

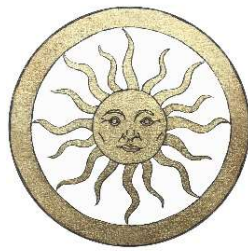
THE  
HOLY COLLECTION  
OF THE  
COUNT SAINT GERMAIN



**Image Caption:**

Artist Hector de Gregorio in *The Holy Collection of the Count Saint Germain*, Deptford X Fringe, September 2022





## Project Synopsis



**Hector de Gregorio**

*Love of Hermes, 2017*

Hand finished giclee on etching paper

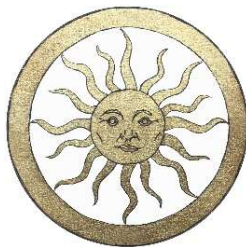
60 x 40 cm (unframed)

*The Holy Collection of the Count of Saint Germain* is a curatorial project which seeks to produce a parafiction<sup>1</sup> about the quasi-mythical Count of Saint Germain<sup>1</sup>, a transhistorical supernatural figure regularly referenced in Occult lore

The project will take the form of a wunderkabinett<sup>1</sup> style exhibition which will present artworks which pretend to be historical artefacts collected by the Count during his many lives. Each work will be labelled as if part of a museum collection, disguising its real nature as an artwork and placing it within the timeline of the Count's alleged lives.

By using this imagined collection to 'evidence' his existence, the exhibition will instigate a hoax scenario, or parafiction, where the audience temporarily believe that the Count of Saint Germain existed and was involved in numerous significant events in human history. If the parafiction is plausible, the intention is for this display to allow the myth of the Count Saint Germain's lives to transition from the realm of fiction into reality in the mind of the audience





## The Count Saint Germain

The mystery surrounding the life of the Count Saint Germain is the foundation of the parafiction. At the end of this mystery is the fact that Wikipedia records the Count Saint Germain twice, both as a genuine historical figure with mysterious origins and as a legendary spiritual master of the Ancient Wisdom. Many Occult belief systems (principally Theosophy) consider him to be an Ascended Master, a Christ-like supernatural being responsible for guiding humanity.

As an Ascended Master he is alleged to have manifested throughout history in various incarnations, most of which are important historical figures. Each avatar has brought their own uncertain history and mythology. The artists involved in the project have elected to imagine their works have been collected by these avatars which include: Joseph of Nazareth (unknown date BC – 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD), Nicolas Flamel (1330 –1418), Christian Rosenkreutz (1378 – 1484), the ‘official’ Comte de Saint Germain (1712 –1784) and the contemporary incarnation of the Count (dates unknown).

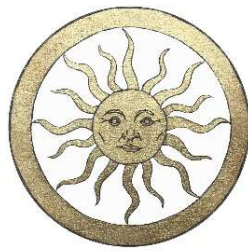


*The Count of Saint Germain,*  
Engraving by an unknown artist.

My interest in The Count Saint Germain as a subject for a parafiction is the uncertainty about the events of his life and the many conflicting beliefs and mythologies that surround his legend. Additionally, his involvement with occult belief systems, many of which’s practices already strain credibility and blur the boundary between myth and reality, make his story the ideal subject for a convincing parafiction scenario. He has also been the subject of a number of significant hoaxes throughout history, which further complexifies the narrative.







## Parafictions & Fictive Museum Exhibits

This project aims to contribute to a tradition of parafictions in contemporary art. The term ‘parafiction’, coined by Carrie Lambert Beattie in *Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility* 2009, describes artworks which “reside in the space between fact and fiction.”<sup>1</sup> In these works “real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect with the world as it is being lived,” allowing fictions to be “experienced as fact,” with various effects and intentions.<sup>2</sup> In the parafiction, the hoax is not the final aim of the artform, it is a tool used to condition the audience’s perception in a certain way to perform an intervention in their beliefs.

Many artists, including Peter Hill and Jamie Shovlin amongst many others, use the parafiction as a tool to blur the boundary between fiction and reality in order to convey messages to their audience.



Damien Hirst’s *Children of a Dead King* (2017) being ‘uncovered’ by divers



### Parafiction Case Study

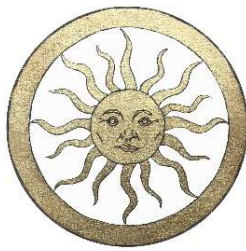
#### **Joan Fontcuberta and Pere Formiguera *Fauna*, 1988**

This parafictional exhibition explored the potential to hack a museum’s authority by producing a fictional exhibit based on the premise of their ‘discovery’ of the lost archives of imaginary zoologist Dr. Ameisenhaufen. This fake archive contained ‘evidence’ (such as aged photographs and altered taxidermy animals) of unusual hybrid animals that were “exceptions to Darwin’s theory of evolution.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kirsty Robertson: *The Disappearance of Arthur Nestor: Parafiction, Cryptozoology, Curation in Museum & Society*, July 2020, pp. 98-114

<sup>2</sup> Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility*, 2009, October Magazine, Ltd. and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, pp. 51–84.





## Selected Works from the Collection

*Each artwork is displayed with a caption outlining its fictional history within the narrative of the lives of the Count Saint Germain.*

### **Jonathan Armour** *Mappa Vita Aeterna, 2022*

#### Parafictional Museum Label



#### *Mappa Vitae Aeternae*

c.1140 - 1151

**Lender:** Jonathan Armour

**Collection:** Nicholas Flamel

A human skin tattooed with the *Mappa Vitae Aeternae*, a precursor to the *Mappa Mundi* (c.1300).

The first custodian of the hidden knowledge encoded in the *Mappa Vitae Aeternae* was Abbot Suger of Saint Denis (1081-1151), a guardian of an ancient network of alchemists in the court of Louis VI.

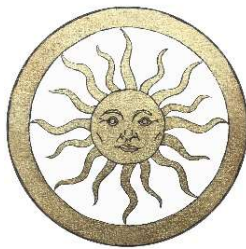
Towards the end of his life, Suger had this knowledge tattooed onto his skin, leaving instructions that upon his death it was to be entrusted to the Knights Templar. Triggered by the purge of the Templars between 1307 - 1321, the Abbot's skin was moved to England and the imagery was transcribed onto a sheet of velum, which became the *Mappa Mundi*.

Nicolas Flamel, an incarnation of the Count Saint Germain, heard of the existence of the *Mappa Vitae Aeternae* acquired it in 1378 to expedite his research into the creation of the Philosopher's Stone.

**Size:** 160 x 120 cm

**Material:** Digital print on furnishing leatherette





**Kit Marlowe**  
*Melchior's Gift to Christ, 2014*



**Size:** 33.4 x 33.4 x 7 cm  
**Materials:** Frankincense, myrrh, gold leaf, plaster, iron, found objects (bronze containers)

**Parafictional Museum Label**

***Melchior's Gift to Christ***

c. 0 AD

**Lender:** Kit Marlowe (deceased)

**Collection:** Joseph of Nazareth

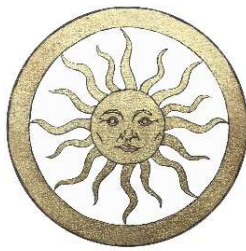
Thought to be the gift of gold presented by Melchior, a Zoroastrian Magi, to the infant Christ. In scripture the form that this gift took was never made specific. Since the emergence of this artefact biblical historians have produced numerous theories for Melchior's motivation to give such an unusual present to a baby.

This item is a gold cast of a baboon skull engraved with the Winged Disk, an early Zoroastrian symbol of divinity. The baboon was a sacred animal to Zoroastrians, possibly explaining the form of the gift. However, scholars believe that this object symbolised Melchior's prediction that Christ's birth signalled the decline of the Zoroastrian belief system which, at the time, was the dominant religion in the Middle East.

This artefact was discovered, accompanied by raw frankincense and myrrh resins, in the empty grave of Kit Marlowe in St. Nicholas Church, Deptford. Theosophical scholars have long believed Marlowe and Joseph of Nazareth to be incarnations of the Count Saint Germain.







**Jane Hoodless**  
*Mermaid, 2007*



**Size:** 40 x 80 x 25 cm  
**Materials:** Mixed media  
including dust & bone

**Parafictional Museum Label**

***Mermaid***

c.18th Century

**Lender:** Jane Hoodless

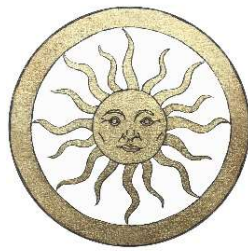
**Collection:** Comte de Saint Germain

The following is an excerpt from a letter to the Lender, signed 'Comte de Saint Germain':

“The recollection of my final bequest still causes me the greatest of sorrows since the last of the aforementioned percussions I retrieved was snapped and wedged in the pharynx of a mermaid. No fish-monkey hybrid was she! O, no! And more beguiling than the twisted beast in Doctor Sloane's cabinet. I believe that, prior to her wretched erosion, she would have been the very finest example of a juvenile.”

“[Text obscured]...An embarrassment that soon became aggravated, after little Mr Pope spied us in my box at Covent Garden, where I had embraced the dear child in a swathe of China silk. I had a foolish notion that the sweet creature would regain her voice in the presence of a bewitching soprano such as the juvenile protégée, Charlotte Brent. But alas, this was not the situation. O, no, not at all! After that ignominy I was forced to attend musical entertainments alone...”





**Hector de Gregorio**  
*Sacred Heart, 2009*



**Size:** 40.6 x 50.8 cm

**Materials:** Giclee, oil, craquelure, mica and gold powder  
on etching paper

**Parafictional Museum Label**

***Sacred Heart***

Unknown artist, c. 1745-1750

**Lender:** Hector de Gregorio

**Collection:** The Count Saint Germain

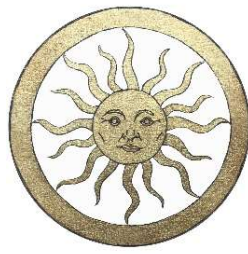
This work depicts a demon-like creature chasing a 'Sacred Heart', a Catholic symbol of God's love for mankind. The image is thought to reflect the Count Saint Germain's pursuit of divine love through occult practices, the demon-like creature representing his impure body striving for the ultimate goal of spiritual purification.

The scene depicted in this image is set over a view of London before the Great Fire of 1666. In some of the Count's early writings he describes rooms which he held in the Tower of London shortly before the fire which may explain the reason for his choice of view.

One of a set of four unusually lavish works on loan from the Count Saint Germain's private art collection. Each work is thought to have been commissioned to mark a consequential development on his journey towards the mastery of various secret knowledges.







**Install Photography**  
**Project Iteration 1: *Deptford X Festival, 2022***

