

# Living Artists



Issue 1: Religion & Spirituality

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## Editors' Foreword

Living Artists was conceived out of a desire to bring together the work of both established and new creatives. We want this magazine to not only reflect on the differing approaches to a preconceived theme, but also to showcase the diversity of contemporary artists working today. For us, this magazine should be a space where new artists are inspired to share their work and readers are exposed to creatives that they may not have come across previously. It is important to us that we publish work by those who are underrepresented in the arts in order to address the current imbalance. That is why our summer issues will feature work only by those artists who are often not represented within the mainstream. Living Artists is a community and platform to make connections with creatives and to encourage future projects and collaborations.

Religion and the spiritual have existed in the lives of human beings for millennia. Often weaved into society and how we live, they have formed inspiration for various activities in the arts, including music, dance, literature and visual art.

Contemporary views of religion and spirituality often aim to differentiate between religion as an institutional structure and spirituality as a personal exploration of the self. For some, these two things are intrinsically connected but for others, they are divorced from each other with religion playing no part in a person's life, but they are able to connect to a sense of the soul and the earth.

Art in all its forms has always, on some level, been linked to religion and spirituality, whether that be the creation of sculptural icons, religious texts, a study of the self, the creation of places of worship, automatic writing, spiritualism, or a fascination with the occult and its connections to spirits and nature. Artists are often preoccupied with questions of mortality and existentialism, as well as exploring their inner psyche. In the current climate where Coronavirus has spread globally and our lives have shut down, perhaps now more than ever, we have the opportunity to contemplate the open questions of our existence.

In this issue, we are able to present a range of individual and personal interpretations of the theme, spanning from personal experiences to reflections on works by other artists. These pieces tackle issues such as religion and queerness, the breakdown of a relationship and performance as an act of devotion. With the curation of these individual works, we hope that readers will reflect on their own attitudes and relationship to faith and spirituality.

— Toni and Rochelle Roberts, December 2020

Elodie Rose Barnes

## Eve, in the Garden of Eden

I

I can see my loneliness  
now that the leaves have fallen  
and light can shine through me,  
skin to skin

I spend hours with skin

looking at someone else's skin

'erotic, malleable and impermanent', and yet

the only part of me that is fixed

Should it be like that?

I read Annie Dillard  
reading the news  
a burned man asking why  
god hated him

skin not transcended  
but cooked to ashes

I put my ear to my skin expecting to hear sound  
like the sea murmuring through a conch shell  
and hear only silence

and I wonder why I am permitted to live  
empty while others are full  
of pain

My skin holds stamps like a passport  
(I am no longer the country of my birth)  
each one inked with a letter from the promised land

I wonder why I am the only one

here

Notes:

'erotic, malleable and impermanent' is quoted from Dana Matthews, *The Promised Land*.  
*Eve, in the Garden of Eden*, inspired by Annie Dillard, *Providencia* and Dana Matthews, *The Promised Land*.

II

Did we once reimagine  
the winter here?  
I dived in  
as if into silk

the dark the fog the snow flaring silver before the dark  
did not even touch my skin

we lived only the most visible moments  
and now the images are blank

photographs of nothing  
except traces of scent caught in amber

What am I doing here, except waiting  
for time to crack itself open  
like a pomegranate?

## Prayer

We all say it, this prayer  
of the dying — perhaps the only time  
we pray, the only time we forget  
language and all speak  
the same. Words stripped  
to their essence,  
bone and flesh, earth and water.

They say that death has a smell  
as it takes hold, almost but not quite.

I say it's the prayer, waiting  
to be released.



The Palingenesia: Warfare, 2018. Collage on paper, 13 x 9.5 in.

This collage hails from my series “Warfare”. I was influenced by the writings of author John Eldredge. In his book *Waking The Dead* he reminds the Christian that, just like Christ, the follower is in a spiritual battle.

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and life to the full” — John 10:10. If Jesus makes such a sweeping statement in one breath, does He suggest an enemy in the crosshairs? If scripture speaks the language of battle, does that not imply war?”*



“ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” — John 8:36, 2017. 14 x 21.5 in.

This collage is one of two works dealing with overcoming an addiction. It is a highly personal work in that it was the infallible WORD of God that helped to turn this artist away from her stray path of bondage and operate unto the full light of Christ. This work hails from her series entitled “The One” (vernavalencia.com).

The One: Centuries have portrayed a cardboard version of a one-dimensional Jesus carrying sheep and sporting a halo. Scripture paints a dramatically different picture; who is this Jesus who silences critics with a word, and yet reads the hearts of followers with the precision of a surgeon? What’s His MO? Who is this God who would leave the ninety-nine in search of the One?



Erasmus Considers the Art of Taxidermy, 2005. Collage on paper, 9 x 12 in.

In his book *The Reformation: A History*, author Diarmaid MacCulloch paints a biting portrait of Erasmus, the humanist scholar: “Instead of being pinned down to a specific place and a round of duties, he virtually created a new category of career: the roving international man of letters who lived off the proceeds of his writing and from the money provided by his admirers. He craved friendship and affection now that he had rejected human passion, and he found it by becoming the brilliant, entertaining scholar whom every clever, wealthy or attractive, well-educated European wanted to befriend.”



The Madonna is Besieged by Silk Moths, 2005. Collage on paper, 6.34 x 6.34 in.

This collage is an ode to the poem *Nature Morte* by Joseph Brodsky:

“Mother to Christ, at a loss:  
— Are you my God or son?  
You’re nailed onto the cross.  
Tell me how to go on?”

How can I go, having not  
understood, grasped, derived:  
are you my son or God?  
That is, dead or alive?

He, in turn, explained:  
— Dead or alive, this time,  
woman, it’s all the same.  
Son or God, I am thine.”

— from *Nature Morte* by Joseph Brodsky

## The Haptics of Devotion by Rose Higham-Stainton

I am in a garden and it is raining cold thick rain and I am training the roses.

This garden within the city walls, is itself a deep depression enrobed in fern, palm, and lined with a patchwork of displaced matter fabricated as if the relics of Roman burial sites, churches, shrines.

The cold thick rain runs from my hood and makes tears on my cheeks. It runs the back of my ungloved hands, numbed by the cold, so that I don't feel the thorn's cruel hooks draw lesions along my fingers. Or perhaps I do and enjoy something of it; a glib repentance for my sins, for I am devoted to the idea of me, or their idea of me. I am devoted to this idea, for it is someone's. And far better to be someone's than no ones, I insist, to no one, in a sunken garden that is not my own.

I guide the messy outcrop of rose branches towards the stucco arch, and the canes—its framework. I weave; I tame them like hair. I pin down tendrils, as plumage, as wings, and knot them in place with wire.

Lately, I have been imagining devotion—its surfaces, its texture—those haptics that speak of reaching. For devotion is a kind of reaching and it is urgent and it is blind.

The extremity of Catholicism recognises purgatory, suffering, repentance as forms of devotion embodied by its walls of worship and projected onto these walls in images as stories for a once illiterate populous. Church walls that say to starve, to subjugate, to purge is to love and be loved.

Though let us not lay judgement at the feet of Christ alone, for all religions—and their patriarchs—speak in this broken logic. A moral order that equates action with consequence and is disproportionate in scale. But Catholicism paints its devotion large—in

flora and murals, gilded cornices, the curvature of pulpits—until it leaks like Christ's pigment blood and then dries heavy and immutable on the altar, which is kind of stage.

I visit churches for their bodies, their cloth, their icons—high on divinity—or buried and decomposed. An icon is a sign where the form dictates its meaning. *Woman*, the Holy Virgin cries, while the body of Christ, pinned up on the cross, is immortal and ascended. Despite their burden—such infeasibility—these painted bodies imply a life, a corporality in the hot flesh and thorns and the leaking tear ducts of the Virgin's tilted head but contained and immutable now in wood and plaster.

To touch God, a thing, is divination. It is the consequence of our devotion and it is made real in these spaces—their icons and votives and vessels; the melted stubs of candles for illumination, though they are soon to be extinguished by the electric flicker flame of artifice and as the light wanes, so too does our faith in him.

*Love thyself*, cries someone somewhere.

And just as soon, *love thyself* forms a new faith. The holy incantations of self-care, self-love, wellbeing, consumed by capital and expelled as the solitary individual—against a blackening neoliberal horizon.

It is ourselves, our sex—and its questionable submissions—our bodies—their excesses—to which we are now devoted. We take it at first for a blade for smoothing; a brush for contours, a pigment fixative, binding braid. To be dressed as gift or grace or offering.

*Thy body is a temple*, cries someone somewhere.

But there are forms and forms of redressing. I like the Greek derivation of *haptics*: a feminine

form of *haptikos*—'able to come into contact with', from *haptos* meaning 'tangible'. The implication is to touch and be touched, which is 'religion at its deepest, most inward level'<sup>1</sup>.

The tenets of the church—its points of connection, its cautionary tales, iconoclasm, communion and immersion—get redressed in the art of Tai Shani, Donna Huanca and Linder Sterling. And as a counterpoint to organised religion, each of them reimagines spirituality for women, in their distinctive aesthetic forms.

A blood-tinged moon is suspended above a woman on a plinth in toga white. She is accompanied by other women reclining in elasticated yellow, or kneeling topless and gloved, in a scaled down pink veneer urban plan with magisterial thoroughfares in measured grooves, prismatic structures, slick orbs, amorphous tonal glass puddles like spilt portions. And overhead an ill-proportioned limb clad in dry-blood red velvet and adorned with pearls and fleshy teats, extends its medusa-teal hand and golden snake-wrapped wrist onto the pink ground and beckons us in. So we sit now and listen because women tell stories in this place. Another limb of stuffed velvet spews glass egg-spawn from lips; an iris-popped eye pervades the room from up high; an oracle speaks from a suspended monitor. The concrete gallery floor is scattered with cushions that beckon prayer and contemplation.

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Harkness, *Mysticism: Its Meaning and Message* (Oliphants, London, 1973) p7.

Tai Shani's DC: *Semiramis* (2019) is 'a world neither completely divorced from our own, nor tied to our own history, or our future'<sup>2</sup>. An 'imagined better' that goes beyond the megastructures of religion, council, politics, money. It is 'drawn from a medieval conception of history, where fact, fiction and myth are blurred'<sup>3</sup> and where forms become cyphers and where space is in fact a time, and the reconstituted vision of Christine de Pisan (c. 1364–c. 1430)—a fifteenth century feminist radical, a writer, who built a refuge for other notable women, historical and mythological in texts like *The Book of the City of Ladies*.



Tai Shani's *D.C. Semiramis*, 2019 at Turner Contemporary.

Pisan's imagined better is embodied by her writing chamber, illustrated in *Mutacion de Fortune* (1403), and its mutable colour of flesh. Shani extends this image to form less a solitary chamber, than a communal space, a sacred stage, in a warm saccharine embrace, and the great beckoning teal arm of Medusa. A world at once vibrant and lurid, in which to

explore feminism and otherness, inside and out of the superstructures that delineate space.

She speaks to and through and reaches beyond the iconoclasm of women and our narrative parts, warm and uncanny in their likeness—*The Teenager*, *The Vampyre*, *Sirens*, *The Mirror*, *Cube of Flesh*. Our innards—fears and secrets—are laid bare, and our unceasing desire for validation—

<sup>2</sup> Tai Shani, *Turner Prize 2019 Nominee / Tai Shani / Turner Contemporary*, online video recording, YouTube, 4 October 2019, <<https://youtu.be/QdEzQc9b5Uc>> [accessed 30.10.19].  
<sup>3</sup> Tai Shani, *Dark Continent I*, 2014, <<http://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/2276/>> [accessed 3.10.19].

*Not desirable enough to be deemed powerful, to bear responsibility for the speechless transgressions that this absent beauty and their will to use it, could compel them to commit. With great power comes great responsibility, I would have been warned, if I have been attractive enough to them. Mythical boys of my late girlhood<sup>4</sup>.*

Shani reminds us that the subject of our devotion has for too long been the mythic, immaterial conception of men—sometimes Christ—and their projections. She alludes instead, to a mysticism, itself evasive and hard to pin down but loosely defined as a communion of body and spirit. A belief that the ‘human spirit, finite, limited and clouded though it is, can nevertheless experience the presence of the Divine Reality which undergirds and permeates the world<sup>5</sup>.’ Listen, she whispers,

as a climbing electronic thud like a heartbeat reverberates against the walls and the oracle—that nucleus—reads these episodic texts about women who fail as women— narratives ‘made of composite, symbolic protagonists that embody excess and examine ‘feminine’ subjectivity and experience as well as the potentials of a realism defined by excess and the irrational; qualities traditionally surrounding notions of the “feminine”.’ That the space Shani builds is leaking and visceral, draws likeness to bodies

<sup>4</sup> Tai Shani, *The Teenager* (unpublished script for the performance of DC: *Semiramis* (2019) at Turner Contemporary), p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Georgia Harkness, *Mysticism: Its Meaning and Message* (Oliphants, London, 1973), p.18.

<sup>6</sup> Tai Shani, *Dark Continent I*, 2014, <<http://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/2276/>> [accessed 3.10.19].

and is ratified in the text:

*...realistically painted scenes are depicted in a peach, flush, rose, and arcane flesh-tone palette, carnal colours interrupted by the mesmer and fascination of viscera-red... Slipping in and out of our surroundings and this imagined place, the narration continues scattered across this tonal vista are ribbons and scraps of colour, aquamarine silk of a torn dress, a patch of rich, rich, soporific ochre velvet surrounded by the high-drama red blood splatter.<sup>7</sup>*

*high-drama red blood splatter.<sup>7</sup>*

Now and then, a young woman in a red cape with red hair cries and warbles mezzo-soprano operatic and breaks off and gurgles and snorts, falls silent. Other women stretch, yawn, hum, beat and the theatrics of this devotion is reconfigured in the imperfect, living bodies and their utterances. While a femme oracle speaks

to us in the measured tone of Greek theatre, in personal pronouns of *we* and *our* and directly to us in second person—*you, you* she says. It is a beckoning and a warning—that ‘the forever future will replay itself over and over again with uncanny accuracy, drawing you back to this horrible, horrible, vile scene<sup>8</sup>.’ She urges us, instead, to move beyond the ‘ideal of the feminine personified<sup>9</sup>’ in Mary Mother full of grace, ‘her yieldingness, softness, gentleness, receptiveness, mercifulness, tolerance, with-

<sup>7</sup> Tai Shani, *Cube of Flesh*, (unpublished script for the performance of DC: *Semiramis* (2019) at Turner Contemporary), p.2.

<sup>8</sup> *Cube of Flesh*, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> Marina Warner, ‘Prologue’, *Alone of All Her Sex*, (Picador, London, 1976) p.xxiv

drawal<sup>10</sup>.’ Because to seek repentance for our flaws in such perfection is a broken kind of logic.

It is in the transience and mutability of the body that we must seek solace. Artist Donna Huanca articulates this in her temporal, large-scale living installations at the heart of which are her ‘original works’—women, their skin painted and once painted, cracked, and shedding pigment in a perpetual state of becoming and undoing. For we are not, she reminds us, the story of divine creation. She paints the body in gestural strokes of blue—that is like and unlike the sapphire of Mary’s chastity—and in clay pigment, cosmetic white powder, egg wash; in spotted patinations, or wrapped in latex and adorned with synthetic braids. And it is through ‘skin as a complex surface via which we experience the world around us<sup>11</sup>’ that we

find the form of our devotion—the naked body. The conception of our naked body, omitted from churches—for it is only Christ’s body that is granted that exposure—is, in Huanca’s work both ‘familiar and distorted, decorative and abstract<sup>12</sup>.’ For her 2019 LA show ‘Obsidian Ladder’, the artist recast the Marciano Art Foundation—once a Masonic Temple—in a ‘femme spirituality’ of flesh and heat and the bottled scent of urban decay—of body odor, bleach and burning feathers. The daily rituals,

<sup>10</sup> Marina Warner, ‘Prologue’, *Alone of All Her Sex*, (Picador, London, 1976) p.xxiv

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.simonleegallery.com/artists/192-donna-huanca/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.simonleegallery.com/artists/192-donna-huanca/>

live events, rotating composition of these live installations are, Huanca says, a politically charged testament. But amidst the commotion are these mute women who recall the silence of the church and their icons. So that the question Huanca asks is, who really gets to speak?

At points, the smeared and cracking surfaces of these bodies get magnified and projected in photographic canvases, anointed with oil and sand, as if devotional reredos—those ornamental screens at the altar. And then she devotes

them, or names them, after women—some of them spiritual and long-forgotten—like *Egeria* (2019/20) who penned a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. *Egeria* is turned away from us in the picture and seated on her ankles, her broad, strong back and curve of the waist and buttock are made in strokes of blue. It is the pad of one foot marked in the peaked hue of flesh that

becomes a moment of revelation—the only undressing.

Huanca’s and Shani’s composite worlds share, with the church, the ephemeral quality of performance and the permanence of painting. Though unlike the entombed and suspended bodies of ecclesiastical devotion, and the transient bodies delivering clipped sermons as dictates, their bodies are full and whole and living. And occupy the space and their surfaces as projections in a haptic collision of the sonic, visual, performed, so that it too becomes a form of communion.



Donna Huanca: *Obsidian Ladder*, 2019; Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA; Courtesy the artist, Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles and Peres Projects, Berlin. Photographer: Joshua White/JWPictures.com



Linder, *Bower of Bliss: An Improper Architecture*, 2020, featuring Lauren Fitzpatrick, Kirstin Halliday, Lilian Wang and Ashley Young. Photo: My Linh Le.

More fleeting, but allied in sentiment, was *Bower of the Bliss: An Improper Architecture*, at Kettle's Yard in 2020. This one-time performance devised by the artist Linder Sterling gave breath to her collage—reconstituted images of female bodies from popular culture that drew on the dissonance of Dadaism and punk. And as such, they became the surface texture for a fleeting stage. Young women, dressed in the clashing punk print-work of Louise Gray, were at once, huddled and entwined and then compositionally at odds—in gestural stops and starts to a soundtrack of distorted synthetic beats and the choral music of Cambridge's all-female college choirs. So that space, like the work, broke free from the parameters of a single movement, plot, or sound, and the institution. A narrative arc was exchanged for an immersive, undefined 'ritual or a feast,' wrote curator Amy Tobin, 'enervating every sense so the viewer is wound into the experience, more than just a witness<sup>13</sup>.' Sterling—like Shani, like Huanca—recognised the aesthetics of devotion as one of excess and summoned it here as sensory, spatial overload. So that their devotion is their oeuvre—their bodies of works in works of the body. Skin becomes canvas and walls become skin. Each artist summons and then fractures feminine narratives in occult, ritualistic performance as disjunctures situated within the walls of an institution. So that the space—the gallery—as alter, as stage—in its entirety, every crevice and depression—gets exposed and then repossessed. And they fill it not with immutable icons, but living bodies that articulate the spirit of the body. *I am brimming with unassigned faith*<sup>14</sup>, cries Tai Shani to someone somewhere.

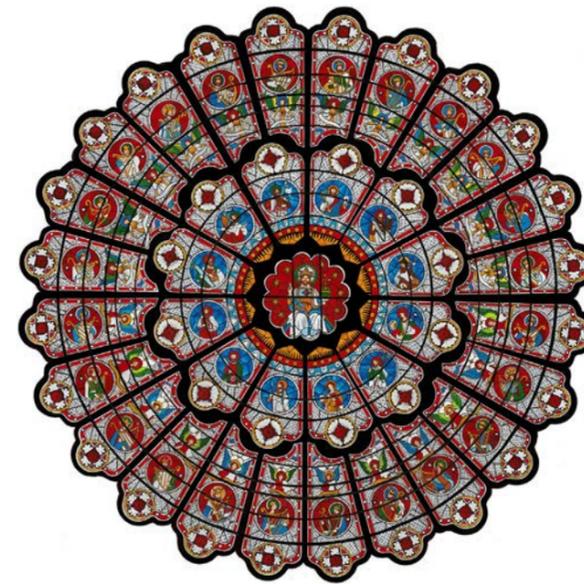
Because immersion—its holy water—brings us closer to the subject of our devotion that we

<sup>13</sup> Amy Tobin, *Bower of Bliss: An Improper Architecture* - Structure and transgression in a new performance by Linde, Kettle's Yard <<https://stories.kettlesyard.co.uk/bower-of-bliss/>> [accessed 19.10.20]

<sup>14</sup> Tai Shani, 'Feminism's Occult Imagination: Artist Tai Shan'i' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OB9dUySaCWI>> [accessed 21.10.20]

know to be the body. So that out of an 'improper architecture', toppled iconoclasm, broken narratives, and in creative communion, the visceral dashes of paint on bodies and the dripping red moon—we might find a new form of faith—our inner sanctum as outward projection, itself a kind of dissonance, a wrongdoing.

I am inspired by the urban modern world and my most recent series of work explores the structures and symbolism of religious buildings. My portfolio includes studies of churches and cathedrals and there is a particular emphasis on the stories told in the stained glass windows of these buildings. I have always had a love of religious architecture, especially Gothic cathedrals, but it wasn't until a recent visit to the breath-taking Sainte Chapelle, that I started to really appreciate the beauty of the stained glass windows that often fill these buildings. Not only are they ever-changing, responding to external light sources, but they also embody intriguing stories often told through symbolic imagery and colour. The external structures of churches and cathedrals are unique and often provide a wonderful contrast to the soulless modern buildings around them. It's a real shame that these beautiful historical works of art are becoming increasingly overlooked as modern society engages less with religion and this has inspired me to share them widely and celebrate their aesthetic value.



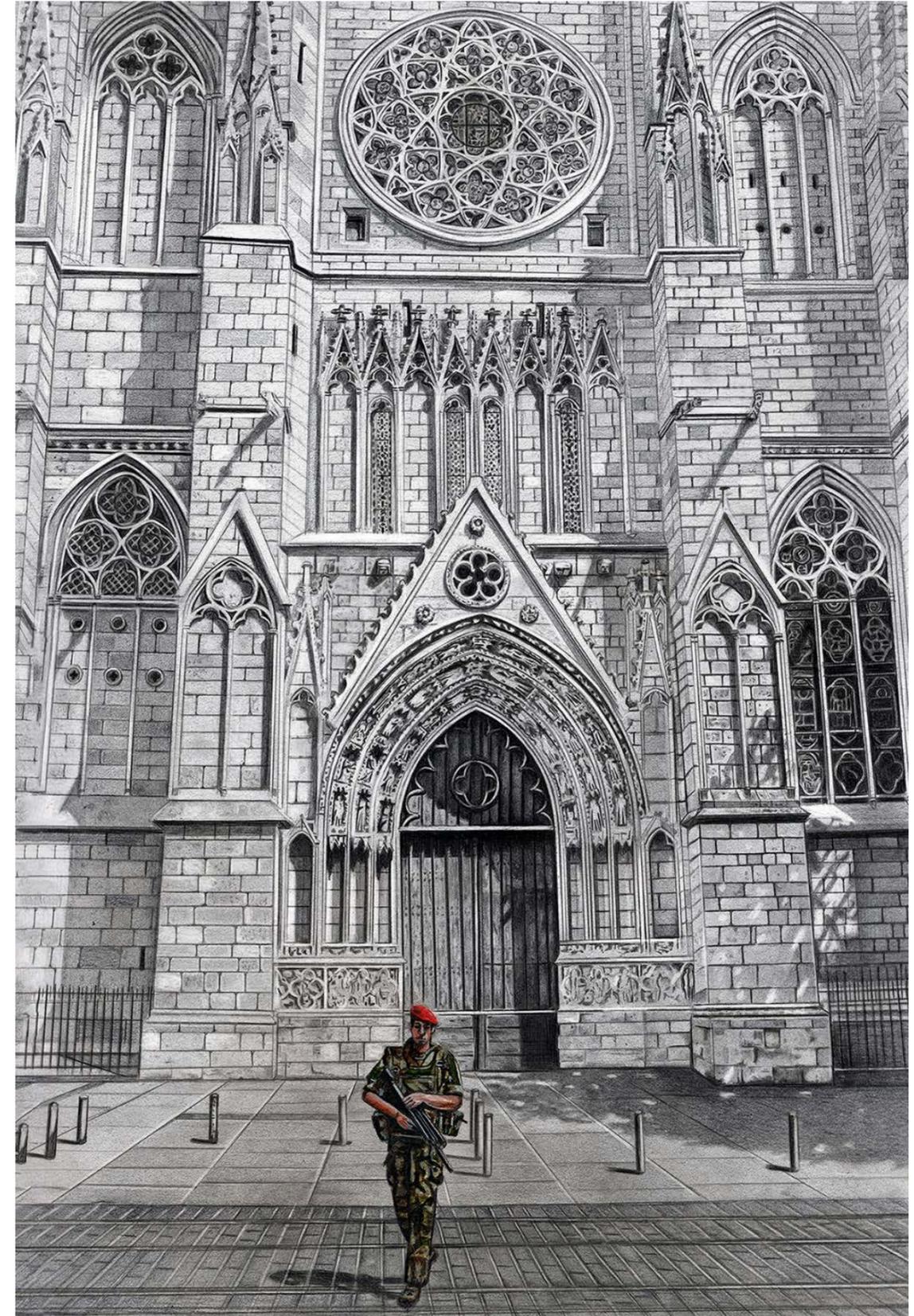
Durham Cathedral Rose Window, 2019  
Acrylic Gouache on Paper  
74x74cm



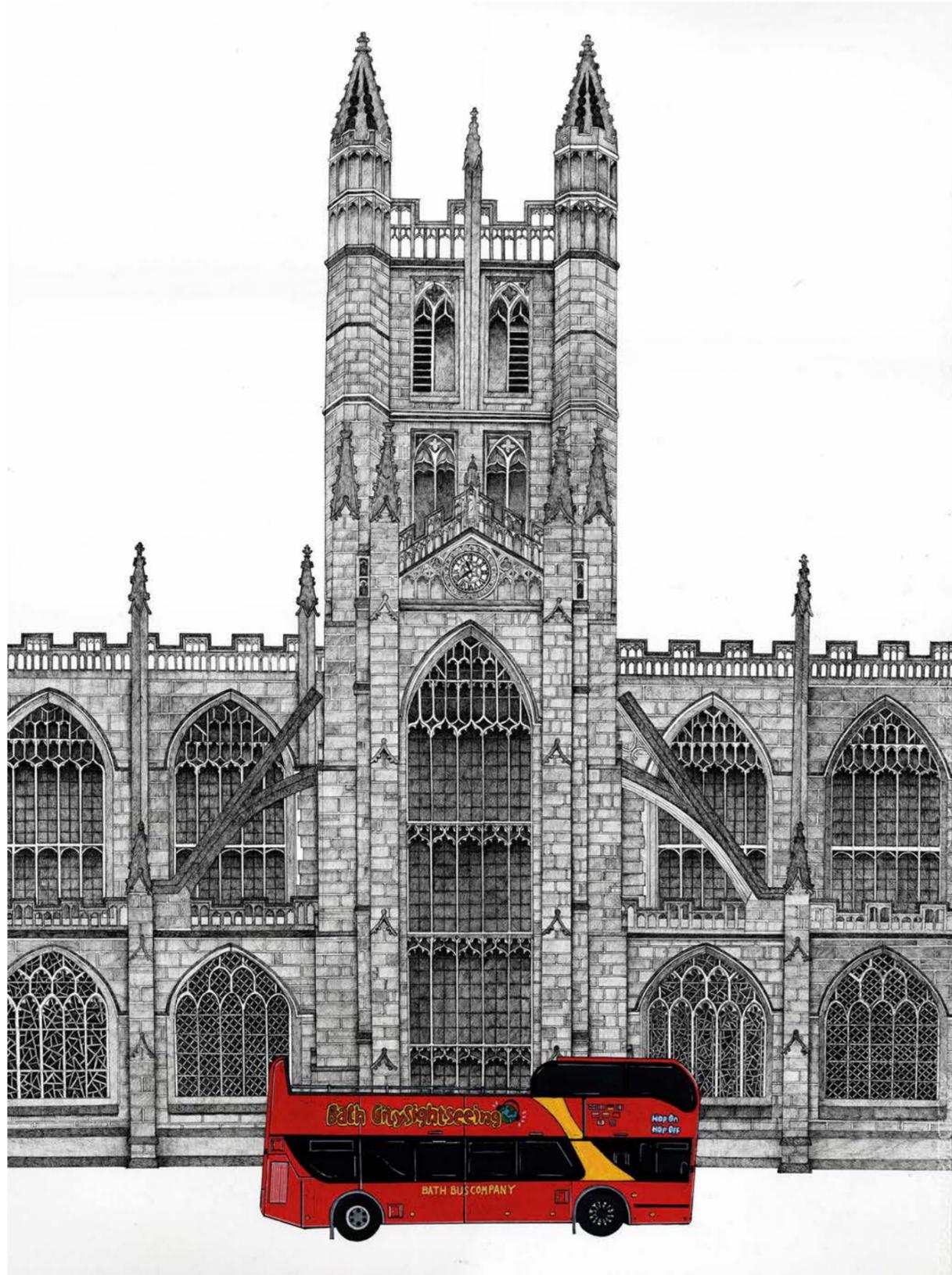
York Minster Rose Window, 2019  
Acrylic Gouache on Paper  
74x74cm



Sainte Chapelle, 2019  
Watercolour on Paper  
82x62cm



Bordeaux Cathedral, 2019  
Pencil and Watercolour on Paper  
43.5x29.5cm



Tour Bus at Bath Abbey, 2020  
Pen and Acrylic Gouache on Paper  
56x76cm

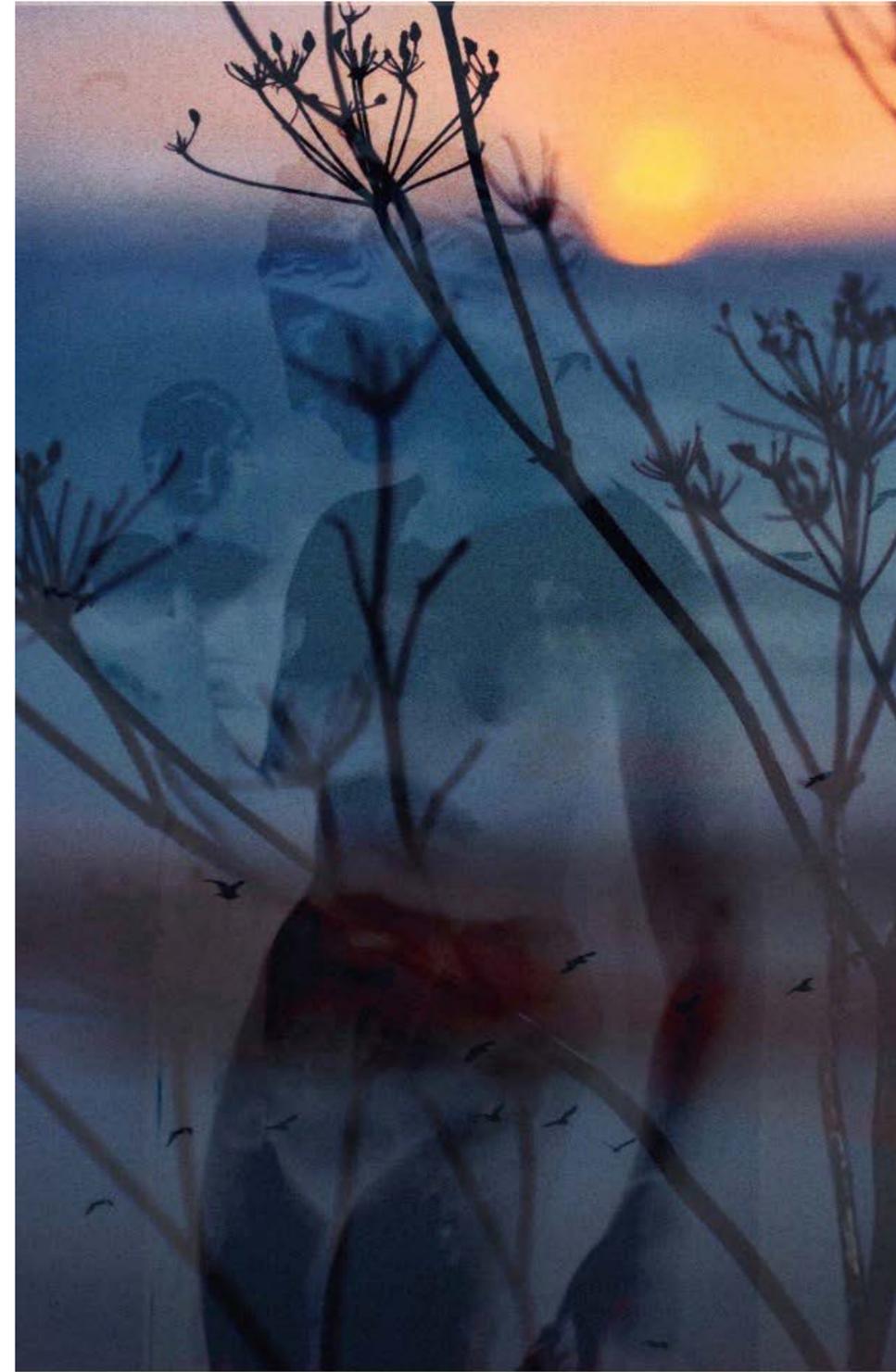
Form The Arches (with reference to Maya Angelou)  
by Lindz McLeod

I dance like I've got aw' Jock Tamson's bairns  
at the meeting of my thighs.  
The gayest of Gordons, the straightest  
of ceilidhs. In and out the dusty bluebells.  
These cobalt flowers mean  
humility. Gratitude: he told me yesterday,  
talked about galaxas and galaxies.  
In and out the dusty bluebells.  
Clammy palm-to-palm, accompanied  
by an unholy rubber guttie scent.  
The cassette rewound, pipes blaring;  
hauled through childhood on the  
squeal of an accordion.  
In and out the dusty bluebells. I whip  
the harts and hinds from my backyard  
drive them hard down cobbled streets.  
Antlers staggering under  
the weight of water. In and out  
the dusty bluebells.  
I am my own master.



In the raw wind of the new world, October 2020. Photograph

The inspiration for this work was Louise Glück's poem *Snowdrops* where the transition between winter and spring encapsulates the resilience of the human spirit and its transformation from contexts of darkness into light. I produced this piece as a reminder that, however transitions manifest in our lives, we should 'risk joy' by embracing new challenges and the 'raw wind' of change.



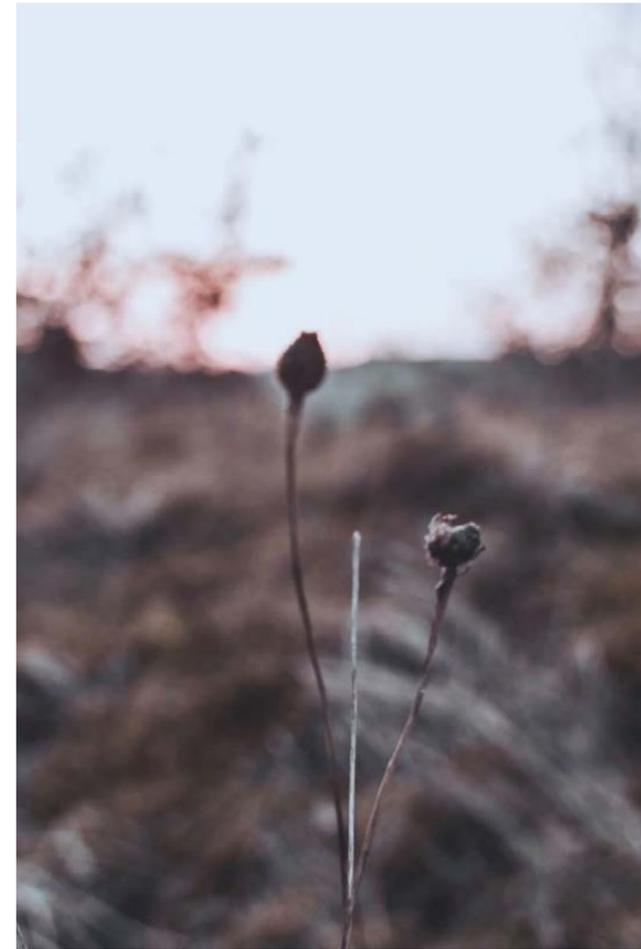
The House of the Muse, August 2020. Photograph

This piece was inspired by Sappho's *Fragment 150*: 'There is no place for grief in a house which serves the Muse' or — in Ann Carson's translation — 'for it is not right in a house of the Muses, that there be lament'. I was thinking about the human body and its ability to endure pain as a result of physical or mental afflictions. I wanted to consider empathy as an alternative to grieving; where the human body becomes 'The House of the Muse', what knowledge can we gain of ourselves through introspection and reflection on all the ways in which our bodies still serve us despite what they suffer.



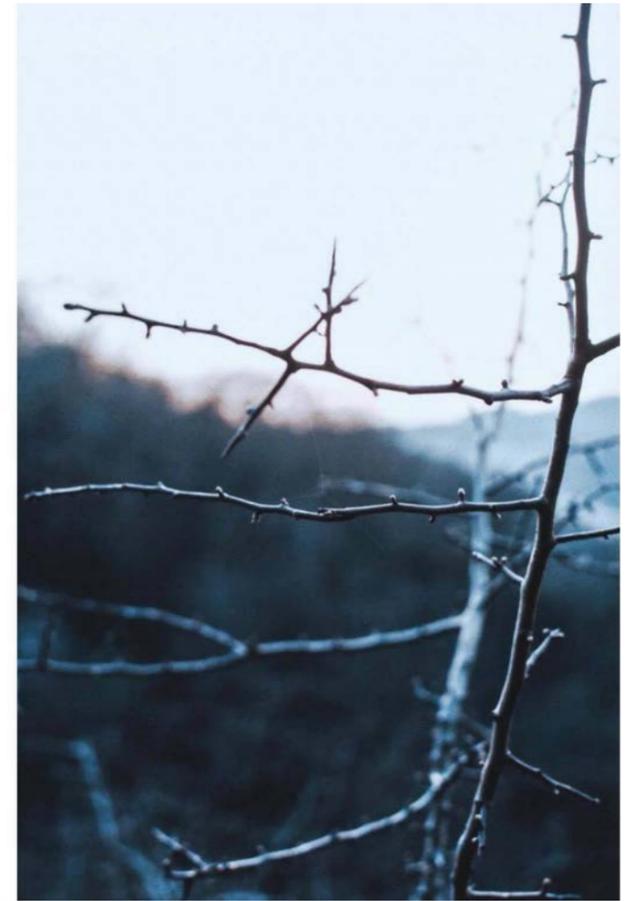
The Still Point of the Turning World, September 2020. Photograph

Most of my work is inspired by the call and response relationship between image and text. The inspiration for this multiple exposure piece was a poem called *Burnt Norton* from T.S. Eliot's collection 'Four Quartets'. I wanted to explore the stillness of time against a backdrop of simultaneous expansion and elasticity.



Chaos 2.0, March 2020. Photograph

This work was inspired by our connections to nature and how we as humans often look to the natural world for solace and points of tangibility amidst the often chaotic disorientation that permeates modern life. I was also thinking about what all the beauty and pain we experience in life might look like were it to be collapsed into just one static moment.



Future Ghosts, March 2020. Photograph

For this work I was thinking about temporality and the fracturing of linearity in relation to the self. I wanted to explore how a visual dialogue between past, present and future might be established in an image.



Good Friday, April 2020. Pen on paper, 21 x 29.7cm

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”.... One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.

As an illustrator, I usually focus on architecture and buildings, but in this case I have created an illustration of the crucifixion on Good Friday as part of the Easter story. I like to be able to create art as part of my faith and so at Easter this year (2020) in the mist of lockdown, soon after deciding I wanted to give illustration a real go rather than as a hobby, I created this illustration.

I wanted to create an artwork that honoured what I believe and how I saw it personally. Unlike most illustrations I do, I did not work from any photography but from how I imagined the landscape would look and so it is a personal interpretation of the text.

## Who’s body is the levitating body?

by Annie Dobson

In a flat above a hairdresser’s, my mum is holding me tight to her chest. She is convinced the devil is trying to take me away. She has been convinced of this for weeks. Later, she will tell everyone she is moving house because of the struggle of getting the pram up the stairs. She sits with the guilt of the ouija board, the bad spirits she has let into this flat.

Twenty-two years later, the psychiatrist asks me, so this was understood in a spiritual context?

~

In postpartum psychosis, hallucinations and delusions are often religious in content. The psychiatrist tells me everyone suffering from postpartum psychosis is now treated in a specialised psychiatric mother & baby unit.

When everyone around you believes, wholeheartedly, in the reality of bad spirits, demons, the devil himself & how they can come into your home, take away your child, it can be dangerous. Understanding *in a spiritual context* often means you are left without adequate healthcare. I have always thought about the connection, the bloodied weave, between religious fervour, illness, disorder & trauma.

~

### *Untethered from the Earth*<sup>1</sup>

Abi Palmer’s (incredibly beautiful) poetic memoir *Sanatorium* is a meditation on the disabled body, water cures & the Catholic mystic, St Teresa of Ávila. *Sanatorium* opens with Palmer’s description of what she experiences when chronic pain has kept her awake: *fatigue, brain fog, paralysis, temporary blindness, floating, climbing out of my body, mid-air encounters with a long deceased and beloved Carmelite saint*<sup>2</sup>.

1 Palmer, Abi. *Sanatorium* (2020), p35

2 *Sanatorium*, p8

St Teresa of Ávila, *a mystic so pure she kept floating off to heaven*<sup>3</sup>. Palmer outlines floatation as both a response to trauma & a trauma cure.

Palmer comments on the *pre-birth dream-space*<sup>4</sup> of floating in water, a reminder of *what it’s like to exist before trauma can hurt you. The argument goes that floatation eases physical pain because you have reminded your body what it is like to live without it*<sup>5</sup>.

Palmer also recounts her first out of my body experience, age fifteen, the day after losing her virginity *out of politeness*<sup>6</sup>, lying down to think about what had happened,

*I lay down and my body climbed out of itself. I was floating three feet above my own body. It was the middle of the day and suddenly I was floating around*<sup>7</sup>.

As a child, I was fascinated with out of body experiences. I remember standing on the landing, way past bedtime, overhearing a relative speak of leaving her body, floating downstairs to watch her partner watch television. Later, I understood what it meant to leave your body as *self-protection*, or, as Sayaka Murata writes in *Earthlings*, during a scene of sexual assault,

*Wow, I must have summoned a super strong magical power. I had no idea how, since I hadn’t used my wand or mirror. But despite this spectacular magic, I felt no emotion whatsoever and simply watched my own body in silence from the ceiling*<sup>8</sup>.

While reading *Sanatorium*, I think about a line from Ocean Vuong’s novel *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*,

3 *Sanatorium*, p31

4 *Sanatorium*, p12

5 *Sanatorium*, p12

6 *Sanatorium*, p34

7 *Sanatorium*, p35

8 Murata, Sayaka. *Earthlings* (2020), p62

*I remember learning that the saints were only people whose pain was notable, noted<sup>9</sup>.*

& the hiddenness of disabled bodies, the doctor's dismissal of women's (particularly black women's) pain, the indignity of disability under capitalism, the traumatised, sometimes even mutilated, bodies of female saints, immortalised in elaborate oil paint.

*Flutter of near wake dream state/could be real or not/same as anything<sup>10</sup>*

My second experience of sleep paralysis came in the form of a female demon. I experienced the common sensation of an unbearable weight on top of me. The demon had a heaviness.

On the NHS page for sleep paralysis: *like someone is in your room, like someone is holding you down.*

The demon was terrifying in her wildness. A trippy, vivid colourfulness. There was a definite sexual element. A *succubus* is a demon in female form, appearing in dreams to seduce earthly men.

If I had been born in the fifteenth century, I wonder if I would have understood my sleep paralysis as a vision? Perhaps I would have self-flagellated, hastily joined a convent, overcome with the terror of eternal hellfire, guilt at giving in to carnal temptations.

The earliest recording of an incubus (the male counterpart to a succubus) comes from Mesopotamia & tales of incubus & succubus have followed through religion & folklore worldwide.

Sleep paralysis occurs during the transitional state of waking up or falling asleep, a neurological glitch where hallucinations are common. Hallucinations of sexual activity with demons

9 Vuong, Ocean. *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)  
10 Walton, Samatha. *Self Heal* (2018), *Lapwing*, p41

during sleep paralysis are common. What is lurking in our collective consciousness?

*If you were able to see how many demons filled this world, they would block out the sky<sup>11</sup>.*

~

*She has become a dwelling place for demons<sup>12</sup>*

I have an uncomfortable childhood memory of a LIFE church in Bradford - an overwhelming, evangelical megachurch. A woman a few rows in front of me stands up, there are beams of electric blue lights, like a strange nightclub, & the woman screams that the devil has possessed her son.

The Roman Catholic doctrine states that *satan* & his *lesser demons can demonically possess* an individual without the host's consent or knowledge. Catholicism states six different forms of demonic possession, ranging from complete control of the host's body by the devil or demons, to voluntary submission.

~

Physical & mental illnesses & neurological disorders associated with a belief in demonic possession or *possessive trance disorder*: schizophrenia, dissociative identity disorder, epilepsy, Tourette's syndrome, functional neurological symptom disorder (FND).

A person deep in psychosis often appears like a person possessed. Especially when they are violent - mostly to themselves, sometimes to others. Especially when you love them.

~

11 Cronin, Claire. *Blue Light of the Screen: On Horror, Ghosts and God* (2020), p117  
12 Revelation 18:2

When I wrote as a child — & sometimes, although a lot less frequent, as an adult — I would see the process as trance-like, writing as if possessed. I would emerge hours later, suddenly aware of being inside a body again, being a body, exhausted. Later, I learned this phenomenon was not mystical, nor demonic, nor even the romance of writing. It was hyperfocus, a symptom of ADHD.

~

Claire Cronin writes that hysteria is a *paroxysm of belief*. The woman in the Bradford megachurch is the sound of a wail. Her belief that the devil has possessed her son is a *mode of social communication where one story replaces another because a person's fear, desire or trauma cannot be expressed<sup>13</sup>.*

~

The woman's son was a heroin addict.

I was also in the evangelical megachurch because of a (recovering) heroin addict. He had recently been born again, saved from heroin by God, was euphoric & often unsettling in his new found faith, giving me Yazoo milkshakes & warning me about the celebration of Halloween as tapping on the devil's door. He was my mum's boyfriend & had taken us to sing the gospels & be saved. I wonder how many of us, an average weekly attendance of 3,000, were in this strange, enormous room, in some way, because of heroin?

~

*Mostly I have felt myself becoming a servant of sadness<sup>14</sup>*

13 *Blue Light of the Screen: On Horror, Ghosts and God*, p120  
14 Nelson, Maggie. *Bluets*. (2009), p29

There is a colourised photograph of the Catholic mystic Theresea Neumann in bed, bloodied, surrounded by crucifixes. There is a black and white photograph of Theresea Neuman, staring at the camera, her eyes impossibly eerie, dark oracle-like. I am endlessly, morbidly fascinated with these horror photographs. I don't know why, but I feel a type of kinship to Theresea Neumann, like an ancestor I would love to spend a transcendental hour with.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes writes,

*A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)<sup>15</sup>*

& I feel it, so powerfully, with these photographs of Theresea Neumann. Or do I mean I am drawn to the photographs, to Theresea Neumann, as if called?

~

There is something about release.

~

There is something about the ecstasy of religious fervour, the total abandonment of all else. *Made for your love a symbol that can obliterate everything.<sup>16</sup>*

~

There is something about pain so huge it is Biblical.

~

*i'm indefinite // i'm chorus<sup>17</sup>*

~

15 Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida* (1981), p27  
16 *Self Heal, Strange House*, p52  
17 *Self Heal, Admonishment Sub-Plot (Intentionally Unsung)* p50

I read that Thersea Neumann was not given the stigmata, that instead, she cut herself.

A psychoanalytic study of Neumann has suggested that her stigmata resulted from post-traumatic stress symptoms expressed in unconscious self-mutilation through abnormal autosuggestibility<sup>18</sup>.

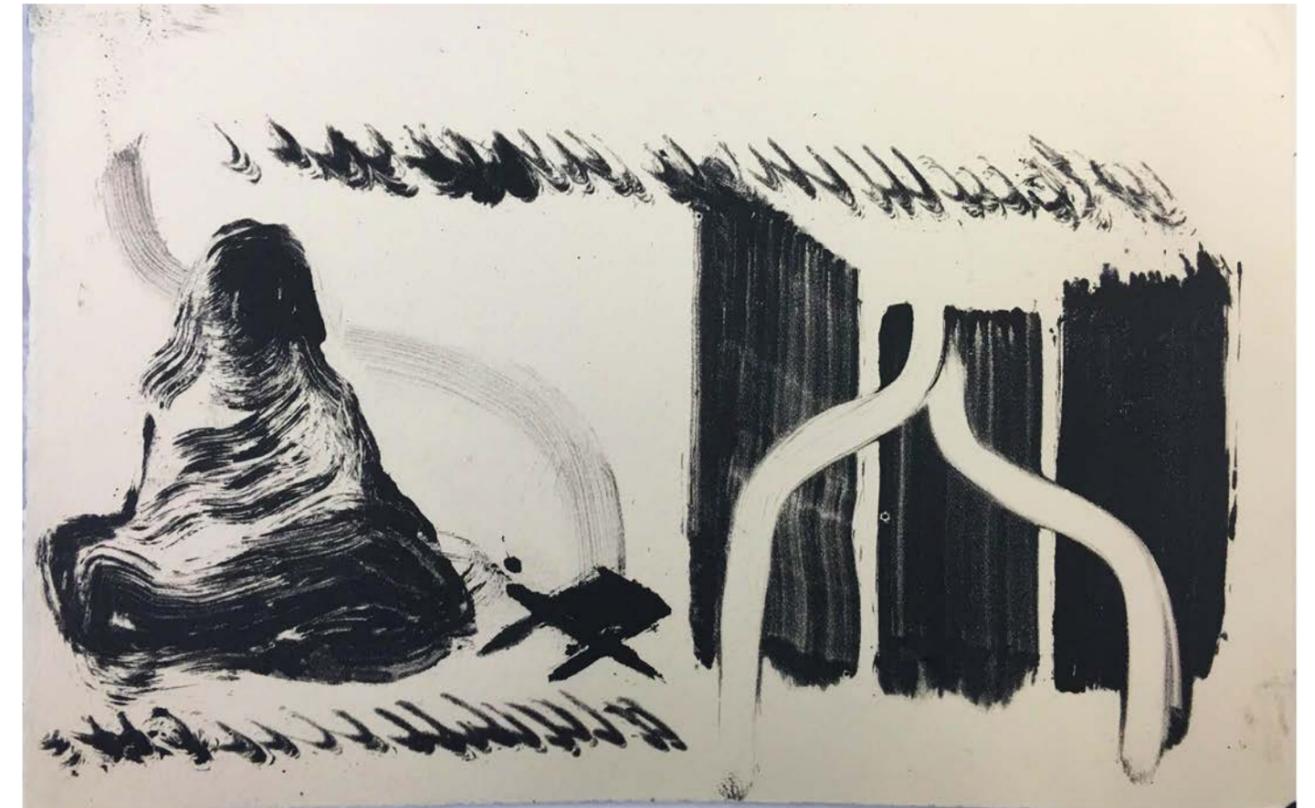
Her inedia, the ability to live without the consumption of food, and in some cases water, also aroused suspicion. Theresea Neumann claimed to have consumed no other food but The Holy Eucharist, nor to have drank any water from 1926 to her death in 1962.

Like many Catholic saints & mystics, Theresea Neumann suffered from many physical ailments & was bedbound for a lot of her life. The cure for her paralysis came in the form of St Thérèse of Lisieux, also known as *The Little Flower*. There is a black and white photograph of Theresea Neumann smiling, holding a bunch of flowers.

I think all Theresea Neumann wanted to do was leave her body. I am thinking of all the times I have wanted to leave my body. Or all the times I have been desperate for something totally eclipsing, total white light obliteration, to encompass myself so deeply in prayer, my body becomes unearthly.

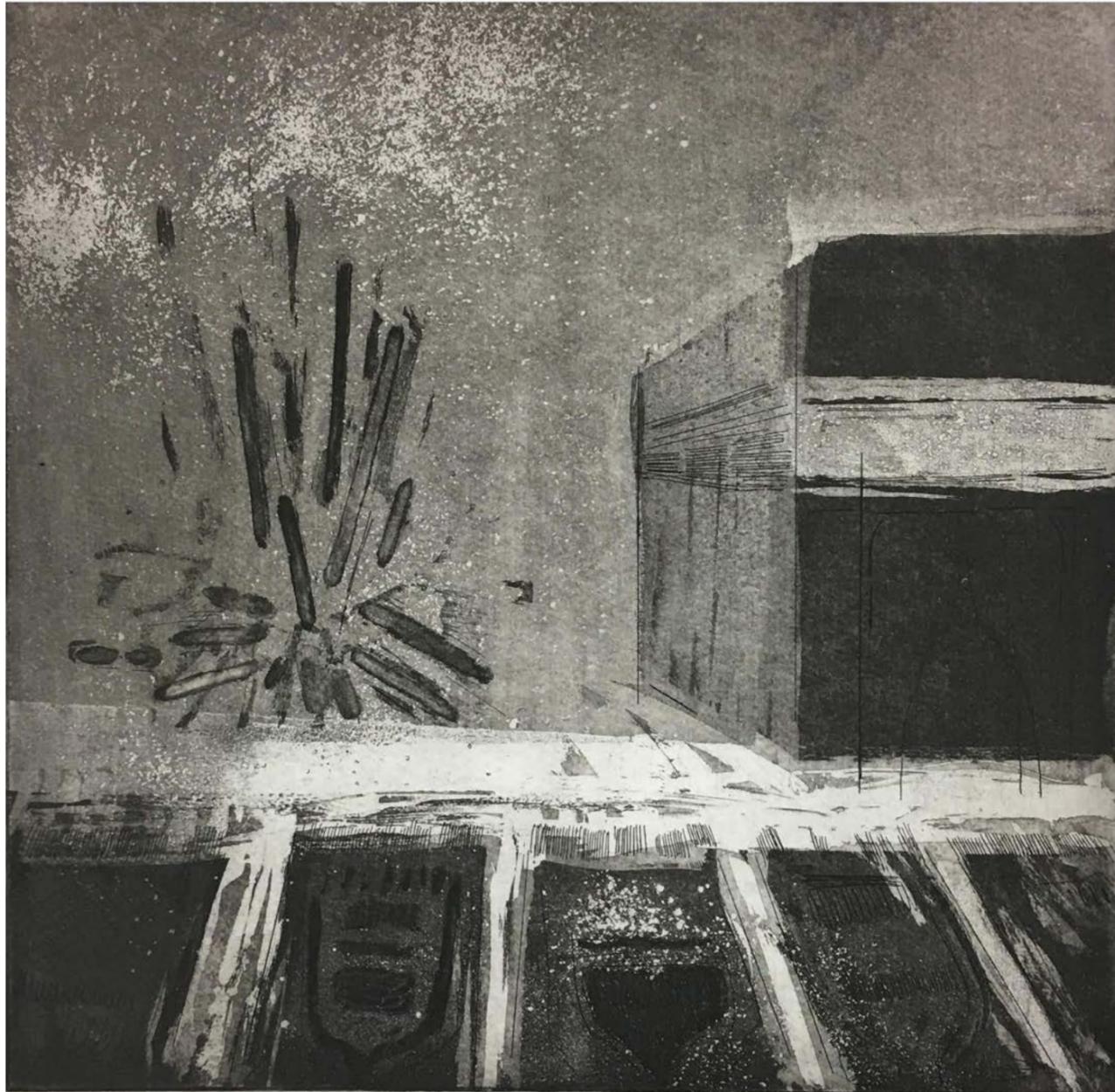
I want to lie down & think of my whole life & levitate.

<sup>18</sup> Albright, M. (2002). "The Stigmata: The Psychological and Ethical Message of the Posttraumatic Sufferer". *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*. 25 (3): 329-358.



Meditation  
12cmx17cm  
Mono print on somerset paper

My mother prayed 5 times a day.



5 prayers in hell  
30cmx30cm  
Etching and aquatint on Fabriano paper

This work depicts mine and my four sisters' relationship to the religion we grew up practicing, Islam. The structure to the right represents the monument of religion and its physical presence in all of our lives. The fire represents hell fire and the constant pressure of good and evil. The five prayer mats represent us as individuals, but also as a unison, as having gone through the same experiences.



Heavenly Portal  
30cmx30cm  
Layered print - Mono print on top of an etching

After you die you are transported, a constant cycle of death and rebirth.

Owen Schaefer

a consummation on mount mitake

lay me in that forest and let the kudzu grow  
into me work its anchors down to bone  
root me to the volcanic earth cedars pushing up  
through ribs pollen to dust my shrinking skin  
let the mice shred my clothes to line nests hidden  
from foxes that lick my eyes devour my heart  
to add to their own beneath the red fur let tanuki  
gather what's left lost fingers rolling away  
beneath ferns my teeth planted so many seeds  
bones gnawed and worn all crumbling to soil  
till I am scattered too thin to give a name to  
then let the hikers and pilgrims come to rest  
by the river backpacks blooming colour  
on the grass open their thermoses of tea  
touch the moss the rough bark and say  
look at our country isn't it beautiful

on Halloween i see the devil

down in Lan Kwai Fong ghouls chase  
shooters with beer and cameras flash  
the crowd dense with wigs and greasepaint

1 a.m. i am home and a light goes out  
across the street darkness in one window  
then another the evening's ink spilling out

this one holds a severed arm pokes it  
at women to make them shriek then pose  
for pictures they giggle shiver

another darkened window a closed eye  
had it been green fluorescence? dim living  
room with curtains? a dog barks twice

an old man hair grey combed back  
walks unhindered his curved horns  
look real and everyone smiles

the lights die one by one by 2  
in the morning, only these remain:  
mine & someone else still on fire

James Rance

Alvari

for your journey,  
you have pulled on your softest clothes,  
your brightest,  
your kindest clothes.

split with jewels,  
slashed with gold,  
your dancing costume,  
your tails of fire.

you have left the dull,  
unruly,  
the mundane

there, tied between the trees

and will wander  
among sand dunes  
and standing stones  
to the feet

of wondrous God.

AI HEIKATERON  
(TO HEKATE)

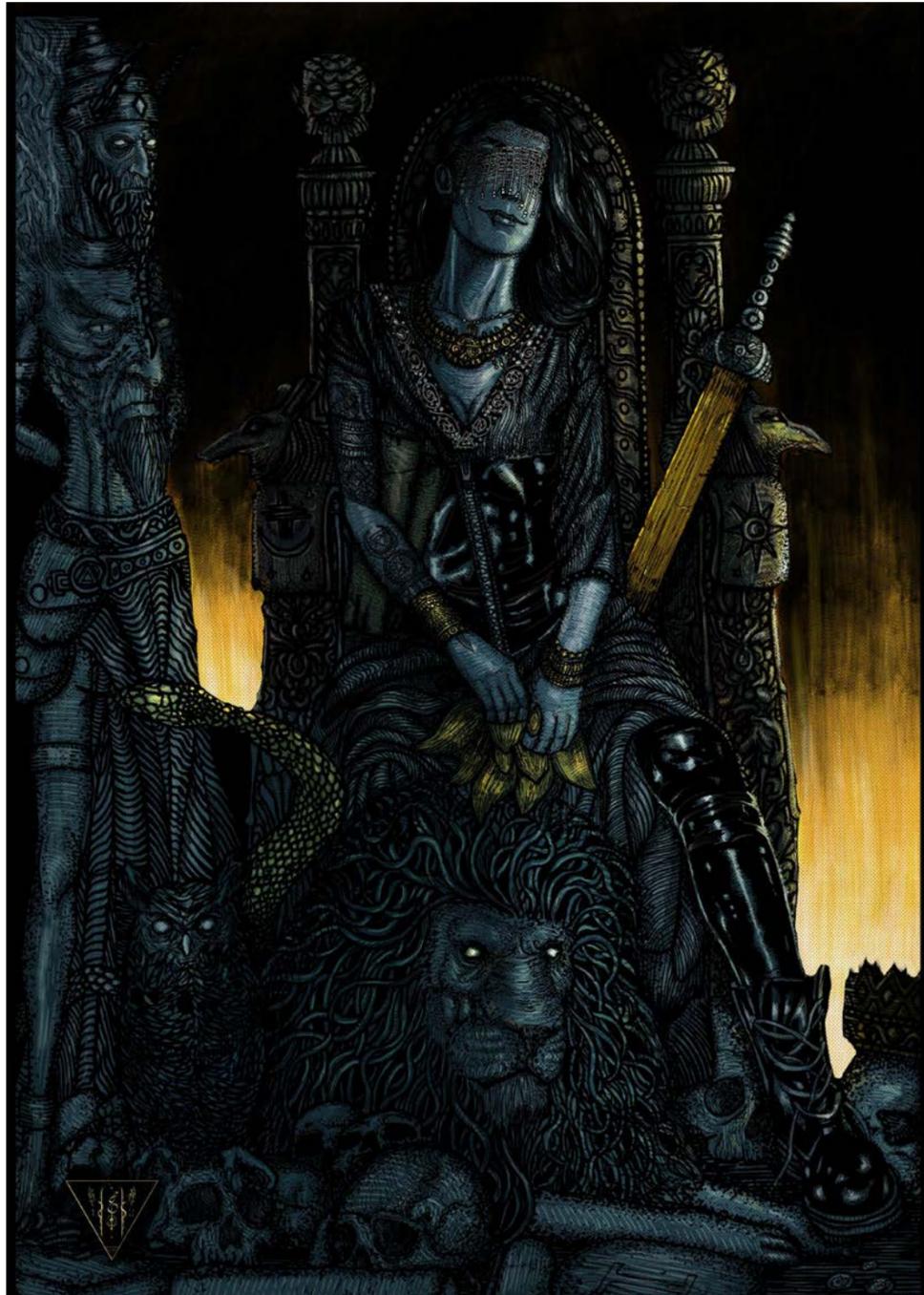
ANDERESVATI HEIKATERONAE  
ṬVERIAT ANKE REIKHSAT ET ṬLAVINAE

iá garavánte tai kirkulnae!  
(now, form your circles!)

eška khete ia forukhón al nortae  
aréṭa únoste andresaṭ enculmae  
(now we draw down the night  
into our sacred bodies)  
barétoṭ, escalioṭ, taniste devulae!  
kaškare ko únoste iandeṭae  
eštai al tai ašklone aranae  
(fate, flight, reveal yourselves!  
ascend with our legs  
as though they were your own!)

teravaisvati heikateron, ioberasvati heikatero-  
nae!  
(great Hekate, dear Hekate!)  
úrai entranae!  
(hear us!)

arénai viákhtome tae  
anderesvati heikateronae  
arénai viákhtome tae  
anderesvati heikateronae  
(we give ourselves in devotion,  
goddess Hekate,  
we give ourselves in devotion,  
goddess Hekate.)



Ereshkigal, 2020  
Work done by using ink then digitized

This work represents a metaphor of a lived reality, inspired by the Sumerian myth of the Goddess of the underworld Ereshkigal. This is a modern representation of the hellish Goddess.



The Seed Of The Serpent, 2020  
Work done by using ink then digitized

This work represents a metaphor of a lived reality, inspired by the Biblical myth of the seed of the woman. The seed of the serpent is a voyage towards the vast lands of my inner world.



Pazuzu, 2020  
Work done by using ink then digitized

Pazuzu is a Babylonian demon-god, lord of the winds and a great healer against epidemics. I thought of illustrating it in a modern way because it is about a divinity linked with what the world lives today.



Kubaba, 2020  
Work done by using ink then digitized

Kubaba was once a Sumerian queen, transformed over time into a fertility goddess like Ishtar, according to some theories. She is a character who influenced the creation of the myth of the Goddess Cybele.

## In Search of the Queen: An autobiographical take on *Midsommar*

by Alessia Zinnari

I spent the lockdown working on my PhD corrections – a horror film in itself. Yet, not satisfied with the levels of anxiety reached while working day and night in my Glasgow flat, I came up with the idea of watching *Midsommar*. I had been drawn to this folk horror for a while, and the reason I hadn't watched it yet was that, over the past few years, my anxiety has gotten worse. Every time I decide to watch a horror film I keep changing my mind a million times and, more often than not, I simply end up not watching it. This is particularly annoying, considering that as a kid I adored everything spooky. I was, for example, an avid reader of the series *Goosebumps*. I used to get so absorbed by those stories that I developed an obsession for Halloween. This was in a Catholic country – Italy – that at the time did not really celebrate this festivity, too concerned with its devilish implications. Now that I think about it, a similar process of transformation – from pleasurable activity into a fear-inducing one – happened later on in my life with the consumption of mind-altering substances. A part of me simply shifted, and the relationship with the activity was left transformed.

Why though? What has changed? One of the answers I give myself is that, as I grew up and went on experiencing the 'real world', I found out that horror actually exists, and that venturing in it almost never proves rewarding, as some of those *Goosebumps* stories wanted me to believe. As I contemplate the thought of what would happen if, now that we live in a pandemic-stricken world, I took a tab of acid, my skin gets chilled with terror. What happens when the human brain is forced to process a new reality, one that overcomes expectations in the worst possible way? Freud would argue that this is the point where the split that characterises psychosis takes place. A trip with no return. But what if, instead, that opening, that rupture, allowed for an elevation of consciousness that took mind and body to a new level of understanding?

One second, less poetic, option, is that my reluctance to expose myself to risk might be the simple consequence of aging. After all, I turned 30 two weeks before watching *Midsommar* – an event that saw my propensity for overthinking intensify. Anyway, the point I was trying to make is that when I found myself on the couch watching a horror film in which people take lots of psychedelics, I felt that my life was heading in the right direction.

*Midsommar* is a film about rites of passage, grief, breakups and liberation. After the first few minutes, I felt myself completely in tune with the protagonist, Dani (an outstanding Florence Pugh) – a young woman who is essentially trying to keep her life together after the loss of her entire family. One of the reasons I might have felt this connection with her from the outset is that her life is characterised by an element that marked almost the entirety of my twenties: a bad boyfriend. Christian is portrayed as a fake, shallow and cowardly character who is unable and unwilling to give a direction to his life. He does not care about Dani, but at the same time he finds the relationship convenient and uses her personal tragedy as an excuse not to break up with her. Dani, on the other hand, has developed an unhealthy attachment to Christian. This is possibly a consequence of his questionable behaviour, but it also stems from her vulnerability. Dani has not learned about her true power yet.

The occasion for this lifechanging encounter with her empowered self – which I will read through the archetype of 'the Queen' – is provided by a trip to Sweden organised by Christian and his friends, to which Dani is invited almost by mistake. Christian's friends are all PhDs in anthropology, and Pelle, who is part of an ancestral commune, has invited them to his village in Sweden to witness a rare midsummer celebration. It is in this liminal location that Dani will come to embody 'the Queen'. Crucially, the celebrations take place in May, during

her birthday week.

Before reaching the remote village, Dani is a young woman who – albeit living by herself – has not attained true, inner emancipation yet. This is made clear by the opening scenes that portray her relationship with her boyfriend: she is not able to state what she wants from him, because she is afraid to come across as needy (yes, we have all been there), and when at a party she finds out that Christian was about to leave for Sweden without telling her, she chooses to suppress her anger because she is scared that he will leave her. This to me rang as a painfully true and relatable portrait of what it means to be trapped in an unhealthy relationship at a young age. During the masterly filmed moments that portray Dani's anxiety attacks, I found myself breathing heavily with her from my living room's couch, in and out, in and out... It felt, once again, like when I embodied the characters of *Goosebumps*. But this was more than the effect of a good horror. This time I *knew* what that was all about, I wasn't just using my imagination to enter the mind of the protagonist.

It then comes as no surprise that Dani's first encounter with psychedelics turns out to be a bad trip. Yet, this first 'opening', or 'rupture', represents in Jungian terms the archetypal hero's answer to the call to adventure. The more Dani dives into the forest, the more she enters her quest, her search for the Queen. This journey cannot come without horror. The women of the village play a crucial role in this rite of passage, as they guide Dani through her transformation. As Dani gets closer to them, she gradually detaches herself from Christian. However, at this stage she is still distant from her new self, as the director shows us in the scene in which one of the village women tells Dani that she is beautiful. Dani seems surprised by this remark, and Florence Pugh is brilliant in conveying her reaction of genuine awkwardness. She is clearly a beautiful young woman, but she is also com-

pletely unaware of her power.

Dani's second psychedelic trip brings her closer to the women of the village. This time, instead of panicking while under the effect of the hallucinogenic, she dances with the girls as part of the dancing competition that qualifies the next May Queen. While Dani is crowned May Queen, Christian – who meanwhile is on a parallel journey downwards – watches from afar, unable to join the celebrations. It is clear that the village also hides some dark secrets, and much of the suspense is provided by the fact that, one by one, the foreign guests start to get killed in horrible ways. 'Why is Dani going along with this madness?' I ask myself while still immersed in the view. At this point, in one of the most powerful scenes of the film, Dani sees Christian participating in a mating ritual with one of the local girls. Destroyed by what she has just witnessed, she drops on her knees and starts screaming desperately. The village girls gather around her and hold her, and each of them cries with her, and the more Dani screams the more her screams are echoed by the girls, until – in an ecstatic frenzy – they become one. This moment has the function of a rebirth rite, one where Dani channels a visceral pain that allows her to give birth to her new self, on the day of her birthday.

Once Dani has vocalised her pain while being held and supported, she is ready to process her trauma and complete her transformation. In order to free herself from the old, there is one last step that she has to take: separate herself from Christian (and yes, he will die of a horrible death). Importantly, it is Dani herself who chooses to sacrifice him. While watching this scene, I couldn't help but paralleling it with another story of separation and transformation that is very dear to me: Leonora Carrington's memoir of mental illness, *Down Below*. In it, the Surrealist painter and writer narrates the story of her separation from her partner, Max Ernst, and her experience of hospitalisation

in a mental asylum in Spain. There is a crucial passage in the memoir, in which her friend Catherine suggests that she seeks psychoanalytic help: '[she] persuaded me that my attitude betrayed an unconscious desire to get rid for the second time of my father: Max, whom I had to eliminate if I wanted to live.' It is not my intention to provide a psychoanalytical reading of *Midsommar*, but the parallel between these two stories strikes me as important. At the core of both narratives is a young woman's decision to 'get rid' of what prevents her from growing. Once both Carrington and Dani are free from what holds them back – the memory of their family, a partner that takes too much space in their life – they can finally be reborn and embrace their inner Queen.

So, now that I come to the end of my reflection, I finally realise why this film had such an impact on me. A few years ago, I experienced a similar journey of rebirth that was key in defining who I am now. I also know that these stories of pain, transition and growth are shared by many women who come to terms with their power and find the strength to heal from trauma. This is the topic of my PhD, in which I ultimately argue that these stories need to be told again and again, as they come from voices that have not been heard enough, and that demand our witness. Every time I meet a young woman I see a Dani, a young Carrington, I see myself. Every time, my impulse is to do the same thing that the village girls do with Dani: hold her, tell her that she is beautiful, cry with her and laugh with her and tell her that she is going to be okay. It is not easy. You will suffer, and scream, and at times gasp for air...but eventually you will come out the other end, and you will be reborn. I don't think it is a coincidence that I ended up watching this film in May, just after I turned 30 – a moment when, also prompted by the lockdown, I found myself evaluating my life and progress as a human being and as a woman. I have come so far, and I wish the same to you.

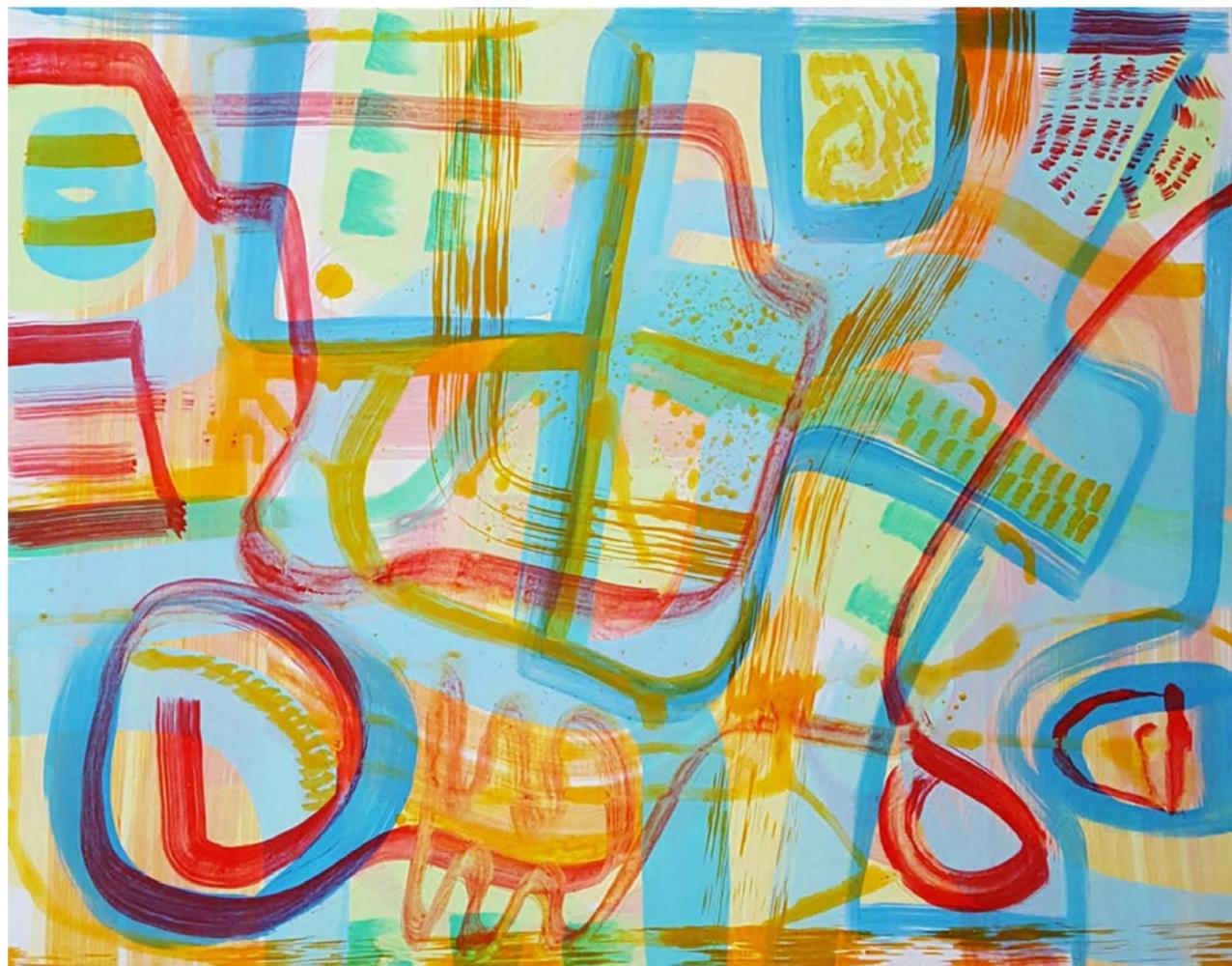
To all of the May Queens out there.  
May you feel loved,  
may you feel held,  
may you embrace the quest  
and get in touch with the power within you.

## Richard Benbow

My practice begins by the simple act of walking. I stake out my territory. A lyrical loiterer I am. Inspiration springs from the absorption of the landscape through the senses — touch, seeing, hearing, and feeling in a spiritual sense: for our connection to the land is deeper than purely physical, the memories we gather vibrate and reverberate within our hearts and minds. The tool of abstraction enables me to configure my message. I am interested in psychogeography and the world around me which I interpret through thought, philosophy, and as an idea. Paradoxically, the world appears in a 'concrete' existence; however, I don't attempt to represent external reality but seek to portray the world through shapes, colours, and textures. Rural/suburban/urban districts, the edgelands where the city meets the countryside are my subjects. My work is inspired by artists including Victor Pasmore, Ivon Hitchen, Albert Irvin, Peter Lanyon, and Adrian Berg. By studying these artist's techniques and manner of observing and painting the landscape, I contextualise my work through the observation of their compositions, use of colour, and brushmarks. Aboriginal artist's such as Mark Nodda also inspire me, not just the visual impact of the images they produce but also the spiritual connection of the native people to the land and aspects of their culture such as the 'walkabout' and 'Dreamtime'.



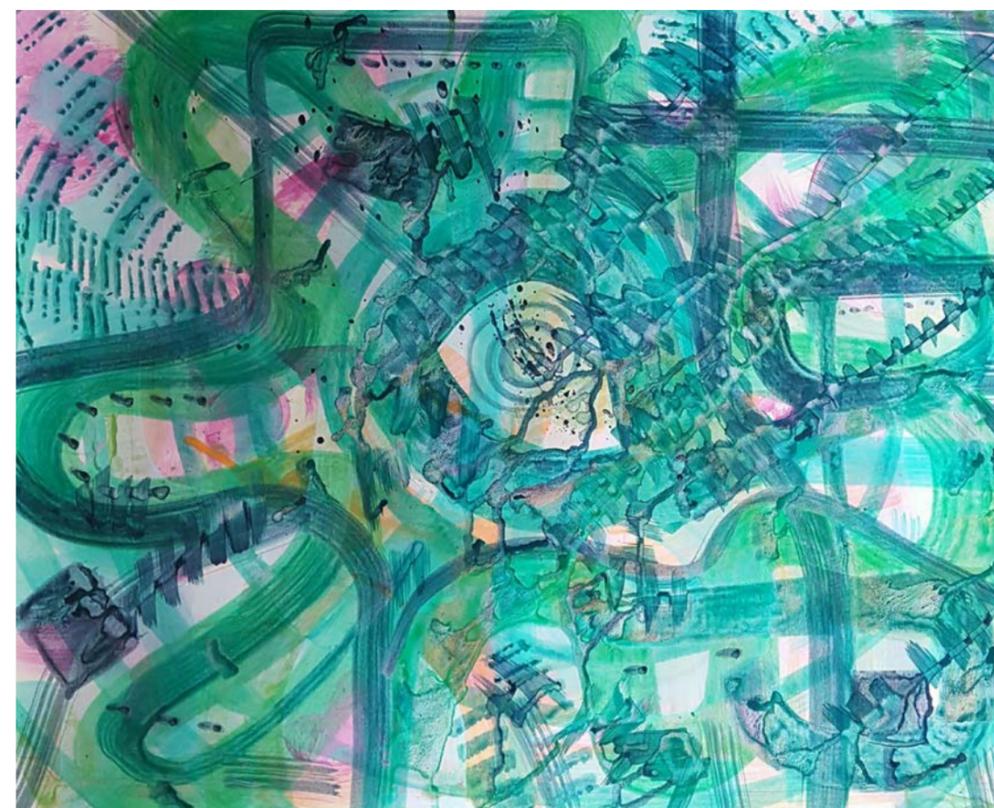
Rainbow Pathway, 2020. Acrylic on cradled wood panel, 40 x 50 x 3 cm



Abstract route, 2020. Acrylic on cradled wood panel, 40 x 50 x 3 cm



Spirit walk, 2020. Acrylic on cradled wood panel, 50 x 60 x 3 cm



Dewy path, 2020. Acrylic on cradled wood panel, 40 x 50 x 3 cm



Walkabout Dreamtime, 2020. Acrylic on cradled wood panel, 50 x 40 x 3 cm

Marius Grebstad

Skiptvet Middle-Age Church

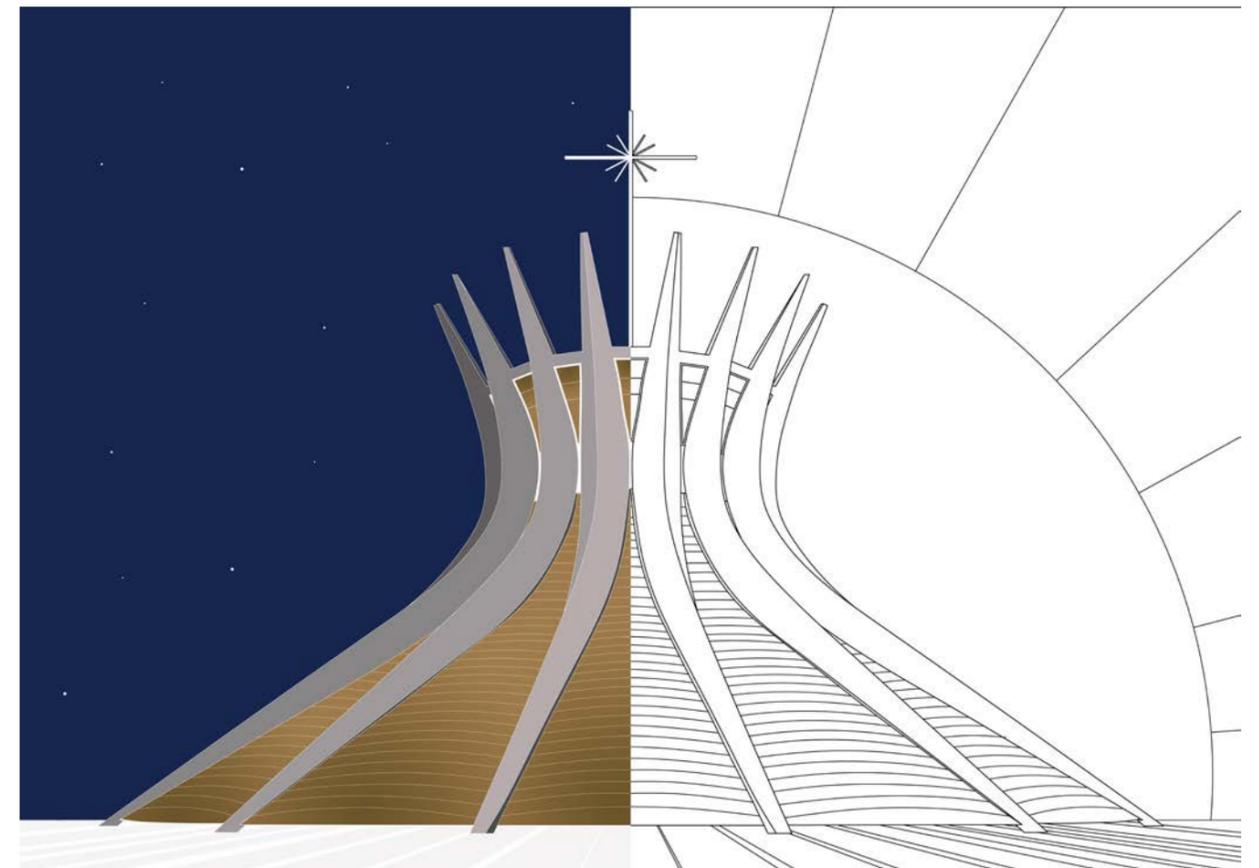
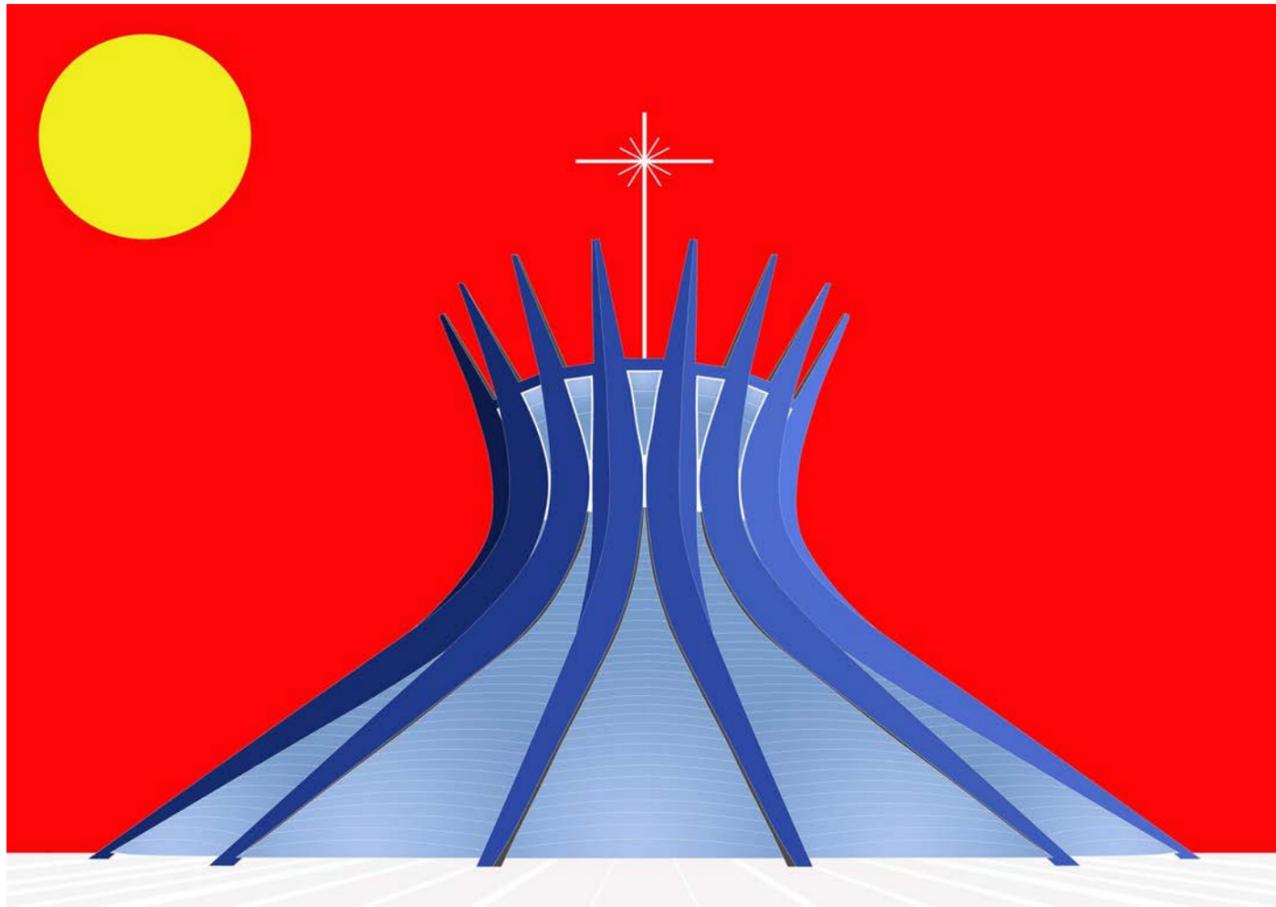
Skiptvet middle-age church was built in the 12th century. When I edit my pictures I like to use only one color. This way, the red wood on the church gets highlighted for the viewer. The picture is shot on a Sony a7s2 and is edited on PS express and photoshop mix with a iphone max.



## Sketching Architect

Structure of Religion, 2020, Autocad and Photoshop, A1

These illustrations are of the Cathedral of Brasília by Brazilian Architect Oscar Niemeyer. I create illustrations of buildings like these to better understand the design and form being created as part of the design. What I also try to do is capture the feel of the building in different scenarios and test the colour and visuals in more extreme circumstances. The built scheme is quietly elegant and hides a feeling of light and space which you experience once inside the building. The three images show the extremes and apply more vibrant tones to the existing subtle shape. Part of my drawing process, especially when it came to this building, was an appreciation of the curves which are flamboyant and out of sync in the communist style and time this was designed.



## Yas Lime

In the Muslim faith, Allah (God) has 99 different names, which describe the entirety of human existence as well as aspects we cannot explain. Here, I have chosen four of Allah's names and placed them on different block colour backgrounds — each representing different acts from the 'Hanky Code' — a flagging system used by queers to signal that they are cruising or to covertly spot other queers. These artworks were designed to look like logos for famous brands, seemingly harmless but they are in fact hidden symbols of rebellion, religiosity and queerness. I intend this work to be a comment on the growing push to profit from marginalised identities, while censorship and fascism directed toward the Muslim LGBTQIA2S\*+ community is on the rise around the world. I encourage you to use these images in your day-to-day life. These artworks were created using a free online photo editor.



All-encompassing, 2020  
#FFA500



The Humiliator, 2020  
#000000



The Watchful, 2020  
#D0C7C5

# THE PROVIDER

The Provider, 2020  
#32CD32

## Reckoning with Lot's Wife: Thinking through trauma and witness with an Anselm Kiefer painting

by Samir Knejo

I can't imagine what it's like to be turned into salt in a moment of terror, but maybe I should try.

For many, religion is a way of articulating values and connecting with other people and with the divine. For as meaningful and foundational as the stories of the Jewish and Christian Bibles are to many people, many of us, both in and out of the traditions, are disturbed by the violence against women that appears throughout our texts.

Reckoning with these stories and experiences can be hard, especially for those who hold these sacred books dear. However, it's crucial that we do so, and as we do this work, we can look at the various writers and artists who have already tried to write, draw or paint a way forward. There is a staggering number of biblical women I could talk about here, but today let's work with Lot's wife.

The Book of Genesis includes the story of Lot, who is forced to leave his city with his wife and daughters as it is destroyed as punishment for the inhabitants' sins. Angels lead them outside the city and instruct Lot (and perhaps his family in general; the singular/plural of the command is unclear) the following: *Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed* (Gen 19:17). As they run, the city is pelted with fire and sulfur (brimstone) from the heavens. Lot's wife looks back at the city and is turned into a pillar of salt.

The story of Lot's unnamed wife is one of tragedy. In this way, she is like many women of the Bible; subjected to violence while readers--and sometimes other characters--watch. Some contemporary authors, like Barbara J. Essex, have delved into Lot's wife's story and tried to read more agency and depth into her character and those of other biblical women. In her book *Bad Girls of the Bible: Exploring*

*Women of Questionable Virtue*, Essex frames Lot's wife's decision to disobey God's order and look back on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:17, 26) not as stupidity, but as suicide. While this reading gives the character more agency than the biblical text does, it still fails to do justice to the woman herself because Essex--like any author writing stories of biblical people from a first-person point of view--presumes to know her thoughts and feelings and puts words into her mouth that Lot's wife might not have wanted.

This is not the only case of increased agency that nonetheless results in violence and trauma; the same can be seen in Anita Diamant's rereading of Dinah's story (Gen 34) in her famous novel *The Red Tent*, where Dinah's rape is replaced with a consensual relationship which nonetheless ends in horror. This shortfall is likely unavoidable when attempting to write voices and choices into biblical stories, but fortunately the written word is not the only medium for interpreting biblical women. At its best, visual art can call the viewer to empathize with its subject, positioning the audience with--if not as--the character in question. In this way, visual art can help resist complicity with the violence and trauma of many biblical texts.

Anselm Kiefer's painting titled *Lot's Wife* is a great example of this. It puts the audience in Lot's wife's position as it attempts to do justice not only to her, but to the horrors she witnessed and to traumas in the modern world as well. To symbolize its eponymous character's saline death, the painting contains salt. According to the Cleveland Museum of Art, whose contemporary art permanent collection houses the piece, *Lot's Wife* was created in 1989 with "oil paint, ash, stucco, chalk, linseed oil, polymer emulsion, salt and applied elements (e.g., copper heating coil) on canvas, attached to lead foil on plywood panels."

In the painting, the grey and white sky is slightly cracked and dripping towards the earth. The ground is done in a variety of browns and makes up the lower half of the painting. Train tracks cut harshly through the caked mud and trail off into the distance, their destination over the horizon, obscured by the stark sky. Though it is not visible, people familiar with the artist's work and themes may suspect--correctly--that the tracks are meant to lead to a concentration camp.

Anselm Kiefer was born in Germany in 1945, exactly two months before the Allies accepted his country's unconditional surrender. Raised in a devout Roman Catholic family in West Germany, Kiefer initially studied law before switching to art. Of his start in art school, he once said: "They told me, now you can do what you want. I had always followed rules, in the Catholic Church and in law school. So this freedom was a revelation." Themes of freedom, oppression, and terror have long been a staple of his work, which became focused and intensified when he was given a re-education record distributed in West Germany by American forces containing excerpts of speeches by prominent Nazis including Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. This began Kiefer's interest in using art to highlight and confront atrocities of the past, particularly those related to the Holocaust and World War II. Many of Kiefer's works show or allude to mass destruction and invite the audience to reckon with and bear witness to tragedy.

In the Bible, Lot's wife witnessed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the Holocaust, the world experienced the widespread destruction of life and efforts to destroy cultures, peoples, and traditions. In *Lot's Wife*, those experiences of destruction and witness are connected, which calls the viewer to reckon with Lot's wife--to join her in the horror, trauma, and sorrow of bearing witness to unspeakable destruction; to bear witness to the tragedy of her own story; and perhaps to even interro-

gate what it means to be a witness and not an accomplice in these stories of violence. The written word can be similarly used to retell stories and inspire reflection, but it is not the only method for doing so. Visual art is another, and one that in this instance is uniquely able to tell Lot's wife's experience of reckoning as well as that of the artist and--hopefully--viewers. When I talk about "reckoning with" I mean that in two ways: we as viewers must bear witness to Lot's wife's trauma--to reckon with the situation--but it is important that we do that in partnership or solidarity with her rather than simply viewing her pain. In this second sense, being *with* her in her reckoning refers to this companionship and sharing of burdens.

My own religious practice has changed dramatically since lockdown. Usually, I am tied to atmospheric worship spaces full of art and incense. Ritual and community are the basis of my practice and at the simplest level, they are what I believe in. Without in-person gatherings, I've had to radically adapt the way I engage with my faith, and it has been difficult. I've found solace in texts and art that call us to social justice and a better future, but also those that force us to acknowledge past harm and consider what reparation and restoration looks like, as well as its limits--what is beyond repair. Paintings like "Lot's wife" can be a guide, helping us think through harming and being harmed and value and pain in being a witness to harm. Perhaps in some distant future we will put works like these on the walls of our cathedrals.



Anselm Kiefer, Lot's Wife, 1989  
Cleveland Art Museum  
© Anselm Kiefer



Fault Line, 2020, discarded clothing and skin (leather), 18 x 18 inches. Copyright © Linda Friedman Schmidt

Discarded clothing (the second skin) and leather (skin) are used to comment on racism and anti-Semitism, the fragmented self and our fragmented society. This artwork was created after the December 2019 murder of innocent Orthodox Jews by a pair of heavily armed African-Americans in Jersey City, NJ USA. It shocked me to the core; I felt deeply wounded, it pained my heart. I was spiritually and physically ill during the creation of this work. Blacks and Jews share legacies of persecution and struggle. Since childhood I have had black friends; I have danced with black people on the salsa ballroom for years, a place where we celebrate our common humanity, experience acceptance, connection, and joy.

This work invites the viewer to consider the psychological trauma caused by man's inhumanity towards his fellow man. The meditative process used to transform the discarded clothing presents the possibility for transformation and healing of the self and the world. We can never have peace if we cannot understand the pain in each other's hearts. The more we interact, the more we will come to realize that our humanity transcends all differences.



Divine Partner (Between Heaven and Earth), detail, discarded clothing, 68 x 41 inches. Copyright ©Linda Friedman Schmidt

This powerful, transformational, textile self-portrait connects the material with the spiritual. The themes that course through this work are wear, tear, spiritual repair, the transformation of hardship and sorrow, and the spiritual uplift after suffering. There is a balance between heaven and earth, between our inner world and the outer world. This work focuses on living with a religious attitude, an openness to the “hands of God”, a hunger to connect with something more enduring than the outer aspects of life.

We are all between heaven and earth seeking to find a balance in these turbulent times. There is a hunger to escape from the world we hear about in the news — a world of illness, atrocities, inhumanity and evil, a world of disposable humanity, disposable clothing, and indifference. Process-focused art helps find the balance, provides a sense of meditative calm, centeredness, and containment from chaos.



Survivor, 2017, discarded clothing and textile remnants, 15 x 15 inches. Copyright © Linda Friedman Schmidt

Survivor is a Holocaust inspired artwork of remembrance and resistance to racism and religious bigotry in today's world. It investigates questions of Jewish identity, heritage, and personal history. It references the yellow fabric Star of David Jews were forced to stitch onto their clothing in Nazi occupied Europe. A cut out star patch was used to identify and brand the Jews, designed to cut them off from the rest of the population. I created this artwork in the wake of rising antisemitism by Neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and white nationalists to draw attention to the importance of resisting, persisting, and fighting religious and racial hatred and bias.

Religious faith is what kept many of the Holocaust survivors alive. A strong belief in the love and protection of God gave them hope and the desire to rebuild their lives. For other survivors the Holocaust raised a crisis of faith: How could a just God have permitted such a tragedy? There was a combination of faith and doubt. I bore witness to my parents' dark history and inherited their trauma. I too am a survivor. I keep the faith in my own way. The discarded clothing and textile remnants I use to create the work are also survivors.



Bring Heaven Down to Earth

The practical way to bring the spiritual down. This painting started with painting many 'yuds' (a Hebrew letter with the numerical value of 10). This Hebrew letter fits into every single Hebrew letter of the alphabet and is also the only one that does not touch the baseline. Bringing the yuds down is symbolic of bringing G-dliness down to earth. The abstraction of the template of the ten commandments depicted, is the practical way to do this. Bringing heaven down to earth can only be achieved by studying Torah — G-d's will and wisdom symbiotically, with prayer and Psalms written by King David with gratitude.



Beresheet

This painting was made with Beresheet - Genesis in mind which is the first of five books of the Holy Torah. The second chapter of this book is called Noach, and tells the story of the great flood that G-d sent to wipe out all negative behaviour. Once the flood was over, Noach sent out a second dove, who returned with an olive leaf which showed him that there was now dry land, and that they could exit the ark. Without planning the painting, a dove and a heart seem to surface. The dove is a symbol of peace and the heart is a symbol of love which is the cement of peace.



Miracle from G-d: Nessia

This painting was commissioned by Nessia a beautiful soul who chose to become a Jew. She had asked only that the colours be green. Knowing her well, I painted this with her, her husband and their life in mind and heart. What emerged in the centre around the letter nun for Nessia was a faint beginning of the pupil of an eye, a Star of David and a chuppah (the Jewish canopy of marriage) with a male and female figure on each side. There is also a speck of gold leaf that seemed to me to be the beginning of a pregnancy. The green symbolised growth. It was filled with Holiness-Kedusha. A short while after she was given the painting Nessia told me she was pregnant at the time.



Self Refinement: Tiferet She Be Tefiret

This painting was made during the Sefirat Haomer which is a 49 day period of self refinement from the holiday of Passover to the holiday of Shavuot. With gratitude to G-d for freeing us from slavery in Egypt, we work on all positive qualities of behaviour for the 49 days when we finally are ready to celebrate receiving the Torah which is G-d's will and wisdom, as a blueprint and code on how to live a life of gratitude, kindness, compassion, love, and joy. All with the awe and love of our creator. This painting was started on the 17 day of the Sefirat Haomer called 'Tiferet of Tiferet' which means the balancing of kindness and severity.

**My Heart is a Diamond**  
by Sammy Ginsberg

“To live fully takes courage.”  
— Some self-help book I read last year probably

a man who is afraid of women  
and a woman who is afraid of men  
drink chamomile tea at Cafe Mak  
and share experiences of romance  
one Rummikub move at a time.

Except this woman is me,  
I am anxious as I speak,  
visions of my grandma saying,  
“Never tell a man about your romantic life,  
it doesn’t matter. It’s not about the past,  
it’s about the present, it’s about the future.”

Yet, the present is  
filled with triggers like pop up ads.  
CLICK HERE to relive that time,  
that word, those phrases, this feeling  
fingering through schemas  
as I try to figure out what to say  
so that it doesn’t happen again.

He says, “I don’t know how to create collaboratively...  
my mother said I always did my own thing”  
and he is before me again

all his strengths are my weaknesses  
all my weaknesses are his strengths

“I need to go to the bathroom.”  
As I pee, the feelings become overwhelming.  
I look into the mirror. All I see is my past.  
That same feeling strikes.

Your kind broke me  
Your kind must heal me.

The feelings turn into emptiness,  
an unhealthy coping mechanism  
for caring

turns into a cramp in my leg  
a weight on my brain  
what if it happens again,  
what if I am blamed

But it is happening again  
will not wait

for my body to force the pain through my mouth  
uncontrolled and unintentional  
resistance to survive instead of resilience to liberation.

I let men play with my heart who didn’t know how to play with someone else.  
used teddy bears, film, and art to avoid feelings and forgiveness and fear.

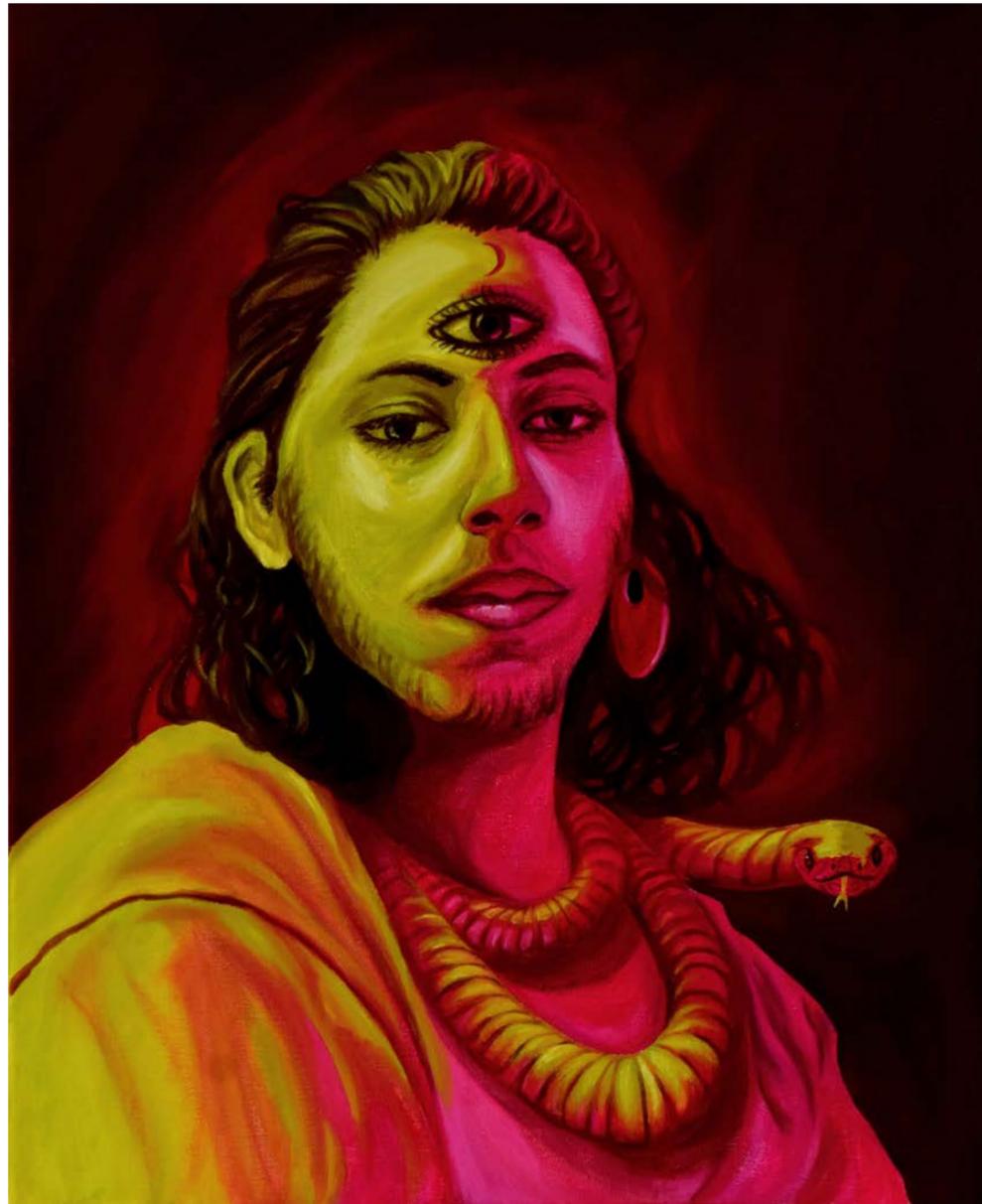
this time I will not be played with, left with my chest purged again,  
collecting the white swirling wisps of love, sewing my chest back up  
with words and friendship and tears  
this time I will not accommodate, will not go underground  
into my journal, into my poetry, into my eyes  
I will be resilient

all my strengths are my blessings  
all my weaknesses are my lessons

There are diamonds in my chest  
I reach inside  
and find my soul  
already knowing  
and listen  
whispering  
tingling

Dylan Vera

Surrealism wouldn't be possible without spirituality; it's a natural derivation of the way the psyche tries to transcend reality. In my series "Trimurti", I try to capture this feeling of trying to grasp something more, of trying to transcend our own physicality. Conversely, "Anhedonia" captures the lack of that realization, the nihilism that comes with denying religion. Reality is absurd, and no pleasure is possible.



Self Portrait as Shiva, 2020  
Series "Trimurti" (3/3)  
Oil on Canvas 40.6x50.8cm



Self Portrait as Visnú, 2020  
Series "Trimurti" (2/3)  
Oil on Canvas 40.6x50.8cm



Self Portrait as Brahmá, 2020  
Series "Trimurti" (1/3)  
Oil on Canvas 40.6x50.8cm

## Contributor Biographies

ALESSIA ZINNARI recently completed a PhD in Comparative Literature at the University of Glasgow, where she is currently working as a lecturer of Italian. Her thesis, entitled 'Mental Illness, Women's Writing and Liminality: A Comparative Study of Leonora Carrington and Alda Merini', is grounded in feminist theory and focuses on the works that the two authors produced as a result of their experiences of hospitalisation in psychiatric institutions. In 2019, Alessia contributed to the edited collection *Leonora Carrington: Living Legacies* (Vernon Press) with a chapter on Carrington's liminal journey in *Down Below*. Alessia has an interest in Surrealism, trauma studies and esoteric feminism, and in 2018 she co-organised a symposium on magic and the occult: <https://theocultturn.wordpress.com> / Twitter: @AlessiaZinnari / Email: alessia.zinnari@hotmail.com

ANNIE DOBSON is an MA Creative and Critical Writing graduate. Her lyric essays and short stories have appeared in publications such as *Ambit*, *Cipher Shorts*, *The Grapevine* and *Porridge* amongst others. She lives in London.

AQSA QURESHI'S work is fueled by their lived experience growing up in western society while being raised within a strict Muslim household. Through making, they explore the barriers they feel between these two cultures. Themes of religion and spirituality are prevalent throughout their body of work, while the overarching connection is childhood memory. Their mother passed away when Aqsa was a young teenager, and making work is a cathartic way through their past, as well as present moments of feeling. Aqsa creates a visual language, where representations of displacement, isolation and identity can coexist. Instagram : @aqsaqdoesart / @harajinn

DYLAN VERA is a visual artist. In his work he talks mainly about pain and transcendence. He covers themes like psychoanalysis and spirituality. Most of his works work as self portraits using surrealist styles and symbolic language. Dylan works with graphite, oils and digital painting. He is currently studying Visual Arts in Mérida, Yucatán. Instagram @dylanv.art

ELODIE BARNES is a poet, reviewer, fiction writer, and essayist who can be found writing in France, Spain or the UK (usually mixing up her languages). Her work is heavily influenced by her travels and love of languages, as well as Modernism and Surrealism. Her flash fiction has been nominated for Best of the Net, and she is guest editor of the Life in Languages series at Lucy Writers' Platform. Find her online at <http://elodierosebarnes.weebly.com> and on Twitter @BarnesElodie.

ERRAXUL is a project created as a collaboration between Mouad an artist from Casablanca and his inner demons. After several years of working in the shadows, Erraxul was born in 2018 out of pain and darkness from internal and external forces. Instagram @erraxul\_art

JAMES RANCE is a poet and collage artist based in York, North Yorkshire. His work is focussed around themes of religion and occultism, prophecies, shamanism, surrealist dream-scapes and psychedelia. He draws inspiration from ancient carvings and sculptures, religious iconography, Soviet-era art, dadaist collages and the natural world. His poems have appeared in *Pondweed* and *Unhomely* anthologies (Greenteeth Press, 2019 and 2020), and his debut collection, *Bagworm* (2020). His collages have been featured as the cover of *Wage Slaves: An Anthology of the Underemployed* (Acid Bath Publishing, 2020). twitter: @jrancewriter / instagram: @james.rance48

LINDA FRIEDMAN SCHMIDT is a self-taught German-born American artist and salsa dancer. She is best known for her emotional narrative portraits created from discarded clothing. She was born stateless in a displaced persons camp, the first child of Holocaust survivors who passed their spiritual trauma on to her. The focus of Linda's artwork is transformation and healing, achieving peace by piecing together a new world. She uses her art to shine a light on religious intolerance, racism, hatred, and human suffering and to introduce the possibility for repair. Her art process is part of her spiritual journey, coming to know who she is, finding the pieces that make up the patterns of her soul, putting them together in different ways to create the life she desires now. Her artwork speaks to the spirits and hearts of others without words. Although Linda has never felt comfortable with organized religion, her faith in God is strong. [www.lindafriedmanschmidt.com](http://www.lindafriedmanschmidt.com) / Instagram @lindafriedmanschmidt / Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/LindaFriedmanSchmidtArt> Linda / Friedman Schmidt Emotional Narrative Portraits / LinkedIn <http://www.linkedin.com/in/lindafriedmanschmidt> / Twitter @textileportrait

LINDZ MCLEOD's short stories have been published by the Scotsman newspaper, the Scottish Book Trust, 365 Tomorrows, and the Dundee Victoria & Albert Museum. She has published poetry with Allegory Ridge, Hellebore, perhappened, and more. She is the competition secretary of the Edinburgh Writer's Club, holds a Masters in Creative Writing, and is represented by Headwater Literary Management. [www.lindzmcleod.co.uk](http://www.lindzmcleod.co.uk) / Twitter: @lindzmcleod

LIORA GREENSTEIN was born and grew up in Cape Town, South Africa. In 1990 she met her husband, Antony Greenstein, and moved to Hong Kong with him six weeks later. They have four miracle children, David Joshua (David Yehoshua), Jessica Cara (Yehudit Chen), Mathew Aaron (Matityahu Aharon), Benjamin Gil (Binyamin Gil) and one daughter, Rafaela Bo (Rafaela Batiya OBM) up in heaven. She devotes her time, creative talent and energies into raising her family. Liora is of Jewish faith and believes that her talent is a gift from G-d. When she paints, she combines her spiritual connections with earthly matters, thereby bringing a bit of Heaven down to earth, in a desire to have G-dliness and peace on earth. Website: [www.lioragreenstein.com](http://www.lioragreenstein.com) / Instagram: lioragreenstein

MARIUS GREBSTAD is a photographer who lives in one of the most picturesque countries in the world, the beautiful Norway. Marius started his photography interest as a child, playing around with his father's old Minolta camera. Later he spent most of his allowance on disposable cameras, until the hobby really took off, as he got his first digital point and shoot camera in his early teens. He's gone on to make tons of social media content, both photo and video, all in locations most of us can only dream about. Check out some of his work on Instagram @Shotbyantsy

NATASHA GODFREY is a London-based artist and illustrator specialising in pen and ink drawings. She works around her local area of South East London mainly focusing on architectural landscapes and botanical illustrations but also works in watercolour, charcoal and etching. She works as part of a community creating work around a certain area, in Camberwell, London, joining with the Camberwell Arts Festival and as part of KCAW in Chelsea and at the Chelsea Botanic Gardens. [www.natashagodfrey.co.uk](http://www.natashagodfrey.co.uk) / Instagram @londonillustrator / Facebook @londonillustrator

OWEN SCHAEFER is a Canadian writer and poet. Prior to moving to London in 2019, he lived in Hong Kong for six years and Tokyo for fifteen, working as a writer, proofreader, and editor. He was also Arts Editor for Tokyo Weekender Magazine. His fiction and poetry have been published in a number of literary journals and anthologies, and he is currently working toward an MFA in creative writing at the University of British Columbia.

RICHARD BENBOW is a Visual Artist based in the North West of England. Prior to embarking on an MA Contemporary Art course, Benbow completed a BA Hons in Fine Art at the University of Salford 2017 – 2020, in which he graduated with First-Class Honours. Benbow won the Howarth Life Drawing Prize in 2018 and traveled to Berlin with the bursary award. His current practice focuses predominantly on painting. He explores the local landscape and reacts to his environment, researching through photography, video, note taking, and poetry. Benbow then translates this information, through his fertile imagination, to produce landscape-inspired abstractions.

ROSE HIGHAM-STAINTON writes about women's creative practice through creative nonfiction, criticism and autobiography. Her writing is held in the Women's Art Library at Goldsmiths College and has appeared in publications including *PIN-UP* Magazine, *MAP* Magazine, *NOIT*, *The Pluralist*, *StillPoint* literary journal and published in anthologies including *Field Work: New Nature Writing from East Anglia*. She has a Masters in Writing from Royal College of Art where her thesis *Three Graces, and Voids* explored notions of abundance, resistance, collectivity and selfhood. Revised extracts will be appearing in a forthcoming collection of feminist writing titled *Cusp: Feminist Writing on Bodies, Myth & Magic* and in the next issue of Parisian print magazine *Skirt Chronicles*.

ROSIE MICHALIK-DENNY is a trained Textile Designer with a love of poetry and photography. She is currently studying for a second degree in English Literature. Instagram @roseannemichalikdenny

SAMIR KNEGO is a queer, Disabled writer and artist living in North Carolina, USA with a little black dog and a bright green wheelchair. He is a writer for dubble and can be found online at @samirknego on instagram and [verydecaf.blogspot.com](http://verydecaf.blogspot.com).

SAMMY GINSBERG is a bad bitch who writes poetry, blovels, and journal entries to try to communicate to people about mental health, human rights, relationships, community, and education. She thinks writing a poem is the same process as taking a poop. She has worked at the European Poetry Festival, Action for Education, and the Teen Choice Awards. She co-edits *The Feminist Toilet* and blogs at [LiteraryPixie.com](http://LiteraryPixie.com). She has a butt tattoo. [literarypixie.com](http://literarypixie.com) / @literarypixie

SHELLEY ASHKOWSKI studied at Cardiff Metropolitan University and has a BA(Hons) and PGCE in Secondary Art & Design. With nearly 20 years of experience in the classroom Shelley has developed a broad range of skills and knowledge in art. In more recent years Shelley has refined the focus for her own work and has left the classroom to devote more time to her own artistic endeavours. Shelley enjoys observing everyday life in urban settings so people and places have become a key feature of much of her work. "My work is a commentary on the modern world. The urban landscape presents a conflicting scene: beautiful and ugly; quiet and chaotic; a place of happiness and sadness. Through my work I seek to observe the turbulent relationship between man and the world he created." Shelley's work is widely recognised for its painstaking attention to detail and level of precision. She takes influences from a broad range of artistic styles including Pop Art, Documentary Art, Photorealism and Architecture. Instagram @shelleyashkowski

MARIOLA VIEGAS ALSO KNOWN AS SKETCHING ARCHITECT is a qualified working architect based in London for over 20 years. She works with local government, schools and social landlords on a range of schemes with strong community links and a keenness to make a difference to local groups and communities. More recently she has started to create prints of buildings and places that hold a special meaning to her and this includes brutalist architecture. Living in London she gets the

opportunity to enjoy a range of buildings and uses sketching to really understand the design intention and purpose to buildings. Sketching buildings and places also allows her to share her love of buildings with a wider audience. For examples of her work visit, <https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/SketchingArchitect> and Instagram @sketchingarchitect

VERNA VALENCIA is a New York-based artist who employs collage to explore the written word. With an ear for poetry and an eye for color, she possesses an intuition for storytelling. Her avid creations assert collage as a viable medium to capture a place in time. She draws inspiration from sources as broad as the Bible (“The Return of the King”) to Dante’s “The Inferno” (“The Drowned World”) to vintage rap music (“The Slums of Shaolin”). Verna crafts imagery from “actors”, colors, and textures culled from graphic novels, religious iconography, vintage photography and natural history magazines. Her series “Artists So Hot as to Melt the Paint Off the Walls” brings to the fore visual artists who pave the way in painting, sculpture, video and installation. She keeps her finger on the pulse of the New York art world in “The Mad Deep Lit Report” and opens the floor for her fellow artists on “Collage Corner”. Finally, as a follower of Jesus Christ, she uses collage to advance the Word of God. As St. Irenaeus proclaimed: “The glory of God is man fully alive”. Instagram @valenciaverna

YAS LIME is a working-class, Brown, queer, autistic, non-binary, mixed-heritage Muslim. They are an artist-curator who lives and works in Birmingham. Their practice is varied and includes independently curated exhibitions, photography, mixed media, writing and research. Yas currently works at Eastside Projects as a trainee artist-curator. Instagram @yas\_lime\_ / twitter @YasLime\_

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