

DreamSpeak

An Interview With Fariba Bogzaran, PhD

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Questions by Robert Waggoner

Fariba Bogzaran, PhD, has been a long time lucid dreamer, explorer, and visionary. As an artist, teacher, and writer, she brings unique insights into lucid dreaming and consciousness. Currently, she serves as the Executive Director of the Lucid Art Foundation.

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Fariba, you have been very active in lucid dreaming as a professor, artist, and lucid dreamer. When did you first learn about conscious dreaming or lucid dreaming?

The first time I had the experience, I believe, I was four years old. I also had numerous lucid dream experiences growing up. I became interested in studying dreams in my teens and became very focused on finding a discipline that led me to this field of study. However, the first time I heard the term "lucid dreaming" was in one of my undergraduate courses on the Psychology of Consciousness at the University of Wisconsin. I was fortunate to have a professor, Daniel Kortenkamp, who taught courses on consciousness studies, parapsychology, and transpersonal psychology at the undergraduate level! I took every class he taught and he became an important mentor to me. I let him know of my interest in dreams. He guided me to several books and would give me any material he would receive on dreams. We received the announcement for the first Dream Network Bulletin in 1981 and the formation of the Association for the Study of Dreams (ASD). So I was connected to the emerging field of dream studies from its inception. At the time, in 1980, there were not many publications on lucid dreaming, but I studied what I could find and I learned more about the topic at the first ASD conference. Naturally there was no discipline for dream studies and I always envisioned a program or a degree on dream studies, not knowing that fifteen years later I would develop a Dream Studies program at JFK University and create a curriculum to include lucid dreaming as a core course and become one of the teachers in the field.

Can you recall your first lucid dream experience? Please, tell us about that.

My first lucid dream was at the age of four and the dream was a combination of a lucid and precognitive dream. In the dream I am in a photography studio with my mother and there are several benches. I am sitting in the front row with my hands crossed looking straight into the camera. I knew this was a dream, but I kept still and focused on the lens. That is all I remember. The precognitive aspect of it was that my mother actually did take me to this photography studio a few days later. We took a taxi there and when we got out of the taxi in a very busy intersection, I recalled the dream. I told my mother and my mother said "If you know where we are going, why don't you take me there." I remember very vividly holding my mother's hand and leading her to the photography studio. She was pretty impressed when I found the place. When we entered, I realized that the room was identical to my dream. There was a row of benches and the

photographer had set up the photo so that I would be sitting in the last row. But I kept running to the front row. He became pretty annoyed with me. He insisted I sit where he had set up the shot but I started to cry. I really wanted to sit where I had sat in the dream. Finally my mother told him, "If you want a pretty expression, you better let her sit where she wants." He had to relocate his equipment to accommodate me. I still have that photo! I never forgot that experience and for years my mother and I talked about it. Later on in life she told me from that moment on, she knew what I wanted and supported me in my path.

But my most significant lucid dreams happened at around age seven when I was very ill with a high fever for almost six weeks. The doctors did not really know what was wrong with me. During this illness, I had recurrent lucid hypnagogic experiences of falling into the abyss. First I was scared but soon I learned there was nothing to be scared about so I began experimenting. There was always a platform in the dream that I would jump off. I began diving into the darkness of the abyss, hanging in space, yet knowing I was dreaming. I could sustain being in these peaceful and comforting spaces for a long time and then I would end up adventuring into various dreams. I was pretty isolated from other children during that time since the cause of my illness was unclear and the doctors weren't sure if it was contagious. That was my first experience of being totally in touch with my inner world. I also learned the skill of lucid dreaming and how to sustain and surrender to it.

What was it about that lucid dreaming experience (or those early experiences) that you found interesting? Was your non-lucid dream life as compelling?

Yes, my non-lucid dream life was as interesting. In my early teens, I was dealing with several major dream themes among them were: spiritual experiences in dreams, dreams of death and precognitive dreams. All three themes became important portals to direct me to my life's path.

The theme of death in my dreams forced me to face many existential questions at an early age. During my entire childhood and adolescence, I had dreams of drowning. Using the skill of lucid dreaming, I learned to transform these experiences by waking myself up or even breathing underwater. Nevertheless it was disturbing to me to have so many reoccurring dreams of drowning. Most children don't think symbolically, so I was convinced that I was going to die by drowning. My way of dealing with that was that I made sure I became a good swimmer!! Later on, I asked my mother many times if I had had any childhood traumas. She never revealed anything about any trauma I had insisted. I was 27 years old when she finally told me that something had happened when I was just a baby. The story changed my life. Finally I understood why I was dedicating my life to the study and teaching of dreams. Since she died 7 years ago, I began sharing this experience with others to honor her and her lifesaving dream. Here is the experience: I am nine months old sleeping in my crib. At the same time, my mother is sleeping in her bed having a dream that someone is trying to suffocate me. She wakes up with great anxiety, goes to my crib and sees the blanket over my head! She is terrified to find me dead underneath the blanket. She grabs the blanket off of me to find me purple and out of breath. She picks me up and keeps shaking me to revive me. Finally, to her great relief, I start crying.

Naturally, this was a traumatic experience for both of us! This experience made a significant impression on my mother and she took her and my dreams (when I learned to talk) very seriously (from then on). I had many insights later about why I had all the drowning dreams at an early age. But the greatest realization was that if it were not for my mother's dream, I would not be alive. I am totally in service to the incredible world of dreaming.

The spiritual experiences in lucid and non-lucid dreams that I had in my teens became an important and central focus in my research and teaching in my life.

At that time, what methods did you use to bring conscious awareness into the dream state? Has that changed over the years?

I began as a spontaneous lucid dreamer. But once I realized I could also intentionally have a lucid dream, then I started working with incubating dreams. I never was interested in just having a lucid dream for the sake of the experience because that happened naturally. However, if I incubated a lucid dream, I always had a particular intention.

In 1984, I began developing techniques for lucidity. Since there was not much literature on the topic in English (the Tibetans had been masters of lucid dreaming for centuries), I began developing my own methodology. I combined and I still use three major practices: meditation practices, sound, and Ta'i Chi. I have been deeply involved with these practices for over 20 years and have found the combination works very well for me. Meditation practice teaches the skill of witnessing, sound or chanting teaches the skill of sustaining altered states, and Ta'i Chi helps the physical and energetic body to open to deep experiences of the mind. But above all, lucid waking practices are the most important - to attend to the present and become awake in the waking state.

As you had more and more lucid dreams, did any lucid dreams make a deep impression on you? Tell us about them.

My most impactful lucid dreams happened in mid- to late 1980s. They were multidimensional in nature. They revealed different aspects of the mind. In some dreams not only did I witness the dream, I witnessed the witnesser and it kept going on and on into dimensions beyond waking comprehension. I later called these dreams "Hyperspace Lucidity." They no longer felt like dreams, although they did happen when I was asleep. But their nature was an intersection between dreaming and "Mind Awakening." These lucid dreams changed me completely. I am no longer the same person that I was. It might be esoteric to say this, but I believe that those experiences changed me at the cellular level. These experiences happened before and during working on my thesis on *Experiencing the Divine in Lucid Dream State*. I was very lucky to have an opportunity to live a more monastic life in nature for three years while writing my thesis and move deeper and deeper into my practice. I was opening myself to the experience of lucid dreaming with all its complexities and depth.

In the late 1980s, I recall receiving a letter from you in which you explained your intent to write a graduate/doctoral thesis on lucid dreaming and experiences of the divine. You sought lucid dreamers to become lucid and seek the divine. What brought about your interest in this particular topic and lucid dreaming?

This topic was of a great interest to me and was part of my spiritual quest at an early age. I always thought the ultimate dream experience was to experience God. But the root of this inquiry goes to my spiritual upbringing. I was raised with the spiritual tradition of the Baha'i Faith. An important aspect of this religion is that when children reach age 15 their parents encourage them to read and experience other religions and then choose their own spiritual path. Because elimination of any sort of prejudices is a key idea in the Baha'i Faith, this is a way to have children study and experience other religions so they have an in-depth knowledge, understanding, and compassion for other views. This exploration is called the "Independent Investigation of Truth." Of course, deep down, parents wish that after the investigation their children will follow the Baha'i Faith, but they have to accept whatever their child chooses. To my parent's total shock, I chose Buddhism. I

started meditating, following the Buddhist thoughts and became a vegetarian. This was 1973 in Iran where Buddhism was not even a major minority religion. The majority followed Islam and the major minority religions were Zoroastrian, Christianity, Judaism and Baha'i Faith.

I read as much as possible and learned meditation. It was around this time that my lucid dreaming began to increase in frequency. Naturally I wanted to go to India but my parents objected. They gave me the choice to go to England or the U.S.A., so my quest took a Western twist! I was 18 when I left for England to learn English.

In England, my inquiry into different religious practices began. When one studies and deeply experiences different spiritual traditions, one begins to see the commonalities among all religions. My question then was how do people of different religions experience God? And how does the image of God appear in their dreams? In the Baha'i Faith, there were no images of God. The Divine is like a close friend who resides inside. Also in the Persian language (Farsi) God doesn't have a gender. God is not personalized. The closest to an image of the Divine is in the geometry of sacred architecture. When I traveled to the West, I found that God was referred to as a "he" and was personalized. Also in my studies of comparative religion, I found icons were very important and they represented impressions of a personalized God.

So naturally I was interested to know how these beliefs are reflected in the dreaming experience. I was surprised when I started teaching lucid dreaming in 1984 that mainly people were interested in lucid dreaming for personal adventure and entertainment. So as part of the curriculum, I decided to include the spiritual aspect of lucid dreaming. Scott Sparrow's and Evan Wentz's books on the topic were my two references. Tibetan texts on Dream Yoga were not accessible unless you practiced Tibetan Buddhism, which was not available where I lived.

It was not a coincidence that I met Stephen LaBerge at the second ASD conference in 1985. I believe our meeting was what the surrealists called a "chance encounter." We were both wandering around the campus at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville looking for the reception party. I knew about Stephen's research and had studied everything I could on the topic. We spent an hour strolling around the campus and talking about lucid dreaming. His book *Lucid Dreaming* had just been published. After he heard of my interest and experience in lucid dreaming he encouraged me to join his research team at the Lucidity Project in California.

At that time, I was a graduate student at the University of Regina, Canada and was on a leave of absence doing research at the University of Wisconsin. I had already done sleep laboratory work in Wisconsin and had worked as a biofeedback technician. I was at a crossroads seeking a sympathetic university with which to do my research. LaBerge suggested the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), one of the institutes where he taught physiology. His encouragement was exactly what I needed.

Soon after I met him, I applied to CIIS and was accepted. Five months later I was in California! I contacted him immediately and started working with him at the Stanford Sleep Laboratory. At the sleep lab I monitored many lucid dreams. I was very lucky to be an early riser, so my observation of the EEG monitors started around 4:30 am to 8:30 am. I would take over the observation duties from Lynne Levitan, another researcher, around 4:30 am. We had one of the top lucid dreamers, Daryl Hewitt, as our subject and it seemed that every time he was in the lab he would have a lucid dream. Naturally, most lucid dreams happened early in the morning when I was observing. Stephen's Dream Light device was in the early stages of development and he was trying to perfect it.

I believe I witnessed one of the longest lucid dreams ever recorded in the lab. It was 40 to 45 minutes long! Daryl was also interested in the spiritual dimensions of lucid dreaming. So we discussed it and he agreed to incubate being in the presence of the Divine in his lucid dream and participated in my study.

At that time lucid dreaming was still a new topic. But I was fortunate to have the support of many wonderful colleagues. LaBerge's book *Lucid Dreaming*, although a classic now, was at the time faced with many critiques from researchers who were not totally convinced of the validity of this phenomena, and those who were convinced, did not like the idea. Thanks to Jayne Gackenbach who pioneered the Lucidity Association and the publication of *Lucidity Letter*, we had yearly conferences and exchanged research, ideas, and encouragement. The Lucidity Association became the educational foundation for understanding this phenomenon. I became part of the Board of this association in 1988 that included LaBerge, Gackenbach, Harry Hunt, and George Gillespie. Together we created groundbreaking conferences and dialogues on the topic.

Was it hard to approach this as a thesis topic and enlist lucid dreamers? Did your dreams provide any encouragement?

At the time, the research on the experience of the Divine in lucid dreaming was provocative. It was definitely a stretch to pick this topic as a thesis, since most people were just learning what lucid dreaming was and were even questioning its validity. But for me, the most important aspect of lucid dreaming was to explore the nature of the mind and advancing spiritual practices.

I was fortunate to have Ralph Metzner as one of my teachers, who was interested in this topic. He also was the Dean at CIIS. All theses had to be approved by him. Although he was supportive, he wanted me to conduct the research quantitatively! Naturally I wanted to do phenomenology and did not like his suggestion. How could I quantify spiritual experience in lucid dreaming? But later I understood the wisdom behind his suggestion. To approach esoteric topics in academia sometimes one has to communicate in the language that is familiar to scholars. Qualitative research at that time was still an unfamiliar and questionable methodology. So the combination of an esoteric topic with a questionable methodology would have meant that no one would have taken the study seriously. Whereas doing the research quantitatively made the research worthy of consideration since no one had done that type of research before.

LaBerge, who supported the study, supervised my research. I met with him almost weekly to design the study. The Lucidity Project had already received thousands of letters from lucid dreamers from all over. I read about 2000 letters to choose 250 lucid dreamers who I thought they really knew what lucid dreaming was and had an in-depth experience. Your lucid dream must have been among those thousands which I chose! Isn't this wonderful. Here we are!

Although I was all ready to do the research, I felt internally conflicted at the beginning. I knew I was contacting a very sensitive and sacred topic. I experienced a strong need to do a vision quest to receive guidance for my work. I also needed to do dream incubation to go deeper into the wisdom of lucid dreaming.

I left San Francisco in the spring of 1987 and moved into a beautiful house in a remote area of West Marin. I began living more of a monastic life: letting go of most of my possessions and devoting my time to deepening my lucid dream practice. My daily practices included meditation at 4:00 am followed by two hours of Ta'i Chi and Chi Qung practice. My graduate study was in East-West Psychology and my focus was on Taoism. Also I was a serious student of Ta'i Chi Ch'uan and was training to become a teacher. Also I was doing shamanic practices. I took daily

walks in the forest and took two naps during the day. In the evenings I used my shamanic drum just before falling asleep. It was a process of emptying the mind, flexing the body, opening the energetic centers, and focusing the intention.

After several life changing lucid dreams in which I had incubated experiences of the Divine, I felt I was ready to begin the research. In one particularly complex and lengthy lucid dream called "Unfolding Universe" (1987) I was reassured and encouraged to explore this topic. I have reported this lucid dream in several publications, but I will share a part of it that might interest you.

After I became lucid and asked if I should be pursuing my thesis on the Divine, the following experience occurred:

Suddenly I see a dot of purple-green color expanding in the sky. It keeps getting bigger, filling the landscape and changing into different rings of colors. It appears to be rings but they are not solid. They are like the circle around the moon. The space is so vast, beyond my visual capacity. As the rings come closer they change into particles of light dots moving extremely fast creating light lines that cover everything. Strong energy starts to move inside me. What seems to be my dreambody transforms into particles of light. Consciousness is very clear, yet no personal consciousness, desire, or will is present. This state is one of absolute serenity. Somehow part of me knows that my consciousness is in everything that I see but yet there is no "I" to see! There is an awareness of vast spaces and purpose. Eventually everything seems to slow down with an inner hum as if time and space are swollen into infinity. Here there is no movement, time, or space but an incredible stillness. I stay in this state for what feels like eternity.... moving back to the Known eventually I become aware of the particles slowly changing into a night sky.... entering into the second hyperspace lucidity the planets change into transparent spheres with light shining from within. Spheres transform into something like halos (hard to describe the imagery) covering infinity. So much is happening at the same time. There is multiple imagery with multiple awarenesses. I now know that I am becoming a witness to different layers of the universe. Suddenly everything turns black. I don't see anything, I don't feel anything. While nothing is happening, everything happens....

I could not write or talk about the experience for almost a year.

Simply incredible! What did you take from this lucid dream experience? What did it come to mean to you?

I am still "unfolding" its meaning and significance. As you know it is difficult to describe these types of experiences in a regular dream report. For me poetry is the only way to capture the spirit of the experience. The experience was similar to what Sri Aurobindo refers to as involution and evolution. Hyperspace lucidity experiences are moving into the depth of the great dimensions of the mind where wisdom lies; we sip from the Source where all creation comes from and then we return with a gift. Sometimes, the return can be disorienting. Also, the part of this experience that was overwhelming was what happened followed this lucid dream before I woke up:

I fell from this lucid dream to a "false awakening." In this state I reached for my journal and begin writing. Then I hear a noise next door. I get up but I am very dizzy. I open the door and walk on to the deck. I open the next door where I see my friend/housemate Tish is sitting looking at some old beads. Her grandmother is sitting in front of her. I tell Tish that I am having an important lucid dream and that she should not wake me up. I go back to my room and lie down. But soon I wake up and turn to see my journal and it is empty. I realize I had a false awakening

following the experience. It took me a while to move out of bed. (This experience happened between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm. I am an early riser and often lie down around 11:00 am and in the afternoon). I finally managed to walk out on to the deck. I saw my friend Tish in the lower balcony. I asked her if she had visitors and that I heard noises. She said no but she said she was upstairs in her office that was located next to my bedroom off the deck. She had been looking through an old box of beads given to her by her grandmother and that she was thinking about her while looking at the beads! When we cross-examined the timing, I realized that in my false awakening, I had had an Out- of- Body Experience in which I could see her in real time. In that state I was able to read her thoughts as a projected image of her grandmother. That is, in my dream experience her grandmother was sitting in the chair!

Tell us more about "the blackness." How did you experience it in the lucid dream? What did it come to mean to you? Is it the blackness of infinite potentiality?

My experience of blackness or the Void is the unity consciousness where all is One and one is all. The Void is the space of perpetual creation. It is not empty or void, it is a space of the mind that connects us to all dimensions, sometimes simultaneously or in an instant. It is like connecting to the source of prayer. It is the oneness with our totality of being, the essence and the source of creation. It sounds like a cliché but it is true! It has been said for thousands of years but I feel we are in a time where we can experience these dimensions ourselves through practice. Spirituality no longer needs to be projected outside of ourselves, but we all can experience its depth. To me the seat of wisdom lies in the Void. Void is creation. If we hold the space with right intention, we receive great wisdom and understanding. The evolution of consciousness deepens upon experiencing the far reaching depths of these dimensions. The great sages and prophets have touched upon these experiences and shared their great wisdom.

How does it feel to lose the sense of one's (ego) self? Obviously, some aspect continues to perceive - a fact that calls in its own set of questions. But what do you make of this disappearance of the ego self? What does it say about the nature of the self? (Is it very common in your lucid dreams?)

This is a very good question. We are complex and multidimensional beings with multidimensional selves. Which self is experiencing, which self is dreaming, which self is lucid and who is the dream ego? The question of "Who am I?" has been a major philosophical discourse. In transcendent experiences the duality of all different selves integrates into the unity of all Selves; in that moment there is a sense of unity with all existence. The disappearance of the "dream body" is part of this evolution and integration. I think one of the major misunderstandings of the Eastern spiritual traditions is the assumption that one has to annihilate the self. Actually one has to have a strong and grounded sense of self to approach these types of practices otherwise it is very disorienting and confusing. One can mix realities and become delusional in the waking state.

In my experiences of various lucid dimensions, in particular when the dream is not bounded to the familiar narrative of perceived reality, my dream body disappears. This often happens in transition from one dimension to the next. The dream body transforms suddenly or gradually, but the sense of self remains. One can lose the dream body but still be in duality. The identified personality might still be present but in a very insignificant way. Then there are experiences of unity of self. There is a sense of surrender and trust with no particular emotions attached to it. There is no "self" or "I" but there is a presence, a knowing, that all is well and that whatever happens is part of the unfolding of creation. Sometimes there is no image to hold on to, thoughts to grab on to, or emotions to feel but a sense of suspending yet evolving consciousness is present.

It is as if we are plugged into a line that connects the universe with various dimensions of our being and depending on our receptivity, we can receive incredible information or wisdom from this mysterious source of our Greater Mind.

Lucid dreaming is an important practice to experience the fullness and complexity of the self and discover the nature of the self and reality.

From your subsequent work on lucid dreams and the divine, what did you find and learn about lucid dreamers who sought an experience of the divine in their lucid dreaming?

The most important part of the study revealed that our belief system has a direct and powerful impact on our experience. This was a great learning and teaching. How do we acquire our beliefs about spirituality? What assumptions do we carry with us and how do those assumptions shape our experiences and reality? The study showed that our core spiritual beliefs affect our dreaming experience. Also the way we formulate our intention and incubation has a direct effect on our dreams. These are the two major findings.

In general the exploration of divine in lucid dreaming has been very positive and in some cases extremely life changing for the participants, also for many people I work with in my classes and retreats. Sometimes fear arises and we work with the core assumptions which is very important. The study also brought more questions to ponder and study.

What advice would you give our lucid dreaming readers if they decide to seek an experience of the divine in the lucid state?

The very first question I asked the participants in the study was what was their concept of the Divine? I still think this is a good place to start. This question helps to clarify core beliefs and assumptions. Then I would ask, "Are you really ready to call in this incubation?!" These types of incubations and intentions are existential and life changing. It is important to know that you are ready to face any challenge because you might be confronted with your deep core beliefs.

I highly recommend doing meditation practices and also energetic psycho-spiritual practices such as yoga, Ta'i Chi, Chi Qung or any other system that deals with the body and energy. (Having a good teacher is important.) Through these practices your body and mind are open to receive and sustain experiences that are otherwise difficult to maintain.

For me, lucid dreaming is a spiritual practice, and in order to incubate a lucid dream of this nature, I prepare myself for a while by doing practices that can open my psyche, spirit, and body. I have found that these practices help the quality, frequency, and integration of these experiences into daily life.

Also clarifying your intention is important. Formulate the incubation phrase or question and then examine it to see if the incubation allows openness to new experience or is it just leading you to what you already know. The most important part of this type of incubation is humility. We all come from different spiritual backgrounds and to respect other's beliefs and experiences is very important. Many years ago, in a book on lucid dreaming, I was misquoted by saying, "people who have impersonalized experience of divine had a deeper experience than the personal experience of the divine." This was not really true and who am I to judge anyone's depth of experience? Unfortunately, throughout years, I have witnessed people trying to put themselves above others because they have had incredible spiritual experiences in their lucid dreams. The question is: What is spiritual? And what makes certain dreams more spiritual than others? It is wonderful to

have highly impactful dream experiences but it is essential that the experience be integrated and be a source for growth of consciousness, not only personal but for the good of all beings. I truly believe, with practice, we all have an incredible capacity to experience the depth and mysterious dimensions of the Great Mind.

Along with lucid dreaming, you seem to have a deep interest in art and creativity. Does this interest come about as an expressive outgrowth of your experiences in lucid dreaming? Or, did you first have a deep interest in art, and then realize the artistry of the mind in dreams and lucid dreaming?

For a long time I was split between being an artist and a scientist. Art and science were always equal interests and parallel inquiries in my life. I studied medicine for three years. In my country, we had to choose our major at age fifteen! The last three years of high school were equivalent to the first three years of college here. In studying medicine we had to do a daily drawing of all the intricacies of the human body, cells, skeleton, muscles and layers from skin to organs to brain to nervous system. Our tests often included detailed color drawings. Other students spent a very short time on the drawings but I would spend hours illustrating. What I was really interested in was art, but medicine was the way I could practice art! Also my older brother influenced me a great deal as he was very artistic. He also studied medicine and became a microbiologist. We used to do experiments with art and science together and often created art installations related to geometry to decorate our room. During this same period, I was paying very close attention to my dream and lucid dreaming world.

For me, art and dreaming came together in 1981 when I took a course on psychophysiology at the University of Wisconsin and studied the complexity of the brain more in depth. In that class I fell madly in love with the mechanism, image and the shape of the brain! I thought the brain was among the most beautiful and mysterious creations. I loved its undulating lines; the connections of synapses; each small center responsible for the different aspect of our body, emotions and thoughts; and its chemistry, intricacy and intelligence. I still think it is the most marvelous and mysterious aspect of the human body! I became obsessed with not only studying the brain but drawing it! Soon my medical illustrations of the brain took a surrealist turn for me. I began painting my dreams inside the image of the brain.

Have you ever sought artistic works or artistic solutions in the lucid dream state? What happened?

Yes, the majority of my work in the past 25 years has been informed by my lucid dreams. I no longer try to illustrate dreams but choose the most luminous part of the experience and allow the creative process to take me back to the dream. The act of creation becomes the unfolding of the dream and the creation becomes a new dream. I sometimes work with the energy of the dream rather than the image of the dream. Sometimes I stay with one series and one aspect of a lucid dream for years. The series "Lucidity, Line and Light" came directly from three lucid dreams in which I experienced matter interfacing with inner light. In these experiences I was a witness to the transformation of form into emptiness, dense matter into luminous light. In some of these lucid dreams my dream body disappeared and I moved through the light while trying to experience what the inner light is made out of. Often I ask, "What is the source of the inner light?" It took me years to find a painting medium to explore this topic. Since 1995, I have been creating textured paintings that I call "collograph paintings." It comes from the tradition of "collograph printing," a form of printmaking that I was trained in during the early 1980s. Currently I am experimenting with video, which I love because I can capture the multidimensional experiences with movement, sound and special effects. I also take my

unfinished artwork and incubate dreams from them and find the next step or solution for the piece. Often I put my half-finished painting in front of my bed and contemplate the painting as I fall asleep. I try to fall asleep lucidly with the painting in my mind. Frequently the image begins to shift and change. Most often I later incorporate these movements into my artwork.

When did you first begin working with lucid dreams and art?

My first "dream inspired painting" was in 1981 when I was living in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. It was a dream of seeing the alchemical imagery of "Squaring the Circle," an image which I later found in Carl Jung's book *Man and His Symbols*.

The dream opened up many other dreams so I began working the imagery into a form of a brain. The painting initially was called "Pons and Medulla in Dream Reality" then later I changed it to the simpler name "Conscious Dreaming." Although "Conscious Dreaming" was painted so long ago and it has been seen and reproduced so many times, it is still mysterious to me. In retrospect, I see this painting as my initiation into painting from within. I had had several lucid dreams of transforming from a woman into a man, a black and white twin merging together and a face morphing into a different shape. The painting became a dreaming process itself. The experience and the painting turned out to be very significant milestones in my life and psyche. At the time, I was an undergraduate student double majoring in art and psychology. My painting style was Photo Realism, Persian miniature paintings and landscapes. Once I had this urge to capture my dreams in painting, I knew I could not paint at the school anymore, because it was too drastic of a change and I was not understood by my painting teacher. The truth was that I did not know what I was doing myself, but I was haunted by something new. I heard of a sympathetic patron of the arts who owned a two-story historical brick building downtown and used the first floor as his shoe store business and the second floor, he rented to independent artists and charged little to just pay for the electricity! It was a wonderful space and for the first time I felt free to create whatever I wished. By then I had so much art schooling and training that all I needed was a space to create from within and not something from outside of me. I found my freedom and it was marvelous! Also once we began studying Surrealism in my art history class, I felt myself coming to life. Like many of the Surrealists, I was totally haunted by Giorgio de Chirico. His paintings awakened something very archetypal inside of me. I did many paintings in his style.

What was the reaction to your dream paintings?

When I showed my first finished "dream" painting to my painting teacher at the University he criticized it right away. He said I was taking too many psychology courses and that I was going in the wrong direction! But I had a very strong inner conviction that I was on the right track. His comments did not sit well with me so I decided to get a different opinion. I submitted the painting to an annual statewide, juried art competition in Wisconsin. The competition was juried by the Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. The artwork was accepted and I took this acceptance as a sign and a confirmation that my direction in art had to come from within. From then on my art education focused on private mentorship. Ironically before the opening of the exhibition, I had a lucid dream in which I was walking into the exhibition gallery and saw where my painting was hung. On the night of the opening, I had *deja vu*. I had been in the opening in my lucid dream and the painting was hung exactly where it was in my dream! That entire experience made a very strong impression on my psyche and triggered a host of other art gallery dreams. For a long time after that experience, every time I walked into a gallery in my dream I became lucid. I would often find artwork in these galleries with my name next to it! I developed a technique to wake myself after examining the details of the artwork. Because of these experiences, I became more of an "experimental artist." That is, in my dreams, I was

presented with different types of artwork and my challenge in waking was to recreate them. Besides painting and drawing, I explored many different art techniques and mediums, from printmaking techniques to marbling to mask making to sound to theater performance. It has been an absolute adventure. If a dream is impactful for me, I will create a series of works related to that one dream for a number of years.

A number of painters have been inspired by dreaming and dream imagery. André Breton, the founder of the Surrealist movement, wrote: "I believe in the future resolution of the two states of dreams and reality into a sort of absolute reality or surreality." Does lucid dreaming assist in the resolution of these two states, dreams and reality? Or, does lucid dreaming exist as the "state between" dreams and reality - the absolute or surreal state? What implications do those ideas suggest?

I think lucid dreaming does both: assists in the resolution of the state of dreaming and waking reality, since the waking consciousness is present within dreaming consciousness; and lucid dreams could be experienced as a "state between" dreams and waking reality similar to lucid hypnagogia which implies a surreal state. What is the implication? Our complex Mind includes waking, dreaming, and other states of consciousness. To access the vastness of our Mind and its potential, we need the flexibility to move from one state of consciousness to another that helps to broaden our perception. Lucid dream practices are a creative way of expanding our perception so we can see with much larger vision than our everyday seeing.

The word "Surrealist" was first mentioned by the poet Guillaume Apollinaire in his play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* in 1917. He referred to the play as a "Surrealist drama." In some ways being in touch with the dreaming world and becoming awakened in it is a form of Surrealist drama! In homage to Apollinaire, Breton gave the name "Surrealism."

Although Breton did not write much about lucid dreaming he was well aware of lucid dreaming, because he knew of the lucid dream research of Marquis Hervey de Saint-Denys. In his work *Communicating Vessels* (1933), Breton reflected on Saint-Denys's exploration of lucid dreaming, which caused him to question the nature of reality, explore the possibility of an independent dimension, and wonder about the nature of the unconscious.

Surrealists show us the very first step in the exploration of the unconscious, the state in between conscious and unconscious, the natural evolution of surrealism captures the depths and dimensions of the conscious Mind. I am very grateful to have found two of the Surrealist members Gordon Onslow Ford and Robert Matta. Although they did not explore lucid dreaming in their art, the dimensions they explored were very similar to the hyperspace lucidity.

You collaborated with Onslow Ford for many years. I believe you met him in 1989. Tell us about that meeting. How did you meet him? What was there in his work that resonated with your experiences in lucid dreaming?

When I moved to the hills of Inverness, California in 1987, I had no idea that I moved ten minutes away from Gordon Onslow Ford's home! Although it took two years before we met, I believe we were in some form of communication in other dimensions.

While working on my research on the spiritual dimensions of lucid dreaming, I was having many lucid dreams similar to the spaces Onslow Ford captured in his paintings. I had never seen his paintings before nor did I know about him. But ironically in my daily walk in the forest, I often would see a house and a studio on a beautiful land in the valley and wondered who lived there.

But because I was in a reclusive period of my life focusing on my research and writing, I did not inquire about it.

Even though we lived in a small town, there was no occasion for a chance encounter because he also was a hermit! We finally met but it was through a series of synchronicities in the fall of 1989. The events that led to our meeting somehow related to dreams. At the time, I was writing a chapter for Krippner's book on dream and art and went to the local photographer, Richard Allen, to have my paintings photographed. I saw a small painting on his wall that I recognized as a hyperspace lucidity image. That is the first time I heard about Gordon Onslow Ford. Richard lent me a book by Gordon called *Creation*. Then he told me that Gordon lived only five minutes away but he told me that he was a recluse and a very private person. I borrowed the book and finished it in a few hours. I loved the book so much I made a complete copy of it. I was totally ecstatic soaking up every page of the book. I recognized many of the images of my lucid dreams in his paintings and that his philosophy was absolutely in line with my discoveries.

Around the same time a friend asked me to hold a dream group in her home in Inverness. I limited the group to only 6 people. It turned out one of the group members was the assistant to Gordon Onslow Ford! I asked her if it was possible to meet him and she said what I had heard before that he was a very private person and did not see too many people. But she agreed to take a letter to him. I was not really attached to actually meeting him personally, but I wanted him to know that his paintings and philosophy were in line with my research on hyperspace lucidity. I thought he might be interested to hear about that.

Soon after the delivery of the letter, I was invited for an afternoon tea. As I parked my car and walked toward his house, I recognized the hill and the ridgeline in front of his house. The top of that ridge was where I took my daily walks and it was his house and studio that I saw for two years! I did not know anything about him personally, his history, his background, his involvement with the Surrealists and, strangely enough, that was not my main concern. All I was curious about was to know whether he painted from his hyperspace lucidity and what his experience and his painting process were like. Also I had stopped painting for a year because I could not capture my hyperspace lucid experiences, they were too complex. How did he arrive at these dimensions and how did he capture them in painting? From our first meeting it became very clear that we were deeply connected not only in our interests, visions, and even personal history, but we were also deeply connected in a metaphysical way that remained a mystery for both of us. We discovered so much in common it was uncanny. He always said that we knew each other "since eternity!" And that was true. When he took me to his studio, I felt he took me to a lucid dream. I recognized one painting after another. I had experienced those imageries in my hyperspace lucidity. When I asked him about lucid dreaming, he did not know about it but because he knew about meditation, metaphysics, and dreams, he understood what I was exploring. It was a marvelous meeting.

After our initial meeting, I saw him a few times and sent him the book by Krippner with the chapter on dream art. He liked my writing style, and in the summer of 1991, he invited me to help him with his upcoming book *Insights*. That was my first collaboration with him in which I read through years of his notebooks, chose writings, and composed them into poetic prose. That summer I spent six weeks in his guesthouse and learned all I could about his art and philosophy. We took daily walks in the woods and conversed about art. I would tell him about lucid dreaming phenomena and he would tell me how he arrived at his paintings that resembled lucid dream spaces. I watched him paint and saw the progression of one painting after another. One painting would lead him to the next dimension just like how we adventure from one space in a lucid dream to the next. In exchange for my helping him with his book, I asked him to give me a critique of my artwork. He was an absolute master in seeing. A year later, after I helped him with his book,

he invited me to be his consultant and collaborator. Among several books I worked on with him was *Once Upon a Time*. But our major project, however, was the creation and establishment of the Lucid Art Foundation in 1998. Lucid Art is an evolution from the Surrealist tradition.

How did Lucid Art come about and how do you define it?

For many years Gordon and I worked on a name for a direction in art that captured the invisible dimensions. Many names arose and dissolved until finally we came upon the term "Lucid Art" that captured all that we were focusing on. What really helped to clarify this concept was an art exhibition I curated linking lucid dreaming, meditation, and inner world painting and called it "Through the Light." It took a few months of going back and forth on the definition until we settled on: "Lucid Art is an expression of the Creative Force of the Universe expressed in the spontaneous work of art that elicits in the viewer aspects of the inner worlds."

Both of us as artists and writers were convinced that there is a creative force in the universe and that the artist is an instrument through which creativity flows. The research I did on the viewer and the inner world paintings became an important aspect of Lucid Art (See "Lucid Art and Hyperspace Lucidity," **Dreaming**, March 2003). Lucid Art does elicit and impact the viewer. The creation takes one to the space of awe and insights, and it evokes forgotten dreams. Certain creations elicit an immediate call in the viewer to experience the depths, vastness and dimensions of the inner worlds. These creations become waking lucid experiences. Besides some artistic creations, which can impact the viewer in this way, nature is an immediate and clear example of Lucid Art. We love nature and something happens when we spend time in nature. It feels like coming home. This sense of home takes us to the depths of our spiritual core where creation is in bounty and we are fully lucid and awakened. Some artworks inspire and open us to these dimensions. Lucid Art awakens the unconscious to full consciousness.

Was he involved in dreaming as a means of artistic expression? How did dreaming affect his art?

When he was with the Surrealists in the 1930s, he paid attention to his dreams and wrote them down, but he soon realized it was impossible to capture dreams in painting. Once he became interested in exploring the fourth dimension he stopped capturing dream symbolism. Although he did not paint from his dreams, he often would say that at night in his sleep he traveled in great dimensions and he captured glimpses of them in the morning. But if you asked him what the dream experience was, he often did not remember his dream. Also he hardly wrote his dreams down. He kept his journal more impersonal and philosophical than about himself, so he did not illustrate dreams in his painting.

From an article of yours, I find this quote on Onslow Ford's philosophy of painting, called Inner-Realism: "In spontaneous painting the Mind acts directly through the hand of the painter to the painting and never-seen-before images appear. The painter, as a separate individual, becomes an instrument of the Mind Shared by All, the creative spirit of the cosmos.... The principle preoccupation of Inner Realism is to express the nature of an Inner World as directly as possible from the Open Mind." (Onslow Ford, 2001) If one replaces "painter" and "painting" with lucid dreamer and lucid dreaming, does one get a feeling for the connection between your and his views of the experience of lucid dreaming/painting?

Yes, absolutely. The inner world to which he refers is very similar to what we call lucid dreaming, but he takes it to the level of the impersonal and transcendental. He often referred to "Great Spaces of the Mind Shared by All." Experientially one can reach this state through certain

dimensions of lucid dreaming where the collective consciousness resides. His paintings captured these dimensions of the mind. He called it "Inner Realism" because the inner reality is as real as the outer reality. Inner Realism is a way to affirm the reality of the inner worlds.

You have decades of experience in lucid dreaming. What still excites you about lucid dreaming?

What still excites me about lucid dreaming is the exploration of the vast dimensions of the Mind and the potential for a greater Awakening. Through my experiences in lucid dreaming, I am convinced that we are multidimensional beings and there are so many dimensions yet to discover. The exploration is endless and limitless. I have been an explorer of the mind since childhood and from experiences in lucid dreaming I know for a fact that our mind is as vast as the universe. Also lucid dreaming is where I receive my teachings.

Although I have been fortunate to have great teachers in my life but also many of my teachings comes directly from my lucid dreams. For many years I had lucid dreams of a Tibetan Buddhist teacher who appeared in my dreams and taught me many practices. A few years later, in my waking, I saw his picture and recognized him. The first time I met the teacher he looked at me as if he knew me too! When I shook his hand he said "Where have I met you?" I said: "In my dreams. You come and teach me in my dreams." And then he gave me a beautiful smile and nodded his head in agreement and said "Yes, that is where I have met you!" Many people in my life whom I have deep connections with, I had already met them either in my dreams or lucid dreams. My life is led by dreams.

When you think of the cutting-edge issues in lucid dreaming, what do you think of? Any personal lucid dreams that bear on these issues?

We are really just beginning. There is so much potential for discovery. Or perhaps we have already done so much but we are not awakened to it! Jayne Gackenbach and her pioneering *Lucidity Letter* brought many interesting researchers together and we explored many ideas and topics. Each one of those topics is a seed for a much larger exploration. Stephen LaBerge continues with his research and dedication to the field, which is admirable. And we have been lucky that the Tibetan Buddhist teachers are sharing their knowledge with us. They have been doing this practice for thousands of years and they know so much about the mind, which we need to learn from them. After twenty years of teaching, one important topic that keeps coming up in my courses is lucid dreaming and healing. We only have anecdotal reports and a few laboratory studies, but it is important to have solid research done on this topic. I really hope more theses, dissertations, and laboratory work will focus on this area. The inquiry into the mind/body connection is very important, such as the transformation of physical body through lucid dreams.

Naturally, issues related to nightmares are very important, how does lucid dreaming assist nightmare and trauma? Visitation from the deceased is very powerful, and in some ways, is a shamanic practice of connecting with the ancestors. How do these experiences impact the dreamer's life? Also the issues relating to dream characters and interaction with them is very interesting to me. How is it that we become lucid in our dreams but it is still difficult to convince our dream characters to gain lucidity? If we look at the gestalt perspective that each aspect of the dream is part of ourselves, how come one aspect of our psyche awakens and the others are totally unwilling to wake up?

For me personally I continue my practice and research in exploring the phenomenology of the multidimensional and the spiritual dimensions of the lucid mind. Also the relationship between

altered states of consciousness and hyperspace lucidity interest me mainly because of my shamanic practices. I would be very interested to receive others' dream reports of these experiences.

Thanks for your observations into lucid dreaming. Any parting thoughts?

In the first academic course I taught on dreams in 1984 in Canada, I addressed a group of young undergraduates by introducing the topic of lucid dreaming as "lucid dreaming is lucid living." I remember they were not so impressed by this proposition. They wanted dreaming techniques and wanted to have fun in their dreams but not be reminded or bothered with waking reality. That statement is still one of my strongest core beliefs about lucid dreaming. I approach lucid dreaming more as a practice and, as a teacher of it, I have great respect and reverence for its wisdom. Lucid dreaming is to wake up to the ultimate reality of who we are and to discover the depth and the mystery of the Mind.

Thank you for inviting me to participate in this interview.