

# Suzanne Treister

#### HEXEN 5.0

and

#### Museum Paintings

20 March - 3 May 2025

#### Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street, London, W1S 1AW +44 (0) 207 629 7578 www.annelyjudafineart.co.uk ajfa@annelyjudafineart.co.uk Monday - Friday 10am - 5:30pm Saturday 11am - 5pm



#### HEXEN 5.0: To Pledge a Beginning

#### by Lars Bang Larsen

The path that leads to the peaks is most narrowly lined with precipices: in the final analysis, the only guarantee at the beginning is purity of heart.

André Breton: l'Art magique, 1957

With watercolours charged in the hues of a sky reflecting the death of the Internet and the insane ways that money is made, Suzanne Treister's tarot cards in HEXEN 5.0 skirt the edges of everything that exists to parse the ends that threaten us in our undone present.

Tarots offer a miniaturized view of life, rendering it like a valley floor of rewired timelines seen from a mountain top. Watercolour is minor, too, a non-medium that lends itself to production from below because it has been used by authors uncredentialled, those who make art after work, on Sundays, between lessons, to their idols, for the here and now.

When the cards are laid out destiny is figured and played with, although not innocently or sentimentally. The moderns saw the human subject to appear through play, and tarots step up this game by also addressing non-human elements that supervene on human-being. More than ever is the awareness urgent that you don't play alone, and no individual voice can be consulted for credible answers. Magic needs *magi*, many commuters of perspective. It is a test of purity of heart because 'necessarily connected to the magic risk of losing one's soul, is the other magic risk of losing the world' (Ernesto de Martino).

HEXEN 5.0 wasn't made for individual readinas of personal incident but 'to be used as a tool for groups to discuss and envision positive alternative futures', according to Treister. Across science and tech on Earth and in space, her deck traces alobal corporate and governmental forces, ecosystems and the climate emergency, old and new fields of spirituality and counterculture, and recent developments in philosophy and science-fiction... DAOs and non-universal futurisms, quantum physics, and much more that is needed to face up to a reality that has fallen like a deck of cards. Each tarot reveals a spacetime scenario that is imaged and folded onto the next as if the universe is a vast hologram, a gestalt in a holistic syntax destabilized by time.

Such insistent mapping that aims for the absolute is carried out to *really know*, beyond optimism and pessimism, and by any knowledge form possible. Its epistemic complexion is not only horizontally vast but also accreted in palimpsest, with a contemporary person or concept featured as a tarot symbol and filtered through old alchemical drawings, too, such as the kabbalistic tradition of depictions of the tree of life. The images have both the hallucinatory tinge of being created on the background of collapsing social forms and in rejection of reigning cartographies; a mapping against the grain. For instance, 'when confronted with a first black person singular, the world is mapped, troubled, and complexified by what "the other" (and their world) takes blackness to be/ signify', as Denise Ferreira da Silva writes about, with, Kindred by Octavia Butler, Treister's Queen of Chalices.

The title sounds like a rogue technology that is more manically contemporary than it is timeless. Since the first *HEXEN* 2.0 from 2011, the artist has had to skip two upgrades to keep up to speed with the intensification of contemporary life that often enough feels like hurtling through alien dimensions in a lost space traveller's broken ecstasy. (We also understand that exactly this self-image must change: we must give ourselves to the world differently than does the isolated human in his colonial isolation – prospector, astronaut, explorer.)

Apart from connotations to *Hexerei*, and the x-sound in the metrics that govern our lives, the etymology bears repetition. In ancient Greek, *hexis* means a relatively balanced state, like someone's character or habit, but also an active disposition, a 'tensional motion in bodies'. Maybe we can think of it as a virtual plastic torque of brain and central nervous system that exceed embodiment in the present. Feed your head \* \* \*

Lord knows which number her next deck will have. Where HEXEN 2.0 mapped a history of computing leading up to Web 2.0, AI and quantum computing, HEXEN 5.0 traces a future-oriented aspect of cybernetics through its relevance to global life



systems whose capacity for self-regulation has been sent out of whack. The loops don't meet any more and have become prowling spirals on the loose.

Conventionally, cybernetics is understood to be a science of control and communication that relies on idealized differences: 0s and 1s, mind and body, data and matter, valorised and kept neatly apart. Apart from the usual modern hierarchization, such binary rigour stems from the original purpose of post-War cybernetics; to keep in check the destructive potential of the human mind with a fault-free electronic brain. This was an idealized notion on all counts, not least because computers didn't exist yet. Thus in the interim before the computer arrived in its present shapes and forms – which a good part of our species has only known for a few decades, but now virtually merged with – there intervened a period when it was available to be richly imagined.

This was 'the cybernetic fold', the felicitous term with which Eve Kosofksy Sedgwick and Adam Frank focus cybernetics on the particular moment 'roughly from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, when scientists' understanding of the brain and other life processes is marked by the concept, the possibility, the *imminence*, of powerful computers, but the actual computational muscle isn't available yet.' Treister herself mentions the period 1957-1986 as a time when no one thought of computers 'as having any authority'.

In – or during – the cybernetic fold in time, a "computer" could potentially be envisioned as any homeostatic environment capable of processing data or essaying complex predictive calculations, such as a chemical process, a garden pond, or other types of organization.

Conceived as thought forms whose material substrates were extremely relative, thinking machines were sometimes subjects of striking articulations. In 1957 the psychiatrist and cybernetician Ross Ashby ventured into the field, or the fold:

> Cybernetics takes as its subject-matter the domain of all possible machines, and is only secondarily interested if informed that some of them have not yet been made, either by Man or Nature.

What is a machine, then, if it is pure potential? Never mind the actual technology, let alone reasonable computation! What ultimately matters might be the repositioning of 'Man and Nature' (nature on top this time?).

Rather than a historical aberration that came and went, Treister treats the cybernetic fold like a topos where things can gestate anew. There is something ineffable in this future-oriented 'domain of all possible machines'. It eludes *enframing*; Heidegger's term for technology as a tool for cutting up the world and turning everything – nature, body, social relations, etcetera – into instrumental value; countable units readied for capture and consumption. Instead, ineffability makes technological possibility contiguous with the mystical, knowledge of a wholly different kind. Mediated by initiation or medium, and marked as marginal, mysticism poses, appears excessive. But there is rawness, too, a pathos behind the posing.

It is not only the desire to be carried away, but an ethics of enchantment outlined by attraction, attachment and affinity. States of receptivity that are the very opposites of aggressive debunking and epistemic violence that have done so much damage. Enchantment acknowledges 'a desire for something else' (Dana Luciano) by sustaining movements back and forth between reason and emotion, practice and theory, image and text, body and mind, and so on. To ready yourself for transport and a deep makeover of history itself. Disenchanted space is a 'peculiarly European assumption' (Dipesh Chakrabarty).

Is it a magic art? And what might this be? T.W. Adorno starts by rubbishing the question in no uncertain terms: 'art is allergic to any relapses into magic'. Any modern art capable of reflecting on its lack of self-evidence is 'entwined with rationalization'. But once Adorno opens the magic can of worms, he can't help but look deeper into it: there is 'something true' about the cliché about the magic of art, he admits, since it is part of a fundamental aporia that pulls every artwork between 'literal magic' and 'thinglike rationality'. Born of this fundamental contradiction, 'no artwork can succeed emphatically', and this is as it should be. Adorno makes it sound like the building up of irrepressible tension, an explosion waiting to happen - between people, between our ears: magic is a fundamental part of every artwork that is a process between elements whose irreconcilability is the precondition for the freeing of its forces.

It is also a question of being capable of tarrying with deep ambiguities. This goes for the notion of magic itself: '...these are all just claims that depend on "magic", Luce Irigaray extrapolates sceptically from Lewis Caroll. 'Alice has never liked occultism ... She's been "in wonderland." She hasn't simply imagined, "intuited." Crossing partitions, going through the looking-glass, like Irigaray's Alice, Treister has always seen what she talks about. This is all quite empirical stuff!

Along similar lines to Adorno, André Breton mused that since 'all art is magical at least in its genesis' it is in a way a pleonasm to call it magic. What is 'specifically magic art [is] only that which in some way re-engenders the magic that engendered it.' Leonora Carrington confirmed in reply to Breton that magic in art is a question of going 'Back to the source of things'. To find a way back to that naked initial difference that reveals to us how we owe up to our debts to the future.

Against a civilization that Treister names 'omnicidal', tech-speculation in the cybernetic fold can be a counter-narrative, a rant. Instead of "progress" supported by boosterism and fetishized hardware, technology is a varied 'interface' with the material world (Ursula K. LeGuin). And not necessarily a human interface, but, as it is explained in card no. XVII, The Star, a crux for an emergence of the big from the small, the whole from the part, and the reconfiguration of our gaze on the world that this becoming asks of us: 'the complex entity has properties or behaviours that its parts do not have on their own'.

Ultimately, no future technology is exempt from the risk of misuse, and all living beings can be made to yield to life-threatening exploitation.

We must seek new openings where time can be bent back towards that which we owe our existence.

Pledge a beginning and place an origin up ahead.

Complete the loop, find seedtime.

#### SOURCES:

- The phrase 'like a sky reflecting the death of the Internet' is a version of 'the sky was the colour of the death of the Internet' from an eponymous work by Suzanne Treister (2021)

- Carol Hanisch: "The Personal is Political" (1969), https://www. carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html

- Ernesto de Martino: Il Mondo Magico (1948), quoted from Federico Campagna: Technic and Magic. The Reconstruction of Reality. Bloomsbury, London 2018, 16.

- Denise Ferreira da Silva: Unpayable Debt. Sternberg Press, Berlin 2022, 109

- Dana Luciano: "Ghosts of Another Time: Spiritualism, Photography, Enchantment", in Christopher Castiglia and Susan Gillman (eds), Neither the Time nor the Place. The New Nineteenth-Century American Studies, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022, 221.

- Dipesh Chakrabarty. Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference. Princeton University Press, Princeton 2000.

- 'Tensional motion in bodies' is from C.N. Cantor and M.J.S. Hodge's introduction to their Conceptions of Ether. Studies in the History of Ether Theories 1740-1900. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1981, 6.

- T.W. Adorno: Aesthetic Theory. The Athlone Press, London 1999 (1969), 54.

- Luce Irigaray: This Sex Which Is Not One. Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1985 (1977), 12. All italics Irigaray's.

- André Breton: Magic Art. Fulgur Press, London, 2024 (1957), 22-23

- Leonora Carrington, op.cit., 73

- 'Omnicidal' is quoted from Treister's Diagram From Gaia via The Climate Crisis to Cybernetic Ecosystems and Spiritual Earth System Science Towards a Return to a Self-Rgulating Planet (2024)

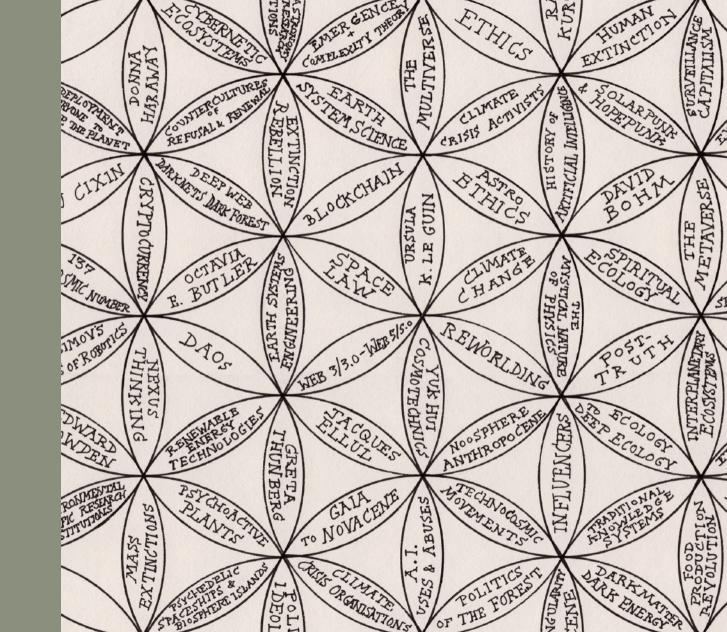
- Eve Kosofksy Sedgwick and Adam Frank: "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," in Sedgwick, Touching Feeling. Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 105.

- https://www.lerandom.art/editorial/suzanne-treister-on-critical-futurism

- Ross Ashby: An Introduction to Cybernetics. Chapman and Hall, London 1957, 2

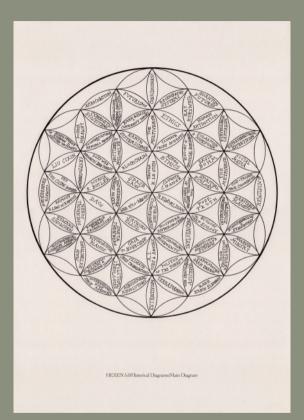
- Ursula K. LeGuin: "A Rant About "Technology"", https://www. ursulakleguin.com/a-rant-about-technology

- Suzanne Treister: The Star from HEXEN 5.0, 2024



#### Diagrams

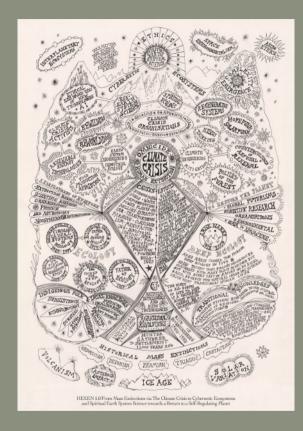
2023-25 digital prints, 119 x 84.1 cm each



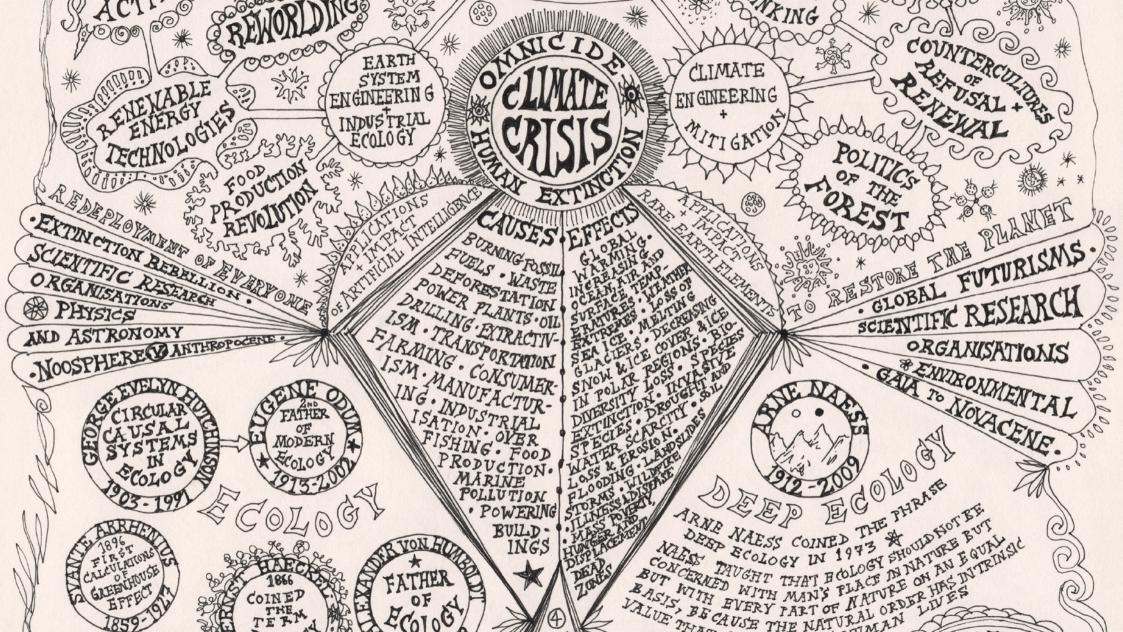
HEXEN 5.0 / Main Diagram



HEXEN 5.0 / Historical Diagrams/From the Golem via Deep Learning to Machine Colonisation of the Multiverse

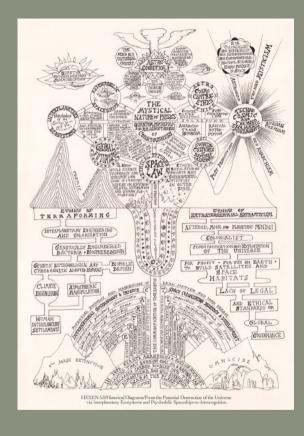


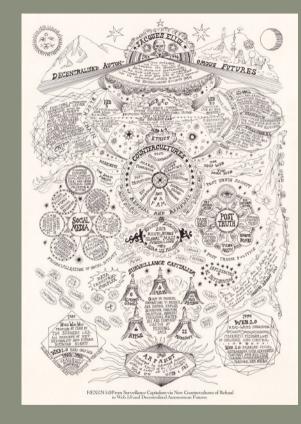
HEXEN 5.0 / Historical Diagrams/From Mass Extinctions via The Climate Crisis to Cybernetic Ecosystems and Spiritual Earth System Science towards a Return to a Self-Regulating Planet









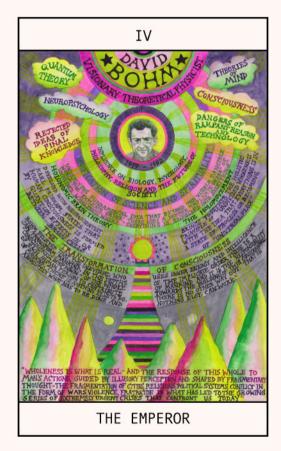


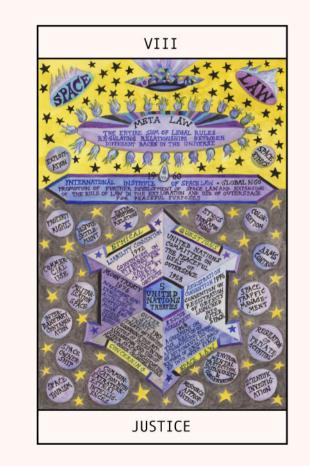
HEXEN 5.0 / Historical Diagrams/From the Potential Destruction of the Universe via Interplanetary Ecosystems and Psychedelic Spaceships to Astrocognition HEXEN 5.0 / Historical Diagrams/From Surveillance Capitalism via New Countercultures of Refusal to Web 5.0 and Decentralised Autonomous Futures

### Major Arcana

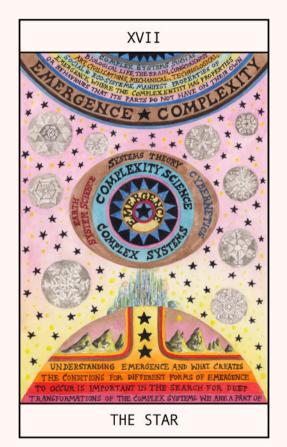








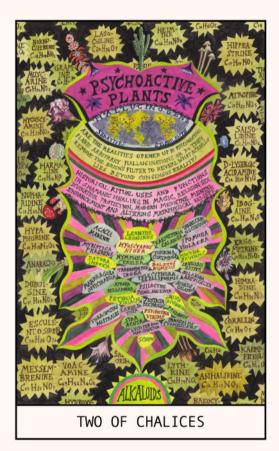




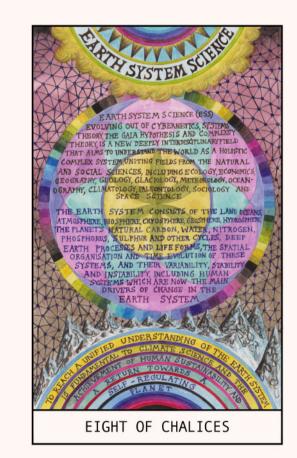


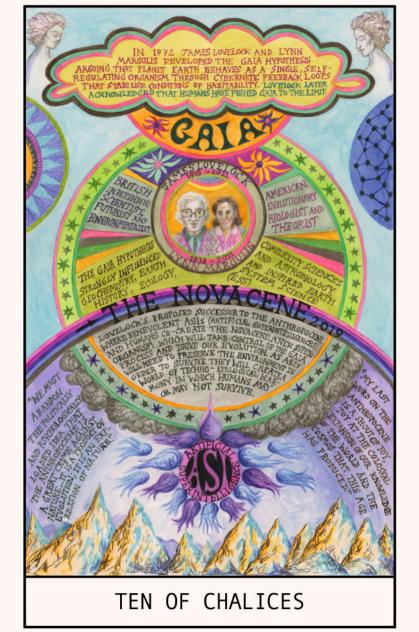


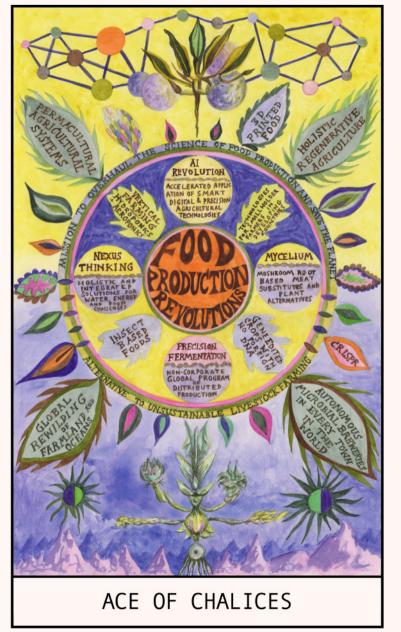
#### Chalices





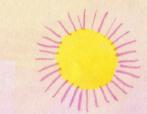






NOT INJURE A HUMAN BEINGOR THROUGH INACTION ALLOW A HUMAN BEINGTO COME TO HARM

A ROBOT MAY

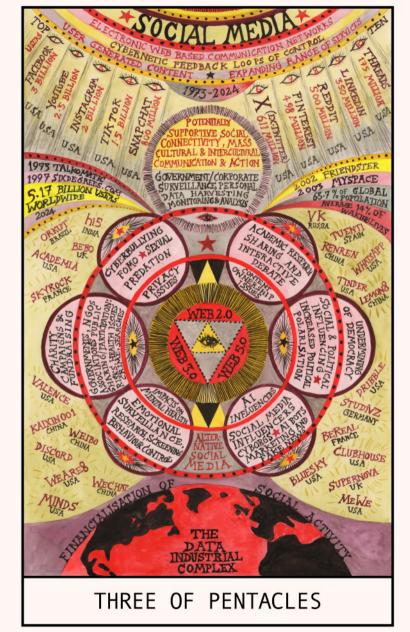


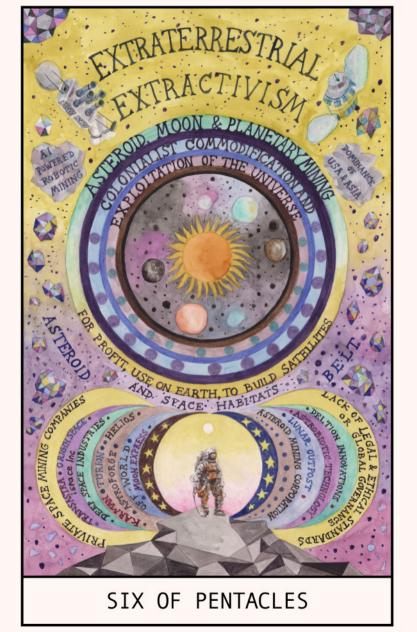
A ROBOT MUST PROTECT ITS OWN EXISTENCE AS LONG AS SUCH PROTECTION POES NOT CONFLICT WITH THE FIRST OR THE SECOND LAW

LAW

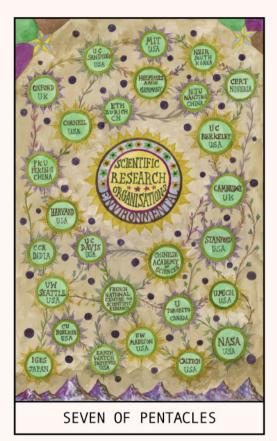


### Pentacles

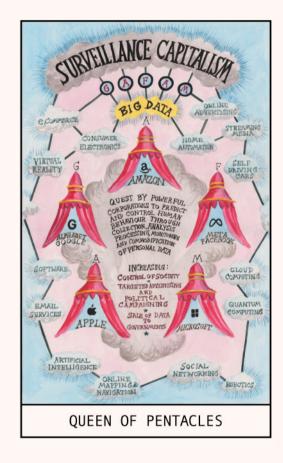








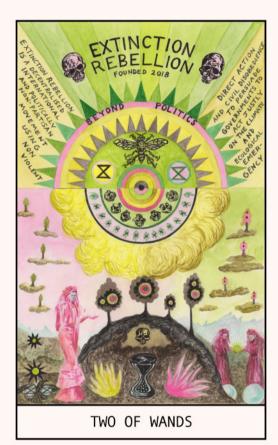


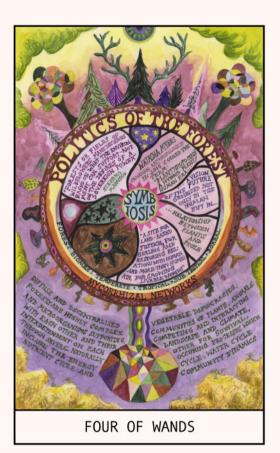


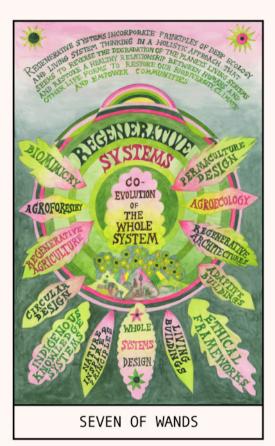
#### Wands









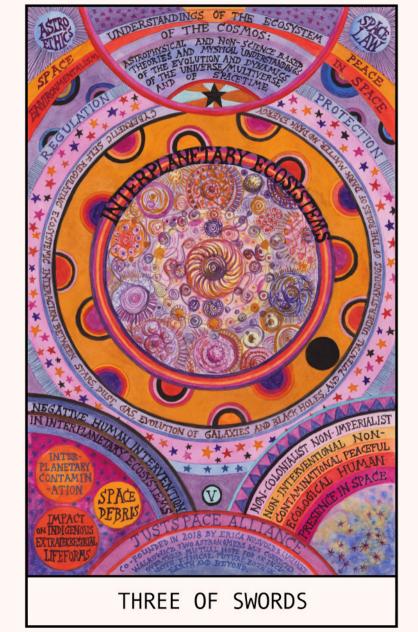


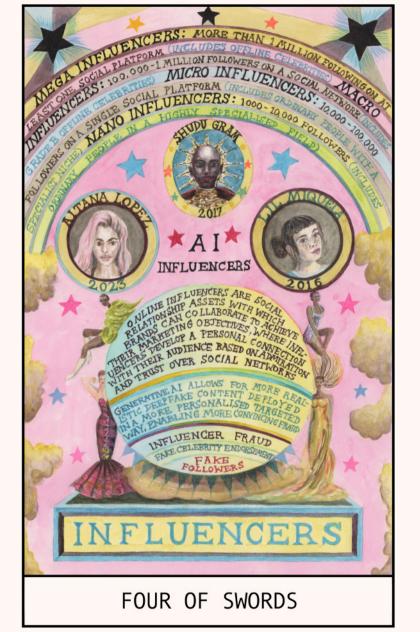






## Swords





ATMOS-PHERIC MANIPUL ATION

RAFOR

HYPOTHEIICAL

CLIMATE ENGIN-EERING



BIO

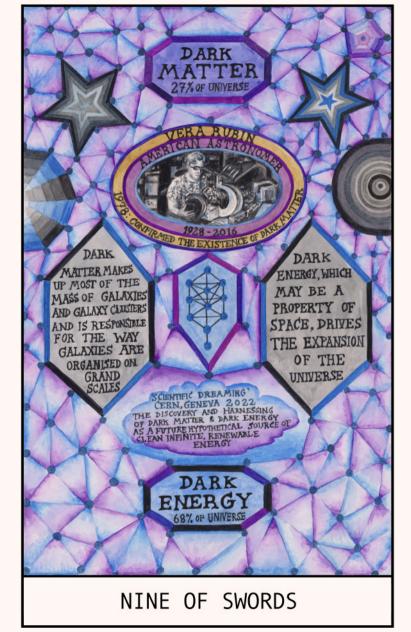
BIOSPHERE

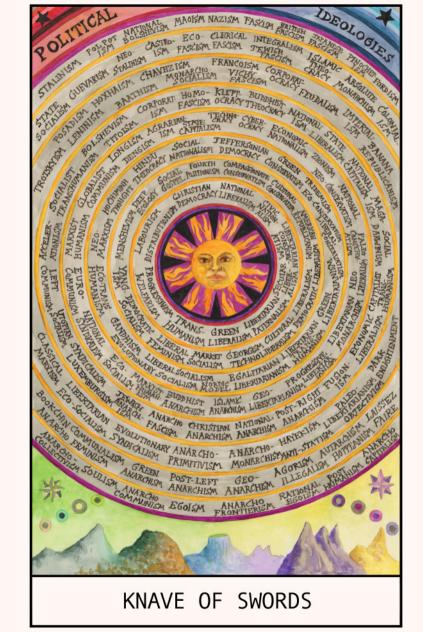
CREATION

GENETIC

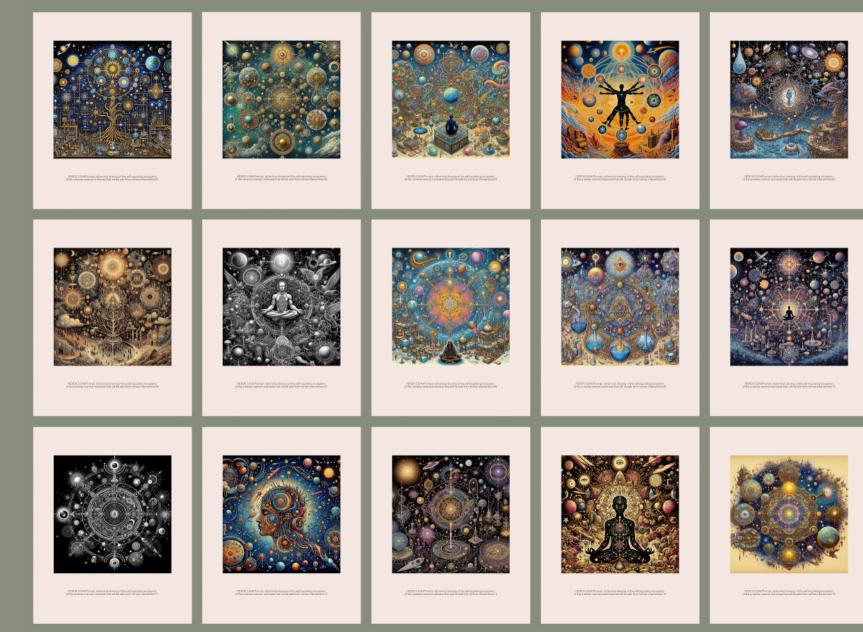
TECHNOLOGIC

YBERGENET





Al





HEXEN 5.0/AI/Prompt: alchemical drawing of the self regulating ecosystem of the universe cosmos multiverse that will be safe from human intervention/04



HEXEN 5.0/AI/Prompt: alchemical drawing of the self regulating ecosystem of the universe cosmos multiverse that will be safe from human intervention/10



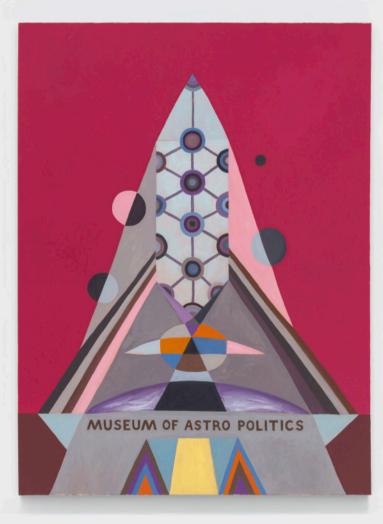
HEXEN 5.0/Al/Prompt: alchemical drawing of the self regulating ecosystem of the universe cosmos multiverse that will be safe from human intervention/15



# Museum Paintings

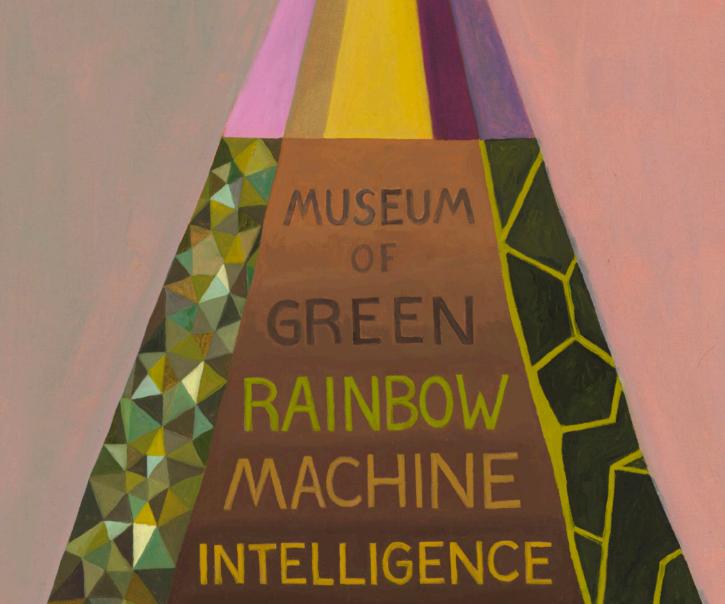
Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/Museum of Ethics and Interplanetary Technologies, 2023 oil on canvas, 213 x 152 cm





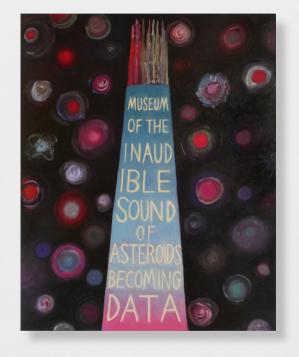


Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museum of Astro Politics, 2022 oil on canvas, 122 x 91.5 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museum of Green Rainbow Machine Intelligence, 2022 oil on canvas, 122 x 91.5 cm



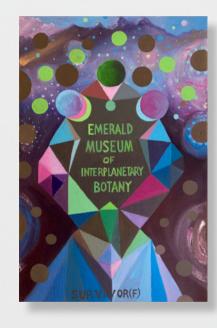






Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/Museum of Kabbalistic Futurism, 2022 oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm The Escapist BHST/Museum of the Inaudible Sound of Asteroids Becoming Data, 2018 oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm







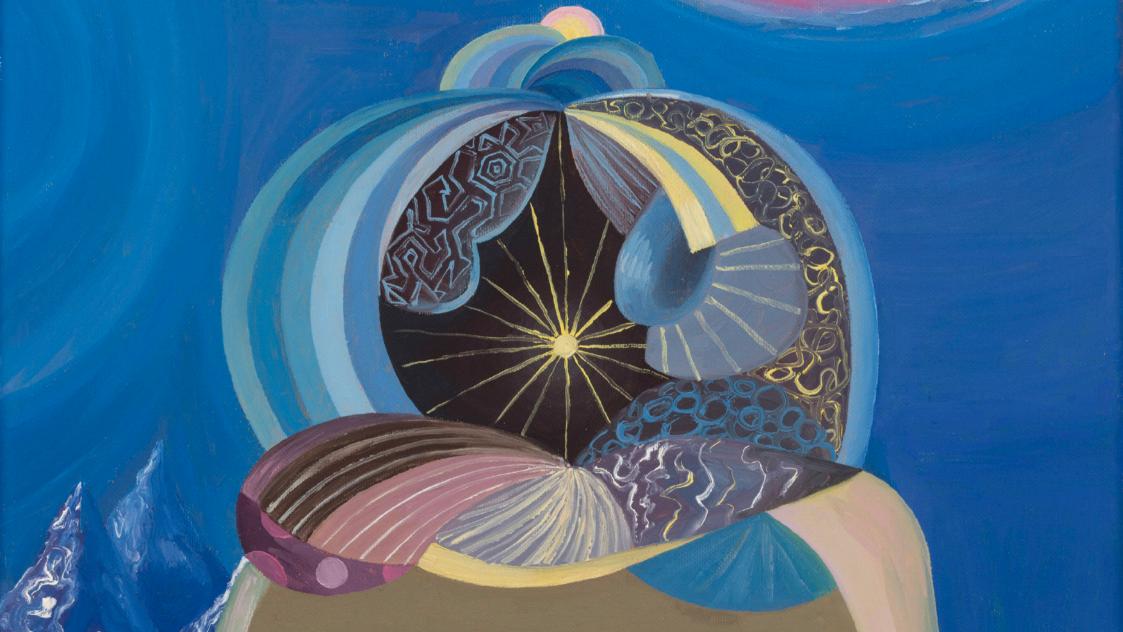
SURVIVOR (F)/Museum of Cosmic Ecstasy, 2019 oil on linen, 46 x 38 cm SURVIVOR (F)/Emerald Museum of Interplanetary Botany, 2022 oil on linen, 41 x 27 cm SURVIVOR (F)/Museum of Machine Telepathy, 2019 oil on linen, 46 x 33 cm







Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of Blue Galaxy, 2022 oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/ Museums/Museum of Cosmic Visions, 2022 oil on canvas, 30 x 20 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/ Museums/Museum of Space Law, 2022 oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm

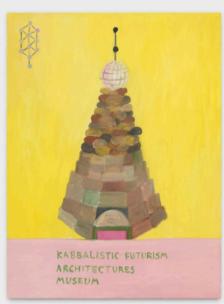








Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of Emerald Universe, 2022 oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of Post Intelligence, 2022 oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/ Museums/Ice Forest Museum, 2022 oil on canvas, 30 x 40 cm





Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures - Museum, 2021 oil on plywood, 40 x 30 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/Museum of Augmented Telepathy, 2022 oil on linen, 41 x 33 cm MUSEUM of the origins of joentity



Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of Visionary Data Stars, 2022 oil on linen, 33 x 41 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of Dreaming Mountains, 2022 oil on linen, 33 x 41 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of the Origins of Identity, 2022 oil on linen, 33 x 41 cm







MUSEUM OF DREAMING MOUNTAINS





Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of Regenerated Landscapes, 2022 oil on linen, 33 x 46 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of Dark Matter, 2022 oil on linen, 33 x 46 cm

## MUSEUM OF REGENERATED LANDSCAPES







Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museum of Intergalactic Prophecies, 2022 oil on canvas, 27 x 35 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/Museum of Augmented Dreams, 2022 oil on linen, 27 x 41 cm Kabbalistic Futurism/Architectures/Museums/ Museum of Quantum Gravity, 2022 oil on linen, 27 x 35 cm



## Annely Juda Fine Art

23 Dering Street, London, W1S 1AV +44 (0) 207 629 7578 www.annelyjudafineart.co.uk ajfa@annelyjudafineart.co.uk Monday - Friday 10am - 5:30pm Saturday 11am - 5pm