



PHOTOGRAPH BY BLAIR HALFORD
Risa Mason-Cohen

BY RISA MASON-COHEN

My previous column was intended to be the first of a two part series on aging. I wanted to write a soulful piece inspired by universal human experiences designed to encourage alternative levels of consciousness and empowering new perspectives. For reasons that were unclear to me at the time, my July 15 effort left me wanting more. After my recent visit with Atmah Ja and Iamikan inside their collaborative art gallery and yoga/massage studio — The Art of Core Consciousness, I finally understood why. This particular *Mercury* feature is not about growing old at all; rather, it is about being timeless.

My last column was safe and practical, with neatly organized categories and concepts. Quite honestly, I hated it. In hiding behind my professional veneer I risked alienating the reader and placing self-imposed limits on my writer's voice, an authentic voice that reflects the truth about who I really am. My

visit with a warm and grounded yogi known as Atmah Ja and a crimson haired, feisty artist called Iamikan brought me back to my core essence as a writer. I realized that in my efforts to be professional I lost touch with my creative flow. Iamikan might say I ran my *positive tilt program* and hid behind a veil of socially acceptable convention. What do I mean by the phrase *positive tilt program*? I won't dare tell; as this is exactly the sort of Iamikan concept you might like to explore with the creative genius himself. A visit to his gallery on Broad Street is well worth the trip for the conversation alone, that is if you are fortunate enough to encounter Iamikan and harness his attention.

Most of us come to believe in the existence of an infinitely expansive universe despite our limited capacity to wrap our minds around an entity of such magnitude. In the brief span of time that I spent conversing with Iamikan, I remembered a cosmology course I took years ago at the Museum of Natural History in New York City, where I learned about black holes and gravitational singularities. As Iamikan proceeded to *download my internal hard drive*, I grew keenly aware of my own self-imposed cognitive limitations. I longed to grasp his concepts and truths, as Iamikan's theories make all the sense in the world despite the fact that they are, for lack of a better phrase, completely

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out of this world. Iamikan sprinkled scattered seeds of transcendental wisdom deep into the recesses of my subconscious mind where they will quietly rest in the darkness (like so many brilliant Iamikan manifestations) until I am ready to allow them into the light of my conscious awareness.

Iamikan and Atmah Ja make a lovely team. They have a quiet respect and admiration for each other, and their core compatibility is easily reflected in the magnificent space they created together on Broad Street. Iamikan has no time for facades; it is so charming to encounter a creative genius who dares to speak his truth without any pretense. I felt humbled by his presence as I instinctively sensed that he does not share his time so generously with just anyone. His work reveals certain fundamental truths about the human psyche that most of us choose to ignore. Beneath the individual perceptions and social personas that divide us there is a larger force that unites us.

All things in nature are intrinsically connected by a common thread of humanity, a tapestry of life encompassing everything that is raw and wild, honest and pure. We exist within an ocean of forever shifting polarities and contradictions — good and evil, strong and weak, darkness and light. None of this is good or bad; rather, it just *is*. Iamikan pays equal tribute to all the forces of nature. His

work reminds us that we need everyone and everything in order to exist, and once we manage to transcend boundaries and distinctions, what remains just *is*.

For a long while I have been itching to expand my horizons and to try something different. Although I have practiced yoga many times before, I was definitely intrigued when I received AJ's invitation to her Broad Street art gallery that doubles as a yoga/massage studio. However it was not until I visited the studio's Web site at www.atmahjas.com and found the image of a majestic golden lion, the third of Iamikan's signature series, hanging proudly behind a gracefully poised Atmah Ja that I knew I must go there in person. Perhaps some would call this a cosmic vibration, fate, animal magnetism or karma. I consider it no more than a sheer act of will, a choice I made at that particular moment in time.

Atmah Ja's warmth and hospitality are instantly contagious. There is a vibe of unconditional acceptance within the walls of her sanctuary where soft evening light mingles with the many colors and forms of Iamikan. A small window at the rear of the studio overlooks a tranquil slice of manicured garden that inconspicuously blends into the surroundings like an organic piece of art. Meanwhile Iamikan's free flowing manifestations stimulate and arouse while AJ's calming voice and easy nature

encourage stillness.

The unpretentious vibe is simple yet seductive, an irresistible combination that conjures images of a perfect romantic duo. As if he read my mind, Iamikan aptly informed me that he and AJ are not in fact *running the love program*. His confession launched us into a lengthy conversation about the concept of romantic love, and I soon grew painfully aware of Iamikan's ability to transcend the confines and limitations of human attachment. He confessed that he would never miss me should I suddenly be gone from the world because, well, there is really no need for such experiences since everything folds into everything else whether good, bad or neutral.

AJ specializes in private sessions of yoga and massage therapy designed to assist people in awakening and directing their core blueprint. She also offers pre-registered group classes for serious students interested in accessing core consciousness through focused mind/body work. It was in a recent group class designed specifically for mental health professionals called *Rewriting the Mind's Program* where I found myself face to face with the majestic lion that initially captivated me through cyberspace. The piece is called *Witness Without the Veil*. I like to think of the lion as a male; however, it was Iamikan himself who informed of its androgynous nature. I am still not sure why this disap-

pointed me, but I admitted as much to Iamikan, who simply smiled as if to reassure me that he placed no judgment on my perceptions.

In that moment I envied Iamikan for his ability to detach from agendas, transcending psychic borders and limitations in a manner some would label manic or even insane. However, there is order in chaos, and Iamikan is a shining example. He reminded me of what I have always known; concepts like wealth and normality and sanity and fame are no more than manifestations of a collective fear-based need to impose order on the natural world.

Iamikan looks beyond the veil to capture the truth that lies within. This truth is raw and untamed and even messy at times, but at least it is real, and I am grateful for having felt, seen and understood that way. I left the studio feeling as if I had grown somehow, although it might take me years to understand this. However, I do know this much: When I left the gallery that day I immediately started to miss the crimson haired genius. Sorry, Iamikan, but my attachment program is quite stubborn and a tough one to shake.

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