



The Bride Stripped Bare 1 (Artemisia Gentileschi) 2022

# Dreaming the Bride

by Tatiana Garmendia





The Bride Stripped Bare 2 (Ljubov Popova) 2022



Nearly two decades ago, I had a series of dreams in which I burned down castles, prisons, and palatial cities. I was joined by Marcel Duchamp, who at my side, spray painted Xs on the face of walls. As we led mobs of outraged citizens, torches in hand, we chanted, "Burn the king's castle," destroying the old guard and making way for the new. Each dream culminated with Duchamp asking me to marry him. And of course, I always said yes. We danced and played chess in a shed, bells ringing in celebration.

The dreams repeated for a week or so, then never reoccurred. It has persisted as a psychic gift from the subconscious more enduring than any real event. An alchemical union that has sired decades long explorations of visual and conceptual strategies in



The Bride Stripped Bare 3 (Paula Modersohn-Becker) 2022



the studio. It has occurred to me that the king Duchamp and I were rebelling against is the very history of easel painting and its expectations. As Rose Selavy, not only did he thumb his nose at gender conventions but also art history's advancement of pecking orders and male genius tropes. The very conventions that excluded the throngs of disaffected dissidents raising torches in my dreams.



The Bride Stripped Bare 6 (Pan Yuiiang) 2022



# Who is the Alchemical Bride?

"Every archetype is capable of endless development and differentiation."

—from  
*Psychology and Alchemy*

For Carl Jung, alchemy was a metaphor for the individuation towards the Self, and the Bride the feminine projection of this symbol. Archetypal markers manifest powerfully in the larger and smaller psychic structures that hold communal and personal histories.

What happens to our development in a world where the feminine story is encoded in degraded and distorted forms or completely erased in some of its instantiations? When the archive of these archetypes, histories, and memories is corroded, how can we perform the individuation journey with certain competency? These questions began to stalk me, first in dreams, and then in real life, until I listened to the promptings of my subconscious and waking preoccupations. Listening to that quiet but urgent voice, I finally saw that the bride had been waiting for me at the easel for many years.



Alchemical Bride 63 (Ana Mendieta) 2020



# A Dream Home



Bride Stripped Bare 4 (Anita Florence Hemmings and Belle da Costa Greene) 2022



“Before I discovered alchemy I had a series of dreams which dealt with the same theme. Beside my house stood another, that is to say, another wing or annex, which was strange to me. Each time I would wonder in my dream why I did not know this house, although it had apparently always been there.” –Carl Jung



Alchemical Bride 98  
(Agnes Martin) 2021

Like Jung, I'd had a recurring dream of an undiscovered wing to my house. It was always a delight. I would discover corridors and rooms filled with art and treasures left behind. Often there were dresses, centuries old and in perfect condition but forgotten in dusty closets and dressers. I'd uncover exquisite perfumes, such as would haunt any Cognoscenti. These I'd inhale deeply and awaken to find the fragrances filling the bedroom with their mysterious scents.

"The unknown wing of the house was a part of my personality, an aspect of myself..." –from *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*



Alchemical Bride 97  
(Luz Donoso) 2021

I recognized these lingering sensations as synesthesia. I sometimes smell the shapes and colors in my painting or drawing.

These dreams were often paired with encounters with the feminine archetype. Her face a black enigma or so incandescent that I was blinded. Often she stood immediately behind me, advising me with her mysteries. I knew these dreams were textbook, big dreams, as Jung would call them. I concluded that I would have to explore them at the easel— my Gnostic center.



The whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero's passage is that it shall serve as a general pattern for men and women, wherever they may stand along the scale...The individual has only to discover their own position with reference to this general formula, and let it then assist them past their restricting walls." –Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

The hero's journey and individuation are but two descriptors for the same transformation– the alchemy of synthesizing personal and collective dreams, imaginations,

instincts, and stories into a cohesive whole. Still, as a culture, we are much more familiar with Campbell's hero than Jung's psycho-spiritual journey, largely because these have been translated in the dullest Professor Herr Doctor tones. By contrast, Campbell's televised interviews with Bill Moyers were charismatic. His easily digested books did much to familiarize (and vulgarize) people with the functions

"Myths are first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul." –Carl Jung

of the individual's own mythic journey. The problem is that the bride or heroine is practically out of sight.



Alchemical Bride 99  
(Hilda af Klint) 2021

***"Women don't need to make the journey. In the whole mythological tradition the woman is there. All she has to do is to realize that she's the place that people are trying to get to."***  
(Campbell, 1981)

That invisibility plagues women, but also all trans and non-binary people. When only androcentric myths, stories, and heroes are recognized, the human experience and story is fragmented and quite far from whole.





Alchemical Bride 91(Shin Saimdang) 2021





Alchemical Bride 102 (Clemencia Lucena) 2021

My preoccupations with Jung and Campbell are not recent. The 90s were the heyday of coordinated studies programs (CSPs) or interdisciplinary studies at Seattle Central College, and from my first year teaching I dove deep into the experience. For five years I team taught the most popular CSP, The Power of Myth alongside specialists in ancient literature, anthropology, archeology, and psychology.

I countered Campbell's androcentric monomyth, and all the male authored literature required of the course with Lucy Lippard's *Mixed*

*Blessings*. Shining a light on the art and stories of women and persons of color was a purely corrective action. When Lippard's *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* came out, this text too joined required readings.

I grew up in *La Regla de Ocha*. I went through the *iyalocha* consecration to the goddess *Oshun* as a child, and experientially understood that the feminine heroic journey is real, that the mythic female archetype is transcendent, and wears her own thousand faces. I knew the record was incomplete, too, when my undergraduate and graduate school teachers only chose male artists, male poets, male philosophers for our studies.



# Here comes the Bride



Alchemical Bride 101 (Clara Ledesma) 2021

Clearing out old files and slides from my office, I found copies of lectures challenging Jung, Campbell, and other readings from those CSPs. I found my notes on alchemy and then got a hold of a copy of Jung's *Red Book*. Just as I was digging through these texts and records, I found a gold mine of bridal magazines at Goodwill. Synchronicity!

Extravagant dresses, crowns and veils announced that these women liminal figures, wavering somewhere between a subconscious emblem and pageant participant. For weeks I sat in the studio cutting out more than 1000 brides. Meanwhile, I'd found out that alchemists called the furnaces in which base matter was transmuted into gold the "House of the Chick" and the "womb".

I found this play on words intriguing especially as it centers the act of transformation within the female form. #MeToo was just then revealing issues I had





Alchemical Bride 88 (Luchita Hurtado) 2021

## Heroines galore

aired in the 2012 series, *Veils of Ignorance*, and compelled me to once again engage feminist activism in the studio, but from a celebratory space.

In 2019 I named each of the cut brides after a woman who overcame the constraints of culture and time to make extraordinary contributions to our world. Each woman, in her time, constellated the Bride, the heroine's journey.



Alchemical Bride 106 (Dolores Porras) 2021



I claim each of the women represented in this series as my ancestors and yours.

They are our communal mothers, even if many have been forgotten or purposely erased from the historic canon. Each imaginal portrait is a reimagining of the female form as the actual source of value and meaning in painting and in our communal lives, brush-stroke by brush-stroke.

In life— I speak a patois of English and Spanish, peppered with a Lucumi phrase here and there, and in the studio I speak in a pidgin of painting styles that I call Cubism 3.0.

My tongues and life mythologies are multiple and at the easel I search for images with universal speak. They're universal because they are archetypal and not to be forgotten or erased anymore.



Alchemical Bride 14 (Miriam HaYehuda) 2019



# The many shapes of the Bride



Platonic Solid  
Manuela Saenz  
(octahedron)

Not just mathematicians but alchemists also have been fascinated by the Platonic solids.

Throughout 2020-2021 I experimented painting portraits on various polyhedrons, prisms, and Archimedean solids as analogies for the various faces of the archetypal heroine. In geometry, plane surfaces are called *faces* and the intersection of three or more edges are called



Platonic Solid  
Bessie Coleman  
(Icosahedron)

*vertices*. This rich language inspired me.

The conceptual and physical adulterations created by the cutting and folding of the painted features paralleled the kinds of distortions that amend our historic records, which routinely erased or minimized feminine myths and heroines.

I was also interested in the tension created when perfect



Platonic Solid  
Hypatia of  
Alexandria  
(dodecahedron)

mathematical forms are imperfectly rendered by my human hand.

Each portrait functions as a discrete piece or when grouped as an installation, becomes an agora.



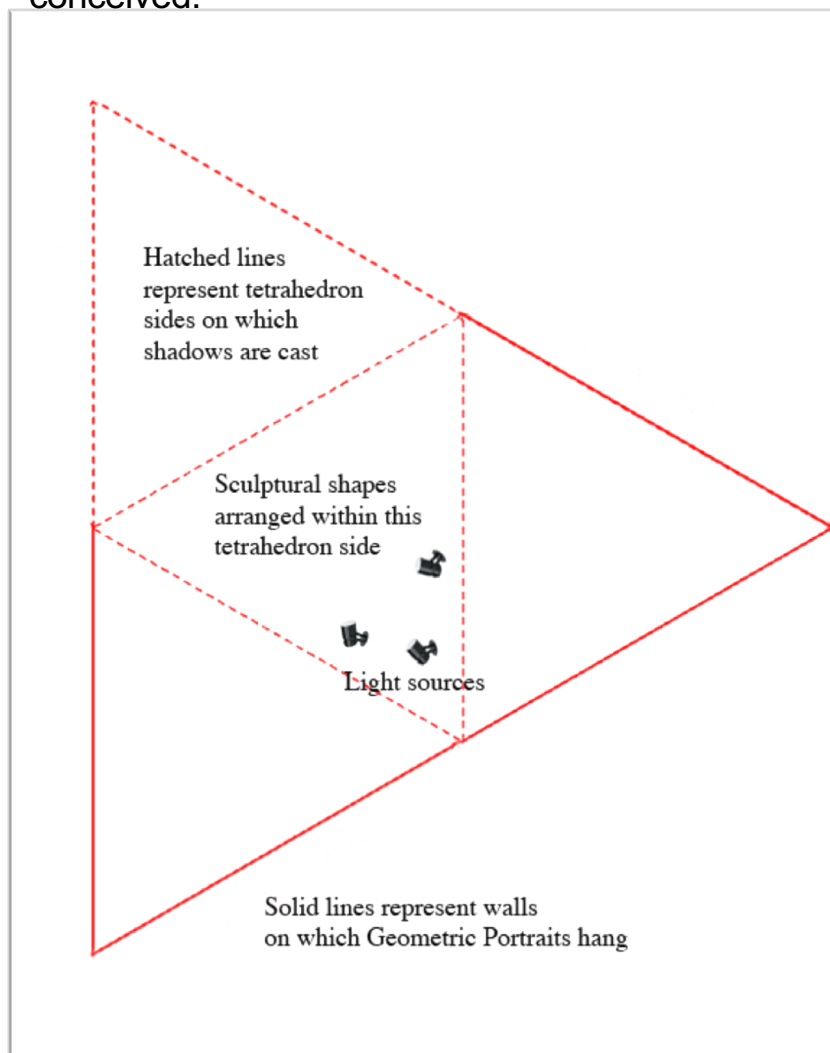




# A gathering takes shape

The Agora was conceived as an installation of paintings and painted geometric forms with projected lights and audio. I envisioned a visual discussion between the shapes changing with shifting lights. Shadow patterns create the illusion of a changing city scape on the walls and floor. Accompanying this sculptural grouping of painted Platonic solids, prisms, Archimedean solids and obloids are geometric portraits, also painted on vellum and on mylar. The shapes are obviously hand-made, embracing the tension between idealized perfection and imperfect praxis. Each representation commemorates a distinguished woman from various histories and ethnicities. The 2-D paintings are diagrams for the sculptural shapes included in the installation so that the viewer can complete them in their own heads, implicating the viewer's imagination in the installation and dialogue of the agora.

An audio recording projects the sounds of my neighborhood drifting in through my open studio windows as well as the sounds of my home and studio, thus connecting the installation in the gallery to the space in which it was initially conceived.



Sample Geometric Portrait





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