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THE MIND'S EYE

INSIDE THE KALEIDOSCOPIC WORLD OF

ALEX GRZY

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*'I TOOK LSD AND SAW GOD. SO
HAVE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE. I WAS
IN DESPAIR, LSD OPENED MY HEART
AND THIRD EYE...'*

Psychedelics give our legs the strength to break our chains, run out into the light and get a glimpse of the larger reality. And visionary artists like Alex Grey are the ones bringing those stories back to the cave dwellers to enlighten us to truth.

"Psychedelics—and the spirituality and relationships they opened for me—saved my life," Grey says.

He doesn't mean that statement figuratively. In interviews, for instance, Grey recounts how he contemplated suicide before asking the universe for a sign to keep going. The next day, he took his first LSD trip at a party alongside a friend from art school named Allyson. They had a vision of the divine, an encounter with the deity-webwork that connects all of life. Soon thereafter, Alex and Allyson were united, inextricably, as creative partners and as the great love of each other's life.

Since that first trip, Grey has cultivated a long and varied diet of ritualized psychedelic use. Today, his preference is for a strong trip made regularly, perhaps a few times a year.

He explains, "Western culture does not yet have a functional understanding for the 'plant teachers' and 'sacraments.' They have been demonized by Western culture for almost 1,700 years, the wisdom of countless shamanic cultures have been lost as Christian zealots destroyed their temples and sacred medicines. I vowed to keep my hair long, to let my freak flag fly, as long as LSD is illegal. I will always respect and hold sacred the sacraments that continue to make my own life and the lives of millions of people better."

The point of the psychedelics, of course, is to allow the visionary to become an eyewitness to the great oneness of existence, or, as the theologian-mystic Meister Eckhart described this mystic state, seeing God through God's eye.

The largeness of this experience is why some visionary artists, according to Grey, prefer to think of psychedelics as entheogens, meaning substances to discover the God within.

Drugs aren't the only way to witness. Meditation. Near death experiences. These moments that disrupt our routine and shock our rhythms. Grey, however, maintains that while these non-narcotic methods can work, the surest way to encounter the God within is by partaking of the sacrament.

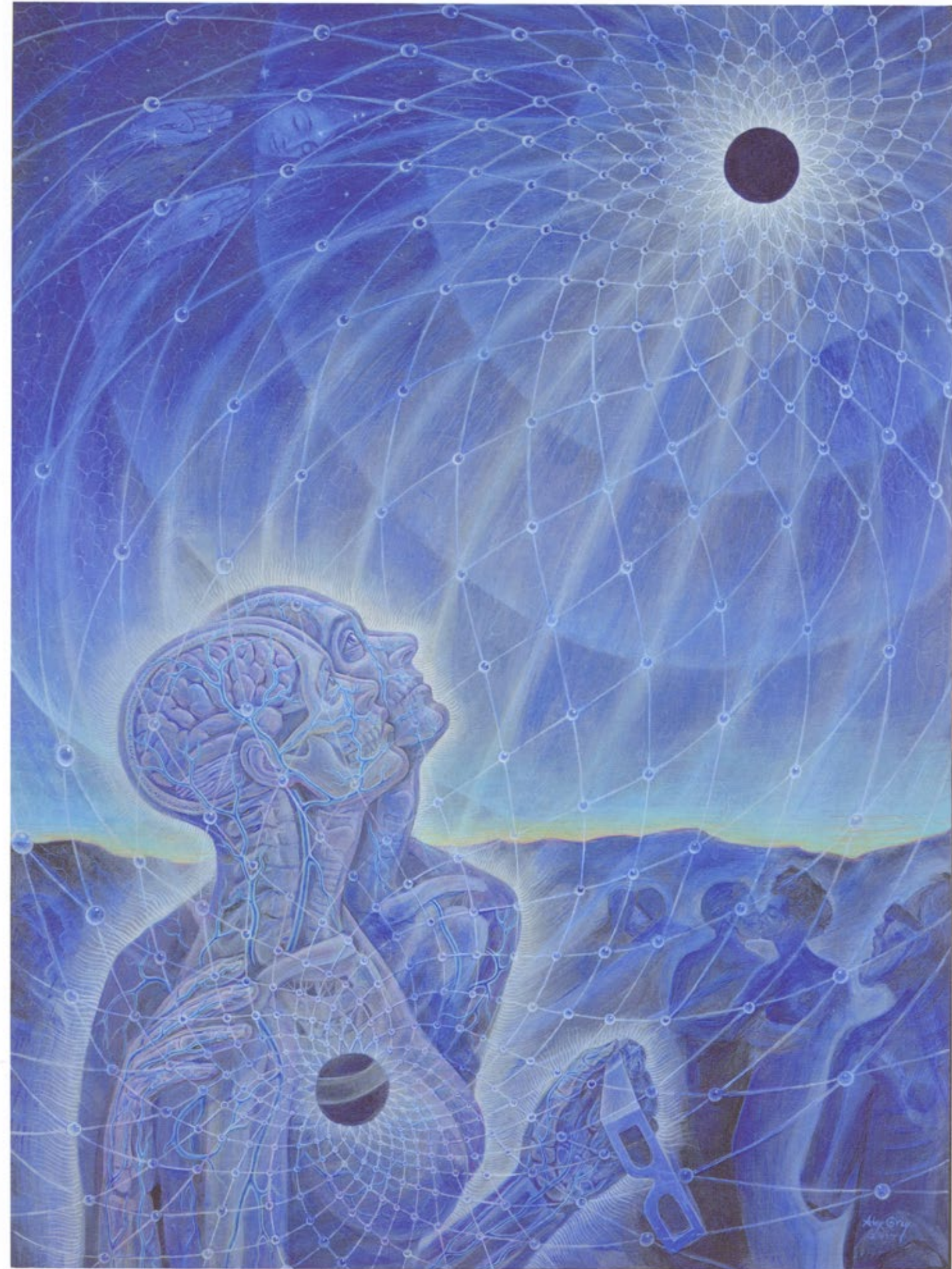
"So many ways can work, but psychedelic science reports that in the right setting, up to sixty-five to seventy percent of people using the sacrament will have a full-blown mystical experience. I took LSD and saw God. So have millions of people. I was in despair, LSD opened my heart and third eye, and I have noticed that unless you have seen yourself and the world through a psychedelic lens there are many things about my life and artwork you will never understand."

Since the opening of his third eye, Alex and Allyson Grey have created a thriving practice of visionary artmaking that includes painting, sculpture, and immersive performances. True: They were already seeking ways to express the joys and awe of their experiences, but they were also reacting to the proliferation of minimalist tendencies of New York City artists in that era.

PREVIOUS
SPREAD LEFT:
"Eclipse",
30" x 40", acrylic
on wood, 2017

PREVIOUS
SPREAD RIGHT:
"Vajra Guru",
24" x 30", acrylic
on panel, 2016

OPPOSITE:
"Godself",
72" x 72",
oil on linen,
2016





By Clayton Schuster

The visionary experience describes a very specific and crucial act in our collective heritage. Moses before the burning bush. Siddhartha, just before his full glow of enlightenment. Mary visited by the archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation. Saul blinded on his way to Damascus. Muhammad hearing the voice of Gabriel in a cave outside Mecca.

As Arjuna says to the thousand-thousand heads of the supreme creator Krishna, in chapter eleven of the *Bhagavad Gita*, "O Lord of lords, O refuge of the worlds, please be gracious to me. I cannot keep my balance seeing thus Your blazing deathlike faces and awful teeth. In all directions I am bewildered." And there it is. Bewilderment. Such is the feeling to envision beyond the veil. Lovecraft portrayed this leading to insanity as humanity encounters matter beyond our understanding, beyond our natural laws, beyond even death.

But this fear of what can be glimpsed outside our consciousness is rather new to our species. The moment of revelation has been and remains revered to so many. This is why mystics still use this moment of pure inspiration to reaffirm their beliefs, or as the preamble to their full-throated conversion.

Visionary art, as a type of contemporary artmaking, cannot be separated from this mystical component. It is

more than a genre, as the visionary necessarily exists outside the confines of style or trope. Visionary art is, at once, too personal and too universal for that. Universal not in the sense that everyone can relate to it, but universal as in an attempt by the seer to relate some undeniable, unimpeachable aspect of existence gleaned from her peek behind the veil—her glimpse at the one infinite reality.

Alex Grey is, perhaps, the best known visionary artist working today. His art, alongside the work of his life-and-creative-partner Allyson, is bound up with our conception of what it means to transport into the visionary state and then translate what occurs on that journey.

"Visionary art is expansive and venerable," Grey says. "All the sacred art traditions are visionary. We also find artists like William Blake, Jean Delville, Pavel Tchelitchew, Emma Kunz, Hilma af Klint, Ernst Fuchs, and Mati Klarwein—each of them transcribing their mystic theophanies.

The 'Divine Imagination,' as Blake called it, is a timeless transcendent mystery living deep inside of us, at the very root of our awareness, a theatre of imagery and archetypal symbols revealing our identity and the purpose of our lives. This is a new form of sacred art reflecting personal epiphanies. When you are in visual communion with Spirit, you enter a dialogue, a Theologue, that dispels feelings of separation from the world and heals deep emotional wounds, liberating creativity and revealing a perspective of interconnectedness."

The journey toward these infinite realities is made, quite often with the aid of psychedelics. LSD, mescaline, psilocybin, DMT. Our mundane consciousness keeps us blinded to the larger, all-encompassing nature of those universal aspects of existence.

Contemplate Plato's Allegory of the Cave. Throughout our daily grind, we are prisoners bound in chains, all our perceptions merely flickering shadows cast by puppeteers.

PREVIOUS SPREAD:
"Bardo Being", 24" x 24",
oil on wood, 2002

ABOVE:
Interior of
"The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors"

OPPOSITE:
"Mystic Eye", 24" x 30",
acrylic on linen, 2018



ALEX GREY 2018



PREVIOUS SPREAD LEFT:
"Eco-Atlas",
 60" x 84"
 oil on canvas, 2017

PREVIOUS SPREAD RIGHT:
"Sol Invictus"
 24" x 30",
 acrylic on linen, 2015

LEFT:
*"Journey of the Wounded
 Healer Panel II",*
 oil on linen, 1984-1985

OPPOSITE:
"Sunyata",
 24" x 30",
 acrylic on canvas,
 2010

"WE UNDERSTAND WHAT WE HAVE TO DO, AS A SPECIES, TO NOT DESTROY LIFE ON EARTH, YET WE ARE STILL ADDICTED TO WHAT IS HURTING THE PLANET..."

Entheon is an extension of the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (CoSM), an interfaith, transdenominational church that Alex and Allyson formed and lead as ministers. Since 2004, CoSM has hosted hundreds of art-based gatherings to explore the visionary experience and herald the world that can be, and to expand visionary culture. (Gatherings during the pandemic have gone online at cosm.tv.) Entheon will be a three-story, twelve thousand square-foot sanctuary for visionary art and artists and will host galleries for Alex, Allyson, and others, as well as permanent installations and spaces for meditation and other visionary activities.

The Entheon structure, once complete, will be gobsmacking. There will be twenty-one-foot high god-heads unfolding across the façade, in the style of Grey's *Net of Being*, and seven hundred-pound bronze doors will mark the portal. The doors

are receiving the final patina in New Jersey before making their way to Entheon of installation. The goal is to open the building by the end of the year, and to complete its façade and other finishing touches as soon as possible.

Grey says, "I'm sure there are many artists in communities around the world who gather and work together who may feel, like we do, that art is our religion, creativity is our spiritual practice. Allyson and I met in conceptual art class in Art School 1974, and after our psychedelic mystical experiences we both saw visions of the Chapel and felt compelled to manifest an enduring site for art that is inspired from the inner worlds."

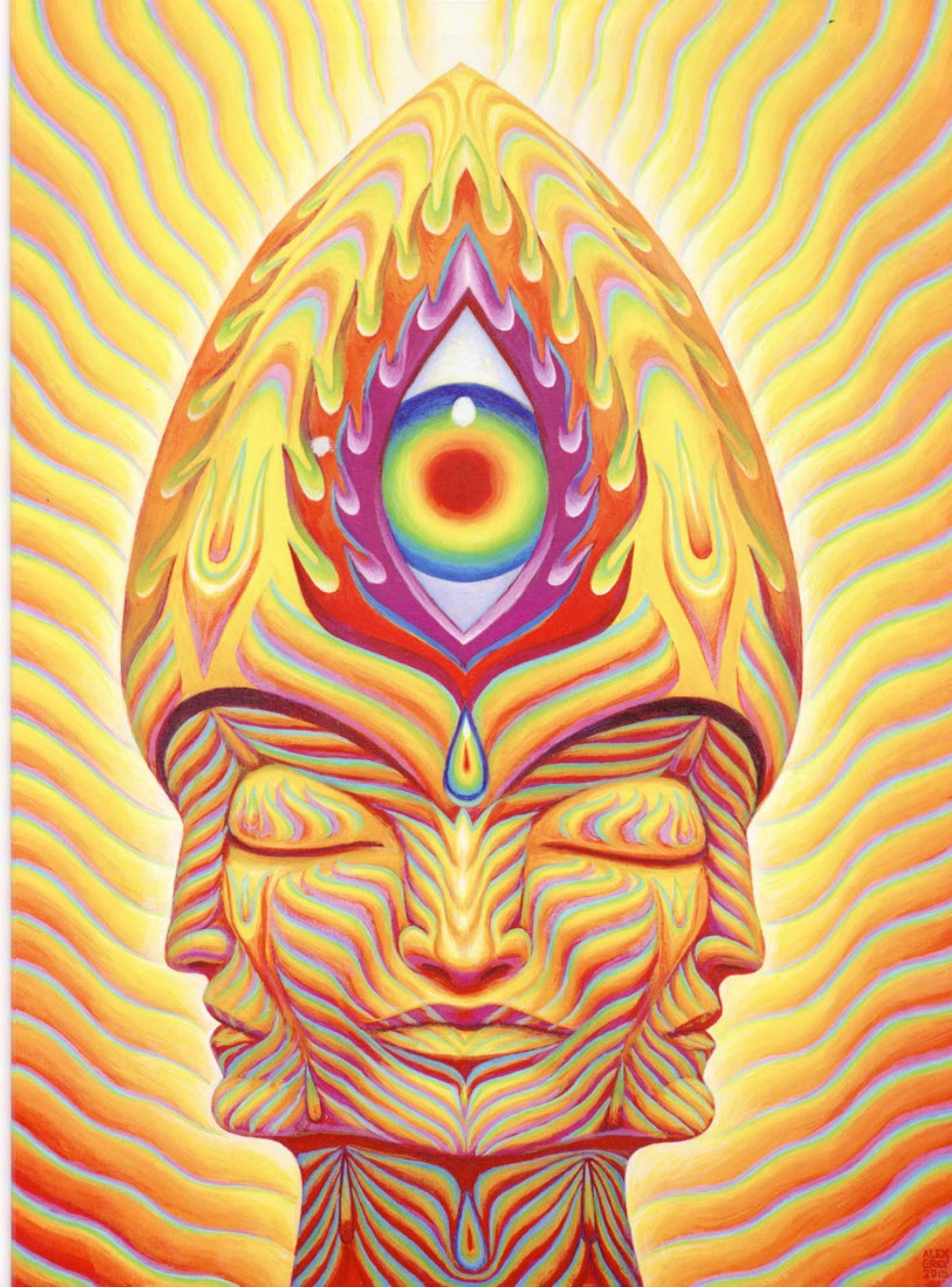
All projects since that initial LSD-induced vision in 1974 have been founded in Grey's belief that humanity can change, and for the better. As peoples around the globe emerge

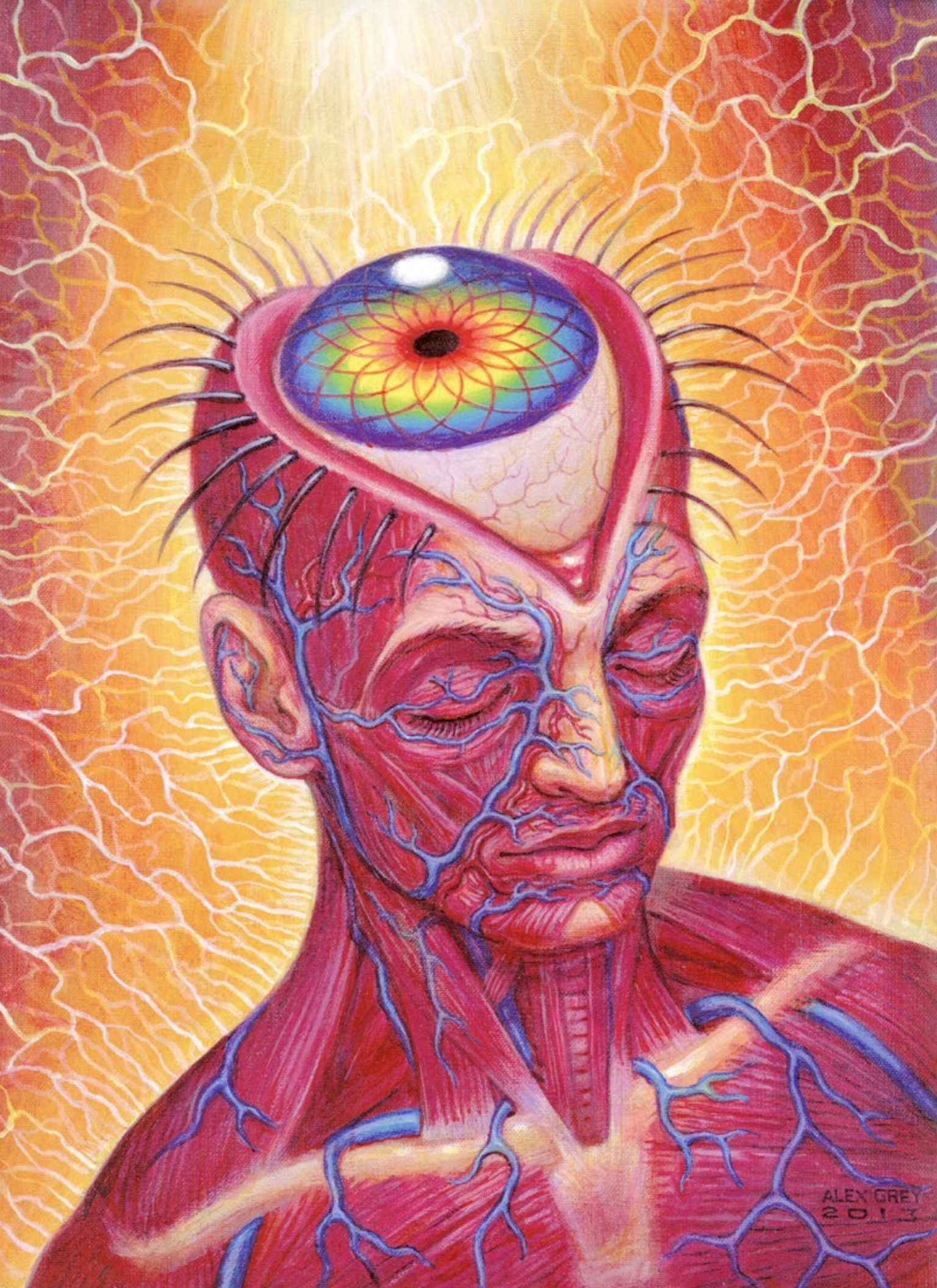
from the pandemic, we face so many challenges. Ecological fallout. Racial injustice. Threats to freedom and democracy.

Visionary art is a way for people to connect with each other, with all life on Earth, with the God that exists within themselves and in everything, the unifying element that calls us to be better, toward goodness.

"Humanity is at a precipice," Grey says. "We understand what we have to do, as a species, to not destroy life on earth, yet we are still addicted to what is hurting the planet. Oil, greed. We must make a moral decision to focus our lives toward the good. Here is a great prayer a friend taught me to say before I begin my art practice: 'Guided by Truth, we create Beauty, to serve the Good.'" †







Today, his paintings are the foundation for the band Tool's visual aesthetic. The meditative droning of the heavy guitar and the thunderous heartbeat-pulse of the bass and drums are an unlikely but altogether natural pairing for Grey's art. Both Grey and Tool direct people toward a higher, better way of living in line with the divine webbing connecting one being to another.

"Adam Jones, the lead guitar of Tool, is an amazing artist musician and we developed a friendship back in 1999 that led to my decades long relationship with the band," says Grey. "We have common interests and respect each other's artistic integrity and are not scared to face difficult ideas and feelings. He has been one of the greatest collaborators of my life, I will always be grateful to Adam, the men of Tool, and their incredible fans."

While Tool shows us what spiraling horrors await those that spurn communion, Grey instead focuses on the good that can come from it. Both, however, have made the pilgrimage to look through God's eye. As with so many visionary artists, each asks us to listen and to learn.

"There are at least three broad levels of multidimensional reality: material, mental, and spiritual, and they are all integrally interactive. Spiritual reality is always present whether in the foreground of our minds and lives or the background going unnoticed because it is the root of being and existence. Spirit doesn't appear and disappear, but our attention to it changes. Although paintings may be a material world artifact, visionary art provides a portal to the multidimensional worldview and can become, as German philosopher Friedrich Schelling called it, an Organ of Philosophy," Grey says.

As we look toward recovery from the pandemic, Grey has many exciting projects nearly ready to unveil, and a few that he is eager to get back on track.

He and Allyson have collaborated with Meow Wolf on the group's new Las Vegas-based experience Omega Mart. The details are a little "under wraps" until the space can fully open but look for contributions from the Greys and their fellow visionaries in a space called the Projected Desert and a room called The Infnitizer.

There is also the ongoing saga of Entheon.



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APPEAR AND DIS-
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IT CHANGES."**

OPPOSITE:
"Aperture"
11" x 14",
acrylic on linen,
2013

TOP LEFT:
Alex and Allyson Grey
in the studio
TOP RIGHT: "Monochord",
acrylic on resin panel,
60" x 120", 2013