

Hans Ulrich Obrist interviews John Giorno

7 October, 2002

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Hans Ulrich Obrist: When we spoke in New York a few months ago you described the very beginning of your work where there was a very natural interdisciplinarity, a seamless transition between art, poetry and literature.

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EVERYONE I KNOW
ONE BY ONE
IN EVERY DIRECTION
THEY ARE LEAVING
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FOR SOME PEOPLE
EVERYONE THEY KNOW HAS DIED**

JOHN GIORNO for VISUAL AIDS • NEW YORK • DAY WITHOUT ART • 1993
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John Giorno, for Visual Aids New York - Day without Art - 1993

albums was in the uncountable millions. Radio was a venue.

HUO: So it was very self-organized.

JG: Yes, it was just me having these ideas and making them happen. More important is making them happen. And then, in 1968 I was talking on the telephone and it just seemed like another venue. The voice was the poet, the words were the poem, and the telephone was the venue. Why couldn't it be poetry, rather than discursive thoughts? I organized Dial-a-Poem in '68 and it was very successful, because it was the first time the telephone was used for mass communication. Before, it was me calling you and you calling me and that was all. The stroke of luck was bringing together technology, (we had twelve telephone lines and twelve answering machines), with lots of publicity: newspapers, magazines, television, and great content. When it started the New York Times did a quarter page feature story with the phone number; and instantly there were hundreds of thousands of calls. It was free.

HUO: At the beginning you were spending more of your time with visual artists, but did you also know many other poets?

JG: Yes, I knew many poets. They were part of the extended scene; but I preferred the artists. Dial-a-Poem began with fourteen poets, and it grew to over two hundred. William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Brion Gysin, John Cage, Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Jim Carroll, Vito Acconci, etc, and represented all the traditions: Beat, New York School, Black, Poesie Sonore, experimental, conservative, performance and music.

John Giorno: I was born in New York, and in the early 1960s, as a young poet, I had the good fortune of meeting a lot of artists. They happened to live and work in the Village and downtown. I met by chance a small extended group of young artists, who were just beginning, and having their first shows. Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns and Bob Rauschenberg, Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris, Merce Cunningham and John Cage, Trisha Brown and Carolee Schneeman. The extended group was about sixty or eighty painters and sculptors, dancers and musicians. Nobody was famous. They knew each other, and went to each other's openings and birthday parties. I met and hung out with them by accident, and it seems strange that they should turn out to be the greatest artists of the last half of the Twentieth Century.

HUO: Which disciplines influenced your work the most at that time?

JG: These artists and painters were the real influence on me, as a poet. Everyday in '62 and '63, Andy Warhol and the others did some fabulous work. They did what arose in their minds, and made it happen. I saw the process, how their minds worked. It occurred to me that poetry was seventy-five years behind painting and sculpture and dance and music.

HUO: Would you say that there was a definitive moment or incident that got you started?

JG: In 1965, the only venues for poetry were the book and the magazine, nothing else. Multimedia and performance didn't exist. I said to myself, if these artists can do it, why can't I do it for poetry? That was what started the whole thing. There actually were countless venues for poetry, the things you did in your everyday life. You listened to rock 'n' roll from a phonograph. The LP record and sitting in the living room became the venue. I started making tapes in '65 and LPs in '67, and over thirty years produced fifty albums. Radio was a venue. With the release of each album, we sent out four hundred copies or more to FM and college radio stations across the U.S.A. and Europe. A college town had ten thousand listeners and San Francisco had three hundred thousand. Cuts by some poets were played in continuous rotation. The actual listening audience for those



John Giorno, William Burroughs, Richard Kirk, Stephen Mallinder The Bunker, New York, Mat 7 1985

HUO: So using the telephone network for poetry was a breakthrough in terms of the relationship between the medium and the message?

JG: More interesting was the innovation that telephone was being used for the first time for mass communication; which gave rise to a Dial-a-something industry. From Dial-a-Joke, to Dial-a-Sports, etc; and amazing technologies were developed to receive simultaneously huge numbers of calls.

HUO: How did the Dial-a-Poem initiative enter the formal structures of the art world?

JG: In 1970, Dial-a-Poem was at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in the Information Show curated by Kynaston McShine.

HUO: And how did you develop this work in order to explore other contexts for presenting poetry?

JG: I produced videotapes. Poems were made into videos, and television was the venue. And all of it culminating with the Internet and web sites. This is a golden age of poetry. For the last forty years, poetry has flourished, as never before from the beginning of time. Endless venues connecting countless poets all over the world to vast audiences. The technologies have completely fulfilled my pathetic beginnings.

HUO: So you would say that these recent forms of communication and dissemination have made poetry more accessible, and that this has also allowed poetry itself to develop and flourish?

JG: A Golden Age of Poetry, for half a century, and many generations of poets. And it has many aspects. Rap is a great poetic form. Every kid in America inspired by MTV and music videos has access in their high schools to incredibly high-tech studios and labs, to make videos and sound recordings. In my day, that didn't exist, and we had to grab at every bit of primitive technology, and rent expensive studio time. Now kids can see something bad on television, and say I can do better than that*, and go into school and make a great work.

HUO: When you started to self-organize* these forms of dissemination, what role did your publishing house play?

JG: I started Giorno Poetry Systems in 1965, which was, and still is, a non-profit foundation that produces my poems and projects. In the early years, we received grants from the New York State Council of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, and small foundations to produce all the endless things that I have done. The benefits! Organizing benefit performances to help the AIDS Treatment Project, Tibetan Buddhists, and whatever, were great showcases to present poetry and rock 'n* roll, Patti Smith and Debbie Harry. That was another venue.

HUO: When did you start making sound pieces with your poetry and what triggered your interests in this particular area?

JG: I had the good luck, in 1965, or late '64, to meet William Burroughs and Brion Gysin. They came to New York for the first time in ten years, for the historic visit. Brion introduced me to the idea of making loops, early samples, and making sound pieces of my poems. The first one I did in 1965, a collaboration with Brion, was called Subway Sound. He sent it to Paris, to Bernard Heidsieck, who presented it at the 1965 Biennale at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris. That was very exciting for me, my first sound work. Then, I went on doing it.



John Giorno photographed by William Burroughs 1965

HUO: What was your relationship with Robert Rauschenberg at that time?

JG: Bob Rauschenberg and I were friends. He did something called E.A.T., Experiments in Art and Technology, a large performance event in the 25th Street Amory.

HUO: Together with Billy Kluger.

JG: Yes, Billy Kluger, as you know, was a laser engineer at Bell Labs in New Jersey. He connected the artists with engineers for great collaborations. Billy orchestrated Nine Evenings of Art and Technology for Bob Rauschenberg. I was a young poet, and was the cameraman in Bob's live video piece. Bob and I were lovers. A month or so later, Bob said to me, about a short round man, who hung around: "You should get to know him. He is brilliant. His name is Bob Moog." He had just invented the Moog Synthesizer. I worked with him making sound pieces of my poems, in Trumansburg, New York, near Ithaca, where he manufactured the synthesizer in a double storefront. This was before he became famous. I went up two or three times a year for the next couple of

years. This was really early, before rock 'n' roll bands discovered the Moog Synthesizer. In '66 or '67, the Rolling Stones and several bands had bought them, were playing them, but hadn't used it on a record yet. Such things arise from time to time in life.

HUO: It is very interesting that it seems to have been a kind of spirit of the time and also an atmosphere of collaboration. In many of the interviews that I have done about the 60's in New York, there seemed to be an incredible convergence of all these different people who whilst they are so different, they talk to each other never the less. Cage is almost always mentioned as a trigger. I wondered how important, for you, Cage was for triggering ideas and projects?

JG: I haven't really thought about that much. John was more a friend than an influence, and I loved him and his work. Of course, for Bob and Jasper and many people, John Cage is a very important influence. For me the Pop artists were the more important. That was what changed me. John's concepts came quite naturally. And over thirty years, we performed at many festivals, MOMA, Pompidou Museum, Minneapolis, etc., big festivals with many performers. They all always had the same idea of putting John and me before or after each other because I was loud and aggressive, and John quiet and peaceful. It happened almost every time. It was little corny, but I loved it, form is emptiness.

HUO: ...it is much more complex.

JG: The energy of the scene around the painters, sculptors and musicians and how they all related to each other was extraordinary. Another example is Wyn Chamberlain who lived on the top floor at 222 Bowery, before I moved into the building. He gave a lot of great parties. On December 4, 1963 he gave me a birthday party: for John Giorno, a young poet, and star of Andy Warhol's movie Sleep. There were about eighty people. Andy, Roy Lichtenstein, the seven Pop Artists and their wives, girlfriends and boyfriends; Jasper Johns left before Bob Rauschenberg and Steve Paxton arrived, Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery, Frank Stella and Barbara Rose, Merce Cunningham and John Cage, Larry Poons, Alex Katz, Prince Alexander Romanoff, Kenneth Lane, and Jonas Mekas; everyone in the art world. They didn't really know me. It was billed as a Pop birthday party for a young poet. It was not about me, it was about all of them coming together. By the late '60s, everybody became very famous and nobody went to anybody's party any more. It was over.

HUO: Then lots of people in the art world became really busy with their careers. And what effect did this have on your work and the work of the others?

JG: Poetry was very disappointing. There was nobody. Allen Ginsberg is a great poet, but he only really liked poets who wrote like him, in his style. And if you were a young boy, he loved your work. I didn't write like that. But Allen liked me because I was famous then there was Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery, who are great poets. Frank was only interested in poets who wrote like them, or what was called the Second Generation New York School of Poets.

HUO: It is very interesting, last night or the night before you briefly mentioned Frank O'Hara. What you were saying was completely new to me. You said that there was a certain tension, a sense of hostility from O'Hara towards Andy Warhol. I wonder if you could tell me a little bit more about this?

JG: Frank O'Hara was really unkind to Andy Warhol. He did not think it was painting. Frank came from the New York art world of the 1950s, and was best friends with de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and all of them. Frank's world was very painterly. The Pop Artists used silk-screens, which to him was a joke. Frank treated Andy with great scorn. It caused Andy a lot of suffering. The abstract expressionists thought Andy was just a fag, and a commercial artist. Only half a man and half an artist.

HUO: But with Frank O'Hara this wasn't the reason? It was surely more complex?

JG: There was a gay issue. Andy told me that in 1959, Frank and John came with someone for drinks at Andy's townhouse on Lexington Avenue. Oak-paneled walls framed with black vinyl, a carved Tiffany couch, and a wooden carousel horse. Frank O'Hara laughed hysterically. Andy said, "He laughed at the furniture." He was demeaning and cruel. Andy was chichi, and inconsequential. Andy was very hurt. Andy and Frank are an example of a negative karmic propensity.

HUO: And the gay issue was really a significant factor?

JG: Those guys, the abstract expressionists, thought that if you were gay, you could not be a painter. Only if you were straight can you be an abstract painter! Their wives, who I knew, were all fag hags. They all had many gay friends. Frank was a poet and they all loved and respected him and his poetry. He worked for the Museum of Modern Art, so in the early '60s when Pop arose, Frank was not helpful. They say that before Frank died in 1965, a year or so before, he realized what Andy had done, and saw some good qualities.

HUO: ...that he had been mistaken?

JG: But the damage was done.

HUO: We have only talked a little about Duchamp and the whole Duchampian link so I wanted to ask you again about the role of Duchamp in all of this at the time.

JG: Duchamp was adored by all of them. I met Duchamp a few times. I shook his hand and that was all that happened, one time really early on, in the summer of '62 or '63, when the Whitney Museum was on the backside of the Museum of Modern Art on 54th Street. Andy Warhol and I went to an opening one evening in June. We were just standing on the curb in a crowd waiting to go in, and Duchamp arrived in a taxicab. Andy became overwrought. He couldn't believe it - Marcel Duchamp! Trembling, Andy pushed his way through the people, and I followed holding his sleeve, and he positioned himself so that as Duchamp walked from the taxi, he would run into Andy, and so that there was somebody next to him to introduce him to Marcel Duchamp. I was there, and got introduced too, as a young poet.

HUO: I was wondering when, in New York, you felt that this exchange between disciplines was disappearing because it somehow seemed to have disappeared by the 1980s?

JG: When that world changed to everyone being famous, and ruthlessly on their own, it finished for me. It was a dead end, a trap. After the Information Show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970, I took a different route.

HUO: What did you show in the Information Show?

JG: Dial-a-Poem. Kynaston presented it in the show, and I re-conceived it bigger. Dial-a-Poem at MOMA got millions of phone calls. And we had a room or alcove down in the main gallery with monitoring telephones; and on the walls were my silkscreen Poem Prints.

HUO: And after this exhibition something changed for you?

JG: My path changed, diverged into other directions. In 1965, I became best friends with William Burroughs and Brion Gysin. Their world was parallel to, but separate from, the art world. Brion was a little bit at odds with art politics.

HUO: How influential was William Burroughs for you and your work?

JG: William Burroughs was a great influence on me, first introducing me to the nature of mind. They were both very political people, opening my eyes to politics and the negative use of the media by conglomerates and ill-intentioned forces to control people and enslave their minds.

HUO: So it is true to say that William Burroughs and Bryon Gysin contributed to the awakening of your political and economic consciousness?

JG: At the same time, I became a Tibetan Buddhist in the Nyingma tradition, and a meditator.

HUO: Can I ask about the notion of sexuality within your work at this time?

JG: Dial-a-Poem in 1968 was very sexual. Poems with sexual images, straight, or preferably gay, as I'm a gay man; and as political activism. It seems strange that in 1968, everything was still externally puritanical. We all took lots of drugs, and in our personal lives were liberated. But in the media, and outside world, pornographic or erotic images were never used. The trial of Naked Lunch for obscenity was just two years before. And Henry Miller's Tropic Of Cancer. In the early sixties, when I used sexual images in my own work for the first time, it was very startling and powerful, and a strong thing to do. By '69 and '70, everything had completely changed. Naked people on Broadway in Hair, and on the cover of Time, and Screw magazine. There was no point doing it anymore.

HUO: And so how did you react to the end of this era of sexual liberation in your work?

JG: By 1970, love and light had changed into hardcore political action. Dial-a-Poem became political. Beside all the poets, I included a lot of anti-Vietnam War material, on civil rights and radical politics. I had tapes from The Weather People and Bernadette Dorn, Bobby Seal and Eldridge Cleaver. Diane Di Prima wrote a series of poems called Revolutionary Letters. One was How to Make a Molotov Cocktail, with completely pure intentions.

HUO: Do-it-yourself!

JG: Do-it-yourself. She was full of innocent fervor to change political injustices. Revolutionary Letters were wonderful. How to Make a Molotov Cocktail was with great compassion. Occasionally, I put it on. By chance, it was on the day The Weather People blew up the IBM building in New York, a huge devastating explosion. A newsperson happened to call Dial-a-Poem and heard the Molotov Cocktail poem. The news story headlines in the New York Times, Daily News, and Post read: CALL THE ROCKEFELLER MUSEUM AND LEARN HOW TO BLOW UP THE IBM BUILDING. And that created an uproar. The next week in Newsweek, in the front on page 6, Periscope, was a story about Dial-a-Poem, call and learn how to make a bomb*, next to a photograph of a policeman shot dead, while talking on a telephone in Philadelphia, a completely unrelated story; but it seemed like Dial-a-Poem was illustrated by the photograph of the dead cop with a telephone to his ear. That was horrible for them to have done that.

HUO: How far has the do-it-yourself* ethos been underlying your work?

JG: In the early 1960s, on the lower Eastside, there were many young poets publishing small magazines. Ed Sanders and "Fuck You". As Ted Berrigan, "C" magazine, said, "We publish ourselves, because nobody else will." Mimeograph was before photocopy. There were many great Small Press magazines. It was the beginning of the Golden Age of Poetry. The editors got together a half dozen or a dozen people to collate the pages of 500 copies or whatever. The do-it-yourself* approach evolved over the years, and has always been important. It has been one of my theories and one of the reasons for Giorno Poetry Systems: if you don't do it yourself, nobody is going to do it for you. I learned early that the Warner Brothers of this world only sign Laurie Anderson, and nobody else. It is always a problem for bands, here in Paris, or in New York, getting picked up by a label, and for the CD and video. It never really happens. And if it's hopeless for bands, it's worse for poets.

When you do it yourself, a lot of energy arises, and enough money always comes in, designers and people to help, and distribution. And the energy and wisdom of the small group, and the interconnecting small groups, makes amazing things happen.

HUO: Concerning the do-it-yourself issue, there are many interesting lines of enquiry, whether in terms of Fluxus or Brecht, Duchamp's readymades, the Performance Art movement and, once again, back to music. How did your interest in poetry develop into these areas in terms of your practice?

JG: I've been a poet since I was 14 years old. I have been doing it, (whatever it* is), all of my life. I went to school and learned art history and everything, like you do in school. But in 1962, when I began writing found poems, the inspiration was Andy, and Bob and Jasper. The possibilities of found images through words. The way I found and used the material, found words, phrases in newspapers and magazines, became a poetic form. The influence was the Pop Artists and how they used found images. Even though in school I had studied Duchamp and learned about the early Twentieth Century Russian and Italian Futurists - I knew their work, but they didn't do it for me. It was the Pop Artists and Burroughs and the '60s, who were my teachers. It is interesting, because you should go to school and learn all of these things, because if not, it is real ignorance. But your teacher is life. It is a live transmission. And even though it came to me through the 1960s, it was the wisdom and spirit of Duchamp.

HUO: So the peers and the friends are more important than teachers somehow.

JG: It is more complicated. I am a Tibetan Buddhist in the Nyingma tradition. In Tibetan Buddhism, there are many lineages of teachings that have been transmitted from great teacher to great teacher, unbroken lines for 2500 years. The transmission is the wisdom and sound of the words.

HUO: And this is something that has empowered your work?

JG: Maybe the 1960s were a worldly empowerment for me.

HUO: Was there a link to what was going on in London at the time?

JG: Yes, a link, indeed. Brion worked with the BBC in 1959. He was given studio time, and experimented making sound pieces. I was connected to Poesie Sonore and the poets who performed in the endless festivals in Paris, Amsterdam, Rome, etc.

HUO: Presumably, records, and then later cassettes, CDs and videos followed on as new venues for you after having worked with the medium of radio?

JG: When I made all the LPs, CDs, and videos, the poets' work became a reflection of my mind. The choices, new venues and connections to the audience were making works of art with their art. Again, not waiting for an audience to come to you, doing it, performing, making it happen.

HUO: Would it be fair to say that these new venues and technologies have superseded the role of the book within poetry?

JG: The book evolved and developed from 100 years ago or 400 years ago or from Guttenberg, fulfilling a need of each time. Poems and the novel arose and evolved for audiences. The venue was sitting in a chair at home by oneself at night with a candle reading words. Everything has changed with all of the technologies. The book is one of the venues, but not the only prime venue now.

HUO: There is no longer such a hierarchy between the venues.

JG: Exactly.

HUO: Following on from this idea of creating venues or triggering venues, and to bring the discussion into your current practice, did the arrival of the Internet change the way you work, the way that you activate venues?

JG: I have been very passively aggressive about the Internet. I am on thousands of websites, if you access my name or *Giorno Poetry*. I tour and perform all over, Bologna, Minneapolis, Brisbane and they all have websites. They put up pages of me performing, audio, visual, text, photographs, and interviews - beautifully designed pages on countless sites. Better than I can do. I always used to be first', and nobody ever remembered; now, I just want to be best'. I don't have my own site, because I don't want to put in all the time making it great. For a site to be alive, it has to change everyday, a constant flow of new information. The medium is the message.

HUO: Do you ever leave old or outdated venues behind as the technology moves on or do you keep them all alive and ongoing in your practice?

JG: I've stopped making CDs. I have done fifty albums! The last was *The Best of William Burroughs*, an elaborate four CD box set with a big eighty-page book with hundreds of photographs. That's the last. Now, I just write and perform.

HUO: And you mentioned that you are working on a new book.

JG: I am just finishing a book that I have been working on for five years. I work on it here in Paris everyday and when I go back to New York there is a little bit more to do. A book of memoir pieces, memoir moments mostly in the 1960s, but also in the '50s, and going up to the present, called *GREAT DEMON KINGS*. My theory is that if you can remember one single moment with great clarity, it tells the



John Giorno

whole story. I've remembered a lot of moments. I am not a prose writer and it takes me a long time. I write slowly. It started in 1986 when Andy Warhol died and I was remembering my times with him in 1963 and '64. Twenty-three years had passed and I was remembering those days very clearly. When somebody powerful dies, it is very strong. The memories were complicated, and came back effortlessly. I said to myself, "You better write them down now, because if you wait another twenty-five years, there is going to be nothing left. I started writing. Thirteen or fourteen years have passed and I have become an expert. I discovered that I have an ability to remember. If I relax my mind, I can remember conversations from thirty years ago. Like focusing a microscope. What William Burroughs said, what I said, what he said back to me, what I thought when he was saying what he said, how I thought he felt. Anyway, I am finishing this book and it is almost done.

HUO: On Saturday you read this amazing passage on Burroughs that is almost like a celebration of the funeral - the funeral not as a sad event even but as a joyous event, so I wanted to ask you if this is also part of the book?

JG: Yes, it is a long piece, called *The Death of William Burroughs*, in gorgeous detail, his dying process and the passing of his consciousness.

HUO: And is it memory in the present? Can one say it is a dynamic notion of memory? Memory has been occupied by a very static, nostalgic and very often reactionary notion of consuming memory, and what you are describing seems to be the opposite. What you are articulating seems to be present moments of memory.

JG: I am writing about some magnificent moments, in whose simplicity there is some wisdom. The book opens in 1968, and skips around, '65, the '50s, and '80s, and '70s, and '90s. Since I'm not a prose writer, there are no rules. I developed the ability to remember conversations in great detail. And I decided to put it to the test. William was still long alive. I went out to Lawrence, Kansas, and we had drinks and smoked a joint, and I reconstructed the conversation from August 1968, in a similar funny context, and asked the same questions. I had a tape recorder. William gave me the same answers, said the exact things that he had said in '68. Because he was remembering what he thought and felt, essentially, it was the same words.

HUO: Word for word?

JG: Occasionally an adjective or verb or construction were slightly different, because he was remembering twenty-five years ago. What he felt about Jack Kerouac at that moment or things we had talked about. I was very happy to learn that I had remembered correctly and with the same words. It was really true. It wasn't only my delusion that I was remembering. I did that for a while, but it was so laborious taping everything and somebody transcribing them. It was labor intensive. And I changed the way I did it. I memorized William's words as he said them. The last times I went out to see William or when he came to New York, we had these conversations and he said these great things. It was easier just to memorize them. I said the words three times to myself, and memorized the succession of sentence groups. Then, I would say to William, I need a drink, and go get a vodka, and on my way back stop in my bedroom and write the sentences down. It was fresh, and easier than the tape transcribing process. Anyway, memories are distorted because the mind is like an imperfect crystal, or a curved mirror distorting the reflection. Emotions and paranoias distort the picture. As a Buddhist, I do meditation practice to purify the obscurations.

HUO: How did you become involved in Buddhism? Was it a chance encounter or something that evolved?

JG: I had a natural propensity. As a teenager in the 1950s I studied Buddhism in college at Columbia University. I was a poet, and majored in literature and minored in Oriental Studies. I took a lot of philosophy courses. I learned all of these discursive thoughts, more information. I learned about Buddhism, but they didn't teach you how to meditate, which is the whole point. A path had not yet opened for me. There was Zen in New York, but my karmic propensity was with Tibetan Nyingma Buddhists.

HUO: What was that attracted you to this particular form of Buddhism?

JG: In the 1950s, Tibet was an isolated, inaccessible country, and the country where Tantric or Vajrayana Buddhism had survived, having been completely destroyed by the Moghul conquest of India, and lost. Professor Dubarry said, "We know it's there, but we don't know much about it." In 1959, the Chinese invaded Tibet, and the great lamas fled to northern India, in exile; and the Vajrayana teachings became available to the world.

HUO: Are there any connections between your meditative practice and your experiences with drugs?

JG: In the '60s I took drugs, which made me question the nature of mind. In '64 and '65, we took lots of LSD and as you know, a good trip is wonderful. And on a bad trip, generally, the mind is grasping at something, or an inter-personal problem. Because of the acid, the mind is more sensitive, and suffers more. And I had a deep confusion not understanding the true nature of mind. Intuitively, I felt the answers were meditation and the Tibetan Buddhist lamas, who were refugees in the Himalayan Mountains.

HUO: Was there a specific epiphany that brought you to Buddhism?

JG: In the late '60s, I asked Al