

## The Spirit of Basel

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*The Spirit of Basel* – there are probably no better words to describe the groundbreaking event that took place in this ancient town over three days in January 2006. Organized by the Gaia Media Foundation to celebrate the occasion of Dr. Albert Hofmann's 100th birthday on January 11, it brought together over 80 brilliant presenters and over 2000 people from all over the world to listen to a cornucopia of outstanding lectures.

The event, *LSD: PROBLEM CHILD AND WONDER DRUG*, was held in the modern Basel Congress Center. From the moment of arrival until the end on Sunday evening, it was obvious that a lot of work by very skilled people had gone into organizing this conference. One could wander for hours enjoying displays of rare books and documents, psychedelic album covers, blotter art, an entire wall of photographs covering Dr. Hofmann's life, an eclectic bookstore with a wide selection of outstanding books, and walls of wonderful artwork. Of course, once the lectures started the hardest part was deciding which of the simultaneous presentations to attend. Outside of the large lecture auditoriums, other presentations and workshops could be found in walled-off areas of the main hall, where a movie screen showed a wide range of films, from an ancient Pink Floyd lightshow to old footage of Leary to Connie Littlefield's wonderful documentary *Hofmann's Potion*.

A spacious cafeteria on one side offered food and drink and a wonderful resting place to just sit and take it all in. Filled with colorful people of all ages, from

dreadlocked kids to gray-haired elders, and even some families with little kids, the conference was bustling with energy. A friendly excitement was in the air and one could feel that this historic event was a special moment.

Of course, the main attraction was the attendance of Dr. Hofmann himself, who spoke on at least two occasions with a lively, clear mind and a joyful spirit. Greeted by standing ovations, he gave inspired speeches and was clearly pleased by the attention and gratitude that flowed his way. It is impossible to estimate the influence that his discovery of LSD (or LSD's discovery of him?) had on the world and society as we know it today.

There is not enough room here to get into details of any of the presentations; hopefully we will be able to find transcripts of the most important ones online eventually. The Albert Hofmann Foundation had the honor to add our board members Myron Stolaroff and John Beresford to the list of presenters, both of whom gave great presentations. John Beresford read some wonderful letters by incarcerated drug war prisoners that congratulated Dr. Hofmann on his birth-

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Stanislav Grof and Dr. Hofmann share some words.

Earth Erowid and Dr. Hofmann.



Basel photos courtesy of Andrew Sewell



Rick Doblin greets Dr. Hofmann on his 100th birthday.

day, thanking him for all his work despite the drug prohibition that caused their present circumstances. A transcript of Myron Stolaroff's talk on the future of consciousness will be available on the Hofmann Foundation website soon ([www.hofmann.org](http://www.hofmann.org)). CDs and DVDs of all presentations should be available online - though only in the original spoken language, which was about 50% German. (DVDs - at least currently - are in the European PAL system. While they should play on computers equipped with DVD drives, they might not work on DVD players or TVs outside of Europe.)

This conference set a milestone in many ways and was a wonderful gift to Dr. Hofmann, celebrating his life and achievements and making clear that his work will be in the hearts and minds of people for generations to come. Hopefully it will be a spark that initiates many more of these gatherings all over the world, and these substances will eventually find their rightful place in human society.

During the ending ceremony Dr. Hofmann was celebrated by an impromptu Happy Birthday sung by the entire audience. Musing during his closing speech that this event showed him that his problem child might - after all - have mutated into a wonder child, we could only agree and will continue to work on making this a reality.

We congratulate Dr. Hofmann with all our hearts to his 100th birthday and hope to celebrate many more with this brilliant man! His discovery will surely live on forever. •

For more on the Spirit of Basel symposium, the Hofmann Foundation recommends:  
[http://www.erowid.org/general/conferences/2006\\_lsd\\_symposium/2006\\_lsd\\_symposium.shtml](http://www.erowid.org/general/conferences/2006_lsd_symposium/2006_lsd_symposium.shtml)  
<http://www.lsd.info> (for pictures, video, and links to more reviews of the conference) We also highly recommend Rak Razam's outstanding article written for *The Age* at:  
<http://www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/passing-the-acid-test/2006/02/03/1138836410493.html>