

Tarot!
*Renaissance Symbols,
Modern Visions*

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LARGE PRINT LABELS

The
Morgan
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Museum

TAROT! RENAISSANCE SYMBOLS, MODERN VISIONS

For many people today, tarot offers a gateway to the ineffable, the subconscious, and, ultimately, to personal understanding. Yet its origins lie not in mysticism but in the artistic and intellectual culture of the Italian Renaissance. Tarot's beginnings can be traced to three fifteenth-century decks, each created in the workshop of the court artist Bonifacio Bembo for the Visconti and Sforza dukes of Milan. Originally conceived to use in a card game, these gilded, hand-painted decks reflect the splendor and refinement of their patrons' world.

Tarot's striking imagery later captivated occultists and mystics, first in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France and then in early twentieth-century Britain with the Occult Revival and the publication of the *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck in 1909. With the dissemination of this deck, tarot became firmly entrenched in the popular imagination.

This exhibition explores tarot's artistic legacy in two parts: The first examines its Renaissance origins, and the second charts its radical transformation in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. Bringing these histories into dialogue reveals tarot to be a dynamic symbolic framework that has been shaped and reshaped over time. Steeped in cultural traditions yet

adaptable to new norms and beliefs, tarot has provided artists with a structure that unites the universal and the specific, that looks to the past while also pointing toward the unknown.

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Elizabeth Colomba, *Study for "The Magician,"* 2024. Graphite and white chalk. The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Jamie and Emmet Watson and purchase on the Manley Family Fund; 2025.102. © Elizabeth Colomba, courtesy the artist.

Christian Dior by Maria Grazia Chiuri (b. 1964)

Tulle dress and satin-crepe and silk-organza coat embroidered with images from the *Visconti di Modrone* and *Visconti-Sforza* tarot decks, Haute Couture Autumn–Winter 2017 collection

Dior Héritage collection, Paris

Maria Grazia Chiuri's debut collection for Dior drew on the symbolic language of tarot, reworking its imagery into embroidered dresses, coats, and accessories. Central to this vision was the legacy of Renaissance tarot, particularly the richly decorated Visconti decks that were created for the Milanese court in the fifteenth century. These hand-painted cards—filled with allegorical figures—provided a historical model for Dior's motifs and storytelling. Chiuri connected Renaissance visual culture with contemporary fashion, using tarot not as a fortune-telling device but rather a poetic system of images through which garments could convey identity, destiny, and transformation.

Top row:

Todd Alcott

The Pulp Tarot

New York: The Unemployed Philosophers Guild, 2021

Collection of PJ Mark

Todd Alcott's *Pulp Tarot* invokes early twentieth-century mass-market detective fiction and film noir: The Devil sports a slick goatee while Death dons a snazzy tuxedo familiar from Prohibition-era films. Alcott was inspired by the way the *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck created "its own moral narrative universe," as do his genres of choice.

Kahn and Selesnick (Nicholas Kahn, b. 1964; and

Richard Selesnick, b. 1964)

Tarot of the Drowning World

Self-published, 2022

Collection of PJ Mark

The photographic *Tarot of the Drowning World*, which presents meticulous arrangements within aquatic garden settings, laments the natural world's quickening destruction by humanity's interventions while simultaneously exploring the cards' beauty and latent eroticism.

Top middle row:

Suzanne Treister (b. 1958)

Hexen 2.0

Hexen 5.0

Chromogenesis, 2009–11 (2.0) and 2025 (5.0)

Private collection

Suzanne Treister explores emerging technologies and the institutions and belief systems accompanying them. *Hexen 2.0* engages in the analysis of a future now past with references to the World Wide Web and the nuclear bomb, while conversely, *Hexen 5.0* envisions a still-elusive future, probing the nascent fields of quantum computing and interstellar colonialism.

Bottom middle row:

Jack Hurley, Rae Hurley, and John Horler

The New Tarot

Self-published, 1974

Private collection

Sourcing imagery from Egyptian, Tahitian, Greco-Roman, and Abrahamic sources, *The New Tarot's* rigidly geometric cards are as austere as they are universal, establishing tarot as a spiritual vehicle which transcends any specific culture.

Salvador Dalí (1904–1989)

Tarot Universal Dalí

Spain: Naipes Comas, 1984

Collection of Adam Putnam

Famed Spanish Surrealist Salvador Dalí was approached by the American producer Albert Broccoli to create a deck of cards for the James Bond film *Live and Let Die* (1973). The commission did not come to fruition, but Dalí decided to complete the deck independently, eventually publishing it in 1984.

Bottom row:

King Khan (Arish Ahmad Khan, b. 1977) and Michael Eaton (b. 1986)

Black Power Tarot Deck

Self-published, 2015

Private collection

Inspired by filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky's long-standing engagement with tarot, the *Black Power Tarot* reworks the nineteenth-century *Tarot de Marseille* with a new cast of characters, including Tupac Shakur as the Hanged Man and Richard Pryor as the Fool.

Alejandro Jodorowsky and Philippe Camoin

The Camoin-Jodorowsky Tarot de Marseille

Marseille: Camoin Editions, 1997

Private collection Juanjo Cristiani

This deck was created by the Chilean filmmaker and tarot practitioner Alejandro Jodorowsky and the tarot scholar Philippe Camoin, a descendant of the last master card makers of Marseille. The duo aimed to restore the eighteenth-century *Tarot de Marseille* to its original symbolic system, rectifying compositional and coloring details that had been lost over time.

Juanjo Cristiani

Fortune Queens: A Drag Race Tarot, vol. 1

Self-published, 2020

Collection of PJ Mark

Fortune Queens, a Drag Race Tarot sets the Major and Minor Arcana in the world of *RuPaul's Drag Race* with each card depicting a specific moment or look from the show, allowing users to commune with their “drag spirit guides.”

Top row:

Karen Vogel and Vicki Noble

Motherpeace Tarot

U.S. Games Systems, Inc., 2016

Private collection

First published in 1981 by Karen Vogel and Vicki Noble, both members of the American neo-pagan Goddess movement, *Motherpeace Tarot* remains a much-cited deck, syncretizing female figures from diverse religions, including Hindu sages and Greco-Roman deities, and offering a radical alternative to tarot's patriarchal history.

Amanda Lee Stilwell

The New Wave Tarot

Self-published, 2021

Collection of PJ Mark

Amanda Lee Stilwell's *New Wave Tarot* reconfigures the Major Arcana as iconic musicians from the New Wave, a pop-oriented rock subgenre that emerged in the late 1970s, rendering the Wheel of Fortune as DEVO donning their iconic energy domes, and the Hierophant as a cigarette-smoking Nick Cave.

Top middle row:

Nicolas Bruno (b. 1993)

The Somnia Tarot

Self-published, 2020

Collection of PJ Mark

Nicolas Bruno's *Somnia Tarot*, created during the COVID-19 pandemic, translates traditional tarot iconography through his personal experience with sleep paralysis. The resulting images—some of which are self-portraits—depict haunting landscapes and faceless, shrouded figures suggestive of isolation, longing, and hope.

Cristy C. Road (b. 1982)

The Next World Tarot

San Francisco: Silver Sprocket, 2020

Collection of PJ Mark

Cristy C. Road's highly influential *Next World Tarot* updates classic iconography with an eye to present-day social issues and debates reframing tarot as an agent capable of creating genuine social change.

Bottom middle row:

Kim Krans (b. 1980)

The Wild Unknown Tarot

San Francisco: HarperOne, 2016

Drawings for *The Wild Unknown Tarot*, 2012

Graphite, ink, and watercolor on paper

Collection of the artist

First published in 2012, Kim Krans's *Wild Unknown Tarot* renders the Major Arcana as forest-dwelling folk: The Hanged Man becomes an inverted bat, and the High Priestess a crystal ball-gazing tigress. To date, the deck has sold over half a million copies.

Bottom row:

Sola Saar (b. 1989)

***Solita Tarot*, 2025**

Self-published, 2025

Private collection

Though she drew from *Rider-Waite-Smith* and *Thoth* iconography, the archival origins of Sola Saar's *Solita Tarot* are anything but conventional: Her sources include everything from vintage girly magazines and images of old Hollywood to old master drawings and paintings, brought together with techniques inspired by Surrealist and Dada collage. Works by Saar's grandmother Betye and aunt Alison are on view in the adjacent gallery.

David Gremard Romero (Chicome Itzcuintli Amatlantli, b. 1975)

Tarot Yohualli Ehécatl

Self-published, 2021

Private collection

Tarot Yohualli Ehécatl takes its name from the Nahuatl word for "Night Wind," an epithet for Tezcatlipoca, the Aztec deity associated with divination. The deck uses both Spanish and

Nahuatl to label the Major Arcana and employs the Mayan base-twenty numeral system, deftly relating a centuries-long history of Mesoamerican visual culture to *Rider-Waite-Smith* iconography.

Verne Dawson (b. 1955)

Calendar, 2025

Oil and paper cards on panel

Collection of the artist

North Carolina and New York–based artist Verne Dawson has long been interested in how carefully constructed belief systems and timekeeping structures mediate human experience. While a student at Cooper Union in the 1970s, Dawson studied under Arthur Hill Corwin, whose esoteric theories encouraged Dawson to approach tarot not as a mere divinatory technique but as a method of universal timekeeping. Corwin's book *Robin Hood's Barn* explores the way in which tarot might have served an egalitarian function throughout history, allowing people of all social classes to keep time without reliance on a higher religious or political authority. Adapting the seventy-eight standard cards into a nonstandard calendrical arrangement, Dawson situates the cards against a planetary backdrop with the green Earth below and a swirling cosmic sky above.

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, Italy

Top row:

The Empress, the Emperor, Death, Judgment

Middle Row:

**Page of Coins, Knight of Swords, Queen of Swords,
King of Coins**

Bottom Row:

Five of Cups, Ten of Coins, Four of Batons, Ten of Swords

Produced by Bonifacio Bembo more than a decade after the *Visconti di Modrone* and *Brambilla* decks, the *Visconti-Sforza* cards reflect technical developments in workshop practice. The figures show a greater awareness of form, with colors applied in fluid brushstrokes. Many trump cards, such as the Death card, highlight Bembo's skill in staging "action figures," with their expressive faces often marked by sly grins and an aura of mystery. Compared to the sophistication of the pip cards in the

earlier two decks, the *Visconti-Sforza* numeral cards forgo silver-leaf backgrounds in favor of a plainer white ground, with the suit emblems in gold, blue, and red. This aesthetic decision can be linked to different circumstances of patronage and perhaps a desire to save money.

Bembo workshop

Brambilla Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1444–45

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

Top row:

Ace of Batons, Five of Batons, Two of Swords

Bottom row:

Two of Coins, Three of Coins, Eight of Cups

Filippo Maria Visconti had a passion for luxury objects, from silver and fine silks to rare imported furs. The *Brambilla Tarot*, the second surviving deck he commissioned, features an extensive use of gold and silver leaf on its pip cards, the ten numbered cards within each of the four suits. These cards are often further decorated with lapis lazuli. Many of the designs intersect to form additional ornamental motifs at the center, elevating the compositions almost to the point of abstraction. Important for dating the deck, the coin cards feature intricate replicas of the gold ducats minted during Filippo's reign. Together, these sumptuous details underscore the cards' prestige and their intimate connection to the opulent world of the Visconti court.

Andrea Bembo (act. 1431–1469)

Visconti di Modrone Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1441–42

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

**Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven**

Top row:

The Emperor, the Lovers, Judgment, the World

Middle row:

**Male Knight of Cups, Female Knight of Batons, Queen of
Swords, King of Cups**

Bottom row:

Three of Cups, Two of Coins, Two of Batons, Nine of Swords

The earliest surviving tarot deck, known as the *Visconti di Modrone Tarot*, was commissioned around 1441 by Filippo Maria Visconti, third duke of Milan, to celebrate his daughter Bianca Maria Visconti's marriage to Francesco Sforza, the future duke. The cards were produced in the Bembo family workshop and were long attributed to Bonaficio Bembo. Recent scholarship, however, suggests they were made by his brother Andrea. The deck reflects the opulence of court life

through its richly detailed trump cards (top row), court cards (middle row), and pip cards (bottom row). Unusually, it includes female knight and page cards, as well as the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity—innovations likely tailored to honor the bride. These additions expanded the deck from the standard seventy-eight to eighty-nine cards, of which only sixty-seven survive today.

TAROT AND COURTLY ART

The earliest surviving tarot decks were created in the fifteenth century, during the time of the Visconti and Sforza dukes, the ruling dynasties of Milan, whose patronage made Lombardy a major artistic center of the Renaissance. Known today as the *Visconti di Modrone*, *Brambilla*, and *Visconti-Sforza* tarots, these decks were produced in the Bembo family workshop in Cremona, about fifty miles southeast of Milan. Hand-painted and richly detailed, these luxury objects reflect a court culture that valued games not only as a source of entertainment and pleasure but also as displays of status and taste. Their imagery blends scenes of contemporary life with allegorical figures and personifications of abstract concepts, encompassing both the material and intellectual worlds of the Renaissance. Standing at the beginning of a pictorial tradition that has endured for centuries, these cards resonated deeply with their Renaissance audiences and continue to captivate the imagination today.

Andrea Bembo (act. 1431–1469)

Visconti di Modrone Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1441–42

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

**Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven**

Top row:

Page of Cups, Queen of Batons

Bottom Row:

The Chariot, Ten of Cups

The Visconti tarot decks present vivid portrayals of fashionable clothing, with each card offering a miniature portrait of life among Milan's elite. The court cards—Kings, Queens, Knights, and Pages—appear as courtiers clad in sumptuous silks, velvets, and gold cloths; these garments are often embroidered with heraldic emblems, trimmed with fur, or paired with polished armor. Ornate headdresses, chains and jewels heighten the sense of splendor. Echoing the pageantry of tournaments and weddings, these costumes signal wealth, rank, and refinement, and transform the decks into glittering reflections of Renaissance material culture.

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, Italy

Top row:

Page of Swords, Queen of Batons

Bottom row:

Three of Cups, Seven of Batons

In case:

Circle of Tommaso da Modena (ca. 1325–1379)

A Heraldic Motif with Putti Playing Games;

Jousting Knights and Medical Scenes

Model book

Northern Italy, ca. 1370–80

Pen and brown ink and green wash on parchment

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased by J. Pierpont

Morgan, 1909; II, 2-25, fols. 3v–4r

On wall:

Lynx and Recumbent Unicorn; Standing Goat

and Recumbent Sheep

Leaves from a model book

Brush and brown, white, and black opaque watercolor

on parchment

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1400–1410

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased by J. Pierpont

Morgan, 1909; I, 83 and 84

Model books were essential tools in Renaissance workshops and one of the primary ways that visual motifs circulated among artists. The book at left preserves a range of scenes popular across European courts, featuring depictions of games, courtship, heraldry, and hunting. Others, such as the leaves at

right, focus on nature studies, including plants and animals that artists could use to populate their compositions. Books like these made it possible to share and reuse motifs within the large, often family-run workshops responsible for creating artworks for many contexts.

Workshop of Pisanello (ca. 1395–1455)

Three water-birds and a falcon, from a model book

Italy, ca. 1425–50

Pen and brown ink and wash, over black chalk, on paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Janos Scholz; 1981.82

Master E.S.

Six of Birds, from the *Large Playing Cards*

Germany, Upper Rhine, ca. 1463

Engraving

**Cincinnati Art Museum, Bequest of Herbert Greer French;
1943.68**

Renaissance tarot decks developed as expanded versions of standard playing cards, which were introduced to Europe from the Islamic world in the mid-fourteenth century. From the very beginning, European artists responded to this new medium, devising a fantastic array of alternate suit systems drawn primarily from the natural world or from the noble pastime of hunting. The Six of Birds, shown here, comes from one of the earliest printed decks, whose suits include Men, Hounds, Birds, and Shields. Such variety reflects fifteenth-century artists' efforts to appeal to the tastes and interests of their patrons. To produce the many recurring figures required for these decks, artists adapted and recombined motifs from model books.

Master of the Vitae Imperatorum

Emperor Tiberius

Suetonius, *Lives of the Emperors*, in Latin

Italy, Milan, 1433

Princeton University Library; Kane MS 44, fols. 59v–60r

Wearing silver armor (now oxidized) and an ornate red cloak fastened with an elaborate gold chain, the Roman Emperor Tiberius (r. 14 BCE–37 CE) holds a dagger in one hand and a heart in the other. This reference to his cruelty reflects a medieval tradition that blamed Tiberius for Christ's crucifixion. The manuscript preserves twelve such portraits of ancient Roman emperors, many similarly dressed in sumptuous garments that allude to fifteenth-century courtly fashions. One of eight illuminated copies of Suetonius's text made for the Visconti court, it exemplifies the luxurious, refined imagery prized by its patrons.

Taddeo Crivelli (d. ca. 1479)

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

“Gualenghi-d’Este Hours,” in Latin

Italy, Ferrara, ca. 1469

J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; MS Ludwig IX 13,

fols. 183v–184r

This exquisite prayer book was likely commissioned to celebrate the high-profile marriage of Andrea Gualengo, an advisor to the House of Este, the ruling family of Ferrara, to Orsina d’Este. Most of the book’s miniatures focus on saints, particularly monastic founders and noted reformers, including the twelfth-century Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux. These figures are often shown in isolation, set against either a lush landscape or a delicately tooled gold ground, and engaged in acts of prayer or devotion. Blending the natural and spiritual worlds, Crivelli’s courtly style offers a close parallel to the six replacement cards that were added to the *Visconti-Sforza* deck around the same time this book was made.

Michelino da Besozzo (act. 1388–1450)

St. Catherine of Alexandria

Prayer book, in Latin

Italy, Milan, ca. 1410–20

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased with the generous assistance of Alice Tully in memory of Dr. Edward Graeffe, 1970; MS M.944, fols. 83v–84r

The earliest known reference to a tarot-like game involves a deluxe pack of cards commissioned by Duke Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan and created by the prominent court artist Michelino da Besozzo. Now lost, this deck portrayed sixteen classical gods and included four suits of birds: Eagles, Phoenixes, Turtledoves, and Doves. It cost an extraordinary 1,500 ducats, over ten times the annual salary of most courtiers. Dating to around the same time as his lost deck, this precious manuscript—Besozzo’s masterpiece—offers the best approximation of what it may have looked like. Containing only half of its original forty-seven miniatures, the manuscript’s missing leaves may have supplied information about its patron, who was likely a member of the Visconti family, if not the duke himself.

Textile fragment with *Sempervivum tectorum* motif

Italy, Milan, ca. 1475–1525

Silk and metal thread

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund;
51.139.2b**

This textile fragment offers a rare glimpse into the rich fabrics that characterized Renaissance courtly life. Its gold-on-gold pattern, accented with cut green velvet, reflects wealthy patrons' taste for opulence and intricate floral designs. Related motifs appear in the garments worn by figures in Renaissance tarot decks, such as the Queen of Batons from the *Visconti di Modrone* and the *Visconti-Sforza* decks, both displayed nearby. The common houseleek, a succulent also known as “hens and chicks” (*Sempervivum tectorum*), was a motif particularly associated with the Sforza family from the mid-fifteenth century.

Coffer

Italy, Siena(?), early fifteenth century

**Poplar with gilded and painted gesso, and
pastiglia decoration**

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
gift of George Blumenthal; 41.100.188**

Likely made to store women's toiletries, coffers were popular wedding gifts among Renaissance nobility. The sides of this coffer are filled with richly textured vegetal motifs inhabited by courtly figures. The central scene on the front side of the lid represents a lady crowning a knight, flanked by musicians and dancers; the scene on the back side (shown here) features two groups of women playing a board game while knights joust around them. Much of this imagery draws from a repertoire of courtly scenes, as seen in the model book displayed nearby. The lid bears the inscription "*Onesstà fa bella donna*" (Virtue makes a woman beautiful), underscoring the connection between moral ideals and courtly aesthetics.

Attributed to Stefano da Verona (ca. 1374–after 1438)

Madonna of Humility

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1430

Tempera, oil, and gold leaf on panel

Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts; 1912.63

Once attributed to Bonifacio Bembo, this panel is now tentatively associated with the workshop of Stefano da Verona, a leading court artist working in Lombardy and the Veneto region during the early fifteenth century. Inspired by Michelino da Besozzo's *Madonna of the Rose Garden*, it depicts the Virgin seated in a lush meadow, surrounded by frolicking groups of angels who sing, play music, and gather flowers. The *Madonna of Humility's* defining features—the richly textured gold background, verdant landscape, and interest in precious textiles—are consistent with the visual vocabulary of the Visconti tarot cards.



Michelino da Besozzo (act. 1388–1450), *The Madonna of the Rose Garden*, Italy, Veneto, ca. 1420. Tempera and gold on panel, transferred to canvas. Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio, inv. 173-1B359. Photo: Museo di Castelvecchio, Archivio fotografico (Gardaphoto, Salò).

Stefano da Verona (ca. 1374–after 1438)

***Three Standing Figures*, from a model book**

Italy, Veneto, ca. 1435–38

Pen and brown ink on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane

Dick Fund; 1996.364a

Most of Stefano da Verona's paintings have been lost, but his surviving drawings reveal his exceptional draftsmanship. Here he rendered his lines swiftly, alternating hatching and cross-hatching to create expressive contours. The three standing figures on this sheet, once part of a now-dispersed model book, show the artist studying an Annunciation scene, perhaps a work of sculpture in the round, which may have provided the groundwork for future compositions.

Attributed to Stefano da Verona (ca. 1374–after 1438)

***Pentecost*, cutting from a choir book**

Italy, Veneto, ca. 1430–38

Tempera and gold on parchment

J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Ms. 95

Renaissance artists worked across a variety of media for their patrons, from panel paintings and drawings to manuscripts and frescoes. This exquisite cutting once formed part of an antiphonal, or choir book, illuminated in the workshop of Stefano da Verona, perhaps by the master himself. The intertwined heads of two dragons form an initial *A* (for *Alleluia, spiritus Domini*), marking the opening prayer for the Feast of Pentecost, which commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit over the Apostles. Even at this small scale, Stefano's distinctive style is evident in the elongated proportions of the figures, the luminous palette, and the ethereal, dreamlike landscape.

FROM TRIUMPH TO TAROT

Tarot first emerged in the Renaissance courts of northern Italy as a trick-taking game designed for elite and highly educated audiences. Its primary inspiration was the *Triumphs* of Petrarch, a fourteenth-century series of allegorical poems describing processions of Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Eternity—each triumphing over the last. Rather than serving as a direct visual source, however, Petrarch’s work provided the conceptual framework for the game, introducing the idea of one card “triumphing” over another. It also gave the cards their first name: Throughout the fifteenth century, they were called *trionfi* (triumphs), the root of the word “trump” used to designate the figural cards. This section examines how artists drew from a wide range of Renaissance visual culture to produce these special cards.

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Top row:

Time, Love

Bottom row:

Justice, the Fool

Renaissance tarot trump cards use emblematic figures to personify abstract concepts. Alongside portraying familiar figures such as Love and Death, artists regularly depicted personifications of Fortune, Time, Folly, the virtues, or celestial bodies such as the Sun and Moon. The use of consistent visual attributes enabled audiences of the time to identify each figure with ease. The cards were arranged in a hierarchical sequence, which, although not fully understood today, generally reflects an ascent from earthly figures like the Juggler, Emperor, and Pope to the cosmic realm of celestial bodies, culminating in the Last Judgment and World cards. A distinctive feature of the *Visconti di Modrone* deck is its inclusion of the theological virtues (Faith, Hope, and Charity) in addition to the standard virtues found in most tarot decks (Strength, Justice, and Temperance).

Andrea Bembo (act. 1431–1469)

Visconti di Modrone Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1441–42

Tempera and gold leaf on pasteboard

Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library,

Yale University, New Haven

Top row:

Death, Hope

Bottom row:

Fortitude, Charity

Unidentified artist

Triumph of Time

**Francesco Petrarca, *Triumphs (I Trionfi)*, in Italian
Italy, Florence(?), ca. 1450–75**

**Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven; MS 438, fols. 49v–50r**

Cristoforo Majorana

Triumph of Death

**Francesco Petrarca, *Triumphs (I Trionfi)*, in Italian
Italy, Naples, ca. 1480–92**

The New York Public Library; MA 87, fols. 30v–31r

Inspired by Petrarch's *Triumphs*, Renaissance artists developed standard illustrations of the text to use in a range of artistic media, from illuminated manuscripts and prints to tapestries and paintings. The mid-fifteenth-century popularity of this imagery coincided with the emergence of tarot cards.

Unsurprisingly, the two groups of illustrations share several points in common. Depictions of the triumph of Time (at left), for example, typically feature an old man hunched over a cane, as we see in the Time card from the *Visconti-Sforza* deck.

Similarly, the triumph of Death (at right), features a skeleton wielding a scythe to vanquish figures from all social ranks, just as we see in the Death card from the *Visconti di Modrone* deck.

Francesco Rosselli (1448–before 1513)

***Triumph of Love*, from the Triumphs of Petrarch series**

Italy, Florence, ca. 1480–1500

Engraving

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane

Dick Fund, 1925; 25.2.33

Produced by one of the leading engravers in fifteenth-century Florence, this print is one of six in a series modeled on Petrarch's famous poem. Standing on a burning vase, a blind Cupid draws his bow. Four horses pull his fiery chariot through a crowd of lovers, including kings and even gods: A despondent Jupiter is chained to the front of the chariot. Behind him is the biblical figure of Samson, carrying a column. The message is clear: No one can escape from the chains of love.

Francesco Pesellino (ca. 1422–1457)

The Seven Liberal Arts and The Seven Virtues

Italy, Florence, ca. 1450

Tempera on panels

Birmingham Museum of Art, gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation; 1961.101–2

These paintings once decorated a *cassone*, a type of chest typically given as a marriage gift in the Renaissance. Each panel displays seven female figures who personify both the foundations of knowledge and the heavenly virtues to which every pious Christian was expected to aspire. The *Liberal Arts* panel begins with the Quadrivium—Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astrology/Astronomy—followed by Logic, Rhetoric, and Grammar, which make up the Trivium. At the center of the companion panel are the theological virtues—Faith, Charity, and Hope—flanked by the cardinal virtues: Prudence and Justice at left, and Fortitude and Temperance at right. Following a long-standing convention, women embody these abstract ideals, while the men below represent historical figures associated with each trait: Solomon, for example, appears beneath Justice. A similar pattern can be found in the virtue cards from the *Visconti di Modrone* deck, where the traitor Judas is shown trampled under Hope.

Unidentified artist

Devil

**Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy (Divina commedia)*, in Italian
Italy, Florence, ca. 1345–55**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased by J. P. Morgan Jr.,
1923; MS M.676, fols. 46v–47r**

No hand-painted Devil cards from the fifteenth century survive today, despite documentation attesting to their existence. This loss can be explained by practices of the era: For instance, depictions of the Devil were regularly defaced by pious viewers, as seen in the spectacular representation of Lucifer in this Florentine manuscript of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Similarly, only a single Tower card survives, in a damaged state. Renaissance audiences may have also destroyed such cards for reasons of devotion or superstition.



The Tower, from the *Tarot of Charles VI*. Florence, ca. 1460. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Giulio Clovio (1498–1578)

Personification of Death and Christ Raising Lazarus

“Farnese Hours,” in Latin

Italy, Rome, 1546

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased by J. Pierpont

Morgan, 1903; MS M.69, fols. 79v–80r

Found in one of the most celebrated illuminated manuscripts of the Renaissance, this double-page spread illustrates the Office of the Dead, a prayer cycle intended to reduce the dead’s time in purgatory. At left, the skeleton, Death personified, holds a scythe in his hand while resting his foot on a papal tiara.

Beneath his throne lies a heap of now useless clothes, signaling that the indistinguishable bodies below include soldiers, kings, bishops, cardinals, and popes. The image evokes the triumph of Death, the great equalizer. The facing page, in contrast, depicts the Raising of Lazarus, a scene intended to inspire hope and the promise of resurrection.

Master of Charles of France

A King and a Fool (Psalm 53)

Psalter-Hours, in Latin and French

France, Bourges or the Loire River Valley, ca. 1455–60

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased by J. Pierpont

Morgan, 1911; MS M.67, fols. 85v–86r

In medieval and Renaissance art, fools are recognized by distinctive attributes including brightly colored or patchwork clothing, coxcomb hats with either bells or donkey ears, and a mock scepter or bauble. These traits can be seen in this illustration accompanying Psalm 53 (“The Fool says in his heart there is no God”), which juxtaposes the figures of a fool and a king.

The Fool in the *Visconti-Sforza Tarot* adopts a more abject form that emphasizes his marginal status. He is barefoot and dressed in rags, with feathers in his hair (feather-brained). A swollen goiter is visible on his neck, and he holds a club to fend off dogs.

Master of the E-Series Tarocchi (Lazzaro Bastiani[?])

“Mantegna Tarot”

Northern Italy, Ferrara or Venice, ca. 1462–67

Engravings

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; 69.961

Known misleadingly as the “Mantegna Tarot,” this set of fifty prints (shown here in a selection) is neither by the famous artist Andrea Mantegna nor a true tarot deck. The images are arranged in five groups of ten, each reflecting a distinct theme: the conditions of man; the Muses and Apollo; the Liberal Arts; the Virtues; and the Heavenly Spheres. Carefully numbered and labeled, the prints were likely intended for educational purposes rather than gameplay. With its ethereal imagery and lofty abstractions, the series presents a humanist understanding of the cosmos, through which the viewer is meant to ascend, starting with the lowly beggar and ending with the “first cause” of all things—that is, God.

Top row:

Beggar (*Misero*), Servant (*Fameio*), Craftsman (*Artixan*)

Bottom row:

Gentleman (*Zintilomo*), King (*Re*), Emperor (*Imperator*)

Top row:

Rhetoric (*Rhetorica*), Geometry (*Geometria*), Music (*Musica*)

Bottom row:

Poetry (*Poesia*), Astrology (*Astrologia*), Theology (*Theologia*)

Top row:

Moon (*Luna*), Venus (*Venus*), Sun (*Sol*)

Bottom row:

**Saturn (*Saturno*), Eighth Sphere (*Octava Spera*),
First Cause (*Prima Causa*)**

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Adoration of the Magi

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1445–50

Oil on panel

**Denver Art Museum, The Simon Guggenheim Memorial
Collection; 1957.167**

This panel once formed part of a triptych of the Coronation of the Virgin that Bonifacio Bembo likely made for the church of Sant'Agostino in Cremona. The painting features familiar courtly imagery that also appears in Bembo's tarot cards and works in other media. Compare, for example, the standing magus at right with the Page of Cups from the *Visconti-Sforza* deck, displayed nearby. Further similarities are apparent in the rendering of metalwork and fabrics. Still, the panel's larger scale, along with the possibilities for layering and blending provided by oil paint, allowed Bembo to produce more detailed, lifelike faces and a more fully developed landscape.

THE TAROT WORKSHOP

The Bembo workshop was a family affair that included Bonifacio; his father, Giovanni; and his brothers, Benedetto, Ambrogio, Gerolamo, and Andrea. Together, they produced frescoes, panel paintings, and manuscript illuminations, sharing skills, compositions, and models across projects, which makes it difficult to distinguish individual hands. In producing the Visconti tarot decks, the workshop balanced the luxury of each card—gleaming with gold and silver, and featuring lively, detailed figures—with the practical demands of gameplay. Every deck required multiple Kings, Queens, Knights, and Pages, each distinct yet consistent in scale, pose, and format. This uniformity within and across decks demonstrates careful planning and coordination.

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Top row:

**King of Cups, Page of Batons, Queen of Cups, Knight of Cups,
King of Batons**

Andrea Bembo (act. 1431–1469)

Visconti di Modrone Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1441–42

Tempera and gold leaf on pasteboard

**Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven**

Bottom row:

**The Empress, King of Swords, King of Coins, Queen of Coins,
Female Knight of Swords**

Despite the clear visual affinity between the *Visconti-Sforza* (top row) and *Modrone* (bottom row) decks, they were created more

than a decade apart and exhibit several differences. The gilt backgrounds of the *Visconti-Sforza* cards are cooler in tone than the gleaming, warm backgrounds of the *Modrone* cards due to the use of *oro di metà*, a laminate of silver and gold leaf that was less expensive than pure gold. As the silver tarnishes, it affects the visual appearance of the gold. This material choice likely reflects a desire to reduce cost, either on the part of the artist or patron, and suggests a shift in workshop practice, taste, or the perceived value of the cards.

Attributed to Franco dei Russi (act. 1453–1482)

***Visconti-Sforza Tarot* (replacement cards)**

Italy, Ferrara(?), ca. 1465–70

Tempera and gold leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Top row:

The Sun, Fortitude, the World

Bottom row:

Temperance, the Moon, the Star

The *Visconti-Sforza* deck includes six replacement trump cards that were produced in a different workshop around ten years after the original set was completed. Likely made to replace lost or damaged cards, these additions were carefully designed to match the scale and format of the earlier cards, ensuring a seamless appearance during gameplay. At the same time, their imagery reflects a more classicizing pictorial language, evident in the Fortitude card, which draws on the myth of Hercules and the Nemean lion. These cards have recently been attributed to Franco dei Russi, an illuminator active in Ferrara and the Veneto region, an example of whose work can be seen at left.

Attributed to Franco dei Russi (act. 1453–1482)
***Adoration of the Magi*, cutting from a choir book**
Italy, Veneto, ca. 1470
Pigment and gold on parchment
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Ms. 83

TAROT AS A GAME

In fifteenth-century Italy, games were not just for fun, they were also indicators of morality and markers of social status. Civic laws and religious sermons alike distinguished between games of chance—like dice and most card games, associated with gambling and vice—and games of skill, like chess, which required discipline and intellect. Tarot emerged within this charged debate as a refined, strategic pastime that was deemed suitable for nobility. Because it required a mastery of intricate rules and an ability to identify and understand the allegorical trump cards, tarot was increasingly aligned with chess and described in contemporary sources as a respectable *giuoco d'ingegno* (game of skill). This acceptance, along with the shift from hand-painted luxury decks to more affordable printed cards in the late fifteenth century, helped transform tarot from a courtly diversion into a game that spread throughout Europe.

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Page of Cups, Ace of Cups

Tarot is a trick-taking card game in which specific cards carry point values. Kings and three key trumps—the Fool, trump I, and trump XXI—are worth five points; Queens count four; Knights, three; and Pages, two. The player who has accumulated the most points by the end of the game is the winner. Although the large-format cards seen here are visibly worn and abraded, it is difficult to determine whether this damage resulted from repeated gameplay or later handling. Documentary records and wall paintings of the era that show aristocrats engaged in card games suggest that such decks were not just luxury display pieces but actually used for play.

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Knight of Batons, Ace of Batons

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Accademia Carrara, Bergamo

Queen of Coins, Ace of Coins

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

King of Swords, Ace of Swords

Unidentified artist

Card Playing

Master Ingold, *The Golden Game (Das gulden Spiel)*

Augsburg: Günther Zainer, 1472

**Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven**

The Golden Game is a treatise written by the Dominican Master Ingold of Basel detailing a complex yet ultimately redeeming relationship between the seven deadly sins and seven different types of games. Playing games the right way, through pious reflection, transforms them into “golden games.” In this state, each game can be set in opposition to its foe: chess against pride; board games against gluttony; card games against lust; dice against avarice; shooting against wrath; dancing against sloth; and harp playing against envy. Works like this helped rationalize the moral implications of gaming as a suitable pastime.

Graphic on adjacent wall:

Master of the Borromeo Games

(Giovanni Zenoni da Vaprio, attr.)

***Card Players*, from the Palazzo Borromeo frescoes,
Milan, ca. 1445–47**

**Photo: © Giancarlo Costa. All rights reserved 2026 /
Bridgeman Images.**

Unidentified artist

Game box

France or Netherlands, fifteenth–sixteenth century

Bone, gilding, and paint over a wooden core

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry G. Friedman, 1954; 54.135

Ivory boxes decorated with secular subject matter began to be produced in the early fourteenth century in France and Northern Italy. Their imagery often relates to themes of courtly love, chivalry, and romance, indicating that the boxes may have been used for courtship or as wedding gifts. With this example, hunting scenes carved along the sides of the box complement courtly imagery on the lid, where elegantly dressed young men and women engage in music-making and conversation.

Although these game boxes may not have been large enough to hold a complete set of playing cards or chess pieces, they reflect the central role of leisure and play in aristocratic life.

Unidentified artist

Dice Playing

**Hugo von Trimberg, *The Rider (Der Renner)*, in German
Austria, Tyrol, ca. 1460**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased in 1930; MS
M.763, fols. 131v–132r**

Written around 1300 by the German moralist Hugo von Trimberg, *The Rider* remained widely read into the fifteenth century. Structured as an explanation of the seven deadly sins, the poem instructs readers through allegories, fables, and moralizing tales that recount the behaviors associated with each vice. In this scene, three shabbily dressed men huddle over a game of dice. Their ragged appearance underscores the poem's warning about gambling: "Chance keeps company with Shame." The scene at right alludes to another warning in the text: The devil stands close by wherever two, three, or four play games. Together, image and text frame gaming not as a harmless diversion but as a potentially treacherous path toward spiritual ruin.

Unidentified artist

A King and Queen Playing Chess

Dirc van Delf, *Table of Christian Faith (Tafel van den Kersten ghelove)*, in Dutch

Netherlands, perhaps Utrecht, ca. 1405–10

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased in 1924; MS M.691, fols. 131v–132r

The Dominican priest Dirc van Delf wrote the *Table of Christian Faith* in 1403 as an introduction to theology. Van Delf explains both the spiritual and the material worlds through the framework of vices and virtues, offering readers practical guidance for moral conduct. In this scene, a king and queen play chess—emblematic of games that demand intellect, foresight, and discipline, in contrast to games of chance like dice. The two royal couples seated nearby further underscore ideals of harmony and partnership, suggesting that wise rule depends upon both moral virtue and having a fitting companion in one's public and private life.

Liberale da Verona (ca. 1445–1529)

The Chess Players

Italy, Siena, ca. 1475

Tempera on panel

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Maitland F.

Griggs Collection, bequest of Maitland F. Griggs, 1943;

43.98.8

Drawing on a long tradition of using gameplay as a metaphor for courtship, this fragment of a *cassone* (storage chest) panel depicts the culminating scene of a romance. In the first episode, a young woman signals from an open window to her suitor below. The narrative then moves indoors, where a game of chess becomes the stage for their relationship, with each move and countermove mirroring the back-and-forth of flirtation. With only black pieces remaining, the board suggests her apparent defeat. She places her arm on his in a gesture of acknowledgment, though her expression reflects ambivalence.

Unidentified artists

Cloisters Playing Cards

Southern Netherlands, ca. 1475–80

Pen and ink, opaque paint, glazes, and applied silver and gold on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Cloisters Collection, 1983; 1983.515.1–.52

Top row:

Four, Five, Six, and Knave of Collars; Seven, Eight, Nine, and Queen of Horns

Bottom row:

Ace, Two, Three, and King of Nooses; Seven, Eight, Ten, and Queen of Tethers

Created in the Burgundian Netherlands, these pristine cards belong to the earliest known complete deck of fifty-two playing cards. Unlike the seventy-eight-card tarot decks, this pack excludes the twenty-two trump cards and omits the Knight card in each suit. Its most distinctive feature are the suits themselves. Instead of the standard Italian tarot emblems—Cups, Coins, Batons, and Swords—this deck features symbols

drawn from Burgundian hunting culture: hound tethers, dog collars, hunting horns, and game nooses. The figures' clothing likewise reflects the region's court fashions.

Master of the David Scenes in the Grimani Breviary, and workshop

Calendar scenes for May

Book of Hours, in Latin

Flanders, Bruges, ca. 1525–30

The Morgan Library & Museum, Melvin R. Seiden Collection, 2011; MS M.1175, fols. 7v–8r

Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century images of card-playing often underscore the activity's associations with courtship—as seen in a Book of Hours created just a few decades after the Cloisters deck. Here, couples partake in the leisurely pursuits that are traditionally linked to the month of May in medieval calendars: making music, playing games, picnicking, and drinking. In the upper right, the customary symbol for Gemini (the twins) is reimagined as a nude man and woman locked in an embrace, reinforcing the amorous undertones of the scenes below.

A sermon on tarot

“Vanderbilt-Steele Manuscript”

Northern Italy, ca. 1480

Vanderbilt University Library, Nashville; Clulow MSS 904

“A Poem on Tarot” (“Strambotti de triumphi”)

***Strambotti dogni sorte, & sonetti allabergamasca gentilissimi
da cantare insu Liuti & variati tormenti***

Rome: Eucharius Silber, after 1500

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased, 1938; PML 34683

Renaissance literature is an important source for understanding the history of tarot. Written around 1480, the “Steele Sermon” at left contains one of the earliest textual descriptions of the game, outlining the composition of the deck and recording the names and ranks of the trump cards. By 1500 the trump cards inspired poetic works such as the “Strambotti de triumphi” at right. In this example, an anonymous poet follows the sequence of the trump cards, omitting only the Popess—perhaps reflecting the contemporary controversy surrounding the figure or simply the poem’s metrical constraints.

Strambotti de triumph
Miracomando aquel angelo pio
almondo alsole alla luna & lostello
alla saecta & aquel diauol rio
lamorte eltraditore el nechierello
la ruota el caro & giustitia di dio
forteza & temperāza & amor bello
al papa imparatore imperatrice
al bagatello almatto piu felice

Detail of "Strambotti de triumph," from *Strambotti dogni sorte . . .*

Unidentified artist

Rosenwald Tarot

Italy, Florence, ca. 1500

Woodcut on laid paper

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Rosenwald Collection; 1951.16.6–7

Named after a later owner, these rare survivals preserve a nearly complete series of trump cards from a printed tarot deck, arranged according to the order of the game as it was played in Florence. The Wheel of Fortune card is damaged, and the Fool was likely printed on a now-lost fourth sheet. Each sheet fit up to twenty-four cards, and an entire deck could be produced from just four impressions. After printing, the cards could be colored by hand, cut apart, and mounted on backing paper for durability. This efficient process marked a shift in production from deluxe, handmade decks to more affordable, mass-printed cards, which helped to spread the game beyond Italy.

TAROT AND DIVINATION

Tarot Cards—Palm Reading—Crystal Balls. Few people today would bat an eye seeing these words associated with fortune-tellers. However, only two of these practices would have been familiar to people in Renaissance Italy. In contrast to palm-reading and crystal-gazing, which represent ancient traditions of divination, tarot cards are a relatively modern addition to the list. There is no concrete evidence that tarot served such a purpose until the late eighteenth century, when occultist writers in France fabricated a mythical, ancient Egyptian origin of the cards. These writers altered the course of tarot's history to such an extent that it is now difficult for some to conceive of the cards without their esoteric aura. This section examines how traditions of divination in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance helped set the stage for the special twist of fate that tarot cards experienced centuries later.

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Top row:

The Popess, the Pope

Bottom row:

The Juggler

Tarot's cultural impact in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries demonstrates how the rich, symbolic imagery of trump cards made the deck easily adaptable to a variety of contexts. At the same time, records from inquisitions and witchcraft trials point to a growing number of fortune-tellers—mostly women—using playing cards in their work, a practice known as cartomancy. These trends prepared the way for tarot's later transformation into a focal point of divinatory practices. Occultist writers like Antoine Court de Gébelin argued that the deck preserved fragments of a lost Egyptian book of magic, whose meanings were corrupted over time. They reinterpreted tarot imagery accordingly, recasting the Popess and Pope, for example, as the High Priestess and Hierophant, the Juggler as a Magician, and the Chariot as a triumphal depiction of Osiris. Even the Hanged Man was reinterpreted as a symbol of Prudence.

Bonifacio Bembo (1420–1480)

Visconti-Sforza Tarot

Italy, Lombardy, ca. 1456–58

Tempera, gold and silver leaf on pasteboard

The Morgan Library & Museum

Top row:

The Chariot, the Wheel of Fortune

Bottom row:

The Hanged Man

Teofilo Folengo (1491–1544)

Chaos of the Three for One (Chaos del tri per uno)

Venice: Giovanni Antonio & Pietro Nicolini da Sabbio, 1546

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Lathrop C. Harper D-1 Fund, 2025; PML 199485

Renaissance writers adapted tarot cards into a literary parlor game known as *tarocchi appropriati*, in which trump cards were randomly assigned to individuals and then interpreted to reflect their personalities. In this work, the Mantuan poet Teofilo Folengo describes a fictional gathering where players drew trump cards from which he then composed corresponding sonnets. One woman received the Sun, Death, Time, Chariot, Empress, and Fool cards; his poem in turn reflects on life's brevity and the need to savor its pleasures. These sonnets could be considered among the earliest tarot readings. Folengo, however, was less concerned with predicting the future than with showcasing his skill in extemporaneous composition.

Sun. Death. Time. Chariot. Empress. Fool.

What could be more foolish under the Sun
than to wait for a time to enjoy Time;
Death, on the Empress' Chariot,
hastens to turn our children to dust.

Beneath the Sun the lad quickly
arranges the violets on the Chariot.
Crazy is the person who fears the mortal arrow
which flies to kill even the Empress,

But Fools there will be on the Imperial Chariot.
Stay, woman, while you are lovely,
for the Sun ages and kills all beauty.

Enjoy, Mad Woman, enjoy the flower while you can.
The Chariot flees with the Sun, and as the cemetery fills
the black Empress grows more beautiful.

Translated by Stuart R. Kaplan

Unidentified artist

Fortune

Francesco Marcolini, *Garden of Thoughts (Giardino di pensieri)*

Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1540

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the T. Kimball

Brooker Sixteenth-Century Fund, 2019; PML 198202

Fortune-telling became an increasingly popular source of entertainment during the sixteenth century, providing ample occasion for surprise, laughter, and shock among a group of friends. This interactive book turns divination into a game: Readers select one of fifty questions and then follow a series of randomizing steps, including drawing two cards and consulting illustrated tables that feature allegorical figures such as Fortune, shown here. Following these prompts leads to a prediction delivered in the cryptic style of an ancient oracle, composed by the noted humanist writer Lodovico Dolce.

Unidentified artist

A mind-reading game

Andrea Ghisi, *Labyrinth (Laberinto)*

Venice: Evangelista Deuchino, 1616

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased in 1925;

PML 22721

This game features twenty-one tables, each labeled with a different letter and displaying the same sixty images but arranged in different sequences. Based in part on the “Mantegna Tarot,” the images are designed to be easily recognized and memorized. A “mind reader” asks a player to choose an image and indicate its quadrant, which determines the next table to consult. After repeating this process twice more, the mind reader will know for certain which image the player has selected. Although not involving any actual cards, the game demonstrates the enduring popularity of tarot-like symbolism and its adaptability across a range of contexts.

Unidentified artist

Tarot de Marseille

Avignon: Jean-Pierre Payen, ca. 1760(?)

**Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven**

Top row:

**The Street Performer (*Le Bateleur*), the Wheel of Fortune,
the Hanged Man**

Bottom row:

Death, the Devil, the Tower (*La Maison Dieu*)

The *Tarot de Marseille* ranks as one of the most popular and influential decks in the history of tarot. Emerging in the seventeenth century, it codified the Renaissance pictorial tradition represented by the Visconti cards, establishing a standard format that would shape tarot practice for centuries. The *Tarot de Marseille*'s clear, iconic designs made the cards highly adaptable for use in gaming, fortune-telling, and artistic practices. This is the style of deck that would have been known to the French occultist writers working later in the eighteenth century.

Unidentified artist

Thoth Recording the Judgment of a Deceased Man's Soul

***Book of the Dead* papyrus**

Egypt, Thebes, third century BCE

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased by J. Pierpont

Morgan, 1912; Amh. Egy. Pap. 35.3

This fragment of a *Book of the Dead* made for a Theban priest shows the ibis-headed god Thoth recording the judgment of Osiris while Anubis and Horus weigh the deceased man's heart to determine his fate. French occultist writers like Antoine Court de Gébelin and the Count of Mellet saw Thoth as a magical figure associated with the Greco-Roman god Hermes, or Mercury. Working decades before Egyptian hieroglyphs were deciphered, they mistakenly suggested that the French word *tarot* derives from the Egyptian *Ta-Rosh*, which was translated as "Pictures of Mercury's Doctrine." Though unfounded, their ideas reflected the "Egyptomania" sweeping through France at the time, which drew on a long-standing belief in Egypt as a land of magic and esoteric knowledge.

Antoine Court de Gébelin (1724–1784)

The Primitive World Analyzed and Compared with the Modern World (Monde primitif analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne), vol. 8

Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1781

The Morgan Library & Museum; 603 C86

French occultist writers were the first to suggest that tarot was not a deck of cards but an ancient Egyptian book of magic in disguise. Printed within Antoine Court de Gébelin's book, the essay shown here, by the Count of Mellet, argues more specifically that the tarot deck represents the "Book of Thoth" (*Livre de Thot*), in reference to the ancient Egyptian god of magic, writing, and wisdom. In the count's view, the trump cards represent this divine scribe's first-hand account of Creation, which took the form of a picture book, much like hieroglyphs. The essays of Court de Gébelin and the count marked a turning point in the history of tarot by establishing a theoretical foundation for its reappraisal as something significantly more important than a card game.

Unidentified artist

Palm-reading diagrams

The Art of Chiromancy (Die Kunst Chiromantia)

Augsburg: Jörg Schapf, ca. 1475

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased with the Bennett Collection, 1902; PML 10

This guide to palm reading consists almost entirely of annotated hand diagrams, with those on the left referring to women and those on the right referring to men. The various lines and marks are accompanied by similarly diverse interpretations, ranging from promises of wealth to more shocking predictions of murder and sodomy. A note explains how the presence of three lines below the left thumb means that a woman will have three husbands. Similarly, marks on the man's hand provide insights into his wealth, character, health, and life-span. Such palmistry guides were likely intended more as popular entertainment than as serious tools for prognostication.

Unidentified artist

A Palm Reader

Bartolomeo “Cocles” della Rocca, *Complexion: How to Learn the Nature and Character of Each Person . . . (Complexion: Natur und Eigenschafft eines yeden Menschen zü erfahren . . .)*

Mainz: Peter Jordan, 1534

Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; 89-B14892

The fear of fraudulent fortune-tellers contributed to the rise of printed guides to prognostication. The frontispiece in this example repeats a common xenophobic trope of Romani fortune-tellers who take advantage of well-to-do men. In the foreground, a turbaned, barefoot woman with loose hair reads a wealthy man’s palm while her children clamor around them for attention. Functioning both as a cautionary image as well as a promotional device, the image encourages readers to follow the book’s instructions for reading their own fortunes and thus avoid such a trap. The emergence of do-it-yourself guides marks a pivotal moment in the history of soothsaying, when the mantic, or divinatory, arts—once the esoteric domain of ordained specialists—were increasingly becoming accessible to the broader public.

Unidentified artist

The Planet Jupiter in Domicile and Detriment

**Abū Ma'shar, *Introduction to Astrology (Liber astrologiae)*,
in Latin**

Flanders, Bruges, ca. 1403

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased, 1935; MS M.785,
fols. 36v–37r**

Consulting the stars was an essential step for rulers before making any important decisions. This deluxe manuscript served such a purpose. Given as a gift to the famous bibliophile Jean, duc de Berry, from his astrological advisor, it describes the seven planets as they were known in the Middle Ages, listing the types of people, qualities, and things under their influence. Jupiter, shown here, relates to children, nobility, temples, laws, ceremonies, and wealth, among many other qualities. Its powers are strengthened when in the signs of Pisces and Sagittarius but weakened when in Virgo or Gemini. The manuscript functioned primarily as a picture book; making any meaningful use of it likely required the guidance of a trained astrologer.

Unidentified artist

Zodiac diagram

Johannes de Sacrobosco, *On the Sphere of the World (De sphaera)*, in German

Austria, ca. 1425

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased in 1927;

MS M.722, fols. 17v–18r

Studying the stars was the most widely practiced method of prognostication in late medieval and Renaissance society. Although skeptics continually criticized the pursuit, there was nevertheless a widespread belief that the movement of celestial bodies influenced many aspects of life on Earth. As a result, astrology, along with its sister discipline of astronomy, became a central component of university studies from the thirteenth century onward. Reflecting the subject's importance, this deluxe copy of a popular textbook features a magnificent diagram of the zodiac signs encircling the Earth at its center. Lines trace the paths of the sun, moon, and a generic planet—all rendered in burnished gold and silver.

Luca Gaurico (ca. 1475–1558)

Wheel of Fortune (Rota della fortuna)

Italy, Naples(?), ca. 1510

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased in 1931;

PML 28078

Fortune-telling was a thriving business in the Renaissance, and predictions made through various methods circulated widely. This rare broadside advertises the services of the renowned Renaissance astrologer Luca Gaurico. At its center appears a “Wheel of Fortune” chart covering the years 1508 to 1591: Readers select a year on the outer rings and follow the corresponding column toward the center to learn which planet rules it and whether it will be “fruitful” (*fruttuoso*) or “unfruitful” (*infruttuoso*). Beginning in 1548, an owner added handwritten notes such as “most truthful” (*verissimo*) or “false” (*falso*), effectively tracking the accuracy of Gaurico’s forecasts.

Jean-Baptiste Alliette (Etteilla, 1738–1791)

***How to Amuse Yourself with the Game of Cards Called Tarot
(Maniere de se récréer avec le jeu de cartes nommées tarots)***

Amsterdam: Chez l'auteur, 1783–85

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased in 1937;

PML 34029

Jean-Baptiste Alliette, known as Etteilla (his surname reversed), counts as the first professional tarot reader—although there were no doubt a few unidentified practitioners before him. Following closely on the work of other occultist writers, Etteilla authored a series of essays in the 1780s that explained his complex system of tarot-based divination, introducing the use of various types of spreads for readings as well as assigning different meanings for reversed cards. He claimed to have further insights into the “Book of Thoth,” whose pages, he believed, were originally made from sheets of gold and placed around a temple of fire in Memphis, Egypt. His “Temple of Memphis” diagram, at right, formed the basis for his revision of both the sequence and meaning of the trump cards.

Unidentified artist

The Light (*La Lumière*) and the Plants (*Les Plantes*)

Etteilla Tarot Deck (Grand Etteilla II)

Lille: Simon Blocquel, ca. 1850(?)

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased in 1907;

PML 79474

First published in 1789, the so-called *Grand Etteilla* cards represent the first of many “revised” tarot decks. Each card is numbered from 1 (Chaos) to 78 (the Fool) and provided with primary and reversed meanings. Several of the trumps, like his 2 (the Light) and 3 (the Plants) cards, are clearly modeled on traditional imagery from the *Tarot de Marseille* deck. Others, however, offer an entirely new set of images whose origins are still a mystery. More than the imagery of his deck, however, it was his innovations in reading practices, such as the use of spreads, and his attention to card reversals that would have a significant impact on the development of tarot as a divinatory tool.



The Sun (*Le Soleil*) and the Moon (*La Lune*), from a *Tarot de Marseille* deck. Avignon: Jean-Pierre Payen, ca. 1760(?). Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

Attributed to Nicola di Maestro Antonio (act. ca. 1472–1511)

Sola Busca Tarot

Italy, Venice, ca. 1491

Hand-colored engravings

Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan; inv. 7685–763

Top row:

Four, Seven, and King of Cups (*Lucio Cecilio*); Three, Five, Nine, and Knight of Coins (*Sarafino*)

Bottom row:

Two, Six, and Queen of Batons (*Palas*); Six, Ten, Page, and Queen of Swords (*Olimpia*)

Surviving only in printed copies, including this deluxe hand-colored set, the so-called *Sola Busca Tarot* (named after later owners) was likely created for the Venetian nobleman Marin Sanudo, whose initials appear on several cards. It is the earliest surviving complete tarot deck and the first to feature figural pip cards—an innovation that would have a lasting impact on the trajectory of tarot imagery. Although inspired by classical antiquity, the imagery of the cards is so obscure that the deck likely served as an esoteric game full of veiled allusions to contemporary figures and events. These references would only have been understood by an intimate and elite circle of initiates.

Pamela Colman Smith (1878–1951)

Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot Deck

London: William Rider & Son, ca. 1921–31

Frances Mulhall Achilles Library, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Working from descriptions provided by the mystic writer Arthur Edward Waite, the English artist Pamela Colman Smith completed most of her designs for this deck in as little as five months. Nevertheless, the cards, which were first published by William Rider, incorporate an extra-ordinary range of visual references, both from Smith's contemporary world and from historical sources, including the *Tarot de Marseille* and Renaissance precedents. Her deck's most groundbreaking feature—fully developed figural scenes for the pip cards—can be directly linked to the *Sola Busca* cards, displayed nearby, which Smith likely studied through photographs at the British Museum. With their vibrant colors, evocative compositions, and rich details, the *Rider-Waite-Smith* cards stand as a testament to the enduring legacy of a Renaissance pictorial tradition.

MODERN VISIONS OF TAROT

Just as this two-part exhibition is not a history of tarot but instead an in-depth look at select historical moments, this gallery does not attempt a comprehensive portrait of tarot in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rather, it considers four periods—the British Occult Revival, Surrealism, the United States in the 1960s and '70s, and the contemporary moment—in which tarot, and the occult in general, assumed greater prominence within the visual arts and culture at large. These periods share similar societal conditions: most notably, a widespread distrust of dominant institutional frameworks that led people to search for alternate ways of existing in the world. Likewise, artists in each period looked to the past for inspiration, creating work that reflects an active exchange between cultures and generations.

THE BRITISH OCCULT REVIVAL

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, esoteric thinkers such as the French occultists Jean-Baptiste Alliette (Etteilla) and Éliphas Lévi established tarot as a divinatory tool encoded with ancient wisdom. By the 1880s the center of tarot studies had shifted to Britain, where industrialization and a weakening of religious authority led to a metaphysical vacuum. Enter the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a secret, elite organization dedicated to the systematic study of ritual magic. The Order fractured in 1903, but its members went on to start new groups and conceive the first modern tarot decks.

Tarot would not be what it is today were it not for several key individuals, including the scholar and mystic Arthur Edward Waite and artist Pamela Colman Smith, who created the *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck in the early 1900s. Taking her cue from the Renaissance *Sola Busca* deck, Smith democratized tarot by illustrating each card, not only the twenty-two trump cards, or Major Arcana. Other critical figures include Aleister Crowley and Lady Frieda Harris, who, against the backdrop of World War II, produced the *Thoth Tarot*, which presented a unique, modern iconography rooted in the intersection of magical forces and geometric abstraction.

Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854–1918)

The Tarot, Its Occult Signification, Use in Fortune-Telling, and Method of Play

London: George Redway, 1888

Ordo Templi Orientis Archives

Éliphas Lévi (Alphonse Louis Constant, 1810–1875)

Translated by Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942)

The History of Magic

London: Rider & Co, Paternoster House, E. C., [mid-twentieth century]

Private collection

Papus (Gérard Encausse, 1865–1916)

Tarot of the Bohemians: The Most Ancient Book in the World; For the Exclusive Use of Initiates

London: G. Redway, 1896

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased by J. Pierpont Morgan, 1907; PML 79478

Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956)

Tarot Deck, ca. 1906

Ink and watercolor on paper

Surrealist Racing Forecast Cards, 1936

Privately published by artist

Obeah Cards, ca. 1936

Ink and crayon on cardstock

Tarot Deck: The Magic Circle Collection, London

Other objects: Shehu-Ansell Collection

Dating to around 1906, the tarot deck of English artist and occultist Austin Osman Spare was recently rediscovered in the collections of the Magic Circle, a London-based conjurer's club. Only Strength, the eleventh card in Spare's Major Arcana, was missing and has been replaced here by a contemporary facsimile based on a historical photograph.

While Spare referenced traditional tarot imagery, he used standard playing-card suits (spades, hearts, clubs, and diamonds) alongside the Major Arcana. He further distinguished his cards by activating their edges, allowing certain cards, when placed next to each other, to create running

images and secondary narratives. Spare remained opposed to organized occult groups throughout his life, responding to the social upheaval of his era by abandoning the idea of shared systems and creating a symbolic vocabulary that was both playful and opaque.

Later in his career he produced other decks, such as the *Surrealist Racing Forecast Cards*, intended to help pick winning horses at the racetrack. Its title is a tongue-in-cheek allusion to the Surrealists' use of automatic drawing—a technique Spare had worked with well before the Surrealists.

Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956)

***Palimpsest (Self-Portrait)*, n.d.**

Pencil and watercolor on board

Private collection, New York

Pamela Colman Smith (1878–1951) and Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942)

Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot (Deck “C”)

London: William Rider & Son, ca. 1921–31

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2025; PML 199373

After the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn disintegrated, Arthur Edward Waite established the Independent and Rectified Rite of the Golden Dawn, which deemphasized ceremonial magic and instead opted for a more interior, devotional approach to the occult that was grounded in Christian mysticism. Following Waite’s instructions, Pamela Colman Smith deftly wove symbols associated with these teachings, such as crosses, grails, and other Christian iconography, into her designs for the Major Arcana (trump cards). By contrast, Smith interpreted the Minor Arcana (pip cards) more freely, drawing on the storytelling impulse in her theater designs and book illustrations. For these cards, she also took inspiration from the *Sola-Busca Tarot*, which is on view in the adjacent gallery.

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, established in 1888 by William Wynn Westcott, Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, and William Robert Woodman, played a central role in the transmission of French occultism into the United Kingdom. Mathers's book *Tarot: Its Occult Signification . . .* systematized the relationship between tarot and occultism more broadly and secured it as a foundational practice in the Order.

Arthur Edward Waite further contributed to this exchange through translations of works by the French magician Éliphas Lévi, who first linked the tarot's trump cards to the stages of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life in Jewish mysticism and posited tarot as the “key” to the occult sciences. After the group's fracturing in 1892, Mathers moved to Paris where he reestablished the Order and enlisted prominent French occultists such as Papus, who had published his influential *Tarot of the Bohemians* in 1889.

Pamela Colman Smith (1878–1951)

Untitled, n.d.

Sketch for Glass, 1908

Watercolor and ink on paper

Time, n.d.

Watercolor and graphite on paperboard

**Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O’Keeffe Archive,
Yale Collection of American Literature**

Although Pamela Colman Smith’s original drawings for the *Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot* have not survived, her contemporaneous works help illuminate the deck’s compositional strategies and narrative approach. Smith’s early practice included stage designs, book illustrations, and synesthesia, or “music,” pictures, in which she translated music into color and form.

The drawings *Sketch for Glass* and *Untitled* (possibly intended as promotional designs for exhibitions) feature figures with arms raised toward the sun and moon, respectively, calling to mind the corresponding cards from the Major Arcana. In *Time*, a pensive figure, with eyes downcast, contemplates a distant horizon. Comparable motifs and modeling appear in

Smith's later designs for cards such as the Three of Wands and Five of Cups and demonstrate her penchant for the *Rückenfigur*, a visual device whereby a figure is shown from behind, inviting viewers to enter the scene emotionally.

Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) and Lady Frieda Harris (1877–1962)

From left:

Sketch for “The Magus,” n.d.

Graphite on paper

Sketch for “Adjustment,” n.d.

Ink and graphite on paper

Ordo Templi Orientis Archives

Of all the cards produced in the *Thoth Tarot*, the Magus was the most challenging to design. These two sheets illustrate the way Aleister Crowley and Lady Freida Harris collaborated—a sometimes difficult process resulting in numerous annotations and layers of graphite and ink. Harris completed three different watercolors for the Magus before settling on the final design, on view nearby.

Aleister Crowley (1875–1947)

The Book of Thoth

London: Ordo Templi Orientis/Chiswick Press, 1944

Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) and

Lady Frieda Harris (1877–1962)

Test prints for *The Book of Thoth*, early 1940s

Collotypes(?)

Ordo Templi Orientis Archives

In 1942 Aleister Crowley described his forthcoming *Book of Thoth*, named after the ancient Egyptian god of wisdom and magic, as a guide to “all serious occult philosophy . . . which will determine the entire course of mystical and magical thought for the next 2,000 years.” As World War II intensified, Crowley’s commitment to his project strengthened. But due to the war, the book was published in limited form only in 1944, three years before his death.

The first edition included eight tipped-in color prints by Lady Frieda Harris for the *Thoth Tarot*, the test prints of which are on view here. Among these images are key cards such as the Hierophant (representing spiritual mentorship), a figure with

whom Crowley identified and which was ultimately selected as the book's frontispiece. Despite Harris's efforts, the full deck was not published until seven years after her death, in 1969.

Xul Solar (Oscar Agustín Alejandro Schulz Solari, 1887–1963)

Tarot Deck, 1954

Watercolor and ink on cardboard

Fundación Pan Klub—Museo Xul Solar, Buenos Aires

Argentinian-born visionary artist Xul Solar lived in Europe for twelve years beginning in 1912, a period which shaped his engagement with tarot and esotericism more generally. In May 1924, in Paris, Solar met Aleister Crowley and soon joined the *Astrum Argenteum*, an esoteric group Crowley had established with George Cecil Jones in 1907. Solar's earliest tarot deck, created in 1918 while he was living in Italy, adheres to the traditional model of the *Tarot de Marseille*, on view in the adjacent gallery. In contrast, his 1954 deck, seen here, reflects years of sustained study of Crowley's teachings and the wider occult sciences. Integrating symbols from alchemy, astrology, and personal mythology, this deck engages with tarot as an interpretive, visionary tool.

**Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) and
Lady Frieda Harris (1877–1962)
Drawings for the *Thoth Tarot*, 1938–43
Watercolor on paper with hand-painted mats
The Warburg Institute, London**

From left:

**The Magus, Knight of Wands, Death, Three of Disks,
the Moon, the Chariot**

In 1920 the occultist and scholar Aleister Crowley became the head of the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), a fraternal organization, and began restructuring the group around the principal that its old systems were exhausted and that individual will, or the Law of Thelema, should hold sway. He soon sought to produce a tarot deck, and in 1928 enlisted the artist Lady Frieda Harris, who would join the O.T.O. a decade later. Although Crowley initially assumed the deck would feature traditional tarot imagery, Harris encouraged him to break with established iconography in keeping with the O.T.O.'s forward-looking ideology. Drawing on projective geometry based on the teachings of theosophist Rudolf Steiner, Harris developed a radically modern and visually unprecedented

interpretation of the tarot. Many of her cards, including The Three of Disks, with its geometric forms and repetitive arcs, verge on abstraction.

SURREALISM

Emerging after World War I, the Surrealist movement increasingly turned to magic and the occult as artists in the group grew disillusioned with government institutions and the rise of fascism in Europe. By 1930 the French poet André Breton called for the “veritable occultation” of Surrealism, marking a shift toward the esoteric and arcane that galvanized young artists in Western Europe and beyond, including Chilean Roberto Matta and Romanian Victor Brauner. For these artists, tarot and its multilayered imagery was a powerful instrument for delving into the subconscious and destabilizing rational thought. Uniting concepts of chance, free association, and hidden correspondences, tarot cards inspired numerous collaborative and solo ventures, including the *Jeu de Marseille*, a multi-artist deck spearheaded by Breton between 1940 and 1941 that took as its source the eighteenth-century *Tarot de Marseille*.

Tarot particularly resonated with the many women artists associated with Surrealism. Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo, who both fled to Mexico City during the Second World War, saw tarot, and its occult companions like alchemy and hermeticism, as an alternative to patriarchal structures and a

means of accessing a divine feminine consciousness. Decades later, in 1977, the British Surrealist Ithell Colquhoun created the first completely abstract tarot deck.

Kurt Seligmann (1900–1962)

***Devil and Fool*, 1948**

Oil on canvas

Private collection, courtesy Weinstein Gallery

In addition to researching and writing about tarot in *The Mirror of Magic* (on view in the case nearby), Seligmann brought tarot into his visual art. Completed the same year that the book was published, *Devil and Fool* depicts the eponymous figures from the Major Arcana in highly abstracted form. The Fool is vaguely recognizable by the position of his arms, one raised toward a glowing orb and the other grasping a rod. Lurking ominously behind him, the Devil extends a claw toward the unsuspecting naïf. Made just three years after the end of war, the painting underscores the Fool's childlike optimism, utilizing tarot's symbolism to convey a warning about the proximity between good and evil.

Jacques Hérold (Herold Blumer, 1910–1987)

***The Wheel of Tarot (La roue du tarot)*, 1942**

India ink on paper

Collection of Timothy Baum

Created a year after the *Jeu de Marseille*, Jacques Hérold's *Wheel of Tarot* incorporates the suits as they were reimagined by the Surrealists (the Lock, the Bloody Wheel, the Black Star, and the Flame) along with their corresponding historical or literary figure. The Wheel—like the bloody Wheel of Revolution from the *Jeu de Marseille*—references the Wheel of Fortune in traditional decks while speaking to the Surrealists' larger interest in the destabilizing effects of chance and the necessity of revolutionary violence. While André Breton left Marseille in 1941, Hérold remained in the city until 1943. Unable to secure an exit visa, Hérold ultimately left Marseille for Paris, staying in France until the end of the war. This drawing traveled with him and remained in his collection until his death.

Various artists

Le Jeu de Marseille

Paris: Grimaud—André Dimanche, 1983

Ordo Templi Orientis Archives

***Minotaure*, nos. 3–4 (1933)**

Cover illustration by André Derain (1880–1954)

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the
Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2025; PML 199432.3**

Although André Derain was never considered a Surrealist, he designed the cover for nos. 3–4 of *Minotaure*, a Paris-based arts periodical that predominantly focused on Surrealism. Below a sketch of the titular Minotaur, Derain included the Juggler, Strength, the Hanged Man, and the Fool from the *Tarot de Marseille*. In the same issue, Derain contributed the text “Criterium de as,” in which he mused on the four Aces of the tarot deck.

Kurt Seligmann (1900–1962)

The Mirror of Magic

New York: Pantheon Books, 1948

The Morgan Library & Museum; REF 199.6 S4

Swiss artist Kurt Seligmann arrived in Paris in 1929 and was officially accepted into the Surrealist fold in 1937. Known among his peers for his extensive collection of books on magic and esoteric subjects, Seligmann established himself as a key resource on the occult. *The Mirror of Magic*, replete with images the artist amassed through his many years of study, presents a comprehensive overview of magical practices from the Mesopotamian era to the eighteenth century. The 1948 book, which includes a lavishly illustrated chapter on tarot, proved essential to the Surrealists' sustained study of magic. Ironically, though, a dispute with Breton about the interpretation of tarot cards had led to Seligmann's expulsion from the Surrealist group several years earlier.

Various artists

Le Jeu de Marseille, 1941

Musées de Marseille, Musée Cantini, gift of Ms. Aube Breton Elléouët and Ms. Oona Elléouët in memory of Varian Fry, 2003

Following the Nazi invasion of Paris in June 1940, André Breton and his fellow Surrealists fled to the Villa Air-Bel in Marseille while awaiting exit visas to escape Europe. To pass the time, they played collaborative games drawn from the Surrealist lexicon. One resulting project was a fifty-four-card deck known as the *Jeu de Marseille*, inspired by historic playing cards in the city's library, such as the eighteenth-century *Tarot de Marseille*. The Surrealists replaced the traditional suits with Flames, Wheels, Stars, and Locks, representing love, revolution, dreams, and knowledge, respectively. The court cards were likewise transformed, substituting the traditional King, Queen, and Knight for the Genius, Siren, and Mage, which were paired with figures that influenced the Surrealists, including Sigmund Freud, the medium Hélène Smith, and the nineteenth-century poet Lautréamont, among others.

Top row:

Victor Brauner (1903–1966)

*Hélène Smith: Siren of Knowledge—Lock (Hélène Smith.
Sirène de Connaissance—Serrure), 1941*

Graphite and colored pencil on tracing paper

André Breton (1896–1966)

*Paracelsus: Mage of Knowledge—Lock (Paracelse.
Mage de Connaissance—Serrure), 1941*

**India ink and gouache on Canson paper,
laminated on paper**

André Masson (1896–1987)

*Novalis: Mage of Love—Flame (Novalis.
Mage d'Amour—Flamme), 1941*

**Gouache and pencil on Canson paper,
with collage of two flames**

Bottom row:

Jacques Hérold (Herold Blumer, 1910–1987)

*Sade: Genius of Revolution—Wheel (Sade.
Génie de Révolution—Roue), 1941*

India ink and colored pencil on paper

Max Ernst (1891–1976)

Ace of Love—Flame (As d'Amour—Flamme), 1941

Black and red pencil on tracing paper

Óscar Domínguez (1906–1957)

***Freud: Mage of Dreams—Star (Freud. Mage de Rêve—Étoile),
1941***

Gouache, colored pencil, and India ink on Canson paper

Roberto Matta (1911–2002)

Illustrations for *Arcanum 17*, n.d. (ca. 1944)

Lithograph

Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet

Early editions of André Breton's *Arcanum 17* feature four tipped-in tarot cards—the Lovers (*L'Amoureux*), the Chariot (*Le Chariot*), the Stars (*Les Etoiles*), and the Moon (*La Lune*)—illustrated by Chilean-born Surrealist Roberto Matta. While maintaining some resemblance to the *Tarot de Marseille*, the scenes are conveyed through what Matta called “psychological morphologies” or “inscapes,” which aim to graphically convey the inner psyche or “a landscape discovered within the self.”

André Breton (1896–1966)

***Oswald Wirth*, ca. 1944**

***Comte de Gébelin and Papus*, ca. 1944**

Autograph manuscripts

Arcanum 17

New York: Brentano's, 1945

Manuscripts: Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet

Book: Ordo Templi Orientis Archives

André Breton wrote *Arcanum 17* in three months while he and his soon-to-be wife, Elisa, traveled across the Gaspé Peninsula in Canada. The book's title refers to the seventeenth tarot trump, the Star, which symbolizes renewal or rebirth following the turmoil of the fifteenth and sixteenth trumps—the Devil and the Tower, respectively. Breton employed the Star as a metaphor for what he described as “the salvation of the earth by woman” from the masculine devastation of war. Merging myth with autobiography, Breton identified his own redemption through Elisa with the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, in which Isis reassembles and revives her husband's fragmented remains.

Breton's notes, on view alongside an early edition of *Arcanum 17*, testify to his extended study of important figures

from tarot history, including famed Swiss occultist Oswald Wirth, French scholar Antoine Court de Gébelin, and Papus. Breton's annotated sketch of the Star card outlines the various symbols and their meanings.

From left:

Kay Sage (1898–1963)

Untitled preparatory drawings for *Le Jeu de Marseille* cards, 1940–41

Ink and watercolor on paper

Private collection, New York

Gordon Onslow Ford (1912–2003)

***Tarot Card*, 1941**

Ink and gouache on paper

Lucid Art Collection, Inverness, California

André Breton brought the *Jeu de Marseille* drawings with him to New York in June 1941. He was welcomed by friends who had already escaped to the United States, including Kay Sage, an American-born artist and the wife of painter Yves Tanguy. Sage created several drawings for the *Jeu de Marseille*, such as these two Native American–inspired drawings, and others depicting the Ancient Greek prophetess Cassandra.

In New York the English Surrealist Gordon Onslow Ford acted as a translator for Breton, who refused to learn English. Ford also made a response to the *Jeu de Marseille*, seen here, that recalls the biomorphic figures, crystalline structures, and chain-like form in his painting *Propaganda of Love* (1940), which Ford gave as a gift to Breton.



Gordon Onslow Ford, *Propaganda for Love*, 1940. Oil on canvas. Lucid Art Foundation.

Victor Brauner (1903–1966)

***The Surrealist (Le Surréaliste)*, January 1947**

Oil on canvas

Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York); 76.2553 PG 111

In this self-portrait, Romanian-born artist Victor Brauner adapted the figure of the Juggler (or Magician) from the *Tarot de Marseille*, underscoring the position of the artist as a conjurer or illusionist. All four tarot suits are referenced—a sword, a cup, and coins sit atop an anthropomorphic table while the figure raises a wand aloft—and the Hebrew letter aleph (א) is visible on his hat, a reference to Brauner’s Jewish heritage and to tarot’s long-standing engagement with Kabbalistic themes. Like the artist, the Magician is portrayed as a master of the elements, capable of manipulating and directing them at will. Brauner made this painting six years after his contribution to the *Jeu de Marseille*, demonstrating how tarot and accompanying magical practices remained prominent in his work.



The Magician, from *Ancien Tarot de Marseille*. Paris: B. P. Grimaud, ca. 1930s. Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Leonora Carrington (1917–2011)

From left:

Map of the Human Animal, 1962

Watercolor, ink, and graphite on paper

Collection of Marguerite Steed Hoffman

Two Dogs Howling at the Moon, 1961

Graphite, gouache, and watercolor on paper

Princeton University Art Museum, bequest of David L.

Meginnity, class of 1958; 2001-53

Tarot and the occult sciences had a tremendous influence on the artistic and literary output of English-born Surrealist Leonora Carrington. Works such as *Map of the Human Animal* provide rare insight into her magical worldview, teeming with handwritten notes describing mythological creatures and alchemical diagrams, such as those featured in the *Chrysopoeia of Cleopatra*—one of the earliest known alchemical manuscripts created by a woman.

Carrington referenced traditional tarot models in works such as her recently rediscovered set of Major Arcana cards, as well as paintings and drawings that show a unique take on tarot and cartomancy—as with the untitled, uniformly sized set of gouache-on-vellum drawings to the left of the case. *Two Dogs*

Howling at the Moon alludes to both the *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck and the *Tarot de Marseille*, with its iconic black-and-white dogs centered between two large towers. The drawing has recently been identified as a study for Carrington's play *Penelope* (1961), in which a young woman escapes her bourgeois confines. With its proscenium-like space, *Two Dogs* harkens back to Pamela Colman Smith's theater-inspired tarot designs.

Leonora Carrington (1917–2011)

***The Major Arcana*, ca. 1955**

Somerset: Fulgur Press, 2023

Morgan Library & Museum; REF 416 C318 A141

Leonora Carrington (1917–2011)

Top row:

Untitled (E=MC²), 1969

Untitled (Cannibal), 1969

Untitled (Snake Swallow), 1969

Bottom row:

Untitled (Blattodea), 1969

Untitled (Fire Elements), 1969

Untitled (Matsya), 1969

Gouache on vellum

***Cannibal*: Courtesy Weinstein Gallery, Los Angeles**

***Matsya* and *Snake Swallow*: Private collections**

**Other works: Collection of the Lucid Art Collection,
Inverness, California**

Remedios Varo (1908–1963)

From left:

***Study for “Tarot Card,”* 1957**

Graphite on paper

Susan and Rob White

***The Other Clock (El otro reloj),* 1957**

Gouache and ink on cardboard

Private collection

Preliminary drawing of *The Other Clock (El otro reloj),* 1957

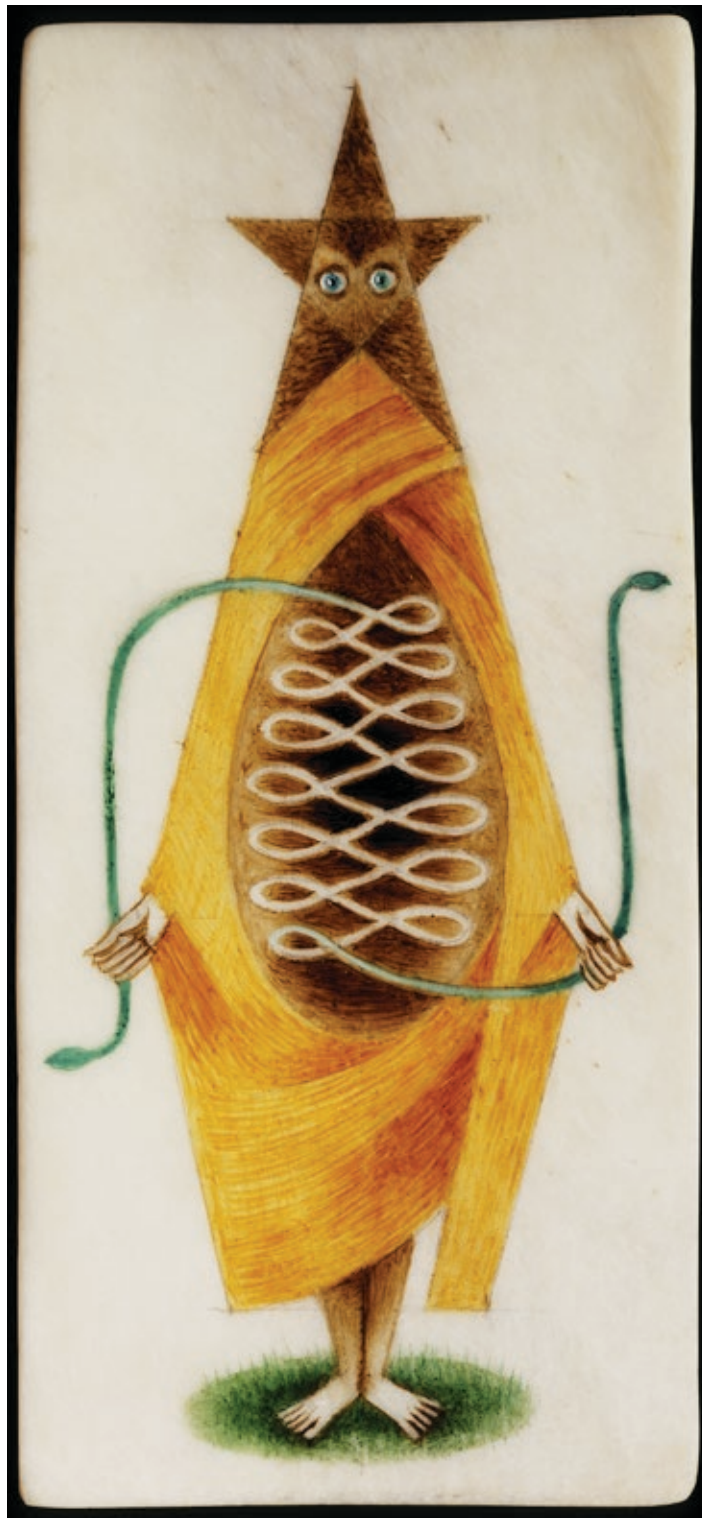
Graphite on tracing paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Irene A. Wang and Yingkai Xu; 2025.77

In the late 1950s the Spanish-born Surrealist Remedios Varo produced numerous inventive tarot-based works, including the paintings *The Juggler (or The Magician, 1956)* and *The Hermit (1955)*. Rather than incorporating typical tarot symbols, she drew from a broader range of teachings on spirituality and transcendence, such as those of Armenian mystic G. I. Gurdjieff and his disciple P. D. Ouspensky, Christian mystics like Meister Eckhardt and St. John of the Cross, and others. Although she did not create a full deck of cards, the numerous sketches she

produced resulted in two known card-sized paintings on bone: *Tarot Card* (Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City) and *Yin and Yang Figure* (formerly in the collection of André Breton). Sketches for *Tarot Card* and a related work, *The Other Clock*, are on view [here](#).

The Other Clock, depicting the same subject as *Tarot Card*, features an androgynous pentagram-headed figure, similar to those of her larger tarot paintings, who holds a double-headed snake that forms a cascading infinity symbol. In *The Other Clock*, the celestial backdrop suggests transcendence out of the material realm.



Remedios Varo, *Tarot Card*, 1957. Oil on bone. Museo de Arte Moderno, INBAL/Secretaría de Cultura. Photo: © 2026 Remedios Varo, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VEGAP, Madrid.

Ithell Colquhoun (1906–1988)

Top row, from left:

**Ace of Wands, Ace of Swords, Ace of Cups, and Ace of Disks,
ca. 1949**

Watercolor on paper

Tate Archive

Bottom row:

Taro as Colour

Somerset: Fulgur Press, 2018

The Morgan Library & Museum; REF 416 C722 S55

Right:

Taro as Colour

Autograph manuscripts, 1962

Tate Archive

Ithell Colquhoun (1906–1988)

From left:

Alcove I, 1946

Oil on board

Collection of Denise and Richard Shillitoe

Taro: Major Arcana, 1977

Enamel on board

Tate Archive

The artist Ithell Colquhoun was briefly aligned with the British Surrealists but left the group at the onset of World War II, dismayed by its provision that artists could not belong to other occult organizations concurrently. In the 1940s she began to explore traditional tarot imagery (or “taro,” as she preferred to spell it) while also delving into the spiritual power of color. Four watercolors depicting the Ace of Wands, Disks, Cups, and Swords (on view in the case) and her oil painting *Alcove I* show Colquhoun’s extended engagement with color-based abstraction.

In 1977 Colquhoun created a complete deck, *Taro as Colour*. Inspired by the terminology employed by the Golden Dawn, Colquhoun opted for names like “Daughter of the Mighty Ones”

instead of “The Empress.” Colquhoun’s written notes testify to the great care she took to ensure each card reflected its associated symbolic meaning. As the first known fully abstract deck, *Taro as Colour* explored the cards for their associative rather than their intellectual properties, opening new aesthetic possibilities for tarot.

Juanita Guccione (1904–1999)

From left:

***Wheel of Fortune*, n.d.**

Gouache on paper

Weinstein Gallery, Los Angeles

***Triumph*, ca. 1975**

Mixed media on paper

Dr. Robert Levy

Since the beginning of her artistic career in the mid-1940s, American Surrealist Juanita Guccione showed an interest in cartomancy. Her early works include copious allusions to tarot and fortune-telling, including motifs of spinning roulette wheels, traditional card decks, and dreamlike, mystical spaces. Between the mid-1970s and the 1980s, Guccione engaged even more explicitly with tarot imagery, creating works such as *Wheel of Fortune* and *Triumph*, which clearly reference the *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck. While remaining true to Pamela Colman Smith's original composition, Guccione replaced Smith's precisely delineated backdrops for abstract swaths of bright color, allowing these hues to heighten the emotional aspects of each card.

Jorge Camacho (1934–2011)

**Drawings for *Arcana of Natural Philosophy*
(*Arcanes de la philosophie naturelle*), 1998**

Ink and colored pencil on paper

Collection of Margarita Torgia Camacho

From left:

**0. *The Chemical Theater* (*Le théâtre chimique*); I. *The Guardian*
(*Le gardien*); II. *Coitus* (*Coïtus*); III. *Sulphur = Making*
(*Sulphurus = faire*); IV. *Salt—the Caravan* (*Salis—la caravane*);
V. *Mercury—the Moist Flame* (*Mercurius—la flamme humide*);
VI. *Star—the Crystal, the Astral Cry* (*Stella—le cristal,
le cri astral*); VIII. *Inert Residue* (*Caput mortum*)**

Jorge Camacho was not a member of the Surrealist group in its heyday, but the Havana-born painter became highly influenced by André Breton after moving to Paris in 1959. The two first met in 1961, and their friendship continued until Breton's death in 1966.

Camacho's illustrations for his book *Arcana of Natural Philosophy* demonstrate the extent to which he was inspired by tarot and hermetic imagery. Pentagrams, planetary symbols, and alchemical vessels abound; like many cards of the tarot,

these symbols—representing the distillation of base metals into gold—act as allegories for the transformation of consciousness. On view are eight (of the full sixteen) drawings.

THE U.S. IN THE 1960s AND '70s

Amid the rise of the civil rights movement, second-wave feminism, and anxieties surrounding the Cold War and the ensuing conflict in Vietnam, artists and countercultural groups in the United States during the 1960s and '70s looked for spiritual unity in alternative practices, including Wicca, Zen Buddhism, neo-paganism, and tarot.

Tarot provided an ideal framework for exploring topics such as intuitive spirituality, expanded consciousness, and nontraditional forms of creativity. Unlike earlier occultists who saw their decks as authoritative models, artists and practitioners of this period felt empowered to reinterpret the cards to reflect their own interests, identities, and values, inserting themselves and their communities into tarot's time-honored iconography. Artworks such as Bea Nettles's *Mountain Dream Tarot*—the first fully photographic tarot deck—and Dorothy Iannone's autobiographical *Ta(Rot) Pack* illustrate this impulse toward personal narrative and self-expression—a tendency that has continued to the present day.

Cameron (Marjorie Cameron, 1922–1995)

Holy Guardian Angel According to Aleister Crowley, 1966

Casein and gold lacquer on board

Cameron Parsons Foundation, Santa Monica, California

Cameron (Marjorie Cameron, 1922–1995)

From left:

***Star [The Fool]* (from *Songs for the Witch Woman*), n.d.**

Ink on paper

Ordo Templi Orientis Archives

***Untitled*, 1955**

Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper

Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah State University

Marjorie Cameron enlisted in the U.S. Navy during World War II through Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), working as a cartographer and in the photography unit. After being discharged, she found employment as a fashion illustrator in Pasadena, where she met and married rocket scientist and devout occultist Jack Parsons, a member of Aleister Crowley's Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.). Cameron joined the O.T.O. and began making drawings and paintings inspired by occult sources such as the archetype of Babalon, a central feminine figure in Thelema, the esoteric philosophy that the O.T.O. practiced. Cameron owned a copy of the *Thoth Tarot*, on view in the case to the left, which she lovingly hand-painted and used for meditation. References to tarot can be seen

throughout her oeuvre, such as in an untitled painting resembling the *Rider-Waite-Smith* Death card, or her drawing of Jack Parsons as the Fool.

Cameron (Marjorie Cameron, 1922–1995)

Above:

***Tarot Deck*, n.d.**

Hand-painted deck of cards

Right:

***Untitled Notebook*, n.d.**

Ink on paper

Cameron Parsons Foundation, Santa Monica, California

Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) and Lady Frieda Harris (1877–1962)

***Thoth Tarot Card Deck / Ordo Templi Orientis, White Box “B”*
St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, [1973(?)]
The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the
Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2025; PML 199371**

Named after Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, writing, science, and judgment, the tarot deck that Lady Frieda Harris and Aleister Crowley produced in the late 1930s was rooted in their novel interpretations of Kabbalah, astrology, and Egyptian mysticism. The deck’s proto-psychedelic imagery and symbolic overload captivated a generation when it was first published in 1969 by Llewellyn and Samuel Weiser. Neither Harris nor Crowley lived to see the publication of the deck, which remains one of the most used today.

Jess (Jess Collins, 1923–2004)

***The Chariot: Tarot VII*, ca. 1960**

**Collage of cut papers (color lithographs) on paper,
with window-shade pull**

Collection of John Hallmark Neff, PhD

Trained as a chemist, San Francisco–based artist Jess spent his days monitoring plutonium production at the Manhattan Project and his evenings painting. Dismayed by the threat of nuclear annihilation, however, in 1949 he decided to focus full-time on art. In 1959 he met his partner Robert Duncan, a poet whose upbringing as a Theosophist helped spur the couple’s occult interests. Jess is most famous for his “paste-ups,” in which he utilized newsprint, book, and magazine cutouts to construct imaginative words that frequently reference tarot’s divining powers. *The Chariot* features architectural details like flights of staircases combined with locomotives and mythical creatures. “I don’t see that much difference between the spiritual and the material,” Jess once stated. “All matter is energy, and all matter and energy are infused with spirit.”

Wallace Berman (1926–1976)

Untitled, Sound Series, 1966

Verifax collage with transfer lettering

Private collection, New York, courtesy AWG Art Advisory

Wallace Berman was an experimental filmmaker and collage artist who played a key role in the California art scene of the 1950s and '60s. He was fascinated by tarot and other forms of mysticism, such as Kabbalah and Beat spirituality, and more generally, systems of symbolic knowledge. This collage, produced using the Verifax photocopying method, combines images from magazines and newspapers, many referencing transmission devices like the typewriter, to compare modern technology with tarot as a spiritual method of communication. In the early 1950s, Berman and Cameron became friends and collaborators. They exhibited their work together at Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, but the show was shut down and Berman arrested for exhibiting a drawing by Cameron of two magical beings having sex.

***The World*, no. 13**

**Edited by Anne Waldman (b. 1945) and Lewis Warsh
(1944–2020)**

Pull-out tarot-card inserts by John Giorno (1936–2019)

New York: The Poetry Project, [1968]

The Morgan Library & Museum; PML 199377–78

Joe Dunn

***My Window Appears as a Tarot Card*, ca. 1958**

Typescript

Helen Adam (1909–1993)

Handwritten tarot reading for Susan Howe, 1977

**The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries, University
of Buffalo, The State University of New York**

Attendees of Jack Spicer's Poetry as Magic workshop adopted tarot in various ways. Joe Dunn's *My Window Appears as a Tarot Card* presents a poetic engagement. Other participants were practicing tarot readers. Helen Adam, for instance, sent handwritten readings to friends, including fellow poet Susan Howe.

When Adam moved to New York in 1964, she carried with her the magical spirit of San Francisco. There, she collaborated with the poet and artist John Giorno and in 1968 participated in

his well-known *Dial-A-Poem* project. That same year, Giorno produced a set of tarot card inserts for *The World*, a magazine published by The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church.

Larry Rivers (1923–2002)

***The Empress*, ca. 1975**

Lithographic proof with colored crayon and pencil

Ordo Templi Orientis Archives

American painter, musician, and filmmaker Larry Rivers was drawn to tarot less because of its occult aspects and more because of his larger obsession with cultural symbols and coded systems. In the early 1970s Rivers created a series of works based on tarot in which he reinterpreted Major Arcana cards, such as the Lovers, the Magician, and the Empress. Rivers modeled the Empress after Kitty Meyer, a New York City socialite, art collector, and patron of Rivers and many of his friends. Like much of Rivers's work, his tarot-inspired images destabilize traditional renderings with an ironic sensibility and sexual frankness.

From left:

Robert Duncan (1919–1988)

The Sweetness and Greatness of Dante's Divine Comedy

San Francisco: Open Space, 1965

Russell FitzGerald (1932–1978)

The Jack Spicer Tarot Deck

Self-published, 1969

Michael McClure (1932–2020)

Boobus on the Tarot, ca. 1965–70

L'Etoile, n.d.

Typescripts

**The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries, University
of Buffalo, The State University of New York**

Many artists and poets associated with the San Francisco Renaissance and its East Coast variants were interested in magic, especially as it pertained to queer identity—two realms that had been marginalized and often forced into secrecy by mainstream culture. Working with Robert Duncan, the poet Jack Spicer began his Poetry as Magic workshops in 1957 at the San Francisco State College Poetry Center. Attendees included the Scottish-born poet Helen Adam; Joe Dunn, the founder of White Rabbit Press; and Beat poet Michael McClure; among others. At the end of workshops, Spicer gave each participant a *Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot* card he felt embodied them.

Around the same time, Spicer collaborated with his then-partner Russell FitzGerald on a tarot deck. FitzGerald did the illustrations while Spicer drafted an accompanying book, which was never completed. FitzGerald published the deck four years after Spicer's death.

Betye Saar (b. 1926)

***House of Tarot*, 1966**

Etching with relief printing and relief-printed and embossed found objects, planned edition of thirty, eight known variants

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, acquired through the generosity of The Friends of Education of The Museum of Modern Art in honor of Marquita Pool-Eckert; 1193.2018

Betye Saar (b. 1926)

A Secretary to the Spirits [for Ishmael Reed] series, 1975–78

Mixed-media collage

Top row:

Secretary to the Spirits, Pocadonia,

The Return of Julian the Apostate to Rome

Bottom row:

Sky Diving, Tea Dancer Turns Thirty-Nine,

Memo to Stevie Wonder

The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of the Modern and

Contemporary Collectors Committee, 2017; 2017.306:1–6

While studying at California State University in the 1950s and early '60s, Betye Saar became fascinated with a variety of mystical traditions and soon began collecting tarot decks and studying their symbolism. Saar's print *House of Tarot* features cards from decks she owned combined with animal stamps and other imagery drawn from her artistic vocabulary at the time.

In 1971, at an exhibition opening in Berkeley, Saar met the writer and activist Ishmael Reed, who invited her to create collages for his upcoming collection of poems, *A Secretary to the Spirits*, in what he imagined would be a “call-and-response”

format. Although the resulting compositions don't directly reference tarot, they feature similar imagery, such as stars, suns, and open palms, which Saar unites with personal motifs as well as references to Black people's experiences in midcentury America.

Dorothy Iannone (1933–2022)

***(Ta)Rot Pack*, 1968–69/2016**

**Double-sided laser copies, mounted on cardboard,
of 54 original drawings from 1968–69**

Air de Paris

Born in Boston, Dorothy Iannone was known for her autobiographical texts, films, and paintings that frankly confronted female sexuality and the fusion of selves through romantic love. *(Ta)Rot Pack* chronicles the daily activities of Iannone and her longtime partner, Swiss artist Dieter Roth, while they lived and traveled together in Düsseldorf, Reykavík, and the South of France. The work has little relation to traditional tarot decks. Rather than taking standard source cards as inspiration, Iannone recast the spiritual as the everyday and the everyday as worthy of devotion: Roth grating chocolate, teaching, suffering a hangover, and even dreaming.

Bea Nettles (b. 1946)

Photographs from *The Mountain Dream Tarot*, 1975

Hand-painted black-and-white photographic prints

**Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven**

Top row:

Temperance, the Star, the Hermit, the Chariot

Bottom row:

The Moon, Ten of Swords, Five of Pentacles, Five of Cups

Created in 1975, Bea Nettles's *Mountain Dream Tarot* was the first fully photographic tarot deck. After having the idea for the project in a dream, Nettles began working on the deck while studying at Penland School of Crafts in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Over five years Nettles photographed friends, family members, and classmates around campus. She manipulated these images in the darkroom and superimposed motifs from the tarot, including lions, daggers, and stars, onto photosensitive paper. The resulting works display an array of techniques and processes, such as masking, multiple exposures, retouching negatives, and drawing directly onto the photographic print, lending reality a dreamlike cast.

Bea Nettles (b. 1946)

Mountain Dream Tarot Deck

Rochester, NY: Distributed by Light Impressions, 1975

**Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University,
New Haven**

Various artists

The Linweave Tarot Deck

New York: Brown Company, 1967

David Palladini (1946–2019)

The Aquarian Tarot

U.S. Games Systems, 2006

Collection of PJ Mark

Fueled by University Books's 1960 reprint of the *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck, tarot's influence on the public imagination spread rapidly throughout the 1960s, resulting in the publication of several key decks, including the *Thoth Tarot* in 1969. One gorgeous addition was 1967's *The Linweave Tarot Deck*, a graphic sampler of the fifty-eight papers in the Brown Company's Linweave paper line. On the back of each card quips such as, "Fate has placed this excellent paper in your hands. . . . Remember the name, Linweave. You are destined to meet again." Brown Company commissioned forty-two artists to produce illustrations for the project, including illustrator David Palladini, who published his own deck, *The Aquarian Tarot*, three years later.

Niki de Saint Phalle (1930–2002)

The Niki de Saint Phalle Tarot Cards

Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, 2015

Niki de Saint Phalle (1930–2002)

***Justice*, 1999**

Lithograph and collaged elements

(“Sparkles” self-adhesive paper)

Courtesy Salon 94, New York

In 1978, after being preoccupied with the idea for years, French American artist Niki de Saint Phalle began a decades-long project: her monumental sculpture park known as *The Tarot Garden*. Having secured a site—the grounds of an old amphitheater-shaped quarry in Calpalbio, a small town in southern Tuscany—Saint Phalle and a team of artists began producing larger-than-life versions of the twenty-two figures from the Major Arcana. Constructed of reinforced concrete, each figure stands over ten meters tall and is covered with multicolored ceramic and glass mosaics. Saint Phalle saw the garden as her ultimate achievement, and to help fund the project and clarify her ideas, she produced related lithographs from the 1970s through the 1990s. In 1997 she published a full tarot deck, on view in the case to the left.



Niki de Saint Phalle, *Tarot Garden*, Capalbio, Italy. © 2026 La Fondazione Il Giardino dei Tarocchi, All rights reserved.
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Photo: Laurent Condominas.

THE CONTEMPORARY MOMENT

Tarot's ability to lend itself to diverse reinterpretations has made it a potent source of inspiration for artists confronting uncertainties and anxieties about the contemporary world. According to Todd Alcott, the creator of *The Pulp Tarot* (2021), when you consult the cards, "You don't really expect an answer on the spot, you merely put your mind in a different framework." Paradoxically, perhaps, tarot's iconographic familiarity provides a kind of scaffolding that, rather than restricting interpretation, allows for experimentation. Tarot, as a form, may point to a longing for synthesis and spiritual unity, but it simultaneously exposes the unfathomable nature of existence and our universal striving for something beyond ourselves.

As the number of artists working in tarot has grown, so too has the number of tarot decks, many of which have reconceived the genre's traditional format. This gallery highlights works primarily made during the last ten years by visual artists who have engaged with tarot imagery. Outside, in the Marble Hall, recent decks showcase the range of approaches to tarot today.

Ali Banisadr (b. 1976)

***The Painting*, 2020–24**

Oil and gold leaf on linen

Untitled tarot card drawings, 2025

Colored pencil on paper

Collection of the artist

Iran-born, New York-based artist Ali Banisadr was attracted to tarot because its combination of mystical traditions parallels his worldview and collage-like aesthetic. His paintings and drawing incorporate motifs ranging from Egyptian and Persian mythology to Renaissance alchemy and astrological symbolism. Banisadr has noted that his compositions come together in a “syncopated manner, like tarot cards,” in “an explosion of parts” wherein images gather like “an orchestra of sound.” Recently he has begun making tarot drawings in colored pencil. Inspired by the eighteenth-century *Etteilla* deck, each drawing features a character or set of characters that are rendered in interwoven patches of color and appear in shallow stage-like settings, emphasizing the theatrical nature of the compositions.

Adam Putnam (b. 1973)

Tarot drawings, ca. 2018–20

Ink and metallic foil on paper

Courtesy the artist and P•P•O•W, New York

Top row:

The Fool, the High Priestess, the Wheel of Fortune

Bottom row:

The Hanged Man, the Moon, the Sun

In the early 2000s New York–based artist Adam Putnam was given an edition of Salvador Dalí’s tarot deck. Knowing very little about tarot, Putnam kept the deck as a curiosity, observing that some of the iconic images, such as the Tower and the Hanged Man, resembled motifs prominent in his own work. Roughly fifteen years later, during a moment of self-reflection in the studio, Putnam returned to tarot, inspired to make sense of the symbolic language and mathematical patterns that structure its age-old language. By way of an organizing principle, Putnam sets his action in and around a tower on an island in the middle of the ocean. These common elements undergo subtle changes from drawing to drawing as doorways and windows open onto dark inaccessible recesses set against the infinite blue of sea and sky.

Courtney Alexander (b. 1986)

From left:

***Forward*, from *Dust II Onyx: A Melanated Tarot*, 2017**

**Acrylic, pastel, spray paint, and magazine clippings
on Bristol paper**

***Crowned Plexus*, from *Dust II Onyx: A Melanated Tarot*, 2017**

Mixed media on Bristol board

Courtesy the artist

Indianapolis-based artist, writer, and publisher Courtney Alexander was inspired by the way tarot has persisted over centuries and how it has combined symbolism from across spiritual traditions. She didn't see herself in the cards, however, and in 2016 created her own deck, *Dust II Onyx: A Melanated Tarot*, a celebration of the Black diaspora that incorporates popular-culture icons such as Grace Jones and Willow Smith with imagery of the Mursi and Maasai peoples of East Africa and the Asante of West Africa. *Forward* depicts the moon as incorporating both light and shadow, while *Crowned Plexus* is loosely inspired by a dream Alexander had about her nephew, who here appears in the crown of the Sun figure.

Marcel Dzama (b. 1974)

Don't ever mistake law for justice, justice is an ideal and law is just a tool, 2025

**Pearlescent acrylic ink, watercolor, and graphite on paper
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner**

Since rising to prominence in the late 1990s, Canadian-born, New York-based artist Marcel Dzama has developed a visual language rooted in folk vernacular, art history, and contemporary culture. As a child, Dzama was fascinated by his grandmother's set of tarot cards, particularly Death and the Devil, which he felt to be mysterious and frightening but also powerful. Now Dzama is drawn to the idea of the supernatural and the way it challenges the constraints of reality and questions established power structures. His title for the work paraphrases an adage by the writer L. E. Modesitt Jr.

Alison Saar (b. 1956)

Drawings for the *Skowhegan Tarot's* Swords cards, 2016

Gouache on paper

Courtesy the artist

Top row:

Six, Nine, Page

Bottom row:

King, Ten, Knight

California-based artist Alison Saar's first memories of tarot involve encountering a *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck and books on the occult that were owned by her mother, Betye Saar, whose work is also on view in this gallery. When asked to create the suit of Swords for the *Skowhegan Tarot* in 2016, Alison Saar looked to *Rider-Waite-Smith* motifs but also inserted images of orishas—divine spirits in Yoruba traditions—and prominent figures from African American history. Saar's Knight is Ogun, warrior and metallurgist. Her Page alludes to both the “trickster,” an archetypal figure representative of mischief and deceit, and Topsy from Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. And Saar's King references both Shango, the orisha of strength, virility, leadership, and justice, as well as Nat Turner,

who in 1831 led a rebellion of enslaved people in Virginia. Saar observed, “I think magic allows us to understand that there are possibilities that we never thought were possible” even when “living in the world feels so impossible.”

Rithika Merchant (b. 1986)

***The Hermitess*, 2021**

Gouache, watercolor, and ink on paper

Private collection

For *The Hermitess*, Mumbai-born, Barcelona-based artist Rithika Merchant was inspired by winged representations of the Egyptian goddess Isis, who is traditionally linked to the Hermit card, which signifies healing, recovery, and introspection in the tarot tradition. This drawing belongs to a series depicting “Aerial Women,” birdlike or feathered figures that reference ancient images of winged females. The feathered protagonist in *The Hermitess* holds scales of stylized comets, symbolizing balance. Celestial elements at the upper left indicate cosmic unity, and a key at the upper right signifies wisdom and self-discovery. Together, they represent the need to balance individual pursuits with collective goals.

Elizabeth Colomba (b. 1976)

Study for “The Magician,” 2024

Graphite and white chalk on paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Jamie and Emmet

Watson and purchase on the Manley Family Fund; 2025.102

French Martinican artist Elizabeth Colomba had her first encounter with tarot years ago through a woman offering readings on Los Angeles’s Venice Beach boardwalk. Colomba later noted, “She wasn’t just interpreting symbols, she was channeling an entire lineage of myth, psychology, and intuition.” Recently Colomba started producing works that focus on what she calls the “positive outcome cards” from the Major Arcana. Each figure is depicted as a Black woman, continuing the artist’s effort to reclaim space and presence for Black femininity. Here, the Magician wears regal attire, including a diadem featuring the infinity symbol, which commonly appears on versions of the card. Her necklace takes the shape of an Ouroboros, or a snake devouring its own tail, an ancient symbol from Egyptian and Greek mythology that evokes cyclical renewal.

Harry Gould Harvey IV (b. 1991)

***Fools Rush in Where Angels Fear to Tread*, 2025**

Charcoal, colored pencil, and Xerox transfer on matboard, in artist's frame made of black walnut from the Delano Sawmill, American holly wood, and .999 pure silver

The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased as a gift of the Modern and Contemporary Collectors Committee; 2025.71

In *Fools Rush in Where Angels Fear to Tread*, Massachusetts-based artist Harry Gould Harvey IV drew on the collaborative writings of Mary Catherine Bateson and Gregory Bateson, anthropologists of the sacred; Duchampian chess theory; and tarot to construct a metaphysical, cognitive map for a journey of self-discovery. The drawing centers on the Fool, who, in tarot, represents the uninitiated individual seeking spiritual enlightenment. In Harvey's interpretation, the Fool traverses the chessboard in a chariot, which is the seventh tarot trump card and symbolizes forward progress. Like a reliquary, the work is enshrined in a handmade wooden frame crafted from salvaged trees and architectural materials, and ornamented with silver.

Rachel Pollack (1945–2023)

Drawings from the *Shining Tribe Tarot*, 1994

Ink on paper

Collection of Judith Matoff

Top row:

Strength, the Hermit, the Tower, the Sun

Middle row:

**The World-Shining Woman, Seven of Stones, Ten of Stones,
Speaker of Stones**

Bottom row:

Six of Trees, Four of Birds, Gift of Birds, Six of Rivers

An award-winning author, trans activist, and comic book writer, Rachel Pollack is also one of the last half-century's foremost scholars of tarot. She published the now-iconic tarot guide *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom* in two parts, in 1980 and 1983, and as a revised, single volume in 1997. In 1985 she wrote the guidebook to tarot paintings by Salvador Dalí commissioned for the James Bond film *Live and Let Die* (the project fell through, but Dalí completed the work). Pollack published her own deck in 2001, *The Shining Tribe Tarot*, which features imagery inspired by tribal and prehistoric art. According to her widow, Zoe

Matoff, Pollack was searching for an artist to illustrate her deck but, unable to find the right aesthetic, decided to draw the cards herself. Twelve of Pollack's original drawings are shown here for the first time.

Hilma's Ghost (Dannielle Tegeder, b. 1971; Sharmistha Ray, b. 1978)

The High Priestess, 2021

**Gouache, ink, and colored pencil on Fabriano Murillo paper
Private collection**

Dannielle Tegeder and Sharmistha Ray, Brooklyn-based artists and educators, formed Hilma's Ghost in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Named after the visionary Swedish artist and mystic Hilma af Klint (1862–1944), the duo found inspiration in the *Rider-Waite-Smith* deck. Working in consultation with the “professional witch” Sarah Potter, they produced seventy-eight drawings that became the *Abstract Futures Tarot Deck*. Using gouache, ink, and colored pencils, they simplified the representational depictions in Pamela Colman Smith's illustrations into geometric shapes and bold blocks of color. For the High Priestess, the card's signature themes of intuition, mystery, and divine feminine energy are conveyed via nesting translucent orbs within a columnar body that is topped by a glowing halo-like orb.

Edie Fake (b. 1980)

***Two of Wands (Dptych)*, 2025**

**Etchings with aquatint on Somerset Velvet Soft White paper
The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Manley
Family Fund; 2025.99:1–2**

This diptych by American artist Edie Fake engages with themes of hope and progress through the motif of the Two of Wands, a tarot card associated with intentional actions and planning. Split across two sheets, the composition invites viewers to reflect on the past and future. *Two of Wands (Facing)* includes candles representing memory and a keyhole symbolizing doors already chosen, while *Two of Wands (Future)* radiates light outward, suggesting the undefined future and potential paths forward. Conceived during the lead-up to the 2024 U.S. elections and a surge of violence against the trans community, Fake used the dynamic energy of the Wands suit to underscore the urgency of action and organization in pursuit of a more equitable future.

Elijah Burgher (b. 1978)

Drawings for the *Skowhegan Tarot's* Cups cards, 2016

Colored pencil on paper

Courtesy the Artist and P•P•O•W, New York

Top row:

Ace, Five, Nine

Bottom row:

Knight, Queen, King

For the Berlin-based American artist Elijah Burgher, the fluid meanings of the arcana gave him the confidence to “leap into abstraction” when making his colored-pencil renderings of the Cups suit for the multi-artist *Skowhegan Tarot* deck. His wager was that when viewing his essentially nonrepresentational images, viewers would connect them to traditional cards while also discovering new information. Burgher used a half-oval as a simplified cup form and followed Austin Osman Spare’s system of creating sigils (a magical or symbolic mark that represents a word, name, intention, or desire) by removing letters from a word (“Knight,” “Queen,” “King,” etc.) and turning the remaining letters into an abstracted monogram. Burgher called his Knight “an ironic Lancelot, a show-off trying to seduce you with all the bells and whistles on his phallic body.”

Kerstin Brätsch (b. 1979)

PARA PSYCHIC_Der Mond; “Transfusion; change in the manner of being, that’s all,” (Nachleben), 2020–21

Adjacent wall:

PARA PSYCHIC_We Are as We Are Ourselves, 2020

Colored pencil, graphite, and collage on paper, in Optium acrylic artist’s frame

Courtesy the artist and Gladstone

Isolated in her New York apartment in early 2020 while the coronavirus raged outside, German artist Kerstin Brätsch turned to tarot. By March 2022 Brätsch had created one hundred quasi-abstract drawings using kaleidoscopic colors and combining imagery from classic tarot decks alongside references to plant medicine, early world maps, medieval books and prints, and other esoteric knowledge systems. Alluding to how tarot cards are read in relation to each other in ever shifting arrangements, Brätsch foregrounded mutability in her installation of the series at Gió Marconi Gallery in Milan in 2022. She positioned the drawings on shelves so that they could be moved from wall to wall to form different combinations—or in the artist’s words, “daily readings”—throughout the run of the show.

In these collages, which were created specifically for this exhibition, Chris Ofili reconceived tarot's iconic arcana within the context of Carnival in Trinidad, where he lives and works. Through costumes, dances, music, sounds, and rituals, Carnival has evolved over time and, much like tarot, reflects a rich tradition of repurposing and recombining elements from different religious and folk traditions. In Trinidad the practice of performing Carnival characters—called Mas (short for “masquerade”)—has also become a way to burlesque former enslavers and colonizers. The syncretic spirit of Carnival is palpable in the patchwork quality of Ofili's works while their monochrome checkered borders evoke the block-printing technique used to produce early tarot decks.

Chris Ofili (b. 1968)

Midnight Conjuror, 2026

Ink, watercolor, staples, and paper collage on paper

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

For his *Conjuror* (also known as the *Magician* or *Juggler*), Ofili fused the trickster character with the *Midnight Robber*—a storytelling showman originating in the oral tales of West African griots, or hereditary storytellers. Here the *Midnight Conjuror* wears a fringed hat featuring the Trinidadian flag and a poncho referencing cowboy garb from American Westerns, a garment frequently worn by *Mas* performers. The protagonist juggles skulls, a staple of *Midnight Robber* costumes, and is a skeleton himself. His shed recalls the brightly colored vendor huts of Queen's Park Savannah, where card and dice games are often staged during Carnival, and he stands in a coffin-like box filled with gold coins, resembling the money boxes performers use while soliciting donations. The work also alludes to paintings from art history: Remedios Varo's *The Juggler (or The Magician, 1956)*, which similarly features a hut and animals; Hieronymus Bosch's *The Conjuror (ca. 1502)*, which depicts a spherical aperture that Ofili recast in this composition as a hovering black orb; and, through the figure's flowing hair, Ofili's own works *The Healer* and *The Healer—Tarot* (see the case below).

Chris Ofili (b. 1968)

***The Chariot*, 2026**

Ink, watercolor, staples, and paper collage on paper

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

Early Chariot tarot cards may have been inspired by Roman military victory parades, and Ofili's work is similarly concerned with the idea of displaying military might. *The Chariot* references the Sailor Mas, which developed in Trinidad Carnival as a response to the sustained presence of the U.S. Navy, particularly during World War II. Ofili's sailor is played by Samuel Lee Gravely Jr. (1922–2004), a U.S. naval officer who served on a segregated submarine early in his career and later became the first Black commander of a U.S. warship. The figure's headpiece takes the form of a guided missile destroyer that was named in Gravely's honor and in 2025 sent to Trinidad, and the USS *Gerald R. Ford* serves as his chariot. On his chest he sports Trinidad's coat of arms, which since 2025 has featured the steelpan, Trinidad's national instrument, where Christopher Columbus's three ships used to appear. Surrounded by a moon, the Pegasus constellation, and shooting stars, Ofili's sailor voyages onward, incarnating a fine balance between the assumption of power and its subversion.

Chris Ofili (b. 1968)

Diablo, 2026

Ink, watercolor, staples, and paper collage on paper

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

Following tarot tradition, Ofili's Devil is a androgynous hybrid with human breasts, the colorful wings and talons of a mythological harpy, and goatlike legs. In tarot, artists have long emphasized the Devil's belly to indicate an excessive appetite; Crix, Trinidadian biscuits, fill the figure's stomach here. The blue horns allude to the Jab Molassie and Blue Devils of Trinidad Carnival. The Jab Molassie's blackened face is in part a response to the racist "blacking-up" of white masqueraders to "play" the people they enslaved, who were banned from attending the original colonial Carnivals. Traditionally, Carnival devils breathe fire and threaten to besmear spectators if not given payment. Devils are often restrained by their associates with chains or leads, another echo of slavery, as seen in the image of the band Jab Jab Nation at bottom right. The work's totemic central column comprises photographs of Carnival's "Greasy Pole," which performers struggle to climb to claim dollars, here represented by Crix that tantalizingly turn into gold.

Chris Ofili (b. 1968)

Madame d'Leau Cascade, 2026

Ink, watercolor, staples, and paper collage on paper

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

The Carnival character Dame Lorraine evolved from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practice of French planters imitating elite women during masquerade balls, a trend that was later appropriated by emancipated Africans, who continued to satirize aristocrats and, by extension, the colonial hierarchy. In his depiction, Ofili associates Dame Lorraine with the Temperance tarot card, reworking its traditional motif—a feminine figure pouring liquid from one vessel into another—into a parody of the card’s advocacy for moderation and self-control. He identifies his Dame Lorraine as Madame d’Leau Cascade, referencing the French word for “waterfall” and the Trinidadian folkloric figure, Mama d’Leau, the “mother of the river.” Wearing a patchwork dress composed of the artist’s photos of Trinidadian waterfalls, Madame d’Leau Cascade appears to be carried forward on a surging wave.

Chris Ofili (b. 1968)

***Le Monde*, 2026**

Ink, watercolor, staples, and paper collage on paper

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

In making his World card, Ofili was inspired by Petrarch's fourteenth-century allegorical poem *I Trionfi (Triumphs)*, in which the ultimate triumph is eternity over all: "I at last beheld a world made new and changeless and eternal. . . . the sun, the heavens and the stars, and land and sea unmade and made again more beautiful and joyous than before." Ofili's iteration presents a world encircled by concentric colored rings, with Mother Earth taking the shape of Africa and branching out across the globe. This figure references Ofili's cover design for a recent edition of Nigerian author Buchi Emecheta's novel *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979).

Mother Earth's resplendent celestial counterpart is Shynel Brizan, who performed the song "I Am Africa, Aja Laive, Aja Lorun" (I am Africa, the winds of earth and heaven) in Trinidad's 2026 Queen of Carnival competition. Towering on stilts, Brizan is a Moko Jumbie—an elevated ancestral protectress—and her sentinels are Adrian Young and his Carnival band *Iyá: The Golden Lineage*. At the bottom of the composition, Ofili painted

the Three Sisters, sea stacks that are said to have inspired Christopher Columbus to name Trinidad after the Holy Trinity—an archetypal colonial “discovery” that Ofili transfigures with open-ended spiritual meaning.

Chris Ofili (b. 1968)

***The Healer—Tarot*, 2025**

Watercolor, gold leaf, and pencil on six paper cards

Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

The Healer—Tarot weaves mythological, biblical, and personal motifs across a series of drawings in which the Healer, a pantheistic being, slowly reveals himself. Ofili based the series on his earlier large-scale painting *The Healer* and has observed, “In order for the subject to have any real gravity, I have to create a belief in it. And that’s through being around it, working through it, and having areas of joy, ambiguity, openness.” There is no single way to understand the Healer just as there is no “correct” way to read tarot. Rather, tarot’s invented personages can assume different meanings depending on the visual and thematic context in which they find themselves. In the case of *The Healer—Tarot*, Ofili’s aim was to create a deck that imparts a restorative energy, with any card drawn from the deck leading the reader to the Healer.



Chris Ofli, *The Healer*, 2008. Oil on linen. © Chris Ofli. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner.