

# VISUAL ART JOURNAL

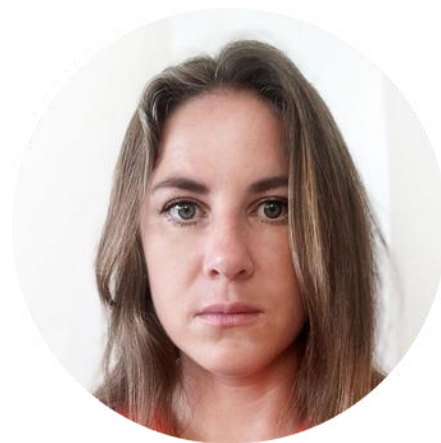
NO. 44

DECEMBER 2025





# — Intro



**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

Hello, dear reader,

In your hands is Issue 44 of our journal. Released in December, it feels as though it gathers together all the colors, forms, and themes that have emerged throughout the year.

For some, the arrival of a new year is an anticipation of something new; for others, it is a moment to reflect and sum things up; and for some, it is simply a change of date. Whatever this moment means to you, for our editorial team another year of working with exceptionally talented people is a great joy and an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

We sincerely hope that the road ahead will bring new encounters, new projects, and creative breakthroughs.

As always, more than 100 pages filled with beauty and thoughtful insights await you inside.

Enjoy the reading.

*On the Front Cover:*  
**Dominika Białas**  
Blaze  
2024

*On the Back Cover:*  
**Serpil Odabasi**



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

# Dominika Białas



**Your bird portraits combine realism with expressive, intense colors. How did this visual language develop over time?**



Dominika Białas | Focus | 2024

My visual language grew from the need to connect what I see with what I feel. At first, I painted birds simply because I found them incredibly beautiful — their forms, contrasts, and distinctive features fascinated me. Over time, I realized that realism alone wasn't enough to express their full energy. Strong, expressive color allows me to highlight the emotional dimension of the subject. My style naturally evolved into a combination of observation and expression — the form remains grounded in reality, while the color comes from within.

**What draws you specifically to birds as the central subject of this series?**

I'm drawn to birds because I simply like them. They are delicate yet powerful, and their diversity means each species carries its own personality, tension, and story. As a highly sensitive person, I easily pick up on these subtle qualities. This makes painting birds feel natural to me — a blend of aesthetic fascination and emotional closeness.

**The eye is the emotional focal point in your paintings. What does it represent for you?**

For me, the eye is where all emotion gathers. It defines the bird's character and brings the entire painting to life. I always begin with the eye — once it holds





expression, the portrait starts to breathe and guides my next steps. It's a small detail that determines everything.

### **How do you approach the balance between realism and expressive abstraction in your work?**

Realism provides structure — the foundation on which I build. Expressive color gives me freedom and allows emotion to enter the piece. I work in a rhythm of back-and-forth: building form, adding intuitive accents, returning to precision, and then opening again to spontaneity. This dynamic creates portraits that feel both readable and alive.

### **Color plays a powerful symbolic role in your paintings. How do you choose your palette for each piece?**

I choose colors intuitively, guided by the bird's character and energy. I look for natural harmony, paying attention to how the shades interact and how they shape the atmosphere. For me, color is a way to highlight the personality of the bird I'm portraying. It's a process driven

more by intuition and emotion than by strict rules.

### **You mention that your neurodivergent perception influences your art. How does this sensitivity shape your creative process?**

My perception is very sensitive — I quickly notice details, contrasts, and tension. This makes painting an intense and deeply focused experience.

I often feel colors before I consciously choose them — emotion guides me more than analysis. I also work in silence, which helps me fully enter the painting and connect with its mood. My neurodivergence is the source of the sensitivity that shapes my artistic language.

### **What emotions or states of mind are the most challenging for you to express visually?**

Calmness is the most difficult — emotional neutrality, balance, stillness.

I naturally create with intensity and contrast, so subtlety requires extra attention from me. Still, I enjoy this challenge — it helps me grow as an artist and discover new ways of expressing emotion.



# — Interview

## Misa Inoue

**Your art blends traditional drawing with digital techniques. How do you decide which elements should remain hand-drawn and which should be enhanced digitally?**

I grew up working with traditional media such as pencil, watercolor, acrylic, and oil paint—and I still love the textures and atmosphere that those techniques offer. At the same time, I'm fascinated by the convenience and the wider range of expression made possible through digital techniques.

While every piece I create is hand-drawn, I intuitively switch between Procreate's diverse brushes, constantly exploring how far I can convey the natural and realistic aesthetics of traditional painting through digital tools. Lately, Procreate has been my primary tool, — though I did recently buy new art supplies again because I suddenly felt like painting with real paint after such a long time.

**You explore spiritual themes such as past lives, auras, and inner transformation. When did your interest in the unseen**



Misa Inoue | Jealousy | 2025



**or metaphysical world begin?**

I've been fascinated by the unseen world ever since I was a child. In my twenties, while living in the United States, I lost several friends at a young age. Their passing deepened my curiosity about the afterlife, and I began devouring books on the subject, almost in search of solace. Since then, I've had a number of mysterious experiences of my own. And even during times of emotional struggle, the certainty that I was being protected by an unseen presence made it much easier for me to keep going. I've realized that I seem to have the ability to sense people's emotions and energy — not visually, but intuitively. Over time, I developed a desire to translate those delicate sensations into visual form through drawing, as a way to offer healing to others.

**Moving from Japan to the U.S. and later to Paris has exposed you to very different cultures. How have these transitions shaped your artistic voice?**

My artistic voice has been shaped by the cultures I've lived in. Each place has left a distinct imprint on how I see the world and how I express it visually.

I was born in Japan, and although I grew up with a strong fascination for Western culture through my family's love of art, the Japanese sense of *ma* — the meaningful use of space — and the dedication to craftsmanship remain the foundation of my aesthetics.

During my time studying in the United States, I was deeply inspired by nostalgic art and graphic design that evoke the spirit of California in the '60s and '70s, as well as by my classmates from many different racial and cultural backgrounds. The mix of cultures and perspectives opened up an entirely new way of thinking about visual expression.

After moving to Paris, my artistic sensibility shifted once again as I was surrounded by a city where beauty is naturally woven into everyday life — from the streets to the architecture and the general appreciation for art in daily culture.

All of these cultural influences blend within me, and they drive my desire to create art that transcends borders — work that carries the quiet sensitivity of Japan, the free-spirited diversity of America, and the refined elegance of Paris. Although my voice





has taken shape through these experiences, I'm still exploring and evolving — always searching for new stylistic possibilities.

**Your portrait “Jealousy” uses the Hannya mask to symbolize emotional intensity and inner conflict. What personal insights did you gain while creating this piece?**

This piece is a self-portrait in which half of my face transforms into a Hannya mask, and it explores one of the deepest and most universal human emotions — jealousy.

In Noh theatre, the Hannya mask symbolizes a woman consumed by intense emotions such as love, jealousy, and resentment, to the point where her heart transforms into a demon. Yet the word Hannya originally comes from Buddhism and means “the wisdom of enlightenment.” That duality suggests that overwhelming emotions can also become a doorway to deeper self-understanding.

Jealousy is one of the most difficult emotions for humans to handle. If left unattended, it can harm others and destroy ourselves. But at the same time, jealousy can also serve as a mirror — a chance to ask, “Why am I feeling this way? What am I truly longing for?” When we face that pain honestly, the hidden wisdom beneath the emotion can finally begin to emerge.

The half-Hannya face in the drawing represents that moment of inner awakening — the insight that arises only when we stop running away from the darkness and dare to look directly into it. On a personal level, I have experienced jealousy myself, just like anyone else. But I also suffered from being the target of jealousy from others. In Japan especially, there is a cultural tendency expressed in the saying “the nail that sticks out gets hammered down”; standing out or being different can easily provoke resentment.

Through these experiences, I realized that jealousy brings benefit to no one. It only causes suffering — unless we transform it. If we

shift our perspective, jealousy can become a source of growth, strength, and even healing. With this work, I wanted to express that possibility: that the emotions we fear the most can become the very catalyst for our inner evolution.

**In your work “Past Life: The Nordic Healer,” you merge ancient shamanic symbolism with a contemporary Japanese face. What draws you to the theme of past lives?**

My interest in past lives began in my teens, after reading the international bestseller series *Many Lives, Many Masters*. The idea that our souls reincarnate hundreds or even thousands of times — and that the traumas, joys, passions, and even professions of past lives can influence who we are today — deeply fascinated me. According to the books, remembering and healing past lives can play a powerful role in the growth of the soul.

Later in life, I had an experience that surprised me even more: a spiritual counselor who knew nothing about my background told me that I had past lives as American and French artists, and that those experiences were strongly affecting my current life path. Hearing that was both mysterious and strangely convincing, as if something clicked into place.

I wanted others to feel that same sense of romance — and to turn it into hope for their lives today. So I began offering portrait-and-reading services that connect people with their potential past selves. *Past Life: The Nordic Healer* is one of those works — a portrait that merges the contemporary Japanese woman with the attire of her past-life self as a Nordic shaman. I hoped to capture a mystical, forest-spirit-like atmosphere, as if two lifetimes were overlapping in a single image.

**Many of your works explore healing, clarity, and emotional transformation. How do you personally experience art as a tool for healing?**

Art has always been a source of healing and purification for me — and it is also my *ikigai*. Growing up with an older sister who was very skilled at drawing, I found that since childhood, I felt most at peace when I was alone and completely absorbed in making art. Looking back, I think my sensitivity led me to pour my emotions into my drawings. Whenever I went through difficult periods in life, I always seemed to cross paths with someone who rekindled my passion for creating — a mentor-like presence or someone who reminded me why I love art.

When I was a child, my family and I often visited museums together, but since moving to Europe, spending time alone in museums, lingering in front of works I love, and walking through the city admiring its beautiful architecture have become precious moments that offer me deep insight.

**Your recent move to Paris seems to inspire you. What aspects of the city’s artistic culture resonate most deeply with your current creative direction?**

Living in Paris has deeply inspired my current creative direction. What resonates most deeply with me are the ornate details found in buildings and sculptures, the craftsmanship and devotion behind them, and the legacy of Art Nouveau, as well as the dreamlike influence of Surrealism, that still shape the aesthetic spirit of the city.

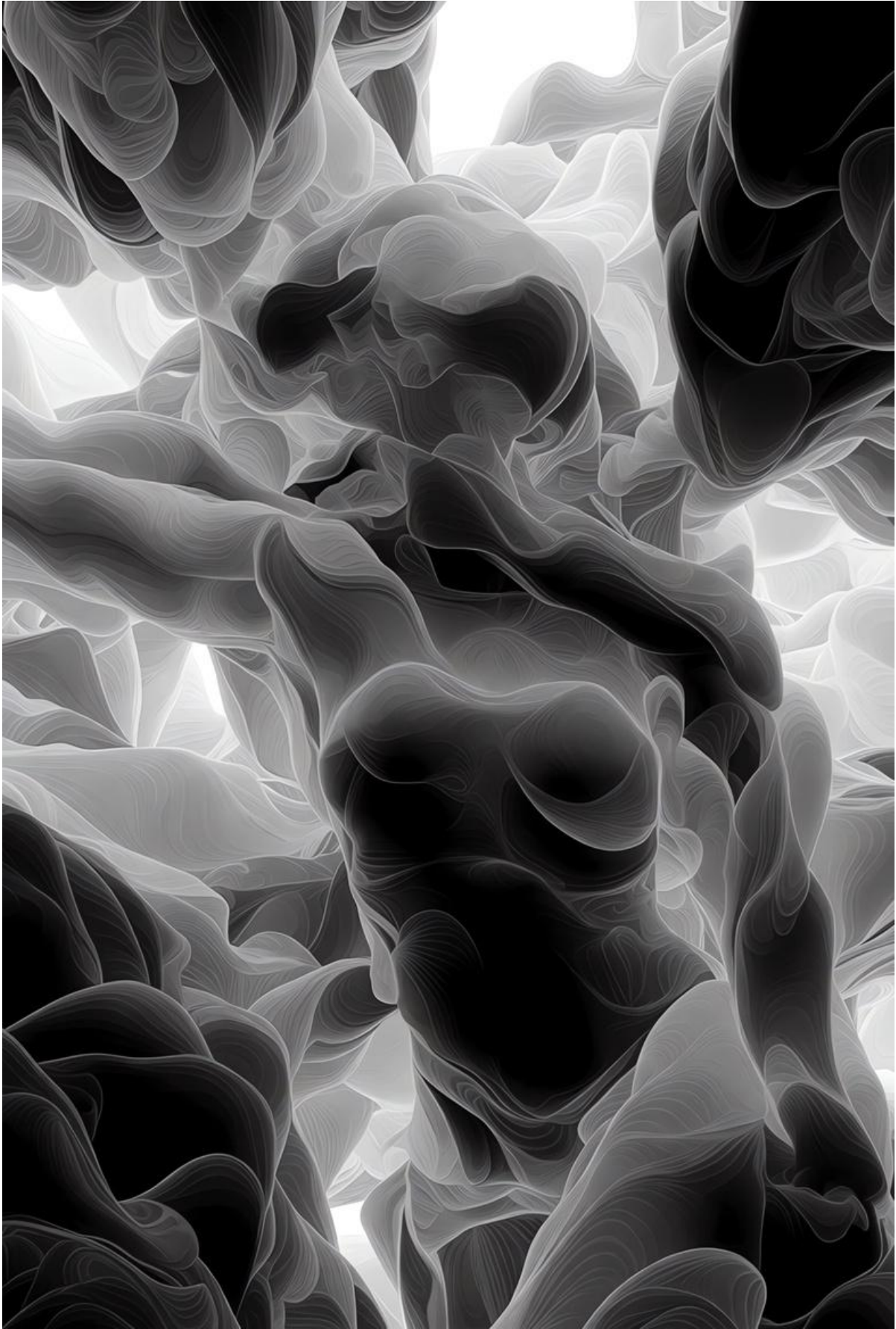
Moving to Paris reignited my passion for creating and encouraged me to push further into intuitive, emotionally driven expression. I'm truly grateful that I found the courage to move here; deciding to live in Paris was one of the best choices I've ever made.

**Ian Barnes**

I'm an abstract Digital Artist based in Toronto, Canada who is obsessed with abstract surreal art. I mainly work with a discrete global clientele which includes luxury interior designers, celebrities, corporate, and media outlets in which I create original 1/1 large works on commission. I use various software and digital techniques to create art pieces that blend abstract, translucence, and photographic elements. My artwork lives between the real & surreal, and titillates the senses.

*Project Statement*

Art should be large and on the wall.







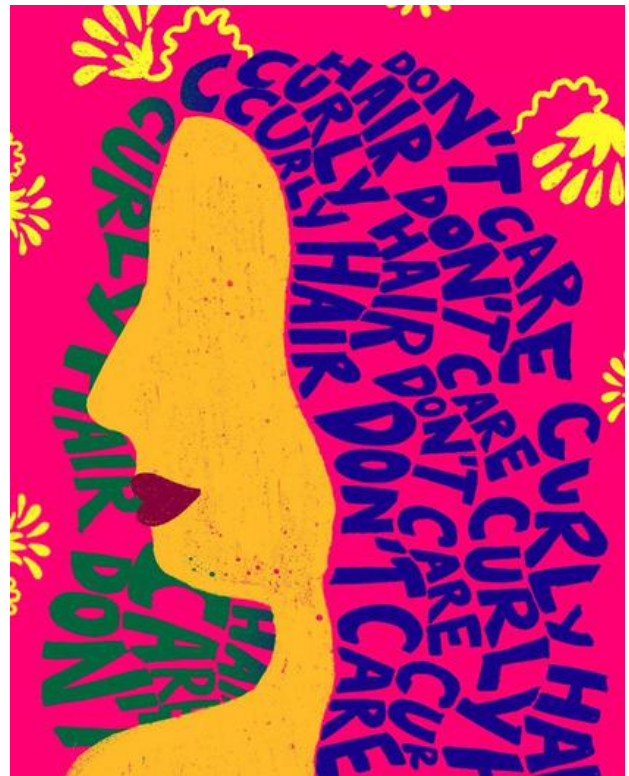
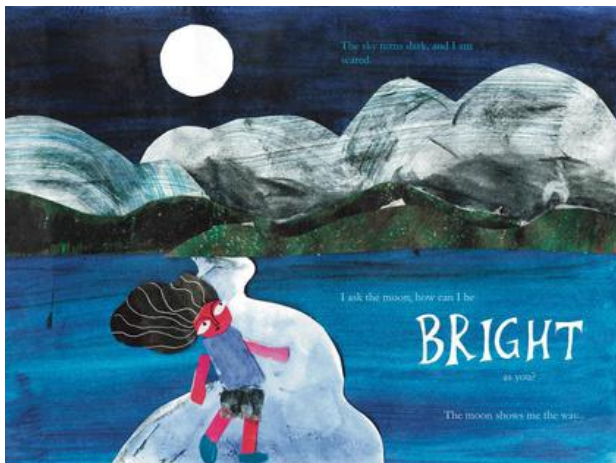
## — Interview

# Arrushi Chakraborty

**Your illustrations have a strong narrative quality — almost like short visual stories. How do your ideas usually begin? From a character, a memory, or a specific emotion?**

I like to have a specific emotion that I would like to convey to my audience. Emotion is a big part of my artistic identity. I connect my emotions with colors, fleeting memories—the deeply saturated blue of a beanie I spotted on the subway, the warm bokeh blur of Christmas lights, the earthiness of my morning coffee. If I forget the minute details of an event, I remember how it felt to be in that very moment. I am a believer in the X-factor that shapes my own art—and that is my ability to communicate my feelings through my own voice.

Arrushi Chakraborty | Moon



Arrushi Chakraborty | Self Portrait

**Growing up in Kolkata clearly shaped your sensitivity to colors and storytelling. What visual memories from your childhood still influence your work today?**

Like many metropolitan cities, Kolkata has an unparalleled beauty of its own. I fondly remember helping my mother drape her vibrant sarees, nine yards of pure elegance. I remember a lot of marigold flowers — they were my favorite flowers in childhood. My parents had a small wooden altar that consisted of several tiny idols of Hindu deities. The miniscule sculptures spoke volumes. I saw incense smoke float lazily up into the air, and I wondered where it finally went. I didn't always look at these memories fondly. Only when I was introduced to Western culture and experienced people's appreciation for diversity, did I learn to take pride in my own.

Currently, my art is subconsciously — or maybe consciously — shaped by these key moments from my childhood that shaped my surroundings. In terms of color, I saw bright and warm hues in Kolkata, but also the deep blue of dusk that inundated the entire city. This taught me contrast. In my mother's saree, big floral patterns were often broken up by smaller lines and circles. This taught me negative space. Holding the stone murti of Shiva in my hand as I bathed it in water. This taught me 3-dimensional form. And so on.

**Many of your works balance playfulness and introspection. How do you find that balance between whimsy and deeper meaning?**





Thank you for asking this thoughtful question. I grew up around a lot of colorful memories, but I was also a quiet observer. I was a wallflower, and I loved reading books and getting lost in a world of my own making. There was a balance, and I have grown to appreciate that through my artistic practice. To be candid, I am still trying to perfect this balance in my art. Sometimes I try doing it through different styles, but I've found my most recent piece, *A Mermaid Called Musing*, to be the most conducive to my creative intentions. I used vibrant colors, while maintaining the emotional complexity of the figure — which is why I think a lot of people like it.

**You often blend digital illustration with tactile media like gouache, ink, and charcoal. What attracts you to combining these techniques?**

The balance I talked about before. Digital tools are easier to attain a crisp, clean style with, whereas tactile media can be more successful in achieving organic textures and brushstrokes. I am still learning how to stop with a piece of art — how to surrender to the last brushstroke that is truly necessary. For this reason, I combine digital and traditional techniques to fully optimize a piece's potential.

**You mention being inspired by fleeting moments — expressions, sounds, small gestures. How do you capture these ephemeral details in your work?**

It really depends, case-by-case. But color plays a huge role in expressing exactly what I want to convey. I am fascinated with Matisse's *Blue Nudes*. The eyes and the facial expression of my character also weigh in heavily. The way they are posed, and the environment I pose them in. If it's a closeup, it's probably meant to be more introspective or whimsical. If it's a full blown environment, it's meant to be more analytical.

**Who or what are your biggest artistic influences — illustrators, writers, filmmakers, or even places?**

My artistic influences have evolved over time. Early on, I found quiet comfort in the bold minimalism of Malika Favre. Christoph Niemann's *New Yorker* covers captivated me with their wit, clarity, and expressive simplicity. I really liked Matisse's work, and I still love the colors and paint quality of Fauvism. For my Junior Thesis project, I illustrated 6 pieces based on Jhumpa Lahiri's heart-rending novel *The Lowland*. I resonated with the immigrant story, the feelings of homesickness and dissociation, the starkly real pictures she paints of Kolkata, and of Rhode Island (I have never been to Rhode Island, but I would love to visit someday).

**As a young artist now based in Brooklyn, how has your creative voice evolved since moving from Kolkata to New York?**

Although I was severely dissociated after moving to New York, I remained hopeful about one thing: the abundance of art housed within some of the world's most renowned museums and galleries. In New York, I discovered what I had been searching for all along: a community of artists who are, above all, honest with themselves. I came to realize that it takes immense courage to translate one's inner world — shaped by past traumas, present struggles, and future possibilities — into visual form. For a long time, I tried to imitate trends and styles in the art world. But that did not work, and I was simply bad. I realized early on that trying to borrow from other artists what doesn't bring me joy is not the way to go. I still find myself sifting through a lot of different art styles, but what I have to say has remained the same over many years.



**Serpil Odabasi** is a Turkey-born Canadian multidisciplinary artist based in Toronto. She works across analog and digital media including drawing, painting, collage, and illustration. Her practice explores themes of memory, displacement, and the quiet resilience that emerges in the aftermath of personal and collective ruptures. She has participated in more than 30 solo and group exhibitions in cities such as Istanbul, Athens, Ankara, Diyarbakir, Izmir, and Toronto. Her work has also appeared on book and magazine covers as well as posters for theatre and film festivals. She holds a BFA in Fine Arts from Gazi University in Ankara, Turkey, and studied Graphic Design at Toronto Film School in 2015. She currently works as an art instructor and continues to produce new works across various media.

### *Project Statement*

My work emerges from the fractures where speech fails, where memory collapses into silence, and where the self must reshape in order to endure. Each piece is built from layers—ink, collage, monoprint, acrylic—echoing the layers of a life marked by migration, rupture, and the quiet weight of survival. I am drawn to figures that are both present and disappearing: women who carry unseen burdens, bodies that fracture into shadow, faces that hold both defiance and exhaustion. Animals, wings, ropes, stones, and emptied silhouettes appear throughout my work not as symbols to decode, but as traces of emotional and historical memory—things held in the body long after language is gone. I use texture, erasure, and repetition to reveal what is usually hidden: the silent negotiations of fear, the fatigue of resilience, the private rituals of staying alive. My practice is a way of marking the unspoken. It is not confession, but insistence. Each work says, quietly but firmly: I was here. I remain.







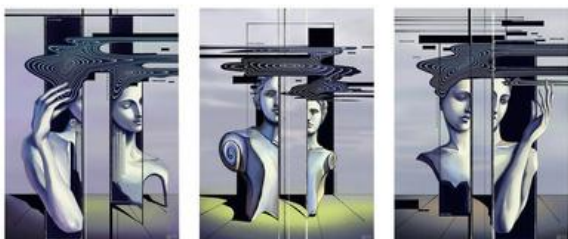


# Nyll Axis

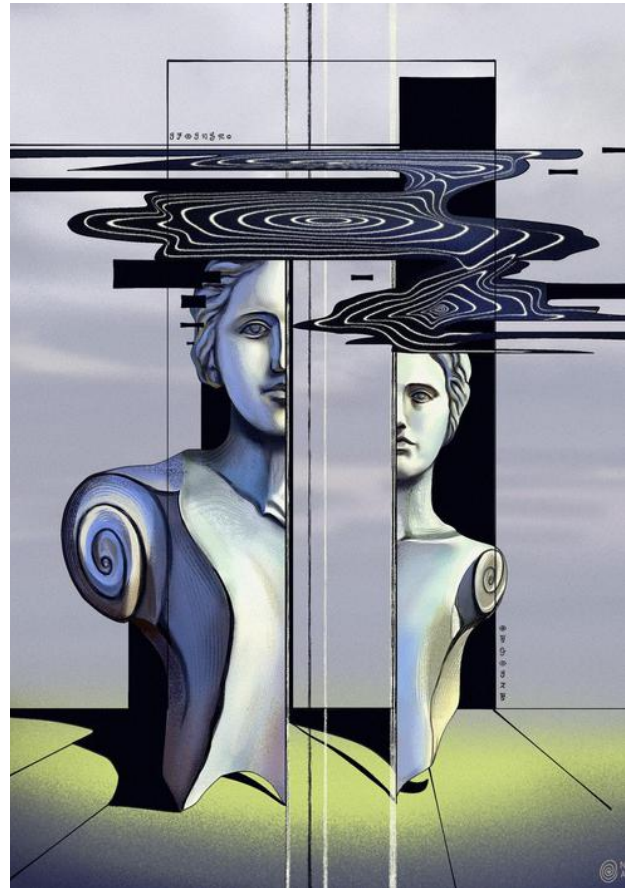
**Your practice revolves around erasure and removing narrative. What first drew you to absence as a creative method?**

It began with an awareness of finitude — the sense of emptiness, the absence of everything. I was looking for a way to interact with these sensations, searching for the tools through which I could approach them. The search revealed itself to be endless, and the tools turned out to be visual art.

**In your series, perception appears fragmented — almost interrupted. How do you define the moment when perception becomes division?**



Nyll Axis | Divided Attention Series



Nyll Axis | Divided Attention

Perception is already an act of separation — the emergence of a perceiver and the perceived. I can only work with the moment when this fact becomes most acute. At that point, the visual elements of the painting and the act of perception-as-division converge into a single event.

**The figures feel both human and architectural. What attracts you to merging body, structure, and space?**

Structure is integral to perception. The body and the psyche can both be understood as structures, and the architectures we build arise from the same spatial cognition. These elements carry, for me, simultaneous aesthetic and structural significance.

**You describe perception as the birth of separation. Do you see art as a way of returning to unity?**

If perception is division, then non-perception is non-separation — the return to unity. These form the two poles within which human consciousness unfolds. Art, for me, is a way to create a temporary equilibrium between them, each work a different iteration of that balance.

**Conflict is described as “the densest form of separation.” How does this idea manifest visually**





Nyll Axis | Divided Attention

### in the series?

Through the two separated male figures and through visual cues that echo the architecture and symbolism of the Roman Empire.

### What changes in you — perceptually or emotionally — while creating these divided forms?

At a certain point, the forms align into a structure that carries a sense of minimalist order. That alignment

signals completion. It provides a brief illusion of control before the next descent into emptiness and unstructured multiplicity.

### If perception is always fragmented, what does wholeness mean to you as an artist?

When absolute integrity appears, there is no one left to register it. As long as I exist as a perceiver, I encounter only its echoes — signals from infinity. But those signals are what sustain the entire process.



**Alexandru Crișan** (b. Bucharest, Romania 1978) is a visual artist interested in the existential complementarity of objective and nonobjective forms of expression. To resolve the former, he is an architect - "but one doesn't shoot the breeze when it comes to architecture, one comes with bricks and mortar where the breeze will shoot", as he tells his students. As far as the latter is to be unpacked, his "counter-professional" career in photography began in 2008; his paintings stand, for almost three decades, as the most intimate, borderline atavistic, acts of divulgence. Assuming that taxonomy is of any consequence, he is partial to fine-art photography and Abstract Expressionism. The eclectic nature of his projects is, therefore, a given.

When it comes to the acrylic heart-chambers of his work, there is an uncanny sentiment of intimacy that gradually found its safe house within the lyrical abstractions spectrum. In the aftermath of incipient spiritualist art etudes, transcending a surrealist period of emancipation from the confines of geometry, not to mention a stint in the magical realism of overpainted photographic negatives, an obsessive chase for the "taming of the light within the organic pool of colors" ensued. While this pursuit found its default creative outlet within architecture, it also pushed him towards the logic of abstract expressionism. A decade after he found his eclectic (often nonrepresentational) niche, the most spectacular results were the series "The Human Comedy" (acrylic Balzacian musings on intersectional dead ends), "Discorsi" (color-coded existentialist Q&As), and "Q" (a chromatic synthesis triggered by anxieties and saudade). His works evolved into a symbiosis which he calls "Brutalisme lyrique". He describes this artistic approach as "a filiation in which the Abstraction Lyrique is a phenomenological motherly figure, while the nybrutalism may claim ontological paternal custody, yet the - ultimately needed - IVF-like metabolic praxeology is delivering the visceral coherence. To put it differently, I now act as a painter (abstract, perhaps) and I final-cut as an architect (deconstructivist, probably)." The "Entropy" series is the pinnacle of this process.

Crișan's works have been presented in over a dozen international exhibitions, have been published in several peer-reviewed magazines, have received several international awards and nominations, and are part of several privately owned collections and art galleries.



Alexandru Crișan | Q2-Quaecumque Diptych





Alexandru Crișan | Q1-Quassatura



# Mackenzie Browning



**Your installation Meander is deeply rooted in slow, patient handwork. What does slowness mean to you as an artist, and how does it shape your process?**



Mackenzie Browning | Floor Detail | 2024

Slowness is the foundation of my studio practice. It is a meditative space where I train my mind to become centred, focused, and receptive. The repetitive actions of cutting, arranging, and layering hundreds of CMYK screen prints allow me to settle into a rhythm where I can listen closely to my intuition. Slowness helps me notice shifts in colour, quiet textures, and emotional cues that might be missed at a faster pace. It is where clarity shows up. When people encounter the installation, I hope they feel the calm and presence that this process builds over time.

**You often work with recycled and repurposed materials. How does material sustainability influence your creative decisions?**

Paper has an ephemeral quality that I return to often. I work with recycled cardstocks, repurposed cotton papers, older prints, and offcuts. These materials carry evidence of their past lives and reflect the cyclical movement of nature. Growth, breakage, renewal. Sustainability in my practice is both conceptual and practical. By using recycled and repurposed materials I acknowledge the life of a sheet of paper and its ongoing transformation. The work becomes connected to natural cycles and to the landscapes that influence my thinking. It becomes a living material history.

**The stones in Meander were inspired by your hikes in Banff. What drew you to these forms, and what did you observe in them that informed the project?**



My time in Banff was shaped by hiking. Those longer, slower routes allowed me to study the stones along riverbeds and trails with real attention. When you slow down, the colours and luminosity within these forms begin to reveal themselves. Soft mineral shifts. Unexpected pinks and greens. Surfaces that catch and hold light in subtle ways. Seeing these features takes a keen eye and a patient pace. Translating the stones through CMYK layers allowed me to amplify their natural glow and bring forward delicate tonalities that are easy to overlook. They became metaphors for resilience and for the beauty that reveals itself only through careful attention. Their rounded, weathered shapes naturally lent themselves to ideas of pathways that shift and reconnect, and these visual cues guided the conceptual direction of Meander.

**The installation shifts between wall and floor, creating a sense of movement. How do you think viewers' bodies and perspectives shape their experience of this work?**

The viewer's movement is essential to the installation. The two circular forms on the walls act as anchors at each end of the space and the stones on the floor create a path that flows between them. As people move around the work they become aware of their own pace, balance, and presence in the room. I want the installation to feel like an encounter, almost like entering a symbolic landscape. Their shifting perspective changes what the piece reveals and this dynamic exchange is something I value. It mirrors the way the work was created through movement, observation, and slow accumulation.

**You describe the work as reflecting non linear pathways of creative discovery. Can you share a moment during the residency when the direction of the project shifted unexpectedly?**

Non linear discovery is at the heart of how I work. I usually enter a project with a plan that is about sixty percent formed and I intentionally leave the remaining forty percent open. That openness gives the work space to speak back. I listen closely to my inner dialogue and to the quiet cues that emerge throughout the day. During my residency at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity there was a moment when the project revealed its own direction. I had placed a group of printed stones on the floor simply to clear space. As I moved around them it felt as if they were calling to climb upward and connect to the circular forms on the walls. That intuitive pull changed the entire project. The pieces began to behave like a living system. They folded, climbed, and formed portals. Through daily action the work guided me toward a more expansive and immersive direction. This is how my strongest ideas emerge. It is a conversation between structure and intuition and a willingness to follow what feels true.

**Walking and physical movement seem essential to**

**this project. How does being in a landscape influence the way you compose and arrange your pieces?**

Movement is essential to how I think. Hiking shaped the rhythm of my days in Banff. The act of climbing, pausing, taking in the view, and adjusting to terrain stays in my body long after I leave the trail. When I return to the studio I arrange the printed stones through similar gestures. I pace around the work, crouch down, shift my position, and respond physically to what is unfolding. The installation reflects the way a trail narrows, widens, and reveals new perspectives. The landscape becomes part of the work through these repeated movements and the memory of being in both the mountains and southern Ontario's trails.

**Your work blurs the line between printmaking, sculpture, and installation. How do you see these disciplines interacting in your practice?**

Printmaking is my starting point for everything. The CMYK layers build the depth and luminosity of the stones. Once the prints enter the space they begin to behave sculpturally. They shift between image and object and they activate the room around them. I am interested in how print can leave the frame, move across the wall, slip onto the floor, and function like temporary architecture. In Meander the printed stones act like a landscape that viewers move through. This expanded field of printmaking feels aligned with current conversations in contemporary art where disciplines flow into one another. I want my work to contribute meaningfully to that dialogue.



Mackenzie Browning | Installation View Alt | 2024



A collage of various textile samples, including fibers, threads, and fabric scraps, arranged on a white background. The samples include a dark, textured fabric, a light-colored fabric with a dark pattern, a dark fabric with a light pattern, and a dark fabric with a light pattern. A small label with the word "Fashion" is visible. The collage is framed by a dashed line and scissors at the top.

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A collage of various textile samples, including fibers, threads, and fabric scraps, arranged on a white background. The samples include a dark, textured fabric, a light-colored fabric with a dark pattern, a dark fabric with a light pattern, and a dark fabric with a light pattern. A small label with the word "Fashion" is visible. The collage is framed by a dashed line and scissors at the top.







Yu Yu (Spencer) | Anatomy of a Belief



Yu Yu (Spencer) | The River of Time | 2025



# — Interview

## Annie RC

**How did your background as a chef shape the way you approach photography today?**

One of the first things you learn when working in the food industry is that people eat with their eyes first. How food or a plate is presented to a guest often determines their experience - a beautiful plate will automatically taste better than a dull, uninteresting one. The same can be said of photography. The aim is that at first glance a photo must draw you in, either a striking subject or something else that peaks your interest to look deeper, further, more intimately at the picture as a whole.



Annie RC | Checkers



**What was the moment or experience in the community photography programme that made you fall in love with black-and-white photography?**

During the orientation on the first day we were told that we would be shooting only in black and white for the entire workshop and I was slightly disappointed. By the end of that same day, I realised that shooting in black and white drove us to look deeper when taking photographs.

When you remove colour, light and shadow take center stage, and viewers aren't distracted by the "real" colours of things. It highlights mood and atmosphere: As an example, high-contrast lighting can create drama or tension, while soft gray tones can feel nostalgic or poignant. Black and white photography places emphasis on emotion and timelessness. By stripping away colour, monochrome photography removes distracting elements and focuses the viewer on the raw emotion, expressions, and connection within the image.

**Your images often focus on quiet corners, textures, and overlooked details. What draws you to these "forgotten places"?**

The mere fact that they are overlooked. Many photographers focus on the obvious, the every day, the blazingly colourful. I want to focus on the details





that people miss, the dismissed corners and objects. The disheveled, the broken and the hidden have such beautiful stories to tell, if you only stop to listen.

### **How do you decide which scenes work best in black and white rather than in colour?**

Shadows and light often determine if I feature a photograph in black and white. Striking contrasts are so much more clear when shadows highlight subjects, strips of light enhancing details, intricate textures reveal themselves when colours are removed. There is also a deep knowing and resonance when taking a particular picture that it should be monochrome.

### **Many of your photographs feel cinematic and atmospheric. Are you inspired by film or any particular visual artists?**

I'm definitely inspired by old cinema, the way a picture can tell an entire story really aligns with me. Also the current trend of abandoned places / urban exploring really influences my eye when I look at my surroundings, finding abandoned and forgotten nooks and corners to show that even in decay there is beauty.

### **Is there a particular location in Cape Town that you find yourself returning to again and again for**

### **inspiration?**

There is a strip of smaller fishing coastal towns along the south coast that I am constantly drawn to. Kalk bay in particular has a small harbour where mostly independent commercial fisherman dock their boats. The diverse community and the natural scenery pulls me back over and over.

I'm also drawn to the inner city streets with it's vibrant communities. Cape Town has a rich and complex history with many surviving historical buildings, that are still in daily use, dating back to the 1700's and 1800's. This makes for amazing architectural photography and capturing changes and symbiotic relationships between old and new, historic and current.

### **What emotions or thoughts do you hope viewers experience when looking at your work?**

The emotions a photograph evokes are subjective and vary depending on the viewer's own experiences. As the photographer, I want to invite viewers to connect with a captured moment, but I cannot dictate their exact response.

However, by capturing hidden corners, objects or often missed scenes I want to encourage viewers to stop, think, experience, as to intentionally guide their reaction through my artistic choices.

Ultimately, I want viewers to see the world through my unique lens. My photography reflects my perspective and my thoughts about the scene. If you can make viewers feel something—anything at all—then you have successfully moved beyond simply documenting a moment and have given the image an emotional weight and purpose.





## Bertrand Capelle

I am self-taught in photography. More interested in expressing a poetic vision than in the technical aspects of this medium, I experiment a lot, whether through the use of blurring or multiple exposures, black and white or color.

I consider photography to be an object that is not meant to remain an immaterial image. The print quality, the choice of paper, its feel (smooth or textured), its transparency, as well as the selection of the frame and the assembly of the prints, all contribute to the emotion one can feel when viewing a work, whether it be simple prints, frames, artist's books, etc.

It was my desire to create artistic objects that led me to train in printing techniques. This allowed me to explore other processes such as engraving, lithography, offset printing, and cyanotype.

### *Artist Statement*

The term Yugen describes a central concept in Japanese aesthetics that refers to a beauty that is both profound and mysterious, often tinged with melancholy.

It is less about representing reality objectively than about evoking subjective emotions and sensations in the viewer. Often associated with nature and human feelings, yūgen invites meditative contemplation, leaving much room for personal interpretation.

This notion, difficult to translate into a single word, encompasses a complex range of emotions and experiences, from serenity to nostalgia, to a feeling of deep connection with the world.

Yūgen is a series of 12 photographic works that capture fragments of our world, real or imaginary, where each image oscillates between dream and reality.

Whether viewed individually or assembled in a poetic mosaic, the works respond to each other in a silent dialogue, offering each viewer a glimpse into an inner landscape as well as a reflection of the outside world.

Bertrand Capelle | Yugen



Bertrand Capelle | Yugen







Bertrand Capelle | Yugen



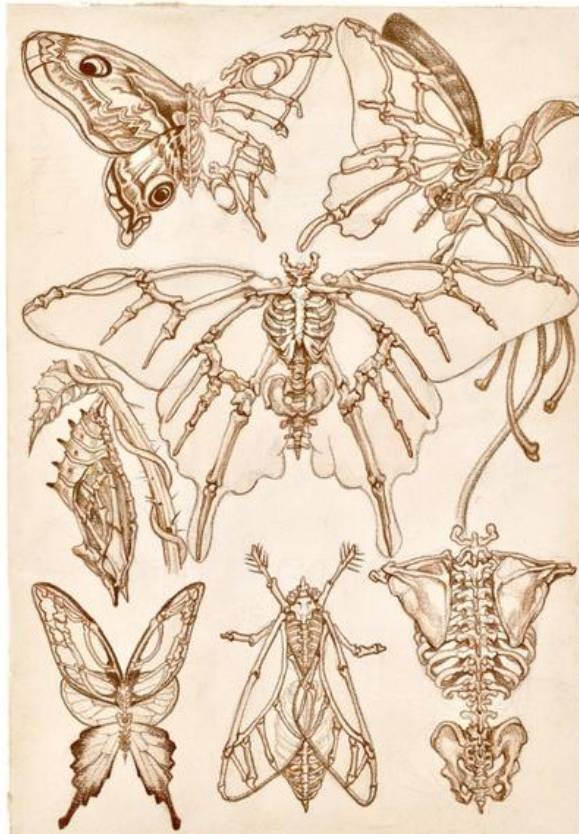
Bertrand Capelle | Yugen

## — Interview

# Qinyunyi Zhang (Yuii)

**Your work merges illustration with ceramics in a very fluid, organic way. How do these two disciplines inform and transform each other in your creative process?**

My exploration of these two mediums is, in essence, an investigation into the boundary between two-dimensional and three-dimensional space. In illustration, I favor



Qinyunyi Zhang (Yuii) | Bone Butterfly | 2025



maximalism, while in ceramics, I prefer bold and simplified forms. This allows them to influence and complement each other in terms of visual rhythm. Furthermore, the themes from my illustrations provide visual inspiration for my ceramic creations. Conversely, ceramics translate the flat visuals of my drawings into three-dimensional entities, even adding a layer of functionality.

**You often materialize abstract or difficult emotions as fantastical biological specimens. What is your internal process for translating a feeling into a creature?**

I approach this translation by combining rationality and sensibility. On an intuitive level, I first select elements I am personally drawn to, such as plants, bones, or marine life. Then, through rational analysis, I deconstruct the characteristics of the emotion and match it with elements of a similar nature. For example, the prototype for AMO, which represents attachment, is the parasitic plant dodder. Its growth state is intimately tied to its host, mirroring how different patterns of attachment are closely linked to the other party in an intimate relationship.

**The “Illustrated Guide to Fantasy Creatures” adopts the format of scientific illustration. Why did you choose this visual language, and how does the “authority” of science influence the viewer’s perception of your imaginary beings?**

I am influenced by the specimen illustration style of the renowned naturalist Ernst Haeckel. I believe this hyper-rational, realistic style creates a stark contrast with the emotional origins of the work, generating a stronger sense of conflict. In my creative process, I consciously avoid a subjective emotional perspective, instead detaching myself to adopt an observer’s stance for description. The specimen illustration format symbolizes objectivity and truth, endowing the viewer with a silent, almost unquestionable sense of “factual” power.

**Many of your creatures contain human skeletal or bodily elements. How do these anatomical references**





**help you express themes of memory, vulnerability, or self-awareness?**

In this illustration series, I extensively use skeletal and visceral elements. Devoid of the protection of skin, these exposed internal structures represent a sharp and resolute confession of my hidden emotions—a further exploration and articulation of the most vulnerable and ineffable depths of the inner self to the viewer. Moreover, this fusion creates a subtle link that operates on both physical and spiritual levels, allowing me to grasp the themes more acutely and personally. The bodily elements are intended to evoke empathy from the viewer as a fellow human, granting the work a sense of embodiment.

**Your works balance eeriness with beauty. What does this tension mean to you personally, and how do you navigate it aesthetically?**

Eeriness and beauty are not opposites, just as I firmly believe pain and sorrow are not purely ugly. Being highly sensitive—a double-edged sword—makes me more acutely aware of pain, yet simultaneously allows me to see flowers blooming within it. Driven by a sense of mission to "show the world the fantastical realm of highly sensitive people unknown to them," I use illustration to create imagery where the eerie and the beautiful coexist. I deeply admire the aesthetic of *mono no aware* in Japanese literature, particularly the exquisite descriptions of death, blood, violence, and pain in Yukio Mishima's writings. Visually, I am also greatly fond of Japanese *ukiyo-e*, especially the parts depicting monsters and spirits. Therefore, alongside the influence of Ernst Haeckel's

specimen style, these aesthetic experiences from Eastern culture serve as powerful aids in navigating this style.

**You've studied for eight years at CAFA and are now pursuing your MA in London. How has this cross-cultural academic journey shaped your artistic identity?**

My eight years at CAFA provided me with solid foundational training, which became a powerful tool for expressing my fantastical world. The rich artistic resources and vibrant, multicultural atmosphere in London, in turn, offer abundant inspiration for applying my drawing skills. Surprisingly, being independent from my homeland has intensified my desire to explore traditional Chinese cultural elements. As I continue my studies in London, I eagerly anticipate what sparks will fly from the ongoing convergence of these two experiences.

**Your personal IP "Redtide404" has gained attention on Xiaohongshu. How does sharing your process and persona online influence your artistic evolution?**

Personality-wise, I am an introvert, which predisposes me to explore the world through "inward seeking." While this can lead to intriguing results and profound themes, it also carries the risk of becoming solipsistic. Sharing my work on social media has built a channel for communication and connection with the outside world. Furthermore, the act of creating a personal IP prompts me to reflect on my work more from a macro perspective and through the lens of others. This undoubtedly serves as a strong complement to my original creative habits.



# Tanner Rhines

**Your style, Condentionism, is described as a “psychological matrix of characters and life energies.” How did this concept originate, and what does it represent for you today?**



Tanner Rhines | Castle Walls



Tanner Rhines | Bella's Last Adventure

I've been making art my whole life, but my condention works really began to take form during my junior year in high school. My art teacher had allowed me to work in the storage room of our art wing, and the space gave me a lot of time to reflect and experiment with my work. It was funny because my friends would sometimes skip their classes to come hang out. It was my first bubble of creative space.

My condention works are a reflection of our external world blended with my inner interpretations. Every character, form, and connection is a collision between what I've seen and how I've chosen to process it.

Travel has intensified this. I've been living internationally for the past two years, spending time in Greece, Bahrain, Thailand, Australia, the UAE, South Africa, Latvia, Sweden, Ukraine, and soon Nepal. Moving through these cultures has expanded my sense of unison and connectivity in the world. As my physical boundaries grow, so does my creative bubble. The more I'm able to experience, the more stories, characters, and concepts I'm able to pull from.

**Your drawings are incredibly dense, filled with hundreds of hidden figures and micronarratives. What does this slow, meticulous process mean to you in an age of speed and instant gratification?**

The process is what excites me. The personal understanding of my art develops as I'm creating it. I





want the viewer to know I took my time with something that demanded months of care and attention. It's a lot of fun to camouflage faces and figures throughout my drawings. I treat it like a sport - it's the playfulness that keeps things interesting. Once a piece is finished, it might take a while to notice everything I've done. You have to live with my art to really catch everything. Each viewing can reveal something different, and it's that slow process of discovery that makes it worthwhile. It's built to age well.

**Do you see your detailed compositions as a form of meditation or resistance to the accelerated pace of contemporary culture?**

Yes, it's very meditative. Creating art has always been my happy place, and I don't believe it should be rushed. It gives me pleasure knowing it's far removed from the impatience and noise of society.

**Many of your works blend playful, cartoon-like forms with philosophical undertones. How do you balance humor, symbolism, and psychological depth?**

I like to think of my work in layers — the immediate visual layer, the concepts behind the characters, and the way they interact with each other in their provided space. The balance comes from letting all those layers coexist. The work should be fun without losing its conceptual substance. I'm careful that it isn't mistaken for 'doodle art.' A doodle, by definition, is an absent-minded scribble. My pieces are deliberate, structured, and built on meaning. Every figure has intention, and I could write an essay about a single piece if I needed.

**Your early recognition—from the Scholastic Gold Medal Portfolio to international exhibitions—came very young. How did these milestones shape your artistic confidence and direction?**

Growing up in Alaska, I always saw myself as an artist, and early recognition gave me a lot of momentum to keep persevering with my work. I was thankful to know that my art can find a place in this world.

**Your artwork has been displayed in varied spaces: museums, ComicCon, airport terminals, and government institutions. How does the context in which your work is shown influence its meaning or reception?**

If my work is going to a specific venue, I prefer it to be complimentary of why it's existing in that space. For example, my work for Alaska Airlines explored transition and a suspended state of being, mirroring the in-between atmosphere of an airport. My works at ComicCon International were shaped around characters from pop culture and anime, leaning into the personality and energy of that environment. The space is responsible for the concepts and forms I attempt to convey. It gives me something new to respond to.

**Your pieces often incorporate recurring characters and motifs. Are there personal myths or symbolic figures that appear throughout your practice?**

There are a few characters I revisit and place repeatedly through my pieces, and I do so almost ritualistically. I always start with the main characters; it feels like developing a movie scene around actors, like a form of inoculation. The medium serves as a petri dish. Some of their stories have been evolving over time, while others have intentionally remained static. A lot of people I've met in real life can turn into characters as well, and there's a lot of moments from my own life that I symbolically reinterpret. These reoccurring characters are growing with me over time. As I change, they change... and sometimes they don't. That dialogue between who I was, who I am, and who I'm becoming adds greater meaning to my work.



## Dusan Marinkovic

Born in 1981 in Belgrade. Graduated from Zrenjanin High School. Graduated from the Faculty of Applied Arts in Belgrade, photography department, graphics studio, in 2006. At the Zrenjanin National Museum, working as a museum adviser for the photography department. Photographer, graphic designer and researcher. Member of ULUS, the Conservatory Company of Serbia, the Serbian Museum Society, and ICOM of Serbia.

### *Project Statement*

Light and time in passing is photography cycles which include 35 photos of various interiors of abandoned villas and a railcar with locomotives.

The imprint of a dream is photography cycles which include 27 b/w photos, some of them combined with watercolor drawings.

Inorganic element and Voltage in crumbs are latest two artwork from this year.







Dusan Marinkovic | Voltage in Crumbs | 2025



Dusan Marinkovic | Blue Room | 2008

# Gabriele Martin

**You have lived and worked in several cities — Vienna, Basel, Toronto, and Düsseldorf. How have these different cultural environments shaped your artistic vision?**

Living in different cities has broadened the way I look at the world and, in turn, how I approach painting. Each place offered its own cultural rhythm, visual language, and energy.

Vienna shaped my foundation — it's where I learned to see art historically and structurally. Toronto expanded my sense of scale and diversity, it encouraged me to



think more freely and intuitively. Düsseldorf exposed me to a strong conceptual tradition and sharpened my awareness of reduction and clarity. And Basel continues to influence me with its focus on precision, dialogue, and the coexistence of art and everyday life. All these experiences flow together in my work, giving it a layered perspective that is both personal and shaped by different cultural contexts.

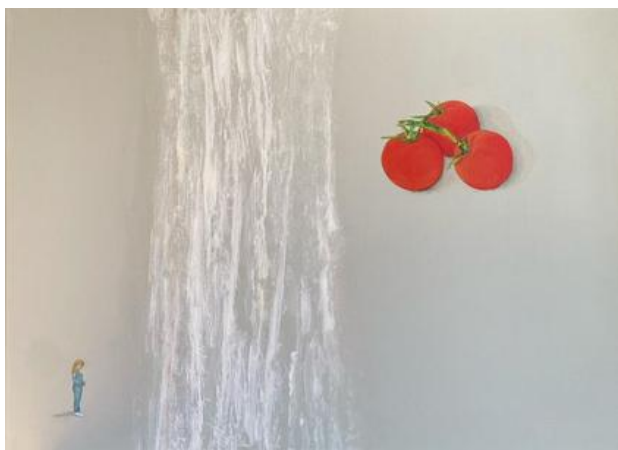
**Your paintings often combine conceptual clarity with emotional subtlety. How do you balance intellect and intuition in your creative process?**

For me, painting is always a dialogue between thinking and feeling. I usually begin with a conceptual impulse — an idea, a contrast, or a question I want to explore visually. But once I start working on the canvas, intuition takes over.

I try not to force a narrative instead, I follow the rhythm of the painting and allow shifts, accidents, and emotions to guide the process. The balance happens naturally when I trust both sides, the clarity of the concept and the openness of intuition. That tension is what gives the work its quiet emotional tone.

**How do you choose your color palette, especially the recurring use of gray, blue, and vivid accent tones like red or yellow?**

Color has always been a moodsetter for me. Grays and blues create a calm, spacious, almost suspended



Gabriele Martin | Tomatoes





atmosphere they allow the viewer to enter the scene without distraction.

The accent colors, like red or yellow, function as emotional triggers or points of tension. They interrupt the silence and bring a sense of immediacy or even slight unease.

I don't choose colors purely aesthetically I choose them for their emotional temperature and the way they influence the narrative of the painting.

**There is a sense of irony and quiet humor in your compositions — for example, figures interacting with surreal or oversized objects. Is this intentional commentary on contemporary life?**

Yes, the subtle irony is intentional. I'm interested in the absurdity that often lies beneath everyday situations the way small gestures or objects can become symbolic when isolated or exaggerated.

The humor is quiet, never mocking. It's more a gentle way of questioning how we move through a world that is both ordinary and surreal. I think contemporary life is full of contradictions, and my compositions mirror that tension in a playful yet thoughtful way.

**Could you describe your working process — from idea to finished painting? Do you plan your compositions in advance, or do they evolve intuitively?**

My process usually begins with an image or a fragment, a pose, an object, a color atmosphere. I sketch loosely, but I don't create strict plans. Once I move to the canvas, the composition evolves intuitively. I build it layer by layer, allowing elements to shift until the painting finds its balance. Some parts come quickly, others need time to settle.

For me, the painting reveals itself gradually. I like to leave room for the unexpected, because those moments often become the most meaningful parts of the work.

**What role does symbolism play in your art? Are the recurring elements (mountains, water, fruits, children) personal metaphors?**

The recurring elements are not symbolic in a fixed or literal way, but they do carry personal resonance. Mountains, for example, represent both stability and distance. Water suggests movement and emotional depth. Fruits often function as playful exaggerations of desire or abundance.

Children appear as figures of openness they allow me to explore vulnerability and curiosity without the weight of adult expectations.

I use these motifs as anchors. They are flexible metaphors, open enough for viewers to project their own interpretations.

**How do you see the relationship between your background in make-up and interior design and your current artistic practice?**

Both disciplines influenced how I perceive form, space, and surface. Make-up taught me to understand faces, gestures, and subtle emotional expressions. Interior design gave me an intuitive sense for spatial composition, balance, and atmosphere.

These experiences shape the way I construct my paintings, the way figures relate to their environment, the controlled use of color, and the careful attention to visual harmony.

Even though the mediums are different, the underlying sensibility is the same, creating spaces, moods, and identities.



## Anna Dudek

I am a visual artist, a student, and an art teacher based in Kraków. My dream of pursuing an art career dates back to my childhood, when I first stepped into a drawing class. I take inspiration from nature and music, particularly sung poetry, which plays a central role in my creative process. Whenever I seek a fresh perspective, I turn to singing with my choir – an experience that always rejuvenates me and prepares me for my current artistic projects.

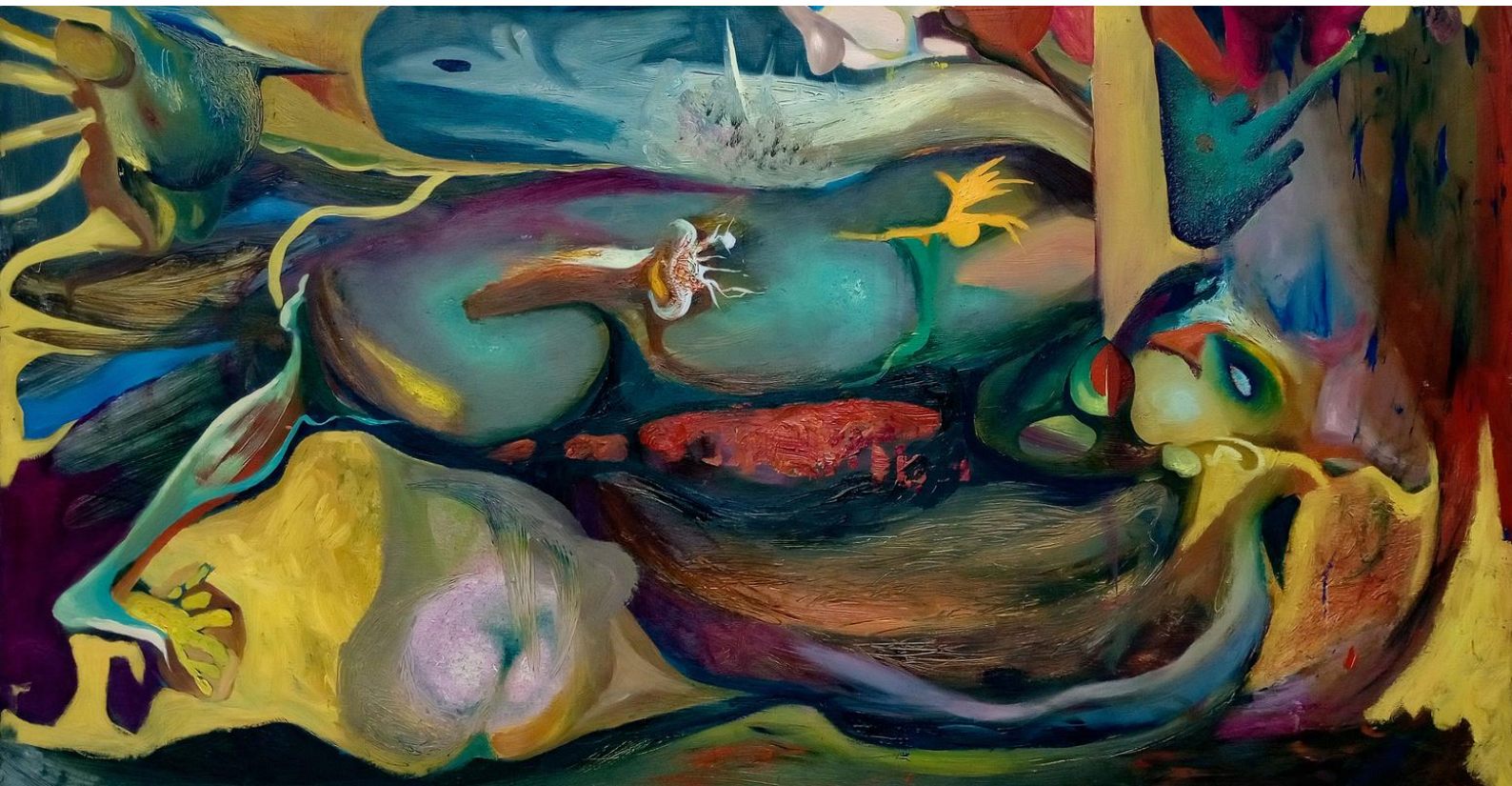
Over the past few years, I have been actively involved in several exhibitions and art events. In 2022, I co-organised and took part in the collective exhibition Turele – truby kowunikacji during Cracow Art Week – Krakers. The following year, my work was presented at Cloud of Inbetweens, a group exhibition within a Polish-German art exchange held in the centre of Nuremberg. In February 2025, I received an award from Zofia Weiss Gallery in Kraków, granting me the opportunity to organise a solo exhibition of my oil paintings.

### *Project Statement*

I am a painter working primarily in oil, creating surrealist compositions with elements of abstraction. My practice is deeply rooted in the exploration of organic forms and the creation of alternative worlds, where reality feels tangible and present. Through my work, I aim to immerse viewers in spaces that are at once strange and familiar, inviting them to step into realms that exist on the border between the known and the unexpected.

I draw inspiration from dreams, the subconscious, and my own personal obsessions, which often appear in motifs such as cows and sunflowers.

Anna Dudek | Self-Portrait with a Friend | 2023







Anna Dudek | Cow and Hummingbird | 2024



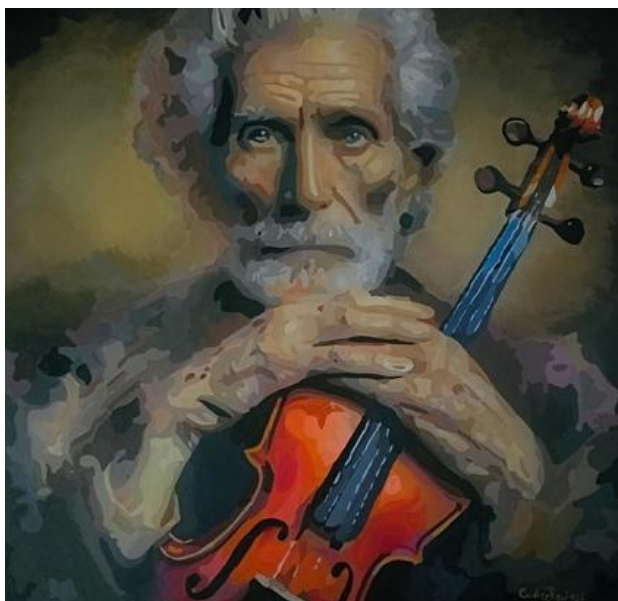
Anna Dudek | Gladiolus-Sunflower | 2024

# — Interview

## Candice Rawlings

**Your series *Music Americana* beautifully captures the soul of musicians. What initially inspired you to explore the world of music through painting?**

Music has always been a place where I could feel deeply, even when I could not find the right words. After the pandemic it took on a new meaning for me. As I worked to piece my life back together and step fully into my identity as an artist, I found myself surrounded by musicians who were doing the same in their own way. Their stories were full of



Candice Rawlings | An Unfinished Song | 2024



grit, humor, joy, and an incredible sense of personal drive. I was moved by the way they showed up for their dreams night after night, not because it was easy but because they could not imagine living without that spark. Their courage, their creative restlessness, and the fun they found in the chase inspired me to paint their world. *Music Americana* became my tribute to these artists, people who remind me that, even in uncertainty, passion can rebuild us, sustain us, and give us a reason to keep moving forward.

**Many of your works seem to tell quiet stories through light and gesture. How do you approach creating emotion on canvas without relying on words?**

I have always been an observant person. My family and friends often joke that I notice everything, but for me it is simply how I move through the world. I pay attention to body language, atmosphere, movement, and the small cues that reveal who a person is beneath the surface. It is how I understand whether a place feels safe, and it is how I understand people. I bring that instinct into my paintings. When I watch musicians, I notice their joy in the subtlety of a tilt of the head, the way they approach the microphone, or how they connect with their own material. I build each painting around these delicate moments. These gestures speak with a truth and intimacy that words could never fully express, and they allow me to create emotion on canvas in a way that feels honest and deeply human.

**The figures in your paintings feel both real and dreamlike. How do you balance realism with the poetic atmosphere you're known for?**

I like to ground each figure in realism because I want them to feel alive the moment you see them. Their presence, their posture, their emotion all come from a truthful place. The dreamlike atmosphere that surrounds them is my response to that moment. It reflects how I feel about them while they perform. That gentle haze and glow express the romance of the moment, creating a space where it feels like only you and the musician exist. Their joy becomes something you can almost hear in the stillness of the painting. It is my hope that





you feel what I felt in that moment.

**You often portray moments of solitude or introspection in musicians. What do these moments represent to you personally?**

I have always believed that a person's truest self emerges in the moments between action. When a musician steps out of the light, the inner world rises to the surface: the doubt, the hope, the exhaustion, the small triumphs, and the lingering emotions that never make it into the song. I connect deeply with these moments because I also know what it feels like to chase something bigger than myself. Solitude exposes a kind of honesty that most people miss, a fleeting glimpse of who someone is when no one is asking anything of them. It fascinates me that such stillness can feel louder than the performance itself. In those quiet pauses, I see the full story of the artist and painting that emotional truth feels just as important as capturing the music they create.

**How has your self-taught background influenced your artistic voice and process?**

Being self-taught has shaped my artistic voice in a way that feels deeply personal. I hold immense admiration for artists who have trained formally, whose dedication and discipline have given them extraordinary mastery. My path simply unfolded differently. I learned through curiosity and persistence, guided by a sincere desire to express something honest and emotionally resonant. My background in English taught me to search for meaning beneath the surface, and to really unpack the story being told on canvas. That instinct influences every artistic decision I make. Without a prescribed structure, I allowed myself the freedom to explore, to experiment, and to grow, discovering a visual language that feels intuitive and true to who I am. Each step of that journey has helped shape a style rooted in emotional storytelling, one that continues to evolve with every piece I create.

**Could you tell us more about your technique — for example, how you layer acrylics to achieve that cinematic texture and depth?**

I work in slow and intentional layers, letting each stage of the painting establish the emotional tone of the piece. I begin by building the atmosphere with thin washes that create the foundation for the mood. From there, I sculpt the figure with thicker strokes and subtle shifts in value, allowing the form to emerge gradually. Light is the backbone of my emotional storytelling. It shapes the structure of the painting and guides the viewer to the most meaningful parts of the moment. While I often use soft transitions to create depth, I also make deliberate choices to leave certain edges sharp or defined. Those solid lines are intentional. They hold tension, anchor the composition, and draw attention to the emotional weight of that particular gesture. By layering gradually and allowing the image to evolve, I build a depth that feels cinematic and honest to the story I want to tell.

**Do you listen to music while painting? If so, what kind of music most resonates with your creative rhythm?**

Absolutely. Music is woven into my process. I listen to everything from jazz and soul to country, classical, blues, and soft rock, depending on the emotional tone I am exploring or one that I am experiencing. I often listen to music while I paint. Sometimes it inspires the direction of the piece, and other times it simply fills the space around me as I work. All genres resonate with me in different ways. Each carries its own energy, whether it is movement, longing, reflection, or intensity. I do not listen for noise, but for connection. Certain songs can shift my mindset or unlock a feeling I did not realize I needed for the painting. Staying open to all styles of music allows me to move fluidly between moods and stories. It keeps me grounded in the emotional world I am creating and helps guide the rhythm of my process in a way that feels honest and intuitive.

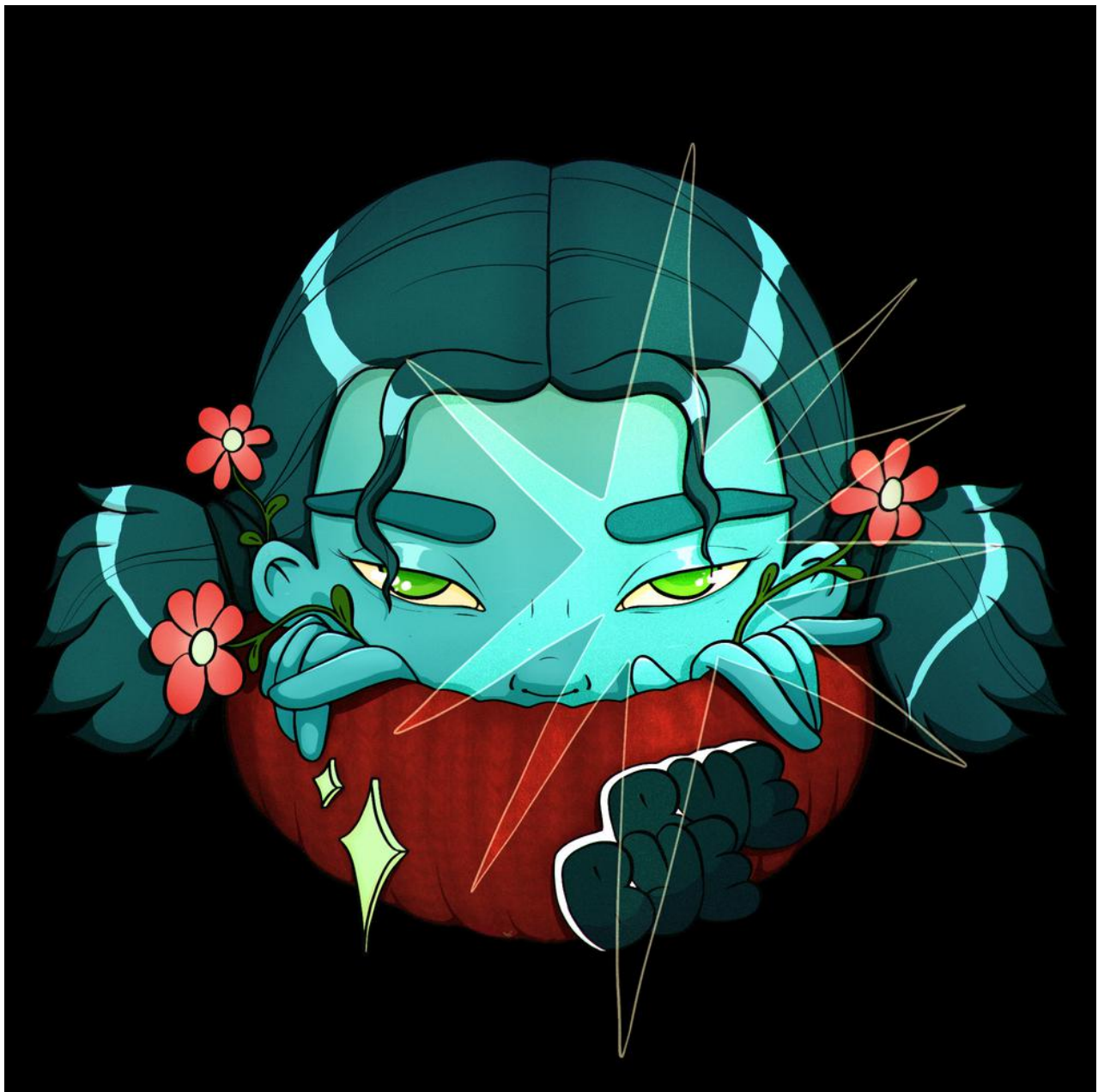


**Marydeer** is a digital artist and frame-by-frame animator exploring character-driven storytelling, cyber aesthetics, and transformative fantasy themes. Active in Web3 since 2023, they create works that blend dynamic motion with emotional narrative. Their animations have been presented internationally, including at Web3Summit in Berlin, and in both online and physical exhibitions across Russia and abroad. Beyond digital showcases, Marydeer produces printed works - posters, stickers, and a self-published artbook - and collaborates with other artists and community projects. Their practice emphasizes movement, energy, and the transformative power of imagination.

#### *Project Statement*

I like exploring the world through imagination, using illustration to play with and reshape reality. In my stop-motion digital animations, I try to catch those little moments when stillness turns into movement, giving life to characters and shapes. Street art is a big inspiration for me - it has its own energy and rhythm, living outside galleries and museums. I try to bring that same feeling into my work, usually starting with sketches on paper before moving to Photoshop, so I stay connected to the process. My artworks has been shown worldwide online and in real exhibitions, like Art Garden Gallery in Saint Petersburg, online on Exhibition The "Places We Call Home" in gallery Women in Arts Network, and the "Artists vs AI" show in Togliatti and twice My animations were shown twice in Berlin at web3 events on screens (2023 - web3summit, 2025 - artontezos). Whether digital, in shows, or as prints and books, I hope people feel movement, energy, and emotion through it

Mary Angerman | Inu Blooming | 2025







Mary Angerman | Flora Mermaid | 2024

# Xingyun Wang

**You describe paper as both delicate and resilient — a metaphor for memory and endurance. How did you arrive at this relationship between material and meaning?**

This connection really grew out of the process of making. When I first started working with paper, it was mostly a practical choice — it's flexible, lightweight, and easier to carry than canvas, especially since I was often moving between spaces. But the more I worked with it and began researching its material history and cultural connotations, the more it felt like a natural medium for me.

Paper is incredibly varied — it can be thin like mulberry paper, or thick like bamboo paper. Each type holds pigment



Photo By Yuhua Hu

differently, and when I layer and sand them, the fibers begin to behave in unexpected ways, revealing strange textures and forms. These physical transformations became central to how I think about memory and endurance — how something so fragile can also carry so much history, hold marks, scars, and still remain intact.

Conceptually, paper is porous — it absorbs, conceals, reveals. It can be torn, cut, stained, and yet it persists. That resilience mirrors the kind of emotional and psychological terrain I try to explore in my work. So over time, paper stopped being just a surface to work on and became an active collaborator in the process.

**Many of your works carry the tension of destruction and repair — tearing, sanding, layering. Do you see this as a healing act, or more as a documentation of damage?**

I see this tension as holding both. It's a record of damage and a gesture toward healing. These two states aren't separate or linear; they overlap, recur, and inform each other. That dynamic mirrors my personal experiences. The act of tearing or sanding can feel violent, but it's also a necessary part of transformation — revealing what's underneath, making space for something new. Layering, then, becomes a way to hold those histories together. I don't see repair as a clean resolution, but as an ongoing process that acknowledges what was broken without erasing it.

**The presence of embedded materials like hair, glass, and perforations adds a visceral intimacy to your surfaces. How do you decide what to include in each work?**

I usually select my materials and palette before starting a



Xingyun Wang | A Third Eye | 2025





piece. Because I make my own pigmented glue, I have to prepare it a day in advance, which gives me time to consider which pigments and materials like sand, glass flakes, pumice, or hair that I want to include. This preparatory phase is slow and deliberate, and those decisions are often meditated during that time.

That said, I also leave space for spontaneity. Sometimes, during the making process, I'm carried by intuition and introduce unexpected materials. This can lead to results I didn't plan for—unwanted textures or surface disruptions—but those imperfections often become the most compelling parts of the piece. They carry their own logic and energy, and I try to remain open to what the material is asking for in the moment.

**Your process of working on the floor and manipulating wet paper feels very physical. How important is the role of the body in your artistic practice?**

Bodily engagement is central to my practice. There's a performative aspect to the making process that doesn't always translate directly into the finished painting, but its traces remain. You can often find fingerprints, footprints, scratches on the paper surface, or areas of paint shaped by gravity when the paper was lying flat. These marks record the interaction between my body and the material.

I'm interested in how these physical traces capture time — the duration of making, the movement of the body, the effect of the environment. The painting becomes a document of its own making, holding a quiet history of those interactions. Working on the floor allows me to approach the work from all sides. I don't see the paper as a passive surface, but as something I move with, press into, and respond to. That intimacy and physical exchange is something I find both grounding and conceptually important.

**The red and burnt tones in your series suggest both danger and vitality. What emotional or psychological states do these colors evoke for you?**

Red evokes many things for me—passion, erosion, destruction, and a persistent sense of urgency. Whatever the specific association, the intensity of the color is always at its peak. That's why I'm drawn to this palette. It holds a wide range of emotional intonations, yet all of them feel powerfully charged. The burnt tones deepen this atmosphere, suggesting traces of something that has endured fire or heat, something damaged but still present.

Together, these colors create a psychological landscape where danger, vitality, and warmth coexist, amplifying the tension I want the viewer to feel.

**Your compositions suggest multiple viewpoints — as if seen through fractured lenses. Do you think of your works as landscapes, memories, or psychological spaces?**

I think of them as an in-between space—somewhere between the body and the landscape. At the same time, I'm drawn to the idea of psychological space, and I welcome that interpretation.

The viewing logic of Chinese handscroll paintings has been a major influence on me. In those works, perspective isn't fixed—it moves fluidly, unfolds with time, and shifts as the viewer moves. I try to bring that same sense of unstable, shifting perspective into my work.

I use large, sweeping gestures with pigmented glue, and then build up the surface with small, intricate marks. I want the viewer to have a dynamic experience—stepping close to trace the fine terraces of a landscape, then pulling back to see an atmosphere emerge, a body-like form inhabiting the space. The multiplicity of viewpoints, like fragments through shifting lenses, allows the work to live between scales and states: landscape, memory, body, and dream.

**How do you navigate between intuition and control in your creative process?**

I deeply value intuition in my process, but it must be grounded in control and a clear understanding of the material. That balance allows me to work freely without feeling lost.

I spend a lot of time preparing before I begin painting. I make pigmented glue from scratch each time, drawing from a few formulas I've developed and refined over the years. I adjust them depending on the needs of each piece, sometimes changing the density, pigment ratio, or drying time. When I'm not actively painting, I research different kinds of paper and test how various pigments behave across layers and surfaces. Each paper has its own absorbency and texture, and I experiment with how they respond to sanding, layering, or staining. These preparations give me the confidence to work intuitively. When I begin applying glue and paper, I'm able to trust my instincts because I've already done the groundwork. That's how I navigate between letting go and staying in control—by building a foundation that supports improvisation.



## Ekaterina Vetchinova

In addition to painting, she is passionate about creating realistic toys, sewing clothes for herself and her family, swimming, and enjoys morning walks in the forest. She reads psychology books as well as light popular fiction. She previously worked professionally as a makeup artist and specialized in evening makeup and hairstyling. For her, it makes no difference whether she paints on canvas or on a face. She loves filling her life with bright, positive emotions and meeting intelligent, interesting, and optimistic people. She has always loved painting, but in recent years this passion has become especially strong. She wishes to devote more and more time to her favorite practice, to continuously improve herself in this field, and to share her personal vision of beauty with the world.

Ekaterina Vetchinova | Still Life | 2025









# Zhe Yang

**Your works demonstrate a balance between Abstractism, Surrealism, and Hyperrealism. How do these different visual languages coexist in your artistic practice?**

Artistic creation itself is diverse, and I have been trying various artistic expression techniques. The infiltration of emotion injects fresh vitality into artworks. Whether it's the minimalist thinking of Abstractism, the specific forms depicted by Surrealism, or the microscopic expression methods of Hyperrealism, these ways of conveying artistic emotions are not contradictory. They are all means to serve the main theme of the picture. In artistic practice, they each perform their roles, helping to better present the content of the picture to the audience.

**You often explore themes such as existence,**



Zhe Yang | A Discussion About Order



Zhe Yang | A Corner Of Life

**self-consciousness, and the fragility of human life. How did these thoughts first appear in your works?**

My works do not have strong criticality; instead, I focus more on expressing and thinking about people's own feelings. Art itself is an exploration that serves human inner emotions. Human self-consciousness injects a soul into art. Works without emotional infiltration are lifeless, which is what I have always pursued to show in my works. I pay more attention to the sensitive and delicate side of human life, which is a subconscious rooted deep in my memory. Looking at the entire world, humans in the long river of history are like a speck of dust. The birth and death of life are just a matter of a thought. What role do humans play? What function do they perform? What position do they occupy? This was the initial idea behind my creation. In subsequent creations, I am committed to exploring human existence, development, self-consciousness, and life emotions, integrating these feelings into my works to provoke people's thinking and thus generate resonance.

**In your self-description, you mentioned 'the existential crisis brought by the dissolution of the body.' Could you elaborate on this view from both a personal and artistic perspective?**

The Nightmare series of works is a series of paintings that explore the state of life and spiritual consciousness. From the moment of birth, humans actually have to face death. At different periods, the perspective on death varies because humans are complex emotional carriers, and various consciousnesses often float in the mind. However, in reality, most fantasies seem unattainable. Only in a half-dreaming, half-awake state does the soul and body seem to find a balance where they no longer





compete. In this state, we start to think: How do the physical body and spirit coexist? How profound is the impact of the existential crisis brought by the dissolution of the body on spiritual consciousness? How does this impact lead us to survive in real life? These are all integrate into my creative thinking, and I continuously present them to the audience one by one.

### **How do dreams and subconscious imagery influence your creative process?**

Emotions that cannot be immediately realized in reality tend to attach themselves to the subconscious, entering dreams. This is the source of complex emotions in my creations. Some fleeting scenes from daytime interact with my rational thoughts in dreams, transforming into memory fragments capable of conveying emotion. In the creative process, I organize these conscious fragments from dreams, reassemble them, and consider composition, color, and form settings, thereby completing artistic creation.

### **Can you describe your approach to handling color and composition, especially in the transition between abstract and narrative works?**

All choices of color and composition serve the overall expressive needs of the Scene. Color is full of vitality; various color combinations convey completely different emotions—passionate and unrestrained, calm and rational, or elegant and gentle—all products of color combinations. My abstract work, 'A Discussion about Order,' uses a minimal palette of only three to four colors. I pursue the structural recombination of pure colors to bring a sense of visual order, exploring the order and decorative qualities derived from the combination of basic painting elements like points,

lines, and planes. In my narrative series 'Nightmare,' I adopt the expressive habits of Pointillism, relying on multiple color combinations and collisions to set off the thematic idea, creating a cluttered and uneasy Scene effect and enhancing the decorative quality of the painting.

### **How has your background in sculpture and craftsmanship influenced your flat (2D) creations?**

I majored in Decorative Sculpture, having been exposed to many types of creative techniques such as wood carving, ceramic art, metal craftsmanship, and clay modeling. Learning these techniques has given me more creative insights. I tend to integrate decorative effects into my painting creations, thinking three-dimensionally about the artistic tension brought by the creation itself. Combining the rich textural sensations, order, and decorative space expressions gained from studying sculpture and metal craftsmanship, all of this continuously enriches my habits in flat creation, allowing me to express unique inner emotions more freely and skillfully.

### **The textures and patterns in your paintings are full of vitality, as if breathing. What role does materiality play in emotional transmission?**

Materiality in emotional transmission is more like a medium and a catalyst. All emotional transmission in paintings is based on the utilization of materiality. Just as a texture, a color, a form, or other Scene elements are formed through materiality, achieving a specific combination. These combinations together create a distinctive formal sense, sending signals collectively to convey the visual intention of the entire Scene, thereby transmitting tangible and moving emotions.



**Manuela Muzzone** (Frosinone, 1995) is a visual artist whose educational path developed between Italy and Spain.

After earning her diploma from the Liceo Artistico, she graduated in Painting from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Frosinone. She continued her studies with a period at the Facultad de Bellas Artes in Murcia, Spain, where she attended a master's degree program.

Upon returning to Italy, she completed her master's degree and subsequently deepened her research in the field of photography by attending a professional photography course at CSF Adams in Rome.

Her artistic practice moves between painting and photography, integrating the skills acquired through her multidisciplinary training.

#### *Artist Statement*

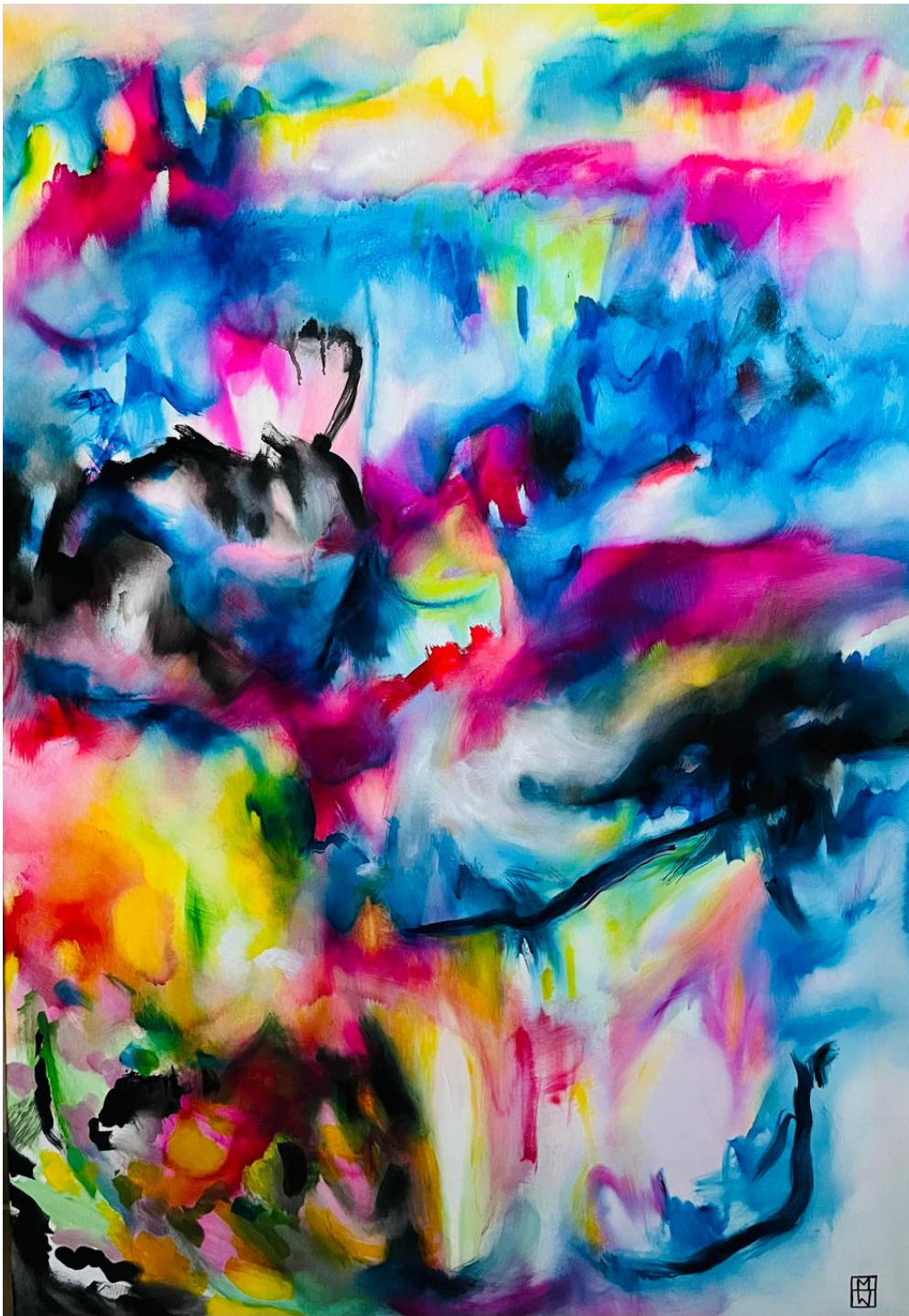
My research investigates inner states and perceptual dynamics of contemporary experience through a multidisciplinary approach that integrates painting, photography, and illustration.

The work is rooted in surrealism, conceptual art, and abstraction—movements reinterpreted to interrogate the urgencies of the present: access to the visual unconscious, strategies of critical reflection, and autonomy of formal language.

The process operates through successive stratifications, where each medium responds to specific expressive needs. The practice of the sketchbook constitutes the methodological core: an analog device of resistance to digital speed, a processual archive documenting the emergence of visual thought.

The works are configured as open systems that activate spaces of indeterminate meaning, requiring the interpretative participation of the viewer. The research privileges semantic ambiguity and non-representation as strategies to generate moments of deceleration and contemplative depth.

The objective is to construct critical devices that oppose contemporary fragmentation with alternative possibilities for relating to experience and the self.



Manuela Muzzone | Hug in the Night | 2023









## — Interview

# Gloria Manoka

**Your work bridges your Congolese heritage, French culture, and experiences in the United States. How do these three identities coexist and influence each other in your artistic practice?**

My Congolese heritage deeply influences the vibrant colors and intricate patterns that shape my creative vision, reflecting the richness of African traditions. At the same time, my American side is inspired by the way African American communities have embraced self-worth and cultural pride, motivating me to uplift and celebrate my own community in a similar way. The French culture adds another dimension to my



identity, guiding me toward fashion, refinement, and an appreciation for elegance in everyday life. Together, these influences intertwine to form a unique perspective that blends heritage, empowerment, and sophistication into everything I create.

**How did your studies at L'Ecole des Arts de La Sorbonne contribute to the artistic language you use today?**

My studies at L'Ecole des Arts de La Sorbonne allowed me to strengthen and affirm my own artistic style. Rather than feeling the need to imitate other artists, I learned to trust my individuality and creative instincts. The experience gave me confidence that my personal approach carries more authenticity than trying to replicate someone else's vision. Ultimately, it helped me embrace the idea that my originality is my greatest strength in developing my artistic language.

**When bringing past visual memories into the present, what emotions or narratives are you hoping to evoke in contemporary viewers?**

When I bring past visual memories into the present, my goal is to create a bridge between historical narratives and contemporary experiences. By connecting these stories, I hope to offer viewers a deeper understanding of how the past shapes our present. At the same time, I want to inspire a renewed sense of harmony with nature, encouraging people to





reconnect with its beauty and wisdom. Through this dialogue between time and environment, I aim to evoke both reflection and a feeling of belonging.

**Your works are filled with vibrant colors. What role does color play in building meaning, emotion, or historical reference within your pieces?**

For me, colors function much like musical notes, each carrying its own vibration and rhythm. They infuse my paintings with energy, transforming them into living compositions that resonate with viewers. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, colors help me express emotions, from joy and hope to memory and reflection. They also serve as a bridge to cultural and historical references, allowing me to honor traditions while speaking to the present. In this way, color becomes both a language and a pulse, breathing life into my artistic expression.

**What motivated your decision to move to the United States after finishing your studies in France, and how has this transition affected your work?**

My decision to move to the United States after completing my studies in France was driven by several aspirations. I wanted to learn English and immerse myself in a new cultural environment that could expand my perspective. I was also motivated by the desire to connect with the environment of artists who inspire me, such as Basquiat, and to engage with the communities that shaped their art. This transition has

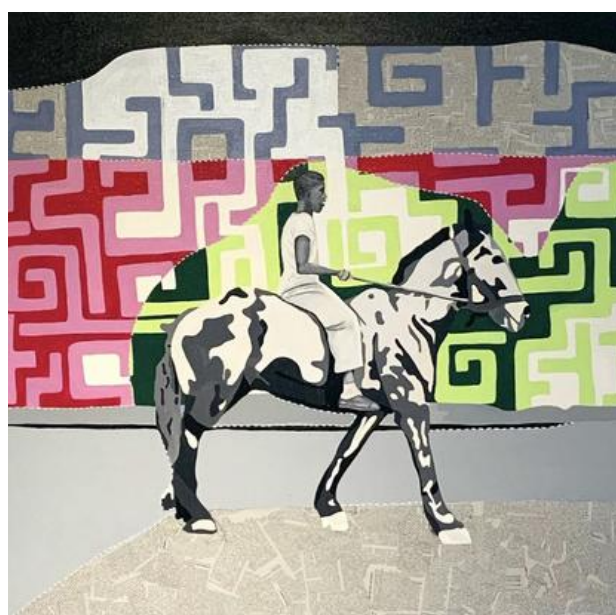
allowed me to enlarge my creativity and explore new directions in my work. Most importantly, it has given me the opportunity to see how my art resonates with people in the United States, adding new layers of meaning to my practice.

**Living between France and the USA, how do you navigate the differences in artistic environments, audiences, and cultural expectations?**

Living between France and the United States is not always easy, but it gives me the chance to blend different cultural influences into my own artistic language. I draw from French traditions, American vitality, and my Congolese heritage to create a style that feels unique and personal. Rather than limiting myself to one environment, I enjoy stepping outside the box and challenging conventional expectations. This freedom allows me to explore new ideas without being confined by borders or cultural boundaries. I see myself as an artist for whom the sky is only the starting point, and whose creativity knows no territorial boundaries. In the end, navigating these differences enriches my creativity and helps me build bridges across cultures.

**If there is one message you hope viewers take from your work, what would it be?**

My art is meant to show that creativity is not only a human gift but also a reflection of the Great Creator who inspires us to make. Through this connection, I hope to encourage people to rediscover harmony with themselves, with others, and with the divine source of creation. Each piece I make carries the message that even in difficult times, light and renewal are possible. Ultimately, I want viewers to feel that art can be a path toward faith, resilience, and unity.



**Obada AlOmari** is a Jordanian multidisciplinary artist whose practice blends sculpture, installation, public art, and mixed-media experimentation.

Originally trained as a medical doctor, he shifted fully into the arts after discovering the transformative power of creative expression during his years in Egypt.

His work draws heavily from nature, found materials, and human psychology, exploring themes of resilience, movement, emotional landscapes, and the unseen stories of both people and places. AlOmari has created public artworks and installations across multiple residencies, often encouraging audience interaction and critical reflection.

He is particularly interested in community-engaged art and the ways creative work can inspire awareness, connection, and change.

### *Project Statement*

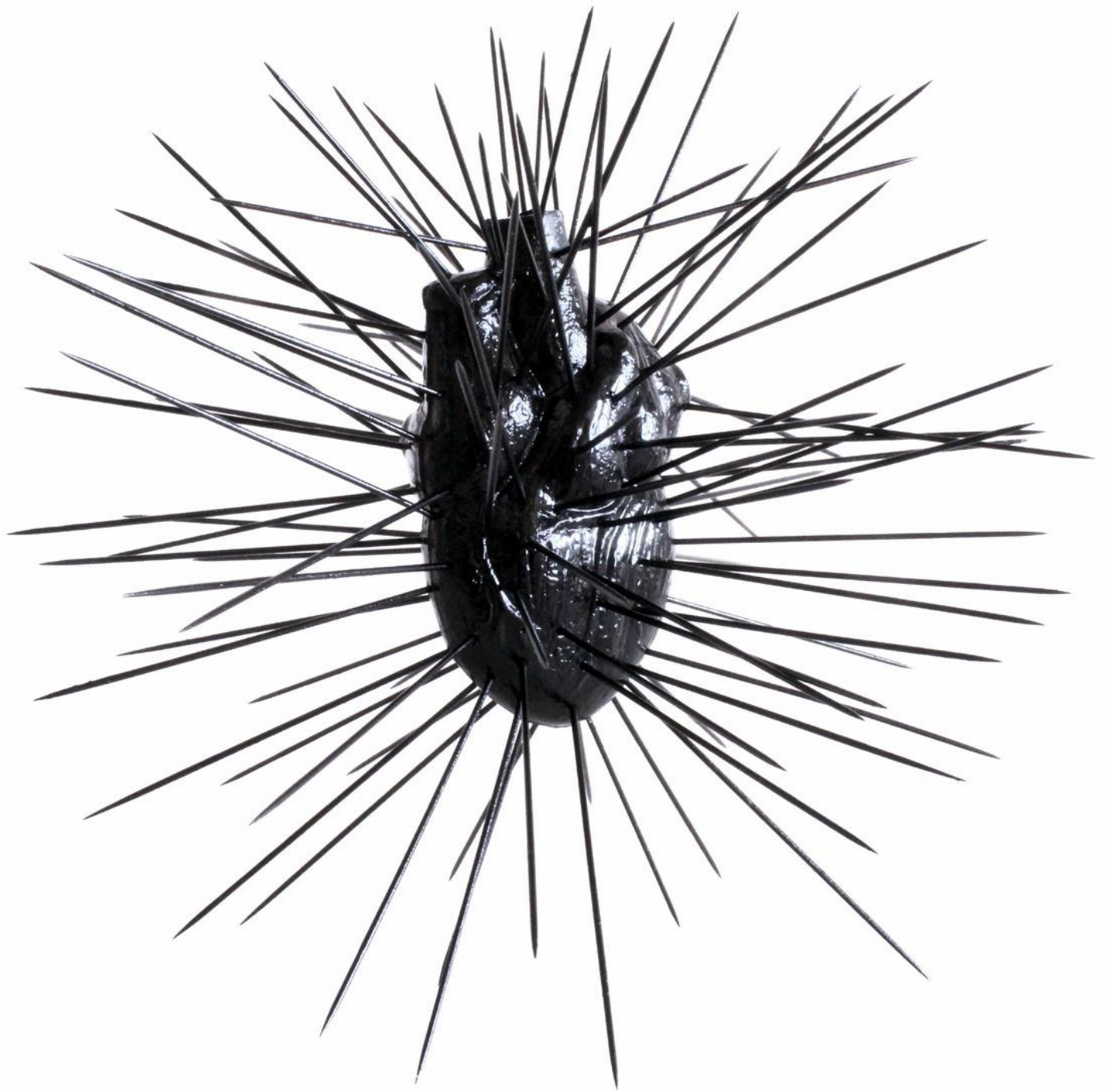
#### ***"Heartfruit"***

Inspired by Castanea, the chestnut, a fruit that guards its seeds.

Beneath its spiky exterior lies something sweet, nurtured patiently, waiting for the right hands or the right season.

Some things are worth the wait; protection and patience are part of nature's rhythm, and true sweetness is revealed only when the time is right.





## — Interview

# Soh Young Lee

**Your work explores the balance between beauty and struggle, especially in the context of pregnancy and motherhood. What initially inspired you to address this theme through art?**

My long-standing interest lies in the collision and combination of words with opposing meanings. This duality reflects a natural relationship in the real world, where we often find that nothing can be viewed from a single perspective.

My work is deeply rooted in my personal experiences, particularly the complex emotions surrounding motherhood and pregnancy. While there is a fantasy associated with these themes, I also confront the real challenges and the indirect connections to my identity. Initially, I focused on



my own intricate feelings and the shocking perspectives that arise when I juxtapose the idealized notions of pregnancy and nurturing against my existence in a competitive, fast-paced world.

For example, in my piece "A Deep Breath", I explore portraits of pregnant individuals navigating the complex challenges of a burnout-driven society. Through this exploration, I delve into the beauty and struggle inherent in these experiences, employing strong contrasts in color, pose, and brightness to evoke the emotional complexity of motherhood. Ultimately, I hope to create a dialogue that resonates with many and encourages reflection on the multifaceted nature of these experiences.

**How has your personal experience of motherhood influenced your creative process and visual language?**

My personal experience of motherhood has profoundly motivated me and sparked new ideas and images for my artworks. For instance, I often encountered comments like, "Why do you insist on breastfeeding when formula is easier and more convenient?" In today's world, the formula is well developed and widely accepted, reflecting a preference for efficiency over the natural aspects of life. This disconnect in perspectives compelled me to reflect on the differing



Soh Young Lee | Deep Breath | 2024





viewpoints surrounding motherhood.

To process these thoughts, I began recording my unique experiences and the words I heard in my diary, along with sketches of ideas. This practice evolved into collage work, allowing me to capture significant moments and images that reflect my journey. The interplay of these elements has enriched my creative process and visual language, enabling me to convey the complexities of motherhood through my art.

**In your statement, you mention integrating Korean historical culture and artifacts into your contemporary practice. Could you share an example of how tradition appears in your recent works?**

In my statement, I mentioned integrating Korean historical culture and artifacts into my contemporary practice. I believe there are long-standing narratives that idealize motherhood and womanhood, deeply resonating with the Korean sentiment of 'Han'. This term refers to the traditional feelings of Korean women who often could not express their genuine emotions, suffering silently both mentally and emotionally.

To explore this connection, I have been researching the "Herstory" of South Korea to uncover the stories of women who faced sadness and hardship. I aim to link these emotions to the experiences of past women who lived under more challenging circumstances, seeking healthier, more natural ways of thinking that can inform both the past and the present. Additionally, I have connected with artifacts that tell the stories of independent women. For example, in my recent work, one of the "A Deep Breath" series, I incorporated the face of the Ungnyeo artifact (the mother of the first king of South Korea) into the artwork to reflect these narratives. This choice allows me to explore the connections between the past and the present, highlighting the silent struggles women have faced throughout history.

Through this exploration, I hope to uncover the most natural feelings about love and life. In today's society, many decisions are made based on effectiveness or individualism, often overshadowing values such as respect for life, love, and sacrifice. I want to understand what spiritually healthy values we may have lost, whether such values existed in the past, and why the natural practice of breastfeeding is facing extinction in modern times. This pursuit drives my work and informs my artistic expression.

**Many of your paintings use vivid colors and**





**strong contrasts. What role do these visual elements play in conveying emotional depth or tension?**

Many of my paintings utilize vivid colors and strong contrasts, which I believe are crucial in conveying emotional depth and tension. One of painting's strengths lies in its ability to enhance meaning through visual effects. I strive to explore the sense of unfamiliarity that color and contrast can evoke.

I intentionally choose unusual colors and reconsider their application, often twisting my thoughts and altering the colors again. If a color choice makes me feel that something is off or strange, that becomes my criterion for selection. The effect I aim to achieve is to capture the viewer's attention, evoke uncomfortable emotions, and provoke contemplation about what the painting expresses. I want the audience to pause and reflect on the work.

Moreover, I believe that just as complex emotions and thoughts collide meaningfully, colors should also crash. I think contrasts in light and shadow should collide as well. From a material perspective, I am currently planning and experimenting with various techniques to explore these ideas further.

**Modern Korean society faces challenges such as a declining birth rate and shifting gender roles. How do you reflect these societal issues in your art?**

As a Korean woman, I find that even a single word I hear reflects the atmosphere of society and its predominant thoughts and values. I believe my personal emotions and thoughts do not exist in isolation; the societal climate around me influences them. Significant issues, such as declining birth rates and shifting gender roles, frequently arise in conversations with friends, serving as both conscious and unconscious fragments and materials for my work. I strive to express body poses and movements that relate to suppressed perspectives and changing roles. I also believe that art continually evolves. While my initial steps may stem from the confusion I directly experience, I am now in a phase of tracing back and clarifying my thoughts. The keywords and concepts that emerge reveal that an individual's experience does not end with them; it connects to society, ideologies, history, and the lives of family and friends.

Consequently, my artworks are evolving into various forms, including animations, painting series, collages, and three-dimensional pieces. This evolution reflects not only my personal journey but also the collective narratives of women navigating the complexities of modern Korean society.

**Could you describe the emotional or psychological space you aim to create for viewers who encounter your work?**

I hope that viewers experience a sense of discomfort yet find themselves unable to tear their gaze away from the pregnant individuals depicted in my work. I encourage them to reflect on the dual meaning of the title "A Deep Breath." While breath is essential for sustaining life, a deep breath can also signify hardship and suffocation. This title embodies the collision between life and death as individuals navigate their journeys through these experiences. It represents the clash between ideals and reality, the transformative responsibility of nurturing new life, and the vulnerability of capable individuals when their productive





functions diminish. In such a society where one's status and position can be precarious, I believe that contemporary viewers can resonate with and understand the emotions and thoughts that arise during times of significant upheaval. Through this exploration, I aim to create a space for introspection, prompting viewers to confront their own feelings about life, responsibility, and the societal pressures that shape our experiences. My work invites them to engage with these themes on a personal level, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities of existence.

**How has your time studying and exhibiting internationally (in South Korea, the U.S., and Canada) affected your artistic identity and worldview?**

My time studying and creating art at university has laid the foundation for my current work, and I believe that continued education is essential for deeper research and artistic creation. It also provides an opportunity to see how my work resonates with and evokes empathy from different audiences.

Conversations with people in the U.S. and Canada have made me realize that the issues I grapple with are not unique to Korea. For instance, during a discussion with colleagues in the U.S., I was struck by the similarities in our concerns about identity and cultural representation, despite our different backgrounds. This realization has deepened my understanding that problems between countries are interconnected, revealing a shared consciousness and experience among us. It has sparked a desire to learn more about the unique cultures and related issues of other countries. I believe that international experience is significant. As an artist, I strive to engage with diverse perspectives and ideas, allowing myself to encounter new viewpoints that inspire growth and expansion. Therefore, I actively seek international exhibition opportunities to connect with other artists and to reflect on my thoughts and position within the current global context. This engagement serves as both a source of stimulation and a way to affirm my place in the world, and I look forward to exploring collaborative projects that reflect this interconnectedness in the future.

# Valeriya Vyatchina (WAYS12)

**Your work focuses on the human body as a living archive. When you photograph someone, what is the first thing you pay**



**attention to - their form, their emotion, or their presence?**

When I photograph, first of all I pay attention to its forms and lines and how they can be shown in space, what poses will be organic for this person.

**Many of your compositions show the body in tension, distortion, or vulnerability. What draws you to these expressive physical states?**

Through my poses, I don't show the body, but rather the state. There are days when something inside seems to have cracked: my shoulders clench, my back arches, and in this tension, the truth suddenly emerges.

I'm not trying to appear whole. On the contrary, it's important to me to show what fatigue looks like when it's no longer hidden. How the body honestly admits: I'm hanging on by the last threads, and that's okay.

This is how I'm saying that the entire spectrum of feelings - from tenderness to breakdown - is not shameful to experience.

**You write that "the body always has something to say." What do you personally hear most clearly in these silent physical stories?**





These are always different stories, each one is unique, which creates an incredible palette with which I create photographs. But many are embarrassed to show their difference.

**How do your own feelings, doubts, or emotional states shape the direction of a photoshoot?**

My creative shoots often grow out of personal experiences. What I personally experience - doubts, fatigue, flashes of strength - becomes the focus of the shoot. I simply translate my states into visual language and let them set the tone for the shots.

**Your series explores fragility and vulnerability. Do you think vulnerability is something people should learn to reveal - or something to protect?**

Everyone has vulnerability. Maturity lies in acknowledging it, not hiding it. When we stop maintaining this unbreakable façade, vulnerability no longer oppresses us or turns into pain. It liberates us - from shame, from tension, from trying to appear stronger than we are.

**In "People Aren't Stones," you reflect on heaviness, struggle, and emotional weight.**

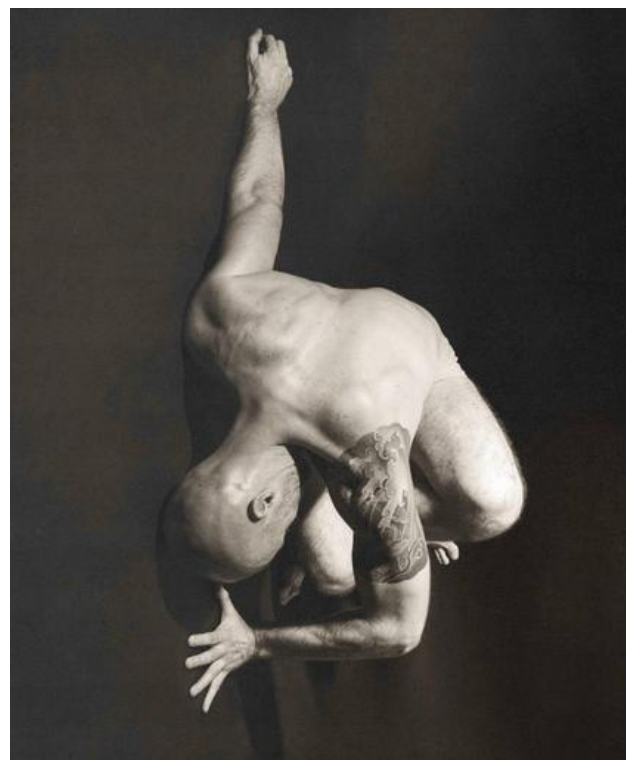
**How did this concept emerge, and what does the stone metaphor mean to you?**

In this series, stone, for me, is a symbol of resilience, driven to the point of numbness. "People Are Not Stones" is a reminder that human strength lies not in armor, but in the ability to feel. We rejoice, we suffer, we get lost, we get angry - and that's what makes us alive. To be human is to be vulnerable. And the only thing that keeps us from turning into stones is the willingness to say, "I remain myself, with all that I am."

We fear feelings because they can hurt. But the ability to experience pain, process it, and grow through it - that's our true resilience.

**The body in your work often appears as sculpture, gesture, or choreography. How much of your process is planned, and how much is intuitive?**

I always come to a shoot with a plan: I prepare references, think through gestures and mood, and sometimes even demonstrate the desired body rhythm myself. But this is only a guide. The most valuable shots appear when the subject gradually opens up and begins to improvise. At this point, the pose ceases to be a blueprint and becomes a living movement.



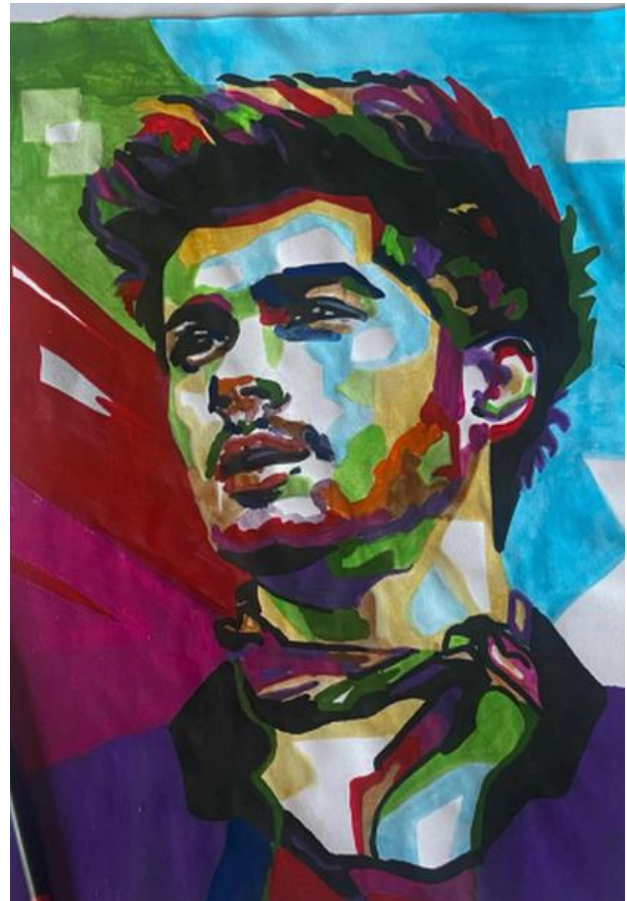
# — Interview

## Aisha Fatima

**How did your artistic journey begin, and what led you to explore painting as your main form of expression?**

My journey began in childhood, when art felt like the most natural way to understand the world around me. I grew up surrounded by stories, textures, and visual traditions that shaped my curiosity early on. I still remember drawing brand logos as my first sketches. Ray-Ban was the first one. Then Nike. Then Tag Heuer. After that I started drawing Audi and Mercedes logos and obsessing over getting the lines symmetrical so those triangle-like shapes looked perfect. It is strange how vividly I remember those moments, but I suppose that is what makes an artist. Those early drawings became my personality, my instinctive language. Art has always been the thing people associate with me, the thing I turn to in my free time, and the dream I quietly hope grows into a widely recognised career.

Painting eventually became my primary language because it allows me to work slowly and intuitively. The process of layering colour, texture, and detail feels very close to the way



Aisha Fatima | A Pop Art Rebellion

memory forms. It lets me capture the emotional and cultural nuances that words often miss.

**You have described yourself as a self-taught artist. How has that shaped your creative freedom and perspective compared to a formal academic path?**

Being self-taught has given me the freedom to experiment without the weight of a prescribed artistic lineage. Growing up in South Asia, pursuing art is often a battle. It is treated as a hobby rather than a career, and parents worry because making a living from it can be difficult. They want stability for us, and they are right in their own way, but that tension makes the pursuit even more personal and resilient. This independence also encouraged an instinctive approach to technique and style, which later blended with my academic background in social anthropology. This mix of self-direction and research creates a practice that is deeply personal yet grounded in cultural inquiry. I explore ideas at my own rhythm and follow themes that feel authentic rather than expected.

**Much of your work focuses on the idea of cultural intersections. How do you usually discover or identify these visual and emotional parallels between different traditions?**

I find these intersections through close observation. The smallest details often reveal the strongest parallels. A pattern on a shawl can echo the geometry of a building, or a fragment of wood carving can mirror the texture of a distant landscape. My anthropological lens helps me recognise these



Aisha Fatima | A Vibrant Sunset Tale





shared resonances.

Before studying anthropology, I used to create more trendy work to make it on social media, like pop art, celebrity portraits, or patterns that fit popular transitions. After anthropology came into my life, everything shifted. I felt a deep need to add meaning and depth to my art, to explore identity and memory rather than just aesthetics. I look for the ways different cultures hold memory, beauty, and belonging in material forms. These quiet connections become starting points for my paintings.

#### **How does your Kashmiri heritage influence your artistic vision and the stories you choose to tell?**

My Kashmiri heritage is the foundation of my visual vocabulary, and so much of my art begins with wuchun - the quiet act of seeing - and unfolds through layers of yaad and zan, where memory and understanding shape how a rukhs or an object is represented on the canvas. My work is guided by the textures, colours, and symbols I grew up around. I often draw from memories of home, traditional craftsmanship, and the emotional significance of objects like pashmina threads, rop (copper) samavars, wicker kanger (clay pot with hot embers inside, encased in a decorative wicker basket.), and the soft florals of a pheran cuff.

Being part of a diaspora adds another layer. It brings a sense of longing and sensitivity to what is easily overlooked. My art becomes a way to honour what endures and to record what risks disappearing.

#### **Your project Microcosms reimagines overlooked fragments like textiles or architectural details. How did this idea emerge?**

Microcosms emerged from a desire to look closer at the mundane. I realised that the smallest details often carry the deepest stories of place and identity. A single thread, a corner of carved wood, or the worn edge of an umbrella handle can hold entire histories within them.

I wanted to create a project that treated these fragments as worlds in themselves. The concept also draws from anthropology, where the micro can reflect the macro, revealing how personal and collective narratives intersect. Over time, I also became fascinated by how these fragments hold emotional weight. A copper samavar's rim reminds me of gatherings, warmth, and conversations that never repeat the same way. A tile edge can echo the geometry of a place I have known since childhood. These details feel like quiet keepers of yaad, small containers of memory that resist being forgotten. Microcosms grew from that instinct to slow down, to honour what the world rushes past, and to build a visual language out of the intimate.

#### **What do these small and familiar elements reveal to you about identity and memory?**

They reveal how identity is built from accumulation rather than spectacle. Memory lives in the quiet and the familiar. These fragments show how cultural inheritance is carried through touch, repetition, and use. They remind me that belonging is often found in subtle gestures and material traces. When magnified, these elements become emotional landscapes that hold both intimacy and universality.

What fascinates me most is how these tiny details can spark entire internal worlds. A thread, a hinge, a woven line of wicker, or the curve of an arch can trigger both personal and generational memory. They reveal how identity is layered, like paint, with one stroke resting upon another.

In many ways, Microcosms is also about resisting erasure. In a fast moving world, these elements become anchors. They whisper stories of migration, home, longing, and continuity. They teach me that memory is not always loud. Sometimes it survives in the smallest corner of a surface, waiting for someone to notice.

#### **How do you see the role of art in promoting empathy and cross-cultural understanding today?**

Art creates space for slow looking. In a world that moves quickly, this is a powerful invitation. When viewers take time to engage with the details of a painting, they begin to recognise their own memories in someone else's symbols. I believe art can soften the boundaries between cultures by highlighting shared textures, emotions, and human experiences. It becomes a quiet form of bridge building, where empathy grows through reflection rather than instruction.

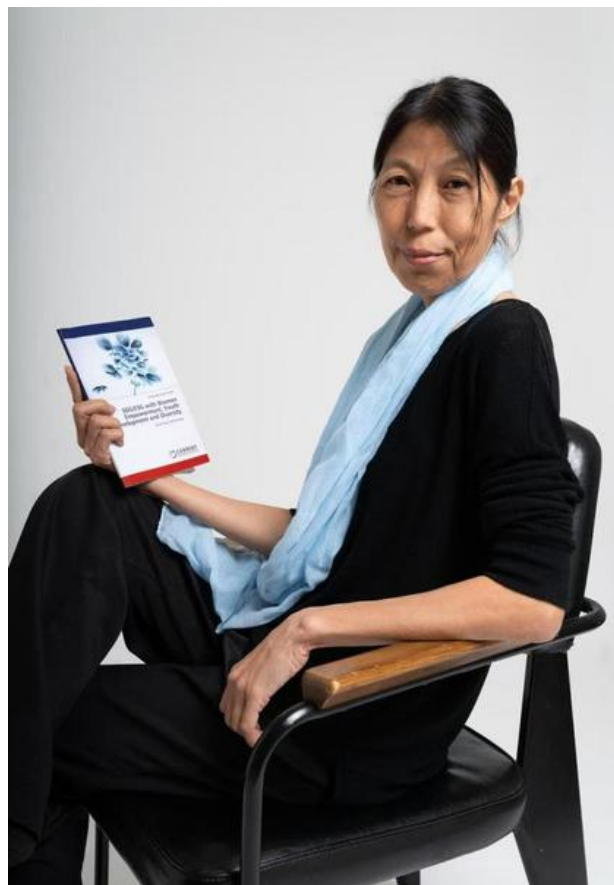
I also think art allows people to enter another culture without defensiveness. When someone encounters a Kashmiri motif, a fragment of a pheran cuff, or the curve of a masjid arch in my work, they are not being taught something. They are being invited to feel something. That shift from explanation to emotion builds a different kind of understanding. In its simplest form, art reminds us that we are all shaped by memory, by longing, by fragments of home. That universality is what creates empathy. Art becomes a meeting point where the intimate becomes shared and where difference becomes connection.

## — Interview

# Prof. Shirley Yeung

**Your artworks often show a figure facing a larger symbolic form. What story or feeling do you want viewers to sense in these moments?**

In my artworks, I often use blue and green, black and white, pink and red nature-related figures as symbolic forms (e.g. lotus, cat, yoga girl) — a visual dialogue that embodies the nature and human as cocreators for a better world for sustainability and education to love, care, tolerance and calm for a solution mind. Inspired by Genesis One's narrative of creation and ESGSCHOOLHK and School of Business, Programmes on service management and transformation, I aim to evoke a sense of calmness for innovations, caring the people, the nature, and the future full of uncertainties. The figures with different movement of lotus for purity, with static pause to think of black a walking cat for a clear mind, with harmony and flexibility in yoga



poses for fluidity. All these represent my humanity and education journey with a purpose of life, happiness, and influence.

For me, symbolic forms flourish lives in different ways, e.g. sustainability for nature, compassion for helping each other to build resilience, and learning for fun and transformations for a higher order of thinking for wisdom. I want audience to develop a mindset to right or wrong, but learn to change, to appreciate and to know your own unique destiny, reminding ourselves to have a feeling of sustainability and education, humility and responsibility with inner happiness for a greater story of creation and renewal.

**You have shown your art in many places — from Hong Kong to London and the UNESCAP Pavilion. How do different audiences respond to your work?**

My work has been exhibited across diverse cultural contexts—Fringe Club, Beyond Coffee and Bar, Color Brown Coffee from Hong Kong, Television Tower from ChangChun, and SYART Gallery, K11 Mall from Beijing, China and Singapore, Boomer Gallery and Holy Art Gallery from London to the UNESCAP Pavilion from Bangkok, Virtual Art Journey Road Show from New York, and TOAF, Toronto, Canada...etc..

Different audience brings unique perspectives of my creations with appreciation of color usage, lines and dots combination, Chinese calligraphy strokes and





western expression with freestyle of environmental paints and soils. In Hong Kong, viewers often respond to the spiritual undertones and the integration of traditional Chinese philosophies (Yin Yang). London audiences tend to appreciate the universal language of the symbols like dancing ballet girls in lotus applied Chinese calligraphy techniques and the emphasis on sustainability and gender equality and knowledge transfer to learning, triggering us to relearn in a better way with inner joy and peace, resonating with the city's multicultural fabric. At the UNESCAP Pavilion, the responses are deeply rooted in a sense of global interconnectedness via my mentee, Lucie Petit onsite learning how to draw with a Chinese Brush together with students and UN related delegates and shared responsibility toward SDGs.

Across these contexts, I observe that audiences are increasingly develop a sense of sustainability in artworks via intangible heritage culture (ICH) with Chinese calligraphy drawings and environmental paintings with AI, blending spiritual symbolism with social issues of SDG x ESG x AI —seeing aesthetic expression with education values for action. The response is often one of reflection, inspiring audience to re-consider their roles in art, technology and nature.

**You call yourself a Life Artist. What does this mean for the way you create and choose your themes?**

Calling myself a “Life Artist” signifies a holistic approach to education with sustainability and transformation with creativity—embedding caring, life

purpose, spirituality, social responsibility, and environmental consciousness into my artistic practice. It means that my art pieces (drawings, apparels, Chinese engraved stamps...etc.) with aesthetic expression, fun to create for sustainable lifestyles and engaging with the world. I choose themes that reflect the experiences with growth, calmness, healing, sustainability, and reconnecting the world for unity and well-being with a belief of art can serve as a transformative force and we are part of the nature to change with actions. My creative process is rooted in solidarity with mindfulness when I practice yoga in the past 15 years, with empathy and responsibility in my teaching, and a deep commitment to my life and family, aligning with the principles of servant leadership, which emphasizes serving others and fostering community. As a Life Artist, I strive to create works for a developing a clear mind for longer life with compassion, promoting sustainable living.

**Your projects often connect art with nature and sustainability. How do you usually begin — with an idea about the SDGs or with an image in your mind?**

My projects often originate from inner dialogue between conceptual ideas related to SDGs and visuals come to my mind. Sometimes, I begin with a specific goal—such as environmental sustainability or gender equality—visualizing symbols or scenes that embody these principles. Other times, I start with walking around to see how people create, how people change, how people suffer, how people enjoy...etc. with images inspired by the nature, yoga poses, or cultural traditions, which then guides me to connect it with broader themes of sustainability and human development. This iterative process ensures that my creations make a purpose to the community.



# Artyom Kozhevnikov

**How did you first come to digital painting as your primary medium of expression?**

I fell in love with digital painting for its convenience: it's easy to make changes, you can work anywhere, there's no need to spend money on materials, and your favorite T-shirt never gets stained with paint. However, I don't exclusively prefer digital art. I express myself in different ways - and that's what makes it interesting both for the viewer and for the artist himself.



Artyom Kozhevnikov | In Line For Happiness



**Your works convey deep emotional states - solitude, empathy, and inner reflection. Do you begin with a specific emotion or allow it to emerge during the process?**

I don't make sketches or drafts, nor do I search for compositional options. The idea for a work comes to me immediately and as a whole, so when I start painting, I already know what the result should be. Where this knowledge comes from, I do not know. But perhaps the inner emotions come first - they anticipate the emergence of the story.

**The figures in your paintings often appear introspective, with subtle gestures and minimal backgrounds. What draws you to this visual language of simplicity and restraint?**

As an artist, I am egocentric. My works know nothing beyond my own impressions. I am inclined toward reflection and self-analysis - a state in which the gaze turns inward, and the surroundings cease to be part of contemplation. That is why information about the environment





is often excluded from my paintings - it is unnecessary.

**Do you see your digital works as a continuation of traditional painting, or do you treat them as something entirely new?**

While working on a painting in a digital editor, I intentionally try to recreate the behavior of real paint. Out of all the available tools, I use only one - the "brush" - to make the process as close as possible to traditional painting. I would call myself a digital traditional artist, if such a thing is possible.

**How do you achieve such a sense of softness and emotional intimacy through digital tools, which are often considered "cold" or "mechanical"?**

I work in a digital medium, yet I still consider it

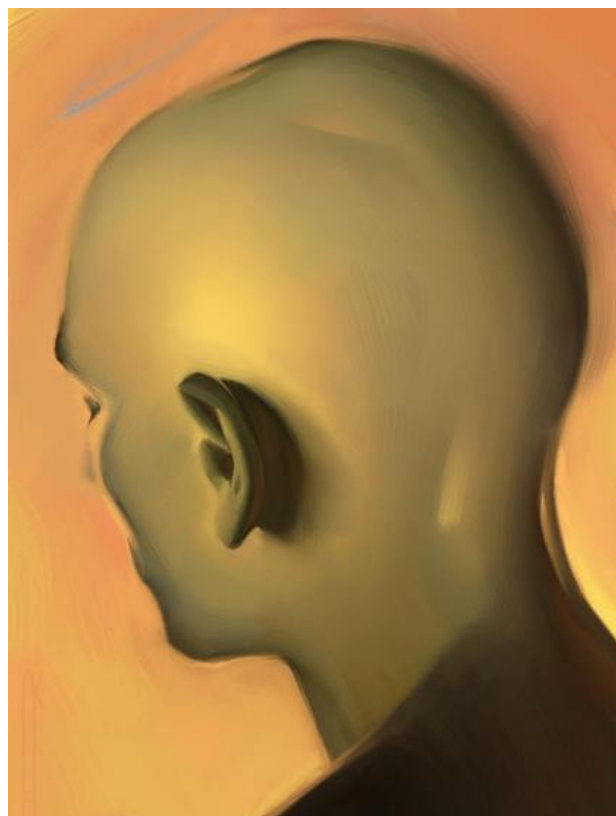
true painting. That's why I treat the workspace on my monitor as a real canvas, and the stylus of my graphic tablet as an actual brush. Perhaps that's why my works don't feel digital - they seem alive.

**Has your background in design and advertising influenced the way you compose or conceptualize your digital paintings?**

On the contrary, I came to design from painting and graphic art. In my advertising work, I try to bring in what I know from drawing. The artist in me comes before the designer.

**What emotions or reflections do you hope the viewer experiences when looking at your work?**

In my paintings, I share personal emotions, the complexity of my inner world, and the feeling of loneliness. I hope that through my works, people can find comfort in realizing that their emotions and experiences are part of the shared human condition. For me, art is a way to express myself, to find inner peace, and to share it with the world. I believe that by overcoming loneliness through self-compassion, we can create a more harmonious and understanding society.



## — Interview

# Saadé L. Taylor

**You mentioned that photography became your perfect medium for expression during your time at Purdue University. What was the turning point that made you realize this shift?**

As a highly creative child, I was constantly drawing, painting, and creating handmade books. In high school, I enrolled in several artistic classes including calligraphy, film photography, and digital photography. I loved to create, and I



enjoyed the many ways in which I could do so. However, it was my participation in a research trip to Los Angeles with the university's Black Cultural Center during my sophomore year of college that sparked my serious interest in photography as art. My ideas of what LA looked like were immediately contrasted by the reality of the city: it was gritty and imperfect, but also beautiful. I was inspired by the raw beauty around me and was compelled to document it in real time; I knew photography was the perfect way to do that. I switched my major to photography shortly after returning from LA.

**How did your early interests in drawing, painting, and handmade books influence your current photographic style?**

Creative expression has always been an important part of my life. My love for drawing, painting, and making books by hand began in my childhood and ultimately helped cultivate my love for color, contrast and interesting compositions. My current photographic style reflects my early interests in creative expression and incorporates the lessons I learned while creating: to explore my imagination (drawing), to



Saadé L. Taylor | Nightscape #1 | 2010





employ the use of color to convey emotion (painting), and to embrace the power of storytelling (crafting handmade books). These influences shape the way I see through the lens, transforming each image into both a visual and emotional narrative.

**Your education combines both art and communication — how do these two disciplines complement each other in your creative practice?**

Art and communication complement each other immensely well in my creative practice. I view art and communication as two sides of the same coin - both disciplines convey the expression of ideas. My educational training in art provides me with artistic principles that influence my creative expression and aesthetics, while my background in communication ensures that this expression is intentional and impactful. Together, the two disciplines provide a robust framework for my artistic practice.

**How do you approach lighting and atmosphere in your photography to evoke emotion or mystery?**

Light quality is one of the first things I consider when shooting a subject. I prefer to shoot in natural light because it adds a beautiful, often quiet atmosphere to photographs. Alternatively, I may opt for studio lighting if I have a specific light quality that I am looking to create as it allows me to direct the light exactly where I want it. Once I have established the lighting setup, I allow my artistic eye to do the rest.

**What role does intuition play in your artistic decisions?**

Intuition plays a large role in my artistic decisions. My work process flows freely and is guided by what I feel the subject is trying to say. Sometimes, I begin with an image vivid in my mind, and I endeavor to make that vision a reality. At other times, a concept draws me in, and I seek to uncover the heart of its meaning.

**You write that photography can “conceal what is true or reveal what is hidden.” How do you decide when to conceal and when to reveal?**

It depends on the subject matter and the concept I am exploring. Photography as a whole is art and all art, in my opinion, is layered with interpretations. Mainly, the perception of the artist and the perception of the viewer. I allow my intuition to guide me, especially when it comes to composition. In my artistic practice, I have found that what is left out of an image is sometimes as relevant as what is within the image.

**What do you hope viewers will feel or question when they encounter your work?**

I hope that viewers will question what they deem (or accept) as beautiful when they encounter my work. I believe that there is beauty in all things, if only we would search genuinely and earnestly to find it. I create pieces that inspire and move me, and I hope that viewers will feel inspired and moved by my work as well.



## — Interview

# Irina Krechetova

**You travel a lot and paint scenes from different countries — India, Thailand, Vietnam, Sri Lanka. How do these travels influence your artistic vision?**

Yes, that's true — I travel a lot and I always take my sketch kit with me. I can't imagine a vacation without it. New places fill me with fresh impressions and inspire me to create studies. Each country reveals its own unique stories, its architecture, landscapes, its sunrises and sunsets... Later, in my studio, I paint works inspired by what I have seen — a vivid reflection of the paths I've taken.

**Your paintings often feature bright colors and**



**expressive brushwork. How do you choose your color palette for each work?**

I am an artist — that's how I see it! This phrase has already become a cliché, but there is a grain of truth in it. I am a realist artist, and it's hard to argue with that. I try to "capture" nature and convey it as it is — but through my own vision, through my perception of the world around me. And the palette and brushstrokes on the canvas are not the main thing; it's impossible to explain how it happens.

**What attracts you most to marine themes — the sea itself, the light, or perhaps the atmosphere of freedom?**

You are right — I have many works dedicated to the sea, rivers, and lakes. I love painting water, boats, and ships. And everything about them fascinates me: the changing surface, reflections, unreal color combinations, the graphic quality of the vessels' forms, their stability, the precise contours of the decks and yacht masts — and the sails!!

**Many of your still lifes and portraits radiate**





**warmth and positivity. Is this an intentional artistic choice or a reflection of your inner state?**

I believe that an artist's inner state will inevitably be reflected in their work. It's like a fingerprint — always unique.

**When you start a new painting, do you plan it in detail or let the process unfold intuitively?**

When I'm working on a piece in the studio, I need to invent and imagine the storyline. But when I paint from life, I capture whatever grabs my attention — the color, the light, the form. Whenever I'm in a new place, I walk a lot, observe, and search for the right angle.

**Your works are in private collections in many countries. Do you remember your first sale abroad?**

Of course, I remember! There was nothing

special about it — they ordered the work online, and I sent it by mail.

But let me tell you about another interesting case.

It happened in India, in the state of Kerala. I was painting a seascape with a small house across from a large hotel. As I was finishing, an elderly English couple approached me and asked to buy the piece. They said they had visited this place many times before and used to come with their daughter. They wanted to bring my painting to her as a gift — a keepsake of their travels together.

Such a touching story, isn't it?

**What would you like viewers to feel when they look at your paintings?**

My main message is positivity. I want people to feel uplifted when they look at my works. There is already so much dullness, gloom, and negativity around us—why bring that onto the canvas?

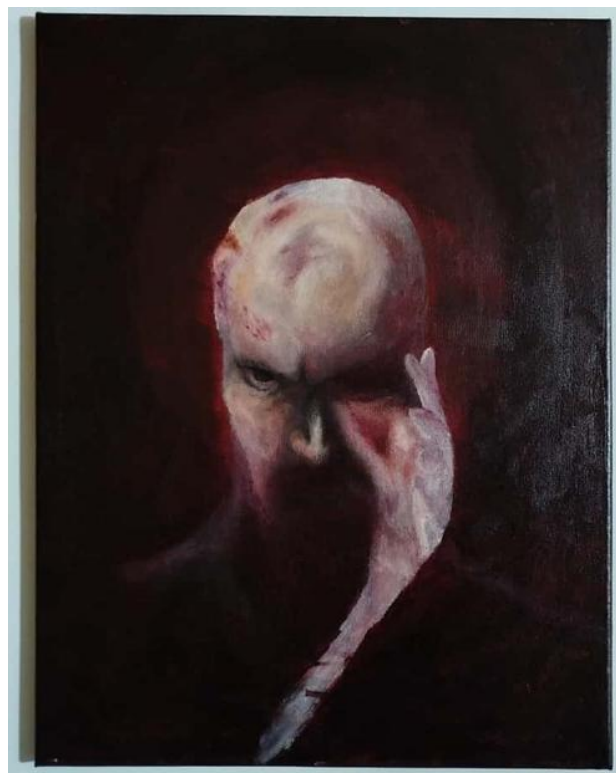
# Jovana Ciric Srbínovska

**Your academic background is in music, yet your paintings feel deeply psychological and visceral. How does your experience as a pianist influence your visual art?**

My work on classical music influenced me as a person pretty much in any aspect of my life. I was fortunate enough to be accepted by a very good mentor at the Academy, and working with a good mentor shapes you into a professional which in turn shapes your character. A person that already sat inside you, waiting to be supported and brought out- it blooms through quality work on any kind of art and then translates into every other kind of art you open yourself to. The most helpful thing I noticed was discipline and approach to work. Working on classical music demands a lot of discipline, pedantry, attention to detail, analytical thinking and sternness with yourself and with your work... Because I've learned how to notice and how to analyse through music- I was able to do that in other arts like painting and writing. Another thing is respect and taste. While studying music we do not just learn how to play- our mentors teach us standards and a way of thinking. We develop our own taste,



Jovana Ciric Srbínovska | Life With Trauma | 2022



Jovana Ciric Srbínovska | The Mask | 2024

we learn how to think for ourselves, how to evaluate quality, how to respect it and how to respect art itself. It definitely defined my taste, approach and perspective towards painting and writing.

**You mentioned that art should reveal the “face” of both the individual and society. What parts of this hidden or denied inner world do you most want your audience to confront?**

Any part that is awakened by art, be it pleasant or unpleasant.

I share a belief that art is a mirror for society and artist's talent is to channel that. We artists- we watch, we feel, we notice, we remember and we digest all of that into art. Anything awakened by any piece of art- that is what we should accept and pay attention to. It is our consciousness or subconsciousness telling us something about ourselves, about our life, our environment, our company... If we listened to the truth that our imagination is telling us, maybe we could flow through life a little easier, let ourselves help ourselves. This is not a new idea, it is said and believed for centuries, from the religious beliefs which found sanctity and prophecy in art, to the modern psychology which finds subconscious truths and ideas in it, every period explaining it in its own terms of understanding.

**Your current collection, “All unhappy families are alike,” deals with what happens behind closed doors. What inspired you to explore this theme?**

There are parts of our society which are like cages, still. People don't talk about what is happening behind closed doors, it is shameful to mention anything that hurts and the neighbors don't ask, everyone watches their own business... In a lot of cases, if anyone tries to say anything, people don't want to





get involved, they act like hurt and pain are a disease which can be carried over through talking. In a society so obsessed with outpicture, the “peace” and the “pretty” face of people is kept by shutting up about the obvious things, letting aggressors do as they please in their own homes, and ignoring obvious signs and cries for help. Our family, what happens behind closed doors, is what no one can save us from until we grow enough to get out on our own. But if we addressed what we bury behind doors, maybe we would see how similar our pain is. We can feel that through honest art. You can hear a song, see a film, painting, read a book and be touched by someone feeling all the things you never said, someone describing everything too heavy to analyse and dissect, someone survived everything that hurts you and he now shouts it at the top of his lungs, at the tip of his brush... and that recognition, that understanding is enough to push you just into another day, and then another... So, this series is for people who need to feel seen and for those who need to see. I try to be as sincere as I can because I am inspired with hope that someone somewhere, maybe even some past part of myself, will be heard when he can't say what hurts. There is too many people who just can't afford to say or feel what pains them, or what they feel at all. I can now, so I hope what I can show will help at least one person through the day in any way.

**Many of your works contain distorted faces, repeated emotional expressions, or fragmented bodies. What do these visual motifs represent for you?**

Emotions, feelings, situations, states of mind, memories... I paint as I perceive and experience.

**How do you approach translating difficult emotions—trauma, fear, shame—into symbolic or surreal visual forms?**

If I paint for someone in particular, I will consciously fit the painting in the context of our relationship or that person's

request, but this series is just complete improvisation. I tried to be as true to my idea as I can, even in moments when I myself didn't understand it.

Some of the paintings, like “Heritage” or “Living with trauma” or “Family portrait” (the one I'm working on right now), I dreamed about. Sometimes dreams are very real and persistent until I get them out on the paper, at least as a scribble of idea. Some parts of those ideas I recognise as clear metaphors and symbols drawn out of culture, memories or some psychological theory. Some parts I understood after finishing the painting, some parts I still don't understand.

**Are any of the scenes in your paintings autobiographical, or do you view them more as collective representations of human experience?**

I did not paint this series as a self-portrait or telling of my own story, if that was the assignment, I would not know how to cut the border between my life and society. I felt my own experience, I felt the experience of watching others live, I felt their feelings wash over me and that all escalated into painting. I feel like to try and part autobiographical parts from collective experience would cause the parts and the whole to lose meaning, to lose integral parts of each other. My own experience is indivisible from collective experience since I am an indivisible part of the society. There are parts which are autobiographical, but they are not just mine alone and their meaning is not just what I identify them with. Much more important is what it wakes up in anyone who sees it. I think that every painting is a finished work only in combination with people's interpretations, not with just the author's.

**Your paintings often evoke intense, almost claustrophobic emotional states. What atmosphere do you hope the viewer experiences when standing in front of your works?**

Exactly that which it evokes.



**Alexandra Kashina (Harufeel)**

As a surreal and expressive visual storyteller, I see art as a struggle for survival and a quest for self-discovery and inner peace. Through powerful imagery, I explore inner freedom and emotional truth, portraying people who inspire me and give me strength to persist in a chaotic world. My work reaches out to those battling their inner demons, reminding them they are not alone. I invite viewers to embrace honesty in their own journey-because only by revealing our true selves can we find real strength and beauty within. This project is a call for liberation through imagery, encouraging a deeper connection with our inner worlds.

Alexandra Kashina (Harufeel) | Shadows Within | 2025









## — Interview

# María Sauzet

**Your work often transforms interior spaces into surreal emotional landscapes. How do these imagined rooms connect to your own memories or lived experiences?**

They are connected in a beautiful way, as it is absolutely magical to be able to capture in each piece—regardless of the technique—my emotions, feelings, or circumstances from the past, present, or even the future. Those invented



María Sauzet | Happy Hour



landscapes, such as forests, gardens, or microuniverses, are precisely the imaginary places where I long to be or where I once imagined myself. In this sense, I can say that my works are both expressive and symbolic.

**The perspective in your works often bends or shifts, creating a dreamlike disorientation. Is this intentional, and what does this distorted perspective represent for you?**

The distortion in my work is entirely intentional. For me, it's part of an expressive language: just as memories fade, are invented, or reinvented, I allow myself to reconstruct scenes in my own way. That freedom becomes a metaphor. I'm not interested in depicting reality as it is; my works are infused with symbolism.

This is also why I turn to collage. I'm fascinated by how this technique allows you—figuratively—to turn the world upside down. I find it compelling when the viewer notices that something is out of place, that the vanishing point doesn't align the way it "should." That slight dislocation opens up a different way of seeing. In this sense, the surface—the canvas, the paper, the fabric—becomes both a playground and a metaphor for an internal state. What appears as distortion is, in truth, a way of revealing what cannot be expressed literally.

**The checkered floor appears almost like a**





**stage where objects “perform.” What draws you to this motif, and what does it symbolize in your visual language?**

The checkered floor holds enormous meaning for me. I spent most of my childhood in my grandparents’ house, where the light filtered in through the tall windows, and the skylight let sunlight spill across each tile of the worn checkerboard floors. There were Hispanic art figures, beautiful illustrated books, and wooden furniture full of character. People talked about theater, and my aunt would recite the verses of Federico García Lorca.

In those rooms, I read my children’s books while imagining every possible setting.

I perceive spaces as sanctuaries of memory; the floor is emotional, a trigger for other sensations. It’s a stage where I place objects not casually, but exactly where I feel they need to be.

Life unfolds on a stage, and the privilege of artists is that we can move the pieces at will and recreate moments from the past.

A large part of my work belongs to the series Vestiges of Childhood. Vestiges are the traces and memories that come back to us in mischievous ways. My practice is multidisciplinary, and these vestiges appear in collages, paintings, photographs, assemblages, and mixed media. The series has no end—I continue to work on my vestiges over time. These most recent pieces clearly reflect a Mediterranean influence, the region where we

lived after leaving Argentina. Every national and international experience has greatly enriched both my work and my life in this profession I’ve chosen - the profession of art. I’ve always been supported and accompanied by my family on almost all of these trips, which makes each experience doubly rewarding.

**Your international background spans Argentina, Italy, and Spain. How has this multicultural experience shaped your artistic vision?**

I’ve been fortunate to participate actively in several major art fairs. (Let me tell you that I’m always surrounded by my family and friends, who are wonderful fans). One of them—ART ON PAPER in New York City—surpassed all my expectations. As in other fairs, I met there with the gallerist and with other artists who were able to travel. During the days of the fair, you are immersed in a world where art is both breathed and lived. Your heart races not only when the audience engages with your work but also as you visit other booths and see the work of fellow artists. The experience is truly sublime.

At that particular fair in NYC, I sold a piece to a collector, Julia W. from Onatrio, Canada. Once she returned to her country, she sent me a photo of the piece beautifully framed and expressed how happy she was to have acquired it. That was incredibly gratifying.

I’ve also participated in other art fairs in the



United States, including the one at the Miami Convention Center. A remarkable aspect of that experience was that the gallerist couldn't travel, so the artists took part in installing the booth, welcoming visitors, and handling every detail—an experience made even more meaningful by the spirit of generosity and camaraderie among us. Traveling to the Palm Beach Art Fair and exhibiting my work there was also highly enriching.

I traveled to PARC in Lima, Peru, and I've participated in many art fairs in Argentina, my home country. One of the most important and rewarding was BA Photo, the leading photography fair in Buenos Aires. A magazine selected my installation—circular photographs of the sidewalks of Wynwood, covered in acrylic—as one of the most interesting projects of the fair, which was an immense joy.

Now living in Spain, I regularly take part in competitions where being selected among so many works already feels like a prize in itself. In 2022, I was awarded First Prize in a competition in the city of Cieza, Murcia, for a piece from the Encuentro series, also created with collage and acrylic. It was deeply fulfilling to travel there and meet the wonderful people who chose my work for the award.

I participate actively in open calls, and we travel whenever possible to the cities where the exhibitions are held.

I also contribute by donating works to charitable causes; I believe it's important for artists to collaborate, because together we can truly make a difference.

It is also a wonderful experience to be blessed with awards. I received the First Prize from the San Isidro Visual Artists Association in 2004, and more recently I was also awarded the First Prize



María Sauzet | Home

in Cieza, Murcia, in 2022. I have also received an honorable mention in photography from the University of Salvador.

**When viewers explore your works, what emotional journey do you hope they experience—from the intimate interiors to the open horizons?**

This is interesting because the question itself implies the dilemma of whether a work of art should—or even can—be explained, or whether each person should have their own emotional experience when standing in front of it. Personally, I don't like to explain my work too much. Everything I pour into it is emotional and connected to the moment of creation, the circumstances, the environment, and my experiences—past, present, or future. Many times, I write texts almost automatically, without thinking, and generally, I intend for them not to be fully understood. Above all, I believe that to have a true emotional experience, one must be physically present in front of the work. Images do not come close to capturing what a piece is in body and soul. Its textures, palette, details, and spirit are diminished when seen only through a reproduction.

I am personally fascinated by how people interpret my exhibitions, because each viewer brings their own imprint and perceives the work through the lens of their own life experiences. The artwork functions as a trigger for personal narratives. I remember a piece from the Partituras series with particular affection, as it was part of my first solo exhibition. The image showed a staircase with blurred ballerina feet,



María Sauzet | Memorias del bosque





combined with a colorful collage of a beautiful sheet music cover. One viewer gave me a full story: the ballerina is afraid to perform in public and flees down the theater stairs to avoid ever appearing on stage. It was amusing to hear, but not wrong at all—the work could perfectly convey that, or on the contrary, express her joy and urgency to reach the stage.

The truth is, when we present works in an exhibition or on social media, we are sharing our feelings and revealing our soul and heart.

**You describe objects as “silent witnesses of memory.” Which objects in your compositions hold the strongest personal meaning for you?**

It’s a beautiful and interesting question. I have a particular fondness for old objects—those with history, with a soul—objects that once inhabited other homes and belonged to other people. I think I grew up in places where such objects were part of everyday life: a mannequin here, small altarpieces there, attics filled with accumulated things where discovering an object felt like finding a treasure.

I was also fortunate that my father instilled in me

a love for photography. My first camera was a KODAK Brownie, and from a very young age I carried it everywhere, photographing the present without knowing that, in the future, it would help me reconstruct my past. Taking photographs, waiting for the roll to be developed—which could take a week—and then seeing the results, was, in a way, part of an artistic creation in itself.

Regarding objects, one of my works, which uses an old typography drawer as its base, holds small elements in its compartments. Each object can represent a memory, a stage of life, or a past emotion. The drawer functions as a personal archive of memory, preserving fragments of lived experiences. It is a miniature world.

I protect these worlds so carefully that I often don’t want to exhibit them; I can hardly bear the thought of parting with these works, as they are an intimate archive of memory and emotion. This is also true for my autobiographical collages. To avoid compromising the privacy of any child, I use my own photographs to create works about childhood, and then I resist letting these works leave me. We are the sum of our memories: of what we preserve, what we choose to show, and also of what it is difficult for us to reveal.

## At the Gentle Edge: Qingyuan Liang's Inner Cosmos

Illustrator and visual storyteller Qingyuan Liang presented her solo exhibition *Intimate Cosmos: Mapping the Tender Space* in London from 17 to 23 November 2025. This exhibition constituted a transient inner space: upon entering, visitors are not required to 'understand' anything but gradually realize they are being invited into an intensely private, quiet but authentic emotional world.



Liang's practice centers on those ineffable sensations and how they leave traces within the body. Through hand-drawn works, fabric collages, paintings, and spatial installations, she constructs an honest retrospective. Her pieces often convey, at a profound level, an acknowledgement of vulnerability, an understanding of attachment, and a patient contemplation of uncertainty.



Installation view of 'Intimate Cosmos: Mapping the Tender Space' in London

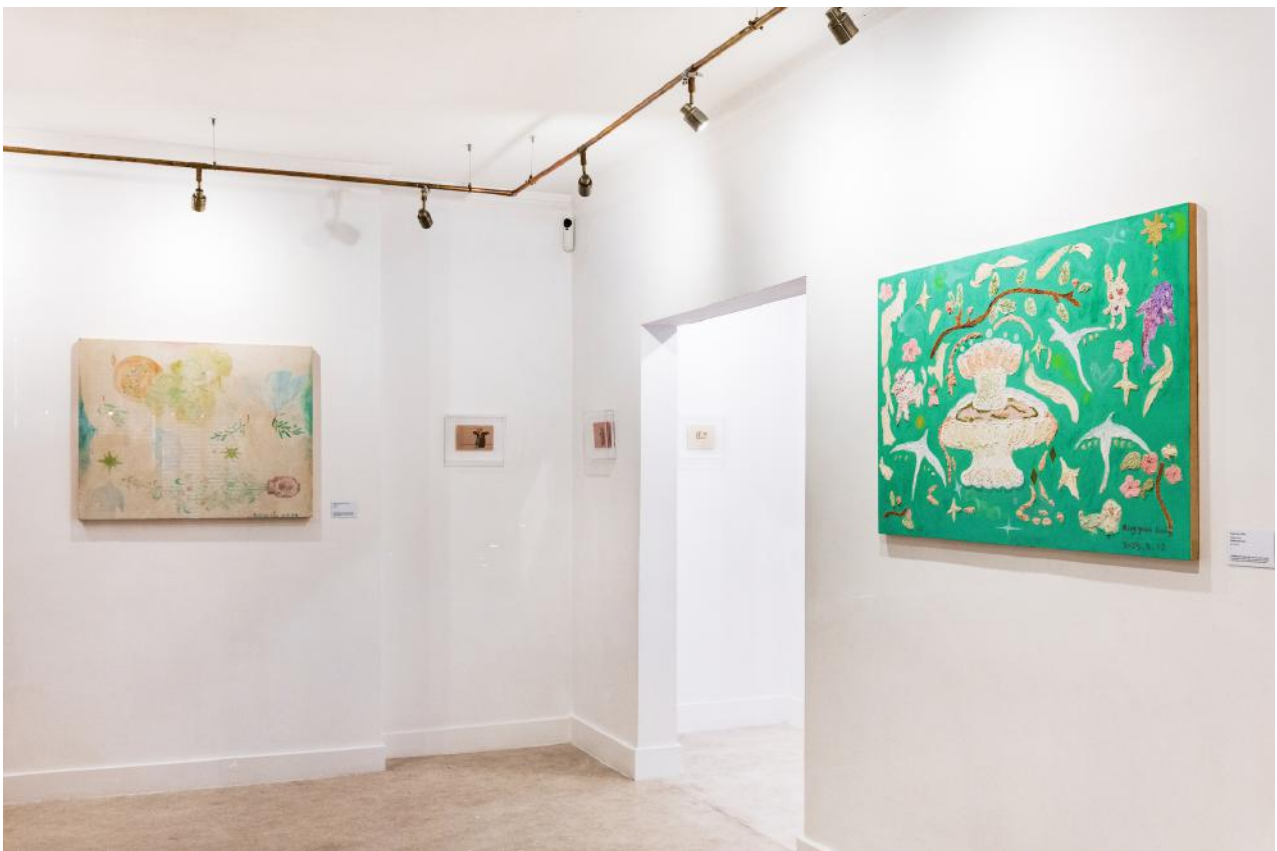
The exhibition's most significant piece is the fabric narrative work *A Lion Wants a Hug*. A small lion journeys through the process of seeking a hug. This simple-seeming story conceals profound psychological motivation. It speaks of 'seeking love' and how a person learns to believe: their emotions are worthy of being held. Fabric becomes pivotal to this work, soft, prone to wear, always wrapped around form. In this piece, the fabric transcends materiality, functioning more as an emotional skin.





The work develops as a space installation, inviting viewers to step into the story instead of only standing outside observing it. In this process, the viewer gradually realizes that the embrace we seek does not always come from others; sometimes it resides within our relationship with ourselves. This is not a tale of growth or triumph, but an unfulfilled psychological journey.

The two paintings in this exhibition, *Forest Zoo* and *Bringing the Olive Branch*, reveal another facet of Liang Qingyuan's visual language. *Forest Zoo* articulates an almost defensive imagination: nature, animals, and stars assemble into an idealized space, akin to a self-constructed sanctuary. *Bringing the Olive Branch*, inspired by her reading of *Once Upon a Country: My Palestinian Life*, avoids political imagery, instead interpreting 'peace' as a private state of being.



Installation view of 'Intimate Cosmos: Mapping the Tender Space' in London

This exhibition does not construct a dreamlike realm but reminds us that our inner worlds are inherently fragile and unstable but deserving of earnest attention. Through her art practices, Qingyuan Liang provides a means to reconnect with those unresolved yet enduring fragments within us.

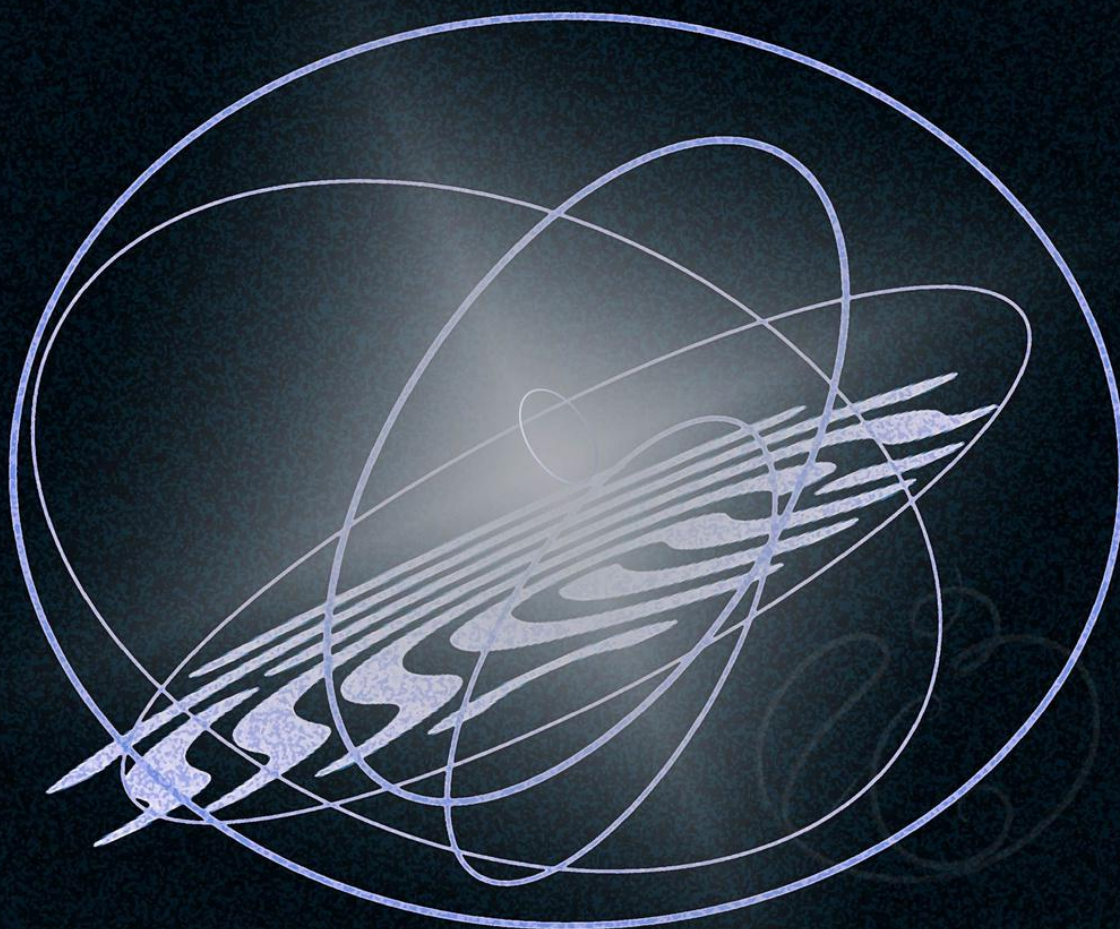
## Irina Zavorotnaya

The artistic practice of Irina Zavorotnaya is professional and multifaceted. She works successfully in various directions, actively participates in exhibitions, and has a number of publications. Irina graduated from the Moscow Academic Art College of 1905 with a specialization in oil painting restoration, and later from the Higher School of Restoration at RGGU with a degree in painting restoration and art history. She also received additional professional education at the Kosygin Russian State University, specializing in graphic design.

Graphics hold an important place in her creative work. Irina works in the directions of symbolism, cosmism, and romanticism. In the genres of psychological portrait and fantasy art, she masterfully handles pencil and pastel techniques. The artist also turns to photo collage and digital graphics. As a graphic designer, Irina develops brand identities, logos, monograms, and advertisements.

Irina Zavorotnaya feels most connected to the world of symbols, metaphors, emotions, and feelings. She strives for harmony of forms, balanced composition, and elegance and expressiveness of lines. All of this contributes to revealing the inner essence of her images, which capture the viewer's attention and draw them into their world.

Irina Zavorotnaya | Space Composition







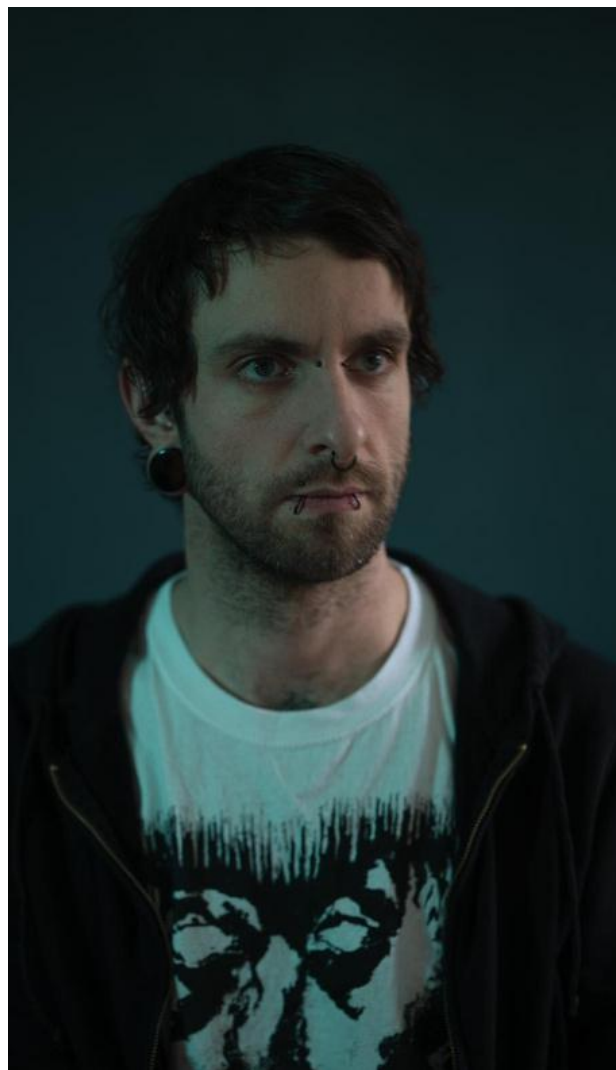
## — Interview

# Tom Zelger

**Your work frequently engages with social and ecological fragility. What initially drew you to these themes, and how have they evolved throughout your artistic practice?**



Tom Zelger | Trauma Project



I started from the conviction that objectivity is a utopia and that every choice, whether conscious or not, and every path we're going is shaped by socialization and power. That awareness, together with a strong sense of ethics and justice, pushed me to make visible how human activity affects people and environments. Early encounters with state violence, shrinking habitats, and the marginalization of communities created a need to respond beyond documentation. At the same time I became critical of the rapid circulation of images, which often flattens complexity. That tension led me to develop methods in which meaning emerges through making itself. Over time the practice moved from solitary documentation toward plural and participatory methods that emphasize vulnerability and interdependence. Collaborations with forest collectives in projects such as Burning Bridges and Emerging from Obscurity prompted a central





question: how can a photograph carry the history of a place and the voices of those who live there? In practical terms I began inviting others to shape the work by suggesting sites, marking film or prints, and taking part in presentation decisions. I also introduced material processes that allow place to leave physical traces on film and paper, treating stains and abrasion as evidence rather than defects. What began as a personal response to loss has become a negotiated collective exploration that distributes power and responsibility among participants and sites.

**Your images combine both analog and digital processes. What does each medium allow you to express that the other cannot?**

I treat analog and digital processes as complementary because each offers capabilities the other cannot. Analog work - shooting on film, hand developing, and processing exposed film with soils, plant extracts or visual annotation by protagonists - invites unpredictability and lets people and place intervene materially. Emulsions can carry sediment, shifts in color, and chemical marks that register an encounter; these traces are part of the work's meaning rather than mere texture.

Digital tools support different functions. After scanning, I use digital methods to organize sequences, integrate archival material, and ensure legibility across formats and audiences. Digital intervention is always modest and dialogical: edits serve translation and clarity rather than erasing the original materiality. In collaborative projects participants often engage

in this stage too, discussing images, annotate captions, or suggest layouts so the final sequence reflects multiple perspectives. In short, analog embeds encounter and contingency into the object; digital enables that object to be read, shared, and co-curated across contexts.

**Some of your works are transferred onto organic materials. How did this material experimentation begin, and what does working with natural surfaces add to your storytelling?**

The move to print and transfer images onto organic substrates grew out of the same interest in letting place assert itself. I wanted to address clear cutting because this form of forestry is among the most destructive: it removes life above and below ground and regeneration can take decades. When I visited a recently clear cut site I noticed the countless remnants of trees that had stood there until recently and wanted to incorporate those fragments as historical testimony within the work. After exposing film to

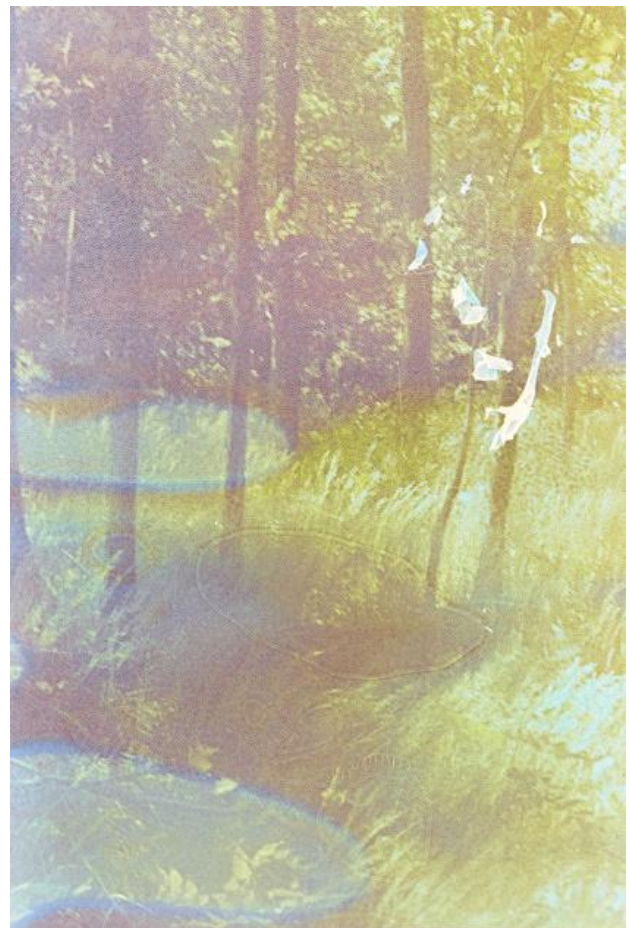


soils and plant extracts, it felt natural to carry that vulnerability into the print by using found wood and bark sourced from these sites. These substrates introduce grain, knots, and frayed fibers that become integral to the image. Cracks, stains, and warping are not damage to be concealed but layers to be read.

People's perspectives and knowledge also play a vital role in selecting places and substrates. That shared decision making turns each object into a negotiated surface: a photograph intertwined with an element of an ecosystem and with human authorship. Conceptually the result is a double script, the photographic image and the material support, which asks the viewer to read both at once. Because the substrate can age or break down, the artwork enacts temporal vulnerability: it accumulates wear, changes form, or may even be returned to the ground. This gives the work a posture of care and accountability rather than permanence.

**Your recent exhibitions span Sweden, South Korea, Italy, and Japan. How do different cultural contexts influence how your work is received or interpreted?**

Each context brings a distinct frame of reference, and I welcome that plurality. The works are intentionally open ended so audiences in



Tom Zelger | Emerging From Obscurity

different places project their own histories and questions onto them. I do not prescribe a single reading; instead I try to create conditions for exchange, for example through co-curated talks, programs that include multiple local voices, and exhibition materials that invite response. Practically, these strategies decentralize interpretive power and surface local priorities, which often reveal overlapping concerns such as non-human agency, stewardship, and diverse understandings of land and memory. Variation in reception is an asset: it shows that an image can participate in multiple knowledge systems and that meaning is produced collectively rather than delivered top down.

**Your photographs often feel both abstract and political. How do you balance aesthetic experimentation with critical commentary?**

Aesthetic experiment is itself a political stance. Formal choices, such as blurs, torn edges, shifts in color or partial framing are used to decenter dominant viewing habits and to unsettle the assumption of a single authoritative gaze. By disrupting legibility I ask viewers to slow down,



Tom Zelger | Trauma Project





question expectations, and attend to absences as well as presences.

At the same time the materiality of the work carries concrete information. Chemical stains, sediment, and physical alteration point to specific interactions between industry, communities, and ecosystems. I aim to merge formal ambiguity with evidentiary detail so aesthetic choices amplify rather than obscure context. Collaborative editing and presentation practices help keep this balance honest: when participants contribute to selection and display, the work is less likely to become a purely stylistic gesture. The result is work in which abstraction invites reflection and material evidence directs that reflection toward concrete issues.

**Environmental questions appear deeply embedded in your practice. Do you see art as a tool for ecological awareness or even activism?**

I regard the work primarily as a form of ecological awareness that creates space for civic engagement rather than functioning as

straightforward propaganda. My methods - exposing film to place, collaborating with local knowledge holders and community members who are emotionally connected to the sites and topics, and producing objects that visibly carry traces of impact - are intended to prompt responsibility and open pathways for dialogue. In this sense the practice has activist potential, but it is a multi-layered activism grounded in relationship building: reflection, shared making, public conversations, and collaborative exhibitions that foreground local concerns and practical approaches to care.

This is a gentle activism rooted in attentiveness and co-responsibility. The work seeks to shift perception and feeling, creating moments in which people can reflect together on contamination, repair, and stewardship. Where appropriate I work with local groups to ensure that exhibitions, texts, and public programs reflect their priorities rather than only my interpretation. Ultimately art can change how people perceive and relate to complex issues, and by distributing authority and creating participatory settings the work encourages collective rather than prescriptive forms of action.

**Working across Europe, how does constant movement and shifting environments shape your creative thinking?**

Working in different places is foundational because each site contributes distinct materials, histories, and collaborators. Travel has taught me to treat projects as situated inquiries rather than prepackaged statements: I spend time listening, walking, and learning from people on the ground before deciding on methods or materials. That deliberate slowness is a practical discipline of border thinking, positioning the project at an edge where multiple knowledges meet.

Mobility also reinforces plural methods. Each context requires its own forms of dialogue and negotiation, and approaches are continually adapted to regional, personal, and ecological realities. The cumulative effect is a practice that learns by comparison, values marginal perspectives, and remains open to being redirected by the people and places I work with.

## — Interview

# Nguyen Minh Tri (Tonee)



**You describe your works as “never fully completed.” What does the idea of incompleteness mean to you personally and artistically?**

I tend to think of artworks as living beings, forever evolving and changing, either in spirit, in form or in size, sometimes a bit of everything. Completed art is dead art. What I present to the world is not completed pieces, but a capture of myself and my thoughts within a timeframe that inspired the piece, and I hope to inspire others to do the same with their life. I always tell myself and people who are close to me: “Be the pond, not the water.” The act of viewing and interpreting art is also a part of proving its liveliness. To be able to converse with people

not only about my art and experience, but also their experience, and my newer experience after the creation of said art. I think that’s what makes my work what it is: a flow of consciousness.

**How does repetition help you cope with ADHD, and how has this practice shaped your relationship with time and patience?**

A major thing with ADHD is the inability to sit still and focus on things that produce little dopamine. In the beginning of my journey, I had to turn on a Youtube video or a game to be able to sit and create. As I tried and trained my stillness and ‘zen,’ I started to enjoy the little things that come with creation and art. Feeling the materials that are at hand: the humming of the air conditioner, the roughness of aluminium wires, the hot and cold of hot glue, the rubbing of ink against the canvas, past memories, daily conversations. I like having conversations with my art. Sometimes, it is pleasant, at times, it is frustrating. But like a close friend, I value it, and I hope that it values me.

**The piece “Octopus Heart Hair Hat” has a powerful symbolic weight. What emotions or memories does it hold for you?**

The hat is inspired by the knit hat that Vietnamese parents usually give to their kids that mimics the appearance of having a different hair style. I imagine if someone never grows up and keeps wearing the hat, the wool hair would become your hair, and hair must grow. In Vietnam, there’s a saying that goes: *Cái răng cái tóc là gốc con người* (Teeth and hair are the roots of humans). The act of knitting is traditionally women’s labour. Long hair gets tangled and messed up, but you are too attached to cut it off, so you hold onto it like a big weight.



Nguyen Minh Tri (Tonee) | Octopus Heart Hair Hat





I don't have a specific memory of the work, but a general feeling toward childhood. How much of it am I dragging toward the present and future.

**In "Fragile" you use aluminium wire, traditionally meant to support bonsai trees. How do you reinterpret this material as something fragile yet expressive?**

The work is in my series that tries to use the glue that sticks and creates structures, to become the structure by itself. By the word 'fragile,' I am toying with the rigidity of the work, physically and fundamentally. It is very ironic, metal and fragility. I really wish to have physical exhibitions where viewers can participate in shaping the works themselves, by physically touching and bending them. I believe there's so much emotion and decisiveness in bending metal, the fear of mishaping them, because metal remembers. Each bend will forever have its mark within the metal.

Aluminium wire is a fascinating material, I really wish to popularize its use in art and in general. Very dependable yet flexible, many fun vibrant colors also!

**Many of your works deal with tension between control and chaos. How do you navigate this balance in your art and in life?**

It's a fine line, but I don't really aim to balance it in my art. I think that art is not always meant to reflect life correctly. I use art as a way to balance my life. Most of the time, life interferes with my art, but sometimes art interferes with life. I would love to make my art more chaotic if I ever learn to code and create machinery to make art that can move on itself. But when viewers move my art by themselves, it's already chaotic already! I love to have more controlled chaos, and more tension if possible.

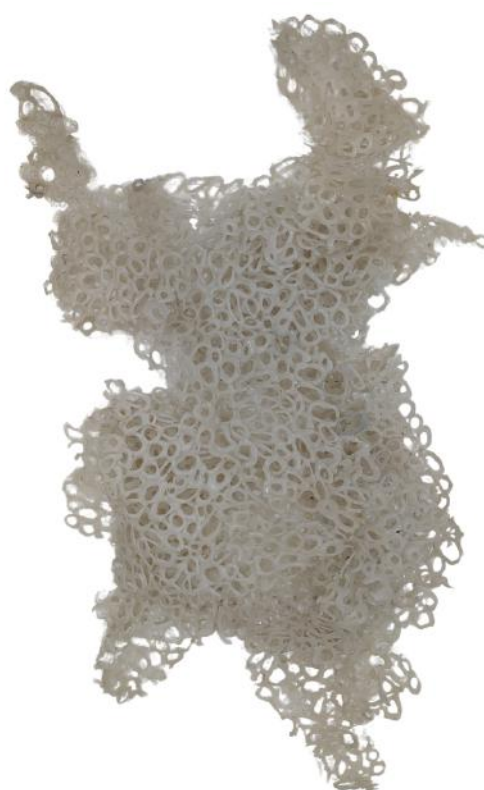
**What role does empathy or self-reflection play in your art practice?**

For me, empathy isn't just for people; it is a form of 'material listening.' When I work with aluminum wire, I have to empathize with its limits. If I force it to bend against its grain, it snaps or weakens; if I listen to where it wants to go, it flows.

There is a concept called panpsychism; the idea that mind or consciousness is a fundamental feature of all things. While I don't know if wire has a soul, I treat it as if it does. Creating art is my way of externalizing that internal dialogue. If I can be gentle with a stubborn piece of metal, perhaps I can be gentler with my own stubborn thoughts. Art becomes the bridge where my internal world meets the physical world, and empathy is the gravity holding them together.

**Do you consider your artworks as self-portraits in some way — extensions of your thoughts or emotions?**

Absolutely, but I view them less as a mirror and more like a shed skin or an exoskeleton. Snakes shed their skin to grow; they leave behind a perfect replica of who they were, but they are no longer that creature. My artworks are past selves frozen in aluminum and glue. They allow me to step out of a specific emotion or obsession by giving it a physical body, separate from my own. Returning to the idea of the pond: if I am the pond, these artworks are the ripples captured at a specific moment of impact. Interestingly, because I want viewers to physically interact with and bend my works (like in *Fragile*), the 'self-portrait' is never static. As soon as a viewer touches and alters the piece, it stops being just my portrait and becomes a collaborative record of our interaction. It's a portrait of me, edited by you.



# — Interview

## Yi Wang (Cizzoe)

### How did your background in social anthropology shape the way you approach art and audience participation?

Looking back, my training in ethnographic and documentary filmmaking was deeply grounded in social anthropology. From that point on, everything I made began with people, to understand different groups, their ways of living, and their unique experiences within certain communities or within society at large. That perspective became the backbone of my early documentary practice, and later opened up a new way for me to think about making art. I've always seen my artwork as a kind of ongoing field research. Each project is an attempt to understand how we,



Yi Wang (Cizzoe) | Yi Yi | 2022

as human beings, exist and relate to the world around us. The anthropological lens guided me to stay curious and open, to approach every person and social issue with sensitivity rather than judgment. The ethnographic fieldwork methods I embodied early on still shape how I start any project today, I begin by immersing myself, by physically experiencing and observing before anything else. Those firsthand encounters then become material that I process through my own perception, translating them into different artistic forms and media for the audience to experience, sometimes through visual such as documentary film, sometime through sensing such as create a participatory arena with installation and performance.

### Can you share a moment or experience that first inspired you to view human interaction as a game with its own rules?

The inspiration first came from observing everyday interactions between people. Since I was young, I've always enjoyed being an observer in a crowd, quietly watching how people behave and wondering why they act the way they do. I have a deep curiosity about how individuals present different versions of themselves in different groups, and what lies behind those shifting "personas."

I began to notice that in various situations, people tend to play different roles, almost like a childhood game of role-playing. To stay connected and continue interacting, everyone follows a set of unspoken social "rules." When someone leaves a group or joins a new one, new roles and new rules naturally emerge.

Of course, games can be both non-competitive and competitive. In some social settings, people seem to coexist peacefully on the surface, yet underneath there are personal motives, subtle self-interests, and even hidden forms of competition. What fascinates me is how these dynamics often happen beneath a mask of harmony. I see this as a kind of game because such behaviors arise when people enter certain groups or particular moments in time. There is always a sense of role-playing, sometimes a quiet competition behind masks. Wherever competition exists, rules follow, spoken or unspoken.

### How did your transition from film practice to installation and performance unfold?

In my early documentary work, I began with an observational approach, spending a long time watching and recording how people behave and interact. Over time, I started to feel the







limits of staying behind the camera. I wanted to step closer and enter the space of interaction. When I began engaging directly with the people I filmed and appearing in the frame myself, the conversations became more alive and revealing. I realized that even when I tried to stay invisible, my presence still shaped the situation. So I chose to make that presence part of the work. By standing in front of the camera with my subjects, I invited the audience to observe both sides and reflect on our relationship.

This experience gradually led me to create my own settings for human interaction, where audiences could also step out from behind the screen and become active participants. I started writing instructions, creating interactive installations, and inviting people to perform together. Through these shared moments, I wanted to explore how real connection and quiet tension unfold between people, and within group dynamics.

**The idea “To win is to withdraw” runs through your projects. What sparked this concept and how do you translate it into physical or performative form?**

The idea developed gradually through a series of rule-based works. At first, I wanted to build interactive frameworks that mirror group dynamics, showing how our choices in society are often shaped or limited by the choices of others, and how we might find our own way within that inevitability. My intention is to let the audience experience this concept rather than only understand it intellectually. In the work *Triangle*, where this idea first took shape, I set up rules and created an interactive installation that invites people to take part in a game, a temporary act of role-playing, where they can feel the concept and form their own reflections through participation and play. In the following work titled *To Win is to Withdraw*, instead of focusing solely on rational structures of rules, I sought to express the idea through poetic texts and sculptural forms, giving it both a tangible and emotional presence.

**How do you hope participants will feel or think after engaging with this paradox of winning by leaving?**

What I hope for is that participants leave with a sense of openness and release. The idea of to win is to withdraw begins from the condition that we are already inside a kind of loop, a situation of struggle, imbalance, or repetition. Choosing to withdraw offers an alternative path, a way to step outside of that cycle. It is not about failure, but about discovering another form of freedom.

**Have you ever witnessed a surprising reaction or outcome when participants confronted this idea?**

I'm not sure if it was a kind of confrontation to this idea, but there were moments when participants chose not to follow the given rules. Instead, they negotiated new rules within their own groups, in a more playful and lighthearted way. I actually enjoy witnessing these so-called moments of loss of control. They open up new layers of storytelling within the work and reveal how freedom can quietly emerge from within the structure of rules.

**Many of your works create intimate spaces where strangers interact. How do you design the instructions to balance control and freedom?**

For example, when creating the instructions for my work *Triangle*, I try to maintain a constant equilibrium between unity and division. Players come together in the middle, yet they are also competing against each other. In the game, there are moments when you have to control others in order to move yourself, while at the same time being controlled by your opponents. The key is that the game has no real ending, and the objective written in the instructions is to provoke group dynamics, where interaction, competition, and control remain in continuous flux unless someone chooses to withdraw. In this context, “winning” means withdrawing, when participants become aware of and consciously step out of a cycle that is no longer enjoyable or meaningful, where the desire to control and be controlled keeps repeating. From my point of view, that is the moment when freedom emerges.



# Ksenia Panasyuk

**Your biography includes many relocations. How have these cultural shifts shaped the emotional world of your artwork?**



Ksenia Panasyuk | It



I believe that changing your environment and a person's ability to adapt really upgrades your neural network—your inner programming. It's like in a computer game: new maps and new possibilities unlock. Your worldview literally becomes wider. You learn how and where different people live, and you're able to perceive any information much more objectively, comparing it with your own internal data and lived experience.

I wouldn't link moving from place to place to the emotional world of my art. It relates more to my personality as a whole and doesn't directly influence my artistic practice. It's simply not a topic I'm interested in exploring creatively.

**You describe your years in China as the most difficult in your life. Do those experiences appear in your imagery or themes, even unconsciously?**

No, my subconscious and I interact quite often, and I more or less understand where things come from. Those two years in China were unpleasant for various reasons, but only because I wasn't in the right place — it happens. So that episode simply sits in the archive of "it happened and that's it."

**Coming from photography, styling, and art-direction, how do these previous professions influence your current approach to composition,**





### symbolism, and visual storytelling?

Not exactly — I actually started with drawing first (not for long), then shifted to photography, styling, and art direction, and later returned to drawing — when I needed to create paintings for the rooms in a new photo studio. I just decided to try and see what would happen :)

All of these fields are intertwined into one shared database, where you have knowledge from different areas and use it to solve various creative tasks. There's no direct influence between them. It's just that through these fields, a lot of information from the fashion world flows into me, because fashion photography is closer to me.

And the fashion world... yes, that really influences me a lot.

### Your works combine humor, surrealism, and social commentary. What role does irony play in your artistic vision?

I love irony—I enjoy playing with meanings and using whimsical forms to draw attention to important things. It may look lighthearted, like I'm just joking, but suddenly someone might stop and think.

### Many of your paintings include animals with expressive or anthropomorphic traits. Why do animals become the carriers of your messages?

I adore animals. As a child, I used to visit my

grandmother in the village, and there were all kinds - cows, pigs, chickens, sheep, goats, turkeys, cats, and dogs... I interacted with every one of them. I helped deliver calves, saved a dog from death, watched chicks hatch from their eggs... I saw so much magic. When I was four, my best friend was a huge dog. That's when my deep connection with animals began. And animals also look incredibly cool! All of them! They are endlessly beautiful.

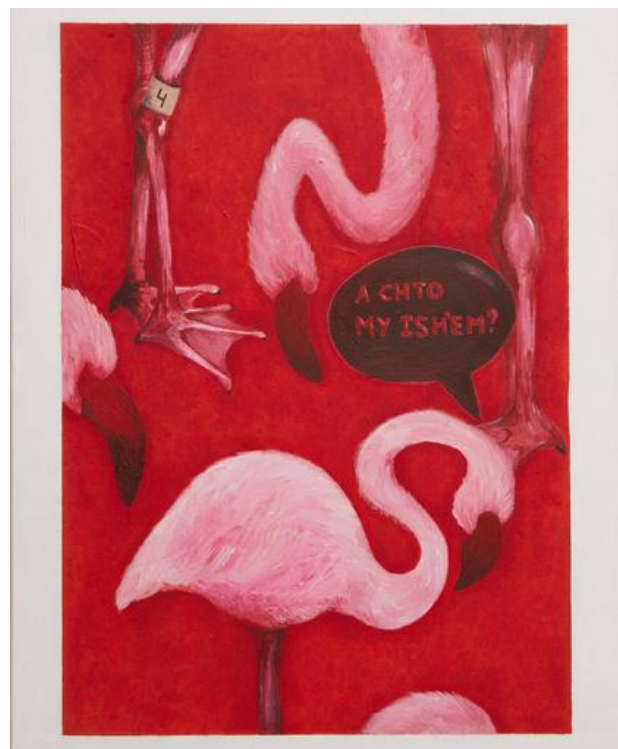
### What emotions or thoughts do you hope to evoke in viewers when they encounter pieces that contain both playfulness and critique?

I understand that we're all very tired of talking and thinking about serious things right now. But—my conclusions and the important thoughts that were born within me aren't going anywhere. So I lower the intensity of this seriousness through form.

If you're in the mood to have fun, you can enjoy playful shapes and bright colors, admire the charming little animals. And if you feel like thinking—welcome, there's plenty there to reflect on.

### You travel a lot and interact with many people. How does this constant change influence your ideas and artistic evolution?

Returning to the first question — your worldview expands, and you gain the ability to weave such networks in your mind that you marvel at them. But a change of environment often unsettles the nervous system, so for now I travel only within my own mind, creating routine and sameness in the physical world.



# Tina Chiu

**Your art beautifully merges jewelry design and painting. How did the idea of creating “Gem Art” first come to you?**

Being a jewelry designer, I am surrounded by various kinds of precious stones. The inspiration hit me one day while I was painting—a somewhat daring thought—that incorporating these gems into a canvas would certainly make the artwork dazzling, aesthetically beautiful, and three-dimensional, giving it a unique edge. So, I experimented by merging



gemstones with painting and created my first artwork. To my surprise, that very piece was later chosen to be exhibited in both Zurich, Switzerland, and the Louvre. This success truly pioneered a different and exceptional approach to my artistic work.

**You often use natural gemstones and gold leaf. How do you choose which stones to include in each artwork?**

I select different types and sizes of gemstones based on the painting's content, including the subject matter, colors, lines, and specific areas or sections.

To enhance the sense of depth and richness, I stack gemstones of varying shades within the same color family. Sometimes, I also use gemstones to create a color contrast with the painting, which helps emphasize the artwork's light-and-shadow contrast.

Given that gemstones differ in texture and luster, the selection process is occasionally intuitive. It is a fusion of rationality and sensibility, where logic and intuition alternate.

**In your statement, you mention that faith became the source of your creative energy. Could you tell us more about how spirituality influences your art?**

I once attended a church class on prophetic painting, where I learned to hear God's voice and how to worship and praise God before painting. During the creative process, I learned to receive the filling and blessing of the Holy Spirit. After completing this special course, I was able to hear the voice of God. Guided by the Holy Spirit, my paintbrush began to freely



Tina Chiu | Dancing Diva | 2023





express the deepest feelings of my heart. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when I was unable to go out and was confined at home every day, I was admiring the beautiful plants and flowers in the rooftop garden one day when I suddenly heard God say to me: "Tina, paint these beautiful plants!" I didn't doubt the Holy Spirit and followed God's guidance. So, during the pandemic, I picked up my paintbrush again at home and began to create freely, drawing these beautiful plants and flowers. Unexpectedly, this marked the beginning of my artistic journey.

**You've exhibited internationally — from Paris to Zurich. What have been your most memorable exhibition experiences?**

The most unforgettable exhibition experience I've had was at the Louvre Museum in Paris. Just a few days before my exhibition was scheduled, rumors spread that the Louvre had received a bomb threat and was the target of a terrorist attack. I had already arranged my flights and hotel in France and was extremely worried that the exhibition would be cancelled. I had poured four months of sleepless work into creating my gemstone painting, and I was deeply looking forward to showing it.

Fortunately, after the police sealed off the area and completed their thorough investigation, the Louvre surprisingly reopened just one day before the exhibition. Consequently, my work was displayed as planned. During the exhibition, visitors from around the world gazed at my gemstone painting, "The Golden Peacock," in amazement. As they approached it, they realized it wasn't a conventional painting but a three-dimensional artwork made of natural gemstones. They commented that they had never seen anything like it at the Louvre before, saying it was truly brilliant and beautiful, and many eagerly took photos with my work. I shared with them the story behind the piece, which is based on my novel, "The Peacock Princess, Odilia." The thrilling tale captivated them completely.

**How has your background in drama and theatrical storytelling shaped the narratives in your artworks?**

My works are filled with unique stories that I have created. Because I loved reading since I was a child and studied drama in college, I have also watched a great number of classic and independent stage plays and films. The different characters and settings within them have given me a tremendous amount of inspiration. These stories I have viewed have taken root and blossomed in my subconscious and conscious mind. Consequently, when I create my paintings, I have an endless supply of creative material, allowing me to fully exercise my

wild and boundless imagination.

**Gemstones are often associated with healing and energy. Do you feel that creating with them has a therapeutic effect for you personally?**

As I quietly gaze at the gemstones, it is as if they speak to me, soothing the past fears or wounds in my heart. Their hard texture and brilliant luster teach me to be strong and to appreciate my own beauty. Some gems are translucent and bright, like pure and innocent children. Others possess beautiful textures, like wise sages.

Through the distinct characteristics of these different types of gemstones, I learn many different life philosophies and thoughts. There is a power within the inner world of every gem; they are subterranean treasures that have existed for tens or hundreds of thousands of years. Though they do not speak, they express their vitality through the color and luster they present.

**Your personal journey — overcoming challenges and rediscovering your voice through art — is very inspiring. What advice would you give to others seeking transformation through creativity?**

Creativity is a wonderful way to break free from constraints and shackles, allowing old thought patterns to evolve into new ones, which is a great thing. Sometimes, problems that are difficult to solve, or situations that seem impossible to turn around, can perhaps be easily overcome with creativity. Everyone possesses astonishing creativity, but their potential needs to be unlocked. The first step to believing you can have great creativity is finding a key for yourself, and this key is called 'the courage to break through'.

The way to seek this key is by finding inspiration through various activities such as traveling, engaging with nature, visiting exhibitions, reading, listening to music, cooking, playing, and then realizing it through artistic creation.



## **Between Sensitivity and Structure: A Critical Review of Huan Zhou's Curatorial Practice** *by Anna Gvozdeva*

Huan Zhou has positioned herself within the contemporary curatorial landscape as a facilitator of cross-cultural dialogue, with a particular focus on materiality, diasporic identity, and transcultural narratives. Based in London and operating through ArtFlow Studio and PA Art, her practice reflects a generation of emerging curators who approach exhibition-making as a relational and research-driven process rather than a purely formal exercise. While Zhou's curatorial projects demonstrate conceptual coherence and sensitivity toward artists' practices, they also reveal certain limitations that merit closer critical examination.



Zhou's strength lies in her attentiveness to material processes and affective atmospheres. Exhibitions such as *Weaving Light, Dreaming Form* articulate a clear interest in liminality—between light and matter, digital and physical, memory and imagination. Her curatorial voice privileges softness, tactility, and poetic transition, allowing artists' works to unfold slowly within space. This approach resonates with current tendencies in contemporary exhibition-making that favor experiential immersion over didactic framing. However, this emphasis on subtlety occasionally risks aestheticizing ambiguity to the point where critical tension becomes muted.

In *Weaving Light, Dreaming Form*, the pairing of Ketong Xing's textile-based, light-infused installations with Junying Jiang's digital illustrations demonstrates Zhou's aptitude for identifying conceptual affinities across divergent media. The exhibition succeeds in establishing a shared vocabulary of "in-betweenness," where both practices operate within transitional states. Yet, the curatorial framework relies heavily on poetic language—light "drifting," narratives "breathing," perception "softening"—without sufficiently interrogating the structural or socio-political implications of these metaphors. While diasporic identity and cultural displacement are frequently invoked, they often remain implicit rather than critically unpacked.



This tendency points to a broader characteristic of Zhou's practice: a preference for emotional resonance over analytical friction. Her exhibitions prioritize care, intimacy, and collaboration, which is commendable, particularly in working with emerging Chinese and East Asian artists navigating international contexts. At the same time, this ethos can result in a cautious curatorial stance that avoids confrontation. Questions surrounding power dynamics, institutional visibility, and the complexities of cultural translation are acknowledged but rarely foregrounded as sites of productive tension within the exhibition space.

Zhou's commitment to bridging Eastern and Western artistic methodologies is central to her curatorial identity. However, this positioning occasionally risks reinforcing a binary framework that contemporary transnational practices increasingly seek to dismantle. Rather than fully destabilizing these categories, some projects appear to operate within them, presenting "dialogue" as a harmonious exchange rather than a contested process shaped by asymmetries of access, representation, and discourse.

That said, Zhou's curatorial practice demonstrates a clear trajectory toward refinement. Her sensitivity to artists' processes, combined with her investment in long-term engagement, suggests a foundation capable of supporting more critically rigorous projects. As her practice evolves, a deeper engagement with curatorial authorship—particularly in articulating sharper critical stakes—could strengthen the conceptual impact of her exhibitions.

In sum, Huan Zhou emerges as a curator whose work is marked by care, poetic coherence, and an acute sensitivity to material and affective experience. The challenge ahead lies in balancing this softness with greater critical assertiveness, allowing ambiguity not only to soothe but also to question, disrupt, and provoke. Such a shift would not negate the strengths of her approach, but rather expand its intellectual and political resonance within contemporary curatorial discourse.



## — Interview

# Yolanda Tian



**You come from an artistic family - how did that early environment shape your sensitivity to aesthetics and visual storytelling?**

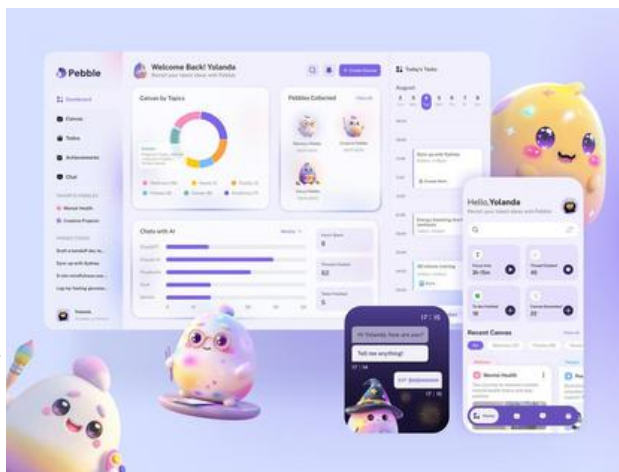
Growing up in an artistic family definitely shaped the way I see the world. Creativity was just part of daily life. I was always surrounded by sketchbooks, paintings, and little experiments happening around the house. Because of that, I learned to pay attention to colors, shapes, and compositions, and the tiny details that often communicate more than words from a young age. What stayed with me most is the idea that visuals carry emotion and intention. What a piece made you feel is much more important than perfect techniques. Even when I'm designing complex digital systems, I'm always thinking about storytelling: what users should feel, how the interface guides them, and how to create clarity without losing warmth.

**When did you realize that design, rather than traditional art, would become your creative path?**

It clicked for me in high school. I joined a small graphic design club and took a UX/UI curriculum that introduced me to the idea of designing experiences rather than just visuals. For our final project, I collaborated with a friend who loved coding, and together we built a student-facing app for choosing elective classes. Looking back, the design wasn't great. The screen layouts were not well-organized, and the design elements definitely weren't elegant. But it was the first time I realized my work could actually solve someone's problem and make their day easier. That sense of purpose felt really different from creating







something just to be looked at. I still love art, but design gives impact. That's when I knew this was the path I wanted to follow.

### **Your work often simplifies highly complex systems. What is your process for turning complexity into clarity?**

My process always starts with listening. I want to understand users' reality: what they're trying to do, what slows them down, and what stresses them out. Then I map out the journey, process, and pain points before I even think about visuals. When you understand the system deeply, the priorities naturally emerge. That's when clarity becomes possible. After that, it's all about progressive disclosure: showing people what they need at the moment they need it, and hiding the rest without taking away access.

### **How do you balance functionality, accessibility, and visual expression in digital interfaces?**

For me, those three aren't opposites. They're different layers of the same design intention. Functionality is the foundation: if it doesn't work, nothing else matters. Accessibility is the responsibility. Design should serve everyone, not just people who fit a narrow profile. And visual expression is how you create personality, trust, and emotional resonance. I start with what users need to accomplish, then make sure every path is accessible, understandable, and able to recover from errors. Once that structure is solid, I layer in visual expression to bring delight and tone. When those three elements support each other, the interface becomes both practical and human-centered.

### **Several of your products integrate AI. What excites you most about AI-assisted interaction design?**

What excites me most is how AI can speed up exploration. Instead of spending hours wiring together prototypes, I can describe an idea and instantly see a

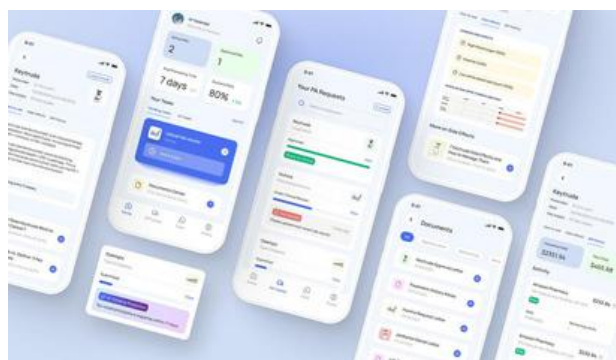
version of it. That lets teams validate concepts earlier and focus more energy on the nuanced parts of design. But what really interests me is how AI opens up new interaction patterns. We're not just designing screens anymore. We're designing collaborative experiences between humans and intelligent systems. At the same time, AI can't replace the thoughtful, context-driven decisions designers make. It doesn't know the constraints of a niche industry. And that's why I think designers become even more important in the AI era. We're the ones working with real users and shaping how these systems behave under real-life constraints.

### **What challenges do you face when designing for healthcare, where clarity and trust are essential?**

The biggest challenge is trust building. People need to feel confident that what they're seeing is accurate, complete, and trustworthy. Even small design details, such as tone, spacing, color, and the way information is grouped, can influence someone's sense of safety. And healthcare workflows vary a lot depending on the role. A layout that makes perfect sense to a doctor can feel totally wrong to a nurse. That's why user research is everything. My goal isn't to create a "beautiful interface". It's to build something that actually supports real clinicians in stressful situations where everyone values time and efficiency.

### **You've won international design awards - what project feels most personally meaningful to you, and why?**

The most meaningful projects to me are the ones where I got to see real users benefit, for example, the medication cost search tools I designed in 2024. Hearing users say things like, "This helped me finally afford my prescription," or "I didn't know I had cheaper options," made me realize how design can directly impact someone's health. Awards are motivating, but those moments of seeing a real person feel relief because of something I designed stay with me the longest. They remind me of why I chose this career in the first place.



**Lena Lecca** is a contemporary artist and photographer whose practice spans monochrome abstract expressionist painting and documentary, event-based photography. Her creative journey began in 2008, when the birth of her children became a powerful catalyst for discovering her own visual language. Starting out as a family and child photographer, Lena quickly gained recognition for emotionally charged, sincere, and vivid imagery. She led Russia's first workshop on child and family photography, earned awards in photo competitions and exhibitions, and, through long-term work with recurring subjects, developed a keen sense for capturing authentic, living moments in everyday life. In 2019 a single phone snapshot taken at her parents' summer house marked a turning point in her artistic path. That observation grew into a body of work shown at international photo exhibitions, including a solo show. The birth of her fifth child sparked a new wave of inspiration and a decisive shift from photography to painting. Her canvases became a natural extension of her photographs: every brushstroke springs from lived emotions, visual fragments of the past, and the "arrested instants" she had preserved for years with her camera. Today Lena pursues two parallel practices—genre-based documentary photography and monochrome abstract expressionist painting—creating works in which personal history merges with the artist's energy and inspiration. She is a member of the Union of Russian Artists, and her art continues to grow and resonate with audiences in Russia and abroad.

#### *Project Statement*

In my practice I explore everyday life as a space of deep emotional and sensory processes.

My path began in family photography, where I learned to notice candid frames, fleeting gestures, and the eventfulness of a moment. Today these observations form the basis of my monochrome abstract paintings—fragments of memory translated into the language of gesture and brush-stroke rhythm.

My mission as an artist is to examine the everyday as a source of authenticity and to show that even the most ordinary moments contain power, emotion, and life. Painting and photography have become for me two languages of the same conversation—about time, intimacy, presence, and those instants that are so easy to overlook.

My works are an attempt to preserve the inner movements of time and to invite the viewer into their own experience of the moment.







## — Interview

# Irina Komarova

You were born in Korolyov and work in Moscow. Which moments from your early life and the environment you grew up in have most influenced your formation and visual language?



My first teacher and true friend was the monumental artist Ulyana Marinina. She undoubtedly influenced my development as an artist and shaped my visual language. I sincerely consider that period to be one of the happiest in my life.

**Your work is rooted in the aesthetics of post-Soviet realism. What aspects of this cultural code are important for you to preserve, and which ones do you aim to reinterpret?**

It is important for me to preserve the color, the light, and the person — to convey their inner story. For me, this period has always been about a “small life” within great changes. I don’t romanticize this code, which is why I inevitably shift the focus from the collective story to the individual one.

**The Home series is very personal and intimate, connected to the feeling of belonging and having a “place of one’s own.” How do you find a visual language for such quiet yet significant memories?**

There comes a moment when I clearly understand that I must. I must express my gratitude to the Home. And this thought will not let me go until the series is completed. I simply do what I cannot not do.

**The portraits from the yacht trip observe people in a**





**confined space and in unusual conditions. What was the most unexpected thing you discovered about human character during those seven days?**

Overall, the journey turned out to be candid and transformative. I found myself more in the role of an observer, and perhaps that's why I noticed something interesting — many people are very "wrapped up" in themselves and look at the world from that state. But what's even more surprising is that, despite this, people still come together, form couples and families. It seems paradoxical — something that should be incompatible with shared life somehow becomes a kind of glue.

**Your major projects, such as *Time Stopped* and *The Suffering of a Russian Woman*, address difficult social and existential themes. How do you find the balance between personal emotion and a universal visual statement?**

It so happens that I prepare for large projects very thoroughly, first and foremost on an emotional level. I understand that I act as a transmitter, and I deliberately avoid overly literal imagery (for example, a nuclear mushroom cloud in the "*Time Stopped*" project). The longest stage is thinking through the theme as a whole — placing myself in the position of my characters; I need to feel their lives and see through their eyes. When that happens, I immediately see the finished image of the artwork, and all that remains is to bring it to life.

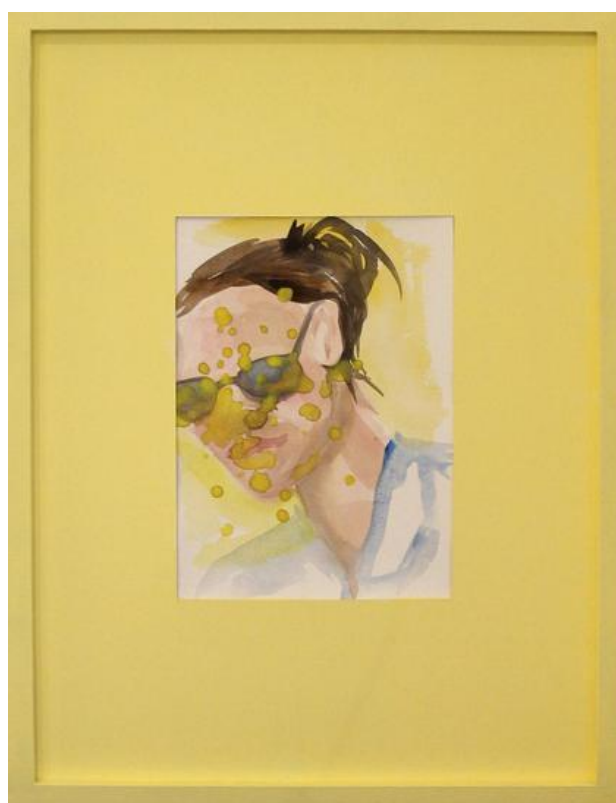
**In 2020, your works became the foundation for a MAD**

**DAISY capsule collection and were presented at Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week. How do you perceive the interaction between art and fashion? What did this collaboration give you?**

I am drawn to moments where art becomes a source of inspiration for design and fashion — especially when this influence can be traced in the silhouettes and visual language of an entire collection. It was certainly very gratifying to see my painting transformed into prints on clothing, to meet women wearing these pieces on the street, and to talk with them about why they chose that particular item for their wardrobe. However, at this stage, even my own tastes have shifted, and this stylistic approach has moved slightly into the background for me. Still, in the MAD DAISY collection it felt appropriate — it served as a kind of manifesto. Above all, this collaboration gave me immense confidence and became the first vivid acknowledgment of me as an artist.

**How do you envision your development in the coming years? Are there themes or formats you would like to explore more deeply or try for the first time?**

I would like to move toward a deeper exploration of European culture and transform my visual language in line with this search. At the moment, I am drawn to themes of true love and the changes taking place in society. In this context, I am planning to start a project called "*From 30 to 20*" — in simple terms, it is what I, at thirty, would like to say to my twenty-year-old self. And this raises many questions: what exactly should be conveyed, and how can it be done in a way that preserves meaning and experience in a rapidly changing world?



**Silviya Plamenova Petkova**, I was born on April 11, 1979, in the town of Gorna Oriahovitza, located at the foot of a mountain range in Bulgaria. One day, the city was still slumbering, and with only my dreams clutched tightly in both hands, an insatiable desire to explore the wonders of the world, I set out on my own journey and began to live.

From 1999 to 2014, I worked as a Manager, providing linguistic support, assistance, and guidance to delegations in Italy and abroad, business meetings and company visits, language mediation and consulting, trade fair negotiations, and assistance. I also handled every aspect of organizing various cultural events—conceptualization, public relations, contracts with local promoters, logistics, technical production supervision, tour management, administrative management, and communications in Italy and Bulgaria.

In 2013, I worked as a Manager for a well-known American production company specializing in classical, opera, and culture, organizing classical music festivals in Italy, Austria, and Bulgaria. I personally oversaw every detail of the entire organization and execution of the event, during which I also served as host and presenter. The detailed preparation of the event lasted a year.

I also served as an assistant and Italian translator during the official visit of the Italian parish priest of the AMERIGO VESPUCCI to the private hospital-style home run by the Sisters of Mother Teresa, which provides shelter for elderly, sick, and abandoned people. I also worked as an organizer of classical music concerts and festivals in Italy on behalf of an American company, an activity I continue to perform with great care and pleasure. I am passionate about the world of Art since the childhood, which gradually involved me and my passion burned within me more and more I approached to understand its secrets and mysteries, as long as it has not become an integral part of my life.

I express this feeling through ballet, painting and poetry. I was about 4 years old when I started with my very first drawings. My initial "style" was black and white, pencil or charcoal on plain paper and then, later on, as I grew up, I moved onto canvas. So I took the courage to use colors too - pastels and for about 20 years now, I've been using acrylic paint and my style has become modern abstract.

I often experiment and create, inventing personalized techniques such as painting with sugar, for example, which requires a specific handle to be able to fix it on the canvas.

I am passionate about painting and also about product design. I am also a Lighting Designer specialized in bringing together a sensitive and creative passion to light, with the ability to create quickly innovated individual superb designs that are fully functional and practical.

I have participated and continue to participate in many international competitions where I am often awarded for my artistic works, which are highly appreciated by critics.

#### *Project Statement*

I love what I do because I'm passionate about it.



Silviya Plamenova Petkova | Introspection





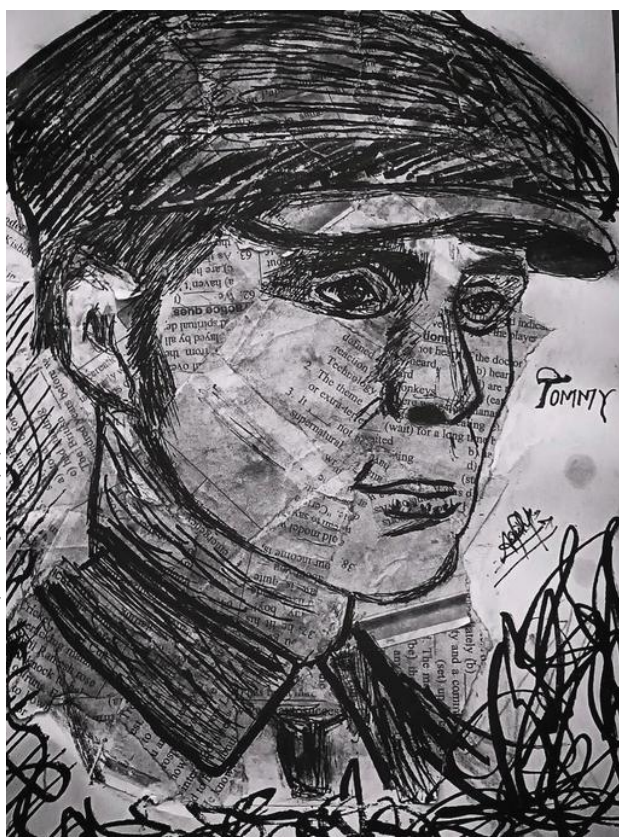


# — Interview

## Enoch A

**When did you first realize that art was your way of expressing emotions that are difficult to put into words?**

I actually found my passion without even knowing. Art didn't appear to me suddenly — it happened quietly, without my awareness. The real moment was when I was watching *Blood Lovers* (30 episodes). That series hurt me so deeply that something inside me dropped and opened. I became emotional in a way I had never felt before. That was the moment I realized art was the only way I could express what my heart couldn't speak. That moment made me an artist.



Enoch A | Shelby Newspaper Art



Enoch A | Dot Art

**Your works often explore pain, rebirth, and inner healing. Are these themes drawn from personal experiences?**

Absolutely yes.

My art is my life story. My rebirth is real. There are days I become completely demotivated — when I feel I can't reach my idol, I can't reach my inspiration, and I feel like I'm losing myself.

One day I heard a song — “Ölümüne” by Barış Baktas. That one song brought me back to life. Because of that, I drew *Rebirth*.

Every emotion in my work — pain, healing, rising — is personal, real, and lived.

**How do you decide which medium to use — graphite, charcoal, ink, or mixed media?**

This answer is perfect already.

It depends completely on the emotional weight of the artwork.

Some emotions need softness (graphite).

Some emotions need intensity (charcoal).

Some need sharp truth (ink).

The medium chooses itself depending on the story.

**Symbolism is a strong element in your pieces. Which symbols appear most often and what do they mean?**

Eyes – they represent the truth hidden under pain.

Shadows – fear.

Broken textures – emotional wounds that never heal but still try to rise, still try to reach their idol.

Life-free patterns – returning, rebirthing, starting again.

These symbols are my emotional alphabet.





**Your artworks have a dramatic atmosphere with strong contrasts and minimal shading. How did you develop this visual language?**

It came naturally — from my emotional life.  
Even when I see my idol, I get extremely emotional.  
My heart burns.  
It feels like thousands of arrows stuck into my chest.  
For one to one-and-a-half months, I cried every single day.  
Every day.  
Night and morning.  
Because my idol did not see my tears.  
That pain automatically shaped my dramatic style — the contrasts, the shadows, the intensity.  
My art is born from that fire.

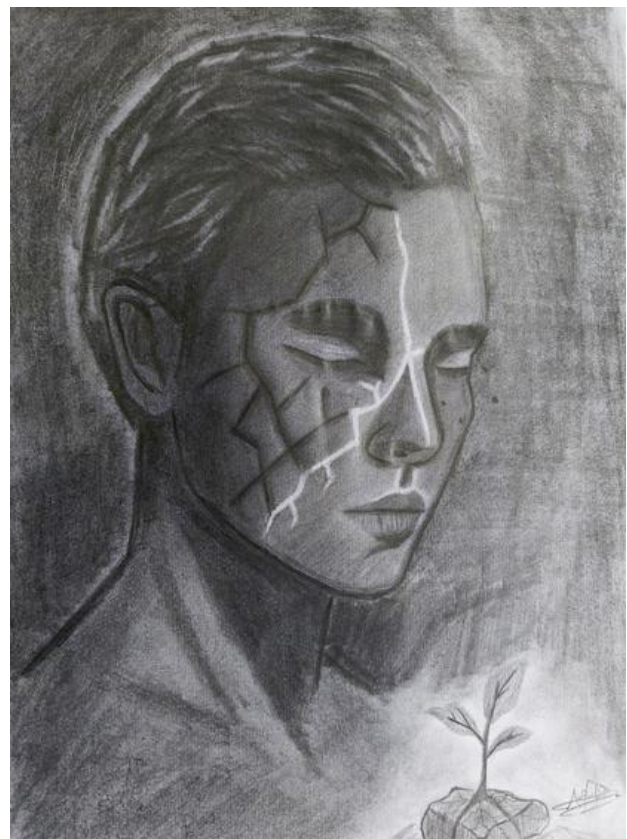
**What emotions or messages do you hope viewers feel when they look at your more introspective and darker works?**

I want them to feel what I feel.  
I want my heart to reach their heart.  
If even one person feels my emotion, then I win.  
Even if my work gets only one view — that one view is a victory.

**Who or what inspires you?**

My greatest inspiration is Barış Baktas.  
His storytelling, his emotions, his smile, his professional life, his personal love — he wins in both life and art.  
He made me stand stronger.  
I cry every day because I want to meet him next year.  
And I won't stop until I reach that dream.  
There was a time when a rumor about him spread.  
He didn't care.  
He stood for himself.

That moment changed me.  
It taught me to stand for myself even when no one cares about my story.  
My feelings matter.  
My art matters.  
My voice matters.  
My own song expresses this part of me:  
When I get soo much of pain and breakdown i write this...  
My Song – “The Real Me” (by Enoch A)  
I'm just a shadow, drawing things in the dark,  
Every line I make is a beat from my heart,  
The words move fast, but I stay still,  
Holding on to places, I can't reach, but I feel,  
Shine on my screen, but I see,  
My soul and the rise I find,  
The pieces stay still,  
Cause I'm not broken, I'm just unseen,  
Living in colors the world's never seen,  
Another version of me is crying to be free,  
Oh, can you hear me?  
Can you hear the real me?  
Barán (Barış Baktas), Pedro, Messi,  
They light up the sky,  
And they chase their fire,  
I don't ask why,  
My art is my voice,  
The tears are my ink,  
pain is the ocean,  
I will never sink,  
They say I drink too much,  
The dreams are what I breathe,  
I turn my scars into stars,  
And my silence into belief,  
I'm not broken, I'm just unseen,  
Living in colors the world's never seen,  
Another version of me is crying to be free,  
Someday you will see,  
Someday you will see,  
The real me.



## Léa Malas

Intuition is Léa Malas's primary tool. An intuitive artist, she translates moments of vision or thought into visual language, giving her artwork its distinct originality. Her originals, unless reproduced digitally, are never recreated using the same process. Each piece is unique and holds special value, both for the artist and for those who feel drawn to live with it.

Born in France, raised in Beirut, and based in Norway since 2018, Léa navigates a richly multicultural identity. She grew up speaking Arabic, French, and English, and now also speaks Norwegian. Drawing has been part of her life for as long as she can remember. As a child in Beirut, her early promise in drawing led her to be mentored by the Lebanese artist Hassan Yatim, who encouraged her to join his adult art class at just nine years old. There, she learned the foundational techniques of charcoal, pencil, light and shadow, human anatomy, and perspective. It was a rigorous start that shaped her approach even as she later moved into freer, more fluid forms of expression.

Though her formal education was disrupted by economic and personal circumstances, Léa pursued undergraduate studies in Biology, English Translation, and Law. Alongside this academic path, she built a diverse work history. In Lebanon, she worked as a bookstore officer and sales representative. In Norway, she took on roles as a waitress, hotel shop steward, cleaner, English teacher, and school assistant.

These lived contrasts; between manual labor and teaching, between the Arab world and Western Europe, between Arabic and Western cultural codes, and between humanities and sciences, are central to her work. They have deeply shaped her artistic expression, cultivating a sensitivity to duality, dislocation, and transformation. Her art emerges from this tension: the space between cultural poles, between languages, disciplines, and kinds of labor and identity.

She chooses abstract art as her primary mode of expression precisely because it reflects this complexity. The ambiguity and emotional openness of abstraction allow her to translate life's richness, its ruptures, migrations, and reinventions, into visual form. Abstraction becomes a language through which she can process what she has lived, seen, and felt. She sees the abstract world wide enough to swing between the classical order and unbound expression depending on what fit her subject best.

Léa's work is also informed by the visual culture of her upbringing in Beirut, a city marked by both layered history and constant flux. The vibrant colors, architectural forms, and visual rhythm of that city remain embedded in her eye and hand. She is particularly influenced by the works of Lebanese painters Moustafa Farroukh and Hussein Madi and his bold expression of the woman using vibrant colors.

In addition, Léa is a lover of repetitive geometric patterns, especially as they appear in Arabic art and architecture. She finds inspiration in the structure and harmony of these designs, which often make their way, consciously or intuitively, into her compositions.

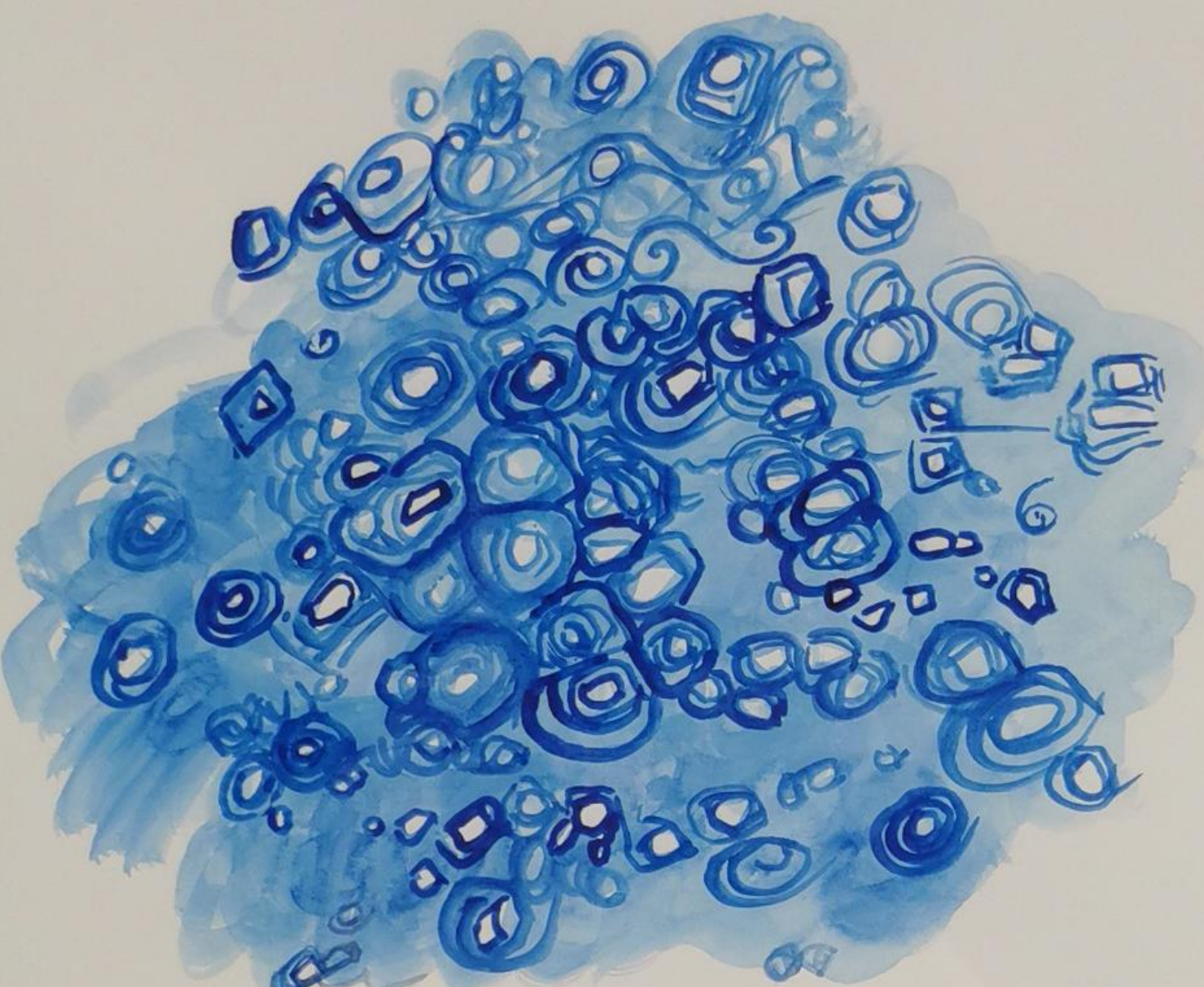
Her first public exhibition took place in 2019, during her time in Northern Norway. Immersed in the overwhelming beauty of the Arctic wilderness and the dancing auroras, she felt compelled to translate that internal and external awe into visual form. It was a powerful turning point that launched her into the public art world. Her next exhibition, *Metamorphosis* (2024), took place during her pregnancy. She was deeply fascinated by the overwhelming changes in a woman's body and mind, and once again turned to art as the most honest way to express what could not be said in words.

While Léa has often been told to stick to one style or develop a singular "signature," she resists this. Her art, like her life, refuses easy categorization. She draws inspiration from polymaths of the Arab golden age, such as Ibn Sina and Al-Khwarizmi, whose example encourages a lifelong curiosity across fields as they have done it all from poetry to astronomy. Though she does not consider herself a polymath, she believes deeply in the power of interdisciplinary exploration. For her, artistic expression is not separate from intellectual growth. It is a parallel form of knowledge, born from the same core.

Today, Léa Malas continues to create abstract and contemporary works that reflect a life lived across languages, geographies, and disciplines. Her work is an invitation to others, especially those who feel scattered or "too much," to see beauty in complexity and to trust that wholeness can exist without limitation.







Signature and date: 12/12/2025

## Yumeng Li

**Your practice merges traditional garment construction with advanced digital workflows.**



**How do you balance the tactile, physical aspect of fashion with the precision and abstraction of parametric modeling and 3D simulation?**

For me, balancing tactility with digital precision is a closed feedback loop. I begin with draping experiments on a 1:4 scale dress form, using elastic fabric with fish bones to build silhouette and volume by hand. This stage is essential because touch makes structure legible: I can immediately read tension, angles, collapse, and support, and quickly identify the most expressive points of the form.

Once the proportions are resolved, I build a full-scale digital avatar in my modeling software based on the measurements of the actual dress form, ensuring a one-to-one match. Using the logic of the 1:4 prototype as a reference, I reconstruct the structure on the digital body, align key connection points, and calibrate dimensions and tolerances precisely. Because the model is executed to real-world measurements, the 3D-printed components translate accurately at full scale and can be fitted directly onto the dress form, reducing repeated toile iterations and size adjustments. In short: draping finds the truth, computation delivers it.





**Your collections often react to natural phenomena - light, movement, organic growth. How does nature shape the emotional or philosophical foundation of your work?**

For me, nature is not a source of imagery but a practical framework for thinking about change. Light, movement, and growth recur in my work because they remind me that form is never fixed; it is continuously shaped by time and by the act of looking. Light is central. The same piece can be perceived differently as angles and distances shift—echoing Su Shi’s insight that each viewpoint reveals another truth. I approach this with a Cubist sensibility: an object is constructed through layered perspectives rather than a single image. I use transparency, variations in sheen, and structural lines so that, as light changes, the work generates shifting visual and emotional states, and the viewer’s movement becomes part of the composition. Movement and growth turn garments into events. Walking and breathing redistribute tension, opening folds and collapsing volume; at the micro level, I take cues from molecular motion, where change emerges from countless small movements. Growth implies repetition, variation, and repair, which leads me toward modular, reconfigurable systems. Ultimately, this approach allows a work to hold past, present, and future versions at once—embracing uncertainty while seeking new forms of order and beauty.

**In your designs, forms are modular and reconfigurable. What draws you to systems that allow continuous transformation rather than fixed silhouettes?**

I’m drawn to modular, reconfigurable systems because of a metaphysical concern: I’m less interested in what a garment looks like as a final image than in why form holds and how it comes into being. A fixed silhouette tends to present one definitive answer, while a transformable system brings attention to the underlying structure—connections, constraints, tension, boundaries, and replaceable relationships. In this sense, form is not an endpoint; it is a temporary manifestation of a set of relations at a specific moment.

When components can be detached, rotated, and reassembled, each configuration becomes a different “version” of the same proposition. The garment shifts from an object to a process, where meaning is produced through change rather than permanence. This also allows the body, emotion, and context to participate in shaping the work: movement or situation can alter how the system resolves itself on the body. For me, continuous transformation is not a technical display; it is a way to speak about the nature of being and becoming—how instability, multiplicity, and time are intrinsic to form.

**How does real-time emotion and bodily movement**



**influence your design process? Do you consider the garment as something that changes with the wearer's psychological state?**

Real-time emotion and bodily movement are central variables within my practice. Within my design philosophy, the garment is not conceived as a static covering, but as a “second skin” that breathes in dialogue with the wearer. In my previous collection on involution, the work was anchored in a single affective condition: anxiety—a tightened pressure produced by constant competition and self-imposed demand. For this reason, emotion is embedded into structure and kinetics. Anxiety is articulated through wrapped, rotating, and compressed curved surfaces, producing a silhouette that reads as if it is continually drawn inward by a high-speed spiral—constricting, pressing, and resisting full release. Ultimately, the aim is to translate internal affect into a visible, time-based language: not concealing the body's anxiety, but allowing it to register with clarity through silhouette and the garment's shifting exterior form.

**You work across CLO3D, Touch Designer, and Nomad Sculpt. How does each tool contribute to different stages of your creative workflow?**

Nomad Sculpt serves as the entry point of my digital process—functioning as a “sketchbook” and “sculpting clay.” When a concept is still ambiguous, the form is



developed directly in 3D to rapidly shape silhouettes and explore organic volume, exaggerated folds, and tactile surface qualities. Its purpose is to capture the raw aesthetic impulse and emotional tension, establishing a distinct visual DNA for the collection. CLO3D then translates these intuitive forms into a wearable structural system—a “digital tailoring studio.” Within this stage, patterns are constructed with rigor, and fabric parameters are defined. In effect, it functions as a digital toile: enabling an early view of the finished look, calibrating proportion and stress points, reducing repeated pattern corrections and sampling, improving production efficiency, and ensuring that the concept resolves into an ergonomic, wearable garment. Touch Designer advances the work from static form into time-based systems—a “digital magic lab.” It is used to generate and drive dynamic visuals by translating sound, bodily-movement data, or algorithmic noise into patterns, prints, textile-like textures, and rhythmic image behavior.

**Your brand YUN MOONMOON has a strong visual identity rooted in softness, futurism, and functionality. How did this aesthetic language develop over time?**

YUN MOONMOON's visual language was not something “set” from the beginning; My work treats clothing as an emotional medium and aims to





articulate a gender-neutral bodily language. This aesthetic vocabulary has grown out of continuous knowledge accumulation and multidisciplinary training. Study across different fields has helped build structural thinking and systems logic; everyday observation of posture, stress responses, and social dynamics provides concrete bodily evidence; and engagement with art, literature, and painting offers narrative methods and art-historical references—so the work does not remain at the level of styling, but points toward deeper emotional and cultural contexts. Within this approach, “softness” is understood as an empathic capacity—an ability to sense and hold another person’s emotional state, rather than merely a tactile quality. It aligns with an Expressionist sensibility: not pursuing objective representation, but making the intensity, tension, and vulnerability of inner experience visible, allowing the garment to function as an interface that carries feeling. For me, “futurism” is primarily a pathway for expanding what clothing can be: ongoing experimentation with materials, forms, and cross-media integration, supported by digital tools that translate emotion into structural language while also shortening development timelines and improving production efficiency. At the same time, “functionality” is refined through repeated real-world testing. Clothing is not only decorative; it should include human-centered features—serving the body through wearability, mobility, adjustability, and support—so

that emotional expression can be lived with and experienced over time.

**Your work has appeared at New York and Shanghai Fashion Weeks. How do runway presentations influence the way you think about scale, movement, and the narrative of your collections?**

Runway experience at New York and Shanghai Fashion Weeks has made one thing clearer: on the catwalk, a garment is not a static display, and the process pushes the design approach from individual looks toward the orchestration of an overall narrative.

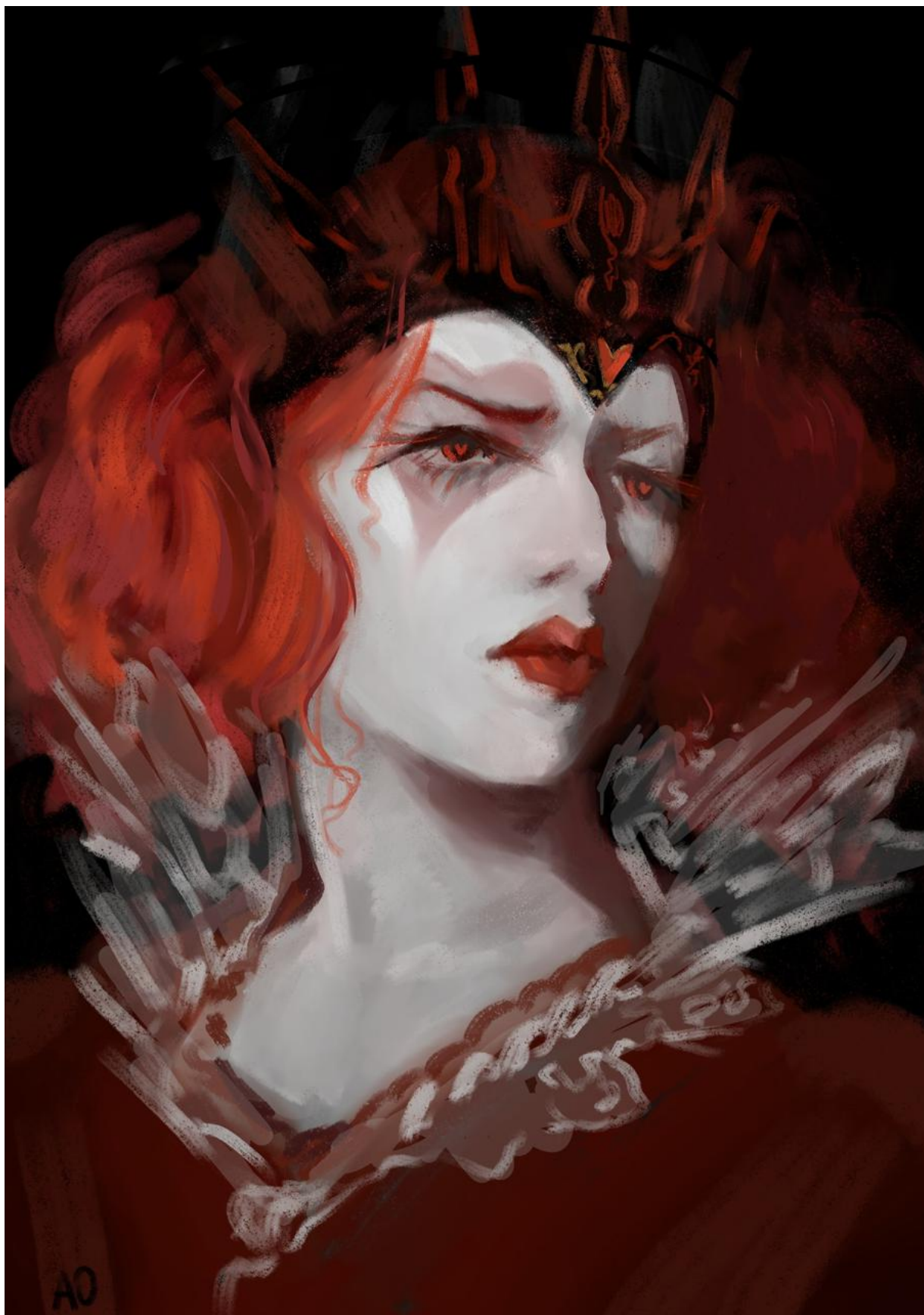
In terms of scale and sequencing, rhythmic fluctuation is treated as part of the design—for example, the pacing of model entrances, a progression in color from light to dark, and alternating several relatively restrained looks with a more exaggerated silhouette. In terms of movement and interaction, a runway show becomes a dynamic image completed together with the audience. The beat of the music, the model’s stride and pauses, and the instant of a turn all change how the garment is perceived.

In terms of narrative, the collection is approached as a time-based expression: an emotional curve is built through musical atmosphere, the model’s physical language, and the progression of silhouettes, so the show itself becomes a way of telling the design story—with fluctuations, momentum, a climax, and resolution.



## Elizaveta Zolotykh

From a young age, I was drawn to the world of art, especially to futuristic and dark themes. I am currently a member of the Union of Artists of Mari El. My work often explores historical narratives, atmospheric eerie imagery, and elements of futurism (particularly in its Soviet interpretation). I have participated in numerous exhibitions both within my region and beyond. Next year, I will officially receive my qualification as a painter and instructor of easel painting.



Elizaveta Zolotykh | Queen of Hearts





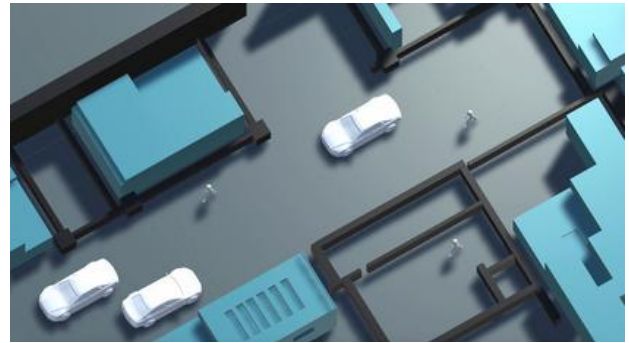
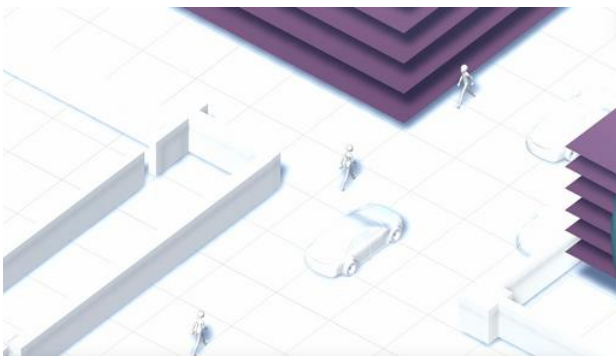
AO

# Ophelia Chen

## What initially drew you to working with VR and spatial interfaces as your primary artistic medium?

I was drawn to VR because it allows me to move beyond representation and into the realm of experience. When we talk about urbanism or the future of cities, diagrams and renderings often feel distant. I wanted to bring the conversation to life by placing the audience directly inside the speculation. Spatial interfaces allow me to connect with the viewer on a visceral level. It isn't just about looking at a future city; it's about inhabiting it. By immersing the audience in this infrastructure, I can inspire a deeper emotional response and bring up a conversation about how we

Ophelia Chen | Leftover Lots | 2024



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want to live. VR transforms the "what if" into a "here and now," making the abstract concepts of future mobility feel tangible and immediate.

## How did the idea for this project emerge, and what moment or observation first made you question the future role of autonomous vehicles in shaping cities?

The project, Leftover Lots, began with an observation of the present: autonomous vehicles (AVs) are increasingly appearing in our cities, yet our infrastructure remains static. We tend to think of AVs merely as "driverless cars," but I started asking the more extreme "what if" questions. What happens when the transition is complete? What if all vehicles become autonomous?

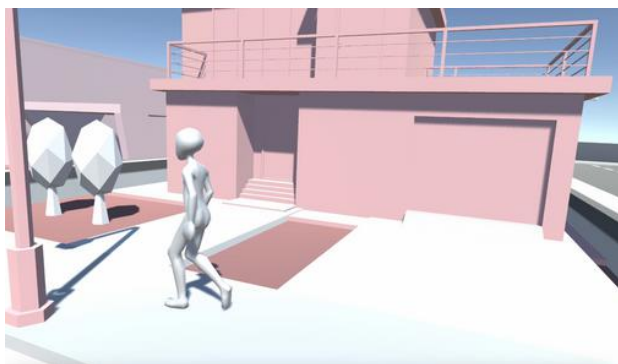
I realized that if mobility becomes entirely fluid and self-organizing, the very concept of "parking" becomes obsolete. This sparked the central inquiry of the project: looking at a city that no longer needs to store dormant machines. I wanted to explore a future where cities breathe and move, animated by a fluid web of mobility rather than being choked by static pavement. It was a realization that we aren't just changing cars; we are on the precipice of changing the fundamental geometry of urban life.

## Your work blends cinema, installation, and interaction design. How do you balance narrative intention with user agency inside immersive environments?

My goal is for the audience to stop feeling like spectators and start feeling like inhabitants. I want them to imagine they are co-authors of this storytelling experience. In Leftover Lots, the "narrative" isn't a linear script; it is the environment itself.

By allowing the user to navigate this immersive infrastructure, I give them the agency to discover the logic of this new world at their own pace. The architecture acts as the storyteller. Whether they are moving through a "mobility hub" or a "shared modular housing" unit, they are piecing together the story of





this civilization. I try to balance my design intention with enough openness that the viewer feels they are living in this future, rather than just watching a movie about it.

**In your vision of a post-parking city, what aspects of urban life do you imagine changing the most — socially, visually, or emotionally?**

I believe the most profound shift will be social. A change in mobility is a change in civilization structure. We have to ask: will this fluid mobility balance our social structures, or will it enlarge inequality? Will it make the city more affordable and accessible, or create new tiers of privilege?

Drawing inspiration from historical precedents like the Egyptian city of el-Amarna, which used grid systems to enforce order, I am interested in how our future grids will shape behavior. I hope to revive a sense of humanity in this new urbanism, ensuring that as we optimize for efficiency, we don't lose the "villages" and diverse constellations that make a city feel human.

**What kind of research or real-world urban studies informed your speculation about future mobility systems?**

My research process was a blend of technical study and personal documentation. I started with a "parking mood journal," documenting the emotional texture of current parking typologies—angle, parallel, and perpendicular.

For the primary visual research, I utilized a technique of architectural overlay. I took photographs of real parking structures near my community and physically sketched over them using transparent paper. I categorized these spaces into time-sensitive sections—temporary parking, loading zones, and permanent structures—and then reimagined how those footprints could transform.

Secondary to this, I conducted technical research on the development of autonomous vehicles, including their size, turning radius, and emerging technologies. This grounded my speculative designs in reality. I moved through a progression: base, mass, tweak,

sculpt, and form. This ensured that even my most abstract ideas, like the "rhythmic hierarchy" of the city, were built upon the physical reality of the existing urban grid.

**The environments you build often choreograph the viewer's movement and attention. What sensory or spatial tools do you rely on to guide participants without explicit instructions?**

I rely heavily on the concept of the "grid" and modularity to guide intuition. Inspired by Howard Gardner's "frames of mind," I treat each modular element in the VR space as a way to organize human senses. I use lighting, scale, and "rhythmic hierarchy" to subtly direct attention. For example, the repetition of modular elements creates a pattern that the eye naturally follows, acting as a visual breadcrumb trail. By manipulating order and disorder—breaking the grid or stretching a form—I can signal to the viewer where to look or move next. It's about creating an "elemental portrait" of a human being within the architecture; the environment stretches, expands, and secures the viewer, choreographing their movement through the feeling of space rather than through arrows or text.

**What role do you believe artists and designers should play in imagining the future of urban infrastructure and mobility?**

We have a responsibility to be provocateurs. While engineers solve for efficiency and city planners solve for code, artists must solve for humanity. We are here to inspire, to advocate, and to ignite conversation before the concrete is poured.

When massive developments in AI and automation are happening, there is often a rush to implementation. Artists have the unique ability to pause that process and ask, "Is this the future we actually want?" By visualizing the consequences—both the utopian and the dystopian—we provide a space for critique and imagination. My role is to bring the dynamic, human side of new urbanism to life, ensuring that the future of our cities is designed for people, not just for machines.



## Melanie Perelshtein

My name is Melanie, I'm 17, and I'm a high school student and an artist. I create art in school for my class and also just for myself. I'm really passionate about making art — both digital and traditional — along with a few other things I enjoy. I've already worked on some projects, even though I'm still young. I'd describe my art style as a portal to another world, because most of my pieces talk about deep topics that the world doesn't always want to show, mixed with my own imagination. I get a lot of inspiration from music, movies, and just the world around me.

### *Project Statement*

I have loved creating art since I was a really young child. Art, I believe, is something that people create to express themselves and also leave a part of themselves on earth. I love creating art because, after so many changes to our world, art is still something that has stayed with me through a lot. In addition, I want to leave my mark on the world by showing my art and creating art that talks to the heart.





Melanie Perelshtein | City of Lempis | 2024

# Nana Said

**You grew up between Saudi Arabia and Alexandria - how did these contrasting environments shape your earliest sensitivities to aesthetics, atmosphere, and visual culture?**

Growing up in both Saudi Arabia and Alexandria meant living in two very different places. In Al-Madinah, I spent most of my time indoors, where everything was quiet, spacious, and simple. That calm made me notice small things, like how light changed on the walls, repeating patterns, and the quiet of empty streets. Alexandria was the opposite: busy, colorful, noisy, and full of visual details. Experiencing both places, one calm and the other lively, taught me to notice mood, materials, and atmosphere long before I knew it was called design.

Nana Said | My Aroma Story-Stories



**Looking back at your childhood, when did you first realize that observing, organizing, and sketching weren't just habits, but early forms of design thinking?**

I didn't realize those habits were part of design thinking until much later. In college, when I first learned about design thinking (the idea of observing, organizing, and shaping meaning with intention) it finally clicked. I saw that I had already been doing these things as a child: rearranging supermarket shelves when the spacing felt off, redesigning book covers in my notebooks, and sketching imaginary brands. What I thought were just personal quirks were actually early signs of the same instincts I use now. College gave me the words for it, but my childhood showed me I had been practicing all along.

**What made you choose graphic design over other creative disciplines like architecture, fashion, or interior design, and how did that clarity emerge?**

I realized all those fields collaborate closely with graphic designers. Choosing graphic design meant I could touch many disciplines instead of being limited to one. Graphic design felt like the one discipline where I didn't have to choose between structure and emotion. Architecture felt too rigid, fashion too anchored to the body, interiors too tied to physical space, but graphic design let me move fluidly between systems and sentiment, concept and craft. It gave me a way to build worlds, stories, and atmospheres without being confined to one material or scale.

**When you moved to the United States, visual communication became a new language for you - how did that experience transform the way you think**





### about design, culture, and storytelling?

When I moved to the U.S., I noticed how emotions are expressed differently in each language. In Arabic, especially with all the dialects I grew up around, there are everyday words that capture feelings English doesn't have: to'borni (literally "bury me," meaning I love you so much I'd rather die before I ever lose you), hanan (tenderness), wahsha (the ache of missing someone), and tehawen (a natural ease with someone).

In conversations here, I often reached for feelings I couldn't translate, and that gap made me rethink how I communicate. I began to understand visual language as a bridge; something that could carry tone and complexity when words fell short.

It shifted my mindset: I didn't just want to design; I wanted to create visuals that make people feel something, even without shared vocabulary

### Aroma Story translates identity into scent, narrative, material, and form - what sparked the idea of telling your story through fragrances rather than traditional visual media?

What drew me to fragrance was how it connects something universal with something deeply personal. Everyone knows the feeling of smelling chlorine and suddenly remembering childhood summers at the pool, or catching a perfume that instantly brings someone to mind. Scent moves you in a way no visual medium can. It's immediate, emotional, and completely involuntary. At the same time, incense is a very specific part of my culture and upbringing. In Egypt and across the Arab world, burning incense is linked to ritual, cleansing, gathering, and protection. Every Friday, our home was filled with its warm smoke. This small but steady ritual shaped the atmosphere of my childhood. Those scents became emotional markers for home, safety, and tradition.

Aroma Story became a way to merge these two realities: the universal power of scent to trigger memory, and the cultural significance that fragrance holds in my life. Instead of illustrating my story visually, I wanted people to experience it as I do, through a scent that brings back an

entire moment or feeling. It felt like the most honest way to translate something personal into a form others could feel for themselves.

### Each incense box carries its own geography, memory, and emotion - how did you approach choosing the scents, illustrations, colors, and bilingual typography to reflect those personal traits?

Each scent in Aroma Story wasn't chosen conceptually; it was the fragrance actually present when each trait emerged. Jasmine surrounded my earliest moments of curiosity, oud marked the period when boldness first formed, the ocean wind reflects the passion and clarity I feel near water, and incense connects to the rituals that shaped my sense of protection. The back of each box explains how each scent ties to a real memory. Typography acts as a bridge between the past and the present. These traits were formed in Arabic-speaking countries, so Arabic represents the voice of the person who lived those moments. English represents the designer I am now, interpreting them through form. Bringing the two languages together allows the two selves to coexist and acknowledges their continuity. The illustrations are reduced motifs that provide the visual cues that complete each narrative.

### As you continue working in New York and evolving your practice, what kinds of stories, collaborations, or creative directions do you hope to explore next?

I'm drawn to collaborations where design becomes an extension of someone's inner world. I want to art direct and build brands for artists and cultural practitioners who want a part of themselves embedded in the work, projects where identity and emotion lead the visual system. I'm also deeply interested in branding exhibitions and cultural spaces, where narrative, atmosphere, and material choices shape how people physically experience a story.

More broadly, I hope to explore creative directions that blur disciplines. Ultimately, I want to build work that feels both conceptual and deeply human.



# Contents

## Interviews

Dominika Białas	4	Artyom Kozhevnikov	62
Misa Inoue	6	Saadé L. Taylor	64
Arrushi Chakraborty	10	Irina Krechetova	66
Nyll Axis	14	Jovana Ciric Srbinovska	68
Mackenzie Browning	18	María Sauzet	72
Annie RC	22	Tom Zelger	80
Qinyunyi Zhang (Yuii)	26	Nguyen Minh Tri (Tonee)	84
Tanner Rhines	28	Yi Wang (Cizzoe)	86
Gabriele Martin	32	Ksenia Panasyuk	88
Candice Rawlings	36	Tina Chiu	90
Xingyun Wang	40	Yolanda Tian	94
Zhe Yang	44	Irina Komarova	98
Gloria Manoka	48	Enoch A	102
Soh Young Lee	52	Yumeng Li	106
Valeriya Vyatchina (WAYS12)	56	Ophelia Chen	112
Aisha Fatima	58	Nana Said	116
Prof. Shirley Yeung	60		

## Featured artists

Ian Barnes	8	Obada AlOmari	50
Serpil Odabasi	12	Alexandra Kashina (Harufeel)	70
Alexandru Crişan	16	Qingyuan Liang	76
Yu Yu (Spencer)	20	Irina Zavorotnaya	78
Bertrand Capelle	24	Huan Zhou	92
Dusan Marinkovic	30	Lena Lecca	96
Anna Dudek	34	Silviya Plamenova Petkova	100
Mary Angerman (Marydeer)	38	Léa Malas	104
Ekaterina Vetchinova	42	Elizaveta Zolotych	110
Manuela Muzzone	46	Melanie Perelshtein	114







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