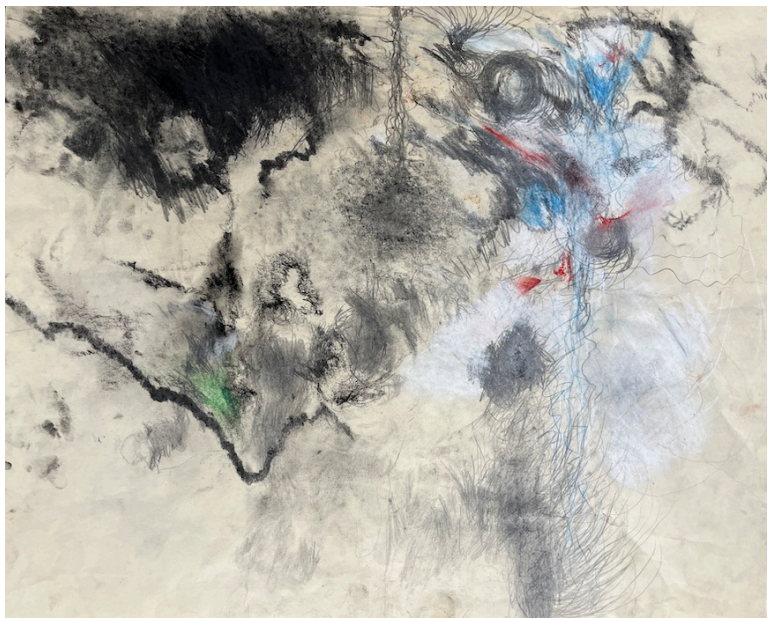




*In the Presence of the Bond*, 2021  
Mixed media on paper (made during the  
Unseen Hand's 2021 Summer Retreat)



*Song of the 7 Dragons (Priscilla's treatment)*, 2016  
Mixed media on paper (made at Sheepscot Hollow, Whitefield, Maine)  
[Both works are on view at the gallery. Contact Pulp Gallery to purchase.]

## **“Under Starry Skies”**

**Artist Statement / Sarah H. Paulson**

**Pulp Gallery (Holyoke, MA) / July 13 - August 11, 2024**

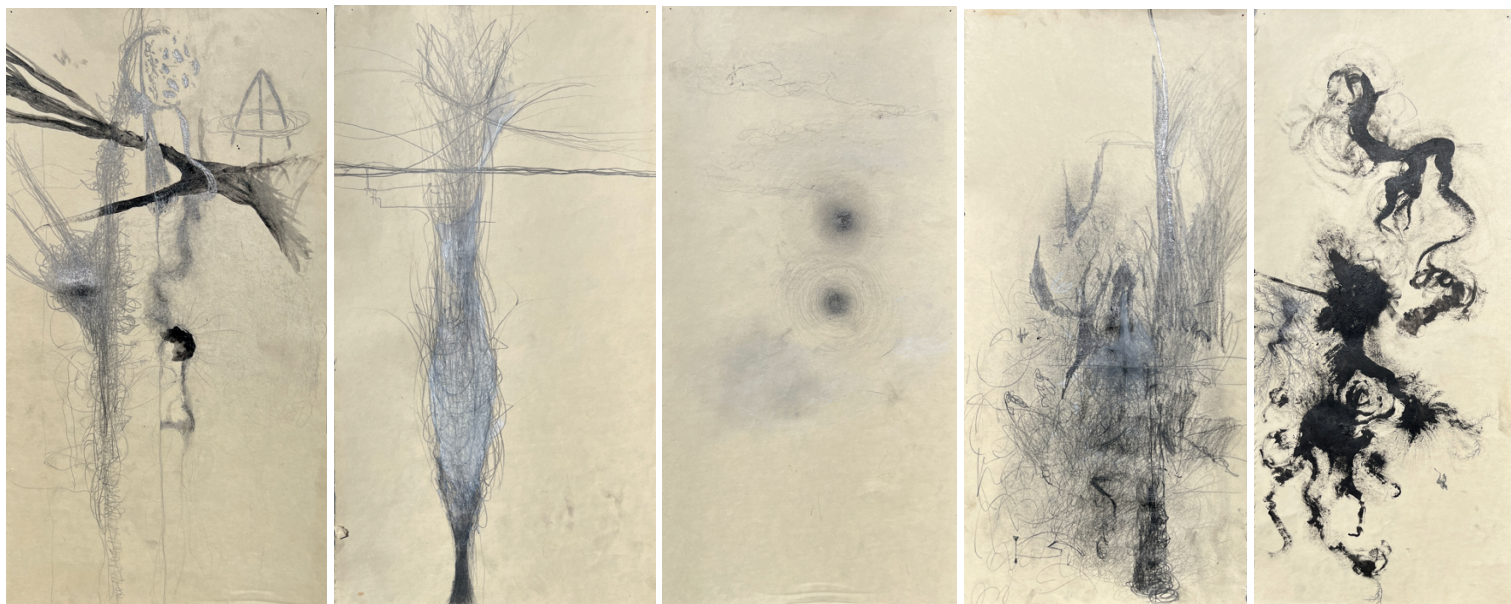
For most of my life, I longed to make art that I did not dictate. I used to create elaborate and ridiculous scenarios in order to find a mark that did not involve my own control. Some of the marks looked interesting or spontaneous, but none of them were true.

In a tiny treatment room in SoHo in New York City 16 years ago, I lay on an acupuncture table for 5½ hours as a patient of the Song of the 7 Dragons (an ancient alchemical protocol sometimes used to treat energetic obstructions). I had reached my limit in my ability to navigate the world, and I needed help.

The practitioner—who would one day become my teacher—stared directly into my eyes and moved (externally and internally) inside a current that held us both. In that moment, I received something Real—a moment that has remained alive in me ever since. There, I was shown that it is possible to be moved by divine power—as opposed to my own. I was never the same after that unexpected meeting. After the treatment, I had access to myself in a way I hadn't remembered feeling before; I knew I had received more help than I imagined was possible. But that wasn't the whole story: My longing grew exponentially after my spiritual awakening that night.

I went on with my life and soon found myself back in the treatment room sitting in many long-form alchemical treatments, but this time it was as a student, not as a patient. There, I repeatedly felt a movement that I was not conducting. I felt a desire to work as an artist in the treatments, because I felt it might be possible to learn to be led. I had a very limited understanding of what art is, even though I had been born an artist. And I had a limited understanding of what in fact I was longing for.

At the time, I did not realize my training would soon go much deeper. I also did not know that one day I would become an acupuncturist. In 2013, I began being trained in the role of the *calligrapher* during the ancient alchemical long-form acupuncture treatments with the esoteric school, the Unseen Hand: Medicine from Antiquity, making drawings like the *Starry Skies* series (currently on view in the exhibition). This was the start of being trained as an artist by my teacher.



Drawings from the *Starry Skies* (2013) series. [Contact the gallery to purchase individual drawings.]

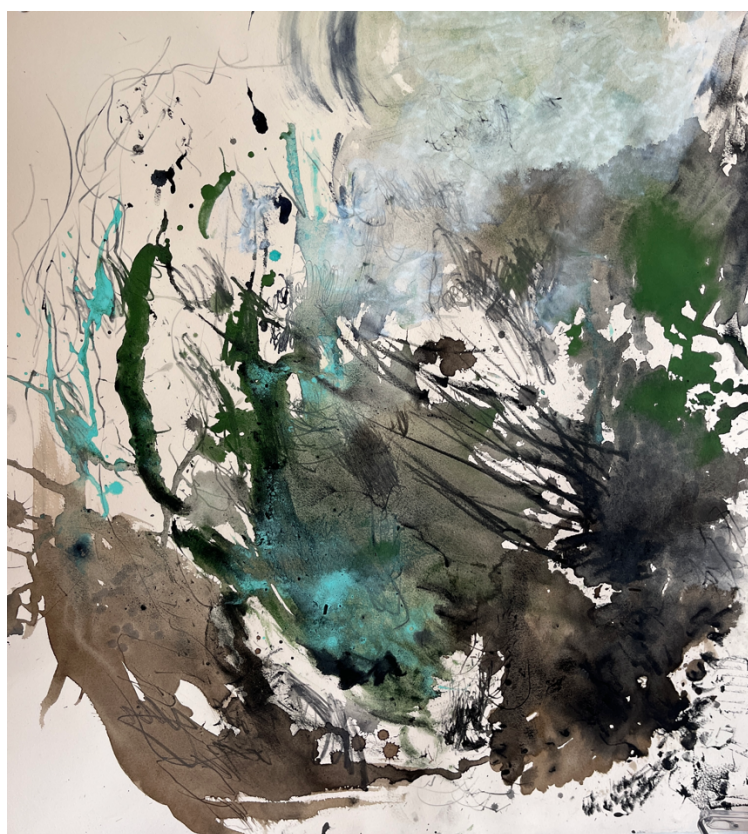
Prior to this, I had spent years constructing endurance-oriented performances that were impossible for me to execute—I would run myself into the ground, push myself physically, sometimes barely able to walk afterwards. I created scenarios that could only result in failure. It wasn't masochism—I was in search of something that was hidden and beautiful, that I thought perhaps could only be found through my own weakness. I was unrelenting in how I pushed myself past my own limits in search of something that was beyond my grasp. I know now that I never could have found what I was looking for in the world I was living—By *world*, I mean my own consciousness and orientation to life.

With all that history, still there was nothing that compared to the rigor of sitting in treatments with a pencil in my hand, finally no longer the conductor of my own images.

I hadn't looked at the chronology of my drawings/paintings until getting ready for this show. Each series of work relates directly to the long-term apprenticeship that I have been in. Many of these drawings/paintings are like visual movements that speak towards a reconnection to the sacred root.

By no means am I saying that my artwork is full of true marks. But many of my marks now are truer than they used to be. And, there is failure all throughout.

I cannot imagine being able to fully express the nuance, magnificence, shock, beauty, heartbreak, and awe that has shaped me as love has come into my life and work, under real guidance. Hopefully, some of these drawings and paintings share a hint.



***In Transmission, 2023***

Natural earth-based ink and graphite on paper  
(Performative painting executed in the dark of the night under the stars on an outdoor stage alongside Travis Laplante improvising on the saxophone. Made during the School of 3 Lights Artist Residency Program.)



***A burn and a drop of gold, 2023***

Natural earth-based ink, charcoal, graphite and moxa on paper  
(Performative painting made at Art Around Books in Bellows Falls, VT while Travis Laplante improvised on the saxophone)

**For more information or to purchase any of these works, contact PULP:**

[www.pulpholyoke.com](http://www.pulpholyoke.com) / 413-362-6368