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[Gordon Onslow Ford + Fariba Bogzaran: Northern California Legacy](#)

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Interview by Homan Rajai

Photos of the Gordon Onslow Ford's Home and Studio at the Lucid Art Foundation by Ekaterina Izmestieva



What do we mean when we talk about our dream home? Do we really mean a space to nurture our dreaming selves? A conversation with Fariba Bogzaran had us radically rethink what we know about dreaming and its relation to place. Bogzaran is an artist and scientist who has dedicated her life to

dreaming. Through her Dream Studies program she founded at John F. Kennedy University in Berkeley and the several books she has written, Bogzaran explores—among many other aspects of dreaming—the relation between the home and how we dream. When speaking with her, it is easy to feel empowered to nourish the dreaming self.

Bogzaran was also friend and collaborator to Gordon Onslow Ford, the British-born surrealist painter who was once part of André Breton's Paris salon. In the late 1940s, Onslow Ford moved to the Bay Area, eventually settling in Inverness, which greatly influenced his own creative spirit.

**Studio Ahead:** You founded the Lucid Art Foundation with Gordon Onslow Ford, whom I believe you met while doing your thesis on lucid dreaming. Can you tell us a bit about that period of your life, how you came to California, and how you and Onslow Ford ended up creating this foundation together?

**Fariba Bogzaran:** I came to San Francisco in 1985 after the invitation by Dr. Stephen LaBerge of the Stanford University who was the leading scientist in the field of lucid dreaming. I joined his team of researchers at the Lucidity Institute and worked with him on exploring the science and phenomena of lucid dreaming at the Stanford Sleep Laboratory. I was also a graduate student at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, working on my thesis on the topic of transpersonal experiences in lucid dreaming. A few months after I finished my thesis, I saw one of Onslow Ford's paintings and I recognized it as multidimensional spaces in lucid dreams.

I met Gordon Onslow Ford, via several synchronicities, the fall of 1989. We recognized each other's work, and we began a weekly dialogue about arts and consciousness. I decided to focus my doctoral dissertation on the parallel connection between art and lucid dreaming. He introduced me to other remarkable painters, such as surrealist Roberto Matta; painters Lee Mullican, Luchita Hurtado, and John Anderson; sculptor JB Blunk and many others. At the time I was teaching for the Department of Arts and Consciousness at JFK University. In 1998, Onslow Ford and I envisioned a foundation to support artists who are exploring arts and consciousness. I suggested calling it "Lucid Art" and we defined it as "a convergence of the creative force, expressed in a work of art that elicits in the viewer aspects of the inner worlds."

**SA:** As designers, we are always thinking about how art affects a space and the people in it, perhaps affects them on a subconscious level that maybe can't be articulated but is real and present. You have written extensively about the connection between art and dream, but could you say a little about the connection of dreams and physical space, or space and dreams as interiors?

**FB:** The spaces we live in reflect who we are. Each object is in relation with every other one. Art in space can elevate a space or become an inactive object. I see my home as a relational installation of art, objects, and living activities. Similarly, in our "dream space" we occupy an architectural landscape, seascape, and inner interior with images we construct. In dreams gravity is inconsistent and spaces are created while constantly moving and transforming. These dream spaces can become extraordinary in a lucid dream when we know we are dreaming. In a lucid dream, we become aware of our dream architecture and witness the creation of our interior space.

Our waking physical space can impact our dreaming mind. Certain spaces and their location can be a trigger of big dreams. In my dream world, it is on active volcanic islands. Perhaps the release of the intense electromagnetic field.

**SA:** We were drawn to your idea of dreams and humans as being “multidimensional,” which you discuss in your book *Integral Dreaming*. To us, dimensionality is about considering design from all sides, both literally but also metaphorically, like in how a person may interact with what we have created in ways we never imagined. How can we be cognizant of this dimensionality in waking life, in moving through spaces?

**FB:** As we cultivate ourselves, we realize that we are multidimensional beings. This cultivation accesses different aspects of who we are: our mind by contemplation or dreaming; somatic awareness with certain practices such as tai chi, qi gong, or yoga; psychological reflection with personal mythology and script analysis; emotional balance and so on. As we tap into different aspects of the self, we realize we are much more complex than we think we are.

Dreams are also multidimensional. Reporting dreams creates only a two-dimensional fragment of the experience, whereas dreams are events like a holographic space. In the case of lucid dreaming, we can experience multidimensional spaces and be conscious of all these dimensions at the same time. The more we gain and sustain awareness, in waking and dreaming, the more we become cognizant of these dimensionalities. In art, cubism began reconstructing our perception of reality and assumption of space. And other movements, such as surrealism, explored the interior world of dreams. Today, we see this impact in architecture and design.

**SA:** What distinguishes Onslow Ford from other surrealists?

**FB:** In 1938, Onslow Ford was the last member accepted into the surrealist group in Paris by André Breton. The second generation of the surrealists, who Onslow Ford was a cohort to, focused and explored different realities. The first group of surrealists were interested in dreams, Freud’s theories, and depicting dream-like spaces. The second group, such as Wolfgang Paalen, Roberto Matta, Remedios Varo, and Gordon Onslow Ford, were interested in exploring beyond dream symbolism into the different dimensions of the mind. Paalen was interested in indigenous cultures and science, and coined the term *Dynaton*, which means “the possible.” Matta created *Psychological Morphology*, which are worlds morphing from one reality to the other. Remedios Varo created her own mythological spaces and, in her paintings, interacted with her environment and worlds unseen. Onslow Ford’s thesis was that through speeding lines we can express different inner worlds and enter “the Great Spaces of the Mind.” Mainly, these artists’ thesis was that through art we can explore the invisible realities.

**SA:** What was his progress as a painter? Did his move to Inverness influence his work?

**FB:** Onslow Ford moved from landscape painting (1920s and early ‘30s) to surrealism (late ‘30s and early ‘40s). Then, in 1943, he resigned from surrealism as he did not want to partake in the political aspect of the group and was impacted by the indigenous culture of Mexico, where he lived during WWII. When he came to California, he was introduced to Zen Buddhism and calligraphy. In the 1950s, his studio was on the Ferryboat Vallejo in Sausalito, which he shared with Greek painter Jean Varda. For five years he studied calligraphy. In the 1950s he was occupied with painting the world of line, circle, and dot on Japanese paper. When he moved to Inverness, his art completely changed. His early 1960s work was of undifferentiated line, circle, and dot, black and white painting where there was no longer a descriptive visual vocabulary, but where the canvas became an occasion of experience. The paintings became the inner space of vibration and matter. From that space, he launched four decades of creation of the inner world spaces. Onslow Ford was not a lucid dreamer and did not record his dreams after he moved away from surrealism. His painting became a mode of meditation. As he often said: “painting is my religion.” And: “Drawing is meditation, painting is meditation, meditation is meditation.”

**SA:** How do you incorporate other aspects of life into your dreams and from there, your art? What did you learn from Onslow Ford?

**FB:** My goal in life has always been to be free to dream! Either in waking or dreaming. I have lived my life based on my dreams and lucid dreams. Many major decisions have been made according to my dream life. Waking is a dream and dreaming is an awareness of the creative mind. My art has been informed by my hypnagogic (the moment we fall asleep) experiences and awareness in my dream space. When I met Onslow Ford, I was focusing more on seeing and experiencing the inner world of dreams and painting them. He taught me his language of line. What happens when we speed up a line? His theory of line was brilliant. I did a scientific pilot study on it, and he was accurate. When we slow down a line, we move towards realism, and as a line moves faster, we enter a different time-space.

**SA:** Where are some of your favorite places to dream in Northern California?

**FB:** In Northern California, I would say Mount Vision, giant redwoods and Mount Vision in Inverness.

























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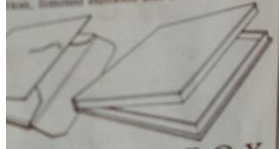
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