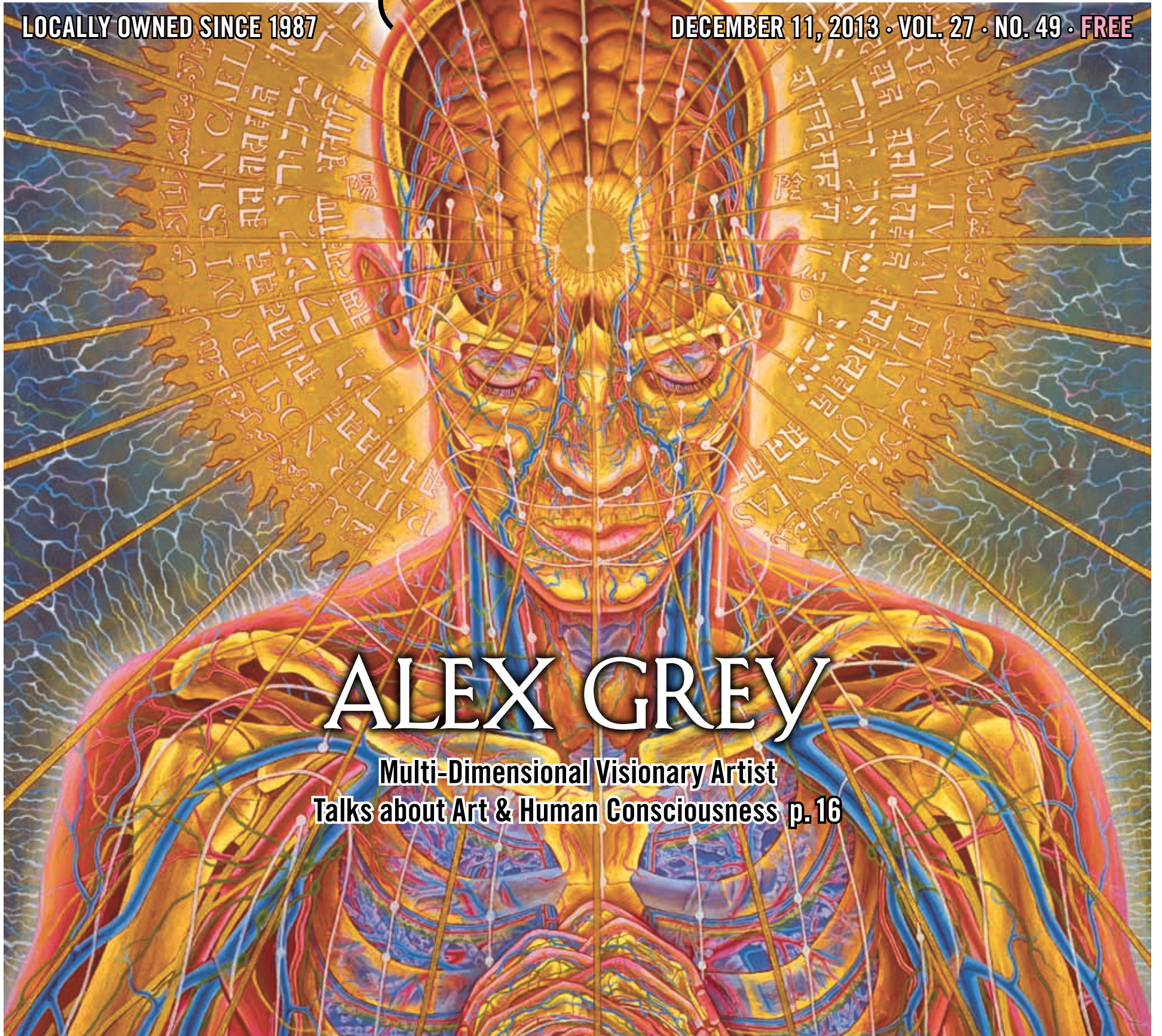


flagpole

COLORBEARER OF ATHENS BETWEEN SEMESTERS

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DECEMBER 11, 2013 • VOL. 27 • NO. 49 • FREE



ALEX GREY

Multi-Dimensional Visionary Artist
Talks about Art & Human Consciousness p. 16



Evil Acts

Fund Replaces Stolen Equipment
of Vincas and The Powder Room p. 9



Gift Guide

It's Inside, and It's Loaded with
Ideas to Help You with Shopping p. 18

The TaxiCab Verses p. 10 • Crafty Beers p. 13 • A Tuna Christmas p. 22 • David Bromberg p. 22

pub notes

ENJOY ATHENS!

Getting ready for what turned out to be a thrilling performance of the Athens Master Chorale in the atrium at the Classic Center last Sunday, I reflected again on just how much really good cultural entertainment is available to us here in Athens. Much of it is free, too, like the chorale and like the upcoming **Athens Symphony Christmas Concert** with local author **Terry Kay** as narrator and with the Athens Symphony Chorus, this Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 14 and 15. For details on the symphony and everything else that's going on, make it a habit to check the *Flagpole* weekly calendar in the paper and at flagpole.com. You'll be surprised how much there is to do and what a wide variety is included every week.

We all know about the music scene here, whether we take advantage of it or not, and if we don't, we may not know what we're missing. It's a lot more than rock and roll: classical, country, bluegrass, jazz, blues, folk—national acts and first-time performances, in fine concert halls and crowded bars. If you and I will just make the effort, we'll find out or be reminded just how much we enjoy live music.

Or take art. Athens is a music town, but it is also an art town. Art is everywhere we go, and the enjoyment of it is free. We see it in restaurants as well as in galleries and museums. We have the Georgia Museum of Art right here on campus, not to mention The Lyndon House and other galleries scattered around town. For instance, right now, in the Circle Gallery of the College of Environment and Design, you can walk in and



Ouida Williams flies over landscapes and uses color to tell what she sees,

see the work of two of Athens' finest artists: the paintings of **Ouida Williams** and the metalwork of **Barbara Mann**. What Ouida does with color and what Barbara does with metal will make you stand in awe. And all you have to do in order to see their joint show, "Landscapes Near and Far," is walk over to what used to be the art building on Jackson St. and go right into the gallery. The show will be up through Dec. 19 and should not be missed.

The same must be said for **René Shoemaker's** new show at Hendershot's: 20 linoleum prints on paper, drawn from her on-site sketches and photographs of café life in France. And all you have to do is walk right into Hendershot's and feast your eyes, perhaps enhancing the experience with a coffee or a glass of wine, while enjoying our own café life. René's work is at Hendershot's through December. Also, the pottery and craft sales continue all over Athens and beyond.

Theater: This weekend Town and Gown has director Eric Kumsomboone's very well done drag version of **Romeo and Juliet** (which I located in Padua, rather than Verona, on last week's *Flagpole* cover). Rose of Athens has **The Santaland Diaries** at The Melting Point Tues., Dec. 10-Thursday, Dec. 12 and The Circle Ensemble is doing **A Tuna Christmas** at New Earth Athens this Friday and Saturday and next.

These are just a few of the reasons, free and paid, for getting out and enjoying what our town has to offer. You've got nothing to lose, and you can't go wrong.

Pete McCommons editor@flagpole.com

ON FLAGPOLE.COM



Mike Collins

from the blogs

IN THE LOOP: Congressional candidate **Mike Collins** parodies **Jean-Claude Van Damme's** "Epic Split" Volvo ad in a new campaign spot that aims "to demonstrate the dangers of Obamacare." It is insane. Watch it.

HOMEDRONE: Local luthier **Scott Baxendale** was chosen to restore **Elvis Presley's** guitar collection, housed at Graceland. Get the deets.

ATHENS POWER RANKINGS: DEC. 9-15

1. **Dexter Weaver**
2. **Evil Acts Relief Fund Supporters**
3. **William Chamberlain**
4. **Chris Conley**
5. **Kelly Girtz**



Athens Power Rankings are posted each Monday on the In the Loop blog on flagpole.com.

facebook feedback

"The 'some random voter' is Michael Stipe."
— Brendan Fagan

Thanks for clearing that up for us, Brendan.
Comments are up and running on flagpole.com! Play nice.

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COVER ART by Alex Grey (see feature story on p. 16)
(CORRECTION: Last week's cover photo was by Joshua Jones.)

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MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 1027, Athens, GA 30603
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CLASSIFIED ADS: class@flagpole.com **LETTERS:** letters@flagpole.com
ADVERTISING: ads@flagpole.com **MUSIC:** music@flagpole.com
CALENDAR: calendar@flagpole.com **NEWS:** news@flagpole.com
EDITORIAL: editor@flagpole.com **WEBSITE:** web@flagpole.com

Flagpole, Inc. publishes *Flagpole Magazine* weekly and distributes 14,500 copies free at over 275 locations around Athens, Georgia. Subscriptions cost \$70 a year, \$40 for six months.
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VOLUME 27
ISSUE NUMBER 49



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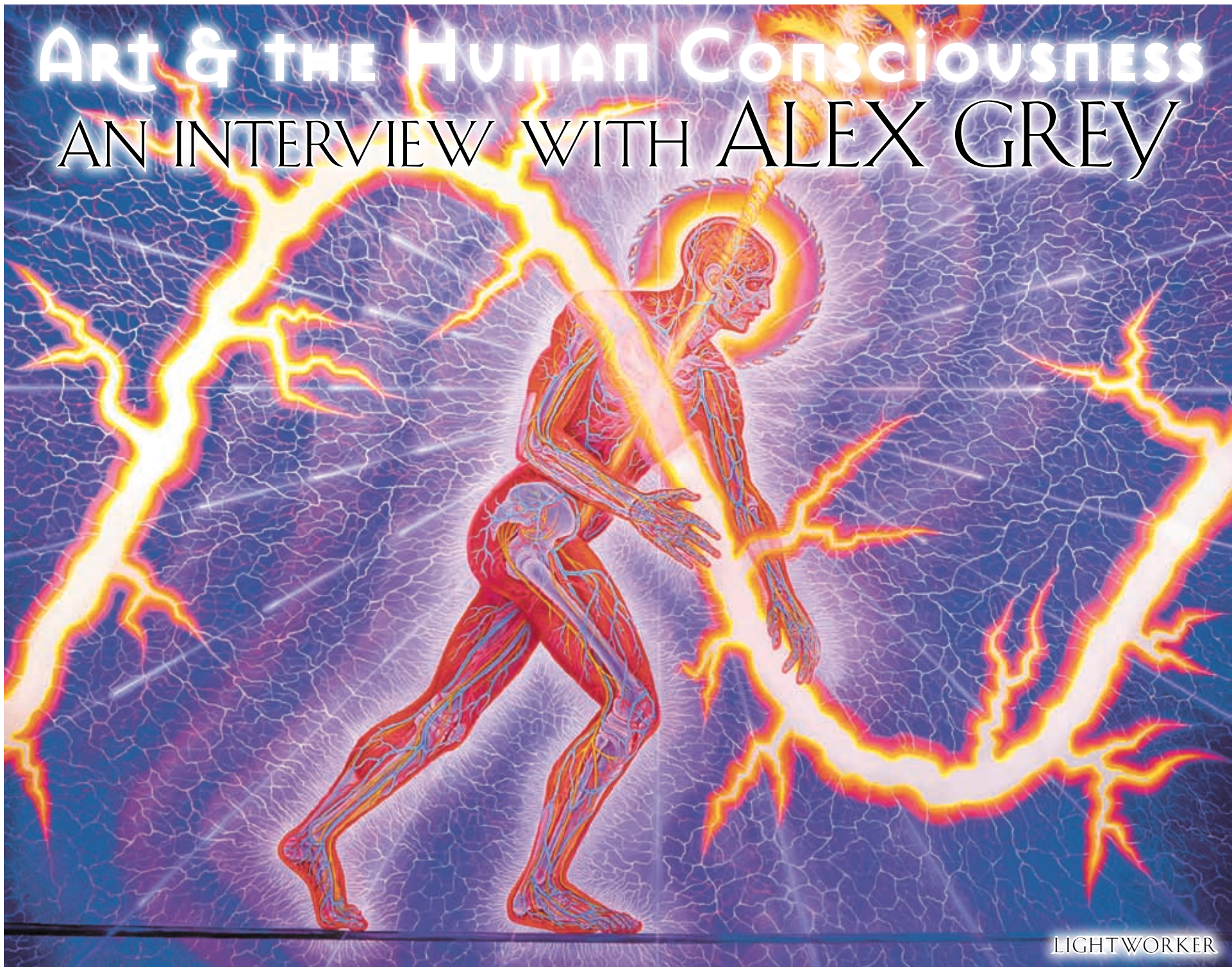
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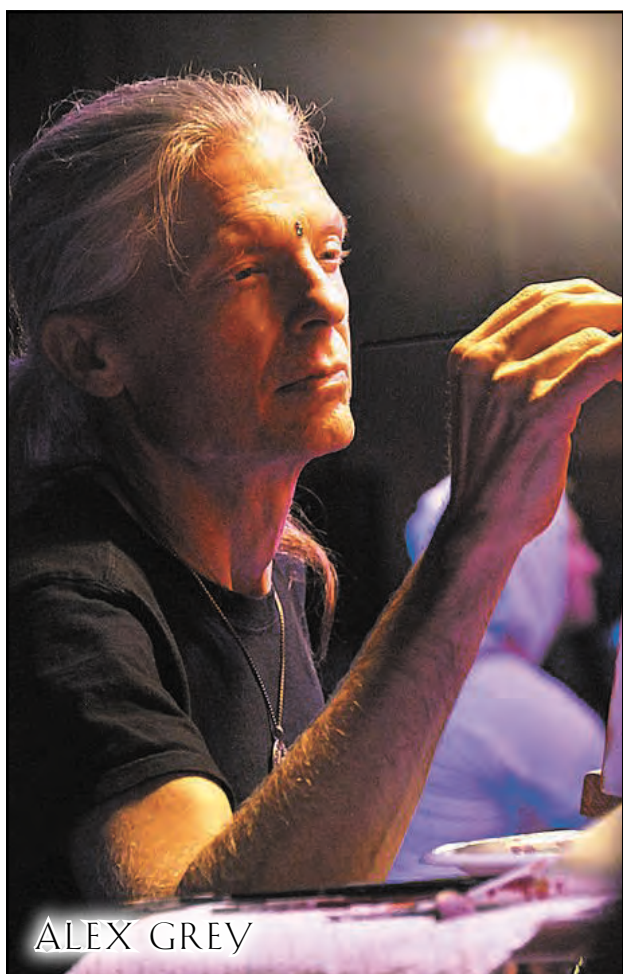
ART & THE HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEX GREY



LIGHTWORKER

ALEX GREY



ALEX GREY

What distinguishes visionary art from other forms of psychedelic, vernacular or sacred art is ultimately a mystical experience or state of mind. Howard Finster, creator of Paradise Garden in Summerville, GA, began making sacred art after seeing a tiny human face in a blob of paint on the tip of his finger. After a fever-induced visitation by people from the future, Eddie Owens Martin, a.k.a. St. EOM, went on to create the celestial artscape Pasaquan in Buena Vista, GA. For internationally renowned artist Alex Grey, the revelation that art can lead to enlightenment arrived while under the influence of LSD. God works in curious ways.

Many of Alex's works—which include paintings, performance art, books, sculptures and installations—focus on themes of consciousness, interconnectedness and transcendence through an interfaith, multi-cultural perspective. He and his wife, Allyson, are in no way shy about the influence sacramental entheogens, or psychoactive substances like LSD, psilocybin and ayahuasca ingested to “generate the divine within,” have had on their artwork over the decades.

Inspired by an LSD-induced vision that Alex and Allyson shared in 1976, Alex developed the “Sacred Mirrors,” a series of 21 life-size paintings created over a 10-year period that explore the interplay of body, mind and spirit. Chronicling a physical-to-mental-to-transcendental pathway, the series begins with crisp, anatomically precise layers of the human body's physical systems (muscular, skeletal, cardiovascular), moves on to images of different races, sexes and religious figures, then ends with depictions of spiritual energy manifested as cosmic white light. As viewers stand before each painting, they are encouraged to contemplate their physical and spiritual identities, representing a journey toward their own divine nature.

In order to publicly exhibit the series, Alex and Allyson co-founded The Chapel of Sacred Mirrors (CoSM), a trans-denominational church dedicated to spiritual renewal through

transformative art, in the Chelsea area of New York City. A few years later in 2008, The Foundation for the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors secured a permanent 40-acre retreat center in Wappinger, NY, and was granted official 501(c)(3) status. The center currently offers full moon ceremonies, solstice and equinox celebrations, workshops and other cultural offerings, and is in the early stages of constructing Entheon, a 3D-printed sanctuary of visionary art slated to open in 2015.

Alex is a longtime supporter of music—having had his vibrant images incorporated into album artwork for several bands including Tool, the Beastie Boys, Nirvana and The String Cheese Incident—and considers festivals to be special environments particularly nurturing of creative thought. On Thursday, Dec. 12, Alex and Allyson will take a trip to Athens during their third annual Visionary Arts Fair, a three-city tour featuring a discussion, meet-and-greet, book signing and live paintings by the couple. The event also includes aerialists, fire performers, a laser light show and live music from Desert Dwellers, Mihkal, Ployd, Modern Measure, Gravity A and Mesca.

Jessica Smith

Flagpole: How and when did you first get involved with art?

Alex Grey: Allyson and I have always been artists. We met in art school in 1974 and have shared a studio for 38 years.

FP: Were you always interested in visionary-style art? Have you ever practiced any other styles of art?

AG: Writing about my first book, *Sacred Mirrors: The Visionary Art of Alex Grey* [Inner Traditions, 1990], James Oroc [the author of *Tryptamine Palace*, 2009] writes: “The sub-title of this book is now believed to be one of the key influences in the naming of a new genre now known as visionary art.”

In my second book, *The Mission of Art* [Shambhala, 1998] I define visionary art as: "... the creative expression of glimpses into the sacred unconscious... the mystical experience of spiritual illumination, unity, wisdom and love."

My art never attempts to portray a style. My art is performative and based on inner visions portrayed from observation to my best ability. Allyson and I are performance artists and social sculptors. CoSM is our artistic co-creation with our global community.

FP: What are some key differences between visionary art and other styles?

AG: Walter Hopps, an imminent art curator and writer, said that there are three broad categories of art: realist, abstract and imaginal. Realistic art attempts to represent the natural world. Abstract art is non-representational and can also come from visions. Sacred geometry, patterning and all forms not referential or literal to the natural world would fit into this category. Imaginal art has been referred to as visionary art, images seen in the creative imagination. Cave paintings of human/animal hybrids [or] a shamanic figure with stag antlers and tail all show the ancient lineage of Visionary Art.

Religious art is related to a sacred tradition. Since visionary experiences of enlightenment and stories of God-contact are the foundation of all world religions, much of sacred art refers to these transcendent

or worked as a janitor by day and created a silver foil throne room in their garage at night. All artists must practice and are ultimately self-taught, although some are influenced by their personal history and environment more than the history of art. Most outsider artists are compelled by a spirit or vision to create. It can be raw and expressive because it's innocent from

the business of art. My work has been placed in each of these categories.

My work is currently included in exhibitions at both the extraordinary American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore and at Halle de St. Pierre, the Paris home of outsider art.

FP: Can you give us a taste of what you'll be bringing or discussing when you come to Athens?

AG: In Athens, I will offer an illustrated overview of sacramental culture and the entheogeneration, sometimes called the Love Tribe. Festivals all over the world attract visionary artists from many disciplines, including dance, music, costume and jewelry design, as well as painting and sculpture. Burning Man is well-known for celebrating what we also call the Tribal Revival that is springing up all over the world.

FP: You often speak about the connection between art and the evolution of human consciousness. Could you briefly explain for readers not familiar with your works?

AG: The evolution of human consciousness is etched into the history of art. Shifts throughout art history appear in phases that are magical to mythic to rational to transcendental. Works of art can literalize states of being and provide a new view in order to transcend it. A depressed person who [pictures] their despair can externalize their inner world and can get a new perspective on their state of being, possibly facilitating a resolution to their depression.

FP: What would you say is your greatest achievement so far?

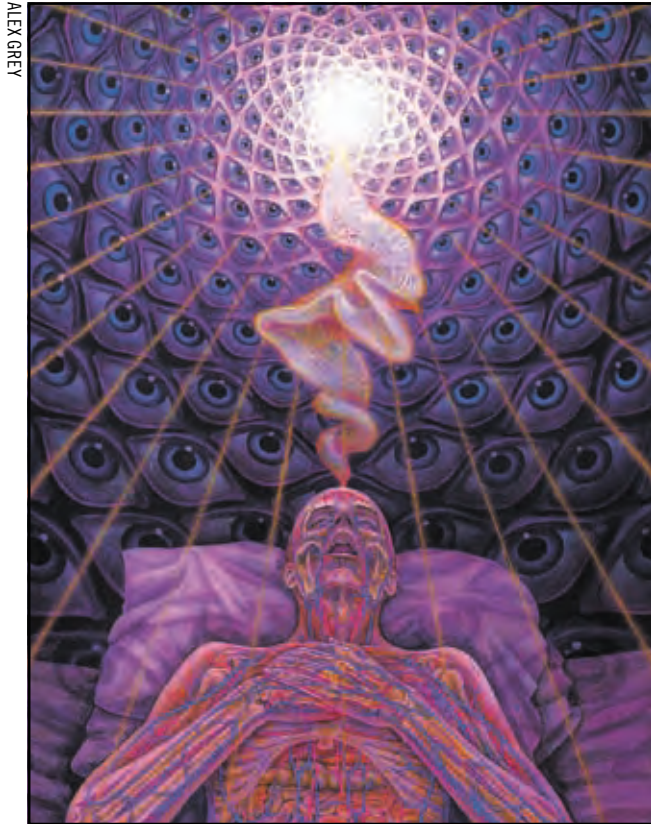
AG: My body of work. Co-founding the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors with Allyson. Thirty-eight years of a truly great marriage. Our exquisite daughter. When I hear that my artwork resonates with the personal peak experiences of others.

FP: What advice would you have for an aspiring local artist?

AG: Keep a journal and draw every day. *The Mission of Art* and my other books [and] the classes Allyson and I teach together at Omega Institute and at CoSM are filled with information useful to aspiring artists. Be inspired by your life in order to create the most

uplifting and thought-provoking artworks. Be uncompromising in your study of technique that will support your art, and study philosophy and great thinkers to make your work come from a deep place.

David Schick



DYING



GODSELF

moments, such as Moses and the burning bush or Buddha dispelling Mara's demons.

Another feature of visionary art is ornate geometric patterns of interconnectedness, and you will find unique expressions of these interweaving latticeworks in many temples throughout the world.

Psychedelic art often reflects the bright intense light, rainbow hues, iridescence, patterns of infinite interconnectedness, forms metamorphosing, one being becoming another, infinite vistas [and] interpenetrating dimensions—art inspired by the psychedelic visionary experience.

Outsider art may refer to art that is created outside the boundaries of an official culture. Every outsider artist has [his] own story. Some made art in prisons or mental institutions

WHAT: Visionary Arts Fair
WHERE: New Earth Athens
WHEN: Thursday, Dec. 12, 6 p.m.
HOW MUCH: \$20 (adv.), \$25 (door)

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THU 12/12 8PM **CARLA LEFEVER**
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We crossed the \$10,000 mark at the 4th Annual event last year and now we set our sights on \$20,000.

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ERIC GREGORY

5:30- 5:55

FESTER HAGOOD

6:00-6:25

DEJA VU

6:30-7:00

BURNING ANGELS

7:05-7:35

WELFARE LINERS

7:40-8:10

BETSY FRANCK

8:15- 8:45

MARCH

8:50-9:20

DAVID BARBE AND THE QUICK HOOKS

9:25-9:55

SHONNA TUCKER AND EYE CANDY

10:00-10:30

CLAY LEVERETT AND THE CHASERS

10:35-11:05

DANGLY

11:10-11:40

TIA MADRE

11:45 -12:15

SOME (DASHBOARD) SAVIORS

12:20 -1:30

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