

## **The Creative Process: Paintings Inspired from the Lucid Dream**

**FARIBA BOGZARAN**

*California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, California*

Creative endeavors often arise from seemingly ordinary everyday experiences. In my own life, my art work received a considerable boost through an initial encounter with a lucid dream which I transformed into an occasion for self-expression. This type of self-expression, which I have explored more fully in the past few years, is highlighted in the following examples.

One noteworthy occasion of personal creativity owes its source of inspiration to a lucid dream, which I have titled, "Conscious Dreaming."

*August 18, 1981*

. . . I stand by the door in a gallery staring at a painting on the wall. It is my painting, however it looks unfamiliar to me. As I step forward to look at the detail of my work, I become aware that I am dreaming. . . .

. . . The painting, approximately six by seven feet in size, displays an image of a wall destroyed in the middle but with the four corners still intact. An imprint of a triangle and circle are inside it. Inside the circle, a figure of a nude man and woman stand.

This image may be interpreted as the "symbolic alchemical concept of the squared circle, symbol of wholeness and the union of the opposites" (Jung, 1964). Besides many personal and interpersonal meanings that arose from the dream, the most important aspect was the inspiration to explore a new art style: a dream art.

Soon after that dream, I decided to explore the image that had appeared in a lucid dream. Instead, inexplicably, I started painting an image of a brain which contained different symbols that I had encountered in my nightly dreams for many years (Bogzaran, 1986. Also see Figure 1).

I will describe here only one of the many important personal insights I received as a result of the dream: the profound transformation of my painting style. I cite the dream as one important reason that I changed my style of painting from a pre-dominantly realistic style to a surrealistic and abstract one. In effect, this transformation helped me with the teetering, hesitant approach to personal creativity which existed at the

time. Once I followed this new path, however, my arrival in this new territory seemed very natural, as if my unexplored, hidden, creative side was now able to merge with other important aspects of my life.

One of these creative aspects, lucid dreaming, has become especially vibrant. I discovered that I now recognize the onset of lucidity by recalling the scenario of the above dream. Like the neuron which fires response to a neurotransmitter across a synapse, I successfully ignite lucidity each time I view a gallery, studio, or room with art work displayed.

As a result, in the past few years, I have experienced more than 45 dreams on this theme that triggered lucidity. The typical setting usually includes an art piece hanging on the wall or sculptures located in various patterns throughout the room. I usually try to stay calm once I become lucid so that I can experience the texture, colors and medium of the art work. The experience becomes ritualistic and sacred. I honor the gift of the art work by an deep inner appreciation. I spend some time with the creation by touching (if painting) or embracing (if sculpture), and feel myself merging with the piece.

Sometimes I focus on the art work to wake myself up. I call this technique "Intentional Focusing." It helps me remember the art work so I can later create the actual piece. Sometimes, however, I cannot recreate the images because in the act of recreating them, I have lost the initial experience. In a way, it's like trying to explain the unexplainable.

The curious yet significant personal challenge I face in working with these lucid dreams has been the variety of art media which I have begun to use. Sometimes I incubate a question before falling asleep. It is important for me to remember the question, because when I experience a lucid dream that features the image of an art piece, the art work can often provide insights which help me work with my incubation question.

To illustrate this approach, I cite the following practical example from a lucid dream I had when I was living in Canada. The incubation question was: "Should I go to California or stay in Canada for my graduate school work?"

*October 13, 1985*

*Title: The Healing Hand*

My husband and I are driving across Canada to go to California. In Alberta, on

our way near Calgary, we encounter a gigantic ancient Greek building that resembles the Temple of Concord at Agrigento (West Doric hexastyle temple dated 430 B.C.).

We stop to look inside the building. People around the building look very pale and sick. Many homeless people sleep around the building. Inside, the building is dark and smelly. There is also a large door inside this building I walk close to the door; the room looks like a gallery. I suspect that I am dreaming, so I do a reality check. Soon I am convinced that I am dreaming because the walls start to change.

I walk into the room slowly, noticing a gigantic hand in the middle of the room. The hand must be ten feet tall. As I walk around the hand, my incubation question comes into my mind: "Should I go to California?"

Now I am standing in front of the hand on the palm of the hand a radiating light is glowing; I decide to walk inside the hand. The answer to the question seems obvious to me as I am walking into the hand. I feel a force pulling me inside the hand. (See Figure 2.)

I woke up feeling overwhelmed, content and joyful. I took the symbol as a positive sign that, yes, I must move to California! Later I decided to recreate the sculpture that I had dreamt. First I found a pyrite mineral stone that gave me the feeling of the inside of the hand. Later, I made the hand as a sculpture and painted it with the appropriate colors. I named it "The Healing Hand." (One day I plan to create the hand in its actual size, producing a beautiful environment inside the hand so a person could actually walk inside it and enjoy its tranquility).

The dreams I have discussed here are just two examples of lucid dreams which relate to my studio/gallery perspective. While it is important for me to note that I have developed a strong association with studios and galleries as the catalyst which assists the onset of my lucidity, not all my lucid dreams occur in a gallery. The onset of lucidity also occurs many times when I am outdoors and almost every time I attempt to seek the Highest, God or the Unknown while lucid. In those situations, I have witnessed environmental changes moving from form to formlessness and have felt an incredible sensation in my body that is difficult to describe.

At times I enter a gallery in my dreams, but there are no paintings or art works in that space. At these moments, I stay mindful of the feelings of lucidity and remain unattached to whatever happens. Often the empty space I encounter reflects the silence, emptiness and formless nature of my inner being.

## **References**

Bogzaran, F. (1986). The message from the inner world. *Dream Network Bulletin*, 5(1).

Jung, C. (1964). *Man and his symbols*. New York: Dell Publishing.