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Ecstatic Landscapes: The Manifestation of Psychedelic Art

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Abstract

"Psychedelic art" can be defined as artwork manifested in the context of the ingestion of LSD-type drugs and related substances. There is a long history of such work dating back to ancient times (picturing mushrooms and other plants with psychedelic effects) as well as more recent anecdotal first-person accounts and various collections of psychological data resulting from experiments and interviews. One such collection includes the studies by Krippner of over 200 artists, writers, and musicians who referred to their artistic productions as "psychedelic" because they had some connection with their occasional or frequent use of these substances. Although there were no commonalities characterizing all of their paintings, films, poems, novels, songs, or other works, several frequent themes were noted following content analysis of the interview reports. The results of this group of studies, as well as those of more structured explorations, attests to the importance of this topic for humanistic psychology with its emphasis upon creativity, human potential, and exploring the wide range of human experience.

Keywords

psychedelic art, psychedelic music

"Art," for the purposes of this article, can be defined as an English language term used to describe the controlled structuring of media or material to

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manifest an aspect of someone's personal experience. An "artist" can be defined as a person who manifests "art" professionally, or who is especially skilled in manifesting "art," or even one whose self-definition as an "artist" has some consensual support. Again, for the purposes of this article, "psychedelic art" refers to artwork manifested in the context of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD)-type substances (the "major psychedelics") or related substances (the "minor psychedelics" such as marijuana), either natural (e.g., ayahuasca, peyote), or synthetic (e.g., psilocybin, mescaline). Masters and Houston (1968) have defined a "psychedelic artist as one whose work has been significantly influenced by psychedelic experience and who acknowledges the impact of the experience on his [or her] work" (p. 88). Jos Ten Berge (2004) has traced the impact of psychedelics and other drugs on Western art back to 1798.

"Psychedelic art" is often considered a synonym for "cosmic art," "transcendental art," or "visionary art." However, each of those terms has its own history and has staked out its own territory. None of them, in the words of artist Ingo Swann (1975), has received "overzealous applaudings from the art establishment" (p. xvi). Each of these overlapping movements is marked by a

> certain withdrawal of the center of psychic gravity from the external worlds, including the worlds represented by the past, towards an immanent future, where the mind and spirit of the human will soar beyond limitations both of things physical and of present ideas about thought itself. (Swann, 1975, p. xvii)

Much of "psychedelic art" shares these characteristics but these terms do not define it because "psychedelic art" is not defined by its content but by a certain type of experience (or experiences) that have affected and impacted the artist. These experiences were evoked by substances variously called "psychedelic" ("mind-manifesting"), "entheogenic" ("evoking the divine within"), "hallucinogenic," or even "psychotomimetic" (among others).

Psychedelic art, as well as the other cited clusters, is indebted to the modern movements of abstraction and surrealism. Indeed, there are psychedelic artists whose style is easily recognized as "abstract" or "surreal." But psychedelic art has a longer history. In Mexico and Central America, stone sculptures dating from 1500 BCE. that portray mushrooms from whose stems emerge the heads of deities. Some Native American artists rendered their peyote visions in fabric, stone, or other media. More recently, Edgar Allen Poe sampled opium and Poe's French translator Charles Baudelaire wrote "The Poem of Hashish" following his experiences with the substance. The playwright Theophile Gautier and the writer Thomas De Quincey were two other French writers who wrote detailed accounts of their experiences with

opiates. Hayter (1968) discussed these cases as well as those of Hector Berlioz, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Lord Tennyson, George Crabbe, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, John Keats, Sir Walter Scott, and Francis Thompson. She doubted that mind-altering drugs transported these literary artists into a totally new world of the imagination, but suggested that they provided access to unconscious material that they used creatively. Plant (2000) wrote her own literary history, adding that Jack Kerouac wrote *On the Road* during a 6-day benzedrine bender, that Winston Churchill wrote most of his memorable speeches after taking amphetamines, and that Wilke Collin's *The Moonstone* (the first detective novel) was fueled by laudanum. Shapiro's (2000) compendium focuses on popular music and drugs, especially the link between jazz and marijuana use.

The Study Participants

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, I interviewed or corresponded with 210 artists and writers who were reputed users of psychedelics. My original report (Krippner, 1970a) provided data on 180 participants, but I was later able to analyze data from 27 musicians (Krippner, 1985). Of the artists and writers, 18 denied having used LSD-drugs although they claimed to have used other consciousness-altering experiences in the manifestation of their work. These participants considered their work to be "psychedelic" although they had never taken an LSD-type drug, preferring meditation or intense contact with Nature. The responses of these artists were not included in my qualitative analysis although they are of interest in their own right.

My questionnaire included the statement, "No personal material will be used in the [report] without the permission of the artist." Hence, the artists cited by name in this article had all provided written or oral consent.

Most of the artists were from the United States, but a few of them lived in Canada, England, France, Spain, Austria, or the Netherlands. There were two dozen women in the group, and the age range spanned four decades, although most of the participants were in their late 20s or earlier 30s. I avoided interviews with amateurs, focusing on individuals who were professionally committed to creative work. Among the group were two award-winning filmmakers, a Guggenheim Fellow in poetry, a recipient of Ford, Fulbright, and Rockefeller study grants in painting, several college faculty members, and rock musicians whose records had sold millions of copies.

When asked what substances they had ingested, almost all had smoked marijuana, followed by LSD, hashish, dimethyltryptamine (DMT), mescaline, peyote, morning glory seeds, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), Hawaiian wood rose seeds, and psilocybin. Ayahuasca (or yage) was virtually unknown

at that time with the exception of Allen Ginsberg who told me it should be used in my studies of telepathy. Few of the artists had been able to take synthetic compounds legally, hence the quality the LSD, DMT, THC, mescaline, and psilocybin they used could not be verified. In 1970, I reported an analysis of "street drugs" that revealed an almost uniform lack of "purity" of the compounds tested in a chemical laboratory.

This survey took me to New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Norfolk, St. Louis, Montreal, Toronto, and Amsterdam. I visited groups of artists such as those living in an abandoned church in Garnerville, NY. The group called itself the "US Company" and consisted of artists, poets, filmmakers, technicians, and weavers who lived communally. One of the works of art I admired was a nine-foot-high statue of the Hindu god Shiva, whose "energy" was symbolized by pulsating lights radiating brilliant lines. Superimposed on Shiva was a painted Buddha; red lights throbbed at the edges of the canvas in a throbbing heartbeat-like rhythm. I asked a young weaver which member of the group had conceived the painting; she replied, "We are all one."

One of my research questions was, "Are you a member of a larger group of psychedelic artists?"

About 25% answered affirmatively. The groups most frequently cited, in addition to the US Company, were the Living Theater, Fluxus, Mandala (a French group), Sigma (a Dutch group), the League for Spiritual Discovery (a loosely organized spiritual movement initiated by Timothy Leary), various rock musical bands, and a number of communes or "intentional communities" (such as Libre of Gardner, Colorado). Don Snyder, who had developed a projector apparatus for psychedelic slide shows and "Lumia" art, told me that it was quite natural for many psychedelic artists to work in a group setting since psychedelics often fostered a "collective mind."

All participants in this survey were asked, "How have your psychedelic experiences influenced your art?" None of the artists felt that their work had suffered as a result of their psychedelic experiences although some admitted that their friends might disagree with this statement. For example, Roszak (1969) asserted that Allen Ginsberg's predrug poetry was superior to his postdrug poetry. Ginsberg, one of the participants in this study, took exception to this judgment but added that meditation soon became his favored form of altered consciousness.

Thematic analysis was used to identify themes in the elicited responses from the 189 artists, writers, and musicians who had ingested psychedelic substances at least once. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns within a data set. A theme captures something important about the data with regard to the question being

asked, in this case, how psychedelic experiences had influenced the work of the participants. Thematic analysis is not as structured as most other forms of qualitative analysis, but simply demands that the data matches the topic under investigation.

Impact on Content

My thematic analysis of the participants' responses indicated that psychedelics affected their art in three ways: content, approach, and technique. The use of eidetic imagery as subject matter was observed by over half the group (64%): the mandalas of Angelo Miranda, the biblical scenarios of Ernst Fuchs, the light projects of Richard Aldcroft, and the collages of Kassoundra testify to the use of eidetic imagery as subject matter. The content is not always visual in nature; it can express bodily feelings, moods, relationships, and other perceptions.

Roger Aplon, a Chicago writer and poet, attributed his fantasies to peyote and mescaline experiences. A sculptor told me that his LSD sessions "have offered me a limitless amount of subject matter. I have been re-introduced to a sense of wonder." Ed Randall, a New York painter, reported that he obtained novel conceptual insights that he was able to incorporate into his huge canvases. Another artist declared, "I have seen sights more beautiful than words can describe and have tried to incorporate these visions into my art."

The content of the psychedelic artist's work varied from altered sensory perceptions to memories of childhood tastes and smells, to visions of archetypal figures. Many of the participants appreciated the ability to glimpse themselves and their world from different vantage points, while others reported a "merging" with the artistic process and an ongoing "flow" of creativity. Rob Van de Horst, a Canadian surrealist painter, was one of the participants who reported that the impact of psychedelics was minimal, citing the work of Salvador Dali and earlier surrealists as being far more influential.

Impact on Approach

Over two thirds of the participants (70%) reported an effect of psychedelics on their approach to their art. However, there were many individual differences. Some artists prefer to work while the experience is ongoing, while others use it retrospectively. A Dutch writer told me, "I work only when I'm under the influence of some psychedelic, as I am trying to turn on the reader without his [or her] being able to resist the process." A New York artist remarked that he only painted while "stoned"; "I have such tremendous

energy when I'm high that I sometimes paint 18 or 20 hours before I put down my brush." On the other hand, another New York artist noted, "I never paint while I'm high; the imagery changes so rapidly that I could not paint what I see, only what I saw."

"The loosening-up effect offered by psychedelic experience has been very useful," observed a fabric designer, "but without the balance of persistently directed effort, no art could be produced." A West coast painter added, "It is difficult for me to produce anything more than sketches during an LSD session; my mind is too active to maintain a prolonged artistic effort." The preferences and personality traits of the artists were only one of several variables responsible for the manner in which psychedelic experiences were utilized. Prior drug usage, set and setting, the substance dosage level, and the specific substance used were other factors. Some artists claimed to be able to work rather well while smoking marijuana or after taking small amounts of an LSD-type drug. The same artists, however, simply "flowed with the stream" after taking 200 or more micrograms of LSD.

The transcendence of one's culturally imposed framework has been a goal for many creative individuals. Many of the artists I interviewed claimed that psychedelics have enabled them to stand apart from their culture, and that this ability has been a major influence on the content of their work. "To perceive in only one way is limiting," stated a photographer; "therefore, we have art—we use another person's eyes and ears, a person who perceives the world differently than we do." The photographer continued,

> If the artist's experience has been profound, and if the artist is able to translate his [or her] experience into a communicable form, the observer can vicariously transcend the single perception. Psychedelic drugs can help to make the artist's experience profound.

Arlene Sklaar-Weinstein shifted her approach from local scenarios to cosmic mythologies following her one LSD experience.

A painter described her ability, with the aid of marijuana and small doses of LSD, to "transcend the ordinary and enter into the limitless intuitions, which are now the basis for everything I do in my work." Another artist stated that mescaline "allows me to transcend the value systems of a culturally-designated reality, which ordinarily encroaches upon what I now know as true Nature." A worker in mixed media called his most important LSD-induced insight "the awesome new sense of the availability of a transcendent level of experience extraordinarily different from that of usual consciousness." Alan Atwell stated that psychedelic experience "has made me more

apocalyptic," thus changing not only the content of his paintings but his personal worldview.

In 1963, Jean Millay had a "life-changing" peyote experience and wanted to share her visions with others. A high school art teacher and silkscreen artist at the time, Millay asked Allen Willis, a friend and professional filmmaker, to assist her. They persuaded the Indian classical musician Ravi Shankar to compose the score for the 18-minute film, which they named "The Psychedelic Experience." Its flow of abstract images and voice-overs by Timothy Leary and his colleague Ralph Metzner were instrumental in its winning the "Film as Art Award" at the 1965 San Francisco International Film Festival.

Impact on Technique

Over two thirds of the participants (76%) in this study reported that there had been a noticeable improvement in their artistic technique. A greater ability to use color was the example mentioned most frequently by artists while other artists cited an enhanced access to emotional concomitants of their work. One California painter told me that he had participated in an LSD research study directed by the psychiatrist Oscar Janiger (1959). "I always had been afraid to use color in my work, but a single LSD session helped to conquer that fear."

Several participants felt that their productivity had been enhanced by psychedelics. A producer and director of dramatic "happenings" claimed that his LSD, peyote, and marijuana experiences had made him "far more enthusiastic and productive." A filmmaker described his post-LSD work "not only enhanced and expanded, but increased in quality." Others claimed that a small dose of a psychedelic improved their ability to concentrate on their work.

Of the painters and graphic artists in the group, over half (61%) claimed that their craft had improved as a result of their psychedelic experiences. The painter Tom Blackwell, who had stopped using psychedelics at the time of our interview, cited a great many changes in his work due to LSD, DMT, and peyote. They had influenced it, he shared,

> in terms of my use of color, and in the juxtaposition of imagery. They have influenced my work in that they have corroborated my original intuitive direction and have given me more conviction of the rightness of my method. They have provided for me a map of my interior self and have enabled me to traverse regions of my mind that I previously was able only to blindly grope after. The psychedelics catapulted me in a direction toward which I was already headed. As a result, my paintings and constructions are concerned with the

> transformation of matter into energy and vice versa, with the thin line between subjective and objective reality, and with the work or art as a means of getting out of oneself and hopefully bringing about something similar in the viewer.

The Infinite Dance

The impact of psychedelic experience is illustrated in the case of Isaac Abrams who founded the first gallery of psychedelic art in 1965. In the first of several (and ongoing) interviews with Abrams, he told me that

> psychedelic experience has deeply influenced all aspects of my life. It was an experience of self-recognition, under LSD, which opened my eyes to drawing and painting as the means of self-expression for which I had always been seeking. During subsequent experiences, many difficulties were solved. Energy was released for the benefit of my art.

On graduating from college, Abrams married, toured Europe with his wife, and went to work selling furniture.

> I had been taught [he remarked] that the most important things in life were to look neat, act nice, and to make money. Yet I knew that something was missing. There was something to do that I wasn't doing. I had a sense of mission but no idea what the mission might be.

Abrams was offered mescaline by a friend but turned it down. Several years later, in 1962, he was invited to ingest psilocybin and decided to give it a try. On Washington's Birthday, Abrams and his wife swallowed the tablets and, sometime later, watched the ceiling whirl. Abrams turned off the lights so as to better fathom his dawning realization that during all of his life he had been behaving "like a person who had no mind."

Abrams and his wife enjoyed their psilocybin experiences and, a few months later, had another opportunity to try mescaline (or a substance that was purported to be mescaline). "We took it in the country," Abrams recalled, "and it was beautiful." His next experiences were with hashish and marijuana; once again they were pleasant and positive in nature. His inner life having been opened by these experiences, Abrams thought that he might discover his life mission. The search was in vain. He sold more furniture. He made more money. He wrote a play. He entered graduate school, but this was not for him and he dropped out.

Early in 1965, Abrams took LSD. During his session, he began to draw. "As I worked," he recalled, "I experienced a process of self-realization concerning the drawing. When the drug wore off, I kept on drawing. I did at least

one ink drawing every few weeks." Abrams attended art classes to learn about technique and art materials. His wife went to different classes, took notes, and passed on the information to her husband. The skills developed quickly and he began to paint what Masters and Houston (1968, described as "ecstatic landscapes," p. 120).

Abrams entered psychoanalysis with a therapist who specialized in the creative process. Abrams mused,

> Psychoanalysis helped me to mobilize my psychedelic experience and externalize it. I think any individual can go just so far on his own. At some point he needs a spiritual teacher or guru. A good psychoanalyst can be a guru.

"For me," Abrams mused,

> the psychedelic experience basically has been one of turning on to the life process, to the dance of life with all of its motion and change. Before 1962, my behavior was based on logical, rational, and linear experiences. Due to the psychedelics, I also became influenced by experiences that were illogical, irrational, and non-linear. But this, too, is a part of life. This aspect is needed if life is to become interrelated and harmonious. Psychedelic drugs give me a sense of harmony and beauty. For the first time in my life, I can take pleasure in the beauty of a leaf; I can find meaning in the processes of Nature. For me to paint an ugly picture would be a lie. It would be a violation of what I have learned though psychedelic experience.

Abrams continued,

> I have found that I can flow through my pen and brush; everything I do becomes a part of myself—an exchange of energy. The canvas becomes a part of my brain. With the psychedelics, you learn to think outside of your head. My art attempts to express or reproduce my inner state.

Abrams concluded, "Psychedelic experience emphasizes the unity of things, the infinite dance. You are the wave, but you are also the ocean."

In the 1970s, Abrams began working as a sculptor and, in the 1980s, as an animation artist. During those years, he displayed multimedia artwork for raves and large dance hall events in collaboration with his son. In 1995, he designed a 10-minute computer animated film for the world's largest kaleidoscope in Mount Tremper, New York, and later designed two additional computer-animated videos. His images display oceanic, microscopic, and cosmic themes, and when speaking of his work he describes it as a "realistic" portrayal of Nature through microcosm and macrocosm, united on the canvas. Like the inner and outer realities, they are interrelated and inseparable.

Infinite Love and Unity

Since concluding and publishing my study of psychedelic artists (e.g., Krippner, 1970b), I have continued to interview people whose creativity appeared to be associated with LSD-type drugs. Among them were Alex and Alyson Grey, founders of the Chapel of the Sacred Mirrors in upstate New York. In the newsletter of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, Alex Grey (2000) wrote,

> Twenty-five years ago I took my first dose of LSD. The experience was so rich and profound, coupled as it was with the meeting of my future wife, Allyson, that there seemed nothing more important than this revelation of infinite love and unity. Being an artist, I felt that this was the only subject worthy of my time and attention.

Grey went on to compare his experience with that of Keith Haring, a celebrated artist on the 1980s.

> Keith Haring . . . credited LSD with stylistic breakthroughs that brought him to his own unique work. I feel the same way about my art. This doesn't mean I recommend sacramental drug use for everyone, but I do think it should be a legal option for all.

Grey's description of the potential stages of the psychedelic experience included (a) physical body changes including rushes of energy; (b) enhanced perception of beauty and meaning; (c) psychodynamic visions including unresolved emotions; (d) birth, death, and rebirth experiences; (e) archetypal and mythic figures; (f) energy release; (g) universal mind, cosmic unit, void, or ground of being. These stages resembled those described by Masters and Houston (1966), namely the sensory, psychological, mythological, and unitive. In our interviews and in his writings, Grey spoke of the integrative potential of psychedelic experience, allowing artists to "bring together the opposites as most every sacred art tradition has done in the past, both the dark and the light, reason and intuition, science and religion, male and female, life and death, matter and spirit."

Allyson Grey added that her husband's first LSD experience occurred in her apartment and "we have always celebrated that date as the anniversary of our 'First Knowing the Beloved.'" In 1971, she had visualized "sacred writing" during an LSD session, realizing that visionary writing was a way to depict the Divine without resorting to what both Jewish and Muslim traditions refer to as "graven images." Grey (2015) has continued to create "mystic languages," which have become her signature work. She has described

how she and Alex keep journals nearby when they "trip" together so that they can briefly record both the verbal and nonverbal images that may ensue. For her, "sacred writing of the inexpressible points to communication through all forms of creativity—music, art, performance—manifested to convey what is beyond words."

Psychedelic Music

I also interviewed 27 musicians, 25 instrumentalists, and 2 vocalists, most of them rock performers. All 27 had smoked marijuana and 25 had taken LSD. Five stated a preference for smoking marijuana before performing; seven felt it impaired their performance, while the others had no strong opinion one way or the other. Three musicians felt that their work was enhanced by LSD; 6 claimed it had no effect, and 15 were of the opinion that LSD-type drugs were detrimental to performing. This consensus reflects the position taken by Bill Graham, the rock music entrepreneur,

> For the most part the musicians I've seen perform under the influence of acid . . . was close to tragic . . . I've known of cases in which a gig had to be cancelled because a certain party was up on Cloud Nine . . . [However] I don't know anyone who has used it and found it detrimental . . . It has made musicians more serious . . . about their music and what they are about. (Stafford, 1969, p. 6)

Using thematic analysis, I found three major themes that ran through my interviews; lyrics, texture, and mood. Because pop music encompasses many aspects of contemporary culture, it was natural that references to drugs should appear in some of the lyrics. Drug lyrics date back several decades; alcohol and tobacco have been mentioned in several pop songs, for example, "Smoke, Smoke, Smoke that Cigarette," "A Cigarette, Sweet Music, and You," "Cocktails for Two." In the 1930s, Don Redmond, a popular band leader, composed "Song of the Weed" and used it as his theme song. Many pop songs of the 1960s presented easily discernable references to drugs, not all of them psychedelic. The Rolling Stones' "Mother's Little Helper" pokes fun at adult drug use ("Mother needs something today to calm her down") and the Velvet Underground's "Heroin" could not have been more blatant.

Well-known references to psychedelics include the Byrds' "Eight Miles High," the Beatles' "Magical Mystery Tour," the Lovin' Spoonful's "Full Measure," the Electric Prunes' "I Had Too Much to Dream," the Amboy Dukes' "Journey to the Center of the Mind. However, a member of a San Francisco rock group told me, "A person who is tripping on acid doesn't want to hear about drugs; he just wants to groove—most acid rock never mentions

drugs in any of the song lyrics." A survey of 770 high school students during that era revealed that a majority wanted fewer songs about drugs and more about love and understanding. Of those students, most said they liked a record more for its beat than for its message.

Even without drug-oriented lyrics, psychedelic influence would still be present in pop music of those years. A subtle influence can be found in the texture or the physical properties of the music, influencing one's mental state, often reminding listeners of their drug experiences. Jimi Hendrix created music with unique textural characteristics. Blue Cheer utilized 15 amplifiers to produce a distinctive texture. The Beatles combined simple lyrics with a complex texture, as in "Strawberry Fields Forever." One musician told me,

> The Beatles' songs "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" and "I Am the Walrus" are the musical equivalents of the light show. Everything is happening all at once—the instruments, the sound tracks, the words pile on top of each other and you can assimilate them much better when you're stoned.

Mood was mentioned by many musicians, many of whom admitted that they enjoy uplifting the mood of their audiences. I interviewed most of the members of the Grateful Dead rock group, beginning with Bob Weir who observed it was difficult to identify specific drug effects in a musician's work since creative artists will manifest songs, paintings, or poems out of the totality of their lives. Mickey Hart added that linear dimensions of time and space do not typify many types of creativity. Regarding mood, he once wrote that there are three "dances," the personal, the cultural, and the cosmic. If a technique works, the reward is a new dimension of rhythm, and the ensuing mood can be "sacred" in nature (Hart & Stevens, 1990). "Quiet yourself and focus inside and eventually you'll start feeling your own biorhythms" (p. 127).

I have seen music used effectively to modulate mood in psychedelic psychotherapy, notably by the Mexican psychiatrist Salvador Roquet (Clark, 1977) whose group therapy sessions inundated his clients with film clips, slide shows, recorded music, as well as their own internally generated imagery. One of the few research studies in this area was conducted by Waskow, Olsson, Salzman, and Katz (1970) who had government-approved access to THC. They placed half the participants in a setting that included music as well as THC. The researchers reported that "Music seemed to play a greater role in bringing about certain euphoric effects than did the drug, especially earlier in the day. Music subjects were, on the whole, more relaxed and happy, felt less sluggish and stuffy" (p. 106).

Legal Issues and Luminaries

As previously mentioned, many artists initiated their psychedelic experiences knowing that it violated legal statutes, and some paid a heavy price for their actions. Richard Aldcroft, the Lumia artist, was pictured on the September 9, 1966 cover of *Life* magazine when psychedelic art was first featured in the popular press. In 1967, Aldcroft was arrested on marijuana charges and was assigned to the ward for the criminally insane at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. I attempted, without success, to intervene on Aldcroft's behalf and to have art materials sent to his cell. Following 2 years of imprisonment, he was released, but his career had been shattered.

Tom Blackwell, following our interview, was approached by a self-proclaimed "art dealer" who promised to buy three of Blackwell's paintings if the artist would supply him with marijuana. Despite the fact that Blackwell had not taken drugs for several years, he complied with the request and was promptly arrested. The "art dealer" was an undercover narcotics officer and his testimony sent Blackwell to jail. The American Civil Liberties Union, of which I am a member, entered the case claiming that this was an example of "entrapment." After a long struggle, Blackwell was released and went on to become a leader in the field of "photorealism," in which his use of light shining on motorcycles and other metallic objects reflects aspects of his psychedelic experiences.

A sculptor I interviewed, who was teaching in the art department of a major university, was accused of selling marijuana to a narcotics officer masquerading as a student. Despite the fact that the sculptor was in another town at the time of the alleged sale and was able to produce credible witnesses, including fellow faculty members and a Roman Catholic nun, the jury delivered a verdict of guilty. The narcotics officer was given a promotion and a pay raise despite the fact that the transcript of the case showed glaring inconsistencies in his testimony. The sculptor was released eventually, but at the cost of tremendous legal fees and an interruption of a promising career. It was such stories as these that motivated me to join the Marijuana Policy Project and the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, both of which have attempted, with some success, to change the draconian laws regarding marijuana, especially for people who could benefit from its medicinal properties.

It has always been apparent to me that without proper caution and guidance, psychedelics (including marijuana, which is not an LSD-type drug) can be a "psychotomimetic" ("psychosis-mimicking") agent for some people. Furthermore, these substances can be "hallucinogenic" ("evoking hallucinations") for others and can even lead to psychological addiction. Given the real

dangers of psychedelic drug usage, the reaction of governmental authorities often has shown more signs of hysteria than intelligence. Over the years, I have rarely seen artists among the casualties of psychedelic drug use. One of the artists I interviewed died tragically of a drug overdose, but the fatal substance was heroin, not a psychedelic.

The artist often stands apart from his or her culture to create something novel or unusual, a product that expresses some aspect of the artist's personal experience. To manifest a creation, the artist often needs to circumvent or transcend his or her social conditioning and cultural framework. Perhaps it is this type of individual, one who will not be alarmed at what is perceived or conceptualized during a psychedelic session, who can most benefit from psychedelic experiences and, in turn, produce something of benefit for society and culture. This is apparent when one glances at the ledgers of artists and other creative people who have attributed some aspect of their work to psychedelic experiences. The list ranges from Lewis Carroll (author of *Alice in Wonderland*), who ingested psychedelic mushrooms, the playwright Antonin Artaud who sampled peyote, numerous actors such as George Clooney, Cary Grant, and Rita Moreno (who told me of her use of LSD in psychotherapy), the computer pioneers Bill Gates, Steve Wozniak, and Steve Jobs, the basketball legend and author Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (all of whom took LSD), and the Nobel laureates Karry Mullis (who indulged often), Richard Feynman (who indulged seldom, usual taking LSD with immersion in a sensory deprivation tank), and Sir Francis Crick, who told several friends that the double-helix of DNA came to him in an LSD session.

Before this information was made public, I met Sir Francis at a small dinner party and only had the opportunity to ask him one question: Why did he and his colleague James Watson grasp the structure of DNA instead of another Nobel Prize-winner, Linus Pauling, who was also attempting to solve the puzzle? Sir Francis graciously praised Pauling and his many accomplishments, and then added that his team had access to equipment and technology that was "not available" to Pauling. He even used the word "private" when discussing one aspect the technology. If I had been sharper and more prescient, I might have guessed that he was referring to LSD.

Related Research

Prior to the restrictions on psychedelic research, a few studies on psychedelics and creativity appeared in the literature. A 1927 book *Der Meskalinrausch* by Beringer reported his study of the effects of mescaline on 32 participants, many of whom illustrated their experiences (in Stuart, 2004). Berlin, Guthrie, Weider, Goodell, and Wolff (1955) investigated the effects of mescaline and

LSD on four prominent graphic artists. A panel of art critics judged the paintings as having "greater aesthetic value" than the artists' usual work noting that the lines were bolder and that the use of color was more vivid, even though the technical execution was somewhat poorer than in their other work.

Barron (1963) administered psilocybin to a number of individuals he deemed to be "highly creative" and recorded their impressions. A composer wrote, "Every corner is alive in a silent intimacy" (p. 255). But a painter observed, "I have seldom known such absolute identification with what I was doing—nor such a lack of concern with it afterwards" (p. 251). Barron (1963) concluded, "What psilocybin does is to . . . dissolve many definitions and melt many boundaries, permit greater intensities or more extreme values of experience to occur in many dimensions" (pp. 256-257).

Before he left Harvard, Leary (1963) administered psilocybin to 65 writers, musicians, and artists, most of who claimed that they had undergone "a creative experience" (p. 24). Leary postulated that creative persons break through the "game structures" of their cultural conditioning if they are to create innovative productions that will be of artistic merit, and that psilocybin can assist this process. Leary had originally heard about psychoactive mushrooms from Barron, ingesting them for the first time in 1960. As they say, the rest is history.

Janiger (1959; Dobkin de Rios & Janiger, 2003) asked 60 artists to paint a picture of a Native American doll before ingesting LSD. Some of the artists also painted other figures as well. During their psychedelic session they again painted the doll. The 120 paintings were evaluated by an art historian Carl Hertel, who found neither condition inferior nor superior. However, the LSD paintings were brighter and more abstract. The paintings were also evaluated by a group of artists using specific criteria; the LSD paintings scored low of craft but high for imagination and use of color.

In a study at the Max Planck Institute in Munich, Hartmann administered LSD to 20 well-known German artists, devoting about a week for each artist (Kipphoff, 1969). None of the artists regretted the experience and all agreed that the experience was of value. The paintings were placed on display in a Frankfurt gallery with the exceptions of Friedrich Hunderwasser who refused to work in the LSD condition, finding the request antithetical to what he was experiencing, and Gerd Hoehman, who recalled a wartime experience that evoked too much pain for him to paint. However, Alfred Hrdlicka, ordinarily a perfectionist, subsided into caricatures and primitive shapes. Waldemar Grzimek attempted to draw a female figure but the anatomical details completely dissolved. Eberhard Eggers felt that his psychedelic art was an improvement. The LSD work of C. O. Goetz, however, was indistinguishable from his usual paintings. Stuart (2004) has noted that this was the "last scientific experiment on psychedelic art" (p. 20).

Fischer, Fox, and Ralstin (1972) administered psilocybin to 21 college-age volunteers who had taken tests for field independence/dependence, creativity, and brain damage. These tests were readministered 90 and 270 minutes after ingestion. Under the influence of psilocybin, about half of the participants' responses resembled those of brain damaged individuals, while the other half did not. Not all the participants were able to complete the creativity tests 270 minutes after ingestion, but of those who did an inverse relationship was noted between their creativity scores and their scores for brain damage. In other words, the higher the creativity scores, the lower the brain damage scores. Figure drawing tests were administered to several subjects who were able to comply with the request. Outside evaluators scored as most "esthetically pleasing" the figures drawn by the participants who were low on creativity but high on brain damage. When asked if they had a "creative experience," those who were "field independent" responded more positively than those who were "field dependent." However, very few of those participants reporting a creative experience were able to execute a creative drawing. The authors concluded that "the widely held generalization that hallucinogenic drugs impair performance cannot be maintained, since we have found that certain inter-individual differences may disappear under hallucinogenic drug arousal, while others become manifest only under drug influence" (Fisher et al., 1972, p. 35).

A number of other experiments involving creativity tests were reported before the governmental crackdown on psychedelic research. McGlothin, Cohen, and McGlothin (1967) utilized three groups of 24 participants each, giving one group 200 milligrams of LSD, one group 25 milligrams, and one group a placebo. Several creativity tests were administered prior to their sessions and again at 2 weeks and 6 months. Of the group receiving a large dose of LSD, 62% claimed that they now had a "greater appreciation of music." This was corroborated by an increase in records bought, time spent in museums, and number of concerts attended. Similar results were not observed in the other two groups. Furthermore, none of the groups manifested increases in scores on art tests. Regarding personality variables, the authors concluded,

> Persons who place strong emphasis on structure and control generally have no taste for the [LSD] experience and tend to respond minimally if exposed. Those who respond intensely tend to prefer a more unstructured, spontaneous, inward-turning (though not socially introverted) life, and score somewhat higher on tests of aesthetic sensitivity and imaginativeness. They also tend to be less aggressive, less competitive, and less conforming. (McGlothin et al., 1967, p. 532)

Zegans, Pollard, and Brown (1967) investigated the effects of LSD on creativity test scores of 30-volunteer male participants. When the creativity test data were analyzed, the LSD group had performed significantly better than the control group or the rest for originality of word associations. Most other comparisons favored the LSD group, but none attained statistical significance. However, the LSD group did significantly poorer on three tests that required visual attention. The authors concluded that LSD "may increase the accessibility of remote or unique ideas and associations" (p. 746), while making it difficult for participants to narrow their attention onto a delimited perceptual field.

Harman, McKim, Mogar, Fadiman, and Stolaroff (1966) administered mescaline to participants who brought a problematic project with them to their sessions. In the morning, 200 micrograms of mescaline were administered along with a stimulant (methylphenidate); the latter was readministered in the afternoon. Several creativity tests were administered before ingestion and during ingestion; questionnaires and experiential reports were also elicited. About half the participants reported that they had accomplished a great more during their psychedelic session than during their ordinary workday. Some 20% were unable to concentrate on their projects because they were caught up in the mescaline experience, while 30% fell between the two extremes. An analysis of the experiential reports yielded 11 factors:

1. A reduction of inhibition and anxiety under mescaline.
2. The capacity to restructure a problem in a larger context.
3. An enhanced fluency of ideas.
4. A heightened capacity for visual imagery.
5. An increased ability to concentrate.
6. A greater empathy with external processes and objects.
7. A heightened empathy with people.
8. A greater accessibility of unconscious material.
9. An increased motivation to obtain a solution.
10. An ability to associate dissimilar ideas.
11. A visualization of the completed solution.

The last factor was illustrated by an architect's visualization of a shopping center he was to design:

> I looked at the paper I was to draw on. It was completely blank. I knew that I would work with a property 300 feet square. . . . Suddenly I saw the finished project. I did some quick calculations. . . . It would fit the property and . . . would meet the cost and income requirements . . . I visualized the result I

> wanted and subsequently brought the variables into play which could bring that result about . . . I could imagine what was wanted, needed, or not possible with almost no effort. (Harman et al., 1966, p. 224)

In 1965, the psychiatrist Humphry Osmond and the architect Kyo Izumi revealed that they had used LSD in the designing of a mental hospital. Izumi (1970) took LSD during several visits to traditionally designed mental hospitals to determine the effects of their architecture on the patients. The result was Izumi's (1970) realization that the customary buildings were unsuitable; he observed that the "hard, glaring, and highly reflective surfaces of polished terrazzo floors, glazed-tile walls, and white ceiling tiles created spaces of unusually intimidating qualities, particularly if there were also other people in this space" (pp. 387-388). Izumi created a building with few sharp edges, many curved lines, few shadowed corners, and more open spaces.

Several decades after these reports occurred in the literature, Jeremy Narby (2002), an anthropologist, provided a similar account. In 1999, he took three molecular biologists to the Peruvian Amazon to see if they could engage in creative problem solving during an ayahuasca session conducted by an indigenous shaman. Each scientist brought an unsolved problem, one that had eluded comprehension over time. They spent 2 weeks with the shaman, and then visited a school for bilingual, multicultural education where students from 14 different linguistic backgrounds were learning how to teach science in the Spanish language. The scientists spoke positively about their Amazonian experiences, but also warned against the unsupervised use of ayahuasca and other psychoactive substances. But all three biologists agreed that their experiences with ayahuasca had changed their worldview, the capacities of the human mind, their respect for the shaman's skill and knowledge, and the information they had received about the scientific problem on which they had focused. The two female biologists reported contact with "plant teachers" and the male biologist received answers from a voice that spoke to him in his visions. All three had visions about DNA molecules and chromosomes relevant to their work. The potential of ayahuasca for artists was explored previously by Amaringo and Luna (1991) in *Ayahuasca Visions*, and art schools have sprung up in the Amazon to train talented young people who are often able to sell their visionary paintings abroad.

In 2002, Grob announced that psychiatric research with psychedelics had resumed. "The bitter and acrimonious debate that raged through the 1970s and well into the 1980s has largely subsided" (p. 263). Grob traced the history of this oppression through the persecution of indigenous healers, especially women, during the reign of the Inquisition in Europe, the aversion to psychedelics by the European conquerors of the Americas, and the

preoccupation with the alleged "psychotomimetic" properties of psychedelics in the 20th century. This combination of religious, political, and ideological opposition to psychedelic experience stands in marked contrast to the visionary insights of my friend Albert Hofmann (1980), the discoverer of LSD, who saw the connection between shamanism and psychotherapy, and between native spirituality and contemporary ecology. This vision has been shared by psychedelic artists over the years, and my fervent desire is that it be incarnated anew in the 21st century.

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