

Tarots

Intermezzo

The first (active) approach to the Tarots coincides with the entrance in the magic world of the Artist Trading Cards. In December 2004, the first deck of "SHERen Tarots" was completed. Main party to it has been the Wirth's book on the subject that a friend had forgotten in my studio after having posed with her newborn daughter for "SHERen&dolphin" project. The 22 Major Arcana were selected from the photos of people in aquatic disguise, few distinctive highlights were added in silver in each card and the first set was self published in 3 series.

In the following years, many occasions to attend the orthodox circles, traditionally in charge of the Tarot "cult" were offered to me and I could participate in some of the events. Though, very often, I remained on the idea that things were run in a different way that I would imagine for my path to develop. My ir-reverent spirit and the longing for freedom could not accept a unconditional adherence to the schemes/classic iconography, the aura of uncritical mysticism sometimes hovering therein, the suspension of rationality, the claim to teach something from an upper level. From the beginning, I have been thinking at the Tarots as a stream of life, a growing of consciousness as time goes by. It often happened to me to be immersed in the imagination of how one senses the key moments: when you are discouraged or full of strength, pleased for the work done, wayfarer of soul in search of answers, etc.

Gazing at the stars in the sky with deep emotions was/is another favourite pastime.

In 2007, with the musician Dario Della Rossa, something that went beyond the personal experience, was undertaken, rather... it appeared *motu proprio*. Dario composed fragments of music (which eventually turned out 22 minutes exactly) caught/selected from impromptu in the gARTen of my house. Together we made the Travelling Tarots (22 cards, in double-sided A4 and in pocket size), performances and videos (among them the "16.Tower" where Trump #16 comes as a political commentary of the twin towers). It all built a basic alphabet of a common project, that would have developed in the following years, through different stratifications and sensitive layers.

The art of images and the art of time together could/can explore much wider fields and build something new, maintaining its own autonomy without prevailing over one another.

Soon the Tarot subject started to generate in individual or joined practice, through performances in more or less institutional contexts, such as the Poranceto wood in Camugnano, up on the cliffs of the Rilke path in Duino, and around Germany, Ireland, London, Venice, etc. The new music that Dario was composing for the (public) actions, along with the magic, the mystery, the sounds of the environment in different situations ended up to reveal new connotations that can be referred to the Tarots.

In 2007 I had already started to paint/embroider/weave drapes of memories on textile (nonwoven fabric) that – if need be -- could be transported rolled around the stick of rain, the only (true) musical instrument that I can play a bit. Without difficulty, the finished ensigns were brought to the poetic of Tarots. The one of 2005 was renamed "Triduo" and became Trump #3. The standard painted in 2006 was reconsidered as the "Swan" of the 20th Tarot. The 14D ("Angel") and 19G ("Sol") were created in the full knowledge of being part in the Tarot suite. Its core was/is growing in full synesthesia with the music, as one can guess from the D standing for a chord in Re and from the G for Sol. At first the "production" of the whole set of Arcana was divided in two plots: 11 (ensigns) would have been up to me and 11 to Dario that would have made them in the intangibility of the music. Actually - as everyone who has been actively involved in the Tarots well knows - the Arcana disarranged all plans. They took more and more space, almost a life of their own and ended up to interweave with life. So many hints and suggestions are to be noticed everyday as tools of a better spiritual/earthly way. I plunged my pictorial/performative expressions into all that, experiencing sometime a slight discomfort whenever I was caught in a kind of obsessive compulsion to act/think according to Tarots schemes. So many times I thought of Arcana who lived in my mind and in my heart just for a moment and whose realization would have killed all the poetry! I could experience the joy/completeness of 21 (World), but also feel like a Priestess, Princess or shipwrecked in a starry night like the Lorelei. The last happened for *real* in an art action along the Rhine banks (Germany, 2009). Often the sacre/profane presences took shapes and generated feelings far beyond their strict and proper meaning as a single card/step. Large sectors/segments of the initiatory path and meaningful relationships between the various Arcana appeared here and there.

In 2008 came to light -- straddling Italy and my second stay as a visiting artist at Cill Rialaig of Ballinskelling -- the Irish triptych consisting in standards: 9 ("Nomad"), 15 ("SHERen") and 18 ("Luna-Ixchel"). While there, immersed in the windy moorland and in the sounds from the Ocean, I studied/practiced the Tarot music related to the 4 elements. The video-performances of the quadriptych "Fire-Air-Water-Untitled" were self recorded from the window of the cottage.

Starting with these ensigns, I began to better integrate painting with parts in embroidery, fringes with beads and findings of proven sentimental value collected from around the world or exhumed from the drawer of memories. I always felt free to choose -- while "building" a Tarot -- only whatever was strictly connected with the *anima*.

Once anyway completed a step/standard, I also felt free to designate it with a variety of names: the original/orthodox one, the Arab or Roman number occupied in the sequence of 22, or a brand new consonant appellative.

Between 2008 and 2009 the Tarots took a number of "in motion" shapes. First was the series of "Tarots transparencies". 22 frames from the impromptu "Equinox" in Duino were printed on acetate in b/w and A4 size. Images from the Travelling Tarots of 2007 were printed in the same way and size. Coupling two sheets at the time and slightly moving the one on top, up and down on the other, the images dilate and reveal unexpected wavy and fluttering textures of nets. Just to remain in the field of precinema -- beside performances turned in "divin-actions" -- I made flick books with tickets of the movies I had seen, fenachistoscopes, zoetropes displaying constellations (Aquarius 1-11 and Gemini 12-0), etc. In Santa Severina (Crotone) as I was going to pick up my luggage in the storage room, after having participated in "Le Arti del Gesto", I noted the blue civil standard of the town leaning against the wall and I had the feeling that my ensigns were part in the same community. I had the same impression when, during a residency at fzkke in Germany, I had the opportunity to visit the monastery of Langenfeld for the new Tibetan year celebrations. I was enchanted by the *tangka* - embroidered paintings of the 21 Tara/Lotus, female incarnation of the Buddha - hanging at the altars. In addition to similarities, they were foldable like my standards! On the same premises, I had the chance to meet Egbert Schmidtke, devotee and expert of Tibetan cults, who introduced me well to the iconography and the rites. He did appreciate the research we were talking about, and pointed out a similarity of inspiration between the "Nomad" (my standard 9) and Tao 47, also evoked in *The Inner Light* of Beatles. In the following years, he would give useful advices for the entire project. Ensign number 10, "W_heal" painted 2 years later, is inspired by a cosmic hand that Egbert had e-mailed me for reference. One can perceive the compassionate hand of Tara, healing our grieves when necessary, in it. Back from the Dalai Lama monastery, I also felt the urgency to write. To secure memories in the visual/concrete form of the standards was not enough. Words were needed, not to loose important steps that led to the creative process and manufacture. Being attentive not to spoil the mystery, magic and unknow (that is up to each personal research) and with no didactic/educational claims, I started to write about the Irish triptych. Beside a commentary text, I planned to write a shorter/evocative poem for each Trump. So far, I did most of the essays related to the ensigns produced, with no specific order, freewheel. Sometimes the making of a standard starts/comes from the text rather than from painting. I also felt the need to deepen different themes such as the Gaelic, Morse and Braille alphabets, the Mayan round calendar, numbers and mathematical curves. Along these years, next to the Atlas and the book of Wirth, my desk has been crowded with texts/documentations of historical, mythological, anthropological kind and so on. Of course it all to be reinterpreted and reused at the service of a brand new suite of Tarots.

Ensign 21 ("CoronA") and 6 ("LoveS") were painted in 2009, number 2 ("ear_th") and 10 ("W_heal") in the following year. In May 2010 the first 11 standards were installed with the musical fragments of 2007 at the Nymphaeum of Cosenza during an impromptu that had a more institutional development a few days later at the Palace of Prisons of Venice, with the new music "S_core".

In subsequent years, ensigns manufacturing needed a pause. Meanwhile, the intimate research had to discover the genuine interest towards the works of others. At the Morgan Libray in New York in 2012 I was struck by the original Renaissance Tarots Visconti-Sforza and by the autograph scores of Mozart. At the Venice Biennale of 2013 the visionary imagination shown by the cards of Aleister Crowley, impressed me very much. In 2011 the proposal of a lecture-performance ("Tarots Long Playing") was selected by the Goldsmith College of London for a presentation at the Thursday Club. Concurrent life commitments did not allow the two of us to be present. Retrospectively it was not that bad since our Tarots project had not expressed fully its peculiar potentials at that stage.

Very significant (and fun) was the making the deck of ArtistTarotsCards 33. It was a sort of diary along the course of the entire 2011. Moments, visions, situations and places were recorded in 22 cards. Numbered with the 21 letters of the Italian alphabet (22 - alias 0 - has no letter), as it was decided for the textile standards, each card is produced in a different number of copies, not less than 3. The deck opens sometime like a Russian doll. The card "c", for example becomes a puzzle of 22 pieces that compose the Unity of Italy (in its 150th anniversary) through the performative wandering. The cards "a" and "d" can be transformed in taumatropes if spinned with the threads provided at the sides. The "z" of Trine blossoms in a lotus origami.

2013 was the year of the performance "Fioritura" (of tulips and waterlilies) in the Netherlands -- with the revival of the musical fragment number 6 -- and the enchantment with the Japanese calligraphy, Cyrillic and various symbolisms. The research became less compulsive/obsessive. I was kept busy by the reorganization in 20 projects of the artistic material produced so far in art/life, that had to be published in the new website (March 2014). At some point, it leapt before my eyes that the 20 projects -- text, videos, images included -- could have also been considered as a Tarots procession! The words that you are reading here make the 21st project! Correspondent to the Arcane commonly known as the World, it embodies the provisional/ephemeral completeness humans can reach at certain stages. Next text I will write -- the 22nd (alias 0) -- will be the Sea, where the Mad will mix it all. Can you think of a better methaphor of the orthodox figure, to conclude/start over?

In 2014 the Tarots resuscitated in the joint research. The opportunity were given by the participation in the choral memory for Raymond Roussel at the cemetery of Père Lachaise in Paris. On July 14 the performance "Danse du Tarot en F" took visible/audio shapes with Dario's new music "08072014" (sum up the digits!) and the presence of Standards 6, 14 and 21. The intent was to relive personal experiences in new stories and geographies of the imaginary. Surprising correspondances occurred with Roussel's masterpiece "Locus solus" in its centenary. Beautiful resemblances to be re-played, the sixth chapter in particular where the Tarot music emerges from the emeralds trapped in the cards... The Parisian performance was/is a miliar stone that made us to re-evaluate, without false inferiority complexes, our project that emerged even strengthened for a further phase. The magic continued nonstop as when, back from the isle of Ponza (where I had made the installation/performance "Sherena Velella") I stopped in Capalblio to visit the Tarot Garden of Niki de Saint Phalle. Of course I remained enthralled/thunderstruck by the Arcana there. Even more when I discovered later in the Memoirs from the Enchanted Garden of Jacaranda Caracciolo that Niki had came for the first time in Maremma, to view the property of Garavicchio (that will be donated/granted to her to build the Garden) in a cold afternoon of the Spring 1979 , back from... the island of Ponza, where she had spent a few days off.

We decided to continue with the "production" of the 22 Major Arcana, since the general implications - for each of the two authors/languages/sensitivities - had still to be developed as a whole, within a larger suite. It was clear that, in the imaginary that comes to life, each step can not be confined in a media or in a fixed representation. Moreover, the journey so far, has reached a crucial point. After the silver way (1-11), comes the golden one (12-0) and all that we have to do is to pick up the signals, to wait confident for the next elusive Arcane -- alone or with friends -- to knock once. The twelfth Trump has already appeared. It was in the cabinet of a history museum, disguised in a textile panel that can change colour (from red to white) whenever is pulled like an accordion. It was used to communicate in Morse during the First World War, when no electricity was available. On the same basic structure, but with substantial variations in the air – electromagnetic for the colours and of movements for the music - a Hanged (Baby) will be depicted, a newborn child in the act of entering the world under the constellation of Perseus. It will become sensible presence of number 12, definitely less disturbing -- hopefully -- than the orthodox representation of this card. However, all the Tarots are beautiful as necessary stages of a journey to set out on with awareness and joy.

For sure, next Tarots will be even (more) cosmic and free; (in)finite and con-sonant, as usual.

January-February 2015



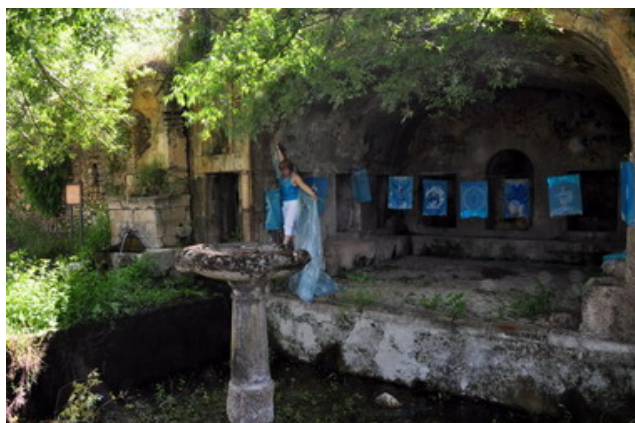
XVIII Luna

Luna is the 18th step along the way of the Tarots. It embodies the main attitude of this journey, i.e. “Look to the sky, but with feet on the ground”, within a nocturnal frame. It is about the time when one recognizes the richness in the **void**. The composition of this Standard is aROUND an empty disk, suggested by concave and convex curves at the four sides. A motionless dance of **Hera** (Giunone, for the Romans) lonely survival of the Greek Temple in Crotona, takes place in the **column**-selfportrait-ed in the vertical frames. An upper concave arch – suggesting the contour line of the lunar paysage, is underscored with **18 + 18 butterflies** holding 'wings' in the shiny ribbon. They are mirrored in the lower contour, where a fine milky lace is painted as an expansion of the keys of the toypiano, They are enchanted by the upright score painted as 'carved-in-relief' on a milestone, showing “**XVIII**” (incidentally, 't' – here in Braille - is the 18th of the Italian alphabet). It all takes place under the constellation of the Summer Triangle, immersed in **Via Lattea**, featuring **Altair**, **Deneb** and **Vega**, with **Sirio** and **Procyon** at the sides. A little dancer rests on a big butterfly, up in the sky. There is an almost imperceptible music – unless 'heard' by the heart, resulting from the tinkling of **14 + 14** washers of the fringe. These rings make 28

fulls and empties altogether – as in the **lunar month**. They display their sound left and right of a Native American's jews-harp made up of a little feather confined/protected inside a green ring to maintain its beauty. *Gealach* and *Ixchel* are written in the lace. They stand for Moon (=Luna) in Gaelic and Mayan. The first language is extremely rich in phonetic sounds, despite having an alphabet of only 18 letters. Maya divided their year in 18 months and used a calendar resulting from the intersection of two disks of 13- and 20- notches-days. Ireland and Mexico are still in my heART, with memories that still live. *Luna* is Dual, as the language tense-mode for lovers. It is the possibility of seeing two sides of the same coin, being able to separate so as to build something brand new, living our 'indivi-dual' time in 2 cycles of permutation, as in the the Mayan Round Calendar.



Legenda: from top, performance “S_core” – wearing standard XVIII Luna – at Palazzo delle Prigioni in Venezia, ph. Laura M. Mino, 29 May 2010; visual scheme and short text for ensign Luna (translated in English by Dawn Redwood). Below: deck of ArtistTarotCards 33, with miniatures of standards made by 2011; at the side: card “c” consisting in a 22 pieces puzzle to compone the Unity of Italy and below card “z” Trine displaying a lotus origami.



Installation/performance with 11 Tarot standards at Nynphaeum of Cosenza, ph Laura M. Mino, May 2010 (Below) Performance “Danse du Tarot en F” at Père Lachaise of Paris, ph Paola Daniele, 14 July 2014

Laura Cristin
 piazza S. Martino 6, 33050 Bagnaria Arsa (UD) Italy
www.lauracristin.it lauracristin54@gmail.com
 +39 0432 928886 mobile +39 3498934353