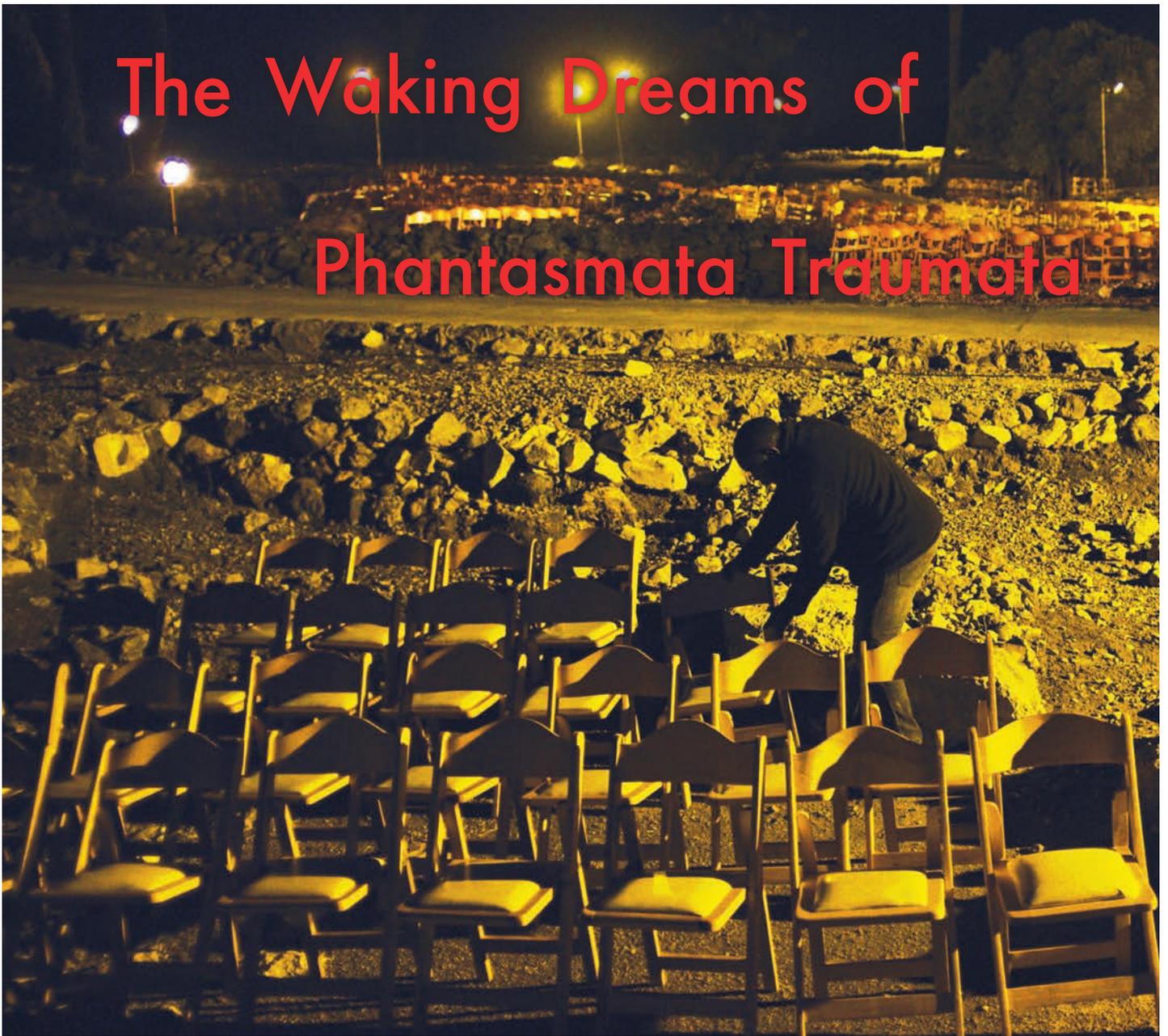


The Waking Dreams of

Phantasmata Traumata



Cover:

Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson, still from *Song for Armageddon*, 2017, digital video, 50m, 23s

The Waking Dreams of Phantasmata Traumata

Susan Bee | Nancy Bowen | Kerry da Silva Cox | Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson | Gallery for Ghosts
Hilma's Ghost | Melinda Kiefer Santiago | Christopher Santiago | Francisco Soto

March 28 – May 9, 2024

Opening Reception

Thursday, March 28, 4:30pm-6:30pm

Curated by Siona Wilson (with Cynthia Chris)

Gallery Hours:

Monday – Thursday

Noon – 4:00pm

www.csi.cuny.edu/campus-life/csi-buildings/art-gallery-csi



Fig. 1 Gallery for Ghosts, *The Visit*, 2024, the attic of a 17th-Century house in New England painted black with a window, mirrors and brass candlesticks, beeswax taper candles, book of matches, 19th-Century Staffordshire porcelain, transferware creamer, two fancy chairs c. 1820, a mahogany Victorian parlor table with a marble top, a hand-loomed lined runner, Persian rug, carved English oak hanging shelf with four ruby red and hobnail wine glasses, and tarot cards seen via live cam app

The Ghost, the Dream, the Premonition, and the Witch

by Siona Wilson

Does an artwork dream? Let's imagine that the material, the medium of a created thing, can also be a medium of another kind. A mystic, a clairvoyant, or a soothsayer that augurs better futures, purges injuries of the soul, and connects us with the unhappy ghosts of our cruel world. The artwork as medium might be a channel to awaken other pasts (and the pasts of others), transform the present, and reshape what is to come. We might be soothed, healed, redeemed, but fear that we cannot. Perhaps the dream begins as a nightmare. These are, after all, times of plague. The *Waking Dreams of Phantasmata Traumata* explores the psychic lives of artworks when the artist is forgotten. The exhibition presents supernatural collaborations, invitations for paranormal visitation, psychic predictions, and uncanny mediations. Teetering between the deadly and the bizarre, the exhibition title is a riddle. Like a drag queen's stage moniker, Phantasmata Traumata* personifies a psycho-social in-between state that embraces the ridiculous. It is a queering of categories, a sliding of reality into enchantment, of despair into playful delight, which I hope will pull an involuntary burst of laughter from you all.

Let me slide for a moment into my art historian's slippers. Modernity can be defined by two competing poles. The dominant one is shaped by disenchantment: the death of God, the rise of rationality, the Age of Enlightenment. But there is a minor key, an obscured or shrouded history that is weirder; it suggests that we are *still* enchanted. This idea periodically asserts itself as a shadow state in the art world. It is often framed as a re-enchantment or seen as a regressive turning away from contemporary social issues. We are in one of these resurgent moments in contemporary art today. The enchanted, however, have always been among us. Yet they are perennially overlooked (especially those who are women), frequently belittled, seen as an embarrassment, a joke, or regarded with suspicion. Describing the cyclical engagement with magic or artists' fascination with "occulture," Jamie Sutcliffe has suggested, "these historical oscillations lend themselves less to the story of a 'dis' or 're' enchantment, than they do an awareness of the imminent co-production of the secular and the

* I am indebted to Christopher Santiago for the term, "phantasmata traumata." With his permission, I have repurposed it for this exhibition. To repurpose it to transform and perhaps—with apologies—to adulterate. For Santiago's understanding of the idea, see Christopher Santiago, "A Brief History of the Phantasm," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 34, no. 1 (2023): 181-228.

magical.”¹ The enchanted and the disenchanting exist together, in unequal tension. Stepping out of the shade, the artists in *The Waking Dreams of Phantasmata Traumata* refuse to believe in a disenchanting world.²

The ghost, the dream, the premonition, and the witch. These are the supernatural ideas animating the work in this exhibition. Rather than a turning away from “reality,” these artists use various forms of haunting to engage with some of the most important questions of the day. As the sociologist Avery F. Gordon has described, the ghost is not just the spirit of a dead person, it is also a “social figure.”³ The ghost or specter is “one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposed well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way.”⁴ The social world is filled with hauntings. As another way of thinking about history, haunting is the unwritten past. The ghost is the forgotten person, the overlooked trauma, the neglected life (and death) that calls for revenge against the living. It is the figure of the victim that has been ignored. The ghost brings together the historical and the subjective.

Do you believe in ghosts? The current custodians of the Gallery for Ghosts, located in a 17th Century New England house, do. Doors are unlocked, paintings moved, sounds emit when no-one is there. We can see dust motes dancing through the air like specters (fig. 1). Are they specters? I can hear crackling and chattering when I listen to the app loaded on my phone. The Gallery for Ghosts, accessed in this exhibition via a real-time live feed, is in the attic room of this old rural house. Used as the servant quarters, including several generations of slave occupation (the property was built well before slavery was abolished in the state), we imagine this haunting as an expression of the disenfranchised subjects who once lived there. Will they visit you in a dream? What unseen artwork would they show on their black-walled gallery? Will they talk to us through the tarot cards that the co-creators pull daily from the tarot deck designed by Barbara Coleman Smith (fig. 2)? Are we willing to listen?

¹ Jamie Sutcliffe, “Introduction//Magic: A Gramarye for Artists” in Jamie Sutcliffe, ed. *Magic* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021), 13.

² For a powerful theoretical call for refusing modernity’s dominant narrative of disenchantment, see Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

³ Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*



Fig. 2 Tarot spread using cards designed by Barbara Coleman Smith, 1909 (left to right: III of Wands, The Magician, and Justice)



Fig. 3 Francisco Soto, *Ochún #3*, 2018, mixed media on acid-free paper, 30" x 22"

Ghosts attach themselves to old things, like the ribbons, braids, and old photographs used by Francisco Soto in his series *Orishas* (2016-18). All the materials in these collages, including the paper support itself, come from estate sales; they are the cast-off things of the nameless dead, many collected by women. These collages function as altars to Soto's dead relatives and a means of acknowledging and activating the often-denigrated religious culture of his Cuban homeland (fig. 3). The orishas of Caribbean Santería emerge from the traumatic history of the slave trade and the ongoing denigration of West African culture in the New World. Blending Christian saints with Yoruba deities, Santería (as well as Espiritismo and Voudon) is a concrete manifestation and a curative balm for a history of dispossession. The Roman Catholic church saw syncretic forms such as this, as "one of the faces of hell."⁵ This demonic association remains active in the mainstream (disenchanted) cultural imagination.

The ghost, the dream, the premonition, and the witch might sometimes call out for justice, but these cries cannot always be answered in the concrete claims of inequality, injury, or disenfranchisement. Moreover, while there are many progressive uses of magic and occulture, there are also "esoteric traditionalists" active in policy making for the most powerful. These include Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin.⁶ Moreover, the counterfactual assertion that we live in "post-truth" times is a disturbing, widely influential worldview informed by so-called "magical thinking."⁷ So, we must attend carefully and critically to the ethics as well as the aesthetics of enchantment.

When Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson made *Song for Armageddon* (2017) the idea of the end of days seemed to be fully alive in political discourse on the left and the right (see cover). Many of our transcendental questions have been repurposed into social questions: environmental catastrophe, the refusal to believe in scientific fact (creationism), paranoid suspicions, and irrational conspiracy theories. The global Covid-19 pandemic unsettled the grounds of our everyday reality and turned it (for a time at least) into what seemed like a living apocalypse. In this show we see many works that use concrete things—objects as a means to

⁵ Laura de Mello e Souza, *The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross: Witchcraft, Slavery, and Popular Religion in Colonial Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 87.

⁶ For two recent studies of the occult influence on Trump and Putin together with the "nihilistic numerology" associated with groups like 4chan and 8chan, see Gary Lachman, *Dark Star Rising: Magick and Power in the Age of Trump* (London and New York: Penguin, 2018); and Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, *War for Eternity: The Return of Traditionalism and the Rise of the Populist Right* (New York and London: Penguin, 2020).

⁷ Amy Hale "The Pagan and Occult Fascist Connection and How to Fix it," Medium, Aug 5, 2019, <https://medium.com/@amyhale93/the-pagan-and-occult-fascist-connection-and-how-to-fix-it-d338c32ee4e6> Accessed: March 8, 2024.

access the unseen. Crowe and Rawlinson traveled to Israel to visit the physical site of Armageddon (known as Tel Megiddo). In Christianity and Islam, it is prophesized as the place where armies will gather for the final destruction of the world at the end of days: the apocalypse. Armageddon is said to have been the site of the greatest violence across known history. It is charged in numerous cultures—ancient and modern—as a symbol and a geographic manifestation of destruction itself.

This elegiac film showing the repetitive cleaning of chairs, now reads as a premonition, a prophetic work. Considering the pandemic, the mundane labor of the custodian has taken on an apocalyptic aspect. The actions associated with the apocalypse are no longer embodied by muscled heroes representing competing armies, but the mundane labor of migrant workers wiping away invisible, deadly germs.

The ghost, the dream, the premonition, and the witch, of these four figures, the witch is the most concrete. The war against witches, as Silvia Federici argues in her incredible study, *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), is where capitalist modernity begins. From Salem (1692-1693) to the various European Inquisitions, this transitional period from an economy of the land to one based on capitalist abstraction is played out through a proxy war against women. The witch can be defined in an expansive way as: “the heretic, the healer, the disobedient wife, the woman who dares to live alone, the Obeha woman who poisoned the master’s food and inspired the slaves to revolt.”⁸ She has special knowledge, values the company of other women, and has a symbiotic relation with the natural world.

The witch appears in Melinda Kiefer Santiago’s paintings as a way of imagining a different relationship between humans and the environment. In her painting *Witch Tree*, is she a necromancer or an enchantress? Certainly, these sorceresses are followers of “dark ecology” in these times of environmental catastrophe (fig. 4).⁹ Kiefer Santiago’s practice belongs to the ongoing legacy of surrealism, especially in relation to feminine and feminist

⁸ Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), 11.

⁹ See Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press), 2016.

traditions. While the first Surrealists in the 1920s were men who used women as muses, models, and metaphors, many of the lasting innovative figures in the global dissemination of surrealist ideas are women, including Leonora Carrington, Ithell Colquhoun, Frida Kahlo, and Meret Oppenheim. In Kiefer Santiago's work, the female body merges with the natural world with painterly marks providing the connecting channel.

Related themes are seen in the work of Christopher Santiago, Melinda's husband and sometime collaborator. His ideas about animism and ecological consciousness are influenced by his anthropological field work with the indigenous peasant resistance movement in the highlands of Cajamarca, Peru. Santiago uses an automatist approach to painting that is most associated with Surrealism. Yet perhaps, we might better align his sensibility with the (suppressed) historical roots in 19th-century female trance painters as well as shamanistic practices across the pre-modern world.



Nancy Bowen is a descendant of one of the judges and a condemned witch from the Salem witch trials of 1692-1693. She has a bibliography of readings and an archive of materials that formed her research for the sculptural installation *Spectral Evidence* (2021). This project has been connected by Bowen to contemporary witch hunts, including the draconian laws enacted in some U.S. states to ban abortion in almost every case, after the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 (fig. 5). The project was extended into the special edition artist's book, *Spectral Evidence: The Witch Box* (2023), made in collaboration with the poet, Elizabeth Willis (see the back cover). Bowen illustrates Willis's poem "The Witch" with a witty series of drawings that suggest the historical continuities from femicide of the pre-modern era into our contemporary moment.

Fig. 4 Melinda Kiefer, "Santiago Tree Witch Ladies" from the *Wolf Man's Dream*, 2024, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 30".



Fig. 5 Nancy Bowen, "Mary Eastey" from *Spectral Evidence*, 2021, ceramic, paper pulp and pigment and mixed media, 18" x 14" x 12" inches.

Hilma's Ghost, the feminist collective made up of the artists Sharmistha Ray and Dannielle Tegeder, are haunted by Hilma af Klint (1862-1944), a long overlooked Swedish visionary painter. Klint, like numerous other visionary women artists, including Georgiana Houghton (1814-1884), Margaret Watts Hughes (1842-1907), Annie Besant (1847-1933), Madge Gill (1882-1961), Janet Sobel (1893-1968), and Ithell Colquhoun (1906-1988), did not receive acknowledgment from art history during her lifetime.¹⁰ Unlike male modernists who engaged with spiritual or occult themes, such as Vassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and Piet Mondrian, these women seem to have been doubly sidelined because of their claim to transcendental powers and their gender. Like a modern witch hunt, they are now damned by indifference rather than by violence. Finally, when the mainstream museum world acknowledged Klint, her Guggenheim retrospective of 2018 saw record-breaking attendance.

Like the British Surrealist artist Ithell Colquhoun who designed her own abstract Taro[t] Card Deck, so have Hilma's Ghost. We include this exquisite

¹⁰ For an introduction to these artists and other overlooked women modernists with spiritual leanings, see Jennifer Higgie, *The Other Side: A Journey Into Women, Art and the Spirit World* (London: Hachette Press, 2023).

¹¹ Ithell Colquhoun, *I Saw Water: An Occult Novel and Other Selected Writings* (State College, PA: Penn State University Press, 2015). Colquhoun drops to second "t" from her spelling of tarot (taro) to emphasize its gallic legacy.

object in the exhibition in two forms (fig. 6). We present the whole deck laid out in a display case for viewers to observe the visual language at play. Since Hilma's Ghost use the tarot as a tool in their art making—it functions as a decision-making system for compositional choices—we also deploy the tarot in the performative installation *The Visit* by Gallery for Ghosts. It is activated in the mirror scenario at the Art Gallery of The College of Staten Island, the material manifestation of the remote, haunted site. Just as the custodians in New England house pull a three-card spread (past, present, and future) using the deck designed by Pamela Coleman Smith (1878-1951), we will draw the same classic tarot spread using the abstract deck by Hilma's Ghost. What esoteric transmissions might possibly occur between the two sites, remains to be (un)seen.

The ghost, the dream, the premonition, and the witch could all be metaphors for the imagination. But this is not the imagination as self-expression in any straightforward way. Instead, haunting suggests an alien presence that could be malevolent, vengeful, or frightening. It is, at the very least, weird. Yet, as Mark Pilkington has put it, "weirdness is recursive, and it is irreducible. It loops and weaves itself into our experience of reality."¹² This is an understanding of the imagination not as a manifestation of the artist's identity or personality, but the imagination as a form of possession. It is a foreign agent or an unknown presence that acts upon us, artists and visitors alike.

Haunting is way of finding shape for something that is absent. Absent because it has been destroyed, overlooked, unseen, and considered unimportant. The hauntings in this exhibition include all the murdered witches (real and accused), the forgotten women artists, the gap between our bodies and nature, the affective channels of technological mediation, the forgotten slaves of New England, our ancestors (real and spiritual, known and unknown), and all those that we have lost.

Do you believe in ghosts?

¹² Mark Pilkington "How to Believe in Weird Things," quoted in Sutcliffe, ed., *Magic*, 11.



Susan Bee, *Apocalypse IV*, 2022, oil and enamel on canvas, 24" x 30"

Artist's Statement

Susan Bee

My newest paintings focus on several themes: apocalypses, fables, fantastic landscapes, and reveries. One recent series of paintings is based on a medieval manuscript, circa 1290, from France, which depicts the Apocalypse. I reinvent this imagery and update the setting in a colorful reimagining of the creatures, praying figures, and heavenly setting. I concentrated on creating a space for the playful seven-headed devils and monsters, to play and to taunt the religious and fearful populace. Our stressful times call out for a reckoning with the apocalyptic end-time imagery, which was so well imagined by our predecessors, the brilliant medieval illuminators and Biblical story tellers. The medieval imagery and religious iconography across cultures are inherently symbolic, invoking cosmologies and values beyond the immediate world.

Other paintings I have created feature witches, our feminist predecessors, as well as devils, and imaginary landscapes with transformative symbolic trees and wonderlands. In these works, the fantastical, visionary, and dreamlike imagery is explored with intense and vivid color and with a riot of linear and eccentrically shaped gestures and many textured layers of oil paint. My canvases are always meant to be materially present with vivid strokes and colors and graphics. I keep my painting surfaces alive with active brush marks, color, collage, textures, and patterns, not polished to the point of illusion. Blending familiar gestures with the unexpected, I hope to confront our present while paying homage to the past. The syncretic blend of the remembered and remade turns monumentality on its head.



Nancy Bowen, *Spectral Evidence: The Witch Box*, edition of 26, silk screen on card stock, digital printing, ceramic object and found cigar box

Artist's Statement

Nancy Bowen

Nancy Bowen's *Spectral Evidence: The Witch Box* is the result of a meeting between Elizabeth Willis, descendent of one of the convicted and executed "witches" of the Salem witch trials, and Bowen, a descendent of Samuel Sewall, a prominent judge in the trials. *Spectral Evidence* pairs each of the 46 stanzas of Willis's "The Witch Poem" with a drawing or collage by Bowen, whose iconographic style moves deftly between humor and seriousness, echoing the affective range of Willis's poem.

The Witch Box came into existence as part of a larger project called *Spectral Evidence* in which Bowen explored the story of her ancestor Samuel Sewall. Although he had convicted 20 people to death as purported witches in Salem, Sewall later recanted and spent the rest of his life atoning for his sins. In Bowen's installation, 20 gravestones face off their accuser while he bears the burden of their deaths. Riffing off Early American gravestone imagery, Bowen deconstructs the "death head" image to create winged creatures with feet stuck in the amorphously shaped stones. The dead could rise again—at least in spirit. While these sculptures were originally conceived as gravestones honoring the wrongfully killed, they took on layers of meaning during their making. They became markers of COVID-19 death, of gun violence death, and of other senseless killings. They took on a feeling of collective mourning for all that has been lost during these difficult times.

The Witch Box allowed for present-day descendants of the accused and the accuser to meet and collaborate in a creative project that gestures toward a reparative solution. Sadly, the era of witch-hunting continues today. *The Witch Box* exists as an expression of resistance to patriarchal systems of repression, and to remind us that we all could be a witch.



Kerry da Silva Cox, *I'll see you in another Life, when we are both Cats*, 2023, acrylic on canvas 43" x 56"

Artist's Statement

Kerry da Silva Cox

My practice is interdisciplinary, although rooted in painting. Drawing from various sources including autobiography, dreams, and art history, I work through the lens of my mixed heritage to explore the themes of mysticism, the natural environment, and our current cultural landscape. I am interested in the body as a space of freedom and limitation with the potential to navigate and heal the current dystopian landscape.

For the past two years, I've been making paintings that focus on the subject-object relationship between artist and performer, specifically in a live music context. The audience worships the performer, the performer worships the audience—intimacy and connection in community on a grand scale. This was inspired by an arena show I attended at Madison Square Garden after quarantine, an experience that moved me to tears. The relationship between audience and performer is not unlike that of artist and viewer my current work resides in this field.

I work in acrylic paint, applying techniques typically utilized in watercolors and those historically traditional to oil painting. Alternating between washes, impasto, and glazing, the paintings mimic the lighting scenarios depicted, sometimes verging on appearing to create their own light. It is said that attention is a form of love, and that is what this practice does for me as a maker, performer, audience member, and watcher of the viewers of the works.



Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson, still from *Song for Armageddon*, 2017, digital video, 50m, 23s

Artist's Statement

Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson

In our work we have repeatedly been drawn to the way in which power and authority articulate themselves; the grammar and rhetoric that surrounds them. The work we produce often combines densely layered visual and acoustic allusions to faith, politics, national identity, and the environment. We are interested in spectacle and its cultural effects and have made work derived from military and biblical sources, from memorials, the uses of public space, and the legacies of the nuclear and coal industries.

Our work *Song for Armageddon* depicts the site in northern Israel that lends its name to the end of the world. A UNESCO World Heritage Site known by its modern name Tel Megiddo, Armageddon is thought to have seen more battles than any other location in the world, and dominated the crossroads of ancient trade and military routes linking Egypt with Mesopotamia. *Song for Armageddon* engages with Tel Megiddo's remarkable heritage but also elaborates on historical confusion between place and event. We created *Song for Armageddon* in collaboration with composer Ophir Ilzetzki in 2016-2017, employing a crew of both Palestinians and Israelis, and with cinematography by Martin Testar. This work was commissioned by Forma and the University of Salford Art Collection, in association with BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, with the support of Arts Council England.

A hellish sodium-lit environment provides the setting for the film, in which, over one night, a group of workers endlessly set out and wipe down thousands of chairs to create a large auditorium for an unknown audience, waiting for sunrise. The film loops every 17 minutes, creating a powerful visual and acoustic meditation that culminates with a performance by singer Faye Shapiro. In an age of Trump, Putin, and climate change, with globalization and wars—civil and otherwise—racking the globe, this work is a chance to return to the source of “end times” iconography. Armageddon is a nexus of metaphysics and geopolitics.

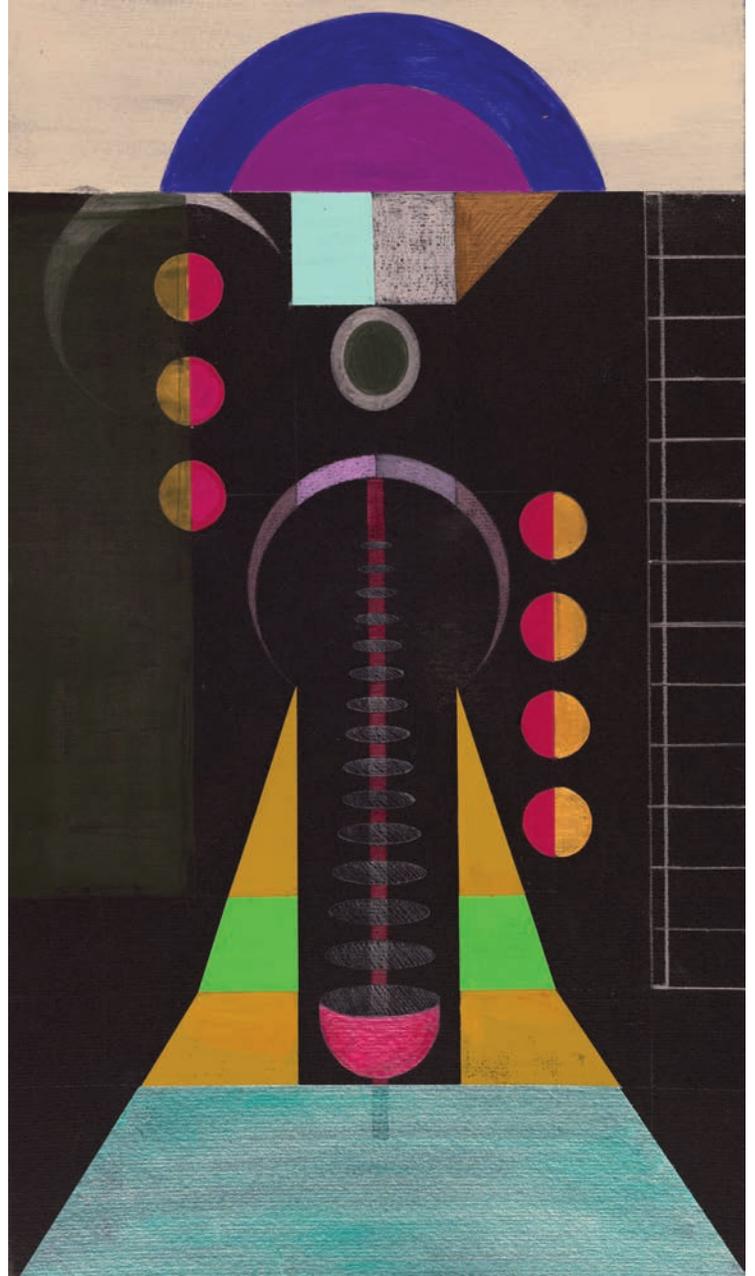


Exterior view of "Antient Elm," Gallery for Ghosts, 2024

The Gallery for Ghosts

The Gallery for Ghosts is a collaborative, creative space located in the attic of a c. 1698 former-tavern (now private home) in Norwichtown, CT (1659). The house, "Antient Elm," has a storied past, once owned by the Puritan diarist Sarah Kemble Knight, and continues as a living, historic site that was essential to both the childhood of Benedict Arnold and the American Revolution. Sometimes pictures on the walls turn by themselves. Antient Elm has had various custodians over the course of three centuries, but the house has never truly been "owned."

While the mythological narrative of the house looms large as a physical plant of U.S. nationalism and identity-formation, the presence of an attic bedroom leaves room for pause. This small, nondescript room in the eaves (approximately 12' x 14'), certainly served as a bedroom for enslaved Africans for generations, as slavery was still practiced in Connecticut until 1848. In fact, the "Antient Burying Ground," located behind the house, holds the unmarked graves of hundreds of Black Americans. Today, the room is reimagined as "The Gallery for Ghosts," a private space only open to the public virtually, where the spectres of the forgotten, the oppressed, the enslaved and the indentured are invited to partake in curated works that would have been denied to them in their lifetimes. Visiting only virtually, mortal spectators are encouraged to engage in their own kind.



Hilma's Ghost, "High Priestess" from
Abstract Futures Tarot, 2021

Hilma's Ghost

Hilma's Ghost is a feminist artist collective that was co-founded by artists and educators Sharmistha Ray and Dannielle Tegeder at the peak of the pandemic, in 2020. The essence of their artistic collaboration lies in acknowledging mysticism as a wellspring of collective wisdom that has fostered personal resilience and sparked aesthetic ingenuity for women artists across eras.

Through exhibitions, workshops, and publications, the collective forges connections between artists and healers, innovating novel, liberatory practices tailored to women, non-binary, and trans artists of the contemporary era. Over the past couple of years, Hilma's Ghost has cultivated undertakings that champion experimental teaching methods, transcultural dialogue, and the scaffolding of communities, all through the prism of feminism, geometric abstraction, and spirituality.

Together, Hilma's Ghost created an abstract tarot deck that responds to the original Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck, which is not only the most popular deck in distribution in the world today, but also, the starting point for tarot in the U.S..



Melinda Kiefer Santiago, *Cherry Blossoms and Worms meet Cloud Head in the Spring at Central Park*, 2023, diptych, oil and acrylic on canvas, each 30" x 40"

Artist's Statement

Melinda Kiefer Santiago

Melinda Kiefer Santiago's multilayered practice explores the porous boundary of oneself with the living world. Through painting and mixed media, her work depicts fantastical feminine and ambiguous bodies merged with landscapes. Emerging narratives suggest visions from the subconscious, identity as interwoven with the natural environment, and the return of the repressed through the effects of climate change on the Earth and our psyches when we as a culture attempt to dominate nature. In conflated spaces, people/plant interactions, and figures with light orb heads, she considers anxiety and dreams of collective near-death experiences from global warming.

Kiefer Santiago developed her *Tree Witch* and *The Return* series from a photo-collage she created of figures with moon heads on a gnarled dead tree by the Hudson River. The cluster of figures represented power in numbers and in natural rhythms. Her husband and collaborator, Chris Santiago, observed that the *Tree Witch* composition reminded him of *The Wolf Man's Dream*, a painting made by a patient of Freud during his psychoanalysis to illustrate a nightmare in which the man looked outside his window to see a pack of wolves seated on the branches of a bare tree, staring at him terrifyingly. While to Kiefer Santiago's memory, she had not seen this painter, she had created an uncanny rendition of wolf-moon-witches in a similar formation, ready to return.

Kiefer Santiago's visual vocabulary derives from self-portraiture, found materials, and photoshoots in New York woodlands and overgrown urban spaces. As well, she is influenced by her Italian American Catholic upbringing, and family accounts of healing visitations by the Holy Mother, which were, to a child, both creepy and intriguing. To reclaim these feminine images of the sacred, she creates works that are simultaneously haunting and physically reconnecting to the Earth through dancing, strolling, or standing. She creates new myths to celebrate a reenchantment of our senses and the Earth along with a worldview that embraces imperfection and impermanence. Through paint, she converses with art history. Through sewing, she channels the work of her Italian women ancestors and a longstanding intergenerational history of women using textiles across many cultures.

Building upon movements ranging from Surrealism to Arte Povera, and the work of artist-heroes such as Leonora Carrington, Ana Mendieta, Ree Morton, and Wangechi Mutu, Melinda Kiefer Santiago embraces the porous, symbiotic, intertwined experience of the self, wild and enchanted, aiming for glorious reverie to conjure structural change rather than waking nightmare.



Christopher Santiago, *From Pineal Eye
to Base Materialism and Back Again*,
2018-2020, acrylic on unstretched
canvas, 104" x 62"

Artist's Statement

Christopher Santiago

When I paint, I let myself go. It's a chance to be free and to overturn the values of society. Art allows the impulses of the body to give rise to phantasms. I try not to think, unless it's to trick my brain to stop thinking. There emerges animated landscapes of mythological creatures, tree witches and giant serpents, underground rivers where the ancestral dead travel, faces breaking open to reveal others, in the great festival of Mother Earth. Through repetitive patterns, saturated colors, stark contrast, and abstracted anthropomorphisms, these paintings unleash an excess of spirits, a profusion of phantasmata, pineal eyes in ecstatic communion with Heaven and Earth. Flora and fauna imagery, as well as outsider and brut aesthetics, challenge rationality and call for the re-enchantment of inner and outer nature. What I do think about while painting is the repetition compulsions of hysteria, transgenerational trauma from the repression of phantasms in Western civilization, and the repercussions of this denial of eros, death, and the sacred. We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers. The phantasm binds soul and body, human and animal, adult and child, male and female, individual and collective, life and death. But modernity is separation perfected. We could say that the splitting of the psyche is the consummation of hysteria, and the phantasm is modernity's missing link. Phantasy is not a modality of thought; it is fundamental to thought itself. Phantasy is not just in your head. The phantasm engenders ambiguity between phantasy and phantom, internal and external, self and other, but in "civilized," "enlightened" modernity, the phantasm is excluded from reality. Therefore, the return of the phantasm is the ultimate transgression. It renders hierarchy impossible. It abolishes the reign of the ideal [of patriarchy, whiteness, capital, state, god]. The ego dissolves into the phantasm. I am no longer myself, I become innumerable others, entering the primordial Chaos. Whether gloriously or catastrophically, the phantasm always returns. Will it come back as an endless repetition of the same, in the fixed linearity of irreversible time, hurtling toward the death of the planet? Or will it be a chance for something new, the repetition of difference, alternate futures, and historical redemption?



Francisco Soto, *Ochún #2* from *Los Orishas*, 2018, mixed media on acid-free paper, 30" x 22"

Artist's Statement

Francisco Soto

In 2018, after reading about and researching the orishas, the pantheon of Yoruba deities in Afro-Cuban religion, I began to create collages of/for the orishas to express the dynamic tensions of Afro-Cuban spirituality as well as of my own cubanía (Cubanness). Collage-making is improvisation; the end result is a poetic visual invocation, an experimental and dynamic supplication, talismanic and transformational. In collage work, I use found materials, odds and ends once of value to someone but which now are discarded and free, or if for sale, then at a very modest price. Like immigrants used to making do with what is available, I use such materials. There is often great beauty in abandoned, disposed of, or discarded marginal objects, worthless to most but small treasures of possibility for me. I see them as fragments of past lives and by reusing them, I honor the departed. Together with found materials, I add from my own hoard of Cuban ephemera collected and accumulated over a lifetime, such as old photos, passports, legal documents, and stamps. The self-taught American artist Joseph Cornell, a great source of inspiration for me, expressed interest in the ordinary and transitory, that which he termed the “métaphysique d'éphemera,” and I strive also to elevate the found and mundane to positions of prominence and importance.

For the *Orishas* series, I found conceptual inspiration in Las Siete Potencias Africanas (Seven African Forces; I prefer “forces” over “powers” as a translation) whose images can be found on candles and prayer cards sold in botánicas (religious and herbal supply stores) and even in some supermarkets serving Hispanic communities. In Las Siete Potencias Africanas imprint, names of the seven popular orishas (Changó, Orula, Ogún, Eleguá, Obatalá, Yemayá, Ochún) appear above the image of each one's Catholic counterpart, each enshrined in its own medallion, and all linked together by a chain. The Lucumí religion and Catholicism co-existing, two religious systems borrowing from each other and creating a synergy of beliefs and traditions. For the *Orishas* series, I crafted three renderings for each African deity (three, for the Catholic trinity), thus in total 21 pieces. *The Waking Dreams of Phantasmata Traumata* exhibits for the first time three collages from the *Orishas* series: *Yemayá #3*, *Ochún #2*, and *Ochún #3*. Thanks to generous support from the Research Foundation of CUNY, the collages were professionally framed in 2021, and the catalog *The Orishas* was published in 2022.

Artist Biographies

Susan Bee has had ten solo shows at A.I.R. Gallery in New York City. She has been a member of A.I.R. since 1997. In 2024, she will have a solo museum survey of paintings from 1981-2023 at the Provincetown Art Museum accompanied by a full-length catalog. She has had solo shows at many other venues and her work has been included in many group exhibitions. She has published 18 artist's books included collaborations with Susan Howe, Johanna Drucker, Charles Bernstein, and Jerome Rothenberg. Bee's artwork and artist's books are in many public and private collections. Her work has been reviewed in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *ArtNews*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Artcritical*, *ArtSlant*, *The Forward*, *Huffington Post*, *Art Papers*, and *Hyperallergic*. Bee has given presentations at numerous institutions. She was the coeditor of the journal *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* with Mira Schor from 1986-2016. Her artist's book archive and the *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* archive are at the Beinecke Library, Yale University. She has a BA from Barnard College and a MA in Art from Hunter College. Bee received a Guggenheim Fellowship in Fine Arts in 2014 and has had fellowships from Yaddo, MacDowell, and VCCA. She lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Nancy Bowen is a mixed media artist known for her eclectic mixtures of imagery and materials in both two and three dimensions. Her sculpture and drawing exists in an in-between zone of form and idea, of abstraction and representation. Her work offers a poetic commentary on our quickly changing material culture. Like an artistic archeologist in this age of globalization and post-industrialization, she salvages (often disappearing) ornament and craft traditions and incorporates them into sculpture and drawings. Bowen has had solo exhibitions throughout the United States and Europe including the Lesley Heller Gallery and Annina Nosei Gallery, both in New York City; Galerie Farideh Cadot, Paris, Betsy Rosenfield Gallery; Chicago, and James Gallery; Houston. Bowen has also completed two major public art works, at DePauw University in Greencastle, IN, and at the Worthington Hooker School in New Haven, CT. Bowen received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from Hunter College, CUNY. She has taught at Bard College, Sarah Lawrence College, and Columbia University. She is currently a Professor of Sculpture at Purchase College, SUNY. She maintains a studio in the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Artist Biographies

Nick Crowe and **Ian Rawlinson** started working together in 1994 as an adjunct to their solo art practices. They initially worked with performance, photography, video, and sculpture. They are fascinated by spectacle and drawn to the ways in which power and authority articulate themselves, their works often combining densely layered visual and acoustic allusions to faith, politics, national identity, and the environment. Recent video works focus on the war in Ukraine and the ongoing rightward shift in global politics during the 21st Century, using digital animation, performance, live-streaming, and artisanal production. Institutional exhibitions include M17, Kyiv; BALTIC, Gateshead; YSP, Wakefield; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; Malmö Konstmuseum; FACT, Liverpool; Kunsthalle Memmingen; CCA, Glasgow; Kunstverein Konstanz; Chisenhale Gallery, London; Energy and Technology Museum, Vilnius; PS1/MOMA, New York; Bildmuseet, Umeå; Kunstraum Kreuzberg, Berlin; OYOYO, Sapporo; Ninth International Istanbul Biennial; Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis; ICA, London and Exit Art, New York. They live and work in Manchester, UK and Niederer-Fläming, Germany.

Kerry da Silva Cox is a Brazilian Irish American artist based in New York City. Cox's work spans a broad range of interdisciplinary projects including objects and paintings. Projects and performances are often undertaken in communion with marginalized communities and aim to amplify topics from the gentrification of the Lower East Side to development in the historic enclave of Eatonville, FL. Recently, her paintings have been exploring the subject-object relationship between performer and audience. Kerry has exhibited her work in venues including A.I.R. (Brooklyn, NY), the Berkeley Museum of Art (Berkeley, CA), and Duke University (Durham, NC). She has performed stand-up comedy in Brooklyn, been trapped in an ashram in Colombia during a revolution, and *The Washington Post* once referred to her face as a "dour visage." Kerry holds an MFA in Visual Art ('13) and an MA in Modern and Contemporary Art Theory and Criticism ('14) from SUNY Purchase, where her research focused on the evolution of Brazilian art under the period of military dictatorship. She founded the non-profit Art Club 3000, providing art classes and mentorship to students the Queensbridge Houses in 2022.

Artist Biographies

Hilma's Ghost, a feminist artist collective co-founded by artists and educators **Dannielle Tegeder** and **Sharmistha Ray** at the height of the COVID pandemic in 2020, acts as a collaborative model for research, artistic production, pedagogy, and community. Named after the Swedish artist and mystic, Hilma af Klint, their work is a critique of gendered power structures, providing a critical and revolutionary platform for rethinking gender in the arts while recovering feminist histories as its ballast for critique. Their collaborative work ranges from the traditional to the esoteric, including paintings and drawings, surrealist games, a tarot deck, ritual object-based installations, pedagogical workshops, curated exhibitions, community projects, and books. In the four years of their collective's existence, they have completed 20+ collaborative projects and participated in 30+ public programs. Hilma's Ghost has been featured in solo and group exhibitions and projects internationally at Marlborough Gallery, New York, NY; The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT; Galería RGR, Mexico City, Mexico; Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington, CT; Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago, IL; The Parallax Center, Portland, OR; The Armory Show, New York, NY; among many others. Reviews of their work have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Artnet*, and *Hyperallergic*.

Melinda Kiefer Santiago is a multidisciplinary artist based in Queens, NY. She holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Art from SUNY Purchase College and a BS in Studio Art from Skidmore College. Recent exhibitions and performances include SEPTEMBER Gallery (Kinderhook, NY), An/aesthetics (Rosekill, NY), Flux Factory (Governors Island, NY), LABspace (Hillsdale, NY), The Wassaic Project (Wassaic, NY), Unison Arts Center (New Paltz, NY), Richard & Dolly Maass Gallery (Purchase, NY) Secret Project Robot (Brooklyn, NY), Blink Grand State (Chicago), A.I.R. Gallery (Brooklyn); Equity Gallery, Studio 9D, ABC NoRio, ChaShaMa, and the School of Visual Arts (all in New York, NY); as well as a solo show at Flowers for All Occasions (Brooklyn) and at HiLo with Christopher Santiago (Catskill, NY). Kiefer Santiago has been an artist in residence at ChaNorth, Eco Practicum, Ox Bow School of Art, among others. She is the Director of Visual Arts at Loyola School. Collaborating with her partner Christopher Santiago as Phantasmata, they have organized projects for artists such as recently co-curating *Dream Alliance* at ChaShaMa in Manhattan, based on an interdisciplinary special issue of the journal *Anthropology of Consciousness*, which they co-edited (October 2023).

Artist Biographies

Christopher Santiago is a sociocultural anthropologist and artist who completed years of fieldwork in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. He earned a PhD from Columbia University in 2017 and works as a Doctoral Lecturer of Critical Criminology and Social Justice at the College of Staten Island, CUNY. Research interests include social movements, indigeneity, Andean studies, critical criminology, oral history, avant-garde art, experimental ethnography, psychoanalysis, shamanism, and magic. Santiago's fieldwork focuses on an indigenous peasant resistance movement in the highlands of Cajamarca, Peru, fighting to defend its water against the combined assault of a transnational gold mining mega-project and the Peruvian state. Along with massive demonstrations, the resistance movement was successful because it mobilized the communities' cultural resources, what Santiago refers to as "arts of resistance": songs, music, dance, dreams, divination, jokes, and stories of the animistic landscape. Santiago is completing a book manuscript on this topic. Other research has concentrated on the historical repression of the phantasm in Western civilization. Santiago has published in *The Psychoanalytic Review*, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, and *Anthropology of Consciousness*. Exhibitions and performances in New York include Secret Project Robot, Flowers for All Occasions (solo), The Living Gallery (solo), Pari Passu, Contemporary Petite, HiLo Gallery (solo), An/aesthetics, Flux Factory, LABspace, ABC No Rio, and ChaShaMa.

Francisco Soto was born in Havana, Cuba, and came to the United States at the age of five. In 1988 he earned a Doctorate in Latin American Literature from New York University. He became a college professor, initially at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and from 1992 at the College of Staten Island, CUNY. He joined the CUNY doctoral faculty at The Graduate Center in 2009. He has published extensively, in monographs, edited volumes, research articles, essays, notes, and reviews, mostly on Cuban and Cuban American figures, both nationally and internationally. He served as Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at CSI (2002-2009), then returned to the faculty to pursue his varied research and artistic interests. In January 2023, he retired to devote his energies to his collage work, among other creative and scholarly projects. His trajectory as a collagist began in 2016. He completed his first collage series, *Los Orishas*, in 2018. That year, he began a second collage series titled *After Lam*, inspired by the works of Cuban artist Wifredo Lam, which was completed in 2022. Currently, he is underway with a third series, as yet untitled, inspired by the Orisha Ayáguná, the youngest path or manifestation of Obatalá in the Lucumí pantheon, and memorializing the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s. *The Waking Dreams of Phantasmata Traumata* marks the first exhibition of his collage work.



Christopher Santiago, *Ukhu Pacha*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 14" x 11"



Dr. Nanette Salomon

March 5, 1946 – May 23, 2023

Dr. Salomon received her PhD from the Institute of Fine Arts of NYU in 1984, “Dreamers, Idlers and Other Dozers: Aspects of Sleep in Dutch Art.” She published on a wide variety of periods and subjects, most consistently 17th-Century Dutch genre painting and the historiography of art history. Feminism as a methodology and politics informed everything she did. She published two monographic books, *Shifting Priorities: Gender and Genre in Dutch Painting of the Seventeenth Century* (Stanford University Press, 2004) and *Jacob Duck and the Gentrification of Dutch Genre Painting* (Davaco Press, 1998). Dr. Salomon’s article, “The Art Historical Canon; Sins of Omissions,” first published in 1990 was reprinted in Donald Preziosi’s *The Art of Art History*, Oxford University Press, and has been translated into German and Chinese. While researching her dissertation in London in the 1970s, Dr. Salomon became a member of the first all-female photography collective in the UK, The Hackney Flashers.

She taught at the College of Staten Island for more than 30 years and she was gallery curator for 15 of those.

Nanette is remembered for her enthusiasm for telephone conversations and her wicked laugh.

As she often quipped, “I prefer my artists’ dead.”

Curatorial Acknowledgments

On behalf of the whole College community, I wish to extend the warmest thanks to all the artists in this exhibition. The feminist ideas explored in the show have been marinating in my curator's brain for some time. Yet, I must thank Melinda Kiefer Santiago and Christopher Santiago, who were instrumental in moving the project into its current public form when they approached me last spring about staging a large group exhibition featuring 22 artists. *Dream Alliance: Art, Anthropology and Consciousness* found a venue in ChaShaMa Gallery in Manhattan (May 20 – June 18, 2023), so I proposed that they participate in a sister exhibition along with one of the *Dream Alliance* artists, Kerry da Silva Cox. I am grateful for ongoing conversations with Melinda and Chris about our shared interests. It is delightful to build community among colleagues and to foster interdisciplinary ideas with students through the work of the Gallery.

This exhibition is co-sponsored by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Thank you to Rafael de la Dehesa for his collaborative spirit and generous support.

A special thank you to Mike Kenney, Christina Werkmeister, Matt Fick, Lavinia Solano, Mark Lewantal, Alex Dudek, and Linda Johns for their assistance on various practical aspects of the exhibition design and realization. I am grateful to Sara Gold and David Pizzuto for this beautiful exhibition catalog.

I wish to extend my thanks to the students enrolled in ART 305 for their help in making this exhibition happen.

The most heartfelt thanks go to my co-curator, Dr. Cynthia Chris. Her good humor, quick intelligence, and empathic sensibility has made this year of curatorial work one of personal growth and joy. Thank you for having my back!

Thanks to Dean Sarolta Takács and Provost Michael Steiper for understanding the importance of the arts at the College and for their presence in the Gallery. We are grateful to have an administration that recognizes the Gallery as a vital center for cultural life at our College, a place for laughter, delight, learning, and somewhere to have difficult conversations in a caring environment.

Together with the support of my colleagues in the Performing and Creative Arts Department, we are delighted to offer a cultural venue in which students from across all divisions and schools can interact with faculty, staff, and our esteemed College President, Timothy G. Lynch.

Dr. Siona Wilson

Gallery Director

Co-curator

Spring 2024

Back cover: Nancy Bowen detail from *Spectral Evidence: The Witch Box*

“if her husband dies unexpectedly, she may refuse to marry his brother” – from the poem “The Witch” by Elizabeth Willis



2024 / #84166