

Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix

PRESS RELEASE

Byzantia Harlow: Aetheric

1st December – 15th February

Private view and opening reception: 30th Nov., 6pm - 9pm

Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix is pleased to announce 'Aetheric', a solo exhibition by Byzantia Harlow. This is the second solo show of the emerging UK artist at the gallery. The work evolves from her long-standing exploration of spirituality and healing processes. In parallel to her artistic career, Harlow practices as a psychic medium. Harlow's spiritual beliefs are informed by family history and personal experiences, including a near-death experience as a young child.

The upper gallery will show 85 original works, the basis of a newly created tarot deck, titled the 'Aetheric Tarot'. The images are a re-imagining of traditional tarot iconography, using real people - friends, lovers and strangers – as inspiration for the portrayals. The deck features the traditional 78 Arcana cards, with 7 additional 'Aetheric' cards. Alongside the original works, the 'Aetheric Tarot' will be presented and sold as a limited edition of 100, signed by the artist.

The lower gallery contains a new sculptural installation, a 'Phoenix' which sits on an dirt-bed of ash, created from burnt drafts of drawings for the 'Aetheric Tarot' deck. A sound-work completes the lower floor installation.

Harlow's paternal heritage is that of an Italo-Byzantine family who came to Ravenna with Theodoric. Over time they formed a library containing esoteric texts and alchemical and Aramaic manuscripts. During the Renaissance her ancestors supported monastic scriptors to disseminate lost knowledge.

Harlow's maternal heritage includes Bermudian and Cherokee origins. Her Bermudian grandmother had a deep interest in the paranormal, spiritualism, clairvoyance and automatic writing. Her cousin has researched and authored books on haunted houses.

Her artworks explore ideas around faith, belief, constructed experience and the potential of art facilitating a transitional space where shared encounter may create personal and collective transformation.

The newly created tarot deck is accompanied by a guidebook with channeled interpretations for the cards, handwritten by the the artist within a ritual. The

Major Arcana section of the guide was written by Harlow's father, Paolo Guidi, who trained as a Jungian Psychoanalyst. It expresses the traditional divinatory meanings through the lens of Jung's Alchemical understanding - relating it to the development of the psyche and the process of individuation. Some symbols in the tarot and alchemy share a common metaphysical origin. For Jung, the alchemical texts were part of mankind's arcane attempt to understand the inner psychic world and the process of growth and development. Guidi has worked as a scientist, physician, psychoanalyst, artist, designer and jeweller.

'Phoenix', the principal work for the lower gallery, is a symbol of rebirth, resilience and fortitude - linking to karmic cycles of life, death and rebirth. The Philosopher's Stone, the goal of alchemy, is often described as a phoenix because the Stone is notoriously deep red and undergoes a transmutation through fire.

The phoenix also represents a notion of cultural and ecological cataclysm. In mythology, 'when the time was right' the phoenix built a pyre and focused the sun's rays, being simultaneously immolated and renewed, heralding a new epoch. Harlow chose to create this work as a sign of hope in time of global disarray.

The lower gallery also features a sound work, 'Take What Resonates' which was first shown with Harlesdon High Street in 2021.

The soundscape chronicles an insatiable search for answers and documents a year-long process of self-discovery. A period of worldwide change (2020 - 2021) also triggered an introspective journey. Harlow consulted multiple psychics and curated their audio readings into a work. All of the predictions that came to pass, or seemed accurate at the time, form the soundscape. 'Take What Resonates' enacts the phenomenon of confirmation bias, acknowledging an oscillation between belief and skepticism within the artist.

Harlow's final realisation was that all the answers that she had sought could actually be found within herself. The soundscape is a personal yet universal experience, Harlow postulates that those who visit the space may find messages in it for themselves. Two sonic spells, created specifically for the project by sound healer Thou Alone and artist Andree Martis, break through the edited predictions within the sound work.

Harlow believes we have an innate spiritual understanding within the structure of the psyche. However, with the dominance of secularism and scientific rationalism this aspect of life was lost. She considers 'spirituality' (as a social movement in all its diversity) has had a major resurgence as it offers an alternative to culturally normative systems that no longer seem to be working. Humans, needing hope and faith, look for patterns to create meaning from the meaningless. As the unknowable or un-integrateable are often sources of fear. Alongside spirituality, Harlow sees art having a similarly important role in making sense or a narrative of difficult events. Artworks can turn society's psychological 'dirt' into something that can be enlightening and healing.

The exhibition title 'Aetheric', references the fifth element or quintessence in alchemy, which remains unchanged unlike the other four elements (fire, water, air and earth) which are perpetually variable. It is the Aetheric which holds the four

elements together, a spiritual constant, adding spiritual quality to the physical world.

During the course of the exhibition, we will organise an event when the artist will give readings to members of audience using the newly created Tarot deck. Dates and times will be announced later.

Byzantia Harlow (b. 1986, lives and works in London)

Harlow's practice encompasses a diverse range of references and media, drawing on her interest in faith, belief, trust, ritual, replication and the gap between real experience and artificial effect/affect as it is perceived and performed by the artist, the work, and, ultimately, by the viewer. The works are ephemeral, beguiling, and oddly forbidding – images and forms hover, half recognised and half remembered from other places and other narratives. (Meg Boulton)

Solo exhibitions include Take What Resonates, presented by AM-POP & Harlesden High Street, 108 Fleet Street (2021), [From the same source I have not taken](#), Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix, London and The Enterprise Centre, University of East Anglia (2018), Duplicate (No one will drink the water of your well if you yourself do not drink it), Chalton Gallery, London (2017), Polyester Breeze, The Telfer Gallery, Glasgow (2017), [Spirit Line](#), The Luminary, St Louis, Missouri (2016). Recent group shows include Kill or Cure, Wolfson College, Cambridge University(2022), [House §1](#), Collective Ending HQ, London; [Ancient Deities](#), curated by Rhiannon Salisbury, Arusha Gallery, Edinburgh; [Moving Oracles](#), two-person moving exhibition featuring Byzantia Harlow & Gertruda Gilyte, curated by Johanna Janssen, various Berlin locations; [Earth Eaters](#), organised by Cole Projects, Hoxton 253, London; [Shaking the Habitual](#), Galeria Duarte Sequeira, Braga, Portugal (2020), Bloomberg New Contemporaries, ICA, London (2016). Harlow did radio projects The Silver Stream on Soho Radio (2018 – 2021) exploring her theoretical concerns in collaboration with invited guests, and wrote a fictional Novella titled Ebbed Tide (2023) which investigates synchronistic events and spiritual connections.

For further information, images or to arrange interviews please contact:

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Dates: 1 December - 15 February 2024

Private View: Wednesday 30 November 2023

Address: 19 Goulston St, London, E1 7TP

Opening Hours: Wednesday to Saturday, noon – 6pm

Travel: Aldgate East, Aldgate, Liverpool Street

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