

REVIEW BY GRADY HARP

# Julia San Román

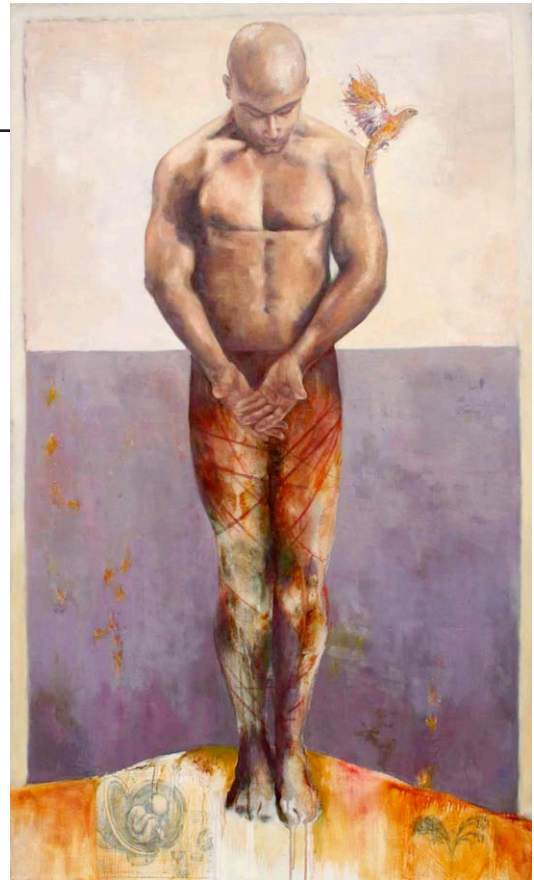
## **METAMORPHOSIS/EPIPHANY**

*"I've often lost myself,  
in order to find the burn  
that keeps everything  
awake"*

*Federico García Lorca*

**J**ULIA SAN ROMÁN has experienced a life of changes not unlike the journey from pupa to butterfly. Born in Madrid, Spain, gratefully close to the Prado Museum where during her schooling in an atmospheric 17th century Order of Mercy building, she spent hours with the art antiquities of Spanish history, including falling under the spell of the masterful paintings of Francisco Zurbarán. Although she concentrated her formal education on science (she earned her PhD in Biomedical Science), the influence of her childhood exposure to art remained an integral part of her passion for life. In 1988 she immigrated to the United States to pursue a career in scientific research, but the obsession with art continued to blossom and since 2000 she has committed her life to painting.

Once the butterfly in Julia San Román's epiphany emerged her painting progressed through stages of exploring her, not surprisingly, aspect of her training in the life sciences: reflections of her feminine side



**Symphony: Blue\_Symphony**

concentrated on fertility and on those aspects that physically define female and male. Her early explorations of representational painting allowed her meticulous attention to detail that she had absorbed as a child from the Spanish masters such as the famous still life's of Zurbarán. Conquering such steps in gaining her own painterly language gradually allowed her to move from the tight, succinctly defined images of her early work to a gradual loosening of her brush technique and spatial explorations as her confidence in her craft grew more

secure. The brush has now been augmented with the palette knife, allowing more freedom of expression and a more poetic, passionate approach to her subject.

And her subjects, though always evolving in the manner they are expressed, are constant: the human figure interacting with nature and most significantly, with birds – in flight, at rest, and in relation to the figure. Birds for San Román have become the liberating icon, the ever present emphasis on the spirit taking flight above the ephemeral toward the



**Duende III**



**Duende VI**



*Cante Jondo: Perishable*

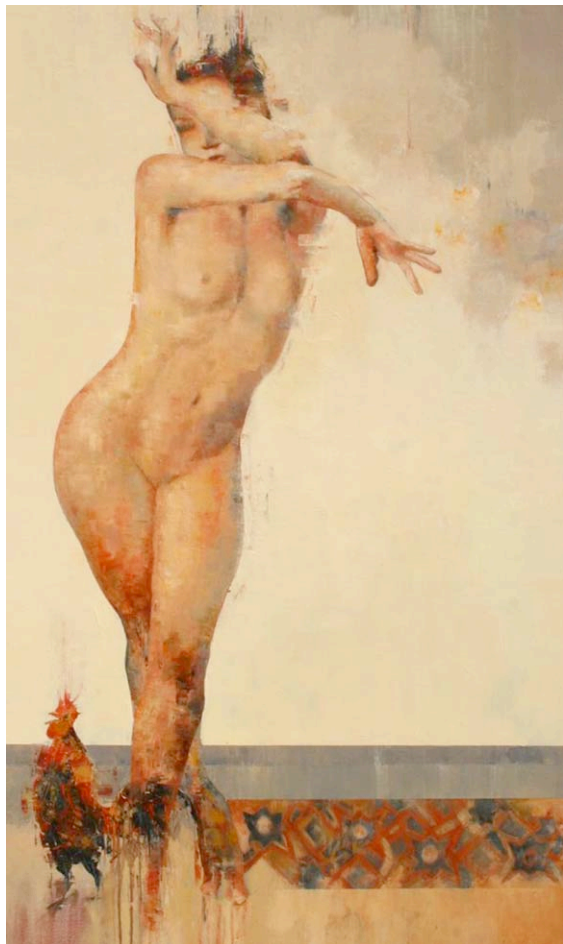
spiritual eternal. 'The unifying quality of my paintings is their romantic nature. As a romantic painter I yearn for the pure, transcendental and universal in life. Thus, I create my art to convey a state of mind that longs to escape the quotidian. Being raised with a strong sense of the past, I like to look back in history to transcend the face of a present world that I find socially and technically alienating.'

The paintings of Julia San Román tend to fall into groups or periods of emphasis, each group of new works being informed by the earlier works, but each new area of expression becoming more lyrical – less narrative, more attuned to a sensual pause of a poetic moment. In the series **Duende** (freely translated from the Spanish art word that deals with emotion, expression, authenticity – or soul!) she deals with birds as detailed images, whereas in the more recent **Cante Jondo** the near impressionistic birds are in flight as trajectories of her earthbound imagination.

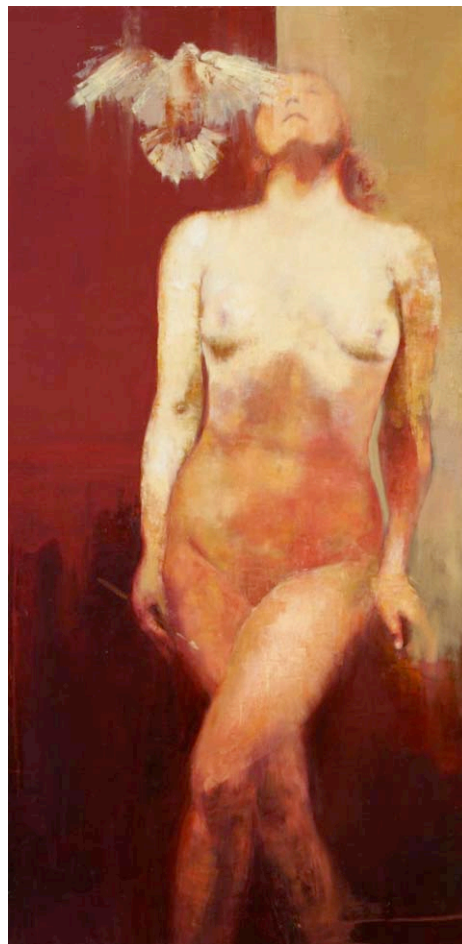
The figures have also developed along similar lines: In the series **Symphony** she has transitioned from the tightly drawn, realistic torso above to the semi-aqueous appearance of the lower portion of the painting: the upper portion is of air and adds the bird; the lower portion is submerged, even to the point of origin of the figure as an embryo in utero. In the series **Brief** the figures while readily defined become more fragile, transient and lyrical, nearly dissolving into the space not only surrounding the figure but also into the indefinable space of eternity.

Another aspect of San Román's paintings is the flid

*Brief: I Am Guell*

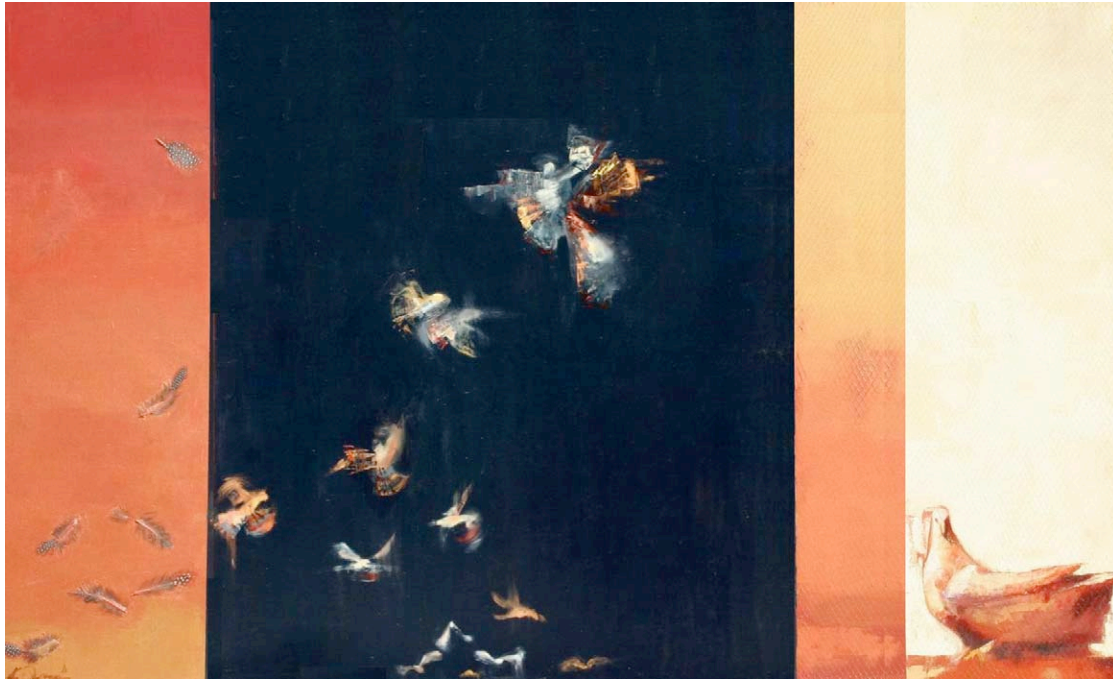


*Brief: La Pintura*



*"Only  
mystery  
allows us  
to live,  
only  
mystery."*

*Federico  
García Lorca*



*Cante  
Jondo:  
La Noche*

use of her Spanish heritage in surprising and refreshing ways. The flapping of the birds' wings in space and the balletic motion of her approach to pigment and its placement on a canvas is inspired by

the artist's fascination and memories of the flamenco hand clapping, an integral aspect of the total art of flamenco expression. Perhaps this is a reason that her paintings have come to a point where they are never static

but instead are dancing. From a woman of scientific searching she has metamorphosed into a choreographer of thoughts barely tangible to words. And we are the witnesses to her epiphany.

**Brief: Kauai I**



**Brief: La Mistica**

