



Change Your Mind

Introduction by David Pescovitz

Timothy Leary coined the term “reality tunnel” to describe the subconscious mental filters that affect how differently each of us experience the world. As a happy mutant, I’m on a constant quest to expand my reality tunnel by any means necessary, to “turn on,” as Dr. Leary said. Great art turns me on. An oil painting by Mark Ryden, a spooky sculpture by Liz McGrath, a pen and ink drawing by Audrey Kawasaki, all tweak my filters for interpreting the world, providing me with a fresh lens on reality.

Reality is still where the action is. Don’t get me wrong: email, instant messaging, social networks, blogs and virtual worlds are all fantastically powerful technologies. But as much as they connect and empower us, they also draw us into an increasingly mediated existence. Thankfully, the more time we spend in the metaverse, the more we yearn for physical, visceral experiences -- the more we appreciate reality. From where I sit, a magnificent piece of art is about as real, as tangible, as things get.

The best art stays with me, altering my perception of the world. It’s a tool for opening my eyes to new possibilities, for changing my mind. Usually, it’s a subtle shift that takes time to even notice. Occasionally though, the otherworldly beauty of a painting by, say Tim Biskup, Camille Rose Garcia, or Jim Woodring, launches me on a thrilling rocket trip directly into dreamtime. When that happens, my new lens on reality feels more like a kaleidoscope.

The mediasphere--magazines, television, radio, newspapers, blogs--contains its own set of lenses. In an era of information overload and cognitive fatigue, media outlets sift through the sound bites, press conferences, spectacles, and cultural detritus to identify what matters, and put it in context. A cartoon in Marshall McLuhan’s prophetic book *The Medium is the Massage* reads, “It isn’t that I don’t like current events. There have just been so many of them lately.” Indeed. The best media helps us make sense of our chaotic world.

Underground art has emerged from subterranea as a powerful cultural force. It’s impact can be seen in everything

from toy design and high fashion to advertising and blue chip galleries, both in content and commerce. It can also be impenetrable to the uninitiated. You might know good art when you see it, but where should you cast your gaze? Think of *Hi-Fructose* as a masterfully-curated art gallery that just happens to exist only on paper. In this case though, the curators, Attaboy and Annie Owens, are also talented artists. By boldly blurring lines in their own lives and careers, they have organically developed a crystal clear lens on the art world they inhabit. That’s why their publication succeeds.

Hi-Fructose is art as media, but it is also media as art. Since the dawn of the digital age, a death knell has been ringing for print magazines. The Web democratizes media creation. Every individual can offer their own lens onto the world, inviting every visitor to their site a chance to peer through their eyes. But a web page feels somehow fleeting, no matter its Google rank. It’s difficult to put your finger on the momentary joy that comes from reading, or writing, a delightful blog post because there is nothing to touch.

“In the future, everyone will be famous for 15 megabytes,” wrote the Imaginary Foundation’s Nick Philip, with apologies to Andy Warhol. In that regard, *Hi-Fructose* is the exact opposite of the Web. It celebrates authenticity, depth and the wonders of the world as seen through the eyes of artists. And every issue is an objet d’art in itself. *Hi-Fructose* embodies the realness we so passionately desire in an increasingly mediated world.

These pages contain the dreams that stuff is made of.

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Brian McCarty

Toy photographer Brian McCarty takes a break from breaking plastic hearts and gets grilled on both sides by toy designer Attaboy.



“I hate to use cliché acting terms, but the most important thing to me is the motivation behind the character.”

Brian McCarty, you’re the Annie Leibovitz of the indie toy revolution. I’ve shown your photos to all types of people and they all get this wide-eyed look like a diabetic in a candy shop.

One guy took a look at one of your doll photos and I do hereby swear he started to drool. After wiping the bubbles of spittle from his mouth, he quickly regained semi-consciousness and covered his face in shame. His embarrassment could not be masked even by the dirty paper bag he found on the street.

Thanks to you, his girlfriend has to suffer through his intricate plastic-fueled fantasies, being forced to pose in articulated stances bathed in vinyl-scented perfume. Mr. Brian McCarty, you are hereby sentenced to answer these questions for crimes against reality.

You have this uncanny ability to bring out the attitude of your inanimate subject. They’re brought to life in a way that makes it seem like they always have been living and

breathing (I’ll avoid a pop reference to that crappy movie *Mannequin* here). How much time do you spend with these toys before shooting?

Brian: First off, aw shucks... thanks for the kind words. However it doesn’t make up for that crappy Starship song from *Mannequin* that is now stuck in my head. At 3 a.m. when it just won’t stop, I’ll be sure to call and serenade you with it.

Anyway, I spend as much time as I can with a toy before planning a shoot, but most of the time the toy stays packed up. I’ll take it out and have a good look at it, and then it’s all about playing with it in my head. The goal is to bring it to life, let it roam around in my imagination, and see where it wants to go. I hate to use cliché acting terms, but the most important thing to me is the motivation behind the character. Location, situation, lighting, angle and everything else pretty much flows from that understanding.

Tell us how you dress up midgets and models to look like the figures you’re hired to shoot just so they seem life-like.

Brian: I’m not proud of it, but lots and lots of booze. They put up less of a fight, and it’s easier to lean them against something to make sure they don’t move around and mess up the shot.

I see a photo of a doll taking a smoke break from a fast food job.

Brian: Yeah! That’s Tika from Mattel’s short-lived and ill-conceived FLAVAS line. I shot her and the rest of the... um... posse for *Mass Appeal* last year. They showed up again in a *Dating Game* spoof I shot for *Vibe*. I needed really over-the-top and stereotypical “hood” clothing, so Bachelors Number One and Two had a lot of their wardrobe put together from various sets. Since then I’ve made a point of buying up all the FLAVAS stuff I can find. The entire line looked dated the day it came out. Imagine how it will be seen in ten years! My FLAVAS “Bike Date” set is packed away waiting with über-hoochie-mama Happy-D inside (swear that is the doll’s name).

Do you carry a box of toys and your camera around wherever you go?



Brian: I do, but the camera I carry everywhere is a little Minox subminiature camera that was built for doing close-up shots like copying documents and random spy stuff. Hooray for cold war gadgets! The pics that come off of it are just for me. It's the photo equivalent of a sketch book.

People must give you strange looks.

Brian: Big time, but after well over a decade of doing this, I'm pretty numb to it now. Once I've got the camera in hand, I pretty much tune out and get lost in the shot. More often than not, folks just want to know what I'm doing, and I'm happy to sit and talk. That is, once I know I've got the shot. Then there are a lot of people that feel compelled to blow me random shit. My assistant and I have a running joke about the cool Doppler effect of insults we get from passing cars—

“frrraaaAAGGGOOOOoottt.”

The *Dollhouse* series of photos unearth some eerie feelings for me, as if I was a kid at a friend's house while a scary domestic dispute was going on. Please let us know the story behind this series so the anguish will stop. How did you get such candid shots from such an artificial Los Angeles suburban family?

Brian: OK, the dollhouse is a bit of a long story and real personal, but it's about time I share some. I thought the project up as a junior at Parsons School of Design, and made it into one of my senior projects. The idea was to use the dollhouse to explore family dynamics and growing up in suburbia. I spent three months building the house and found myself getting really obsessive about it, to the point where I wouldn't sleep for days. Everything had to be just right. The thing has working lights, real wallpaper, actual hardwood floors, the works.

I got the house done, spent forever finding the right dolls and furniture, and finally started shooting. I didn't set out to make the series into anything dark, but it kept turning in that direction. The shots became some sort of fucked-up art therapy that, to be honest, I just wasn't ready to handle, so the crazy perfectionism took hold more and more. I would



shoot and re-shoot the same scene over a couple of weeks, making print after print. Nothing really changed but a slight turn of a face or placement of a side prop. It was a way to stay insulated from what I was exploring.

As more shots got done, a story began to emerge. It was my childhood, and I managed to capture the subtle and powerful demons that had been spawned from that time. The revelation hit really hard. I felt naked and exposed, and there were things that I wasn't ready to handle.

OK, this is a huge confession, but the series that's out there is not anywhere close to complete. I destroyed the negatives for a good part of it. What was left mostly showed the rest of the family. The boy that so clearly became me is only seen in one image now. So to get around to answering your actual question, I got the shots I got because I knew the house and the characters in it like I knew my own childhood. Ten years later and the dollhouse is still in storage, purposely not easy to get to. When the time is right, I'll bring it out and dive back in.

While photographing the image for the cover of our premiere issue you called me in a panic and left a muffled message on my phone. Something about "...sacrificial offerings for them... must escape their wrath... out... of... film... limited budget... helllp." What was that all about?

Brian: OK, that image is a good reminder that there is no way to really plan ahead on these shoots. I was feeling mighty confident before setting out after spending a couple of days finding the perfect picnic blanket, plates, snack cakes and location. I knew the shot I wanted to get and thought everything was completely planned out. We got to the location, put the set together, and lined up the camera for the first of a couple shots planned. About then, a hornet flew into the set and then off again pretty quick. Didn't think much of it. What we didn't know is that he went back to tell his friends, "Dudes, I swear to god there is a huge pile of snack cakes just sitting in the field."

Within about five minutes, there were lots and lots of hornets, and they really wanted the zingers and such. Having only got one of the shots I wanted, we resisted for a bit, but it just wasn't to be. My assistant started throwing the cakes out into