



## Ritual

The word is already present in the word 'spiritual'. It doesn't always have to be worshipful but is almost always contemplative. House-cleaning is ritual, making coffee with the grinder, the machine, the filter, the flame is. Cooking with the recipe, the 'spell', certainly is, physical exercise is. Household tasks being a favourite distraction for the artist, the composer, the writer. An opportunity to wile away their time during the anxious minutes and hours prior to creation. Getting out and about helps. The rhythms of Duke Ellington's music were inspired by his constant travelling on trains. Writers cite walks and bicycle rides as a form of contemplation. Ritual helps. Ritual heals. Ritual inspires.

### IGOR STRAVINSKY

(b.Oranienbaum, Russia, 1882. - d. New York, 1971)

*Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring) 1913

*"I saw in imagination, in contemplation, a sacred, pagan rite. Wise elders, seated in a circle, watching a girl dance herself to death, sacrificing her to propitiate the God of Spring"* wrote Stravinsky of his early masterwork. What was new in the Rite was that following a period of expansive chromatic harmony; Wagner/Chopin/Liszt/Richard Strauss, rhythm was to take over as the most important structural and expressive element, the young composer using simple diatonic ideas of folk-like character. Benefitting from a close collaboration with the visionary Sergei Diaghalev, and the dancer/choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky, Stravinsky uses the dynamics of rhythm as a primitive force with which to tell the story of the pagan sacrifice of a virgin by her villagers to usher in spring in the ballet's Sacrificial Dance.

The composer's original exercise-books show multicoloured sketches for the dance, as Stravinsky found himself composing music which he did not know how to notate. Backstage at the premiere, Nijinsky yelled at the dancers while Diaghilev tried to suppress a possible riot by flashing the house lights. Stravinsky himself fumed at the audience's response to his music. If nothing else, the ballet's premiere managed to instill in the audience the true spirit of the music. As Thomas Kelly (Harvard) states, "The pagans on stage made pagans of the audience." Despite its inauspicious debut, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* remains one of the true masterpieces of the twentieth century, avant-garde companion piece to Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*. The composer later wrote "I was the vessel through which the Rite passed"

Opposite **HOWARD MORGAN** (b.1949) *Self-Portrait*. Oil on board, 12 x 12ins. 1970

## Sacrifice

Leah Gordon is a photographer and film-maker who first visited Haiti in 1991. She photographed the Amnesty International report on Haiti in 1994 and is author of 'The Book of Vodou' – Vodou & Art (Quarto 2000). Currently at work on a documentary about Haiti's Grand Rue sculptors, her work has featured in numerous exhibitions including the National Portrait Gallery, London.

*"Much is written about the possession by the spirits in Vodou, and often the 'sacrifice' is overlooked. I once stood close to a bull sacrificed for Ogou in Haiti. At the point of death I felt a charge pass through me making me both helpless and also energised.*

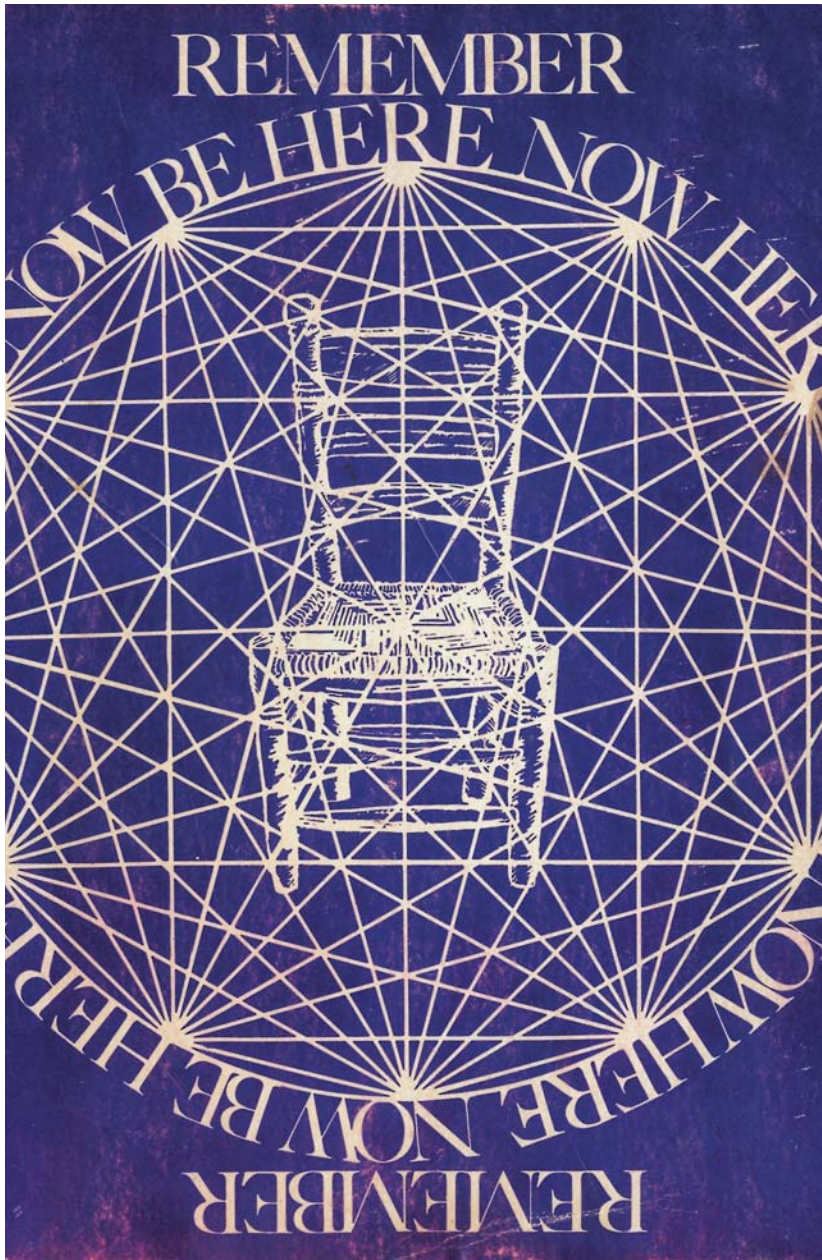
*In South Africa, after hours of tracking their prey on foot, bushmen kill the worn out beast only as it submits to their stamina. After the killing, the hunter wipes the froth and saliva from the mouth of the prey onto his mouth. This is an act of spirit connection, transference and respect. In Vodou, Sacrifice is the metaphorical vestige of this practice within agrarian society. Artists could consider sacrifice as a component of their practice. What is it we doggedly track down, wear out, identify with, transform and annihilate in order to create?*

*Possession is the performative stage of Vodou art. I've seen incredible possession and very bad possession, from intense and ecstatic to hammy and derivative. There is a poetic transgression at work somewhere between theatre and trance, which is inherent in Vodou ritual. But all possession, good or bad, has the capacity to command me. I collude with the drama wholeheartedly as it forbids challenge.*

*Art has become the material expression of the Vodou faith. All forms of the plastic arts have their roots in the Vodou temples. I am working currently with a group of artists, the Sculptors of Grand Rue, from a downtown ghetto in Port au Prince. They've transformed their labyrinthine backstreet neighbourhood into a living installation. Their powerful sculptural collages of engine manifolds, TV sets, wheel hubcaps, skulls and discarded lumber have transformed the detritus of a failing economy into radical, morbid sculptures, mainly inspired by the Vodou spirit of the cemetery, Gede, the guardian of the dead and the master of the phallus. Their, often monumental works, reference their shared African cultural heritage, Vodou practice and a dystopian sci-fi view of the future. Again there is death, transformation and rebirth' Leah Gordon 2008*

Opposite **LEAH GORDON** (b.1959) *JUGE, HAITI*. Lamda print mounted on aluminium  
b/w film 40 x 40, ed.5 – 30 x 30 ed.5. 2004





## Language

*The word...*

The word *Vodún* (*Vodoun Vudu*) is the Fon-Ewe word for 'spirit'. The word is primarily used to describe the Afro-creole tradition of New Orleans while *Vodou* is used to describe the Haitian Vodou Tradition. Alternatives *Vudon*, *Vodun* and *Vodoun* describe the deities honored in the Brazilian *Jeje* (Ewe) nation of Candomblé as well as West African *Vodoun*, and in the African diaspora. *Voodoo* or *Hoodoo* also refer to African-American folk spirituality of the southeastern USA, with roots in West African traditional or "folk" spirituality. When the word Vodou/Vodoun is capitalized, it denotes the Religion proper, otherwise it refers to folk spirituality or the actual deities honored in each respective tradition. Vodoun religion was suppressed during slavery and Reconstruction in the United States, but maintained most of its West African elements. The Fon tradition in Cuba is known as La Regla Arará.

VIRGINIA WOOLF on language...

Woolf states that it is language itself which informs and suggests through familiarity of placement, adjective against noun, and long-term association. The ether in 'ethereal', the 'air' in 'aria' or the sung 'air'. The spirit in the 'spiritual' – or the 'ritual' already in it. We are in 'low' or 'high' spirits. We are 'spirited away'. Shakespeare is full of implication, illusion and imagist ideas and so is Marvin Gaye, much 'soul' singing deriving from gospel origins and the (negro) lamentation or 'spiritual'.\*

The opposing forces and main characters in *The Tempest* are named Prospero – prosperous, luck-giving – and the half-man/half-beast Caliban, a possible mix of *cannibal* and *Cariban*, derived from the Carib Indians. Caliban embodies an 'otherness' in contrast to the civilised Europeans who come to the island.

\*with thanks to Sally Brown: curator: 'Charleston' - British Library 2008

VIRGINIA WOOLF *The Waves* (1931)

Dr Deborah Parsons, says of *The Waves*, 'With its polyphonic, dialectical relationship between interludes and episodes, natural and aesthetic creation, universal and individual, the Waves is undoubtedly the most formally and thematically experimental of all Woolf's novels. It

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was, the author worried, 'fundamentally unreadable', and yet, also, 'my first work in my own style', (*The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol 4, 1931 – 35, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, London, 1982.

"I have no face... I am whirled down caverns, and flap like paper against endless corridors, and must press my hand against the wall to draw myself back" Rhoda, in *The Waves* (1931)

'Rhoda's connection with the world beyond the internal psyche is fragile as she struggles to integrate finite and infinite sensory experience. Feeling trapped between her physical body and its single self she constantly seeks to move beyond it, yet the extreme mental dispersal she consequently experiences which places her on the edge of the margin between mysticism and madness, terrifies her'. Introduction to *The Waves* (Wordsworth Editions) 2000.

W.B. YEATS on language...

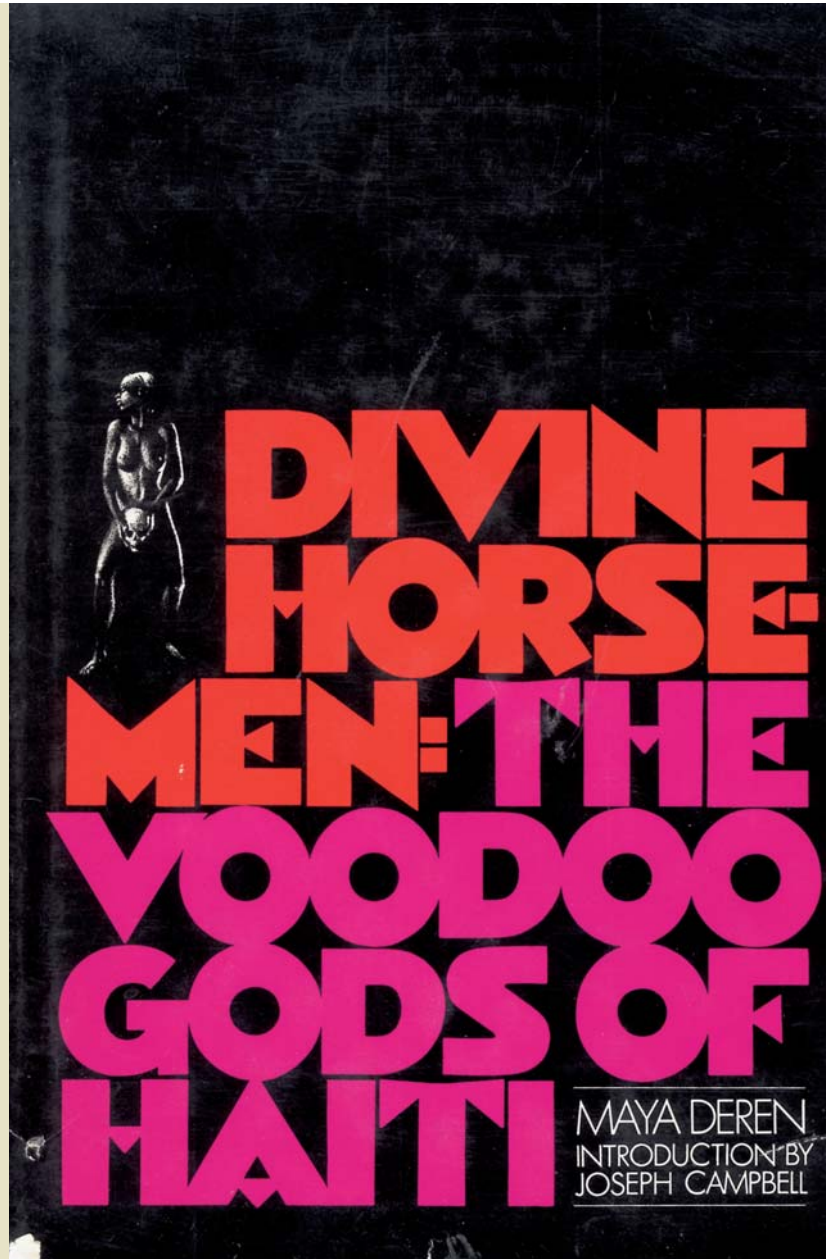
"All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their pre-ordained energies or because of long association, provoke indefinable yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotion; and when sound and colour, and form are in a musical relation, a beautiful relation to one another, they become one sound, one colour, one form, and evoke an emotion which is made out of their distinct evocations and yet is one emotion. The same emotion exists between all portions of every work of art, and the more perfect it is, and the more various and numerous the elements that have flowed into its perfection, the more powerful will be the emotion, the power, the god it calls among us."

W.B. Yeats *Essays & introductions* (MacMillan) 1961 (p153-164)

W.H. AUDEN *Macao*

*Rococo images of Saint and Saviour  
Promise its gamblers fortunes when they die,  
Churches alongside brothels testify  
That faith can pardon natural behaviour*

(WH Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems, 1927-1957*, 1945 © Random House Inc)





# Spells

MARIA NOVELLA DEL SIGNORE  
(b. Florence, Italy)

'Throughout a long career as an artist Maria Novella Del Signore has been associated with the major developments in experimental art, particularly in her native Italy. The open-ended environment of Arte Povera created a laboratory situation in which artists delighted in the exploration of new materials and process. Del Signore's work since the late-seventies, influenced by a meeting with the French post-structuralist philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, concerns itself with ideas that question reason and logic, asserting the importance of non-rational forces such as sensations and emotions. Spontaneity remains the modus operandi of her oeuvre. It is from the unexpected and the intuitive that her work arises.' David Thorp, London, May 2007. (catalogue essay, *Animal Earth* Edizioni Polistampa)

Solo exhibitions: 1972 M.A.F. Florence. 1981 PSI, New York, *Aurora*. 1981 Italian Cultural Institute, New York. 1986 Milan Triennale 1999 StaProject, Florence, Installation. 2007 Siena, Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, *Animal Earth*

CHRISTOPHER BUCKLOW  
(b.1957, Manchester, England)

"For me it's as if I have become porous; as if the barrier between the unconscious and the conscious has been penetrated. The opening stays open for months and years. No longer moments or glimpses. Images come through... If I stop to think about them they are as pregnant with meaning as dreams. Previous life seems to have been lived upon a blade. In contrast, 'now' feels like a vast plain. The knowledge of this state feels like body knowledge. It makes past knowing seem like an intellectual bubble – the inside curve of which was mirrored"

DASH SNOW  
(b.1981, New York City)

Dash Snow is best known for his sculptural installations, collages, and photographs. The great-grandson of Dominique de Menil, his mother, Taya, is the daughter Robert Thurman and half-sister of Uma Thurman and Christophe de Menil. Snow ran away from home and began living on the streets aged thirteen. He began taking 'night before' photographs

Opposite **MARIA NOVELLA DEL SIGNORE** *MACHINA PER L'ODORE*  
(scent machine). 20 x 14 x 30cms. 2002

Overleaf **CHRISTOPHER BUCKLOW** Sketchbook page, ink on paper, 6 x 8ins, 29/2/2008



This is  
reminiscent  
of the  
fusion brooch

That I drew in Venice in 1996.  
But this has the purpose or potential  
to be an agent of fusion action  
whereas the mirrored fish form  
is more of a location.

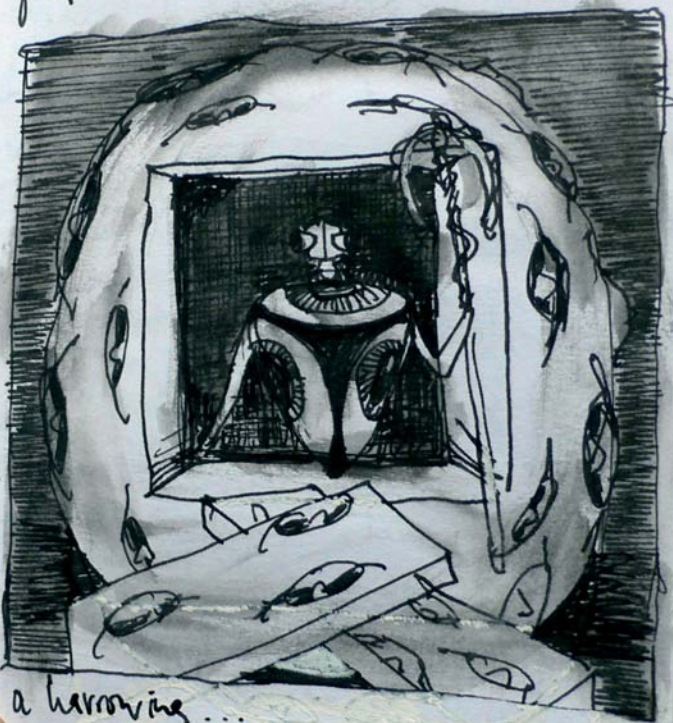
I feel the womb eye part travel...  
Explore ... get about ... sink is  
said of mats - explore  
phobos Use staves? Meet  
staves?

→ crown & handle  
inside? →

Inside - the winged reeds?  
or is that at the doors  
as Christ?

Make  
horizontal  
format.

Reef? What is it about?  
Really about? Two asteroids -  
both me? When did the idea  
first occur & where?



a harrowing...  
I've stave crushed by doors?



as a record of places and situations he might not remember the following day. From his, Snow's photographic work, coming to prominence after the Whitney Biennial 2006, often depicts scenes of a candid or illicit nature. Sex, drug-taking, violence and art-world pretentiousness are documented with disarming frankness and honesty, offering insight into the decadent lifestyle increasingly associated with young New York City artists and their social circles. The artist's recent collage-based work has been characterized by the controversial practice of using his own semen as a material applied to or splashed across newspaper photographs of police officers and other authority figures. Dash Snow is represented by Peres Projects

YAYOI KUSAMA  
(b.1929, Nagano, Japan)

Yayoi Kusama's obsession with endlessly repeating dots, nets and meshes can be traced back to her childhood hallucinations during which multiplying forms encompassed the universe so that she herself and everything else around her was obliterated. Kusama's art is mainly installation-based and encompasses tent-like structures and inflatable forms. The work invites the viewer to completely immerse themselves within it in order to share in the isolation and disorientation experienced by the artist.

Opposite top **DASH SNOW** *UNTITLED* Collage, 14 x 17ins (36 x 43cms), 2008

Below **YAYOI KUSAMA**