

# **Painting at the Intersection of Psyche, Science, and Mystery**

A Journey into the Cosmos through an Inner Landscape

**Johanna Baruch**

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This article is an exploration into the mystery of the creative process and the transformative power of art. I'll be speaking from my own intersection - of looking up into the infinite cosmos while diving down into my own inner worlds. And I'll be using the medium of paint as my language. But I hope this will speak to where you stand at your own intersections of creativity.

You'll be seeing many images, paintings from artists across time, and photographs from our amazing space telescopes. We'll study a little of the science behind our space discoveries. We'll go into the artist's studio to explore the alchemy of painting. And in the last part, I'll show some images of my own work.

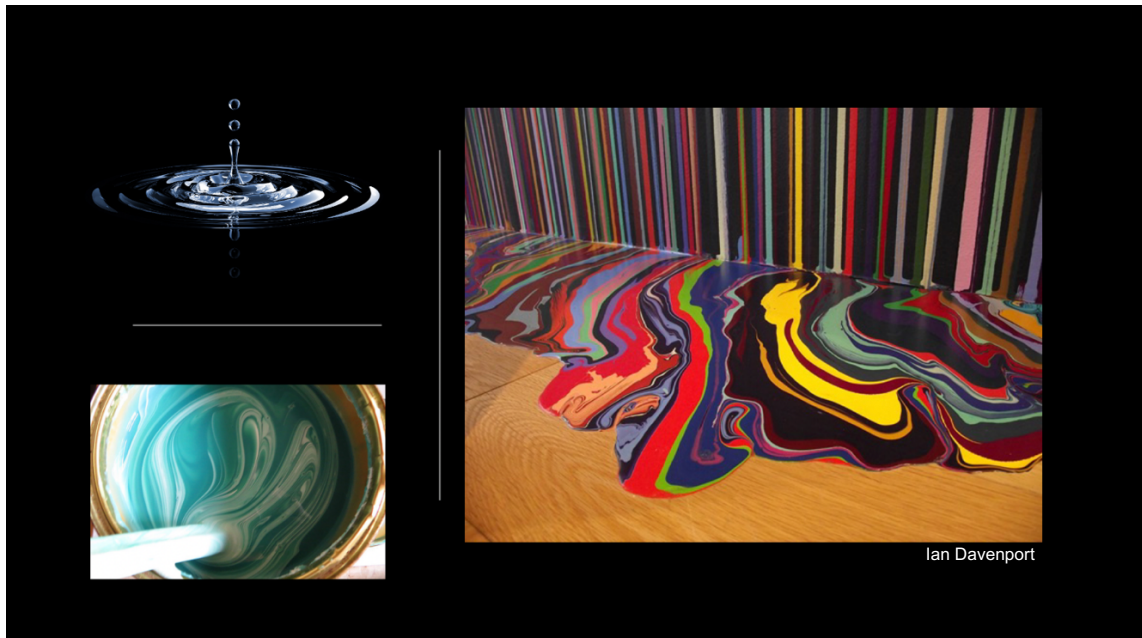


## Part I



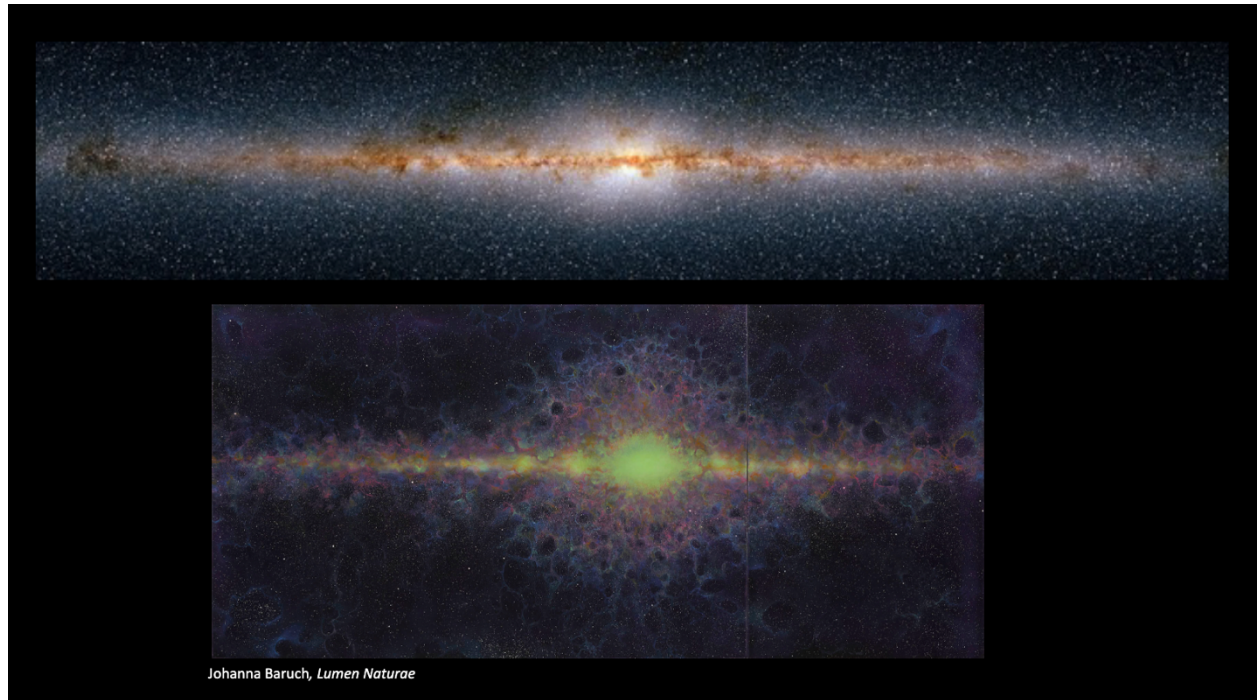
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*About process and animating an image*



For me, the materiality of paint – its feel, its texture, its color – all contain an innate vitality. The artist has a relationship with it. Establishes a partnership. It's the artists job to allow paint to take its own nature while expressing ourselves through directing and guiding it along.

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I begin my process by looking at photographs of deep space. I look and open myself up till one hits me viscerally. It goes beyond words, or even thoughts. It's a primal relationship between my own inner cosmos while looking at the great universe all around us.



Johanna Baruch in her studio

When an artist stands before a blank canvas or panel, it's that terrifying and thrilling moment of putting the first stroke on nothingness that puts us, and the painting on a completely unknown path. That canvas is a receiver, and a vessel, yet it also responds back. Together we create a new life.

Here's what the great 20th c. artist, Wassily Kandinsky said about that:

“Empty canvas. In appearance - really empty, silent, indifferent. Stunned almost. [But] in effect - full of tensions, with a thousand subdued voices, heavy with expectations. A little frightened because it may be violated”

Wassily Kandinsky, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1935*, Ed. Edward Weisberger, 1986





An artist may start with an outside image or model, or they may start with an inner vision. But that's only where the work begins. Then, it's about the commitment to being as true and as authentic to the life being created as you can be.

Going willingly into the unknown is like being an explorer without a map. You feel both the dangers and the joys of it. And as the explorers of old had to have faith they would not sail off the edge of the earth, an artist must have trust in their own creative unfolding -through their skill, their experience and trust in their unconscious.

Jung said:

“We would do well to think of the creative process as a living thing implanted in the human psyche.”

*The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 15: The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, Exec. Ed. William Mc Guir, 1968

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John Berger, in his brilliant book “The Shape of a Pocket” writes:

“The modern illusion concerning painting is that the artist is a creator. Rather he is a receiver. What seems like creation is the act of giving form to what he has received.”

John Berger, *The Shape of a Pocket*, 2001



For me, when I’m inside the full throes of a process, I feel like I’m channeling something much bigger than the small me. And with my source material being as boundless, as deep and as awesome as the Cosmos, you can imagine how expansive I must make myself from the inside. It’s a constant dance between the inner to the outer and back to the inner worlds again.

Shitao, the great 17th c. Chinese Landscape Painter said:



Shitao, *Album of eight leaves*, ink and colors on paper, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

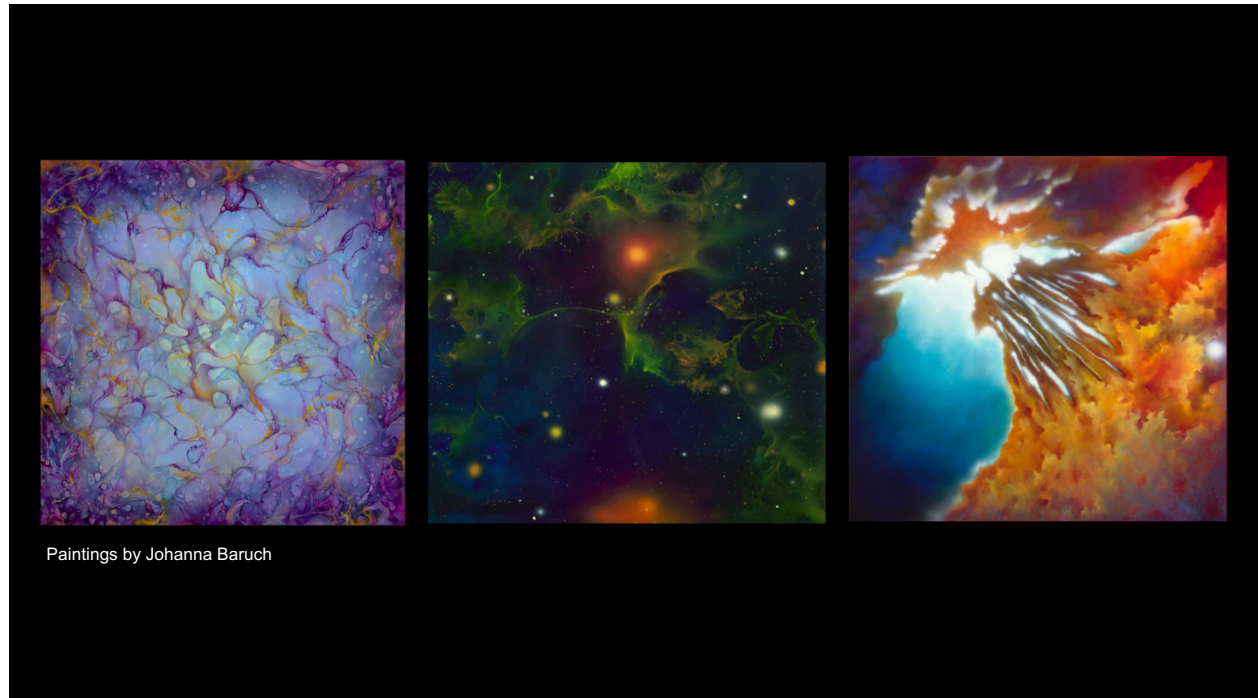
“Painting is a result of the receptivity of the ink: the ink is open to the brush: the brush is open to the hand: the hand is open to the heart: all this in the same way as the sky engenders what the earth produces: everything is a result of receptivity.”

- Shitao

“Painting is a result of the receptivity of the ink: the ink is open to the brush: the brush is open to the hand: the hand is open to the heart: all this in the same way as the sky engenders what the earth produces: everything is the result of receptivity.”

Shitao, from the essay: *Treatise on the Philosophy of Painting (Huayulu)*, 2021

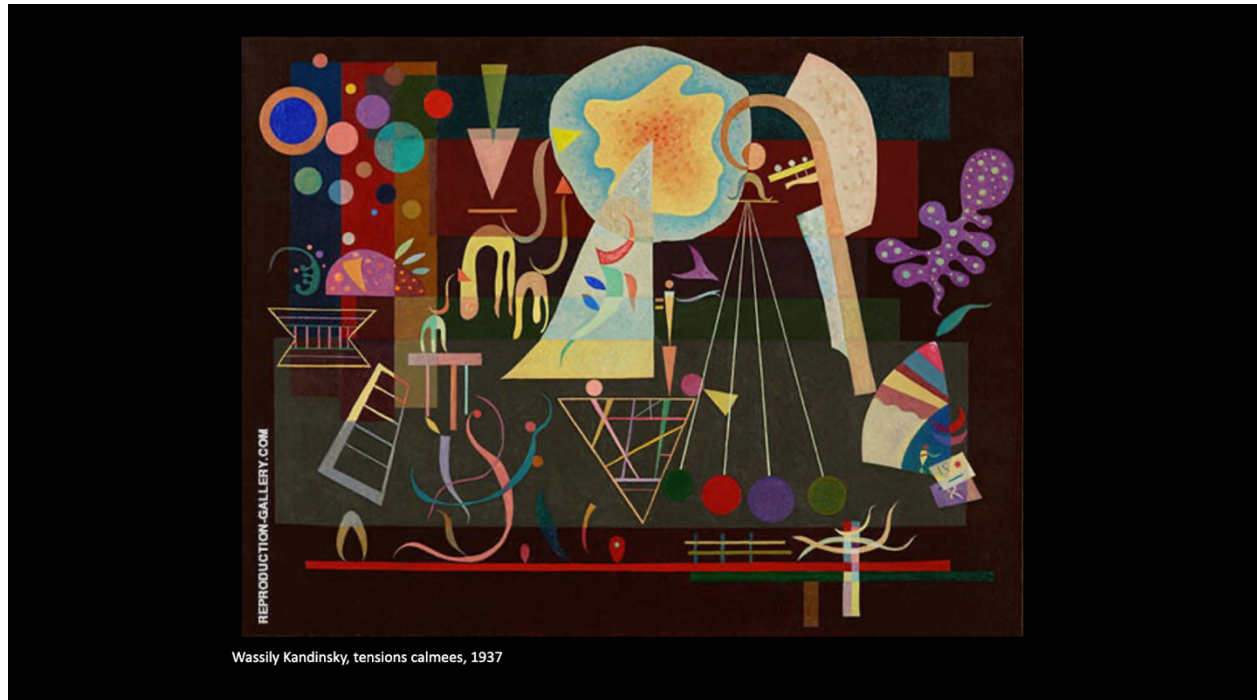




Jung said creativity can be autonomous, not under the ego's control, and it can sweep us "along on an underground current". What we today may call being in the flow. He also said:

"Art is a kind of drive that seizes a human being and makes him his instrument."  
And "Man does not possess creative powers, he is possessed by them."

Carl Jung, from the Essay: *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry*,  
1922



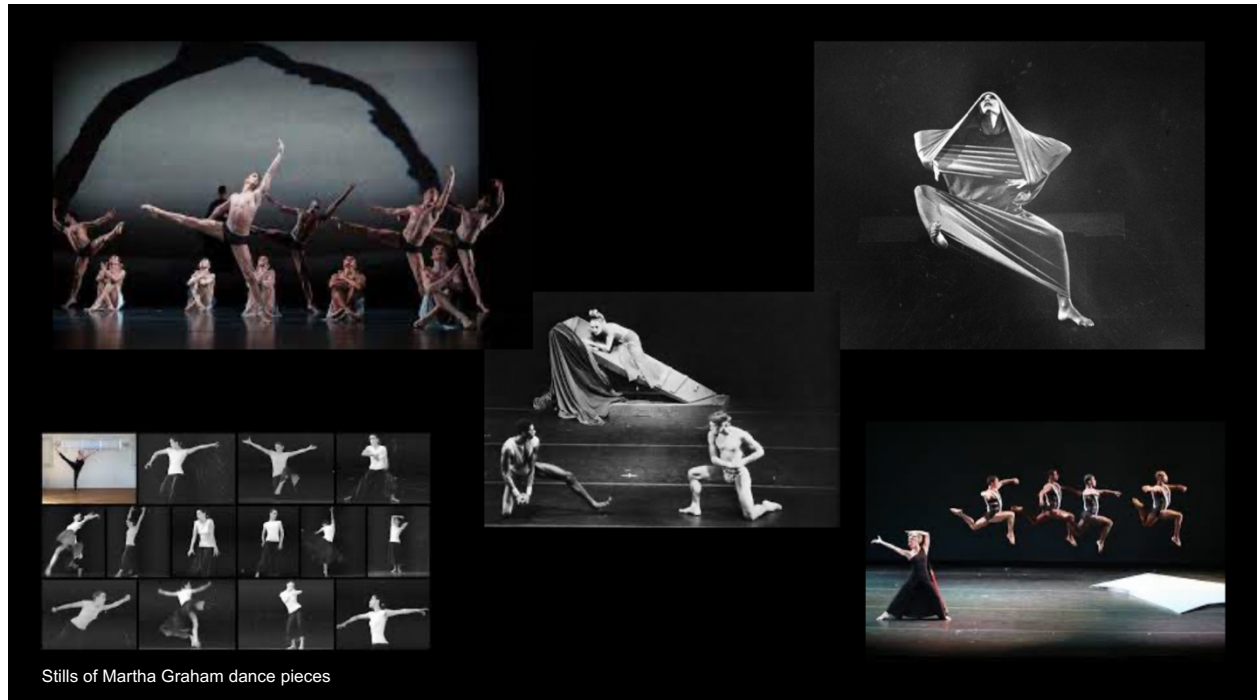
But there are some principals one can incorporate as a kind of skeleton or framework.

One I've come to accept is that in works of art, there must be some kind of animating principal to give it life. Some examples are works that hold a kind of internal tension, a rhythm and movement and dynamism. These together can carry us to new places.

We can imagine these ideas perhaps more easily in music. Kandinsky, in his book *"Concerning the Spiritual in Art"* wrote about music in this way:

"A painter, who finds no satisfaction in mere representation, however artistic, in his longing to express his inner life, cannot but envy the ease with which music, the most non-material of the arts today, achieves this end. He naturally seeks to apply the methods of music to his own art. And from this results that modern desire for rhythm in painting, for mathematical, abstract construction, for repeated notes of color, for setting color in motion."

Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 1977



Or, we can see this dynamism in choreography, like one sees in a Martha Graham piece – contractions, expansions, reaches and foldings. Paintings can also hold these in a kind of dance.



Joan Mitchell, *La Vie en Rose*, 1979

One can see these tensions, rhythms and movements in Joan Mitchell's work, with bold attacks of paint to the canvas living alongside gentle caresses.



Joan Mitchell, *Strata*



Or the tension of seeing both the conscious control of the materials, while also the abdication of control, as one sees in a Jackson Pollock...



Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Leaves*

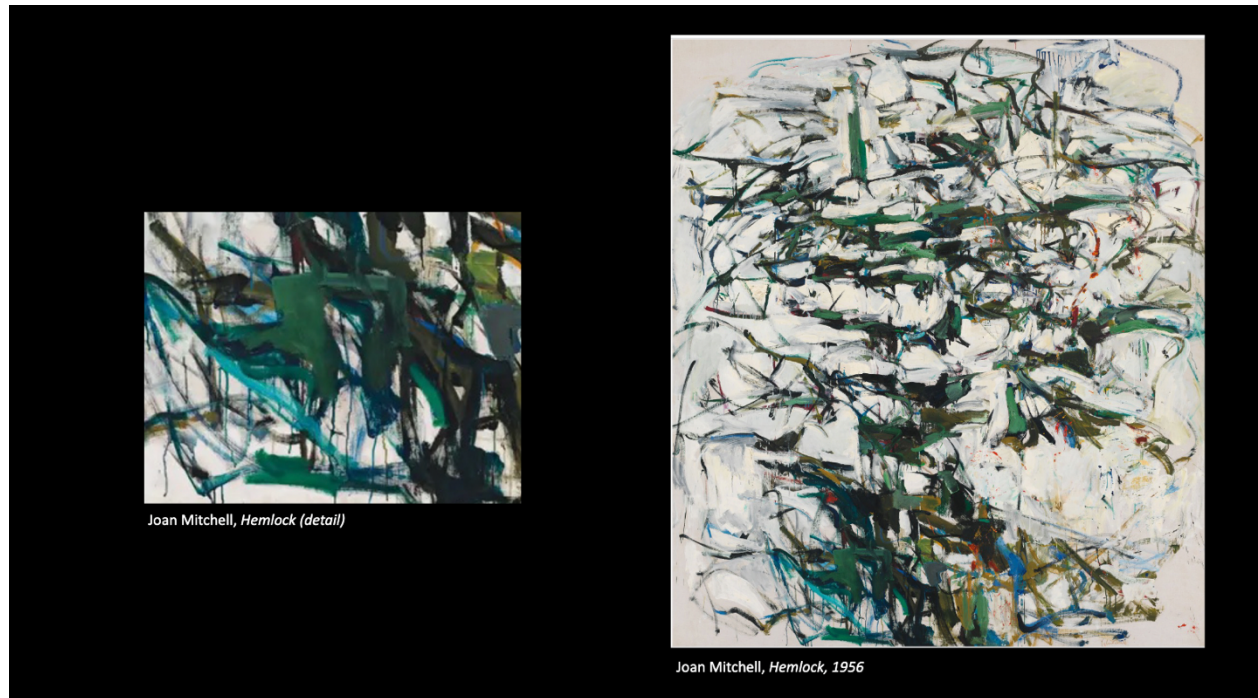
...or in a Helen Frankenthaler.



Helen Frankenthaler, *Red Shift*, 1990



What makes a painting interesting is how often it may contain internal chaos that is somehow resolved when seen as a whole, first by looking close up, then stepping back.



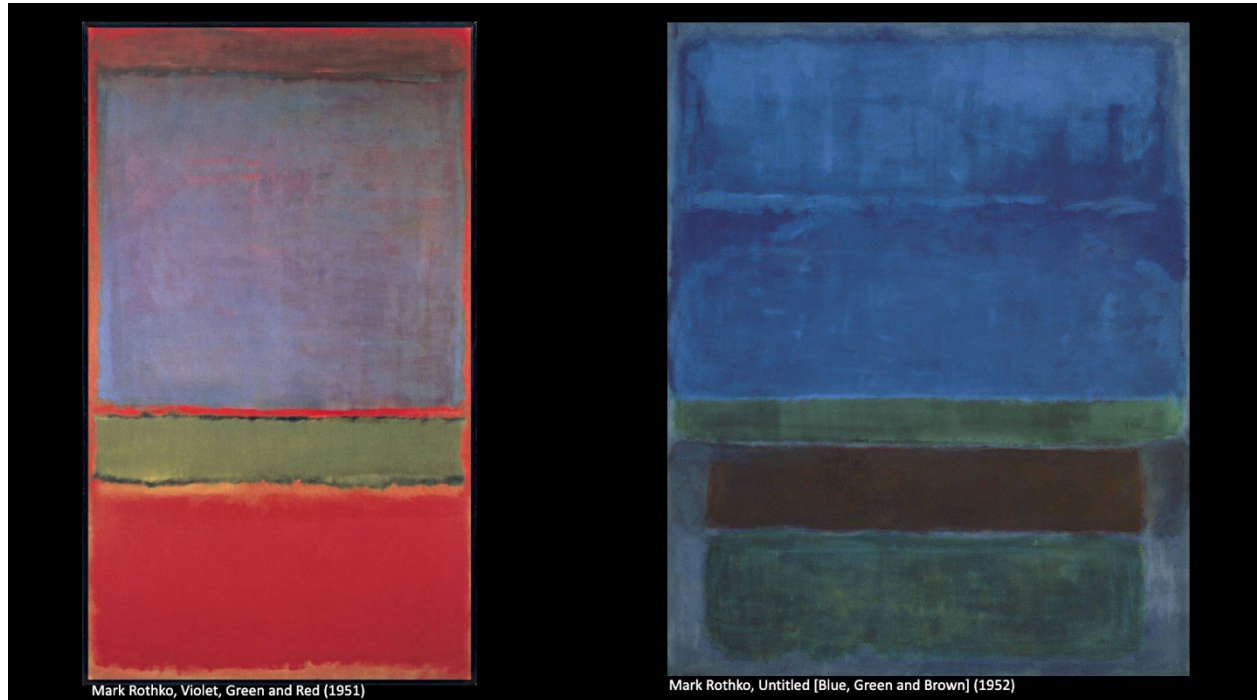
Shitao, said:

“The brush is for saving things from Chaos.”

Shitao, from the essay: *Treatise on the Philosophy of Painting (Huayulu)*, 2021



The expression may be through pure color and form, that asks you to open yourself up to their fields of energies...



The dynamic of tension and their releases can also appear in the painting's composition, its organization, the way your eye, and perhaps your body moves around the space.

Henri Matisse, Dance II (1910)



What adds another layer may be in the stories they tell, in the subject matter.



Henri Matisse, The Red Studio (1911)

The stories may be overt and dramatic, while still communicating through form and color and movement.



Peter Paul Rubens, *Mars and Rhea Silvia* (c. 1617)



Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (c. 1612)

Or, the story may be quieter, and the feelings more subtle, more embedded, where the artist imbues a work with an internal tension. We can even call it an investigation...



Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*



...that one can feel but it would be hard to put a finger on it.

Diego de Silva y Velázquez, *Las meninas* (1656)





It's in the in-between, the internal space within the painting, but also between you viewing it and the painting itself. I feel here Rembrandt is actually trying to speak to us.



Rembrandt, *Self Portrait with Two Circles*

These works just contain an arresting kind of power. An indefinable energy that an artist transfers from themselves and draws us into it

Johannes Vermeer, *The Milkmaid*



that then continues to live on...



Rogier van Eyck, Arnolfini Portrait

### *A Marriage of the Inner and the Outer*



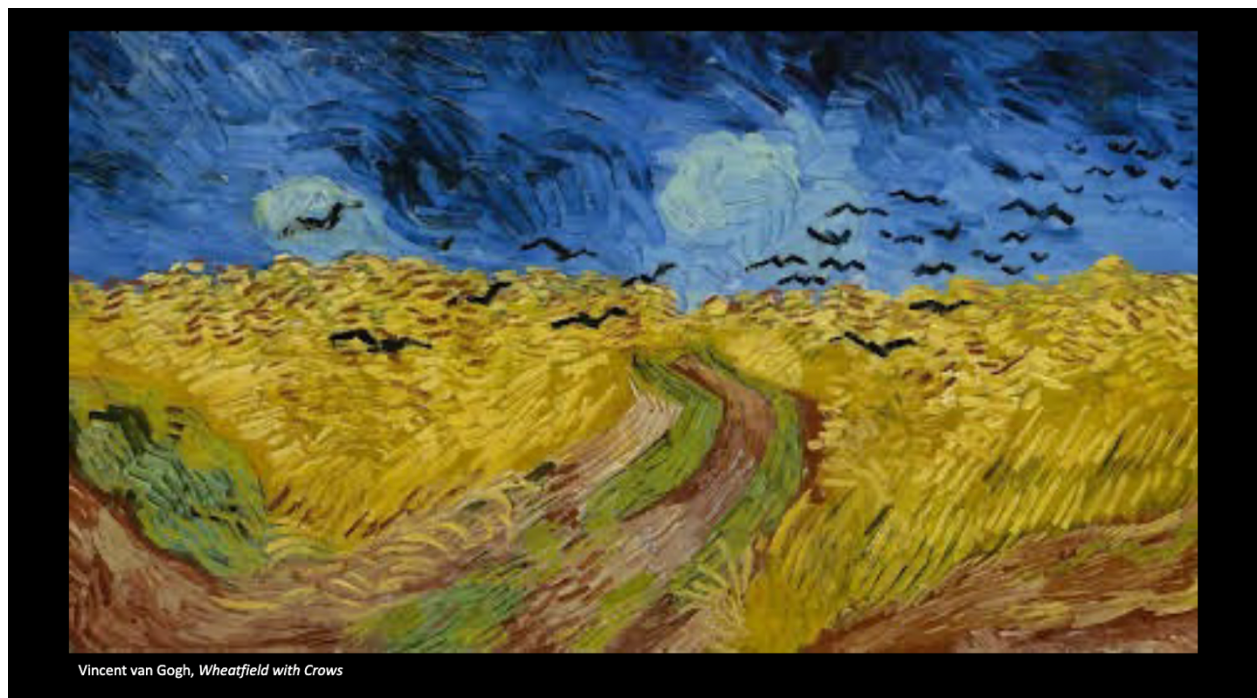
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Creating any work of art requires a strange kind of a co-existence. The artist imbues herself into it, yet it also becomes an object that lives in the world, so it's both subjective and objective. And this then combines to become a single thing that can touch everyone.

Jung said that in the creative process, we “escape from the limitations of the personal” and move into the transpersonal realms which is how works of art can speak to anyone. (Carl Jung, *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry* 1922) That conjunctio, the mysterious marriage of the opposites creates a third, which might give us a feeling of completion and even transcendence - which in my opinion, can be another way to define beauty.



One explanation as to why living as an artist can be such a struggle, and we've seen so many great artists tear themselves apart from the inside, is what Jung saw as an inevitable and inseparable correlation to creation - which is destruction. Like Shiva who

is the great destroyer because he is also the creator. It's a very hard thing to articulate, that in the process of creation, something is also destroyed.



Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night*

Creating something out of nothing means living on the edge, stepping off to free fall into nothingness. Something must be sacrificed to do this.





Edvard Munch, *Anxiety*, 1894



Edvard Munch, *The Sick Child*, 1907

I had previously thought that the archetypes that live deep within our psyches always took the shape of symbols - objects, characters or narrative stories that we then express through art, or myth, or dreams. But I've come to see that archetypes actually start underneath those symbols.





They are the primordial patterns from which these others take their outward shape. Working as I do in an abstract language, I feel I must tap into that primordial - through form, gesture, and movement.



JMW Turner, Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth

It's amazing how these primary marks can evoke something we intuitively know.

And with the great artists who use representational imagery, still, we can feel that archetypal primary root source expressed through the symbols to what lies underneath.



Claude Monet, *Impression, soleil levant*



Cy Twombly, *Empire of Flora 1961, Rome*

From the hand, from gesture, from imagination, but also something more. Can you imagine yourself making these marks?

Lascaux, *A depiction of aurochs, horses, and deer*



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And what would that feel like?



El Greco, *The Vision of Saint John*

### *About Inspiration, the Spiritual and Imagination*



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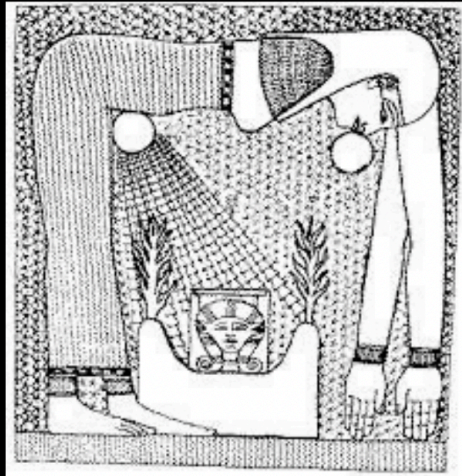
The beauty and awesomeness of seeing into the cosmos, as we are so privileged to do with our great space telescopes, is looking into nature in one of its grandest and most unanswerable mysteries.

I believe this wonder and questioning we feel is embedded into our psychic DNA. We have always been drawn into looking up into the night sky.



Our ancestors, from ancient times forward, have created myths and stories to try to express what the universe was, how it came to be and our place within it.





In Ancient Egypt, Nut, the Goddess of the heavens, is stretched across the sky. The Sun (Ra) is entering her mouth, passing through her star speckled body and emerging from her birth canal nine months later (from the spring equinox to the winter solstice). Thus, Ra becomes a self-creating god, i.e. the Universe is self-creating and eternal, C 10th century BCE

So many ancient stories start with “In the beginning there was only darkness”, or “There was Nothing.”

One of my favorite genesis stories is by the ancient Greek writer Hesiod, writing in the 7th c. B.C.E. In his *Theogony*, he says “in the beginning there was only chaos” Which happens to be so amazingly close to what we know happened just after the Big Bang - chaos, an absolute dense and opaque particle soup.

After that he says came Gaia, the mother of all, and from her came Eros, desire, and all else followed.



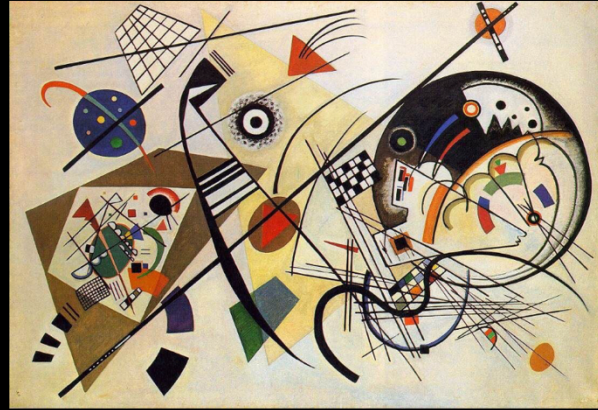
For me, this is an astonishing insight, and perhaps the answer to not just the what we are made of, but how we came to be. Eros, this impulse for growth and creativity - perhaps it had to be the driving force behind all else. Without it, nothing would be.

And if we put aside any concept of a Supra intelligence that may have designed and directed the universe, perhaps this force is built into the composition of every atom, every molecule, every cell. So that that tiny dot that contained our entire universe was propelled by that impulse.

What can we call this force embedded in every living thing, from cells to plants to animals to humans to perhaps even beyond? So ineffable, so uncontainable, so much bigger than any individual, yet shared by a connection between us all. It's such a mystery. Just one way to refer to it is to call it Divine.



Vasily Kandinsky, *Several Circles*



Vasily Kandinsky, *Transverse Lines*, 1923

Here's a beautiful passage about the painter Wassily Kandinsky by Harriett Watts for the book "The Spiritual in Abstract Art".

"In 1935 Kandinsky acknowledged that the "universal laws of the cosmic world" are also the inner laws that govern the imaginative process, through which unique works of art come into being.

The artist, as microcosmic creator must actually experience these laws of nature in the creative process. Spiritual energies reveal themselves in discrete, materialized forms in nature and the physical universe - which includes man's artifacts. They are the means through which the divine spirit may make itself manifest. With each new instance of materialization, the divinity discovers yet another facet to its limitless potential."

Harriett Watts, essay for: *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1935*, Ed. Edward Weisberger, 1986



Vasily Kandinsky, *Composition VI*, 1913

She is saying that Kandinsky, swept up in his own divinely inspired work saw that the universal laws of the cosmic world, which included for him, more than just the physics we think of today, but that Eros I referred to, were mirrored in the human imagination, that infinite and endless potential waiting to be created. He also imbues matter with what he calls “spiritual energies”, through which our creations become a way to make the divine manifest.

And here’s Kandinsky on this subject:

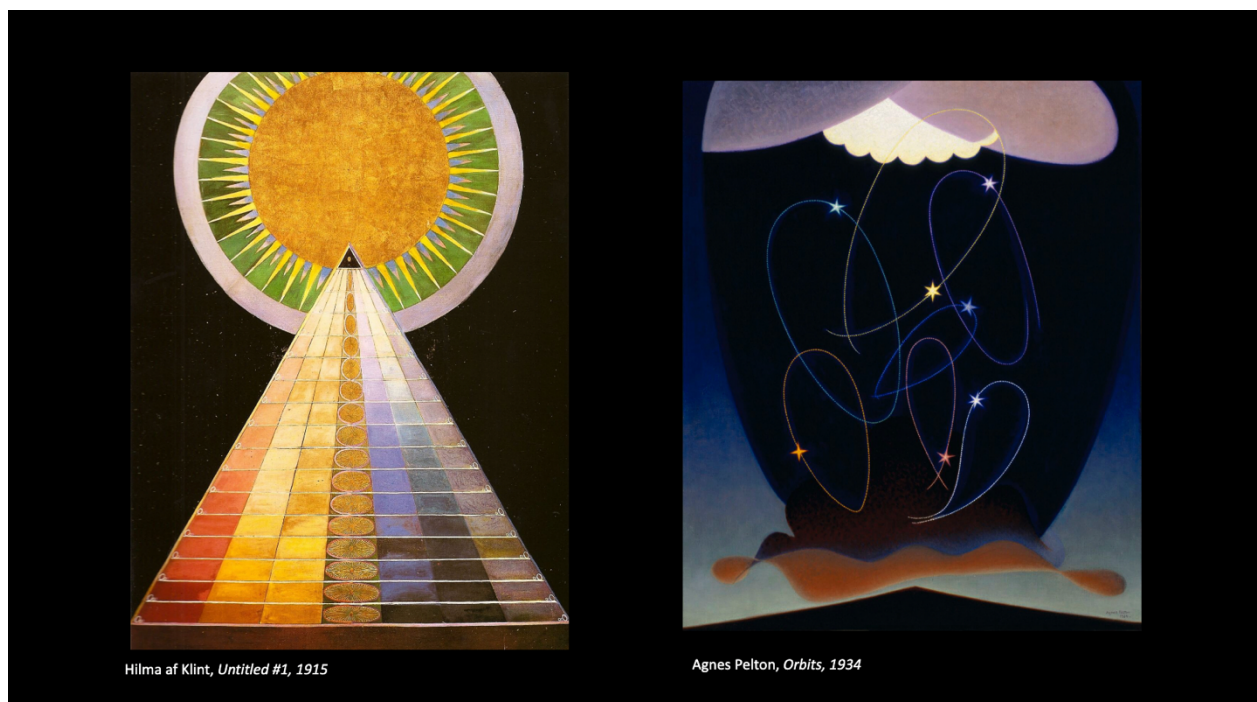
“The true work of art is born from the artist: a mysterious, enigmatic, and mystical creation. It then detaches itself from him, it acquires an autonomous life, becomes a personality, an independent subject, animated with a spiritual breath, the living subject of a real existence of being.”

Wassily Kandinsky, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1935*, Ed. Edward Weisberger, 1986



For anyone who has made a work of art, or who has had a moving experience looking at any kind of work of art, we know that it can feel alive, it brings us to places we wouldn't be without it.

Then, Kandinsky actually brings it full circle to say that through our creativity, the divine discovers itself, even discovers a new facet to its limitless potential.



This makes the case that we have a responsibility to create, to allow the divine to discover itself in a new way. It has an uncanny echo to what the great astronomer Carl Sagan said: “We are the way for the cosmos to know itself.”

And to expand it even further, it has a resonance to what the German mystic Meister Eckhart said:

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“The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God’s eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.”

- Meister Eckhart

“The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me; my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.”

Meister Eckhart, from *German Sermon 12*

### *About the Science*



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Rather than the science of astronomy and cosmology demystifying the magic of the universe, I have found that the more I learn, the more in awe I am that all things work so elegantly together, from the micro to the macro. We can describe what things are, but how they were designed is beyond scientific explanation. So, we can go into theological arenas, which for me almost bypasses the point - which is to have a direct experience with the absolute awe of it. Some may call this experiencing the Divine.

But, science can offer us some accessibility, which, to understand it more metaphorically, is like a language that represents the concepts or experiences behind the words and their constructs, or like a model that represents the idea. For me, science can act as the bridge to what lies behind it. So, if we look at the science this way, not as the thing itself, but as an expression, a verb, to activate a revealing experience, then, we can behold the reflection in the mirror, and also hold the unseeable that is being reflected.



For example, scientists have established that the cosmos is infinite, it has no boundaries, nor any center. How can we comprehend this except to let it grow in our imaginations, to feel it with wonder, and joy, and terror too.

Another example – we know that before the Big Bang, everything that exists today, every particle, every force that rules physics, even space itself, was contracted into a tiny single dot.

This point existed in non-space, until suddenly, it exploded into what we call the Big Bang to eventually become the everything that we know today. For me, this is science, and it is also magic - understanding that everything we behold today, and that ever existed throughout history, even time itself, was originally held within that tiny dot.



In the first period, the universe grew from an almost infinitely small point to nearly an octillion (that's a 1 followed by 27 zeros) times that in size in less than a trillionth of a second. This inflation period was followed by a more gradual, but violent, period of expansion we know as the Big Bang. During the Big Bang, an incredibly hot fireball of fundamental particles — such as protons, neutrons and electrons — expanded and cooled to form the [atoms](#), stars and galaxies we see today.



Albert Einstein said:

“The intuitive mind is a sacred gift, and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.”

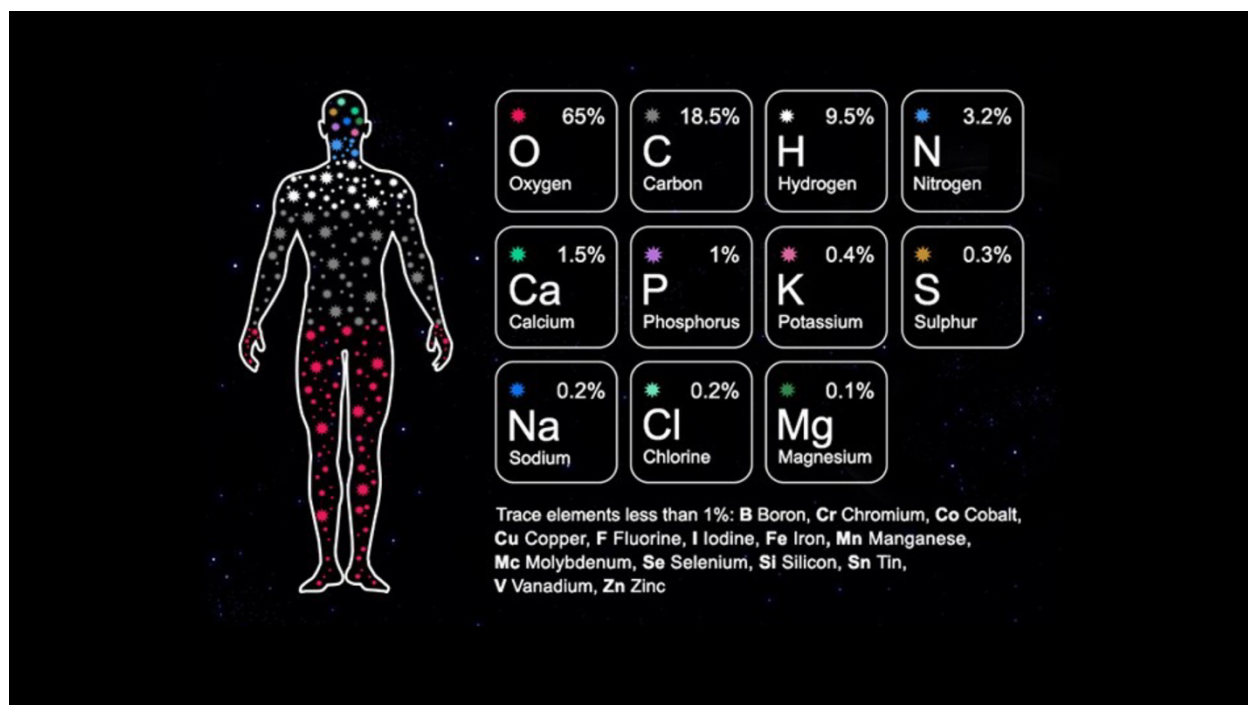
He also said:

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.”

From an interview conducted by George Sylvester Viereck for *The Saturday Evening Post* in October 1929, titled "What Life Means to Einstein."

This is a remarkable statement by one of the greatest thinkers, as he is suggesting that embedded inside what we call our unconscious, and what can be brought to consciousness through the channel of our imaginations is the comprehension of everything. In the context of imagining the cosmos, this is a mind-blowing idea.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe our fascination with the cosmos is built into our psychic DNA. But it is also built into our physical DNA. It's now proven that our bodies are actually made up of the “star stuff,” as Carl Sagan famously said.



Over the course of billions of years and multiple star's lifetimes, the elements exploded out from stars and then converged into new elements that now make up our bodies. Some scientists think it's possible that some of the actual hydrogen in our bodies originated from the Big Bang. Imagine, not only are we made up of stars that exploded many, many times, but a part of us is almost 14 billion years old!



Remnants of a massive star supernova that exploded about 8,000 years ago

And so, do we feel a magnetic pull towards the stars because they were our original home? Or, do we know the stars intimately because they are inside of us?

I am reminded of a quote I read by Jacques Cousteau, the great oceanographer. He mused,

“Why am I doing this? Only the tiny sea of my cells reply, reminding me that I am the sea and the sea is me.”

Jacques Cousteau, *The Living Sea*, 1963

And so, we can also say, as we gaze into the night sky in wonder: “Only the tiny cosmos of our cells reply, we are the stars, and the stars are us.”

## Part II



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### *The Alchemy of Painting*

The painter's studio is her laboratory. Her materials, and the ways she manipulates them are the stuff that makes transformations happen. Painting is alchemy.



Philip Galle, *The Alchemical Laboratory*



David Teniers, *An Alchemist in His Laboratory*

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Alchemy embraces the knowledge that there is something ineffable that happens inside a process. Even if working with substances that have fixed sets of properties, putting them together, doing new things with them, and in the theory of quantum mechanics, even simply witnessing them, can create something never before seen or even imagined.

As James Elkins put it in his brilliant book, “What Painting Is”:

“Alchemy is the old science of struggling with materials and not quite understanding what is happening...” This is one of the purest descriptions of the process of painting I know.

James Elkins, *What Painting Is: How to Think about Oil Painting, Using the Language of Alchemy*, 1998

This is one of the purest descriptions of the process of painting I know.

Painting, like alchemy, is working with substances that feel almost animate. These substances change, or their spirits alter, due to processes over time. On even the most basic and observable levels, oil paints that were in malleable form dry, becoming solid. Water mediums turn into vapor and then disappear.

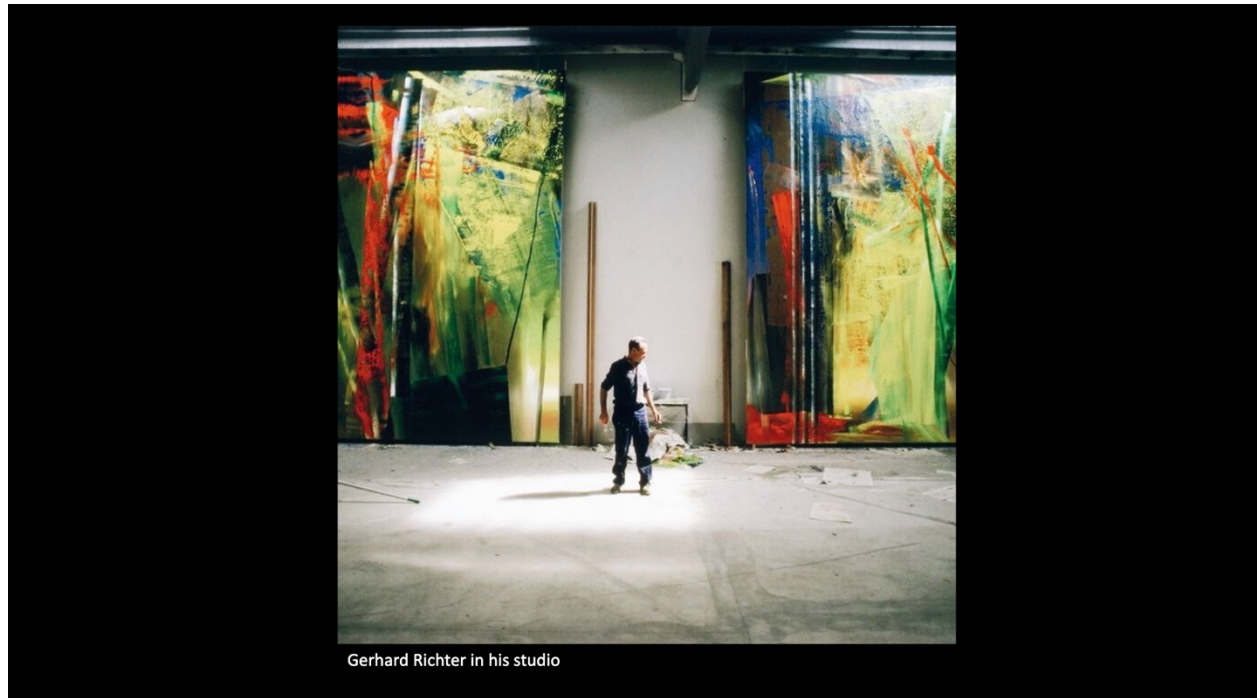
And while most painters don’t have beakers of liquids bubbling over fires...



Betsy Eby in her studio

...the mixing, layering, the using of mediums, the manipulations, and all the other things artists do can be as mysterious and as indescribable as watching a magician at work.

In alchemy, the Latin word *la-bor* is used to describe the alchemists' methods, techniques, and processes. And in Latin, the word for prayer is *ora*. Alchemists loved to point out that *la-bor* and *ora* together spell lab-ora-tory. I find this a beautiful way to describe an artist's studio as well - labor and prayer are our laboratory.



There is a word “Hypostasis” that is defined as the underlying, unseen reality of a substance, where matter holds an inner meaning. Most usually used in a religious sense describing Jesus as the hypostatic incarnation of the Word of God, meaning he was spirit made flesh, a descent from an incorporeal state into ordinary matter. We can feel that too in a painting.



Lucien Freud in his studio

As James Elkins continues to put it:

“Hypostasis is the feeling that something as dead as paint might also be deeply alive, full of thought and expressive meaning.”

He went on to say:

“...[Paint] begins to speak in an uncanny way, telling us things that we cannot quite understand... [It is] infused with moods, with obscure thoughts, and ultimately – in the language of alchemy and religion - with soul, spirit, and a ‘formal life’.”

He also said:

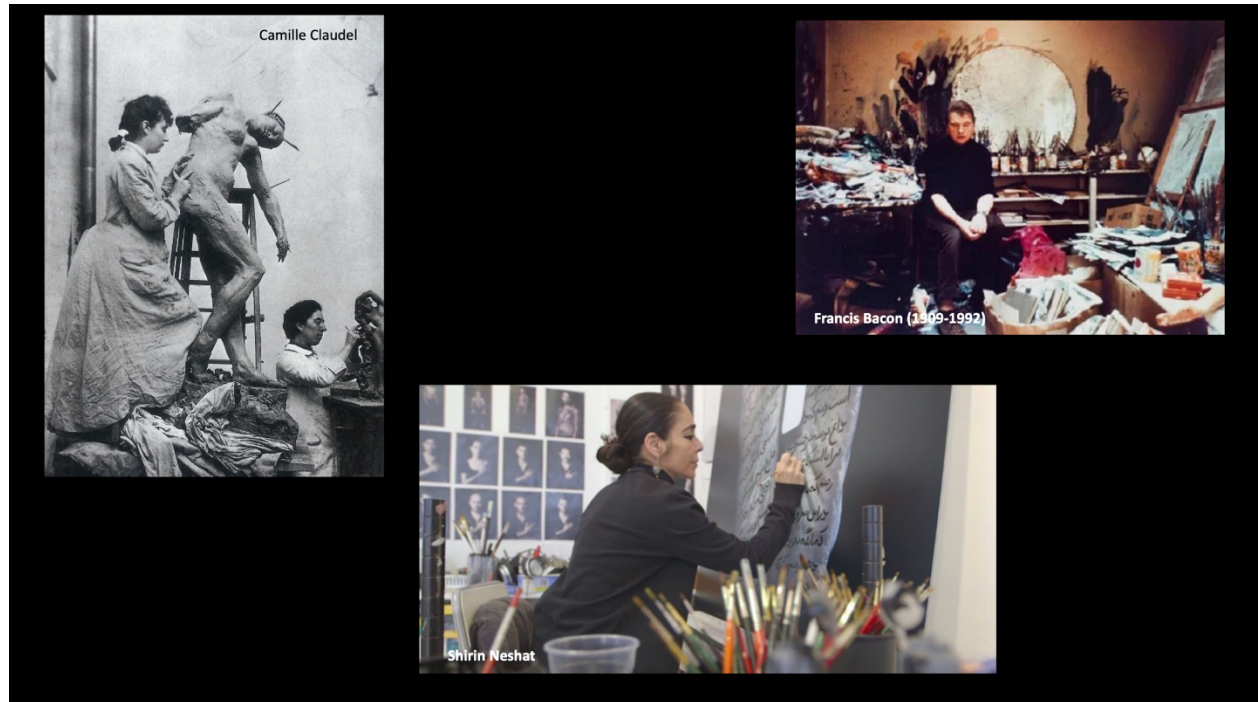
“Substances are like mirrors that let us see things about ourselves that we cannot quite understand.”

James Elkins, *What Painting Is: How to Think about Oil Painting, Using the Language of Alchemy*, 1998





So, is it just our projections that make a painting moving? Or do the materials themselves contain a spirit? Or, does an artist imbue the paint with his or her own spirit and that is what we may be witnessing and receiving? I think it is a synthesis of all of the above.



Overall, there is a gestalt to a work of art that is greater than the sum of its parts. It's the physicality and the sensuality, and the spirit, and the overall presence of the artist. And also that larger breath blown into them that they have channeled.



So now, we'll go into my own laboratory, otherwise known as my studio.

A short description of my process and materials:

I paint in oils on aluminum panels. I use aluminum in part because it's a metal, and metals live in space - so there's a resonance between me, my materials, and my subject matter.

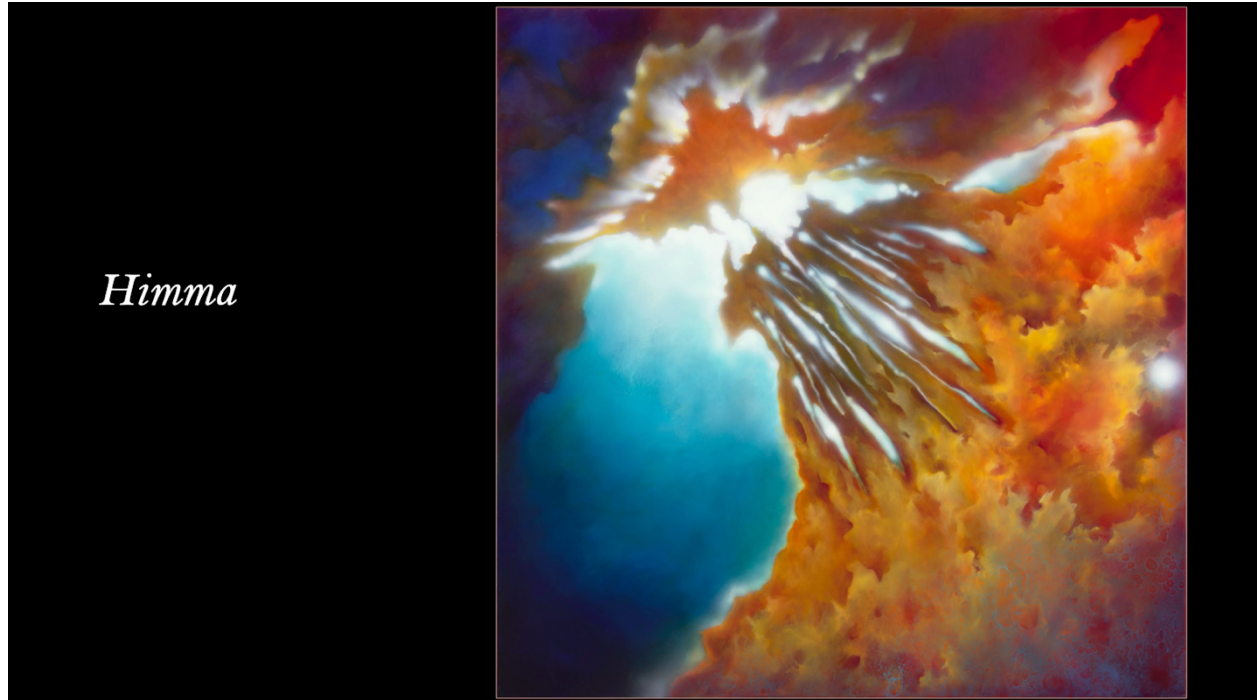
I have adapted a technique of the Old Masters, which includes applying many layers of thin, translucent colored glazes one over the other. This allows the lights underneath to shine through in luminescence, while the darks have more dimension, and the colors saturate. It's like layering actual veils of color and pattern one over the other. The paint visually vibrates, changes with each layer. And I am constantly surprised.

*Cosmos Series Paintings*

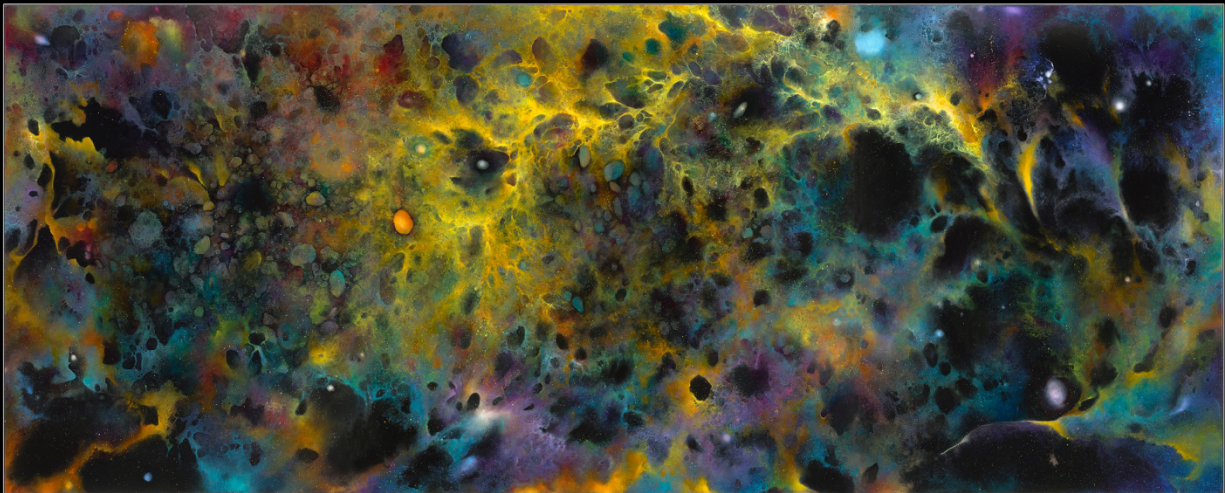
Along with my images, I'll also be sharing their titles. They are words that have touched me deeply or sparked my imagination. For me words can be like maps to help guide us through our inner territories. I choose words that are generally not in use today, so that we don't automatically get locked into our literal associations with the word but can participate in the concept or felt experience behind them. Then I match the meaning, the vibration of the word, with the vibration of the painting.

While you are looking at these images and reading their titles, I ask that you see them as doorways. You walk through the doorway yourself, and then can discover your own personal experiences on the other side.



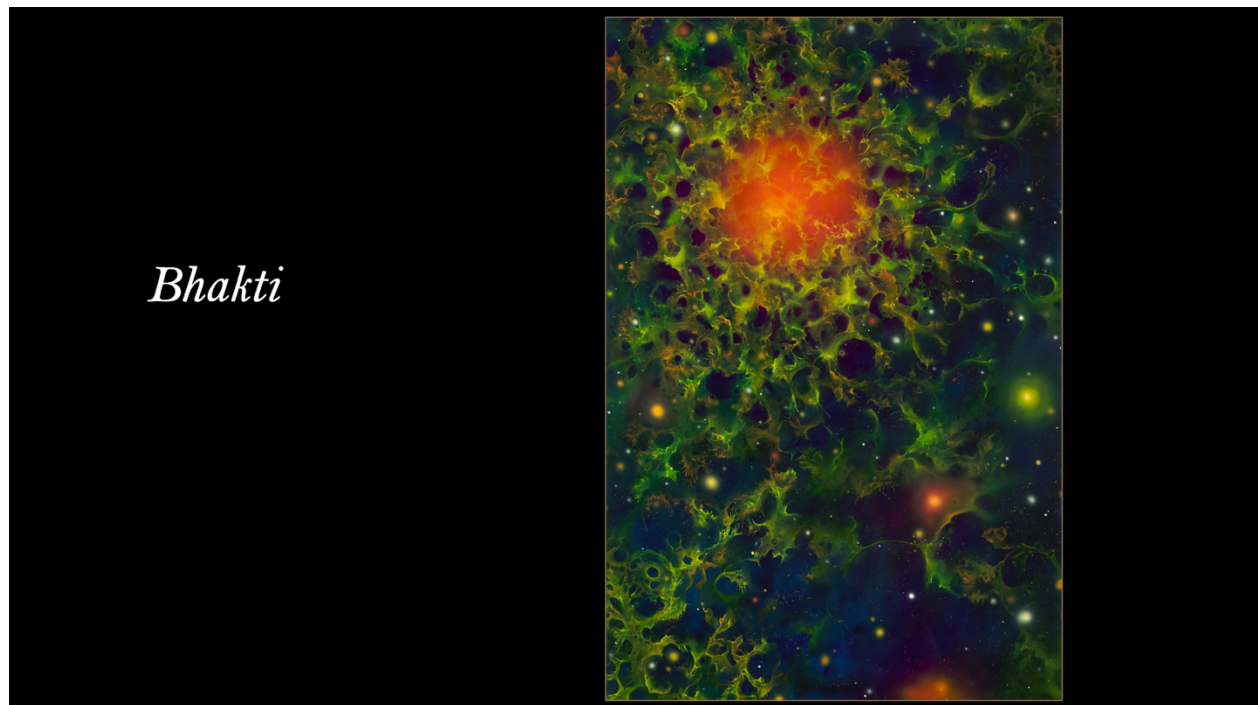


*Himma* is a Sanskrit word used by Sufis that signifies the cave of the heart where dwells imagination and rebirth. It's the power of the heart, and of the soul's desire and aspiration towards the divine.



*Creatio Continua*

Most of my paintings are quite large. This one is 10' wide. Because of its size, I felt like I was almost moving through space itself. It has animation to it. This is called *Creatio Continua* which means continuing creation. That because God is eternally outside of time, The Divine is creating in real time - now, and always in the now.

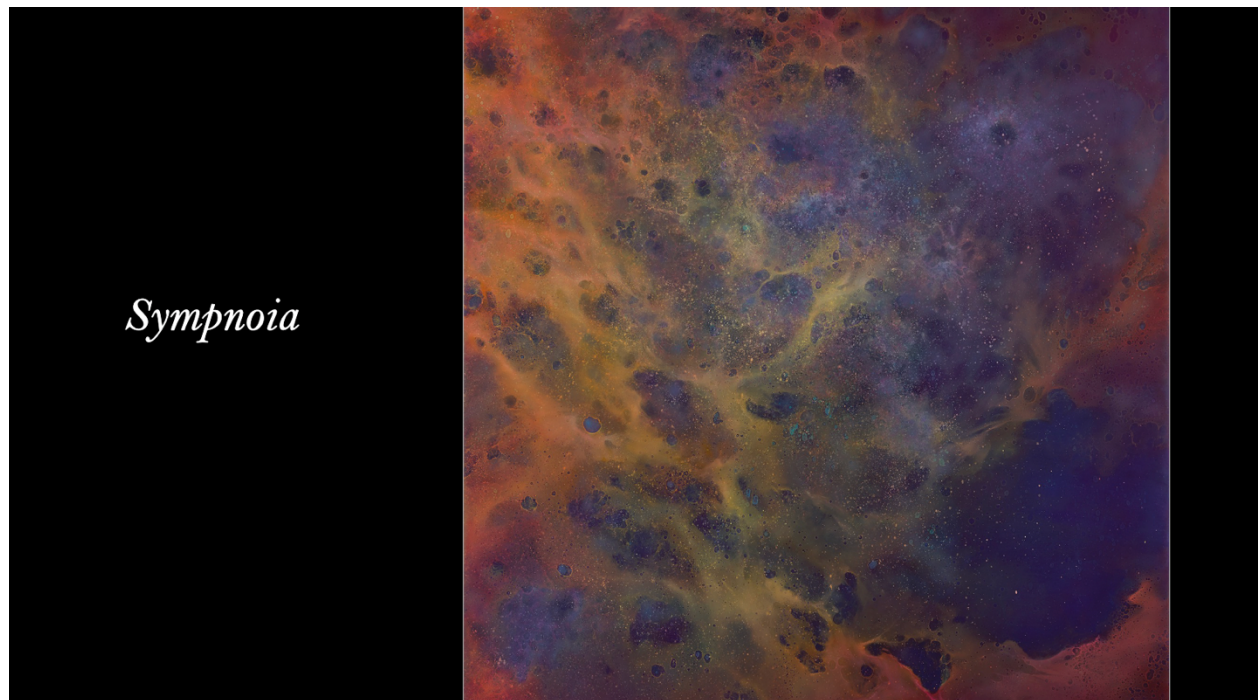


*Bhakti* - devotion to God. It means emotional devotionism to one's own god or a spiritual idea. It speaks of the personal engagement of the heart with the experience of the divine spirit.

*Shekinah*

This is *Shekinah*. It's a Hebrew word found in the Kabbalah. She is the Divine Feminine. In other languages, she may be called Inanna, or Sophia, or Mary, or any of the other names given to the mystery of the goddess over the millennia. It also suggests the dwelling of the Divine Presence that lives in us and us in it. It's the glorious, and the glory of the Sacred Feminine.

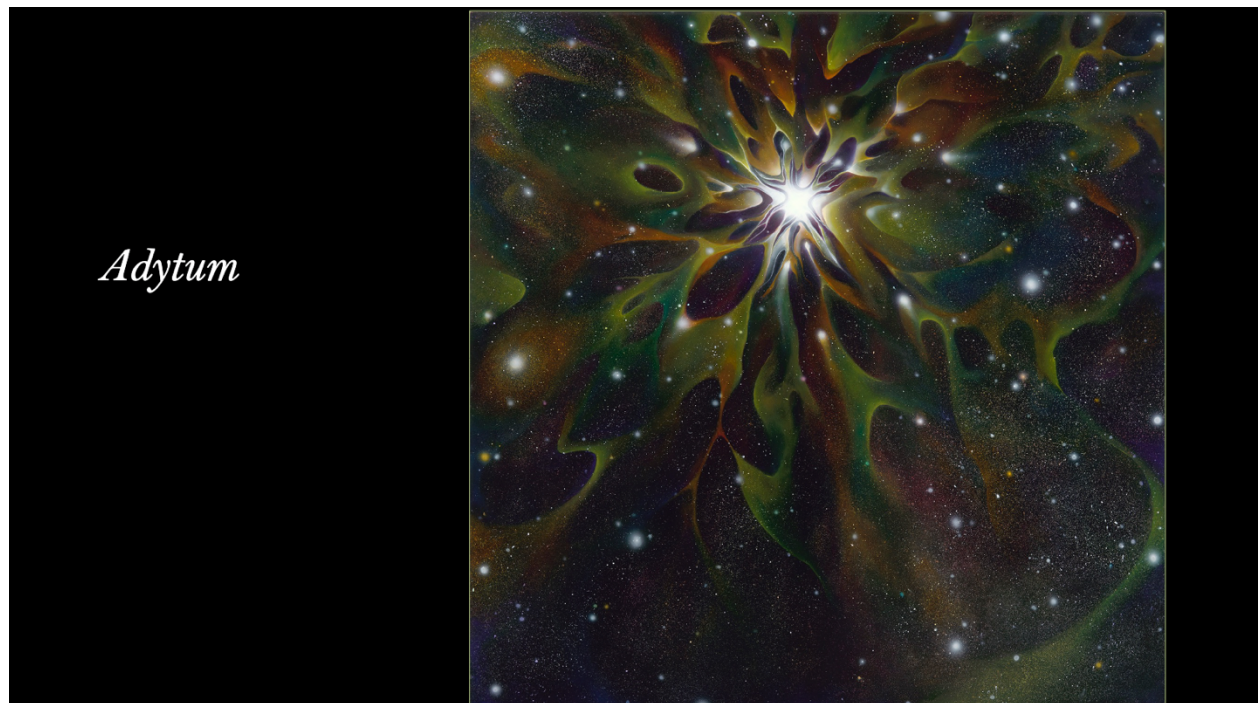




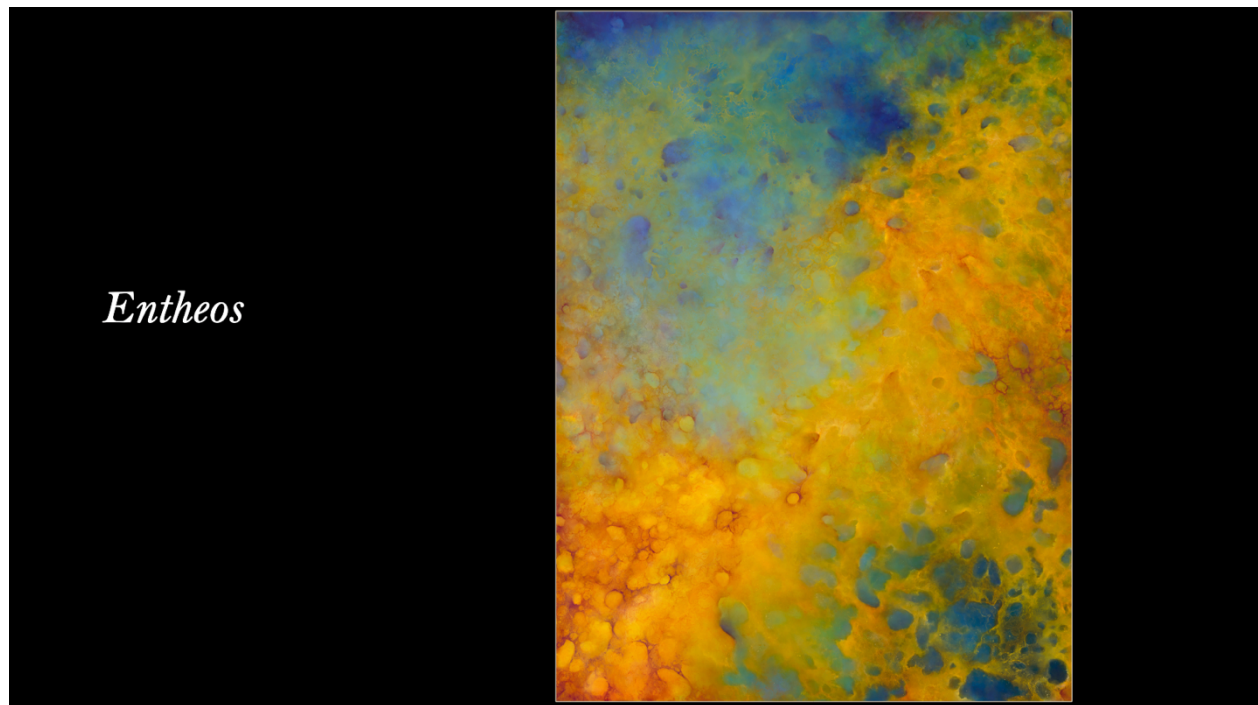
*Sympnoia*. It's a Greek word for a beautiful concept that means the total psychic interconnectedness of the universe through a spirit of love.



*Illud Tempus*. It's a multi-faceted word that includes the moment of creation, and also time outside of time - timeless eternity. I feel that inside – the moment of creation, even in the eternal.

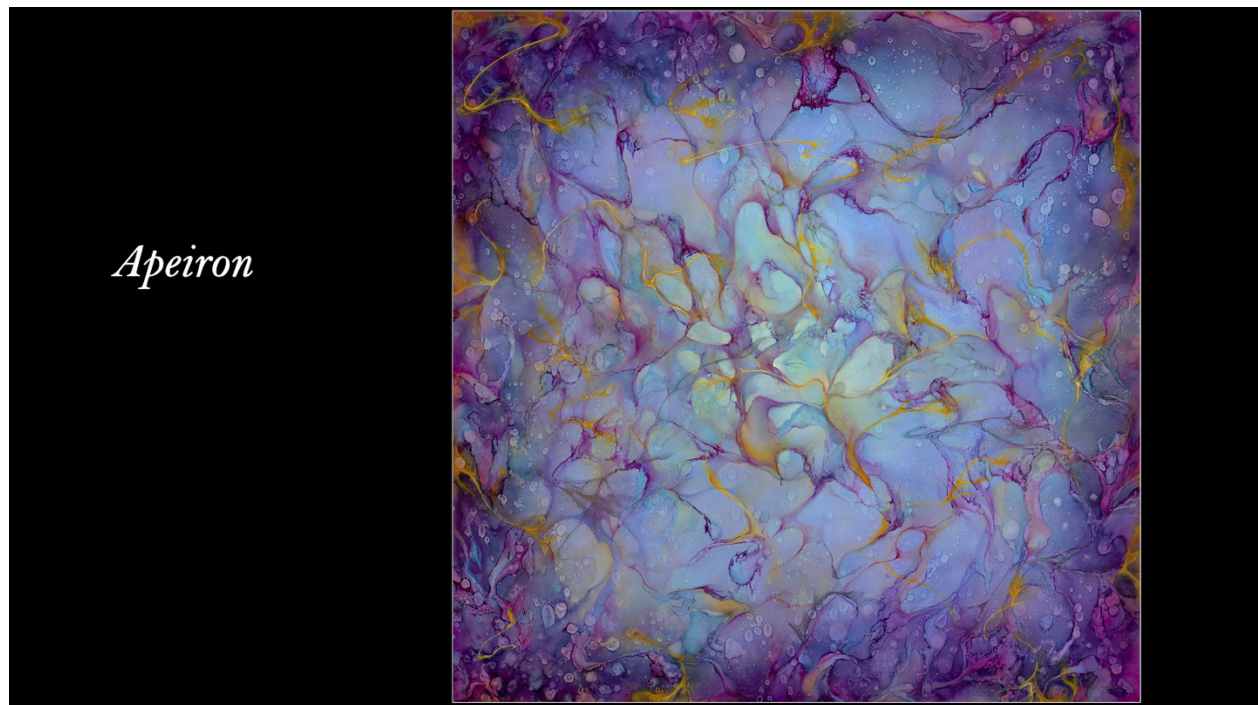


*Adytum* - which means inner sanctum, a sacred place. This is a place of rest, of safety, of diving into that core part of yourself, where you can connect to your own deepest Self and with the greater Divine.



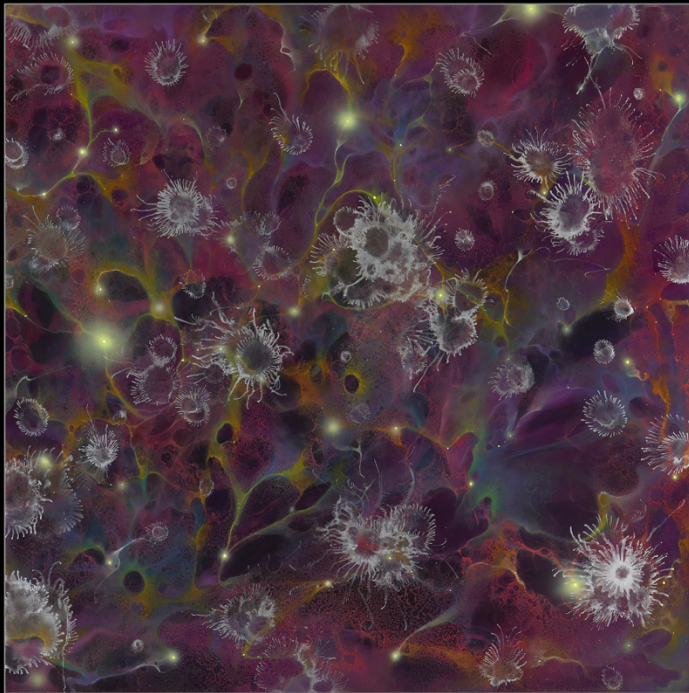
*Entheos* - En, meaning within, and Theos, meaning God. So it is the Divine within - that Divine Spirit that is in all of us, and us living in God.





*Apeiron* - Greek, for unlimited, boundless, infinite. It comes from an Ancient Greek cosmological theory that believed that the beginning, and the ultimate reality is eternal and infinite. When creation leads to destruction, it goes back to Apeiron where new, infinite worlds are created.

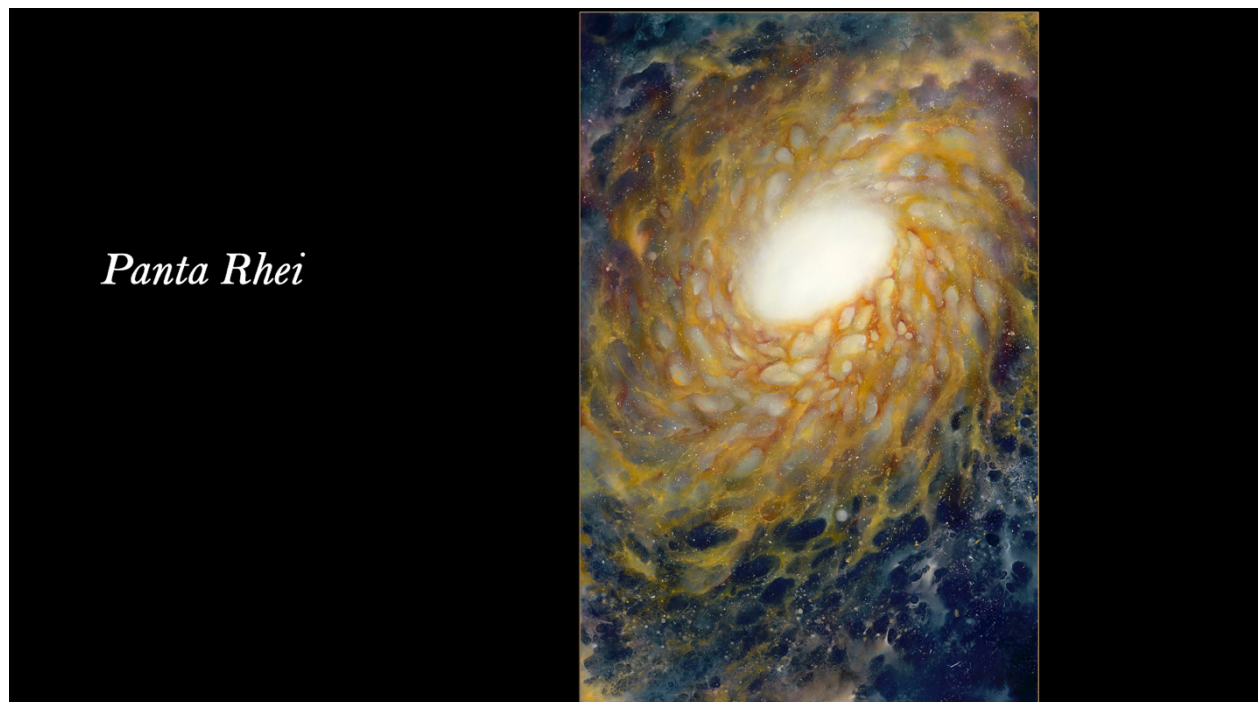
## *Correspondentia II*



*Correspondentia*. Or correspondence in English. It has a scientific meaning, but I find it has such an interesting meaning in the spiritual sense. It means correspondence between heaven and earth - As Above, So Below as we read in the Alchemical texts.



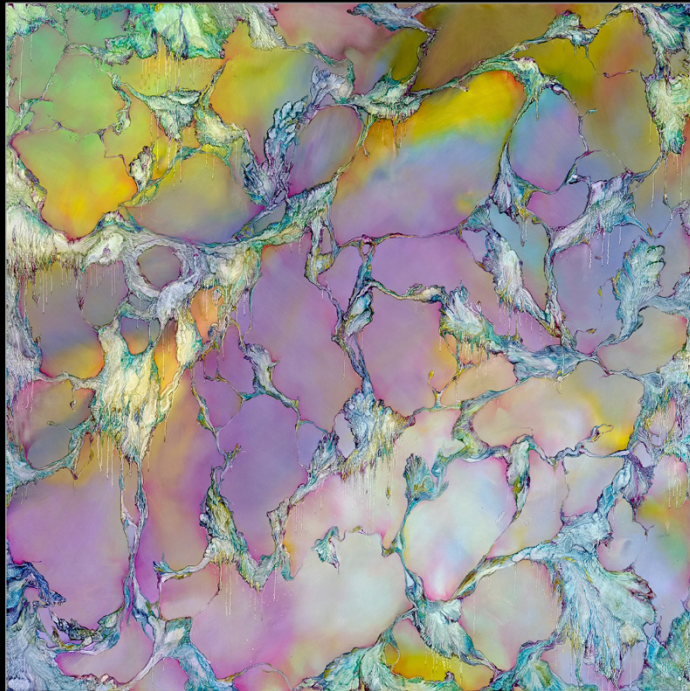
*Nascendus* – In Latin - that which is to be born.



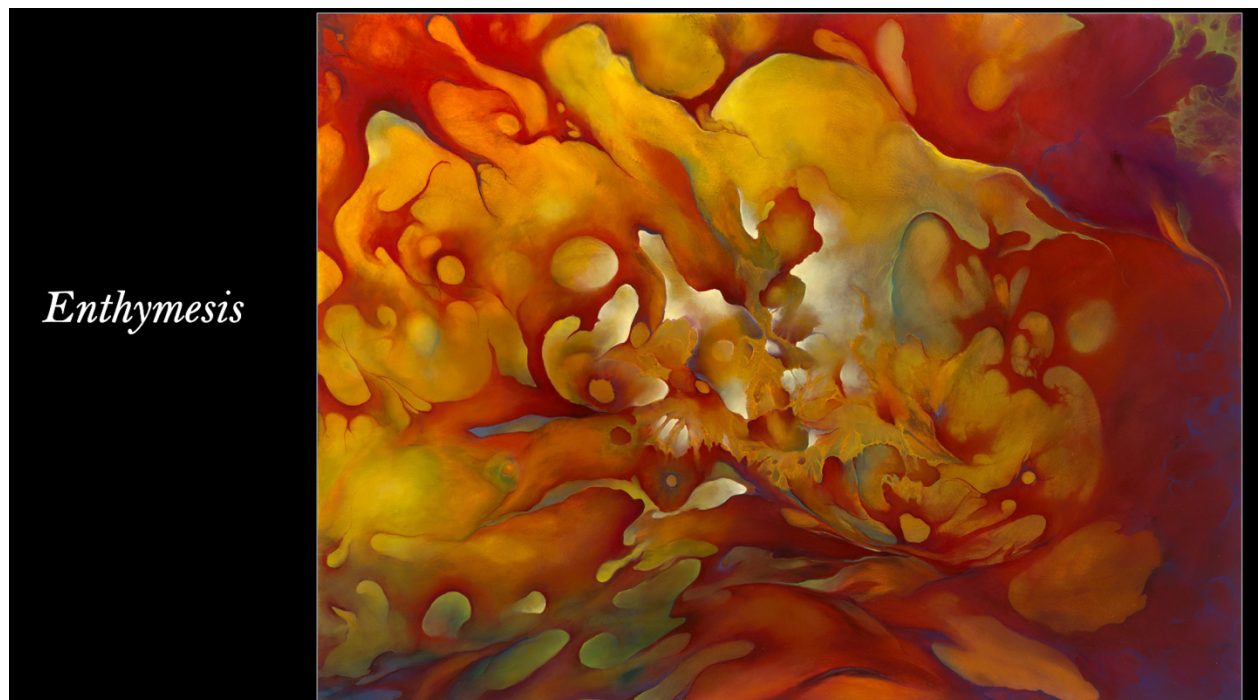
*Panta Rhei* – All things flow, from the Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who also said that “you can never step into the same river twice.”



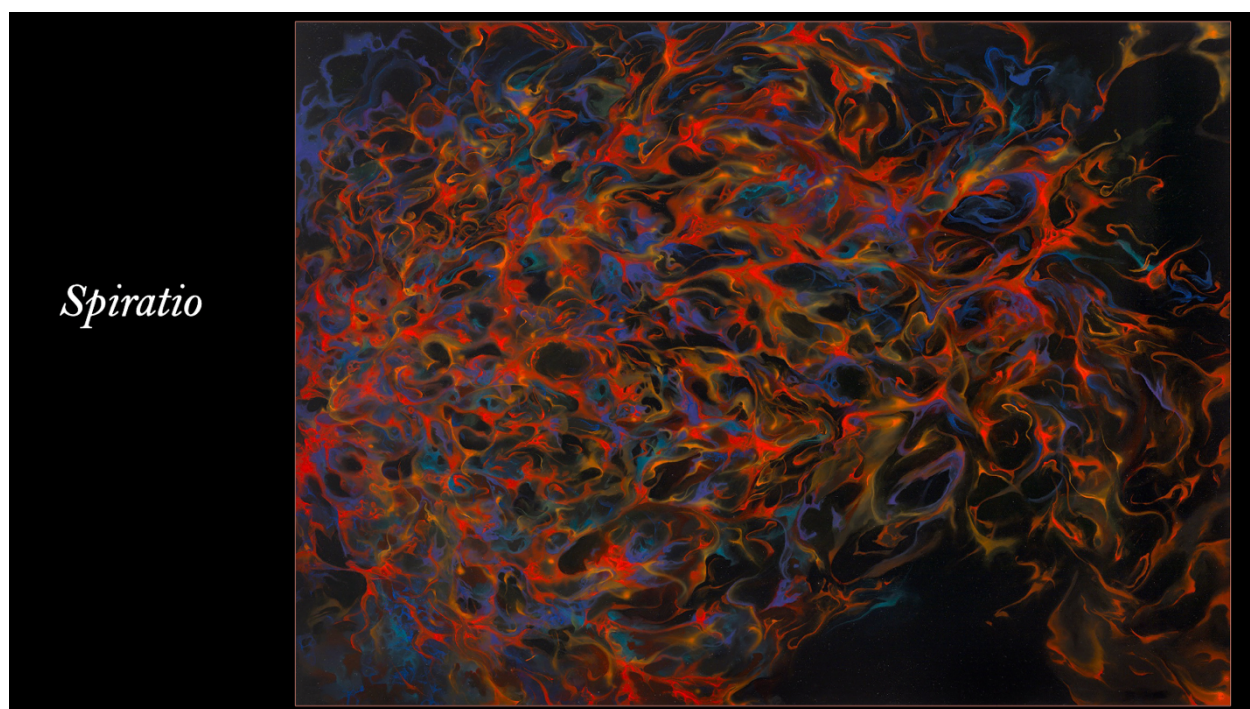
*Ennoia*



*Ennoia* – In Ancient Greek philosophy, it is the Divine Mind within, through thinking, thoughtfulness, intention and moral understanding.



*Enthymesis* – In the Gnostic texts, Enthymesis is the Goddess Sophia's passion, her burning desire. A burning desire that evokes a spontaneous response of desire and yearning in the human soul.

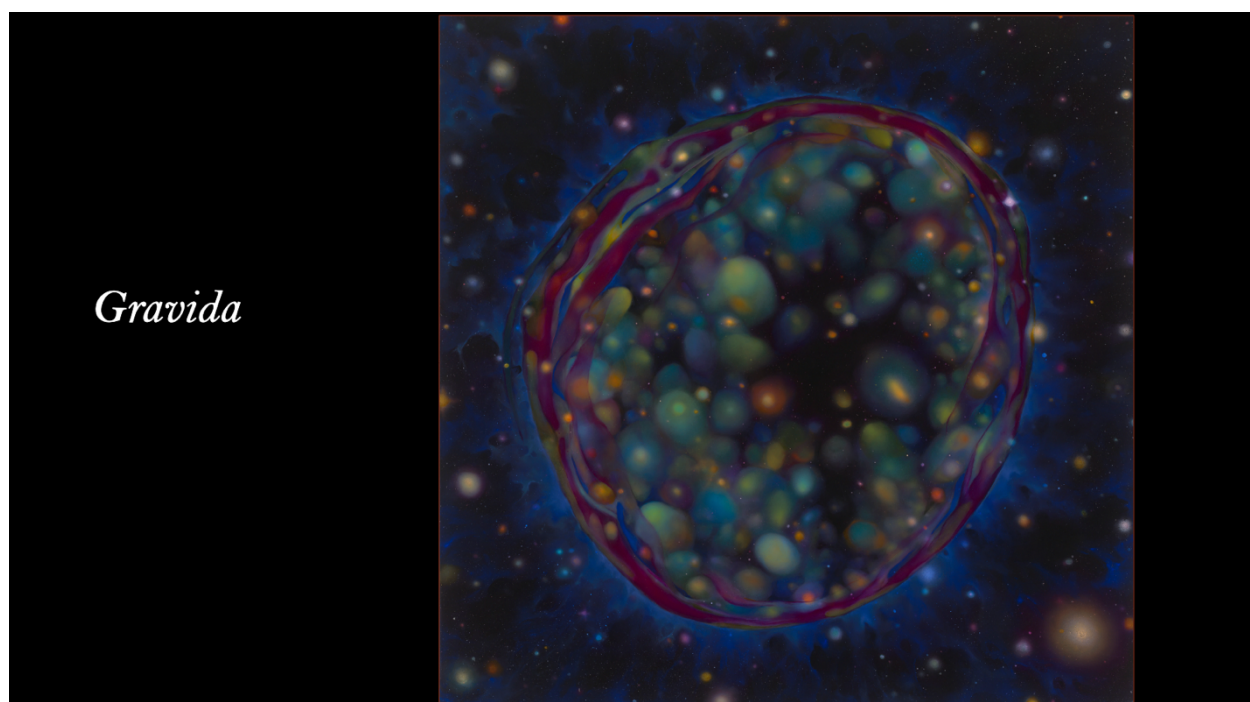


*Spiratio* – breath, breathing, spirit in breath, breath in spirit.

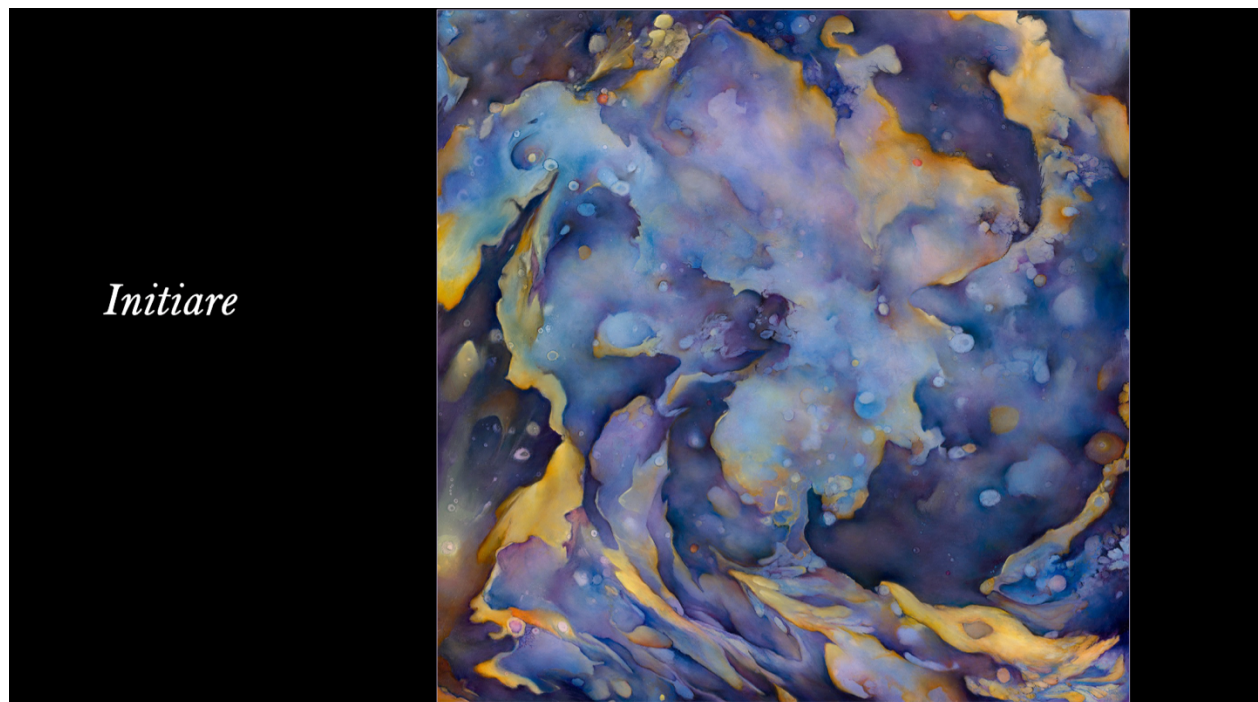


*Kairos* – which has deep, complex meanings. It means a numinous and magical moment in time in which synchronistic events happen. But it's also time outside of time. Think of it as the opposite of chronological time. Kairos is the absence of time, an indeterminate moment in which everything happens.





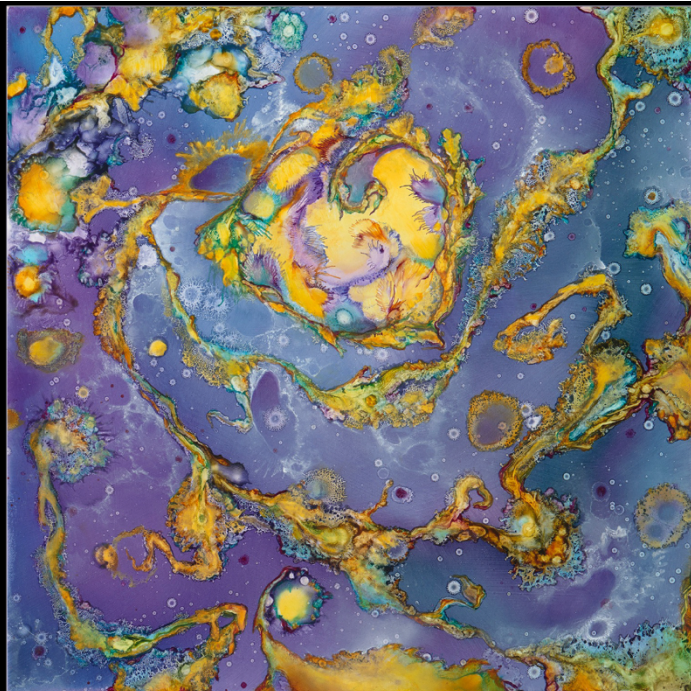
*Gravida* – Pregnant



*Initiare* – Latin for initiation, to start and also to reach one's goal so to be ready to move towards the next stage. With this painting, I felt like I was traveling through a portal. It was a threshold of initiation.

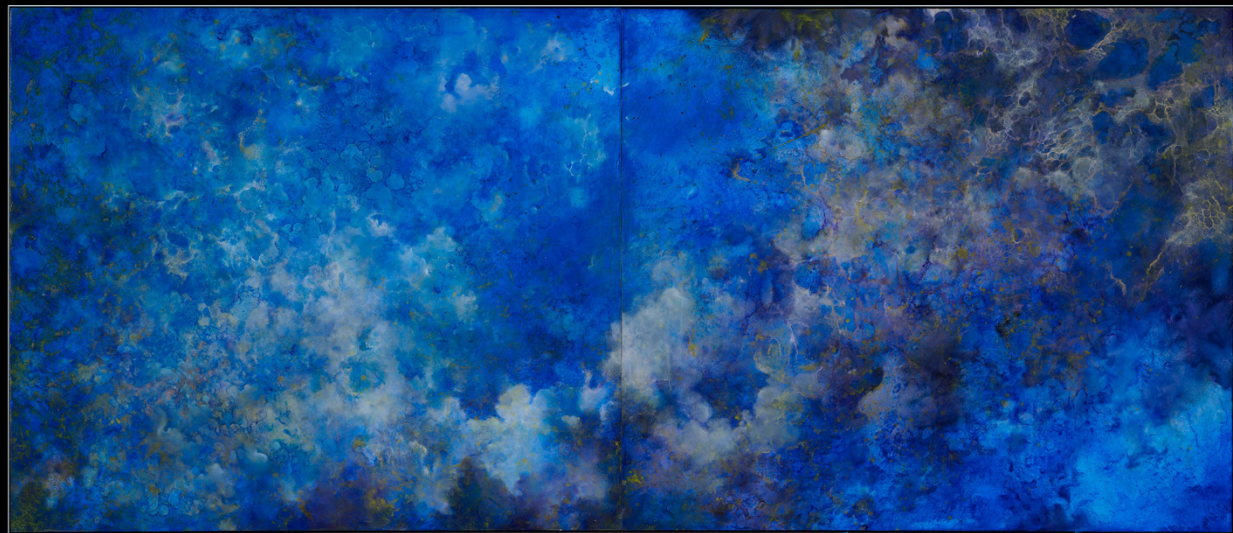


*Eudaimonia* – in Ancient Greek, the word for happiness, or to satisfy the inner daimon, that inner living spirit that accompanies our souls through life. It means human flourishing. I love this idea, that we personally flourish when we satisfy and make happy our own inner daimon.

*Aurea Catena*

*Aurea Catena* – It means the Golden Chain, the direct experience of other realities. In Homer, it's the chain that binds heaven and earth, a chain in which every mortal person can climb to ascend to the realm of the gods.



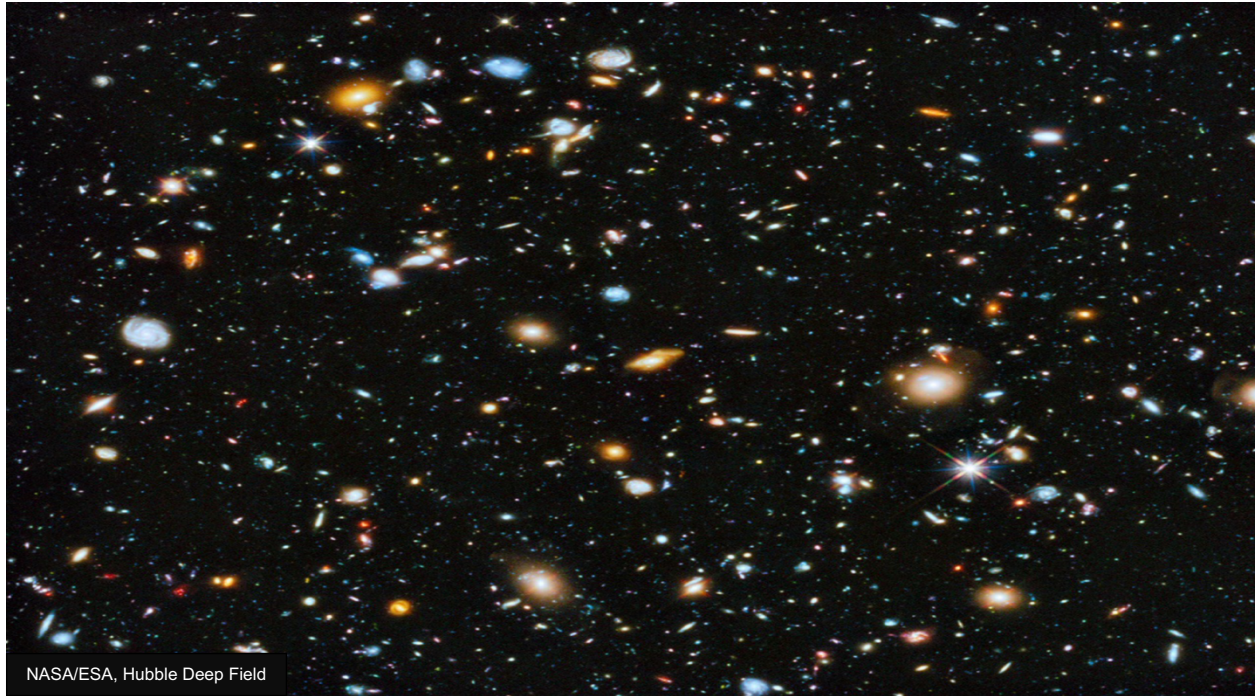


*Prima Materia*

*Prima Materia* – The prime material, the chaos, the primeval substance that is the original material that made everything in the universe. The alchemists saw it as the base from which everything can eventually manifest and transform.



And *Nostro Mari*. In Latin, our sea, but also understood as a symbol for the unconscious.



As I wrote this paper, I imagined others reading it and seeing the imagery, and it left me with a sense of profound connectedness. We are all standing at our own intersections of our inner and outer worlds to birth something unique, yet with a foundation that is ancient and enduring from generations beyond measure. I envision that together we are all creating something out of the Prima Materia within this Kairos moment of timelessness.

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**Johanna Baruch** was born and raised in NYC where she studied at the Art Students League as well as privately before moving to California.

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She earned her degree from New College of California, and continued her artistic studies during her travels to the Middle East and Europe where she learned plein air painting and the techniques of the Old Masters.

Johanna has adapted these techniques to her own working practice. She paints in oil on aluminum panels, creating luminescent surfaces through applying multiple thin layers of translucent colored glazes.

Johanna has worked in other artistic disciplines and fields which have informed her paintings today. Her earlier work with production companies, being a part of a team producing film, video and large staged events, honed her skills in understanding how to animate composition, as well as how to unfold a story as she captures a moment in a much larger drama.

While continuing to paint, Johanna also developed a career as a middle eastern dancer—dancing professionally in nightclubs accompanied by live musicians. This embodied knowledge of music, rhythm and dance, of riding waves and staccatos, the quiet and forceful, and the transitions between them is as inherent in visual compositions as in any time-based medium.

Johanna has been a life-long student of the psychologist Carl Jung's teachings. Her acknowledgement of the reality of the psyche, her understanding of symbology and mark making, her explorations into the unconscious and her embrace of the greater mystery are suffused in her work, giving them dimension, breadth and depth.

Johanna has exhibited nationally in galleries and museums. Her work is represented internationally in private and corporate collections. She serves on the Board of Governors of the C. G. Jung Institute of SF, is a former trustee of the California College of the Arts and the Djerassi Resident Artists Program, and former committee member of the SFMOMA Accessions Committee.

She currently splits her time between San Francisco and Inverness, CA.