

LandEscape

CONTEMPORARY ART REVIEW

Anniversary Edition



**JOAS NEBE
CHRISTINE COMEAU
SIJIA GUOE
KONSTANTINA MAVRIDOU
STEPHANIE PAINE
PAVEL OTDELNOV
OLGA MARKARI
MARGARET WASIUTA
HOLLIS HAMMONDS**



The Skinning of the Eel, by Christine Comau, exhibition, 2023 photo by Vincent Drouin



The Enchanting Pool - K. Mavridou

C O N T E M P O R A R Y A R T R E V I E W



Hollis Hammonds

USA

Built on threads of memory and tied to the public collective consciousness, my drawings and installations connect personal narrative to social issues, natural and man-made disasters, environmental degradation, and a fragile changing landscape. I often draw on inspiration from a fire that consumed my childhood home when I was 15 years old. In the context of climate change, that displacement takes on new meaning. Rather than being an aberration of the past, the incident foretells a potentially apocalyptic future. Nonetheless, I find hope in landscapes and forests and trees. I rely on drawing and assemblage in many forms to construct both real and symbolic representations, melding fact and fiction, past and present, to create meaning out of a world currently in turmoil.



Joas Nebe

Germany

The sprawling thematic expanse of his work, ranging from urban architecture to communication ideologies, reveals Nebe's understanding of these motifs as distinctive languages through which people communicate. His prime focus on the utilization of language, both politically charged and devoid of it, coupled with an appreciation for the inherent gap between intent and the tool's limitations, seeks to demonstrate the perpetual scope for interpretation in communication, reflecting a critical viewpoint towards ideology and political theory. The artist's journey, meandering through varied mediums and themes, is deeply imbued with an array of influences, both cinematic and literary, that have intricately shaped his work.



Margaret Wasiuta

Poland

Inspired by life and people, my painting is a way of story-telling. Using the language of colour and lines, I attempt to translate my feelings onto the canvas. To accomplish my goals of expression, I make use of acrylic, oil, pastel, charcoal, pencil, glaze, and varnish in various combinations. Layer after layer, I want to expose what is underneath. My recent artwork tends to focus on the creation of a structural space - one which represents both an atmosphere of personal experience, as well as an active state of mind. The creation of this image often becomes a living process, blending the boundary between abstraction and representation. My paintings are meant to be an open invitation to the viewer, providing the space from which individual meaning and significance emerge.



Pavel Otdelnov

United Kingdom

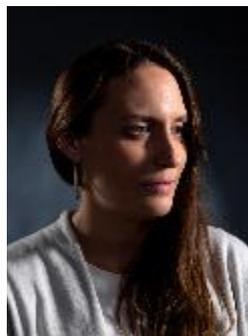
Pavel Otdelnov is a multimedia artist working primarily in painting, installations, and exploring such subjects as urban space, the environment, historical memory, and Soviet history. Pavel Otdelnov was born in 1979 in Dzerzhinsk, Russia. He graduated from the Moscow State Academic Art Institute named after Surikov and the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Moscow. He has lived and worked in London since 2022. From 1996, Pavel Otdelnov has exhibited widely in both public and private contexts in Russia, Sweden, the UK, and elsewhere. He was nominated for the Kandinsky Prize in 2015, 2017, and 2019, in the category of 'Project of the Year', and in 2021 he became a finalist in this category.



Sijia Guo

United Kingdom

Sijia Guo also known as Zoe, is a visual artist based in London. Her background in sociology and illustration, combined with her experiences of growing up in China and Japan, inform the multi-layered subject matter of her work. She has a multifaceted studio practice for which drawing and humor are central. Sometimes she draws on paper, at other times she incises a drawn line into clay, adds color with glazes and fires the clay to yield a ceramic painting; at other times she uses ink wash painting. She employs a variety of media including sculpture and print, to create symbolic associations in her art. Her focus is on marginalised individuals and the themes of nostalgic childhood fantasy and the subconscious, which serve as a form of escapism and resistance to consumerism and societal expectations.



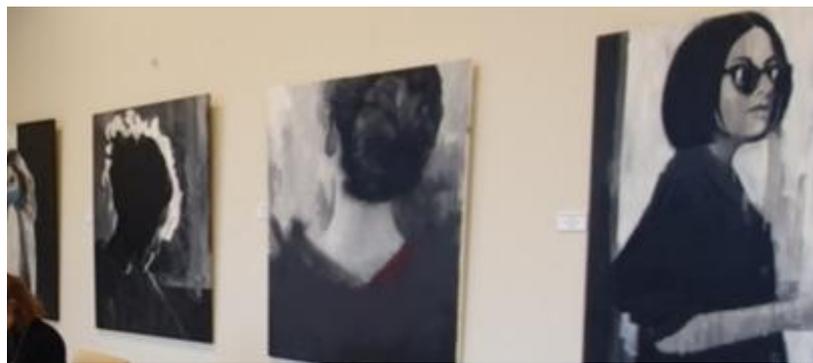
Stephanie Paine

USA

My creative practice is explorative and experimental, and rooted in photography's many distinct processes. I use a range of techniques including traditional gelatin silver methods, collage, and primitive cameras, and rely on the medium as a material of light and alchemy that surpasses the release of the shutter. Conceptually, my work is less concerned with the representational, leaning into aspects of impressionism and surrealism. In the last decade, I've been focused on the natural environment as it relates to the human experience. A concept I refer to as ecological dissonance attempts to address the disconnect between humankind's actions and the health of the environment. In conveying this concept, I often incorporate the human figure or use my own in the act of making the photograph.



What a perfect world - Olga Markari



Hollis Hammonds 4

lives and works in Austin, TX, USA

Margaret Wasiuta 34

lives and works in Canada

Olga Markari 60

lives and works in Cyprus

Pavel Otdelnov 80

lives and works in London, United Kingdom

Stephanie Paine 102

lives and works in Lafayette, LA, USA

Christine Comeau 126

lives and works in Quebec, QC, Canada

Konstantina Mavridou 156

lives and works in Thessaloniki, Greece

Joas Nebe 176

lives and works in Germany

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Olga Markari

Cyprus

Olga Markari studied Dance at Nadina's Loizidou ballet school, at Rudra Bejart School in Switzerland, and at the Conservatorio de Danza de Madrid Maria de Avila in Spain. In 2015 she became a dancer with the De Dutch Junior Dance Division, and in 2017 she joined Wroclaw Ballet. In 2021 she became a demi-soloist with Opera Nova in Poland and, in 2022, she was promoted to soloist. Her repertoire comprises the title role of Anna in Bozena Klimczak's "Anna Karenina", Clara in Paul Chalmer's "Nutcracker", Alice in Robert Bondara's "Alice in Wonderland", Madame de Tourvel and Cecile in Krzysztof Pastor's Dangerous Liaisons, Snow Queen in Youri Vamos' "Nutcracker", Zulma and Friend in "Giselle", friends in Jacek Tyskie's "Romeo and Juliette" and "Copelia" and others. Since June 2024 she is a freelance dancer and choreographer.



Konstantina Mavridou

Greece

My art is a dialogue between the constants of nature and the ever-evolving landscape of technology. Drawing heavily from the realms of science, mathematics, and philosophy, my work seeks to explore and question the current technological acceleration and its trends. By interweaving the physical with the digital, the real with the illusionary, I aim to create a poetic reflection on space, time, and perception. My projects delve into themes of movement, transformation, and the interplay between the tangible and intangible. Through my art, I invite viewers to contemplate the nature of experience, the fluid boundaries between technology and nature, and the endless possibilities that lie in interpretation and creation. This journey is not just about observing the world but about engaging with it, challenging our perceptions, and imagining new realities.



Christine Comeau

Canada

Since the beginning of my career, my creations have been rooted in an exploration of mobility as a metaphor for a personal and collective quest for identity. To this end, I design temporary shelters inspired by the tents of nomadic peoples who, rather than putting down roots in one place, choose to roam, invest and inhabit the territory. The tent translates the idea of a house, a refuge, but also a portable shelter that accompanies us on our travels. From then on, it becomes both the reassuring symbol of a refuge and that of a shifting identity, forged by time and space traveled. I also imagine and make "relational clothes" in which two people must often slip into. In doing so, they are encouraged to connect with each other, both physically and symbolically, in a relationship of intimacy, sharing and negotiation. These clothes also become camouflage, blurring the external markers of the participants' individual identity. It results from it performed installations which induce an external as well as internal disorientation. Here again, the idea of a shifting identity is omnipresent.

LandEscape meets

Hollis Hammonds

Lives and works in Austin, TX, USA

Built on threads of memory and tied to the public collective consciousness, my mixed media works connect personal narrative to social issues, natural and man-made disasters, and environmental degradation.

Working across various mediums and methods, my art serves as a form of storytelling that invites reflection and contemplation on our relationship with the natural world. I often draw on inspiration from a fire that consumed my childhood home when I was 15 years old. In the context of climate change, that displacement takes on new meaning. Rather than being an aberration of the past, the incident foretells a potentially apocalyptic future. My works explore themes of climate grief intertwined with personal memories. My focus lies in conveying the fragility of nature and the impact of human actions on the environment, drawing inspiration from the mysterious depths of forests and piles of debris.

 [@mynameishollis](#)

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

Hello Hollis and welcome to LandEscape. Before starting to elaborate about your artistic production and we would like to invite our readers to visit <https://hollishammonds.com> in order to get a wide idea about your artistic production. You have a solid formal training: after having earned your BFA in Drawing from Northern Kentucky University, you nurtured your education with a MFA in 2D Studies, that you received from the University of Cincinnati. How did your educational background shape your development and approach as an artist?

Growing up in the Midwest in Northern Kentucky, just outside of the city of Cincinnati in

Ohio, offered me access to many amazing opportunities. Although I didn't come from a family of means, my parents fostered all forms of creativity from singing to dance to art making. I was able to study at an affordable yet large public university that offered a wide range of programs of which I studied design, drawing, costume design, and dance. I eventually settled into the Drawing BFA program which allowed me to focus on drawing as both medium but also as concept. I was pushed by my faculty at the undergraduate level to experiment with materials, scale, narrative, and the human form. These years were very formative in my creative journey. I always had an interest in drawing, but never knew that I could focus primarily on drawing as my primary art form. The freedom I had at Northern Kentucky University was exactly what I needed. In my final thesis





Carbon Collectors, installation

created for the exhibition Upwelling, at ICOSA gallery in Austin, TX
and curated by ICOSA Member Madeline Irvine/Look See Productions.

exhibition I combined drawings with wood carvings, textiles, and performance. All of my works were large-scale, and I loved combining several disciplines into one experience.

Growing up near Cincinnati, I was able to personally see many amazing exhibitions of artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Andre Serrano, and Yoko Ono. I was also inspired by artists like Robert Rauschenberg, Merce Cunningham, Laurie Anderson, Tim Hawkinson, and Kara Walker, all of which had a strong influence on my multi-layered and interdisciplinary practice. I went on to receive an MFA at the University of Cincinnati in 2D Studies. This program was also supportive of experimentation and valued the blurring of disciplinary lines. I was free to investigate narrative threads in my work through drawing, painting, installation, performance, and video. This is also where I discovered my love of teaching art. As a graduate student I was able to teach several classes on campus from life drawing to foundation design. For me teaching and making art go hand in hand. My studio practice directly informs my teaching and vice-versa. As a teacher I embrace a multi-media approach that values skill development, but puts equal emphasis on the conceptual intentions of the artist.

For its special edition of *LandEscape* we have selected *Carbon Collectors*, a stimulating installation created for the exhibition *Upwelling*, at ICOSA gallery in Austin, TX. Your work strikes us with how it blends personal and global narratives, highlighting the cyclical nature of our environment—and, we dare say, of our lives. Your holistic view of environmental issues is particularly captivating: it not only addresses the urgency of preserving such a fragile ecosystem but also reveals a sense of hope that it provides

us. When walking our readers through the genesis of *Carbon Collectors*, would you tell us something about your usual setup and process?

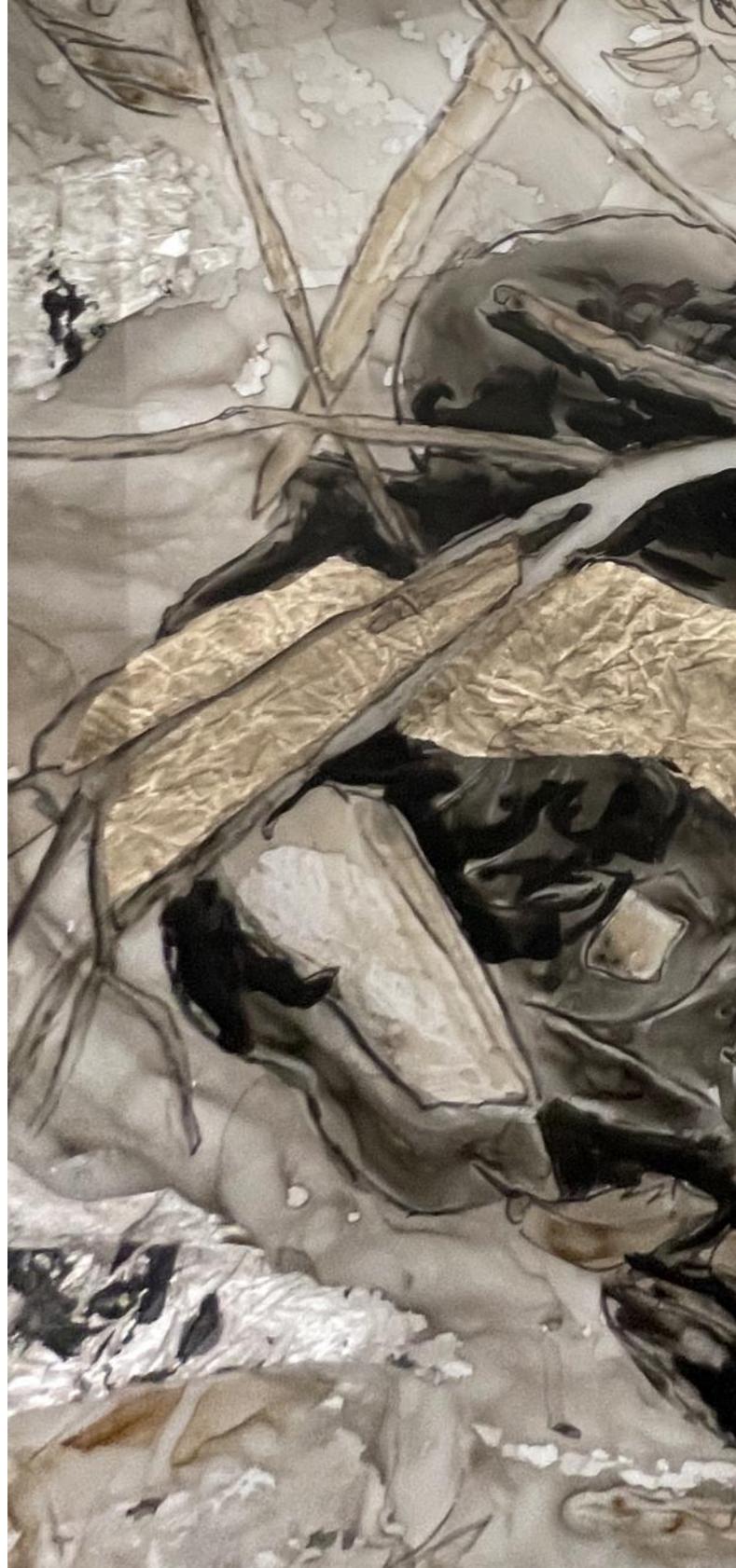
Hollis Hammonds: I was recently awarded a sabbatical from my university. This allowed me to spend several months at various artist residencies this year, including the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming. *Carbon Collectors* is a work that evolved organically from drawings created during these residency experiences. My proposal for my research leave included two goals: to investigate and further develop my work related to climate change and climate grief, and to develop a more sustainable art studio practice. In Virginia my focus was on feeling more connected to the natural landscape through observational drawing and photography. I was compelled to more carefully observe the local landscape, plants, and ecosystem. At first I was looking for instances where the human-made intersected or was in conflict with the natural world. Instead I focused on thickets, tangled vines, and textural details. Many of the drawings I created during this residency became the foundation for the **Carbon Collectors** piece.

My next residency was at the Ucross Foundation in Wyoming. During this time I was thinking about sustainable art practices, so I collected rocks, soil, and plants to make dyes and pigments, I made charcoal and carbon ink to draw with, and I made paper from recycled materials. The rest of my time I focused on representing the trees. On my walk to the studio I saw twisted groves of trees in low lying and swampy areas, created by this rugged environment and climate. I became fascinated with the growth patterns and

gnarly branches. I used carbon ink, India ink, and walnut ink, as well as lithography crayon to draw onto translucent drafting film. At the time of producing these drawings I thought of them simply as studies, not finished works per se. It was only later that they organically came together to construct the **Carbon Collectors**.

One thing that is important in my work is reflection on the local. I prefer to be inspired by what is around me, what is visible, but also what is sometimes intangible. I also work in multiples, making many parts, drawings, or artifacts, that are then combined into a larger installation. In this way, I feel that my work, although inspired by my experience and reflective of the locations I've been in, becomes a larger culmination of many moments and many places, creating a more universal narrative. It was only when I came back to my home studio that I then constructed the installation for the exhibition *Upwelling*. I knew that I wanted to utilize the many drawings I had made, but also wanted to reflect on the importance of the trees. I foraged fallen limbs and branches from my neighborhood that I blackened with chalk board paint. Since I had been turning twigs into charcoal in a fire pit, I was particularly interested in trees as producers of carbon. At the same time, trees and forests are literal carbon collectors which help to filter our air. However trees cannot offset all of the carbon produced by humankind. So, **Carbon Collectors** is a culmination of all of these things. It is a fragile, multi-layered piece that entices us through the beauty of nature, but also invites us to question our own role in our current climate crisis. Well, at least, that is my goal.

The themes of natural and man-made disasters, environmental degradation, and a fragile changing landscape play a central role





Carbon Collectors, installation



Carbon Collectors, installation



in your artistic research and production. It's important to mention that you often draw on inspiration from a fire that consumed your childhood home when you were 15 years old. One could say that it gave you a visceral understanding of how quickly our surroundings can change and how vulnerable we are to forces beyond our control. How do you view *the role of memories and personal experience* in your artistic process?

Hollis Hammonds: My work has always been grounded in personal memory and experiences. I believe all art is autobiographical, even if we try to make it as non-representational as possible, it is always inspired by our own beliefs, philosophies, ideas, feelings, or aesthetics. I spent many years trying to strip the sentimentality out of my work, but the older I've gotten, the more I've embraced the expression of personal emotion and narrative. Leaning into the emotional seems crucial when making work about climate grief for instance. It is through the hand of the artist that we can find a connection to speed, intensity, memory, and experience. Also, if I don't feel a connection to the content of the work, the work will end up lacking in some way. So even a drawn study is not just about faithfully representing a thing, but it is interpreting that form through my own mind, heart, and hand. This is why I love drawing so much. It is difficult to hide the hand of the artist including the visible mistakes of the process. In this way drawing is a more vulnerable medium than painting or photography for instance.

For many years, I tried to suppress my personal feelings and stories. I felt that I was just documenting and recording disaster images. I tried to take away the emotive mark making and imperfections in my drawings. I began tracing as a form of recording. It was only through the collections of moments that the viewer would feel the impact of the natural disasters I was documenting. But now, I've swung back to a more



A fragile landscape

gestural and imperfect manner of drawing. I think this directly relates to my current embrace and connection with my personal experiences and memories. I suppose I'm okay with pulling at the viewer's heartstrings as a

means to engage deeper thinking about our own impact on the environment, or our own complacency perhaps.

The extraordinarily cyclical and self



-regenerative characteristics of the ecosystem should not make us forget that *the damaging effects of the fossil fuel industry cannot be offset by forests alone*. This means we humans need to actively help protect the

environment, which in turn helps protect us. Throughout history, artists have long used their creations to communicate ideas and conveying messages. How do you view *the impact of artists on important social issues*,



The Dark Forest Homeland

particularly environmental concerns, as their reach grows wider?

Hollis Hammonds: We are in a time of social

and environmental consciousness in the arts. I have no doubt that artists are very important when it comes to communicating social change ideals to the public. We are just one



small piece of the cultural and social landscape, along with scientists, scholars, activists, and social workers. Compared to that previous list, I believe that artists feel insignificant, but it is

through art and design that people are moved and informed. There are many artists that have paved the way through their environmental and social art activism. Artists

like Mel Chin and Kim Abeles have personally inspired my own work. Art critic and curator Linda Weintraub is also an important voice today when considering the ways in which artists can become environmental activists through their creative practice.

One way I believe artists can have a greater impact is through collaboration. I've been lucky to have collaborated with other inspiring artists and poets, and hope to collaborate with other scholars in the sciences in the future. As artists we tend to be solitary, but it is through collaboration that we can reach broader audiences, expand our own understanding of the current crisis, and hopefully work to find new creative solutions to those challenges.

We are captivated by your nuanced approach to employing both real and symbolic representations. In an art world increasingly dominated by conceptual and digital practices, how do you view the role of symbolism in your work? Could you elaborate on your process of selecting and developing symbols, and perhaps share insights into a particularly significant symbol in your recent pieces?

Hollis Hammonds: I enjoy the multiplicity of meaning that can be found in the most common of subjects. The representation and symbolic meaning of "the forest" or "the woods" has become an integral part of my recent works. For instance an older work called *The Dark Forest* is a 34 foot long drawing of the woods (as I remember them) behind my home where I played as a child. In this work the woods are both a literal representation of the forest I played in, and also a place of fairytales and imagination. These woods I've drawn are also dark and filled with junk, not an ideal version of the romanticized landscapes of the past. *Future Forest* is another work I created that represents





Future Forest, installation



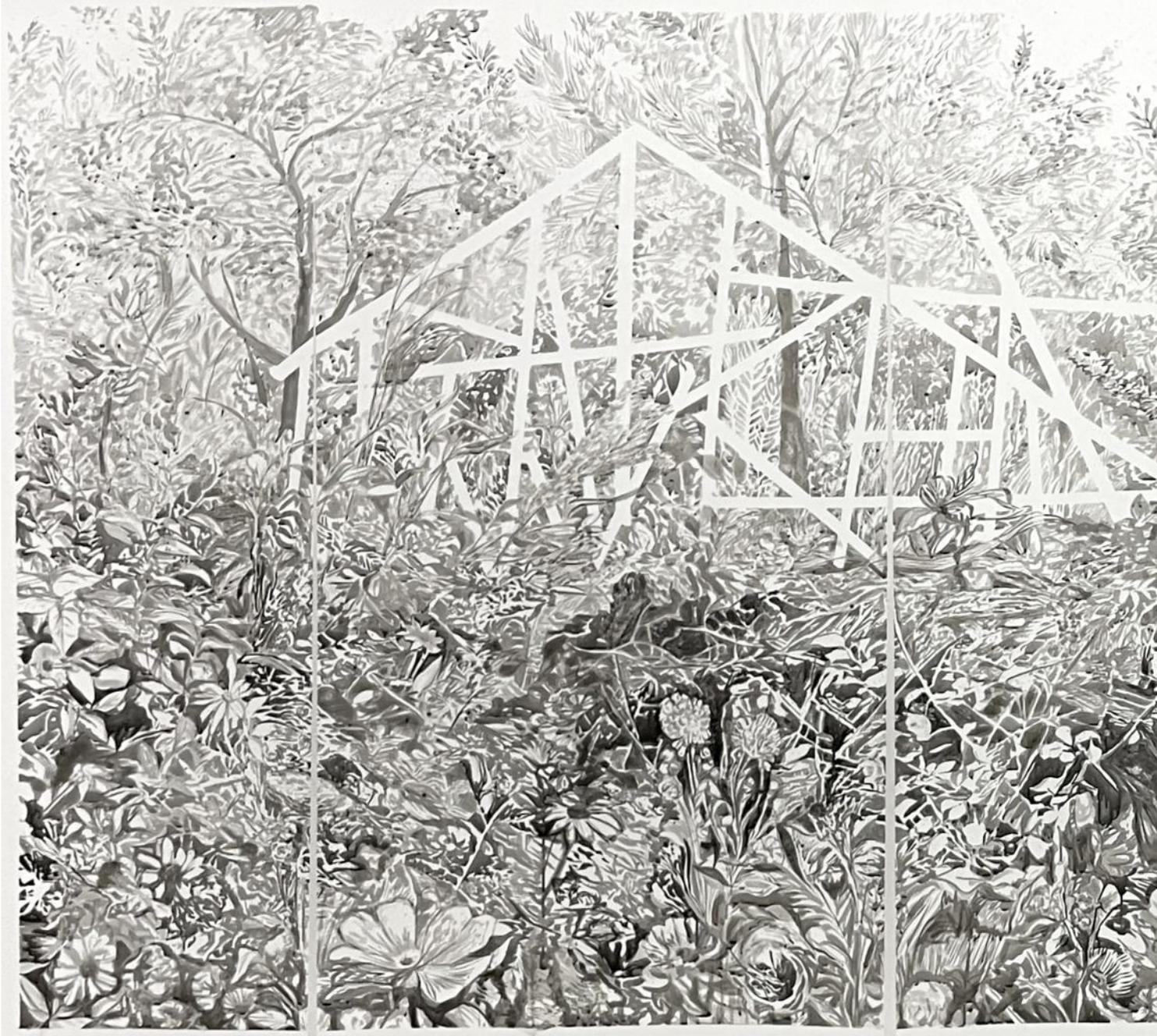
Future Forest, installation



a symbolic forest of trees combined with piles of junk on the ground and in the branches. In this forest human waste and nature are fused together in a Frankenstein manner.

The forest motif is visible again in a series of works that were recently exhibited in group show called *Objects of Affection* in Austin, TX. The first work called ***A Fragile Landscape*** pictures fragments of trees and foliage all rendered in black ink brush marks on a wrinkled fabric panel. The materials and the application of the marks feel crude. The image is inspired by those low lying and twisted trees I mentioned earlier at the *Ucross Foundation* in Wyoming. The simplification of the composition, along with the fragmented hand-made marks on an imperfect substrate provide enough information to hold the piece together both visually and conceptually. These tactile qualities are essential to establishing the deeper meaning in this drawing.

A second piece from that same show called ***The Trees of Ucross*** captures a similarly crude and simplified graphic image of a collection of twisted and tangled trees made from ink drawn onto handmade pieces of paper. In this work the textural affect of the handmade paper adds to the earthiness and natural feel of the work. Not only have I been leaning into the emotional aspect of my work but also the physical and tactile quality. In all of these examples the trees and the forest have power and presence on their own. The organic forms are familiar, maybe even comforting, but there is always that connotation of the woods as a wild and scary place. At the same time, the forest is blackened, stark, fragmented, and damaged. Although no figure is present in any of these works, it is always suggested as a character that has had some impact on that environment.



Distant Past, Distant Future, ink on drafting film, 103" x 180" x 8", 2024

Another work of yours that has particularly impressed us is entitled *Distant Past, Distant Future*. With its 103" x 180" large dimensions, it invites the viewers to imagine a landscape of the distant past or distant future,

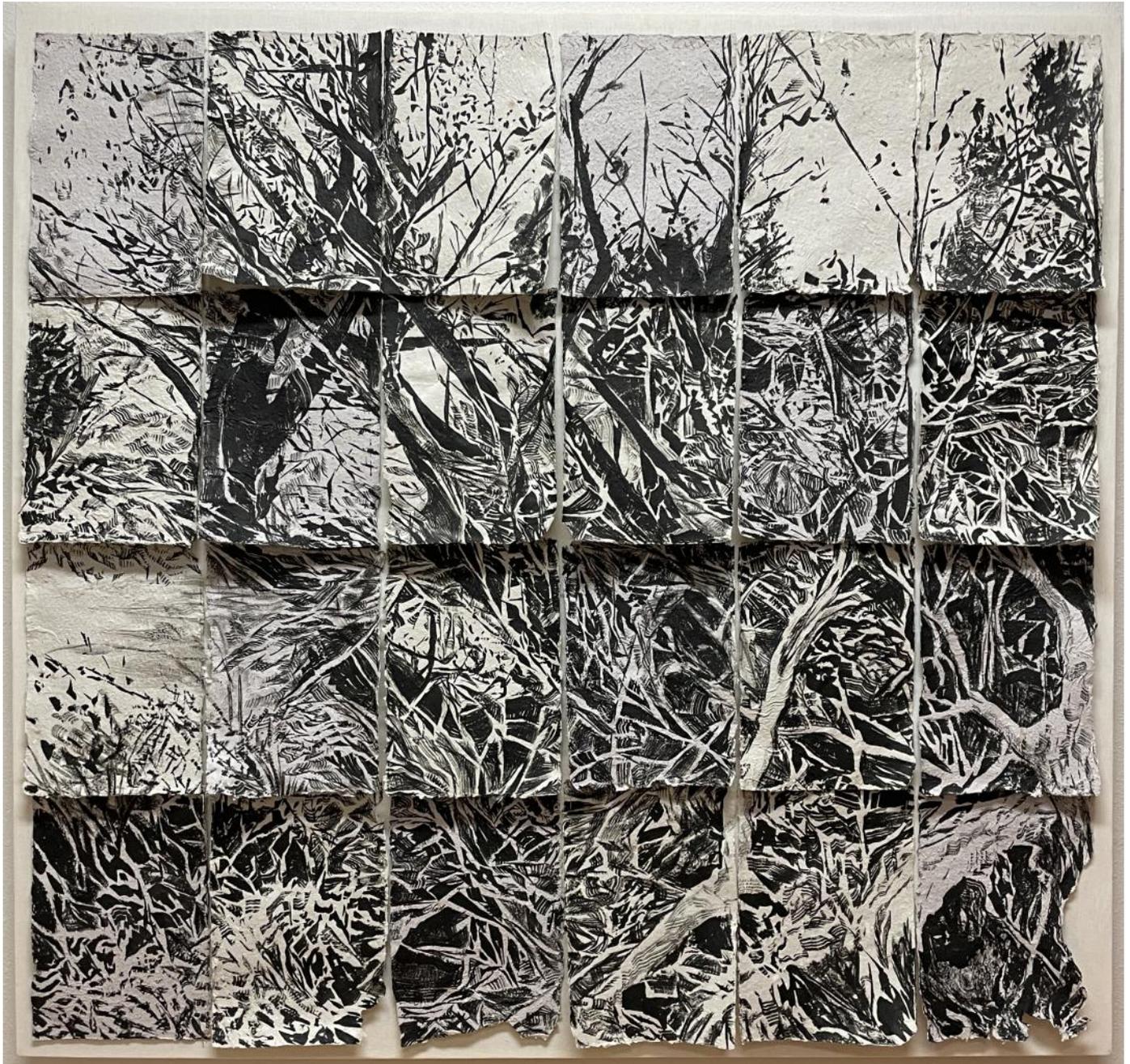
providing them with such immersive visual experience. The scale and depth of the piece are truly captivating. What inspired you to create *Distant Past, Distant Future* on such a grand scale? And how do the dimensions of



your artworks affect your workflow?

Hollis Hammonds: *Distant Past, Distant Future* is an ink drawing on 5 vertical panels of translucent drafting film that float away from

the wall. It was created just a month ago for an exhibit called *Temperate Grasslands*, curated by Coka Trevino. For years my work has taken on an apocalyptic tone. These fictionalized landscapes in ruin were filled with



Wasteland, installation created for the Understory exhibit at MASS Gallery

drawings of the detritus left after natural or human-made disasters. **Distant Past, Distant Future** is a work that is intrinsically more hopeful. I've been working through my own feelings of climate grief this year, and coming

out the other end I've been envisioning a future where nature will rebound. This is new and exciting for me.

My work is often life-size or larger. I'm



and now bear
down the sixth
extinction's crowning



interested in creating immersive works that envelope the viewer. These works also change in their reading when viewed from a distance as opposed to up close. In this particular piece the drawing is beautiful, soft, even quiet when viewed from afar, however, when you approach the drawing more closely, you see a flurry of gestural and unpredictable marks. This dissonance between the frantic and loose quality of the marks juxtaposed with the overall peacefulness of the composition create the deeper meaning in this work. Also, a ghostly line image of the shell of a human-made structure is immersed in the center of the composition, providing further context.

To create this work I utilized an unused classroom on the college campus where I teach. I pinned the Mylar panels to the wall, then masked the boarder of the drawing with craft paper. Since the work is so large, I had to use a ladder to access the top of the drawing. It is very labor intensive, although I enjoy drawing at this scale. I do create digital collages for almost all of my larger works. For this piece I pulled from my own photos and drawings from my travels this year. I also took photos of local plants and wildflowers found in my neighborhood to fill out the composition. Although not visible to the viewer, I took inspiration from some of my favorite works including the garden fresco from Livia's Villa (on display in Rome), and the flowers in Botticelli's painting Primavera. It took about 20 hours to create this particular drawing, with 2-4 hour work sessions, spread over approximately three weeks.

Your artworks feature a tension between the tangible and the abstract. How do you feel this duality in your work reflects or comments on our contemporary experience

of reality, especially in an age where the lines between fact and fiction are increasingly blurred?

Hollis Hammonds: I've always been interested in visual art as fiction, even when attempting to be true to reality, all visual images are in some way non-factual, or as we say through the lens of the artist. I'm also interested in abstraction, although no matter how hard I try, the works I create are quite representational. So it is in the marks, the cropping of the image, the simplification of the silhouette, and in the flattening of space that I find pleasure in small moments of abstraction. I've always been suspicious of images, yet I know the power images can wield. This makes art making exciting. I think the awareness today of artificial or fake images is just more prevalent now with fake news, the proliferation of AI, and the amazing advancements in technology, 3D modeling, and so on. Even before these technological advances, before photography, images still were a fiction, craftily manipulated by the artist to tell a story or teach a moral lesson.

One thing I think about is how the tactile or experiential aspects of a work of art can have more truth in them than the image represented. Oral storytelling for instance is something I've always been interested in. These stories passed down through generations may lack historical verifiable facts, but somehow the tones of the teller and the vernacular of their speech hold more truth than any facts could. Human expression is powerful. I look for authenticity. It doesn't solve the problem of the blurring of the lines between fact and fiction, but I'd say a little skepticism in all things is healthy.



Wasteland, installation created for the Understory exhibit at MASS Gallery

One of my primary ways of working includes pulling source imagery from the collective consciousness (ex. the internet) to construct personal memories. I'm combining found images to create a facsimile of an actual memory. To me, these constructed images are more real than if I went back to my childhood home and photographed the place. Reality in itself is a construct when you think about how

we remember things, and how those memories are altered each time we remember them. When I'm creating a work, what feels real is more important to me than what is real. **The Dark Forest** is an example work that was constructed in this way.

We can recognize a layered approach to meaning in your work. In particular,



***Homecoming* unveils personal narratives, resonating with a wider audience: how do you envision viewers engaging with these layers? Are there particular interpretive strategies or perspectives you hope your audience will bring to their experience of your art?**

Hollis Hammonds: My work is definitely

dependent on layers of meaning, and I often feel that the work is best viewed in the context of an exhibition, where multiple works and parts of a larger story are put into context for the audience. In the solo exhibition titled ***Homecoming***, a wide variety of works in various media are presented together to create an experiential narrative of childhood, place, and personal concerns. Some of my

works include text, a drawing is animated by a video projection of fire burning, and another drawing acts as a backdrop for a found object installation. In this exhibit the symbol of home or house is repeated through various images including a floating house form made completely from found and discarded objects. I often will flip between drawing and installation as a way to communicate the complexities of human life, consumerism, personal trauma, and the natural world. This exhibit is a good example of how these multiple approaches to making can coexist together and inform one another.

I have been utilizing found and altered human-made objects or artifacts (personal objects imbued with memory or meaning) to create sensory, life-size installations and sculptural forms. These common objects found in most U.S. homes are conceptually loaded and easily relatable to most viewers. This is one way in which I attempt to engage audiences, sparking personal memories and connections in individuals, which often opens up interpretations of my work that is both universal and at the same time personal. By combining pictorial images with 3-dimensional forms I hope to spark narrative threads leading to multi-layered interpretations of my work. In the work **wasteland** I created a four panel ink drawing on large Yupo paper panels which act as a backdrop for a sculptural barricade made from household objects and furniture, all blackened with chalkboard paint. This work brings the drawing into space and allows the viewer to enter the work physically as they walk between the sculptural barrier and the drawing. I enjoy this illustrative and theatrical approach to art making.

Your site specific installation *In the Wake* features elements of both natural and man-made disasters. As an artist interested in finding





Poetics of Waste, construction debris, chalkboard paint, and dirt on paper, each work is 22"x30", 2023.



Awake in the Dark at CCAD (Columbus College of Art and Design)



beauty in piles of rubble and images of conflict, you challenge conventional notions of aesthetics. In your opinion, what role does aesthetics play in transforming images of destruction into works that invite contemplation and reflection?

Hollis Hammonds: I feel that beauty and aesthetics may entice a viewer into going deeper into a work of art. This deeper looking may lead to a more impactful reading into the meaning of a work of art. Ironically I'm also really interested in crude and clumsy mark making for instance. But what I love is when that ugly mark somehow coalesces with other marks to become something beautiful or visually compelling. This is similar to the affect I was describing previously with the work *Distant Past, Distant Future*. The work you mentioned, *In the Wake*, is beautiful to me, but may not be to others. That aesthetic response is very individualized. But, if you can somehow make a work that sparks that emotional (perhaps chemical) response in the viewer, then you are able to reach them on that deeper level. In my work I'm always trying to find a balance between message and visual delight. It is a hard balance to figure out, but mostly I love what I love, and lean in that direction. When the content is harsh or ugly or difficult, the artist has the ability to utilize their art form to make it approachable, digestible, and impactful. That's our special skill.

You are an established artist and over the years your drawings and found-object installations have been widely exhibited throughout the United States, including solo exhibitions at venues. How would you describe your connection with those who view your art? Moreover, as art increasingly moves beyond traditional galleries to streets and digital

platforms like Instagram, how do you think this shift affects the relationship with a worldwide audience? What are your thoughts on the roles of physical exhibitions compared to online presentations in displaying your work?

Hollis Hammonds: When you physically walk into a space and are immersed in a sensory experience at human scale, you will have some reaction to that experience whether physical, emotional, or psychological. There is definitely a theatrical quality to my work that is best experienced in real life. I still prefer physical experiential exhibits and installations over the digital experience, however, digital platforms have expanded the reach of artists in amazing ways. I do utilize my online website to document my work the best I can. I also use Instagram to connect with other artists, curators, environmentalists, and art lovers. There is a limitation though in the digital space. It is hard to be immersed or have an emotional connection with a painting through a screen. Both the physical and digital presence of my work is important, and can complement each other. The democratization of the digital space is really exciting. I enjoy finding new work by artists from other countries that I may never have seen in person. I will never give up making work for physical spaces, but I understand the importance of being a participant in the online space.

We have really appreciated the multifaceted nature of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Hollis. Could you tell us about your current projects and

any concepts you're keen to investigate in your upcoming work?

Hollis Hammonds: I'm finishing construction work on my new home studio, which should be ready soon. Then I have a lot of new work to make, including a large drawing for an installation that is approximately 10 feet tall by 72 feet in length. I have two solo exhibits coming up in summer 2025 with my collaborator Sasha West who is an environmental poet. Our collaboration, **Hammonds + West**, constructs multi-modal and immersive multi-media installations and exhibits about the climate crisis. An example of one of our works is called **Awake in the Dark** and is an installation that includes video projections, sound recordings, poems, found objects, and a large-scale drawing. We will be adapting this work for a future exhibit in Houston, TX that will focus on the realities of repeated floods there. Another upcoming exhibit will embody themes related to The Great Turning (as we move away from industrialization toward a time of regrowth). Beyond that I'm also looking to extend my work internationally through ecological artist residencies, conferences, and future exhibits. I'm excited to see what the future holds.

I appreciate being able to talk with you about my work. Thanks so much!

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landscape@europe.com



LandEscape meets

Margaret Wasiuta

Inspired by life and people, my painting is a way of story-telling. Using the language of colour and lines, I attempt to translate my feelings onto the canvases. To accomplish my goals of expression, I make use of acrylic, oil, pastel, charcoal, pencil, glaze, and varnish in various combinations. Layer after layer, I want to expose what is underneath. My recent artwork tends to focus on the creation of a structural space - one which represents both an atmosphere of personal experience, as well as an active state of mind. The creation of this image often becomes a living process, blending the boundary between abstraction and representation. My paintings are meant to be an open invitation to the viewer, providing the space from which individual meaning and significance emerge.

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

Hello Margaret and welcome to LandEscape. Before starting to elaborate about your artistic production and we would like to invite our readers to visit

<https://www.margaretwasiuta.com> in order to get a wide idea about your artistic production, and we would start this interview with a couple of questions about your background. You have a solid formal training: after having earned your Master's degree from the Faculty of Interior Architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. Additionally, you nurtured your education at the internationally acclaimed Paris College of Art Summer Program. How did your formative years influence your evolution as an artist?

Moreover, how does your cultural substratum address the direction of your current artistic research?

Margaret Wasiuta: I studied a great variety of different fields at the Academy of Fine Arts, which ranged from art history, sculpture and painting to graphic design and interior architecture. This five-and-a-half-year period instilled in me the principles of art and design, while offering a thoughtful and structured program that ultimately helped me transition smoothly between different art-related fields throughout my career and life-stages. When I look back at my early formative years, the influence of my parents cannot be overstated – both of whom were doctors with big hearts and open minds. Then came school, education in music and fine arts, tutors, and friends – all of whom created the environment in which I was raised. Krakow, with all its



beauty, magic and mystery, is where my senses and abilities were awakened. The city dates back to the 7th century with an omnipresent history of arts and science, being one of the leading centres of academic, economic, cultural and artistic/bohemian life in Europe. Named the European Capital of Culture since 2000, My Alma Mater - Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Art (established in 1818), is where I got a chance to interact with a dizzying variety of extraordinary and often eccentric people. Krakow was the vessel in which my foundation was formed.

By contrast, Paris is the city where I painted fan-art for tourists during the summer while studying in my young adulthood. These experiences granted me freedom of both expression and interpretation.

All these “ingredients” among others undoubtedly still influence the motifs throughout my artwork and my life in general, supporting my journey into a wider world and within myself. They have given me courage, resilience and a belief that anything is possible.

Living in Paris opened my eyes to the beauty of the wider world, and eventually resulted in my acquisition of a second Homeland: Canada. This land of scenic beauty and stunning natural settings is where my son was born, and a sense of recognition emerged amidst themes of hope, change, growth and mystery, which serve as the cornerstones of my current artistic direction.

For this special edition of *LandEscape* we have selected *Immaculate Sound series*, a stimulating body of works that has immediately captured our attention for the way it successfully attempt to integrate





Immaculate Sound series: Space, Acrylic on canvas, 16" x 20"



Immaculate Sound series: Silence, Acrylic on canvas, 16" x 20"



geometric and organic forms, to create a point of convergence between the real and the abstract. When walking our readers through your usual setup and setting, would you tell us something about the genesis of the *Immaculate Sound series*?

Margaret Wasiuta: I always keep my eyes open and observe the world around me for inspiration. It can come from a passage that I'm reading, an archetypal hero, a moving piece of music, my earliest childhood memories, meaningful conversations or just by simply observing the natural world. This foggy conceptual starting point stays in my mind for a while until a clearer image arises and flows onto the canvas.

The imaginary world depicted in the "Immaculate Sound" series simply reflects my longing for something unspecified and unattainable... something that was always missing and for which my longing has been intensified over the last few years. Looking for the purest sound, this multi-layered mixture of structural space attempts to integrate geometric and organic forms into a calm dreamscape without borders. This series was heavily influenced and inspired at different times by love, inner depth, distant memories, space, water, wind, and a descent into the great unknown.

The *Immaculate Sound series* features delicate tones able to create such thoughtful, almost meditative ambiance. At the same time, there's a stimulating contrast between such nuances and dark, often black geometric elements, that create delicate tension and dynamics: how does your own *psychological make-up* determine the nuances of tones that

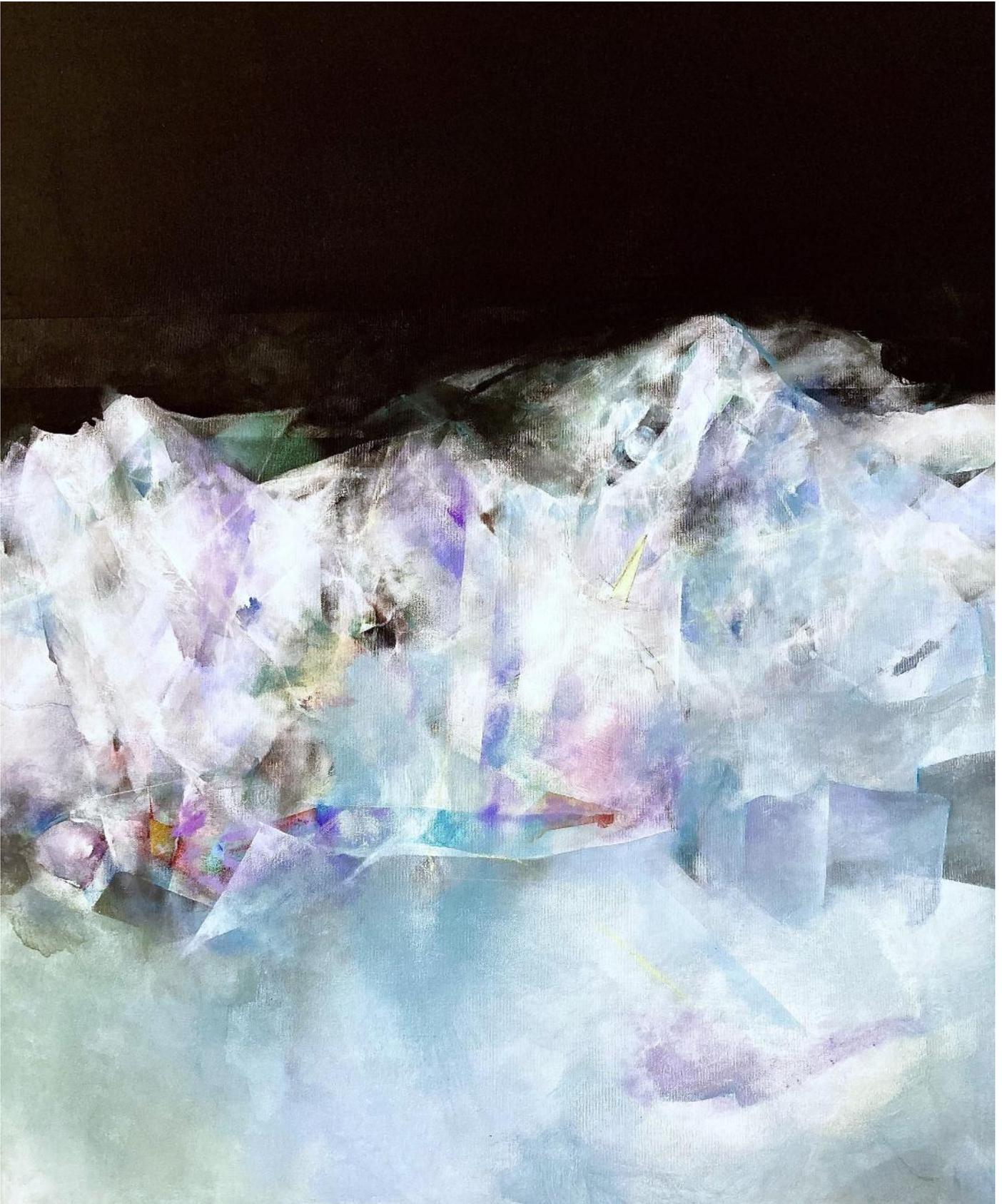


Immaculate Sound series: Emergence, Acrylic on canvas, 20" x 20"

you decide to include in your works?

Margaret Wasiuta: The series titled "Immaculate Sound" represents my internal

journey. The abstract compositions emphasize colour, light, shadow, shape and form with an ethereal sense. The mood and ambiance I wanted to create required quiet colours and



Shades of Enchanted Districts series, Hocus Pocus Acrylic 36x30



Shades of Enchanted Districts series, Far Out, Acrylic on canvas, 36" x 30"



Krakow Story, Acrylic on canvas, 24" x 24"

tones, with an undercurrent of floating and wandering light. To enhance this effect, I've contrasted these elements with black,

geometric forms, serving as foundational grounding points. With respect to the psychological underpinnings of this series, my

process of painting is both spontaneous and meditative... it embraces both logic and happenstance. Colour choices are the emotional component, often mirroring the atmosphere of my daydreams. These are then accompanied by a more rational, focused creation and placement of dark geometric figures.

Another aspect that has impressed us of your *Immaculate Sound series* is its rigorous and essential sense of geometry. Would you tell us something about such refined geometric aspect?

Margaret Wasiuta: The following description of Ancient Sacred Geometry resonates with me on a very deep level: "Geometric patterns exist all around us, creating the fundamental structure and templates of life in the universe. The patterns can be broken down into a language of mathematics that rules the entirety of our visible and invisible world. The geometrical archetypes reveal the nature of each form and its vibrational resonance, symbolising the inseparable relationship between everything and everyone, which ultimately makes up our whole matrix and the universe at large – embodying oneness." I've been using abstract geometric shapes and structures (flexible grids for example), to provide a harmonious foundation for paint composition and action, then shaping them into something more recognisable. This process ultimately creates a narrative element that the viewer can relate to.

As you have remarked once, your recent artwork tends to focus on the creation of a structural space - one which represents both an atmosphere of personal experience, as well as an active state of mind: how do you consider the relationship between direct experience





Reflection 2, Acrylic on canvas



Reflection 1, Acrylic on canvas



and creativity? More specifically, can you elaborate on how life experiences have inspired your *Immaculate Sound series*?

Margaret Wasiuta: In creating these works, I wanted to emphasize the importance of my origin story by bringing the foundations of my life and creativity onto the canvas. At its core, this series emerges from my undifferentiated elements... taking shape and ultimately materializing through a lifelong search for meaning. At the same time, the images I've created have intuitive origins, often springing forth from my imagination, memories and dreams.

One of the key life experiences that gave rise to the *Immaculate Sound series* is the traumatic nightmare that seemingly all of humanity endured throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. This was undoubtedly a turning point not only in my personal life, but also in my artistic path. As was the case with many others, I was initially gripped by a powerlessness and inertia which seemed endless and all-consuming. Thankfully this paralysis was eventually transformed into an inner revolt through my instinct of self-preservation. By immersing myself in music, literature, and the movement of Tai Chi, I was able to recover fragments of the past piece by piece. These came back to me in a scrolling kaleidoscope of sorts... with the feel and atmosphere of a Fellini film. Carefree images from childhood, the vast open water of the Baltic Sea, my first romantic love, late night conversations about the meaning of life, the majestic Tatra mountain range, lessons from my heroic Grandmother, and ideas from free-thinking professors, all came into view... as if through a foggy window with the present-day world dancing to its own rhythm on the other side. In the midst of all this, I felt the creative



Immaculate Sound series: Longing, Acrylic on canvas , 20" x 20"

impulse that eventually gave rise to the “Immaculate Sound” series. My longing for something elusive and pure inspired the light, harmony, and freedom that

permeates throughout this series and continues into the next one. And yet, I must admit that the strong, vibrant, and colourful world which permeated my style and artwork



Open! Sesame, Acrylic on canvas, 36" x 30



Up in Smoke, Acrylic on canvas, 36" x 30

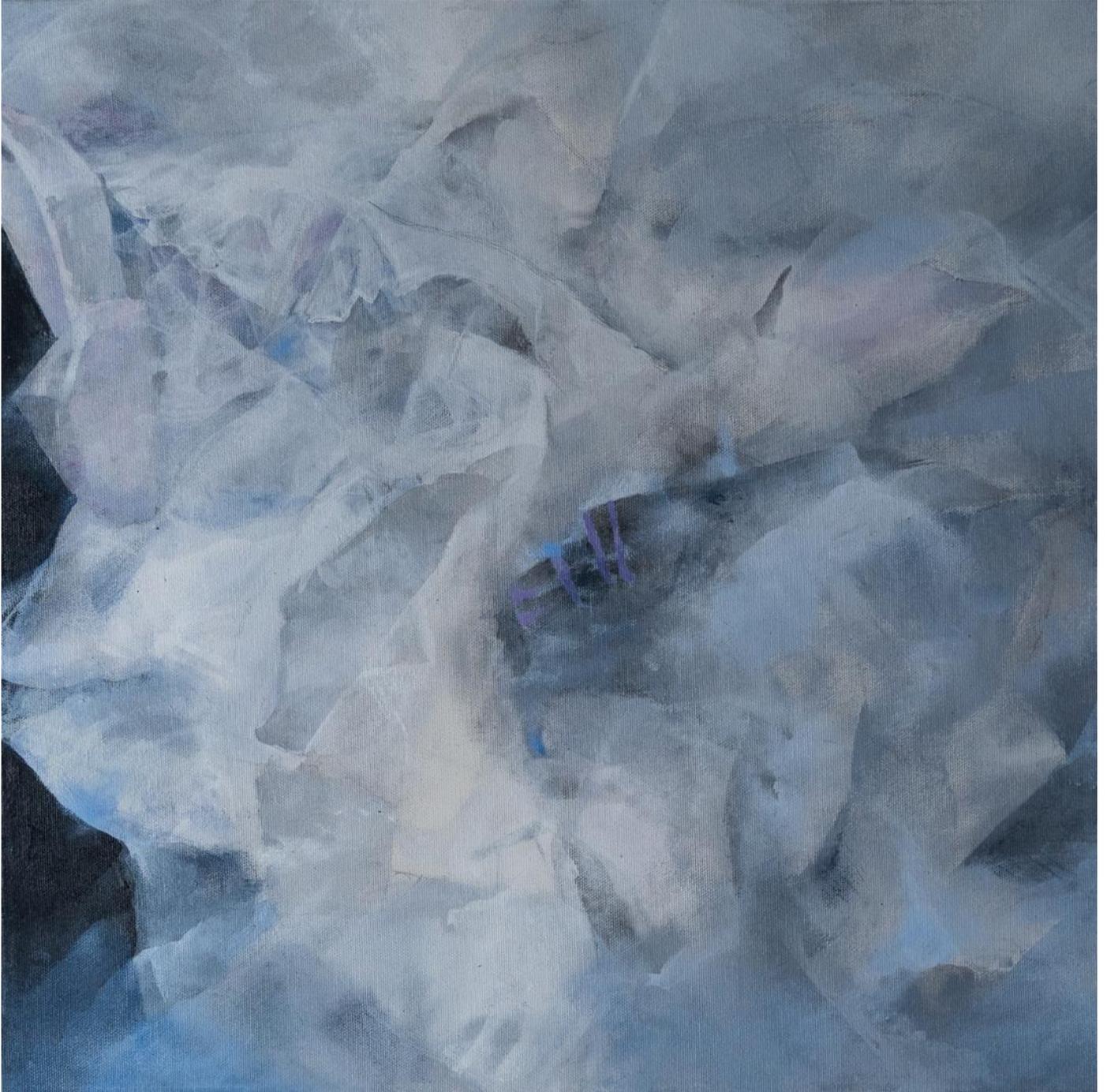


Escapism, Mixed Media 20x20

in the pre-covid19 era appears to be gone for good.

Another stimulating series of yours that has particularly impressed us and that we would like to introduce to our readers is entitled *Shades of Enchanted Districts*. Reminders of

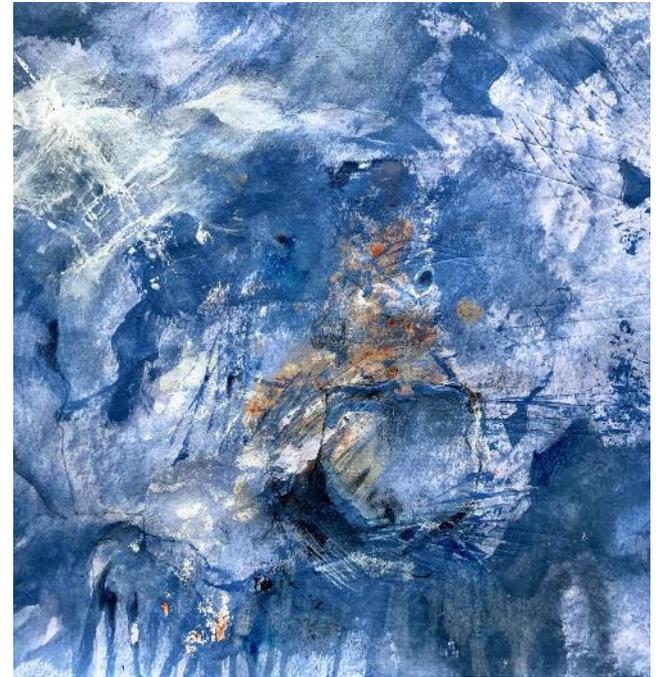
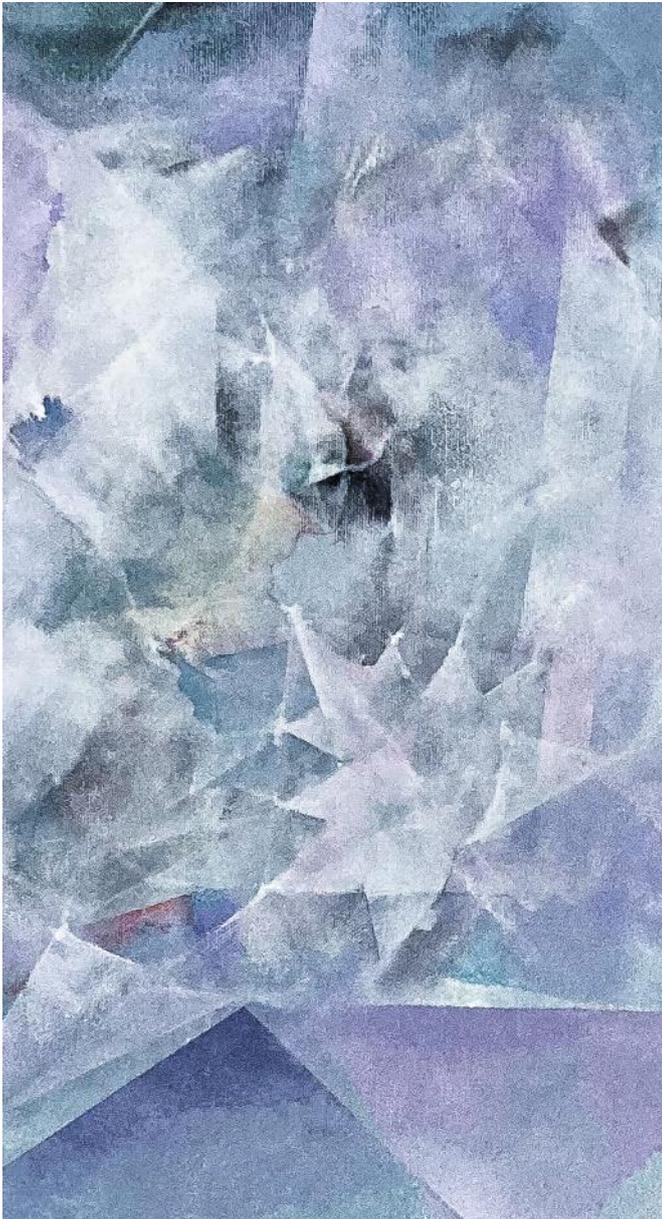
the shape of snowy mountains, the works from this series dive the viewers into the dreamlike dimension. Scottish painter Peter Doig once remarked that *even the most realistic paintings are derived more from within the head than from what's out there in front of us*, how do you consider the



Immaculate Sound series: Flow, Acrylic on canvas, 18" x 18"

relationship between reality and imagination, playing within your artistic production? And

how do you balance abstraction and representation in your work, and what



Reflection 4

Acrylic on canvas

Enchanted Districts”. These images are seen through various lenses that have established themselves in my memory over time, representing an intimate and primordial link to nature through the living, breathing Mountains.

In this series, imagination and reality come together and make each other whole in the process. This balance arises naturally throughout my creative process, where actions and awareness come together in the space between intuition and conscious decision making.

Exploration of this relationship allows access to a seemingly infinite well of vitality and creative energy. When difficulties arise, I seem to navigate through them on a subconscious,

Hidden In The Mountainscape, Detail Acrylic 16x9

challenges do you face in doing so?

Margaret Wasiuta: Inspired by my first impression of the Canadian landscape, I attempt to convey the emotions that emerged during this experience in the series titled “Shades of



Reflection 3

Acrylic on canvas

intuitive level owing to a lifetime of experience coming in and out of this state.

With their unique combination between references to reality and abstract atmosphere, the works from your *Shades of Enchanted Districts* urge the spectatorship to a participative effort, to realize their own interpretation. Austrian Art historian Ernst Gombrich once remarked the importance of providing a space for the viewers to project onto, so that they can actively participate in the creation of the illusion: how important is for you to trigger the viewers' imagination in order to address them to elaborate personal interpretations? In particular, how open would you like your works to be understood?

Margaret Wasiuta: My paintings are meant to be an open invitation to the viewer, providing

the space from which individual meaning and significance emerge. The dreamscape is a very interesting place. If you step outside of the busy mind for a while, it can free you from the stubborn shackles of daily routine into a deeper world of awe, wonder and meaning. Layer after layer I want to expose what is underneath to reveal its infinite depth. The image I create has a strong intuitive aspect, originating from my blurred, hazy memories, imagination and dreams. It represents an intimate connection to nature, seeing the Earth as a sensual being to be communed with, by rooting into her depth and extending out into the sky. The recognition and re-creation of my concept in the viewer can facilitate a deeper union with life itself by stimulating and awakening something deep inside of them.

The abstract elements and perspectives allow the pieces I'm creating to be intuitively understood through the viewer's emotions and senses, to be shaped and moulded by their unique, personal lens.

Given the importance of layering in your approach, can you describe a moment when you felt a painting was complete and what indicators or feelings guided you?

Margaret Wasiuta: The one question I like to ask myself right at the beginning and again at different points throughout the creative process is this:

What do I want to say?

If there's no longer an answer that comes back to me, this means I'm at the end of the road...

You are an established artist: your work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, and can be found in private and public collections throughout Canada, Europe, and the



Sound Healing

36" x 52" Mixed Media







11. JONAS MEYER
"The Spirit"
Oil on Canvas
2018

12. JONAS MEYER
"The One Part of"
Oil on Canvas
2018



13. NATALIA FREEMAN
"Clown of a New City"
Mixed Media
2018



14. MICHAEL ZANDROWY
"Michael Zandrowy"
Mixed Media
2018



15. DIANNA HILLMAN
"Winter Flight #2"
Oil on Mixed Media
2018



16. MARGARET HALLIDAY
"In Between"
Mixed Media
2018



USA: how do you consider the nature of your relationship with your audience? As the move of Art from traditional gallery spaces, to street and especially to online platforms increases, how would in your opinion change the relationship with a globalised audience and how do you envision the role of physical exhibitions versus online presentations in showcasing your work?

Margaret Wasiuta: In modern times, the exhibition fulfills its role in different ways. To participate in an exhibition means to feel seen and heard, and also to receive support and appreciation for my art through the gallery itself and the audience I'm relating to.

It looks different in a traditional gallery when compared to online galleries, which have recently become very popular and take on various forms and dimensions. From my experience, in person galleries create a very specific, intimate atmosphere. The painting is viewed "live". Everyone knows why they came, what they are talking about, and what they want. It's mostly a "professional" art crowd, but not always. In the case of virtual galleries, the relationship changes, it is simply different. It's hard to say whether it's better or worse. I personally exhibit my works here and there. Each of them meets different expectations, and each one can bring completely unexpected results, and above all, motivate and stimulate further development.

Both virtual and in-person exhibitions have their advantages and disadvantages. While virtual exhibitions are an attractive option for people who cannot or do not want to travel for various reasons, real exhibitions offer an incomparable and oftentimes indescribable experience. Ultimately, which type of exhibition is the better choice depends on personal preferences and

circumstances – which is why I'm happy to provide both options!

We have really appreciated the multifaceted nature of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Margaret. What projects are you currently working on, and what are some of the ideas that you hope to explore in the future?

Margaret Wasiuta: I am so grateful for your thoughtful questions, and incredibly humbled by the responses to my artwork.

Recently I've been trying to access a new part of my mind – somewhere in the back of my head, and just sitting there for a while. There is no clearly defined goal at this point, but I would like to create something that I look back at one day and think: "Wow... did I really paint this?!"

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

LandEscape meets

Olga Markari

Olga Markari studied Dance at Nadina's Loizidou ballet school, at Rudra Bejart School in Switzerland, and at the Conservatorio de Danza de Madrid Maria de Avila in Spain. In 2015 she became a dancer with the De Dutch Junior Dance Division, and in 2017 she joined Wroclaw Ballet. In 2021 she became a demi-soloist with Opera Nova in Poland and, in 2022, she was promoted to soloist. Her repertoire comprises the title role of Anna in Bozena Klimczak's "Anna Karenina", Clara in Paul Chalmer's "Nutcracker", Alice in Robert Bondara's "Alice in Wonderland", Madame de Tourvoel and Cecile in Krzysztof Pastor's Dangerous Liaisons, Snow Queen in Youri Vamos' "Nutcracker", Zulma and Friend in "Giselle", friends in Jacek Tyskie's "Romeo and Juliette" and "Copelia" and others. Since June 2024 she is a freelance dancer and choreographer. Olga is also a qualified dance teacher with the Royal Academy of Dance, a certified yoga instructor and she is currently attending a master's in Cultural Policy and Development. Some of her choreographic works include: Peirasmos for Opera Nova in Poland, BELong and Patient no8 for Wroclaw ballet, Two or Less together with Daniel Agudo Gallardo, premiered at Semperoper Theatre, "What a perfect world" for Cyprus Choreographic Platform and more.



An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

Hello Olga and welcome to LandEscape. Before starting to elaborate about your artistic production we would start this interview with a couple of questions about your background. You have a solid formal training: you hold a PDPTC that you received

from the Royal Academy of Dance and you are currently nurturing your education with a MA: how do these formative years influence your evolution as an artist? Moreover, how does your multifaceted cultural substratum address the direction of your current artistic research?

Olga Markari: Hello and thank you for inviting me! The journey through formal training has





significantly shaped my development as an artist. In today's world, having a wide knowledge of various disciplines and cultural contexts is more important than ever. Everything learned or encountered becomes, in some way, part of your work and shapes it. Whether it's a new technique, a philosophical concept, or a cultural experience, these elements enhance the depth and breadth of the artistic expression.

Formal training has opened up my thinking and made me understand the market, the politics, the problems, and the need to attract a diverse audience and address different people. It has equipped me with the skills to navigate the complexities of the art world and start creating works that are relevant in today's world but also adaptable to the new demands of the field without restricting myself to traditional ways. Of course, I continue to carry forward all my experiences and learning as a dancer and as a creator, which continue to be integral to my artistic identity and expression. Most importantly, these studies have taught me to stay curious and keep developing.

For this special edition of *LandEscape* we have selected *What a perfect world* a stimulating performative work that recently received the Young Choreographer Award of the 23rd Cyprus Choreography Platform — and that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article — and that can be viewed at https://youtu.be/7Q5xs_aQhvE. We're particularly impressed with your ability to tackle such a complex and timely issue in your performance piece. Can you elaborate

on what inspired you to explore the dichotomy between the real and artificial worlds in *What a perfect world*?

Olga Markari: My piece "What a perfect world" addresses the impact of technology, specifically artificial reality, on human psychology and social behavior. Undoubtedly, this progress has brought incredible benefits, but it also carries the risk of misuse. My choreography revolves around virtual reality and the ability of individuals to create a world as they desire, which, however, does not correspond to reality. Often, this artificial world serves as a refuge from the real world. This is a topic that concerns me personally and, I believe, many others as well.

I am particularly concerned about how a future world dominated by technology might look and the potential loss of human connection and authenticity. As we deepen our relationship with the virtual world, there is a risk of diminishing our engagement with the physical world and losing touch with our humanity. The purpose of the choreography is not to condemn technology but to provoke reflection on a more conscious and balanced approach to it. It is a call to consider how we can maintain our human essence amidst technological advancements.

***What a perfect world* reflects a conscious shift regarding the reciprocal dialogue between environment and performative gestures: how would you consider the relationship between the necessity of scheduling the choreographic details of the performance and the need of spontaneity?**

How important does improvisation play in your vision?

Olga Markari: In this piece, careful planning was crucial because of how closely the dancer's movements had to synchronize with the projection. Everything needed to appear seamless, as if the dancer was truly immersed in the artificial world. Despite this precision, Daniel Agudo Gallardo, the dancer, was encouraged to react naturally. His genuine responses were important to make the experience feel authentic.

Encouraging Daniel's individuality was key; his unique reactions shaped the piece significantly. If another dancer had performed, the piece would have had developed differently, reflecting their own style and responses. This approach not only highlighted the dancer's personal expression but also added authenticity to the overall performance. The necessity of scheduling choreographic details ensures that the performance unfolds cohesively, with careful consideration given to the sequence of movements, transitions, and interactions with the environment. However, spontaneity and individuality of the dancer are equally crucial in my artistic vision.

We have appreciated the significant role sound plays in *What a perfect world* and how it contributes to the piece's atmosphere. Could you elaborate on your process for integrating the performance and sound?

Olga Markari: Sound plays a crucial role in "What a perfect world". It was not merely a









background element but an active component of the performance. It guided the dancer's actions and reactions, helping to shape the narrative and emotional journey. I wanted to integrate sounds that are familiar to the audience, like the sound of a phone message, the sound of starting a video game, and the sound of scrolling on social platforms.

Together with the video artist Milosz Budzynski, we created the video and sound alongside the choreography. We worked closely to ensure the audio elements would complement and enhance the movements and themes of the piece. Using a mix of sounds, music, and digital effects, we aimed to create a soundscape that would fully engage the audience in the artificial world we were creating.

During rehearsals, the dancer and I explored how the movements could synchronize with the sound. We paid close attention to how the sound influenced the dancer's timing, intensity, and emotional expression. This often involved experimenting with different sounds and adjusting the choreography to connect it better with the audio and visual elements.

What a perfect world transforms abstract concepts into tangible sensations, creating such a visceral commentary on the human condition in our hyperconnected era. Artists across various movements and eras — from pioneers like Carolee Schneemann, through Valie Export, to more recent figures like Tania Bruguera — often convey messages in their work, ranging from subtle to explicit. In your view, how effective can artists be in raising awareness about pressing societal issues to a growing audience? Specifically, as a





performance artist, how do you perceive the role of artists in our globalized and rapidly changing world?

Olga Markari: Artists can be incredibly effective in raising awareness about pressing societal issues. Art has a unique ability to bypass the defences we often put up and speak directly to our emotions and subconscious. It can make complex issues more relatable and immediate, encouraging audiences to reflect on a deeper level. By presenting these issues through a creative and often provocative lens, artists can inspire dialogue, shift perspectives, and ultimately drive change. As a performance artist, I feel the responsibility to create works that are not just aesthetically pleasing but have a small impact towards a conscious, more empathetic and connected world.

What a perfect world offers a compelling exploration of our dual existence in real and artificial worlds, highlighting the paradox of technology: its ability to both connect and isolate. We're particularly intrigued by your exploration of technology as both a tool and a potential source of isolation. Could you walk us through your creative process in translating this complex dynamic into movement? We'd be especially interested to hear about any specific scenes or choreographic sequences that you feel best embody the tension between technological connection and human disconnection.

Olga Markari: "What a perfect world" explores our dual existence in real and artificial worlds, revealing the paradox of technology: its ability to both connect and









isolate. As I've mentioned before, this topic deeply concerns me because while technology has opened doors, it has also contributed to feelings of isolation. The piece relies heavily on technology, particularly through the use of projection, which is crucial for its success. Yet, at its core, it critiques the impact of technology on human connection. Despite being more connected than ever, we often feel lonelier, which raises concerns about how we use this powerful tool and its potential consequences if left uncontrolled.

In "What a Perfect World," this tension is vivid. When the dancer "enters" the artificial world, he immerses himself in various virtual scenarios where he can be and go wherever he desires. However, amidst this freedom, he misses an important phone call and forms artificial relationships that leave him alone in reality. The dancer finds excitement, adrenaline, and love in the artificial world and, in contrast, the real world feels flat and unfulfilling.

We appreciate your exploration of complex ideas through physical performance. Many artists use their bodies to express abstract concepts. How do you connect the intangible ideas in your work with the physical act of creating and performing your choreography? Can you give us an example of how you turned a specific concept into movement in *What a perfect world*?

Olga Markari: In my creative process, I start by focusing on the core idea or the concern I want to express through my work. To turn the concepts into movement, I visualize how emotions can be shown physically. For "What a perfect world," I wanted to contrast the





excitement and fulfillment of the artificial world with the flat, unfulfilling sensations of reality, highlighting the dancer's addiction to the virtual realm.

I approach it like a movie, using choreography to tell the story. For instance, I choreographed dynamic movements that show the dancer's joy and energy in the artificial world, contrasted with heavy, repetitive actions that reflect his boredom and longing in reality. As I refine my work, I take a step back to evaluate it with a fresh perspective, considering how to polish and enhance it. However, maintaining a personal connection to the choreography is crucial to me. This ensures it authentically reflects my perspective and artistic integrity, creating performances that resonate with my own experiences and beliefs.

As the move of Art from traditional gallery spaces, to street and especially to online platforms — as *Instagram* — increases, how would in your opinion change the relationship with a globalised audience? In particular, how do you consider the nature of your relationship with your audience?

Olga Markari: I believe that this shift from traditional spaces to more accessible locations and platforms has allowed a wider and more democratic participation in the arts, allowing artists to connect directly with a diverse audience worldwide. However, I also recognize that for performance art, the live experience is irreplaceable and offers a unique interaction that cannot be replicated online. I acknowledge that social media have bridged gaps and reached wider audiences, yet I value traditional live performances for their distinct experiential qualities. Though I am not as an









active user as I should be, I wish to explore how to integrate and enhance the real-life experience of performance art with the online platform, ensuring both mediums complement and enrich each other. You can find my Instagram page here

https://www.instagram.com/olga_markari/

We have really appreciated the multifaceted nature of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Olga. What projects are you currently working on, and what are some of the ideas that you hope to explore in the future?

Olga Markari: Thank you for your kind words. I'm currently focusing on developing the intersection of technology in performing arts, exploring how digital tools can enhance storytelling and create immersive experiences while reflecting on their impacts on our lives. Moving forward, I'm eager to involve individuals from diverse backgrounds in my projects to collaborate and integrate different ideas.

In the future, I aim to collaborate on projects that challenge perceptions and stimulate dialogue within society both as a creator and performer. I'm enthusiastic about the opportunities ahead and remain dedicated to creating work that stimulates thought and deeply engages audiences emotionally.

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landscape@europe.com

LandEscape meets

Pavel Otdelnov

Pavel Otdelnov is a multimedia artist working primarily in painting, installations, and exploring such subjects as urban space, the environment, historical memory, and Soviet history.

Pavel Otdelnov was born in 1979 in Dzerzhinsk, Russia. He graduated from the Moscow State Academic Art Institute named after Surikov and the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Moscow. He has lived and worked in London since 2022. From 1996, Pavel Otdelnov has exhibited widely in both public and private contexts in Russia, Sweden, the UK, and elsewhere.

He was nominated for the Kandinsky Prize in 2015, 2017, and 2019, in the category of 'Project of the Year', and in 2021 he became a finalist in this category. In 2017 he received an award at the Sergey Kuryokhin Contemporary Art Awards. He won the Artist of the Year Innovation State Prize in 2020. Furthermore, in 2020 Otdelnov was named Artist of the Year by the Cosmocoscow Foundation.

His works are in the collections of the Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow), the State Russian Museum (St. Petersburg), the Uppsala Art Museum (Uppsala), the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (Moscow), and the Pushkin Museum (Moscow), as well as in private and corporate collections worldwide.

 [@pavel_otdelnov](https://www.instagram.com/pavel_otdelnov)

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

Hello Pavel and welcome to LandEscape. Before starting to elaborate about your artistic production and we would like to invite our readers to visit <https://otdelnov.com> in order to get a wide idea about your artistic production,

and we would start this interview with a couple of questions about your background. You have a solid formal training: after having earned your M.F.A. in Painting, from the Surikov Moscow State Academy Art Institute, you nurtured your education at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Moscow: how did those formative years influence your evolution as a visual artist?



Pavel Otdel'nov

Photo by Elena Mikhaylichenko

Moreover, how does your cultural substratum direct the trajectory of your current artistic research?

Pavel Otdelnov: Thank you very much for the invitation. Indeed, I have a broad academic background. I went through the 3-step Soviet art education system: 4 years in the Art school, 5 years in the Art college and 6 years in the Art Institute. It was a quite conservative system dedicated to preparing skilled artists. It was not enough for me because there was no art theory. So, after graduation, I studied at the iCA, Moscow.

I cannot say that my education affected the area of my artistic research. On the contrary, I forged an unusual path in my research. I combine my academic skills with contemporary investigative strategies, such as work in archives (in projects such as ‘Promzona’, and ‘Ringing Trace’, and work as a journalist (in my project ‘The Shitty Sea’, where I have traced the journey of my domestic garbage and even worked at a waste sorting plant.

For is special edition of LandEspace we have selected NOWHERE, a stimulating project that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article. Centered on the exploration of urban locations often overlooked and swiftly passed by, NOWHERE reminds us the concept of non space elaborated by French anthropologist Marc Augè: such places, often seen as mere transitional zones, are reimaged in your work



Nowhere. Blockhouses. 2020. Oil on canvas. 100x200. Pr

with a unique depth and perspective. Would you tell us something about the genesis of NOWHERE? More specifically, can you describe your process of transforming these virtual, digital images into physical paintings?

Pavel Otdelnov: You’re absolutely right. It was a



ivate collection

project about places with no identity, it's very similar to Augè's non-places. My idea was to find some areas, which looked familiar although I'd never been there. I found them with the help of Google Maps. It was my pandemic project, I was sitting at home and

walking online. I stopped only when I felt a déjà-vous effect. So I collected views of some of these places and painted them as if they were landscapes I had seen in reality.

The most interesting thing for me is the nature



Nowhere. Barns. 2021. Oil on canvas. 100x200

of Google's Street View photography. These shots were made automatically. Human photography is always about choice, what to take. You always find a frame and a composition with some objects inside. In these automatic shots, there is no framing, no

choice of the object, and it has no subject, there's no person behind the camera. I bring to these images my choices, my framing, my emotions and my memories. I transform these faraway landscapes into my personal ones.



Based on virtual images captured by Google Street View, the works from NOWHERE challenge the act of seeing itself: images initially acquired in an almost random manner — whose selection depended on an almost mechanical process — pass through the filter

of creativity. They are not altered in substance, however, your brushstrokes seem to confer a poetic atmosphere to initially mundane places. As a visual artist whose work is focused on real environmental images, are you particularly interested in arousing emotions that go beyond the realm of visual perception?

Pavel Otdelnov: It's important to say that these landscapes remind me of something in my childhood, it's a background that is very familiar to me. I would be happy if it were possible to share my feelings, the smells and sounds with my spectators, and most especially the time. I'm inviting people to spend time with me there. I know that sometimes our brain needs a small detail to switch on our imagination and memory. And I really enjoy it when this magic of transformation happens.

Drawing heavily from the peculiar specifics of the environment, NOWHERE reveals your ability to elevate the ordinary into the extraordinary: how important is for you to capture the atmosphere of locations — as the one of Concrete Fence — that are connected to life's experience?

Pavel Otdelnov: It's really important for me. And not only to capture the atmosphere but also the recognisable elements, like this concrete fence. It's a commonly shaped concrete wall, you can find it anywhere in post-soviet landscapes. This particular shape was invented by architect Boris Lakhman in the 1970s. It became the most popular in the



Garages. Panorama. 2020. Oil on canvas. 115x345

USSR. I like the shades *inherent in* concrete. It remembers the substances it was made of: sand and cement.

Your brushwork seems particularly dynamic in the works from NOWHERE, and feature particular attention to nuances, despite usual highly contrasted images on Street View. Can

you walk our readers through your technique and your choice of tones?

Pavel Otdelnov: I put everything into my suspended landscapes. I want to change the duration of these landscapes for the viewer, make it slower or even still them. In landscapes, I notice elements of different natures: some very stable, some more “liquid”



and quick. It's a kind of historical slice that we can see in our eyes. I never paint all the elements I see, usually I try to focus on some of them. I want to make a 'typical', or 'common' landscape, which might be familiar to other people.

Firstly, I really like to choose a specific time of year (probably, it's early spring or late autumn),

when there's no grass and leaves. When colours are muted, our brain needs more time to see the shades and shadows. *In contrast*, sometimes you can notice colourful elements related to different services and advertisements.

Your choice of large scale in some of your paintings as — as Zhuten and Garages

Panorama — is quite impactful, and provide the viewers with such immersive visual experience. How does the size of a painting on such a large scale affect its impact or the message you wish to convey?

Pavel Otdelnov: You are right, I want to plunge the spectator into my paintings. It must be a kind of immersive experience. I want to provide an opportunity to walk through the landscapes and even to disappear there.

Pavel Otdelnov: “Zhuten” is a landscape with some new colourful buildings. I found this haphazard construction on Google somewhere in Samara. It was covered with different advertisements. I replaced the texts on it with the found comments from special groups on social media, where young people discuss different random photos from the city outskirts. For example, “it might be any CIS city”. Actually, you can find the same anywhere in the post-soviet space. Some of the comments are quite wise, like “In times of change, people often turn to images of the past. It is a way of coping with the stress of an unstable present”. The past is comforting, it seems immutable. The name “Zhuten” is an invented word in a comment. It's based on the word “жуть” (horror).

Another painting with the garage doors. All of them are different colours and shades. It was one of the ways to express your individuality in the Soviet Union, to paint the garage door the colour you want. Sometimes the



Nowhere. Concrete fence. 2020. Oil on canvas. 100x200

combination of colours is very beautiful. And the garage itself was much more than just a place to store a vehicle. It was a kind of men’s club. It was a place of freedom.

Another stimulating project of yours that has at once captured our attention is entitled



. Private collection

LANDSCAPE WITH GHOSTS. *Dedicated to the history of your native city, Dzerzhinsk, the works from this series feature evanescent references to human figures, which are a clear allegory of ongoing depopulation, as well as of the transience of human presence. How do you consider the role*

of metaphors, playing within your artistic research and practice?

Pavel Otdelnov: Actually, I now call this project “Hometown”. I've just had a new show in London with this name, this year. The ghosts are not only a metaphor for



Nowhere. Red Barn. 2020. Oil on canvas. 100x200, Private collection

depopulation. It's a series of paintings with criminal youth gangs, my family, my grandmother, and myself. It's also about the fragility of our memory.

Sometimes I use metaphors, especially if I want to show something which has no image

itself. For example, for my show "Hometown" I found a metaphor for this terrible war in my work "Abyss", where something hovers above my beloved home city. It looks like a black vortex. And it's about the catastrophe that is happening right now. I feel that instead of where the Sun should be there is a black hole.



In LANDSCAPE WITH GHOSTS, as in many of your projects, the theme of landscape plays a crucial role. As you remarked in your artist's statement, not animated, landscapes testify human presence and activity, and we dare say that landscapes function as a commentary on contemporary environmental issues, drawing

from the historical traces and human activities they depict. Do you think that artists can raise awareness to an evergrowing audience on topical themes that affect our everchanging society? In particular, as an how do you consider the role of artists in our globalised and unstable society?

Pavel Otdelnov: The role of artists could be very different. I want to believe that art is a space for freedom and creating that space could be one of the artist's tasks. For me, it's a way to ruminate, to reflect and communicate with others with the help of images. Sometimes art really can change the world. For example, Yoko Ono and John Lennon did a lot with their actions to stop the senseless war in Vietnam.

In my case, it's sometimes a way to bring scrutiny to some of the problems. For example, my project "Promzona" helped to bring attention to the environmental problems of the region. As a result, some of the sludge reservoirs were recultivated. My project "Shitty Sea" was about domestic garbage and what happens with it after we throw it away. I tracked my own garbage with GPS trackers and visited all the places where it was dumped. I found enormous landfills in different areas and made huge paintings and a film. Moreover, I even worked in a waste sorting factory.

As a result, I participated in different public discussions and shared the results of my research. I supported eco-activists who were



Zhuten. 2020. Oil on canvas. 115x345

struggling against garbage dumps. As a result of their activity, three of the landfills, I mentioned in my project, were closed.

The depiction of a chemically contaminated city might invoke a dystopian vision, still the ghostly presences suggest a narrative of resilience amidst decay: how important is for you to trigger the viewers' imagination in

order to address them to elaborate personal interpretations? In particular, how open would you like your works to be understood?

Pavel Otdelnov: I prefer not to create direct messages and posters for propaganda. I believe that the spectator can draw their own conclusions. In my big projects, I try to combine different perspectives. In



“Promzona” I included my father’s memories about his experiences, I included materials from the local historians, conducted interviews with my relatives, collected information from ecologists, and showed my correspondence with a German soldier, who was a prisoner of war in Dzerzhinsk. In “Ringing Trace” I combined my impressions with extracts from declassified documents,

memories of different people and anthropologists and ethnographic discoveries.

The best responses I have ever got after my exhibitions were about the visitor's interest in the topic. For example, some people wrote that they interviewed their grandfathers and grandmothers about their jobs at their

factories. I'm really happy when people start discussions about controversial and sensitive topics. I believe that this interest necessarily could lead to a more responsible attitude towards the environment and a greater understanding of history.

Combining different historic layers and perspectives, LANDSCAPE WITH GHOSTS, has impressed us for its blend of fragments from Present and Past, in order to highlight the ephemeral, and at the same time to keep things from getting lost. How do you consider the role of memory playing within your artistic process ?

Pavel Otdelnov: Our memory is not very reliable and it's fragile. Where's the memory of our deceased grandmothers? It's just in their blurred photographs and maybe some private letters. Our own memory is not strong enough either.

I was surprised when I visited the place where my grandparents had lived and where my father was born. This worker's village had completely disappeared. There was only wild forest in its place and pits in the soil. I made a video, where my father and I lit a fire in the pits. My father spent his childhood there, and he is standing in the wild forest. My grandmother built a plexiglass workshop and she worked there for many years. I visited it, and it was abandoned when my grandmother was still alive. I painted her inside this half-ruined workshop. She returns there as a





Family. 2023. Acrylic on canvas. 210x285



Workshop. 2023. Acrylic on canvas 210 x 285 cm



ghost. I would like to save some of those memories from oblivion.

You are an established artist: among the others, you received the Kandinsky Prize, the Artist of the Year Innovation State Prize and in 2020 or are you using just like you were named Artist of the Year by the Cosmocoscow Foundation. How do you consider the nature of your direct relationship with your audience? By the way, as the move of Art from traditional gallery spaces, to street and especially to online platforms — as Instagram — increases, how would in your opinion change the relationship with a globalised audience?

Pavel Otdelnov: I prefer to have close contact with my audience. I spent a lot of time at my shows, making tours, and art talks, take part in discussions around it. It's a very interesting part of my life and an opportunity to learn more and to hear other views. And it stimulates me to continue my practice. I do not know how online platforms will change my relationship with the audience. I'll continue to make offline shows and I believe, that the screen media have no chance to replace real paintings and installations.

Anyway, I want to have interactions with my audience. I hope that online platforms will help me to receive these and feedback. I invite the readers of your magazine to follow me on social media

https://www.instagram.com/pavel_otdelnov/ .

But this kind of communication with my art





Ты здесь
Хозяин
А не гость
Береги
Каждый
Гвоздь!



Grandmother. 2023. Acrylic on canvas. 210x285

must be not instead of the real lived experience.

We have really appreciated the multifaceted nature of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Pavel. What projects are you currently working on, and what are some of the ideas that you hope to explore in the future?

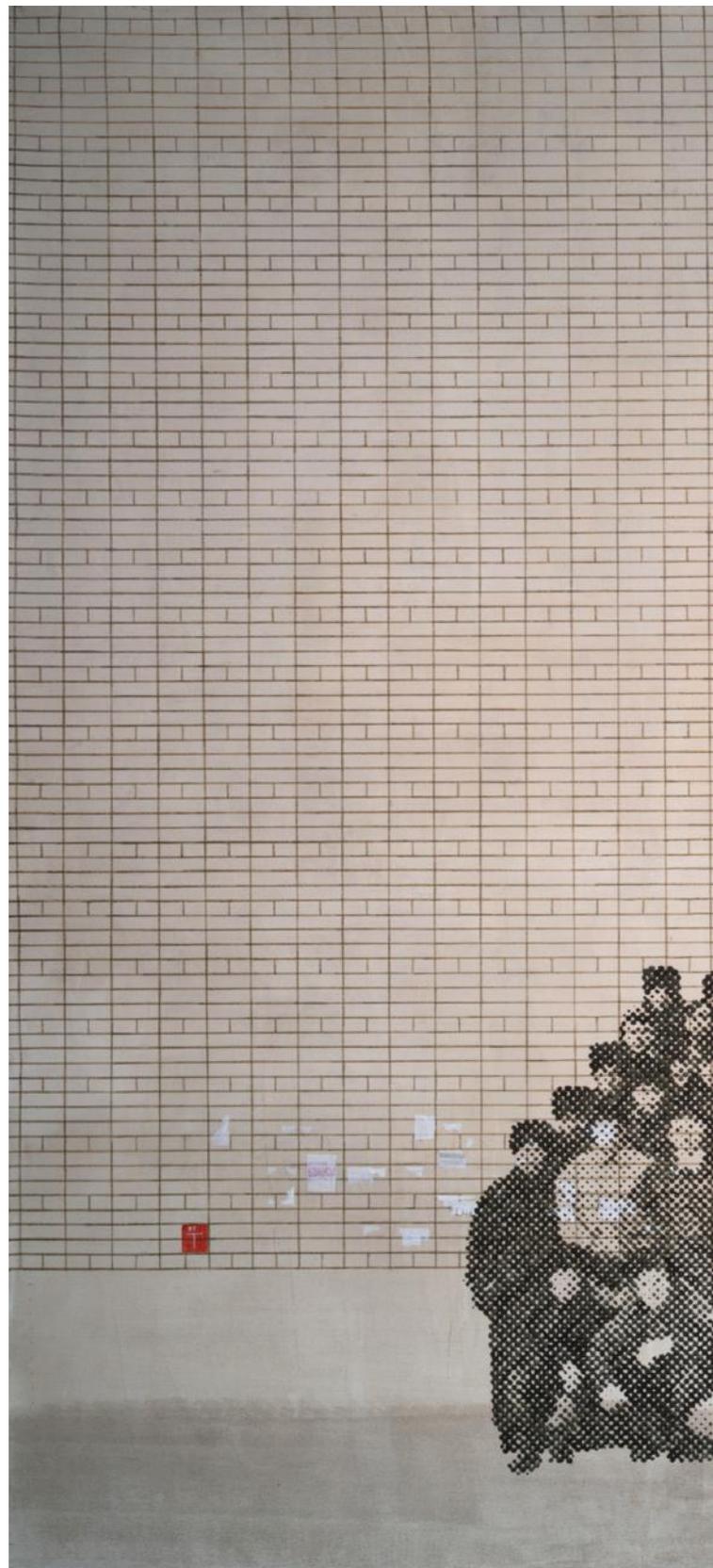
Pavel Otdelnov: Now I live in London and I want to create something new related to this extraordinary place with a deep and rich history.

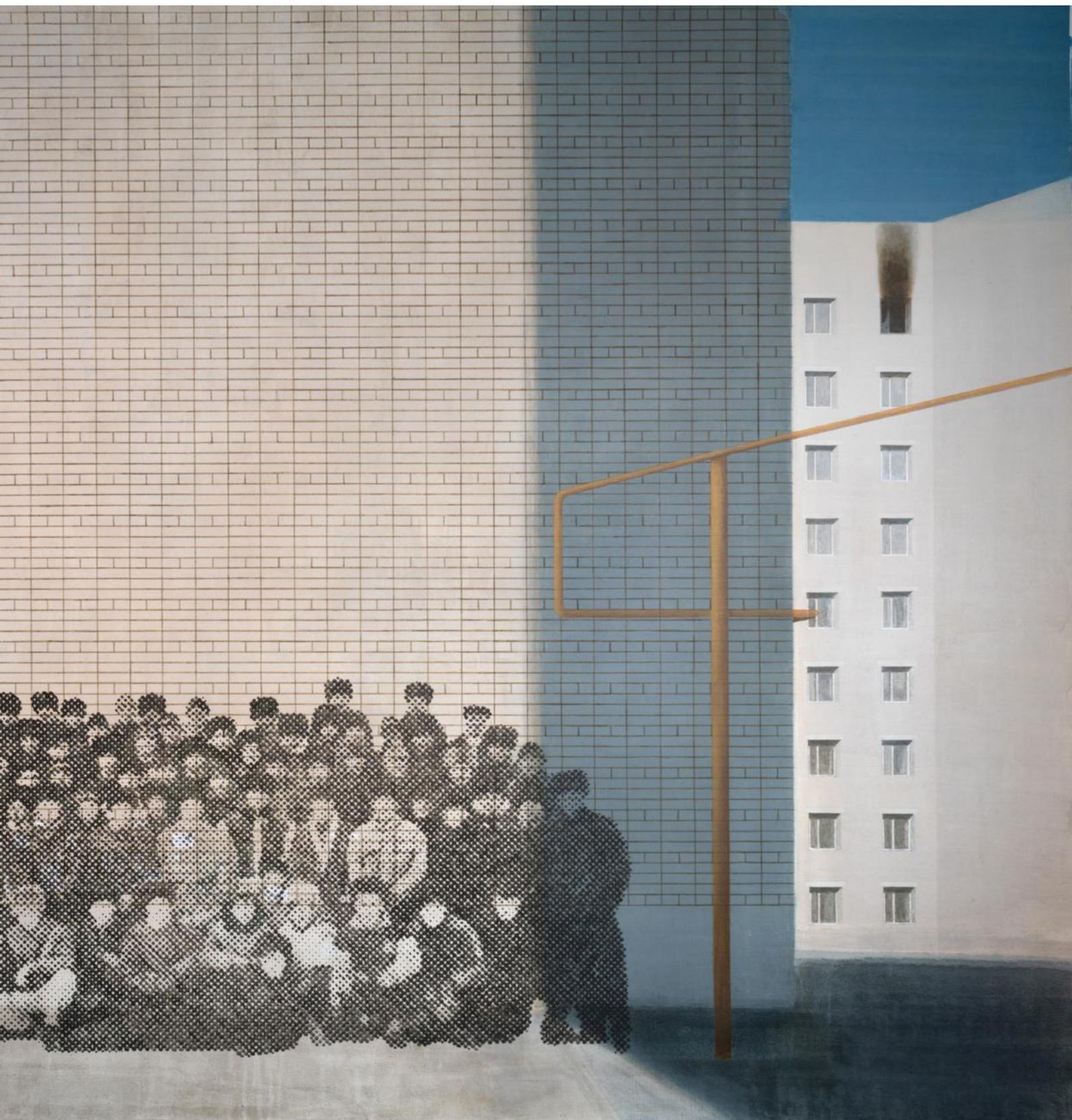
I want to learn more about it. And I want to learn more about people and their lives. Surprisingly, almost all the people I met here were relocated from different places. I would be happy if my art struck a chord with them.

Thank you so much for such profound questions. It was a pleasure to talk with you.

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com





Gang. 2023. Acrylic on canvas. 210x285

LandEscape meets

Stephanie Paine

My creative practice is explorative and experimental, and rooted in photography's many distinct processes. I use a range of techniques including traditional gelatin silver methods, collage, and primitive cameras, and rely on the medium as a material of light and alchemy that surpasses the release of the shutter. Conceptually, my work is less concerned with the representational, leaning into aspects of impressionism and surrealism.

In the last decade, I've been focused on the natural environment as it relates to the human experience. A concept I refer to as ecological dissonance attempts to address the disconnect between humankind's actions and the health of the environment. In conveying this concept, I often incorporate the human figure or use my own in the act of making the photograph.

This is evident in, Helios, a photographic series about the sun, which affects our planet's climate, weather, and tides, while providing us with heat and life giving light. With greater UV exposure and rising surface temperatures on earth, the sun seems stronger than ever. These changes serve as a reminder of the interconnectedness between modern human life and the environment. In developing the series, I used the pinhole camera: its inherently long exposure times and pinpoint lens lend themselves to a light writing technique. During exposure, I held the camera close to my body and moved it in the direction of the sun. The resulting images balance abstraction with identifiable details, like a neon line piercing the sky.

The body is used similarly in, Exile, a landscape series depicting the Princes Islands, a group of islands at the base of the Bosphorus Strait. These islands were used as places of exile and imprisonment since the Byzantine Empire until the turn of the 20th century. Aiming to embody the exiled, I walked the circumference of each island over a period of nine months. Pacing and circling their shorelines, and eternally looking outwards, I pointed my camera to the sea and the vast expanses ever beyond reach.

My most recent body of work, Further Out (Than We Thought), is a series that aims to address the current instability of one of our largest and most significantly shared resources, water. In the photographs, scenes of crashing waves are intercepted with hands and arms in positions that at times embody and embrace the ocean and at others become engulfed by it. These collages are the result of multiple layers of analogue and digital imagery, ultimately outputted as a traditional gelatin silver photographic print.

An interview by **Ralph Landau**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

**Hello Stephanie and welcome to
LandEscape. Before starting to elaborate**

**about your artistic production, we would
like to invite our readers to visit**

**<https://www.stephaniepaine.com> in order
to get a wide idea about your artistic
production. You have a solid formal**



Stephanie Paine

Photo by Annabeth Mejia



Helios

Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, 16 x 22 inches

**Helios**

Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, 16 x 22 inches

training and you hold an MFA degree, that you received from Purdue University. How did your educational background, as well as your five-year experience teaching photography courses at Sabanci University in Istanbul, shape your development and approach as an artist?

The graduate school experience influenced me to use research to support my creative practice. Even though I perceive my work as starting from intuition and exploration, the final

**Helios**

Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, 16 x 22 inches

artworks usually have an investigative aspect to them. Graduate school also introduced me to digital photography and editing, whereas before then, I made photographs in a traditional darkroom setting. My creative practice was further shaped by my experiences living in Turkey. There, I was limited to some of the film-based materials I was used to using. Through discussions with large-scale printing professionals, I began incorporating digital image editing techniques with photographic film, such

as digitizing film negatives to output as an inkjet print. *Helios* and *Exile* are outcomes of that, but *Further Out (Than We Thought)* demonstrates an added layer to that digital-analogue approach.

For this special edition of LandEscape we have selected *Helios*, a stimulating photographic series centralized on an exploration of the sun. Through such captivating blend between abstraction with identifiable details, *Helios* creates a visual experience that is both meditative and thought-provoking: the abstract aspect draws the viewer into a contemplation of the sun's vital role. The identifiable elements, such as the piercing neon lines, serve as a reminder of the sun's tangible effects on our planet's climate. Could you walk our readers through your decision to use the pinhole camera and explain how it aligns with your conceptual goals?

Stephanie Paine: The pinhole camera is something I've been latched onto since early on in my creative practice. The ability to build a camera – often from low cost materials – that can be shaped and altered to produce a variety of aesthetic outcomes, was what drew me into the process. It is often the first technique I reach for when beginning a new project. It has also fundamentally become a part of my artistic philosophy that art making, specifically photography, does not have to be expensive nor require the most technologically advanced equipment.





Helios, Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, 16 x 22 inches



Helios, Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, 16 x 22 inches

With, Helios, I just needed to start photographing, so I picked up my pinhole camera and pointed it at the landscape I was surrounded by. I knew that I wanted to do something different with the camera, so I began to incorporate subtle movements during exposure. At the same time, I was reading about weather changes, loss of the ozone layer, and increases in UV exposure, which eventually became integrated with the concept of Helios.

After reviewing the first roll of film and seeing the results of those movements – lines created from the sun – I decided to continue with the technique. I worked for several months and produced around eighty images with varying camera movements. Due to the pinhole camera's exceptionally long exposure times and lack of a lens, those piercing, neon lines could only be produced with a pinhole camera. Additionally, images result in soft, impressionistic details. This adds another conceptual layer to Helios as those soft sky details evoke the air and atmosphere.

We have been fascinated by the conceptual aspect of Helios: the images evoke a sense of reverence for the sun. The luminous lines etched across the images symbolize both the beauty and the danger of our solar connection, a duality that we have found particularly stimulating. How do you consider the role of symbols and metaphors playing within your work? Do you believe that beauty is



Helios

Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, 16 x 22 inches

necessary to encourage care, or can a more challenging visual language be equally effective?

Stephanie Paine: I think it's essential that artists communicate with the viewer to allow them to engage with the artwork, which can be about the artist's motivations and process, or through historical or contemporary frameworks. So I do spend time writing about my work, not just for an artist statement, but also to identify the symbols and metaphors that I'm using. This is something that is revealed over time through making the artwork, reflecting on it, and learning about the subjects and objects depicted.

Beauty in art is a tricky subject. I find that Helios is harmonious in color, value, and texture, which can be perceived as a way to draw the viewer's eye to the work, but Helios can also be considered a challenging aesthetic since it does not fit with typical photographic conventions. However, I think there are many ways to encourage care and promote change. Photographers, especially, have the ability to show in clear and poignant ways, the reality of many situations. Whether someone works metaphorically, such as myself, or is situated in realism such as a documentarian, all of it is important.

Your work seems to straddle the line between abstraction and representation. The phenomenological approach you describe, moving your body in space and time while holding the camera, is



Exile, Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, va

fascinating. We're impressed by this physical engagement with your art. How do you feel this bodily involvement influences the final images and their meaning?



riable sizes

Stephanie Paine: I am fascinated with how the body moves and navigates the spaces it exists in. Through the combined use of all of our senses, we inherently know how to

move about in our environments. This became important to the process of making *Helios* as I was using my body in a variety of locations, like coastal areas,



Exile, Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, variable sizes

forests, and urban spaces, in which to move the camera. Helios is essentially a performance piece. Despite my body not being depicted in the images, it is still

there. That is a huge aspect to the work and of the interconnectedness that is referenced in the artist statement: the need to be connected with our natural



environment is part of our physical presence and experiences in those environments.

Your description of the images as "a neon

line piercing the sky." is particularly evocative. This vivid imagery immediately draws the viewer into your work, creating a powerful visual and emotional impact. We're especially intrigued by the interplay between the technical precision of your photographic process and the lyrical quality of the final images.

Stephanie Paine: Craftsmanship has become an integral part of my creative practice. With experimental or non-traditional photography, the final presentation is always going to have an influence on how the image is perceived by the viewer, especially with a series like, Helios, as I did not have total control over the compositions. The final selection of images was determined by careful review of composition while balancing variety and unity within the body-of-work. I aimed to show a multitude of lines, atmosphere, and color without being too repetitive or too different.

How do you see the connection between the sun - traditionally associated with masculine identity in many cultures - and your female perspective, subverting these traditional associations? More particularly, how do you feel your identity as a woman influences and shapes your experimental processes?

Stephanie Paine: Well, I've always been drawn to early photographers Julia Margaret Cameron and Pictorialist, Anne Brigman. Both individuals had redefined the meaning of photography for women



Exile, Pinhole camera capture, pigment prints on photo rag, variable sizes





Further Out (Than We Thought), Selenium-toned Silver Gelatin prints, 20 x 24 inches

during their time, but the latter specifically integrated the female figure with the landscape in a way that was totally freeing women from social expectations. I'm certainly influenced by that mode of thought.

When working in the studio, exploring

photography in the way that I want to, I don't feel the pressures to fulfill typical photographic conventions, which have historically been led by and defined by men. It's definitely become a way for me to challenge traditional associations of the subjects I'm photographing.



Further Out (Than We Thought), Selenium-toned Silver Gelatin prints, 20 x 24 inches



Further Out (Than We Thought), Selenium-toned Silver Gelatin prints, 20 x 24 inches



Further Out (Than We Thought), Selenium-toned Silver Gelatin prints, 20 x 24 inches

The concept of interconnectedness appears to be a fundamental thread running through your work, linking humans and the environment. This holistic approach is evident in how you connect the sun's effects on our planet's climate and tides to the broader implications of climate change and human interaction

with the environment. We're interested in how this idea of interconnection manifests in both your art and your thinking. Could you elaborate on how you see these relationships playing out in your work?

Stephanie Paine: In all three series

featured here, *Helios*, *Exile*, and *Further Out (Than We Thought)*, the human-nature connection is a driving force. Referring back to your question regarding phenomenology, our bodies are essential to everything we experience. They are vessels to things we ingest and feel, including the health of the land we reside. Whatever is happening in the environment is happening to us. My work emphasizes this connection as a form of ecological dissonance, which references a broken connection between humans and nature. The responsibility of the environment has been placed on the individual, such as the need to recycle or drive electric vehicles, but without broader policies focused on change within large-scale commercial industries, our efforts as individuals go with little impact. Although there are good things and efforts happening in that realm, I also believe the problem is intrinsically tied to consumer capitalism, which is yet another facet dividing the human-nature connection.

You created your *Exile* series by exploring the base of the Bosphorus Strait and the Princes Islands, which were once places of exile during the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires and later used for detaining political prisoners. With your camera, you sought to embody the perspective of the exiled, intertwining personal experience with historical narrative and capturing the haunting echoes of their past. How do you think the act of physically walking and tracing

the perimeters of the islands influenced the emotional tone and composition of your photographs compared to a more detached, observational approach? Moreover, in what ways do you hope your audience will connect with the narrative presented, particularly in relation to the haunting echoes of the past?

Stephanie Paine: I went to the Prince's Islands almost weekly for months, walking their perimeters, which wouldn't take more than a couple of hours, sometimes less, as several islands are quite small. At times it became tedious, and that's when my emotions began to take on what I imagined the exiled would feel. I think some of the images convey those emotional states such as when the trees feel overpowering and ominous or the water is so still and flat it appears to not exist at all. Although *Exile* was born out of the history of the Princes Islands and is inevitably attached to that land, my hope for viewers is that the series can be a catalyst to think about how their land may have been used in the past or present that does not serve their communities in healthful and thriving ways.

Inspired by Stevie Smith's, *Not Waving but Drowning* — a poem about miscommunication and its consequences — *Further Out (Than We Thought)* visually intertwines human limbs with the ocean, highlighting the complex relationship between humanity and nature. We are



Further Out (Than We Thought), Selenium-toned Silver Gelatin prints, 20 x 24 inches



Further Out (Than We Thought), Selenium-toned Silver Gelatin prints, 20 x 24 inches

particularly impressed with your ability to link the poem's interpretation to ecological dissonance and climate change through such powerful symbolism. How do you consider the role of images rich in symbolic value within your artistic practice? And how can art influence public perception regarding environmental conservation and climate change?

Stephanie Paine: Stevie Smith's poem, which is about miscommunication, evoked such powerful images for me that I knew I wanted to make an artwork about it. Described in it is a separation of land and sea, already dividing two parties: the lone figure in the water and the masses of people standing on the shore. Both parties are ill-equipped to communicate or understand. This was a quality of the poem that led to me think yet again about ecological dissonance. While making the work, I had dozens of compositions that not only included hands and arms, but also disjointed heads, legs, and feet. I eventually decided on compositions that focused only on the hands and arms, as they hold so much potential for expression. They can be tense and outstretched as if in distress. They can be soft and relaxed as if giving up. Those are some of the physical aspects of the hands that I relied on for symbolic meaning.

With the right approach, artists can be situated alongside scientists and

researchers so that conversations regarding climate change can connect all people. Whereas science provides the data, art provides a source of reflection. Personally, I'm seeing, and participating in, more and more exhibitions that are environmentally focused, and to truly influence public perception regarding climate change and art, it takes platforms like, *LandEscape*, and museums and galleries to promote artists that have an environmental perspective.

We have really appreciated the complexity and depth of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Stephanie. Could you tell us about your current projects and any concepts you're keen to investigate in your upcoming work?

Stephanie Paine: Thank you as well. Currently, I'm departing from the environmental concepts discussed in this interview, and developing a self-portrait series about the female experience within the medical industry. It involves some aspects of performance art as well as an exploration of materials used in medical treatments. I've since returned to a traditional studio lighting space, but at times, move to my darkroom to make photograms.

An interview by **Ralph Landau**, curator and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

LandEscape meets

Christine Comeau

Since the beginning of my career, my creations have been rooted in an exploration of mobility as a metaphor for a personal and collective quest for identity. To this end, I design temporary shelters inspired by the tents of nomadic peoples who, rather than putting down roots in one place, choose to roam, invest and inhabit the territory. The tent translates the idea of a house, a refuge, but also a portable shelter that accompanies us on our travels. From then on, it becomes both the reassuring symbol of a refuge and that of a shifting identity, forged by time and space traveled. I also imagine and make "relational clothes" in which two people must often slip into. In doing so, they are encouraged to connect with each other, both physically and symbolically, in a relationship of intimacy, sharing and negotiation. These clothes also become camouflage, blurring the external markers of the participants' individual identity. It results from it performed installations which induce an external as well as internal disorientation. Here again, the idea of a shifting identity is omnipresent.



An interview by **Ralph Landau**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

Hello Christine and welcome to *LandEscape*.
Before starting to elaborate about your
artistic production and we would like to invite
our readers to visit

<https://christinecomeau.com> in order to get a
wide idea about your artistic production, and
we would start this interview with a couple of

questions about your background. You have a
solid formal training: after having earned your
Bachelor in Visual art, you nurtured your
education with a Master in Interdisciplinary
Art. How did your formative years influence
your evolution as an artist? Moreover, how
does your *cultural substratum* address the
direction of your current artistic research?

Christine Comeau: Obviously, my university
training in the visual arts has had a huge
influence on my artistic practice. When I
started my bachelor's degree, I'd been painting



abstractly for eight years. Immersing myself in a theoretical universe transformed my way of seeing creation and my artistic practice, intellectualizing them. I lost my spontaneity. I was even unable to paint, because painting was associated with creative spontaneity. The day I stopped painting, I was standing in front of a blank canvas and nothing was coming out. I had writer's block, and I knew right then and there that I had to change my medium. So I threw myself into a practice that I felt was much richer, that opened up multiple avenues, and it was only much later that I realized this. My current practice is multidisciplinary, combining textile sculpture, installation, performance, photography and video, and has enabled me to travel and discover new spheres of creation. This has enabled me to take up creative residencies around the world, something I've dreamed of doing since I was 18. During these residencies, I made enriching encounters that have nourished my practice. My master's thesis deals with this subject, this marriage between the creative process and everyday life. Nicolas Bourriaud's theory, taken from his essay *Radicaant. Pour une esthétique de la globalisation*, according to which artists are compared to radicaant plants (radicaant subject), which take root in all soils, has supported and, above all, inspired me.

For this special edition of *LandEscape* we have selected *The Skinning of the Eel*, a stimulating performance video that our reader can view at <https://vimeo.com/685512610>. Offering an innovative reflection on the fluid concept of contemporary identity and belonging in the era of global mobility, your work bridges visual and performance art, actively





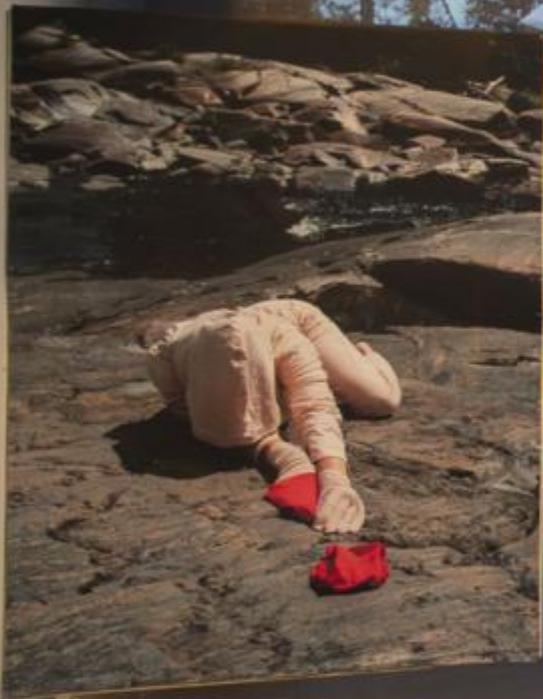




engaging the viewers. When walking our readers through your usual setup and setting, would you tell us something about the genesis of *The Skinning of the Eel*?

Christine Comeau: *The skinning of the eel* (2021-2023) is a veritable metaphor for the search for an authentic identity. The project is divided into several stages, beginning with the preparation of the performance: applying for grants, making jumpsuits, preparing the venue, etc. This is followed by the in situ performance, in which three dancers (James Viveiros, Maria Kefirova and Sara Hanley) quietly remove "jumpsuits" while experiencing the natural landscape. On the banks of a river in northern Lac-Saint-Jean, Quebec, the protagonists gradually remove each of these "skins", symbolically freeing themselves from the identities that have been prescribed to them throughout their lives by those around them or society. Guided by choreographer Sarah Bild and myself, the performers meticulously execute their emancipatory, poetic movements, finally undergoing a complete metamorphosis.

These tableaux-vivants, these interventions, have left behind only photographs, video recordings and "jumpsuits". From October 27 to December 3, 2023, at the artist-run center L'Œil de Poisson, Quebec, used these traces to create a vast multidisciplinary installation, the final stage in *The skinning of the eel*. In the exhibition, photographs printed on fabric create a "landscape-installation", while the video, as large as the gallery wall, allows for a true immersion in nature. Jumpsuits, used by the dancers, are displayed on the floor, recalling the final scene of the performance, a moment when constructed identities are abandoned in favor of a lightning, both psychic and physical. The audience is invited to put on and take off the clothes one by one, inspired by the video to





recreate the liberating performative gesture of stripping off.

The choreographies that make up your work are presented in a series of performances: a sort of living tableaux in which professional dancers wear 'sweat-suits', created to explore the concepts of border, territory, landscape, and identity. We have particularly appreciated the idea of "relational clothes" and the way they become catalysts for intimate and immediate human connections: blurring individual boundaries, your creations invite us to reconsider our relationship with others and ourselves. Could you delve deeper into how you developed this idea, and what inspired you to use clothing as a medium for exploring interpersonal relationships?

Christine Comeau: In fact, I've long felt like a stranger in the world I live in. So I came up with the idea of designing relational garments that would allow me to inhabit the world in a different way, and accentuate this feeling of strangeness. But as I don't want to be alone in this adventure, I'm taking others with me. These relational garments are used for collective performances in which people are invited to participate. So I'm interested in different fabrics, colors and garment systems to create interconnecting garments.

The prototypes are velcroed to the inside of the suits, which the participants put on. A system of fastenings is designed to bind the participants together, enabling them to establish a physical and psychic connection. This is the basis of my relational garments. Thus linked by the ties, the bodies must move, necessarily affecting the movement of other bodies. Physical constraints form in









their movements, and the connected garments restrict them even though they seem to merge them. The question of the carnal envelope as limit and constraint has always preoccupied me. Because once dressed, these singular garments become a second skin that the volunteers must appropriate, an envelope that serves to camouflage their true identity and allows them to experience their own strangeness, their own difference. Having lived the experience myself, I can testify to this phenomenon: this impression of strangeness is formulated by a feeling of being different from others. This feeling is often triggered by the way passers-by look at us. The suits, often with a single sleeve, cover the entire body. From the outside, this gives the impression that the characters are mutants. Of the individual's body, only his or her face is visible. The individual becomes a member of a community of strangers.

Through negotiation, the participants exchange ways of living together in the confined spaces of the sculptural tents and overalls. As bodies, linked by a system of ties or subjected to the transportation of a mobile tent (with just one arm, for example), move together, creating a choreographic game of movement, communication between volunteers is essential. Encounters and exchanges take place between participants. They are all part of a whole, a work, an event, a start-up.

By designing strange clothes for human beings, I try to reinvent a singular, playful world where the presence of the other is essential to the smooth running of the game and where, sometimes, self-mockery and delirium rub shoulders.



The northern Lac-Saint-Jean region as the backdrop for *The Skinning of the Eel* has particularly caught our attention, as it seems to resonate with the themes of border, territory, and identity. How did the geography, history, or cultural significance of this specific location shape your creative process and the messages you aim to convey? Additionally, we're curious about any specific features of the Lac-Saint-Jean landscape — perhaps its lakes, forests, or

local communities — that resonate with your artistic vision.

Christine Comeau: In fact, I lived in Lac Saint-Jean for two years, during the pandemic period, when I took up a management position in an art center. In the solitude imposed by the pandemic, I explored the landscapes of this grandiose region, mainly through its hiking trails, its rivers, its boreal forest and Lac St-Jean, which is so large it's said to be like an inland sea. These wide-



open spaces made me want to make this northern landscape my own, to develop an artistic project. It has to be said that waterways have been an integral part of my artistic practice from the outset. First, I applied for a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts to carry out this project, as I wanted to hire professional artists (choreographer, dancers, photographer, filmmaker, musician). Next, I did some canvassing and prospecting to find the ideal venue for the project.

I approached the general manager of the Parc régional des Grandes Rivières du Lac St-Jean, Dominique Gobeil, who agreed to create a partnership with me and guide me. He introduced me to the various majestic sites north of Lac St-Jean. I chose the Énergie sector of the regional park, in Girardville, which is a unique place combining rivers, boreal forests (conifers, lichen and blueberries) and a small island on which you can camp, as there are facilities for wilderness camping. It's also worth

mentioning that the Mistassini River was diverted from its original course by the construction of a power plant. So its original bed, sculpted over thousands of years, was offered to us as a creative terrain. The idea was that my team and I could camp on site and carry out a creative micro-residency. The Jeannois (people of Lac St-Jean) are very welcoming and always ready to help. To this end, I was able to create a link with a Girardville restaurant that agreed to cook meals for me and my team every night, and the municipal campground offered us its showers. What's more, I was able to hire two talented professional artists from the region for the photographic and video direction. Lac St-Jean is home to many talented artists. All these factors contributed to the success of *The skinning of the eel*.

The soundtrack — produced by musician David Ryshpan — blends evocative natural sounds with subtle electronic undertones is crucial in establishing the unique atmosphere of *The Skinning of the Eel*. Can you explain your approach to balancing audio and performative gestures to create such a powerful overall effect?

Christine Comeau: I wanted the sound of the video to create an atmosphere that combined the sounds of nature and mystery, while respecting the movements of the dancers. Musician David Ryshpan, with whom I've been working for several years, is a great listener. He has an intuitive approach. So he created a first version of the score, which I then guided so that the final version would be close to a certain balance. The aim was that when the video was projected in an exhibition room, visitors would be engulfed by the









sound and the video's moving, enveloping images.

3000 ans d'errance, has captured our attention for its effective essential aesthetics and powerful symbolism. The tent — *which is a quite recurring element in your artistic research* — translates the idea of a house, a refuge, but also a portable shelter that accompanies us on our travels. How did you incorporate archetypal symbols in *3000 ans d'errance* to tap into deep-seated, universal human experiences or emotions? How crucial do you find it to stimulate your audience's imagination, encouraging them to develop their own interpretations? Specifically, to what extent do you aim for your works to be open to various understandings?

Christine Comeau: I need to introduce you to the very root of my artistic approach. First of all, I'd like to go back to Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of the radical artist/semionaut* and talk about my condition, the position in which I find myself as an artist of displacement and uprooting. Let me explain; this desire to be always on the move and on the move stems from the fact that I find it difficult to appropriate my mind and my body. This phenomenon is undoubtedly due to the domestication that capitalist society has instilled in me. Between this domestication and the education handed down to us by our parents, the school system and this society of over-consumption, is there any room left for a certain well-being and freedom? For me, traveling is an attempt to get closer to this freedom, even if it seems unattainable. What's more, I don't have a home to live in. I don't feel at home anywhere, so since I don't have a home to leave or to return to, I continue on my way, like a nomad. I often feel



like a stranger in this world I live in. Traditions are not part of my North American culture. I have no attachment to the land where I was born, and the question of identity, my identity, haunts me at times, so I shape it, I invent it. I'm attached to people, but not to

any specific place. So displacement is an integral part of my artistic practice.

The notion of sculpture-habitats, and more specifically of mobile artistic houses, has proved relevant in my journey as an uprooted



person. Since there's no fixed, stable home to return to, why not build one to take with you?

The Trois mille ans d'errance project (2010-2012) consists of eight wheelbarrow tents designed to wander the streets. They are pulled by participants. These mobile tents are

fitted with suits that are attached to the inside of each tent with Velcro. The participants inhabit not only the tent but also the suits, becoming the actors in the performance.

Moving around is arduous and very restrictive

for the volunteers, who can only use one arm. The wheelbarrows move with difficulty due to the wheel mechanism. The wheels are made of wood, and make a shrill noise reminiscent of a bustard's cry. This accentuates the extravagant, surreal character of the parade. It's an extraordinary, incongruous tableau vivant: a group of strangers, resembling mutant aliens, taking their mobile home with them, roam the streets of a village, Saint-Jean-Port-Joli, where I did a two-month creative residency through the Est-Nord-Est center.

With this wandering project, there is the creation of new cultural referents or a new culture, based on the human model (human scale, clothes, participating human beings, geometric shapes), but which distances itself from it through its singularity. The color of the fabric, bright orange, amplifies this phenomenon. I had originally chosen it as a reference to the aesthetics of construction panels.

The impact of a referent on people's imagination is very strong. Whether or not the public is initiated into contemporary art, the desire to understand is always present. The brain likes what it sees to make sense, but it inevitably refers to something known, to socio-cultural reference points. This attempt to play with the human imagination, through my art, is a fascinating game. Imagination is, for me, an essential element of survival. It's our ability to fantasize, to invent stories, to give meaning to our lives.

My will to be in the world, to materialize my ideas and impose them, is stronger than anything else. I share the whims of my imagination with others of my kind. This drive takes me out of my shy comfort zone,









camouflaged in a suit/shell/second skin, to reach out and open myself up to others. Whether this other is the participant or the passer-by, my invitation is the same: I invite them to discover my world and to help me discover theirs through an exchange of dialogues and perspectives. It's an encounter. And this desire to meet, to get to know this world and its inhabitants, is stronger than my desire to escape. Travelling is a tactic to provoke these encounters that feed my projects.

Audience engagement and the transformation of spectators into active participants are fundamental aspects of your artistic practice. This is particularly evident in your work *Inventer le pays*, where viewers transcend their passive role to become integral components of the installation itself. In this piece, you extend an invitation to the audience, beckoning them to immerse themselves in a realm of poetic displacement — a space that embodies the essence of nomadic existence. This approach not only blurs the line between observer and artwork but also creates a dynamic, shared experience that resonates with themes of rootlessness and cultural fluidity. How did this participatory approach evolve over the years, and what new forms of engagement are you exploring?

Christine Comeau: Initially, during my "haltes nomades" (creative residencies), the performance required a good deal of organization, since I had to call on several people and resources to make it happen. It's best to hold it in a busy thoroughfare (a public place) in the town or village, so as to be able to meet passers-by. Audience and

participants are distinct. The participants are the actors in the performance, while the audience witnesses it. The performance brings people together, linking the work to the participants and the participants to the audience. It constitutes a public stage, inviting encounters and social acts.

Audiences often come into contact with participants, creating dialogues and asking questions about the event. Depending on the host structure, the itinerary often becomes random. In some cases, the participants decide the route of the intervention, as in my Blanc project (the first project in my current practice), presented at the Viva! art action festival in Sainte-Thérèse in 2006. Eight white suits fitted with a fastening system were inhabited by individuals found among the public. They were free to choose the location and duration of the intervention. They drifted along the city's arteries, meeting passers-by.

Whereas with Vagabond Stories, presented in Goerlitz in 2013 through the WildWuch E.V. art association in Germany, the parade route through the town was defined in advance. To mark the occasion, the association sent out an invitation to participate to all its contacts (members, friends, artists, etc.). The project, advertised as an outdoor festivity, was published in local and regional newspapers, along with the date, time and location of the performance.

The extravagant, festive nature of these interventions invites passers-by to take a stand: will they allow themselves to encounter this series of mobile homes and mutant, somewhat grotesque and surreal creatures that move in front of them,

upsetting their daily lives? Or will he continue on his way, unperturbed? Perhaps he'll be a little amused and astonished by the singularity of it all? Inevitably, encounters take place between participants and curious passers-by. Some of these curious onlookers even follow the parade, as if they too wanted to take part in this singular parade, this collective jubilation.

Over the years, I've come to ask my participants not to speak to the public, to play the game of the mutant creature who observes passers-by as passers-by observe them. The observed becomes the observer. This accentuates the enigmatic, theatrical character of the performance.

With *Inventer le pays* (2018-2021), the grotesque character has disappeared to make way for solemnity and contemplation. My invitation to the public was to take the time to reflect. The project consists of installing a series of small domes inscribed with excerpts from poems I've written on my travels. The domes become places of meditation for visitors, who are invited to lie on their backs and read the poem. This series of actions - taking off one's shoes, putting on the moccasins, bending over, entering the tent, lying on one's back - for each dome (a poetic journey) constructs a sort of rite of passage for recollection. Once inside the tent, the visitor's moccasined feet are visible from the outside, becoming part of the installation.

On the other hand, with my latest project, *The skinning of the eel*, the first phase of which was carried out in the midst of a





pandemic, the organization of the performative event took place in a place without spectators. My team and I had to take measures of social distancing. At first, the dancers performed separately. But gradually, they came closer together and began to help each other in the stripping off of their suits/skins. This created unexpected and beautiful sculptural images. I give my performers a great deal of room for improvisation, which leads to some astonishing surprises. With this project, I was no longer part of the performance, but the one who observes and guides.

Multidisciplinarity and a collaborative approach play a central role in your artistic production. There's no doubt that interdisciplinary collaborations are increasingly powerful in Contemporary Art, and the most exciting developments occur when creative minds from different fields come together on a project. Could you tell us more about the collaborative nature of your approach when developing your artworks?

Christine Comeau: With *The skinning of the eel*, I marked a new milestone in my artistic practice, taking my approach even further through collaboration. In other words, it was not the culmination of my research over the past 15 years, but the logical continuation of my path, my aesthetic reflections and my recent formal explorations. With this project, I set up a new camp, set new forms in motion and forged new links with artists and cultural professionals in order to build up a body of previously unseen work. This project enabled me to develop new creative avenues while consolidating certain

acquired skills. Above all, this multidisciplinary project enabled me to collaborate with other creators from fields as varied as dance, video art, music and photography. Finally, on a more personal level, it enabled me to broaden my professional network and, above all, my artistic horizons. Through this abundance of ideas and multidisciplinary encounters, I wanted to create living tableaux in which the talents, sensibilities and strengths of all the participants were put to good use. I've grown from this experience and hope to continue collaborating with other creators on future projects, as I'm convinced that it enriches my artistic practice.

Your artworks exhibit a meticulous sense of symmetry and demonstrate exceptional attention to chromatic composition: what importance do you place on visual appeal? Is surface-level attractiveness essential for inspiring engagement, or can more complex and potentially difficult imagery be just as powerful?

Christine Comeau: Good question (like the others). I must confess to a somewhat maniacal penchant for visual aesthetics, geometric shapes and color schemes (suits and natural or urban locations). Aesthetic research is an integral part of my creative process. I have to find beauty in my projects, even if it's not my primary goal. Frankly, I don't think the images would be as powerful without this aesthetic research.

You are an established artist, and your works have been exhibited nationally and internationally. As the move of Art from traditional gallery spaces, to street and especially to online platforms — as

Instagram — increases, how would in your opinion change the relationship with a globalised audience and how do you envision the role of physical exhibitions versus online presentations in showcasing your work?

Christine Comeau: My current artistic practice began on the street in 2006, with the performance art festival Viva, art action! For several years, I presented my performances in non-art venues. Gallery shows have slowly been added to the mix, and the majority of my most recent events have taken place in 'White cubes'. I'd love to return to the street with my performances. I'm also open to presenting my work online, on different platforms, but the physical encounter is obviously not the same. In fact, I have an instagram account: <https://www.instagram.com/comocrie/>, a website and a facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/christine.georgette.comeau>. My photographs are also available on Artsy: <https://www.artsy.net/artist/christine-comeau>

We have really appreciated the multifaceted nature of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Christine. What projects are you currently working on, and what are some of the ideas that you hope to explore in the future?

Christine Comeau: I'm about to embark on a four-week creative residency at Cortex Frontal, in Arraiolos, Portugal, to begin the first phase of my new artistic project, La valse des somnambules. Up to now, my

practice has explored the physical and mental constraints of displacement, and now I want to work on the theme of fatigue. The psychic and physical states caused by fatigue in everyday life: dispossession, displacement, etc. This project will combine textile sculptures, choreography and video projections. Next fall, I'll be deepening my knowledge of video editing by taking a specific training course with a technician from Bande Vidéo, an organization dedicated to video art. I'll be collaborating once again with a Quebec City choreographer and professional dancers. Thanks to a grant recently obtained from the Le levier program offered by the City of Quebec. We're very fortunate as artists in Quebec, because we have several bursary programs offered to artists by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the Ville de Québec and the Canada Council for the Arts. Without this support, it would be difficult to develop large-scale projects.

I'd like to thank you for this interview, which enabled me to take the time to reflect on my artistic practice.

**The semionaut artist sets forms in motion, inventing through them and with them the paths by which he elaborates himself as a subject, at the same time as he builds up his body of work. - Nicolas Bourriaud, in Radicant, pour une esthétique de la globalisation.*

Free translation by the artist

An interview by **Ralph Landau**, curator and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com



LandEscape meets

Konstantina Mavridou

My art is a dialogue between the constants of nature and the ever-evolving landscape of technology. Drawing heavily from the realms of science, mathematics, and philosophy, my work seeks to explore and question the current technological acceleration and its trends. By interweaving the physical with the digital, the real with the illusionary, I aim to create a poetic reflection on space, time, and perception. My projects delve into themes of movement, transformation, and the interplay between the tangible and intangible. Through my art, I invite viewers to contemplate the nature of experience, the fluid boundaries between technology and nature, and the endless possibilities that lie in interpretation and creation. This journey is not just about observing the world but about engaging with it, challenging our perceptions, and imagining new realities.



@konstantinaoomavridou

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

Hello Konstantina and welcome to LandEscape. Before starting to elaborate about your artistic production and we would like to invite our readers to visit <https://konstantinamavridou.xyz> in order to get a wide idea about your artistic production, and we would start this interview with a couple of introductory questions. You have a multifaceted educational background that marries the precision of Mathematics with the creative flair of the Arts: after having earned your Bachelor in Mathematics from the University of Ioannina, you moved to the Netherlands to nurture your education with a Bachelor in Art & Design, that you received from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. How did your educational background as well as your

cultural substratum shape your development and approach as an artist?

Konstantina Mavridou: My initial studies in Mathematics was definitely one of the key factors started affecting my work. Mathematics is strict and calculative, but it is also open to creating spaces; Euclidean or non Euclidean, or other forms and notions that are out of the zone of our regular thinking. When I realised that, it helped me push further my imagination and ideas. My studies in Art came way later, after I had graduated in Mathematics - I had actually found already my first job in 2014 in the Netherlands, where I started my career as an analyst in big corporations. However, my relationship with art started very early in my life as a kid; with line or nature drawings. Later on as a math student, I remember being busy and active in video art creation, as well as graphic design, where I had collaborated with multiple musicians and venues around the world. At that moment in time, I had no idea or aspiration to



study Art as I did later, as with my greek mind there was no [professional] future in whatever artistic, nor I thought myself as an artist in that way. I consider myself lucky that I kept looking for something more inspiring than the greek economic crisis - outside of the greek borders - back then. A new path opened up for me at Gerrit Rietveld Academie suddenly. On the other hand, the last couple of years I have also started recognising where I am coming from - my cultural roots with all of its characteristics; being our ancient history or our latest socio-economic-political tragedies. That's the reason why I returned back to my country, so I can connect with and listen to it and form in a way my art, or let it find its way.. So, my artworks the most of the times present or follow lines, paths, patterns, directions in a very abstract mathematical or imaginative way, and its incorporated with my current views on tech and contemporary trends. I see myself mostly as an observer and enabler when a new art piece is coming into life, as I think it appears in front of me after long experimentation.

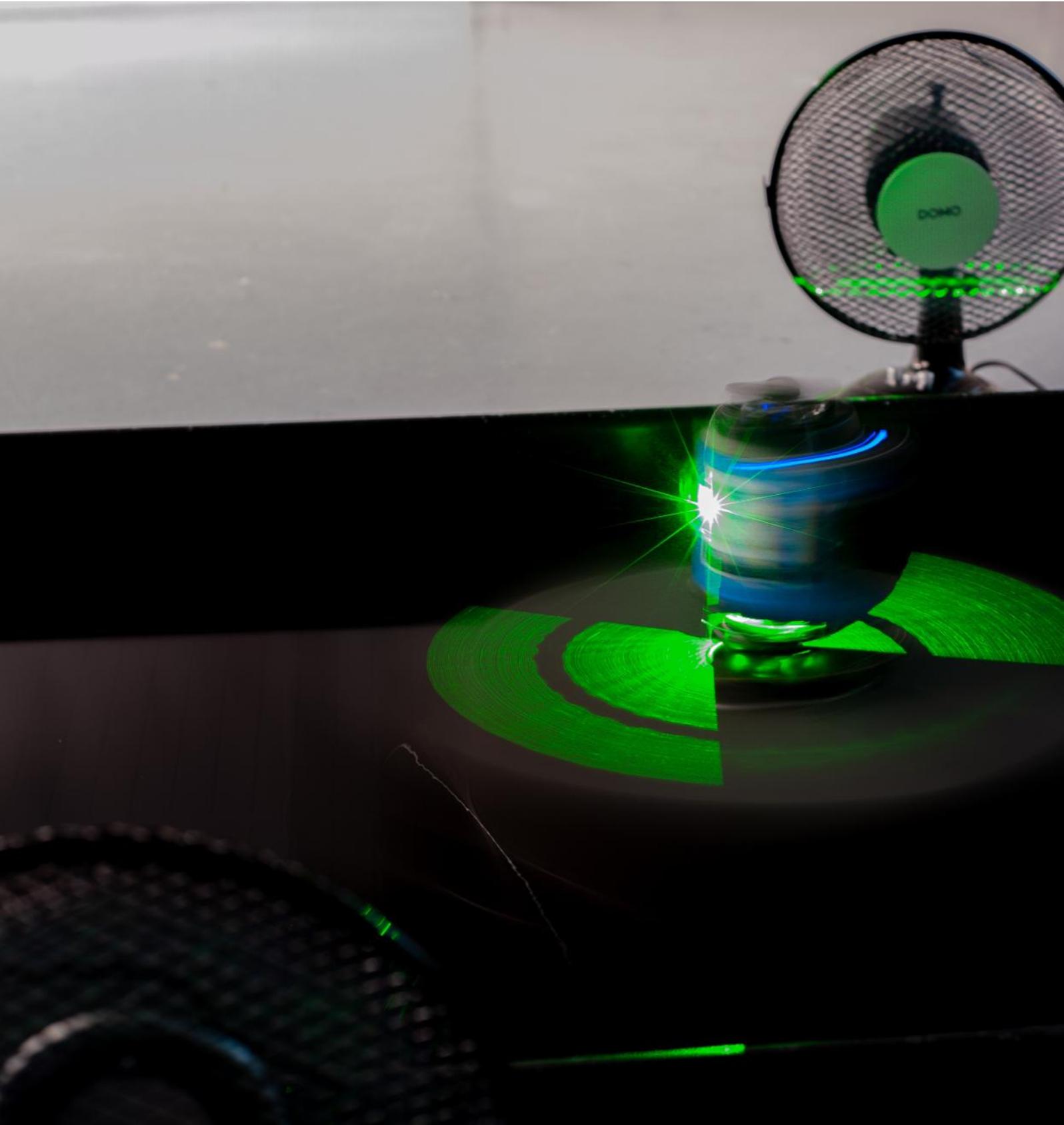
For this special edition of LandEscape we have selected The Enchanting Pool , a media installation that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article. Unveiling the elusive, still ubiquitous Ariadne's thread that lies at the intersection of art, science, and philosophy, The Enchanting Pool not only questions the trajectory of technological progress but also urges us to actively engage with our surroundings. When walking our readers through the genesis of The Enchanting Pool, would you tell us something about your usual setup and process?

Konstantina Mavridou: The Enchanting Pool is a media installation which merges the physical and digital worlds into a hybrid in between





The Enchanting Pool, 2021



The Enchanting Pool, 2021



experience. The 3D Laser levelling machine is floating on water of a square pool, which is being moved constantly by 4 carefully placed fans around the pool. The wind, the water and natural forces create a system where a purely scientific device - normally used by architects and topographers to measure space in construction - creates space at a constant base, never stops, an ongoing unpredictable game, in which visitors can experience it from their own point of view.

The final output and selection of the elements of water and air interfering with the laser levelling device came up in stages; first I envisioned this device to be floating, then I tested it in a smaller scale, then I added air of a fan and then I scaled up the pool and found the exact positions of the fans, so it has constant movement.

Using the laser device as it is, without further programming is a crucial conceptual decision, as it is using a-signifying semiotics methods to remove societal meaning, while at the same time creating a new spatial and hybrid becoming.

You are a versatile artist we definitely love the way you've integrated scientific tools into an artistic context. Can you elaborate on what inspired you to use a 3D laser levelling device as the centerpiece of your installation? How does this fusion of technology and art speak to broader themes in your work?

Konstantina Mavridou: The Enchanting Pool was born after long consequent experimentation and my drive to play with smart light and measurement readymade devices found on the Internet. This interest of mine is something very related to my curiosity to explore the tech trends, but also commenting the direction to where smart tech products are heading to and how these intrude our daily lives measuring







There are no universal coordinates, 2024

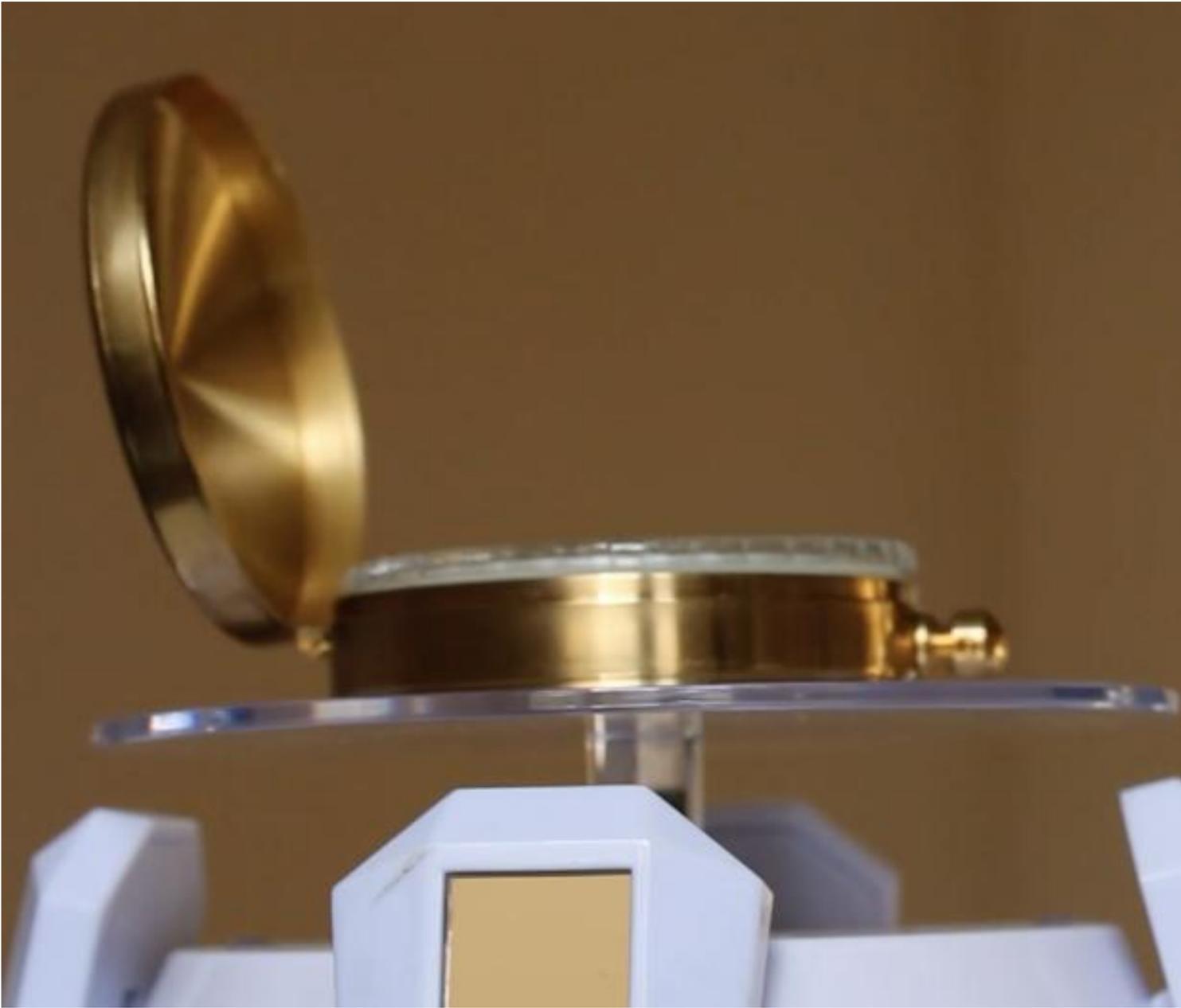


There are no universal coordinates, 2024

every single thing of our actions, providing somehow directions and even decide for us in the very near future if not already. In general, my reflected approach on the matter for this work and other works, combined with my scientific background use a more philosophical way of presenting and creating things.

The participatory aspect plays an important

role in your artistic production. In The Enchanting Pool visitors can experience it from their own point of view, inviting them to explore the interplay between control and chaos. How important is this individual perspective to the overall meaning of the work? Do you anticipate or hope for specific reactions from your audience?



There are no universal coordinates, 2024

Konstantina Mavridou: I have no expectations in terms of the audience's reactions while experiencing my works. For this reason, I let my works be open for interpretation as much as I can. I place the audience in the position of the observer, but also the actor in some cases. I believe in the spatial experience; to feel the

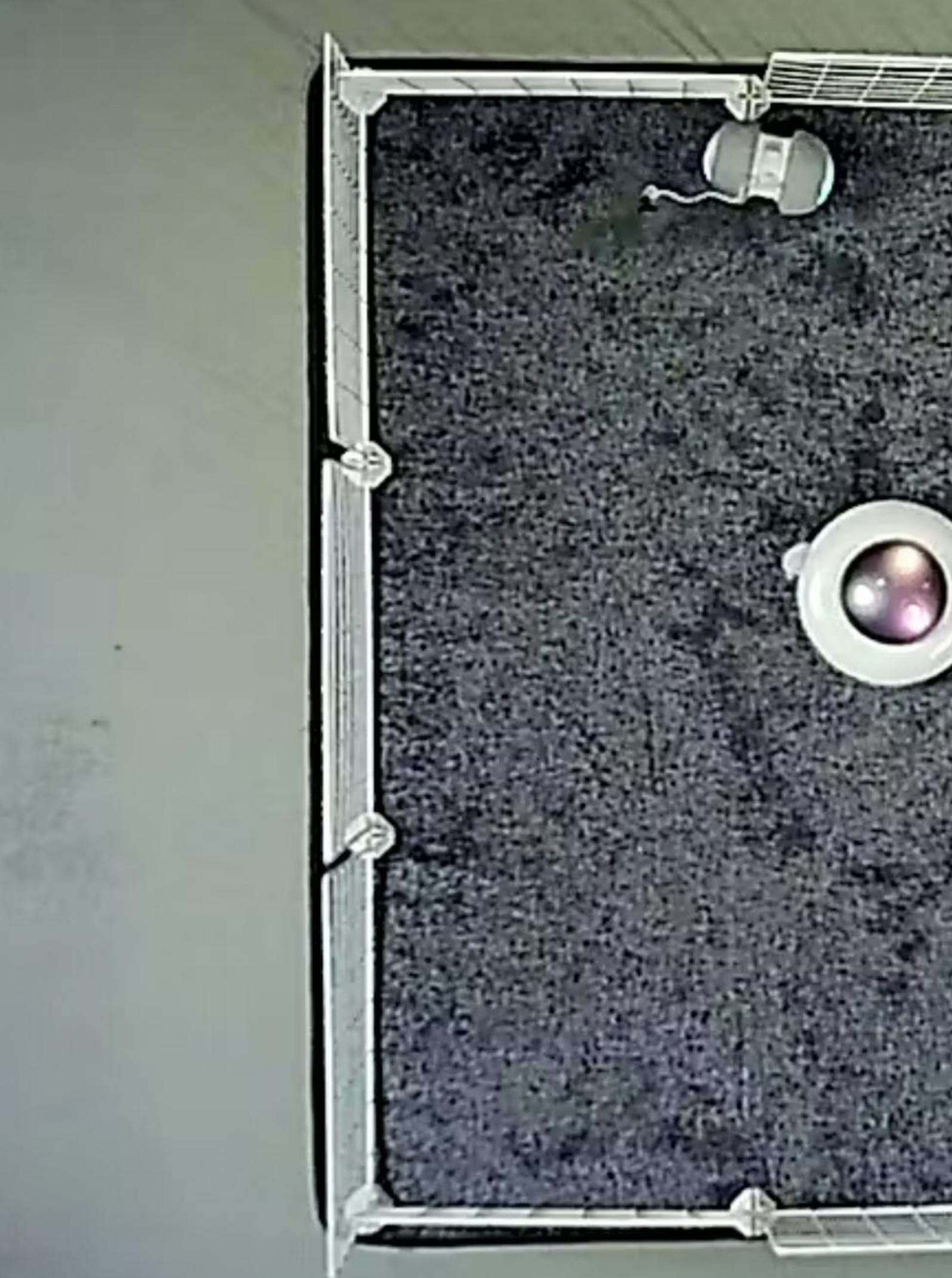
work through the movement inside the new space. I am also not a fan of imposing certain beliefs or points of view through art or any kind of medium. I see my works as a newly created space the moment of the experience, any reaction is allowed as long as there is some respect for the artwork itself. But, even

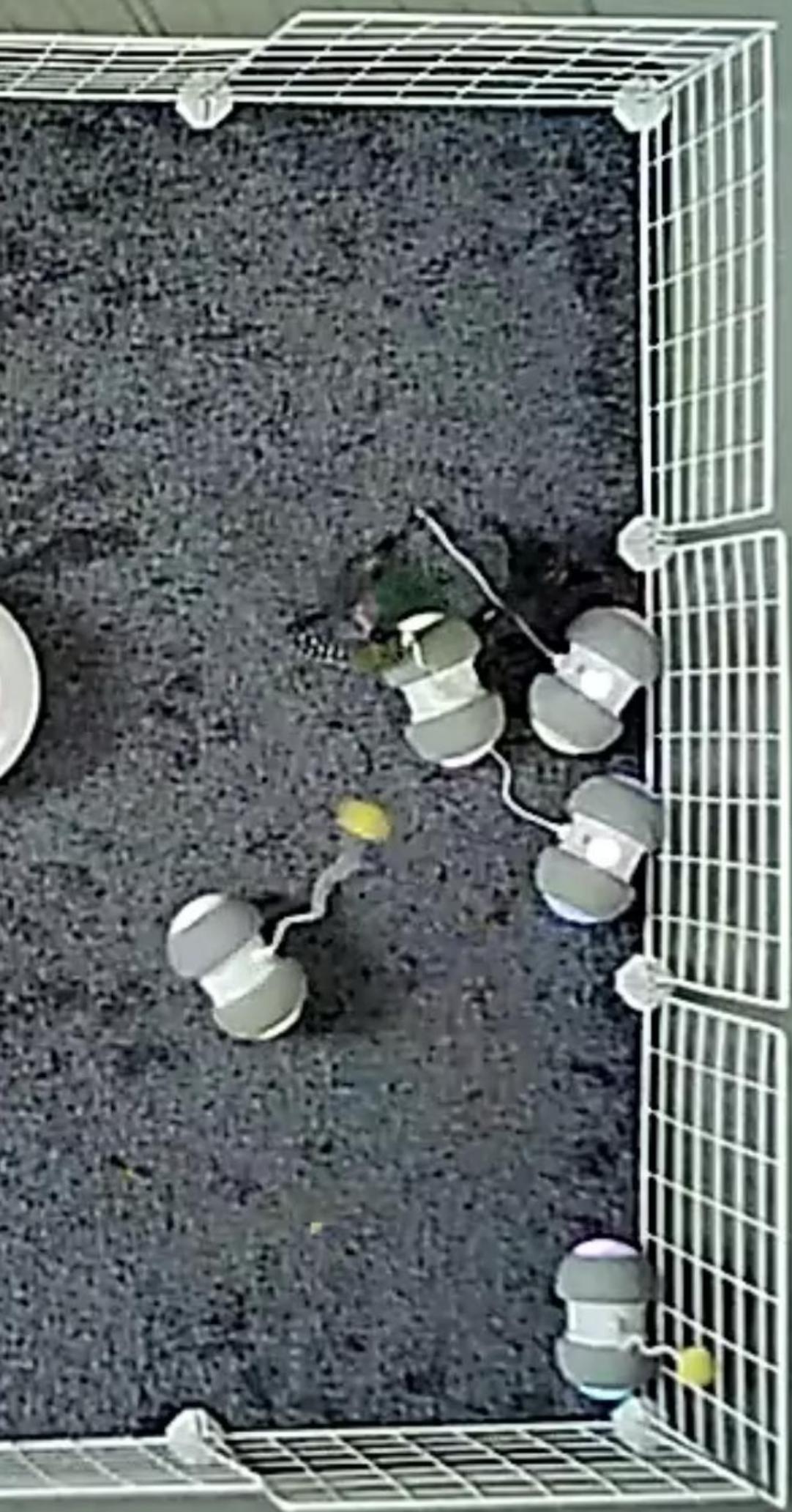


a very negative reaction is still a reaction, so that would be acceptable too.

As a matter of fact, technology is taking on an ever-growing role in human experience: do you think that one of the roles of contemporary artists has changed these days

with the new global communications and the new sensibility created by new media? In particular, as an artist particularly involved in the creation of immersive works, how will technology help artist to expand their chances to create a kind of involvement that will break the usual exhibition spaces' barriers?







Konstantina Mavridou: The progress of technology used to be helpful to artists since always; even if it was a light bulb, a tv screen, a new speaker or sound equipment, or even new types of colours for painting or frames or new techniques for support and projection. Artists always follow on what is happening and I believe that technology offers us a lot. It doesn't mean that tech fits to all artworks as a medium..no. But, it can support and present the works in better ways for sure. In my case, it can inspire me to generate new ideas, it pushes me to experiment, but not always. There are works that I refuse to use the latest technology and I prefer to follow some more traditional pathways. It really depends on what the artists are aiming for to achieve through an artwork.

Another interesting work of yours that has particularly impressed us and that we would like to introduce to our readers is entitled There are no universal coordinates. Your kinetic sculptural installation seems to open up a space for multiple viewpoints: we can recognize such allegoric quality in it, prompting us to reconsider our understanding of the relationship between the natural and the technological. Can you elaborate on how you conceptualize and represent the fluid boundary between time and perception in your art?

Konstantina Mavridou: *There are no universal coordinates* was inspired by Ptolemy's Almagest star measurement system initially. My focus was on the system itself and I was wow-ed by the manual scripts of Ptolemy writing down every coordinate of the stars, inventing a new imaginative space in that way. In parallel, I had found some solar compasses and mentally I was very busy with the notion of direction, change of route and way finding. Then, I thought that these compasses needed to be moving constantly -

another common point with the Enchanting Pool - and so I found some solar rotating display bases where I placed the compasses on. After that stage, I was thinking in a more contextual and philosophical way and my last decision was to present it on ancient greek columns. This process somehow reflects also in general my way of working in other works as well. That fluid boundary's representation is reflected by itself after selected medium combo succeeds. If it shows itself to me, then it's visible to everyone and it just works. If not, then simply the work is not ready. I need to let the work become first.

The idea behind The Square — a timed toy performance & installation in which the elements are not programmed, but they work purely with their factory settings — has reminded us of John Conway's Game of Life. As you have remarked in your artist's statement, in your process art emerges through a process of revelation and experimentation: how do you consider the creative role of chance and randomness, playing within your artistic practice?

Konstantina Mavridou: Randomness and chance are always needed to complete the work. If they appear - maybe due to factory settings - then this is a gift to the work and things work like a miracle sometimes. If they are not there, then I tend to use natural forces to help things out, or even specific positions of the objects in space could create randomness, but always in combination with and relation to the other devices or affected elements.

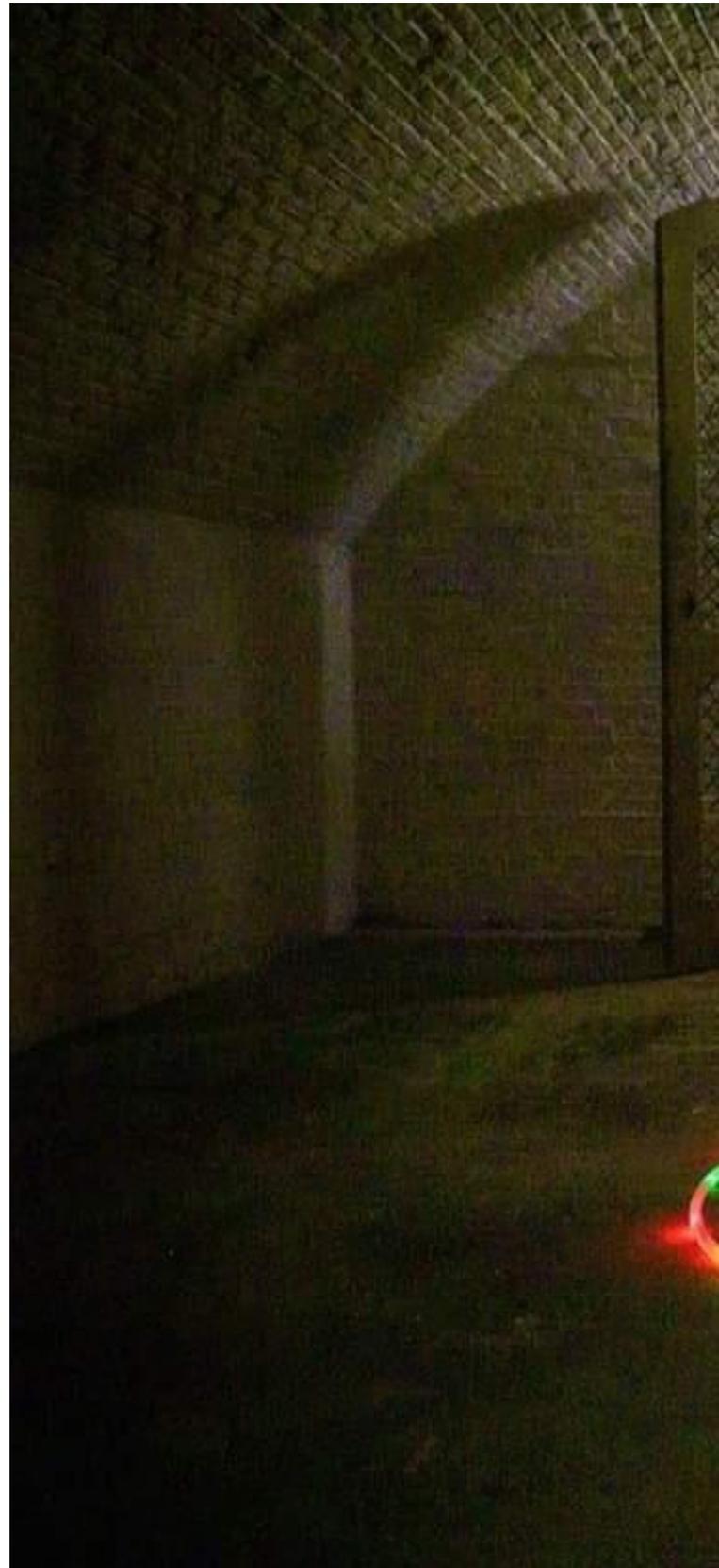
We really appreciate the juxtaposition of everyday objects in Vacuum the Circle. Triggering a hybrid play and dialogue between a robotic vacuum cleaner and a LED hula-hoop, your work successfully attempts to subvert

superimposed societal categories. Across the ages, artists have wielded their creative output as a powerful medium for expressing ideas and delivering messages. Given the expanding reach of artistic influence in today's interconnected world, how do you assess the role and impact of artists in addressing critical social issues?

Konstantina Mavridou: Yes, artists are kind of obliged to talk and open the discussion to social issues, it can be felt like a mission. The last years more and more artists are touching deep social issues through their work and they speak out. The attention is large from the media but short - however, the impact of the works to the society is minimal, and this is clearly a society's decision. Attention & impact are two different things, and the most of the times attention is created due to the hype created out of these social themes solely. So, in my eyes it is a desperate loop leading to nowhere, unless society changes the position of the artists' impact for the better.

Over the years your works have been showcased in many occasions, including your recent participation to Colour Your Dreams In 60 Seconds in Copenhagen and to the Electronic Literature Organisation Conference in Coimbra. How do you consider the nature of your relationship with your audience? Moreover, as art increasingly moves beyond traditional galleries to digital platforms like Instagram, how do you think this shift affects the relationship with a worldwide audience? What are your thoughts on the roles of physical exhibitions compared to online presentations in displaying your work?

Konstantina Mavridou: Social media like Instagram are a key part of the nowadays exposure and promotion of an artist. But, without works there is nothing. Online presentation is just





Vacuum the Circle, 2022

ads and informative material for people to see. The real experience of the artworks happens in the very natural and physical space of the exhibition or the studio of the artist, especially when we are talking about installation forms and not NFT or digital art. Even these forms, from what I have seen, are better presented in physical spaces. Let's don't forget; we are humans - we need to connect, to touch, to smell, so we can feel.

For my digital presence you can connect with me here:

<https://www.instagram.com/konstantinaoomavridou> or find my work and my news through my website: <https://konstantinamavridou.xyz>. I am always open to connect with people, exchange ideas or collaborations.

Your artistic research has truly impressed us with its depth and diversity. As we conclude this enlightening discussion, we'd like to express our sincere gratitude, Konstantina, for sharing your insights with us. We're curious about your current endeavors and future aspirations. Could you tell us about the projects you're presently immersed in? Additionally, we'd be interested to hear about the concepts or themes you're eager to explore in your upcoming work.

Konstantina Mavridou: Currently, I am preparing my gears to participate in a residency in Europe, collaborate with other artists, expand my research more and present potentially something new during autumn time. Solar devices, light, sound and stones like marble are some elements that keep my mind busy at the moment. Next to that, the notion of leaving (con)temporary traces is something new and I might go further with it soon.





The Seed Is Planted | An End, 2023

LandEscape meets

Joas Nebe

“The sprawling thematic expanse of his work, ranging from urban architecture to communication ideologies, reveals Nebe’s understanding of these motifs as distinctive languages through which people communicate. His prime focus on the utilization of language, both politically charged and devoid of it, coupled with an appreciation for the inherent gap between intent and the tool’s limitations, seeks to demonstrate the perpetual scope for interpretation in communication, reflecting a critical viewpoint towards ideology and political theory.

The artist’s journey, meandering through varied mediums and themes, is deeply imbued with an array of influences, both cinematic and literary, that have intricately shaped his work. Cinematic luminaries, such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Abbas Kiarostami, together with literary maestros like James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges, have bestowed upon Nebe a rich palette of narrative and imaginative forms to draw upon. While the initial chapters of his career were penned with a distinctive narrative style, his evolving interest leaned into non-narrative art, esteeming the abstraction inherent in the communication process as a pivotal element both in his artistic preferences and creations.

Nebe’s choice of medium invariably intertwines with the themes he explores, offering a synergistic union between message and method. For instance, the collage technique in the “Into The Void” series artfully narrates physical and metaphorical erasures during the Stalinist era, whilst the Chimera series deploys AI-generated images to navigate through the realms of stereotypes and artificial creativity in AI applications. (...) It’s the perpetual uncertainty and potential for evolution in his projects that form the core of Nebe’s creative pursuits, rendering each journey into the artistic unknown both exhilarating and refreshingly unpredictable.”



An interview by **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator
and **Ralph Landau**, curator
landescape@europe.com

Hello Joas and welcome to **LandEscape**. For this special edition, we have selected "Give My Regards To The Alps", an immersive 10 channel video installation that our reader can

start to get to know at
<https://youtu.be/peyFCoNmQSA>
<https://youtu.be/z4ZrGkYwdtc>
https://youtu.be/z_ojRBafHdU

Addressing the viewers to question the influence of global image prototypes on the mechanism of perception, your work is a provocative exploration of the interplay





GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE ALPS

(10 channel video installation, 2012/2013)

between technological reproduction, environmental degradation, and human perception. When walking our readers through the genesis of *Give My Regards To The Alps*, would you tell us what did address to center an important part of your artistic research on the theme of communication in its different forms and aspects?

Joas Nebe: First of all, I would like to thank you for inviting me to this interview. Now to the question. Images are part of the visual language that we have all learned from childhood and usually no

longer perceive as such. We are not aware that the images we see are composed creations. Since the invention of photography in the mid-19th century, image production has developed in ways previously unknown for centuries. With photography began the rise of the image as a universally understandable language, independent of the ability to read words. Even illiterate people understand the message of a photography. With reportage and photo essays in newspapers, propaganda was made during the First World War at the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, the image,



supposedly an “objective depiction of reality,” was exposed as such, because the detail accuracy that makes a photograph a credible witness of events was discredited by manipulation. Around 1900, the triumph of cinema began, which soon learned to speak and whose audiovisual achievements shape our perception even today in the internet age. Influencers use the same mechanisms of audiovisual storytelling as cinema.

However, since moving images are part of our daily lives, we no longer properly perceive the influence they exert on us.

But how we perceive images influences our way of seeing. We expect certain compositions from the views we seek on our travels, for example, the view of Yellowstone Falls in Yellowstone National Park. The viewpoint in the national park, which you can drive to, corresponds almost exactly to the angle that painter Thomas Moran had in 1872 of the Yellowstone Canyon.

What applies to Yellowstone National Park also applies to other regions of the world. We generally travel to relive the images we have in our minds from countless



GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE ALPS

(10 channel video installation, 2012/2013)

documentaries. We want to see the Matterhorn from Zermatt and not the view of the Alps from the highway leading from Basel to Geneva.

Because we always expect the same views, which have often been spectacularly tested in numerous paintings, photographs, etc., our mindset does not allow us to engage in something new or unexpected. We seek postcard views. The composition of an image thus determines our expectations, which we want to see fulfilled when traveling. However, since most travelers see it the

same way, it leads to overtourism. Roads and viewpoints are built into a landscape, destroying what took millions of years to form in a short time.

In my video work “Give My Regards To The Alps,” I have copied footage from various regions of the Alps and the Black Forest into a panoramic image. The idyllic images I show are counteracted by the soundtrack. You hear metallic noises, like those from construction sites. So, the images are not real because the views I chose do not exist in the depicted form. They are composed. And



the beauty of the images is counterbalanced by the noise it comes with.

Your choice of locations — *Simplon Pass, Black Forest* and *Jura Mountain Chasseral* — seems deliberate and significant. What led you to select these particular sites? Was it important for you to choose images of a place you know well, of something that is closely related to your personal experience?

Joas Nebe: My father had a good friend who later became my godfather. This godfather had a vacation home at the foot of the

Chasseral, one of the highest Jura mountains. Throughout my life, I have repeatedly visited the Chasseral when visiting my godfather. The Black Forest, on the other hand, has been a part of my life for the past 10 years, as I moved from Berlin to Staufen at the foot of the Black Forest after five years. I have also frequently traveled the Simplon Pass when going to northern Italy. So, one could say that the choice of places is related to my familiarity with them.

The theme of environmental degradation in mountain regions is a complex issue: Give



GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE ALPS

(10 channel video installation, 2012/2013)

***My Regards To The Alps* touches on the duality of technological advancement, presenting it as a simultaneous force of destruction and construction. Throughout history, artists like Thomas Light and Kelly Richardson have used their work to convey both overt and subtle messages. In our current era of global interconnectedness and societal instability, do you think artists have the capacity to effectively raise awareness about pressing issues such as media communication and environmental challenges? What role do you believe artists should play in addressing the complexities**

of our modern world?

Joas Nebe: Art is received by only a very small group of people because art can be very complex and requires extensive prior knowledge. Not everyone is willing to embark on this journey, especially as our society increasingly fragments into small groups with different interests, whose members have little interest in the concerns of other groups. Therefore, the influence of art is quite limited.

Nonetheless, I believe that some decision



-makers might be willing to embark on the journey that artists offer them.

I actually assume that art is increasingly losing influence because the political elite is increasingly distant from and even hostile to art. In Kreuzberg, a district of Berlin, galleries and artists' houses have been stormed by left-wing activists.

Members of the so-called “Last Generation” destroy art to draw attention to their cause. Thus, art no longer holds the significance it perhaps had 100 years ago.

Your exploration of the theme of communication feels particularly relevant in our digital age, where the nature of human interaction is rapidly evolving. We're curious about how modern technology has influenced your perspective on this theme. Has the rise of digital communication tools shifted your artistic focus or techniques? How do you address the unique challenges and opportunities of digital communication in your work?

Joas Nebe: Social media has changed communication in terms of form and speed.

The formation of groups and the fragmentation of society into small groups have accelerated. Moreover, communication forms have changed. Cameras are ubiquitous, and moving images are omnipresent in ways unimaginable 30 years ago. On the one hand, digital communication presents a risk. On the other hand, it offers opportunities. For example, I can present my art to interested groups like art collectors or curators. Worldwide connections can be established in no time. Data exchange virtually makes face-to-face communication unnecessary.

Interestingly, as a video artist, I have always created artworks with traditional means, whether with a digitally crafted image that I then animate in classic stop-motion style. Two examples are “The Shooting Gallery,” a film about the significance of pelicans as sacred animals

<https://youtu.be/w-ilJTmQAWI>

and “The Tower,” a video about the presence of nature in the big city

<https://youtu.be/P422JJRZs54>

In both video works, I have animated birds, making them fly over a coastal landscape in “The Shooting Gallery” and in front of building facades in “The Tower.”

Recently, in my projects, I have started working with charcoal drawings, animating them through erasing and redrawing. One example is “The Political Argument.”

<https://youtu.be/njoJS288PCA>









Perhaps this is my way of evading digital communication and the presence of social media. Maybe I try to point back in the direction of traditional art forms and what potential they have today though.

In the context of your artistic practice, how do you balance the intuitive, spontaneous aspects of creation with the deliberate, analytical processes of planning and execution, and what does this reveal about the cognitive underpinnings of your artistic identity? In particular, how do you think the intrinsic functions of mind, including *memory and perception* contribute to the conveyance of meaning and the evocation of responses through art?

Joas Nebe: Developing art projects requires both cognitive and intuitive abilities of an artist. Part of being an artist is accumulating knowledge in various fields. Besides studying psychology and literature, I took courses in theater studies, art history, and media studies at the university. Parallel to that, I learned traditional media like tempera painting and printmaking at a private art school. Even back then, I tried to accumulate as much essential knowledge as possible. This knowledge, supplemented by daily research, forms the cognitive pattern from which I realize my works.

Even today, I am a person who plows through countless materials to explore a topic that interests me and that could lead to a new project. I often follow my instincts. It often happens that engagement with a neighboring topic arises from my knowledge.

The philosophical depth of your work is particularly challenging, especially when it

investigates into *the gap between a sender's intentions and a receiver's understanding*, inviting the viewers to question whether *genuine communication is even possible*. This provocative idea challenges our fundamental assumptions about human interaction. We're intrigued to know how you translate such an abstract and potentially unsettling concept into tangible art forms. Could you walk us through your usual process of manifesting this idea visually?

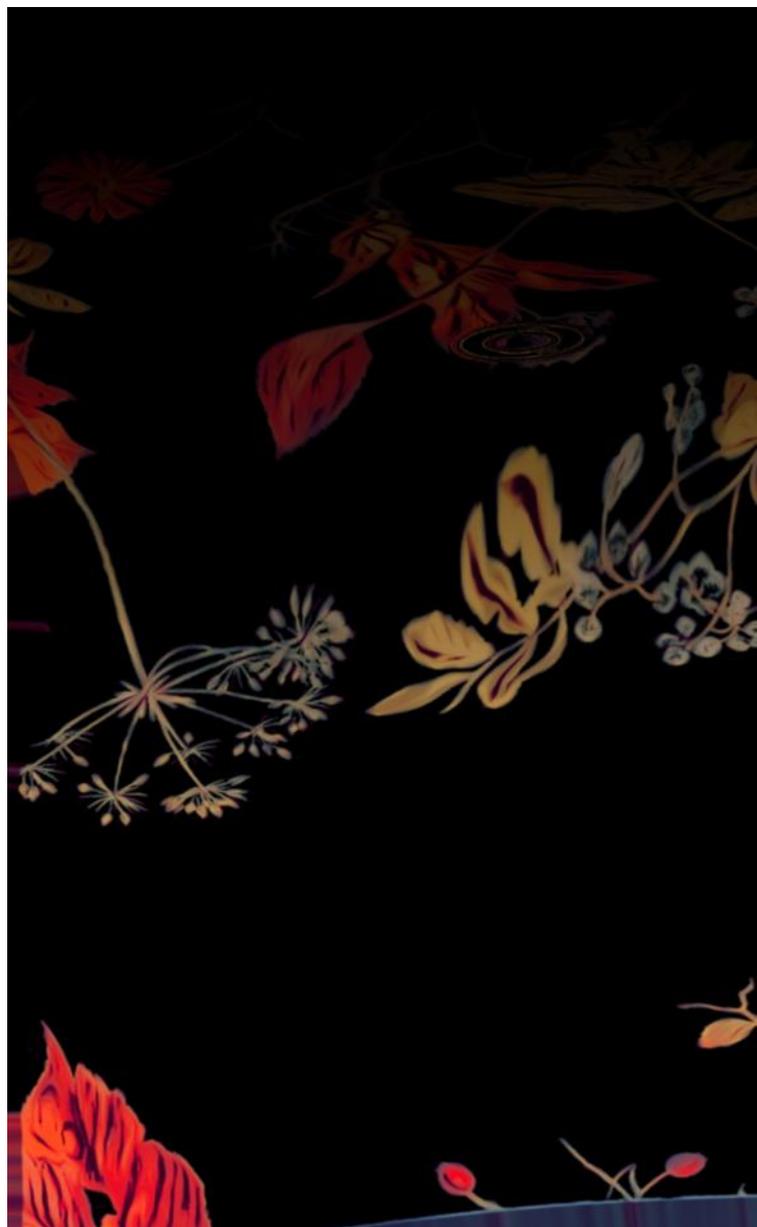
Joas Nebe: The idea that the world around us is just an illusion is centuries old. One of the most famous doubters is Descartes, who doubts everything at first to then gradually reassure himself that he exists because he can think.

So why should I understand my neighbor if I cannot perceive him? As long as I exist, I can ultimately only perceive myself, and everything around me may be mere appearance (Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa*). If we cannot be sure about a fundamental topic, how can we be sure we understand what the other person is saying?

This is the central issue driving my artistic work. The doubts about communication on various levels.

If I am not sure I can make myself understood, I cannot be sure I can capture this problem in an artwork. So, in a way, my attempt to find a symbol or image for the problem is doomed to fail from the start. Yet, I keep trying.

Not all my works are directly about the problem of communication. Sometimes it is



ATLANTIS series

(4k, single channel series, color, 2023)

only touched upon by the concept of the work. Nevertheless, it remains present in one way or another as an overarching theme.



In my video project “The Grammar Series/Gangland,” I used found footage that I animated to create images for abstract concepts like grammatical categories. I made

a film about the adverb “Now,” animating the eyes of a model and running them on five screens side by side. Nothing moves except the huge eyes of the heavily zoomed-



ATLANTIS series

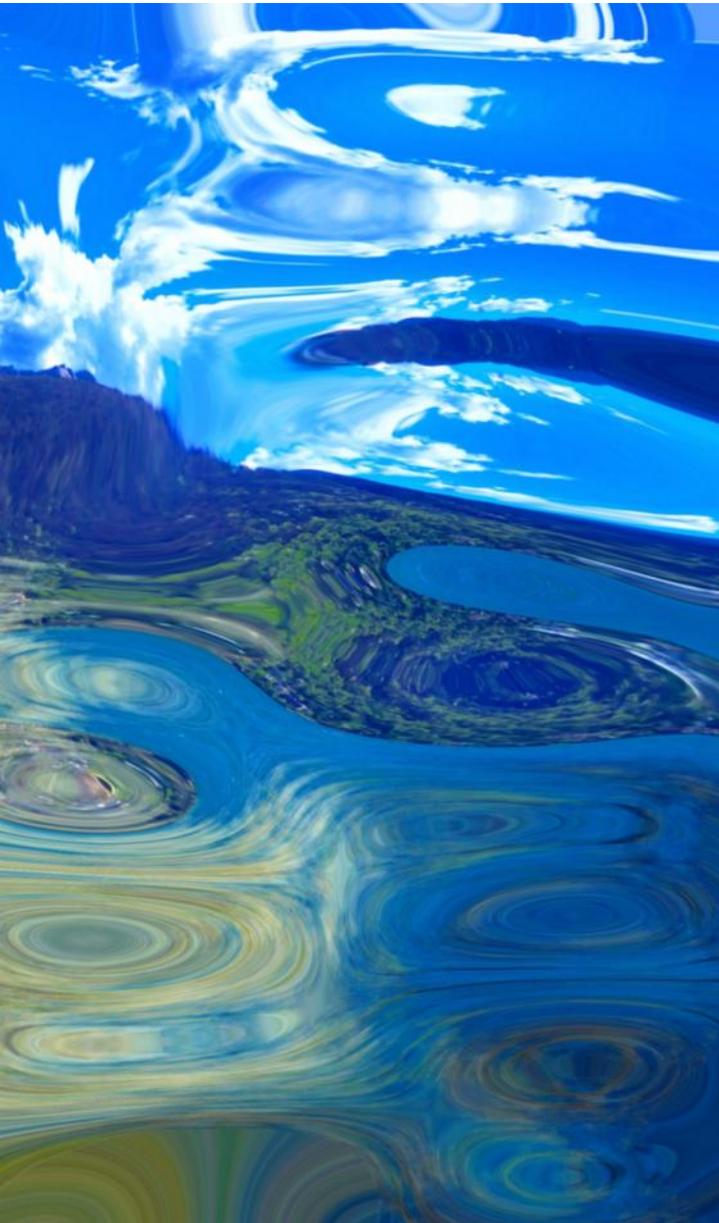
(4k, single channel series, color, 2023)

in model wandering from left to right and back.

<https://vimeo.com/393399032>

The video illustrating the verb category shows playground equipment, with two carousel horses rocking back and forth.

<https://youtu.be/Glly9oOHGNo>



In another later video project called “The Room Project,” I developed rooms with landscapes, infrastructure like highways, or cars on the walls. The idea is that everyone

has a special connection to their home, that their own apartment or house is charged with emotions, which is why a break-in is felt by many as a deep violation of their privacy. At the same time, the room I show is a metaphor for being trapped in one's psyche. The person is trapped in this room, and at the same time, they are not.

<https://joasnebe.art/socialmediaresidencies/>

Reflecting on the complex interplay between personal experiences and psychological processes, how do subconscious influences manifest in the symbolism of your artistic creations?

Joas Nebe: Reflecting on the subconscious and its influence on one's work is extraordinarily difficult because the subconscious is, by definition, not truly accessible to consciousness. We can only indirectly infer the workings of our subconscious through dream interpretation, for example. Or we can make assumptions about why we react in certain ways in certain situations. This process is called psychoanalysis, as you certainly know.

What I can say is this:

As an individual, I have daily experiences that are matched with my consciousness, semi-consciousness, which is the transition to the subconscious that is still somewhat accessible to the mind, with my knowledge and previous experiences. It is important to separate daily experiences from truly significant events and keep the latter alive for artistic production. Separating trauma, which everyone has, is also crucial, as I, as an artist, must be aware of them. Art should not





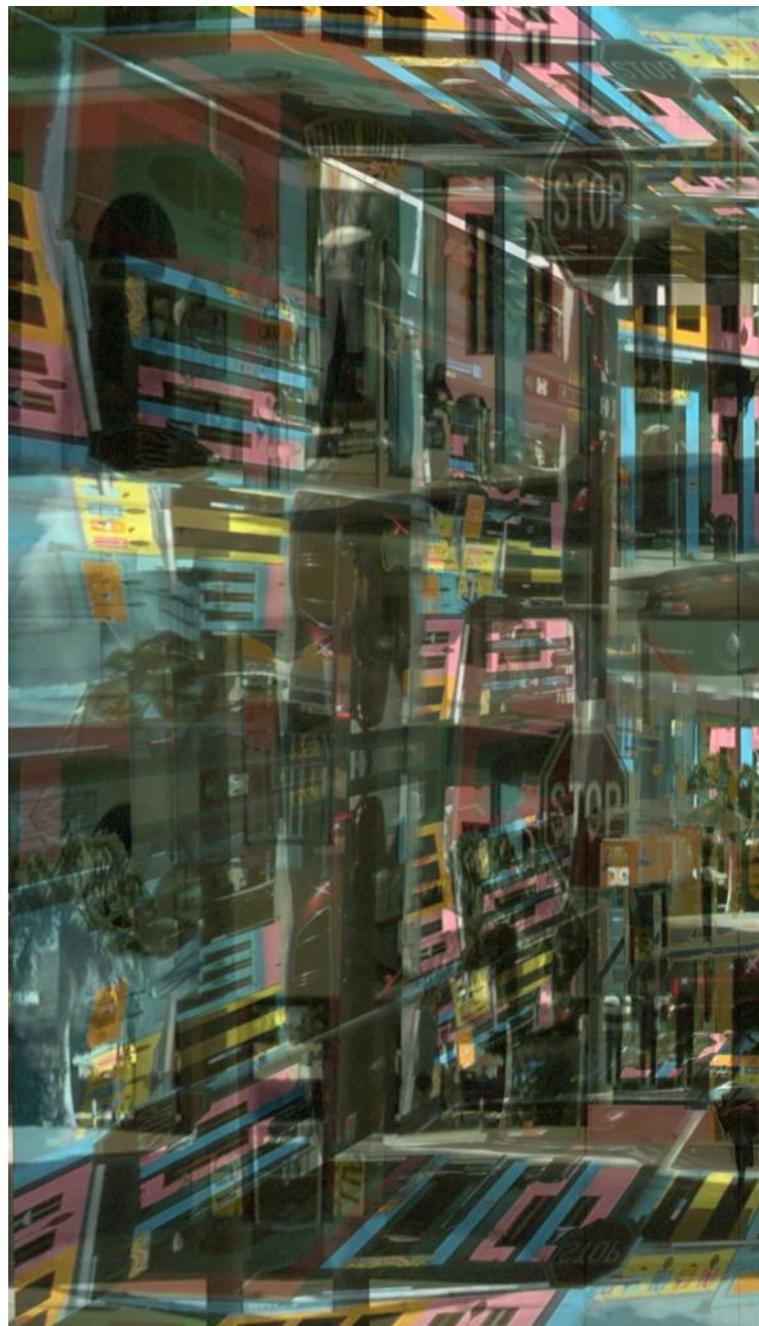
be driven by psychological disorders. Art must be largely independent of them. Minor insults, like someone taking a parking spot in front of me or the last pretzel at the bakery, are unimportant for artistic production.

When I analyze the experiences that have shaped my life so far, very important insights and inspirations for new art projects can emerge. For example, the Russian army's invasion of Ukraine moved me because it reflects a recurring pattern in Russian history. I only mention the Holodomor, where Stalin tried to subjugate Ukrainians by starvation. Naturally, this also includes the German occupation during World War II, which parts of the Ukrainians may have seen as an opportunity to free themselves from Russian dominance and dependence. However, my knowledge of Ukrainian history is too rudimentary to take a definitive stance here. Nevertheless, I see a historically recurring pattern in Putin's aggression against Ukraine.

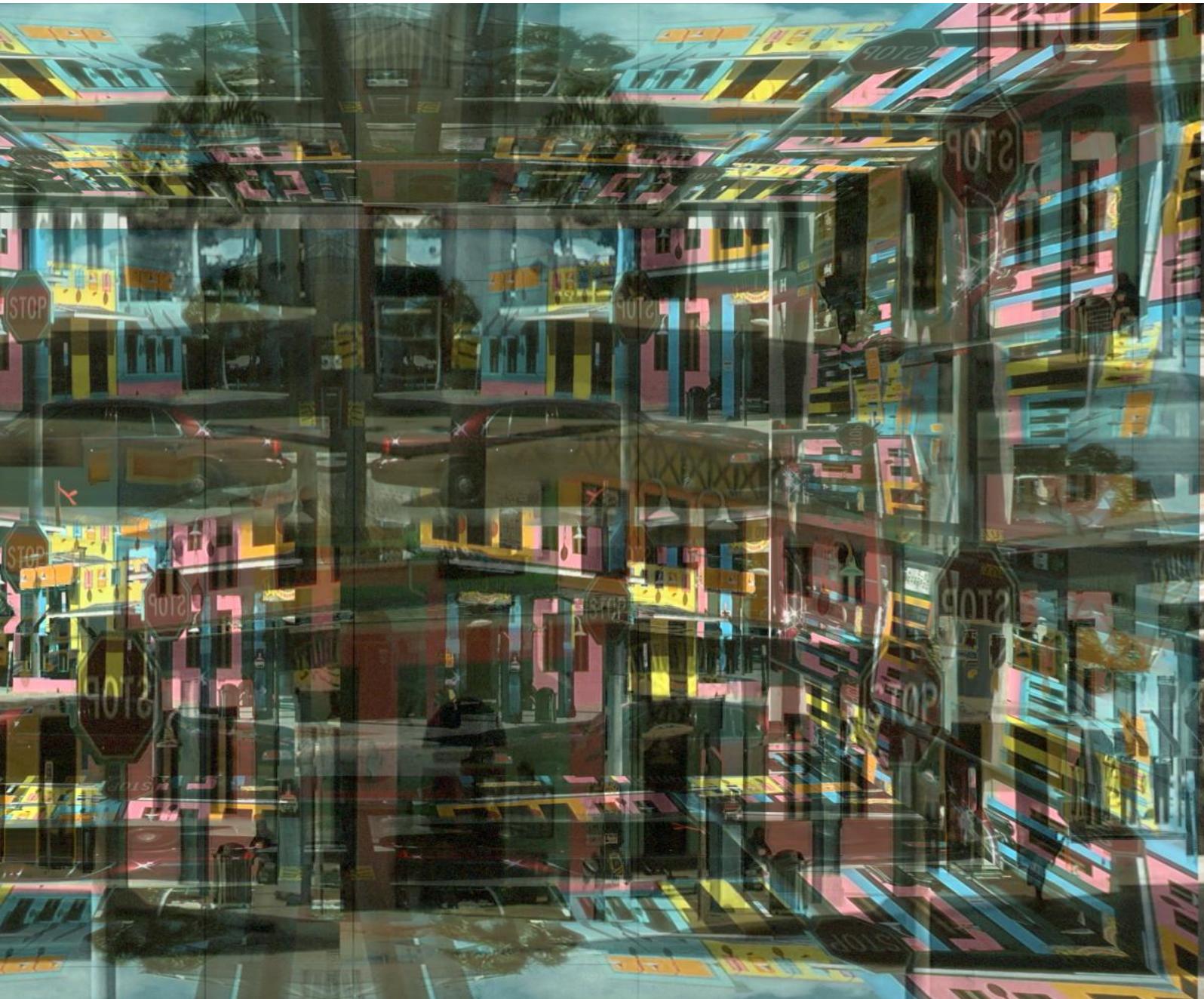
Additionally, family history plays a role. My parents were severely traumatized, even decades after the war, actually until their deaths in the early 2000s and 2020s. Based on this experience, I developed the video series "Peace Talks," in which I attempt to develop a metaphor for the different mindsets that war participants bring to peace negotiations.

<https://joasnebe.art/home/graphite-animation/>

Starting from stop-motion animated charcoal drawings depicting real scenes such



as warships, burning villages, but also the pre-war idyll of a park walk in the snow, <https://youtu.be/D4uj81vT4jl> I abstract the experiences the viewer has



here by running the same material through video filters in a video editing program. Abstract patterns emerge, representing the cognitive starting point where personal

experiences play a lesser role than ideological and political beliefs.

<https://youtu.be/zWJUe3gxw5U>



<https://youtu.be/gS8KcMJtluU>

Your works — more specifically *Puddle And Ponds* and *Atlantis* — raise important

questions about climate change's impact on human creativity, suggesting a profound link between natural phenomena and human cognitive processes. We're



curious about your perspective on how changes in our physical environment, such as the reduction of cloud formations, might reshape our collective imagination and

cultural narratives in the long term. Moreover, how will in your opinion artists adapt their practices in response to these environmental shifts?

Joas Nebe: Puddles and ponds, small lakes, were crucial to driving my creativity since my childhood, alongside cloud formations. I observed the reflections of clouds in puddles and small lakes, and the cloud formations, which could take on various shapes, just like the reflections on the surface of the ponds and lakes, inspired my creativity. Without puddles, which only form during heavy rain, or ponds, which are larger puddles, my creativity would not have flourished. Now, with climate change reducing both clouds and ponds, I am unsure how this will affect the development of creativity in the next generations. Without creativity, human life is meaningless, as creativity is the foundation of everything that defines us - aside from how sports scientists see us (ok, just joking...).

Introduction and film links:

<https://joasnebe.art/filmworks/>

Atlantis series:

https://youtu.be/fno-_eF1yDo

<https://youtu.be/oQZTMTIK83w>

<https://youtu.be/3JnicNo1ojk>

<https://youtu.be/monzjZzHTDk>

Puddles + Ponds series:

<https://youtu.be/pExzAH4XXf4>

<https://youtu.be/ZHSfp1C4O1s>

<https://youtu.be/vnLKvkkxvCc>

<https://youtu.be/e2FLo-fH8tY>

<https://youtu.be/6y2H9kB7ETc>

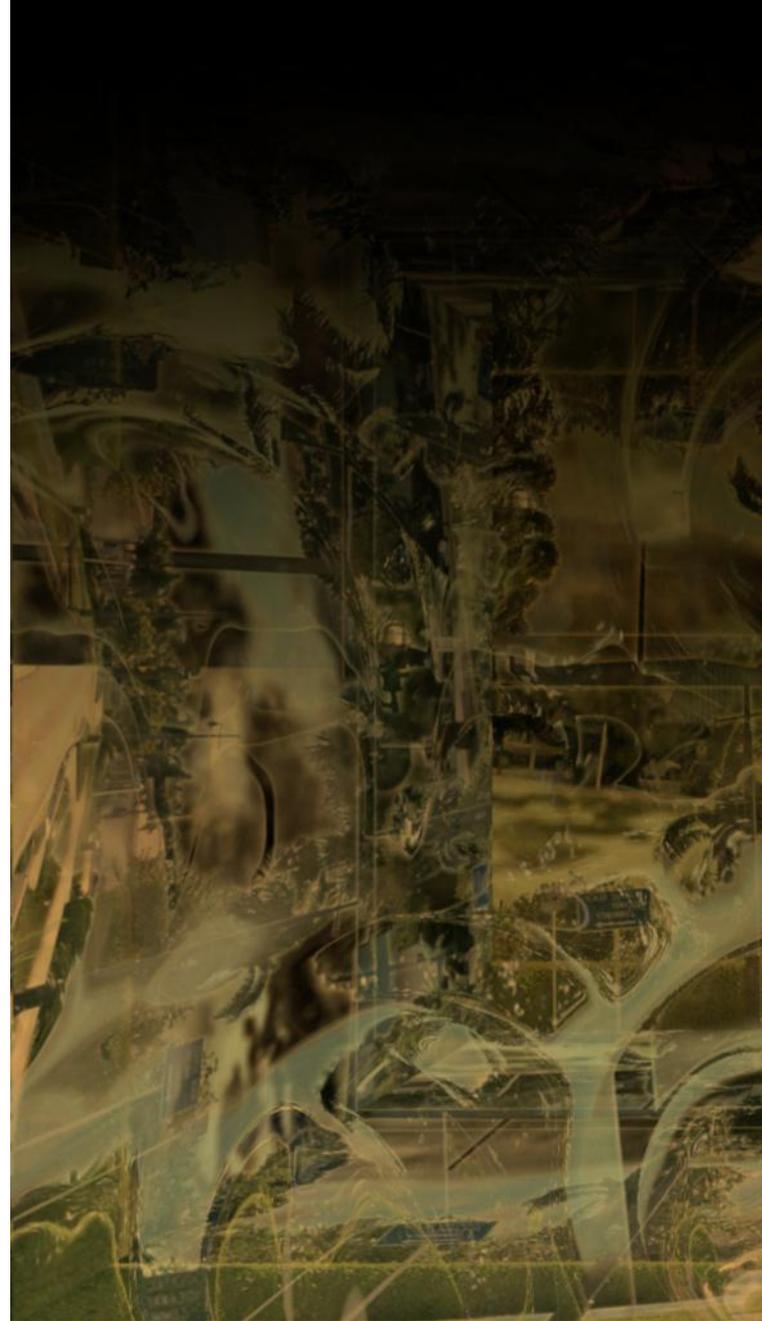
<https://youtu.be/-ofJFJ3NCZY>

As a matter of fact, technology is taking on an ever-growing role in human experience: do you think that one of the roles of contemporary artists has changed these days with the new global communications and the new sensibility created by new media? In particular, as an artist particularly involved in the creation of *immersive works*, how will technology help artist to expand their chances to create a kind of involvement that will break the usual exhibition spaces' barriers?

Joas Nebe: An artist today must be present on all social media platforms. They must familiarize the audience with their work, attempting to capture the initial interest of Instagram users, which lasts an average of about 2 seconds according to empirical studies. They need to produce moving images and videos of themselves and their work to satisfy the insatiable desire for new content that drives all social media users.

On the one hand, this demands that even the introverted among us, myself included, must constantly push ourselves to promote our work across various channels to generate interest. This is exhausting over time and detracts from deep engagement with the content. At least, that's how it is for me, which is why I decided to share only one post weekly with my latest work. The result is, of course, modest: 290 followers.

<https://instagram.com/joas.nebe>



On the other hand, as trainers for Instagram presence repeatedly convey in paid seminars for artists, it allows direct communication with collectors, offering them deals that PR



agencies or galleries previously handled at corresponding prices. This doesn't mean that all PR for self-marketing artists is free! That's the public aspect. When we consider

the possibilities offered by the internet, the metaverse, and AI, the picture changes. The metaverse allows experimenting with various concepts and establishing a



counter-world to the white cube of galleries or museums, which can largely be shaped by us creators. Throughout my career, I have also worked as

a curator, showcasing video works by artists from many countries and continents in gallery presentations. In 2018, influenced by Donald Trump's



victory in the U.S. presidential elections, I developed the Democracy Scrabble Project with Spanish curator Anna Corpas and presented it at (.BOX) Video Project Space in

Milan. Before that, my first curatorial project, "Encyclopedic Cartoons Video Project," ran in Berlin, Milan, and Tehran.

Additionally, I am increasingly experimenting with video projects in the metaverse. The metaverse is becoming increasingly important for art marketing, even among major galleries. According to a survey by Artsy, the world's largest and most significant online art trading platform, the presence at art fairs worldwide has now likely taken second place due to experiences dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the metaverse is accessible to all artists independently of intermediaries, making presentations there increasingly important. So far, I have been present on the art platform Anasaea, which belongs to the metaverse, with a collection of my collages, but I plan to expand my presence there with my video works soon.

<https://anasaea.com/viewGallery/6418751coe972791f5598931>
<https://anasaea.com/viewGallery/6418751coe972791f5598931>

I am also present on Artsy through ALTibag Gallery in Barcelona, Spain,

<https://www.artsy.net/artist/joas-nebe>

Your artistic research has truly impressed us with its depth and diversity. As we conclude this enlightening discussion, we'd like to express our sincere gratitude, Joas, for sharing your insights with us. We're curious about your current endeavors and future aspirations. Could you tell us about the projects you're presently immersed in? Additionally, we'd be interested to hear

about the concepts or themes you're eager to explore in your upcoming work.

Joas Nebe: I also thank you for the insightful questions and hope that my answers will provide a better understanding of my art, especially the one related to landscapes. Currently, I am working on bringing together the experiences of my parents, grandparents, and myself into a large ensemble (<https://joasnebe.substack.com>). The attack on Ukraine has made me more aware of my own past, as well as that of my parents and grandparents, and I have felt compelled, especially after the passing of my mother two years ago, to delve into my family's history. In my mother's estate, I found the diary of my 16-year-old father, which I have translated and published on [substack](#).

The other big project is researching how landscape inspired storytelling is impacted by the climate change, the rising temperatures, the rising sea levels etc..

An interview by **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator and **Ralph Landau**, curator
landscape@europe.com

images (c) 2024 VG Bildkunst, Joas Nebe





LandEscape meets

Sijia Guo

Sijia Guo also known as Zoe, is a visual artist based in London. Her background in sociology and illustration, combined with her experiences of growing up in China and Japan, inform the multi-layered subject matter of her work.

She has a multifaceted studio practice for which drawing and humor are central. Sometimes she draws on paper, at other times she incises a drawn line into clay, adds color with glazes and fires the clay to yield a ceramic painting; at other times she uses Ink wash painting.

She employs a variety of media including sculpture and print, to create symbolic associations in her art. Her focus is on marginalised individuals and the themes of nostalgic childhood fantasy and the subconscious, which serve as a form of escapism and resistance to consumerism and societal expectations. Through the use of vibrant colours, intricate patterns, and symbolic imagery, she aims to depict the struggles and triumphs of outsiders and inspire empathy and understanding through her art.



An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landescape@europe.com

Hello Sijia and welcome to LandEscape. Before starting to elaborate about your artistic production and we would like to invite our readers to visit <https://sijiazoe.cargo.site/30049667> in order to get a wide idea about your artistic production. You have a solid formal training: how did your educational background, including your BA in Exchange Illustration and your Master's in Visual Communication from the

Royal College of Arts in London, shape your development and approach as an artist?

Thank you for the interview. I graduated from the Royal College of Art in London in 2023 and began studying Illustration at Kyoto Seika University in 2019. Before that, I spent three years studying Sociology. During my time studying sociology, I focused on the Social Identity Approach in Japanese society. It was then that I realized art's essence lies in opposing a purely materialistic view of life, while sociology aims to uncover how seemingly unique phenomena are





socially constructed and reproduced. Motivated by my passion for interdisciplinary research and the enriching academic environment, I decided to transfer from Tokyo to an art university in Kyoto. Through an exchange program, I moved to London, which has a thriving artistic atmosphere. One of my works, "A Outsider," is a practical application of these influences and methods. In this piece, I aim to maintain a sense of childlike innocence and resilience against the world. Through my art, I strive to convey a pure approach to life and offer a deep reflection on social phenomena.

You are a versatile artist and your practice encompasses Ceramics, Illustration, Graphic design and Animation. How do you decide which medium will best communicate the concepts that you explore?

Sijia Guo: Choosing the medium often depends on the specific concept I want to express. Sometimes, ceramics best convey the tactile and formal aspects of a piece, while illustration and graphic design are suited for detailed and intricate patterns. Animation allows me to tell stories in a dynamic way. By flexibly using different mediums, I can more accurately communicate the themes and concepts I explore.

Having grown up in both China and Japan, and now residing in London, how does this tricultural experience shape your artistic vision? In particular, how does it inform your portrayal of social dynamics and cultural nuances in your work?

Sijia Guo: Growing up in China and Japan, and now residing in London, has deeply influenced my artistic vision. This tricultural experience has given me a unique perspective on social dynamics and cultural nuances, which I ex-

plore through various mediums like sculpture and printmaking to create symbolic associations in my art. My focus is often on marginalized individuals and themes of nostalgic childhood fantasies and the subconscious. These themes serve as a form of escape and resistance against consumerism and societal expectations. By using vibrant colors, intricate patterns, and symbolic imagery, I aim to depict the struggles and triumphs of outsiders and evoke empathy and understanding through my art. My artistic style began to shift in my second year of graduate school, largely due to my mentor's encouragement to explore different mediums. During this time, I started a project that analyzed my journey from experiencing "cultural confusion" to living in various places, ultimately finding inner freedom by embracing the differences of others. Growing up in China and Japan deepened my sense of alienation, a feeling that only intensified as I lived in different countries. These changing environments have continually influenced my evolving art style, which adapts as my experiences change. In this process, my work has become a vessel for expressing the conflicts I perceive in the world, using my own sense of alienation as a tool. This sense of estrangement allows me to convey a deeper understanding of global conflicts and cultural differences in my art, highlighting the social dynamics and nuances that come from navigating multiple cultural landscapes.

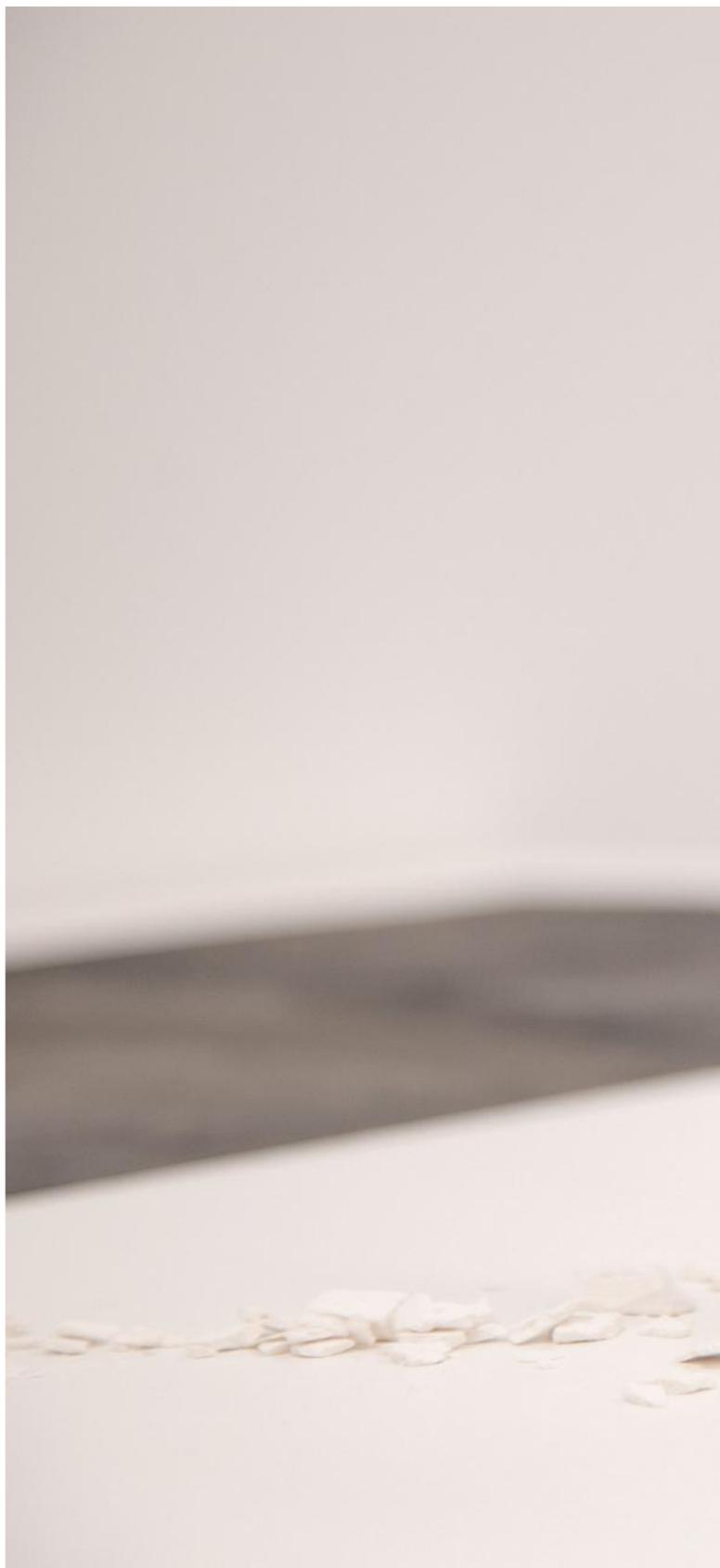
For is special edition of LandEspace we have selected A Outsider, a stimulating project that our readers have already started to get to know in the introductory pages of this article. A Outsider beautifully captures the intricate layers of personal and cultural disorientation you've experienced, and we really appreciate your ability to convey the complexities of cultural identity. When walking our readers

through the genesis of this stimulating work, could you highlight the specific elements in that convey your awareness of multiple cultures?

Sijia Guo: In "A Outsider," I use my Chinese zodiac sign, the rat, as a symbolic representation. The glaze on the ceramics is the result of numerous experiments, aiming to express personal traits, social roles, gender, Chinese football, and cultural background through a process of fusion, contrast, collision, and inclusion. This dynamic process evolves with personal experiences and societal changes.

The discouragement from speaking Shanghaiese in favor of Mandarin during your childhood is a pivotal part of your narrative. Your cross disciplinary ability to intertwine personal experience and cultural heritage, invites the viewers to not only appreciate the surface beauty, but to delve deeper into the underlying ideas, inviting them on an introspective journey that is both personal and universal: how important is it for you to highlight the aesthetic aspect in your works and how do you balance this with conveying deeper meanings to engage viewers on multiple levels?

Sijia Guo: I believe that deeply personal creations are a way of visually presenting one's life. Such art inevitably moves the artist because it stems from questions, exploration, and ultimate sincerity about one's own life. Using symbolic forms without excessive explanation, I leave the work to the audience, opening up a particular stage of my life. This approach is why I avoid overly serious themes in my upcoming projects. I firmly believe that the true power of a work comes from the artist's faith in it.









An artist must believe and be convinced of the content they express; they must first persuade themselves before they can persuade others. Therefore, whether it is love or hate, satisfaction or melancholy, or even a series of confusing thoughts, these feelings must be expressed clearly and resolutely. Expression often has layers and nuances, but it cannot be vague in its intent.

Balancing aesthetic appeal with deeper meanings is crucial for engaging viewers on multiple levels. While the surface beauty of a work draws people in, it is the underlying ideas that invite them to reflect and connect on a more profound level. By intertwining my personal experiences and cultural heritage, I aim to create art that not only pleases the eye but also encourages introspection and a deeper understanding of universal themes.

We truly appreciate the remarkable impact of your vivid color choices. They are striking and captivating. Could you share your process for selecting these nuances and explain how they contribute to the overall narrative of your works? Do you find that certain colors evoke specific emotions or themes that you aim to convey to your viewers?

Sijia Guo: Before I start a project, I gather a wealth of references from books and archival materials, most of which are monochromatic. My decision to use bold or muted tones depends on my immediate emotional response to the images and how I want them to be perceived.

I use color, tone, and hue as emotional symbols, and these varying intensities allow me to guide the narrative of each piece. I prefer to mix colors in advance, contemplating how they will resonate and create visionary ideas. I



also associate colors with specific periods of personal experience, using these references to create an immersive atmosphere.

Another interesting work of yours that has fascinated us is entitled *Savage One, The One*

Who Runs Barefoot. Your ability to transform such personal experiences into art is remarkable. Given that your work draws from intimate moments, how do you approach making these deeply personal narratives resonate with a wider audience?



Sijia Guo: In *Savage One, The One Who Runs Barefoot*, I delve into personal narratives by using old family photographs, especially those of my parents.

A haunting image of a young girl with my par-

ents led me to question my identity and reflect on my past in China. Another significant photograph of my mother, taken after her breast cancer treatment, revealed her vulnerability and reliance on my support, teaching me about strength and sacrifice.

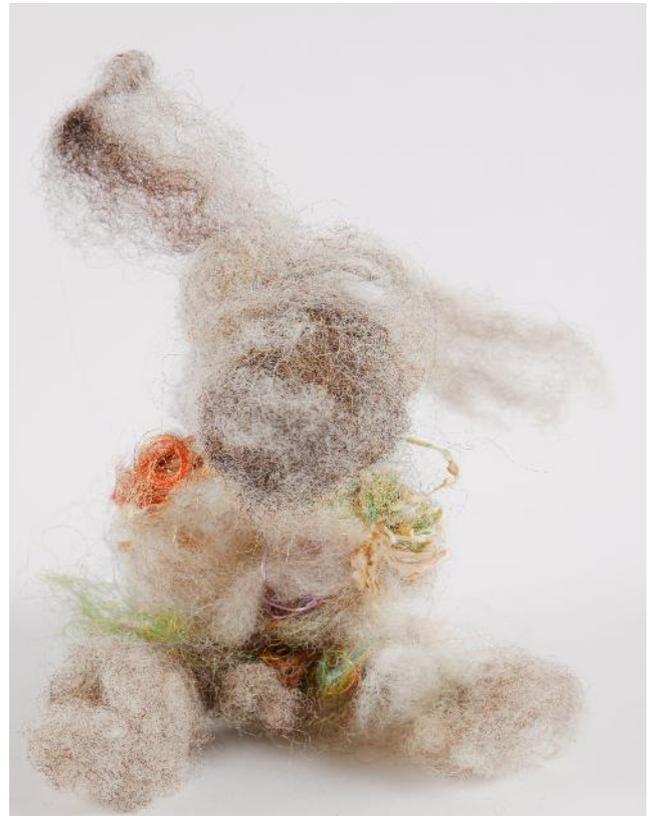












These personal moments are not just family memories but pivotal experiences that shape my art. They allow me to explore themes of memory, identity, and resilience. In *Savage One*, I use an old, weathered ladder as a metaphor for my journey of transformation. Ladders are universally recognized symbols of ascent and overcoming challenges. The figures on the ladder represent my past and present selves, illustrating the ongoing struggle to break free from past constraints and achieve self-realization.

My work often combines a childlike aesthetic with humor to juxtapose the seriousness of overcoming adversity with a sense of whimsy. This approach reflects the complex emotions

involved in facing personal challenges. By blending different materials like gypsum and wool, I add a tangible layer of struggle and imperfection, mirroring the instability and effort in any growth process.

Savage One reflects my journey as an outsider, shaped by a childhood marked by silence and observation in China. Experiences like linguistic suppression, my mother's illness, and my father's absence cultivated a deep sense of alienation. My subsequent move to Japan further influenced my worldview, driving me to constantly seek my place and purpose. Influenced by my mentor Richard during my graduate studies, I've embraced a multidimensional approach, using various mediums to

create a dialogue between the artwork and the audience. Through a mix of whimsy and introspection, I aim to evoke empathy and connection, encouraging viewers to reflect on their own journeys and the broader human experience of finding one's place in the world.

The detailed patterns in your work add a layer of complexity and depth. How do you develop these intricate designs? Are there particular influences or inspirations behind these patterns?

Sijia Guo: Thank you for your question. Since my work primarily follows a narrative style, I approach the intricate details by considering composition, perspective, and scale. When developing these designs, I focus on how elements change over time. I observe how the sense of time influences the thickness and depth of the imagery. Additionally, I consider how colors and saturation shift subtly with time—whether the morning hues lean towards blue and purple or the evening shades towards orange and pink.

These temporal changes are also intertwined with my memories, adding another layer of interest. I find it fascinating to explore how these shifts in time and color can evoke different emotions. Lastly, I enrich the visual complexity with large areas of texture, chosen to reflect the material, feel, and impact of the objects depicted.

Your exploration of the subconscious as a form of escapism is intriguing. In an era of constant digital connectivity and information overload, how do you see the role of the subconscious changing?

Sijia Guo: In today's digital age, information

overload can lead to irritability, difficulty sleeping, depression, and anxiety. As a recent graduate, I also find myself affected by social media. I view the subconscious as a guide to reshape my life. Since the end of 2023, I started a new project with a clear goal: to avoid serious themes and create works that are fun, whimsical, and even humorous. Each morning, I start my day early with a cup of hand-brewed coffee, which sets the tone for my creative process. This routine helps me understand myself better and gradually frees me from the distractions of urban life and fragmented information. I believe that life's guidance will naturally lead you to where you want to go. My work "Savage One, The One Who Runs Barefoot" embodies this philosophy. It shows the potential to overcome past struggles, embrace freedom, and exude confidence.

Your works feature unique intersection of childhood fantasy, marginalized voices, and resistance to societal norms relies on complex symbolic associations. Can you tell us the importance of symbols in your artistic practice? In particular, could you walk us through your process of linking diverse symbols to create a cohesive message?

Sijia Guo: Before starting each creation, I visualize a vague image in my mind, akin to looking through fogged glasses. The process of creating the artwork is like gradually wiping away the fog. I habitually refine memories that blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy, using them as symbols in my work. By embedding myself within the composition, I guide the audience to perceive my views on childhood, marginalized groups, and societal norms.

Symbols are crucial in my artistic practice because they enable me to convey complex ideas





and emotions succinctly. The process of linking diverse symbols involves careful consideration to ensure they collectively form a cohesive message. I often worry about the meanings behind specific symbols, fearing that I might unintentionally create something offensive. To avoid this, I make a conscious ef-

fort to research and understand which symbols might be sensitive or need to be avoided.

You've showcased your work globally, including recent exhibits like 'The Colour Show' and the 13th Dynamic Contemporary Artists Exhibition at the Fukuoka Asian Art



Museum in Japan. How would you describe your connection with those who view your art? As art increasingly moves beyond traditional galleries to streets and digital platforms like Instagram, how do you think this shift affects the relationship with a worldwide audience? What are your thoughts on

the roles of physical exhibitions compared to online presentations in displaying your work?

Sijia Guo: In my view, my artwork serves as a medium between the artist and the audience, creating an interactive space. Through this interaction, viewers can form new personal connections and challenge my work, becoming



part of the artistic process. Regarding physical versus online exhibitions, I believe experiencing the original artwork is crucial. Art needs to

be interacted with – touched, smelled, and heard. Without this tangible interaction, its impact can feel diminished.







We have really appreciated the multifaceted nature of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Sijia. What projects are you currently working on, and what are some of the ideas that you hope to explore in the future?

Sijia Guo: I am currently exploring a project that combines Scottish wool with ceramics. Additionally, I am working on a series called “Migration, Roots, Blossoms, and Leaves.”

This project focuses on the mass migration that

began under an ancient tree in Shanxi Province, China, during the late imperial era. My grandfather and his parents were part of this migration.

The series will explore and reconstruct these connections, infusing new narratives into the artwork and evoking reflections on both past and present in a novel context.

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

landscape@europe.com