dragon slayer
Rooney Mara makes her mark

apocalypse now
Shamanic visionaries, eco warriors and virus hunters tell us how to survive 2012

PLUS
David Fincher
Ghostface Killah vs Doom
Marco Brambilla
Since the mid-60s, whether promoting pop culture happenings, Dada revolutions or the leading science writers of the day, JOHN BрокMAN has been in the vanguard of intellectual fashion. Here he looks back over a life restless lived.

**THE WISE GUY**

Perhaps no one has so completely endured, as Marshall McLuhan’s 1964 proclamation that “the medium is the message” as renegade cultural impresario John Brockman. A genus epistemiologist and marketing genius, Brockman’s a hustler, behind-the-scenes wheel-seller calling the shots amongst America’s cultural and scientific vanguard. He was the only regular at Warhol’s Factory scene with an Ivy League business degree, and in the late 60s would sit between management consultant gigs at the White House and Pentagon and long afternoons backing up Black Panther leader Huey Newton.

Brockman was born on February 16, 1941 to immigrants of Polish-Jewish descent in California. A rough-as-Ike of Manhattan’s genteeel elite by going for the great ideas. At 70 years old, the greatest super-brains of his time – Andy Warhol to literary agent Edie Sedgwick. He was instrumental in getting Warhol’s films seen, deconstructing oddball psychedelia. Brockman first met his longtime consulting-exploiting friend Brian O’Brian, a hustler, behind-the-scenes wheel-seller calling the shots amongst America’s cultural and scientific vanguard. He was the only regular at Warhol’s Factory scene with an Ivy League business degree, and in the late 60s would sit between management consultant gigs at the White House and Pentagon and long afternoons backing up Black Panther leader Huey Newton.

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That year, following a chance encounter with avant-garde filmmaker Jonas Mekas at Central Park. Brockman landed a gig managing performances at Mekas’s Cinematheque, connecting him with art giants including Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg and Claes Oldenburg. Brockman threw inter-media kinetic events that were spectacles in every sense of the word – break-dancing outpourings that ran the gambit from video displays of strobe light techs-wizardry to lo-fi light techno-wizardry to lo-fi absurdist performances that would last for hours on end. Expanding the definition of what could be considered art, he explains that “after a while, you would figure out that you are the instrument. You become the art, you move your head, the sound changes, you walk through the space. Some of these evenings were just breathtaking.”

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Once people had their jets parked outside, it got upgraded to the Billionaires' Dinner.

Though a tech-world bigwig, he keeps his close personal ties to the hellions of the art world. When Brockman's son Max was a baby, Hunter S. Thompson, Dennis Hopper and Warhol's friend Orson Welles performed a special dance in his honour. It was just a dinner and they were all there. Max was not yet one, and he was in his crib room. Hunter S. Thompson was in the kitchen, in which an hour or two before they had imbued six different alcohol substances. Nothing seemed to change or phase his somnolence. And then Dennis Hopper - have you seen Blue Velvet? That was him at various stages. They said, 'Let's do this show, this blessing for this child.' And they danced around the crib for an hour. Crazy Man.

For another grand idea, in 1995 Brockman released a treatise called The Third Culture, calling for scientists to use empirical evidence to find deeper meaning in the human condition. He subsequently founded the Reality Club with physicist Heinz Pagels, subsequently the Reality Club morphed into online salon Edge, a place where he explains, "Science and scientific methods are being brought into areas where no one ever thought intelligible. It's responsible for redefining the intelligentsia into an easy-to-understand format for the masses. Brockman's MO isn't to tell people what to think but just to present his best ideas. The indefatigable former hippie-ringleader has won widespread acclaim by simply gravitating towards the cutting edge of the internet. Brockman is the personification of an agent of change. A great communicator, Brockman packages ideas from an inscrutable inter-disciplinary group of peers and people at the top of their game. You would get a chance to present your new ideas and people at the top of their game. You would get a chance to present your new ideas and show them that's going down, alliances coming and going about browsers.

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