

The Daily Grail *Presents*

SUB ROSA

Where Science And Magic, Myth And History Meet



Issue Three - December 2005

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The Visions And Art Of
Alex Grey

This issue's cover feature is on visionary artist Alex Grey; not only one of the foremost artists of our time, but also an eloquent and articulate speaker on the subjects of art, mysticism and society in general.



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December 2005

It's December already, what a year! Personally, it's flown by – self-publishing and promoting my book *The Guide to Dan Brown's The Solomon Key* (and then signing up for a 'real' publishing deal), launching *Sub Rosa*, continuing the daily updates to our news site "The Daily Grail" (www.dailygrail.com) and also adding new web resources such as our wiki "The Red Pill" (redpill.dailygrail.com) and our 'raw feed' alternative to the Grail, "The Underground Stream of Consciousness" (stream.dailygrail.com). All this while having two small children to love and care for!

Why so busy? Simply put, because researching and publishing on these subjects is what I live for. The various resources we've created, which I mentioned above, allow us now to focus on presenting alternative topics in a number of formats, from daily news briefs, beautiful magazine presentations and published books, to user-submitted and managed news and information via 'the Stream' and 'The Red Pill'.

On the downside to such immersion in the field, is the problem of earning a living and supporting my family. I am not a commercially minded person, and hate the idea of 'selling out'. However, hopefully we are setting up a structure which allows us to continue working on these topics. On "The Daily Grail", we now have Google Ads, which are (usually!) topical advertisements based on the keywords found on the website. From what we've seen so far, many readers find these a helpful addition, with solid click-through rates on a regular basis. Here in *Sub Rosa*, we have a growing number of advertisers who – once again – provide topical ads which I'm sure many readers are very interested in. The support of these advertisers is what allows us to keep churning out issues, so please support them in return if you find their ad interesting!

Beyond that, we also now accept donations to help support the magazine, with a view to eventually getting it into print. If you're not in a financial position to offer a donation, why not help out in some other way – for example, passing on the web link to your friends or online communities,

or even printing out a few flyers and distributing them? The great resource we have is our community – if everyone did just a little bit, the results would be massive. In order to ascertain whether going to print would be a worthwhile option, please visit the Daily Grail (www.dailygrail.com) and vote in the poll we have there.

Also, from Issue 4 we will have a 'letters' section (more correctly, email), so if you have any feedback or comments to make, please email us via subrosa@dailygrail.com. We also welcome any submissions of book, music or DVD reviews – we can't pay, but we will certainly credit you.

Enough with the small talk – we've got another huge issue packed full of content waiting for you, so dive right in (after you go vote in the poll of course!) . . .

- Editor: Greg Taylor
- Art Director: Mark James Foster
- Illustrator: Adam Scott Miller
- Columnist: Michael Grosso
- Columnist: Ian Lawton
- News Editor: Rick Gned
- Writer: Mark Oxbrow
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- Alex Grey
- Luke Brown
- Mark Oxbrow
- Jon Bodsworth (www.egyptarchive.co.uk)
- Cover image courtesy of Alex Grey

To submit content or feedback, please email us at subrosa@dailygrail.com



Shades Of Grey

The Visions And Art Of Alex Grey

Alex Grey is one of the most well known visionary artists in the world. In the mid 1970s he had a series of entheogenically-induced mystical experiences which transformed his view of the world, from agnostic existentialism to a radical transcendentalism. Since that time, he has painted some of the most recognizable and inspiring sacred art of recent decades. His art has graced the cover of TOOL's Lateralus album, and Rick Strassman's book DMT: The Spirit Molecule. Alex's large-format art book, Sacred Mirrors: The Visionary Art of Alex Grey has sold over one hundred thousand copies, an astounding number for an art book. In recent years he has focused on the construction of the "Chapel of Sacred Mirrors", a long-term exhibition of fifty of his works of transformative art, which opened in 2004 in New York City. Alex lives in New York with his wife, the painter Allyson Grey, and their daughter, the actor Zena Grey.

Illustration by Adam Scott Miller



SR: Thanks for taking time out for a quick chat with us Alex. Many of our readers first became aware of your work through your well-known images on the TOOL album *Lateralus* and the cover graphic for Rick Strassman's *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*, but may not know a lot more about you than that. Could you give us a quick history of your interest in art, your influences/heroes, and current projects?

AG: The answer to that question is a book . . . in fact it's three books – *Sacred Mirrors: The Visionary Art of Alex Grey* (Inner Traditions; 1990); *The Mission of Art* (Shambhala, 1997); *Transfigurations* (Inner Traditions, 2001). My website (www.alexgrey.com) has brief and complete bios.

I'm a mystic artist, that is, spiritual experiences happened that inspired my artwork to reflect this sacred dimension. I'm influenced by Michelangelo, William Blake, and Ken Wilber. I've studied Buddhism for many years as well as the mystical underpinnings of the pantheon of human and divine wisdom. I never finished art school and have no degrees but have taught in some of the best art schools which gives me perverse pleasure. I teach visionary workshops with my wife and partner of thirty years, Allyson (www.allysongrey.com), who is also the mother of our one daughter, Zena, an actor (www.zenagrey.com). We have just recently celebrated the first anniversary of the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors. The

Gaia (left panel)

I'm a mystic artist,
that is, spiritual
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sacred dimension

Chapel is an experimental art installation that Allyson and I and many other artists created to house the art and spirit of the Sacred Mirrors.

Right now I am working on a portrait of Dr. Albert Hoffman: Discoverer of LSD to commemorate his 100th birthday. He is still alive and well and his birthday is being celebrated in Basel with a conference on the study of LSD. My wife and I will be there in January.

SR: While we're talking hallucinogens – at this year's Mind States Conference you gave a talk on "Drugs and Art", which discussed the different themes and emotions which come through in various artists' work and the relationship to the drugs they used (including coffee, alcohol, amphetamines and hallucinogens). If you were to stand outside yourself and analyse your own work in this context, what do you think you would see - both in terms of the drugs used and the themes and emotions that come through in your art?

AG: My impression would be that this artist is an acid-head who has pierced the veil of material world illusion and



Gaia (right panel)

found some spiritual gold.

SR: When discussing alcohol in your Mind States lecture, you mentioned how it had the effect of 'loosening' the constraints of the artist. Do you feel that this 'loosening' - not only through alcohol but also other substances - is becoming more prevalent as a reaction to modern society, where rationalism and logic are the 'rewarded' traits, while creativity and freedom of the mind are not?

AG: I think you are talking about a reaction to

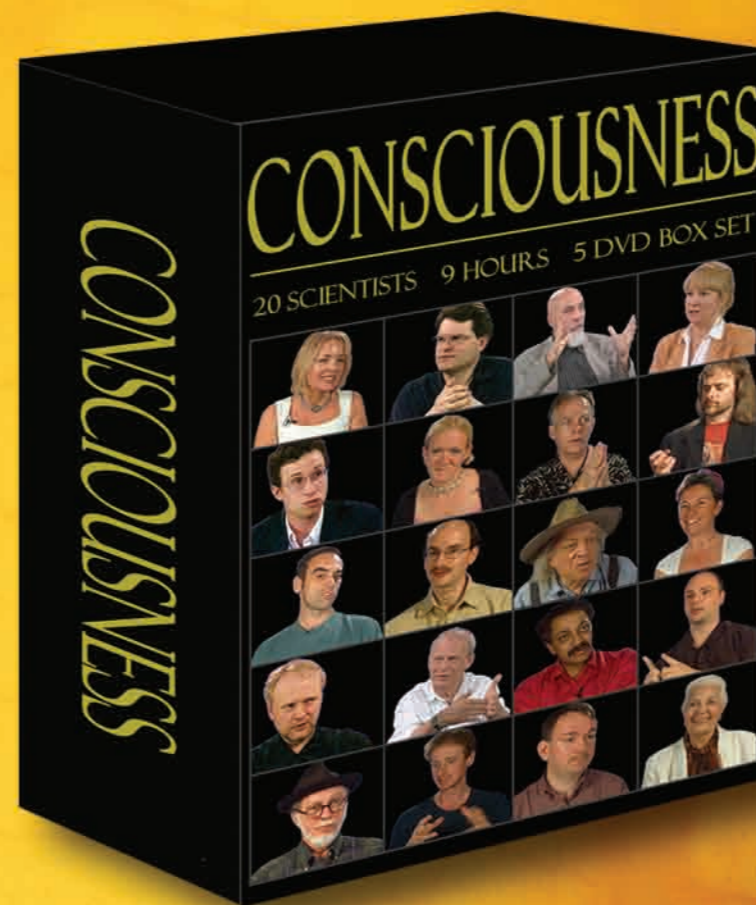
the pressures of modern life and the use of substances to escape those pressures. Alcoholism has been around as long as alcohol, which dissolves boundaries but depresses consciousness and kills brain cells. Societies from indigenous cultures to post-modern urban dwellers have sought altered states of consciousness through many means including meditation, whirling, ecstatic dance, drumming and all kinds of deprivation including food, sleep, isolation . . .

SR: In terms of the different methods of achieving altered states of consciousness, you are seen



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The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors



The Grey family at the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors

The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (CoSM) arose out of a shared, simultaneous vision that Alex and Allyson Grey experienced during their first MDMA experience. Currently housed 'temporarily' (for a number of years) in New York City, the current incarnation of CoSM is meant as a "living brochure" for the eventual permanent structure of the Chapel – which Alex sees as a spiralic or twisted pyramidal form. It is home to many of Alex Grey's greatest artistic pieces, including the 'Sacred Mirrors'.

The Sacred Mirrors are a series of 21 framed images, consisting of 19 paintings and two etched mirrors, which present a life-sized 'mirror image' facing viewers, enabling them to identify with the art and integrate its energy into themselves. The anatomy of each image is precisely portrayed, while visionary elements allow the viewer to see themselves as reflections of the divine. The Sacred Mirrors underline the unity of human experience across all racial, class and gender divides.

Alex Grey describes the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors:

"The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (CoSM) was created to provide a space for spiritual renewal through contemplation of transformative art . . . there are devotional portrayals of the human journey from birth to death, with love and relationship, creativity, enlightenment, and social activism as the unfolding iconic narrative. The Chapel peels away our accumulated layers of separateness, showing that we are all made of the same miraculous blood, guts, and cosmic dust. For receptive people, mystic art can help catalyse their creative and spiritual path. CoSM has already begun serving as a cultural and spiritual centre. Our evolving community uses the space for events such as workshops on visionary art,

sacred geometry, and sacred architecture, monthly interfaith full-moon gatherings, and film, music and poetry evenings—all intended to inspire. We're very excited to be open and receiving visitors."

The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors is Alex Grey's great dream, and is supported solely by charitable donations from the community. You can support his endeavour by making a donation to CoSM, or purchasing something from the webstore at the CoSM website (www.cosm.org).  URL

Watch a video of Alex giving a short tour of the Chapel, courtesy of www.cosm.org. Does Alex Grey's Gaia painting (1989) predict the World Trade Center attacks? (please note: very large file - broadband only)



Statue at the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors

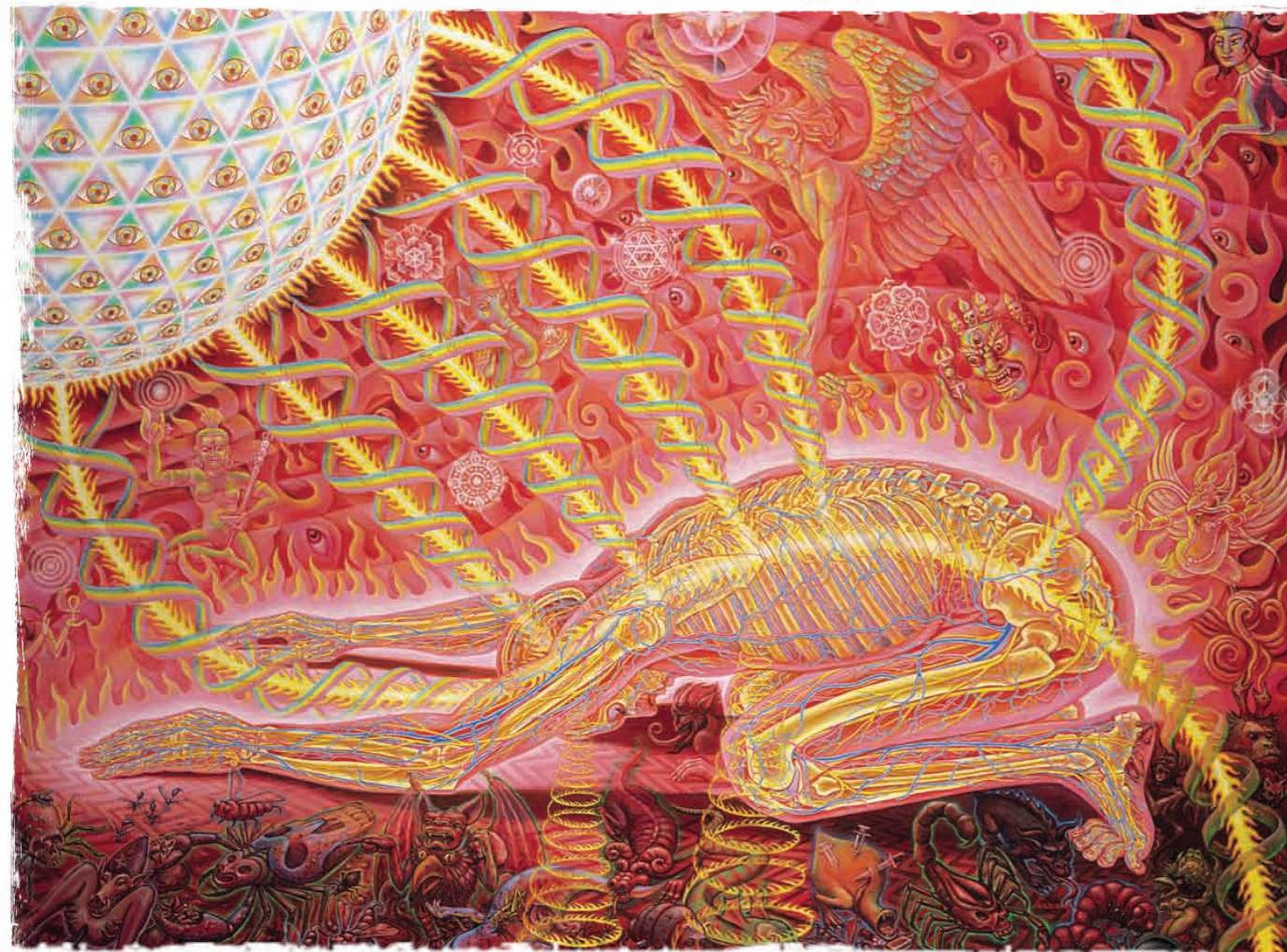
– rightly or wrongly – as somewhat of a spokesman for hallucinogen use. You also have a loving family relationship with your wife Allyson and daughter Zena. How do you integrate use of hallucinogens with raising a child and maintaining a healthy family relationship, considering firstly that you are pursuing somewhat of an ‘apostate’ lifestyle to the social norm, and secondly your own personal feelings of responsibility towards your family as a husband and father?

AG: I had my first LSD experience in Allyson’s apartment. It was our first evening together. Allyson was already a seasoned veteran.

I suppose you mean by ‘apostate’ that I may have renounced the conventional approach to family values, but some people have described my work as a kind of Norman Rockwell on acid. My imagery portrays mother and child nursing, kissing, praying, copulating – activities

that are basic to all humans and many animals, as well. The art is conventional in that it celebrates simple things like love, and attempts to map the dimensions of compassion and infinite consciousness that the evolutionary stream has brought forward. So, there are conventional and post-conventional elements in my painting.

Allyson and I have always told Zena the truth as we see it. We have not kept secrets about substance use, but have only answered questions that she asked us, not giving her more information that she needed or wanted. We also abstained a great deal from using substances while around her, not wanting to jeopardize her safety, or make her uncomfortable with our possibly unusual behaviour. Plus, when Allyson and I wished to partake of the sacrament we’d always prefer to be free from as much responsibility as possible, so we would put our daughter in the care of others during that time. Zena is



Prostration

now 17 and I will leave it to her judgment to speak for herself.

SR: The influence of your art and ideas is really beginning to show with the new generation of artists – such as Luke Brown [see our feature on Luke later in this issue – ed.] – and the Internet is showing the incredible amount of talent out there. What advice would you give young artists, in terms of balancing artistic endeavour and the need to survive in the modern world (i.e. pay the bills) where art rarely pays unless you are willing to pursue it within the corporate framework (eg. graphic design of advertising)?

AG: I would certainly advise young artists to put their artwork first. When looking for a way to pay the bills, stay as close as possible to your passion. I did medical illustration for twelve years, and although I hated doing it, I also got value from it and learned a great deal. Early on, I painted funhouses and later billboards, I worked in a library and spent a lot of time reading the books about altered states and the paranormal.

I had my first LSD experience in Allyson’s apartment. It was our first evening together

I worked as part of a research team studying the affects of psychic healers on corn seeds and planaria. I always spent as much time as possible on my own artwork and really got quite a bit done during that time. No one sought me out for interviews then. (just kidding)

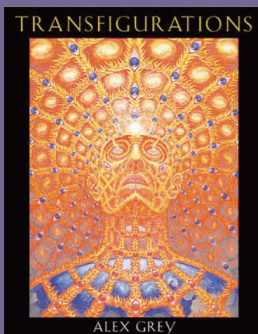
I cannot tell anyone how to make money. I certainly never did any of the things that other people told me to do in order to make money

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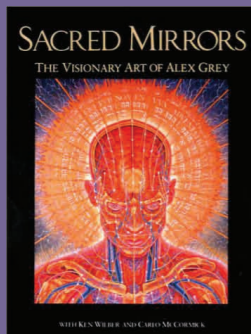
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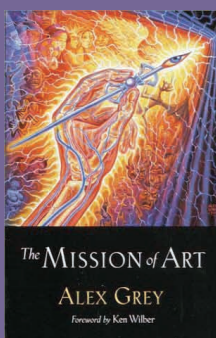
More from Alex Grey



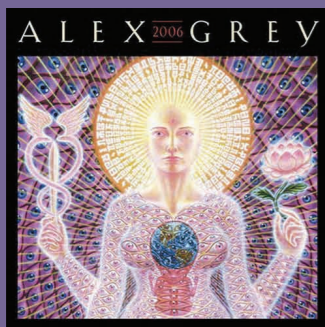
Transfigurations



Sacred Mirrors



The Mission of Art



2006 Calendar

All books, as well as DVDs, clothing, posters and other merchandise can be bought directly from Alex Grey's online store. Additionally, books purchased from the webstore are individually signed by the author

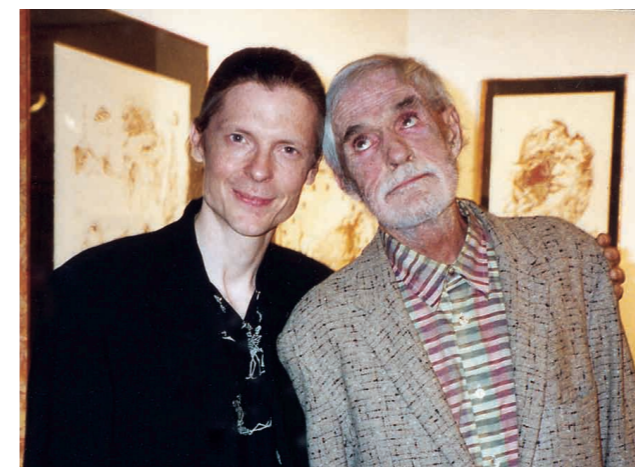
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with my art. When I was in art school, a professor told me, "Alex, keep doing what you are doing, my boy, and you will one day be painting covers for TV Guide." That was when I began seriously deciding to quit art school because that is not who I was going to be. A gallery owner once told me to go with the current trend rather than doing the work I was doing. He meant well.

SR: A turning point in your life was when you had a transpersonal experience with your wife Allyson under the influence of LSD, where you both saw the same 'mind lattice' connecting everyone. Has this experience convinced you of some underlying ontological reality to the psychedelic experience?

AG: Of course. I'm a psycho-chemical mystic who sees an underlying unity in the timeless now shared by, and at the foundations of all world religions and visionary phenomena. We can look at Mohammed's ride to the Seventh Heaven. That was a visionary experience. We can look at the Annunciation and the Transfiguration and perhaps even the Resurrection. There is also the Tibet Buddhist pantheon of Higher World Buddhas. The Torah is full of Jewish mystics like Ezekiel who saw fiery wheels or Moses himself who beheld the Burning Bush. Could anyone point to a non-visionary religion? Maybe, but all of the religions I can think of came out of the mystical experience, direct contact with the divine, by some charismatic leader. I do believe that some people are more inclined toward visionary experiences than others. It is our intention, and the shared intention of many, to revisit the primary religious experience and the "Beyond Within". The visionary state is certainly what the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors is all about, no matter how that state is realized.

SR: You've had this life-changing experience using LSD, which is certainly a hallucinogen which lends itself time-wise to the contemplation and integration of the experience. Do you see any similar value to the smoked DMT experience, or is it better employed via the shamanic ayahuasca journey?



Alex Grey and Timothy Leary

AG: All three experiences have value. Smoked DMT is something like psychic bungee jumping. You bound briefly into another dimension sometimes getting very deep very fast. However prolonged immersion into the DMT influence via ayahuasca, can catalyse some of the most intensely beautiful visionary experiences, and is half the length of a typical acid experience. Acid is wonderful because it is so easy to consume and because Allyson loves it and with LSD we've had some of the most profound sacramental sojourns of our lives.

That said, integration of the experience has become one of my artworks steady challenges – to find different methods for evoking the radiance of the visionary realms through painting, a medium with a long history for human culture. For 18,000 - 40,000 years humans have been painting images. It's one of the defining characteristics of what differentiates human beings from animals. The integration of the entheogenic experience, in my experience, happens after the drug wears off and the work is to manifest new insights into ones creative life.

SR: I've heard a number of comparisons between the DMT trip and the work of another visionary artist, M.C. Escher – from the 'impossible figures' he is most famous for, to his tessellated patterns and even images of 'elves'. Rick Strassman discusses endogenous DMT in his book - could there be an argument for Escher having endogenous DMT flashes?

AG: Escher never claimed to be a mystic but he did say that he had strange and mysterious visions, as is evident in his art. I think Escher certainly could have been having endogenous DMT flashes, because there is always a psycho-chemical component to any mental experience, as long as you're operating a brain. DMT lives in the brain fulltime, as we all know. Neuro-chemicals tessellate with our brain waves in the mystical experience and dance to the incomprehensible consciousness that powers the universe.



SR: You talk about art having the potential to change humanity and our future. In what way do you think visionary art is able to achieve this?

AG: We often forget that what we know of the world is entirely dependent on our view, our vision of the world, which is possible to evolve and transform into inspiring aliveness, or to stagnate and atrophy into sinkholes of cynicism. The news media and other corporate sponsored culture have an agenda that we unconsciously consume as we tune into their worldview. The shrill lies that fuel corporate advertising, like, "happiness and satisfaction in life is dependent on the products we consume," ties us to a fear-based materialist and greed-centred worldview. There is no true spiritual liberation offered from the corporate media that we consume on a daily basis. It's no wonder that anti-depressants are current drugs of choice in our culture. Where do we

I'm a psycho-chemical mystic who sees an underlying unity in the timeless now

go for visions of freedom and reflections of our highest possibilities as a species – not to CNN. Today, I think visionary artworks can offer the “still small voice” of conscience, that may help people wake up from the mass media trance. It takes an engaged individual, willing to think for themselves and eager to enlarge their world-view, to spend time contemplating visionary art and embrace the divine imagination reflected there, source of creative solutions for our current growing problems. Visionary art can be a sacred mirror introducing us to our own

untapped potentials, in this way it can catalyse and validate people’s path to a sustainable and saner future.

You can learn more about Alex Grey, view galleries of his artwork, and purchase goods at his official website, www.alex-grey.com.  [URL](http://www.alex-grey.com) More information about the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors can be found at www.cosm.org.  [URL](http://www.cosm.org)

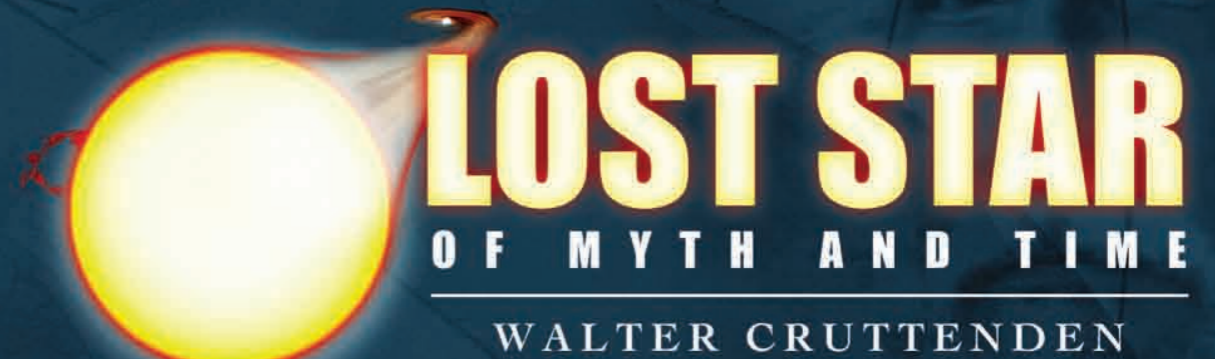


Bardo Being

Visionary art can be a sacred mirror introducing us to our own untapped potentials . . .

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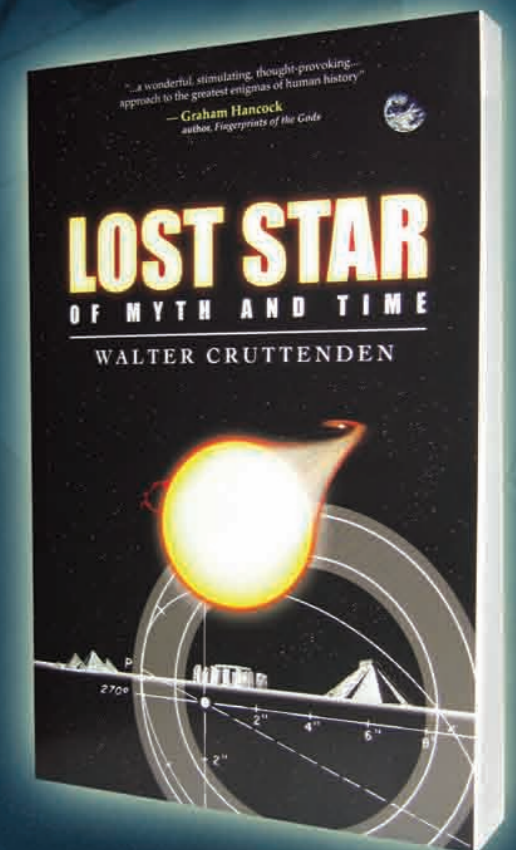


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