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Gettin' tanked

Photo by Steve Dykes

Deprivation provides altered states

By MIKE LEE
Of the Emerald

Altered states of consciousness. Release of tension. Salt in the ears.

Different people experience different sensations after lying in a "sensory-deprivation tank." In the movie "Altered States," the hero turns into an ape after spending a few hours in the tank. Local tank owner Jon Carroll dismisses the movie as fantasy but admits the mind does strange things.

"You drop into what states your discipline allows you to," Carroll says. When he's in the tank, "I happen to be outside the bounds of physical laws — I call it doing probes of other time."

"Mystical people call them 'astral-body projections,'" explains Amit Goswami, a University physics professor who has studied the tank. "You get into a state where everything seems as one — there is total unity of the universe."

Weird stuff for such an innocuous-looking box. Carroll's tank, with its hardwood finish, looks like a sauna tipped over: it sits 8 feet long, 4 feet wide and 4 feet high. Inside, there's a foot of water heated to 93½

degrees — so the body can't feel the temperature — and filled with 600 pounds of epsom salts that force the body to float in the water.

There's also darkness. Lots of it.

"You don't get any light, any sound, and gravity is neutralized," Carroll says. "You're basically left with just your thoughts."

Now that's scary.

"The basic fear is exploring your inner mind," Carroll admits. "Our culture does not emphasize getting in touch with your own mind."

After two hours of this, most people reportedly hallucinate.

"If they can stick to it," Goswami adds, "they can get into altered states of consciousness."

The term was coined to include any state of consciousness other than sleeping, dreaming and waking, Goswami says.

Meditation aside, the tank also is physically relaxing. All strain is taken from the body — sometimes to the user's surprise.

"They had no idea of the tension in their muscles," Carroll says. "All of a sudden you can feel the

tension — and you can just let go of it.

"It's exciting — people come over, and they can't wait to see what's going to happen."

Isolation tanks were developed in the 1950s for just that reason, Carroll says. Government-funded scientists wanted to see what the mind would do when the body's senses were dulled. To that end, the original tanks completely submerged the user.

After funding stopped, some scientists kept developing the tank privately. Carroll's tank, which he bought in Denver for \$2,200 two years ago, was designed by John Lilly, who also researches human-dolphin communication.

Carroll, who lives at 1925 Adams St., now rents his tank to the public at five dollars a session, with no time limit. His phone number is 683-3689.

Some people like to prep the mind beforehand, taking drugs to "go for the most bizarre experience possible," Carroll says. He doesn't think that's necessary, however.

"I respect people that want to pop 10,000 cc of something and go on in, but the tank's powerful enough for me."

Holiday art museum closure angers visitors

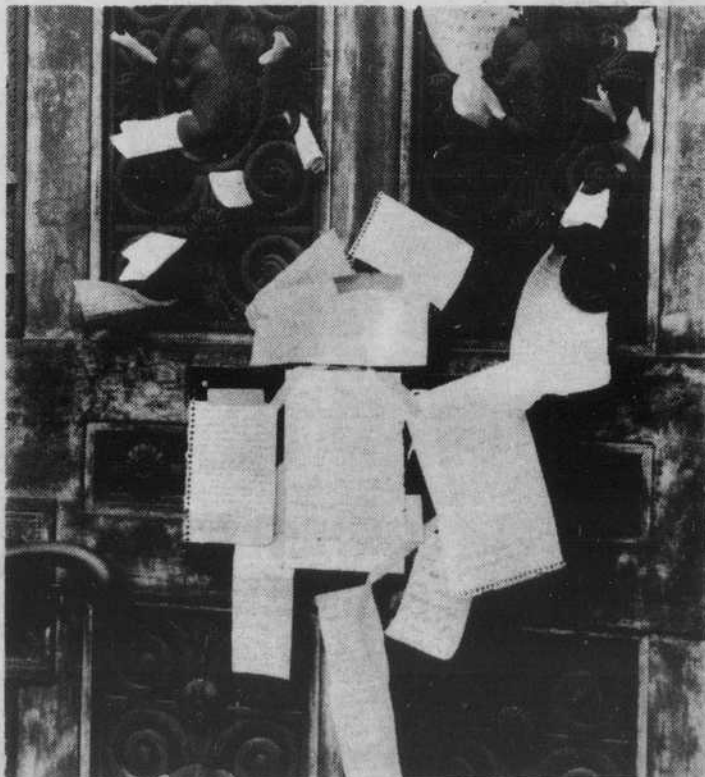


Photo by Erich Boekelheide

Angry visitors stuffed more than 30 notes of protest in the art museum's iron doors last Sunday when they found the building locked and the Ansel Adams photography exhibit closed.

By GABRIEL BOEHMER
Of the Emerald

Vandalism visited the University art museum again on Friday.

Although the damage didn't cost the museum anything for repairs, it may have cost some valuable community support.

A notice that the museum would be closed on Easter Sunday — the originally advertised last day of the Ansel Adams photography exhibit — was posted Friday, but it disappeared soon after, according to museum designer and preparator Tommy Griffin.

Griffin characterized the disappearance of the sign as typical and predictable.

"Photographs of Ansel Adams" was originally scheduled from March 22 through April 19, but because the museum could not afford to hire a security guard on the holiday, it opened the exhibit one day early on Sunday, March 22.

The museum did not realize there would be a holiday conflict with the Adams exhibit, explains museum director Richard Paulin.

Still many visitors — some from as far away as Portland — came to view the Adams exhibit Sunday only to find the museum's iron doors closed.

And more than 30 of the would-be viewers left notes in the door's iron work. Many of them were addressed to Paulin.

The salutations ranged from "To whom it may concern" to "Dear Dick," but they all contained essentially the same message — disappointment.

The small avalanche of notes was scribbled on everything from business cards and money-machine receipts to library charge slips. They were stuffed in and taped to the doors' ironwork.

The notes apparently were started by a single scribe's suggestion — "Write and voice your protest!" the note suggested.

Another visitor who lives in a University dormitory wrote, "I have heard that the University needs all the friends it can get. May I say that for an organization that is up to its neck in debt and scandal, with this oversight, you are down to your Nikes in non-renewable resources, friends."

Radio stations in the Eugene area aired commercials to correct the exhibition schedule, and all museum publicity after the opening of the show carried the correct information, Griffin says.

"In past years we've tried to keep the museum open for family days," Griffin says.

But funding reductions have cut the number of security guards the museum can employ from three to one, he says.

In fact, every permanent member of the museum staff now acts as a receptionist because the museum's six student-help positions were eliminated.

But this type of scheduling mistake shouldn't happen very often, Griffin says.

But the mistake may have damaged the museum more than conventional vandalism.

"I'll remember this the next time it is suggested that I become a 'Friend of the Museum,'" a visitor wrote.