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### 'The Village Voice' On NY Abduction Conference

From: Stig Agermose <[stig.agermose@get2net.dk](mailto:stig.agermose@get2net.dk)>  
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Stig

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April 7 - 13, 1999

by  
austin bunn

The Alienist

Artist Brings UFO Abduction Home To New York

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Budd Hopkins keeps a scrapbook of scars=97 close-up photographs of lashes, wales, and scabs that people can't explain. He flips through the images and points to an indentation the size of a teaspoon on a woman's upper arm. "These are scoop marks," he says. "You see them a lot." In another shot, a woman's labia are spread to reveal two perforations in the skin, supposedly incised by aliens while she slept. On another woman's shoulder swells a giant, deep bruise that, he says, "healed by the end of the day."

This Saturday, Hopkins takes his latest findings =97 scars and all=97 public at a daylong conference on UFO abduction, featuring the leading lights in the field: UFO Encyclopedia author Jerome Clark, nuclear physicist Stanton Friedman (speaking on the possibility of interstellar travel), and Temple University historian David Jacobs (on abductions in the 19th century). Over 50 abductees will also be present, including Linda Cortile, the victim of New York's best-known incident, the 1989 Brooklyn Bridge abduction case.

"What you're dealing with are tightly imagined testimonies" by abductees, says Hopkins, who has interviewed hundreds of them. For example, "No abductee has ever reported any interest [by the aliens] in the heart." It's as if the alleged victims of an interstellar human buffet all somehow got their stories straight. As if they were all telling the truth.

Hopkins, a veritable Alan Lomax of UFO abductions, has been listening to abductees for over 20 years. An established artist with paintings in the permanent collections of the Whitney and Guggenheim, the 67-year-old has been collecting abductees' testimony since his first (and only) sighting back in 1964 of a "dark, elliptical object" hovering outside Provincetown. He has amassed over 650 histories and transformed them into books like *Missing Time* and the bestseller *Intruders*, which became a CBS miniseries.

No doubt Saturday's "crash course," sponsored by Hopkins's own *Intruders* Foundation, comes at a strange time for ufology. On St. Marks Place, the city's extraterrestrial airstrip, you can't escape merchandise printed with little green aliens toking on spliffs and popping the peace sign. Cults seem to regularly make the jump for Heaven's Gate. And who doesn't have a "scoop mark"? According to a 1996 Newsweek poll, 48 percent of Americans think UFOs are real and 29 percent of us think we have made contact. For Hopkins, the cultural saturation vindicates the cause. "We've gotten a tremendous fair shake from the media because of it," he says.

The problem is that all the media attention is "contaminating the pool" of subjects, notes Hopkins. "The more material that is publicized, the easier it is for somebody with psychological problems to invent something."

He already filters huge amounts of delusion from his mailbox (people contact him through a P.O. box listed at the back of his books). The majority of mail gets dumped immediately. Of the remaining correspondents, only 30 percent can recall their experience coherently afterward. As a result, Hopkins gets their testimonies by hypnosis (free of charge), which raises eyebrows. He claims it's necessary because aliens submerge people's memories of abduction. Usually, each person has multiple encounters. "If people have had one abduction experience, then they will have others," he says. "It's as if you become a specimen for them."

Why would a superior race waste its time wiping out people's memory when pop-cult awareness of its activities is at an all-time high? "It's extremely difficult to get inside the alien mind," explains Hopkins. "There may be reasons for them to forget the experiences so that they're tractable."

Unfortunately, the testimonies themselves don't tell us very much, and for Hopkins, that is the most alarming part. In all the records he's got, he's never seen any sign of alien malevolence=97 "they don't pull out chin whiskers one by one," he says=97 or benevolence. "That goes a long way to eliminating the fantasy element to this=97 we tend to fantasize angels or devils because most fantasy is connected to our needs and fears. But this is something that doesn't have coloration and it leaves people completely confused. It is truly alien."

Hopkins resists the idea that his own abstract expressionist art might be influenced by his UFO research, through it's impossible not to see parallels. His "Guardian" paintings=97 canvases fractured by color that he calls "sentinel-like"=97 and his "Altars" series of wooden sacred objects resonate with a spiritual questioning. But he's cagey on the topic. "A relationship ends, you move to a studio with a higher ceiling, it all affects [the art]," says Hopkins. "I withstood the connection [to the UFO research] for many years, and I still don't like to stress it." He admits it has done "more harm than good" to his art career.

He provides an invaluable service for the abductees, regardless of whether they're telling the truth. "If it wasn't for Budd, I don't know what would have happened to me," says Cortile (not her real last name), who claims she was abducted from her apartment on the Lower East Side. Her story is renowned in the UFO community as one of the only witnessed abductions. (Hopkins's book *Witnessed* examines the case.) In November 1989, Cortile was preparing for sleep when she "looked up and there was a four-foot guy across the room." She threw a pillow at it, but then a white fabric fell over her head. "The next thing I remember was dropping into my bed," she says. Three witnesses later wrote letters to Hopkins claiming to have seen Cortile floating up from her window into a spacecraft.

The case gets weirder. The woman who saw the abduction from her car on the Brooklyn Bridge spoke to Hopkins, but now refuses to be interviewed. The two other witnesses were unidentified "agents" whom Hopkins never met and who continually harassed Cortile to explain what had happened. One even claimed to have been abducted repeatedly with Cortile (and to have fathered one of her kids). If that weren't enough to undermine credibility, Cortile herself must have floated through grilles on her window to even make it into the open air. "You can't really believe them," says Greg Sandow, a New York journalist and moderator at the conference. "On the other hand, the more I looked into it, it's a hoax of unimaginable complexity because of the number of people that had to be involved."

Hoax or not, Hopkins is doing a kind of social work right in the gap. He brought Cortile to a free monthly support group for abductees he runs out of his art studio, and she's been attending ever since. "I didn't know what to expect, but they were people just like me," she says. "I made friends and they pulled me through." Unfortunately, there's no cure for the stories they're now living with. "I wish I was crazy," Cortile says, exasperated. "There's a treatment for that."

The 1999 UFO Abduction Conference will be held at the O. Henry Learning Center on West 17th Street, Saturday, April 10. Call 645-5278 for full information.

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