



black antoINETte

the work of olaf hajek

black antoinette

~~the work of olaf hajek~~

常州大学图书馆
藏书章

gestalten

black antoinette

~~the work of olaf hajek~~

Edited by Robert Klanten & Hendrik Hellige

Preface by Dr. Philipp Demandt

Layout by Hendrik Hellige & Claire Besset for Gestalten

Typefaces: Lektura by Martin Guder, Calcine by Mark Froemberg;

Foundry: www.gestaltenfonts.com

Project management by Julian Sorge for Gestalten

Production management by Janine Milstrey for Gestalten

Translation of the preface by Steven Lindberg

Proofreading by Rachel Sampson

Printed by Optimal Media GmbH

Made in Germany

Published by Gestalten, Berlin 2012

ISBN 978-3-89955-452-6

© Die Gestalten Verlag GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy or any storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Respect copyrights, encourage creativity!

For more information, please visit www.gestalten.com.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available online at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

This book was printed according to the internationally accepted ISO 14001 standards for environmental protection, which specify requirements for an environmental management system.

This book was printed on paper certified by the FSC®.



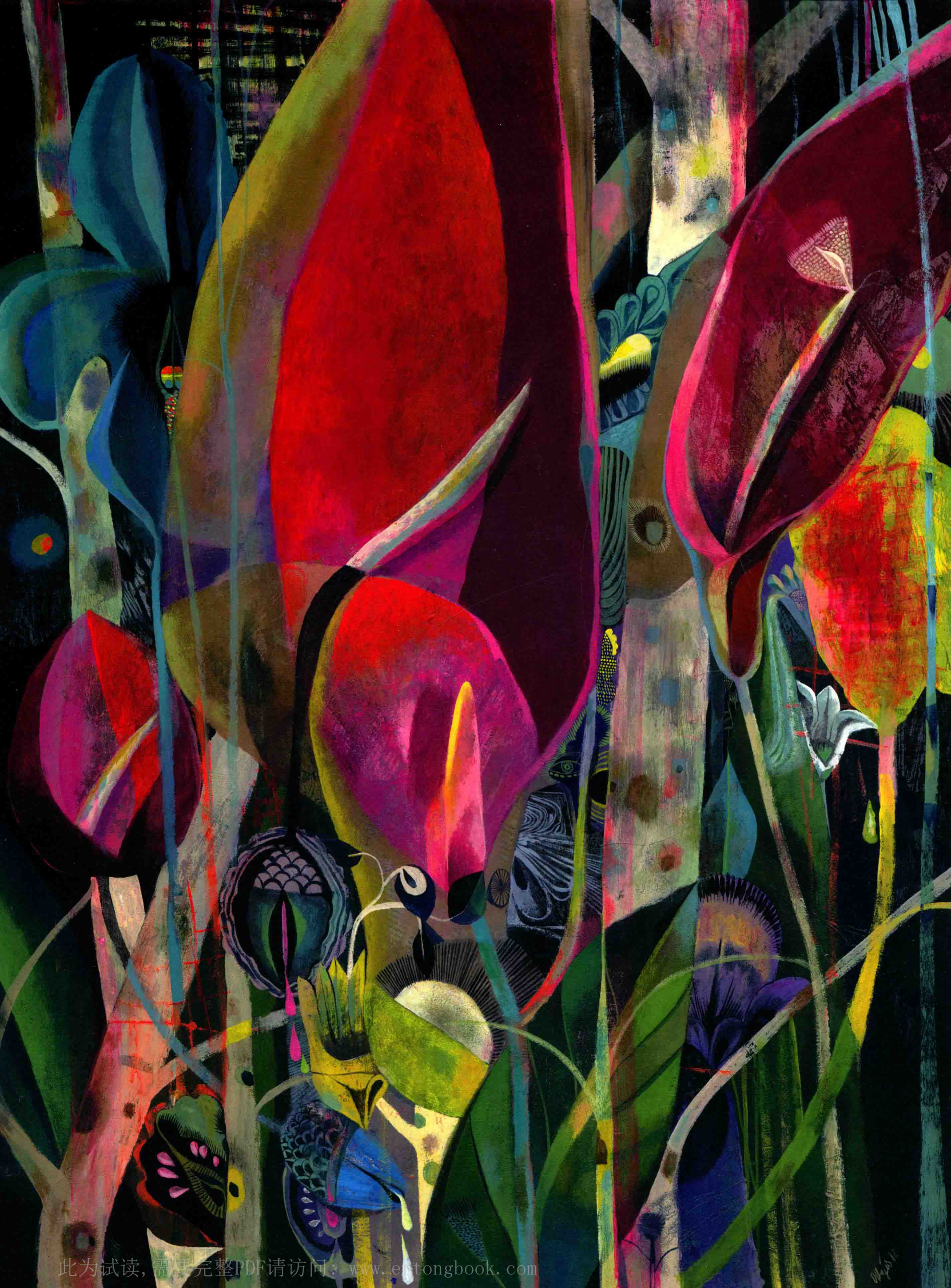
Gestalten is a climate-neutral company. We collaborate with the non-profit carbon offset provider myclimate (www.myclimate.org) to neutralize the company's carbon footprint produced through our worldwide business activities by investing in projects that reduce CO₂ emissions (www.gestalten.com/myclimate).



black antoinette

~~the work of olaf hajek~~

gestalten



lilac night

~~the work of olaf hajek~~

I couldn't stop thinking of the hyena. Although it had been years since I had seen it. At some point I asked Olaf Hajek about it. And it was still there. It came forth from the depths of his studio as if out of a distant past. Monstrous and meters-tall, it stood on the sidewalk, just barely hidden behind a gas lamp. Why this painting—like quite a few by Olaf Hajek later—had etched itself into my memory is something I had never asked myself. Until now. The more I think about it, the clearer it becomes that the hyena reveals in miniature everything that constitutes Hajek's art on a large scale. And yet at first glance it is not even recognizable as his work.

The hyena as such is not an animal held in especially high repute and—probably for that reason—not a species often seen in art. But the surprise of finding such a creature in Hajek's painting is by no means the only one. For this hyena is not in Africa but in the middle of a civilized landscape, a street that looks both civilized and English, almost like Downing Street. The discrepancy is made worse by the fact that this predator is almost as large as a door. And then it is night. But the night is lilac. And the hyena is smiling. Do not fear. No Jack the Ripper is concealed here in spotted fur. Did the artist know that hyenas have unrivaled social behavior? And are masters of communication? If not, he suspected it. Hajek discerns a lot. Intuition is just one of his strengths.

The hyena should have been used for a Royal Mail stamp. Hajek's art sometimes seems as archaic as a postage stamp, for often it is the small, the actual, the undistorted that inspires him. He defrosts the hyenas that lived in prehistoric Britain for a postage stamp. The extinct on the becoming extinct—ready to be sent all over the world. And what could be more English than a postage stamp? The British invented it. Anyone who has stood before paintings by the likes of George Stubbs or Johann Zoffany will know how inimitably English this image of the hyena is, though painted by a German. It is English and fascinating in a way that is difficult for those who are not English to understand: serious and comic, cozy and uncanny, cultivated and impetuous. And yet in all: regal. Royal Hyena in Royal Britannia.

Hajek sifts through space and time. North and south, east and west. The Oriental fuses with the Occidental, African with Asian, folk art with old master art. No doubt that the brimming wealth of the art of the continents is his inspiration per se—his aesthetic is so free of trends and unbridled that it is probably unequalled in art. No wonder that the people who commission and collect his art come from all over the world, from North America to Japan and Korea, from France to South Africa. Olaf Hajek's own inspiration is thus one with his external fascination: the one justifies the other perfectly.

Probably none of his contemporaries is as fearless, unrestrained in the use of color. And probably no one has mastered color as he has; it is not just his bluish-green gray that is unequalled. But only rarely are his colors unbroken. The layers reach deep. Consequently, we seem to hear and smell Hajek's paintings as well; they roar and speak, they sing and are fragrant. For sensuousness, of whatever sort, is clearly his theme in general. And that extends to the haptic quality of his works. For he never works on paper but always on a support that can stand up to it. Wood and cardboard, scraped and carved, are the foundation for many a beauty from his brush. And for its cryptic quality.

It may seem surprising that Hajek's paintings should be considered unfathomable. But if you only look more closely: Hardly ever does Hajek braid bouquets around his women or arranges his tables

without the memento mori, without emphasizing the dark side of every beauty, which is always inherent in the beautiful: vanity, transience. Pleasure thrives on transience; the rush wouldn't be one if it didn't pass. It is no coincidence that the flow of water plays a role for Hajek. And he always finds symbols to give form to igniting and extinguishing. Beginning and end, life and death. If Hajek's paintings were perfume, they would first smell flowery, later lush, and finally muddy, bitter, like compost. Existence is transition.

Nature is here his pointer, the inexhaustibility of forms is the arsenal of Hajek's art—a single path from mountain to lake, from hamster to elephant, that does not want to stop. Evil bugs nibble on flowers; beautiful birds die and give birth to flowers; but the latter are soon overflowing, just as the fruit is overripe. Life is always on the edge; every day is followed by the night. And so Hajek's art is always a balancing act. Every painting exudes his astonishment about the earthly force of color, form, and silhouette. And about the fact that everything that comes to life must fade away.

Memories of Alexander von Humboldt's time are evoked in me, the era that discovered, mapped, and disenchanted the world—and yet seems to have resisted this disenchanted with all its might. Inventions revolutionized industry and production; mobility and transportation grew rapidly; automobiles began to fill the streets; the first aircraft rose into the air. And Freud researched the soul. People streamed to fairs and zoos, which were first established at this time; people were astonished, and also frightened, by exotic animals and even human beings that were put on display. People dreamed of distant worlds and occasionally even left for them.

Occultism and magic, exoticism and flight into surreal worlds rise like wisps of opium smoke from Hajek's paintings as well, though undercut by a reproduction of all morphology that is scientifically accurate. Hajek's art seems like an herbarium between faithful observation and the knowledge that every image is merely constructed, is merely ephemeral. Tenderness and fragility run through his oeuvre, and the symbols he chooses are often subject to the struggle of life, whether children, foreigners, butterflies, birds, deer, or stags. Hajek is a Darwinist in the positive sense.

Hidden behind all the luxurious opulence of his motifs, however, is much more than something overwhelming: rather, it is struggle against the absence of meaning, inside and outside. So it should not be surprising that, despite Hajek's intoxication with the natural, the original, the human being remains the center of his work: usually seeking, lost in yearning, drawn into this world of form and meaning.

And yet the converse is perhaps even more true: the world of the senses, the overpowering quality, paves its way; it breaks out of Hajek's image of the human being. The inner paradise into the outer hell. Here too: the silent scream of nature. Good? Evil? Is it growing? Is it overgrowing? Transgressing and establishing limits in a continual conflict, captured in the gild-edged cage of the small format that Hajek describes as "precious."

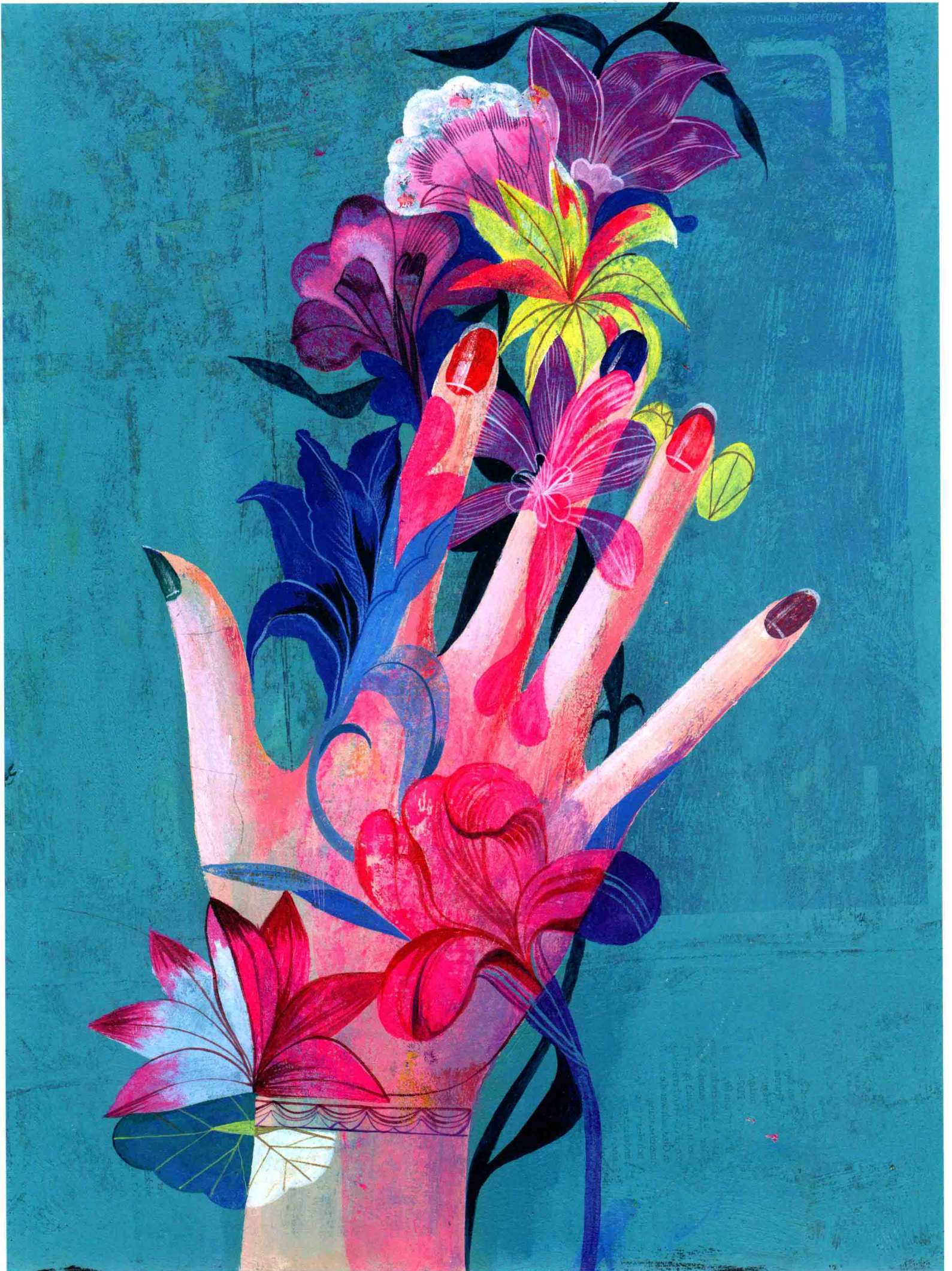
Hidden beneath a beard of his prophets was once a mountain that Hajek rotated, painting over it. And beneath an Antoinette was once John Wayne. Inside of Hajek's art there is something screaming to come out. Find out for yourself.

Dr. Philipp Demandt

The author is head of the Alte Nationalgalerie (Old National Gallery) in Berlin, Germany.



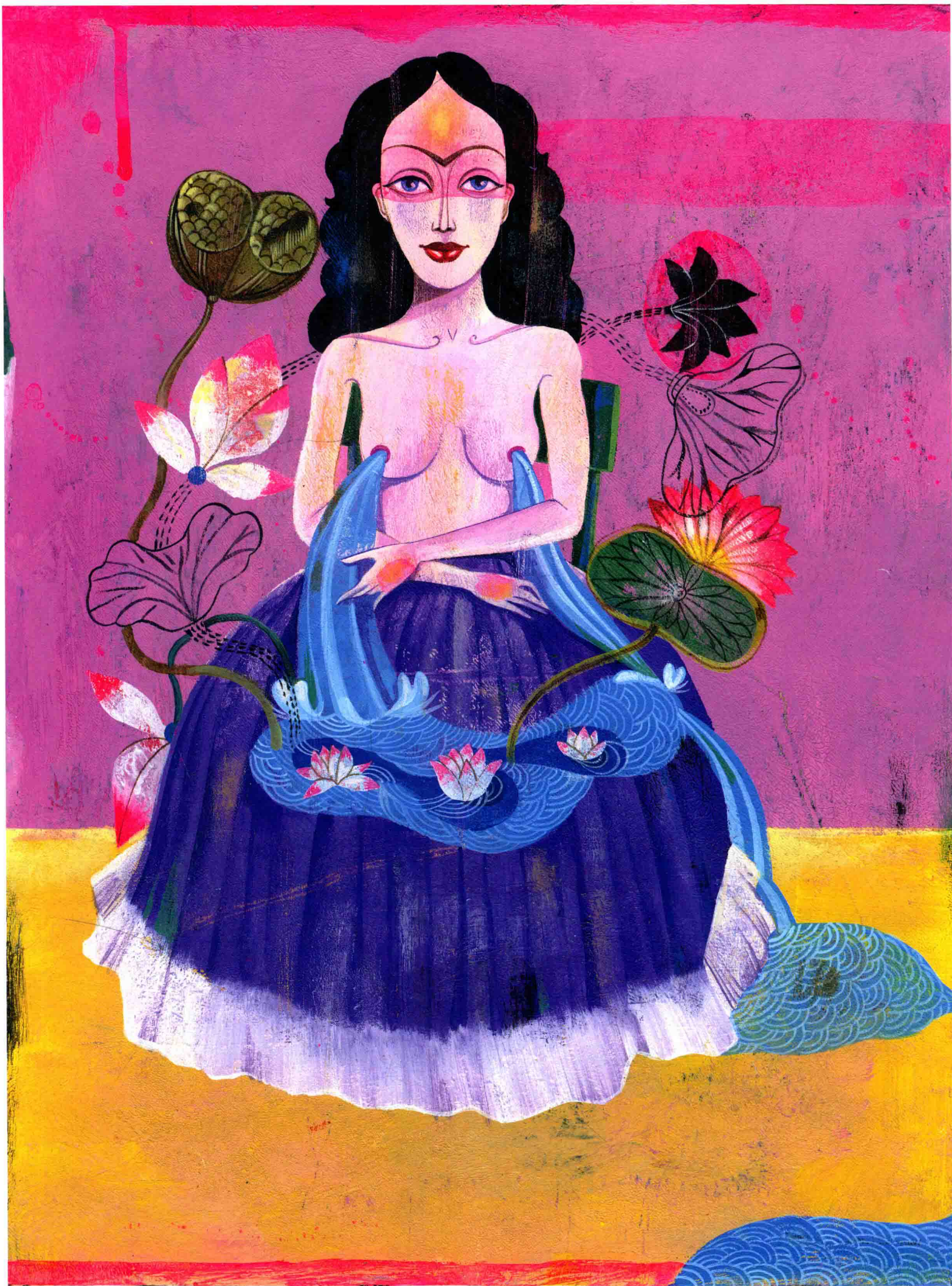


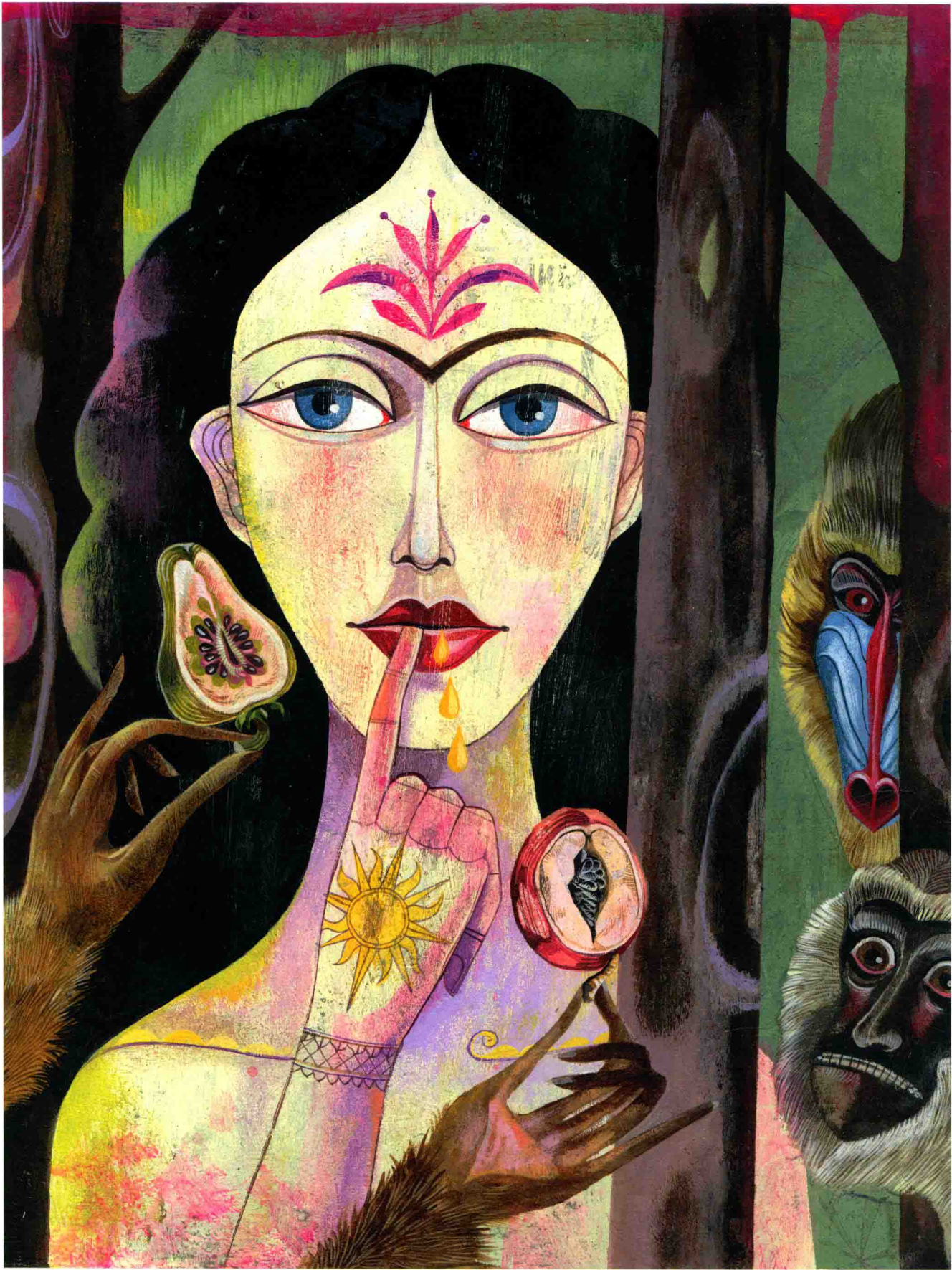


eva











fashion heads

page 15-23 fashion heads 2011