

24 JANUARY – 14 MARCH

TRANSCENDENT THRESHOLDS

Aeon of the Black Sun | Alex Coma

Naguala | Claudia Medina + Sophia Sanford



***Naguala (detail)* | Claudia Medina + Sophia Sanford | 3 Channel Video | 2 Channel Sound Installation | 16:20 Loop | English, Spanish, Nahuatl**

TRANSCENDENT THRESHOLDS

Curatorial Comment by Denise Lawson

Collectively, we stand together at the beginning of a new year in a time that feels exceptionally precarious. With much going on around the world that is unsettling, it seems appropriate that CVAG offers *Transcendent Thresholds* as the introduction to its 2026 programming.

Artists Alex Coma, Claudia Medina, and Sophia Sanford bring us work that disrupts the framework of a colonial worldview. Their exhibitions hold up ancient knowledge and cultural traditions as relevant and vital to knowledge, perception, and understanding of our place in the world as one of co-existence and not hierarchical.

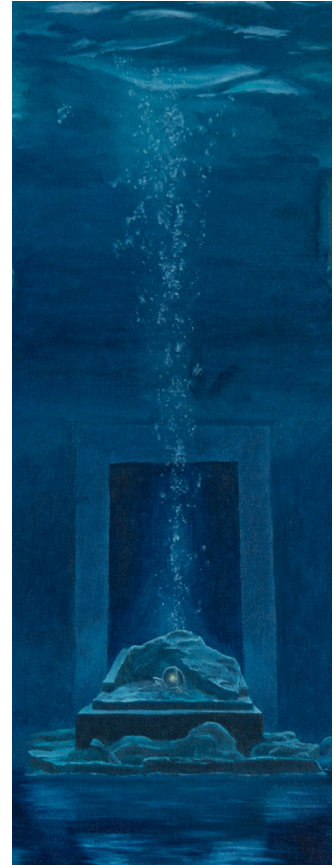
In *Naguala*, filmmaker Claudia Medina and sound artist Sophia Sanford, have created an immersive video and sound installation in which the viewer is drawn into Nahua knowledge that “challenges interpretations that cast Nagualismo as evil or dangerous, revealing instead a healing, poetic, and cosmological practice of becoming. In Nahua tradition, becoming a Naguala means studying movement, medicine, the stars, and the cycles of life and death. It’s about relationality and regeneration.” Medina’s filmmaking uses spoken words and beautiful visuals paired with a richly layered soundscape created by Sophia Sanford. The resulting experience embraces and transports the viewer as it offers an invitation “to dissolve the skin-bound self and step into deeper entanglements with land, time, and the more-than-human world.”

Naguala is an entrance way into a spaciousness where there is room for reframing who we are and how we might imagine a transformed integration with the cosmos.

In the work of Alex Coma, *Aeon of the Black Sun* — based on the ancient knowledge of the goddess Nuit — the viewer enters a space that is installed with paintings, assemblages, sculpture, scent, and sound. The artist uses traditional techniques — oil painting using historical methods such as chiaroscuro, the application of gold gilt, ceramics, and the ancient practice of Cob construction — and mixes these with modern practices — digital technologies in sound, photography, video, and 3D printing of sculptural form. Each piece is in conversation with the others — aligned in direct relationships using principles of sacred geometry, archetypal energies, and esoteric knowledge — the installed works imbue the space with beauty and mystery. The body of work comprising *Aeon of the Black Sun* creates an immersive installation that “summon contemplative, non-rational atmospheres that actively challenge scientific objectivity and Eurocentric rationalist canons.” There is an alchemy of the sacred. Here, old pathways can be abandoned and new journeys can begin.

Transcendent Thresholds offers an opportunity to be refreshed, restored, and rejuvenated. The artists’ works strengthen, ground, and energize hope for the “re-storying” of our humanity to a place of relationality where the boundaries of separateness that alienate us from the animals, plants, earth, cosmos, reality, the supernatural, and each other are dissolved.

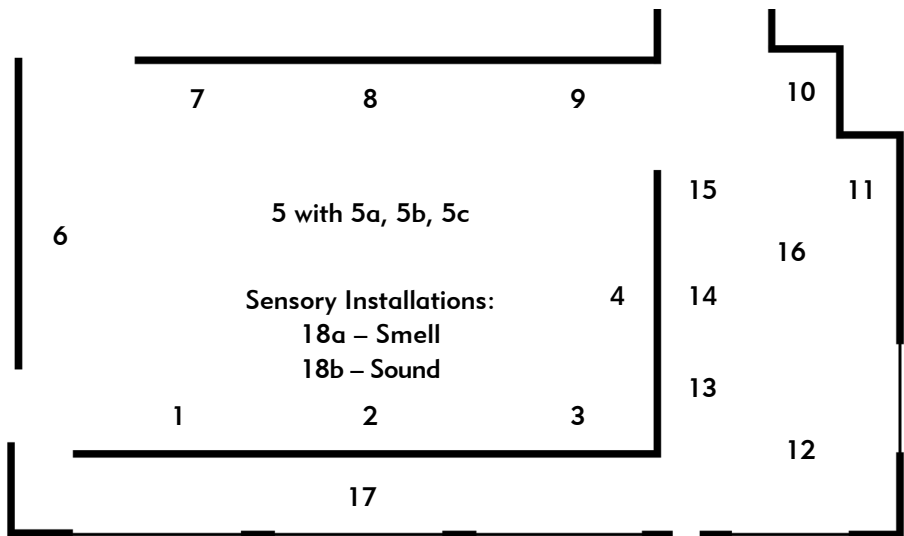
Vision of Osirion (detail) |
Alex Coma | 2025 | Oil on
Canvas | 36" x 48"



Gratitude to CLAUDIA MEDINA and ALEX COMA for the words in quotations.

Aeon of the Black Sun

Alex Coma



SOUTH GALLERY | GATHER:PLACE | WINDOW + PLAZA MEDIA GALLERY

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Osirion Activation</i> 2025 Oil on Canvas, Frame, Lapis Lazuli Pigment 25" x 35" | 5. <i>Gharbha - Grha Womb</i> Steel Frame, Plaster, Local Clay, Vetiver Root, Angelica Root, Cardamom, Wool Fabric, Wood, Lapis Lazuli Stone, Copper Wire, Rose Extract Essential Oil 5'6" x 4'6" x 9' |
| 2. <i>Oracle of Binah</i> 2023 Framed Oil on Canvas 30" x 36" | |
| 3. <i>The Lust of Space</i> 2025 Glazed Ceramic 13" x 4" x 9" | 5a. <i>Velocity of Stillness</i> 2025 3D Printed Turtle, Lapis Lazuli Paint, Lapis Lazuli Stone 13 " x 11' x 3" |
| 4. <i>Vision of Ecstasy</i> 2024 Oil and Lapis Lazuli on Canvas 48" x 72" | 5b. <i>Smell of Prayer</i> 2025 Glazed Ceramic 7" x 2.25" x 2.5" |

- 5c. *Blue Linckia* | Lapis Lazuli Oil Paint on Dried Starfish | 8" x 8"
6. *Portal of Emanation* | 2025 | Oil and Lapis Lazuli on Embossed Steel, Powder Coated Steel Frame | 72" x 72" open 36" x 72" Closed
7. *The Light in the Wound* | 2025 | Glazed Ceramic, Bees Wax Candle and Chlorophyll Dye | 8" x 8" x 2"
8. *Portrait of Silence* | Oil on Gold Plated 19th C. French Frame, Wax Candles, Painting Pallet | 17" x 23"
9. *Astral Alignment* | 2026 | 3D Printed Sculpture, Clay and Spice Mix, Copper Wire, Chemically Engraved Copper Plate, Acrylics, Red Ruby, Hassonite Garnet, Emerald, Quartz, Citrine, Lapis Lazuli, Green Jade, Italian Red Coral, Epoxy, Salt Water, Aluminum Dish | 8" x 8" x 26.5"
10. *Vision of Osirion* | 2025 | Oil on Canvas | 36" x 48"
11. *Angel of the Presence* | 2024 | Framed Acrylic on Canvas | 18" x 18.5"
12. *The Mechanics of Resurrection* | 2025 | Glazed Ceramic, Water, Plant | 11" x 11" x 4"
13. *Journey into the Body* | 2024 | Framed Oil on Canvas | 18.25" x 21.5"
14. *Madonna of the Rubble* | 2025 | Inkjet Print on Archival Paper, Non-Glare Acrylic, Walnut Frame | 22" x 15.36"
15. *Constructing the Chariot* | 2023 | Framed Oil on Canvas | 10.5" x 19.25"
16. *Virgin Tears of Synthesis* | 2025 | Steel Grid, Engraved Steel Plate, 20th C Portuguese Madonna Poster, Raw Silk, Silk Thread, Charred Wood, Bees Wax and Chlorophyll Candles, 3D Printed Rose | 24" x 13" x 33"
17. *For I am Divided for Loves Sake* | 2026 | Continuous Video Loop | 1:30 min
- 18a. *Solar Anchor* | 2025 | Olfactory Essential Oil Intervention | Dimensions Variable
- 18b. *(Sublimation)* | 2025 | Single Channel Audio Loop (stereo) | 12:00 min

Artist Statement

My story is one of following the invisible path that, ever since my time in art school in 2011, has shown me which doors to open. Where those hints from the universe used to unconsciously and magnetically pull me in a specific direction, they are now a conscious and intentional part of my life. This show is for me a three-years-long act of trust and surrender to the greater forces of the universe that need an outlet to express and transform something within the collective reality. I am the vessel; the art is the message.

My art practice begins in the territories of spirituality, transformation, and the unconscious, articulated through the systematic languages of oil painting and immersive installations. The creative process is driven by intense meditation and self-investigation, starting with the acknowledgement of psychic imbalances and leading toward the perception of vast, impersonal archetypal energies. This internal journey is my rigorous methodology for generating shared symbolic content. The best way I can describe it is a sort of warm glow that condenses in my chest until I give this light a form — which is what you will see in *Aeon of the Black Sun*.

In painting, I blend detailed realism with layered symbolism, deploying the chiaroscuro technique to summon meditative atmospheres where the visible and invisible converse. I use rare, labor-intensive pigments, such as lapis lazuli, viewing the creative act as an alchemical process that transforms both the artwork and my own perception simultaneously. My compositions — featuring specific architectures, night skies, and lush landscapes — function as portals to inner realities and the critique of material ephemerality.

For this exhibition, some of those received visions were best expressed through 2D images/ paintings, while others seemed to need to move through space in the form of sculptural installations. My immersive installations transition beyond the two-dimensional plane, transforming the presentation spaces into contemplative territories through the integration of soundscapes and precise, symmetrical arrangements. The sound is a way to allow the audience to enter the right heart space to receive the work. The scent component is a way to tie the whole experience into the realm of emotions and of allowing this experience to be recalled further down the line to allow this transformation to continue even when visitors' experience at the gallery has ended.

Aeon of the Black Sun is all about shifting our focus collectively. From the deep-seated and imbalanced egotistical desires that seem to dominate the world — where “stars” (be they countries striving to be the best, or individuals, etc.) — to instead focus on becoming the “Black Sun”, who doesn't need to be seen but still shines invisibly through working in silence



for the greater good of humanity. This leads to a more balanced psyche and understanding of who we are in relationship to what is considered "other".

This project depicts a symbolic and conscious ritual of remembering the feminine mysteries associated with the Black Sun in an attempt to rebalance those unconscious desires within us. The only symbol I will mention is that of Goddess Nuit, whose message was taken from the *Thelemic Book of the Law* and quoted in this exhibition. She is the guiding light that has been working through me and that we all have access to. From her body, made up of time and space, she allowed light to move through her and birth the universe. You will see many references to Nuit throughout the show but most importantly when looking in the mirror. These mysteries are as ancient as the universe, and you will see various manifestations of them in the artworks presented: some depicting more physical, earthly dimensions; some more emotional; others more intellectual; and finally, some more spiritual and ethereal.

The aim of this body of work presented is not clear to me yet, as it has felt more like channeled work that needs to be felt by the public to find its meaning. Therefore, the people who will experience the show hold lots of power in allowing the energy found in all those symbols to find a new way of expression. It might come through feelings, thoughts, physical sensations, and even dreams. My hope for this show is that the spirit of this exhibition may demonstrate its beneficent light to anyone open to receiving it, in whatever form that may take.

"For I am divided for love's sake, for the chance of union. This is the creation of the world, that the pain of division is as nothing, and the joy of dissolution all." - Goddess Nuit

This project is a testament to the support and inspiration I have received. My heartfelt thanks go to ADAM TZOKI, whose hands-on expertise built the foundations of some of the pieces in this work through his skill in frame construction and metal work and to my friends DEBBIE DOE and EVE for their collaboration on the musical piece for the show. I am grateful to my father, PIERRE COMTOIS, for lending his strength and help to the painting frames. To my partner, CARISSA, thank you for your reflective support throughout these past three years. I carry the light of inspiration from the many EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN in my life, and I am very grateful for my spiritual teachers, AMIR MOURAD and LANCE SPEED, for their reflective guidance. Above all, I thank the GODDESS NUIT, the brilliant night sky who has continually illuminated my path helping me unveil the deepest mysteries of my inner world.



Oracle of Binah | Alex Coma | 2023 | Oil on Canvas | 30" x 36"

Biography

My interests as an artist are exploring the complex intersections between systematic symbolic language, esoteric knowledge, and what consciousness means in the age of technology.

Graduated from the photography program at Concordia University, my practice is defined by a rigorous methodology developed over a decade of disciplined inner exploration under the guidance of Egyptian spiritual teacher, Shri Amir Mourad.

This intensive study informs my visual lexicon, enabling me to perceive and translate the profound symbolic content and archetypal energies through oil painting and immersive installation. My work utilizes historical techniques, such as chiaroscuro, to summon contemplative, non-rational atmospheres that actively challenge scientific objectivity and Eurocentric rationalist canons.

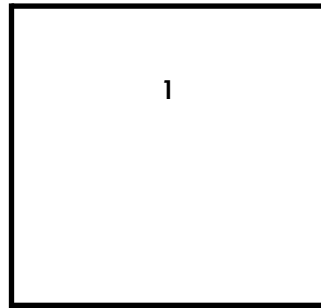
My commitment to collaborative artistic research extends to my role as the 2023 founder of Roze Umbra, an initiative dedicated to visionary artists, which includes "The Blue Hour Podcast" and the "Visionary Roze Grant" offering.

My work seeks a delicate balance between empirical knowledge and the ineffable mystery, focusing on creating shared symbolic content that critically engages with collective consciousness.

Naguala

Claudia Medina + Sophia Sanford

1. *Naguala* | 3 Channel Video |
2 Channel Sound Installation |
16:20 Loop | English, Spanish,
Nahuatl | Copalero – Copal Burner,
Tzonelpilloni “Hair Ribbons” – Silk



GEORGE SAWCHUK
GALLERY

Artist Statement

My work aims to untangle the concepts of tradition and culture to highlight aspects that are often left out of mainstream discourse. Perspectives of rural women, of children, relationships with non-human life forms, and intergenerational relationships have been central themes in all of my work. *Naguala*, in particular, aims to de-centre the human and re-story ourselves beyond a hierarchical interpretation of existence. I have aimed to deepen my understanding of Nahua traditional knowledge, going beyond western “folkloric” or “magical” interpretations to explore ways of knowing and being that I feel are more relevant than ever and that have never been erased.

Naguala draws from the ancient knowledge traditions of my mother's home community, Tecomitl, Momoxco, is known for. The project was catalyzed by my curiosity and investigation into why this community has been known as the "Tierra de los Naguales". The result aims to peel the surface off the colonized interpretation of inherent evil and fear associated with the concept of nagualismo to reveal the beauty and wisdom of the teachings beneath. In Nahuatl tradition, to become a Nagual means to immerse oneself in the learning of cosmology, poetry, plant medicine, and movement. It is ultimately a healing practice. It is this interpretation that has been suppressed, misunderstood and unseen by popular culture.



***Naguala* | Claudia Medina + Sophia Sanford | 3 Channel Video | 2 Channel Sound Installation | 16:20 Loop | English, Spanish, Nahuatl**

Nagualismo is revealed to be full of rich and relevant teachings rooted in our shifting and yet consistently relational connections to the non-human aspects of life both on earth and beyond. The Naguala guide brings us to a new place, composting the notion of the Anthropocene, and invites us into a place of remembered entanglement with processes of time, life, decay, and regeneration. The Naguala asks you to consider "Who are you outside of your skin?"

Biographies

CLAUDIA MEDINA

Claudia Medina is the proud daughter of a Nahua/Mexican mother and Italian father who left their homelands to start a new life on the Sunshine Coast of Canada in Tla'Amin territory/qathet region. After many years working, travelling and studying in Vancouver, Galiano Island, Latin America, Asia and Europe, Claudia eventually returned to the coast to raise her daughter Alma while continuing to develop an art practice in film, video and installation.

Claudia has been involved in film and video production since 1998. She established her production company, EnMedia for her fiction films and since then has expanded it to produce and direct diverse projects in film, visual design, media education and installation.

Her immersive multi-channel installations include *On The Trail* (2010), *Future Forests* (2018), *Clam Basket* (2022), a collaboration with Tla'Amin artist/weaver, Sosan Blaney and painter Megan Dill, and *Naguala* (2023).

Claudia holds a master's degree in Visual Culture from the University of Barcelona with a focus on installation, visual culture and ecology. She continues to create media with the goal of creating possibilities for reconnection in times of crisis.

SOPHIA SANFORD

Sophia Sanford is a composer, vocalist, and producer writing and releasing music and audiovisual projects across genres. With a life-long passion for sonic expression, she brings a depth of emotion to production that echoes an obsession with the voice and all things sound. Music has always been a place where Sanford can articulate specific truth and turn pain into power. She has composed for artists, dance companies, circus performers and various audiovisual projects. With their love of noise leading the way, Sanford creates emotive landscapes designed to help a story be told in new ways, and more deeply understood. Collaboration is an essential element of Sanford's practice, which will be spotlighted in the coming year through a series of exciting releases and performances. Most days she can be found weaving sound in her seaside studio. Community is another essential part of Sanford's practice leading her to start Noise Machine, a residency space and service provider that helps artists make and release music.

***Naguala* was created with the generous assistance of the BC ARTS COUNCIL.**



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Acknowledgments

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