As visionary artist Alex Grey expressed during the same event, “Now, with the gift of science and scientific research, serious interest is again making it legally possible to discuss these matters.” But this fortuitous resurgence of activity and attention demands a chorus of new voices, new models, and new approaches.

There is a growing community of younger scholars who are actively focusing their academic attention on this field. In January 2011, MAPS announced to attendees of their April 2010 conference “Psychedelic Science in the 21st Century” that they would be sponsoring a new listserv for graduate students actively working or writing on some aspect of psychedelic culture, use, practice, or theory. This announcement was significant both for psychedelic studies in particular and for academia at large, as it aspires to be frequently falls short of realizing genuinely interdisciplinary work.

My personal contribution to this movement lies at the intersection of literature, philosophy, comparative religion, and art history, and I cite psychedelic philosopher Terence McKenna as my immediate forebear.

In April 2011, I presented a paper on the concept of “hyperspace” in the context of the dimethyltryptamine (DMT) experience. Since the DMT experience is notoriously difficult to integrate into the terms of mainstream “commonsense reality,” the emergent concept of hyperspace has enabled participants in the field to articulate and co-create an alternative worldview. In addition to its sociological function, I discovered in researching the term that it etymology has a rich and interdisciplinary history. The term “hyperspace” emerged out of the specialized context of mid-19th-century analytic geometry, and would subsequently circulate extensively amongst avant-garde artistic and spiritualist circles.

In the humanities and social sciences, establishing a historical canon of artists who define their work as hyperspatial or interdimensional creates a connective context for further investigations. It establishes and defines an aesthetic tradition within which one can include artists ranging from William Blake to the cubists to the visionary painters of the modern day. It also provides a venue for discussing experiences that are related but external to the current reaches of direct scientific inquiry. The concept of hyperspatial art and experience is just one example of the manifold ways that psychedelic discourse pertains and responds to questions of philosophy, creativity, imagination, religion, culture, and language. The crucial step now is to bring these conversations into the open.

One necessary component of this opening-up process involves developing critical rationales and precedents for investigating issues like multidimensionality within a mainstream academic conversation. Thought experiments, acknowledged as such, could be encouraged rather than taboo. Dr. Strassman himself has recognized how such experiments can be deeply intellectually valuable: “The only explanatory model that held itself out as the most intuitively satisfying, yet the most theoretically treacherous, involved assigning a parallel level of reality to these [DMT] experiences. In other words, I engaged in a thought experiment.”

If we are able to remain unattached to the particularities (and eccentricities) of such thought experiments, they can help us to overcome the anachronistic privileging of what we can see over what we cannot see. In the words of Terence McKenna, “I would prefer a kind of intellectual anarchy where whatever was pragmatically applicable was brought to bear on any situation, where belief was understood as a self-limiting function.” Alien intelligence and prime spirits are ideas that can be played with in ways that don’t need to be universally agreed upon as “true” or “real” to have intellectual significance.

Anthropology may be the key to opening up a space for psychedelic studies in the university, and may even be partly responsible for the resurgence of scientific interest in these substances. Strassman has pointed out with exceptional clarity: “Within traditional Western academic settings, anthropology is the field that has focused attention on psychedelic plant use and the role of these plants in the societies that use them. More than any other field, it has maintained the flame of interest in these plants and drugs over several hundred years of Western suppression of all information about them.”

The fields of psychiatry, clinical psychology, and the neurosciences are bringing psychedelics back into the modern Western imagination, and the social sciences can play a powerful role in this ongoing evolution. It is time for the academic iron curtain to fall. I hereby inaugurate Psychedelic Studies as a post-disciplinary field. Let the games begin.

NOTE


Exploring Psychedelic Healing:
Three New Book Reviews by David Jay Brown

The Psychedelic Explorer’s Guide: Safe, Therapeutic, and Sacred Journeys
James Fadiman, Ph.D.
Park Street Press, 2011, paperback, 338 pages, $18.95

I’ve been waiting years for someone with the proper qualifications to come along and write this book. Hands down, this is the very best guide that exists on how to prepare for a safe and therapeutic psychedelic journey, with positive psychological transformation as one’s goal. It is the most important book written on the subject since The Psychedelic Experience—Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert, and Ralph Metzner’s classic adaptation of The Tibetan Book of the Dead, which was published in 1964.

Before psychologist James Fadiman’s book, this was a subject that desperately needed attention by someone who really understands what psychedelics can do to (and for) the human mind. Fadiman reviews the necessary precautions and proper techniques for a beneficial journey in a straightforward manner. Drawing from his own personal experience as a psychedelic researcher, he presents the fascinating results from his clinical studies into how psychedelics can enhance creativity and improve problem-solving abilities, in the context of a clearly-explained guidebook.

The Psychedelic Explorer’s Guide can be used as a training and reference manual by professionals in the blossoming field of psychedelic psychotherapy research, as well as by outlaw shamans who defy government regulations to engage in illegal forms of self-exploration. Anyone interested in the subject for educational purposes will find this book hard to put down. This comprehensive volume is simply overflowing with rare, valuable, and well-organized information about how to get the most from a psychedelic experience.

Invaluable for dispelling the many myths and misconceptions associated with this controversial subject, this jam-packed volume provides essential guidelines for the conduct of psychedelic sessions, and presents little-known techniques for using sub-perceptual doses to improve mental functioning, along with new information from surveys, clinical studies, group sessions, and personal anecdotes. This book is absolutely essential reading for anyone interested in the subject.

Psychedelic Healing: The Promise of Entheogens for Psychotherapy and Spiritual Development
Neal M. Goldsmith, Ph.D.
Healing Arts Press, 2011, paperback, 236 pages, $16.95

Psychedelic Healing is a wonderful summary of what we have learned from psychedelic psychotherapy research, and of where the explosive Renaissance with all these fascinating
new studies is headed. The medical potential of psychedelic drugs appears enormous, and they are currently being reintegrated into mainstream Western culture. This is truly a cause for celebration, and Neal Goldsmith does a marvelous job explaining this important research and tying it all together.

However, perhaps even more valuable and interesting are Goldsmith’s personal story and insights, which make up a significant portion of this hard-to-put-down volume. Goldsmith’s masterful blend of research summary, practical information, biographical profiles, and personal experience is delightful to read, and the book is filled with psychological and spiritual insights. I highly recommend *Psychedelic Healing* to anyone interested in the exciting field of psychedelic research and the frontiers of human psychology.

The *Psilocybin Solution: The Role of Sacred Mushrooms in the Quest for Meaning* by Simon G. Powell (Park Street Press, 2011, paperback, 274 pages, $18.95) I was blown away by musician and filmmaker Simon Powell’s thoughtful book about what he has learned from his visionary experiences with psychoactive mushrooms and his reflections on the biosphere. The *Psilocybin Solution* presents the best argument that I’ve ever read about the possibility of teleology operating on the biosphere. Reading this book helped me to rethink many of my beliefs about the nature of reality, consciousness, and the nature of reality—was certainly an ambitious undertaking. Powell does a masterful job at translating the grand and mysterious language of Nature into mere English symbols, and artistically articulating the shamanic voice of the Other. I think that anyone who is interested in the evolution of life and consciousness will find this book utterly fascinating.

Some other wonderful books about psychadelics that I’ve read recently, but don’t have the space to review in this Bulletin, are important to mention here: Don Lattin’s *The Harvard Psychedelic Club, Richard Doyle’s *Darwin’s Pharmacy, Antero Alli’s* The Eight Circuit Brain*, and Ram Dass and Ralph Metzner’s* *Birth of a Psychedelic Culture*. My reviews of these great books are posted on Amazon.

David Jay Brown is the editor of the annual theme MAPS Bulletin, and author of the forthcoming book *Over the Edge of the Mind: Exploring the Interface of Psychedelics, Culture, and Consciousness. The Spring 2012 MAPS Bulletin, which he is currently editing, will be devoted to Psychodelics and the Arts. It will cover how psychodelics have affected music, film, television, painting, dancing, and pop culture. If you’re interested in contributing, please contact David at dajab@well.com. *•*

In Loving Memory of Robert Venosa, 1936–2011

By Martina Hoffmann

An outstanding master of Visionary Art, transitioned peacefully on Aug. 9, 2011. He will be remembered by an audience of many generations for his unique genius in captur- ing the crystalline, light-filled energy of the source. His long and brave healing journey with cancer was greatly supported by shamanic journeys with ayahuasca in the Amazon regions of South America.

Venosa experienced to lysergic acid diethyl- amide (LSD) for the first time in the 1960s in his Manhattan apartment while surrounded by a group of voyeurs who did not yet have the courage to partake themselves. LSD was still legal, and Robert was not afraid to stretch his mind and putative gland to accommodate the synesthetic merging of new concepts and visions. He felt he had become part of a liberating global revolution, the likes of which the world had never before experienced.

These experiential beginnings launched Robert onto a lifelong spiritual and artistic path that cemented his memory of the deeply transformative and healing power of psychodelics.

Throughout his life and in whichever part of the world he happened to reside, Robert felt kinship with the psychodelic community and considered many of its luminaries his friends. Amongst these friends were the archetypical psychodelic artist of the 1960s and 1970s Mali Kalwarine, the renowned psychonaut Terence McKenna, the legendary Dr. Albert Hofmann, and the brilliant consciousness pioneers Stan Grof and Ralph Metzner. He had dear friends in the visionary art community, including Alex and Allyson Grey, Pablo Amaringo, and Jan Kounen, and enduring connections with shamans Louis Eduardo Luna and Kestenbetsa, to name just a few.

Awakened by his psychodelic experiences and mentored by Kalwarine, Robert embarked on the path of becoming a fine artist. His accompl-ished creative and spiritual path has been beautifully recorded in three monographs, *Manas Manna* (Big O), *Nixephoros* (Pomegranate Artbooks), and most recently *Illuminatus* (Fine Arts Press). *Illuminatus* features the Haiku-like poetry of Terence McKenna, probably McKenna’s last published writing before his own passing in 2000.

Tercence and Robert had a special friendship that was deepened by the complementar- ity of their work: Venosa skillfully painted what McKenna had seen in the “hyperspace” of DMT, and McKenna used the power of his words to describe the realms that Venosa painted. They spent special times together at each other’s homes, and in 1999 Venosa pre- sented his inspirations and views on vision- ary art at McKenna’s AllChemical Conference in Kona, Hawaii. Here he also met fellow visionary artist Alex Grey.

Referred to by younger members of the vision- ary and psychodelic family as one of their seasoned “elders,” Robert spoke at many conferences and events exploring human con- sciousness, including MindStates; the Proph- ets Conference; Convergentos, the Amazonian Shamanism Conference in Iquitos, Peru; the International Conference on Expanded States of Consciousness at the University of Cuen- navaca, Mexico; as well as at Burning Man’s Entheon Village and Portugal’s Boom Festival. He was known to be extremely approachable, down to earth, and endowed with a great sense of humor.

My husband Robert and I have for many years been regular teachers at the Omega, Esalen, and Skyros Institutes. The exchanges that ensued between us and fellow visionary art- ists about the source of consciousness and its relationship to (as well as inspiration for) art were a kind of alchemy that nourished us both. Robert felt especially strongly about offering building artists the proper support and techni-