the way they were conditioned and far be it for me to try and deprogram them. My mom has decided to take the safe path of sidestepping the issue of "why" I choose to do what I do and instead focuses all drug discussions on debating drug policy and legislation. She seems to think that I think I have all the answers to the world's drug problems, which I don't, but I let her try to pin me down on moral and legal issues anyway because it's the only frame of reference she has. Her biggest fear is not that I'll accidentally jack up my brain into a vegetative state — a legitimate fear, if somewhat unfounded — but that my family might be raided by stormtroopers who want to tear apart my house, take away my child, and lock me in an eight-by-five cell with a guy named Crusher who thinks a little rape and torture after lunch are a good way to blow off steam. My dad, on the other hand, has found a more elegant solution to the whole debate: He's simply stopped speaking to me. Is this a turn for the better in my life? Probably not, but at least the cat's out of the bag now and I can move onto a whole new set of messy issues. Who ever said life was easy?

So have psychedelics allowed me glimpses into states of higher consciousness and given me a deeper awareness of self and the universe? Undoubtedly. Has my life been forever changed by the things I've learned in my psychedelic experiences? Without question. Is my life better now because of the things I've learned on psychedelics? It's hard to say. The world is a damn complicated place, and more knowledge and understanding doesn't always mean more peace and happiness. Psychedelics are many things, but they are hardly a panacea for the human condition. They can illuminate and heal but they can also delude and traumatize, and the general lack of understanding about their power makes most people fear them like the plague. For better or worse, in choosing to walk the psychedelic path I now live on the outside of society, no matter how normal I may seem otherwise. A wise man once said that being enlightened in a sea of ignorance is not an easy place to be. In fact, it can be downright lonely.

— **James Kent, Publisher**

An Update from Rick Doblin

by James Kent

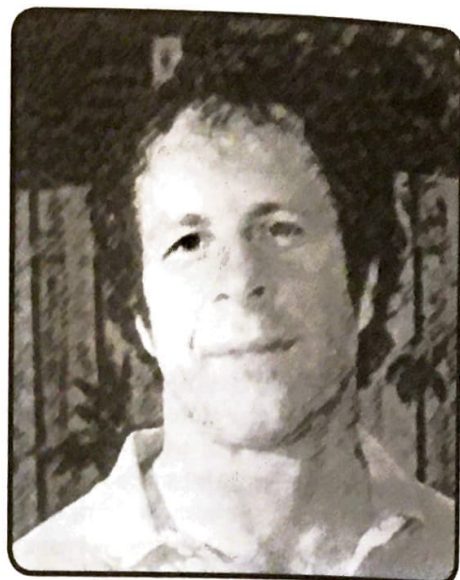
As part of an ongoing series of updates on the status of world psychedelic research, *Trip* talks to Rick Doblin, founder of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, about MDMA trials in America and the state of world psychedelic research.

Trip: So sixteen years of lobbying and banging your head against what seemed like a stone wall, then suddenly someone at the FDA listens and approves a study for MDMA in the treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). What finally persuaded them to approve this study?

Rick Doblin: The FDA concluded that the scientific data demonstrated that the potential benefits of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy outweighed the risks to the subjects in the study (patients who suffer from chronic PTSD and had failed to obtain relief from at least one prior treatment with an SSRI such as Zoloft or Paxil or Prozac). MAPS spent about \$80,000 on a review of virtually all the published, peer-reviewed scientific literature on MDMA¹, and provided the FDA with PDF copies of almost 800 scientific papers on MDMA.

As with most sudden changes, there were years of smaller changes laying the groundwork that enabled the FDA to base its decision on the scientific data. The most important change took place at the FDA in 1989 when the responsibility for the review of research with marijuana and psychedelic drugs was switched to a new experimental division called the Pilot Drug Evaluation Staff, under the direction of Dr. John Harter. Dr. Harter and senior FDA management established an FDA policy stating that Schedule 1 drugs could be researched in humans using the same rigorous standards used by the FDA to review all other drugs. What this policy basically did was to make clear that the FDA was prioritizing scientific analysis over drug war politics which viewed research into potential medical uses of Schedule 1 drugs as "sending the wrong message."

MAPS also obtained letters of support from Dr. Franz Vollenweider, U. of Zurich, who conducted PET research that found no evidence of significant reductions in serotonin reuptake sites after MDMA-naive subjects received a dose of MDMA in the therapeutic range, and Dr. Efi Gouzoulis-Mayfrank, U. of RWTH in Germany, who conducted some of the most well-controlled studies of the effects of Ecstasy on memory function, which



found no significant effects on

memory in infrequent Ecstasy users who had taken more MDMA than the PTSD subjects will receive.

Can you briefly give us the scope of this study?

The protocol² is designed as a double-blind, placebo-controlled study that involves twenty subjects, twelve in the MDMA group and eight in the control group. The twelve subjects in the experimental group will receive non-drug preparatory psychotherapy, two day-long experimental sessions scheduled three to five weeks apart, during which 125mg of MDMA will be administered orally, and non-drug integrative psychotherapy sessions. The eight control subjects will receive the same course of treatment except they will be administered an inactive placebo instead of the MDMA during the two experimental sessions. Patients will be evaluated for several months after the last experimental session.

The study is taking place in Charleston, South Carolina, under the direction of Dr. Michael Mithoefer, a board-certified psychiatrist. The male/female co-therapist team will consist of Dr. Mithoefer and Annie Mithoefer, RN, both of whom are certified Grof Holotropic Breathwork practitioners. Independent patient screening and evaluation will take place under the direction of Mark Wagner, Ph.D., who will not know which patients received the MDMA and which the placebo.

We've submitted an application to the FDA to switch the location of the treatment sessions from a hospital setting to Dr. Mithoefer's clinic, which will be a more therapeutic environment and is where all the non-drug preparatory and integration sessions will take place. As part of our proposal to the FDA, we've proposed a series of safety precautions that will essentially enable the clinic to function as an emergency room if there are any serious adverse effects, including the hiring of an ER nurse to sit outside the treatment room. If the

FDA says yes, we celebrate. If the FDA says no, we will just move forward with conducting the study inside a hospital. Either way, we expect to begin the study early this summer.

Is this an isolated study or is the field opening up again?

The field is definitely opening up again, though slowly. In addition to the MDMA/PTSD study, the FDA has approved one other study of the therapeutic use of a psychedelic drug. That study³ investigates the use of psilocybin in the treatment of patients with Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder (OCD). This study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Francisco Moreno, U. of Arizona, Tucson.

One element in the opening up of psychedelic research has to do with the struggle for the medical use of marijuana. The government position against the medical use of marijuana has been that more research needs to be conducted to determine marijuana's safety and efficacy. This rhetoric insulates the FDA from possible pressure from the DEA and the Office of National Drug Control Policy to block both medical marijuana and psychedelic research.

As for the future, protocols for LSD and psilocybin in the treatment of anxiety, depression and pain in cancer patients have been submitted to the FDA, though none of these have yet been approved. MAPS is in the early stages of developing a protocol for MDMA in the psychological treatment of hospice patients.

What about the world outlook? Is it up to the U.S. to open the doors in this area or are there countries out there looking into clinical psychedelic research on their own?

The U.S. has been a follower, not a leader, in opening the door to psychedelic psychotherapy.

In February 2000, the Spanish Ministry of Health approved a MAPS-funded, double-blind, placebo-controlled dose-response study of the use of MDMA in the treatment of PTSD⁴. This was the first government-approved study of the therapeutic use of MDMA. Six patients have been treated so far, out of a total needed of 29. Patient recruitment has been much slower than anticipated but the study is moving forward. For over ten years research into the therapeutic use of ketamine-assisted psychotherapy in the treatment of alcoholism and heroin addiction has been underway in St. Petersburg, Russia, under the direction of Dr. Evgeny Krupitsky⁵. The Swiss government had, from 1988-1993, approved a small group of psychiatrists to administer LSD and MDMA to their patients, but no formal research was conducted and the permission was withdrawn. Nine years later, Dr. Franz Vollenweider, U. of Zurich, is moving forward with efforts to obtain

permission to study the use of psilocybin-assisted psychotherapy in patients with eating disorders. Dr. Torsten Passie, Medical School Hannover, Germany, is preparing to conduct psilocybin psychotherapy research. He has recently obtained approval for a preliminary study administering psilocybin to 12 healthy physicians. In St. Kitts, Dr. Deborah Mash is administering ibogaine to help treat addiction in a quasi-research setting⁶. In Peru, Dr. Jacques Mabit is studying the use of ayahuasca within a shamanistic context for the treatment of addiction.

If we are fortunate, perhaps the U.S. desire for global leadership will help enable us to win the race to be the first country to approve the medical use of psychedelic psychotherapy!

If all goes well what's next?

After the U.S. MDMA/PTSD study is approved, I will immediately go to Israel to try to start the MDMA/PTSD study there. This study will include patients with PTSD as a result of war and terrorism. The Spain, U.S. and Israeli pilot studies are all part of a five million dollar, five year plan to develop MDMA into a prescription medicine for PTSD⁷. This is the larger context in which to understand all of MAPS' MDMA efforts.

Once the U.S. MDMA/PTSD study is underway, MAPS will work more actively to start some clinical research with LSD. At this point in time, there isn't a single study anywhere in the world in which LSD is being given legally to human subjects. MAPS will also start to broaden the types of psychedelic research that can be conducted and will develop a protocol to submit to the FDA that will investigate the use of psilocybin or mescaline in facilitating creativity. We need to move beyond just studying psychedelics for medical uses and focus also on psychedelics as tools to understand and perhaps enhance basic human functioning.

Footnotes available at <http://tripzine.com/articles.asp?id=doblinnotes>



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The Drug Policy Reform Project:

A Visit with ACLU Washington

interview by Scott

The American Civil Liberties Union has been a vocal opponent of the criminalization of drugs since 1968. The renowned organization works at both a national level and a state level via affiliates in every state of the union (North and South Dakota share an affiliate office; California has three affiliates). But a little over a year ago, the Washington state affiliate became the first state affiliate to start its own distinct Drug Policy Reform Project. We spoke with Andrew Ko, the first Project Director, at the Washington affiliate's office in Seattle, to find out more about the Project's activities.

Trip: Let's start by having you give us a broad overview of the Drug Policy Reform Project.

Andrew Ko: The ACLU recognized that the drug war has led to an incredible range of civil liberties violations – for instance, violations of the search and seizure provisions of the constitution, as well as the idea that locking people up for using drugs and no other reason is a pretty substantial civil liberties violation in and of itself. It's almost the reverse of *Roe v. Wade*, the idea that you could be told by the government that you cannot put something *into* your body, that you can't think certain thoughts, that you can't make yourself feel a certain way – that's a pretty substantial civil liberties limitation as far as we're concerned.

So a number of years ago, the national office decided to do something about it, and they started the Drug Policy Litigation Project, headed by Graham Boyd in the national office, and based in Connecticut. The Washington affiliate, thanks to the leadership of Kathleen Taylor and some of the other senior staff here, decided that we wanted to have our own project to address some of these issues on the local level, which is a strategy that's being used by a number of other national organizations, such as the Drug Policy Alliance (formerly known as the Lindesmith Center). They've really realized that it's the people on the ground who are going to change this. It's the people locally who are seeing their children being locked up, their particulars being kicked in, their people being killed, members of their communities being swept up in buy-bust arrests and that type of thing. They realized that they had to do it on the local level, and that's really what we're aiming at.

What were you doing before you became director of this project?

Prior to this, I was at Columbia Legal Services in the Everett office. I did housing, public benefits,

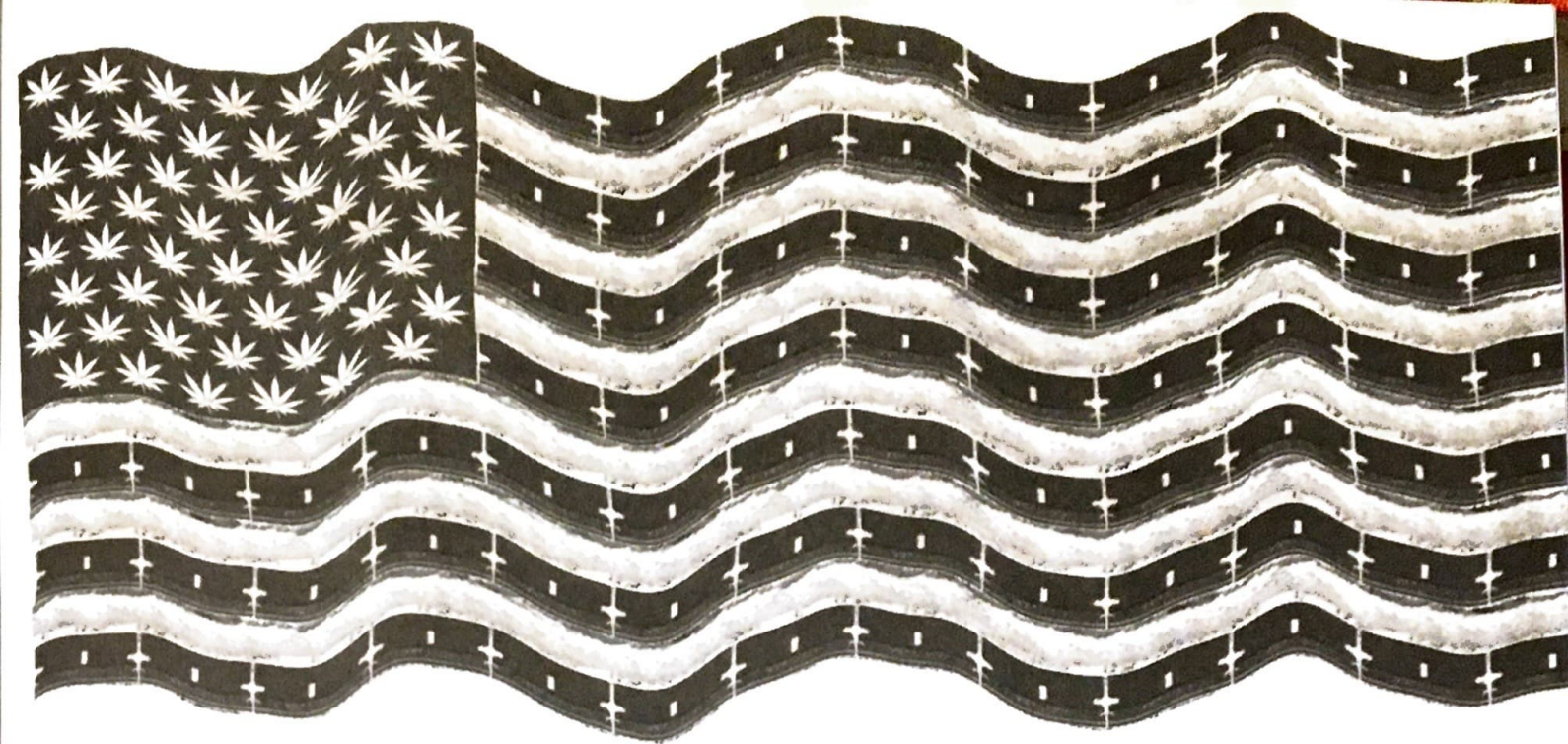
homelessness, the slew of poverty law work. Prior to that I was at the Employees' Society of New York for eighteen years, right after law school. I was working with the Homeless Family Rights Project there. It was interesting – drug policy was something that was always in the background. It's in the background for any legal services attorney, because basically American drug policy exacerbates every aspect of poverty in this country. It doesn't help anybody, it only hurts. That's one reason why we started a specific Drug Policy Reform Project. Almost every issue that we were working on prior to my coming and prior to the Project being created had a component that was linked to the drug war. And more and more of the work of the senior staff here was being committed toward drug war issues. They realized they needed one person to coordinate it all and take on a lot of that work.

Is this project funded through the national office, or do you get funding locally?

Originally we had money from the Soros Open Society Institute, which was also a funder of the Lindesmith Center. That was our first year. We're applying for other funding, and there's been a certain amount of ACLU money and Washington money as well.

Do you collaborate much on tactics with other groups?

We actually work quite closely with a number of other organizations. Nationally we speak with the Drug Policy Alliance, the Marijuana Policy Project, NORML, DanceSafe, and other organizations. Locally we've had quite a bit of contact with the King County Bar Association, which is working specifically on this issue as well, because they recognize the same way that we did that there are some huge civil liberties implications as well as policy implications. The ACLU can in a sense be described as an absolutist organization, whereas the Bar Association might agree on some of our issues, but they're more looking at the legal policy and the



implications of the policy of the drug war. There are a number of other groups and individuals that are interested in this issue. Many of the local politicians and elected officials, especially in this area but also throughout the state, are very interested in this issue.

There are other organizations that we have periodic contact with – the November Coalition, for instance, and Sensible Seattle which is sponsoring one of the marijuana enforcement reform initiatives this year. The Libertarian Party, which I had never had any contacts with before, is wonderful on drug issues; they're very principled and active, and they've really been going after the forfeiture law in this state, which is incredibly unfair and counterproductive. We have ongoing contact with DanceSafe Seattle, which is one of the more active DanceSafe chapters; they're not being supported by local law enforcement, they're being stigmatized, but that's turning around right now. It's a growing array of people, and it's incredibly diverse. This particular issue, the drug war issue, brings together people who on other issues have nothing to say to each other. They suddenly find themselves cooperating to bring this atrocity down, which is heartening.

Can you describe the King Country Bar Association report for us?

This was a nearly year long process that brought together a lot of lawyers, but a lot of people who weren't lawyers as well – reformists who had been involved in other issues, whether it was poverty or individual rights or reform of the criminal justice system, a number of academics, a number of law enforcement people, a whole host of people. There were four main task forces that were set up. Three of them have completed their

reports at this point, and they've been compiled in a report that's available at http://www.kcba.org/drug_law/druglaw_index.htm. The three that have reported are the Task Force on Drug Addiction Treatment, the Task Force on Effective Drug Abuse Prevention, and the Task Force on the Use of Criminal Sanctions. The Task Force on Racial and Class Disparities has yet to report.

Let me start with the Prevention task force. One of their central conclusions was that to have an effective drug prevention policy, it has to be targeted at young people essentially. Most people have developed their ideas about drugs at a certain point, and as you get older you're much less likely to develop drug problems; it's really people who start early that have the biggest problems later on. The other broad conclusion that they reached was that it has to be a truth-based program. You can't scare or intimidate people out of using drugs. If you give people misinformation – as in the old Aesop's fable of the boy who cried wolf – and they find out that you've lied to them, they don't believe anything that you say. And that's fairly dangerous, especially when you're giving true information. Some drugs, if used wrong, can be very dangerous. And if someone's going to use them anyway, for whatever reason, whether they're self-medicating or whether it's experiential, whatever it happens to be, if they use them wrong, they can die. Unfortunately people who view this as a moral issue, more in the sense that “drugs are evil, are un-Christian or un-Jewish or un-Muslim” or whatever, a lot of them don't seem to be too concerned about whether people are getting hurt or not. So that's another issue for prevention.

The main conclusion with the Treatment task force is

that treatment works, whether it's coerced treatment or voluntary treatment. The other main conclusion that they reached is that there's not enough treatment. I think in this county, the statistic is one in five people who want treatment can get it. Why we're locking up people with this idea that we're helping them by locking them up when we're not providing them treatment, when we have so many people who want treatment and can't get it, why we do that is sort of beyond me. No one's given me a good answer to that, and I don't think they really have answers for that.

The Criminal Sanctions task force actually had in some respects a very delicate question that they were addressing, with all kinds of political sides to it. Most people can agree about educating young people about drugs to help them make their decisions and do the best they can in that area. Most people agree that if treatment is something someone wants and really needs it should be available. But when you get to the criminal sanctions, we have been, at this point anyway, locking up people for so long that most people can't remember a time before we were locking people up, even though it wasn't *that* long ago. But it's a very touchy subject. And the main question for the task force was, do criminal sanctions work to prevent drug abuse and the societal problems that drugs cause? The conclusion was no, that there has not been any significant positive impact from the criminalization of drugs, or the incarceration of people who use drugs or even deal drugs, and that there are a number of identifiable harms that come out of the criminalization aspects of the drug war.

Two criticisms have come from certain quarters. One is a factually incorrect criticism that the Sanctions committee at that point was suggesting that we decriminalize drugs. There was no such suggestion; at least, that wasn't the thrust of the report. Another criticism is that it didn't provide any alternatives, and that's actually a fair criticism, but it's a criticism that is premature because it wasn't meant to. The phase in which we were going to look at potential options for dealing with drugs from a regulatory, governmental approach, was coming later, and is actually a process that's about to start.

How involved was the ACLU in supporting the passage of Initiative 192, Washington state's Medical Use of Marijuana Act?

We were involved in some of that process. That was, of course, before my time, that was '98. That's something that we continue to work on.

You negotiated with the Seattle Police Department to determine how many plants a person could legally grow under that Act.

Well, we attempted to. The "60 day supply" is what the term is. The 60 day supply is meant to be flexible.

You have different sized people, you have people with different illnesses. you have people with different tolerances, and you need it to be flexible on that level. Unfortunately, the people who determine at first what a 60 day supply is are police officers and prosecutors, aside from the patients themselves of course. The problem is that police officers and prosecutors are still treating medicinal marijuana as if it's illegal. In this state, it's not illegal. So they still have the mindset that it's their job to minimize this particular medication for people who are using it legally. It's as if a doctor were to prescribe penicillin to you for an illness, and a police officer came up to your door and said, "Your prescription's a little high. You should take a little less. I'm going to take half of what you bought at the pharmacy today." And they lock you up, of course, so it's an absurd way for us to be going about that.

So you made a recommendation to the Seattle Police Department about what the 60 day supply should be.

And they did not take our recommendation. Nine plants is what they determined. Our suggestion was substantially larger. With medicinal marijuana, the point of the initiative is to make sure that people who could benefit from using cannabis as a medicine would have access to it and wouldn't be locked up. The flip side of that is to make sure that no one else has access to the medicine, like any other prescription medicine. My view is that the 60 day supply should be extremely liberal. Now if there's some indication that you're giving your medicine to other people, it's law enforcement's duty to put a stop to that. But the idea that they could be limiting the amount of medicine that a particular person could have on hand makes no sense, it's unnecessary, and it's something that we'll be talking about over the next year or so and trying to fix.

With regard to reducing sentencing, I noticed on your web site a reference to something called "triple scoring." Can you explain what that means?

This is a reference to a bill that in its present form is in the legislature right now. A lot of the idea for this came out of the California initiative, Prop. 36, which is the treatment instead of incarceration initiative. This bill has gone through the Washington legislature a number of sessions. The most recent one, the one that's actually active right now and is still under consideration, is House Bill 2338. The main features of the bill are getting rid of triple scoring, and bringing a certain number of offenses that are at level eight down to level seven; that reduces the base sentence a certain amount, and it also has a certain symbolic value. The State of Washington Sentencing Guidelines Commission was reviewing the range of sentences, trying to determine what's fair and what's not, what's working and what's not, and nonviolent crimes (property crimes) and drug crimes were the two areas they looked at the closest. What

they decided made sense was to take drug offenses directly out of the current sentencing grid and make it a separate grid, to find some way to make things a little more rational in terms of the length of sentences and what is being punished more strictly than other sentences. The House bill passed in a big way, 72 to 25, passed, in a fairly bipartisan vote as well, and now it's in the Senate Ways & Means Committee, held up there for political reasons unfortunately – but if it gets out of Ways & Means and gets to the Rules Committee and goes to a floor vote, there's every indication that it will win as big as it did in the House. It's just a question of the politics. So the Sentencing Guidelines Commission drug grid would kick in July 2004, and I anticipate there will be an enormous amount of debate over whether these are too high or too low, whether they should exist at all, and I think that'll be very helpful at this level.

One of the big provisions of the bill is the removal of triple scoring for everything except methamphetamine manufacture. Triple scoring is a little bit complicated. The drug grid has a vertical axis that shows what type of

offense it happens to be. So something like marijuana possession is way down at the bottom of the grid, as compared to methamphetamine manufacture which is higher up. As you go up the vertical axis, you have greater and greater base penalties for certain offenses. But you also can increase your sentence by going along the horizontal axis, which is the offender score. So for instance, my score can go up if I have a prior assault charge or some other type of offense. I can have an additional score of one or two or three depending on what type of offense it is, and that brings me farther along the sentencing grid which also increases my sentence. So for drug offenders, for someone who might have a very serious heroin addiction for which they've never gotten any sort of treatment or counseling, they may have a number of possession or delivery charges – a lot of petty delivery charges are really being done by people who are just trying to support their own addiction. These people characteristically do have a number of prior convictions. All of those under the current system are scored not at one increased offender score level; they're at three. So I jump not to the next level for increased sentence, I jump three levels.

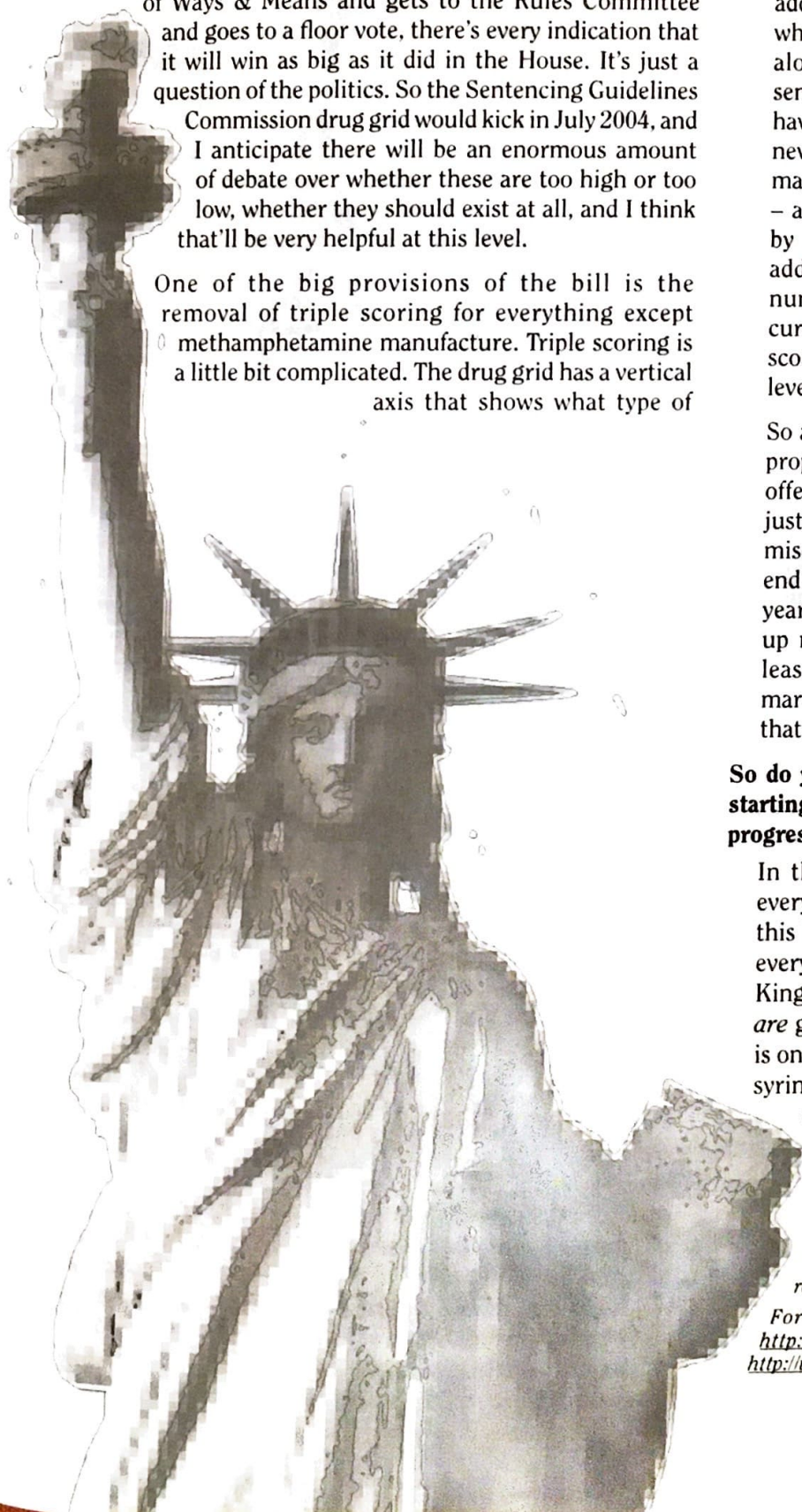
So as opposed to a number of other violent offenses or property offenses which are only single scored, for drug offenses where you've hurt *nobody*, basically you're just living your own life – sometimes it may be a very miserable life, but you're living your own life – you can end up with an incredible sentence... 8 years, 9 years, 10 years if you have a prior offense, and that can build up rather quickly. So removing the triple scoring at least gives somebody a little bit more time as they march down that grid to check out treatment and cut that cycle off.

So do you get a sense that with this kind of legislation starting to take effect, you're actually seeing significant progress toward affecting drug policy?

In this particular building, you could probably get everyone to agree what the drug policy should be for this building. Expand it to Seattle, you might still get everyone to agree what it should be for Seattle. Maybe King County. When you get to the state level, people *are* getting the message. Reduction of drug sentencing is one issue that they're working on, provision of sterile syringes through pharmacies is another. Fewer things are happening at the national level. In terms of the local and the state level, though, I think things actually *are* happening.

Update: After this interview was conducted, the sentencing reform bill passed the Washington state Senate, 36-11.

For more information, visit the ACLU's web site at <http://www.aclu.org>, or visit the Washington affiliate's site at <http://www.aclu-wa.org>.



On The War On Drugs:

A Conversation with Stanley Krippner, Peter Nelson, and Adam Fish

Stanley Krippner, Ph.D., Alan W. Watts Professor of Psychology at Saybrook Graduate School, San Francisco, is a Fellow in three APA divisions, and former president of two divisions (30 and 32). Formerly, he was director of the Kent State University Child Study Center, Kent, OH, and the Maimonides Medical Center Dream Research Laboratory, Brooklyn, NY. He is co-author of *Extraordinary Dreams* and *The Mythic Path*, and co-editor of *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence*, *Broken Images*, *Broken Selves* and *The Psychological Effects of War on Civilians: An International Perspective*. He is a member of the editorial board for the *Journal of Indian Psychology* and *Revista Argentina de Psicología Paranormal*, and the advisory board for the International School for Psychotherapy, Counseling, and Group Leadership (St. Petersburg) and the Czech Unitaria (Prague). He holds faculty appointments at the Universidade Holística Internacional (Brasilia) and the Instituto de Medicina y Tecnología Avanzada de la Conducta (Ciudad Juarez), and is a Fellow of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Peter Nelson started his scientific career with the study of action potentials in the giant axons of squid, moving

to psychophysiological studies of the human brain with particular regard to the process of consciousness, arousal and higher-order information processing. As a result of his Buddhist practice and a series of profound spiritual experiences, Dr. Nelson became a psycho-phenomenologist and went on to study religious and altered state experiences. His primary areas of interest are now consciousness studies and personality theory. In the former he has developed a statistically derived multi-dimensional psycho-phenomenological methodology for mapping spontaneous mystical, visionary and remote perception experiences in a non-reductive manner. His published thoughts and research can be found in various books, international journals and electronic databases.

Adam Fish is a Nowist and cognitive archaeologist from the Pacific Northwest. He was the 2001 Alchemind Society Summer Fellow and has constructed a survey that seeks to illuminate the role of entheogens in the artistic process, which will be available at Alchemind.org. He has volunteered for Students for Sensible Drug Policy and DanceSafe, has published on the subject of sacred sites, rites of passage, and dreams, and now writes and edits for *Earth! First*.

Trip: How would you define the drug war?

Stanley Krippner: The term "drug war" dates back to a statement made by Richard Nixon in 1968. In this electioneering speech, he asserted that the major problem faced by the United States was the use of narcotics, and that the country must wage war against these drugs. Little use was made of this rhetoric until Nancy Reagan's 1984 admonition, "Just Say No to Drugs," became a political weapon in her husband's re-election campaign. By 2001, the war on drugs had become an industry exceeding \$500 billion, and that figure does not include the transactions involved in the actual buying and selling of drugs. I could have supported a war on addiction, which is quite another

matter if it is fought with treatment, not punishment. But like the war on poverty and the war on drugs, this too would be a struggle with no victory. Poverty, addictions, and other social ills are simply part of the human condition; insofar as addiction to both legal and illegal drugs is concerned, "harm reduction" is the best we are capable of attaining.

The war on drugs has never been explicitly defined. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-690) contains the statement, "It is the declared policy of the United States government to create a Drug-Free America by 1995." An ancient Chinese treatise, *The Art of War*, written some 500 years B.C.E., offers the axiom, "Never start a war that you can not win." U.S.



policy-makers should have read this manual before they set that target date.

Adam Fish: Like other wars, both at home and abroad, the drug war is responsible for a military buildup, civilian casualties, an immense economic expense, polemic propoganda, the stifling of personal privacy, the federal takeover of property, and thousands of fatalities, many of them civilian. However, this war is directed primarily at U.S. citizens. When not spraying Roundup or other herbicides on crops and civilians in Colombia, destabilizing legitimate governments through military coups, or awarding human rights abusers millions of dollars for "crop eradication," the drug war is aimed against American citizens. The "war" is actually stealing the rights of citizenship. People who do nothing more than occasionally enter an alternative state of consciousness (an act akin to reading a good book) should not have loaded guns pointed at them as they are herded into police wagons.

Besides brutalizing nature, native people and their religions, your friends who enjoy dancing all night to house music, or your neighbors who grow a few cannabis stalks in their basement, the drug war enacts a subtle, pervasive war on the freedom – and the minds – of responsible U.S. citizens. This drug war has created the 51st State of the Union. With 400,000 people in U.S. jails for "drug crimes," this State, consisting primarily of young men of color, nearly has the same population as Wyoming. However, its inhabitants have no representation and are disenfranchised.

Peter Nelson: The drug war is actually a war on the underclass. When I co-wrote the marijuana white paper for the Queensland government in Australia, our research clearly indicated that the greatest number of busts per number of users per class were conducted against those in the low-income demographic groups. I'm sure this is similar in the U.S., but to the discriminating factor of income, add race.

I also see the drug war as a continuing manifestation of American paranoid hysteria that appears to be a part of our culture (perhaps arising from many of our founders being members of fundamentalist religious groups). Earlier examples of this sort of behavior can be seen in the Salem witch killings and the communist witch hunts of the 1950s.

How have you fought the drug war? Can this "war" be won?

SK: While working in New York City, I was a member of Right-A-Wrong, an organization set up by a wealthy business executive to change the drug laws. He thought it would take three years, and that was three decades ago. I spoke at benefit concerts, at meetings with New York state legislators, at colleges and universities, and even at churches. At one church gathering, I was the only Right-A-Wrong member on a five-person panel. During the question period, one astute youth observed that I was the only panel member who had not been smoking cigarettes during the discussion, and asked if tobacco should be considered a drug. I was the only panel member who answered affirmatively. After the

demise of Right-A-Wrong, I joined the Marijuana Policy Project and the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. These organizations try to bring some sanity to the drug scene.

AF: In discussing the drug war, remember that nothing is clearly dualistic. Nothing is completely good or evil, won or lost. That is the rhetoric used by the Drug Enforcement Agency, the National Institute of Drug Abuse, the Partnership for a Drug Free America, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), and other fundamentalists throughout the world. From a metaphysical perspective, I believe that this is an archetypal battle. It is a confrontation of those who choose to exploit the power inherent in the control of a population against those who assert liberty and demand the full rights of the mind, who value the right to responsibly exercise choice, and who extract something useful from alternative states of mind. In every society, there will be those who dedicate their efforts to asserting rights and freedoms customarily denied. The Puritan witch hunts, the harassment of women suffrage activists, the persecution of labor organizers, and the stalking of civil rights and anti-war activists are all examples of policies set by big government, big business, and big religion that attempted to stifle cultural and cognitive dissidents. The struggle continues.

Every human society has included a sizable percentage of people who have used drugs.

Through informing the media, the public, and lawmakers, my colleagues in the cognitive liberty movement and I hope to reform drug laws so that they are more compassionate, require less bureaucracy, and have fewer racist, sexist, classist, and mortal consequences. Our group consists of physicians, writers, social workers, lawyers, theologians, artists, professors, police officers, and parents. We use all the skills we are able to muster collectively in our fight for justice. I think we are making some progress. Nine states in the U.S. and several countries abroad now have provisions for the use of medical marijuana. Most major periodicals and television channels have featured articles and programs about the "failure of the drug war." A growing proportion of the American public is tired of having its young people locked up in detention centers, and seeing its prisons filled with non-violent ethnic minorities. Ironically, it is members of the DARE generation, the target of the "Just Say No" invective, who have invigorated the campaign to end the drug war. Organizations like the

Students for Sensible Drug Policy are an inspiration for this group.

Considering the role that entheogenic herbs and fungi have played in human evolution, the drug war seems not only poorly conceived but also ill-advised in its attempts to reach an impossible goal. Dr. Andrew Weil, in his classic text, *The Natural Mind*, takes the position that alternative states of consciousness are necessary for the maintenance of mental health. Every organism requires novelty, and responsible drug use has been a safe, effective way of meeting these needs over the millennia. Drugs are part of our diet.

SK: Every human society has included a sizable percentage of people who have used drugs in the search for health, spiritual experience, or for entertainment. I wear a T-shirt emblazoned with the words, "Just Say Know." This should have been the slogan decades ago, and the initial dedication should have been for information about both the pleasures and the hazards of drug use. The most important audience for information is school children, and they need to know the facts about drugs, both legal and illegal, and why people use them. They are of an age when peer pressure is strong; if DARE and similar programs present information which is obviously biased, students will pick up on hypocrisy and may reject even the valid material being offered.

PN: Since it is not really a war, but an attempt by the government to oppress a group within its own boundaries, this so-called war cannot be won. Mind-altering drug use is connected to individual and social needs that will not, in the long run, respond to suppression. I have never fought against drug use because it is futile, considering the power of the fundamental appetitive drives represented by drug use. Anyone who has dealt with a family member who is using drugs knows that the true drug war is an inner one and until the players on the inner battlefield negotiate a truce, there is no end to the fight.

According to The Alchemind Society, "The essence of the War on Drugs is not a battle against pills and powders, but a battle against the mental states that such substances can elicit." In this light, why do you think the mental states elicited by drugs like MDMA, LSD, psilocybin, and marijuana are demonized to a greater extent than those elicited by drugs like alcohol?

AF: As Dr. Krippner has explained, Nixon-era prohibition was directed not only at the perceived health threats of drugs but also against the cultures that use drugs. Psychedelics, LSD and cannabis in particular, were seen by the state as instigating and activating the anti-war movement. The drug war is one convenient way to target a minority subculture for persecution and extermination.

And they are right! The U.S. government should be fearful of psychedelics. An informed society makes wise policies. By evincing pleasures beyond material commodities, and insights more potent than those given on the nightly news, psychedelics influence individuals to seriously question mainstream "Americanism." Both explicitly and latently, psychedelics instigate, in those who consume the drug with intention and awareness, personal and communal revolution. Psychedelics agitate "pedestrian conformity," to quote Wrye Sententia. It is my belief, shared by Tim Leary, Douglas Rushkoff, and many others, that profound shifts in collective ideology have been partnered with chemical allies over the millennia. LSD was crucial in the reorganizing of American morality that occurred in the late 1960s, just as MDMA has been essential for preparing the younger generations for the technological/information era of the coming century.

What I am interested in right now is recognizing and helping to bring into fluorescence all the factors that will instigate a change away from the current dominant paradigm of "commodity fetishism," to quote Terence McKenna. We will need philosophers to write books, architects to build intentional communities, horticulturalists to plant sustainable crops, and psychotechnicians to invent novel entheogenic molecules.

Your question reminds me of the Gary Snyder poem, *On the North Slope*. Snyder writes about being at a bar in northern Alaska, commenting on the oil-workers who are getting incoherently drunk. His last lamenting words are "the pain of wrecking the world." So many of the jobs the current economy creates also create sad, depressed people. Alcohol, benzodiazepines (Valium, etc.), and selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (Prozac, etc.), like Soma in Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, allow their users, for a brief soporific moment, to forget about their meaningless and unfulfilling occupations. These drugs make it possible to file into the factory and stomach the office cubicle. Likewise, nicotine and caffeine allow the worker to work harder and longer doing monotonous, trivial acts. This is good for the economy, but particularly hazardous for the family. According to one estimate, 27% of violent felons were drunk when arrested, while 3% were loaded on cocaine. The number of violent crimes committed under the influence of cannabis, psychedelics, and MDMA is minuscule. Nevertheless, the peaceful possession or use of these drugs is enough for someone to earn a lengthy jail sentence.

PN: Just look at the personalities of those who see this as a war against the ingestion of illegal substances. They are fundamentalists and you should recall that fundamentalism is an attempt to preserve a notion of

who we are according to some mythical past. The more brittle the personality, the more desperately that story is clung to and preserved (and the more intensely are non-traditional drug users demonized). For some, but not all of these fundamentalists, alcohol is a part of that mythic image of who we are and what we are allowed to do. The illegal psychotropic substances listed in your question are not merely powerful disinhibitors like alcohol, they are epistemic dam-busters that facilitate the penetration of our fundamental myths and the creation of new (but not always useful) stories of who and what we really are.

The vilifying of a biochemical is like believing that synthetic plant fertilizer is the work of the devil.

What are your thoughts on the place of psychedelic drugs in the field of psychology?

SK: I saw the potential of psychedelics when I first read Gordon Wasson's article about psilocybin mushrooms in *Life* magazine back in the 1950s. Later, I volunteered for the psilocybin experiments being carried out by Timothy Leary and his group at Harvard University, and a session was arranged for me in 1962. Even though Leary was a good friend of mine, I felt that he botched the opportunity that Harvard offered him. As a result, the restrictions on psychedelic research in the U.S. are so stringent that it is difficult for innovative work to be done. There is a dribble of data available from past and current investigations of the role of psychedelics in psychotherapy, especially those that have an entheogenic or spiritual effect. However, I believe that psychedelics are too unpredictable to play an important role in psychotherapy, and that their major contributions will be in understanding the psychoneurological dimensions of creative behavior and novel thought process. From an anthropological perspective, the function of psychedelics in the development of myth and ritual is an exciting field of study.

PN: Depending on the drug, there are many potential uses ranging from the facilitation of depth psychotherapy to helping to create rites of passage and initiation. These drugs, in properly controlled conditions, offer the possibility of rediscovering who we are as seen from previously unavailable perspectives. Leary's early work with hardcore recidivists at Concord State Prison and Pahnke's Good Friday experiment and work with terminal cancer patients all point to great possibilities for the positive use of psychedelic drugs.

It is my theory that ending the drug war is one of the first and most necessary steps to the facilitation of the evolution of consciousness on earth. What connections do you make between ending the drug war and the evolution of consciousness?

AF: I agree with your theory. Vegetable and floral allies can help people attain oceanic states and broaden the scope of what they know much in the same way that travel, a Tantric experience, an anthropology course, or a good book might do so. I believe that entheogens are an integral tool in bringing about more ecological, sacred, and communal experiences. The drug war cannot end the evolution of consciousness, if such a notion can even be conceived. Direct numinous experiences, dionysically or privately performed, will continue to flourish. If need be, they will be done in secret; indeed, with the exception of raves, these consciousness-altering experiences have gone underground in the U.S. I hope that this prohibition is only temporary.

The movement to end the drug war, what I like to call the New Peace movement, has demanded the energies and efforts of many intelligent and creative individuals

The war on drugs has become a conflict with the U.S. Bill of Rights.

who have formulated networks and consortiums in order to end this immoral war. If reaching higher states of consciousness involves a deeper degree of interpersonal information-sharing, then the New Peace Movement is manifesting these higher principles.

SK: My friend Terence McKenna proposed that the use of psychedelics by early humans was responsible for the rapid jump in cognitive skills that many anthropologists have written about. During my visit to the Lascaux Cave in southern France in 1997, I was struck by the raw power of the colorful paintings of wild horses, antlered reindeer, and massive bison. The early humans who executed these marvels some 17,000 years ago used negative space to create perspective, a technique not seen again in Europe until the 16th century. The cave's surface brings three-dimensionality to the paintings; a naturally formed hole provides the eye for one animal, and a bulging rock becomes the shoulder of another. There are even earlier examples of cave paintings, especially in Australia and southern Africa. Steven Mithen's excellent 1996 book, *The Prehistory of the Mind*, attributes this skill to the rather sudden

linkage of four specialized cognitive domains: technical intelligence, social intelligence, natural history intelligence, and language. Nowhere does Mithen, or most other contemporary writers on the topic, suggest that psychedelics played a role in this evolution. Frankly, I am open to the idea, but am waiting for a solid neuropsychological explanation of how psychedelic cacti, mushrooms, and other plants could have altered brain structure, and how these changes could have been passed down to succeeding generations through the DNA.

For me, the ending of the drug war would be an example of the evolution of human rationality and compassion, similar to the ending of human sacrifice, the abolition of slavery in the U.S., and the expansion of suffrage to American women and its ethnic minorities. This evolution of consciousness took place as a result of social, political, and economic changes, not because there was a change in the DNA. I think that physical evolution has gone about as far as it will go, barring a planet-wide catastrophe that will grant survival to those who have the right type of constitution to endure the effects of radioactivity, biological warfare, or natural disasters.

PN: I don't believe that ending the drug war will facilitate the evolution of consciousness. This notion itself is faulty and is most likely the product of the hybridized pseudo-spiritual belief systems that are the bastard children of misconstrued Indian thought and various New Age fantasies. If consciousness is evolving, then it will continue to do so with or without the use of psychedelic drugs. However, these substances may be useful facilitators and, in any case, the vilifying of a biochemical is like believing that synthetic plant fertilizer is the work of the devil.

What are your thoughts about the current war on terrorism as it relates to the war on drugs?

PN: Again, whenever one attempts to suppress something that has deep and powerful psychological and cultural roots that are directly related to survival and self-worth, the task is futile. Unless you're prepared to sterilize whole countries with thermonuclear devices, the beliefs, drives and behaviors that comprise terrorists' worldviews will not disappear (and maybe not even then). As with the drug war, a more creative solution that recognizes and respects individual and cultural differences is required (too long a topic for here). However, I do believe that those people and organizations who perpetrated the horror committed against the people at the WTC and the Pentagon on Sept. 11th should be brought to swift and severe justice.

AF: Considering the general failure of the drug war, it

surprised me that the Bush administration used that same rhetoric. The war on drugs is identical to the war on terrorism, and is very similar to the Vietnam War. To paraphrase Jonathan Ott, the war on drugs is a war only on certain people and on certain drugs. The war on terrorism is a war on certain actions by certain people. Both are suspiciously ambiguous. From the point of view of the military-industrial complex, this ambiguity ensures that military and business leaders can fight an indefinite enemy indefinitely. With so many potential terrorists and opium poppy or coca farmers around the world, the United States can claim the authority to sell and ship arms anywhere. Furthermore, in both cases covert conflicts can be ignited just below the public retina, with little or no public debate and Congressional oversight. Both wars can transform countries seen as hostile toward the U.S. and Americanism into sterilized ports in which multinational corporations can safely operate and even colonize. With the war on drugs at a standstill, the war on terrorism will provide a ripe opportunity to rally Americans behind the flag, to the benefit of those who sell, bear, and use arms. And this is another runaway train into which the New Peace Movement needs to throw a monkey wrench.

SK: I think that Adam has articulated the similarities quite well. I think that terrorist attacks are an outrage, no matter in what part of the world they occur. However, I think the proper immediate response is "cunning, not killing," and the appropriate long-range response is a careful examination of the diplomatic, military, and commercial policies that have turned so many people, especially in the Middle East, against the United States.

AF: Right, and the most "cunning" thing we could do to remedy the drug problem is to reduce demand. The most sophisticated way to enact this would be to increase the quality of life by bringing higher-paying jobs to the lower classes. What are so many people escaping with the use of drugs? Could it be poverty? What has instigated such brutal attacks against the U.S.? Could it be our gluttony? The root of both issues seems to me to be the unequal distribution of wealth; the dynamics between the 25% who control 80% of the world's wealth and the 25% who control 1%.

SK: In the meantime, the columnist Arianna Huffington has contrasted the seizure of Elian Gonzales, in Miami, with the paramilitary police tactics used against suspected drug dealers. Miami's mayor, Joe Carollo, fumed (with some justification) that there "was no excuse whatsoever to have a military force come in, as a SWAT team, with machine guns at a home where all that you had were patriotic, law-abiding, humble, working men, women, and children." But Mayor Carollo

was silent a few months later when a SWAT team, heavily armed and dressed in black, burst into the home of Tracey Bell, another humble, hard-working (and nine months pregnant) resident of South Florida with no criminal record. Bell claims she was hauled to the floor and handcuffed in front of her two small children while the officers unsuccessfully searched for drugs. Another SWAT team of some 15 men, armed with assault rifles and the wrong address, stormed into the South Florida home of Eddie and Loretta Bernhardt, a law-abiding, humble, working couple. They were roughed up, humiliated, and—in Eddie's case—hauled off to jail. Where was the voluble mayor then? Innocent men, women, and children have been accidentally killed in drug raids, and the same politicians who screeched when the home of Elian's relatives was broken into had nothing to say, probably because the casualties of the drug war cannot be exploited for votes. They are probably seen as mere collateral damage in the noble fight for a larger objective.

In conclusion, Adam and I agree with Huffington that, in the name of fighting drugs, the United States has not only gutted the principle of "innocent until proven guilty," but also the Fourth Amendment, which guarantees "the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures." There are many social ills afflicting the United States, drug addiction and the criminal behavior it spawns among them. However, the occasional use of drugs for spiritual, creative, hedonistic, or even frivolous purposes should not be one of them. The war on drugs has become a conflict with the U.S. Bill of Rights; it is our patriotic duty to oppose it with any suitable means at our disposal.



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A 21st Century Approach to a 16th Century Dilemma

by Paco Xander Nathan

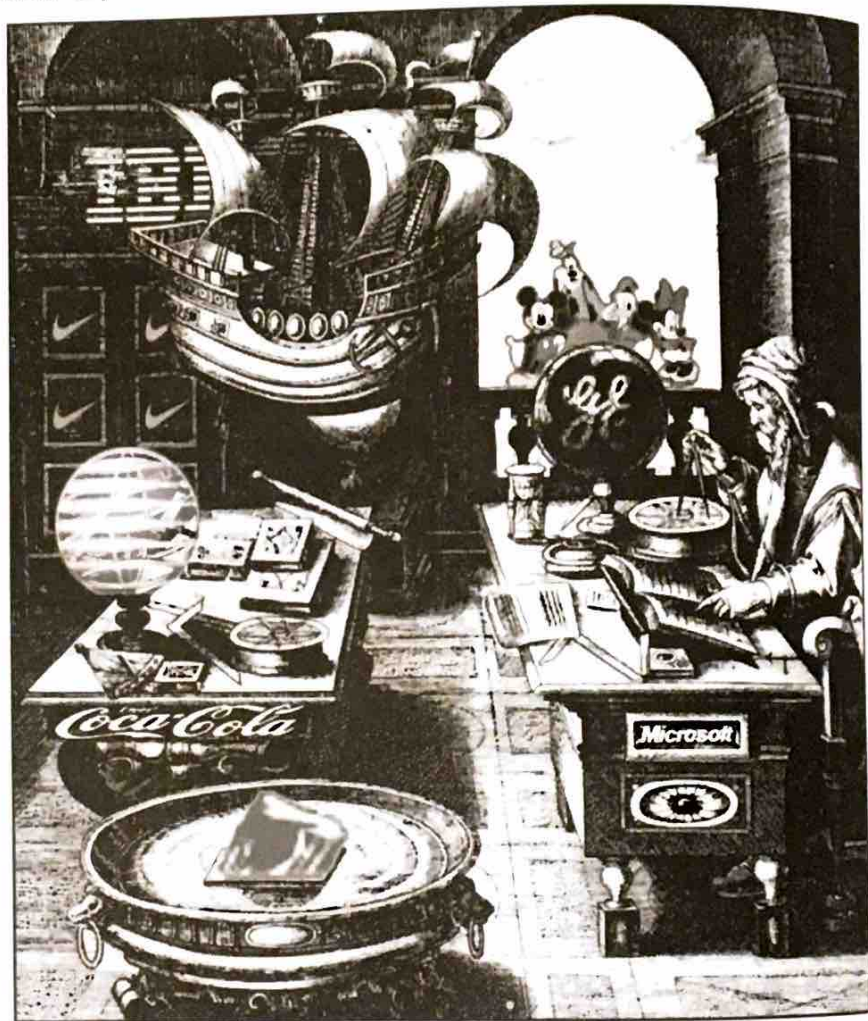
This article is a transcript of a talk given at the Cinematexas 6: Parallax Views conference, "Reclaim The Media," September 22, 2001.

Today I'm here to discuss transnational corporations – I have a rather strange fascination with transnationals, particularly about means for studying them and strategies for opposing them. A decade ago, I helped start a controversial media operation called FringeWare. After the demise of FringeWare, I started a private research group called the Ceteri Institute, focused on studying transnational corporations. Last year, the first public presentation about Ceteri materials was made at this very same conference [see *Trip #6*, "Corporate Metabolism" – ed.]. Since then a variety of articles, radio interviews, salons, etc., have discussed the historical background and theoretical aspects involved.

We're looking at the general form of a transnational corporation: a thing that exists entirely within the domain of social communications. That's an important point – a corporation is not a building or a department, but an entity composed of language. We're researching cross-disciplinary means to model the behavior of that form, and better frameworks in which to develop strategies to take a stand against the corporate form as needed, to oppose it, to contest it.

Consider this: people must live with two inevitabilities, namely *death* and *taxes*. In what has been called the "greatest legal achievement of the 19th century," the US Supreme Court granted *personhood* to corporations – extending constitutional protections found in the "Bill of Rights." Yet corporations, unlike most *persons*, do not necessarily ever "die" and, in many cases, they avoid paying taxes. Consequently, the corporate form for perpetuating power has developed over the past four centuries to a point where it governs many aspects of contemporary mainstream culture.

However, to the extent that corporations have become a



necessary part of contemporary life, the term "necessary" does not imply "free reign"; boundaries and considerations are needed but currently diminished. In essence, we're searching for a 21st century approach to a 16th century dilemma.

Suppose you were involved in a role-playing game, say like *The Sims*, where you needed to create a character that was a transnational corporation: the game-board would be a combination of the courts, legislatures, financial markets, advertising, etc. What would such a character look like? How would it behave? How would an enemy oppose it?

I'm going to address that question by examining a sample population of the largest firms in the world. I'm going to present a model for discussion. I'm going to provide data and analysis to support that model. I'm going to examine the political imagery of at least one firm as a case study. Then I'd like to apply that model within the context of recent world events.

The Corporate Form

Transnationals are pervasive in our lives. As an experiment, try to avoid interacting with any corporation for at least 24 hours... As a more immediate experiment: how many of you have some kind of insurance policy?

Almost everyone interacts with the corporate form in several ways:

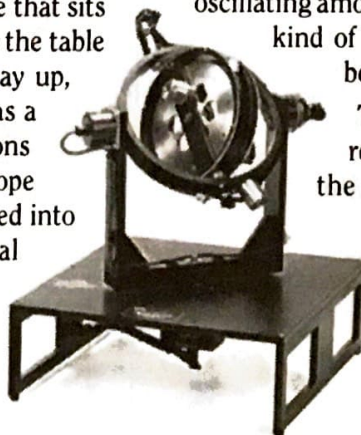
- **Security:** through insurance and investments, we rely on the corporate form to provide for future well-being; alternatives would be readily appreciated.
- **Consumerism:** we tend to depend on products and services provided by corporations, e.g., groceries, transportation, medical, etc.
- **Conflict:** each of us will encounter situations where the corporate form does not act in our best interest, so we must contest it, e.g., in terms of labor relations, environmental hazards, consumer fraud, lobbying efforts, etc.
- **Attention:** in a sense we "feed" the corporate form through our process of selection within social communications; the nascent field of *attention economics* examines this phenomenon.
- **Identity:** many individuals define themselves based on corporate self-identity – e.g. their employment, the brand of car they drive, favorite advertising slogans, preferred network television, etc.

These points determine forms of *meaning* in our lives for the corporate form.

How does the corporate form function? What does a model for it look like?

First, keep in mind that corporations exist as means for dissipating risk and perpetuating wealth for shareholders: that is a game of how to acquire power, how to keep it in the long run, how to flex it when needed, etc.

To describe our work at Ceteri, think of a strange little Rube Goldberg device that will represent the corporate form. Visualize a gyroscope atop a small table that sits on four legs, each of those legs connecting to the table through a piston. So long as the pistons stay up, the table remains level and the gyroscope has a great place on which to spin. If any of the pistons begin to drop, the table dips and the gyroscope wobbles. Perhaps there is a feedback sensor tied into the gyroscope so that when it wobbles, a signal gets sent out to boost the falling piston.



Our hypothetical device – if one considers it the way that a physicist might – applies what is called *nonequilibrium thermodynamics*. The corporate form behaves within that context as something called a *dissipative structure*.

To explain these two-bit words, let me back up about 60 years... The kind of physics that Einstein used back then could not account for biological evolution because of something called *entropy*. It was believed that as time progressed, a system would necessarily lose its structure, so the notion of evolution – systems becoming more complex over time – violated the physical laws of thermodynamics. In a very subtle corollary, it was believed that time was symmetric: the physics of a system's past were supposed to be identical to the physics of its future.

During the last few decades, a very different view has emerged for studying systems that dissipate entropy – ergo the name "dissipative structures." In the newer theory, time is asymmetric: it only moves forward, and complex processes become irreversible.

In business, the notion of entropy is usually called *risk*, and complex social systems often describe irreversible processes in terms of *consent*. Structures that dissipate risk are known in business as *corporations*. Primary reasons for incorporating include minimizing exposure to *litigation, taxation, disclosure*, and in many cases even *regulation* – which traces back to the original intent of corporations as relief for entrepreneurs from *debtor's prison*, later generalized as what we now call *insurance*.

In our Rube Goldberg device, the table legs represent four distinct *subdomains* within the domain of social communications – as partitions. These subdomains exhibit a condition of complexity called *autopoiesis*, i.e., they have some means for self-regulation. Law is a great example of an autopoietic subdomain. Finance is another. According to some issues in information theory, *meaning* from one subdomain does not necessarily apply in another, so they are quite separate and distinct.

The pistons represent *metastable structures* in each of those subdomains – ergo the term "nonequilibrium". If a pen rests on my hand, it's stable. If I balance the pen – like any good juggler might – the pen is *metastable*... nearly ready to fall over, but not necessarily. This is an extremely important point for social criticism, which we'll catch in a moment.

The table represents what's called a *hypercycle* oscillating among those structures. That word means some kind of coupling, some kind of indirect influence between distinct systems.

The gyroscope and feedback sensor represent a set of *regulating functions* for the form. These include: a sublimative reflex, selection, self-identify, reproduction, etc. These are reflexes, behaviors – all subject to catastrophe, and essential to

understanding how to contest the corporate form.

Translated into English, the corporate form must produce distortions to survive; its existence is a precarious balance that depends on *market inefficiencies*. Several well-defined reflex behaviors impose those nonequilibrium states – and that’s where meaning, social criticism, and strategy come into play in a very big way.

In the subdomain of law this often means that lobbying efforts overcome legislative representation for the public. In the subdomain of social contract this often means horrific labor abuses. In the subdomain of finance this often means high price/earnings ratios and subsequent displacement of local businesses. In the subdomain of media, read *Ogilvy On Advertising* about “truth in advertising” and the lack thereof.

“We’ll give the world an opportunity to see what it’s like to save and have a better life for all...” – Sam Walton

Keep in mind a few caveats. First, this theory concerns the *general form* of a transnational, and does not necessarily apply to other kinds of organizations or to any specific corporation. For instance, a new ruling by the US Supreme Court might establish law that will apply to many corporations – that’s a general phenomenon. A protest against Nike for the most part just concerns Nike – that’s a specific phenomenon.

Secondly, this theory is about *power*, not about *money* – finance is only one of those legs in the table. A lesson of the past 400 years is that if a group of people regards corporations simply in terms of money, the corporations involved will gain an overwhelming advantage. The power of the corporate form is found in its resilience – its ability to dissipate risk. Contesting the form solely in terms of finance is like trying to knock over that Rube Goldberg table by kicking one of its legs; the gyroscope will compensate. Maybe, if you knock out two or three legs at once, the thing will take a tumble.

Having developed a theory about the corporate form, we needed data to test our models – and lots of it.

The Ceteri100

I created a database for a “sample population” of transnational corporations, which the Ceteri Institute makes available to the public as a research tool – as part of our contribution to “reclaiming the media.” See <http://famous.aspect.to/study/ceteri/sample/>.

This listing, called the Ceteri100, tracks top

transnational firms in the world. Features include an info capsule for each firm, a 3D Java applet for data visualization, descriptive statistics for the general form, and an annotated bibliography of data sources used. Capsules include corporate identity, web sites, company histories, oldest constituent business units, as well as links to stock ticker, current news headlines, and social critique. The data is published as an XML database.

Selection for firms is based on gross annual revenues – that’s in keeping with lists such as *Fortune’s* Global 1000. While some financial directories select based on market capitalization or assets (e.g., the FTSE Multinational Index or the UN’s World Investment Report) those estimators tend to be less stable and more biased over time. For example, market capitalization changes frequently and can imply a grossly distorted view: FTSE sometimes claims that Amazon.com is more powerful globally than Exxon-Mobile. I can assure you, that is not the case.

This listing represents a relatively small but highly influential sample: these are the organizations at the top of the corporate feeding chain, the ones that other firms scramble to emulate. Most of the firms currently listed in the Ceteri100 are public, though a few large private or governmental corporations (i.e., those with excess of US\$50 billion in annual revenues – USPS, PDVSA, Nippon Life, etc.) have been included for contrast. Parameters for our analysis also pertain to nonprofits with large annual revenues/donations, such as PACs and some NGOs which front for corporate lobbying efforts and international economic development, respectively. Disclosure by non-profit entities is limited, and their analysis to-date with respect to social critique is less available.

Our intent with this project is two-fold: one is to visualize a generalized form for transnationals, another is to provide side-by-side comparison of the political images involved. Using the listing, a researcher can compare a corporation’s own narratives, history, and self-identity with related current headlines and social criticism, as a kind of visual dialectic.

Consider a simple case study using the Ceteri100, through the analysis of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. One can learn of its humble beginnings in Rogers, Arkansas – launched in 1962 by the brothers Sam and Bud Walton. Just after WWII, these two had made millions in the drugstore business, but recognized the rising competitive form of a discount store. They specialized in “name brands at low prices,” and their chain of discount stores metastasized across rural America, displacing traditional mom and pop stores, and raking in billions.

Their family still owns 38% of the firm – now the second largest corporation in the world, and one of the largest sellers of books and music in the US – and considers its corporate efforts as a kind of holy war to bring American “ideals” to the rest of the world. As the founder/CEO Sam Walton proudly stated:

"We're all working together... we'll lower the cost of living for everyone, not just in America, but we'll give the world an opportunity to see what it's like to save and have a better lifestyle, a better life for all."

Their rhetoric must be taken into balance with their actions. Recent reports by PBS and others document how young women making shirts at the firm's Beximco garment factory in Bangladesh were forced to work 80 hours/week at a rate of US\$0.09 to 0.20/hour, being fired for any suspicion of labor organization. Similar sweatshops have been discovered in Saipan, Honduras, Myramar, even within NYC's Chinatown – with resulting goods sold under Wal-Mart's "Made in USA" label.

What are the results of these efforts to "give the world an opportunity to see what it's like" while engaged in forced labor, massive media censorship, and destroying the economic infrastructure of American heartland? An enormous US\$193 billion in annual revenues – second only to Exxon-Mobile – and an organization ranked #14 worldwide in terms of foreign assets.

Transnationals Under A Microscope

What about a description for the generalized form of a transnational?

Looking at the sample, three categories emerge, seemingly based on age of the oldest constituent business units. There are few very old firms, created within the first century of the corporate form. These began in industrial commodity production – e.g., textiles or mining – but gradually shifted into finance. They tend to have large asset bases, lower rates of shareholder equity, less employees, and are based in Japan or the UK. Sumitomo and CGNU are good examples.

A smaller category includes a few newer firms, varied in form, more sensitive to fluctuations in consumer trends and hence relatively volatile: NTT, Wal-Mart, Carrefour, Sony, etc. – big now, but their long-term prospects are perhaps questionable.

The main category is divided among firms in the industrial, technology, and energy sectors. Energy seems the strongest of these, though with respect to global warming issues it is the one that needs to change the most. The age clustering for this category is relatively tight: most firms emerged in the late 19th century, just after the pivotal *118 U.S. 394* ruling that established corporate personhood.

In general, a profile for the main category *looks* like:

- 120 year-old constituent business unit
- 150,000 employees
- US\$75 billion in annual revenues
- US\$150 billion in assets
- 50% profit margin
- profitability directly proportional to shareholder equity

There is your *Sims Corporate* character definition for a transnational. The last point seems particularly interesting in terms of social criticism, as a small ray of hope.

Who monitors these firms and strives to contend against the corporate form? The *Ceteri100* cites a variety of public resources for further research about transnationals and social change:

- **Transnationale**

(<http://www.transnationale.org/>) provides the single best online resource for researching about transnational corporations: what are their subsidiaries, their shareholders, their current lobbying actions, their trademarks and slogans, etc.

- **Program on Corporations, Law, and Democracy** (<http://www.poclad.org/>) is a group of eleven activists, including Richard Grossman and Jane Anne Morris, working throughout the US and UK. POCLAD offers exemplary archives for online research. Publishers of *By What Authority*, and sponsored by the non-profit Council on International and Public Affairs.

- **Focus on the Corporation**

(<http://www.corporatepredators.org/focus.html>) is an excellent periodic column authored by Russell Mokhiber, editor of *Corporate Crime Reporter*, and Robert Weissman, editor of *Multinational Monitor* and co-director of the equally recommended <http://www.essential.org/>

- **Top 200: The Rise of Corporate Global Power** (<http://www.ips-dc.org/reports/top200text.htm>) is a report by Sarah Anderson and John Cavanagh of the Institute for Policy Studies which compares the top 100 firms with the top 100 nation-states, in terms of economic power.

- **Global Policy Forum**

(<http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/tncs/index.htm>) abstracts and lists a number of excellent articles and essays about the rise of transnational corporations, in addition to its other areas of interest that track NGOs, nation-states, etc.

- **Money in Politics**

(<http://www.opensecrets.org/>) is a highly recommended public database for tracking political donations, PACs, lobbying actions, and soft money.

- **Democracy Now!**

(<http://www.democracynow.org/>) publishes interesting historical vignettes and also tracks US political contributions for a selected group of transnational corporations.

The Effect of 9.11

Make no mistakes about our intentions here: the loss of civilian life in NYC 9.11 represents a terrible tragedy. Now we face a crucial time for trying to understand the impact of those events.

The danger now is that we frame questions and debates in the context of a terrorist attack against a nation-state. That perspective promotes retaliatory warfare, moreover it also denies due consideration of the NYC 9.11 events as an infrastructure hit on transnationals. Hits against transnationals will happen.

I urge that we take a moment to reflect on the aftermath of the explosions – here not so much in terms of human loss, but in the counterpoint perspective of impact on the world's largest transnational corporations. This discussion does not attempt to second-guess the motives of the perpetrators of the tragedy; it examines the effects in retrospect.

Our listing includes a metric – i.e., an artificial statistic – to study the relative damage sustained by top firms in NYC 9.11. This metric was compiled from financial news wires throughout the proceeding week, based on three criteria:

- Direct hit on substantive, immediate business operations.
- Disruption of infrastructure and long-term business operations.
- Earnings forecast revisions and long-term profit outlook.

With respect to the terrorist events, consider several summaries apparent from data visualization:

- Firms with relatively more employees and more shareholder equity tended to take less damage.
- Firms with relatively less assets tended to take less damage and may tend to realize subsequent profits – these are generally in the energy sector.
- Older firms or those with relatively more assets tended to take more damage.
- Of the financial firms listed among the world's largest, 9 of 13 either had direct hits during the explosions or were insurers for properties and businesses involved.

Though the subsequent effects may change this ranking, the worst hit among the world's largest firms included, in order:

- J.P.MorganChase
- GeneralElectricCompany
- TheBoeingCompany
- MizuhoHoldings
- AssicurazioniGeneraliS.p.A.
- BankofAmericaCorporation
- VerizonCommunications

- Deutsche Bank AG
- Allianz AG

A generalization of events is that the largest firms engaged in investment banking – particularly those engaged in Third World “development” projects – and the industrial basis for the defense sector suffered or will suffer, relatively speaking, more than other similarly sized commercial interests. Energy may benefit.

Airlines are typically not large enough firms to reach into the top ranks of transnationals. However, the airlines have obviously been hit among the hardest of any businesses subsequent to NYC 9.11 events. Consider the effects on airlines as a sector: concurrent attacks on financial and media subdomains, which will likely cause significant destabilization. According to our model, expect the legal and social contract subdomains to respond vigorously to compensate. Expect lobbying efforts by the airlines to become increasingly effective in the near-term. Meanwhile, expect labor and antitrust protections to become all but forgotten during the recovery period and somewhat beyond.

Conclusion

What can be concluded from this theory and analysis?

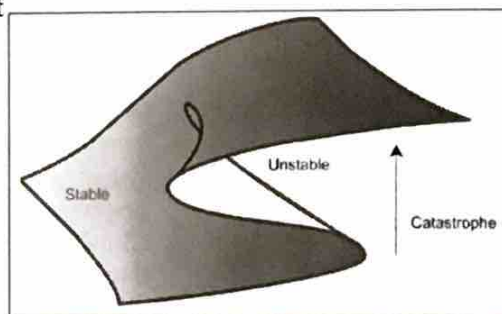
The corporate form is amazingly powerful, and not easily contested. However, its stability relies on a set of *regulating functions*, e.g., sublation, reflex, selection, reproduction, etc. The use of systems theory and complexity theory guides the development of models for *catastrophe* in those functions. An example catastrophe is shown in this diagram – taken from a math lecture online. It's a question of how to kick the legs out from underneath the table...

When informed by historical caveats about the intellectual context (called *synecdoche*) in which the corporate form emerged – which we covered at this conference in depth last year – these models may help develop better strategies for opposing the corporate form.

For a simple example, currently two of the world's top firms appear to deviate significantly from the main category: Wal-Mart and AT&T. Their deviations do not seem related to power or profit, but rather a dampening of nonequilibrium. One may consider both firms at-risk

in terms of structural stability, and hence susceptible targets for disruption.

In a more involved example, look at the diagram – imagine yourself as a small ant trying to crawl from one corner of the surface to another corner. If you stayed along the top edge, no



problem, but if your path veered diagonally, you might intersect the "cusp" and fall off what looks like a cliff. That would be a catastrophe. So if the stability of a regulating function can be plotted on a similar kind of diagram, it becomes relatively easy to see where the corporate form begins to experience catastrophe. As it happens, the openness of a system and its complexity relative to the surrounding environment can produce catastrophe situations.

Remember: nothing is omnipotent, unless you believe so.

Epilogue – Six Months Later

On the Ceteri email list, there has been some discussion concerning Enron – does its disintegration provide a good or bad example of what our theory proposes?

I took the position: No, it's not actually news. Enron was the eBay (i.e., the "dot-com" darling) of energy stocks, and practically none of the "ethically-challenged" schemes they executed seemed particularly novel in the financial world. Yawn. The "scandal" concerning Enron plays right along in Batesonian two-part harmony with contemporary tag lines such as "weapons of mass destruction" and "axis of evil," at least in my mind, a pervasive aspect reframed as novelty, much like people looking at Nixon in 1973 and suddenly articulating, "Gee, US presidents tell lies, too?"

On the other hand, from what other issues do all the headlines about Enron in the popular press divert attention? News which should be making more headlines includes how Wal-Mart recently reported big profits (ever heard that line before?) albeit with almost no where else to grow. Ask yourself: how many bulk packs of 2-ply toilet paper can redneck America consume? And for how long can their consumption sustain double digit growth? The Waltons' business strategy seems based largely on a bait-and-switch shtick of undercutting their suppliers while repeating the colonial tactics of seventeenth century Western Europe. Nonetheless people tend to believe in the firm mystically, almost like a god: "Them folks make profits in tough times. Hell, they must be real smart."

Now, an intelligent reader should perhaps hear that sentiment and become concerned. Wal-Mart is currently the largest transnational in the world, recently beating out Exxon-Mobile for the top-ranked position. According to our Ceteri model, their profile doesn't look much like the more stable transnationals. Even so, they report a big jump at roughly the same time as their #2 competitor, KMart, files for bankruptcy – at a point when the retail sector in general faces dismal prospects. So, does anybody else perceive a distortion concerning Wal-Mart? Perhaps they've simply evolved a new strategy for survival... Redneck America, which practically resides at Wal-Mart,

has grown to depend on the retail megastores and had best hope the firm keeps growing at a phenomenal rate – but the question is: where?

Shortly after this conference presentation, I embarked on several weeks of travel throughout the rural corners of the Southwest deserts in the US. Based on that research, let me ask: what are the small communities – which only a few years ago were staying afloat by encouraging Wal-Mart stores to move in – doing now to generate revenues? Answer: *building large private prisons*, mostly for drug-related convictions. Subsequent prediction: within 5 years, at least one small town in the US will convert its assets entirely into operating as a for-profit prison. Houses and businesses in those towns are practically worthless, when compared with their large city neighbors, so why not sell out to more panopticonically-minded entrepreneurs?

While the Waltons and their ilk may not be able to sustain growth by playing a game of "limbo" on sweatshop wages throughout the Third World, some domestic trends imply remarkable potential for cost-effective labor pools closer to home. Financial speculation in prison cell residency rates and prison labor have become a reality; US drug convictions engendering cheaper prison factory labor would also help preserve the sentiment of "Made in the USA."

Meanwhile, for what it's worth, oil stocks have shot through the roof. For a reality check about my predictions concerning the relative strength of the energy sector – check out the OIX index for a general case, and stock picks such as XOM or ROIL for more specific examples. For a reality check about my predictions concerning airline lobbying efforts – that's a noteworthy exercise left for the interested reader.

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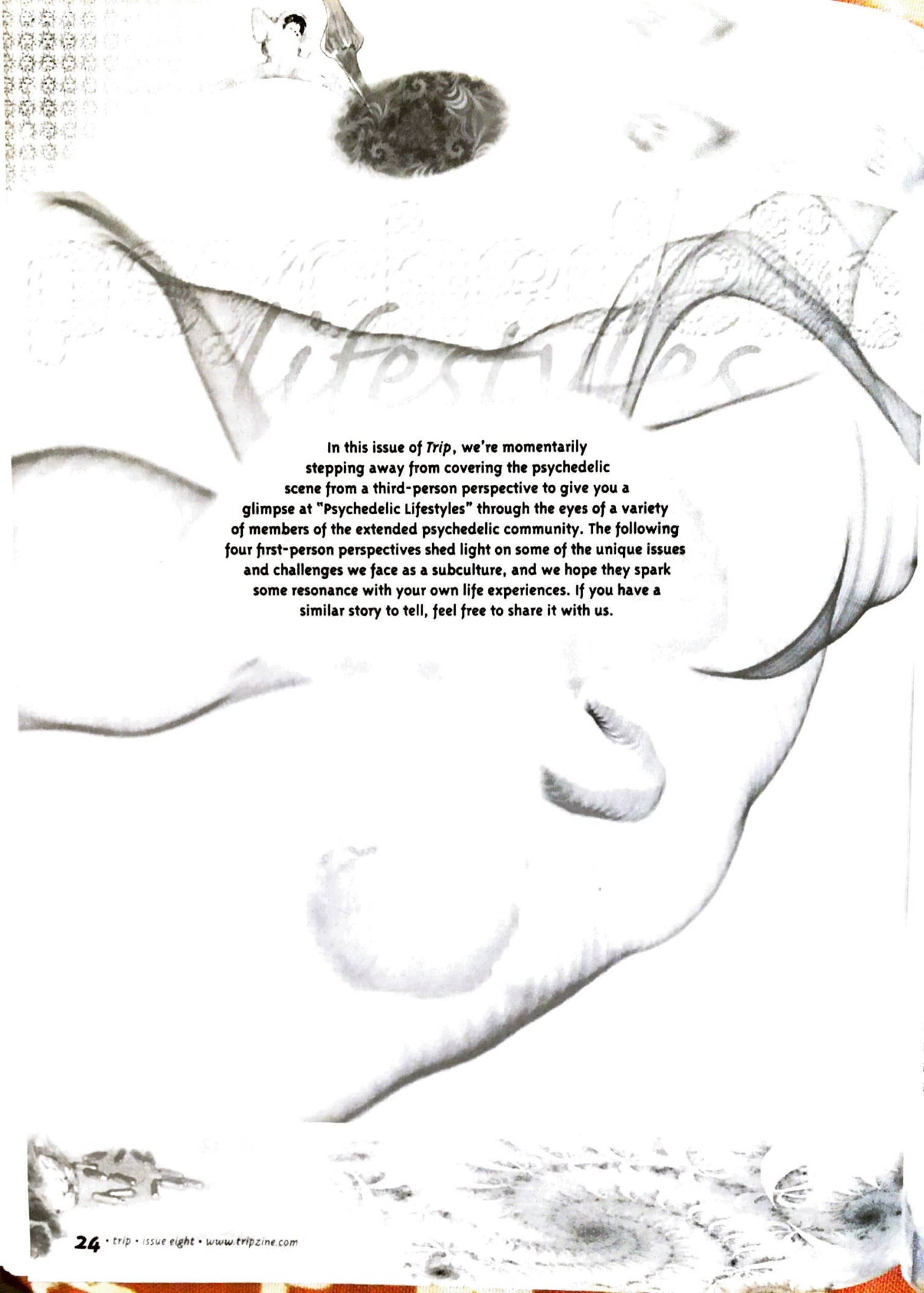
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In this issue of *Trip*, we're momentarily stepping away from covering the psychedelic scene from a third-person perspective to give you a glimpse at "Psychedelic Lifestyles" through the eyes of a variety of members of the extended psychedelic community. The following four first-person perspectives shed light on some of the unique issues and challenges we face as a subculture, and we hope they spark some resonance with your own life experiences. If you have a similar story to tell, feel free to share it with us.



Illustration by TonyB

A Year Without Psychedelics

by Scotto

The year 2000 was an insane year for me. I'd been taking psychedelics since 1992 for reasons ranging from psychological exploration and spiritual confrontation to pure hedonism and outright debauchery, most often within the same weekend. But 2000 got to be pretty intense, on both a professional and personal level. Coincidentally, I chose 2000 as the year to actually start keeping a log of my drug use; I figured this log would provide valuable information for metaprogramming purposes by giving me insight into patterns of usage in my life, as I continued the seemingly never-ending process of questioning the role of psychedelics in my life. By the end of the year, the log was threatening to consume me with its sheer corrosive malevolence. I eventually un-un-un-un-unencrypted it, surprised it, dragged it behind my apartment building, shot it several dozen times, drowned it in cement, and threw it into Puget Sound, spitting on it a few times for good measure. I had gleaned all the information I needed to know – my psychedelic use was approaching wildly unhealthy levels, and it was time for a new approach.


I decided to take the entire year of 2001 off from doing any strong psychedelics whatsoever. I had two caveats, which I determined before 2001 began, so that no one could later accuse me of cheating: 1) I do not consider MDMA to be a strong psychedelic, and 2) the week of Burning Man would be a reprieve from this abstinence. The goal was to attempt to analyze my appetite for altered states by depriving myself of access to the usual ones. I'm not a psychiatrist or psychoanalyst, nor can I typically afford one, but after years of wrestling with questions about the value of psychedelics, and additional questions

related to examining self-worth, spiritual focus, and community involvement, I believed that shaking myself free of patterns of drug use accumulated throughout the years would offer me valuable information that I might not attain otherwise. Indeed, by the end of 2000, I felt as though I was wearing my soul thin; it was definitely time for a break.

My friends immediately suspected my personality had been hijacked by puritanical aliens, but I calmed them, reminding them that due to interdimensional peace treaties, aliens are no longer allowed access to my personality without appropriate paperwork. For the most part, my friends were supportive of my effort to take a break. Over the years I've developed a reputation within my little microcommunity as [deleted for security reasons], and I think many of them were relieved to see that I wasn't progressing directly to injecting bleach into my eyeballs. Others seemed to believe I was staging a publicity stunt, as though I might start taking pledges for my favorite charity group. I waved goodbye to psychedelics at the turn of the new year, and started my long, long year without psychedelics.

It turned out to be relatively interesting timing for such an experiment. 2001 wound up being "The Year Of Sucking Serious, Serious Ass" for me and many of my compadres. And I realized that I had been using psychedelics as a way of "enforcing relaxation" upon myself in times of significant, awful stress. The catch of course is that as 2000 got more and more intense and my drug use increased, I wasn't actually getting any relaxation at all; I was working even while tripping, examining the previous few weeks'





endeavors under the harsh psychedelic microscope. That was why my soul was wearing thin, but now, as 2001 got steadily more awful, I no longer had the reflexive tool I was so accustomed to.

Apparently in psychoanalysis practitioners use a term called "substitution" to describe what happens when a person bails on one addiction, only to replace it with another. In this case, what immediately happened when my psychedelic use stopped was that my alcohol intake increased astronomically. I've always been a drinker, but this got to be quite ridiculous. The rest of my body actually posted armed guards around my liver to prevent it from actively fleeing in abject terror. I justified and rationalized by noting that my actual life wasn't particularly impaired by my alcohol intake; I continued to help publish this magazine, held down a day job for most of the year, produced theatre and music and books and stories, maintained a wonderful relationship, and so on.

But as the year rolled on, and my professional life got uglier and uglier, it became apparent that alcohol was no particular substitute for psychedelics in the realm of facing up to an immense, encroaching depression, and trying to do something about it. However, I was learning an enormous amount about the essential appetite that lurks at the heart of this entire landscape for me. Recently I was asked at a party if I felt my psychedelic intake was healthy, and I still don't know the answer. I have managed to identify an essential appetite for altered states that isn't going away any time soon. For better or worse – sometimes

it truly is for better, and occasionally it truly is for worse – I seek these states with a kind of voraciousness that I can't understand or explain, only address and learn to live with.

The fact is that psychedelics have helped shape my personality in ways I find to be immensely positive and powerful. When I was first introduced to LSD years ago, I was at a time in my life when I had quite recently lost my faith, and lost my best friend to suicide – two events that are inextricably linked. Over the course of many challenging years, years in which I made wild, preposterous mistakes and caused quite a bit of anguish, I nevertheless managed to find my way to a kind of maturity that I treasure and respect. I don't have a god to trust, and I don't have a spiritual path that could comfort me, but the psychedelic state has been a rigorous training companion as I've approached adulthood. Even in those occasions

where my companions and I simply sought recreational bliss – and don't ever underestimate "because it feels good" as an intrinsically valuable part of the psychedelic experience, especially at a time when so many people medicate themselves on a daily basis because their lives do *not* feel good – I believed I was making genuine progress as a person toward someone more compassionate, more deserving of trust and respect.

As the year progressed, I began to regret my decision in some ways, but I was also quite happy in the meantime to demonstrate to myself that I could stick to it. It was like running a marathon, knowing that I would feel satisfaction at reaching the finish line, and also, of course, knowing

I experienced twelve solid hours of happiness for the first time in too long to remember...

lifestyles

that I truly could "quit at any time." It became very informative over time to realize exactly how often and under what circumstances I instinctively or habitually thought about taking psychedelics, and months into the new year, my sense of awareness about those decisions feels heightened in a positive way. My decision did affect a number of close friends as well, who mysteriously found their own use declining without my presence as the constant "inciting incident," so to speak.

Burning Man arrived, and I experienced a mind-blowing trip on three hits of liquid LSD that I won't ever forget (think very large video screen, and I'd never seen *Repo Man* before); then it was 2002, and I immediately leapt back into guinea pig mode, promptly having a wig out on one of those bizarre research chemicals that was a throw back to the days when I was just a toddler on these drugs. It seems you can forget a lot of really good habits in a year's time. But soon enough, I was back up on my feet, and although my appetite remains much as it once was, I'm at least aware of my intemperance now in a way I never bothered to be before.

The years have long passed when I would try to proselytize on behalf of trying psychedelics. There seems to be an exuberance among new users that no longer appeals to me at all. The questions posed by the psychedelic experience, both on its own merits as the *mysterium tremendum*, and as it relates to our increasingly bizarre Western mindset, are too complex and fraught with a kind of existential peril for me to ever again try to convince someone this is the path for them. By the same token, if someone has already chosen this path, I remain quite full of enthusiasm for discussing its relative merits, working out strategies and techniques, and perhaps most importantly, participating in and helping develop notions of psychedelic

community. Ultimately my year without psychedelics left me with several important questions to consider, several more questions than when I entered the year, and far fewer answers than I was hoping I might encounter.

And then, I had my first AMT experience after more than a year. AMT is one of my favorite drugs on the planet; I realize for many people it's a cold, boring, irritating space, but for my compadres and I, this experience is a kind of delightful manna, a slow, luxurious empathogenesis that offers less intensity in a given moment than MDMA, but because it lasts so much longer (12-14 hours), offers instead the ability to truly relax, follow tangents, explore ideas and moods, and not worry about cramming in all the emoting you need to cram in before it wears off too, too rapidly. That day, I experienced twelve solid hours of happiness for the first time in too long to remember, and what a precious gift it was. At one point, we decided to let our ground control drive us to a different location that was hot tub-enabled. It was one of those insanely beautiful days in Seattle where it was sprinkling rain and yet completely sunny out, the kind of day that no one tells you about when they're warning you away from Seattle on the basis of weather. As we left location one, we saw the most enormous, beautiful rainbow towering over the cityscape. It was almost too beautiful to believe, but there it was... and as we crossed a street on the way to the car, we saw one end of the rainbow landing, not in a pot of gold, but directly in the street perhaps a block and a half away from us. Nature was putting on one of those shows that it seems to reserve specifically for tripping people, and even just remembering it as I write this puts things into a kind of perspective I often forget as I stumble through the rest of my life. How might I have felt about that rainbow if I had seen it in my year without psychedelics?





Trying a New Drug

An Experiment with Alcohol Abstinence

by *Samanthe*

I'm sitting here at the keyboard thinking, "I wish I could have a beer." So why don't I get up, go to the fridge, and crack open a cold one?

An Experiment in Living

In October 2001, I decided not to introduce any alcohol into my body for six months, to see what would happen. I consider myself to be a dedicatedentheogenist, but $\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$ is very near and dear to my heart. I would argue for its entheogenic properties. Cannabis has not been my primary everyday drug of choice – when it's time to relax, many of my friends reach for the pipe while I reach for a bottle. Before Halloween 2001, I was doing alcohol one to four times a week, and had been for over ten years. So why deny myself this pleasure, this tool for loosening up, for relaxing, for general social lubrication and occasional bliss and hilarity?

Well, like many people, I had never carefully examined my drinking. It's the same with coffee and sugar: it's there, I can get it at the store... and it's LEGAL, woohoo! On some level, even at age thirty, I was still stuck with the program, "Oooh, you're in college, you can drink!" The partying drinking patterns had just morphed into the work-a-day habits of my twenties and seeped on into my responsible thirties. But this program was old. I needed an upgrade.

Detox is for Quitters?

Through a process of self-exploration (uh, therapy) where I was examining family-of-origin issues, I kept getting hung up on a theme — drinking. This was not something I wanted to think about. Dad might have been an alcoholic? Couldn't be, he just drinks a glass of wine a day these days. Me, a problem drinker? It's not that bad to have a hangover sometimes, and oops, I slept with people

when maybe I shouldn't have, but damn, I was having fun! (Wasn't I?)

The worst part of having these thoughts was not the prospect of changing my behavior, or facing painful realizations about myself, or discovering how intertwined my drinking may be with my social persona. I *like* uncovering self-delusion. No, the worst part of worrying about my drinking was thinking, "I do *not* want to label myself an alcoholic." It just did not compute. My understanding of drug culture and substance use is fairly sophisticated. How could I possibly throw that away? I do not believe in blaming drugs for my problems; my behaviors with chemicals of all sorts are related in a complex dance to my underlying psychological and emotional factors. Admitting I had trouble handling my liquor and doing something about it would be a challenge. I certainly didn't want to be a (gasp) SOBER person. And I never want to talk about being "clean" — that would imply there's something dirty about putting stuff in my body to help me get off baseline. So where was my shining example, my Robert Downey Jr.-done-right?

The Dilemma

Whereas conventional society doesn't embrace positive role models for partakers of illicit substances, I had no



Illustration by Jeremy Young

psychedelic lifestyles

worries in that area. My social milieu is replete with amazing people of all ages who are elegant, clever, well-adjusted, highly intelligent psychedelic enthusiasts: the *entheogensia*. I've learned (and continue to learn) how to take illicit drugs with self-awareness and panache. My main chemical challenge was that I had not yet found good models for facing my *problem* use of *legal drugs*. The multiple-choice world of "pick one! Sober or Drunk!" didn't have a damn cubbyhole to stick me in.

I Decide to Wing It

First, I listened to something cannabis told me. In 1996, in a puking-up-sick bout with cannabis (see <http://www.erowid.org/experiences/exp.php3?ID=9641>) that was unrelated to alcohol, I got a clear mental message out of the blue: "Quit drinking alcohol. It's poisoning you." Huh? Where did that nonsense come from? I just wasn't ready to listen to whatever that was about. But after going deeper into my entheogen work in 1999, in guided sessions with ayahuasca, mescaline, LSD and mushrooms, I was beginning to think that alcohol might be an old friend worth questioning. When I was ready to listen in 2001, I followed a quiet inner voice — an echo of the 1996 one — that suggested I quit drinking alcohol for just a month. It was a goal I set for myself that I was able to meet with no problem. It felt good. After a few ghost hangovers, yucky morning episodes that I've since realized are not from drinking or not drinking but really are from dehydration, I really enjoyed the clear-headedness that follows a night of not drinking three beers.

Then I talked with one of my most hardcore entheogenic friends, who'd faced alcoholism as a teen over a decade ago. He has recently resumed experimenting with it, and we shared what it's like to not be straight and sober, but to be trippers admitting and facing problem use of alcohol. So I had my little "support group."

And then, another inner voice piped up and suggested I quit alcohol from Samhain to Beltane (six months — October 31 to May 1). So I did it. The beautiful thing is that I haven't cheated. I must have been really ready to do it. The first three months were easy. At Month Four it's sometimes a bit of a challenge, as the regular cycle of life unfolds. I've felt a little depressed... and one of my default behaviors — slamming beer or wine — is not available to me.

The Universe Abhors a Vacuum

Not drinking, I naturally am exploring my options. About twice a week I smoke some cannabis. I used to never do that because cannabis is so intense for me. But I discovered that I've been overdosing myself for years. As long as I take tiny sips of smoke and redose carefully, I get into just the right place. And there's GHB — not to get fucked up, but to get relaxed. And yoga and meditation; I'm tasting those. Finally, there's caffeine. Oh caffeine. It might be next on my "Abstain from" list. I didn't always drink this much tea...

Do I Really Like Life without Access to Ethanol?

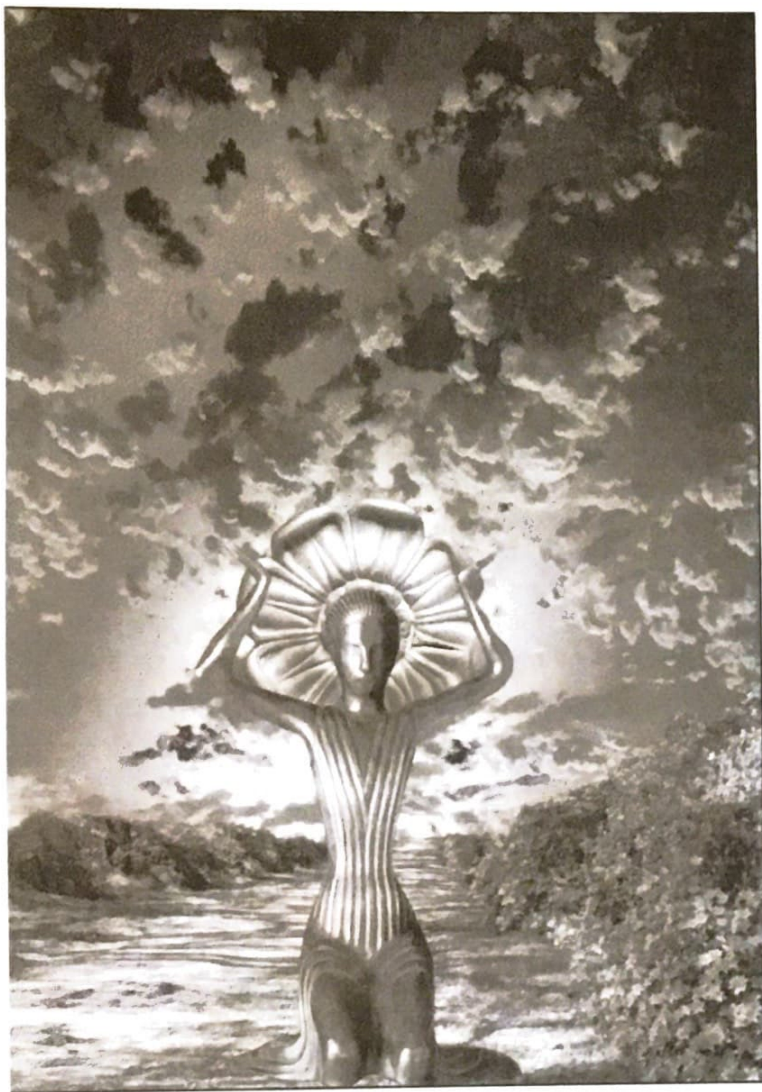
What was I *really* drinking for? Do I miss it? What I'm finding is not surprising. A lot of drinking I used to do was out of sheer habit. Other drinking was for coping with difficult emotions. And then there was the life-affirming and healthy desire to relax or get sloshed and have fun. Just discovering a visceral knowledge of these things is enormously valuable. Without experimenting with abstinence from alcohol, I wouldn't really know, just as without having tried LSD or cannabis or MDMA, I wouldn't really know about them, either.

Now that I have a better idea what baseline is really all about, I can't wait to have that beer.



Sober in a Psychedelic Community

by Kymmco



"Garden of Serenity," by Robyn Peterson
<http://www.artistone.com/rsp/>

I don't use drugs. I dabbled a bit in college – smoked pot which made me paranoid, tried LSD and mushrooms a few times with much the same result, inhaled nitrous at a Grateful Dead show, but basically I stuck to the legal drugs: tobacco, caffeine, and alcohol, the holy triumvirate of any college student. Eventually I phased out even these legal diversions. Tobacco and caffeine were ruled out when a slight heart arrhythmia was detected my sophomore year. Alcohol, my drug of choice, stayed with me the longest, but over the last few years pregnancy, the birth of my son, six months of breast feeding, and an anti-anxiety medication have all combined to reduce my alcohol intake to the very occasional glass of wine, or shot of kahlua in my decaf coffee. Hardly the stuff legendary parties are made of.

Yet I'm surrounded by people who can reel off the names of designer psychedelics with the ease that a devout NFL fan can name her favorite teams. LSD, MDMA, DMT, DPT, AMT, MDA, the acronyms are endless. I've often found myself the only sober person in a group of wildly grinning, cheek-chewing, massage-giving candyflippers. Or attempting to defend the aims of this magazine to anxious in-laws. And of course there is that little issue of my position as *Trip's* Senior Editor. It's largely a ceremonial title these days, but I've certainly put in my hours getting *TRP: The Resonance Project*, and now *Trip*, off the ground.

Why? Why have I surrounded myself with these people who share an interest, even an obsession, that I can never fully understand? What is it like being a sober person in a psychedelic community?

Well, very often it's quite boring. Drug people like to talk about drugs. A lot. And since society at large doesn't give them many opportunities to share their psychedelic experiences with others, when they get together they tend to spend a lot of time talking about their latest trip, or

lifestyle

their strangest trip, or establishing who in the group has done the weirdest drug, the most potent drug, or the most drugs period. It's sort of like that scene in *Jaws* where Roy Scheider and Richard Dreyfuss compare scars. And sometimes it's like a bunch of frat boys talking about the kegger last week – "Dude, I was sooooo wasted!"

But then there are the great conversations. About politics, the drug war, *Star Trek*, the *Lord of the Rings* movies, or the great book someone just read. There's the caring, the acceptance of oddity, both physical and mental, and the instant network of friendly people – the sense that my friend is your friend, or could be, so look them up when you get to Chicago, to Austin, to New York. This openness is historically typical to fringe or marginalized groups, but in reality I've rarely found it in my women's studies classes, or rape crisis hotlines, or protest rallies. There's often a hostility and suspicion of new people that I just haven't found in the psychedelic community, ironically the one group that might benefit by being suspicious of others, given the legal status of their particular hobby. I guess the bottom line is that I've always been attracted to people who question the status quo, who don't quite conform to societal expectations.

But I still have some issues with this community, of which I am both part and apart. I admire the desire for community, but distrust the desire for gurus and crackpot visionaries. I wholeheartedly agree with the distrust of organized religion that pervades this scene, and indeed most underground groups, but am very unhappy with the fuzzy "let's take a bit from here and a bit from there" spiritualism that seems to have taken its place. Why do psychedelic plants need to be sacraments of the gods? Why the need to couch psychedelic experiences in religious terms yet reject religion in general? I also am saddened, and sometimes offended, by the notion that non-users just don't "get it." Sure they do, or can at least; psychedelics

aren't the only path to enlightenment. In fact many psychedelic users I've met are no more spiritually enlightened than your average DARE member. They just think they are. It's as if eating a mushroom or slipping a tab of acid under your tongue gives you instant credentials. You don't need to work on your own compassion, centeredness, awareness, or spiritual growth – psychedelics have taken care of it all for you.

Now of course not all psychedelic users are going to fit into any or all of these categories. In fact many, if not most, probably don't consider themselves part of a scene at all, let alone a community. Yet if you read books about psychedelics, pick up magazines such as this one, maybe attend a local hemp rally or lurk on a drug-centered mailing list, you're part of a community. You help shape what the community talks about, how it presents itself to society, and which voices are given the most weight.

I've given a lot of thought recently to what my own goals are for the psychedelic movement, and I think it all boils down to the trite saying that I want everyone to be happy. I want my friends to be safe: safe from overdose or tainted drugs they might buy on the street, safe from arrest and incarceration for a non-violent act that at worst can only be termed self-endangerment. I want those people who are suffering from addiction to be able to get real help, and I'd like our society to turn its money and attention to other, much graver issues facing us today: terrorism, racism, disease, bigotry, George Bush in the White House. And I want my friends to be free – free to take whatever drug they desire, to grow their own pot plants if they so choose, free to turn their rich talents and creativity to other things. In essence, my goal, if you can call it that, is an end to the psychedelic community, a move toward a time and place where we won't need it anymore.

A Life of Drug Therapy

by Miss Susie

My eyes scan over the headline, "Brad Pitt plans weekend getaway for wife," as I sit waiting, trying to find any means to ignore the growing lump in my throat and ache in my belly. Finally, he walks into the office, but does not take a seat. It is in that moment, the moment where he remains standing that the real truth is exposed. Over the years I have learned no good news can come when my neurologist remains standing in his own office. Before my mind can process his body language, he says with an uncertain look in his eyes and a half smile, "Do you want the good news first or the bad?" I opt for the bad news first in order to hopefully be soothed by the good news afterwards. He looks directly at me and says, "Well, the bad news is we have run out of medicine for you at this time; however, the good news is I will no longer be feeding you any more poison." I can feel myself struggle with the conflict of heartbreak at what this means and relief that I will no longer have to ingest any more harmful drugs that seem to only cause chaos in my already sensitive body. I take a deep breath and in what feels like hours recount in my head the horrors of my past experiences of being a guinea pig to the many medicines recommended as a cure to my seizure disorder.

In the Western world of doctors and hospitals there is a very easy formula when it comes to seizure patients. Go to the neurologist, get an EEG, play hunt and peck with every medicine out there and the dosages until one works. As advanced as we are in technology, life saving surgeries, even in research for obscure diseases, the brain is still mostly an uncharted complex mystery. A typical office visit might include some fairly bizarre neurological testing that might be more suitably renamed "Trip Games for the Fun and Hallucinating." There is an impressive set of obscure questions concerning detailed accounts of sleeping patterns and positions, what hand forks are held



in, trauma, and most importantly, do I like the story of *Alice in Wonderland*? Or better yet, do I currently feel that I am possessed by the devil? Ahhh, science.

The final and most hard-hitting part is finding a medicine that will work with the type of seizures that are displayed during an episode. I am specifically a hard case to work on due to an extensive history of serious drug allergies. The hunt begins. My neurologist writes a prescription for a medicine with a gradual increase in dosage over an allotted duration. I hold pills in hand and do a series of chants and offerings to the g-ds that this one will not kill me, as I close my eyes, open my mouth and, well... wait. One after another: dilantin, tegretol, phenobarbital, depakote, felbamate, lamictal, keppra.

Illustration by Darin Stumme
Original photography by K. Johansen - <http://www.fotografik.com/>

psychedelic lifestyles

topiramate, and on. All of these drug therapies may have the potential of helping me gain a seizure-free life; however, within days or sometimes even months, it is clear that my body rejects the medication. All medicines have side effects and these are no exception.

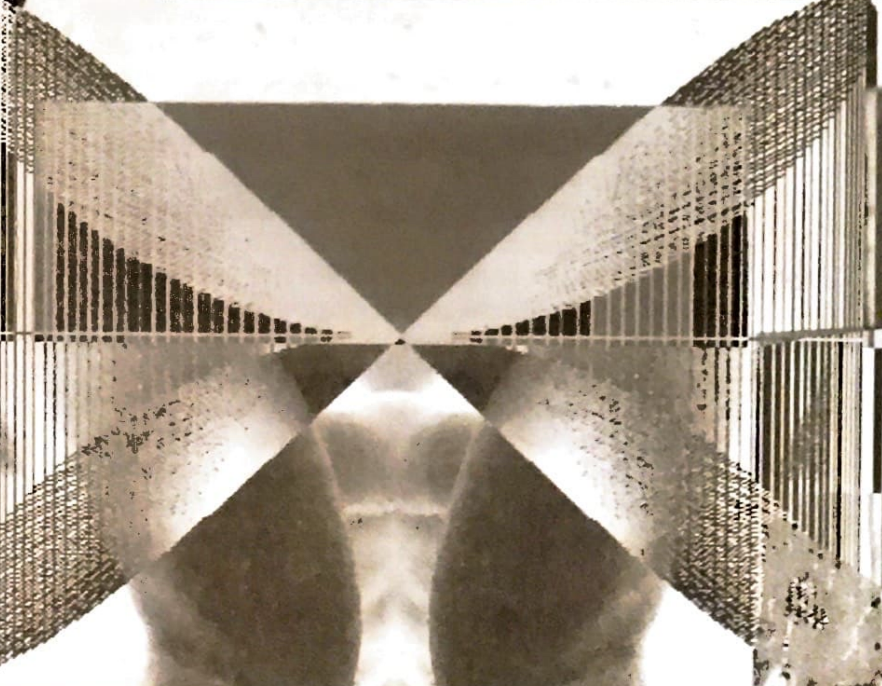
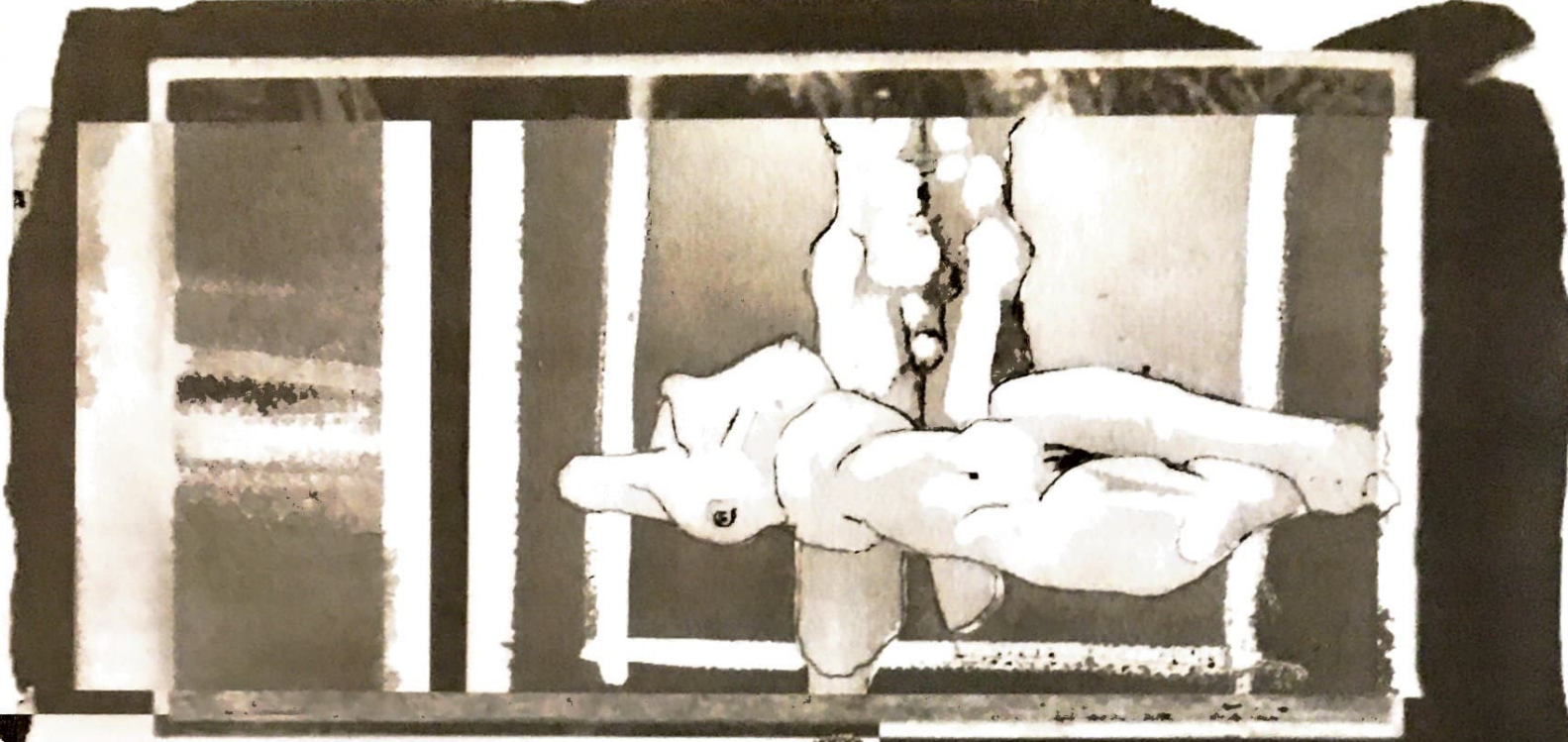
In my world, in my body, they have all declared war.

Here is a mixture of interwoven war stories. I wake up only to find out that I have been sleeping on and off for days, desperate to go to the bathroom. My stomach pains with the sensation that it is filled with curdled milk as it cramps until tears stream down my cheeks. While walking back to bed I slam my shoulder into the wall as I turn the corner unable to focus on the true dimension of the hallway. I grab a Coke and immediately spit it out from the horrible metal taste in my mouth. I make those in the house try it. Did it go bad? Doesn't it have a shelf life longer than Twinkies? No, please do not take away the ambrosia of the g-ds. My concentration fades in and out as people speak to me. I make plans and forget them just as quickly. Time passes as I realize I have been staring at a wall for, well, a long time. I pick up a book and it drops. My motor coordination is not yet intact. I close my eyes only to find my world spinning and insomnia creeping in. Weak and tired, I turn on the television. I shift back and forth unable to find a comfortable position as an urge to scratch my arms and legs overwhelms me. After further inspection, I see hundreds and thousands of little red dots turning me into my very own Monet painting only it itches like my skin has been attacked by thousands of spiders. I have a fever of 103 and am starting to pass out. On the way to the hospital, they draw some blood. The doctor approaches me with what could be potentially fatal news. My white blood count is so low they fear I might have leukemia. I will need to have it drawn again in a few days. My heartbeat is abnormal and needs to be investigated further. All of these symptoms and plenty more are some of the reactions I have suffered while trying to find a therapy to control my seizures. I swear, sometimes it is easier to simply fall on the floor uncontrollably; at least I know what to expect.

I understand that without trial and error we will never know what medicine can or will work, yet the intense regimen of my drug therapy is focused almost exclusively on neurochemistry. At the same time, my beliefs lead me to explore Chinese herbs and acupuncture, meditation, yoga and spiritual healing, in an attempt to supplement the Western approach with more holistic approaches. Psychedelics are another avenue of strength, an outlook into an inward world from which I can draw strength. Certainly I take into consideration the effects a drug might have on my seizures or how it will interact with my anti-convulsants and my current seizure pattern. I consider the body load of a given psychedelic: is it very speedy, how long does it typically last (shorter drugs are easier for me), and so on. I usually need to skip my med dose and figure out how to add it onto the end of my trip – will my meds make me go even higher at that point, or will I fall fast asleep? I need to be rigorous about adding food into the end of the trip, and my recovery time is often longer. I've never had problems while actually on a psychedelic, but seizures often follow exhaustion for me, so the next day has a higher seizure potential. And naturally a safe environment for me includes a well-trusted, well-educated person who is willing to handle a seizure for me if it does arise.

But it would be nearly impossible for me to heal without a strong connection to myself, and psychedelics offer an important path to working deeply within my core, to finding the stamina, endurance and courage to face the rigors of drug therapy. Western medicine certainly has its place. As a matter of fact, without it my life could potentially be much harder to live. However, this science is not perfect, and it does not offer the psychological and spiritual support that psychedelics and my other pursuits offer. This effort is an unknown uphill battle. It is the combination of all of these experiences that build my endurance to continue toward a hopefully seizure-free life.





Psychedelic Sexuality

From Acid Orgies to Conscious Conception

by R. Stuart

During the 1960s, a lurid association between psychedelics and erotic libertinism became firmly entrenched in the public imagination. Timothy Leary stated in his September 1966 *Playboy* interview that "LSD is the most powerful aphrodisiac ever discovered by man." Soon, other popular magazines published articles such as "LSD – The Instant Thrill Pill: Sizzling Exposé of America's latest Sex Drug."¹ Psychedelic sex was a topic in fiction,² and numerous pulp novels immortalized the acid orgy.³ A movie portrayed acid-crazed bikers cavorting with naked women atop a giant LSD sugar cube presided over by the Devil.⁴ Psychedelic Tantricism was discussed in underground magazines.⁵ Pop sexology books represented psychedelics as aphrodisiacs,⁶ some containing chapters such as "LSD – The Drug of One Hundred Orgasms,"⁷ "The Spell of LSD Sex" and "Lesbian Sex with Acid."⁸ One drug abuse text described an STP orgy.⁹ Books had titles such as *Hippie Sex*¹⁰ and *Hippies, Drugs and Promiscuity*.¹¹ The August 1966 issue of *Police Gazette* reprinted a *Journal of the American Medical Association* paper re-titled as "LSD and Sex Madness." Seemingly, the only attempts to dispel the concept of a psychedelic aphrodisiac were ones that were equally sensationalistic, for example the article "LSD kills sex drive forever."¹²

These stereotypes of psychedelic sex are the product of a confluence of historical trends. There was a brief period of increased promiscuity among some young people from the introduction of the birth control pill in the early 1960s until the pandemic of venereal diseases in the early 1980s. The sexual freedom occasioned by medical technology engendered a skepticism towards Judeo-Christian dogmas of sexual repression. This created a spiritual vacuum that was often filled by experimentation with psychedelics. Media exposés of the "sex & drugs" scene caused parents nationwide to fear that their innocent virgin daughters might run away to Haight Ashbury or Greenwich Village, where they would be debauched after succumbing to the corrosive influence of LSD.

It is true that some people can have strong sexual responses under the influence of some psychedelics in

certain circumstances. For instance, Alexander Shulgin found 5-MeO-DIPT to intensify the pleasurable sensations of ejaculation, particularly at low doses starting at about 6 mg. He predicted that 5-MeO-DIPT "will demand a great deal of interest sometime in the future, especially if the erotic enhancement at a low dose proves to be a consistent property."¹³ Shulgin suggested to an employee of Pfizer that this tryptamine be marketed in combination with Viagra. Although the employee was enthusiastic, Pfizer's upper management ignored the proposal.¹⁴ The following 1999 internet posting describes a 5-MeO-DIPT session with a man on 10 mg. and his partner on 7 mg.:

She pushed me to the floor and almost literally tore my shirt off. We began kissing with a great deal of passion, caressing each other as we did so. It felt quite incredible. We were almost mad with lust, so foreplay, weird or not, didn't last long before we began having sex.... The sex was phenomenally good.... Orgasm was accompanied by a huge explosion of colorful visuals, momentarily obscuring everything else.... It was some of the best sex we had ever had together.... I felt incredibly close to her. We were able to talk about a few touchy subjects with ease and clarity. I think this could be a terrific tool for couples to use to work out differences (or sexual difficulties).

Ralph Metzner published an early poetic and impressionistic account by a husband and wife who enjoyed making love on LSD in 1962.¹⁵ Several commentators have advised that such activity be practiced only by couples who are committed to deep mutual exploration, and who have considerable experience both with making love together, and with taking psychedelics on their own. This will minimize disappointing experiences. For instance, one woman's latent discomfort manifested during the height of her passion as a hallucination that her partner's penis broke off at his crotch and fell lifeless to the ground. Then her terror increased as she felt her vulva dry out and fill with dust.¹⁶ Ray Nelson, author of *The Acidheads*, reported

that a woman was frightened while lying on the bed next to her nude husband. She recounted:

I thought he was masturbating and that his penis was a frightful monster. It had a monster face and my husband seemed like a monster too. It seemed to me that this hand was stroking his penis and that he was stroking this monster... it was blue and pink with colored light coming out of it.

She talked with her husband about her aversion to his "frightful pet." This led to the insight that her fear came from an inability to share love that was derived from feelings of painful abandonment when her beloved father died when she was two years old. After she understood the source of her anxiety, her resistance to sex melted away and she enjoyed intercourse with her husband. This example demonstrates that scary imagery can lead to an improved psychological state, but only if the person has the capacity for self-examination and is motivated to explore the reason for the negative perceptions. Nelson then described a case of a woman who had a prolonged psychotic reaction after being unable to cope with having honestly discussed her latent lesbianism with her husband while they were under the influence of LSD. The husband was not judgmental about the revelation that she just had her first affair with another woman the week before. However, the wife could not handle having been honest after so many years of evasion. This led to a big disturbance with the wife's psychiatrists, and the breakup of her marriage. Nelson concluded, "It seems to me that LSD functions in sex as a kind of searchlight into the mind. Where a sexual relationship is already open and flowing the LSD only adorns it with a garland of fantasy that reflects the underlying health, but where there is some sort of dark secret or hidden reservations, the LSD will throw a pitiless light on things the individuals involved might well have wished to keep hidden even from themselves."¹⁷

Richard Alpert wrote "A Manual for Making the Marriage New." This ceremony involves taking a psychedelic, reading excerpts from spiritual literature, self-examination of identity while staring into a mirror, followed by sexual union.¹⁸ Robert Masters noted that psychedelic intercourse might take on symbolic and archetypal overtones as the couple feels that they are living out mythic or legendary roles. These ecstatic states may "include one or even several instances of apparent physical and psychic melting into and becoming one with the partner. Whether this occurs in a sexual union or in a mystical context, or in a combination of the two, it is almost always regarded as one of the most profound and fulfilling experiences human life has to offer."¹⁹ The most detailed description of the psychedelic sexuality of ordinary citizens in naturalistic settings is a little-known paperback *The Sexual Paradise of LSD* by Marsha Alexander.²⁰

Stanislav Grof described sexual imagery that can emerge in individual LSD sessions. There are the death/rebirth motifs of divine intercourse, satanic sexuality, and oceanic sex. Transpersonal themes might entail reliving sexual experiences from one's personal ancestors or from sexual rituals from different cultures, kundalini arousal, or even full experiential identification with the mating of animals or the pollination of plants. Grof believed such reveries could yield authentic insights about the actual details of procreation among other species.²¹ Psychedelic sexual fantasies are not always pleasant. For example, a subject in a DMT experiment actually believed that two crocodiles were anally raping him.²²

There have been numerous discussions of sexual issues in the literature on psychedelic psychotherapy. LSD was used to treat frigidity,²³ homosexuality and sexual deviations.²⁴ Grof wrote that LSD therapy had yielded favorable results for cases of fetishism, exhibitionism, coprophilia, and sadistic or masochistic tendencies.²⁵ Alpert discussed the use of LSD to treat homosexuality and leather fetishism.²⁶ Interestingly, this psychologist did not challenge the legitimacy of homosexuality as a psychiatric diagnosis, although in his personal life he was bisexual.

MDMA in particular has been described as having an impact on sexuality.²⁷ One report claimed that it tends to encourage emotional closeness, but does not increase sexual excitation or desire in the majority of users.²⁸ In one survey, 90% of the subjects reported that MDMA increased sexual desire and satisfaction, although it inhibited erection for 40% of men, and delayed but intensified orgasm.²⁹ Individuals who are usually repressed, particularly women, may lose all inhibitions under the influence of MDMA. Some people habitually use MDMA as an excuse to engage in group sex or homosexuality; they later attribute these behaviors to the drug in order to avoid the self-image issues involved with admitting that they are bisexual or promiscuous. There is also the problem of people feeling such interpersonal warmth that they neglect to practice safe sex.

Finally, psychedelics may influence people's approaches to gender and procreative issues. Natalie Rogers interpreted her LSD-inspired feminine imagery within the context of her feminist activities.³⁰ Grof became convinced that fetuses are conscious due to his personal LSD experiences. Although Grof believes that it is a pragmatic social policy to permit abortion, he no longer performs this operation himself.³¹ Under ayahuasca, pregnant women have reported telepathic communication with their fetus, gaining insight into the karmic histories that brought them together with their particular child. This sort of experience has contributed to the movement for "conscious conception."

The footnotes for this article can be found on the web at <http://tripzine.com/articles.asp?id=sexnotes>

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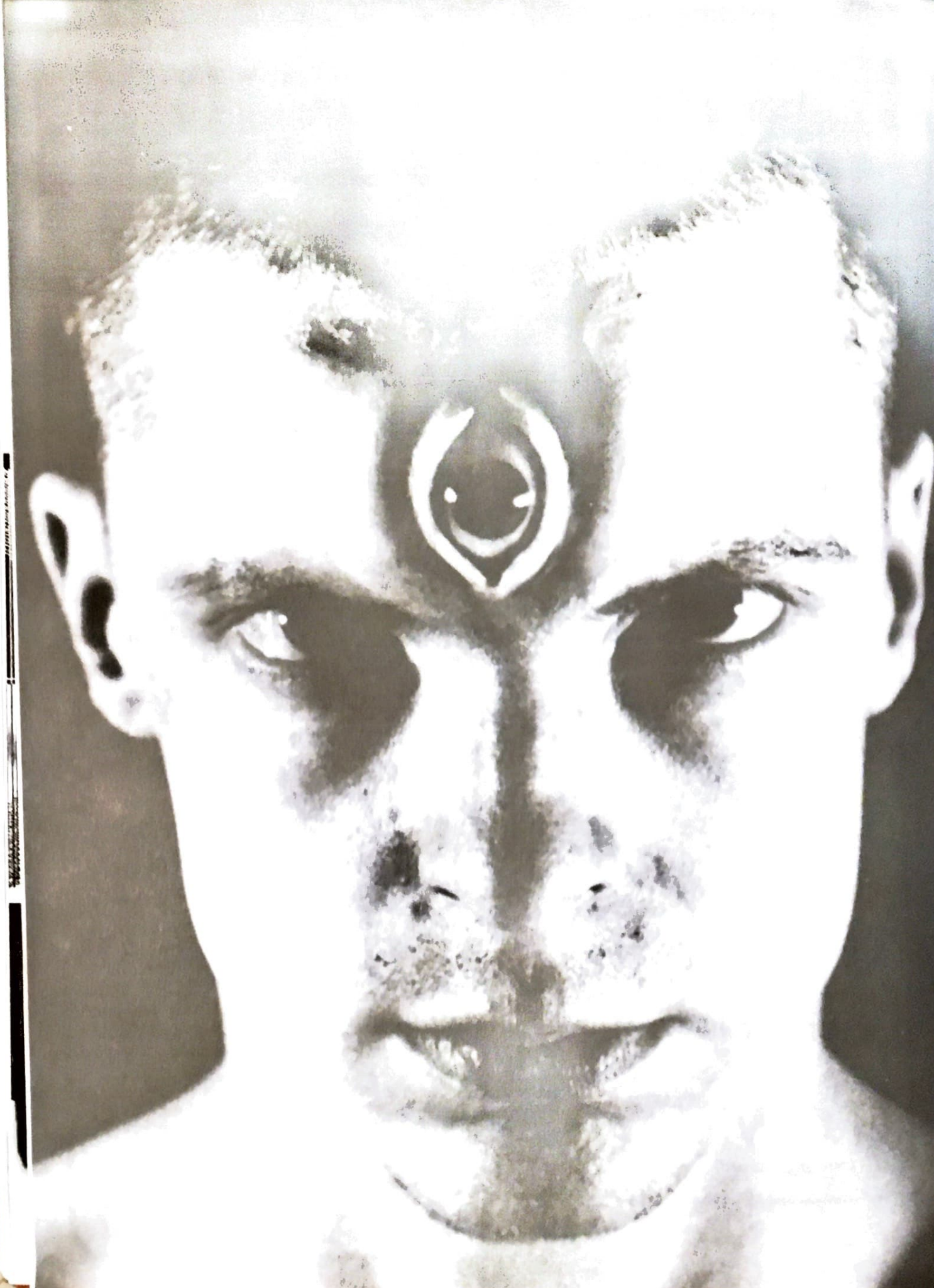


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Toward an Integral Art

An Interview with Alex Grey

by Gilad Rosner

Trip talks to Alex Grey about art, spirituality and chemicals. We caught up with him in his Brooklyn studio.

Trip: Let's begin with your book, *The Mission of Art*. It appears that one of the purposes in writing the book is to redirect some thought away from the postmodern idea that authenticity in art is impossible. Some critics feel it is a laughable idea to really make a strong fusion of spirituality and art. The postmodern perspective, as you describe it, lacks any specific artistic mission and is simply the realm of titanic egos. It seems that with *The Mission Of Art* you are trying to suggest a redirection of artistic focus in the art world towards the transpersonal.

Alex Grey: Spirituality seems to be taken more seriously today than even a few years ago when I wrote *The Mission Of Art*. Maybe 9-11 has accelerated an interest in spirituality and maybe we are all facing our vulnerability and mortality, forcing us into a cauldron of searching questions: "Who am I? Where am I going? What's life all about?" We realize that life is over all too soon and it's time to drop bullshit mind games. This year, 2002, a legitimate art journal, *Art Papers*, had an article entitled "Beyond Postmodernism" that featured my work on the cover. The article discussed the possibility of an "Integral Art" by artists that are incorporating the full span of being in their art as well as socio-political, scientific and aesthetic issues. Postmodernism has had the good qualities of valuing varied opinions, thereby allowing multicultural and formerly marginalized points of view to emerge. Outsider art, Native American art, and art of many cultures have grown in popularity and renown in the last ten years. The shamanic underpinnings of tribal artwork have been revealed. It's becoming obvious that there has always been a spiritual basis to art making that expresses the values and meanings and collective soul of the culture.

So there's a hunger in contemporary art to keep things fresh and new. Shocking art is no longer so shocking, and as we try to stimulate ourselves and shock ourselves further, we keep accreting other types of art. We've delved now into a much more multicultural art world because of this hunger, and we're pulling other cultures' spiritualism

into our own art world through that search to keep the culture vibrant.

Yes. This was brought out in a show that happened ten years ago called *Magicians Of The Earth*, which brought together artists that were doing minimalist works and conceptual artists with tribal artists from Australia and Africa. It recontextualized contemporary art in a broader multicultural framework, and helped allow the context of art to embrace a spirituality which had been anathema. This was an encouraging sign pointing beyond the fragmentation of the postmodern mind toward a more integrative world culture.

For me, psychedelics were the door opener into how everything weaves together. You can literally see how things integrate during an entheogenic mystical experience. There is an unwritten chapter in art history on how important artists have gained insight through their use of psychedelics. Keith Haring, a major artist of the Eighties, is one of them. He credits the invention of his style to LSD trips when he was 17 or 18. His work has had a major influence in the art world, and is celebrated in the highest bastions of culture. Albert Hofmann told me that Francesco Clemente came and thanked him for the visions. I've often thought it would be interesting to look at various artists' work through the lens of the drugs that they used. Look at the sloshed abstract expressionists; you can practically see the drunken frenzy that was coming through De Kooning and Pollock. They were both alcoholics, and tremendous painters.

Van Gogh and his interest in absinthe...

Exactly. Rembrandt was also supposedly a famous drunk. Alcoholism is linked with expressionism. Francis Bacon was an amazing painter who liked to drink. Getting out of your rational state and into a loose, "oh fuck it" mode that can promote spontaneous experimentalism with painting has been responsible for some of the real breakthroughs. We can credit drunken, deranged mind states for some of the great

works through art history. Absinthe and hashish in the late nineteenth century fueled the Symbolists. Cocaine drove the artists of the 1980's. In fact, it would be great to analyze all of art history in terms of artists' drug use.

One might suggest that prohibition and the war on drugs are counter to the art spirit of the nation.

(laughs) Most definitely. Artists have always embraced unauthorized and unconventional states of mind, or as Glen Boire calls it, "cognitive liberty." The artist is, by necessity, a maverick sensibility operating on the sidelines of their community, bringing new insight. If they're not bringing new insight, then they're merely parroting the conventional mode and not advancing the thinking or vision of the tribe. We commonly associate art with that opening of possibility that leaves us momentarily awestruck until it seems obvious, and then we incorporate it. That's the trajectory of art through the ages.

One can see psychedelics as a type of lubrication to help an artist make the break from the mundane to a more liminal state, a position between what they understand to be their normal circumstance and areas that could be closed off.

We've all got our limited ways of thinking. We've got our own "mind-forged manacles," as Blake would call them. I think that the catalyzing of the creative process is precisely that: it's pushing yourself beyond your own limits. Sometimes it just comes gratuitously. You're working or walking down the street and an insight like a lightning bolt comes and strikes you. I remember waiting on a subway platform, exhausted after a day teaching, and suddenly I had this vision of a World Soul Sculpture. It was this being that was hovering there in my mind's eye on this subway platform, and I thought, "Wow, that's an interesting idea for a painting." Then it opened its wings and turned around on the lazy-susan of my mind, and I thought, "Oh my God, it's a sculpture," and that kept me occupied for two years. This visionary flash was under a minute. I was very excited after being completely exhausted, there it was, I wasn't high, it was a normal state, and boom! Who can account for it? Then there are times my wife and I will get into a pickle with some particular artwork that we're doing, a painting that gets to a certain state of frustration, so we'll get high, usually just smoke a joint, and look at it, and many times the solution is obvious in that state. We're transcending our own conventional modes of thought by shifting gears.

Have you ever had ideas or artistic concepts that you couldn't reproduce on canvas?

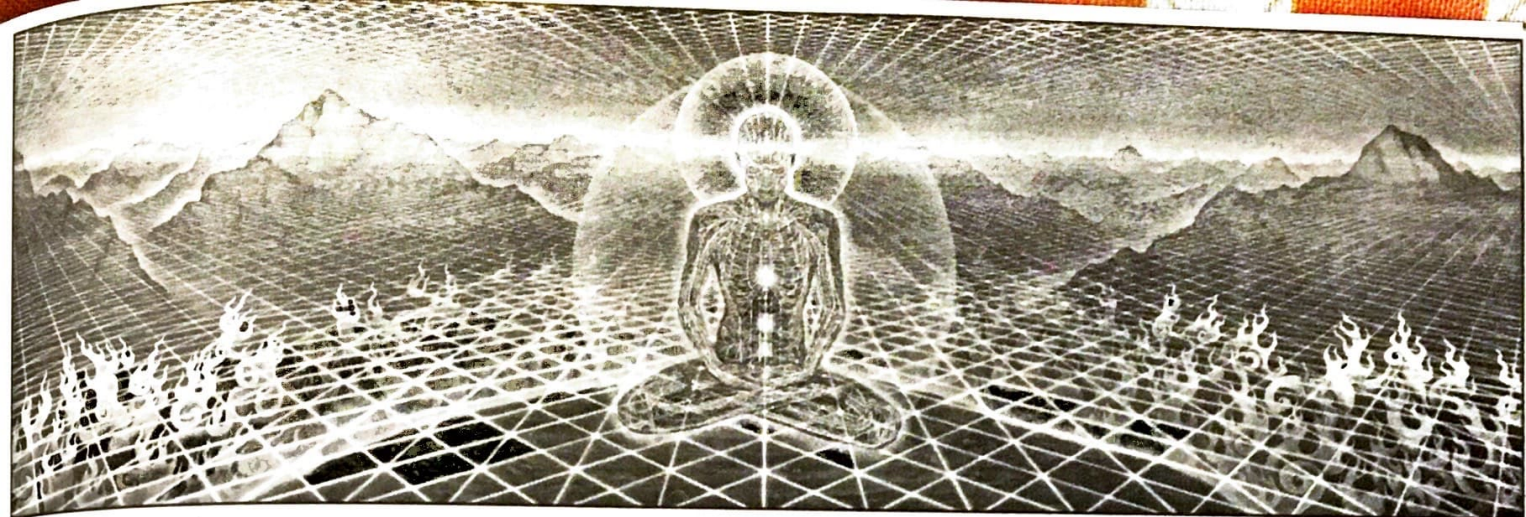
All the time. I think that when you smoke DMT and your entire body is involved in an emergence into another reality, certainly you wish you could sculpt the soul of

the viewer or the audience member in such a way that you could reproduce an effect like that. The paintings are a pale reflection of these altered states or insights. I'm always amazed at the number of people who are able to recognize the multidimensional experience from a two-dimensional surface. It's only because it's etched itself in their cells that any twinkling of a reminiscence or a resonance with those states alerts and excites the person who's been there. Even if it's not an exact "right on!" to their previous experience, they're able to recognize that it was something like this with the same infinitizing aspect, or an experience of ascending, or an expansiveness of the mental processes keyed to an infinitude of eyes, or a superabundance of light, or colors that were brilliant or iridescent. There are people who say their experience "was exactly like that, I don't know how you could do that, this is what happened to me!" This fulfills my whole purpose in making these works, that they could evoke the flavor of these states of consciousness, and give people imagery or an iconography of the psychedelic state so that they could say, "Look, I'm not crazy. Other people have experienced it too. I'm not alone."

What you're describing is a transcendence of relativism. It sounds like you managed to go beyond the postmodern art condition and posit more universalist ideals in art. Even though it's a very personal experience for you to create these works, you have shown in your language something that is akin to a universal concept. You're bringing forth these energies and visions that might truly be part of the human condition.

Well, that's my mission. It's encouraging that a universalism to the transpersonal dimensions exists. Stan Grof verified those claims through thousands of documented LSD patients that he worked with, and time and time again established the same cartography. There were personal differences, but within a meta framework a perennial vision recurs throughout different world cultures, and is the origin of all the mystical traditions. Huxley and numerous authors have written intelligently about the perennial philosophy. Huston Smith has brilliantly teased out the threads of universalism that run through the world's wisdom traditions. It's a great task for a contemporary artist to educate one's self on these many threads.

The artist struggles with their demons, and the flights of messianic self-importance, the inflated possibilities that an artist can "CHANGE THE WORLD!" with their vision or can "HEAL THEIR CULTURE!" or the collective soul. All these high-falutin' and maybe preposterous ideas are necessary in order to get an artist off their ass and make a potentially stunning work of art. It might be fueled by outrageous enthusiasm and inflated claims, and the viewer may only get the slightest vibe. Even on that very subtle level, it may have a worthwhile effect



Theologue, by Alex Grey, 1984

I'd like my artwork to be like a bandage on the collective psyche or soul.

on the viewer. Whatever intention and energy is bound up in a work of art is like a battery, there to recharge whoever is in front of it. It's why we look at sacred art and images of the Buddha, Christ and Krishna. We wonder, "What is this enlightened mind that the mysterious smile of the Buddha seems to project? How can I get that?" That common peaceful vibe that comes through sacred art is restorative, is curative for people's psyches.

I've been working on a drawing of a meshwork of galactic consciousness that is visualized as endless pillars of heads, all interconnected in a flaming eye grid, through which you see the galactic swirls. You peer down into an infinite regress of these heads, and see an expanse to each side of these heads, each of them four faced and staring at each other giving the appearance of infinite expansiveness. It alludes to a dimension of total interconnectedness. I'm getting very excited about painting this thing, and I'm trying to contemplate, how big should I make it? How big is this idea? WHY, IT'S HUGE! What are the works that have profoundly reflected the state of being of its culture? We have *Guernica*, Picasso's greatest work of art. How big is it? That fucker is HUGE! It's 12 x 26 feet! Oh my God, it's huge! Then there's Pollock's works, like his breakthrough mural for Peggy Guggenheim. That's like 20 feet long by about 8 feet high. It's vastly huge! With *Guernica*, Picasso was reflecting the dehumanization of the twentieth century, the debased humanity, the fragmented, fractured nightmare of history. He was purposefully using the blacks, whites and grays of newsprint, and the kind of helplessness and victimization and terror that we all feel in relation to the news media and in relation to the magnitude of violence inherent in modern warfare. *Guernica* was a perfect reflection of that shattered hope. The shards of human sensibility and all the beings are either dying, dead, or in terror. The grief and horror and disbelief is a beautiful expression of the existential state of the twentieth century. The only light is an electric lamp that is the mute witness to the horror.

Pollock reflected this kind of chaos in his soul, this abyss that he was facing. He and some of the other profound abstract expressionists, like Rothko, were epic painters. Pollock got the energy of the rhythms of nature and the cosmos, the galactic splatters that at his best were a giant breakthrough, but also had this angst-ridden stale cigarette smoke and ash kind of feeling of hopelessness and despair. He was a brilliant, amazing painter. Bacon never liked Pollock's work and thought it was like wallpaper, but Pollock had a profound impact on the art world. He really took the ball from Picasso in terms of what was avant-garde, and established a touchdown for American post-war art. It set a new standard of scale for a whole generation of artists. James Rosenquist has probably outdone everyone as far as humongous scales for works of art, and I don't anticipate trying to compete with that. Rosenquist, Picasso, and Pollock are messengers of fragmentation, postmodern reflections of a shattered psyche expressing the meta-narrative of the 20th century. Rosenquist is still painting.

Anselm Kiefer, a great German painter living in France, has advanced this meta-narrative, and is aimed toward an alchemical healing. He's reflecting the despair of the history of his nation, and his work is also reflective of a search for spiritual meaning. The search is there, but the viewer is not sure what has been found. There's an alchemical process of healing going on, so that's an advancement over some of the earlier shattered sensibilities, like Picasso and Pollock. In my new work, I'm intending to advance the meta-narrative of painting, and point to a transcendental, already enlightened state of profound interconnectedness, beyond a normal conception of time and space, that is the source of healing and that many of us visit while we're tripping. I'd like my art work to be like a bandage on the collective psyche or soul. We are all wounded from our journey through the 20th century and now the horrors of the 21st are dawning on us. Even as we read the headlines and we know the realities that are disheartening and

disempowering, there are alternative realities that are empowering and that can help us see our lives in a universal context.

I know that in the Eighties, some of your work really reflected the cold war tension — *Nuclear Crucifixion*, for example. Have you started to create anything in relation to 9-11?

Well, I did a number of very simple drawings immediately after 9-11 in my sketchbook that depict a conveyor of souls hovering over the World Trade towers after they were hit. There were little light emanations shooting up through this great being that was helping convey the souls to heaven. It's an archetype I've seen in children's art and art work by outsider artists, as well. A lot of people felt that there was some kind of angelic or spiritual presence that was above the towers that was helping to escort the souls of the unfortunate victims. These images may find their way into more developed work at some time as a commemoration. I also did drawings of the people who jumped and held hands as they were falling. I had images of body parts flying out of the sky and terrified onlookers as things started to fall. I did drawings of people in grief, and have been working on a grieving painting that's based on the aftermath.

I think 9-11 profoundly impacted a number of artists. New York is the art capital of the world. There are probably more artists here than anywhere else in the world, so there will continue to manifest profound waves of impact from 9-11 that will be reflected in artists' works. Confronting mortality causes everyone to reexamine their lives and essentialize things. There was a tremendous amount of hand-wringing in the intellectual press, in the *New York Times*, after 9-11: "So now where do we stand in our postmodern view? What has this done? How has this impacted things? If all points of views were honored, how can you honor Osama's terrorist views when it kills your friends?" It's catalyzed a lot of rethinking, at deep levels, and I think that the outburst of art making that New York went through — the memorials and candlelight vigils and collages of loved ones on the walls — transformed the city into a giant installation of grief and commemoration. Just as a funeral is a ceremony to honor the dead for the living, these memorials that were spontaneously erupting on many street corners and around the fire departments in neighborhoods throughout New York were ways for us all to grieve and integrate the assault.

I wonder how many people found themselves to be unintentional artists, people who hadn't ever made much collage art or photographic art who found themselves putting memorials together, coming in touch with their natural creativity because of this.

It's the human creative response. You want to create

in response to destruction. It's just a natural thing, a response to the horror. Psychotherapists know that when you have monstrous feelings it's best to express them through creative endeavors — making a painting, a drawing, a musical work, a dance, a theatrical production, or writing in a journal. It's a way to creatively vent the negative powers that can eat away at us.

This is the healing function of art and creative therapies. Even though we may not imagine ourselves becoming Olympic athletes, it doesn't mean we shouldn't exercise. Likewise, even if we're not going to be Picasso, it doesn't mean we shouldn't express ourselves creatively. In fact, it's an important function of the mind and body to integrate feelings. Using art to describe visionary and psychedelic insights has profound and important implication. Grof recognized this early on, and various psychotherapists who have dealt with traumatized patients. When you go through a psychedelic experience, it may not necessarily be traumatic, but ontologically it can be apocalyptic. Just as when a loved one dies, a child is born, or one falls in love — life-altering, identity-shifting experiences, like a first trip, call for a complete rewiring of the philosophical circuitry. Psychedelics are on par with the most profound experiences human beings go through. The creative response is called for, and in my case this is what I do naturally.

I really liked the question you raised in *The Mission Of Art* regarding who legitimately can judge what is art or what is good art. You tell the story of a man who was a janitor his whole life, had profound visions and worked in secret, showing no one what he was making. He then died, and his wife found a temple that he had created in a rented garage.

The artist was James Hampton and his creation is called *The Throne Of The Third Heaven Of The Nations Millennium General Assembly*. It's an incredible piece on display at the National Gallery in Washington. It never fails to attract a crowd. It's basically a bunch of chairs and objects and knick knacks and bric-a-brac covered with aluminum foil, but the assemblage of common objects are transformed into this holodeck of *Star Trek* where this guy would sit in his garage and converse with the Virgin Mary. We think, "tut tut, what an amusing psycho." William Blake received that sort of response from the public, as well. People thought of him as a lunatic but he left behind a trail of incredibly beautiful art work and poetry. During his lifetime his work was reviled. He was a laughing stock in the critical press; they found him a pathetic character. I just wish those critics could read the kind of praise and following that Blake engendered through the following centuries. Now he's a *cause célèbre* among the literati and the illuminati. His idiosyncratic spirituality is an inspiration to thousands.

Let's switch gears for a second. How is the *Chapel* coming?

The *Chapel Of Sacred Mirrors* project is coming really well. We intend to declare the site in 2002. There have been numerous offers by organizations who would consider the *Chapel* a jewel in their crown and also clear offers of land. We have had to decide whether the *Chapel* has a better chance joining an existing institution or going independent. The American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore has been interested in exhibiting the *Sacred Mirrors*, and we may work out an extended loan there while we are building the actual *Chapel*. We love the American Visionary Art Museum and strongly recommend visiting there if you find yourself in downtown Baltimore. I'm exhibiting two major works there right now in a show entitled *War and Peace*. The *Cosmic Christ* is a 9 1/2 foot altarpiece, which I consider my most recent major work, and it will be there until September. Also the giant *Nuclear Crucifixion* is in the show. It hadn't been exhibited since the anti-nuke years of the Eighties.

I'm now in the process of creating the visionary architecture for the *Chapel*. It is our intention for the building itself to initiate people into universal spirituality. Sacred works of art need sacred architecture to view them in. We need to build architecture for a new state of being. It would also be a safe place to expand one's consciousness and download the frequencies that are being transmitted through the works of art. Rather than being the "source" of this artwork, I feel like I'm an antenna, and the laborer who is channeling the works, trying to obey as best I can the edicts of the inner worlds. We've refused selling numerous works of art and bought works back from collectors that we want to be included in the *Chapel*. Other collectors have promised to donate works that they own if we're able to build this *Chapel*. We hear from people every day who want to know where they can go to see the work. It needs a permanent, publicly accessible space. They're really tools for people to catalyze their own spiritual process.

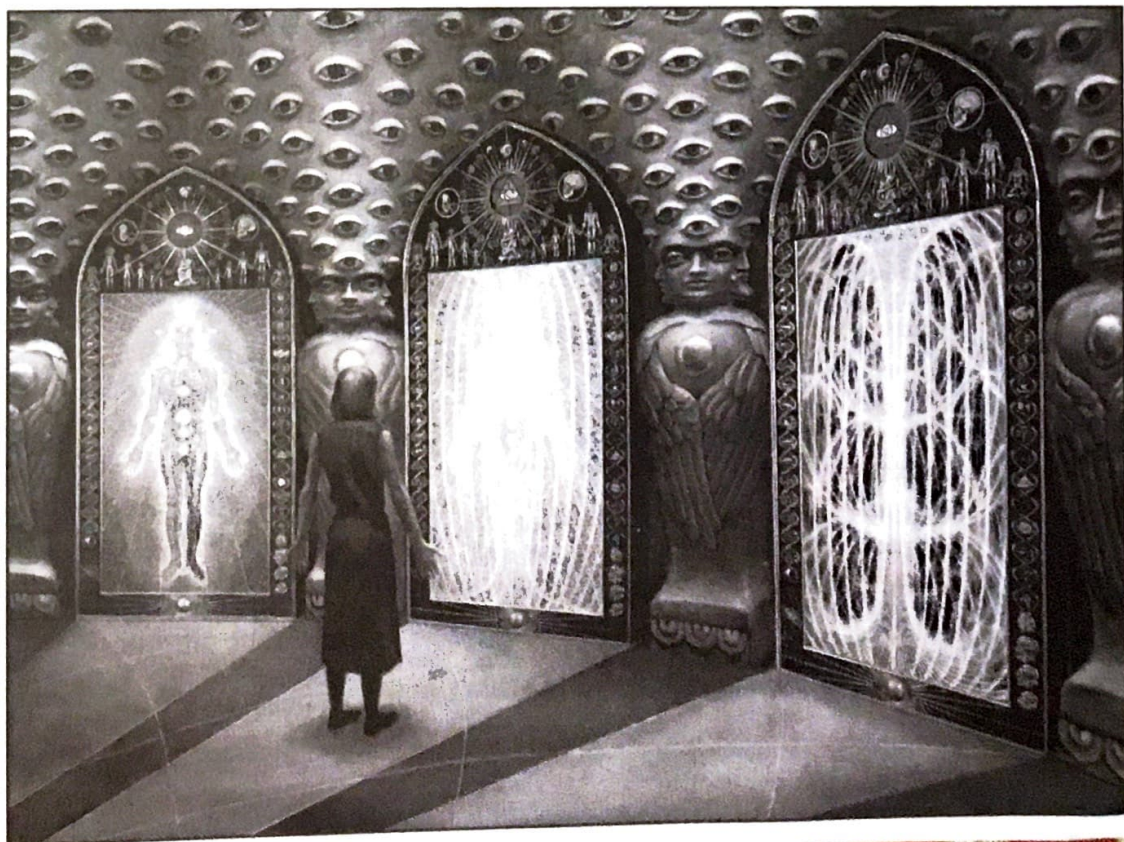
The traditional gallery space and the curatorial aesthetic might not fulfill that use that you're trying to encourage.

"Chapel of Sacred Mirrors:
Interior View with Three Sacred Mirrors,"
artist's conception by Alex Grey

Definitely. That isn't the mandate of galleries. They are committed to expressing the current fashions of the art world, not necessarily to respiritualize and resacralize the world. Sacred spaces have been built by cultures that feel moved and devoted to bringing their spirituality to an outer form. We are the inheritors of insights from all the world's wisdom traditions and iconography of all world religions, as well as the psychedelic state. We can synthesize this knowledge and access archetypes from a multitude of world cultures. We can experience the profound patterning and ornamentation of neighboring worlds and DMT worlds and translate what we see into real architecture that emanates from these insights. People know that Persian carpets, Maori tattoos, Celtic knotting, Gaudi's non-rectilinear ornamentation and art nouveau, have all come out of patterning seen in the collective unconscious by many people from many places – symbols and imagery that are emblematic in a particular culture. The psychedelic and visionary state has evoked many patterns and images that can be woven into our new architecture. We have to acknowledge the reality of these spaces by building them. We need to provide a comfortable, stimulating environment to see these true visions expressed. This new sacred space would initiate some into an awareness of these visionary realities, and confirm the realities to others. Providing a visual resacralization of the every day could have a profound implication on our daily life. This is the intention of my work.

In my painting, *Kissing*, people are portrayed as translucent, and a flaming infinity band links together

Psychedelics are on par with the most profound experiences human beings go through.



the hearts and minds of the lovers. It is pointing to a ground of being that is beyond the material realm, to a subtle spiritual essence, a truth that transcends the flesh. I chose to paint normal every day experiences to portray their life-enhancing quality, and to point to what makes life worthwhile. The work is also meant to see outside any particular religious framework. That's why you see their bones and the palpable anatomical flesh that's beneath the skin. The image points to what isn't normally visible, but what we all know to be true. Seeing the anatomical body invites the psyche to accept as reality these realms of subtle energy and spiritual light that the artwork intends to transmit to the open-minded, open hearted viewer. Each artwork is like a battery of consciousness.

Collecting many of these works together in one place, like the *Chapel*, each artwork having different insights and facets of this gem of awareness, influenced by the many wisdom traditions, could serve people in deepening their own spiritual life.

Your work is educational in that it shows people what they know to be anatomical truths, but also reveals deeper truths that their culture may not have emphasized. You're addressing the big questions, the really huge questions of spirituality, and I can imagine that in the *Chapel*, you're going to stir some people up. You have these very, very strong psychic events depicted in your paintings, and you have your own psychic event in viewing the art object itself, and then you have this educational aspect where people are actively learning beyond having the aesthetic event.

That is my intention and why we are building the *Chapel*. We have gotten tremendous encouragement and support from many generous and enthusiastic people. The Sacred Mirrors web site, <http://www.sacredmirrors.org>, enables anyone to view the virtual *Chapel of Sacred Mirrors*. The paintings morph with one level of anatomy

dissolving into another, one race and sex dissolving into another, the spiritual energy system and the Universal Mind Lattice and spiritual archetypes morphing into each other. It's a way of viewing the *Sacred Mirrors* that I'd always hoped for. It can't replace the value of standing in

front of the paintings themselves in their life-sized scale, having them all assembled together and surrounded by the guardian pillars, but it's a great way to inform about this possibility that we want to create. We've raised around \$125,000 toward the building fund, and we need to raise several million. One average budget movie may easily cost \$30 million dollars. We think we can come up with \$5-10 million for a transformative *Chapel*.

Are there any other artists that you want to engage on the project, either to include their work inside or to have them work on the building's design with you?

Absolutely. We foresee a large collaboration with numerous artists. Many artists have already pledged their support and want to work with us on the *Chapel*. We will need the assistance of many artisans and artists, designers, engineers

and architects. Keith Critchlow, a wonderful architect who is a world renowned authority on sacred geometry and has designed some of the world's finest contemporary sacred spaces, has pledged his architectural support. Our friends Peter Terezakis, Brooks Cole, Jon Bell and Cody Harrington have already contributed their expertise to design our web sites and computer animated envisioning of the space. Peter Terezakis has offered to donate a version of his speaking flame sculpture, *All The Names Of God*. My wife Allyson's artwork is obviously going to be incorporated into the design and tile work. We'll ask for input from many artists.

I know sacramental drug use has been important to your work. What else would you recommend to artists to help them with the spiritual journey of their work?

Intention is the most important ingredient to making the artist's path a spiritual one. In Buddhism it is said that you can perform the various contemplative practices, but without having the intention to awaken to enlightenment for the benefit of all other beings, your practice will come to nothing. Commitment to awakening is not an offhand or accidental thing. We can look at an artist's spiritual life in terms of the three

William Blake had mental conversations with deceased philosophers and artists. He was taught painting by a discarnate entity.



Kissing, by Alex Grey, 1984

pillars of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, that is, enlightenment itself, the teachings about enlightenment, and the community that supports enlightenment.

The Buddha for an artist may be considering that enlightenment is a true human possibility, and allowing that possibility to empower one's actions in life and art. We could think of enlightenment as the realization of human potential for wisdom and compassion. Growing in compassion means developing patience and generosity. Gaining wisdom or spiritual insight can come through meditation and prayer, yoga, trance dancing, enduring pain, shamanic journeying, being sensitive to dreams, or by being aware during the flow of the creative process. To open the eye of the soul means recognizing, honoring and appreciating your relationship with the creative spirit inherent in your life and the cosmos. Artists are "mini-creator sparks" off the Great Creator. Our energy can be aligned with the power of universal creativity.

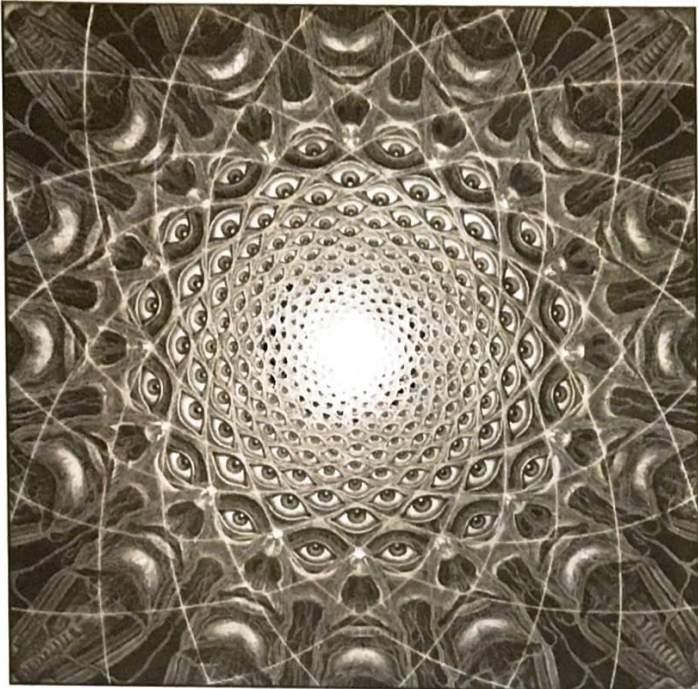
The Dharma for an artist would be studying sacred art traditions and examining the relationship of creativity and transcendence throughout art history. To extend the philosophical reach and possibilities in your art making process, there are many books you can read. I once felt that the coordinates of art and spirituality were not well articulated in our culture. Since then I've gone on to collect a whole library of books aimed specifically at the convergence of art and the spirit, from Kandinsky's concise work of the early 20th century, *On The Spiritual In Art*, to Roger Lipsey's wonderful book, *An Art Of Our Own*, that looks at the transcendent themes in modern art. The catalogue for the L.A. exhibition, *The Spiritual In Abstract Art*, which happened about 15 years ago has a wonderful collection of images and artists with spiritual intentions. A book by an artist named Phil Jacobson, *Drinking Lightning*, is a wonderful book about the quest of the visionary artist. The Julia Cameron books including *The Artist's Way* have been helpful to many people. One of the things I wrote about in *The Mission Of Art* was the way traditional sacred arts have used meditative awareness, and how contemporary, spiritually minded artists can tap into similar states without adopting the dogmas of a particular religion. There are many ways that artists can open themselves to a spiritual path even if they're outside of a sacred tradition.

The Sangha for an artist is their art world family or community. Most artists are not working in total isolation. Try and find a community that supports your path of art and spirit. Search world cultural history for art that feeds and encourages your soul. Both figurative and abstract artists can look back through art history and find their ancestors, and collect their family around them through books and pictures. That's very

empowering. Many of us grew up in art schools where we were encouraged to reject our predecessors. The pop artists gained notoriety because they distinguished themselves from the abstract expressionists. If the artists previous to you were metaphysical, you had to be flat and ironic. These oppositions characterize art historical progress, from dadaism to expressionism to analytical cubism. Swinging the cultural pendulum burdens the artist with the necessity for originality. I'm not disparaging originality, it's essential to contemporary art. Artists need to find their own way, their own voice. However, I felt very alone in my consciousness driven artwork, which was not motivated by the contemporary art world stylistic oppositions. It has been important for me to find my aesthetic family. William Blake had mental conversations with deceased philosophers and artists. He was taught painting by a discarnate entity. Even if you don't seem to have friends or artistic peers who understand your work, it's possible to have a psychic dialogue with artists who do. You can telepathically have an interaction with artists and artisans from all cultures and all eras of history, even with artists of the future or purely spiritual beings.

Sacred art expresses sacred ideas communicated through the art. In Islamic temples there are no graven images, reflecting their understanding that God is unportrayable. But God is everywhere present, suggested through mosaic and tile patterns of infinite interconnectedness, a profound insight which is communicated in Jewish synagogues as well. Many wisdom traditions give us a variety of sacred teachings in a visual format. The glowing figurative iconography of Christianity and Buddhism puts forward the understanding that Spirit shines through enlightened masters. My art suggests the many complex interwoven levels of our being: a physical dimension, an emotional component, a mental dimension, a devotional or subtle energetic component, and a psychic and spiritual aspect to our being. My art works present an intentionally integrative unitive vision which is different from a more cubist, shattered, collaged together understanding of humanity. I'm intentionally saying that we are coherent, harmonic beings, and if we're in touch with the absolute presence, we can reflect the harmony that has made the stars, has created this immense and sacred artwork in which we struggle and live, this universe. We are not only dust in the wind, we are also reflections of God's infinite intelligence and transcendental mystery. That is the kind of insight that I want to transmit through my art work.

As far as practical advice for all artists, my daughter gave the best advice I've ever heard in her book entitled *How to Be a Great Artist* that she wrote at the age of six. There are three illustrated pieces of advice in her book and I included the entire book in the appendix of my book, *The Mission of Art*. I placed it in the back of



Collective Vision, by Alex Grey, 1995

He had a bottle of kahlua with LSD mixed in. I had never tripped before.

the book because after you read it you realize it is all the advice you need. It goes like this: "Be Yourself. Do Your Best. Never Give Up." An artist has got to keep busy making their art work. For most of us it is difficult to set apart time every day to make art. We all have to work for a living, and most of us have responsibilities to our families and many obligations that whittle away at the hours of a day. The most important thing is to just keep working.

In *The Mission of Art* you talk extensively about your original LSD experience, and you mention it in *Transfigurations* as well. Can you describe it for us?

In May of 1975, I had just come back from the north magnetic pole. I was doing a lot of experiments in polarities, and this was the final one that kind of broke the bank. I spent all my money and went to the north magnetic pole where all the compasses point to. I did a variety of crazy things up there, but when I came back, I realized, "Wow, I am really searching for something. What am I searching for? Why am I putting myself through all this shit?" It occurred to me as sort of an existentialist, angst-ridden young performance artist that perhaps I was searching for GOD, you know, but without much hope.

Without much hope because you hadn't seen good results so far?

I hadn't had any clue that God existed. My reference point was really that God was an invention of humanity to explain away what was unknowable. God just seemed like an invention by authorities to claim some kind of superiority and connection with some almighty force that would make peasants cower, and give them more

power. My sense of God was all wrapped up in religion and how religions oppress people. I'd never experienced God and thought that Marx had appropriately called religion the opiate of the masses, and our job was really to wake up from this belief in a non-existent Santa Claus type deity. That was my pretty atheistic or at least agnostic orientation as a young artist. But then I also had this sense of quest or wondering, "Could there possibly be something that allows our lives to take on meaning? Could God or spirituality provide a backdrop that would make life less absurd?" So on that day in May, I was finishing my one year at the Museum School, and I was hanging out with my professor on the street corner, and a girl drove by and stopped and said, "Will you come to my party tonight?" So the professor picked me up later that evening. He had a bottle of kahlua with LSD mixed in. I had never tripped before.

It was kahlua mixed with LSD?

(laughs) Yeah, it was a bottle of kahlua and he just put acid in it. So I felt like, "Well, hey, I've just come back from the north magnetic pole, I can do anything, why don't I drink it?" So I drank about half of the bottle. We got to the party and the girl asked what was in the bottle, and she drank the rest of it. I was feeling kind of woozy and a little bit disoriented and I sat down on a couch in her apartment. After about an hour, I remember the first parts were all giggles, and I was just being a ridiculous ham, there on the couch playing with dolls, being stupid and silly and enjoying myself. And then the trip deepened and I didn't really know what to expect. When I closed my eyes, I felt as though I was going through this spiral tunnel, like being inside a chambered nautilus, or some kind of shell-like shaft where I was in the dark going toward the light.

As this continually spiraling dynamic unfolding was going on, I felt the coming together of all opposites. In my artwork all year, the subtext or theme of my work had been that the world is made up of all these polarities, and so the struggle of life occurs within all these opposites. I was trapped in my mind, the mind that separates one thing from another. I wasn't familiar with the great philosophies of nonduality or the Taoist unity of opposites. In this tunnel, I could see every shade of gray between me in total darkness, going toward the brightest light. The polarities merged and it resolved this conflict of opposites. Gray became a way to resolve and unite the opposites. It sounds not that important, but for me it was kind of a breakthrough realization, that there is a greater unity underlying things. Life and death, day and night, male and female, all of the various opposites that our mind creates through separating things and distinguishing one thing from another, there is a unity underlying them that holds it all together. This also became kind of a spiritual rebirth canal for me, just by passing through this tunnel.

Needless to say, I was profoundly moved, inspired, and confused. The day after, I felt a state of clarity and vivid aliveness that I hadn't felt before. It also turned all of my existential emptiness on its head, and life suddenly had a symbolic importance as a manifestation of all these opposites. I had gotten a glimpse of an underlying unity to things. So I called up this girl who had shared the kahlua and LSD with me, and told her, "Wow, that was very powerful for me, what was going on with you?" She said, "Oh, I've tripped many times." So I said, "Oh, well, can we get together? I'd really like to talk about this." She agreed. That was Allyson twenty-seven years ago, and we never really separated after that. For me it was a confirming gesture by the universe saying, "You want God? Okay, here." Within twenty-four hours, I had had a mystical spiritual rebirth experience, and met the person that is the physical representative of the divine in my life, Allyson. Because if God is love, God is more accessible through those that love us and those that we love.

It turned me from an angst-ridden existentialist to a giddy kind of hippie that believed that all you need is love. (*laughs*) Acid introduced me to my own spiritual potential, which Allyson and I continued to explore. We lie in bed together, wear blindfolds, and take massive doses of LSD, just like probably thousands of people still do. We keep a journal, a "Book of Trips" recording our experiences, very funny and stupid things, and also some profound things. It has been a source of our imagery for our artwork. After a very profound trip in '76, a vision of sacred interconnectedness became the real subject of our work, based on what we saw on our trip. We called it the "Universal Mind Lattice" where we dissolved into an endless grid of cell-like bodies of Light — the light was love energy — that seemed like our raw and radiant soul united with every other being in the cosmos. We continue to develop the iconography of the tripping state to the best of our ability.

Let's close with technology. Have you seen any great examples of new media, or interesting computer technology in art? Anything that comes close to some of the experiences you've tried to create through painting and performance art?

I think most people agree that computer animation holds great promise for modeling the tripping state in a time based medium. This could be translated into video works, Flash animations, or cinematic spectacular events. I'm interested in bringing my work into those mediums, too. I just finished working with TOOL on a music video where an "Alex Grey, X-ray type figure" dissolves into a grid of light. Some cinema and light shows are evocative of highly organized visionary realms. The psychedelic subculture of the Sixties has blossomed into a digitally reconfigured trance culture of the Nineties and the 21st century. As the technology

grows more complex we're going to see more and more inventive translations from the tripping state into our media.

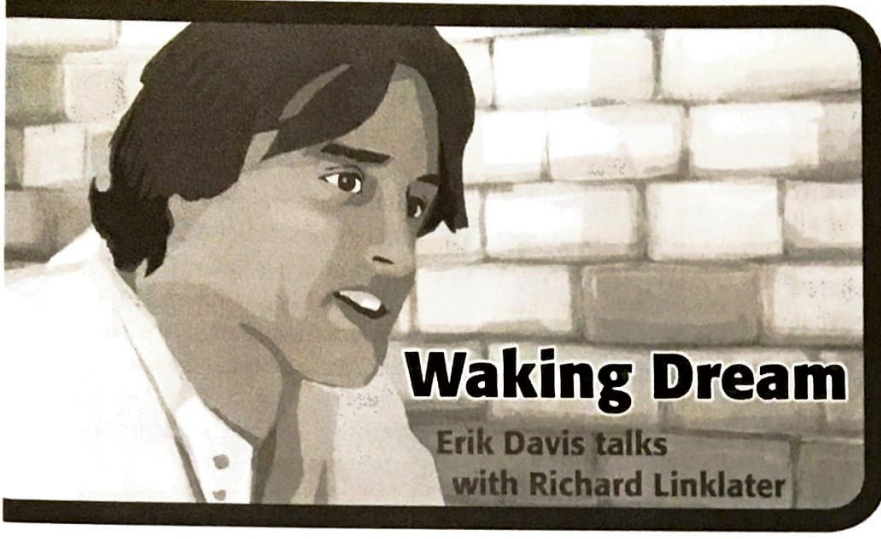
Advertising incorporates tripping imagery already. Fruitopia ads are clearly psychedelic. Psychedelia has been revived as an advertising approach over the last ten years, because it represents the lost hope of redemption for boomers. We're awash in psychedelized ad media, as well as through the trance dance culture and various other subcultures. In a way tripping has become mainstream, even without making a dent in the political regime of the USA that's as repressive as ever. It's a bizarre thing. We've already won the consciousness battle, the discovery of alternative dimensions is already apparent, and continues to influence our culture. The psychedelic state will continue to be incorporated into cinematic moments. *2001* is one of the most amazing and still great examples. Eventually, there will be a history of psychedelic art written and acknowledged as people are censured for their psychedelic influences. *Sgt. Pepper's* would have never happened without acid. The Beatles were the premiere band of the Sixties and if they had just said no, we wouldn't have some of the greatest music that was ever composed. The culture wants its novelty, and wants its beauty from the arts, but many people are still unwilling to accept the reality that psychedelics have played such a crucial role.

Obviously what's coming is a more integrated kind of media. Light shows and mythic journey rock events happened in the Sixties. Now there are groups like TOOL using huge projections and computer animation and driving music. It's a shamanic kind of phenomenon, a magic rite where the energy of the audience is focused in a mind-expanding power of light and sound for a transformative effect. Even if they're not on a drug, people are getting a high from the phenomenon of being surrounded by such intense sound and light. These immersive and integral environments are growing more and more. As bandwidth and download speeds increase, the web holds greater and greater potential for interactive psychedelic interfaces.

Cinema and television integrate all the other media and make them excellent vehicles for communicating visionary worlds. Photography, paintings, exotic locations, sculptural props, a sound score, the theatrical narrative, so many mediums can be integrated. When all these art mediums are working together they have the potential to create powerful transformative effects. Of course, let's not forget a blast of transcendence can also be found in a sweet little song, a drawing or a haiku poem.

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Waking Dream

Erik Davis talks
with Richard Linklater

Working on the periphery of the Hollywood beast, Austin, Texas filmmaker Richard Linklater has already made a handful of great movies (*Slacker*, *Dazed & Confused*, *Before Sunrise*), but 2001's *Waking Life* is a masterpiece: an idea movie that seeps into your dreams. Literally. The loose structure will be familiar to anyone who has seen *Slacker*: an unnamed young man, played by Wiley Wiggins (who also played the stoned naïf in *Dazed & Confused*), wanders about, bumping into various philosophers, revolutionaries, artists, and kooks, and listening to their rants and rhapsodies. But the world of *Waking Life* is the world of lucid dreams, a world that, try as Wiley might, he can't escape from. Riding Wiley's eyes and ears, we are overwhelmed with information and meditations concerning consciousness, language, love, dreams, the future, free will, film, and the explosive poetry of being. If all those verbal wonders weren't enough, the film is also marvelously animated, using a technique of digital Rotoscoping that "paints" over digital video images, lending the animation the shimmering, hauntingly familiar quality of old memories — or dreams.

Trip: How much of the inspiration for *Waking Life* came out of your own experiences with dreaming?

Richard Linklater: The narrative structure of the movie is 100% autobiographical. It was something that happened to me a little over twenty years ago — a series of lucid dreams and false awakenings. And this was before I was ever a filmmaker or anything. At that point, I just thought I'd be a writer of some kind. But that structure always stayed with me, where the lead character is very cognizant of the fact that he's dreaming. And this was even before I knew what lucid dreaming was. It was just an experience I kind of flipped into.

What was the situation of your life when this happened?

It was a school night, senior year of high school. No big deal. I wasn't on any drugs or anything. (*laughs*)

Besides being incontrovertible proof that independent cinema is alive and well (at least in Austin), *Waking Life* may be the ultimate head movie. Though plenty of people wander out of the theater dazed and confused, a certain portion of viewers — psychonauts, edgy futurists, lucid dreamers, garage philosophers — will be drawn into an amazing liminal zone, at once strange and familiar, heavy and humorous, ordinary and indefinably *important*. Because most of us aren't very adept at lucid dreaming or astral traveling, this zone will remind most of us of drugs, but without the bells and whistles of hardcore hallucination (very little of the film's considerable trippiness derives from "special effects," and even then, they are subtle). But *Waking Life* isn't about drugs, just as it isn't about mysticism or the usual dream-movie plots. What it's about is waking up: to the reality of our condition, to the seeds of change lurking in our apocalyptic moment, to the extraordinary potential of our brains — and to the distinct possibility that what we normally take to be waking life is a deep sleep.

Did it happen in one night?

Yeah, not only did it happen in one night, it happened in like five minutes. When I finally did wake up, it seemed like the whole thing had taken literally weeks, just going around talking to people. I think it had a lot to do with being eighteen, with some existential crisis of that time period of my life. It got a little creepy at the end there, like, "Golly, am I trapped here forever?" And I'd ask people to try to wake me up, and it got really comical. And then I finally just kind of woke up. I had one of the early digital clocks, which I built in like 1976...

You mean like a home kit?

Yeah, you solder it and you get the diodes and the resistors. I'm pretty good with electronics so I fashioned up this little clock that I still have to this day. And

the same clock would tip me off that I was dreaming in the dream. I wouldn't notice it and then finally I would and it would be all kind of scrambled, and I'd be like, fuck, okay, that means I'm dreaming. That digital imagery seemed to be my dream sign. And finally when I did wake up and I looked down across the room at the foot of my bed, I could read the clock. I'd gone to bed at around midnight, and it was like 12:05. I'd barely been asleep and I was drenched head to toe in sweat. I went and got a glass of water, and just went back to bed. I couldn't get out of bed the next day. I slept until like 5. I missed school.

I believe there's nothing in the human experience that can't be explained; there's precedent for everything. We all think we're unique but we're not. Over the years I kind of loosely got into dream research, or read things as they came up, but I never delved into it very much. And I had subsequent dreams, not quite that intense, but similar lucid dreams, where I was kind of aware I was dreaming. I did that fairly regularly.

Did you do it intentionally?

No, it just kind of happened. I never would go to bed and say, "I'm going to try to have a lucid dream tonight." I just would. I think I'm sort of predisposed to that a little bit, although all my research since then tells me that it's a discipline anyone can do. I considered it just an event in my life like any other. But as a writer, and eventually a filmmaker, it always stuck with me, like, "That is an interesting narrative structure." When you think of storytelling, it's kind of the ultimate story. It's sort of like the writer who's writing a story about someone who's writing a story, fiction that keeps looping in on itself. I think there's something kind of primordial about that.

There are certain periods in media forms where there's a highly self-conscious understanding of the frame that creates the narrative inside the media. And it often gets played out early in the history of the media. For example, if you look at the history of animation, you'll see that at the very beginning, when people are first starting to screw around with animation like Fleischer's *Koko the Clown*, there's a lot of awareness of the frame. There's a lot of characters jumping off the page while the guys are drawing them.

There's a great Tex Avery where he erases Donald Duck's mouth.



David Jewell (left) and Caveh Zahedi
in *Waking Life*
Artist: Patrick Thornton

Exactly. A similar self-consciousness is also in narrative, in storytelling, like in *The Arabian Nights*, where you have these collapsing story frames. There's a story within a story within a story. And as you're reading, you almost get to that *Waking Life* state because you keep getting deeper and deeper into

these stories, and then you break out again. There is something very primordial about it, even though it seems kind of avant garde because it's fucking with your expectations.

Expectations in your head, when you think of fictional constructs. But I think what these things are getting at – and this is what I was trying to do – is to point out how your brain really flows, or how thoughts follow thoughts, or how the narrative of your own thinking unfolds, or the narrative of your own life. This process is very digressive and it has no set path, and it does fold in on itself. Someone will say something that will tie you back into a story that is much older. So for me, I always felt like I was trying to get closer to my feelings of how the brain worked, and how this shit kind of unfolds.

How much of the film's actual content – the segments, the discussions, the weird characters – were you just making up as a storyteller? And how much of that had you experienced dreaming or heard about other people experiencing?

Well, that's a whole different realm. On one level, I was trying to capture the intensity of that dream I had and the content of it, although I don't remember any of it word for word.

Did you write it down at the time?

No. It just seemed so real. I tend to remember dreams pretty well. I remember them like they're real experiences. But no, I didn't write it down. In the movie I was trying to capture that feeling that there was some important transformation going on, right at the tip of my experience. I just tried to capture that feeling of potential. There was a certain newness in the air that I felt. But then the actual content of the film came out of a jump ahead twenty years to the present moment, and my own thinking today. I keep notebooks – thoughts, ideas, experiences, quotes, a great paragraph out of something, just typical writer kind of notebooks – and a lot of it came out of there. I recycled stuff from other films that hadn't made it in. So it was sort of a kitchen sink. That's the same way I worked on *Slacker*: a lot of

information from a lot of different places all finding a home where they wouldn't in a typical narrative. None of this stuff kind of "qualifies" to be in a movie. It doesn't progress a story or the character traits or any of that shit...



Wiley Wiggins in *Waking Life*
Artist: Bob Sabiston

The second time I saw the film, it seemed to me that there was more of an evolution than I first perceived in terms of the ideas and the experiences that Wiley is undergoing. There is almost an initiatory quality to the order of events.

There was a natural order to things, the way the story progresses. It kills me when people say there's no story. I say, "No no no, there is a story, it sneaks in the side door." The story is there, it just doesn't present itself. Like a lot of things in life, you just become aware of it. Once you're aware of it, that's the story. It just doesn't present itself in the first act of the movie in the traditional three act structure. It sneaks into the movie and then you realize what story you're in. To me, that's a lot more like life. You realize what's really going on. It's been going on all along, and then you just become aware of it. When you learn things, that's how it always is, it's like, "Oh, now I'm aware of this," and then you see it everywhere, then it permeates your thinking and your experience.

The content came from a lot of different directions. A third of it was shot as written, a third was something I wrote that we rewrote in rehearsal with the actors, and another third basically came from the actors. I call them actors, but a lot of them were just professors and interesting folks who I encountered. In my casting, I would say, "Well, give me the most intelligent, cool people you know, I don't want actors, I want fascinating people." And so I just sat down and started talking to them, and one of the questions was always, "Well, what are you most passionate about? What do you think you know more about in this world than most people?" And so a certain amount came out of that. We would just start talking right then. They'd come back maybe several more times and then we'd just work on a scene. And it was up to me to go, "Well, I think this fits in thematically." I had a lot of funny scenes that were a little too tangible, a little too blunt. However funny and informational, they were just a little too real, so I ended up either not shooting those or cutting them out. I just kept things in there that were sort of, you know, I guess less rational... rational's not the right word, but... tangible maybe.

I'm not sure whether or not you were conscious of it, but it seemed to me that, in terms of the more philosophical rants Wiley hears, that the ideas built on the previous raps he's heard, that they actually moved forward...

Yeah, a lot of that I moved around in the editing room. You remember the one right off the bat, where

the professor is talking about existentialism as being more than a fad from previous generations? I first felt that it belonged near the end of the movie. But it really worked better as a formative idea for the movie, and I discovered that in the editing room. I thought, "No, let's say that up front. Your life is yours to create." To me this resurgence of the subjective is very important. Your ideas are who you are, you do make a difference. Personally, that was just my own feeling of coming around, having gone through postmodernism. That was my own and I think a lot of people's philosophical trajectory. Postmodernism jerks the carpet out from underneath you and pretty soon you're in this hall of mirrors. I just found myself cycling back to old ways of thinking, but in new ways. I guess it's just the cycle of life. I was really interested in things I hadn't been interested in for 15 or 20 years.

Like what?

I was reading, oh, everything from existentialist writers to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sartre, stuff that I first read at a young age. It seemed very different to me now, it meant completely different things.

That philosophical trajectory is one of the things about the movie that for a certain section of the audience is really going to hit home. That's one of the main things that I struggle with: how do you reaffirm or approach the question of human subjectivity when there are so many things that are blasting it away, from postmodernism to all our new neuropharmacological models of subjectivity. Everything is ready to pull the rug out from under your own unfolding subjective experience, so how do you come around and reaffirm that? Because to my mind, if you lose that thread, if you lose the ability to sustain and affirm that particular flow of experiences, then really you have kind of capitulated to the more nihilistic and frightening aspects of our moment, philosophically and technologically.

I know, it's sort of frightening. I mean it's very real, but I think humans do have that subjective ability to claim their place. That's why I found myself back in the nineteenth century with Thoreau and Emerson,

the original transcendental subjective guys. When they thought of God, when they cut out all the middlemen, it was complete: your own experience, your own development and your own world, was everything. My favorite Emerson quote is, "Ideas are real. Thoughts are real."

And that's sort of the lesson of the lucid dream world. You're giving in to whatever situation you find yourself in but still trying to be true to yourself, and then suddenly you're translated into a space of lucidity, and you know that it's your will and your imagination that are partly constructing your experience. Then you can't avoid the existential burden of having to create your life, because you're in this plastic world that is a creation of yours. You can't shuck it off, you can't say, "Well, I'll just let something happen," because *that's what's happening*: your need to choose.

Yeah. You *are* creating your world. This is all a visual construct and the brain's processing and doing it all... That's why it was a nice parallel life for me, diving into the lucid dream world by going forward with this movie. I had the wonderful experience of my waking and dreaming states becoming very similar to one another.

Did you start lucid dreaming more when you were working on the film?

Every night. Even during my waking hours, I would walk through kind of wondering, "Is this a dream?" I was asking myself that every five minutes. And it was wonderful. It's really a great way to go through life. I had a very superficial knowledge of lucid dreaming before jumping into this movie, so I had several months of just reading everything I could get my hands on, really concentrating and starting to do some of the discipline things that I had been tipped off to in Steven LaBerge's work. It confirmed a lot of my own experiences – like the fact that it's hard to adjust light levels, just like it's difficult to call up your name.

I was getting challenged every night with these things. I would be in a production meeting on the movie, sitting there with my producers and a couple other people, and I would be explaining to someone how it's difficult to adjust light levels in lucid dreams. And I would get up and I would flip the light switch, because I'd trained myself to do that in my waking hours. Every time I mentioned it, I had to go do it. I would walk across the room, flick the light switch, say okay, it works, so we can all go back to work because this is the real world. You know, I'd make a joke. But often I'd be in that meeting and I'd go over there, and I'd flick the light switch, and it *wouldn't* work. And I'd just kind of laugh and go, okay, I'm dreaming. Typically in that situation, once you're really cognizant of the fact that you are perceiving a mental model and the people are dream people, they

get real quiet, because you've sort of robbed them of their... it gets a little tricky at that point. Often I would just say, "Now that we're here, we're shooting that scene where Wiley floats through the wall, so at least I'll get the right angle." So there was a complete blur between my waking and dreaming.

It was very poetic, because you notice everything. You're very attuned. You're like, "oh, that tree," and you're asking yourself: Is this a dream? I came up with that line that to me kind of sums up the whole movie: "Most people are either sleep-walking through their waking life, or wake-walking through their dreams. Either way you're not going to get much out of it." I've had people say, "Well, I don't want to control my dreams, I like the way they just kind of flow and flow." But no one who's ever had a meaningful lucid dream experience would ever say that.

You talked about going through scenes for your movie when you were in the dream world...

The scene where the woman confronts Wiley, and goes on the big rant about the soap opera she's doing, and then he realizes halfway through the scene that he's dreaming – that really happened to me. Somewhere in early production, I was listening to this woman talk and I realized I had a watch on. I haven't worn a watch since fourth grade. I look at it, and I can't read it, so I go, "I'm in the middle of a dream." But I don't just say that, instead I go, "Hey, I'm making a movie, and I want to know who you are. Tell me all about your subjective experience, because it's really interesting to me who you are." You have to get really calm – this is the discipline aspect – because it's easy to freak out and either wake up or float up. So I actually was able to have this conversation with her. But when I threw it all on her, she just sort of threw it back on me. She says, "Well, who are you? Do you know your name?" I'd read probably two days before in my research that it's hard to recall your name in dreams. You can, but it's difficult. So I go, "Ah, this is a test, can I recall my name?" And I really concentrated, and I was able to pull up my own name. But I didn't give Wiley that ability, because I thought it would be interesting to have a lead character who has no identity. He is strictly a floating perspective. I thought it would be funny to be more than halfway through the movie and then realize that the lead character has no idea who the fuck he is.

As you started doing dream research, I assume you met people or talked to LaBerge. What was your impression of the state of the lucid dreaming scene?

All I did was read. I didn't have many conversations outside of people I was working with. I kept it pretty close. I only met LaBerge recently, after *Waking Life* was finished. I wanted him to see it. We hooked up in San Francisco and I had a really good time with him.

But you have tried the Nova Dreamer [a device designed by LaBerge to trigger lucid dreams by emitting light signals through your closed eyelids when you go into REM sleep].

Yeah, I have a Nova Dreamer. I used it last night. I think it's interesting. I was lucid dreaming naturally

when I was making the movie, but as I finished it and got farther away from it, even into the editing, I quit having my lucid dreams as regularly, and then pretty soon I was hardly having them at all. So the Nova Dreamer is sort of a short cut that I'm still incorporating. It has a different quality, but I'm sort of enjoying it. You get these little flashing lights on your eyelids, so flashing lights become a dream sign whether you like it or not. If you see a flashing light in your waking life, like somebody blinks the lights in the lobby before the play starts, you have to check: is that a sign? Because then you're going to be in a dream, in a trench in a war with a rifle and a couple other soldiers and bombs going off, and then you'll have to think, was that a flashing light? Oh, okay, shit, I'm dreaming. Those explosions are flashes that you have incorporated into your thinking.

One of the things that interests me even more than the magical ability to control these dream spaces is the moment where you wake up inside of the construct. That particular little passage has always really attracted me, because it's that passage that for me has the highest density of the quality we were talking about earlier, that sense of imminence, of some tremendous potential just around the corner. A lot of Phil Dick, who you mention at the end of the film, deals with these breakthrough moments. How does information come in from outside of your reality bubble and create cracks that then allow some other change to happen that affects the entire structure?

There's a total poetic moment where you're overwhelmed at what's created there in your brain. And you truly don't know where it all comes from. That's the eternal mystery, and to this day, I waver a lot in my thinking about it. I like to think that on some spiritual level or a human consciousness level that there is this interconnection. The film dealt with this a lot, it hints that we are sharing thoughts and experiences, there's this psychic space out there that we're all tapped into. But sometimes I'll think, well, no, we're all totally these biological entities. There aren't those connections, this stuff is coming from your own experience, and you're



Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke in *Waking Life*
Artist: Katy O'Connor

just not aware of it. I wish someone would tell me.

That's the big koan. But the fact that you can create a materialistic explanation for altered states – spiritual experiences, lucid dreams, and so on – should no longer prevent us from exploring them. That's what's happening now, it seems to me. That's one of the ways that

this whole conversation connects up with psychedelics, because psychedelics present a similar paradox. It's completely obvious that I am taking a molecule that affects me on a biophysical level. I take it, then my body metabolizes it, and then it goes away. And yet, does that mean that when I'm experiencing these amazing things, I'm going to sit there and go, "Ah, this is just some crap in my brain?"

It's about finding those hidden passages, those areas that you have to sneak into somehow, however you get there. We all want to transcend and get there. You can take drugs. You can meditate for years. You can have a temporal lobe seizure.

There's one thing that I always come back to, that's also explored in the Ethan Hawke sequence of your film. Maybe all these intimations of immortality we have, these hints of a future bardo state or an otherworld or a heavenly world – maybe they're just strange premonitions of what happens when the biological brain dies. There is no carryover into another world, but nonetheless, when you greet that experience, the idea of somehow preparing yourself for it becomes paramount, because you still have to go through it. So when people walk away from *Waking Life*, a lot of them are going, "There's this whole world out there that I'm just not dealing with." And why *wouldn't* you want to do this? Not only is it fun, but it might actually be important on some level.

On one level, I don't know of anything more important. In my thinking, that's what it's really about. To me, the right analogy for watching *Waking Life* would be a lucid dream versus a regular dream. In the regular dream you go to a movie and it just unfolds and you take it unquestionably. But *Waking Life* by design demands that you acknowledge it. You have to kind of participate in it or you don't get anything out of it – you'll hate it, you'll not get it. So there's a certain how-to manual aspect of *Waking Life* in the realm of lucid dreaming. It sort of tips you off and helps you align and then hopefully takes you along on this experience that to me is analogous to the dream itself. It's what you're up for at that time. If you're not up for anything, the movie totally blows.

Tell me more about your reactions to other people's reactions.

I'm overwhelmingly touched. I knew I was putting something out in the world that could be powerful to people who are on this particular wavelength. Sure enough, that response has been really heartfelt and really positive. Others are just like, you know, "I just didn't get it. I thought it was boring or preachy." And that's just fine, you know, whatever. I was always moved by people who talked about the positive. They said it was a "yes movie."

I think that's very true.

That's what I wanted, it's this totally non-cynical, positive vibe.

Although there's some very powerful darkness in it...

No, it's potentially very dark. I thought that was very important, to be honest, because that's the gambit. I felt it was very important to have extremely dark areas.

For one thing, in both the movie and your original lucid dream, there is this great horror that you're stuck, that you're not going to wake up anymore. With psychedelics, people often get to this point where they feel that they've gone too far, that they have reached some pocket of timespace that they are never going to escape. That kind of waking death is one of the major fears you deal with when you move into this kind of lucidity, whether it's in dreaming or other altered states. Part of you wants to go back, to know that you can go back to sleep and then wake up in the morning and feel the constraints of normality. There's something extremely refreshing about it once you've been blasted open. Before you've been blasted open, it may feel like a prison, and then afterwards you're like, "I just want to curl up with my lover, drink a beer, and go to sleep." It reminds me of that scene in *Waking Life* with the guy in jail who is consumed with rage, who imagines a very interesting torture experience. He talks about pulling his enemy's eyelids off so they can't shut out the sight of him slowly pushing a lit cigar into their eyes. In other words, they can't go to sleep, they can't stop being aware of what's going to happen to them.

I'm glad you picked up on that image. That's very important – cutting the eyelids off, that idea of being awake. People say, "Oh that's so dark," and yeah, it's dark, but look how he's keeping himself alive on more of a tangible, sociopolitical level. This guy is in a jail, and that's what's keeping him alive, his own imagination.

That's an example of the aspects of the movie that are very Tibetan. The hell realm is not some external place, but something that you have access to through your own violence and your own imagination.

Yeah, even if it is just in the dying brain, heaven or hell are lived in those last few real-time minutes and

however much cognitive life is mustered in that time frame. I think those are probably good analogies based on your own beliefs and thought processes and how much you have or haven't prepared yourself. I like what you said earlier about the preparation aspect, of not being afraid. I think that's a real important thing. When I was younger, I'd read about psychedelics, but I thought, "That'll really trip me out, there's a certain danger element to it." Once I was talking to some old guy who I really respected, and I described my fears, and he goes, "Being afraid to take psychedelics is much worse than anything that could ever happen in the trip." And he had a point, and I tell people that to this day. Being afraid of the experience is ultimately much more harmful to the general way you perceive your life than anything that could happen to you in the process.

There is an initiatory quality to *Waking Life*, in the sense that it's full of cues and clues that, if you're already primed, will really give you a deeper sense of possibility about your own dream state. The scene for me that really nails that down is the one that takes place in the white room where Wiley meets those three guys and first tries the light switch...

I call that the "dream room," where they're all specifically talking about dreams.

There's something very interesting about the fact that there are three of them. I think of them as dream angels, initiators. Even the windows in the room are peaked, like church windows...

Yeah, sort of stained glass windows. That building is not used as a church now, but it used to be a church. That was a perfect setting. Strange scene.

It's also the scene where you get probably the most "reductionist" rap in the whole movie, where the first fellow explains that as far as the brain is concerned, there really is little different between waking and dreaming, except that in waking life our serotonin levels suppress memory in order to keep us focussed on the immediate situation.

Right, there's some dense stuff in there, but I thought it was important to get the science out there.

Besides the science guy, you have the sociopolitical commentary by the guy with the ukulele, who talks about the horrible experience of dreaming you are at work and then waking up and realizing you actually have to work all day – and then resisting that. Rounding it out is the crazy "id" guy who talks about how much fun you can have. The whole encounter reminded me of certain experiences on psychedelics, when you're suddenly confronted with knowledge that you haven't had before, knowledge that's kind of creepy but also kind of liberating.

Initially I wanted to put that stuff in different points in the movie, but the more I got to thinking about it,

the more I thought it was much more fitting to put those three back to back. By the time Wiley floats out of that room, you're really at some new level.

Tell me about the character who seems like an alien, the kid who speaks in a very detached monotone about human life?

That scene has a funny lineage. My animation partners on this, Bob Sabiston and Tommy Palotta, had done a short film called *Snack and Drink* that I think's going to be on the DVD. And it's about that guy. His name is Ryan, and he was a 13-year-old autistic kid who they knew. They just shot some video of him walking up to a convenience store and getting a snack and a drink and talking about cartoons and music. He's kind of regurgitating a litany of things – you know how autism works in the mind. So they were like, "Hey, you've got to get Ryan in here somewhere."

I did have room for a teenager, but then I thought of another idea. I always had this idea as a kid, that you're in a science fiction sort of world and that you would encounter an alien who had been here a thousand years. He had kind of used Earth up and was departing, and you encounter him at that moment, on his last day.

There's a weird relationship between certain aspects of functioning autism, and the ability to detach and see through the trance of ordinary life. Whether or not you think of it as a serotonin trance, you can see our conventional reality as an emotive mammalian thing. You know, mammals evolved emotions to deal with social reality, that's clearly part of what maintains our sense of consensus reality.

Yeah, it's a very adaptive thing for humans.

Right, but autistic people don't deal with emotional or social codes in a similar way at all. There's this weird quality to autism that you can also associate with people who have gone way beyond this stuff, who have transcended the world in some kind of way. What I like about that scene is its strange, simultaneous quality: you don't really want to be the alien, but on the other hand you see that if you keep doing this human thing, eventually you're going to get there.

Yeah, they're beyond us at this point and you're not sure you want to be that guy. But then if you really just visit that place that they're occupying, which is sort of like the mystic or the holy man who's meditating, you kind of want to go there. But you're not really



Wiley Wiggins in *Waking Life*
Artist: Mary Varn

ready to give up all your earthly delights. We love all that emotion and shit, you know, as painful as it is sometimes.

That comes around to what a "yes movie" *Waking Life* is. You can talk about it philosophically or you can talk about it just in terms of its overall feel. But if you lay out the more philosophical

discussions or monologues that Wiley hears, they really do build toward a certain kind of, I don't know, "posthuman humanism." We've blasted apart all of the old conventional ways of continuing to be human beings. Our perception of ourselves as willing, loving, imaginative creatures doesn't really work the way it used to. That's the posthuman part. But on the other hand, as we go into all of these new and alien spaces, whether we are talking neuropharmacology or genetic engineering or these lucid virtual spaces, that doesn't mean we stop willing and imagining and emoting and doing all of that familiar stuff. The qualities we like about human beings actually have a role to play, a new zone of expressing themselves in new ways. That's very different than saying, "Well, from here on out we're just Darwinian machines and you might as well give up on all those old stories..."

The human essence is seen as being left behind to these almost zombie-induced forces... they're seen as so cold and sterile and nonhuman, but I think it's really just the opposite. I mean, the development that humans are doing is ultimately to progress, and a lot of that progression is human consciousness, whether we're aware of it or not.

It seems like the dream state is one of the best places to work with in terms of developing the discipline of consciousness.

I think so. It's a fascinating place, really endless. I think more people need to pick up the ball and run with it in that realm.

Can you talk about your plans to adapt Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* to the screen?

It's in its earliest phases. We want to do it as our next animated feature. Who knows how these things ever work out... I'm working my ass off on it, though.

What attracts you to *A Scanner Darkly*?

As a Dick fan, to me it always felt like it was incredibly personal, like this was his life, these were his friends, this was him. On a human level, I love these people and the culture at that moment. On a social level, what was seen as sci-fi paranoia back then has actually come

to pass. What for him was the near future seen from the mid-'70s (he set it in '94 or something) is where we're at right now as a society, with surveillance, face recognition, etc. I'm really going to run with that aspect of it. There's just no privacy any more. Your house is being scanned, there are scanners everywhere, you're even likely to find employment nancing on your friends.

I was in LA in a rental car for one day about a month or two ago. It was like ten at night. There's nobody around, I approach the intersection, it turns yellow, and I do the typical thing, kind of scoot out into the intersection. You know, the light turns red while you're in the intersection but you go through, right? That's what we all do. I get a ticket in the mail with a picture of my car in the intersection with a little time line next to it, a little number, I get a close up of the license plate, a close up of *me* behind the wheel of the car, and a ticket for \$270.

Wow.

That's just the beginning. How long until we get tickets like, "Okay, you jaywalked at 4:30 a.m. on East 42nd Street in New York, you owe us a hundred bucks." How long until it's like that? It's just kind of scary. They tracked me down through the rental car company. I never talked to a human. That kind of thing wouldn't fly in Texas, at least it wouldn't today. But things like that start in California and work their way east. With the whole post September 11 attack on our rights, it's just a matter of time. Every phone's tapped, they can just search anything. The part of me that's always on about control and the big brother stuff, that's flourishing in this story. I've updated it a little bit, but it's very true to the book. I'm not doing anything too radical.

Obviously you can't really do a drug movie that's some postcard fantasy about how marvelous drugs are. But though *A Scanner Darkly* is in some ways an anti-drug book, it's also incredibly sympathetic with the reality of these things.

Of these people. Because they're not bad people. They're addicted to Substance D, but they're just guys working on their cars, trying to get along.

What about the idea you float at the end of the film, that time is a way of resisting the eternal now that's always right before us, awaiting us with open arms? Where'd that come from?

I like that sentiment. There's that idea that there is just this moment, and you're creating everything beyond that. It's such a cliché, people are always like, "Oh, be in the moment," but you know...

If you really try to accept that experience, there's a tremendous amount of fear and exhilaration that goes into it. Like you say in the movie, we resist that freedom.

But it's such a cliché Seventies-ism that it's kind of hard to make it come alive.

Not that they weren't onto something then. They were trying, it was a good step. When you talk about all the hypocrisies in the official drug culture, well for 35 years now, everybody kind of knows the truth about all that. But it's going to be up to someone to take a leap forward and really move us out of the negative horror story of prisons and criminalization. I think the way you get these kind of sea changes isn't like political overnight stuff, it's generational. All the old folks who just knee-jerk vote for the guy who puts the most drug offenders in prison are going to die off. Hopefully some people who are a little more tolerant will replace them, and maybe we can move forward.

That would be nice. So how did you choose that particular style of animation that you used in *Waking Life*?

I never thought I'd do an animated film. I never thought about it in terms of this story. But a friend of mine developed this software that enables you to digitally paint over existing imagery, a computer variation of Rotoscope. That's when it clicked: "Oh, that's how that thing I've been thinking of for twenty years, that's how it should look." That's why the film in my head all these years didn't work. It just didn't work with live action.

You need to have that kind of slightly surreal layer that's still really close to the everyday.

If you're going to try to depict an unreality in a realistic way, it's perfect. On one level the animation is real, with real people and real voices. Yet it's obviously a visual construct. So your brain's kind of put in the same place as when you process your memories or your dreams, where by definition there's an imaginative constructive element going on with the visuals. That's the perfect analogy for this movie, because the audience member has to work the part of their brain where this movie takes place.

One of the most unusual things about the animation is that the style changes throughout the film.

Different artists drew different people so inevitably they had a different style, a different look to them. I thought that was important in a film that is so much about individuality. These animated people seem to care about the human experience of individuality. It's ironic that they're animated characters and yet they seem more real and individual than so many other things – especially animated films, where there's obviously one über-designer and three hundred drones working together to make everything the same way.

The animation also increases the sense of passage. The whole idea of a bardo is that it's an in-between space, it's moving between X and Y. In Tibetan Buddhism, the bardo

isn't just where you go when you die. There's also a bardo between sleep and waking, between birth and death, and even between every moment of the day. The more that you can communicate that or draw people into that sense of a liminal, in-between space, the more you can get that kind of energy going. So by changing styles, it's like we're getting a subtle cue that we're on the move again. The universe has shifted a little bit.

Yeah, don't get content with your reality, because it's not really there. Don't think you know anything. That's the Buddhist thing: you do your work and when the situation arises, the knowledge is revealed to you. You always have to be putting yourself in the situation where you're open to that revelation.

That's why I think the positive vibe of the movie is important, because it affirms individual subjectivity. If the world gets weirder and weirder, and the world of

consciousness gets weirder and weirder, the one thing you'd hope is for people to be able to be balanced or centered or firm just in their own experience.

Yeah, you have to be your own editor in this world. There's so much out there. You have to be your own little weather vane, you've got to be in touch with your own muse. You need it as an artist, as someone trying to create, but also just to proceed through life and feel okay about the world. We've been given an amazing opportunity by being human. Our own brains are incredible, so don't hand yours over to some middleman to feed you and tell you what's going on. You have to take control. No one's ever the worse for that.

Erik Davis is the author of Techgnosis: Myth, Magic & Mystery in the Age of Information. He is a contributing editor for Wired and Trip.



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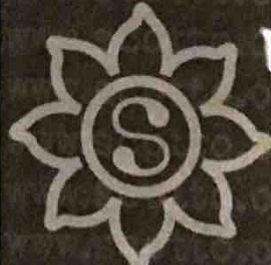
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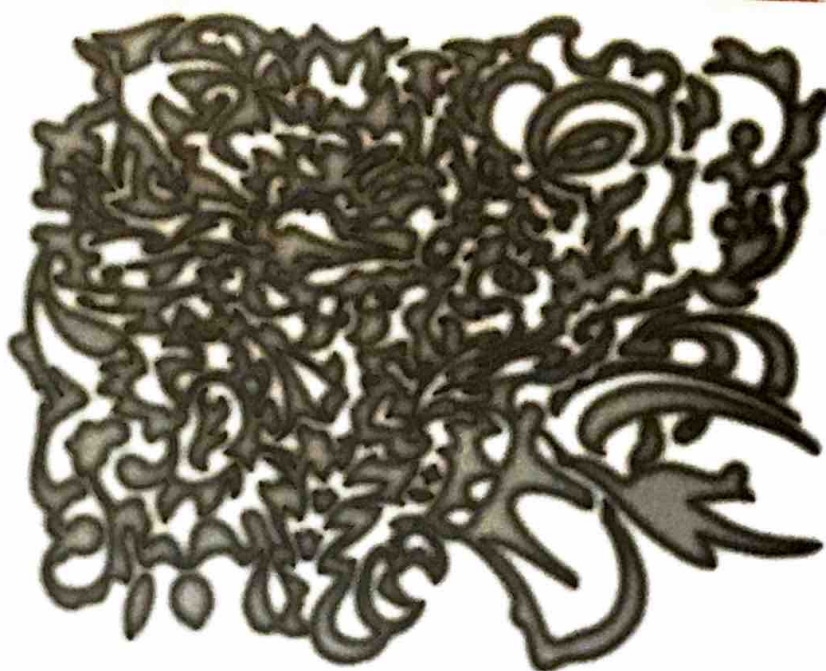
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Iboga: The Super-Conscious Spiritual Entity

by Daniel Pinchbeck



The following excerpt is from *Breaking The Head*, a forthcoming book by *Rolling Stone* contributor Daniel Pinchbeck that examines the repression of psychedelics in the Western world. "Breaking The Head" is a phrase used by one of the Bwiti tribes of Gabon, Africa, as part of its iboga initiation: after an initiate has ingested the iboga, he is or she is struck on the head with a hammer three times, to "break open the head" so that the initiate can enter the spirit world. In this excerpt, the author has taken up an offer on a web site to spend over \$7000 for an authentic Bwiti initiation. He joins his guide, a hapless botanist named Lieberman, and another Western initiate, an analyst from NYC named Elaine, as they meet Moutamba, "The King of the Bwiti," who will lead their initiation.

When we returned, The King called us to the temple. "It was good you stayed here last night." He smiled broadly, flashing white teeth. "Last night, I dreamt that *le journaliste*," — he pointed at me — "will have many wonderful visions. Now it is time. You must give us the rest of the money."

This was a surprise. We had already handed over the agreed-upon \$600 for the ceremony, at least double the fee paid by the average Gabonese. We reminded him of this, but The King started shouting.

"You want to cheat me?" He demanded another \$600 from each of us. Our guide tried to bargain with him, but Lieberman seemed to have little authority among the Bwiti. The argument went on for hours. Moutamba raged at us, shouted his demand over and over again. He would go away for a while, then return to scream some more. The young men of the tribe stared at us coldly, as if they were shocked we would challenge The King's authority.

Later, I learned that shamans tend to be tricky when it comes to matters of payment: It is tough to set a simple price tag on revelation. During an interval when The King stopped yelling at us, he approached me through his emissaries. They brought me to see him. Through Alain, the translator, I was told that, in the future, they didn't

want to work with the botanist any more. "You yourself, you should bring more Americans to him for initiation." I said I would see what I could do.

Lieberman kept assuring us the Bwiti were pacifist, but the situation seemed out of control. He certainly did not have control over it. Lieberman's extensive web site gave the impression he had led numerous people through the Bwiti ceremony. When I actually questioned him about it, I learned he had brought only one other customer to The King, a Dutch computer programmer. The Dutchman lost his nerve before the initiation, swallowed a fistful of tranquilizers, and did not eat any iboga. Lieberman had also told us that Moutamba had initiated many outsiders. The King presented us a large ledger for foreigners to sign before the ceremony. There were only two other names in the book.

We did not feel safe — later on, the analyst would tell me she was never as terrified in her life. We were completely in their power. While The King ranted that we had cheated them out of money, all of our belongings, our bags and passports and wallets, were stashed in one of their unlocked houses. During one meeting with The King and his retinue, a hunting rifle lay on the table in front of them. As The King screamed at us, one of his sons carefully cleaned it, then loaded it up.

"I'm not sure I like the power dynamics I see here," the analyst whispered to me.

While the analyst had earlier seemed a karmic curse, I now considered her a good luck charm. It was easy for me to imagine myself and the botanist burnt at the stake by angry Bwiti who felt we were ruining their ritual – we were two pale-faced sad-sacks desperate to know the tribal mysteries – but it was impossible that they would hurt the analyst. With her "Free Tibet" t-shirt, Patagonia pants, bug-eyed glasses, and incessant chatter, she had a curious quality of indestructibility.

Finally it was decided that the initiation would proceed even though we had cheated them. At the end of the ritual, however, The King would not give us the special oil that bestows a deeper understanding of our visions through the year. "He himself will not walk with you into the forest and explain to you the myth of the Bwiti, the origin of the plants," Alain translated. Now Moutamba's tribe seemed to regard us with contempt. Bwiti no longer seemed quite the "essence of love" Lieberman had described.

It was almost dusk. I was told to sit alone in front of the temple. As night fell, the men of the Bwiti came to me. They were an impressive sight. They had changed from their everyday jeans and t-shirts into tribal dress. Limbs and torsos bare, they wore animal pelts and loincloths, with armbands and necklaces made from shells and feathers. Their jet-black skin was painted with white stripes and dots.

We walked in single file, away from the simple wooden houses of the village, taking a path through the jungle, to the banks of a small stream. Among the Bwiti, I felt absurdly self-conscious: I knew I was not a person to them so much as an archetype. To the Bwiti, I was a white ghost, a pale interloper from the colonial world seeking to return to the spiritual source. I wanted to laugh – the initiation seemed like an act of insane hubris on my part.

Some of the men held torches. Others played drums and rattles and horns in a weirdly humorous march. The young men of the tribe had the sleek and muscular bodies of hunters. White painted patterns glowed like neon on their bodies in the flickering flames.

Moutamba, wrapped in a leopard skin, ordered me to undress completely and step into the middle of the stream. As I shivered in the icy water, the young man assigned to be my "Bwiti father" poured a soapy liquid over me — a protective spirit-medicine. He smeared a rough red paste across my face and torso. The Bwiti sang while I put on the initiate's outfit — straps of tanned animal skins and shells

looping across my chest and upper arms, a short red tunic. A red feather was twirled in my hair.

It was time to begin eating the iboga.

The King raised up the plantain with two hands. My Bwiti father carried this sacrament to me gingerly while the others watched. I looked at the fruit held to my lips, which had been split open and filled with the gray flecks of iboga powder. The Bwiti men on the hillside sang and drummed a dirge-like melody. By casting off my clothes and putting on the red robe of the initiate, I had symbolically died. After eating the dry powder, I would be reborn.

For years after, whenever I recalled the flavor of iboga, I shuddered with disgust. The powder tasted like sawdust laced with battery acid – it was entirely revolting, the most bitter substance I ever put into my mouth. Worse yet, the plantain was dry and hard and each bite required extensive chewing. My tongue became dry and swollen, my throat gagged as it tried to reject the vile stuff.

After I finished the plantain, I was fed a few more spoonfuls of the drug mixed with honey. The shaman nodded encouragingly. I fought to keep the stuff down.

"Le journaliste a mange beaucoup, beaucoup," he said.

We returned to the village. My legs had turned rubbery and I felt queasy. In the main courtyard, a few of the men sat around me, playing drums. One of them strummed the *m'congo*, a one-stringed mouth harp resembling a bow, which has the eerie tonality of a mocking voice. I had been told that the *m'congo* channels the voices of the Bwiti ancestors. They put a bundle of leaves in my right hand and a whisk of dry thistles in my left and told me to keep shaking both in time to the music. This mechanical gesture would help to steady me throughout the visions. The Bwiti were strict about this rule – whenever I stopped shaking the rattles throughout the night, a tribesman would rush up to me and force me to continue.

They fed me more iboga and brought me, shuddering, into the torch-lit temple. I was unbalanced, confused. They sat me alone at the center, in front of my mirror which was surrounded by fern leaves and carved figurines. The King and the tribal elders sat to my left, and the rest of the tribe was on benches to my right, perhaps thirty people in all.

The analyst was telling her visions, which seemed to be pouring into her. She lay along a wall of the temple surrounded by Bwiti women who murmured supportively

They fed me more iboga and brought me, shuddering, into the torch-lit temple.

as she recounted what she saw.

"There's Buddha," Elaine said, pointing at the ceiling. She turned around. "And I see my dead grandma over there." She waved at the wall. "Hello, grandma."

Around me, the atmosphere was tense. The King had decreed I would have "wonderful visions." I began to realize that not satisfying him was not an option.

A long time passed, and nothing happened.

In the mirror, I saw my face change shape. I seemed to age, lines and wrinkles spreading across my skin. Then I appeared younger, my features smoothing out, impacting into the scrunched face of a baby. These effects fluctuated, lasting a few instants. Then I was staring at myself again, a bewildered pale face in tortoiseshell glasses and tribal outfit.

"I don't see anything," I said to the impatient tribesmen watching me.

Finally, out of the corner of my eye, I had my first vision: A large wooden statue, a dark and faceless golem-like figure formed out of rough logs, walked across the room and sat on the bench. Crossing its legs, it leaned forward, as if to watch me with interest. The vision happened quickly. It seemed utterly real. A moment later, a tiny screen opened in the mirror's scratched, pockmarked surface. On that screen I looked into the window of my Manhattan apartment. Through the hanging plants, I saw into my living room, which was empty. Then I watched crowds crossing a Broadway intersection, holding umbrellas in the rain. The images were ghost impressions in shades of gray, like images from an old movie – they were clear, totally distinct, but only for a moment. When I tried to study them, they wavered and disappeared.

"If you see a window you must try to go through it," The King instructed me through the translator, "and if you meet somebody there you must try to talk to them. Perhaps they have a message for you, some information."

The Bwiti kept insisting I should relate my visions out loud. I was not ready for that. I had expected whatever I saw to be my own concern. But the Bwiti didn't sympathize with my Western ideas of privacy. "Everything you see must be shared," The King urged. "You might have a message for the tribe, some information." In my stoned state I was tongue-tied, and I sensed the Bwiti's rigid disapproval of my silence.

Other images passed quickly before my eyes—a *memento mori* arrangement of candles, burning skulls and goblin faces; the figures of women in black dresses stretching out long white arms toward me from the edges

of my vision — but when I tried to speak of them, they disappeared.

The King began to shout again. "When is he going to see the fabulous castles? The cities of the spirits?" he asked, exasperated. He stormed out of the room.

"I think they are going to keep feeding iboga to you until you start talking," Lieberman whispered.

Meanwhile, I was fighting against pulses that gathered into waves of nausea. I wanted to reach the deepest visionary state. I was also scared. If iboga was indeed a "super-conscious spiritual entity," I wasn't sure whether this entity liked or hated me. Perhaps it wanted to kill me. I was

an outsider, a stranger to its meanings. They brought me outside, where I stood under the cool stars. I remembered King Moutamba saying, earlier, "*Le journaliste a mangé beaucoup, beaucoup.*" Had I eaten too much?

I was drenched in sweat. My head seemed like a balloon, blown up several times its normal size. I wondered if I was going to die. I retched and vomited green slime into my pail.

When I was no longer sick, the Bwiti took me back inside the temple. They brought me to lie on a mat on the hard-packed earth. The King returned to his seat. The Bwiti tribesmen started drumming and singing. The awesome sound filled the temple, pounding against the walls of my skull. I felt an incredible sense of failure as I scorned my own foolishness: Who was I to try entering the African spirit world?

From time to time, the drums and the singing stopped, and The King would make a speech to his tribe, slipping between Bantu and French. I didn't know either language, but I felt I could understand every nuance of every word he spoke. He was deriding me, making fun of my anatomy, my visionary failures, my weakness – several times, I had asked for a blanket to cover myself, and a pillow for my head, but the Bwiti rejected these requests.

"The foreigners, they say they want the true Bwiti initiation," The King seemed to say with a sneer, "Well, this is what they are getting. Now they complain: *I want a blanket, I want a pillow*, they say. The true Bwiti doesn't want any comfort."

Finally The King took a break from mocking me. The impossibly beautiful music – polyrhythms, call-and-response songs – started up again.

Closing my eyes, I saw brightly colored patterns. Spiraling plant-like forms and dancing geometries swirled with the music. I fell into a trance, floating with the Bwiti songs. I drifted into a new phase of the trip.

Who was I to try entering the African spirit world?

Piece by piece, the pattern of my past began to flare up in my mind. For the next several hours, I forgot about the tribesmen watching me. I was witnessing a "memory theater," a scrupulous replaying of all the forces which sculpted me into the person I was. I reviewed the elements of my early life — my parents' separation, my father's absence from my childhood, the imprint of my mother's loneliness and depression, my own solitude and love of reading, the many months I spent in a hospital bed at the age of eleven with a bacterial infection in my spine. I went back to the secret, baroque sources of childhood nightmare and fantasy — the primal fear of the monsters under the bed, the cave of darkness inside the closet. I saw the desperate, desolate parts of my life and the flashes of power and invention that were also mine. Separate from myself, yet enclosed within myself, I followed the traces of the being that I was — that was given to me — as it unfolded over time.

Laid out for me was the entire, intricate process of my self-development. The process was complex — yet ultimately organic. The extension of the self was, I realized, a natural process, akin to the blossoming of a plant. While a plant extends towards the sun throughout its life, human beings evolve internally. We rise up and flourish, or become stunted, involuted, as we react to the forces that press against us. Our growth takes place in the invisible realm of our mental space, and the unreachable sun we rise towards is knowledge — of the self and the universe.

Henry James once described human consciousness as "a helpless jelly poured into a mold." Iboga compelled me to perceive the exact shape of that mold — at the same time, it helped me escape that sense of helplessness. I felt a mingling of wonder, sorrow, and freedom. By letting me perceive the shape of my past self, iboga also seemed to be freeing me from the burden of that past. The action of the drug actually was — as I had heard it described, but wouldn't believe — the equivalent of ten years of psychoanalysis compacted into one interminable night.

For a brief time, I mulled on my drinking habits. I knew I wasn't an alcoholic, but since high school I had relied on booze as a tool for socializing. For the first time, I fully realized the negative impact that alcohol had on my relationships, my work, on me in general. Alcohol fired up my id, sent me staggering across endless parties and bar-room floors in an aggressive, sometimes successful, pursuit of sex. But drinking was holding me back — it was like a weight I was dragging around. It was keeping me from my own self-development. I saw myself as a drunken idiot at parties, cycled through many nights where I drank to blot myself out. There was a dark tinge of shame and

self-disgust entwined in my overuse of alcohol. I realized I didn't need to do it anymore.

Through iboga, I recognized my existing self as the product of all the physical and psychological forces that had acted upon me. Yet there seemed to be something beyond all of it — something that was "mine," an energy projected from outside of my biographical destiny. That energy was the self — and the self's tremendous capacity for transformation.

The trip turned to a cinematic cyclone, whirling images and scenes at high speed. A series of unknown houses appeared, ghostly gray suburban landscapes I had never seen before. I drifted down into them as they faded away.

Impressions of old girlfriends dispersed like fog, their bodies dancing away from me into the ether. I saw the sign for a restaurant, Teacher's Too, a childhood haunt. In its heyday, Teacher's Too (across the street from the original Teacher's) was a maroon-colored meeting place for publishing types, professors, the lost liberal intelligentsia of the Upper West Side.

Teacher's Too was the place where I met my first serious girlfriend, after I dropped out of college. I arrived early for a lunch date, and started to chat with the restaurant's cute hostess. She was sipping a Bloody Mary at the bar, wearing a plastic hat for St. Patrick's Day. She was giggly, vivacious — it was like an electrical current flowed around her. Julie told me she was also a college dropout. Suddenly I remembered her: We had met once at a party during high school when she was dating a friend of mine. After that chance meeting, we started seeing each other, and stayed together for three years.

The letters of the restaurant sign peeled off one by one in small squares, as though they were pieces from a board game. The squares spun around in my mental space with a clicking sound. It was like a cheap special effect from an old movie. The letters reassembled, rebus-like, to spell out a phrase that was either "Touchers Teach Too," or "Touchers Teach Two."

This ambiguous message, this telegraphic koan, seemed to contain a code about my future relationships. There was a sense of reconciliation and hope in the phrase, but what did it mean? It seemed to suggest the possibility of having children — two to be exact — an option I had rarely considered, certainly not at the time of my trip to Gabon, when I had no money, no girlfriend, no prospects for either.

The drumming and singing became deafening in the low-ceilinged temple. In my altered state the songs were awesome in their beauty. There was a strain of self-aware

"I demand more money for the visions I have shown you!"

humor in the melodies. Intricate rhythms unfolded organically, as if the music, channeled by the Bwiti, was emanating from the plant's essence. I realized the depth of the tribe's bond with this plant that showed them things. I felt how complete their culture was in itself. So complete that no outsider could disturb it. The music expressed the botanical symbiosis, essence of the Bwiti's pride and power.

Late at night, the Bwiti made us rise and dance with them. The men tried to teach me the basic steps – hard for me to follow in my state of stoned self-consciousness, my sensitivity to The King's disapproval. Then we sat down to watch as each man in the tribe danced around the temple, whirling a torch, scattering shadows across the walls like living forms. They executed their steps with expert grace and gravity.

"After you take iboga you will know what Bwiti is," The King had told me the day before the ritual. I was still trying to understand. Perhaps iboga opened a symbiotic link between plant and human – a doorway for interspecies communication. But if that was so, who or what was communicating from the other side? I was left with an impression of contact with some other intelligence or entity existing in a realm outside of our own. I wondered if what my guide said was true, that in Bwiti, like Buddhism, there is no ultimate deity, just an endless play of forms, vast hierophanies of spirits, spinning like pinwheels across the Eternal Void.

I knew, intellectually, that tribal groups attribute spirit and sentience to plants. Levi-Strauss wrote about this in *The Savage Mind*, giving some examples of a universal phenomenon: "When a medicine man of eastern Canada gathers roots or leaves, he is careful to propitiate the soul of each plant by placing a tiny offering at its base." My iboga experience tested the limits of my own beliefs: How could eating a bitter bark take me on such a profound and carefully structured journey through my past, into my future? Could a plant have a "soul" or an intelligence? I had never taken this idea seriously before.

At dawn, the Bwiti led us outside to watch the sunrise. Pink light filtered over the palm fronds and fruit trees, across the dusty disorder of the village. They sang, and we sang with them.

The analyst and I staggered woozily as the ritual ended, but The King immediately started shouting at us again. "Now you have been initiated, you give me presents of money!" he screamed. "I demand more money for the visions I have shown you!" We decided to escape his shouts and check into a hotel in Lambourene. This required another long and tense negotiation.

"*J'ai eu des visions de ruine terrible,*" The King shouted.

Because *le journaliste* had not seen or told all of his visions, he explained, we would be in mortal danger if we

did not stay another night. As the botanist insisted we were leaving anyway, The King tried to make a fast bargain. Introducing the analyst to the father of a nine-year-old girl, he suggested that, instead of paying more, she take the man's daughter and raise her in America. This was crude but pragmatic psychology on the part of The King: While tripping, the analyst told the Bwiti she regretted not having a child — she didn't expect an instant chance to rectify the situation.

We convinced one of The King's sons to drive us to the Ogobue Palace, a placid hotel overlooking the river. In my hotel room, I found the iboga trip was still going on. I was wide awake and without hunger, although I had not slept or eaten in over thirty hours. Lying in bed, an eerie strain of Bwiti music returned to my ears. I watched a parade of fleeting phantasms that drifted across cracks in the white wall. Solemn men in funny hats and coats marched away, melting into the plaster, trailed by fading rhythms. I realized these were the "ancestor shades," ghost-impressions of my forefathers, a vision that the iboga trance often produced, according to accounts I had read.

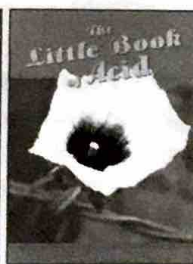
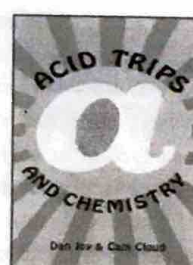
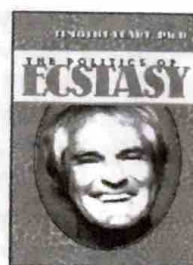
I am descended from Europeans – Polish Jews and Irish Catholics. I know so little about my ancestors, my history. As the figures paraded across the wall, I wished I could linger among them, see them more clearly.

So faint – so quick – they melted away.



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Transfigurations

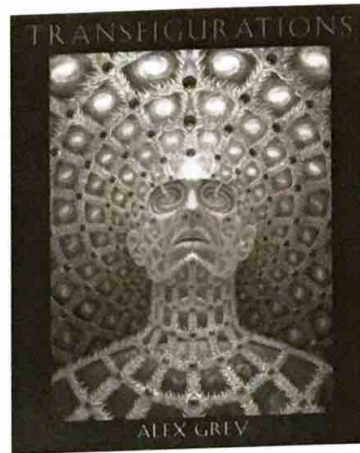
Alex Grey (with Stephen Larsen, Donald Kuspit, and Ken Wilber)
Foreword by Albert Hofmann
Inner Traditions, 2001

I can still remember the party almost ten years ago at which I was first introduced to the visionary artwork of Alex Grey. At the time, I was just getting my feet wet with psychedelics, as were a number of my friends, and we crowded around a copy of *Sacred Mirrors*, Grey's first collection, and oooohed and ahhhhed at what appeared to all of us to be direct snapshots of states of consciousness for which we were barely scraping together rudimentary models in our minds. It was a visceral connection; we didn't doubt that this person was painting with a rare authority, and perhaps it gave us courage to continue our nascent explorations of the psychedelic realms. He acted as a kind of ontological cartographer, inspiring us to visit these regions that to us had previously been uncharted territory.

Transfigurations is an eminently worthy follow-up to the *Sacred Mirrors* collection. The book opens with a tour of Grey's history as an artist, following him through his days of existential, "transgressive" performance and installation art. These are his "pre-LSD" days, and his work is confrontational, searching, and political; indeed, some of his most interesting early work focuses on Cold War tensions and visions of nuclear holocaust. But soon, his eyes opened to the spiritual world via his encounters with psychedelics and the serendipitous meeting of his love, Allyson, he settles into exploring and elaborating the spiritual themes that will eventually come to dominate his work. The bulk of *Transfigurations* is a tour of the paintings and sculptures created in what has come to be recognized as his signature style.

I freely admit to feeling a distinct intimidation at having to review this book, for Grey's knowledge and understanding of the world's wisdom traditions is immense. But as art critic Donald Kuspit writes in an essay published in the book, "We need not know the meaning of each symbol in Grey's encyclopedic array — we need not know the cultural source of any of them. We only have to experience the forceful luminosity and overwhelming rhythms of Grey's images and surfaces to have a so-called mystical, oceanic experience, that is, to be transfigured." That's undoubtedly the reason Grey's work has attained such popularity within the psychedelic movement, which seems to many observers to encompass a wildly disparate array of skeptical, nay-saying, syncretic, buffet-style spirituality, and outright hostility toward anything that smacks of organized religion. Grey manages to incorporate the themes and imagery of the world's wisdom traditions without demanding belief in any particular system; he is revealing the mysteries as experiential in nature, not something frozen, but something dynamic and filled with joy.

I won't make the mistake of attempting to describe these paintings in words; you should visit <http://www.alexgrey.com> if you need more



of an actual introduction to Grey's style. That said, Grey paints with such meticulous precision that it often takes a very close look at these glossy reproductions to reveal the actual brush strokes and texture of the works. This is

not the crisp digital perfection of modern computer-generated psychedelic graphics, which makes these works all the more astonishing in a way. By the same token, seeing a still from the *Chapel of Sacred Mirrors* fly-through computer animation definitely suggests that Grey could take over the entire "trippy animation" genre if he set his mind to it. His painting, *The Soul Finds Its Way*, is a depiction of what happens to the soul after the physical body dies — because his other paintings resonate with such authority in terms of actual experience, one feels as though this beautifully compelling work is actually a kind of journalism.

An interesting conversation between Grey and Ken Wilber punctuates the book, as they discuss notions of an integral art culture, a culture in which the primary focus of the art world is to deepen humanity's connection with, and awareness of, the spiritual realities of our existence. Grey clearly elucidates the mission of his work, and it's extremely admirable, although my own personal feeling is that Grey's work succeeds against a backdrop in which we are also free to explore so-called "low art." The one thing that seems entirely missing from Grey's work, for better or worse, is a true sense of humor. I don't think humor is necessary in his work at all, mind you, but I hesitate to imagine an art culture without humor, without parody, without trashy burlesque, and for that matter, without the weird joys of surrealism and absurdism. Then again, the world would be a lovelier place if Grey had more company in his chosen field, and because Grey writes with such clarity throughout the work, he avoids the trap of "preaching," leaving us instead with a healthy amount of food for thought, as artists or simply as consumers of art.

It's clear that the *Chapel of Sacred Mirrors* will be a mecca for the psychedelic movement, such as it is. Until it's built, we are fortunate to have *Transfigurations* to tide us over. Grey's work offers a unique alternative to even the most strident agnosticism, and reminds cynical bastards like me that there is indeed more to life than what meets the eye. — *Scotto*

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Duckapus

pfly
<http://neuron.net/pfly>



One of the greatest things about the psychedelic community is the wide variety of unique do-it-yourself artists and musicians who populate the scene. Holistic artists like these typify the values of the renaissance creators, blending philosophy, technology, music, and art into a tidy package of alchemical sound and vision, handily compatible with any home CD player and guaranteed to stimulate any set of eyes and ears the planet.

One such renaissance musician is pfly, also known as Paul Fly. pfly has been producing underground ambient and experimental tracks for years now, but with *Duckapus*, his latest release, he has taken the art form to a new level. Every snippet of sound on this CD was assembled from the ground up by Fly, mixed and mastered in his own home studio. Even the curiously enfractured art on the CD sleeve comes from his desktop, making the entire package a start-to-finish holographic representation of pfly's head space.

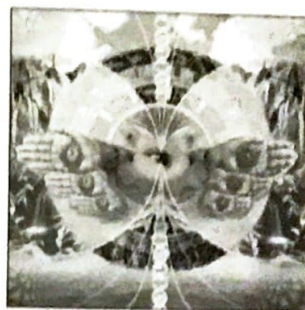
Duckapus is a very strange and unique album, moving through lush organic spaces, squeaking dissociative noise machinery, and churning caverns of dark mystical power, each one bubbling over with the potential to explode into states of pure chaos at any moment. The mind states flow seamlessly from one to other, some leaving you in the warm folds of sonic bliss, others sending you spiraling into darkness, others spinning your awareness forty-five degrees in space while simultaneously giving your light vehicle a two-and-a-half minute lube and tune.

Whether you're being pounded by hammers of insanity or washed over with electro-harmonic love plasma, the great joy of this album is never knowing where you're going to end up next. Some transitions are organic and exotic, others creep out of nowhere and take control, others pass you through hellish corridors of torment before alighting you into a field of fresh wild flowers at sunrise. *Duckapus* leaves you with the sensation that a grand dreamlike voyage has been undertaken, a skittering surreal journey through the many joys and pains of existence. *Duckapus* is also an immaculately crafted album, each passage deep and complex with simultaneous unfolding and enfoldment of mood and sound. In short it is a production tour de force, and certainly has the depth to listen to over and over again, always discovering new glittering snippets and pieces, like tiny polished gems of sound awash in a great ocean of sound.

— James Kent

Shakatura

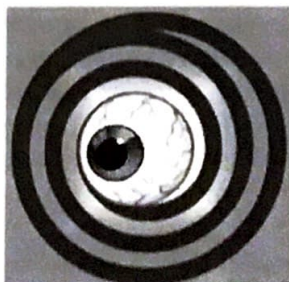
Shakatura
Ceiba Records 2001



Another artist who fits the image of the modern psychedelic renaissance man is San Francisco's Galen Butler, also known as Shakatura. Butler recently released an eponymously titled debut from Shakatura on Ceiba Records, and it is probably one of my favorite albums of the year. Grooving with an organic house vibe from start to finish, *Shakatura* booms and rolls with lush bass lines, phat breaks, and swirling synths that bloom and sting with simultaneous hints of Eros and menace.

While moving through various downtempo moods and spaces *Shakatura* steps and swings along with ease, always maintaining an entirely chilled out demeanor, unafraid to get comfortable in a specific zone and just roll with the flow for a while. Yet within the meaty grooves lie the deep processes of time passing, planets spinning, life evolving, each bathed in the ever-present electro-harmonic radiance that ties it all together. Even while sober there are parts of *Shakatura* that leave me envisioning the elegant dance of intracellular process, the tiny, wet machinery of life metabolizing through time at the bio-molecular level. It is a soothing yet endlessly fascinating pulse, flowing and combusting along with the organic groove of life. And if your booty stays still while listening to it you are probably dead.

Although *Shakatura* is hard to classify it is very easy to listen to. It embraces the best aspects of both downtempo and beatless ambient spaces into tight organic grooves that keep popping, moving and rolling to the end. The entire album swings with consistent breakbeat chill and trippy soundscapes, and will definitely enjoy heavy rotation on your sound system. [Read an interview with *Shakatura's* Galen Butler online at <http://www.tripzine.com/articles.asp?id=shakatura/>]
— James Kent



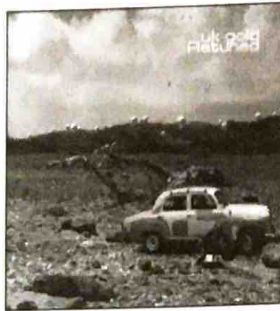
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Retuned

UK Gold

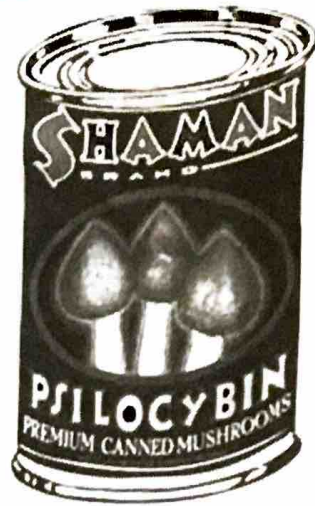
Primeval Recordings 2002



Retuned is the debut album from UK Gold, otherwise known as Chris McCormack, a producer whose track "Flight Decimator" was sampled by Fatboy Slim for his big megahit "Star 69." The transition from the deceptively lush ambient musing of the opening track, "At The Break Of Dawn," into "Arise," an upbeat and seriously dubtastic track, sets the tone for this eclectic rekkid. I love dub done well but often times it wanders into muddy, monotonous waters, and this album clearly avoids such pitfalls by strategic use of excellent beats, sharp vocals, and creative arrangements, including trumpet appearances reminiscent of Ben Neill and a nice mix of talented male and female vocalists. On occasion the bass lines remind me of the musicality of the Orb's early sound, but the considerable thump of the percussion establishes a signature style that keeps the head bobbing. It's dub on steroids.

The album is insidious. "Amazulu Booty" is an excursion into a style known as "tech-house," a style apparently defined by relentless, driving staccato beats with just the subtlest of variation over time to keep it from sounding like a drum machine that somebody forgot to turn off. At first, I thought to myself, "That settles it, then, I simply do not like tech-house." And then, eight or nine listens later, I started totally grooving on the absurd juxtaposition of these hard core synthesized beats interspersed with actual bells and whistles that just... won't... stop... then the little kid starts squealing in some alien language and that's when I realized it wasn't just me, this guy is crazy too! "Fight The Reaper" features a very sensuous, ominous groove, with textured vocals across the top that I can't really understand, except for key words like "dark side" that pop out to remind me I am probably being programmed subliminally. "In Fever, In Fear" is like a more aggressive version of a Craig Armstrong track; "Returning" is like a funk track that was sped up past the point of rationality.

"Turn Around" is the closest thing you get to an inspirational diva track; naturally, though, McCormack manages to set the vocals against a jarring background chord progression and a beat that's just too fast for you to pay attention to whether the diva thinks the sun is shining or not. That's UK Gold for you: finding a frequency and then fucking with it. This album is an ideal response for those nights when people just won't stop playing that one BT album they own. — *Scotto*



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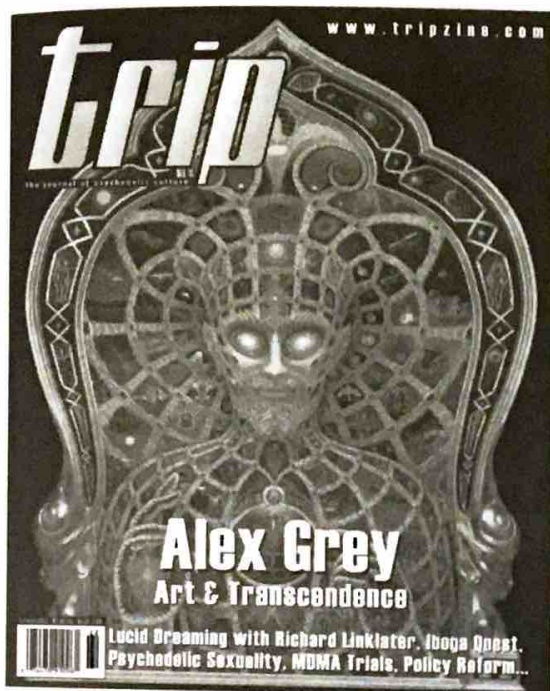
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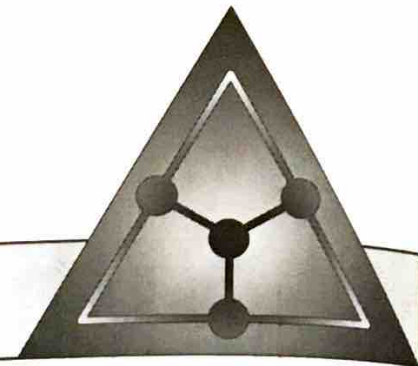
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the SCRYTCH page



scrytch is a group of escaped alien lunatics. one of the alien lunatics is yourself.

*a story that doesn't use the words midas touch elektra complex broken mirror brings bad luck
by deborah lyn siegel*

I pulled Strawberry Shortcake into the vehicle and we sped away. Now there were five of us, zooming along the suprahighway, eleven feet in the air, in the Metal Groove-Mobile. Earlier we were being pursued by the evil Mr. Creepy and his sidekick Shadow. They had penetrated our vehicle, and we gave them the boot. I imagined them spending hours peeling their slimy asses off the pavement.

"This is a message from Captain Quek. Do you read, Metal Groove-Mobile?"

"Ten four, Captain."

"You are to rendezvous on the Planet Gela-Tin immediately upon completion of your mission. Do you copy? Over."

"Xerox-clear, sir. Mission completed. Shortcake recovered. Enemy lost, Captain. Heading to the planet."

"Ten four, Major Great. Over and out."

Major Great switched off the com. "Well folks, another job well done," he congratulated us.

"You can't be serious," Shortcake said. "How do you know that wasn't Mr. Creepy, luring us into one of his evil traps?"

Major Great's face twitched slightly, probably as a result of his high salt diet. He faced Shortcake. "We'll be prepared for anything."

The Metal Groove-Mobile shimmied its way through some interplanetary dust, got a little masochistic with an Asteroid Belt, and neatly but unknowingly avoided a black hole. The Metal Groove-Mobile and its five most excellent passengers, Strawberry Shortcake, Major Great, J.S.D.R.B Hobbs Jr., Red McGee, and myself, veered through space and time toward the planet Gela-Tin.

"Ok, let's raise the roof on this bucket!" said Red.

"Woohoo!!!!" said the other four.

J.S.D.R.B. started passing out the drugs. "What the hell else is there to do?!" he exclaimed, as he rationed out the rainy-day supply of lysergic acid diethylamide-25, MDMA, 4-bromo-2,5-dimethoxyphenethylamine, DMT, Psilocybin Mushrooms, Peyote, Hashish, Opium, Cannabis, Yage, Dramamine, Bully Hill "Love My Goat" Wine, Camel Filters, and Ben & Jerry's Devil's Food Chocolate Sorbet.

"Hey! Your Serotonin is in my Dopamine!" exclaimed Shortcake.

"I'm Sloshed," observed the Major.

Outside the cabin, stars were born and died. Planets accrued matter and gravity, grew populations of living beings, invented Politically Correct Behavior, and were destroyed by random galactic burps before anyone left the surface or was discovered. Some time and many waves of paranoia and joy later they arrived for landing at the planet Gela-Tin.

The doors to the MGM opened slowly and they peeked out. Strawberry was the first to let down her guard.

"Hi Dad," she said.

"Young lady," the Captain said gravely. But then he smiled. "You really know how to irk the fire out of me. The next time you want to visit planet Victorious Secretus without telling anyone, I will leave you to the whim of Mr. Creepy and his sidekick Shadow." At this he winked at Major Great.

"What an enlightened man," the Major thought to himself as they piled out of the vehicle and headed toward the beach.

*Tune in next week for further tales of the Stupendous Neurotic Bisexual Polyamorous Weird Druggie Crew
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Finally, the world's most powerful miracle cure is available without a prescription!

The following is a patient summary of information about PLACEBO (placebic acid HCL). Read this information carefully before taking PLACEBO.

What is placebo?

PLACEBO is a powerful miracle drug which has been scientifically proven to be effective in the treatment of every physical and emotional disorder known to humans.

Is placebo the right medicine for me?

Of course it is. PLACEBO is the right medicine for everyone.

Are there any side-effects to placebo?

No. PLACEBO works perfectly every time.

How does placebo work?

To operate PLACEBO, remove a caplet from the tamper-proof bottle, place on the tongue and let dissolve slowly over a period of several minutes. PLACEBO's minty freshness will lift your spirits as super-powerful nano-medicines effortlessly relieve all your ailments.

Should I ask my doctor about placebo?

No. Don't mention anything to your doctor; your doctor is an idiot. The medical industry has a vested interest in keeping you ill so they can continue to prescribe more costly treatments and toxic medications. Frankly, doctors are scared shitless of the super-powerful nano-medicines in PLACEBO. The last thing they want is a pill that cures everyone because then they'd all be out of work.

How often should I take placebo?

Any time is the right time for PLACEBO!



placebo.
placebic acid hydrochloride

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