



Catharyne Ward

Born in Kent, England

Catharyne Ward (aka Cathy Ward) was born in Kent, England. As a child, she was sent to a private convent run by the Irish order of The Sisters of Mercy, an experience that had a profound and lasting effect on Ward and her work to this day. While Ward studied under sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi and graduated with a master's in ceramics and glass from the Royal College of Art in London, her two-dimensional practice is largely self-taught and—like the works of many Outsider artists—defies traditional modes of classification. Her nearly three-decades-long career has seen Ward move to Canada and then New York, eventually returning to London. Her practice traverses many mediums, from large-scale painting and installation to film and sculpture, and has evolved as the artist navigated bereavement and chronic illness. In “Liberty Realm,” one of her most recognized bodies of work, Ward works on boards covered with white china clay and black paint. Resembling human hair or pulsating fields of energy, this illustrative series is one of subtraction and redaction. Ward uses a surgical scalpel to unearth her renderings from utter darkness, carving media away to reveal a glowing image teeming beneath the inky surface. Ward’s process often undergoes transformations parallel to her personal life. In her most recent body of work, Ward combines her myriad of interests—from her fascination with the mystical and the psychic, the communicative power of dreams, the almighty forces of nature, and the fleeting passage of time. The paintings in “The Oracles” are not planned; instead, they commence with a largely automatic process involving an initial, intuitive application of vivid pigment in ink and watercolor that Ward then probes to release otherworldly imagery. Piercing a technicolor veil, the artist conjures scenes from a mysterious realm populated by archetypal entities. “The Oracles” is at once whimsical and ominous as Ward acts as a conduit to unleash the human connection to our primordial origins.

Cathy Ward has exhibited her work at The Drawing Center, New York; The Jerwood Space Gallery, London; The Whitechapel, London; the Good Luck Gallery, Los Angeles; and John Moore’s Contemporary Painting Prize, The Walker, Liverpool, among others. She was awarded artist in residence for ‘Madge Gill - Medium & Visionary’ at Orleans House London and is a recipient of The Elephant Trust Award. Titled “Liberty Realm,” her monograph was published by Strange Attractor Press & MIT Press in 2020.