

A Double Dose of Genius

Robert Venosa



THIS short story has been written as background for the introduction of a collection of signed, limited edition prints of a portrait I recently painted of Albert Hofmann, Ph.D. Myself, Dr. Hofmann and MAPS have collaborated on this venture to support MAPS-sponsored LSD and psilocybin research, especially Dr. Peter Gasser's proposed study of LSD-assisted psychotherapy in subjects with anxiety associated with end-of-life issues, and to gain financial assistance for my own plan to provide a permanent venue for my art, and that of the many wonderful visionary artists burgeoning on the cultural matrix today. Salvador Dali becomes a part of these thoughts due to his genius, his obvious influence on most artists—psychedelic, visionary and otherwise—and the fact that I knew him personally. More information about the signed, limited edition prints is available at the end of this article.

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On January 11, 1906, Albert Hofmann was born in Baden, Switzerland. Exactly 20 months prior, on May 11th, 1904, Salvador Dali y Domenic was born in Figueras, Spain. And so, in a matter of months, and not too many miles, two of the 20th century's greatest revolutionaries entered this planetary realm. Each in his own manner provided paths for a profound expansion of human consciousness. Dali, through his surrealistic imagery, opened up a color-filled window onto dreams and hallucinogenic metaphors that gave dimension to Freudian and Jungian subconscious mysteries. Albert Hofmann, through his discovery of lysergic acid diethylamide, opened up an even wider door for any and all to enter into the more expansive realms of superconscious transcendence. LSD awakened on a massive scale the sleeping giant which had been dreaming of the shape, sound and visceral feel of its spirit; cosmic truths insinuated; unimagined phantasmagorical visions; and, most of all, opened up hearts and minds to a nascent understanding of the universal connectedness of all things. And so both paths, the subconscious surrealistic dream world of Dali, and the superconscious galaxy of

Hofmann, provided revolutionary/evolutionary leaps that have come few and far between in the history of human consciousness.

How does such a brilliant mind operate? What keys are provided in allowing access to such super-human discoveries and the ability to translate them and make them digestible to the normal mind? It has been said that God created the universe from a spark blest with a creative spirit, along with the intention of seeing what scope of manifestation would present itself at the juncture of infinity and eternity. In order to be present for the entire gig, as well as to enjoy the ride, God endowed each and every materializing spirit with a piece of Herself. And so, through a bit of contemplative observation, it's easy enough to reckon that some spirits have been bestowed with a more reflective shard of God's creativity blessing...such as Messrs Hofmann and Dali. Having had the extreme honor of spending quality time with both of these genial giants, I can report that a good deal of their brilliance is wrapped in high-velocity intelligence, captivating charm, and a quick wit. Very human traits actually, but the dynamic

energy and extreme brainpower they exude borders on the alien.

Amongst other reasons why I include Dali in these thoughts that were planned to be primarily about Albert Hofmann, is the obvious fact that as a fellow painter I can relate to Dali's challenges, and highly appreciate the unique genius that he manifested on canvas. All art is an emotional experience, a language of form, color, sound, and movement that is constantly being translated by consciousness, and at the higher levels will take on a transcendent nature. A layman is not aware of the courage it takes to face an empty canvas and proceed to expose one's soul thereupon. In this sense Dali was a hero and mystical genius without peer. And all this without the aid of any entheogenic stimulation. As he said, "Dali does not do drugs, Dali is the drug!" Although he passed on in 1989, I speak of Dali in the present tense only because his art, in one form or another, seems to enter our lives on a daily basis.

Albert, of course, will always be present as part of the higher state of consciousness he helped birth in us all. With that in mind, I must mention that the first time I met Albert I blurted out 'Father!' as he opened the door of his home in Burg, Switzerland. My beloved Martina and Dieter Hagenbach, who introduced us to Albert that day, were somewhat embarrassed by my unexpected and slightly weird outburst. But, as Albert was responsible for the re-birthing of a consciousness in deep-sleep, I believe I could not have been more honest in my spontaneity. And what a pleasure, a joy(!), to meet this man who became the alembic for the alchemical sacrament that empowered a generation in-waiting. That first meeting took place in 1996, and for the past 10 years, as we drive through Switzerland on our way to Spain, Martina and I make sure we spend a day with Albert and Anita, sharing new art and recent adventures, entheogenic and otherwise, while walking through the gardens and fields where Albert can name every plant, herb and other of nature's variations in the beautiful environment that he calls home. This year was no exception, but it did mark a very special occasion as I introduced Albert to my recently finished

portrait of him. In a way this painting is a culmination, or a crossing point, in the spiral of the creative dynamic LSD instilled in me that night (and many nights and days thereafter) in New York 41 years ago. Never having picked up a paint brush, acid commanded I do so, and then proceeded to provide a few other-worldly visitations and inspirations, then put me together with masters Mati Klarwein and Ernst Fuchs to learn some technical magic, and, with that in mind and hand, I've been attempting to externalize those phantasmagorical worlds in form and color ever since. And here was my paternal alchemist, Albert, gazing upon his portrait with pleasure-filled approval! What more of a reward, what maximum honor, could I ever hope to receive?

I once mentioned to Albert that he is surely one of the 20th century's greatest revolutionaries. "That's very kind, and perhaps overstated," he responded.

"However, whatever recognition I have received from the public comes primarily from my association with LSD. But I have also discovered the compounds Ergometrine and Metrogine, both of which prevent post-partum hemorrhage, saving a number of lives of woman during childbirth. Hydergine, which stimulates oxygen flow to the brain, relieving symptoms of deteriorating mental capacity, is also another discovery of mine. And I consider these discoveries equally important as LSD-25. These are also kinder, but perhaps not as problematic." It should also be mentioned that Albert synthesized psilocybin, and when he presented the compound to Maria Sabina, she assured him that it had the exact same spirit as in nature's psilocybin. Albert said that he has always regretted that the potential of LSD as a psychotherapeutic aid and/or cure for various ailments and addictions was short-circuited in the 1960s by governmental interdiction and prohibition following LSD's rapid, widespread and uncontrollable dissemination. The horror! Reports of trippers jumping out of windows trying to fly; hair on men growing below their shoulders, the devil's lance of Hofmann and Leary impaling the souls of innocent children; and most threatening of all, a generation was discovering a spiritized individuality,



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contesting greed and war, and, horror of horrors, enjoying sex, drugs and rock and roll!

Once LSD became a Schedule I drug, Albert was saddened at the ensuing loss of the unlimited potential of his demonized "problem child." However, it's so satisfying to know that he has survived the barbs of ignorance and stultifying limitation, and is here to see a wonderful, long-hoped-for turnaround. Fast-forward to present-day Switzerland, where, after years of forced hibernation, the subdued promise that LSD held is now being re-awakened by Dr. Peter Gasser's proposed MAPS-sponsored LSD-assisted psychotherapy research, which would be the first clinical trial evaluating the therapeutic use of LSD in several decades. This study will move ahead with financial support from MAPS through various channels of donation and fund-raisers, including portions of the limited edition print sales of my portrait of Albert Hofmann. In regards to the portrait, which I had been working on this past Spring, I spent time considering what stage of life I should represent Albert. I thought back to a visit we had with him in 2000, and how impressed I was with his regal profile and enthusiastic energy at that time. How inspiring to know that one could maintain such a youthfulness at 94 years of age! And so, with oil paint, I've tried to capture that handsome, leonine structure, along with the accoutrements of a magic garden, the molecular structures of LSD, psilocybin and DMT, and a halo of form and energy.

I spent approximately 100 hours painting the portrait of Albert, working in both my Boulder, Colorado, and Cadaques, Spain studios. As any artist will attest,

painting a portrait is a major challenge, with each stroke within the framework of the face, especially the eyes, nose and mouth, demanding absolute concentration. One or two wayward strokes and the artist struggles to regain the magic. The challenge is not so much to re-create an acceptable resemblance—that's the easy part—but to capture with brush and paint the soul essence of the one being painted. No small feat.

I told Albert at that time, during the Millennium, that we would be celebrating his 100th birthday with him in six years, and so it has come to pass. This year I mentioned that we would next celebrate 101, and beyond, with him. And, so I expect, if not here in this realm, then surely at the crossroads of eternity and infinity. •

Editor's Note

* The good news from Switzerland: Dr. Peter Gasser's study evaluating the efficacy of LSD-assisted psychotherapy as a treatment for individuals suffering from emotional difficulties related to advanced-stage cancer and other illnesses has just made some important steps toward government approval and initiation. Dr. Gasser, President of the Swiss Medical Association for Psycholytic Therapy (SAEPT), along with MAPS, completed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the study, which, coincidentally, will be submitted on January 11, 2007, Albert's 101st birthday. Another piece of good news is that Dr. Gasser has already found a chemical supplier in Switzerland, approved by SwissMedic (Swiss FDA equivalent), that will sell MAPS 10,000 mcgs. of LSD for the study and other future studies involving LSD. SwissMedic has also given approval for the lab that Dr. Gasser identified to conduct encapsulation of the LSD for his proposed study.

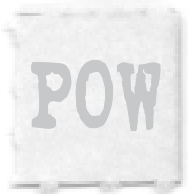


Dr. Hofmann is presented with his portrait by Robert Venosa at the recent symposium in honor of Hofmann's 100th birthday, "LSD: Problem Child and Wonder Drug".

Robert Venosa's portrait of Albert Hofmann is now available as a full-color print in a limited edition of 50 exemplars. Printed on archival, acid-free Somerset Velvet paper, these prints measure 27" x 33", with a 23" x 28" image area. They are pencil-signed by both Robert Venosa and Albert Hofmann, and numbered 1/50 through 50/50. A Certificate of Authenticity, signed by the artist, accompanies each print.

Print number	Price
1-10	\$3000
<i>(no. 1 will be auctioned; 2, 3, 4, 6 are sold)</i>	
11-20	\$2500
<i>(11, 13 are sold)</i>	
21-30	\$2000
<i>(21, 23, 24 are sold)</i>	
31-40 <i>(sold)</i>	\$1500
41-50 <i>(sold)</i>	\$1000

To purchase or for information regarding available prints, contact MAPS at orders@maps.org or phone (831)336-4325, or visit www.maps.org/catalog



Drug War Prisoner: Casey Hardison

ENTHEOGENIC ACTIVIST, researcher, and chemist **Casey Hardison** is currently serving a 20-year prison sentence for the manufacture of LSD. Hardison acted as his own lawyer during his case, and, rather than denying the charges, he argued that he had a fundamental human right to engage in his chosen entheogenic religion. The court rejected the argument and he was sentenced to 20 years in prison on April 22, 2005. He has submitted human rights appeals to the European Court of Human Rights and to the House of Lords,

the highest court of appeal in the UK (see www.lsd25.20m.com for further details). Hardison is also a former MAPS Bulletin contributor, and he requested that we include a brief mention of his whereabouts, so that readers may send letters of support and donations to him.

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