Marjorie Cameron Parsons Kimmel (April 23 , 1922 ? June 24 , 1995) , who professionally used the mononym Cameron , was an American artist , poet , actress , and occultist . A follower of Thelema , the new religious movement established by the English occultist Aleister Crowley , she was also the wife of rocket pioneer and fellow Thelemite Jack Parsons .

Born in Belle Plaine , Iowa , Cameron volunteered for services in the United States ' Navy during the Second World War , after which she settled in Pasadena , California , where she met Parsons , who believed her to be the "Elemental woman " that he had invoked in the early stages of a series of sex magic rituals called the Babalon Working . They entered a relationship and were married in 1946 . Their relationship was often strained , although Parsons sparked her involvement in Thelema and occultism . After Parsons ' death in an explosion at their home in 1952 , Cameron came to suspect that her husband had been assassinated and began rituals to communicate with his spirit . Moving to Beaumont , she established a multi @-@ racial occult group called The Children , which dedicated itself to sex magical rituals with the intent of producing mixed @-@ race " moon children " who would be devoted to the god Horus . The group soon dissolved , with many of its members concerned by Cameron 's increasingly apocalyptic predictions .

Returning to Los Angeles , Cameron befriended the socialite Samson De Brier and established herself as a figure within the city 's avant @-@ garde artistic community . Among her friends were the filmmakers Curtis Harrington and Kenneth Anger . She appeared in two of Harrington 's films , The Wormwood Star and Night Tide , as well as in Anger 's film Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome , and in later years she would also make appearances in art @-@ house films created by John Chamberlain and Chick Strand . Rarely remaining in one place for long , during the 1950s and 1960s she lived for periods in Joshua Tree , San Francisco , and Santa Fe . Over the course of this period she had relationships with various men , bearing one of them a daughter . Although health problems at times prevented her from working , she produced enough art and poetry to result in several exhibitions . From the late 1970s through to her death from cancer in 1995 , Cameron lived in a bungalow in West Hollywood , there raising her daughter and grandchildren , continuing to pursue her interests in esotericism , and producing further artworks and poetry .

Cameron 's recognition as an artist increased after her death , when her paintings made appearances in exhibitions across the U.S. As a result of increased attention on Parsons , Cameron 's life also gained greater coverage in the early 2000s , while in 2011 a biography of Cameron authored by Spencer Kansa was published .

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= = Biography = =
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= = = Early life : 1922 ? 1945 = = =

Cameron was born in Belle Plaine , lowa , on April 23 , 1922 . Her father , the railway worker Hill Leslie Cameron , was the adopted child of a Scots @-@ Irish family , while her mother , Carrie Cameron (née Ridenour) was of Dutch ancestry . She was their first child , followed by three further siblings : James (b . 1923) , Mary (b . 1927) , and Robert (b . 1929) . They lived on the wealthier north side of town , although life was nevertheless hard due to the Great Depression . Attending Whittier Elementary School and then Belle Plaine High School , where she did well at art , English , and drama but failed algebra , Latin , and civic lessons , she also joined the athletics , glee club , and chorus . Relating that one of her childhood friends had committed suicide , she characterized herself as a rebellious child , claiming that " I became the town pariah ... Nobody would let their kid near me " . She enjoyed going to the cinema , and had sexual relationships with various men ; falling pregnant , her mother performed an illegal home abortion . In 1940 , the Cameron family relocated to Davenport in order for Hill to work at the Rock Islands Arsenal munitions factory . Cameron completed her final year of high school education at Davenport High School , there having romantic relations with both a man and a woman . Leaving school , she worked as a display artist in

a local department store.

Following the entry of the United States into the Second World War , in February 1943 she signed up for the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service , a part of the U.S. Navy . Initially sent to a training camp at Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls , she was then posted to Washington D.C. , where she served as a cartographer for the Joint Chief of Staff , in the course of his duties meeting U.K. Prime Minister Winston Churchill in May 1943 . She was reassigned to the Naval Photographic Unit in Anacostia , where she worked as wardrobe mistress for propaganda documentaries , in the course of which she met various Hollywood stars . When her brother James returned to the U.S. injured from service overseas , she went AWOL and returned to Iowa to see him , as a result of which she was court martialed and confined to barracks for the rest of the war . For reasons unknown to her , she received an honorable discharge from the military in 1945 , traveling to Pasadena , California , where her family had relocated , with both her father and brothers securing work at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) there .

= = = Jack Parsons : 1946 ? 1952 = = =

In Pasadena , Cameron ran into a former colleague , who invited her to visit the large American Craftsman @-@ style house where he was currently lodging , 1003 Orange Grove Avenue , also known as " The Parsonage . " The house was so @-@ called because its lease was owned by Jack Parsons , a rocket scientist who had been a founding member of the JPL and who was also a devout follower of the new religious movement founded by English occultist Aleister Crowley in 1904 , Thelema . Parsons was the head of the Agape Lodge , a branch of the Thelemite Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) . Unbeknownst to Cameron , Parsons had just finished a series of rituals utilizing Enochian magic with his friend and lodger L. Ron Hubbard , all with the intent of attracting an " Elemental " woman to be his lover . Upon encountering Cameron , with her distinctive red hair and blue eyes , he considered her to be the individual whom he had invoked . After they met at the Parsonage on 18 January 1946 , they were instantly attracted to each other , and spent the next two weeks in Parsons ' bedroom together . Although Cameron was unaware of it , Parsons saw this as a form of sex magic that constituted part of the Babalon Working , a rite to invoke the birth of Thelemite goddess Babalon onto Earth in human form .

Cameron briefly traveled to New York City to see a friend , there discovering that she was pregnant , and again decided to terminate the pregnancy . Parsons meanwhile had founded a company with Hubbard and his girlfriend Sara Northrup , Allied Enterprises , into which he invested his life savings . It nevertheless became apparent that Hubbard was a confidence trickster , who tried to flee with Parsons ' money , resulting in the termination of their friendship . Returning to Pasadena , Cameron consoled Parsons , painting a picture of Sara with her legs severed below the knee . Parsons decided to sell 1003 , which was then demolished , and the couple instead moved to Manhattan Beach . It was there , on 19 October 1946 , that he and Cameron married at San Juan Capistrano courthouse in Orange County , in a service witnessed by his best friend Edward Forman . Having an aversion to all religion , Cameron initially took no interest in Parsons ' Thelemite beliefs and occult practices , although he maintained that she had an important destiny , giving her the magical name of " Candida " , often shortened to " Candy " , which became her nickname .

Cameron decided to travel to Paris , France , with the intention of studying art at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière , hoping that they would admit her with a letter of recommendation from Pasadena 's Art Centre School . She also hoped to use the trip to visit England and meet with Crowley , to explain to him Parsons 'Babalon Working . Traveling via New York aboard the SS America , upon arrival she learned that Crowley had died , and that she was unable to join the college . She found post @-@ war Paris " extreme and bleak " , although befriended Juliette Greco before spending three weeks in Switzerland and then returning home . When Cameron developed catalepsy , Parsons suggested that she read Sylvan Muldoon 's books on astral projection , also encouraging her to read James Frazer 's The Golden Bough , Heinrich Zimmer 's The King and the Corpse , and Joseph Campbell 's The Hero with a Thousand Faces . Although she still did not accept Thelema , she began to be increasingly interested in the occult , and in particular the use of

the tarot.

Parsons and Cameron 's relationship was deteriorating and they contemplated divorce. While Cameron visited the artistic commune at San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, there befriending the artist Renate Druks, Parsons moved into a house on Redondo Beach, having a brief relationship with an Irishwoman named Gladis Gohan before Cameron returned . Parsons and Cameron then moved to the coach house at 1071 South Orange Grove, while he began work at the Bermite Powder Company constructing explosives for the film industry. They began holding parties once more that were attended largely by bohemians and members of the beat generation, with Cameron attending the jazz clubs of Central Avenue with her friend, the sculptor Julie Macdonald. Earning some of her own money, Cameron produced illustrations for fashion magazines and sold some of her paintings, with a number being purchased by her friend, the artist Jirayr Zorthian. Parsons and Cameron had decided to travel to Mexico for a few months. On the day before they planned to leave, June 17, 1952, he received a rush order of explosives for a film set, and began work on the order at his house. In the midst of this project, an explosion destroyed the building, fatally wounding Parsons; he was rushed to hospital, but there declared dead. Cameron did not want to see the body, instead retreating to San Miguel, asking her friend George Frey to oversee the cremation.

= = = The Children, Kenneth Anger, and Curtis Harrington: 1952? 68 = = =

In the hope of communicating with Parsons 'spirit, while in Mexico Cameron began performing blood rituals in which she cut her own wrist. As part of these rituals, she claimed to have received a new magical identity, Hilarion. When she learned that an unidentified flying object had been seen over Washington D.C.'s Capitol Building she considered it a response to Parsons' death. After two months, she returned to California, there attempting suicide. Increasingly interested in occultism, she read through her husband's papers, coming to understand the purpose of his Babalon Working and furthermore believing that the spirit of Babalon had been incarnated into herself. She came to believe that Parsons had been murdered by the police or anti @-@ zionists, and continued her attempts at astral projection to commune with his spirit. Her mental stability was deteriorating, and she became convinced that a nuclear test on Eniwetok Atoll would result in the destruction of the California coast. Though unproven, there is evidence that she was institutionalized in a psychiatric ward during this period, before having a brief affair with African @-@ American jazz player Leroy Booth, a relationship that would have been illegal at the time. At some point in this period she stayed with the Thelemite Wilfred Talbot Smith and his wife, although he thought that she had "bats in the belfry" and ignored what he described as her "Mad Mental Meanderings".

In December 1952 Cameron moved to a derelict ranch in Beaumont . With the aid of Druks and Paul Mathison, she gathered a loose clique of magical practitioners around herself which she called " The Children " . Intentionally comprising members from various different races , she oversaw a range of sex magic rituals with the intent of creating a breed of mixed @-@ race " moonchildren " who would be devoted to Horus. She fell pregnant as a result of these rites, terming her forthcoming child " the Wormwood Star ", although the pregnancy ended in miscarriage. Over time , many of Cameron 's associates within The Children distanced themselves from her , in particular because of her increasingly apocalyptic pronouncements; she claimed that Mexico was about to conquer the U.S., that a race war was about to break out in the Old World, and that a comet would hit the Earth, with she and her followers being rescued by a flying saucer that would take them to Mars. During her magical rituals she was using a range of drugs, including marijuana, peyote, and magic mushrooms, and in June 1953 visited Los Angeles to attend a Gerald Heard lecture on the mind @-@ expanding usages of hallucinogens. Perhaps related to her drug use, Cameron was suffering from auditory hallucinations, frequent bouts of depression, and dramatic mood swings. During this period, she was in correspondence with the Thelemite Jane Wolfe, although other Thelemites and Crowley associates such as Karl Germer and Gerald Yorke deemed her insane.

At the advice of the I Ching, Cameron returned to Los Angeles, moving in with Booth until the duo were arrested for illegal drug possession. Released on bail, she moved into Druks' Malibu home,

and through her joined the avant @-@ garde artistic circle surrounding the socialite Samson De Brier . It was through this circle that Cameron met the Thelemite film maker Kenneth Anger , and after a party titled " Come As Your Madness " which was organised by Mathison and Druks , he decided to produce a film featuring Cameron and others in the group . The resulting film was Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome . After seeing the film , the English Thelemite Kenneth Grant wrote to Cameron hoping that she might move to England and join his New Isis Lodge , however Cameron never responded .

Through common friends Cameron met Sheridan " Sherry " Kimmel , and the two entered a relationship . A veteran of the Second World War from Florida , Kimmel suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder , often causing him severe mood swings . He developed an interest in occultism and became intensely jealous of Parsons ' continuing influence over Cameron , destroying Parsons ' notes on the Babalon Working that she had kept . Cameron again became pregnant , although was unsure who the father was ; she gave birth to a daughter , Crystal Eve Kimmel , on Christmas Eve 1955 . She allowed her daughter to behave how she pleased , believing that that was the best way for to learn . With her friend , the film @-@ maker Curtis Harrington , Cameron then produced a short film , The Wormwood Star , which was filmed at the home of multi @-@ millionaire art collector Edward James ; the film features images of Cameron 's paintings , and recitations of her own poems . In autumn 1956 Cameron 's first exhibition was held , at Walter Hopp 's studio in Brentwood , however a number of paintings were destroyed when the gallery caught fire . Around this time , Cameron was introduced to the actor Dean Stockwell at a public recital of her poetry ; he then introduced her to his friend and fellow actor Dennis Hopper .

In late 1957, Cameron moved to San Francisco with her friends Norman Rose and David Metzer. There she mingled within the same bohemian social circles as many of the Beat Generation of artists and writers, and was a regular at avant @-@ garde poetry readings. She began a relationship with the artist Burt Shonberg, and with him moved into a ranch outside of Joshua Tree. Together they began exploring the subject of Ufology, and became friends with the ufologist George Van Tassel. However, after Kimmel was released from a psychiatric ward, Cameron re @-@ established her relationship with him, and in 1959 they were married in a civil ceremony at Santa Monica City Hall; their relationship was strained and they separated soon after.

In 1960, she then appeared alongside Hopper in Harrington 's first full @-@ length film, Night Tide . The film was a critical success and , despite not receiving a wide distribution , it became a cult classic. She was also invited to appear in Harrington 's next film, Games, although ultimately never did so. Having based herself in the Los Angeles area of Venice, it was here that an exhibit of her artwork was held at a local arts shop in August 1961. On his return to the U.S. from Europe, Anger moved in with Cameron for a time, although in early 1964 she then left Venice and moved in with Anger in his flat in Silverlake Boulevard until he departed for New York City. According to Anger biographer Bill Landis, Cameron had become " a rather formidable maternal figure " in Anger 's life. In October 1964, the Cinema Theatre in Los Angeles held an event known as The Transcendental Art of Cameron, which displayed her art and poetry and screened some of her films ; however, Anger arrived and disrupted the event by objecting to the screening of Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome without his permission. He proceeded to launch a poster campaign against his former friend, The Cameron File, in which he labelled Cameron Typhoid Mary of the Occult World ". She later reconciled with Anger, visiting him in San Francisco, where he introduced her to Anton LaVey, the founder of the Church of Satan. LaVey was delighted to meet her, having been a fan of Night Tide.

= = = Later life : 1969 ? 1995 = = =

In the latter part of the 1960s, Cameron and her daughter moved to the pueblos of Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she developed a friendship with the sculptor John Chamberlain and appeared in his art movie, Thumb Suck, which was never released. It was also while in New Mexico that she suffered a collapsed lung and required hospitalization. Her wider health was poor, as she suffered from chronic bronchitis and emphysema? which were exacerbated by her chain smoking? while

hand tremors resulted in her being unable to paint for four years . Returning to California , by 1969 she was living in the Pioneertown sector of Joshua Tree . From there she and her daughter moved to a small bungalow on North Genesse Avenue in the West Hollywood area of Los Angeles , which at the time had become impoverished and associated with crime , sex stores , and adult movie theatres ; she remained there for the rest of her life .

By the mid @-@ 1980s Cameron was focusing to a greater extent on her family life , particularly in looking after her grandchildren , who were known to go joyriding in her jeep . Neighbors recall her playing a Celtic harp in her garden and slowly walking her dog around the block while smoking a joint of marijuana . At one point she was arrested for cultivating cannabis in her home . During that decade , Cameron became a regular practitioner of Tai chi , taking part in group sessions in Bronson Park under the tutelage of Marshall Ho 'o and gaining a teaching certificate in the subject . She also came to be very interested in Jose Arguelles ' The Mayan Factor and Charles Musès ' The Lion Path , undertaking the Neo @-@ shamanic practices endorsed in the latter . The claims regarding a prehistoric matriarchal society devoted to a Goddess which were made in the writings of archaeologist Marija Gimbutas also interested and influenced her . Cameron was also very interested in A. S. Raleigh 's Woman and Superwoman , taping her own reading of it and sending copies to her friends and getting it played on local public radio . Throughout all of these disparate spiritual interests , she nevertheless retained faith in the Thelemic ideas of Crowley .

As well as entertaining old friends who came to visit her in her home , Cameron also met with younger occultists , such as the Thelemite William Breeze and the industrial musician Genesis P @-@ Orridge . Cameron aided Breeze in co @-@ editing a collection of Parsons ' occult and libertarian writings , which were published as Freedom is a Two @-@ Edged Sword in 1989 . Cameron was also acquainted with the experimental film @-@ maker Chick Strand and appeared in the latter 's 1979 project Loose Ends , during which she narrated the story of an exorcism . In 1989 an exhibition of her work , titled The Pearl of Reprisal , was held at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery . It included a selection of her paintings and a screening of Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome and The Wormwood Star , while Cameron attended to provide a candle @-@ it reading of her poetry . In the mid @-@ 1990s , Cameron was diagnosed with a brain tumor and underwent radiotherapy treatment , which she supplemented with alternative medicines . However , the tumor was cancerous and metastasized to her lungs . She died at the age of 73 in the VA Medical Centre on July 24 , 1995 , having undergone the Thelemic last rites , carried out by a high priestess of the Ordo Templi Orientis . Her body was cremated and its ashes scattered in the Mojave Desert . A memorial event was then held at the Venice 's Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center in August .

= = Personality = =

According to historian of Thelema Martin P. Starr , Cameron 's " very dominating personality could not brook rivals of any kind " . Stockwell described Cameron as " a very , very intense personality , but very fascinating " . Considering her to be " an out and out witch " , Hopper described her as having an " infectious personality " through her presence ; she was someone " that you knew [was] different and [she] had a magnetic quality that you wanted to be closer to . " Charles Brittin , who knew Cameron on Los Angeles ' artistic circuit , called her " a sweet person with a great personality , not the way some of her friends wanted to picture her to be " . Her friend Shirley Berman described her as having " many different crowds of friends , and I think she was a different personality with each crowd ... She wasn 't an even personality at all , but she was always a very gracious person . "

= = Artistic style = =

Cameron 's occult beliefs closely impacted her artworks . According to The Huffington Post , Cameron 's artwork merges " Crowley 's occult with the surrealism and symbolism of French poets , yielding dark yet whimsical depictions buzzing with otherworldly power " . The art curator Philippe Vergne described her work as being situated on " the edge of surrealism and psychedelia " , embodying " an aspect of modernity that deeply doubts and defies cartesian logic at a moment in

history when these values have shown their own limitations ".

Cameron 's biographer Spencer Kansa was of the opinion that Cameron exhibited parallels with the Australian artist and occultist Rosaleen Norton , both in terms of her physical appearance and the similarities between their artistic styles . Harrington also saw similarities in the work of Cameron and the artists Leonora Carrington and Leonor Fini . On the website of the Cameron Parsons Foundation , Michael Duncan expressed the view that Cameron 's work rivals that of " fellow surrealists " like Carrington , Fini , Remedios Varo , and Ithell Colquhoun , while also appearing " fascinatingly prescient " of the works by later artists Kiki Smith , Amy Cutler , Karen Kilimmck , and Hernan Bas . In later years , Cameron would often be erroneously labelled a Beat artist because she inhabited many of the same social circles as prominent Beat poets and writers . Rejecting this label , Kansa instead described Cameron as " a pre @-@ Beat bohemian , whose heart lay in Romanticism " .

= = Legacy = =

Cameron 's reputation as an artist grew posthumously . In 2006 her friend Scott Hobbs established the Cameron @-@ Parsons Foundation to serve as an archive storing and promoting her work . In 1995 , her painting Peyote Vision was included as part of an exhibition on "Beat Culture and the New American " which was held at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City . A number of her artworks were then exhibited alongside those of Crowley and other Thelemites for the 2001 exhibition "Reflections of a New Aeon " , held at the Eleven Seven Gallery in California 's Long Beach . In 2007 a retrospective of Cameron 's work was held at the Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery in New York City 's Chelsea district , while that same year some of her works appeared in the traveling exhibition "Semina Culture " , which was devoted to all of the artists who contributed to Wallace Berman 's journal . In 2014 , a retrospective of her word , titled "Cameron : Songs for the Witch Woman , " was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art , Los Angeles . That year , the U.K.-based publisher Fulgur Esoterica released a book featuring images of Cameron 's artworks and Parsons ' poems . In 2015 , a retrospective of her work titled "Cameron : Cinderella of the Wastelands " was held at the Deitch Projects gallery in Soho , New York City , which included an evening in which friends of Cameron 's assembled to publicly discuss her legacy .

Cameron 's life was brought to wider attention through the publication of two biographies about Parsons , John Carter 's Sex and Rockets and then George Pendle 's Strange Angel . On the basis of this , a dramatization of Parsons ' life appeared as the play Moonchild , performed at The Access Theatre on Broadway in 2004 ; for the show , Cameron was portrayed by Heather Tom . In 2011 , Wormwood Star , a biography of Cameron authored by the Briton Spencer Kansa , was published , a work that was not authorized by the Cameron @-@ Parsons Foundation . He had spent almost three years in the U.S. researching the book , interviewing many of those who knew her , a number of whom died shortly after . Kansa stated that most of those whom he interviewed " were immensely generous with their time and recollections " but that " one of Cameron 's kookier friends " had begun making claims that Kansa was not a biographer but was really an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation . Writing in the Los Angeles Review of Books , Steffie Nelson noted that Kansa did " his due diligence tracking down [Cameron 's] childhood acquaintances and friends " but at the same time was critical of the lack of sources of footnotes .