

3. the spirit issue

# QUEER QUARTERLY

Fall 2021

















(pages 1-12)  
**Roberto Navarrete**  
(1) *Aché Boveda*,  
(3) *Communion*,  
(4) *Boveda II*,  
(5) *SIN Titulo*,  
(7) *Aché I*,  
(8) *Aché II*,  
(9) *Mythical Transition*,  
(10) *Conception*,  
(11) *Offering I*,  
(13) *Boveda I*,  
Photography &  
Mixed Media Installations.

Poetry  
**Benediction**  
Glory Cumbow

May you have ears to truly hear,  
so that you can listen and contemplate in silence  
the prophetic words of the ostracized.

May you have hands that reach deep,  
gripping evil by the root,  
instead of being distracted by the branches.

May your hymns and prayers  
not be uttered for self-gratification,  
but as a reflection of work already in progress.

May you have eyes to see the individual soul,  
for the sake of the collective,  
in defiance of the institution.

So be it.





# QUEER QUARTERLY

Issue 3  
Fall 2021

## the spirit issue

# 38

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#### Editor/Publisher

K Ryan Henisey

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Natalie Madden

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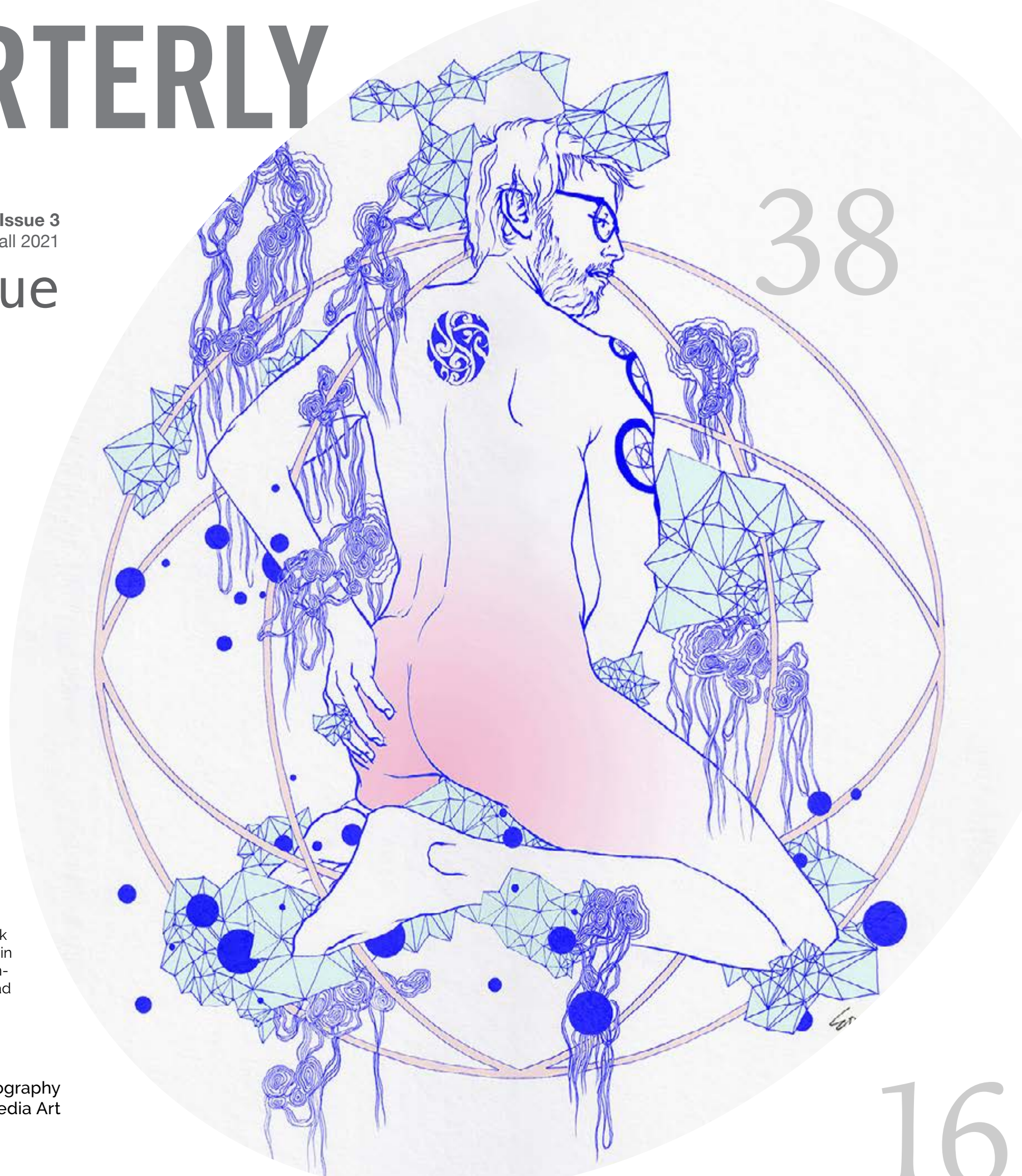
Miss Brightside  
J Casey Doyle  
Eduardo Gutiérrez  
Chuck Hohng  
Eugene Huffman  
Joe Klaus  
Cornelia Kurtew  
Roberto Navarete  
Arthur Taussig

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Glory Cumbow  
Corey Saucier  
Brian Sonia-Wallace  
S E Toulouse

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Pentz, Alistair McCartney, M Rudder, Benjamin  
Schaefer, Frank Paublo Tagaban, Jack Thom-  
son, Spencer Toulouse, John Waiblinger, Brad  
Welch, Sean Yang



(cover) B Jeppson, Ardha Padmasan (*Half Lotus*), Photography  
(back cover) Miss Brightside, *The Exaggerated Woman*, Mixed Media Art

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## Tip our Artists

Queer Quarterly Magazine is free to read and open for free submissions. Give to our volunteer editorial staff and contributing artists, writers, photographers, curators, and more. Queer Quarterly is a project of K Ryan Henisey.

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## from the editor

Hello artists and art lovers!

Art is my church.

I come back to it over and over again—creating and consuming. Art gives me focus, drives my passions, and feeds my spirit.

But, my perception of art is not the same as others—nor are the things that inspire me, the things that invoke worship. And worship is an interesting concept when applied to LGBTQIA+ communities.

Many submissions to the spirit issue (3) were focused on anxiety with religion, or overcoming past harm caused in the name of religion. Many others were focused on making religion out of sexuality. I struggled with both of these. The first, because I relate so well to those who have turned away from established religion. The second, because I have personal need for Queer Art to be more than photos of naked men and drawings of dicks.

These are battles I had to overcome with this issue, because I feel a responsibility to the artists and the art lovers in queer communities and in isolation across the globe to reflect the breadth of Queer Art as it is submitted to me.

So in this issue, there is a rejection of establish-

ment, especially faith-based establishment. And there are a lot of dicks.

There's much more tucked within these pages as well: Biblical stories with an aggressively queer re-write, fiction on love and belief, essays, photographs, paintings, installations, and more.

So I invite you to join me at my church. The church of art.

—Ryan



Poetry

# No Ocean at All

[Brian Sonia-Wallace](#)

## San Antonio, Somewhere on Twitter

*This poem was written as part of the Pride Poets' Hotline in June 2021 in response to a story told by a caller. The caller who inspired this poem was Jo in Texas, who shared the weight of being an elder queer and community organizer in a hostile state.*

All the Selina drag queens  
are good, even when they're bad.  
My friends are queer, are artists a  
re enveloping. They stamp me  
and send me postmarked  
everywhere, from this state  
where our governor is trying  
to destroy us.

Block by block, is it safe?  
For this body, for these bodies?  
The opposite of a gun is  
the dancing butch on the corner  
With arms full of water.

We make our vows in tank tops,  
swear on every frightened sweaty teenager  
an oath to protect, on every genderfucking  
low-rent queer strung out on selfhood,  
an oath to protect, on every Selina drag queen,  
every belt buckle & soft neck,  
every RuPaul meme every mental breakdown e  
very day every time

I wake up in this body  
and put on the whole world.

## OUT

The boys stagger cawing across Robertson  
like Mary Oliver's wild geese, harsh & inviting  
down this ancestral flight path of faggots  
as I set down to write a nature poem.

They are swish-wristed wrestlers,  
pleading heathens set loose,  
marching for black lives, for Britney Spears,  
shirts off, fanny packs loose across one shoulder.

History spikes me, enters me, brokers  
no consent. It pimps me out, puts me on my knees  
to test my gag reflex. These are my people,  
I convince myself. I take some convincing.

This is my swish-flick, my good gravel,  
my bones my bones — skeleton, you have so much  
meat! Soft animal, come in. Here is everything  
you ran from for so long. Come in.

You must be lonely from all that running.

## No Ocean at All

On a shy bluff  
of the alpine lake  
the sun-baked boy  
swims naked. The sun  
explodes! A million shards of light  
sculpture the water.

The rock says leap.  
Each wave's a dare,  
My no-tomorrows invitation  
To stir a lake to ocean.  
The water droplets on his chest  
Shine a perfect constellation of my desire.  
We talk about coves that have been carved  
In each of us by rough winds, his husband,  
My clean break at last, our parents, passed.

Those eyes maroon me.  
My hunger grows until at last I eat  
my shyness. We are sculptures come  
to life and running from our makers,  
We chart course under a slivered moon  
Without waiting for darkness.

Our eyes catch and hold. This bluff  
of boy, baking alpine against me,  
His lips sculptors, arms dark slivers  
That chart explosions down my sides.  
The dogs bark.

I am shipwrecked on sunset.

## **Faggot #12, No Relation**

You're getting old, Millennial, with your  
love of dick, and active Facebook account.  
Desert wars and Craigslist personals  
    before all the kids were gay.  
Your politics have never smelled like death.

Your parents read Marx.  
They remember the wasting  
Castro hospital beds in the 80's,  
    burnt libraries of lovers.  
Alexander! Alexandria! Exhumation.

2nd Gen Queer, you speak both  
languages but neither fluently, cringe  
    at rainbows — so old country — but discover  
painted nails and armpits anew.

Columbus the same bad world.  
Notice bones only once no one is left.  
All your elders are dead.  
    All your elders are dead  
& you're not even really related, sweetheart.

Bees make hives in all the wounds.  
We rail against extinction & try the word  
Queen  
    like someone taught us.  
Like we even knew the half of it.

## **The Unbuilt City after Adrienne Rich**

shoes Louis Vuitton,  
contact lenses blue,  
taco man at the gay pool party says “man”  
to all the boys in painted nails  
& pained postured —

I suck my gut  
in. Scarf my meat but don't  
touch the tortillas.

I've been carving myself  
toward beauty,  
disillusioned with words  
in the successive eclipses  
of Reggaeton, House, Abba.

You don't just join a world like a Discord server.  
Whenever we make a technology,  
we put a password on it.

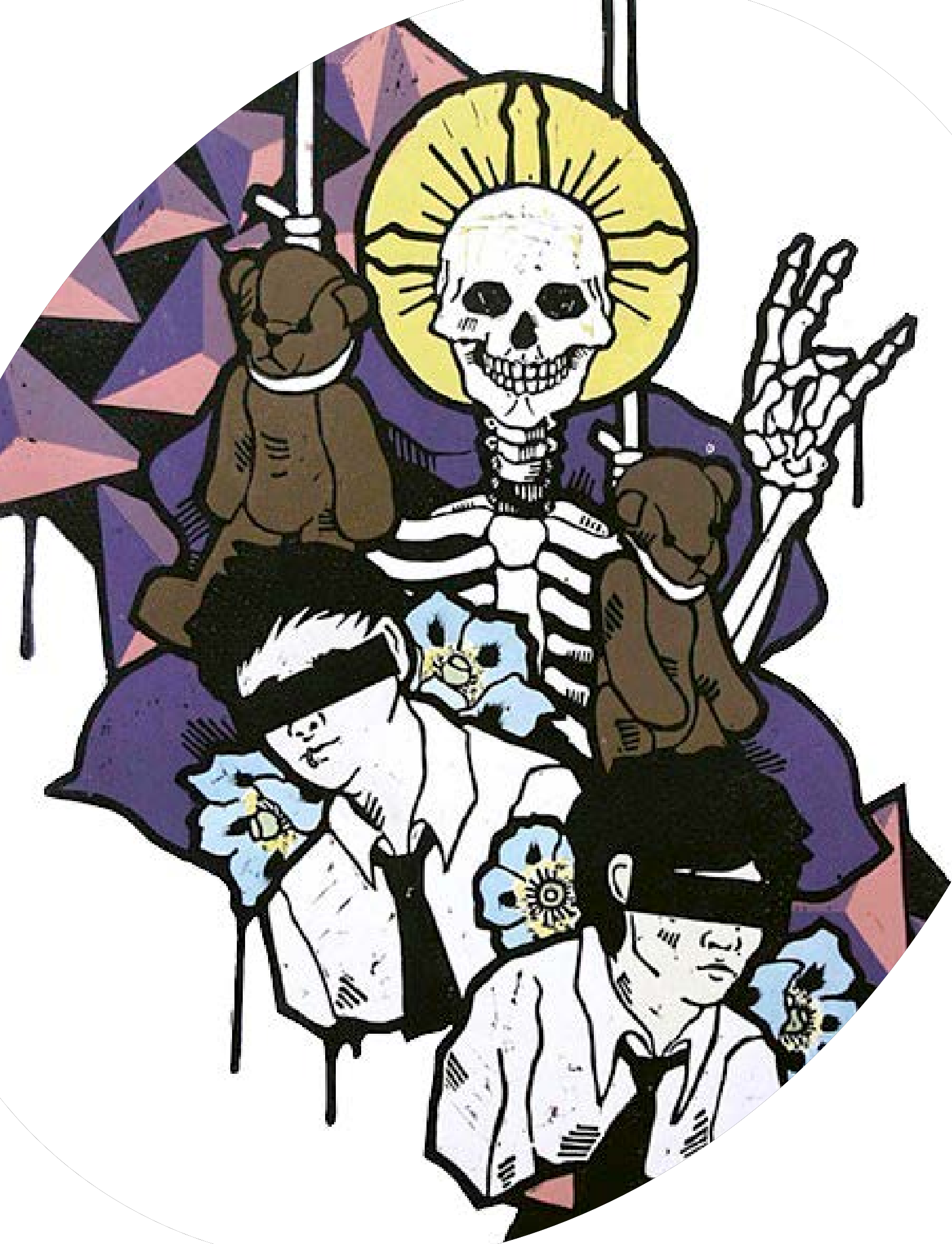
Mine is flesh molded  
until it burns from the inside.

The hot tub isn't really hot.  
The chocolates have shrooms in em.  
I grin peering into the back bedroom,  
hoping to see boys fucking.  
No dice. They're just doing cocaine.

On the door, a neighborhood council hopeful  
(he's a cult leader, my friend tells me  
gleefully) has rubber-banded a glossy flyer:

TAKE PRIDE / IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD





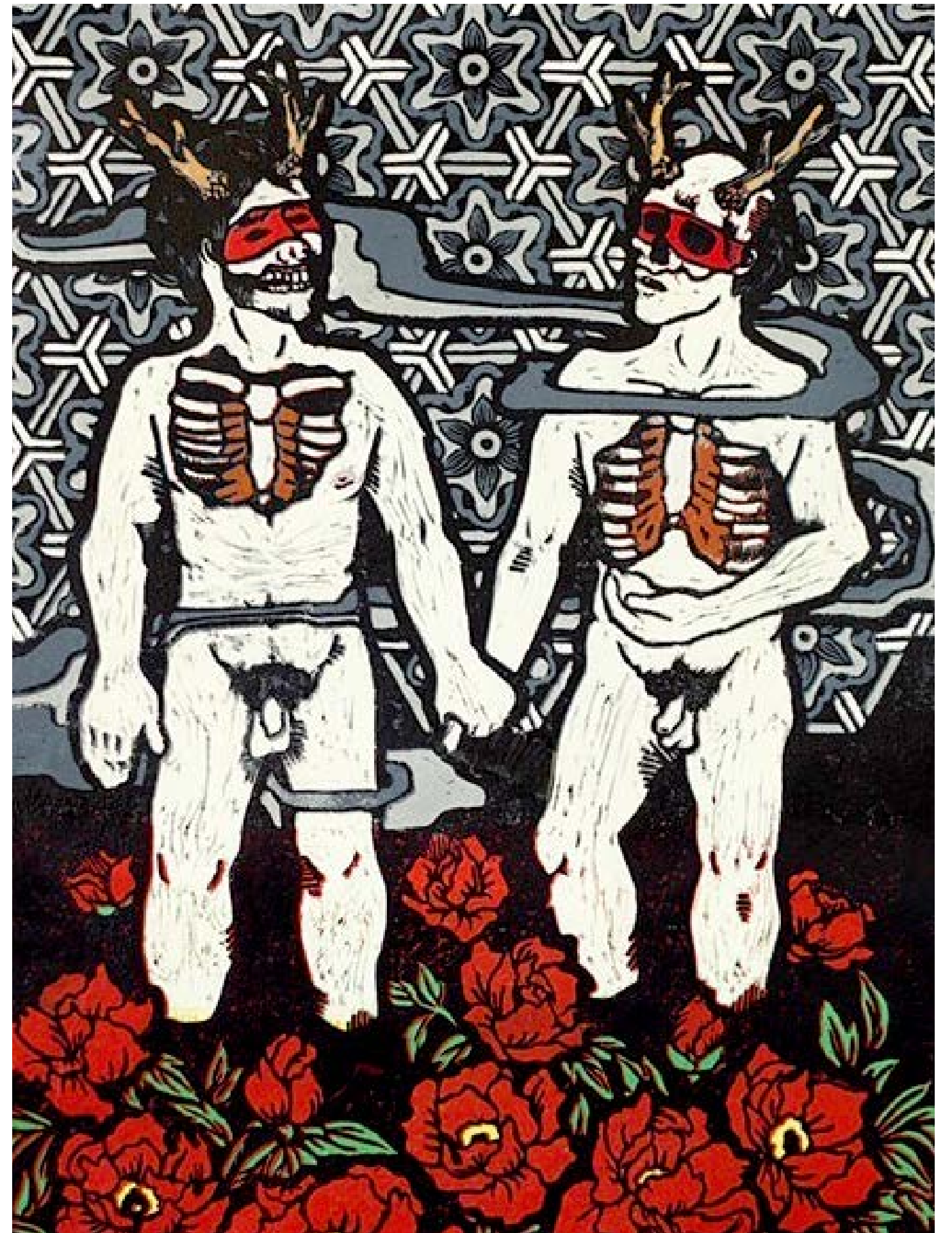
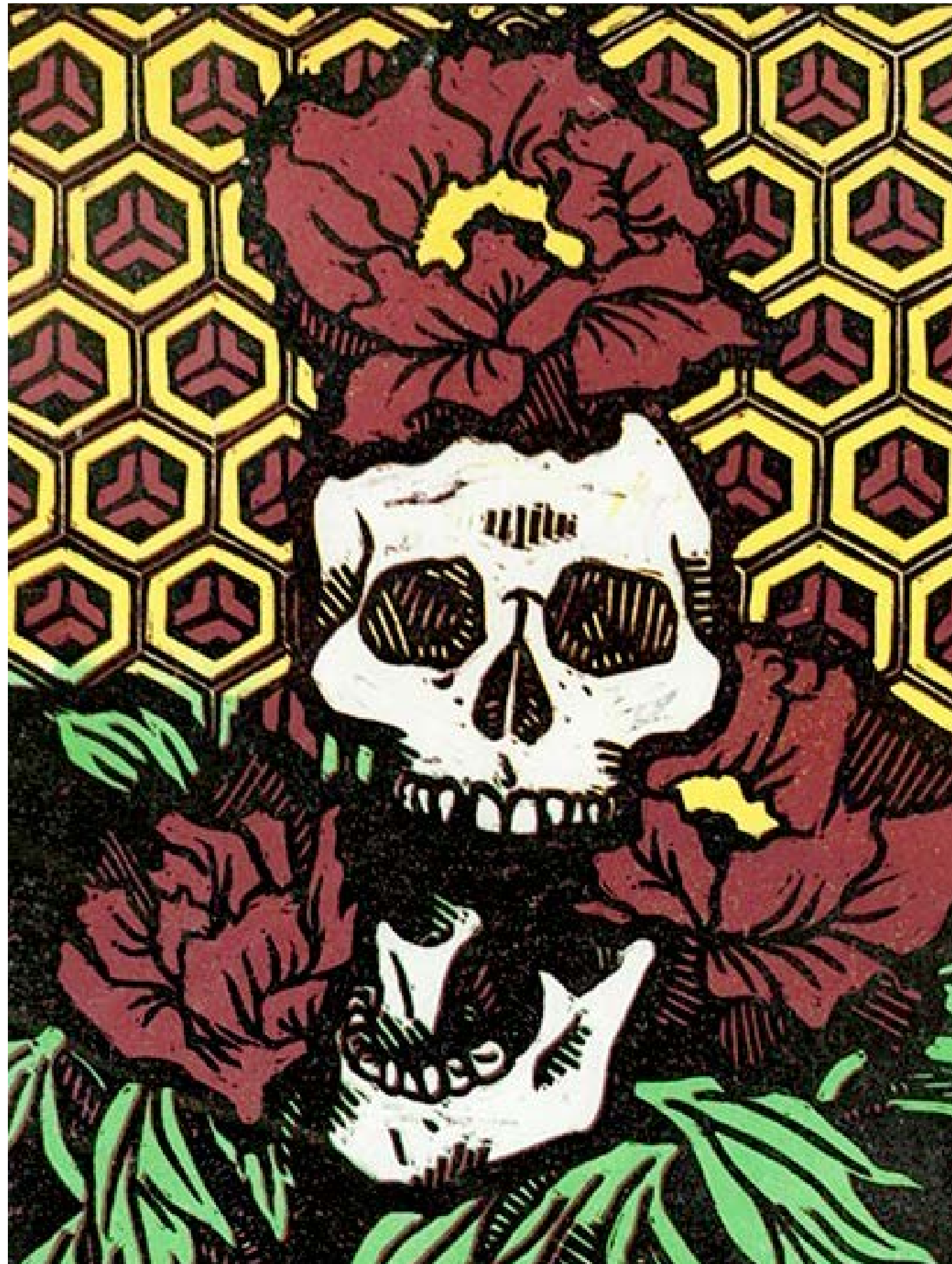
Fine Art

# Dead Teddy

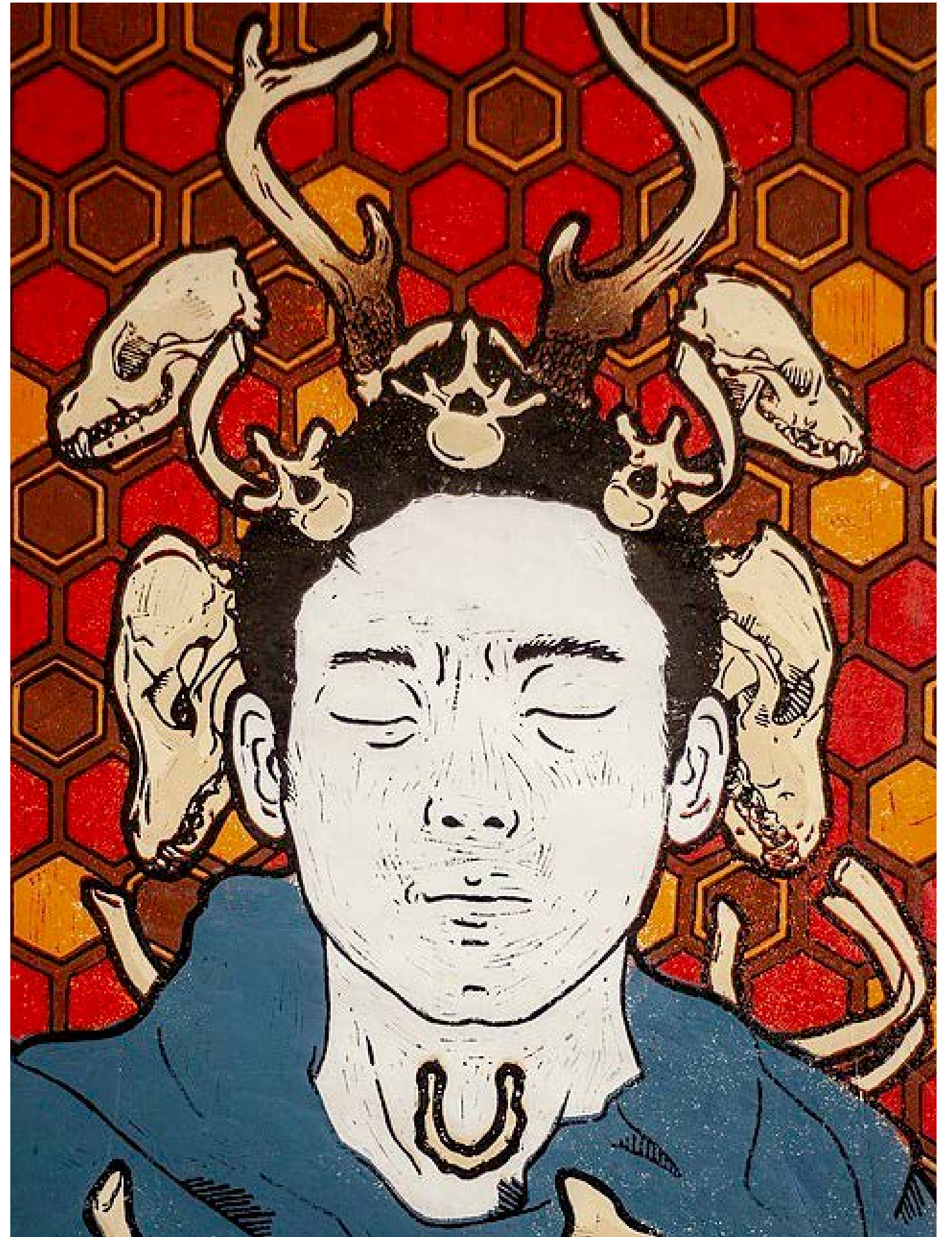
[Chuck Hohng](#)

Woodblock prints on paper.











Fiction  
**Luke 17:34**  
Corey Saucier

But I was obsessed with Job. He was beautiful and righteous and good.

I was obsessed with Job. We were lovers once, he and I. We would make love in seedy bathhouses downtown and catch two dollar matinees at the now torn down silent theater in West Hollywood. We were eighteen and nineteen, twenty and twenty-one; children really. We would shove dirty needles in our arms and collect used condoms from adult bookstore floors. He was perfect with his curly blond hair and his eyes as blue as the Midwestern sky; and skin the color of the inside of a hazelnut shell. He was pock-marked and glassy-eyed—with bloody abscesses on the inside of his right thigh. And on Sundays we would find a church to feed us: to nurture our spirit and heal the shattered bits of our souls. And I would tell him that his God might not even be real, and that “we really shouldn’t be here!”

You see, I was just there for the bread and the free wine, but Job—he really believed.

I was obsessed with Job. I think he just tolerated me. He said that God was testing him. He would pull me aside covered in fever and cum and say that the trees and birds were watching to see how quickly he would sin and how often he would spit the Lord’s name into shit.

But he never did.  
He never would.  
He couldn’t.  
He wouldn’t.

And I know, because I was there. I was there naked beside him in the bug infested bed—holding his cock in my mouth like a prayer, and begging him to damn God’s name. But Job was one of God’s favorites. He even had a tattoo that said so—just above the small of his back, in between his shoulder blades—blanketed in a beautiful hedge of golden Gerber-daisies and purple roses were green spindling vines that read: “Blessed and Highly Favored.” But at 3 o’clock in the morning he would mix crystals with water and glass and wait for the syringe to turn the water into blood then plunge it into his veins so that he and God would become one.

But the devil had had him by then. He would turn on all the lights in the house wearing a jockstrap, high striped white socks, and a backward baseball cap—the way they do in the pornos. And when I would kiss him on the mouth and say: “Baby, calm down! There is no one here.” He would tell me that I was a sinner and liar. He would profess that there was no God but God and that he had committed no sin! And I would get my things and go, because I knew he was

*“I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.”*

—Luke 17:34

“Two men in one bed?” That’s so gay right?! And I love Luke for that. I love Peter and Mark and John, too. And even Samson with his big muscles and butch little crew cut (he always had a thing for whores you know). I love David and Jonathan and Judas with his kiss—and all of the no-named eunuchs with their bracelets and eyeliner and pink puffy wigs.

We would make  
love in seedy  
bathhouses and  
catch two dollar  
matinees at the  
now torn down  
silent theater.

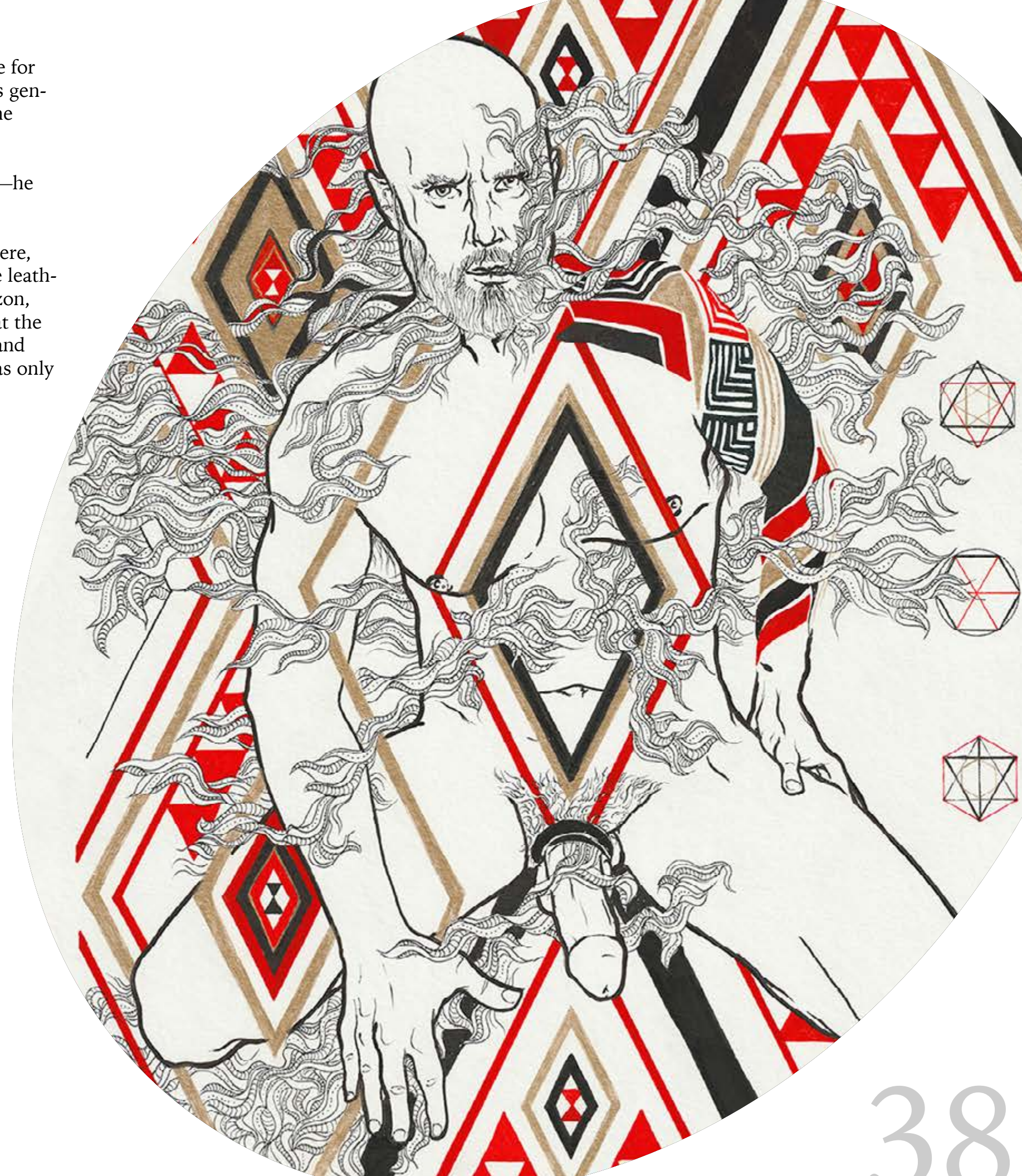
right - even if he was wrong. I mean, abominations have no reasons to lie. And we were dying anyway...

I was obsessed with Job. We were lovers, he and I. He was so beautiful, with his eyes as green as the winter pine, hair like tight tangles of midnight, and skin as pale as the inside of a lemon peel—and those abscesses on the inside of his thigh. He told me once that God would save us, that this was just a wager: a game. That it only looked like God hated fags!—that it only looked like we were destined for Hell. That if we waited long enough, the truth would come out, and everyone would know that he was “Righteous and Good.”

But I didn't believe; I was just there for the cum, and the meth, and his fingers gently caressing the back of my neck. So he kissed me, and prayed me to sleep.

And on that—I tell you, that night—he was taken, and I was left behind.

I told the medic where the drugs were, left the keys on the dresser next to the leather bound bible we ordered off of Amazon, and the next morning I found myself at the church near the corner of Hollywood and Vine. And I really don't now why; I was only there for the bread and the free wine.

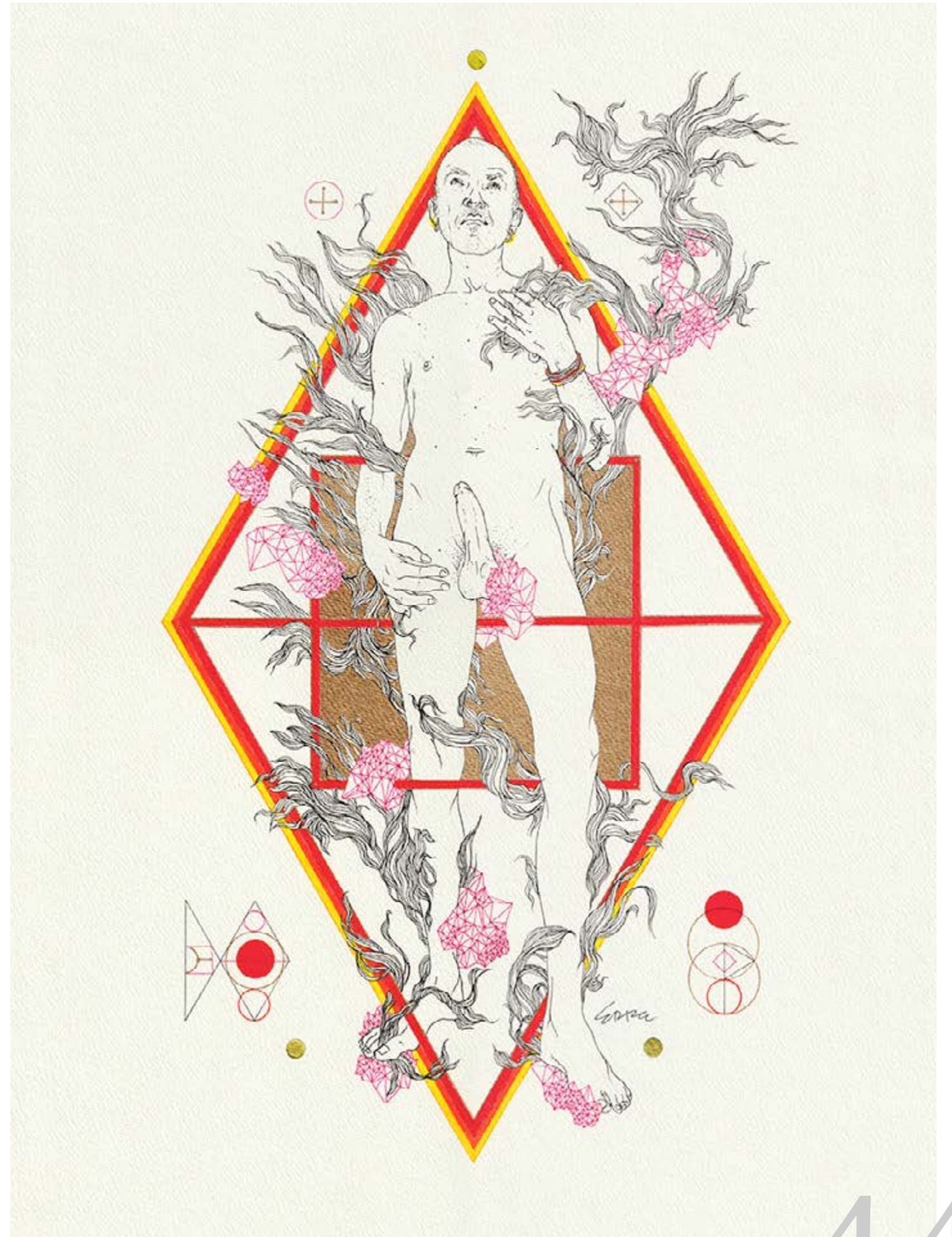


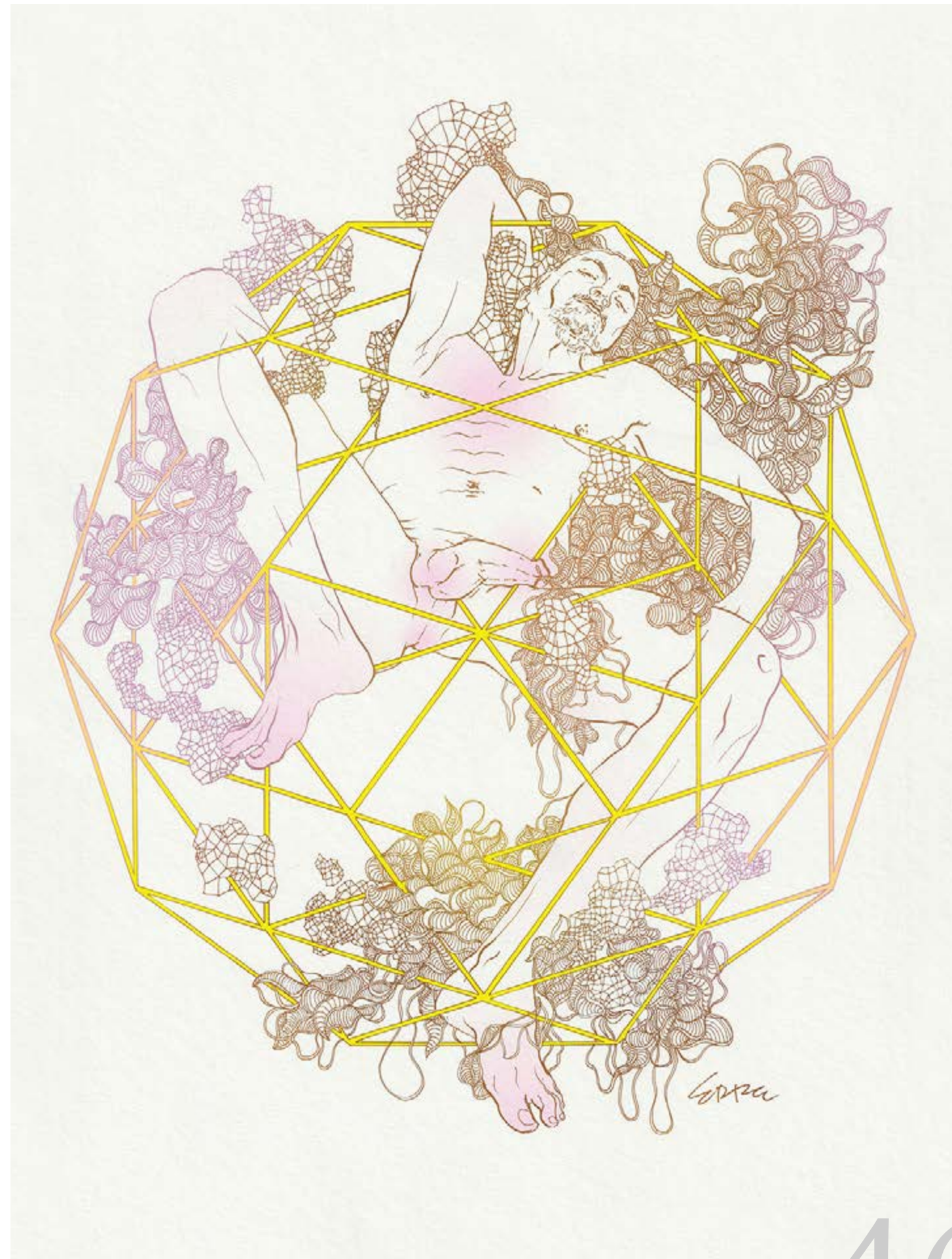
Fine Art  
**Sex & the Holy Man**  
Eduardo Gutiérrez



Glory of the World (series), Fineliner on Paper.









Fiction **The Fable of**  
**Cain & Able**

Corey Saucier

His name was Adam.

You know THE Adam.

You know of THE Adam of Adam and Steve—of “In the beginning there was Adam and Steve.” Many don’t know that before Eve there was Steve. Because You know on the Sixth Day, God made man. All Man. And Some of those mans liked other mans. And Adam didn’t know any better because he was dumb as rocks (because he was made of dirt and all). But when God saw that Adam was lonely and unhappy with Steve, He made Eve. You know because Women weren’t made until like weeks after everything else in the uni-

verse. That’s why they are sooo much smarter than men, so much prettier than men, and so much more resilient. After God made man, and man was soooo dumb, He thought “NEVER Again!!” So He laid Adam down in the Garden of Eden, which is right off of the 101 just a little South of Silver-lake, and put him to sleep. Removed his rib. And made Eve. And for some reason she loved him and he loved her. And so now we say “Adam and Eve.” But first there was “Adam and Steve.”

And don’t worry about Steve. Steve met Dave—a sexy butch bear from the Westside—two years later. And they are very happy.

But his name was Adam. And he was not gay. And he had been tricked by Steve who wore impeccable makeup and floor length weaves and who sometimes went by Jenny.

And this was the first rift between the straights and the gays.

And the first time that God was displeased. Well, until Eve ate that apple.

Adam had two boys and their

names were Cain and Able. And he made sure that they were “Real Men.” Because even though all men were made in the image of God—all on the 6th day—the same day—all by a divine creator who can make no imperfect thing—for some reason, some men think that some men are made better than other kinds of men.

And Adam was one of these men.

So to make his boys rough and tumble, he registered them in a tough high school in South Central (near 97th and Wall). And when Able begged to transfer to Fairfax High School of the Performing Arts, Adam said “no.” Because Adam is as dumb as Rocks.

Now Cain was Cute you know, and strong: all sexy and brood-

ing with his dark hair and dark eyes. But Able was something else. Smart and talented, with a voice that never sung off key. Cain was like Adam’s third wife, Eve. But Able. Able reminded of him of Steve.

And this was the second rift between the straights and the gays.

One day Cain and Able were playing in a field. You know, the way that rough and tumble boys do. And Cain

**After God made  
man, and man  
was soooo dumb,  
He thought,  
“Never Again!!”**

smote his brother: struck him down.

Able was just sitting in the field minding his own business: skirt at the knee, surrounded by daisies and dandelions, his blond hair and light eyes—bleached and bought to look like mid-80's Madonna (which as we all know is the best era of Madonna). And the sun is canary yellow, and the sky is cobalt blue, and the field is as green as a delicious Shamrock Shake. And Able is separating his wigs in the summer breeze: organizing them by color, brand, length and material. You know, being fabulous! As young gay boys are want to do. And Cain seeing his brother all sparkly, and self-aware, and as brave as any warrior, grew jealous, and lonely, and scared. And because for some reason some men think that some men are made better than other kinds of men, it made him question himself and how he would be seen; and how he might be diminished in comparison. You know, just the light carefree thoughts one has when considering their brother. And Cain raised a stone and called his brother a Fag. And Able broke. Fragmented. Shattered. Where once he was perfect and proud and whole, suddenly Able was missing something. And there was a hole where the stone had hit. Twenty years later he is still crawling on his knees searching for little bits of crystal

stones scattered across the floor of his million dollar home in West Hollywood.

So that's when God appeared.

You know, THE GOD.

You know, THE ONE.

You know, THE BIG Cahuna, El Chavo himself. God—who just gave up his bus pass to start riding in Ubers from his job in Santa Monica to his motel downtown—found Cain alone in the field and said:

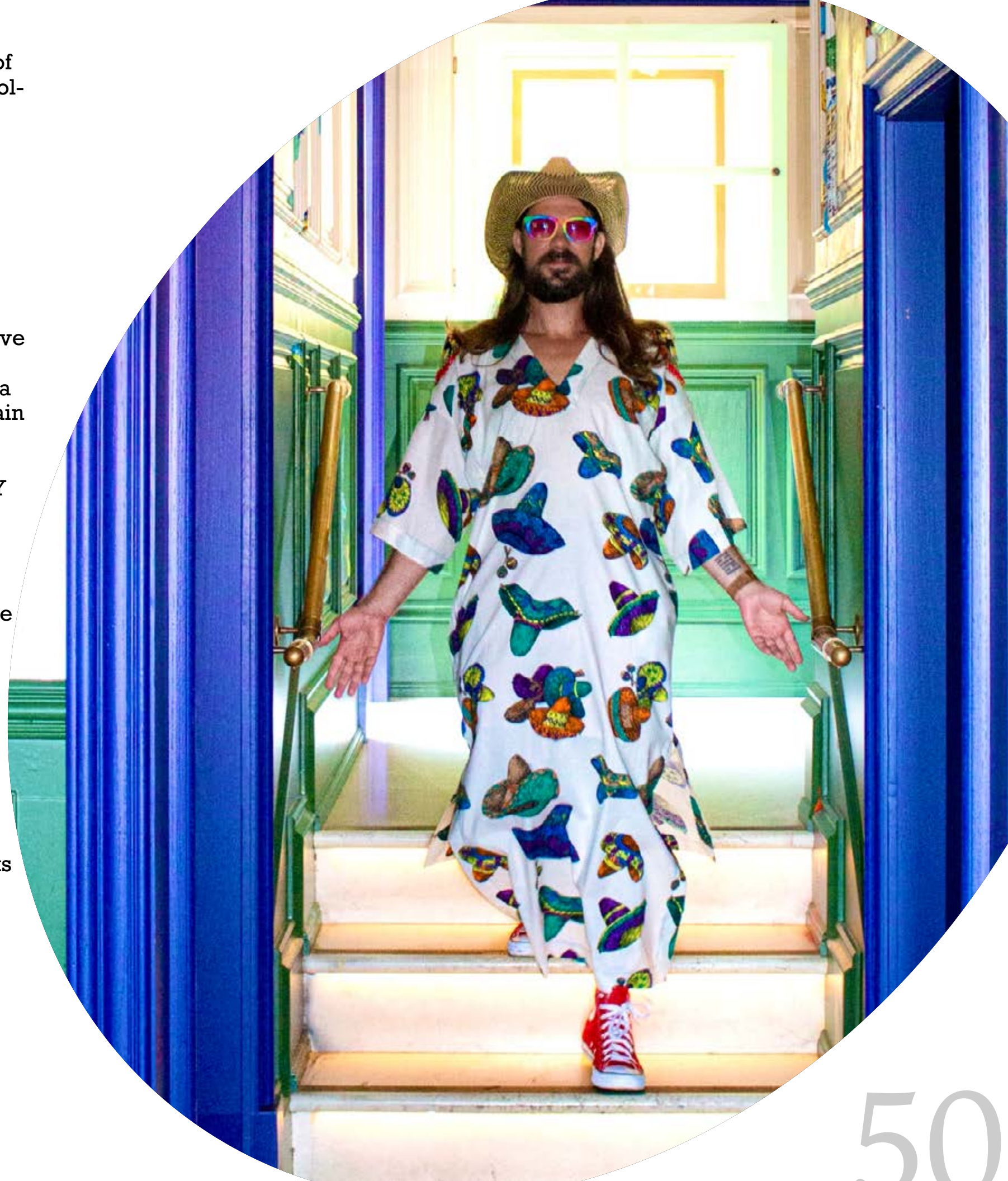
“Que Insiste con to hermano? Y porque el no esta contigo?”

Cain who was still more handsome than any man should be, so beautiful and black he turned blue in moonlight—but like his father as dumb as Rocks—said,

“I don't know; he is weird, and I don't get him, and he embarrasses me! And besides, am I my brother's keeper?”

And God said: “Si. Si Estupido! Si Eres!” Because God only speaks Spanish.

The End



performance art

# Resurrecting Jesus

[K Ryan Henisey](#)



I became a magical being this summer. Wearing the diving, I discovered that there are three common reactions to Their Holiness, the Rainbow Majesty, Jesus 3.0: amusement, contempt, and joy. Most common is amusement, with people shouting recognitions from their car or asking to take a picture with me on the street. There is also a good deal of contempt: my West Hollywood neighborhood has a large population of young gay men and Orthodox Jewish families. Between the two of them, there is plenty of reason to mistrust the Christ figure, and the people it often represents. These reactions are quieter than those of amusement, often displayed with a slight sneer, or crossing the street. But my favorite among the common reactions is joy.

Joy appears in special ways—sometimes quietly, but oftentimes with power. Many individuals approached me over my granted month of performance—the City of West Hollywood award me with a public performance art grant for the summer of 2021, legitimizing my resurrection of Jesus—to speak to me about Kevin Lee Light, the origin Street Jesus. Each of them had a special moment or relationship with Kevin that they shared with me (sometimes right in the crosswalk on Sunset Boulevard!). But joy also appeared as soft smiles, gently thrown peace signs, or a warm hug.



Colette  
Miller

At first, Jesus 3.0 started as a personal joke. Strangers and friends would call out, “hey, Jesus!” when they saw me. With long hair and a beard, I look like classical versions of European-descent Jesus—and a lot like Light, the late performer. After expressing that it would be fun to walk around like the original WeHo Jesus to a couple of my besties, a grant opportunity appeared with the City of West Hollywood and I pounced. A flurry of digital activity ensued and then I waited.

Well. I didn’t really wait. I jumped right into the project. City or not, I was confident and inspired by the idea. Frock-making began. I learned how to use a sewing machine. Collaborations with other artists and designers made sure that the costumes, the overall look, and the feel of MY Jesui (that’s plural for Jesus) were unique. Working off of the original works of Light, who walked the streets of Hollywood and West Hollywood as Jesus for more than a decade, Jesus 3.0 became a secular reading of the Christ figure, specifically with references to contemporary politics and social issues, using pop art and performance as the medium of expression.

I didn’t have long to wait. The summer grants were awarded within six weeks. To my surprise and delight, I was one of the grantees. My first Jesus looks were modified kaftans—*Rainbow Jesus*, a Jesus for the LGBT Community, and *Pina Colada Jesus*, the harbinger of summer fun. Costumes quickly grew more elaborate and included a toga style *Black Lives Matter Jesus* (with hand-painted lettering listing unarmed black

and brown peoples killed by police officers in the United States, back through 2013), *Light Bright Jesus* (with it’s own wearable light-up marquee), the stunning kimono-inspired kaftan works from artist and designer Miss Brightside (including *Mad World Jesus* with is specifically designed fabric panels for each part of the frock, and *La Bamba Jesus* which celebrates the South West through vintage fabrics and my great-grandmother’s button collection). In all ten looks were created for the granted period of Jesus 3.0, giving each weekend of the summer performances a unique experience with the Rainbow Majesty.

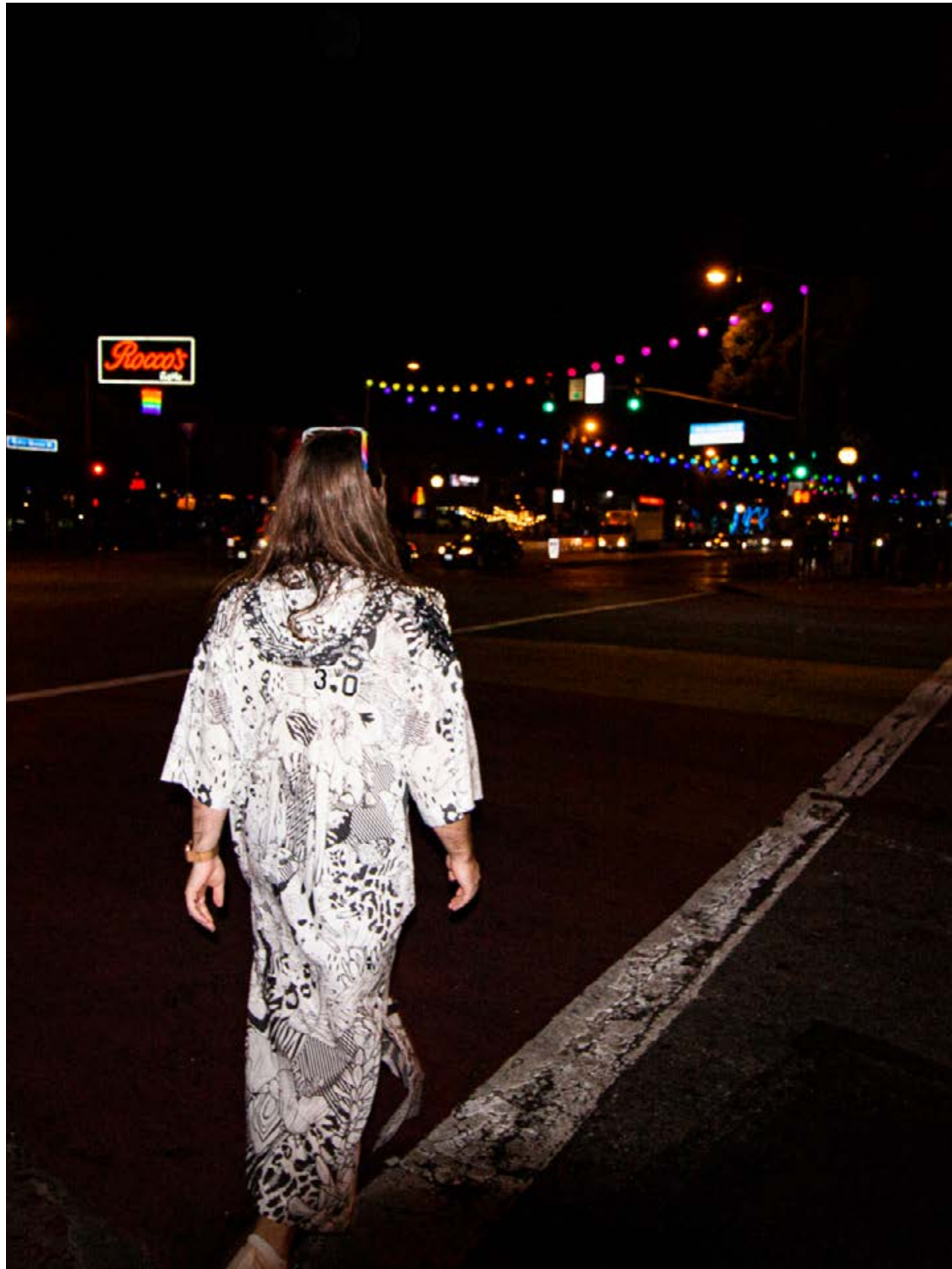
Over that period, the common reactions felt like a blessing to me. Even when reading contempt in those that felt negatively about the symbol, I felt the magic of performance. Any reaction, after all, is a positive reaction. But there were a few outstanding moments during the performances that touched my heart in special ways.

One of the best was during the third performance, when a pair of young men approached me on the street. We were in the thick of Boy’s Town, somewhere between *Trunks* and *Micky’s*, along Santa Monica Boulevard. The fellas had been partying for some time, their movements loose and a little unbalanced, their speech a little slow. But they stopped to say hello and have their own moment with Jesus. They asked what I was doing and I explained the grant and the history of Light’s performances.

“Jesus,” said one of them, full of serious-

I became a  
magical being  
this summer.





ness. “I try to be good. I really do. But it’s so hard to be good when everyone around you is filled with demons.

“What can I do,” he asked. Okay—he wasn’t that lucid, because he was drunk as fuck, but it was something to that effect.

“Well,” I said, flippantly and without any forethought—almost as if being driven to provide the message—“why don’t you try focusing on sharing kindness and joy, rather than worrying about the demons in others?”

His reaction was instant, as if struck by lightning. It was as if he sobered in the milliseconds after my answer, his mind and spirit stung by a revelation of which even I wasn’t aware. He smiled, hugged me, and said that was exactly what he needed to hear.

His friend pulled him away quickly after, yanking him into a waiting Lyft. But the moment stuck with me through the rest of the performance, and was echoed with other messages of love and kindness shared through the city. There was a man who

asked if Jesus (me) were gay? “I love everyone,” I said, “so I’m pretty sure that makes me gay.” He replied that he knew it his whole life. A young woman asked me for a hug, no conversation, just a long, warm embrace with a stranger. And more. There was more magic every time I pulled on a frock.

I became a magical being this summer and I see that magic is in us all. It might look like Jesus. It might look like something else. But in its heart is the one thing we all need: love.

*Resurrecting WeHo Jesus: Jesus 3.0 is an ongoing project from artist K Ryan Henisey. Jesus 3.0 is a secular, pop art interpretation of the historic symbol used to highlight important political and social issues through the ideas of shared community and brotherhood. Henisey appeared as Jesus 3.0 for the City of West Hollywood during the summer of 2021. A fine art exhibition displaying the costumes, art, and photography of the grant-ed period will appear at TAG Gallery, in April, 2022, in Los Angeles.*



(52) *Mad World Jesus*, Photo by Miss Brightside

(53) *Mad World Jesus*, Photo by Miss Brightside

(54) *Creative Fire Jesus*, Tucson sighting, Photo By K Ryan Henisey

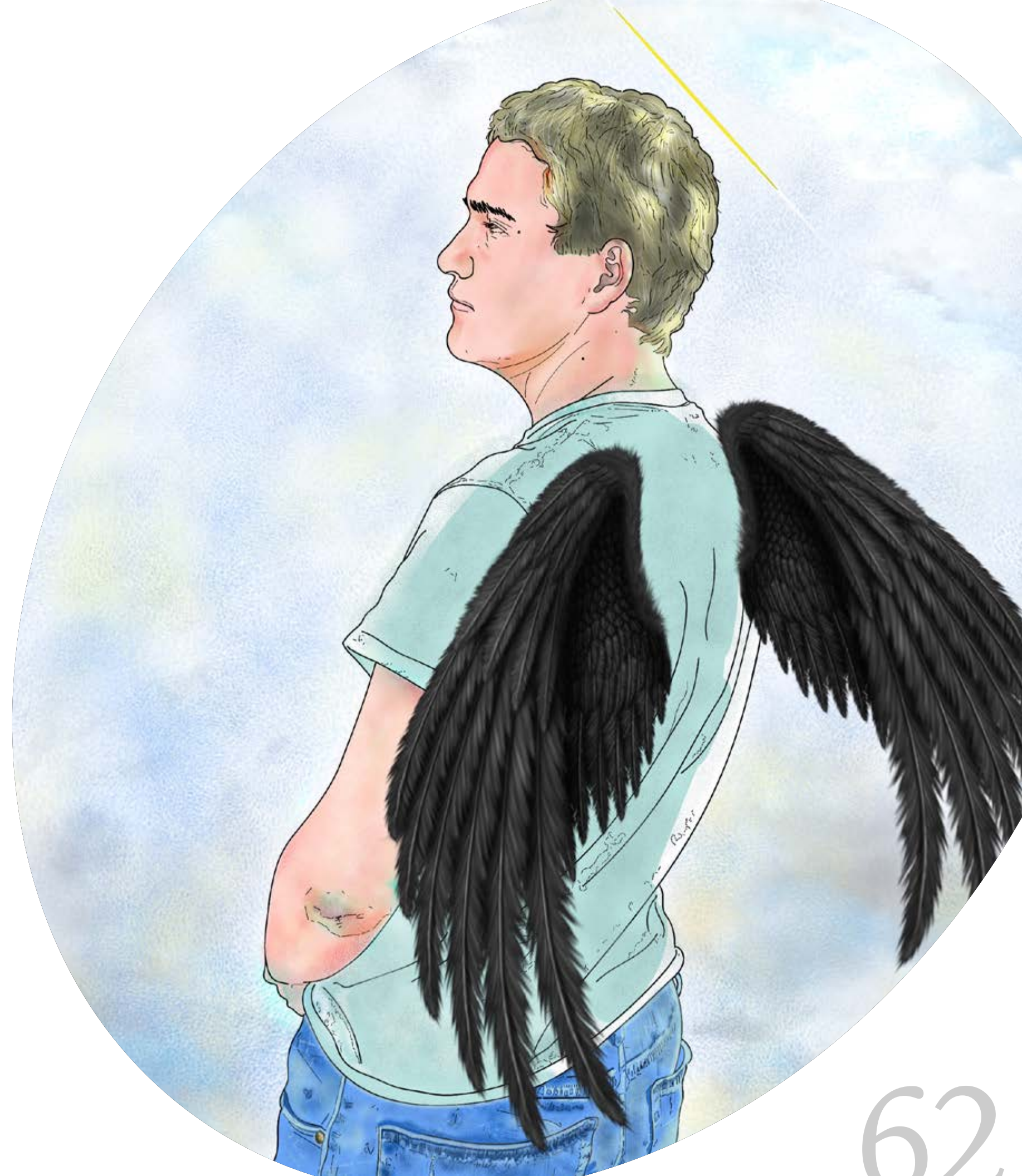
(55) *Mad World Jesus*, Photo by Miss Brightside

(56) *Rainbow Jesus*, South Dakota sighting, Photo by K Ryan Henisey and Socks Whitmore.



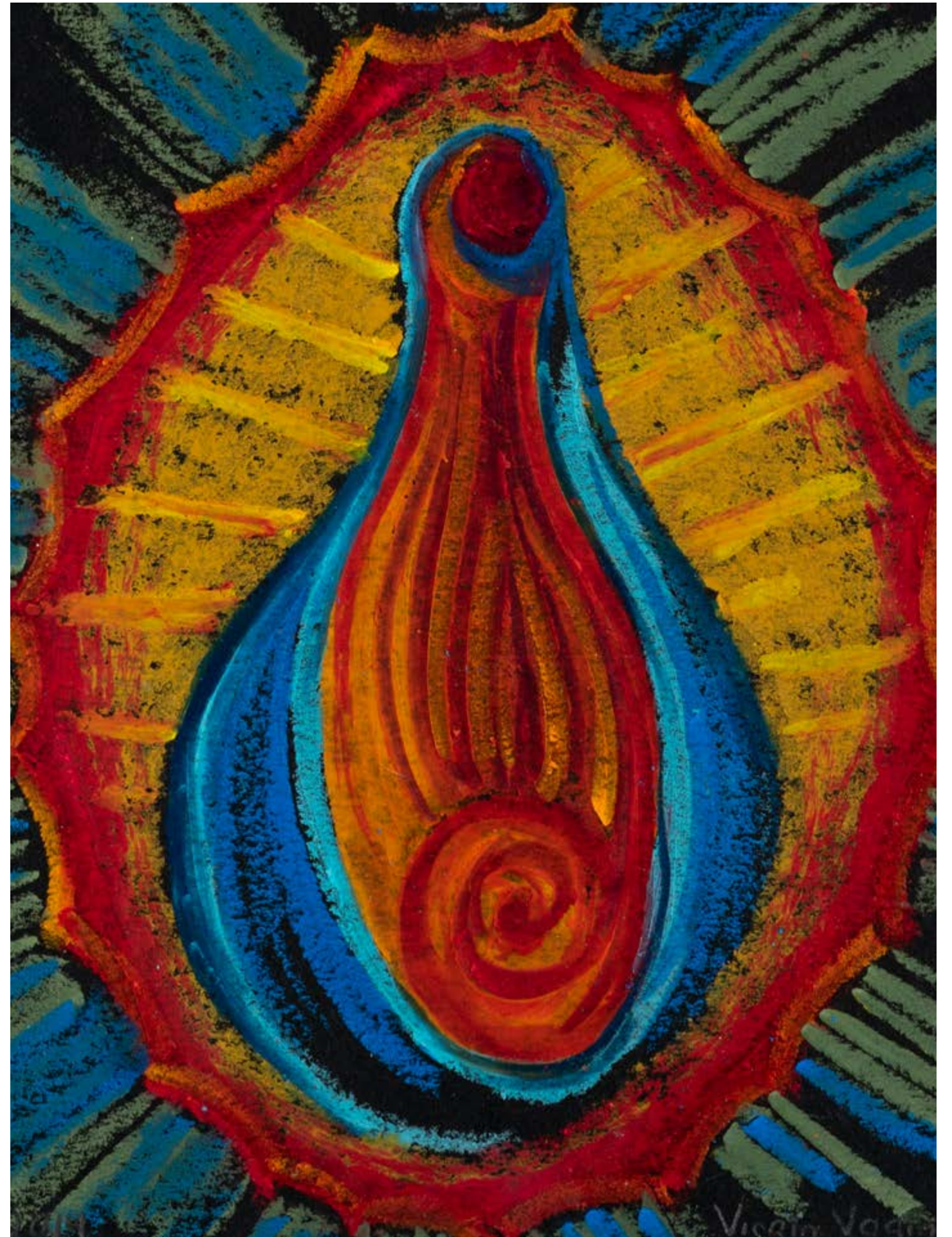
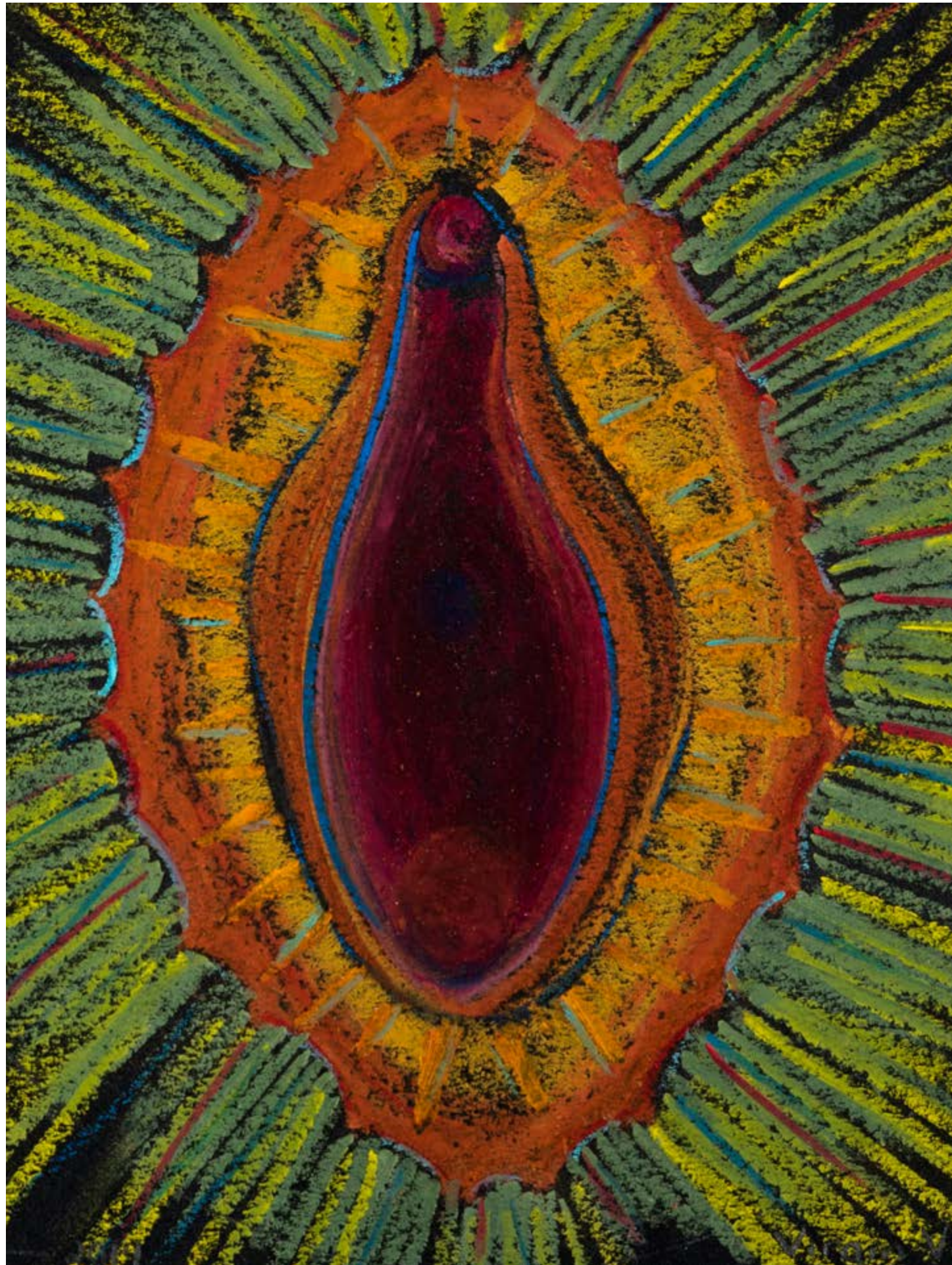
Fine Art  
**A Queered Spirit**

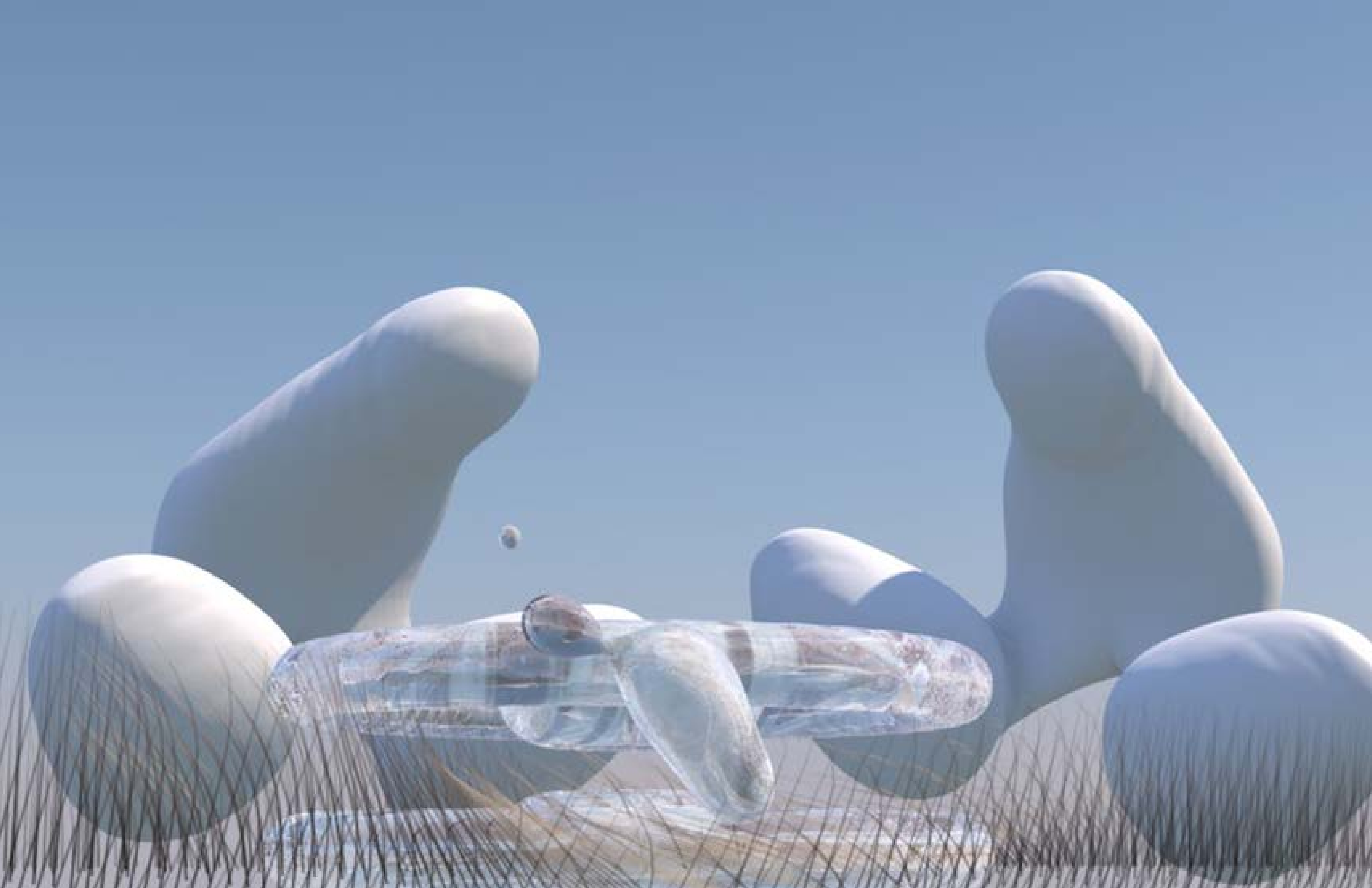
Various Artists



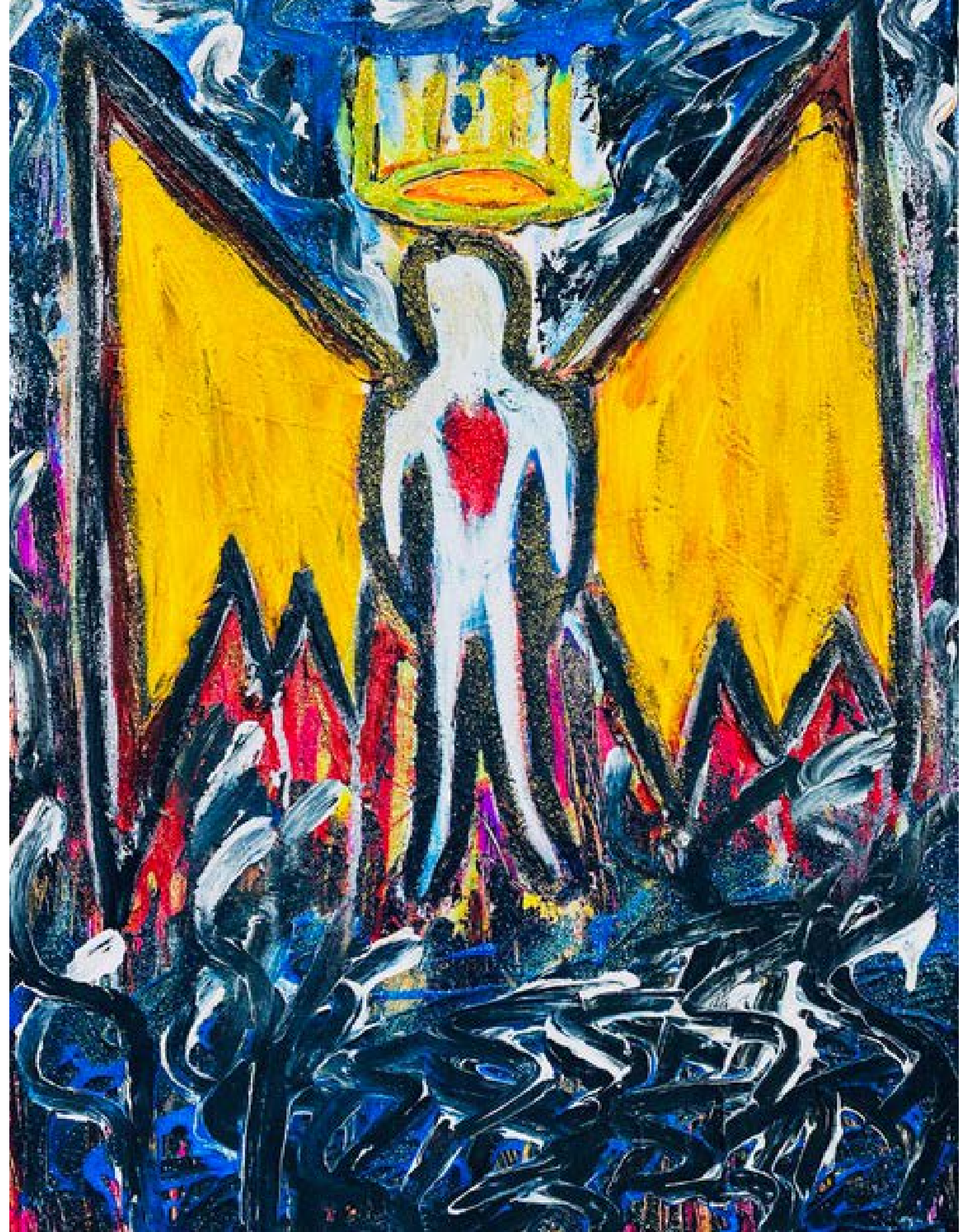
- (62) [Frank Pablo Tagaban](#), *I Did it for Revenge*, Digital Art  
(63-64) [M Rudder](#), *Virgin Vagina 1 & Virgin Vagina 3*, Oil Stick  
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(67) [LEE Bueno](#), *In Fear Of Ostracism*, Watercolor  
(69-70) [Derek Pentz](#), *Afternoon At Angel Hill & Paranormal Influencer*, Mixed Media  
(71) [Jason Jenn](#), *Cascade (a study in maintaining center)*, Mixed Media  
(72) [Spencer Toulouse](#), *Spongebob Wayward*, Digital Art  
(73) [Laura Graving](#), *The Justice in Healing*, Photography  
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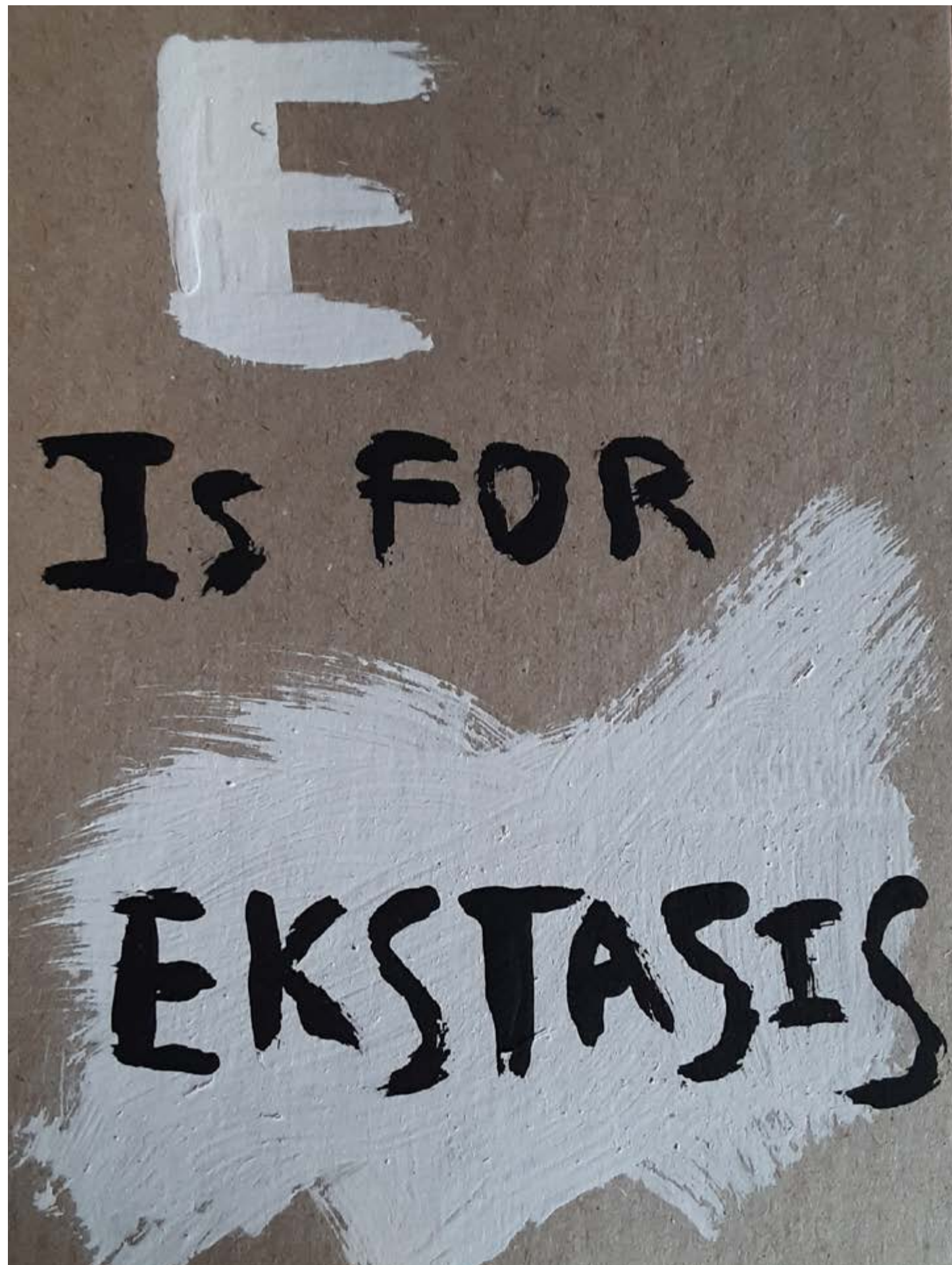












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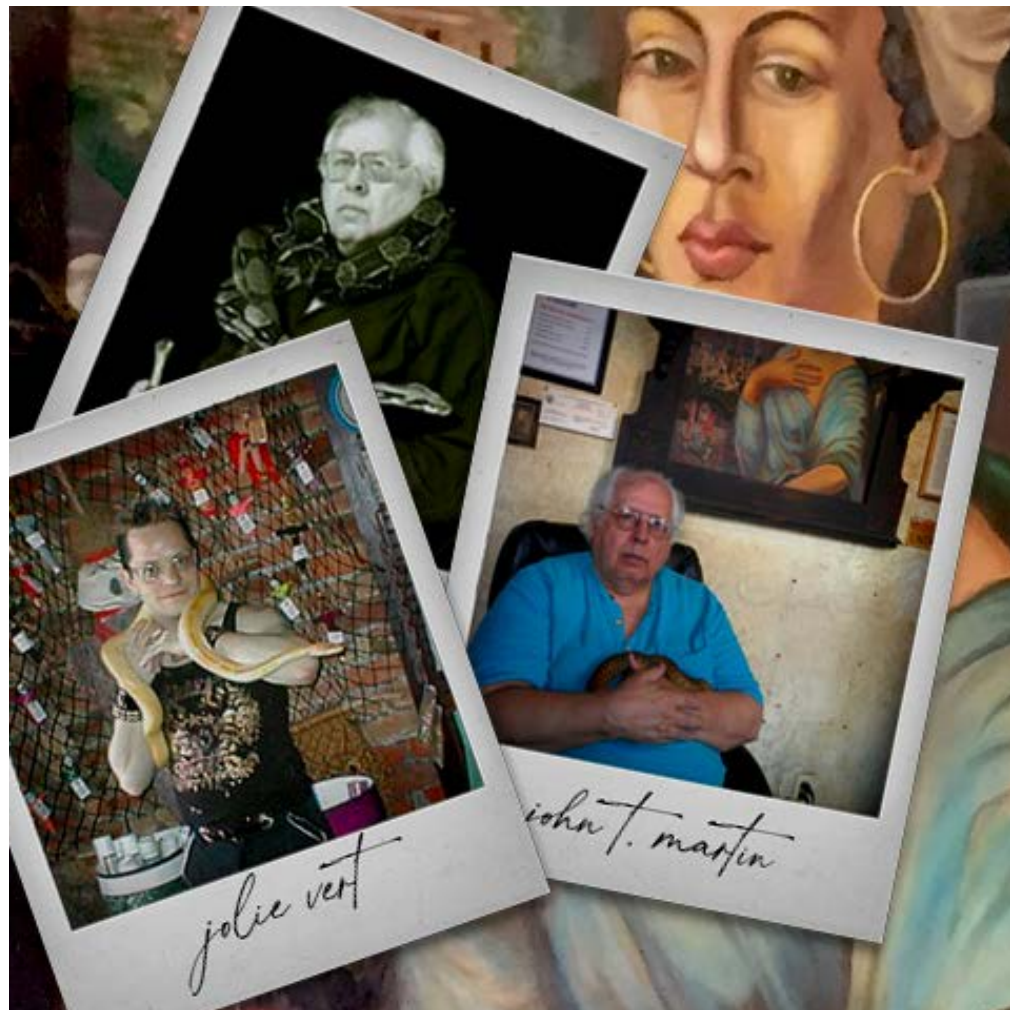
Art, Interview, & Vodou

# *Licht and Loas*

[Eugene Huffman](#)

Eugene Huffman—fine artist, designer, HIV advocate, and a friend of Queer Quarterly—took time to explain a bit of Vodou and his custom designed Oracle of the Loas Tarot deck. Eugene Huffman is an accomplished curator and currently helms the online gallery Kuntzhaus RoZig with business partner Connie Kurtew.

*Oracle of the Loas Tarot Deck.*



NEW ORLEANS MEMORIES: JOLIE VERT – JOHN T. MARTIN – MARIE LAVEAU

QQ:

What brings you to Vodou? How did you develop the interest and then your spiritual practice?

EH:

As a child I lived in a household where domestic violence—among other things—was practically a daily occurrence. I found solace in school—and discovered the welcoming sanctuary of the school library, where I would spend all—if not most—of my free time. I was known for reading through the entire set of encyclopedias my parents owned. I was a sponge and craved knowledge. I knew the few stories my mother told

me about her being a witch before and when she met my father. I read every book I could find on the occult. And then I discovered mythology, legends and folklore. The reference section and card catalog were the keys to new discoveries and knowledge. Favorite books that hold a fond place in my memory are the Time-Life *Enchanted World Series* from 1985, or Katherine Briggs' *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* full of legends and lore of supernatural creatures. I was so happy to be lost in those worlds.

The next step on my path were the novels of Anne Rice, my favorite series being the *Lives of the Mayfair Witches*. A related novel to the series was *Merrick*—the main character bearing the same name as the novel, a Voodoo priestess or mambo who was a Mayfair descendant. Add to that the lush descriptions of the magic anachronistic locale that is New Orleans—it was calling my name, and eventually I went.

Any time I had the opportunity to go—I spent my vacation days in New Orleans. I would always visit the New Orleans Historic Voodoo Museum. On one of these visits, I ran across John T. Martin. He was the manager of the museum, and per his statement was “the only white ordained Voodoo priest” in New Orleans. I pointed out the Drapo Vodou (“Voodoo Flags”) he

had on his walls—sequin covered banners that derive directly from the practice of the Vodou, traditionally the work of practicing vodou priests and their followers, and flag depicts the vevé symbol or image of the Loa to which it is devoted (Loa or lwa, spirits that are intermediaries between the Supreme Creator Bondye and humanity). Drawing from the knowledge I already possessed, I was able to name the Loa each flag was devoted to. I made an impression, and from there he took me and my traveling partner on a personal tour of the museum. I was most honored that day when he let me hold his sacred serpent—Jolie Vert. She was a juvenile at that time, an albino Burmese python with a green shade and a splash of magenta on her head. He pointed out that she “really like[d]” me. I was completely honored, knowing that not just anyone gets to hold her. It wasn’t until after his death that I discovered he also had a python named Eugene. He cemented my connection on that day for sure. It burned like a fire in my heart. Sadly, Mr. Martin passed away in November 2014.

QQ:

And how does Vodou influence your life today? And your Tarot?

EH:

Cut to 2020—the Pandemic Era. In April I had a major surgery—two

of my neck vertebrae were removed and replaced with titanium. With the recovery being a substantial amount of time, I decided I would finally do a project I had been meaning to do for several years—a tarot deck. Before, I had thought one based on Tibetan Buddhism would be a good fit, and I had designed a few of them, but the inspiration never lasted. What felt like an epiphany was an obvious answer that had been right in front of me the entire time—making the subject Vodou. The well of inspiration began to overflow with thoughts and ideas. I reached out to practitioners in New Orleans I knew, who provided me additional reference and books in addition to the research I had already culled. After planning out

MAJOR ARCANA

(L-R): ERZULIE DANTOR – AYIDA WEDO – ERZULIE FREDA – DAMBALLAH – LEGBA



my Major Arcana and suits (Coffin Nails—Skulls—Fleurs de Lis and Crosses), I started designing. I dedicated the deck to John T. Martin.

I am a solitary practitioner. Vodou is not for everyone—and it requires the utmost reverence and respect. But it is often misunderstood—and a lot of that blame lies squarely on Hollywood and its representation of it.

QQ:

What are some better ways for us to consider Vodou?

EH:

#### THE SUITS



When Queer identity can find itself in the spiritual and artistic intersection of creativity, it is truly a place of wonder, divinity and love. Vodou provides that both in practice and through the aspects of its divine beings.

What is little known is that the spiritual tenets of Vodou enshrine the acceptance of people of all sexual orientations and gender expressions. In a ritual, a person can be ridden (possessed) by any Loa, regardless of whether or not they are the same gender. Erzulie Freda, the Loa of love and beauty, is a protector of gay men. Her sister, Erzulie Dantor, is the patron of lesbian women and protector of children (although she is bisexual and is wed to more than one husband—she prefers the company of women).

The Guédé or Ghede are a family of Loa that are associated with magic and the powers of death and fertility. A number of the Ghede and Barons are associated with transgender or same-sex interactions. As an example, one is Guédé Nibo.

He was formerly human—a handsome young man who was violently murdered. After his death he was adopted as a Loa by Maman Brigitte and Baron Samedi (also a bisexual Loa). He is viewed as an effeminate dandy in a black riding coat, or sometimes appearing in drag. When he inhabits humans - they are inspired to lascivious

sexuality of all kinds.

QQ:

How does Vodou specifically influence your tarot deck?

EH:

In the traditional Tarot there are four suits: Wands, Cups, Pentacles and Swords, which represent the elements of Fire, Water, Earth and Air, respectively. I kept with the four suits, but assigned them to Vodou elements. Wands became Crosses; Cups became Skulls; Pentacles became Fleurs de Lis medallions (a nod to New Orleans); and Swords became Coffin Nails. Additionally, there are four “Court Cards”—Page, Knight, King and Queen. I did these a bit differently, and assigned as Houngan (a Vodou priest/masculine energy); Mambo (a Vodou priestess/feminine energy); Baron (after the Guédé Barons/can represent any expression); and Z’Étoile (representing major connections or influence in life).

On the reverse and front covers of the custom Oracle of the Loas box is Vodou imagery and the Vévé of Papa Legba—the one you have to salute each time a service or activity with any Loa is requested. He can grant or deny entry; he opens and closes the gates. Vévés of Maman Brigitte, Erzulie Freda and Ogoun display throughout the set. Vévés are



MAJOR ARCANA (L-R):  
SILIBO – SAMEDI – LAVEAU – Z’ÉTOILE – BOKOR

ritual symbols meant to compel the spiritual energy associated with a particular Loa.



# A Primer on Vodou & Loa

**AYIDA WEDO:** A Racine (“Root”) and Rada Loa – the Rainbow Serpent – Protector of the Cosmos, Bestower of Blessings.

**BOKOR:** A Vodou witch/sorcerer said to serve the Loa with “both hands” – benevolent and black magic. Feminine Aspect: Caplata.

**DAMBALLAH:** A Racine and Rada Loa – the Serpent, source of Life and Creation.

**ERZULIE DANTOR:** A Petro (“Hot”) Loa – Protector of Women, Children and Lesbians.

A DREAM OF LEGBA



**ERZULIE FREDA:** A Rada Loa – Love, Sex, Passion and Beauty – a very powerful Mambo; Protector of Gay Men. She weeps for the limitations of live and love.

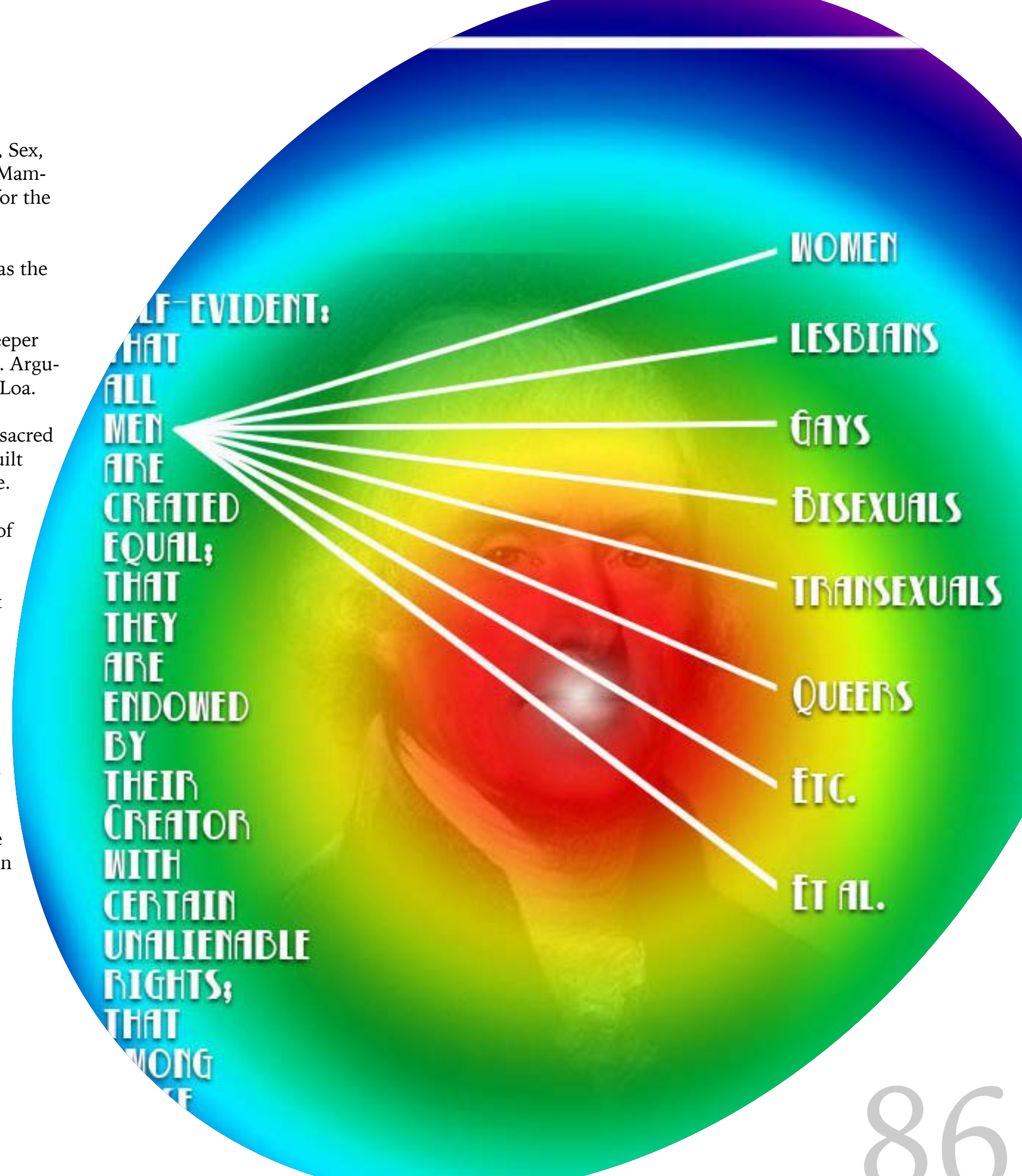
**LAVEAU:** A powerful Mambo known as the Vodou Queen of New Orleans.

**LEGBA:** One of the Guédé, the Gatekeeper between the Spirit and Human worlds. Arguably one of the most important of the Loa.

**SILIBO:** An esoteric Loa of magic and sacred sexuality. Her fire can burn away all guilt and shame – she is beholden to no one.

**SAMEDI:** Leader of the Barons, Master of the Dead. His power is great when it comes to Vodou curses and black magic.

**Z'ÉTOILE:** The Star of Destiny – the part of human being that guides you and is inseparably linked to the body and resides in the cosmos.

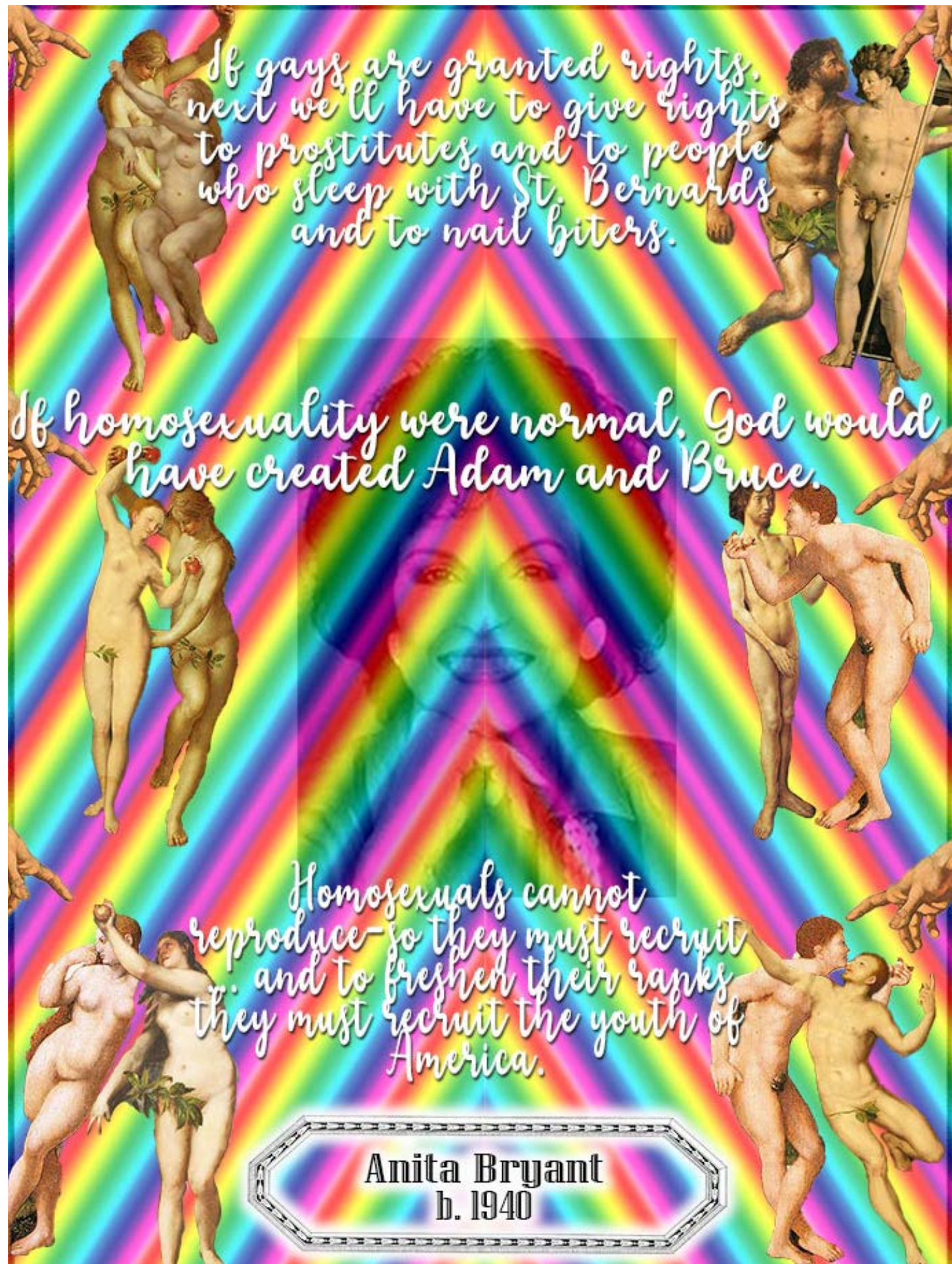


Digital Art

# Haters Gonna Hate

[Arthur Taussig](#)





If gays are granted rights, next we'll have to give rights to prostitutes and to people who sleep with St. Bernards and to nail biters.

If homosexuality were normal, God would have created Adam and Bruce.

Homosexuals cannot reproduce—so they must recruit and to freshen their ranks they must recruit the youth of America.

Anita Bryant  
b. 1940



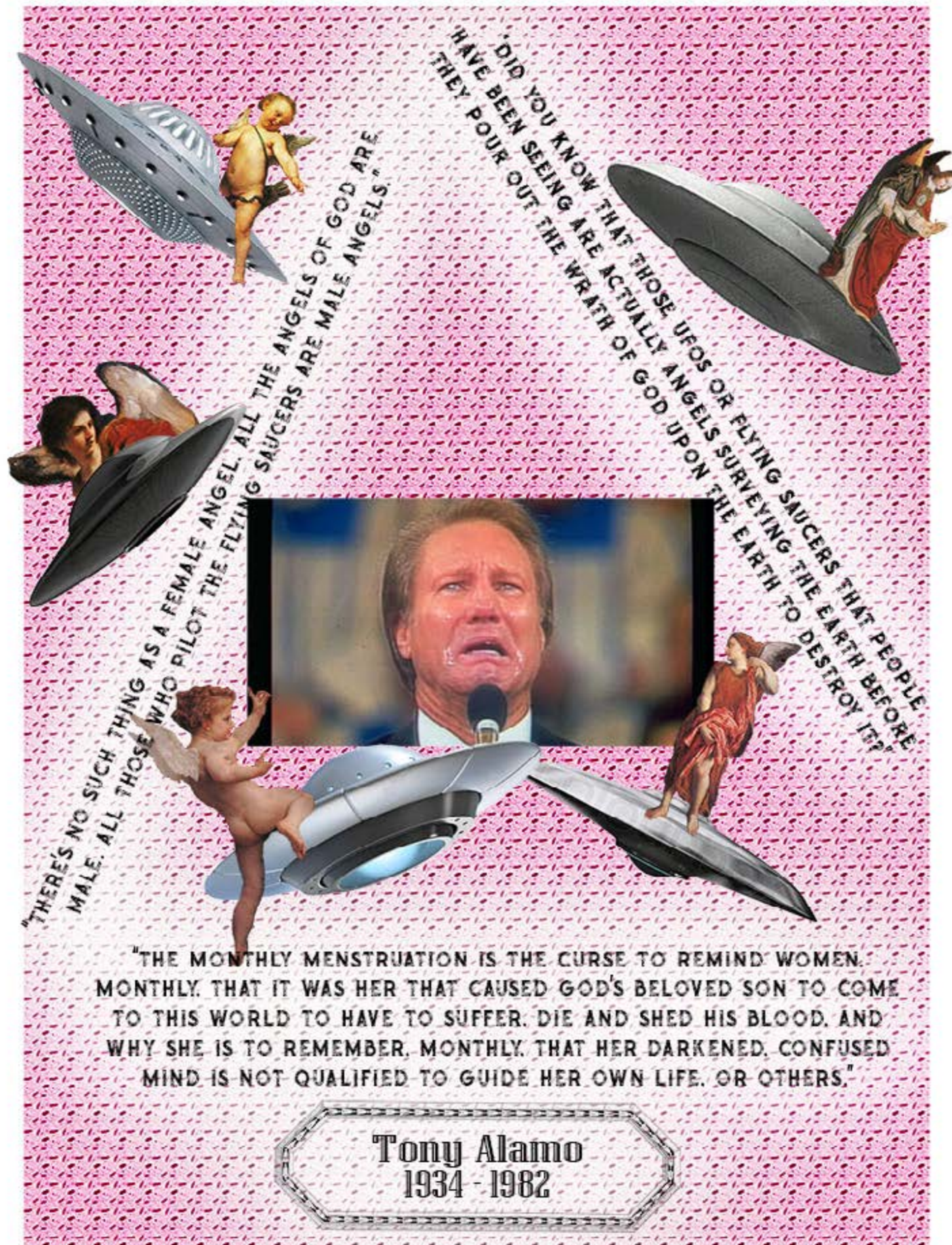
The atomic bomb is a marvelous gift that was given to our country by a wise God

Sex education classes are like in-home sales parties for abortions.

ERA means abortion funding, means homosexual privileges, means whatever else.

Sexual harassment on the job is not a problem for virtuous women.

Phyllis Schlafly  
1924 - 2016



Fiction  
**King of the Sea**  
S. E. Toulouse

Claire doesn't talk to me at school. Only after when no one sees. But she wears the necklace I got her. Which is a dolphin. We talk after school at the stairs behind Sears. The stairs are covered in ivy and rusted cans. It's probably the most beautiful place there is. At the end of the school year my mom gets a call. I am invited on Claire's family trip to the shore. I feel like a wild pony, ready to run for miles and miles.

Claire's family has the kind of van with automatic doors and tvs in the seats. We talk the whole way there, sometimes in a whisper. We talk so much I barely can't see when we set up in a room that smells like Lysol and cedar. At this place, there's also a den that smells the same,

with a shelf full of dime store novels that Claire loves. Dime store novels about brave mice and handsome romances. We read them out loud down at the beach and when we do this sometimes Claire gets a mean streak and covers me with kelp. Kelp makes my skin crawl. I run away from her across the sand as she calls me Kelp Boy. I tell her I am not a boy, especially one who loves kelp. One day Claire stops. When we are near kelp I still act afraid. It doesn't make her laugh anymore. I lie awake at night, in our cedar smelling room, and I wonder why.

In the morning the whole family eats together. The whole family and me. The stools at the table are so tall, my feet don't touch the ground. I wave them around like a flower fairy. Claire and her brother tell me about the shore. Beyond the beach there's the cove. And at the cove, there's the lump.

"It's always been there," says Claire, who asked for egg whites only. "It smells from a distance. Gulls flock to it."

"Every year?"

Claire's brother assures me, it is always there. He uses too much ketchup, but nobody seems to mind. "You can't get to the cove," says Claire's brother, "unless you have a speed boat."

"You can if you swim through the caves," boasts Claire.

Claire's brother says Claire doesn't know. She doesn't know if they even open up on the other side! Claire smashes her egg whites and refuses to speak to him for the rest of breakfast. I watch her parents and decide to eat the egg whites as a method of keeping the peace. Her parents make us all promise we will never swim in the caves. I wonder to myself, *will Claire's brother let people know I came on vacation?*

Claire and I walk to get ice cream. It's

hot out and the 7 Eleven is far. We take side streets and back alleys from Claire's summers past. We pass big houses with long winding driveways and packs of stray cats. We pass small apartments stacked and colored like weather worn Duplos. Halves of bottles glitter in the sunlight. I meet dogs behind fences that want to get to know me. Lawns bead with recent watering, threatening to go yellow at the edges. I don't think about what this place is. I do not realize that this is an American moment, passing swiftly and brightly by. Claire's arms glow brown. Her smell to me is now synonymous with zink and fake coconut. I think maybe one day that Claire and I will both be in the city. We will go to glamorous bars with triangle drink glasses. We will have tops that show our navels and thick metal earrings. We will be laughing and people will see us. They will wonder who we are and what we are laughing at. We will go to coffee shops that play jazz and serve chicken noodle soup on rainy days. These coffee shops will have thick plush armchairs. We will fall into them with our shopping bags. Claire will tell me a secret. I will laugh in a way that makes my earrings glitter and shows that my neck is long and delicate.

That night when the lights are out, Claire crawls under my covers and tells me a real secret. She has never been in my bed before and I can barely breathe. Claire's secret is this: she knows for a fact the caves open up to the cove. Once, in the dead of night, she snuck out and the tide was super low.

"So low you could walk right through the caves," says Claire, "I had to swim a little too, but I made it to the lump."

Claire's breath smells like wheat thins and toothpaste. She swears me to secrecy. I pinky promise twice.

"The closer you get to it, the worse the smell is. You have to walk through a thick cloud of flies. The buzzing is so loud it's hard

to hear, but the flies are not interested in climbing in your eyes or ears."

"The lump," she says in a whisper, "is the King of the Sea. He is like a seal but long dead, and full of terrible magic. Wind howls out of him. That's his voice. And he told me that whoever touches his skull, can go live in the ocean forever."

Under the covers together Claire and I are almost unbearably warm. Especially where our arms touch. I'm very careful about moving. I'm silent for a long time. I think about the kelp. I think about summer ending. I think about Claire not talking to me at school. I tell Claire, *if the King of the Sea is magic, why aren't you living in the ocean already?*

The next day Claire won't meet my eye. Making conversation with her is impossible. I ask Claire to come walk on the beach. She covers me in kelp. After that, when Claire talks about the King of the Sea, I help make plans for our life forever underwater.

Some time passes.

And our time here is almost over. I am taller.

There is a gate closing within me.

I'm closing it.

It's clumsy work. Like trying to turn the light on in a dream. There is a week left. I no longer lay awake feeling Claire's presence, too

near like electric cotton candy. I sleep heavy. I dream about a sharp fall off the second story of a mall. I dream about the second floor of the mall having no railings. I dream the pit of my stomach.

I dream I am older. Claire is older. We are in the city on a rooftop at night. The lights glow wavering orange. Sheets fly out peoples windows. That's what they use for curtains. We are drinking. Our boyfriends are going to come meet us. They fly down out of the sky. I look at mine in the face. I never see faces in dreams, but I see this one. This face is like mine, but big and adult. Big and pale. Masculine. Features prickling and clownish. My heart jolts. It feels like I am falling.

Claire wakes me up.

*Come with me.*

*Why?*

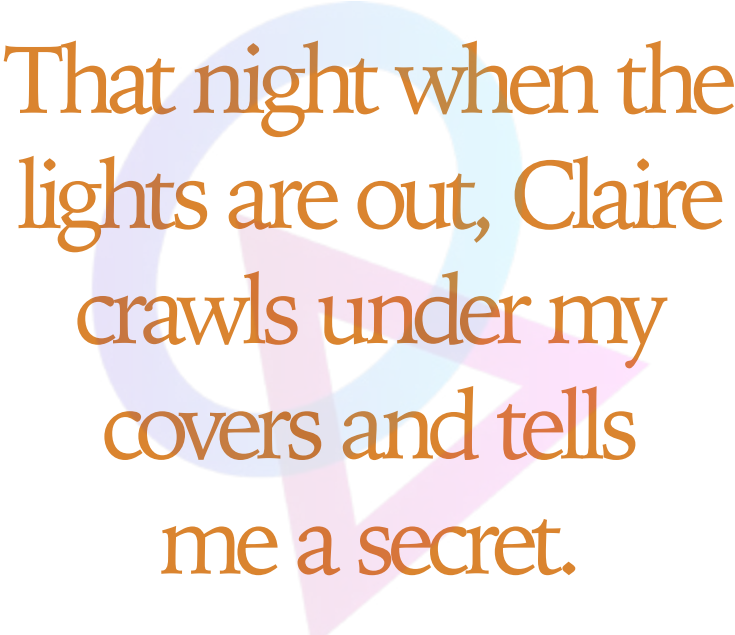
I get my jacket.

Claire and

I climb out the window, which is screen-less and low to the ground. The

frame is sun bleached wood. I am in my too big Etnies hoodie and platform flip flops. My thumbs jut out of holes I have worn into the sleeves with my teeth in response to my mother forbidding me from using scissors to do the same. As Claire and I walk, I think that I am especially dexterous in these sandals. That I have won a special dexterity only "girls" that wear rocket dog and sneak eyeliner are allowed.

There's a soft wind on the beach. The impossibly low tide pulls us like a piper to the



That night when the lights are out, Claire crawls under my covers and tells me a secret.



edge of the water. We end up so far away from civilization I get kind of scared. The water is ink black. It is a massive, round, electric god stretching out before us. Cotton candy like Claire's nearness in our room. A coiled spring.

The moon is a small pin prick in the sky. Light enough for Calire, who ever serious, takes me to the caves. I hate it. It's dark inside but if I squint, everything's edge has a thin grey rim. As we walk further into the caves I decide that I do not believe that Claire has ever made it to the cove. There is no outlet. There is no other side. We hit water.

Claire disrobes, I shield myself from the silver line of her naked form. I keep my t-shirt on, embarrassed even in the pitch black as the water quickly becomes knee deep. The floor drops off. So does my heart, pitter-patter. My shirt floats around me like a jellyfish, full of air. As I swim it shrinks to me and conspires with the undercurrent.

"This is like the last time," Claire says "we have to swim the rest of the way."

"I don't want to swim in here," I say, far too late.

We are gently knocked into rocks, some smooth, some sharp, by the current of the cave water. We are knocked together, water in our noses and mouths. Claire is a fearless swimmer. I am afraid if I drift too far from her I will be swallowed up into a distant cavern. I wish this was over. I begin to hear buzzing.

"That's the flies," Claire says as the sea floor thankfully returns beneath our feet.

The cave walls again appear in grey. Finally, I see sky. Claire looks back at me, her face is all shadow, but I can see how her long wet hair now clings to her body like dread kelp. Ahead of us, by the light of the tiniest moon, unfurls the cove. At its center is a natural bridge of stone. It juts out into the water. A smell is thick in the air. It is somewhat like fish or the hull of a ship, a bit like rotten flesh, and a bit like raw eggs. At the end of the bridge is the shape we have seen so frequently from a distance. The Lump.

I have never seen so many flies at night before. The air is busy with them. As soon as we step out onto the lump's rocky outcrop, they sing forward our procession to his royal resting place. His highness. The King of the Sea.

The King of the Sea is bloated and dead and covered in kelp. His body is a long brown-leather fin-studded tube. It is not like I imagined: either cartoon, or not there at all. He is definitely here, and hyper real. Animal. Decaying. Claire parts the kelp to reveal his skull, picked clean by sea gnats. It almost glows in the moonlight. Bone white. His abdomen begins to move. Hot wind howls out of his incredible maw. The wind itself, perhaps, the decompositional gasses built up within him. Dread magic. Damned. The gasses pour out of him in endless amounts. It sounds like the wind inside a seashell.

The conchian howl turns to verse:  
"when I had fill of shock and awe  
when no more depths there were to sink I  
saw myself the merchant of paw  
And bought a claw and quill and ink

The conchian howl turns to verse:

"when I had fill of shock and awe

when no more depths there were to sink I  
saw myself the merchant of paw

And bought a claw and quill and ink

I cut my tongue on my new quill I cut my young on tip of claw

I poured the ink upon the ground And with none, I called you

still

And all at once you'd seen my smell And if I ran my footsteps black

from all the ink I had laid down

so you could find

my the way back"

"It's a message from the future", Claire says, delicately caressing the King's skull. "Touch the skull," Claire says.

I won't. I can't. She calls me a liar, but I've only ever told the truth.

After a long while, standing in silence, we go home. Then it's over. The house. The alleys. The sunscreen and ice cream smells. Goodbye too much ketchup brother, morning egg whites, cedar room. Goodbye dime store novels, twangy whisper, long hair sticky, browning skin. And done, my heart leaping, like a humming bird, into my throat again and again and again.

"Did you have fun?" says my mother. I close the screen door. My feet pace back and forth.

Summer finishes out in the way all sunsets make me mournful: sighing smelling Bar-B-Q, my feet in the pool. Claire messages my little flip phone wondering what i'm thinking. My little flip phone with the mirror on the front instead of a camera. I do not answer Claire's texts. So Claire begins to call. And call and calls. With a frequency that feels like the siren of an ambulance. My ringtone is Blind by Korn. Its droning follows me like a shark, as the school year starts.

My first year of high school. I worry fre-

quently that I am going to run into Claire. The air is sweet with pencil shavings and glade plugins. I settle into the first weeks, shedding my old self like an onion skin. I get a tight jacket. I ditch my rolling backpack. I chew gum in secret. I braid my hair. A few weeks pass. I am at my locker and turn around. There she is.

"Do you hate me now?" asks Claire. I say nothing at all.

I am like an unpolished rock.

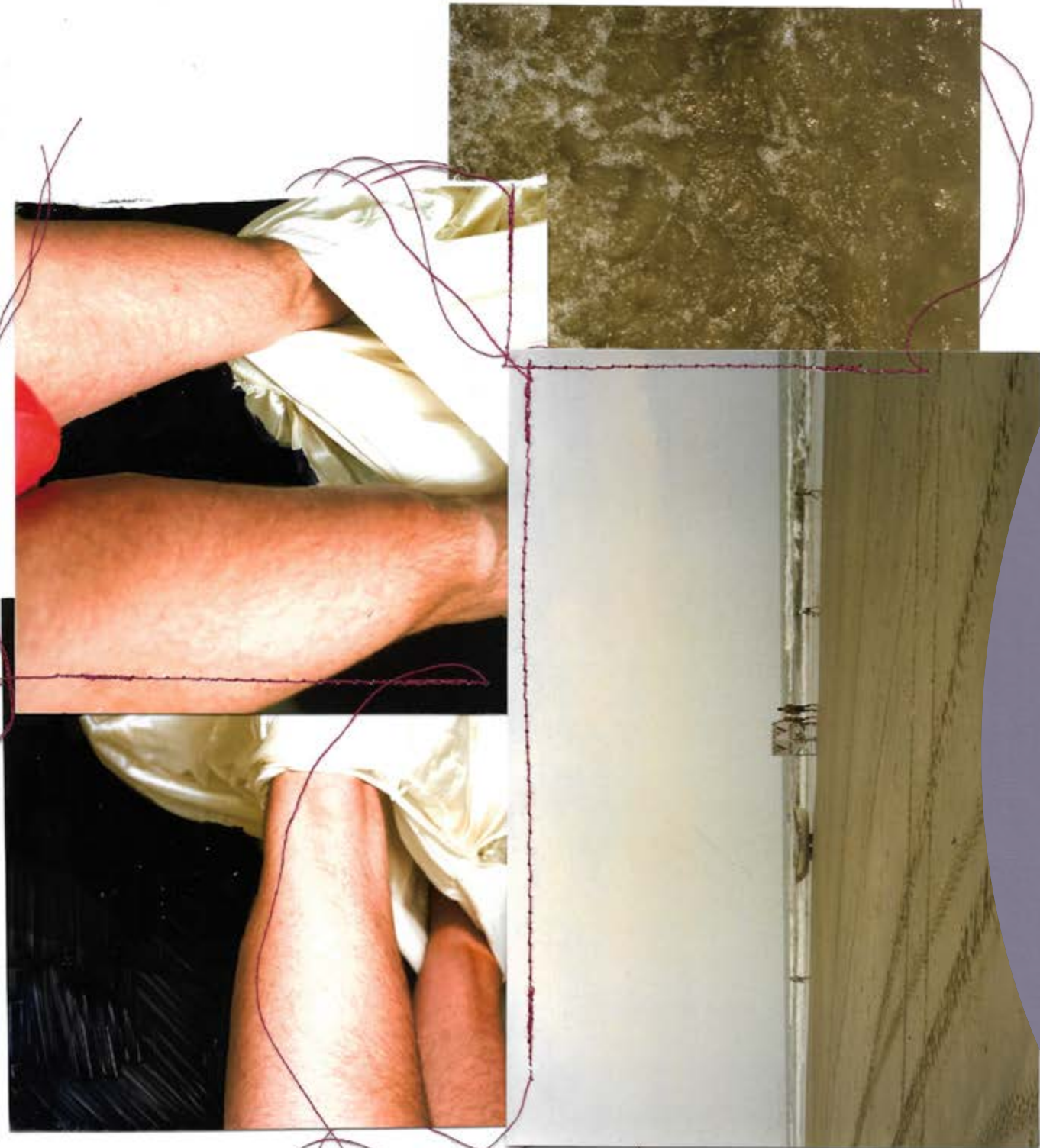
I say nothing at all.  
I am an  
unpolished rock.





(97-101) [Joe Klaus](#), *Tapestries of Memory* (series), Fine Art Photography & Collage





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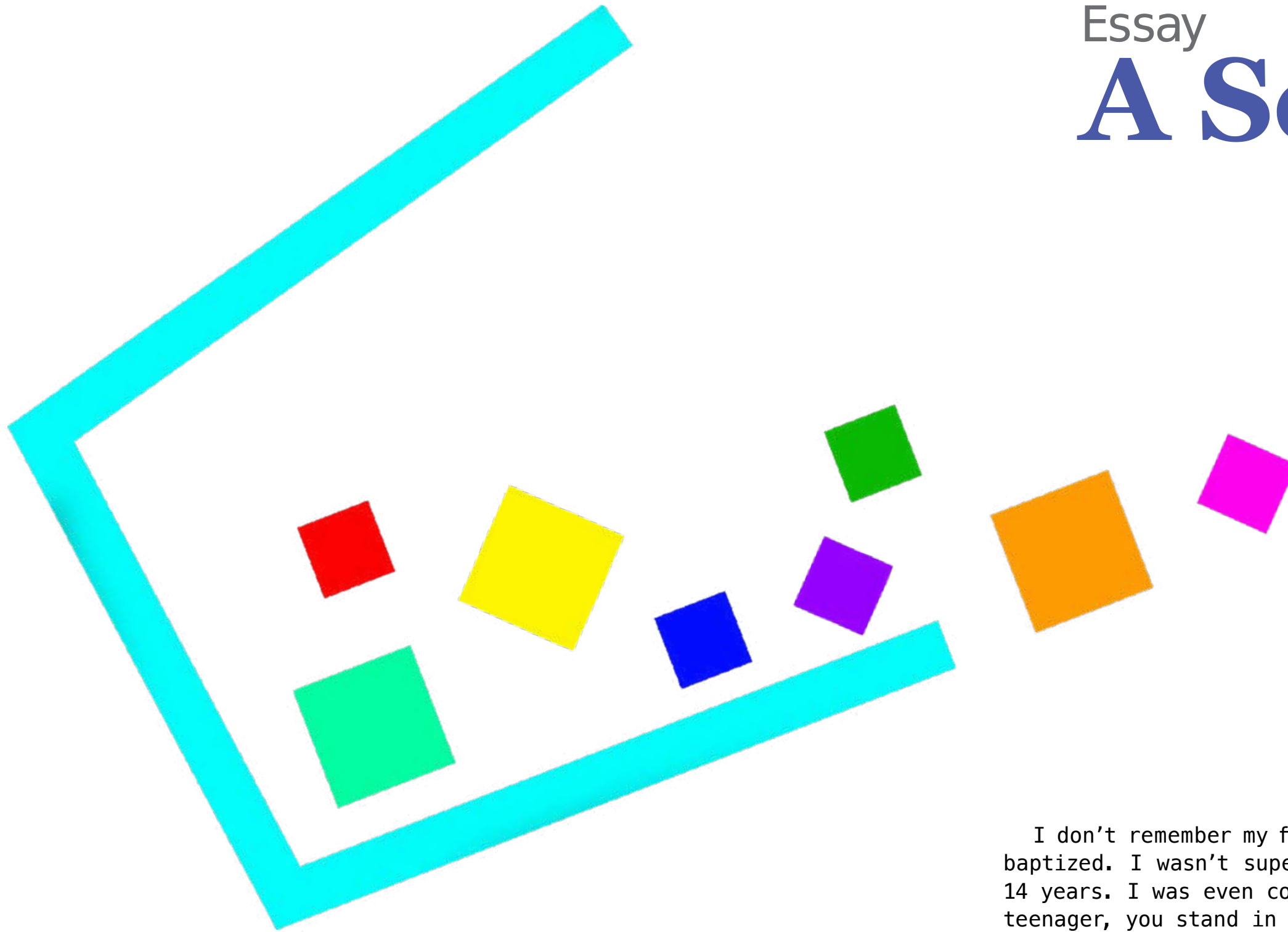
XX



Essay

# A Second Baptism

Christian Cintron



I don't remember my first baptism. I'm Puerto Rican, so of course I was baptized. I wasn't super-religious but I did go to Catholic School for 14 years. I was even confirmed. That's like a baptism booster shot. As a teenager, you stand in front of the entire congregation and confirm your belief in God and renounce Satan. I'd never really believed in Satan. But, considering a reality star became President of the United States. Maybe Satan is real!?

For as long as I went to Catholic School, I'd never really "believed" in God either. I hadn't had a "come to Jesus" moment. I could neither confirm nor deny the existence of God. I went to a fairly progressive Catholic all-boys high school. Not progressive enough for me to have had a boyfriend or take a boy to prom. But my World Religions teacher did confirm a lot of the Jesus narrative was faked. I don't remember if it was to piss off the Sumerians or incorporate some Pagan prophecy. But it was millennia-old drama so I didn't care. Besides, Karens and Jeffs have been cherry-picking from the Bible ignoring so much of the New Testament was all about peace, love, joy, and charity.

I didn't get very spiritual until after I started doing Drag. Between religious trauma, toxic masculinity, and my existential struggles, being able to take a break from being myself helped. As Dianya Birthday, in messy make-up and thrift store clothes, I was able to connect to something greater than myself. Free from having to defend myself or qualify my existence, I could show people what was inside. I could just be myself.

I was not one of these impeccably painted children raised by Drag

Race. I was suddenly in touch with something inside me. My Jackson Pollock approach to make-up and my love for the 1980s did most of the work. I had a love for shiny pretty things and a want to just let my spirit be free.

I started to meet people who talked about energy. The freedom to express myself released a lot of artistic blocks. I was processing a lot of dark emotions and trauma. I was blending my love of comedy,

painting, improvisation, and finding my spirituality. Suddenly, free from other gay men questioning my masculinity or challenging me I felt what it was like to be ap-

preciated as a person by gay men. Guys who would never reply to me on Grindr were coming up and talking to me. Some even wanted to make out or show off for me. Let me just say, it's good to be the queen.

Unlike many drag queens, I was not put in touch with an inner femininity. Raised by women, I'd arguably always been connected to my feminine side. Instead, I reconnected to my masculinity. Me in full drag feeling my masc 4 masc fantasy. But not masculinity as how others defined it but what being a man meant to me.

I found balance. In over a decade

in the queer community. I needed a mask to be able to feel safe enough to feel happy. How often do people come up to you because they like your energy and bring nothing but thirst, or negativity, or general shitty vibes? Being free to explore happiness was the start of my spiritual journey.

Joy was a word I'd heard but never understood. I'd argue many Christians don't understand joy. But when your heart is free and you lead with love even negative emotions can be met with joy. You can see the lesson from the negative emotions or the treasure in the tragedy. You don't have to be happy all the time but being joyous does put you in touch with something greater than yourself.

One night, I was in drag at a club. My aunt had died recently and it had hit me hard. She was the one member of my family I felt truly saw me. We would always connect over our love for dessert and being on the more sheltered side. It's always hard when your favorite family member dies.

I'm standing by a vendor selling crystals. As I ran my polished fingers over rose quartz necklaces this random woman turned to me. Apropos of nothing she said, "I'm proud of you. You deserve to be happy. It's beautiful." In that woman's face, I saw the face of my aunt. Not literally. But, I also didn't just see the features they shared the bright eyes and the awkward smile with the

same crooked tooth. I felt my aunt there.

It was the thing I needed to hear at the exact moment I needed to hear it. I felt a flood of emotions. Here was someone validating not just my drag but my feelings. Someone confirming despite all I'd survived I deserved to be happy. Without missing a beat, I asked her, "Are you a medium?" She said, "Why yes I am." It was confirmed. My aunt had appeared.

I quickly replied, "Well, I'm a size 16," and confidently walked away. Could you imagine? I actually excused myself, hobbled away in my heels, and proceeded to ugly cry. I cried like no one was watching. I cried for my grief not just at losing my aunt who was like my best friend. I cried for all the times I had not been myself. A deep emotional release and an old wound healed. Maybe magic was real.

Drag balanced me out. I'm not about the binary, I believe we all have solar and lunar sides. Our yin and yang. There are ways men connect (solar) and women connect (lunar) but they are interchangeable. This can be in physical, mental, emotional, and even energetic ways. We have to balance both to truly make magic happen in our world.

In drag, I saw men testing their endurance in heels, engineering outfits from unconventional materials, engaging in physical feats like dips and jump splits. We root

Let me just say,  
it's good to be the  
queen.

for our favorite queens the way straights root for sports teams. Drag was like our boy scouts, our after school sports. We were learning what we didn't learn as little girly boys about becoming men—by letting ourselves act like women. The women we admired, the female figures that empowered us.

In drag, I saw and felt all the things they railed into us in Catholic School. Not literally, pervs. The joy, love, and charity you don't see in the world despite how often it's mentioned in the Bible. I saw drag queens being so generous with each other. I saw queens like the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence doing great community work. By not having to be myself, I learned how to express my happiness without fear of being called a faggot, or "too much." I felt what it was like to feel the validation I wasn't getting in my life. I felt more LIKE MYSELF.

So back to my second baptism. Drag started me on a spiritual quest. I got more in touch with my body by working out. I got more in touch with my creative side, and energy. I softened some of my harder edges and was connecting with more people. I took to going out more in West Hollywood. I felt it was my responsibility to keep West Hollywood queer. The block of gay bars I'd fantasized about going to as a baby gay in Catholic School had become an enclave of Beckies, Susans, Karens, Kayleighs, and the gross

beta guys trying to have questionably consensual sex with them while they were drunk.

So I'm vibing at the club and this guy walks up to me and asks "What are you on?" I say, "Life." Not wanting to be dragged into a drug deal or a therapy sesh, I move on. I see this magical being, a fellow unicorn. They were also vibing to the music and bore a striking resemblance to Tracy Chapman. If you don't know them, they're the singer of "Fast Car" You know the song. You've got a fast car I want to take it to anywhere.

So Tracy Chapman Jr. and I meet up with her gay friends. A black guy, a white guy, and a Latinx guy. Now, let me just interject I'm Puerto Rican. See how I brought that back? There's certain diplomacy that comes from being Afro Latinx. I mean I'm light-skinned AF but I have relatives in all colors. Being of black, white, and indigenous descent I joke I have good credit, don't trust the police, and I believe in magic.

As soon as we arrive, the black guy grabs her by the pussy. I was shocked. This was in the middle of the Trump Presidency and I didn't think it was cool. I know it may have been playful. There also might be something I didn't know. But from the outside, it seemed like an aggressive movement to say, "I'm a man and you are not. And let me show you how." Seeing as how I'm 6'2 and at eye-level with the guy,

I did the same thing. I grabbed him by the dick. Gimme one reason to stay here...

He understood my intention. He said, "Nah, that's my friend." I replied, "Yeah, but it still feels the same." We had a weird silent moment of recognition. Now clearly, I shouldn't have interjected. But I saw how my friend was vibing and the vibe changed and I felt I needed to say something.

Meanwhile, the Latinx guy was not having it. I am not sure if he didn't understand what happened or if he was drunk. But he was plucked. He completely glossed over the misogyny of a guy grabbing an AFAB person at a gay bar by the vagina. He responds, "You need to go." And I say, "I was invited here. I'm just talking." I still haven't had a chance to talk to the second coming of Tracy Chapman, who is the only reason I'm here.

So the guy pushes me. He clearly did not know you should not lay hands on a Puerto Rican. We have two modes, cute and crazy. I have a long fuse but I also come from people who wield machetes. So the white guy says, "You should go. He always does this. He may start

swinging." And emboldened by who knows what I spit out, "Let him.

"I will end him."

I turn to the white guy. I look in his eyes and say, "You're a good person. Why are you letting him act like this?" He responds in a self-effacing way, "No I'm not." I say more emphatically, "Yes you are." Those were the magic words, suddenly they have flanked the Latinx guy who had a lot of Karen energy. This had been a catalyst for a conversation long overdue, because he was needlessly belligerent and his physical attack had nothing to do with me.

"Summer Lovin" starts to play. I start singing along. I find myself with a new group of people. I let them all have their conversation. We're all singing along to Olivia Newton-John the way God intended. The two friends have talked to Latinx Karen and they're about to leave. He rushes by and in a dramatic moment, throws his drink in my face.

Not to be outdone, I say, "Thank you. That was delightful."

And that was my second baptism.

I was no longer going to let

I joke I have good credit, don't trust the police, and believe in magic.

other people dictate how I should behave. I was not going to be bullied into accepting what I didn't believe to be right. And as I tasted the remnants of his discarded gin and tonic on my lips a guy standing next to me looks up to me—literally, he was shorter than me, and also Latinx.

He says, “Thank you for being you.”

It was in that moment I felt baptized. I felt committed to not just living as myself but also to celebrate myself and defending myself. And I felt confirmed in my new spiritual path.





# Fine Art de·scent

Various Artists

## de·scent

/də'sent/

*noun: descent; plural noun: descents*

*an action of moving downward, dropping, or falling.*

[Brad Welch](#), *Hung*, Drawing

[Roberto Navarrete](#), *Aché Boveda (Back View)*, Mixed Media Installation

[Chuck Hohng](#), *Decline of Empire* series, Reductive Linoleum Prints

[David Arenas](#), *Matters of Faith: The Book of Jonah & Ruairaidh13-55*, Photography

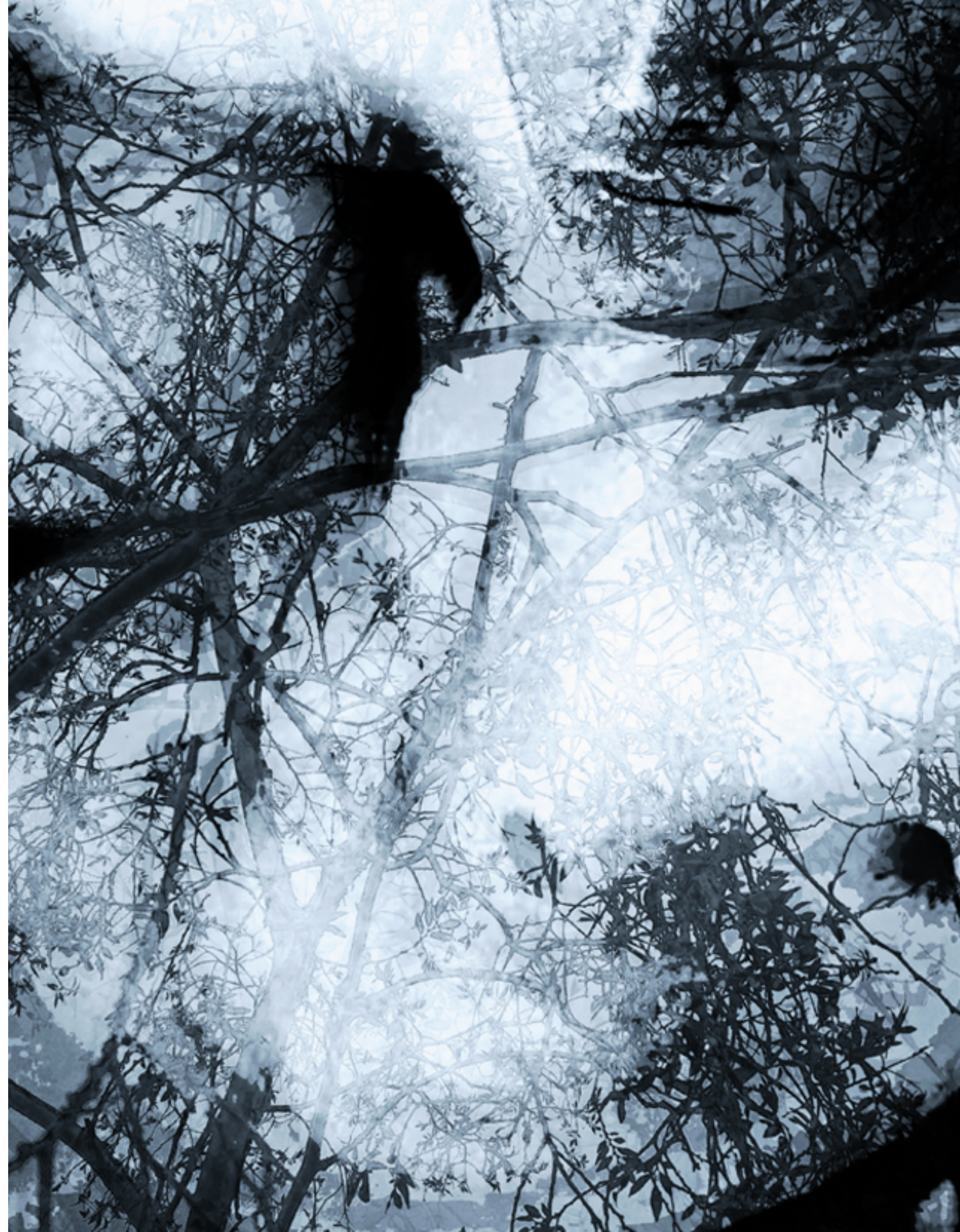
[John Waiblinger](#), *Willow, Shadow Play, Night Bloom & Wild Reeds*, Post Photography

[B.Jeppson](#), *Ardha Padmasana (Half Lotus), Matsyendrasana (Seated Twist), Parivitta Sanchalanasana (Revolved Crescent Lunge), Parsvottanasana (Side Angle), Urdhva Shanurasana (Wheel), Virabhadrasana (Warrior 2)*, Photography





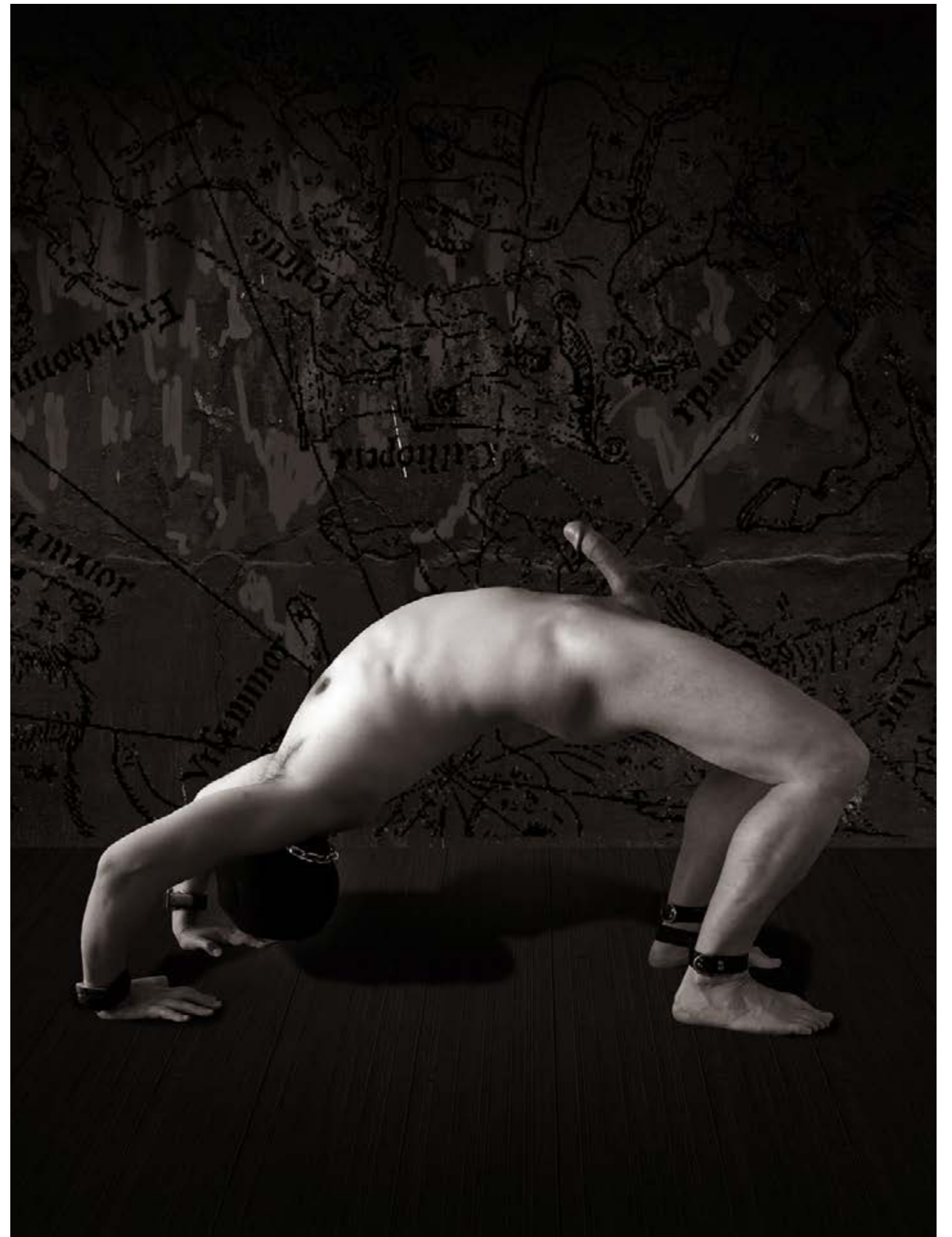


















Ceramics & Interview

# *Head Full of Clouds*

[J Casey Doyle](#)

Fine Artist J. Casey Doyle joined us for a Zoom interview to discuss his life among the clouds. Casey is an Associate Professor of Art and Design at the University of Idaho. He received his MFA with an emphasis in Sculpture from The Ohio State University, a BFA with emphases in Sculpture and Metals & Jewelry and a BA with emphasis in Spanish from New Mexico State University. He is the recipient of two Idaho Commission on the Arts Fellowships. He exhibits his work both nationally and internationally. His art combines interests in craft, sculpture, metals & jewelry, video, gender and the concept of play.

QQ:

Congratulations on all of your previous shows, I feel like every time I look on your instagram, you are hosting another fine art exhibit. Anything coming up?

JCD:

Well, I am currently looking for new show opportunities. I don't have any new exhibits coming up. I've been trying to regain my breath and momentum. It's been weird, in the pandemic. But I am very grateful; I had two show opportunities which is pretty amazing.

QQ:

And the last show was a collaboration, right?

JCD:

Yeah. That show was layered. The artist I collaborated with—I had never met her before. It was kinda this moment where they said, “Hey we wanna do a two-person show with you, there are similar ideas and interests you both have. Oh, and PS: Tiffany loves

to always collaborate on one piece.”

And I was like: “Okay.”

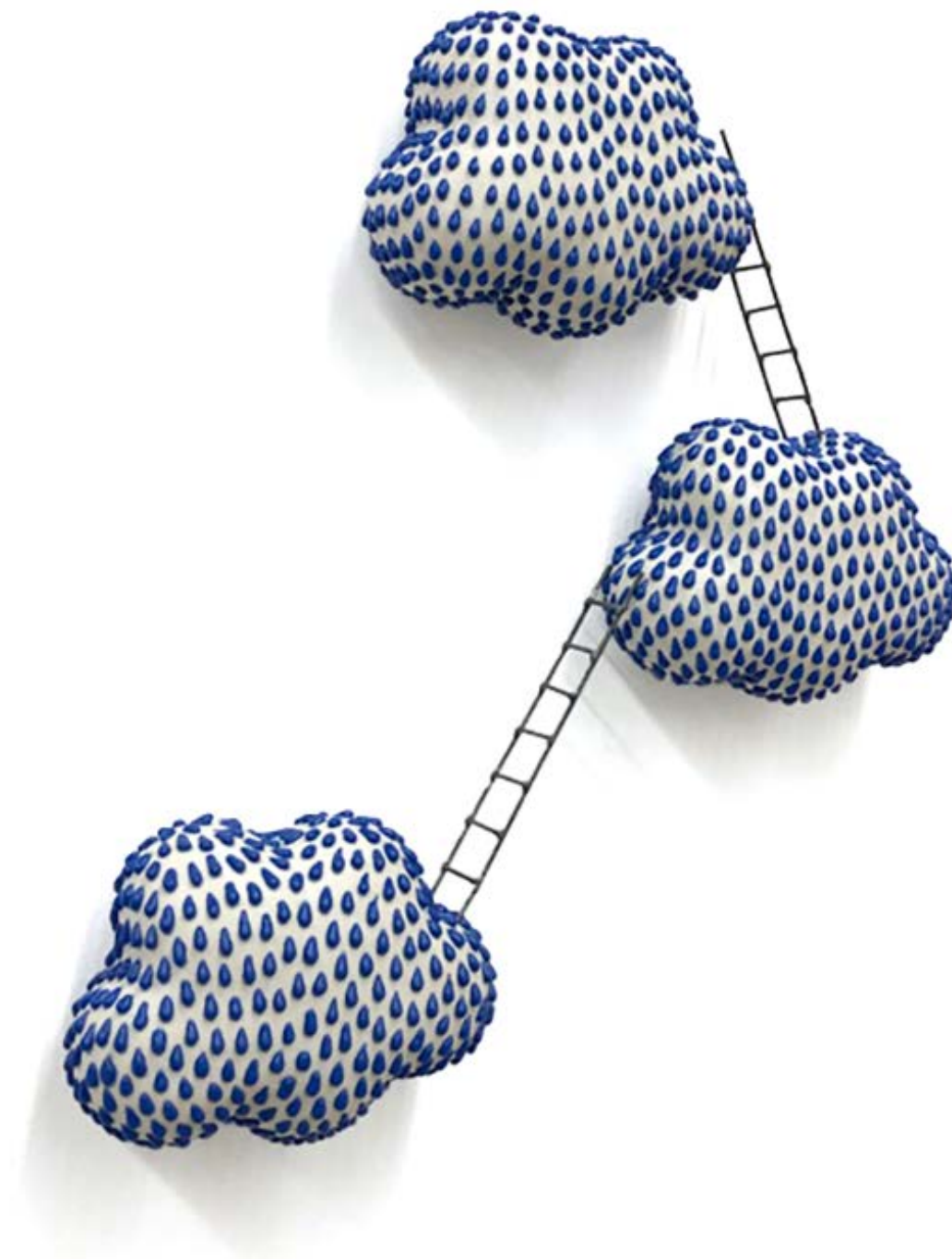
And then we started talking and it just made sense to collaborate on the whole show. The way I work with molds also lends itself well to crazy time compressions. We didn't even live in the same town, about an hour and half apart. So how were we going to get

clay to each other and deal with multiple firings, and the back and forth? It worked really well to make some beautiful cloud forms that I could hand to her to decorate. Some never came back because she watercolored them—they were beautiful. And then

some came back, and I glazed them, so they could become more functional.

It was a wild process, I definitely stepped out of my realm, in terms of mark-making. I'm not really illustrative. I have a tendency to draw back over things and erase repeatedly—which I don't put out in the world. [laughter] These ones which are very obsessively made with marks are very controlled and something I have practiced.

How do I  
break free  
from that? By  
throwing some  
glitter on it!



QQ: Absolutely. One of the wonderful things about your pieces is their intricate simplicity. It's really a testament to hand, restraint, and overall artistic vision.

JCD:

Well, thank you. I see the whole process as being meditative: staying in that moment and keeping a clear head. It became something super useful, especially in the pandemic.

I started making the initial clouds the summer just before Covid hit as a demo for my ceramics class. It just sort

of manifested itself. And then I started putting a little raindrop on it. And from there, I was like, "I think there is something here!" I wasn't using clouds before but it just kind of came into being. When you acknowledge the space around you and what was coming, it was important to me to think about my own breath and clear air and looking to someplace else. The clouds for me are not directly about heaven but I can see the connections to it and the multiple ladders moving upwards. So part of it is thinking about that. And I think depending on the audience, someone could be more mournful or sad. But there's also the other side

that's a celebration of going to the next plane of existence.

I grew up Catholic, which is that other wonderful layer of being a queer individual who grows up and makes it all the way through confirmation, prepares third graders for their first communion, and then goes to college and says, "Yeaaaaahhh!!! It's time to tell you who I am." And now I feel like there is a questioning of Jesus or God, right? I believe in a power or energy. I'm not sure I believe in what the church specifically said I should be fearful of, or love, or whatever. But I do think of something higher. So the cloud becomes that weird interplay between space and us on the ground and whatever else exists.

Most of my work is also about re-connecting to the idea of play. Play is very structured, especially as kids—and as queer kids—we were told not to play with certain things and to play with other things because we appeared to be male or female and assigned to those roles. Remembering how to play as an adult is important—because we forget how to even do that, we lose it. Luckily some of us gravitate to sports and vocations and that sort of thing, and that's maybe our release, but how to incorporate that sense of "play!" and experimentation, and "what is this," and that freedom is something that I constantly am looking at in my own work. This opens me up, understanding when I've gotten into a rut





and just repeat the same thing. How do I break free from that? By throwing some glitter on it, and introducing something where I question whether or not it's crazy. Like, how could I pull that back?

Now with the clouds, it's about figuring out that form. The form is very inflated, a lot of my work before used party supply ribbon to knit these different textiles. I liked the ribbon in terms of content. As in: the gendering of that material, and the process of knitting and me being this man. I liked the celebration aspect of party supply ribbon and these inflated things and how they connect with balloons. I love how ribbons and balloons say, "Ya! Party," but they also say "Sad. Here's a gift for something..." I think it runs the spectrum.

With the clouds I've been experimenting with surface: shiny vs matte, and texture. I like the unexpected in an object, especially the smaller ones. These you can hold, they rattle and make noise. So I love that spectrum of sizes and color.

Depending on how you look at them, clouds can be ominous and dark. So, I'm from New Mexico. I've been in Idaho for about ten years because this is where I teach. But in New Mexico, when a storm is rolling in, we're excited about the rain and moisture. That's bringing something to it. And lightning—that could be scary. But it could also be life-giving. I see clouds as being fertile things, as opportunities for true, literal growth. You know, like plants, and like ideas and inspiration, and thinking beyond something.

QQ:

I love that dichotomy of celebration. That we exist with both the good and the bad.

JCD:

Right? We learn from it. Maybe not literally connected and visible in the work, but for me, the time it takes to create them, to put each of those raindrops on and the meditative state of it, is the opportunity to think about what was bad and how to learn from it. A lot of my clouds come together as multiples with the ability to

reconfigure them. I also love that it's like a part of me and my fear of commitment. But I don't see it as a fear, I see it as a celebration of how we're always reconfiguring ourselves. And clouds are always moving. They may be closer together and they may be part of the group; or they may be slightly isolated from the group but still one and similar.

**It's our job as artists to decide what we share with the world. And not everything we make has to be shared.**

I have different sizes of a similar cloud shape. Two different clouds—a long one and a short one—people. They are not specifically male or female or binary, but with the molds they are this





JCD:

I fully started to approach it in my own work during grad school. I have a need and a desire to make everything. To do it, it's got to come from my hand. Yes, it's a material, but I've got to manipulate it and do something. I can't go buy the thing, modify it sort of, and then call it a work, right.

So in grad school, I was continuing this idea of "is it okay if a man wore a dress if it was covered in fifteen hundred steel cut pansies connected by magnets and it was steel and heavy." So I'm making this dress and I'm now like, "okay, I've got to make some high heeled shoes, right?"

Because, why wouldn't you need those?

But, I've never really worn a pair of high heels. So maybe I need to go buy a pair? So I have to go find ridiculously large high heeled shoes, and try them on. And I should get them too, to model, rather than trying to work from memory, so I can make my own shoes. And then it was encouraged by faculty to document. And I put the camera down and capture myself trying to fit into shoes that are too small, and how to stand, with my foot popping out and my hairy legs. And the camera became like the mirror on the floor, like when you are trying on shoes and I was modeling for it. That super opened me up to the idea.

cookie-cutter moment. But then each of the drops is hand applied, making each one of them unique. They may look similar from afar but as you get closer you understand that there are little things that make them different. And I love that. I love that repetition and the ability to learn from my process.

QQ:

I love this idea of play in the work. How would you encourage queer others to embrace play as adults?

This was play.

This was experimentation and stepping out of myself, accessing something that's desired or familiar. But it's being done in the safety of my own studio. So the studio became this space I had created where I shut my door and I was allowed to be me. All me. What happens behind these doors is just for me.

It's our job as artists to decide what we share with the world. And not everything we make has to be shared. We make that choice. So putting those

shoes on was a moment. And then finally deciding to share that with somebody was important. Finding the space to play in, and then finding someone you know is going to be open and receptive. So it's finding your bestie or somebody to kinda go, "I tried this thing, what do you think?"

I would encourage people to explore the silly dumb idea. We always have this idea that the cliché is not valid. But I love the cliché. I mean, let's roll that out. You are going to find kernels if you keep playing.





Comelia Kurtew.

*Spirit of Family (series)*

*(141) Women, (143) If You See Her Say Hello,*

*(144) Kings and Queens of America,*

*(145) Kurtew Family, (147) Untitled*

Fine Art Photography













Fine Art & Criticism

# Spirit of the Hunt

Miss Brightside

Essay by K Ryan Henisey

“Each mask is akin to trophy, a series of documentation and investigations into sexual liberation,” explains artist Miss Brightside.

We’re standing outside one of our local coffee haunts. Her asymmetrical, black hair a contrast to her bright, twinkling eyes. Full disclosure: Miss Brightside (Katie to me) and I are friends—good friends. Like, inner-circle, Covid-breaking friends. And while Miss Brightside is not LGBTQIA+, she is a true ally who celebrates the queerness in all people, including herself.



And her masks are fucking queer. I dare you to challenge me.

Miss Brightside's Trophies are Amazonian in scope, as if a goddess had embraced divine madness and righteously beheaded all who scorned her. When hung, the masks—especially as disembodied, fabric wolves and monsters—take on a defeated expression, reinforced by Miss Brightside's candor and glee.

As a curator of Queer Art, I am deeply concerned with questioning the nature of "queer." What makes and object—or an individual—queer? (This question is as dangerous as its parent, "what is art?") Consistently, I return to two answers: art made by queer peoples, art that contains queer content.

It's easiest to call art made by LGBTQIA+ people Queer Art. This would include those who would historically have been categorized as part of queer communities today, even if our contemporary terms and ideas were not part of their era. With this definition, it could easily be argued that the work of Sappho is queer. But also the works of Michelangelo and Leonardo DaVinci. David Hockney would be included, as would Tom of Finland. Simply being a queer person qualifies the art as Queer Art.

Defining Queer Art by the circumstances of the artist's life does have pitfalls. Michelangelo's Madonna and Child certainly doesn't read as Queered (even if many of his other figures do). Is it then Queer Art? What of Hockney's landscapes? Are they queered, just by the nature of the hand that made them?





Content is a much more accurate reading of queerness in art. Tom of Finland is queered. DaVinci's Mona Lisa is queered (seriously—she is looking right at you! AND she might have been a man **\*\*historically accurate gasps\*\***). However, when defining queerness from the content of art, we must accept that non-Queered people can make works that reflect queer sensibilities. Most important to queerness is the rejection of status quo. The discarding of existing norms extends even to Queer Theory itself disrupting any forced definition of queerness by nature of its very establishment. Queerness, as content, cannot be defined, because it must always be in a state of re-defining.

Miss Brightside's masks, then, fall into the second category—artwork that is queered by content rather than by its maker. And how does she tap into queerness? By rejecting conventions of feminine sexuality and celebrating conquests.

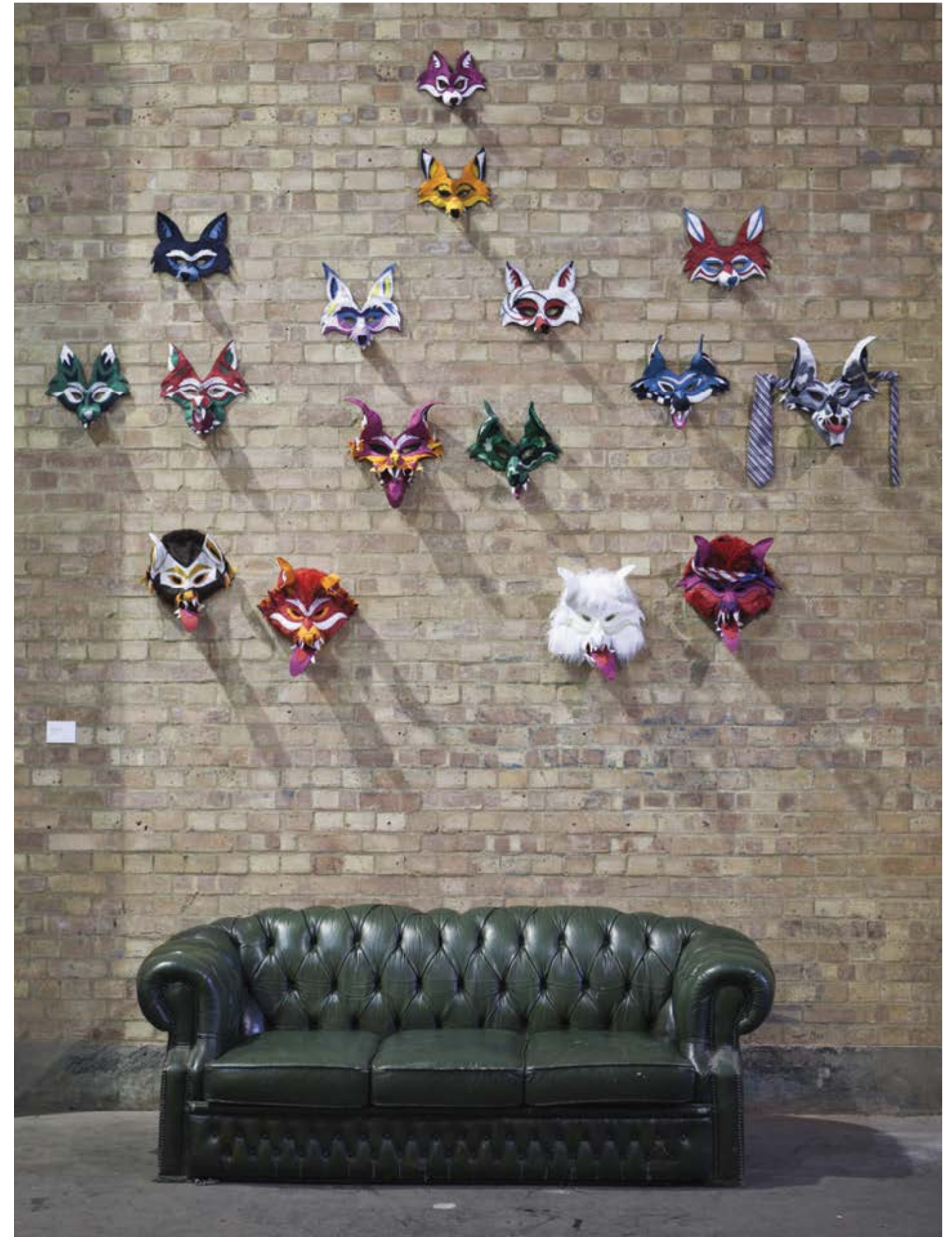
“Ultimately,” Miss Brightside explains, “the Trophies are a reflection on how I feel, or felt, in a relationship. They are about me. But that doesn't stop the men they represent from hating me for the depiction.” Katie laughs. And we snark about boys for a time.

Miss Brightside reveals a deep intelligence—not just in her Trophies—driven by a need for understanding the nature and history of all of her work, including her design productions. Each mask, for example, incorporates objects men left behind, whether articles of their own clothing or gifts they may have purchased for the artists. They are portraits, though a portraiture of emo-

tional abstraction, rather than direct representation. This sense of being is carried through in all of Miss Brightside's creations, including her wallpaper installations at the Farmer's Daughter in Los Angeles. Drawing on the bordello history of the establishment, Miss Brightside's designs reflect a tasteful licentiousness that is both respectful and referential.

“I mean, the goal is a husband and to end this series,” she jokes with me at our two-top table, revealing her heterosexuality with the casual ease of all straight peoples. “But even with marriage,” she continues, “I look forward to the retrospective of my hunt!”

“And that, my friend,” I exclaim a little too loud, “is exactly why your artwork is Queer!” We've talked about this before. Queer Theory is a child of Feminist Theory and the Civil Rights Movement. It would not exist without the collective theoretical and social work of those movements. At the heart of Miss Brightside's Trophies is a feminism that rejects the notion of female sexuality in the negative. Her catalogue is a personalized history of conquering men. In making her masks, Miss Brightside subverts the hunter and engages in her own, ribald hunt.







Miss Brightside  
(149) Twenty-Nine  
(151) The Wedding Dress #5  
(153) Forty-Four  
(154) Thirty-Nine  
(155) Forty-Two  
(158) Trophies, 1-16  
(159) Mask One, Playboy

