

# VISUAL ART JOURNAL





# — Intro

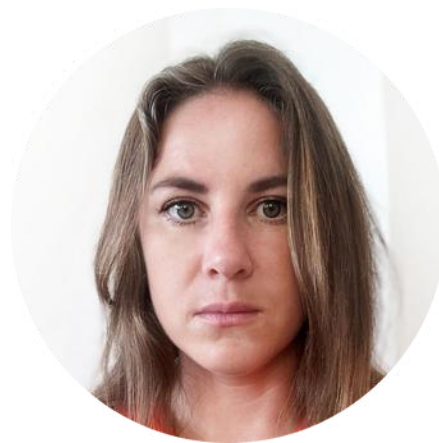
Hello, dear reader!

I am thrilled to welcome you to the 9th issue of our magazine. For our entire team, working on this edition has been an incredibly exciting and inspiring experience.

Ahead of you lies an adventure through different countries, cultures, forms, and colors. In this issue, we have gathered all kinds of art: paintings, photographs, sculptures. You'll read about people with diverse creative journeys and vastly different backgrounds, which continually proves that anyone can create, regardless of the country they were born in or the education they received. The world of art is open to everyone, and modern technology and global connectivity allow creators to reach and share their work with audiences no matter the circumstances.

The goal of our magazine is to provide a platform for artists to express themselves, showcase their works, and share their thoughts, stories, and dreams.

Enjoy reading! I am sure you will experience the same joy we felt while working on this issue!



**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

*On the Front Cover:*  
**Yibei Liu**  
Untitled 3

*On the Back Cover:*  
**Sergei Voronin**

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

## Sheldon Goldman

During his lifetime, Sheldon had been drawing and painting from an early age, and the only time he took off from his art was during his university years. One of the ironies of his art career is that Sheldon is color-blind. He, therefore, always has to tone down his paintings to achieve the realism he strives for.

In 1987, he discovered that people liked his art enough to buy it. Sheldon had been painting surrealistic watercolors for many years, and the switch to another water-based medium was not a great leap. Sheldon has always said that acrylic painters are frustrated watercolorists at heart. His areas of specialization are landscapes and surrealism, using acrylics on canvas.

A group show he is most proud to have participated in was curated by Daniel E. Greene and was combined with the Olympics of Ballet, held in Jackson, Mississippi (Salon International). He and about 200 other artists had the honor of displaying their art alongside Degas originals.

Sheldon presently lives and works from his home in a northern suburb of Toronto, Canada. He has been creating his art full-time since 2013. One of his inspirations, besides his wife Fern, was his Chesapeake Bay retriever, Java, who has been immortalized in some of his paintings.

Sheldon Goldman | Can You Hear Me

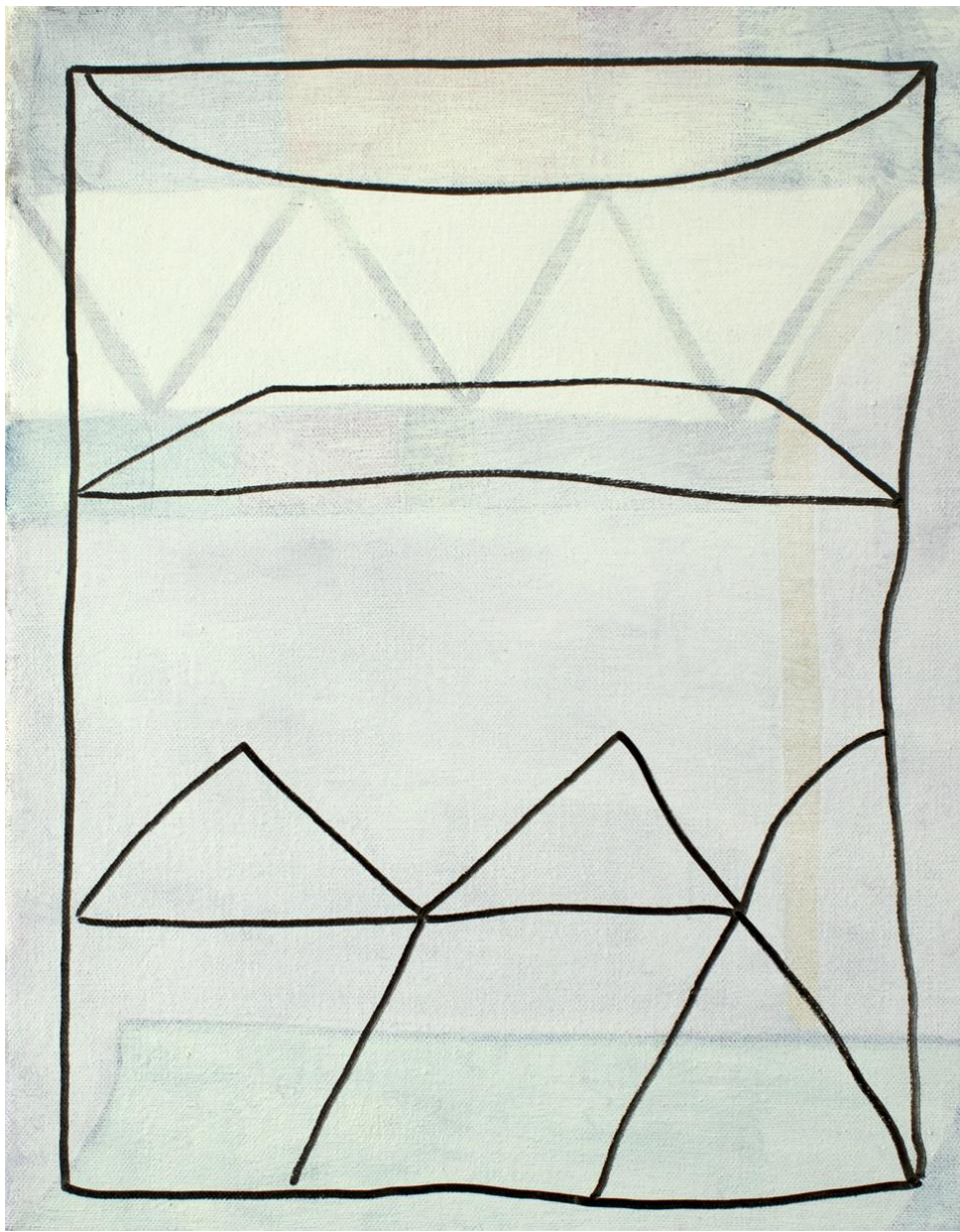




Sheldon Goldman | Kite Flyers On Safari

I am a graduate of Chelsea College of Art and Design in London (2011, MA in Fine Art) and the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology in Dublin (2008, BA in Visual Arts Practice), and a recipient of numerous prestigious awards including the Arts and Humanities Research Council of England Fellowship (2011) and the Travel and Training Bursary by the Arts Council of Ireland (2010). I participated in international artist's residencies among others at Igor Metropol Budapest (2015), Halle 14 Leipzig (2013) and the Temple Bar Gallery and Studio AIR in Dublin (2009). My latest (selected) exhibitions include 'Spot On', VUNU Gallery Kosice, Slovakia, 'Small Things', EQO, Spissky Hrhov (2018), 'Flexible Stillness', Pragovka Artdistrict, Prague (2017), 'The Level of Abstraction in Real Life Has Been Declining', The Gallery of Central Slovakia, Banska Bystrica (2016), 'Picture This', Kasarne Kulturpark, Kosice 2015.

— Peter Cabocky



Untitled | 2021 | Oil on canvas



# — Interview

## Emma Fish

**Your work often reimagines natural landscapes with an unconventional color palette. How do you decide which colours to use for a particular piece, and what role does colour play in conveying the emotion or mood of your paintings?**

I don't believe in too much pre-planning when it comes to my work. Even though I create abstract pieces, I start with a digital coloured sketch to block out the initial colours. But once I begin painting, the process becomes fluid. The colours evolve naturally as the piece progresses, and they guide me in balancing the composition. The interaction between the colours develops organically during the creation process. I find that this approach allows me to capture the essence of the landscape in a way that feels fresh and unexpected, both for myself and for those who view the piece. In a sense, I become the first viewer of the work as it takes shape, unlocking the true beauty from the original landscape alongside everyone else.

**How do you balance the different elements in your mixed media work? Do you find that certain materials express certain emotions or ideas better than others?**

Balancing the different elements in my mixed media work is a deeply intuitive process. I experience emotional dysregulation, which means I often struggle



to fully grasp or control my emotions in the moment. Instead of using specific materials to convey certain emotions, my creative process becomes a journey of discovery. As I layer different elements and experiment with materials, I gradually uncover the emotions I'm trying to express. It's a process filled with trial and error, but somewhere along the way, it all starts to make sense. By the time the piece comes together, I often feel transformed, like I've gained a better understanding of what I was aiming to achieve emotionally.

**In your art, you often depict nature in a vibrant and imaginative way. How do you view the relationship between humans and nature, and how does that influence your creative vision?**

I see a profound connection between humans and nature in my work. Since the



dawn of time, humans have thrived through community and the ability to share resources. Our communication and collaboration have been key to our survival and success as a species.

In modern society, we often prioritise individualism, sometimes losing sight of the bigger picture. Just as nature relies on diversity to build a thriving ecosystem, so do we. There's a clear parallel between the natural world and human society—we need to honour the different roles we all play, rather than focusing narrowly on certain skill sets. This belief strongly influences my creative vision, as I aim to highlight the importance of diversity and interconnectedness in both nature and humanity.

**As an artist who is neurodiverse and has a learning disability, how has this aspect of your identity shaped your artistic practice and the messages you wish to convey through your art?**

I don't see my neurodiversity and learning differences as a disability. Instead, I view them as assets that have shaped my unique perspective and creative process. Society often highlights those who fit into certain categories of "normal," but thinking



Emma Fish | I am Magic | 2023



Emma Fish | A Winters Dream

differently can lead to extraordinary outcomes. Some of the greatest minds in history didn't fit the mould, and I believe that's true for many artists as well. While there are challenges, my way of thinking allows me to see and create in ways that might not be possible otherwise. This difference fuels my art and the messages I aim to convey, celebrating the beauty of diverse perspectives.

**You've worked on making art more accessible and affordable through outdoor exhibitions and hand-painted jewelry. What challenges have you encountered in making art available to a wider audience?**

Making art more accessible has always been a passion of mine, but it definitely comes with its challenges. Fine art often feels confined within gallery walls, accessible only to those with higher incomes. That's why I've poured so much energy into my hand-painted earring line as well as more accessible pieces. I believe art should be something everyone can enjoy, and wearing it every day is just as valuable as displaying it on a wall.

One of the biggest challenges is expanding my network into shops while managing the

costs of starting up a business that prioritises using sustainable materials. Establishing connections with retailers across the country, or even globally, is time-consuming and expensive. Plus, I'm competing with mass-produced products from companies with large teams, while I'm handling everything myself—from marketing to creating to running the business. Despite these challenges, my passion for creating high-quality, adventure-ready wearable art keeps me going. The reward of making art accessible and affordable, and seeing people enjoy it in their daily lives, makes all the effort worthwhile.

**Can you share a specific project or piece of art that was particularly meaningful to you? What made that experience stand out in your career?**

My current collection "Coming Together" is particularly meaningful to me because it challenges the conventions of landscape art by blending abstraction with the natural world. In this series, I warp space and defy gravity to deconstruct nature, inviting viewers to see its elements in a new light. Through this approach, I'm not just painting landscapes—I'm exploring the complexities of our world and the possibility of positive change. The question that drives this work is: Are we coming apart, or can we come together? It reflects my own struggles with dismay and distrust in humanity, while also holding onto

hope of a better future. This collection has pushed my artistic boundaries and has resonated with audiences, opening doors to galleries and museums across the province. It's a standout moment in my career, and I'm excited to see where it will take me next.

**As an artist who has lived in both Australia and Canada, what cultural differences do you notice in how art is perceived or valued in these two countries?**

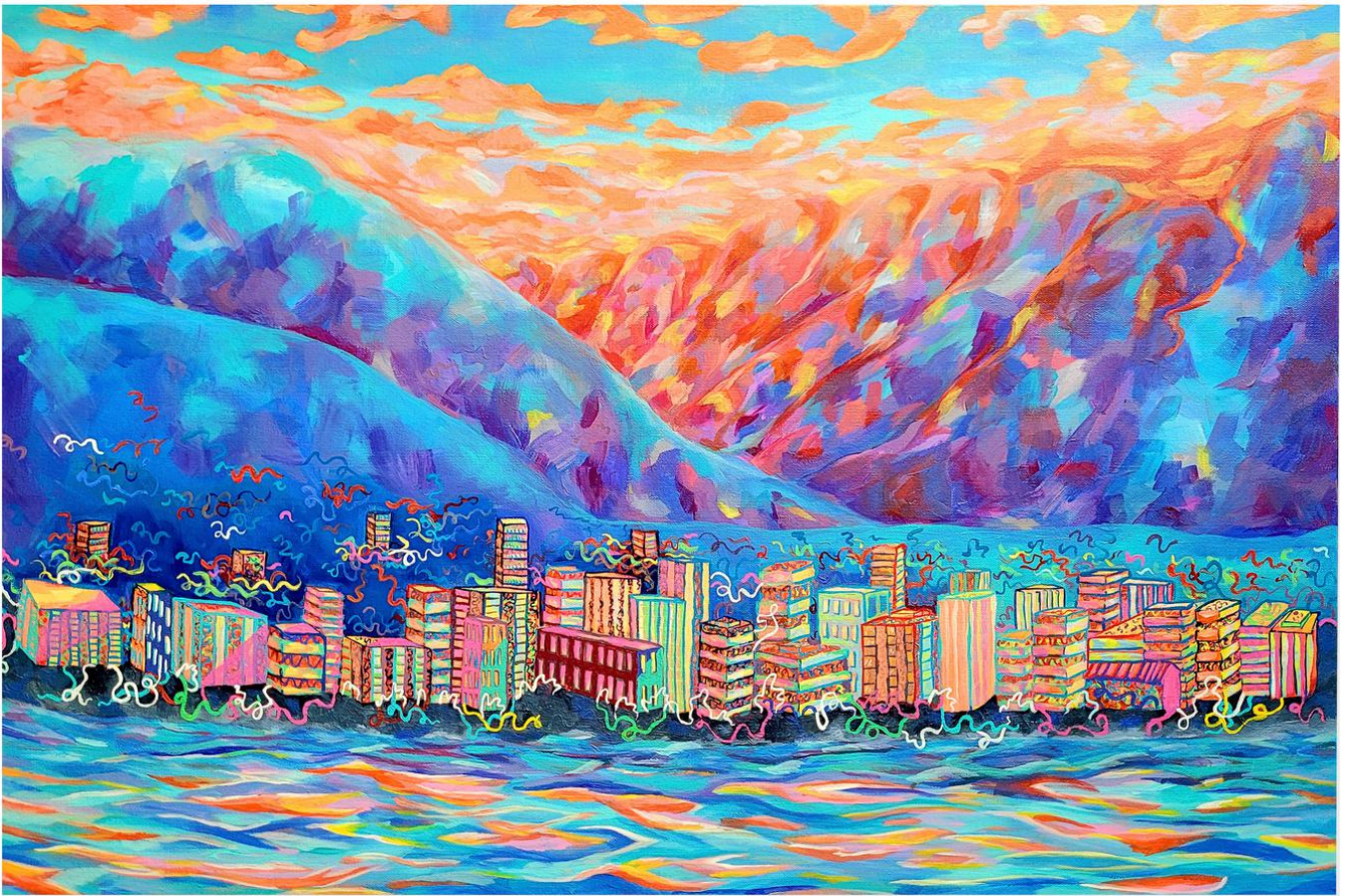
Living in both Australia and Canada has given me a unique perspective on how art is perceived and valued in these two countries. Canada is now my home, and I feel a sense of adventure here that I never quite experienced in Australia. If I were born on the beach in Australia, perhaps I would have never left, but my journey led me to this new landscape.

When I return to Australia, I'm struck by the vibrancy and laid-back attitude that permeates its art culture. There's a boldness and brightness in Australian art that reflects the country's spirit. In contrast, Canadian culture can feel more reserved, yet the adventurous spirit deeply influences the art scene here.

These days, I feel like an art nomad, drawing inspiration from both cultures yet not entirely belonging to either. My work borrows from each, blending elements of both worlds without anchoring itself to a single home.



Emma Fish | Elements of Us | 2024



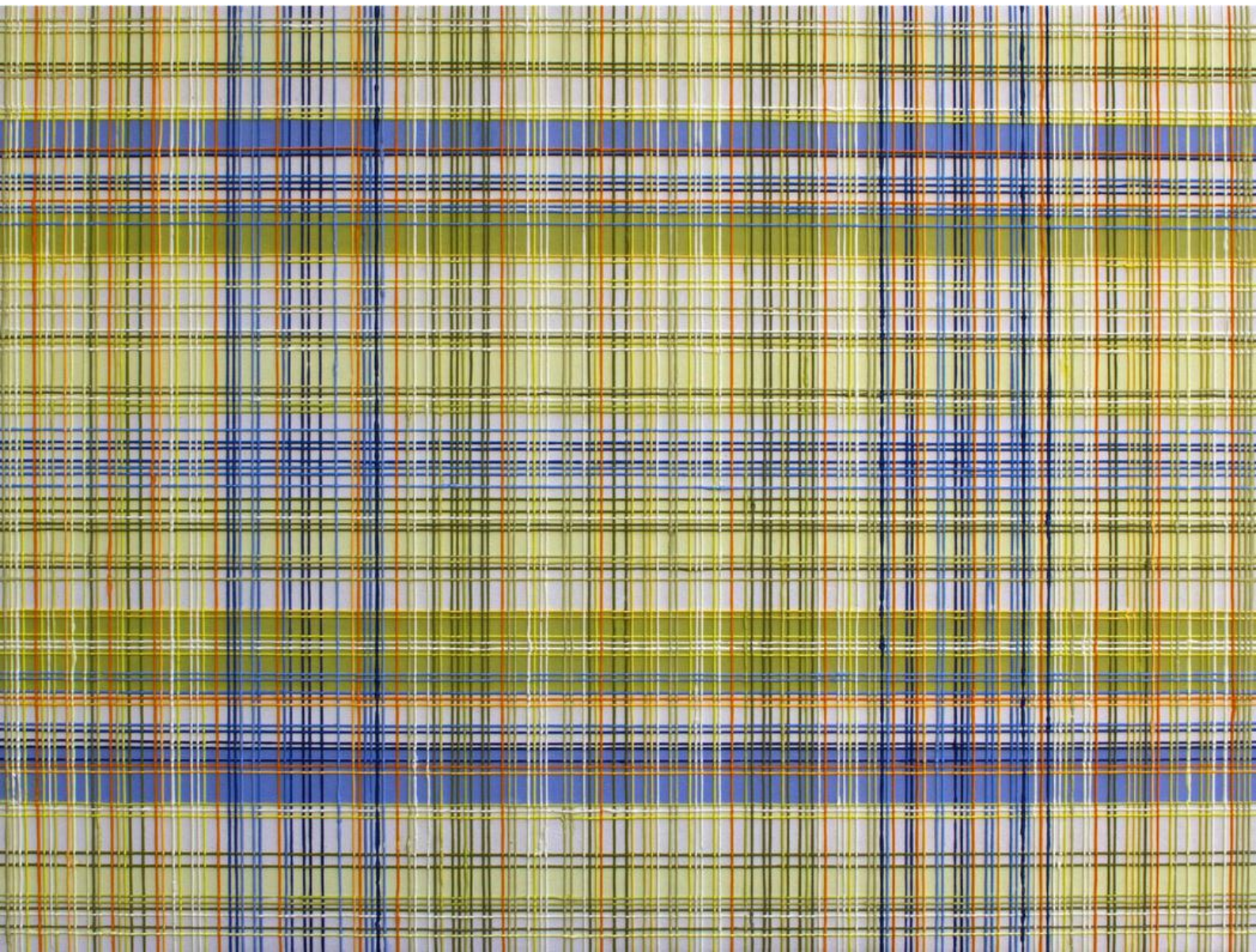
Emma Fish | Home | 2023



Emma Fish | All I Am | 2023

I am **Zdene Flerin**, a contemporary artist from Slovenia. After several years of exploring various styles and materials, I have developed a unique and inventive oil painting technique. I prefer the vividness of oil paints over the passive hues of acrylics, as oil paints offer greater precision and the ability to make corrections, allowing me to create truly perfected works. My technique demands exceptional concentration and precision. I paint on high-quality, high-grammage raw canvas, skillfully exploiting the properties of both the colors and the canvas to create my signature stripes. My art is a quest for balance and harmony, using rich, contrasting colors and bold lines to depict complex human emotions. Through my work, I aim to provoke thought and inspire a sense of harmony in my audience. Drawing inspiration from the works of Gerhard Richter, I have been refining my distinctive oil-painting technique for the past 12 years, although my passion for art dates back to my childhood.





## — Interview

# Olia Breva



Olia Breva discovered her artistic vision in early childhood. When she was 8, one of her artworks was chosen for an exhibition in Japan. She entered an art school six years later, which she successfully completed. Despite her calling for the art sphere, Olia got a master's degree in economics. However, her innate passion has always pulled her back to the artist pathway: Olia continued to master her creative skills in the studios of academic artists, taking classes and practicing. She tries herself in various formats: painting, graphics, interior design, and architectural solutions. Olia Breva believes that self-development is the key quality for all creative professions and that she is constantly evolving as an artist. You can see her as a painter whose life is connected to art. She is always searching for new ways to express herself and find meaning.



### **How would you describe your art?**

This is delirium in poetic dreams. The delirium of my bottomless consciousness, which I can't get out of. The illusory world that my paintings represent is the embodiment of dreams and memories. We reach out to the souls from the past and present through the canvas. In subtle, transparent color combinations, their features come out of the air in quiet thoughtfulness. The colorful feature of my perception of reality and spiritual depths, prone to expressive symbolism, gives rise to all these paintings and graphics. Sometimes my art scares me, sometimes it makes me happy. Occasionally, I'm afraid to look at my picture, so I hide it behind the curtains, but I don't rule out the possibility that the characters will appear in real life and have a lively conversation with me.

**What is rebellious, unconventional, and unusual in your creations?**

During my work, I immerse myself in the worlds of my painting, pushing apart the spaces in the subconscious. I am unable to evaluate my work objectively. I have this theme that doesn't lend itself to being told. It is part of my soul, my path. This is part of my life. And this is poetic nonsense, and what is unconventional rebellion, only the viewer can judge and evaluate.

**What makes your art different?**

My art is unique because I see the world, people, and everything invisible from a certain angle. I find symbols and archetypes of the feminine in the surrounding reality and everyday life. My art is the art of my creative visions. It is wild and poetic, but at the same time, it is close to me in spirit. This is my world of illusions and colorful metamorphoses.

**Did your creative path have a thoughtful direction, or did it gradually develop in any direction?**

At first, I didn't set any limits; I just pushed them apart and did everything I could to make them go



away. When the brain explodes, what do the eyes look like? Do they run, spin, or jump out of their orbits? What types of sounds are accompanied by this? Are the canvases dry or do they leak? Do you think this direction is the best one? I love this state because it gives me the opportunity to create. I love to create.

**What artists have influenced your art?**

I am inspired by new trends in art and design. I keep an eye on cool new art shows and concepts. Some don't fit into my model of the world order, but I try to feel and understand this modern rhythm of time. Because this is the future. The article is not enough to list those creators who are important to me. In my opinion, both old and new painters, as well as true creators, require observation.

**What is the project you are currently working on?**

I work on myself. This is my biggest project. I am progressing as a person and as an artist. I hope this helps in my work. Currently, I'm preparing for several solo shows in Dubai and Cyprus.







I have been creating analog collages since 2021. I like traveling and many of my collages tell about these journeys. I create all my works by hand using scissors and glue.

— Dorota Kilichowska

# — Interview

## Yibei Liu

**Your sculptures often explore the feelings of being trapped in negative emotional loops. Could you share more about how these emotions translate into your work visually?**

The feeling of being trapped in negative emotional loops is something I deeply relate to, and it translates into my sculptures through the forms, compositions, and textures I create. Visually, these emotions are often expressed through constricted or repetitive elements, distorted proportions, or figures caught in dynamic yet cyclical motions. For example, in some of my works, limbs may be bound, twisted, or appear incomplete, reflecting a sense of limitation and emotional struggle.

I also use repetitive forms or gestures to mirror the repetitive nature of negative thoughts or behaviors. This repetition can appear in coiling techniques, with layers of clay building up in a way that reflects the slow accumulation of unresolved emotions. Fragmentation or disconnection within the figure—such as separated body parts or disturbingly bubbling forms—symbolizes the disconnection one might feel from themselves when trapped in these emotional loops.

Textures, too, play a crucial role. Rough, uneven surfaces might represent internal turbulence, while smoother, more polished areas could signify moments of clarity or fleeting emotional



Yibei Liu | Untitled 3

resolution. Through these visual choices, I aim to evoke the tension and complexity of emotional entrapment, inviting viewers to connect with these internal struggles on a personal level.

**How does your personal experience with mental health shape the narrative of your sculptures?**

Through my work, I aim to externalize the internal struggles that often remain hidden. Sculpting becomes a medium to explore emotions like anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt—feelings that many experience but hesitate to openly discuss. By confronting these emotions through the creative process, I bring attention to how societal pressures and personal battles impact mental well-being.

The themes in my sculptures often reflect the conflict between societal expectations and personal identity, mirroring my own journey of self-awareness. For instance, the recurring use of anthropomorphized elements, such as the abstract form of the brain, allows me to personify the subconscious forces that drive behavior and act as a metaphor of the chaotic mindset during depression. This exploration of mental health is not just an abstract concept in my work; it's a deeply personal narrative that emerges as I process my own emotional

landscape.

Ultimately, I hope my sculptures prompt viewers to reflect on their mental health and the pressures they face, encouraging open dialogue around mental health and destigmatizing the conversation around it.

**You mention self-healing as part of your creative process. How does sculpting help you in this journey?**

Actually, it is coiling that is the primary technique in my creative practice plays a crucial role in my self-healing journey. It is a slow, deliberate process that allows for deep reflection and ongoing refinement, distinguishing it from faster techniques in ceramics. Each coil represents a step in decision-making, where I can rethink, adjust, and respond to the material in real-time. This iterative process mirrors life's continuous decisions and challenges, making the act of creation a powerful emotional experience.

Throughout this journey, I encounter a full spectrum of emotions—frustration when the clay collapses, disappointment in repeated failures, surprise at the unexpected beauty of a glaze, and the satisfaction of completing a piece. These experiences infuse the final work with personal depth and significance.

Moreover, exposing my inner thoughts and emotions through my artwork is akin to a form of desensitization therapy. By sharing vulnerable aspects of myself with an audience, I build the capacity to confront difficult emotions that I might otherwise resist. Over time, this process has helped me to better face and navigate my own emotional landscape, allowing for personal growth and a deeper understanding of the strength that comes from confronting challenges head-on.

**Can you explain the specific techniques or materials you use to evoke the emotions of entrapment and release in your sculptures?**

In my work, I use coiling to convey feelings of entrapment and release. Coiling is a slow, repetitive process where layers build up,



Yibei Liu | Untitled 10

symbolizing the accumulation of emotions and the sense of being trapped. I also use texture contrasts to express emotional shifts—rough or cracked surfaces represent internal chaos and confinement, while smooth surfaces suggest release and calm.

**In your current project, you explore the relationship between emotions, actions, and their psychological reasons. What have you learned through this exploration?**

As I began delving into this project, one of my initial ideas focused on the psychological reasons behind certain behaviors, like flashing. In everyday perception, flashers are often seen as inappropriate or repulsive, leading to avoidance and condemnation. However, as I researched the pathological causes of such behavior, I was struck by how deeply rooted these issues can be, often tracing back to childhood trauma or unresolved psychological conflicts. This discovery shifted my perspective, allowing me to understand the complexity behind human actions that are typically stigmatized.

This exploration has expanded my interest beyond my personal emotions to a broader focus on the human condition. It has encouraged me to investigate the sociological and psychological underpinnings of behaviors that are often dismissed or misunderstood. I've also begun studying concepts like Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology, which emphasizes the influence of early experiences on behavior, and Mass Psychology, which examines how societal pressures shape individual mental states. These studies have enriched my understanding of how

deeply interconnected our emotions, actions, and social environments are, and they continue to inspire my work as I explore the complex layers of human behavior.

**Your work sends a message of “you are not alone.” How do you hope your audience will connect with your sculptures on a personal level?**

As a very personal and introverted individual, I often find it challenging to open up, even to those I’m close to. It takes time for me to lower my guard, and finding the right moment with an appropriate icebreaker is crucial in starting those deeper conversations. Talking about someone else’s emotions serves as an easier gateway and often becomes a way for me to ease into sharing my own experiences. From my perspective, discussing another’s emotions can plant a seed, encouraging them to reflect on their feelings.

This process can bring thoughts from the subconscious to the forefront of the mind, leading to a more active reflection and possibly a shift in perspective. By making those hidden emotions conscious, it can aid in the reconstruction of one’s mindset, a process that I find central to both my personal interactions and

the narratives in my artwork.

**As a figurative sculptor, how do you strike a balance between abstraction and representation in your work?**

As a figurative sculptor, I strike a balance between abstraction and representation by blending recognizable human forms with more abstract elements that symbolize or help illustrate psychological and emotional states. The human figure serves as a familiar entry point for viewers, allowing them to connect with the work on a personal level. However, I introduce abstraction—through exaggerated or distorted features, symbolic objects, or fragmented forms—to convey deeper, more intangible ideas.

This balance allows me to explore complex concepts like mental health, conformity, or societal pressures without being overly literal. For instance, in my project, while the human figure is clearly represented, the bubbly form of the brain, symbolizing unconscious chaotic thoughts on the back of one’s mind. This blend of realism and abstraction helps to provoke thought and invite personal interpretation while maintaining a connection to the physical and emotional reality of the human condition.



Yibei Liu | Untitled 7



## — Interview

# Hamed Siamaki

**Your works are deeply connected to the desert. What does the desert represent for you, both personally and artistically?**

The desert, for me personally, represents a confrontation with the essence of humanity, which is solitude. Solitude can be physical or emotional. What often torments us is physical loneliness, while emotional loneliness is entirely internal. I may be among friends and still feel lonely. Both forms of solitude occur simultaneously in the desert, creating a confrontation of me with myself. Physical solitude in the desert is about overcoming basic human challenges—what to eat, where to sleep, and so on. But emotional solitude pushes me towards inner reflection, questioning why I exist and what I must do. These are fundamental questions humanity has always asked from the dawn of understanding the world through philosophy and mysticism, yet none have fully answered such essential inquiries. Perhaps the cryptic nature of art, which sometimes happens unconsciously and sometimes consciously, can provide a clear path for humanity. And I explore this path of clarity in the desert.



**How do the local desert legends and stories influence your installation pieces?**

The stories and legends of the desert's marginalized inhabitants reflect their way of life in an arid climate, redefining human perseverance and inner beliefs. These tales carry lessons about the path of human truth upon this land. The selection of objects in my installations is rooted in those stories and the journey of truth, but in the installations, I no longer delve into the original narrative. Instead, it becomes a reinterpretation, a redefinition of the story as I perceive it. At times, my imaginings in an installation might be a personal narrative that I share with the audience. This imagination of mine may even resonate with the audience's own mind.

**Could you describe the emotional and physical challenges you experience during your solo desert expeditions, and how they shape your art?**

The desert and wilderness represent a true way of life for me. After two years of desert trekking, I turned to installation art, meaning I sought to express my personal insights from this landscape through installation. Sometimes, I find myself deeply influenced by my own installations, which eventually lead to environmental activism and campaigns to clean up the desert's waste. The "Desert Giant" installation stands as proof of this.

**Many of your installations are created using natural materials and are left to the elements. How do you view the interaction between nature and your art over time?**

Interacting with nature requires time. Our daily urban lives have separated us from nature, and at times, we are compelled to escape into nature to break away from the monotony. Whatever we give to nature, it eventually gives back to us. The desert is not devoid of life, though we mistakenly believe no living creatures inhabit it. In reality, the desert is a delicate and fragile ecosystem, and thus, it must be treated with care. My works are part of the desert ecosystem, so I don't alter it but rather aim to explore and make use of it. If color is needed, it comes from mineral stones, and if plastic is involved, it comes from discarded waste, which I bring back with me in the end.

**Your projects often explore themes such as human resilience and the fate of humankind. What conclusions, if any, have you drawn through your art about these themes?**



Hamed Siamaki | Hidden Presence 1 | 2021



Hamed Siamaki | Hidden Presence 2 | 2021

Humans, like all other living beings and the Earth itself, are destined for destruction. However, human activities accelerate this process. What we are witnessing now are climate changes that have been intensified by human interference. Yet, throughout history, humanity has always found a way to survive, which reflects humanity's ability to coexist under varying conditions.

**How has your work in graphics and your role in the advertising industry influenced your installation practice?**

My mind is trained in graphic design, which is why form and composition inevitably appear in my installation works. The choice of elements may also stem from this graphic mindset.

**What do you hope viewers take away from experiencing your desert**

**installations through photography?**

There may be mental or experiential commonalities between me and the audience, but we've each viewed them from different perspectives. I aim to tell the audience, "You are not alone—look, I think this way too."

And finally, I am eager to experience the approaches and perspectives of other cultures that live alongside the desert. I wish to live among them and discover new ways of thinking within their lands.

Hamed Siamaki | Desert Giant | 2023







Hamed Siamaki | Apprehension | 2022

Hamed Siamaki | of Gavkhouni to Hawizeh Marshes | 2023



## — Interview

# Cameron Meade

**Your background in both Psychology and Physics is quite unique for an artist. How do these fields influence your creative process and the themes you explore in your paintings?**

Before pursuing an art career I was a researcher in computational biology. Funnily enough I think that experience trained me well for my creative pursuits. Research is a cycle of conducting experiments, analyzing results, determining which outcomes warrant further investigation, and repeating until you arrive upon a novel and significant conclusion. One must continually self-assess to ensure the work is approaching something worthwhile, while inevitably discarding inconsequential results without dwelling on missteps. It is necessary to be steadfast yet flexible, thorough yet efficient, meticulous yet observant. There are no clear and apparent benchmarks; one is very much treading their own path, entirely self-motivated. The creative process really benefits from the same self-awareness, nimbleness, and grit.

My background in Physics informs the ways in which I conceptualize and represent physical space. Cognitive Psychology — the study of how the human mind perceives, processes, and interprets information — influences how I compose and paint my images.

**You've mentioned that your work is inspired by fashion editorials.**



**Can you elaborate on how fashion influences the colors, patterns, and textures in your artwork?**

I've always been inspired by the artistry in fashion editorials. I'm a gay who came of age watching fashionTV and who — to this day — collages torn-out pages from print magazines into my journals. Back when vogue.com was still style.com (and you didn't have to subscribe to the magazine to have access), I'd pore over the season's latest runway shows, delighting over the clothes, styling, and atmosphere, which would inevitably recur in ads and editorial features. It was never about merchandise for me; I was in it for the creativity, the intrigue and fantasy evoked through just an image.

This interest prompted me to draw from fashion editorials as source material. In photoshop, I loosely collage varied parts from numerous images to create figures and environments. Some of the decisions I make are influenced by styling; there's a playfulness and whimsy to the clothes and characters I represent. The colors, patterns, and textures in particular contribute to the lively tone of my work.

**Your art is described as a balance between representation and abstraction. How do you decide where to draw the line between these two elements in a particular piece?**

This balance between representation and abstraction in my art has a lot to do with cognitive psychology, the study of how we internalize the outside world. Quick lesson — we are constantly taking in innumerable stimuli from the environment through our senses but we are not capable of attending to it all. To manage, our minds filter this endless flood into digestible amounts of information, disregarding most of what we intake in the process. For example, even though the street noise outside my apartment remains present, I'm not continuously aware of it while I sing along to my music. Or more illustrative for this question — we will likely register a rough square with five rectangular appendages as a hand if it is situated near a rendering of an arm. If it's contextualized by a body, the "hand" doesn't need to be super detailed to be informative. I'm making use of these cognitive tricks that we rely on to perceive the world to produce my art.



Cameron Meade | Piecewise 4 | 2022

Because of this understanding, often my "arting" philosophy is "good enough is great." I don't want a fussy painting. A bunch of near approximations blend harmoniously.

**You paint imagined subjects with elements from editorial photographs. How do you select the source material, and what role does imagination play in transforming these elements?**

There's a couple blogs I go to that have been posting fashion photography from publications all over the world for at least a decade. I comb through their endless archives and save images that interest me. My selection process is fairly intuitive. My eye may catch a posture, pattern, or lighting, etc. This collection is then the playground for my imagination. I clip, transform, and combine to produce my unique image.

I definitely refer to the mock-ups I create but also allow myself to be imaginative while I paint. It's more of a starting point than a destination.

Cameron Meade | All Art is Collaboration 19 | 2022





**Your artist statement reflects a playful approach to your work, emphasizing spontaneity and the absurd. How do you maintain this sense of playfulness in a world that often demands seriousness?**

I grew up in a traveling circus because my parents were clowns. It was their job to react to the world with levity and humor wherever we went. Circus-life trained me to appreciate spontaneousness and absurdity. Ok, that's a complete lie.

Mainly, it's just authentically who I am; I'm serious about playfulness.

**Your involvement with Starting Right, Now (SRN) and your work with homeless youth seems to deeply inform your art. Can you talk about how these experiences shape the themes and emotional tone of your paintings?**

I have spent the past 16 years working for Starting Right, Now (SRN), a nonprofit organization located in my hometown of Tampa, FL. SRN addresses the roots of poverty for unaccompanied homeless youth — teens unhoused, not living with a parent or guardian and not eligible foster care. I was involved with SRN from an early age because it was founded by my mom. My experiences with this nonprofit definitely shaped the intentions of my art practice (and my life generally).

I don't take for granted that I have always had food to eat, water to drink, and a safe place to sleep. For this simple reason alone (and so many others) my life is abundant. This gratitude helps me cultivate real joy, which shapes the themes and emotional tone of my art.

**How has living and working in Brooklyn influenced your artistic style and the themes you explore? Are there any local influences or experiences that have significantly shaped your recent work?**

I have been a studio assistant for Brooklyn-based artist Derrick Adams since 2017. Assisting him affords me a particular kind of familiarity with his work, witnessing his process and discussing his intentions. His whole attitude towards art-making is so refreshing: simply, we should enjoy it. If it becomes irksome, it's lost the plot. This perspective is best exemplified by how much time Derrick spends happily singing and dancing around his studio. An artist is working even when they are not painting, he professes.

His mentorship and friendship definitely influences my art practice. There are certainly parts of his visual vocabulary that have seeped into my paintings. And of the kinds of images we want to make, we agree — we want to contribute more than we criticize.



## — Interview

# Adam Strange

**Your work is heavily influenced by the Dada and Surrealist movements. How do you see these influences manifesting in your digital artwork today?**

Well, these artists are the pioneers in a long line of movements/artists cutting up, destroying, and assembling images in response to significant times like wars, oppressions, and uprisings. All of these movements were responses to their cultural environment and times. They sought to break down or destroy established systems, whether technological, cultural, or political, or to criticize politicians or philosophies. Other artists, while many held radical political ideologies, turned inward to seek freedom in the unconscious from those same systems. Both are movements of anarchistic action, opening new ways of thinking and seeing. This approach to life and art is immemorial and perpetual, and includes us all. The content of art may reflect the contemporary, but the context may be the same – tearing down oppressive systems and providing space for new ideas and realities to exist. This reference also serves the purpose of context as an entry point to my work for those who need it. However, the word surreal is now in the general lexicon of everyone who needs a word to describe something they were surprised by, but it's consistently applied to moments of actual banality. The word has been stripped of any etymological meaning through generations of misuse. This, in turn, has led people to view the surreal as simply an aesthetic style instead of a revolutionary mode of creative activity of an artist.



Adam Strange | The Weight | 2019

**You mentioned that your art aims to reflect, respond, and critique the world around us. Can you describe a recent piece where this intention is most evident?**

Sure, the work “Sold Down the River” is a good example, but all my work follows this aim to a greater or lesser degree. This work is about the environment and the corruption behind its destruction. Repeatedly hearing the news of the fossil fuel industry poisoning communities around the world, I wonder who or what will be alive to enjoy what remains of this toxic legacy. In many cases, there is a social component to my work; however, I do not like to be too specific about particular issues, but rather reach for the essence of a situation. I'm not interested in the personal lives of artists or their material discoveries. The existential issues facing the human race, I think, outweigh the insights from navel-gazing.

**How has your transition from traditional art forms to digital media influenced your creative process?**

Well, there are many differences I could go on about, but the biggest change is how I create pictures. I have almost completely given up

drawing, save for quick thumbnail sketches to record an idea. Instead, I combine writing ideas down, visualization, and chance to develop my art. In fact, I seek out the “state-of-being” or emotional response to the world as the starting point and enter the process from there. Technology, in part, dictates the form of the work. With digital technology changing so fast, the tools of expression may simulate any other art form to a close degree, but mastering the tools to blur the line between analogue and digital media is what I attempt to achieve. Digital art is portable, reproducible at a variety of scales, on a variety of substrates, and through other technological means to be viewed. What’s interesting is that the actual electronic file is not the image but made of the same material as everything else digital. One could say, the digital artwork doesn’t really exist, but technology allows us to “televue” something unviewable with the naked eye.

**In your career, you’ve balanced between graphic design and fine art. How do these two disciplines intersect in your work?**

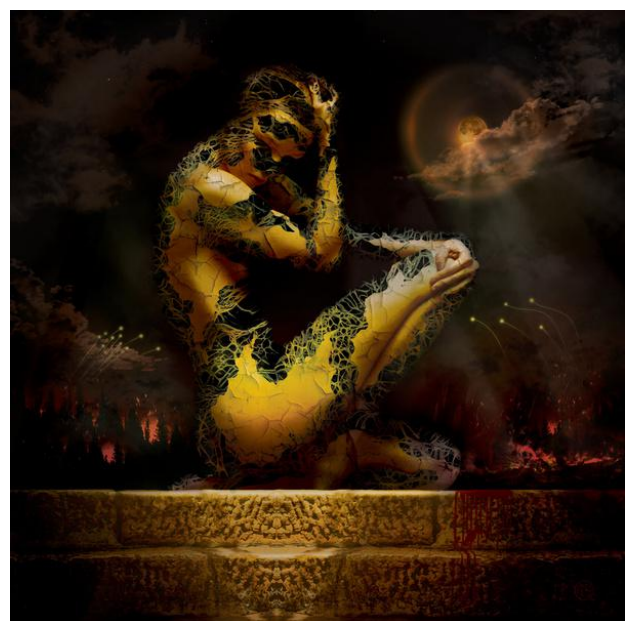
I hope they don’t, but you can’t remove the skills or influence acquired in one place and not find them in another. Fine art and graphic design are like oil and water. I think the main and fundamental difference is the intent required between these two opposing activities. One is for commercial manipulation, the other is for personal liberation. One is a process shared between a group of “owners,” the other is a singular activity channeling your unfiltered expression. While there are crossover skills in technology and picture making, my work is not made as a commercial commodity (unless as a sardonic critique of commercialism, i.e., Death Matters and the Abolition Arts); it’s the intent that counts. However, each of these disciplines is a means of communication, but the content communicated follows different purposes. Thankfully, I have mostly cast off the shackles of “design thinking.”

**The themes of politics and social issues are central to your work. How do you approach such heavy subjects in your art without overwhelming the viewer?**

It’s been a steady descent into my current subject matter of corruption, and it IS my intent to overwhelm the viewer. I consider it a success if the viewer has a strong emotional response, which some people do. However, people also self-censor by simply not taking the time to develop a relationship with the artifact and therefore not having any meaningful reaction to the work. The context in which you view the work also plays a big role in this, whether it’s viewed on a screen or printed, hanging in a gallery. People should be repulsed, sickened, and saddened when engaging with my work, as people should have those same reactions to the real-world events of human activity, but few do. In recognition of the desensitization of the viewer, I feel it is imperative to make art with a social message to respond to the urgency of the situation. This is the work to be done, and my choice of weapon is art.

**Can you explain your method of recontextualizing found photographs and digital assets in your artwork? What role does chance and accident play in your creative process?**

Recontextualizing content, regardless of discipline or medium, is how all cultural evolution happens. We build new monuments on top of the ones we destroy, we observe the universe through new technology, and the systems that govern that universe get rewritten. We play old songs at a different speed and



Adam Strange | Monument Of Corruption | 2023



spawn a whole new musical genre for a generation. When we cut up an image, we do it for different ends, but the process of destroying images, removing the content or context from an image, is the first step to controlling the meaning of images wherever they may exist. Slicing and suturing images is how people can reclaim control over their visual environment and narratives of images in the public sphere. The photographic image has connotations we associate with recorded history, reality, and truth. So, like artists before me, I subvert those collective associations by blurring the lines between truth and illusion. This effect is similar to semantic satiation – we might call it “visual satiation.” It appears photographic on many levels, but it’s not a photograph. It’s imaginative, but it’s not surreal. This process results in the viewer confronting the very mechanism that is the source of their anxiety in determining what they are looking at. If, in the end, the image strips all connotations or associations, and the viewer is left in a space of neither realism nor illusion, meaning or absurdity, then my work might have the possibility of changing perceptions. Stock photographs can represent a repository of global viewpoints, locations, and moments in time, or the mediocrity of the world through censored images, or as a collection of simulated

realities no longer existing, any of which an artist can harvest the aesthetic or emotional content and use it as ammunition for their own work. Like all collage artists, I engage in iconoclasm as a means to destroy the meaning of existing content, then incorporate those disparate fragments into a new context, thereby creating new meanings and ideas. During the creative process, I may plow through hundreds of photos out of the millions available, with or without intent, sometimes allowing the emotional response to direct the selection. Like finding weeds in a farmer’s crop, images are selected for consideration. Relationships between the selected photos can also randomly occur, changing the course of the picture into an unknown direction. All these results can be used in a variety of ways, such as leading to further refinement of the original idea, or allowing the picture to evolve from the new relationships between the harvested photos and my intentional selections.

**Having returned to fine art after a focus on graphic design, what new perspectives or skills have you brought back into your artistic practice?**

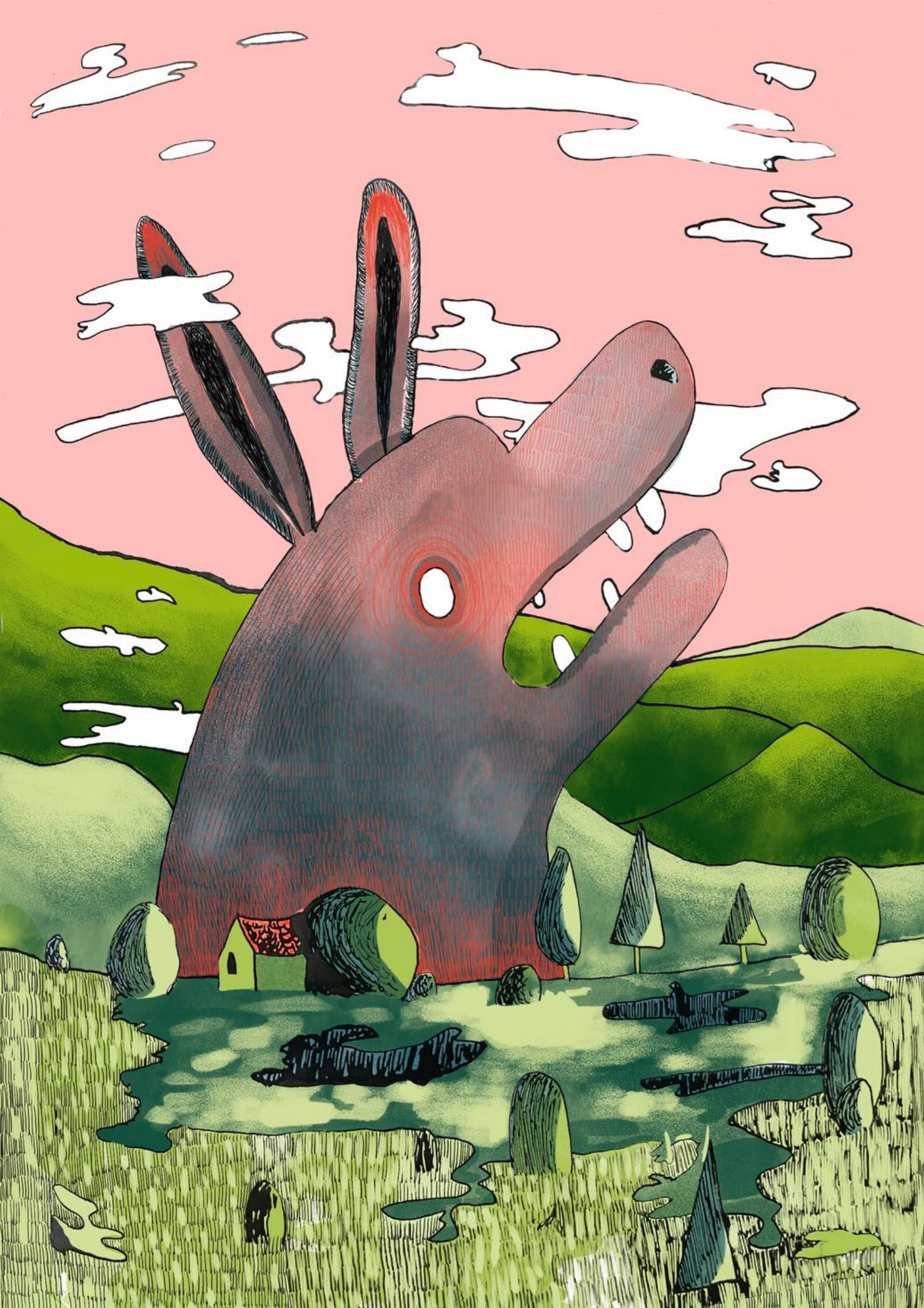
Well, I’m finally able to express my ideas of the world through pictures again. I doubt that I would be doing photomontage if not for my time in graphic design. In fact, photomontage and image manipulation might be the common activity on the internet today, and technology is making it easier all the time. Thirty years of computer use has given me the skills to be able to create my work without the feeling of the tools as a barrier to my expression. The other focal point of design is communication. I’ve concerned myself with how communication happens within the limitations of images and language, and its effects on expression. On the fine art side, I still engage in, incorporate, and utilize all the teachings of the old-master techniques I can – composition, perspective, color, etc. Working digitally allows these methods to be done in a virtually non-destructive way, giving me unprecedented flexibility in the development of the image compared to a traditional painting.





Adam Strange | Madonna of the Sea | 2022





After finishing school **Jo Schulz** studied Visual Communication in Augsburg, Germany. When graduating they started to pursue illustration and design commissions.

### *Project Statement*

The series "inside the wall" is a work cycle created about my experience with depression. Within the drawings I want to illustrate the overwhelming and often times suffocating feelings like guilt, shame and anxiety going along with mental health problems. Often times these struggles are something most affected people are hesitant to talk about. Through my playful style and unique characters I am trying to form a connection to the topic for the viewer.



## — Interview

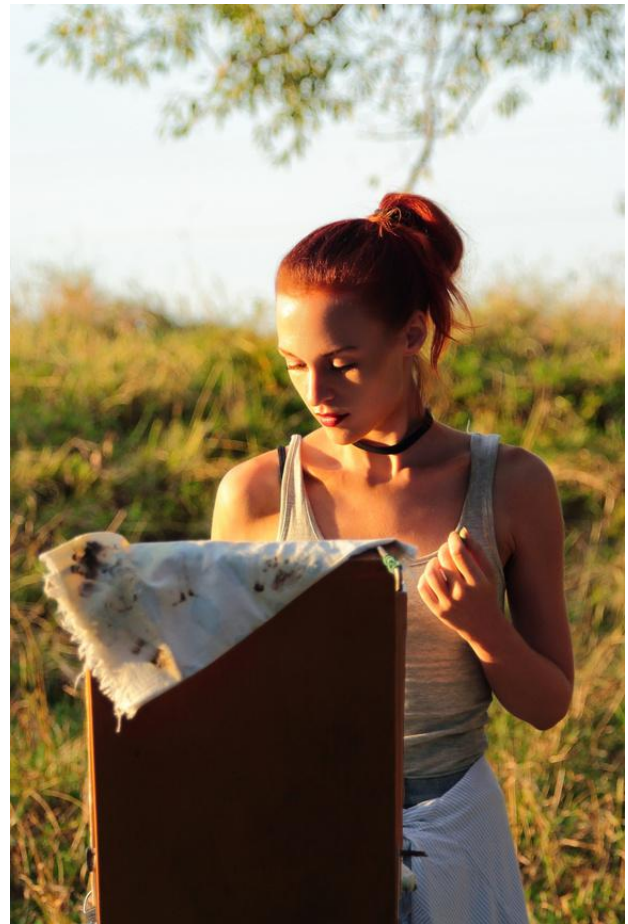
# Lissa Laurus

**Your series "Southern Market" focuses on the diversity of human faces. What inspired you to capture this theme, and how do you choose the faces you draw?**

Humans are beautiful. The human body and face, their diversity inspire me the most. The probability of meeting completely identical people is zero. Even twins are at least a little different from each other. When I painted the series of portraits "Southern Market", I wanted to show this diversity. Gender, age, skin color, eye and hair color, face shape, emotion imprinted on the face, clothes, gestures - so many details by which we can be recognized among hundreds of people in a huge and noisy southern market. Even in a crowd of strangers, we manage to see faces that we like or seem familiar. I wanted to depict several such faces.

**You mentioned that the triptych "Little Demon in Eden" explores the blurring of good and evil. Could you tell us more about the symbolism in this series and how you approach such complex themes?**

There are three works in the series -



"Little Demon in the Garden of Eden", "Frightened Angel in Hell" and "Death". The series represents the mixture of dark and light, bad and good, kind and evil. The human world cannot be monochromatic, it is a mixture of shades. In one person, in one personality, good and evil are mixed. The same situation can look positive for one person, and bring grief to another. We are always trying to divide everything into bad and good, but such a division does not really exist. The world is much more complex.

So, if you look at my "Demon" from afar, she will seem sinister to you, but if you come closer and look into her eyes, you will see that they are pure and innocent. Skulls, which many perceive as something related to death, are in fact

symbols of connection with life, symbols of the human path to salvation. The Garden of Eden in the background seems tangled, like a jungle. Perhaps this little girl is simply lost here?

If you look at “Frightened Angel in Paradise”, then in general her image looks gentle and light, but there is still something demonic in her eyes, especially if you look at her point-blank. Hell in the background looks orderly and calm, it is not the creepy place described in the Scriptures.

And between them, Death is that part of existence that orders everything, equalizes. Death does not divide anything into evil and good, it itself contains everything from fear to a sense of peace and liberation.

I like to work with complex themes and

concepts, they fascinate me and I easily immerse myself in them. For me as an artist, the main goal is not just to copy reality, a camera does this very well. My goal is to convey an idea, a state, a mood with the help of images, colors, textures. I think I will work on this until the end of my life.

**How did your artistic process evolve as you worked with mentors? Could you share any tips that significantly influenced your work?**

Working with more experienced mentors accelerated my development. Firstly, I worked through the mistakes I had made before. Secondly, I began to work with oils and watercolors with more confidence. Thirdly, I felt that I could turn to them for advice if I suddenly felt a little lost in new techniques or genres of painting. This is very valuable.



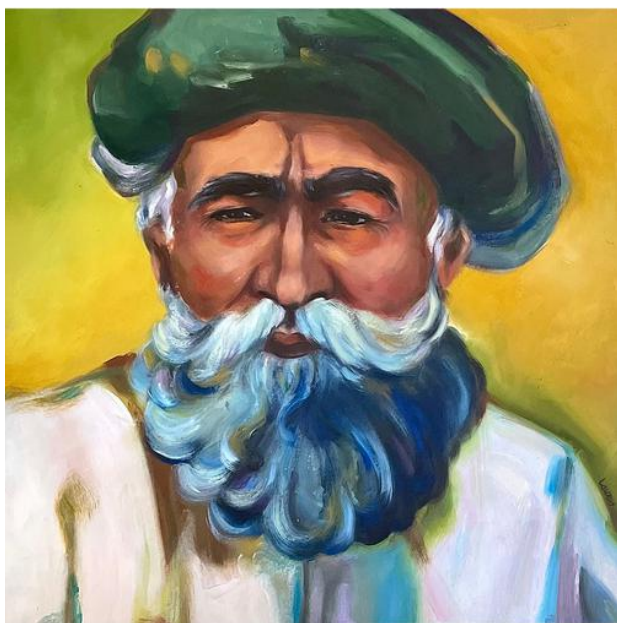
Lissa Laurus | Little angel in the Eden | 2023

**You have recently started participating in exhibitions and competitions. How has this experience affected your confidence and artistic growth?**

Exhibiting your work is always a bit nerve-wracking, because you are sharing something very personal with a lot of other people. At that moment, your paintings are no longer yours, they are now for everyone. I would like to exhibit more. So far, I don't feel that exhibitions have had an impact on my development as an artist. I think it's a natural part of the journey when painting is not just a hobby for a person.

**Looking ahead, how do you envision your artistic evolution in terms of subject matter and technique?**

Of course, I want to continue working with different materials and continue painting people. I have a huge number



Lissa Laurus  
Southern market, old man  
2024

of ideas and sketches that are constantly growing. It will take me several decades to turn them into separate canvases or series. Therefore, all that remains is to work and improve myself from year to year. But what I know for sure is that I will continue to paint narrative conceptual and symbolic canvases.

**How has your cultural background as a Russian artist influenced your artistic expression?**

It is difficult for me to judge. Probably, first of all, it is a love of symbolism, a certain minor key in creativity, which can be observed in many Russian artists. I think this is part of Russian culture and perception of the world, it can also be traced in literature and music. I do not know a single Russian who would be far from symbolism in its various manifestations.

**How do you stay inspired and continue to grow as an artist?**

I don't believe in inspiration. I believe in an idea, a thirst for creation and hard work. If a person is passionate about what he does, then bursts of inspiration are only a small part of his path. As long as I live this life, I can develop, learn and create, and I feel enough strength and motivation to do this. I am interested in finding out what else I can create in the future and how far I can go. This is what keeps me moving forward.



Lissa Laurus | Southern market, young woman | 2024



Lissa Laurus | Southern market, older woman | 2024

## — Interview

# James Johnson-Perkins

### **What inspired you to develop your GIGATAGE project, and how did you choose the specific locations featured in these works?**

Once upon a time, in the vast and twinkling world of the internet, there became a magical project called GIGATAGE.

It's simple: I wanted to plunge headfirst into the chaotic miasma of human history and extract something meaningful from it—like a mad scientist operating on the veins of time itself. The locations? They were chosen not just for their picturesque views but for their deep, existential significance. These are places where the ghosts of past follies still murmur and where the absurdity of human endeavor screams from the cracks in the pavement.

These sites in VENICE, KATHMANDU, NEW YORK, MOSCOW, BRIGHTON, AGNKOR and ISTANBUL are chosen for their rawness, their power to UNSETTLE and PROVOKE, ENGAGE and ENCHANT.

The GIGATAGE project emerges from a chaotic symphony of digital exploration, driven by an obsession to capture the elusive, echoes of forgotten realms. Imagine navigating the boundless expanse of the internet like a lost soul in a cosmic jazz improvisation, hunting for those eerie, liminal spaces where history and the present converge in a disorienting crescendo.

### **How do you approach the use of Gigapan technology and montage in your art, and what challenges have you encountered while working with these tools?**

The Gigapan is a monstrous contraption, a digital Frankenstein's monster that stitches together a patchwork of insanity. Montage? That's where I play mad scientist, layering fragmented visions into a single, mind-warping spectacle. It's like a jigsaw puzzle

with missing pieces, and the challenge is keeping the whole thing from spiraling into an irredeemable mess. GIGATAGES are my secret weapon, my post-digital magic carpet ride through the labyrinth of pixels. They allow me to assemble fragmented visions into sprawling, high-resolution nightmares and dreams. To overcome challenges, I navigate the digital haze, aligning countless images into a coherent whole, stitching together a fragmented imagined landscape.

### **Your works often reference historical figures, artists, and thinkers. How do you select which figures to include, and what role do they play in your narratives?**

In selecting historical and modern figures for my works, I often choose individuals whose lives or ideas resonate with the themes I'm exploring. These figures act as tiny touchstones within my art, adding layers of meaning and context.

The artists and thinkers are chosen not with cold calculation but with a poet's fervent heart. They are spirits who have walked the earth with fierce purpose, their voices resonant with the eternal questions of existence. The figures in my work are like spectral intruders from another dimension, their voices echoing through the static. I choose them based on the strange resonance they have with my ideas, their own stories bend and twist through the layers of narrative.

### **Can you share more about the themes of ethics, religion, the uncanny, refuge, and war that are present in your GIGATAGE works?**

Themes of ethics, religion, the uncanny, refuge, and war are explored through a kaleidoscopic lens, echoing the thematic depth of a metaphysical poem such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and they are

James Johnson-Perkins | *The Great Battle*, After Canaletto, Venice, Italy, 7m x 2m, 2014-23







James Johnson-Perkins | The Assembly of the Gods, After Raphael, Kathmandu, Nepal, 10m x 2m, 2012-23

rendered in ultra-high-resolution to provoke profound reflection on the chaotic and unsettling aspects of human existence.

These themes are the dark veins running through the fragile skin of existence. Ethics are the brittle, cracked facades of moral absolutes; religion, a cold, distant sound of solace that can both comfort and torment. The uncanny is the unsettling tremor that shakes the core of the self, refuge a frail sanctuary that crumbles under the weight of reality, and war, a relentless, animalistic storm that tears through the fabric of our being. Each theme reflects my inner turmoil—the ceaseless battle between my mind's longing for meaning and a void that threatens to engulf it.

**How do the historical and modern figures in your works contribute to your exploration of history, identity, and place?**

Historical and modern figures in my pieces serve as metaphors for broader concepts of history, identity, and place. A historical figure might symbolize certain ideological struggles, while a contemporary figure reflects current issues. This interplay between different eras and viewpoints helps me construct a richer, more layered understanding of the themes I'm addressing.

**How has your experience living and working in different countries influenced your creative process and the subjects of your art?**

My global odyssey has been a whirlwind of cultural disarray, like a series of psychedelic trips or memories through similar fractured landscapes. I've tasted some of the world's wild, bitter, sweet, and salty flavors. Each place, each culture, brings a new rhythm, a new beat that fuels creativity. Exposed to new cultural contexts, historical insights, and societal issues, I've enriched my work with these diverse perspectives and my global experience has helped me approach themes from multiple angles, adding depth and complexity, whilst the stories of these places also seep into my art, contributing to the kaleidoscope of narrative textures.

**What message or feeling do you hope viewers take away from your ultra-large-scale digital images?**

From these massive digital images, I hope viewers don't just see but feel. I want them to be jolted awake by the scale, drawn into the tempest of details and grand narratives. I want them to get swept up in the whirlwind.

It's about plunging them into a world where the familiar becomes alien—a sensory overload. I want them to feel as though they're falling through a fractured, hallucinatory dimension where history, identity, and the very fabric of existence unravel in a chaotic mess. They are immersive experiences, where there is a sense of having ventured into a vast, surreal wilderness, lost in a sprawling, disoriented dreamscape where history and identity blur into one grotesque, beautiful vision.

James Johnson-Perkins | Mother (In law) land, After Schopenhauer, Moscow, Russia, 4.8m x 1m, 2014-24



James Johnson-Perkins | Times Square Nude, After Bosch, New York, USA, 4.5m x 1.5m, 2012-24



## — Interview

# Boris Rodnyy

**Your work often evokes a sense of both symmetry and mysticism. Could you share your process for creating such intricate compositions?**

For me, symmetry is the interplay of chaos and cosmos (where cosmos equals chaos; cosmos is ordered chaos), the empty and the full, yin and yang, the inside and the outside. Nothing in the world is perfectly symmetrical or identical: even the two halves of a person's face are not the same, and even twins are different. This is the mystique of the world around us – it is never predictable, and it is fluid. What you once perceived as white may later appear black, and vice versa. Symmetry represents a balance of opposites in the macrocosm we inhabit. It is crucial to feel the boundary while recognizing the universality of the parts that organize this balance. This feeling embodies the Daoist attainment of the Middle Way and the unity of being with all existence that I strive for through my art.

The process of creating compositions begins with intuitive, almost automatic drawing, where I allow lines and shapes to emerge spontaneously, following the energy that guides me. My artwork often has a conditional axis of symmetry, but I also leave room for spontaneous deviations, which I call fluctuations, reflecting the fluidity of the universe. As the painting progresses, individual elements merge into cohesive structures, forming intricate compositions.



Mysticism manifests itself through hidden meanings embedded in the patterns and symbols I convey, sometimes unconsciously, accessing them on a sacred level. You could say that they use me rather than the other way around. Thus, these compositions become a form of meditation in visual form, where each line and shape finds its place within the overall picture.

**How has your exploration of Eastern philosophies like Daoism influenced your artistic practice and the symbolism in your works?**

I have been deeply influenced by Eastern philosophies, especially Daoism. I resonate with the Daoist theory of interdependence and the attainment of harmony and balance through meditation, as well as the ability to work with energy, exemplified by the "intention and energy" method I learned in Tai Chi Chuan. These ideas and principles form the foundation of my artistic practice, where I focus not on managing the creative process, but on allowing images to emerge through my creative work. The symbolism in my work is also imbued with concepts from Eastern philosophy. For example,



Boris Rodnyy | Masculinity | 2024

the circle as a symbol of eternity and unity, lines that convey energy flows, and symbols that represent the connection between the earthly and the celestial, as well as the masculine and the feminine – all of these elements are reflected in my creations. Daoism has taught me to work with consciousness and to flow with the currents of life, integrating the physical and the spiritual.

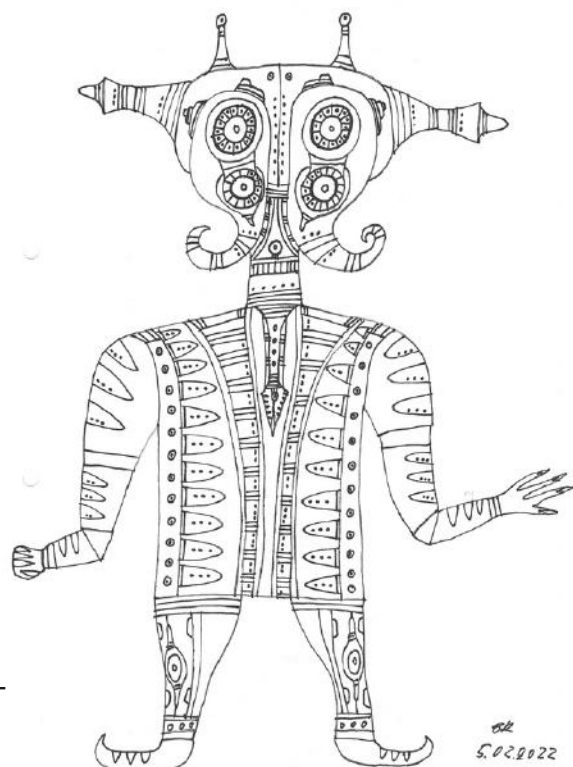
**You mentioned the importance of "intention and energy" in Tai Chi Chuan. How do these concepts translate into your visual art?**

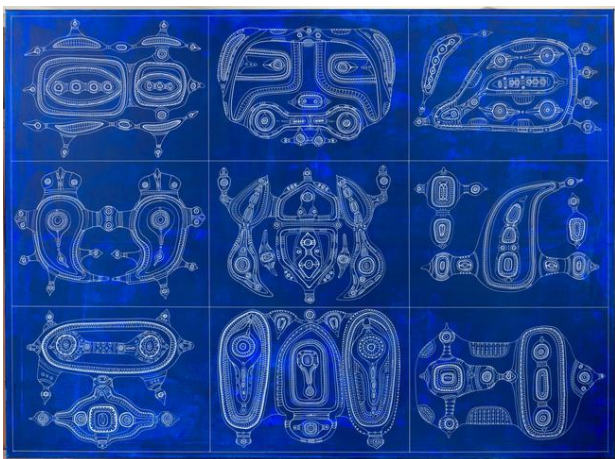
Intention and energy play a crucial role in Tai Chi Chuan, and I integrate these practices into the creative process and my artwork. As I create, I consciously infuse each line and shape with intention, allowing energy to flow freely through my body and hand. This process is similar to a meditative state in which each stroke becomes an expression of the energy that guides my creativity. The eighth principle of Tai Chi Chuan states that there are three types of energy: our body as a carrier of realized energy – kinetic – and free potential energy that we can use, with thought also being a form of energy. Consciousness and body can only unite by "dissolving" into a unified field of qi – wholeness. Thus, my work creates a field for attaining wholeness and even health, as the realization of the spiritual within the physical represents health. Both I and my viewers achieve wholeness through my work. Art serves as a form of visual meditation through which my intention and energy create a deep emotional response in the viewer. My artwork is filled with a vital and cosmic force that often resonates with those who view it, creating a sense of connection to something greater than the physical world.

**Your drawings appear almost like maps or blueprints. What inspired this approach to design, and what deeper meanings do these "cosmogonic" structures hold?**

My drawings truly resemble maps or blueprints due to my engineering background, which has taught me to communicate complex concepts through simple lines. This approach allows me to create "blueprints" of an archetypal universe that reflect the sacred codes of humanity, where each element has its own meaning and symbolic significance. In my works, I combine body and soul, substance and information, memory and genetics, emphasizing their structural similarities.

The cosmogonic structures in my artworks are an attempt to reflect an underlying order and harmony that governs the universe. We do not definitively know the origins of the Nazca Lines or the pictograms and symbols of the Incan, Mayan, Aleut, and Aztec deities, as well as the Mesoamerican codices. I believe that art can serve as a visual map that guides us to a realm beyond our ordinary perception. My compositions act as codes that provide pathways to a deeper understanding of the connection between the earthly and the cosmic. Each line and shape in these "maps" serves as a link between the past, present, and future; they constitute a "geographical map" of a celestial, universally human "landscape," traveling where the viewer can discover himself, his "self," his own harmony, and his own path.





Boris Rodnyy | Message | 2024

**The themes in your work seem to merge Eastern and Western aesthetics. What challenges do you face when integrating such different philosophies and visual languages?**

I have a deep appreciation for all cultures, but I'm particularly drawn to Eastern aesthetics and philosophy over Western and European. The main challenge is to achieve a harmonious balance between these different philosophies and aesthetics while preserving their unique qualities. Eastern philosophy emphasizes

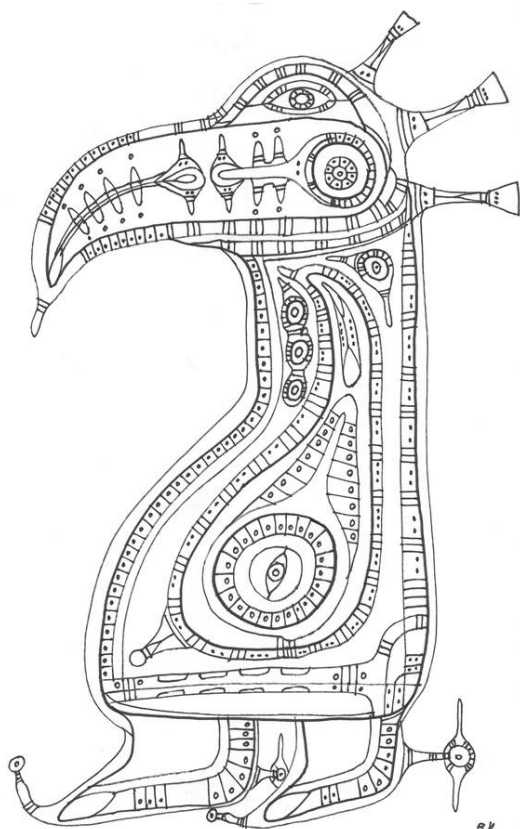
harmony, cyclicity, and a nature-centered approach, while the Western tradition emphasizes individualism, logic, and progress. However, these differences are becoming increasingly blurred as European culture now often turns to Eastern philosophical systems and aesthetics, especially in the context of the desacralization of humanity in the Western world, amidst political and military conflicts, creating significant tensions for individuals and society. Eastern philosophical schools, expressed through aesthetics and culture, help to overcome existential crises and the erosion of spiritual values, demonstrating the unity of humanity with the world and the universe. I believe that the concepts of "Western" and "Eastern" aesthetics relate to styles because when we look at the ancient archetypal symbols of humanity, we find that many ancient signs visually coincide. This is a universal language of humanity, and we are all siblings.

In creating my artwork, I strive to integrate these two cultures in a way that not only complements each other but also creates new forms of expression. This requires a deep understanding and sensitivity to both traditions. For example, I might use Eastern symbols and concepts of harmony in composition while incorporating Western elements such as logical structure or a focus on individuality.

Finding this balance is a process that requires a certain state of mind and constant reflection. My goal is to create works that are understandable and meaningful to people with different cultural and philosophical perspectives, offering them new insights through the fusion of these two worlds.

**How do you perceive the role of mythology and spiritual practices in contemporary art, and how do they shape your own work?**

Mythology and spiritual practices play an important role in contemporary art, seeking existential solutions for humanity in a world where technology does not nourish the spirit. Myths are central to my work. I see them not only as a source of inspiration, but also as a means of transmitting profound knowledge and wisdom. Myths are archetypal stories that reflect the fundamental laws and principles of the



Boris Rodnyy | #13 | 2022

universe, while spiritual practices help me connect with this knowledge on a deeper level. In my art, I strive to combine mythology and spirituality, creating unique symbols and images that resonate with the language of the collective unconscious. These elements allow me to convey not only visual impressions but also deeper meanings related to the search for inner truth and understanding of the world.

**Being self-taught and drawing from diverse cultural sources, how do you continuously evolve your unique style while staying true to your vision?**

I have sought self-expression through the exploration of different cultures, symbolic systems, and philosophies. This process has allowed my style to evolve naturally as I discover new symbols, techniques, and materials. Inspiration from Eastern philosophy and ancient

symbols allows me to create works that bridge tradition and modernity while remaining authentic and unique.

My inner vision and philosophy serve as the primary guiding principles in my creative process. Even as I experiment with new materials or techniques, I strive to maintain the core of my art – the principles and ideas that define my distinctive style.

By continually learning and evolving, I discover new ways to express my ideas, which allows me to maintain the uniqueness and depth of my artworks. As the history and culture of humanity is inexhaustible, I have a long journey ahead of me. Ancient codes and spirituality are largely terra incognita for the modern world. By looking back, I am moving forward. I believe that art must evolve with the artist, yet it is crucial to remain true to myself and my own unique artistic journey and path in a broader sense.

Boris Rodnyy | Hierarchy | 2024



## — Interview

# Judith Trench

**- What inspired you to dedicate yourself to both illustration and journalism?**

For as long as I can remember, I have been obsessed with the world of books, films and music. Everything else has somehow been left in the background, so I knew that my future (working or not working) was there: the creation of images or texts.

My initial idea was to dedicate in to writing in-depth articles and chronicles, but later I realized that I felt more comfortable expressing myself with drawings and not with words. The echo of writing anything makes me feel ashamed, as if I were very exposed. With illustration it is the other way around, it allows me to uninhibit myself. I do not rule out dedicating myself to cultural



journalism and adding my sketches to the written pieces. It would be an interesting differentiating point.

**How does your training in children's and young adult narrative illustration influence your current projects?**

I started recently so I don't have a very extensive background. What I am clear about is the type of book I want to make. I just finished my first project for children (early readers). The project is called "The Six Pastry Chefs" and it is a very short and funny story about making a cake for a person who is not expecting it. Now I have to find the publisher that fits with this type of story. And with a bit of luck more books will come!

**Can you explain your creative process when working on an illustration?**

For me the most important thing when drawing is to be in a state of calm. I don't like to have any expectations because that slows me down and makes me doubt. Many times the dirtiest and most absurd sketches are the ones that I



finally polish and become the final art. I try to use few photographic references because I like my drawings to be far from reality. Once I have a clear idea of the assignment or personal project, the sketching process begins. Then, after many discards and collages, I use that same line in two ways: either I respect the line and redraw it with the same pencil and with more force, or I outline it digitally. Finally, I choose the color palette, which is usually a fairly intuitive process for me, and I move on to coloring the necessary elements. I try to use few colors in the same image, since this way the characters remain the total protagonists of the image.

**What are some of the challenges you face in the illustration industry, especially in the children's and young adult book niche?**

I think that the important thing is to have your own voice, but that is not enough. You have to find someone who "finds" you, and that process can take a long time. Apart from drawing every day, it is important to be in contact with the industry, whether through teachers, talks, colleagues, etc.

**What do you think are the key**



**elements of a successful children's book illustration?**

The key element would be to illustrate honestly. Look for alternative paths and really make the book you want to make, without asking permission or forgiveness.

**Who are some illustrators or artists who have influenced your style?**

Bill Plympton in terms of the deformation of anatomies. Bastien Vives for his delicacy, although my drawings are not characterized by that adjective. The Simpsons for their color treatment. Lastly Lisa Hanawalt for her humor and quirkiness.

**What advice would you give to aspiring illustrators who want to work in the field of children's and young adult literature?**

To stay firm in their vision. I repeat this to myself every day. Also to be inspired by external references but to know when to stop. With the avalanche of images we have available it is easy to get confused and think that everything is done.

# Charlotte Hass

**Your work has a distinct cinematic quality. Can you describe how your background in film production influences your photography?**

My experiences in production have deeply inspired my desire for storytelling. Similar to frames in film and tv, I like when an image strikes the viewer in a way that makes them have some sort of reaction.

**Natural light plays a significant role in your photographs. What draws you to**



**this lighting choice, and how does it affect the mood of your images?**

Natural light is time sensitive and has a mood of it's own. I find the challenge there to be inviting because it is constantly changing and moving in the space you are shooting.

**You shoot exclusively on Kodak 35mm film. What are the advantages and challenges of using this medium in your work?**

Film is temperamental and I enjoy that. It provides an element of inventiveness and unknown up until the point of when the images are developed. Some of my favorite pieces have transpired out of happy accidents with film. One time I shot a roll of expired film and the photos came out the perfect amount of ghostly.

**Can you share any specific experiences or projects that have significantly shaped your artistic vision?**

Shooting stills on set continues to bring me joy because my artistic vision is ever changing. I think all artists seek new sources of expressiveness and for me that is through collaboration with other creatives.



**What has been the most challenging shoot you've done, and how did you overcome the obstacles?**

I did a shoot that was underwater! The heavy (and expensive) camera equipment made it even trickier but I used a large clear plastic tub to help protect the precious cargo. The end result made it worth the challenge!

**What advice would you give to aspiring photographers who want to incorporate cinematic elements into their work?**

Spend time on set! Connect with other types of artists and welcome collaboration.



## — Interview

# Caroline Scorzelli



**Your work in the 'Geometrical Landscape: Sun' series features constructed landscapes and a vibrant use of color. Can you share the inspiration behind this series and how you developed your unique approach to geometric forms?**

The inspiration behind the series is the marriage of my training as a landscape painter and as a practicing architect (RA - MA). I build landscapes on canvas. The architect's pallet is architectural spaces,

geometric forms and construction materials and the painter's pallet is color and texture. The paintings are blueprints for a landscape. Whereas the standard building design is based on function, a person enters the building for a purpose: work, sleep, entertainment, etc., a person enters a landscape for mindful meditation.

**As someone with both an architectural and artistic background, how do these two disciplines influence each other in your work? Do you approach your art from an architect's perspective or vice versa?**

I approach my work from a state of grounding calm. I use color and texture from my artistic background to design the painting scape from the geometry of architectural building design.

**Color seems to play a significant role in your 'Sun' series. How do you choose your color palettes, and what emotional or conceptual significance do the colors hold for you?**

Painting is an exercise in mindfulness. It is the conjunction of painting, a



Caroline Scorzelli | Geometric Landscapes: Sun-01

subconscious state of mind, and architecture, a conscious state of mind.

**Can you tell us about your process when working on a new project? Do you start with sketches, digital designs, or is it more intuitive?**

My compositions are developed from archived paintings. I build from the blueprint of the archived painting and continue this process until the composition's layers of colors and textures create a landscape full of textured layers and overlaid color.

**What challenges have you faced in merging your roles as an architect and an artist, and how do you overcome them?**

As an Architect, I'm highly technical. The architectural geometric spaces are from a series of data points: the stakeholders,



Caroline Scorzelli | Geometric Landscapes: Sun-04

operation, function, constructability, funding and design standards/regulations. As an Artist, the geometric spaces do not technically include these data points, so are free from conscious constraint – this is how I release my emotions as an artist onto the canvas without a care.

**Many artists find inspiration in their surroundings. How do your travels or environments influence the landscapes you create?**

Boston, MA influences the landscape. I use my visual memories of my neighborhood in Boston to create landscapes.

**What message or feeling do you hope to convey to viewers through your 'Geometrical Landscape: Sun' series?**

A feeling of calm.



Caroline Scorzelli | Geometric Landscapes: Sun-03

## — Interview

# Simon Hafele Psy-Pix

**Can you share how your travels to India, Cambodia, Nepal, Thailand, and Laos have shaped your artistic vision and style?**

The motivation behind my extensive travels to countries like India, Cambodia, and Thailand was deeply rooted in a desire for a spiritual quest. Exploring mysticism, spirituality, and the search for self-identity became the thematic core of my artistic narrative. The journey to India, in particular, marked a transformative experience, providing a template for my paintings and expanding the horizons of my creative expression. Beyond the physical and cultural landscapes encountered during these travels, the freedom inherent in the act of traveling itself provided my mind with an expansive canvas for creativity. This freedom, a departure from the structured routine of everyday life, continues to be a wellspring of inspiration.

**What is your creative process like when starting a new piece? Do you begin with a clear vision, or does the piece evolve organically?**



Simon Hafele Psy-Pix | A jar of fools

It all begins with the vision. The creation of an image starts in the mind; in a way, they're like snapshots taken from a constantly flowing river. To truly see this river, one must learn to perceive with all three eyes. To me, this river represents the purest, most vibrant form of creativity that man can experience—an endless source of possibilities. I feel incredibly grateful to be a part of this flow. While the core concept of the vision is formed in my mind, I always leave room for change and evolution throughout the creative process. I also enjoy incorporating elements from nature, such as sacred geometry, the Fibonacci sequence, and sometimes animals. Inspiration often strikes during my long hikes in the mountains, which are a significant influence in my life. I feel deeply connected to them, and they serve as a continual source of creativity and reflection for my work.

**Your use of bright and often fluorescent colors is striking. Can you talk about the role of color in your work and how you choose your palette?**

One of the most challenging aspects at the beginning of creating a painting is selecting the color palette. By the time I settle on the final color scheme, I've often revisited and reimagined the piece many times. This process is deeply intuitive, guided by my inner drive to achieve a harmonious interplay of colors. My aim is always to make the color dynamics feel organic and balanced, allowing the hues to complement each other effortlessly. I'm particularly drawn to earthy tones, though I also enjoy incorporating striking contrasts. Ultimately, it's about achieving the sense of harmony that the chosen palette should evoke. When it comes to my fluorescent color palette, earthy tones are much less prominent. I tend to mix nearly every color to tone it down and create a softer effect, as pure fluorescent shades can be quite overwhelming to the eye. I prefer a more balanced and harmonious feel, even with vibrant colors. The luminous quality of fluorescent tones brings its own unique energy and aura to the viewer, adding a special dimension to the overall experience.

**Can you tell us more about the "Vision Scientist" project and the experience of creating huge ceiling designs for festivals?**

My involvement in decorating music

festivals, particularly within the Psytrance scene, has been a significant chapter in my life. The relationship between art and music in my world is deeply symbiotic. The harmonious nature of music enhances the beauty of my artistic vision. My affinity for Psytrance has not only enriched my artistic journey but has also shaped the colorful tapestry of my life. While the industry has undergone significant changes with the advent of digital technologies, I still find joy in occasional event decoration, especially for friends in the industry. Having celebrated numerous festivals worldwide over my 18-year career, I've forged enduring friendships with event organizers, with whom I continue to collaborate. However, I also recognize the evolving landscape and acknowledge my own desire to take a more relaxed approach in my creative endeavors.

**What has been your most memorable collaboration or project so far, and why?**



Simon Hafele Psy-Pix | Reflection of a moment

I don't really have a preference when it comes to collaboration because I believe every project offers its own unique potential. I always aim to structure my work in a way that brings out the best in every situation. My focus is on partnering with professionals who are truly dedicated to their craft. Whether it's with the organizers of the Burning Mountain Festival in Switzerland, the Psychedelic Experience Festival in northern Germany, or the Museum of the Americas – which plays an active role in the global art scene with exhibitions in the U.S. and Dubai. I'm also proud to be a certified artist of the Museum of the Americas, which has been a significant milestone in my career. For me, a collaboration is truly successful when each part complements the other, creating something extraordinary in the process. I believe that the right synergy can turn a project into something remarkable.

**How do you hope viewers will engage with your paintings? What emotions or thoughts do you wish to evoke in them?**

In my eyes, the essence of art lies in the viewer's engagement, placing them at the very heart of the artistic journey. I deliberately leave my work open to interpretation, creating a space where viewers can craft their own stories amidst the strokes and colors. Love, the thread that weaves through my art, acts as a universal dialect, inviting a myriad of interpretations. Each piece is more than just a visual feast; it's a gateway to an emotional voyage, where the vibrancy

and harmony of love paint the soul of my artistic realm. My aim is for viewers to not only revel in the visual splendor but to also plunge into the emotional depths it offers. This isn't just passive viewing; it's an open call for a deeply personal, participatory experience with art.

**Have you received any particularly impactful feedback from viewers of your work that has stayed with you?**

From the very beginning, I've been fortunate to receive highly positive feedback for my work. This early encouragement was crucial, as it helped build the self-confidence needed to pursue art independently. In truth, I haven't encountered much criticism, and the response to my work has consistently been positive. This support has made it easier for me to maintain belief in what I do. As every artist knows, the journey can be challenging, especially in the early stages, when you often feel like giving up. During those tough times, positive feedback becomes invaluable—it was precisely that encouragement that kept me going through difficult moments, ultimately leading me to where I am today.



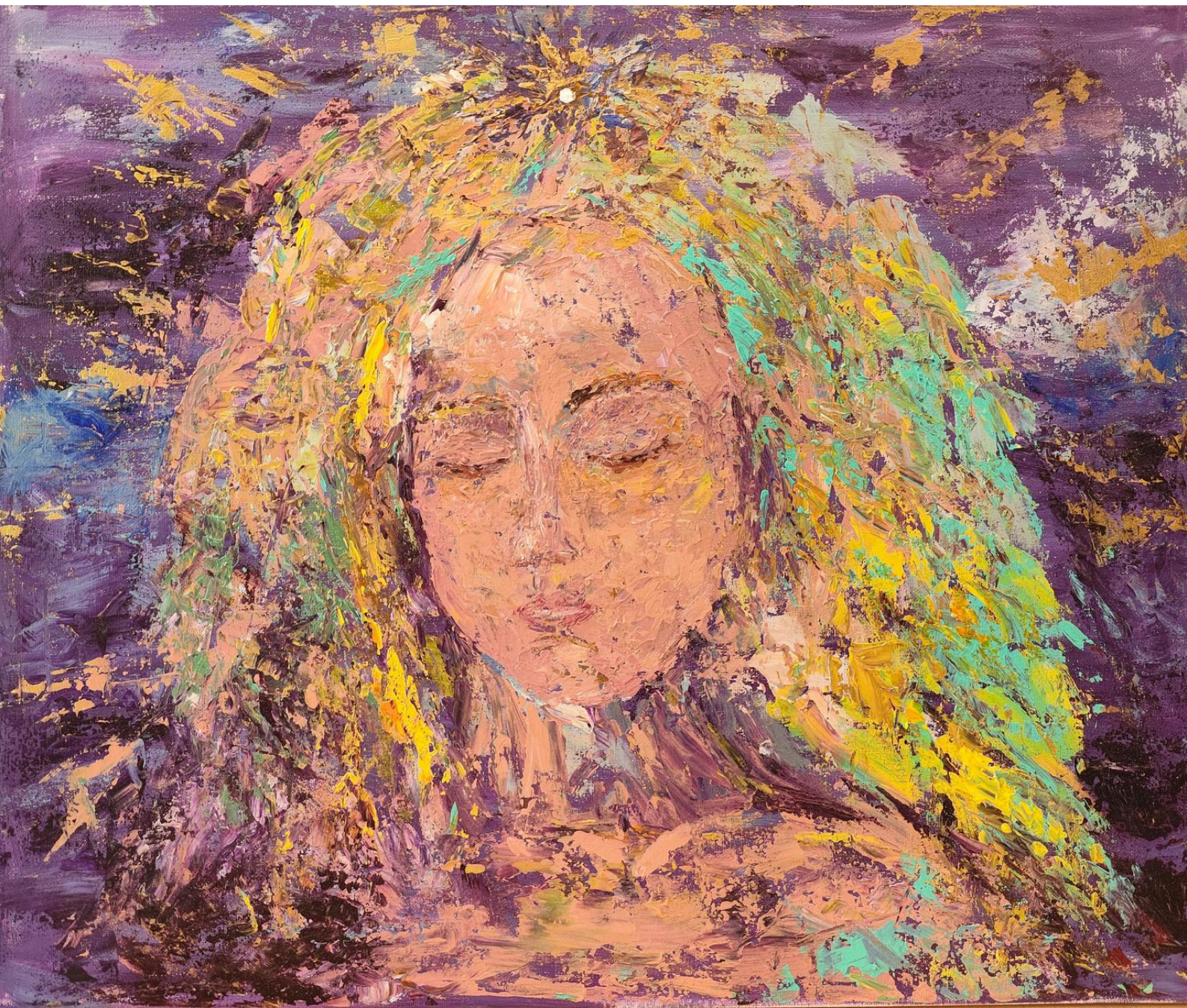
Simon Hafele Psy-Pix | The first supper



I am an artist and a soul-oriented body therapist, psychologist, and energy practitioner. I create esoteric and spiritual paintings—quantum canvases that heal specific aspects of our being. For example, balancing the energy centers of the human body.

— Elena Karavaeva

Elena Karavaeva | The One Who Knows Acrylic







## — Interview

# Jihan Thomas



**You work with various mediums, including painting, textiles, and ceramics. What draws you to experiment with such a wide range of materials?**

As a young girl who loved art I was always interested in varied materials and mediums. I am a bit of an art monster, and I have always been attracted to everything about art. I decided at an early age to not confine myself in working in one medium. I know my lane and what I am good at; however, I am always interested in sharpening my cipher of creativity and never limiting my expressions.

I am also interested in how the materials can support my ideas and inspirations. When I create, I think of the medium that will best communicate that inspiration so in that way the medium is also crucial to my visual voice. In many ways I look at my art supplies as personalities that have their own language.

**Your art often explores themes of Black womanhood, motherhood, and sisterhood. Can you tell us about how these themes are reflected in your latest works?**

In my most recent works I have been delving

into some more truthful interpretations of my experiences with my intersectionality of being a mother, a Black women artist and how I show up for my community of Black and Brown women artists. These themes compound on each other, and I have been trying to decipher it visually so that I can sleep better at night.

There are so many things that I am happy about and excited about when it comes to the experience of Black women, but it also comes with things I am enraged about, and I want to express that truth in my artwork. I need my artwork to heal me first. My artwork assists in supporting my survival first. Not my viewer. My art is a place where I do not lie to myself.

These themes are not monolithic, and every lived Black life is different. I have something to add to the Black women aesthetics and trajectory within art history.

**Your artwork blends Black surrealism, abstraction, and symbolism. What role does surrealism play in conveying messages about Black experiences in your pieces?**

I have always loved symbolism and using images to support critical thinking. In my artwork k you may have to work a little hard. Every detail matters. From the texture, color or composition. I strive not to be too literal in my work and I want the viewer to bring their own experiences to my work for their own interpretation. Abstraction and surrealism allow me to float from various realms and dimensions.



Over the years I have been developing my own visual language and vernacular and I feel like now I am really gaining that in my artwork. In addition, I think daydreaming and aspects of Black imagination have been surveillance, destroyed, and manipulated. My more recent abstractions came about out of pure rage from an experience of disrespect, and I love them sooo much and I am proud of myself for making them and showing them publicly.

**How does your work as a museum and community arts educator influence your creative process and approach to art?**

As both an artist and arts educator I realize not everyone can do both. I am interested in reconnecting how we access and experience not only art and art making but rather creativity.

Research plays a significant role in my

creative process. My community and museum art practice are grounded in the fact that everyone lives a creative life in some way, and it is not about the big “ART.” It is more about how we can use art to interpret our lives, feelings, and aspirations. The process of imagination is a powerful one and I would like to share that excitement with others.

In addition, there are still A LOT of structural barriers to understanding art, how we think art is made and its relationship to who gets to live the “artist life” with ease. I want to be able to model to youth and my peers that museums are not the authority on the arts, but someone who lives life every day is.

**Ecology and disability are also themes you explore. How do you approach integrating these concepts into your visual language?**

I have always been interested in the Earth. She is a superstar, and I imagine her a Black essence. In my artwork I discuss the importance of environmental justice, ecofeminism and how it pertains to communities of color. I often use aspects of the earth as a synonym for topics within Black womanhood, the Black body, femininity, and labor.

My intersections of chronic pain and art are



at the forefront of my experiences. They can never separate. In many ways it is very difficult for me to do my art because of being stuck in cycles of anguish.

I am always saying my sketchbook saves my life because when I am in the most pain, I can keep a small sketchbook and try to pour my pain into the pages. It has only been in the last few years that I have been more openly visual about my chronic pain and how it relates to my art process.

**As an artist, how do you see the intersection of art and activism in your work? What changes or conversations do you hope to spark through your art?**

Art has always been a part of the revolution. Artists and creatives of all kinds have been a part of amplifying historical events that have changed history. Everyone has a part to play and so do artists.

In my activism practice I do my best to offer and serve with the skill sets I have to support my city and community to bring a visual component to the matter at hand. This can come in the form of murals,

posters, or community workshops. I have found that the arts and art making can be a restorative and a responsive way to cope with feelings when things are exciting and optimistic or scary and dangerous.

**What advice would you give to young Black artists who are starting their creative journey, especially those interested in using their art as a form of empowerment?**

Advice I would give younger Black artists would be to get into a habit of consistency and discipline. Art is a long game, and it can take time to develop so having the discipline to be consistent can be crucial whatever that looks like for the individual.

I would also suggest reading about art, writing about your art regularly, and try to see art. Black people have been making art and we stand on the shoulders of these artists today. Writing about your own work is important to record our process and ideas so that the narratives in your work are primary. Lastly, I would say to experiment with a variety of mediums to hone your craftsmanship.



Thomas Jihan | OMW | 2023



**Constanze Kratzsch** is a German artist. Born in 1984 and grew up in the GDR on the island of Rügen.

In her artistic work she is concerned with transience. The Art of Visual Poetry.

Constanze Kratzsch lives and works in Berlin. The work "Beton Spiegel" was collected by the Berlin Wall Foundation in Germany.

In 2018 she was Artist in Residence at the Kunstgarten Graz – Kulturraum and Open Air Museum in Austria.

Her works have been shown in the past at Palazzo Ca' Zanardi in Venice Italy, OnArt Gallery in Florence Italy, CICA Museum in South Korea and Cello Factory Gallery in London United Kingdom, run by the renowned London Group Avantgarde is organized and operated.

### *International Exhibitions*

New York, Miami, Los Angeles (USA); Basel, Zurich (Switzerland); Venice, Florence (Italy); Graz (Austria); Bogota (Colombia); Odessa (Ukraine); Montpellier (France); London (United Kingdom); Copenhagen (Denmark); Bangkok (Thailand); Gyeonggi-do (South Korea)



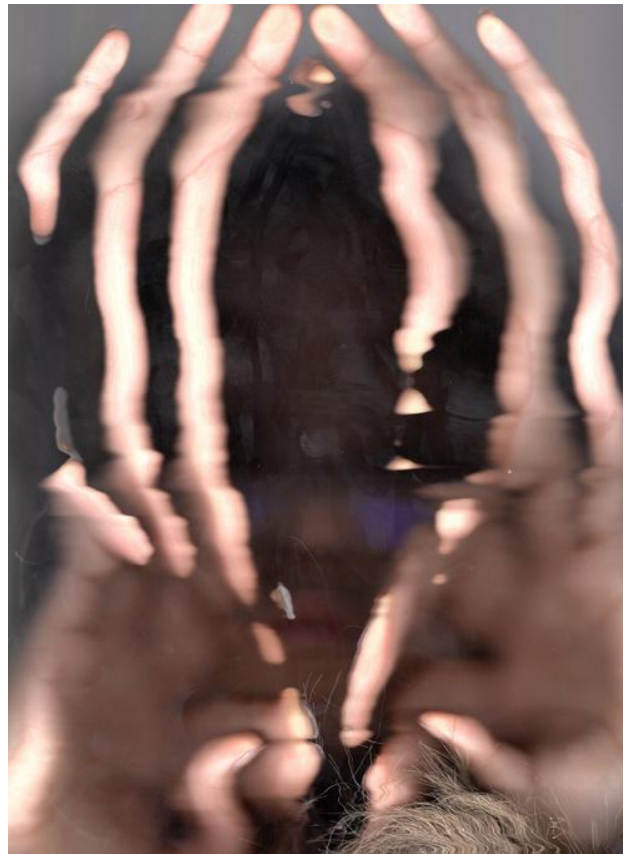
## — Interview

# Jiayi Yu

**Can you elaborate on the concept of 'distance' in your work and how it relates to the themes of 'touch' and 'touch me not'?**

The concepts of 'distance', 'touch' and 'don't touch me' interact to explore physical, emotional and metaphorical space. Distance usually represents physical separation or emotional estrangement, evoking a feeling of longing or tension. It implies a gulf that must be bridged, either literally or metaphorically. In contrast, 'touch' suggests immediacy and intimacy, symbolising connection through physical contact or emotional support. It reflects the desire to break the distance and build intimacy. However, 'don't touch me' can bring resistance to this dynamic relationship, suggesting the need for boundaries. It may suggest fear, trauma or a desire to maintain control and autonomy, resisting the vulnerability that touch represents.

Thematically, distance and touch are in constant dialogue. Distance creates separation, which touch attempts to overcome, but 'don't touch me' complicates this interaction by enforcing boundaries. This creates a tension between the desire for connection and self-protection. Touch evokes



vulnerability and intimacy, whereas 'don't touch me' emphasises the importance of maintaining personal space. The relationship between these concepts reflects the emotional entanglement between intimacy and independence, highlighting the push and pull between the desire for closeness and the fear or need for distance.

**You describe scanning as an extension of the skin. How does the scanning process influence the emotional impact of your artwork?**

The scanning process, seen as an extension of the skin, amplifies the emotional impact of artwork by creating a sense of intimacy and vulnerability. Scanning captures every detail of the surface, much like touch, but without direct contact. This evokes closeness while maintaining distance, highlighting



the fragility of the subject. Additionally, distortions from the scanning process, such as glitches, symbolize imperfections and evoke themes of memory, loss, and alienation. By transforming the body or object into a digital form, scanning deepens the emotional resonance, exploring the tension between connection and disconnection.

**How did you come to choose scanning as your primary medium? Were there specific experiences that led you to this decision?**

Choosing scanning as a primary medium often stems from a fascination with its unique ability to capture intricate details and textures while maintaining a sense of distance and detachment.

**Your work seems to focus on the visualisation of touch. How do you think this changes the way viewers interact with your pieces?**

By visualising touch in my work, I invite the viewer to engage with the work in a more intimate and sensory way. Haptics as a sense of touch evokes emotions and memories, and by visualising it creates a space that encourages the viewer to imagine the sensations behind the image. This deepens their emotional connection as they not only see the work but also feel it on a sensory level, imagining the textures, pressures and vulnerabilities.

In addition, haptic visualisation introduces a layer of empathy, whereby the viewer can personalise the



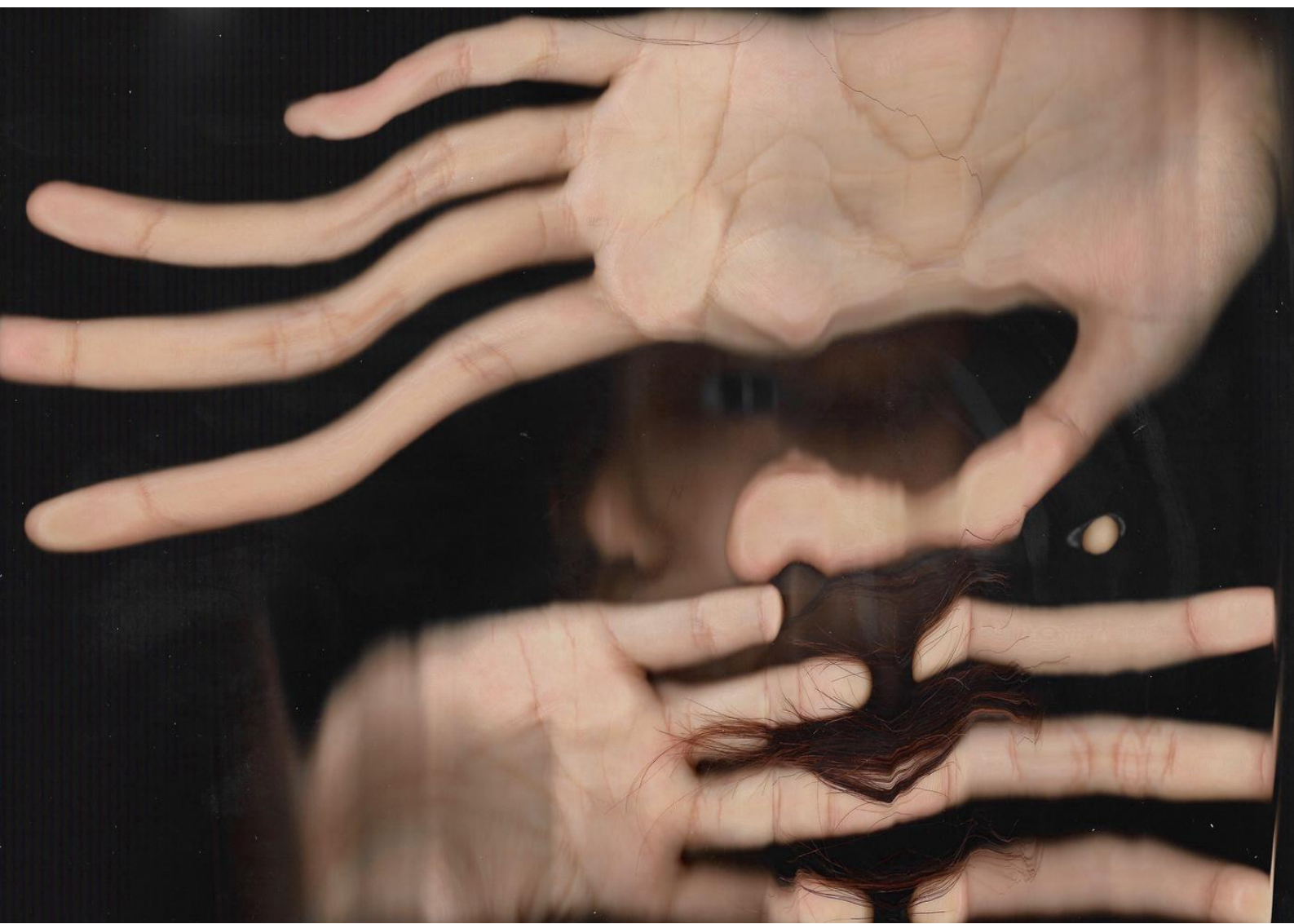
interaction by projecting their own tactile experience onto the artwork. This engagement blurs the line between sight and feeling, making the viewer's experience more immersive and sensual. There is no physical contact, but there is a suggestion of physical contact, which also emphasises the themes of distance and intimacy, subtly altering the viewer's perception of, and relationship with, the artwork.

### **How do you incorporate elements of film and theatre into your scanned works?**

Incorporating elements of film and theatre into scanned works can add layers of narrative, movement, and emotional tension. From film, you might

draw on techniques such as framing, sequencing, and lighting to create a sense of cinematic storytelling within a still image. The scanning process, much like a film camera, can focus on specific details or zoom in and out, mimicking the way film directs a viewer's attention. This can evoke mood and atmosphere, much like a film scene, with the scanner capturing fleeting moments or impressions of the subject.

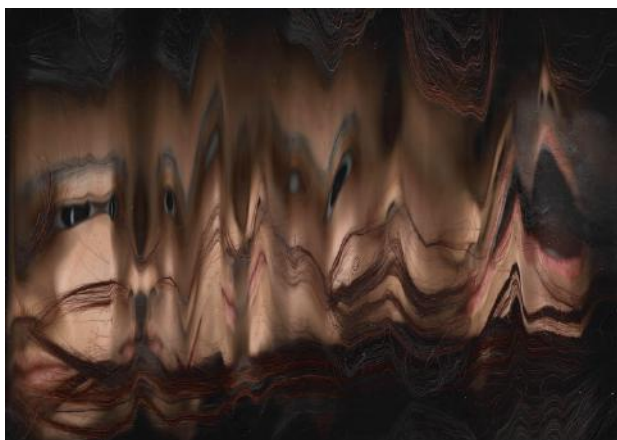
From theatre, you might incorporate staging and performative aspects, where the scanned objects or body parts are positioned like actors on a stage. Theatricality can be reflected in how the subject interacts with space, creating a sense of drama or tension. The act of scanning itself may become a performance, where the movement of



the scanner and the subject's interaction with it suggest choreography. By merging these elements, your scanned works may evoke a sense of time, motion, and narrative, much like a live performance or a scene in a film, even within a static medium.

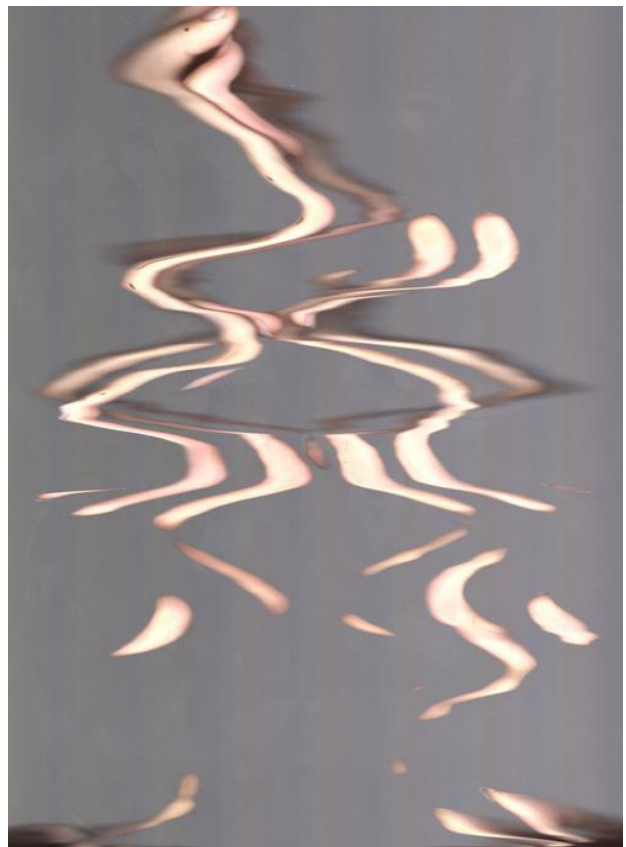
**What role does everyday life play in the creation of your art? Do you find inspiration in routine moments or more extraordinary experiences?**

Everyday life plays an important role in my artwork, and everyday bits and pieces are a rich source of inspiration. I like to create by observing some overlooked or fleeting details, even trying to retain the emotion of a moment that cannot be replicated.



**How has living in London influenced your art practice, especially in terms of the themes of touch and distance?**

Living in London has immersed my art practice in a fast-paced, diverse urban environment, with a deep sense of the themes of touch and distance. The density and constant movement of the city is likely to heighten awareness of physical and emotional distance, as



people are often in close proximity yet disconnected from each other. London's cultural diversity and vibrant arts scene may also provide inspiration through the convergence of individual and collective experiences of space, touch and disconnection. The urban environment - a mix of public and private spaces - may reinforce your thinking about how people navigate proximity and separation, making these themes central to my work.



## — Interview

# Sergei Voronin

### **How did your interest in graphic design during school influence your journey into oil painting and abstraction?**

My interest in graphic design during school played a significant role in shaping my creativity and preferences in art. Working with digital tools such as Paint, Photoshop, and Flash animation developed my sense of composition, colors, and forms, which are essential foundations for any visual art, including oil painting and abstraction. The use of graphic software helped me develop an understanding of color schemes, contrasts, and harmony, which are very useful when working with oil paints.

My experience in creating digital images and animations contributed to my understanding of composition and highlighting key elements, which is important in abstract painting. Creating animations and studying graphic design nurtured my ability to see art in various forms and styles, which is an integral part of abstraction.

I believe that my experience in school may have been the foundation on which I built my understanding and love for more traditional forms of art, such as oil painting, combining them with modern approaches and ideas that I gained through digital graphics.

### **Your statement mentions nature, architecture, and music as sources of inspiration. Could you share more about how these elements manifest in your paintings?**

Nature, architecture, and music can have a profound influence on creativity, and these elements can manifest in paintings in different



ways.

Inspiration from nature can be reflected through the color palette, textures, and motifs. For example, abstract forms reminiscent of leaves, waves, or clouds can be reflected in the dynamics and composition of a painting. Natural colors—soft and muted earthy tones or bright shades of a sunset—can also influence color choices.

The influence of architecture can manifest through structural elements in paintings. Geometric shapes, lines, and symmetry can create a sense of order and balance, while more chaotic and abstract interpretations can evoke modern architectural trends. Architectural elements can also inspire interesting compositional solutions and play with space.

Music can affect my emotional state and mood, which can easily be reflected in painting through the dynamics and rhythm of brushstrokes, the choice of color palette, and the overall energy of the canvas. Certain musical genres or compositions may inspire the creation of paintings that convey similar emotions and moods—whether smooth and calming lines for classical music or sharp and expressive forms for jazz.

These sources of inspiration help create unique works that convey not only visual but also

emotional and even conceptual elements, forming a unique artistic language.

**Your work seems to be a constant exploration of new techniques and forms. How do you balance the desire to experiment with maintaining your unique artistic voice?**

Finding a balance between experimentation and maintaining a unique artistic voice is indeed an exciting and challenging process. I strive to maintain this balance:

Before starting to work on a new piece, I try to understand what idea or emotion I want to convey. This helps me stay focused on what is truly important in the work, even if the form or technique changes.

Despite experimenting, I have a certain style or theme that remains constant in my works. This could be a characteristic color palette, a specific theme, or a motif that becomes a kind of calling card that connects all the works together.

While experimenting with new techniques, I make sure to study their history. This allows me to understand how they can be integrated into my own style without losing my unique voice.

Reflecting on past experiments helps me understand what worked and what didn't. Sometimes, to understand the direction, it's helpful to look back and evaluate progress in the paintings.

Feedback through social media gives me clues about how viewers perceive changes in my works. This helps adjust the course and not lose touch with what resonates with the audience. Sometimes the results of experiments don't immediately fit into the existing artistic language. I allow myself time to adapt and integrate the new, which helps preserve the integrity of my style.

Thus, while experimenting with new forms and techniques, I stay true to my core principles and ideas, creating art that evolves but remains authentic.

**Can you describe a specific moment or experience in your life that significantly impacted your creative process?**

My creative process began when everything settled in my life: I moved into a new apartment,

had my fourth child, started doing sports, and got a job as a manager at a large company. Inspiration was born from the new environment and meeting interesting people. I realized it was time to look deeper within myself and express the emotions I experienced through art.

**How do travel and life events influence the themes and emotions in your artwork?**

Travel and life events greatly enrich my creative process. I try to take vacations abroad three times a year, offering a new perspective on the world and expanding the range of themes and emotions I bring to my work.

Traveling opens up access to new architectural forms and cultural symbols, which stimulate me as an artist to experiment with new styles and techniques.

I am often inspired by the works of other artists whom I follow on YouTube and Instagram.

**What role do colors play in your compositions, and how do you decide on the palette for a particular piece?**

Colors play a key role in compositions as they can significantly influence the perception and emotional response of the viewer. The choice of



a color palette for a particular work often depends on the emotions and atmosphere I want to convey, as well as the conceptual goals of the piece.

Different colors evoke different emotional reactions. For example, warm tones such as red, yellow, and orange can evoke feelings of warmth, energy, and passion, while cool tones such as blue and green may be associated with calmness or sadness.

Themes and subjects can dictate the palette. Landscapes may require natural, muted tones, while abstract works may be done in bold, saturated colors.

In different cultures, colors may have different symbolic meanings, and this knowledge can be used to convey a more layered meaning.

I choose the palette based on my personal style and intuition, often experimenting and intuitively determining which colors best suit the idea.

For example, in the work "Freedom of Speech Beyond Wealth," the background was chosen in the colors of the flag, and wealth was shown through the color gold.

### **What advice would you give to young artists who are trying to develop their own style and voice in the art world?**

Developing your own style and voice in art is an exciting but also challenging journey that requires time and dedication.

1. Don't be afraid to experiment with different techniques, styles, and materials. By trying new things, you can better understand what you truly enjoy and what best suits your artistic intuition. If you are a painter, don't hesitate to use other tools like textured paste or gold leaf.

2. Studying the works of renowned artists can provide not only technical knowledge but also inspiration. Understanding how they solve compositional and color challenges can help you develop your own approach. I often visit museums and contemporary art exhibitions. If you don't have time to visit such exhibitions, you can always subscribe to Telegram channels and see photos of other artists attending exhibitions and posting pictures from there.

3. Try to express your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences in your art. Sincerity and authenticity often lead to the creation of a

unique and recognizable style.

4. Never stop learning and growing, whether through formal education, workshops, or just self-study. Developing skills and understanding new concepts will expand your artistic arsenal.

5. Be open to constructive criticism and use it as a tool for growth. It's important not to take everything personally but to extract what's useful from others' opinions to improve your art. It's crucial to note who's giving advice: a professional or a layperson. Not all advice is helpful.

6. Work on what truly inspires you, rather than what you think may be popular. Passion will help you overcome difficulties and keep your motivation. It's important to remember that trends grow fast but also fade quickly and become unpopular.

7. Constant practice and creating art regularly help refine skills and foster new ideas.

8. Inspiration can be found everywhere if you stay observant and curious. Observing the world around you can lead to unique ideas and concepts.

9. Developing your own style takes time. Don't rush and don't compare yourself to others. Every artist has their own path, and it's important to move at your own pace.





Additionally, I'd like to highlight the painting "Imagination," which is full of bright and saturated colors. Yesterday, I received feedback

from a viewer who was deeply emotionally affected by it. She shared that in recent months her life was filled with difficult events, such as illness, surgery, and the upcoming euthanasia of her beloved pet. Despite this, upon encountering the artwork, she found comfort and support. The painting became a way for her to escape the hardships of reality and immerse herself in a world of beauty and tranquility.

The painting not only serves as a source of inspiration for her as an artist but also helps her cope with difficult moments in life, becoming a kind of art therapy.

I was personally very emotionally touched that the painting became a tool for someone's art therapy.

The painting allowed her to forget the negativity, worries, and pain in her life and immerse herself in a bright and positive world.

Perceiving art as something beautiful and inspiring helps her see life in more colorful tones, which contributes to her emotional healing.

In the end, art is not only her professional field but also an important tool for maintaining emotional balance and healing.



## — Interview

# Nicole Labad

**How did your journey in art begin at the age of twelve, and how has your style evolved since then?**

My journey began with reading loads of graphic novels; one of my first and favorite authors being Hiro Mashima. I would draw Mashima's work and stare in front of a screen trying to copy his characters, eventually creating original characters to make my own comics. I was heavily interested in the Japanese animated style at that age, but as I grew older and started to explore art, my style started to evolve. I would try all sorts of styles and eventually landed on my own style bordering on semi-realism. Now, I focus on human emotions as the source of my inspiration. Drawing from feelings of sadness, melancholy, and hope.

**You mention that your pieces represent healing and time. Could you explain how you incorporate these themes into your art?**

In this collection of pieces they all have an element of nature. With it, it's natural to grow, whether it's a plant or a person. Over time, some wounds would heal-- which is why I use the element of nature to highlight the scars of these wounds. Within pain and hurt, there's



always hope and evolution beyond it. Over time, self-evolution outgrows the pain and in turn can create a new sense of beauty.

**Can you talk about the specific symbols or imagery you use to represent pain, growth, and healing in your work?**

As I mentioned previously, nature is a huge part of this collection. The flowers and greenery represent beauty within the healing of pain. Especially with the piece of the statue: "Healing From Your Touch" which represents the healing from abuse. That although the past has been weary and dreadful, there is always hope and the chance to grow and heal after the fact. It's the fact that we as humans don't choose what we go through, but what happens afterwards determines our fate. To make those scars beautiful, rather than making them another source of pain is the goal of my work.

**What role does nature play in your artwork, particularly in relation to healing from**



## humanity's destruction?

In the piece: "The Engulfed City", climate change has affected our world so deeply that the polar ice caps are melting and multiple species of animals are on the brink of extinction; so I thought to myself, what if humanity disappeared altogether one day. The world would keep spinning and nature would slowly creep up to take back its world. It's cynical, yes, but the reality is the world wouldn't stop spinning without humans and in fact the atmosphere might be better without. The piece is a call to humanity to take back the beauty of the world, rather than harming it. To embrace eco-friendly options of energy and to save the world, one step at a time.

**Aside from art, you have other creative passions such as writing fiction and playing music. How do these other forms of expression influence your artwork?**

All of my pieces tend to have a story, and it stems from reading and listening to music all of my life. These influence my work because no song is without a story, and no writing is



without a background, hence the basis of my art. My art is never without a message or a story behind it.

**How does your personal experience with pain and healing influence the way you create?**

I've had times where I felt so hopeless that I couldn't go on, or had emotions that clouded my judgement and affected my decisions. Hence why I turned to art to channel it. Rather than taking it out on the world around me, my art supported me and became a place where I could lay all my feelings out on a piece of paper or canvas. Eventually, I realized that many of the emotions I felt, others were feeling too, and that became the foundation of my art. To give a sense of hope in a world of hopelessness.

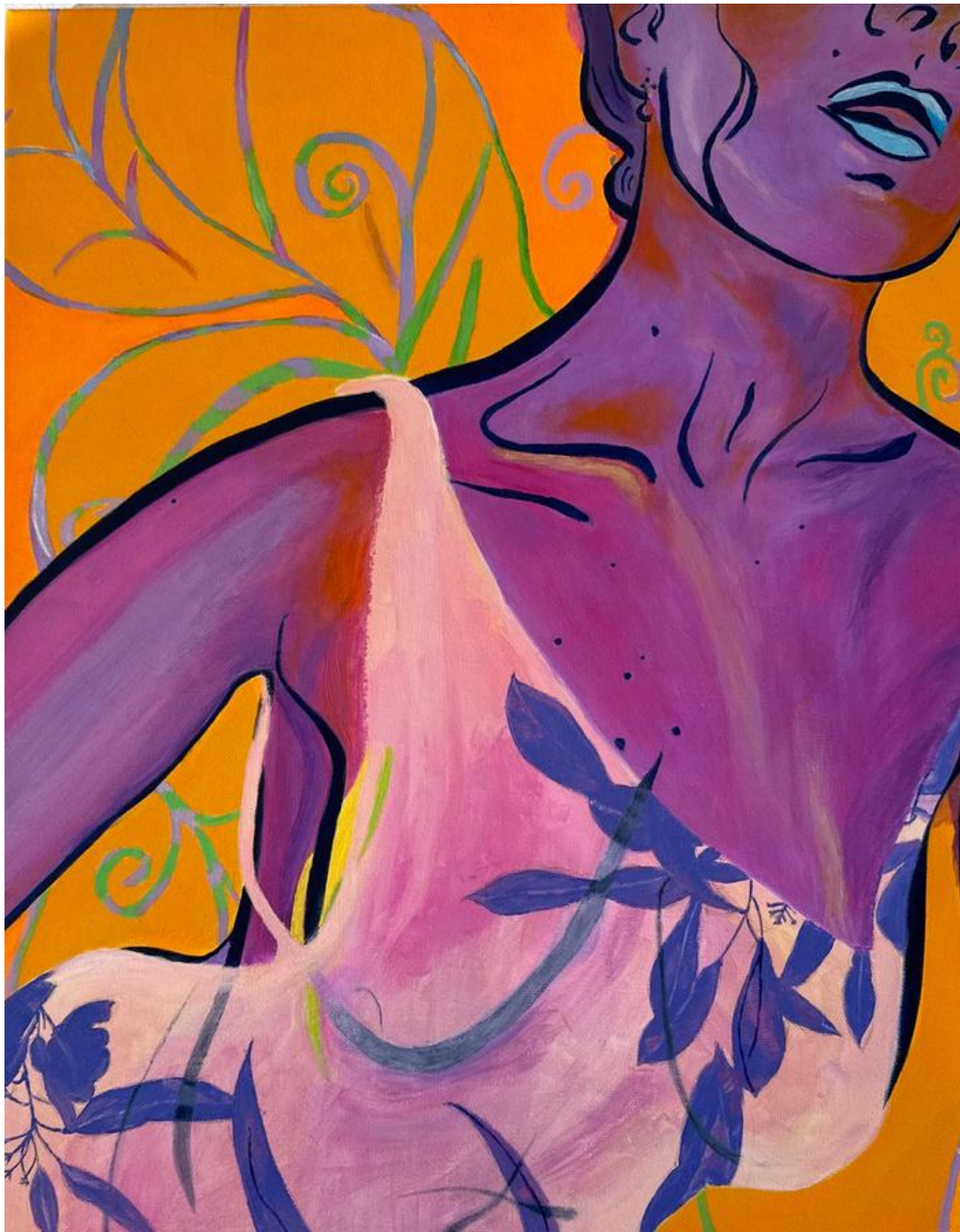
**As an artist based in B.C., Canada, how does your environment influence your work?**

Being in B.C., nature has always been a part of my life, oftentimes I take the views around me for granted until I see other places which are not fortunate enough to have the towering pine trees or the flowing rivers. Hence why it's captured in my art and has always been a huge basis for it. Whenever I feel lost, nature can always ground me and the fresh air could always clear my thoughts. It's why it's my inspiration for art.



In my art, I strive to capture the inner experiences and emotions of a person. I use color, texture, and form as tools to convey the subtle yet powerful interaction between the inner world and the external space. Through my unique Meta Art technique, based on the synesthetic perception of music and color, I transform sensations and energies into visual forms. My goal is to reveal the invisible aspects of personality through abstract art, allowing the viewer to see what is usually hidden from the eye.

— Pakhomova Margarita



Pakhomova Margarita | Metamorphosis | 2023



## — Interview

# Hannah Lewis

**Can you tell us about the inspiration behind your use of clothing motifs in your prints? How do they relate to your connection with nature?**

I started using the shape of a piece of clothing, such as a jumper or a dress, to 'frame' my linocut prints a few years ago. Just like a favorite woolen jumper feels familiar and keeps me warm or a cape enfolds me, walking in the bush I feel comforted and enveloped by the magnificence of the natural world. The clothing is a metaphor for nature's embrace. I relish the details of the plants that I observe and photograph for their unique beauty. Just as nature holds me, an item of my favorite clothing provides a gentle space on a lino plate to carve the details of the bush I explore daily.

I have had a long-held interest in artisan-made textiles and clothing versus fast, synthetic fashion. I grew up with a mother, grandmother, and aunt who knitted beautiful pure wool Aran and cable jumpers that were warm, enduring in style, and lasted for a lifetime. I still wear the jumpers knitted by my aunt and have a viyella cotton/wool nightie, hand-embellished with embroidered sprigs of flowers and edged with delicate crocheted lace that was my great-grandmother's.

My mother was also a ceramicist. She used a wooden kick wheel and gas-fired kiln in our garage to throw and fire bowls, plates, mugs, and hand-decorated planters, mixing her own glazes in buckets. She used innovative techniques such as wax resist and melted glass in her bowls in the 70s. I was influenced to have a deep appreciation



of things that were made by hand. I love drinking my morning coffee from a favorite hand-thrown and glazed mug. I always think of the maker when I wear or use something that is handmade. I have a beautiful pair of fingerless gloves that were dyed with Cherry Ballart, a tree that grows locally and is of significance to First Nations people. The color is a deep mossy green that, to me, speaks of these beautiful trees with their pendulous, needle-shaped leaves and tiny edible berries.

I became more conscious of the impact of fast fashion and mass production on the environment and on the lives of the workers in factories who make our clothes when we visited my daughter in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India, where she was studying textiles at The National Institute of Design.

Gujarat is a significant center for traditional textiles in India, and we were fortunate to visit communities and family businesses that had been producing textiles for generations. We visited traditional block-printing workshops where families dyed cloth using plants such as turmeric and saw piles of dried pomegranates and indigo vats used to produce complex, intricate, beautiful designs. I learned about the toxic pollution of rivers that had occurred in India as a result of mass production and the use of chemicals to replace natural dyes.

I love textiles and clothing woven from wool,

nettle, linen, silk, and hemp, materials of the earth that are durable and authentic. They speak of culture, traditions, community, and connection. I have been embroidering some of my prints with silk and wool dyed with eucalyptus, madder, chamomile, neem, and calendula. All these plants are purported to have healing qualities. On my residency at Point Nepean, I visited the local museum and had access to their textile collection. I photographed a beautiful corset cover and made a chin colle print based on this item of clothing. I printed it on vintage Chinese tissue. I then embroidered the motifs within the lace. The process of sewing multiple layers of paper was quite meditative. My grandmother used to knit woolen covers for wooden coat hangers, and I incorporated a coat hanger in the print to hold up the corset cover. I embroidered it with woolen thread.

The 'framing' of flora in an item of clothing has become a metaphor of sorts for my values, my passion for the environment and involvement in activism to protect it, and my love and appreciation of textiles and functional objects made by artisans. I feel that we need to pare back our obsession with material things: transitory fashion, gadgets, the best and the latest products, and work towards restoring and protecting the land, our forests, bushland, and waterways. I used an image of a simple pinafore with a pocket for one print. I embellished the body of the pinafore in medicinal plants brought out to the 'colony' of Australia by white people, as a reminder of the familiar and their gardens in Britain. In the pocket, I placed potent medicinal plants used by First Nations people, the Bunerong and Boonwurrung people who lived on the Mornington Peninsula where I live. Colonizers carved up the land, fenced it, clear-felled it, and the hooves of their cattle destroyed important grasslands and nearly eradicated important food sources such as the yam daisy. I want to draw attention to the contradictions and what we have lost and still stand to lose from inappropriate development and land use.

**You've worked as a printmaker for over 20 years alongside a career in education and environmental projects. How do these fields influence each other in your work?**

I taught English and Humanities before stepping into a role that focused on the well-being of students. I started a long journey of working with staff and students to design innovative and entrepreneurial curricula that took young people out of the classroom to participate in art and horticulture-based projects in the school grounds. Our buildings were run down and degraded, but we had plenty of outdoor space and a blank canvas. We were lucky enough to be close to a Ramsar wetland in Westernport Bay, which was a tremendous resource. We worked together on a range of environmental initiatives and became the first state secondary school in Victoria to be a fully accredited sustainable school. I saw young people's self-efficacy, self-worth, and self-esteem improve in leaps and bounds when they were given the chance to lead, design, innovate, and work as a team. They were involved in landscaping, growing food, creating sculpture, mosaicking, the regeneration of a bush block, and all sorts of community projects.

The natural environment had always been fundamentally important to me, and I trusted my instinct to take a risk and give the students the freedom and space to solve problems, design, and create on their own terms.



I have recently been taking linocut workshops for a local organization that provides carers' retreats and respite short-term stays for families experiencing hardship. It has been joyous to see people flourish through a simple art-based activity when circumstances in their daily lives are often overwhelming and challenging. They each completed a small circular linocut print that they took home. I strung each print together in a 'necklace' of sorts as a metaphor for community strength.

While my work is generally solitary, it tells a story of place and the power of the natural world to 'heal the soul.' Whether it's a jewel of a flower in my garden, the vibrant pink of seaweed on our local beach, the whisper of wind in the local bush, or the song of the spinebills in our garden, nature calls to me, and I love to share its details and beauty in my work.

**Could you share more about the specific flora and landscapes that inspire your prints? Are there particular species or locations that hold special meaning for you?**

The bushland and coastland on this side of Westernport Bay are my heart-place. I first started coming to Balnarring with my family 60 years ago. I moved to Balnarring permanently in 1984. We are lucky enough to have Coolart homestead and wetlands less than a kilometer away as the crow flies and within easy walking distance through coastal bushland at the end of



our street. Balburooro Wetlands are a short walk to the north of us.

We walk around the wetlands and through the bush regularly. Coolart foreshore has a healthy colony of black wallabies, echidnas, antechinus, the odd sunbathing snake, and a plethora of birds. The sound of the frog chorus in the surrounding wetlands is like an evening chant in the wetter months. Merricks creek, which feeds into Western Port Bay, is at the end of our road and abounds with birdlife, egrets, wild ducks, and herons.

We have always walked the beaches close to where we live, but during COVID lockdown, I became far more acutely observant about the changes within that landscape depending on the weather, the season, the tide, and the time of day. We walked daily within the restrictions of a 5k radius with our kelpie, from Balnarring to Merricks and beyond. I was more cognizant of the plants marking the seasons with their flowers, fruit, and seedheads: a carpet of tiny white boobialla stars festooning the sandy paths to Merricks beach in late spring, glorious fragrant native clematis blanketing the cliff face in spring at Merricks, and wrapping the tree trunks along Merricks creek, native raspberries' sweet summer fruit. Walking through casuarina groves, the tips of their long dangly pin leaves shimmering gold in summer and the breeze rustling through them has a whispering sound that is soothing. Erect Golden banksia cones grow in the sand, survivors of the high tides on Merricks beach.

Tones and nuances of seasonal skies and waters are everchanging; blanketing mists and frigid air in winter, rolling back to blue skies, gentle blush of pink sunset in the colder months compared to the fiery, gaudy summer sunsets. Silver water at dusk glistens with a metallic sheen. The full moon reflects on inky black depths on moonlit walks.

My garden has been sculpted from scratch over 40 years. It has evolved as my knowledge and love of Australian plants and understanding of the importance of local providence plants have grown and matured. It is abundant with fruit

trees, vegetables, herbs, and Australian plants, and the birds that enjoy this habitat: Eastern rosellas, cockatoos, wattle birds, scrub wrens, and Eastern Spinebills, to name a few. We even had a family of 5 blue-tongued lizards at one stage. I love the local kangaroo, wallaby, and poa grasses that now self-seed everywhere, the meter-tall rogue asparagus that appears every year under my rosemary bush, but most of all the banksia that stands sentinel beside our driveway with its huge golden wiry flowers that stop people passing by in their tracks.

I make pesto from nasturtium leaves, summer basil, wild rocket, and coriander that have self-seeded. We drink tea from the garden: lemon verbena, Tulsi (holy basil), strawberry gum, and lemon myrtle. The garden sustains and feeds our family, provides material and inspiration for my prints, but first and foremost, it restores and grounds me. The simple acts of having my hands in the earth, digging, planting, weeding, and harvesting, cutting flowers for the house or specimens for my prints, keep me hopeful and purposeful. I have the joy of sharing it with friends, my family, neighbors, and the community.

**During your residencies, especially the floating residency on Lake Tyers, how did the environment impact your creative process?**

Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) had a significant impact on my practice. It was an astounding place. To be living and working on a floating studio-residency for four weeks was such a privilege. To kayak and live on an extraordinary body of water (It is a designated internationally recognized Ramsar wetland) and listen to birds alighting from the water, feeding, and flying overhead, to see the changes of light and movement on the water, the morning mists and evening sunsets of a dramatic scale was transportive. I have always loved writing, but I realized that the narrative behind my work is an important part of the whole picture. At first impression, you could be forgiven for thinking 'It's 'just a pretty dress,' but there is a backstory to each work that tells a story of place, habitat, and ecosystems and of the preciousness of our indigenous flora, so much of which has been

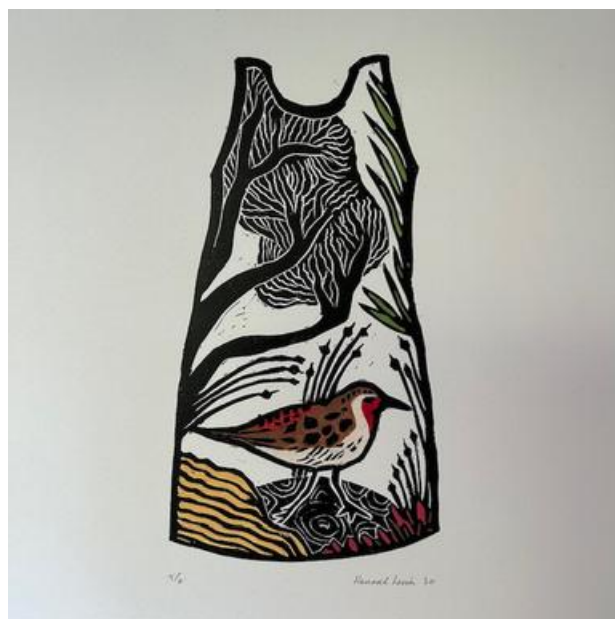
destroyed and degraded through farming, development, and the practices and ignorance of the colonizers' mindset. The tragic thing is that despite what we now know about the impact colonization has had, the pollution, destruction, clear-felling of land rich in biodiversity, and the mining of places that are culturally significant to First Nations People, it continues today.

My response to this residency was to record the details of walks that I did, looking at specific plant groups. For example, the vegetation along the shoreline that I kayaked to every day was a pristine example of intact shoreline vegetation that has evolved to cope with regular inundation when the lake fills in the wetter months. One of my prints features the plants that grow along the shoreline: sea parsley, knobby club rush, common reeds, warrigal greens, samphire, yellow button flower, and rounded noon flower.

The chance to really immerse myself in the landscape and experience real solitude over a four-week period on the lake enabled me to really feel a sense of place. I felt as if my senses became attuned to the nuances and moods of the water and landscape.

**Your work seems to carry a strong narrative about the healing power of nature. How do you hope your audience feels when they engage with your prints?**

I hope people are reminded that, despite the



ever-present horrors unfolding in our world and the damage to precious environments, there is so much beauty in the natural world. It can be found in a flower growing through a crack in concrete rubble, the way gold light filters through tree branches at the end of the day, or the sound of water trickling after rain. My practice focuses on the minutiae in the bushland around me and on walks further afield in less familiar places, rather than the grand sweep of the landscape. It is so much about walking with intention to absorb the sounds, scents, and details of the land I walk on, to feel a sense of place. We can so easily walk without seeing.

When I worked in education, I saw young people that hated school, were disengaged, or faced daily trauma in their lives transform when we took them outside to work in green spaces and in bushland. It was as if they could breathe again. Having access to nature and green spaces around you is so important. I hope people can feel a fragment of the delight and joy that I feel when I find these precious jewels peeping from the bush.

**Can you share any details about your upcoming solo show in November? What themes or subjects will be highlighted?**

The exhibition will feature three distinct bodies of work: early work from COVID Lockdown in 2020 through to 2021 when my daily walks became so important, and I started to notice the changes in the landscape more acutely. The second body of work will be from my residency at Police Point, adjacent to Point Nepean National Park, on the furthest part of the

Mornington Peninsula where I live. It features the plants and animals I saw on my daily walks and references to historical detail and narratives. The final body of work will be from my four weeks on a floating studio/residency on the Ramsar wetland Bung Yarnda (named Lake Tyers by colonizers). Each body of work evokes a sense of place. People who know those locations and walks will recognize the flora. I chose the title "Flora" for the exhibition because it is both a woman's name and the Latin word for flower. Flora was the fertility goddess of flowers and springtime in ancient Rome. Walking in the bush and working in my garden gives me a sense of hope when the world is unraveling, and we are facing an escalating climate crisis. I hope people can walk away from the exhibition with a sense of how precious plants are and how we need to value and care for our environment no matter where we live.

**What advice would you give to emerging artists who are also passionate about environmental issues?**

Build connections and immerse yourself in finding out about artists whose practice speaks of the environment. Look broadly and keenly at artists from all mediums: writers, poets, musicians, performers, and jewelers. Keep journals, something I have only seen the value of more recently, as narrative has become an important part of my practice and telling my story of place. When you are overwhelmed by what is happening in the world, read for inspiration, get involved in community arts and campaigns. My involvement in three local environmental campaigns helped me to find 'my people' and a sense of community, connection, and belonging. This is important as artists often work in isolation, alone with their thoughts. Channel your anger and despair into your art. My daughter, who studied Fine Art, gave me the best bit of advice. I rang her after I had torn up a botched failure of a print. I had spent the day cutting the plate and when I printed it, I hated it. I felt like giving up, that I was a poor excuse for an artist. She said words to the effect of 'You only create for yourself. Don't try and make something that will please others.'







9/5

Hannah Keefe '21

I am a visual artist specializing in documentary and art photography. My projects explore sensory experiences and the aesthetic qualities that surround us, transforming the mundane into icons of beauty. They reflect my relationship with life itself, intertwining the past and present while emphasizing the importance of being present in the fragile moments that define our existence. My work seeks to uncover the unexpected within the ordinary, prompting us to reconsider what we often overlook in our daily routines.

— Tali Vikhtinskaya



Tali Vikhtinskaya | Art And Life | 2024



## — Interview

# Angelo Keene

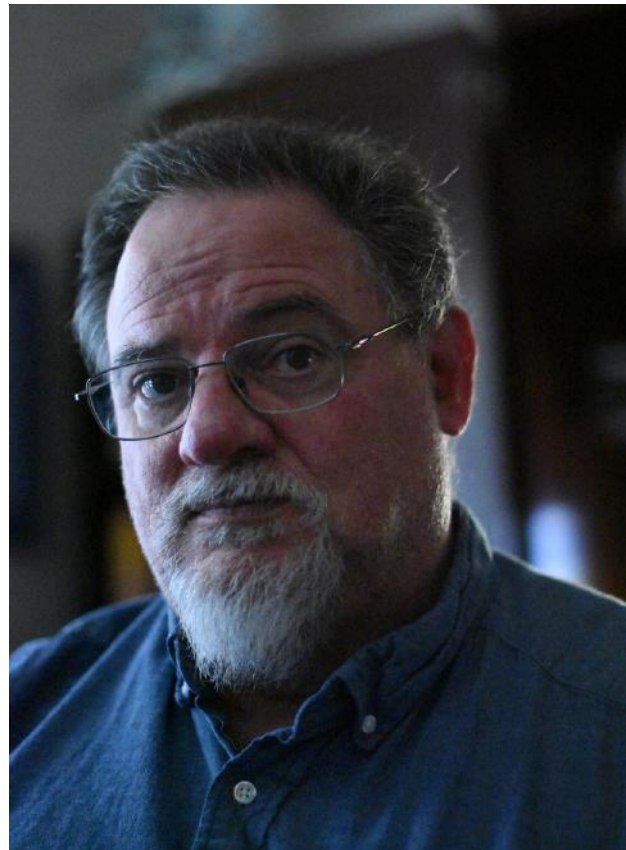
**As a software engineer by profession, how do you balance your technical career with your passion for digital artwork and 3D-rendering?**

In years past, I hadn't had the time to pursue much in the way of hobbies, but I've had the opportunity in recent years to have time on weekends to enable more creative activities. Since weekends are short, and I have other things I need to attend to, I've needed to try to be as efficient as possible in planning and post-creation organization of workflow. For 3d rendering, once I get past the original design and prototyping stage, the bulk of the production is done in the background on my personal workstation, so I can do that and create other artwork at the same time.

If I'm able to, after I retire, I hope to still be able to exercise creativity, either with my writing or art. I use a separate laptop for my professional work, so there's no overlap that I've had to manage.

**Your artist statement mentions that what's seen is not always important, but rather what the viewer thinks they see. Can you explain how this philosophy guides your creative process?**

I have been a fan of some of the artists in the photorealism/hyperrealism realm for quite a few years, such as Robert Bechtle and Richard Estes among others, but I know my level of skill, and although I admire their work, I prefer to create works that give power to the viewer's imagination, like some of the Japanese silk



paintings that didn't 'try to draw every rivet', but showed just enough to be effective.

**What role does photography play in your digital artwork? How do you decide when to integrate photography into your pieces?**

When I take photographs, I may take a hundred shots, but only use three or four, depending upon what I'm trying to capture (or if I screw up my settings). There have been a few times where I've noticed that maybe a picture taken accidentally or with the wrong settings has much better composition and color that I could have tried to attempt on purpose. Sometimes I might just deliberately take photos 'wrong' just because I can, to see if I can get a good interplay of light and color.

There's been a few photos that otherwise would be boring stills, but those I may take and play with layering, color manipulation, and filtering, I can turn into more of an abstract piece. Three pieces in particular are examples of this: "Train", "Tales from the flat earth", and "Wheels". The original photo is so-so but not very evocative and mostly boring, but the art lays in how to turn the ordinary into something interesting.

**Many of your works involve digital mediums. What specific tools or software do you prefer for creating your art, and how have they influenced your style?**

For my photography, I have my cell phone, a Nikon D5600 with a small selection of lenses, a couple of color-selectable mini LED light panels, and a tripod. I have not yet invested in a mirrorless camera because the one I have is working just fine, and the prices are still way too high for me to justify the expenditure.

My Lenses and Accesories:

AF-S Micro Nikkor 40 mm 1:2.8G DX 52 mm  
AF-P Nikkor 10-20 mm 1:4.5-5.6G DX VR 72 mm  
AF-P Nikkor 18-55 mm 1:3.5-5.6G DX VR 55 mm  
AF-S Nikkor 35 mm 1:1.8G DX 52 mm  
ATX-i Tokina 100 mm F2.8 FF Macro 55 mm  
AF Nikkor 35-80 mm 1:4-5.6 D 52 mm  
AF Nikkor 50 mm 1:1.8 D 52 mm  
AF-S NIKKOR 50mm f/1.4G  
JINTU 900MM F/8.0 SUPER MIRROR TELEPHOTO  
MANUAL FOCUS LENS + T2 MOUNT ADAPTER  
RING  
AF-P Nikkor 70-300 mm 1:4.5-6.3G ED 58 mm  
Opteka Achromatic 10x Diopter 10x macro  
Platinum Series High Definition  
A set of 13mm, 20mm, 16mm extension tubes

So far, the Tokina is my favorite lens, with the Jintu as my least favorite.

Many of these lenses are made for a full-frame camera with a lens motor in the camera body, so they require manual focus and adjustment since they do not have a built in motor for focusing. This requires me to use manual mode on my camera most often, and has caused me to learn a lot as I've progressed with how to set up my camera while I'm using it and the post-processing that goes along with it. I try to touch my photographs as little as possible in post.

My home workstation where I do my artwork and post-processing is an older MSI B350M Mortar motherboard with an 8-core 2.7 GHz AMD Ryzen 7 1700, and a AMD/ATI ega 10 XL/XT [Radeon RX Vega 56/64] video card with 64 Mb of memory and a combined disk space of about 12 Tb. I have an MSI Optix MPG321 32-inch 4K monitor

connected via Display Port.

I have a Wacom Intuos Pro M tablet, but I haven't used it that much. I'm better with the mouse. Since I work from home, I'm pressed for space, so I only have a single monitor, with my work laptop and its second monitor taking up my extra space, so eventually I want to get a larger workspace where I can use a dual monitor setup on my home computer as well and have more room to access my tablet and start using it.

For software, I use Linux Mint under the XFCE desktop with the following commonly used graphic and art tools: Darktable, GNU Image Manipulation Program (aka Gimp), povray (for 3d rendering), krita, and hugin (for creating panoramas). I use scribus and PDF chain for creating my books for publication.

Most importantly, I have a couple of external network shares in my house that are used for automated backup and recovery, backing my data up into multiple locations.

I also have an 256 Gb Apple iPad Air, which I've used to create a couple of artworks, but it is difficult to get media off of that platform to my



Angelo Keene | Tree | 2018

workstation, so I don't use it for creation as much. On my iPad, I have the following software installed: Procreate, Art Set 4, and Realistic Paint Studio. I personally prefer Procreate.

Using linux has been very good for me; when I ran windows in the past, the PC spent so much time running the background tools and other things, such that even though I had plenty of memory and CPU cores, everything was really slow. I have much more control over what is running on my PC and I don't feel like I've needed to update hardware quite as often. The biggest impact on my workflow has been that when I stepped up to a 4K monitor, I had to tweak some low-level settings such that my application menus and text were not too small to read. Otherwise, I've had no problem opening up and editing large multi Gb files, such as a recent panorama I generated that was made up of over 50 images that ended up generating a file of 29327x7618 pixels.

It's been beneficial for my 3d rendering as well. After I perform the overall 'set design' and decide on lighting strategies and placement, and run some lower quality test renders to check the overall appearance, some of my renders may take a week or more to run; at that point, it's more of a matter of being willing to spend the time dry running and pretesting, and maintaining patience. I have access to Blender, but I haven't used it at all because I prefer designing my own surface properties and objects differently than

that tool provides.

### **You've lived in various parts of the United States. How have these different environments influenced your art and creative expression?**

I initially grew up in Chicago Illinois, and had access to the museums there, such as the Art Institute, the Museum of Science and Industry, the Adler Planetarium among others, as well as the historical architecture. A lot of my early influence was from the architectural Art Deco style, and Frank Lloyd Wright.

During elementary school, I had the opportunity to participate in a multi-weekend exploratory hands-on art program at the Art Institute through the Chicago Public School system, and I got the chance to explore and create art in various media. One of the most memorable experiences was taking a field trip to the symphony, and while in the balcony listening to a performance, sketch while listening. All this was taught by great teachers who promoted creativity without judgement; just helped with technique.

In the years following, I worked more with pen and ink with detailed geometric drawings, reminiscent of the Op Art style on my own, but when the college years started until recently, I hadn't done much more than the occasional pencil sketch, but wherever we lived, I always tried to search out whatever museums were in the areas we were in.

Living in the desert southwest, I have a lot of respect for the early American artists who tried to capture in paint the look of sunlight through the clouds during a rainstorm, or a sunrise/sunset without the benefit of a camera to lock down what they wanted to share with others.

One thing I have noticed, especially as I've been online, is that the subjective judgement of the 'art world' and 'potential clients' is so diverse and critical, if I didn't try to produce the kind of artwork I visualized, but served what I thought others wanted, I'd never create anything, and

Angelo Keene | Sky | 2023





Angelo Keene | Find Me | 2024

burn myself out trying to make everyone else happy. With the internet, trends and fads come and go, but hopefully the real talent gets recognized anyway. Everyone is good at something, and there is always someone that is 'better', but what good do I want to give up in myself chasing approval I don't need, burning out, and to eventually be good for nothing?

I have a lot of respect for those who are working hard ethically to make a living with their creation, and we need to support them and what they need to grow to compete against what will soon be a corporate AI trend. That spans not just the United States, but the entire world.

Support your local artists, wherever they are.

### **Your art often incorporates abstract and surreal elements. Where do you draw inspiration for such imaginative themes?**

I tend to listen to music in the background while I work and create art. A lot of times, it may be a song lyric, a musical phrase, or maybe how multiple pieces go together as a playlist theme that stimulates a mood or feeling that I want to try to emulate. Many times I'll do a piece, then title it later as I look back on it and realize it fits well with something I didn't realize at the time that might have been an influence. So I'd say that music is a primary contributor. In my published books to date, I have a suggested playlist for each.

An example of an influence not realized immediately is that I used to travel frequently for work years ago, and had to travel via nighttime flights to and from the work site. One inspiration is the very first evening flight, looking down at the glow of city lights from above through the clouds. All you can see from high altitude is light

and shadow and a spiderweb of links between them.

### **How has your engineering background influenced the way you approach problem-solving in your art?**

As I mention in my book "Career Advice for Engineering Professionals", there are some common things to keep in mind that apply to both engineering and the pursuit of any hobby or art. Here's a short list:

1. Never stop learning something new.
2. Learn to manage yourself.
3. Take advantage of opportunities.
4. You have value.
5. Different is okay.
6. Keep your eyes open.
7. Technology may change, but people remain the statement.
8. Learn how to learn what you don't know.
9. Stuff goes wrong.

I am fortunate that I have the freedom to invest time and resources into pursuit of my art, but these are things that have to be managed just as in an engineering project. My advice is to make sure in whatever you choose to do, you don't forget to take care of your own needs and those around you.

I find that I might have an idea in mind of what I'd like to produce, but if I overthink it too much, I might never get started, so I may start creating a piece, but set it aside because I can't make it match with what I'm thinking about at the moment, but I might later, so I'll save it and move on. One thing I always have to avoid is overthinking how and what I'm trying to do, and not knowing when to stop poking at something. Engineering is the same way.

Angelo Keene | Entryway | 2023



## — Interview

# Patricia Steinmann- Britt



**Can you tell us more about the moment when you rediscovered your passion for art? What inspired you to start painting again after raising your children?**

Rediscovering my passion for art felt like returning to an old friend I hadn't seen in years. After raising my children, I found myself with more time and space to reconnect with that creative energy. The inspiration to start painting again came from a deep desire to express emotions and ideas that had been quietly simmering during the busy years of motherhood. Art became a way for me to process the transitions in my life and reflect on the beauty and challenges I had experienced.

**How did your travels influence your transition to abstract art? Can you share any specific places that left a lasting impression on your work?**

Travel has been an essential part of my

artistic journey, as it opened my eyes to the colors, shapes, and moods of different landscapes and cultures. I found that abstraction allowed me to express not just what I saw, but what I felt in those places.

Travel has been an integral part of my evolution as an artist. Each destination has left its unique mark on my work, often in unexpected ways. In South Africa, the vibrant, earthy colors of the savannah and the powerful contrasts of light and shadow inspired me to play with bold palettes and dynamic compositions. Colombia, with its lush rainforests and lively cities, introduced me to a world of textures and intricate patterns that I now explore through abstraction. Costa Rica's rich biodiversity, especially its dense jungles and vast coastlines, influenced my use of organic forms, allowing me to express the chaotic beauty of nature. Finally, Bali, with its serene landscapes and spiritual atmosphere, encouraged me to





Patricia Steinmann-Britt  
Far Shores

incorporate a sense of calm and flow into my pieces, balancing the vibrant energy from other travels with a softer, more introspective approach.

**Your work blends abstraction with figuration. How do you balance these two elements in your compositions, and what drives your choice to focus on one over the other?**

Balancing abstraction with figuration is an intuitive process for me. I enjoy the freedom that abstraction offers, but I also feel a pull towards recognizable forms that ground the viewer in something familiar. Sometimes a piece begins as an abstract exploration of color and form, and figures or landscapes emerge organically. Other times, I start with a clear figurative image and allow abstraction to evolve around it, creating a dialogue between the two. The decision to lean more towards one over the other often depends on the mood or story I want the piece to

convey.

**Nature seems to play a central role in your artistic vision. How do you capture the essence of landscapes and flora in your abstract works?**

Nature is an endless source of inspiration for me, and I find its patterns, textures, and rhythms deeply fascinating. In my abstract works, I try to capture the feeling of being in nature rather than a direct representation of it. I use color to evoke the emotions that landscapes or flora stir within me—whether it's the calming blues and greens of a forest or the vibrant, fiery hues of a sunset. I also play with layers and textures to mimic the complexity and depth of natural forms, creating a sensory experience for the viewer.



Patricia Steinmann-Britt  
Sardinia



Patricia Steinmann-Britt  
Rhythms of the Earth

**Can you describe your creative process? How do you begin a new piece, and what techniques or materials do you find most inspiring?**

My creative process often begins with a spark of inspiration—a color palette, a memory from my travels, or a mood I want to explore. I usually start with broad, loose brushstrokes to lay down a foundation and let the painting take shape organically. I primarily work with acrylics for their versatility and fast drying time, which allows me to layer and experiment freely. I often incorporate texture using mediums like sand, fabric, or natural elements to bring depth and tactile dimension to my work. This combination of materials helps me evoke the organic forms and emotions

that inspire my art.

My discipline is rooted in abstract painting, where I explore the intersection of nature, emotion, and form. I approach each piece with a balance of spontaneity and control, allowing the work to evolve organically while maintaining a focused vision.

**Can you talk about a particular piece that holds special meaning to you and why?**

One piece that holds special meaning to me is a painting inspired by my time in New Zealand. The work captures the rugged coastline and dramatic cliffs, but through an abstract lens. It reminds me of a moment of deep connection with nature during a solitary hike. The colors and textures in the piece evoke the raw energy of the ocean crashing against the rocks, but also the quiet serenity I felt standing there, surrounded by such vast beauty. It's a reflection of the balance between chaos and calm that I often seek in my work.



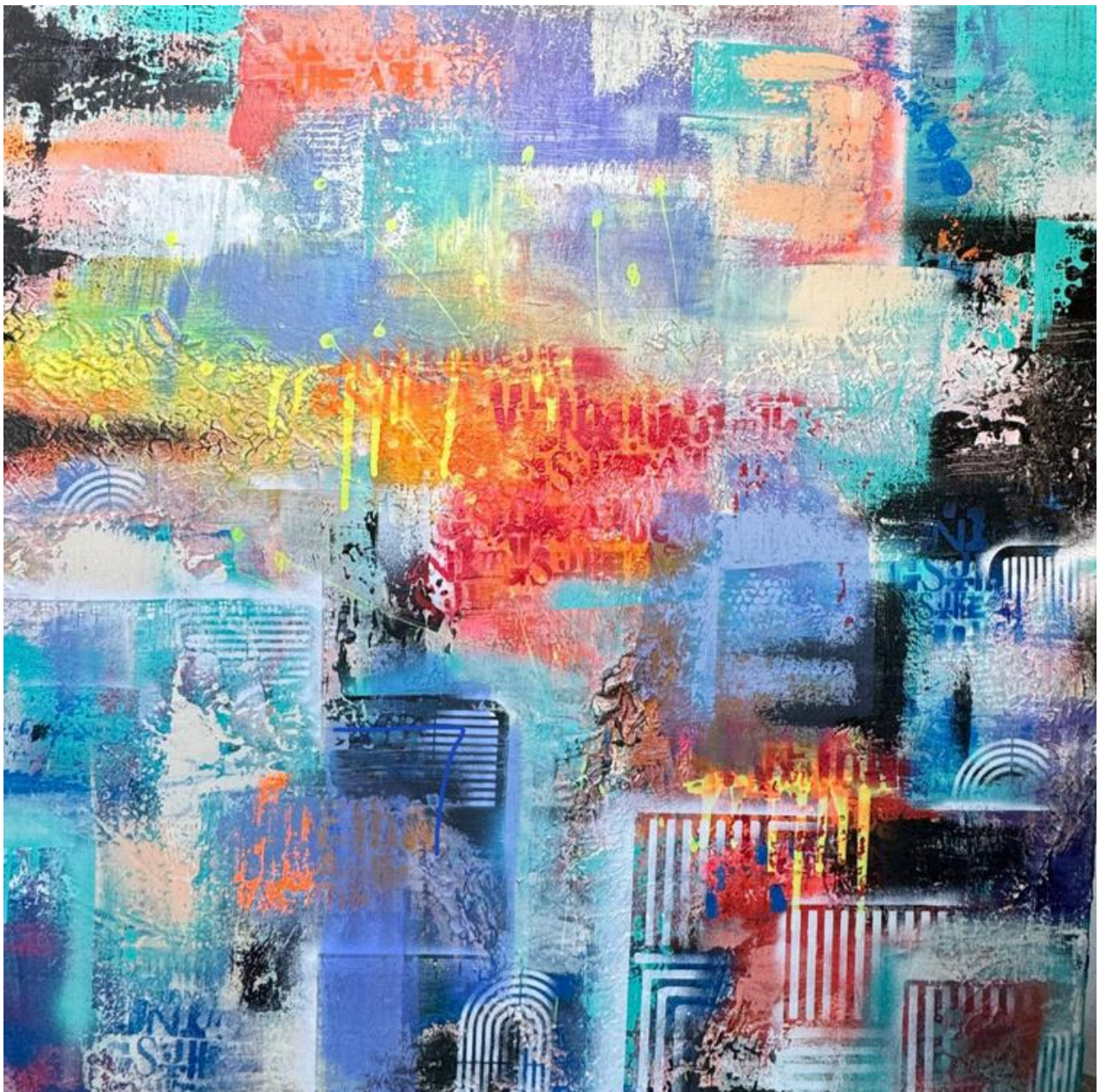
Patricia Steinmann-Britt | A Hot Day

**As someone who rediscovered art later in life, what advice would you give to other artists who may feel disconnected from their creative pursuits?**

My advice is to give yourself permission to start again, no matter how much time has passed. Creativity doesn't have an expiration date. Life has a way of pulling

us in different directions, but the urge to create never truly fades—it's always there, waiting for the right moment. Don't be afraid to begin where you are, with whatever tools or time you have available. And most importantly, let go of perfectionism. The beauty of art lies in its ability to reflect our ever-changing selves, imperfections and all.

Patricia Steinmann-Britt  
Sunset



## — Interview

# Julia Khishchenko

**Your paintings reflect a deep emotional world. Can you tell us more about how introspection influences your work and your creative process?**

I've been thinking a lot about the reason I depict myself in my paintings. Sometimes I'm torn apart by the feeling of shame that there is only my face everywhere. But I know that I cannot do otherwise. I want to make feelings more significant for myself. I want to allow myself different kind of emotions. My works are the key to permission to be imperfect.

**You describe your paintings as visual diaries of emotions. How do you decide which emotions or experiences to capture in each piece?**

The images in my head appear unexpectedly.



Julia Khishchenko | Flickering | 2024



They follow me relentlessly until I express the idea on canvas. Therefore, I don't make a decision in this issue. In a sense, I become a mediator between the image in my head and the canvas.

**Many of your works seem to blend surrealism with personal expression. What role does surrealism play in representing your inner emotional landscape?**

I don't categorize my feelings. What seems surreal to the viewer is reality for me. Because that's how I see the world. And for me there's nothing special about it.

**Do you find that your audience resonates with the emotions you depict? Have you had any memorable interactions with viewers who connected with your work on a personal level?**

I'm very pleased with the response from my

viewers! After all, I myself am a lump of doubts and self-oppression. But when people express gratitude for revealing unpleasant feelings and showing them honestly, I understand that I'm on the right track.

**Your work is found in private collections across the world. How do you feel about your art reaching such a diverse audience, and what do you hope they take away from your paintings?**

I don't think my audience is diverse. We, people, are basically the same. A person from any part of the world is familiar with sadness, and joy, and feelings of loss, and love. And what can be taken from my paintings? That the viewer of my art is not alone, and can receive support and understanding of the feelings. Somewhere there is an artist who is ready to support through art.



Julia Khishchenko  
Aquarium  
2021

**You use self-portraits as a medium for expressing personal experiences. How do you balance personal vulnerability with the public nature of art?**

From time to time I have to take breaks from my



Julia Khishchenko  
The Reins of Power  
2024

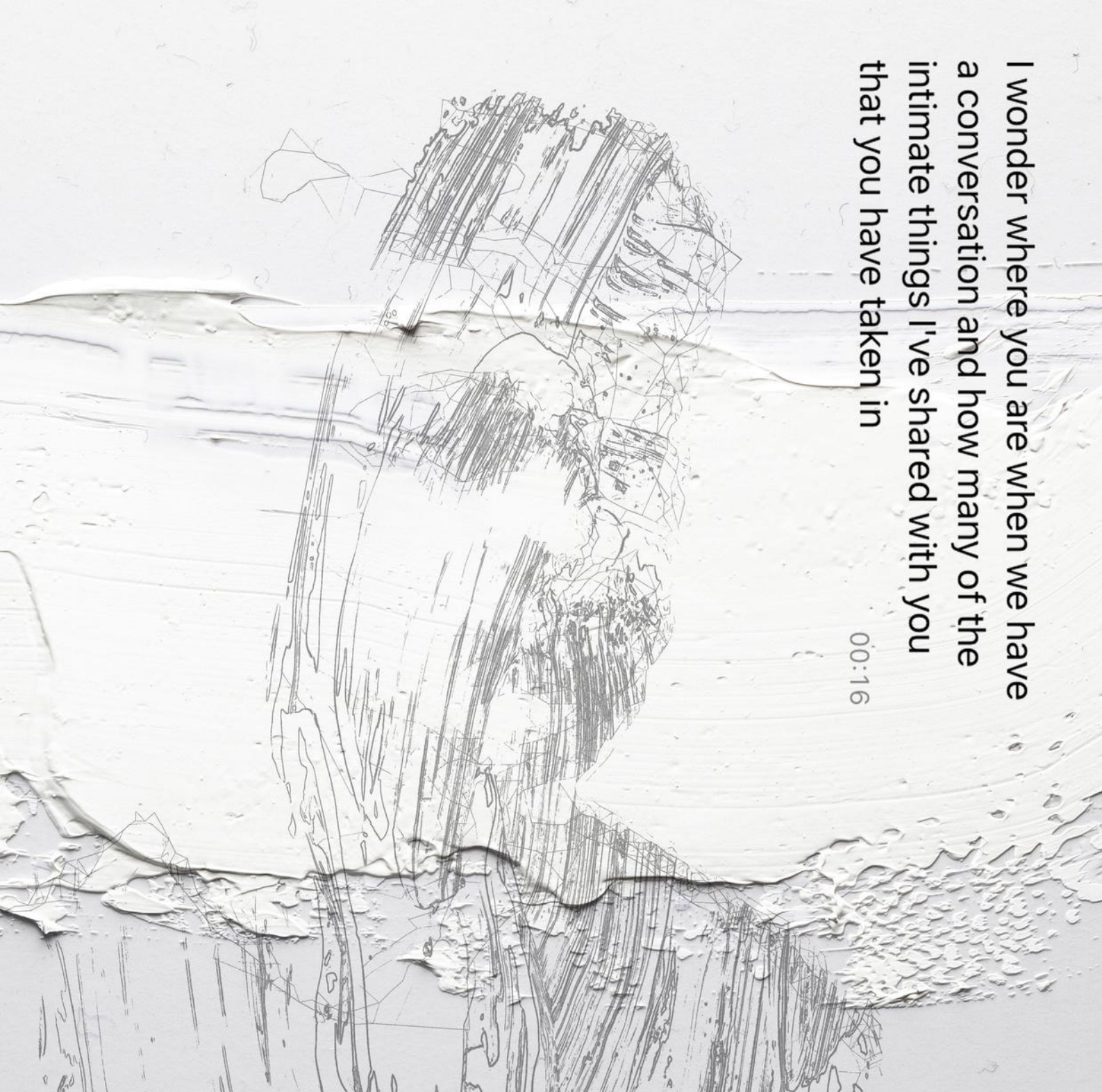
work because I become too vulnerable, almost dying of shame for my openness. But then I start to put myself back together like a puzzle. Any vulnerability can result in the birth of a new painting (or not necessarily a painting, but any other creative expression).

**Your paintings feature recurring motifs, such as distorted limbs and floating objects. What is the significance of these elements, and how do they contribute to the narrative of your art?**

Distortions, dismembering... They reflect an internal breakdown. And pain always entails new images.

Julia Khishchenko  
After the Game (Doll vol 2)  
2020



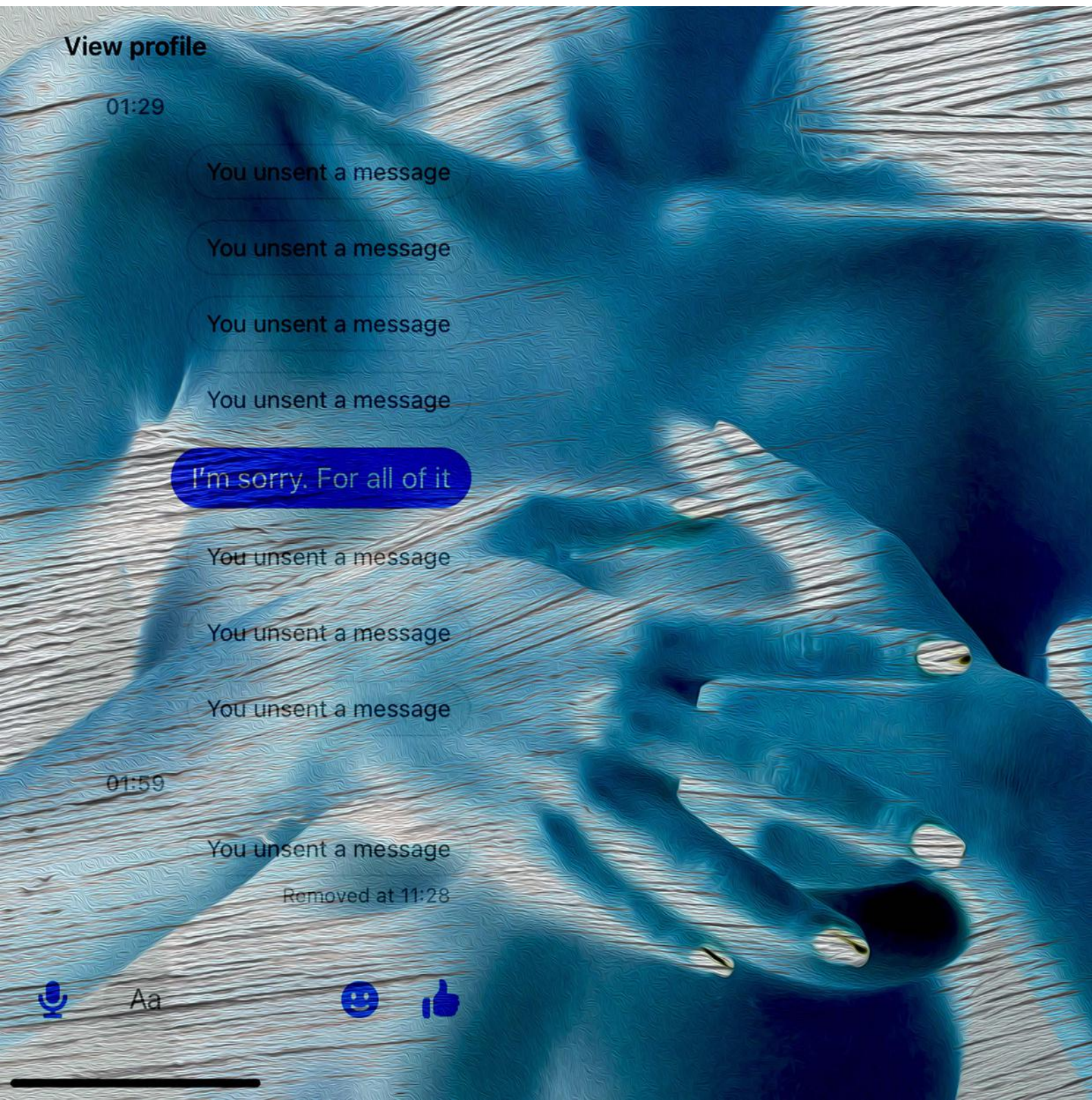


I wonder where you are when we have  
a conversation and how many of the  
intimate things I've shared with you  
that you have taken in

00:16

**James Frew** is an artist and academic who exhibits regularly and maintains an international collector base. Since 2015 he has been represented by the Glasgow gallery Art Pistol. As an academic he has taught across the United Kingdom at universities including The Glasgow School of Art and ONCAMPUS Southampton (in association with Winchester School of Art). He completed his practice-based PhD in painting at The Glasgow School of Art in 2021 and is an active researcher – he has published original research and lectures frequently on art and culture. As an educator he possesses a keen interest in pedagogy and its evolving manifestations within practice-based learning, specifically, the interplay between theory and praxis.

My practice explores expanded painting and post-digital art production in the age of the Internet and social media. Specifically, how paint(ing), images, and language translate via traditional mediums and new media, through the process of using digital technologies. Thematically, my work nods to contemporary Internet culture and imagery, frequently employing irony, profanity, and transgressive humour. Formally my work attempts to reassess and rejuvenate the histories and languages of painting, expanding its territories by using analogue and digital formalisms to blend medium (discrete, analogue objects) and media (networked, digital information). My recent work explores post-digital art practices through the creation of what I call 'digipaintage' – a process which hybridises painting, print, the digital, and photomontage, which exist as both digitally circulated images and physical objects.



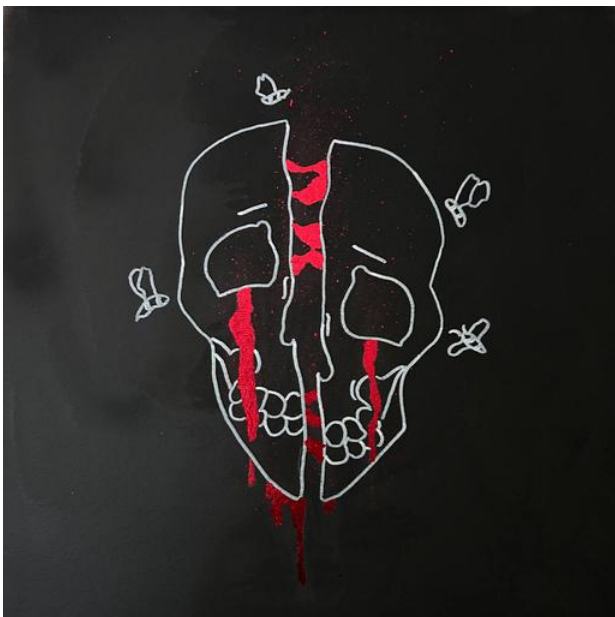
## — Interview

# Svyat Nes

**Your art appears to be deeply emotional, drawing from challenging moments in life. How do you process these emotions to create your artwork?**

Navigating through challenging times, I experience a full spectrum of emotions. However, I do not allow these emotions to overwhelm me. Instead, I view my experiences from a detached perspective, as if observing them from the outside. My paintings are a constant companion, serving as a visual representation of my emotional journey. They do not define who I am, but rather serve as a tangible reminder of my experiences, allowing me to maintain a physical connection to them.

**What does the symbolism in your pieces**



Svyat Nes | Hive



**mean to you personally? Do you believe that viewers should interpret them in their own way, or is there a particular message you want to convey?**

Symbolism is a way of expression that conveys the idea that a work of art is something that can be embodied in a person's life or is already present, although it does not exist. My paintings, for example, depict skeletons, skulls and bones, which are tangible elements. However, the way I depict and intertwine them in my compositions helps to convey that each work of art carries its own plot.

**You mentioned that your art is created "without imperfections of the flesh." How do you translate this idea into your acrylic works?**

The concept of «without imperfections of the flesh» is a metaphorical phrase that can be interpreted literally when examining the works of artists who depict skeletons and skulls devoid of flesh. These imperfections can refer to aspects that may not align with our preferences or expectations in others. They can manifest both externally and internally.





**What role does acrylic paint play in your creative expression? Do you explore other media, or is acrylic your primary tool?**

The acrylic dries swiftly, serving as a testament to the irreversibility of events. Everything we undertake becomes an integral part of history in an instant. During particularly challenging times in my life, I sometimes create bas-relief sculptures in the form of skulls, which allows me to fully engage with the art.

**How do you manage the relationship between the painful emotions that inspire your work and the sense of comfort you mention that comes from creating?**

The ordeal associated with overcoming difficult periods inevitably leaves an indelible mark. In the most desperate moments, I create an image in my memory, from which I start to regain my composure. It is often difficult for me to recognize the transition from suffering and torment to a state of calm that comes after the experience.

**What do you hope viewers feel or understand when they see your work?**

I've always wondered how people perceive my artwork. But when I see someone looking at them, I wonder: what does he think of the author of these works? If a person looks at a sign with the name and a series of works, he can understand that this is my work. But even if this does not help him realize that my work is a reflection of my experiences, then I can only agree that my drawings simply depict skulls.

**Are there specific life events or experiences that directly influence certain works? Could you share more about one of those pieces?**

I wouldn't stand out if I described my life as a continuous adventure. The only question remains how acutely I perceive the complex aspects of this journey. One of the hardest moments is loss — the moment when our paths part and we are forever separated. I've been through the loss of friends and loved ones, which can be incredibly debilitating. But what really affects me is the experience of depersonalization, self-loathing and dissatisfaction with my appearance, actions and deeds. In times of unbearable pain, I smoke up to 42 cigarettes a day and create my own works of acrylic art.



## — Interview

# Lewis Ashfield

**Can you tell us about your journey from Graphic Design to mixed media collage? What inspired this shift in your creative practice?**

My creative journey in graphic design started when I began studying for my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at the University of Wolverhampton: School of Art. Initially, I started with a foundation course which helped me find my footing as a creative arts student, where I was introduced to art disciplines and history, amongst other things. After completing the foundation course, I began studying for my Bachelor's in Graphic Design. During my undergraduate studies, I was able to develop the skills I had learnt during the foundation course whilst learning how to think like a designer – generating ideas and concepts, understanding and picking apart design briefs to meet expectations and spot any opportunities where the brief can be expanded upon.

My undergraduate studies were very digital-based, I had a sketchbook but that was it. Towards the end of my undergraduate degree, I was starting to develop an interest in punk and grunge design – I tried to create work in the mentioned styles but digitally as I felt like didn't have the confidence as a creative to break away to make them traditionally.

After working digitally during my undergraduate studies when I started to study for my Master's I wanted to avoid working digitally if possible, deciding to work more traditionally. What started this change was the freedom of being able to experiment with different art disciplines during



my studies and, when I watched the *Brett Morgen* film, *Moonage Daydream* about one of my favourite musicians and creatives *David Bowie*. I found this film to be very influential in shifting my creative practice from graphic design. As I watched the film, I found myself inspired to change and push myself out of my comfort zone, pushing the boundaries of what I can achieve as a creative – something which Bowie frequently did throughout his career.

**You mentioned that unpredictability and chance play a significant role in your work. Can you explain how you incorporate these elements into your creative process?**

Whenever I start to create a collage, I sketch out how I might want my collage to look then I begin to review social media, online articles, and editorial photoshoots which would form the basis of a collage. My 'tools' consist of an ink stamp pad, Tippex, tape (Sellotape, packaging, etc) and a glue stick (I find using sprayable adhesive glue stains the paper and not in a good way!). In terms of unpredictability, tape plays the biggest role within my artwork as I use it to create texture by ripping the top layer of the paper once it has been 'stained' with the ink stamp pad, I can't control the angle the paper gets damaged from the tape; same principle with

the ink stamp pad I stamp it down at various point on the page quickly not caring how much pressure I apply. The role of chance within my work relates to when I rip up a printed image as I can't control the paper, how that rips is purely down to chance/randomness.

**How did your time studying for your Master's in Digital and Visual Communications shape your artistic approach and philosophy?**

Whilst studying for my Master's I was able to develop myself as a creative by experimenting with different art disciplines – I particularly found interest in the fine arts (practitioners, influences, movements, etc). I was able to develop myself as an artist by broadening my research knowledge by adopting some of the knowledge of the fine arts. One creative I came across was Beat Generation author, *William S. Burroughs*, (whilst not traditionally known within the fine arts, his style of incorporating randomness into his work helped influence my creativity) whose writing style was known to use a 'cut up' technique – chopping up sentences to create new sentences no matter how bizarre they sound. An example of this is the track *Moonage Daydream* by *David Bowie* and Burroughs's fantastic novel, *Naked Lunch*. I found myself drawn to the *Theory of Chance* a term which was coined by French artist



Lewis Ashfield | Violent Desires | 2024

and sculptor, *Marcel Duchamp*, his take on 'Chance' was seen as "a procedure that is seen as an act of randomness" something which is evident in my use of paper tears.

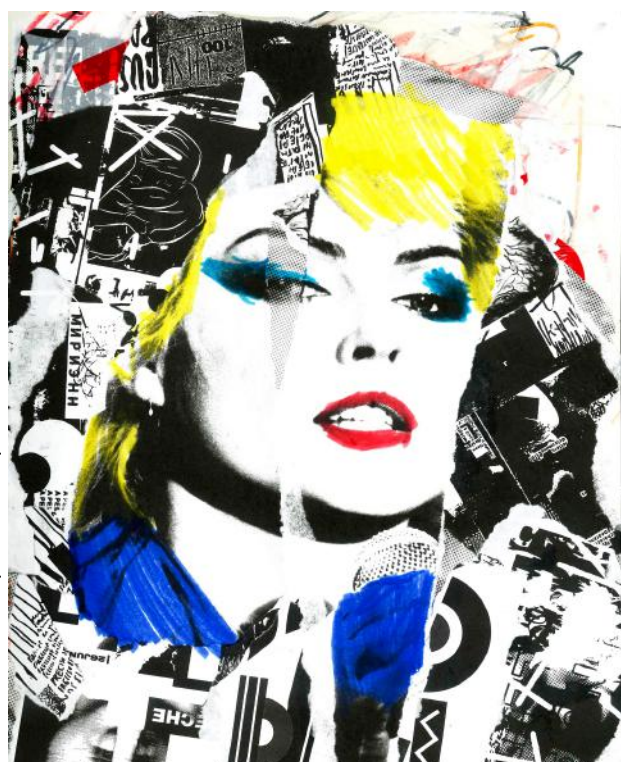
**Paper tears are a distinctive feature of your collages. What do they symbolise for you, and how do they contribute to the overall message of your artwork?**

The paper tears are a prominent feature in my artwork, I feel like I must include them in some way otherwise it looks a bit too 'clean'. I believe they don't symbolise anything however they do contribute to my overall artist approach of incorporating unpredictability and chance. I like to think it's also a nice reference to the artists and movements that inspired me.

**You quoted David Bowie, saying, "I don't know where I'm going from here, but I promise it won't be boring." How does this idea of unpredictability reflect in your future projects?**

I love that quote from David Bowie, I believe everyone can take something away from it (creative or not). Not many people can say they know exactly where we're going in life even from a young age, the majority of us are finding our way and discovering ourselves day by day. This quote relates to my project work; I don't know what I am going to be working on next, I've got ideas floating around my head constantly but I can't say when I'm going to work on those by pinpointing a date.

**What artists or creative figures have had the**

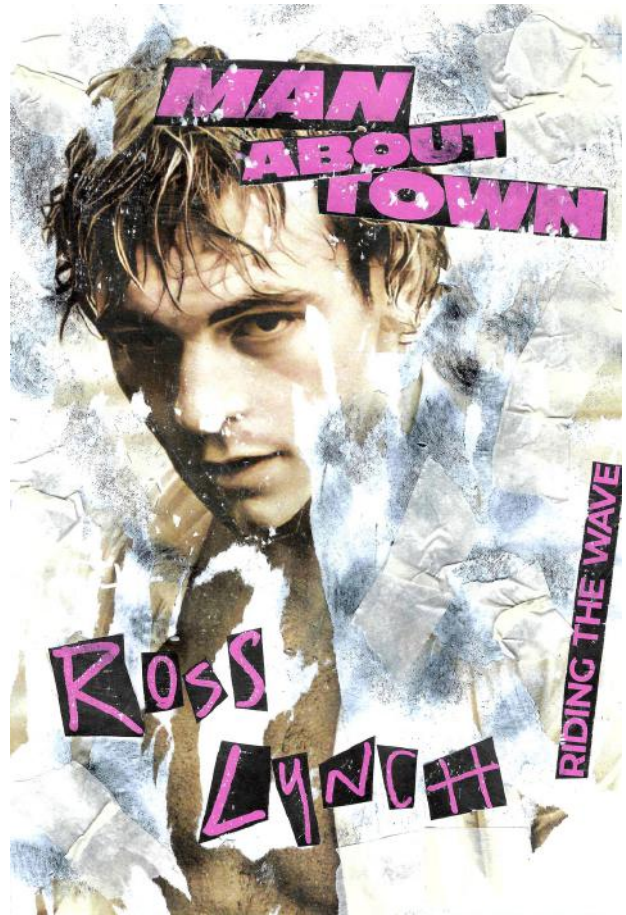


Lewis Ashfield | Blondie | 2022

**most significant impact on your work and why?**

I would have to say, David Bowie. His creativity has had the biggest impact on my practice, especially after watching the Moonage Daydream film, I always knew Bowie experimented with music genres, personas, and art but I didn't know he was the master of experimentation - pushing his work and himself to new creative boundaries. I have delivered a handful of workshops and presentations about my art and my practice; I always try to quote or reference Bowie's artistry in some way - paying tribute to one of my biggest heroes.

Another artist who has had a significant impact on my practice is, punk anarchist legend, Jamie Reid. It still breaks my heart that he is no longer with us. You will probably know his work from the punk movement in the 1970s, particularly the *Sex Pistols - Never Mind the Bollocks... Here's the Sex Pistols* album cover. His practice was rooted in working analogue, using a photocopier, scalpel knife, glue, scissors and paint. I was lucky enough to contact Reid as I was going to interview him for my final project at the Master's however, he



Lewis Ashfield | Riding The Waves | 2024

passed away before he could respond to my questions.

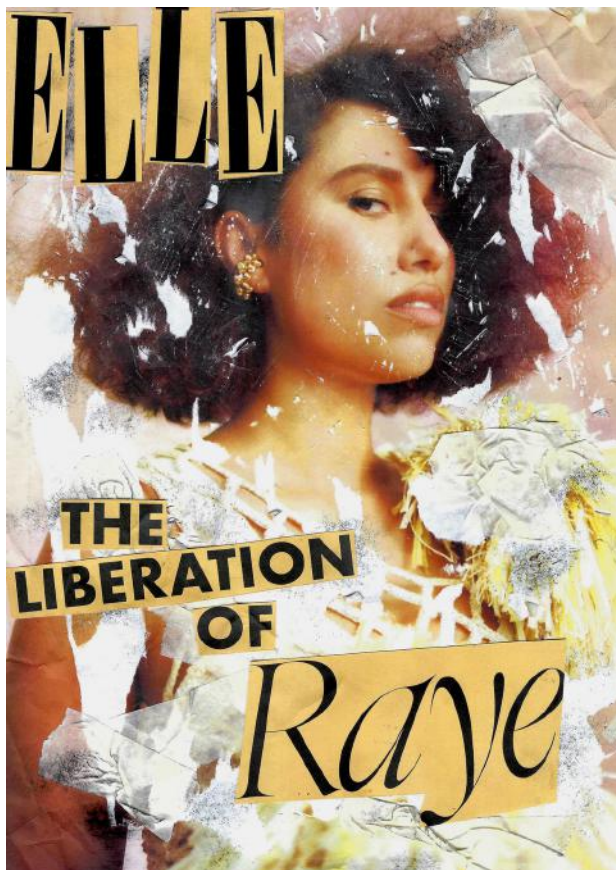
Other creatives who have influenced my work (as a Graphic Designer and as a Mixed Media Artist) are:

Chris Ashworth - British Graphic Designer whose work focuses on 'Swiss Grit', taking Swiss typography and destroying the type aka adding grit.

Patti Smith - Musician, writer and poet. Her writing and outlook on creativity inspire me to keep working and doing what I love.

Paula Scher - the Queen of Graphic Design in my opinion. Scher's work influenced the entirety of my time as a graphic design student and continues to inspire me as a Graphic Designer.

Portis Wasp - Scottish collage Artist, who creates collages digitally and is inspired heavily by fashion and celebrity culture.



Lewis Ashfield | Raye's Liberation | 2023

Storie



Storie



## — Interview

# Krista Jones

**Your metalwork often draws inspiration from nature. Can you describe how your environment influences the materials and forms you work with?**

Growing up with the mountains out my backdoor in British Columbia and spending weeks at a time in the Bruce Peninsula, Ontario created a solid foundation and respect for nature. We are fortunate to have such a diverse canopy that I can get lost in. My inspiration comes in the moment of peace and awe when I hear the wind through the trees and ancient lines carved through rock.

Choosing to work in metal has been a process of experimenting in different mediums, none of which really seemed to speak to me the way metal does. I want to keep exploring the way metal moves under pressure. It's really not unlike rock compressing and crumpling under milenia of pressure. Apply the right kind of heat and force, the molecular structure will change and bend.

**How do you balance the creative process between you and Darrin when collaborating on metal sculptures?**

The concept and creation is rooted in being outside and wandering through the trees.



Having a background in environmental sciences lends me a different insight into where to find species, connections within nature, and looking at the details in rock formations. I will work and rework a template design before cutting into a metal sheet.

Darrin, an accomplished fabricator, helps refine the piece into practical aspects for what materials will weather well together, what sort of joining would bring out the best of the materials, and how to finish the surfaces to bring the vision to life. His life-long practical knowledge is invaluable to my newer found love of steel.

Our artistic partnership is a lot of debating back and forth, hahaha... what would be best for the piece... but not without some foot stomping along the way! He patiently helps guide my wild ideas into being and the colours, textures, and finishes come from talking through the puzzles pieces as I lay them out.

**The use of copper and brass adds striking**

**accents to your steel creations. What role do these semi-precious metals play in your artistic vision?**

It is rare in nature to find only one type of material. Where there is granite, you will also find quartz; where there is an old-growth forest, you will also find a decomposing trunk springing with new saplings. Balancing a softer, brighter semi-precious metal with a harder steel or stone balances the piece both visually and elementally.

Aesthetically contrasting the heavier feel of steel, copper, brass, and gold add warm and depth to my pieces.

Elementally, I have great fun combining metals with other materials that are not so easily accepting of a joining. This often forces me to think outside the box when combining copper with stone or steel.

**You've mentioned being influenced by the Group of Seven, Brian Froud, and Gustav Klimt. How do these influences manifest in your current work?**

While these are all wildly different artists, they all have shape and balance in their compositions. Walking the same paths through the Kawartha Region that the Group



Krista Jones | Ram Skull | 2024

of Seven walked, seeing the same fantastical details in a mushroom as Brian Froud, and feeling the subtle elegance of a Klimt painting inspires me to push simpler forms to higher standards.

My current work in layering steel and copper to create a moment in time along a weather beaten shoreline is heavily influenced by spending time in the same forests and rocky outcroppings and Tom Thomson and Emily Carr.

**Your art explores the cycle of life, particularly focusing on the transition from death to new life. Can you explain how this theme shapes your creative process?**

While it is often overlooked in day to day, the natural cycle can be seen everywhere - with the death of a field for a parking lot, you will still find grasses and wildflowers occupying cracks in the pavement. The decay of autumn leaves enrich the soil with nitrogen for spring's growth. The trees and skulls I incorporate into my pieces are rarely perfect specimens.

I photograph nature in all of its stages and use the symbiotic relationship within ecosystems to fuel a transition from detailed photographs into simple lines and layers

Krista Jones | Western Shore | 2024



that tell a story of that moment in time.

**Many of your works play with shadows and layering. How do these elements help convey the relationship between nature and humanity?**

You can find sweeping tree silhouettes all along the Canadian shorelines that are home to an ever-changing delicate micro-ecosystem. The relationship I explore within the cycle and symbiotic relationships of nature brings to light small bright moments in time as erosion, climate change, and eco-tourism change the coastal landscape year over year.

Decaying or growing, Trees, soil, and the foundational rocks speak strongly to a subtle ever-changing landscape. The wave of

movement toward eco-tourism has left the natural landscape limping along as people attempt to find their place outdoors again. While I attempt to showcase stoic moments and iconic structures, I hope that there is a deeper thought of the balance and care we need to give back to nature as we enjoy the view.

**Can you tell us about a specific piece you created that holds special significance to you and why?**

Hahaha, the first ram skull I created was both terrifying and freeing. To explore the more macabre aspects of the biological cycle... It was a step in realising that I could draw on inspiration from the latter half of the life cycle without heavy gothic intentions.



Krista Jones | Skeleton Leaf | 2023





## — Interview

# Julia Bocharova

**How did you develop your artistic style, and what drew you to work with oil and acrylic on canvas?**

I love realistic, well-detailed character figures against abstract or simplified backgrounds, or vice versa: giving all the attention to the background while keeping the figure more symbolic. This approach makes my paintings accessible to viewers while also feeling current, fitting well into modern interiors. In painting, I value not only decorativeness but also meaning. For example, my painting "It's Hard to Be a Girl," despite the cute character and pink background, addresses the conflict between societal expectations and personal needs. The bear-girl character focuses on her true uniqueness instead of following societal norms – and I like her choice.

My first choice in painting was acrylic. It dries quickly, and the painting is ready to be framed within just a couple of days. Additionally, acrylic is a modern material, and I enjoy working with new technologies. However, I also appreciate oil



Julia Bocharova | Bear Cub - It's Hard to Be a Girl



painting: it allows for slow and thoughtful work. In this technique, you can change shades and the smallest nuances for several days before the paint dries. Working with oil also allows blending the paint with your fingers, creating a living connection between the artist and their painting. I feel like a part of my warmth transfers into the painting during this process.

**Your work often features positive subjects and bright colors. What influences your choice of themes and palette?**

I think that many people today lack positive emotions. I create paintings to uplift the viewers' spirits through vibrant colors and chosen subjects. Dark and unsettling news is for journalists and politicians. Painting can become a source of light and warmth around which people gather, tired of the world's upheavals.

**Could you share the story behind your painting, "It's hard to be a girl: don't climb trees, don't roll in the dust, don't growl. But what if this is my nature?"**

One day, I saw a strict mother at the playground scolding her 5-year-old daughter for being too active. The girl was sniffing, and then she said, "But what if this is who I am?" That's how the idea for my painting came to life. Its hero became a bear-girl full of vitality and energy. She climbs trees and growls because she is inwardly free and ready for self-realization. Instead of being



Julia Bocharova | Bliss

ashamed and suppressing her nature, she finds her uniqueness in it. The painting "It's Hard to Be a Girl" won the "Successful Artist III" competition on the "Open calls" platform in 2024. The painting was purchased, and it can now be seen in the interior of the "Etazh" cultural center in Novosibirsk.

**How do you approach the creative process? Do you have a particular routine or ritual when you start working on a new painting?**

The creative process is always a joy for me. I don't experience the fear of the blank canvas when you hesitate to make the first strokes out of fear of ruining it. Ideas live in my head, and I can't wait to express them. So, I cancel all other activities, set up the canvas on the easel, and start painting. Problems arise later, when the first layer of paint has dried, and the painting is ready for further work. It's scary to ruin what's already been done. But I draw inspiration from my brave characters and continue working. And if I mess something up, well, there's always a chance to fix it.

**How do you envision the future of your art? Are there any new techniques or themes you are eager to explore?**

Contemporary painting features many diverse techniques and methods, and I'm eager to explore them. In the near future, I plan to

integrate textured 3D painting, recycling (reusing paper and fabric), combining different materials, and other techniques into my style. I'm curious to see how it will turn out.

**How do you hope viewers will feel when they engage with your paintings, particularly those that convey deep personal or societal messages?**

I hope people will reflect on the issues of personal and societal interaction, as well as on the complexities of personal communication with others (both humans and animals). In the flow of life, we often forget about these topics, considering them routine. Many people postpone addressing personal issues for the future and live a less fulfilling life than they could. That's why I believe it's important to draw attention to this. At the same time, I hope viewers will enjoy my paintings and feel inspired to decorate their own spaces with them.

**What advice would you give to aspiring artists who are working to find their unique style and voice?**

I would suggest following the "3 b's" rule that I came up with for myself. It goes like this: "Be brave, Believe in yourself, and Bring something new and unique to this world." And I wish good luck to everyone who embarks on the path of creativity. It elevates people and allows them to share ideas and emotions, overcoming any barriers: linguistic, governmental, or territorial. After all, creativity is something that touches people all over the world.



Julia Bocharova | Oh well, I guess I'll have to go barefoot

## — Interview

# Molly Valentine Dierks

**Your works often explore the intersections of nature and technology. How did this interest originate, and how do you see these themes evolving in your practice?**

I am ambivalent about different technologies, specifically communication technology, and some mass production technologies, which allow us to produce for profit without thinking of the impact. We also have a history of likening the human body to the machine (beginning with Descartes)- I find this an incredibly troublesome analogy that doesn't make space for cycles of rest, of quietness, just 'being' versus 'doing'. I also feel like phones, while they connect us, can contribute to a larger culture of isolation. Life is messy, there are no answers, so maybe likening ourselves to work machines is comforting. This being said, I rely on fabrication technologies in other areas of my practice, because it gives me a sense of control over the design, which I love, and I talk to my family over facetime etc. So a lot of my work explores this discomfort. Sidebar: I also see a lot of movies about AI and human robot assistants turning against humanity, so I think this is actually an underlying cultural anxiety... machines becoming more



important than the human spirit, or the natural world.

**You collect various materials during your walks—mushrooms, debris, etc. How do these objects inspire your creative process, and how do you decide which to incorporate into your pieces?**

This originated organically, mostly from a need to be outside. I am always collecting things that I like to look at, that inspire me... basically what I find visually appealing... tiny, delicate, absorbing. I feel like in the United States, we put an emphasis on the new, the flashy, the big, the stand-alone. But in nature, so many of the quiet, tiny things are not only beautiful, they are integral in a larger web of being. So this part of my practice is how I give myself permission to explore more. I did this work in grad school, really just for me, and was hesitant to show it for critique. After the Arteles Residency in Finland, where I was immersed in nature & did not have access to the internet (they even confiscated our phones as part of the residency, which I loved), I got more serious about this work (living in nature) and it became more central.

**Your art combines synthetic and natural elements. How do you select these elements, and what role do they play in conveying your message?**

I tend towards things that are tiny and delicate in the natural world... things like mushrooms, really delicate branches. I love how time slows down when we are absorbed in these exquisite things (the curve of a branch, a miniature mushroom, a neat moss culture etc.). The synthetic things I am drawn to (some are bought, some are collected...) generally seem to refer to hospitals, or science, or even body extensions... like test tubes, needles, wax, etc. There is an element of the body in there. My dad was sick when I started the tree work, so I think some of these almost sci-fi appendages we have created to heal people worked themselves into the series. I am also really fascinated with how we 'fix' body, our being, in our culture, what we pay attention to (science, machines, pills), and what we don't emphasize as much (touch, nature).

**Your installations focus on transitional states such as vulnerability and evolution. Could you elaborate on how**



Molly Valentine Dierks | Eva and Sophie | 2022



Molly Valentine Dierks | Twin Spirits | 2022

**these states are represented in your work, both conceptually and visually?**

This refers primarily to my public artwork and installations. As a neurodivergent (ADHD), I am highly motivated by other people, probably also as a human being. Designing large-scale or immersive spaces or installations that are open-ended is my way of carving out a space for people to let go, to just 'be', to sit with things that are complex or messy, but also beautiful. To slow down, and acknowledge that life isn't linear, or solvable, and that growth is a process that is ongoing. It's important to me as a designer to work with institutions to create these spaces, which I think of as little dream bubbles in someone's day, where they can slow down and connect with themselves.. to be with more complicated, open-ended feelings - and also a sense of peace.

**You've participated in residencies in various countries such as China, Japan, Iceland, and Finland. How have these diverse environments influenced your artistic process?**

I love traveling and exploring, visual culture,

ways of interacting, how things are produced, the natural landscape. Each of these residencies has been eye-opening in some way: for example in Finland (and Iceland), there are very strict rules for how people interact with nature, with ecology (sound laws, clean water, other things like not disturbing moss cultures, they even have free thrift centers where you simply pick up what you need). I am also interested in how different cultures approach design, color palettes, and forms (for example pastel versus primary colors in Korea). Even the religious underpinnings- Buddhist, versus Puritan - works itself into how people approach art-making. I like getting away from the United States, especially as an artist-designer, because there is an emphasis on different forms, and shapes. I particularly love the lack of emphasis asymmetrical 'balance' in design in Japan and Korea (ukiyo-e prints, ikebana).

**How does your background in social psychology and your love for fiction and poetry influence the way you approach your art?**

I am fascinated by people. The only drawback I have found to being an artist or designer is that it can get lonely. I combat



Molly Valentine Dierks | Twilight Sleep | 2022

this, not just with being an educator and mentor, (which I adore)...but with studying people, through movies, through fiction, through poetry. I particularly love how people approach fantasy. I think it's telling... like what is popping up in our movies? How does that reflect a kind of cultural wistfulness or anxiety? What are we worried about, hopeful for? My work is a kind of fantasy too, a story without a conclusion.

**You've exhibited internationally. How has audience response to your work varied across different cultures?**

I haven't honestly found a great deal of difference in the way that people respond to my work across cultures. My goal is always to create a draw, something so visually visceral and hopefully appealing, that it does not need to be explained in words, it is okay to just feel, and to look. I think across cultures, we all need space and time to turn off our desire to explain, or have an answer, or even a 'point', and just be... feel things that are complex, open-ended, without answers. We are super uncomfortable with that, it seems, so I use my skills as a designer to create a space of comfort around it.

Molly Valentine Dierks | Twilight Sleep | 2022





Molly Valentine Dierks | Twin Spirits | 2022

I was born in 2005 and grew up in a small town named Alexandra in New Zealand. Being from a small town, I didn't have much to do so I focused on art in school. I have been painting from around 14 years old and have loved it since. My mum is a painter too which inspired me to explore my style and art in general. Throughout high school I made several portfolios and murals. This year I started studying a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the Dunedin School of Art. I discovered my interest in sculpture as art school really pushed my limits. I worked on my painting skills which in turn has moved me towards painting extreme perspective styles. I have participated in a few local exhibitions and came third in an inter-college art competition. I am very proud of all my projects so far and can't wait to share more.

— Tasia



Tasia | Look at me spaghetti





## — Interview

# Maartje Martisan

**As both a therapist and an artist, how do these two roles relate to each other in your work? Does your therapeutic approach inform your image creation, or vice versa?**

My images emerge from my subconscious, often before I can fully comprehend them. I create many images until they naturally come together. During this process, I reflect on what's significant—what I wish to convey, informed by my therapeutic background—and sometimes, this leads me to create new images. This cycle repeats endlessly. There's no single starting point; everything continually works together and evolves. This wholeness is what I aim to express in my projects.

Through my studies in fields such as pedagogy and systemic therapy, I've learned a great deal about what matters to us as human beings—psychologically and relationally. And from my studies at the art academy and photography school, I've gained the skills to create better-quality images, and more importantly, discovered who I am and what I want to convey in my projects as an artist.

In my work as a therapist, I see people struggle daily, often with similar issues. I feel a strong mission with my art projects to



address topics that I believe are essential for achieving or maintaining mental health.

With my project *Neverending End*, for example, I believe that if we can break destructive family patterns, we can build a healthier, more loving society.

**Your work touches on deeply personal themes, including intergenerational trauma. How have your experiences inspired you to explore this in *Neverending End*?**

Through my own experiences—such as the anger I felt from my mother and the anger she described from my grandfather—I became determined to actively address and stop these intergenerational issues so that my own children can live healthier lives. Beneath anger often lies pain, and I chose to engage with the pain rather than the anger, which led to greater understanding and space for healing.

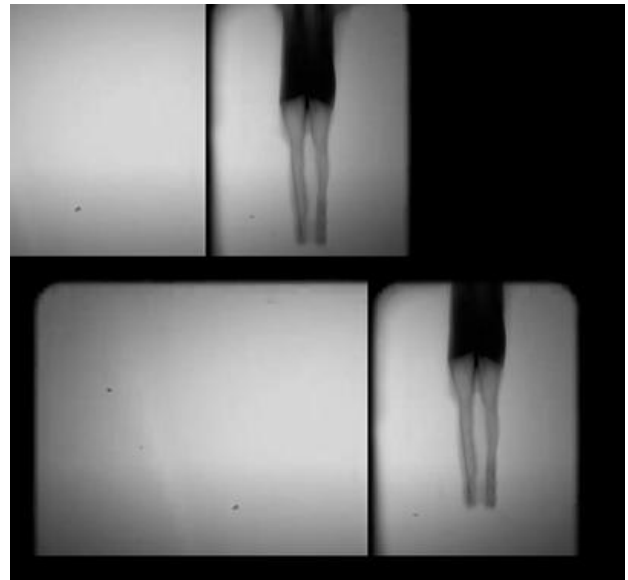
I've worked through several significant themes in my own life, which helped me

process the pain rooted in trauma. For instance, I transitioned from a helper/rescuer role towards my mother, to embracing my role as her daughter, fully accepting her as she is. This shift brought immense peace to me, improving both my relationship with her and with myself. Because of the strong relationship my mother and I had, *Neverending End* naturally gained deeper layers of meaning.

In hindsight, I've been working on this project for over 10 years, though I didn't realize it at the time. I always work from a place of feeling, from my subconscious. Only in the final year of my photography studies did everything come together. I realized then that all my work from the art and photography academies centered around the same theme: my desire to visually explore my sense of disconnect. This disconnect, I discovered, stemmed from intergenerational trauma—a cycle I've since broken.

**You describe internalizing your mother's trauma and ultimately finding peace. How has this personal journey influenced your artistic practice?**

Recording my interactions with my mother—through audio, video, and photography—made me acutely aware of this process, deepening it further. Both my mother and I are creative, leading to many ideas we could



Maartje Martisan | Disappear | 2022

develop and explore together while she was still alive. This strengthened our bond even more.

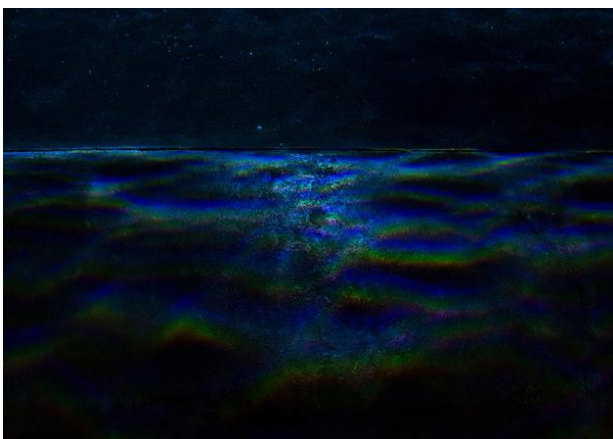
**In *Neverending End*, you aim to confront uncomfortable emotions and disconnection. How do you think audiences typically respond to these themes in your work?**

Audiences often tell me they feel a sense of recognition. During exhibitions or lectures, people openly discuss their own struggles and patterns. My artist talks have sparked beautiful conversations about self-reflection, and meaningful exchanges about ethical issues such as trauma, mental health care, and assisted suicide. These dialogues have been invaluable.

**How do you balance exploring such heavy emotional themes in your art while maintaining your own mental and emotional well-being?**

Thanks to my work as a therapist, where I deal with difficult themes daily, I've learned a lot. I firmly believe that life isn't easy, and we must accept that. It's normal. I've embraced this, which makes life feel less heavy. I also take good care of myself by focusing on my health and doing things that energize me.

Maartje Martisan | Hope | 2022



For instance, when I create an image that feels just right, I gain a lot of energy from that.

**You've mentioned your focus on preventing the transmission of intergenerational trauma to your children. How do you see your art contributing to this goal?**

Through my images or artist talks, I hope people become more aware of their own disconnection. This awareness can spark an inner dialogue, prompting individuals to process difficult situations more deeply and find acceptance. This is the first step in stopping destructive patterns and creating a better life.

**Can you share more about the role your mother, Cornelia, plays in your work? How did she feel about being the subject**

**of your art?**

For my mother, this project was extremely important. She wanted the world to know more about the laws and regulations surrounding assisted dying in Switzerland. My mother went to Switzerland because she couldn't get assisted dying in the Netherlands. She wanted people to understand that they don't have to commit suicide if they genuinely wish to die, sparing themselves and others additional trauma. Her last wish was for people to realize there is a place in Switzerland where you can die with dignity, surrounded by loved ones.

I am deeply motivated to share this project with the world, both for the new generation—to help them grow up healthier—and for those who seek a humane way to die, in alignment with all ethical considerations and legal frameworks.



Maartje Martisan | Portrait my mother and me | 2022



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VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM

# VISUAL ART JOURNAL

NO. 9

SEPTEMBER 2024

