

turing strobe light, oscilloscope, and varied gaudy products of the psychedelicates, head shops, and acid marts. Finally, psychedelic wallpaper, neckties, shirts, dresses, magazine advertisements, and television commercials. Recently, the *Wall Street Journal* had a front page item headed:

CALL IT PSYCHEDELIC  
AND IT WILL SELL FAST,  
SOME MERCHANTS SAY

The writer of this article remarked that almost anything a merchant might call psychedelic would sell, even "wildly colored widgets that have been sitting on the storeroom shelf for years."

"Psychedelic," he said, "is developing into a magic sales word."

At the same time, the national debate over use of psychedelics is bitter, frequently hysterical, and almost never rational.

The sweep of psychedelic art is disconcerting. It ranges from discothèques through the recent music of the Beatles to work seeking in a sacred science new archetypes adequate to the needs of modern man. The psychedelic journey inward results in religious art erupting into ecstasy or revealing the rich multi-dimensionality of consciousness. Mystical awareness is being at one with all phenomena joined in a frenetic cosmic dance, or it is a union with the primordial substance and energies. There are distortions of perception and intensifications of perception; efforts to inundate our senses and other efforts to stir us in our spiritual depths. There is primitive art and ritual art and art that would turn us on by means of advanced electronic equipment and in the light of the latest neurological findings; art shallow and deep, crude and refined, childishly simple and highly complex, with many gradations of shading in between.

These different works of art do have a unity, common meanings and intentions that keep them within the framework of psychedelic art. However, the unity may not in every case be apparent to the viewer who has had no first-hand experience of altered states of consciousness and who is not otherwise knowledgeable about psychedelics.

### ***Psychedelic experience & psychedelic art***

The artist's unique personality is always the basic determinant of his psychedelic experience, as it is of his creative production. Mind-altering chemicals—such as peyote, mescaline, LSD, psilocybin—activate various mental processes. The specific contents of the altered awareness depend upon the interaction of these processes with all that the person otherwise is, including his set (preparation) for the experience. The other

main determinant is setting, including the persons present and especially those guiding the session. Thus the experience can be one thing for one person and something vastly different for another.

Of the classes of phenomena most common to the psychedelic experience, a few have particular relevance for the artist. They include (among others) accessibility of unconscious materials, relaxation of the boundaries of the ego, fluency and flexibility of thought, intensity of attention or heightened concentration, a breaking up of perceptual constancies, high capacity for visual imagery and fantasy, symbolizing and mythmaking tendencies, empathy, accelerated rate of thought, "regression in the service of the ego," seeming awareness of internal body processes and organs, and awareness of deep psychical and spiritual levels of the self with capacity in some cases for profound religious and mystical experiences.

What is most striking about this list is that, with a few exceptions, we have itemized what many psychologists regard as main components of the creative process—the very conditions of artistic, inventive, and other creation. This might explain why some ordinarily noncreative people are able in the psychedelic state to produce eidetic (visual) imagery they find to be more stunningly beautiful than any work of art they have seen. The high value placed on this imagery is by no means self-delusive or a product of narcissism in all cases. From such experience one might surmise that the vision of even the greatest artist is to some extent impoverished by the time it is realized on canvas or in his sculpture or architecture.

Artists are seldom able to work well with their hands during psychedelic experience. The mind is alert enough, but in most cases coordination is impaired or motivation wanting. Those who have frequent sessions sometimes learn to overcome this. On the other hand, in the LSD-type states, artists may perceive and conceptualize what will be expressed in their work later. The considerable but still limited value of these states for a majority of creative persons has been stated by Gerald Heard, writing in the *Psychedelic Review*:

Can LSD provide any assistance to the creative process? Even when given under the best of conditions, it may do no more (as Aristotle said when appraising and approving the great Greek Mysteries) than "give an experience." Thereafter the person must himself work with this enlarged frame of reference, this creative *schema*.

There are also, however, in LSD experience potentials for therapy and growth that can affect an artist's work. For example, creative blocks are sometimes overcome. When the blocks are neurotically grounded, the elimination of them is within the domain of psychotherapy. If it is more a matter of gaining fresh perspectives and impetus, the experience may

provide this without any evident therapeutic content. In some cases there are claims of an enhanced creativity—inspiration—following psychedelic experience and lasting for days, weeks, months, or even years. We will not attempt now to say why this occurs or what may be involved. But it is not likely to impress the artist very much if we say, as some do, that his inspiration is “only auto-suggestion.” He will settle for having it and leave the theorizing to others.

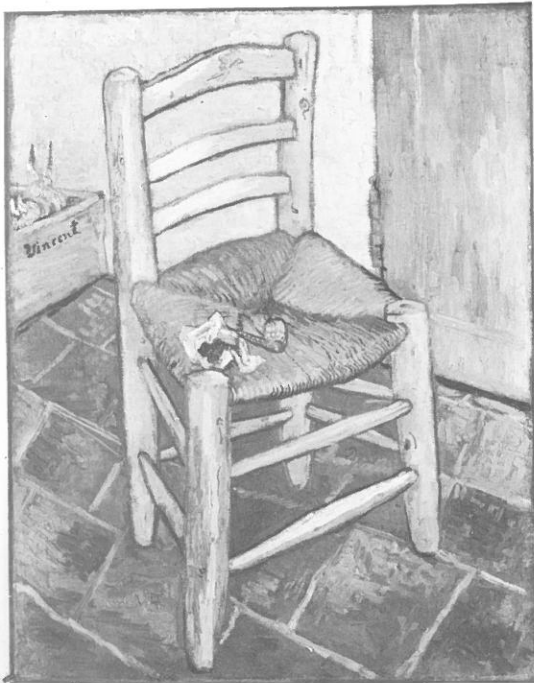
Psychedelic experience drastically alters both inward and outward awarenesses. One’s apprehension is of a world that has slipped the chains of normal categorical ordering. A vast range of phenomena normally excluded enter into the extended consciousness. The mind no longer is subject to the highly selective censorship or screening usually imposed upon it by the ordinarily dominant mechanisms of the newest (cortical) areas of the brain. Mechanisms much older in evolutionary terms become dominant. Novel perceptions and a wealth of other experiences then become possible. These may not serve the usual interests of survival and practical functioning in the day-to-day world, but they can be immensely seminal for the creative person.

Among the earliest effects are the radical changes in sensory perception, very notably vision. All at once, colors and textures may be seen as having a beauty and richness never known before. Lines, too, are seen with exceptional clarity, and attention fastens on objects or details of objects and invests them with intensified meaning and emotional charge. A chair, for example, may be seen as Aldous Huxley saw one during his initial mescaline session—as a noumenon or *Ding an Sich*—more essentially real even than the chair in Van Gogh’s painting, *The Chair and the Pipe*.

There may be visual distortion as well as the heightened visual acuity. Very often the world takes on a beautiful and magical appearance. A research subject of ours gave a typical account:

We took a little stroll and outside in the warm Louisiana night—it then was after ten o’clock—the world was transfigured. The full moon shone so brightly it seemed like the sun, and, like the sun, one could not focus one’s eyes upon it any longer than an instant. The foliage appeared to be a lush tropical garden, the waxlike leaves and blades of grass taking on a deep olive hue. It seemed as if I could distinguish every leaf, every blade of grass. It was like walking through a fairyland, a tranquil, dreamlike landscape unassociated with anything I had previously known.

Spatial relationships are altered and objects may increase or decrease in size, in a whimsical Alice-in-Wonderland way, or sometimes clearly in terms of an intellectual or emotional reaction to the object. People and things may be seen as if some slight tendency had become fully realized. Should a human face be slightly equine or porcine, then the



57. VINCENT VAN GOGH.  
*The Chair and the Pipe.*  
Collection The Tate Gallery, London.

person might be seen as in some of the familiar seventeenth-century Italian caricatures. The hint of slyness and cruelty in a face may become a fully realized visual perception so that the person resembles the personifications of human frailties found in the paintings of Bosch or Brueghel. A loved one may be perceived as indescribably beautiful. Or a face will be seen as having all the subtlety and richness communicated in Rembrandt's great portraits. (Despite all this, we have not heard of any portrait artist using psychedelic-state perceptions of his subjects. When it happens, the results should be interesting.)

In another type of perception, one might look at a flowered sofa and find emerging from its floral design a variety of faces and other forms, somewhat as these emerge, for example, in Tchelitchev's *Hide-and-Seek*. One of our subjects, looking at such a sofa, reported "a great face with the trunk of an elephant that is blowing liquid on the face of a demon whose body has been trampled into the ground. . . . A herculean male figure rises next to the elephantine face. He is trapped to the waist in stone and this marbled stone looks like sea foam, it is so delicate and lacy. Everything blends into everything else. The herculean figure is also the ear of a face and the elephant-like trunk is the bridge of the nose of another, larger, still more complicated figure." This same subject saw in the sofa design Toulouse-Lautrec café figures, German art from the late twenties and mid-thirties, works of Felicien Rops and Modigliani, and a good deal more. The basis for much of this we could not see; the subject was obviously building some of his perceptions from very slight hints in the design.

Very early in the experience, the person may become aware of a pulsing, vibratory excitation of the atmosphere, and remark small, curved, flickering and sparkling particles of light that appear to dart in all directions, dance briefly in place, then dart away again and disappear. The flickering lights and the atmospheric excitation resemble what is seen in the works of the impressionist painters and was theorized about by Seurat, who believed that all objects are a coalescence of these (energy) particles.

In fact, so many perceptions in the psychedelic experience resemble materials found in art of the past that it becomes possible to make a case for what might be called a psychedelic sensibility. Chemically induced alterations in idea content, and verbal imagery, raise similar questions about such a sensibility in some novelists, poets, and other writers.

Artists naturally find such perceptual changes as those we have mentioned to be of intense interest. Of even greater interest and relevance are likely to be the eidetic images common in the psychedelic experience.

Eidetic images are those usually seen with the eyes closed, although sometimes they may be projected in a gazing crystal or upon a blank,

flat surface, such as a canvas. Some Tibetan artists, without psychochemicals, claim that they can project their images upon a surface and then paint them.

It is difficult for those who have not experienced them to understand what eidetic images are. It is as if a series of photographic slides, or a motion picture, were being projected upon a screen, inside one's head. Typically, the images are brilliantly illuminated and vividly colored, the colors exceeding in their beauty and richness even the psychedelic perceptions of colors in the external world. People usually describe this color and light as extraordinarily glowing, luminous, and "preternatural."

Some people see only shifting, swirling bi- or tri-dimensional masses of color, like some of the lumia effects. Others image a flow of geometric forms, or perhaps a succession of intricate arabesque patterns. Appearing among these last may be other images still somewhat indistinct but suggestive of known objects. For a description of this sort of imagery, we will take the account of Havelock Ellis, relating his experience with peyote. Although written about 1898, it is probably still the best.

Closing his eyes, Ellis saw:

. . . images of the kaleidoscope, symmetrical groupings of spiked objects. Then . . . mostly a vast field of golden jewels, studded with red and green stones, ever changing. . . . I would see thick glorious fields of jewels, solitary or clustered, sometimes brilliant and sparkling, sometimes with a dull rich glow. They would spring up into flower-like shapes beneath my gaze, and then seem to turn into gorgeous butterfly forms or endless folds of glistening, iridescent fibrous wings of wonderful insects; while sometimes I seemed to be gazing into a vast hollow revolving vessel, on whose polished surface the hues were swiftly changing. I was surprised, not only by the enormous profusion of the imagery presented to my gaze, but still more by its variety. . . . Every color and tone conceivable appeared to me at some time or another. Sometimes all the different varieties of one color, as of red, with scarlets, crimsons, pinks, would spring up together, or in swift succession. . . . Although the effects were novel, it frequently happened that they recalled known objects. Thus, once the objects presented to me seemed to be made of exquisite porcelain, again of a somewhat Maori style of architecture; and the background of the pictures frequently recalled, both in form and tone, the delicate architectural effects as of lace carved in wood, which we associate with the mouchrabieh work of Cairo. . . . On the whole, I should say that the images were most usually of what might be called living arabesques.

Heinrich Klüver, in his meticulous study of mescaline and what he calls the "mescal visions," isolates "form-constants" of the eidetic imagery; that is, forms that recur again and again in the psychedelic state and in both abstract and representational imagery. One does not have to look very hard to find these form-constants frequently repeated in psychedelic art.

One of the constants, Klüver observes, is always referred to by such terms as "grating, lattice, fretwork, filigree, honeycomb, or chessboard design." The "cobweb figure" he finds to be closely related. A second form-constant is usually described as "tunnel, funnel, alley, cone, or vessel." A third is the *spiral*. He also notes the unusual *brightness* of the colors and the high degree of *illumination* of the field upon which the images appear. The "visionary forms" may be two- or three-dimensional. As to size, imaged objects "vary from 'gigantic' domes to 'Lilliputian' figures." His entire discussion of psychedelic imagery is important and unique in the English-language literature.

One of our own experimental subjects demonstrates very well the occurrence of Klüver's form-constants; her account also seems relevant to psychedelic and some other art. In describing her LSD session, this young woman wrote:

From the first, everything was seen through a filigree grid of light, resembling a most delicate and symmetrical lace screen. I realized the vision I seemed to have of energy particles structuring themselves did not come through the set of eyes or state of consciousness normally in use. For the duration of the experience, the points of light began to trace the archetypal patterns basic to the recorded art of mankind. The early triangular grid became one of snowflake-like crystals of quaternary then pentagram formation. The pentagrams began whirling and I was reminded specifically of the drawing of "The Star of Bethlehem" plant by Leonardo da Vinci. Everywhere, these "starfish" became tiny spirals or funnels. As the LSD's effects became more intensified, the combination of crystals—one upon another—or whirling, i.e., the spiral, appeared as the dominant form. At first, the grid resembled a magnified tungsten atom which, itself, is no different from the pattern made on water's surface by rain or spray. . . . This shape, upon the grid, grew more complex in a very short while and quite like a de-spined sea urchin or the sacristy dome in San Lorenzo by Michelangelo. I soon saw all in terms of, or rather through, rose windows of an infinite, beautiful variety. The mandala was for the first time comprehensible to me. At times it seemed like the intersecting gyres, or cones, described in W. B. Yeats's *Vision*. The center of the mandala seemed to me to be the place one goes if a change to a different plane of vibrations or consciousness is desired. Any small section of the mandala seemed to be a funnel, as well, out of this layer of life.

In addition to imagery of these kinds, many persons spontaneously produce eidetic creations that are representational and succeed one another either without apparent connection or in a narrative sequence. In the latter case, the unfolding drama may be personal, or possibly historical, legendary, or mythical. Then one sees realistic or fantastic persons, animals, architectures, landscapes—a profusion of imagery in what seems near-limitless variety. For example, one of our subjects reported this imagery:

There are snakes, alligators, dragons, beautiful reptiles. They are lying at the bottom of a kind of sea, but I don't think it is water. At the edges of this place where they are there are tigers walking along the shore. Up on the beach all kinds of wild orgies are going on. Lots of sex, people getting drunk, and tigers eating the people. Tigers getting drunk on blood and then slaughtering one another.

Another LSD subject, holding a gold cross, reported the following eidetic images, among others:

I saw Jesus crucified and Peter martyred. I watched the early Christians die in the arena while others moved hurriedly through the Roman back streets, spreading Christ's doctrine. I saw Rome fall and the Dark Ages begin and observed as little crossed twigs were tacked up as the only hope in ten thousand wretched hovels. . . . My hand trembled, the cross glimmered, and history became confused. Martin Luther walked arm in arm with Billy Graham, followed by Thomas Aquinas and the armies of the Crusades. Inquisitorial figures leveled bony fingers at demented witches and a great gout of blood poured forth to congeal in a huge, clotted cross. Pope John XXIII called out "good cheer" to a burning, grinning Joan of Arc, and Savonarola saluted a red-necked hell-fire and brimstone Texas preacher.

Imagery such as this may be experienced with great richness of detail. The crowded canvases of some of the psychedelic painters are attempts to convey this imagistic richness and a similar wealth of ideas. The psychedelic state's extreme acceleration of the mental processes can mean that the person experiences in minutes image or idea sequences that would require hours or longer if experienced by a normal consciousness capable of sustaining the undistracted flow. One thinks of the hypnotic subject who, with time distortion, can re-experience in a few minutes and at what seems a normal pace some film he has previously seen which took two hours of objective, clock-measured time to run through. But here the mind is creative, not just recollective.

Eidetic imagery has a greater diversity and beauty than the imagery of dreams. The meanings of its symbolic forms may be quite clear, and in any case the images are experienced by a lucid, waking consciousness well able to consider them and commit them to memory. More often with artists than with other groups of people, this imagery or something like it recurs after the session. Some report the recurrence when they begin to paint. The picture already is "on the canvas," or the artist somehow knows exactly what to do. He can work very rapidly and with a feeling of spontaneity. This sort of inspiration is by no means common, but it happens often enough to be worthy of remark. The experience is different from hallucination, and the artists are free of psychedelic-like phenomena when they are not working creatively. There are also, of course, some artists who have never knowingly experienced psychedelic-type states who report similar mental processes.

Possibly these perceptions and images alone would be sufficient to launch a psychedelic art movement. However, in themselves, they are not the richest part of psychedelic experience. And the art takes its impetus from an overall experience that at its most potent can radically and beneficially transform the human personality. It is usually a lesser but still very powerful experience or series of experiences that motivates the artist to center his concerns upon the psychedelic states.

The psychedelic experience that freely unfolds without blockage from personal or external factors has a pattern of progression through deepening levels of increasingly complex awareness. Specifically, four levels may be distinguished in terms of each level's characteristic phenomena. The experience begins on the shallowest *sensory* level and then may progressively deepen through levels that we call *recollective-analytic* and *symbolic*, to the deepest, *integral* level. The integral only rarely is reached, but experience of the other deeper levels is not uncommon, especially when the person is fairly mature and an experienced guide directs his session. Many themes and preoccupations of psychedelic art become clearer when viewed from the perspective of these levels.

On the sensory level, there is a very great enhancement of all sensory experiencing, particularly the senses of vision, touch, and hearing. The visual changes are those described earlier—a heightened acuity and a distortion of visual perception. There also is another important phenomenon of vision that has not been mentioned: the imposition—or is it a discernment?—of a patterning in nature more intricate, delicate, and far more ubiquitous than previously recognized. In some respects akin to the eidetic image-constants, these patterns and forms were observed by Alan Watts, who described them in *The Joyous Cosmology*:

I am looking at what I would ordinarily call a confusion of bushes—a tangle of plants and weeds, branches and leaves going every which way. But now that the organizing, relational mind is uppermost I see that what is confusing is not the bushes but my clumsy method of thinking. Every twig is in its proper place, and the tangle has become an arabesque more delicately ordered than the fabulous doodles in the margins of Celtic manuscripts. In this same state of consciousness I have seen a woodland at fall, with the whole multitude of almost bare branches and twigs in silhouette against the sky, not as a confusion, but as the lacework or tracery of an enchanted jeweler. A rotten log bearing rows of fungus and patches of moss became as precious as any work of Cellini—an inwardly luminous construct of jet, amber, jade, and ivory, all the porous and spongy disintegrations of the wood seeming to have been carved out with infinite patience and skill. I do not know whether this mode of vision organizes the world in the same way that it organizes the body, or whether it is just that the natural world is organized this way.

There also are curious visual experiences in which everything is seen with very great detail and with equal clarity regardless of the comparative





58. MATI KLARWEIN. *Abstract Vision in Form of Spanish Landscape*. Oil and tempera on canvas. 60 x 41". 1963.

distances of the things seen. This is exemplified in Klarwein's painting of a beach, above which rise tiers of stone walls. In this painting, a pebble is seen as clearly as a large stone; and distance blurs nothing, so that the stones in the wall in the foreground are seen as clearly but no more so than the stones in the ever smaller walls that recede up the hill.

If awareness is internalized and focused on the body, there may be an acute sense of humming nerves, coursing blood, heartbeat, or other physiological process. The rhythms of heartbeat or of breathing may be projected onto objects, world, and universe, until there is a sense of synchronous oneness and harmonious relationship with the cosmic process. As the person breathes, a flower may be observed to breathe with the same frequency and depth. The heartbeat of the cosmos is heard and is the same as one's own. We have mentioned how such body sounds, recorded and amplified, have been used in various mixed-media attempts to induce or re-create altered states of consciousness. There is no doubt that some persons make a strong emotional response to these kinds of stimuli.

It is also on the sensory level that the mental processes first accelerate, time is "slowed down," and great numbers of mental events may be compressed into small segments of clock-measured time. Synesthesias (cross-sensing) may appear, with the person "hearing colors" or "seeing sounds." The eidetic images first emerge on this level. If these images are representational, they have here no discernible symbolic or other meaning beyond themselves but just *are*. The sensory-level images typically lack continuity, so that they seem more like a flowing sequence of slide projections than a motion picture. Moreover, there is no recognizable associational link between succeeding images. When, rarely, the imagery does have continuity and a kind of story line unfolds, the narrative is experienced as having no personal relevance. It would seem to be pure, gratuitous entertainment—mind at creative play.

The necessity of coming to terms with these phenomena deconditions the person of old ways of sensing, thinking, and feeling. This creates an openness to new ways of being that permits further development and deepening of the experience. A result can be the breaching of walls that ordinarily separate conscious and unconscious minds. Then consciousness comfortably accepts the emergence of a mass of usually unconscious materials.

At this point, many persons turn away from their preoccupation with the external world and their sensory-level experiencing of it. They "descend" to the second, recollective-analytic level, where the exploration is of one's own mental "inner space." The concern is increasingly with self-analysis and personal problems and values. Long-forgotten and also repressed experiences may come up freely and sometimes be vividly relived. In general, phenomena of this second level are the ones with which psychoanalysis deals, and so this might also be described as a "Freudian" level of consciousness. It is the level of the literal stuff of a life's history and the complexes and fantasies built upon experiential foundations. As such, it is a level whose materials differ from the symbolic, race-historical, evolutionary, and other more universal experience of the still deeper levels. Especially interesting is the fact that the psychedelic artists, having access to this lode of smoldering trauma with its smoky fantasy, with few exceptions choose to make no use of it at all. Should there occur in a work of art any forms or motifs with which analysis has made us familiar, the artist to whom this is pointed out is likely casually to accept or reject it, shrugging it off as being unimportant.

Major symbols and themes no longer are taken, as by the Freud-oriented surrealists, from neuroses and dreams. Psychedelic art, like psychedelic psychotherapy, proclaims the long overdue news that Freud, in the sense of most present use of his ideas, is dead! The artist declines knowingly to exhibit or attempt to exorcise his own neurosis, if any,

through the medium of his art. He rejects the now all-too-familiar motifs of madness, aberration, degeneration. He feels he has something better to communicate. Essentially, this is life—a life moving forward, dancing and ecstatic, one with the cosmic process, not a maimed, defeated, or alienated life slipping shudderingly back into death.

The relationship to surrealism bears some further discussion. Psychedelic artists, like surrealist artists, are concerned with depth probes of the psyche and create a basically psychological art. As art “movements” we can say of both what Patrick Waldberg has said of the surrealists, that: “It is not a question of a school or a formal movement, but of a spiritual orientation.” Yet these two movements diverge at many crucial points.

Especially, they diverge in their values, and it is in the area of values that psychedelic art is distinctly advanced in relation to surrealism. Presently, of course, the two movements also differ very greatly in accomplishment. Many artists of considerable merit have contributed to the remarkable body of art that is surrealism. Mature artists and significant works of art are still rare in a psychedelic art that is only in process of emergence. But psychedelic art appears to have a values base that is favorable to growth and to the production of a less limited art than could arise from the surrealist world view and understanding of the mind.

Psychedelic artists do not, by and large, consider that they are dealing with the marvelous. Inward realities are not necessarily more real than external ones. In the case of the archetypes or noumena, these may be comparatively more essential and enduring than the objects of the material world. This, the psychedelic artist would say, is because the former are rooted in man's genetic inheritance. They are part of his evolutionary links with the past and change slowly as compared to objective, external phenomena.

Surrealism was exclusive; psychedelic art is inclusive: it does not withdraw from the external world but rather affirms the value of inwardness as complementary awareness. The aim of psychedelic experience is to *expand* the consciousness so that it can be a consciousness of *more*. Unlike surrealism, psychedelic art makes a basic tenet of spiritual harmony with the universe. Psychedelic art is not antagonistic to the religious art of the past and does not find its affinities with daemonic and heretical art as such. It is more mature than surrealism in declining to equate the beautiful with the bizarre. It has no fascination with madness or the hallucinations of madness. It seeks out the images and other phenomena to be found in the depths of the normal but expanded mind. It shares with surrealism, and much other art, the intent to shock the viewer into a transformed awareness.

Where surrealism is magical, psychedelic art would be scientific in

its approach to "mind." It also would be religious and mystical and finds no incongruity between being all these things; in fact, it might be called a scientific-religious or a mystical-scientific art. In some ways more naïve than surrealism, psychedelic art has yet to work its way through a kind of childish wonder at the realities uncovered in the altered states. Particularly, psychedelic art tends to be naïve in its metaphysical outlook and in its religious and mystical awarenesses. These are generally shallow and rather primitive. Barry Schwartz calls psychedelic art "the surrealism of a technological age." This is true if we understand that psychedelics, with technology, have worked a transvaluation of many of surrealism's concerns.

Those who regard the unconscious from a Freudian perspective are likely to cast themselves in the role of black magicians. In calling up the contents of the unconscious they are calling up demons. This magical attitude is alien to the psychedelic artist, who tends not to fear the unconscious or think of it as something tabooed. The contents of the deeper levels of consciousness are, like objects beyond the eye's reach, simply there to come into awareness when the proper stimulus has been applied. With regard to externals, one enlarges one's awareness, and much that was excluded before is now available.

Involved here is a view of consciousness that holds that much is normally excluded by the mind because it would be distracting or lacks survival value. This theory was mentioned by Henri Bergson and applied to psychedelic experience by Aldous Huxley. In psychedelic experience, said Huxley, the funneling or screening function of consciousness is suspended; the inhibitors are inhibited; and what was always there is now free to enter in. We would like to suggest again that the mind also seems to manifest a tendency to creative play in psychedelic experience. Perception plays jokes and enhances the beauty of things. A variety of psychodynamic mechanisms seem to behave in a similar way. Mind, liberated from its everyday tasks, takes a holiday and gives free rein to all sorts of capacities normally kept in check. The liberated psychedelic mind is also able to initiate self-healing and growth processes, as we have described in our book, *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience*.

On the third, symbolic level, the expansion involves basically a movement beyond the particular-personal and toward the personal-universal—a movement toward broadening contexts and more universal formulations. The person experiences historical events, evolutionary process, myths and rituals, either as spectator or as participant. If he is a participant, the senses can respond as to real events. Emotional involvement then is strong, and there remains only a slight residual awareness that the events participated in are fictitious.

The person may be present at the Roman Games, the building of a

pyramid, the storming of the Bastille, the painting of the Sistine Chapel. As the eidetic images unfold, he may witness an incredibly rich portrayal of the beginnings and subsequent development of life upon this earth. At the same time, his body may be experienced as undergoing many metamorphoses, as he *becomes* various of the life forms simultaneously envisioned by him.

Or the person may image rituals in which he participates with all his senses and with profound emotion, so that the rite of passage can have the same effect as an actual rite, significantly advancing him toward maturity. Someone else may image the archetypal figures, of fairy tales, legends, or myths, and perhaps discover the broad patterns of his own life as he identifies with Prometheus, Parsifal, Oedipus, Faust, Don Juan, or some other figure. In these mythic symbolic dramas, too, the sense of participation may be complete as the images continue in a meaningful sequence and the symbols emerge undisguised and relevant to the person's life and problems. Any one of these experiences—historical, evolutionary, mythic, or ritualistic—may be beautiful, profoundly emotional, and important for the person.

The experiencing of mythologies in psychedelic states would seem to incorporate myths of almost every time and place. Of course, the experience of any one person is more limited; but even one person in one session may deal with myths and mythic themes both Western and Eastern, ancient and modern, primitive and civilized. The artist, while he often has had such experience, tends to avoid in his art specific mythologies and traditional archetypal figures. He may use broad mythic themes, but for his symbols and archetypes he turns to the world of nature and especially to the data of science. Then, for example, an experience or myth of rebirth no longer concretizes in a god figure. The new mythology tends to be unpeopled and ungodded. Rather, the process itself may be deified and symbols taken from what in the psyche as well as in nature is more fundamental than the old mythic archetypes: energy, basic matter, the Heraclitean flux. Whether in Irwin Gooen's light paintings, Edward Randel's lumia, or the oil paintings of Bernard Saby (color plate 17), Tom Blackwell (color plates 15 & 16), and many of the others, organic forms or thrusting energies are the main communicants of the mythic message.

Familiar legendary and mythic figures do sometimes make their appearance in the art. Ernst Fuchs' *Cherub* (color plate 12), Ortloff's *Inhalation and Exhalation* (color plate 26), and various works of Arlene Sklar-Weinstein, for example, contain some well-known if psychedelized figures. The mandala itself is one of the more frequent and interesting forms encountered. Buddhas appear with some frequency, as do swamis and other Eastern gurus. For the most part, these seem

especially anachronistic and otherwise out of place in an art of the now that sometimes surrounds them with products of our own technology. To defend this as "paradox" will not do.

On the deepest, integral level, the psychedelic experience is one of psychological integration, "illumination," and a sense of self-transformation. In our experimental work with psychedelics, only a small percentage of the subjects ever reached this deep level. How many artists have reached it, no one can say. Not in art or elsewhere do we find an entirely successful attempt to communicate experience that men of all times and places have tended to agree is essentially incommunicable.

The integral level seems always to be one of religious or mystical experience. Whether some other way of experiencing this level is possible, we do not know. Here the ideas, images, body sensations (if any), and emotions are fused in what is felt to be an absolutely purposive process culminating in a sense of self-understanding, self-transformation, religious enlightenment, and possibly mystical union. The person here experiences what he regards as a confrontation with the Ground of Being, God, Mysterium, Noumenon, Essence, or Fundamental Reality. The content of the experience is self-validating and known to be true. There is no question at all that these experiences are of profound depth levels of the self. In no apparent way do they differ from other religious and mystical experiences traditionally accepted as authentic.

After such an experience there is likely to be a powerful wish to communicate what has happened. Some of the psychedelic art may be thus motivated. What complicates the matter, however, is that pseudo-religious and less profound types of mystical experience can occur on even the sensory level of psychedelic states. Practitioners of yoga and Zen also frequently mistake these more shallow experiences for the more profound ones. Thus we have the present-day proliferation of people whose claims to religious and mystical enlightenment properly amuse or stir feelings of pity in those who know them. The psychedelic subculture teems with such persons. The artists, most of whom do not belong to this subculture, but many of whom have been affected by it, also tend to be naïve with regard to religious and mystical experience. Some are self-deluded in these areas, and, as mentioned, many of them deal rather shallowly with the spiritual or deep psychological awarenesses they would like to communicate.

The hunger for some kind of religious or transcendental experience is genuine. Especially so in America and some other countries where, for the first time in history, many millions of people no longer have a primarily economic concern. Among some of these people, a religious man is replacing the old economic man. At the same time, the traditional religions are felt by more and more people to be inadequate.

They do not, for one thing, provide means of personal growth; and the ritual content of much psychedelic experience suggests that this is one critical area of failure. These facts explain some of the appeal of psychedelics and also the current embracing of superficial but new and sensational religions with their false gods and prophets.

Xenophanes, in the sixth century B.C., remarked that if horses could create works of art, the gods that they painted would all look like horses. The gods painted by lions would look like lions; and the oxen, too, would create their gods in their own image: even as men do. From time to time and from place to place the metamorphoses of the gods, and of God, have been many. Too often we get the impression that in our own time and place, against a God who is called dead, there are arising gods who are teenagers. Their prophets, who are also their inventors, are aging, perennial adolescents who hardly need to be named.

Much psychedelic art is presently limited by some degree of adherence to these pseudo-theologies and neo-primitive concepts. There is no reason why it must remain so. When circumstances are more favorable, a profoundly spiritual art should be able to emerge.

### ***Psychedelic sensibility***

The use throughout the world of plants that produce LSD-type states of consciousness predates history. The new synthetic chemicals are somewhat more potent and have fewer immediate odious side effects, but the ages-old plants afford similar changes in perception and similar profound, multi-leveled awarenesses. Why is it that only now large numbers of artists are producing work concerned with psychedelic experience?

Any attempt to answer this question must involve a considerable measure of guesswork. Today's psychedelic art, along with the psychedelic movement generally, must be seen as to some extent the product of historical accident. Specifically, there is the coincidental development of synthetic psychedelics and an increasingly prevalent turning inward on the part of Western man. The ease with which LSD in particular can be made and distributed has surely been a factor. So have present-day communications media, which quickly informed artists, among others, of the existence and experiential possibilities of the new drugs.

The challenge posed by these chemicals is exciting. They make possible exploration by everyman of what seems one of the last frontiers—"inner space." That the exploration can be hazardous may add to the challenge for the adventurous spirit of artists.







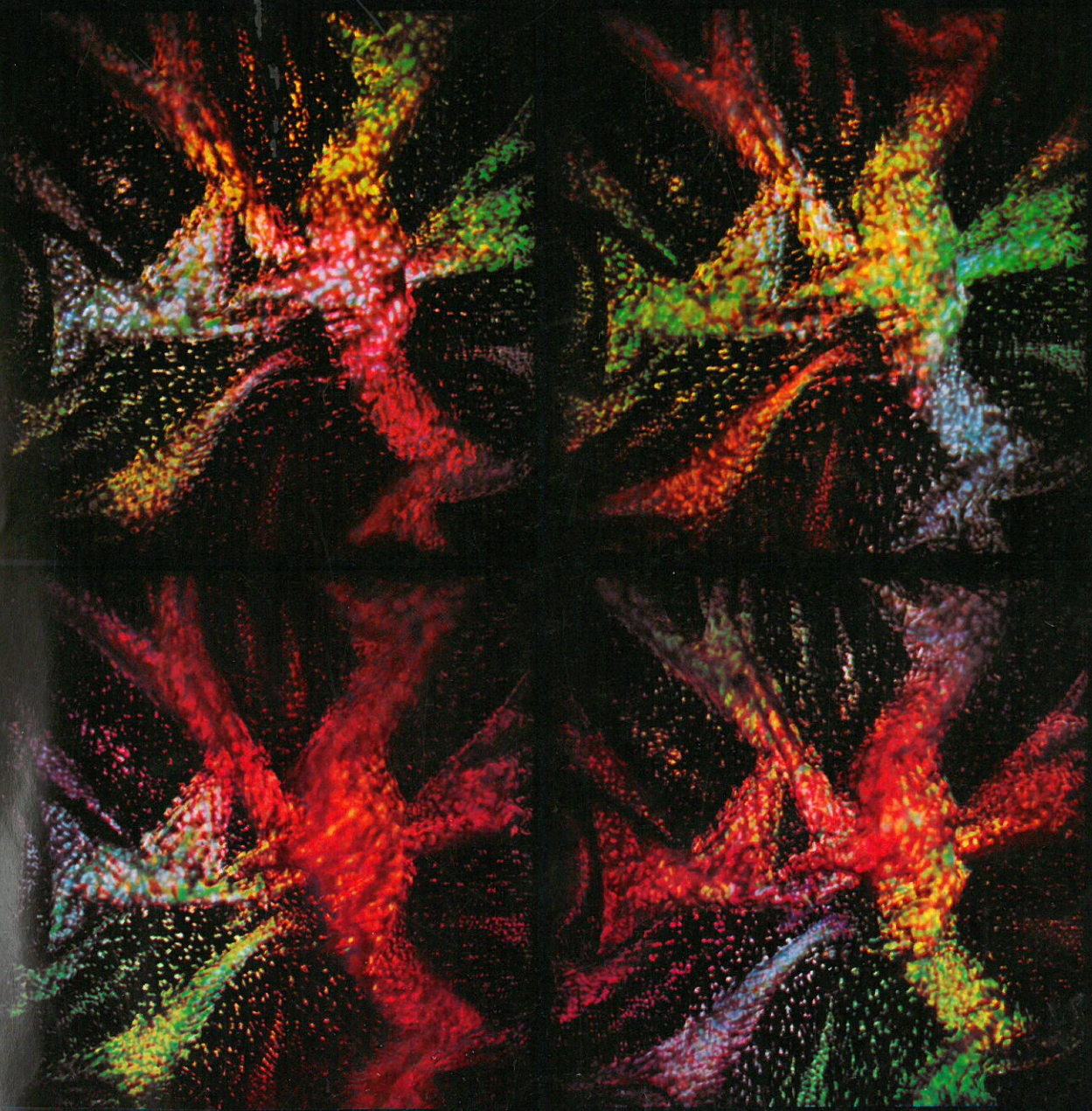
**16** TOM BLACKWELL



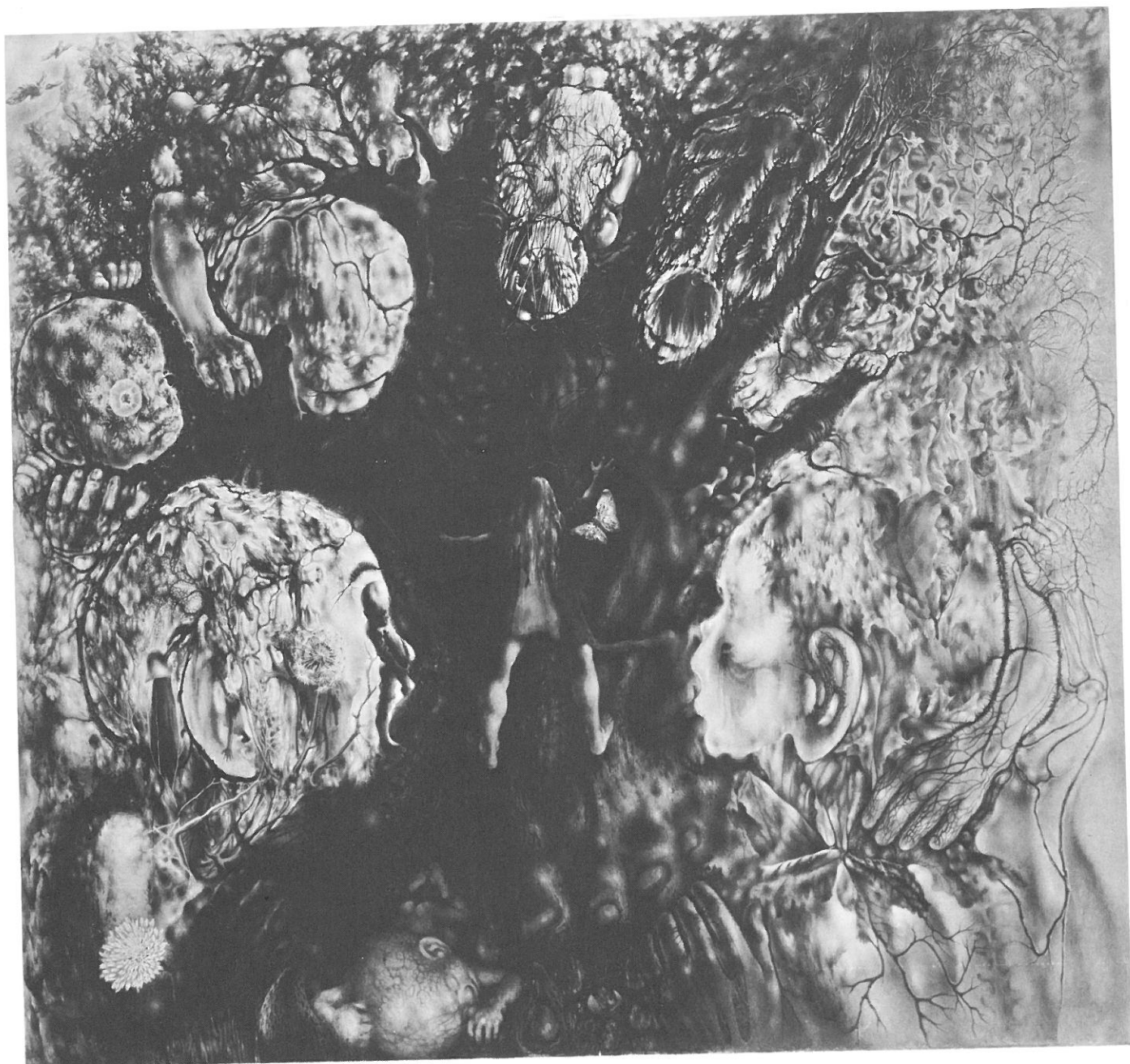


**17** BERNARD SABY

**18 & 19** EDWARD RANDEL →







69. PAVEL TCHELITCHEW.  
*Hide-and-Seek*. 1940-42. Collection  
The Museum of Modern Art, New  
York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.

able to express the psychedelic religious consciousness of sophisticated modern man. Tchelitchew is said to have died with the feeling that he had not yet finished his Hell-Purgatory-Paradise trilogy, of which the first two were *Phenomena* and *Hide-and-Seek*. No doubt this is true, but surely he was nearing his goal in the paintings we have mentioned. For in the last works we do find a profound, extraordinary consciousness of the basic structures of Being as apprehended on the deepest psychical levels.

The birth agonies of the final splendid vision were apparent in *Hide-*

71. HIERONYMUS BOSCH.  
*The Garden of Delights*. c. 1500. Col-  
lection The Prado, Madrid.

