

TRANCE OF THOUGHT  
CLAYTON CAMPBELL









# TRANCE OF THOUGHT

DIGITAL ART WORKS, 2022- 2024

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## Piecing Together Glitching Thoughts of the Collective Mind

Is this a dream, or a memory? Perhaps dreams of lost ancestors, or memories of unborn kin. Perhaps both.

I met Clayton Campbell serendipitously, soon after his decision to get back to being public with his art following several years of an introverted focus on creating. His introspective period coincided with a mandatory hiatus for all of us, and our collective memories of the pandemic found a place in his personal explorations. The result is a collection of shared narratives from the glitching mind.

Glitch aesthetics are reminiscent of digital distortions and technological imperfections, and serve as a metaphor for the inherent errors of the human mind. Campbell started working with corrupted jpeg files back in 2006 – there wasn't any software designed for it, and the aesthetics didn't have a name.

Yet, digital distortions that we today call glitching has been the perfect medium for Campbell to express how the human brain processes the non-stop flow of fragmented images. Glitching mirrors the unpredictability and spontaneity of the human mind. It allows for a more unconstrained expression, without specific outcomes in mind. It's the perfect artistic response to the disjointed ideas, judgments, and narratives that the brain relentlessly spins out. Campbell's art evokes ideas around the fragility of memory, the vulnerability of perception, and the beauty that emerges from embracing imperfections, and celebrates the flaws that make us inherently human.

At first glance, *Treasure Room (page 65)* resembles a kaleidoscope – one that offers a glimpse into one's glitching mind. Campbell juxtaposes contradicting angles of perception by overlaying images from the exterior and interior of a Baroque chapel. The viewer sees the structure in all its grandness from above while simultaneously looking up to the saintly figures that cover the ceiling and the walls of the chapel. The work manipulates glitch aesthetics into reflecting a sense of vulnerability, aspiration, and hope, alongside a god-like perspective of overseeing everything below. The visual contradiction suggests that both perspectives are essential for a complete understanding of life – *as within, so without*.

An insightful interpreter of the human condition, Campbell translates the chaos and beauty of one's mind into a visual language that resonates on a collective level. By re-contextualizing simple moments of everyday life as well as pivotal stages in epic scenarios, Campbell ponders on the behavior of ordinary people who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. Campbell's trance of thought, which gives the series its name, finds expression in his art that turns his deeply personal meditative sessions into a contemplative space for the viewers. The viewers are invited to witness their surroundings and circumstances, and their part in it.

Furthermore, Campbell doesn't shy away from overtly depicting his contemplation of his own place in tumultuous times – *Navigating the 8th Circle of Hell (page 25)* is a self-reflective piece that depicts a chaotic moment with the artist, taking a mirror selfie, in the midst of the mayhem. Navigating through the labyrinth of memories, Campbell reflects on narratives of personal assumptions with collective echoes. Much like the way our brains piece together disjointed memories to form a cohesive understanding of the world, Campbell's art channels the raw and unpredictable nature of collage to depict the dance between chaos and order that we call life.

Campbell explores one's own mind through the concept of collective memory, for they are often intertwined. Through the artist's lens, the pandemic becomes a crucible for exploring the intricacies of the human psyche, not only because it has been a period of forced introspection, but also because the collective experience of navigating through unprecedented challenges has left an indelible mark on the collective memory of society. Campbell's incorporation of collective memory into the creative process extends beyond one's own reservoir of memories to the elements of shared cultural beliefs, adding an extra layer of complexity to the narrative woven into each piece.

*A Storytelling (page 82-83)* depicts two women sharing a private matriarchal moment of intimacy in a sacred temple-like space – the elder is passing on knowledge and wisdom of the great feminine spirituality to the younger through her storytelling. The circular roof is open to the sky, connoting a path and access towards the transcendent realm and divine mysteries from our tangible reality. It's a mirror image, hinting that the stories will be echoed to future generations, and the transmission of knowledge and wisdom will continue. The work is a beautiful narrative representation of an exchange of collective memories. It's not only about the events and moments society experiences together, but everything we pass on to generations to come – much the way Campbell's work conveys cultural learnings through visual representations, weaving our collective story.

Just like reading an intimate passage from a dream journal, or picking up lost pieces of a distant conversation, Campbell's viewers find themselves not only immersed in a visual narrative, but also actively participating in the exploration of the mind while contemplating their place and role in this world.

Is this a dream, or a memory? Perhaps dreams of lost ancestors, or memories of unborn kin. Probably both.

Cansu Peker, March 2024, New York  
Founder, Digital Arts Blog





Clayton Campbell is an artist, writer, and cultural producer. He has been working with digital imagery since the mid 1990s.

His work has been exhibited in museums, galleries, art centers and community spaces including: Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; WYSPA Institute for Art; Gdansk, Poland; International Center of Contemporary Art, Bucharest, Romania; Three Shadows Photography Art Center, Beijing; University of Cape Town, South Africa; Unit 24 Gallery, London; Nam Jun Paik Center, Yongin-si, South Korea; Higher Bridges Arts Center, Enniskillen, Northern Ireland; Museum of Mobile, Alabama; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Wonder Institute, Santa Fe; and The Exploratorium, San Francisco.

His work is in the collection of the Wiggins Collection of Prints and Drawings, Boston Public Library; Center for Political Graphics, Los Angeles; Library of Congress 9/11 Print and Drawing Collection, Washington, DC; The Phoenix Museum of Fine Art; New Mexico Museum of Fine Art; Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; Robert Bell Print and Drawing Collection, Santa Fe; and Highlands University Museum and Archives, Las Vegas, New Mexico. He has been in residence at MacDowell, Peterborough, NH; Fellowship; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; and at the Camac Centre de Art Marnay Art Centre, France. In 2003 he was awarded the distinction of Chevalier, Order of Arts and Letters, by the French Ministry of Culture.

As a writer he has contributed reviews, essays, and features to Flash Art Magazine (Milan), Artillery Magazine (Los Angeles), Art Voices Magazine (Los Angeles), Art Presse (France), Res Magazine (Istanbul), Contemporary Magazine (London), THE Magazine (Santa Fe), After Image (Rochester, NY and Berkeley, CA), DART Magazine (Toronto) and Artblog, (Philadelphia).

Campbell's recent digital art has been featured on-line by *The Eye of Photography*, Paris; exhibited in *Atlas of Affects* at Slought Gallery, Philadelphia; featured in the Digital Arts Blog Pavilion in Wrong Biennale media festival; and is included in the 2024 survey of the EZTV Museum at Santa Monica Community College Art Gallery. In 2023 he was a virtual artist in residence in the Loop Art Metaverse and the Belgrade Art Studio.

The digital artwork in this volume have been made with Campbell's original photographs, images sourced from public domain archives, and images generated from AI platforms Dalle 3 and Midjourney. Some of the images are further processed with Glitchshop, Lightroom Classic, and various generative software applications . All of the final digital art works are processed with Photoshop.

Each work is of various sizes, whether in print, projection, or on monitors, ranging from 17" x 22", to 51" x 66" to 66" x 198."

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BIRTHRIGHT

FRONT COVER- *WHITE LIGHT* BACK COVER- *BORDER CROSSING 1*













LOST IN THE MINDSTREAM





ALLEGORY OF AIR (DEPENDENCY)





RULE OF WOMEN





TRANCE OF THOUGHT





LONG BLACK DRESS





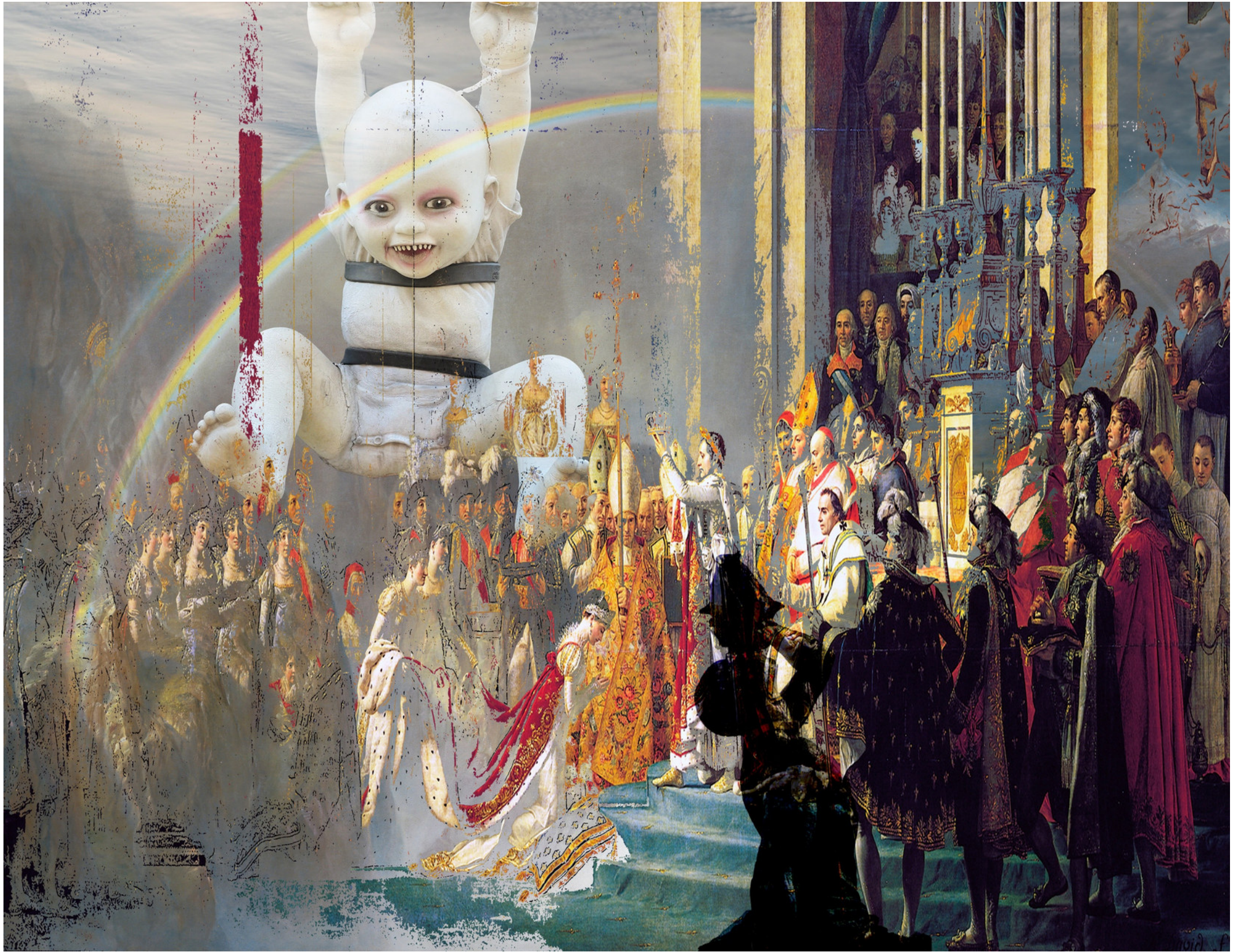
LAND OF SLEEP





DAY OF THE DEAD













UNEXPECTED VALOR





FORECLOSURE NOTICE





BORDER CROSSING





DANCE LITTLE SISTER DANCE





WHIRLWIND









IDENTITY THROUGH ACQUISITION





ALLEGORY OF PAINTING





ODALISQUES









FAMILY ALTAR





FALLING SKIES





NAVIGATING THE EIGHTH CIRCLE OF HELL





GATEKEEPERS





MY MOUNTAIN





SQUANDERING OF THE TREASURY





DEFENDING THE GATE





CONTEMPLATING PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE





PARTIAL ERASURE IN PROGRESS





MARFA DIORAMA



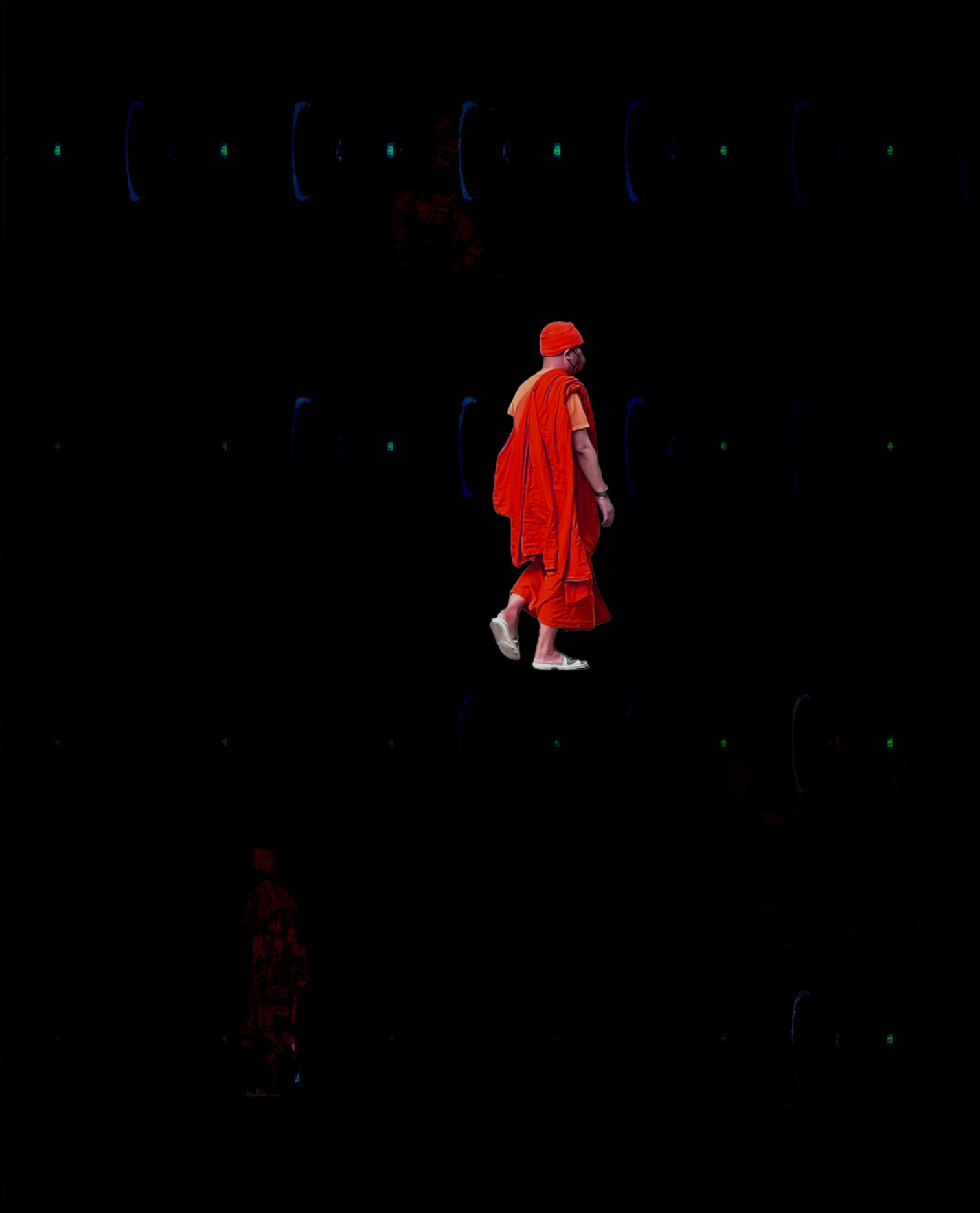


L'ATELIER DU LIBERTINE













EKPHRASIS, SPRING





EKPHRASIS, SUMMER





EKPHRASIS, AUTUMN





EKPHRASIS, WINTER





THE LEAF BLOWER'S MASTERSTROKE





LOVE. COMPASSION









ABDUCTION OF THE BUDDHA





IN PURSUIT OF THE FLYING DUTCHMAN





UNRELENTING FALL INTO A MASS OF CONFUSIONS









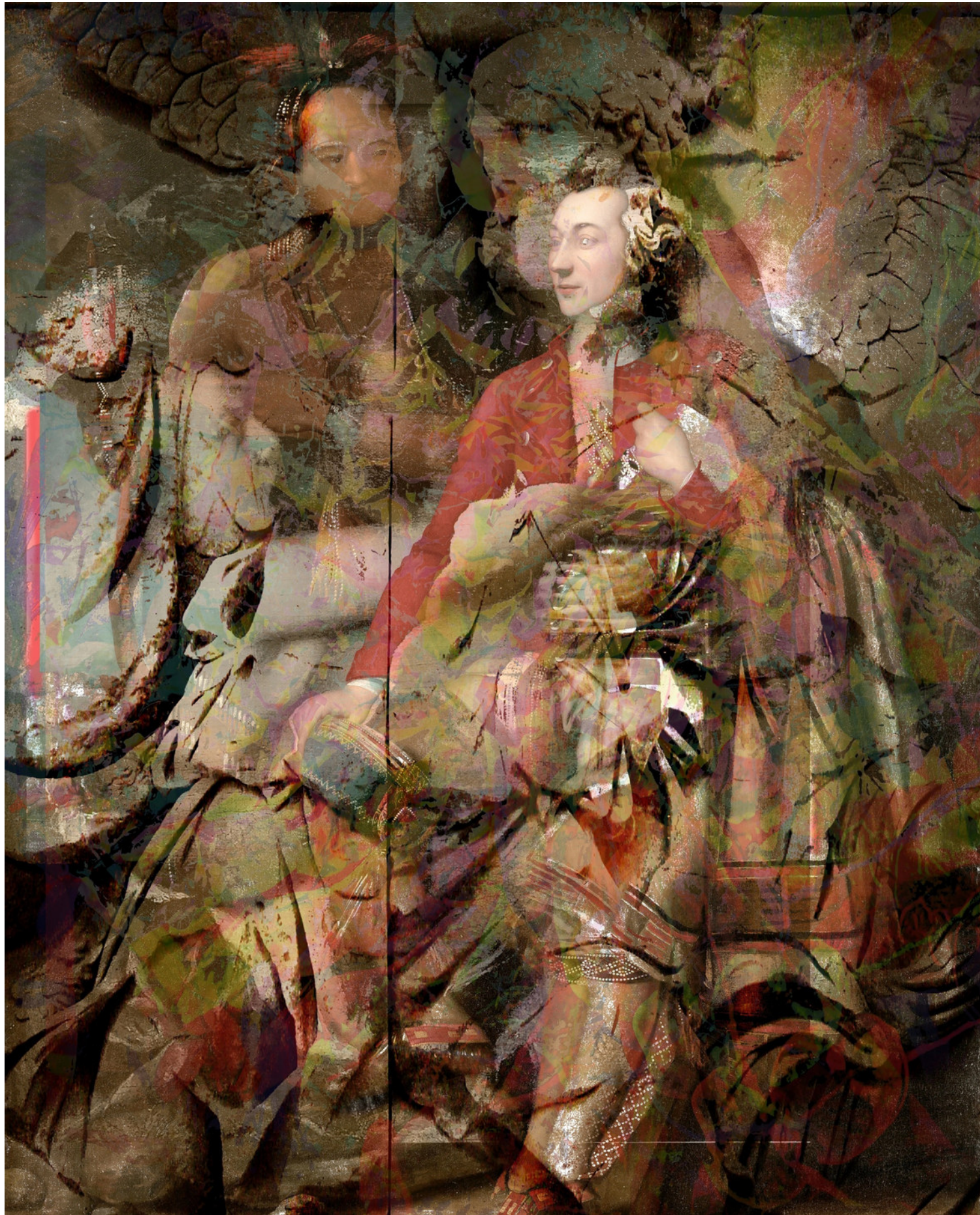
GHOST SHIPS





SAFETY IN NUMBERS





FORBIDDEN









BAD ANCESTORS





NO THERE THERE





NO THERE THERE, THERE





THE PATHWAY





OUR BETTER ANGELS PASSING US BY.....





RIDER ON A PALE HORSE









SLOTH, TORPOR, MADNESS









AN UNDERWORLD OF MALE MADNESS





RIPPING THROUGH THE VEIL 1









THE SACRIFICES WE MAKE





THE HISTORY UNDERNEATH





TREASURE ROOM





HEREAFTER









ADRIFT





THE GIRLS OF REVOLUTION STREET





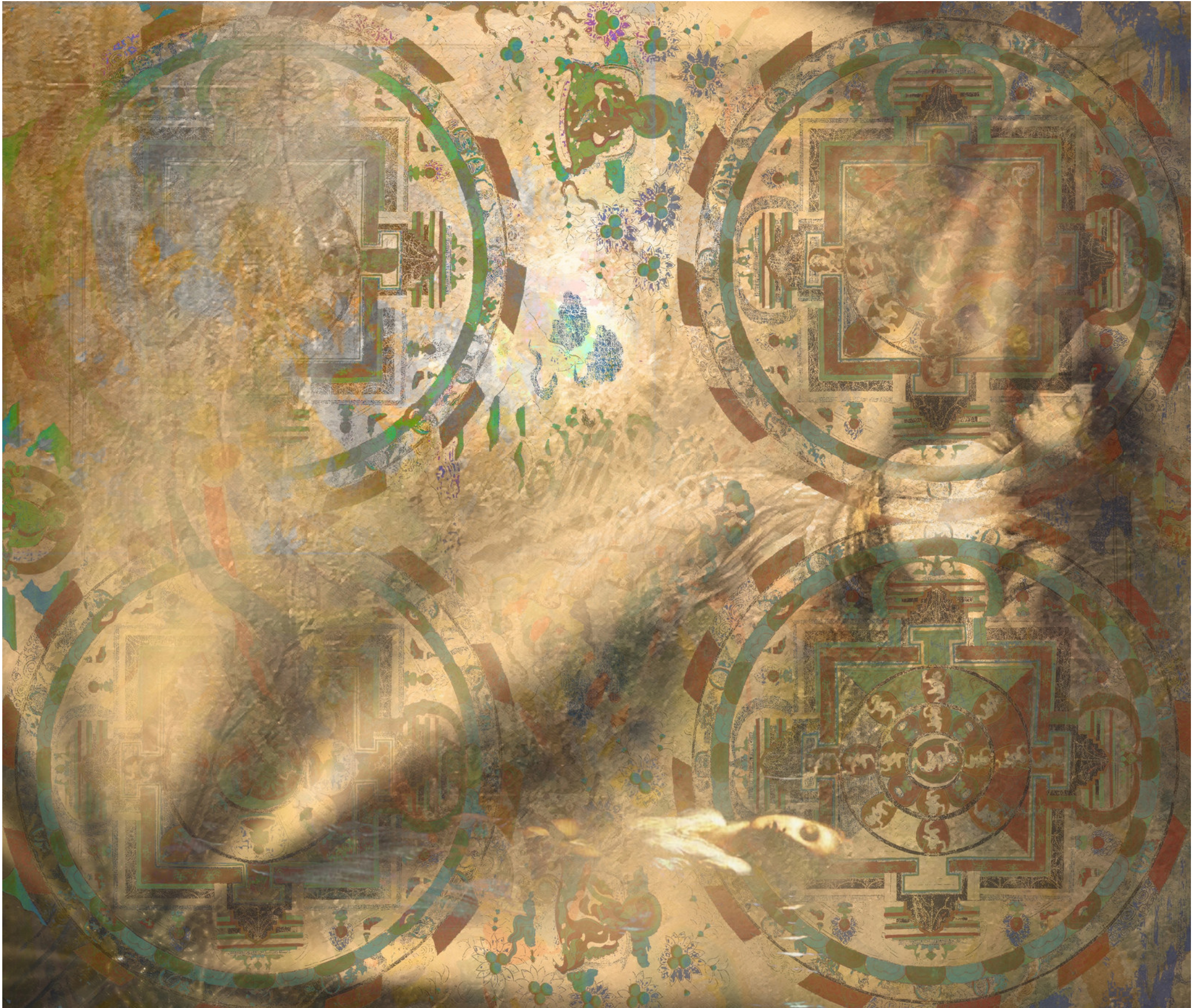
FRAGMENTARY LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT





VICTOR HUGO'S LAMENT (UKRAINE)









PAUSING AT THE ESPLANADE MARKET









IN THE BARDO





CYCLOPEAN





BURNING MAN





SAD CLOWN PARADOX





BREAKOUT





A STORYTELLING













GREAT GRATITUDE





AFTERSHOCK





A LOSS APPROACHES





SOUNDING OF THE FIRST TRUMPET....





AN EXCEPTION WAS TO BE MADE.....





THE THREE FURIES









THE FURIES - VENGEFUL DESTRUCTION





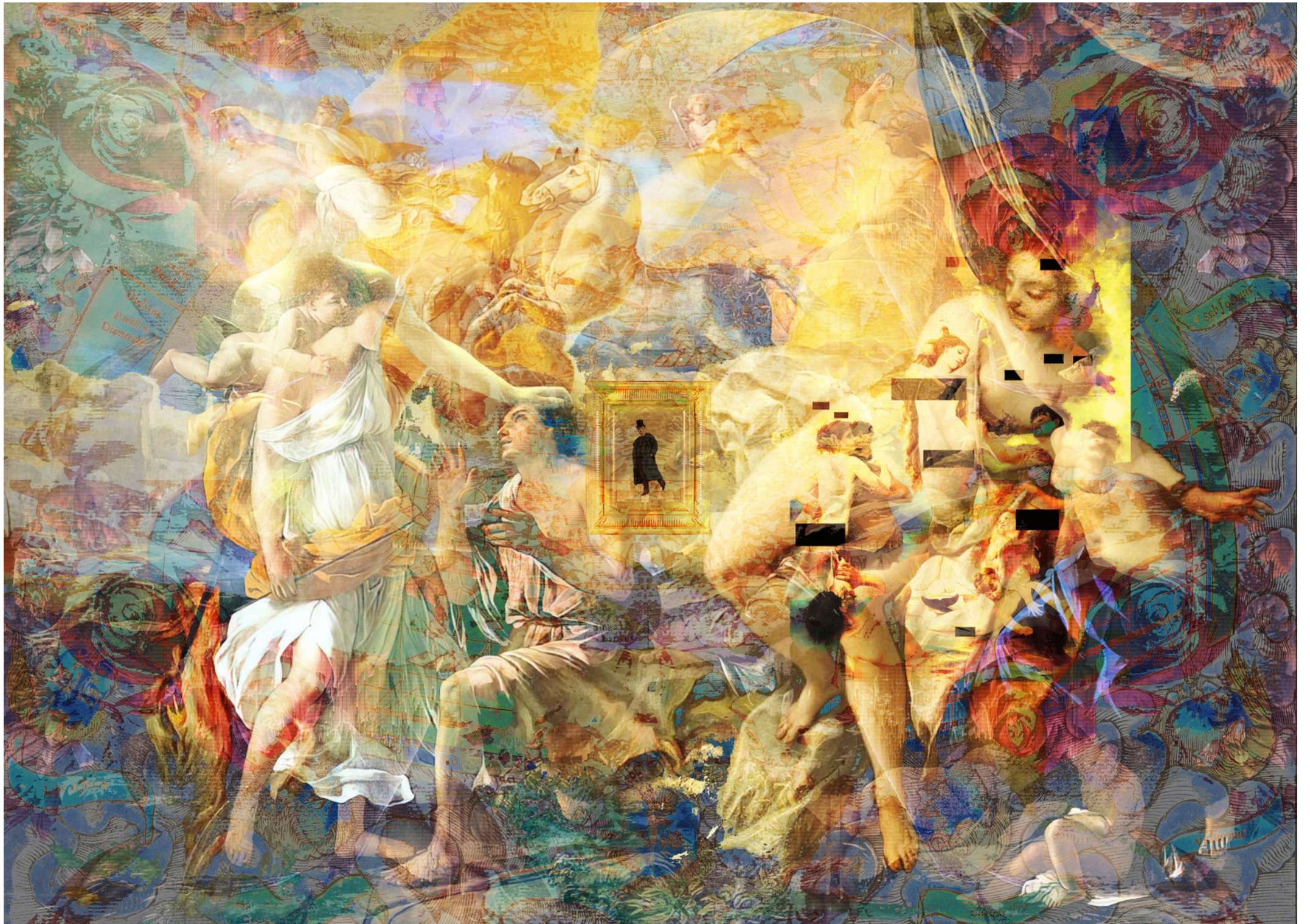
THE FURIES - ENDLESS ANGER





THE FURIES - JEALOUS RAGE





EXIGENCE





NEUROTYPICAL BEHAVIORS





ENRAGEMENT





IT TAKES ONE KIND WORD TO WARM THREE COLD WINTER MONTHS 1





IT TAKES ONE KIND WORD TO WARM THREE COLD WINTER MONTHS 2





IT TAKES ONE KIND WORD TO WARM THREE COLD WINTER MONTHS 3





IT TAKES ONE KIND WORD TO WARM THREE COLD WINTER MONTHS 4





RIPPING THROUGH THE VEIL 2





THE GREAT PONTIFICATE





LANDSCAPE -GARDEN OF BABEL





LANDSCAPE - SECOND ARROW









BURNING DOWN OUR HOUSE





BLISS OF BLAMELESSNESS





THINKING MIND





ALCHEMICAL MAP TO HEAVEN





SOFT LANDING RETURNING TO THE BODY





THE PITCH 1





THE PITCH 2





SEA OF PROTECTION AND GRACIOUSNESS





BARCELONA





CALIFORNIA









PROHIBITION





THE BACK ALLEYS OF EUROPE









RIPPING THROUGH THE VEIL 3





ATLAS COLLASPING





MIXED BLESSINGS





THE WONDER







