

Star Protected: Shivani Khoshia, Spiritualism and Healing

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‘What if you could feel empty and full, a sea of vibrations... What if there were star beings we could talk to and who could guide us – what if we return to them when we die?’ (Khoshia, 2023)

This tranquil realm is the setting of artist Shivani Khoshia’s paintings. Translucent, childlike faces course through canvases like shooting stars, weaving through channels of soft colour, evoking the fluidity of sea and sky. Butterflies and botanical life adorn the cosmic landscape. Each element summons an essence of an intangible and irresistible realm, transmitted through Khoshia, who acts as an artistic translator for varied entities and planes of existence.

‘To me, channelling is simply complete surrender, and allowing spirit to come through and essentially speak through you... I do my best to articulate that information.’ (Khoshia, 2023)

Khoshia’s paintings are a contemporary contribution to a rich history of spiritual and mediumistic artists, including Georgiana Houghton (1814-1884), Hilma Af Klimt (1862-1944) and Madge Gill (1882-1961), the latter claiming to act as a conduit for her spirit guide Myrninerest, relaying through her work messages of ***‘the dawn of a new era in civilisation’*** (Dutton, 2019)

In recent years, a resurgence of interest in spiritual art has taken place. Both Klimt and Gill have been subjects of retrospective exhibitions, *Painting the Unseen* (Serpentine, London, 2016) and *Nature in Mind by The Line* (Newham, London, 2020-2023), respectively.

Collective shows such as The Drawing Room’s *Not Without My Ghosts* (2020) and The College of Psychic Studies’ *Creative Spirits* (2022) have chronicled not only historical spiritual art, but today’s psychical practitioners, reflecting a revival of otherworldly intrigue.

‘Many of us search for something intangible that, we



Fig.1 *Wolf Moon*, Shivani Khoshia, mixed media, 2023

hope, might heal us – of our grief, our fears, our longings, our all too fallible bodies, our materialism. Perhaps what we really crave is to become magical ourselves; transcendent creatures not ground down by bills, work, family; the stress and strains of the physical realm.’ (Higgie, 2023)



Fig. 2 *Mystic Lady*, Madge Gill, ink on card, 1940



Fig. 3- *The Eye of the Lord*, Georgiana Houghton, oil on canvas, 1862

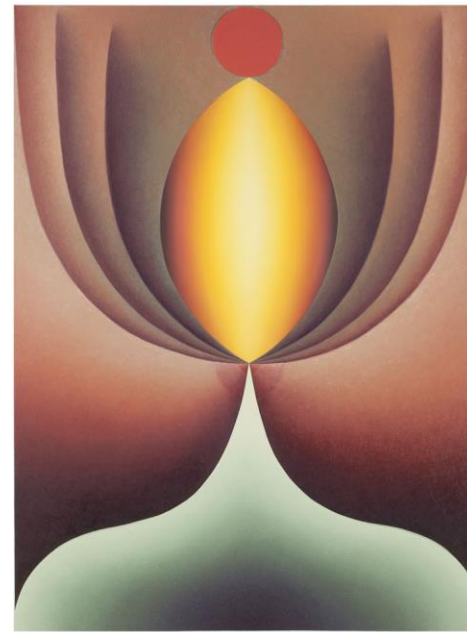


Fig. 4 *A Gentle Meeting of Tips*, Loie Hollowell, oil paint, acrylic medium, sawdust, and foam on linen mounted on panel, 2018

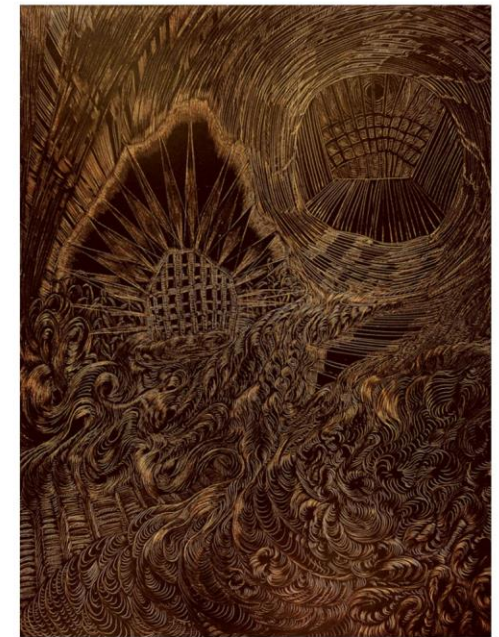


Fig. 5 *Held*, Cathy Ward, incised ink on gold, 2015

Healing appears to be a vital part of today's spiritual art; Loie Hollowell (1983-) marries spiritual symbolism with abstract resemblances of the body (*Hollowell, 2022*), Cathy Ward's (1960-) intricate drawings allow catharsis for illness and bereavement (*Gilbert, 2020*), while decolonial healing and activism is the focus of Tabita Rezaire (1989-), whose work combines the spiritual with the cyber (*Nestor, 2018*).

These therapeutic quests for enlightenment can merge with questions of purpose, embodied by Emma Talbot's (1968-) contribution to the Venice Biennale 2022: *The Milk of Dreams*. Talbot's psychedelic installation *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? Why Do We Think We Can Outwit Nature?* was described as taking on **'the human desire for escape in our environmentally catastrophic present.'** (Weisburg, 2022), validating Higgle's idea of the spiritualist's need for solace.

By embracing the spirit world, the artist achieves not only an insight into another world, but also a way to process, escape, and recover from our own. Shivani Khoshia acknowledges the healing process within her practice: **'Working with the spiritual realms necessarily means moving through a lot of emotion and**



Fig. 6 *SENEB*, Tabita Rezaire, HD video, plasma screen, wooden base, copper pyramid, 7 mins, edition of 3, 2016



Top: Fig. 7 Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? Why Do We Think We Can Outwit Nature? Acrylic on silk 2022 **Above: Fig. 8** (detail)



Fig. 9 Star Protected, Shivani Khoshia, 2022, mixed media

healing. Time and space are moving incredibly fast in these dimensions... where big energy shifts & transformation are possible.' (Khoshia, 2023)

Images

Gill, M. *Mystic Lady*, ink on card, 1940.

Available at <https://madgegill.com/drawings/mystic-lady> accessed 05/05/23

Hollowell, L. *A Gentle Meeting of Tips*, 2018, oil paint, acrylic medium, sawdust and high density foam on linen mounted on pane. Available at <https://www.pacegallery.com/exhibitions/loie-hollowell-2/> accessed 13/05/23

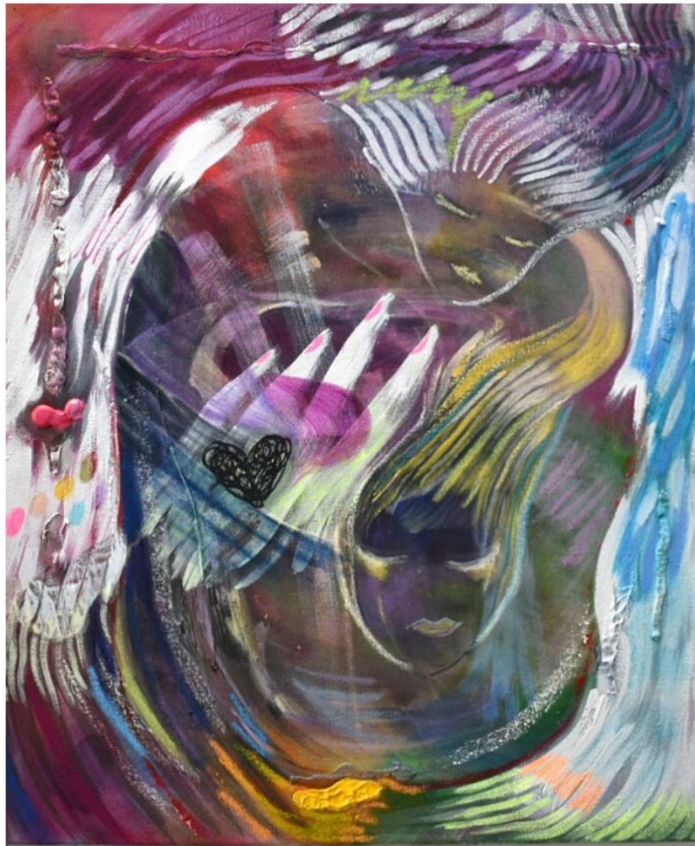


Fig 10. *Crying Light*, Shivani Khoshia, mixed media, 2022

Houghton, G. *The Eye of the Lord*, oil on

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