

Visionary Art and Its Mirror: The Transformational Festival

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“Once artists successfully realize their vision, the next level of difficulty comes when they attempt to share their works. Artists have no chance of entering culture unless conditions are favorable,<sup>1</sup>” Alex Grey wrote in his book *The Mission in Art*. Transformational festivals are producing immersive environments that create this “favorable” environment for visionary artists to share their works. Transformational festival communities construct temporary utopian villages that promote their vision of personal and communal growth centered around music, art, and spirituality. By examining the definition and characteristics of transformational music festivals and visionary artwork, and opinions from attendees and participants of Envision Music Festival, it becomes clear that the festival environment becomes a mirror of the visionary artwork that is created within them.

Outsider art is often referred to as visionary art. Just like visionary art, transformational festivals are considered outsider because they aim to push the social boundaries of the cultures in which they are placed. In the case of both transformational festivals and visionary artwork, they push against the expectations of society by merging life and an artistic practice with spirituality.<sup>2</sup> Visionary artists seek to convey the multidimensional elements of the human reality through their art, a tangible depiction of their visions. Transformational festivals do the same through their unifying focus of universal principles. Both environments speak to something that is timeless and tribal: seeking something that is not a discovery but a remembrance of the universal and primal.

The first music festivals appeared in the 1950s and centered around secular music. Generally pushing against acceptable societal constructs, these events burst into mainstream culture as catalysts

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<sup>1</sup> Grey, Alex. *The Mission of Art*, 25

<sup>2</sup> Grey, Alex. *The Mission of Art*, 175

for art, music, and rebellion. 1969 marked the advent of Woodstock, the iconic festival which popularized the use of psychedelics like LSD (*Figure 1*).<sup>3</sup> In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, innovations in technology brought entirely new genres of music, like EDM (electronic dance music) and genres of music festivals. Festivals with this kind of music have grown to become a part of mass culture with events like Coachella, Burning Man, or Electric Daisy Carnival. Often, these bacchanals rely heavily on a variety

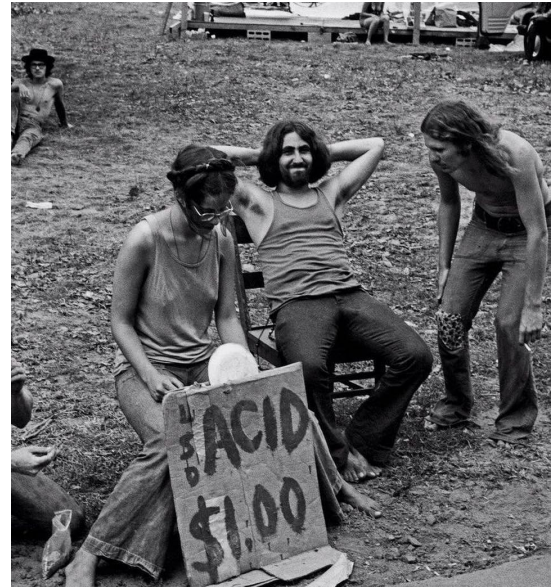


Figure 1

of creative fields from art to social media to popularize the event itself. These events have frequently fostered the construction of an immersive experience that becomes as important as the music itself, often funding grassroots artists to create installations, murals, and other forms of live art.

Unlike today's mainstream EDM music festival, transformational festivals like Envision project a different tone among its collaborators, participants, and environments in which they are held. In the course of this conversation, festivals will refer to these kinds of transformational events. These festivals differ from their mainstream cousins because they are focused on cultural transformation and the re-invention of humanity within the spaces they inhabit. Whereas



Figure 2

mainstream festivals focus on the party... often unaware and inconsiderate of the detrimental effects their partygoers have on the

<sup>3</sup> Public Domain, Author unknown

Earth on which they are held. Transformational festivals promote a symbiotic environment that cares for one another, yourself, your neighbors, and your planet. The focus on co-creation emphasizes that the attendees contribute to the festival experience. Starting about 15 years ago, these transformational events have largely been overlooked by the media. Often built around a natural setting, the event celebrates the surrounding forest, beach, jungle, mountains, or desert. Envision was held in a jungle, with a beach nearby for enjoyment during the day (*Figure 2*)<sup>4</sup>. From the stage design, performers, and music, the transformational nature of a space is considered. Although these events are music based, they also have live painters and artists, galleries, and immersive art spaces. Centered around the belief that not only is art important, but also the attendees are art themselves. It is estimated that 30% or more of attendees are creating within the space some way.<sup>5</sup>

Transformational festivals show the power of music to create new kinds of culture, aiming to evoke and articulate something about human nature and man's experience. Mirroring ancient rituals, these events revert to some of the most tribal and ancient beliefs about the spiritual world through new digital means and technological advancements, encouraging ecstatic trance-state dancing or chanting. These tribal values are sacred within every single culture in the world, rooted in hunter-gatherer traditions and histories that all of humanity share. Although some cultures never lost these valuable sensibilities, Western culture detached from their deeply grown roots of these values that were once universal practices. Festivals speak to this old, utopian world by recreating and celebrating co-creation and the compatible diversity of its inhabitants. Acknowledging the different realities in which we live, these immersive spaces promote a merging of the spiritual being with secular means of dancing and connection, attempting to connect something that has been separated in Western culture since the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> They accept all views, beliefs, and backgrounds. These

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<sup>4</sup> Photo by T. Pat

<sup>5</sup> Leung, Jeet Kai. "Transformational Festivals: Jeet Kei Leung at TEDxVancouver."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

temporal villages demonstrate spiritual environments can exist without doctrine or leaders, while promoting their ‘citizens’ divine abilities of autonomous critical thinking and celebrating how our individual perceptions converge.



Figure 3

Envision Music Festival is held yearly in the jungles of Costa Rica. It focuses not only on music, but also art (Figure 3)<sup>7</sup>. Advertised as “a platform for different cultures to collide harmoniously in a regenerative community.” It strives to “inspire one another through the

collective participation in art, spirituality, yoga, music, dance, performance, education, regenerative strategies, and our fundamental connection with nature.”<sup>8</sup> The festival focuses on eight pillars: movement, spirituality, music, radical acceptance, community, permaculture, health, and art.

Visionary art is defined as “the attempt to convey to the viewer a peek into the unseen of a higher state of existence.”<sup>9</sup> These works aim to connect with anything outside of the premise of common imagination, attempting to avoid conversations of globalization, transcultural collisions, economic decline, or environmental disaster. Rather, these paintings inspire the viewer to reflect inward. Artists like Alex Grey seek to represent these higher states

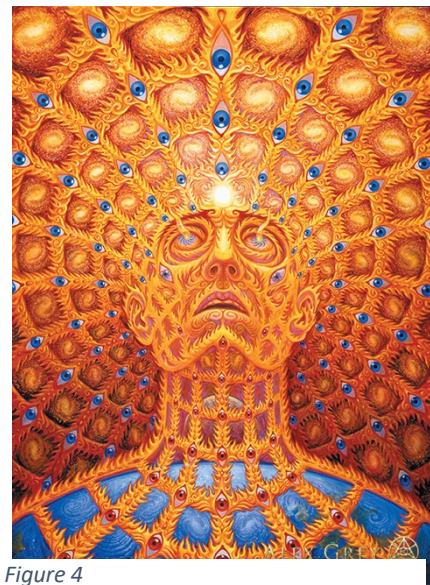


Figure 4

<sup>7</sup> Photo by Jess Bernstein

<sup>8</sup> "Envision Festival." Envision.

<sup>9</sup> Caruana, L. *The First Manifesto of Visionary Art*, 1

in works like his piece *Over Soul* (Figure 4)<sup>10</sup>. Throughout history, visionary art has had its own definitions and histories through culture and time. Contemporary visionary art, however, seeks to construct a ‘time resistant space.’<sup>11</sup> Dreams, hypnagogic states, trance, illness, shamanic vision quests, meditation, day dreaming, psychedelics, and the transformative nature of other visionary art itself has the ability to inspire artists within the contemporary tradition of visionary art. This genre is separate from surrealism due to its artists’ attempt to reach an altered reality by any means, even by inducing hallucinogenic substances, and its unbreakable bond with spiritual meaning, ancient medicines, and mystical insight.



Figure 5

Channeling ideas of the shared experience and attempting to display ideas of love, unity, and oneness, visionary art— “identifies the scared inner world of the artist.”<sup>12</sup> The visionary tradition seeks to show the viewer, where no cameras are allowed, another reality within an altered state of consciousness. ClairVoyage, known as Claire Lathrop, paints work based on visions arriving to her in a hypnagogic state, or between wakefulness and sleep. These visions come to her from something beyond her mind and produce works like

*Forest Beings* (Figure 5)<sup>13</sup>. By creating from visions, artists are not conveying what their minds create, but rather something that they are receiving from an external and divine force. With the emergence

<sup>10</sup> Alex Grey, *Over Soul*. 1999, 30” by 40”, Oil on Linen

<sup>11</sup> Caruana, L. *The First Manifesto of Visionary Art*, 7

<sup>12</sup> Allyson Grey in Brown, David Jay, and Rebecca Hill. *Women of Visionary Art*, 11

<sup>13</sup> ClairVoyage, *Forest Beings*, 2018, 24” by 36” acrylic on canvas



of western painters working with indigenous medicines from around the world, visionary artists are able to bring a trans cultural lens to the conversation and combine ancient cultural traditions and teachings. These transcriptions act as patchworks of the divine, transcribing the psychedelic state that cannot be faked.<sup>14</sup> Visionary Voyager, known as Zachary Brown, often paints works that show the link with these ancient, indigenous medicines like his piece “Earth Medicine”, which displays a frog with venom that is injected into an open wound. This produces psychotropic effects 5 times stronger than the other psychedelic drug, DMT (*Figure 6*)<sup>15</sup>. These works are often imagined under the influence of such substances.

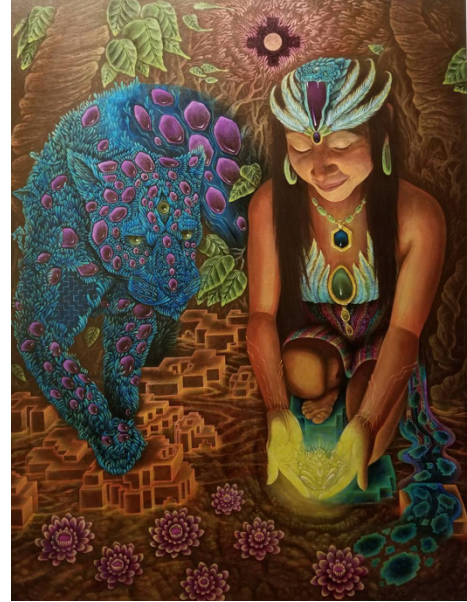


Figure 6

Before discussing how visionary art works mirror the festival environment, festival participants primary experiences and opinions will be presented. Dalton Sessumes, a 24 year old from Texas, performed at Envision Music Festival. His performance art creates another level of experience within the environment. He uses a prop called a “levitation wand”, which is a stick attached to a long string, to perform to the music on stage (*Figure 7*)<sup>16</sup>. This creates an additional visual element to the festival. Sessumes talks about the connections and differences of visionary and performance art.

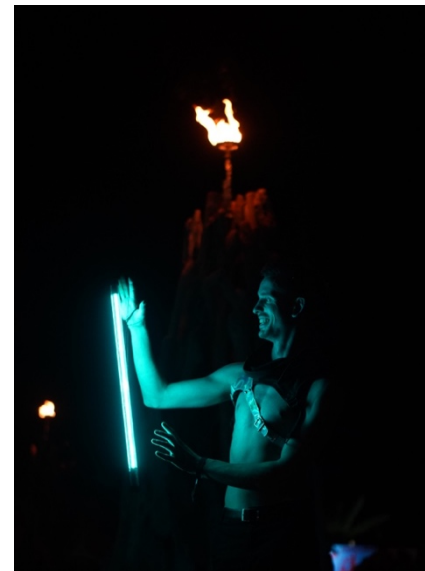


Figure 7

<sup>14</sup> Brown, David Jay, and Rebecca Hill. *Women of Visionary Art*, 17

<sup>15</sup> Visionary Voyager, *Earth Medicine*. 2018, 36" x 48"

<sup>16</sup> Photo by Author

“As a performance artist, we are sort of representatives of the human condition; rather than our medium being something other than human... What I do is I upload my full resolution visionary art to my (LED) wands and I study what these artists actually mean. What are they trying to convey with this imagery? From there, I can link it up with movement and hopefully, bring a more immersive experience to the viewer.”<sup>17</sup>

In contrast, Sessumes believes that visionary art created within the environment is able to negate the physical human experience,

“There is this idea as humans, we have this biological filter that makes sense of the world... These visions sort of go beyond those biological filters to something that is more objective or at the very least, less biased by the human situation.”<sup>18</sup>

Zach Jackson has been attending festivals for 12 years and created a conscious vegan food business around it. Jackson prefers transformational events; saying,

“They have a much more enjoyable crowd. I think that people take more away from those festivals ... A huge part of that is the emphasis on the experiential art that is happening... the creative side and having it highlighted so much, it encourages people... It creates more of a creative vibe for the entire festival. The art sets the tone for how people interact with each other.”<sup>19</sup>

After interviewing some of the artists creating at the festival, it became apparent that the co-creation of the environment was critical to the creation of visionary artwork. Ericka Wexler (*Figure 8*)<sup>20</sup> has been painting for 30 years, and on visionary art she said:



Figure 8

“I’m definitely tapping into more universal. I think all artists do if they get to a certain level, if there are allowing a higher spirit to flow through them, instead of over thinking the art they are creating... into something visually stimulating that people can understand, so they can expand their consciousness into some sort of light, love, and expansion to change the way they think about things.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Appendix A

<sup>18</sup> Appendix A

<sup>19</sup> Appendix B

<sup>20</sup> Photo by Author

<sup>21</sup> Appendix D



The universal quality of visionary artwork can be seen in the experience of Zachary Brown, also known as Visionary Voyager, an artist that was painting at Envision who aligns himself with the visionary tradition of painting. While painting live (*Figure 9*)<sup>22</sup>, Brown evaluated the qualities of Visionary art that mirror the immersive spaces within the festival:

“A visionary painting is trying to create a visual blue print of a more collaborative, beautiful future... They are providing people with permaculture design ideas, which kind of form the land in the most ecological friendly cohesive way possible. Like herbalism information and how to get your medicine from the food that you are eating, body movement, social communication and intimacy work. The festivals are trying to give people the tools to take back to their own communities to create this brighter more balanced future and that is much of the intention of the visionary art that I have been seeing.”<sup>23</sup>



Figure 9

These anecdotes highlight the importance of visionary art within the transformational festival experience, showcasing first-hand perceptions of how it functions as a means of universal expression.

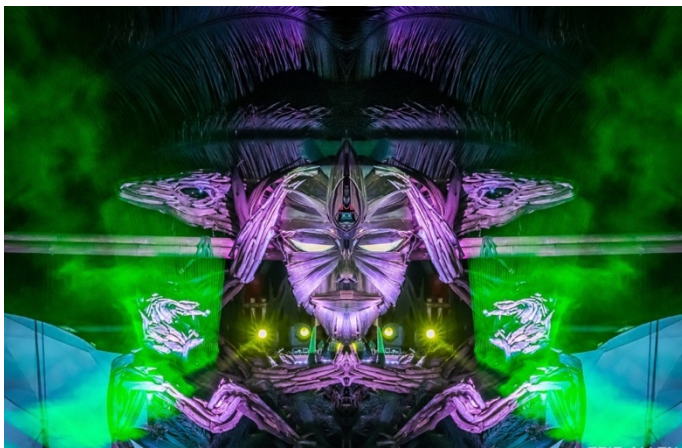


Figure 10

Transformational festivals play EDM to remove the performance of the band and place that importance on the attendee, evoking a spiritual and tribal atmospheric emphasis within the participation. The environment creates immersion through movement, bright lights, installations, stage

<sup>22</sup> Photo by Visionary Voyager on Instagram

<sup>23</sup> Appendix E

design (*Figure 10*)<sup>24</sup>, and exposure to visionary art. Playing on the human need to contribute to community, the environment causes transformation through inspiration. Visionary artworks focus on transcribing realms of a universal reality and creative flow to transform and inspire. The shared festival environment recognizes our own human experience. Converging on a dancefloor acts as consciousness that binds all (*Figure 11*)<sup>25</sup>; the same way that a visionary artwork is a window into the universal conscious experience. Both environments “infuse sacred consciousness with new creative juices”<sup>26</sup> to displace the ego, promoting a wholeness within love, unity, and acceptance. “True creativity depends on fostering independent thought and the ability to peek beyond cultural horizons,”<sup>27</sup> wrote Alex Grey. Trans-cultural ideas are bred and cultivated within both the impermanent festival environment and visionary depictions.



Figure 11

Unlike traditional Western culture and its obsessive nature to seek happiness within the material, both this kind of festival and artwork aim to seek happiness through an idea of oneness and individual spirituality with the divine. Similarly, they both value the impermanence of their being. The festival is alive for a limited amount of time, while a vision captures a specific, fleeting moment within a state of being, both are often described as something ‘timeless’ and something that has not been newly discovered, but a remembered kind of human state. Visionary artwork remains a more permanent reminder of the values extolled by transformational festivals, while the festival literally creates a space in the world where these values are exercised. Visionary art objects act as a

<sup>24</sup> Photo by Eric Allen

<sup>25</sup> Photo by T. Pat

<sup>26</sup> Leung, Jeet Kai. "Transformational Festivals: Jeet Kai Leung at TEDxVancouver."

<sup>27</sup> Grey, Alex. *The Mission of Art*, 27

reminder, souvenir, and visual representation of the transformation that takes place to a festival participant. “Through their craft, artists leave tangible traces of the states they have entered,” Alex Grey recounts.<sup>28</sup> Artists creating this work have the ability to ignite change in the attendees that are encountering their own states of altered perception.

Reality within the works and the festivals in which they are created are influenced and comprised of a collection of shared experiences and events. The festival wages peace within the world, creating a temporary civilization where art with the same goal can exist. A subculture mirrors a form of art; simultaneously, the festival creates a successful stage for the artwork to be received, viewed, and utilized. Often, entire galleries are dedicated to this kind of work (*Figure 12*)<sup>29</sup>. Visionary works can then be removed from the festival



Figure 12

as tokens of their impermanent and transformative existence. Both visionary artists and festival goers offer little resistance to the discoveries and experiences in the worlds within which they create. The ego is removed, and principals of better, more sustainable living are introduced. Attendees dress up into other beings and transform themselves into something more whole and timelessly representative of these better values. This mirrors the visionary paintings in which these principals are depicted.

By examining the significance and definitions of transformational music festivals and visionary art traditions, it becomes clear that the festival environment is a mirror of the visionary

<sup>28</sup> Grey, Alex. *The Mission of Art*, 66

<sup>29</sup> Photo by T. Pat

artwork that is created within it. Unlike other kinds of festivals and artwork, transformational festivals and visionary art encourage and inspire unity, light, and the altered state, celebrating the collision of the individual experience with universal consciousness. Both explore the divine nature of spirituality through ritual, medicine, and celebration. By envisioning other realities, visionary artists are working to create a better future by inspiring their viewers. Festivals allow this better future to be modeled in the present, offering a small glimpse of the utopian future that could exist. After all, “If we cannot envision a better world, we cannot create one,”<sup>30</sup> states *The Mission in Art*.

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<sup>30</sup> Grey, Alex. *The Mission of Art*, 29

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## Appendix A

Dalton: My name is Dalton Sessumes, I am 24 years old and from Austin, Texas.

Claire: I was looking for what questions to ask you because I feel like you count as an artist, but I also have a category for a worker. You are somewhere in between but you are definitely an artist?

Dalton: I think as a professional artist, there is really no division. You cut out work and work is also work. By work, I mean someone who builds things, like fabrication and stuff.

Claire: I am interviewing my friend who does food services for festivals and he was there. That would definitely be a clear-cut worker, but I feel you are definitely falling more on the side of the artist.

Dalton: Yes, in terms of music festivals, I don't do any services.

Claire: You are an artist, absolutely. Do you know what visionary art is?

Dalton: Yes. Do you want me to say what it is?

Claire: Yes, what do you think?

Dalton: To me, visionary art is when an artist of any skill set... most of the time, that is illustrative. But it can really be any skill set, basically has a vision; whether it be a dream or something deeper and they pull this vision from wherever it is it comes from and bring it into reality to communicate this depth or complexity that they have seen and what they communicate to be a deeper reality. There is a lot of interpretations of it, it could be anything from like whoo whoo I had some weird vision, here are some pretty pictures. Or there is this idea; as humans, we have this biological filter that makes sense of the world, it is our senses. Our eyes, ears, nose, taste, all those things are filters conveying the world as it is. They simply make it makes sense to the human brain and so these visions, whether it is really a visual thing or not, which a lot of people say it is not, it is more of a feeling than anything. These visions sort of go beyond those biological filters to something that is more objective or at the very least, less biased by the human situation.

Claire: That is a great answer. Do you consider it an outsider art form? If so, why?

Dalton: Outsider art form, it depends on what you mean by an outsider art form. In a way, all art form started as outsider art form, it is what makes it art. I don't know if I would consider visionary art an outsider art right now, I think at one point, it definitely was just like all art was at some point. That is why people become interested in them because they are unique. and that is why people catch onto it. Right now, we had a burning man exhibit in the Smithsonian so how can it be an outside form if it is like the biggest museum in the United States. It is the biggest right?

Claire: Yes, one of them.

Dalton: The biggest museum in the United States has visionary art in it. It is down to a point where it has grown so much that the outsider art form has now become... I am not going to say the main art form but it is at least accepted. Can I talk about drugs in this? Are drugs acceptable?

Claire: Yes.

Dalton: Back when LSD really hit America back in 1960's, it revolutionized art. Color became a thing, like a big freaking thing and so for a while there, it was super outsider. Nobody wanted to associate with these freaks but then it stopped being that way; people started accepting it and seeing there is some real complexity going on behind this stuff that we should definitely pay attention to and not right it off as some crazies doing woo woo crap. I feel like that is what is happening to visionary art right now for a long time, there was this weird abstract madness that people would go, take drugs and paint. That is totally cool, that is how somethings starts but it has developed into something that is much more than that now. To the point that we had this Smithsonian exhibit, we have entire virtual experience built around visionary art. You can go and put on some goggles or you can go and sit inside of a dome, there are really big funded projects going on right now that it cannot be outsider anymore; it has become mainstream.

Claire: Yes, I like that a lot. How do you interact with this form of art and where have you seen it? o guess you have already answered where have you seen it but how do you interact with it.

Dalton: I interact with this art.... Let me think and then talk. As a performance artist, it is hard to make a clear-cut definition of how to interact with visionary art. Because visionary art comes from this infernal place that speaks beyond the human condition. As a performance art, we are sort of representatives of the human condition; rather than our medium being something other than human... we have painters who use medium as paint right. Our medium is literally the human body so where visionary art is sort of ignoring the biological filters, the biological filters for performance art is kind of like the thing, they are the medium. For me, it is a lot of like the channeling of ideas that come from somewhere into a human body-based art form. Especially with technology because technology is super crucial to all art forms really but especially mine because I use these things, You know what I do but I should explain it so I use these levitating sticks basically that have an early strip on them that produces what we call a persistence of vision images. So, you get that when you stare at the sun for too long, you look away and you have this blotch in your vision. That is a persistence of vision with the sun's brightness remaining in your vision. You can harness that effect to create full resolution images basically looking like they are floating in the air as I spin my stick, it is called a levi wand. I will call it a levi wand from now on, I guess my levi wand harnesses this effect to create these really stunning high-resolution images. What I do is I upload my full resolution visionary art to my wands and as well as that, I peel back, and I study what did these artists actually mean. What are they trying to convey with this imagery? From there, I can link it up with movement and hopefully, bring a more immersive experience to the viewer.

Claire: That is very cool. You said you load the images from visionary artists to your wand, but do you feel inspired by visionary art in a way to translate that through your biological filter performance.

Dalton: That is difficult. I do feel drawn to that idea, I would start with that. I do feel drawn to the idea of channeling visionary art but it would have to be visionary energy for a performer really, but I do feel drawn to the idea. The main form of visionary art is visual, that is why they call it visionary and if you talk to a lot of visionary artists, they would come out and say this isn't just a visual thing, it is a feeling, there is something deeper. It still sorts of expresses itself visually and that is why it learns itself so well 2D and 3D illustration because it sorts of presents itself as a visual effect. So, whenever I try to interpret this to performance art, it is difficult but that doesn't say much. It is hard because my body only does so many things; like I cannot be a three headed monster coming out with a beast from the black hole, it just doesn't work like that. What I try to do is instead of being the visionary art, in my movement, my overarching goal is to create a visionary environment that I can then become a part of. This is sort of where I am heading with my art in the near future. In fact, in August, it is going to be really cool. The real goal is to create an environment that is conducive to visionary thinking. Whenever you talk about psychedelics, you talk about 2 main things of how they have a good trip is set and setting. So, a set is mental card, this is where people are exploring their mindsets. They are getting these visions, they are developing these deeper connections with what really it is but that is ignoring half of the puzzle. The other half is setting, and you cannot really have one without the other so that is where I am headed with my art, to sort of develop that other half. To develop a setting in which visionary art arises hopefully on its own but all things take a lot of effort but at least easier.

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## Appendix B

Zach: My name is Zachery Jackson. I am 29 and I am from New York. I have spent 7 years here so that is where I am from?

Claire: Do you know what visionary art is and how do you define it.

Zach: I don't know, I don't have a definition from it. I think I can shoot some words out of how it sounds and how it feels when I hear you say that. Visionary art sounds like a very personal experience. My earliest interpretation of it would be it is a very personal experience It is like you are getting a glimpse into what that artist is either experiencing at that moment or trying to portray. Like a future existence of themselves. For some reason, it sounds personal for me and I guess it could be like water lilies or something like that. It is just like that, it feels a little bit cold to be called visionary art. Personal relationship through visionary art.

Claire: With it being so personal, would you consider that an outsider art form? What I mean by outsider art is something like water lilies, I would consider that to be like inside an institution.

Zach: Yes, I would say insider-outsider exists in this particular institution. I would say visionary art, it does sound or feel more experimental and it won't fit into a box, it wouldn't fit into an institution. I can see that with that being what the actual art is or what is being used in the art. Maybe your painting was with branches as opposed paint brush or something like that. It sounds cool to me actually.

Claire: It is really cool. So, you have been working festivals and attending festivals for quite a while. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Zach: Yes, I have been attending festivals I would say since I was 17 and those were very different festival experiences than they have nowadays. Like the jam band, folky, have beer and 'yeah man' kind of festivals and getting more into the EDM scene. As I grew up, interests changed and things like that Tomorrowworld in the states was a life changing festival for me. Basically, we had all these experiences going to festivals and attending them. Part of that was you eat at festivals and for vegetarians, like I was then. It was kind of a tricky thing and there was a stupor end to it and we started attending festivals. Then we started getting inside the business side of festivals. It really changed the experience and changed how I look at festivals and how I attend festivals. My whole festival experience shifted since seeing the back end of things and doing that 4 days set up and when the fun has already been had and it is just a shit show. Seeing those side of things, it changes the experience for sure not better or worse, just different. I have attended 100 festivals or maybe, some outrageous amount of festivals. We have gotten down to where we are doing about 3-4 a year now. I haven't actually attended a festival just to attend it in like 2 years, I think. For every festival I have done, I have worked so I'm looking forward to attend it.

Claire: What festivals so you typically render and do all these festivals have visionary art or visionary art influences.

Zach: Basically, I would say my favorite ones do. I would say they are some festivals we do just to work and those kind(s) of things and it makes it a little bit more stale. We did one where it was like orange blossoms and it was behind this rock and roll thing. The entire set up was just very cold and very dry, so was the art and so was my experience and the people, that kind of thing. My favorite festivals to do are definitely more aligned and they have art as part of the main concept of the experience. Hulaween is huge one, the installation there are like light parts. From what I hear, electric fires. Like burning man type of installations. All of the artists there are absolutely incredible; whether it is performers, like people I have seen most of the time. doing something during sets, building something during sets. Those are definitely the most fun festivals to be, I think they have a much more enjoyable crowd. I think that people take more away from those festivals, I know I take more away from those festivals. Envision and Hulaween are my top 2 festivals that they are. I think a huge part of that is the emphasis on the experiential art that is happening.

Claire: How do you think the art is enhancing the experience and bringing people together?

Zach: I think the creative side and having it highlighted so much, I think it encourages people. Seeing people stepping out of the box and saying this is my creative outlet. I think even like even people watching that, they get affected by that and even in their conversations and meeting people are more immersed. It creates more of a creative vibe for the entire festival. I think the art sets the tone for how people interact with each other.

Claire: You kind of described visionary art and we were talking of how those are seen in more transformative festivals. Can I ask what commonalities are seen between artists that are creating this visionary art. Like in terms of subject matter or how they are working.

Zach: I am not exactly sure how to answer that. Like in terms of what their art form are, is there some congruence there or something like that. I don't know if there is a better term for it, but I think there is more of a psychedelic vibe, that is what I see being created. It is hard to say what plays in for what, but I think a lot of that is a lot of detail, a lot of little big and pieces to those too. I think that is inspired by the music and inspired by the people but also vice versa to that; it also helps inspire the people. Those are the congruencies that I see there.

Claire: Do you think that these works of art are a peek through human nature or something more universal.

Zach: Yes, I would say so. Because I think as people getting people get to work outside those institutions and so I think it is a more real response of them working without boundaries, working without rules and without borders, without inhibitions. It is just like that freedom I think, and it is like they have the tools to express themselves. So that freedom is definitely a more real experience.

## Appendix C

Cameron: There is this program that I really like that says, “He who speaks doesn’t know and he who speaks doesn’t know”. What it has always made me feel like is like that of Winston Churchill, “Walk softly and carry a big stick”. It is like don’t be loud, there is no need to. Your impact would be known by your actions, those thing(s) would speak for themselves. I always felt out of place in a situation where it was more like how dressed I was or how well I looked compared to what I was presenting, and it just made me feel bizarre in that regard. It made the art feel less pure.

Claire: That is one thing that I think about these environments is that I feel the environment is shaped by visionary art. If you look at the installation, you look at the visuals and the stage set. Then I think in terms of like a festival being a physical representation of a visionary work of art. Like in terms of it being a peek into another reality and something that is not true to who we are as humans. That to be is really powerful in terms of when this art is created here and how safe that is because it is a mirror the environment is created in.

Cameron: Absolutely and you are so right about how these environments are shaped by visionary, they are co-creating each other, it is almost like seeing a cypher on a large scale. Especially in the hip-hop dance community, there are these things called cypher; they are basically like a shared circle where people collaborate and give ideas back and forth by taking turns in a circle. I feel a lot of times, that applies to most creative outlets in lots of different ways. Here, I always notice that one of the beautiful things about these environments is that we all gain these ideas and grow together with these ideas through all these things we are doing and sharing together, these ideas that are building each other. One artist would say something that another artist is doing, and they are completely inspired and changed by it. Just like somebody who is in the crowd would see something and would be completely inspired to do it just to start. That is so powerful because I remember when I start doing anything, when I first started painting and when I first started dancing or when I first started doing circus. It wasn’t ever because I was like I thought I was going to make money off of this, it was always of feeling of that looks incredibly fun that I cannot not try. It was like I want to do it and I feel like that feeling is the purity of creation, it is unadulterated. It had no feathered things hanging onto it to make it impure for lack of a better term.

Claire: It is crazy. How old are you?

Cameron: I am 34. I am from Los Angeles, and my name is Cameron Eagle Dollinger

Claire : Just in terms of like focusing on the light in this place but it not reflecting your status. But what I think is interesting is our imperfections are the thing that separates us. Because I feel like in a lot of ways, what is perfect about humanity is what is relating us and I have never even considered that because we are all perfect beings in that way. The imperfection or the intricacies or the nuances separate us.

Cameron: Years ago, when I was in college, I was taking an elective on death and dying, I was really fascinated by it. Cultural beliefs and death and how cultures handle death or how people mourn and grief in their own ways. At one point, there was this Buddhist monk that was the head of the sunghung in Portland. He came and gave a lecture and I later had an opportunity to have a one on one interview with him. There was this point where I asked him what connects us in his opinion versus what separates us. First, he said there is this Buddhist meditation called ‘not this’ Neti Neti is how they say it, but it means ‘not this not this’. So, it is like ‘I am not, I am not’. So, what it means is when you are meditating, you are supposed to imaging all these things that you associate with yourself. I am a dancer, no I am not. I am a painter, no I am not. Not really, not at a core level. I am a body, no I am not, not

just. I am a mind but not only. I am Cameron Dollinger but not really. On a deep fundamental level, when you keep thinking about this, you think about truly what we are is something beneath the ego. It is like silent passive witness, that is constantly there, never judging, never holding opinions about others. Because we on a fundamental level understand that that is all of us; we are all that silent witness. The only thing that separates us really is the ego, the brain, which creates this sense of separation because it is how it views the world. It is the only way that our brain has evolved to understand our surroundings. It is a survival mechanism that probably evolved thousands of years ago. But on a fundamental level, it creates this intense sense of separation that in reality... because in Buddhism, that is their seed of life. Loneliness, suffering, sadness, grief and pain. That is like intense fundamental separation from understanding that we are all the same little drop of water in a giant ocean.

Cameron: I think I started painting when I was 21 or something and I was trying very hard to paint this figure anatomically and it was not coming out the way I wanted it to. I just slapped myself and I was like what it is the vaguest human shape that I can think of. Because on a deeper level, that is what we all are; this witness, this drop. There is no face to this thing, there are no features to this thing because it is all of us. It is like every feature, every shape, every form, every bit of humanity. When I thought about what is the simplest thing that I can do in that regard and what came to me was non-distinct shadow character. To me, it emphasizes that we have a shadow; there is darkness to us all. It is just part of what we are and our lesson here in this world. It is like learning how to work with that and embrace it so that we can be givers again instead of takers. At the same time, it is not threatening, it is not intimidating, it is not in anyway, trying to harm anything. It simply is there witnessing you know, I love that. I like it a lot.

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## Appendix D

Claire: First we will start out with your name, your age and we're you are from.

Ericka: Ericka Wexler is my name, age 36, I am from California, Currently, residing in Cameria.

Claire: Do you consider yourself a visionary artist or an outside artist?

Ericka: I don't like to classify myself into categories, but if you would like to categorize me, I would like to say I'm more fantasy surreal.

Claire: Are you classically trained?

Ericka: I am classically trained. I did oil painting lesson, since I was age 6, up until about age 13. I stop doing art for a little while. Then I went back to fine art in college, majored in that for 2 years and then I dropped out because I thought that it will never make me money. So, I transferred to graphic design, I did that for 10 years, I got sick of staring at a computer for 12 hours a day, so I went back to painting. Back to square one.

Claire: How long have you been painting in the festival environment?

Ericka: I have been painting at festivals since 2016. I don't do them very much, I do like 4 a year.

Claire: What and who are your inspiration?

Ericka: My inspiration comes from a lot of things, but mostly like personal experiences and emotions, and other arts and artists who I really admire, and nature and places I have been to traveling. Basically, my art tells a story, what's happened.

Claire: Do you think you're tapping into something more universal in your painting? if so, can you talk some more about it?

Ericka: I'm definitely tapping into more universal, I think all artist do if they get to a level, if they're are allowing a higher spirit to flow through them, instead of over thinking the art they are creating. They are letting something else over take them, having messages pass from the spiritual realm to a canvas, into something visually stimulating



that people can understand so they can expand their consciousness into some sort of light, love, expansion to change the way they think about things.

Claire: Beautiful! So, you have been painting for about 3 years at festivals, but how long have you been attending them.

Ericka: About the same amount of time, I was married for 10 years, I was in a 13year long-term relationship, as I was doing, that I was playing stepmother and the festival live didn't coincide with that. As soon as I start going to festivals ironically, my relationship started kind of disappearing, but I don't think is kind of the festival per say but that did happen to play a part. because when I started going to festivals, is when I started to wake up more and more, I started waking up more and more as I started doing art full time. Before that I feel like a lot other world, a little sleep, that's why art is a really good activation for waking.

Claire: I love that. So, what other festivals with outsider art have you been to?

Ericka: First was, I have been to was still dream, serenity gathering, lighting in a bottle and some other ones. My favorite ones are smaller ones to be honest, I really don't like doing huge festivals, because they are overwhelming with all the energies. I am an empath so I feel other people's energy and what they are on especially if there's a lot of drugs going around, so I Start feeling what they are doing. So it's a little intense for me, so I like to do the more smaller conscious ones, my favorite ones are serenity gathering.

Claire: Do you think visionary art shapes the festival environment? And if so how?

Ericka: Well I think it definitely plays a part, a huge part. If there wasn't any visual art at the festival, it will be just music basically, and other workshops and things. People need things to look at that are cool, it adds a huge element of the whole ambience and energy to the entire festival.

Claire: Do you think that the environment visionary artist creates in their work, mirror festival dreams scape?

Ericka: Yes definitely, it's all dreams scape I think, different portals, different reality, different realm we go into.

Claire: What commonalities do you see between painters that paint this kind of art, at art festivals.

Ericka: Commonalities are colors really, a lot of them use a lot of vibrant colors, we are all rainbow and light warriors. So, we like to use colors to stir emotion inside that make you feel a certain way, and I feel like colors, very colorful art makes you feel usually happy, and joyful, and feelings of peace.

## Appendix E

Zach: My name is Zachary Brown, I am 23 years old and I am from Dumont Iowa in the United States.

Claire: How long have you been attending festivals?

Zach: I think my first festival I went to was when I was like 11 years old. It was a local festival called 8035 in Dumont and it was a small local music festival that was kind of like an alternative folky rock festival. That was first introduction to hanging out with my friend with live music and culture around live art and expression. The first one I went to when I started traveling for festivals was probably when I was 17, so about 6 years ago now.

Claire: Do you think art brings people together? If so, how?

Zach: Art definitely brings people together, I think the most amazing way I see my art and other people's art bring people together. For me, when I create a piece, I have an idea and specific intention behind what I am creating. Every single person that I show it to, it connects with them in their own way, their own life experience and their

own perception of the visual things that I build in my work. It connects people from across cultures like we are down here in Costa Rica right now. I thought all these people that cannot really communicate with linguistically and we are able to communicate through my art work or through the visual of it and it bridges people from all over the world. Art is not just my painting, like food and any kind of expression it kind of breaks down people's barriers between them because it creates connection and shared experience.

Claire: What other festivals with art have you been to?

Zach: I have been to a lot, so we are down in Costa Rica right now, I have been to Envision festival in Costa Rica the last 2 years. I have been to Swami Halloween festival in Florida in 3 years, which is this really big festival in Florida that focuses on large installation work and painting and co-creation in that way. I did some Californian festivals like Desert Heart music festival, connection camp out in Tennessee, summer camp in Illinois. Lots of really tiny festivals all over the United States, like little under 1,000 people festivals. Quite a few.

Claire: How do you think visionary art shapes the festival environment?

Zach: For me, first off, to define visionary art for me. I feel like all art is visionary art in some sense because for me, visionary art is taking internalized vision or idea or concept and creating it into the external brinks. Creating something out of nothing, which is an alchemy of transforming material into a creation. So in a sense, all art is visionary art and for me, I think in a festival environment and visionary art, I think it involves creating art with an intention to lift up people or to create positive change or to bring about some transformation. So when you create art with an intention to create good for people, yourself or anything like that, I think that defines as visionary and spiritual based art. I think that really transforms things because our visual perception is so primary to our interaction with our environment and it is so immediate. Viewing paintings that have this intention to provide you this feeling kind of provides you this experience. Especially combined with music and with this new people that you are meeting and other people who have diverse experience and cultural background. The visionary art can really bring people together and heal people and it can even heal people without them knowing it. Because all they have to do is to look at it and that energy that the artist was trying to portray can move through them, work with them and it just creates beauty and creating beauty is one of the best things we can do.

Claire: What commonality do you see between visionary artists? You have kind of already answered that.

Zach: I feel like a lot of visionary artists I meet have had some sort of epiphany experience at some point in their life, which can be a huge variety of things. Spiritual experience, like meditations or something and even with travelling, you can have an epiphany. Just realizing how connected we all are as humans through this earth. I feel us as visionary artists kind of have had something like us that drives us to create art for the betterment of the earth. I think that is the coolest part about meeting them.

Claire: Do you think that the environment's visionary artist creates in their work mirror the festival dream scape, something other than our reality.

Zach: Yes, I really like that question a lot. I think that really is the case. Because I feel like the idea of a festival is to create the Shamballa; the Utopian vision of a group people all living together. That is what I feel like a gathering like that is trying to do. I think they mirror each other extremely well. A visionary painting is trying to create a visual blue print of a more collaborative, beautiful future. The festivals are laying the concrete ways that we can do that especially like an Envision festival. They are providing people with permaculture design ideas, which kind of form the land in the most ecological friendly cohesive way possible. Like herbalism information and how to get your medicine from the food that you are eating, body movement, social communication and intimacy work. The festivals are trying to give people the tools to take back to their own communities to create this brighter more balanced future and that is much of the intention of the visionary art that I have been seeing.

Claire: Beautiful. How do you think that these festivals are a peek into human nature and something more universal?

Zach: The festivals are such a peek into human nature because they bring out all the aspects of human nature, they bring out all the good and the bad. That is really important because by seeing the areas we are struggling in that is how we learn to fix and grow through them. Festivals are tough, we are all down here in Costa Rica and we all slept in tents in the jungle, in the rain with the bugs and with thousands of people on top of each other with loud music going all night. It is a really stressful environment, but it is all kind of like boot camp. You are put in a stressful environment to take back home, which is also a stressful environment but in a different way. It mirrors human nature to reflect on yourself and to reflect on your own struggles, what your own weaknesses are and judgement of yourself. With all these interactions with your environment and other people and by working through those and connecting with other people who are in the same path you are on. You can figure out how you can take those teachings and lessons home and really bring those to your community and your loved ones.

Claire: Do you consider yourself a visionary artist or an outsider artist?

Zach: I consider myself visionary artist. The term outsider artist, I feel like that was the term before visionary artist was used for this art movement. I don't know if I like the term outsider because I don't think any of us are outsiders, we are all insiders and I feel like we are all people making art. I accept the term visionary artist even though it is kind of misunderstood a lot of the time. Because I feel like a lot of my concepts do come from visionary experience, they come from internalizing ideas and visualizing concepts. A lot of my ideas and concepts recently are coming from shamanic work and different shamanic indigenous teachings that are very involved with visionary experience and lineages. Yes, I do consider myself a visionary artist.

Claire: Are you classically trained in anyway?

Zach: I am. I have done a few things that I guess would be considered classical. I went to a state college in Iowa, the University of Iowa for about 2 years. I studied printmaking and painting, a little bit of drawing and stuff, but I dropped out. I wouldn't even consider that classical training because it was the technical side of that. But painting-wise, I didn't receive any technical classical instruction, it was kind of critique and very conceptual. But I did a tattoo apprenticeship for a year and that was very rigorous. It was very rigorous training and observation and that was something that helped me a lot along my path to trust myself, be more confident in being an artist on general. Two years ago, I went to this art school in Austria called The Academy of Visionary Art. I studied there for 3 months under 2 teachers Amanda Sage and Jonathan Solter. That opened me up to infinite possibilities of my own art where art can take me and the fact that I can be an artist as a profession and live off that and make that my life. It taught me really authentic technique like making your own oil paint and painting with oils and all those old painting styles. It also taught me the spiritual side of painting, like creating harmonious structures and paintings that correspond to the canvas size that you are working on. Putting intentional ceremonies and different things to really embody the energy that I want to embody

Claire: How long have you been painting in the festival environment?

Zach: I think the first festival I painted at was in 2015, it was summer camp music festival. That was like the first festival I ever got in as a life painter at. It has been about 4 years.

Claire: Are you tapping into something universal? How?

Zach: Yes, it is my opinion that we are all one unified consciousness. I really think we can all tap into this universal mind or creative spirit that kind of resides within everything and within everyone all the time. It is all like in the present moment here right now, we can all tap into that universal truth. It is definitely harder sometimes than others, we are all humans and we are just trying to figure out everything out. Through practices and meditations, really anything that kind of clears the cloud of your everyday mind away. I feel like we can tap into things way beyond what we think is possible and imaginable.