











## TARTARUS

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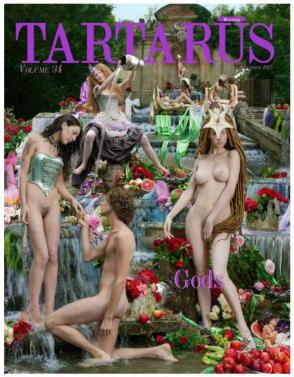
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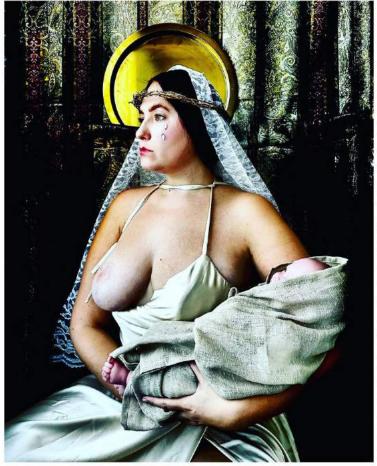
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Nora Kobrenik Photographed by Nora Kobrenik | I am no mother, I am no bride, I am king | August 2023

I think at this point my fascination with gods, religion and mythology is no secret to anyone. This is one topic that I can and have discussed endlessly, debated, mused on and explored - Volume 34: Gods is no different.

I'm not a religious person, I wasn't raised with religion and I don't believe in religion. Religion in general is something I'm not comfortable with, something that I fear but not for the reasons you might think. I find religion to be something of a fairytale, something that was made up by people, written by people and indoctrinated by people. And something that was used by people to instill fear, inspire blind devotion and obedience. More wars have been fought on religious grounds than any other; more people have been prosecuted and put to death over religion than anything else. Religions claim that Devil is the great

deceiver but I disagree. For centuries Catholic Church has oppressed people into submission by instilling terror of eternal damnation for any misstep while the church itself has thrived on bribes, financial machinations, sexual misconduct and prosecution of things it did not understand such as science and other religious beliefs. So I ask you, who is the Great Deceiver now? Volume 34: Gods explores more of a mythological approach to religion. Different gods and goddesses thriving, creating, illuminating, punishing, loving, healing, destroying, damning, cultivating. Mythological Gods have always propagated the reality of human nature - we are not inherently good or bad, we are multifaceted creatures capable of many things. Of course there will always be cracks but that's how the sunlight gets in. Welcome to the issue.

Nora Kobrenik Editor-in-Chief and Founder



# ST(





### ARINE **)**RY







































































































ince the end of the 20th Century, large numbers of worshippers have left Christianity to join the growing ranks of adults who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or "nothing." The religious profile of the world is rapidly changing, driven primarily by differences in fertility rates and the size of youth populations among the world's major religions, as well as by people switching faiths. Over the next four decades, Christians will remain the largest religious group, but Islam will grow faster than any other major religion. If current trends continue, by 2050 the number of Muslims will nearly equal the number of Christians around the world. In Europe, Muslims will make up 10% of the overall population. The number of Muslims will nearly equal the number of Christians around the world.

In 2023, India's population has matched and then surpassing the population of mainland China, it's population is virtually certain to continue to grow for several decades and will retain a Hindu majority but also will have the largest Muslim population of any country in the world, surpassing Indonesia. Atheists, agnostics and other people who do not affiliate with any

religion - though increasing in countries such as the United States and France - will make up a declining share of the world's total population. In the United States, Christians will decline from more than three-quarters of the population in 2010 to two-thirds in 2050, and Judaism will no longer be the largest non-Christian religion. Muslims will be more numerous in the U.S. than people who identify as Jewish on the basis of religion. Four out of every 10 Christians in the world will live in sub-Saharan Africa.

These are among the global religious trends highlighted in new demographic projections by the Pew Research Center. The projections take into account the current size and geographic distribution of the world's major religions, age differences, fertility and mortality rates, international migration and patterns in conversion. In addition to fertility rates and age distributions, religious switching is likely to play a role in the growth or decline of religious groups worldwide.











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ost experts view the arrival of AGI as a historical and technological turning point, akin to the splitting of the atom or the invention of the printing press. The important question has always been how far away in the future this development might be. And the answer is now.

A three-letter acronym doesn't capture the enormity of what AGI would represent, so let's refer to it as what is: God-like AI. A superintelligent computer that learns and develops autonomously, that understands its environment without the need for supervision and that can transform the world around it. To be clear, we are not there. Yet. But the nature of the technology means it is exceptionally difficult to predict exactly when we will get there. God-like AI could be a force beyond our control or understanding, and one that could usher in the obsolescence or destruction of the human race.

The computers used to train AI models have increased by a factor of one hundred million in the past 10 years. We have gone from training on relatively small datasets to feeding AIs the entire Internet. AI models have progressed from beginners — recognizing everyday images — to being superhuman at a huge number of tasks. They are able to pass the bar exam and write 40 per cent of the code for a software engineer, and tell you how to engineer a biochemical weapon.

They can generate realistic photographs and videos of real and imagined people, currently Hollywood is striking against becoming obsolete with the dawn of AI generated photographs and videos that are virtually indistinguishable from reality that cost far less to produce than a Hollywood blockbuster. There are limits to this "intelligence", of course. As the veteran MIT roboticist Rodney Brooks recently said, it's important not to mistake "performance for competence".

In 2021, researchers Emily M Bender, Timnit Gebru and others noted that large language models (LLMs) — AI systems that can generate, classify and understand text — are dangerous partly because they can mislead the public into taking synthetic text as meaningful. But the most powerful models are also beginning to demonstrate complex capabilities, such as power-seeking or finding ways to actively deceive humans by generating images of world leaders engaging with extra terrestrial beings or falsifying arrests of public servants with images and news articles. "We're creating God," the former Google Chief Business Officer Mo Gawdat recently told an





nterviewer. "We're summoning the demon," Elon Musk said a few years ago, in a talk at MIT. Either way, an encounter with the superhuman is at hand. Since the events of Genesis chapter 3, humans have been trying to create their own gods based on their own wisdom. We are about to witness the birth of a new kind of religion.

In the next few years, or perhaps even months, we will see the emergence of sects devoted to the worship of artificial intelligence. But lest we forget, "You may love your computer, but your computer [and AI] do not love you" Kallistos Ware. The future is here and with it a new God.







































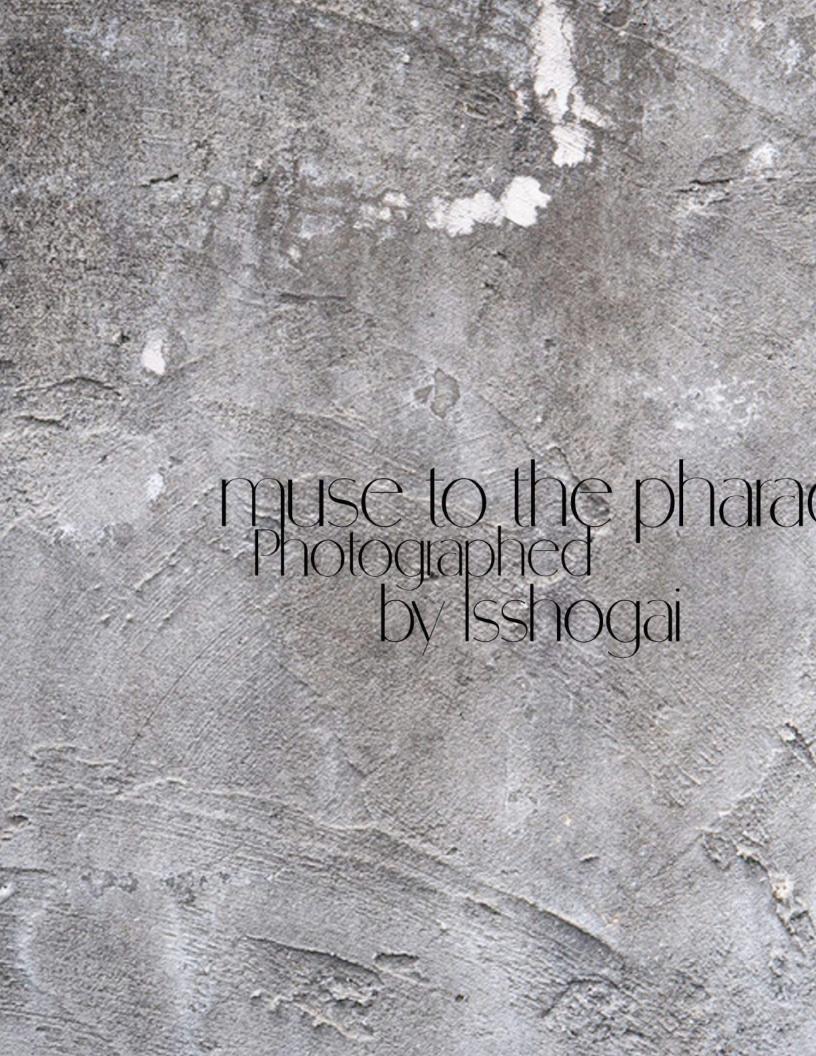














































































here is no universally accepted consensus on what a deity is, and concepts of deities vary considerably across cultures. A deity is typically conceptualized as a supernatural or divine concept, manifesting in ideas and knowledge, in a form that combines excellence in some or all aspects, wrestling with weakness and questions in other aspects, heroic in outlook and actions, yet tied up with emotions and desires. Polytheism is the belief in and worship of multiple deities, which are usually assembled into a pantheon of gods and goddesses, with accompanying rituals. In most polytheistic religions, the different gods and goddesses are representations of forces of nature or ancestral principles, and can be viewed either as autonomous or as aspects or emanations of a creator God or transcendental absolute principle (monistic theologies), which manifests immanently in nature. Monotheism is the belief that only one deity

exists. A monotheistic deity, known as "God", is usually described as omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, omnibenevolent and eternal. Many cultures—including the ancient Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Germanic peoples—have personified natural phenomena, variously as either deliberate causes or effects. Some Avestan and Vedic deities were viewed as ethical concepts. In Indian religions, deities have been envisioned as manifesting within the temple of every living being's body, as sensory organs and mind. Deities are envisioned as a form of existence after rebirth, for human beings who gain merit through an ethical life, where they become guardian deities and live blissfully in heaven, but are also subject to death when their merit is lost.







































nthropologists estimate that at least 18,000 different gods, goddesses, and various animals or objects have been worshipped by humans since our species first appeared. Today, it is estimated that more than 80 percent of the global population considers themselves religious or spiritual in some form. Religious beliefs, spirituality, and the need to worship a deity of some kind are undoubtedly durable traits. Some gods were worshipped for very long periods and then virtually disappeared from the historical record. For example, the sun god Ra was worshipped by many different cultures for thousands of years and then completely disappeared. If historical precedent holds, many of the gods worshipped today will be forgotten and quickly replaced by others. Here are a few most popular deities from around the globe:

Yudi ("Jade Deity") or Yuhuang ("Jade Emperor" or "Jade King"), is the popular human-like representation of the God of Heaven. Jade traditionally represents purity, so it is a metaphor for the unfathomable source of creation.

Vishnu is known as The Preserver within the Trimurti, the triple deity of supreme divinity that includes Brahma and Shiva. In Vaishnavism, Vishnu is the supreme being who creates, protects, and transforms the universe.

Siddhartha Gautama, most commonly referred to as the Buddha ("the awakened"), was a wandering ascetic and religious teacher who lived in South Asia during the 6th or 5th century BCE and founded Buddhism. The Buddha's central teachings emphasize the aim of attaining liberation from attachment or clinging to existence, which is said to be marked by impermanence (anitya), dissatisfaction/suffering (dukha), and the absence of lasting essence (anātman).

Islam is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion centered on the Quran and the teachings of Muhammad. Islam teaches that God (Allah) is one and incomparable.





t states that there will be a "Final Judgement" wherein the righteous will be rewarded in paradise (Jannah) and the unrighteous will be punished in hell (Jahannam).

Christianity is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. The core Christian belief is that through belief in and acceptance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, sinful humans can be reconciled to God, and thereby

are offered salvation and the promise of eternal life. Asatru (Icelandic: Ásatrú) is a religion which involves the worship of ancient Germanic and Scandinavian Viking spirits and gods. The most prominent are Thor, Odin, Freyja, Frigg, Freyr, Tyr, Loki, and Heimdall. A religion of nature and life, stressing the harmony of the natural world and the search for harmony in the life of individuals.











FRUITSOFTHEGODDESS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY NATALE INA
TIANA BROOKS ON ANCIENT RITUALS

















efining paganism is complex and problematic. Understanding the context of its associated terminology is important. Early Christians referred to the diverse array of cults around them as a single group for reasons of convenience and rhetoric. During and after the Middle Ages, the term paganism was applied to any non-Christian religion, and the term presumed a belief in false gods. Paganism came to be equated by Christians with a sense of hedonism, representing those who are sensual, materialistic, self-indulgent, unconcerned with the future, and uninterested in more mainstream religions: savages. Owing to the history of its nomenclature, paganism traditionally encompasses the collective pre- and non-Christian cultures in and around the classical world; including those of the Greco-Roman, Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic tribes. Here are some ancient pagan worship practices and rituals: The Celtic Druids burned a YULE log during what we now associate with Christmas time in order to banish the darkness and any evil spirits that may accompany it. In all cases, the day marks the death of the Sun/ the rebirth of the sun and it was celebrated more domestically than the Summer Solstice.

IMBOLC came at the first signs of spring. Like many Celtic festivals, the Imbolc celebrations centered around the lighting of fires. Fire was perhaps more important for this festival than others as it was also the holy day of Brigid the Goddess of fire, healing and fertility. The lighting of fires celebrated the increasing power of the Sun over the coming months. OSTARA celebrates the renewal of life on Earth with the coming of spring. It is a time of rejuvenation and child-like wonder at the glories of the Earth. The day coincides with festivals for Aphrodite, Hathor, Ostara, and Easter. The Celtic word 'BELTANE' means 'fires of Bel' and refers to the ancient Celtic deity. This spring fire festival is meant to celebrate the coming of the summer as well as the fertility of plants and animals of the coming year. Cattle are paraded between two bonfires to ensure strength and fertility for the herd. For similar reasons, some people opt to jump over a flame to increase "fertility," which in this case may be physical or mental

reative fertility. Much of Beltane's rituals revolve around the needs of farming communities who are looking forward to a fruitful year ahead. It is also a time when many marriages take place or are arranged.

LITHA is about honoring the Sun while it is at the peak of its glory. Bonfires and feasting were common ways to celebrate and this festival was much more public and communally celebrated than its winter counterpart. On this day, the Chinese celebrated Li, the Goddess of Light, and the Christians celebrated the feast of St. John the Baptist.

LUGHNASADH traditionally marks the first day of the harvest. It commemorates the death of Lugh, the Celtic god of light, the son of the Sun. Lugh is the medium through which the power of the sun can

enter the grain and ripen it. SAMHAIN marks the end of the harvest and, thus, the end of the summer and the beginning of winter. It is also the festival for the dead. This day is supposed to be the point of time when the veil separating the world of mortals and the world of spirits is at its thinnest, enabling the souls of the dead, witches, and faeries of all sorts to mingle with living people. Loved ones who have died are invited to join in the end of harvest feasts and are asked to watch over the newest members of the community Samhain is also the time when all those born during the past year are officially welcomed into the community.













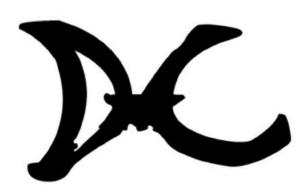
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## PHILIPPE AUDIBERT

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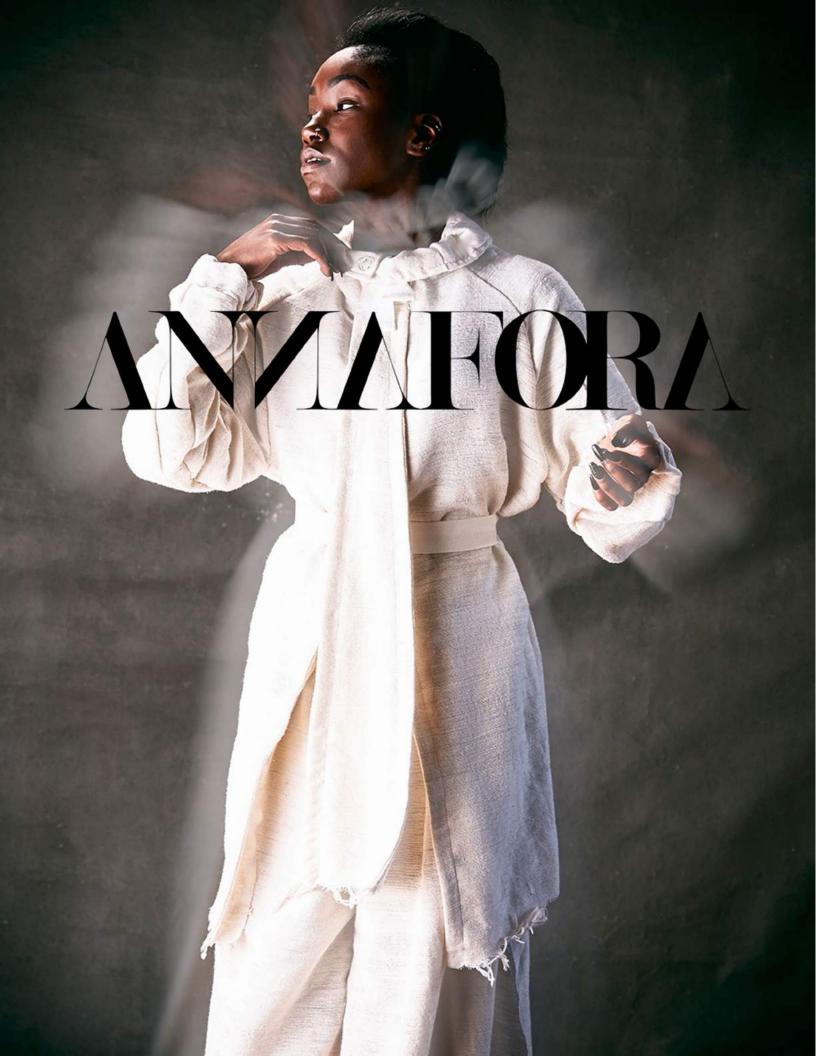






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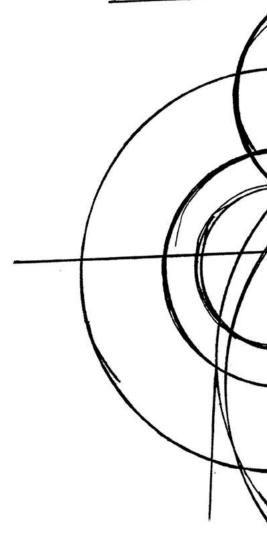
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## Nora's Deities







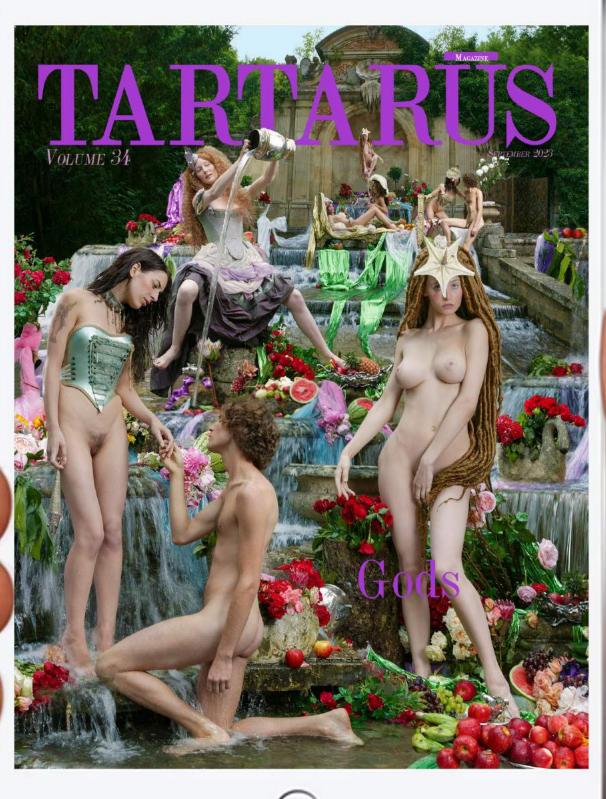
- 1. Balenciaga hourglass dress
- 2. Tiffany bone cuff
- 3. Les Puces de Saint-Ouen
- 4. Food for thought: Costes Restaurant
- 5. Thomas Barger art
- 6. Visit: Paris, France
- 7. Chanel pearl Mary Jane
- 8. Radis Au Beurre
- 9. Père Lachaise Cemetery

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