

MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHEDELIC STUDIES



MAPS

B U L L E T I N



SPECIAL EDITION
Psychedelics and the Popular Arts

VOLUME XXII NUMBER 1



Images: Android Jones / Obscura Digital

On March 20, 2011, San Francisco-based multimedia design lab **Obscura Digital** and digital alchemist **Android Jones** collaborated on a breathtaking project at the intersection of 21st century symphony orchestra, visionary art, and cutting-edge digital technology.

Performing that night was the YouTube Symphony Orchestra, whose 101 musicians from 33 countries auditioned by submitting YouTube clips, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas of the San Francisco Symphony.

For the entire two-hour show, Obscura Digital used real-time audio-reactive graphic projections to project Android Jones' live digital paintings across the Sydney harbor and onto the complex exterior and interior of the world-famous Sydney Opera House.

Android Jones (www.androidjones.com) is at the forefront of the visionary art movement, a wave of artists who emphasize creativity as the foundation of consciousness and an agent of social change. Android builds on the technical developments of past centuries in art history while pushing the boundaries of the imagination with new technologies and media forms. Android's art encourages others to explore the potential interfaces of mind and machine, bears witness to realities accessible through heightened states of consciousness, and engenders heightened awareness through artistic creation and audience interaction.

From mapping video onto nearly any surface to building large-scale, multi-touch displays, **Obscura Digital** (www.obscuradigital.com) delivers groundbreaking immersive and interactive experiences. Part technology lab and part creative agency, Obscura is continually generating new forms of experiential marketing for Fortune 500 clients around the world. Obscura Digital was named one of the top 10 most creative agencies in 2009 by FastCompany Magazine and is a member of the Society of Digital Agencies, the world's premier group of creative agencies focused on new media.

"Tripping the light fantastic with chic geeks: San Francisco's hot-to-trot Obscura Digital made light of some very sweet music."

-Sydney Morning Herald

"Another example of technology and artistic innovation creating what was inconceivable not all that long ago."

-Forbes

"It all seemed to interlock: old and new pieces, social media, high-tech projections and an orchestra filled with young, fresh faces culled from the Internet, led by a venerable and charismatic conductor, all happening live. It was a satisfying and successful marriage of technology and classical music."

-NPR

"The most ambitious and breathtaking projects we've ever seen."

-Richard Evans, CEO, Sydney Opera House



The Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) is a membership-based organization. Founded in 1986, MAPS is an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation funded by tax deductible donations. Our mission is (1) to treat conditions for which conventional medicines provide limited relief—such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), pain, drug dependence, anxiety and depression associated with end-of-life issues—by developing psychedelics and marijuana into prescription medicines; (2) to cure many thousands of people by building a network of clinics where treatments can be provided; and (3) to educate the public honestly about the risks and benefits of psychedelics and marijuana. Interested parties wishing to copy any portion of this publication are encouraged to do so and are kindly requested to credit MAPS and include our address. The *MAPS Bulletin* is produced by a small group of dedicated staff and volunteers. Your participation, financial or otherwise, is welcome.

©2012 Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, Inc. (MAPS)
 MAPS, 309 Cedar Street, #2323,
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060
 Phone: +1 831-429-6362, Fax: +1 831-429-6370
 E-mail: askmaps@maps.org, Web: www.maps.org

Editors: Brad Burge & David Jay Brown

ISSN 1080-8981

Visit maps.org/store for information about donations and purchases.

The *MAPS Bulletin* is printed on 40% post-consumer recycled paper.



Free Cultural Work -

A Creative Commons Attribution

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License. This license is viewable at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>, or you may request a copy from Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

Inside cover images by Joshua Brott / continuousflux.tumblr.com

1	Contents
2	From the Desk of Rick Doblin, Ph.D. MAPS Founder and Executive Director
4	Letter from the Editor David Jay Brown
6	How Psychedelic Consciousness Transformed Modern Art: An Interview with Ken Johnson David Jay Brown
9	The Art of Reality: Psychedelic Experience in Cinema and Television Evan Martin
12	Ayahuasca and James Cameron's <i>Avatar</i> Erik Davis
14	What's So Funny? Mainstreaming Psychedelic Science Through Comedy Brad Burge
16	Electronic Music and Psychedelics: An Interview with Simon Posford of Shpongle David Jay Brown
19	Psychedelics and Alternative Rock: An Interview with David J of Love and Rockets Damon Orion
21	Psychedelics and Circus Arts: Creating Community with the New Old Time Chautauqua Rose Grey
22	Forever Altered: Robert Venosa and the Visionary Art World Robert Venosa and Martina Hoffmann
24	New Worlds and Ways of Seeing: Visionary Art After Postmodernism By Neşe Lisa Şenol
25	Co-Creating the Haight-Ashbury Museum of Psychedelic Art and History J. Frame and the Haight-Ashbury Museum Team
26	Who Supports MAPS and Why?
27	MAPS Staff
28	Membership Page

MDMA, the Oreo Cookie, and the Path to Cultural Acceptance

This special issue of the *MAPS Bulletin*, with guest editor David Jay Brown, is about the myriad ways that psychedelic experiences have been incorporated into popular media such as movies, television, the arts, and music. We're highlighting how psychedelics are becoming more integrated into mainstream culture to show how a core part of MAPS' mission—to obtain government approval for the legal medical uses of psychedelics and marijuana by prescription—is becoming less controversial over time.

From the desk of Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

Part of this shift is due to our expanding and increasingly successful efforts to educate medical professionals, media, and the public at large about the long-recognized healing power of psychedelics and marijuana. Another reason has to do with the impressive results that we are now getting from our meticulously designed clinical studies. Next time you see psychedelics represented in a clear and honest light on television or in the theater, it's probably in part because of the quarter century of research and education that MAPS supporters have made possible.

2012 is the 100th anniversary of the creation of MDMA. MDMA was first synthesized in 1912 by Dr. Anton Köllisch of the Merck Pharmaceutical Company, though the exact date is unknown and not mentioned in any existing Merck documents. We do know that the company submitted a patent application for the drug (as an intermediary chemical for the development of a blood-clotting medication) on December 24, 1912, and received the patent in 1914. As it turns out, Merck chemists were completely unaware of MDMA's psychoactive properties. The first published study of MDMA in humans, by Alexander Shulgin and David Nichols, did not appear until 1978, more than six decades later.

For the sake of comparison, it helps to look at another famous creation born in 1912. According to Nabisco records, the first Oreo cookie was manufactured at the Chelsea Market Bakery in Manhattan on March 6, 1912. Today, there are about 25 billion Oreos eaten every year (about 70 million per day), with about \$1.5 billion in annual revenue.

While we've come a long way with the cultural integration of MDMA—from an unrecognized precursor chemical to a promising therapeutic adjunct—we still have a long way to go. According to a variety of different estimates, annual global sales of illicit Ecstasy are well in excess of the \$1.5 billion spent on Oreos. Sales of legal, pure MDMA for scientific research are probably not more than

\$50,000, if that. Sales of MDMA by prescription currently amount to exactly \$0, a number that—if our drug development research succeeds—will start to grow in about 8-10 years.

Two recent examples of positive media about psychedelic research from unexpected sources suggest that MDMA and other psychedelics may one day be as culturally accepted as Oreos. On March 14, 2012, the U.S. federal government's international multimedia broadcast service Voice of America posted a strongly favorable 5½-minute radio story about the renaissance in psychedelic research, focusing in part on MAPS' MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD research (www.maps.org/voamarch2012). Depending on local interest, this report may be translated in up to 43 languages. When Voice of America, the official international broadcast agency for the U.S. government, speaks positively about psychedelic research, there's a shift underway!

On March 12, 2012, the Partnership for a Drug Free America reported positively on a meta-analysis of pioneering LSD research in alcoholics from the 1960s that was just published in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*. The meta-analysis revealed that that LSD-assisted psychotherapy could indeed help some people overcome alcoholism with overall benefits lasting up to six months after a single session. The positive findings in the paper were reported all over the world and have created additional public support for the expansion of psychedelic research. Meanwhile, Dr. Peter Gasser, the Principal Investigator of MAPS' Swiss study of LSD-assisted psychotherapy for end-of-life anxiety, is working with his MAPS and his Swiss co-authors on a paper reporting the promising results of his study, which we anticipate will be submitted to a journal for review in the next two to three months.

The phenomenal strides that MAPS is making are the result of the work of MAPS staff and researchers, empowered by the generosity of MAPS members. With the continuation and expansion of our partnerships into MAPS' 26th year, we'll see ever more positive examples of the beneficial uses of psychedelics and marijuana in movies, television, the arts, music, and—most centrally for MAPS' mission—in science and medicine.



Rick Doblin, Ph.D.
MAPS Founder and Executive Director

Psychedelically yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'R. Doblin'.

Rick Doblin, Ph.D.

MAPS Founder and Executive Director

Letter from the Editor

David Jay Brown

Numerous references to psychedelic drugs—as well as the influence of their effects—can be clearly and pervasively seen throughout modern popular culture and the arts. If you know where to look, these influences and references appear just about everywhere—in film, music, television, comedy, advertising, comic books, fashion, toys, video games, and other multimedia art forms. Sometimes the reference or influence is blatantly obvious, while other times it is subtle, or hidden with a knowing wink.

It's no secret that cannabis and psychedelic drugs hold incredible potential to enhance creativity. This was the subject of a previous special theme *MAPS Bulletin*, and many highly acclaimed artists, scientists, writers, musicians, and creative people of all sorts have claimed this for decades. The bottom line is that you have to already be talented to begin with—psychedelics won't give you that—but among those who already are, it appears that cannabis and psychedelics are creativity-enhancers without par.

Since the 1960s, psychedelics have inspired a lot of music and visual art, and much of it has worked its way into today's mainstream culture. Additionally, psychedelics have influenced just about every aspect of the art world, from painting and sculpture to theater, music, writing, poetry, and dance. How psychedelics have influenced mainstream artistic forms of expression—and their appreciation—is the subject of this special theme *Bulletin*, which I co-edited along with MAPS communications director Brad Burge.

This is a huge, encyclopedic topic that deserves a whole library and an entire museum to contain, so we'll just barely be able to scratch the uppermost surface of this important subject in this issue, although I'm sure that we will be exploring this fascinating cultural and pharmacological interaction again and again in the future.

Psychedelics, Performance Art, and Popular Music

The first artistic medium that usually springs to mind when we think of psychedelics is music, as an endless array of talented musicians have claimed inspiration from cannabis and psychedelics. Music is often an integral part of many people's psychedelic experiences, and it is even used in clinical therapeutic settings with psychedelics. It appears that this tradition of combining music and these compounds stretches back into human prehistory, as members of our species have been using psychedelic plants and dancing to music since the beginning of time.



David Jay Brown
dajabr@well.com

In his marvelous, although now outdated, book *Kaleidoscope Eyes: Psychedelic Rock from the '60s to the '90s*, Jim Derogatis recounts the intertwined history of modern music and psychedelics, which is a good place to start for those interested in this subject. Music and psychedelics alone is a huge and important topic, and it deserves having a whole *Bulletin* dedicated to it, so we'll just be able to touch on it here.

For this special issue, we brought in the voices of two brilliant British music composers to discuss this subject further. I spoke with Simon Posford from the popular electronica music project Shpongle, and music writer Damon Orion interviewed David J of the alternative rock band Love and Rockets, about how psychedelics have influenced their remarkably successful music careers.

Circus artist Rose Grey also contributes to this edition with an article on how modern community-based performance troupes make use of the psychedelic experience.

Painting, Modern Art, and Psychedelics

Although the intimate relationship between painting and psychedelics has been covered in previous *Bulletins*, and will be somewhat de-emphasized in this one due to spatial constraints, this is certainly one of the areas where there has also been a great deal of influence—as the covers of most *MAPS Bulletins* clearly demonstrate.

Psychedelics have not only influenced how paintings are created, as with music, but also how they are viewed. To get a broad overview on this subject, I interviewed *New York Times* art critic Ken Johnson, author of *Are You Experienced?: How Psychedelic Consciousness Transformed Modern Art*, about how psychedelics have affected modern art in mainstream art circles. Visionary artist Martina Hoffmann also joins us to share how her late husband, the celebrated painter Robert Venosa, developed in intimate collaboration with psychedelics and the worldwide visionary art community.

Also joining us is University of Pennsylvania graduate art student Nese Lisa Senol, who discusses how the influx of new psychedelic-inspired visionary art is influencing the “post-postmodern” academic art scene.

Film, Television, and Psychedelics

There is a strong psychedelic influence in many popular television shows, films, commercials, as well as many animated films, and numerous Hollywood actors and directors have claimed inspiration from psychedelics, such as Stanley Kubrick, Jack Nicholson, Peter Fonda, Larry Hagman, Jane Fonda, George Carlin, and Dennis Hopper. Art Clokey, creator of the wonderful *Gumby* animation series that originally ran from 1955 to 1968, has said in interviews that he was inspired by his experiences with psychedelics.

So many popular films come to mind when one thinks about how psychedelics have affected the motion picture industry that it's hard to keep count. Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Ken Russel's *Altered States*, the Wachowsky brothers' *Matrix* trilogy, Jan Kounen's *Renegade*, and Jodorowsky's *Holy Mountain* are but a few that instantly spring to mind.

In this edition of the Bulletin, celebrated writer Erik Davis explores how psychedelic themes of ecological interconnectedness shape the highest-grossing film of all time: James Cameron's *Avatar*. Evan Martin also joins us in this special issue to share with us his encyclopedic knowledge of how psychedelics have influenced film and television.

Pushing the Boundaries of Mainstream Culture

I suspect that every creative person who has ever taken a psychedelic drug or plant yearns to express the experience. Whether one has had a healing experience or a beautiful vision, a mystical insight or a sense of spiritual transcendence, some rapturous sensory enhancement or a revelation that reveals hidden dimensions in the mind and nature, the creative spirit seeks to express these profound and powerful experiences through the medium that it finds most effective. As our species continues to evolve, as we grow smarter and more aware, our artistic ability to express these extraordinary states of consciousness will surely grow and develop into realms that we can now hardly conceive of.

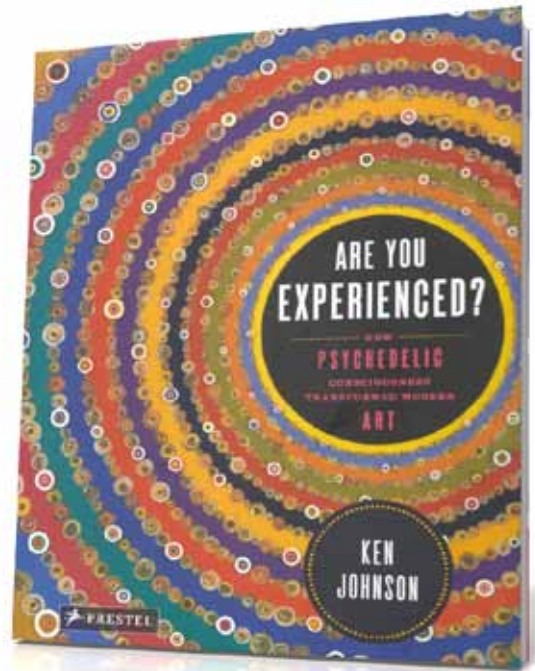
We can barely begin to imagine what the future holds in store for us. However, before we can arrive at such a transcendental point in our evolution, we first need to radically heal ourselves and the biosphere. Psychedelic drugs seem to be valuable keys, that can not only help us to effectively treat many forms of illness and disease, but also to help raise ecological awareness, inspire spirituality, and enhance creativity on a major scale.

This is why I believe so strongly in the research that MAPS is doing, and so faithfully support this leading-edge organization. A more conscious and compassionate world can emerge with the intelligent use of psychedelic drugs, and the kind of scientific research that MAPS and its sister organizations are currently doing can transform how our society views the use of these important medicines. •

The creative spirit
seeks to express
these profound and
powerful experiences
through the medium
that it finds
most effective.

How Psychedelic Consciousness Transformed Modern Art: An Interview with Ken Johnson

By David Jay Brown



Now available at www.maps.org/art.

Ken Johnson is an art critic who lives in New York and writes for the arts pages of *The New York Times*, where he covers gallery and museum exhibits. He is the author of the book *Are You Experienced?: How Psychedelic Consciousness Transformed Modern Art*, which was published this past year by Prestel. We spoke about how psychedelics have influenced the traditional art forms of painting and sculpture.

David: *What initially inspired you to write the book *Are You Experienced?**

Ken: I can't pinpoint exactly what inspired the book, but several factors contributed. One is that I personally came of age during the peak years of the psychedelic revolution—from about 1965 to the early 70s. As a teenager I was fascinated by psychedelia and all that it seemed to promise aesthetically, philosophically, and spiritually. In this I was far from atypical, but it was not until years later—sometime in the late 80s, I think—that it occurred to me that perhaps psychedelia had something to do with some of the huge and wild changes that art underwent around the same time. My first idea was to ask artists themselves if psychedelics had influenced their art. But artists are not always the most reliable witnesses about their own work, so I thought the best approach would be to look at art itself for evidence.

The big question that eventually became clear to me was this: if the psychedelic revolution had not happened, would art today look different than it does? I was convinced that it would look a lot different. If I was right about that, and if, on the other hand, the influence of psychedelia has been inadequately addressed by academic art historians and critics, as I think has been the case, then the follow-up question becomes: How might the ways we think and talk about art of the past half century differ from the official version?

David: *In your book you wrote that "in the 1960s some kind of awakening took place in art." Can you explain what you mean by this, and how this "awakening" is still affecting the art world today?*

Ken: There have been three so-called "Great Awakenings" in American history—periods when the populace was gripped by religious fervor,

awakened somehow to the Christian God. I think the psychedelic revolution was a similar awakening but not to God. It was more like an awakening to what the first and second century Gnostics thought of as Divine Mind. The new art that came out of the 60s had nothing to do with the progression of styles identified with Modernist art from Manet to Abstract Expressionism. The new frontier for art was and still is, I think, mind and consciousness, which psychedelia has revealed to be far more expansive, complex and variable than was previously ordinarily thought. No longer did it seem that consciousness had to adapt to a fixed state of affairs; mind came to seem the tail that wags the dog of reality.

David: *How do you think that psychedelic drugs, and psychedelic culture, have influenced—and are influencing—how paintings and sculpture are created in the art world?*

Ken: Painting and sculpture got more psychedelic in all kinds of ways—and not necessarily along the lines of conventional “psychedelic art.” Painters and sculptors have explored possibilities from hallucinatory illusion-making to the unvarnished display of found objects and raw materials. The idea that there must be one dominant style like Cubism or Abstract Expressionism went out of style, at least in part, I believe, because psychedelic consciousness, excited by all things great and small, is inherently non-hierarchical. Why should a three-inch piece of rope nailed to a museum wall by Richard Tuttle be any less compelling than a giant spiral of rusted steel by Richard Serra? Artists today need not identify with and work along the lines of some great tradition. Whatever it takes to put your own mind into play and to engage the minds of others is okay.

David: *How do critics in the NYC art circles generally respond to the idea that a particular piece of art had been inspired by a psychedelic experience?*

Ken: Critics will certainly take note if a given artwork exhibits formal or stylistic features similar to those conventionally identified with psychedelic art as a genre—day-glo colors, Op art effects, intricate patterning, and flowing shapes or hallucinogenic hyperrealism. But if the work was the literal by-product of an actual

psychedelic experience, I, as a New York art critic myself, would consider that of secondary interest to the experience of the artwork itself. On the other hand, I think I would tend to find more significance and deeper meaning in whatever psychedelic dimension may be found in the work itself because I think that a psychedelic ethos runs through many superficially different kinds of art being made these days.

David: *What kind of an effect do you think that psychedelics have on creativity and the imagination?*

Ken: There’s no doubt that when on psychedelics many people feel more creative and imaginative—and, I think, they really are. Whether that leads to making more creative and imaginative artwork during or after a period of altered consciousness is not guaranteed. A bad artist on LSD is still a bad artist. So I’m agnostic about psychedelics and creativity.

David: *How do you think that psychedelic drugs have influenced the way that art is viewed? (Are you familiar with the term “museum dose?”)*

Ken: I’ve never heard that term, but it makes sense. What better way to enjoy visually extraordinary things in a quiet, cloistered environment? But the museum experience of a 19-year-old art student on LSD is not what art historians and critics generally are concerned with.

If by “viewed” you mean how art is talked and thought about—as opposed to how it is really experienced—I don’t know. There is a paranoid dimension in much of the theory that academics have indulged in over the decades since the 60s, for example in Michel Foucault’s idea that all people internalize the order of power that keeps them in place. I recently read Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* for the first time. It is very trippy. Jean Baudrillard’s writings about simulation and reality are hallucinatory. In the U.S., theory imported from Europe met up with the homegrown, paranoid radicalism of the hippie era, which still informs, I think, some important conversations going on in the art world.

Artists today
need not identify with
and work along
the lines of
some great tradition.
Whatever it takes
to put your own mind
into play and
to engage
the minds of others
is okay.



Photo: J. Dowling

Ken Johnson
kenjohnson53@gmail.com

Modern artists
are suspicious
of norms...
So they try to
make art that
expresses,
represents
and
communicates
non-normal states.

The perceptual and intuitive experience of art is harder to talk about, and in that respect, it seems to me that mainstream academic ways of talking about art have lagged behind what artists these days are doing. The prevailing vocabulary of art criticism, with its emphasis on conceptual and ideological analysis and its broader tendency to think compartmentally, is less well equipped to talk about the resonant ambiguities of metaphor and the psychology of the spiritual in art.

David: *Why do you think that discussing the relationship between psychedelics and art is still a somewhat taboo subject?*

Ken: Psychedelics bear the stigma of illegality and association with anti-social behavior. I don't know that anyone takes seriously the idea of psychedelics as performance enhancers like steroids for athletes—I don't—but there's that, too. I'm not sure that the topic is taboo so much as that it has not been regarded as worth investigating. For most observers, psychedelia has been a minor blip on the sociological radar and has had little effect on art. There is a risk of embarrassment if you do take psychedelic culture seriously.

Since the 60s, psychedelia has been a popular culture with a low price of admission. Anyone could be a hippie; you didn't need an advanced degree. A lot of stuff that seems hare-brained to someone with a Ph.D. in art history—astrology, neo-paganism, New Age spirituality, Jungian psychology, UFOs, Burning Man, the Mayan calendar and so on—must be on the table for anyone who does want to take psychedelia seriously as a socio-cultural force. Also, you're not talking about high culture appropriating pieces of low culture for its own reasons but about high culture being inspired by and following the lead of popular culture. This is contrary to what the avant-garde is supposed to stand for; the avant-garde typically works to maintain critical distance between itself and popular culture. The question of psychedelic influence presents a problem that high art discourse has trouble getting its mind around.

David: *What type of relationship do you see between art and altered states of consciousness in general?*

Ken: The phrase "altered state" suggests a condition of mind that is somehow different from that of the norm, whatever it may be. Is "normal consciousness" universal? Or do norms vary in different communities and societies? I suspect the latter is more the case. Anyway, most people, it seems, are happy to conform to prevailing norms of consciousness and ideology in their part of the world. But modern artists are suspicious of norms and tend to regard them as repressive. So they try to make art that expresses, represents and communicates non-normal states. Along these lines, avant-garde art tends to be negative, to define itself by what it rejects, and much critical writing supports this characterization. Psychedelia adds something more positive: the idea that you can connect to Divine Mind through altered states. I doubt if many artists would say that in making art they are communing with Divine Mind. The best artists are pragmatic mystics and wary of overblown, ego-inflating claims. But I like to think that as a collective, cumulative enterprise, what art is doing is not just communing with Divine Mind but feeding it, giving it more intelligible form and making it more present in consciousness and the world.

David: *Is there anything that we haven't spoken about that you would like to add on this subject?*

Ken: I guess that methods of mind-expansion have been influencing art since the beginning of human time. The period studied by my book is unique as far as I know in that it is the first time ever that radically consciousness-altering drugs were available to and consumed by millions in an industrial society. Why did this happen? Because, I think, psychedelia was an answer to the spiritual yearnings of a population that could no longer find solace in established religions and science. Psychedelia and Divine Mind are live, Gnostic myths that continue to inspire seekers of all kinds, artists included. •

For the unabridged interview with Ken Johnson plus more interviews
by David Jay Brown, visit www.mavericksofthemind.com.

The Art of Reality: Psychedelic Experience in Cinema and Television

By Evan Martin

Psychedelics temporarily inhibit the mind's filtering mechanisms, allowing the senses access to increased amounts of information. Since prehistory, shamans, artists, and storytellers have used these hyper-receptive states to transmit meaning and insight by implementing attention evoking mechanisms such as rhythm, dance, poetry, narrative, vocal cadence, facial expression, body language, symbolic and patterned costume, and scenic sensorial effects such as fire, decorations, and acoustics. So emerged what we now call theater: a blending of art forms (visual, musical, dance, fashion, linguistic, etc.) onto an animated canvas of human action, painted with the endless palette of human emotion.

The technological unfurling of the past century has awarded us increased capacities, both generative and destructive, from acid to the atom bomb. While psychedelic aesthetics are intimately joined to the natural world (as exemplified by such hippie-driven movements as environmentalism, natural foods and clothing, natural medicine, natural homes, nudism, and the romanticization of indigenous cultures) there has also been a direct historical correlation between psychedelics and the cutting edge of technological innovation. This can be easily illustrated by the most recognizable symbols of psychedelic culture: electric guitars, electronic music, computer graphics, computational or fractal geometry, and the open, collaborative ethical codes brought forth by networked information technologies that spread like mycelia from the silicon spores of Bay Area counterculture philosophy.

These two seemingly diametric attachments, to nature and technology, are in fact aspects of psychedelics' more general tendency to enhance awareness of networks and systems, such as those that comprise biologies, ecologies, and cosmologies (an aspect aptly captured by Richard Doyle's notable neologism: *ecodelic*). When technological methods are aligned with those of nature—such as beauty, harmony, and synergy—technology itself becomes indistinguishable from nature: an emergent property rather than antipode.

Special effects have always been part and parcel of cinema's evolution. As photographic and editing technology improved, so did the



Evan Martin
teleomorph@gmail.com

This is an abridged
version of
*The Art of Reality:
A Review of
the Reunification
of Shamanic
Traveling and Cinematic
Sojourns.*
For the full
unabridged review,
visit
www.teleomorph.com.

apparent reality of on-screen illusions. The earliest visionary sequences were mostly found in animated shorts and features such as *Mickey's Garden* (1935), *Fantasia* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941), *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), and the Salvador Dali/Walt Disney collaboration *Destiny* (1945). Another Dali collaboration with Alfred Hitchcock in 1945 for the dream sequences in *Spellbound* introduced more sophisticated, non-animated film effects to portray the surreality of altered states.

In 1959, LSD made its first appearance onscreen in *The Tingler*, starring Vincent Price. Film presentations of *The Tingler* took viewer immersion to the next level. Multicolor oil lighting effects were projected over the black and white film during the LSD scene; a real skeleton popped out of a trap door next to the screen and zip-lined out towards the audience; actors paid to be moviegoers screamed and fainted in their seats; and electric vibrating buzzers under the seats startled the audience when the movie's namesake creature, which feeds on fear, supposedly escaped into the theater.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as the influence of LSD and other psychedelics on popular culture grew, so too did the number of films inspired by, depicting, and even celebrating psychedelic experiences—certainly more than are within the scope of this review. A few notable mentions include *The Trip* (1967) written by Jack Nicholson, Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969), *Fritz The Cat* (1972), the animated and profoundly psychedelic *Fantastic Planet* (1973), and *Hair* (1978), based on the 1967 off-Broadway musical.

During the anti-drug hysteria of the 1980s and early 1990s, most films and television shows either contained ominous warnings and goofy misrepresentations about psychedelics, or directly exaggerated their negative consequences. One such example is the classic, psychedelic camp thriller, *Altered States* (1980), based on the hallucinogenic and sensory deprivation experiments of Dr. John Lilly.

Other films from this period that added a baleful air to drug experimentation were *Midnight Express* (1978), *Liquid Sky* (1982), *Jacob's Ladder* (1990) and *Lawnmower Man* (1991).

Lawnmower Man is a perfect example of how technology-driven special effects evolved hand-in-hand with the portrayal of altered states, as it was the first film to utilize the revolutionary new 3D capabilities of computer-generated imagery (CGI).

Some films from that repressed period, such as *Naked Lunch* (1991) and *The Doors* (1991), portrayed the consequences of combining psychedelics and more harmful intoxicants such as alcohol and heroin. Others, such as *Natural Born Killers* (1994) and *Beavis & Butthead Do America* (1996), while clearly psychedelically informed, additionally demonstrate that visionary states were most frequently portrayed to the general public in menacing contexts.

David Lynch's *Dune* (1984), based on Frank Herbert's 1965 novel, while having a generally positive take on mind-expanding drugs, focused less on the drug itself than on the raging violence over its control. In other films, even when references to drugs were not explicit, psychedelics nevertheless directly informed themes and aesthetics. For instance, the producers of *Brainstorm* (1983) consulted Stanislav Grof for the CGI-driven post-death transpersonal journey of Christopher Walken's character.

With the resurgence of psychedelic use that occurred in the early 1990's along with the rise of rave and cyberculture, it became harder to thwart the oncoming flood of psychedelic aesthetics, reinforced as they were by emerging technologies. *Strange Days* (1995) portrayed a brain-computer interface that offered radically novel subjective experiences and generated its own black market—a digital drug with the potential to “fry” a person's senses into warped rainbow static. In 1996, the most famous work of theatrical drama in history became a blockbuster film which had Romeo rolling on MDMA when he first laid eyes on his Juliet. Terry Gilliam's now-classic rendition of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998) famously portrayed the results of “seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high-powered blotter acid, a saltshaker half-full of cocaine,

and a whole galaxy of uppers, downers, laughers, screamers.”

With the turn of the millennium came yet another influx of psychedelics in major films, starting with *The Matrix* (1999). The entire film (and its sequels) candidly draws from the standard themes of psychedelic philosophy, such as a red pill that forces Neo through a birth-like process into the “real world” of mind over matter, time dilation and cave raves where there are no spoons and “anything is possible.” The exploding electronic dance music scene became the backdrop for altered states in a number of popular films, including *Human Traffic* (1999), *Groove* (2000), *Sorted* (2000), *24 Hour Party People* (2002), *A Midsummer Night's Rave* (2002), *Party Monster* (2003), and *It's All Gone Pete Tong* (2005).

As the use of MDMA spread beyond the rave scene, its portrayal in cinema moved beyond the lights and sounds of electronic music parties and into the bars and bedrooms. The “love drug” had favorable (or at least neutral) cameos in such popular films as *When Do We Eat* (2006), a comedy about a Jewish family that comes together over a Passover dinner and a tablet of MDMA, as well as *25th Hour* (2002), *Bad Boys II* (2003), *Garden State* (2004), *Holy Rollers* (2010) and *Black Swan* (2010).

The complex effects of fictional hallucinogenic flowers were central to the plots of Charlie Kaufman's *Adaptation* (2002), Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005) and Richard Linklater's adaptation of Philip K. Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* (2006). *A Scanner Darkly* explored themes of addiction, drug politics and disapproving inter-dimensional beings, and was made in a similar animation style to Linklater's *Waking Life* (2001), a profound and visually stunning film about lucid dreaming and other transpersonal states.

Some of the most accurate and intricate depictions of the psychedelic mystical experience in cinematic form occurred in *Renegade* (2004). Directed by Jan Kounen, who was deeply inspired by his ayahuasca journeys, this shamanic Western was based on a comic book series by visionary illustrator Jean “Moebius” Giraud, who passed away in March 2012. In addition to helping formulate the stunning visuals in *Renegade*, Moebius also helped create the luminous aquatic aliens in James Cameron's *The Abyss* (1989) and contributed design concepts to such fantastical films as *Alien* (1979), *Tron* (1982), *Willow* (1988), and *The Fifth Element* (1997).

Psychedelic aesthetics without direct drug references are also making a splash in popular cinema as can be seen in the epic visual creativity of such films as Terry Gilliam's *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* (2009), the increasingly popular works of Hayao Miyazaki, and *The Secret of Kells* (2009), an enchantingly trippy film about illuminated manuscripts and Celtic faerie lore which won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature.

In the past decade, we have seen many hallucinogenic insights and adventures in hilarious stoner films such as *Knocked Up* (2007), *The Pick of Destiny* (2006), *Walk Hard* (2008), *Men Who Stare at Goats* (2009), *Get Him to the Greek* (2010) and *21 Jump St* (2012); whimsical and profound psychedelic experiences in musical and light-hearted comedies like *Across The Universe* (2007) and *Taking Woodstock* (2009); and even some frightful trip scenarios in thrillers like *The Tripper* (2007).

One of the most sophisticated cinematic explorations to date of altered states, including those induced by LSD, DMT, and near-death experiences, was in the maturely dramatic film *Enter the Void* (2009). Filmed in Tokyo and shot entirely in first-person perspective—blinks, memories, and all—*Enter the Void* begins with the central character smoking DMT while coming down off LSD before being launched into a voyage through the Tibetan bardos.

Avatar (2009) was also particularly striking in its psychedelic saturation. Even a symbolic portrayal of the ayahuasca ritual was almost included but the scene ended up being cut from the script. That such a representation of the way human beings actually are capable of reconnecting with the ecosystemic sentience of Earth was so nearly included in the highest grossing, most popular film in history, says something about the rate at which the mycelial threads of psychedelic cultures are reaching out and linking up with the very roots of popular culture. [Editor's Note: See Erik Davis' article on ayahuasca and *Avatar* in this issue.]

While big-budget feature films have the benefit of ever-advancing special effects to communicate psychedelic themes to popular culture, psychedelics are also making more appearances on television. The main character in *House* is a gifted yet troubled M.D. who echoes the image of shaman in his uncanny ability to diagnose mysterious ailments and his radically unorthodox methods of healing. This petulant medicine man has taken LSD at work to relieve a migraine, given psilocybin to a surly young patient suffering from cluster headaches, and helped manage a fellow doctor's difficult psychedelic experience. In the supernatural thriller *True Blood*, the fictional drug works as an addictive stimulant in small doses—enhancing cognition, sensation and physical strength—while at higher doses it affords visionary states casting rippling rainbows of euphoria and insight over the bleakness of a tribulating world. The hit comedy *Weeds* presented its main character imbibing ayahuasca, albeit not in the most meaningful manner, still further exposing the concept of entheogenic ritual to the masses.

One of the boldest and most ostentatious treatments of psychedelic drugs on TV is in the successful science fiction serial, *Fringe*—the very first episode of which involves the main protagonist being administered a cocktail of LSD and ketamine while floating in a sensory deprivation tank and neuro-computationally interfaced with a recently deceased person in order to extract subjective memories from the still warm corpse. Throughout the show, another lead character—the lovable mad scientist—repeatedly admits to using psychedelics during his normal routines. The screenwriters even grant psychedelics the fundamental role of inspiring the invention of the transdimensional portal that is the basis of the show's entire story arc.

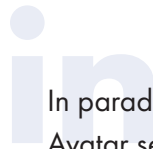
Psychedelics have repeatedly been topics in the longest-running sitcom in American history: *The Simpsons*. In one episode, Homer undergoes an intense and extended vision quest after consuming the merciless "Insanity Peppers of Quetzalacatenango." *South Park* also routinely pokes fun at the criminalization of psychoactive drugs, from psychedelics to medical marijuana dispensaries. *Family Guy* also recently paid homage to psychedelic experiences with an episode in their tenth season in which Brian consumes magic mushrooms on a rainy day and returns from his vividly harrowing experience with a newfound sense of calm and compassionate wisdom.

Phenomenal strides are being taken in the inoculation of pop culture with psychedelic revelations, yet we are still but on the brink of fully realizing the potentials for big-budget applications of rapidly advancing media technologies to the momentous, shamanic emotion of the imminent entheogenic reformation. Amidst the commencing unfurlment of technological extensions into interactive, immersive media, mutable matter, neurotechnology and the awakening ethics of interconnectedness, openness and abundance, the exteriorization of the psychedelic vision from the mind's eye to the world of matter and media will become ever more manifest and resplendent.

Despite mass media's flagrant exploitation for misguided ends, an inter-subjective and egalitarian ethos is emerging upon the rising tide of network and communication technologies, wherein the doctrine of centrality will once again be denigrated to quaint obsolescence, as the telescope did for the geocentric model, or Gutenberg's press for centralized religious authority. Coinciding with the rise of networked society is a rediscovery of ecological reverence which calls for sustainable relationships with nature, plant knowledge, and biomimetic technologies. Amidst the cultural, technological and biological diversity to which all these trends introduce us, shamanic principles will rapidly become increasingly appropriate. With psychonautic navigation at the helm of creative design and media communications, we will beautify the earth, and reclaim art as a core aspect of our conscious, cosmic evolution. •

Ayahuasca and James Cameron's Avatar

By Erik Davis



In paradoxical and altogether predictable terms, James Cameron's dazzling Avatar sets a blue man group of mystically attuned forest dwellers against the aggressive and heartless exploitation that characterizes the military-industrial-media complex, with its virtual interfaces, biotech chimeras, and cyborg war machines. The paradox, of course, is that an avatar of this technological complex is responsible for delivering Cameron's visions to us in the first place.



Erik Davis
erik@techgnosis.com

To wit: Before a recent screening of the film at the Metreon IMAX theater in San Francisco, we hapless begoggled ones were barraged with military ads, along with a triumphant techno-fetishist breakdown on the IMAX gear that would soon transport us to the planet Pandora almost as thoroughly as the handicapped jarhead Jake jacks into his avatar body—a body that is, in reality, generated by computer, and so not quite reality after all. The message of all these nested media prostheses is clear: We are imaginatively handicapped, and need an commanding apparatus of virtuality to achieve fusion with the bygone but utterly concocted world of wisdom and myth represented by the Na'vi and their world.

Erik Davis' most recent book, from which this article is adapted, is **Nomad Codes: Adventures in Modern Esoterica** (Yeti).

He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Religious Studies at Rice University, and also hosts the podcast *Expanding Mind* on the Progressive Radio Network.

But those are behind-the-scenes ironies, and like most people, I just gave into the ride. With its floating Roger Deanscapes and hallucinogenic flora, the manifest world of Avatar instead spoke another truth about our era's visionary consciousness: The jungle pantheism that now pervades the psychoactive counterculture has gone thoroughly mainstream.

Of course, noble savage narratives of ecological balance and shamanic wisdom have been haunting the Rousseau-mapped outback of the Western mind for centuries. That said, Avatar represents some important twists in that basic tale.

The most important of these is that the Na'vi's nearly telepathic understanding of their environment is grounded in more than ritual, plant-lore, and that earnest sobriety that afflicts Hollywood Indians everywhere. Their enviable at-oneness with things is also grounded in an actual organic communications network. The fibrous, animated, and vaguely repulsive pony-tail tentacles not only allow the Na'vi to form direct control links with animals but also, through the optical filaments of the "Tree of Souls," to commune with both ancestors and the Eywa, the biological spirit of the planet Pandora.

Eywa resonates with Erda, of course; Pandora is a dream of our own Earth. Contact with Eywa is clearly a visionary operation, one perhaps best seen as "ayahuasca lite." For while Avatar features nothing like the South American shaman songs and stupendous ayahuasca visuals that litter the otherwise very bad 2004 Western released here as Renegade, Cameron's film does suggest that the bitter jungle brew, and the spirit of ecological wisdom now attached to it, is having a trickle-down effect.

After all, as ads for ayahuasca retreats readily point out, the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine that gives ayahuasca its name (though not its most hallucinogenic alkaloids) is also known as the "Vine of Souls"—an echo of the Na'vi's "Tree of Souls." And at one point in the film, when Sigourney Weaver manifests the Tree's powers through a neuro-electrical connection, the corporate tool Parker asks what she's been "smoking"—a backhanded way of acknowledging how much Avatar's visionary take on jungle unity is grounded in psychoactive consciousness.

After all, beyond a thriving and in many ways damaging ayahuasca tourist market largely centered in Brazil and Peru, clandestine "aya" circles

It no longer matters whether Cameron or his animators have themselves drunk the tea;
its active compounds are already swimming in the cultural water supply.

manned by South American shamans and all manner of Euro-American facilitators are now well established throughout the West. Among the professional creative classes who make up a sizable portion of West Coast seekers—after spirit and thrills alike—ayahuasca itself could almost be said to be mainstream.

So it no longer matters whether Cameron or his animators have themselves drunk the tea; its active compounds are already swimming in the cultural water supply. Indeed, whether you are talking form (ground-breaking 3D animation) or content (cyber-hippie fantasy decor), Cameron's visual and technological rhetoric is impossible to disentangle from a hallucinogenic experience.

If there is a psychedelic-*Avatar* connection—as suggested by a deleted scene available on the DVD extras in which the hero Jake ascends to meet his power animal after being given a psychoactive combination of scorpion venom and a worm—it would at least explain the most crucial way in which the film differs from conventional noble savage mysticism. Rather than ground the Na'vi's grooviness in their folklore, spiritual purity, or access to supernatural powers, the film instead argues for a direct and material communications link with biological consciousness.



This means that Eywa (aka Aya) is not a religious position that has to be believed—rather, she can be experienced through corporeal fusion. After temporarily plugging into the Tree of Souls, Weaver's chain-smoking left-brain doctor happily confirms Eywa's existence even as she dies. She is smiling, no longer needing to explain or be explained.

Like the Vine of Souls now winding its way from the anthropological margins into the developed world, the Tree of Souls is a bio-mystical medium, a visionary communications matrix that uplinks the souls of the dead into the networked mind of the ecosphere itself.

In the end, though, it is tough to say what the real object of enchantment is: the possibility of a biological interface with the plant mind of the planet, or the technological communications networks—the Hollywood blockbusters and ayahuasca vacation packages advertised online—that already circulate our desires and fantasies, our hopes and fears. Indeed, if anything, *Avatar* suggests that eco-futuristic dreams are now indistinguishable from the visionary potential of media technology itself, a technology that must disguise its own poisoned environmental footprint through a continual invocation of beckoning phantasms. •

"Caduceus" by Simon Haiduk. Oil and digital painting (2009).
High-quality giclée prints available at www.maps.org/art.

What's So Funny? Mainstreaming Psychedelic Science Through Comedy

Brad Burge

On March 31, 2011, I had the unique chance to travel with my friend and colleague Berra Yazar-Klosinski to Los Angeles, California, to shoot a pilot television show with a production company that develops shows for major networks. The company, which I won't name since they haven't decided to publicize the episode yet, invited us to appear on the first episode of a new "exploratory science show," a cross between *The Daily Show* and *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, that would make science fun and accessible to a wider public through the insightful, playful, improvisational sarcasm of LA-based comedian Duncan Trussel. Between my eagerness to talk about the world of psychedelic research on television and Berra's razor-sharp wit and Ph.D. in molecular, cell, developmental biology, we made a good team.

It was a warm spring day when we got on the plane for LA. The episode was to be an "unbroadcastable pilot," meaning that the episode must pass the scrutiny of network executives before it is aired and before a network decides to fund additional episodes. Since this particular company has worked with Comedy Central, HBO, Showtime, and plenty of others, it seemed well worth the round trip. The production team decided to do their pilot on "the world of psychedelic drugs," based on their belief that doing the show on so controversial—and popular—a topic would stand a good chance of making the cut.

From the sound engineer and the key grip to the director and Duncan himself, everyone in the studio was professional, courteous, and intrigued about who we were and what MAPS does. As soon as we arrived we were offered coffee and breakfast burritos, introduced to Duncan ("the talent"), and subjected to some minor makeup.

Our interview was filmed in a tiny room made to look like a modern office: primary colors and IKEA furniture. Berra and I sat on opposite sides of Duncan for the interview. Once the cameras started rolling, Duncan asked us to introduce ourselves and say a

little bit about MAPS. Then he turned to us and said, "I'm a big fan of the work that you guys are doing, so in the spirit of science, I decided to do a little research of my own to help you guys out." Then he picked up a remote control and flipped on a television screen.

Before our arrival, Duncan and a production team had shot a segment of Duncan under the influence of *Psilocybe cubensis* mushrooms. Duncan, on screen, happily munching away on dried mushrooms out of a plastic bag: "I am currently consuming an unknown quantity of psilocybin mushrooms."



Brad Burge
brad@maps.org

The next shot is of a recognizably altered Duncan in a workout suit trying with all his physical and existential might to lift weights while a trainer (an actor) screams at him from behind reflective shades like a drill sergeant to "lift harder, push harder, stop laughing" while Duncan giggles and smiles and marvels aloud about how the laws of the physical universe are preventing him from lifting more weight.

The next shot is of Duncan sitting in the gym, connected to a real respirator device and cardiac monitor under the watchful eye of a man who appears to be some sort of medical professional. The setup was intended to gather data about Duncan's physical state as well as to demonstrate that adequate

medical supervision is important when using psychedelics. It was also effective punctuation between the rest of the scenes, which were comparatively action-packed.

"I was rolling around and laughing on the floor, and it was hard to stay focused on what I was doing and what I needed to get done," Duncan reflected. "A bunch of times while shooting the segment I felt as if I was doing something really far out and crazy by shooting this thing, and that there were maybe other, more important things I could be doing with my life, but I had to stay focused and get the job done."

The following sequences included the drill sergeant screaming at Duncan to throw baseballs, climb stairs, and lift weights—while Duncan visibly struggled to do as he was told and to pay attention to his tasks. Another sequence has Duncan marveling at a blank green wall and speaking aloud about the faces and "elves" that he sees projecting from it.

In yet another sequence, Duncan attempts to play the saxophone. He wails and wails and makes the ugliest sounds imaginable, prompting Berra to ask him whether he'd ever played the sax before taking the mushrooms. He responded that he hadn't, but that he'd heard of famous musicians talking about using psychedelics to enhance their creativity. Psychedelics, he had discovered, can't enable people to do things that they couldn't otherwise do.

At one point, Duncan is being told to run up several flights of stairs. He dashes up the first, hobbles up the second, and then collapses into a hysterical heap on the third.

"What's the matter? Why are you laughing? Get up! Get up!" screamed the sergeant.

"I was trying!" Duncan responded, "I was running, and doing OK, but then I looked down at my hands and I realized—I realized they were monkey hands."

At this point Duncan pushes pause on the remote and turns to Berra, who by this point in our interview had already established herself as a world-renowned expert on the neurobiology of psychedelics. “Berra, scientifically speaking, why did I see my hands as monkey hands?”

Stone-faced, Berra looks him directly in the eye and responds, “Because they are, Duncan.”

Between sequences, on camera we speak about the neurophysiology of the effects of tryptamines (like psilocybin and psilocin) on the serotonin system, the physiology of hallucinations, the difference between using psychedelics in hazardous recreational settings like gymnasiums and using psychedelics in controlled clinical settings, the importance of set and setting in the structuring the psychedelic experience, the importance of having medical help available, the methods of psychedelic therapy, the source of the drugs that MAPS uses in our studies, the complex mythology of elves and mushrooms, the cultural history of psychedelics, and the return of psychedelics to

mainstream science and medicine. We also discussed Charles Grob’s new pilot study of psilocybin for anxiety in patients with advanced, and highlighted our ongoing research on MDMA and PTSD.

In all, Berra and I stayed very much on message and on point, and we, Duncan, the director, even the technicians were all immensely pleased and entertained. Based on the conversations we had in front of the camera and on my and Berra’s immediate conversation after the shoot, I can confidently say that we all worked together to create some unique, educational, and at times hilarious material.

I remember especially clearly something Duncan said to us as we were getting our coats and heading out the door. It was about how beyond the slapstick and sarcasm, there was also something about the experience that seemed to invite—or even partially compel—him to explore something deeper.

“I was afraid of doing the segment because I thought I might go insane or have a

nervous breakdown, but when I stepped outside to get some air I felt as though the universe was composed of love and that it was pretty much impossible to do anything wrong in that sort of universe. You guys are doing really great things.”

Even if the show never gets broadcast, we succeeded in introducing MAPS to the LA comedy production community, and showing that, yes, we have some pretty good material. And most importantly, we found that comedy was not something that we needed to be afraid of when communicating what MAPS is all about. I guess in that sense, psychedelics and comedy are really similar: They’re both really powerful tools, as long as we’re careful and mindful of what we’re saying and doing.

MAPS is on camera and in the spotlight a lot these days. This experience showed that at this point in history psychedelics are at a point of transition, somewhere in between feared compounds to respected medicines. As it turns out, we can take psychedelics seriously while still having fun. That’s a pretty funny place to be. •

Check out MAPS on

You Tube

and listen to “Duncan Trussell and
Joe Rogan on the Importance
of Psychedelics in 2012.”

www.youtube.com/mapsmdma

Electronic Music and Psychedelics: An Interview with Simon Posford of Shpongle

By David Jay Brown



Simon Posford

Simon Posford is an acclaimed British electronic musician and producer whose music spans many genres from psychedelic trance (psytrance), to rock, to electronica.

Posford's first studio album, *Twisted*, was released in 1995 under the artist name "Hallucinogen." *Twisted* is considered one of the most influential albums in the genre of psytrance, and Posford's connection with psychedelics was evident from the title of the very first track—"LSD," which, to this day, remains the defining sound of a form of electronic music that originated during the late 1980s in Goa, India, called "Goa trance."

In 1996, Posford and Australian musician Raja Ram created one of the most popular electronica music projects of all time—Shpongle. Arguably, not since The Grateful Dead has a brand of popular music been so positively associated with psychedelics as Shpongle. Psychedelics have played a huge role in the creation, performance, and experience of Shpongle's music, which is extremely popular among members of the electronic music community.

Posford is generally responsible for coordinating the synthesizers, studio work, and live instrumentation, while Raja contributes broad musical concepts and flute arrangements. Shpongle's unique style combines Eastern ethnic instruments, flute riffs and vocals, with contemporary Western synthesizer-based electronic music, hyper-dimensional sound effects, sound clips from television shows, and spoken words. Truly genre-defying, Shpongle contains elements of jazz, classical, dub and glitch, among others.

Shpongle performs live with different musicians, dancers, and other performers, while Posford masterfully controls an electronic sound board, alchemically mixing and remixing the music, engineering, tweaking, and orchestrating the highly textured, multilayered music that emerges. Shpongle's studio albums include *Are You Shpongled?* (1998), *Tales of the Inexpressible* (2001), *Nothing Lasts...But Nothing Is Lost* (2005), and *Ineffable Mysteries from Shpongleland* (2009). Posford also frequently tours as Hallucinogen.

I interviewed Simon on July 26, 2011. Since Simon's music has served as the soundtrack for numerous important personal experiences, this was a special interview for me. It was great fun to—as Simon put it—"intellectualize the abstract" and "muse over the ineffable" together. There's

a delightful eloquence to the way that Simon expresses himself, and a vibrant sense of creativity continually comes through his words. We spoke about how his psychedelic journeys have affected his creativity and his experience with music.

David: *In general, how would you describe your creative process with Shpongle?*

Simon: Raj will turn up, sometimes with a load of samples or recordings. One time he went to Brazil and recorded some stuff there. Otherwise, he'll record stuff off of TV shows, some spoken words, or bamboo forests creaking in the wind...something like that. So that might spawn an idea for a track.

Raj is a very visual person, and he's a fabulous painter, so he might come up with a visual image that, in time, I'll translate into music. Over the years he's come up with some inspiring imagery, such as a lake shimmering in the sky. Our most recent one was about CERN, the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland, and about the idea of particles colliding at high velocities, neutrinos, protons, and neutrons smashing into each other, creating black holes explosions and new universes. Stuff like that.

So we'll have a visual image. Then, when I can finally get him to shut up, Raj will sit on the sofa

Each note
will be analyzed,
effected, and
tweaked out,
with layer upon layer
of instrumentation...
tambourines turned into
liquid drops of nectar,
vocals converted
to voices of
the cosmos.

and do a thousand drawings into his notebook, while I'll sit at the computer and get about translating our images into sound. I generally do the programming, playing, and production because Raj can't work the computer or any of the equipment, but he's the inspiration and the muse, and will play flute or jabber strange vocals into the mic.



Image: Carly Marthis, MusicMarauders.com

We start with just a blank canvas, an empty computer screen, and just add more and more sounds—either until it's time to go home, I'm sick of having him in my house, or he's sick of sitting on my sofa listening to me torture him with various obnoxious instruments. Then we stop, and later we mix it. Then we give it the acid test. He'll take some LSD and put the headphones on when I'm ready to mix. Then I'll play it to him at high volume, and—judging by the state of his eyeballs and his face afterwards—I'll know whether we've got a good one or not. *(laughter)*

David: *I love it! This leads right into my next question, which is: How have psychedelics influenced your experience with music, and how has it affected your creativity and your performance?*

Simon: I would say massively, and on a profound level. In fact, so fundamentally that I didn't even really like the type of music that I now create before I took psychedelics. I liked bands and music with singers and stuff. I never got into Kraftwerk, or Depeche Mode, or any of the well-known electronic bands that my friends would listen to. Then, once I took psychedelics, I really went off that for awhile, and only wanted to hear the alien, otherworldly, futuristic sounds of electronic music, and it's what inspired me to start making the music that I'm doing now. In a way, it's foundational to what I'm doing because it pushed me down this path.

Also, it changed my appreciation of music

in general. I think that listening to music in an altered state of consciousness can either magnify the music or it can really leave you cold. Hopefully, it will enrich the experience, and, hence we have what we call "psychedelic music," which is designed to do so. I think that electronic music can certainly enhance a psychedelic experience. I probably shouldn't mention the artist, but there's a particularly commercial band that sold a lot of records in the 80s and early 90s, and I made the terrible mistake of listening to their music while trying to have a psychedelic experience in my parent's house when I was a teenager. I put on this CD, and truly heard it for the bland, pot-bellied, corporate, insipid, vapid nastiness that it was.

So our only concerns now are, what do we need to do to make this sort of kaleidoscopic music that really expands the brain, in the same way that, I think, psychedelics do?

David: *I think that's really important. One of the reasons that I love your music so much is because I feel really vulnerable when I'm on psychedelics, and it seems just so vital to have the properly supportive music. I was listening to some of your music recently, and was thinking that some of it reminded me a bit of Pink Floyd, one of my favorite bands in high school. They developed sophisticated acoustic techniques for beautifully heightening consciousness with their music, but much of it feels so sad to me, like I'm floating all alone in outer space, haunted by loss of cosmic proportions. You seem to have*

developed similarly layered acoustic techniques for heightening consciousness with your music, but much of it has an upbeat, joyful exuberance.

Simon: What's amazing about Pink Floyd is that they managed to capture it with lyrics as well, which I find quite hard to do—because lyrics often distract me from the exact feeling that you were describing. This is why

I never got, for example, The Grateful Dead, or some of the jam bands over here that were touted as so psychedelic. The Grateful Dead weren't as big here in England, but they certainly weren't around me and my friends when I was growing up. So when I finally did have an experience with them, and then someone told me, "oh, that's The Grateful Dead," man, I was disappointed. To me it was just blues-folk music. I just didn't get it...apparently it sounded best from the car park, which I could understand!

David: *There's such a rich tapestry of acoustic variation, and so many dimensions to your music, that it really comes close to capturing the multidimensional state of consciousness that can happen during a psychedelic experience. I'm sure that's why so many people love it.*

Simon: You know the old cliché about gazing at your shoelace for ten hours when you take psychedelics? I always like to have a similar experience with music, where I really get into each and every guitar note. Each note will be analyzed, effected, and tweaked out, with layer upon layer of instrumentation...tambourines turned into liquid drops of nectar, vocals converted to voices of the cosmos.

David: *Right, and there's such an incredible sense of time dilation with psychedelics. Everything seems to slow down, and there's a lot more going on in each moment, so you can analyze every detail more easily.*

Normally, it all just flies by so much more quickly.

Simon: Yeah, I guess that's why it takes me so long to make an album. I like to spend a lot of time on each track. I think that you should be able to listen to a good track many times, and hear something new in it each time. It should be composed so that you hear something new in it if you listen to it on headphones, or on a good sound system or in the car, alone or with friends. It's got to keep you interested and tickle the brain cells as long as possible.

David: How have psychedelics affected your audience, and your interaction with your audience?

Simon: I don't know if I can really speak for my audience, because the psychedelic experience is a very personal journey. But I would say that quite a large percentage of our audience appears to have certainly had that experience, and I think that it provides a way to relate. Our music creates a common thread and instant bond of alliance to other people who have had a psychedelic

experience, in the same way that, say, traveling might.

I think that I get on better with people if they've done psychedelics and traveled, because it opens your mind up in a way that is unequivocal. It makes one adept at relating and interacting in a playful intangible broad-minded way, that perhaps you don't have with people that maybe haven't had those experiences.

David: I think that's there's something very similar about traveling and using psychedelics, because they both help you to become more culturally transcendent. They allow one to dissolve and transcend the boundaries of culture, and most people don't even know that culture creates limitations until they are free of them.

Simon: Yeah, so it does mean that then there is a bond with the crowd, and my interaction with them. I only really make music that I want to hear myself. Because I want to hear that tricked out, tweaked out, psychedelic, trippy sound, I hope that many other people will want to hear that as well,

and that my personal taste isn't so weird that no one else will like it.

David: You're definitely tapping into something that's really hitting a chord with a lot of people.

Simon: A lot more people might have done psychedelics than, perhaps, we might imagine. It's also a lot less taboo just to talk about it now than it used to be.

David: Is there anything that we haven't spoken about that you would like to add?

Simon: Yes, I'd like to think a little bit more about psychedelics and art, generally...

The more I think about it, the more I realize psychedelics have probably had a huge impact on art and artists. When will it start to affect our governments and politicians? That's what I'd like to know! •

For the unabridged version of this interview, visit www.mavericksofthemind.com.

Connect

Connect with MAPS

Stay up-to-date with the latest media, events, and research news, and be a part of the growing psychedelic and medical marijuana research community.



Monthly E-mail Newsletter www.maps.org/newsletter



Facebook www.facebook.com/mapsmdma



Twitter @MAPSNews



YouTube youtube.com/mapsmdma



Google+ gplus.to/mapsnews

Psychedelics and Alternative Rock: An Interview with David J of Love and Rockets

By Damon Orion
damonorion@yahoo.com

The 1980s were a grim time for kids in search of higher consciousness. Cocaine, capitalism, hedonism and hairspray held sway, and all the things our parents had revered—psychedelic sacraments, meditation, tribalism, gentleness, artistic expression—were considered hopelessly uncool. Not surprisingly, the music of the day reflected this shift: “Turn off your mind, relax, and float downstream” had given way to “everybody Wang Chung tonight.”

One of the psychedelic treasures that mushroomed from this mulch was Love and Rockets, a British alternative rock band comprised of three former members of the pioneering post-punk group Bauhaus. Love and Rockets broke through to mainstream American audiences in 1986 with its second album, *Express*—a title that on one hand challenged the group’s hair dye-sporting, trench coat-clad fan base to communicate through art, and on the other hand proclaimed that the magical mystery tour bus of the 1960s had been replaced by a faster, sleeker mode of transport to the astral realms. When bassist/vocalist David J urged, “All aboard the Express Kundalini,” it was in much the same spirit that yesteryear’s psychedelic Pied Pipers had inquired, “Is everybody in?” and “Are you on the bus?” But the band’s stylish, cutting-edge sound left no question: This train was headed out where the rainbow-painted buses didn’t run.



Damon Orion
damonorion@yahoo.com

Damon Orion is a freelance journalist, musician, ghost-writer, writing coach, music instructor and visual artist in Santa Cruz, California.

Enticed by the palpable whiff of LSD-fertilized spirituality emanating from Love and Rockets’ music, many of us accepted the invitation. David J served as a friendly, wise, cosmically cool tour guide, directing us to let go of our old identities (“You are disintegrating into everything around”), nudging us toward the realization that enlightenment can only be found in the present moment (“Are you in search of somewhere or something that rings true? Well, it could be closer than you think”) and gifting us with Alan Watts-ian bits of mind-origami (“You cannot go against nature, because when you do go against nature, it’s part of nature, too”).

David J, who explores the mystery of mortality on his latest solo album *Not Long for this World*, insists that the essence of chemically catalyzed knowledge can’t be captured in words. “It’s like the Tao: ‘The Tao that can be expressed in words is not the Tao,’ and the psychedelic experience

that can be expressed in a song lyric is not really the psychedelic experience,” he offers. “But it can give you a little hint. And maybe you can dance to it at the same time, which is fun.”

Damon: How have psychedelic experiences influenced your art?

David: I didn’t really get into psychedelics until ’85. It was the time of the first Love and Rockets album [*Seventh Dream of Teenage Heaven*]. In fact, the collage that’s on the inside of the gatefold sleeve—that was finished on LSD, on the day of my first trip. I remember being quite delighted with it! I remember sitting on the floor, looking at [guitarist/vocalist] Daniel [Ash]’s antique furniture and thinking how sexy the legs of the furniture were, and remarking on this! [*Laughs*] The curvature of the furniture, and Daniel just smiling.

My second experience was very heavy. That was

For the full unabridged version of this interview, visit
www.damonorion.wordpress.com/consciousness-expansion-and-the-paranormal/david-jay/

indoors, and I decided to do some drawing and listen to The Beatles' *Revolver* and *Sergeant Pepper's*. Just something I had to do. So I got as far as *Revolver*, and I was looking at this sheet of blank paper, and I just started to see this jungle in the paper. It was sort of like the cover of *Revolver*, but again, it was sort of like this effect of being embossed, almost like watermarks. It was incredibly detailed—there was all this fauna and jungle vines and leaves, and there little characters in there, sort of like going through the hair on the front cover.

The music sounded incredible. That was when I was listening to "Tomorrow Never Knows." Then I remember looking at the back of my hand and seeing through to my bones, seeing the cellular structure, seeing blood coursing through my veins, and then seeing my hand rot in front of my eyes. It was horrific. But I remembered that old Buddhist adage: "If you see something terrible, do not turn away. If you see something beautiful, do not cling to it." I embraced that and went into the hand, into the death, and came through the other side. I saw it as a very beautiful process.

There's a line in one of our songs, "The worm we dug from higher ground"—that's what that came from, that experience. So it was the death trip. If I had turned away from it, it could have turned very negative, but thankfully I didn't. And there was a huge lesson in that.

Damon: "I know what it's like to be dead," indeed! So, as long as you're referencing "Kundalini Express," how did that song come into being?

David: That song originally was gonna be called "Dr. Hofmann," and it was going to be about Albert Hofmann discovering LSD, but it just sort of mutated into this lyric about kundalini [Editor's Note: A Sanskrit word meaning "energy" or "force"] and aligning that with psychedelic experience.

Just before I started experimenting with psychedelics, I had a spontaneous kundalini experience when I was meditating. I didn't know anything about kundalini, but I started to hyperventilate, and then I effectively stopped breathing, which was very strange.

I felt this glow at the base of my spine, and I felt a warm substance rising through the



David J of Love and Rockets.
Image: Brendon Crigler

spine...I wasn't thinking anything sexual. And then I had, like, an explosion of this substance in my head! It was orgasmic, but it was like a cosmic orgasm. And I felt a golden—I just equate it with the color gold—it was gold, and it just flowed over my brain! It was just ecstatic. I had no idea what had just happened, so I started to look into this experience at the library—this was pre-Internet. I discovered kundalini, and I'd had a classic spontaneous kundalini experience. Never had it again.

Damon: You struck gold there! People who have heard of kundalini can strive for 30 years to get there, and you just stumbled onto it! You mentioned Albert Hofmann. Did

you ever meet him?

David: No. I met Timothy Leary a couple of times, though. He was interested in Love and Rockets. He actually really liked the lyrics of "No New Tale to Tell"—so the last time I spoke to him on the phone, I invited him to a gig we were playing at The Palace in L.A. But I didn't realize that he'd gone down really quick since the last time I saw him, and he was just staying in bed. But he said, "I'll be there in spirit." And he died a couple of days later.

We were on tour at the time, and at the gig that happened the day after he died, I dedicated "Yin and Yang (The Flower Pot Man)" to Tim. That song starts with an acoustic guitar, like a Bo Diddley rhythm. Daniel struck the guitar in a funny way, and it just made the strings feed back in a way I'd never heard before or since. And this vibration just picked up, and I thought, [excitedly] "Let that go, Daniel! Just let it go!" And he thought the same, 'cause he did. I remember him holding his hands up in the air, just lettin' this thing ring out and build up and up and up.

He started doing this undulating rhythm, and it was echoing 'round this big hall. Kevin [Haskins, the drummer] picked up on it and started doing a bass drum beat to this rhythm, and then the crowd picked up on that and started clapping. We all started clapping in the band, and this tribal sound just grew and grew. It was really something! And at the right moment, Daniel went back to the Bo Diddley rhythm, and we crashed back into the song. The chorus of that song goes, "Beauty, beauty, beauty, beautiful." Then I saw [Timothy's personal assistant] Howard, who was with Tim when he died. I said, "What were his last words?" He said, "His last words were 'Beautiful. Beautiful.'" And then the last thing he said to me came back: "I'll be there in spirit."•

Psychedelics and Circus Arts: Creating Community with the New Old Time Chautauqua

By Rose Grey

It's an average day at the grocery store until you hear the sound of a big brass marching band. A parade of merry-makers with colorful banners, dancing children, hula hoopers, jugglers, acrobats, and people on stilts gallivants down Main Street and into the store.

The entire experience has been concocted by the New Old Time Chautauqua, a troupe of about 60 entertainers, educators, cooks, stagehands, truck drivers, and musicians that puts on free shows and workshops over 3-4 week tours in a different region of the Pacific Northwest every summer. Now in its 31st year, Chautauqua encourages us all to take a break from our "To Do" lists and join the parade, remembering for a time that life is short, precious, and full of surprises.

This modern mobile artistic celebration was born from an annual fair in Oregon where many attendees choose to use psychedelics. The fair describes itself as a place for psycho-spiritual rejuvenation and is intended to create experiences that nourish the soul and enliven the spirit. The use of psychedelics allowed early fairgoers the creative freedom to think outside the box, and to dream up and carry out a fantastical vision, one which may otherwise have felt impossible.

The members of this dedicated group range in age from toddlers to elders and have included well-known artists such as the Flying Karamazov Brothers, Patch Adams, and Utah Phillips. But, behind the scenes there is more than just acrobats putting on their leotards. The organization is run completely by volunteers and requires a lot of hard work to organize, promote, and fundraise throughout the year.

The creators of the New Old Time Chautauqua sought to create experiences that changed attendees' perception of what was possible. The noise of daily life can cloud the path towards a life that is meaningful, satisfying, and joyful. Why do some of us spend so much time in front of a computer screen or a TV or behind a desk fretting the details of paperwork? Live entertainment carries us away from all of these distractions and brings people together in a real moment for a shared experience. It brings us back to our roots.

Of course, psychedelics are by no means necessary for building a



Poetic Motion Machine performing with the New Old Time Chautauqua

healthy and meaningful life. Religion, family, yoga, meditation, nature, solitude, good friends, diet, education and exercise can also accomplish this. Yet psychedelics can and do play a role in helping create shared experiences of acceptance and healing. They remind us that being human is about connection.

Our ancient ancestors and people of many cultures across the world have long gathered

around fires to sing and dance, producing a heightened awareness of love and appreciation. Creating these kinds of experiences is central to the mission of modern-day performance troupes like the New Old Time Chautauqua, as they bust through the doors of hospitals, detention centers, and retirement homes with refreshing rays of color, sound, and spirit.

A good show inspires the audience with a sense of unity among themselves, between themselves and the divine, and even within themselves. Although it varies greatly and is difficult to define, this feeling also characterizes the psychedelic experience. Whether brought on by actually ingesting a psychedelic drug or by other intense moments such as loss of a loved one, drastic physical or emotional changes, or falling in love with someone new, these transformations empower great art. Many of our culture's most popular songs or most remembered photographs speak to these times in our lives.

Today, the New Old Time Chautauqua is fostering community in the everyday world, with professional entertainers making their living through dedicated practice and organized business methods. With shows in big theaters, high school gyms, local parks, and school cafeterias and workshops in everything from gardening to unicycling (even discussion workshops on scientific and intellectual topics) Chautauqua is bringing the spirit of community and compassion to the modern imagination. In its waves of rejuvenation, we find hope and a reason to feel good. •



Rose Grey

Forever Altered: Robert Venosa and the Visionary Art World

By Martina Hoffmann and Robert Venosa (in his own words)
art@martinahoffmann.com

The late visionary artist Robert Venosa describes an early childhood dream “in which a large, demonic-looking bird tried to enter my body by forcing its way through my eyes. However, a large, brilliantly glowing sword, floating in the air, sliced off the demon’s head just in time, and in doing so saved my sight. When I awoke, there was a dead dragonfly next to my head. I couldn’t have been more than four years old at the time.”

It was at the Lincoln Hall Boy’s School that I started to awaken to my artistic abilities by sketching. The deeper gift, however, would remain dormant for the next fifteen or so years until the mid-Sixties, at which time, thanks to Lysergic Acid, my mind and consciousness were psychotropically—and forever—altered.

The beginning of the “consciousness revolution” proved to be a time of great change and transformation for many, including Robert Venosa. In 1964, living in Manhattan, he became an art director for Columbia Records and directed one of the first music videos ever made for The Temptations, called “Runaway Child, Running Wild.”

Later Venosa founded his own commercial art and advertising agency in the city. Here he designed an abundance of award-winning cover art for jazz label Blue Note Records, as well as for a number of up-and-coming musicians of the time, including Carlos Santana.

Walking away from the extremely comfortable lifestyle offered by the multi-million dollar-a-year agency to pursue a path of existentialist struggle and near-poverty would seem, in the eyes of many, to be reaching towards the heights of lunacy. But such were the demands made by an expanded consciousness in conjunction with the Muse of Painting.

It was during this cross-burning re-birth that the perceptions and values of art took on a dimensional change for me. Having had little or no previous experience in

the finer arts, I quite suddenly became attracted to oil painting, especially as exemplified in the works of the Visionary artists such as Ernst Fuchs, Mati Klarwein, William Blake, and Gustave Moreau.

Upon seeing the work of Mati Klarwein and Ernst Fuchs in the book *Psychedelic Art* in 1967, I knew that this was the world that I also desired to paint. They were, after all, painting the visions that I had been having since my first LSD journeys in the mid-60s. As a result of the mind-expanding influences of the entheogens, I was absolutely attracted to Fantastic Realism for its potential of allowing transcendent, otherworldly visions.



Robert Venosa and
Martina Hoffmann

In late 1969 I had gone to a Tim Leary lecture one evening in NY, and noticed a few very interesting looking guests sitting behind Tim on stage. A few days later, a friend asked if I wanted to go see the work of Mati Klarwein at his 17th Street loft. Having seen Mati’s work in a number of publications—and having been absolutely inspired by it—I jumped at the opportunity. Upon walking into the loft, there was the couple I had seen at Tim Leary’s lecture! It was Mati and his lovely Catherine Milinaire. We immediately became friends, and, as I was still doing my commercial art to survive, we worked on a number of album cover projects together, most notably Santana’s “Abraxas,” for

which I designed the Santana logo, which is considered somewhat of a music icon today.

In April 1972, Venosa put his Dodge van filled with a concise selection of belongings on a boat, and headed back to Europe. In June of the same year he discovered the small Catalan fishing village of Cadaqués, Spain, situated on the Mediterranean coast, renowned for the fact that it was the home of Salvador Dali.

Dali was quite accessible, especially to his fellow artists. Venosa, who, over time, cultivated a close friendship with the maestro, spent many a memorable evening in the Port Lligat casa, enjoying the spectacle that surrounded Dali. Rather “hallucinate” in personality, the maestro made sure that his visitors understood that “Dali does not take drugs, he is the drug!”

I met Dali in 1972 on my first visit to Cadaqués, Spain, where the Maestro lived. Actually, I looked in the phone book and there was his listing! When I called the house, his servant handed him the phone and his first question was, “Are you beautiful?” With measured confidence I answered “yes,” and he invited me over that evening. I subsequently spent much time with him during my 17 years in Cadaqués. My relationship with him was based on our absorbing conversations regarding art, and my introducing him, through books, articles, catalogs to new and unique artists whom I knew Dali would enjoy.”

In 1981 Robert Venosa met the German artist Martina Hoffmann, in the wee hours of Beltane morning in a café on the Mediterranean shore. She had come down to Cadaqués on a visit from Paris. They recognized each other on a deep level instantly and stayed together for the next 30 years until Venosa’s recent graduation to the next level of existence. From 1982 on the couple lived and worked together in Cadaqués, traveling to the U.S. regularly and eventually splitting their time between both places.

In 1992 I first met Terence McKenna at a seminar he was giving in Boulder, CO. He dazzled me with his intellect, as well as his knowledge and explanation of the sacramental world of psychedelic substances. We bonded as friends when he visited my studio and saw that I was painting what he was talking about. It was a friendship that culminated in the collaboration of my book *Illuminatus*, for which Terence wrote the text. Actually that text, which is more like poetry, was the last he wrote before his untimely death in 2000.

It was also during this period that Venosa and Hoffmann were introduced to the Amazonian psychedelic ayahuasca. Throughout the years they regularly explored the far reaches beyond the veil during shamanic journeys in the Amazonian rainforest of South America. With excitement they became familiar with the visual language that is so inherent to "the mother's realm," and found immense inspiration for their art therein. Often during this time, while spending weeks with the dieta and medicina they also taught fellow travelers painting techniques and methods for manifesting their visions on canvas.

The ayahuasca experience is mostly inexplicable, and the only word that does come to mind is "Holy."

Those images, perceived in ayahuasca space, were profoundly inspirational, and provided the initial stimulus for me to attempt my own interpretations of the inexplicable, divinely mysterious, sometimes terrifying, but gloriously beautiful visual world of ayahuasca. I, myself, as an artist, know it would take numerous lifetimes to

be able to paint the visions from just one aya journey. There is just too much, a delicious abundance, of heretofore unknown forms and colors that inundate the inner eye during the journey. I have throughout the years discussed this with Pablo Amaringo, and he agrees that there is not a canvas or palette large enough to capture the smallest iota of the overall ayahuasca visual storm.



"Celestial Tree" by Robert Venosa. Oil on masonite (1976).
Prints available at www.venosa.com.

Venosa's personal transformation, initiated in the 60's, came full circle during a pilgrimage to Dr. Albert Hofmann's home in Switzerland in the mid-90's: "After ringing the doorbell, Albert himself opened the door and Robert, with open arms, gave him a contagious smile shouting "Father!"

The good doctor reciprocated the smile, as well as the hug, and a natural familiarity was established between them right there and then. Hofmann showed great appreciation for the arts and always enjoyed seeing Venosa's and Martina Hoffmann's latest creations during their annual visits that became a tradition until Albert Hofmann's transition in 2008.

In my own experience, I must say that an abundance of inspiration and consciousness expansion has been transmitted to me in the form of the various sacramental entheogens. Psychedelics have probably had the most profound influence on my life since the zygote selected my gender. They have catapulted me from the most banal of deep-sleep consciousness levels up to the authentic Sun King's hall of light, life, and oil paint. There can be little doubt that altered states of consciousness have a profound effect on the creative quality and productive output of the visionary artist.

Visionary art is subversive in its message to the world...in the sense that the common mind cannot entirely escape the subliminal force planted in the creation that will affect, superconsciously, whomever confronts the art. The form, color, imagery, energy and spirit in the work, contain the seeds of an awakening and, unbeknownst to the observer, the first stages of allowing experi-

ence to follow suit. And from experience comes knowledge, followed ultimately by wisdom.

While Robert was still alive, he and I both started dreaming a vision that he named "VIVA" (Venosa Initiative for Visionary Art). Now, after his transition I feel called to keep this dream alive and will work towards creating the future location for a permanent Venosa museum collection and visionary cultural center in order to keep his vision alive in the memory of future generations. •

New Worlds and Ways of Seeing: Visionary Art After Postmodernism

By Neşe Lisa Şenol

Is there a tension regarding the presence and role of visionary art at MAPS conferences that otherwise focus on psychedelic science? I have heard concerns that the inclusion of visionary art could be a non sequitur that detracts attention and legitimacy from a controversial academic field—a nuisance at best, and at worst a liability. As an alternative to this view, I would like to propose one specific rationale for its inclusion and its relevance to MAPS' pioneering medical research: The time is ripe, I will argue, for visionary art to explode into the academic art scene, which would in turn provide an invigorated funding source for psychedelic research by circulating the cultural capital within the community. MAPS, in other words, has the potential to help popularize an art form that the academy is finally positioned to take seriously—and which will materially benefit all sides of the equation.

Although it has received remarkably little scholarly attention as yet, the rise of visionary art is a landmark event in the history of aesthetics and philosophy. It offers an alternative to the "postmodern" thinking that still preoccupies many scholars of the humanities across disciplines, despite a search for more practical alternatives. Notably, a Google Books search for "after postmodernism" produces over 8,500 results. Although a definition of postmodernism is difficult to pin down, due in part to an emphasis on difference and the rejection of the label by many of its own most influential thinkers. Postmodernism is often related to the absence of concrete perspectives and the ironic coexistence of symbols and time frames.

In the conventional version of art history, postmodernism emerged as a reaction to modernism's fascination with objective rationality, grand narratives, and universal principles. In place of these, postmodernism turned to cultural relativity and institutional critique. It opened the door for novel and minority perspectives. Truth became relative, and common foundations slipped away.

According to the editors of *After Postmodernism: An Introduction to Critical Realism*, "A buzzword which began as an emerging, radical critique became, by the 20th Century's end, a buzzword for fracture, eclecticism, political apathy and intellectual exhaustion...[A] new and different intellectual direction must come after postmodernism...because [it] is inadequate as an intellectual response to the times we live in."

Visionary art is a performative alternative to the outdated notion of a secular, ironic postmodernism that the academic art world still holds onto. "Performatism," a word coined by German scholar Raoul Eshelman in his book *Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism*, provides an alternative frame. In contrast to critiques and fractures, performative works create their own lineages and perspectives. Instead of disrupting the existing world, they create new worlds and ways of seeing: performances in and of context.

Visionary art is a performative approach to the conscious construction of a sustainable, aesthetically inspired worldview. In opposition to secular irony, the visionary art of Alex Grey, Amanda Sage, Michael Divine, Adam Scott Miller, Andrew Jones and others is spiritual, optimistic, and performative—which is to say it aims to do something, to introduce new symbolic frames and create ritualistic spaces wherein personal and collective identities can be consciously shaped and refashioned.

Performatism is a paradigm of identity without attachment. It is based on a principle of creative exploration of potential—possible worlds, ways of knowing, states of being, forms of communication and communion—without searching for a final resting point. Creative decisions are seen as probes for further possibilities, rather than as all-consuming limitations that close possibilities down.

Although visionary art and other affirmational performances have so far remained under the radar of academia and the high art marketplace, there are signs that the



nseol@gmail.com

tides are turning. A few months ago, *New York Times* art critic Ken Johnson published a new book, *Are You Experienced?: How Psychedelic Consciousness Transformed Modern Art*. [Editor's Note: See David Jay Brown's interview with Ken Johnson in this issue.]

Johnson's argument is that the influence of psychedelics on art is more than a matter of what mind-altering substance a particular artist was on at a particular time. It was actually the much larger macro-level culture that tripped out in the '60s—many artists were inspired by psychedelics without ever having had personal experiences with psychedelic compounds.

Johnson's book is a monumental contribution to art history in that it "opens a field of inquiry that has lain inexplicably fallow for half a century." It demonstrates a psychedelic aspect of psychedelic art beyond the standard associations of fractal patterns and black light posters. But Johnson himself admits, at the end of his book, that postmodernism as a paradigm has likely seen its heyday—and that something new must arrive to fill its place.

The visionary artists promoted by MAPS fit the bill for a significantly novel paradigm—one where psychedelic-inspired visionary art is recognized for its aesthetic and historical importance. Johnson's book is an opening towards this possibility from within the mainstream, and the next step has not yet been taken. That next step is where we are now, and MAPS can only benefit from its early investments. •

Co-Creating the Haight-Ashbury Museum of Psychedelic Art and History

Jeff F. and the Haight-Ashbury Museum Team
info@haightashburymuseum.com

It's time for psychedelic art to have a museum of its own, a place to present the positive impact and artistic role that psychedelic substances have played throughout human history. Work is currently under-way to establish the world's first psychedelic art and history museum in San Francisco—the Haight-Ashbury Museum of Psychedelic Art and History.

Through the powerful media of painting, sculpture, and other art forms, the museum will present the history of psychedelia, from the ancient to the modern. This unique museum will make rare and valuable psychedelic-inspired artwork available to the millions of visitors who come to San Francisco every year, searching for the creativity, originality, and authenticity that the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood represents. The museum itself will be a work of psychedelic art, designed to give visitors a drug-free psychedelic experience, by opening up their minds and stimulating their senses.

The museum will attract many visitors who are unfamiliar with psychedelic culture, providing an opportunity to educate a wide range of people about psychedelics. A steady flow of tourists and psychonauts alike is likely to create a revenue stream that can be used to support and promote current psychedelic artists, as well as benefit a wide range of psychedelic-related organizations from MAPS to indigenous spiritual communities.

We kindly ask for the support and help of the MAPS community to create this one-of-a-kind, world-class museum. We encourage you to volunteer your time, ideas and comments, contacts, and psychedelic memorabilia to this worthwhile cause. Thank you for your generous support in making this much-needed and long-anticipated museum a reality.

For more information see
www.haightashburymuseum.com.



The Haight-Ashbury Museum of Psychedelic Art and History hosts a booth at MAPS' 25th Anniversary Conference in Oakland, Calif., Dec. 2011.



San Francisco underground newspaper
The Oracle was published from
1966 to 1968.

Who Supports MAPS and Why?

Last year, MAPS' financial support came from about 2,000 individuals, family foundations, and businesses, with gifts ranging in size from \$5 to \$250,000. This international network of donors gives for a variety of reasons: to help heal veterans of terrible psychological pain, to change attitudes towards drug policy so they are based on science not fear, to promote personal freedom, and to continue research into the potential beneficial uses of psychedelics and marijuana.

100% of our funding comes from visionary individuals—by direct donations, by purchases of event tickets, publications and artwork, and through family foundations and businesses. To date, no government agency or large private foundation has been willing to take a risk on funding this groundbreaking research.

Over the last year:

- 43 donors gave gifts of \$1,000 or over, with an average gift size of \$15,946.
- 1,536 donors gave \$5 to \$999, with an average gift of \$64.
- 157 donors participated in our Monthly Giving Program, giving \$5 to \$300/month.

People also gave generous gifts of time, services, and products to sell at our auctions or web store, or to serve at our events.

Tells us why you support MAPS at askMAPS@maps.org. Please let us know what inspires you to give, and if we can use your name in a future Supporter Spotlight article!

Supporter Spotlight



Table Nectar®
LOCAL & ORGANIC
CATERED EVENTS

Andrew and Kimberly Tannehill gave generously for our Sunday morning Floating World breakfast cruise on the San Francisco Bay during our Cartographie Psychedelica conference last December.

They gave because *"We are sincerely interested in medicine, journeying, and the social importance of ritual, and are excited to have this opportunity"* Gifts of professional catering and event services allow us to use proceeds to support our educational and research activities.

MAPS encourages you to visit www.tablenectar.com if you are interested in local, sustainable, and organic foods served with creativity and love.

MAPS: WHO WE ARE

Our mission is (1) to treat conditions for which conventional medicines provide limited relief—such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), pain, drug dependence, anxiety and depression associated with end-of-life issues—by developing psychedelics and marijuana into prescription medicines; (2) to cure many thousands of people by building a network of clinics where treatments can be provided; and (3) to educate the public honestly about the risks and benefits of psychedelics and marijuana.

If you can even faintly imagine a cultural reintegration of the therapeutic uses of psychedelics and medical marijuana, please join MAPS in supporting the expansion of scientific knowledge in this area. Progress is possible with the support of those who care enough to take individual and collective action.

www.maps.org/donate



©2012 Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, Inc. [MAPS]
MAPS, 309 Cedar Street, #2323,
Santa Cruz, CA 95060 USA
Phone: +1 831-429-6362
Fax: +1 831-429-6370
E-mail: askmaps@maps.org
www.maps.org



Rick Doblin, Ph.D., Founder and Executive Director, earned his Ph.D. in Public Policy from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Doblin was also in Stan and Christina Grof's first training group to receive certification as a Holotropic Breathwork practitioner.



Michael Mithoefer, M.D., Clinical Investigator/Medical Monitor is a psychiatrist practicing in Charleston, SC, where he divides his time between clinical research and outpatient clinical practice specializing in treating posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with an emphasis on experiential methods of psychotherapy. He is a certified Holotropic Breathwork Facilitator and trained in EMDR and Internal Family Systems Therapy.



Annie Mithoefer, B.S.N., MDMA/PTSD Study Co-Investigator is a Registered Nurse who lives in Charleston, SC where she divides her time between clinical research and outpatient clinical practice specializing in treating posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with an emphasis on experiential methods of psychotherapy. She is a certified Grof Holotropic Breathwork Practitioner and is trained in Hakomi Therapy.



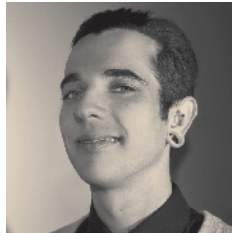
Valerie Mojeiko, Deputy Director, earned her B.A. from the California Institute of Integral Studies. In her work with MAPS' psychedelic harm reduction project, she has trained over 200 volunteers with skills for helping people who are undergoing psychedelic emergencies.



Brad Burge, Director of Communications, earned his B.A. in Communication and Psychology from Stanford University in 2005 and his M.A. in Communication from the University of California, San Diego in 2009. His graduate work focused on the political, scientific, and cultural changes required to make illicit drugs into legitimate medicines.



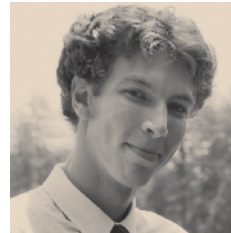
Amy Emerson, Director of Clinical Research, earned her B.S. in genetics and cell biology from Washington State University. She has worked in clinical development and research for the last 15 years in the fields of immunology, oncology, and in vaccine development. Amy has worked with MAPS since 2003 facilitating the development of the MDMA clinical program.



Josh Mojeiko, Director of Finance and Information Technology, earned his B.A. in Philosophy and Religion from New College of Florida and is a chef, musician, poet, and technologist. He immensely enjoys the depths of existential experience.



Virginia Wright, Director of Marketing and Development brings a wealth of fundraising experience to MAPS. Her firm Wright & Associates has provided strategic thinking, marketing, and fundraising services to arts organizations and cities throughout Northern California and Nevada. She received her B.A. in International Relations from San Francisco State University, and her M.B.A. from Santa Clara University.



Brian Brown, Development Associate studied medical anthropology and visual culture at the University of California, Santa Cruz where he researched social prospects for psychedelics using a community centered approach. Brian is now developing MAPS' membership base by assisting with education and outreach efforts.



David Jay Brown, Guest Editor, earned his M.A. in psychobiology from New York University, and has been interviewing accomplished thinkers about their creative process for over 20 years. He is the author of *Over the Edge of the Mind* (Inner Traditions, 2013), and eight other books about the frontiers of science and consciousness.



Kynthia Brunette, Volunteer Coordinator has a B.A. in Political Science, an M.S. in Human Computer Interaction, and a lifelong interest in models of personality and development. Her interests have evolved over the years into a fascination with the design of institutions, organizations, and experiences that serve as vehicles for transpersonal growth.



Shannon Clare, Office Manager, majored in Cultural Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz and is now training in Integral Counseling Psychology at the California Institute for Integral Studies (CIIS). She values curiosity, communication, and creating community.



Ilsa Jerome, Ph.D., Research and Information Specialist, earned a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Maryland. She helps MAPS and other researchers design studies, gathers information on study drugs by keeping abreast of the current literature and discussion with other researchers, creates and maintains documents related to MAPS-supported studies, and helps support the MAPS psychedelic literature bibliography.



Linnae Ponté, Executive and Clinical Research Assistant, earned her BA in Biological Psychology from New College of Florida. She's assisted data collection and analysis at University of South Florida's Cardiovascular Psychophysiology Laboratory, MOTE Marine Mammal Aquarium Psychophysical Laboratory, East-West College of Natural Medicine, and the West Mamprusi Civic Union in Ghana, West Africa.



Berra Yazar-Klosinski, Ph.D., Lead Clinical Research Associate, earned her Ph.D. in Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology from University of California Santa Cruz, where she also served as president of the Graduate Student Association. After attending Stanford University, she worked as a Research Associate with Geron Corporation and Millennium Pharmaceuticals.

Multidisciplinary Association for
 Psychedelic Studies, Inc. (MAPS)
 1215 Mission Street
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060 USA
 Phone: +1 831.429.6362
 Fax: +1 831.429.6370
 E-mail: askmaps@maps.org
 Donate online!
 www.maps.org
 (secure web transactions)

YES, I would like to join MAPS and support this important research.

Please accept my tax-deductible gift: (circle one)

\$40 \$60 \$120 \$250
\$1000 \$5000 \$10,000 Other_____

*Canadian & Mexican members please add \$7 for shipping the Bulletin, and \$5 if you choose a book as a premium. Other international members please add \$18 for shipping the Bulletin, and \$12 if you choose a book as premium.

Please renew my gift automatically every month.

Name & Address:

NAME _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE & COUNTRY _____ POSTAL CODE _____
 Yes, I would like to receive MAPS' monthly email newsletter, my email address is:

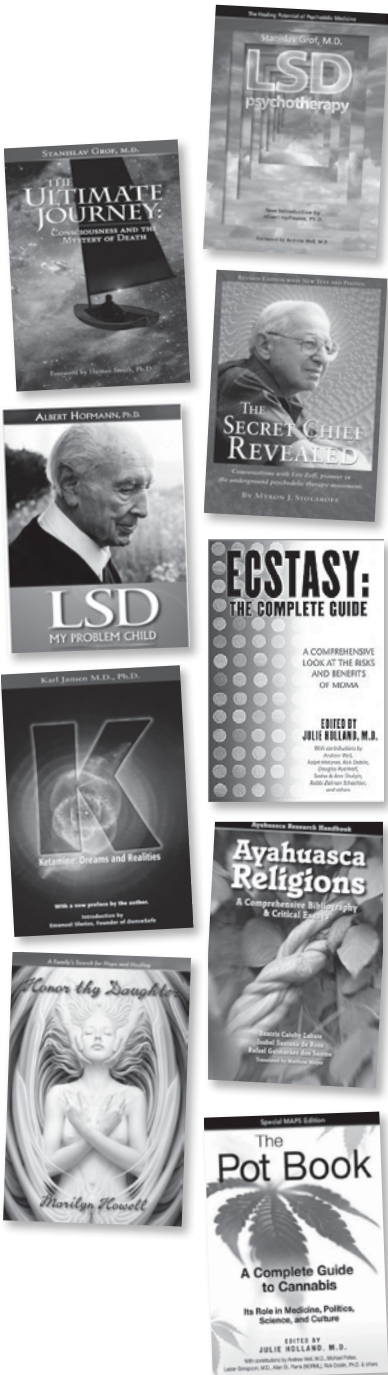
TOTAL \$ enclosed. Donations to MAPS are tax-deductible.

Enclosed is my check or money order payable to MAPS
 Please charge my credit card: Mastercard Visa Amex

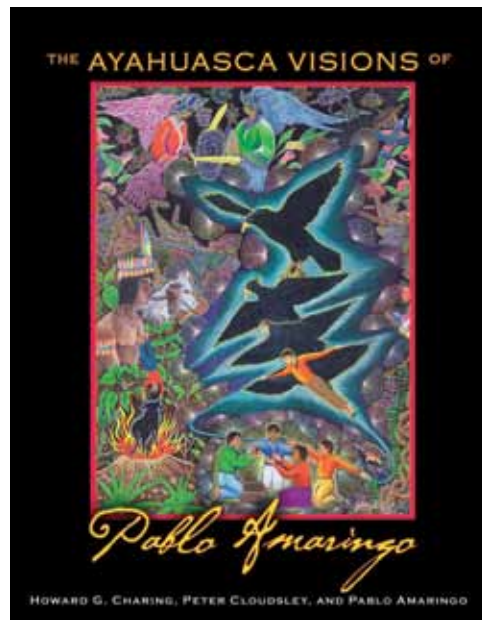
CARD NUMBER _____ EXPIRATION DATE _____
 SIGNATURE _____ PHONE NUMBER _____

For contributions of \$60 or more, you may choose a complimentary MAPS-published book from the list below.

- No book: maximize my donation!**
- Ayahuasca Religions: A Bibliography & Critical Essays** by Beatriz Caiuby Labate, Isabel Santana de Rose, & Rafael Guimarães dos Santos, translated by Matthew Meyer, 160 pgs, \$11.95
- Ecstasy: The Complete Guide** edited by Julie Holland, M.D., 464 pgs, \$19.95
- Honor Thy Daughter** by Marilyn Howell, Ed.D., 208 pgs, \$16.95
- Ibogaine: Rite of Passage** DVD \$20.00
- Ketamine: Dreams and Realities** by Karl Jansen, M.D., Ph.D., 355 pgs, \$14.95
- LSD: My Problem Child (4th Edition: Reflections on Sacred Drugs, Mysticism, and Science)** by Albert Hofmann, Ph.D., 224 pgs, \$15.95
- LSD: My Problem Child documentary** DVD with Albert Hofmann, Ph.D., \$25.00
- LSD Psychotherapy** by Stanislav Grof, M.D., Ph.D., 374 pgs, 40 pgs of color plates, \$19.95
- The Pot Book** (Special MAPS Edition) edited by Julie Holland, M.D., 576 pgs, \$19.95
- The Secret Chief Revealed: Conversations with a Pioneer of the Underground Psychedelic Therapy Movement** by Myron J. Stolaroff, 176 pgs, \$12.95
- The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death** by Stanislav Grof, M.D., Ph.D., 356 pgs, \$19.95



Overseas airmail rate: \$12.00, plus \$10.00 per additional book (please allow 4-6 weeks).

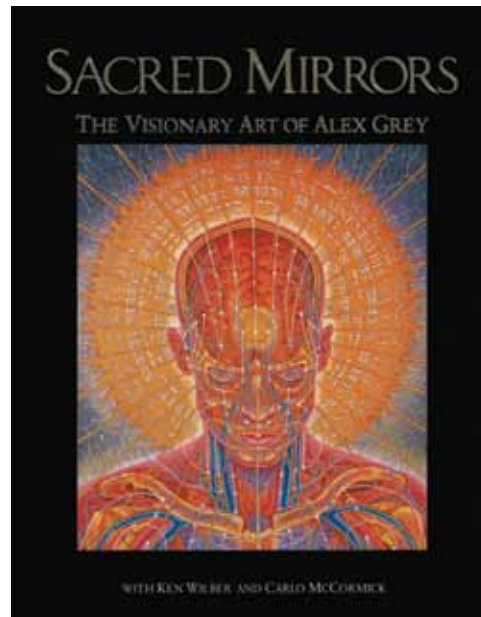


Now Available from MAPS

The Ayahuasca Visions of Pablo Amaringo

by Howard G. Charing,
Peter Cloudsley, and
Pablo Amaringo

Illustrating the evolution of his intricate and colorful art, this book contains 47 large, full-color reproductions of Amaringo's latest works along with detailed explorations of Amazonian mythology and commentary on the symbolism and story behind each image.



The Visionary Art of Alex Grey

Combining the anatomical detail of medical illustrations with the spiritual imagery of Buddhism, Alex Grey's art takes us on a journey through the physical, metaphysical, and spiritual anatomy of the self.

Sacred Mirrors

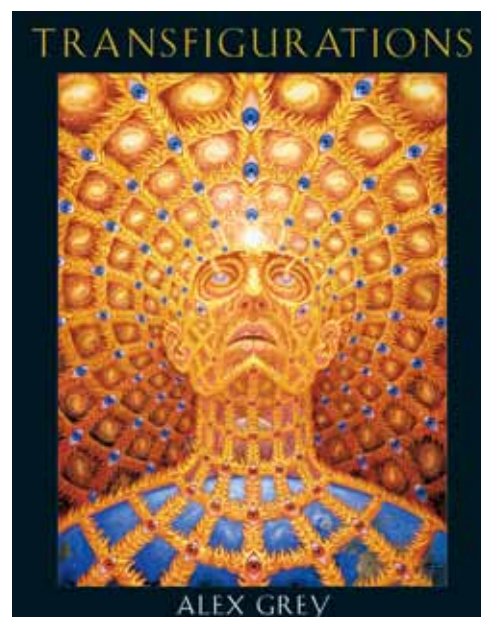
by Alex Grey, with Ken Wilbur
& Carlo McCormick

Transfigurations

by Alex Grey

"Alex Grey is making some of the most beautifully refined imagist work in the country today."

—Walter Hopps, senior curator,
Guggenheim Museum and
Menil Collection



"Grey's vision of a flawed but perfectible mankind stands as an antidote to the cynicism and spiritual malaise prevalent in much contemporary art."

—The New York Times

**Available now at
www.maps.org/art**

Proceeds from the MAPS Store support our ongoing success in developing contexts for the careful, beneficial uses of psychedelics and marijuana.

