

START JOURNAL

ISSUE TWO

07-13 OCTOBER 2024
TOWN HALL BY BOTTACCIO



HOLY RELICS

Photographer Rick Guest on sacred cultural artefacts and emotional resonance

EYE OF THE STORM

Wells Tempest and Rita Nowak on the creation of reimagined mythologies

ABSTRACT REALITIES

Wesley Eberle on why the truth exists at the outer edges of the real

TRANSCENDENT SOUL

Maria Bracha on ethereal elevation and painting the essence of being



Welcome to the second issue of *START JOURNAL*, a new publication that introduces the participating artists at StART KX – providing insight into the creative mind via in-depth profiles. With its finger on the pulse of the ever-changing landscape of contemporary art, *START JOURNAL* celebrates a panoply of unique artistic talent and announces the relocation of StART to Town Hall by Bottaccio in London's Kings Cross, a stone's throw from the iconic creative technology hub Kings Cross, St Pancras (now known simply as KX).

Since our very first show in 2014, StART has helped to springboard the careers of emerging artists from around the globe, celebrating its 10th anniversary at Saatchi Gallery, London in October 2023. Now, one decade on, StART has relocated in a move that heralds a visionary new future. The first edition of StART KX in its new home promises to be an uplifting experience that celebrates art and creativity allowing visitors to get to know what is behind the conceptual drive of the exhibitors, and how their work relates to the overarching themes of the zeitgeist.

In the second issue of *START JOURNAL* you will find the brilliant art couple Rita Nowak and Wells Tempest. Rita Nowak creates

painterly images that very often reference iconic imagery from art history, while her partner Wells Tempest sculpts enigmatic sculptures influenced by nature, ancient mythology and geometric forms. Together, they employ art to explore profound cultural archetypes, and present modern-day mythologies. Among these pages, you will also find the ethereal abstraction of the Greek painter Maria Bacha, whose meditative Rorschach-esque works seek to transmit the experience of transcendence, and are held in collections worldwide.

There is also work from the wonderful Doowon Lee, who blends the inspiration and materials he finds in nature, channeling emotions he experiences during his travels around the world. Lee is an artist who works in tune with his unique vision of the universe, in which nature, animals, and humans are one. In contrast to the mysticism of Lee, the photographer Rick Guest exhibits photographs of key cultural artefacts he has hunted down over the years – hyper-detailed portraits of objects that have shaped our history across three centuries, from the gun used to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand to the last microphone Amy Winehouse ever recorded on. Hailing from the midwest, artist Wesley Eberle conversely explores the hid-

den world, presenting canvases that seem to be in a state of perpetual transformation. Elsewhere, Thai artist Anan Thathamma shares memories of his childhood in a Buddhist temple, where the seeds of his artistic journey were planted, and tells us why sounds are crucial to his process, listening to healing frequencies to induce a flow state, before employing his thumbs as direct conduits during the painting. His use of thumbs as tools being a tactile approach borne out of experimentation 'to allow the energy to flow directly through' from artist to canvas, without obstacle.

Finally, we are also joined by the brilliant Nandita Chaudhuri, a globally recognised British Asian artist, of Indian origin, based in London, Mumbai and Dubai, whose multi-media work sits as an amalgam across the multiple disciplines of painting, video art, animation and augmented reality. The dreamlike paintings she shares with us here in *START JOURNAL* endeavour to demarcate and illustrate the ultimate dissolving of man-made boundaries, taking a deep dive into unpeeling onion layers in human behaviour. Enjoy ...

START JOURNAL has been created, edited and art directed by [John-Paul Pryor](#). Additional design by Luke Fowler.



An abstract painting with a vibrant, ethereal quality. The background is a mix of deep blues, lighter blues, and greens, with some purple and pinkish tones. There are numerous small, golden-yellow dots scattered across the canvas, some forming faint, curved lines. The overall effect is one of movement and light, suggesting a celestial or spiritual theme.

TRANSCENDENT SOUL

Maria Bacha on ethereal elevation
and capturing the true essence of being

Maria Bacha earned her BA in Studio Arts from the University of La Verne, California, where she studied next to the Greek painter Michalis Veloudios, attended courses at RISD and MOMA, and was the Head Art Teacher for ten years at the Hadzivei Elementary School. She illustrated books for the Greek public school and she created many set designs for children's theatrical plays. She is also a member of the Greek Chamber of Fine Arts. Maria now focuses exclusively on her art and her ethereal Rorschach-esque abstract works are in private collections worldwide. Also, the Greek Ministry of Culture purchased her artwork in 2020 and to date, her works have been shown at prestigious art fairs in Greece, London and Los Angeles. Here, she shares her visionary passion.

What are your earliest memories of making art?

As a child, I was first drawn to the path of an artist by a deep fascination with line drawing using pencil on paper. I repeatedly drew the same themes, primarily an imaginary country house and a designed aircraft. I remember spending hours at our kitchen table in our urban apartment, located in my hometown in Greece. The table was white, and I even drew on its surface, erasing and redrawing my sketches. This specific theme stayed with me for many years. My deep fascination with line drawing during my childhood was also expressed with white chalk on the blackboards in classrooms. I remember going from classroom to classroom, trying to find an unoccupied one so that I could secretly enter and stay there as long as possible, drawing and writing letters in calligraphy. I recalled this memory when, as an adult, I encountered Josef Beuys's blackboard drawings, William Kentridge's drawings, and Japanese calligraphy. Looking back, it's clear that my journey as an artist began with simple desires: to move my hands on a surface, to create lines, letters, or imaginary things, and to experience the rough texture

of the blackboard or the smooth surface of the kitchen table. Over time, these simple desires grew into something deeper. Art became my way of understanding my emotional state, a way of expressing myself.

How would you describe your role as an artist?

As an artist, I see myself as an explorer of the unseen, a conduit between the inner and outer worlds, navigating the fluid boundaries of emotion, memory, and nature. I am a medium through which the energies of nature, emotion, and intuition flow. My work is a dialogue between the materials I use and the natural world that inspires me. I am deeply committed to the process of creation, where instinct, emotion, and careful observation guide my hand. This connection allows me to explore the intricate relationships between color, texture, and form, seeking to capture the essence of nature and its profound impact on our inner world. Through my art, I seek to explore and convey the profound interconnectedness of all things. Nature, both within us and around us, is a constant source of inspiration and reflection. When I create, I am not just painting an image – I am interpreting experiences, emotions, and sensations, translating them into a visual language that may speak to the viewer on multiple levels.

Where does inspiration come from in your work?

The ideas behind my work are deeply rooted in the interconnections between nature, emotions, and the materials I use. My inspiration flows from the natural world, both the external landscapes we inhabit and the internal landscapes of our emotions and experiences. I see nature as a universal force, both around us and within us, and my work seeks to express that unity. This connection to nature isn't just a theme; it's a guiding force in my creative process. I find myself irresistibly drawn to the color blue, a hue that embod-

ies the vastness, depth, and fluidity of water, sky, and emotion. Blue is a bridge between the earthly and the ethereal, capturing the serenity and mystery of the natural elements I explore. In my collections like Hydroexperiences, I delve into the sea and sky, where the infinite meets the intimate, reflecting how these vast forces mirror the complexities of our inner worlds.

Talk to us about your creative process ...

My creative process is akin to a meditative ritual, where instinct flows freely yet with an acute awareness of how each element communicates with the others. I embrace a gestural approach, letting the materials guide me in a dance that is as spontaneous as it is deliberate. This process reminds me of free association in psychotherapy—where one image, one gesture, leads naturally to the next, revealing layers of meaning. Through the use of acrylic, ink, and sometimes art resin, I create a dialogue between transparency and texture, light and shadow, organic shapes and a few sharp edges, crafting compositions that are dynamic, pulsating with energy, yet rooted in deep, contemplative calm.

How would you describe your compositions – what response do you hope to evoke?

My compositions are thoughtfully constructed, yet they retain an organic fluidity that invites the viewer into a meditative space. Each element within the composition is carefully placed, not just for balance but for the way it interacts with its surroundings. There is intentionality in how I build worlds on canvas, with mindful consideration of how colors, textures, and shapes interact to create a narrative that is more felt than seen. The brushstrokes I lay down are intuitive and wise, each one carrying the weight of experience.

To find out more about the artist visit [instagram.com/theartofmariabacha](https://www.instagram.com/theartofmariabacha)



Previous Spread: Ethereal Depths (detail), acrylic on canvas, courtesy of Maria Bacha
Above: Turn Your Light On, acrylic on canvas, courtesy of Maria Bacha

OUTSIDER SPIRIT

STEP INSIDE THE MIND OF DOOWON LEE

Doowon Lee works with the inspiration and materials he finds in nature, and transmits the emotions he experiences during his travels around the world. He works in tune with his unique vision of the universe, in which nature, animals, and humans are one. He is constantly researching new working materials in countries like Pakistan, Nepal, and India. Here, he discusses his unique and spiritual artistic practice.

How would you describe yourself as an artist? What essentially are you seeking to explore?

Humans start with scribbles before they even learn to speak. I believe art is an instinctive form of expression that transcends language; it's a joyful medium that can spread positive energy and elevate spirits. My goal is to create art that brings a smile to anyone's face, overcoming language barriers and cultural divides with universal joy.

What are the pluses and minuses of being a self-trained artist?

Being a self-taught artist is comparable to a climber forging their own

path up a mountain, continuously navigating challenges. I relish the freedom to choose my materials, composition, and colours, yet the solitude of bearing full responsibility often sharpens my focus. My drive to create is fueled by an intense inner hunger, much like a tiger conserving energy before the hunt. This dynamic compels me to swiftly transform fleeting mental images into tangible art. Before I begin my work, I activate the projector in my mind, visualizing the scenes I intend to create. For 'The Peacock Selling Guns,' I identified a connection



Bird Violinist March on Stormy Night Flight (detail).
Mixed media on vintage cotton, 2022, courtesy of Doowon Lee



Butterfly Dream in Flower Garden. Korean ink, oil, watercolour
and buttons from Georgia on linen, 2020 courtesy of Doowon Lee

between the intricate pattern of peacock feathers and a gun's target, which inspired me to depict these feathers alongside various whimsical guns. In 'Crash Landing in the Jurassic Period,' I painted realistic dinosaurs and then imagined myself unexpectedly arriving in their world. My inspiration often blurs the line between the inevitable and the coincidental, giving rise to unexpected narratives.

Why are you drawn to depicting creatures and animals so much in your work?

My creative process follows a cycle: nature – creatures and animals – intuition and transformation – implication – expression – back to

nature. Creatures and animals are integral to nature, which I consider my greatest teacher. I strive to encapsulate my reflections on nature poetically, using them to convey profound personal emotions.

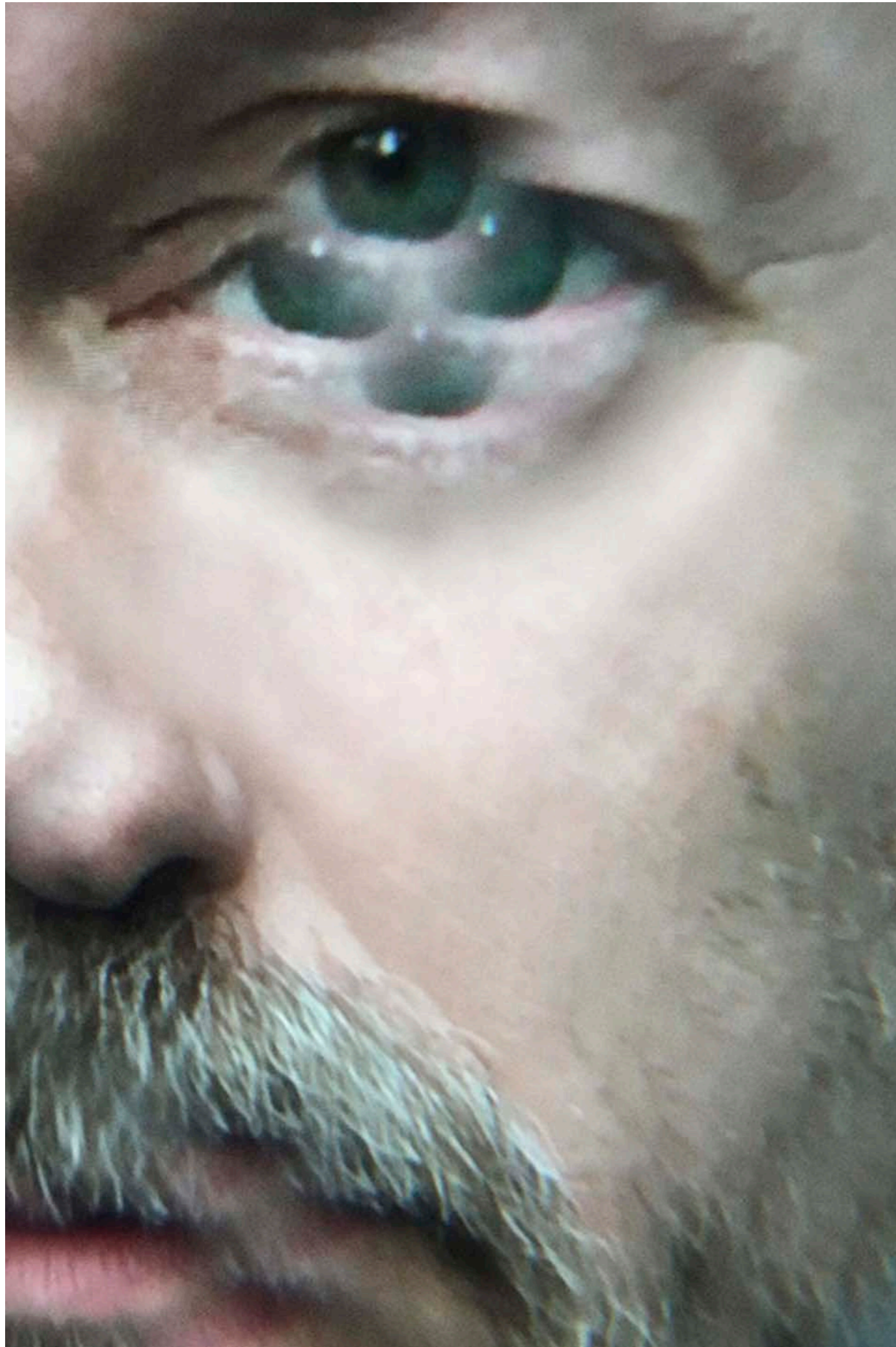
Can you talk to us about the key ideas behind your work? Where do you take inspiration from?

In my mind, there is a small theater where images inspired by nature come to life. I travel the world to gather and experiment with materials, bringing these visions into reality and documenting each step of the journey. This continuous exploration is essential for my growth as both an artist and an individual.

You incorporate many cultures in your work – why is that important to you as an artist?

My work naturally blends Eastern and Western elements, which can be viewed as Western from one perspective and Eastern from another. This fusion, combined with folkloric influences and the originality of my unique style, creates a distinctive balance that sets my work apart and marks my signature in the art world. Painting, much like poetry, has the power to encapsulate complex thoughts and emotions. It is my karma to express the poetry of life through my art.

To find out more about the artist visit [instagram.com/lee_doowon](https://www.instagram.com/lee_doowon)



HOLY RELIQS

Photographer Rick Guest on capturing
emotional resonance in historical artefacts

Interview by John-Paul Pryor

Rick Guest is the preeminent dance photographer of his generation, with 15 portraits of ballet dancers and choreographers in the National Portrait Gallery. In more recent years, he has hunted down and artistically documented artefacts endowed with historical narrative and emotional resonance for his Legacy + Art initiative. He has travelled the world to capture hyper-detailed portraits of objects that have shaped our history across three centuries – from the gun used to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand to the last microphone Amy Winehouse ever recorded on. Here, he discusses culture's holy relics.

What drew you to photography? What first made you excited to pick up a camera?

The thrill of first picking up a camera in my teens was, I suppose, one of control, in what was essentially a life without it. To be able to compose something, to frame an image, to leave things out, and to focus on others, was a revelation. I grew up in the 70's, the child of a single parent, and spent a great deal of time in front of the television, which I was obsessed with from a very young age, and so the leap from viewing to creating was a natural one, but without any examples of possibility around me, it took quite some time, and more than a few pieces of luck to get there.

How would you describe yourself as a photographer?

I no longer really call myself a photographer, as it's really just part of the process in order to end up at the finished print, the photography is no more than the research to find these incredible artefacts or than travelling to wherever they are; the experience that I hope to deliver is to create an emotional space between the viewer and the print, in which they can reflect and bring forth what the artefact means to them, so I really see myself as a print maker. The work sits at the intersection between memory and emotion, and my role in it is just

to present it in a way that the viewer can have their own experience with it, creating a portal through which the viewer can deep-dive into that personal experience.

What first drew you to shoot objects that have been important in shared cultural history?

I set up Legacy and Art several years ago to allow the project as it was at that point to become more anonymous, to place the focus completely on the artefacts, the artworks and the viewer, rather than the artist. I've always loved stories and that, as a species, we have the ability to conjure up the things and people we love from the past and bring them into the present. We imbue objects with great meaning, and use them as vessels for emotion and we always have done, from Egyptian tombs full of artefacts to a father's watch in the back of a draw, we hold these things close to us, connecting us to our loved ones past and present, and to both shared and deeply personal memories.

How did it actually begin?

The project really came out of working briefly at Abbey Road Studios, filming a soundtrack being made for a short film I had already shot; whilst there, one of the runners was bringing in some recording equipment and I remarked on how beautiful the small metal case for one of the microphones was, as was the microphone itself. He remarked that the studio knew what every microphone had been used on, as they have all the original session notes, detailing all the recording equipment used, and its position in the studio; I said, so, does this mean you can point to a microphone and say that this was used by Paul McCartney on Sgt. Pepper's? To which he replied '...yes, pretty much...' These artefacts are simply the tools of the trade to the people working there, as is often the case, so it sometimes takes someone not involved in the whatever discipline it is to notice the importance of

some of these things, and how they might resonate with the wider world.

What are the most interesting objects, and stories behind them, for you?

I have a slightly different perspective on the work than most people who view it, as the experience of finding it and photographing it can play such a major role in the memory I have of it, and my relationship to the final print. The skull is a prime example, probably being the most famous theatrical prop of all time; this one is a human skull used by the great actor Edmund Keane as Hamlet in 1814 for the dead jester Yorick. I went to the RSC to photograph it, and it was brought to me in a large box, accompanied by a pair of latex gloves. Left alone with the box, I removed the lid to see a smaller grey archival box, and, as I took away the tissue paper packing, I could see the top of the skull. I had been very excited to photograph it, but as both of my hands slid either side to pick it up, I was struck with the profound and overwhelmingly solemn emotion of holding the remains of another human being's head. After a few moments to catch my breath, I lifted the skull from its cocoon; my immediate thought was how very light it is, and is this it, is this how we all end up? I was then struck with the fact that I was having my own version of the famous Hamlet speech, and even though no one knows who this skull originally belonged to, the thought that it was someone who laughed, loved, cried and lived not so differently from any of us, was deeply moving, and stays with me to this day. The bullwhip is another; it belonged to Roy Chapman Andrews who, in 1906 got a job sweeping floors in the American Natural History Museum in New York; by 1934, he was the Museum's Director. He was an absolutely astonishing character, a fearless and enthusiastic explorer, being the very first to discover nests of dinosaur eggs in Mongolia in 1923, providing proof that dinosaurs hatched from eggs.



The Beatles. Neumann U48. As used on 'Come Together' [1969].
Courtesy of Rick Guest



The Skull of Yorick as used by Edmund Keane, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1814.
Courtesy of Rick Guest

I was in the Explorer's Club in New York, an incredible collection of artefacts intrinsically linked with exploration, housed in an astonishing building, and had that day already photographed a small flag carried by Jim Lovell on Apollo 13 around the Moon, and a polar mitten belonging to Matthew Henson, arguably the first man to the North Pole. The wonderful curator there, Lacey Flint, brought the archival box contains Roy Chapman Andrews' whip to the room they had allowed me to use as a temporary studio; she said I could use the large table to photograph the objects on, and after I had set up told me that it was on this table that the route of the Panama canal had been drawn up. The bullwhip is an incredible artefact, and the thought that it accompanied him on so many amazing explorations into the unknown, sat on his hip, was mind blowing. Lacey then told me that as the story goes, when George Lucas was doing research at the Club for the film that was to become Indiana Jones, Roy Chapman Andrews' devil-may-care character, his hat and the now famous whip provided the inspiration for the eponymous hero.

What do you hope a viewer will take away from these photographs?

It's not really for me to say what anyone who sees these large format prints will feel or take away; of course, I hope that the prints will resonate with a viewer's personal associations and memories of the people and events that are permanently entwined with the objects, and as I said, that they can potentially bring those emotions out of the past and into the present. I do see my work entirely in terms of collaboration, and I hope that viewers will also be curious enough to want more, to find more context and experience the subject matter on a deeper level, by visiting the places, institutions and collections where these artefacts are

held. To be in the room where Jane Austen wrote *Pride & Prejudice*, to stand under the Saturn V rockets at the Kennedy Space Centre, or witness the Antarctic Huts belonging to Scott and Shackleton, as I have been lucky enough to have done, is a deeply rewarding experience.

In a broad sense, where do you take inspiration from and what is your creative process ...

Inspiration comes from almost any quarter and really revolves around finding a great story for me. Story telling, as an act of imagination or keeping memory alive is an intrinsic part of what it is to be human; from the earliest sitting around camp fires to where we are now, we need these stories and delight in the act of story telling, it's who we are. My work aims to look very pared down and simple; a great deal of time goes into making the prints look uncluttered, celebrating the object itself and stripping away all context, so the viewer sees the artefact completely clearly, perhaps for the first time, even if it's an object they are familiar with. The process itself is rigorous and very painstaking; Each image can be made from many, many individual frames, composited in postproduction to give an extremely three-dimensional feeling, like you could reach up and touch it. I work with very high-resolution cameras that allow my prints to be of a size that rewards the viewer who wishes to go really close to them, to reveal all those marks of use and acts of creation and sometimes destruction, to see the witness marks of history up close and personal.

What would you say makes you unique as an artist? How do you set yourself apart?

The thing that sets us all apart is our own unique perspective; why does a particular artefact or for that mat-

ter a particular angle speak to me directly? The simple answer is that I contemplate what's in front of my camera, and I compare it in a few fractions of seconds to everything I have ever seen in my entire life and one viewpoint feels 'comfortable' to me, which is all that intuition is; I'm not sure that I could unpick it any more than that.

Why is photography your chosen mode of expression?

I fell into photography, and so this is where I ended up; it wasn't deliberate and chance has played the largest role in my practice, but years and years of trying to hone all the technical craft required, constantly attempting to get more in tune with what feels right to me, brings me to where I am. I have bent the medium I know to serve what I want to say, or at least in the way that I want to say things, but it's certainly an ever-evolving thing.

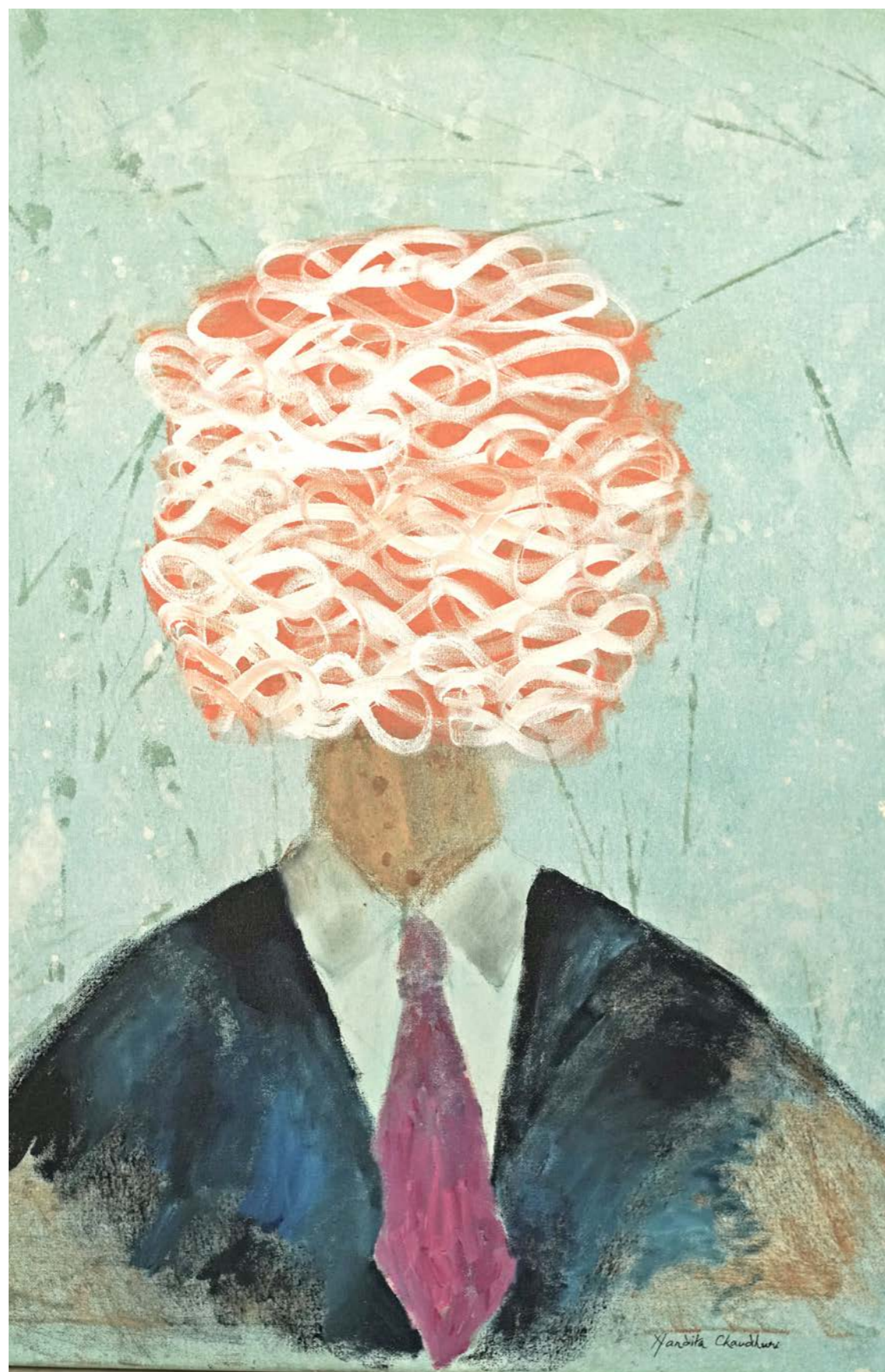
What for you is ultimately the purpose of photography?

For me, the purpose is to have the work create an emotional space for viewers to commune with their memories and feelings. Some of my most treasured memories are of extremely personal in nature, often when private collectors have commissioned me to make a print a personal possession, usually belonging to a relative who is no longer with them. When they see the print, and understand that rather than this object being out of sight somewhere, in a safe or the back of a drawer, they can live with it on a daily basis, they are usually very moved and often have a very visceral reaction. Whether it's Napoleon's hat, or a lost child's favourite toy, the experience for the viewer is unique to each of us.

To find out more about the project: legacyandart.com



Roy Chapman Andrews Bull Whip. From the Explorers Club Archive. Courtesy of Rick Guest



Unmasked. Oil and acrylic on canvas, courtesy of Nandita Chaudhuri

DREAMLAND

Nandita Chaudhuri on creative beauty and painting the inner landscape

Interview by John-Paul Pryor

Nandita Chaudhuri is a globally recognised British Asian artist, of Indian origin based in London, Mumbai and Dubai, whose multi-media work sits as an amalgam across the multiple disciplines of painting, video art, animation and augmented reality. Taking her lead from the vagaries of what it means to be alive, the paintings the artist shares with us here in START JOURNAL endeavour to demarcate and illustrate the ultimate dissolving of man-made boundaries via dreamlike abstraction, taking a deep dive into the unpeeling onion layers in human behaviour in a stark and vivid manner.

How did art manifest itself in your upbringing?

I grew up with the smell of paint and canvas. My mother was a poet, writer and artist. She painted incessantly and wrote soulful poetry. From an early age I was taught to question the universe and not follow any hand-me-down theories. To develop wings that would let me soar out of cultures, habitats, divisions, conventions or man-made rules. I was born a free spirit without shackles, to paint and conceptualise profound realities through multiple media. I write deeply profound poems and create paintings, sculptures, poetry and technology-led art, which are translated into metaphorical narratives.

What essentially would you say you are seeking to transmit?

The works comprise of complex patterns of sensuous states constructed by imagination. The outcome is a unified process guided by a combination of sensory input, memories, expectations and varied influences. The multiple disciplinary works, aim to convey and evoke a singular ethos. My art forms evolve continuously, as new technologies and media are introduced. They take a deep dive into unpeeling on-

ion layers in human behaviour in a stark and vivid manner. The reflections are both intuitive and perceptive. My works rely on graphic metaphors to convey a common thread. Metaphors used, serve as symbolic bridges allowing me to convey complex ideas and emotions in a relatable and vivid manner. They paint pictures in the mind's eye, making abstract concepts tangible and emotionally resonant. Some of my more recent works engage with a deep perceptive analysis of how individualistic behaviour can be intertwined with societal norms and its impact on interpersonal relationships. In other instances, they satirically use the negative spaces between objects to appropriate the narrative. The subtleties conveyed by focussing on spaces between objects can be more potent than visualising the object itself; as it unfolds more heightened imagination in a potent manner, with possibilities for more abstract negotiation.

How does your Indian heritage play out in your work? How does the cycle of life play out in your work as an artist?

There is a certain integrity in negotiating collective experiences and creating works that are rich in transnational references with multiple narratives. Works are unique, when the references sit astride timelines reflecting both fusion and displacement from a transnational context with multiple cultural perspectives. It even reflects globalisation and the history of art emerging on a larger global landscape. It would be vital for global art markets to tap on this important facet and recognise its relevance in emerging art today. Having been displaced from my earlier years in India and then finding home in the UK, where I have lived for three decades, the works have a distinct transnational context, a hybridity. I don't see it as a displacement from any one point to another. I allow an instinctive flow of inspiration from my various influ-

ences guide my practice. I am convinced that the richness of the transnational 'third space' has a distinct and unique identity that a body of imitative mass media works cannot produce. My works have also been derived from a unique set of experiences that reflect gender prejudices and other challenges in my personal journey. My lifecycle has led me to produce three distinctive phases of work. I painted nudes early in my career 25 years ago where the usage of paint was stark and aggressive. It was interpreted as immensely sensual, though I had done it at the phase where I was finding my freedom. Then came a calm spiritual phase of auras and vibrations that I truly felt. I am now on the third phase of translating profound and introspective thoughts through experimentation in metaphorical language.

Does the experience of making art give us access to a deeper reality?

Have you ever heard the ambient sound inside a seashell? It mimics the sound of the ocean perhaps even of the bygone air once trapped inside. In the Jungian sense, energy waves trapped in man also produce ingrained impressions. A lot of art interpretation or sensibilities come from an unconscious layer of subjective thought processes. And so, we are interconnected in a larger sense and yet disconnected by dogma, localised influences and conditioning creating dissonance. It's to be marvelled how various esoteric subjects, concepts or cultural leanings go down so deep as a universal theory. Is it conditioning or have we been coded by a deeper reality by our ancestors? If mind can indeed be over matter, cannot mind soar above or explore further possibilities to a given theory? As an artist, you are able to intercept and negotiate this plane and translate it into imagery.

To find out more about the artist visit nandita.co.uk



Contingency. Oil and acrylic on canvas, courtesy of Nandita Chaudhuri



The Pink Light. Oil and acrylic on canvas, courtesy of Nandita Chaudhuri



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EYE OF THE STORM

Wells Tempest and Rita Nowak
on the art of reimagined mythologies

Interview by John-Paul Pryor

The brilliant Wells Tempest is a self-taught British sculptor whose enigmatic wood and bronze sculptures are influenced by nature, ancient mythology (particularly Egyptian and Meso-American), and geometric forms, such as the Fibonacci sequence. Modern influences on his totem-esque creations include Bauhaus and Art Deco, and his latest collection, 'Aegyptiana', is comprised of various representations of deities and primal elements from Egyptian mythology. There is a strong element of design and architecture in the work also, with artists such as M.C Escher, Constantin Brancusi and Barbara Hepworth referenced in his aesthetic choices. His partner Rita Nowak is a firmly established Austrian artist who creates painterly photographic images that very often reference iconic imagery from art history. Her profoundly enigmatic work manifests symbolic archetypes from the collective unconscious, and one of our favourites of her images graces the cover of the second issue of START JOURNAL. Here, the two artists discuss together the various ways in which they inspire each other to create, and tell us why any notion of originality in the creation of art is an illusion.

How do your concerns as artists overlap? Where do your individual creative drives come from?

Fred: We constantly discuss our ideas and critique each other's work at every stage, from concept to completion. I always assist Rita when she is setting up her shots and sometimes appear as a physical prop or character in her pictures. This allows me to play the part of a living sculpture and provides constant inspiration as a result. Rita often spends time in the studio while I am working and I can rely on her to give me her honest opinion.

Rita : As a couple, we explore many shared interests in art, archaeology, architecture, foreign cultures and their varied expressions – literature, films and music. We digest the input

differently, but we share a similar sensitivity in our expression, and it's quite astonishing to see what is created parallel and how our works start to communicate when finally put next to each other. We discuss ideas, and Fred is very supportive in helping me realize my pictures.

Rita, please can you talk to us about the ideas behind your photography?

Rita: For my work, the medium photography is conceptually absolutely essential as it is an instrument of non-objective reality – surreal tales and dream images become tangible. In terms of my process, it usually starts with a concrete idea about the story. I keep images in my imagination for months, sometimes even years, until I can implement them with the right people and in the right places. Chance plays a subordinate role in this design process, although chance often plays a part in shaping it through the metamorphoses that arise in the process. The concept of leaving the structure to experience the moment is one of the biggest challenges for me.

Fred, please can you talk to us about the sculptural objects you create as Well Tempest?

Fred: As my inspiration comes largely from nature and mythology, my sculptures tend to depict animals and deities; also naturally occurring geometric shapes –and structures such as crystals and spirals are often recurrent features. I love the architecture of ancient Egypt, and early Meso-American cultures, and objects such as obelisks and totem poles, or combinations of the two appear in my work. Sculptors such as Constantin Brancusi, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Jacob Epstein are huge influences, as are HR Giger and Zdzislaw Bekinski, whose work continues to shock and inspire me. I took up sculpture purely by accident. I had an off-cut left over from a workbench in my studio, which I attempted to fashion into a copy of Constantin Brancusi's 'Bird in Space'.

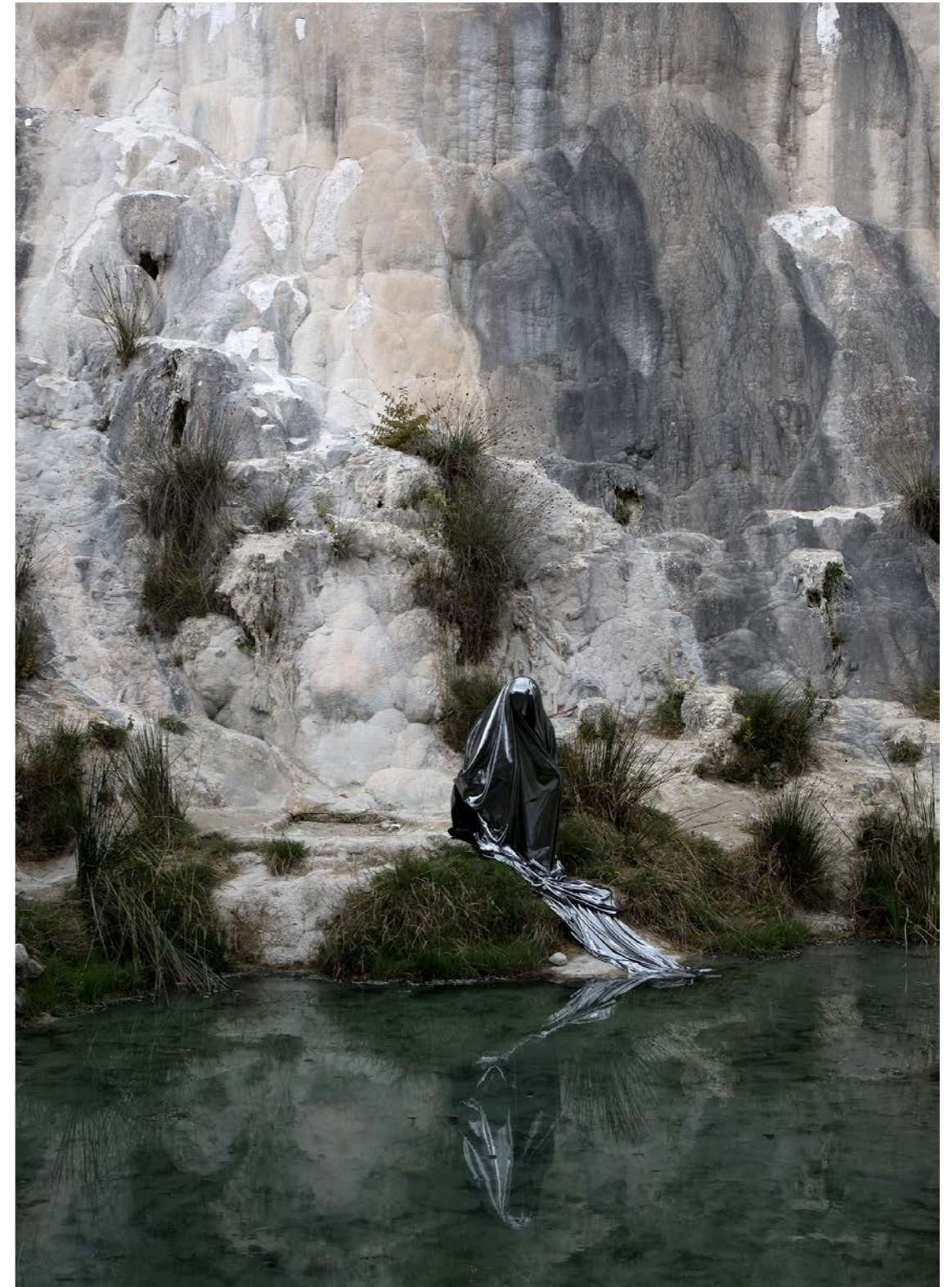
I only had basic tools, but I quickly realised I loved working with wood and the idea of creating a three-dimensional object. This was the exact opposite of the printmaking I had done before and I found it far more exciting and appealing. The name Wells Tempest is a combination of my mother's maiden name, Wells, and my father's family name, Vane Tempest Stewart.

Do you believe that anything in art is truly original?

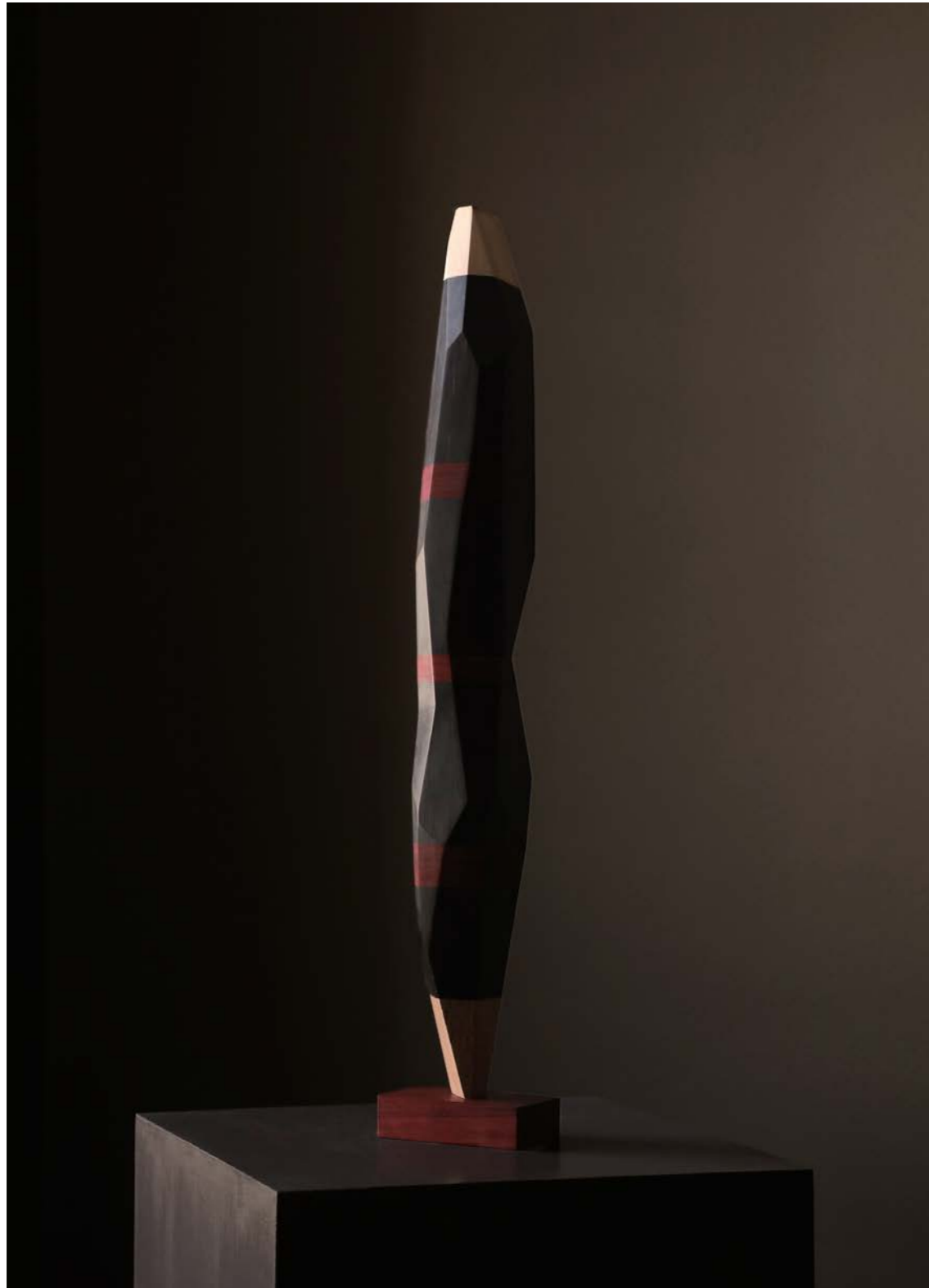
Fred: I think one of the most difficult barriers an artist can create for himself or herself is the idea of producing something that will be considered original; it causes unnecessary pressure and only serves to hamper the creative process. Everything we create is based on something we have seen or have had some exposure to, whether consciously or unconsciously. One of the best things an artist can do is to allow the work of other artists they admire to influence their own work; not to simply copy, but to pay compliment and further develop their ideas and style.

Do you believe in a collective consciousness in the Jungian sense?

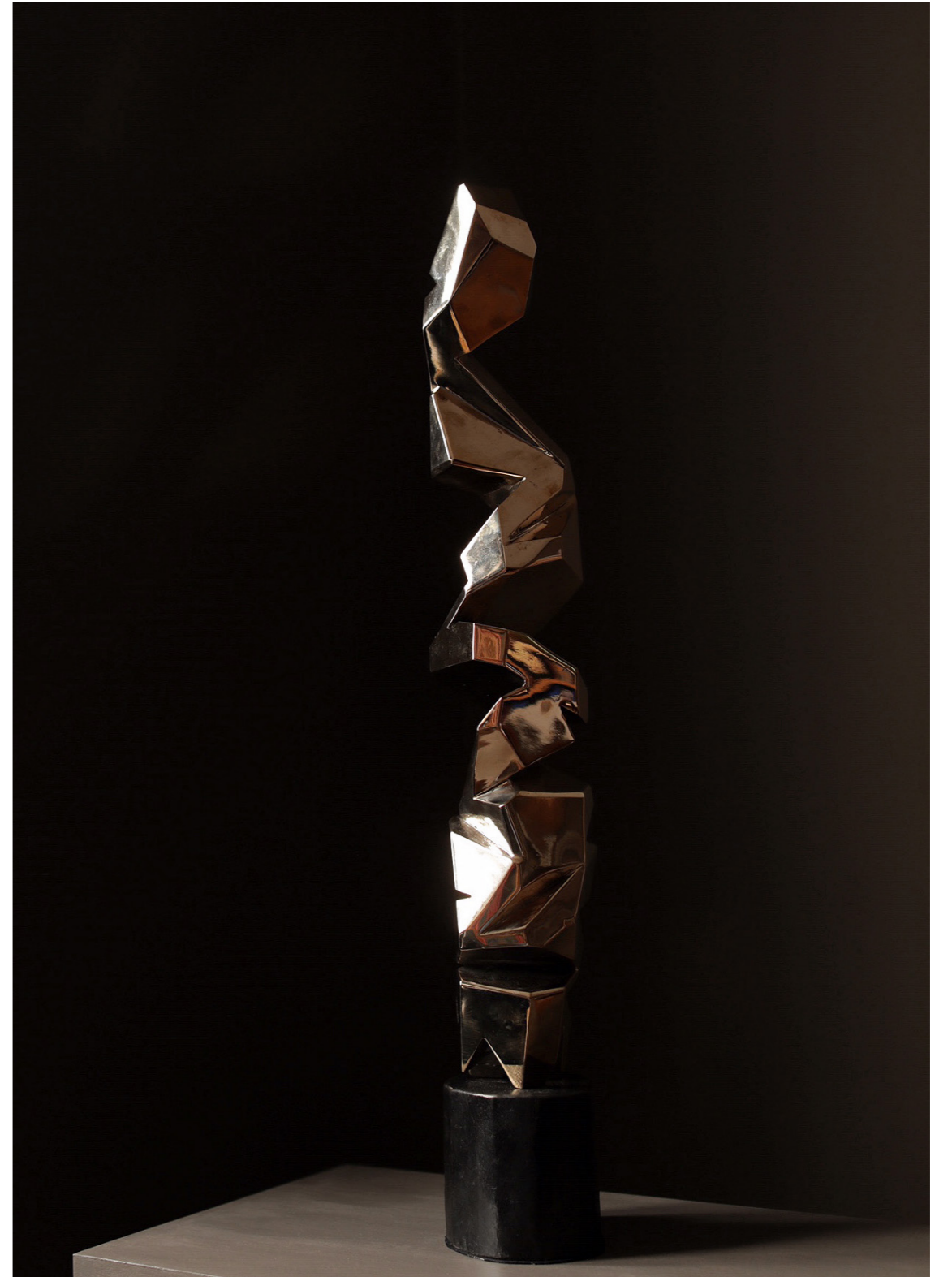
Fred: I like the idea of a collective unconscious, that we all share common memories or images. The idea of accessing such images through dreams is also something that appeals to me; surrealism, the works of Dali, Ernst and De Chirico were and remain strong influences. Something that many ancient cultures share is the use of hallucinogenic substances to transcend to a higher state of consciousness. This perhaps explains the depictions of ancient Egyptian deities, most of which take the form of humans with animal or insect heads; the same is true of many other such cultures. Art can and should allow access to a deeper reality and one of its most important functions is to encourage people to use their imagination. Particularly in western societies, people have moved away from nature and spirituality, life is



Ancient of Days, 2021, C-Type Print, courtesy of Rita Nowak



Crystalline Form II, courtesy of Wells Tempest



Cobra, courtesy of Wells Tempest

way too fast-paced competitive and stressful, with an emphasis on acquisition and achievement. I think art can play an invaluable role in teaching and reminding people of the fundamental importance and beauty of the natural world.

Rita: I absolutely believe in collective consciousness. For me making art is a spiritual experience – this fact amazes me constantly. A successful picture means, for me, that I can bring to light what is usually hidden under the surface and that this is understood at the time of creating by my sitters and me and hopefully when finally displayed.

What is your definition of beauty? How does beauty play out in your work?

Fred: For me to appreciate art properly I have to be able to see beauty in it, it has to produce an emotional response in me, a sense of pleasure and appreciation. I think this necessity is always present when I am working; and I feel it is important when others see my sculptures, that they feel a similar emotion and satisfaction. On the whole, we have similar taste and sensibilities regarding art and the art world. We both aspire to the idea of creating beauty and have a strong sense and appreciation of aesthetic in the way we approach our work.

Rita: Beauty is a basic necessity for me and I love to find beauty in unseen places. Beauty has so many different faces and I am receptive to all of its shapes and sensations but probably, at the core my personal ideal, is something authentic, unexpected and simple, with the grace of an underlying and sometimes unexplainable structure – may it be physically or the structure of a thought/concept. The structure of concept plays a big part in my work paired

with a big amount of spontaneity. Aesthetically, Fred and I speak the same language, and although we create very independent works, we have a very similar sensitivity.

How does art-making help you psychologically?

Fred: I am convinced that art, in any form or medium can be extraordinarily therapeutic. Carving, for example, has a meditative quality to it; the repetition and strokes of chisel against wood, the sound that it creates, removing material to produce a line or curve; all these combined elements are extremely satisfying. For me, creating art is an absolute necessity, it is the purest form of expression; and I am never more content than when I am alone in my studio experimenting with new ideas and materials. There have been difficult periods in my life; pursuing a career in art and changing from printmaking to sculpture has proved invaluable in dealing with stress and depression, and has always helped me overcome any such obstacles.

Talk to us about the relationship between the viewer and the image or object, as you perceive it?

Fred: I used to feel it was important that I explain why I made a particular piece, what it was that inspired me and how the various works link together or tell a story. One of the most interesting aspects about being an artist is listening to how people respond to and try to understand my work. I've come to realise that most people see what they want to see, that their responses are entirely subjective. Ideally, I want them to feel an emotional response that can trigger their imagination.

Rita: Creativity is the only way, which transports me to somewhere vast

and unknown. Through my work I understand who I am and where I am at, and the wisdom of being, unconsciously expressed. As a creator, one is often too closely attached to ones work to see its meaning so the viewer plays an essential part. It's often through the eye of the beholder that one can see the extent of one's creation – that's why I often wait with giving titles until after the first display of my new works. I love when the viewer feels himself seen in my picture and can fill it with his persona. I love my works to be open for interpretation and inviting.

What has been the most profound response to your work in your life so far?

Fred: I am proud and honoured that two of my bronze sculptures are now part of a large private collection owned by someone whose opinion and appreciation of my work mean a great deal to me.

Rita: A few years ago I had an exhibition in a castle in southern Austria. I was inspired by the ancestor gallery, which was partly blackened with time – some of the portraits were faded, some unrestored. I added a new photographic portrait series to that gallery. They blended in so well that they were seen only at the second sight but their presence revived the gloom. The owner, in his late-80s, held the opening speech. I always loved photography, but always found it difficult to understand as an art form. Looking at the ancestor gallery today I can see the old portraits as mere functional paintings, but finally my art has arrived among them. It's time for something new.

To find out more visit:
wellstempest.com
ritanowak.com



Time After Time, 2021, C-Type Print, courtesy of Rita Nowak.

ABSTRACT REALITIES

WESLEY EBERLE ON THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

Originally hailing from the rural American Midwest, Wesley Eberle is a self-trained artist who draws on his extensive travels for inspiration. He is based between his studios in London and the Greek Island of Hydra, and his abstract expressionist work seeks to explore the hidden – presenting canvases that seem to be in a state of transformation.

What first drew you to the path of the artist as a child?

I was raised in a home where art was a constant. Music was always

on, shelves overflowed with books, walls were full of paintings. But I didn't paint as a child. I grew up in a small Midwestern town. My father moonlighted as a jazz DJ and my mother would trundle me off to Chicago art museums whenever she could. But my first love was music and songwriting. Academic life took me to physics. Professional life began in politics, and continued for 20 years in political and strategic communications. Painting came more recently. And I found quickly that I could draw on everything I loved – the physics and balance of abstract

painting, the human cognitive exploration of figurative work, and the ability to tell a story of a moment – a single moment, a feeling, a love, a heartbreak – better in painting than I could in song.

What essentially are you seeking to explore and transmit?

I came to painting later in life after a long career in political and strategic communications. And my background influences my work through my interest in our rapidly changing culture of communication and how



We Are our Ghosts, 2022. Oil on canvas, courtesy of Wesley Eberle



Mercury Retrograde (Detail), 2023. Oil on canvas, courtesy of Wesley Eberle

individuals and groups perceive themselves and the world around them. I am not seeking to transmit a particular end but rather to invite feeling and open questions. My work is rooted in communication and perception. I'm interested in memory, expectation and how we view our past, current and future selves. I am particularly drawn to the multiplicities of the self, how we perform them, and how that changes our perception of ourselves, of others, and of memories and time. We live in a society that encourages us more than ever before to perfect the self, and media has developed alongside digital platforms in which we perform doppelganger versions of ourselves. What happens when we confront our doppelgangers? And how does this phenomenon affect mental health? As we normalise modern concepts of therapy, have we supplanted true self-reflection and enlightenment with virtue-signalling as prologue to the performative versions of ourselves?

Isolated untis of consumption ...

It has now become both affordable and accessible to create "product" versions of ourselves, and as a society we have not truly explored what this means. A brand is, by definition, non-human. To

be effective, it must be simple and static – the antithesis of the values of human development. And when this new culture of communications becomes transactional, human interaction becomes zero-sum. When the self takes up too much space, it prevents us from reaching out to one another. We are encouraged to channel our insecurities inward instead of through a community. And, in a society where impending challenges require collective effort, we avoid action and progress. Most alarmingly, we regress.

What fascinates you about abstraction as a mode of expression?

Abstraction is what creates room for emotion, interpretation and a unique personal connection with the work. Abstraction can also tap into our own tendency to reverse what we perceive as filled and what is void. It is not about reduction, but addition – of emotion, drama, love, pain, anger. Abstraction of the human form elevates the figure, rather than detracting from it, leaving the audience to consider the emotions involved. I want to create a wall of colour. Not a barrier, but one that invites you in, that moves towards you. One that is sculptural, enticing you to explore, to feel it. I want the paint to be the subject, creat-

ing movement and emotive force. And when the paint is the subject, one has to expect a lot from it. It needs to interact with itself – colours competing with one another *for primacy*.

How do you think the advent of AI in art is going to change the human experience of art?

In the rearview mirror, very little. Just as modernity hasn't drastically changed our human relationship with literature or music. Silicon Valley is great at overpromising and underdelivering. And what we're told will be lifechanging ends up making it easier to pay for a taxi at best and profiteering on our most base instincts at worst. In a digital future that is unclear, it is the art that challenges these conceptions of progress, that is most powerful.

What for you is ultimately the purpose of art?

Art can make us think, question, feel, or simply bring joy. But also, it does not need to. If any art form adds some kind of dimensionality to our world, then it is serving its true purpose.

To find out more about the artist visit wesleyeberle.com



Above: Heart Sutra (detail), Anan Thathama, 2024.

INTO THE VOID

The Buddhist artist Anan Thathama deep dives
into the outer reaches of consciousness

Interview by John-Paul Pryor

Thai artist Anan Thathamma's work draws inspiration from his childhood in a Buddhist temple, where the seeds of his unique artistic journey were planted. His upbringing in this environment fostered a deep sense of observation and curiosity, unencumbered by societal norms, which continues to shape his artistic expression today. Before commencing each new piece, Thathamma engages in metta practice, a loving-kindness prayer for all beings, tapping into cosmic consciousness. Sounds are crucial to his process, listening to healing frequencies to induce a flow state before employing his thumbs as direct conduits during the painting. His use of thumbs as tools is a tactile approach borne out of experimentation "to allow the energy to flow directly through" from artist to canvas without obstacle.

What first drew you to the path of the artist. How did it manifest in your Buddhist upbringing?

Growing up in a Buddhist temple in Thailand, I was always intrigued by all of the religious art and culture around me, and when I started painting as an adult, it was immediately apparent just how much this had influenced me. As an artist, I try to explore form, energy, vibrations and sound, and bring intangible themes to life on the canvas.

Can you talk to us about the ideas behind your work? Where do you take inspiration from and what is your creative process ...

My work is inspired by the cosmos - such a huge theme, I know, and within is everything that we have known or can ever know. There's so much more that we as humans can explore and understand beyond the physical realm, and the journey starts by opening our minds and where we originate. Before starting to create, I engage in metta practice, which is a loving-kindness prayer for all sentient beings. During the creation process, I listen to healing frequencies to support my flow

state, and I use my thumbs rather than brushes to allow for more direct connection between the cosmos and the canvas.

What would you say makes you unique as an artist?

I believe that all artists are unique and have their own stories and messages to share. I feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to share my works with the public, and I hope that my works can connect with some people. I used to paint more traditionally with brushes and other implements, however a few years ago, I decided to remove the barrier between me and the canvas. As soon as I started painting with my hands, it felt like I was communicating directly with the canvas through colour and it created more of a sensory experience, allowing me to express myself much more clearly.

How do Buddhist notions of the nature of reality play out in your work?

For me, the cosmos equates to the collective consciousness - everything is source, comes from the source and returns to the source. My Buddhist upbringing taught me about the temporary and illusory nature of our physical reality, and showed me how to use this human experience to connect with my higher self and with the field of consciousness. Through my art, I aim to depict these experiences and portray different aspects of the cosmos.

What is your definition of beauty? How does it manifest in your work?

Beauty can appear as subjective based on individual interpretation, however I believe that beauty can be found in everything and every being. Every object or being has multiple perspectives and dimensions, and at a deeper level can be understood to be a reflection of one's self.

What is your inner journey as a painter? Would you describe your painting as a spiritual practice?

Historically, my works have often had a religious element, however, in the last few years, my own spiritual journey has greatly influenced my art. My meditation practice has helped open me up to so many new experiences which have provided inspiration for my works, and I have cultivated a sense of purpose which allows me to share these moments with others.

What do you hope a viewer will take from exposure to your paintings?

As with most artists, I have messages to share, and my inner sense of purpose helps me to bring those messages to life. Some viewers may not connect with those messages at their current life stage, however others will experience a strong personal connection. It's so rewarding to hear viewers discuss how a piece connects with them, then share their interpretations with me - this often provides me with a different perspective on my works. Some are captivated by the energy of the whole image, whereas others are drawn into some of the much smaller details. Every time I have a conversation with someone who connects with any element of my art at a deeper soul level, it reminds me of how blessed I am to be doing something that I truly love and am able to share with the world.

How do you think the advent of AI in art is going to change the human experience of art?

I view AI as another form of conscious creation, and so we humans should consider the influences and examples that we provide to allow it to evolve in a way that benefits all of creation. In some ways, it'd be similar to raising a child to be the best possible adult. Rather than considering AI as competition to humans, we can and should encourage a collaborative creative process that allows us to evolve together.

To find out more about the artist visit anans-art.com



Above: Lotus Sutra (detail), Anan Thathama, 2024

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