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ENTHEON: A Sanctuary of Visionary Art

Part 2 of an Exclusive
Interview with
ALEX & ALLYSON GREY
by *Alexander de Cadenet*

AdeC: Could you share how the original idea for Entheon came to you?

A & A: The name Entheon means “a place to discover the God within,” and is a Sanctuary of Visionary Art at CoSM.

In 1985, when MDMA was still legal and successfully used by therapists, we were gifted our first MDMA experience together. Lying on our bed, not talking or touching, we had a simultaneous vision of the Chapel of Sacred Mirrors, an installation of Alex’s series of paintings. CoSM, the name of the organization we subsequently co-founded, is an anagram of Chapel of Sacred Mirrors. From 1979 through 1989, Alex created the 21 Sacred Mirrors, which includes nineteen paintings and two etched mirrors.

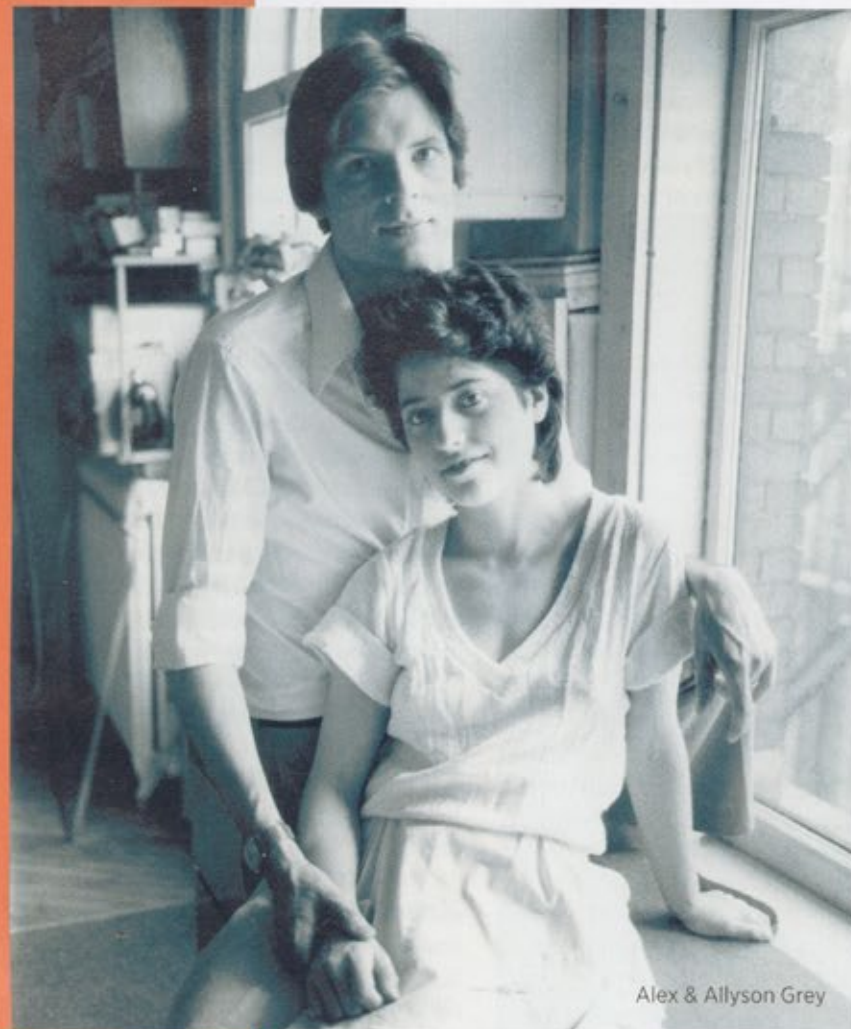
On that first MDMA journey, Alex’s vision included elaborately sculpted frames, providing a unifying context for the series. In the Fall of 1985 we built, sculpted and cast the twenty-one large frames for the Sacred Mirrors.

The Sacred Mirrors were inspired by charts that Alex painted for our 1978 Boston performance, “Life Energy,” offered in a Boston gallery. Guests were invited to reflect on their nervous system and alternatively on the subtle energetic systems, including chakras, auras, acupuncture meridians and points on the human body. On our way home from this performance, Allyson suggested a fully rendered series of paintings — life-sized portrayals of body, mind and spirit of an individual. Alex spent the next twelve years painting the series. Allyson named the series, Sacred Mirrors.

Inspired by the Pantheon in Rome, a place for “all the Gods,” the name Entheon was conceived for the Visionary Art sanctuary at CoSM. Entheogens has been an alternative name for psychedelics, alluding to their religious sacramental importance. Entheos translates from Greek as “full of god, inspired, possessed.” Entheon was the name Alex originated for the renowned Burning Man Camp of 2006. Many of the best and brightest Visionary painters exhibited banners and hosted live painting and music in the various domes and sculptural tents of Entheon Village.

AdeC: You have described Entheon as a ‘temple’ — how is it intended that visitors will ‘discover the creator within’?

Alex: A common language unites a people. Visionary Art is the language of CoSM’s community, because it affirms the psychedelic



Alex & Allyson Grey



Wonder, by Alex Grey, 1996

“If there are many jobs in the afterlife, just like in life, we both intend to keep making art with the angels if they will have us.”

ALEX GREY

divine imagination and mystical experience. For pilgrims to the sacred inner dimensions, visionary art provides validation for their own glimpses, and proves the universal nature of the imaginal realms. Reflecting the luminous richness of higher spiritual worlds, visionary art activates our light body, empowers our creative soul, and stirs our deepest potential for positive, transformative action in the world. The “discovery of the Creator within” depends on the receptiveness of the viewer. Altered states of consciousness depicted in visionary works of art have ontological veracity, validated through claims of shared perception by independent observers. Artists who depict their psychedelic journeys become cartographers of the ineffable, providing a snapshot of “the beyond within.”

For those unfamiliar with these dimensions, it may be an introduction to the appearance of the supernatural world behind our own eyeballs. This is why CoSM is supported by friends world-wide, joining with us in collectively building a place to honor and preserve visionary artworks that point to humanity’s common transcendental source. Visionary Art is evidence of the “inner creator” becoming visible to the outer world through an artifact. Contemplating iconic artwork can reflect the dimensions of the sacred found within the observer and can potentially activate our highest spiritual alignment and healing. Since 1996, CoSM has been hosting rituals, skill development, unifying and consciousness raising events intended to engage a global spiritual community.

Allyson: A creative container can inspire the Divine within and uplift by catalyzing personal acts of artistry. In our beleaguered world, Entheon can be a beacon of “the light of creativity.”

Entheon will have three floors of Visionary Art plus a Great Hall, hosting a stage, where we envision gathering safely again with community, to celebrate celestial events, enjoy live performances, share and receive person to person wisdom, be uplifted. Throughout Covid, CoSM.TV has continued to reach out virtually.

AdeC: Alex has said that “Art is an echo of the creative force that birthed the galaxies” and “Creativity is a way the cosmos evolves and communicates with itself”. Could you explain how you came to these realizations?

Alex: The force that birthed the cosmos lives as the creative urge in our souls. Creativity is evolution in our own hands. Each one of us is the undeniable result of causes and effects in an evolving universe. Who is the voice in your head that is commenting or asking questions? Who is listening? Every voice in every head is the subtle voice of Cosmic Creator. A cosmic creative force,

ultimately, moves every artists brush, initiating every inventive thought. How do I know this? LSD made that apparent by expanding our identity and temporal horizons, but truly this insight is logical.

AdeC: Could you both give your thoughts on the age-old philosophical question “How is consciousness even here?”

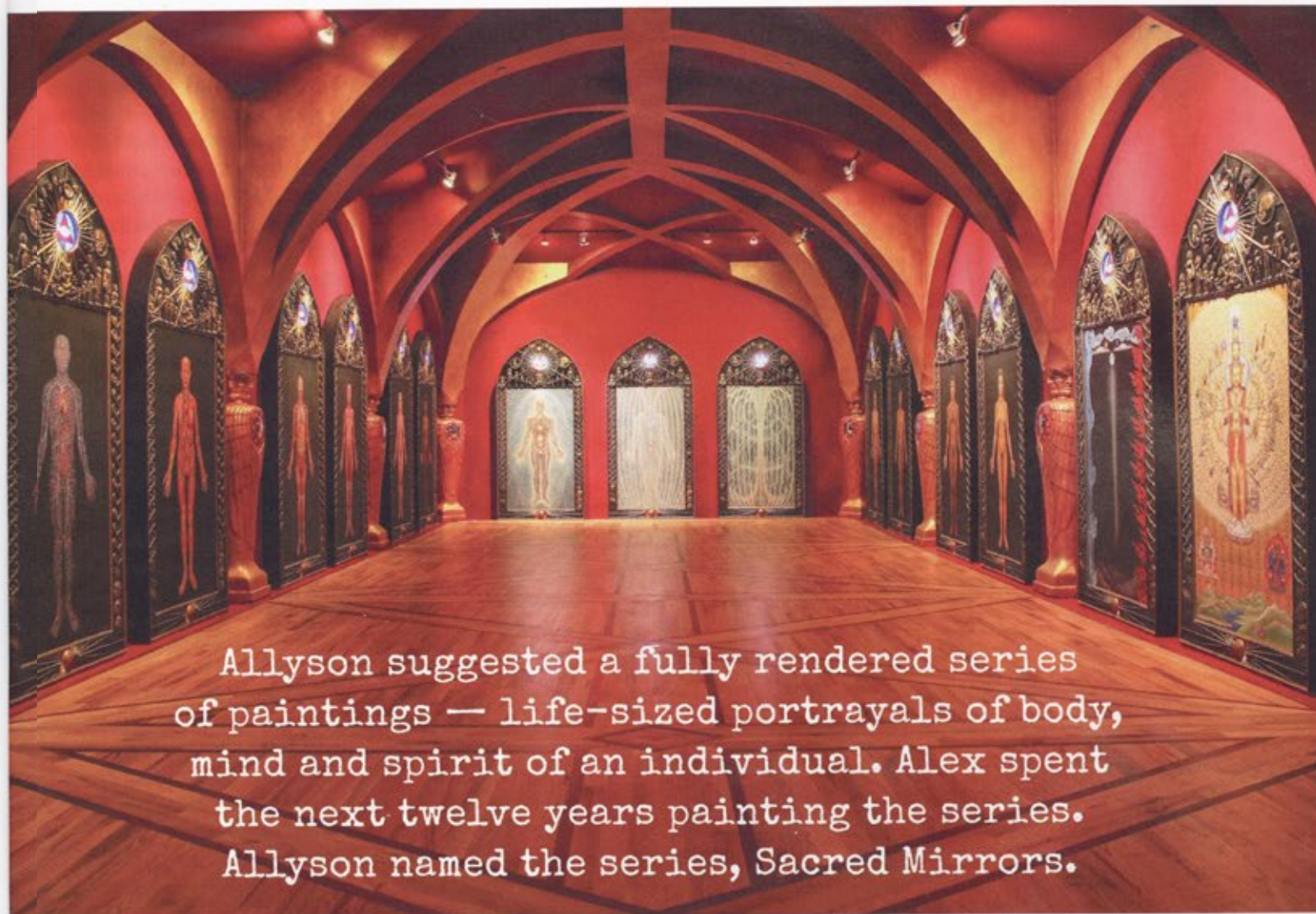
Alex: Astrophysicists report that our universe is mostly dark matter and dark energy, in other words, nothing. In this vast expanse of nothingness, the appearance of galaxies with stars, let alone planets with higher life forms and consciousness able to contemplate it all, is truly the greatest of miracles. How is this possible? To an artist, “creative will” appears to be the obvious answer. God is the divine Artist and Cosmos is the masterwork in progress. Reality is like a gigantic wave in the ocean of time that is cresting and our conscious lifetime is a foamy droplet that falls off of one cresting wave. In astonishment, for a moment, we glimpse the phenomenal spectacle of the wave unfurling before us and then plunge back into the Ocean of Love Bliss.

Allyson: Once we’ve had personal contact with Divinity, the existence of a higher power capable of designing such an elegant complexity is evident everywhere we look. Repeated scientific psilocybin trials have shown that a majority of spiritually open subjects, journeying within a conducive mindset and setting, will report having a mystical experience — personal contact with Divinity. At age 19, on an LSD journey in dark solitude, I saw what was obviously God, the force of life and light of the Universe, coursing through every being and thing. Washing over all surfaces and in ribbons through the air, Secret Writing, the Language of the Ineffable, transformed me from an Agnostic Jew to a Universal Mystic. Natural Knowing, the highest level of consciousness, may be challenging to maintain, but cannot be UN-known.

AdeC: Do you believe that consciousness can survive death? In what form might it take?

Alex: That is the big mystery, isn’t it? I do believe that consciousness survives bodily death. I have had numerous “past life” recalls and feel that I am a re-incarnation of the Symbolist painter Jean Delville, something that I certainly cannot prove. Some of the most compelling scientific evidence of reincarnation has been collected by the research of Ian Stevenson, which would give any skeptic something to scratch their head about. A subtle energetic form may be the necessary vessel during afterlife journeys. Different vibratory vessels may be appropriate for alternate dimensions. In our dream body, we have adventures as we sleep.

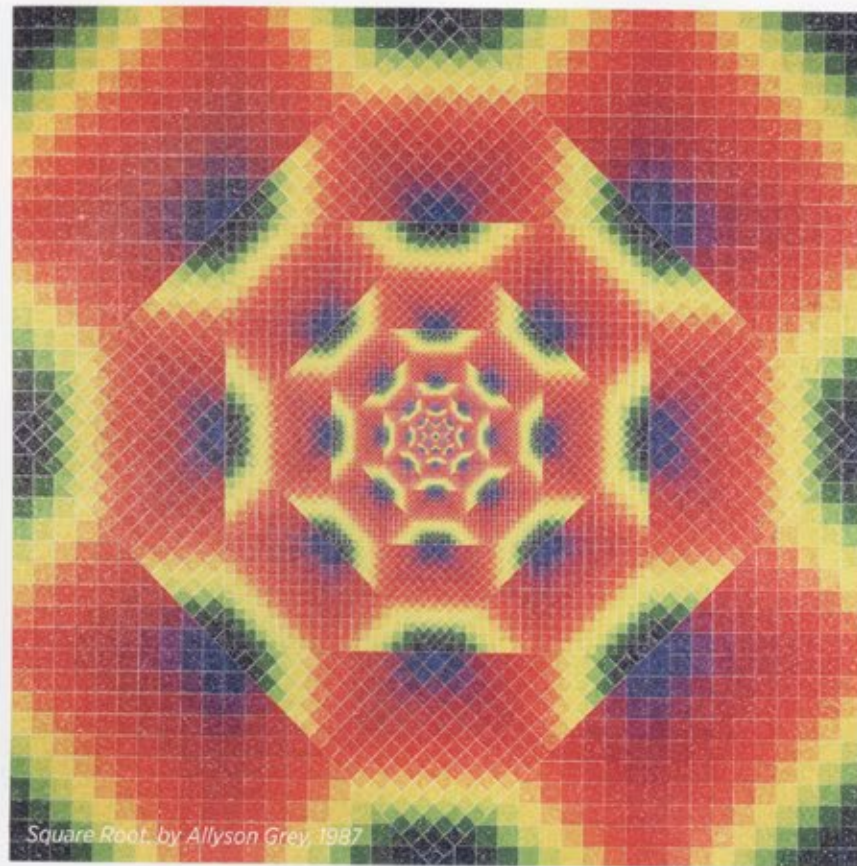
When we die, according to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, we enter the Bardo, “the between,”



Allyson suggested a fully rendered series of paintings — life-sized portrayals of body, mind and spirit of an individual. Alex spent the next twelve years painting the series. Allyson named the series, Sacred Mirrors.



OPPOSITE PAGE:
TOP - CoSM Sacred
Mirrors Room, 2020
BOTTOM -
Entheon 3D Model.



Square Root, by Allyson Grey, 1987



Alex & Allyson at Red Rocks, 2017



CoSM Community gathering around 'Altered States', a sculpture by Kate Raudenbush

a time from Death to Rebirth. For up to 49 days the soul is impacted by lights and visions in the Bardo. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* recommends avoiding the warmer, softer lights of rebirth from the Bardo, but to go for the brightest light that will carry your consciousness beyond subsequent births. In this way, the light guides us to a higher incarnation of our consciousness, unhooked from the realms of Samsara, to join the celestial Buddha field. If visions are frightening we are advised not to run away, but to face them as our teachers and learn what lessons they provide.

Ghosts are part of many world fables. Where do our departed friends hang out, the ones who meet us when we cross over to the other side? Spiritual scientist, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 – 1772) believed in cities of the dead that resembled our own towns. If there are many jobs in the afterlife, just like in life, we both intend to keep making art with the angels if they will have us. Allyson and I may have previewed the death state when we visited the *Universal Mind Lattice* during our breakthrough June 3, 1976 LSD journey. That trip connected us to a transcendent fountain of light at the core of our being, where we saw ourselves as part of an infinite omnidirectional grid of spiritual beings. Several near-death experience descriptions resemble the place we encountered.

Allyson: Death is the precipice over which we cannot see during life. Death is the end of our job, a journey from this to the next plane of existence. The timing is God's secret. That said, I do believe I've been reincarnated. Maybe I'll return in another form or maybe I'll go toward the light and join the choir invisible and do some good there.

AdeC: How would you both describe synchronicity?

Allyson: *The Book of Synchronicity* by Italian philosopher, Oberto Airaudi a.k.a. Falco, Founder of the Federation of Damanhur, suggests that by noting our synchronistic occurrences we can develop our psychic ability. Alex and I can often enough finish each other's sentences and sense having become more psychic with others, especially those we know best, but more sensitive overall to the thoughts and feelings of others.

Alex: Years back, Allyson and I ventured onto the Munich streets one evening after teaching a day-long drawing workshop. We were looking for dinner. An old friend from New York, traveling in Germany recognized me on the corner. We asked for advice on where to get dinner and she pointed toward the arches. "You ought to go to the Hofbrauhaus, it's down there, just ask someone..." So we wandered into the center of old Munich. We thought we were lost when we encountered a storefront sign of a friend we had lunch with

the day before. Inside, a man watching the store looked shocked as we walked in. "Oh my God, Alex Grey! Allyson Grey! The picture I took of you at the painting event last night is on my phone NOW!" We asked his help. "Can you tell us how to get to Hofbrauhaus?" He left the store to guide us and, in a few blocks, he said, "I'm not sure where it is, after all, but before we part, I wanted to show you my tattoo!" In the middle of the street, he rolled up his sleeve to show us the tat of my work entitled, "Buddha Embryo," inked by Mike Lee, a visionary artist friend we had in common. As we crossed the street, Drew Roulette of the U.S. band Dredg, saw us coming and opened his shirt to show us his chest tat of my art, "Vajra Brush Angel." Drew told us his bandmates were meeting up at the Hofbrauhaus and invited us to go along. Synchronicities are like a cosmic wink, or a feeling that the angels are playing with you.

AdeC: Who are your preferred spiritual teachers? Can you recommend any books or programming you're currently inspired by?

A & A: We are each other's spiritual teacher. First and foremost, the angels in our heads are our spiritual teachers.

Alex: Everything by Ken Wilber, the most inspiring spiritual genius I have ever known. Matthew Fox continues to write about an ecological creation spirituality that speaks to my soul. Michael Singer, dear friend of CoSM, founder of the Temple of the Universe and favorite of Oprah, has long been a wise mentor we recommend for spiritual love dynamite. His recent book *The Surrender Experiment: My Journey into Life's Perfection*, shows his mental dexterity in paying attention to the messages planted all around us by spirit. Our Tibetan teacher, Namkhai Norbu introduced us to the Dzogchen view and practices which have been very important to me. I love to read the classic mystics like Ibn 'Arabi, Plotinus, and idealist philosophers like Schelling. Throughout the pandemic I have appreciated the heartfelt messages that Marianne Williamson brought to social media. One of our new friends, Brian Muraresku has brought some archaeological scrutiny to the Eleusinian Mysteries and early psychedelic civilization in his recent book, *The Immortality Key*.

Allyson: Ram Dass' book *Be Here Now*, changed my mind and my life in 1971, the year it was released. My mother was a child psychologist and I grew up reading books of the great behavioral and motivational intelligences, a category I still enjoy and turn to for guidance. For nearly fifteen years, I've continued my blog, "Ask Allyson about Art & Life" [allysongrey.com] with insight for it coming from so many teachers.

Together, we listen to human behavior, science and philosophy podcasts — among our favorites is



LEFT: Tattoo of "Buddha Embryo," by Alex Grey, inked by Mike Lee

RIGHT: Drew Roulette of the U.S. band Dredg showing his tattoo of "Vajra Brush Angel" by Alex Grey.

the lecture repertoire of Steven West on the long running podcast "Philosophize This," a brilliant way to brush up on the fun facts of philosophy from pre-Socratic to Marshall McLuhan.

AdeC: Do you enjoy living in a commune? How does it help your creative process?

A & A: We do not live in a commune. CoSM is an Interfaith Art Church, a spiritual organization whose mission it is to uplift the world by building an enduring Sanctuary of Visionary Art. CoSM became a non-profit in 1996. Since becoming a church in 2008, the two of us have been volunteers, donating all earnings to CoSM. Those who live and work on-site are employees of CoSM, very special people whom we love and trust like family. Within their departments and in their jobs, everyone has some say.

Do we enjoy group living? Very much. Living and working on a small campus, everyone's contribution allows us all to better serve the global community. During the pandemic we have all bonded. We jokingly call CoSM an "Artshram," like an ashram of artists, musicians and creators, all in service to spirit. Our biggest challenge over this year has been the birth of online offerings on social media. It's taken us all to new levels of trust in collaborating. We are dedicated to presenting the beauty of visionary art virtually, to inspire and uplift everyone.

Everyone who works here helps the two of us facilitate our creative process as they develop their own. With CoSM staff, we co-create an interactive social sculpture, an artwork intending social transformation by hosting and nurturing creativity in everyone. The tranquility of nature and the camaraderie encourages every CoSMonaut to pursue creative passions while supporting the visionaries of CoSM community world-wide.

Connected with outposts of visionary culture around the planet, we recently collaborated on two multi-media immersive installations at the new Meow Wolf Las Vegas. There's a psychedelic dawn emerging throughout the world. [w](#)

MEET THE ARTISTS

The mystic paintings of ALEX GREY articulate realms of psychedelic visionary consciousness, revealing interwoven energies of body and soul, love and spirit; illuminating the anatomical core of each being. Alex's visual meditations on the nature of life and consciousness have reached millions through his books, the exhibition and extensive reproduction of his artwork, speaking appearances, stage sets for major rock bands, video animation, and Grammy award winning album art.

ALLYSON GREY is a painter, social sculptor, and Alex's partner in creativity and life. Chaos, Order and Secret Writing comprise the essentialized world view portrayed in Allyson's paintings. Chaos represents the material world, Order, the interconnected realm of energy and light, and Secret Writing articulates the mystic realm of creative expression.

ALEXANDER DE CADENET is a British artist in photography, paintings and sculptures that are "an exploration into the mysteries and sacredness of life". His work has been exhibited at museums and galleries worldwide. He is the founder of the Awakened Artists group and is Contributing Arts Editor for *Watkins Mind Body Spirit* magazine.

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