

Anjali Rathod: *Chrysalis*

1819 3rd Ave ▪ Sept 2 - Oct 4, 2022



In *Chrysalis*, life, where it lives, when it leaves, the spirit, and interactions with such entities that can only take place in the gut are made visual. Life, as death, is liquid, and Anjali Rathod renders the transformative in layers of water based paint. The life cycle of spirit, of presence, emotion, wet on the canvas, creates a luminescent image of what is left behind as the colors' ability to move dries up.

A chrysalis is a chamber of dead skin built for transformation. A body within which a worm becomes paper thin. When it exits its husk, it floats on air. The exhausted flesh hangs from silk on the branch. We consider the butterfly beautiful, yet we imagine this insect trapped in our guts when we are unsettled. Sometimes this unsettled feeling is called love, the nausea of emotional connectivity with a specter projected from the mind onto animated flesh. We see the memory of something that used to move in someone's lifetime in the blank space left behind where only light lands. I love you, and I know this, because my guts are crawling with insects. I miss you, and I know this, because my guts are fluttering with a winged infestation. My body holds the evidence of a completed transformation that makes me sick when I think of you. I love you. I miss you. Please forgive me.

In his 1942 essay, *Water and Dreams*, Gaston Bachelard said, "A being dedicated to water is a being in flux. He dies every minute. The pain of water is infinite." When are we let go? Water is life, and water is dying. When they cross the river, memory drips from our faces in streams of confusion, because we can not see the traveler. We imagine them. Everything we see is light, and everything we feel is presence. We relive the terror of loss in the moments of their visitation, even if we are dying to be with them again. It's a trap inside of a labyrinth. Grief and terror are felt in the body. Peace lives in the soul. Human life is in divine contradiction. We ascribe the spiritual nausea to a winged creature at the end of its promise, to an angel, to love, to avoid calling it what we know in our guts it really is: an awareness of the unknown.

—Toniann Fernandez