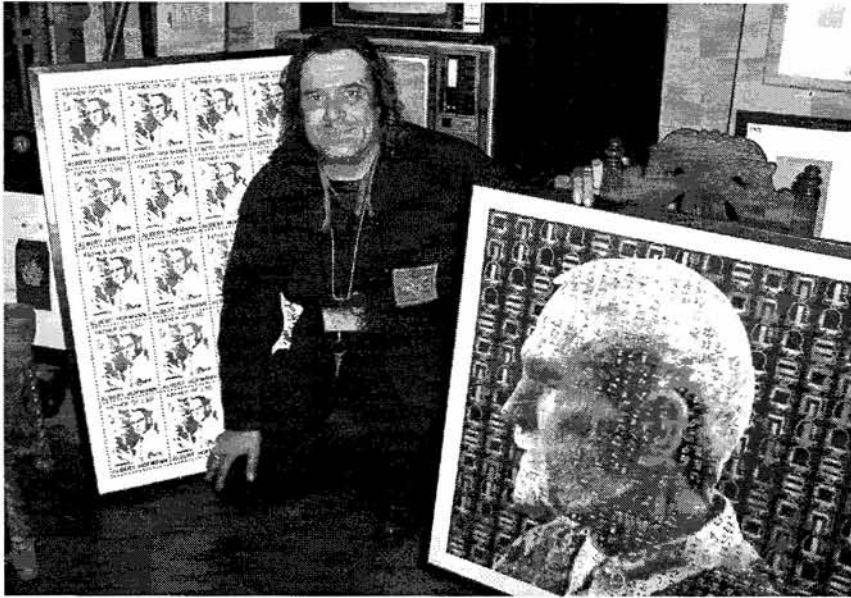




# THE KING OF BLOTTER ART: MARK MCCLOUD SPEAKS...

Interviewed by JON HANNA



MARK MCCLOUD is a 50-year-old artist and former art professor who has the largest collection of LSD blotter art in the world. This art collection has caused MCCLOUD to be busted (and acquitted) twice on charges of "conspiracy to distribute LSD": first in 1992, and then more recently in 2000. Having dodged a Federal conviction two times may be more unlikely than lightning striking the same spot twice. MARK told me that, historically speaking, the Feds rarely lose their drug cases: "They don't want to put up a fight unless they feel confident of a conviction." His most recent trial took place in the conservative Midwest, in Kansas City. MARK believes that the prosecutors made a strategic blunder when they argued the legal "merits" of their case during the first half of the trial, and presented the evidence during the second half. Hundreds of framed blotter art images were freshly imprinted on the jurors' minds just before they left to deliberate. It wasn't possible that they could see these as anything other than art. The judge wasn't pleased. When the verdict was read, MARK jumped up with arms open and rushed towards the jurors, as if to give them all a big hug. "Mr. MCCLOUD, if there is *one* word out of you, I'll hold you in contempt and throw you in jail," justice GARY FENNER snarled. MARK considered for only a couple of seconds. He had been facing a *life* in prison, and now the judge felt that a few days in jail was some kind of threat? "Your honor," MARK spoke up slowly and clearly, "Where I'm from, when someone saves your life, you *thank* them."

With his generous heart, MARK is someone that you immediately fall in love with. His abilities as a raconteur rival SPAULDING GRAY, TERENCE MCKENNA, or NICK SAND. You can listen enthralled for hours to all manner of stories, as time slips away unnoticed. For example, he recently told me about how politicians in a specific area of South America take their job more seriously than those in the United States do, because if the townspeople are displeased at the end of the politicians' terms, they will strip them naked, smear honey on their genitals, tie them to trees, and let the squirrels feast on their scrotums. I protest. But with a twinkle in his eye, MCCLOUD swears that it is indeed true. And somehow, I almost believe him.

I met up with MARK at his Victorian house in San Francisco—perhaps more reasonably described as a museum, considering the high ceilings and walls with every inch covered in all manner of art. Of course, much of this was blotter art, some of which still sported the DEA evidence stickers from his past run-ins. On a rainy winter day, we chatted about psychedelic art, LSD, and some of his current projects. His new business, BLOTTER BARN, produces beautiful, gigantic giclee art prints, in signed, limited editions, of enlarged blotter hits and sheets. Talk about inducing macroscopic visions...





JON: I *love* this idea of the giant blotter. It's genius, really. You're gonna make your mint on it.

MARK: Yeah, we thought that every bar should have one. Here's the funny thing. I showed them at this art space the other night, and the staff—who weren't familiar with blotter—asked if they were stereograms. You know, that type of art that you sort of view with crossed eyes, and a hidden image eventually pops out of it. A lot of those images have a psychedelic blotter art feel to them.

JON: Right. Perhaps that's an example of the "mall mentality" as a means to relate to blotter art. Those stereograms used to be popular on poster art in the malls of America. So kids who didn't grow up with LSD blotter art still have a naïve way to understand it, by lumping it into the arena of stereogram art.

MARK: That's a really good analogy. And I like it that way, where people can still enjoy the images, but not have the stigma that is sometimes attached to blotter art. Or the life in prison. [laughs]

JON: Which of course brings to mind the idea that someone should put stereogram images on blotters.

MARK: Well, you know, THOMAS LYTTLE actually did one of those. He unfortunately didn't invent one, he just grabbed a computer program off of a Mac. But one of those "signed six"—the first "vanity" blotter, produced solely as a collectible due to the autographs on it—that LYTTLE did is a stereogram—this little pink thing. It's off-center, because he had to square it up to fit the format. But it's still cool.

JON: The other computer software that might be exploited in creating new blotter art is that Photomosaic™ technology developed by ROBERT SILVERS, where he takes many small images and manipulates them as components to form a larger image.

MARK: Oh yeah, I love that guy's stuff. I have a *MAD Magazine*—their "400th Moronic Issue" from December of 2000—where they used that process. They grabbed a bunch of images of past covers and other art from the 'zine and made a big head of ALFRED E. NEWMAN.

JON: Recently it was suggested to me that there may be blotter going around that doesn't contain LSD, but rather which contains ergine being passed off as LSD. What are your thoughts about that?

MARK: How would that work? How do you get ergine into a solution where one hit is enough of a dose?

JON: Well, it's supposed to be about a tenth as active as LSD is, right? So someone could certainly get 500 micrograms, or a milligram, or a bit more, onto a hit of blotter.

MARK: I think that there's another thing going on that more easily explains differences in effect from LSD. There are two stages in the completion of an LSD synthesis process. The first involves turning the ergotamine tartrate into a psychedelic oil. And then from that, the oil is refined into a crystal. And what has been the custom in the last fifteen years, is to use the oil itself, rather than taking the extra work to produce the crystal. That's what's going on.

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JON: Do you think that this is the reason that some people report that the quality of LSD is not as good as it was back in the 1960s?

MARK: That's one thing that may be contributing to such an attitude. But then there is also the dosage. Believe it or not, I think that the weakest hit I ever saw in the 1960s had to be 150 mics, or maybe about 100 mics, with some of those windowpanes. And back in those days we usually took around 500 mics. So *that's* the difference.

JON: Is there some difference chemically between the oil and the crystal? Or is this just a physical thing, like water and ice, and—if so—why would that make a difference in the effect?

MARK: The time it takes to come on to the effects from the oil is a lot longer in duration. The crystal acts faster. But, the oil is actually higher in psychedelic properties than the crystal. And that's one of the reasons that underground chemists stopped refining it to crystal. So it is the same chemical, but like you suggest with the water and ice analogy, it is in a different stage.

JON: So perhaps the stage that it is in is causing some manner of difference in how it is absorbed?

MARK: That may be possible, and that could also be why some people report that they can't get off as strongly as they used to in the 1960s. It doesn't come on as fast, and it is provided in a lower dose unit. It could be.

But here's my *other* theory about the complaints that acid isn't as good these days as it was back in the 1960s. Back then, our brains' synapses weren't all fucked up from doing a lot of cocaine. They weren't all blocked from ten years of doing bad coke.

JON: That might fit with my own experience, in that I've never done a lot of cocaine—barely any really—and I have never done a lot of speed. Now, I wasn't doing acid in the 1960s, so I can't make a comparison. But when I have done LSD, I've had *full-blown* psychedelic trips, and it has always been the same, keeping in mind some variation from set and setting of course. I have never gotten any "bad" acid, and all of the acid that I have taken has produced the exact same spectrum of effects as all of the other acid that I have taken. I sometimes get into discussions with old-timers about the "new" acid, or the "bad" acid that is on the street these days, and I

just don't comprehend what they are saying, because if I take enough of the 50-microgram (or so) hits that are available these days, I always have a full-blown psychedelic trip that is similar in effects to all of my other trips. But of course, not *all* of the old timers glorify the 1960s acid. Some who I have spoken with feel that today's acid taken in the right dose produces identical effects.

MARK: Well, you know, there are libraries of vintages from many different years, including a lot of the older stuff that was produced in the 1960s, that people still have in their collections. So it is pretty easy to compare the older stuff to the more recent hits.

JON: And what is your feeling regarding such comparisons?

MARK: That it's just the dose that people are taking. That dosage is the main difference between the so-called "good" acid of the 1960s and the so-called "bad" acid available today. People making a comparison to the stuff from the 1960s simply aren't taking a high enough dose of the currently available material. That, and perhaps their synapses are fried from coke abuse.

JON: So if you take a golden oldie on one day, and enough of some contemporary material to produce a dose of equal potency on another day, your feeling is that there really wouldn't be any difference?

MARK: Yes, I think that they would produce the same effects. They would be the same deal. But see, I'm not a snob. I do have friends that *are* real snobs about this sort of thing, and they'll only take a certain type of crystal. But I know better. And also, the effects have nothing to do with the *color* of the dose, for example, which some people still believe.

JON: That idea about the color of the dose producing different effects is related to test marketing that OWSLEY was said to have done, right? It's been said that he dyed the same crystalline material five different colors, stuck this into gel caps, and then sent it out to see what the consumer liked best. And different colors got different reviews. Red was supposed to be too mellow, green too speedy, and blue the happy medium. But it was all the same stuff.

MARK: Right.

JON: There is an appropriate quote from ABRAM HOFFER that was recently reprinted in OTTO SNOW's new book *LSD*, where







HOFFER said: "At 75 mcg some subjects react with a strong experience and others remain very tense and uncomfortable. At 100 mcg about 75 percent of normal subjects become very relaxed and remarkably free of tension. The remainder may require 200 mcg to get the same degree of relaxation. There must be a maximum degree of relaxation before the psychedelic experience is achieved; most subjects have very tense, unpleasant experiences when given too little LSD." HOFFER said this back in 1967, so it was *known* back then that low doses produced the sort of side effects that some bullheaded old-timers attribute to what they call the "bad acid" that is produced these days. So, again, I think that it is the lower doses available on today's market that are primarily responsible for the difference in effect, and even for the increased side effects that some of these old-timers report. As well, all of the side effects that are said to be due to the impure, or bad acid of today, were reported by some patients in the early literature from the 1950s: nausea, cramping, stimulation—this stuff is nothing new.

MARK: Now, I would say that "all acid is alike," except for that RONNIE STARK acid. That shit was definitely from another planet. RONNIE's acid... *forget* about it! It was like being shot out of a fucking cannon—really. And people might say, "Nah, that's just due to the high doses." But I don't know that I can agree in this case. There was something about that acid—five minutes after taking it you could *hear* something happening to you, and within a half an hour you had nothing to do with this level of reality at all.

JON: Was it maybe a different chemical altogether?

MARK: No, I don't think so. But it was something so well finished that it just coupled to you in a way unlike anything else. That's the one that I saw change more lives than any other. Unfortunately, a lot of those people ended up in asylums.

JON: [laughs] So it wasn't necessarily a change for the good?

MARK: No, because it was such a transforming experience that it took years for them to integrate it. I talked to poet JOHN GIORNO about this, because JOHN had tried that acid with RON, back in 1965, and he said, "RON was the walrus."

JON: But you don't think that this was just a dose-related thing, with people taking really high doses?

MARK: I don't know. But I have said this to several people, and every once in a while someone will reply, "Dude, you're

*right!* I tried that acid. And that was the weirdest acid that I ever took, and it was *definitely* different." The real psychedelic art that came out—when things really transformed in the art world—was when RONNIE STARK's acid was what was going around. Half an hour later you were on a different fucking planet, that had nothing to do with this one here. That you made it back at all, was like a miracle. It was fierce magical stuff—the stuff fables are made of. And I think that's why the BROTHERHOOD [OF ETERNAL LOVE] was so successful, because they had that fucking incredible acid of RON's.

I had a life-transforming experience on that acid of RONNIE STARK's, which changed me around. I was a psychology major at the time, and by the end of that trip I had become an art major. What I thought people called "psychology" turned out to be called "art." But, you know, English was my second language. [laughs] But that experience was really what sparked my collecting. It was my *love* for LSD that caused me to think, "Hey, I could frame one of these up and change the context."

JON: What ever ended up happening with RON?

MARK: Well, that's one of the great unsolved mysteries of our time. The government claimed that he died in 1984, but I'd bet he's still around. One of the fantastic treasures of our time was that RON, apparently before he disappeared into the Italian Red Brigade, left a trunk full of acid buried in Death Valley, deep enough so that it would keep well at the low temperature it was stored at there.

JON: And that's never been reported as having been found, right? You're making me want to walk around Death Valley with a metal detector digging holes. [laughs]

MARK: Dude, I'm hoping that it's gonna show up on one of those aerial photographs someday!

JON: But that story could just be urban legend.

MARK: Sure, but such legends are often based in truth. Either way, this is a good one. People who knew RON have said, "Not *one* trunk of acid, it was TEN trunks of acid." And he was said to be that kind of a guy. When they arrested him, he was holding a Bulgarian passport in an Italian prison—they were holding him as a Red Brigade. And one of the CIA agents recognized him and had him brought back here to San Francisco, where he apparently died of that mysterious "heart attack" that they tend to get [laughs], but no one ever saw





the body. I bet they let him walk.

JON: So, the last time I saw you, we were discussing a book project that you were working on, related to blotter art.

MARK: Sure, that's my dream book, which I am still working on. It deals with the history of blotter paper as an art. We're still struggling with that, and I don't have the contract yet. I'm hoping to work with a fabulous English publisher called Sir EDWARD BOOTH-CLIBBORN EDITIONS. Sir EDWARD, who's now 84, told me that we're gonna do it. So I still have some faith. But there are possibly some legal troubles with it right now. There's potential copyright problems. How do you get away with including those images of MIKHAIL GORBACHEV in there? What's GORBY gonna think? You know, there is a GORBY protection league. [laughs]

JON: It seems as though, from an art historical perspective, that it is unreasonable for copyright issues to create too much of an obstacle. Perhaps with things like MICKEY. The MOUSE might be an insurmountable obstacle...

MARK: But not really... You know that WALT was expelled from the KANSAS CITY ART INSTITUTE for plagiarism? And they still haven't paid off their POOH bill. DISNEY is being sued as we speak for WINNIE THE POOH, although that's about to get settled. They never paid a cent to the copyright holder for unreported software and video sales.

Anyway, with my dream blotter book, I already have 250 pages of it produced, and Sir EDWARD told me that I can have 80 of these perfed, if I want to. They are produced in 8-flats, and he was willing to perf 10 of the flats, which is an incredible nightmare of an engineering problem, but what fun! So I have PAUL MAVRIDES as my book designer, who did the SUBGENIUS books, and then I have CARLO MCCORMICK as my art hysterical writer, dealing with the aesthetic side of things, and then I will write the history side of it.

So that's who Sir EDWARD is. He did some work on *Bag One* with JOHN LENNON. He's been around forever, this old-timer. He was MARSHALL MCCLUHAN's sidekick. He's got the best art book company in the world.

This editor named LIZ FARRELLY came out to a blotter show of mine in Los Angeles. She works for *ID Magazine—International Design*—and she's done a lot of books with Sir EDWARD. She worked on a book called *Highflyers* that came out in 1996, which is about the rave flyers in London. And she

saw the blotter collection and said, "Hey dude, come on out." And I said, "Yeah, I'll come on out." We were right about to produce the book, when the bust in 2000 happened. So I've had to re-initiate new contracts now, and get everyone in line.

My copyright attorney tells me that there is a realm of "found objects" that can appear in art, where you already *know* that the image is a rip-off. So we're hoping that some of these copyrighted images that have appeared on blotter art can be used in the book and that they will fall under that category of protection from lawsuits. The English even have a clause in their contracts where you have to be sure that what you are producing doesn't in some manner insult the Queen.

JON: You could publish the book in Mexico, and then you wouldn't have to worry about copyright laws at all, heh...

MARK: But that's not my focus. I'm trying to get it out there as a legitimate art form from a historical perspective. The book would be representing a couple hundred anonymous artists, so I have to give them their due respect. I want their little place in history secured. Then after that, sure, let the "vanity" blotter reign. But these original underground artists paid with their *nalgas*, you know.

JON: Are you aware of artists whose singular contribution to the art world is blotter art?

MARK: Sure. One of my dearest friends, who I collected for many years before I ever got to meet him—he was also serving a ten-year term—is FORESTER. He's a very famous guy. He did hundreds of sheets of blotter, and then got busted in the late 1980s. When he got out, I befriended him. I took him to that TIM LEARY show that we did, with TIM presiding, and he got to see all of his blotter framed up, and he couldn't believe it. So we became fast friends, and he comes over about once a month and we have serious talks. But that's all he's ever done, is blotter art. He's more of a mad scientist type who out of *need* got into the art world. But he was turned on by this guy called THE ELECTRIC BUDDHA, who had a 'zine in the Haight called *Stains on Paper*, which was published for about five years during the 1970s.

There's an idea that some of these underground blotter artists now hold to when wholesaling blank sheets. They will charge \$3.00 each if the customer is gonna dip them, and \$5.00 each if the customer is going to frame them. Some folks want to cut the customer a deal if he is going to propagate a hit, since that gives the art a good name on the street.





**The Bust Book** is an amazing collection of drug art. It was enjoyable to flip the pages and reminisce about which hits I had eaten or seen on the street during my younger days. Compiled by the DEA, and used as evidence against MARK McCLOUD, the facsimile edition produced by ADAM STANHOPE and McCLOUD is clearly a labor of love. Several mainstream media articles about McCLOUD's bust and acquittal at the beginning of the oversized binder (gold-foil-stamped on the cover, with an "Eye of Horus" design) provide a historical account of the case at hand. Following this, full-color reproductions from the original evidence book are carefully contained within 3-hole plastic sleeves. Each has data provided about what perfering machine was used on the blotter, the evidence number for the bust, a DEA-assigned descriptive name for the sheets, the number of hits seized, the drug content of the hits, and the date and location of the bust. The earliest busted sheet of acid is from August of 1982, with the most recent bust (aside from McCLOUD himself) being July of 2000. The date on this final bust was interesting; since McCLOUD himself was busted in February of that year, it would seem that the prosecution continued to collect "evidence" of McCLOUD's "guilt" even after they threw him in jail!

None of the sheets taken from McCLOUD's home had any LSD on them, and a few sheets seized from other locations also had no LSD on them. However, the hits that were seized that *did* contain LSD provide some interesting data on the range of potency that has been available over the last two decades or so. On the low end, there were sheets of "3-D Cubes" and "Roses" busted in Cave Junction in 1997 that only had a "trace" amount of LSD on them. Other dosed hits weighed in at 48 mics (1982), 63 mics (1986), 60 mics (1990), 37 mics (1991), 47 mics (1991), 62 mics (1992), 16 mics (1993), 23 mics (1993), 52 mics (1993), 78 mics (1993), 40 mics (1994), 51 mics (1994), 61 mics (1994), 69 mics (1994), 78 mics (1995), 63 mics (1997), 22 mics (1998), 27 mics (1998), 57 mics (1998), 22 mics (1999), 24 mics (1999), 24 mics (1999), 32 mics (2000), 51 mics (2000), with the highest dose being 107 mics (2000) for a hit of "Egyptian Eyes." Throwing out the two trace doses, this leaves 25 busts that the Feds presented specific dose data for, with an overall average dose of 48.56 mics. This is about one-third lower than the average 75 mics published by PHARMACHEM based on doses seized between 1969 and 1975, although it is worth noting that their results were calculated from a larger sampling of 2,200 doses that, when they contained LSD, ranged from 5 to 500 mics (EROWID 2003). Nevertheless, the assumption that today's hit of blotter acid is substantially less potent than that which was going around in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s seems to be borne out by the details presented in *The Bust Book*.

The format that *The Bust Book* is presented in, while historically accurate, also provides a good home where the connoisseur of contemporary "vanity" blotter can house his or her growing collection. As well, I have expanded the historical relevance of the book in the other direction, by downloading earlier representatives of blotter art in the form of "The LSD Blotter Index" (FRANZOSA et al 1987) from EROWID ([www.erowid.org/chemicals/lsd/lsd\\_history5.shtml](http://www.erowid.org/chemicals/lsd/lsd_history5.shtml)), which covers blotter busted from 1976 through 1986. Of course, produced as muddy black-and-white photocopies, this document collection pales compared to *The Bust Book*, but it does widen the scope.

Weighing in at around 140 printed pages, *The Bust Book* was produced as a signed, limited edition of 250 copies, and sells for \$750.00. A special premium edition, limited to a mere 10 copies, comes with a vintage "Eye of Horus" blotter art—the oldest known piece of blotter art still in existence—which is potentially worth the price of the entire book to a dedicated collector, and sure to go up in value. For information on how to order a copy of *The Bust Book*, check out [www.acidartz.com](http://www.acidartz.com). — JON HANNA

JON: You have *another* book project, however, that actually has recently been produced—*The Bust Book*, published with ADAM STANHOPE of ACIDARTZ.COM, right?

MARK: Let me tell you a little bit about *The Bust Book*. It begins with the bust of the "Eye of Horus"—you know, the "Eye in the Pyramid"—and then it goes all the way up to the bust of "Dancing Condoms." And in-between then it has numerous busts occurring throughout history in the United States, linking my collection of undipped blotters to these busts all over the U.S. What's valuable about this book, is that it is actually a history of blotter put together by the Feds. And it compares perforating machines, not just the artwork.

JON: So they can more accurately target where the undipped blotter may have entered into the market, by associating it with a specific perforation machine in a certain area?

MARK: Right. They break the history of blotter during this time into about eleven perforating machines, and then classify all of these different blotter images by associating them with specific perforating machines. Then they also provide the dosage that was on the seized street blotter, and the place and date of the seizure.

JON: Are there some busted hits in there that had the same image, but which had been perforated by two or more different machines?

MARK: Yes, thank God. What's neat about it is that you get to see that dosages on the same art also vary—there's some "Shields" in there that go down below 20 mics, and there are others that are around 80 mics. There's some other minor classifications in there too. For example, there's signed blotter, captured in King's County, from a friend of mine that has the second-largest blotter collection—a great guy called MAGIC MIKE.

JON: The interest in collecting blotter art has recently mushroomed into a huge phenomenon. There are many more people collecting it now than there were even two or three years ago.







What do you attribute that to? Is the desire to collect primarily driven by people who nostalgically look at a specific sheet, which reminds them of a certain time in their life when they were taking those hits? Or is there something else at play?

MARK: Well, preferably there *is* that association going on, and people are collecting their favorite hits. I remember being interviewed by a guy once, who works for *The Washington Post* now, and he was telling me that he had only tripped once, but it was under the pyramids at a DEAD show, and it was on an "Eye of the Pyramid" hit. Of course, when he saw a sheet of that framed up, I could see him flashback a little bit. So, I think that the beginning blotter collector does look for the one that "did it." And then as one gets into it, the whole field becomes fascinating. Even the "vanity" blotter thing that is going on now—which never sees a drop of acid placed on it—for me, is an incredible achievement.

JON: It is indeed. On the other hand, there is a practical aspect to the "vanity" approach. These days we have hundreds of thousands of blotter images produced solely with the idea that they are only for art's sake. Yet some people may chip off bits of this mountain and divert it to the street. In a pinch, it can be *practical* as well as alluring.

MARK: That's the advantage of the time we are living in today. When blotter paper wasn't considered an art form, it was a death sentence to be caught with a stack of it. And now it is kind of an honor to have a framed-up piece in your living room. It's a good way to approach the topic without drawing a big line on a mirror.

JON: And with your BLOTTER BARN approach, there's a whole new angle to the presentation of blotter art, taking it to an even higher level. Someday the name "McCLOUD" will be spoken in the same breath as "WARHOL."

MARK: It's true that I am trying to sneak them into the museums, I confess. My dream is to hang one in a museum somewhere, and have it work both ways. Have it be a valid art piece, and then, "Hey—nudge, nudge—that's a four-way."

JON: A *gigantic* four-way! [laughs]

MARK: I think that's the next step to take. That's the way to go with it and be true to my cause, which is to be an artist, and also perhaps invoke some penal reform. I'm hoping that I can eventually get one into the Vatican.

JON: What year did you start collecting?

MARK: In the late 1970s. I was still eating them back then, so my collection was kept in the freezer. And I had some that I would never eat, that ended up getting framed. But with most of them, I was scarfing them. So I kept them in the freezer for maybe the first five years of the collection. It wasn't until I found this little old framer up on Noe Street, that I started framing them. And I only started out framing four-ways, and like nine hits—little tiny things. He didn't know what they were. So I went to pick up a big framing job once and the shop was closed, and I thought, "Oh *fuck!* I bet this guy licked his fingers." You know, because they were all loaded back then. I couldn't find any undipped sheets back at that time. I was like anyone else.

JON: When I was dealing with the blotter art that I commissioned STEVEE POSTMAN to design for LSD's 60th anniversary, some of which was signed by ALBERT HOFMANN and created as a fundraiser for EROWID and MAPS, I took a few of these autographed sheets to AARON BROTHERS to have them framed. AARON BROTHERS has a ludicrously low insurance amount per piece of art that you leave with them—something like \$200.00—that they will pay you if the trained monkeys they have working at their store mess up your art while they are framing it. Most of the 60 signed and numbered pieces that *are* available for sale have now sold, and the remainder that are available at the moment are going for \$1,500.00 each. And they will no doubt only go up in value. So I had to leave a few of these that were being framed there at the store for about a week. The manager had no idea of their *value*, right? But she clearly knew what they were used for on the street, and she thoughtfully suggested that the art be retained in the store's safe. I think that she was worried that some hungry monkey might end up eating the art.

MARK: Right. Yeah, it was back when I saw a little hit of that HOFMANN design—you know, 20 hits of that "Father of LSD" design—that's when I said to myself that I was going to start framing them. I included that blotter on the cover design for this issue of *The Entheogen Review*.

Anyway, I was on the board at the SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE back then, and they had this show every summer that was open to the public. As a board member, I suggested, "Since it is the 20th anniversary of the Summer of Love, I thought that we could show this." I showed them my little blotter collection, and they said, "Cool dude." And that's how it happened. But you know, it was a fluke, because no one in





their right mind would have shown blotter back then. Only the S.F. ART INSTITUTE, of anyplace on the planet, would have done it. And then JACAEBER KASTOR came to that show and saw it, and asked me to do an exhibit at his gallery, PSYCHEDELIC SOLUTION, in New York.

JON: What ended up happening with that gallery? It was open in the mid-1980s, and then it closed down in the mid-1990s.

MARK: It just burnt JACAEBER out, and I can see why. He had half of the gallery dedicated to original art. He was showing people like MARK MOTHERSBAUGH, and AXEL—my favorite blood painter and silversmith, who used to do lost-wax work for H.R. GIGER and SALVADOR DALI. But then he had the other half of his gallery, where they were flipping posters. And it was the grind of the crowd flipping posters day-in and day-out that got to JACAEBER. If he had just said, “Hey, get out of here” to the poster crowd, or had done that in a separate spot perhaps, he might still be open. But the grind got him. Ten years of that grind will knock you out of the lottery.

It’s really hard to find a good art dealer. These days you can still call up JACAEBER and buy a JIMI HENDRIX watercolor from him for b’jillions, out of his living room. But it’s too bad that he couldn’t keep the gallery going. It was a perfect location—it was across from ELECTRIC LADYLAND STUDIOS. We all tripped the night of my opening, and then shut down the gallery to give PETER MAX a private viewing. He came in with this crowd of psychics, who were all telepaths. I don’t know if you’ve met that crowd yet, the telepaths, but man—they know you’re coming. They swept the place before he came in the building, to make sure that there weren’t any narcs in there. One look at you, and they know what you are thinking; they can see what you think. PETER was funneling lots of money into Congress at the time, trying to “turn on” Congress. He’s had some legal problems recently, but I like the guy. PETER’s one of my heroes. And he spends a lot of money trying to psychedelicize Congress, truly. He’s a weirdo.

I think that the interest in psychedelic art, that has been increasingly growing, is inevitable. It’s our time. The few and the proud have turned into the many. It’s left the ghetto. Slowly people have been able to *integrate* the psychedelic experience, and develop the psychedelic *individual*, and that’s what we’re seeing. It’s manifesting itself in the visual art world more. Of course, it has done this forever in the music scene, but now the visual arts are just starting to catch up. The phenomenon of blotter art as a collectible is just a reflection of the psychedelic individual’s new status in the 21st century.

JON: There’s many more of us now.

MARK: Exactly. And we’re all over in different countries. I was looking at a web page on EROWID today, and there was a donation up there from some nut in Buenos Aires, a little “Cheshire Cat” blotter image. So it’s really a worldwide phenomenon.

JON: The 1960s have been traditionally depicted and thought of by many as the psychedelic heyday. But I believe that there are *way* more people taking psychedelics right now than there ever were in the 1960s. Society in general may not see this; it doesn’t appear as explicit to them, because the radical political change is no longer as strongly associated with it, nor even the overt and “shocking” fashion statement. So psychedelic use today doesn’t draw nearly as much public attention as it did in the 1960s, but there is a lot more use actually happening. This is particularly easy to see when considering *Cannabis*, and it can be shown statistically via web page hits. For example, the web site POT-TV.NET gets over 800,000 page hits per day, and about 125,000 individual users per month. And even the more general-interest psychoactives web site EROWID.ORG recently reached around 500,000 page hits a day at their site. That is evidence of massive contemporary interest in this area.

MARK: There are many more people tripping now. I mean, suppose that there was the same amount of acid being made now as there was in the 1960s—and of course you would have to multiply this on a “per hit” basis by at least five times, considering that the doses back then were 250 to 500 mics, right? And today they are more like 50 to 100 mics. However, there are *many* more acid doses being produced now than can be accounted for by a simple multiplication by five times. There is much more acid being produced now. *Much* more. It’s turned into a world phenomenon and a major manifestation. It’s no longer just an American or a Czechoslovakian enterprise. It’s being made in many countries. The idea of Canadian acid in the 1960s was unheard of, for example.

JON: And I suspect that the interest will only continue to grow. Thanks for your contributions to this art scene MARK, and for taking the time to speak with me for *The Entheogen Review*. ☉

