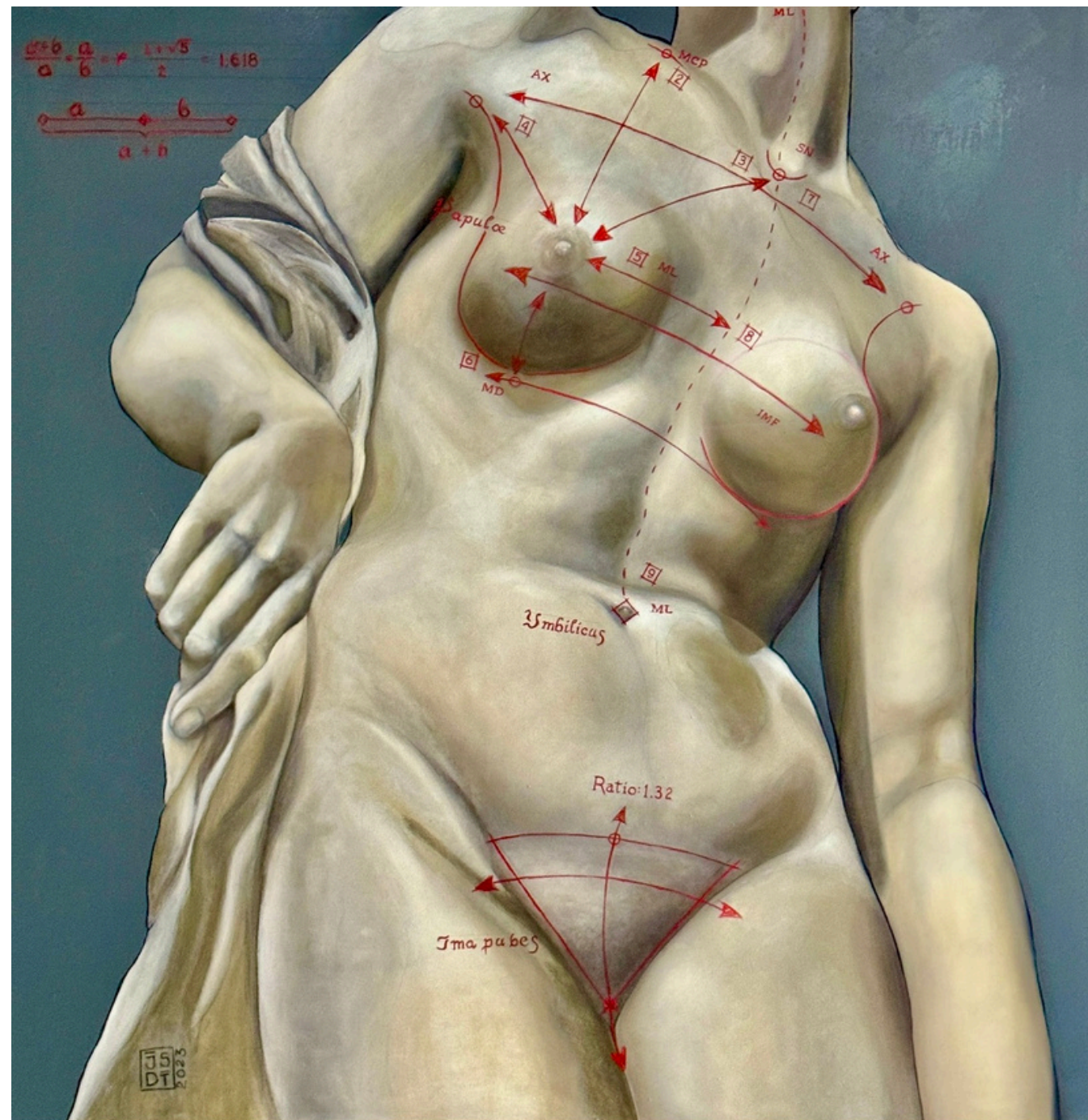




FEMININE ARCHETYPES: QUESTIONING THE LITANY

Josefina Soriano

Feminine Archetypes: Questioning the Litany



This series of works interrogates the traditional stereotypes and symbols historically associated with the female figure in art.

Through each piece, I seek to challenge and reclaim the archetypes assigned to women, exploring how they have evolved and how they have shaped the perception and role of the feminine in society.

Through mythological characters and ancestral symbols, this series invites reflection on identity, representation, and the value of women—both in the history of art and in the present.

Feminine Archetypes: Questioning the Litany is, at its core, a silent provocation: an invitation to question what we take for granted, to free womanhood from the confines of imposed roles, and to recognize the complexity and richness of its identity.

From Ecstasy to Agony

Oil on acrylic sheet
110 × 110 cm
2023

In *From Ecstasy to Agony*, I merge two images that embody the emotional and symbolic extremes of the feminine archetype: the mystical ecstasy of Saint Teresa and the tragic agony of Medusa's decapitation.

The piece contrasts the spiritual and carnal experience of pleasure—that instant in which the soul seems to overflow the body—with the punishment imposed on the woman who dares to wield her desire and her power.

This archetype represents the woman who, for daring to name her will, express her desire, reveal her sensuality, and exercise her power, is transformed into a monster.

From Ecstasy to Agony is a reflection on the gaze that fears the free woman—the one who does not ask permission to feel, think, or exist in fullness.



L'Origine du Monde

Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas

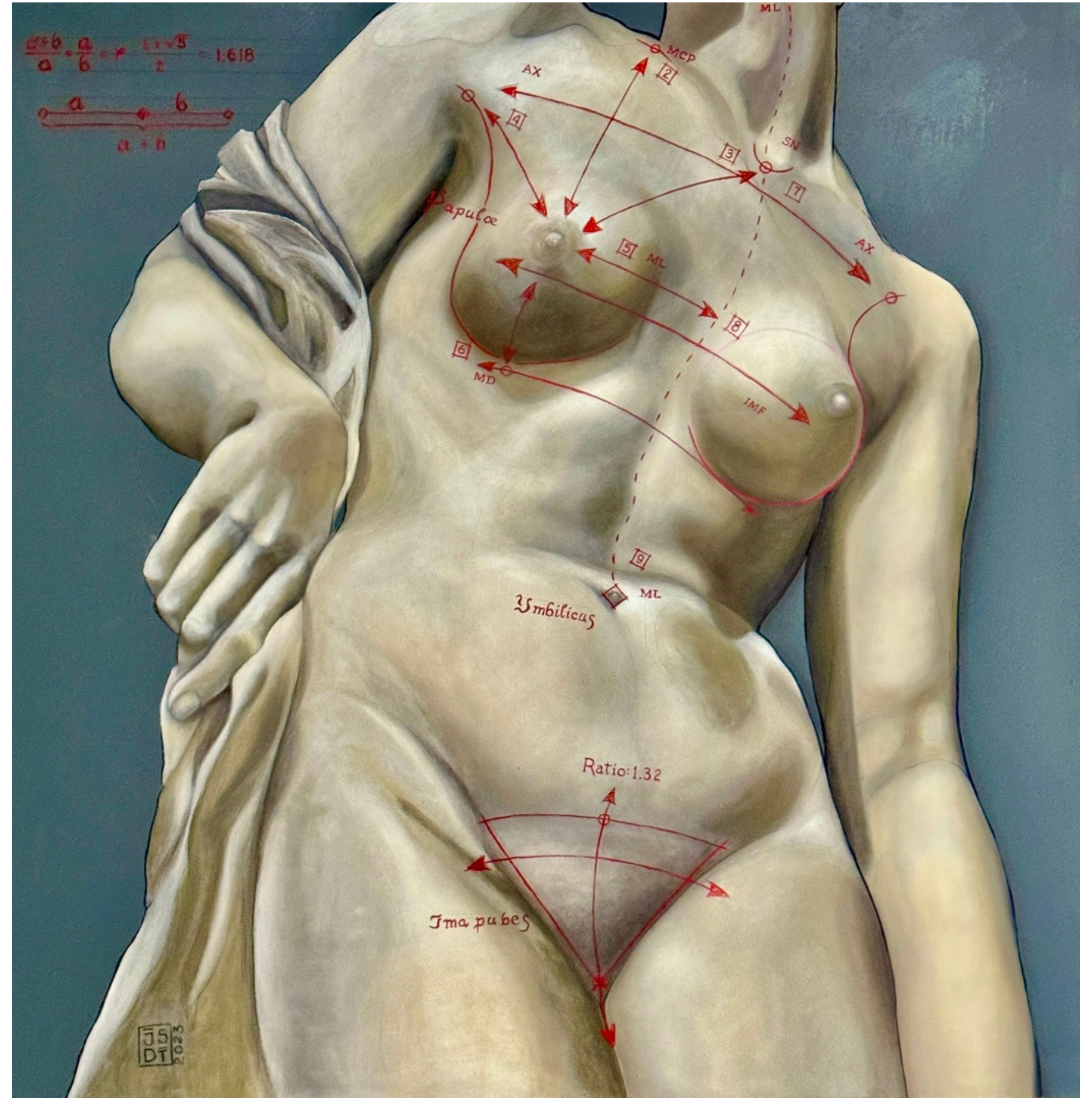
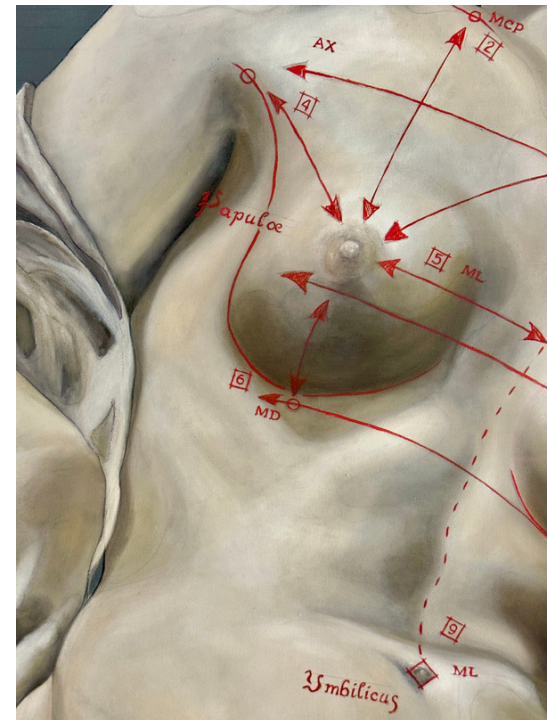
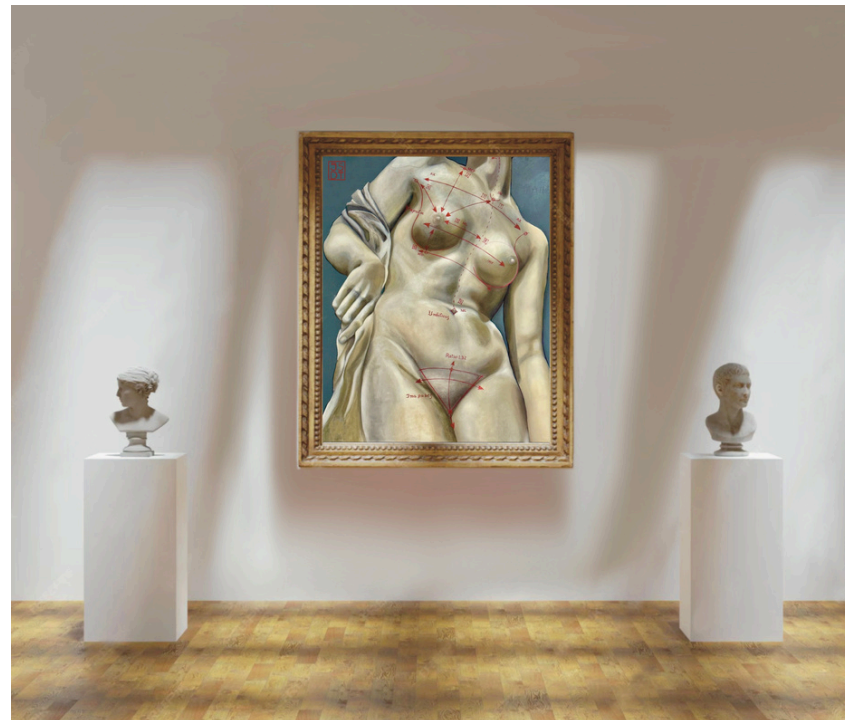
110 × 110 cm

2023

Throughout the history of art, the female nude has been represented as an object of desire—associated with sensuality and passivity—while the male nude has embodied strength, heroism, and intellect. This duality reveals a cultural gaze that has shaped our perception of the body and its symbolic meaning.

In 1866, Gustave Courbet broke with the conventions of his time by painting *L'Origine du Monde*, a work that strips the female body of romantic idealization and confronts us—without modesty—with the essential mystery of existence: the origin of life itself.

My reinterpretation stems from that provocation, but seeks to move beyond scandal and the erotic gaze to restore the sacred dimension of that image. It is not about showing, but about revealing—transforming the carnal into a symbol of power, fertility, and ancestral beauty.



Venus with a Pearl Earring

Oil and marker on canvas
110 × 110 cm
2023

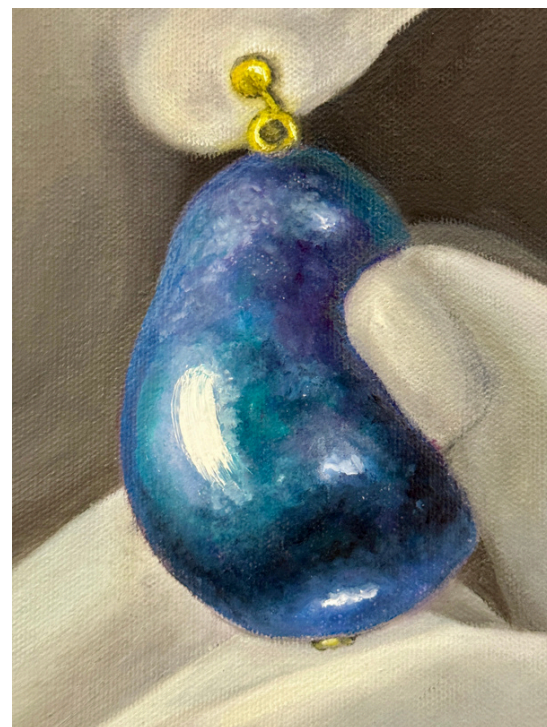
Venus with a Pearl Earring reinterprets the symbols of status, desire, and perfection throughout the history of art.

The solitary pearl she wears embodies a duality: it is an emblem of modesty, yet also a metaphor for the human longing to reach the unattainable.

The work poses a silent question: could Venus—paradigm of divine perfection—yearn for the imperfections of the human?

Between the sacred and the earthly, between the ideal and lived experience, this Venus becomes a mirror of a more complex beauty—one that recognizes fragility, desire, and contradiction as an essential part of the divine.

Venus with a Pearl Earring does not merely exalt classical aesthetics; it re-signifies them. It suggests that within every woman resides a divinity that questions itself—an eternal reflection of the tension between the power of myth and the vulnerability of the real.



Full of Oneself

Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas
110 × 110 cm
2023

In *Full of Oneself*, I explore the profound symbolism of the ancient Venus of Willendorf—an emblem of primordial sensuality, fertility, and feminine divinity. This figure is juxtaposed with the graceful profile of a classical Greek Venus, exalting the beauty of womanhood in its most sublime form.

In this fusion, the idealized beauty of the classical Venus intertwines with the symbolic strength of the Paleolithic Venus, creating a vibrant celebration of femininity, fertility, and motherhood.

The contemporary Venus pays homage to the very essence of the feminine.



Undeniable Pleasure

Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas
120 × 120 cm
2023

In this piece, also titled *Virago Unveiled*, I pay tribute to women who challenge oppressive norms. The Viragos raise their voices, transforming desire into a political declaration.

This work subverts the idealized image of Venus, exalting what is both monstrous and divine in the feminine. It is a hymn to women who refuse to be silenced—celebrating their strength, complexity, and unapologetic power.



In your Eyes

Oil on black mirrored acrylic sheet
120 × 120 cm
2023

In Your Eyes interweaves African and Greek mythologies, questioning the traditional interpretation of Medusa. Inspired by an African goddess who wore dreadlocks as symbols of wisdom and renewal, the piece suggests that Mediterranean culture may have misread those braids as serpents—thus transforming a true goddess into a feared monster.

Without claiming or denying any single origin, the work highlights the fluidity of myth and invites us to reconsider history in the light of new perspectives. Medusa emerges here as a mirror of European fear toward African spirituality and the empowered woman.



When is Isis a Venus?

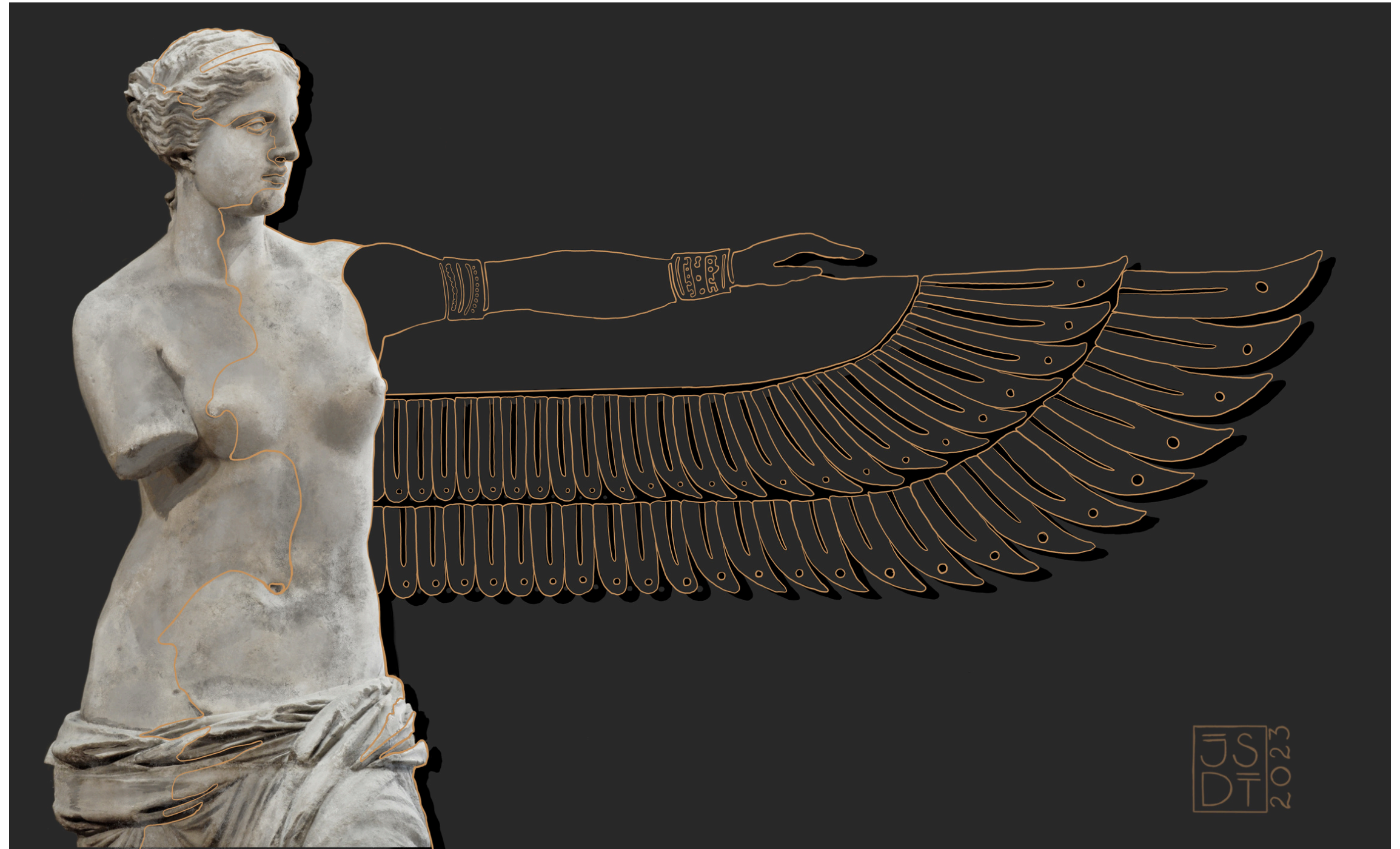
Oil on acrylic sheet and liquid gold on acrylic sheet
76 × 113 cm
2023

This work interweaves three feminine archetypes from antiquity: the Roman Venus, the Greek Aphrodite, and the Egyptian Isis. Each embodies a distinct dimension of feminine power: desire, beauty, and spiritual transcendence.

In ancient Egypt, Isis symbolized healing, protection, and the bond between life and death. Her image—often depicted with wings—represented the capacity to embrace and resurrect, to give life even in the midst of loss.

Here, the Venus de Milo—emblem of the classical ideal but also of the mutilation caused by time—is reimagined with the wings of Isis, in a gesture of repair and redemption. The fusion of these figures dissolves the boundaries between East and West, body and spirit, beauty and power.

The work thus proposes a reflection on the endurance of myth and the ancestral force that inhabits the feminine figure: a fragmented body that, upon recovering its wings, is reborn as a universal symbol of freedom, desire, and divinity.



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2023

The Mockery

Oil on acrylic sheet
120 × 120 cm
2023

Inspired by Hélène Cixous's essay, this work celebrates Medusa's transformation from victim to emblem of feminist resistance.

Her laughter—once silenced—now resounds as an act of insurrection. Medusa's Mockery invites women to reclaim their voice and their body, to write their own language outside the patriarchal system.

It is a mockery that heals, that breaks, that creates.
A mockery that returns to women their narrative power.



Epiphany

Oil on canvas
80 × 60 cm
2023

I titled this work *Epiphany* because it represents the moment in which a woman awakens to her own wisdom and recognizes her worth. It is the instant she understands that her strength does not come from outside but from within—from that feminine energy that drives her to build herself spiritually and emotionally.

The snake, an ancestral symbol of the divine feminine, wraps around her body as an emblem of power and transformation. It represents the energy that, once awakened, leads to illumination and inner liberation.

Epiphany is the vision of a woman who, upon encountering herself, leaves fear behind and embraces her own light.



The Vine

Oil and liquid gold leaf on canvas

80 × 60 cm

2023

This work reinterprets the archetype of the mythological bacchante, a figure associated with ecstasy, intoxication, and the freedom of the senses—one that, over time, was reduced to the stereotype of the femme fatale: desired yet feared, sensual yet condemned.

This piece reclaims the freedom of the female body and its capacity for pleasure without guilt. The grapes, exalted in gold, allude to their dual symbolic nature: on one hand, desire and temptation; on the other, fertility, abundance, and the creative power that various cultures have linked to the feminine.

By coating them in gold—material of the sacred and the incorruptible—the work transforms this symbol into an object of dignity, shifting the moralizing gaze toward a celebration of joy and fullness.

The Vine thus invites us to question the judgments that have fragmented the identity of women, proposing instead a vision in which eros and virtue, beauty and power, desire and wisdom can coexist in equilibrium.



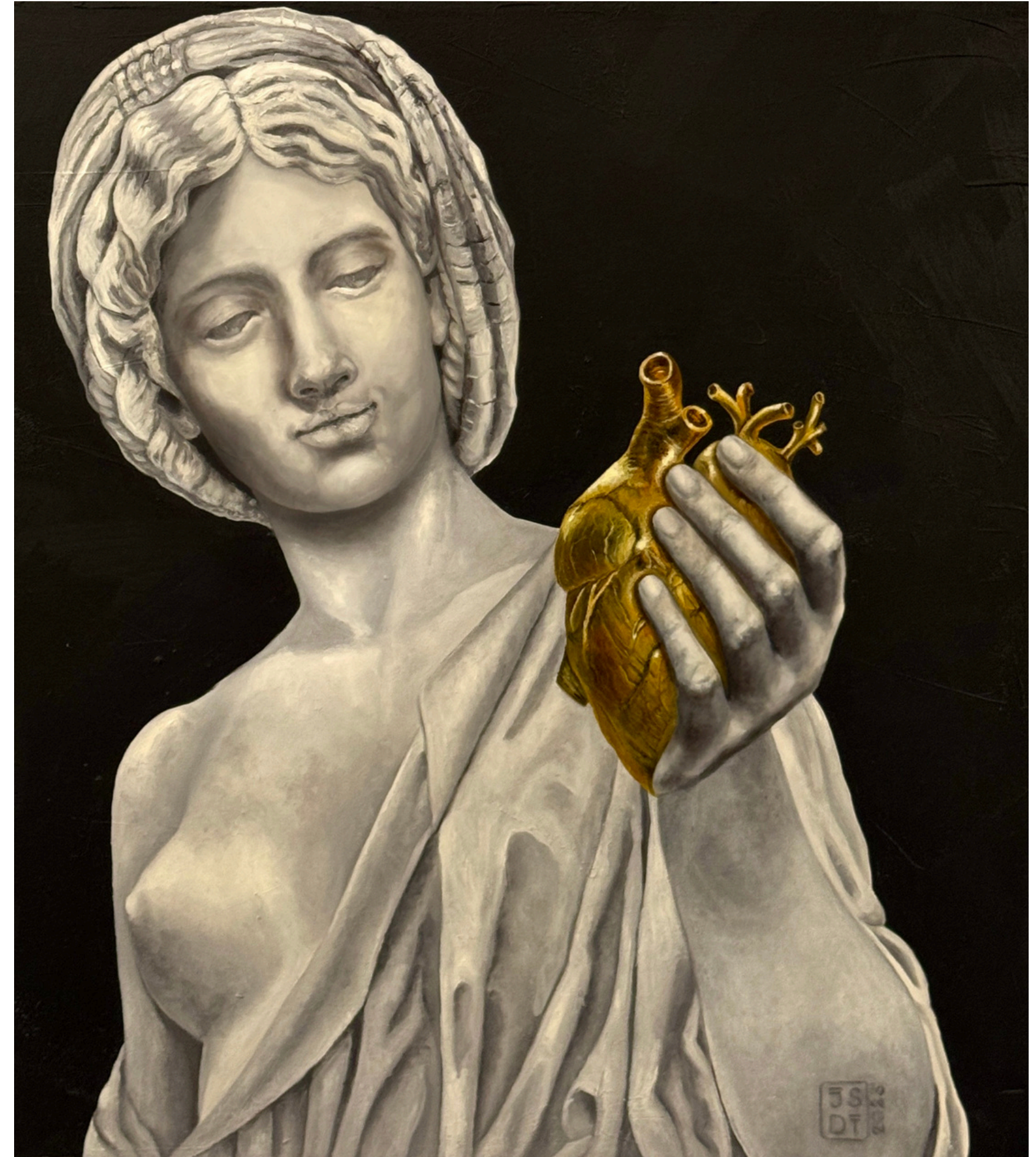
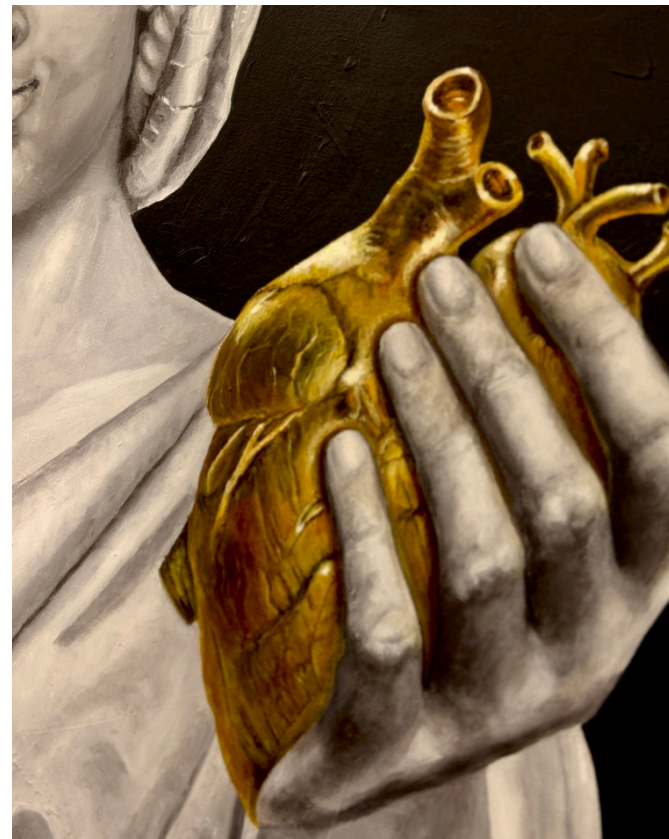
Pietà

Oil on canvas
90 × 80 cm
2023

The image of a woman holding a golden heart embodies the power of love as a vital and spiritual force. It represents a generous and compassionate woman—one capable of offering affection, empathy, and inner light to the world around her.

Gold—an incorruptible material associated with the divine—underscores the value and preciousness of feminine love, not as fragility but as virtue and strength.

In Christian iconography, this image evokes the Sacred Heart, symbol of redemptive love and divine compassion. In contrast, in ancient cultures it can be linked to goddesses of love, beauty, and fertility—figures that embodied creative power and primordial feminine energy. Thus, the work unites the sacred and the human, the mystical and the emotional, paying homage to the heart as a universal emblem of love, devotion, and transcendence.



Giver of Dreams

Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas, with engraved and inked acrylic sheet
90 × 80 cm
2023

Giver of Dreams reinterprets feminine archetypes by merging the classical figure of Gaia—the primordial mother—with the iconography of space travel. The earthly goddess becomes a cosmic creator, one who generates not only life, but also future and knowledge.

The contrast between marble and the metallic helmet symbolizes the union of the ancestral and the technological, the human and the divine. *Giver of Dreams* offers a new vision of womanhood: not as a distant muse or myth, but as an active force capable of imagining and inhabiting other worlds.



The Other Woman

Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas, with engraved and inked acrylic sheet
90 × 80 cm
2023

The Other Woman confronts the traditional roles assigned to women in Western culture by uniting two opposing archetypes in a single figure: Venus, symbol of beauty, desire, and ideal perfection, and Medusa, emblem of power, wisdom, and feminine resistance.

The classical Venus wears a Medusa bracelet—a gesture that redefines her image: the goddess of love incorporates the strength of the one who was demonized for possessing knowledge and autonomy.

Thus, *The Other Woman* does not portray “the other woman” in the sense of rivalry or taboo, but the integral woman—one who carries within herself sensuality, intelligence, healing, and the ancestral power that history attempted to fragment.



Athena sporting the Dragón

Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas, with engraved and inked acrylic sheet

90 × 80 cm

2023

Athena sporting the Dragon explores the symbolic power of the dragon—demonized in the West yet revered in the East as a symbol of wisdom, strength, and hidden knowledge.

In Chinese culture, the dragon represents fortune, courage, and determination. The dragon's feminine presence embodies the defense of high ideals, gender equality, and freedom of thought.

This work pays homage to feminine resilience—honoring the courage of women who forge their own destinies and reclaim their bodies and their histories.



Renaissance Woman

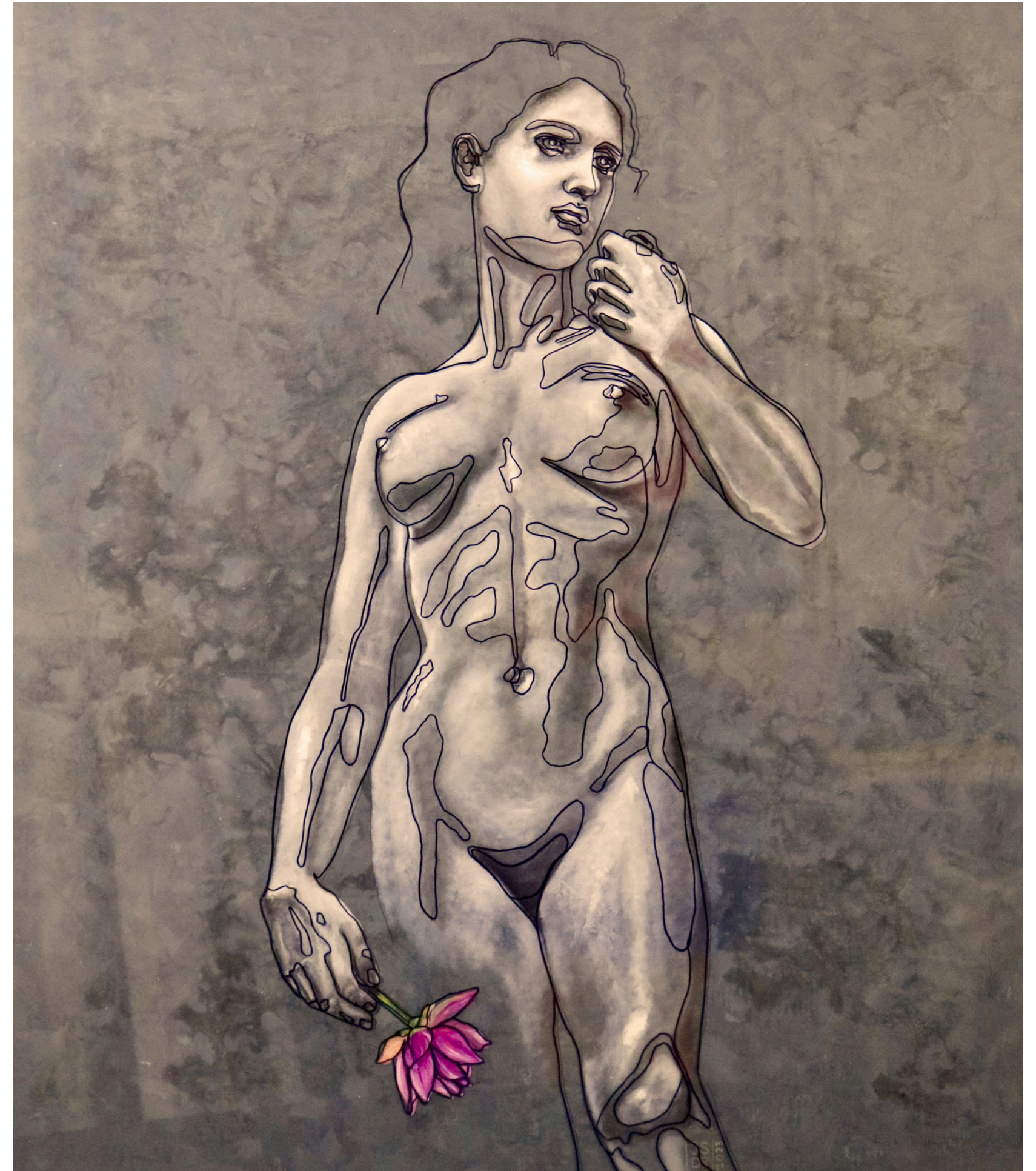
Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas, with engraved and inked acrylic sheet
90 × 80 cm
2023

Renaissance Woman celebrates the free woman in a society that still fears her autonomy.

Strong, educated, and aware of her body, she holds a lotus— a universal symbol of enlightenment, purity, and spiritual rebirth.

The lotus that blossoms from the mud becomes a metaphor for inner transformation.

This work embodies the feminine capacity to transcend, reinvent, and bloom even in the midst of adversity.

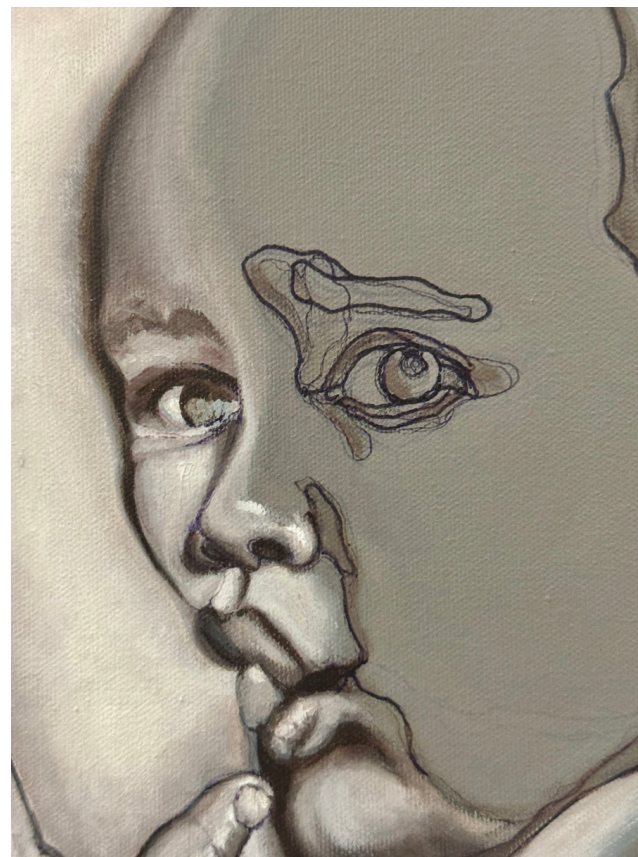


Unpleasant Women

Oil, marker, and gold leaf on canvas
100 × 80 cm
2023

Unpleasant Woman reinterprets the iconic figures of Venus and the Virgin Mary. The rebellious Madonna holds her child—thoughtful and protective—embodying a new vision of motherhood: complex, lucid, and free.

The work breaks the dichotomy between Virgin and Magdalene, proposing a figure who embraces her multiplicity: mother, thinker, sensual, and spiritual at once. A visual declaration that celebrates women's right to be all their versions—without guilt.



We Come in Peace

Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas
110 × 110 cm
2023

We Come in Peace reinterprets the symbol of Athena, goddess of war and practical wisdom. Born from the mind of Zeus—without mother or consort—Athena embodies an autonomous and incorruptible force. Unlike Ares, she represents strategic intelligence, reason, and excellence in combat.

With Amazon war paint, Athena prepares to confront her most formidable enemy: self-destruction—a metaphor for the internal battles women continue to face today.



Lady in Blue

Oil, graphite, and marker on canvas
120 × 120 cm
2023

This work is built from a single continuous line—one-line art—a gesture that embodies the unity between thought and form. The line, the most minimal element of visual language, becomes a metaphor for vital flow, for the energy that shapes and defines the feminine being. Its continuity suggests permanence, breath, and inner movement; it is a trace, but also an imprint of consciousness.

In contrast, the painterly mark represents emotional reflection: a synthesis of color and form, a projection of the psychic onto the physical. While the line delineates, the mark reveals; while one structures, the other exposes interiority.

Coexisting on different planes—the rational and the emotional, the tangible and the spiritual—both dimensions construct a complex portrait of womanhood as a symbolic and emotional territory: body and idea, boundary and overflow, control and vulnerability.

