

# INFRUCTESCENCE

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**Abstract**

**INFRUCTESCENCE**

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*INFRUCTESCENCE* is a multimedia sculptural thesis that weaves personal memory, mythic narrative, and material poetics into an exploration of hunger—bodily, emotional, ancestral, and cosmic. Rooted in Knox’s rural Tennessee upbringing, the work spirals outward from the intimate image of a slug inside a green bell pepper into a larger meditation on containment, desire, and transformation. Slugs and shadows recur as symbolic agents of vulnerability and boundary, echoing themes of metamorphosis and mythic punishment. Sculptural forms become vessels of narrative, protected and imprisoned by salt, a material both preservative and destructive.

Blending ceramic sculpture, text, and performance, *INFRUCTESCENCE* imagines a descent into an otherworldly realm where characters like Hades, Eve, and a many-eyed slug navigate a maze of hunger, memory, and myth. Through these figures and their

encounters—comical, tragic, surreal—the installation investigates the limits of the body and the self, and the moments in which transformation becomes inevitable. Salt maps the psychic terrain between protection and isolation. Ceramic forms stand as guardians, remnants, and containers for unseen forces.

Drawing from the botanical term *infructescence*—a cluster of fruits where once flowers bloomed—the work proposes that what remains after longing, hunger, or desire is not absence, but residue: thick with memory, ripe with story. At its core,

*INFRUCTSECENCE* is a sculptural poem about the hunger that shapes us, the boundaries that break around us, and the mythic echoes that carry us home.



### Infructescence<sup>1</sup>

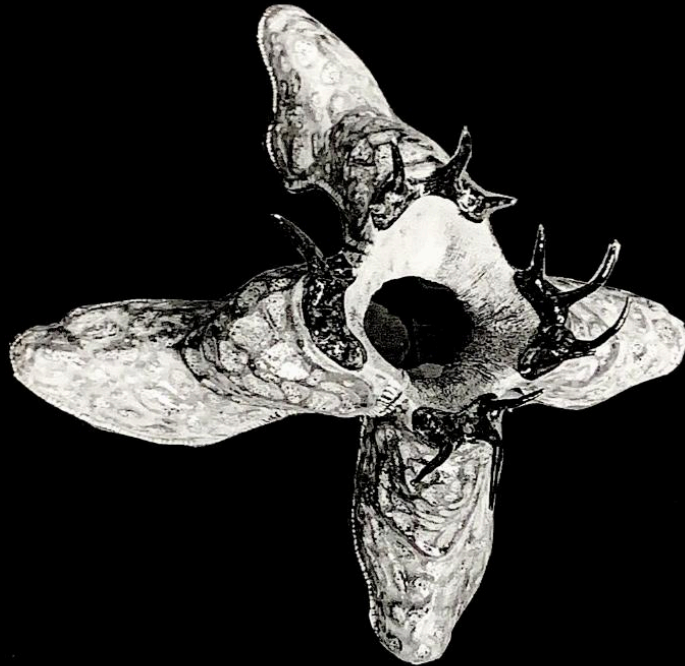
A fruit where flowers  
Once flourished - a ripened remnant  
Of bunches of blooms

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<sup>1</sup> The fruiting stage of an inflorescence

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/infructescence>

ACT I



The Slug in the Green Bell Pepper

This show is about hunger. And thirst and lust and desire.

This show is about the hunger that I grew up with; the stalks of corn that grew up with me, and often above me, and the mazes that were cut into them on the fields owned by our neighbors, a father and son.

This show is about the barn that I grew up in, in between those two farms, with a small vegetable garden right in the middle of the clover-filled lawn.

This show is about a green bell pepper plucked from that garden, lighter than any other pepper I had pulled. I turned over that green bell pepper in my hand, dirt beneath my chewed up fingernails, and found a hole - not perfectly round, but as though a bite had been taken out of it. Inside this peephole, a slug stared slimily back at me.

This show is about what it feels like to be so hungry to chew yourself into a burning hell, to sit in an empty shell of your own making, to look hopelessly through the hole you can no longer fit through - and find a giant eyeball staring back at you.

In this show, you will see exactly four slugs, but it really is about The Slug in the Green Bell Pepper.

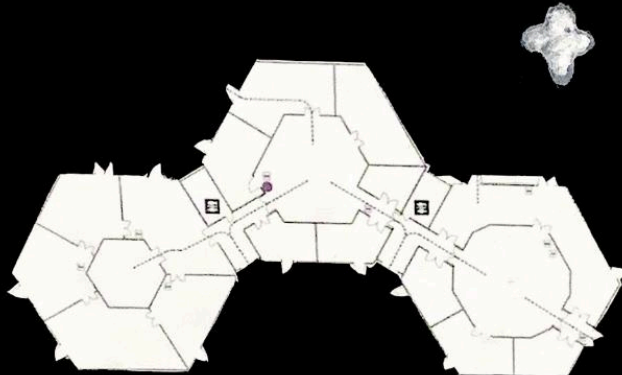
The slugs were not contained to the garden. Their transparent trails would wind around walls, smear across the windows, slide up the stairs to the porch. A squish, a squelch, a shriek; a careless bare foot shocked into retreat. The only way to keep the slugs safely on the other side of the screen door was to lay a line of salt across the threshold.

I use salt to establish the boundaries of the other-world because the material, aesthetically similar to sand or snow, brings to mind a desolate landscape and doesn't immediately give itself away. It provides space for a viewer's imagination to wander. My use of de-icing salt, typically laid on frozen roads and sidewalks to melt ice, is a specific choice as an attempt to melt a frozen landscape.



Wisdom's Root  
Glazed ceramic, salt; 2024  
Photographer: Jacob Chung

## INTERMISSION



## The Hill of Hades

After Hermes' banishment to the Underworld, Zeus ordered Hades to bar the ancient entrances so that no human could breach the borders of the realm of the gods. He has just buried the last remaining portal—The Well of Fortune.



The Well of Fortune  
Glazed ceramic, salt, pool liner, cement; 2025  
Photographer: Jacob Chung

“Let’s take this three-dimensional cube and project it- carry it through a fourth physical dimension. *Not* that way, not *that way*, not *that way*, but at right angles to those three dimensions.”<sup>2</sup>



Tesseract  
Glazed ceramic, salt; 2024  
Photographer: Jacob Chung

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<sup>2</sup> [YouTube](#) Cosmos - Carl Sagan - 4th Dimension

### Inward<sup>3</sup>

In the endless fall  
I found no direction at all  
Inward, not a path - a Portal, unknown

Inside, I crawled  
I discovered I was small  
Insignificant as an echo

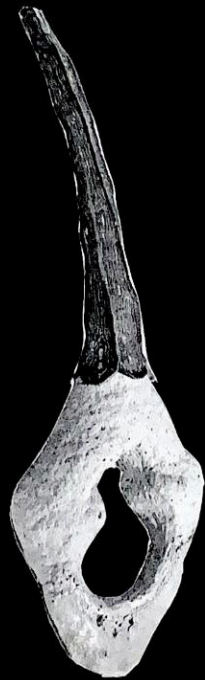
Intruding on all senses, salt  
Intent, as if with malice, to scald  
I felt my scars open

I understood Nothing  
It was Everything

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<sup>3</sup>Knox, J. (2019). Inward. *ArtAscent Magazine, December*(Artists of Motion).

ACT II Scene I



The Stolen Spade

Enter Hades

Loyal Hound! I see by your slime that you have only just yourself returned from a journey! What news do you bring from the four corners of the world?

Hades sits upon a throne.

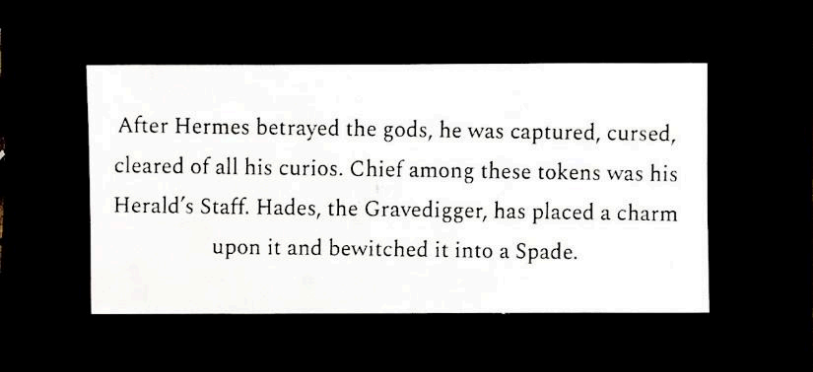
I myself am much weary. A long winter means many graves to be dug, and the cold does so numb the toes. If only I could remember where I laid that accursed torch, I would have warmth to unfreeze them by! I know - you could jump here, upon my stool, and warm them for me!

Hades pats the stool in encouragement. The Hound makes no movement. Hades picks up the reluctant Hound and places it on the stool himself.

Tenacious Hound! No other could I bear to put their feet upon this stool, as it were a gift to me from the Queen, and fit only for the feet of Kings! Say, Hound, what do you call a rat king made of slugs, eh? You know not? What say you?

Hades addresses the audience. (The crowd was silent)

Thoughtful and provoking answers to be sure, but none correct! This beautiful beast be nothing more than... a slimeball! Oh come, dear friend, I merely jest. I see, though, that you are in no mood, and need rest. And I myself await the ringing of the dinner bell. You know, dear Hound, they say if one is hungry enough, they will eat anything which crosses their path! If it were you and I alone in the world, I think my stomach could not bear it.



After Hermes betrayed the gods, he was captured, cursed, cleared of all his curios. Chief among these tokens was his Herald's Staff. Hades, the Gravedigger, has placed a charm upon it and bewitched it into a Spade.

*Hades believes himself my savior, having changed my father's mind on his punishment for me. I would rather be swallowed whole than bear this curse. My speed has been stolen - now I am slow, slimy, slithering. In this accursed form, I suffer to eat only dust, my mouth so dry I can hardly speak; I would swallow the ocean except for the choke of its saltiness.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Genesis 3:14; "So the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.'" H., R. F. *The Bible*. By the Deputies of Christopher Barker ..., 1598.



Gate Guardian  
Glazed ceramic, salt; 2024  
Photographer: Jacob Chung



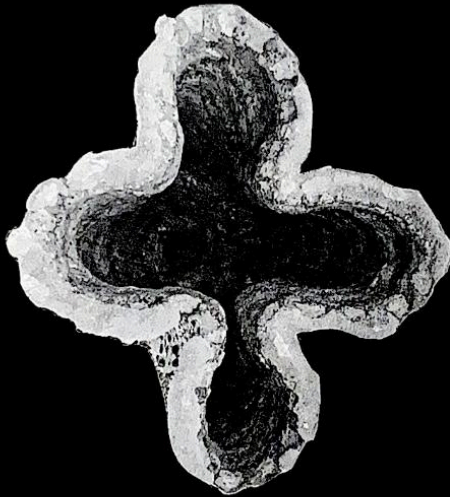
The Well of Fortune, detail. Photographer: Jacob Chung

### **Static Wave**

**Sharp wind in soft hair  
Glassy eyes reflecting infinity  
An ocean of inky onyx  
Beneath a sky of seething stars**

**I wonder if I walked across this frozen ocean,  
At once with no direction  
Yet altogether lost,  
Should the tide begin to turn again  
Could I be swallowed up  
In the endless black  
And fall into sweet bliss?**

ACT II Scene II



The Copper Bell

A bell rings, seeming to come from all corners of the room.<sup>5</sup>

Ah, the bell rings, reliable as the rolling tide! A tone as warm as the voice of the Queen; it is she who calls me now. If only I could wear her voice upon my head, so that my ears would never miss it! A copper crown fit for a King, eh? Or, perhaps, for you, a nightcap!

Hades places the Copper Bell upon the Hound.

Alas, my rest will be brief. After I sup, I must again away. In the meantime, I trust unto you my Spade. Guard it in sleeping as you would in waking, and bear no man to wield it!

Hades places the Stolen Spade upon the Hound, exits.

This bell is under another spell—not by Hades, but by Hecate.  
The glamour guards its genuine guise from all but her  
steadfast servants.

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<sup>5</sup> [Choosing the Right Word](#)

The Well of Fortune stands unguarded, its seething salt still, its magic stale. The seat of the Hierophant's Throne is warped from constant use - but where is its occupant now?



Hierophant's Throne  
Glazed ceramic, salt; 2025  
Photographer: Jacob Chung

Salt is scattered across the floor. A careless step along the border, or the wind rushing through the thrown open window, releases the hungry beasts beyond the threshold. Our heroes, just in time, beat back the evil hounds before their spectral teeth meet flesh.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [Supernatural. Season 3 Season Finale](#)

*Skitter Scatter* stands stoic on a stratum of salt. The figure is frozen - in fear, or in the slow flow of time - its shadow carefully confined. Around the ceramic, a material most notably molded in the making of vessels, salt acts as a protection against the intentions of those who observe it. However, the salt doesn't merely surround the sculpture - it is itself a container for the shadow, its spirit.



Skitter Scatter  
Ceramic, plaster, oil paint, salt; 2024  
Photographer: Jacob Chung

## Sentinel

I stand before the Sentinel-  
A countenance consisting of coiling eyes,  
No capacity to confirm my cries.

I hold my offering-  
Eternal flame - my chest charred  
"Can I cast my hope unto God?"

I stare, helplessly-  
My reflection compounds into countless copies.  
"Without it, what will I come to be?"



Sentinel  
Oil on canvas; 2024  
Photographer: Jade Knox

INTERMISSION

ACT III Scene I



The Lure

Enter Eve.

She approaches the Infructescence, seeming to be transfixed.

Eve plucks the fruit from the Staff of the Herald and bites into it. She falls to her knees, spitting out the bite and tossing the fruit aside.

Bitter as truth! O, how the taste traps my tongue between my teeth!

Cursed am I to wander these winding halls - surely I have become trapped in the realm of Hades! Nowhere else on Earth would there be rooms all of the same shape - though their contents prove they are by no means alike. This one had appeared the most fruitful. Could this be the flower who, by the perfume of its blossom, has beguiled me to walk endlessly through this labyrinth? Indeed, its scent grows stronger..

Eve lifts the Staff of the Herald away from the Torch.

Hermes, in his cursed form, must split himself into four to fulfill his duties as messenger to the gods—he is forbidden from leaving the Underworld for fear he may forge a rebellion among the humans. In slumber, however, he stealthily slips through the shadows to the minds of sleepers.

This creature seems to have suffered some injury near the base of its trunk. The substance on the inside - a yellow pith, fibrous and tacky - has seeped out through the crack and sealed the wound from within.



Fortunafax tennis, detail. Photographer: Jacob Chung

Partly named for the shape of its crown - like a four-leafed clover, a common symbol of luck,<sup>7</sup> its ribs are thin, sharp - like a cactus' protection against the thirsty mouths of large mammals. Indeed, it thrives in a desert of salt.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> [The Secret of the the Four-Leaf Clover](#)

<sup>8</sup> Jie, Chen & Yanfei, Kang & Liu, Wei & Fan, Jinyang & Jiang, De & Chemenda, A.. (2018). Self-healing capacity of damaged rock salt with different initial damage. *Geomechanics and Engineering*. 15. 615-620. 10.12989/gae.2018.15.1.615.



Fortunafax tennis

Glazed ceramic, tape, salt; 2024

Photographer: Jade Knox



### Hillbilly Lemonade

Skin from pulp

Flesh from rind

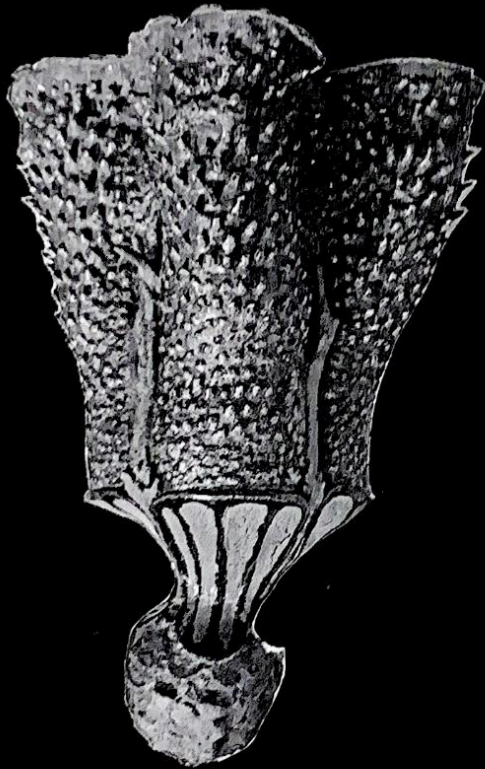
Your sweet lips twist

Around the sour of mine

I forget the bitterness that stings my nose

And the acid that burns my throat

ACT III Scene II



The Torch of Eternal Flame

What strange fruit is this, which grows in a bed of flame?

Eve lifts the Torch from the head of the Hound.

But this is the torch of Hermes, exactly as my mother described! Copper as the arms of the farmers. It holds the first flame, made by Hermes himself, and so is the brightest of all. For what purpose is it here, in this maze of endless chambers?

Eve's eyes fall upon the Hound.

You know, they say if you are hungry enough you will eat anything which crosses your path. In this case, I think my stomach could not bear it.

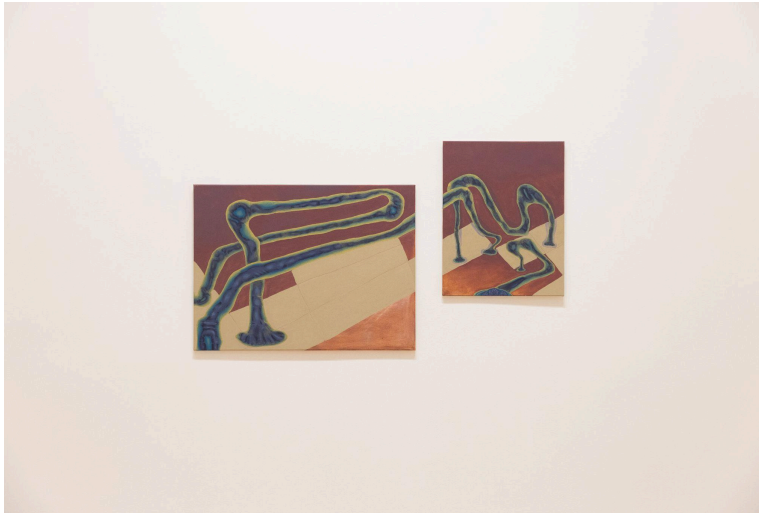
A bell rings, seeming to come from all corners of the room.

Who are you, foul beast, to hold the Eternal Flame as a jester's cap upon your head? Be you a servant of Hecate? I guess as much by your silence. What a genius disguise! One which leaves behind a trail of slime. This is my hope of escaping this wretched confusion! Blessed Hound!

Eve kisses Hermes, and leaves with the Torch.

## Siphonophore<sup>9</sup>

A living constellation -  
Many small beings bound in harmony,  
Moving as one -  
A single creature composed of many parts



Siphonophore  
Oil on canvas; 2025  
Photographer: Jacob Chung

Siphonophore, detail. Photographer: Jade Knox

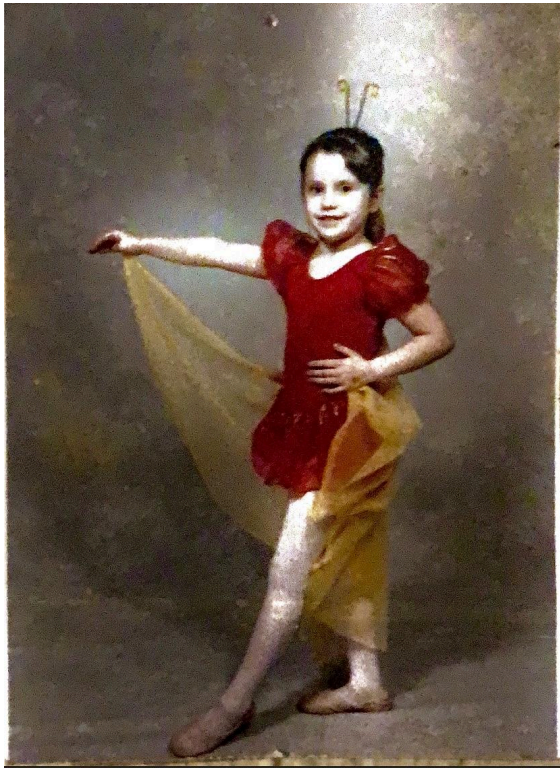


“We have discovered such hostile environments - and yet, so complex and elaborate and strange, unlike anything we have explored before. Geometrics of the universe expressed in these branching turns and interlocking engines.

What a world is this we have stumbled across!”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://cimi.org/blog/siphonophores-a-colonial-existence/>

<sup>10</sup> Tchaikovsky, Adrian. *Children of Ruin*. Orbit, 2019.



Under the spotlight, skin hot and eyes blinded, my shadow and  
I dance in unison across the stage. The rhythm of the music  
turns to the thunder of applause, and she bows with me to the  
sea of smiling faces. As the heavy red velvet curtain drops, we  
both disappear.