

SPIRITUALITY, SCIENCE, PAST LIVES AND VISIONARY ART

Debra Alford, Guest Editor

ISSSEEM's long practice of publishing articles based on presentations at its annual conference is the source of an extraordinary variety of topics presented by distinguished pioneers in their fields. This issue continues that valuable tradition.

What is strikingly different and new this year is that our electronic publishing format allows us to offer our readers instant links to additional information and resources, as well as including an unprecedented number of beautiful color illustrations in a wide-ranging article by visionary artist Gilah Yelin Hirsch.

I guarantee you will be fascinated and challenged by each of these three excellent articles, which explore unique subjects through the insights of people who have dedicated their lives to discovering and sharing a variety of "hidden" realities.

2010's conference theme, *Evidence-Based Spirituality for the 21st Century*, was also the basis of Charles Tart's Presidential Address. In it, he argues persuasively that it is reasonable and rational to be both scientific and spiritual, and explains the difference between science and scientism. Charles doesn't tolerate sloppiness or sentimentality in either science or spirituality; he argues for honesty and clarity in both. He presents the case that there is high-quality empirical evidence that humans possess the psychic qualities that you would expect spiritual beings to have. He goes on to explore various tools and approaches we might employ to develop an evidence-based spirituality, as well as the many obstacles and resistances we must deal with. Finally, he invites all of us to explore the subject further and develop methods and approaches that will advance this essential realm of human awareness.

Carol Bowman is the world's foremost expert on the healing effects of children's past life memories; her books have been translated into sixteen languages and she has appeared extensively on radio and TV. Yet her down-to-earth personality and compassionate orientation allow readers to feel as if she's just telling you about her extraordinary life and discoveries over a cup of tea. Part of what makes her research and writing so compelling is that it grew out of her own dramatic recovery from illness and her children's remarkable healing experiences after remembering past lives. Her article relates several intriguing cases, and discusses the research of Dr. Ian Stevenson. Carol builds a compelling case for the continuity of some personality traits from lifetime to lifetime, as well as the profound healing potential for both children and adults when they access and integrate past life memories. The article also links us to the Reincarnation Forum (which she created thirteen years ago) and her website, which offer valuable resources and interactive discussion about past lives.

In the most comprehensive overview of her life's work she has ever created, Gilah Yelin Hirsch weaves a fascinating narrative of her life's journey, illustrated by an astonishing 140 paintings, photographs and images. This article offers us many glimpses into her life and work – where science, mysticism, nature, healing, visionary art and insatiable curiosity have lead her to exceptional experiences and insights. From her solitary wilderness sojourns and multiple near-death experiences to her explorations of cellular behavior and her study of the Bodhicitta practice with the Dalai Lama, Gilah takes us on an extraordinary journey of growth, awareness, healing and stimulating questions. Illustrated beautifully with her paintings, photographs, and images from others she has learned from, this article is both an intellectual and mystical experience that you'll come back to again and again.

Working with ISSSSEEM's speakers is always both a privilege and a pleasure; editing their work is much like immersing myself in an intensive seminar and deeply absorbing their messages. I also want to acknowledge the meticulous and diligent work of Gilah's dedicated assistant, Anna West, who dealt with the myriad details of incorporating so much artwork into this article, and Justin Block, ISSSSEEM's Design Editor, who did an amazing job of constructing and patiently revising the complex layout of Gilah's article, which simply would not convey her meaning without all of the illustrations and video links.

I know you'll enjoy the fruits of our labor, and I hope these articles will inspire you to continue to explore the work of these outstanding authors.

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