

# Magical Blend

A Transformative Journey  
Through April 1993  
ISSUE 38

Laura  
Huxley

A Life In Reflection

Allen  
Ginsberg

RELIGION, MADNESS & CREATIVITY

Huston Smith

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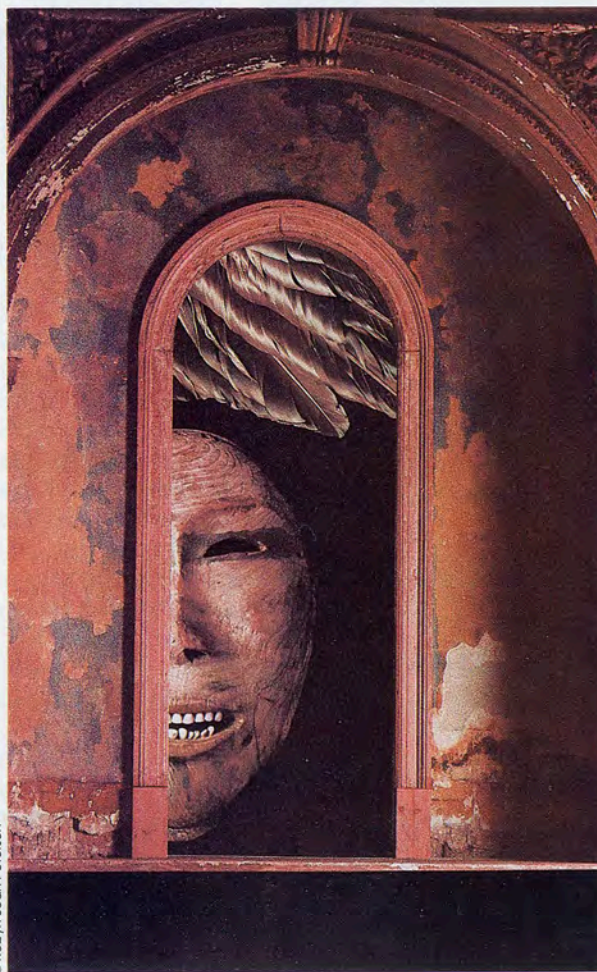
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The transformative journey... Magical Blend accepts the premise that society is undergoing a fundamental transformation. A new world view is being born, and whether this birth is to be an easy or difficult one will depend largely upon the individual. It is our aim to chart the course this transformation is taking and to assist the individual to cope with and contribute to the birthing process. We believe that people's thoughts influence their reality; if this is true then the world we live in is a combination of our highest hopes, our deepest fears, and the whole range of experience that falls between. Our goal is to embrace the hopes, transform the fears, and discover the magical behind the mundane. In this way, we hope to act as a catalyst to encourage the individual to achieve his or her highest level of spiritual awareness. We endorse no one pathway to spiritual growth, but attempt to explore many alternative possibilities to help transform the planet.

Religion, Psychedelics & Creativity



photograph of Frank Moore and Linda Mac by Annie Sprinkle

# FRANK MOORE



FRANK MOORE 540-0907

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## the Art of a Shaman

written by Jerry Snider



The sign hanging above the performance space makes it clear that this is not your typical theatrical experience; it reads: "Warning! Enter at your own risk. This piece may be threatening to your everyday reality."

Those who have come to experience the performance gather in the lobby. Lights are low as the scent of incense wafts through the room. A sense of anticipation is heightened by silence. Many of the attendees will wait up to two hours to be ushered inside by a cast member whose nude body is ritually decorated with paint, but no one is in any hurry. They have come prepared to spend the night if necessary, blankets and pillows in hand, to participate in a performance by master reality bender Frank Moore. If the performance is a success, they will enter a bizarre dreamscape of their own imaginations. And though they may be enchanted, they will not be entertained. Frank Moore does not entertain. Unable to walk, talk, and with only spastic control of his movements, Moore demands more of his "audience" than passive attention; he requires their involvement—their willingness and daring to break through their own personal barriers of isolation the way he has broken through his.

When Frank Moore was born with cerebral palsy, doctors advised his parents that he would be mentally retarded, and that it would be best to institutionalize their son. They did not. Instead, they chose to raise their child at home. Their decision required a passionate commitment, and that commitment drew others who wanted to help and dared to hope that there might be possibilities for the boy the doctors had not foreseen.

Surrounded by love and generosity, Moore learned early a lesson that many never do; he learned to trust, and that trust opened interior doorways that led to a freedom his body could never experience. Imprisoned within his body, Moore found liberation in the spirit.

Keenly intelligent, but unable to communicate with the outside world, the boy watched from his isolation. And what he saw was theater, the grand performance of life. Like the people who now wait in silence for extended periods to experience his performance, Moore learned patience, the kind of patience it takes to find the stillness of the spirit and the liberation of vulnerability. To a large degree, that is what a Frank Moore performance is about, and those who accept his gift and are touched by it see Moore as he sees himself—not as disabled, but enabled.

This attitude, though rare in our culture, is not new. It has a rich history in indigenous tribal cultures that saw magic not as a cheap illusion, but as a

powerful force issuing from veiled realities that few could see and fewer still enter. Those who could became guides for the rest. Though few performers realize it, this is their heritage; it is also Frank Moore's. He understands that theater is one of the few public gateways left to the mythic realms where all things are possible and limitations melt away. It is this understanding of theater's magical roots that allows a man who cannot speak and who can barely

is the extended vigil in the lobby, an atmosphere Moore continues by "spending the first hour boring people, usually by asking what each person does, how did he hear about the performance, etc." He drives up to each person in his wheelchair and taps out his questions slowly on his letterboard. Says Moore, "Talking to this strange person in this strange way is interesting as a confrontation. Listening to the trivial chatter of a disabled man in this painfully



© Eric Kroll

**Moore demands more of his "audience" than passive attention; he requires their involvement—their willingness and daring to break through their own personal barriers of isolation the way he has broken through his.**

move to command the attention of an audience and make the unlikely claim that he has the "perfect body for a performance artist."

Forced to communicate his thoughts by painstakingly tapping out individual letters of the alphabet on a letterboard via a pole strapped to his head, Moore's eloquence belies the awkward technology that allows its expression: "I was born into the long tradition of the

deformed shaman, the wounded healer, the blind prophet, and the club-footed 'idiot' court jester," says Moore. "Primitive tribes believed that if a cripple could survive childhood, he belonged to the spiritual world. As a symbol of the deformed medicine man, I am a medium to other dimensions. My body and attitudes toward life break taboos and change things."

Moore's performances are meant to rattle. Combining the roles of shaman and avant-garde artist, he is doubly aware that opening vistas to alternative realities usually requires a jolt, and the artist provides that jolt in various ways. To begin with, there

slow way creates an active boredom in a room—a slow, increasing shock that makes people who want quick-paced, high-energy entertainment suddenly bolt out of the door."

As unnerving as it may be, boredom is only the beginning of a theatrical shock therapy that is meant to induct Moore's "apprentices" into a trance-like state. Like a piper leading his followers farther and farther from everyday reality, Moore's magical techniques include ritual, nudity, erotic physical encounters, and just plain silliness.

For some, Moore's idiosyncratic shamanistic performance is an emotionally liberating exploration of death and rebirth; for others, it is a disturbing spectacle of self-exploitation, an excuse for a cripple to exercise his overactive libido. (One recurring criticism of his work is that it is more therapy than art). But those who see only shock for shock's sake in Moore's strange, erotic performances fail to realize his motive, which is a kind of spiritual warfare, an attack on society's encrusted taboos to free the energy trapped inside.

Of course, taboo busting is not without its peril. Moore's "art for subverting reality" requires a cer-



tain adventurousness of spirit—a quality seldom appreciated by government bureaucracies. As a result, Moore has landed on Jesse Helm's "hit list," which means that performance spaces that receive NEA grants are likely to have them yanked if they underwrite the wheelchair-bound showman shaman.

Moore refuses to be intimidated: "When performance is limited in time and space for acceptability, it stops being performance. Art should not be a show. By simply following society and recording its trends, the artist becomes linked to a power system and becomes trapped in a basic conflict of interest, when her true job is to act as a surrogate who travels into the reality of dreams, myths, and universal truths in order to bring new dreams, myths, and visions to society. The more restrictive society is, the more it needs this kind of dream art. Just as an individual needs to dream or go insane, so does the culture.

"The two areas of creativity—theater and religion—that traditionally were the source of magic and inspiration, long ago moved to entertainment and politics. This void gave birth to psychology and performance art which both developed at about the same time. Both are involved in spiritual healing by digging into the hidden mysteries of life.

"The difference between theater and performance art is that, in regular theater, you can climb up onto the altar of the stage, and you don't have to interact with your audience. This also happened in religion, and look what happened: When the priests climbed up to the altar, not only did they divide themselves from the people, but also from the vital magic.

"What I create in my performance is a reality, not an illusion, even if I have to use illusions to get to this reality. I am a channel through which a whole host of factors actively mix together, creating a community change, a mythic over-reality, a group living poem. I do not perform to tell stories, to paint pictures for others to look at, or to reveal something about myself, and certainly not for fame. It was simply the best way to create the intimate community that I needed and thought society needed as an alternative to personal isolation."

The "intimate community" that Moore speaks of is an integral part of his work. Even in traditional theater, there exists a subtle power energy that unites, for the period of the performance, the individual members of the audience into a small community sharing the same emotional experience. But while most performers create this magic by drawing the audience's emotions into the performance, Moore's physical limitations force a different, more intimate, approach. Moore creates his intimate community through close, personal contact, allowing the audience to get in touch with their own isolation by exploring the obvious source of the artist's isolation—his body. By creating the proper atmosphere and frame of reference for this exploration, Moore channels the emotional response of the audience from separate individuals into an organic whole. His body acts to unite the audience, overcoming both his own and his audience's isolation.

There is no stage, nor, strictly speaking, an audi-

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ence. The performance is a gateway the audience must actively enter rather than simply being carried through. "I do not see the performance as my own," he says. "I recognize I am only one factor in creating the altered reality of performance." Even so, Moore remains the focus, and despite the playfulness of his work, he is serious about his obligation to the audience. "I have to take responsibility for their well-being. I cannot take them out on a limb and leave them there."

To create the magic of his "intimate community," Moore uses his own vulnerability as a tool for the audience to tap into theirs. Part of this process involves dividing his performance into two parts. To prepare the audience for the public performance, they participate in private sub-rituals in which pairs of performance-goers are ushered into the artist's

"cave." Moore has utilized the metaphor of the cave throughout his career as a symbol of a sacred place free from outside taboos and limitations. These private encounter sessions are not referred to in

the public performance piece that follows. Rather, the trance-like atmosphere created in the intimacy of the "cave" carries out into the larger performance. The energy that bonds the audience individually with the artist in the cave gives them a common bond with each other in the public performance. Sworn to secrecy in the cave, that bond retains a mysterious, sacred quality. Says Moore, "The purpose of the private piece is to provide a sacred freedom for the participants to break free from their own isolation."

Within the cave, blindfolded participants have their hands placed on Moore and are told to do whatever they want, but not to reveal what happens in the room. Perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of Moore's work, it is also one of the most important. According to Moore, "When the secret sub-ritual fails to reach the taboo-breaking intensity, the public ritual falls flat.

"There has always been pressure to change the content and focus of the work. People always say they like the work because it is strong, but that I should get over my obsession with sex and nudity and get on to more important issues. What they like about the work, the strength, comes from being committed to a single vision, no matter what the current trends and fashions are. I have always used nudity and physical acts in my work, which most people would call sexual. I combine this with breaking time/space taboos, my unique body, and other

tools to enter an awakened dream, but the 'sexual' content of my work grabs most of the attention.

"One of the things that undermines my work is the English language. Our minds need labels, and there is no word for the force I am dealing with, an intense physical play that I call Eroplay.

"Eroplay is intense physical playing and touching of oneself and others, as well as the energy that is released as the result of such play. Kids play very



© Linda Mac

**"I cannot imagine more important issues**

**than sex and freedom symbolized by nudity. But these are not my ultimate focus; sex and nudity are powerful tools to reach the intimate community."**

physically both with their own and others' bodies; they get turned on by this play, both physically and mentally, in nonsexual ways. When we grow to adulthood, eroplay becomes linked to sex, maybe to assure procreation. But there may be different results when eroplay is connected to the sexual orgasm. What stops most people from physically eroplaying without connecting it to sex, without sexual undercurrents or expectations, is the inability to see where eroplay ends and sex begins. The difference between foreplay and pure eroplay is one of intent; physically there is no difference. In sex, however, there is a point where foreplay (eroplay) ceases to satisfy and energy builds to be released in the sex act, which is a clear and broad dividing line between the turn-on of eroplay and sex.

"Eroplay is safe because it has no physical intercourse, but it is not an avoidance like celibacy. Eroplay connects you more with your own body and with other people. It decreases isolation and alienation and increases self-trust and trusting of others. It makes you harder to be controlled. We may need a certain amount of straight eroplay, not connected to or leading to sex, to be healthy.

"I cannot imagine more important issues than sex and freedom symbolized by nudity. But these are not my ultimate focus; sex and nudity are powerful tools to reach the intimate community. By limiting the tools of art, art itself is limited.

"The problem with our modern frame of art reality is its preoccupation with what is seen. What we usually think of as works of art are aftermaths of art. The fundamental dynamic of art is in the doing. The doing of art and having other people see the artwork are two separate dynamics, events, rituals.

The seeing of the art is what the viewer or the listener does in her head. The doing of art is the ritual of creation, is what the artist does. In reality, this ritual has more to do with the act of doing than the act of creation. When a child first draws crazy lines on the wall, he is not trying to create something or express himself or show you something... but to do something for some effective purpose that our linear logic cannot grasp. The crazy person does his insane

rituals, not to express himself, but to keep the sky from falling or to make pain go away. And it works. The sky does not fall down. Maybe it is because of the rituals of the insane.

"The very act of doing changes the whole universe. This is a key principle of magic. By doing a ritual or by speaking a spell, you can effect change. Painting a picture, doing a dance, writing a poem, any act of art can be a magical ritual, the doing of which has nonlinear effects. Most acts of creation are private rituals done in personal caves.

"The ancient cave artists operated in this magical way. Their art was not for looking at. This is why they did their rituals and paintings in very dangerous, inaccessible, pitch-black bowels of caves. The purpose of these paintings and rituals was to magically effect change in the world (the past, the present, and the future, as well as the life after death...) or to communicate with the universal powers. The act of doing this magical art released an energy, some of which remained within these caves, making them 'holy' or 'magical' sites. The walls of a lot of these caves have layers upon layers of magical drawings done by different tribes over the time spans of hundreds or thousands of years. These tribes may have been drawn to these dangerously inaccessible caves by this special energy, released through the doing of art, stored in the caves, radiating out of the caves, and recharged by every new act of magic art done within the cave.

"Private performance is a way to regain the magical power of doing art. Doodling or singing in the shower are other private performances that are too silly, too intense, too vulnerable to be expressed in public. But I believe this may be where real art begins.

"Our society is at a fork in its growth; it can go deeper into high-tech impersonal isolation, or it can rediscover the magic that happens when humans actively and directly link up with one another. Art needs to take a pathbreaker role. The kind of art I am committed to is art as a battle, an underground war against fragmentation. Artists of this breed need to be warriors who are willing to go into the areas of taboo, willing to push beyond where it is comfortable and safe to explore and build a larger zone of safeness.

"An 'art expert' told me that my work was not art  
Frank Moore continued on page 74



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have been people who have been resuscitated, so something is there. In that eight minutes, what should you prepare for? My meditation practices are on the breath, so what happens after I stop breathing?

I think the process of dying takes over, whatever you think, and goes on automatic. What you think may be harmonious with what happens, but what happens is going to happen in any case. Sometimes I think that you enter open space and become open space.

In the last moment you don't want to be pissed off, even if there's no rebirth. So it's a good idea to get into the frequency of some kind of meditative practice in case there's no afterlife. It prepares you for whatever situation. "Do not go gently into that good night, rage, rage against the dying of the light." You know that poem? It seems the worst advice possible.

**Do you think that the fear of death could be the fear of non-existence?**

**Allen Ginsberg:** Well, no, that wouldn't be so bad. It would be the fear of existing again, in another life. Popping up again, like pop goes the weasel, and being stuck with whatever hard-on you started out with. You could have an obsession and think, oh, I should have cut that out long ago! I should have stopped lusting after pretty boys long ago! You're born into a universe with nothing but pretty boys, and you get stuck there for another 100 years until you realize, uh oh, you're going to die. I'm not quite up to that adventure yet.

*David Brown is the author of Brainchild (Falcon Press, 1988), and Rebecca McClen is an award-winning poet and freelance journalist.*

## Frank Moore

continued from page 42

because it doesn't address 'the concerns which are part of the current art dialogue.' But galleries and the people who think what is in galleries is the full range of art need the artists, not the reverse. The magic of private performance is needed to expand the narrow, shallow river of 'the current art dialogue.'

"I was lucky because I was never under pressure to be good at anything, to make money, to be polished—and the other distractions that modern artists have to, or think they have to, deal with. I could focus on having fun, on going into taboo areas where magical change can be evoked. I am also fortunate because my body gives me a tool that other artists spend years to create. Artists who don't have the built-in advantages and shields that I have need to resist the real world and be more sneaky to avoid being seduced by the business and politics of art. I want to encourage artists, who have not been so blessed with bodies that mark them as misfits, to aspire to be misfits anyway, to do misfit art. Their road is definitely harder than my road, but that's life."

*Frank Moore offers an intensive shamanistic training based on his book, Cherotic Magic. For more information, write to: Frank Moore, P.O. Box 11445, Berkeley, CA 94701-2445. Also available is a free catalog of Moore's written, audio, and video works.*