

ALEX GREY

40 YEARS OF SELF-PORTRAITS

OPENING
SATURDAY, 6 PM NOVEMBER 29

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

MicroCoSM Gallery
530 W. 27th St., New York, NY 10001
212-594-8841
info@microcosmgallery.com

Alex Grey
40 Years of Self Portraits
Saturday, November 29th through
December 31st 2008

Alex Grey, creator of the internationally known Sacred Mirrors series, started drawing and painting self-portraits as a very young artist. Over the past four decades he has made hundreds of these likenesses drawn from life in front of a mirror, most of them modestly scaled and on paper. His self-portraits have never been exhibited and have been a private and experimental mode of reflection for the artist over periods of intense personal turmoil as well as psychedelic theophanies. The earliest works in this exhibition portray Grey at 14 years of age, over 40 years ago. During certain periods, self-portraits were done daily and some on special occasions, like birthdays. These drawings and small painted works include the 15 year old artist imitating Rembrandt's grimacing self-portraits, donning a mortar board on route to high school graduation (drawn from a rear-view mirror of the family car), as a performance artist with his hair half-shaved, worshipping Buddha and Christ, in various masturbatory or uncensored sexual encounters (as in the ink and semen series), and toasting the birth of his daughter. Several self-portraits include portrayals of his wife, the painter Allyson Grey, with whom he has been married for over 33 years.

The comfort of execution with which these self-portraits capture physical features, emotional conditions and the artist's thoughtstreams leaves a faithful record of psycho-spiritual scrutiny through a consistent life long creative process. In numerous works, diaristic entries and philosophical commentaries are directly written onto the picture plane. In recent years, these writings cover over all the page surface, making for unusual fusions and tensions of Grey's expressive image and language. Physical flaws and negative moods are rawly displayed as the artist faces his depression and his shadow, yet there are some tender beautiful works that show the artist is growing more at ease with himself. These works in various media go beyond physical likeness and point to what is consistent over 40 years of reflection, the inner witness, the soul that is watching and animating the self to draw.

As human beings we all develop ways of gaining insight to character from analyzing features of the body and face. Few pictures through the ages are more honest or authentic than artists self-portraits, see Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo, Kathe Kollwitz, Francis Bacon and Robert Crumb to name but a few. Although the practice of self-portraiture can be considered narcissistic, some artists convey introspective depth reaching through the guise of a vulnerable personality toward a universal Self. The mirror enables artists to capture their most personal view of reality.

Grey's obsession with examining the nature of the self are explored more trans-personally in his Sacred Mirrors series and in the subsequent painting series, Progress of the Soul, many of which are displayed at the CHAPEL OF SACRED MIRRORS, COSM, in New York City (542 W. 27th St., 10001) through December 31st, 2008.

www.alexgrey.com

