

# JESSE WAUGH



*Paintings*  
2013

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# My Pulchrit Experiment in Verisimilitude

Having lived as an experimental 'artist-at-large' for the past two decades, I took it upon myself to try my hand at representative oil painting this year. I moved to Florence, Italy, in December, 2012, because I wanted to see how renaissance painters created Beauty on canvas.

What I found was that far from being hyperrealist in the execution of their paintings, the Old Masters simply attempted to create Beauty in as realistic a way as was possible. *Trompe l'oeil* was and is a niche technique. The uninitiated often fetishise hyperverisimilitude, believing it to possess the greatest intrinsic artistic value. But my goal is to create Beauty. I've even created my own art movement which I call Pulchritism. So I attempted realism in painting this year merely as a potential vehicle for Beauty.

Drawn somewhat unconsciously to silent movie imagery, I began this quest with a still image capture from an old movie, interpreting its general form into my Sacred Hermaphrodite diety 5=6 who descends onto Florence's Via del Moro.

From there I pursued more realistic body contouring with *Suffrage* and *Beauty Disarming Love*, learning about background detailing along the way.

Finding a beautiful head shot of silent movie actress Lilian Gish on the Internet, I was inspired to recreate a version of her in oil paint. I fell in love with her at first sight, and therefore had to name her *Galatea*.

When the summer came to Florence I decided it was time to migrate to my air-conditioned apartment in New York City's Bowery District. There I painted *Cascading Orchids* as a still life practice exercise in preparation for *Butterfly Goddess* - a much larger, more complex work. I soon after completed *Unicorn Purifying Water*, an accomplished work in my estimation, one inspired by an exhibition of unicorn imagery at the Cloisters in northern Manhattan.

After spending a month in Japan seeking out Shinto shrines and Japanese Art Nouveau, I finally returned to the UK and ventured to recreate hothouse flowers in *Pitcher Plants*.

Having a strong desire to make large canvases depicting beautiful butterflies, I endeavored to reproduce the extraordinary colour of the Madagascan *Sunset Moth* in my last painting of the year.

- Jesse Waugh, November 2013

# 5=6

## Oil on canvas

### Florence, Italy

This was my first figurative oil painting. It's entitled 5=6. It depicts a god manifesting or descending upon a Florentine street.

5=6 refers to the initiation title given to full members of the turn-of-the-century esoteric *Order of the Golden Dawn*.



*Suffrage*  
Oil on canvas  
Florence, Italy

Suffrage spills wine from a chalice in her right hand, while being poisoned by her own serpent writhing free from her left.

She levitates suspended above a walkway in Florence's Cascine Park.



*Beauty Disarming Love*  
Oil on canvas  
Florence, Italy

Beauty Disarming Love is based on a classical story of Aphrodite / Venus tricking Cupid / Eros into dropping his weapons. She manifests butterflies or other beautiful distractions as a ruse to draw his attention away from his love-spreading.



# *Galatea*

## Oil on canvas

### Florence, Italy

“The image reminds of me the intents of the pre-Raphaelite... perhaps its emphasis on simplicity and purity.”

- Liliana Leopardi, Art Historian, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

*Galatea* gazes lovingly upon Pygmalion as she completes her metamorphosis. A torrential rain cascades down while a Morpho butterfly hovers above announcing the event.

Inspired by Louis Gauffier's depiction of Galatea at the Manchester Art Gallery, and modelled after a famous portrait of the silent movie actress Lillian Gish, Jesse Waugh's *Galatea* is the first fully Pulchrist work of painting, embodying all of the tenets of Pulchrisism, the art movement advocating Beauty in the arts.



*Cascading Orchids*  
Oil on canvas  
New York City

Perhaps my most balanced attempt at marrying Beauty with verisimilitude, *Cascading Orchids* also turned out to be a very pleasant experiment in the creation of *atmosphere*.



# *Butterfly Goddess*

## Oil on canvas

### New York City

Geisha-inspired *Butterfly Goddess* stands in the eye of a storm surrounding Glastonbury Tor, next to a tree with ripening persimmons hanging from its otherwise barren branches, whilst reaching out to harbour a butterfly from the gales.



# *Unicorn Purifying Water*

## Oil on canvas

## New York City

Inspired by an exhibition I went to see entitled “Search for the Unicorn”, which took place at the Cloisters in upper Manhattan, *Unicorn Purifying Water* is in certain ways a veiled self-portrait depicting me focusing my energy.

There were a number of depictions of unicorns purifying streams at the Cloisters show. I wanted him to purify the ocean.



*Pitcher Plants*  
Oil on canvas  
Glasgow, Scotland

*Pitcher Plants* are strange and exotic, despite the fact that they come from the good old United States! This particular species - *Sarracenia leucophylla* Raf - is native to Mississippi, Alabama, and the Florida Panhandle.



# *Sunset Moth*

## Oil on canvas

## Glasgow, Scotland

The Madagascan sunset moth (*Chrysiridia rhipheus*) is an explosion of colour! While I remain loyal to my favorite butterfly Morpho, I can't help that I am enchanted by the beauty of colour emanating from the wings of the sunset moth.





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