VISUAL ART JOURNAL

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— *Intro*

Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
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Hello, dear reader,

You're holding issue 31 of our magazine. It's the height of summer, and the holiday season is just around the corner. But can an artist truly take a vacation? I believe the answer to the question "Is it necessary?" is a clear yes — it's essential to recharge, reset, and clear the mind of the old to make space for the new.

But is it really possible to step away from the creative process? Even without a brush or paints at hand, the mind keeps painting, the imagination keeps working.

Still, coming back to the idea that everyone needs a break, how can we shape a vacation that nourishes the creative soul? The answer lies in simple truths: spend more time in nature, less time on screens. Visit places you've never been. Reconnect with people you've long meant to meet.

And of course, don't forget to engage with art — both the kind you know well (which may still surprise you) and the kind you've never encountered before. That's where our magazine may help: over 100 pages filled with art and inspiration.

Enjoy your reading!

On the Front Cover:
Johan Cova
Passionnés
2025

On the Back Cover:
Jace Ambwani
Human Suburbs 1
2024

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We invite artists to submit their works for publication in our magazine: **https://visualartjournal.com/call-for-artists/**

Vaidotas Vankevičius

Your style blends realism and impressionism beautifully. How do you strike a balance between the two in your creative process?

My style emerges from a strong personal philosophy about painting, which developed over a decade of extensive and diverse painting practice — a practice I always carried out from life, regardless of difficulty or weather conditions. Painting in challenging weather and constantly pushing myself to work in different locations forced me to think about what truly matters: what deserves to be included in a composition and what is better left out.

Vaidotas Vankevičius | Gytis

Additionally, my style has been shaped by the goal of completing each painting in a single sitting. Over time, this principle greatly improved my sense of composition, as it allowed me to produce a large number of works and observe what works and what doesn't.
Finally, continuous study of the old masters — such as John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn, and Joaquin Sorolla, among others — provided valuable reference points and helped lay the philosophical foundation that guided the refinement of my stylistic direction.
One of my main goals in painting is to create a composition that contains a sense of rhythm and movement, while maintaining a balance between dry realism and overly effect-driven impressionism.

You mention completing each painting in a single session from life. What challenges and rewards come with this approach?

Since I paint exclusively from life and do not use photographs, I realized already during my student years that I most enjoy — and benefit from — completing a painting in a single session in order to best capture the chosen place and moment. Even when returning the next day at the same time and under similar weather conditions, something is always different — no two days are ever the same. That's why, regardless of the painting's size or complexity, I always aim to finish the work in one sitting. This allows me to fully experience and express the chosen moment, ensuring a smooth and coherent process. Having only one chance also sharpens my ability to select what is essential and continually improve my technique, since each situation demands specific — and sometimes unconventional — technical decisions.
Of course, this method comes with its fair share of

Vaidotas Vankevičius | Winter River

drawbacks. No matter how skilled one becomes, some compromises are inevitable when painting this way. Often, during the process, I find myself thinking that certain parts could be rendered much more easily and effectively over multiple sessions. Sudden changes in weather or unforeseen circumstances can also prevent or complicate the completion of a painting — sometimes forcing me to either abandon a particular scene or start it over from scratch another time. Finally, painting this way can sometimes lead to mannerisms, repetition, or an overreliance on technical shortcuts in pursuit of quick and simple solutions.

What draws you to certain landscapes or interiors when choosing your subjects?

I often enjoy painting places and subjects that are less typical or conventional. The region I come from is rich in forests and greenery, full of fascinating spots such as swamps, moss-covered areas, lakes, streams, and nature reserves. These are the kinds of places where I feel most at ease while painting, knowing that I won't be disturbed and can fully immerse myself in the creative process. Thanks to many years of painting from life, I've developed a strong sense of which places to choose based on the season, time of day, and weather conditions. Interiors, for me, offer a refreshing break from the monotony of landscapes, as each one has its own story and unique color palette. I often choose spaces — or fragments of them — that can reveal at least a small glimpse of the life happening within. I'm also drawn to interiors because of their bold or distinctive color harmonies. At times, I paint interiors as a way of documenting and preserving a specific memory, a moment in time, or a place I've visited.

How has your background in fresco-mosaic influenced your current oil painting techniques or compositions?

I chose to study fresco-mosaic because it offered the best education in traditional oil painting and academic drawing. My focus was more oriented toward the study of classical painting techniques, with significant emphasis placed on large-scale monumental art. The lessons I learned while painting frescoes — such as technical precision and color clarity — laid a solid foundation that later proved very useful when I transitioned to oil painting. Fresco painting also taught me a great deal about composition and helped me become more comfortable working on a large scale. This experience is especially valuable now, as I have begun painting large-format landscapes from life.

Can you tell us more about your teaching practice? How does mentoring students influence your own art?

Since 2020, I have been officially teaching painting and drawing, as well as helping others build professional portfolios or prepare for admission to various art academies and universities, both in Lithuania and abroad. Throughout my teaching practice, I have assisted students in preparing for and entering all major fields and specializations in the arts. I work with people of all ages, and based on my experience, I can confidently say that I have developed a unique teaching philosophy and program that can help achieve excellent results — whether for amateurs or those aiming to become professionals.
Teaching also continuously challenges me to grow and reflect more deeply. Through this practice, I have been able to fully shape my own artistic philosophy. It was only by teaching others that I finally found answers to questions that had long troubled me during my student years. Painting and drawing are not only forms of art — they are also sciences. Not everyone is able to teach these disciplines, as certain principles and sensory concepts are very difficult to express in words. That's why it is crucial for every teacher to be able to present everything as clearly, simply, and systematically as possible. I have pursued this goal for many years myself, and it has helped me refine a great number of technical aspects that have significantly contributed to my own creative work.

Which painting from your current body of work holds the most personal significance to you, and why?

It's very difficult to single out one key work, as there are many. Each painting has its own story behind its creation and carries a certain emotional weight. The painting "Blizzard," which I painted at night during an actual snowstorm, is one that many find eerie and it's not particularly popular — yet it's very dear to me. I created this work shortly after finishing my studies. It represents my first intense creative years, during which it was very important for me to experiment and constantly choose increasingly challenging situations to paint. Painting at night in the middle of a blizzard was extremely difficult for many reasons, and I probably wouldn't want to repeat it — but this piece always reminds me how important it is not to stop exploring new and less conventional ideas, and to not shy away from extreme working conditions.

How do you see the role of realism in contemporary Lithuanian art today?

In my subjective opinion, throughout the history of painting in Lithuania, there have been very few representatives of the traditional realist painting movement. Even today, you wouldn't need more than the fingers on one hand to count the current Lithuanian masters of realist painting. For this reason, it is especially important to me to preserve the traditions of this artistic direction while also bringing in new, contemporary ideas. I do this in part through my own creative work and also through teaching others. If this tradition is further neglected, in the near future there may be no professionals left to train the next generations and pass on the knowledge and values it holds. This mission is one of my callings — and I hope I will be able to continue fulfilling it

Quinn Miller was born and raised in Clewiston, FL. He discovered his passion for photography in middle school, inspired by the work of Erik Johansson. This newfound interest led him to pursue an education in the arts, culminating in a Bachelor's degree from Florida Gulf Coast University. Currently residing in Lake Worth Beach, FL, Quinn teaches art at the high school level, sharing his love for creativity with the next generation.

Project Statement

"As a conceptual portrait photographer, I immerse myself in the surreal to investigate the intangible emotions that define our personal experiences. Drawing inspiration from the intricacies of humanity, my work challenges conventional perceptions and invites deeper reflection. I aim to spark meaningful conversations and illuminate challenging themes that resonate with our shared existence".

Quinn Miller | Dreamer's Disease | 2019

Quinn Miller | To Accept | 2024

— *Interview*

Oleksandra Serhiienko

Your works blend watercolor and pencil with a strong focus on botanical elements. What draws you to nature as your main subject?

Nature has always been a source of inspiration and strength for me. Observing it is a way to "ground myself" in the moment, to feel a nearly childlike wonder and delight, an aesthetic pleasure. These are feelings often missing in everyday life, filled with tedious "adult" tasks. Nature is a simple and accessible way to bring touches of joy and even happiness into one's life.
I know many stories of people who, in moments of crisis or even tragedy, planted and cared for flowers. This reveals an inner strength and the psyche's ability to recover after terrible shocks.

Oleksandra Serhiienko | Yellow Crocus Flowers | 2025

How has your scientific background in physics influenced your artistic approach, if at all?

I am glad I chose this field, even though I ultimately didn't pursue a scientific career. You can forget formulas, but the interest in and respect for the laws of the universe remain. I don't like it when creativity is set in opposition to scientific thinking — I believe these two ways of understanding the world can harmoniously coexist.
True scientific discoveries happen through the courage to look beyond the known. The same is true in art: we are impressed by unconventional solutions and challenges to established practices. In my artistic practice, I strive for conciseness: minimal means — maximum meaning. And for me, this is close to the beauty of physical formulas (yes, I really do talk about the beauty of formulas!).

Many of your works evoke a sense of silence, memory, and quiet resilience. How do these emotional layers emerge in your creative process?

These themes are truly important to me both as a person and as an artist. Every time I choose a subject — consciously or spontaneously — I ask myself: what does this mean to me? Why these flowers, colors, lines attract me right now? What inside me at this moment demands expression?

Oleksandra Serhiienko | Magnolia Constellation | 2025

At the same time, I understand it's not always appropriate to burden a botanical work with deep meaning. Sometimes the viewer just wants to see beauty. But even a momentary admiration is an expression of emotional resilience, the ability to recover. This especially applies to the Ukrainian viewer now fighting for physical existence amid Russian aggression.

Your work is part of international exhibitions across very different cultures. Do you notice differences in how your art is received in Ukraine, Turkey, Brazil, and the UK?

I have only just begun exploring this question for myself and haven't found a definitive answer yet. But one of my missions is that by participating in international art projects, I aim to increase the presence of contemporary Ukrainian art on the global cultural map.

You describe your goal as "manifesting the invisible." What does this mean to you in a practical sense, when you sit down to paint?

This artistic goal is probably also a result of my scientific background — the desire to look deeper, to investigate, to understand the essence. Practically, it means searching for artistic means and techniques that encourage the viewer to pause, to reflect, to look at the painting like in a mirror and feel something hidden inside themselves.
To allow oneself to experience emotions — longing or admiration, nostalgia or inspiration — and therefore, to live fully and vividly.

How do you choose the plants or botanical details you depict? Do they carry symbolic meaning for you?

Most of the subjects I choose have an intimate meaning. They are memories from childhood — summers at my grandparents' village, barefoot on the grass, flowers, cows, ants, trees, scraped knees.
But I am also inspired by the present. Often while shopping, I stop to look at leaves or flowers, take photos, remember the place. Later I can return to it for inspiration. People who see the finished work might not know which observations or memories it embodies. But the main thing is the dialogue that arises between the viewer and the work, when they read something deeply their own in it. Then the painting gains layered meanings. That is truly valuable.

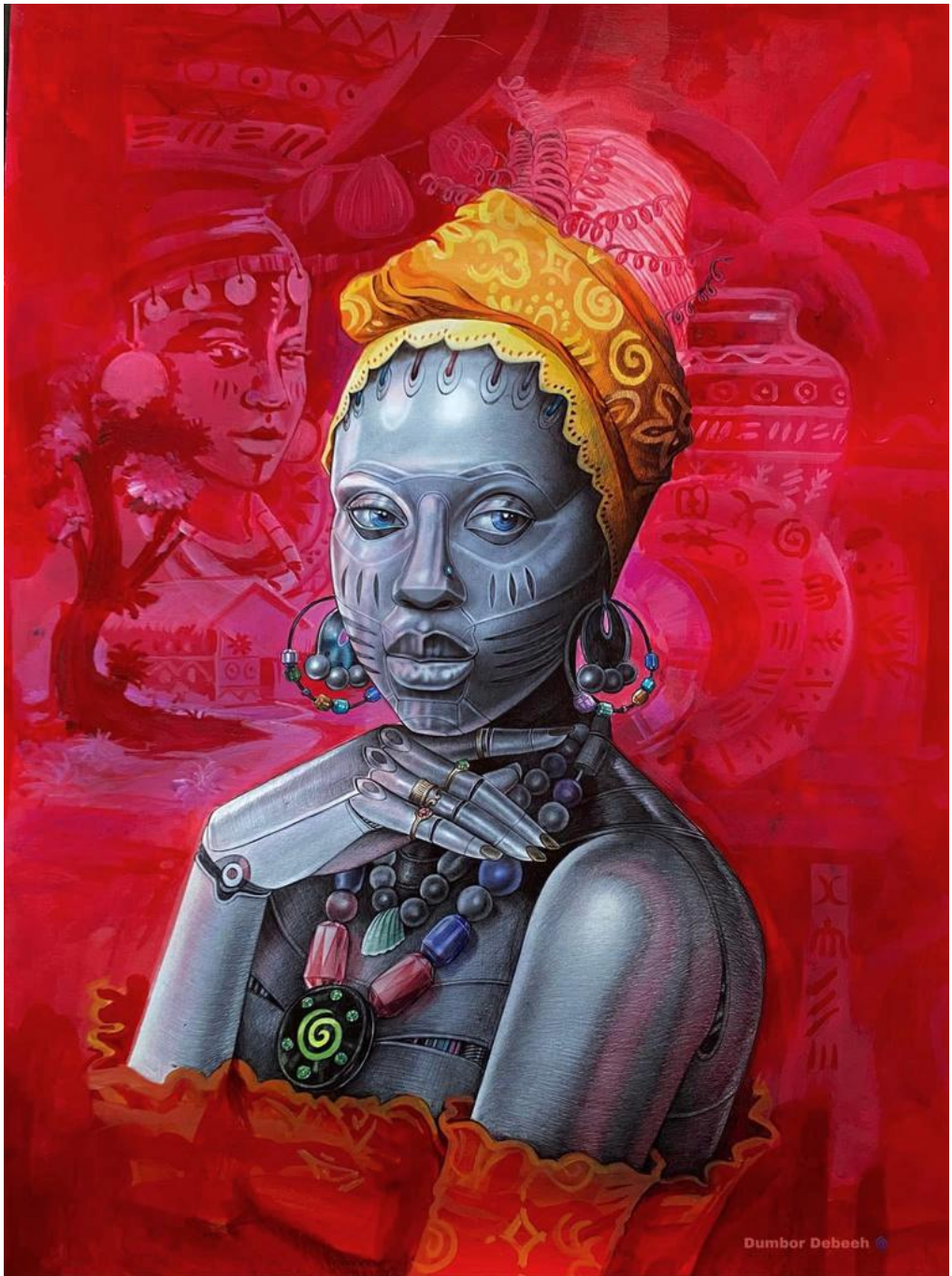
What role does time play in your painting — both in the process and in what the work expresses?

Time is something I really lack. It must be divided between household duties, motherhood, and creativity. My younger son has a severe disability, and I can only create at home, combining painting with care and routine. But I am learning not to blame myself for the so-called "inefficiency" and instead to appreciate rare moments of silence and solitude.
This lack of time also affects my choice of techniques. I adore multilayered watercolor, but I haven't yet taken on large formats — they require deeper focus and time. In terms of meaning, my works are less about capturing a specific moment and more about conveying a state: calm or despair, acceptance or denial, fullness or emptiness.

Oleksandra Serhiienko | There is no one to harvest | 2024

Dumbor Debeeh, an acclaimed artist and activist, was born and raised in the culturally rich Gokana Local Government Area of Ogoni, Rivers State, Nigeria. A graduate of the Department of Arts and Design Technology at Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, he has earned recognition for his innovative use of mediums such as ballpoint pens and acrylics, through which he creates deeply evocative and thought-provoking works. Renowned for his ability to blend subtlety with powerful social commentary, Dumbor's art captures themes of peace, optimism, and resilience. Each piece serves as a quiet reflection on societal and global issues, resonating with audiences by offering both emotional depth and intellectual insight. His works have garnered multiple awards, establishing him as a leading figure in the contemporary art scene. Dumbor's ongoing exploration of movement as a central theme in his practice reflects his commitment to artistic evolution. Through his ever-developing body of work, he seeks to challenge perspectives, inspire dialogue, and use art as a transformative tool for social change. His creations continue to have a profound impact on both the art world and the communities he seeks to uplift.

Project Statement
As an artist, I view art as the purest manifestation of imagination, a medium through which abstract ideas and concepts are transformed into tangible expressions that shape our perception of the world. "I am a visionary artist exploring the frontiers of Afro-futurism and surrealism. My artistic practice delves into the uncharted territories where Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Natural Intelligence (NI) converge. Through vibrant, dreamlike landscapes, I illuminate the symbiotic relationship between technology and nature, revealing the transformative potential of their union. My art invites viewers to contemplate a future where AI and NI harmonize, giving rise to new dimensions of human experience. By merging traditional African motifs with futuristic elements, I create a unique visual language that reflects the complexities of our evolving world. My Afro-futuristic surrealism seeks to inspire, to provoke, and to envision a tomorrow where technology and nature entwine, propelling humanity toward a brighter, more enlightened future." By engaging with the Afro-futuristic surrealism style, I aim to create a visual dialogue that an invitation to reflect, question, and reconnect with the narratives that define us. Each piece is an exploration of identity, technology, innovative ideas and design, culture, and the human experience, meant to inspire deeper contemplation and appreciation of the African story in all its forms.



Dumbor Debeeh | African Renaissance

Dumbor Debeeh | Cultural Codex 2100

Interview

Magdalena Kluth

Your work frequently explores emotional expression through material experimentation. How do you decide which materials to combine in a particular piece?

It's based on a feeling—a form of resonance I'm working to materialize. I choose materials that respond intuitively to that inner state, finding my voice within each piece. There is a knowing and a daily re-discovery how different materials interact, allowing their natural behaviors to guide the development. It's a conversation between intuition, matter, and emotion.

The element of water plays a symbolic and literal role in your work. Could you tell us more about how you believe water responds to human consciousness and how you incorporate this idea into your process?

I'm fascinated by the idea that water can hold memory and respond to energetic frequencies. This concept—found in both spiritual traditions and scientific exploration—deeply influences how I approach water as a collaborator, not just a medium. Beginning the process of painting by charging the water —through intention-setting, labeling the bottles, or sound—it becomes a carrier of emotion and a responsive field within the work. The way water moves on the canvas, what it absorbs or resists, feels like a direct mirror of inner states.

Magdalena Kluth | Take My Hand, We Belong Together

Many of your paintings seem deeply personal, almost like emotional landscapes. Do you view painting as a form of healing or emotional processing?

Yes, absolutely. For me, painting is both an emotional release and a way to transmute my experiences. It allows me to access things I might not yet have found language for—or that simply don't exist in our world yet. The act of layering within each piece—returning again and again—becomes a ritual of remembering and rebalancing. With that, I am for presence - not necessarily resolution. Painting gives shape to the intangible and invites others to meet themselves in it, too.

You've mentioned the influence of Hawaiian culture and the word "Akahai" in your work.

How did your time in Hawaii shape your artistic philosophy?

Being in Hawai'i for almost six months shifted something in me. The depth of connection to land, spirit, and story was unlike anything I had experienced before. In the Hawaiian language, akahai— which speaks to kindness with tenderness —is not only a core value but also the first A in the acronym ALOHA. Akahai is a value that deeply resonates with me. It taught me that creation can come from softness, presence, and reciprocity. I started listening more closely—to nature and the people around me, to materials, to space, to energy —and that listening became central to my process.

How has moving between Miami and Mexico City influenced your creative process and subject matter?

Both cities have contrasting but equally vibrant energies. Visiting Miami regularly offered a kind of expansive light and boldness—it shaped how I embraced color, clarity, and emotional exposure. Living in Mexico City, on the other hand, is rich in textures, layers, and ancestral presence. It's also where I fully stepped into life as a full-time artist. Being between these places allows me to be reinspired again and again, to hold both vibrancy and stillness within myself and my work.

What role does text play in your artwork titles and descriptions? Are these writings a part of the visual experience or a separate narrative layer?

Almost all of my pieces carry not only a title but also a short text or poem that accompanies them. These writings often arrive toward the end of a piece and serve as emotional anchors or portals into the work. I don't see them as separate from the visual language, but rather as extensions of it. Sometimes they're poetic, sometimes direct—but always meant to evoke feeling rather than explain.

Your pieces have a strong tactile quality due to the layers and textures. How important is physicality in your work compared to visual aesthetics?

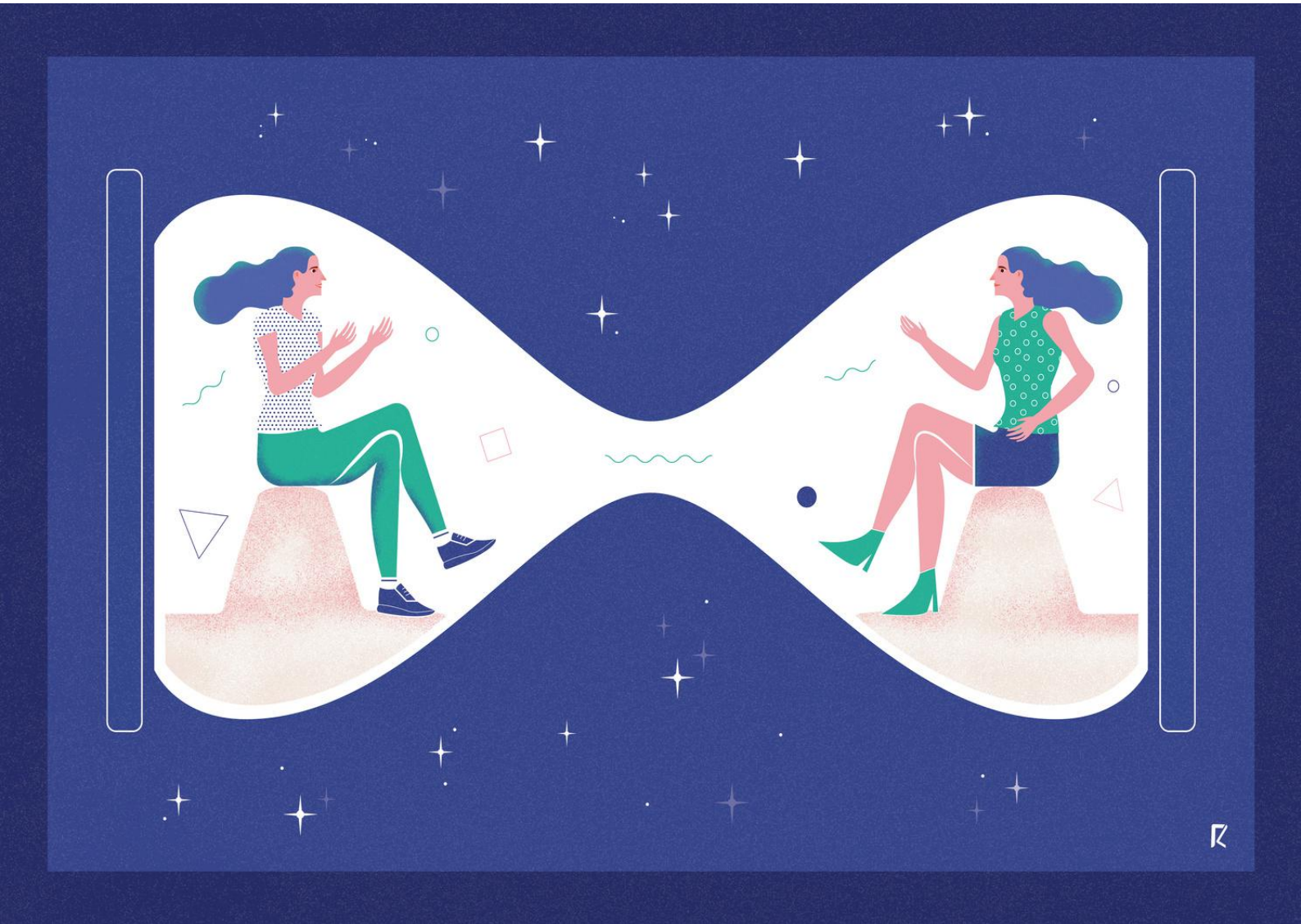
Very important. The physicality is not just about surface—it's about memory, tension, and presence. I often build up and then strip away layers, letting traces remain. This speaks to the cycles of experience: how things accumulate, how they're released, how they leave marks. It's not just something to look at, but something to feel—to sense its weight, its fragility, its shifts. The tactile aspect is what gives the work its pulse.

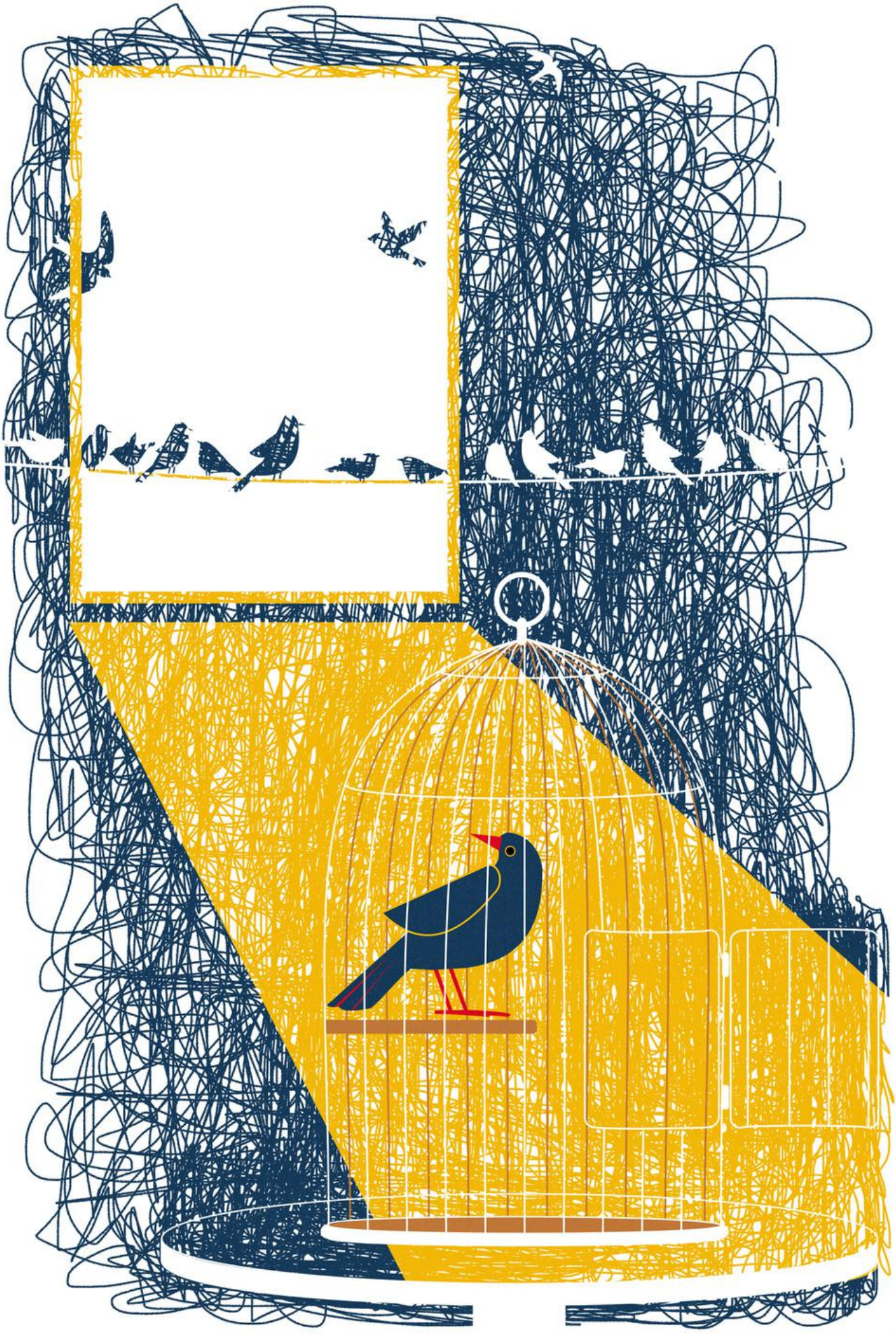
Magdalena Kluth | Es Sind Die Kleinen Großen Dinge

Laura Ralli

As a child, I kept my room perfectly tidy, at least on the surface. But opening the closet revealed an explosion of clothes, toys, and papers. That was likely my first "controlled chaos": a confined, manageable mess. Over time, this approach became central to my creative process. Choosing textures, colors, light, and shadow is the vital, chaotic phase; enclosing this energy in clean, geometric shapes is how I give it structure and then I can communicate it. I hold a degree in Sculpture at Florence's Academy of Fine Arts and a Master in Editorial Illustration. I've been working for years as a freelance illustrator and graphic designer. From sculpture and illustration, I've absorbed emotional depth; from graphic design, the power of visual synthesis. I've explored a wide range of materials and techniques, 2D and 3D, digital and handmade, static and in motion, believing that every idea requires its own path and language to express itself. My main inspirations include: the shapes of Kandinsky, Munari, and Klee; the Brancusi's synthesis; Burri's raw textures; the posters of Cassandre, Depero, Saul Bass and Tom Whalen; Mattotti's colors; Noma Bar's use of space and symbols; Fritz Kahn's compositions and the vintage packaging. I enjoy creating ironic or conceptual illustrations, playing with positive and negative space to craft immediate but not usual images, blending common elements in unexpected ways. For me, creativity means expressing the essential in a distinctive voice.

Laura Ralli | Take Time for Yourself | 2024





Laura Ralli | Social anxiety | 2025

Alla Golovcenco

Alla Golovcenco | Merfolk | 2023

Your artworks often blend whimsical fantasy with natural motifs. What inspires this unique fusion?

I think, it is something that happens naturally, almost on an intuitive level. But, if I try to rationalize it, flora in a fantasy setting is an important tool to use as a background frame and world building. If you think about all your favourite books, like LoTR, you'll probably envision the surroundings as much as the main characters. So, I think even small natural motifs can express an identity for the character (in clothing, accessories, armor, background objects etc.).

Alla Golovcenco | Accept your flowers | 2024

How does your background in architecture influence your painting style or creative process?

Architecture is the reason, there are almost no buildings in my drawings :), for now at least. It seems like, I gravitate outside a confinement of a concrete box, when creating art. But, the knowledge from architecture school in perspective, 3d modeling, space orientation aids a good understanding about the world around you, how it works, how does our eye perceive images, places, the science between light and shadow.

There's a strong narrative quality in your illustrations — do you imagine stories behind each piece?

Yes, I do. Each character or still image has a backstory. The creatures' facial expressions, their costume, hair, body language represent a history hidden from the world. Having this little "Easter eggs" around, each viewer can imagine their own narrative about them. Sometimes, I do write small

Alla Golovcenco | The portrait of the dragon | 2024

descriptions in my sketchbook, while other times it is just kept in my head.

What emotions or thoughts do you hope to evoke in the viewer?

One of my goals is to immerse the viewer into the story of the painting and let them forget about their everyday struggles and worries. So, they can get a sense of comfort and magic. Life can be quite challenging. So, if you can take a breath, look at your environment, view a painting and feel a sense of serenity within, a sense of ease and a remainder to still believe in magic. Because, magic does not come from a wizard, but from a small act of kindness.

Nature seems to be a recurring element in your work. What role does it play in your artistic vision?

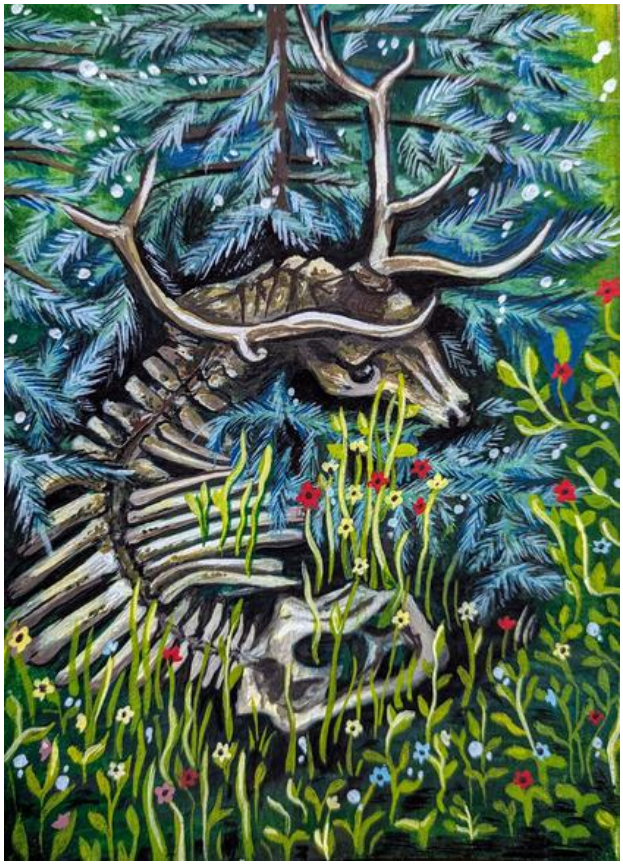
Nature is a source of inspiration and healing, which a lot of people can relate. Our flora and fauna are such unique beings, filled with magic. Just learning about different critters, plants, studying how the nature works and communicates, is enough to enrich our artistic vision, even some creatures sound like, there are straight from a Tolkien book. I draw inspiration from researching and then trying to add my twist to it. If I find an interesting life form, the next step is to discover how it can become even more special, what new qualities can be added or subtracted.

You mention a desire to incorporate social issues into your art. Are there specific themes you're drawn to explore?

Yes, this is a goal of mine. Incorporating social issues into art is quite important. Art in the end, reflects our reality. Pieces of artistic expression, that speak for animals rights, women's rights, discrimination against minorities and just learning to accept each other. We are all human, even thought we come in different fonts. But for me, there needs to be a balance between still making comforting art, while also engaging in complicated themes. And I am yet to figure it our. But it's a work in process :).

How do you balance your full-time job in architecture with your passion for painting?

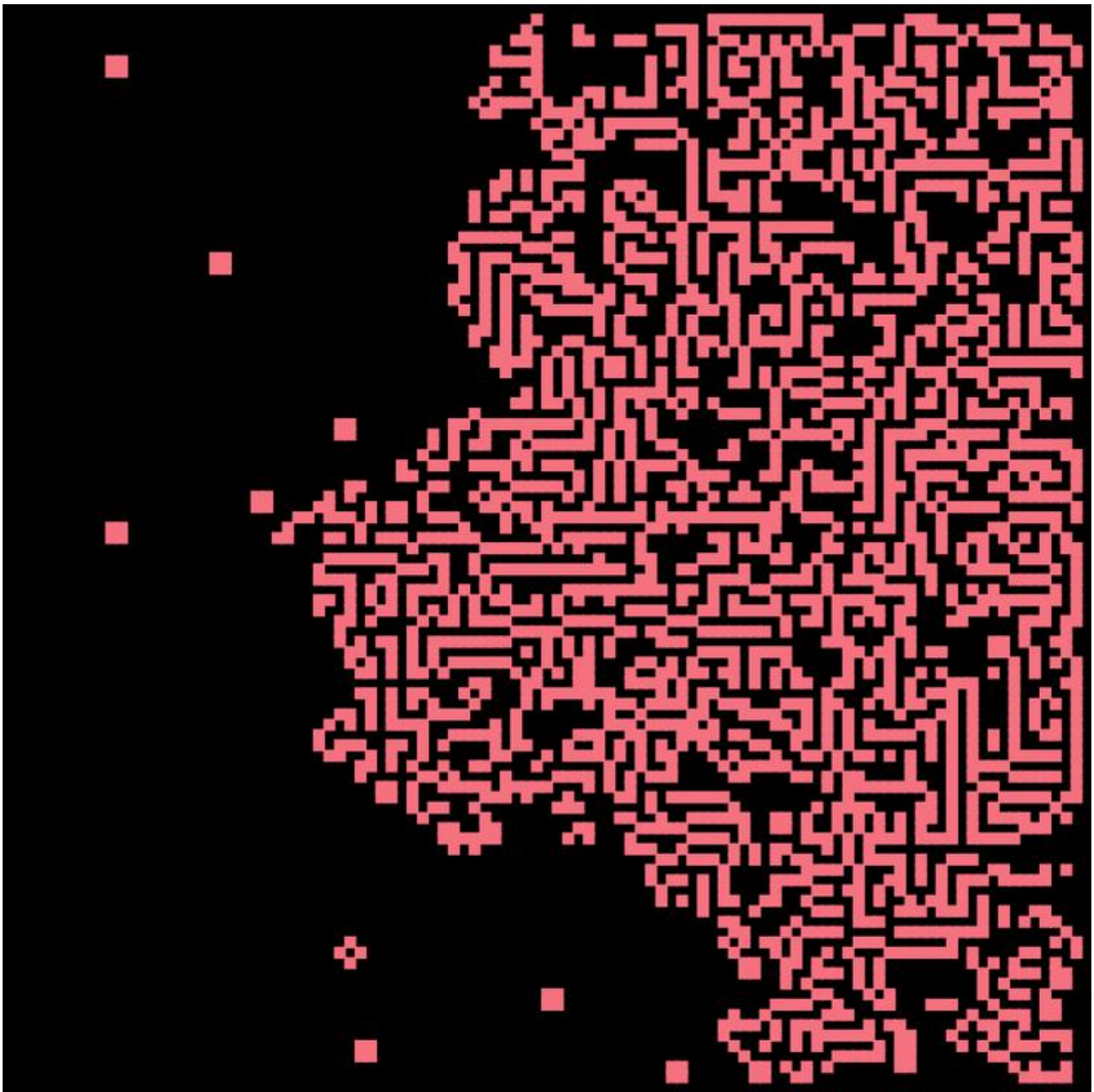
I don't. :) Just kidding. I just attempt to organize my time after the day job and try to have realistic goals. When you are short on time, small and simple projects are quite helpful, just to keep the ball rolling. To be honest, I am still seeking to figure out my schedule. :)



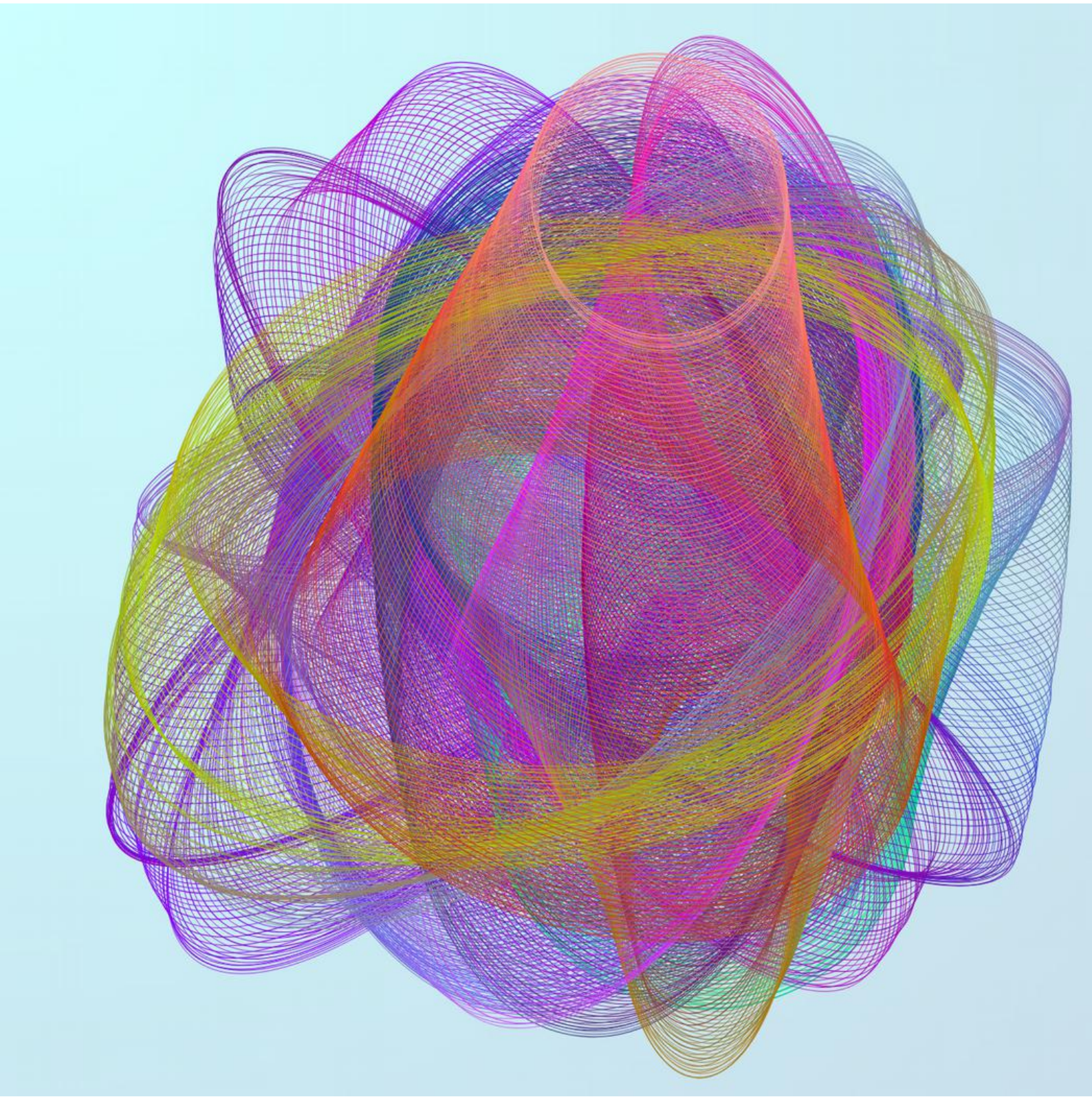
Alla Golovcenco | After death | 2023

Reyhaneh Daneshdoost, known as Reyrove, is a textile engineer turned creative coder and generative artist. With a background in polymer science, she bridges the gap between engineering and art, creating interactive, algorithm-driven artworks that explore the intersection of science, simulation, and creativity.

Project Statement
At Reyrove, I aim to merge the precision of engineering with the fluidity of art. Utilizing technologies like JavaScript and p5.js, I craft generative artworks that challenge conventional boundaries. My work invites viewers to experience the beauty of chaos and the elegance of algorithms, offering a fresh perspective on digital creativity.



Reyhaneh Daneshdoost | Game of Life



Reyhaneh Daneshdoost |Hank

Jace Ambwani

To begin with, how did your return to art during the pandemic reshape your understanding of creativity and its place in your life?

Before studying architecture, I was studying business and foreign languages. I love learning languages, but I felt profoundly disconnected from myself in my business lectures. I was in my second year of undergraduate when the pandemic hit. I had just switched my degree program to Architecture, so I was taking some design classes and some art courses as well. I felt like, for the first time, I was doing something that felt right. In the past, I was always jumping from career idea to career idea, trying to find something that would satisfy my preconceived notions of success while still being something I felt 'passionate' about. But I didn't know passion until I started taking art and design seriously.
I am in a privileged position to be able to say that the pandemic sparked a sort of personal renaissance in my life. It forced me to take time into my own hands and to be alone with my thoughts and my boredom. I am fortunate enough to have been in a comfortable space with a loving family during the pandemic, and I had a lot of personal freedom. I spent the whole lockdown period on my porch, which I set up as a makeshift studio space, experimenting with painting, printmaking, collaging, drawing, and all sorts of mediums and techniques. I felt like I was reconnecting with a critical part of me that had been dormant for many years. I didn't realize how much I needed to create, for my own spiritual and mental well-being, until I started again.

Jace Ambwani | Human City | 2023

How does your architectural background influence the way you compose space and light in your paintings?

When I think about the parts of my architectural background that play the biggest roles in the way I paint, I think of depth, scale, and perspective. In my process, scale plays the biggest role in composing space and light; it is a useful tool that I enjoy exploring. I am very fascinated by the power that scale has and how quickly it can change the mood and dynamics of a scene. I integrate that into my work when, for example, I exaggerate the size of a shadow relative to a figure to evoke isolation or shrink a horizon line to create tension. My fascination with scale stems from its power to manipulate spatial perception. Light follows this same rule of scale—I treat it as both structural and emotional material. Just as architects carve light with apertures and reflections, I layer rough shading or sharp contrasts to 'construct' atmosphere.

Jace Ambwani | Human Suburbs | 2024

The result is a painting that doesn't just depict space, but invites the viewer to step into it, to feel the intensity of the world I've depicted.

Your works often depict solitary figures or sparse, monumental environments. What emotional or philosophical states do these evoke for you?

I guess I would describe it as an uncanny solitude. A sense of comfort that, at the same time, is foreboding. Purgatory. Overwhelming isolation. I want my work to capture an overall sense of deep, personal uncertainty; uncertainty about who I am, what the world around me is, where I am, and who I want to be. Uncertainty about what lies ahead for my future and beyond death, the laws of the universe. The sparse, monumental environments are the spatial manifestation of uncertainty: I would describe it as a purgatory, like being on a fully set stage before the audience floods in and the spotlight turns on.

Can you talk about the relationship between anonymity and familiarity in your work? How do you explore this tension visually?

I approach the relationship between anonymity and familiarity as an exploration of the uncanny valley for built environments. The familiar, low-polygon environments (a house, a skyscraper, a ranch) are paired with this anonymous figure. The audience correctly assumes what those massings are and what this figure is supposed to be. They are familiar and recognizable as spaces we've seen before. They are nowhere to be found; however, they don't exist in reality, but they are represented everywhere. It is abstracting an existing condition to reveal its fundamental parts. Sort of like a 3D model before applying materials to it. It makes me think about how we store memories and associations. The images of memories in my head are fuzzy and hazy, yet recognizable. If I picture 'sprawling suburbia' in my head, I don't picture a specific neighborhood in, say, Arkansas, but a mix of similar architectural features that I've seen before. I hope my work may trigger a hazy memory from the viewers' childhood and bring them a sense of comfort or unease.

Several of your paintings convey a strong sense of isolation within urban or suburban settings. Is this a reflection of your own experience, or more of a cultural commentary?

It is both a personal and a cultural reflection. My work draws from my own experience in the American urban landscape and the role it plays in the American psyche. North America has a breathtaking and diverse natural landscape that is painfully juxtaposed with an urban design that wastes space and restricts the development of community or collective movement. It is intentional and has led us to become distant from one another while chasing individuality. Labyrinths of overpasses and highways, like in Los Angeles or Houston, the dense and imposing concrete jungle of New York, desolate rural environments in the south, and so-called 'fly-over states'. Each of these conditions evolved from Manifest Destiny urban design and exists at the same time and space. Under the guise of individualism, the built landscape reveals the true conditions of our society: the house you live in is identical to the acres of homes around you, only accessible with an automobile. You sit in the same traffic jam during your commute, surrounded by other people also alone in their cars. For the U.S., there is a fine line between embracing individualism and falling into isolation, and our urban design contributes to our slow descent into a society of lonely and extremist individuals.

The human figure in your work is often reduced to a simple silhouette. What role does this abstraction play in how you express identity or universality?

The figure is the individual around whom the modern built environment is centered. It is me, or my neighbor, or it can be you. It is anonymous in depiction, but it represents everyone. The figure's initial function is to give the viewer a sense of scale and, in turn, an emotional reaction.

What significance does shadow hold in your visual language? It seems to almost become a character in its own right.

The shadow represents the passage of time, as well as another layer of scale. I typically choose to represent times of the day that are the most still and quiet, where you are most likely to find yourself alone if you walk outside. Dawn and dusk are sort of purgatories between night and day. It's when the shadows are the most dramatic, and they stretch into infinity as another set of hours begins or comes to an end. The hours between night and day are lost time, perhaps the loneliest hours we experience regularly, and often they feel existential. If you're conscious during these hours, you may find yourself reflecting or, if you're like me, overthinking. The light and shadows contribute to the sense of overwhelm and existentialism that I aim to induce in my paintings and help form the context of the work itself.

Anemone Schultze

I use the flow of colors to create surreal worlds without any prior plan. These worlds open up to each viewer in their own personal way. A complete painting emerges intuitively, finally uniting to form a perfect whole. Abstract art knows no limits. It is a symphony of emotions and a visual menu of inspiration through the combination of shapes and colors. I started this journey seven years ago after becoming a mom of two and an editor for several TV formats. I now work full time as a contemporary abstract artist, primarily using acrylics and mixed media on cotton and linen canvases.

Interview

Scarset Vincent Thierry Noel

Your early training involved classical techniques and mentors. How did this foundation influence the evolution of your current abstract and conceptual style?

I studied fine art from the age of 5 to 17 mentored by two very inspiring figures in the associative art world of my home town (suburbs of Paris, France), and with their support, at around that age (12~13) I started working on my own personal expression/work. After High School where I studied mechanical engineering, I entered the ENSAAMA Olivier de Serres Applied Art School in Paris in 1999 to pursue a Ceramic design Bachelor degree, while apprenticing with Serbian sculptor Dragoljub Milosevic. The crossroads of fine art, industrial design and those important mentors, pushed me to develop a practice I named "Dé-composition", where I started (around 15-16 years old) zooming in, partitioning, extruding elements, reducing my palette, and simplifying my work in order to extract the essence of each particular painting I was working on. This method took various abstract forms in time, including physical and digital works. Over the years my work evolved from more figurative to abstract, from knife and oil painting to industrial paints and solvents, then digital and now back to a mix media with parts of each of those building blocks.

維新 | Commu-négation | 2025

The project title "Commu-négation" is a powerful play on words. What inspired you to coin this term, and how does it reflect the themes in your work?

My current project "Commu-négation", is part of a growing collection of works including: writing, digital art, and painting, centered around my current societal malaise living in a very crowded bustling yet anonymous world, where year after year life is becoming more and more about communication without human interaction. Where all I see are heads down scrolling, watching and messaging while no one is talking to each other. The introduction of that digital lifestyle in my experience has negated communication little by little to the point where we constantly see entire families and groups of friends and coworkers out and about together, completely alone on their individual devices, from children, to teenagers, to adults. For me, being extremely unwell and uncomfortable generally in society and quite unskilled in interpersonal relationships, it has translated to a more isolated lifestyle year after year. The current work is a direct expression and reflection of that sentiment, trying to build it into a new identity, as if to create its roots and make sense of it.

Many of your figures appear faceless, voiceless, and plugged in. Are these representations a critique, a warning, or an invitation to reflect?

The figures in those works are with eyes closed, hollow ears, sometimes hollowed heads, faces angled down at

devices. Mouth closed or screaming quietly. It is surely a critique, although not a warning, but an attempt to characterise modern individualism into what I call our "new standards of tribalism". I paint those figures as if they were totems depicting our new values. In a sense, I also want to make them my own as if to reconnect with them. I think this new hedonistic epoch we are building together, seemingly a continuum of the rococo era, needs to be captured and reflected on. The ambition and maybe foolishly, is to present that epoch in a display that heads would look up to instead of down at, and together communicate around it.

Your artist statement mentions "tribal identities" and "internity." Could you elaborate on these concepts and how they emerge visually in your paintings?

I have described in one of the texts that accompanies the work : "With cynicism and love at heart, let's explore with idle eyes, our new tribal identities. Let's take a look at our legacy as we continue to "commu-négate" and selfishly race toward "internity". I coined the term "Internity" to express the current longing for constant approval in the attempt of displaying one-self (one-imagined-self) with the hope of being seen and remembered in this new digital reality forever. Our eternity shall be digital, on the internet and we crave the sense of belonging and shared cultural, historical, and social characteristics within this new tribal group. Where tribal communities were deeply rooted to a land, customs and communal role, we have built this new digital land, communities / tribes and customs online. In the work, it can take the form of characters posing for selfies, holding onto their device, or in other instances like in the work "Commu-négation", where some sort of post-human figures with glass helmets are looking into a picture of the world from outside the frame. I try to tie it all with a common visual language of shapes and colors as if it is the offspring of that culture.

You blend fine art techniques with modern commentary on technology and society. How do you balance aesthetic expression with critical messaging?

When I start each individual work, I don't have any idea what it is going to be. Everything is done in the mindset of automatic writing and or improvisation. I will categorize and classify what emerges out of it after the fact. The commentary or message that arises from it seems to be the result of that personal reality I express, which is current, relatable and a very common illness, but it is not a conscious decision at the work's inception. It is almost like a byproduct. Although I decided on a nomenclature of primary colors, acrylics, as well as over simplistic forms, the mix of aesthetic and critical messaging isn't preplanned.

Do you consider your works more personal catharsis or social commentary? Or is it a blend of both?

It ends up being both, but it's personal first and foremost. My overall work concept I call "Dé-composition" is my way of deciphering my own torments and anguish, and trying to make sense of it by taking things apart and zooming in or juxtaposing them. While doing so artistically, it is a "Dé-composition" of my life at the time of each work. As a result, the techniques, and aesthetics become a reflection of that current life experience, in which extreme changes in society and technology are happening, overhauling almost all behaviors and deeply affecting me. I know it affects many others just as much, but the result of the work could just as well be seens as a beautification of that modern lifestyle. In the end, once the work is done, I don't want to have an imposing message, I want the work to be seen from as many angles as there are viewers.

What materials or mediums do you use in the "Commu-négation" series, and how do they enhance the message you aim to convey?

In the project, the work covers writing, sketches, digital photography and paintings. All tied together around a storyline. The paintings have three categories: -Primary tribal depictions, which are only using primary colors, mainly painted with knives on canvas, geometrical and basic. -Expressive abstracts, on canvas and paper, where I use mixed mediums, with acrylic, inks, markers, with a larger palette, where more figures and wider depiction styles appear. -Portraits, that I call "Classically Grotesque", that are figurative acrylics on paper only. My ambition once the collection is finished is to have an ensemble of works that tells the story of our "Commu-négation" and take the viewers on a disturbing voyage that mirrors our communication landscape and how we see ourselves in it and through it.

Adriana Catarig

I am Adriana, a visual artist rooted in Romania. For ten years, I shaped brands as a graphic designer, training my eye on rhythm, balance, and story. Yet the pulse of art never stopped beating. Today, I let it lead, slowly weaving a future built entirely from making. My pieces begin with materials that carry history, inherited linens, driftwood gathered on Greek shores, and carved symbols echoed from folklore. Through hand-stitching and pain, I give them new breath, creating objects that bridge generations and anchor feelings of belonging. I work slowly, listening to fabric, grain, and memory. I care less for polished perfection than for presence, the quiet tremor of something honest. Each gesture honours the women before me, the earth beneath my feet, and the rituals that keep us human. Art, to me, is home: not a place, but a living state entered when we remember who we are and where we come from. I'm building that home, one mindful piece at a time.

Project Statement

"Dialogue with Nature" This 120 x 180 cm piece is painted with acrylic on old hemp cloth, handwoven by my grandmother almost 50 years ago. The fabric is carefully preserved and full of time and memory. This work wasn't just made in the workshop; it was a passage. The brush struggled against the dense texture of the hemp, but that resistance opened something deeper: a path toward roots, toward the silence of the women before me, toward the forces of nature I come from, and that inspired the name. Here, nature is not just a backdrop, but a collaborator. I didn't create alone, but in dialogue with the material, with energy, with something greater than myself. It's not only an artistic expression, but an offering.

Adriana Catarig | Dialogue with Nature

Adriana Catarig | Dialogue with Nature

Renée Marsha Miller

Renee Miller | I Am Unstoppable

Can you share the story behind the "I Am" series? How did it begin?

After a bipolar depression triggered a five year hiatus from painting, I felt its loss in my life keenly. This Spring, while recovering from another depression, I finally went upstairs and brought down my paints and brushes and started painting again. I cannot fully express how powerful it was for me to be painting again! Dipping the brush in the paint and applying it to a blank canvas gave me a rush of creative energy and feelings of self-empowerment that I hadn't felt in years. I discovered a source of infinite joy and wonder in the beauty I found in abstract painting.

Renee Miller | I Am Fascinating

Your paintings are vibrant and full of energy—what feelings or ideas do you hope to evoke in viewers?

I want viewers to feel the sense of joy, creative energy and self-empowerment that fills me when I paint.

How has your experience with bipolar disorder influenced your creative process and artistic voice?

I think having experienced the bleak, colorless landscape of a depressed mind gives me a greater appreciation for the possibilities of joy and empowerment to be found in creative expression.

What role does color play in your work? Do specific colors represent particular emotions or states of mind?

Renee Miller | I Am Reborn

My current I Am series uses bright pink, vibrant turquoise and metallic gold. The colors are fun and happy, which reflect the feelings I have when I paint.

What inspires your use of gold spirals and organic shapes across the series?

The gold spirals and organic shapes are inspired by the Native American petroglyphs which commonly use spirals to represent life, growth and the cyclical nature of existence.

Do you approach each painting with a clear plan, or is it more intuitive and spontaneous?

I always start with a general plan of what I want for the painting. This helps me dive in and avoid that paralyzing feeling at the approach to a blank canvas. As I am painting, however, intuitive leaps often take over and I give myself over to the painting that wants to take shape.

What does painting bring to your life today that other forms of expression do not?

Painting expresses emotion in a way that words fail to capture.

Lady Milo is a contemporary painter based in Swinford, Co. Mayo. Born and raised in Southwest Poland, a region characterised by cultural diversity and international influence, she moved to Ireland in 2007. She studied culture, including Art History and Aesthetics and after moving to Ireland in 2007she developed a particular interest in the subconscious processes and underwent a training in shamanism (2015-2016, Dublin) and holotropic breathwork with facilitators from Ireland and USA. In 2015 Lady Milo completed an oil painting course at Marino College, Dublin. Shortly after settling in in County Mayo in 2022 she returned to painting. Lady Milo exhibited in shows across Ireland and above.

Project Statement
In March 2022, surrounded by raw and dynamic nature of Co. Mayo, Ireland, I found myself turning my dream of becoming an artist into reality. Every day, I noticed, the lights of sunrise and sunset, as well as the moody weather, seem to reflect the spectrum of human emotions and make the same places look different. My work consists of two main paths. While walking the first one, I try to capture life in rural Ireland, where past ovelaps with presence. Real and imaginary entities appear in the surrounding lanscape and confirm the perrenial nature of life. At the same time when painting objects and my surroundings, I focus on the momentary atmosphere and allow the actual images to go though the filter of my personal perception of them. I try to express the ephemeral essence of any given moment. Analogically, in portraits, I refrain from adhering to the obvious standards of beauty and instead try to capture the emotional state of the portrayed people. The costant exploration of the illusion of permanence and the evanescent character of all that exists.. On the second path of my work, I allow my imagination wander without any restrictions and create worlds full of imaginary creatures and objects in which they are all interconnected. While expressing my own experiences through art I become the connecting agent between the portrayed world and the receipients of the works who happen to be living in different cultures and aesthetics. I believe that in the essence we are all interconnected and the connection is showing up in our emotional response.

Lady Milo | Our Feral Nature | 2025

Lady Milo | Womanhood As A State Of Mind | 2025

Johan Cova

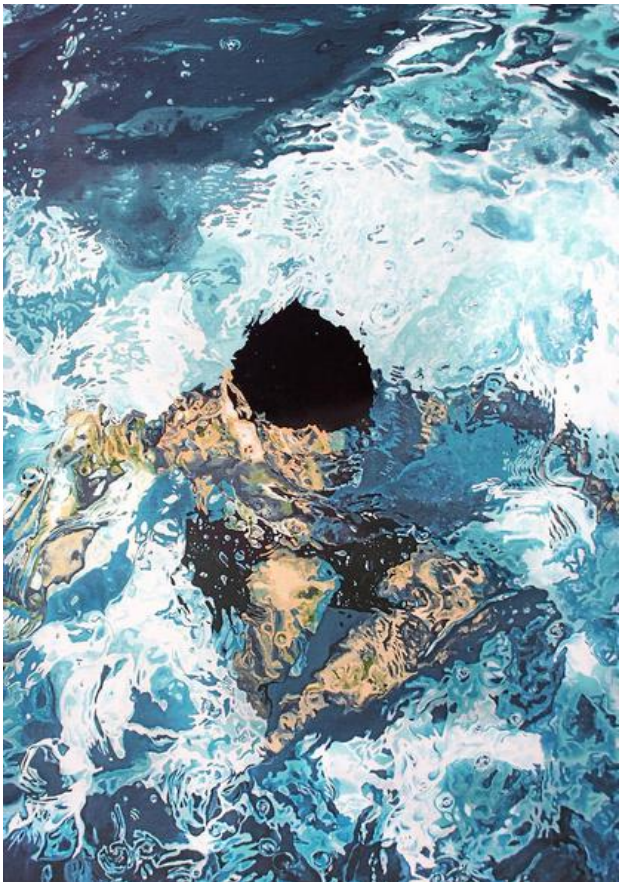
Can you tell us about the moment you decided to return to art in 2020? What inspired that shift?

The truth is, I never left art. It has been my therapy since childhood—a safe creative space I would retreat to whenever I felt I was merely operating in survival mode as a busy corporate man.
2020 was a unique opportunity — I believe for all of us — to reconnect with ourselves as the world suddenly shut down. For me, it was simply a matter of having more time. I was working less than part-time in the corporate world that I still belonged to, which gave me space to create. It was the first time in my adult life that I could hold a brush for more than two hours a day. I couldn't stop creating. I found light in the darkness as the world was seemingly collapsing.
The transition happened organically, largely thanks to social media. I had only ever shared my work with family and friends, but when I started posting publicly, people began reaching out to ask if my work were for sale. I remember I was drawing The David of Michelangelo, posting daily progress, and receiving encouraging comments. I began selling. I was also painting horses for people I met through horseback riding, and they commissioned works with overwhelmingly positive feedback. That combination of events gave me the confidence to think: Well, maybe I am good at this because people genuinely like it.

Johan Cova | L´Enfant | 2024

How has living in Mexico City influenced your artistic vision compared to your time in Buenos Aires?

I've changed cities and countries many times, and each move has influenced my work through the diverse forms of creativity I've encountered. I've kept my eyes open to art in all its expressions.
Mexico City, in particular, has been one of the most culturally rich places I've lived, awakening my creativity in ways I'm still beginning to fully grasp. It's the second city in the world with the most museums, and the first in Latin America—not to mention its countless galleries, cultural centers and architectural landmarks.
When I first visited Mexico City in 2017, I was overstimulated: Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Rufino Tamayo, Jorge Marín, Leonora Carrington—the list of painters, architects, sculptors,



Johan Cova | Vacances | 2022

musicians, and even culinary artists seemed endless. I felt, and still feel, like a child in a toy store—exploring, discovering, and enhancing my life experience thanks to this city's overwhelming creativity and culture.

Your Submergé series masterfully blends realism with abstraction. What draws you to depict the human figure submerged in water?

First of all, thank you for noticing and for the compliment implied. I've had collectors and viewers observe my work and say, "I love abstract," while others say, "I love realism." I always smile and respond, "Yes, me too," allowing them to interpret it in their own way. I don't correct them because both perspectives are valid.
I love the diversity of interpretations within Submergé; it enriches the collection and invites viewers into the open-ended nature of art. The fragmentation of the human figure creates a magnetic visual that draws you in—you need to pause to understand what's happening and the environment around the subject. Then comes the emotional layer: stories of resilience, vulnerability, sadness, joy, among others.
I've always been drawn to the human figure and the complexity of human behavior and emotions. Even as a child, I was found quite often drawing eyes, hands, lips, and torsos. The human form has always been fascinating to me.

Water is a central theme in your work. What symbolic meanings does it hold for you personally?

Water has been present throughout my childhood, adolescence, and adulthood—it is my life. I'm the kind of person who will always choose the beach over the mountains. My mother is the reason for that. She kept me and my siblings close to the ocean, and I'm grateful to have grown up with easy access to it. The beach was pure joy, a place to bond, connect, recharge, and create lasting memories with friends and family. It still is.
As an adult, my connection with water deepened when I began exploring spiritual paths. Water, for me, is an element that facilitates a cleansing process—one that leads to clarity, certainty and inner peace. Even if you´re not a spiritual person you can feel a sense of ease after submerging in the ocean or a pool. I embrace water's effect even in my morning showers, using that moment to meditate, checking in and expand the 70% of water within me—which we all have. I then begin my day with consciousness, purpose and intention.

Do you work from photographs or live models when creating your underwater scenes?

The starting point is usually the idea—what I want to express—followed by underwater photoshoots with models that I conduct myself. Those photographs become the raw material for my paintings. However, I'm not rigid about this process. For example, my recent piece Passionnés was inspired by a photo I didn't intentionally capture. I was pursuing to photograph a dancing couple underwater, but one of the shots unexpectedly spoke to me. I thought, This is love—I want to talk about love. In that case, the creative process shifted: photo → idea → painting, rather than my usual sequence of idea → photo → painting.

Your technique mimics the way light and motion distort the body underwater. How do you approach this technically?

I intentionally seek the fragmentation of the human body during each photoshoot. The more broken into pieces the figure appears, the more I want to paint it. I enjoy the challenge, and I believe that complexity enhances the viewer's experience.
I carefully control the conditions to achieve this effect. Each session yields around 500 photos, sometimes more. I shoot quickly to protect the safety of my breath-holding models. Noon provides the best light, the location must be sunny, and the water must be moved—but not by the model. I prioritize all these elements every time I shoot.

What emotions or memories are you hoping to evoke in the viewer through the Submergé series?

I honestly don't hold expectations in that regard. I've learned that whatever emotions inspired a piece may not mirror the feelings evoked in viewers.
One particular moment taught me this: a collector came to my studio to see Sportif, the third piece in the Submergé series, which talks about body image and societal expectations. With watery eyes, he said, "It reminds me of my brother. He was a swimmer and he passed away." I was speechless and deeply moved. I never imagined my work could bring forth such a powerful memory of both sadness and love.
I've always believed that art—of any kind—should awaken emotions within us. When those emotions are stirred, the artwork, the movie, the song creates a connection with us. And that, to me, it´s the power of art at its finest.

Margo Nacai
I am a visual artist based in Italy working in the style of abstract expressionism with elements of portraiture. Originally from Eastern Europe I moved to Italy where I found new inspiration in solitude color and inner reflection. My journey into art began as a way to process emotions and explore my inner world. Over time this practice grew into a professional path and a source of connection with others. I work primarily with acrylics on canvas using vibrant colors intuitive movement and layers to express what cannot be said in words. My paintings have been collected by individuals who are drawn to their emotion energy and sense of mystery.

Project Statement
My art is a reflection of what lives beneath the surface. I paint from emotion letting intuition guide every choice of color texture and movement. Each work is a visual diary a moment of feeling captured without words or explanation. I do not aim to define meaning but to leave space for others to find their own. I am fascinated by how abstract forms can speak to something deeply personal in each viewer. Through this process I explore the unseen the vulnerable and the powerful language of the subconscious.

Margo Nacai | SILENT CLAMOR

Margo Nacai | THE HARMONY OF THREE

de Brauwere Aline

fifteen, I started taking classes at the Académie des Beaux-Arts: painting, mixed media, etching, and later sculpture. Since then, I've never stopped creating. My art has greatly evolved year after year. I've used different techniques and worked on various themes, but I'm always aiming for the same goals: offering new perspectives on our daily environment and sharing peaceful ambiances.

Can you tell us about your journey as an artist? How did it begin?

Art has always been part of my life. Both my parents were passionate about art and architecture, and they took us to every museum they could find. When I was

de Brauwere Aline | Eat me if you can

Your work explores the beauty found in everyday moments. How do you decide which fleeting moments to capture, and what does capturing them mean to you as an artist?

Auguste Rodin once said, "Beauty is everywhere. It is not that she is lacking in our eyes, but our eyes which fail to perceive her." I try to keep my eyes open to the quiet poetry that surrounds us—autumn leaves scattered on the ground, an open book resting on a table, the gentle play of light on a familiar object. These seemingly ordinary scenes are full of meaning when we take the time to notice them. As an artist, capturing these moments is my way of showing their subtle beauty. These paintings serve as a reminder to everyone to seek out those moments.

In your statement, you mention that simplicity can become a source of beauty. How do you approach finding beauty in seemingly ordinary or overlooked subjects?

I believe we often overlook the quiet beauty that surrounds us, always chasing more or longing for what we don't have. Yet true beauty—and even happiness

de Brauwere Aline | Au rendez-vous des insomniaques

—often resides in the simple, everyday things. For me, it's about slowing down and paying attention to what's already there: a gesture, a shadow, an object we pass by without noticing. In a world that can feel overwhelming, turning our gaze to these small moments is not only grounding—it's a way of reconnecting with what truly matters.

Your most recent collection focuses on simplicity and gentleness, often using objects viewed from above. What draws you to this perspective, and how does it enhance the meaning of your work?

I've always admired still lifes for their strong symbolism. I love Flemish painters, as much as Zúrbaran, Cézanne or Matisse. Inspired by that tradition, I aim to renew the genre by focusing on single, evocative objects—always seen from above. This particular perspective allows me to offer a fresh and intimate look at everyday life, inviting the viewer into a quiet moment of contemplation. It's a way of elevating the simple, giving it presence and weight.

You often use acrylic and mixed media to create works that speak to a wide audience. How do these materials help you express your artistic vision?

I enjoy exploring materials like plaster, fabric, and paper to bring texture and depth to my work. These elements add contrast and invite tactile engagement. In my most recent series, I've also started using glazing resin. It creates a glossy, transparent finish that enhances the surface and intensifies the colors, almost like zooming in. It creates an impression of depth and vibrancy. It's a subtle but powerful way to magnify what might otherwise be overlooked.

You are also passionate about Literature. How does this contribute to your work?

Indeed, literature is my other great passion. I often incorporate texts such as poems, fragments of novels, or quotations into my pieces of art. Sometimes, it starts with a text that inspires me to create an artwork which gives a new perspective on the text; other times, a finished piece calls for the perfect words to complement it and I integrate them in my work. It's a way for me to build bridges between two art forms I love deeply — visual art and literature.

What do you enjoy about participating in group exhibitions compared to solo shows?

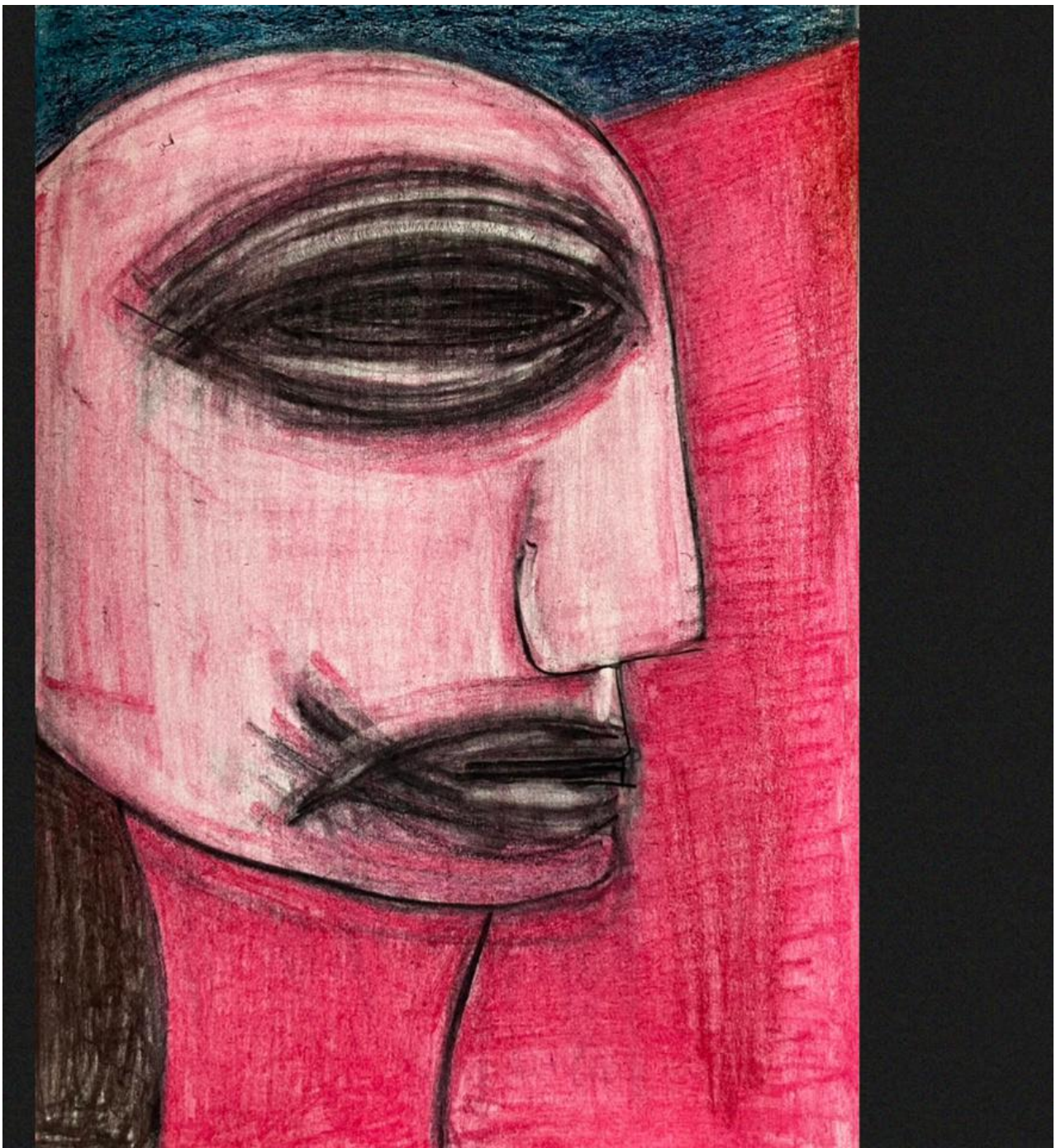
I particularly enjoy group exhibitions because they foster connections both among artists, and between artists and art lovers. Creating art often means working by yourself, so these events become valuable opportunities for shared enthusiasm and dialogues, which enriches my own practice.

What do you hope viewers feel or experience when looking at your work?

I hope my work invites viewers to rediscover the beauty woven into the fabric of everyday life. Through my art, I seek to reveal the quiet poetry that surrounds us—encouraging a pause, a breath, a moment of presence. I want to create a space that nurtures serenity and mindfulness, where each person can reflect on their connection to the world and to themselves.
One of the most rewarding experiences during exhibitions is hearing from viewers. Each person perceives different symbols, emotions, and narratives in my work—and that, to me, is the essence of art: to speak differently to everyone, allowing each individual to find their own meaning. I like that exchange so much, where my work becomes a mirror for personal interpretation and inner dialogue.

de Brauwere Aline | Danse aquatique

Anna Nartsis Shopova (b. 1976) is a multidisciplinary artist and stage designer based in Sofia, Bulgaria. She studied Civil Engineering at the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (Sofia), and later earned a degree in Stage and Costume Design from the National Academy of Arts, where she is currently a PhD student in the Scenography Department. Her artistic practice centers on storytelling through a combination of drawing, photography, collage, text, video, and sound. She primarily creates imagined personas, often in the form of portraits, using an experimental mix of materials such as acrylic, ink, industrial paints, nail polish, and scotch tape. Alongside her visual art, Anna has designed stage and costume elements for productions at the Rhodopean Drama Theatre, Theatre NATFIZ, and in collaboration with student ensembles. Her work has been featured in group exhibitions including Late Anthropocene Findings at the Bulgarian Pavilion of the Prague Quadrennial (2023), Wild Æst at Æther Haga (2020), and 70 Years of Scenography at the National Academy of Arts (2017). She has also developed several solo projects exploring her unique visual language.



Anna Nartsis Shopova | Under Your Spell | 2024

Robert Sumner

Robert Sumner | Tangnesshiegrum

Your works are full of movement and rhythm. Do you see your paintings as visual music?

Yes, although my work is not intended to be a visual illustration of music it is one very important influence on my work and I often use it as a framework or reference point to explore color, form, and composition. My recent solo shows at the Hoffman Center for the Arts and at the Czong Institute for Contemporary Art are both titled 'Visual Music.' I'm fascinated by, and love to explore, the parallels between music and visual experience such as repetition, improvisation, melody, harmony, and syncopation. Even the concept of the linear progression of time, which is inherent in music, is captured in painting as decisions about color, texture, tone, visual structure, etc. They are recorded in the paint itself. It's as if a painting can physically capture time, which to me seems almost magical.

Can you describe your creative process — do you plan compositions in advance, or do they evolve spontaneously?

It's a little bit of both. There are times when I see an image while reading or listening to music and I try to get down on paper and those sketches then lead to a composition on canvas. Other times I start with a blank canvas, get myself into the right headspace by bringing my mind to a state of stillness and then start painting as it comes to me. Regardless of how an image begins, each painting is a journey, and each additional brushstroke adds another variable to the composition which needs to be considered, which means that the finished artwork will have traveled some distance from the initial ideas and images.

Robert Sumner | Nythetiers

How has your background in arts administration and business influenced your artistic practice?

Corporate culture requires a very different mindset than artistic practice, and having to toggle between the two makes it easier now for me to manage the business side of making art full time. There are obviously a number of business skills that are transferrable to an artist but the thing my time in Corporate America taught me most was how valuable the time in my studio is. While working full time I never had enough studio time, and so when I moved to creating art full time I had years of pent-up hunger for, and a deep appreciation of the time spend thinking about and creating art.

You mention synesthesia and pre-verbal communication — do you personally experience any form of synesthesia?

Yes, when I am able to fully concentrate listening to music or reading certain authors the experience becomes like watching the music with my eyes closed, or seeing images flit across a movie screen as I read a story. Some of these images go directly to paper/canvas to start the formation of a composition.

Your color palettes are bold and expressive. How do you choose your colors? Do they represent emotions, sounds, or something else?

There are a number of influences that feed into my color choice, one of which is the season of the year. I live in the Pacific Northwest of the US and have converted my garage into a painting studio and I keep the garage door open, which means I am basically painting outside for most of the year. I've found that my palette often cools

Robert Sumner | Roomschorusprious

down in the winter and warms back up in the spring. I wouldn't say there is a one-to-one relationship between a color and an emotion or sound, but I believe there is an inherent value and joy in beauty and what can be more beautiful than the interplay of color?

What role does improvisation play in your painting practice?

I believe that improvisation plays a role in creating interesting art regardless of the artist, medium, or genre. Even in the most representational work, the artist will improvise as they respond to the work as it grows and the final piece will be different, even if only in subtle ways, than the original vision in the artist's head. For me, improvisation plays a big role. As the work develops, I am always asking myself where it is going next, what the image is lacking, and how to move it forward. Every time I add a new element, whether it's a new line, a new color, a new texture, it shifts all of the relationships in the entire work. Sometimes it works and the new addition helps everything else sync up. Sometimes it doesn't and I have to come up with something new to bring things back into balance. For example, perhaps the shade of green I add makes the other greens in the image yellow shift yellow in relation to it, altering how they interact with, let say, the purple. And so, something needs to change.

You developed a unique approach to titling your works using syllables from Finnegans Wake. What drew you to this text and method?

Conceptually, my objective when creating an image is to end up with an abstract visual matrix that is subtly suggestive to the viewer but not determinative, leaving room for the viewer to bring their own experience and history to the conversation with the work. Titles, on the other hand, can be very specific or narrow and can have the effect of limiting the viewer's visual and conceptual exploration of the work. For example, if I were to title a work 'Fugue in Blue' a viewer may think of only music and color, and not think to themselves, "Those squiggles remind me sea creatures!" So I began looking for a way to develop titles that were as conceptually open as I hope my visual images are. The prose of Finnegans Wake uses words laden with layers of meaning while still leaving room for the reader to bring their own experience and knowledge to bear upon the text, which means James Joyce had a similar objective for this book as I do for my paintings. This made Finnegans Wake the natural choice as a source of material for titles, and in a nod to the Dada artists I decided to put random syllables together to form titles. Hopefully they are puzzling enough to raise questions in the viewer's mind and create an open space for contemplation.

Nattarika Chaiyadaecha

A former Thai diplomat whose mental health got taken a toll over on her 11th year of the career. I had to quit my job, then I followed my German husband to live in Germany, where my dad became a graduate of Pure Arts (he studied at Art Academy in Düsseldorf). He passed away already. Now I use arts as means of healing and an effort to continue his legacy. I wish to send a message of hope and resilience to the world through my art.

Nattarika Chaiyadaecha | The Great Naga Dragon | 2025

Interview

Jenn Mangino

Jenn Mangino | Resistance I | 2025

Many of your photos depict nature reclaiming human-made structures. What message do you hope viewers take away from these scenes?

Hold on - the only thing certain in life is change, and the world is ever changing, restoring order from chaos.
Jeff Goldblum's character in Jurassic Park probably said it best: "Life finds a way". My message is "You will find a way".

Your series explores the theme of "resistance" through nature. What inspired you to focus on this particular theme?

I find hope in scenes that evoke what master landscape photographer John Blakemore referred to as 'Precarious Poise'. Subjects in impossible situations, thriving. Resisting and persisting against the odds.

Jenn Mangino | Resistance III | 2024

How does your background in microbiology influence your perspective or photographic practice?

Well, microbiology is about the study of small life forms, and the way we visualize those involve lenses and light. Through that lens another world is revealed. While photography requires equipment and technical skills not unlike the microscope, it's the way the camera reveals a different world that is so captivating.

What role does solitude or quiet observation play in your creative process?

I find the more I immerse myself in an environment before clicking the shutter, the more the moments I am looking for will find me.
This practice is harder than it sounds. For me, it's only when forced to slow down, observe the scene for longer and shoot slow that the noise in my head dies down so the scene can reveal its stories.

Why do you choose to work exclusively in black and white? What does it allow you to express that color might not?

Why shoot black and white in a world of color?

Jenn Mangino | Resistance VI | 2024

Color is reality.
I'm not necessarily interested in documenting reality, I'm interested in enhancing the serenity, emotion and mystery of a scene to tell the story. Monochrome allows me more latitude in drawing out that story.

Could you tell us more about your recent move to the Midwest and how the Kettle Moraine landscape has shaped your work?

A change of environment can be so creatively stimulating, and that's what I found when we recently moved to the Kettle Moraine area of Wisconsin. The Moraine is a geographical area characterized by ancient glacier activity, and the resulting hills, valleys, lakes and forests of the area are endlessly fascinating subjects.

Some of your images evoke a sense of stillness, while others suggest quiet persistence. How do you find balance in composition and mood?

There's a reason why minimalism is so popular in art and design.
The simplest scenes have the most emotional impact. Reducing a scene down to the essential elements to convey the moment is the constant challenge.
I love to use a square crop to achieve that reduction and balance. Contrasting not just light and shadow, but the texture of a scene is a critical element as well.

Teresa Greve Wolf is a Chilean American painter whose work draws deeply from her cultural heritage and personal journey as an immigrant. Born and raised in Santiago, Chile, she studied at the Escuela de Bellas Artes before relocating to the United States, where she continued her education at the University of Notre Dame and Indiana University South Bend. Her narrative, expressive style explores themes of identity, belonging, social justice, and community. In addition to her own artistic practice, Teresa has dedicated many years to teaching private art lessons, mentoring students who have gone on to attend top art institutions such as Parsons School of Design, the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and others. Teresa's work has been exhibited in solo and group shows across the country. Recent exhibitions include the University of Notre Dame; Saint Mary's College – Moreau Gallery; Civil Rights Heritage Center; University of Illinois; South Bend Museum of Art; Colfax Art Center; Woman Made Gallery; Stola Contemporary Art; and Bridgeport Art Center in Chicago. Nationally, her work has been shown at BWCA in Brooklyn, New York; Art of Fort Worth Gallery in Fort Worth, Texas; Museo de las Americas in Denver, Colorado; and The Art Show International in Los Angeles, California. Internationally, Teresa was recently selected as a Next Generation Artist in the Identity Contemporary Art Museum Exhibition at Insa Art Center in Seoul, South Korea.

Project Statement
As an artist, my mission is to use my art as a reflection of the current social climate. Over the past decade, my work has focused on raising awareness about social injustice and inspiring action. In my latest works, I invite the viewer to connect with my part by seeing their reflection within the paintings and engage in the issues I address. My artistic process typically starts by actively researching current events and protest movements across the globe, which enables me to encounter issues of injustice and critical causes I feel compelled to raise awareness about. As my artistic approach is figurative in order to help make my message more readable to a large audience of diverse backgrounds, my process then involves sketching a rough outline of a figural narrative on a large, modular surface to be painted, made of composite canvases. I determine the number of canvases needed to complete my design and transfer the imagery onto the surface using charcoal. I then apply black paint to define the shapes and paint the background, before incorporating reflective media. I use tracing paper to create templates for the mirrored shapes, cut them out of the reflective paper, and affix onto the canvas. The final painting is a balance of movement and color, with deliberate choices made to draw in the viewer's attention by directly placing the viewer into the narrative via the incorporation of mirrored media. I often use complementary colors in addition to mixed media to create a bold, striking layered effect that seeks to encapsulate the viewer. The aim of my work is to emphasize how we as society are all impacted by injustice, no matter how distanced one may feel from the issue itself, by drawing the viewer into the visual narrative. Cultivating this awareness in my artistic production, my work seeks to spotlight contemporary issues while stimulating a call for positive change.

Teresa Greve Wolf | Hoping Unity Prevails

Teresa Greve Wolf | Surrounded

— *Interview*

Chen Yibing

How did your background in psychology influence the way you approach visual storytelling?

I tend to bring my own imagination into specific scenes. I studied transpersonal psychology, which differs from other branches of psychology in that it focuses more on spirituality and the idea of universal oneness. So in my work, you might notice expressions of the collective unconscious. I aim to infuse a sense of spiritual reflection into my images, offering viewers a moment of emotional resonance.

What inspired you to create the series Silent Devotion — My Mother? Was there a specific moment that sparked it?

I didn't feel the need to "create"—to me, my mother is the work.
The final motivation probably came from a deep love for her. (My eyes teared up a bit at this point—sorry.)

Your work feels very intimate and quiet. How do you balance documentation and imagination in your imagery?

I remember it was a gloomy, rainy day—maybe by coincidence, but that mood heavily influenced the final atmosphere of the work. Since my mother was the model, she naturally expressed herself in front of the camera. In my mind, I had envisioned a story set in Republican-era China, which helped guide the overall tone. My mother's reserved personality and the private setting we shot in created a perfect harmony between realism and imagination. That balance might have been the most honest way to express the piece.

How do you think cultural expectations of Chinese motherhood shaped your understanding of your mother?

There's a phrase circulating online recently: "The best cook is always the last to sit at the table." That's exactly my mother—she's always the last one to eat. Perhaps she resonates with others too, becoming a symbolic figure of East Asian or specifically Chinese womanhood of our time—someone who devoted her entire life to her family.

The photo evokes stillness and emotional weight. Can you describe the process of creating this image — location, lighting, direction?

Location: Nanhua No.7
Camera: Canon
Clothing: PICCIN

Has your mother seen this work? If so, how did she react?

She has seen it, but didn't look very closely. (awkward smile)

What emotions were you hoping to evoke in viewers when presenting this project?

We live in an AI-driven age, but I don't think that undermines artistic creation. As long as the work comes from a real person, it holds emotion and an inner world. That's what gives the image its aura and sense of mystery, drawing the viewer in to explore it further and form an emotional connection. I believe my work carries a kind of spiritual energy and universal love—something AI simply can't replicate.

Christoph Bossart

You describe skin as both a metaphor and a material inspiration. Can you share what initially drew you to explore this theme so deeply?

Skin is often marked with small cracks and wounds, which, when closely examined, reveal an immense source of inspiration. There's a visual richness of the colors, textures and structures. Skin can be opaque or translucent. Its color is made up of countless tiny dots—almost like pixels—in an endless range of shades and hues.
My skin takes up quite a bit of time and headspace. Living with atopic dermatitis, it's been a source of discomfort and, in the past, embarrassment. The idea now is to turn this experience into something beautiful. So, there's an introspective dimension to my interest in the theme. At the same time, skin is universal. Everyone has one, and everyone has a relationship with it.
But skin is not just an aesthetic subject; it also functions as an archive of physical and psychological life. Skin cells hold memories, reflect a person's lifestyle and condition, and serve as a communication tool while also shielding us, as best they can, from the outside world.

Christoph Bossart-Lee | Kortison | 2025

That said, I sometimes hesitate to attach too much symbolism to my work, as I hope to create something that others can find beautiful without context.

Many of your works incorporate close-up textures and imperfections. What role does macro photography play in your creative process?

Macro photographs of skin and other materials are a source of inspiration. These images are like maps inviting exploration, the forms of skin imperfections like letters of an alphabet waiting to be deciphered. They're usually a starting point for a painting or sculpture and help guide the shift from the realism of my subject to the abstraction of my work.

There's a fascinating tension in your work between vulnerability (cracks, wounds) and beauty (gold leaf, delicate surfaces). How do you approach this contrast?

I'm looking to find beauty in imperfection and fragility. I don't think everything is beautiful, but I believe that through some sort of transformation, ugly things can become beautiful. "Art is the wound turned into light," said Georges Braque.
One way to reach transformation is through close observation. If you zoom in far enough on anything, even the vilest object, it becomes something else – open to reinterpretation. Another way is abstraction. A photo of a nasty wound can be turned into something beautiful through simplification or decontextualization. A third is figurative reinterpretation (This wound looks like a goat!). And then there is choice and combination of materials: matching two things that don't belong together, like delicate gold leaf and thick, cratered Hanji paper, creates tension and dialogue, and in the best of cases, beauty.
In Japanese Kintsugi, gold is used to highlight rather than hide repairs in broken ceramics. That practice transforms the object into something more beautiful and unique because of

it's history, not in spite of it. I quite like that perspective.

Could you tell us more about your time at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and how it shaped your recent work?

I had a great teacher in the life painting classes I took. He helped me a lot with painting what I see and not looking for a representation of the object in front of me. It was often frustrating – there are many traps to fall into, and I did so frequently – but also very liberating.
The classes also challenged my attachment to precision, which I aimed for but regularly failed to achieve. They gave me confidence to give up on lines, focus more on blots of paint and be more gestural and expressive
My teacher advised me to look at a model's pose as a letter of an unknown alphabet. That stuck with me, and it continues to inform my wound alphabet series.

Your artistic journey began through textile design. How has that background influenced your current practice?

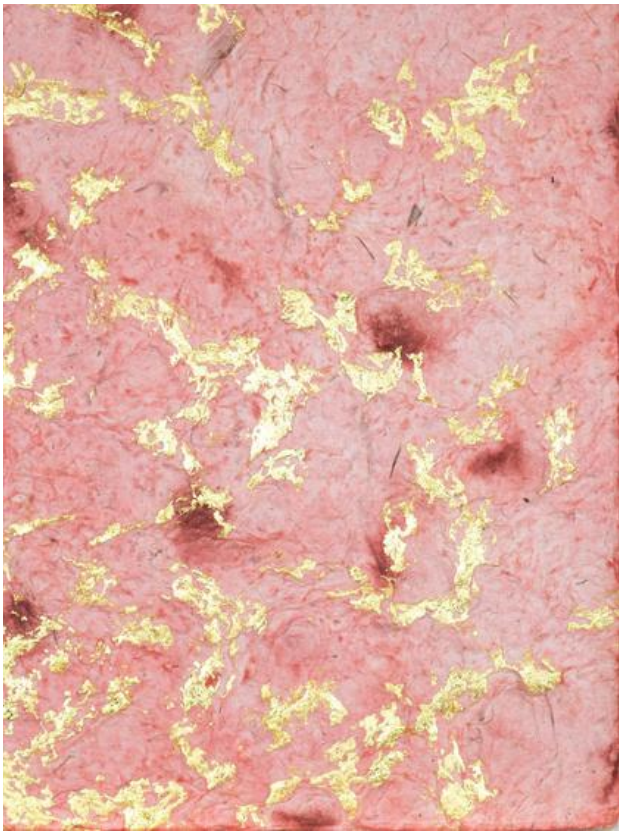
My grandfather had a carpet business, and carpets were very present in my childhood. A carpet in a family home collects memories – stains, pressure marks from furniture, wear and tear. Maybe that connection planted the seed for exploring skin as a collection of memories.
Me working with textiles was inspired by these carpets. And it made me appreciate materials; the savoir-faire that goes into them, learning about the properties of different fabrics. To me, there is incredible beauty in a piece of blank fabric. It taught me the value of white space. This translates to paper. For my practice, the choice of support medium is as important as the paint. I enjoy looking at a blank sheet of paper that is the result of centuries of craftsmanship. It makes me want to do it justice and paint only what's necessary.

Some of your pieces appear almost sculptural or tactile. What attracts you to working with surface and texture in such a physical way?

That has to do with the subject matter. Skin is three dimensional, topographic, so it was a natural evolution.
It's a different kind of practice than painting: more craft-like and planned. It tests my patience, but I learn a lot through it – about materials, mediums, and bonding agents, whether it's Hanji paper, rice glue, or aluminum molds.
And Hanji is more than a surface to paint on – it's also used in conservation, repair, and architecture. It invites physical work.

How does your personal experience with atopic dermatitis affect your artistic vision and emotional engagement with the work?

My life with dermatitis has certainly taught me that things pass and happen in waves. It gets worse, it gets better, then worse again. This is comforting to know and helps me when I struggle creatively.
The process starts from a personal perspective, but I'm looking for universality through practice and abstraction. As I said earlier, it's about getting some beauty out of the ugliness and discomfort, which probably also has to do with overcoming the emotional urgency I felt as a kid when, for example, showing up to boy scout camp with a bag full of creams, ointments and bandages.
I hope the confrontation with my experience – as trivial and insignificant as it may be in the grand scheme of things – keeps my work authentic and reflects the tension between fascination, obsession and frustration.



Christoph Bossart-Lee | Layers | 2025

Sarah Fishbein

I've always been captivated by Pop Art, often finding myself lost in museum exhibits or art books. I was drawn to the bold lines, the emotional punch, the unapologetic drama the artists were trying to convey. I began to experiment in that direction, creating glass lips and hearts using bright color palettes, and eventually added words. I wanted to say something with my work.
While locked down during COVID, my husband pulled out a stack of old romance comic books he had collected and immediately, it was like everything came together. I realized I could merge emotion with expression—pairing what I was feeling with a look, a phrase, a face and the vivid colors and lines of Pop Art. That's when I knew I'd found my direction.

What first drew you to the medium of glass mosaic, and how did you start incorporating Pop Art influences into it?

I discovered mosaics in my early twenties, having grown up in a crafty household, I dabbled in sewing, painting, and other traditional mediums, but thanks to a rainy weekend, I found myself in a local craft store and I stumbled across a book on mosaics. From the moment I cracked my first tile into tiny shards, I knew I'd found my match.
At first, I started making mosaics, using ceramic tiles, on flower pots, tabletops and any surface I could find. I soon tired of traditional mosaic themes, such as flowers, landscapes or decorative patterns. I was craving something with a bit more edge and energy and that helped me transitioned to glass. The colors were bolder, more vibrant, and had a sparkle that resonated with me.

Sarah Fishbein | Violet | 2023

Your work is heavily inspired by 1950s–60s romance comics. What about that era speaks to you emotionally or artistically?

The comics of that time were beautifully drawn and overly dramatic. Over-the-top in the best way. Artists could capture an entire story in just a few panels, expressing everything from heartbreak and longing to joy and resilience. But what I found especially interesting through my research is that many of these stories—centered around women—were actually created by the same men behind Marvel and DC superheroes. So, while the imagery was striking, the narrative and roles were often shaped through a male lens.
That realization made it even more important for me to reclaim and reframe these visuals. I want to flip the script—to tell these stories from the perspective of strong, complex, powerful women. I also weave in themes that never would have appeared in those original comics, like LGBTQ+ representation and characters who defy the era's gender norms. It's about honoring the beauty of the past while rewriting it to reflect a more inclusive, honest, and empowered point of view to match my emotions and feelings for today.
I want people to see themselves in my mosaics, to feel that the emotions and characters reflect something true in their own lives. That's why the visual language of this era was the perfect foundation for my work.

Sarah Fishbein | Enough | 2025

How do you choose the specific moments or expressions to freeze in your mosaics? Is there a storytelling method behind your compositions?

Every mosaic I make starts with a moment from my own life. Before returning to art, I spent years as a video producer—often in male-dominated spaces. Over time, I realized how much silent frustration I was carrying—being talked over, overlooked, and pushed aside. I started keeping a list on my phone—phrases I wished I had said, emotions I was not allowed to express out loud.

Those phrase became the foundation of my work. I pair them with bold, expressive faces that mirror what I was feeling. One piece came from a time I was constantly battling doctors and insurance companies. I had so much anger and the phrase "All I FEEL IS RAGE!" kept repeating in my head. Those words became the basis for a bold, colorful image of a woman with a fierce expression and a single tear. She's not weak—she's powerful, even in her sadness.

My mosaics aren't just about injustice. They're about real moments—being in love, feeling cheeky, proud, or vulnerable. Sometimes they capture quiet slices of life, like a gay couple deciding what's for dinner. Not a protest—just presence. Just being. And to me, that's just as powerful.

Can you describe your process from idea to finished work? How do you select glass, colors, and layout?

Each mosaic I create usually begins with a phrase, an emotion, or a comment that's been living in my head—something I just can't shake. From there, I dive into research, often exploring old comics and vintage styles for inspiration. I start collaging and sketching digitally, building a visual that captures the essence of what I'm feeling. Once the concept feels right, I project the sketch onto a hard substrate, tracing the outline to create the foundation of the mosaic.

My process blends stained glass techniques with traditional mosaic methods. I create a custom glass palette—selecting different types of glass for specific effects: mirrored, metallic, and glitter glass to reflect light, and opaque stained glass for outlines and accents. Every color choice is intentional. I want the eyes to shine, the lips to catch the light—while the background and skin tones take on a quieter, supporting role. Once the palette is set, I hand-cut each piece of glass, starting with the bold black outlines. I use a combination of stained glass tools, mosaic nippers, saws, and grinders to shape and refine even the most difficult cuts. After outlining, I fill in each section with carefully chosen and cut color pieces, layering emotion and precision into every inch.

The final—often overlooked—step is grouting. I hand-dye each grout color to complement the surrounding glass and bring out the vibrancy of every detail. From concept to completion, each mosaic takes around 150 hours of focused, hands-on work.

Your mosaics seem to interact with light in a unique way. How intentional is that aspect of your work?

Glass is a wonderfully dynamic medium—it feels like it has a life of its own. As it interacts with light and its surroundings, it almost becomes a character in the piece. My favorite place to hang a mosaic is across from a wall of windows. Throughout the day, something magical happens: in the morning, the artwork might seem calm and quiet, but as the light shifts, it begins to sparkle. A glint in the eye, a shimmer on the lips, a subtle glow in the background—it's always changing.

My goal is to create work that's truly interactive, something that never looks exactly the same twice. Every piece of glass I use is carefully chosen with this in mind. The eyes are always the centerpiece—they need to draw you in, to hold your attention. Even the black glass, though it doesn't shine, plays a vital role. It acts as the structure—the bold lines that bring everything together. Each element serves a purpose, helping the mosaic come alive in whatever space it lives.

What emotional response do you hope to evoke in viewers when they see your work for the first time?

It's always fascinating to watch people interact with my work. The first reaction is usually a simple "Wow." The second—almost always— "How?" But the moment that stays with me most is when someone steps back, puts a hand to their chest, and you can see they've been emotionally moved. That's when I know the piece has really connected.

I love when people bring their own stories into the mosaic. While my work begins with something personal to me, I'm intentional about leaving space—just enough ambiguity—for others to find their own meaning. What the piece represents to me might be entirely different from what someone else sees, and that's the beauty of it. It becomes their story too.

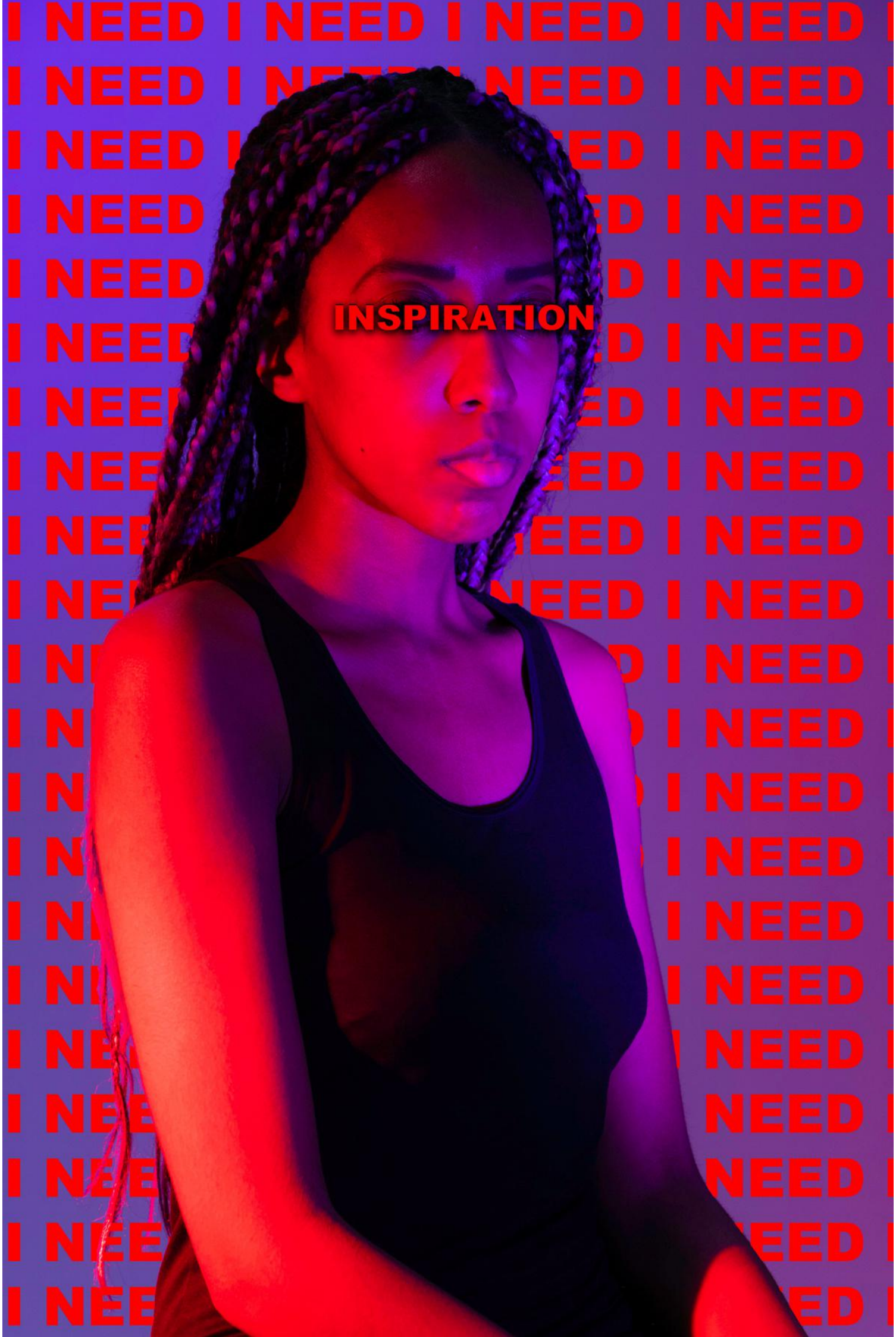
Has your identity or personal life influenced the narratives in your pieces?

My personal life and identity are the foundation of my work. From growing up in a small, blue-collar town in Ohio to navigating a range of jobs and building a career, to marrying my life and business partner and raising our child—each chapter has shaped who I am and the stories I tell through my art. I'm deeply passionate about the resilience of women and the challenges they face every single day. Through my work, I hope to create a world that taps into that inner strength—one that inspires both women and men to push past limitations and step into the fullest version of themselves.

Lorielle Sinclair (b.2002) is a fashion, portrait and fine art photographer raised in Olympia Fields, Illinois and works out of Chicago. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio with a focus in Photography from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and online platforms such as Lenscratch, The Holy Art Gallery, SAIC Galleries, and Mana Contemporary Chicago. Her photographs have been published in magazines and catalogs such as Sarze Magazine and School of the Art Institute of Chicago Photography Department Catalog. Her photography zines are held in collections at the Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection + Archive and Hive Center for the Book Arts.

Project Statement
Throughout her fine art practice, Lorielle Sinclair deals with themes of self identity. She uses her self-portrait images as a journey within the self and this acts as a visual diary that allows her to express emotions to the viewer. Within her self-portraits she deals with how she is moving throughout the world in the present moment, and how different events are impacting her. She uses her self-portraits to heal.

Lorielle Sinclair | Experimentations With My Representation


I NEED
INSPIRATION

Hala Kusiak

Hala Kusiak | Intimate And Free

Your journey began in a place where artistic freedom was limited. Can you describe what it felt like to create under those constraints, and how it shaped your voice today?

Creating under constraints where artistic freedom was limited felt like painting with invisible chains—every brushstroke required not just intention, but caution. For me, this early tension between expression and restriction became a defining force in her artistic evolution.

Hala Kusiak | Mold Me

In such an environment, the canvas was more than a surface—it was a quiet act of resistance. With limited access to materials, mentors, and open critique, each creation carried a deeper weight. Art became a language of survival, of encoded emotion, and of dreams that couldn't be spoken aloud.

This shaped my voice into one that is bold, deliberate, and fiercely symbolic. My work today is not only visually striking but emotionally charged—imbued with layered meanings that speak to freedom, identity, and the power of the unseen. My signature use of intense, balanced color and symbolic detail reflects an artist who once had to say everything without saying too much.

Now, my journey across borders—geographically and creatively—has transformed that early silence into a global voice that invites others to explore, feel, and awaken.

What was the turning point that led you to leave Baghdad and pursue your creative life abroad?

The turning point that led me to leave Baghdad and pursue my creative life abroad was a powerful convergence of inner restlessness and external limitations. Living in a place where expression was often constrained by societal norms, political tensions, and limited opportunities for artistic growth, I began to feel the walls closing in around my creativity.

There came a moment when the silence imposed on my art no longer felt survivable—it became clear that to grow as an artist and as a woman, I needed to step beyond the borders of comfort and tradition. It wasn't a single event, but rather a slow-burning realization: that my voice, my

Hala Kusiak | Enjoy It While It'S Yours

vision, and my freedom would only truly flourish in a place where art could breathe without fear.
Leaving Baghdad was both a personal liberation and a creative rebirth. It meant walking away from the familiar, but it also meant stepping into possibility. In the journey abroad, I didn't just find new colors and audiences—I found the unfiltered version of myself. That decision continues to shape my work today: art that bridges cultures, defies silence, and empowers others to claim their space and story.

Many of your works explore female empowerment and vulnerability. What does "emotional honesty" mean to you in your practice?

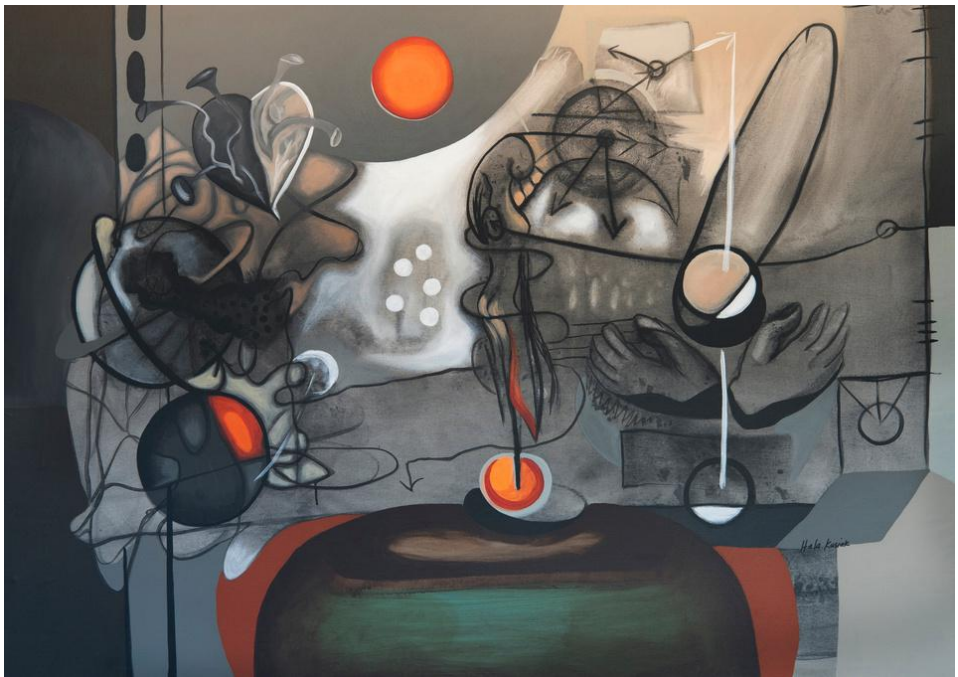
For me, emotional honesty means creating without a mask—letting the raw, unfiltered truths of being a woman pour onto the canvas, no matter how uncomfortable or complex they may be. It's about honoring both strength and softness, power and pain, without needing to choose one over the other. In my practice, emotional honesty is not just a theme—it's a commitment. It means painting the moments that society often asks women to hide: heartbreak, anger, longing, self-doubt, and resilience. It's the quiet courage of exposing the inner world in full color, knowing that vulnerability is not weakness, but the foundation of authentic connection.
This honesty is visible in my bold contrasts, layered textures, and symbolic motifs—each work acting as both confession and conversation. For me, emotional honesty is how healing begins. It's how silence is broken, how strength is redefined, and how viewers—especially women—are invited to see their own reflection in my story.

Which of your works feels most personal to you, and why?

I will mention 2 artworks, but there are more. "Our Monster" because it helps me realize the good side and the bad side in myself and others and allows me to understand that the bad side can come across so sweet sometimes! We should be careful!
"Come To My Bed" because it is such a powerful feeling when you are intimate with the one you are in love with.

How does mentorship influence your own growth as an artist?

I'm deeply grateful to my art mentor, Boris Garbe, owner of Mills Art Gallery in Orlando, FL. Boris has been more than a teacher—he's been a true guide and friend on my artistic journey. He inspired me, believed in me, and taught me how to express myself, present my work with confidence, and grow both creatively and professionally. From sharing the ins and outs of the art world to opening the doors of his gallery as a space to learn, explore, and simply be—his support has meant the world to me. I carry his wisdom with me every step of the way.



Hala Kusiak | We Will Meet Again

Sanjay Nicolas Gill

Your work often features inflatable, shiny figures. What fascinates you about the aesthetics of balloons, inflatables, and shiny surfaces? What emotional or symbolic meaning do they have for you?

What fascinates me about these materials is their paradoxical nature: they appear light and almost weightless, yet they possess a tangible physical presence, occupying space and casting shadows. The shiny surfaces act like armor—they mirror light and gaze alike, deflecting as much as they reveal. For me, they symbolize what we present to the outside world: a shimmering shell that both protects and piques curiosity. Emotionally, they embody the tension between vulnerability and self-protection.

Masks and anonymity appear repeatedly in your series.

Sanjay Nicolas Gill | Amy

How do you view the relationship between identity and anonymity in the digital age, and how is this reflected in your images?

In the digital age, the boundaries between what we reveal and what we conceal are increasingly blurred. For me, masks represent this ambivalence: they allow for both intimacy and distance at the same time. In my images, faces are often anonymous, almost childlike—never fully graspable. The masks in my work serve as both protection and invitation—they preserve intimacy, yet still let light and emotion shine through.
"Amy" is a classic portrait that captures this perfectly: we sense her vibrant inner world without her fully revealing herself. Her beauty is immediately apparent, and we project countless wonderful thoughts onto her—but whether these are true remains a mystery. Much like carefully curated online profiles, we see a fascinating surface whose true depth remains elusive.

You describe how life is sometimes "too heavy or too easy to leave uncommented." Can you describe a moment when you felt this tipping point and how it translated into an image?

My work always begins with my own photographs—many taken during vacations or weddings, moments of pure lightness. I capture them so I can draw on this "preserved light" during darker times, reminding myself of the richness life offers, both inside and out. My aim isn't to drown in nostalgia, but to lift myself up when my spirit feels heavy. I think many people forget this, overwhelmed by daily stress and unmet expectations.
That's why I anonymize my deeply personal photos with shiny surfaces and masks, allowing me to share them without exposing their intimacy. For me, it's less about a dramatic tipping point and more about an ongoing visual dialogue—between lightness and weight, past and present.

Sanjay Nicolas Gill | Assini

Your practice seems like a collection of "small escapes." What kinds of escapes—mental, physical, emotional—do your works represent? Do you have a favorite "escape fragment"?

My 'little escapes' are quite diverse: sometimes I get lost in the sky and clouds while flying a kite, sometimes on the beach when the waves are breaking endlessly, or sometimes when meeting people or travelling. For me, there isn't just one favourite moment, but lots of bits and pieces that come together to form a mosaic – made up of retreat and encounter, contemplation and adventure.

You commute between Pretoria and Berlin. How does this constant movement or the tension between two homes influence your creative process or your choice of subject matter?

For years, I've traveled back and forth between various places in Africa and Berlin. This broadens my perspective and constantly recalibrates my worldview.
For me, there aren't really two homes—Berlin is my base, the place where many close friends live and which has shaped me over decades. Because I'm always coming and going, I notice the city's changes much more than those who are here every day.
Africa, on the other hand, represents chaos and joie de vivre despite adversity, creativity and spiritual connection despite often reactionary structures. There, I witness awakening and innovation born from profound inequality and injustice.
Still, I am an expat, living a privileged life and able to leave at any time. This creates a sense of distance and isolation, which I try to bridge through this series.
"Assini," for example, was created on a beach in Côte d'Ivoire. I spent a year there, but my French is poor and without the language, it's hard to truly immerse yourself in a culture. That's why this figure—a warrior-like, almost archaic being—is so closely tied to that place for me. She embodies all the impressions and feelings I absorbed there.

Iridescent colors and luminosity play a central role. How do you choose your color palettes and textures? Do you ? associate certain shades with certain emotions or memories?

My color palettes emerge intuitively, in the moment. Even as a child, I was fascinated by puddles of water with shimmering oil—I could spend hours stirring them, watching the colors and water mix and the surface constantly change. This fascination with the mutable, the amorphous, and the accidental has stayed with me.
With texture, it was important to me to make the supernatural tangible through this kind of synthetic polymer — these entities no longer originate from our everyday world. "Jozi" is such a being, super-artificial in a playful, futuristic environment. The bubble, as a key ethereal element, provides an important counterpoint to the material figure. It seems to give delicate, tangible form to the invisible—an energy or aura surrounding Jozi. After decades as an art director, such an intuitive color sense is also, of course, a whisper of experience.
Anything illuminated—like oversized neon signs—has always had a magical pull on me. Perhaps this comes from a formative childhood memory: my father once hung a giant, glowing roll of gum drops in our small apartment. It was far too big for our flat, but it always radiated a cheerful, almost magical atmosphere. Impressions like these continue to shape my love of bright colors and shimmering surfaces.

Your characters hover between childlikeness and distance. How do you hope viewers relate to these figures? Should they project their own stories into them?

Absolutely. I see my figures as projection surfaces—they are intentionally anonymous and open, so that everyone can discover their own feelings, memories, or stories within them. The blend of childlikeness and distance is meant to invite viewers to encounter themselves: their own need for protection, but also for connection. I'm happy when viewers see themselves reflected in my work—or perhaps even experience a moment of lightness.

Sanjay Nicolas Gill | Jozi

Frank van Groen

Your photographic journey began with a radical shift from law to visual storytelling. What sparked that transformation, and how did your first trips to Indonesia shape your artistic path?

After completing my first state examination in law, I came to a point where I asked myself whether I could really realize myself as a person on this chosen path. A profession is always more than just the content, it also immerses you in a world that belongs to it. I came to the conclusion that I am a person who needs a lot of freedom and therefore independence, who likes to inspire people to cross boundaries in perception and thinking ... and who likes to communicate. The image as a means of communication and its immense depth effect seemed to me to be exactly the right medium for this and so I embarked on the path to photography.

Frank van Groen | Related

I started with an internship with an advertising photographer, but ended this after 6 months because I was longing for more. That was not satisfying me at all. I wanted to go off and do something on my own. Then I decided to fly to Java & Sumatra in Indonesia for 2 months, mainly to photograph orangutans, the Mentawai Indians and a bit of the country and its people. So I started very early with a project in which I was drawn to nature and encountered other worlds. I looked deep into the eyes of orangutan babies, met full-grown orangs in the jungle and spent a few days with people from a completely different culture who are totally connected to nature, only to realize in the end that many we do have the same.

This idea of overcoming foreignness in favor of closeness and familiarity, and therefore connection, is a thought that has often accompanied me in my freelance photography ever since. The experiences, encounters and insights that I had with my camera in Indonesia had created something like an inner foundation that I could always refer back to when things didn't go as they should in contract photography. It always gave me support in bad times because I had discovered why I actually wanted to do photography, to work on these kind of projects.

In your early work, you focused on Orangutans and the Mentawai people. What drew you to these subjects, and how did you approach them with respect and authenticity?

I can't really say for sure, how it came up to my mind then! It was more of a feeling at the beginning. When I thought about what subject I should devote myself to photographically, orangutans immediately came to my mind. Perhaps because I had read an article about human rights for great apes during my studies and found the legal idea very exciting. But I remember, that it was no question for me that I wanted to visit the Orangutans - and not Chimpanzees or Gorillas. Perhaps because Indonesia appealed to me as a country and the Orangutans are only native there.
But what certainly also played a part in the choice of the two "themes" is the fact that topics relating to endangered animal species or groups of people have always attracted my attention.
These issues have always stirred my sense of justice, which is why I had already studied law.
While I was photographing, I always tried very hard to hold back as much as possible and only take pictures when I felt it was OK to do so. After all, with my camera I'm something of an intruder in the private sphere and so I tend to hold back until a level of trust has been established instead of immediately thinking only about my photos. Doesn't matter if I photograph people or animals. And since I didn't have a job to do, I wasn't under any pressure to deliver certain results.

You've mentioned that perspective changes open the door to new ways of seeing. How does this idea manifest in your portrait work today?

This statement was a very universal one, that is something of a life motto in all areas of life & work. When I adopt a different perspective - whether physically with my camera or mentally with a different point of view - then I also see different facets. This approach is particularly evident in my current portrait series "related", in which I am primarily concerned with raising awareness of the common history of origin of all people in order to promote much more empathy and understanding among people, regardless of which culture they come from. The idea of my project is, underlined by a Oxford Study published in the Scinece magazin in 2022, that all humans are related to each other. And if you take this point of view, you maybe are looking more at the connecting element rather than the dividing element. It could encourage more togetherness. But this guiding principle also applies to my other works, which are not portraits. I always like to communicate different points of view, because it expands perception and does justice to the complexity of many things. As you can see, it is again a parallel to jurisprudential thinking.

Can you tell us more about your collaboration with your wife on the Norway project? How did working together influence the visual language of the book?

We had both wanted to discover Norway for a long time, independently of each other. When we made our first trip there, we hadn't been a couple for very long and were far from married. But we had already worked together and Hanne had been my assistant for a while on my advertising and corporate assignments. The decision to produce an illustrated book came during our travels because we both felt there was a huge discrepancy between the Norway depicted in the vast majority of illustrated books and travel guides and the Norway we traveled to. Norway has such an incredibly diverse landscape that is not limited to a few well-known glaciers and fjords. We wanted to create an illustrated book that would create a comprehensive portrait of Norway off the beaten track. My wife and I had the same vision and went hand in hand in the visual realization. Sometimes I just photographed a little more wide-angle and my wife a little more telephoto, but actually the entire book, from the creation of the photos to the realization of the book, was a great joint hand-in-hand result, which once again exemplifies our joint work and also relationship, that we even already have had in our early time together. I think, this good and team-based partnership has created an absolut great individual looking book that was sold out in between 8 month worldwide.

You've photographed across diverse environments—from Sumatran jungles to Scandinavian landscapes. How do you adapt your creative vision to such contrasting contexts?

Oh, that's quite simple! I am very, very flexible! Joking aside, I'm always interested in discovering and immersing myself in another physical or spiritual world, getting to know it and letting others participate in a certain way through my pictures, in my discoveries, my insights and also my feelings that landscapes, encounters or insights have triggered in me, in the hope of enriching people through my work. And in the end, it doesn't matter which country or which people, animals, etc. I seek out and photograph. For me, it's always about getting to know, the connection, and expressing it with my photography as long as I myself have a connection towards the subject.

What inspired your "auenblicke" calendar series, and how important is it for you to connect with your local community through your art?

At the time, I wanted to devote myself more intensively to a

Frank van Groen | Related

Frank van Groen | Related

topic and initially planned to travel to China to visit the Mosuo, a matriarchal society. But then I abandoned these plans. It would certainly have been a great project, a great trip and wonderful pictures would certainly have been taken. But the question of what this actually had to do with me slowed me down. Nothing, of course! The exoticism of the image motifs would certainly have had its effect here again, but I wanted to somehow take on a completely different photographic and content-related challenge. I decided to photograph a project that had to do with me and my origins. And that was a photographic exploration of a small meadow landscape in the south of Düsseldorf on the Rhine. My parents live and I grew up on the edge of this meadow landscape. At the beginning, it was really difficult to find good motifs that would take the viewer into my world of thought. But over time, I connected more and more with the landscape on my tours early in the morning before sunrise or in the evening at sunset and more and more motifs opened up. I began to see more and more and so, over a period of 2 years, I actually spent time there again and again taking photographs, accompanied by memories, feelings, smells and images in my head from my childhood and youth. I actually wanted to make an illustrated book at the time and show this area in all seasons. Unfortunately, there was no or hardly any snow during my working period there, so I had only one snow motif. This gave rise to the idea of a calendar, which I then produced myself. There is also a limited art edition of special motifs called "Heimat". The calendar was a local project that far exceeded my expectations. I had little local support, and I had to manage the project all by myself and also pre-finance the printing. I had 1000 calendars printed, which is really a lot for such a local project, which also tends to be of interest only in this part of Düsseldorf. But the majority of the calendars were sold in just a few sales outlets and with a lot of personal commitment and were so successful that I produced another calendar the following year. In the end, it was exactly the right topic for me because it reconnected me with my homeland and the people. The calendars contained motifs of this landscape that most local people had never seen or perceived before, especially, of course, because the light and thus the appearance of the landscape differed from what most people see on their daytime walks. They liked to see their well known location from a new point of view and that was nice to see, how this calendar brought up a lot of dialogs about this area and my work with the local people over there. I think it's important to stay connected where you come from and thus create a solid basis.

Many of your portraits seem deeply rooted in nature—almost literally, as in the "Related" series. What is the conceptual message behind these blended visuals of people and forest?

My project "related" is a series of pictures with portraits of people from originally very different cultural backgrounds connected with a second picture plane consisting of individual protruding tree roots. As a rule, a person's "roots" are initially shaped by their family, home and culture. In addition, each person forms their own individual inner roots through their very personal path through life.
Our own "roots" usually provide support, orientation and a sense of belonging. They connect us through a common culture, a common language, common themes or even a common value system.
However, "roots", as much as they can connect us, also always have a divisive side. People often find it difficult to understand "others", for example those with a culture that is foreign to them, and the more foreign the other person or their world of thought appears, the more distance arises; misunderstandings and conflicts are often a consequence of this divisive side of different "roots".
But we are all human beings and have similar basic needs, regardless of our origins. After all, we all spring from the nature of this earth and most likely have a common ancestry, common roots, so to speak.
A study by the Big Data Institute at the University of Oxford was published in the journal Science in 2022, and in this study the most extensive family tree of mankind was created. The result supports the thesis:
Our genetic material not only determines our individual characteristics, but also tells the story of our ancestry and origins.
In the study, more than 3,500 individual genome sequences from 215 populations of modern and up to 100,000-year-old DNA samples from all parts of the world were recorded and analyzed using AI. The mapping shows the relationships of populations living today and allows conclusions to be drawn about common ancestors.
I really like the idea that we are all somehow related to each other and perhaps it also encourages more openness and respect towards everyone, no matter how individual and otherwise rooted this person is, because we all have a common element that connects us, the common ancestry of a human family.
This project was originally initiated by the request for an exhibition with the theme "roots", an interdisciplinary art project in Düsseldorf and the invitation to tender for another exhibition "rooted" from the Berufsverband freier Fotografen und Filmemacher e.V. (BFF) as part of the international Photoszene Köln Festival. My project "related" was then the result of my exploration of the theme of roots and being rooted.

Paulina Czajkowska

Born in Bydgoszcz, Poland; after graduating the local art school she went on to study painting in Łódź.

Project Statement
She paints and sculpts abstraction as a way for emotional expression, finding it's best to do so using wire and handmade paper.

Paulina Czajkowska | Carousel | 2024

Alexis Lovely

You work at the intersection of fashion, technology, music, and gaming. How do you approach blending these different disciplines into one cohesive artistic language?

Alexis Lovely | V

I'm able to approach blending these disciplines through cutting edge modalities like AR/VR. I recently presented my first solo installation that combines all of the above entitled "First of Many."

What drew you to mixed reality experiences, and how do you see this medium evolving in the next few years?

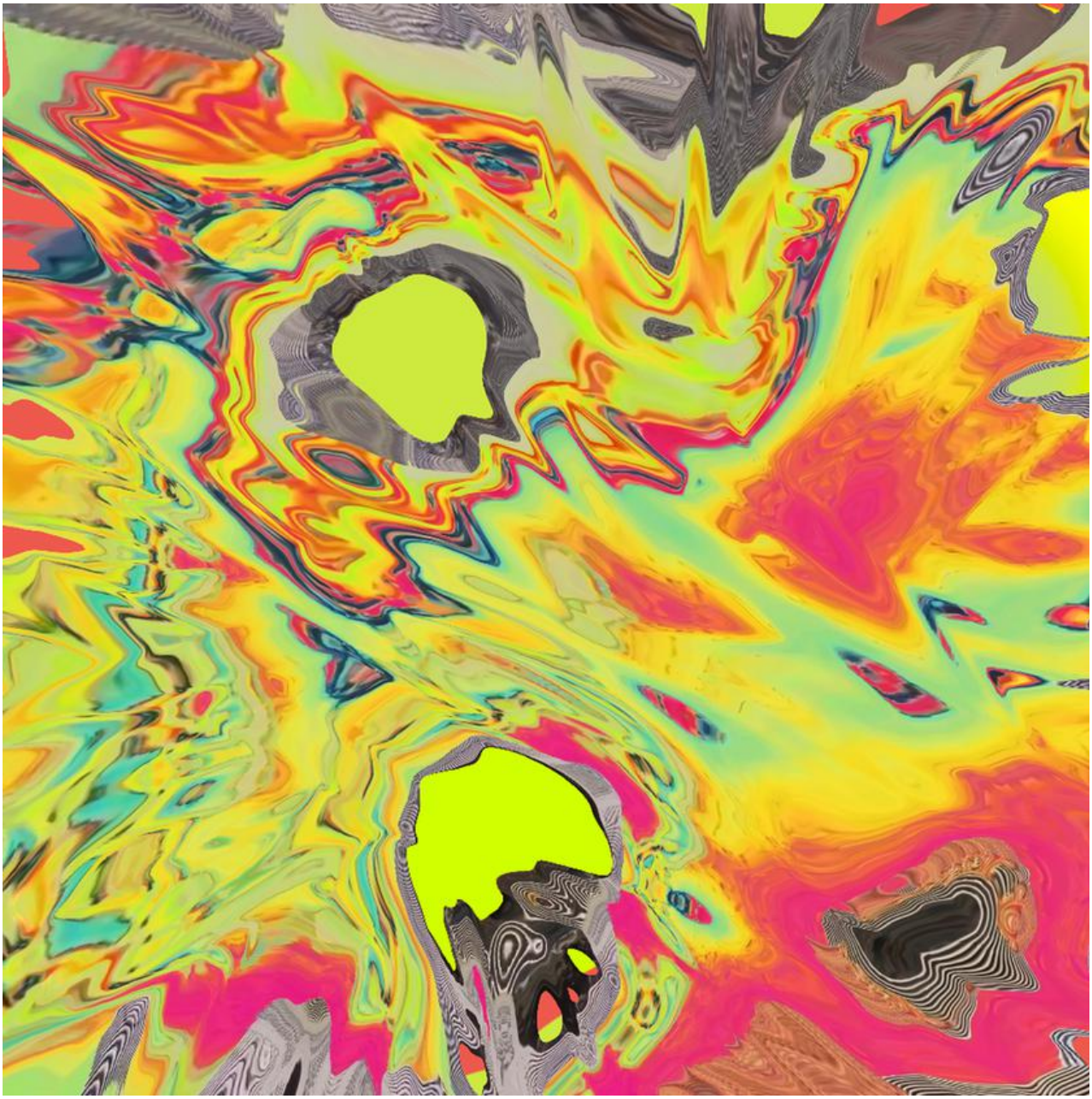
I was drawn to mixed reality in my search for presenting my mixed media art in an innovative way. In the next few years I see the immersive capabilities improving tremendously and it being the go-to for independent creatives to put their art on display.

Can you tell us more about your collaboration with adidas neo or Reebok Impact? How did those projects come together creatively?

The adidas neo collaboration is unique in that it's the first ever collection designed on Snapchat and brought to life at the Adidas HQ in Germany. I designed a kit as well as my own 1/1 cloud foam QT racer.

Your works have been featured in Times

Alexis Lovely | Sublime



Square and Art Basel — how does public or large-scale digital exposure shape your creative decisions?

Public facing opportunities do play a role in my creative process but are not a deciding factor when it comes to which projects i choose to pursue.

How do you navigate the balance between commercial collaborations and your personal artistic voice?

I follow my creative compass when it comes to navigating the two. It's important to me to keep my artistic integrity and i do that by remembering who and what i do this for.

What role does interactivity play in your digital wearables and in-game assets?

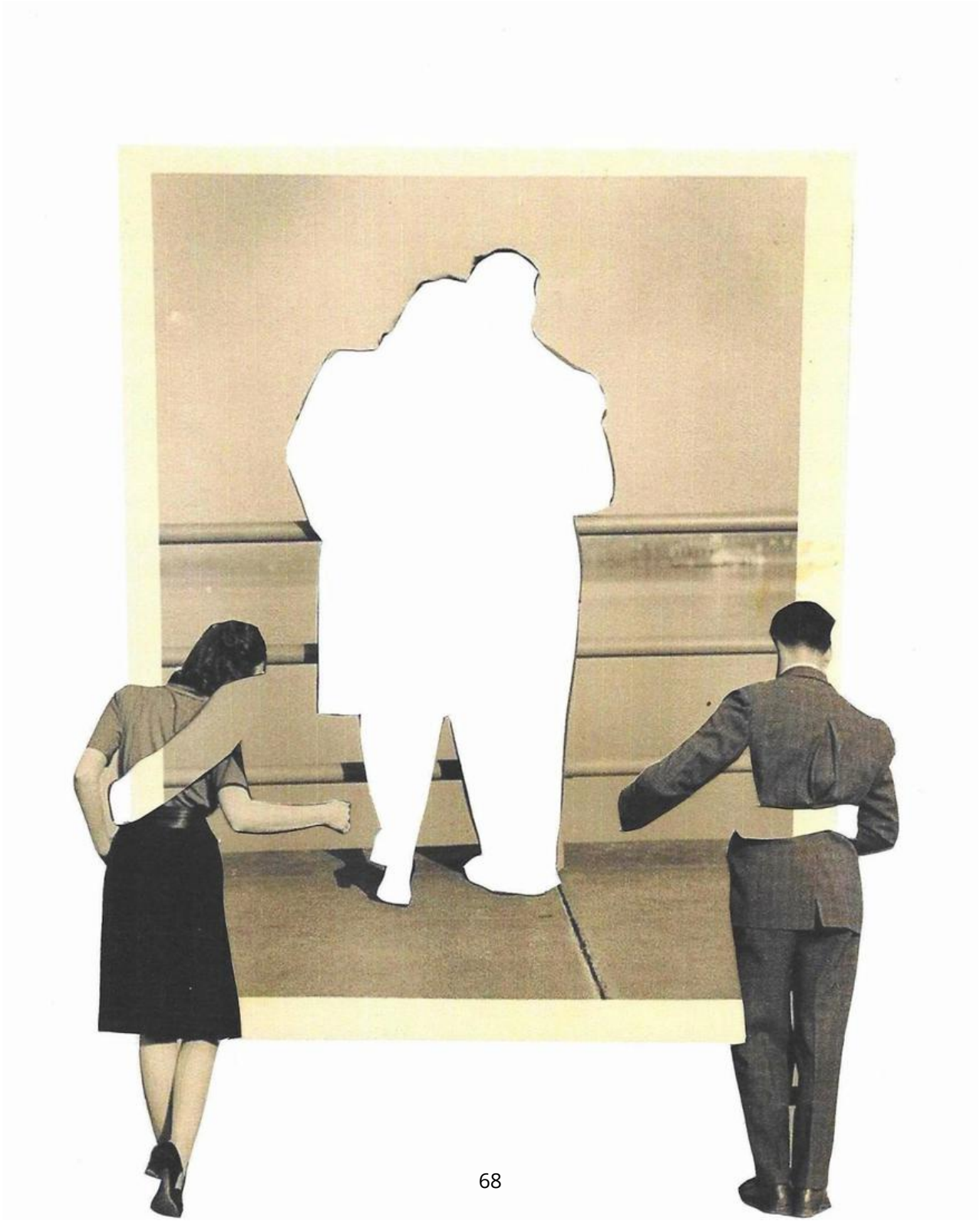
Interactivity is paramount with my wearables.

How does your background in fine arts influence the way you design for immersive and gamified environments?

My background contributes to the abstract nature of the art that fills the environments i create.

Ottavia Marchiori (Italy, 1980).
Editorial illustrator | Visual artist | Collage Maker.
She discovered the practice of collage when she was a child and then approached it again during her artistic path, electing it as the privileged form of expression of her own artistic production. She loves the playfulness, the versatility, the democratic nature of this art, the possibility that it offers to create, through the dialogue between elements, a kaleidoscope of infinite visual narratives. She collaborates with magazines such as the Italian women's weekly Donna Moderna. Her works, aimed at a constant openness to experimentation, are spontaneous, surreal, colourful, with a distinctly pop feel, often permeated with humour: they reflect her vision of life and her approach to it.

Project Statement
In a world dominated by digital, for Ottavia making analog collage is a powerful instrument of resistance to the role of passivity imposed upon us by certain technology: she firmly believes that recovering the taste for manual skills through art can allow us to stimulate our brains and to apply a critical and dynamic approach to reality.



Ottavia Marchiori | Horizon | 2025

Ottavia Marchiori | Trying to heal | 2025

Alisa Chernova Art

Your work blends psychology and art. How has your background in medicine and Gestalt therapy influenced your approach to painting?

My artistic thinking grew at the intersection of body and soul. Medicine taught me to see the human being not only from the outside but through vulnerability — to read pain as a metaphor for inner conflict. Gestalt therapy, in turn, gave me the language for that conflict: a language of images, sensations, and unfinished stories.
When I paint, it's as if I'm peeling away emotional layers from the canvas — like listening to a patient, but instead of words, there are textures, shadows, lines. My paintings are not diagnoses — they are acknowledgements: "I see you, even if you don't fully understand yourself yet."

Alisa Chernova Art | Despair

Your paintings "Anxiety" and "Despair" are part of a series inspired by Freud's theories. Why Freud? And how does his work inspire your creative search?

Freud isn't just psychoanalysis — he's the courage to look where we usually avert our eyes: into what's repressed, painful, invisible.
I've always been drawn to hidden impulses, suppressed emotions, the internal conflict between who we are and who we're supposed to be. The series "In the Company of Sigmund Freud" is a visual dive into the unconscious, where anxiety, despair, and isolation are not demons but shadows of the self. I don't want to silence them — I want to give them voice.
For me, the canvas becomes a space of free association, where every brushstroke feels like a Freudian slip.

What role does color psychology play in your creative process? Can you share how certain colors are chosen to reflect emotional states?

Color is never just an aesthetic decision — it's an

emotional code. It speaks before the subject does, and often louder than the form.
When I choose a color, I don't ask, "What looks beautiful?" I ask, "What does this emotion feel like?" For example, my depiction of anxiety isn't the traditional blue — it's a muted greenish-grey with rust undertones, like something that scrapes from within. Despair, for me, is a deep, dried-blood burgundy — clotted, heavy, like an old wound.
I work with my palette as if it's a therapeutic tool: until the color matches the emotion, the painting doesn't breathe.

Many of your works visualize inner struggle and emotional pain. How do you reconcile artistic expression with a therapeutic intention?

I don't set out to "heal" the viewer. But I do hope they feel seen — in their fear, in their brokenness, in their complexity.
When we recognize our own shadow, it loses some of its power. Art can be a mirror or a window. Often, it's both.
My paintings are invitations to an inner dialogue. If that dialogue begins — then perhaps that is already a kind of therapy.

You often portray intense feelings like fear, hopelessness, or internal conflict. Is the act of creating these works also a form of personal healing for you?

Absolutely. I never paint just because something looks "interesting." Every work reflects an emotional state I've lived — or am still living through.
The canvas becomes a safe space to speak without words. A place where I can be fragile, angry, silent, lost.
Sometimes, when I finish a painting, I realize something inside me has shifted — like after a deep therapy session. Except here, the therapist is color and texture.

What does your daily artistic practice look like, and how do you integrate therapy or psychological insight into your creative proces?

I don't follow a rigid routine. There are long periods of thinking, reading, absorbing... and then one night when everything pours out at once.
I often borrow techniques from Gestalt — working with bodily sensations, inner images, spontaneous associations. Sometimes I begin with the question: "Where does it hurt?" and instead of answering in words, I answer with brushstrokes.
Each painting is like a case study. But the "client" is a hidden part of myself.

Alisa Chernova Art | Anxiety

Your artworks are often presented in raw, natural environments — among rocks, ruins, and landscapes. Why do you choose these spaces to showcase your work?

Nature is my silent co-creator. I photograph my finished pieces against mountains, cliffs, or ruins — not for decoration, but for resonance.
Cliffs that have endured centuries of wind, burning sun, and crashing waves symbolize inner strength and resilience. I want my emotionally intense works to lean on that backdrop — so the viewer can feel: yes, there is pain, but also the possibility to endure.
But sometimes, the landscape must reflect collapse. I photographed the painting "Despair" in the ruins of an old house. Because despair is not just pain — it's the collapse of hope, of will, of belief itself. It needed a setting where even the walls were broken.
I don't place my art in nature — I let it merge with it. The background becomes part of the message. And sometimes, wind, silence, and stone are the best curators.

Selvi Ilhan was born in 1967 in Hasandede, Kırıkkale. She graduated from Anadolu University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Ceramics in 1994. She completed her master's degree in 1999 at the same university in the Institute of Social Sciences, majoring in Ceramics. She continues her artistic work in her ceramics studio in Ankara.

Project Statement
Clay is the medium through which I explore the emotional depth of form and texture. My work is rooted in a deep appreciation for tradition, yet I constantly seek to reinterpret it through contemporary perspectives. As an artist and educator, I find inspiration in the silent language of objects — how surfaces can speak, how form can whisper stories of memory, identity, and place. Each piece I create is an act of dialogue between material and meaning. I allow the spontaneity of the process to guide me, embracing imperfection and transformation as part of the creative journey. While my academic background has given me technical grounding, it is my years of experience in the studio and classroom that continually shape and expand my artistic voice. Through my work, I hope to evoke curiosity and invite viewers to reflect on the emotional resonance that a simple shape or texture can carry. For me, ceramics is not just a discipline, but a lifelong conversation between hand, earth, and soul.

Selvi Ilhan | Crossed Forms

Selvi Ilhan | Clouds of Shanghai

Alexa Gallo

Your bio describes your work as a "love letter to life's quiet moments." Can you share what moments in daily life inspire you the most?

I have always been drawn to the small, intimate moments in life, the mundane and habitual activities that connect us all. Making morning coffee, calling a friend to catch up, sharing a cigarette with a stranger, and just sitting next to someone in silence, all inspire me. I enjoy memorializing these experiences through my work in an effort for them to last forever. A singular moment stretched through time untouched by the chaotic beauty of life.

Your oil painting "5:51am" captures a surreal yet familiar morning scene. What does that specific time represent to you?

5:51am represents the sunrise during a spring day. The weather is just starting to get warmer while the days get longer. The piece including two peoples arms folded in lazy embrace works in tandem with the title 5:51am to create a warm morning scene being experienced between two lovers. They have the whole day ahead of them but at this moment they have each other.

Alexa Gallo | 5:51am

Flowers appear in multiple works, often juxtaposed with darker elements. What role does nature play in your narrative?

Flowers are beautiful and delicate, but can be very powerful. During the Victorian era, flowers were assigned meanings and were used to pass messages. I use flowers in my work to further the message I am trying to convey. The delicateness of the flowers juxtaposes a violent scene inviting the viewer to look deeper into the piece and its meaning.

How do you approach blending traditional media like woodblock printmaking with painting and sculpture?

Material plays a very important role in my work. My work includes oil paintings, woodcuts, and wood and found object sculptures. The ideas I am exploring are directly influenced by the medium I choose to use. Soft elements like skin and light are pushed to states even more supple by my applied blending techniques with oil paint,

while the rough surface of wood directly opposes softer subject matter. The intensity that accompanies carving layers of wood is an almost mutilating action. I enjoy toying with how softer subjects such as flowers and the human form interact with the rigid material of wood. In my piece Forget Me Not, the figure is painted in oil emphasizing the suppleness of the human form surrounded by woodcut forget-me-not flowers, another delicate subject matter that is instead being created with a hard, rigid material.

Many of your works feature hands — sometimes isolated, sometimes intertwined. What draws you to this subject?

I believe hands can be as expressive as faces. Hands have the ability to direct the narrative of each piece. A hand can be strained and show anger or distress. They can be soft and relaxed to show comfort or sadness. Hands are tools that have the ability to create or destroy worlds. They are used in spiritual and religious practices, art and revolutions. Hands are our unspoken language that unites us no matter who we are.

Do you work on multiple pieces at once, or focus on one artwork from start to finish?

I tend to work on one piece at a time. I find that my pieces change and grow as I sit with them. I enjoy giving my all to one piece allowing it to form into what it wants to be. This can be meditative for me and while I'm sitting with one work I will get inspiration for other pieces.

Alexa Gallo | Forget Me Not

Alexa Gallo | Interconnectivity

Which artist or movement has most influenced your practice and why?

I am influenced by old master artists who have studied and mastered the painting of light. Edward Hopper is one of the masters of light that I have been drawn to that influences my work. His technique of creating shapes with light and shadow makes the composition dance across the canvas. The color and tones of his lighting furthers the narrative by creating mood. The intense lighting of Caravaggio's work and the expressions he captures in his figures, have also had a heavy influence in my work. I have always enjoyed the stories behind his works and how he was able to capture raw human emotion.

Massimiliano Bruno Calabresi

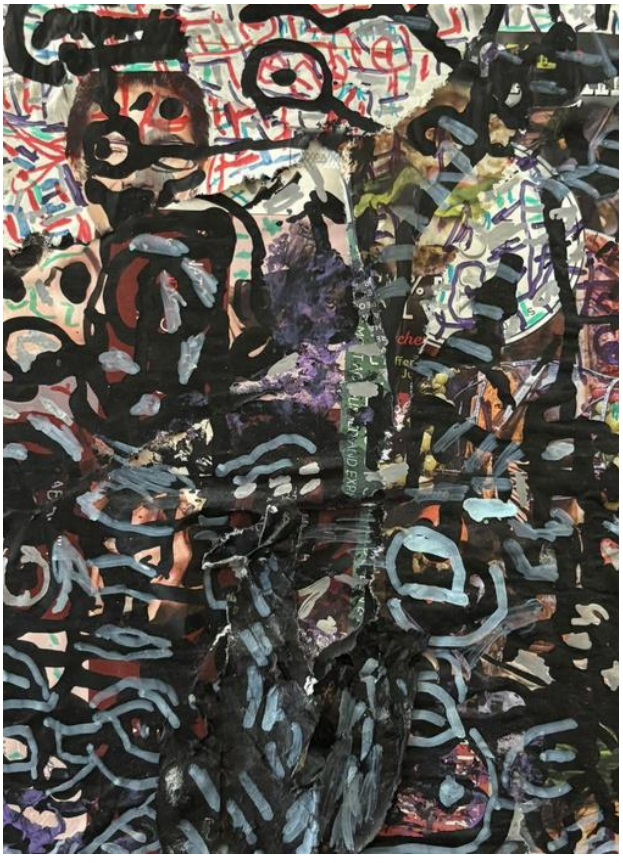
I am Massimiliano Bruno Calabresi, and I come from Terracina, an Italian town near Rome. Currently I am attending a Master's course in Graphic Arts at Frosinone's Academy of Fine Arts. One of the techniques that I enjoy the most is woodcut but also drypoint on recycled materials such tetrapak. With those techniques I depict places of my childhood, to bring back old memories and emotions from my past. Through my art, I try to elaborate the loss of my loved ones and the love I received from them. I also draw in digital and I'm currently working on various illustrations with animals in human roles. The purpose of these works is to conduct a critical analysis of the society through the use of satire. My works have been published in English and American magazines. Furthermore, I exhibited my works in many Italian cities, as Naples, Rome, Florence and Milan.

Massimiliano Bruno Calabresi | Turkish checkers

Massimiliano Bruno Calabresi | Turkish coffee

— *Interview*

Bryn Frederickson



Can you tell us more about how your early experiences with art shaped your current style and approach?

My mother was a big influence on me growing up. She was a docent at an art gallery and I was brought to appreciate the dedication, emotion, and imagination the artists form in their work. I took art classes in elementary school, middle school, and high school. I learned new techniques like cross- stitching, collage, and shading. It brought my self- esteem to a mountain level when the teacher gave me a good grade on a project. The teachers gave me helpful advice by showing contrast in my work and knowing how to use paint and pastel.

Your work features rich layers, textures, and graffiti-like marks—what inspires this aesthetic?

Other avant garde artists like Basquiat inspire my niche by adding layers. I like to mesmerize the audience with my skill in making my portraits more 3D.

How do you choose the materials you use, such as magazine paper, acrylic paint, or textured surfaces?

When I have random advertisement junk mail

laying around, I scribble acrylic markers on them, add dark overtones with the ink dropper, and add paint as a cohesive to add bold color. I also glue the magazine paper on the canvas first and splatter paint like Jackson Pollack.

What emotions or ideas do you hope viewers take away from your artworks?

They will be my jovial moods when I add kinetic lines with the acrylic markers and somber introspection when I decorate the dark ink faces that grimace on the portrait. The viewers can feel the tension when I color the canvas with incendiary oranges and reds.

You mentioned becoming humble through critique. Can you share an example of feedback that influenced your practice?

It skyrocketed my confidence when my mom wanted to frame a pastel portrait I completed as a senior in high school. That gave the message I had talent. I used to go around towns like Kennett Square and West Chester to show people at an art event a folder of my work and amaze them with my unique style. I also got a flattering comment two years ago at a bar where I lady said, “your style reminds me of Keith Harring.” I showed her photos of my work in my picture folder on my old iPhone.

What role does Instagram or social media play in your artistic journey today?

Instagram has been a godsend to me. When I post photos of my paints and drawings, I amaze my friends and other followers of my distinct style. I have been getting support of friends giving me helpful advice on how to network and take initiative.

Your artist statement emphasizes discipline—how does that reflect in your creative process?

Discipline is important because that trait keeps you busy and focused. You learn how to manage time and not procrastinate. I learn how to juggle a strict schedule with handling a job, taking care of a pet, and having the free time to complete my art projects.

Andrada Leyla

I’m Andrada Leyla, surreal artist working primarily with gouache to explore themes of consciousness, symbolism, nature astrology. Lately my work has been deeply intuitive, symbolic, and emotionally driven. Much of my creative process happens in the quiet hours. By day, I work a full-time job; by night, I step into my role as an artist. Time has taught me to value stillness, symbolism, and the power of showing up for your craft—especially when no one is watching.

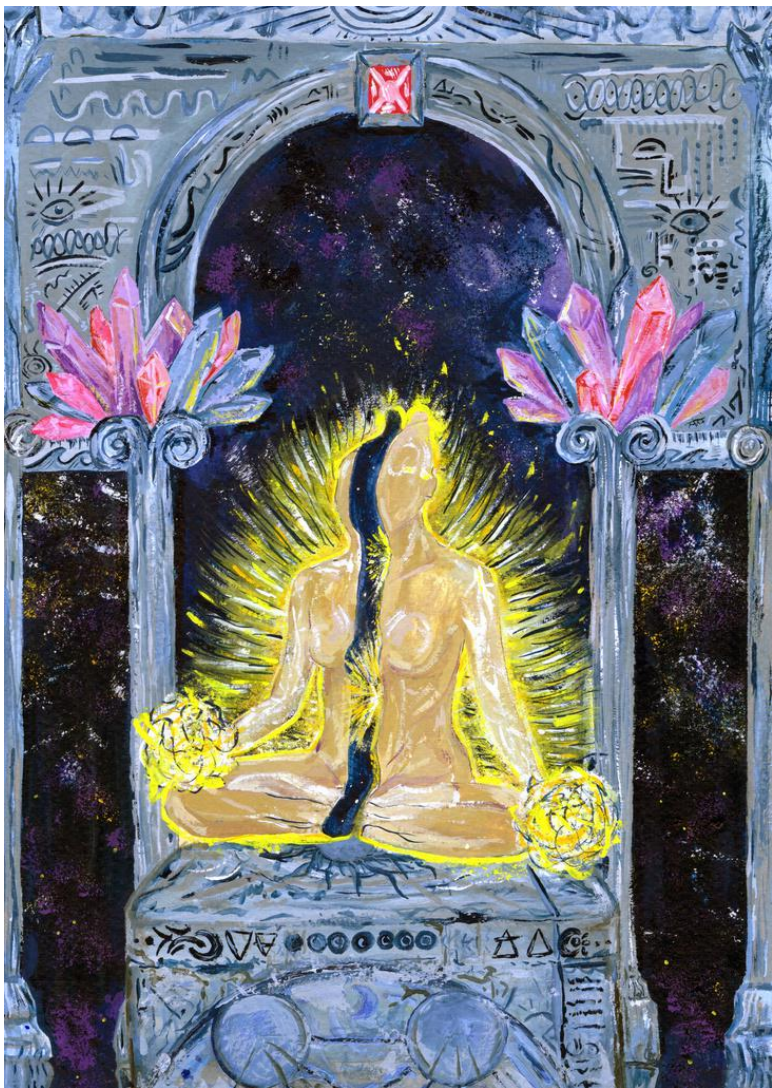
Andrada Leyla | Eternity | 2025

Project Statement

My latest collection, Rising, is a series of three paintings with poems that was born from a period of searching and reflecting. Each piece explores a different facet of my awakening process. Eternity is a reminder that we are more than our bodies, that our light has no beginning or end. Within Me turns inward, exploring how powerful the inner light is, and the love that sits inside. And, My Temple is a reclamation of the body as sacred ground—a reminder that we can always be in touch with the divine. Each poem came to me in the final stage of each painting—like an extension of the portal itself. I didn't write them to explain the work, but to deepen the experience, to open the door a little wider. My hope is that when someone connects with Rising, they feel a sense of calm, peace, and inner knowing—a reminder that it's possible to simply be. To rest in that still space. To live in a state of love.

Andrada Leyla | Within Me | 2025

Andrada Leyla | My Temple | 2025



Katerina Lapskaya

Your background is in project management and marketing. How has this experience influenced your approach to creating art?

I see it as a beautiful balance: prioritizing inspiration and intuitive creative processes, but being able to properly organize such processes, being selective about large amounts of information to define my direction, working with that information, possessing systemic thinking and maintaining a structured vision of the project. I analyzing and choosing the best tools for learning and creating art works. Knowing the basic laws of marketing is also valuable. Over time, perhaps, such skills will help me decide about how best to implement the results of my creativity on the market.

Katerina Lapskaya | Depth time

What initially sparked your interest in using AI as a creative tool, and how did your project begin in 2024?

For many years, I loved traditional and modern painting styles and was interested in architecture. In 2024, in addition to my main job, I was offered cooperation with a company that is engaged in the construction and design of commercial properties. As a project manager, I helped create a restaurant project for a beautiful resort area. I saw how my partner experimented with interior visualizations using AI programs, I was amazed by the good results and such possibilities. This is where my interest in neural networks began. And I created a separate project where I can come up with art works for the digital space and interior design space.
P.S. It's funny and interesting, but as a child, a kaleidoscope was one of my favorite toys. I recently found out that a kaleidoscope is an early prototype of generative art. I admire this fact!:)

Many of your works explore time, perception, and awareness. What draws you to these themes?

Probably, every person during their life thinks about such deep topics, about the flow of life. I find the topic of life perception interesting, how sometimes the perception of certain moments changes. How we feel what is happening in life with our head, body, soul. Now I have started to study some philosophical works on the topic of Time. As a child, my dad taught me deep analysis, philosophical reflections. I'm very glad that I have this inside. Also, recently I have been interested in some spiritual practices. All this helps me to expand my perception of art and creativity, myself in art. This perception becomes multi-sided.

How do you develop the concepts and prompts behind your AI-generated works? Do you follow a certain structure or is it more intuitive?

Katerina Lapskaya | For my daughter

I use different options. If it's a custom art work, then I create a prompt based on the client's wishes, I can supplement it with my creative ideas. Or I take as a basis the conditions of the interior space or digital space, so that the creative work, for example, a painting, its texture and color expression look harmonious in this space. If it is my personal art work, I choose intuitively, what attracts me, what I want to embody. For example, I love abstraction, I can put a special meaning into it. Reflect this meaning in texture, colors and form. One of the most impressive experiments for me is the creation of an abstract mosaic picture.

Can you describe your process of translating inspiration from nature and interiors into abstract, digital compositions?

I'm currently working on a project and will spend part of the summer in the mountains of the Altay region. This nature inspires and fascinates me now. There is such a beautiful pine forest here, some trees are several hundred years old. There is a wide turquoise river, high mountains with delicate peaks. Some places here are considered sacred and difficult for visiting. If these landscapes are transformed into digital compositions, the shapes of the elements can depict the power and density of the dark colors of the mountains. The lines and expression of color can express the dynamics of the fast flow of the river. Glow and light can show soft sunlight, the glow of greenery (ferns, flowering trees, grasses). With color and volume, I would reflect the strong energy of these places. Not only the visual component is important to me in my art works, I put energy into them. It is always about energy and feelings.

How do you see the role of an AI artist evolving in the next few years, especially in design and interior decoration?

This question is fascinating! Trends are developing when AI is integrated into the design process and other creative processes. And here, in my opinion, the big advantage is the space of options and speed: the implementation of creativity, the speed of processing large amounts of data, the speed of studying new trends in the market, the speed of issuing proposals. For example, for interior design, if an AI artist correctly sets the task for the neuronet, then in a fairly short time he will receive a large number of visualizations for a specific space and people will be able to see and compare versions. But I would like to hope that on the flow of AI development, the role of a person will still remain important. A person who creates a prompts is a unique author, he must have a certain vision, knowledge in his field and a deep understanding of what he wants to create in order to get the best possible result. This is deep mental work.
Since AI can provide AI artists with powerful analytical tools and new approaches, allowing them to focus on higher-level creative tasks, I believe this will lead to the emergence of new genres and styles that couldn't exist without the participation of digital technologies. Collaborations between AI artists and artists from other fields are also possible. Artists will use AI as a tool for inspiration, idea generation, or analysis of works, creating unique joint projects that combine human creativity and the capabilities of digital technologies.

What message or emotional experience do you hope the viewer takes away from your art?

One of the world's great film directors said that the true value of an art works is in the sincerity of the author. Sincerity in creativity is very important to me. By expanding my own understanding of creativity, consciousness and existence, I try to bring depth and meaning to my art works. In my heart, I hope that this inspires viewers to make interesting discoveries for themselves, to question and reflect on their own experiences and awareness, to feel new things. It's magical that art work can be a journey into the unconscious. This many-sided perception enriches my artistic process and the experience of my audience, creating a special dialogue that goes beyond the visual.

Katerina Lapskaya | Gold rain

Kelly Byler is a multidisciplinary artist based just outside Savannah, Georgia. Although she expresses her artistic ability through a variety of two and three-dimensional mediums, she has consistently focused her artistic endeavors on nature and how people have interacted with animals and natural spaces throughout history. She has a knack for acrylic painting but with a unique twist. She embellishes many of her acrylic paintings with embroidered lace fabrics and other sewing-related odds-and-ends as a way to engage her audience and offer them a new perspective on how to complete a two-dimensional work of art. Her lace-trimmed borders are her way of exploring her intimate relationship with femininity and gender expression while depicting creatures that, as a child, made her feel boyish. With a passion for all things small, her attention has turned to the tiniest yet most impactful critters of our planet: insects. To her, these creatures are living works of art. Kelly believes these beautifully intricate beings often face a fate far worse than most due to overconsumption, habitat destruction, and urban development. She aims to provide a fresh perspective on the relationship between humans and insects, highlighting how this connection is far more complex than it appears. She understands that many people are afraid of these multi-legged creatures, but she believes that the first step to conquering your fear is understanding what you are afraid of.

Project Statement
The main subjects in my body of work are insects. I love that each insect is unique and that there are hundreds of thousands of patterns they come in. There's something intricately beautiful about taking the time to study each bug as I am painting it--as if I am preserving the natural history of the animal. I love starting with acrylic gestural sketches to give myself a loose frame of my subject. Then, I jump in with my flat brushes to create solid shapes and outlines. Finally, I use metallic and acrylic paint to pull out the tiny details and make my insect feel alive through whimsy. The beauty of insects deeply inspires me. The way light bounces off of their shells and wings and the intricate motifs they carry. Being able to connect to something so small makes me feel on top of the world.

Kelly Byler | Pathways | 2025

Kelly Byler | Zwiebelmuster | 2024

Interview

Yuelin Li

Your works often balance between motion and stillness. How do you decide what kind of movement a piece should have?

I've always been drawn to objects in motion, but I'm even more captivated by the moment they pause to hold their breath and wait. Viewers often respond in a similar way. During the exhibition of I Know a Place, whenever the automaton came to a stop, the entire space would sometimes fall into stillness.
In my practice, movement feels closer to breathing, or to hesitation. I've come to believe that slowness holds more emotional weight than speed. A soft rotation or an uncertain shift aren't just performing, but dwelling. Sudden pauses and irregular delays become part of the sculpture's grammar, as if the piece were saying: "I'm not quite sure where to go." This kind of paused motion, this quiet negotiation with time, reflects how we navigate relationships—tentatively, slowly, often unresolved.

Yuelin Li | See My Absence

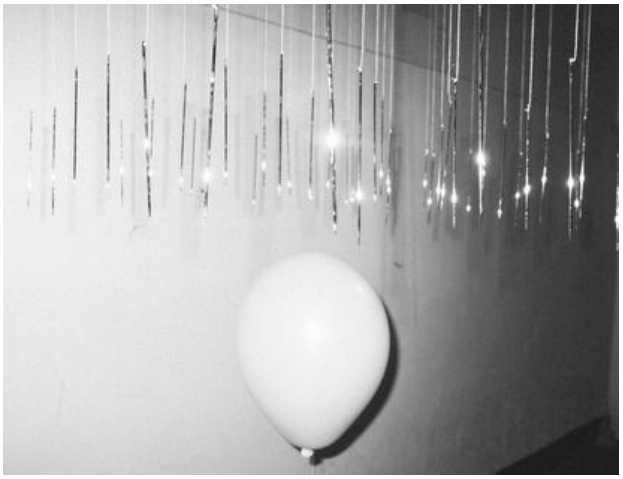
This emergence is also shaped by the nature of materials. Some resist movement, while others are restless from the beginning. Motion arises through this ongoing dialogue, from listening to the inclinations and resistances embedded in each form.

You describe your sculptures as having "their own quiet agency." Can you talk more about how you think objects express themselves?

Every object carries its own memory and tendency. Reclaimed metals, with their rusted edges and broken joints, don't arrive as blank materials. They come with a quiet resistance and a sense of history, asking to be approached on their own terms.
Jean Bennett, in Vibrant Matter, describes materials as having vitality, or a capacity to act, resist, and express. I feel that in the studio. A piece of metal that won't weld properly, or only fits in a certain way, isn't just being difficult. It's communicating. That resistance is part of its agency.
I don't usually start with drawings. I place the materials on a large table and spend time with them, touching, shifting, waiting. As Tim Ingold also suggests, materiality isn't fixed, but emerges through making. My role isn't to shape it into something, but to listen. Most of the time, I feel more like a witness, holding space for the material to become what it already is.

What role does impermanence play in your creative process, especially when working with materials like ice or fragile mechanical systems?

Impermanence has always been embedded in my way of thinking through making. It stems from the physical nature of materials, but also shapes how I understand the unfolding of a work. I often respond to this sensibility through the work itself.



When I use ice, melting becomes a marker of time. In See My Absence, the ice face, made from a mold of my own face, gradually dissolves under observation. It doesn't rely on metaphor. It meets the viewer through a direct, embodied disappearance.
Loose wires, fragile structures, and unexpected malfunctions form part of the work's syntax. Over time, I've come to see fragility and impermanence as a language of emotion. It speaks of tenderness, uncertainty, and the inevitability of change.
For me now, making is a practice of both precision and release. I build with full intention, while also accepting that the work will eventually disappear. Its vanishing is part of how it becomes.

How do you want viewers to interact emotionally with your installations?

To be honest, I don't think much about the viewer's reaction while creating. My focus is simply to express myself with honesty. I don't want to guide or instruct how someone should feel. What matters more to me is building an atmosphere where emotion can arise on its own, quietly and without pressure.
The movement of the piece, the click of metal, the hum of a motor, and the slow rhythm of the system all gradually draw attention inward. The experience becomes intimate, like the silence that happens when someone is truly listening.
Sometimes, viewers will stand in front of the work for minutes, watching a gear turn slowly, or witnessing an ice face melt, moment by moment. I've seen people respond with excitement, with tears, or with stillness. These moments feel deeply meaningful to me. Occasionally, in conversation afterward, viewers share stories or emotions that resonate with what they saw.

Many of your works seem to suggest solitude and introspection. Are these themes rooted in personal experience or broader observations?

In my work, solitude is not a theme I consciously select. It emerges as a condition that has always been present. Since childhood, I have been sensitive to presence and disappearance, and to the uncertainty that underlies all human connection. This world never allows two beings to move together indefinitely.
After I completed See My Absence, my mother reminded me of an animation I watched often as a child—The Snow Child. In the story, a rabbit builds a snowman who later sacrifices himself in a fire, evaporating into steam and drifting into the sky. I didn't have the words for it back then, but I cried every time. That story stayed with me. Over time, it returned to me through the emotional texture of loss and the visual vocabulary that began to form in my work.
In I Know a Place, the automaton and helium balloon are connected by a single thread. They move together, but their relationship is fragile, always shifting between pull and lift, tension and imbalance. The automaton pulls forward with uncertain force, while the balloon floats up and down, carried by unstable air. Above them, a suspended field of threads, each tipped with a needle, defines a moving boundary they must navigate. The movement is slow and hesitant, shaped by constant adjustment.
I'm drawn to that suspended space, where friction between materials and quiet tension create a posture that hovers between closeness and separation.

What inspires your choice of materials—like rusted metal, gears, balloons, and translucent surfaces?

When I choose materials, I focus on how they behave and whether they can take part in the concept and rhythm I'm building. Qualities like responsiveness, weight, tension, or transparency often guide my decisions more directly.
Before making any choice, I often ask myself: which material can best articulate the concept of this piece? Then, through touch and working alongside the material, I make the next decision.
To me, rusted metal holds a sense of gravity and reveals the traces of time. Gears carry rhythm and direction. They help express slowness, friction, or misalignment. Balloons are sensitive and unpredictable—their instability works well for expressing suspended or uncertain presence. Translucent materials blur edges and create a space that feels fleeting or in-between.
I often visit scrapyards or recycling centers. I'm not looking for specific parts. I look for fragments that trigger a tactile or perceptual response. A curve, the tension of a surface, the way something receives light; qualities that can immediately connect to a gesture or emotional state I'm working with. Materials help shape the language it speaks.

How does your background in both art and technology influence the way you build your sculptures?

My background in technology gives me more freedom to imagine how a sculpture can be built and how it might behave over time. It opens up possibilities for movement, interaction, and timing. But I approach technology carefully. Any system I add, whether a sensor or a control mechanism, has to serve the emotional and conceptual structure of the work.
In See My Absence, I used a very simple hardware setup that allows the ice face to slowly turn toward the viewer. The motion is subtle, but it creates a sense of attention and quiet response, adding emotional weight to the piece. It wasn't about showing off technical skill. It was about making a presence more perceptible.
I never use technology to make something look advanced. I care more about whether it allows the work to communicate something clearly, something that might otherwise remain invisible.

Analy Castro Sanz
I love art and have been creating scrapbooks, altered books, and both analogue and digital collages. I've participated in several exhibitions, mostly in Pamplona and also in Madrid.

Project Statement
Vintage women.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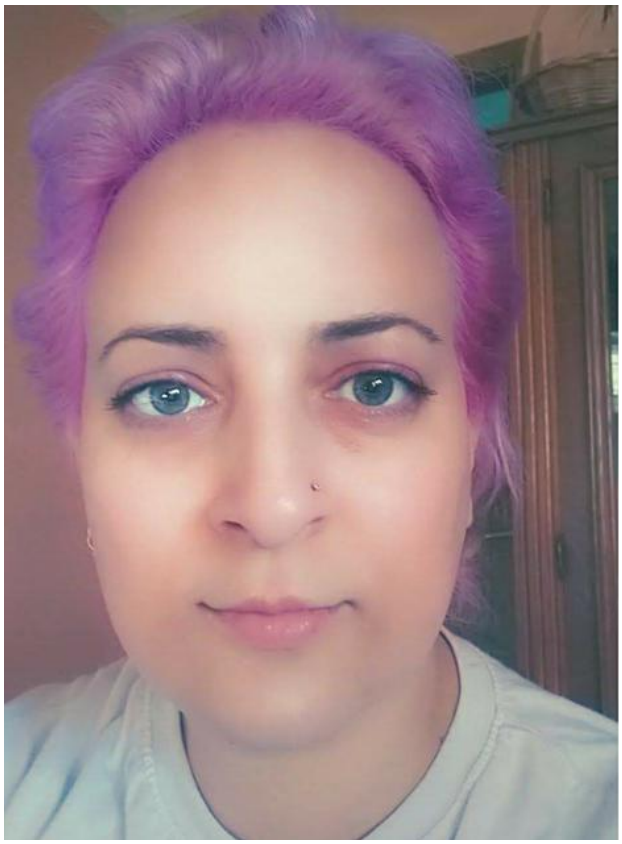
Lejla Naser Ćopić



Can you tell us about your early connection to art and how it shaped your creative voice?

From my earliest memories, art was simply how I understood and interacted with the world. My earliest memories are filled with the joy of creating, whether it was scribbling on scrap paper or trying to replicate the vibrant colors of my grandmother's garden. My parents nurtured this from the start; they never batted an eye at my messy hands or the piles of drawings covering some surface. This early freedom, this encouragement to simply create without judgment, profoundly shaped my creative voice. I wasn't just drawing; I was observing, feeling, and translating. It was a language, a form of communication that preceded words. My childhood was filled with exploring different mediums - crayons, watercolors, pencils, anything I could get my hands on.

This early immersion allowed me to develop an intuitive understanding of color, form, and composition. It shaped my creative voice by making me unafraid to experiment and to see the beauty and potential in everyday materials. Art wasn't just about replicating what I saw, but about expressing what I felt and what I imagined. Art wasn't just about technical skill, but about expression, exploration, and finding a unique way to tell a story. It taught me that art is a language, and the more I practiced, the more fluent I became in speaking my own truth through lines, colors, and textures. It gave me permission to be playful, to experiment, and to trust my own intuition, which are all things I lean heavily on now.

Lejla Naser Ćopić | The brush of hope | 2024

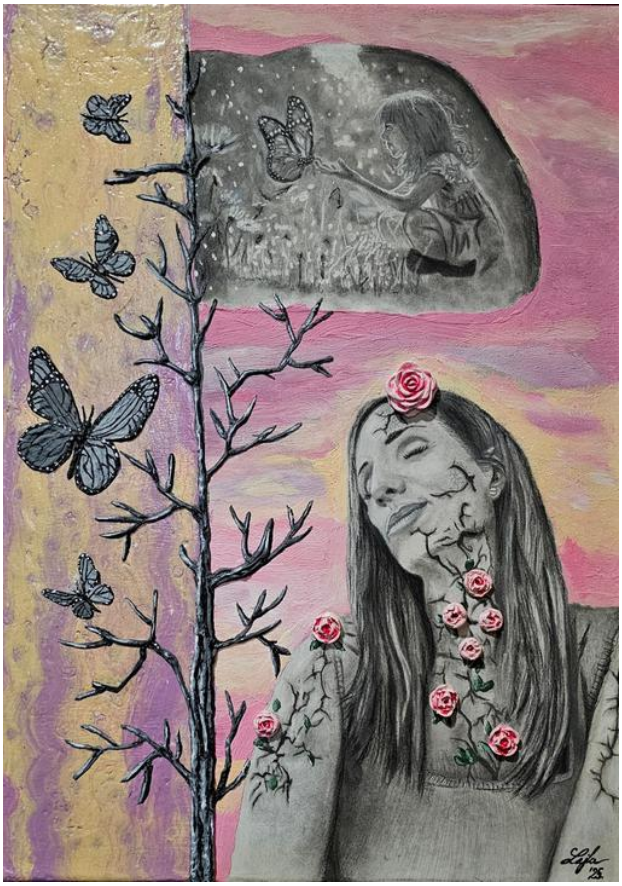
After a long break from art, what inspired you to return to creating?

The return to art after two decades wasn't a sudden decision; it was a slow, persistent pull. Life took its turns, as it does, and while I never stopped appreciating art, the act of making it took a backseat. However, the urge to create never truly disappeared. It was like a dormant seed, waiting for the right conditions to sprout. The inspiration ultimately came from a deep personal need to express myself again, to reconnect with that fundamental part of who I am. It was a yearning for something authentic, something that felt uniquely mine.

The quiet moments made me confront that missing piece. I started with simple sketches, just to get my hand moving again, and gradually, the passion reignited. It felt like coming home. The world had changed, I had changed, but the joy of creating was just as potent as ever. It was a whisper that grew into a roar, a realization that it was time to pick up my tools again.

How did your experience as a kindergarten teacher influence your current artistic practice?

My years as a kindergarten teacher profoundly influenced my artistic practice in unexpected ways. Working with young children, I witnessed firsthand the uninhibited joy and fearless experimentation they bring to art. They don't worry about perfection; they simply create from a place of pure imagination and emotion.



Lejla Naser Ćopić | Memory | 2025

This profoundly influenced my current artistic practice. It reminded me that art is about the process, about discovery, and about embracing imperfection. It taught me the power of storytelling through visuals and the importance of fostering creativity without stifling it with rigid rules. It instilled in me a deep understanding of symbolism, as children often express complex ideas through simple, symbolic representations. This experience also honed my ability to observe and understand individual personalities, which is invaluable.

Why did you choose mixed media as your primary form of expression?

I chose mixed media as my primary form of expression because it offers an unparalleled freedom and depth. For me, it's the most authentic way to tell a story. While I adore traditional drawing and painting, mixed media allow me to build up layers and create sculptural elements that literally pop off the canvas. It provide a unique way to incorporate the symbolic details that are so crucial to my portraits. It's about creating a rich, immersive experience for the viewer, where they can discover new details with every look.
For me, a portraits aren't just about capturing a likeness; it's about delving into the layers of a person's story, their dreams, their past, and their unique essence. Mixed media allows me to create a truly immersive and tactile experience for the viewer, extending the portraits beyond a simple rendering into a symbolic realm. It's about building a world around the persons, not just depicting them.

Your portraits are rich in texture and symbolism - how do you choose the materials and motifs for each piece?

Choosing materials and motifs for each piece is a highly intuitive and personalized process, deeply connected to the individual I'm portraying. When I receive a commission, I spend time talking with the person, learning about their life, their passions, their significant memories, and their aspirations. These conversations are crucial. The materials I choose for the background are not arbitrary; they are selected to extend the narrative and symbolism. For example, if someone has a strong connection to nature, I might use textured modeling paste to evoke tree bark or rippling water. The motifs are directly drawn from their stories - a specific flower, an animal, a significant object, or even an abstract representation of a feeling or experience. It's about finding visual metaphors that resonate deeply with who they are.

What does the process of combining realism with abstract or symbolic elements look like for you?

The process of combining realism with abstract or symbolic elements is where the magic truly happens for me. The realism in my portraits, primarily executed with graphite and charcoal for the figure, serves as the anchor. It grounds the piece and captures the tangible essence of the person. However, life isn't just about what's visible; it's also about dreams, memories, and inner worlds. This is where the abstract and symbolic elements come in.
I always start with the portrait, focusing on capturing the individual's likeness and expression. Once the drawing is established, I move to the background, allowing the symbolism to emerge organically. The background is built up in layers, using the various mixed media materials to create textures and forms that subtly or overtly relate to the subject's story. It's a dance between the concrete and the conceptual, where the realistic portrait invites the viewer in, and the symbolic background expands the narrative, inviting contemplation and deeper understanding.

How do you approach capturing someone's essence in a commissioned portrait?

Capturing someone's essence in a commissioned portrait is both a privilege and a challenge. It goes beyond just getting a good likeness. For me, it's about connecting with their spirit. This begins with active listening and open communication with the client. I ask questions about their values, their triumphs, their struggles, and what makes them uniquely them. I try to understand what makes them unique, what their inner world looks like, and what stories they carry.
Then begins a process of translation - taking those conversations and observations and distilling them into visual form. It's about finding the balance between realistic representation and the symbolic elements that illuminate their inner world, creating a piece that truly resonates with who they are.

Laney Fouracres

I am a queer artist based in Melbourne Australia, who primarily uses art as a method of engaging with macabre and sombre themes and images. I love the emotive nature of painting and photography utilising it as a way to express a vast array of both personal and universal human experiences.

Laney Fouracres | Installation view


I
didn't
escape

— *Interview*

Mia Grosshart

You grew up around dressmakers and designers. How has that influenced your artistic approach to embroidery and beadwork?

Having witnessed the precision and care put into the craft directly shaped my appreciation for detail. In the early '90s, I would run around the shop my relatives owned—a unique blend of a boutique, design house, atelier, and alterations is the best way I can describe it. There were sewing machine stations whirring daily and beads/sequins being organized piece by piece until sunset. Various forms of textiles draped over mannequins next to stacks of sketches of wedding gowns, suits, dresses, etc. with measurements scribbled. It sounds chaotic and it was energetic, but I recognized the flow of the process and how everyone understood their timing within it to produce the final product.

Mia Grosshart | Honey | 2024

Many of your works are vibrant and textured. How do you choose your color palettes and materials?

I personally need to pick a theme to give my scattered ideas direction, otherwise I would have a collection of works in progress. This batch of hoops is for my Color Wheel series where the palette selection highlights a few colors at a time. Hues and vibrancy are also at the forefront of choosing materials to complement the embroidery floss or bead work.

Your biography mentions moving across states and countries. How does that experience translate into your artistic process?

It has a leading role in the process, giving way to improvements, decision-making, efficiency, and intuition towards my pieces. This was made possible by the experiences and connections I made along the way. Our family was either moving within a state to a different city or house, another state altogether for new opportunities, or for family time in a different country. The variation of local highlights, events, history, lifestyles, native flora and how that has impacted the art disciplines in the area were collectively shaping what I wanted to create.

Do you consider your pieces more sculptural or painterly — or do you see them as something

Mia Grosshart | Ember | 2025

entirely different?

Bit of both. I look for the relationship the textures and color schemes create whether it's cohesive or in disarray. Building on the flat plane of the taut fabric and understanding the boundaries is my intent and whether I'll reinterpret the edge to build on it or respect it. The visual or structural limitations of one item is the decision point to add more or use it to highlight other features.

What role does storytelling play in your compositions?

I like how the process creates its own web of stories. The interactions for procuring these items through small businesses, excess supplies, or gifts from friends and family led to late night stitches and scattered materials all around our house. I have memories associated with each one, but it has been interesting to hear the interpretation of others, or the thoughts associated with the overall composition. I want the layers and elements to give consideration to what could work in these spaces.

Can you walk us through your creative process, from the first idea to the final stitch?

The first puncture has consistently been the satin stitch as though it sets my idea in motion to a more permanent state. The final stitch is somewhat of a mini feat to me. It leads into sealing and framing accents closing out the piece. I'm not sure if I have a specific process for everything else in between. The best way I can describe it is through the phases I cycle through which includes contemplating, preparing, production, and validation.

How do you balance traditional techniques with contemporary expression?

My focus between traditional and contemporary constantly shifts to highlight and item or area as much as possible. I have unconventional approaches alongside traditional embroidery stitches. I want to continue appreciating the beauty in both practices.

Jichi Zhang: The Poetics of Ephemerality

by Anna Gvozdeva

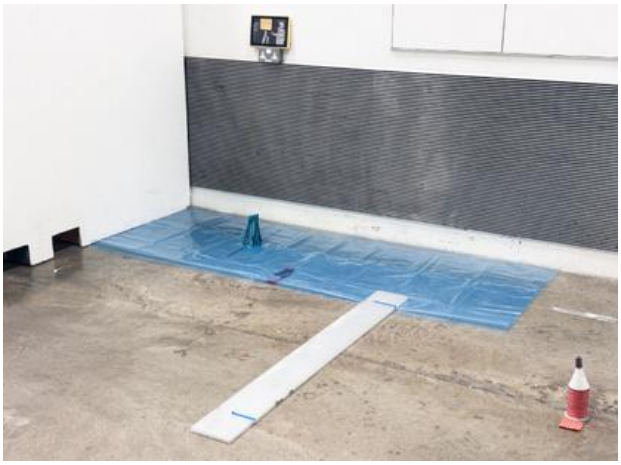
Jichi Zhang's practice transforms industrial detritus—plastic sheeting, packaging materials, discarded ephemera—into meditations on impermanence. His works exist in liminal states, where materials hover between form and decay, presence and absence. Rather than imposing rigid structures, Zhang collaborates with his mediums, allowing their inherent qualities—wrinkles that soften, surfaces that shift—to guide each piece's evolution.

Jichi Zhang | Backroom, leben | 2024

The am series (2025) epitomizes this philosophy. Stripping the verb "to be" to its barest form, these installations embody suspended states of existence. Like plastic sheeting trembling in an unseen draft, they celebrate transience as a generative force. Similarly, Backroom, leben (2024) encases mechanical fish in plastic—a

poignant commentary on preservation and obsolescence that avoids didacticism through material poetry.

Jichi Zhang | Pre-am | 2025



Jichi Zhang | Under-am | 2025

Zhang's site-responsive installations (Pre-am, Under-am) demonstrate remarkable spatial sensitivity. They don't occupy space so much as converse with it—activated by light, air currents, and viewer proximity. This creates an intimate viewing experience antithetical to today's spectacle-driven art world.

Historical consciousness permeates works like Grounded (2024), where archival documents confront barbed wire. Yet Zhang's approach remains resolutely material-first—the politics emerge through textures and tensions rather than explicit statements.

Jichi Zhang | Grounded | 2024

Educated at Central Saint Martins and the Slade, with exhibitions from Saatchi to the Louvre, Zhang represents a vital countercurrent in contemporary art—one that privileges fragility over monumentality, asking viewers to slow down and sit with uncertainty. His is an art of quiet persistence, where disappearance becomes its own form of staying.

Ashley Rose
Alternative Visual Artist • Graphic Designer • Comic Illustrator
Texas-born but Detroit in soul, Ash Rose is an alternative visual artist and graphic designer whose work pulses with the grit of city streets and the spirit of the underground. A graduate of the Art Institute with a degree in Graphic Design, Ash began in the world of comic book illustration—laying the foundation for a style that fuses story, symbolism, and subculture with bold visual impact.

Deeply rooted in goth and punk, Ash's artwork is a living mixtape of influences: from the sharp stencil edges of protest art to the moody textures of decayed romance and static-drenched TV screens. Ash's evolving art language fuses traditional media with digital design, bringing alternative culture to life through a uniquely personal, goth-rooted lens. Whether reimagining icons or distilling the poetry of asphalt and neon, Ash's work remains fiercely independent—crafted by an outsider, for outsiders.

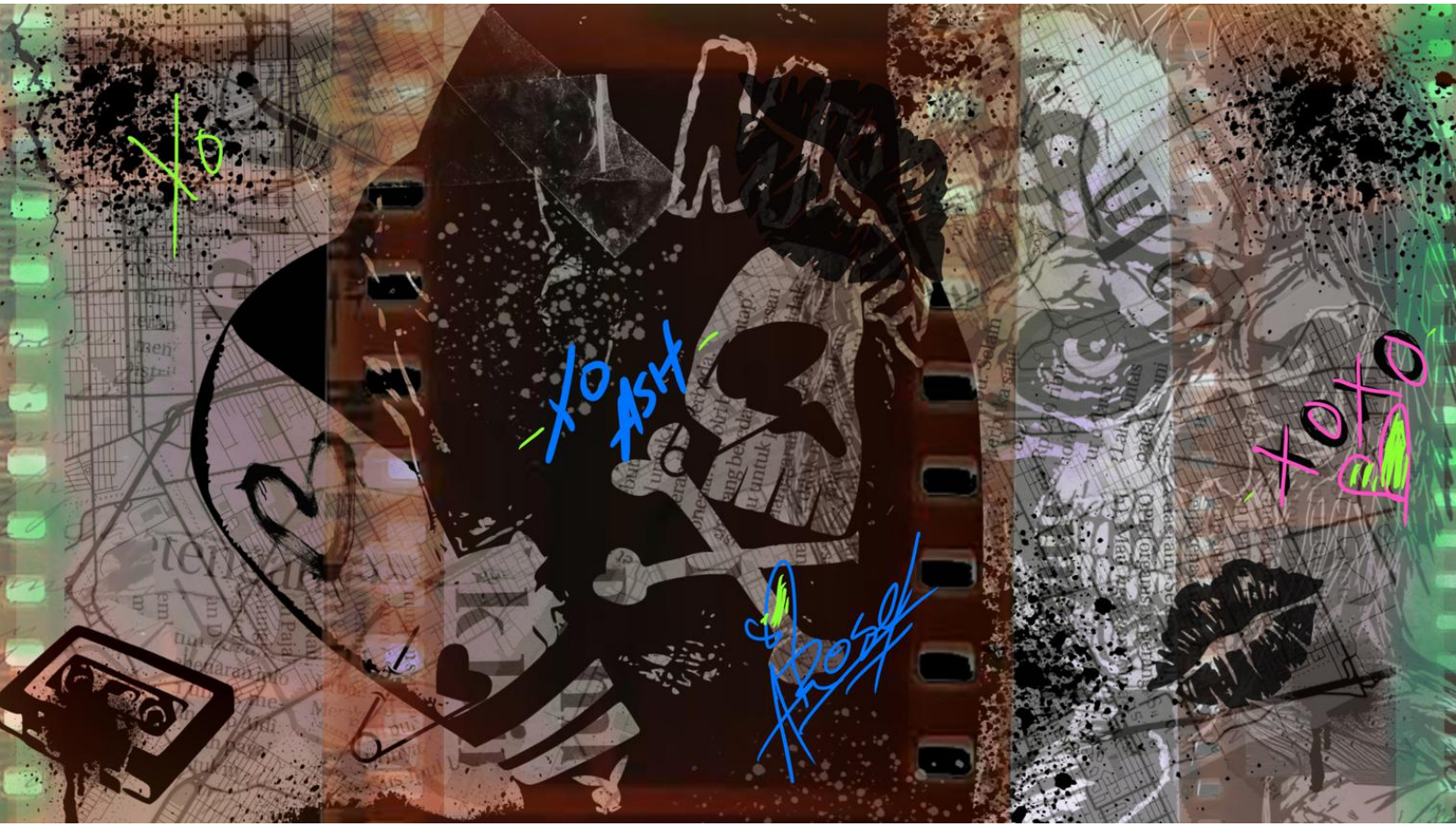
Project Statement
Project: 313 on SIde B
This collection is built like a record flipped over—Side B style. The unpolished tracks. The ones made for the outsiders, the lovers in alleyways, the ones who find beauty in distortion.

Each piece is a memory pressed to wax—Detroit's skyline looping like a broken chorus, stenciled bodies caught mid-rewind. My art lives where the static hums and the needle sinks deep. Born in Texas but tuned by Detroit, I created from the part of the record that doesn't get radio play. Side B isn't where the hits are; it's where the heart bleeds through. These works capture that: raw connection, rough edges, stories that crackle like vinyl pulled from a sleeve too many times.

This is for those who still listen all the way through.
For those who know the truth's on the flip side.
For those who live on Side B.

Love in this world isn't polished or soft—it's punk.
It's loud, reckless, a worn leather jacket, long nights, and ripped sleeves.

Ashley Rose | 313 Skylines & Side B | 2025



Ashley Rose | Love You to Death | 2025

Ashley Rose | TV EYE on SIDE B | 2025

Olivia Ross

Olivia Ross | Brushing Harvey | 2025

To begin with, could you tell us what first drew you to painting as a form of expression?

My journey into painting began during the COVID-19 lockdown. I was 24 at the time and on furlough from my job, which eventually led to redundancy. I was searching for a fulfilling hobby to pass the time and decided to paint a self-portrait using some of my mum's old acrylic paints from when she used to do art classes with her friends. I hadn't painted since primary school, so I was really surprised by how much I enjoyed the process and by how much I loved the painting I produced. It felt like the first time since the start of the pandemic that my brain switched off and was able to focus entirely on one thing. It also felt totally natural, as if I had been painting my whole life. It's funny to pin the start of my artistic journey down to one moment but it really was this first painting that started it all. Then in 2023 I applied to do a second undergraduate degree in Fine Art at the University of Dundee and I'm now on the brink of starting my third year. Discovering painting really has been a transformative experience for me as it altered the whole course of my life and career, and I feel really fortunate to have stumbled upon it. It has made me a passionate advocate for encouraging others - especially those who consider themselves to be uncreative - to explore creative hobbies.

Olivia Ross | Duncan's Tenth Birthday | 2025

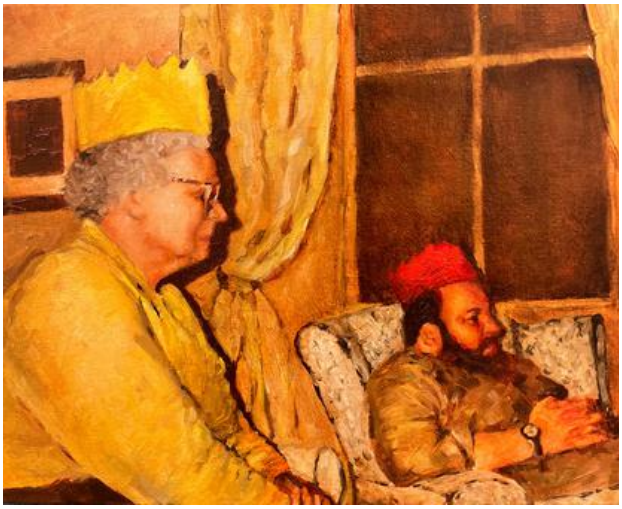
Having previously studied Mediaeval History and Film, in what ways do you feel those disciplines continue to shape your perspective as an artist?

The two experiences are completely linked. I chose to study Mediaeval History because I have always had a deep fascination with human beings, their lives, stories, and the shared human experience throughout time. This same curiosity and appreciation for human narratives naturally extended into my artistic journey. Additionally, studying film alongside Mediaeval History helped me develop an understanding of visual storytelling. My background in film naturally influences my approach to painting, in guiding how I construct scenes, use light, and consider the viewer's gaze. It has also been integral to how I choose composition, colour, and framing and my understanding of how they can evoke certain emotions and convey complex narratives.

As we understand, this series emerged from a deeply personal loss—the fire that destroyed many of your childhood memories. Could you share what led you to transform that experience into a body of work?

It was during the first couple of weeks of my second year at uni. We were encouraged to do some research and pick a subject for an art project that was deeply personal to us and also that we could see being developed into a series of works. It started with me wanting to do a piece about memory, not even thinking about the house fire. I was searching for some photos to make into a project and came face to face with the realisation that many of my childhood photos, all of my childhood videos and countless other objects from that period were lost forever. After this, doing work about the fire and its effects was a bit of a no-brainer.

In your own words, this project is about remembering without anchors. How do you approach painting moments you no longer remember clearly?



Olivia Ross | Christmas 1996 | 2025

In this project, I was trying to capture childhood moments that an individual would remember as a single scene – for example a birthday, Christmas, or playing in a well-remembered living room. I wanted to inject a warmth into these paintings to evoke nostalgia and I approached them with varying looseness to reflect how memory fades, fractures, and sometimes sharpens with time. I worked in layers: underpainting for mood, then secondary layers for form and highlights and finally adding a glaze which added a cohesive warmth to the finished paintings. I wanted to approach the paintings as interpretation, not record. I was very firm in that I wasn't trying to mimic photography, even though it was about losing photos as a record of my childhood. The process was less about 'getting the image right' and more about creating a correct feeling. Even if I can't picture exact memories, I can still recreate the resonance of my childhood in these paintings.

While working on this series, did any unexpected feelings or memories emerge that surprised you?

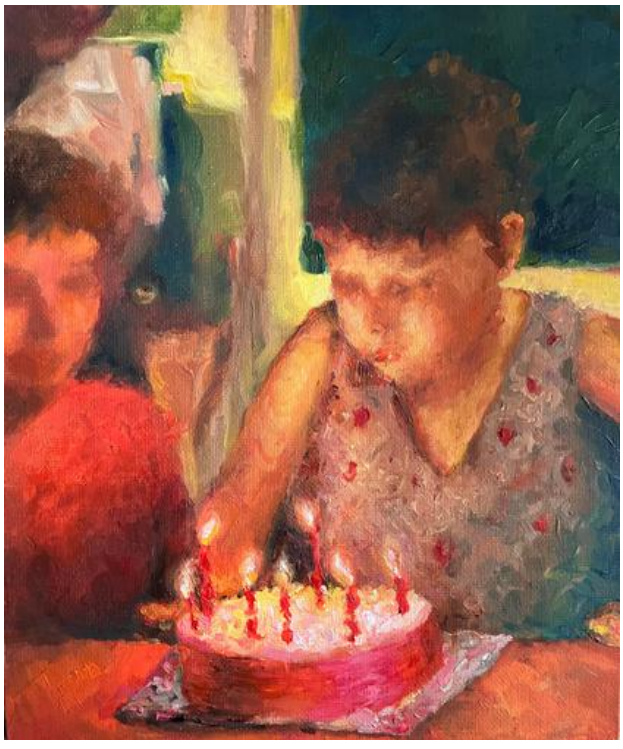
I've never really been that emotional about the fire, and it wasn't ever something that my family got morose about. As a family, we just took it in our stride that we had a house fire, and it is quite a strange period of our lives where we were living elsewhere for almost a year while the house was fixed. At the time it felt like a bit of an adventure. However, even though it happened in 2017, we are still constantly reminded about the various irreplaceable things we lost. Losing all our photos and home videos has been our greatest heartbreak; on reflection, they were our most precious possessions, and now the thought of them is what hurts the most. It's an odd feeling, not even knowing what scenes those videos captured or what moments the photos preserved. They were the anchors to my childhood memories, and now, without those physical keepsakes, it feels as if those memories are lost forever.

Do you see this project as a form of personal healing, or more as a way to invite others into a shared emotional space?

The project has forced me to confront the loss head-on, whereas before I was in a sort of blissful ignorance and I must say it hasn't been that cathartic. Perhaps this means that there is still more work to be done on the subject. I resonate more with the idea that the work invites others into a shared emotional space. The project is about the house fire and my childhood photos, but it is also about the fleeting nature of early childhood memory. I know there are many who don't remember their childhoods very clearly and I get struck by the idea of the malleability of memory, especially in those formative years of childhood. Sometimes I can't remember if I remember a memory clearly or if I was just told a story about that memory and therefore my overactive imagination has given the story clarity in my mind. For example, I have so many clear memories of my grandpa but he died when I was five and so I can't possibly remember these moments so clearly, but he was such a character and so deeply loved by my family that I have heard many stories about him and his antics.

Do you envision continuing to work with personal memory as your subject, or are you curious to step into other narratives?

It is such a huge subject, and I can definitely envisage more work being done on it. I think some work about connections to memory as it relates to family history is interesting. For example, developing on from those ideas about my grandpa and doing some work about members of my family that mean a lot to my family but that I don't have specific memories of. Family is so complex and there is so much lore connected to each individual. My parents had me when they were both 40 and so our family is quite old compared to others. My parents and my aunt and uncle are now the elder generation in my family and the only connection we have to extended family and family members who have passed is through the stories we are told and photos that have been collected. My aunt has recently been attempting to put together a family tree and keeping photographic records of extended family members in order that they aren't forgotten. It is a crazy idea to me that our memories are lost within two or three generations and I can foresee some work being done on this which would be an extension of my work about the memories lost in the fire.



Olivia Ross | Seventh Birthday | 2025

Svetlana Leonova was born in Pavlodar on February 25, 1971. From early childhood, she showed a strong interest in visual art—painting characters from fairy tales and cartoons using watercolor or gouache. Her love for creativity continued throughout her school years. Svetlana is a self-taught artist. Despite not having a formal or related education in the arts, her natural curiosity and creative abilities allowed her to return to painting years later and dedicate a significant part of her life to it.

In 2021, Svetlana entered a period of experimentation—creating watercolor postcards for family and friends, landscapes with a palette knife, and miniatures in oil and acrylic: on 10x10 cm canvases, 5 cm pins, magnets of various shapes and sizes, and wooden slices. Today, she considers herself a mixed media artist.

“Painting is a part of life for me. I love it for the freedom of expression it offers and the space it gives to imagination. I may be in a bad mood or the opposite, but as soon as I stand behind the easel, all the emotions that overwhelmed me pour into the artwork. Now I realize that I can’t imagine my life without it,” she says.

Svetlana especially loves painting the sea and flowers for the opportunity to showcase the richness and variety of nature’s colors and shades. For inspiration, she often turns to Impressionist artists such as Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir, as well as to masters of other styles like Vincent van Gogh, Nicholas Roerich, and Arkhip Kuindzhi. She believes that paintings can convey not only moods but also messages and deeper meanings—even without depicting them directly.

Svetlana Leonova | Tiger's Joy

Svetlana Leonova | Bridge Across Generations

Emma Krenzer

Your work is deeply autobiographical and touches on themes of grief and memory. How do you navigate the vulnerability of sharing such personal experiences through your art?

Over the last few years, I've experienced a tremendous amount of loss that has deeply and permanently reshaped many parts of my identity, particularly my identity as an artist. Art has always been a passion of mine and an important part of who I am, but before grief entered my life, creating was more of a joyful pastime—something I did simply because I loved it. That changed when I began navigating loss and grief. Creating stopped being just something I enjoyed and wanted to do—it became something I needed. A way to survive. There are many days where the weight of grief is so heavy, and the only thing that makes it feel lighter is being able to pour those emotions into my work. It has given me an outlet for my pain, a place for it to go so that I don't always have to carry it in me. Being able to take these painful experiences from my life and transform them into something tangible has truly been my saving grace.

Emma Krenzer | Everything And Nothing Always Haunts Me | 2021

Ironically, even though I've been creating the most work I ever have during this period of my life, there was a long stretch of time in the beginning where I stopped sharing my work altogether. Sharing my work was something that I really enjoyed doing in the past, but this work was different. It was so deeply personal, and sharing it just felt too vulnerable to me. Not only was it the embodiment of my deepest pain, but I also looked at a lot of the work as tributes to people that I had lost, which made it all the more sacred to me. This was work that I was truly making just for myself, and I didn't want to invite other people's perceptions and judgements into it. This period of keeping my work private lasted for a few years. There would be moments where I thought maybe I was ready, but I would end up overthinking and decide against it.

So I gave myself time. Time to heal, time to let my work be just for myself, time to navigate the grief and my creative process in the way that I needed to. I knew that the day I felt ready to share again would come, and it did.

One day I just knew that I was ready and that it was time. I shared a piece that I had created about my grief, one that was extremely special to me. And while it did feel vulnerable, it also felt extremely liberating to be able to share that part of myself and to be able to use my work as a channel to communicate these

painful experiences that I had been through. For my pain to be seen. I received such an outpour of love, support, and validation by sharing that piece and allowing my pain to be seen by others. The responses that I received were just as healing as the process of making the work itself.
Creating and sharing vulnerable work can feel scary, because it demands honestly with yourself and others. But that's also why I love it, and why I think it's so important. It allows me to connect with people on a level I never could otherwise, and to give form to emotions that are often too heavy to articulate. Now, I truly love sharing my work again. It has become an important part of my healing process by helping me feel seen in my grief, and I hope it creates space for others to feel seen in theirs too.

Several of your pieces incorporate domestic or childhood motifs—like birthday cakes, dollhouse settings, and nursery decorations. What role does nostalgia play in your exploration of grief?

For me, grief and nostalgia are deeply intertwined, and that connection has become a defining thread throughout my work. Grief evokes a complex range of emotions, but one of the most persistent for me has been a deep, aching longing for the past—for what once was.
Nostalgia is something that everyone experiences to some degree throughout their life, and I certainly did before I experienced loss. But grief has intensified those feelings to the point where they are sometimes almost physically painful. Because not only am I longing for places, things, and moments that no longer exist, but people too. I'm homesick for a home that I can never return to, a life that will never exist again.
I find myself constantly reflecting on periods of my life that at the time didn't feel particularly special, but now, in hindsight, I would give anything to return to. I look through old photos, especially from my childhood, and wish that I could live in them. I long for the simplicity, joy, and innocence of that time in my life —a time before I knew the kind of pain that I carry now. A time when my dad was still in our family photos.
Much of the inspiration behind my work comes from these photos and memories of my childhood and the complicated emotions they evoke in relation to grief. Looking through old photos brings me feelings of comfort and happiness, but also of regret and deep sadness. There is a profound weight in knowing what was to come and wishing I had cherished those moments more. Wishing I had been more present, more aware of how fleeting that version of life truly was. I want those happy memories to remain untouched by grief, but it often feels as if grief has bled backward—reaching even into the past, coloring moments that once felt pure.
This emotional conflict is something that I try to convey in my work. I use nostalgic, domestic, and childlike imagery to evoke feelings of comfort and familiarity, and I juxtapose them with unsettling or unexpected elements. The work becomes a visual representation of both warmth and unease, a reminder of how quickly things can change and that life as we know it is extremely fragile. A collapse of the bridge between what was and what is.
Incorporating nostalgic imagery in my work is also a way to address my complicated, sometimes frustrating relationship with memory. When someone passes away, people will often say, "You'll always have your memories," in an attempt to offer comfort. But for me, that phrase has always felt more haunting than comforting—because I don't have a very good memory. I find myself desperately searching my memories for pieces of the people that I've lost, and worry that the fragments I do have will fade, and I will be left with nothing.
Creating art allows me to preserve these fleeting memories—turning them into something physical, something permanent. It is my desperate attempt to capture and hold onto the moments that time threatens to erase. Through my work, I try to give form to grief, nostalgia, and memory—inviting others into the emotional complexities that live in between.

In "A Web of My Past Selves", we see figures entangled in a web—what does this image represent to you in the context of loss and identity?

Emma Krenzer | I Grew Older In Dog Years | 2025

Emma Krenzer | Security Blanket | 2024

The figures entangled in the web are all photographs of me at different stages of my life—each one representing a different version of myself. With this piece, I wanted to explore the idea that we are constantly evolving, continuously becoming new iterations of who we are, while also carrying the weight and memory of who we once were. In that sense, we're not just who we are now—we're a culmination of every version of ourselves that came before.

The loss I've experienced over the last few years hasn't just been the loss of others, but of myself as well. Grief has profoundly changed me. In many ways, I've mourned—and continue to mourn—the person, or rather the people, I used to be before loss reshaped me. At the same time, I'm extremely proud of the person I've become through that grief. She exists because of those experiences, and she wouldn't exist without them.

What I've come to realize is that those past versions of myself aren't truly gone. They still live within me, but they've changed, just as I have. They've been altered by time, by memory, by transformation. That's why I chose to depict them caught in a web—a web of my own making. They aren't lost; instead, they're woven into the fabric of my life. Permanently entangled, not in a way that restricts, but in a way that acknowledges their ongoing presence and influence.

What is your process like when starting a new piece? Do the visuals come first, or the emotional impulse?

For me, it's really a combination of both. My work is autobiographical, meaning it is derived from personal experiences and the emotions tied to them. Creating art is how I process those emotions; it's a way of working through what I've lived. Emotion or experience is always the starting point of my process, but interestingly, the visuals tend to come to me before I even begin creating as well.

I'm a very visually oriented thinker. I think almost entirely in images. Because of that, my emotions and experiences naturally take on visual forms in my mind. And often, those visuals come together in a way that becomes an idea for an art piece.

When I get an idea for new work, it usually appears to me as a fully formed visual in my head. I visualize the final product first. From there, I start thinking about what medium or materials would best bring that image to life. I essentially build the entire piece mentally, step by step, before I begin physically creating it. In some ways, I really appreciate this approach because I have a clear vision and direction. But at the same time, it can be frustrating if the final piece doesn't match what I had visualized initially. That disconnect can be discouraging, even though it's part of the process.

How does your background in psychology influence the way you construct your visual narratives?

A recurring theme throughout my work over time has been the idea of revealing what lies beneath the surface—both materially and conceptually. The exploration of this idea began during my undergrad, when I was pursuing both art and psychology. The two disciplines deeply informed one another and shaped the direction of my practice.

At the time, I found myself reflecting a lot on the concepts of suppression and shame. These were feelings I was personally struggling with and that I knew many others experienced, yet were rarely discussed openly. I wanted to explore these themes in a way that was metaphorical and emotionally resonant, using familiar domestic imagery to connect the tangible, physical world to the intangible inner-workings of the mind.

In my earlier work, I frequently used imagery like bathrooms and plumbing as metaphors for hidden emotional processes—what's unseen, repressed, or on the verge of eruption. I also incorporated childlike symbols, such as dollhouses, as a way to investigate psychological themes tied to memory, identity, and vulnerability.

Ultimately, my goal is to construct visual narratives that invite viewers to reflect on their own psychological landscapes in a way that feels both

Emma Krenzer | A Web Of My Past Selves | 2025

visually compelling and conceptually rich. Psychology has been a crucial influence on my creative process, and without it, I'm not sure I would have been drawn to explore these inner narratives in such a layered and symbolic way.

There is a strong tactile quality in work—fabric, yarn, toys, wallpaper textures. Why is materiality so central to your storytelling?

Being able to explore different materials and the way that they can shape and support the message of a piece is one of my favorite parts about being an artist, and why I've found such a love for creating mixed media work. I think that materials, especially those that may not be considered traditionally associated with fine art, can be such a powerful tools for storytelling and creating connection.

It has also been interesting to see how much my use of materials has changed and evolved as I have changed both as an artist and a person. In my earlier work, I used a lot of harder, more industrial materials like wood, pipes, and drywall, building rough structures that I would then cover with floral wallpaper. For me, wallpaper functioned not only as an aesthetic visual, but as a conceptual device, symbolizing concealment and touching on ideas like femininity and domestic spaces, and what lies beneath those surfaces.

Over the past few years, I've shifted away from these rigid materials and have began creating work in softer, textile materials. Part of this transition was due to the fact that I no longer had access to all of space and materials that my university provided me with during undergrad. But the shift also mirrored deeper emotional changes, and became really salient as I started experiencing the losses I have over the last few years. Everything just felt so heavy, and work I was making at the time carried a lot of that emotional weight.

Textiles, which we often associate with warmth, comfort, and care, became a natural material to turn to. I think I was drawn to them because they embodied exactly what I was so desperately yearning for: a sense of safety, home, and softness. I also wanted the materiality of my work to create those feelings for others. I think the universal nature of textiles has the power to foster a sense of emotional connection among people, evoking memories and shared feelings of comfort and home.

You mention the idea of "home" as a recurring theme. What does "home" mean to you now?

As I've grown older, the idea of "home" has become increasingly complex, and that complexity is something I've been exploring through my art. I've come to realize that, for me, home is more of a feeling than an actual place. And that feeling is often bittersweet.

Throughout my life, I've had many different versions of what "home" means. I've lived in many different places with many different people. Some of the places I once called home are places I can no longer return to, and that, in itself, is a strange and painful feeling. But even more painful is the reality that some of the people who I've shared these homes with are no longer on this Earth. It has given "homesick" a whole new meaning to me. It's not just missing a place, it's missing a moment in time, a version of life that can't be recreated.

That's why my relationship with the idea of home feels so complicated. Because even when I'm in the place I currently call my home, I am homesick. Homesick for all the past homes I've had, and for the people who made them feel like home. It's incredibly hard to sit with the knowledge that some of those versions of home are gone forever, especially because the people that made them home are no longer here. There is a quiet and profound grief in realizing: I can't go home.

But this understanding has also made me more present in the home I have now. It's made me cherish this version of home, knowing how fragile and fleeting it can be. Because this, too, will change. One day, I'll look back on where I am now with the same kind of longing I feel for all the homes that came before.

I've learned that home can be a lot of things, even things that don't even exist anymore. It can live in memories, in photos, in feelings that are hard to name. And maybe I will always be a little homesick, and that's okay.

Erica Galera is a passionate individual with a deep love for creativity and self-expression. She earned her BFA in Studio Art from Silliman University, Philippines. She fully embraces making and creating. She volunteers as an art editor for an online publication. Her works are mostly infused with themes of spiritual growth and inner healing. As an emerging creative, she works in a variety of mediums to explore her creative process.

Project Statement
This piece is a repurposed monoprint using acrylic paint. My incorporation of earth tones is a representation of soft femininity—calm and grounding. This is an attempt to restore that natural feminine energy and honor my feminine nature. Encouraging me to sit with myself and be in the process of being.

Nalân Karadag

Your works are deeply emotional and intuitive. How do you know when a piece is finished?

I often feel that a piece is finished when it has reached a certain balance and harmony for me.

Nalân Karadag | Frida | 2021

Sometimes, it's a sense of satisfaction or the feeling that no further changes are needed. It's also an intuitive decision, where I listen to my gut feeling and the emotions that the piece evokes in me.

How do you translate internal chaos or tension into visual forms?

I try to translate internal chaos or tensions into visual forms through expressive lines, bold colors, and dynamic compositions. I often use irregular shapes and contrasting elements to convey the intensity and emotions I feel. It's about representing the energy and movement within me in a way that touches the viewer and invites reflection.

Can you share a moment when creating art helped you process a personal experience?

During a particularly difficult time, I turned to my art to process an emotional experience. I created a piece that captured my feelings of confusion and pain, and through the act of creating, I was able to give shape to emotions I hadn't fully

Nalân Karadag | GDDH | 2022

understood. The process not only helped me express what I was going through, but also became a path to inner peace and healing.

Do you work with a set palette or do the colors choose themselves in the moment?

I am flexible and often let the colors decide spontaneously what best suits the mood and atmosphere of my artwork. Sometimes I have a specific palette in mind, but most of the time I let myself be guided by the colors that inspire me in the moment. This gives my works a lively and authentic energy.

What role does spontaneity play in your process, and how do you balance it with compositional control?

Spontaneity plays a significant role in my creative process, as it allows me to capture genuine inspiration and keep the work lively and authentic. I enjoy letting my intuition guide certain elements, which often leads to unexpected and exciting results. At the same time, I strive to maintain a balance by applying some compositional control, ensuring that the overall piece remains harmonious and coherent. This blend of spontaneity and control helps me create artwork that feels both spontaneous and thoughtfully composed.

What do you hope viewers feel or reflect on when looking at your artworks?

I hope that viewers feel a connection to my artworks and embark on a personal journey while looking at them. I enjoy it when my pieces evoke emotions—whether it's joy, contemplation, or surprise. Ultimately, I wish for them to inspire reflection and give each viewer the opportunity to discover their own meanings and stories within the artworks.

You often explore the contrast between chaos and order. Is this duality something you experience in daily life?

Sometimes, life feels like a whirlwind of unpredictable events and emotions, representing chaos. At other times, there are moments of calm, structure, and clarity—symbolizing order. Exploring this duality in my work helps me understand and express the balance we all navigate between these two states. It's a way to find harmony amidst the chaos and appreciate the beauty in both aspects.

Nalân Karadag | GDDH | 2024

— *Interview*

Samayra Slade

You mentioned you don't usually paint — what motivated you to start this project?

My friends had started doing their own painting projects, and I felt like I hadn't created anything in a while. It looked fun, so I went out and got supplies to start my own project.

How does your interest in architecture and fashion influence your visual style?

I'm usually more of an admirer of beautiful and creative things; I don't usually practice art seriously enough to have developed my skills. That being said, I tend to prefer more jewel toned colours and traditional patterns, which likely influences a bit of my style.

What inspired you to create this particular painting? What emotions or ideas were you hoping to express through the sea and sunrise?

I knew I wanted to paint something, and eventually I landed on painting a work that was ocean-inspired. I think the ocean is incredible and fascinating, despite living in a landlocked province. When I began, I tried to recreate a photograph I'd seen of crystal clear water casting shadows, evoking a sense of serenity, but quickly pivoted when I considered the colours I was working with. It ended up much darker than I initially thought it would be.

The theme of origins and life is powerful — do you often explore such large-scale concepts in your work?

I came to the conclusion of the meaning of my work after making it, which I find ironically fitting. My interests are typically pretty focused on people and human creation, but once in a while I wonder about bigger things like the creation of the world. I don't ever reflect on this for long, though, since it makes me anxious.

How do you balance your academic life with your passion for art?

It's difficult pursuing my passions with school and work. I try to reserve some time for myself to do the things I love, but at the moment I'm on the grind for my education.

What have you learned about yourself through creating this artwork?

I was reminded that even if things don't seem to be going the way I planned, it may be for the best, and I can end up with results that I limited myself to imagining if I trust the process.

Gary Dawes

You have had a diverse career in filmmaking and photography, and later transitioned to land art projects. How do these different experiences influence your current work?

I think the aesthetics side of things plays a part, but overall there is no real influence upon the land art itself, I find It's a different animal, there's more of an organic and physical process involved, more of a raw hands-on approach. I see land art as just another form of creativity that's all. It takes me out of my comfort zone. Away from the film and photography projects where I'm heavily reliant on my vision, light, cameras and lenses.

Your "Body of Light" exhibition was your first outdoor installation. Can you tell us more about the process of creating art in outdoor spaces and how it differs from indoor exhibitions?

I would say "Body of Light was more of a learning curve, and I kept the concept pretty simple. There are various things to bear in mind.One being what materials to use.The weather, the fluctuations in temperature and varying atmospheric conditions can be brutal at times, so weatherizing the artwork is paramount, A site visit once a month for a maintenance check to make sure things were still secure, safe and sound. Then there's budget, materials, transport and logistics, health and safety, public liability insurance.There's a lot more work involved. Another issue raised was about the artwork being stolen or vandalized. The way I feel about it is,

Gary Dawes | Outsider

that I invest a lot of my time, effort and care in what I do, but I'm certainly not precious about the work, I don't think you can stop it. Sure you can try to negate it sometimes, but if you worry about putting your work outside and it getting stolen or vandalized you will never get anything done. So Fuck the vandals and thieves.

"Looker" was displayed in Sherwood Forest, the first outdoor exhibition of its kind. What inspired you to bring your work to such a historical and iconic location?

Sherwood Forest had been on the radar for a while, plus the fact that nobody had ever done it before, I found it a stunning and atmospheric location, far away from the restrictions of concrete white walls and ceilings. With "Looker" I wanted to create some sought of connection between art and nature, a kind of coexistence amongst the elements and the environment, the "Looker" series just simply felt right for that location it's just a gut instinct or feeling about something that I use a hell of a lot. Both in art and in life. Another reason is I wanted to break away from a virtual world and the internet. Everything now is being driven digitally, with online exhibitions, virtual galleries, AI, Algorithms, Apps etc,etc, having my work just languishing on the internet with everything being harvested by AI without any permissions or regard. I see people everywhere constantly viewing things and communicating via mobile phones or computer screens. Like I'm doing right now. It's not for me. I feel very strongly that having a connection with nature and the outside world in both a physical and sensory sense is even more important today. I feel that the connection is slowly being lost.We are nature and nature is us. It was one of the main reasons I started Outsider.

In your Outsider projects, you explore art forms outside of photography. What mediums are you most excited about and experiment with in the future?

I'm not too sure, I have no agendas. Art and creativity in whatever form has always played a big part in my life and there will always be something I will want to explore and experiment with, to put my ideas to the test, to see if they come together or they fall apart. I never looked at my time spent in either film or photography as a career, I always saw it as a way of life, as I do to this day.

Your work explores alternative spaces for art. How do you approach selecting the locations for your installations, and how do these spaces enhance your artwork?

Gary Dawes | Outsider

I think it's more about intuition, a feel for something. Like I mentioned previously, I find it can be frustrating trying to put it all down into words. For me, It either works or it doesn't. I am always looking at everything and scavenging for ideas. If something gives me a tug I just follow it, I have always liked the idea of having my work set in a natural living backdrop amongst the changing seasons that come and go, the lighting and colors, the sounds, the smells, everything is in a constant state of flux which I find interesting both on a visual and sensory level. One instance comes to mind regarding your word "enhance". I had installed "Wolf Moon" in a local nature reserve it was made from wood and natural organic ingredients of white/black wild rice, mung beans, nerger, lentils, and star anise. Over a period of 7 yrs the weather had taken it's toll and it began to slowly decay which had diminished the artworks vibrancy. It took on a more natural mature and rustic look, the mung beans also went missing, I think the rats or mice had eaten them, I liked the fact that nature and the elements had intervened which had a physical impact on the artwork which I thought enhanced it and helped it blend more into the surroundings. I also like the impermanence and the volatility that comes with land art. I would say on an aesthetic level that over time I thought nature and the elements had done a better job than I had.

What role does the natural environment play in your creative process, especially when working on land art projects?

From an early age, I have always been in awe of wildlife and nature. It runs deep, and I find that using nature and the enviroment as a medium or a canvas so to speak starts to open everything up. It gives me a sense of freedom which allows me to explore and engage in a more organic and sensory way. I like to use the natural raw materials that are at hand, I find it gives the artwork a more natural look more of a coming together between art and the natural world. The picture frames I made for " Looker" were made up from the natural materials I had scavenged on my walks in the forest, the same with "Fishious". I don't think I would have ever achieved the same effect had I sourced the wood from a timber yard or the picture frames from a shop. I feel it's important for me to try and create art that is more than just a decoration or commodity.

As a self-taught artist, how has your non-traditional training influenced the development of your artistic voice and style?

The word's voice and style sound like something that's brought up at art school or university, which I know nothing about. I have a healthy dislike when people start verbalizing things with Jargon/artspeak. I have no real interest in style, I would hate to be pigeonholed for creating or be labeled with a certain style. All I know is that for me creating art in whatever form is a need. It is something I have always done, I don't analyze it, and I have no interest in voices or self-expression. If people ask why did you do this or that or whatever. There is NO why. I see my art as a work in progress and always will be.What I do know is that life without art would be a pretty empty and soulless existence.

Keiko Azemoto

I’m Japanese and currently living in Japan. I started working with latex outfits when I used to live in Canada. I enjoy working with various materials, such as oil paint, acrylic paint, and more.

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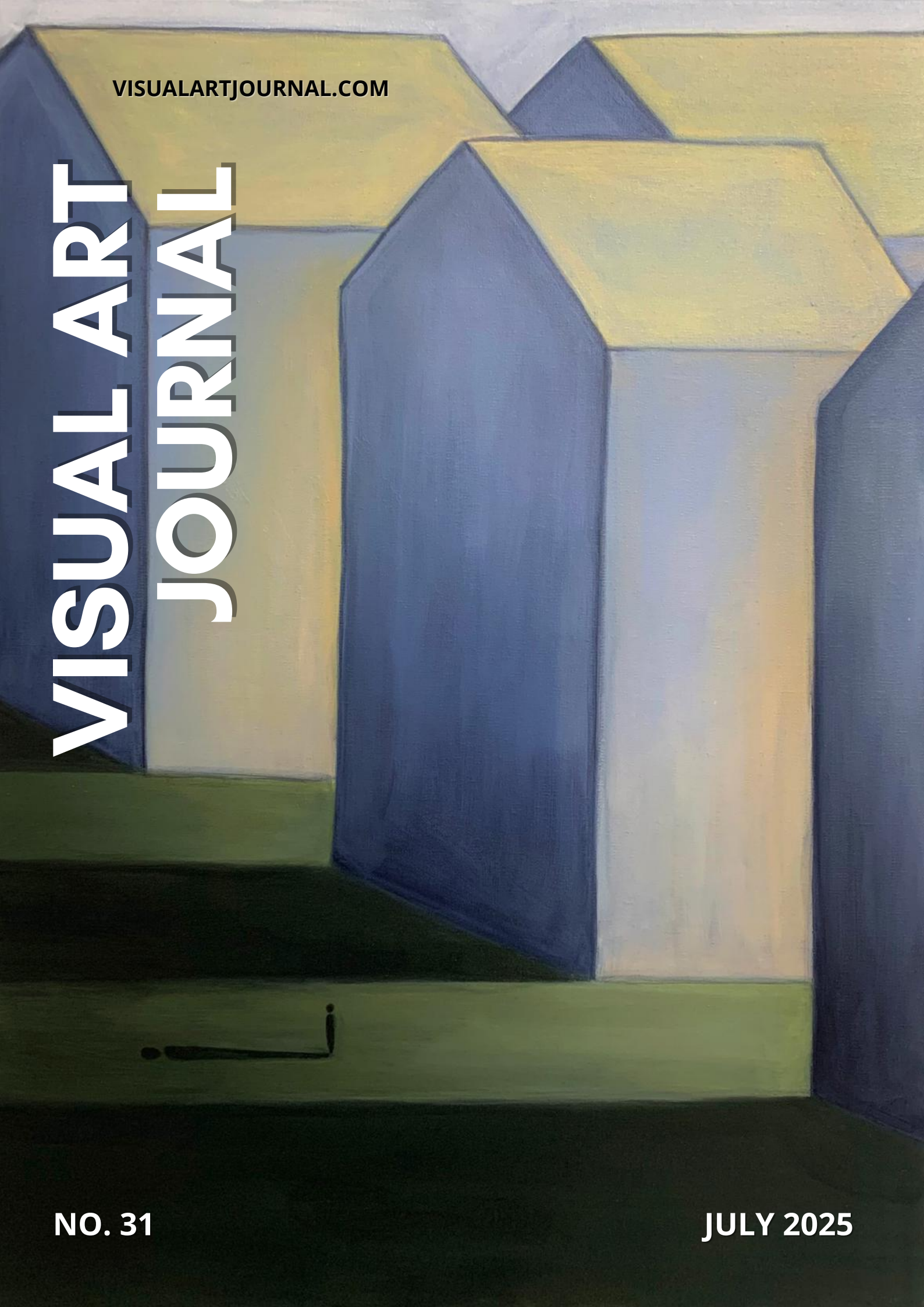

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