



# Dreaming Mind and Creative Mind

*We call them “dreams”: The magical theater we find ourselves in every night amidst strange and marvelous landscapes. Inspiration from dreams has informed humans since the beginning of time, as we witness in the Paleolithic cave paintings of Lascaux, the Australian aboriginal Churinga maps of the Dreamtime, the mandalas of the California Chumash Indians, and the surrealist paintings of the 20th century. Dreams lead us to mysterious and healing dimensions in which time hangs on a tree limb, and the creative mind is queen.*

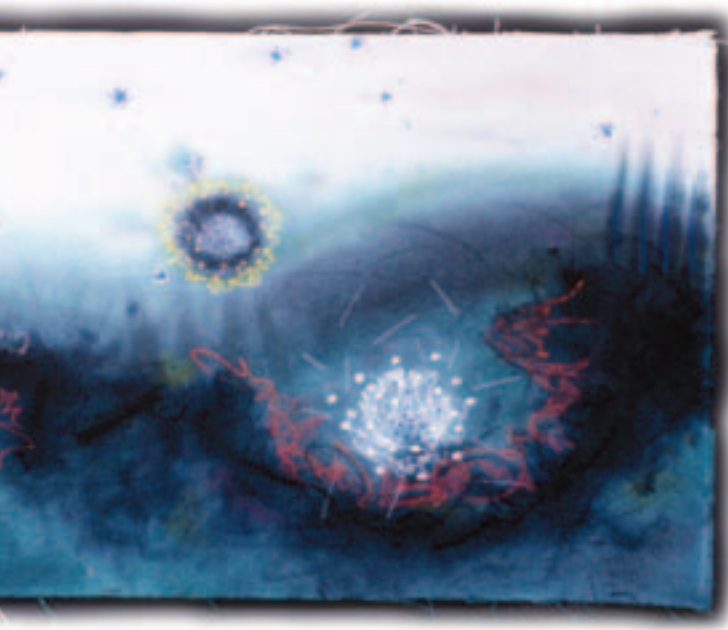
AS AN ARTIST and long-time dream teacher and researcher, I am convinced that the creative mind is intimately intertwined with the dreaming mind. Dreams by their very nature are creative: Unfolding the tremendous neural connections that weave together narrative constructions, emotional communications, bodily reactions, and spontaneous illuminations, dreams are an astonishingly complex set of creative experiences. Our acts of creation also involve the free expression of life’s creative force that shows particular brilliance in our dreams, oscillating between the literal and the metaphorical, the abstract and the real, the mundane and the sacred, the personal and the impersonal.

In the midst of our turbulent world, we might ask ourselves how practices like dream awareness would be helpful. This type of inquiry can often be marginalized or be seen only as a self-indulgent practice. However,

throughout history we have seen that the arts often flourish in times of uncertainty. This kind of creativity can bring about new insights, and our dream-life can serve to elevate consciousness and act as a transforming agent. The nature and the subject of dreams can push the limitations and boundaries created by the illusions and insecurity of the ego to a development of a new perception of the self that is much more expansive and perceptive of conflicts—and solutions.

## WAKING UP TO THE DEPTHS

Cultivating dream awareness is a practice of waking up to the unlimited depths of our creative self by learning and transforming our habits of the mind into something new. This willingness to open our eyes to see our greatest potential, to own ourselves as creative beings, seems to



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be one of the deepest challenges humans face. Turning our gaze inside seems immeasurably more demanding than externalizing our creativity. But when we get in touch with this awareness through practices such as lucid dreaming we are invited into the infinite creative wealth that is available and alive every night.

The symbolic language we discover in dreams maps to our multidimensional qualities of being. When we bridge our waking and dreaming lives, we no longer feel that we exist in a set of fixed habitual experiences. Rather, we become an active participant in our dream/waking theater. A new perception begins to grow and a world of possibilities and choices opens up. Assumptions and presuppositions are questioned, and soon we find ourselves making decisions based on a totally different set of rules.

In the past twenty years of teaching and writing on dreams and creativity, I have come to see that dreams are like a multifaceted diamond. In order to reveal fully the beauty and complexity of a dream, we need to view and explore it from many creative angles, dimensions, approaches, and perspectives. With the assumption that the dreaming mind and creative mind are inherently


one, I work with students to animate their dreams in waking life through the arts and shamanic practice.

Because each dream is the creation of the dreamer, he or she possesses the keys to its mystery and meaning. To unfold the dream, the dreamer must play a major role in exploring and understanding the dream in the context of his/her life. Various creative methods can help dreamers engage with the dream; for example, automatic writing, painting, dream re-entry, dream theater, poetry, sound, and clay-work. Experiencing dream creations in these ways integrates somatic and emotional awareness with cognitive understanding, and invokes a deep sense of interconnectedness in the students. From my experience, this total engagement with dreams and creativity harkens to the same processes as when the mind is dreaming. In this lucid interaction of waking and dreaming life, boundaries dissolve and we are immersed in the spacious, timeless and inventive aspects of the mind.

### PRACTICE OF LUCIDITY

The source of great wisdom and teaching often arises in dreams or moments of contemplative creative insight. Every night we have the possibility to tap into the source of our creative mind where wisdom lies dormant waiting for a lucid visitation. As we begin seeing in greater dimensions, boundaries begin to disappear. We become transparent, and reflect the source of our true essence. Our purpose becomes more apparent to us: We are here to evolve as conscious beings, to awaken and be awakened.

We are living in a time when these resources need to be cultivated inside each one of us. Lucidity, while awake or asleep, offers us the flexibility to re-examine the choices we make, reflect on our emotional and mental states, and to reconsider and change the habitual patterns that no longer serve us. Tibetan Buddhism remind us that our lucidity practice is not only for our own development, but also for the evolution of all sentient beings. As we create ourselves anew, so we change the world around us. Dream awareness is one of the agents of change closest at hand, helping us

to wake up to our true nature and to our incredible creative capabilities. Having this awareness, we can literally dream a new world into existence. 

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