



XISEO ROJO

TRANSFIGURATIONS



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Hello,

I'm happy to announce that my third studio album, *Transfigurations*, will be released on May 21st, 2021.

Transfigurations is an album about change, renovation and transformation, both through art and through some sort of "ancestral spirituality". The idea behind this music is that of the power of magic and love (aren't they the same thing?) in altering the way we live and roam the world, and in strengthening the deep connection of the human being with the celestial and the natural world, which for me is its innermost and more authentic essence and state. The songs reflect a journey, some form of meditative state: it is meant to be a continuum and a circular work, as the last note on the record is the same as the first note that one hears, and that transition also happens between side A and B.

I began writing the music for a new record soon after *You Got To Walk That Lonesome Valley* came out in 2015. Since then, many events have taken place in my life and in the world, some of which have affected me in a way that interrupted and altered the process of creation itself, and challenged the direction this record should take. I wanted to make an album that contained many points of view: many sides, influences and spirits had to coexist in it. A statement of all the things that are a part of me, and which I wanted to claim, transform and show to the world (and ultimately, myself). Maybe too many at some point, which is one of the reasons why it took a lot of personal and creative twists and turns in order to arrive to a place where I could identify myself in the music I was making.

In this time, I went through a complete personal -mental, physical, spiritual- breakdown involving therapy and medication, I gave a 180° direction change to my way of earning a living, and I became a father to a wonderful daughter. For a good part of my adult life I have spent more time than I'm happy to admit in a state of constant worry and anxiety. Worried about what I should create, how it would be received -if at all-, and worried about the moves of other artists and my place amongst them, which have also affected my mental health in a way that I've never let myself enjoy the creative process as much as I could, or as much as I should. I feel so lucky in so many ways: lucky to be gifted with many talents and lucky to have so many brotherly friends, unconditional support and amazing experiences. Maybe with luck can come guilt sometimes. I know I've welcomed -and even provoked- hardship wherever I could find it as a way of subconsciously tempering all this luck I've had. Also, I had to face the simultaneous task of sorting this big mess out while the record was being created, and at the same time I was taking a deep dive in the process of learning about newborn life and the responsibility that goes along with it.



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Because of all these convulsions throughout its conception and completion, I felt that the record should ultimately bring forth some sort of relief, it should evoke and transmit a time to rest after many a battle, albeit still heeding the war horns in the distance so that the lessons learned aren't easily and rapidly forgotten. I wanted to make an album that celebrated life in the face of death, but that didn't look away from the grimmer side of human existence, as a sort of reminder of our condition that also works as a propeller for joy and living life at its maximum degree of expression, full and vibrant in the present moment. In this way, it could be considered a state of mindfulness: the music of the alchemic and spiritual nature of life blending with the Unified Field. I wanted to make an album that felt like a relief, a milestone of inner peace and joyous contemplation of our very human essence, in all its angles and nuances.

After preparing the initial demos, I began registering the songs in the summer of 2019, shortly after the aforementioned vital crash had taken place. I had also recently moved in at a new location for my recording studio. My daughter was born that autumn, and Spain entered a 3-month long hard lockdown. A new interruption in the development of the recording sessions and the materialization of the record, so it wasn't until almost a year after starting scribbling this music, in July 2020, during a short break in the more strict lockdown policies in Spain concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, that I started the real recording process at the studio. I acted as my own sound engineer, and the sessions were flexible but steady, rapidly pinning down songs and ideas. I soon ended up with a lot of material recorded, and started to dwell in the arrangement and sound design processes, which inevitably open new possibilities. Although some of the songs were written beforehand, it happened that a good part of the material for the record came along once the recording process had already started, compositions that didn't exist at the time of pressing the REC button but mysteriously knocked on the door and made their way into the flowing lava. In the end, it so happens that those pieces are which give the mystical context to the record, and pump its primitive pulse.

Once finished recording and mixing, and having discarded a lot of material originally intended to be in the album (and which will likely be part of a new collection of songs happening soon), a stream of consciousness arose. I felt that *Transfigurations* blended the many musical and philosophical edges of my persona, and succeeded at an old goal of mine: identifying and connecting with some kind of deep personal root and tradition. Also, and connected to this, I wanted this album to exist in a liminal space outside of time, inhabiting both the future and the past, accessing something spiritual or personal that is untouchable, no matter the state of the world at a given moment. I hope I have somewhat succeeded at this mission.

Lastly, I'd like to recall that, despite the phase of collapse, this time not only hasn't meant a creative blank at all, but since 2015 I have played a great number of shows, I released a live album (*Live in Seoul & Kyoto*), a 7" single (*Resistance Ragas*), a collaborative EP with Carnisaur (*Encomienda*), and a 30-minute improvised session (*Axial Tilt*) registered during lockdown and recently released by TakuRoku, the netlabel of experimental music of the vibrant Cafe Oto in London. These last years I also have produced and recorded many albums of other artists, to which I've contributed a large number of arrangements and interpretations of my own.



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I like to think that *Transfigurations* is informed by all these vital and creative experiences, circumstances and progressions, and that listening to it may help others the same way it has helped me creating it.

Xisco Rojo
March 19th, 2021
Madrid



SOME NOTES ON THE SONGS

'As above, so below' Hermes Trismegistus

For You Dwell in the Light

12-string acoustic guitar, Philicorda organ, windchimes, field recording

A ternary-like song about the everchanging essence of light, constantly shifting in form, tone and intensity, and impossible to grasp permanently, so we can only aspire to approximations and remembrance. At the same time, light is an extremely evocative feature of human life and its manifestation is consubstantial to our earthly nature, which is fundamentally affected by it. The title is roughly adapted from the Bible, where in 1 Timothy 6:16, it is said about God that "He alone is immortal and dwells in unapproachable light." In my personal philosophy, light might as well be God himself.

11 Out Of 10

6-string acoustic guitar

A canonical primitive guitar tune about the impossibility of being more than one holds, and the sometimes too pushy demand from turbo-capitalist society to permanently "reinvent" oneself. The name of the song stems from the expression meaning "being of an adorable countenance that is at better than perfect quality", albeit referring to personality types and academic goals.

Embellishment & Sporting of The Golden Cross

Weissenborn

Sometimes we carry inherited burdens that plummet on us, and despite their negative effects on our well-being, we tend to relish on the fact that we must keep them shiny and bright. We happily weigh our shoulders down with them, causing us great grievance both physically and mentally. This song is dedicated to my friend Asier Vázquez, who has exemplary learned to carry himself better than this.



A Different Kind of Peace

6-string acoustic guitar, shruti box

A tune about my own personal process of finding inner peace and forms of intimate resistance, and the different psychic turns, revelations, substances, techniques, therapies, drugs and epiphanies that have accompanied it. Turns out that the key to that state lies inside music.

Maia

Mountain dulcimer, Greek baglamas, 6-string acoustic & electric guitars, 12-string electric guitar, bass, Philicorda organ, shaman drums, tambourine, chajchas, cymbals, field recording

Maia, in ancient Greek religion, is the daughter of Atlas and Pleione the Oceanid, and is the oldest of the seven Pleiades, and the mother of Hermes. The Pleiades were born on Mount Cyllene in Arcadia, and are sometimes called mountain nymphs or *oreads*. In ancient Roman religion and myth, Maia embodied the concept of growth, as her name was thought to be related to the comparative adjective *maius, maior* "larger, greater". Most importantly, Maia is the name of my daughter.

Íakch' O Íakche!

Processed Portuguese guitar, bass, synths

The Eleusinian Mysteries were initiations held every year for the cult of Demeter and Persephone based at the Panhellenic Sanctuary of Eleusis in ancient Greece. The mysteries represented the myth of the abduction of Persephone from her mother Demeter by the king of the underworld Hades, in a cycle with three phases: the descent (loss), the search, and the ascent, with the main theme being the ascent of Persephone and the reunion with her mother. For the initiated, the rebirth of Persephone symbolized the eternity of life which flows from generation to generation. The procession to Eleusis shouted "Íakch', O Íakche!", possibly an epithet for Dionysus, or a separate deity Iacchus, son of Persephone or Demeter. Numerous scholars have proposed that the power of the Eleusinian Mysteries came from the kykeon's functioning as an entheogen, or psychedelic agent. Many psychoactive agents have been proposed as the significant element of kykeon, like the ergot, a fungal parasite of the barley or rye grain, which contains the alkaloids ergotamine, a precursor to LSD, and ergonovine.

The Nāga and The Dvārapāla

12-string acoustic guitar, processed cymbalom

A *Dvārapāla* or *Dvārapālaka* (Sanskrit, "door guard") is a door or gate guardian often portrayed as a warrior or fearsome giant, usually armed with a weapon - the most common being the *gada* (mace). These statues were traditionally placed outside Buddhist or Hindu temples, as well as other structures like royal palaces, to protect the holy places inside. In other instances, a fierce-looking *Nāga* snake figure may perform the same function. The idea behind the song is that *There Is a Policeman Inside All Our Heads: He Must Be Destroyed*. The song somehow takes the shape of a Raga, connecting the musical form with the references in its name.



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Paseo de los Melancólicos

6-string electric guitar

A street in Madrid which, in the time of king Carlos III, was nothing more than an area of crops and tree-lined walks. With the arrival of industrialization, it was reformed to accommodate the railway that linked the stations of Príncipe Pío and Atocha, passing through the old Imperial station, which pushed the neighborhood to industrial activity and the construction of low-class households. It used to be a very lonely and sad area, which gave the name to the street, forged by the very neighbors themselves. The studio where this album was recorded is near this street, where I took many a stroll whilst completing it.

'Oumuamua

E-bowed 12-string acoustic guitar, bass

'Oumuamua is the first known interstellar object detected passing through the Solar System. The name comes from Hawaiian *'oumuamua* (from *'ou*, 'reach out for', and *mua*, reduplicated for emphasis, 'first, in advance of'), and reflects the way this object is like a scout or messenger sent from the distant past to reach out to humanity. It roughly translates to 'first distant messenger'.



ALBUM CREDITS

SIDE A

1. FOR YOU DWELL IN THE LIGHT 9:16
 2. II OUT OF 10 2:55
 3. EMBELLISHMENT & SPORTING OF THE GOLDEN CROSS 2:47
 4. A DIFFERENT KIND OF PEACE 5:49
- TOTAL > 20:47

SIDE B

1. MAIA 2:51
 2. IAKCH' O IAKCHÉ! 3:34
 3. THE NĀGA AND THE DVĀRAPĀLA 4:37
 4. PASEO DE LOS MELANCÓLICOS 3:18
 5. 'OUMUAMUA 5:54
- TOTAL > 20:14

All songs written and performed by Xisco Rojo

Recorded and mixed by Xisco Rojo at Sauerland Studios & Recording
Co. (Madrid) from July to December 2020

Mastered to tape by Ángel Álvarez at LinneoDos



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The following instruments & elements were used in the making of this record:

6-string & 12-string acoustic & electric guitars, Weissenborn, mountain dulcimer, Greek baglamas, Portuguese guitar, bass, shruti box, Philicorda organ, synthesizers, cimbalom, windchimes, shaman drums, tambourines, chajchas, cymbals, field recordings and sound processing

For You Dwell in The Light contains a field recording of cicadas at twilight registered in Vejer de la Frontera, Cádiz.

Maia contains the sound of my daughter's heart while inside her mother's womb.

Original artwork by Mohammad Barrangi
Layout by Mohammad Barrangi & Xisco Rojo

THANK YOU

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