

## Spiritual Addiction

### -- Kitsch Art and Psychedelic Culture

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#### Abstract

Psychedelic art is represented in literature, music and visual arts to reflect the kaleidoscopic patterns of meth's hallucinations, which are subject to various key interpretations of the changing social, political and revolutionary spirit as a state of consciousness. The characteristics of hallucinogenic art represent subconscious changes in the influence of drugs. Freud's theory of the unconscious was promoted by surrealists, while hallucinogenic artists opened a new continent after the discovery of LSD by chemist Albert Hofmann. The epidemic of LSD is a microcosm of postwar drug abuse in the west. The origins and development of psychedelic rock were closely related to the drug abuse problems of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, as well as to the "hippie movement". Psychedelic works that appropriate such sources are criticized as being mere attempts at recreating and conveying the sensual and visual experiences encountered while hallucinating on LSD. Kitsch is a characteristic of the accumulation and heterogeneous use of cultural products that is considered trivial, old-fashioned or popular.

#### Keywords

Psychedelic Art; Psychedelic Visual Arts; Hallucinogenic Art; LSD; Kitsch Art.

#### 1. Introduction

Psychedelic art is any artistic or visual display inspired by Psychedelic experiences and hallucinations known to follow the ingestion of psychoactive drugs such as LSD and psilocybin [1]. The term psychedelic, coined by the British psychologist Humphry Osmond, means "mental expression." By this definition, all artistic efforts to depict the inner world of the spirit might be considered "psychedelic". The common term "psychedelic art" first refers to the counter-cultural art movement of the late 1960s.

#### 2. Psychedelic Visual Art

Psychedelic visual art is the counterpart of psychedelic rock music. Concert posters, album covers, liquid light, liquid light art, murals, comic books, underground newspapers, etc., reflect not only the kaleidoscope of color patterns in the LSD illusion of color rotation, but also the psychedelic state of consciousness of revolutionary politics, society, and spiritual emotions inspired by these ideas.

Psychedelic art is represented in literature, music and visual arts.

All artistic efforts to project the inner world of the mind can be considered psychedelic; But in idiomatic usage and in professional bibliography, the expression "psychedelic art" or "wheat color" refers specifically to the art movement of the 1960s counter culture[2]. Then, in the last decade of this century, with the help of new computer technology, the carnival movement revived drugs for artistic use.

The psychedelic visual arts are parallel and, to some extent, subordinate to psychedelic music, especially pop music, which is the most socially prevalent. Concert posters, album covers, light shows, murals, cartoons, fans (underground newspapers) and similar media are used to reflect the kaleidoscopic patterns of meth's hallucinations[2], which are subject to various key interpretations of the changing social, political and revolutionary spirit as a state of consciousness.

### 3. Hallucinogenic Art

The cinema has also experimented with psychedelic images, even in widely distributed productions such as 2001, Odyssey in space (1968), which have a few minutes of scenes in which only colored light is radially projected; Or the curious credit title at the beginning of a James Bond movie.

The features of hallucinogenic art include:

- (1) Abstract fantasy;
- (2) Shapes include kaleidoscope shapes, spiral shapes, concentric circles, fractal or paisley patterns, diffraction patterns, and repetition of these patterns;
- (3) Bright and contrasting colors;
- (4) Excessive details, which cover the whole picture, namely the so-called horrible vacuum style;
- (5) Soft and excessive deformation of the image, sometimes including collage;
- (6) There will be some inner image, especially when there is light on the eye, which makes certain objects visible both inside and from outside the eye;
- (7) Light spots or rings, which are caused by eye compression or direct stimulation of the visual system, not light;
- (8) In typography, innovative fonts and hand lettering are used, including concave-convex deformations and shifts.

These characteristics represent subconscious changes in the influence of drugs[2]. Hallucinogenic art believes that the change in the state of consciousness produced by hallucinogenic drugs is the source of artistic inspiration, which defines the way of obtaining inspiration. In this sense, it is similar to surrealism, which follows the rules of following the guidance of dreams, while hallucinogenic artists follow the hallucinations caused by drugs[2]. Both types of art are closely related to the development of science and psychology. Freud's theory of the unconscious was promoted by surrealists, while hallucinogenic artists opened a new continent after the discovery of LSD by chemist Albert Hofmann.

In fact, in the early days, many artists used drugs to raise their awareness and expand their psychological horizons, but the hallucinatory effect of LSD had a very strong influence on artists in the 1960s[3].

Back then, the first hallucinogenic art appeared in literature, not in visual art. Antonin Artaud's 1937 *Voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara*, for example, described what he saw after leaving drugs. Henri Michaux's *Miserable Miracle* (1956) described his experience of cactus poison and cannabis [3]; More notably, Aldous Huxley's accounts of drug-inducing experiences in *The Doors of Perception* (1954) and *Heaven and Hell* (1956) are still authoritative accounts.

Albert Hofmann, a chemist in Sandoz's laboratory, and his colleagues discovered the effects of LSD in 1943, confirming that the drug caused hallucinations. In the 20 years since its discovery, Sandoz has called LSD an important drug for psychological and neurological research[3]. Hoffmann also saw the potential of the drug to inspire poets and artists and was intrigued by the hallucinogenic experiments of the German writer Ernst Junger.

And, as many people like to tell us, Hoffman did not discover the hallucinogenic effects of the drug. He accidentally spilled some LSD powder on his hands while working in the lab, and he

soon developed a psychedelic state, which faded after about two hours[3]. On April 19, 1943, Hoffmann deliberately took a very small dose of LSD (just 0.25 mg). After 30 minutes, the hallucinogen returned and he was unable to continue his work, he got on his bicycle and raced home. LSD enthusiasts later designated April 19 as Bike Day.

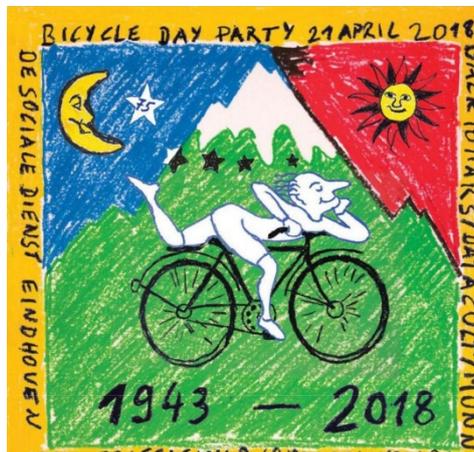


Figure 1: Bike Day

#### 4. The Epidemic of LSD

LSD's early art experiments were conducted under the clinical direction of Los Angeles psychiatrist Oscar Janiger. Janiger asked a group of 50 different artists to draw a theme of their choice. They then took LSD and painted the same subject under its influence [3].

The epidemic of LSD is a microcosm of postwar drug abuse in the west. From the anti-war hippie movement to the life of a lost generation [4]. The young Steve Jobs was a less fanatical hippie, "Meditation, yoga and LSD were my inspirations. They gave me extraordinary creativity."

Aldous Huxley, author of Brave New World believed that psychedelic drugs helped improve perception and thinking, just like Zen meditation, Hindu yoga and meditation. He wrote a book about his experience of taking mescaline, a hallucinogen, called the gate of perception, as the title of this article[4]. As a suicide note, he left a piece of paper, "LSD, 100mg, intramuscular injection".

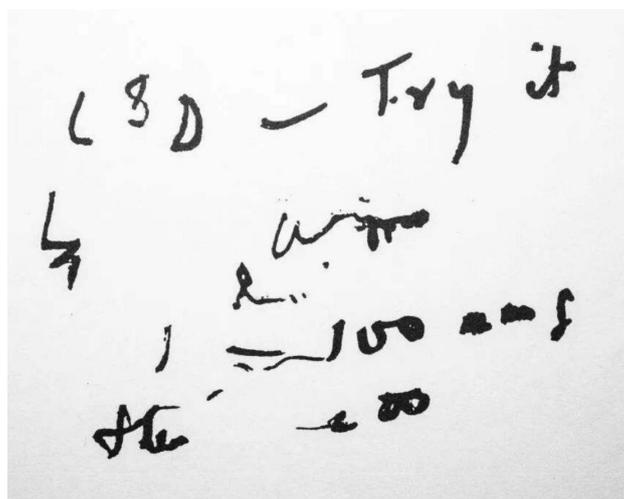
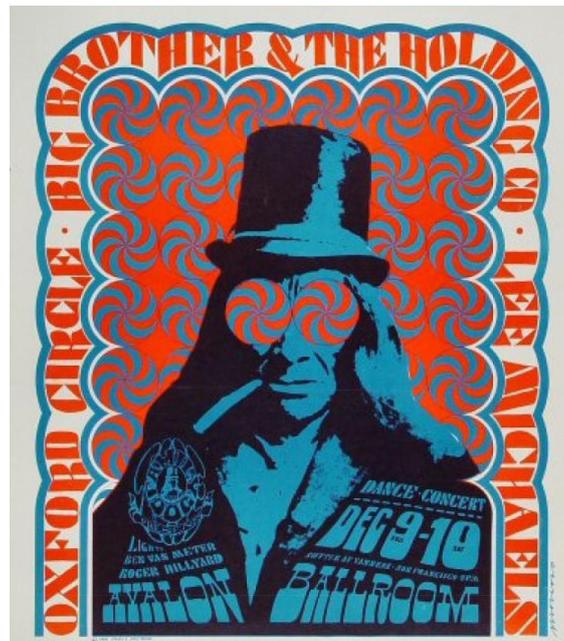


Figure 2: LSD,100mg, intramuscular injection

Finally, hallucinogens are counter culture is widely accepted in The United States, hallucinogenic art movement in The 1960s's main backers, posters of The artist in San Francisco, in hippie community, such as rock concert promoters Bill Graham commissioned artist Stanley Mouse, Rick Griffin and Alton Kelley to The Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix and The Big Brother Holding Company band poster[5]. By the 1970s, though San Francisco was still the center of hallucinogenic art, it was also being developed in New York and Los Angeles, as well as in other countries, such as Bridget Riley's paintings in Britain.



**Figure 3:** Bridget Riley's Painting

The origins and development of psychedelic rock were closely related to the drug abuse problems of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, as well as to the "hippie movement"[6]. America had just emerged from the Korean war in the 1960s and was soon Mired in the Vietnam war. The themes of the hippie movement: anti-war, peace and love as trends of thought reflected the idealistic side; Sex, drugs and violence are inevitable as a result. The typical beat generation, or troubled youth, began to have a party, taking LSD and experiencing strange visual images in rock music[7].

Audiences naturally and artists promote each other. Under such psychedelic tide, the psychedelic art schools represented by psychedelic rock bands and pop art also emerged. Both of them led and represented the psychological needs and aesthetic orientation of the young people at that time and promoted this trend from the perspective of hearing and vision respectively[7]. And the two were inseparable, like the velvet underground -- not only Lou Reed's band, but Andy Warhol's; Or like Warhol's giant bananas for the velvet underground or bulging jeans for the Rolling Stones, this art and music have become inseparable.

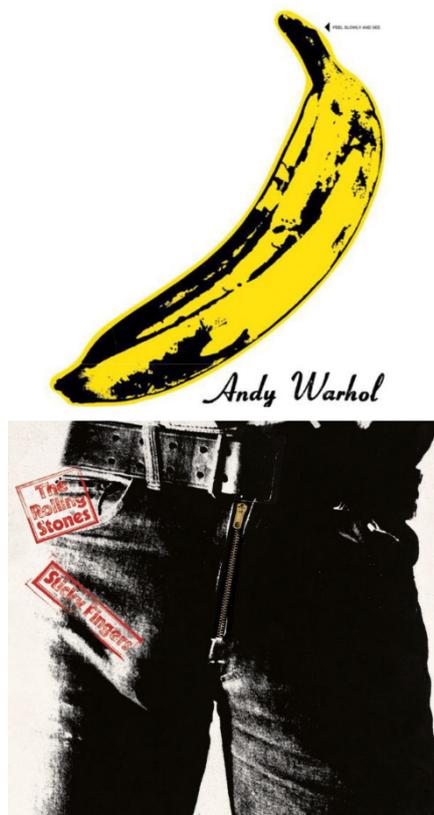


Figure 4: Warhol's giant bananas and bulging jeans

## 5. Kitsch

Psychedelic works that appropriate such sources are criticized as being mere attempts at recreating and conveying the sensual and visual experiences encountered while hallucinating on LSD[7]. In fact, and this will become relevant when looking at kitsch, one so often speaks of it as an ersatz culture or as an artificial art because it is used to replace the experience itself. Due to the consumption and market itself under the circumstance, kitsch art and psychedelic culture together rendering a part of mass culture. Kitsch is art or other artwork or other object that attracts people to love. Sometimes these objects are interestingly appreciated in a sarcastic or humorous way. From the observer's point of view, kitsch is usually a derogatory, inferior, and desired expression of emotion[8]. In contrast to artistic efforts at truth or beauty, critics see an easy way to express emotion, triviality or tackiness. Kitsch is a characteristic of the accumulation and heterogeneous use of cultural products that is considered trivial, old-fashioned or popular. Kitsch means the judgment of value and the specification of it.

The term "kitsch" was first applied to works of art in response to certain branches of 19th-century art whose aesthetic claims were later regarded by art critics as exaggerated sentimentalism and melodrama. Therefore, "kitsch art" is closely related to "sentimental art"[8]. Kitsch is also related to the concept of the camp (which has been popular since the 1960s, emphasizing skill, frivolity, and naive middle-class conceit) because of its humorous and ironic nature.

Kitsch visual art is generally derogatory, because it implies that the work in question is gaudy, or that it is merely for ornamental and decorative purposes, rather than a work of real artistic value. Chocolate box made by artist Thomas Kinkade (1958-2012), whose idyllic landscapes are often derided by art critics as "vulgar" and "schmaltzy", is considered a prime example of contemporary kitsch[8].

Industrialization and urbanization in the mid-19th century ushered in the first phase of kitsch. In Europe and North America, those who took advantage of the jobs offered by industry formed a new middle class. These workers who were previously satisfied with the countryside and traditional arts now have access to new cultural products. The new middle class tried to entertain themselves in ways that suited them. Hence the latter's response to what Greenberg calls "cultural alternatives"[9]. For people who are not sensitive to real cultural values, they still yearn for the entertainment that only culture can provide in one form or another. Leisure activities allow the middle class, among other things, to taste cheap imitations of traditional high art. As a result, manufacturing and retailing have given the middle-class easy access to widely distributed cultural products.

The middle of the twentieth century saw the development of a second phase of kitsch, which became the primary target of criticism of popular culture[10]. Leftist intellectuals used kitsch to denounce the culture of the new consumer society. This time, the convention is not because of the erosion of elite culture and criticized, but was accused of manipulating the privilege of the tools: "new vulgar turn adults to children, let the masses are more easy to manipulate, reduce the favour of the Disney cartoons,, and romance novels (Binkley) - this means:" to suppress adults to children, new convention makes it easier for mass processing, reduce their cultural needs, let the Disney cartoons, pulps (cheap) and romantic rose water. For some thinkers in the 1950s, kitsch worked in the same way in the context of American capitalism, between fascists and communists, before encouraging devolution[11].

With the gradual globalization of markets and product transactions, kitsch has unwittingly become one of the most popular styles in the world through consumer goods. The word is somewhere between derogatory and emotional ("bad" assumed taste)[12]; The kitsch of an object is a particular corollary of the taste of its observer. For example, rococo art, Neapolitan tablecloths, snowballs and Bavarian clocks or cuckoo clocks are often labeled as "kitsch," sometimes with a bit of arrogance or a sense of humor.

Since the post-modern boom, contemporary culture seems to be particularly suited to the temptation of kitsch, by shifting the object of desire's attention to the search for alternative emotions to the egocentric character. This is reflected in the preference for text-based imagery, mimicry and simulacra, in a culture full of images and pervaded by such contemporary virtuality. This impression by soap dramas and Hollywood pap extinction exciting video game and film "addiction" products are everywhere to confirm, this product provide emotional intensity in the absence of real objects, and conflicts with fictional oppressors, eliminate the observer in the real world to identify the needs of the oppressor, and with the struggle, give play to the role of the alternative of anger.

Kitsch Art and psychedelic culture does share some sort of similarities by the "addiction" affect that creates by the artists and how it revealed to audiences in today's world. As mentioned before, Kitsch does not create psychedelic culture as a starter instead both of them are the productions under the influence of mass culture or pop culture.

The main supporters of the psychedelic art movement of the 1960s were San Francisco poster artists such as Rick Griffin, Victor Moscoso, Bonnie MacLean, Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley and Wes Wilson[12]. Their psychedelic rock concert posters were inspired by the art nouveau movement, Victoria, dada and pop art. The "Fillmore poster" was one of the most famous posters of the time. The stark contrast of saturated colors, the elaborate and ornate typography, the strong symmetrical composition, the collage elements, the rubbery contortions and the exotic images are all hallmarks of San Francisco's psychedelic poster art style. The style flourished from 1966 to 1972. Their work immediately influenced vinyl album cover art, and virtually all of the aforementioned artists created album covers as well.

Although San Francisco was still the center of psychedelic art in the early 1970s, the style also developed internationally: British artist Bridget Riley is known for her psychedelic art paintings that create visual illusions[12]. Mati Klarwein created psychedelic masterpieces for Miles Davis' jazz-rock fusion album and Carlos Santana Latin Rock. Pink Floyd worked extensively with London-based designer Hipgnosis to create graphics to support the concepts in their albums. Willem DE Ridder created the cover art for Van Morrison. Artists in the Los Angeles area such as John Van Hamersveld, Warren Dayton and Art Bevacqua, as well as New York artists Peter Max and Milton Glaser, have produced posters for highly collected concerts or social commentary (such as the anti-war movement) during this period[12]. The cover of *Life* magazine and the main article at the height of the "summer of love" on September 1, 1967 focused on the explosion of psychedelic art on posters and artists leading the hippie counterculture community[13].

The psychedelic ethos reflects the hippie movement, which was also influenced by the beat generation of the 1950s, encouraging experimental, rebellious behavior, and the proliferation of drugs, violence, and free sex, which was contrary to its original purpose, but inevitable: the hippie movement was born of war and ultimately of violence. The spirit of the psychedelic ethos was not the peace and love idealism that its vehicle, the hippie movement, claimed; Nor is it as rebellious as it seems.

However, the psychedelic ideological trend takes aesthetics as the establishment of existence value after nothingness caused by doubt, and the aesthetic basis of psychedelic ideological trend can be further traced to the philosophy of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to find its spiritual connotation.

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