

COSMIC EXPRESSIONS AND SPIRITUAL REVIVALS WITHIN VISIONARY ART

HONORS THESIS

Presented to the Honors Committee of
Texas State University
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for Graduation in the Honors College

by

Danielle Elise Colombo

San Marcos, Texas
May 2015

COSMIC EXPRESSIONS AND SPIRITUAL REVIVALS WITHIN VISIONARY ART

Thesis Supervisor:

Catherine A. Hawkins, Ph.D.
School of Social Work

Approved:

Heather C. Galloway, Ph.D.
Dean, Honors College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my parents and the rest of my family and friends for their support not only throughout my college career, but my entire life. I would not have completed this thesis or gone to college without them. I greatly appreciate my parents' support of my choice to pursue studies in art history and honors. I would like to thank Johnny for planting the seed in my head for the topic of my thesis, and constantly reminding me what it was all for when I would lose sight and fall down the rabbit holes.

My interest in spirituality was greatly catalyzed my freshman year in Dr. Catherine Hawkins' honors course, Spirituality and Religion. When it was time to choose a supervisor, I knew she would be the perfect candidate. I want to thank her for unknowingly influencing my journey and interests through my college years, and of course for spending time supervising my thesis. She has kept me on track the entire time and pushed me to always keep working, which is exactly what I needed. I also want to thank my art history thesis professor, Dr. Erina Duganne, from the Art History Department. I have learned a lot about talking and writing on the subject of art in her classes. I appreciate her most for giving me, as well as the other thesis students, the freedom to write about what we love while giving constructive and encouraging feedback. I thank both of these professors for being flexible with the cross-disciplinary nature of my topic.

The Honors College would not exist without Dr. Heather Galloway and Diann McCabe. Joining Honors was the first and best choice I made at Texas State, and every Honors course I have taken has greatly influenced me and made me a stronger

thinker and writer. Thanks to Diann McCabe who always showed interest in every student in the Honors Thesis Development course. She really connected with and encouraged us.

I am so thankful for the other Honors thesis students and Art History thesis students that have been on the same journey with me this year. Remembering that I was not alone in the thesis process always gave me the strength to keep going and not take myself too seriously.

Finally, I would like to thank the local artists who I interviewed, in order of the interviews: Michael Garfield, Toper Sipes, and Chance Roberts. Without them, my thesis would not make the personal connections for which I hoped. Each of these artists had a unique and significant perspective on visionary art and live painting, and expressed their thoughts extremely eloquently. Besides their perspectives, they are all remarkable human beings who pour their souls into their art, which truly radiates beauty, love, and light.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the overlooked topic of the post-contemporary visionary art movement and live painting. Some visionary artists attempt to convey non-ordinary states of consciousness, and in doing so, merge spiritual and cultural iconography and symbolism from around the world and across time while expressing archetypes of the collective unconscious. This thesis addresses paintings by local artists and more globally recognized, self-proclaimed visionary artists, including Alex Grey and Laurence Caruana, to show how they merge and bring universal archetypes into material form through iconography and symbols. Another section discusses the role of live painting at music and art events and how this method allows the artist to connect to people on a personal level outside of museums and galleries. The heart of this project is to discuss how visionary art can reveal connections between cultures, and how live painting can inspire viewers to embrace their own creativity and spirituality.

COSMIC EXPRESSIONS AND SPIRITUAL REVIVALS WITHIN VISIONARY ART

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERSONAL STATEMENT.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	3
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
History and Influences	
Archetypes, Iconography, and Symbolism	
Entheogens	
STYLISTIC AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF VISIONARY ART.....	21
Archetypes in Visionary Art	
Merging Iconography	
CONVERSATIONS WITH ARTISTS.....	31
Iconography and Symbolism as Expressions of Archetypes	
LIVE PAINTING.....	34
Spirituality in Visionary Art	
DISCUSSION.....	42
CONCLUSION.....	47
IMAGES.....	49
REFERENCES.....	54

PERSONAL STATEMENT

I was introduced to visionary art by going to art and music festivals in Texas such as Art Outside and Head for the Hills where I met visionary artists who live paint at music and art festivals. Many of these visionary artists and live painters reside and work in Austin and the Texas Hill Country. Recently, there have been events emerging in San Marcos, Texas, such as Martian Culture, that support visionary artists by providing a space to paint while spectators casually observe. Visionary art is relatively young as a distinctive type of art, but it is already gaining a global presence.

The aspect that interests me most about visionary art is that a great deal of the work has spiritual and inspirational qualities. These appear to have become less important to mainstream art works of the modern and contemporary periods. Art critic, Rosalind Krauss notices this dilemma, “we find it indescribably embarrassing to mention ‘art’ and ‘spirit’ in the same sentence.”¹ The local visionary artists and live painters I interviewed for this project, as well as primary texts by more globally recognized visionary artists, do not express the desire to display their work in a museum. They are more concerned with influencing people on a spiritual level, as well as accessing their own spiritual nature, which I will refer to as “the source.”

Based on my own personal experience and observations of the culture surrounding visionary art, I see that visionary art and live painting have the potential to transform the individual by giving him or her a glimpse of a visionary or spiritual experience. This could eventually lead to a transformation of the individual

¹ Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 12.

by creating a more harmonious worldview. For example, one way that visionary art can give the viewer a spiritual experience is through inspiration.

This project is merely a brief exploration of a much larger topic that would require a more extensive paper and cross-disciplinary studies to even attempt to convey. Visionary art could be discussed in the fields of art history, psychology, spirituality and religion, archaeology, sociology, and many others. For me, this study is a jumping off point to understand spirituality's connection to visual representation and creativity and, ultimately, to its potential healing effect on humanity.

INTRODUCTION

This section provides an overview of the parameters of this thesis. The project pertains to the topic of post-contemporary visionary art. This alternative art form, for the most part, has not been studied by art historians or critics, and has not been shown in museums. The information gathered for this project is used to explore how visionary artists attempt to create a revival of spiritual experience through art, encourage cultural acceptance by merging different iconographies in their work, and inspire others to embrace creativity by live painting at events outside of museums and galleries.

A revival of spiritual experiences in art would bring back older spiritual and religious themes to art while adding newer themes. However, these newer themes are universal, without the previous focus on a dogmatic or exclusive approach toward different religions, cultures, philosophies, or belief systems. Many live painters in the Texas Hill Country and Austin area consider their work as characteristic of visionary art. Their work is broadly characterized as rendering spiritual visions and experiences, archetypes, non-ordinary states of consciousness, theophanic representations, interconnectedness of humanity, science, mysticism, and specific religious narrative remixes. Often, in the attempt to convey these concepts, artists end up merging religious and cultural iconography from around the world.

In the literature review, approaches and methodologies used in art history, including iconographical analysis and a study of past art movements and styles are applied to understand visionary art's formal elements. Furthermore, these

approaches briefly give the reader a frame of reference for visionary art since there is limited existing information about the art form. The iconographical analysis of a selection of paintings by more established visionary artists, including Alex Grey and Laurence Caruana, as well as work by local artists including Topher Sipes and Chance Roberts, shows how these artists use iconography and symbolism from different times and cultures to convey universal archetypes.

Psychologist Carl Jung studied archetypes of the collective unconscious in his books *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, and *Symbols of Transformation*. These sources help identify the archetypes depicted in the selected works of art, specifically how they are ways to convey a source of spiritual realization to the viewer. Margaret Stutley's *The Illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography* helps identify the Hindu iconography in the artworks and to learn what the icons mean in Hinduism. Understanding the iconography and symbolism may help explain its purpose, how some icons and symbols can also serve as universal archetypes, and ways that they affect the collective unconscious and spiritual development.

Visionary art should remain outside of museums and galleries, or any type of "white cube" setting, as artist and art critic Brian O'Doherty describes them.² Visionary art is better experienced as a live process since its purpose is to reach and inspire a multitude of minds and add an interactive dimension to viewing art. Exposing the artistic process is a way for the artist to share a universal, spiritual experience. While iconographical analysis has the unintentional potential to place visionary art in a conceptual "white cube," it is still helpful to gain a better

² Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space," *Artforum* 14, no. 7 (March 1976): 80.

understanding of what icons and symbols mean in specific religious traditions. This understanding facilitates a connection between the meanings of different faiths and religions.

The selected artworks that will be analyzed include Grey's *The Gift* (1996) (figure 1), Caruana's *Face of Kali* (in progress) (figure 2), Roberts' *Kali* (2014) (figure 3), and Sipes' *Full Metamorphosis* (2014) (figure 4). The purpose of discussing these works is to see if the merging of iconography, or representation of universal archetypes from different times and places fulfills the artist's intent to help others progress toward spiritual awareness and cultural acceptance. The reason these paintings have potential to connect to a universal audience is that many of the figures are archetypes of the collective unconscious, as Jung describes them.

The dynamics of the live painting process are discussed in the second part of the project. The interviews conducted with Roberts, Sipes, and one other local artist, Michael Garfield show their perspectives of visionary art and live painting, its influence on the post-contemporary culture, methods of production, iconography and symbolism in their work, and how they aim to influence the world's way of seeing on a global scale. The information acquired in the interviews shows how the younger generation of visionary artists and live painters have obscured the distinction between participant and viewer, producer and consumer, work and play, and art and life. Through live painting at festivals, these artists reach out to other people and create a more interactive environment to experience art.

Another goal of this project is to see if post-contemporary visionary artists have become revolutionaries in their intent to inspire creativity through live painting, and if the exclusion of their work from museums and galleries is actually essential to their success. Unlike some well-established museums and galleries, visionary art is not exclusively tailored to a certain audience because it welcomes everyone who is interested in viewing or creating art to participate in the process. The festival setting, which is currently the most supportive site for live painting, gives the artists a free space to create, experiment, and be involved in culture, which is the purpose of immersing themselves at social gatherings. This can be more effective than displaying art in an enclosed, formal “white cube.”

In addition to the local artist interviews, the primary resources for this project were Grey’s *The Mission of Art*, and Caruana’s *The First Manifesto of Visionary Art*. Opinions and perspectives of Grey and Caruana, more established and recognized visionary artists reveal similarities with the local artists’ perspectives. Ultimately, the purpose of this project is to explore whether visionary artists can help a mundane, material world at a spiritual impasse to be more universal and compassionate.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Post-contemporary visionary art is distinctive in many ways, yet very diverse. It has stylistic and conceptual influences from ancient, religious, Surrealist, Psychedelic, and Fantastic Art. Buddhist, Christian, and Hindu art are three religious art forms that influence post-contemporary visionary artists discussed in this project. An examination of Hindu and Christian iconography and symbolism in the selected works will help to understand what the icons mean in those specific religious traditions. This will reveal the connection between meanings of icons between different faiths and religions.

Understanding the iconography will show how some icons and symbols serve as expressions of universal archetypes, and how they affect the collective unconscious and spiritual development. The Jungian anima, mother, and rebirth archetypes appear in the selected artworks, which include Caruana's *Face of Kali* (in progress) (figure 1), Grey's *The Gift* (1996) (figure 2), local artist Sipes' *Full Metamorphosis* (2014) (figure 3) and Roberts' *Kali* (2014) (figure 4). Jung's description of these three archetypes will be used to show how the characteristics of those archetypes can be visually represented by certain symbols and iconography in a work of art.

History and Influences

Scholar of ancient civilizations, Graham Hancock considers the cave drawings at Chauvet in France, and the cave art of the San in the Drakensberg mountains of

South Africa, the work of ancient visionaries.³ These drawings date back 8,000 years ago. Hancock sees a clear connection between the artwork of Pablo Amaringo, a Peruvian medicine healer (called *vegetalistas* or *ayahuasceros* by the people native to the Amazonian and Andean regions) and the cave drawings. Cave artists from ancient times depicted the similar motifs, otherworldly beings, and stylistic patterns visible in Amaringo's work. Hancock questions how the cave art could have so many similarities to the work of Amaringo, a contemporary visionary artist, when it is impossible that these artists ever made physical contact with each other. Amaringo claims that all of his paintings have been created directly out of his visions on ayahuasca, a psychoactive brew used in Amazonian medicine tradition, and not influenced by other artwork.⁴ Hancock hypothesized that the connection between the artwork is the fact that the cave artists were also shamans, medicine healers who have undergone spiritual ordeals and could communicate with the spirit world to help people of past traditions. Ayahuasca took Amaringo to a place where he could communicate with supernatural beings beyond the material world. Similarly, shamans from ancient times depicted their experiences in the same states of consciousness induced by other psychoactive substances native to their particular regions, as well as non-substance related methods like meditation. Hancock concludes that the common factors of all the great visionary art of the world include

³ Graham Hancock, "Pablo Amaringo: A Special State of Consciousness," in *The Ayahuasca Visions of Pablo Amaringo*, editors Howard G. Charing, Peter Cloudsley, and Pablo Amaringo, (Rochester; Toronto: Inner Traditions, 2011), 10-11.

⁴ Pablo Amaringo, *The Ayahuasca Visions of Pablo Amaringo*, 1-2.

“altered states of consciousness, shamanism, and direct experience of non-ordinary realms.”⁵

Buddhist art serves a similar purpose to the artwork produced by Amazonian *ayahuasceros* and *vegetalistas* in that it is meant to convey spiritual experiences and provide an image that can be used for meditation and spiritual healing. Spiritual representation can be found in all forms of Buddhist art and in many different aspects. The process of creating work is a spiritual, introspective activity for the painter, while viewing the artwork is meant to help induce a contemplative and meditative state.⁶ The spiritual realizations of a Buddhist monk or nun are embedded into the painting, and this gives the art form its compelling and captivating power. There is spiritual energy in the subject matter, the making, and the viewing of the work.

Many of the principles of Buddhism are revealed through paintings and other art forms. Buddhist art has a very complex system of symbolism. The artists use recurrent images to symbolize different things in a painting. Certain objects, postures, mudras (hand positions), thrones, and animals are associated with different manifestations of the Buddha, deities, and Bodhisattvas. These symbols are representative of some of the Buddhist concepts of compassion, wisdom, purity and teaching. For example, the Dharmachakra mudra symbolizes the Buddha's teachings. One would need to have prior knowledge of Buddhist iconography before understanding the message depicted in these paintings. Another form of symbolism characteristic of Tibetan Buddhist painting is the significance of color. In Buddhism, it is believed that by meditating on the colors, the viewer can achieve an internal metamorphosis. The intricate designs and colors are more universal in

⁵ Hancock, “Pablo Amaringo: A Special state of Consciousness,” (see footnote 3).

⁶ C.G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, (NY: Princeton University Press, 1970), 356.

conveying spirituality and producing meditation than some of the specific icons because they are non-representational.⁷

Modern art movements and styles also influence post-contemporary visionary art. Surrealism was a literary and art movement that emerged in Europe in the early 1920s.⁸ Surrealism was established in the visual arts when André Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* was published in 1924. In the manifesto, Breton defines Surrealism as "Pure psychic automatism by which one proposes to express, verbally, by writing, or by any other means, the real functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, beyond all aesthetic or moral preoccupation."⁹ Breton created a premise for Surrealist artists to dispel rational thought and realism through imagery. This inevitably led the artists to look to the dream state for secrets of the subconscious. Conveying the concepts of emotions and uncontrollable desires was Breton's ideal way of resisting the stream of rational thought that was so prevalent in modern society and in the postwar period. Surrealism was innovative to the art world because it aimed to convey the next dimension of consciousness through visual representation.

Fantastic Realism is an art style emerging in Europe in response to the Surrealist movement. Ernst Fuchs is a prominent figure of Fantastic Realism, and has influenced many visionary artists. Fantastic Realism gained full momentum after the Second World War in the Viennese art scene. Author Walter Schurian is

⁷ Meher McArthur, *Reading Buddhist Art: an Illustrated Guide to Buddhist Signs and Symbols* (New York: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2002), 8-25, 113.

⁸ Kim Grant, *Surrealism and the Visual Arts: Theory and Reception* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

⁹ André Breton, *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (Paris: Pauvert, 1962).

concerned that Fantastic Realism is confused with Magic Realism, Surrealism, Art of the Absurd, and Art of the Insane because there is some stylistic and conceptual overlapping between those styles. They also emerged in the same time period in response to warfare and rationalism. He further explains that fantastic with a lower case “f” is a component that can be present in any work of art from any time period.¹⁰ Fuchs uses specific Christian or Pagan iconography in his work, but does not merge iconography. However, many visionary artists took his idea of using iconography and his fantastic style to proceed toward merging iconography.

Psychedelic art is a style that emerged with the 1960s counterculture. Its characteristics include abstract properties of extreme color and kaleidoscopic space, or imagery that is highly imaginative and visionary. In his book, *Psychedelic: Optical and Visionary Art Since the 1960s*, David S. Rubin, writer and curator of contemporary art at the San Antonio Museum of Art points out that psychedelic imagery became widely circulated in popular culture through band posters, lava lamps, and set designs in movies. In an essay included in Rubin’s book entitled “Embracing the Archaic: Postmodern Culture and Psychedelic Initiation,” artist and writer Daniel Pinchbeck says that the popularization of psychedelic imagery became cliché after advertising companies and popular media began to broadcast it. With this occurrence, psychedelia became too popular to be taken seriously, and its most important aspect, the spiritual experience inherent to the psychedelic experience was stripped away. Pinchbeck also writes that unlike many institutionally recognized art styles and movements, the psychedelic movement had a fairly

¹⁰ Walter Shurian and Uta Grosenik, *Fantastic Art* (Köln; London: Taschen, 2005), 6.

widespread culture surrounding it that extended into other art forms including music, as well as its relationship to psychedelic drugs such as LSD. Rubin explains that psychedelic art is more descriptive of the imagery itself rather than a particular style. Psychedelic art initially emerged in response to experiences with psychedelic drugs and the counter-culture, but after it became more widespread, artists who did not actually have drug-induced visions could create art that looked psychedelic.¹¹

It was not until 2005 that Psychedelic art was institutionally recognized by the Tate Liverpool in the exhibition curated by the Director, Christoph Grunenberg, entitled *Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era*. In the essay “Freaks” in Grunenberg’s book *Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era*, Dave Hickey defines psychedelic art as “anti-academic, a tendency that also manifests itself in a number of other styles which, he claims, have been *permanently* out of academic fashion for nearly three hundred years.” Hickey sees that the reason for the rejection of these styles is their emphasis on “complexity over simplicity, pattern over form, repetition over composition, feminine over masculine, curvilinear over rectilinear, and the fractal, the differential, and the chaotic over Euclidean order.”

In the *Summer of Love* exhibition catalogue, Grunenberg claims that psychedelic art has deep spiritual, mystical and religious qualities. These spiritual, mystical, and religious qualities are synonymous with the psychedelic experience as told by many participants, and made their way into visual culture with the

¹¹ David S. Rubin, *Psychedelic: Optical and Visionary Art Since the 1960s* (San Antonio: San Antonio Museum of Art; Cambridge: in association with the MIT Press, 2010), 15-16, 51.

emergence of psychedelic art.¹² Visionary artists mostly draw from those “deep spiritual and religious qualities” that are experienced through psychedelics. Some of these are institutionally recognized art forms, while others remain difficult to categorize. However, the purpose of discussing each of these styles, movements, or art forms is because they influence visionary artists.

Archetypes, Iconography, and Symbolism

In Jungian psychology, archetypes are “universal and inherited patterns which, taken together, constitute the structure of the unconscious.”¹³ These archetypes have flowed through the stream of the collective unconscious possibly as early as the beginning of humanity. The collective unconscious is a sector of the psyche that every human being shares.¹⁴ Jung says “We must constantly bear in mind that what we mean by ‘archetype’ is in itself irrepresentable, but has effects which make visualizations of it possible, namely, the archetypal images and ideas.”¹⁵ There is evidence that archetypes appear in myths and fairytales from almost every culture.¹⁶ It would make sense that archetypes also appear in visual representations of many cultures.

Archetypes are expressed through art, myths, dreams, and religions. Jung explains that archetypes are entities that, unless tapped into through the

¹² Christoph Grunenberg, “The Politics of Ecstasy: Art for the Mind and Body,” in *Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era*, ed. Christoph Grunenberg, 13, 17.

¹³ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 228.

¹⁴ C.G. Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (NY: Princeton University Press, 1970), 22.

¹⁵ C.G. Jung, *Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche* (NY: Princeton University Press, 1970), 154.

¹⁶ Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* (Boston: Shambala, 1996).

unconscious though dreams, images, myths, and religions, are hidden within the source of the human spirit. The human psyche metaphorically births representations of archetypes “the human psyche is the womb of all the arts and sciences. The investigation of the psyche should therefore be able on one hand to explain the psychological structure of a work of art, and on the other hand to reveal the factors that make a person artistically creative.”¹⁷ Not only do archetypes exist in the unconscious realm, and are brought forth and communicated through art and stories, they influence individuals as well as collective groups of people in their everyday actions and beliefs. Jung acknowledged his debt to Plato, describing archetypes as active living dispositions, or ideas, in the Platonic sense, that perform and “continually influence our thoughts and feelings and actions.”¹⁸

According to historian and philosopher Richard Tarnas, archetypes carry certain meanings that influence one’s beliefs. He stated, “Archetypes invisibly constellate our vision. They filter and reveal our data, structure our imagination, permeate our ways of knowing and acting.”¹⁹ This is similar to Jung’s belief that archetypes continually shape humanity’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. It reflects his statement that experience of the archetype is impressive, possessive, and productive of the individual’s faith.²⁰

A key component to understanding the nature of archetypes is to understand the concept of the collective unconscious. Jung says this concept is the most

¹⁷ C.G. Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature* (NY: Princeton University Press, 1966).

¹⁸ Jung, *Structure & Dynamics*, 154.

¹⁹ Richard Tarnas, *Cosmos and Psyche* (NY: Penguin Books, 2006), 12.

²⁰ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 232.

misunderstood of his ideas. The collective unconscious, in brief, is a part of the psyche that does not “owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition.” As opposed to the conscious complexes, the unconscious has archetypes. To give a frame of reference, in mythology, archetypes are like motifs, or perhaps motifs are expressions of archetypes. Singer and Kimbles postulated that archetypal patterns work at the collective or cultural level.²¹ This supports the idea that archetypes can influence not only the individual, but large groups of people, and recalls the idea of the collective unconscious and how it accommodates archetypes. Over time, the archetypes, of which there are as many as there are typical situations in life, are forgotten and remembered again. They are ubiquitous, whether one is aware of them or not. They influence the way people think and act, whether or not they know what archetypes are.²²

Jung lists three of the most well recognized anthropomorphic archetypes in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. There is the shadow, the anima, and the wise old man. These, according to Jung, are the only three archetypes that can be personified. Then there are the archetypes of transformation, which are common places or situations that symbolize specific personal transformations. The archetype corresponding to the situation is activated, and the forces of that archetype come into action.²³ The archetypes of transformation include the mother, child, hero, trickster, and rebirth, among others. In this project, the artworks that are discussed mostly depict the mother, anima, and rebirth archetypes.

²¹ Thomas Singer and Samuel L. Kimbles, *The Cultural Complex: Contemporary Jungian Perspectives on Psyche and Society* (NY: Routledge, 2004).

²² Jung, *Archetypes*, 42, 47.

²³ Jung, *Archetypes*, 37, 47.

The anima archetype is the masculine perception of the female. She is represented in myths, stories and art as the siren, witch, or nymph. More specifically, popular characters that represent the anima include Eve, Helen, the Virgin Mary, and Sophia. She plays tricks, seduces, nurtures, loves, and destroys. The anima encapsulates both negative and positive aspects, such as life and death, and Jung refers to her as female. Anima is the word for soul; therefore, even though the anima is characteristic of the female nature, she resides in both the male and female unconscious. One other important characteristic of the anima is that she is more encompassing of a primitive nature, and, in Greek mythology, appears as a goddess or witch. She is known to have magical and supernatural powers and holds a superior knowledge of life's laws, despite her trickery.²⁴

The mother is one of Jung's archetypes of transformation. She is a common figure in many cultures and religions. Characteristics and manifestations of the mother archetype overlap with the anima. For example, both the Virgin Mary and Sophia have qualities of the mother and the anima archetypes. Qualities associated with the mother include fertility, fruitfulness, solicitude, sympathy, the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that transcend reason, intuition, and instinct. Like the anima, the mother archetype can embrace both good and evil. The negative qualities associated with her include secrets, anything that devours, darkness, an abyss, and seduction. In comparing the anima and mother, one may find that they are similar. The only

²⁴ Jung, *Archetypes*, 25-31.

qualities that the mother represents that the anima does not are fertility and fruitfulness.²⁵

The rebirth archetype is one of Jung's archetypes that is not easily personified. It is not a role one can assume, like the mother or anima, but can only be experienced. Jung lists five forms of rebirth: metempsychosis, reincarnation, resurrection, rebirth, and participation in the process of transformation. The fifth, participation in the process of transformation, appears in one of the selected works of art by a local artist that will be discussed later. In brief, the fifth form of the rebirth archetype is not directly experienced, because Jung claims that the transformation process occurs "outside the individual."²⁶ A transformation process could include any type of change that individuals go through in their lifetime. In some cultures, this is recognized in a rite of passage ceremony, which celebrates the coming-of-age. However, this is only one example of a change or development process as presented by Jung.

One other concept of Jung's relevant to this project is individuation. Individuation is the synthesis of the unconscious with consciousness.²⁷ This is where the visionary artist brings forth the unconscious archetypes into consciousness through a visual representation. Iconography and symbols are the means by which they depict these ambiguous patterns of thought in visual form.

Many religions and cultures use iconography and symbolism as visual tools to express the essence of a divine being for the purpose of worship or appreciation.

²⁵ Jung, *Archetypes*, 81-84.

²⁶ Jung, *Archetypes*, 114-115.

²⁷ Jung, *Archetypes*, 40.

“An icon should be regarded as a reflected image or shadow of the Supreme Being.”²⁸ The specific artworks discussed in this project depict iconography from Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist faiths, as well as Amazonian indigenous tradition. However, visionary artists can use any iconography they wish, and often depict multiple traditions in the same painting.

The Hindu goddess, Kālī, fits into the anima and mother archetypes as described by Jung. Kālī is the name of one of Agni’s seven tongues or flames. She is the female consort of Śiva, and symbolizes the power of time (*kāla*) in which all forms are manifested and in which they also are destroyed. Kālī is traditionally described as a two to four-armed, hideous, nude woman who destroys everything and all beings. She is shown holding a noose, vajra, skull-topped staff, sword and severed head. Her symbolic message is that there is no escape from time and that individual lives are trapped in the time continuum. Her four arms signify the four directions of space, identified with the cycle of time. The weapons point to her destructive powers. Finally, her nakedness denotes the stripping of all the veils of existence and the illusion (*māyā*) of material reality.²⁹ This information provided by Stutley on traditional iconography associated with Kālī will be used later to discuss the selected artworks that depict Kālī.

Entheogens

According to Huston Smith, author and religious scholar, entheogens are “chemical substances typically of plant origin, that have the potential to open the

²⁸ Margaret Stutley, *The Dictionary of Hindu Iconography* (London; Boston; Melbourne; Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), viii.

²⁹ Stutley, *Dictionary of Hindu Iconography*, 63-64.

subject's mind to a higher realm of spirituality and help them to be more compassionate after the realization of oneness with the rest of humanity, all life forms, and the universe."³⁰ The term *entheogen* was coined in 1979 by a group of ethnobotanists and mythologists including Carl A. P. Ruck, Jeremy Bigwood, Danny Staples, Richard Evans Schultes, Jonathan Ott and R. Gordon Wasson. *Entheogen* replaced the names *hallucinogen* and *psychedelic*, terms that gained a negative reputation and did not adequately describe the importance of psychoactive plant substances used in indigenous traditions for thousands of years.

The term is derived from two words of ancient Greek, ἔνθεος (*entheos*) and γενέσθαι (*genesthai*). The adjective *entheos* translates to English as "full of the god, inspired, possessed," and is the root of the English word "enthusiasm." The Greeks used it as a term of praise for poets and other artists. *Genesthai* means "to come into being." Thus, an entheogen is a drug that causes one to become inspired or to experience feelings of inspiration, often in a religious or spiritual manner.³¹

The powerful experiences that entheogens bring about may have to do with the fact that they are plant-based substances. The plants from which the substances are derived are believed to have spirits and are referred to as plant spirits. So, *ayahuasceros* believe that they are ingesting the essence of the spirits. Some of the most common entheogens discussed by anthropologists are derived from plants such as the *Banisteriopsis* vine found in the Amazon region used in ayahuasca, the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom used by ancient Hindu shamans documented in the

³⁰ Huston Smith, *The Way Things Are: Conversations with Huston Smith on the Spiritual Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 22-24.

³¹ Theodore M. Godlaski, "The God Within," *Substance Use & Misuse* 46, no. 10 (2011): 1217.

Vedas, and the peyote cactus used by American indigenous tribes. This relates to Hancock's claim that some visionary artists' ability to reproduce the spiritual visions comes from direct experiences with entheogens.

Amaringo was a practiced *ayahuascero* of the mestizo tradition. He painted the visions he saw during his many ayahuasca journeys during the healing ceremonies in the Amazonian jungle. Many other visionary artists seek these non-ordinary states of consciousness and attempt to reproduce their visions. Self-proclaimed visionary artist Alex Grey has openly discussed his use of entheogens, as well as synthetic psychoactive substances like LSD, as vehicles to higher states of consciousness.³²

This literature review described and distinguished visionary art from its influences so the reader has a better idea of its basic conceptual as well as stylistic elements. It is important to remember that terms and labels are limiting, and that many people may interpret visionary art differently. Visionary art could just as easily be renamed mystical, meditative, transformative, or spiritual art. To do so, however, would be naming it based on its characteristics alone. Visionary art is better understood through the perspective of its creators, as discussed in the section "Conversations with Artists."

STYLISTIC AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS IN VISIONARY ART

Before discussing visionary art as a specific art form, it is important to note that the term visionary is a loaded one, and places a huge responsibility on the artist. Local artist and live painter Chance Roberts states in an interview, "people do

³² Alex Grey, *The Mission of Art* (Boston: Shambhala, 1998), 21-22.

not like to be called visionary artists because it seems conceited to claim that you are a visionary.”³³ Instead, he thinks the term meditative art is more accurate. Further, the label “visionary” implies a sense of spiritual enlightenment in the artist. In general, labels and labeling are problematic. This perception may apply to artists who are not self-proclaimed visionary artists, and who do not want to be labeled or categorized based on what could be perceived as a fleeting cultural phenomenon. It is too early to determine if visionary art and the culture surrounding it are superficial or substantial.

Hopefully, visionary art opens the “doors of perception” for viewers and that those experiences will last throughout their lives, especially if it influences them to act positively. In general, labels can be problematic. They can limit the individual from reaching outside of the category in which he or she is placed. However, humans tend to use language, specifically words and labels, to understand things better, or simply to distinguish them from other things. The label of visionary art is helpful for understanding its distinctive aspects and uniqueness from other art forms. Although labels are malleable, visionary art as a name allows it to be discussed and understood.

The development of visionary art has been a cumulative process. While post-contemporary visionary art is distinctive in many ways, it is also diverse. It uses stylistic and conceptual influences from Buddhist, Hindu, indigenous, Psychedelic, Surrealist, and Fantastic art, just to name a few. The descriptions of the influences of visionary art were discussed previously in the literature review. In this section these

³³ Chance Roberts (self-employed artist), in discussion with the author, February 2015.

influences are applied to visionary art in order to explore what aspects of those styles and movements that are most evident.

Visionary artists draw from Surrealist art in their attempt to convey non-ordinary states of consciousness, other than the waking state. Many people look at visionary art and immediately equate it to Surrealism because of its dreamlike, whimsical imagery. It should be clarified that they are not the same and that visionary art is more of an expansion of Surrealist art. Imagine the dream state as a hierarchically lower level of consciousness, and spiritual consciousness a few levels higher than the dream state. Visionary art falls between these two states. Surrealism opened a door for visionary artists to enter, explore, and expand.

Religious imagery has a strong presence in post-contemporary visionary art. The selected works in this project display iconography and narratives from Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, and South American indigenous tribes. However, visionary artists are by no means limited to certain religious or cultural iconography. They are more interested in making spiritual connections across traditions.

The use of entheogens to create art, as well as certain stylistic elements, links visionary art with the Psychedelic genre that emerged in the 1960s in Western culture. It also connects with the work of spiritual art from shamans and other spiritual practitioners from indigenous as well as contemporary traditions. Besides using psychedelic visions as creative inspiration, visionary art is stylistically similar to psychedelic '60s art. Common stylistic elements include bright colors, organic forms, chaotic composition, distortion or absence of linear plane, and optical

illusion. The two styles share vivid colors and references to transcendence. Although psychedelic art is generally more abstract and influenced by popular culture, in some cases, it could be seen as more rooted in materialism and consumer culture.

Visionary art that evolved markedly from roughly 2000 to 2015 is more symmetrical, representational, organized, and intricate rather than chaotic and abstract, attempting to convey order beyond chaos. There are a few contemporary visionary artists, however, whose work still leans more toward the abstract style. Most of the terms Hickey listed could describe certain visionary art works. However, Psychedelic art of the 1960s mirrors the more chaotic air of that decade with the sudden uprising of reactions toward political, social, and spiritual struggles. This is not to say that those issues disappeared with the emergence of the twenty-first century, but that visionary artists have taken a different approach to addressing what they regard as cultural or spiritual stagnation.

Archetypes in Visionary Art

This section will discuss how the Jungian archetypes appear in the selected works of Grey and Caruana. Visionary artists commonly use archetypes to communicate a spiritual experience. Artists represent the original concept of the archetype through visual tools such as iconography and symbols that have gained meaning across time and cultures. The collective unconscious is the accumulation of common human experience that is instilled in the human psyche. Archetypes are intuitively understood, but in order for people to know that they are common in the stream of human thought, they must somehow be manifested. Even though

archetypes are internal notions, they can be represented externally through visual art.

Grey specifically depicts archetypes in his work. The Jungian anima archetype appears in his drawing, *The Gift*, (1996) (figure 1). *The Gift* is a picture of Grey himself, represented by a transparent, skeletal hand desperately reaching up from the bottom right corner. A divine figure's graceful, voluptuous hand reaches down from the corner of the canvas, from heaven or someplace above the earth, to give the earthly, skeletal hand a paintbrush. In the center of the divine hand, there is a stylized human eye. In Buddhist iconography, the eyes are one of the most important representations.³⁴ The traditional eye is rendered half-open, indicating that the Buddha is in a deep, meditative state. The eye is often in the shape of a lotus petal. That is how Grey renders the eye on the hand of the divine hand in this drawing, so it is clear that he is drawn to using Buddhist iconography in this work. The earthly hand receives creative powers from the divine, feminine anima archetype in the form of the paintbrush. At the tip of the brush, as in many of Grey's other pieces is an eye, which could also symbolize creativity. The drawing indicates that Grey believes artists receive creative powers from a higher creative force in the universe. The distinction of a specific divine figure is ambiguous. Grey believes his inspiration comes from this divine entity. However, he sees that the creativity he received is not his own, since it came from somewhere else, and that the creative force is meant to be shared with others.³⁵ Grey understands himself and other

³⁴ McArthur, *Reading Buddhist Art*, 93.

³⁵ Grey, *Mission of Art*, 80-82.

visionary artists as mere messengers of the divine, not divinely inspired geniuses.

The hand carries the essence of the anima because it is the creative aspect that lives in the collective unconscious. This also reflects creative power, an aspect that the Jungian anima symbolizes.

Jung says that artistic expression comes from the hinterland of man's mind, in other words, the source of the human spirit. The source has existed in every human being since the beginning of humanity. This is why it is so interesting that archaic archetypes are emerging in post-contemporary visionary art. Throughout cultures, an archetype's essence is, for the most part, the same, while the expressions of an archetype can vary. For example, Kālī is a very specific expression of the mother archetype in Hindu religion, while in Christianity, the Madonna or Virgin Mary figure is the specific expression of the mother archetype. Metaphorically, archetypes are seeds of the collective unconscious.

Visionary artists go back to the source of the unconscious to find archetypes. Then, through their art, they spread the seeds in order to connect to other individuals. Archetypes are repeated and recycled throughout history and expressed in different ways by different cultures. In this sense, they are not original or specific to any culture. The reason they are universal and able to connect with many people is because they are not original. Experience with entheogens is another way that artists come into contact with archetypes because entheogens have the power to bring people back to the source of the soul and the collective unconscious. Many people have reported very similar experiences and visions from entheogen-induced trances.

Local artist Garfield expresses the importance for archetypes, “having a map and a sense of deep time and an understanding of the archetypal organization of things is key to not losing your s**t when we live in an age that’s changing very rapidly and it’s very hard to find solid ground to stand on, so the thing is to teach people to fly.”³⁶ The use of archetypes in art has the potential to change individuals and society by bringing them back into touch with what they represent. Manifestations of archetypes reveal the nature of the soul and have the power to bring individuals back to “the source” in themselves, and to help people feel a sense of grounding.

Pinchbeck writes about the connection between entheogens and archetypes. He argues that “psychedelics also open us to lost modes of sensory and extrasensory perception, revealing the archetypes that Jung found in the collective unconscious as living presences hiding all around us.”³⁷ This suggests that people have come into contact with archetypes in an altered state of consciousness reached by entheogens, which explains why archetypes appear in so many visionary art works. Ultimately, through the use of archetypes, visionary artists can help to spread cultural awareness and acceptance. Their art can spark the imagination and connect the viewer to other faiths through creating images of universal archetypes, and showing how those archetypes are inherent in all human consciousness.

³⁶ Michael Garfield (Evolutionary Biologist and self-employed artist) in discussion with the author, November 2014.

³⁷ Daniel Pinchbeck, “Embracing the Archaic: Postmodern Culture and Psychedelic Initiation,” in *Psychedelic: Optical and Visionary Art Since the 1960s*, editors Rubin, Davis S., Robert C. Morgan, and Daniel Pinchbeck, (San Antonio: San Antonio Museum of Art: Cambridge: in association with the MIT Press, 2010), 52.

Merging Iconography

Once artists know specific iconography and what certain icons symbolize in certain cultures and religions, they are able to see how they can express different archetypes through visual representations. Caruana is another well-established visionary artist who uses traditional iconography in his work. However, his work is non-traditional in the sense that he combines iconography from different religions and cultures into one painting. Caruana's *Face of Kali* (in progress) (figure 2a & 2b) is a primary example of merging religious iconography. Caruana looks to Fuchs, the "father" of Fantastic Realism and how he depicts religious iconography.³⁸ Fuchs depicts narratives from the bible, including Adam and Eve in his work *Adam and Eve Under the Tree of Knowledge* (1984), and the Crucifixion in *The Sorrowful Rosary* (1958). He portrays Greek mythological figures such as Icarus in *Icarus on Cothurni* (1978), and Aphrodite in *Aphrodite and Perseus on the Isle of Eyes* (1982). Fuchs did not typically merge iconography, but his fantastic style and use of iconography gave visionary artists like Caruana the idea to expand on representing religious iconography and combining them.

Caruana juxtaposes Christian and Hindu icons in *The Face of Kali*. This painting is a work in progress, and Caruana posted the phases of it on his website. One phase depicts Kālī hovering over a traditional Madonna and child scene (Figure 2a). In this version, more aspects are visible than in the later version, (Figure 2b). For example, in the earlier version, a pelvic-like structure frames the Madonna and child scene. This indicates the Jungian mother archetype and fertility. In the more

³⁸ Laurence Caruana, *The First Manifesto of Visionary Art* (Paris: Recluse Publishing, 2010), 5.

complete version, the face of Kālī is laid over the entire painting. The less complete version actually reveals more of the many layers in the painting.

Stutley's *Dictionary of Hindu Iconography* helps determine that Caruana accurately depicted the goddess Kālī in traditional form. Kālī is one manifestation of Siva's consort as the terror of Time that destroys all creatures and things.³⁹ Caruana includes Kālī's sword, two intertwined snakes, slithering upward, four arms, scepter and skull, and necklace made of skulls. Her multiple arms are meant to distinguish her as a deity and to suggest a transcendent mode of being. Caruana depicts her with the proper mudras, or hand positions. Kālī's specific mudras include the *abhaya*, meaning fearlessness, protection and peace, and *varada*, meaning charity, offering, and compassion. These could further indicate her motherly nature and support the claim that Kālī is the Hindu expression of the Jungian mother archetype.

Jung's description of the mother archetype is similar to the description of Kālī in Hinduism or of the Madonna or Virgin Mary in Christianity. Kālī is essentially a very specific expression in a particular religious tradition of the mother archetype. Likewise, the Madonna or Virgin Mary is a specific expression of the mother archetype in Christian religion. Caruana says "As myths from different cultures have *crossed* and their symbols *combined*, the remaining task, for me, has been to read their hidden message. Ultimately, I believe, these compositions attempt to reveal the greater Unity underlying all cultural manifestations of the Sacred."⁴⁰ By combining the two expressions of the Jungian mother archetype into one painting, Caruana is

³⁹ Stutley, *Dictionary of Hindu Iconography*, ix.

⁴⁰ Laurence Caruana, "Statement," *The Visionary Art of L. Caruana*, accessed April 20, 2015. <http://www.lcaruana.com/webtext/intro.html>.

sending a message to the viewer that these two religions have a similar icon that represents a similar idea. The only difference is that Kālī and the Madonna are visually expressed differently through iconography. The larger implication of this is that people should be more accepting of other religions and be aware of their similarities. Ultimately, Caruana encourages cultural acceptance by showing a similarity between two religions, Hinduism and Christianity. Further, he acknowledges the relevance of feminine aspects of the Divine.

Merging iconography may indicate that the artist does not claim one particular belief system or that he or she appreciates more than one belief system. Traditionally, icons were used to serve as a purpose for worship of specific figures in some religious traditions. In some post-contemporary visionary art, displaying icons serves as a way to help the viewer to question the separation of these religions and beliefs, especially when the iconography is combined or juxtaposed. Whether or not it is intentional, visionary artists who merge iconography and remix religious narratives are advocating pluralism. As such, they promote an appreciation of the diversity of religions, or universalism, and the acceptance that truth may be found in all religions.⁴¹ This recognition of shared, human, universal themes that underlie all religions is what “spirituality” represents.

⁴¹ Fisher, *Living Religions*, 292, 7.

CONVERSATIONS WITH ARTISTS

This section begins presenting the information gathered from face-to-face conversations with local artists Chance Roberts and Michael Garfield, and an electronic communication with Topher Sipes. The artists were asked questions about their perspectives on visionary art, if they use iconography and symbols in their work, and if they attempt to depict archetypes.

Iconography and Symbols as Expressions of Archetypes

Visionary artists give universal archetypes material form, while expressing them in unique ways. Roberts renders his archetypes in an interesting way: “I like to do paintings of people that I know that are community members and maybe insert them into a ridiculous archetype that might not fit their personality and then you can laugh about it because you wonder, *why is this guy holding onto the earth?*”⁴² Roberts uses his friend, a fire spinner and community member in the Texas Hill Country art community, and “inserts” her into the Jungian maternal archetype, the Hindu goddess Kālī. The work is titled *Kali* (figure 4), completed in Fall 2014 for Roberts’ thesis exhibition in Gallery [1] in the Joann Cole Mitte building at Texas State University, for the School of Art and Design. Roberts is effective in expressing the destructive essence of Kālī by depicting her with spheres of fire and a menacing facial expression. Using local people in his work is an interesting way to connect to the community while also manifesting the powerful nature of a female goddess and universal archetype in this painting.

⁴² Chance Roberts (self-employed artist), in discussion with the author, February 2015.

Roberts deviates from Garfield, Grey, and Caruana in that he does not use iconography often because he believes it is overused. However he still is worth talking about in this project because he depicts archetypes in his own way. Roberts deviates from other visionary artists in that he does not typically use specific iconography. However, he is successful at capturing the essence of Kālī as well as the mother archetype without representing her through well-recognized iconography and symbolism. The fire dragons and the facial expression alone suffice in rendering the destructive nature of Kālī. Further iconography and symbols would not be necessary for this particular painting.

Another local artist, Sipes, depicts the Jungian rebirth archetype in his work *Full Metamorphosis* (2014) (figure 3). In an interview, Sipes says the conceptual aims of the work are “towards transformation and transcendence for a transformational festival.” He created this digital painting for the transformative festival, Art Outside in October 2014. *Full Metamorphosis* was one part of a series of a butterfly’s transformation. The other two works in the series included an illustration of a caterpillar and a cocoon. He uses the butterfly, a universal symbol to connect to a wide audience. Based on the butterfly’s life cycle, and its transformation from a caterpillar, the butterfly is representative of growth, development, and transformation. Even if one does not know about the butterfly’s life cycle, wings could stand in for a more general symbol of transformation and transcendence. Growth and change are two common experiences to all human beings.

Sipes also renders the butterfly as a mystical being by depicting it with a surrounding aura, which shows that the butterfly has spirit. He uses the same symmetrical composition and intricate, radiating patterns present in Tibetan thangka paintings. These intricate patterns draw the eye into the world of the painting, creating a meditative effect. *Full Metamorphosis* is a truly magical work and has the potential to resonate with a multitude of minds and souls. Sipes said that he received a great deal of positive feedback from viewers, which shows that this work resonated with them on a spiritual level.⁴³

According to the previous discussion pertaining to Jung, archetypes in the human mind are not images. If they are not images, and only patterns of thought, artists manifest them through visual representation. Archetypes are experienced through art, and if the artist eloquently manifests them, they will leave a significant impression on the viewer. Although archetypes are not images, artists make them into images so they can be communicated and understood by others.

⁴³ Topher Sipes (Graphic designer at Art Seen Alliance) in discussion with the author, April 2015.

LIVE PAINTING

This section focuses on the dynamics of live painting, a recent artistic practice that has emerged in festival culture. This section continues incorporating the information gathered from artist interviews with Garfield and Roberts specifically about live painting.

In his book, *The First Manifesto of Visionary Art*, Caruana expresses his jaded attitude toward the institutional art world, "Tired of the academicism, elitism, shock value, gallery politics and huge financial speculations surrounding modernist and post-modernist art, the practitioners of Visionary art have made a genuine, sincere and authentic attempt to revive something eternal within the contemporary experience of art."⁴⁴ This statement summarizes the motivation of the visionary artist and live painter to break free from museum and gallery politics and capitalist values in order to inspire a spiritual experience in people.

Live painting is a fairly new practice emerging within festival communities. Music, art, and transformative festivals have become increasingly popular in the last decade, and are currently the most supportive sites of live painting. The interesting aspect of festivals is that they are alternative places where people can escape the mundane reality of every day life. This can be helpful or harmful depending on the individual. For some people, festivals can be easily mistaken for idealized utopias. What is special about festivals, however, is that they allow artists to live paint along

⁴⁴ Laurence Caruana, *The First Manifesto of Visionary Art* (Paris: Recluse Publishing, 2010), 14.

with live music and other entertainment. Live painting exposes the creative process and can inspire the spectators to become active participants.

Not everyone who goes to a festival seeks to better himself or herself through spiritual experience. Some attendees are only there to escape reality or satiate their hedonistic appetites with excessive partying. However, many of the organizers of these events dedicate their time to helping people learn about global consciousness and spirituality. Grey is one of the prominent figures to express his beliefs through his art, as well as through speeches at festivals such as Burning Man. Garfield gave a series of talks about the meaning and proper use of entheogens at festivals over the summer of 2014. Live painters offer a greatly needed contribution to festivals because they are actually productive while they are there, and the live painting process adds another level of stimulation to the festival environment. Most of artists simply contribute by being present and showing their work.

Festivals offer an open space for painters to work around other people. Instead of working alone in a secluded studio where the work will not reach the eyes of others until it is complete, idealized expression of the artist, live painters courageously step out of their comfort zone into a chaotic and energetic environment for every spectator to see their process, including the mistakes. Not every live painter has the same strategy for setting up at an event. Some, like Garfield, go to the event with a minimal draft, and let the rest of the ideas enter the painting throughout the night. The improvisational painting is interesting because it leaves the result up to chance. Garfield states, "I'll start with a general idea and I'll

lay the whole thing out in blocky, low-resolution shapes and from that moment forward it just becomes a conversation with the painting.”⁴⁵

Not only is live painting a “conversation with the painting,” it is a conversation with the divine artistic muse, the people dancing, the music, the other artists’ works, and the energy. In such a high-energy environment like this, there are many sources of inspiration. Some viewers may even contribute to the work physically, “working in really intense environments as a live painter, if you look really closely at the painting you’ll see that the line of paint is vibrating from the base coming out of the speakers, or you’ll see where somebody bumped me. Sometimes I’ll paint over it, sometimes I’ll leave it in.”⁴⁶ Leaving the spot where some random person “bumped” into the painting is an extremely selfless choice as an artist. Garfield truly sees his work as part of a collective energy force rather than as an individual expression. This is the kind of spontaneity that can benefit the world, and perhaps the art world in particular. Art is for everybody, and artists who truly believe in the power of art as a transformative force can inspire other people to embrace it for themselves.

Improvisation is not the only approach to live painting. Roberts talks about how he has tried to go to an event with no plan, and he is usually unsatisfied with the result. He blames his conservative method of using a complete drawing as the starting point for a painting on his training in studio art, where students are typically required to start with a plan.⁴⁷ Roberts also talks about how “flowing with

⁴⁵ Garfield.

⁴⁶ Garfield.

⁴⁷ Roberts.

the environment” is the main reason people get into live painting. Flow depends on the energy of the specific place you are in, the people you are around, and what kind of music is playing. All of these factors determine the overall result of the painting. He explains that even though he likes to have a preconceived plan of the painting before setting up his easel, this does not hinder him from “tuning into the flow of the environment.” What the live painter is looking for is to become entranced and suspended in the moment. Roberts calls this “hitting the zone,” where hours go by unnoticed, and at the end of the night, the work is complete. This is a meditative and spiritual experience in itself. If the artist is capable of transmitting this visionary, spiritual, mystical state through the work, the observer will receive that vibe.

Despite their preferred artistic methods in live painting, Garfield and Roberts share something in common. Visionary artists can inspire others to access their creative abilities and to embrace their inner spirituality. This may be an entirely new experience for many people. Embracing creative capacity is inherently a spiritual experience. Roberts states:

“All I know is that I like making art, and sometimes I like to get deep with it. I feel like it is about connecting with the people around you, making something positive that impacts people you know, and trying to spread good vibes in your immediate realm of influence. That is why I do it. I definitely want to inspire people.”⁴⁸

Similarly, Garfield states:

“I want it to kindle in them an enthusiasm and an urgency to engage their own creative power and essence. I want the work I do to motivate people to recognize their own capacity as creative beings in whatever medium. I want it to give them a sense of personal

⁴⁸ Garfield.

empowerment that comes from plugging into a deeper story and appreciation of the human story.”⁴⁹

When people embrace creativity for the sake of inspiring others or to teach others what they believe will be beneficial, they are dissolving the preconceived notion that creativity is solely for the sake of production, money, or self-gratification. The spiritual energy that the artist puts into these paintings can likewise facilitate expressions of the creative nature inherent within the viewer. Live painters are catalyzing the viewer to find “the source” of inspiration that is often described as a spiritual experience. It is essential that these artists are thinking about how their work can help others on a spiritual level.

Spirituality in Visionary Art

Visionary artists frequently refer back to “the source” of the soul through icons, symbols, and archetypes, while live-painters actively transmit creative, spiritual energy to others. These are only two ways in which they embrace the growth and emergence of spiritual knowledge, or gnosis.⁵⁰ In addition to the figurative embodiments of archetypes and meaningful religious icons, visionary art can express other numinous qualities. The artist can reach an altered state of consciousness through entheogens, dreaming, lucid dreaming, or meditation. Intricate designs, similar to indigenous Amazonian art or Buddhist thangka paintings, can induce a trance-like, meditative state. Finally, by bringing their work to events and live painting, visionary artists can inspire others to tap into the same states and embrace spirituality through creativity.

⁴⁹ Roberts.

⁵⁰ Fisher, *Living Religions*, 6.

Like spirituality, the visionary experience is elusive. It is a personal, subjective experience that can be interpreted differently. Nevertheless, visionary artists consulted in this project describe it similarly. Garfield described it eloquently through an analogy of someone who might be considered a visionary: “When you talk about a visionary, it means someone who is seeing something that other people do not. It is someone who has a deeper, more comprehensive grasp on reality than your average bear. For example, killer whales do this thing called spy hopping, where the whale will poke its head out of the water and look around.”⁵¹ Based on Garfield’s description, it can be concluded that anyone with curiosity has the potential to be visionary. All artists make a choice to bring forth negative or positive imagery. They also can choose to “poke their head out to see what is above the water,” so they can make this experience visible to others.

Where does merging iconography fit into the spiritual aspect of visionary art? The merging of iconography is a more concrete way of showing that spirituality is universal, despite the fact that each culture has developed its own rituals, belief systems, dogmas, and specific deities and myths. Seeing this juxtaposition helps the viewer see the interconnectedness between people. It is a re-mythologizing of familiar archetypes and stories. Seeing the juxtaposition might ultimately help the viewer to appreciate differences to realize that anyone is capable of embracing underlying common spirituality. This realization may help alleviate some of the divisiveness and turmoil that results from religious conflict. Spirituality helps humanity conceptualize how expansive the universe is, and that everyone is sharing

⁵¹ Garfield.

this space. Spirituality may be the means to achieving a more harmonious cooperation among human beings throughout the world.

Entheogens are one way that visionary artists reach altered states of consciousness. They are legitimate substances in many indigenous and historical religions and cultures, and are regarded as having spiritual significance. Entheogens are still used in the contemporary world by formal practitioners of various religious and spiritual traditions. Many people see entheogens as a quick way to access their spirituality, in contrast to more involved practices such as meditation, prayer, and other rituals. In the post-contemporary festival scene, however, they are often used recreationally. Although entheogens are not considered to be physically addictive, they can be abused. Many visionary artists do not follow specific healing or ceremonial rituals used to ingest entheogens according to specific healing or ceremonial rituals. So, while their use may be described as not originating from a spiritual practice, they may have the result of conveying a positive spiritual message to viewers through their artwork.

Garfield states “There is a whole system of right relations with psychedelics that we can start to recover in the electronic age now that we have easier access to the various medicinal traditions around the world, and we can learn from their established best practices before WalMart drives them extinct. It’s a race against the clock to accumulate the wisdom of cultures before they are destroyed by global civilization and commerce.”⁵²

⁵² Garfield.

Not all visionary artists are shamans, medicine healers, or formal spiritual practitioners like Amaringo, nor do they necessarily use entheogens to get to those altered states. Many artists working in the realm of visionary art look to dreams, transformative experiences, near-death experiences, and epiphanies for inspiration. These other ways can reveal hidden meaning about the mysteries of humanity, nature, and the universe are common subjects in visionary art. Visionary art can induce a trance-like or meditative state, helping the viewer to tune out distractions and be completely in the moment, suspended in time and free from distractions including the outside world and their own thoughts. Buddhist art uses mandalas to induce a meditative state, and Sipes' *Full Metamorphosis* provides an example of how intricate patterns can induce a meditative state.

DISCUSSION

There are many aspects of visionary art. First, there is the merging of iconography, archetypes, and symbolism from various cultures. There is the use of entheogens to induce spiritual or visionary experiences. There is the inspiration of

creativity through live painting. How can these be interrelated to support the supposition that visionary artists create a spiritual experience for viewers while promoting multi-cultural acceptance? Art by definition is subjective. Most of it is based on the artists' experiences and perspectives compared to other types of artwork, and to the viewer's reaction. This thesis argues that visionary art is distinctive based on its potential to deliver spiritual experiences to viewers.

Most visionary art includes representations of altered states of consciousness. This can be induced by psychedelic or entheogenic experiences. Based on psychological experiments and personal accounts, these altered states are similar to near death experiences, meditative or trance states, and dreams. Visionary experiences bring people to "the source," or what Jung defines as the collective unconscious. They can lead to an even deeper state, where the individual is detached from the ego and feels a sense of connection with all things and beings. Often, the person encounters what Jung defines as the universal archetypes when he or she reaches the source of shared human spirituality. The visionary artists discussed and live painters interviewed manifest these archetypes through their artwork by using iconography and symbols borrowed from other cultures and religions' representations of those specific archetypes, such as the mother archetype.

Since archetypes are universal patterns in human thought, attempting to represent them to others is like speaking a universal language. Representing archetypes is a universal way of communication because, if archetypes are as old as human thought, every human should be able to relate to them in some way. The

visionary artist makes a further universal human connection and dissolves boundaries between faiths by using iconography borrowed from other cultures or religions. They can either combine them in a single painting or incorporate them throughout their body of work. Then these deeper states can become visually apparent. As discussed, for example, in Caruana's *Face of Kali*, the Virgin Mary in Christianity essentially represents the same archetype as Kālī in Hinduism. This connection may be new to some people, and it may hopefully cause them to question why there is so much turmoil surrounding religious beliefs. And, why are formal religions often so unaccepting of other beliefs, when in fact most of the core principles such as compassion are essential to those beliefs?

Aspects of other art styles are often incorporated into visionary artworks. Visionary artists tend to pick and choose the most meaningful, mystical and spiritual aspects from Surrealist, Buddhist, indigenous, and Psychedelic art. A few of the many religious or cultural traditions that visionary artists draw from include Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and indigenous traditions, as previously discussed. The examples provided starting points for understanding this emerging art form.

Surrealism is a particularly important influence on visionary art. It was one of the first modern art movements discussed by art historians to depict the unconscious, fantastical realm, and specifically the dream state. Surrealist imagery is easily identifiable based on its odd juxtapositions of waking-life and dream imagery. Looking at a work of Surrealist art is like looking into a dream, and most Surrealists wanted to give that effect to viewers. Some visionary artists also want to create a

similar effect, except they take it further by either trying to convey an entheogenic or similar experience that is found beyond the dream state.

The most important aspect of Psychedelic art that visionary artists draw from is also the attempt to convey an altered state of consciousness. In the 1960s, this became known as the psychedelic experience. On a canvas, the psychedelic experience looks like undulating and radiating movement, bright vivid color, intricate designs and patterns, and juxtapositions of form. Again, visionary artists take these representations further by incorporating transparency, soft hazy focus, and narratives of transformations, rebirth, death, and life. These are all common sensations inherent in the entheogenic, psychedelic, or visionary experience. In that sense, post-contemporary visionary art is more representational and has a more symmetrical composition. In conveying non-ordinary states of consciousness, different domains of reality begin to appear in the work, as a single space of the transpersonal imagination. The artists connect principles that link experience with aesthetics.

How can seeing a representation of someone else's entheogenic, dream, spiritual, or visionary experience help other people? The twenty-first century has had numerous social, global economic, and spiritual cataclysms. People compete for resources within their own countries and other countries, and fight over whose religion is superior. In America, many people are detached from each other and do not understand what is happening beyond their television or laptop screens. Many Americans seem to be distracted by media stimuli and mundane tasks much of the time and, therefore, have little energy to embrace creativity for spiritual growth. In a

visionary experience, all of those distractions are dissolved for a short amount of time. When people realize that they are capable of connections, they may be able to reconsider their purpose in life. Further, they may decide to help others and themselves on a more spiritual level. Without visionary experiences, one can still get a sense of that experience by viewing art, especially a work that delivers the message in an appealing and beautiful way. Many visionary artists have experienced these non-ordinary states of consciousness and claim that they have received a similar message, that is, to share their work with others. The visionary artist endeavors to convey an experience that is not only visually and emotionally impactful, but spiritually moving as well. This thesis argues that this is what makes visionary art distinctive as a post-contemporary art form.

Some visionary artists take their work a few steps further than simply producing a piece of art. Live painters actually work in front of hundreds of people at festivals. This performance is more inclusive than solitary painting since spectators are able to see the artistic process and witness the progression of the same painting. It is enjoyable to watch live painting because many of the artists use beautiful, intricate, swirling, and undulating patterns as well as radiant colors combined with symmetry and representational figures. It is inspiring not only because the paintings themselves are stimulating to the eye, but one can see how much joy it brings the painter. Amaringo, Grey, Roberts, Sipes, and Garfield all said that they simply hope their work will inspire creativity in others. Buddhist monks and nuns who paint thangkas or mandalas claim that the process brings them to a peaceful state. Participating in any creative activity can help someone achieve a

peaceful state, which is why it is important to inspire people to embrace their creative capacity.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore connections between visual art and spirituality. The reader is encouraged to make their own connections based on the artworks, the artist interviews, their own life experiences, and comparisons with other types of art. Hopefully, this project will motivate the reader to be more curious about visionary art, interested in its many aspects, and perhaps inspired to create their own art.

CONCLUSION

Whether or not visionary art helps people reach a spiritual realization is subjective and can only be based on experience. The visionary artist transforms personal expression to a transpersonal one. Their art can be regarded as an intermediary position between waking consciousness and the sacred unseen. Visionary artists bring archetypes into view, as well as the symbols and icons that represent archetypes. Archetypes reveal unseen realities of the soul. Visionary artists are driven by creative hunger, and they are fueled by spiritual energy. They are striving to capture and reveal a shift in global consciousness, but the viewer must be open to the potential experience. There is no quantitative way to measure the value of spiritual experience.

Visionary art attempts to bring the nebulous concept of spiritual transcendence to conscious awareness. It can separate the secular, mundane reality from sacred, extraordinary reality. By combining the two realities, it embodies the best of both. Diana Eck, Chairman of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University states “religious traditions are rivers of faith—alive, dynamic, ever-changing, diverging, converging, drying up here, and watering new lands there.”⁵³

Visionary art has the potential to catalyze global change. This mentality is emerging in smaller subcultures, including the festival communities. It may only be a matter of time that it extends outward to mainstream culture, depending on how long it lasts and how seriously people take it. Visionary art has the potential to gain a global presence. People will interpret visionary art in many different ways and,

⁵³ Fisher, *Living Religions*, 292

hopefully, will not take the knowledge it reveals at face value, or only consider it as a fleeting cultural phenomenon. The Dalai Lama stated in a speech at and Interfaith Celebration of Religious Freedom, Episcopal National Cathedral, Washington D.C., April 24, 1997, that “Now it is crucial to accept that different religions exist, and in order to develop genuine mutual respect among them, close contact among the various religions is essential. I believe deeply that we must find, all of us together, a new spirituality.”⁵⁴ This message from the Dalai Lama describes what visionary artists try to show through their work. One of their main intentions is to bring people together. For a visual artist, that means bringing symbols related to different cultures together visually to create a spiritual experience and show connections between cultures.

Jung questions the task of theologians, “Instead of insisting so glibly on the necessity of faith, the theologians, it seems to me, should see what can be done to make this faith possible.”⁵⁵ Perhaps it is not necessarily and solely the theologians job to make faith possible. Visionary artists, who are concerned with the unseen and the spiritual, can make this ideal possible. They express core human themes by bringing them to life through visual representation. Humanity is at a point where language will not suffice in communicating the intricacies of faith, spirituality, and personal or social transcendence. Visual art perhaps can.

⁵⁴ Grey, *The Mission of Art*, 132.

⁵⁵ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, 227.

IMAGES



Figure 1. Alex Grey, *The Gift* 1996.



Figure 2a. Laurence Caruana, *The Face of Kali*, in progress.



Figure 2b. Laurence Caruana, *The Face of Kali*, in progress.



Figure 3. Topher Sipes, *Full Metamorphosis*, 2014.



Figure 4. Chance Roberts, *Kali*, 2014.

REFERENCES

- Amaringo, Pablo. "Transformacion del Shaman Aguila," gouache on arches paper, 2002. In *The Ayahuasca Visions of Pablo Amaringo*, by Charing, Howard G., Peter Cloudsley, and Pablo Amaringo, plate 5. Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2011.
- Breton, André. *Manifeste du Surréalisme*. Paris: Pauvert, 1962.
- Caruana, Laurence. *The First Manifesto of Visionary Art*. Paris: Recluse Publishing, 2010.
- Caruana, Laurence. "Statement." *The Visionary Art of L. Caruana*. Accessed April 20, 2015. <http://www.lcaruana.com/webtext/intro.html>.
- Charing, Howard G. *The Ayahuasca Visions of Pablo Amaringo*. Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2011.
- Fisher, Mary P. *Living Religions: a Brief Introduction*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2009.
- von Franz, Marie-Lousie. *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*. Boston: Shambala, 1996.
- Fuchs, Ernst. *The Sorrowful Rosary*, egg tempera, watercolor and gold leaf on parchment, 1958-61, <http://www.ernstfuchs-zentrum.com/html/b3e.html>.
- Hancock, Graham. "Pablo Amaringo: A Special State of Consciousness." In *The Ayahuasca Visions of Pablo Amaringo*, edited by Howard G. Charing, Peter Cloudsley, and Pablo Amaringo, 10-11. Rochester; Toronto: Inner Traditions, 2011.
- Godlaski, Theodore M. "The God Within." *Substance Use & Misuse* 46, no. 10 (2011): 1217-1222.
- Grant, Kim. *Surrealism and the Visual Arts: Theory and Reception*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Grey, Alex. *The Mission of Art*. Boston: Shambhala, 1998.
- Jung, C. G., et al. *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*. editors, Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler; William McGuire, executive editor; translated by R.F.C. Hall. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970-1979 (v. 1 1975), 1970.
- Jung, C.G. *Structure & Dynamics of the Psyche*. CW 8. NY: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Jung, C.G. *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. CW 9. NY: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Jung, C.G. *Symbols of Transformation*. CW 5. NY: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Krauss, Rosalind. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985.

McArthur, Meher. *Reading Buddhist Art: An Illustrated Guide to Buddhist Signs and Symbols*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002.

MacLagan, David. *Outsider Art: From the Margins to the Marketplace*. London: Reaktion Books, 2009.

O'Doherty, Brian. "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space." *Artforum* 14, no. 7 (March 1976): 24-30.

Rubin, David S., Robert C. Morgan, and Daniel Pinchbeck. *Psychedelic: Optical and Visionary Art Since the 1960s*. San Antonio: San Antonio Museum of Art; Cambridge: in association with the MIT Press, 2010.

Shurian, Walter and Uta Grosenik, *Fantastic Art*. Köln; London: Taschen, 2005.

Topher Sipes interview by Danielle E. Colombo, April 27, 2015, transcript.

Smith, Huston. *The Way Things Are: Conversations with Huston Smith on the Spiritual Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Stutley, Margaret. *An Illustrated Dictionary of Hindu Iconography*. London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.