



Christopher Volpe
Alchemy & After
November 3-28, 2021

All paintings are executed in various combinations of stabilized tar, oil, and a mix of 23K and artificial gold leaf.

1. Jacob's Ladder	\$3,500
2. Abraxas	\$550
3. Burning Whaler	\$3,200
4. Air (Whose breath gives and takes away the form of all things)	\$1,750
5. The Mystic Alone Sees the Sun Aglow at Midnight	\$4,200
6. Earth (O darkness veiled by Splendor! Who Concealest the Marvelous Seeds of Stars!)	\$1,750
7. Fire (The Secret Celestial Fire which, when aroused into action, can as easily destroy as It can create)	\$575
8. Water (dread King of the Sea, who hast the Keys of the Floodgates of Heaven)	\$575
9. Surely All This is Not Without Meaning	\$6,200
10. Plunging Rose	\$675
11. State of Preservation	\$425
12. Apparatus for Distilling Time (Submersion Phase)	\$1,850
13. As Above So Below	\$875
14. Golden Pear	\$625

Artist's Statement

Painting's secret ambition is to conjure the immaterial from the material, to render non-visible worlds visible. In this, artists are like alchemists, transforming materials to conjure new realities, new worlds-within-worlds.

But today's "alchemy" is mostly about technology. Science is no longer linked to magic or the spiritual significance that alchemists once found in nature and the elements. The natural world has long lost its enchantment and its meaning, and modern humanity, along with the chemistry of the planet itself, is beginning to register the damage of a purely materialistic worldview addicted to commercialism.

These paintings were created using liquefied coal tar (a by-product of petroleum refinement) combined with shredded gold leaf. I think of the tar as the ultimate base matter – dark, toxic, pulling toward dissolution and decay – as well as a signifier for industrialization and the fossil fuels that drive it. In the gold I see the opposite – a precious, relatively "pure" metal invested with spiritual overtones – and a fitting symbol of the commercialization of nature. The titles are borrowed from historical alchemical and esoteric texts.

I hope this work evokes dynamic forces of darkness and light, dissolution and rebirth. My goal is to wrest from our failure to transcend our human flaws a kind of equilibrated beauty, however raw, one that both attracts and repels like the materials themselves.

- Christopher Volpe