



A B I S A Y P U E N T E S

ABISAY PUENTES



The development of my expressive trajectory has taken 20 years to evolve to its current phase. My current work began with a series of drawings that I began, in 1997. Today, my work contains two kinds of space; one space is visual and the other is based on my interest in music. The forms of each of the modes of artistic expression that I employ in my work – music and painting – are not necessarily intrinsically linked – because “musical forms” and “pictorial forms” do not function on the same sensory level. Nonetheless, as content, within a given work, these elements can fuse and affect an audience’s perceptual sensibilities. Such a fusion of sound and image was found in the history of film in silent movies. In this sense, such films were mute but not deaf.

As I have explored the fusion between image and sound, the work of Wassily Kandinsky has provided an inspirational model. Kandinsky’s ideas have entered my referential inspiration through my absorption of his intentionality as expressed in “Concerning the Spiritual in Art,” where he wrote:

“... The most modern musicians like Debussy create a spiritual impression, often taken from nature, but embodied in purely musical form. For this reason Debussy is often classed with the Impressionist painters on the ground that he resembles these painters in using natural phenomena for the purposes of his art. Whatever truth there may be in this comparison merely accentuates the fact that the various arts of today learn from each other and often resemble each other.”

Further down, he also stated:

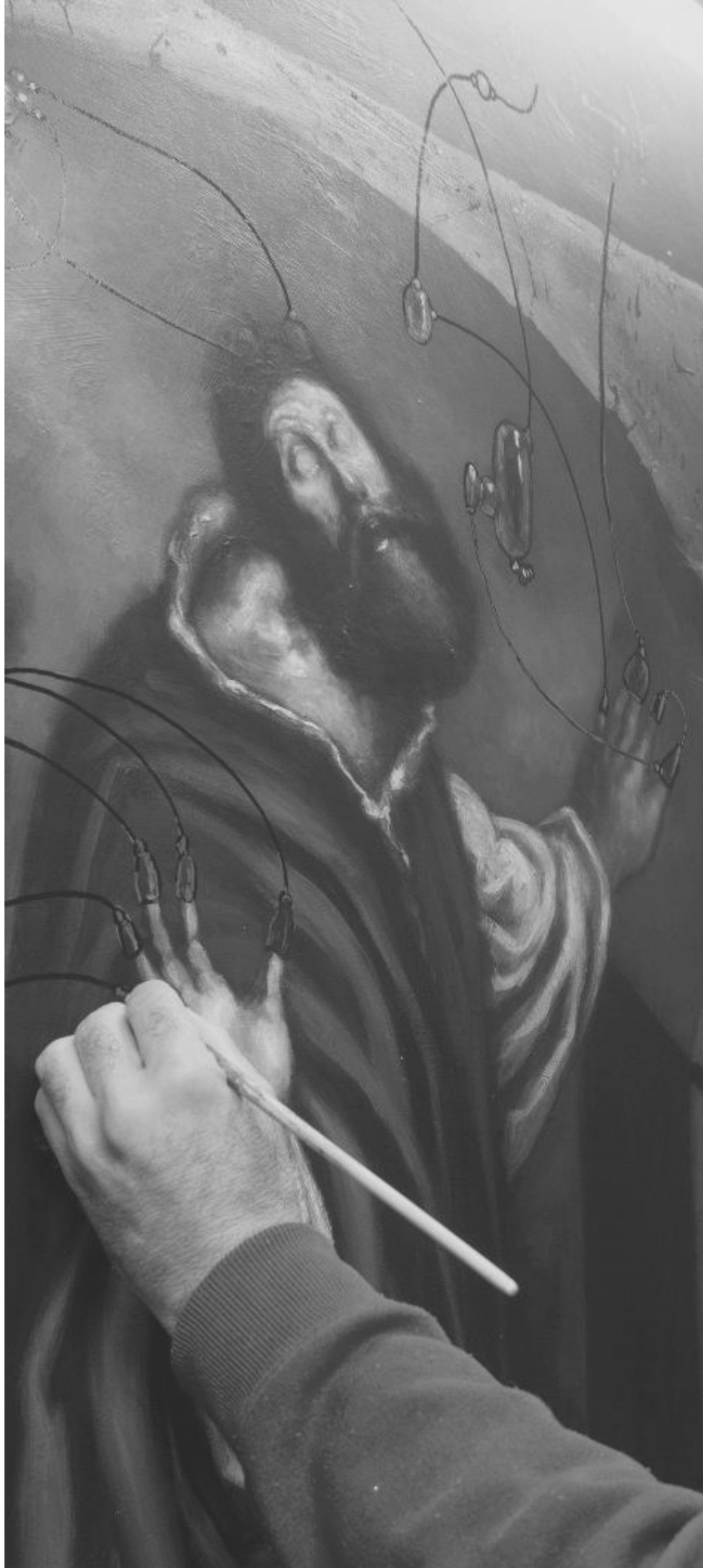
“... And so at different points along the road are the different arts, saying what they are best able to say, and in the language which is peculiarly their own. Despite, or perhaps thanks to, the differences between them, there has never been a time when the arts approached each other more nearly than they do today, in this later phase of spiritual development.”

It is precisely in these concepts, as expressed by Kandinsky, that I have employed in developing the symbiotic aspects of my work. Evidently, artistic evolution since Kandinsky has continued from when he left us with these concepts. Contemporary Art has moved beyond Kandinsky’s legacy as it has departed from traditional conventions of artistic process and outcome. Despite such changes, the elemental spirituality of art does not change; and it is within the parameters of this conceptual structure that I create my work. In my artistic practice and intentionality, I seek to join the visual aspects of painting to

the aural space of melody or pure sound in a manner that communicates this fusion.

All visual art can resonate with the spiritual in a manner that is intrinsically musical. This is even more possible today, as we live in an intellectual moment identified by Arthur Danto's philosophy as the Post-Historic Period, in so referencing the end of traditional historical identification of "Art" or of a concept of art, which ruled on artistic definition since the Renaissance to identify or deny artistic actualization. Danto's conceptualization of art maintained that art had entered a new phase of artistic utopia, wherein all is permitted in the name of art. Pure art as Form lost its significance, but the new significance or meaning of such art has not yet been identified. As an artist, with the ability to function within Danto's description of artistic possibilities, I seek to describe what I identify as my artistic sensibility within my artistic sensibilities and the trajectory of what I identify as my artistic intentionality.

Lately, my work's fusion of sound and sight combines the experience of both into one expressive format, which can be experienced separately or in a combination of listening to music joined to the visual perception of interaction with painting. The meaning of the experience is found within the spectator's experience, as it is the audience that provides meaning through the aesthetic moment produced by my work. Visual images are static but music flows. Images are frozen in time but music cannot be detained and its ongoing development unfolds as time passes. In perceiving how these two aspects of artistic expression develop, someone immersed within this created world can create a mental history for the image seen, altered through the sound of the music that animates its spiritual existence. As such, the "history" or the image or its "story" is recounted by the space that exists separating the diverse realities of music and painting. Fused in my work, these two areas of perception – sound and sight - are united into a holistic experience that enmeshes the spectator in a world that is between their perception and my intention for the work's performative display. Thus, I challenge audiences to interpret and absorb the intrinsic nature of the work they perceive, that is my creative process, and the extrinsic perception of it



that is the result of the spectator's experience. In so doing, my goal is to enmesh the spectator into the perceptual performativity of seeing and hearing within an altered state of existence that seeks to find a place between the material existence of painting, the sound of music and the spiritual with art.





ARTWORKS

LIBERTAD, *Acrylic/Canvas, 59 x 31 inch.*



ESPERANZA VACÍA, *Acrylic/Canvas, 59 x 31 inch.*

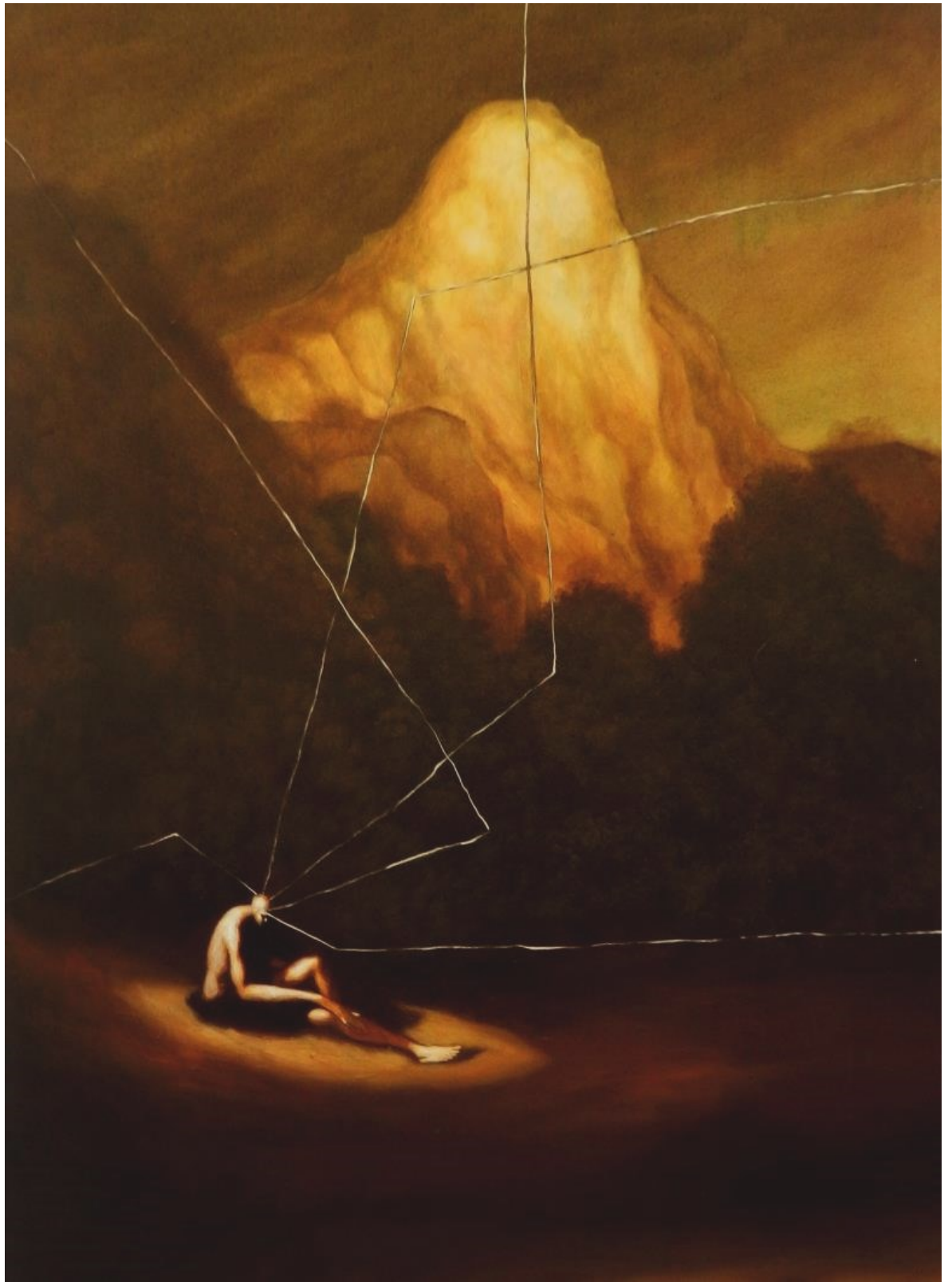


REPOSO EFÍMERO, *Acrylic/Canvas, 39 x 51 inch.*



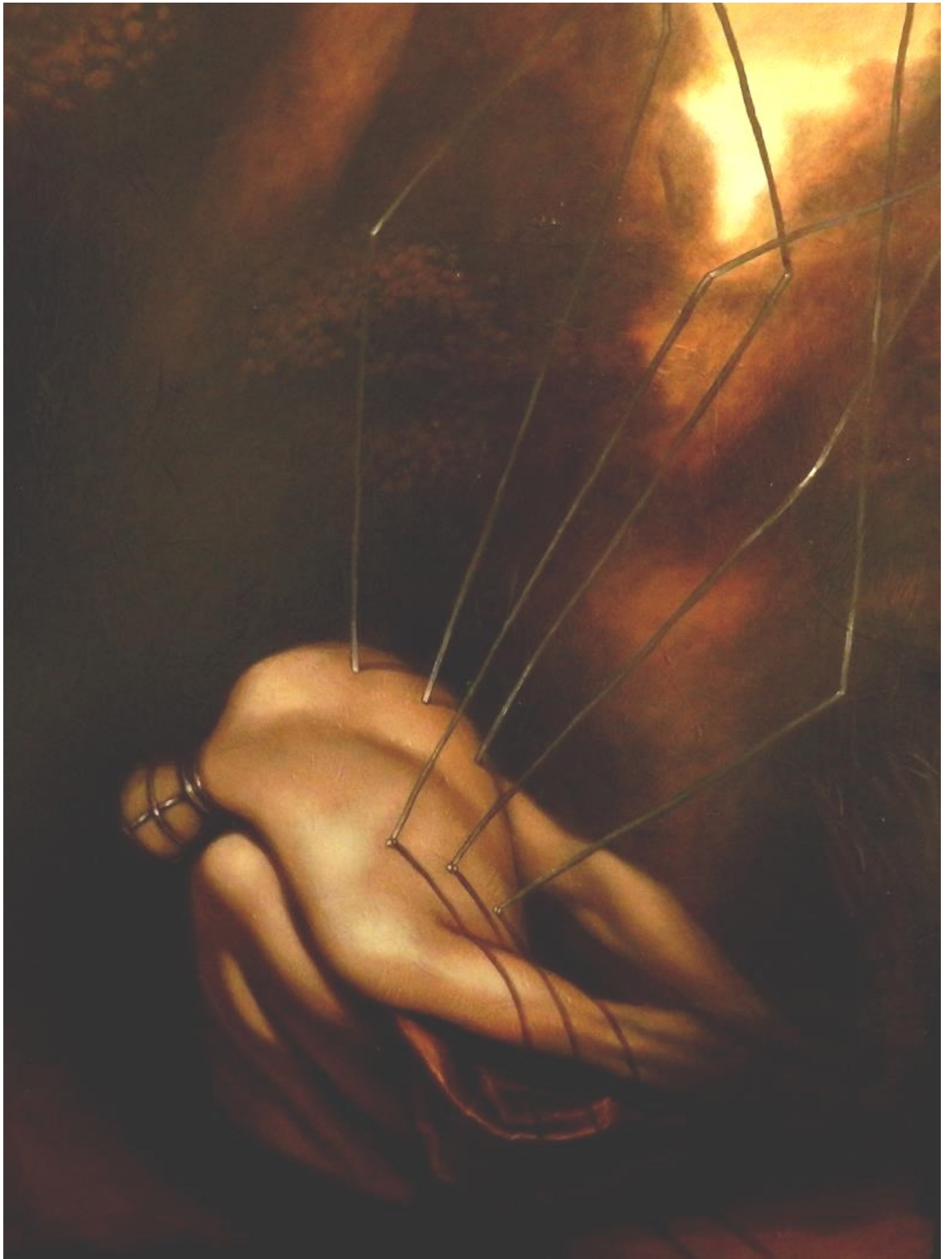


EL ABISMO DE SU DOLOR, *Acrylic/Canvas, 39 x 51 inch.*



EN EL LODO CENAGOSO, Acrylic/Canvas, 39 x 28 inch.

EN EL FOSO DE LA DESOLACIÓN, *Acrylic/Canvas, 51x39 inch.*



DONDE ENCUENTRO MIS TORMENTOS, *Acrylic/Canvas, 51x39 inch.*



REJAS INFINITAS, *Acrylic/Canvas, 58 x 28 inch.*



MY TORMENTS, *Acrylic/Canvas, 37 x 21 inch.*



¿DÓNDE ENCUENTRO MI PAZ? *Acrylic/Canvas, 39 x 51 inch.*



RETRATO DE ADÁN NO.1, *Acrylic/Canvas, 30 x 50 inch.*



RETRATO DE EVA NO.1, Acrylic/Canvas, 30 x 25 inch.



LA RESPUESTA, *Acrylic/Canvas, 48 x 36 inch.*



LAMENTO DE ADÁN NO.1, *Acrylic/Canvas-panel, 8x10 inch.*



INSTALACIÓN: **ARIDEZ**, *Acrylic/Canvas-Panel, 72 x 55 inch.*





SERIES: DESVANECIMIENTO DIBUJO No.4 y 5 *Pencil-Ink / Paper, 22 x 30 inch.*











MECANIKALGIA NO.4, *Acrylic/Canvas, 39 x 51 inch.*

DE LA SERIE: DESVANECIMIENTO DIBUJOS No.12 *Pencil-Ink / Paper, 22 x 30 inch.*



DE LA SERIE: DESVANECIMIENTO DIBUJO No.2 *Pencil-Ink / Paper, 22 x 30 inch.*



DE LA SERIE: DESVANECIMIENTO DIBUJO No.3 *Pencil-Ink / Paper, 22 x 30 inch.*





DE LA SERIE: DESVANECIMIENTO DIBUJO NO.9 *Pencil-Ink / Paper, 22 x 30 inch.*



DE LA SERIE: DESVANECIMIENTO DIBUJO No.10 *Pencil-Ink / Paper, 22 x 30 inch.*



DE LA SERIE: DESVANECIMIENTO DIBUJO No.14 *Pencil-Ink / Paper, 22 x 30 inch.*



PARADOJA No.1 Acrylic/Canvas, 11 x 15 *inch.*



PARADOJA N0.2, Acrylic / Canvas, 40x 521 inch.



PARADOJA N0.3, *Acrylic / Canvas, 40x 521 inch.*



PARADOJA N0.4, Acrylic / Canvas, 40x 521 inch.



CIUDAD MÁQUINA NO.1, Acrylic / Panel-Board, 30x 30 inch.



VARIATIONS



EN EL LODO CENAGOSO No.3,
Mixmedia/Canvas, 48x24
inch.

EN EL LODO CENAGOSO No.2,
Mixmedia/Canvas, 48x24
inch.





EN EL LODO CENAGOSO No.9, Mixmedia/Canvas, 24 x 18 inch.



EN EL LODO CENAGOSO NO.10, Mixmedia/Canvas, 36 x 24 *inch.*

EN EL LODO CENAGOSO No.5, Mixmedia/Canvas, 24 x 18 *inch*.





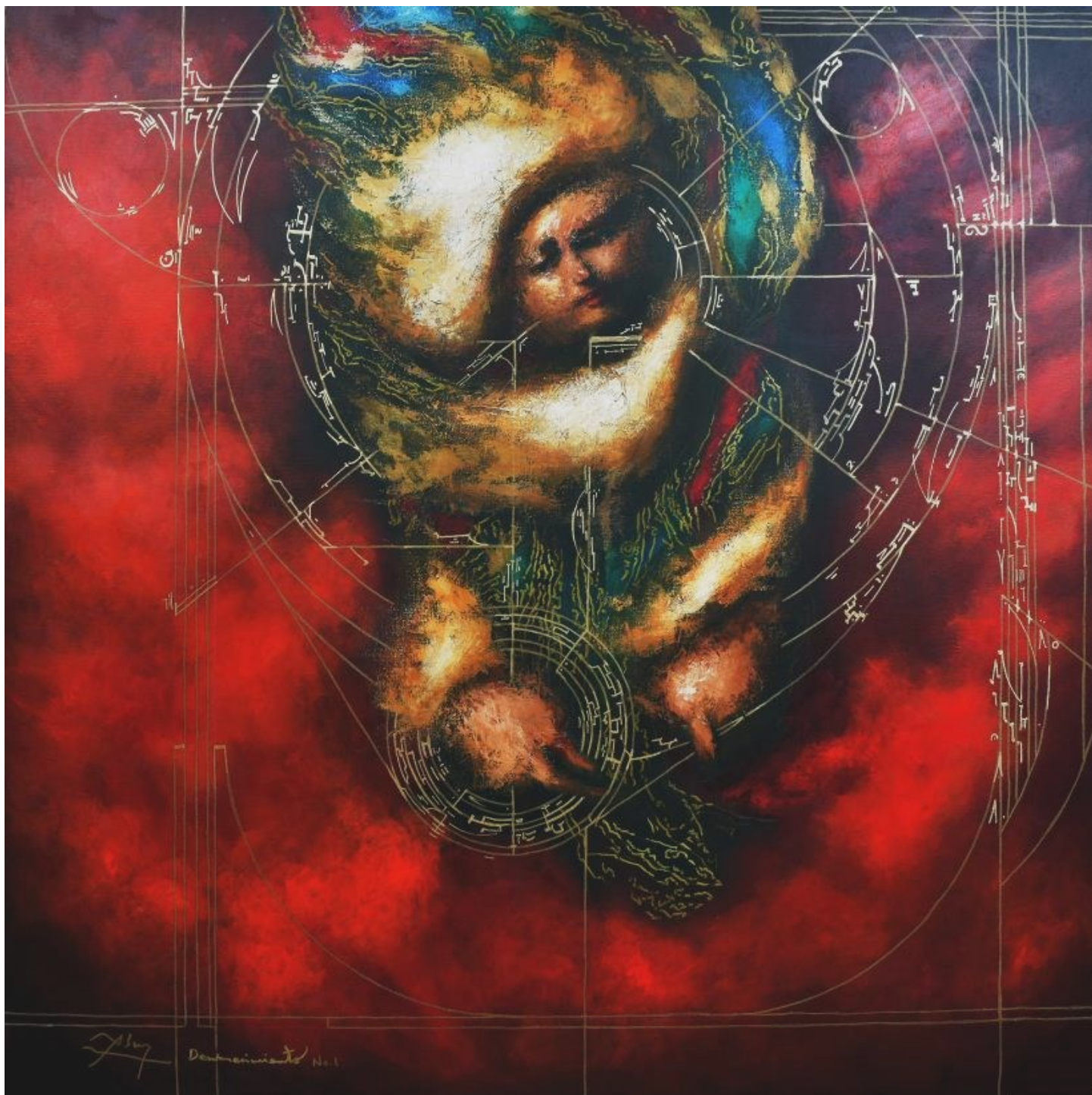
EN EL LODO CENAGOSO No.11, Mixmedia/Canvas, 30 x 40 *inch*.



DESVANECIMIENTO No.4, Acrylic / Canvas, 36 x 36 inch.

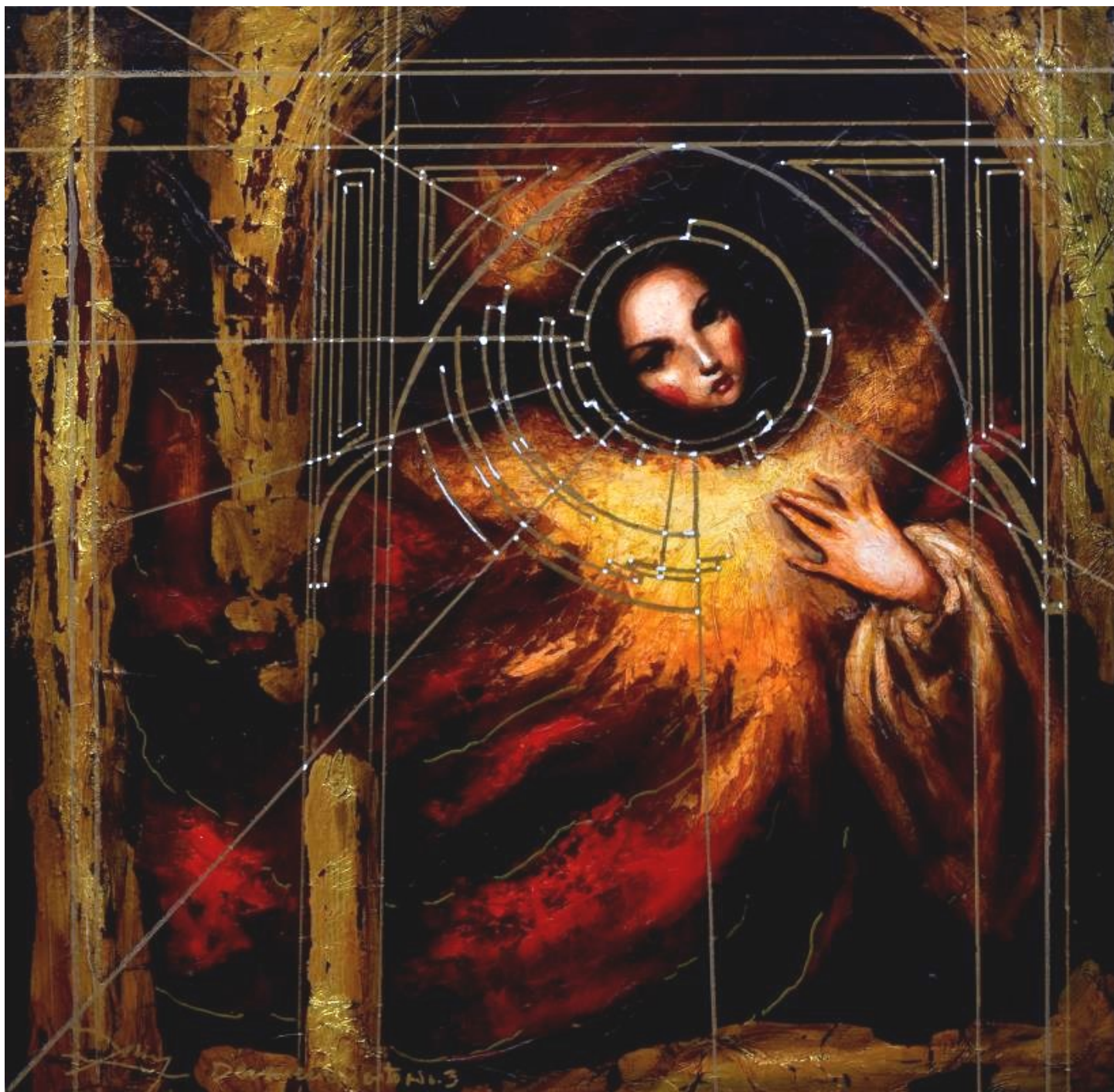


DESVANECIMIENTO NO.1, Acrylic / Canvas, 48 x 48 inch.





DESVANECIMIENTO NO.2, Acrylic / Canvas, 48 x 48 inch.



DESVANECIMIENTO NO.3, Acrylic / Canvas, 48 x 48 inch.

SERIE: DESVANECIMIENTO: EVA NO.1, 2, 3, 4, *Watercolor / Paper, 20 x 16 inch.*



1



2



3



4

SERIE: DESVANECIMIENTO: EVA No.5 *Watercolor / Paper, 22x 30 inch.*







BRUMAS NO.7, Watercolor / Paper, 18x12 inch.



BRUMAS NO.6, Watercolor / Paper, 18x12 inch.

BRUMAS NO.3, Acrylic / Canvas, 30x40 inch.





BRUMAS NO.25, *Acrylic / Canvas, 36x12 inch.*



BRUMAS NO.17, Acrylic / Canvas, 39x51 inch.



SYNESTHESIA:

The Art of Abisay Puentes

Synesthesia:

The Art of Abisay Puentes

By Lynette M.F. Bosch, SUNY Distinguished Professor
SUNY, Geneseo

Abisay Puentes is a multimedia, visual artist and a composer, whose artistic expression flows from visual to aural in a diverse aesthetic performance. This versatile artist consistently and expertly draws the spectator into an engaged experience with the visual arts and music that blurs the boundaries between the senses of sight and hearing. For Puentes, artistic expression is not bound by the traditional categorical divisions that separate painting from music. Puentes performs his art in a creative continuum found in his paintings, prints, drawings, watercolors, videos, poetry, prose and musical compositions, which generate immersive environments. As Puentes challenges the traditional separation of aural and visual categories of art, in his complex works, sight and sound merge into one perceptual experience.

The melding of the arts found the works Puentes creates forms part of a trajectory of creative possibilities that originated in the mid-Twentieth Century, with *Fluxus*, an intermedia artistic movement from which Contemporary, international art springs. For Cuban-born Abisay Puentes, who now lives in Syracuse, New York, the freedom provided by the foundational concepts of *Fluxus* are a gateway to his exploration of his cosmological vision of existence. As it is in the mixed media creative expression initiated by *Fluxus*

artists that Puentes finds his way of exploring the universal questions that define his search for meaning in life.

Puentes credits his teacher, Dr. Juan Enrique Guerrero, with whom he studied in Cuba, with his artistic path. It was Guerrero who awakened Puentes to the possibilities of exchanges between words and images, supplemented by sound, which was foundational for *Fluxus* artists and those who followed their lead. As an intermedia artist, Puentes creates, in his drawings, paintings, watercolors, graphics and mixed media works, artistic life for a multitude of inter-species beings, existing in states of anthropomorphic combinations that defy the limitations of organic life. In this imaginary world of fluid existence, an arm can become a jar and an unexpected head can transform a human body into that of an animal. These complex beings defy classification and promote an acceptance of transformational possibilities that evoke the human/animal transference of shamanic possession.

Puentes recounts his personal vision thus: “Man is genuinely overwhelmed by the evil around him. He has a question in his heart: Why is there so much evil in this world? On the road, he meets Adam and Eve. The man tells them his inquiry. They were willing to answer Man’s question. And it was given to man, but as a pantomime act, just music was the sound filling the air. Adam and Eve’s performance was masterful. The story told in the



mime, consisted of the design and assembly of a machine. The machine would serve to process the fruit and extract the essence of it, and thus they would give the man a taste of the fruit. The man used the fruit, using the machinery, and at that moment, he forgot his agony. His doubts evanesced, and he forgot his question. Since then, the man only saw *Brumas* (Mist), this being the title for one of the continuing series within which Puentes works.

It is this spiritual narrative that Puentes follows throughout his work, with its evocations of Hebrew Scripture and, specifically, *Genesis*, and John Milton's (1608-1674) *Paradise Lost* transcription of the *Genesis* narrative into literary art. Puentes transfers his interpretation of this spiritual history into the industrial age, transmitted in sight and sound and in a manner that elides the separation between music, visual art, literature, philosophy, video, and performance installations. These varied aesthetic experiences evoke a range of emotional experiences in the audience Puentes summons to participate in his world vision.

In his complex multimedia performances, Puentes unifies the visual arts into video and music throughout juxtaposing realism and abstraction, with detailed paintings offset by increasing abstraction culminating in musical abstraction. As the spectator crosses boundaries between sight and sound, Puentes leads them in a journey that moves the aesthetic experience of perception, from the signs of material existence (found in realistic art), to a spiritual universe (indicated by col-

or fields, composed of light and dark tonalities). Puentes composes his complex ensembles with the implicit assumption that geometry and mathematics define the proportional relationships manifest in the compositional structures of the visual arts. The same foundation is found in music, wherein mathematical relationships govern the sounds of music - thus does Puentes join the abstract harmony of creation with the very material nature of the universe.

For Puentes, spirituality is essential for existence and his artistic intermedia practice is a bridge that creates an in-between reality that melds his intentionality with the spectator's engagement.

In so unifying his cosmic view of material existence and spiritual human destiny, Puentes communicates, through his artistry, his personal interpretation of a spiritual reality, defined by the existence, purpose and fate of our species. For Puentes, the meaning of existence is found in a transformative transcendence that enables communication with human destiny's ultimate return to *Genesis* before The Fall. As Puentes communicates his interior world to his audiences, spectators receive his staged works in a state of active participation defined by form, color and sound.

As was noted above, within currents of 20th and 21st Century Art, the flowing and intermedia quality of the works Puentes creates belongs to the larger movement, *Fluxus*. Fluxus is not an artistic movement fixed in time. Instead, it is a continuing and growing movement that came together internationally, in

the 1960s and 1970s.

Fluxus artists include:

John Cage (1912-1992),

the composer; Nam

June Paik (1932-2006),

the video artist; Joseph

Beuys (1921-1986),

known for his experi-

mental environments

and unusual materials;

and George Maciunas

(1931-1978), the

graphic and ensemble

artist, who was the ac-

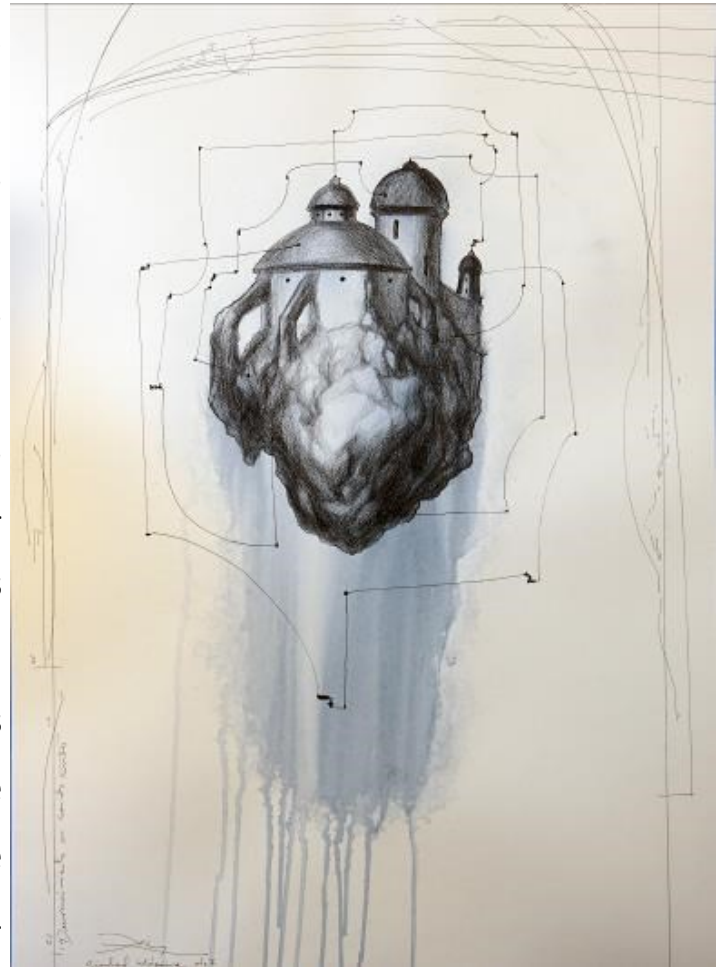
cepted founder of the

movement he named. “Intermedia,” which is the creative

realm of *Fluxus*, was so identified by Dick Higgins (1938-1998),

the American artist, composer, art theorist, poet, publisher,

printmaker, and a co-founder of *Fluxus*.



Fluxus developed in the aftermath of World War II (1939-

1945) and many of the movement’s founders and participants

had survived the War. Their experiences caused them to

question the previous boundaries between the arts. Their

questions took them to their search for different ways of com-

bining artistic expression. Thus did *Fluxus* pave the way for

Contemporary artists, like Puentes, who continue to evolve

innovative ways of transcending the barriers that previously existed between the arts. Yet, Puentes has gone beyond *Fluxus*, as his work has moved from intermedia to synesthetic, as his composite works deny that sight and sound are separate sensory experiences. Even more, in the environments Puentes creates – they become interchangeable.

In the complex environments Puentes develops, sight and hearing are simultaneously and conjointly stimulated. In so doing, Puentes induces, in the accepting spectator, a state of potential synesthetic cognitive awareness. The result is a dislocation of sensory perception, wherein sight and hearing trade places in a substitutive experience that causes an exchange of sensory possibilities. As Puentes deliberately melds diverse stimuli into a united whole, the merging of these separate perceptual and cognitive experiences causes an aesthetic and sensory exchange of sight for sound and sound for sight that is the very essence of synesthesia.



Synesthesia, simply defined, is an alternative cognitive reality, named conjointly from the Greek roots *syn* (together) and *aisthēsis* (sensation). For those for whom synesthesia is a common and natural experience, a color may produce a taste sensation or a sound may become a scent. It is this immersive and transformative aspect of a synesthetic experience that is territory Puentes explores in his art using sensory stimulus to evoke emotional states. The aesthetic response Puentes evokes is inherently synesthetic and unfolds in his audience's participatory absorption of his intermedia ensembles.

With his artistic ensembles, Puentes draws his audience into a visionary universe that is essentially spiritual, as he propels spectators into an experience of transcendent emotional synchronicity with his personal concepts of humanity's spiritual life. For the spectator, the result is an engaged perceptual and emotional response that takes them into the history of the arts and their aesthetic impact and their related interaction with philosophy, psychology, cognitive science and theology. Puentes unites these fields of study and knowledge together into a synesthetic experience that generates an emotional engagement with his vision of life. Within the created universe in which Puentes explores humanity's journey towards knowledge and God through vision and sound, human emotion plays a significant role, as Puentes stirs the emotions through sight and sound. The emotions provoked by Puentes, through his immersive works, become experiential in a manner that recalls the Classical, rhetorical trope of *enargeia*.

Simply defined, *enargeia* is the ability works of art have to recreate lived experience in an emotional encounter between a spectator and a work of art. *Enargeia* is what makes an audience, watching a sad story in any form, cry with the protagonists, as though they were the protagonists and as though art were life. By evoking sympathetic emotional states in an audience, *enargeia* can make the absent present across time and space through emotional resonance and connection. *Enargeia* was originated by Plato (428-349 B.C.) as part of his spiritual philosophy and was explored by the Romans, Cicero (106 B.C.-43 B.C.) and Quintilian (35-100 A.D.), as a rhetorical trope. *Enargeia* can be provoked by poetry, theater, literature, oratory, auditory or visual, which generate empathy, as one reality is exchanged for another in a kind of emotional synesthesia. In this exchange, wherein the spectator's actual life experience is exchanged for that of another, Puentes enables his audiences to see the human condition and its history through his eyes and mind. In so doing, they live the emotional life of his narrative as they absorb it.

In this uniquely personal blend of art into history and into his personal vision of existence, Puentes suspends the spectator between realms of existence suggestive of dimensional possibilities of alternative realities. The worlds Puentes creates is peopled with animates aged patriarchal figures, youthful beings engaged in the beguilement of temptation, as well as personages depicted in the throes of loss and redemption. In his realistic work, Puentes depicts his imagined world with a

mournful beauty endowed with a pulsating realism reminiscent of the Baroque work of Michelangelo da Caravaggio (1571-1610), Diego Velázquez (1599-1650) and Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669).

Because Puentes is singularly focused on his individual perspective on his version of the story of humanity's spiritual development. As Puentes recounts his vision of interaction with God and with human destiny, the visual, musical and literary arts flow in an intermedia manner that was the ideal of *Fluxus*. The foundational cosmology and the intermedia artistry Puentes employs is expressed succinctly and movingly in his "*Brumas (Mist)*" series - a project that has been with him from the start and which continues to shape his representation of his internal world.

In his *Brumas* series, Puentes explores the dissolution of form into color and light, then sound. With a range of brushstrokes and a use of color deliberately evocative of the trajectory of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist and Abstract art, Puentes dissolves the realistic forms of his neo-Baroque style



into abstraction. As he moves through artistic eras, Puentes uses a selective application of paint in a deliberate abandonment of form. As he erases materiality, Puentes gives form to the philosophical foundation of art advocated by Wassily Kandinsky, in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911).

Kandinsky has been an important influence for Puentes, along with the impact the graphic work of Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981), the English experimental music composer has had on his art. Cardew, was an experimental musical and visual artist, who created *Treatise* (1967), a musical score, in which sound is translated into visual patterns composed of looping lines and geometric forms. Philosophically, *Treatise* is an evocation of Pythagoras's (570-495 B.C.) assertions about the universe's *Music of the Spheres* or the "sound" of the cosmos as grounded in mathematics - the basis for musical composition. For Plato, this music, grounded in mathematics, was the sound of harmonious beauty, virtue and truth. These concepts passed into Medieval Christianity through Boethius (427-534), in his *De Institutione Musica*, where they merged with the Edenic fate of humanity, evoked by the narrative Puentes follows as his artistic guide. In the images and musical compositions Puentes creates, there is an underlying geometry of composition from his most realistic to his most abstract works in paint, video and sound that remains consistent and is his stylistic signature. In every medium, Puentes adheres to the philosophical trajectory that began with Pythagoras and Plato, continued in Boethius and which leads through Cardew to his own work.

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was a significant artistic and spiritual guide for Puentes. It was Kandinsky, who explicitly linked the process of considering painting as a means to stimulate the emotions accompanying a spiritual awakening and these ideas were foundational for the manner in which Puentes works. Kandinsky sought to break down the barriers between the heightened states of absorption and cognitive change that is produced by the aesthetic impact of artistic reception and response. Thus, these influences on Puentes, of Cardew and Kandinsky, combined with the intermedia of *Fluxus*, combine in his work to produce the transformative and transcending synesthetic *enargeia*, which is his signature style. Audiences sharing in the visionary reality Puentes projects can thus take on the role of spiritual pilgrim searching for meaning in God's creation that is at the heart of this artist's creative process.

Looking at the imagery found in the imaginary world to which Puentes gives form, brings to mind the unexpected combinations of beings and objects found in the work of Odilon Redón (1840-1916), the French mystic artist. They also recall the imagery found in the stories told by horror writer, H. P. Lovecraft (1890-1937), in his Chthulhu mythologies. In Redon's imaginary world, where transgressing boundaries is the usual state of existence, an eye can become a balloon. For Lovecraft, whose beings and humans interacted in an interdimensional

space, a creature composed of undefinable parts, capable of emitting inaudible sounds can exist. Evocations of similar beings are found in the personages and situations Puentes brings into existence in the works he composes. As with the art of Redón and Lovecraft there is something of attraction, intrigue, fear, revulsion, fascination and a desire to penetrate the message being presented in such a quixotic and gripping manner in all of the works that illustrate the visionary cosmos Puentes brings to life.

Yet, even as we enter into the environments Puentes creates looking for clarification, the artist greets us with ever greater dilemmas of choice between opposing realities. The story Puentes tells us is not fixed and it emerges in varied and fluid versions. Puentes is only at the beginning of his journey into the world of the spiritual mind and into the human journey through creation. To understand the message Puentes wishes to convey, it is necessary to connect to his version of reality and to exist within the emotional state of transcendence and faith required to complete the puzzle presented by the polarities of good and evil, which meet in the human mind, heart and soul.





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ABISAY PUENTES
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