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Psychedelic signing

Artists Alex, Allyson Grey visit Grass Valley

By Christopher Rosacker
Staff Writer

No shortage of spiritual- and psychedelic-related elements have emanated from Nevada County, where artists Alex Grey and Allyson Grey will visit Wednesday for a book signing.

When Tibetan monks have begun their United States tours for the last dozen years, their first stop is Nevada County. The popularization of the Sensory Deprivation Tank has roots in the county. The area also boasts a large community of Burners, who attend the annual undefinable counter-culture festival Burning Man in the Nevada desert.

"We have large festival-going community here. That translates to the psychedelic art world," said Melanie Steinberg, who owns and operates downtown Grass Valley's Art Discovered gallery, along with partner Matt Wells.

"You can't have one without the other these days," Steinberg said.

And when talking about psychedelic art, one name springs to the top: Alex Grey.

"The visionary mystical experience is humanity's most direct contact with the divine. The best currently existing technology for sharing the visionary mystical experience is a well-crafted artistic rendering by an eye witness," Grey said in an email. "This is why visionary art matters."

For those who don't know, Grey is a renowned spiritual and psychedelic artist, as is his wife, Allyson Grey. The pair will visit Art Discovered Wednesday for a book signing of the former's "Net of Being," released in November.

"We have many friends in Northern California, but this is our first visit to Grass Valley," said the couple in the email. "It has a reputation for great beauty."

"Net of Being" is also the name of one of Alex Grey's famous paintings. It was inspired by a vision of an infinite grid of

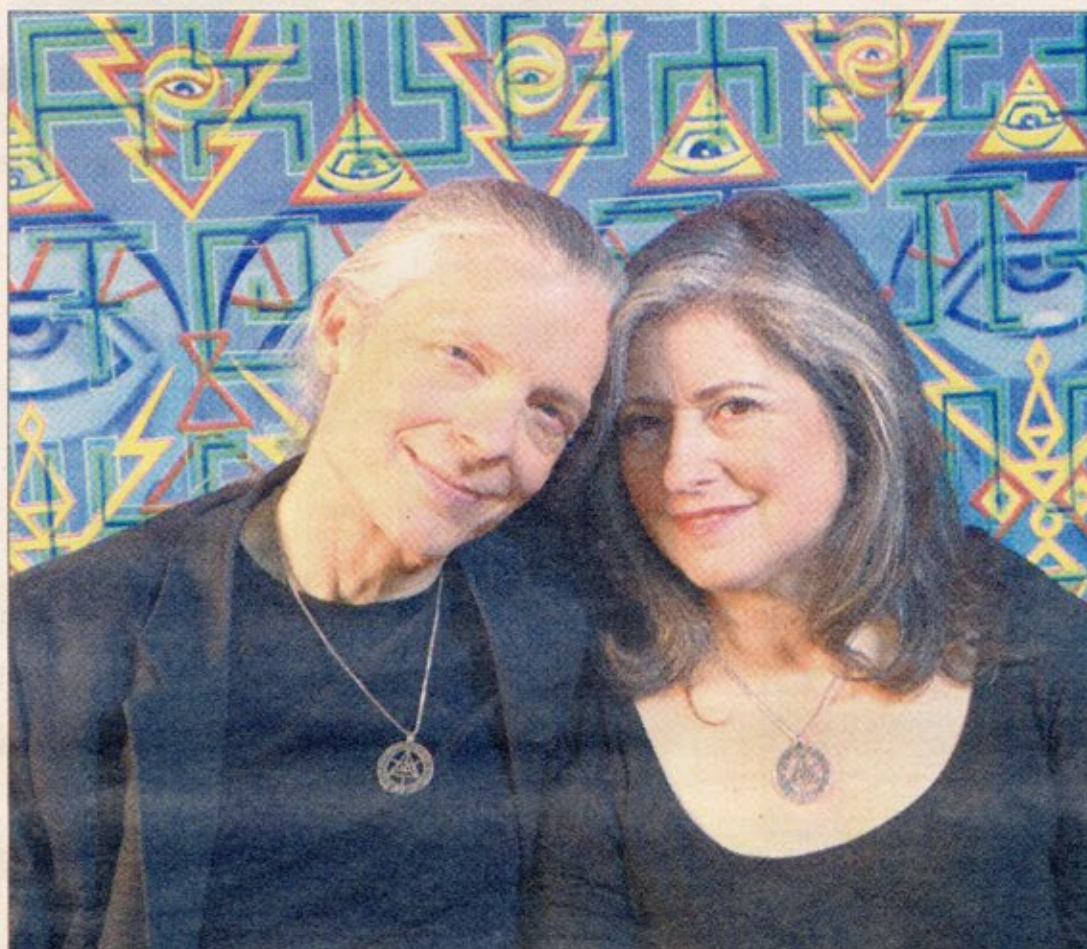


Photo by Eli Morgan

Alex Grey and Allyson Grey will be in Grass Valley April 10 at the gallery Art Discovered for a book signing.

Godheads during an experience spurred by ayahuasca, a psychoactive-infused brew developed by native Amazonians in Peru for divinatory and healing purposes, according to Grey's recent book of the same name.

The painting has been seen by millions, partially because it was portrayed on the cover and interior of art of renowned alternative metal band Tool's most recent album, "10,000 Days," a triple-platinum release that garnered a Grammy in 2006 for best recording package. Artists such as Nirvana and the Beastie Boys have also employed Grey's work, among many others.

Grey's art has also been featured in the New York Times, Newsweek, Revolver and Watkins Review, which listed him among the top 20 most spiritual people, among the Dalai Lama, Eckhardt Tolle and Oprah Winfrey.

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WHAT: Alex Grey "Net of Being" book signing

WHO: Alex Grey and Allyson Grey with music by Andreilien.

WHEN: 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Wednesday, April 10

WHERE: Art Discovered gallery, located at 156 Mill St. (across from Del Oro Theater) in downtown Grass Valley

Described as sacred, visionary or even postmodern, Grey's paintings often depict energetic anatomical human bodies portrayed through various X-ray layers of the human body's inner workings, along with spiritual elements. Some of Grey's most well-known work is a series of 21 life-sized paintings known as the Sacred Mirrors. Begun in 1979, the series took a decade to complete and present the context of spiritual, biological and technological evolution of humans.

DETAILS: Books and prints will be available for sale.

AFTER PARTY: Begins 8 p.m. at 151 Union Square, located at 151 Mill St.

DETAILS: Music by Smoke Signals, Bass Cadet and Matt W. Live paintings by Anthony West and Nikki Lee Drum, Matt Degrado and Jennifer Michelle Long, John Benko and Chelsea Kosta, as well as others.

While also portraying some of Grey's work, his most recent book, also titled "Net of Being," further explores themes of interconnectedness.

Not only does the theme permeate "Net of Being" the art book, it also has defined much of Allyson Grey's art.

One of Allyson Grey's defining experiences was a shared 1976 LSD trip with her husband in which she perceived a vision akin to the Jewel Net of Indra.

"My portrayal of this graphic description of infinite

interconnectedness resonates with the image Alex and I had together that changed our work — the infinite vista of fountains and drains," said Allyson Grey.

Her work also incorporates an not-translatable, invented text, reminiscence of symbols on religious art of a forgotten language.

"Secret writing is a 'nameless' alphabet, not translatable in the typical sense but representing the essence of creativity as it is manifest in the material world," she said. "I often ask viewers what they think my work means, and I find that their answers are usually correct."

Compared to the Johnny Cash and June Carter of the psychedelic art world, in part because of their propensity for dressing in black, the Greys travel the world together sharing their spirituality and artistic talents. Beyond book signings, the pair has performed live paintings, such as in Sao Paulo, Brazil, before 25,000 participants at a 20-hour party.

"We have shared a studio for 38 years and all of our work individually is influenced welcomingly by each other. Zena, our daughter (a budding actress), has always been an inspiration, as well," Alex Grey said. "The subject of family and the energy that brings souls together has been a central theme in my artwork."

Steinberg is expecting an overwhelming turnout to meet the Greys at her and Wells gallery.

"This is a huge opportunity for Art Discovered, but it is ultimately just a really cool thing for the community as well. We are looking at as a community event more than we are looking at it from a promotional standpoint," Steinberg said. "We are expecting a large turnout. We are a small space and people are going to have to be patient."

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