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Enchanted South Tarot: A Contemporary Interpretation of Tarot

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ENCHANTED SOUTH TAROT: A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF TAROT

by


Hannah Mathis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Art History and Visual Culture
at
Lindenwood University

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A Project Report Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Arts and Humanities
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Hannah Grace Mathis

Saint Charles, Missouri

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Abstract

Enchanted South Tarot: A Contemporary Interpretation of Tarot

Hannah Mathis, Master of Art History and Visual Culture, 2023

Thesis Directed by: Dr. Stefanie Snider

This project uses qualitative research to create an original 78-card tarot deck. Its focus is to create a tarot deck informed by the rich history and symbolism of tarot while utilizing original art and unique experiences to create a one-of-a-kind deck. The deck's artwork showcases flora, fauna, and manufactured objects of the Southeastern United States, referencing traditional tarot archetypes to select each card's imagery. The deck's guidebook introduces readers to some of the history of tarot and several historical and contemporary decks that inspired the Enchanted South deck. The project emphasizes tarot's evolution and how each artist's contribution adds layers of meaning, sparks discourse and solidifies tarot's position as a legitimate form of artistic expression.

Keywords: tarot, art, illustration, divination, occult, spirituality

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Introduction

As I approached the conclusion of my time as a Graduate student of Art History, I sought to produce a final project that could marry my interests in art history, the occult, and my creative practice as an illustrator. I created my original Oracle Deck¹ earlier in the year, which revealed to me the vast symbolism and deep meaning embedded in certain card decks. This personal project planted the seed for my interest in card decks as a creative pursuit. As I continued my education, my interest in art depicting witches and deities and art produced by occult and esoteric societies grew. I struggled to pinpoint a specific subject for my project, particularly one that would build upon my professional portfolio.² After significant contemplation, creating my own tarot deck became the obvious path, as it allowed me to produce a project that could enhance my professional life by incorporating the art historical knowledge and research skills I have earned as a graduate student. For my Thesis Project, I created an original tarot deck inspired by my personal experiences and informed by the history and traditional symbolism of tarot. This project

1. Kristin Vergara, “How To Do an Oracle Reading in Five Easy Steps”, Youtube Video, *Kristin Vergara*, March 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jg-c2n4ix0E>.

An oracle deck is a divination deck similar to tarot. It is often used in a similar format with various spreads that can be laid out to address different concepts or questions. It differs from tarot in that it is more free-form, and the creator has the freedom to make the theme or message of each card totally their own. Rather than following the framework of tarot’s major and minor arcana, an oracle deck may have cards labeled with different animals or different emotions, like joy or calm. Kristin Vergara provides a simple explanation of how some people use an oracle deck.

2. See image 1 for an example of my Oracle Deck design from Summer 2023. My oracle deck is based on characters and items commonly found in fairytales and folklore, and each card represents a different theme or emotion, such as “community,” “loss,” and “love.” Creating the Oracle deck provided solid experience in planning the themes and images of a card deck and familiarity with the design, formatting, and production process. However, the framework of tarot necessitates a more intensive and researched-based process due to the archetypes and symbolism expected of a tarot deck.

aims to explore tarot and its growing popularity while creating an art object for distribution that complements my career as an illustrator.

My experience as a professional artist greatly influenced my decision to create an original tarot deck. It allows me to produce a project that directly applies to my career and pushes me to grow as an artist. As an artist fascinated with fantasy, folklore, and esoteric symbolism, I have honed my skills in visual storytelling, color theory, and symbolic imagery. Creating other card decks³ has given me the know-how to successfully design, print, market, and distribute the final product. Being an art history student enhances my understanding and appreciation of the symbolism, cultural and historical significance, and narrative quality of tarot cards.

Tarot is a system of divination⁴ and self-reflection that has captivated the human imagination and acted as a symbolic conduit for introspection across time and culture.⁵ In recent years, tarot has experienced a significant resurgence, capturing the attention of individuals from all walks of life.⁶ While some collect decks for spiritual use⁷, others treat tarot decks as

3. I have created an Oracle deck and a Mushroom Matching game. Both are available for sale to my customer base at www.glitterandtoadstools.com and throughout the country at various retail locations.

4. Helen Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot from Entertainment to Esotericism* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 29.
The exact date and origin of tarot is disputed; however, most accept that tarot began as a simple card game called Tarocchi. It is believed to have originated in Italy in the 15th or 16th century.

5. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot from Entertainment to Esotericism*, 91-119.

6. Patrick Maille, *The Cards: The Evolution and Power of Tarot* (University Press of Mississippi, 2021), 64.

7. Ailene Xu, "Tarot for Beginners: How I Use Tarot Cards for Self-Discovery and Guidance", Youtube Video, *Lavendaire*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdCp9sBnrVg&t=12s>.
There are various ways to read tarot cards. It is common for practitioners to randomly choose and lay out cards in different spreads (a predetermined scheme of cards used during a tarot

collectable items, purchasing multiple decks based on their unique themes and artwork. This growing interest in tarot and customized decks has resulted in many artists tackling the grand project of designing their own decks.⁸ Embracing this cultural moment, this project crafts a one-of-a-kind tarot deck that examines some of the reasons behind this resurgence.

By crafting a tarot deck using one's own symbolism and imagery, an artist faces the challenge of creating something original while working with age-old standards and symbols. This thesis project explores the process of designing a personalized tarot deck, diving into the spiritual and creative dimensions that compose the art of tarot. The rising popularity of tarot asks interesting questions about the contemporary human experience and attitudes toward spiritualism. By uncovering the reasons behind tarot's resurgence and applying that knowledge, along with historical context, to the design of my deck, this thesis examines how visual representations can address the human desire for deeper meaning.

The final deliverable of my project is a 78-card tarot deck inspired by the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck⁹ and few other notable contemporary and historical decks. I used research of

reading, whereas different arrangements are selected to address various questions or purposes). The positions (whether right side or upside down), symbolism of each card, and relationships of the cards allow the reader to draw insights about life situations, self-reflection, or specific questions. Ailene Xu provides a great comprehensive introduction to how many use Tarot today.

8. Kendrick Daye, *Queer Black Tarot*, 2021, Tarot Deck, <https://blackqueertarot.com>; Sarah Shipman, *Our Tarot*, September 2020, Tarot Deck, <https://www.our-tarot.com>; Yoshi Yoshitani, *Tarot of the Divine*, December 2020, <https://yoshiyoshitani.store/products/tarot-of-the-divine-deck>; Ashley Molesso and Chess Needham, *Queer Tarot*, April 2022, Tarot Deck, <https://ashandchess.com/products/queer-tarot-an-inclusive-deck-guidebook>. The *Black Queer Tarot*, *Our Tarot*, *Tarot of the Divine*, and *Queer Tarot* are just a few notable decks made in the past decade.

9. Emily E. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn: Recent Publications," *Mythlore* 40, no. 1 (2021): 244; Martin Ramstedt, "Metaphor or Invocation? The Convergence Between Modern Paganism and Fantasy Fiction", *Journal of Ritual Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 8, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44368765>.

tarot and other decks to inspire the direction I took with my artwork and to inform the symbolism and meanings utilized in the deck's compositions. My research and completion of the deck increased my knowledge of tarot as an art object. I also explored tarot's ability to be used by different artists to convey personal narratives while maintaining a universal quality that resonates with many. This project examines the process of creating a tarot deck, uncovering the motivations and experiences that drive individuals to develop their tarot cards.

The tarot deck is accompanied by a guidebook that offers readers insight into the history and significance of tarot, as well as notable historical and contemporary decks and background information on the *Enchanted South* deck itself. The guidebook explores the evolution of tarot from a playing card game¹⁰ to its current iteration as a mode of artistic expression and tool for divination and self-help. The book briefly introduces readers to historical decks such as the Sola Busca, Visconti Sforza, and Rider-Waite-Smith, emphasizing their unique contributions and touching on the rising popularity of tarot as a mode of empowerment and expression for marginalized groups. The booklet concludes with an introduction to the *Enchanted South* tarot deck, which harmonizes regional elements with traditional tarot interpretations to create a unique deck of cards. This guidebook differs from most tarot guidebooks in that the focus is shifted away from the interpretations of each card (which is typically the same across tarot decks and is widely accessible) and focuses on the evolution of tarot and several different iterations of the deck.

The Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot Deck was made by Arthur Waite and artist Pamela Colman-Smith in 1909. It is the most widely distributed Tarot deck today and is considered the standard on which most tarot decks are based.

10. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot from Entertainment to Esotericism*, 29.

The originality of this project lies in blending academic research with the creation of a practical art object. This combination of creativity and scholarly rigor creates tarot art with a deeper understanding of its context and can make intentional and nuanced re-imaginings of the deck.

State of the Field

For my project, I gathered several sources encompassing various aspects of tarot, cartomancy, divination, and esotericism to inspire the symbolism and artwork of my tarot deck. My studies explored tarot's symbolic, historical, and cultural aspects to pursue a more comprehensive understanding of tarot and related topics. Having very little previous knowledge of tarot, this research prepared me to approach the creative aspect of my project with a better understanding of the subject.

Some may dismiss tarot and spirituality as pure superstition,¹¹ but many scholars are re-examining the deck for its cultural, art historical, and spiritual merit.¹² “The Master of the ‘Sola-Busca Tarocchi’ and the Rediscovery of Some Ferrarese Engravings of the Fifteenth Century” is a prime example of a scholarly examination of tarot, exploring historical models, archetypal interpretations, and aesthetics.¹³ Though there is some research out there about tarot, there is a

11. Jennie Klein, “Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s,” *Feminist Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 578, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40608393>.

Jennie Klein is an art historian who is interested in the ways gender and visual culture intersect.

12. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot from Entertainment to Esotericism*, 1.

13. Mark J. Zucker, “The Master of the ‘Sola-Busca Tarocchi’ and the Rediscovery of Some Ferrarese Engravings of the Fifteenth Century,” *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no. 35 (1997): 181–94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1483546>.

Mark J. Zucker is an art historian interested in tarot.

large hole in the study of tarot from an art historical perspective. Most art historians consider the significance of a tarot card within the context of art of its respective period. Religion and esotericism scholar Helen Farley says that art historical tarot studies are more “concerned with the ‘who’ and ‘when’” rather than the “why.” While there is a lot of interest in the patronage of early tarot decks, there needs to be more focus on the actual artists themselves, their artistry, and the symbolism of each deck now and in the social climate of their time.¹⁴

First, I researched the history of cartomancy and tarot. Emily Auger, an art historian who has written extensively on tarot, was a vital resource in my research. Auger’s *A Brief History of Cards and Cartomancy* and *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks* offered in-depth descriptions of tarot, its history, and its evolution from a playing card deck to a divination tool. Auger provides a comprehensive historical overview of tarot, going beyond mere history and diving into the cards’ aesthetics, uses, and symbolism. Auger’s writing presents tarot as an artistic expression, spiritual tool, and cultural symbol.¹⁵ Starting as a simple Italian playing card game, tarot has evolved into a spiritual tool and artistic expression. Artist and theatre lecturer James Edward Frost’s “The Serious Game: Towards a Hermeneutic Understanding of Tarot” and Helen Farley’s *A Cultural History of Tarot* look at the interpretational, symbolic, and cultural aspects of tarot, examining tarot’s evolution from entertainment to an esoteric device.¹⁶ Humanities and religious studies

14. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot from Entertainment to Esotericism*, 4.

15. Emily E. Auger, “A Brief History of Cards and Cartomancy,” in *Cartomancy and Tarot in Film: 1940-2010*, 1st ed. (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2016): 21–34; Emily E. Auger, *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks: History, Theory, Aesthetics, Typology* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2004).

16. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot from Entertainment to Esotericism*, 29; James Edward Frost, “The Serious Game: Towards a Hermeneutic Understanding of the Tarot,” *International Journal of the Image* 7, no. 2 (June 2016): 15-32. doi:10.18848/21548560/cgp/v07i02/12-32.

scholar Cynthia Giles builds on her colleagues' historical examination of tarot. In addition to providing readers with interpretations of the deck's major and minor arcana, she encourages those interested to look into the deck themselves, whether for academic inquiry or self-discovery.¹⁷ These sources provided historical context and insight into the symbolism of significant decks. They were highly pertinent to my creation of an original tarot deck as they built a solid and informed foundation for creating my images based on tarot's archetypes.

Tarot has long been associated with spirituality due to its use as a tool for divination. Experimental psychologist Miguel Farias and social psychologist Mansure Lalljee's "Holistic Individualism in the Age of Aquarius" and religion historian Egil Asprem's "Rejected Knowledge Reconsidered" look at New Age practices and the study of esotericism.¹⁸ Asprem outlines some methodological insights on the study of esotericism, exposing some of the difficulties of understanding alternative religious practices while also providing diverse methodologies and perspectives to keep in mind when considering esoteric practices.¹⁹ Farias and Lalljee examine the individualistic and collectivist aspects of various belief systems (including Catholic, New Age, and agnostic/atheist) and how they are affected by broader

17. Cynthia Giles, *The Tarot: History, Mystery, and Lore* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

18. Egil Asprem, "Rejected Knowledge Reconsidered: Some Methodological Notes on Esotericism and Marginality," in *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism*, eds. Egil Asprem and Julian Strube, (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2021): 127–46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv1sr6jm4.10>; Miguel Farias and Mansur Lalljee, "Holistic Individualism in the Age of Aquarius: Measuring Individualism/Collectivism in New Age, Catholic, and Atheist/Agnostic Groups," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 2 (2008): 277–89, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20486912>.

19. Asprem, "Rejected Knowledge Reconsidered," 127–46.

cultural shifts.²⁰ Scholar of religion and folklore Ethan Doyle White explains the folklore and history of some pagan and Wiccan belief systems and the significance of ancient symbols to contemporary pagan practices. He argues that ancient symbols, folklore, and history build meaning in modern pagan practices, re-enforcing the recurring theme that tarot imagery transcends visual appreciation and holds deep spiritual significance.²¹ These sources helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual facets of tarot imagery, ensuring that the imagery I chose for my cards is spiritually resonant with consumers.

Many sources look into sociological approaches to understanding tarot and other esoteric practices. Danny and Lin Jorgensen use empirical research to examine the diverse social settings that can cultivate occult practices and beliefs. They investigate how certain societal frameworks can give the occult meaning and how the associated rituals can give people a sense of community, meaning, and new perspectives.²² “Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture” by sociologist Edward A. Tiryakian builds a sociological foundation for understanding and analyzing the dynamics of esoteric practices such as tarot divination.²³ In "Negotiating Precarity: Tarot as Spiritual Entrepreneurialism," sociologist Karen Gregory looks at how tarot reading, spirituality, and entrepreneurship interact. She looks at how the tarot and divination industries have and

20. Farias and Lalljee, “Holistic Individualism in the Age of Aquarius,” 277–89.

21. Ethan Doyle White, “Devil’s Stones and Midnight Rites: Megaliths, Folklore, and Contemporary Pagan Witchcraft,” *Folklore* 125, no. 1 (2014): 75–76, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43297733>.

22. Danny L. Jorgensen and Lin Jorgensen, "Social Meanings of the Occult," *Sociological Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1982): 373-389.
 Danny Jorgenson is a sociologist and professor of religious studies.

23. Edward A. Tiryakian, “Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 3 (1972): 491–512, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2776304>.

continue to evolve. She examines how diviners traverse the industry's uncertainty while using the spiritual marketplace to their advantage as a source of financial empowerment.²⁴ Sociologist Mike Sosteric's sociological examination of tarot presents a perspective emphasizing its role in social dynamics and personal development. The author also investigates how tarot has grown popular and become increasingly commercialized in modern society. He looks at the complex dynamics of consumerism and spirituality and how commodity culture can affect the distribution and interpretation of tarot. He also investigates the internet and social media's role in the accessibility and dissemination of tarot in recent years. A growing online community of tarot has increased learning and purchasing opportunities, connected those with common interests, and shaped public perspectives of tarot.²⁵ All of these sources explore the interaction of consumer culture with tarot and the current cultural and spiritual climates that have created the perfect setting for tarot to thrive. Their insights helped me to develop a deck that is aware of and engages with these dynamics.

Feminism and esotericism are linked in various cases, often noting the prevalence of esoteric practices in women, LGBTQIA+, and other marginalized groups.²⁶ Additionally, scholar of gender and sexuality studies Christine Varnado claims that paranoia and suspicion over esoteric religions can often be linked to social anxieties and prejudices against marginalized

24. Karen Gregory, "Negotiating precarity: Tarot as Spiritual Entrepreneurialism," in *Women's Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 3/4 (2012): 264–280.

25. Mike Sosteric, "A Sociology of Tarot," in *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 39, no. 3 (2014): 357–392.

26. Thomas Waters, *Cursed Britain: A History of Witchcraft and Black Magic in Modern Times* (Yale University Press, 2019): 9–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvmd866w>.

people.²⁷ In “Divine Objectification: The Representation of Goddesses and Women in Feminist Spirituality”, religion scholar Cynthia Eller looks at the way that goddesses (and, in turn, women) are represented in spiritual belief systems, feminist art, and tarot decks, reflecting on how these portrayals challenge religious norms.²⁸ English and gender Studies scholar Elizabeth Foley O’Conner looks at the intersection of tarot symbolism, feminism, and art in “Feminist Symbolic Art: Tarot Designs, Suffrage Posters, and Representations of Women”. In her analysis of tarot symbols and feminist art, she presents the ways that the mediums have been a source of empowerment for women while combatting traditional gender norms.²⁹ historians Alex Owen and Jeremy Young look back at the Victorian Spiritualist movement, discussing how women used divination and mediumship as a social platform to challenge gender norms and established power dynamics.³⁰ These sources examine how marginalized people have used tarot and other esoteric practices to empower and express themselves. They provided a framework for me as I developed a unique deck expressing my own experiences and perspectives.

27. Christine Varnado, “It Takes One to Know One: Paranoid Suspicion and the Witch Hunt.” in *The Shapes of Fancy: Reading for Queer Desire in Early Modern Literature* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020): 147–98, <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv10rrc4x.6>.

28. Cynthia Eller, "Divine Objectification: The Representation of Goddesses and Women in Feminist Spirituality," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 16, no. 1 (2000): 23-44, Accessed June 20, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25002374>.

29. Elizabeth Foley O'Connor, "Feminist Symbolic Art: Tarot Designs, Suffrage Posters, and Representations of Women," in *Pamela Colman Smith: Artist, Feminist, and Mystic*, (Clemson, South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2021): 175-228.

30. Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Jeremy C. Young, "Empowering Passivity: Women Spiritualists, Houdini, and the 1926 Fortune Telling Hearing," *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 2 (2014): 341-362.

A recurring theme throughout my investigation was the intersection of spirituality, art, and tarot. The recurring symbolism of tarot and its varying interpretations allow it to communicate personal yet universal messages to its viewers. In an exploration of the Jungian Archetypes of tarot, English and German literature scholar Jessica Fink argues that tarot archetypes possess spiritually and psychologically transformational qualities that can foster self-help and realization.³¹ Helen Farley supports this sentiment in *A Cultural History of Tarot* as she outlines the evolution of tarot, emphasizing its various artistic expressions, symbolic imagery, and spiritual significance.³² Emily Auger studies the decks of various female artists inspired by the occult society, the Golden Dawn, and reflects on how their diverse experiences, art styles, and cultural influences mingle with the traditional framework of tarot. Auger examines the connection of each deck in the broader context of the tarot deck as it evolves with the world around it. She discusses these tarot artists' possible impact on the future of tarot deck artistry and the increasing appeal and accessibility of esoteric traditions such as those found through the Golden Dawn.³³ "The Fool's Journey" by artist Robert M. Place follows the evolution of tarot and its symbolism by surveying various decks from the past 500 years. He examines how tarot cards have been carried (literally and figuratively) through the centuries due to their (often) accessible price point and easy transportability. He views the cards as a discourse between

31. Jessica K Fink, "Archetypal Tarot: The Art of Seeing Through," *Jung Journal* 16, no.2 (2022): 62-74.

32. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot: From Entertainment to Esotericism*, 93-172. Helen Farley is a scholar of Religion and Esotericism.

33. Auger, Emily E. "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn: Recent Publications," *Mythlore* 40, no. 1 (2021): 242–248. Emily Auger is an art historian who has written considerably on tarot.

spiritual practitioners, artists, and collectors, offering universal narratives and a tool for self-reflection.³⁴ In *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive*, independent scholar and professional tarot reader Laetitia Barbier presents readers with tarot cards spanning 500 years as they appear in esoteric practices, contemporary art, folklore, and pop culture. This resource is a rare view of tarot's visual history, outlining its history, symbolism, and artistic significance, and situating tarot as an art object.³⁵ These sources do a deep dive into the symbolism of tarot archetypes, effect of cultural and spiritual influences, and the development of tarot imagery over the years. This helped influence how I created my own symbols that reflected the traditional archetypes and spiritual significance of tarot.

After exploring tarot's historical and spiritual aspects, I sought sources focusing on the intersection of tarot and popular culture. In "Lord of the Rings Interlace: From Tolkien to Tarot", Emily Auger links J.R.R. Tolkien's fiction series *The Lord of the Rings* to tarot symbolism, revealing the similarities between literary narratives and esoteric themes.³⁶ In "The Cards, the Cards, the Cards Will Tell: The Power of Archetypes in Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*", children's literature scholar Susan Strayer analyzes reference to the Major Arcana of tarot in the *The Princess and the Frog*. By unpacking the tarot symbolism of the film, she shows how tarot symbolism amplifies the movie's narrative and themes. Strayer's analysis creates a framework

34. Robert M. Place, *The Fool's Journey: The History, Art, and Symbolism of the Tarot*, (Saugerties, New York: Talarius Publications, 2010): 6-28.

35. Laetitia Barbier, *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive* (New York City, New York: Cernunnos, 2021):17-258.

36. Emily E. Auger, "The Lord of the Rings Interlace: From Tolkien to Tarot," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 19, no. 3 (2008): 317–30, Accessed June 27, 2003, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24352379>.

for reviewing other pop cultural artefacts.³⁷ Similarly, anthropologist Martin Ramstedt studies the convergence of fantasy fiction and modern pagan practices, emphasizing the cultural and spiritual resonances of tarot symbolism.³⁸ Historian Patrick Maille discusses a plethora of tarot appearances and references in pop culture, from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997) and *King of the Hill* (2003) to *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows* (2011) to DC Comic's *Dark Nights: Metal*. He explores tarot's various roles in popular culture, from sparking fear to increasing magical allure to creating comic relief.³⁹ Literary scholar Dr. Melissa Ridley Elmes explores the success of Christian Arthurian legends as they have been transformed (and often misrepresented) within contemporary tarot decks that resonate spiritually with a modern Neopagan and New Age audience. This shows how archaic archetypes can find lasting significance by being reimagined and repurposed and tarot's ability to source meaning from various origins.⁴⁰ Each of these sources examines how the themes and archetypes of tarot can amplify contemporary media's narrative power. For my project, they offered guidance on enhancing the power of my artwork by channeling the established archetypes of tarot.

37. Susan M. Strayer, "The Cards, the Cards, the Cards Will Tell: The Power of Tarot Archetypes in Disney's: The Princess and the Frog," *Children's Literature* 46, (2018):112-132, Accessed June 14, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1353/chl.2018.0006>.

38. Martin Ramstedt, "Metaphor or Invocation? The Convergence Between Modern Paganism and Fantasy Fiction," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 1-15, Accessed June 29, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44368765>.

39. Maille, *The Cards: The Evolution and Power of Tarot*, 145-228.

40. Melissa Ridley Elmes, "From Propaganda to Product: The Arthurian Legend in Modern Tarot Decks," in *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 3 (2013): 381-406, <https://doi.org/10.11157/rsrr3-2-579>.

This literature review highlights the multi-faceted nature of tarot. The sources discussed help form an overview of tarot-covering history, symbolism, spirituality, art, and pop culture. While interest in tarot as an academic study is growing, there is still a significant gap in the literature surrounding this subject, particularly concerning tarot decks as art objects and the artists behind them. Continued interest in tarot and its diverse perspectives will hopefully increase awareness of and appreciation of it as an art object and cultural artifact. The largest hurdle to jump in the study of tarot is bridging the gap between strictly historical sources and unverified sources produced by practitioners. An increase in inquiries that are academically rigorous and peer-reviewed while still acknowledging the spiritual, cultural, and artistic significance of tarot would foster a more holistic understanding of the deck and acceptance of it as an art object.

This project is a valuable addition to the discourse surrounding tarot as art. Making my own tarot deck, I pay homage to the long-standing history of tarot while playing a role in solidifying tarot's relevance as a contemporary art form. While some works of art remain frozen in the time they were created, tarot is special in that it is not only a practical item that can be used repeatedly but is also capable of reincarnation, finding new life through each new artist's eyes. As the deck is reimagined, it evolves with the cultural context in which it was created, making it a dynamic artistic medium. Each new tarot deck creates opportunities to reinterpret tarot's traditional framework. As artists reimagine the symbolism, archetypes, motifs, and themes of tarot, they add to the deck's multiple layers of meaning and ignite dialogue, boosting tarot's reputation as a legitimate art form. The *Enchanted South* tarot deck offers my unique perspective and artistic style, adding to the catalog of imagery and interpretations of tarot. By rooting my

deck in academic research and artistic training, I am contributing to an attitude of academic and artistic legitimacy towards tarot.

Methodology

Creating an original tarot deck is a multi-disciplinary venture centralized around art, history, and culture. The research for this project mostly employed qualitative research, unearthing insights into the tarot deck's creative process by delving into its rich history and cultural significance. Combining my experience in illustration and managing large creative projects with research resulted in a unique deck embedded with meaning.

My educational and professional history played a large role in the success of this project. I completed an undergraduate degree in drawing, painting and printmaking with a minor in illustration from DePaul University in 2019 and have worked as a full-time illustrator since 2022. Years of honing my skills as an illustrator allowed me to create images that successfully depict the themes and narratives chosen for my cards. Not only has my training and experience as an artist helped in the creative process, but it has also prepared me for designing the deck, getting it printed and marketing it to customers.

A foundational knowledge of various tarot artists was essential to forming the themes and imagery of my tarot deck. Investigating the decks of artists such as Pamela Colman Smith,⁴¹

41. Pamela Colman Smith and Sir Arthur Waite, "Ace of Wands", "The Emperor", and "Strength", *Rider Waite Tarot Deck*, US Games Systems, <https://www.usgamesinc.com/Rider-Waite-Tarot-Deck.html>.
See Image 2.

Leonora Carrington,⁴² and Yoshi Yoshitani⁴³ provided insights into possible techniques, approaches, and artistic styles that I utilized in the creation of my deck. By understanding how other artists have reimagined tarot imagery, I approached my reinterpretation with knowledge of how it fits in with other decks.

Research into the history of tarot provided context when creating my deck.

Understanding where, when, and how tarot was created, and the journey it has taken over the years, helped me create a respectful deck that resonates with tarot's history. Studying the cultural and spiritual importance of tarot created a deeper understanding of the deck's roles in the lives of people from various walks of life. Understanding tarot's significance influenced the imagery and themes I chose for my deck.

While examining tarot's historical, spiritual, cultural, and artistic applications, I primarily employed feminist and queer methodologies in my research. These methodologies made me consider how gender and sexuality are represented in art and the diversity of perspectives depicted through tarot art. By merging these various research approaches and methodologies, I created a tarot deck that celebrates tarot's history, appreciates its cultural and spiritual influence, and allows me to utilize the skills gained during my career as an artist.

42. Leonora Carrington, "The Fool," 1955, Estate of Leonora Carrington/ARS, New York, <https://www.leocarrington.com/paintings-pinturas.html>. See image 3.

43. Yoshi Yoshitani, *Tarot of the Divine*, December 2020, <https://yoshiyoshitani.store/products/tarot-of-the-divine-deck>. See image 4.

Production/Results

This project consists of a unique 78-card tarot deck of my original illustrations and an accompanying guidebook that offers an overview of history and significance, introductions to several decks, and a description of the *Enchanted South* tarot deck and interpretations of its Major Arcana.

The guidebook and card designs are complete and will go into print production in early 2024. The deck will be printed on matte woven paper and is relatively small, with each card measuring 2.5” x 3.5”. Intended to be purchased primarily as a collectible art item, the deck comes with a hand-painted wooden box and a hunter-green velvet carrying bag. Though the deck is, first and foremost, a collectable item, I carefully selected the imagery of each card. I provided information in the guidebook to ensure the cards are also usable for recreational, spiritual, and self-help purposes.

Though the process may seem simple, producing a tarot deck takes in-depth research, understanding of tarot, hours of planning, drawing, and designing, and the know-how needed to print, market, and sell the finished product successfully. Compiling a literature review,⁴⁴ watching YouTube videos, and looking at examples of other decks helped form the foundation for this project. After gaining an understanding of tarot’s history, symbolism, and imagery, I began planning out the aesthetics, themes, and characters I wanted to utilize in my deck. I chose *Enchanted South* as my concept⁴⁵ and began pairing Southeastern United States’ fauna, flora,

44. See pages 8-17.

45. The concept of *Enchanted South* is based on my upbringing in and sentimental associations with the Southeast United States. The Southeast is a region teeming with history (some of it very difficult to come to terms with), diverse flora and fauna, and fascinating folklore. The “Enchanted South” deck marries my fascination with the landscape of the South with my love of fairytales.

and household items with tarot archetypes based on their symbolism and associations. While most tarot decks primarily depict humans, my deck solely focuses on animals, plants, and objects that I associate with my experience of the Southeast United States. The cards' titles and numbers correspond with those on the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, with the subjects of each card indicated in the guidebook. The next step in my process was drawing and designing the cards. Each card contains original art I drew from scratch using the digital application, Procreate, and took about one to three hours to complete. Each illustration was then formatted into a 2.5" x 3.5"⁴⁶ card design.

Feminist and queer methodologies helped me to situate myself within the context of other contemporary tarot artists as I applied my unique experiences and perspectives to tarot's framework. Though the finished deck is not explicitly labeled as feminist or queer, it is intrinsically due to my identity, and I encourage readers to view it within the context of those lenses.

Some contemporary decks, such as the *Biddy Tarot*,⁴⁷ closely mirror the imagery and compositions of the Rider-Waite-Smith. However, there are various examples of decks creating their own unique artwork that diverges from the visual symbols expected of each card.⁴⁸ The

46. Tarot card sizes vary. My oracle deck cards measure 3.5"x5", and I wanted to create a mini-sized tarot deck (the size of regular playing cards) to complement the oracle deck.

47. Brigit Esselmont, "Knight of Pentacles", *Biddy Tarot*, Tarot card, <https://www.biddytarot.com/tarot-card-meanings/minor-arcana/suit-of-pentacles/knight-of-pentacles/>. See image 5.

48. Kendrick Daye, "The High Priestess", *Black Queer Tarot*, 2021, tarot card, <https://blackqueertarot.com>; Tomas Hijo and Casey Gilly, "The Magician", *Lord of the Rings Tarot*, September 6, 2022, tarot card, Simon and Schuster,

Enchanted South tarot deck is one of the latter, using the iconic archetypes of tarot while incorporating my style, theme, and images. Both types of decks have their strengths. A deck that mimics the imagery of a traditional tarot deck ensures consistent interpretation and symbolic depth that goes back over a century. Consumers can anticipate the deck's contents and how they will interpret each card before even opening its box. A deck with unique imagery, such as the *Enchanted South* deck, may tap into a more niche than universal audience but offers a fresh perspective and added layers of meaning. Readers may feel more connected to a deck that fits their aesthetic preferences and utilizes relevant symbols in their lives.⁴⁹ These cards allow for more open-ended interpretations, potentially making them more personally meaningful to some consumers. Creating a deck with unique artwork can also offer an edge in a growing market, as it can appeal to consumers drawn to specific themes or styles. The downside to a deck like this is that there may be more of a learning curve for consumers. Resources that cover tarot as a whole may offer interpretations that do not apply to the unique deck, creating some difficulty in readings, particularly for novices. However, this risk is mitigated in the *Enchanted South* deck because the cards' titles and interpretations are still consistent with tradition.

There were some ethical considerations I made during the production of my deck. The primary considerations I made were originality, marketing, and pricing. I made sure that all of my artwork was completely original and hand-drawn by me, to avoid any issues with copyrights.

<https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Lord-of-the-Rings-Tarot-Deck-and-Guide/Casey-Gilly/9781647228095>.

The *Black Queer Tarot* and The Lord of the Rings Tarot, like the *Enchanted South* tarot deck, are inspired by the archetypes and interpretations of the iconic Rider Waite, but showcase completely new artwork. See images 6 and 7.

49. By tapping into personal connection, additional layers of meaning are added to the cards. Readers not only interpret the traditional meanings of the cards, but also incorporate other cultural and personal meanings tied to the subjects of the images on the cards.

I came up with my theme for the deck and did not rely heavily on any other decks as I chose my subjects and compositions to ensure that the deck was as unique as possible. I will make sure that I use ethical marketing tactics and fully inform customers of what they will receive if they purchase a deck. I will also consider accessibility when pricing my deck. Because it is independently produced and will come with a hand-painted box, the deck will be a specialty item, and the price will reflect its cost of production. However, I will keep my audience in mind in my pricing and ensure that it is still affordable to consumers.

I faced some limitations as I worked on the *Enchanted South* deck. The most significant were consistency, symbolism, accessibility, and distribution. I have never created a cohesive project focused on one theme of this magnitude, and remaining consistent for 78 illustrations challenged me creatively. When I first began designing my cards, there were some inconsistencies with the types of subjects I chose, and the level at which I adhered to the compositions of the Rider-Waite-Smith. The feedback I received during my Prospectus was vital in helping me hone in on the direction I wanted to take in my artwork, leading to a more cohesive deck.

Although the *Enchanted South's* artwork diverges from tradition, the meaning of each card adheres to traditional interpretations, and each major and minor arcana card is included. The symbolism behind each subject I chose had to correlate with the classic tarot archetypes. I found certain cards were a great match for many subjects, while others were challenging to match. Careful planning ensured that the deck was unique but symbolically sound. I considered accessibility when creating my cards. Although I wanted to create a unique and personal deck, I wanted to keep my references simple enough that the average person could tell what was on each card. I also wanted to keep the titles and general meanings of the cards consistent with tradition

to ensure that readers would have a baseline understanding of the deck and be able to reference most tarot resources in their interpretations.

Production is one of the biggest limitations of this project. I will be producing this deck independently, so I do not have access to the funds and resources a creator would have if working with a publisher. I will be working with a limited budget and a fairly small pool of printing options. I will be responsible for distributing my decks to retailers (if I choose to do so) and customers and ensuring the deck is marketed successfully. Thankfully, I already navigated budget, printers, distribution and marketing with my small business and my oracle deck specifically. I have sold over 150 oracle decks (in addition to an entire catalog of other products) in the past six months, and there is high interest (via word of mouth and social media) in the tarot deck already, so I feel confident in my ability to successfully distribute the deck once it is printed.

Though I am relatively satisfied with my progress on the deck, I would like to revisit the illustrations in a few months and make adjustments to the images themselves, as well as subjects chosen for each archetype as needed. Because of the time constraint presented by this project's timeline, reassessing the deck after some time will ensure that the artwork and symbolism of the deck are as successful as possible before it is sent to production. My guidebook covers the history and significance of tarot. It provides readers with an overview of the *Enchanted South* deck, but there are a few items I would like to add in the months following the completion of the Thesis Project. These include a brief tutorial on using a tarot deck, examples of spreads one can use when conducting a reading, and more in-depth deck-specific card interpretations covering all 78 cards. Currently, the guidebook includes interpretations of solely the Major Arcana, which coincidentally is mostly symbolized by Southeastern flora and fauna. The addition of Minor

Arcana interpretations will include a wider array of imagery, such as the cowboy hat, pie safe, and pickle jar. I think these items will add even more depth to the guidebook but will take several more months of work and add significant length to the guidebook, two factors that made these additions infeasible for the Thesis Project's final deadline.

I will print the *Enchanted South* deck using SmartPress, a U.S.-based printer. I plan to continue to build upon the booklet created for this project, adding in-depth descriptions and interpretations of each card. Once I have raised the funds to get this deck, booklet, and packaging printed, I will make the deck available to my audience of nearly 10,000 people on social media and to customers at several markets and festivals each month.

Conclusion

My objective for this project, using research to inform the creation of a tarot deck and guidebook, has been met. The *Enchanted South* tarot deck is an original deck that reflects a fresh take on tarot via my personal experiences and creativity while maintaining ties to the tradition of tarot symbolism. Whether used as a collectable item or a tool for divination and self-reflection, the *Enchanted South* deck adds layers of meaning to the tarot archetypes and contributes to the discourse on tarot as an art form.

Through my Literature Review, I observed the multi-faceted nature of tarot and noticed that there was not much discourse surrounding tarot as a type of art. The *Enchanted South* tarot deck merges creative practice with academic research to contribute to the field in various ways, including the legitimization of tarot as an art form. This project incorporates art, spirituality, history, and pop culture into the study of tarot. Future inquiry could continue to follow this path, embracing the interdisciplinary nature of the deck. Additionally, the project mentions the impact of consumer culture on tarot, a topic that could be explored in further research by looking at how

tarot is produced, marketed, and distributed, and the effect of social media on tarot interpretation and distribution. This project highlights the intersections of feminism and queerness in tarot. Future research and tarot decks could tap into this even more, further examining how gender is represented in tarot and how marginalized groups use tarot for self-expression. Perhaps most significantly, the *Enchanted South* project emphasizes the potential of tarot to be an evolving and dynamic art form, encouraging exploration of tarot as a form of artistic expression and for its spiritual and cultural symbolic value. My contribution adds to the growing catalog of diverse perspectives expressed through tarot art. This increases the art form's visibility and diversity and further solidifies its place in the art world.

The strengths of this project are in the artwork itself and the research and planning done in preparation for the deck, the use of feminist and queer methodologies, and the focus of tarot as a tool for self-discovery and an art object. The project is strengthened by its interdisciplinary approach and potential to resonate with a wide range of audiences. Limitations include budget, time and length constraints, and possible learning curves for those first encountering the deck. Future iterations of the deck could benefit from continued refinement of the artwork and symbolism and expansion of the guidebook to further improve accessibility.

Designing my tarot deck was a labor-intensive and detail-oriented process requiring significant research and thought beyond the scope of what is included in this paper. During this process, I increased my knowledge of tarot's history and spiritual, sociological, artistic, and pop-cultural significance and furthered my skill and professionalism as an artist. I hope this project will shine a light on the myriad of voices that have used tarot to express their experiences and stories through my unique deck and to inspire more artists to explore and reimagine the tarot deck.

Images



Image 1. Hannah Mathis, *Fungi Fauna and Folklore Oracle Deck*, June 2023, Digital Print, <https://www.glitterandtoadstools.com/products/copy-of-🌟pre-order🌟-fauna-fungi-and-folklore-oracle-deck-box-set>.



Image 2. Pamela Colman Smith and Sir Arthur Waite, “Ace of Wands”, “The Emperor”, and “Strength”, *Rider Waite Tarot Deck*, US Games Systems, <https://www.usgamesinc.com/Rider-Waite-Tarot-Deck.html>.



Image 3. Leonora Carrington, “The Fool”, 1955, Estate of Leonora Carrington/ARS: New York, <https://www.leocarrington.com/paintings-pinturas.html>.



Image 4. Yoshi Yoshitani, *Tarot of the Divine*, December 2020, <https://yoshiyoshitani.store/products/tarot-of-the-divine-deck>.

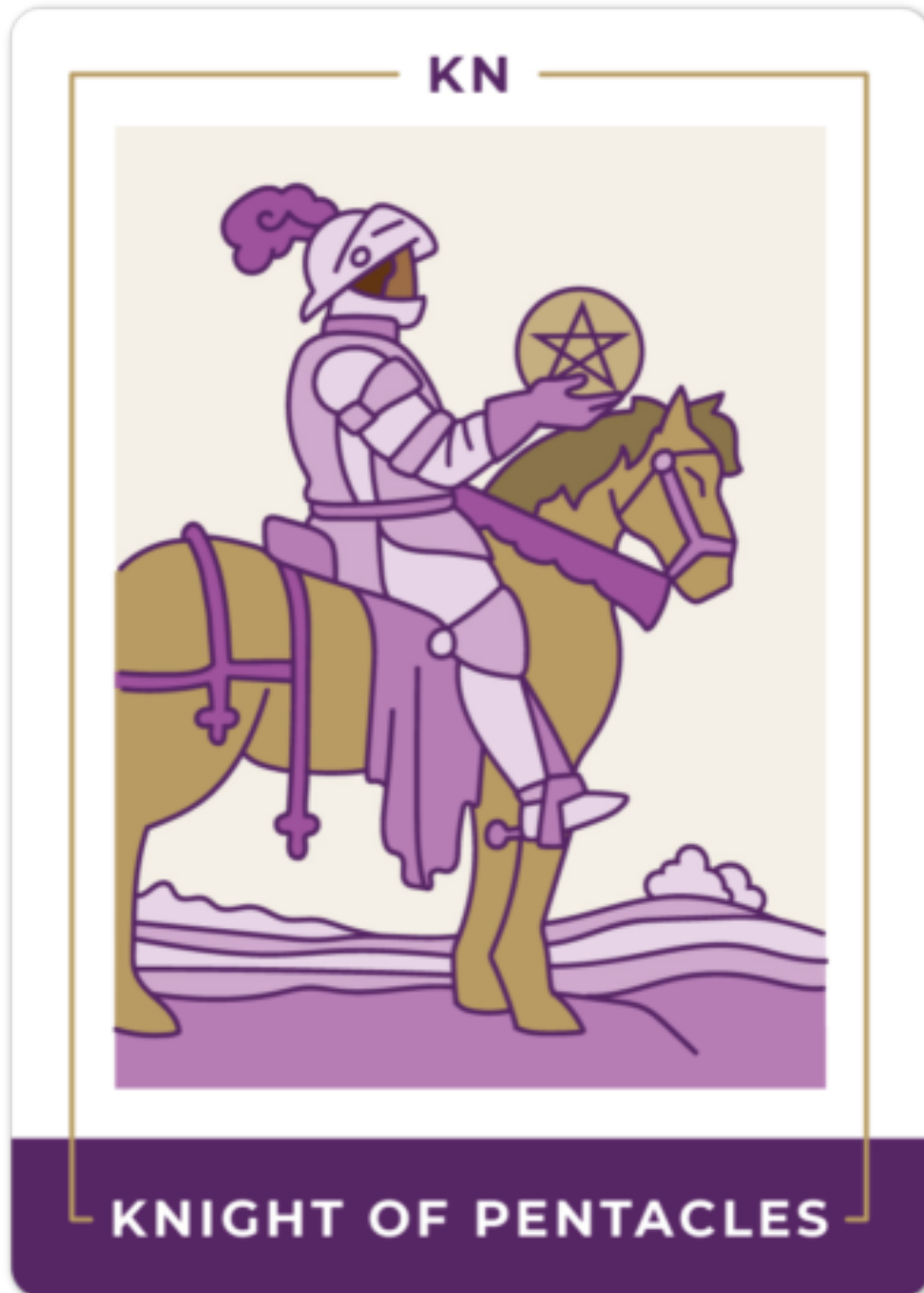


Image 5. Brigit Esselmont, “Knight of Pentacles”, *Biddy Tarot*, Tarot card, <https://www.biddytarot.com/tarot-card-meanings/minor-arcana/suit-of-pentacles/knight-of-pentacles/>.

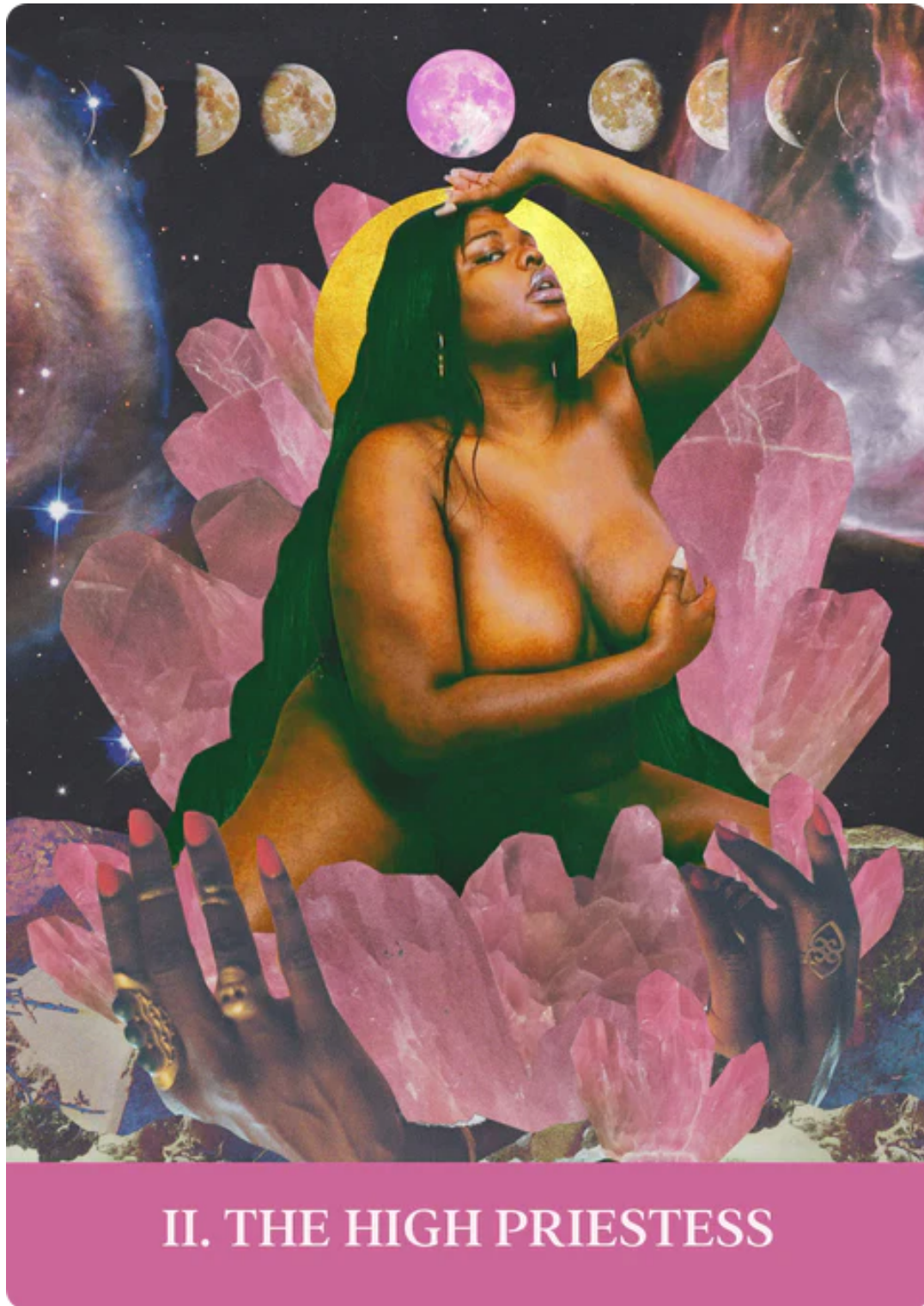


Image 6. Kendrick Daye, “The High Priestess”, *Black Queer Tarot*, 2021, tarot card, <https://blackqueertarot.com>.



Image 7. Tomas Hijo and Casey Gilly, "The Magician", *Lord of the Rings Tarot*, September 6, 2022, tarot card, Simon and Schuster, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Lord-of-the-Rings-Tarot-Deck-and-Guide/Casey-Gilly/9781647228095>.

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**The Enchanted South Tarot
Guidebook**

By Hannah Mathis, the artist behind Glitter and Toadstools

Introduction

The *Enchanted South Tarot* deck is inspired by the rich history and symbolism of tarot and imbedded with imagery derived from the folklore, fauna, flora, and objects of the Southeast United States.⁵⁰ Utilizing the enduring archetypes of historical decks such as the Rider-Waite-Smith, this deck features 78 original drawings depicting the lush colors, diverse plants and animals, and meaningful objects associated with the region.⁵¹ Traditional tarot metaphors are reimagined in this deck through magnolia seeds, honeysuckle blooms, moonshine bottles, mosquito wings, and more.

This guidebook goes beyond offering interpretations of the cards and provides readers with context, including a brief of tarot, the tarot deck's evolution, and the significance of tarot in contemporary times. Whether you are a seasoned tarot reader, art enthusiast, collector, or novice, this guidebook will provide you with the tools to understand this unique tarot deck.

50. I define the Southeast (United States) as spanning as far West as Louisiana and Arkansas and as far North as Kentucky and West Virginia. This includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Some Southeastern states are a part of Appalachia, but not all of Appalachia is part of the Southeast. My family hails from Middle Tennessee, Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida and Georgia (Southern), as well as West Virginia and East Tennessee (which are Southern and Appalachian).

51. See page 7 for more information on the Rider-Waite-Smith deck.

Background

From metaphysical shops, to neighborhood bookstores, to online platforms such as Etsy,⁵² a diverse offering of tarot decks is widely accessible to modern-day consumers.⁵³ Having begun its journey as an Italian playing card game, tarot has shifted to an occult esoteric tool and then to the self-help device and mode of artistic expression it is today.⁵⁴

It is believed that tarot evolved from an ordinary card game, likely the Bolognese card game *tarrochino*⁵⁵ Many scholars suspect that the concept of a card game made its way to Europe from China and the Muslim world via trade routes in the fourteenth century. Over the next couple of centuries, card games grew in popularity, and various iterations of the tarot trumps popped up throughout Italy and France.⁵⁶ The first evidence of tarot being used for divination was in the 18th century. Before this time, divination that required signs or sigils would likely have been seen as demonic and subject to the disapproval of the Inquisition.⁵⁷ Antoine Court de Gébelin's *The Primitive World* traced tarot cards back to Ancient Egyptian mystics and

52. "Tarot Decks," Etsy, Accessed September 15, 2023, https://www.etsy.com/search?q=tarot%20deck&ref=search_bar. There are over 58,000 search results for "tarot deck" on Etsy.com.

53. Wicked Moonlight, "My Top Ten Tarot Deck: 2021 Releases", Youtube Video, *Wicked Moonlight*, January 3, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01AYJ-Zu-e8&t=15s>. Natasha of *Wicked Moonlight* names just a few of the multitude of modern tarot decks on her Youtube channel.

54. Helen Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot from Entertainment to Esotericism* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009): 29.

55. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot*, 29.

56. Laetitia Barbier, *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive* (New York: Cernunnos, 2021): 18.

57. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot*, 44.

the ancient Book of Thoth. While this assertion has been widely disproven, many still associate tarot with ancient mystical knowledge.⁵⁸

The rising popularity of the Golden Dawn and other occultist groups in the Spiritualist movement of the late 1800s resulted in several notable decks, such as the Mathers deck, the Thoth Tarot, and the Rider-Waite-Smith.⁵⁹ Although pulling from some shared belief systems, these decks showcase unique approaches to tarot through unique art styles, symbolism, and imagery.⁶⁰

Historical Decks

In the exploration of tarot artwork, there is a plethora of significant decks to uncover. I have briefly outlined a few below:⁶¹

Sola Busca

Commissioned in the late 15th century by a wealthy Milanese family, the Sola Busca⁶² card deck was the first and only deck before the Rider-Waite-Smith that included a fully

58. Elizabeth Foley O'Connor, "Feminist Symbolic Art: Tarot Designs, Suffrage Posters, and Representations of Women" in *Pamela Colman Smith: Artist, Feminist, and Mystic* (Liverpool University Press, 2021):188-89; Robert M. Place, *The Fool's Journey: The History, Art, and Symbolism of the Tarot* (Saugerties, New York: Talarius Publications, 2010): 6.

59. See pages 6-8.

60. Emily E. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn: Recent Publications," *Mythlore* 40, no. 1 (2021): 242–248; Patrick Maille, *The Cards: The Evolution and Power of Tarot* (University Press of Mississippi, 2021): 13-69; Barbier, *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive*, 25-26.

61. Place, *The Fool's Journey: The History, Art, and Symbolism of the Tarot*; Barbier, *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive*. Robert M. Place's *The Fool's Journey* and Laetitia Barbier's *Tarot and Divination Cards* are both excellent guides to various decks from the past 500 years.

62. See image 1.

illustrated Major and Minor Arcana. It is characterized by precise outlines and expressive cross-hatching. Copies and engravings of the deck are in possession of the British Museum, and Pamela Colman-Smith referenced these images while creating the designs for her deck.⁶³

Visconti Sforza deck

Michelino de Besozzo is believed to have painted the first Italian tarot deck, commissioned by Duke Filippo Maria Visconti in Milan. This deck has been lost since its creation, but descriptions of the deck can be found in letters and treatises of the time. Though the deck differs greatly from the tarot we know today, it serves as an intermediate deck between regular playing cards and later tarot decks.⁶⁴

Tarot of Marseilles ⁶⁵

The Tarot of Marseilles became the most popular tarot deck in Switzerland and France in the 18th century.⁶⁶ The first example of the Tarot of Marseilles is believed to have been published between 1650 and 1660. Much of the artwork seems to have been inspired by the Italian Sforza deck.⁶⁷ For the first few centuries of the deck's existence, there is no evidence of it being used for

63. Foley O'Connor, "Feminist Symbolic Art," 188; Barbier, *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive*, 25.

64. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot*, 35 and 37; Scarlet Ravenswood, "The Visconti-Sforza: The Original Tarot Deck", Youtube Video, *Scarlet Ravenswood*, March 3, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_UduTNhI0A&t=161s. Scarlet Ravenswood does an unboxing video of the Visconti Sforza deck.

65. Water Child Tarot, "Tarot de Marseilles," *Water Child Tarot*, Youtube Video, July 25 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLmHy_avv0w. Sarah (last name not mentioned) offers an excellent overview and unboxing of the Tarot de Marseilles.

66. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot*, 93.

67. Place, *The Fool's Journey: The History, Art, and Symbolism of the Tarot*, 22.

divination. This changed in the early 19th century as Occultism rose in France after the Revolution. Spiritism, The Theosophical Society, and Martinism partnered with literary movements interested in the Occult, such as Romanticism and Symbolism, and opened the door for tarot adoption as an esoteric device.⁶⁸

Jessie Burns Park and Paul Foster Case B.O.T.A deck

Paul Foster Case commissioned artist Jessie Burns Park to create a tarot deck specific to the Builders of the Adytum (B.O.T.A) organization.⁶⁹ This deck was unique in that it was intentionally made using black and white images so that each user could color in the decks themselves.⁷⁰ This added an extra layer to the interpretation of the cards, as it allowed users to contribute their own color associations.⁷¹

Thoth Tarot Deck⁷²

After five years of reworking the deck, Aleister Crowley⁷³ and Lady Frieda Harris completed the Thoth Tarot in 1937. It was first published in the *Book of Thoth* in 1944 and then

68. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot*, 95 and 98.

69. "B.O.T.A: A Modern Mystery School", BOTA, Accessed September 16, 2023, <https://www.bota.org>.

On its website, B.O.T.A describes itself as "a non-profit organization dedicated to spiritual attunement through study, practice, and worship in the Tradition of the Western Mysteries...B.O.T.A members receive weekly lessons in Tarot, Qabalah, Gematria, Astrology, Alchemy, and other related disciplines."

70. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn", 244-45.

71. See image 2.

72. See Image 3.

73. Maille, *The Cards*, 48-51.

Aleister Crowley is an influential occultist of the Twentieth Century. Founder of The Order of Thelema and member of the Golden Dawn, Crowley is known for his controversial personality

printed as an actual deck in 1971.⁷⁴ This deck integrates eerie, swirling images that are intentionally strange and thought-provoking. Traditional symbolism falls to the wayside in favor of haunting pictures that act as portals into another realm.⁷⁵

Rider-Waite-Smith

The Rider-Waite-(Smith) deck⁷⁶ was created in 1909 after the Golden Dawn splintered, and Arthur Waite formed the Independent and Rectified Rite of the Golden Dawn. Waite had commissioned Pamela (Pixie) Colman-Smith, artist and member of the Golden Dawn, to create the iconic imagery for the deck. Colman-Smith used cheerful primary colors and simple, playful figures in her compositions. Though the images themselves may seem simple, they are deeply symbolic, with each character, object, and color selected with intention based on their symbolism.⁷⁷ Following its creation, Arthur Waite consistently downplayed Colman-Smith's contribution to the deck.⁷⁸ While the deck is often referred to as the Rider-Waite deck, some now include Smith in the title to give credit to the woman artist behind the deck. In 1971, U.S. Game Systems began publishing the deck, and it has become the most recognizable and widely used

and cult-like following. He authored *Liber 777*, *Diary of a Drug Fiend*, and most notably, *The Book of Thoth*.

74. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn", 245.

75. Martin Ramstedt, "Metaphor or Invocation? The Convergence Between Modern Paganism and Fantasy Fiction," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 8.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44368765>.

76. See image 4.

77. Ramstedt, "Metaphor or Invocation?," 8.

78. Foley O'Connor, "Feminist Symbolic Art," 177.

tarot deck today. This deck is the standard that most artists and readers base their imagery and interpretations on.⁷⁹

Leonora Carrington

Leonora Carrington created her deck⁸⁰ based on the 16th-century Marseilles woodcuts, The Rider-Waite-Smith, the research of Carl Jung, and a deck that was created by Oswald Wirth. Unlike many of the 19th and 20th-century tarot artists mentioned, Carrington was not a member of the Occult but had an interest in esoteric themes.⁸¹

Ithell Colquhoun

Ithell Colquhoun was an initiate of multiple esoteric groups, including the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO).⁸² Made in the 1970s, her deck was the result of intensive study of the symbolism of the Golden Dawn, as well as color theory and associations. Unlike many other decks, hers was highly abstracted rather than illustrative.⁸³ It was briefly exhibited at the Newlyn Gallery in Cornwall in 1977 but gained widespread awareness when it was printed as a limited-edition version by Adam Mclean in 2009.⁸⁴

79. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn," 244.

80. See Image 5.

81. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn," 246.

82. Emily E. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists," 246; "Mission and Planning", US Grand Lodge: Ordo Templi Orientis, Accessed September 17, 2023, <https://oto-usa.org/usgl/mission/>. The OTO, also known as the Ordo Templi Orientis, describes itself as "a hierarchical, religious membership organization [whose] mission is to effect and promote the doctrines and practices of the philosophical and religious system known as Thelema, with particular emphasis on cultivating the ideals of individual liberty, self-discipline, self-knowledge, and universal brotherhood".

83. See Image 6.

84. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn," 246-47.

The contributions of Colman-Smith, Park, and Harris were often overshadowed by the contributions of their male collaborators. However, in recent years, these artists have gained recognition for their contributions due to increased interest in women artists.⁸⁵

Rising popularity of Tarot/The Occult

It seems as though the United States cannot shake the Occult. From the Spiritualist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to the New Age movement of the 1960s and 70s⁸⁶ to what is sometimes called the Now Age movement (among others) of the early 21st century, psychic mediums, witches, and Wiccans, neopagans, and diviners have held a place in U.S. History.⁸⁷

When women and other historically marginalized groups have lacked societal power and agency, divination and other occult spiritual practices have been a source of power for some.⁸⁸ During the Spiritualist movement of the early 20th century, 50-80% of mediums were women. This role allowed women to gain a level of agency unavailable to most.⁸⁹

85. Auger, "Women Tarot Artists Inspired by the Golden Dawn," 243.

86. Jennie Klein, "Goddess: Feminist Art and Spirituality in the 1970s," *Feminist Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 575–602, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40608393>.

87. Maille, "The Cards," 35-107.

88. Egil Asprem, "Rejected Knowledge Reconsidered: Some Methodological Notes on Esotericism and Marginality," in *New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism*, eds. Egil Asprem and Julian Strube, (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2021), 127–46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv1sr6jm4.10>; Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (University of Chicago Press, 2004): 5.

89. Jeremy C. Young, "Empowering Passivity: Women Spiritualists, Houdini, and the 1926 Fortune Telling Hearing," *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 2 (2014): 342-343.

In recent decades, the U.S. has seen an increased interest in alternative spiritualities, particularly neopaganism, Wicca, and other esoteric belief systems.⁹⁰ Even among people who do not practice these beliefs, there is a growing affinity for “witchy” aesthetics from cottage-core to whimsi-goth, to dark academia, and other witch and occult-inspired aesthetics have become widely popular. Much of this can be credited to popular media such as *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Charmed*, *the Craft*, and *Practical Magic*.⁹¹ Tarot has grown along with these interests, with the rise of the internet, social media, digital archives, and platforms such as Kickstarter to credit for a blooming accessibility of historical and new decks.⁹²

While some see tarot as a tool for divination,⁹³ others interpret their cards based solely on the imagery on the cards and their associations. Though there are seasoned, professional readers, tarot is widely accessible, with most decks costing under \$50 and accompanied by an interpretation guidebook. They are widely available online, at New Age and Magic shops, and even at Barnes and Noble.⁹⁴

90. Benjamin Fearnow, “Number Of Witches Rises Dramatically Across U.S. As Millennials Reject Christianity,” *Newsweek*, November 18 2018, Accessed September 18 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/witchcraft-wiccans-mysticism-astrology-witches-millennials-pagans-religion-1221019>.

91. Ramstedt, “Metaphor or Invocation?” 5.

92. Barbier, *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive*, 26-27.

93. Jessica K. Fink, "Archetypal Tarot: The Art of Seeing Through," *Jung Journal* 16, no. 2 (2022): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2022.2053470>

94. “Tarot”, Barnes and Noble, accessed September 16th 2023, https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/books/astrology-divination/tarot/_/N-29Z8q8Z1fj0. There are 974 search results for “tarot” at www.barnesandnoble.com.

Over time, pop culture and tarot have cross-influenced each other.⁹⁵ While contemporary tarot decks often incorporate well-known movies, TV shows, literary works, or mythologies into their symbolism,⁹⁶ tarot has also become integrated into society as a pop-cultural artifact, as well as a tool for deepening meaning in other media (such as in Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*).⁹⁷ Contemporary tarot can blur the line between alternative spirituality and pop culture-converging play and ritual.⁹⁸ While “mundane” consumers are utilizing a spiritual tool for secular entertainment, tarot decks that feature modern artists, stories, and popular media are integrating pop culture and leisure into religious rituals.

Notable Contemporary Decks

Many contemporary artists have found inspiration in tarot. Most artist adaptations of the tarot deck follow the precedent of historical decks, comprising 22 Major and 56 Minor Arcana cards with pentacles (coins), swords, wands, and cups suits.⁹⁹ The 1909 Rider-Waite-Smith deck provides the framework for most newer decks, either as a guide from which artists pull their

95. Ramstedt, “Metaphor or Invocation?”

96. Emily E. Auger, “The Lord of the Rings” Interlace: From Tolkien to Tarot” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 19, no. 3 (74) (2008): 317, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24352379>; Melissa Ridley Elmes, 2013, “From Propaganda to Product: The Arthurian Legend in Modern Tarot Decks”, *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 3 (2):381–406, <https://doi.org/10.11157/rsrr3-2-579>. Melissa Ridley Elmes discusses the appropriation of the Arthurian legend in various tarot decks available today.

97. Susan M. Strayer, "The Cards, the Cards, the Cards Will Tell: The Power of Tarot Archetypes in Disney's: The Princess and the Frog," *Children's Literature* 46, (2018): 112-132, Accessed June 14, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1353/chl.2018.0006>.

98. Ramstedt, “Metaphor or Invocation?,”2-3.

99. Maille, *The Cards*, 115.

imagery and symbolism or as a diversion from the standard.¹⁰⁰ Though the Major and Minor Arcana¹⁰¹ are somewhat set, the flexible nature of artistic interpretation and the ever-changing meanings of symbols allow the artist flexibility in the compositions they ultimately create. The decks outlined below are examples of the diverse stories and styles that can be expressed through the medium of the tarot deck.

Lord of the Rings Tarot

Inspired by the *Lord of the Rings* series, the “Lord of the Rings” Tarot deck was created by author Casey Gilly and illustrator Tomas Hijo¹⁰² Its rustic, storybook illustrations use the widely recognized characters and themes of the trilogy to compliment the traditional motifs and iconography of tarot.¹⁰³

The Black Queer Tarot

*The Black Queer Tarot*¹⁰⁴ by collage artist Kendrick Daye is intended to combat “outdated, no-non-inclusive decks of the past” by recasting the tradition of tarot with a “diverse cast of muses”. The deck’s vibrant surrealist collage images present viewers with a world where Black Queer people thrive.¹⁰⁵

100. Auger, “The Lord of the Rings,” 317.

101. See pages 16-20.

102. Tomas Hijo and Casey Gilly, “Lord of the Rings Tarot”, September 6, 2022, Simon and Schuster, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Lord-of-the-Rings-Tarot-Deck-and-Guide/Casey-Gilly/9781647228095>.

103. See Image 7.

104. See Image 8.

105. Kendrick Daye, “Black Queer Tarot Deck”, *Black Queer Tarot*, Accessed August 20 2023, <https://blackqueertarot.com/products/black-queer-tarot-deck>.

Our Tarot

*Our Tarot*¹⁰⁶ is a colorful and intricate collage-based deck featuring portraits of women “who have helped shape history.” Artist Sarah Shipman’s designs are inspired by the traditional Major and Minor Arcana of Tarot but swap out the traditional figures for influential historical women from diverse backgrounds, abilities, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, and sexualities.¹⁰⁷

Buffy the Vampire Slayer Deck

The Creation of author Casey Gilly and artist Karl James Mountford, the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* tarot deck¹⁰⁸ utilizes the iconic characters of the popular TV show to portray the classic themes, archetypes and motifs of tarot.¹⁰⁹

Tarot of the Divine

The *Tarot of the Divine* utilizes rich, vibrant colors to depict fairytales, folklore, and deities spanning the globe.¹¹⁰ Illustrator Yoshi Yoshitani brings the Major and Minor Arcana of tarot “to life with characters from beloved stories,” marrying tarot tradition with “diverse cultural

106. See Image 9.

107. Sarah Shipman, “What is Our Tarot?” *Our Tarot*, Accessed September 16 2023, <https://www.our-tarot.com>.

108. See Image 10.

109. Karl-James Mountford and Casey Gilly, “Buffy the Vampire Slayer Tarot Deck,” Simon and Schuster, Accessed September 14 2023, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Buffy-the-Vampire-Slayer-Tarot-Deck-and-Guidebook/Karl-James-Mountford/9781647228514>.

110. See Image 11.

fables, ancient mythologies and spiritual legends” that reflect the symbolism and motifs of tarot.¹¹¹

Queer Tarot

*The Queer Tarot*¹¹² deck by trans and queer artist team Ashley Molesso and Chess Needham is described as an “inclusive, affirming deck” that reimagines traditional tarot figures in a “bright, bold interpretation” that uses real-life lgbt+ models to “showcase a “full range of races, gender identities, sexual orientations, sizes and abilities.”¹¹³

These decks, combined with tarot’s history and timeless symbolism, helped to inspire the artwork and meaning behind the *Enchanted South* tarot deck.

The Enchanted South Deck

About the Deck:

The *Enchanted South* deck was inspired by the symbolism of the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck, illustrated by Pamela Colman-Smith. While some of Colman-Smith’s compositions and symbolism were taken into account in the planning and design process of the *Enchanted South* (*E.S.* deck) deck, the *E.S.* deck incorporates my own experiences and sensibilities, modifying the framework and archetypes of earlier decks to create a unique and personal deck.

The *E. S.* tarot deck combines traditional tarot imagery with fauna, flora, and artifacts of the American Southeast. These elements are depicted through a whimsical lens that incorporates

111. Yoshi Yoshitani, “Tarot of the Divine,” *Yoshi Toshitani*, Accessed September 1 2023, <https://yoshiyoshitani.store/products/tarot-of-the-divine-deck>.

112. See Image 12.

113. “Queer Tarot: An Inclusive Deck and Guidebook”, *Ash and Chess*, Accessed September 16 2023, <https://ashandchess.com/products/queer-tarot-an-inclusive-deck-guidebook>.

fairytale, folklore, and magic to create illustrations that illuminate the magic of my childhood spent playing make-believe alone in the woods. The deck incorporates lush greens, mushrooms, and insects. With this deck, I intend to capture the magic of the Southern landscape.

The Cards

Though the *E. S.* tarot deck diverges from the imagery of the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, commonalities can be found in each corresponding card's general themes and takeaways. The *E. S.* deck aligns with the universal narratives of tarot while weaving in personal sentiments and unique illustrations. While the Rider-Waite-Smith may depict literal pentacles on the Pentacle suit cards, the *E.S.* deck takes the meaning of each card and substitutes the original symbols with completely new imagery with corresponding meanings.¹¹⁴

Here is a list of the 78 tarot cards and the corresponding images chosen for the *Enchanted South* deck:

Major Arcana (22 cards)¹¹⁵

0. The Fool: Mockingbird

114. Hannah Mathis, "Knight of Pentacles," *Enchanted South Tarot*, October 2023, digital illustration; Brigit Esselmont, "Knight of Pentacles", *Biddy Tarot*, Tarot card, <https://www.biddytarot.com/tarot-card-meanings/minor-arcana/suit-of-pentacles/knight-of-pentacles/>.

Brigit Esselmont's *Biddy Tarot* (see image 14) closely follows the imagery and compositions of the Rider-Waite-Smith, while the *Enchanted South* (see image 13) is composed of unique compositions and images inspired by the symbolism and interpretations of the Rider-Waite-Smith cards.

115. Jessica K. Fink, "Archetypal Tarot: The Art of Seeing Through." *Jung Journal* 16, no. 2 (2022): 67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2022.2053470>. The Major Arcana of Tarot is comprised of 22 cards holding symbolic spiritual interpretations. They are seen as the core framework of tarot, representing major life phases and events. As a group, the Major Arcana represents a narrative of the universal human experience, often broken into three sections: the Fool's Journey from naivety to self-discovery, aspects of human life such as love, strength, and transformation, and spiritual concepts such as rebirth and justice.

1. The Magician: Fly Agaric Mushroom
2. The High Priestess: Catfish
3. The Empress: Dogwood Flowers
4. The Emperor: Box Turtle
5. The Hierophant: Quilt
6. The Lovers: Blue Willow China
7. The Chariot: Snail
8. Strength: Cricket
9. The Hermit: Leopard Slug
10. Wheel of Fortune: Spider Web
11. Justice: Willow Tree
12. The Hanged Man: Opossum
13. Death: Black Vulture
14. Temperance: Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly
15. The Devil: Fiddle
16. The Tower: Raven
17. The Star: Lady Bug
18. The Moon: Alligator
19. The Sun: Coneflower
20. Judgment: Lantern
21. The World: Underground Ecosystem

Minor Arcana (56 cards)

The Minor Arcana consists of four suits of 14 cards.¹¹⁶

Wands¹¹⁷

Ace of Wands: Coyote

2. Two of Wands: Inch Worm

3. Three of Wands: Fleabane Daisy

4. Four of Wands: Raccoon

5. Five of Wands: Skunk

6. Six of Wands: Stag Beetle

7. Seven of Wands: Picket Fence

8. Eight of Wands: Spanish Moss

9. Nine of Wands: Magnolia Seeds

10. Ten of Wands: Cowboy Boot

Page of Wands: Cicada

Knight of Wands: Marbled Salamander

Queen of Wands: Bobcat

King of Wands: Squirrel

116. Barbier, *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive*, 209-211.

The remainder of the typical tarot deck, deemed the Minor Arcana, is made up of four suits of fourteen cards. These suits are the cups, the swords, the wands, and the pentacles (or coins), each signifying a different element of the human experience.

117. *Ibid*, 249.

The **Wands** are associated with personal growth, inspiration, action, ambition, and goals. These cards often show people holding a wand or staff, signifying drive and energy. Representing the element of fire, the wands are a sign to use one's inner strength to innovate and face challenges head-on.

Cups¹¹⁸

Ace of Cups: Chrysanthemum

2. Two of Cups: Bumble Bee

3. Three of Cups: Tomato

4. Four of Cups: Tennessee Whiskey

5. Five of Cups: Witch Hazel

6. Six of Cups: Moonshine

7. Seven of Cups: Poison Ivy

8. Eight of Cups: Crossroad

9. Nine of Cups: Rocking Chair

10. Ten of Cups: Honey Suckle

Page of Cups: Bluebird

Knight of Cups: Rabbit

Queen of Cups: Blue Bell Flower

King of Cups: Fishing Pole

118. Ibid, 237.

The cards of the **Cups** suit represent relationships, emotional situations, and the heart. It encompasses intuition, compassion, creativity, and connection. In many cases, these cards depict scenes of characters near lakes, rivers or oceans, or vessels pouring into each other or overflowing. The symbolism of water is often associated with the ebb and flow of emotions and the connection of different forces (like the mixing of water from different sources).

Swords ¹¹⁹

Ace of Swords: Five-Lined Skink

2. Two of Swords: Tornado

3. Three of Swords: Copper Kettle

4. Four of Swords: Sleeping Rat

5. Five of Swords: Black Bear

6. Six of Swords: Brown Bat

7. Seven of Swords: Red Fox

8. Eight of Swords: Mosquito

9. Nine of Swords: Red Wasp

10. Ten of Swords: Kudzu

Page of Swords: Chipmunk

Knight of Swords: Yellow Garden Spider

Queen of Swords: Apple

King of Swords: Longleaf Pine

Pentacles (or Coins) ¹²⁰

Ace of Pentacles: Cast Iron Skillet

119 Ibid, 225.

The cards of the **Swords** signify decision-making, conflict, and mental strife. The emphasis of this suit is on the mind and communication. The imagery of the sword represents both conflict and protection.

120. Ibid, 213.

The **Coins** or Pentacles represent materiality and elements of life such as work, health, and money. It is associated with the earth and deals with issues of resources or wealth, stability, practical matters, and experiences in the physical world. While not always the case, this suit is typically depicted with coins or pentagrams, linking the physical and spiritual realms.

2. Two of Pentacles: Crawfish
 3. Three of Pentacles: Banjo
 4. Four of Pentacles: Armadillo
 5. Five of Pentacles: Homemade Pickles
 6. Six of Pentacles: Bolete Mushroom
 7. Seven of Pentacles: Field Mouse
 8. Eight of Pentacles: Fairy Ring
 9. Nine of Pentacles: Red Chanterelle
 10. Ten of Pentacles: Fawn
- Page of Pentacles: Tadpole
- Knight of Pentacles: Cowboy Hat
- Queen of Pentacles: Okra
- King of Pentacles: Pie Safe

Interpretation

The subjects of the *E. S.* cards were selected based on the historical archetypes of tarot. Using the commonly accepted interpretations of the tarot archetypes, I chose imagery aligned with each card's concepts. I combined common associations with my own correlations to create compositions that are personal yet decipherable to a wide range of readers. In the following sections, I have outlined the general meanings of tarot's Major Arcana, accompanied by the symbolism and application of the subjects chosen for the *E. S.* deck. The application sections are based primarily on interpretations when the card is drawn right-side-up.

0 The Fool: The Fool card stands for naivety, innocence, and spontaneity. It represents fearlessly plunging into the unknown. The fool embraces new experiences and opportunities for learning.

The Mockingbird: The mockingbird mimics the sounds of other birds, insects, and amphibians. This characteristic represents the ability to learn new skills, and a light-hearted eagerness when trying new things.

Application: Like the Fool card, the mockingbird's mimicry of the sounds of other birds represents an adaptability and willingness to learn new things. Someone who pulls this card should take this as a sign to be open to new opportunities and experiences, and to approach them with an open-minded, fearless, and light-hearted eagerness.

1 The Magician: The Magician represents a connection to the divine, while the tools represent one's command over the various aspects of life. The Magician card represents creativity, transformation, and the ability to take hold of one's destiny. It symbolizes embracing one's gifts and intentionally manifesting one's desires.

The Amanita Muscaria Mushroom: The amanita muscaria, an iconic red mushroom with white spots, can be found across the Northern Hemisphere. While some consider this mushroom poisonous, others regard this mushroom as a tool for spiritual discovery. It is often associated with spiritual journeys and is sometimes seen as a gateway to self-discovery and inner wisdom.

Application: Similar to the Magician card, the amanita mushroom is often associated with a spiritual journey and a connection to the divine. Just as the amanita muscaria mushroom is sometimes known for its consciousness-altering abilities, the Magician card acts as a tool for self-discovery and introspection. Pulling this card symbolizes a push to embrace one's gifts, seek spiritual guidance and transformation, and take ownership of one's life path.

2 High Priestess: The High Priestess card represents the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, uncovering hidden knowledge, and trusting in one's instincts.

Catfish: Just as the High Priestess card represents trusting in one's own instincts, the catfish uses its whiskers to guide itself through murky water.

Application: Like the High Priestess, the catfish represents relying on one's own inner wisdom and gifts to navigate the world. Additionally, the catfish's ability to live in unclear waters correlates with the High Priestess's association with uncovering hidden truths. Pulling this card encourages the reader to trust their instincts and intellectual and emotional abilities, and can represent revelation and spiritual enlightenment.

3 The Empress: The Empress card represents abundance, fertility, and feminine power. While this card can sometimes mean motherhood, it can also symbolize nurturing and creation in other ways. This card is a reminder to nurture relationships, embrace creativity, and cultivate a connection with the natural world.

The Dogwood Flower: The dogwood tree is associated with fertility, love, and beauty. A durable tree, it symbolizes both strength and femininity.

Application: Much like the dogwood flower, the Empress card is connected to love, fertility, and femininity. The archetype of the Empress and the symbolism of the dogwood flower complement and reinforce each other, communicating messages of creativity, feminine strength, and connection to the natural world. Pulling this card serves as a reminder to embrace your power, let creativity flow, and focus on love and relationships.

4 Emperor: The Emperor card represents unwavering stability, structure, leadership, and discipline throughout various aspects of life.

The Box Turtle: The box turtle signifies a deliberate, steady, and patient approach to life's challenges.

Application: Consistent with the meaning of the Emperor card, the box turtle's shell represents structure and stability. The box turtle's slow movement symbolizes patience and focus, which can be applied to the leadership symbolism of the Emperor card. This card could signify the need for stability, discipline, and thoughtful and deliberate leadership. The Emperor card archetype, combined with the imagery of the box turtle, encourages one to approach challenges with patience and steadfast leadership.

5 The Hierophant: This card stands for tradition, conformity, and following established structures in the pursuit of higher knowledge.

Quilt: The quilt represents years of knowledge passed down through family tradition. Additionally, successfully producing a quilt requires strict adherence to established measurements and patterns.

Application: The imagery of a patchwork quilt is closely connected to the interpretation of the Hierophant card through its association with tradition and conformity. Depending on the rest of your spread, pulling this card may mean you either need to embrace or pull away from the established status quo in spirituality, love, or your career.

6 The Lovers: The Lovers card represents harmony in interpersonal relationships and a profound connection between two people.

Blue Willow China: Blue Willow China depicts the story of star-crossed lovers who meet an untimely end in their human lives but are transformed into doves and spend eternity together. This story signifies a deep connection that survives all obstacles.

Application: The imagery of Blue Willow China melds with the symbolism of the Lovers card to represent a deep connection between two people that transcends life's obstacles. Both the card and the Blue Willow's narrative emphasize themes of enduring love that is fated to be. Additionally, the Lovers card is often associated with a crossroads-choosing one path over another, a sentiment reinforced by the lovers' choices in the Blue Willow China story that lead to their transformation into doves. Someone who pulls this card is prompted to reflect on the close relationships in their lives, and the sacrifices and choices they make.

7 The Chariot: The Chariot card signifies determination, focus, accomplishing one's goals and overcoming obstacles.

Snail: In the context of the Chariot card, the snail represents slowly but surely progressing forward. The home on his shell represents the goals one works towards and the ability to shape one's surroundings through consistent effort.

Application: The combination of the common snail with the Chariot card symbolizes slow but steady progress. Pulling this card represents overcoming obstacles and working towards goals with consistency and perseverance, no matter how slow progress may seem.

8 Strength: The strength card symbolizes courage, resilience, self-control, and the reminder that strength does not always have to dominate or show force.

The Cricket: Small but mighty, the cricket's chirp can be heard loud and clear in the night. The cricket's tiny legs also propel it impressive distances through the air. This tiny insect shows that strength is not always expressed through force or intimidation but through confidence and mastery of one's skills.

Application: The cricket reminds us that strength is not solely dependent on physical power or size. The cricket, combined with the symbolism of the Strength card, encourages readers to rely on their courage, gifts, skills, and inner strength to face life's obstacles.

9 The Hermit: This card stands for solitude, introspection, and slowing down to pursue self-discovery and improvement.

The Leopard Slug: The slug symbolizes the quiet, slow, intentional journey toward self-discovery. The slug's soft, shell-less body represents vulnerability in discovering oneself. Its slow movement serves as a reminder to move forward at one's own pace.

Application: The quiet, solitary nature of the leopard slug reinforces the Hermit card's emphasis on introspection, solitude, and self-discovery. Picking this card suggests that one should take a moment to withdraw from the outside world and take the time to explore their own beliefs, desires, and goals.

10 Wheel of Fortune: The wheel of fortune card signifies the cyclical and ever-changing nature of life.

The Spider Web: The spider web represents the interconnectedness of life, as each strand signifies a different path.

Application: The spider web strengthens the Wheel of Fortune card's symbolism of life's cyclical and interconnected nature. Our actions affect each other, similar to how the strands of a spider web are connected. Just as the spider web moves in a circular shape, so do life's cycles. Pulling this card can represent life changes or external forces that are out of your control.

11 Justice: This card represents justice, fairness, consequences, and the pursuit of truth.

The Willow Tree: The willow tree's ability to bend without breaking signifies resilience and sticking to one's values even when challenged.

Application: Pulling this card can have various meanings for the reader. The willow tree's imagery, combined with the Justice card's symbolism, can represent dedication to one's values no matter the opposition or difficulty of a decision, balance in making fair judgments, and resilience.

12 The Hanged Man: The Hanged Man card represents letting go (of material things, old ways of thinking, or the control of a situation), a shift of perspective, sacrifice (those necessary for growth or those made willingly to gain something better in the end), acceptance, or being in suspended in a moment of reflection before moving forward.

Opossum: Opossums are known for hanging from trees by their tails and playing dead when faced with a threat. This surrender is a reminder to let go and to look at situations from a different angle, just as an opossum does.

Application: The opossum in the context of the Hanged Man card represents surrender, acceptance, and a shift of perspective. Pulling this card can indicate that the reader may need to

let go of control in a situation (just as the opossum surrenders when playing dead) or to explore a conflict from various perspectives.

13 Death: The Death card symbolizes change, new beginnings, and transformation. The theme of death does not necessarily signify actual death but the ending of something and the resulting changes. It reminds us to grow, shed old beliefs and habits, and leave situations that no longer benefit us.

The Black Vulture: Vultures eat the remains of dead animals and are a vital component of the decomposition process. Though they are associated with death, they also represent the new opportunities for growth and life that come with endings.

Application: The Black Vulture/Death card in a tarot spread is not always as foreboding as it may initially appear. Just as the vulture takes death to feed life, this card can indicate new beginnings and transformation. It may represent the end of a phase or relationship, but this inevitably leads to new opportunities and experiences.

14 Temperance: The Temperance card represents harmony, patience, and balance.

The Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly: The zebra swallowtail's symmetrical pattern represents balance. The process of metamorphosis from caterpillar to butterfly symbolizes patience.

Application: The Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly's symmetry is a visual representation of the balance the Temperance card represents. Pulling this card urges readers to approach situations with balance, weighing the pros and cons and considering alternate perspectives. Additionally, it reminds us that things will always balance themselves out in the end (so difficult

situations now do not mean difficult situations forever. Just as the caterpillar must be patient in its transformation into a butterfly, the Temperance card represents patience and hope for the future.

15 The Devil: The Devil card is associated with attachment, temptation, addiction, and negative cycles.

The Fiddle: Inspired by the “Devil Went Down to Georgia” song, the fiddle was chosen for this card to represent standing up to one’s demons.¹²¹

Application: The fiddle connects with the symbolism of the Devil card as it represents confronting one’s demons and standing up to temptation. Just as the protagonist of the “Devil Went Down to Georgia” song uses his own skills and wit to defeat the devil, this card is a reminder that, with conscious effort, we can break our own negative cycles.

16 The Tower: This card represents sudden upheaval, chaos, destruction, release, and awakening.

The Raven: Ravens are often seen as omens for something terrible to come. As scavengers, they are also associated with death. Just as the tower card signifies impending upheaval, the presence of a raven may foreshadow events to come.

Application: The Raven’s imagery strengthens the Tower card’s symbolism. Seen as a foreboding omen, the Raven foreshadows the themes of chaos, upheaval, and destruction

121. Charlie Daniels, “The Devil Went Down to Georgia,” in *Million Mile Reflections*, performed by The Charlie Daniels Band, Track 6, (Epic, 1979). This country rock song tells the story of a man named Johnny who challenges the devil to a fiddle duel to defend his soul and wins.

represented by the Tower card. Often associated with death, the Raven does not necessarily indicate literal death in the Tower card, but can symbolize a tumultuous, traumatic, or destructive event. Drawing this card suggests that the reader may have a disruptive life event on the horizon.

17 The Star: This card means inspiration, guidance, purpose, and hope.

The Ladybug: Ladybugs are sometimes associated with good luck and hope for the future.

Application: The ladybug's connection with hope and good luck corresponds with the Star card's message of optimism and good fortune. Ladybugs are sometimes released on crops as a natural way to protect plants from destructive insects like aphids. Just as the ladybug protects a crop, the Star card can represent divine guidance and protection. Additionally, ladybugs go through metamorphosis from a larva into an adult, reinforcing the Star card's theme of positive transformation. Seeing this card in your spread can indicate that you may be entering a period of life where you feel full of purpose, inspired, and optimistic.

18 The Moon: This card symbolizes repression, fear, anxiety, illusions, darkness, and confusion.

The Alligator: Just as the Moon card can symbolize fears and anxiety lurking in the subconscious, the alligator lurks beneath the water's surface towards its prey.

Application: The alligator's lurking and predatory behavior mirrors the themes of darkness and hidden fears the Moon card represents. Pulling this card can indicate that there are fears or anxieties that you are consciously or subconsciously repressing. Readers are encouraged to confront these fears in a healthy manner.

19 The Sun: The Sun card represents joy, contentment, success, fun, enlightenment, celebration, and vitality.

The Coneflower: With their yellow sun ray-like petals, coneflowers radiate positivity, joy, and life.

Application: The coneflower embodies warmth and positivity with its bright yellow petals. This emphasizes the Sun card's representation of joy, celebration, and contentment. Just as a healthy, blooming flower can signify life and success, the Sun card symbolizes vitality and the joy of basking in achievement. This card indicates that the reader has a lot to be optimistic about.

20 Judgment: This card signifies illumination, judgment, self-reflection, and life-changing decisions.

The Lantern: The lantern shines light on a situation, exposing what is in front of you for better or worse. It symbolizes self-examination and guidance through darkness.

Application: The imagery of the lantern gives depth to the themes of illumination, judgment, and self-reflection represented by the Judgement card. Just as a lantern lights the way for its user, the Judgment card symbolizes light being shed on a situation, enabling the reader to make more informed decisions for the future. Drawing this card suggests that the reader may need to make some big decisions, and emphasizes the importance of addressing these decisions with clarity and self-examination.

21 The World: The World card represents wholeness, completion, harmony, and accomplishment.

The Underground Ecosystem: The underground ecosystem represents all aspects of life, from birth to death and everything in between. The roots represent the interconnectedness of all things, while the various insects represent harmony between multiple forces.

Application: The World card's themes of harmony, wholeness, and accomplishment are reinforced by the imagery of an underground ecosystem. The underground ecosystem represents interconnectedness, wholeness, and harmony as various lifeforms work together to make up a complete and balanced system. This card appearing in your spread suggests that you have come to a phase in your life where you feel whole and content or have completed a significant life milestone.

These interpretations are just a starting point and are not all-inclusive. The reader is encouraged to incorporate their associations and experiences into their interpretations of the cards.¹²²

Conclusion

The *E. S.* deck, along with other contemporary tarot adaptations, demonstrates the ever-evolving nature of tarot and its unique ability to convey universal meanings through personal associations. From its origins as an Italian card game to an esoteric tool and collectible item, the tarot deck has evolved with changing cultural landscapes and creators' sensibilities.¹²³

122. Barbier, *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive*, 31-205; Place, *The Fool's Journey: The History, Art, and Symbolism of the Tarot*, 29-125; Brigit Esselmont, "The Meanings Of The Major Arcana Tarot Cards," *Biddy Tarot*, Accessed October 1, 2023, <https://www.biddytarot.com/tarot-card-meanings/major-arcana/>.

These are commonly held interpretations of the Major Arcana cards. For an overview of these archetypes, I recommend Laetitia Barber's *Tarot and Divination Cards: A Visual Archive* and Robert M. Place's *The Fool's Journey: The History, Art, and Symbolism of the Tarot*. Brigit Esselmont's *Biddy Tarot* also offers a comprehensive guide to the interpretations of these cards.

123. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot*, 173-176.

The increased popularity of the occult and tarot is intertwined with cultural shifts and the quest for community and empowerment, particularly among historically marginalized groups. Divination and other alternative spiritual practices have often provided a source of agency for those who lacked influence.¹²⁴ From Spiritualism to New Age and modern manifestations such as the Now Age and Neopagan movements, tarot's significance has stood the test of time.¹²⁵

A growing interest in tarot has resulted in a plethora of contemporary decks produced by a range of artists and creators.¹²⁶ The *E. S.* deck merges tarot traditions with regional and folkloric elements to create a unique deck that complements the growing library of tarot available to consumers.

124. Aspren, "Rejected Knowledge Reconsidered," 127–46; Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*, (University of Chicago Press, 2004): 5.

125. Farley, *A Cultural History of Tarot*; Maille, *The Cards*.

126. "Tarot Decks," Etsy, Accessed September 15, 2023, https://www.etsy.com/search?q=tarot%20deck&ref=search_bar; "Tarot," Barnes and Noble, accessed September 16th 2023, https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/books/astrology-divination/tarot/_/N-29Z8q8Z1fj0.

Images



Image 1. “Deo Tauro”, *Sola Busca* Tarot Deck, 1491, *Public Domain Review*, Accessed September 16 2023, <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/sola-busca/>.



Image 2. Jessie Burns Park, “The Fool”, *The B.O.T.A Tarot Deck*, c. 1910, Store BOTA, Accessed September 15, 2023, <https://storebota.org/collections/tarot-decks>.

Scroll or Resize Window to View More Cards



Image 3. Aleister Crowley and Freida Harris, *Thoth Tarot*, 1937, Open Culture, Accessed September 14 2023. <https://www.openculture.com/2017/11/the-thoth-tarot-deck-designed-by-famed-occultist-aleister-crowley.html>.



Image 4. Pamela Colman Smith and Sir Arthur Waite, “Ace of Wands”, “The Emperor”, and “Strength”, *Rider Waite Tarot Deck*, US Games Systems, Accessed September 1 2023, <https://www.usgamesinc.com/Rider-Waite-Tarot-Deck.html>.



Image 5. Leonora Carrington, "The Fool", 1955, tarot card, Estate of Leonora Carrington/ARS: New York, <https://www.leocarrington.com/paintings-pinturas.html>.



Image 6. Ithell Colquhoun, “The Princess of the Echoing Hills. The Rose of the Palace of Earth”, 1977, tarot card, National Trust and Tate.



Image 7. Tomas Hijo and Casey Gilly, “The Magician”, *Lord of the Rings Tarot*, September 6, 2022, tarot card, Simon and Schuster, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/The-Lord-of-the-Rings-Tarot-Deck-and-Guide/Casey-Gilly/9781647228095>.

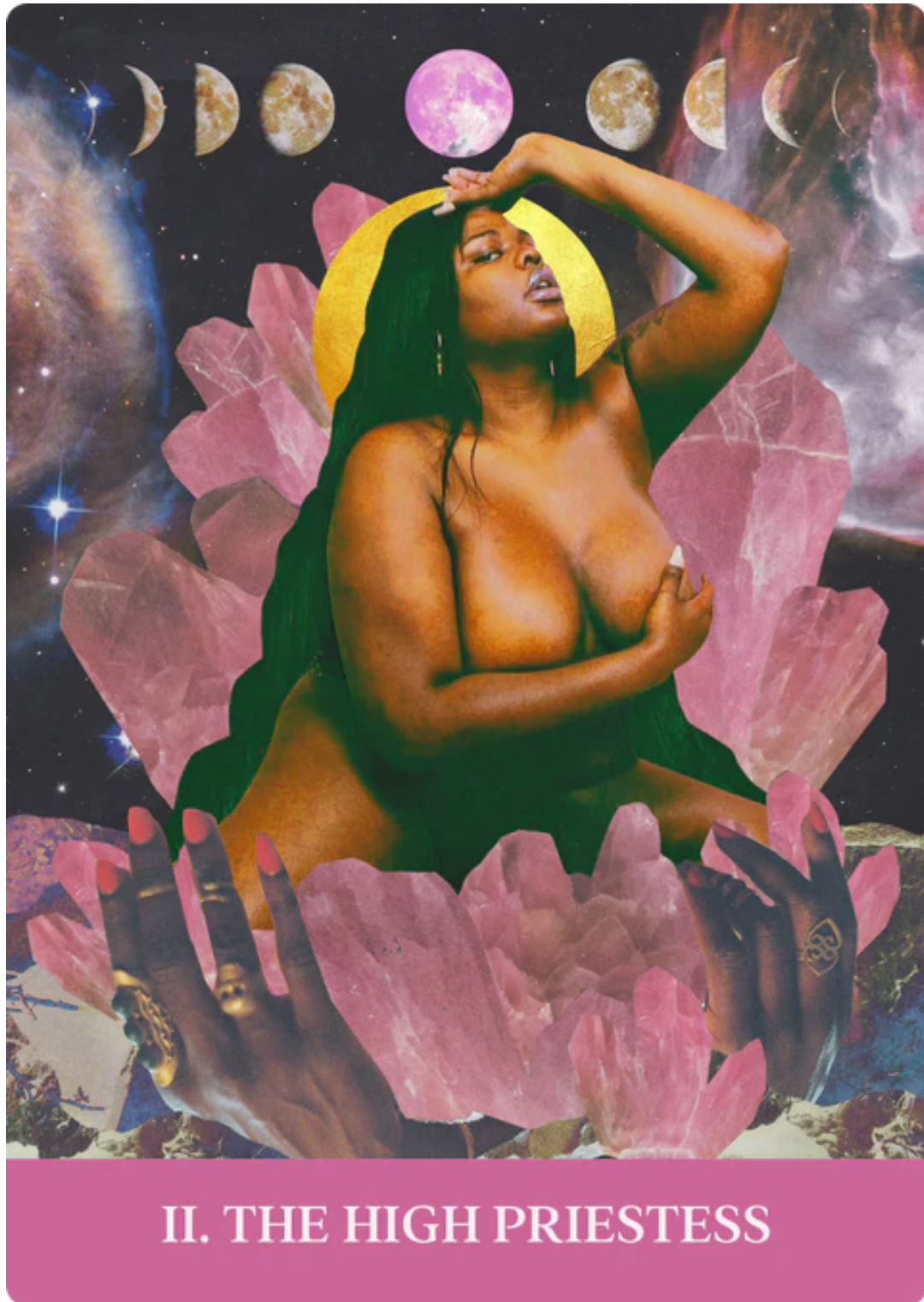


Image 8. Kendrick Daye, "The High Priestess", *Black Queer Tarot*, 2021, tarot card, <https://blackqueertarot.com>.



Image 9. Sarah Shipman, "La Femme," *Our Tarot*, 2020, tarot card, <https://www.our-tarot.com>.



Image 10. Karl James Mountford and Casey Gilly, “The Hierophant”, *Buffy The Vampire Slayer Tarot Deck*, 2023, tarot card, Simon and Schuster, <https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Buffy-the-Vampire-Slayer-Tarot-Deck-and-Guidebook/Karl-James-Mountford/9781647228514>.



Image 11. Yoshi Yoshitani, *Tarot of the Divine*, December 2020, Tarot deck, <https://yoshiyoshitani.store/products/tarot-of-the-divine-deck>.



Image 12. Ashley Molesso and Chess Needham, *Queer Tarot*, April 2022, tarot deck, <https://ashandchess.com/products/queer-tarot-an-inclusive-deck-guidebook>.

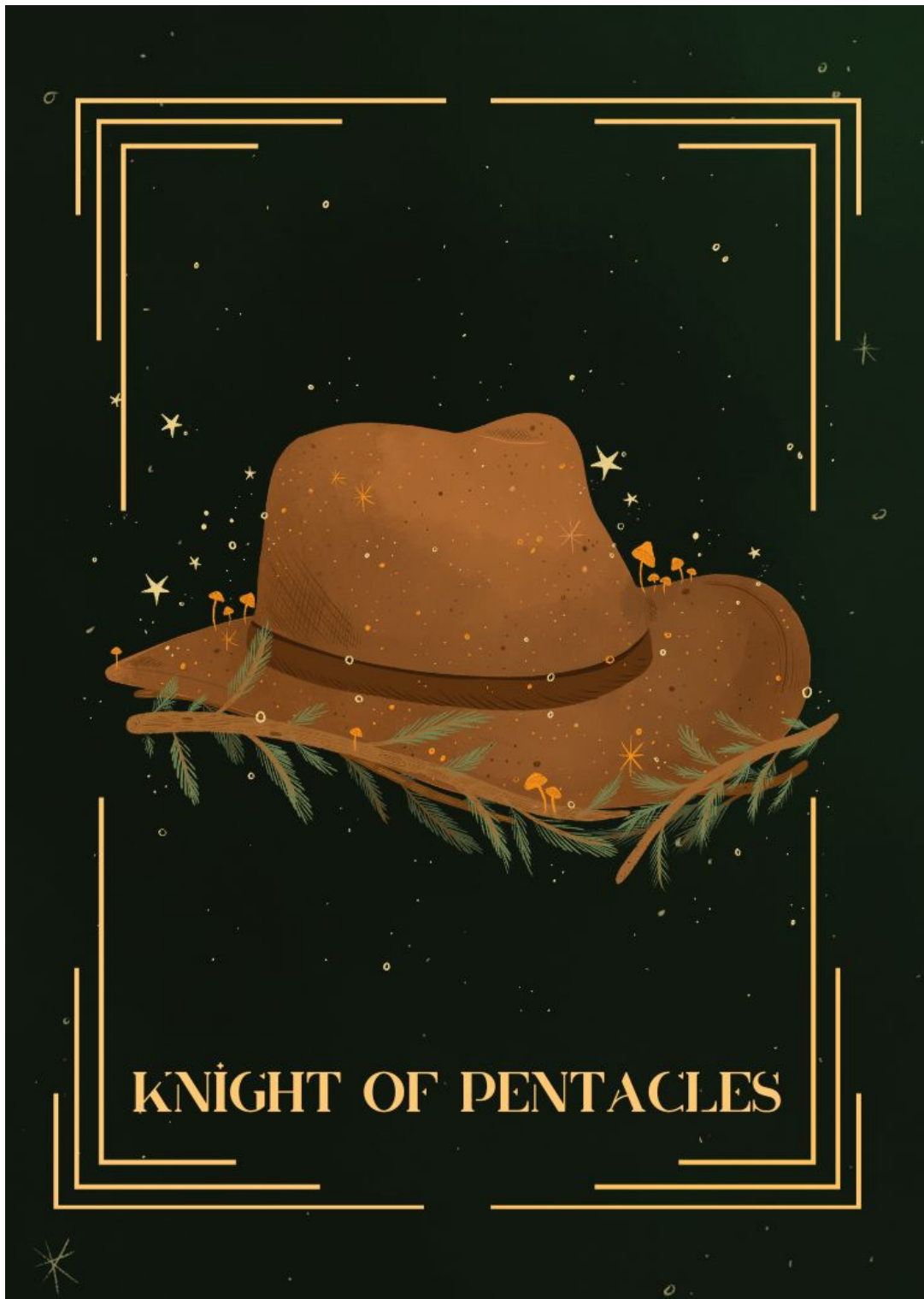


Image 13. Hannah Mathis, “Knight of Pentacles,” *Enchanted South Tarot*, October 2023, digital illustration.

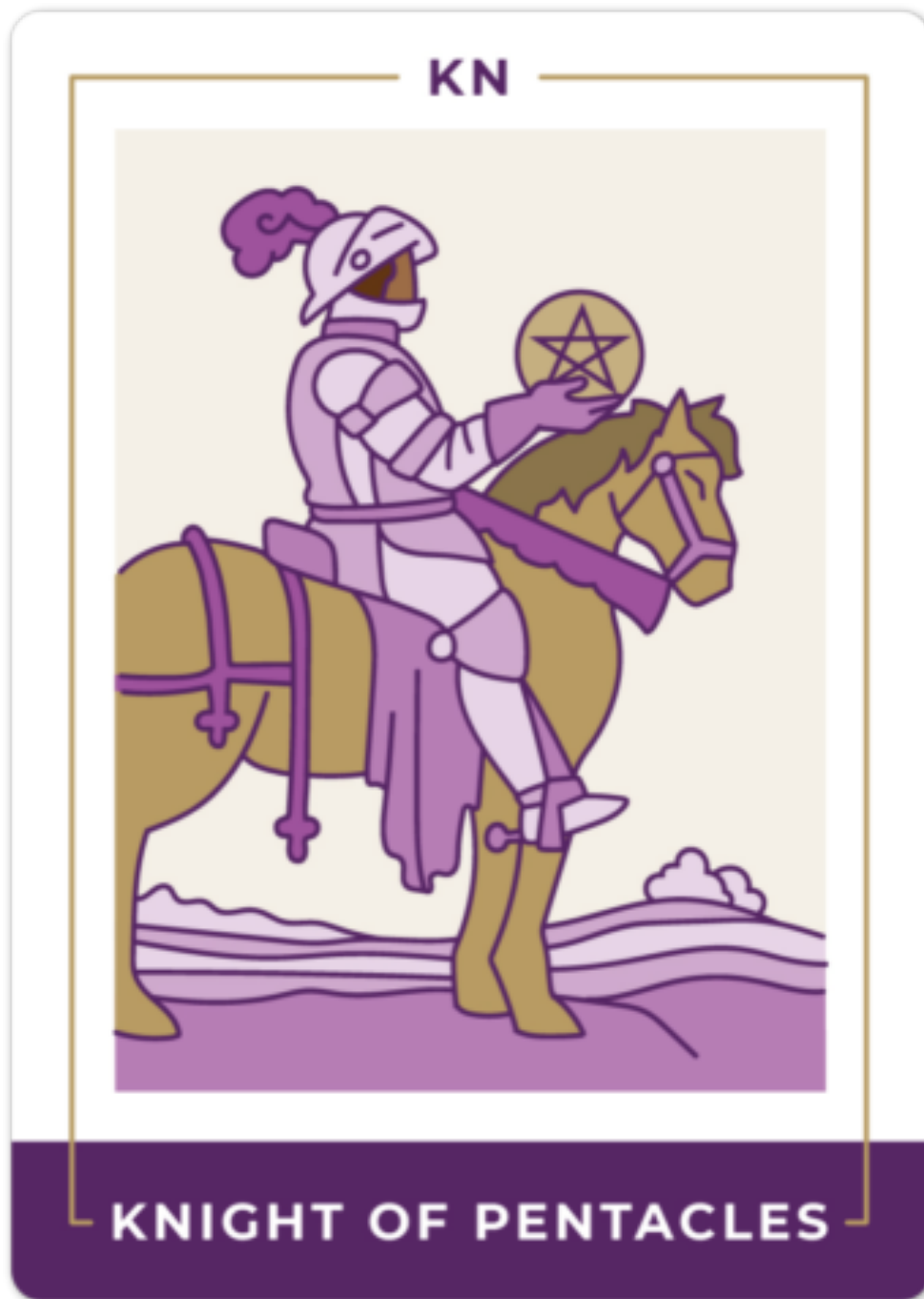


Image 14. Brigit Esselmont, “Knight of Pentacles”, *Biddy Tarot*, Tarot card, <https://www.biddytarot.com/tarot-card-meanings/minor-arcana/suit-of-pentacles/knight-of-pentacles/>.

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Enchanted South Tarot Deck

By Hannah Mathis



Design that will be printed on the back of all cards.

The Major Arcana









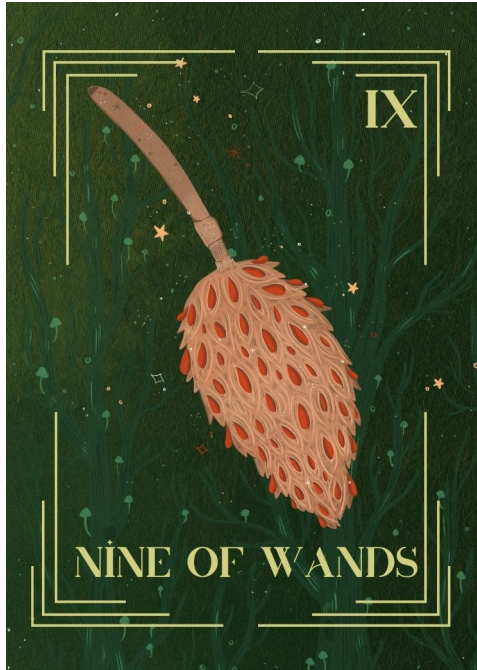




The Wands





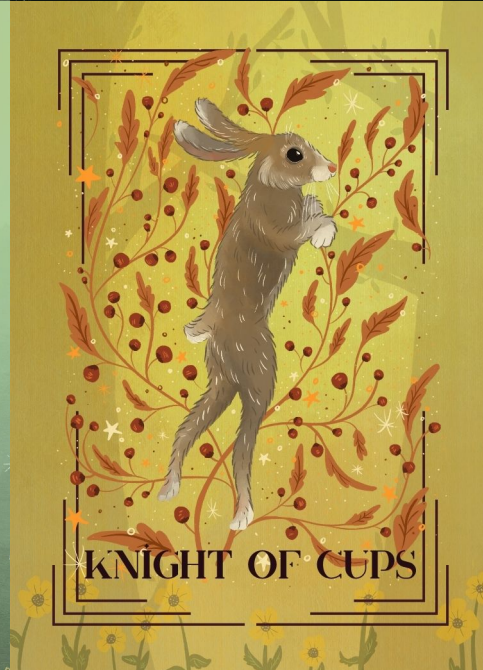
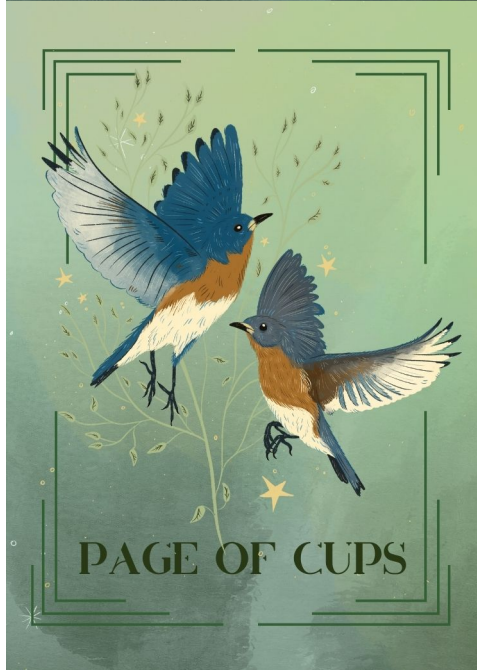
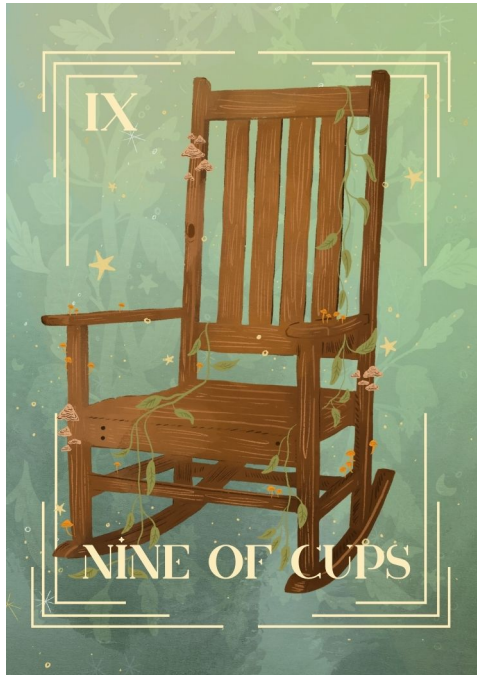




The Cups



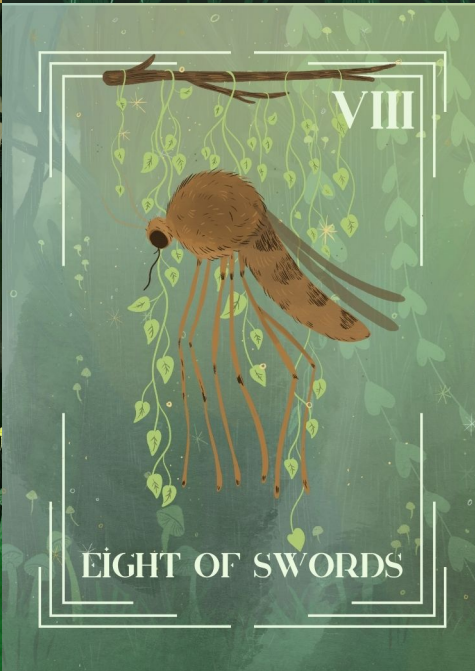
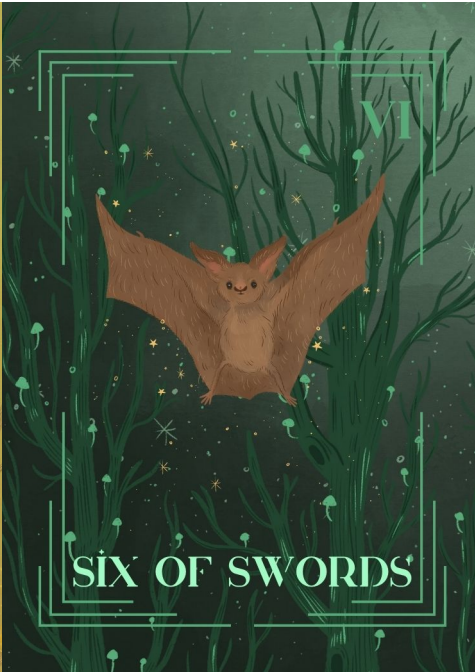


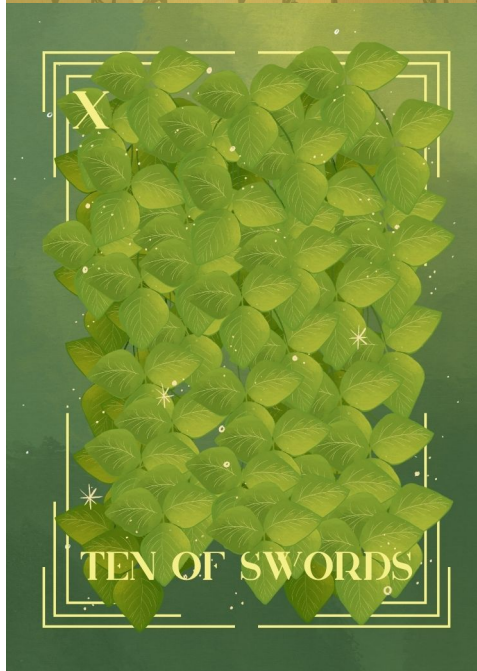




The Swords









The Pentacles







