

During the Forties and then throughout his life, Carl Jung researched alchemical treatises, particularly the Rosarium Philosophorum, written in 1550. In various of his books, Jung described how alchemy's investigation aims to transform stone into gold (also called lapis philosophorum, or the philosophers stone). The process should be interpreted not only as a physical quest (which originated chemistry, as we know it today) but also as a process for profound spiritual transformation.

Jung highlighted that alchemy was a symbolical process for profound spiritual transformation, that deepened consciousness, expanding it to new levels. With the subsequent spiritual development the soul of a person was more fully integrated in the body.

By the end of the alchemical process, a new being, non binary, would be born, which integrated in itself the two primordial energies: male and female. The process, not easy, was called by Carl Jung, individuation. That was, the final goal of the alchemical process, where the philosopher's stone, if understood symbolically, also meant reaching the center of the star (the word desire in its etymology, means reaching for the stars).

To arrive to that final stage, it was necessary to go through various phases. Jung delineates those phases, organising them in 10 stages, in his book "Psychology of Transference" (1954) . He also mentioned how the process tended to last 9 months, and how sometimes, before the process, it was usual the occurrence of premonitory dreams, anticipating in a non linear way and through symbolical language, the birth of an integrated new being.

The ten phases are the following:

1. *The mercurial fountain* (it describes the elements that enable the alchemical transformation)
2. *The king and queen* ( symbolising all kinds of opposites: male and female, dark and light, pain and pleasure, sun and moon)
3. *The naked truth* (the taking of the masks and the courage)
4. *The immersion in the bath* ( the beginning of the bath in the alchemical vase, filled with mercury. That immersion means the descent into the unconscious, for its subsequent acknowledgement)
5. *The conjunction/connunctio* (the integration of opposites through intercourse. The process is not easy and it is seen as transgressive).
6. *Death/Nigredo* (the intercourse originates the death of the body of the two separate beings... this means, symbolically, the dissolution of the ego. The death originates the "nigredo" phase, which means darkness. The "nigredo" is similar to the dark night of the soul, as described by the Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591).

7. *The ascent of the soul* (the old body dies, and the soul abandons it. The body begins a process of fermentation).
8. *Albedo/The purification of the soul* (a new body begins to emerge, from the merging of the former two bodies. A process of purification, entitled albedo/whitening, begins. One feels more comfortable with paradoxes).
9. *The return of the soul* (the soul returns).
10. *The new birth* (a new being, non binary, is born).

In my art work "the alchemical cabinet of desires" I used art, drawing, installation, collage also to go through these various phases.