

A Door to Creativity?
A Consideration of the Role of Psychedelic Drugs in
Creative Culture.

Maya Mercer-Bell

1700895

Photography in the Arts BA (Hons)

Supervisor : Hamish Gane

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of BA (Hons)
University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 11th December 2019.*

6303 Words.

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SUMMARY

This inquiry seeks to explore and evaluate the effect of psychoactive drugs within creative culture through reviewing several aspects of the psychedelic movement, various cultural references and philosophical perspectives. This inquiry will follow a loosely chronological pattern, with the main eras/subjects of interest being: origins of psychedelic drugs, pioneers that have advocated the use of psychedelic drugs, mythology surrounding the nature of psychedelic drugs, psychedelic counterculture and the role of psychedelics in modern society.

A Door to Creativity?

A Consideration of the Role of Psychedelic Drugs in Creative Culture.

Introduction:

This inquiry seeks to explore and evaluate the effect of psychedelic drugs within creative culture through reviewing several aspects of the psychedelic movement, various cultural references and philosophical perspectives. The motivation for this line of inquiry stems from a profound personal experience regarding a first encounter with psychedelic drugs. During this first psychedelic experience, the mind seemed to deeply consider visual art - in the way that everything seemed as if it were art. The feeling that all things somehow made sense, that stereotypical feeling of unity that psychedelics are often said to bring about, was overwhelming and euphoric. When looking at photographs and artworks in general, whether scrolling through images on a smartphone or flicking manically through the pages of a book, one feels as though you were there in the exact moment that each image was conceived and thus understand completely the artist's reason for having created it. Art that one would, in a sober state of mind, consider to be 'bad' or not to one's taste, simply appears as a manifestation of some part of the human psyche, and thus seemed to be filled with meaning and purpose. Having found this such an awakening experience, it provoked a curiosity about what various drugs, specifically those which are psychedelic, may have done for creative people throughout history. Psychedelic drugs are known to trigger these 'breakthrough' experiences or bouts of inspiration, but they've also been infamous for destroying creative minds alike. This inquiry will follow a loosely chronological pattern, with the main eras/subjects of interest being: origins of psychedelic drugs, pioneers that have

advocated the use of psychedelic drugs, mythology surrounding the nature of psychedelic drugs, psychedelic counterculture and the role of psychedelics in modern society.

Chapter 1 - Beginnings / Pioneers / Mythology

Altering our conscious minds and making art are two acts that have been somewhat synonymous throughout anthropological history. From Native Americans and their use of peyote to Ancient Amazonian tribes and their use of ayahuasca, taking mind-altering drugs is something that has been traced back to our most ancient civilisations. Drug use has been attributed to the work of many hugely influential creative people throughout time, almost too many to mention, but including Sigmund Freud, Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, Steve Jobs, and countless musicians. Various scholars have even speculated that a few influential Greeks, such as Pythagoras, could not have come up with their genius theories and philosophies *without* some form of drug use (Knox, 2019).

Although it would be impossible to determine exactly how long these substances have been in use, there is evidence in the form of stone paintings that Saharan aboriginal tribes of North Africa might have been using mushrooms from around 9000 BC. Similarly, rock paintings in Spain created about 6000 years ago suggest that the mushroom *Psilocybe hispanica* was used during certain religious rituals (Brusco, 2019).

Information about the use of these drugs in ancient civilisations comes mostly from early creative efforts - cave paintings, sculptures and artefacts. An example of evidence from these early artworks in regards to use of psychedelics is a recent study that analysed over 40,000 years worth of cave paintings. A 2013 study investigating ideas surrounding biology, culture and consciousness found that commonly found spiral patterns and designs painted in caves and on ancient artefacts across the world

aren't entirely coincidental. These patterns were found to be consistent with hallucinations that many humans see after ingesting hallucinogenic plants and are specifically known as "Turing instabilities".

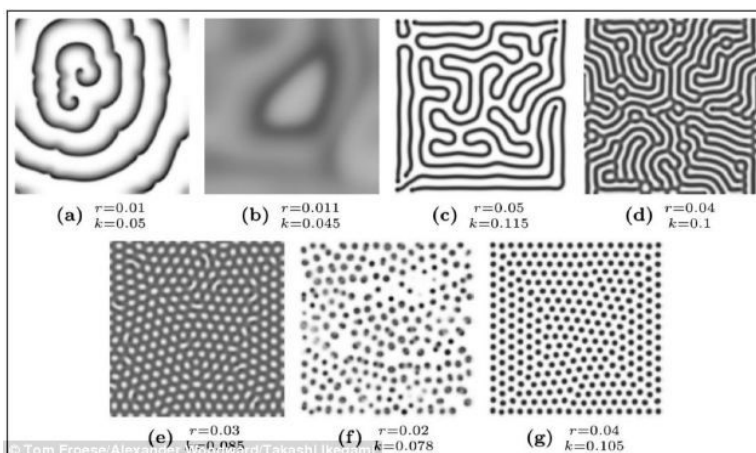


Figure 1: *Neural patterns associated with visual hallucinations*

According to the study, these visuals resemble neural patterns that mimic the structural makeup of the brain. The researchers commented on this phenomenon that: "When these visual patterns are seen during altered states of consciousness they are directly experienced as highly charged with significance... the patterns are directly perceived as somehow meaningful and thereby offer themselves as salient motifs for use in rituals." (Froese, Woodward, Ikegami 2013). This therefore implies a longstanding use and perceived importance of these psychedelic substances throughout the earliest of ancient human cultures. Amanda Fielding, a researcher for the Beckley Foundation, supports this idea in her view that

The imagery that comes with the psychedelic experience is a theme that runs through ancient art, so I'm sure that psychedelic experience and other techniques, like dancing and music, were used by our early ancestors to enhance consciousness, which then facilitated spirituality, art, and medicine (Berman, 2019).

Many prominent researchers believe this early use of psychedelics to be a precursor to many different phenomena associated with human culture.

There are countless studies and theories about the use and importance of psychoactive plants in ancient cultures, but it is generally accepted that these substances were utilised within most cultures across the world for ritualistic and spiritual purposes. It is likely that these drugs were mostly administered by Shaman-like figures for their perceived spiritual healing properties. According to Gaia online, the way of the Shaman is to treat the patient or circumstance through esoteric gateways. The word *shaman* originates from the Evenki word “šamán” (loosely translated as ‘the one who knows’). Shamans have been, and still are, practicing across the globe. In many indigenous tribes around the planet, their methods are held in sacred secret (Faraci, 2017). Recent evidence to support the idea of ritualistic drug use comes from a 2016 archaeological find of what is thought to have been a shaman’s pouch in a cave in Bolivia. According to National Geographic, the pouch once contained a number of psychoactive substances. Interestingly, several of these compounds were not found natively in the area, suggesting that great effort had gone into finding these plants. An analysis of the pouch revealed traces of bufotenine, benzoylecgonine (BZE) and cocaine (likely from coca leaf), dimethyltryptamine (DMT), harmine, and possibly psilocin, a chemical component of psychedelic mushrooms (Miller et al., 2019).



Figure 2 : *The Shaman's pouch recovered in Bolivia*

This suggests that the use of such substances in ancient cultures was considered sacred and supports the idea that the role of the psychedelic drugs at this time was mostly ritualistic. The research seems to imply that early humans came together because of these substances to experience phenomena outside of their usual consciousnesses and express themselves through new and exciting creative efforts.

Another interesting theory in evaluating the role of psychoactive drugs in ancient cultures is that they may have been a catalyst in human evolution. In 1992, ethnobotanist Terence McKenna published his book *Food Of The Gods* in which he outlined his 'Stoned Ape Hypothesis' - the idea that the great cognitive leap between the early homo erectus and their immediate successor, homo sapiens, was due to their encounter with psilocybin mushrooms (Berman, 2019). Homo erectus were the first known hominids to move beyond a single continent, encountering new animals, plants and diets along the way. McKenna proposed that as these hominids moved to new areas, they would have undoubtedly come across psychedelic mushrooms and consumed them. After consuming their psilocybin, their brains would have been kicked into overdrive, acquiring new information-processing capabilities, and perhaps a noticeable expansion of their imaginations. As McKenna put it, "*Homo sapiens* ate [their] way to a higher consciousness". He also commented that, "it was at this time that religious ritual, calendar making, and natural magic came into their own" (Berman, 2019). This suggests that psychedelic drugs may have played an immensely important role in terms of the expansion of human consciousness and therefore the beginnings of creative cultures throughout history.

However, this theory has been largely overlooked by the scientific community for being too simple in its nature. For example, paleontologist Martin Lockley in his book *How Humanity Came Into Being*

(2010) put forward the criticism that McKenna's theory implies that there is a singular cause for consciousness, and in reality, there would be many more contributing factors. Citing psychoactive substances for the emergence of higher consciousness and creativity may be somewhat far-fetched, but it can be argued that the consumption of these plants could definitely have been an evolutionary catalyst. In more recent years, popular mycologist Paul Stamets has revived this idea of the Stoned ape hypothesis, branding it rather as a 'theory', because he believes that it could never really be proved, but exists as one of the most probable and exciting theories that exist to explain this phenomenon.

In looking at the links between creative people and psychoactive drugs throughout history, it is also very interesting to refer to mythological archetypes, namely Apollo and Dionysus. Outlined in Friedrich Nietzsche's work *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), these two Greek gods form a fascinating dichotomy that has been referenced in various bodies of work in an attempt to describe different aspects of art or culture. Nietzsche proposed that these two Gods were the foundation of all creative work, an integral duality of what he calls "dreams" and "drunkenness." For Nietzsche, dreams represent the realm of beautiful forms and symbols, an orderly place of light and reason. Drunkenness, on the other hand, is a state of wild passions where the boundaries between "self" and "other" dissolve (Hendricks, 2018).



Figure 3: *Apollo and Dionysus*

Dionysus, is most well-known for being the God of wine, festivals, madness and ecstasy. He is often described as being followed by hoards of women known as ‘Maenads’ who are transfixed by his paradoxical and wild nature. This can be seen to draw many parallels with that of the persona of a classic rock and roll musician, which is fitting, as Nietzsche considered music is said to be the pure Dionysian artform since it doesn’t appeal to our rational mind, but rather to our emotions (Berman, 2019). Apollo, known as a calm, wise, and knowledgeable God was used by Nietzsche to describe the other half of the human disposition. Centred around structure and rational thinking, the Apollonian state of mind values prudence, purity and order, with the most ‘apollonian’ artform being sculpture.

In relating this to my questioning of the role of drugs in creative culture, these unconscious artistic archetypes may be able to explain why creative-types throughout history are often considered to be more likely to take psychoactive drugs. For example, creative individuals who are more dionysian in

their personality traits may take drugs for reasons that are more destructive - the passionate and emotional side of the creative dichotomy;

Dionysus symbolizes the justification of pain and suffering both on a personal level...the pain and suffering which precedes the creation of oneself or a work of art, as well as on a cosmic level (Academy of Ideas, 2019).

Whereas, Apollonian character traits may lead a person to take drugs in search for meaning: for example, traditional ayahuasca ceremonies that are based on spiritual practices. Therefore, this ever-present dichotomy as presented by Nietzsche may explain somewhat the reasons that drugs are often so deeply associated with creative culture - these drugs act as a way of expressing these creative archetypes.

However, Nietzsche later wrote his 'Attempts at self-criticism' (1886) in which he described much of his previous book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, as 'ponderous, painful, with fantastic and confused imagery'. He disregards a lot of his points as being 'youthful work full of the spirit of youth and the melancholy of youth', implying that his points were overly romanticised and far-fetched. Despite this, however, he also comments that due to the success that the book received, the book should still be handled with some 'consideration and discretion.' Therefore, it can be argued that the book still holds weight as a tool for considering the place of drug use in creative culture through mythological archetypes.

Chapter 2 - 60's / 70's Counterculture

Nietzsche suggested that folk music is especially Dionysian and that “it might also be historically demonstrable that every period rich in folk songs has been most violently stirred by Dionysian currents” (Hendricks, 2018), which may explain a few things about the 1960s - arguably the most revolutionary period of time regarding the impact of psychedelics on creative culture. Social issues such as racism, women’s rights, and the Vietnam war in this era paired with the post-war baby boom of the 40s and 50s gave way to an unprecedented number of young people rethinking the direction of authority in the Western World. As the 60s progressed, these young people inspired a dynamic subculture that celebrated subjects such as equality, sexual liberation and experimentation with psychedelic drugs.

Despite LSD having been discovered around 1943, it wasn’t until the publication of seminal books such as *The Doors of Perception (1954)* by Aldous Huxley, in which he spoke firsthand about his psychedelic experiences, that an interest was sparked amongst the general population. This includes, perhaps most prolifically, Harvard scholars Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (now Ram Dass). At the age of 40, Leary was profoundly affected by an experience whereby he consumed psilocybin mushrooms whilst on a trip to Mexico. He would later describe taking them as “the deepest religious experience of [his] life” (Meneer, 2015).

Following his return to Harvard that year, he introduced magic mushrooms to Richard Alpert, and thus began the Harvard Psilocybin Project - a project that administered psilocybin to graduate

students from the university and asked them to write reports describing their experiences of taking the drug. In addition to the official activities that the pair were running through Harvard, Leary's home in Massachusetts is said to have become a hub of psychedelic experimentation.



Figure 4: *The Millbrook Mansion - Leary's infamous home in the 60s.*

It is here that Leary introduced psychedelic drugs to many prominent creatives and intellectuals of the era, including Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Maynard Ferguson, Alan Watts, and Huston Smith (Meneer, 2015). The publication of Alpert and Leary's book in the summer of 1964, *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, a guide on how to take and experience psychedelic drugs, further helped with the dissemination of psychedelic culture, even reaching perhaps the most prolific people in 1960's popular culture - the Beatles.

It was an interest in the Beatles and their music that initiated this research enquiry into the idea of psychedelics, and they are a classic example regarding the use of mind-altering substances for creative processes. When John Lennon and George Harrison were given LSD unknowingly by their dentist at a dinner party in 1965, a major shift in their music and their individual outlooks became apparent. So eye-opening was this experience, supposedly, that George Harrison commented that:

John and I had decided that Paul and Ringo had to have acid, because we couldn't relate to them any more. Not just on the one level - we couldn't relate to them on any level, because acid had changed us so much. It was such a mammoth experience that it was unexplainable: it was something that had to be experienced, because you could spend the rest of your life trying to explain what it made you feel and think (Gilmore, 2019).

Many people regard the shift in the Beatles' later music to be a direct result of their experimentation with psychedelics, with their album *Revolver* coming out shortly after their first experience. The track "Tomorrow Never Knows" on *Revolver* is a great example of this. At the time of its release, the song was by far the most experimental piece of music the Beatles and their producer, George Martin, had created to date. John Lennon wrote the lyrics following his own experience with LSD after reading *The Psychedelic Experience* by Leary and Alpert. When questioned about his inspiration for writing the album Lennon said:

[Timothy] Leary was the one who was going around saying, "Take it, take it, take it," and we followed his instructions in *The Book of the Dead*, his how-to-take-a-trip book. I did it just like he said in the book, and then I wrote 'Tomorrow Never Knows,' which is almost the first acid song. (Gilmore, 2016)



Figure 5: John Lennon and Yoko Ono pictured with Timothy Leary (Right)

McCartney took LSD for the first time within the year, though it wasn't in the company of the other Beatles. The drug, he said in a 1967 interview, "...opened my eyes to the fact that there is a God... It is obvious that God isn't in a pill, but it explained the mystery of life. It was truly a religious experience." He also commented on LSD that, "It started to find its way into everything we did, really. It coloured our perceptions. I think we started to realize there wasn't as many frontiers as we'd thought there were. And we realized we could break barriers." (Gilmore, 2016). Following this, the Beatles' music evolved at a rapid pace and they went on to create many more songs of this sort of surreal aesthetic, changing the world of rock music as they went. This suggests that these experiences, of which there were several, had a lasting effect on the perceptions and creative outputs of The Beatles as individuals. Being that they were perhaps the most influential figures in pop culture of this era, I would argue that psychedelic drugs played an integral role in the shifting and development of art styles in creative culture at this time.

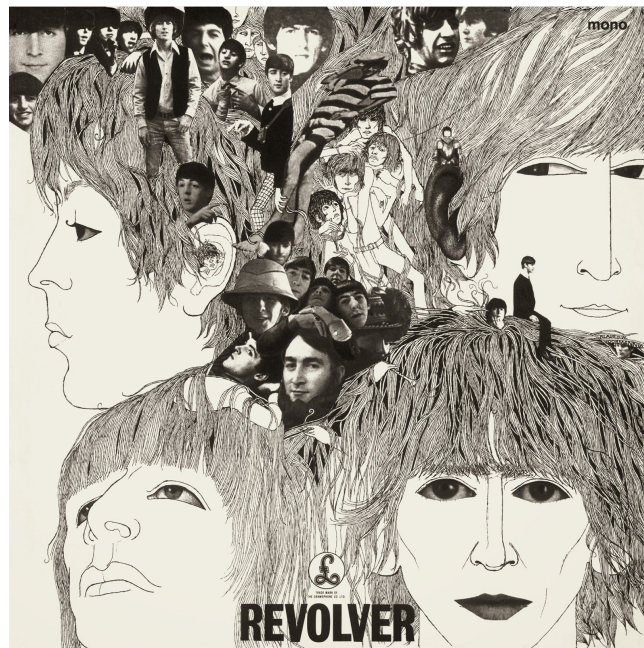


Figure 6: *Revolver*, often referred to as the Beatles' LSD album

The pairing of Lennon and McCartney is also an interesting topic of discussion when referring back to the dichotomy of Apollo and Dionysus in that they can almost be seen to embody these archetypes: Paul was well-known for his meticulous and organized nature - he always carried a notebook around with him, in which he methodically wrote down romantic lyrics and chord patterns in his neat handwriting. However, seemingly on the other end of the spectrum, John's style was far more chaotic - loose pieces of paper filled with scribbles of nonsensical thoughts and rhymes. Paul would sit politely at press conferences and answer questions; John could often be offensive and argumentative. Paul was a pleaser, and John stirred up controversy. The pair obviously worked well together, but it was also well-known that they had an air of rivalry, with disputes over who wrote many of their famous songs. Paul commented that he and John had a habit of 'answering each other's songs: "He'd write 'Strawberry Fields,'" Paul explained. "I'd go away and write 'Penny Lane' ... to compete with each other. But it was very friendly competition" (Shenk, 2014). As Nietzsche states in his book: "The two creative tendencies developed alongside one another, usually in fierce opposition, each by its taunts forcing the other to more energetic production".

Of course, creativity as a concept is in itself far more complex than reducing a creative outcome to a collaboration between Apollonian and Dionysian ideas, as Nietzsche outlined in his own self criticisms. There are plenty of artists who may not embody any of these traits, and since art is subjective, it is almost impossible to comment on the absolute nature of what makes 'good' art. However, Lennon and McCartney could be said to be one of the greatest modern examples of these two mythical archetypes working together, also rivaling each other, in order to create what is widely considered to be beautiful art, just as Nietzsche outlined.

Another fascinating link between the dionysian, creativity and drug culture is The Doors frontman Jim Morrison. With the name of the band originating from Huxley's book on his own psychedelic experimentation, *The Doors of Perception*, Morrison was no stranger to drugs and psychedelic culture. With his wild personality, ecstatic and erotic stage presence, his fixations with gloomy subjects and ideas of hell, he is said to have taken many traits from the dionysian archetype.



Figure 7: *Jim Morrison photographed in 1967*

He was greatly influenced by the writings of Nietzsche throughout his life, referencing his works in several of his creative endeavors. John Densmore, the band's drummer, even wrote in his autobiography that "Nietzsche killed Jim Morrison... Morrison the Superman, the Dionysian madman, the Birth of Tragedy himself" (Densmore, 1990). As Jim rose to fame, he became increasingly identified with this archetype, with the author of his biography commenting that: "like Nietzsche, Jim identified with the long-suffering Dionysos, who was without images, himself pure primordial pain and its primordial echoing" (Hopkins, 1980). His personality and lifestyle went hand-in-hand with his use of drugs such as LSD, mescaline, alcohol and amphetamines. This greatly

influenced every aspect of his life, including his art, but also ultimately led to his demise. A 2014 study evaluated the effect of Morrison's substance abuse on his creative endeavors by analysing his self-assessments in his works and his letters. They concluded that his drugs and alcohol may have decreased his creative motivation and potential, stating that:

The frequent use of high doses of alcohol and drugs weakened [Jim Morrison's] capacity to realize creative motivation. [He] is an exemplary case showing that heavy drinking and the abuse of LSD, mescaline and amphetamines damage the capacity to realize creative motivation (Holm-Hadulla and Bertolino, 2014).

The researchers also made the observation that Morrison is in no way an isolated case, commenting that:

Jim Morrison is typical of creative personalities like Amy Winehouse, Janis Joplin, Brian Jones and Jimmy Hendrix who burn their creativity in early adulthood through alcohol and drugs. We suppose that the sacrificial ritual of their decay offers some benefits for the excited spectators. One of these is the illusion that alcohol and drugs can lead to authenticity and creativity (Holm-Hadulla and Bertolino, 2014).

This can be seen, therefore, to present the role of drugs in the creative culture of the 1960s as a damaging one - substance abuse led to the deterioration of many great artists that were a part of this great period of counterculture. However, it can also be seen that Jim Morrison's embodiment of the Dionysian archetype re established the connection of dionysian creativity with modern culture at the time, which differed hugely from some of the clean-cut groups of the 1960s, offering a new style of music to the general population. As Rolling Stone journalist Mikal Gilmore put it: "Other groups were trying to prepare their audience for a world of hope and peace; the Doors, meanwhile, were making music for a ravenous and murderous time, and at the group's best, the effect was thoroughly

scary and thoroughly exhilarating.” (Gilmore, 1991). The Door’s performative, sometimes morbid and exhilarating music still influences modern music today.

It can also be argued that there is a difference between substance *use* and substance *abuse* - for example, the Beatles’ use of drugs never really progressed to addiction during the years that they were active. Their use of psychedelics was not all that much of a regular occurrence, apart from for Lennon, the seemingly most dionysian character, who also succumbed to a heroin addiction after his time with the Beatles. In the case of Jim Morrison and many other creative people of that era that were victims of substance abuse, it is arguable that certain drugs may enhance creativity up to a point, but overuse of these substances does indeed lead to a decrease in creative motivation. It is also worth noting here that psychedelic drugs specifically don’t tend to be addictive, due to the fact that they do not work on reward systems as other addictive substances such as opioids do. Therefore, *some* psychoactive drugs, specifically ones with psychedelic properties, clearly had their place as a tool, used in moderation, for expanding people’s minds and birthing new aesthetics and sounds throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter 3 - Modern Times / Artists / Movements

After 50 plus years of drug prohibition in the Western world, the psychedelic scene today still exists as a somewhat stigmatized counterculture. However, it is also still widely celebrated within various modern art circles, particularly the music scene, with events such as music festivals introducing many young people to various psychoactive substances. As modern-day popular culture embraces psychedelic culture, more music festivals than ever are adopting a psychedelic focus. Certainly, psychedelic drugs and the counterculture of the 60s which birthed events such as Woodstock, paved the way for the music festivals that we are familiar with today. From Burning Man in Nevada, to Shambhala in Canada, Psychedelic Circus in Germany and events such as Boomtown in the UK, these events are offering the perfect setting for young people to take psychedelic drugs due to their emphasis on ‘trippy’ music and aesthetics. According to *VICE* online, recreational use of psychedelics has increased massively over recent years, especially amongst young people. United States government statistics show that 1.31 million 18-to 25-year-olds admitted to taking LSD in 2017 compared with 317,000 in 2004 - meaning that use has almost quadrupled over the past 10 years (*VICE*, 2018).



Figure 8: *The Enchanted Wood Stage, one of many psychedelic themed areas of the 2018 Shambhala music festival.*

The internet has been a huge factor in the dissemination of psychedelic culture in the modern age through facilitating the formation of a large, global psychedelic community that can offer unbiased information, interactive communication and availability of products. First-hand information from experienced users has proved essential for those who consider using a certain drug and there are many forums and websites that cover such topics. One of the main platforms for the sharing of psychedelic experiences today is YouTube. Giving millions of people the ability to share their experiences of taking psychoactive drugs, you no longer have to write a book about these experiences to reach a huge audience, and the number of ‘youtubers’ covering these topics only seems to be increasing. One of the most prolific names in sharing information and discussing ideas of these nature is Joe Rogan, and his podcast *The Joe Rogan Experience*. Described as the ‘21st century Timothy Leary’ by Rolling Stone magazine, Rogan has used his platform to bring many in-depth conversations about the nature of psychedelics to the general public (Hedegaard, 2015). Easy access to this kind of information ultimately enables a huge number of people to have these psychedelic experiences more safely and with more profound outcomes.

In regards to modern visual artists that use psychedelic drugs, it has become more common to see artists attempt to visually recreate the psychedelic experience. For example, contemporary artist Joe Roberts has chosen the psychedelic drug DMT as his muse for making art, and his book, *We Ate the Acid 61)A3HT3TA3W*, explores his attempts to reconstruct the visuals of his own psychedelic experiences.

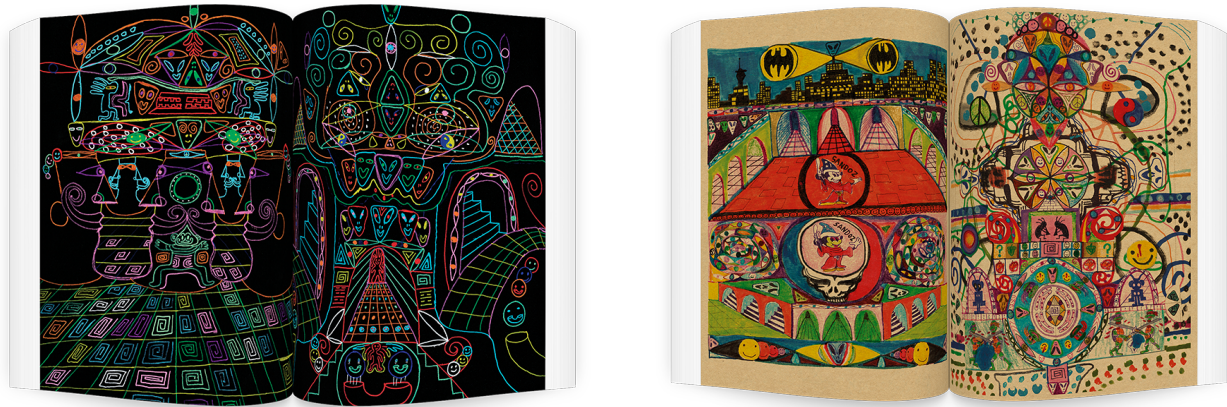


Figure 9: *We Ate the Acid 61)A3HT3TA3W*

Art critic Sarah Rose Sharp comments on his work that, “...his oeuvre is startling, capturing the kind of visual spontaneity and rejection of hierarchy that makes the work of children and Surrealists so appealing” (Sharp, 2018) - outcomes of such work are often strange, but it serves to offer an interesting look into the unconscious parts of an artist’s mind. Social media platforms such as Instagram are bursting at the seams with artists working with similar aesthetics, with the hashtag ‘trippy’ and ‘trippy art’ being associated with over 7million and 1.3million posts, respectively (Instagram, 2019). The rising popularity of this creative aesthetic, paired with the soaring numbers of young people consuming psychedelics in the past ten years, has been described by experts as a ‘psychedelic renaissance’ in terms of creative culture.

This idea of a psychedelic renaissance has also spilled into medical circles around the world, with recent years bringing countless studies surrounding mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety

and PTSD. Companies such as MAPS, a not-for-profit organisation advocating for the therapeutic use of psychedelic drugs, has raised and distributed over \$20million dollars to initiate new, scientifically rigorous psychedelic research with many additional studies being funded by a mix of private and public grants. They have succeeded in conducting research that positively links psilocybin, LSD, Ketamine and MDMA in the treatment of severe anxiety and depression, addiction to alcohol, opioids and nicotine, as well as various other health issues (Bell, 2017). Therefore the role of drugs in modern-day creative culture can be seen as a therapeutic one, as they are now being more widely accepted for their potential benefits.

The 21st century has also brought some of the first empirically sound data surrounding psychoactive drugs and the effect that it may have on creativity. An example of this is a study from 2016 published in *Language, Cognition, and Neuroscience* which analysed what changes take place in the brain when you take a hallucinogenic drug. The research found that brain scans of volunteers who had taken LSD intravenously showed noticeable connections between parts of the brain that are not usually connected, allowing information to be processed in ‘new and unorthodox ways’. Dr. Neiloufar Family, one of the researchers on the study, told the *International Business Times*,

The effects of LSD on language can result in a cascade of associations that allow quicker access to far away concepts stored in the mind...Including a hyper-associative state may have implications for the enhancement of creativity (Family, et al.).

Therefore, because LSD may be able to boost certain neural networks, thoughts, concepts, and connections that you may be storing subconsciously, or that you may not usually think of due to your normal thinking patterns may more easily come to light.

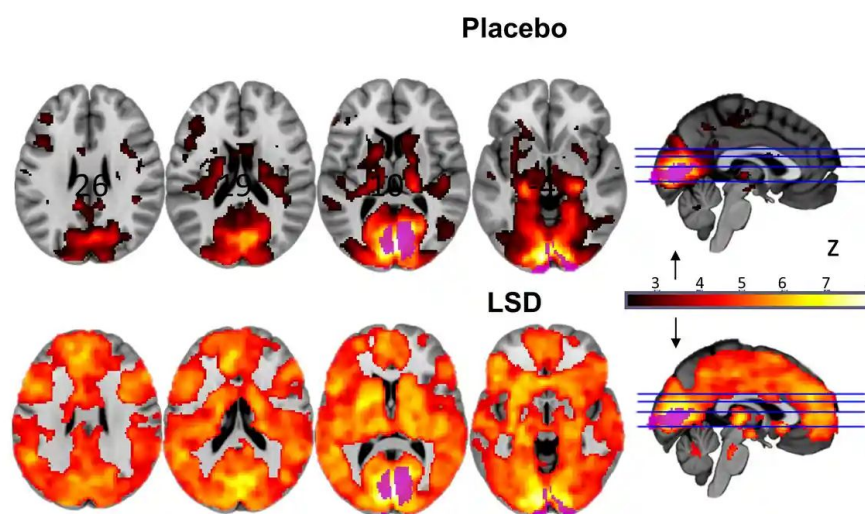


Figure 8: *Brain scans illustrating that the networks dealing with vision, attention, movement and hearing become far more connected when using LSD rather than a placebo.*

A well-known example of this link between psychedelics and breakthrough ideas is Steve Jobs, who famously said that taking LSD was “one of the two or three most important things I ever did in my life,” and that it “reinforced my sense of what was important—creating great things instead of making money, putting things back into the stream of history and of human consciousness as much as I could.” (Baer, 2015)

In line with this is microdosing - ingesting a small enough amount of a psychedelic to not induce hallucinations - which has also gained mass media attention in the past few years. Particularly popular

amongst working professionals in the Silicon Valley in California, many have reported that this activity does wonders in terms of offering a creative boost. According to The Third Wave online,

Microdosing with psychedelics allows busy working people to continue their daily work routine, but with a boost in creativity and energy that can help with problem-solving, startup ideas, motivation, and insight (Smith, 2017).

The act of microdosing has also been studied scientifically in recent years with results that imply a positive effect on an individual's creative output. For example, researchers from Leiden University in the Netherlands tested the cognitive effects of microdosing psilocybin and found that 'tiny doses can stimulate brain function and boost creativity without harming reasoning abilities', meaning that participants saw an improvement in convergent thinking generated more ideas that the researchers described as more "fluent, flexible and original" (Livni, 2018).

This suggests that the role of psychedelics in the modern age may become a more common and accepted creative tool in the workplace to help workers think outside of the box and break out of rigid thought patterns, thus allowing for a new wave of creative thinking. However, It could also be argued that whilst a lot of people looking for inspiration, whether its office workers, entrepreneurs or CEOs have taken psychedelics, very few become as successful as Steve Jobs. This could be taken to suggest that creativity induced from psychedelics may be more of an isolated occurrence, and therefore the effect of psychedelics on creative culture has really only been very minor. I would argue against this

idea, however, as Steve Jobs and other similar personalities are an example of extreme success, but this shouldn't be used to diminish a person's own subjective individual creative output.

The modern era has also led to an increase in people calling to end the war on drugs, especially due to the widely available research and information shared across the internet which has spread greatly the therapeutic benefits that psychedelics may offer. One of the most prolific advocates for this at the moment is Graham Hancock, who believes that using these tools in order to expand our consciousness are fundamental rights of our individual and creative freedom. On his website he comments that: "drugs are an aid to creativity and focused mental effort" (Hancock, 2015) and he discusses the legalisation of psychoactive drugs, especially where personal growth, therapeutic actions and creative efforts are concerned. He often discusses the modern technological society that we live in today and the negative effects that it may have on our consciousness and the way we express ourselves. He comments that:

[Modern technological society] appears to have been expressly engineered to switch people off to the wider implications, and the wider mystery, of being alive. It bombards our consciousness with sterile, soulless messages of production and consumption, of envy and greed, that never get to the fundamentals of anything (Hancock, 2015).

Hancock believes that by ending the war on drugs, not only would people be safer due to legal regulation of the substances, but these drugs could be utilised as a tool for the progression of the human race, and the criminalisation of these substances is ultimately a hindrance to mankind and only offers to,

...[empower] faceless bureaucratic authorities to send armed agents to break into our homes, arrest us, throw us into prison, and deprive us of our income and reputation simply because we wish to explore the sometimes radical, though always temporary, alterations in our own consciousness that drugs facilitate (Hancock, 2015).

Based on this idea that we cannot truly express ourselves if we do not have control over our own consciousness on all of its levels, the role of drugs in modern creative culture can be seen as a tool for reclaiming autonomy over our minds and therefore accessing full creative freedom. This may lead to a number of different breakthroughs to perhaps benefit our race in terms of its creative and spiritual advancements. Furthermore, with the huge and unnatural amount of media consumption that we face in the modern age, psychedelic drugs may provide us with the escape that the population needs. In an age governed by consumerism and social media, psychedelics may offer a way to reconnect to the part of us that is essentially human, and as Dennis McKenna puts it, 'psychedelics are the antidote to propaganda'.

Conclusion

Though it is somewhat difficult to evaluate the relationship between the concepts of creativity and drug use due to their complexity, there are insights to suggest that the role of psychedelic drugs on creative culture has been both positive and negative. Perhaps most vital to this notion is the idea of drug use vs drug abuse, and indeed the type of drugs that a person is consuming. There has been countless famous case studies throughout history of creative people expanding their minds through the use of psychedelics and taking their work in new and exciting directions. The research on early civilisations is also important to note as it suggests that these substances have played an important part in the creative development of mankind, perhaps even playing a part in the evolution of our consciousness. On the other end of the spectrum, though, comes countless artists who have met an early demise due to drug abuse, putting forward this idea that psychoactive drugs have played a part in robbing creative culture of many of its most influential people.

Despite this, with the rise of studies on psychedelic drugs in recent years, and the journey towards ending the war on drugs, it makes sense that these practices may become a lot safer. If this is the case, then psychedelic drugs may prove themselves as a powerful tool in the future of creative culture. With the rise of depression and anxiety disorders in our new fast-paced, technology focused world that leads us far away from our unconscious minds, psychedelics may enable the human race to reconnect with a united universal consciousness, and regain our creative freedom. It may be then that they play the role

of bringing humans back to what is important - especially since we are increasingly so disconnected from natural creativity and instead perpetuating idealistic aesthetics for social media. It is clear by any means that the relationship between psychedelics and society is an ever-evolving cycle, from the 1960s where the use of psychedelics arose as a way to change the world, as perpetuated by the likes of Timothy Leary, but was outlawed by the government due to fear and misunderstanding, to today where it has found its place in many circles as being a tool for human progression and healing, being funded by major companies.

It is widely accepted that drug trends arise as a response to the times in which we are living in, and change depending on the existence that we are experiencing. We may use drugs as a form of escapism, a creative boost, a way to change the world - it all depends on our current existence. Whether overall good or bad, psychedelic drugs definitely exist as a tool for negotiating our own reality. They give us the ability to step outside of our own experience and look at things through a different perspective and a different expressive outlet, which definitely should not be overlooked.

As Huxley comments in *The Doors of Perception* (1954),

The man who comes back through the Door in the Wall will never be quite the same as the man who went out. He will be wiser but less sure, happier but less self-satisfied, humbler in acknowledging his ignorance yet better equipped to understand the relationship of words to things, of systematic reasoning to the unfathomable mystery which it tries, forever vainly, to comprehend.

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