

WINTERSEMESTER 2025/26

SEMINAR

MASTER

EINFÜHRUNG UND ERSTE SITZUNG
17. OKTOBER 2025

11:00—17:00

24. OKTOBER
07. NOVEMBER
21. NOVEMBER
05. DEZEMBER

11:00—17:00

SEMINARRAUM
(L3|01 110)

OPPRESSED FANTASIES LIBERATORY CONSTRUCTIONS ANNA KOSTREVA

This block seminar will investigate architecture and artworks for their potentials to comment, critique and enact alternative worlds. To what extent can architecture support struggles for emancipation and human rights? We will discuss architects, writers, activists, and mythical characters such as Eileen Gray, Lebbeus Woods, Ursula K. Le Guin, Henri Lefebvre, Audre Lordé, Rosa Luxemburg, and Pandora. Students will participate in a collaborative world-building project that ties critical thinking and literary development into architectural drawings. The course is organised as a series of full day workshops, in which there will be time for collective study and production. These exercises, experiments and collective methods for textural and visual material will serve as tools for praxis that integrates theory and technical expertise in architecture.

Dieses Blockseminar untersucht Architektur und Kunstwerke im Hinblick auf ihr Potenzial, alternative Welten zu kommentieren, zu hinterfragen und erfahrbar zu machen. In welchem Maße kann Architektur emanzipatorische Prozesse und Menschenrechtsbewegungen unterstützen? Wir beschäftigen uns mit Architekt:innen, Autor:innen, Aktivist:innen und mythischen Figuren wie Eileen Gray, Lebbeus Woods, Ursula K. Le Guin, Henri Lefebvre, Audre Lorde, Rosa Luxemburg und Pandora. Die Teilnehmer:innen erarbeiten einem kollaborativen Worldbuilding-Projekt, in der kritisches Denken und literarische Entwicklung in architektonische Zeichnungen übersetzt werden. Das Seminar ist als Reihe ganztägiger Workshops organisiert, die Raum für gemeinsames Studium und gestalterische Produktion bieten. Die Übungen, Experimente und kollektiven Methoden zum Umgang mit textlichem und visuellem Material dienen als Werkzeuge für eine Praxis, die Theorie und architektonisch-technisches Wissen miteinander verknüpft.

Oppressed Fantasies Liberatory Constructions

Responses to *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*
by Jane Ellen Harrison
Collated for <https://womenwritingarchitecture.org>

These student projects respond to Pandora as a figure to inspire liberatory constructions. The starting point for their research was the chapter “The Making of a Goddess” in the 1908 book *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* by Jane Ellen Harrison. The projects are from the Masters of Architecture Theory Seminar *Oppressed Fantasies, Liberatory Constructions* led by Anna Kostreva. It took place at TU-Darmstadt in the department of Architectural Theory and Science (Architekturtheorie und -wissenschaft / ATW) during the Winter Semester of 2025. The student projects are published as annotations to citations from the course collection on <https://womenwritingarchitecture.org>.

The seminar investigated architecture and artworks for their potentials to comment, critique and enact alternative worlds. To what extent can architecture support struggles for emancipation and human rights? We discussed architects, writers, activists, and mythical characters such as Eileen Gray, Lebbeus Woods, Phyllis Birkby, Ursula K. Le Guin, Henri Lefebvre, Audre Lorde, Rosa Luxemburg, and Pandora. Students participated in a collaborative world-building project that tied critical thinking and literary development into architectural drawings. The course was organised as a series of full day workshops, in which there was time for collective study and production. The exercises, experiments and collective methods for textural and visual material served as tools for a praxis that integrates theory and technical expertise in architecture.

pandora:
a story of hope
by moe rist and nour hadaya

the story of pandora

pandora is a central figure in greek mythology, known as the first woman. according to the poet hesiod, she was created by hephaestus under the command of zeus as a punishment for humankind after prometheus stole fire. her name means "all-gifted," as all the olympian gods bestowed various talents and traits upon her, including beauty, skill, and deceit. zeus intended to use her as a "beautiful evil" to bring misfortune to mortals.

she was given a pithos (a large jar, later mistranslated as a box) containing all the evils, sickness, and sorrows of the world. driven by curiosity, pandora opened the container, releasing suffering and misery upon humanity. she managed to close the lid again, but only one thing remained trapped inside: hope.

the myth of pandora is often interpreted as an explanation for the origin of evil and the necessity of toil in human life. however, some scholars suggest that pandora was originally a benevolent earth goddess who was later diminished and vilified in patriarchal narratives. the story permanently cemented the phrase "pandora's box" in popular culture as a metaphor for an action that unleashes unforeseen, widespread trouble.



the
element of
guilt

it always starts the
same. i find myself inside
another realm. back where
everything began. where all of it came
to life. where my story started, as well as...
ended. i think.

i stand at the bottom of a grand staircase. it is quite familiar to
me, but it takes me a few minutes to get my bearings. then, suddenly i
realise where i am: the olymp. however, something doesn't feel right. it all
seems a bit distorted. different from what it should be.

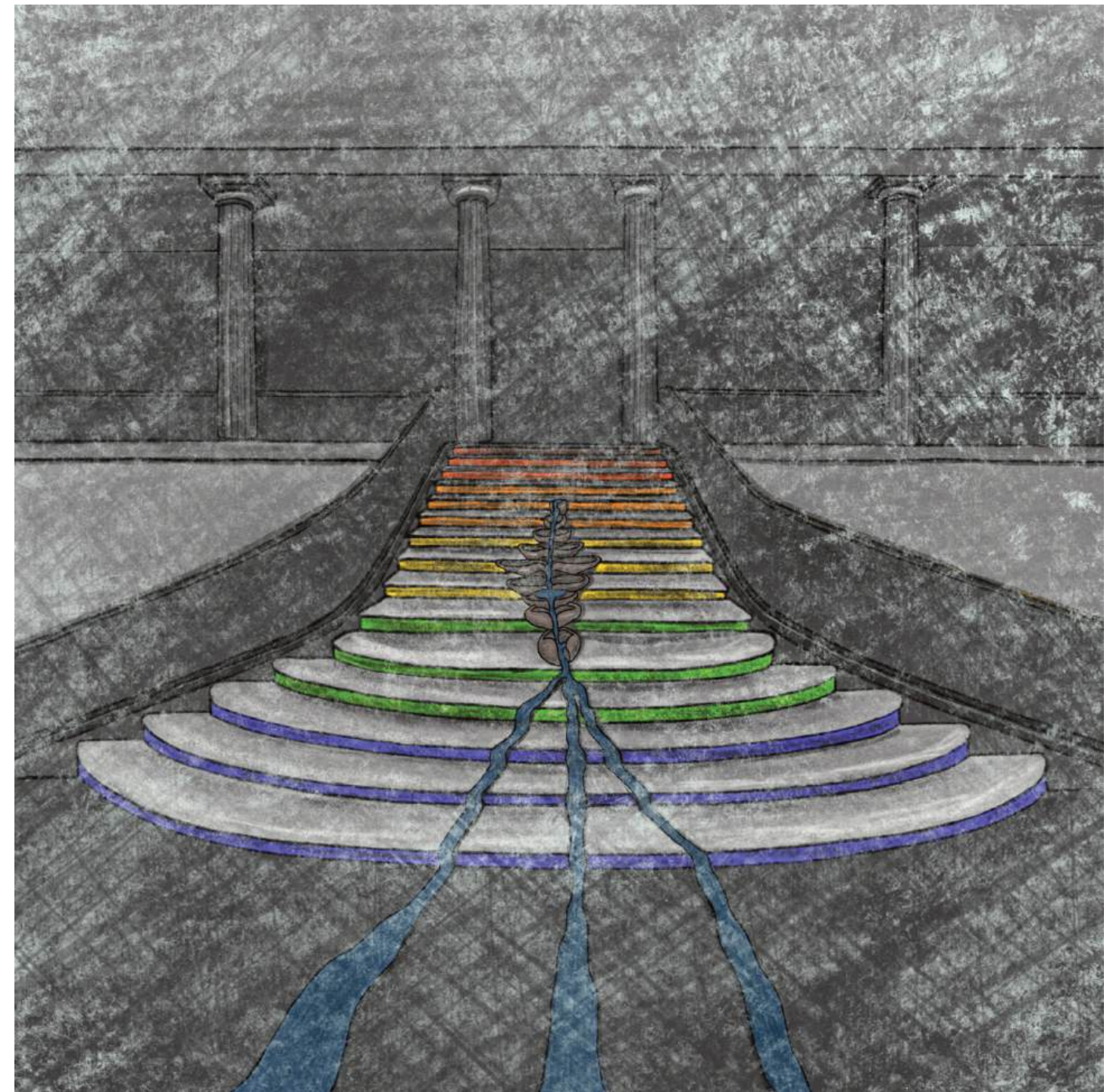
time. i notice it – the same way i always do – yet i am unable to properly perceive it. as if it
has been covered up by the fog, making it sheer impossible to see what is actually there. the
very moment i realise how my sight has been compromised by the fog inside the room, it
immediately disappears. as if by enchantment, the veil lifts and i see everything with such clarity it
feels as though i have awoken from a lifelong blindness.

suddenly i notice the cascading fountain in the middle of the stairs and i observe how the water flows
from one basin to another until it reaches the bottom and spreads out in every direction.

thereupon i recognise what i am looking at. myself. my story – or rather the story i have been
burdened with. the story of guilt. how it starts at the top basin and is handed down over and over
again until enough time has passed that no one wants to remember where it started and can
only see how it disperses all over the ground – all over humankind.

the instance i am made to live through the erosion of my purity, the corruption of
perception and the projection of blame – i awake in reconciliation.

for even nightmares are made of dreams.



pandoras hope

the tale of pandora's box is often told as a tragic warning, focusing on the moment wickedness and sorrow were unleashed upon the unsuspecting world. we frequently dwell on the evils that escaped, yet we fail to notice the silent, luminous presence that remained: hope.

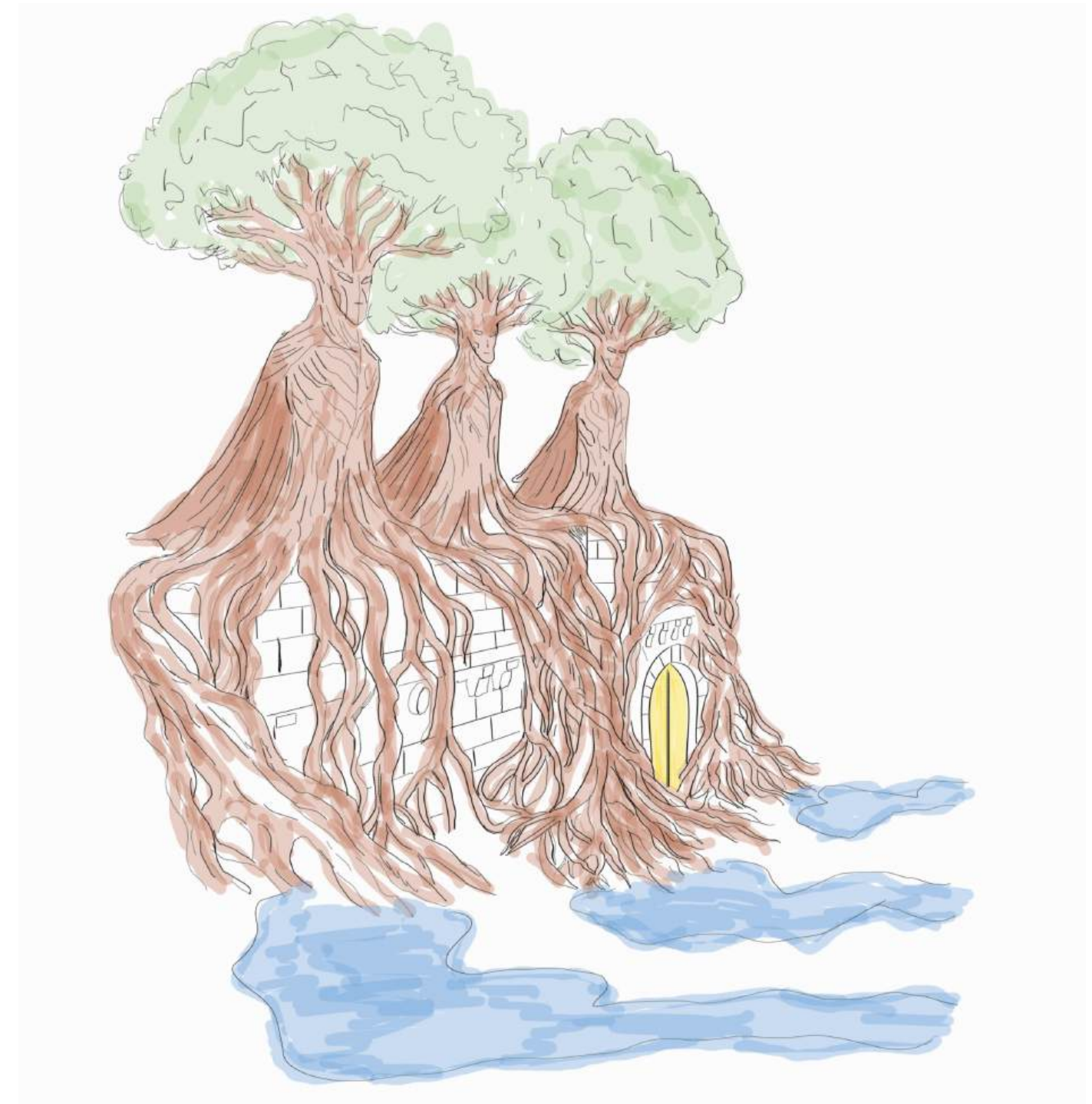
this enduring hope is the sole bastion, the unyielding fortress that will forever defend pandora's spirit against the tide of despair. the evils that escaped, while seemingly catastrophic, paradoxically paved the way for profound goodness.

from the shattered vessel, beautiful trees of great benefit have sprung forth, their branches reaching toward the light.

this is the sacred duality of the human experience: the outward protection provided by goodness can only be truly appreciated and actively pursued in the presence of evil. good and evil are intertwined complements; without the shadow of the former, the radiance of good deeds—and the hope for them— cannot fully shine.

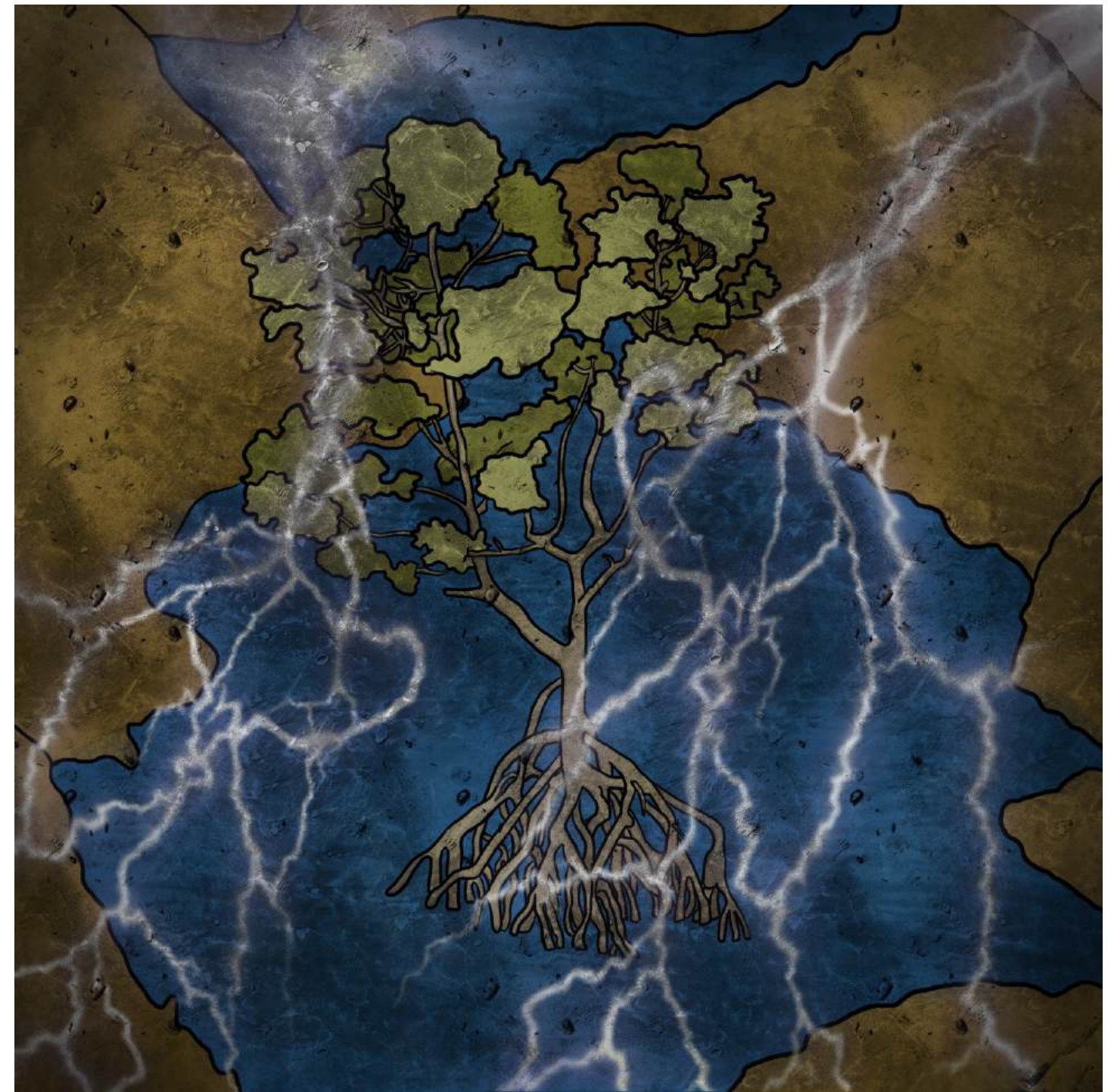
imagine the scene: with every tear shed, every droplet of water born from the weight of guilt and sorrow that burdens pandora, a vibrant tree takes root. this miraculous blossoming is the powerful metaphor for the essence of hope— a testament that the promise of light is inherent in everything, even the deepest suffering. it is a profound assurance that the darkest night will inevitably yield to the dawn.

this ultimate realization is what elevates pandora's story from a mere myth of catastrophe to a timeless epic of resilience. it profoundly asserts that hope is not merely a pleasant sentiment, but the essential, unconquerable force required to triumph over the most daunting adversities.



reflection of my destiny

guilt and innocence. strength and weakness.
pain and ease. sorrow and joy. defamation and
...hope, at last. all this carries the
burden of my
life. the duality
of reality
and deception.
what i was made
out to be, even
though i am not. the distorted image
forced upon myself by others. by the ones with
the power. all the power in
while i was left powerless,
the once title i once wore, from the
pieces, held. my life shattered into
my worst, not impossible to re-
this, all that re- knowing if i could con-
so i remained tinue living like
i believe that hope springs eternal.
pain and self-assured and steadfast.
myself, the roots for so long. through all the
honest with hope i always kept within
side i kept on to flourish. i stayed
very roots. the truly am. so on the in-
and once it anew grew from those
the amount of hatred i get, the lies spread around my existence.
no matter how raging the storm of life might be, how wild and
unpredictable it might get, those who grew roots deep
within the earth will never drown in the
flood of sorrow and despair



by moe rist

The Girl Behind the Closed Chest

Nour Hadaya in collaboration with moe rist



Once, I was life itself.
Gaia—Mother Earth—this was my first name, my first breath.
I was everything and nothing at once:
the soil that fed humanity,
the quiet force that made crops sprout,
trees rise,
flowers blossom.
Earth was balanced then, held gently in my hands.

But after the Titanomachy, balance shattered.
Zeus ruled Olympus and earth with a fist carved from fear and ambition.
A sovereign who demanded sacrifices and obedience.

And Prometheus, protector of humankind, defied him.
He stole fire from the heavens and placed it into mortal hands—
a spark that birthed civilization.

In that very moment, when fire kissed earth,
I changed.
For the first time since my existence began,
I took shape.
A form both divine and vulnerable.

It was this form that became my downfall.
Epimetheus saw me and fell in love,
and Zeus, burning with vengeance toward my husband Prometheus,
unleashed a plan that tore fate open.
He told Epimetheus to shower me with gifts—
for I was the giver of all gifts,
the gift of all gods,
the one to whom every blessing had been bestowed.

Epimetheus brought the *pithos*,
opened it,
and tragedy spilled into the world.
The balance shattered,
and the blame fell on me.

I became victim to Zeus's tyranny and Epimetheus's vanity—
defamed, misunderstood, recast as the source of suffering
I never created.



In the heart of old Damascus, where narrow lanes echo forgotten centuries,
stands a house open to the sky.
Light slips through its courtyard like a soft memory,
touching white stones that have felt both joy and grief.

Here I live—
or hide—
no longer a myth, but a woman breathing among ruins.

They said I brought sorrow when I opened the forbidden jar,
but they never spoke of the shimmer of hope that lingered inside.
In this house, that forgotten hope flickers in me,
quiet but alive.

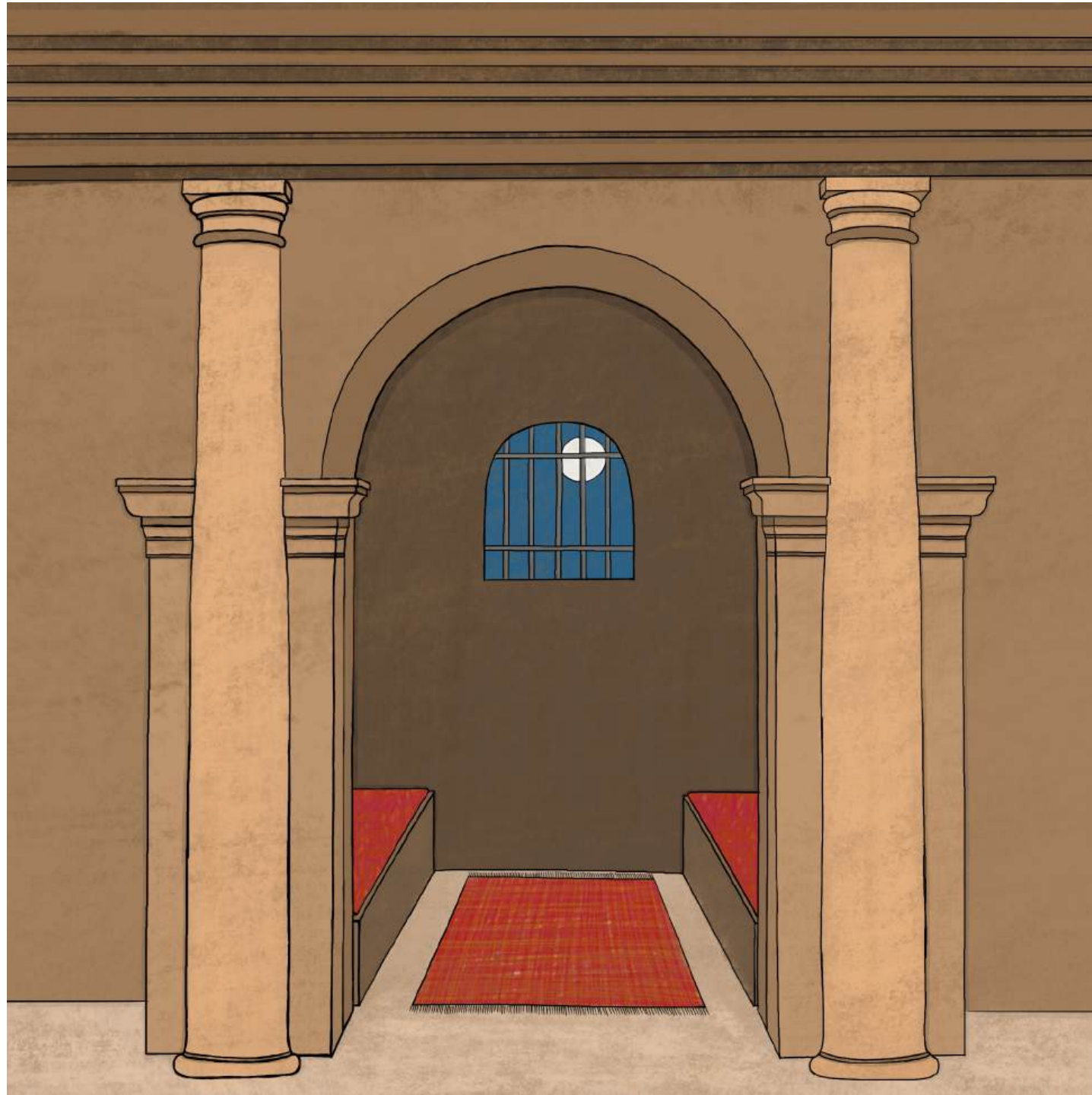
The war outside roars like a distant storm.
Inside, time pauses.
The fountain sings even though its water has thinned.
Rooms rest in silence,
cradling abandoned dreams.

And in that stillness,
I find myself again.

I learn that sorrow is not the enemy of beauty—
it is its shadow.
Every beautiful thing carries a wound,
and every wound hides a spark of light.

Perhaps this is what it means to be human:
to live inside contradictions.
The house is fragile yet standing,
broken yet breathing.

And I—cursed and salvific—walk the edge between despair and grace,
a quiet rebellion against the gods and the world that misunderstood me.



In endless repetition,
I roam the archways of the house I was sentenced to inhabit.
Not knowing why.
Not knowing whether apathy or lethargy gnaws at me—
or whether the difference even matters.

I am here and not here,
present yet adrift.
My surroundings blur into something unfamiliar,
even though I have seen them countless times.
Reality feels slippery,
as if I cannot grasp its edges,
or my own.

What is reality, anyway?
Did it ever exist for me?

I remain trapped, alone.
Not forbidden from humans by decree,
but by something deeper—
an unspoken fate,
a silent exile imposed by those who twisted my story.

They made me the monster.
They made me the cause of suffering.
They blamed me for the weight of the world,
though I never had the power to shape it.

I was banished into shadows
so that my truth could be erased
and their version could survive.
My name buried under centuries of shame,
my voice smothered beneath myths that never belonged to me.

All I can do is carry the burden
of what has been lost
for the rest of eternity.



But as centuries settle like dust upon my story,
a quiet truth begins to rise—
a truth soft enough to be overlooked,
yet strong enough to break the silence of ages.

Pandora... is not just me.
She never was.

I am every soul locked behind unseen bars,
every person who trembles before the eyes of society,
every heart taught to fear its own voice.
I am the reflection of countless lives
silenced by judgment,
caged by expectations.

We built this prison together—
not out of malice,
but out of the ancient fear of opening the chest within ourselves.
We feared what our own darkness might reveal,
so we handed the blame to the one who stood closest to the mirror.

They judged me because they could not judge themselves.
They called me danger because they trembled before their own truths.

Yet those who judged—
those who whispered, pointed, condemned—
are nothing more than smoke:
shapes that rise only while the fire of fear burns.
And when that fire dies,
they will vanish into air,
leaving no trace but the faint scent of what once tried to consume me.

So where does my story end?
Perhaps it doesn't.
Perhaps it continues as long as there are hearts afraid to be seen,
as long as shame is stronger than truth,
as long as hope hides at the bottom of a jar waiting for release.

The door of the house stands half-open now—
a passage between silence and the world beyond.

And whether I step through it...
or remain in the space between.