

Sentinel VIII | Sentinel IX | Sentinel XII, by Aude Hérail Jäger

art selection and comment by [Aaron Rosen](#) in the [December 30, 2020](#) issue



(Images used by permission of the Artist)

"More great than human, now, and more August, / New deified she from her fires does rise." John Dryden wrote these optimistic words in 1666, in his poem *Annus Mirabilis* (The year of wonders). Only a poet of Dryden's immense imagination could find a blessing in that year, when London was struck by both the Great Fire and the Great Plague, all amidst a naval war. As we close 2020, is it possible to find a similar hope amid the embers? Personally, I find some solace in the mysterious *Sentinels* of Aude Hérail Jäger, a French artist based in London. Hérail Jäger has been creating these more-than-life-size drawings for several years, often taking inspiration from her studies of Old Masters as well as anonymous artists and craftspeople in collections such as the National Gallery and the British Museum. Like the biblical cherubim assigned by God to guard the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24), the colossal lamassu in front of Assyrian palaces, or the gorgons carved into the pediments of Greek temples, the *Sentinels* have an otherworldly, apotropaic power. "They appear benevolent but are armed either with swords, flutes luring malevolence away, or feather and book to reveal vile actions," writes the artist. "They know how to face danger and come out victorious." Significantly, these figures are female, standing their ground in a climate of toxic masculinity. They remind us that if we are to

emerge from this annus horribilis “more august, new deified,” we must guard against our baser instincts and protect our best.