

# OPUS HYPNAGOGIA

Sacred Spaces of the Visionary and Vernacular



Curated by Stephen Romano  
Essay by Decadence Darling



Cover: Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) Chapter Ornament of All-Seeing Eye, c. 1600's,  
El Gato Chimney "The Right Proportion", 2015.  
Above: Hunter Stabler "Tetris Graviton", 2014 .

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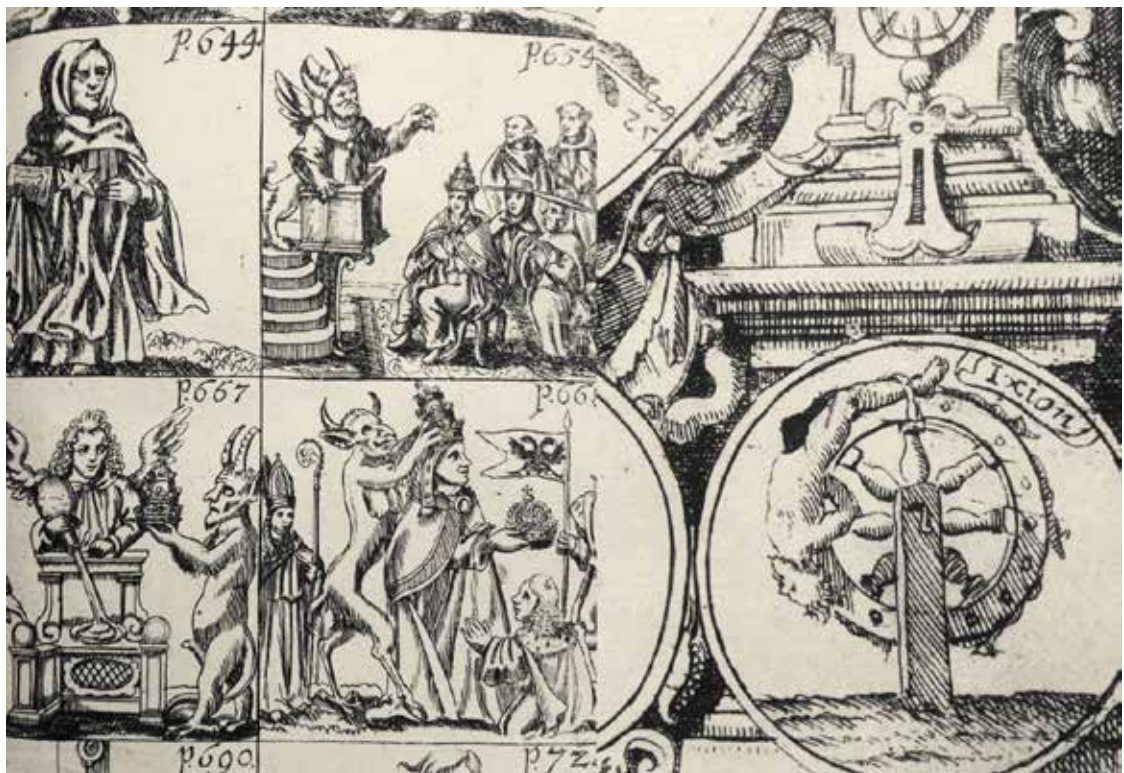
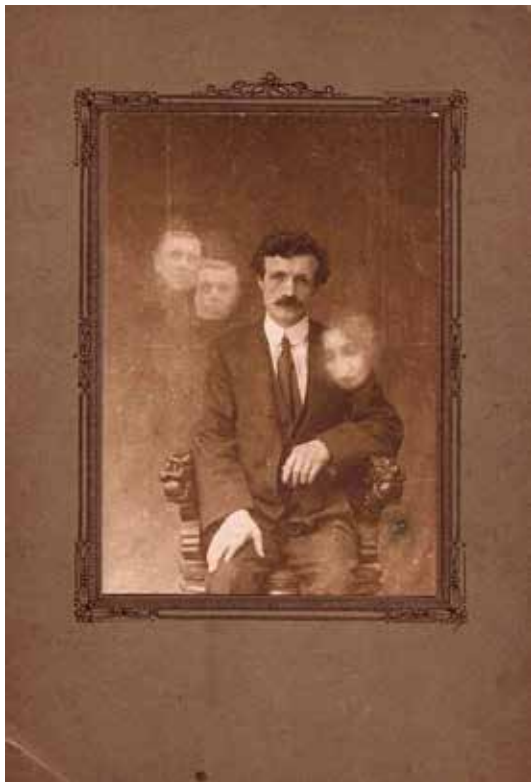
Kris Kuksi, Kymia Nawabi, Martin Wittfooth, El Gato Chimney, Rithika Merchant, Rene Pierre Allain, Caitlin McCormack, Jel Ena, Ellen Stagg, Lori Field, Erna Kd, Matthew Dutton, Lizz Lopez, Joseph McVetty, Barry William Hale, Hunter Stabler, Peca, William Mortensen, A. Fiorelli, Brittany Markert, William Blayney, Jacob Bohme, Darcilio Lima, Charles A.A. Dellschau, David Molesky, Romeyn de Hooghe, Joachim von Sandrart

Including loans and acquisitions from:

Collection of J.K. O'Rourke, David Wheatcroft Collection, Joey Lin's Anonymous Works, David Winter Works on Paper, John Foster Collection, Collection of Larry Dumont, The Ashé Collection of Randall Morris, Shari Cavin and Simone Morris, Ildiko Gebei, The Museum of Everything, London, Collection of Jared Polis and Marlon Reis, and Stephen Romano Collection.

Above: detail from Doktor Johannes Faust's Magia Naturalis, 1849.





Spirit Photograph of DD Home, Medium and Levitationist, c. 1865.  
 Early 20th Century Box with Strange Folk Art Carvings, courtesy of Joey Lin.  
 Excerpt from *Lectiones Memorabiles*, 1625.



Fon Vodun Altarpiece, Benin Africa, ca. 1970, Courtesy of Cavin Morris Gallery.

Matthew Dutton "Fauna Gomorrah", 2015.

Detail from Doktor Johannes Faust's Magia Naturalis, 1849.





Anonymous (signed W.H. Morris) "Apocalypse Painting", c.1925.



El Gato Chimney "The Trailblazer", 2015.





Installation view of "Opus Hypnagogia".  
 Opposite: Hermon Finney "Mask", c.1950's, Vintage Press Photos, 1970 and 1940's.  
 Skrimshaw Ceremonial Wand, c. 1800, Boston.





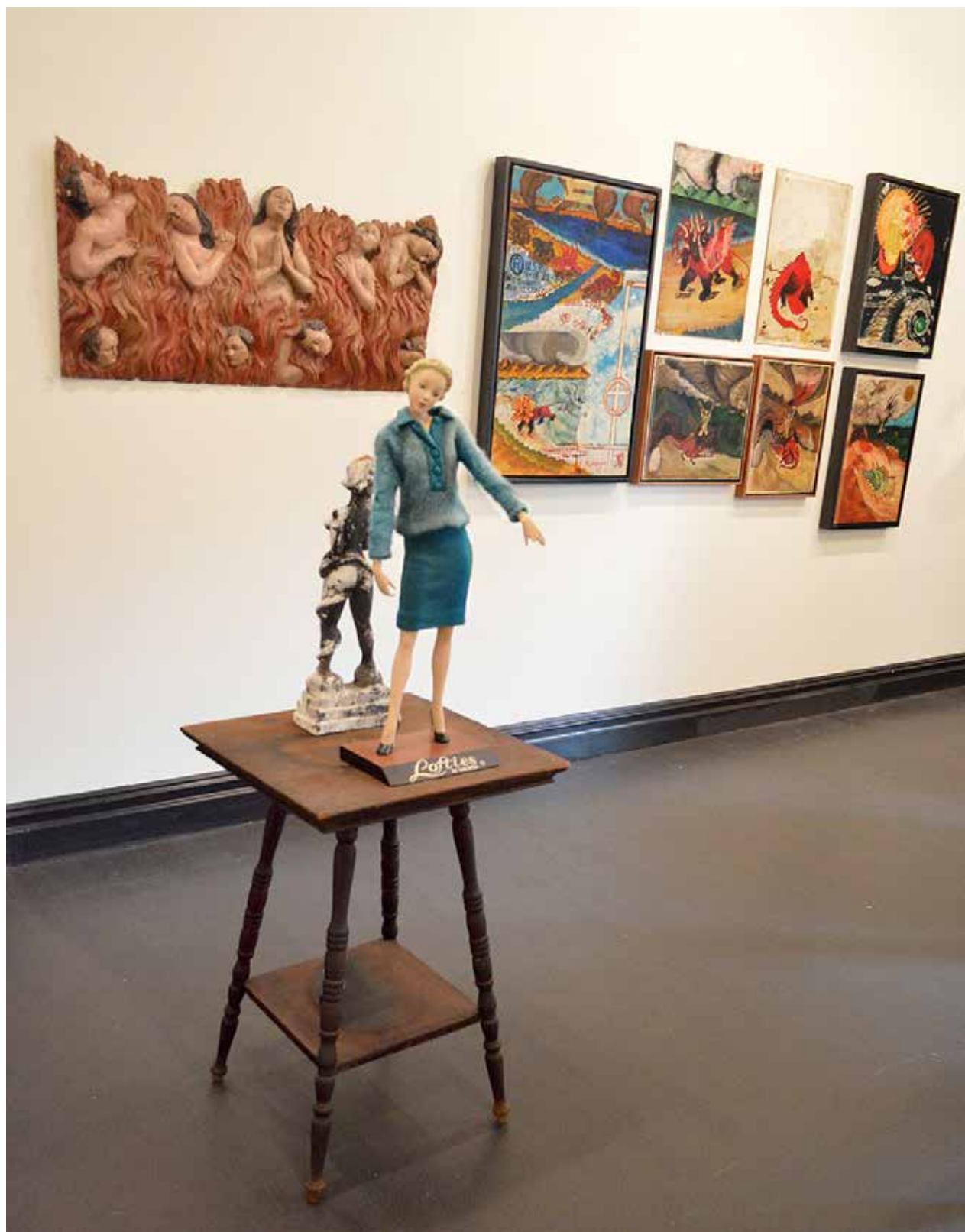
The experience of death is practiced daily, rather nightly for most people. Sleep is symbolically and minutely a death experience. Whereas the death of the body severs consciousness from the corporeal identity, sleep momentarily brings our awareness from the physical body to the mental subconsciousness. In this context death is not the decay of flesh but rather the division, or even perhaps, the expansion of consciousness beyond the physical body. It is in this context that individuals for millennia have explored “death” while still living in the body, namely through meditation, astral projection and astral travel, in which they project their mental self out of the confines of the flesh and become conscious of the subtle planes of reality not perceivable by the physical senses. Within the process of astral projection are transitional stages where consciousness is not quite in the mental ether nor quite in the physical body.

The early stages of astral projection include sleep paralysis, in which the individual becomes fully aware of their body and surroundings, but cannot exercise the physical functions of the body. They become an observer of the flesh. It is during this stage that can either be a stepping stone out of the physical body and into the ether, or for those not aware of astral projection, or people who are attempting to have an out of body experience but who suffer from anxiety, depression, or fear in general, it can be a horrifying experience that might include the presence of malefic spirits. In this stage one’s fears can project in the form of demons, thus making the experience haunting rather than liberating.



Anonymous “Pipe Rack with Carved Demon”, c. 1860’s, Salem.





Installation view of "Opus Hypnagogia".



William H. Mortensen image from "A Pictorial Compendium of Witchcraft", c. 1926.  
Courtesy of The Museum of Everything, London.



The Morbid Anatomy Museum is hosting the exhibition *Opus Hypnagogia: Sacred Spaces of the Visionary and Vernacular*, curated by Stephen Romano, for the museum's first year anniversary—which I'm sure for the museum directors feels like somewhat of an outer body experience in its own way. *Opus Hypnagogia* explores this sleep phenomenon that has been the cause of lucid dreaming to full out of body experiences. This concept, this phenomenon, is appropriately depicted in art because it is similarly the process of an artist to relax the mind from daily anxieties and fears, and to enter a state of awareness detached from the physical senses, and yet sensitive to the imagination of the subconsciousness. Art breaks rules, progresses philosophy, politics, fashion, society—and it is by having an inner “out-of-body” experience that accesses them beyond the framework of the ego and the physical senses to the limitless subconsciousness. Within that transcendental realm they bring progressive ideas from out of the dark and forward to the conscious mind, project it through their artistic medium, which then enters the public's conscious mind, and then finds its way to the individual's subconsciousness.

The rendering of these images the artist receives from their inner experience may not translate to the rules and laws of contemporary culture, or any social construct for that matter. The art might not be intended to communicate to the audience's consciousness, but is intended to communicate to their subconsciousness. Such art is almost telepathic the way it speaks deep into our minds



Installation view of “Opus Hypnagogia”.

without saying a word by communicating a language only the individual can decipher, a code that is translated differently by each individual—thus giving the individual a moment in which they escape their physical senses and come in contact with a part of their self deep within the sub-conscious. Such art is an out of body experience because it causes the audience to become more aware of their being beyond the physical body. Such art is a death experience.

Opus Hypnagogia: Sacred Spaces of the Visionary and Vernacular suddenly becomes something very personal. This exhibition of artwork from artists such as Charles Dellshau and William Mortensen are works beyond the obscure and taboo. Those are words your physical senses uses to categorize the experience your conscious mind is not structured to understand. Each work is a step away from the perceived world into the perceived self—beyond the perceived self into the self. It is an exhibition curated to facilitate an inner-body experience while having an outer-body experience. It is a chance to observe your own death while still living and to understand that the word death is just your conscious mind trying to categorize an experience beyond what it is capable of experiencing.



Installation view of "Opus Hypnagogia".





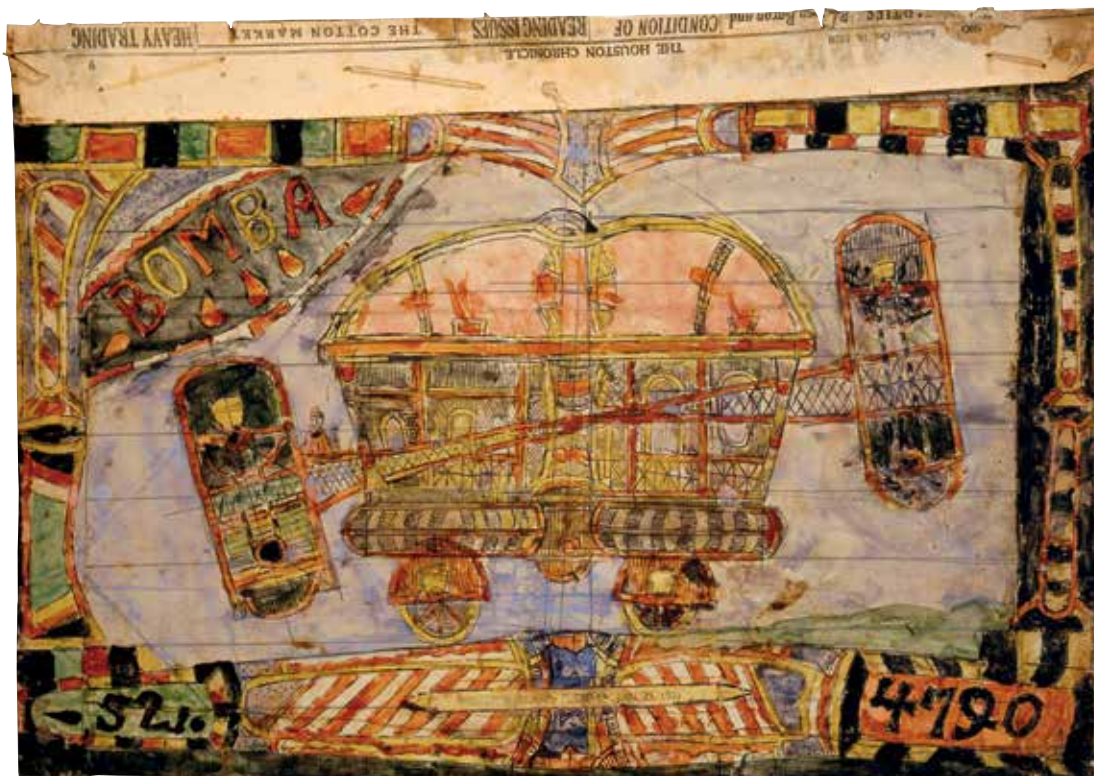
MYTHOLOGY-ICONOLOGY-EVIL-HYROGLYPHIC-Romeyn de Hooghe, 1735 Plate 28 shows evil Gods. This plate shows A. Herimis; B. Joosje Tidebaic; C. Dragon; D. Abaddon; E. Temptation in the Garden of Eden; F. Treasure keeper; G. Treasure guard; H. Goblins; I. Pagan dance; K. De Witte Vrouw (the White Lady); L. Larunda; M. Harpies; N. Wrath of the Harpies; O. Nightmare; P. Earthquake; Q. Scylla; R. Charybdis; S. Syrtes.



David Molesky "Krampus of Sleepy Hollow", 2014. Opposite: Matthew Dutton "Infernal Companions", Anima Sola Depiction of Souls in Purgatory, mid 19th Century.









René Pierre Allain "Installation of a Songye Power Figure", 2015.  
Opposite: Anonymous photographs, c. 1920's,  
Charles Dellschau (1830 - 1923) AERO BOMBA, 1919.







William Blayney (1917 - 1986) "First and Second Wonder", 1969 - 1980.  
 Opposite: Ellen Stagg "Rogizoid Floor", 2012, Brittany Markert "California", 2015.

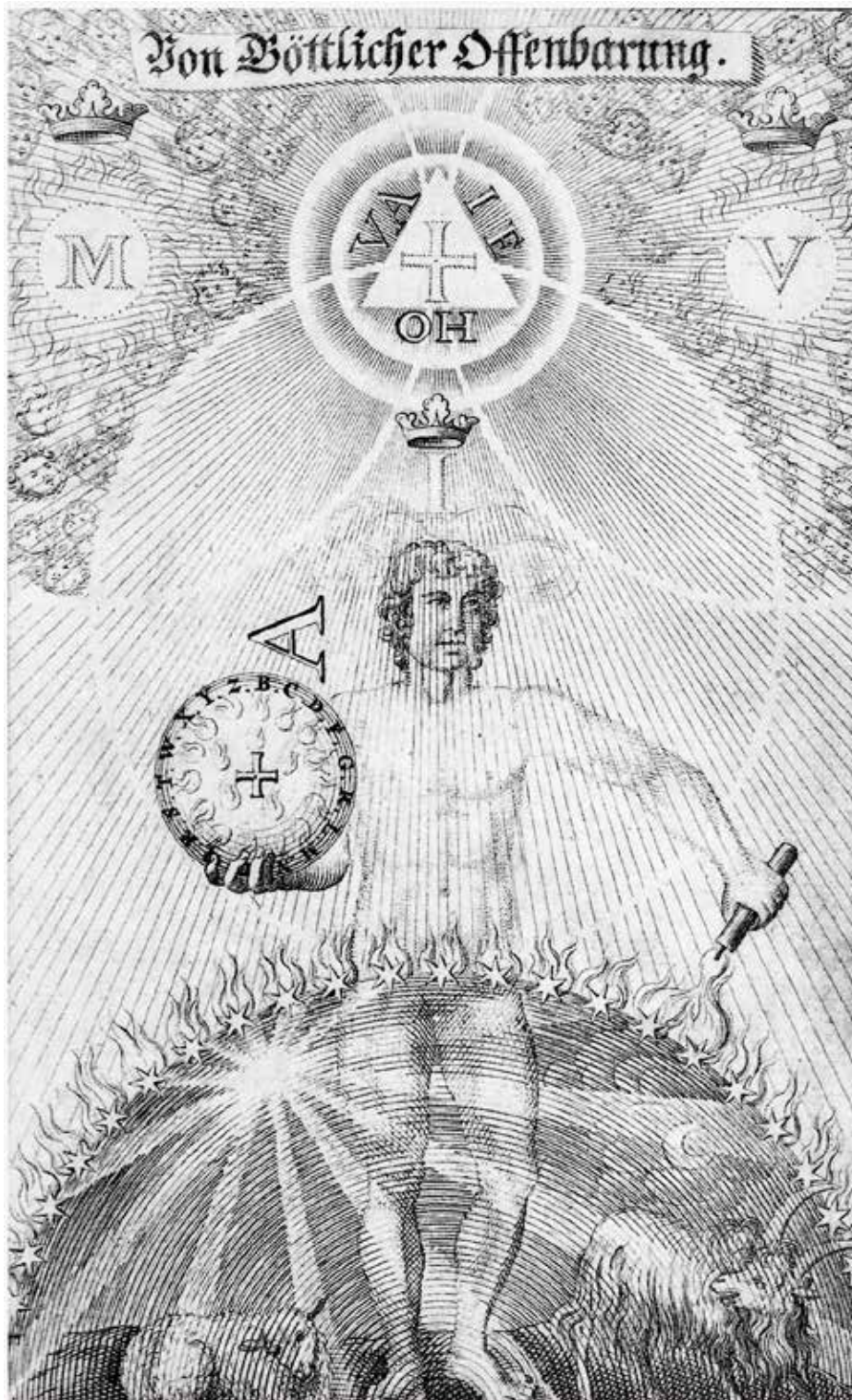


Anonymous "Spirit Photo", c. 1860, Erna Kd "Sorceress", 2015, Joseph McVetty Untitled Drawing, 2015.  
 Opposite: Darcilio Lima (1944 - 1991) "The Prince", 1970.









Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) "Divine Revelations", 1665.  
Caitlin McCormack "Homewrecker", 2014.

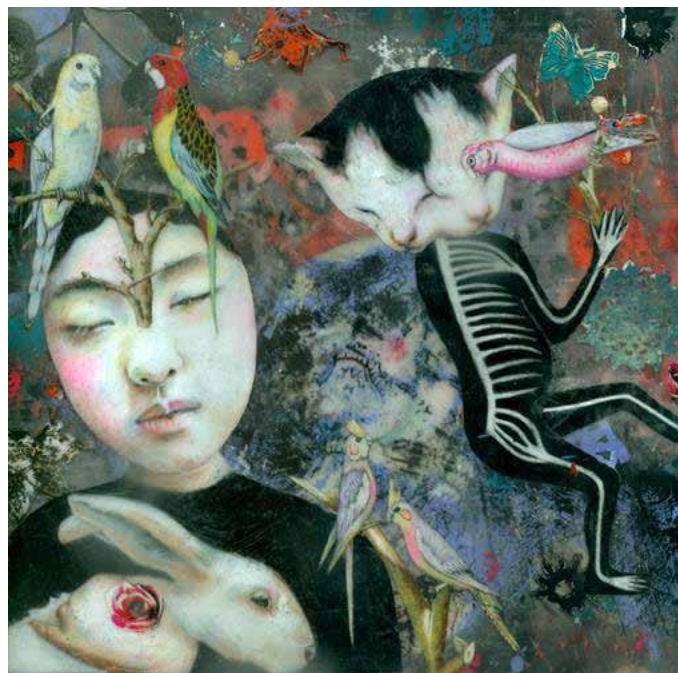






Rithika Merchant "Dance of the Djinns", 2014. Opposite: Lectiones Memorabiles, 1625,  
Jel Ena "The Generosity of No Face, 2014, Lori Field "The Little Death", 2008, Lizz Lopez "Casting Devils" 2015.







Kris Kuksi "Churchtank Type 12", 2015.  
Opposite: Martin Wittfooth "Shaman 1", 2014,  
Rithika Merchant "The Intruder (Sleep Paralysis)", 2014.









## Acknowledgements

This catalog is dedicated to the unique spirit and community which the Morbid Anatomy Museum fosters and perpetuates.

Stephen Romano wishes to thank the artists for their contribution to the exhibition, El Gato Chimney, Rithika Merchant, Matthew Dutton, Kris Kuksi, Caitlin McComack, Jel Ena, Hunter Stabler, Joseph McVetty, Lizz Lopez, Erna Kd, Pulu Zhao, Peca, Lori Field, Kymia Nawabi, Barry William Hale, Martin Wittfooth, Rene Pierre Allain, David Molesky, Brittany Markert, Ellen Stagg. Thank you also to Decadence Darling, Randall Morris, J. Kevin O'Rourke, James Brett, Samuel D Gliner, Douglas Howard Dowling, Gail Worley, Ken Johnson, Priscilla Frank, Peter Gillmore, Larry Dumont, Jared Polis and Marlon Reis, Monty Blanchard, Amie Romano. Joey Lin, David Winter, John Foster, Larry Dumont, Shari Cavin, Simone Morris, Ildiko Gebei. From Morbid Anatomy Museum, thanks to Joanna Ebenstein, Laetitia Barbier, Cristina Preda, Erica Saunders, Dianca Pott, Evan Michelson, and Tracy Hurley Martin

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## Contributors

Decadence Darling explores the esoteric elements of chaos, death, and transformation in art, philosophy, and society as a means to redefine our understanding of darkness. Through written word and conducting interviews with artists such as Kazuhiro Tsuji and El Gato Chimney his work has been published online and in literature in Beautiful Bizarre Magazine, as well as his personal blog, "Manifesto of Decadence".

Stephen Romano has been a dealer and collector of self-taught, outsider, visionary and vernacular art for the past 20 years. He has curated the exhibitions "William Mortensen: American Grotesque", "In Missa Interfectionis", "Colin Christian: Trypophobia", "El Gato Chimney: De Rerum Natura", "Rithika Merchant: "Luna Tabulatorum", "Lexcion Infernali" and "Jel Ena: Sanctum Infernum". His exhibitions have been reviewed in many publications such as The New York Times, Hi Fructose, Juxtapoz, Blop, Beautiful Bizarre, Disinformation, Phantasmaphile, Vice, Beautiful Decay, Between Mirrors, Savant Garde, Widewalls, The Worleygig, The Huffington Post, and many others. Stephen Romano operates the Stephen Romano Gallery in New York City [www.romanoart.com](http://www.romanoart.com)

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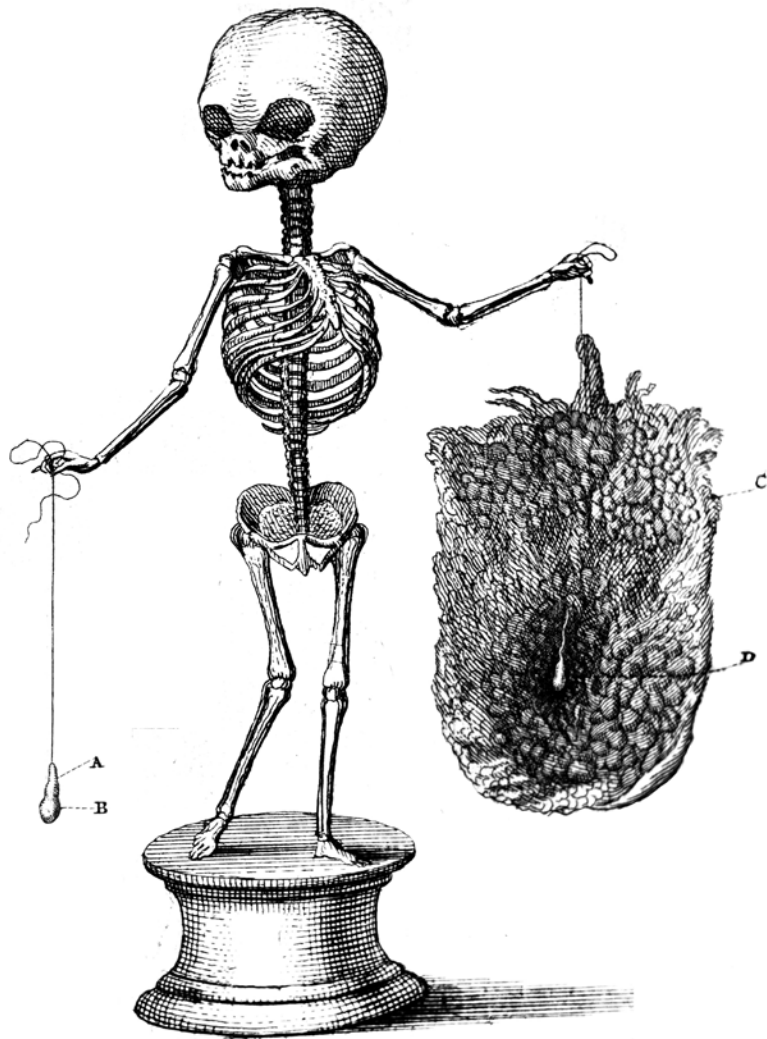
Opposite: William Mortensen "A Pictorial Compendium of Witchcraft", c. 1926, Courtesy of The Museum of Everything.  
Fon Vodun Altarpiece, Nigerian Altar piece, Courtesy the Ashé Collection, Randall Morris, Shari Cavin, Simone Morris,  
Doctor Johannes Faust's Magia Naturalis et Innaturalis.



Installation view of "Opus Hypnagogia", Ceremonial Banner c.1900 from the International Association of Rebekah Assemblies, Voodoo Altar, Bizango Societies, c. 1980's.  
Opposite: Barry William Hale "Apomagdalie Demonomarchia", 2015.







# Morbid Anatomy Museum

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