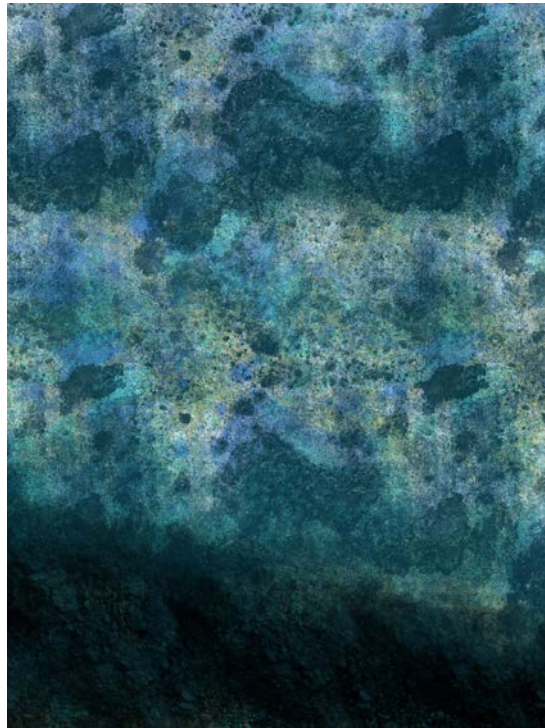


MAHLER'S DAS LIED VON DER ERDE

+

a song for the earth



DAS LIED VON DER ERDE – THE SONG OF THE EARTH

In 1907, Gustav Mahler became interested in a volume of ancient Chinese poetry translated into German by Hans Bethge titled *The Chinese Flute*. Mahler was taken by the vision of earthly beauty and transience expressed in these “paraphrase-poems” and chose seven to set to music. A symbolic overview of life and death, *Das Lied von der Erde* (*The Song of the Earth*) was completed in 1908. Mahler himself wrote “The most personal composition I have created thus far.” He managed a perfect synthesis of the lyrical and philosophical aspects of his music. A piece that can speak so deeply of universal human issues and the opposed musical genres in which Mahler worked almost exclusively: song and symphony. Also a piece where East and West become one.

With its refrain, “Dark is life, is death”, *The Drinking Song of Earth’s Misery* sets a tone for the rest. The original poem mixes drunken exaltation with a deep sadness. In *The Lonely Soul in Autumn*, a subdued song whose tone colors can be described as “faded gold”. The third, *Of Youth* it is as if, through the fogged looking-glass of memory, the landscape of one’s own youth becomes as foreign as that of a distant country. Then is *Of Beauty*, all the lost happiness of a lifetime seems compressed into the sunlight of one lazy afternoon. *The Drunkard in Spring* - “What has spring to do with me?” - a bird singing outside the window telling spring has come. But to the drunk man, real life appears “as in a dream”. The final movement absorbs and dissolves all that precedes it: *The Farewell* its text is drawn from two different poems. They paint a picture of universal loneliness, no longer personal misfortune but the all-embracing “Earth’s Misery”. Mahler explicitly writes moments of silence into the score, the music seems always in danger of dissolving into nothingness. His last farewell is fundamentally ambiguous: through the eyes of leave-taking, the wounded earth at last shines out in all its beauty. Hope seems to hide in the tissues of the music. The movement ends with a few lines added by Mahler himself until the music fades into silence, “etched on the air”, as Benjamin Britten wrote “that final chord is printed on the atmosphere”. Against all reason, resignation and hope can no longer be distinguished. *The Farewell* is about the journey to a homeland that belongs to everyone in every time. These were the last words Mahler ever set to music, and, unlike the rest of *The Song of the Earth*, they were not those of an ancient poet, but his own. Mahler, the master of contradiction and paradox, ends a work that is so universal in scope with just the briefest hint of autobiography.

The beloved earth everywhere

Blossoms in spring,

And grows green anew.

Everywhere and forever, forever

Blue lights the horizon.

Forever...

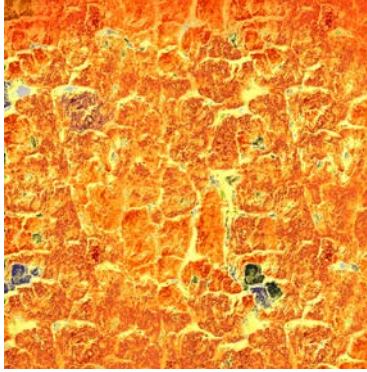
forever

A SONG FOR THE EARTH

An irreplaceable companion, Mahler's music has been an important part of my life. His music always seems to create a balance between creating unease and catharsis. In *Das Lied von der Erde* extraordinary final song all our questions are addressed, and our wounds healed. This serie of iPad created images evolved from the vast Mahler's *The Song of the Earth* to a obviously more humble *A Song for the Earth*. A collection of images inextricably related to personal experiences – joys, wounds, scars, reflections, awakenings, contemplations, realizations, resolutions and revelations –as a panorama of the relation of an artist with his beloved planet when our connection to “the beloved Earth” has never been more tenuous.

SEBASTIAN SPRENG

Argentinean born visual artist Sebastian Spreng established in Miami three decades ago. Music is pivotal in his work and whole series of paintings were based on musical structures and cycles – *Liederkreis I and II, Sinfonietta, Impromptus, Der Ring des Nibelungen, Chamber Music, Mahler Songs* and *Das Lied von der Erde*. Significantly, his works grace program covers of the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra, New World Symphony and the Florida Grand Opera, as many CD covers, including the Grammy award-winning *Da Pacem* by Arvo Pärt. With more than fifty solo shows in Buenos Aires, Miami, Santa Fe NM, Seattle, Atlanta, Düsseldorf, Munich, Essen, Sun Valley, Toronto, Tuscany, France, Japan, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela, and works in private and public collections, including the Perez Art Museum Miami, Fundación Ortiz Gurián, Florida Grand Opera, Museo del Barrio, Miami-Dade Public Library System, Barclays, Banco Santander and Merrill Lynch. In 1994, he was commissioned by Metro-Dade Art In Public Places to create a exhibition at the Miami-Dade Government Center as a memorial tribute to the *American with Disabilities Trailblazers*. In 2009 his work *Daphne* was selected for the book *Speak for the Trees*, alongside 70 other artists. In 2012, he was selected as one of the *100 Latinos of Miami* and as the 2013 Visual Artist in residency of the 11th Edition of the *Music@Menlo Chamber Music Festival*. Spreng writes about classical music since 1988, first as foreign correspondent for *Clásica Magazine* in Argentina. Currently he writes articles, comments and reviews for several publications including *El Nuevo Herald, Knight Foundation Arts* and his own *Miami Clasica*. Since 2009 he is a member of the *Music Critics Association of North America*. He was honored with he *Dr. Sanford L. and Beatrice Ziff Outstanding Arts Contributors* by Classical South Florida of 2015. After *Liederkreis II* and *Salad Bar, Song for the Earth* is his third solo exhibit with KELLEY ROY GALLERY in Miami-Wynwood.



THE SONG OF THE EARTH – THE CHINESE POEMS

I. "Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde" ("The Drinking Song of Earth's Misery")

The wine beckons in golden goblets but drink not yet; first I'll sing you a song.
The song of sorrow shall ring laughingly in your soul.
When the sorrow comes, blasted lie the gardens of the soul, wither and perish joy and singing.
Dark is life, dark is death.
Master of this house, your cellar is full of golden wine!
Here, this lute I call mine.
The lute to strike and the glasses to drain, these things go well together.
A full goblet of wine at the right time is worth more than all the kingdoms of this earth.
Dark is life, dark is death.
The heavens are ever blue and the Earth shall stand sure, and blossom in the spring.
But you O man, what long life have you?
Not a hundred years may you delight in all the rotten baubles of this earth.
See down there! In the moonlight, on the grave squats a wild ghostly shape; an ape it is!
Hear you his howl go out in the sweet fragrance of life.
Now! Drink the wine! Now it is time comrades.
Drain your golden goblets to the last.
Dark is life, dark is death.

2. "Der Einsame im Herbst" ("The Lonely One in Autumn")

Autumn fog creeps bluishly over the lake.
Every blade of grass stands frosted.
As though an artist had jade-dust over the fine flowers strewn.
The sweet fragrance of flower has passed;
A cold wind bows their stems low.
Soon will the wilted, golden petals of lotus flowers upon the water float.
My heart is tired. My little lamp expires with a crackle, minding me to sleep.
I come to you, trusted resting place.
Yes, give me rest, I have need of refreshment! I weep often in my loneliness.
Autumn in my heart lingers too long.
Sun of love, will you no longer shine to gently dry up my bitter tears.

3. "Von der Jugend" ("Of Youth")

In the middle of the little pond stands a pavilion of green and white porcelain.
Like the back of a tiger arches the jade bridge over to the pavilion.
Friends sit in the little house well dressed, drinking, chatting some writing verses.
Their silk sleeves glide backwards, their silk caps rest gaily at the napes of their necks.
On the small pond's still surface, everything shows whimsical in mirror image.
Everything stands on its head in the pavilion of green and white porcelain.
Like a half-moon is the bridge its arch upturned.
Friends well dressed, drinking, chatting.

4. "Von der Schönheit" ("Of Beauty")

Young girls picking flowers, picking lotus flowers at the riverbank.
Amid bushes and leaves they sit, gathering flowers in their laps and calling one another in raillery.

Golden sun plays about their form reflecting them in the clear water.

The sun reflects back their slender limbs, their sweet eyes,
and the breeze teasing up the warp of their sleeves,
directs the magic of perfume through the air.

O see, what a tumult of handsome boys there on the shore on their spirited horses.
Yonder shining like the sun's rays between the branches of green willow trot along the bold companions.

The horse of one neighs happily on and shies and rushes there,
hooves shaking down blooms, grass, trampling wildly the fallen flowers. Hei!

How frenzied his mane flutters, and hotly steam his nostrils!

Golden sun plays about their form reflecting them in the clear water.
And the most beautiful of the maidens sends long looks adoring at him.

Her proud pose is but a pretense; in the flash of her big eyes,
in the darkness of her ardent gaze beats longingly her burning heart.

5. "Der Trunkene im Frühling" ("The Drunken Man in Spring")

If life is but a dream, why work and worry?

I drink until I no more can, the whole, blessed day!

And if I can drink no more as throat and soul are full,
then I stagger to my door and sleep wonderfully!

What do I hear on waking?

Hark! A bird sings in the tree.

I ask him if it's spring already; to me it's as if I'm in a dream.

The bird chirps Yes! The spring is here, it came overnight!

From deep wonderment I listen;

the bird sings and laughs!

I fill my cup anew and drink it to the bottom
and sing until the moon shines in the black firmament!

And if I can not sing, then I fall asleep again.

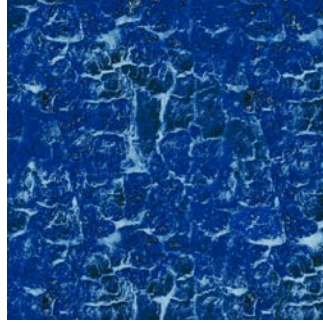
What to me is spring? Let me be drunk!

6. "Der Abschied" ("The Farewell")

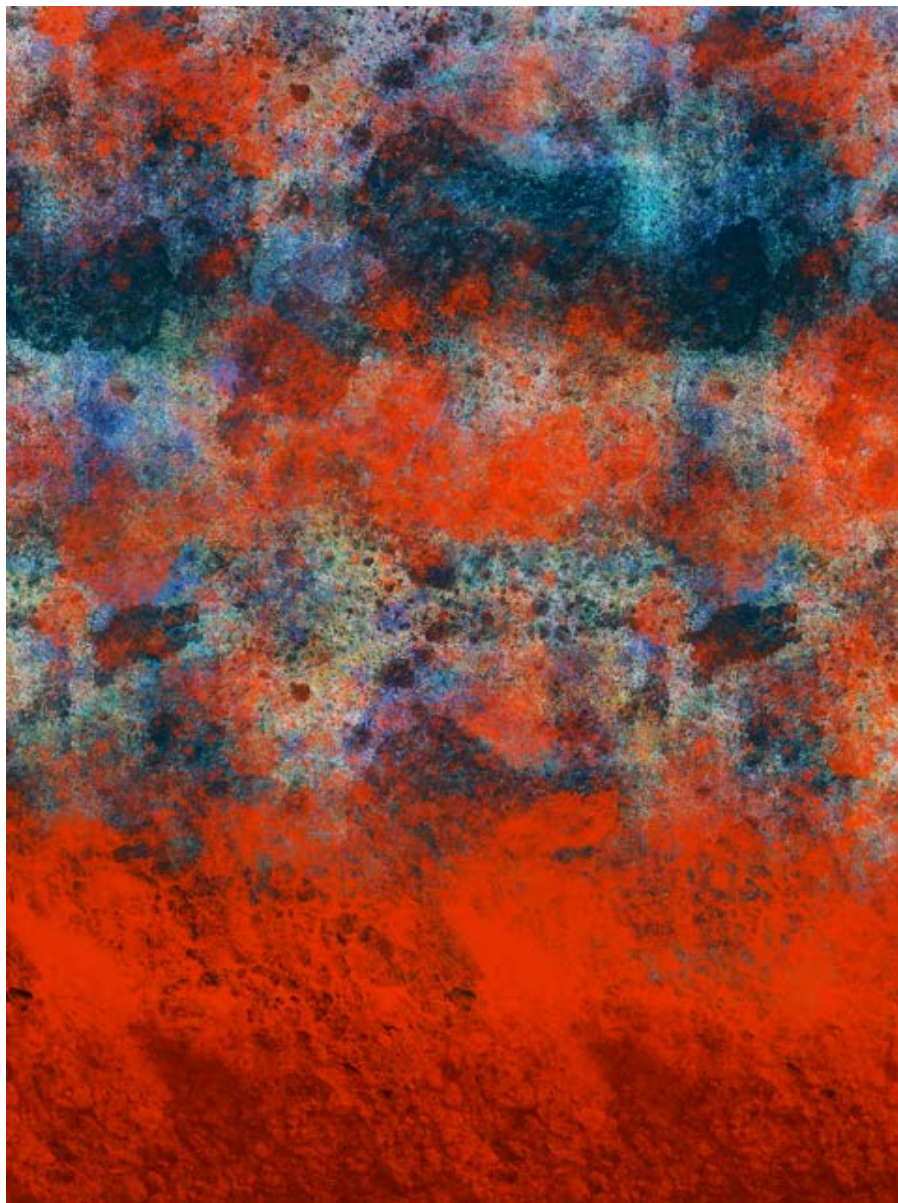
The sun departs behind the mountains.
In all the valleys the evening descends with its shadow, full cooling.
O look! Like a silver boat sails the moon in the watery blue heaven.
I sense the fine breeze stirring behind the dark pines.
The brook sings out clear through the darkness.
The flowers pale in the twilight.
The earth breathes, in full rest and sleep.
All longing now becomes a dream.
Weary men traipse homeward to sleep;
forgotten happiness and youth to rediscover.
The birds roost silent in their branches.
The world falls asleep.
It blows coolly in the shadows of my pines.
I stand here and wait for my friend;
I wait to bid him a last farewell.
I yearn, my friend, at your side to enjoy the beauty of this evening.
Where are you?
You leave me long alone!
I walk up and down with my lute on paths swelling with soft grass.
O beauty! O eternal loving-and-life-bedrunken world!

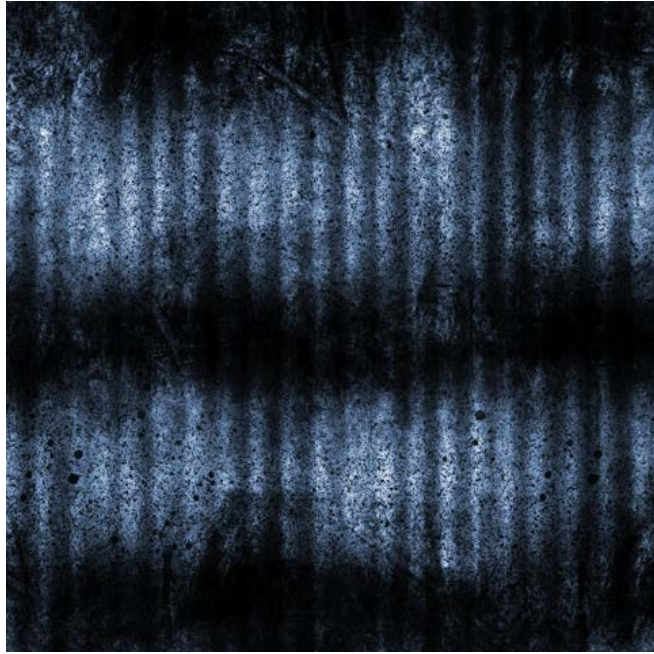
...

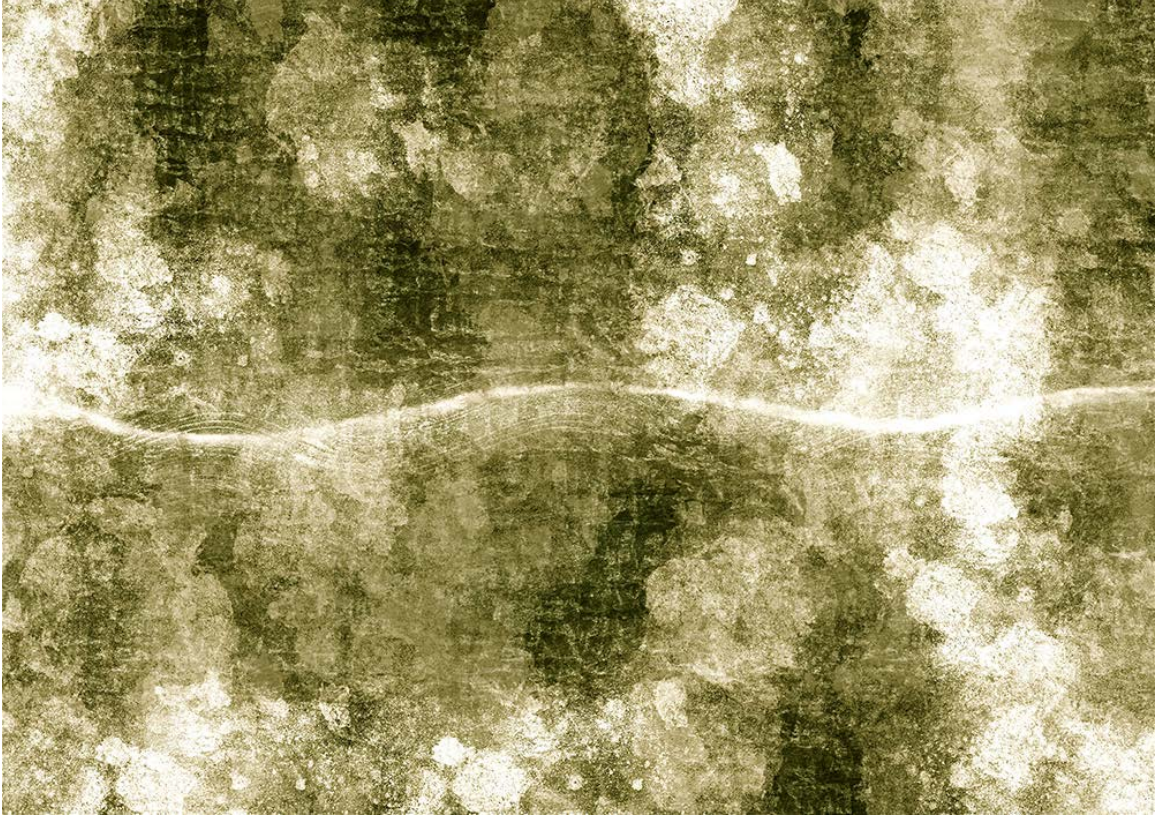
He dismounted and handed him the drink of Farewells.
He asked him where he would go and why must it be.
He spoke, his voice was quiet.
Ah my friend,
Fortune was not kind to me in this world!
Where do I go?
I go, I wander in the mountains.
I seek peace for my lonely heart.
I wander homeward, to my abode! I'll never wander far.
Still is my heart, awaiting its hour.
The dear earth everywhere blossoms in spring and grows green anew!
Everywhere and forever blue is the horizon!
Forever ... Forever...

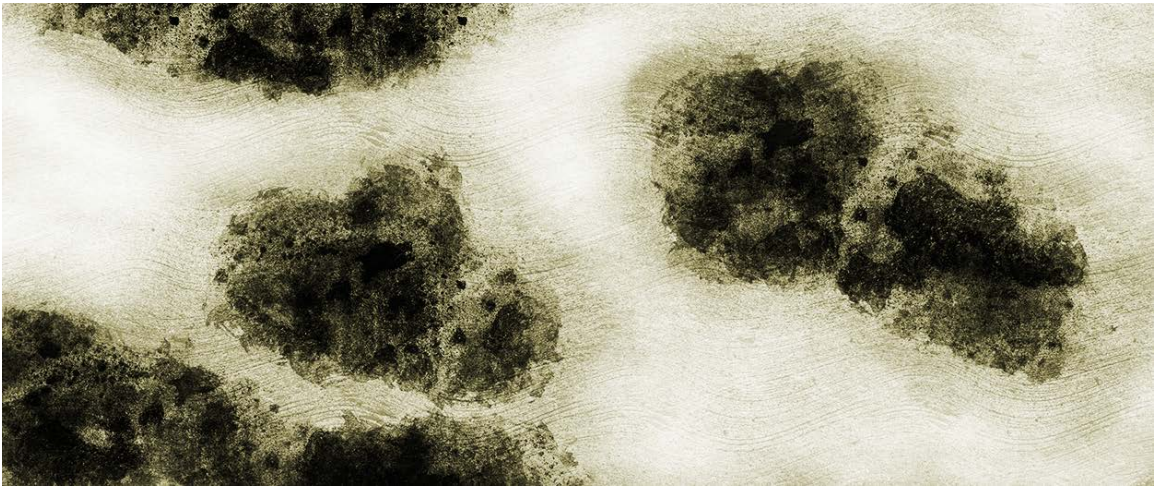
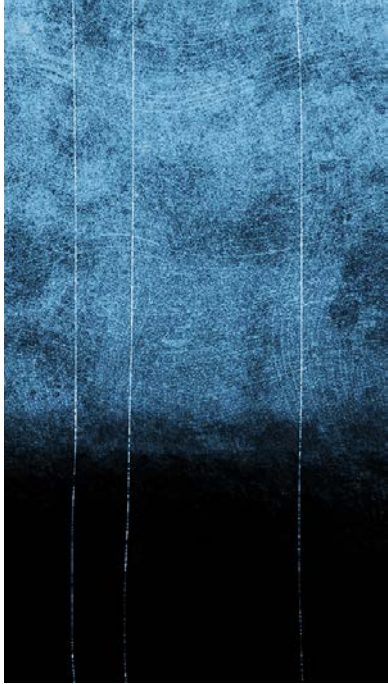


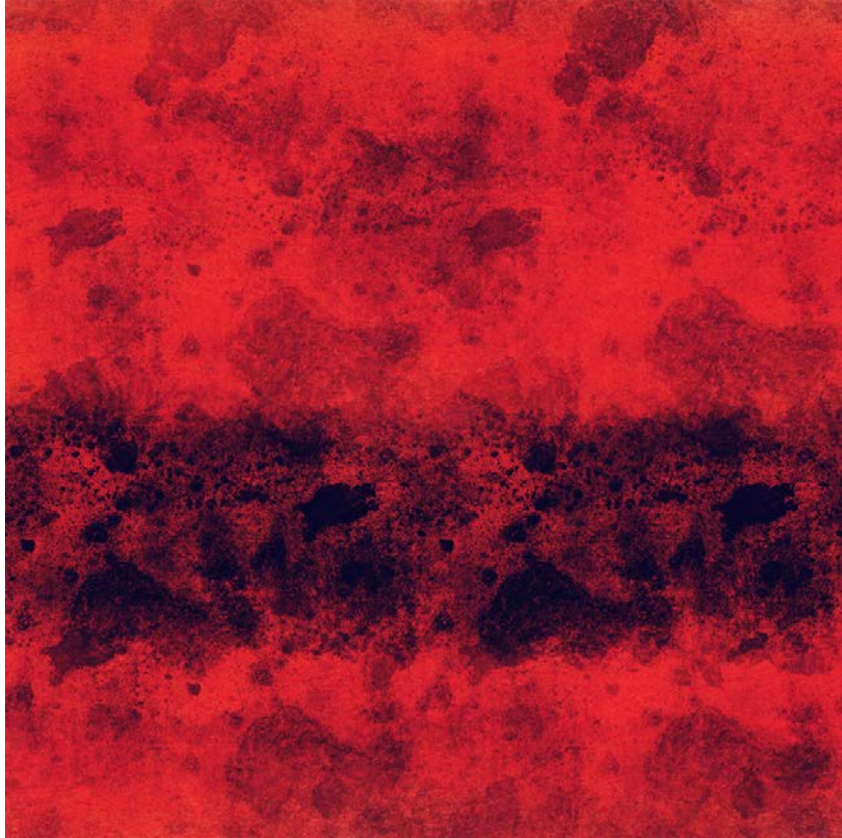
THE SPRENG iPad DRAWINGS
INSPIRED BY DAS LIED VON DER ERDE















THE EXHIBIT AT KELLEY ROY GALLERY

SEBASTIAN SPRENG
a song for the earth

iPad drawings inspired by Gustav Mahler's DAS LIED VON DER ERDE



APRIL 16 – MAY 16 2015

OPENING RECEPTION THURSDAY APRIL 16 - 6 TO 9 PM

KELLEY ROY GALLERY

153 NW 24th Street . Wynwood Arts District. Miami . FL 33127.