

SABINA ZENTEK

11/22



— 2011 – 2022 —

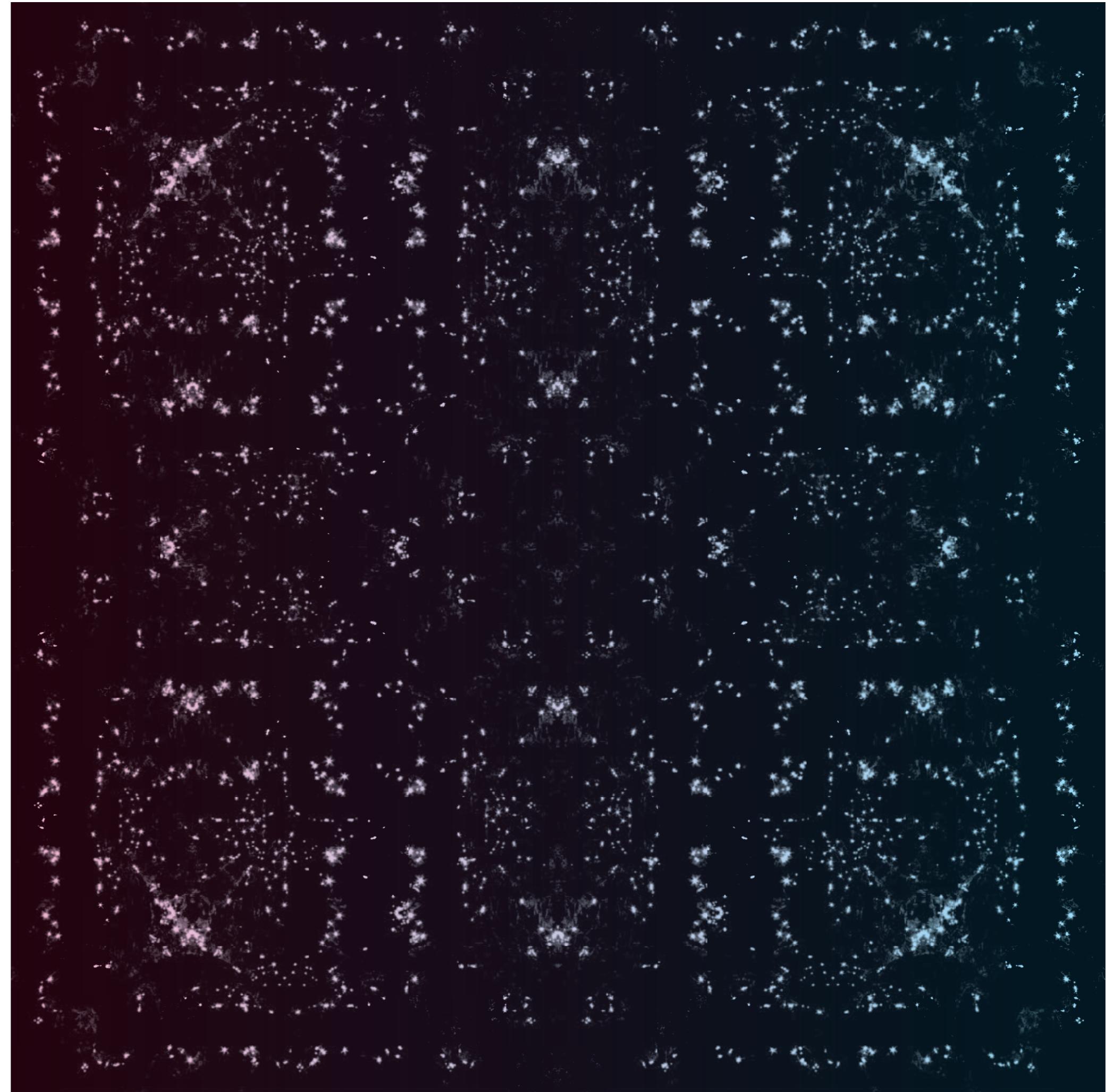
in Transition

"We're all made of stardust."

13.8 billion years ago the universe begins with the Big Bang within a second it cools enough for particles to form and within a few hundred thousand years these particles combine forming the first simple atoms hydrogen and helium. These ancient atoms are the foundations of everything at this early stage of the universe's evolution the ingredients do not yet exist to make even the most basic molecules of life and as space expands these atoms are in danger of dissipating into the void but already they feel the force of gravity. Under its influence everything that matters will come together over a few hundred thousand years gravity creates spiraling regions so dense their temperatures begin to rapidly increase. The swirling gases form huge discs far larger than our solar system temperatures in their centres surpassed 100 million degrees and suddenly the first stars are born. From this moment on primordial stars appear in the billions and cast the first light on the universe. But they'll also transform it through a quirk of nature stars will generate all the raw materials of life inside the helium cores of massive stars totally new elements are now forced for the first time huge quantities of oxygen carbon and nitrogen are fused into existence. These are exactly the ingredients all beings of planet Earth are made of. The death of the first generation of massive stars spreads new atomic elements into the void. The universe reaches a crucial threshold for the first time it contains everything necessary for life to form.

(Smithsonian Channel, 2018)

"Imagination is the real and eternal World of which this vegetable Universe is but a faint Shadow."  
(William Blake)



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The *Black Crow*, *White Swan*, *Peacock*, *Pelican*, and *Phoenix* are some of the most common birds in the tree of alchemy, each representing a progressively deepening encounter with the inner verbal dimension of our being. The birds as symbols mediate between the physical and spiritual worlds, they reflect certain archetypal experiences encountered by the soul in its development through the alchemical process. These symbols are used in two ways. Firstly, as a description in a text of one aspect of the process. Secondly, these bird symbols can be used as a subject matter for a meditation, and by inwardly building such a symbol, one connects in soul with the essential experience of the particular stage of the process (McLean<sup>1</sup>, 1978).



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<sup>1</sup> Adam McLean (born 7 March 1948 in Glasgow) is a Scottish writer on alchemical texts and symbolism. In 1978 he founded the *Hermetic Journal* which he published until 1992 during which time he also started publishing the *Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks*, a series of 55 editions (to 2018) of key source texts of the hermetic tradition.

# THE BIRDS IN ALCHEMY BY ADAM MCLEAN

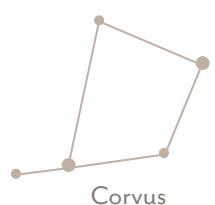
This article written in 1979 was first published in the Hermetic Journal No. 5.

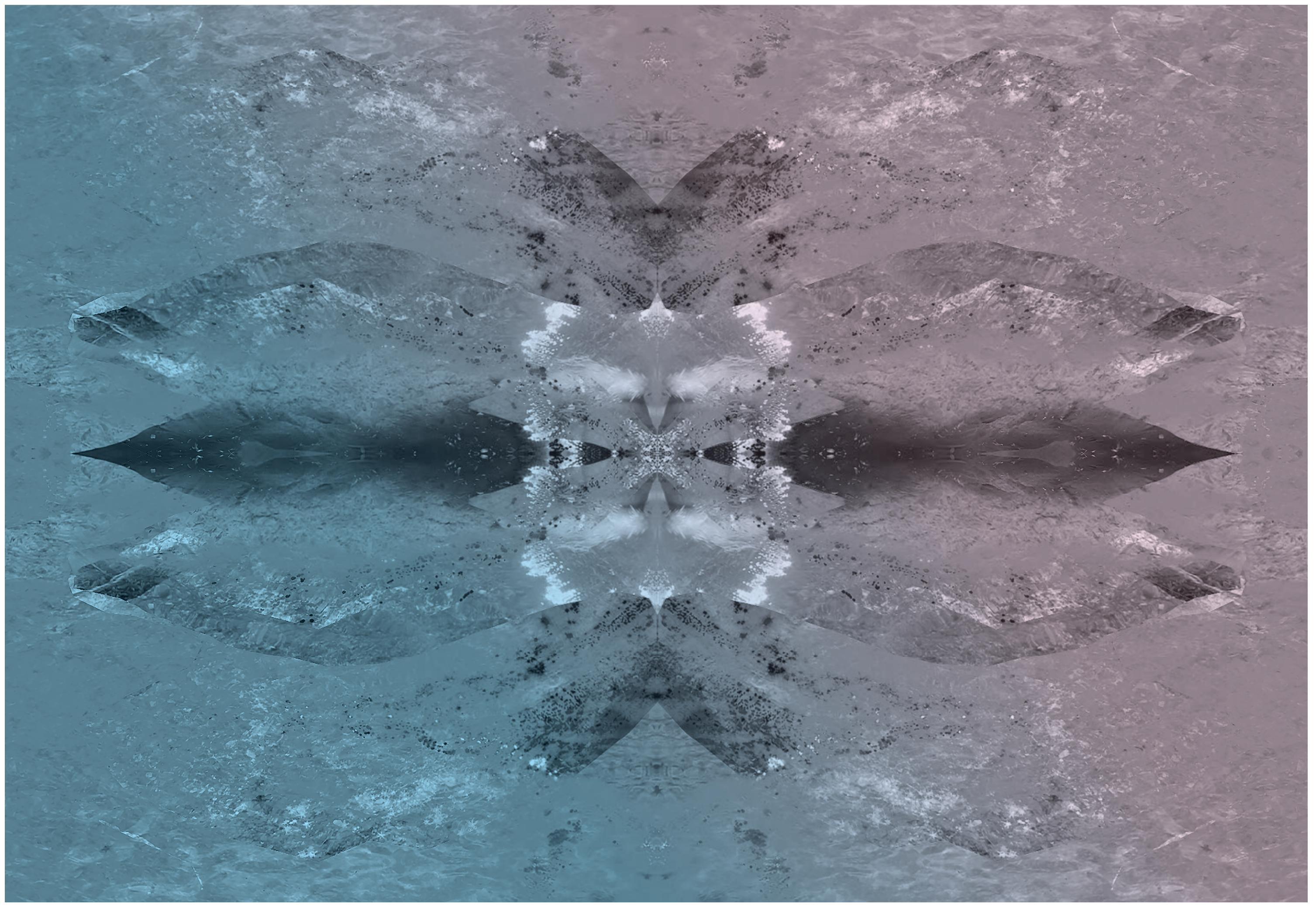
In alchemical writings we meet a seemingly bewildering multiplicity of animal symbols – red lions, white eagles, stags, unicorns, winged dragons and snakes. Although at first glance all this complex mass of symbolism seems tortured and confused there is an inner coherence to these symbols, which the ancient alchemists used in specific ways reflecting their esoteric content. In this article I wish to consider a particularly tight knit group of these animal symbols, the birds of alchemy – the *Black Crow*, *White Swan*, *Peacock*, *Pelican*, and *Phoenix* – which are descriptive of certain stages of the alchemical process. Of course it would be wrong to suggest that there are fixed rigid meanings with regard to these symbols. The alchemists always integrated the symbols they used, so that one has to look at the total context, the background against which they stand, but when the birds appear in this sequence it is almost certain that the following interpretation can be applied.

Firstly, let us look at the symbols in general. What did the alchemists wish to symbolise by birds? The essential thing about birds is that they, having as their domain the air element, mediate between the earthly realm and the heaven world. The alchemist in observing the flight of birds, recognised in them a picture of the human soul undergoing spiritual development. The soul, aspiring upwards, flying free of the restraints of the earth bound body seeking the heavenly light, only to have to return to the earthly consciousness again after the meditation, the alchemist symbolised by the bird. Thus the bird symbols, in alchemy, reflect the inner experiences of soul alchemy, the soaring of the soul free from the earth bound body and the physical senses. The soul, in the meditations of soul alchemy, touches upon the spiritual world, and brings something of this back into the outer life again. Now we will look at these in detail. I would like to consider them in the following sequence, one which occurs in various sources: *Black Crow* – *White Swan* – *Peacock* – *Pelican* – *Phoenix* – as these correspond to a developing inner experience which involves a progressively deepening encounter with the inner spiritual dimension of our being.

The *Black Crow* sometimes also the *Raven* is the beginning of the great work of soul alchemy. This indicates the initial stages of the alchemist's encounter with his inner space, through withdrawing from the outer world of the senses in meditation, and entering what is initially the dark inner world of the soul. Thus this stage is also described in alchemical texts as the blackening, the nigredo experience, and it is often pictured as a death process, as in the *caput mortuum*, the deaths head, or as some alchemical illustrations show, the alchemist dying within a flask. Thus in the symbol of the *Black Crow* we have the stepping out in consciousness from the world of the physical senses the restrictions that bind us to the physical body.

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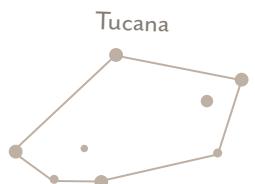
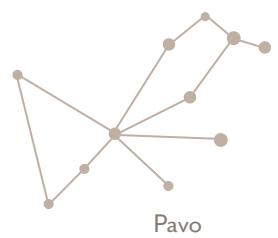
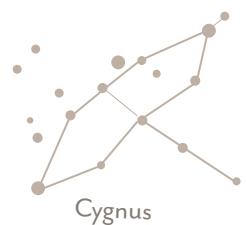




The next stage, is often shown as *The White Swan*<sup>2</sup>. Now the alchemist begins to experience the inner world as being light filled – the initial inner brightness which is often erroneously mistaken for true illumination. This is merely a first conscious encounter with the etheric world, and in comparison with physical sense experience is for many souls so overpowering as to be pictured as bright white light. The alchemical tradition recognised this and symbolised this stage as the *White Swan*. The swan is a bird which is rarely seen in flight, but rather swimming upon lake or river, gracefully moving on the surface of water – in soul terms, on the soul's surface, its etheric interface with the physical.

With the *Peacock* stage, the alchemist has entered into the inner experience of the astral world, which initially appears as ever shifting patterns of colour. This experience is often symbolised in alchemy by the appropriate image of the peacock's tail with its splendid iridescence of colour. In terms of this series of five stages, the turning point is reached with the *Peacock*. Up until this point the alchemist has experienced aspects of his being which he was formerly unconscious of – the etheric forces and the astral body. Essentially these experiences have happened to him, although he had to make himself open to the experiences through entering into the initial *Black Crow* state, however, in order to progress he must begin to work upon his inner being.

This active working with the soul forces is perfectly pictured in the *Pelican*. The *Pelican* is shown stabbing its breast with its beak and nourishing its young with its own blood. The alchemist must enter into a kind of sacrificial relationship with his inner being. He must nourish with his own soul forces, the developing spiritual embryo within. Anyone who has made true spiritual development will know well this experience. One's image of one's self must be changed, transformed, sacrificed to the developing spiritual self. This is almost invariably a deeply painful experience, which tests one's inner resources. Out of this will eventually emerge the spiritual self, transformed through the Pelican experience. The *Pelican* was in this spiritual sense a valid image of the Christ experience and was used as such by the early alchemists.

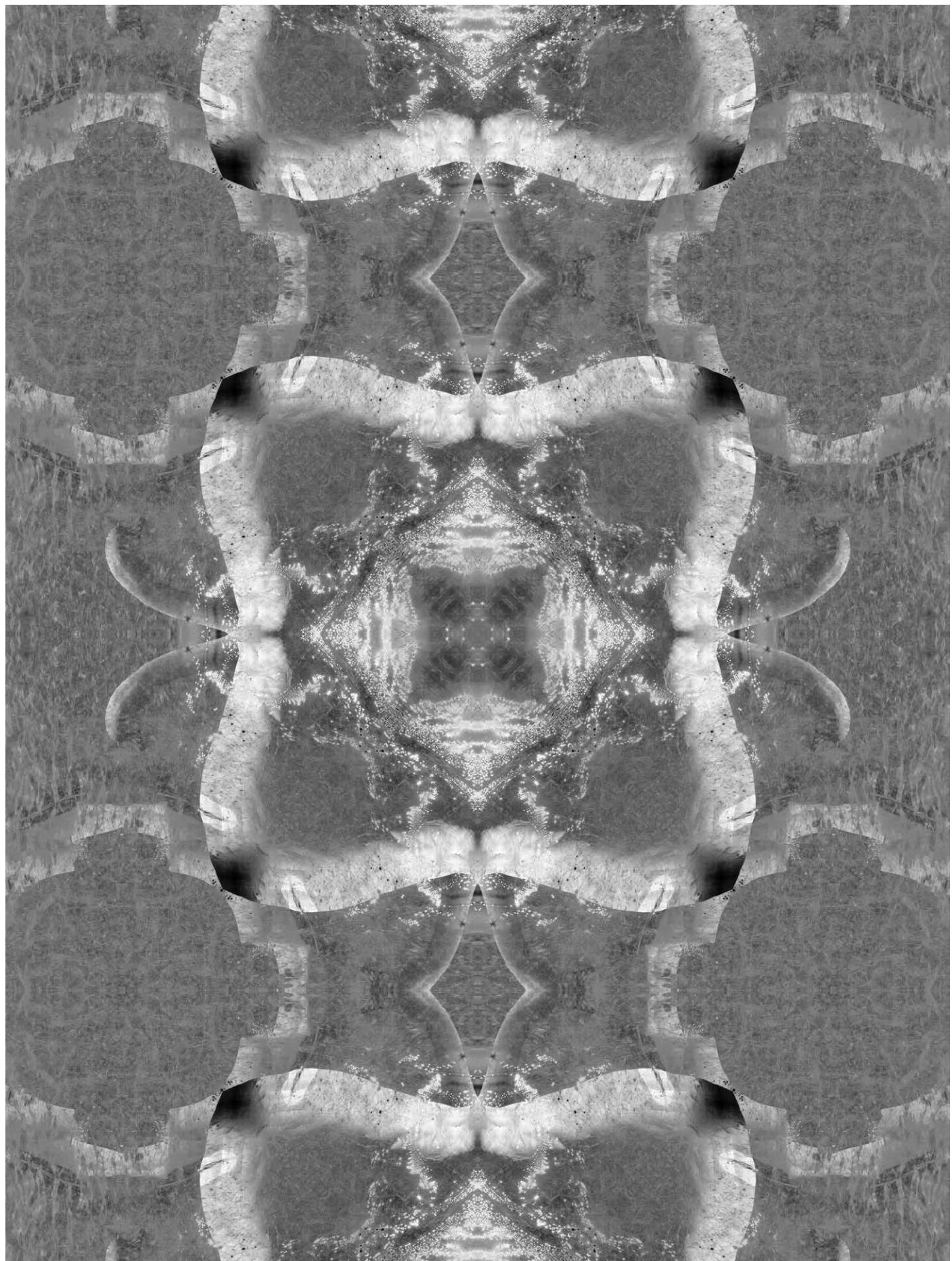


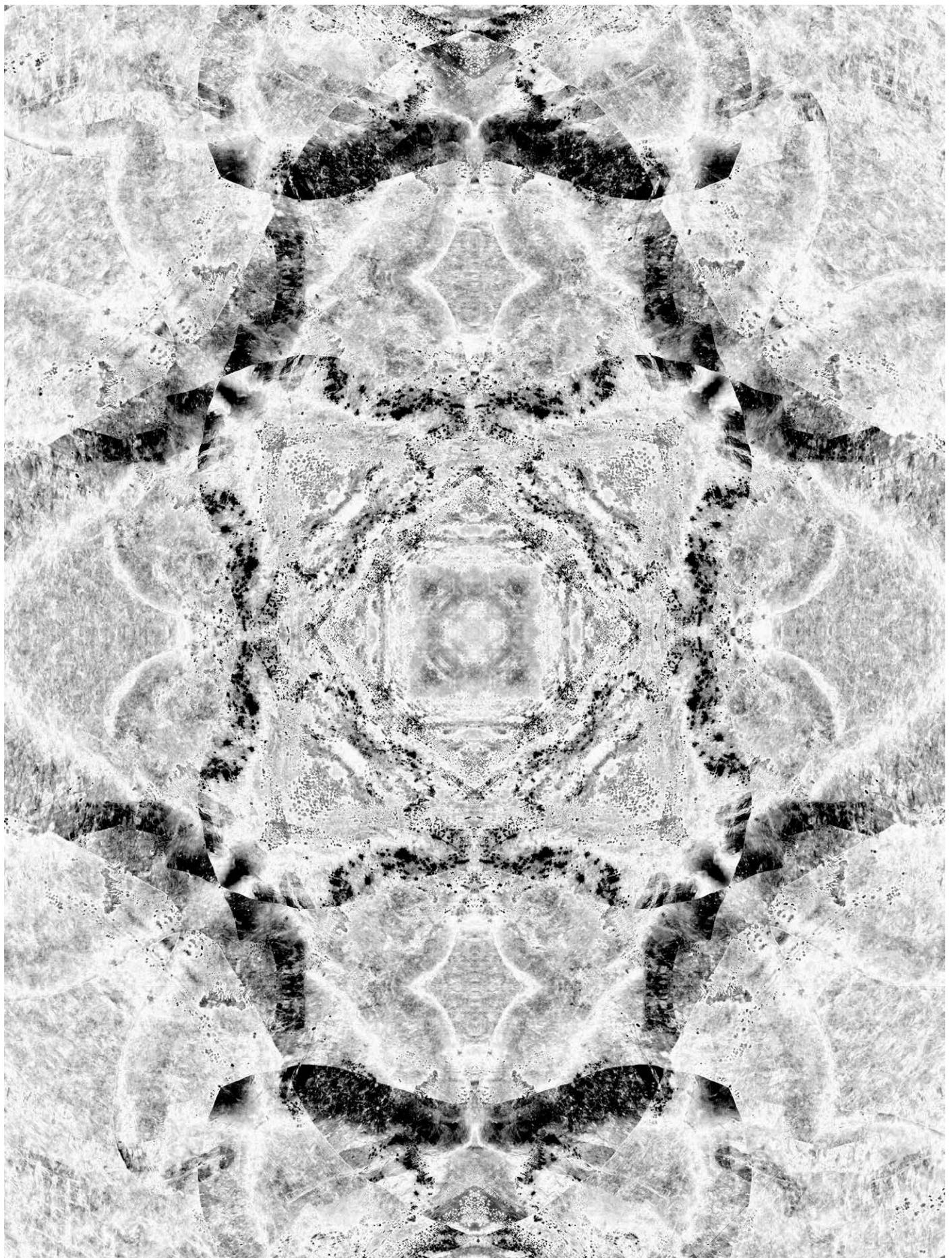
<sup>2</sup> Christians believe the *Swan* to be a symbol of the Virgin Mary, much like the single Rose. But it is also listed as one of the unclean birds (Lev. 11:18; Deut. 14:16). In the Biblical Text the *Swan* being listed as both something pure; Virgin Mary and someone unclean is due to the alchemical meaning of the *White Swan*. Where the pure soul meets the impure, 'surface level' (FD 11-11 Ministries, 2019) the so called 'lower self', the *ego*.

It can get quite ugly, the confrontation with reality, but it is necessary. What is dying is the chimaera, the false world (*Platos Cave*). With *Fire* you burn away dross and reveal hidden essences, laying bare what Paracelsus called the "star in man", the hidden process that is going on in our souls, and the hidden evolution of the universal soul, *Anima Mundi* (Blabel, 2012).

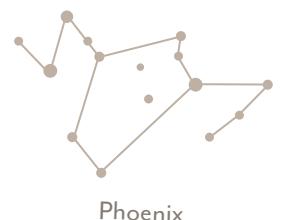
In Hinduism, Paramahansa translates to 'Supreme Swan' and is the vehicle for the god Brahma. Also known as Hamsa (*Swan*), the symbol of the divine bird and the soul. Possessing the capability of separating milk from water once they have been mixed (FD 11-11 Ministries, 2019).







The *Phoenix* completes this process of soul development. The *Phoenix* bird builds its nest which at the same time is its funeral pyre, and then setting it alight cremates itself. But it arises anew from the ashes transformed. Here we have captured the alchemists experience of spiritualisation, He has integrated his being so much, that he is no longer dependent upon his physical body as a foundation for his being. He now stands upon the sureness of the spiritual – he has in this sense attained the *Philosopher's Stone*, the Spiritual core of his being.



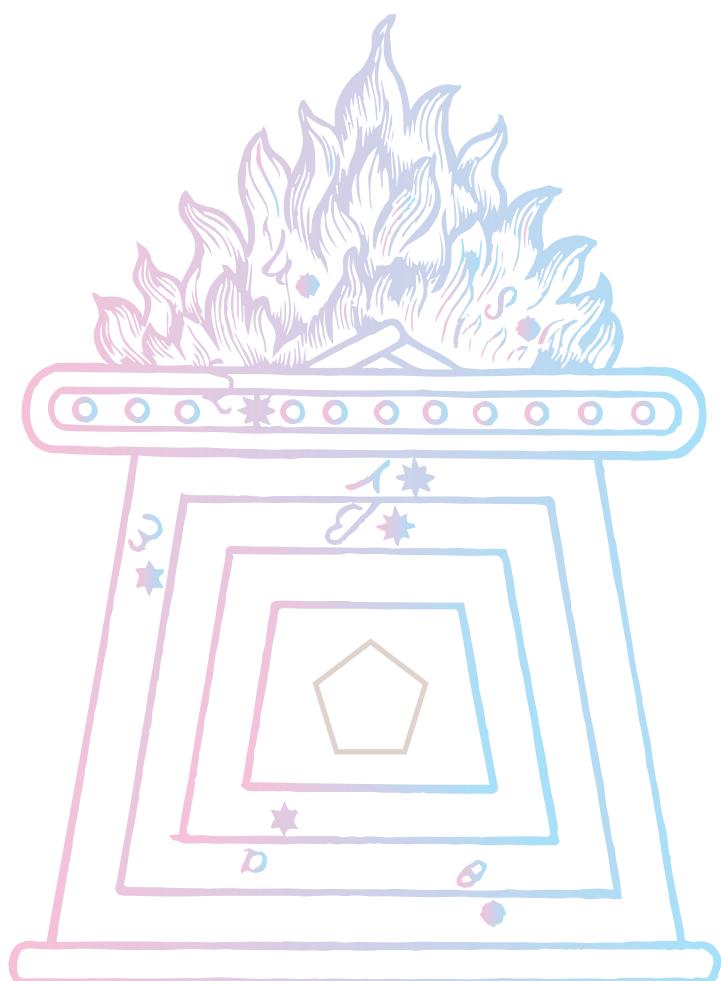
Thus we can sketch shortly the process of *Soul alchemy*, the integration, purification and transmutation of the soul, as pictured in this series of bird symbols.

- BLACK CROW – withdrawal – freeing of the from dependence on the physical senses
- PHOENIX – freeing of the spirit from the bounds of the physical
- WHITE SWAN – experience of the etheric body
- PELICAN – using consciously the forces of the etheric body
- PEACOCK – astral body consciousness – inward immersion – point of transformation – outward expression integration – purification – transmutation

The *Peacock's Tail* is the central experience to this process, the point of inner transformation, which arises from a true consciousness of the astral body. We note also that the other stages mirror each other. Thus the *Black Crow* and the *Phoenix* are related as beginning and end of the process, but in a deeper sense they are both connected with death-processes. The dying to the senses of the *Black Crow* stage is ultimately transformed into the triumph over the death process of the physical, that is pictured by the *Phoenix*. There is a further mirroring of the *White Swan* and *Pelican* stages. The *White Swan* is an experience of the etheric forces in one's being, and this is later transformed into a conscious mastery and outward expression of these life forces.

The *Peacock's Tail* stage – the conscious experience of the astral body – stands alone in this picturing of the process, though it was sometimes split into two facets, in the writings of some alchemists – an initial winged dragon phase which resolved into the *Peacock's Tail*. In the initial encounter with the astral body, the negative distorted aspects of one's being can dominate, and these can be pictured as the winged dragon, but through soul purification, ultimately the full beauty and splendour of the astral body are revealed in the *Peacock's Tail*.

In the early alchemical texts (and in particular the 'Rosarium philosophorum'), this picture of soul alchemy is developed in parallel with descriptions of what was a sore physical process. Thus it was that the soul development of the alchemist went hand in hand with an actual physical operation, and this operation, the details of which have not been wholly lost, involved colour and form changes within a sealed flask, isomorphic to the inner changes of soul alchemy, described by these bird symbols. Thus we had a physical process which involved a blackening, a whitening; a rapid iridescence of colours, a circular distillation stage, and a final sublimation. Part of the task of modern alchemy must be to rediscover this physical process, and explore its further ramifications.



# THE DEPTHS OF SWAN SYMBOLISM

## — Digression I —

A *Swan* is a symbolically very important bird in many cultures. The *Swans* are in very close relationship with the gods of light (represented by the element of fire) and are a symbol of grace, wisdom, true love, faith, partnership, innocence, purity, strength, courage and transformation. Pure *Swan* energy gives birth to the ability to interpret dreams, and represents the spiritual evolution which is tied to the water where it swims and connects, the air where it flies and breathes and the earth where it walks and grounds itself. The *Swan* travels in a metaphorically and literally way through the different elements and dimensions. In the context of the spiritual path and alchemy, the totem of the *Swan* represents the purification stage.

The *Swan* may also bear messages of different stages of love<sup>3</sup> and relationships. They pair for many years. Often *Swan* unions are monogamous pair bonds sustained for a lifetime. Mute *Swans* have been observed to display even homosexual or transgender behavior.

*Swan* meaning is also linked to Celtic deities with solar associations, like Belanus and Lugh. As solar animals, the *Swan* represents the rising glory of a new day as well as the farewell of an old day with the setting sun. Mythology also indicates when inhabitants of the Otherworld required passage to the physical land of life you and I experience every day, they would take the shape of the swan. Furthermore lore states they would travel out of the Otherworld in pairs, thus reinforcing the theme of union, bonds and partnership. In Celtic art, gold and silver chains are often depicted around the swan's neck (Avia, 2018) – a strong connection between the material and the spiritual world and between planet earth, the sun, the moon and venus. In the Middle Ages the swan was the emblem of chivalry, the mystical knight who set out in search of the Holy Grail.

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<sup>3</sup> Ancient Greek philosophy differentiates main conceptual forms and distinct words for the Modern English word love: *agápe*, *érōs*, *philia*, *philautia*, *storgē*, and *xenia*.

Though there are more Greek words for love, variants and possibly subcategories, a general summary considering these Ancient Greek concepts is as follows:

*Agápe* (ἀγάπη agápē) means “love: esp. brotherly love, charity; the love of God for man and of man for God” (Liddell, Scott).

*Éros* (ἔρως érōs) means “love, mostly of the sexual passion”. The Modern Greek word “erotas” means “intimate love”.

Plato refined his own definition: Although eros is initially felt for a person, with contemplation it becomes an appreciation of the beauty within that person, or even becomes appreciation of beauty itself (Liddell, Scott).

*Philia* (φιλία philía) means “affectionate regard, friendship”, usually “between equals” (Liddell, Scott).

*Storge* (στοργή storgē) means “love, affection” and “especially of parents and children” (Liddell, Scott).

*Philautia* (φιλαυτία philautía) means “self-love”. The Greeks further divided this love into positive and negative: one, the unhealthy version, is the self-obsessed love, and the other is the concept of self-compassion.

*Xenia* (ξενία) is an ancient Greek concept of hospitality. It is sometimes translated as “guest-friendship” or “ritualized friend-ship”. It is an institutionalized relationship rooted in generosity, gift exchange, and reciprocity. Historically, hospitality towards foreigners and guests (Hellenes not of your polis) was understood as a moral obligation (Powell, 1995).



## SWAN COLOR MEANINGS

*White Swans* are a symbol of purification and new beginnings (*Raider Waite Tarot: the Fool*, number zero and 22). The *White Swan* represents the 'marriage of the opposites'. Swans are rarely seen in flight but rather floating on the surface of calm waters, this stage of the Alchemist development is known as *The White Swan*. This speaks to the souls evolutionary state, the souls surface. The Alchemist begins their spiritual journey much like the Fool Card in Tarot, with a surface level understanding of thyself, the inner world and life. This is better known as the 'false self' but with the first introduction to 'etheric world', 'higher self' something is forever changed, this initial spark is known as *The White Swan* (FD II-II Ministries, 2019).

*Black swans* indicate the action of diving into dark spaces of emotions and the inner psyche. They are a symbol of deep transformation (*Raider Waite Tarot: Death*, number 13). As mentioned, swans stand for intuition and dreams. It's time to shine some light on the shadow selves. Holding the ability to not only transmit new information but to digest and converse the information so the lower tiers of the Collection can digest the frequencies. This would be called putrefaction in alchemy, the process of 'destroying' the former to creation something new. *Black Swans* of The Collective burn much of the 'collective karma' and transmute that energy into high vibratory energy for the masses (FD II-II Ministries, 2019).

# CYGNUS (CONSTELLATION)

## — Digression II —

Cygnus is a northern constellation on the plane of the Milky Way, deriving its name from the Latinized Greek word for swan. Cygnus is one of the most recognizable constellations of the northern summer and autumn, and it features a prominent asterism known as the Northern Cross (in contrast to the Southern Cross). Cygnus was among the 48 constellations listed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century astronomer Ptolemy, and it remains one of the 88 modern constellations.

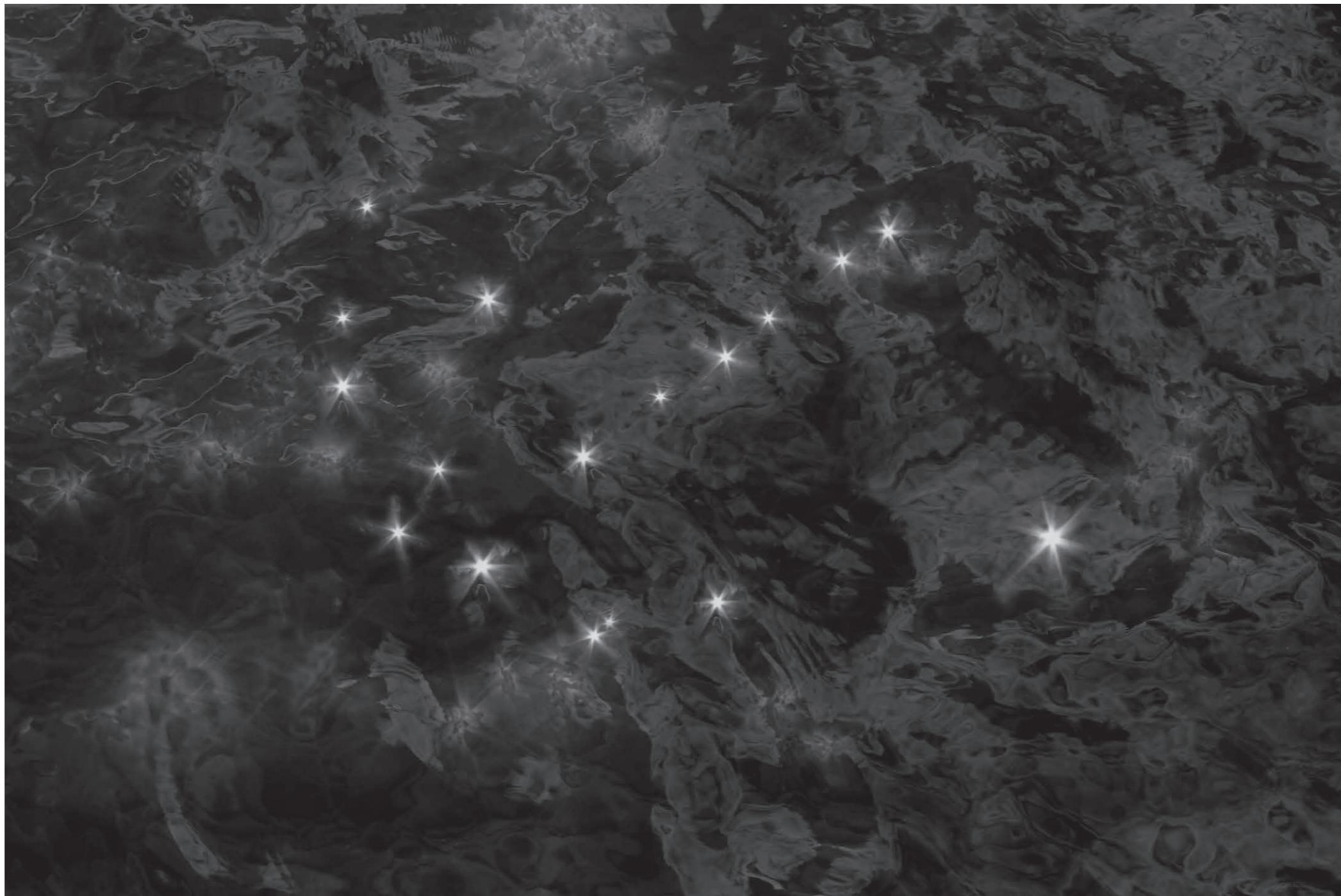
It also has some notable X-ray sources and the giant stellar association of Cygnus OB2. Many star systems in Cygnus have known planets as a result of the Kepler Mission observing one patch of the sky, an area around Cygnus (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

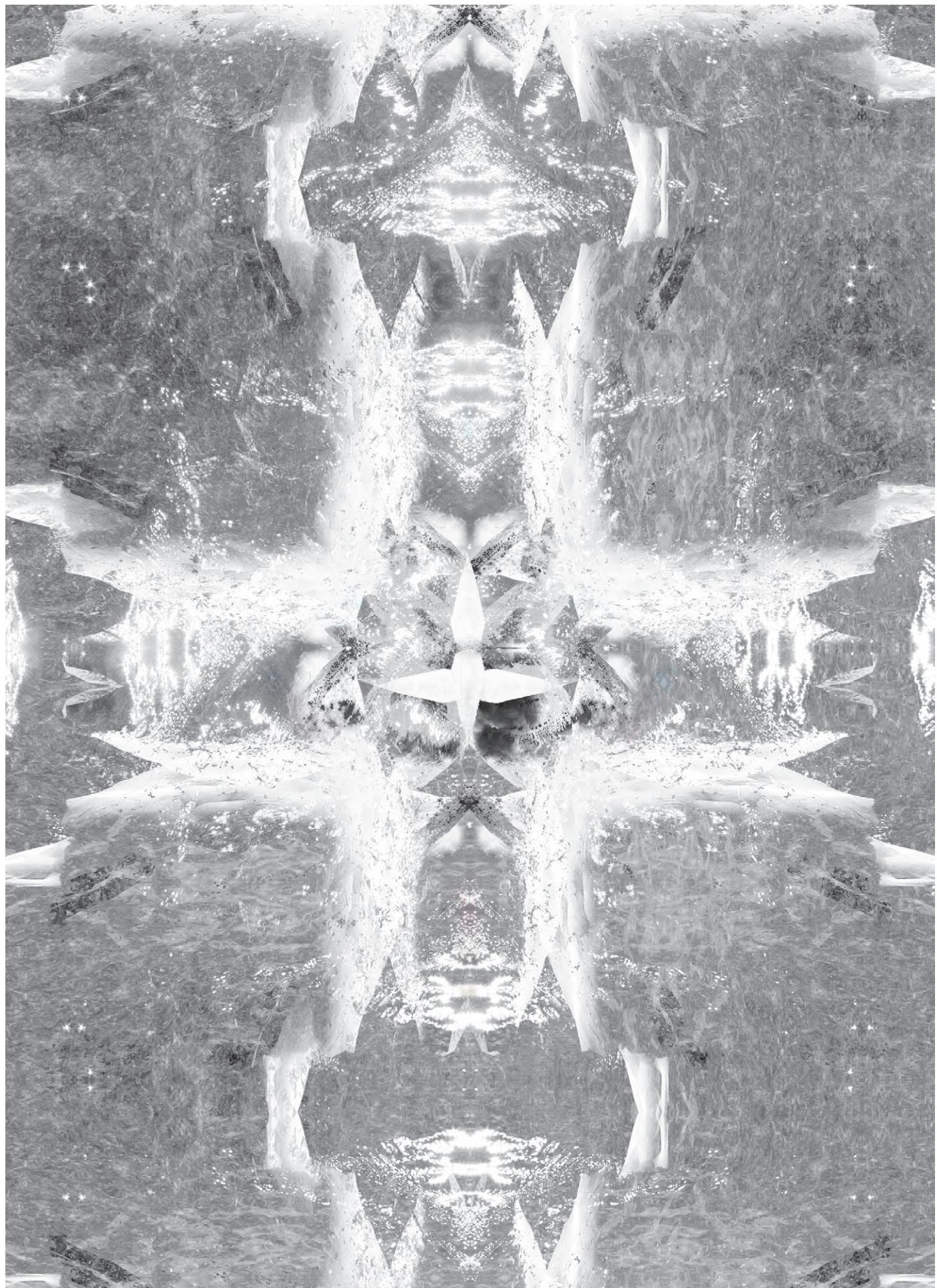
### THE MYTHOLOGY BEHIND CYGNUS

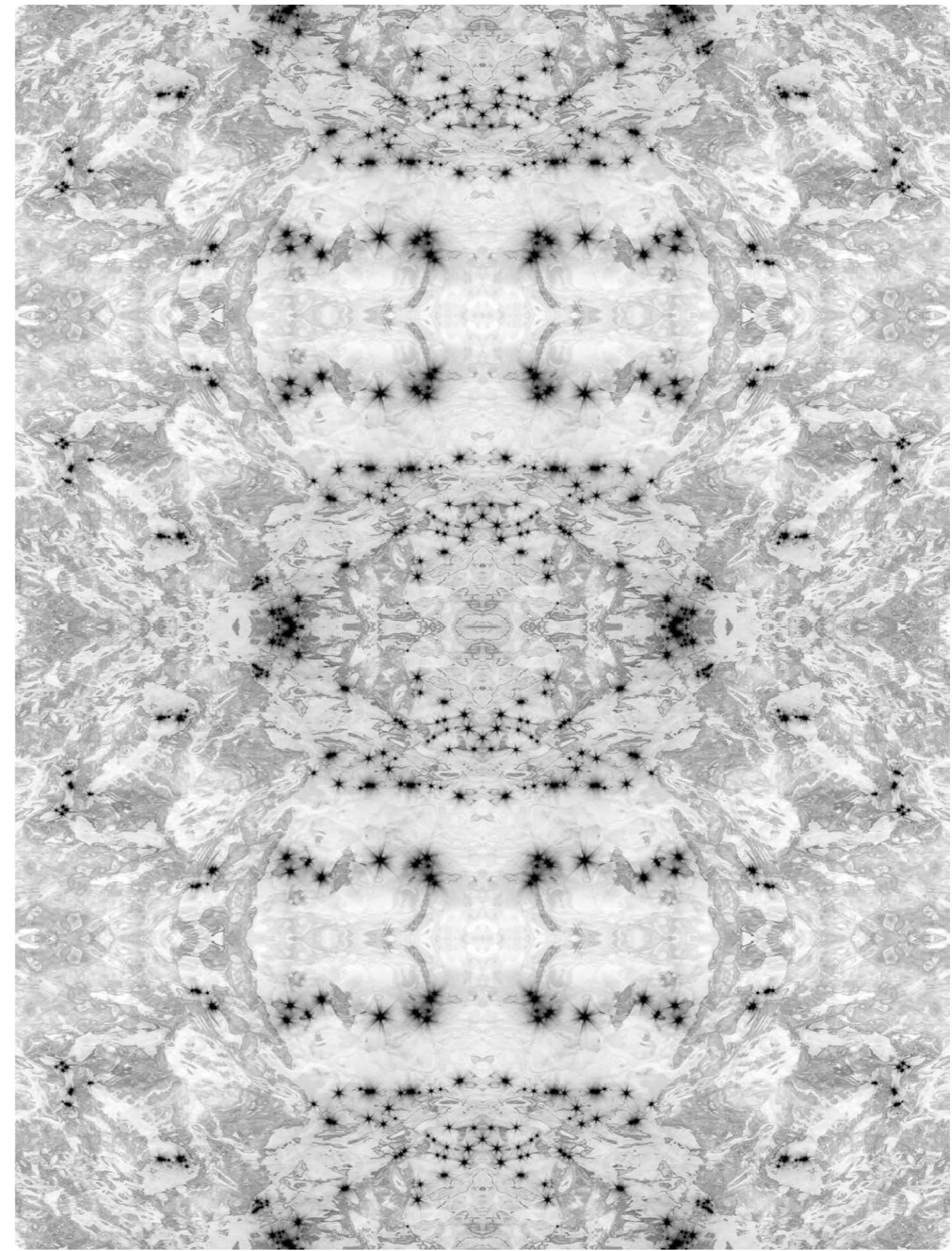
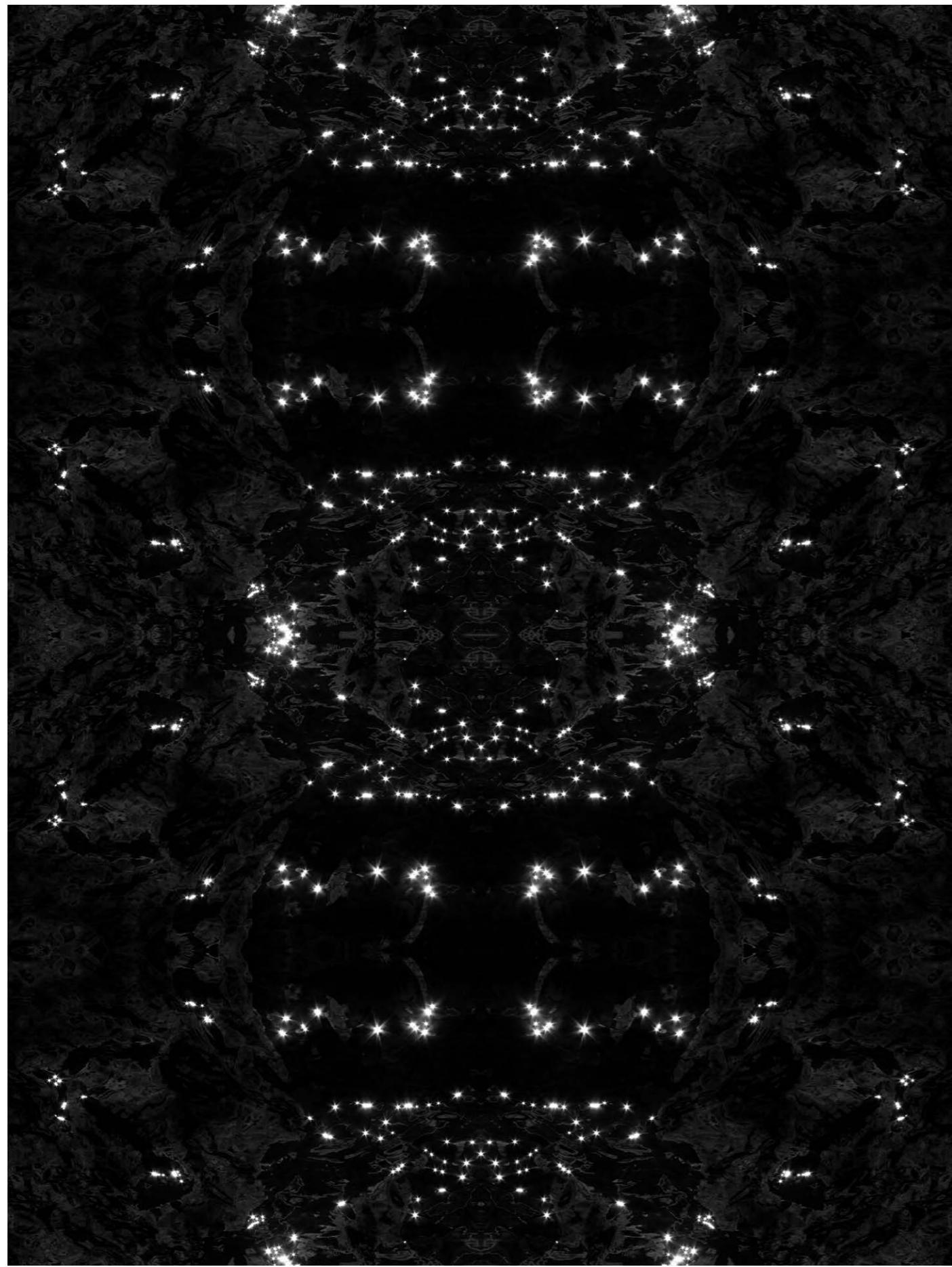
There are several different myths behind Cygnus. In Greek mythology this constellation represented the form that the god Zeus took to seduce either the Spartan queen Leda or the nymph Nemesis.

In other stories, Zeus took a swan's shape to seduce Leda, wife of King Tyndareus of Sparta, who also slept with her husband on the same night. Leda gave birth to an egg, out of which came the twins Castor and Pollux (represented in the constellation Gemini) and the beautiful Helen of Troy.

Chinese accounts call Cygnus "Tianjin," or a ford or bridge, which crosses the Milky Way, known as "Tianhe," or celestial river, Ridpath writes. Ancient Hindu astronomers associated the starry pattern with the "Brahma Muhurta" ("Moment of the Universe"), a period between 4:24 and 5:12 in the morning that is considered the best time to start the day, according to Universe Today (Mann, 2020).







## ANDREW COLLINS ABOUT THE CYGNUS MYSTERY

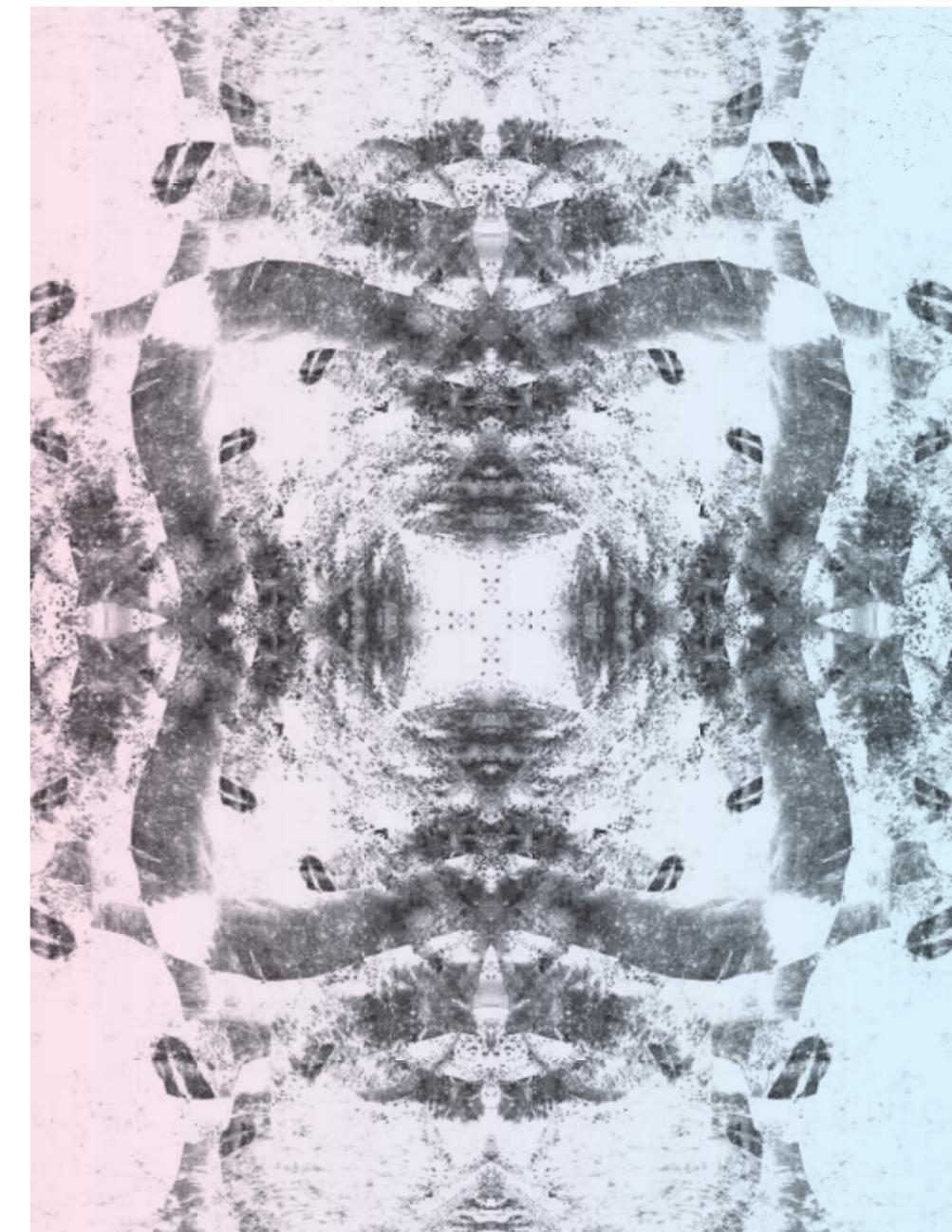
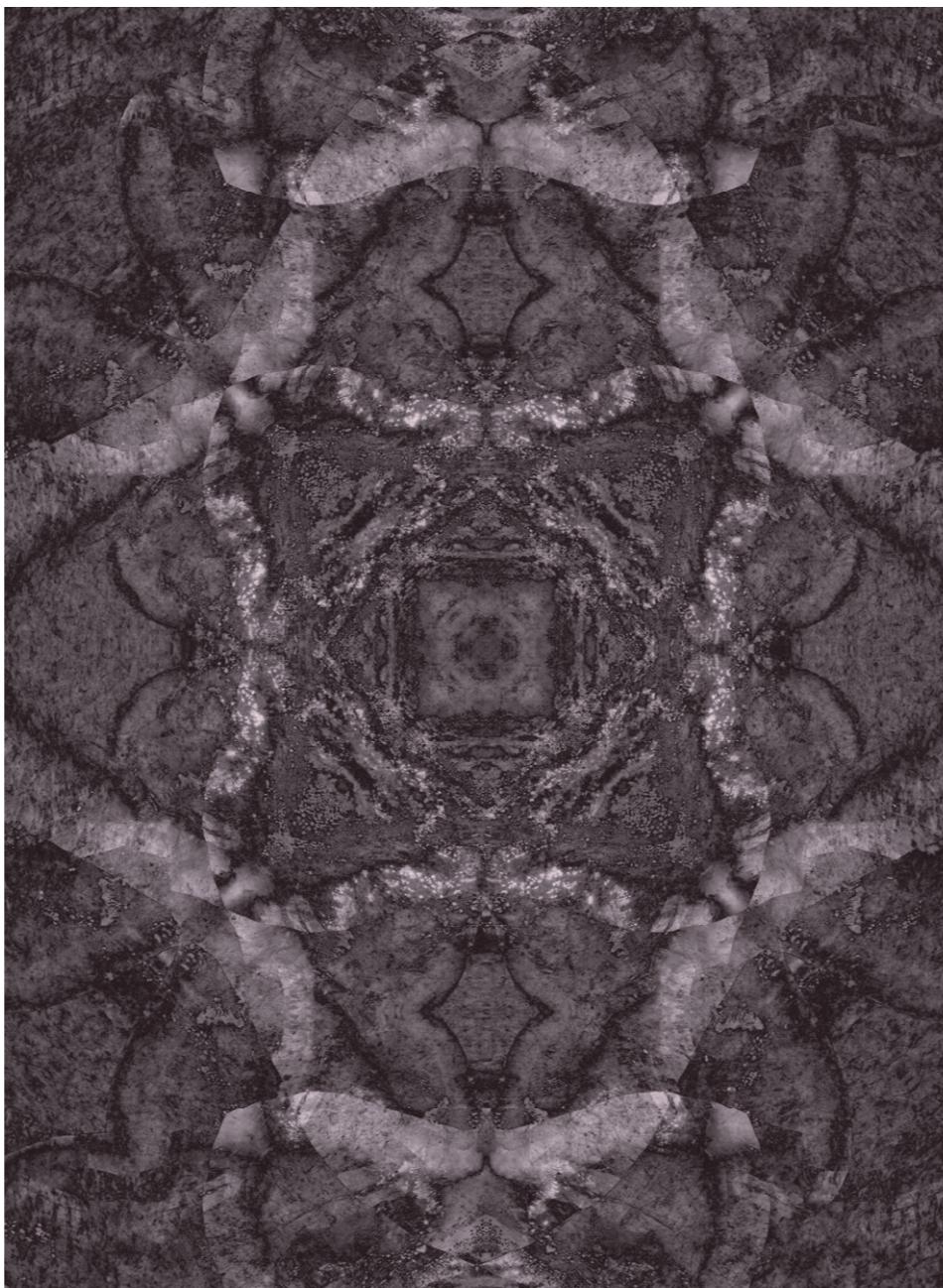
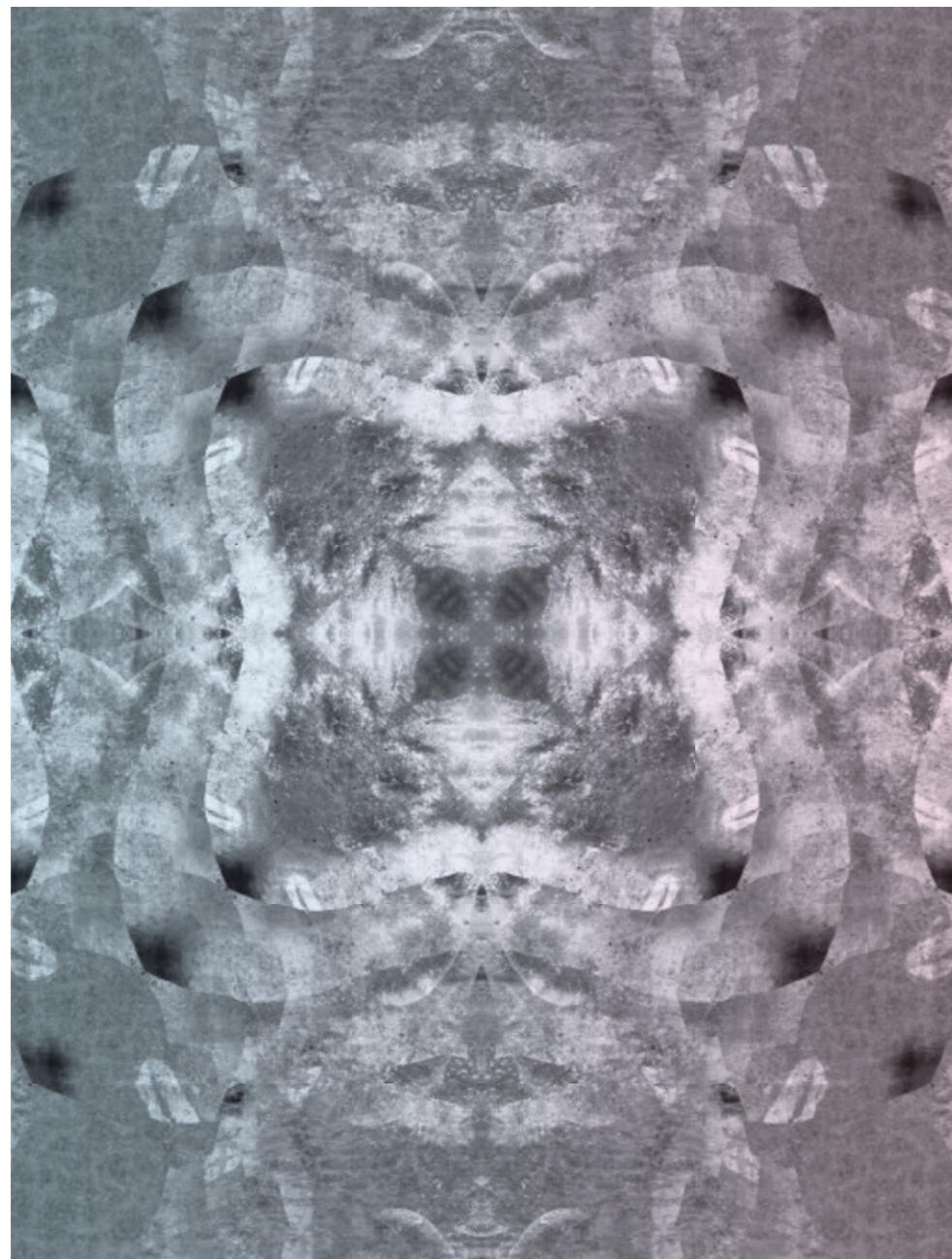
As the author Andrew Collins examined the possible astronomical alignments at *Gobekli Tepe*<sup>4</sup>, the constellation of Cygnus became the only possibility for the celestial bird of the North. Cygnus is comprised of a host of stars, including Deneb. Deneb is seen in the heart of the Milky Way, near the area known as the Great Rift, which is a dark split in the Milky Way, nearly devoid of stars. Earth lies near the outer rim of our galaxy, and the Milky Way represents our nighttime view deep into the center of our own spiral galaxy. In ancient religious belief systems, the stunning band of stars represented a magical pathway.

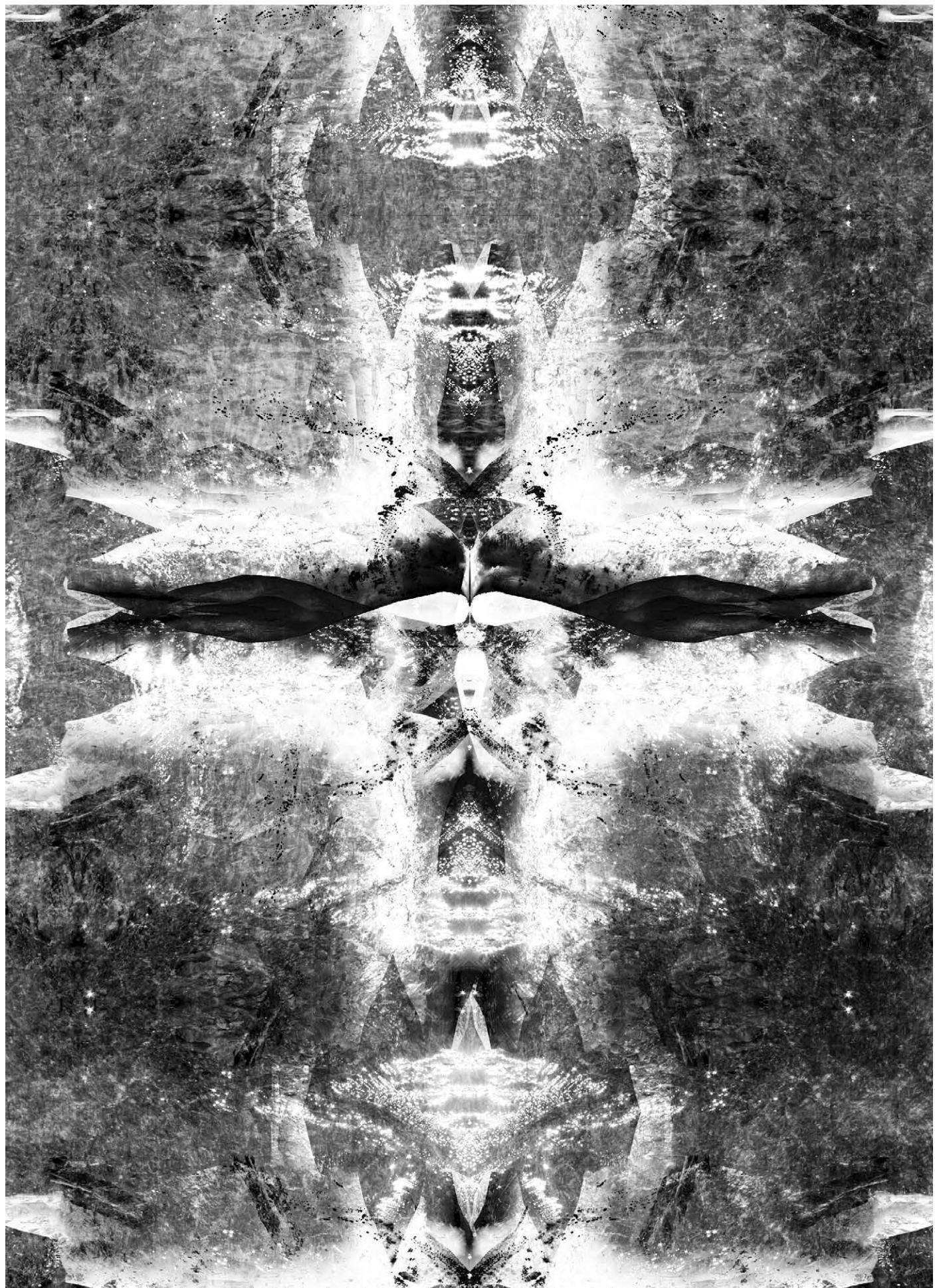
"And this was the fact that this site [*Gobekli Tepe*], and the others, all seemed to be orientated towards the North. What is important is that thousands of years later, in the very same area where these unique temples were constructed, a peoples known as the Sabians rose. Now they were star worshipers. What's so significant about the Sabians and their descendants, is that they all venerated the North in celebrations that they knew as the mystery of the North. They saw the North as the place of the primal cause, it was the place of heaven, and it was the place where the soul returned in death, symbolized by a bird. And they would see the soul journeying to the North in the form of this bird.

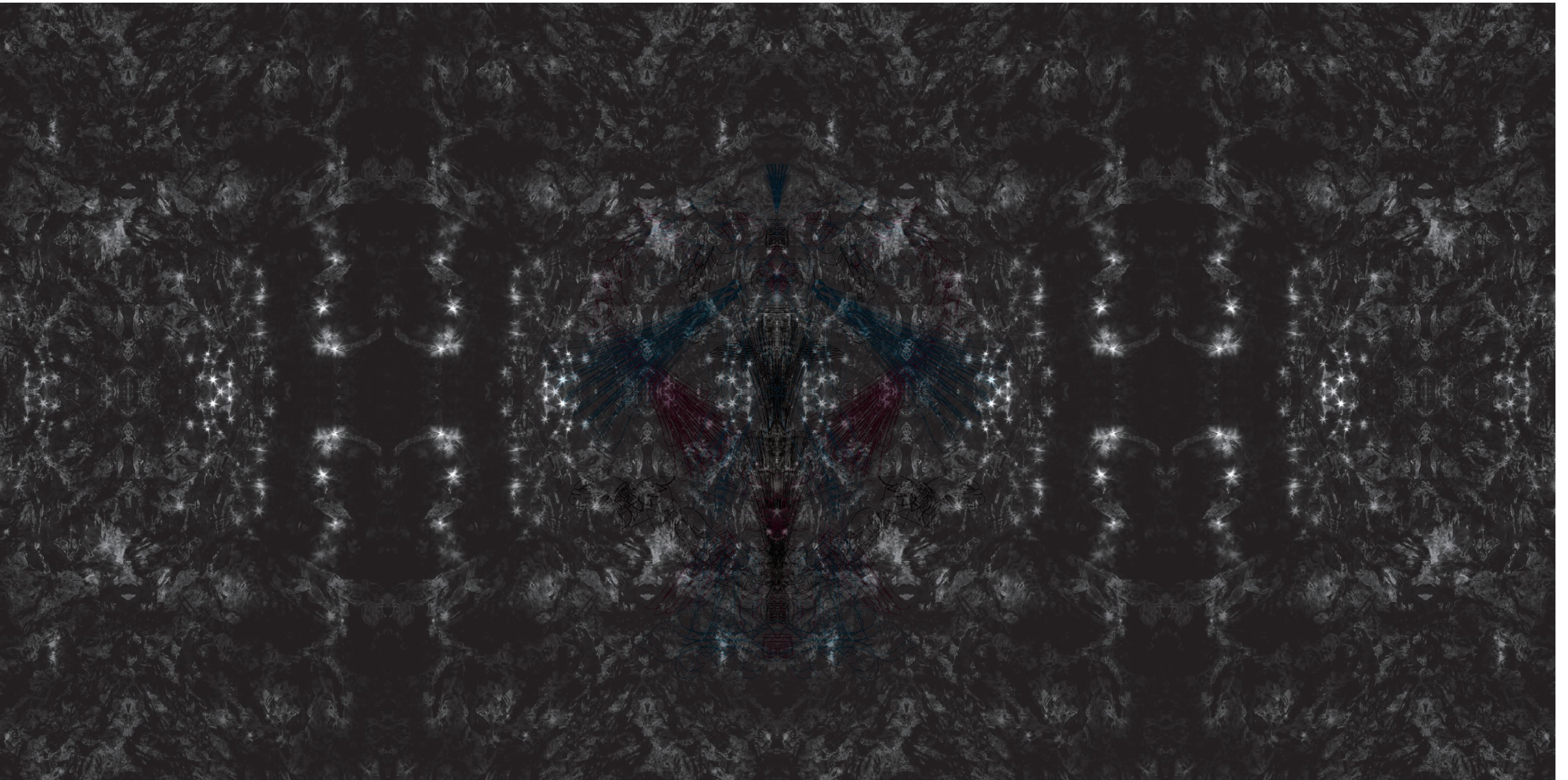
For them, it was universally-seen as a road or river to the stars, and more specifically, to the sky world, to heaven, to the afterlife. And what's so important about its relationship to Cygnus is that in its most northerly extension, exactly at a place where the Milky Way breaks in two courses through this circle, dark rift or great rift, or nebulous clouds, dust which forms like this dark region. Here is placed the stars of Cygnus, and it was here that was the entrance or exit into the sky world. Unanimously around the world, it was seen as a bird, a cosmic bird, a bird of first creation, a bird of life, and of death, and of rebirth; a bird that symbolized the transformation of the soul in death across the world, in shamanic traditions, in indigenous cultures. The stars of Cygnus in particular, Deneb, its brightest star, was considered to be like a hole, an entry point, a doorway, a window, into the sky world." (Andrew Collins, 2018)

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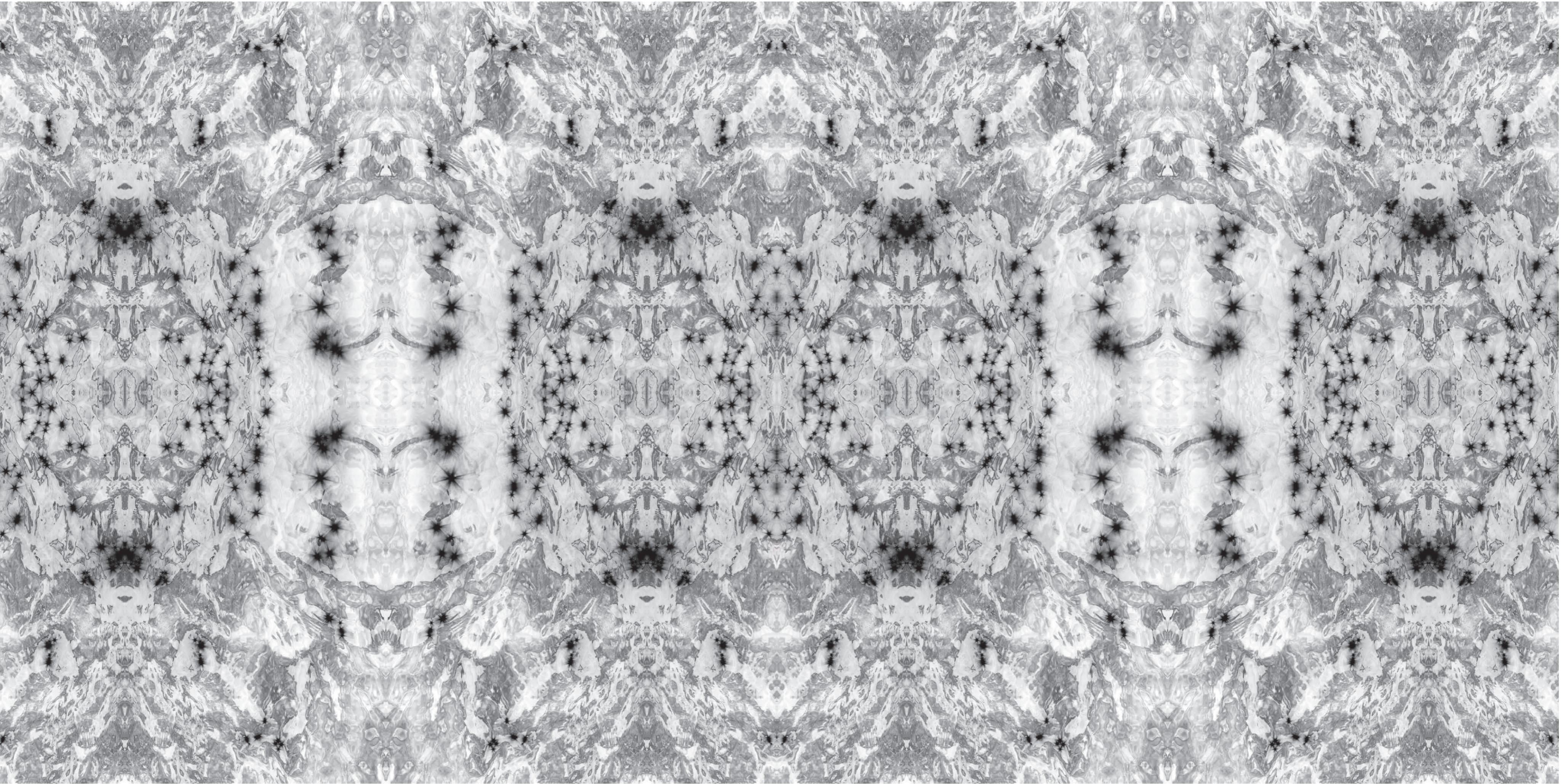
<sup>4</sup> *Göbekli Tepe* known as Girê Mirazan or Xirabreşkê in Kurdish is a Neolithic archaeological site near the city of Şanlıurfa in Southeastern Anatolia, Turkey.



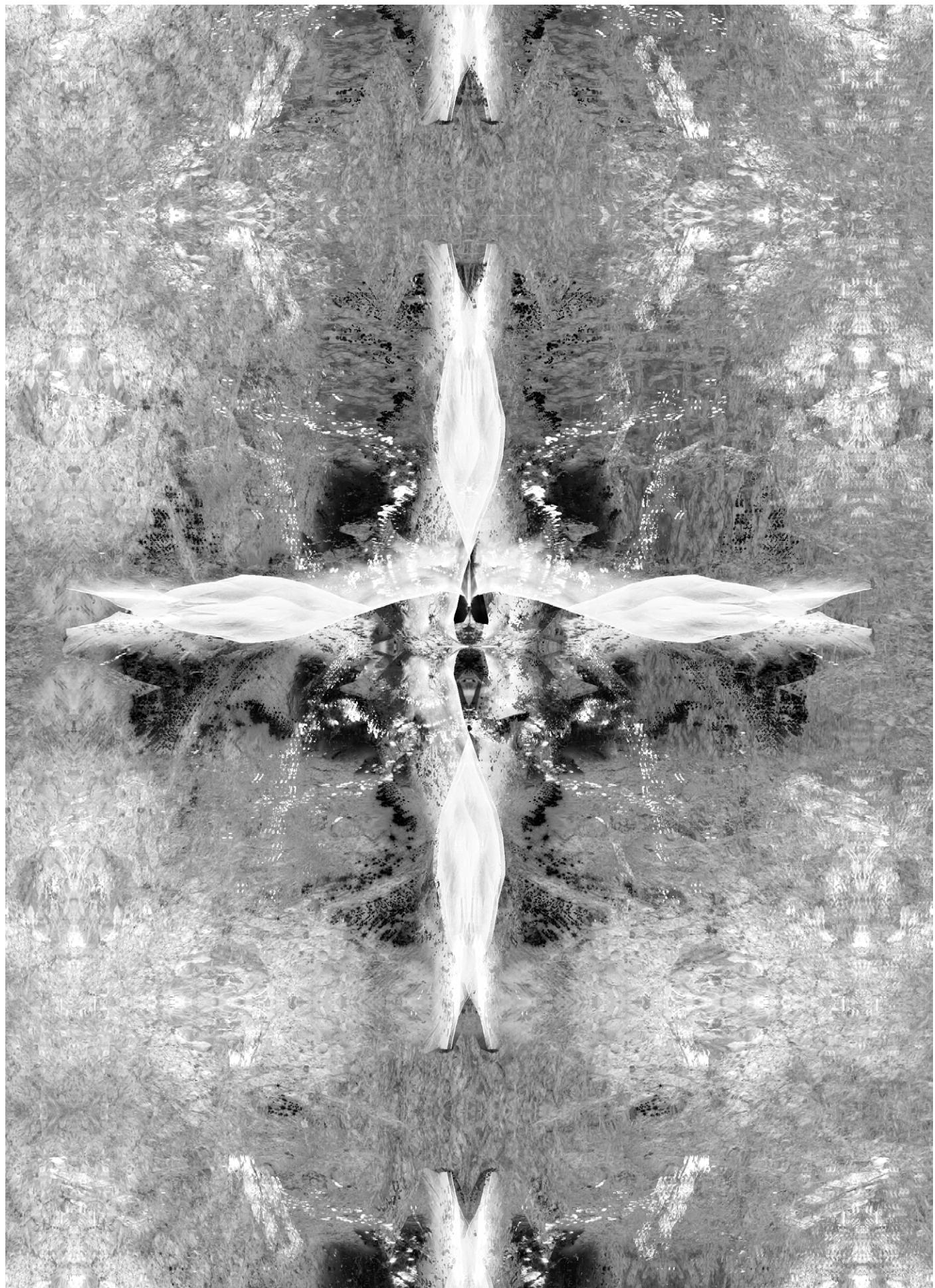


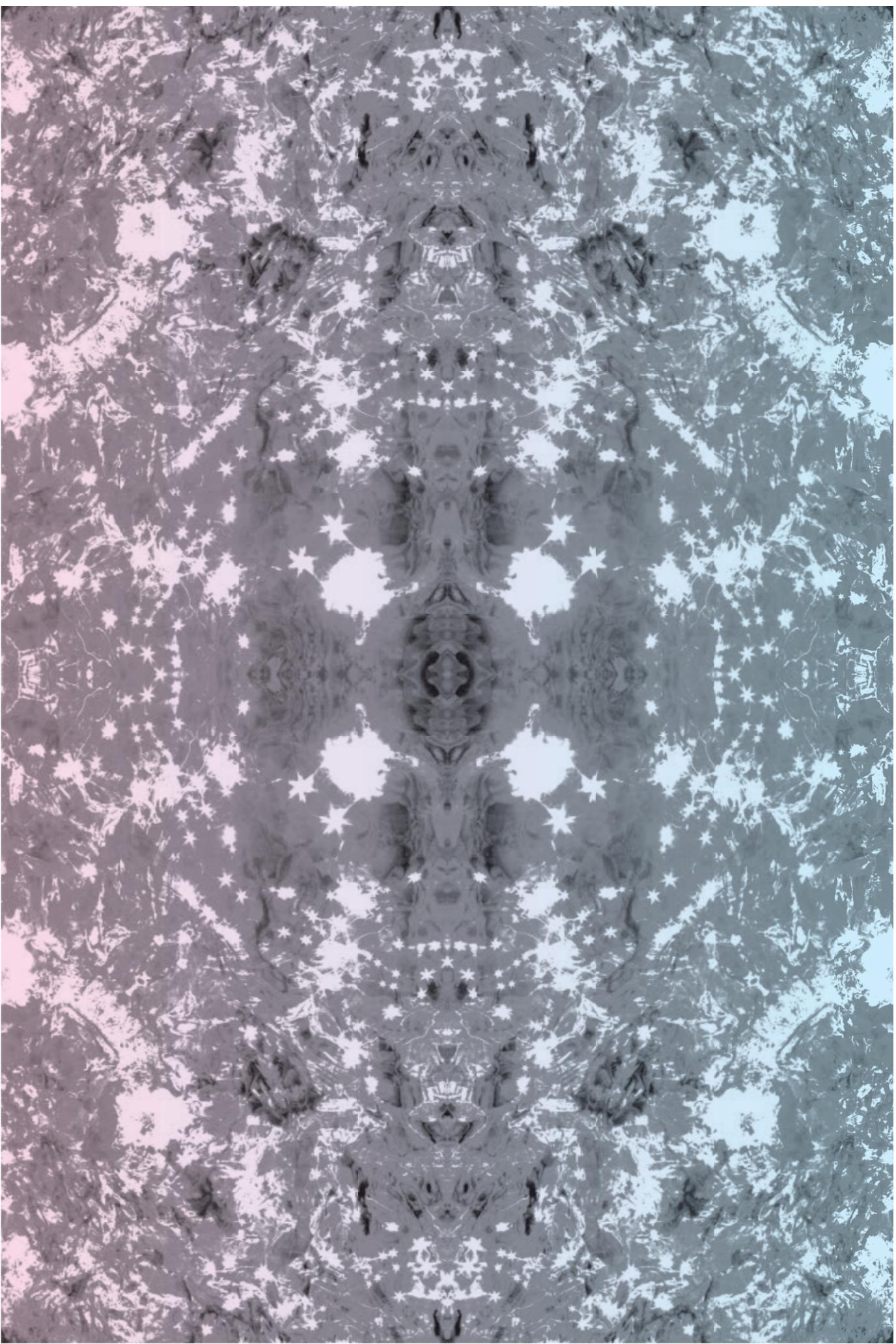
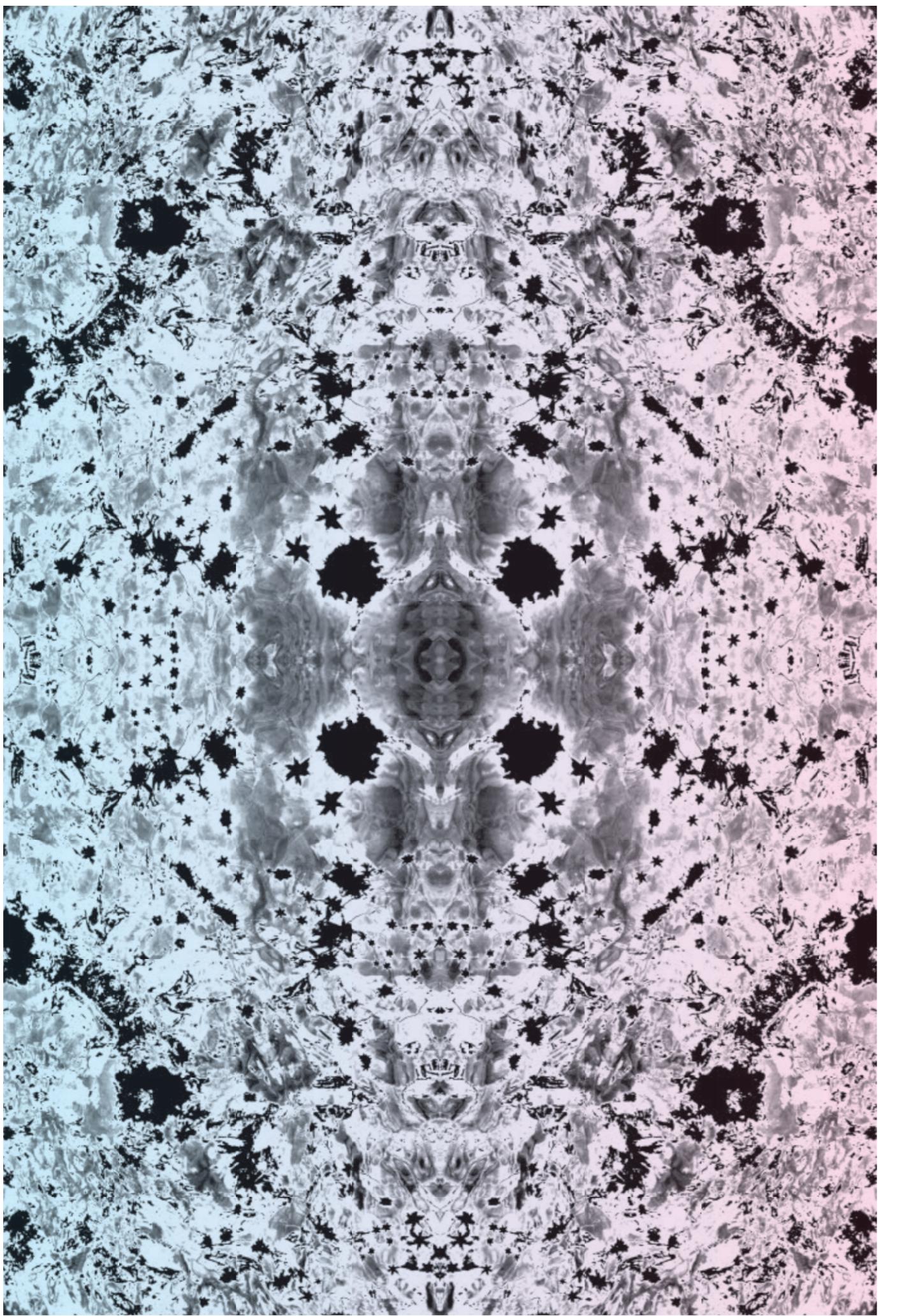


TYGNY (SOLD)

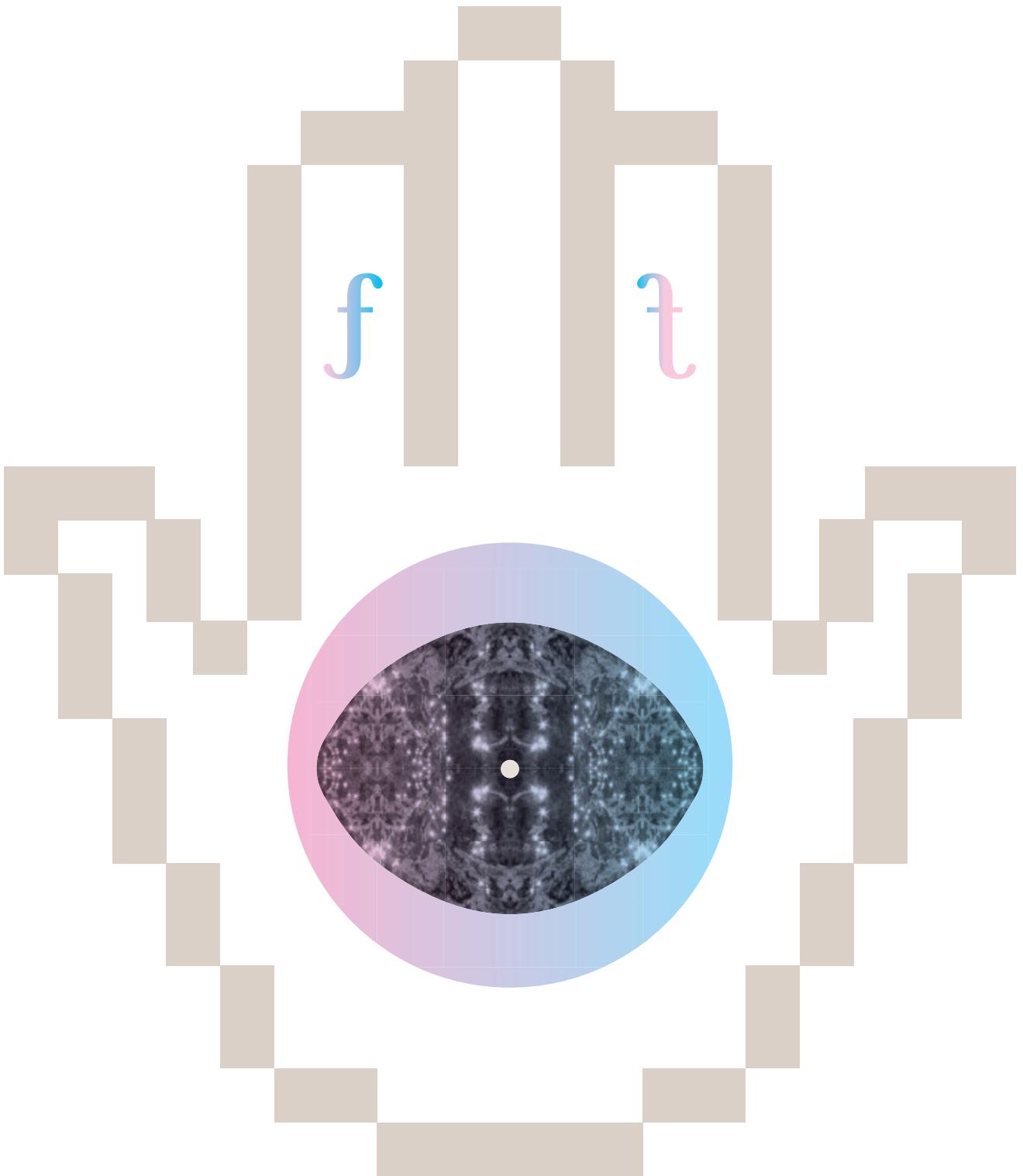


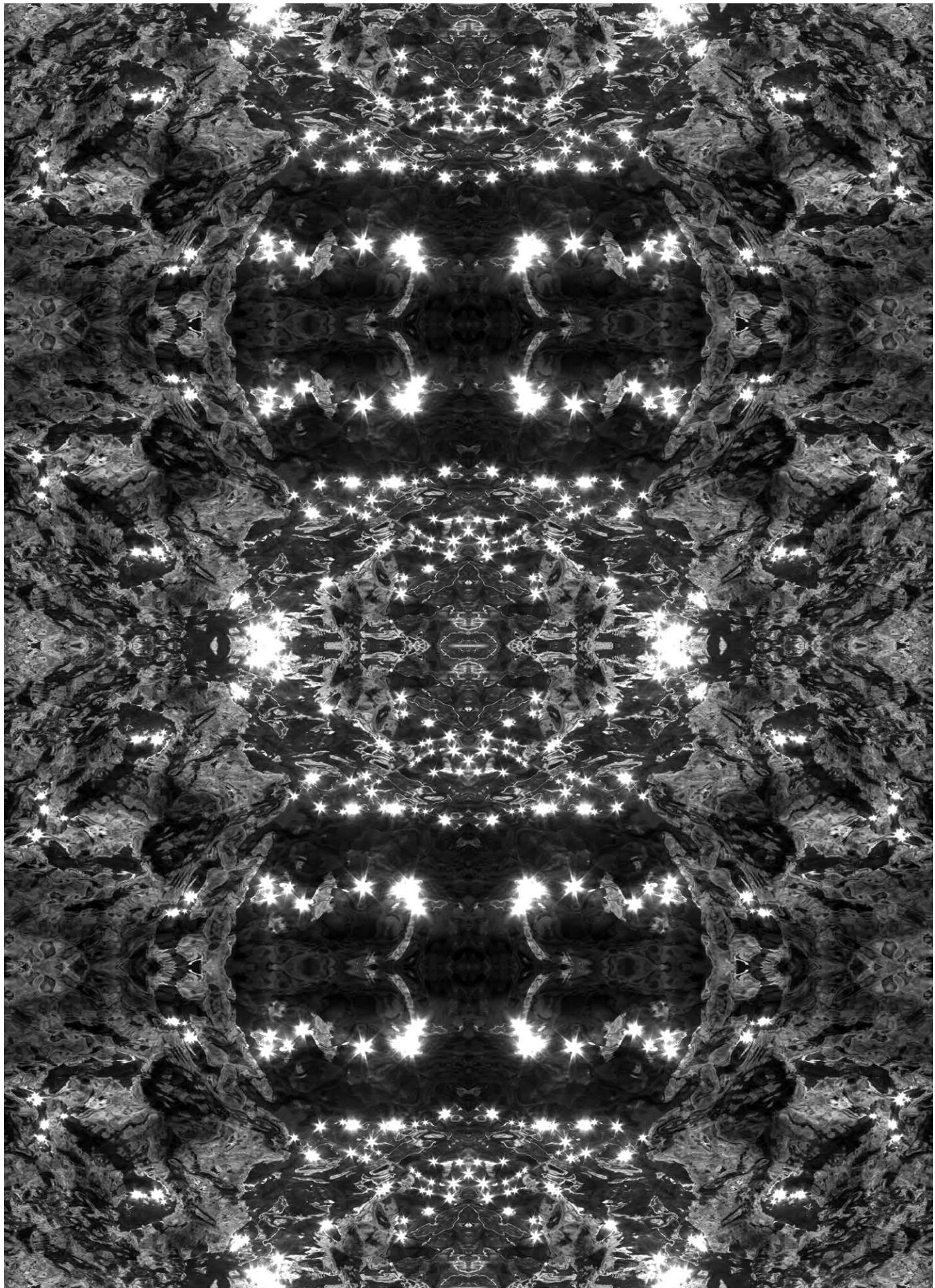


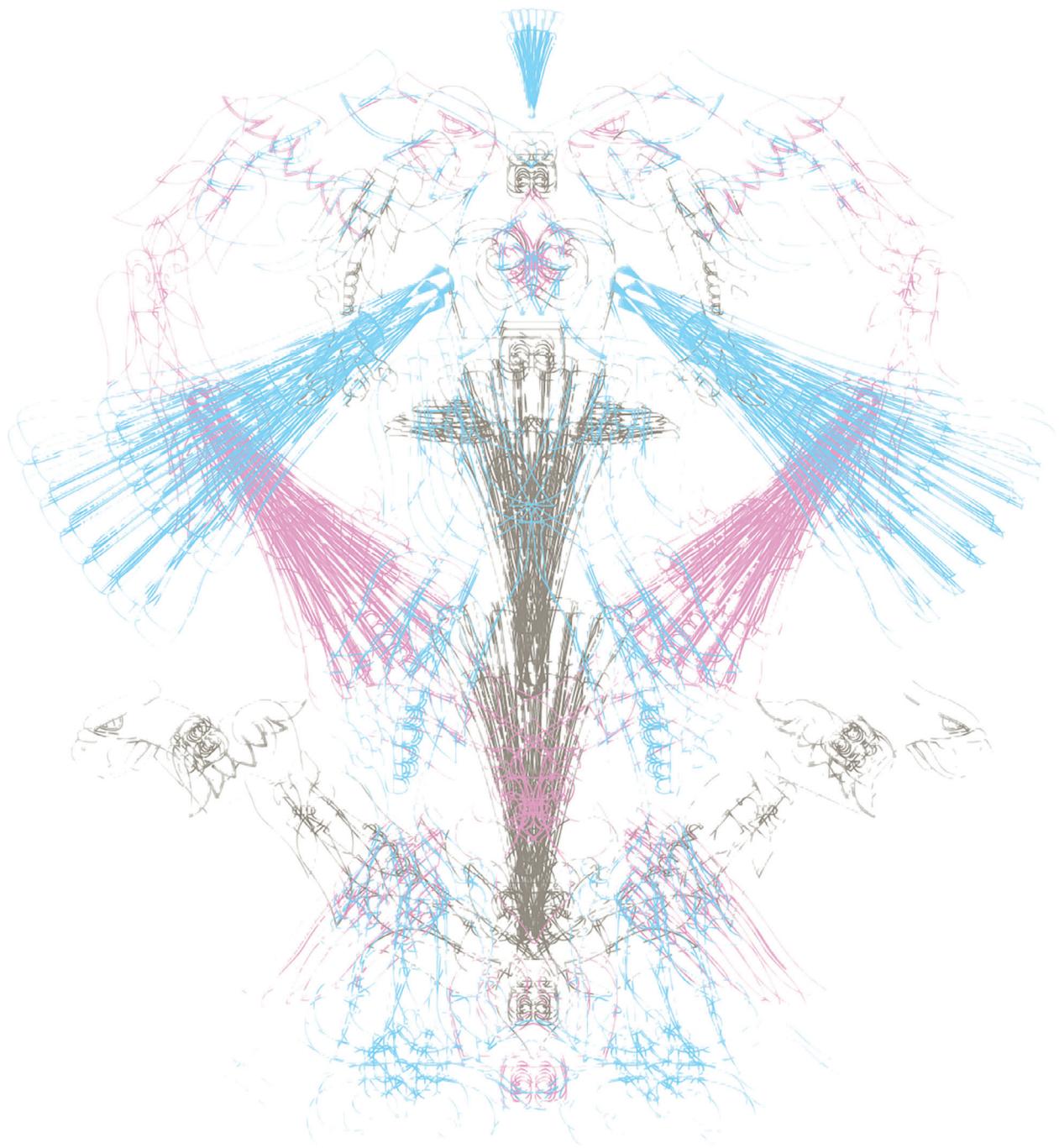






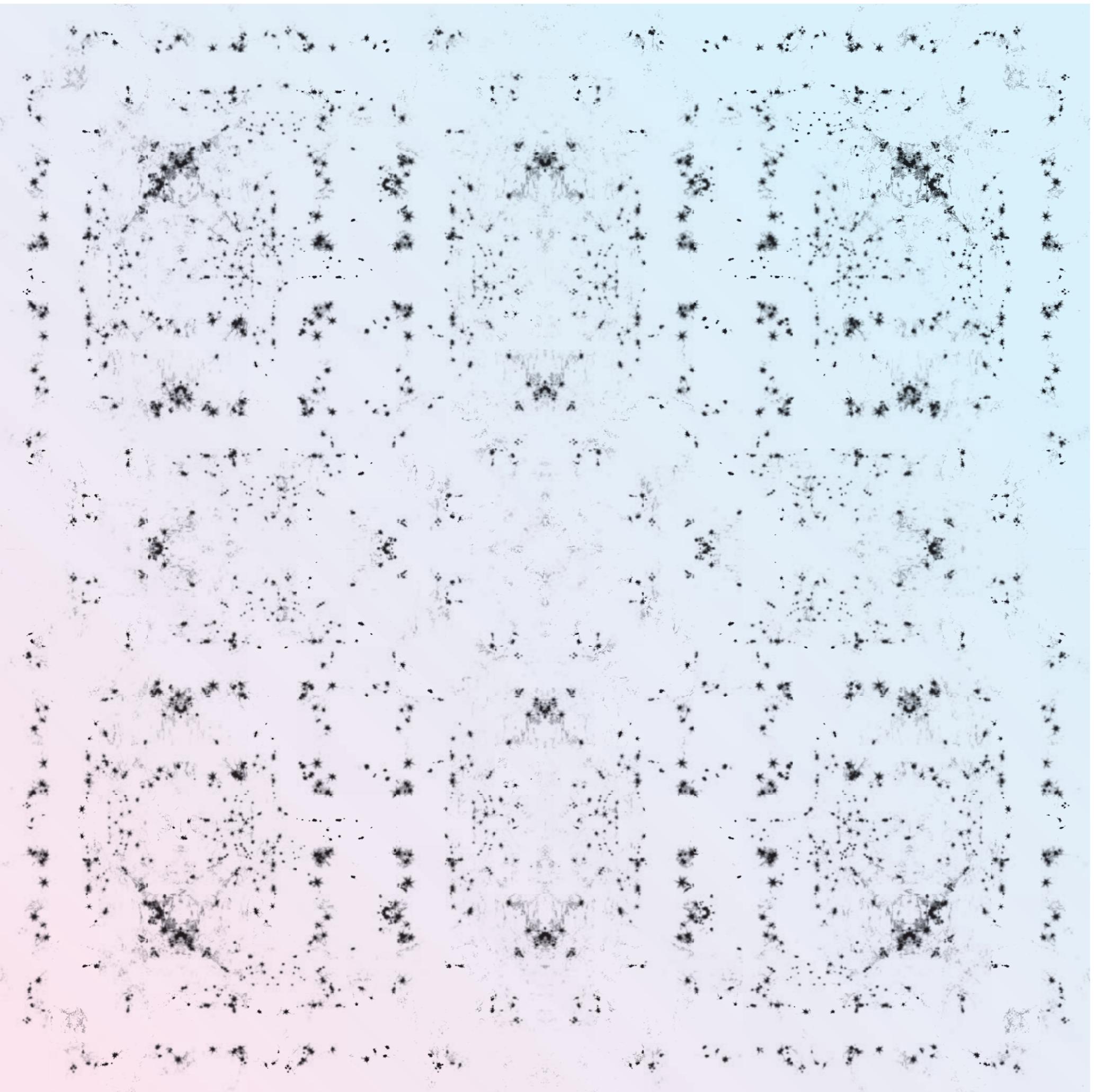






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<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constellation>



"The day science begins to study non-physical phenomena, it will make more progress in one decade than in all the previous centuries of its existence."

"If you want to find the secrets of the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration."

(Nikola Tesla)

----- Contact -----

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