

# USCO

## The Loving Community

Sheil Salasnek

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The New Age of man finds more and more people interested in living together for the mutual benefit of one another's growth and development.

While many communes have been set up in the past they have generally been of limited success. Despite all the difficulties that one encounters in communal living it is the belief of many that it is only through such living together and the sharing of lives that man can achieve his maximum potential.

One of the more successful groups to have arisen in the New Age is called USCO and makes its headquarters in a small New England frame church in Garnerville, New York.

Started four years ago and founded on the belief that "we are all one," the group is now beginning to achieve national recognition. The basis of existence for each member is work and creative output and the organization is made up of photographers, painters, poets, engineers and film-makers.

The output takes the form of the new art-media mix. The group puts out environments. Not simply paintings or music, but complete audio-visual-tactile-olfactory-gustatory overload.

Last summer USCO did a six week show at the Riverside Museum in New York City. The show was labeled "Psychedelic Art" and it drew thousands to the museum throwing the creators into national prominence. USCO has since had coverage in such diverse sources as *Life* magazine and the *Tulane Drama Review*.

Long recognized as the leading proponent of the production of the religious experience through electronic media mix and sensory overload it is only fitting that the center of activities for USCO be in a church.

As masters of the media mix, USCO has begun to devote some of its time to other matters. Their largest undertaking to date is the development of a tribal community—Solux, somewhere in the middle of New Mexico. Four members of the group are currently living in New Mexico, trying to acquire the land.

This is envisioned as a community of tribal units, or families, in which each member is expected to contribute to the community projects. The talents of each member being considered in the planning of such projects.

Currently, USCO is working on an electronic tote board for Norman Mailer's new play, "Deer Park," a unit for permanent exhibit at the Riverside Museum, an exhibit for the Scott Paper Company and two pieces for upcoming shows in Boston and Philadelphia.

The church in Garnerville is probably the first electronic church in the history of man—The Church of the Living God. It is turned on Sundays from noon to eight and is worth a trip to see.

The building itself is divided into the living quarters and the tabernacle. The tabernacle is a domed hexagon with each wall made up of pulsating electronic mandalas and the ceiling having multiple image projections of 35mm slides.

Six separate tracks of audio are fed in through the middle of the infinite mandalas and incense is kept burning at all times.

When you lie down, as most do when they are confronted by the sensory overload, you sink into the deep soft pile of a Persian carpet. You then rest and find yourself thinking of God in the middle of a church that hasn't even been conceived of yet, let alone built.

Connected to the tabernacle is a sanctuary which is a small room with a loft in which there is room for one person to sleep. You enter the sanctuary through huge ten foot hand-carved wooden doors and swing them closed behind you. You are left alone to spend your night in peace.

The main living room is decorated with large luminous oil paintings done by USCO artist Steve Durkee, but rather than the traditional treatment these paintings are illuminated by the black rays of the ultraviolet lamp. Many of the accessories around the room have complex electronic circuitry as, for example, a lamp which is actually four randomly flashing pulselights behind a rectangle of large photographic negatives.

The only ritual of the church which is practiced by all members is the joining of hands around the table before breaking bread at the evening meal.

Out of a growing public interest in their work, USCO has created a "road show" and has been traveling around the country for two years showing what media mix can do in places like MIT or the LSD conference in Berkeley, California last summer.

Art critics have been receptive to the new art and *Life* magazine found that the USCO group "shifts effortlessly. from multichannel audio hookups to woven rugs, from 'proving out' Marshall McLuhan's theories on media to projecting Hindu philosophies. Their art is concerned both with tuning in and with 'divine geometry' and showing people in a concentrated way what's going on around them all the time."

The *Village Voice* found that the USCO show "has no audience, only participants...an exhausting melange of lights and colors and music and movement and it seems absolutely eternal."

"We Are All One" is the title of the show and it is a journey of being, riding and fighting the waves from birth through love's body, searching living currents, sampling peaks of illumination, holding on and letting go, the experience of time-space death, finding potential rebirth in the consciousness We Are All One.

This literal and symbolic voyage is explored by being presented in a multichannel hookup combining films, slides, oscilloscope, stroboscope and sound in a programmed experience.

"We are all one," says USCO, "beating the tribal drum of our new electronic environment."

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