

Sasha Chaitov



Stained by the Light²

Glastonbury Galleries | 14-23 October 2017
an exhibition of painted stories

I have always believed that for a piece of art to be alive, it has to have something to say... and that something can evolve, sparking new ideas and new narratives in the viewer. That is when the work stops being a simple object and turns into a transmitter. It stops being static. The artists and the works that achieve this are multidimensional, but most of all, they are “stained by the light”... a kind of light which, once seen, cannot be forgotten or denied.

These are the thoughts brought to mind by Sasha Chaitow’s new collection of paintings. They are works that invite one into conversation, and are food for thought. They hold much room for interpretation, and do not sit quietly in a corner, they continually whisper their stories... stories both ancient and modern, timeless stories.... It doesn’t matter if you don’t immediately understand their language... it grows on you slowly, as long as you let yourself become stained by their light... Blessed are those born blind, because they do not know what they are missing. But if you are stained by the light, if you let yourself take the journey that such paintings are calling you to, then you will never be content with the “still life” of darkness...

Tassos Kouris

artist - ophthalmic surgeon - homo universalis

Corfu 2017

Stained by the Light²

an exhibition of painted stories by

Sasha Chaitow

glastonbury, october 2017

Stained by the Light I
is an original collection of neosymbolist art exhibited at
Corfu Reading Society, Corfu, Greece, 24 May - 7 June 2017

Stained by the Light II
is an extended version of the collection exhibited in May, featuring 21 new works, exhibited at
Glastonbury Galleries, Glastonbury, UK, 14 - 23 October, 2017

Contact:

Web: www.sashachaitow.co.uk
www.iconcraft.gr
www.facebook.com/SashaChaitow

Email: sashachaitow@gmail.com

All images, text, translations, and catalogue design are © Sasha Chaitow 2017
All reviews and comments are in the words
of the respective authors and used with their permission

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the author. No image may be used for any reason and in any way without prior permission in writing from the artist.

Catalogue produced by ICON Gallery
52 Guilford Street, Corfu 49100, Greece
www.iconcraft.gr

Printed and bound in the United Kingdom

contents

6	.....	Sasha Chaitow: biographical note
7	.....	about the collection
8	.....	image thumbnails - May 2017
10	.....	image thumbnails - October 2017
12	.....	the “stained by the light” collection I
34	.....	the lightstains collection (stained by the light II)
62	.....	contact and purchasing information

Sasha Chaitow

Sasha Chaitow, PhD, is a British-Greek artist, author, and scholar. A Corfu native, she is active in her fields both in Greece, the UK, and further afield.

ART

She initially trained in art alongside the established Corfu artists Spyros Alamanos, Aggelos Gerakaris, and Nerina Lymperopoulou. She studied in the Fine Arts Department of VAKALO School of Art in Athens. Between 2000-2009 she held 6 solo exhibitions in Corfu and Athens. From 2009 she focused more on her academic work, continuing to paint portraits on commission and taking part in group exhibitions. Having completed her PhD in 2014, she returned to full-time painting and established ICON Gallery in the old town of Corfu, aiming to provide a showcase for local artists. In 2015, at the invitation of Gothenburg University, she travelled to Sweden where she held 2 solo art exhibits in Lund and Gothenburg, accompanied by lectures. In 2016 she exhibited her collection “Saving the Lives of Angels” in London and Northampton in the context of the Trans-States Conference at the University of Northampton. This exhibition, “Stained by the Light” represents a body of entirely new, original work, exhibited in Corfu in what is her 10th solo show, and due to be exhibited at Glastonbury Galleries in October 2017. Sasha has also been invited to participate in a group exhibition organised in collaboration with MaLou Gallery (Athens) in Moscow, 2018.

SCHOLARSHIP

Sasha holds 2 MA degrees in English Literature (University of Indianapolis 2004) and Cultural History (Western Esotericism, University of Exeter 2008). She was awarded her PhD in Cultural History from the University of Essex



in 2014. Her research interests involve the interdisciplinary study of the relationship of philosophy and esoteric thought with art and wider culture.

WRITING

In Greek she has published a monograph *Searching for Josephin Peladan* (Daidaleos Pub., 2013; Alloste Pub., Athens 2016); a layperson’s guide to the philosophy and history of art, as well as book chapters in collective works by Archetypo Publishing. For a number of years she wrote articles for the national and periodic press. Outside Greece, she has published a number of academic papers and chapters in various peer reviewed

journals and books (USA, Sweden, Spain, Holland). She is currently working on the revision of her PhD thesis for publication with Brill Academic Press in 2018, and is preparing a series of works on Josephin Peladan with a UK publisher.

EDUCATION

Since 2003 Sasha has presented dozens of public talks and academic lectures in Greece and further afield. She is frequently invited as a guest lecturer to universities in the US and Europe. She has 14 years of experience as a teacher of foreign languages at secondary level, and 12 years in higher education and lifelong learning (University of Indianapolis - Athens 2005-2010, P.R. Academy - London 2010-2014, Andrioti School - Corfu 2014-present). She is currently developing lifelong learning courses on culture-related topics and academic skills for Andrioti School, and extracurricular classes for teenagers on art and culture.

about the collection

“ It’s six A.M., and I am working. I am absentminded, reckless, heedless of social obligations, etc. It is as it must be. The tire goes flat, the tooth falls out, there will be a hundred meals without mustard. The poem gets written. I have wrestled with the angel and I have no shame. Neither do I have guilt. My responsibility is not to the ordinary, or the timely. It does not include mustard, or teeth. It does not extend to the lost button, or the beans in the pot. My loyalty is to the inner vision, whenever and howsoever it may arrive. If I have a meeting with you at three o’clock, rejoice if I am late. Rejoice even more if I do not arrive at all. There is no other way work of artistic worth can be done.

~ Mary Oliver, ‘Power and Time,’ *Blue Pastures*, 1997 ~

This quote is the source of the exhibition title. It sums up the experience of preparing this exhibition, and is just one of several strands of inspiration that have fed into the “Stained by the Light” collection. But it is more than just the struggle that all artists can relate to; it is the subversive concept of light being able to stain. How can light be a stain? The answer that I gave, and that this collection of paintings reflects, is that light becomes a stain when darkness is dominant. When darkness is normal. And our world, at the time of writing, is dark for a myriad reasons that we are all aware of. If that is the new normalcy, then light is indeed a stain, and light, to paraphrase the late, great Leonard Cohen, gets in through the cracks... through the deep, dark, broken parts. It seeps, like water, in the hidden places. And that is what these paintings endeavour to explore... how that happens, how it looks, and what magic it can bring about.

Leading on from that, the central motive force within my compositions is the idea of metamorphosis... the light stain changes a person, once seen, it cannot be unseen. Within that process of metamorphosis is embedded the possibility of both success and failure... everything is possible, and the only constants are the darkness, the light, and the life force of both humans and nature. The conflict between the latter two form a secondary thematic unit within this collection, in which I explore the potential for the regenerative power of nature to break open the cracks that are needed for the light to seep in.

The building blocks of my compositions draw on the power of letters, words, and ancient scripts, antique and emblematic symbolism inspired by Renaissance art, all heavily influenced by the subversive power of street art. Though some of these images may appear dark, that darkness is the subterranean place of gestation; the alchemical nigredo; the chaos before order of one kind or another

ensues. If light is a stain then perhaps the swirling chaos of the creative process is the most orderly of matrices... if one knows how to look at it.

Each painting is a narrative inviting the viewer into a dialogue, so that we may share an exploration of the timeless, but also current themes in the paintings. In each one, a human form is the base for the composition. Its position, posture, or action reflects the essence of the transformation that is at hand or under way. The images – or lettering - layered on top, is often a clear key to the meanings locked within. A contrasting motif, either in the form of ancient lettering (accurately rendered words and phrases in their original tongue) or in the shape of an animal or floral design, breaks through the darkness and “stains” it with colour and light, reflecting the message that nature, spirit, and the narratives of collective memory can transform the gloom into beauty with human creativity as a driving force.

Thank you for joining me on this journey... I can only hope that by exploring these paintings, you too, may become stained by the light.

ABOUT SASHA’S SIGNATURE

Observant viewers may have noted that I prefer to sign her paintings using only my first name, and that my signature on many of the paintings from the “Stained by the Light” collection features a curious symbol beside it. This is a symbol, or personal sigil, derived from the painting *Allegory of Hope* by George Frederic Watts (1886). It depicts a blindfolded woman seated on a sphere, holding a broken lyre. According to Watts, Hope sits on a darkened Earth, holding the last lyre in Creation. The lyre has only one unbroken string, which she is about to strike. If it breaks, the universe dies. But it may not break, in which case the universe will be restored. The lyre also reflects the myth of Orpheus, the archetypal artist-initiate who inspired countless paintings, poetic, and musical compositions throughout the centuries.

The sigil beside my signature is a stylized version of this image. The lower circle stands for the globe; the upper one with the “u” shape for the lyre. The horizontal line is the crossbar, and the vertical one is that last, unbroken string.

The message is one of hope... that art, in all its forms, can strengthen that final string.

Sasha Chaitow
Corfu, May/October 2017

Stained by the light - May 2017



1. *Ecstasy - Shekinah*



2. *Adam, becoming human*



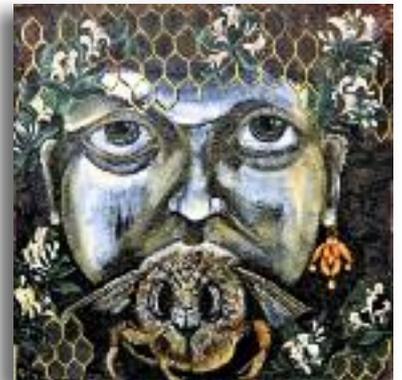
3. *The feathers of Penemue*



4. *Systema teleion*



5. *The nursery*



6. *Potnia*



7-9. *Learning the language of the birds 1, 2, 3*



10-11. *The Sacred Ibis 1 & 2*



12. *Hungry Mind*
13 *Cherry Blossom*



14. Hand of Creation



15. Cauda Pavonis



16. Guerilla Angel



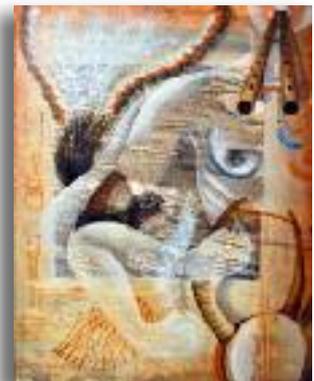
17. Atropos: medico della peste umana



18. Jocus severus



19. Coniunctio oppositorum



20. Orphea



21. Lachesis-Wyrd



22. Clotho - Verthandi



23. Atropos - Skuld

Stained by the light 2 - October 2017



24. Birth of Phanes I



25. Birth of Phanes II



26. Phanes Creates the Birds I



27. Phanes Creates the Birds II



28. Nature speaks



29. Apollo



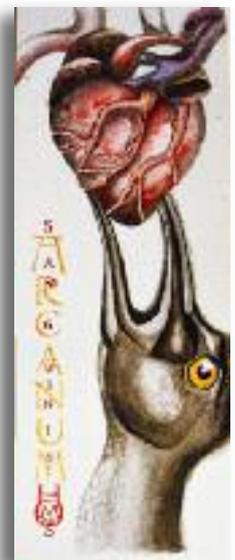
30. Medusa & the falcon



31. Homunculus (draft)



32. Furies - Eumenides



33. Arcanum Sanguinis Hominis

34 - 36. Hesperides



34



35



36

37 - 41. The Alchemical birds



37



38



39



40



42



41

42 - 48. In all things, follow Nature



43



44



45



46

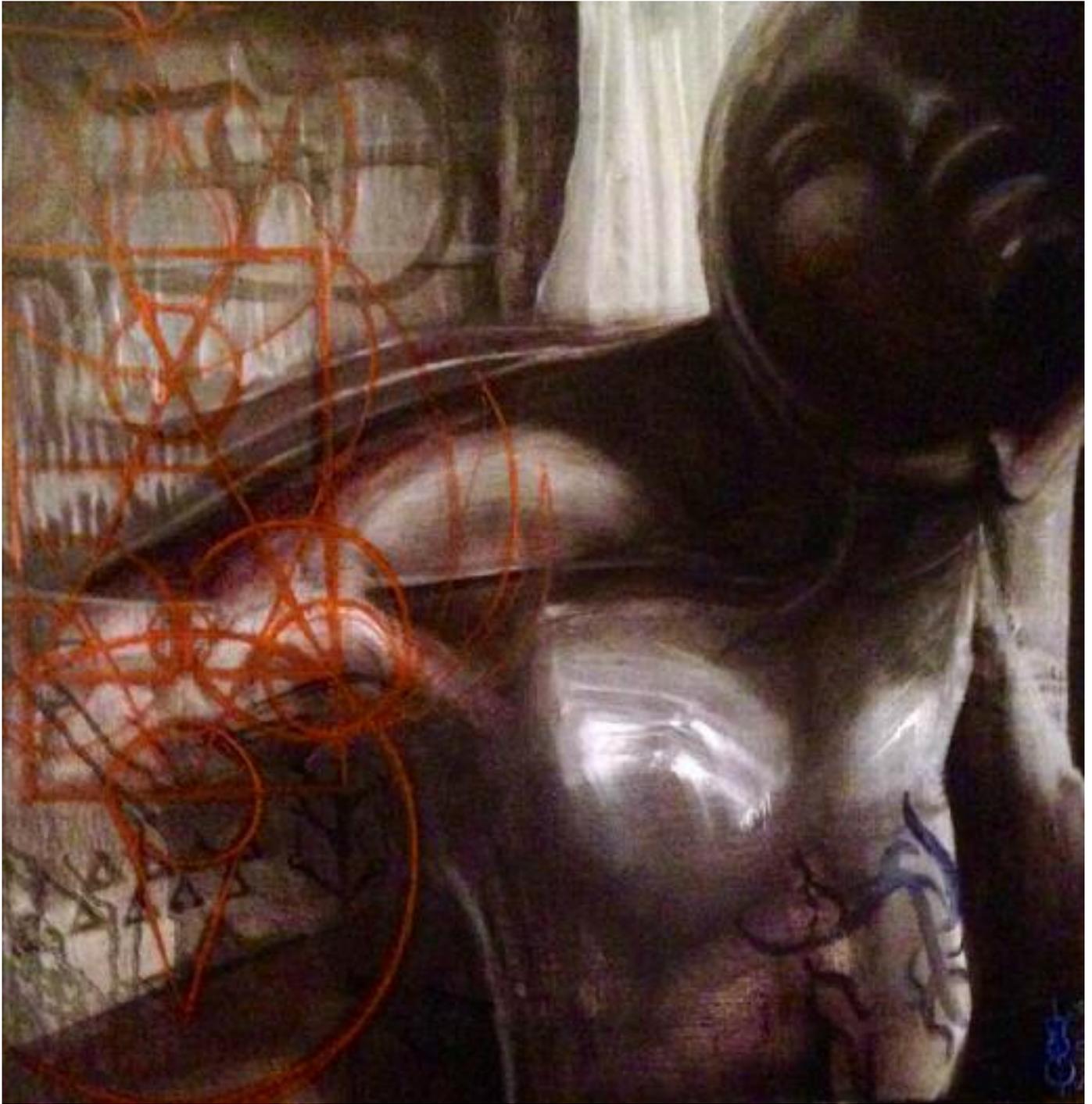


47



48

Ecstasy - Shekinah



oil on canvas 50 x 50 cm

The Shekinah (also spelled Shechinah) is a Hebrew word meaning “dwelling” and is understood to also mean the presence of God (often associated with the Divine Feminine). In Orthodox Christianity this is known as *Parousia*.

In this painting, the initiate has been absorbed in his studies and prayer, until a moment of ecstasy arrives and the

divine presence descends to possess him. This is reflected in the orange symbol which takes the form of a bird descending into matter – also reflecting the dove symbol of the Holy Spirit. The writing on the walls behind him, and on his body, includes the words “Paradise” and “Unity” in various ancient scripts.

Adam becoming human



oil on canvas 50 x 50 cm

In ancient versions of Scripture on the origins of mankind, there were two metaphysical versions of primordial man: the prelapsarian, collective Adam Kadmon, and the postlapsarian, individual Adam Ha-Rishon. Some apocryphal interpretations say that the angels themselves were the creators of humanity, and that the “forbidden fruit” was the knowledge of the divine mysteries. Because their original creation was not able to absorb such

knowledge due to its nature (made from the shadows of angels), primordial man was placed in time, made mortal, and rended in two - thus creating man and woman. Whether the apple of knowledge was a boon or a curse is a question left to the viewer – this painting is more of a meditation on how Adam too, is stained by the light even in his mortal form, and what that may mean for the human condition.

The feathers of Penemue



oil on canvas 50 x 50 cm

Penemue is the Watcher Angel who taught the skill of writing to mankind, for better or for worse. The oldest extant version of this particular verse from the Book of Enoch (Apocrypha) is written in the Ge'ez (ancient Ethiopic) script, and the name "Penemue" is reproduced on the red strip falling out of the inkpot to the right. Is writing the presence, or absence of memory? Is it all powerful, or is it a ruse? Is it futile, or vital? All this and more are explored here, while the graffiti and text, in a va-

riety of other ancient scripts, reproduce an old prayer: that human endeavour might (must) heal the world.

"The name of the fourth [angel] is Penemue: he discovered to the children of men bitterness and sweetness; And pointed out to them every secret of their wisdom. He taught men to understand writing, and the use of ink and paper."

Enoch I, 68, 9-16

Systema teleion



oil on canvas 50 x 50 cm

Systema teleion refers to the Greater Perfect System of music; the system of harmonics that give us the octaves and notes used in Western music, itself based on mathematics. It evolved in ancient Greece and ancient thinkers and philosophers spoke of its correspondences to colour, geometry, and the planets. The yellow arches depict the octaval system subdivided into chords and notes. The coloured dots correspond to the colours that Aristotle associated with the main tetrachords (chords of four). The central figure might be screaming - or singing. On the left, a nightingale and a goldfinch are singing at him - or to him

- or with him. He sits within a triangle, within a circle, within the square of the canvas, reflecting geometrical progression and a mystical notion of transformation - as the circle is squared (a metaphor among geometers for attempting the impossible) the harmony of the universe is revealed. At the top, the line "let none enter here without geometry" was written above the entrance to Plato's academy. Here it suggests that knowledge of geometry unlocks the secrets of universal harmony. The shimmering figure within the concentric circles depicting sound waves is singing himself, and the universe, into existence, with the help of the birds.

The nursery



oil on canvas 50 x 50 cm

A key theme in this series is the notion of "homo technologicus" having lost something essential as we become separated from nature, and each painting explores a sense of "nature's revenge." "A question I am asking with many of these images is: what effect might the transformative power of nature have on our almost post-human existence?"

In this painting, the crows are nursemaids, incubating a

new matrix for humanity in their bluebell wood. It is also meant as a visual wordplay - a group of crows is known as a "murder" of crows... yet these ones are gestating life. And whilst many may superficially associate crows with death or something morbid; it is worth remembering that the alchemical nigredo stage is the moment of putrefaction from which new life is spawned.

Perhaps then, there is most hope in the darkest moments.



oil on canvas 50 x 50 cm

Potnia Theron was the title given to the Greek goddess Artemis, protectress of nature and the wilds. She was considered to be the Mistress of Bees, and her handmaidens were also called "Melissia" (bees). In some parts of ancient Greece she was conflated with the Gorgon Medusa, and Gorgo was seen on her temple metope as a guardian (the most important example of this is on the Doric temple in Corfu, that dates to the 6th century BC).

The Medusa was often used as an apotropaic (parotective) figure and symbol, since her glaring eyes and

fearsome looks would turn the enemy to stone. Her earring is a copy of an original one found in Crete and dated to 1500 BC. Meanwhile apart from being a favourite flower of bees, honeysuckle, pictured here, also symbolises devotion and affection.

It is left to the viewer to decide whether the framework surrounding her is a honeycomb, and cradle of nature, or a torn wire fence through which nature is breaking free. This painting too, is a kind of invocation to the powers of nature, for Artemis to protect her own. - and that we might as well.

Learning the language of the birds i, ii and iii



3 pieces, oil on canvas 20 x 60 cm each

The *Language of the Birds* refers to two things: an ancient Sufi poem entitled “Conference of the Birds” by Attar, and more generally in mythology and mysticism, a pure, symbolic language of the divine, based on wordplay and double entendres, that is used to communicate divine teachings to the initiated.

The ghostly figure from the first set of paintings is present in various stances, but the actual message of the painting is hidden within the actual choice of birds on each one – make no mistake, these birds are not simply decorative. Each selection draws on ancient, medieval, Renaissance, and other symbolism, and each depicts a stage in the process of transformation.

In the first, the scholar, pictured with a quill, is learning the language of the birds. The bluejay stands for perseverance and vigilance. The golden oriole represents new beginnings - the metamorphosis about to occur.

The second painting draws on the symbolism of

the Fisher King (or Wounded King) of Arthurian legend, who guards the Holy Grail. Impotent, wounded, and last of his line, his impotence leaves the land barren, and can only be healed by magic. In the Grail legends, Perceval is the one knight able to heal him, but fails initially to do so... so in the third painting the watchful cranes and the hoopoe guide him towards the dwelling of the Simorgh - the legendary Phoenix who rises from its own ashes. This is a reference to Attar’s poem in which all the birds, each of which represent a human vice, are led by the wise hoopoe to seek the Simorgh to be their ruler, but only a few remain after falling by the wayside on the journey.

So this trilogy depicts the travails of the initiate seeking enlightenment (the Phoenix-Simorgh and language of the birds), his vulnerability and the necessity of sacrifice and persistence, and finally, that by following the wise hoopoe, metamorphosis and healing may be achieved.

The sacred ibis vs. the death of culture i and ii



oil on canvas 20 x 60 cm each

The sacred ibis was the symbol of the Egyptian god Thoth, gave writing to mankind. According to famed Egyptologist Wallis Budge, the Egyptians credited him as the author of all works of science, religion, philosophy, and magic.

The Greeks thought him the inventor of astronomy, astrology, the science of numbers, mathematics, geometry, medicine, botany, theology, civilized government, the alphabet, reading, writing, and oratory; the true author of every work of every branch of knowledge, human and divine. He was also the heavenly scribe, who would record whether, at the moment of judgment after death, the human heart weighed equal to a feather. allowing them to pass into the afterlife.

Here the ibis appears dead.... as culture appears to be dead in our time. Yet it grips a human heart, which is in-

cubating a baby ibis....

The foliage that replaces his wing includes acanthus leaves - used in architecture and decoration since antiquity to symbolise immortality, and baby's breath flowers, whose presence should be self-explanatory.

In his beak he carries fresh papyrus stems, ready to reinvent what he must. A papyrus stalk also forms his halo, around which the Coptic lettering spells out the name Thoth.

Basically, this painting is a prayer, whispered by the scribe in the second image, as he calls the spirit of Thoth to assist in his search for knowledge.

Nature's revenge quartet

4 pieces, oil on canvas 30 cm diameter



hungry mind



hand of creation



cherry blossoms



cauda pavonis

In a time governed by technology our imaginings now produce flesh fused with metal and composites.

Might the ultimate transgression be to revisit ancient wisdom and a primeval perception of nature for the answer to humanity's burning urge for transcendence?

Might an alternative science work with, rather than beyond nature? Could the answers we seek in our laboratories lie in unexplored corners of our psyches and flawed bodies?

Could we speak of a "art as a technology?" – because to visualise is to create? What aesthetic and narrative for-

mulations could emerge from the concept of creativity as a technology for transcendence?

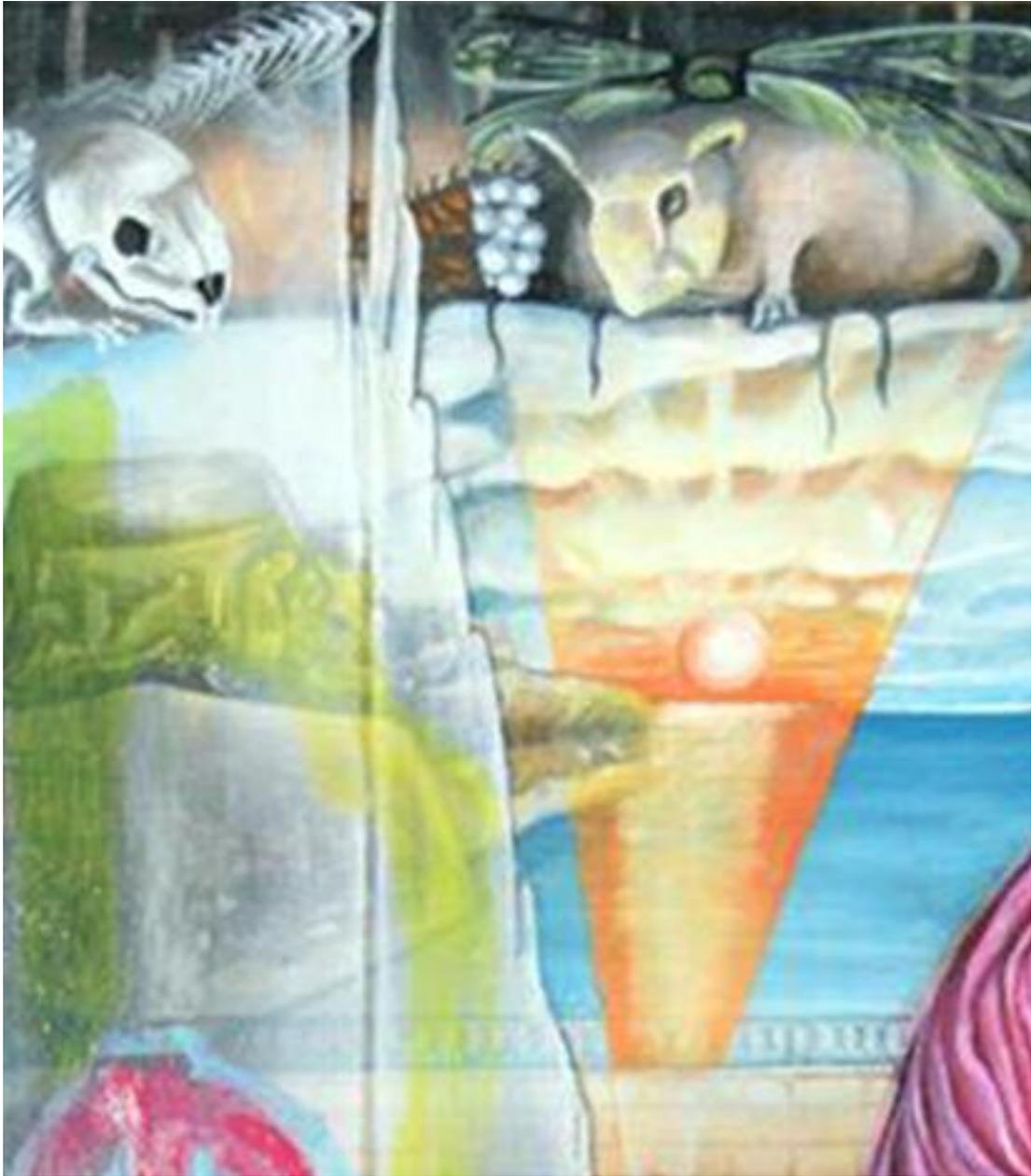
Might a triumph of nature and art over artifice be the ultimate transgression?

This is the idea informing this quartet of paintings - each of which explores the aesthetics and symbols that might depict such an outcome to the current technological search to extend and perfect human life and biopunk visions of posthuman existence. What might it look like if nature decides to bite back?



Guerrilla Angel

oil on canvas 100 x 50 cm



This is one of three “ludibria” in this series - visual puns that are playful, almost whimsical, but hold a deeper set of meanings as well. This, the first one I painted when beginning this series, sums up my view of what art is all about, and what art is for – it is for staining the darkness with the light in the most subversive way possible.

My little guerilla angel has to hide her face and wings, and go scrambling into the dirtiest places to do her job, but here she is, gazing into the sewer behind the picture post-card (of my beloved Corfu), spraying her light into the

cracks.

And so the rats sprout dragonfly wings, and the cockroaches metamorphose into pearls. The graffiti on the broken down obelisk (a familiar landmark to Corfiots) says $\Phi\Omega\Sigma$ (= light in Greek).

The word “Watcher” is tattooed across her knuckles- in reference to the Watcher angels said to guide, or perhaps have been cast down, to live out eternity with mankind. The tattoo on her left arm is a stylized version of my signature: the last lyre in the universe....



Atropos medico della peste umana

oil on canvas 100 x 50 cm



Atropos is the third of the Fates (Moirae), who cuts the thread of the human lifespan. The mask, cloak, gloves, and lavender, are all elements of the uniform worn by medieval "plague doctors" (and later immortalised in the *Commedia dell'Arte*).

Crow's feathers may stand either for mortality, or for the mysteries of the beyond. The goldfinch escaping her clutches - and literally flying off the edge of the canvas - is a symbol of immortality and rebirth. And the golden

peacocks may be interpreted either as a nod to her two sister Fates, Clotho and Lachesis (who weave and measure the thread of human life), or to the peacocks, and the gold, of alchemical lore - the choice of interpretation is up to the viewer. Behind the central figure, the superimposed clocks are another reminder of mortality.

In a way, this is a portrait of Death - who does however carry summer flowers and spares those who toil for immortality

Coniunctio Oppositorum



both paintings: oil on canvas 60 x 80 cm

The title means "unification of opposites," and that, along with the transformation that accompanies this unification, is the central theme of the painting, reflected in the central figures who are united in holding the egg (shades of the Philosophers' Stone), which contains pure gold. In some Eastern traditions, the swan is a symbol of rebirth, the universal soul, and of spiritual knowledge. The flight of the swan represents "moksha" in the Hindu tradition - the release from the cycle of reincarnation. It is also the symbol of the goddess Saraswati and her husband Brahma, who together represent the creative force. In the Greek tradition, the swan traditionally stands for Leda, who gave birth to Apollo, patron of music and the arts, and is also a sign of deliverance and rebirth.

The snake is often seen as a symbol of wisdom, while the frog is a creature that metamorphoses, but is also a symbol of healing and regeneration. The silhouette of the rest of

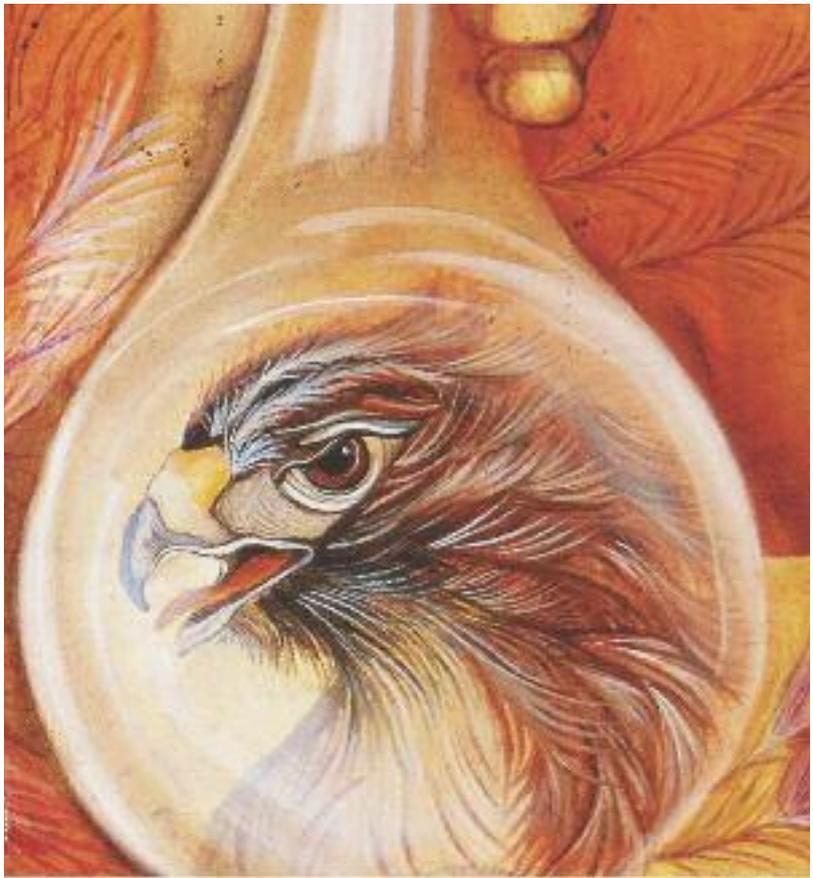
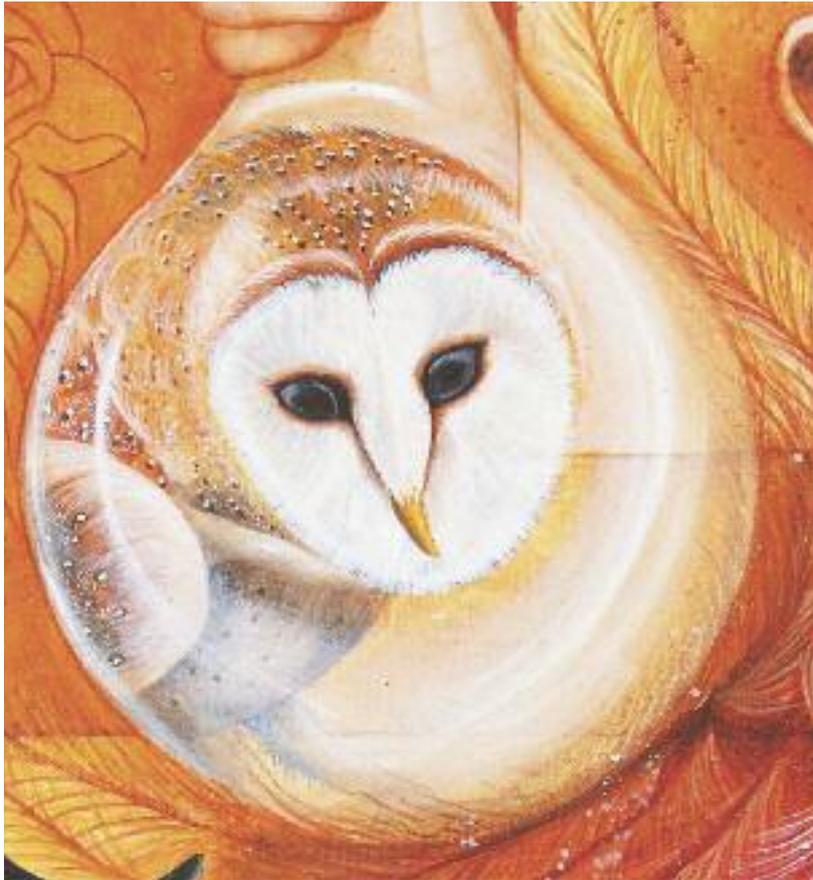
the coiled snake that is taken from Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* depicting a snake and a bird, with the snake holding the earth, sun, and moon in its mouth (suggested by the silhouettes and colours on the right). The snake and bird, also represent the unification of opposites. In Hindu and Chinese mythology, swans are said to feed on pearls, pictured here. The central figure holding grapes in his/her mouth is also a hint of the Greek god Dionysus, god of wine, divine mania, and wild nature - the counterpart and opposite of Apollo - but the grapes also resemble pearls. Altogether there are several sets of "opposites" being united here: the spiritual (swan) and wild nature (frog, snake, grapes); the methodical and logical (Apollo) and the wild (Dionysus); East and West (the respective meanings in Eastern and Western thought), and all of them culminate in the contents of the egg as the ultimate sign of the perfection of nature in the Western alchemical tradition.

Orphéa



This painting could simply be interpreted as "Allegory of Music" - the lyre being the hallmark of the mythical Orpheus who enchanted all living beings through the beauty of his playing. This bird is known as a lyrebird, in a visual wordplay that also echoes the myth. The visual arts are also reflected here, through the optical and geometric diagrams borrowed from da Vinci and featuring the golden ratio (ϕ) that demonstrates the relationship between the arts and mathematics - in another visual pun referencing the whole art collection, and the way in which the exhibition combines art and music.

The selection of a female rather than a male figure to represent Orpheus was made partly out of artistic license, partly with reference to a character named Orphéa in a book by Josephin Peladan, the French visionary author who inspired a generation of Symbolist artists. The writing is a quote from Plato's Republic (Book 3, 401d) commenting on music's power on the soul. It reads: "...Education in music is most sovereign, because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it, bringing with them and imparting grace, if one is rightly trained."



The three fates



oil on canvas 40 x 50 cm each

The trilogy of paintings in the next three pages draws on elements from both Greek and Norse mythology to depict the three Fates (known as the Moires in Greece and Norns in Norse myth) who govern human lives and to whom even the gods must answer.

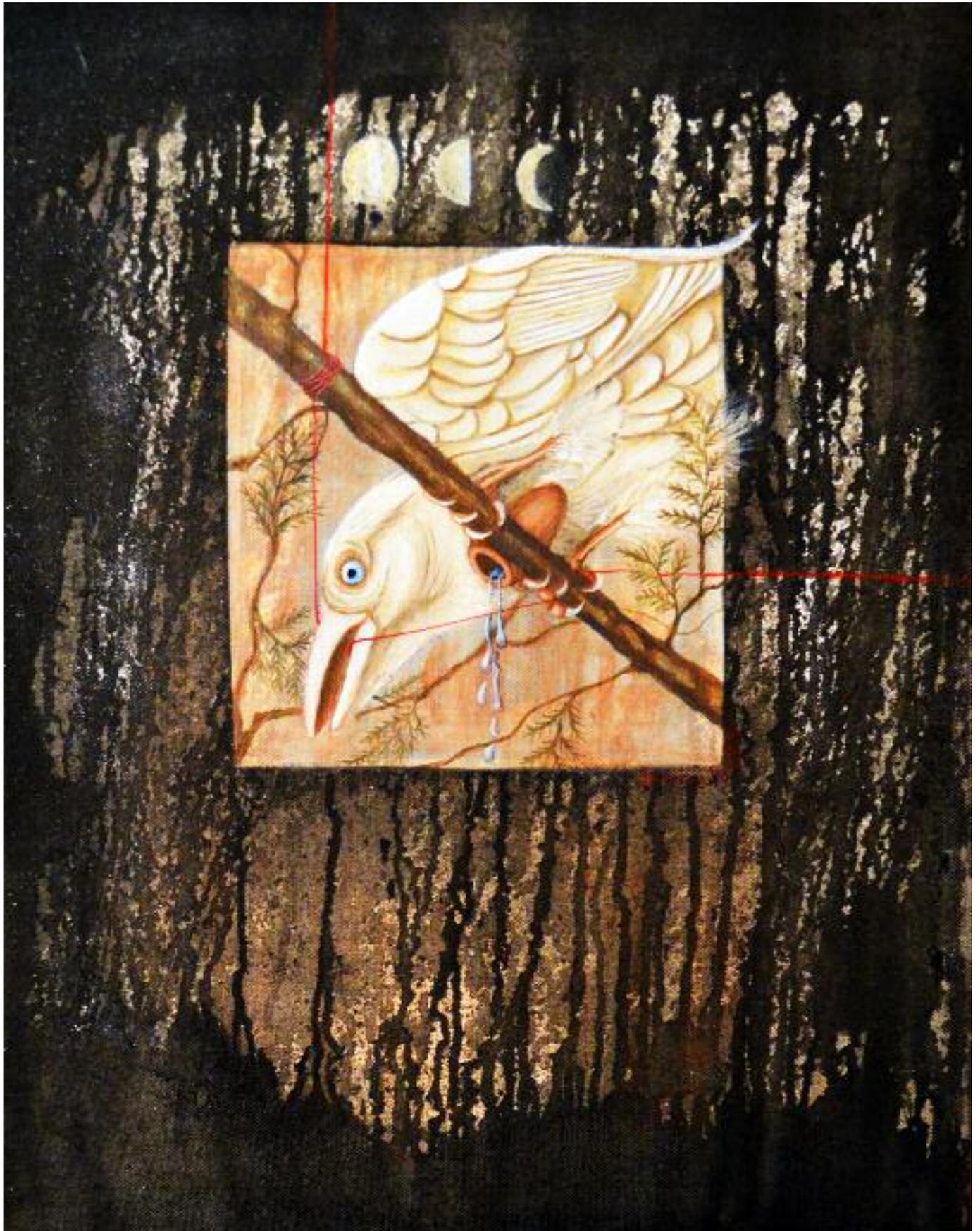
The first, **Lachesis/Wyrd**, measures the thread of life, and is associated with the past, suggested by the positioning of this white raven, looking down and back (white ravens, although rare, do exist in nature). It is white because her colour is gone/past now, and the past is known and therefore transparent. The water from her vessel has poured out (in Norse mythology the Norns carry pitchers of water, while the Greek Moires are depicted with weaving and cutting implements). The moon phases at the top depict the waning moon, on its way to darkening.

In the second painting of the trilogy, **Clotho/Verthandi** is associated with the present, as she spins the thread of life playing out in the present. Of the

three ravens, only she is in motion - since action can only take place in the present; the others are frozen in their respective moments. Her pitcher is perfectly balanced, half empty, half full of potentiality. She too, is white, because the present is known and visible. The full moon reflects the fullness of the present. Reflecting the Greek myth, she is grasping the thread of life in beak and claw as she weaves it.

Lastly, **Atropos/Skuld** cuts the thread. She is dark and mysterious, reflecting the unknown and the future. The cutting of the thread may signify death, but the droplets (water or honey? You decide!) suggest sustenance, and the acorn is a symbol for immortality. The new moon suggests transitions and new beginnings. There are choices for the viewer to make when interpreting it, reflecting the choice to see it as an ending, or a transition..

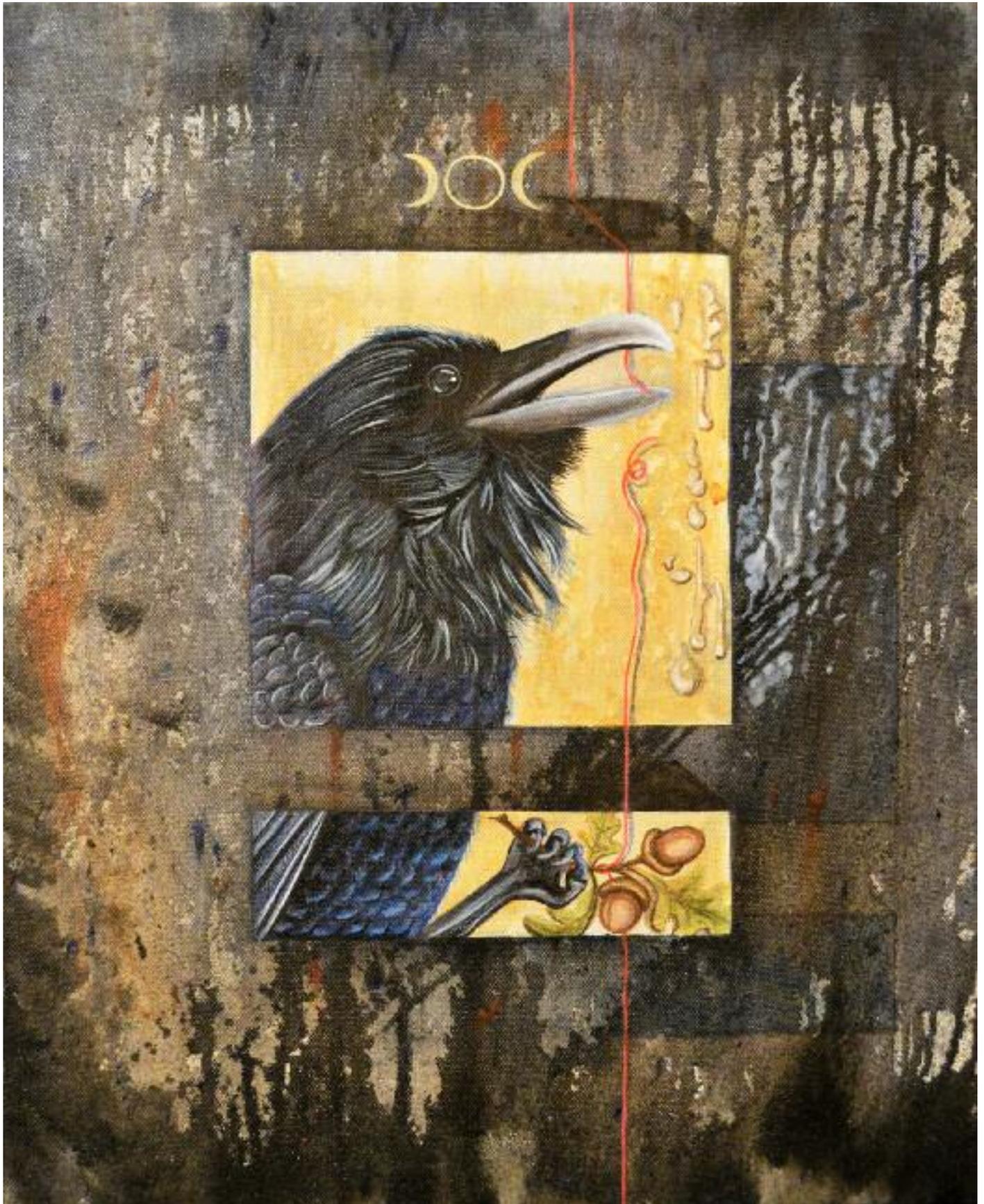
Lachesis - Wyrd



Clotho - Verithandi



Atropos - Skuld



Lightstains



The title “Lightstains” differentiates the all-new collection created for Glastonbury from the oil paintings from *Stained by the Light I* (Corfu-May 2017).

It continues to explore the same themes, drawing on ancient myths and esoteric concepts, but in a more illustrative spirit, focusing on two key sources; *The Birds* by Aristophanes, and alchemical lore.

The first six paintings are inspired directly by a description of Creation found in *The Birds*. It is spoken by a Chorus of birds led by Epops, a nightingale disguised as a beautiful woman. She addresses humans to explain how the birds were created before the gods themselves and emphasises their superiority over the rest of creation.

Weak mortals, chained to the earth, creatures of clay as frail as the foliage of the woods, you unfortunate race, whose life is but darkness, as unreal as a shadow, the illusion of a dream, hearken to us, who are immortal beings, ethereal, ever young and occupied with eternal thoughts, for we shall teach you about all celestial matters; you shall know thoroughly what is the nature of the birds, what the origin of the gods, of the rivers, of Erebus, and Chaos; thanks to us, even Prodicus will envy you your knowledge.

At the beginning there was only Chaos, Night, dark Erebus, and deep Tartarus. Earth, the air and heaven had no existence. Firstly, blackwinged Night laid a germless egg in the bosom of the infinite deeps of Erebus, and from this, after the revolution of long ages, sprang the graceful Phanes (or Eros) with his glittering golden wings,

swift as the whirlwinds of the tempest. He mated in deep Tartarus with dark Chaos, winged like himself, and thus batched forth our race, which was the first to see the light. That of the Immortals did not exist until Eros had brought together all the ingredients of the world, and from their marriage Heaven, Ocean, Earth and the imperishable race of blessed gods sprang into being. Thus our origin is very much older than that of the dwellers in Olympus. We are the offspring of Eros; there are a thousand proofs to show it.

The next six pieces explore and illustrate snapshots from this passage; from the birth of Phanes in the depths of the abyss to his creation of the birds and the narration by the bewitching Epops.

The seventh piece stands alone and is inspired by a line from *De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi*, a mid-fifteenth century treatise on the art of dance by Domenico da Piacenza, according to whom a dancer must “learn to dance with phantasmata” and “freeze at the end of a step as if one has seen the head of the Medusa... that is, turn to stone in one instant and then immediately take flight like the falcon swooping on its prey.” My thanks are due Alkistis Dimech for sharing this source with me as part of her talk at the ART=PRAXIS symposium accompanying this conference.

These works were designed with the full framed presentation in mind. Each painting, made with calligraphy and natural inks on Fabriano paper (some of the best in the world), is mounted on Italian velvet board with a gold inlay.

Birth of Phanes!

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink on Fabriano cotton paper. Mounted on black velvet mount with gold inlay.
Image dimension 23 x 30.5 cm. Mounted dimension 30.5 x 38 cm.



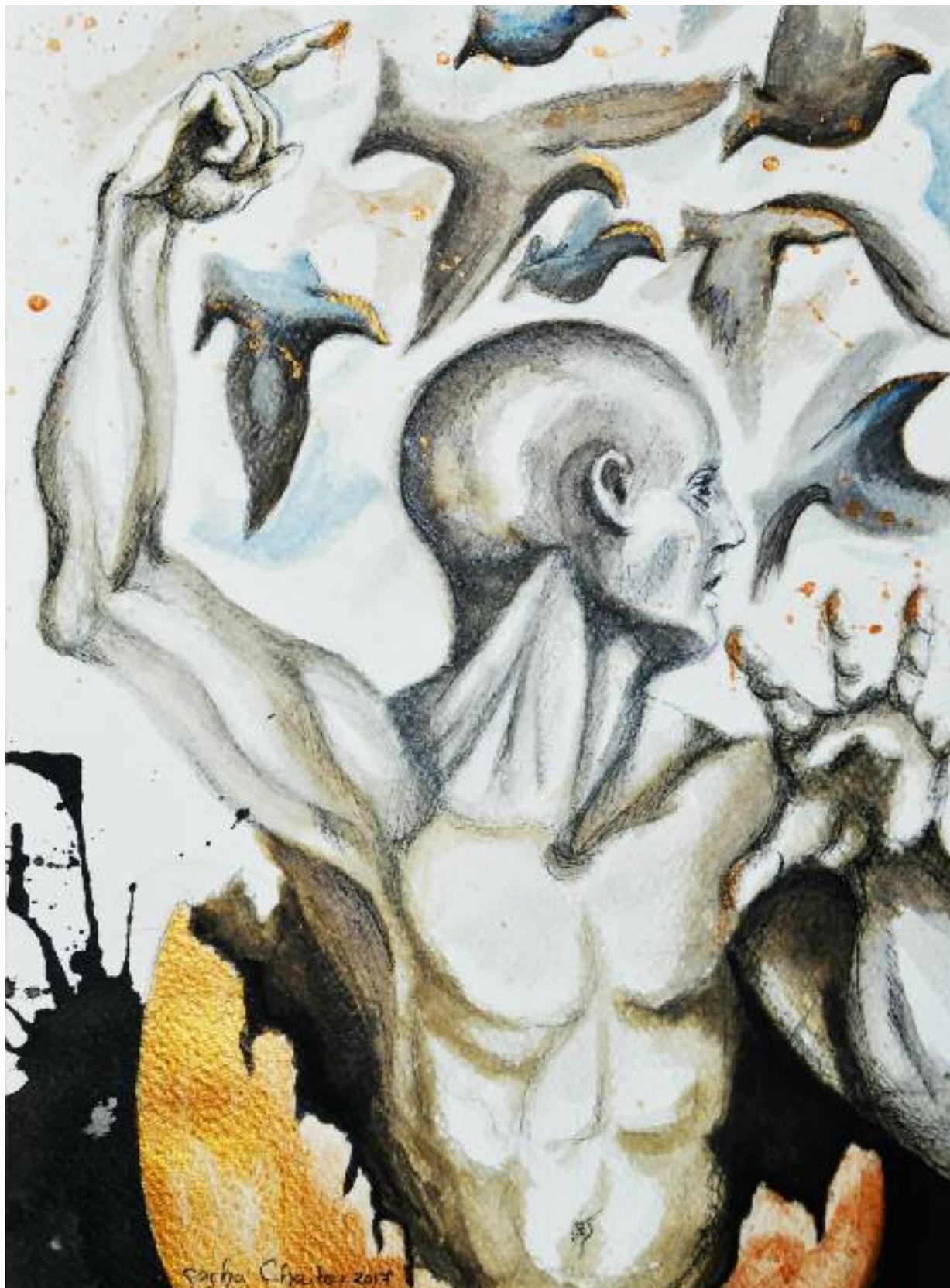
Birth of Phanes 2

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink on Fabriano cotton paper. Mounted on black velvet mount with gold inlay.
Image dimension 23 x 30.5 cm. Mounted dimension 30.5 x 38 cm.



Phanes creates the birds!

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink on Fabriano cotton paper. Mounted on black velvet mount with gold inlay.
Image dimension 23 x 30.5 cm. Mounted dimension 30.5 x 38 cm.



Phanes creates the birds II

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink on Fabriano cotton paper. Mounted on black velvet mount with gold inlay.
Image dimension 23 x 30.5 cm. Mounted dimension 30.5 x 38 cm.



Nature speaks

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink on Fabriano cotton paper. Mounted on black velvet mount with gold inlay.
Image dimension 23 x 30.5 cm. Mounted dimension 30.5 x 38 cm.



Apelle

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink on Fabriano cotton paper. Mounted on black velvet mount with gold inlay.
Image dimension 23 x 30.5 cm. Mounted dimension 30.5 x 38 cm.



Medusa and the falcon

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink on Fabriano cotton paper. Mounted on black velvet mount with gold inlay.
Image dimension 23 x 30.5 cm. Mounted dimension 30.5 x 38 cm.



Furies : Eumenides

One of the best known “triads” in Greek mythology, the Furies, or Erinyes - Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone, were the daughters of the Titans, or of Nyx according to other accounts. Denizens of Erebus (primordial darkness), they visit the vengeance and justice of the gods upon the guilty.

However, in Euripides’ play *Orestes*, the Furies are present at his trial. He is accused of matricide and the only possible punishment is death. Yet, Athena presides over the trial and forces a debate on the utility of retributive punishment, Athena persuades them to break the cycle of blood vengeance and offers them a new role as kindly goddesses with the capacity for mercy as well as judgment. Thus they acquire a secondary, beneficent aspect as the Eumenides (literally “The Gracious Ones” or the Semnai (Venerable, or Chaste Ones). It has been suggested that these names were also used euphemistically to avoid attracting their negative attention.

This triptych is my imagining of the Furies as the Eumenides - with sweeter, gentler features, but with obvious strength and chthonic elements. As always, the snake of wisdom is present, able to advise or to bite, and the Eumenides’ human features turn into birdlike ones at the neck to remind us that their deeper nature is never too far away.

On the following pages, another triad, the Hesperides are the guardians of the Garden of the Evening and of the tree with the golden apples that confer immortality. *Aigle* (dazzling light), *Erytheia* (reddening sky) and *Hesperethusa* (sunset glow) are yet more daughters of Nyx. The dragon Ladon guards the tree from the Hesperides themselves as well as other thieves, placed there by the ever-jealous Hera, to whom the tree belongs.

My rendition here explores the personalities and possibilities of these personifications of the evening light through a more modern aesthetic that suggests a different kind of immortality of myth...

Ink and oak gall on Bockingford cotton paper. Black card mount with burgundy velvet border. Image dimensions 14.8 x 42 cm each. Total mounted dimension 62 x 78.5 cm.



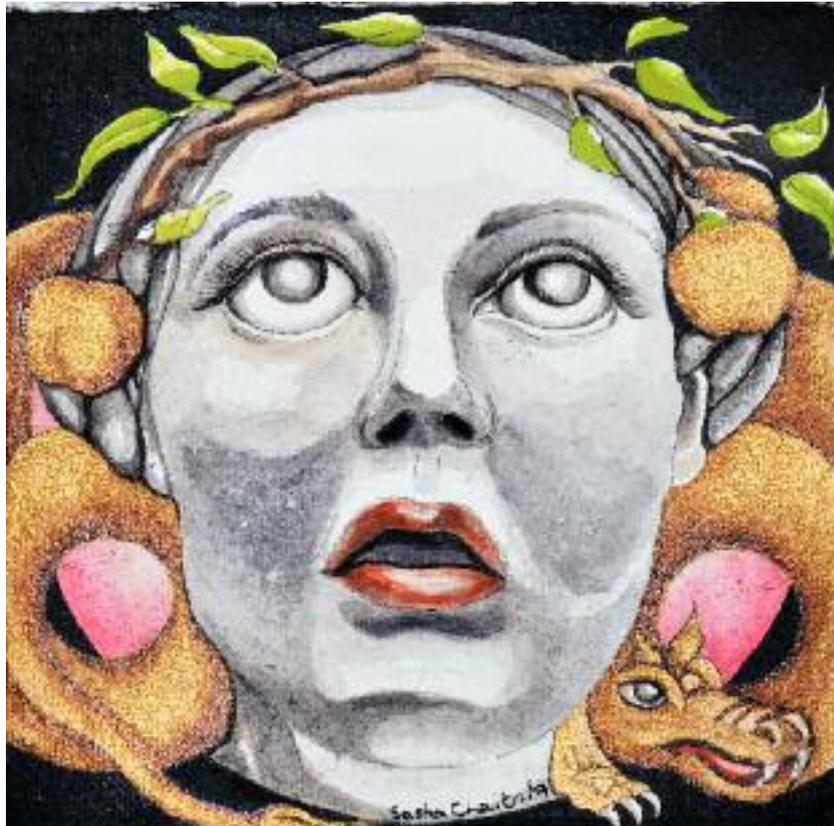


Hesperides

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink on handmade Khadi paper. Mounted on black velvet mount with gold inlay.
Image dimension 20 x 20 cm each. Mounted dimension 33 x 33 cm each.



Erytheia



Aigle and Ladon



Hesperethusa

The notion of the homunculus - or miniature, preformed man created through artificial or magical means appears in stories and occult tales of many cultures, from Zosimos of Panopolis (who speaks of an *anthroparion*, or little man), to the Golem of Kabbalistic lore, to the homunculus of alchemical experimentation, first named thus by Paracelsus in his *De homunculis* (c. 1529-1532) and *De natura rerum* (1537).

Paracelsus writes: *That the sperm of a man be putrefied by itself in a sealed cucurbit for forty days with the highest degree of putrefaction in a horse's womb, or at least so long that it comes to life and moves itself, and stirs, which is easily observed. After this time, it will look somewhat like a man, but transparent, without a body. If, after this, it be fed wisely with the Arcanum of human blood, and be nourished for up to forty weeks, and be kept in the even heat of the horse's womb, a living human child grows therefrom, with all its members like another child, which is born of a woman, but much smaller.*

There are numerous interpretations of this curious-practice, some sinister, some magical, some whimsical - and some even attempt to be literal. Tales of the Golem in particular focus on the futility of attempting to 'play God,' since the creature that is animated lacks a soul and is never fully human. My own interpretation is symbolic and draws on echoes of the myth of Prometheus and the Greek story of human origins, whereby the original creatures of clay are weak and spiritless, but Prometheus gives them divine fire and teaches them the arts and skills of creation. Similarly, the homunculus stands for the conscious creation of the self, and it requires consistent attention (hence the laboratory apparatus) and lifeblood (commitment and sacrifice) in order to be born. The alchemist must give his own heart to feed it, and by participating in the act of creation, becomes himself a small creator. For, as Hermes Trismegistus says: *If then you do not make yourself equal to God, you cannot apprehend God; for like is known by like.*

Ink and oak gall on Bockingford cotton paper. Mounted on cream card mount with burgundy velvet border. Image dimension 14.8 x 42 cm each. Mounted dimension 48.6 x 66 cm



Sanguinis Hominis



Preparatory sketch for *Arcanum Sanguinis Hominis*. Pencil on watercolour paper. Mounted on burgundy Italian velvet. Image dimension 11 x 11 cm, mounted dimension 26 x 26 cm.

The five Alchemical birds

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink and liquid metal on handmade Khadi cotton paper. Mounted on matching Italian velvet mounts (black, blue, or burgundy). Image dimension 30 cm diameter. Mounted dimension 44 x 44 cm.



In keeping with the theme of transformation, and wanting to explore the symbolic use of birds and animals still further, the alchemical birds have a natural place in this collection. I drew inspiration and ideas for these images from a 1979 essay by Adam McLean, “The Birds of Alchemy,” (Hermetic Journal no. 5), in which he provides insight into the symbolism - alchemical and spiritual - of these five birds which are ubiquitous in alchemical lore.

They reflect five key stages in the alchemical process (which can be simplified to three or extended to twelve). The first, *Putrefactio*, reflects a period of decomposition and gestation; materials must break down before they can be reconstituted into something new, and death is necessary for rebirth to occur, whether spiritual or literal.

The second, *Ablutio* (literally, washing), reflects both the mythical birth of twin gods Apollo and Artemis subtly reflected in the gold/sun and silver/moon colouring behind the swan, reflecting Leda, mother of the two gods. The ultimate product (after many repetitions of the process), is the Albedo stage of alchemy (also known as the White Queen), that emerges as the purified material that is eventually transmuted into the Philosophers’ Stone. Here she appears from the waters, holding the seeds that promise the goal in the form of red roses.

This is followed by *Distillatio*, or the *Cauda Pavonis* stage

- where the materials are dissolved and recombined, refined more and more each time until they begin to display their potential for transformation.

The Pelican is found in much alchemical, esoteric, and Christian iconography. It is traditionally depicted as piercing its own breast to feed its young with its blood in a symbolic representation of self-sacrifice. Here, Adam McLean suggests it also refers to the spiritual evolution of the individual undertaking the alchemical process and the refinement of both body and soul; hence the title *Exaltatio*. Lastly, the mythical Phoenix emerges from the flames in the *Rubedo* (reddening) phase of alchemy which presages the creation of the Philosophers’ Stone, the key to immortality and a discovery of the secrets of nature.

For each depiction I have maintained the original symbolism, but chosen an aesthetic that emerged from my materials. This handmade paper has a particularly rough texture, which contrasts with the harmony of the circular shape, just as nature is both rough and harmonious. I have played with the geometry and aimed to reflect the spiral ascent of the alchemical process in all five pieces, and worked with the textures to allow the strong ink tones to reflect the colours of the alchemical process. The velvet mounts set off the shapes and colours, echoing the same contrast and reflecting the final refinement sought through this procedure.

Purtofacto



Distillatio



Exaltatio



Abblute



Rubedo



In all things follow Nature

Ink, oak gall, walnut ink and liquid metal on handmade Khadi cotton paper. Mounted on matching Italian velvet mounts (black, blue, or burgundy). Image dimension 30 cm diameter. Mounted dimension 44 x 44 cm.

The title of the first image in this final thematic unit, *Kairos*, is a Greek word meaning “opportunity” or “auspicious” moment. It reflects Carl Jung’s ideas on synchronicity inspired by the flight of a scarab beetle through his window, both through the depiction of the scarab itself, and through the symbolism of timepieces melding and criss-crossing invisibly through time.

This exhibition was born out of a series of true synchronicities. As I completed the *Alchemical Birds* and contemplated my next steps, I returned to the idea at the heart of this exhibition: the all-powerful force of nature that shines through even in the most urban and modernised settings. The little green scarab became the mascot of the Glastonbury collection (hence its presence on all the exhibition signage). The bee, *Melissae*, came next, firstly because it had haunted me since I painted *Potnia* earlier in the year, secondly because I wanted to begin combining the strands of the exhibition, nature, myth, and some of the most ancient deities. The same rationale lies behind *Pandora’s nightmare*. It is the quintessential example of light staining life... the white moth of Hope flying out of Pandora’s box when all has turned to darkness.

VITRIOL marks a nod back at alchemy expressed more literally through natural processes. I wanted to move away from the stylized symbolic depictions, and use realism to show how these processes are present within nature itself, and work with an aesthetic that would connect the mythical with the real. Thus, the branch, snail, frog, and butterfly respectively represent the four key stages of alchemy... from the vegetable to the slowly animated (but hermaphroditic), to the amphibious and more mobile, to the airborne...

The final three pieces continue this line of exploration through combining the mythical with a kind of magnified realism. *Nature rising* deliberately reflects this; the stag beetle was often used as an alternative to the more familiar blue scarab in Egyptian art, and I selected an earthy, deliberately asymmetrical depiction in combination with a whisper of Egyptian glory. The ankh of eternal life is still held in the gritty jaws of an ungainly flying beetle... and that is the joy of it, reminding us perhaps that the seeds of the Philosophers’ Stone are to be found in inglorious places...

In a similar spirit, *Sweet tooth* was inspired by a BBC photo in which a death’s head moth really is stealing honey from a hive. Here I have adapted the image (it is original, not copied) to be read on many levels. It reflects the intelligence of nature (the similarity of the moth’s colouring to that of bees); the whimsy of an often despised creature stealing honey; and the contrast between the death’s head and the longevity of honey.

Finally, the series could not be complete without a “proper” blue scarab. As before, I went for a more naturalistic depiction. Knowing this would be the last piece, I wanted to bring it full circle (pun intended). Thus the background (perhaps reflecting a slightly Vorticist aesthetic) attempts to bring a sense of order to creative chaos, the world beginning to take form as it emerges from Erebus (the abyss), as did Phanes at the beginning of the *Lightstains* collection. As to the snake and the title Life and Knowledge; the snake, as elsewhere, is a symbol of wisdom (and the dangers encountered in seeking it), while, echoing Egyptian tradition, the beetle represents life.

Kaitos



Melissae



Pandora's nightmare



V.I.T.R.I.O.L



Nature Rising



Sweet tooth



Life and knowledge



purchasing information

Purchasing from the exhibition

Unless otherwise noted, paintings in this collection will be on view and available for purchase through Glastonbury Galleries between 14-23 October 2017. Paintings are priced in £ GBP and all payment methods are supported.

For exhibition purchases please contact

Glastonbury Galleries, 10A High Street, Glastonbury, +44 (0) 1458 837888

www.glastonburygalleries.com
info@glastonburygalleries.com

After 23 October 2017, please contact Sasha for further information.
Some works may be in her possession, some may be represented by various galleries.

Artist contact

www.sashachaitow.co.uk
sashachaitow@gmail.com

ICON Gallery, 52 Guilford Street, Corfu 49100, Greece, +30 26614 00928
www.iconcraft.gr

Purchasing directly from the artist

Direct purchases can only occur after the exhibition is complete. Please email Sasha for further information. Layaway/installment plans are available for direct purchases only.

Commissions and licensing

Images can be licensed for use in printed material or album art. Sasha also undertakes a wide variety of artwork on commission. Please view her online portfolio for details: <http://iconcraft.gr/icon-artists/sasha-chaitow-2/>

Contact Sasha to discuss your project via sashachaitow@gmail.com.

Terms and Conditions

Paintings purchased at exhibition or after viewing in person cannot be returned and will not be refunded.

Direct purchases, layaway plans and commissions require a 30% deposit, with installments to be agreed thereafter. Paintings purchased online are subject to a 7-day return claim. Buyers must communicate with Sasha within 7 days of purchase to arrange a return. Return postage and insurance is the responsibility of the buyer. The painting must arrive undamaged and in its original condition for a refund to be issued. Refunds will be issued only after the safe return of the painting.

PLEASE NOTE: For the duration of the “Stained by the Light II” exhibition at Glastonbury Galleries, all conditions printed here are superseded by the terms of the hosting gallery. Online and direct purchases may only take place after the exhibition has ended on October 23rd 2017.



Lacerating! Her work is spectacular. I love her paintings....and what she writes about them. She is certainly tuned into the mythological, alchemical, all those wonderful areas the Jungians explore.

Jacqueline Carleton, PhD | *New York 2017*
Founding Editor, International Body Psychotherapy Journal; National Institute for the Psychotherapies

She is a talented painter, very capable and skilled.

Laura Walford | *London 2017*
Belgravia Gallery, Mayfair

We should therefore be considerably thankful for the tireless and scholarly work of Dr Sasha Chaitow. She has shone light upon that, which to most admirers of Symbolist Art, would have remained impossibly obscure. Not only is Sasha Chaitow a respected academic in the field of esotericism, she is as well, a practicing artist and gallerist. Her exhibition of 2016 entitled 'Saving the Lives of Angels' has offered an enlightening study, through her oil paintings and accompanying commentaries, into the Platonically influenced but highly individual esoteric philosophy of Peladan.

William Rose | *London 2017*
author | *Talisman Fine Art Gallery*