Flooding the Senses

by malfunkt

Body weight: 185 lbs

Background:

This experience was inspired by several things one being to see what mental states one can obtain without drugs. I have a good ability to visualize with my eyes closed, seeing phosphenes and being able to ‘excite’ these into shapes and more intense patterns. Usually this is before going to sleep at night. I’ve also noticed on occasion that I’ll get a visual hallucination either just before going into a sleep state where with my eyes closed I’ll see objects or people in almost hologram-like dimensionality, but composed of the ‘colour’ that is typical of phosphenes.

The other motivation for this experience was an app I had download for my iPad. On the developers’ website, he made reference to the app being a good aid to open-eye meditation. I didn’t find too much information online about this style but felt I would be able to improvise.

The other tie-in is that I had become more interested in mandalas, particularly after having had a powerful DMT trip weeks prior. (That is another experience entirely and one of the most powerful experiences in my life, very positive.)

The Experience:

I got myself comfortable in a small dimly lit room used for reading and gaming and sat crossed-legged on a ‘70s shag rug. I placed the iPad several feet in front of me opened up the app. I used a pair of SRH-840 headphones and an iPod to play some music from Steve Roach. He is a master of the ambient arts, and I was listening to one of his ‘Immersion’ series. I left my eyes open and allowed them to relax, not quite focusing but able to see what was around me. From time-to-time I’d let my hands interact with the application, as you can create colour changes and shape changes in the mandalas through touch and sound. What I love most about the app is the colour scheme, unlike so many ‘trippy’ visualizers out there, this one always has a pleasing colour palette. Its ‘tempo’ is also appropriate and won’t induce an epileptic fit :)

Before this experience, I had practiced meditation at a young age mostly for martial arts. One thing about meditation was the difficulty in shutting off that inner voice or thought-train.

Now, I was less concerned with this. In fact, I was keeping all senses occupied - my auditory senses were flooded with ambience, my vision comfortably filled with mandala in sight, even my sense of touch engaged naturally just being at rest or moving my hands. Lastly, it was this inner voice I would pre-occupy and it came to me to recite a ‘mantra’. Whatever word came to mind I’d just repeat it, not out loud, just internally. I’d let it change and merge it with whatever thought came
forward. I was surprised how effective this was. As long as this was happening no concrete or complex thoughts entered.

I felt like this technique was almost the opposite of sensory deprivation - rather I had engaged all my senses with pleasing stimuli. It felt balanced and I felt a ‘time dilation’ effect. I did this for an hour or more, and it was enjoyable just being relaxed in this state.

Toward the end of this session, I received an open-eye visual hallucination. It was very similar to the ones I experience from time-to-time just before sleep. In this case an arm (I assumed mine) flashed in front me, it was almost electric like it was coloured out of phosphene reds/greens/yellows. It almost looked like an Alex Grey illustration, with all the nerves visible and effervescent. Whether I saw this or thought I saw this is up for debate, in fact that may just be what hallucination is in this case - a confusion or merging of thought and experience. Mind you it’s not like I consciously was thinking arm, at least it did not seem like that.

Satisfied, I left the experience and felt genuinely relaxed. In fact, I realized it was probably the equivalent of going to a spa in my own home.

I’ve done powerful hallucinogens before, and at my age, while I still enjoy these experiences (much rarer than when I was younger), I can honestly say they are on par with the seemingly ‘mild’ experiences we have in life. That light bit of meditation or contemplation can give you powerful insight, creativity or sense of serenity. Alternatively, we can work ourselves into angered and tense states just from experience a bad situation or stressful day of work. Being mindful of all of this can allow us to integrate it and essentially shape our experience.

Anyhow, I’d recommend this technique/experience and I have to give credit to the artists involved in creating such great music, technology, and programs. I’m sure this can all be done without technology too. Next time I’m near a babbling brook in a picturesque forest I’ll make mental note to try this.