

# Illuminated Manuscript

## Robert Venosa's *Illuminatus*

Reviewed by  
Richard T. Carey

*To make art is to draw even with the aspirations of divinity.  
To make art well is to call spirit into being.  
Magicians, like Venosa, know this.*  
— Terence McKenna

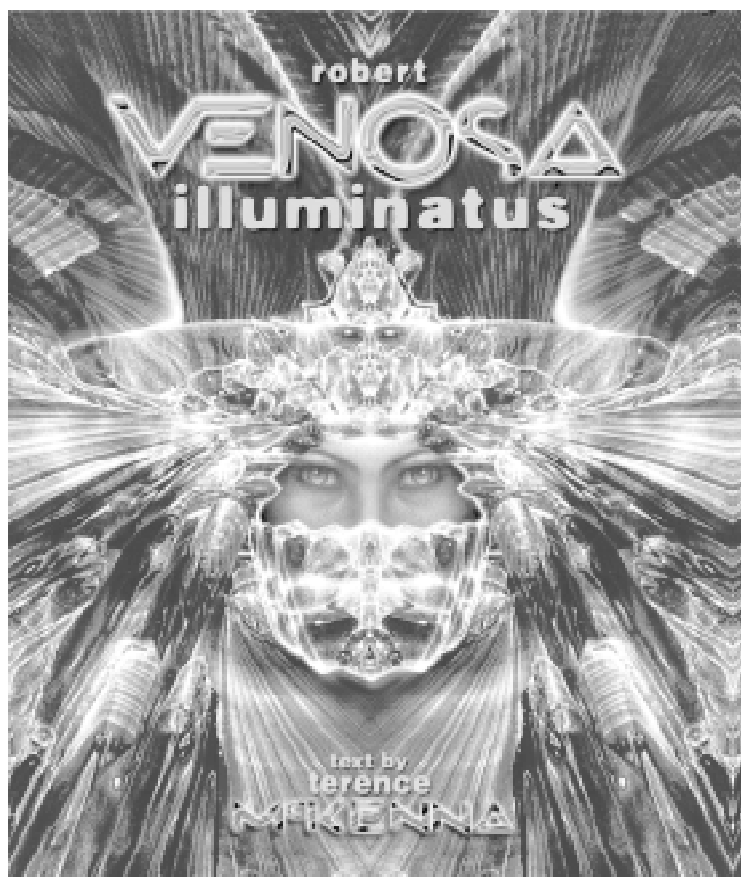
**H**AVE YOU EVER taken a journey to a “separate reality” via ayahuasca or magic mushrooms or some such sacrament and wish you could bring back a snapshot or reconstruct an image from your visionary experience? I have, but cameras are not allowed on these trips, only the mind’s eye, and I am left fantasizing about having the talent of a great painter, such as Robert Venosa. Venosa is an artist of high accomplishment and much of his work reflects images of his inner mindscapes. His new book, *Illuminatus*, further defines the genre of Fantastic Realism (Surrealism, Visionary, Hypo-realism, Psychedelic). With comments and essays by a host of illuminated mentors and/or contemporaries, *Illuminatus* is simply a mind-expanding book. “Those artists, such as Venosa, who gain access to visionary states, captivate us through their eternal imagery to fall under a spell of that reality.” — *Ernst Fuchs*.

But Venosa’s visionary reflections are but one aspect of his broad talent and subject matter. His portraits have a photo-realism mixed with spirit that instills life on his canvases. He uses his photo-realisms “...to lure us through its ‘reality’ into his own inner world of swirling and seraphic energies... Venosa... learned the tempera and oil glazing technique... from yours truly in New York and... Ernst Fuchs in Vienna, and opted to perfect it in a state of mind of jewel-like clarity.” — *Mati Klarwein*

Venosa’s realism, like a hallucination, is astonishing. I confess there have been times I touched his artwork, expecting to feel something that wasn’t there. On one occasion I thought somehow water had spilled onto a painting and I dabbed the drops with a tissue. Another time I was compelled to feel the raised texture of DNA molecules. Both times I was fooled! Speaking of touching, H. R. Giger writes, “I would be delighted to experience one of these images in three-dimensional form and to touch these ethereal figures and faces with my hands...,” and again, “The biggest thrill would be to touch this imaginary cool, smooth surface.”

Tantamount to Venosa’s extraordinary art is the accompanying text by none other than Terence McKenna, art historian, writer, and leading spokesperson for the myriad explorers of mind-altering substances. Terence has reached the stature of one the most articulate psychonauts the world will ever know. Needless to say, his talent for word crafting is par excellence and his text in *Illuminatus* is as illustrious as Venosa’s artwork.

Venosa and McKenna each explore our ultimate frontier, the wilderness of mind. Artists/explorers extraordinaires, they return from their travels in the noosphere and now meet to commingle their elaborate work with brush and pen to bring us a volume the nature and calibre of which has never before been published. *Illuminatus* is destined to be a classic. •



**ROBERT VENOSA**  
**ILLUMINATUS**  
book cover featuring  
**SCHEHERAZADE, 1997**  
oil on canvas,  
44 x 55 cm



**ROBERT VENOSA**  
*PRANA EXHALATION*, 1985  
oil on canvas, 70 x 55 cm