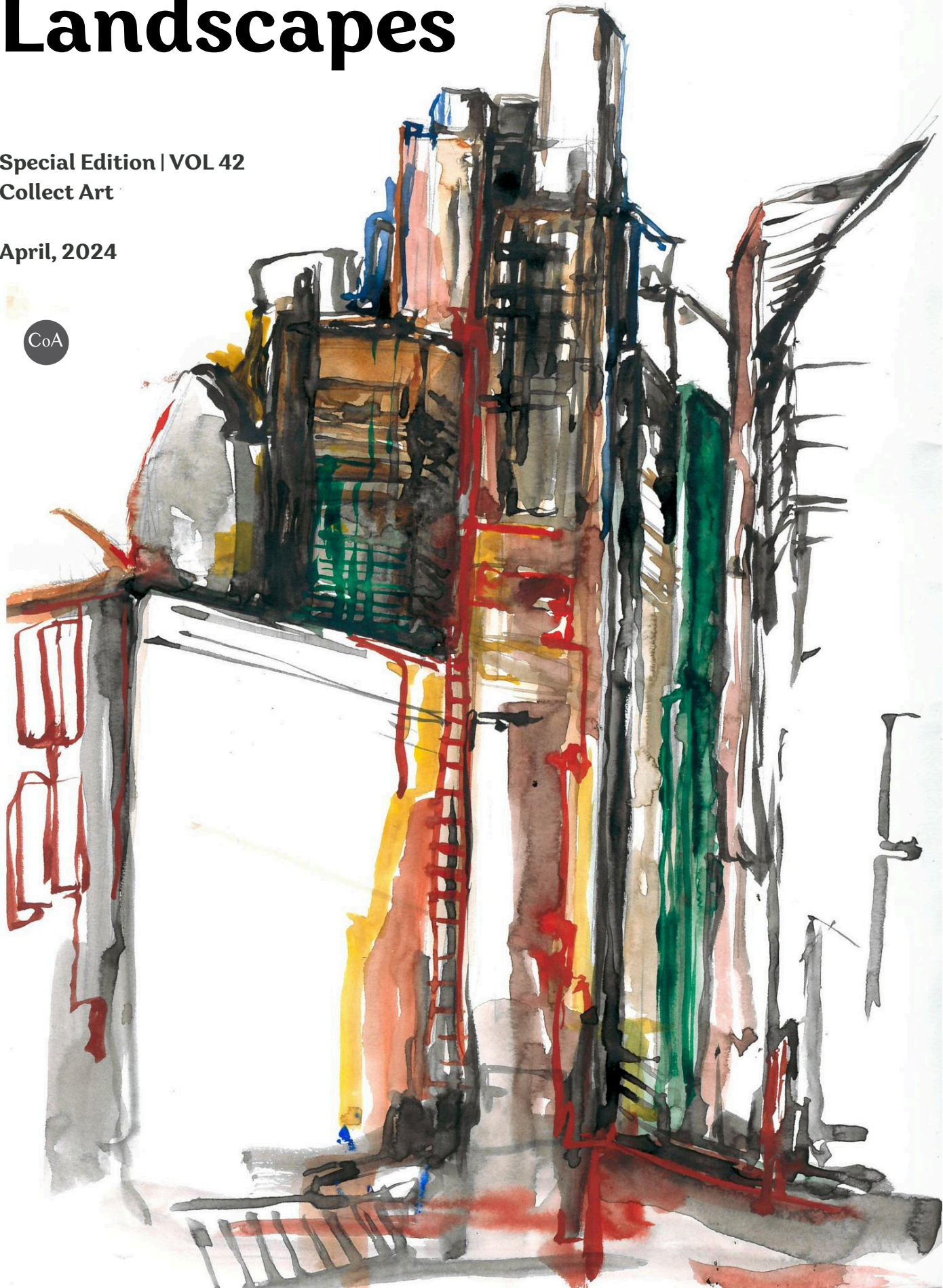


# Landscapes

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# Giordano Cioni



*"My practice stands as an artistic exploration of the language of symbol, ritual, and magic through a combination of classical photography of unorthodox subjects and hieroglyphic sculpture made of industrial materials. I reimagine ancient spiritual systems in contemporary bodies of works that combine a minimalist, queer standpoint alongside an informed artistic understanding. Symbolic motifs from sources as diverse as Egyptian mythology, Medieval cosmology, and Christian iconography find their way into my exhibitions as vivid portraits, totemic objects, and mysterious landscapes. In exploring magic, I ultimately aim to uncover new mythological narratives and to live them out in my work as active magical forces"*

Giordano Cioni, formerly known as Gøneja ✱, is a photographer and sculptor based in Berlin. He has published internationally and has released two books. His work has been exhibited across Europe including group shows at The Holy Art Gallery (London), Palazzo Bembo (Venice), and Rossocinabro Gallery (Rome) as well as three solo exhibitions in Berlin at tête (2020) and Organ Kritischer Kunst (2022 & 2023).

Spomenik  
Inkjet print, 80x120cm, 2021  
A breathtaking war memorial concrete structure over some snowy Bosnian mountains.



**Your work delves into the realms of symbol, ritual, and magic. What initially drew you to explore these themes in your photography and sculpture?**

*I believe that rituals are a primordial need of every human being, which we have used historically to tap into the magic that shapes the universe that we inhabit and to confer meaning to our lives. Photography and sculpture have become to me vehicles to explore these grounds more deeply and to widen my research of these topics. At the same time art practice is in itself a powerful form of magic, one that has opened up to me an endless amount of direct spiritual experience.*

**You've exhibited internationally and released two books. Can you share how your artistic journey has evolved over time, from your early works to your most recent projects?**

*Initially I was working only with the photographic medium and my approach was rather editorial, my interest was to develop narratives around the in-depth explorations of my subjects, combining images with various forms of text as well as book editing. Whereas now photography has for me evolved purely into an exhibition practice alongside the sculptural medium, which is expanding my language three-dimensionally. At present, my focus is to develop these media within more ample exposition contexts, including a new solo show next year which will feature site-specific installation elements in its gallery set-up.*

**Your practice combines classical photography with hieroglyphic sculpture. How do these two mediums interact and complement each other?**

*Photography and sculpture are to me like an older and a younger sister respectively. Since I have worked with the former for longer I have sophisticated its language more, yet the latter re-taught me the joy of experimentation and embracing the new. With photography my approach is more serious and I use it only with a higher charge of intensity, while the process of sculpture is more curious and open-ended. They do complement each others in informing my practice parallelly and they definitively belong side by side in my exhibition output.*

**You mentioned reimagining ancient spiritual systems in contemporary bodies of work. What challenges or opportunities do you encounter when bridging the gap between the ancient and the modern in your art?**

*The challenging part to bring archaic spiritual wisdom into present form is that our contemporary society has mostly lost touch with its mystical traditions. Capitalism constantly distracts us with matter, replacing the sacred with the meaningless. Our ancient myths are still alive nonetheless, with my practice I attempt to render them contemporary by creating rather classical compositions while deliberately including elements that set you in the here and now. Photographically, for instance, by staging ancestral rituals within modern industrial locations, or sculpturally, by using present-day urban materials to construct ancient hieroglyphs.*

**Symbolic motifs from various sources, such as Egyptian mythology and Christian iconography, are prominent in your exhibitions. How do you select and incorporate these motifs into your work, and what significance do they hold for you?**

*Since I am committed to my own process of transformation, symbols have become a language. If I keep my investigation open and pay attention to the synchronicities, they come to guide me, and a part of them will inevitably find expression in my work too. Some are present due to my conscious desire to represent them artistically, an example being some the planetary or angelic motifs in my sculptural sigils, which resonated with my research. Other times, symbols manifest unexpectedly, it was the case in few of my photographic portraits where some of my subjects ended up embodying mythological or religious motifs that we didn't initially plan to use.*

**Your exhibitions feature vivid portraits, totemic objects, and mysterious landscapes. Could you elaborate on the creative process behind bringing these elements together to create a cohesive narrative or aesthetic?**

*Up until the present moment, I focused on establishing a quite classical artistic language, one that attempts to be universal and easy to grasp by creating simple yet powerful photographic or sculptural compositions, centred around the exploration of the single subject and bound together by the thread of an underlying narrative. I have also tried to resist the temptations of abstraction, choosing a rather figurative language, using few elements but with a heightened emphasis on them; mysterious architectural structures standing in empty landscapes, tribal objects with a ritualistic feel or humans subjects captured in austere locations. Part of my approach is to create as much diversity possible within the range of subjects, while maintaining a consistent language throughout by not losing sight of the larger picture that binds them all together.*

**Your standpoint is described as minimalist and queer. How does your identity and perspective inform your artistic vision, and how do you navigate the intersectionality of art, queerness, and spirituality in your work?**

*My queer identity surely informs my approach to spirituality whereby it allows me to move freely in this territory without setting rigid rules or boundaries. A lot of forms of magic, like some ceremonial traditions, can be very formal and manneristic in their rituality whereas my take on it remains fluid. I can borrow spiritual material from very serious sources like Alchemy, without the strict moral behaviour that one would normally affiliate to its adepts. At the same time, while my exploration is iconoclastic and my subjects unusual, I keep my artistic language more disciplined and pure, aiming for redefined artistic standards. As such, I could define my standpoint as rigorously unorthodox.*

**Can you share any specific mythologies or stories that have inspired your artistic practice, and how do you reinterpret them in a contemporary context?**

*There is one mythology from the Hindu tradition that is close to my heart, that of the Ananda Tandava, the cosmic dance of Shiva which creates and destroys the world. In ancient Sanskrit scriptures it is attributed to Nataraja, the Lord of Dance, who is represented in the iconic postured movement of a four-armed figure coiled by snakes and encircled by flames, dancing over a dwarf.*

*This image has been impressed in my mind ever since I befriended this divinity during a visit to India in 2016. To this day, Shiva's blissful dance guides my path by helping me find new rhythms of creation and evolving artistic cycles.*

Gate of the Sun

inkjet print on plate, shadow-box frame  
77x106x5cm, 2022

The mysterious monolithic gateway standing in the ancient archaeological site of the ancient town of Tiwanaku on the Bolivian Andes.





**How do you envision your art affecting viewers and participants?**

*Indeed every exhibition I create is first and foremost an attempt to contextualise myths and rituals within my own life, to live them up, to incarnate them. This is in itself the most transformative journey that is available to my life right now. Yet, my work is also my message to the world, I do not just do it for myself. I can only hope that some of my viewers will connect to its meditative quality; each representation is my interpretation of timeless and primordial matter, buried within our collective memory. If it can trigger this type of reflection and understanding to someone, no other effort is more worth it.*

**Looking ahead, what themes or concepts are you eager to explore in your future projects?**

*For my next solo exhibition, I'm exploring the Western astrological myth of the Age of Aquarius. This is known as a major age transition on Earth dictated by an astronomical phenomenon known as the Precession of the Equinoxes, which is linked to the almost-imperceptible rotation of the terrestrial axis and was already known to many ancient cultures including the Egyptians and the Incas. In terms of practice, I'm currently focusing on expanding my sculptural language towards more diverse outputs incorporating a wider range of materials like aluminium, glass and paint and new techniques like inscriptions. In the longer run, I would like to explore the installation medium, incorporating elements of spatial design, sound and film into my exhibitions, bringing my practice to a more multidisciplinary territory.*

