



Marina Perez-Wong and Elaine Chu, *Our Ancestors' Wildest Dreams*
(© 2020 Twin Walls Mural Company at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)

Dance on the Waters of Creation

STACY HASSEN

This dance is the joy of existence.

Rumi (Coleman with Moynes 1995, 131)

Blending hyper-realistic and free-flowing painting styles, Elaine Chu and Marina Perez-Wong are complementary change-makers. After a synchronistic meeting in art school years ago, these two women felt an immediate kinship and forged an alliance and created Twin Walls Mural Company. Their focused efforts and balancing perspectives seamlessly intermingle to create a distilled unitive, collaborative process, working with pigments in paint to dissolve separation and inequality based on pigments in skin and discordant views of gender. Mainly mural-makers for outdoor spaces, their recent installation (from October 3, 2020–October 23, 2022) inside the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) was created as part of the museum's Bay Area Walls commission. *Our Ancestors' Wildest Dreams* features vibrancy and vision for life



beyond borders, generational trauma, and division. Working with symbols and vibration, rhythm and emotion, the mural's visual narrative conveys physical, psychological, and spiritual healing.

Bridging realities and manifesting hope by redefining cultural identities within a broader context, these courageous women work first in the imaginal realm to envision the mural's design. Within a narrative that identifies the outer loss of marginalized peoples at the hand of entrenched social structures, the mural—almost silently, yet powerfully—acknowledges those who have come before: their sufferings, their endurance, their too-numerous-to-count stories. In a time of great need for healing and breath, inspiration and embodied spirit, the seemingly two-dimensional painting offers a healing medicament through an infusion of ancestral presence, archetypal symbols, and artistic soul. Birthed from within a circle of midwifing artists whose support and contributions bring another level of consciousness's healing light, the mural grows from a cohesive center.

A Mexican mango flower, like a thousand-petaled lotus made of liquid sunlight, painted on parachute silk by their "art mom," Susan Cervantes (founder of Precita Eyes Muralists in the Mission district of San Francisco), graces the heart of the mural. This mandala radiates as a fertile field and ground for the cherry blossom or sacred Sakura tree's living, branching lungs and restorative power. Beneath Milagros—little miracles as offerings, as prayers—loaded with mana adorning the trunk, the artists have included chakras as balancing centers of consciousness. The tree's heartbeat emanates from the Anahata center of love—the heart chakra—in a kinetic pulse as bands of verdant blessing. Symbols, stenciled as cohesive patterns within each ripening-green hue, are contributions from seven compassionate, fierce artist-healer activist

women influential in Elaine and Marina's creative life. These symbols are imbued with ancestral medicine and the energy to contain, confront, accept, and transform.

Within the mural's fluid rhythm, seven larger-than-life feminine figures—those of three inspiring art students from Oakland School for the Arts and four youthful Radical Monarchs (an Oakland-based organization that educates and empowers girls of color in sisterhood, activism, and social justice)—dance from the soul of their being, with the joy and rhythm at the heart of creation. Ancestral waters support them as their dance breaks down border walls, dismantles monuments and memories of past idols and brutalities, and sinks slave ships' weighty colonial moorings. All this, in turn, releases blocked energy. As stagnant qi being freed tonifies and nourishes the body, the composting of these old, constricting forms and barriers becomes revitalizing nutrients within the healing waters of the Earth. This balm bathes Mother Earth's womb and her world tree roots with velvety glowing pink-rose light. The same vibrancy appears in the healthy lungs and pink blossoms intimating that what feeds the roots then becomes the nourishing sap of this life-giving tree from which breath flows and circulates.

Uplifting winds twirl and carry seven pink and white blossoms with gold filament centers like little miracle-prayers. They are seeds of change winding their way in beauty into a dance older than our oldest ancestors and as youthful as this moment being born. They are planting themselves like petaled starlight into the current of the breath, into the in and out respiration that restores vitality and gives inspiration for the dance. Their sweet perfume enters the lungs as vibrant life, delicate and enduring, and flows through the bodies, hearts, and bones of those who dance on the waters of creation. The illuminating blossoming reveals itself in the dancers' enthusiasm, in the tree's roots and branching lungs, in the thrumming air. This ancestral seeding of light guides the hand, brush, and unfurling vision of the artists. Its presence reveals itself in the mandala's thousand-petalled blooming, in the shimmering radiance and roundness of the verdant dance. This presence is in the gravity of our soles touching down upon the membrane of the ocean in harmony with these non-binary young women and girls dissolving the old to restore balance and revivify the breath that celebrates life's cosmic dance.

NOTE

For additional information about ARAS Online, go to aras.org where you can access a rich array of free offerings: visit an international virtual art gallery with "Art in a Time of Crisis: Interconnection and Companionship"; explore a library of articles, books, poetry, and writings on art and symbols; and search Jung's *Collected Works* by keyword and topic with "A Concordance." Subscribe to receive emails of our monthly symbol exploration, *Archetype in Focus*, and our quarterly online newsletter, *ARAS Connections*. Subscribers to ARAS also receive access to Artstor Digital Library. Complementary online appointments for ARAS in San Francisco are available by emailing aras@sfjung.org.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barks, Coleman, with John Moyne, trans. 1995. *The Essential Rumi*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

STACY HASSEN, PhD, curator of ARAS (Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism) and faculty at the C. G. Jung Institute of San Francisco for more than twelve years, writes and gives presentations on the importance of the archetypes; the union of inner and outer worlds and the Anima Mundi; alchemy as a psychological process; and the transformative power of symbols. Her work focuses on what seeds the emerging consciousness of oneness and renews our relationship with the sacred in life. *Correspondence:* stacyeri821@gmail.com.