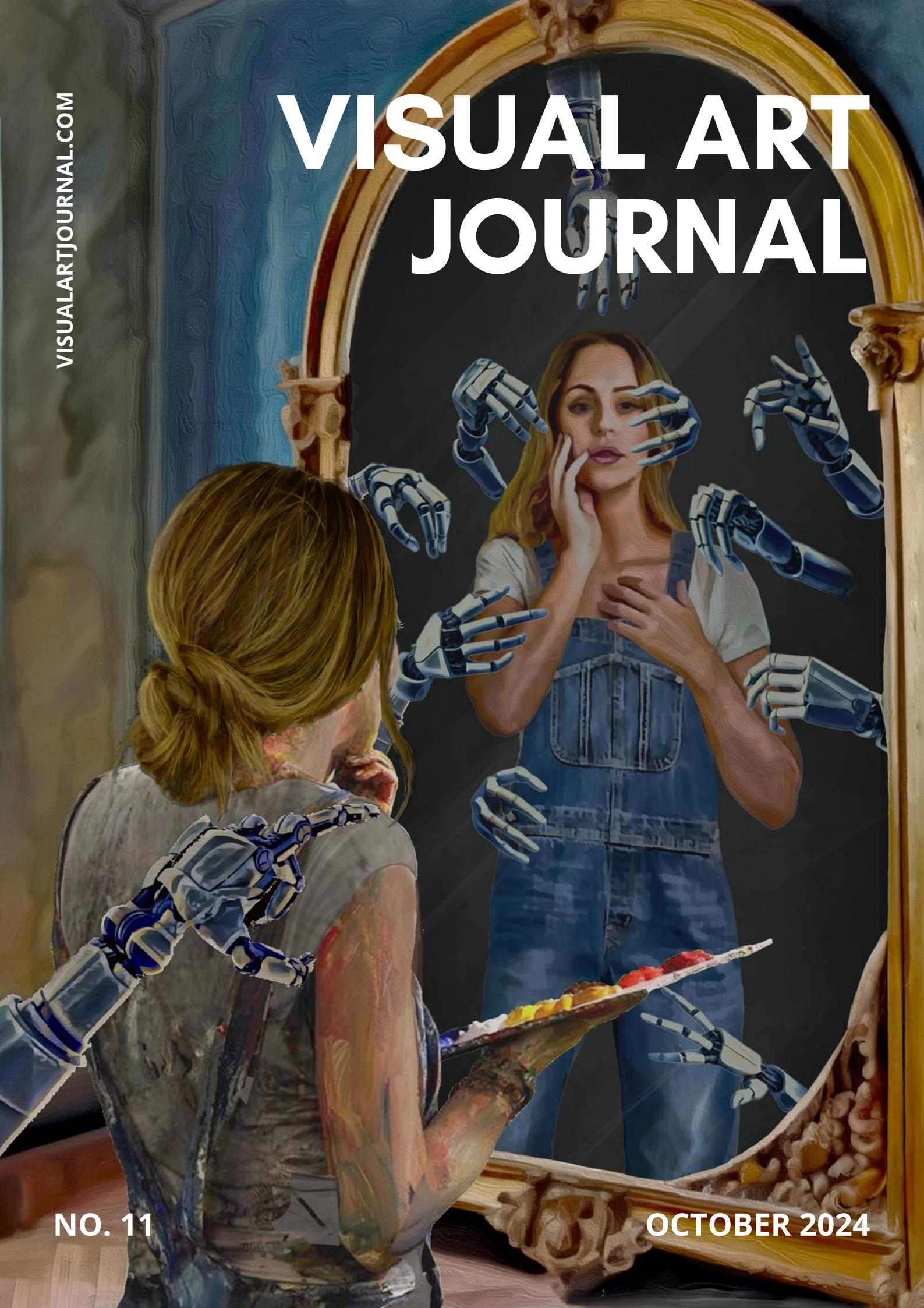


VISUAL ART JOURNAL





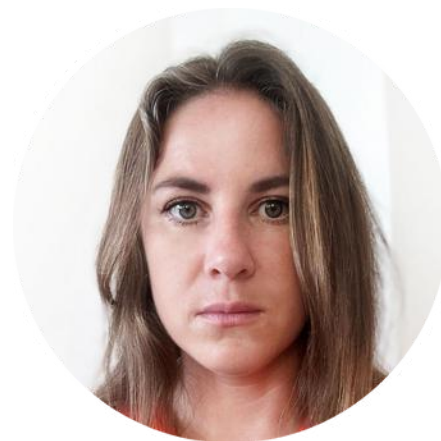
— Intro

Hello, dear reader!

You are holding the eleventh issue of our magazine in your hands. In this edition, we've decided to broaden our horizons and include art not only created on canvas or through traditional materials, but also, for example, tattooing, where the human body becomes the canvas.

I am incredibly happy that our magazine is becoming a platform for self-expression and fulfillment for both professional artists and those who are just beginning their journey in art. After all, support is especially crucial at the start, when confidence in one's talent is still fragile and can easily falter without some encouragement or a helping hand.

Brew yourself a cup of aromatic tea or coffee, get comfortable — ahead are dozens of pages filled with visual delight and an immersive journey into the world of art.



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

On the Front Cover:

Sakira Rimlee

Soliloquy
2024

On the Back Cover:

Lisa Claisse

Goldfinch on Delft
2022

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

— Interview

Datz

Can you tell us more about your journey from the Philippines to the Bay Area, and how these cultural experiences have influenced your art?

My Filipino roots and growing up in the Bay Area have deeply shaped who I am as an artist. The Philippines brings this rich, vibrant culture, while the Bay Area exposed me to diversity and different perspectives. Both places taught me the importance of expressing myself fully, and that shows in my work.

Your art is a mix of chaos and harmony. How do you balance these two contrasting elements in your work?

Life is full of chaos and harmony, and I think my art reflects that naturally. It's not about forcing a balance but letting both exist together. I embrace the chaos and let the harmony emerge through the flow of colors and shapes.



What emotions or stories are you hoping to evoke in viewers when they engage with your pieces?

I want people to feel something personal when they look at my art—whether it's curiosity, peace, or even confusion. My hope is that they connect to the movement and energy in their own way.

You've mentioned that your art has hidden meanings known only to you. Can you give us an example of how one of your pieces tells a personal story?

One piece might look like abstract colors, but to me, it represents a memory or a turning point in my life. For example, I've hidden shapes that remind me of my childhood or personal struggles.

Las Vegas is known for its vibrant and eclectic culture. How has living in this city impacted your artistic style or themes?

Vegas has this wild energy that's definitely influenced my style. The lights, the colors, the



Datz | Covid2020 | 2020

fast-paced life—it all adds to the vibrancy and unpredictability in my pieces.

In your biography, you mentioned that people often mistake you for being tough. How do you challenge or embrace that perception in your art?

I embrace it. People might see my exterior and think one way, but my art is how I show the softer, more vulnerable side. It's my way of saying there's more to me than meets the eye.

What role does your family play in your creative process, and how does their support influence your work?

My family is everything. They've always supported me, and knowing they believe in me gives me the confidence to keep creating. My art wouldn't be what it is today without them.



Datz | Don Dadda | 2024

Dead Boy is an artist, whose works emerged from the depths of a personal crisis. After fleeing Belarus due to political unrest, he settled in Warsaw. It was here, in the grip of depression, that he discovered a new fascination: the marginalized people of the city, whose everyday lives are filled with drama and an unexpected kind of beauty. In his work, Dead Boy focuses on portraying the homeless of Warsaw, whom he quietly observes and captures on canvas. It is these "drifters" who have become an unexpected source of inspiration for the artist, symbols of survival and human dignity, with their stories etched into every face. Through his works, Dead Boy invites viewers to see the world through the eyes of those who are often rendered invisible by society. His paintings reflect a fascination with the drama of street life, but also a deep empathy and a desire to understand the complex nature of humanity.

Dead Boy | PKP Wola





Dead Boy | Pipe

— Interview

Yana Liubarska

What inspired you to transition from a career in economics to becoming a full-time artist?

Art has always been something that lived inside me throughout my life, even when I was working in economics. Economics and art may seem like two different worlds, but for me, they were always intertwined—analytical thinking and creative vision. At a certain point, I realized that art was not just a hobby but a calling, and through it, I could express my deep feelings and ideas much more powerfully. Transitioning to a full-time artist was a natural step for me to follow my passion and share it with the world.

How has your move to Greece influenced your artistic journey and the subjects you paint?

Moving to Greece has had a significant impact on my art. This country, with its ancient culture, vibrant nature, and rich history, inspires me every day. Here, I began to explore themes of inner strength and the beauty of women more deeply. The Greek light and atmosphere seem to have added more energy and emotion to my works, allowing me to look at my subjects and techniques in a new way.

Your portraits are known for their multi-perspective gaze. Could you explain what this means and how you developed this unique technique?

My "multi-perspective gaze" symbolizes the multi-dimensionality of the human persona. It's a technique where the eyes of my subjects are depicted with multiple irises and pupils. I want to convey the idea that we are not just one feeling

or one state. Within us, there are many "selves," many perspectives on the world and on ourselves. This technique developed gradually as I sought a way to portray the inner conflict and the variety of emotions that we carry inside.

In your artist statement, you mention portraying the strength and beauty of women. How do you select the roles or situations in which to depict them?

I aim to show women in various states and roles—from leaders to creators, from warriors to mothers. These images come to me as I reflect on life and the experiences that women around me, as well as myself, go through. I choose situations that highlight both women's strength and their vulnerability, always focusing on the idea that a woman's inner greatness is revealed in her ability to be diverse, multifaceted, and strong in any role.

Watercolor is often considered a delicate medium. How do you use it to convey the power and strength of your female subjects?

Watercolor is indeed delicate, but that's where its strength lies. I enjoy working with contrasts—I use soft color transitions to convey the emotional depth and inner energy of my subjects. Bold strokes and vibrant color accents help me depict power and strength, but through the lens of subtlety, which watercolor can so masterfully convey. My goal is to show that strength can be gentle, yet no less powerful.

How do you think your work resonates with women who see your paintings? What message do you hope they take away from your work?

I hope that women, when they see my work, feel recognized and understood. I strive to show that each of us is not only externally beautiful but also strong internally, and that we all carry a power within us that can manifest in many ways. My message is a reminder that we can be different but still whole. I hope my paintings bring women a sense of inner peace and confidence.

What advice would you give to women who are pursuing their dreams, whether in art or other fields?

The most important thing is to believe in yourself and not be afraid to try new things. Often, the path to your dream can be difficult and long, but each step brings you closer to what you truly want. Today is yesterday's "tomorrow." So,

activate your multi-gaze and weave your web by small acts in honor of tomorrow, step by step. It's important to keep your inner fire alive and never give up. Don't be afraid of mistakes because they provide us with valuable lessons. And most importantly, surround yourself with people who support you and help you to grow, who improve you day by day.

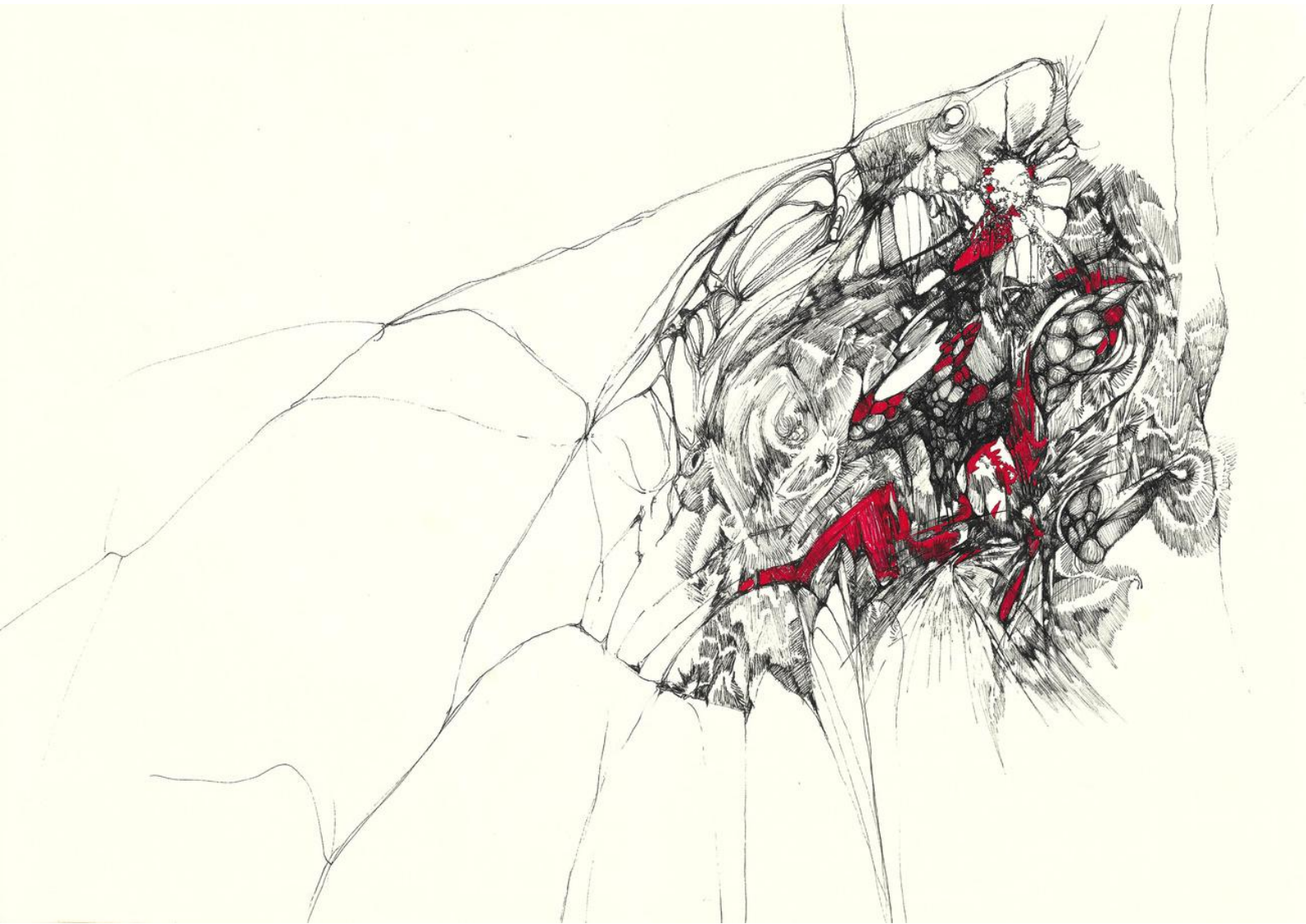


Yana Liubarska | The Sea of Trees

I come from an artistic family. From an early age, I was surrounded by my father's watercolors, my mother's masterful paintings, and my grandmother's passionate soul. I would wake up at 6 a.m. just to start drawing in the morning light. I still explore my inner world today and continue learning new things about myself. My emotions have always been predominant in my work. The process of creating is sometimes more important to me than the result. I record the moment, state, or gesture on a given medium, often without a prior plan. With each piece, I devote more attention to my emotions, trying to understand and calm them. I never saw any other path for myself than heading towards art. As a result, I graduated from the Fine Arts High School in Bielsko-Biała and the University of Silesia in Cieszyn. I have held the title of Master of Arts since the fall of 2023. Both in high school and at university, I mainly defended my diplomas in the field of printmaking. In Cieszyn, I run the Artelier-Design Gallery, where I discover my inner self, mostly through traditional techniques, and provide others with a space to explore themselves.

— Wiktoria Kaczmarek

Wiktoria Kaczmarek | Pajęczak | 2024





— Interview

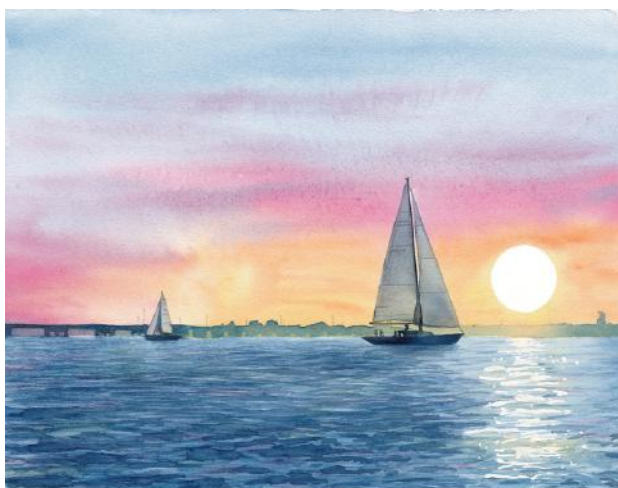
Lisa Claisse

How did your travels across the United States influence your artistic style?

I was exposed to many different environments and cultures. The natural habitats intrigued me the most. From a very young age I was drawn into each new territory to explore: High desert, low desert, forest, mountain, ocean. I loved watching the wildlife and smelling and tasting the wild plants. Murals and graffiti also influenced my art.

What draws you to paint nature, and how do you capture its fleeting beauty in your work?

I have always felt very connected to nature. I have seen what human damage can do to destroy a once beautiful place. I like to make my pictures as crisp and beautiful as nature is at her best. Our planet is very important to me. It breaks my heart when I see our natural things destroyed. I hope that someday humans will somehow reconnect with the natural world in a more sustainable way.



Lisa Claisse | Bridge and sailboats | 2022



Lisa Claisse | Goldfinch on Delft | 2022

What roles do traditional and digital tools play in your creative process? How do you balance them?

I started out as a traditional artist, but we must make money, so I started working as a silkscreen artist, and later as a graphic artist for several magazines. When I got my first Apple computer I was captivated. I got hooked on Photoshop. I love to scan in my art and manipulate it with Photoshop -- the possibilities are endless.

You've exhibited your work in California, Florida, and New York. How do you feel the artistic communities differ across these regions?

I find that people are basically the same in every community. Most people are nice, bad people are very rare. I am always attracted to artists, museums and art groups.

Your art often evokes a sense of dreaminess. Could you share more about your approach to blending reality and imagination in your paintings?

Most of my art comes from my dreams. I want to feel good when I see my art and I want people to feel good when they see it.

How has your involvement with BACCA and East End Arts impacted your artistic journey?

They showcase my work so that the community sees it. They inspire me and I have made some great friends.

What are some of the key lessons you've learned from meeting and interacting with other artists?

We feed off each other in a good way. I am inspired by seeing artworks by other artists. I have learned many tips and techniques and discovered new tools and supplies. I also find venues to show and sell my art.



Lisa Claisse | Peaceful Water | 2021



Lisa Claisse | Truck barn 3 | 2020

My name is **Irina Ponomarenko**, and I am an emerging artist. Painting is one of the directions of my hobby. For my canvases, I use acrylic, oil, as well as various materials such as fabric and putty. I draw inspiration from the northern nature and landscapes I encounter during my travels. I strive to convey the depth of emotions through a picturesque interpretation of reality, and I aim to improve my skills with each new piece.



ARTISTA ARTISTA



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Matteo Cervone

You spent over two decades in the corporate world before pursuing art full-time. How did your professional experiences influence your artistic approach?

For many years I was a corporate trainer in organisational change, interpersonal relations and conflict resolution. The aim was to experience the space of work, which takes up a lot of time in life, as a satisfying and nourishing space. I believe that this is partly present in my artwork: the desire to convey optimism about life, self-discovery and improvement.. When I am at exhibitions and talk to visitors, I notice that those who stop and talk to me are often attracted not only by the aesthetic aspect of my work, but also by the deeper meaning, the philosophy of life, the ethic.

Your project 'Other Worlds' plays with the metaphor of traffic lights. What inspired you to use these everyday symbols to explore human behavior and emotions?

My relationship with traffic lights was born when I was working as a consultant. I drove many kilometres by car every day. I had a "love-hate" relationship with them (mainly I hated them when they were red,



to be honest). Then, one day, I was at a traffic light near my home and I thought: "I go in the morning and come back in the evening. In the summer, in the autumn, in the winter... This light is there, it does not move, and it sees me walking back and forth every day"

So I thought that the traffic lights could see us, trying to understand our hurried or slow movements... And that they change colour according to the emotions of the people walking under them.

Surrealism and conceptual art seem to play a role in your works. How do you balance the real and the imaginary in your visual compositions?

I think life is a very serious thing. But a laugh can make everything easier and help in hard times.

As for my pictures, I start from an observation of reality. As we often discover, reality can surpass fantasy. If you look for interesting or strange traffic lights, you notice a similarity with people: all traffic lights seem to be the same, but they are all different in their specific situations.

Then I realise what I am looking for: sometimes a contrast with the

surroundings, sometimes a particular colour combined with other details. So the little man at the traffic lights is doing something that makes me think, or is doing something that makes me smile, or is in a surreal situation. I don't stop until my composition moves and evokes me.

Another point concerns the creation of a visual project when I want to explore a particular theme. I select and sequence existing images, look for missing ones and retrieve material from my archives to create a narrative with moments of introspection and moments of emotional release. Like a kind of film.

I want the single image to carry a message, and the visual project as a whole to carry an even stronger message.

I like to think that my pictures are eye-catching, that they attract attention, like just beautiful pictures. But then, on closer inspection, they bring a different, stronger emotion and a deeper message about our lives. That is the conceptual side of my work.

You often emphasize the 'yellow light' as a symbol of choice, free will, and change. Could you share a personal experience where this idea of choice was pivotal for your art?

Thank you for your question. My first work with the traffic lights came at a time when I was leaving the corporate world. It was challenging, exciting and really scary at the same time. On that occasion I made one of my first works. Three images representing the alarm of the situation, the indecision that freezes, and the choice to face the new. When it was finished, I realised that all the lights in this triptych were "yellow



lights".

I think that there is a kind of "behavioural code" that is already in the traffic light. When you approach an intersection and the light turns yellow, you automatically make a choice: do you speed up to get through before the red, or do you slow down, stop and wait for the next green? So I realise that the yellow light has to do with choice. Even waiting and "doing nothing" is actually a choice.

Your pieces are printed in a very limited edition, with a focus on authenticity. What drives your decision to limit the availability of your works, and how does this affect the connection with your audience?

The printing process, colour calibration and depth of some of my images are best appreciated when printed in large format on fine art paper, which allows for optimum chiaroscuro detail and lamp brightness. This also guarantees a colour and gloss life of over 100 years (this is called "museum quality"). These prints, when properly lit, make it look as if you have a window in your house and a real traffic light outside your window.

This type of printing and media (forex or dibond) is more expensive, so it is necessary to limit its production and

dedicate it to a collector audience. Collectors often find a particular affinity with the story in a particular scene. They meet me at the fair, they come back to see their favourite board with their husband or wife, maybe we discuss it and share the emotions they feel and those I feel. It creates a one-to-one relationship between the collector and the board.

However, I do not only produce numbered pieces. I also produce some pictures in open series. I also make small offset-printed posters of other images. This is obviously a very different print quality, but it makes for a cheaper 'keepsake'. Art is a form of communication and this way my message can reach as many people as possible.

In your statement, you mention that your traffic light figures assign colors to human actions and emotions. How do you decide what actions or emotions correspond to each color?

Similar to the feelings associated with the colour yellow, the feelings associated with green and red emerged on their own. It was like an art-therapy session.. I started by taking pictures on the street in a casual way. At first I thought the visual research would be over after a few shots: here's the green, here's the red... Done. Then I realised that some of the images made me feel "happy or cool" and others were "strong and passionate". Many people helped me to read into my pictures. Something similar can happen in psychological support groups: you may have all the answers in front of you, but you just cannot focus on them. Everything can be clearer to people looking at you from the outside.

This is why I like to do public shows and fairs as part of my annual activity. I listen to what people see in my work... And often their feelings enrich the depth of my vision and myself.

As a part of contemporary artists who arrive at art later in life, how does maturity affect the themes and narratives you explore in your work?

From one point of view, this moment is a personal life goal. In my early life, my family pushed me into a "practical and paycheck" career. If I had a "daring" project, the question was "can you make money out of it?" So I parked some dreams in a drawer.

At the time, I found this approach difficult. But today I really believe that my family's suggestion was a good one and that it worked. In fact, that decision in the past has allowed me to have the resources today to pursue the expression I wanted. So now the dreams can come out of the drawer like a "hellzapping" and that is great!

Coming to art expression at a mature age means freedom for me. I feel that I have fulfilled my obligations to my family, society and the world. I have paid the 'debt' to the previous generations that allowed me to be here, in this world, today.

So I can take time and energy to explore new worlds, to get out of my comfort zone. I have a wide range of possibilities, similar to when I was 25 years old. I have nothing to lose, except perhaps the opportunity to have these experiences!



Matteo Cervone
Triptych Man In The Mirror
2022

Hi, I'm **Bella Taylor**, the artist behind **BBTdoodles**. My work is a celebration of bold colours and vibrant energy, drawing inspiration from street art, pop culture, and the world around me. I love taking what I see in my mind and reshaping it into reality with a playful and unique approach. Art should evoke a feeling of excitement, and through my work, I aim to do just that.



— Interview

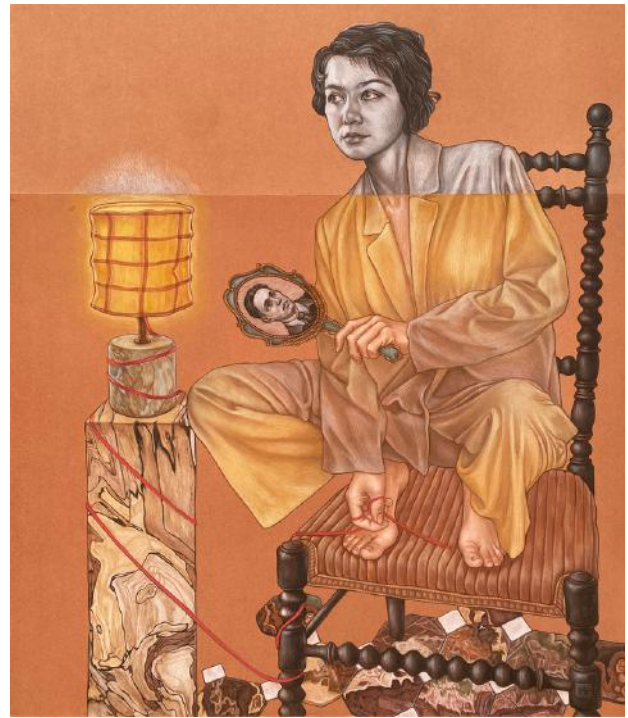
Sasha Krautman

Your background in arts, architecture, and interior design is clearly reflected in your artistic style. How do these disciplines influence your creative process?

My education and experience in interior design have definitely shaped my sense of aesthetics and beauty, training my eye to notice small details that contribute to the bigger picture. I've worked as an architectural visualization artist for seven years, a role that requires constant attention to materials. Over time, I realized that many textures and patterns are beautiful even outside the context of interiors, and they deserve to be captured individually. This led me to start experimenting. After drawing my first wooden block, I couldn't stop this journey.

You've mentioned that the phrase "This too shall pass" was a theme for your recent artwork. How did this phrase guide your emotional journey through the creation process?

I had wanted to explore this phrase in my artwork for a while. It holds deep meaning for me and has kept me grounded through the toughest moments of my life, while also helping me stay humble during the happiest ones. When my grandfather passed away last year, I knew there wouldn't be a 'better' moment to create this piece. At the same time, I was reading the autobiography my grandfather had written for us. Drawing this diptych became part of my grieving process and a way to reconnect with my family history. I wanted it to feel nostalgic, light, and hopeful—a reflection of things passing and things remaining with us, like small memories



Sasha Krautman | This too shall pass part 1 | 2024

that linger even after their physical presence fades. Ever-changing, cyclical, and following a mysterious synchronicity, these moments form the unique patterns of one's life.

Both of your grandparents seem to have played a significant role in this project. Can you tell us more about how their stories influenced the imagery in your diptych?

My grandmother was my biggest supporter when it came to art. She always encouraged me, telling me I would be an artist when I grew up. In many ways, this artwork feels like a tribute to her—as if I'm saying, 'Look, Grandma, I'm doing it!' While working on the piece, I was reading my grandfather's autobiography. Their relationship was beautiful and passionate, shaping their life together. It has always inspired me, and I wanted to capture that as best as I could. Our family often says they were never seen apart in their minds, so I depicted my grandmother holding a mirror with his reflection, as if he is always with her, wherever she turns it, and perhaps even when she looks into it. Imagining them this way helped me accept loss and find comfort in the thought that, if there is a place where people go after life, they are now back together.

Grief and memory are strong themes in your work. How do you balance these heavy

emotions with the sense of hope and lightness that your art conveys?

I try to keep a positive outlook on life. I think life can be dark enough, so we don't always need to add more of that in art. While it's important to acknowledge all aspects of the emotional spectrum, I prefer to view it through a lens of hope, light, acceptance, and an optimistic perspective on the future. In my artworks I prefer to use a warmer color palette, as well as objects and materials, like wood, that create a sense of comfort and balance.

What role does symbolism play in your work? For example, the red strings and moon imagery in your diptych seem loaded with meaning. Can you elaborate on their significance?

Even more than I love symbols, I enjoy hearing how people interpret them. There's no 'one way' to see a color or shape, and viewers' interpretations enrich each artwork beyond what the artist has ingrained in it. In the 'This too shall pass' diptych, the red string symbolizes a connection between souls and times. The young woman holds onto it, as if she wants to maintain her connection to home and the comforting warmth of light. At the same time, the lamp has a net in it, which can be viewed as a prison—warm and comfortable, but limiting. On the right side of the diptych, the girl is holding the moon on a string like a balloon, as if she's catching it like a butterfly. She looks up with a hopeful smile. Interestingly, both of my grandparents passed away on a full moon. That's why it was important to add it here, to symbolize the mysterious and synchronous nature of life.

Your diptych feels deeply personal. How do you think your audience connects with the personal stories you weave into your art?

I believe that the best way for people to connect with one another is through personal stories. When someone opens up and shares something that happened to them, revealing how it made them feel, we immediately see their soul. Even if we can't relate or have never experienced what they have, pure, honest emotion is what brings

us closer.

My main wish and aim is to evoke a state of self-reflection in viewers. Whatever they discover as they look and slow down is what's most important for them in that moment.

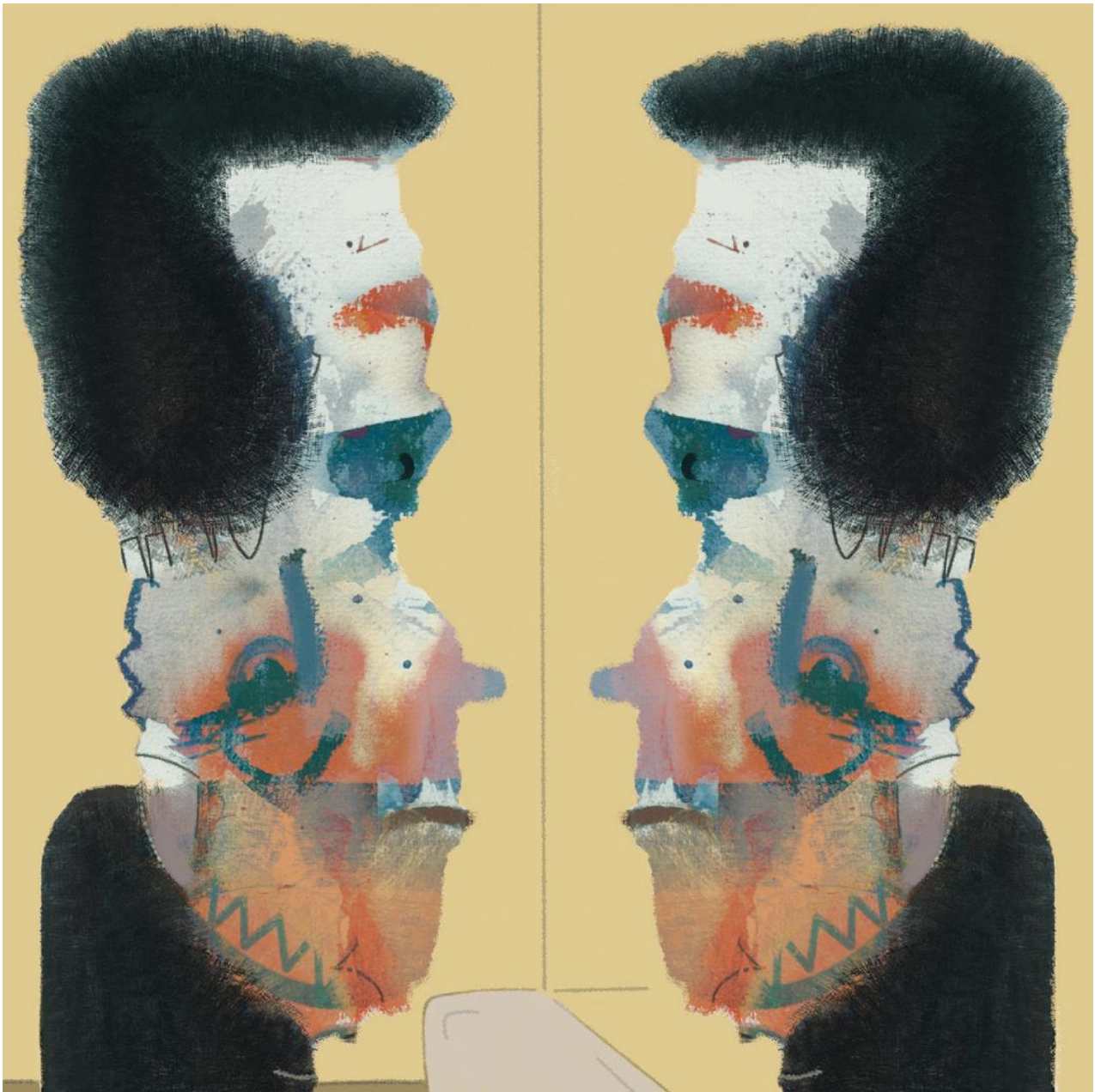
You've lived in both Russia and Australia. How has your move impacted your artistic expression and your connection to personal themes like family and loss?

I started traveling long before moving to Australia, so I'm used to living away from home. While I don't think the move has drastically changed my artistic expression, traveling and relocating have helped me focus on what truly matters. Leaving certain aspects of life behind has made me more aware of the meaningful elements I want to express in my art. The textures and objects I draw serve as important elements and pieces of life—a wooden table we once sat at with friends, a marble pattern we saw in a museum, a chair we remember from someone's home. I aim to make them present, a piece of now.

Of course, it gets tough when something significant happens back home. You spend hours on the phone with family, trying to decide whether to fly back or not. Living so far away forces you to make difficult choices and sometimes miss important family moments. But when I do get the chance to reconnect, it feels so much more meaningful.. These experiences shape my perspective and influence my work, allowing me to express both the pain of separation and the beauty of what stays with us.



Jorge Linares (Tenerife, June 30, 1982) is an artist and Doctor of Philosophy who has resided in Berlin since 2008. Driven by Nietzsche's thought, he moved to the German capital to write his doctoral thesis, "The Game in Nietzsche's Tragedy," where, in connection with Heraclitus' philosophy, Linares defines play as the key to understanding Nietzsche's thought: "The game is present in all moments of Nietzsche's thinking, and among all the players, there is always one that stands out above the rest—the child." With the presentation of his doctoral thesis in February 2016, Linares decided to distance himself from academic philosophy. Without forgetting Nietzsche's teachings and the experiences gained during the years of working on his thesis, he sought new horizons. It was precisely with his departure from academic philosophy and the birth of his daughter Luisa that Linares found in art a medium of expression that offered him a space for play, experimentation, and freedom: "Luisa came at the right moment. Together we found in watercolors, crayons, and colored pencils a medium of expression and communication in which she was the teacher and I was the student." Thus, in 2017, the **Horekb** project was born. It is an artistic project that seeks to be increasingly incisive without losing the child's perspective. A mix of styles, with the use of watercolors and digital art standing out, Horekb is "a game of shapes and colors in which there is no premeditated plan, and things seem to happen naturally—sometimes as a result of effort, and other times, by chance.



Horekb | The man in front of the mirror | 2024



— Interview

Sakira Siamina Rimlee

Your work "Soliloquy" touches on the contemporary discussions surrounding AI-generated art. Could you elaborate on what inspired this particular piece and the message you wish to convey?

As suggested by its name, 'Soliloquy' is the by-product of my inner reflection. It responds to the pivotal changes in artistic production brought about by AI. It attempts to capture my personal dilemma regarding the ethical integration of AI generative art in image-making, invoked by casual conversations in the university cafeteria with friends and contemporaries, who, much like myself, have been grappling with this 'new normal' of visual communication. However, when viewed against the larger backdrop of ongoing discussions within the contemporary art community, especially regarding the unlawful copying of artistic gestures emulated by these generative tools, 'Soliloquy' transcends its original purpose. It becomes a mirror unto itself. The work aims to represent the two sides of the debate on a singular picture plane. It features a duality of helpful reliance and overbearing devaluation of individual artistic rigor prompted by generative media. It is left up to the viewer to decide which side of the 'mirror' they begin interpreting the work from. In doing so, they introduce their own bias by picking a side.

Having a background in both architecture and graphic design, how do you feel these



disciplines influence your creative process and artistic expression?

Being in architecture school has vastly impacted my preliminary process of formulating a composition. While I have been a lifelong art enthusiast, being actively involved in design-oriented thinking has changed the way I approach worldbuilding in my artistic explorations. Architecture and graphic design largely involve thinking through layers. In recent times, my focus has therefore shifted from thinking firstly about the subject of the drawing. Instead, I now focus on the spatial organization of the backdrop. Once the backdrop is well-oriented in my imagination, I am then able to easily translate it onto my digital canvas. In my opinion, this approach provides more clarity moving forward, making the process of adding and subtracting in collage/mixed media-based pieces much easier. The resulting works end up having a better balance of spatial elements, combined with color, texture, light, and shadow. Working together, these components help accentuate the emotive quality of the artwork. They communicate the broader themes encircling the subject more effectively.

You have worked with various media throughout your career, from acrylics on canvas to digital mixed media. What motivated your transition towards digital art, and how do you see this medium shaping your future work?

I feel like operating within a design school for the past four years had a lot of influence in terms of this transition. As I harbored technical skills in Adobe CC and other design software, producing digital drawings and mixed media art helped broaden my artistic vocabulary. Both from a creative as well as an economical point of view, I found digital works to be incredibly exciting. Not only did this shift allow me to move from 'representative' art to 'reflective' art, but it also minimized the necessity for physical tools such as paints and brushes, which can be pretty costly and sometimes even wasteful. I would say that the transition from physical to digital art definitely helped me put on my sustainability hat beyond the realms of architecture. With this newfound love for digital image-making, I am currently delving deeper into experimentation with various software. I believe that refining both the techniques of producing digital art, along with the content itself, would help make my works more versatile in the future.

"Soliloquy" presents a duality of comfort and anxiety. Can you share more about how you personally experience this duality when creating art in the age of AI technology?

As mentioned earlier, 'Soliloquy' is definitely a product of self-reflection. For someone like me who experiments a lot with digital collage and mixed media, AI can prove to be a very seductive form of technology. I have had my fair share of experience inserting my preliminary sketches and/or written prompts into generative media to help feed my curiosity. Though none of the generated imagery came out exactly as I envisioned them, they did help me organize my thoughts and ideas better. However, I couldn't shrug off this persistent feeling of guilt as I carried on with this process. I feared that I would become overly indulgent in using AI to accelerate the process of artistic production, or the final works wouldn't be too far removed from the

guidelines that I had generated. 'Soliloquy' bears signs of this very anxiety.

Be that as it may, I am happy to report that I came up with a better way to integrate AI into my practice down the line. As found imagery often serves as the building block for collage-based art, I have started using generative tools to formulate minor components of my art, which are otherwise difficult to come across. Once generated, these elements are oriented and transformed through manual intervention before being paired up with other found, collected, or captured media to create a piece. I find this practice to be more morally and visually ethical, in a similar vein to traditional collage-making.

Your work often reflects societal changes and personal growth. How do you integrate these themes into your art, and how has your artistic voice evolved over time?

When working with reflective or commentative themes, I usually incline towards conjuring up a new character each time I work on a project. These characters tend to view the world through a lens they share with me. This helps me respond



Sakira Rimlee
Soliloquy
2024

to ongoing social and cultural phenomena in a tone aligned with my inner voice. It is a tactic that is very similar to filmmaking, except that instead of a moving image, the story/narrative is communicated through capturing a singular moment in time.

As for the evolution of my artistic voice, I would say that it has gone through a major shift since I started working on more digital projects. Before this shift, much of the work I would make would be strictly representative in nature. I would surf the internet for hours trying to find references that allowed me to experiment with different painting media, texture, and color. But nowadays, I am more interested in making art that is inward-looking. I use it as an outlet to process my own thoughts and feelings.

In your view, what role should human creativity play in a world where AI is increasingly involved in generating art?

Even before the advent of AI, I never really believed in the idea of a 'singular creative genius' of an artist or an artwork. In my eyes, no art that has ever been created is devoid of worldly inspiration, no matter how otherworldly it looks. Art functions much like a person's dreams. In this sense, as a practitioner of art, I take little issue with AI drawing 'inspiration' from other people's work. What I do not stand for is unethical ripping off and mimicry of another artist without any kind of acknowledgment.

While there has been much upheaval in the art community regarding this topic, my opinion is that holding the 'tool' at fault does no good at all. I feel like artists should have more first-hand involvement in shaping AI itself. That way, human creativity can still take the lead in refining the tool, training AI to be more ethical and useful to artists as well as the larger society. If that means art would become even more accessible to wider masses, I see no problem with that. I believe there's plenty of room for all of us.

You draw inspiration from both urban landscapes and natural settings. How do these contrasting environments influence your art, and do you find a balance between them in your creative process?

As an architectural designer, I have come to understand urban landscapes and natural settings as two sides of a coin, which, though contrasting, cannot exist without one another. I try to implement the same ideology when portraying urban and natural settings in artistic representations.

Most of the time, my works feature one or both of these types of landscapes as a secondary character. I draw inspiration from travels and everyday scenes or even from photographs and videos that I capture on the go. I think that the rendering of both these highly distinctive scapes is crucial to my creative process, in that they help carry the narrative of the work by catering to its atmospheric quality and mood. The landscapes serve as a mediatory tool, bridging the gap between the artist's intent and the interpretation made by the viewer.

While striking a good balance can be quite tricky at times, I would say that the content of a specific artwork influences the choice between urban and rural scenes very early on in the process. Even in this sense, the landscape and the subject matter simply feed into each other.

Sakira Rimlee
Heavy is the Crown
2024

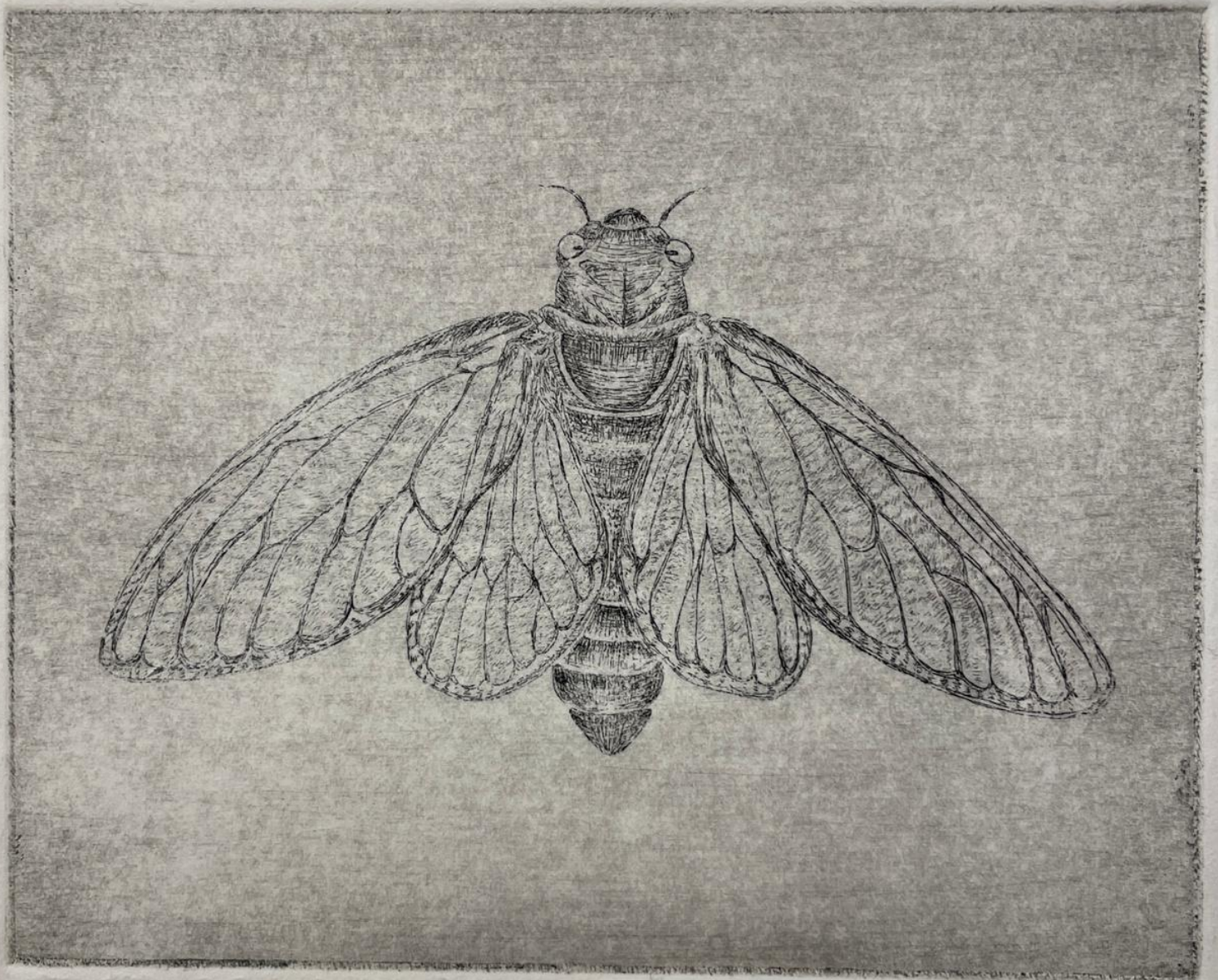


Autumn Shelton is a fine arts student at the University of Cincinnati College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP), working towards a Bachelor of Fine Arts with an art history minor. She was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, and continues to live and work in the city as an artist. She works with a variety of mediums, including printmaking, painting, drawing, photography, and fiber arts. Her work mainly explores the inner workings of her mind. As she struggles with depression and other mental illnesses, her work tends to have a melancholic mood, often represented through symbolism and self-portraiture, which aids in her journey of self-discovery and introspection. Making her debut after graduation in the Spring of 2025, she will be solidifying herself in Cincinnati's art scene by working under the artist in residence at Tiger Lily Press.

Artist Statement

My work greatly explores feminine identity and my battle with mental illness. I struggle with depression every day, and creating is the healthy coping mechanism I use to express myself. My work focuses on the damage this dejection has done to my self-confidence and body image. I investigate my perception of self and what it means to me to be a woman in today's society. I dissect and criticize every little atom of my existence in life, but by exploring my literal reflection artistically, I can see the beauty in myself and constructively relinquish the destructive feelings. I hope that by viewing my work, others feel inspired and the work begins to help them heal as well.

Autumn Shelton | Cicada | 2023





— Interview

Sergei Titukh

Tattoo conventions are quite popular among artists, yet many people don't know what happens behind the scenes. Can you share some of your most memorable experiences from conventions, and how they've influenced your work?

That's absolutely true. For those who aren't part of the tattoo scene, conventions can be a mystery. In reality, they're incredibly exciting events. The best thing about conventions is the opportunity to meet other artists face-to-face, see different styles in person, and just enjoy the community. It's also a great place for tattoo enthusiasts or someone contemplating their first tattoo to immerse themselves in the culture, ask questions, and witness the process live.

As an artist, attending conventions has pushed me creatively. I used to hesitate about participating, worried that the public setting would be distracting, but I quickly realized how inspiring these events can be. They're also an amazing way to get feedback, whether through casual conversations or competitions.

One of the most memorable moments for me was my first win in a tattoo competition. I hadn't expected it at all! The rush of excitement, mixed with the honor of being recognized among so many talented artists, was unforgettable. That experience gave me a confidence boost and motivated me to continue evolving and refining my style.



Your tattoo designs evoke a haunting and surreal atmosphere. How do you balance the darker themes with the emotions or stories your clients bring?

I don't feel the need to balance the themes too much because most of my clients come to me specifically for my darker, more surreal style. Often, they're drawn to the aesthetics and the design rather than an emotional connection to the subject matter. However, for some, getting a dark-themed tattoo is a way to channel negative energy or process difficult emotions. In those cases, I make sure to listen closely to what the client wants, but I always stay true to my own artistic vision.

You mentioned that many people seek tattoos as a way to express personal experiences. Could you elaborate on how you interpret these stories and translate them into your unique artistic style?

When a client comes to me with a personal story, my goal is to interpret that in a way that stays true to both the narrative and my style. Sometimes, I translate their emotions through symbolism or abstract elements.

But sometimes things take a funny turn. Not too long ago, a client came in asking for a "wolf

spider" tattoo across his entire back. I thought, "Cool! Another chance to do something wild!" Since I often design creatures with claws instead of legs or other weird features, I didn't blink. So, naturally, I drew up this fierce-looking wolf with spider legs, sent it over, and he was thrilled. Fast forward to the day of the session, we're deep into it, and the guy casually mentions he wanted an actual spider, not a half-wolf-half-spider hybrid! Whoops! But hey, he ended up loving my take on it anyway, so all's well that ends well. That's why I always get my designs approved ahead of time—though when I'm doing abstract pieces, I often just go freehand and see where it takes us.

Heavy music seems to be an inspiration for your art. Could you explain how this musical influence shapes the visual elements of your tattoos?

It's hard to explain how exactly it works, but music has always been a huge part of my creative process. Many artists draw inspiration from the music they listen to, and for me, it's impossible to imagine my life without it.

When I listen to black metal, for instance, I start visualizing elements from nature like forests or mountains, and those images fuel my creativity. I get immersed in the sound, and it creates this atmosphere that naturally flows into my designs. It's almost like the music helps set the mood for the art, guiding the visual direction without me



even realizing it sometimes.

You've judged tattoo conventions as well. What do you typically look for in a tattoo artist's work when evaluating them in a competition setting?

When judging a competition, I look for a combination of technical skill and creativity. The quality of the tattoo is crucial—clean lines, smooth shading, and attention to detail always stand out. But beyond that, I'm drawn to artists who manage to bring their own unique style into even the most traditional styles. Seeing someone's individuality come through in their work is always impressive and adds an extra layer to the evaluation.

Tattoo art often serves as a form of therapy or personal expression for clients. Have you had any profound experiences where a tattoo session became deeply emotional for both you and the client?

Tattoos can definitely serve as a form of therapy for many people. Whether it's to mark a difficult loss, commemorate a major life change, or even as part of medical procedures like covering scars, tattoos often carry a deep emotional significance.

I've had a few clients share these kinds of experiences with me.

For example, one man asked me to create a tattoo based on a drawing his late father had made. Also, a close friend of mine wanted a tattoo in memory of her boyfriend who had passed away. These sessions were emotional for them, and I do my best to honor their feelings and create something meaningful that reflects their story. Even though I may not share the same grief, I put a lot of effort into capturing their emotions in the design.

As tattooing evolves as an art form, where do you see the future of this industry going,

especially in terms of how artists like yourself can push the boundaries of creativity?

It's hard to predict exactly where the tattoo industry is headed, but I do see a growing interest in darker, more mystical themes. People are becoming more open to creative and abstract interpretations of tattoo art, which allows artists to explore new boundaries and challenge traditional styles. I hope to see talented artists continue to push their creative limits, while still keeping the integrity of the craft. For me, it's important that even as we push the limits of creativity, we do it with a sense of respect for the art form and the people who wear our designs.





Richard Tippins is a self-taught painter whose artistic style is influenced by his background as a professional photographer. After graduating with a certificate in Photography in 1986, Richard had the opportunity to work alongside some of the best image makers in the world. This experience enabled him to incorporate the elements of light, subject, and composition into his paintings, using line, form, and color to create his unique visual language. Richard's paintings range from impressionistic to representational, and he is known for his bright and colorful palette, which has become his personal trademark. His work explores themes of memory, nostalgia, and serenity, drawing inspiration from artists such as Hopper, Van Gogh, and Tom Thompson. Richard's studio is located in Chelsea, Quebec, where he is surrounded by the breathtaking beauty of the "Parc de la Gatineau." This natural environment provides him with a constant source of inspiration, and he seeks to capture the essence of this beauty in his art. Through his paintings, Richard aims to convey a sense of joy, tranquility, and wonder to his audience, inviting them to experience the world through his eyes.

Artist Statement

Richard believes in the freedom of artistic expression, as he often says, "paint what you want, want what you paint." For him, painting is a way of telling a story, and that story usually comes from a memory or a place that he once visited. By using a paintbrush to communicate this story, it can take many forms, sometimes very clear, other times with a hint of mystery. His artistic quest is to paint a memory that will evoke some emotion in the viewer, always hoping that his brush will take him there. Richard's art is deeply personal and draws from his experiences and emotions. Through his paintings, he aims to transport the viewer to another time and place, to share his vision and emotions. Painting is a journey of self-discovery, where I can explore new ideas, techniques, and styles. My work ranges from impressionistic to representational, and I am known for my use of bright colors and bold brushstrokes. My paintings reflect a deep connection to nature, and I am inspired by the beauty of the natural world. Overall, my artistic vision is to create art that is both beautiful and meaningful, to capture the essence of my experiences and emotions and share them with the world.



Richard Tippins | Tools

Marie M.Nova

"August is My Favourite Colour"

The August series on film emphasize summer in warm, excitable moments which attempt to move the viewer to a joyful parallel world. These moments are braided with childhood longing and flirtatious accents on the body that is free and aches for the nomad lifestyle. With all the atrocities in the world, these series seek quiet, peaceful celebration of life where life is still allowed. All photos were shot on film during summers over the years.

"Paris"

"Paris" is another analogue film photography project centered around artists' best friend, Paris. It explores the nuances of womanhood through sensuality, flirtation, and intimate details of femininity. The subject is never shown with her face, creating a sense of mystery that invites viewers to read between the lines and imagine their own interpretation of her character. Through this veil of anonymity, the project reveals Paris in a different light, capturing her essence without ever fully revealing her.

Marie M.Nova | August is My Favourite Colour | 2022





Marie M.Nova | Paris (ongoing series) | 2023

Marie M.Nova | Paris (ongoing series) | 2023



— Interview

AvRaam Cohen

Your work often integrates industrial design with artistic expression. How do you balance these two disciplines in your sculptures?

Industrial design, in my mind, is the intersection of engineering and art, where creativity meets functionality. It blends technical precision with aesthetic vision to develop products that are not only efficient and practical but also visually appealing and user-friendly. From an engineering perspective, industrial design involves understanding materials, manufacturing processes, and technical requirements to create products that perform effectively and meet safety and usability standards. On the artistic side, industrial design emphasizes form, style, and the emotional connection between the product and the user. Designers consider factors such as color, texture, ergonomics, and cultural relevance to shape products that resonate with users on an emotional level. This fusion of art and engineering is what enables me as an industrial designer to create innovative solutions that enhance the quality of everyday life, whether it's through designing a sleek consumer product, ergonomic furniture, or environmentally conscious packaging. When it comes to my sculptures, there's naturally a much stronger focus on the artistic aspect, as function isn't the main priority. However, I still draw heavily on my industrial design skills. I use them to figure out how to bring my vision to life: deciding on the right tools, selecting materials that enhance the message, and ensuring that the piece will physically work, whether it's standing, hanging, or incorporating a specific interaction with light or space. I also enjoy pushing engineering tools to be repurposed in unexpected ways for artistic creation. This approach not only broadens my palette of creative solutions but also infuses my



art with the precision and inventiveness characteristic of industrial design.

You mention being captivated by the power of color. How does color influence the emotional or conceptual impact of your pieces?

At first, I have to admit I was hesitant about using too much color in my artwork. Coming from an industrial design background, where color plays an important but very controlled role, I was used to a more restrained approach. In product design, color needs to be carefully selected—most products don't use more than two or three colors because too much can make them feel cluttered or unfocused. When I started creating my first art pieces, I carried that same mindset, being somewhat shy about exploring color. But as I grew more confident in my artistic practice, I decided to temper my inner industrial designer and allow myself to experiment more freely with vivid colors and bold combinations. I quickly realized how profoundly color can influence the emotional or conceptual impact of a piece. It's fascinating to see how the same form, when cast in a different color palette, can evoke entirely different feelings. For instance, a piece that feels energetic and vibrant in one set of colors might take on a more subdued or contemplative tone with another. Color has become a powerful tool for me to convey the mood or message I want to express.

Your sculptures are highly dimensional and seem to play with light and shadow. Could you talk about your process in creating this depth and dimensionality?



Every piece I create begins with graphic design on a 2D platform. I start by setting up the composition, carefully placing design elements as needed to establish the visual foundation. Photo editing programs play a critical role at this stage, allowing me to manipulate the initial design and achieve the first step toward my vision. Depending on whether the piece will be a freestanding sculpture or a wall-mounted work, I then transition into a more technical phase. This involves using up to five or six different programs, many of which are traditionally used for engineering or CAD purposes. These tools help me transform the 2D design into a topographic solid representation, where highlights and bright colors are extended outward, while shadows and darker tones are recessed. It's not a true 3D representation of the subject, but rather an artistic pixelation of light and shadow, almost like creating a landscape of contrast that plays with depth. Once the digital design is complete, I move into the physical creation process. Here, I utilize a range of tools, from laser cutting to coping saws, depending on the material and form. The most important aspect of this stage is that I handcraft each piece—at no point in this process do I rely on 3D printing. This hands-on approach allows me to maintain a closer connection to the work, ensuring that the final result reflects the texture, depth, and interplay of light and shadow I originally envisioned.

You have a long history in product development. How has your experience in this field shaped your approach to sculpture?

My experience in product development has significantly shaped how I approach sculpture. In

product design, there's a deep focus on problem-solving, functionality, and precision elements that have become second nature to me. This technical mindset has influenced my artistic process, especially in terms of how I think about structure, materials, and the way things are made. When I approach a sculpture, I draw on the same principles of design and engineering that I use in product development. I think about the form not just as an aesthetic object but also in terms of its construction, how it will hold up, what materials are best suited to achieve the desired effect, and how different methods of fabrication will impact the final result. The precision required in product design carries over into my artwork, where I often employ CAD tools and engineering software to help visualize and develop the piece before it's physically created. However, in sculpture, I get to break free from the constraints of functionality that are always a priority in product design. I can experiment with form for its own sake, playing with shapes, light, shadow, and texture in ways that don't have to adhere to the limitations of manufacturing or usability. Yet, my background always provides a strong foundation, allowing me to explore more complex forms while ensuring they are structurally sound. In short, my history in product development provides me with the tools and discipline for precision, while sculpture gives me the freedom to explore creativity in a more abstract, expressive way.





What materials or techniques do you find most fascinating when creating your sculptures, and how do they enhance the overall meaning of the piece?

I find exploring new materials fascinating because each one can profoundly influence the final outcome of a piece. Material selection is critical and, in some cases, is the primary way I convey the meaning behind the work. The texture, flexibility, and durability of a material can enhance or transform the message I want to express. For example, in my piece *Brain in Time*, the material choice was essential to conveying the concept. This sculpture was inspired by my father's battle with Alzheimer's disease, and I wanted to depict what I imagined was happening inside his brain during our final conversation. In my mind's eye, I saw neurons connected by delicate, elastic rubber strings—some of them intact, while others were dried out and broken. These strings represented the fragile communication pathways in the brain. To bring this vision to life, I used metal threaded rods with aluminum caps to represent the neurons and colorful rubber strings to symbolize the lines of communication between them. The elasticity of the rubber reflects the healthy brain's ability to form strong connections, while the dry, broken rubber bands illustrate the deterioration caused by Alzheimer's. The materials allowed me to not only represent the brain visually but also evoke the physical fragility of the disease. Another example is my piece *Excuses*. For this sculpture, I

used soft expanded foam to create a large wedge—a metaphor for how excuses function in our lives. Excuses are mechanisms we use to justify inaction, and by making the wedge out of soft foam, I rendered it as ineffective as an excuse itself. The choice of foam, which looks substantial but is physically weak, reinforces the concept that excuses seem like valid reasons but ultimately hold no weight or power. In both cases, the materials were as integral to the meaning of the work as the form itself, allowing me to express complex ideas in a tangible way.

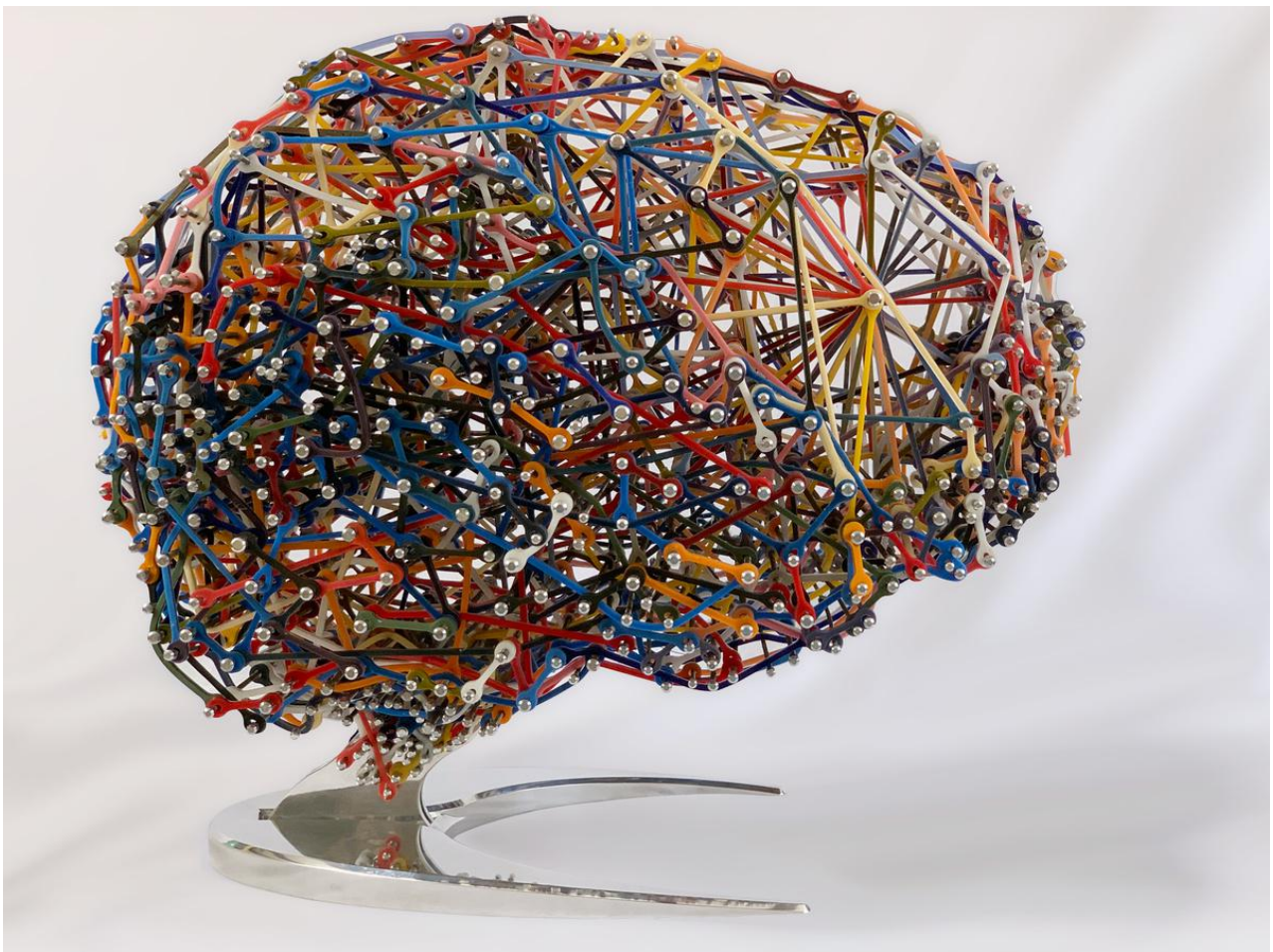
In your artist statement, you mention drawing inspiration from both the craftsmanship of others and nature. Can you elaborate on how these influences manifest in your work?

For me, the ability to sculpt delicate, intricate shapes from a solid block of marble or granite by hand without the use of power tools is the ultimate expression of craftsmanship and talent. I have great admiration for those who can create such timeless masterpieces, as it requires both precision and an intimate connection with the material. Although I don't possess the skill to work with marble or granite in this traditional sense, I often find myself inspired by these artisans and their work. In some of my pieces, I create my own interpretation of small portions of these monumental sculptures, using my own techniques and materials to express my admiration. It's my way of paying homage to the craftsmanship that has always fascinated me, while also making it into something uniquely my own. Nature is another significant influence in my work. The organic forms, patterns, and structures found in nature often guide my designs. I aim to capture some of that organic complexity, blending it with the structured precision that comes from my background in industrial design. In both cases, whether drawing from human craftsmanship or the natural world, I try to translate these influences into something that feels personal and reflective of my artistic vision. They provide me with a sense of direction, but I always interpret them through the lens of my own techniques and concepts.

Many of your sculptures reinterpret 2D images into 3D forms. How do you select the images you work from, and what draws you to them?

The first step in selecting the images I work from is a simple admiration for the subject matter. I'm drawn to figures, concepts, or objects that resonate with me on a deeper level—whether because of their cultural significance, personal relevance, or the emotional response they evoke. Once I have an idea in mind, I search for an image that best captures the essence of the subject. From there, I manipulate the image to fit my vision, allowing it to evolve into something that speaks to both the original subject and the new context I'm placing it in. For example, in my piece *Imagine That...*, I wanted to create a representation of John Lennon using his own lyrics. The combination of the sourced image with superimposed text allowed me to form a three-dimensional face made entirely out of his

words, which felt like a fitting tribute to someone who expressed so much through his music. The choice of lyrics as the medium became an integral part of the overall concept, emphasizing Lennon's impact not just as an image but as a voice. Another example is my piece *The Pipe*, which depicts Albert Einstein smoking a pipe. Once I had sourced the image of Einstein, I began manipulating it to align with the vision I had in mind. I added a chalkboard full of equations in the background, paying homage to the intellectual brilliance of the man. The juxtaposition of Einstein's relaxed posture with the complex mathematical equations serves as a reminder of his genius, both approachable and awe-inspiring. In both cases, what draws me to these images is not just their visual qualities but the stories, ideas, and emotions they represent. By transforming these 2D images into 3D forms, I aim to reinterpret them in ways that invite the viewer to engage with the subject on a deeper level.



AvRaam Cohen
Brain in Time - Side

Eugina M. Becton is a self-taught artist who has found a profound connection to creativity throughout her life. In 2021, a transformative encounter sparked a deep desire within Eugina to rediscover her true essence: freedom and artistic expression. Primarily working with acrylics on canvas, Eugina's art embodies a vibrant interplay of delicate blooms and rich, heavy layers. Her abstract paintings acknowledge the intricate balance between resilience and vulnerability, drawing inspiration from the beauty and complexity of flowers. Through her work, Eugina seeks to emanate joy and acceptance, inviting viewers to reflect on their journeys of growth and freedom.

Artist Statement

Flowers, flowers, and more flowers! My fascination with flowers is rooted in their beautiful resilience and ability to withstand diverse conditions. Like us, they bloom in their own time, embodying patience, growth, and freedom. It's a reminder to honor your unique journey with self-compassion and to collect your flowers along the way.

Eugina Becton | 444 | 2022





Veronika Ishchenko

Born in 1970 in the small town of Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, a region known for years of nuclear bomb testing, Veronica has a unique perspective shaped by a complex environment. A self-taught photographer, Veronika began capturing the world through the lens two years ago, experimenting with various cameras and lenses, including vintage Soviet ones. With a degree in journalism from Rostov-on-Don, Russia, Veronika worked as a mediator and is now a practicing psychologist. Photography became a healing outlet during personal crises, helping to process emotions and find peace. Each image reflects a deep connection with nature and an ongoing journey of inner growth.

Artist Statement

Photography became a remedy for pain and loss, as the act of capturing vulnerable, sometimes broken branches and wilting flowers led to a healing process. Through embracing vulnerability, a subtle beauty emerged, one that leaves an indelible mark. It is hoped that those who find themselves in similar life situations will not shy away from feeling vulnerable, for within it lies a quiet beauty that speaks volumes. All photos are celebrating nature's fragility and strength through art.

Veronika Ishchenko | Echoes of Hope | 2024





Veronika Ishchenko | Defiant Blossoms | 2024

Veronika Ishchenko | Terracotta Serenity | 2024



— Interview

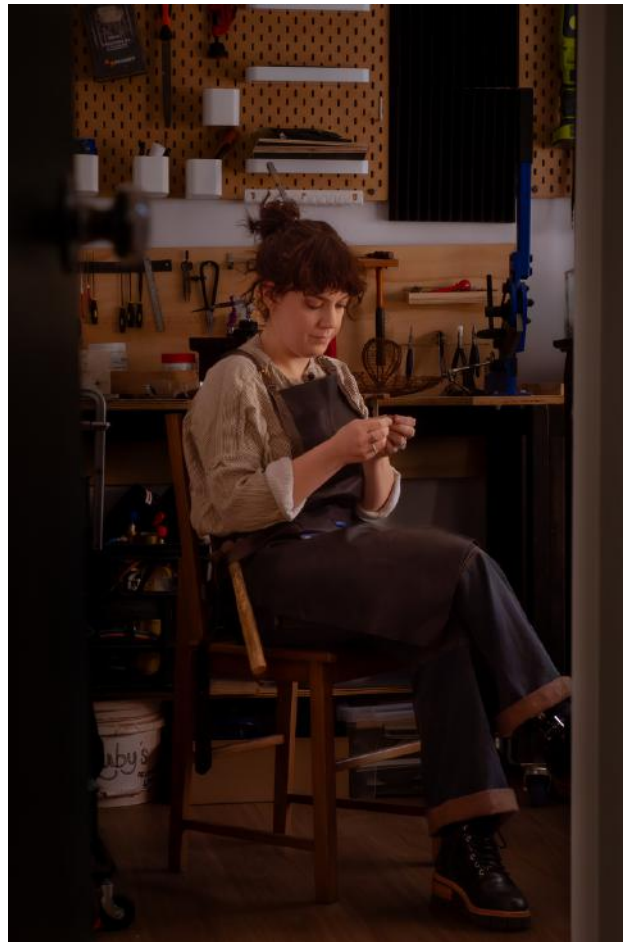
Ruby Marchese

Your work frequently contrasts natural forms with manmade materials, such as copper. How did you come to explore this juxtaposition in your artistic practice?

I've always liked the imperfections and unpredictability of natural forms. Things in nature form and grow instinctively, and I think instinct is how I approach art. When I was introduced to working with metal at NIDA, I loved the flexibility of being able to reheat and rework a material. It's can also be quite instinctive to work with, but is very forgiving as a material, which is a stark contrast to nature in lots of ways.

Could you tell us about the inspiration behind your 'Podlette' series, particularly your reflections on the concepts of security and its impermanence in nature?

I'm quite a fan of Fiona Hall's work 'Paradisus Terestris', in which she's sculpted mundane sardine cans into beautifully detailed, refined objects that combine botanical motifs with human body parts; each is a little vignette that juxtaposes culture and nature that tells the viewer much about humanity. I was channelling this a lot in the creation of the Podlettes. I've always been preoccupied with creating containers or vignettes for my artworks, because I like working on a smaller scale, with focus on small, refined details that force the viewer to come in close to see. I think this creates a more intimate experience. I like the idea that some people will notice things others won't in a small scale, contained work, and Hall achieves this admirably in her work.



The motif of cocoons and pods has always been something I've come back to because it combines my fondness for natural forms with my inclination for a container and effectively creates this idea of vignettes and stories. Like Fiona Hall, I also enjoy creating juxtapositions between natural and manmade, and relish in exploring the theme of security frequently in my work, which I believe to be one of the most manmade concepts we've created. As humans we like to seek a sense of security and surety, whether that be in work, home life or relationships. We strongly desire a feeling of comfort and reliability. And yet, if we look to natural symbols of security like pods and cocoons, they eventually break down and disintegrate, metaphorically suggesting security is just an illusion we've generated in society.

Many of your pieces, like 'Dîner pour un' and 'Dîner pour deux,' explore themes of human relationships and connection. What motivated you to create these specific works, and how do they reflect your personal experiences?

'Dîner pour un' and 'Dîner pour deux' were made during my artist residency in Sainte-Valière in France in 2022. They started out as being a mode in which for me to channel my love for Alexander Calder's hammered wire work into my own art, and experiment with these techniques, but ended up encapsulating a lot more.

During the residency, I was in slight trepidation of the solo travel I was about to embark on for several weeks after Sainte-Valière; the solo dinners, the reliance on myself, the missing of company... when making a booking would I be asking 'Dîner pour un' or 'Dîner pour deux'? There can be a bit of a taboo attached to doing things solo and I had a lot of people seem surprised when I said I would be on my own for the trip, but I found indulging in "Dîner pour un' to be quite liberating and empowering (it's quite cathartic when there's no one else to be mad at if I make a bad food decision or get lost).

Other aspects of post covid life also seeped into the artwork... 'Dîner pour un' is a sort of self-portrait of trying to be all the things at once when confronted with the isolation and loneliness that lots of people felt during lockdown. In contrast to the solo flatware, 'Dîner pour deux' was viewing how people could lose a bit of themselves in their relationships with others; become overly enmeshed, entwined and co-dependent. Either way, both make for rather unusable pieces of flatware.

Despite what seems to be a lot of navel gazing, my time at the residency was the most idyllic, dreamy, fulfilling experience. It was blissful to be amongst fellow creatives, making art, meeting locals, eating, and swimming in the river. I shared the residency with several other artists, and at dinner we would be vulnerable with stories, opinions, ideas, and conversation, all while our fellow eaters were armed with prongs and daggers, exposed in our state of consumption. As someone who was trained as a props and objects maker, I find regular objects interesting, so this work was also an ode to the tools of the everyday and the stories that go with them. It also served as an experimentation in transforming usually practical utensils into something ergonomically useless, that can

instead be used as a conversation starter for the dinner table.

I hope Calder would approve.

Your background in film and theatre prop making is quite fascinating. How does this experience influence your approach to your art, particularly in terms of craftsmanship and storytelling?

I think my experience as a prop maker opened me up to the range of materials and techniques available. Learning various skills at NIDA and throughout my career has unfurled a new world of possibilities in how to approach object making. When I first started NIDA I was interested in learning practical, useful skills that could be applied to make functional props and objects. Over time, I think I've come to invert that idea, and create artworks that challenge the idea of function, turning the useful into the useless, such as my Reservations series that I did in my artist residency. I think the storytelling element in film and theatre also means I'm continually aware of how it is within human nature to subconsciously imbue meaning and stories into mundane detritus. Earlier this year, I displayed an artwork at a group exhibition, and



Ruby Marchese | Diner pour deux | 2022

eavesdropped on individuals discussing the artwork and how they interpreted it. It was fascinating to hear how different people viewed a work and came up with a story for it that was so entirely different to what I'd intended. In some ways, I think an object could have very little deliberate meaning attached to it, and people would still be inclined to give it a story. Filmmaking and theatre entertain this a lot and I think artmaking can be very similar. We're very drawn to narrative as a human race, and I like playing with this concept in the objects I make.

Copper is a material that naturally evolves and changes over time. How do you see the patina and aging process of your works contributing to their meaning?

I think much of my art process is about being instinctive and relinquishing a sense of control or perfectionism, which I sometimes find tricky to do in other aspects of life (I really love a plan).

I enjoy the juxtaposition of making a form that is so naturally delicate and easily broken, such as cocoons and pods, in something tough like metal, which requires high levels of heat to be shaped and manipulated. Despite this, copper oxidises over time and nature still wins. As

humans, we have to relinquish control when it comes to nature, so I think using a material like copper that does patina and age, results in this false illusion of control and toughness that doesn't really exist.

I also like the idea that my work will evolve and change over time with a patina, and therefore the story will change with it.

During your residency at Hôtel Sainte-Valière, how did your surroundings influence your creative process, particularly in the development of your Podlette series?

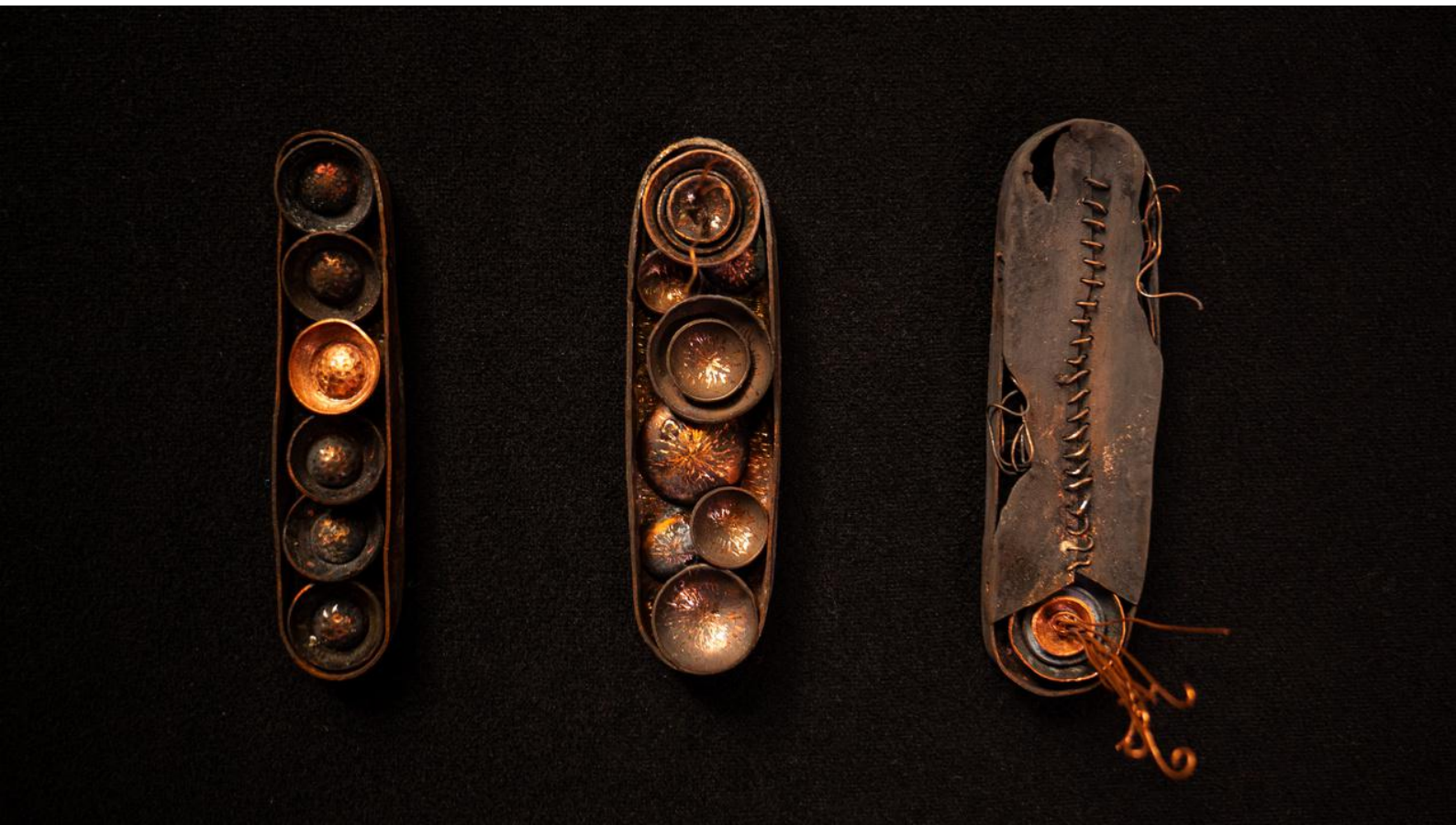
I think my surroundings of other people was the major influence during my residency. It was a beautiful, eclectic group of people, all coming together with a passion for travel and for art, and I became quickly enamoured with the life stories of the other artists. It was the conversation, storytelling and vulnerability that I think subconsciously influenced the Reservations series I created whilst there, and as a result, later informed how I approached making other works, like the Podlettes. Not to mention, the residency was in a small commune, surrounded by nature and vineyards away from the hustle and bustle of the city. The influence of the natural environment was very strong and reiterated my interest in organic forms. It's hard to ignore the environment around you and not let it influence you, when you're literally sipping a wine that was made from the grapes growing on the vines of the residency's neighbour.

In your statement, you mention the use of stitching in one of the Podlettes. Could you explain its symbolism in relation to human attempts to maintain control over nature?

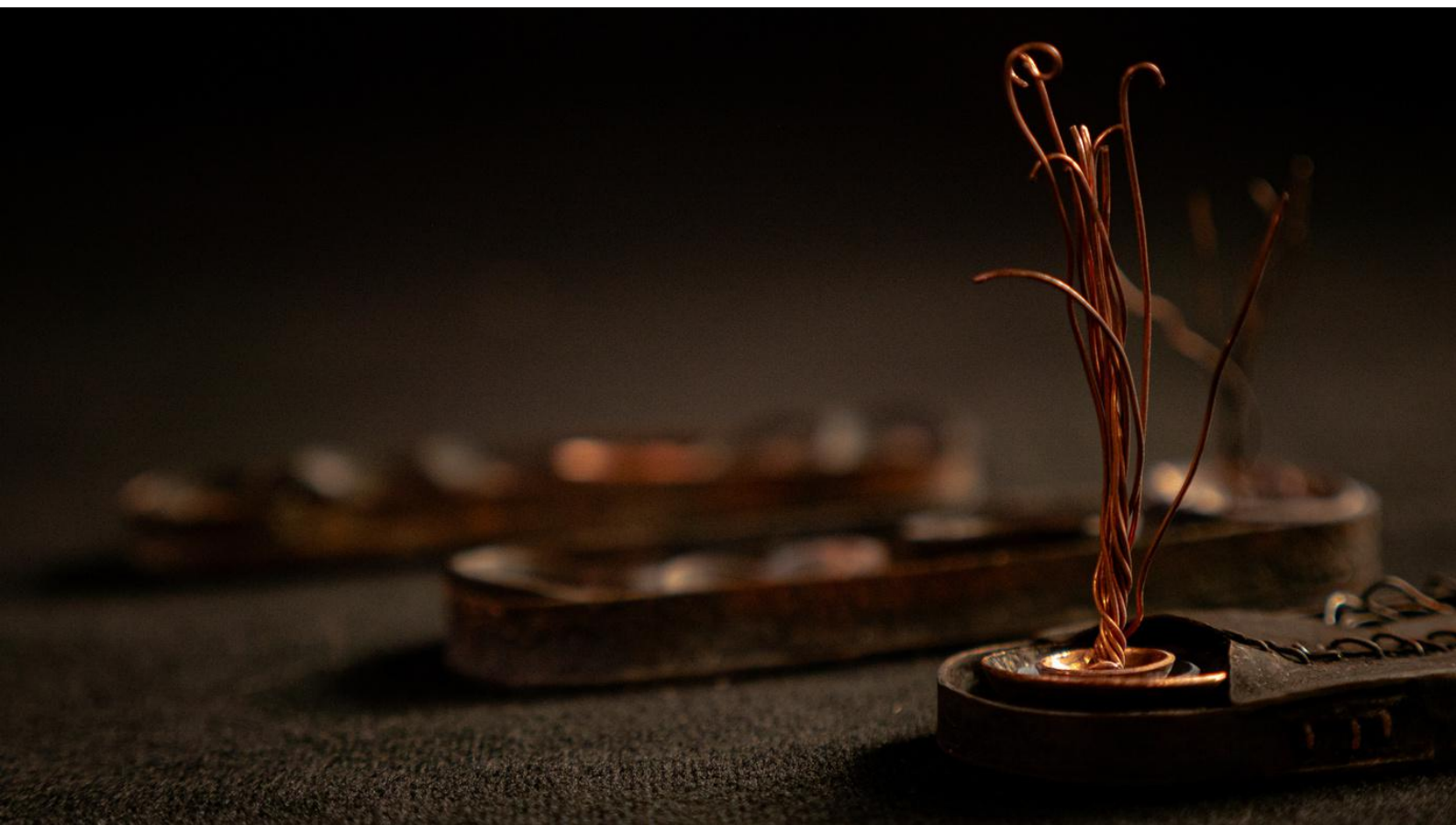
Stitching to me was the equivalent of a band-aid solution or sweeping something under the rug. When is stitching metal, or stitching a decaying cocoon ever going to practically fix anything? It's the illusion of a solution, which harks back to this idea of human nature constantly desiring this concept of certainty and security, even when we can't control it. It's a bit confronting maybe to think this way, but it's also liberating to realise that at the end of the day, it's out of our hands.



Ruby Marchese | Diner pour un | 2022



Ruby Marchese | Podlettes group | 2024



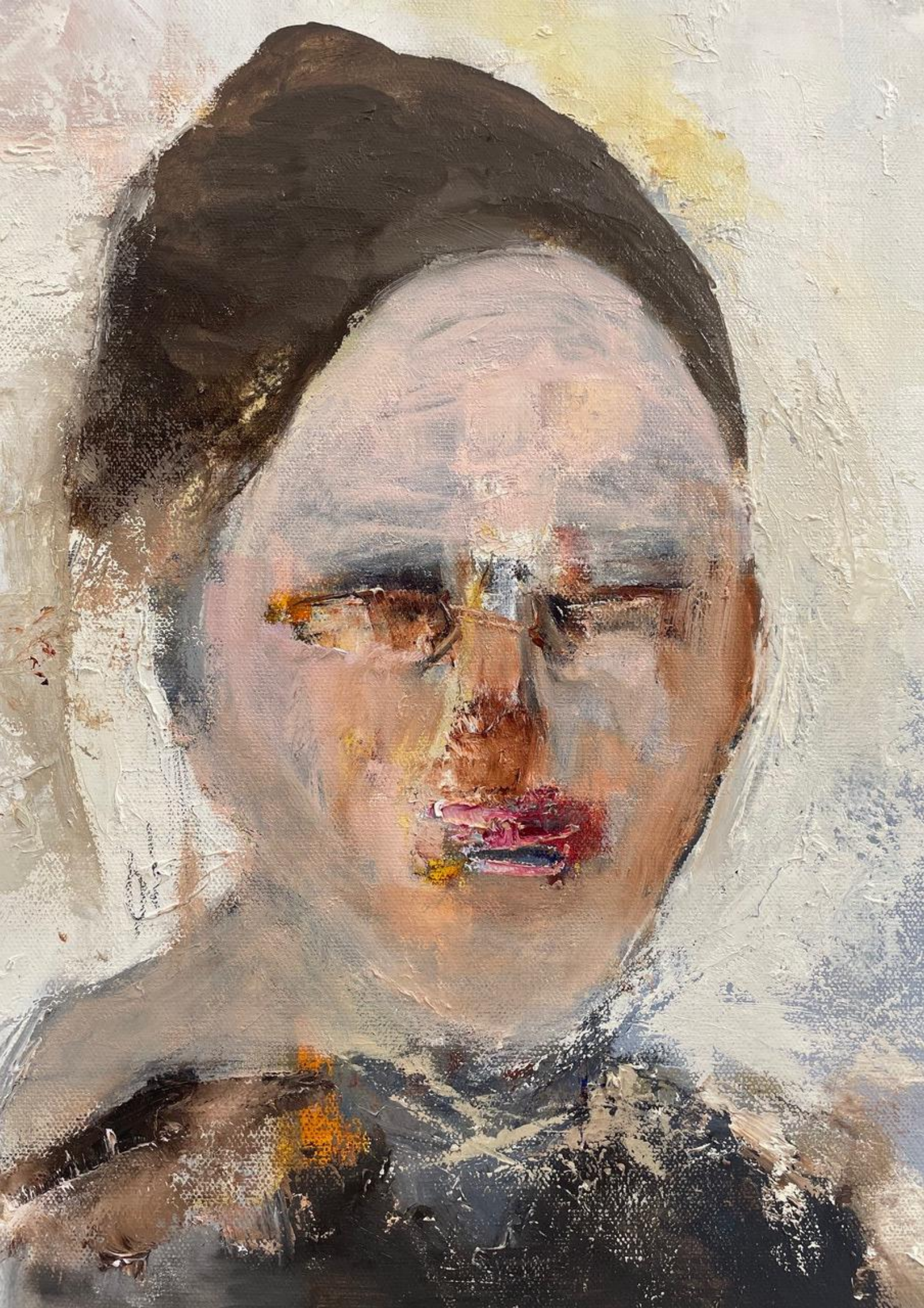
- 51 - Ruby Marchese | Podlettes detail | 2024

Judith Skillman paints expressionist works in oil on canvas and board. She is interested in feelings engendered by the natural world. Her paintings have been featured on the covers of *Thin Air Magazine*, *Pithead Chapel*, and *Torrid Literature*. Work appears in *The Penn Review*, *Artemis*, *Raven Chronicles*, and other journals. Skillman has studied visual art at McDaniel College, Pratt Fine Arts Center, and Seattle Artist League (SAL). Shows include *The Pratt*, *Galvanize*, and *Seattle Artist League*.

Artist Statement

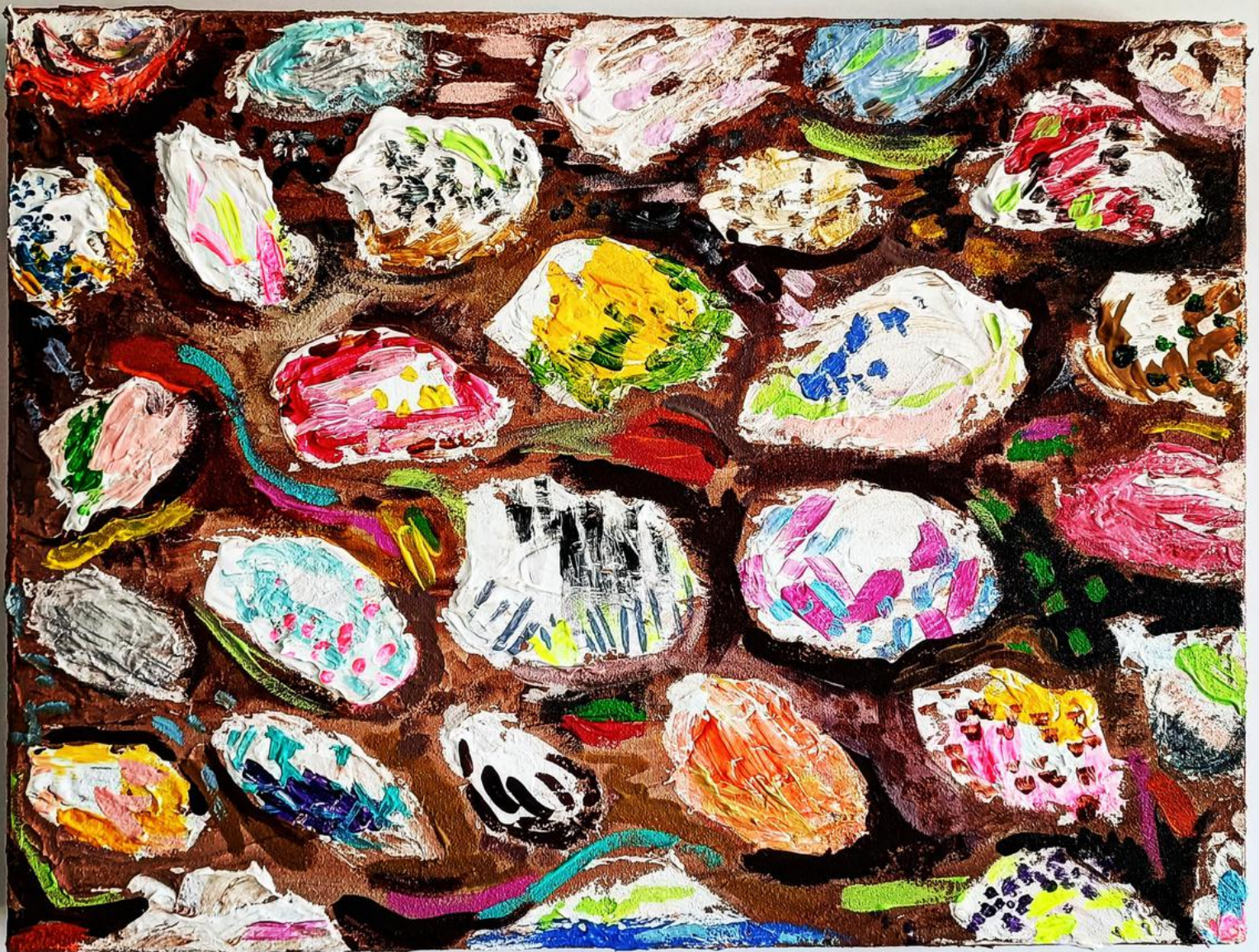
I plan to do a series of twenty figures in an expressionistic and minimalist fashion, using oil on canvas and board.

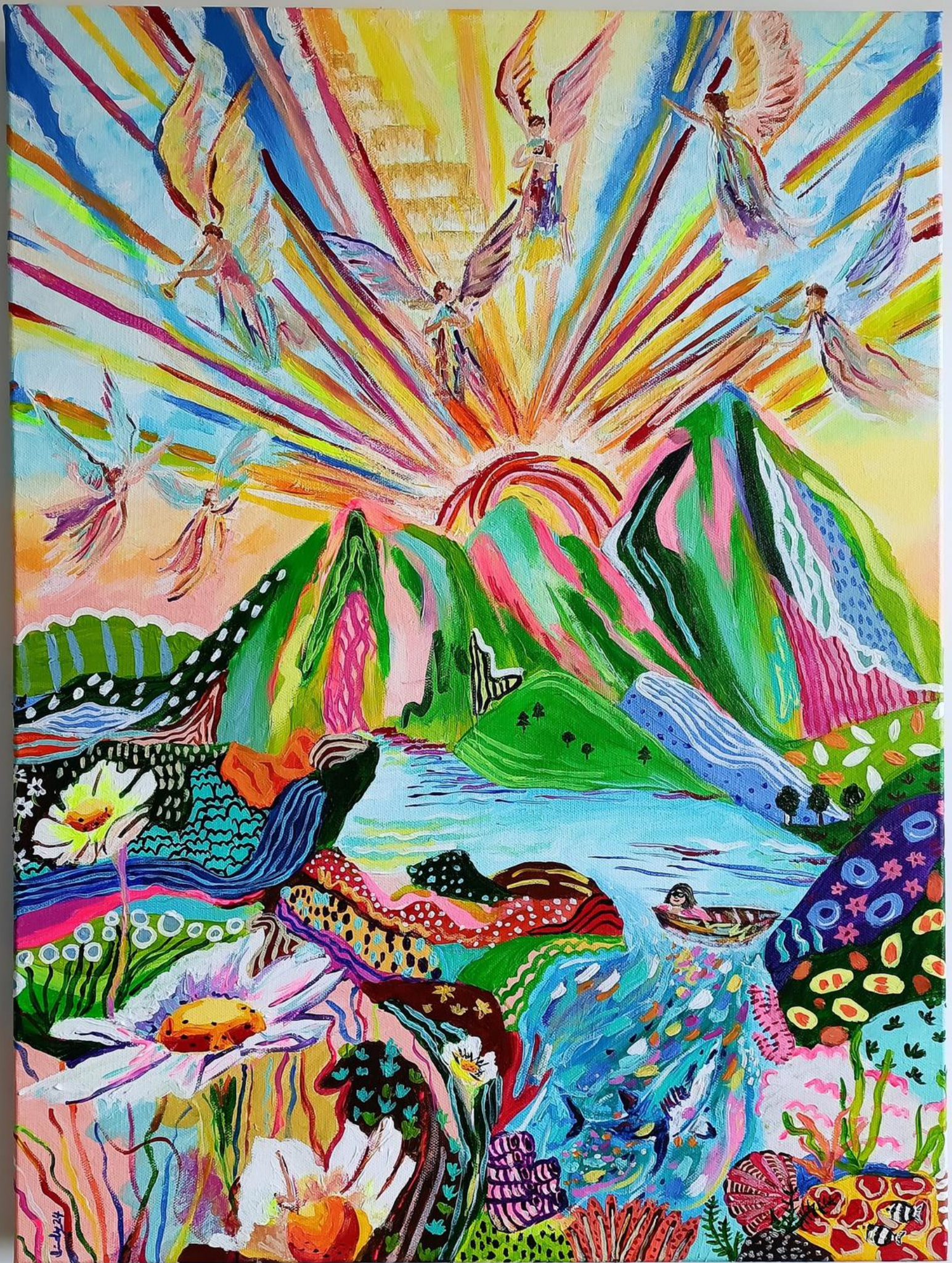




Cindy Soh

A Singapore artist who paints a mix of abstract and impressionist art inspired from her life journey.





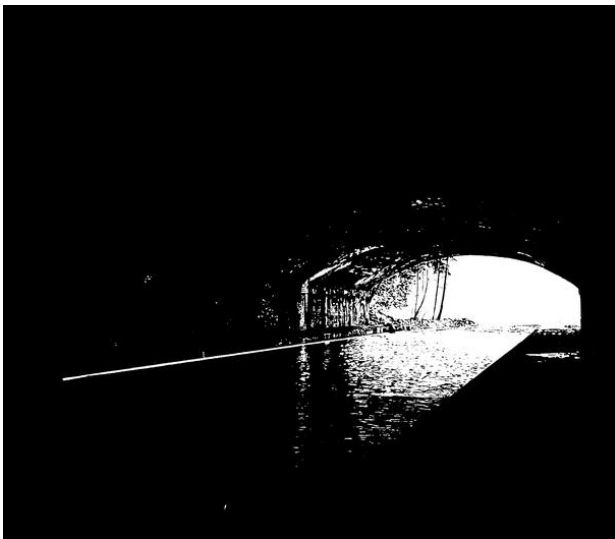
— Interview

Satinder Parhar

Can you explain how your fascination with interstitial spaces began and how it has influenced your artistic journey?

My fascination began naturally as I entered spaces. It was this reaction between the space and myself which influenced my thoughts. It questioned the viewer's position in relation to the space, and the form which shapes it. Does the structure and the space formed within work together in harmony or as opposite forces? It also raises the question in when does a space become a place?

How do you select the specific tunnels, vents, and other apertures that feature in your dry-point prints? Do these spaces have personal significance?



Satinder Parhar | Out of Darkness Cometh Light | 2016



When selecting a given space, I read books and use online platforms to help discover a space which best portrays my theory. Not every space I explore yields the desired result, however this is a natural process of development.

The spaces do not have a personal connection to myself; however the spectator may do. With man-made spaces, like canals for example, some viewers state it was once a route they would frequently navigate in their youth. The composition of the space plays a part in the decision making as I need to ensure that depth is replicated accurately to allow the viewer to be emersed in my prints.

Your work emphasizes the relationship between the "object" and the interstitial space. Could you elaborate on how you view this interaction in your art?

The term 'object' refers to both the viewer and a given object which may sit within the space. An example would be a table inside of a bedroom. The interaction of the 'object' to the structure and the formed space highlights the

submissive nature of it. This applies to any space. There will always be a hierarchy.

What role does the large scale of your dry-point prints play in immersing the viewer into the interstitial spaces?

The size of the prints allows the audience to be fully submersed. The prints are a re-representation of an existing space. Allowing the prints to be large places them in in that space. A space which they are a mere "footnote" in the overall realm.

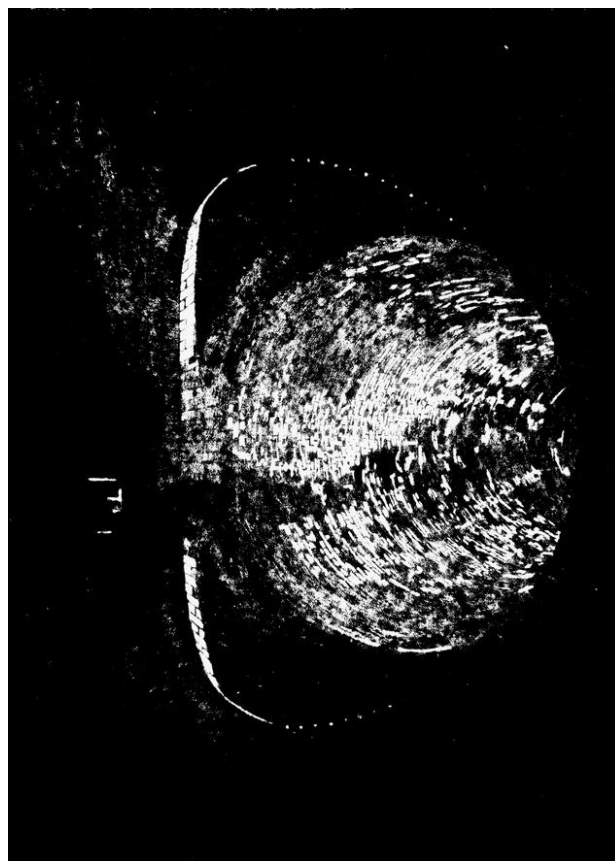
Could you describe your creative process for producing these large-scale dry-point prints? What challenges do you face?

One of the main challenges I face when creating my work is to ensure the depth is replicated correctly to prevent any flatness. One way to overcome this issue is to incorporate tonal depth through the etching phase. This is done by applying different amounts of pressure when creating the marks. Deeper marks hold more ink in comparison to shallower marks. Secondly, if required, an imbalanced paper tone must be created through the process of tinting the paper to the desired colour prior to printing my plate on to. The third is to remove the correct amount of ink off the plate through the inking stage. There are many variables.

Your work has been exhibited in various galleries across the UK. How has your interaction with these spaces and audiences influenced your development as an artist?



Satinder Parhar | Obnubilated | 2016



Satinder Parhar | #44 | 2024

The audience's interaction with my work has been successful. They are immediately overwhelmed with the scale of the pieces. The reception received is also positive. The same cannot be said for two cave prints I've produced. These prints are ambiguous, therefore harder to read. The aim is to immediately place the viewer in a space. With the works being ambiguous, it removes the impact factor and creates an opportunity for the viewer to misinterpret the work. The work needs to be impactful and in the viewer's face to create this sense of entrapment. This feeds into the submissiveness one will experience.

Are there any other mediums or techniques you'd like to explore in the future beyond dry-point printmaking?

Apart from creating dry-point prints, I aim to develop my skills and learn the process of stone lithography and mezzotint. These processes allows me to create dark rich tones in my work, which in turn creates depth. Depth is important as it helps the viewer to be submersed in my work.

Liz Schmitz

I was born in 2003 in a small village in Luxembourg. From a young age on, I knew I wanted to create Art. Throughout my entire education in Luxembourg I loved spending time drawing, painting and illustrating which is why in 2018, I decided to enter a plastic and graphic Arts department offered by my highschool. After graduating in 2021, I moved to Rotterdam, in the Netherlands, to pursue a bachelor in illustration at the Willem de Kooning Academy. Currently I am in my third year of this studyprogramme.

Artist Statement

Looking at an oak, every leaf tells its own tale, waiting for a touch of imagination to be revealed. My name is Liz Schmitz and I transform dreams into the real world's narratives. As a child, I felt the trees whispering stories to me, awakening a world beyond my known surroundings. In the depth of my imagination, I discovered and settled my roots in a realm filled with comfort and joy, where my creativity could flourish freely. Today merge visual storytelling and meaningful narratives through captivating illustrations and visual arts. My works convey messages driven by mine and other's curiosity. In a world full of rules and boundaries, I bring forward the untold stories and limitless possibilities of our dreams and imagination. The versatility of digital illustrations bring forward the magical in a seemingly monotonous world. By turning illustrations into prints, the border between the imaginary and the tangible gets broken. This act is the trunk of my creative practice. Looking at an empty paper or canvas, I can see a hidden tale so I let my brushes freely dance over the surfaces in watercolors, oils and acrylics. An act where every brushstroke whispers a world of untold stories. Each idea and narrative is as unique as every brushstroke. Vibrant colors bring forward the stimulation of creativity in the ones who engage with my art. I convey to the viewers the comfort and happiness I found in my own imagination. Ultimately, I spread my creative branches being a spirit of inquiry by inviting viewers to consider their own narratives within the tapestry of their life. I serve as a vessel for understanding and transforming themes of identity, memory and the world's interconnected systems into illustrated stories. Because in the end; Every leaf indeed gets to tell its very own tale.



— Interview

Vladimir Kortikov

Can you describe the inspiration behind your painting "Alice"? What made you choose this particular scene from "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"?

My inspiration comes from my subconscious, which unexpectedly gives me new images at any moment. Therefore, when I started working on the painting, I didn't set out to depict a scene from Lewis Carroll's work. It emerged on its own. First, the image of a girl falling into the void came to mind, and I began to think about how to visualize and transfer it onto the canvas. The character of Alice fit best to explain to myself what I had envisioned.

Your artwork combines painting and calligraphy. How do you approach blending these two art forms, and why did you feel it was important for this piece?

I find modern calligraphy very interesting as an art form. It has gone through the same developmental journey as painting: from the idea of accurately conveying and preserving information to the concept of expressing images and meanings through the geometry of lettering. Therefore, I believe that the use of calligraphy in painting allows for the painting to be imbued with additional meaning and to more fully reveal the artist's idea.

The inscriptions in my work serve several purposes. First, they encircle Alice, creating a vortex effect to make her fall more realistic. Second, the lines serve to animate the character, rushing past like thoughts in her head. Third, they add intrigue, making the viewer wonder, "What is actually written there? What is the artist trying to say with these quotes?"



What challenges did you face while creating "Alice," especially in balancing the figure of Alice with the calligraphic elements?

You're right, finding that balance was indeed a difficult task. I had to seek compromises not only in the composition but also with myself. I was very inspired by Pokras Lampas' works and wanted to create something similar. But in the end, I concluded that his style in its pure form wouldn't be artistically justified for my idea. The painted part of the picture would have been overshadowed by the bright and original calligraphy, and in the end, it would have simply turned into a portrait of a girl surrounded by text.

The falling Alice is a powerful image. How do you interpret the symbolism of the fall in your painting?

I want each person to decide for themselves what it might mean. But for me personally, Alice's fall symbolizes our contemporary, who has had the ground pulled out from under them by the upheavals of recent years. These events cannot be resisted, and one cannot run away from them. All that remains is to fall and wonder when, or if, they will hit rock bottom.

That's why one of the quotes I chose was "Curiouser and curiouser!" — has everything that could have happened already occurred, or is there more to come?

How has your experience as an amateur painter and your training in the studio of Evgeniy Ponomarenko influenced your artistic development?

My painting practice helped me develop my imaginative thinking, view art through the professional eyes of a painter, and better understand myself.

For example, in school, I enjoyed studying human anatomy and thought that with such interest, I should go into medical school, which I ultimately didn't do, and I regretted it for a long time.

But now I realize that anatomy interested me not as a doctor, but as an artist, as it's knowledge necessary for giving the character physiological accuracy.

You also work as a lawyer. How do you balance your legal career with your passion for art? Does your legal profession influence your creative process in any way?

For a long time, painting was just a hobby and art therapy for me. My job is associated with a high

level of stress, and working in the studio helped me release emotional tension. But recently, I decided to pursue a slash career, combining it with legal practice.

On the one hand, in such a situation, I cannot fully dedicate myself to painting. But on the other hand, I don't depend on the sale of my works, so I can afford to paint what I want and when I feel inspired.

As someone learning painting, what advice would you give to other amateur artists who are looking to grow in their creative journey?

Try different directions, don't be afraid to experiment, and don't undervalue your work.

I want to emphasize that I am 38, almost 40. For many people, especially in Russia, this is a critical age when they are no longer willing to learn something new or especially to change their field of activity.

With my example, I want to prove that this is not the case. We create our own limitations. Just remember what you dreamed of before, what you wanted to learn, who you wanted to become.

Don't be afraid to act — fear living a life where you haven't realized yourself.



Vladimir Kortikov | Alice

From 6 years old i am a portrait painter. Working with pastel, pencil and charcoal. Also working with glass. Fusing, firepainting on glass, etching etc. I have been a teacher, an inventor and an ict specialist.

— Joop van der Linden





Paul L.

— Interview

Inara Batcha

How did your background in Informatics and English influence your approach to art?

For me, knowledge is a tool that significantly makes life easier. For example, knowing English helps in communicating with international colleagues, watching useful lessons, or reading helpful information. It also keeps me up to date with global art trends. Regarding Informatics, it's about the ability to work with various programs. For instance, I design a catalog of my original paintings, create references, and produce promotional materials for exhibitions. In this, my second degree in management and marketing also plays a crucial role. Overall, every stage of my education, of which I have quite a bit, in one way or another, helps me grow as an artist.

Can you share more about the moment when you decided to pursue art seriously?

It was the moment when I realized that I no longer wanted to grow in the marketing profession, that I was living someone



else's life. It was a tough period of searching for my true self, with no clear direction on how to move forward, who I wanted to be, or what I wanted to offer the world. My family and friends were very supportive at the time. I conducted a survey, asking them how they saw me, what positive qualities they noticed, and what kind of advice they might seek from me. I also learned more about my ancestors, their occupations, and hobbies, and remembered my childhood dreams and aspirations. As a result of this soul-searching, I realized that art had accompanied and surrounded me all my life. I always drew – it gives me energy, lights me up, and brings me joy. And then, magic happened, I can't describe it any other way – I won money to develop my own business, bought all the necessary tools and materials, and took painting courses. That's how a new chapter in my life began.

Nature and human emotions are key

themes in your art. How do you go about expressing this connection in your abstract compositions?

Nature never leaves us without emotions. When we see a beautiful lake, we feel awe; when we see leaves falling in autumn, we may feel sad; when standing on a mountain peak, we feel absolute happiness and love.

In my work, I can divide my paintings into two groups. The first is nature through my eyes (e.g., paintings like "Jungle," "Steppe Palette," "Mountains"). In these works, the beauty and colors of our planet are expressed through abstract forms of plants and mountain landscapes. The second, deeper and more personal group are the paintings that reflect our emotions through the images of nature. For example, in the painting "Manifestation," I use textured cracks reminiscent of hardened lava under which a person lies. This lava is like a cocoon where many of us hide, afraid to come out and show ourselves, fearing judgment and criticism. But at any moment, the dormant volcano may awaken.



Inara Batcha | Jungle | 2023



Inara Batcha | Palette of the Steppe | 2024

As someone without formal art education, what challenges have you faced, and how did you overcome them to establish yourself in the art world?

First and foremost, it's self-doubt and self-esteem. At first, I was even ashamed to call myself an artist. By the way, I painted "Manifestation" during that time, and it is entirely about me.

Have I overcome it? I think I'm still in the process. But I can definitely say that constant learning, participating in both Russian and international exhibitions, winning a prize in an international abstract art competition, having admirers of my work, and the incredible support of my family have undoubtedly boosted my self-esteem! Now, when people ask me what I do, I proudly say, "I am an artist!"

Could you talk about your process of creating a layered composition? How do you approach the development of a piece from start to finish?

First, of course, I create a reference in my sketchbook, where I also plan the

mediums I'll work with. My favorite art material is textured paste because it makes the painting three-dimensional, allowing you to feel it like a sculpture. After the reference, I make sketches on the canvas.

The next stage depends on the composition. In some paintings, I first use oil paints, then apply textured paste around them, followed by acrylic layers, gold leaf, and varnish.

In others, I apply texture first, and then create the colored layer with acrylic paints on top of it, finishing with varnish for fixation.

Your art often feels like a dialogue between the inner and outer worlds. What emotions do you hope to evoke in viewers through your work?

It's important to me that viewers feel a connection with the artwork and find a reflection of their emotions or thoughts in it. I love showing a painting without explaining the meaning I initially put into



Inara Batcha | Flow | 2023

it and asking viewers to tell me what they feel or what they think the painting is about. It's a fascinating experience – people reveal themselves through the image in the painting. And I genuinely believe that any interpretation is valid. It's like different stories within the same painting.

You mentioned that you are still searching for your artistic style. How do you navigate this exploration, and what do you hope to discover?

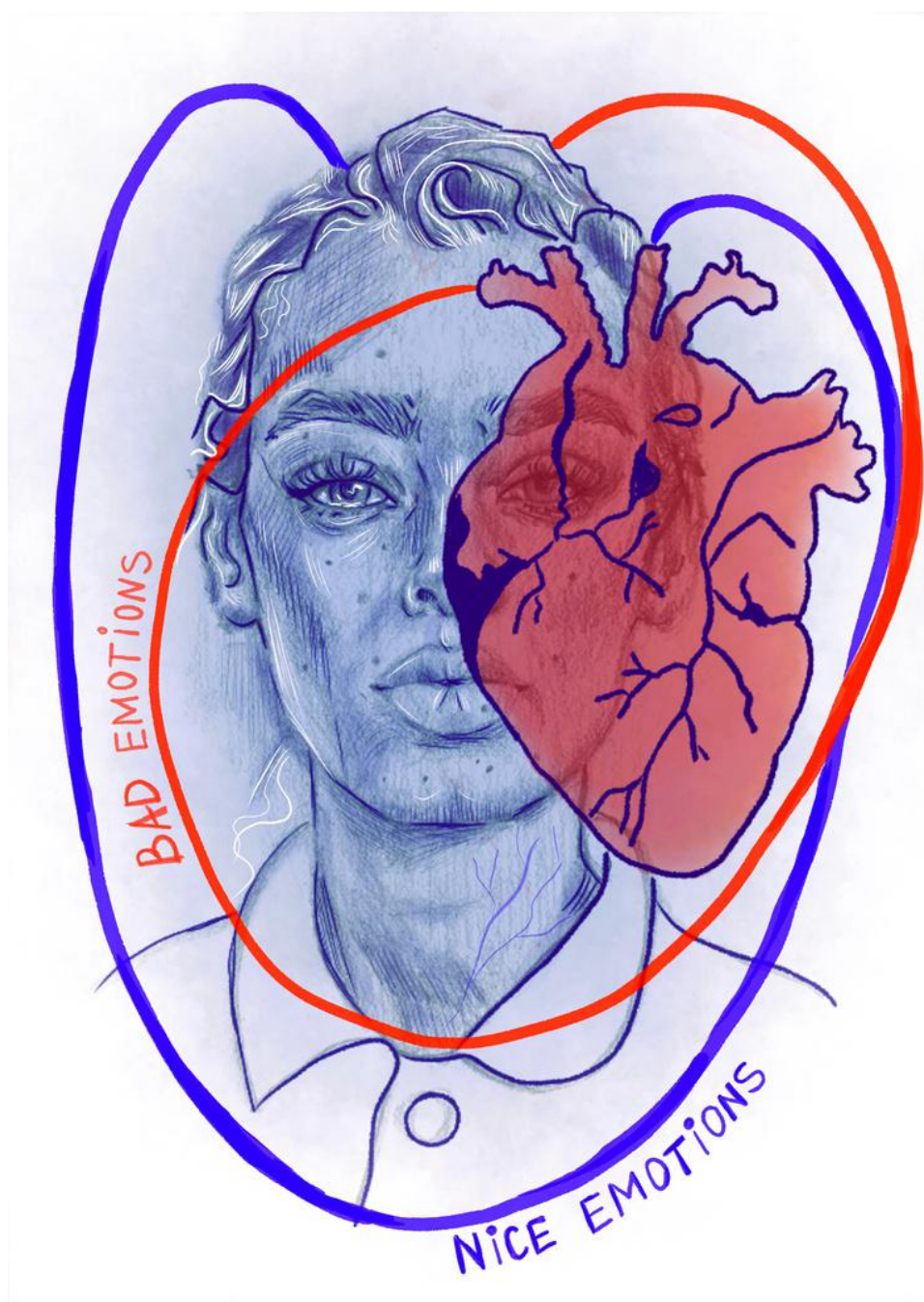
The search for a style is, for me, a continuous process of experimentation and self-discovery. I try different techniques, combine them, and observe what resonates. In this process, I hope to find a balance between technique and self-expression, creating works that will stand out for their depth and unique stylistic identity.

Inara Batcha | Inner Light | 2024





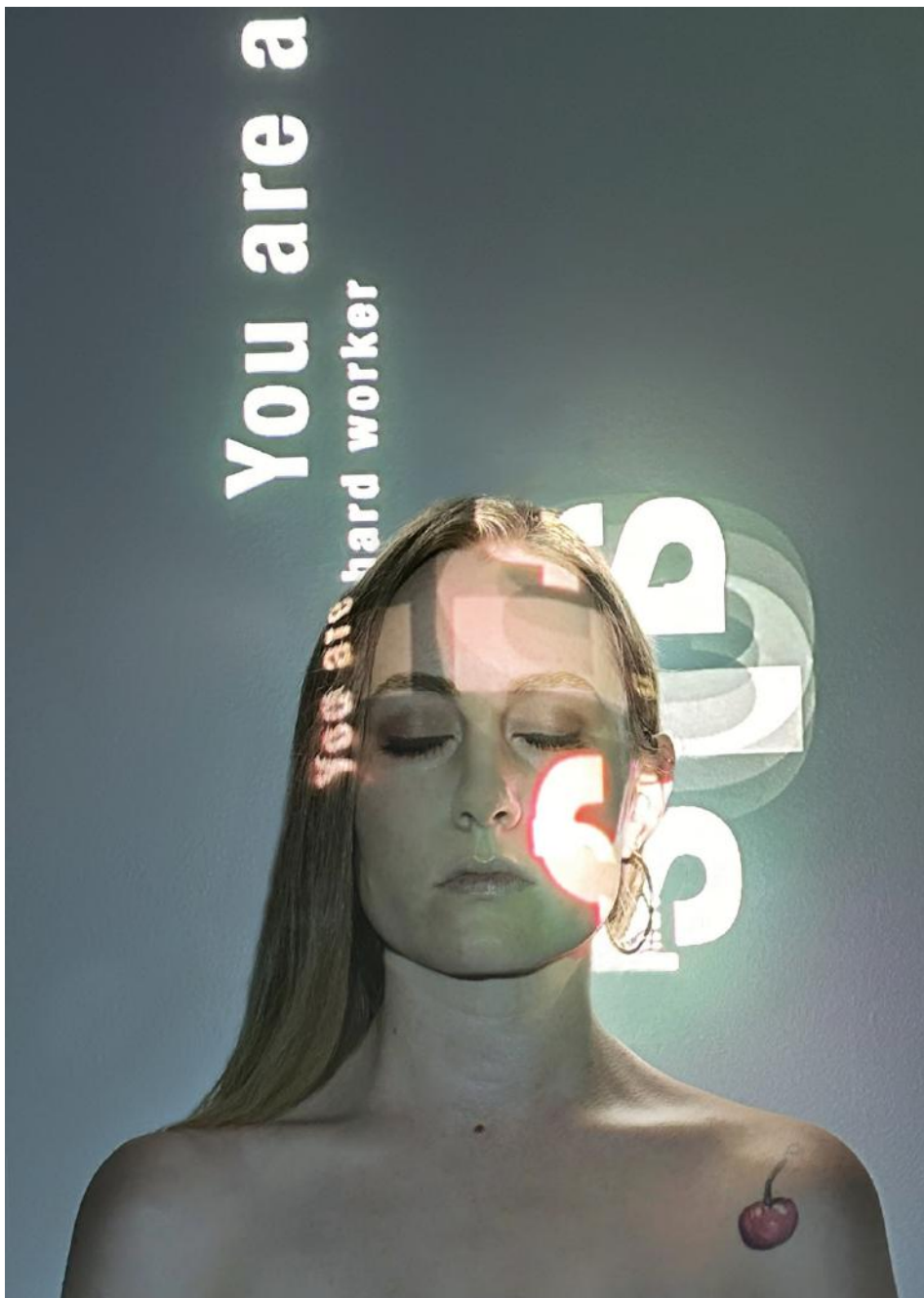
Nadezhda Petrova is based in Kazanlak – a small town, situated in the Rose Valley, Bulgaria. She has a bachelor’s degree in Graphic design from the Technical University of Sofia, after which she also completed a master’s degree at New Bulgarian University. She has worked as an illustrator on a freelance basis since her graduation. She opened her studio for illustration and art dolls called “Made by Nadiusha” in 2019. There she expresses her bold ideas the way she wants to. Her inspiration comes from literature, history, art, cinema, nature in all forms, symbolism, astrology and magic, medicine and science, myths, legends and old stories, real people and events.



Nadezhda Petrova | Heart is master of our mind | 2024



Mona Gandomkar, an Iranian-born Graphic Designer, is deeply passionate about addressing women's issues and fostering self-awareness among women. Her mission is to empower women to navigate the complexities of societal expectations, personal relationships, and professional endeavors by encouraging them to understand their own values, strengths, and aspirations. Through this self-awareness, she aims to inspire women to confidently challenge restrictive norms, maintain their independence, and forge paths that reflect their authentic identities. Mona motivates women to actively engage with the visual narratives she creates, using her art to prompt exploration and reflection. Her design approach is cross-disciplinary, incorporating elements such as sound, lighting, motion, and interactive design to create immersive experiences. Central to her work is typography, which she employs as a subtle yet powerful tool to communicate messages that stir emotions and elevate awareness. By skillfully manipulating the visual aspects of written language, she invites viewers to connect with the deeper meanings in her work.

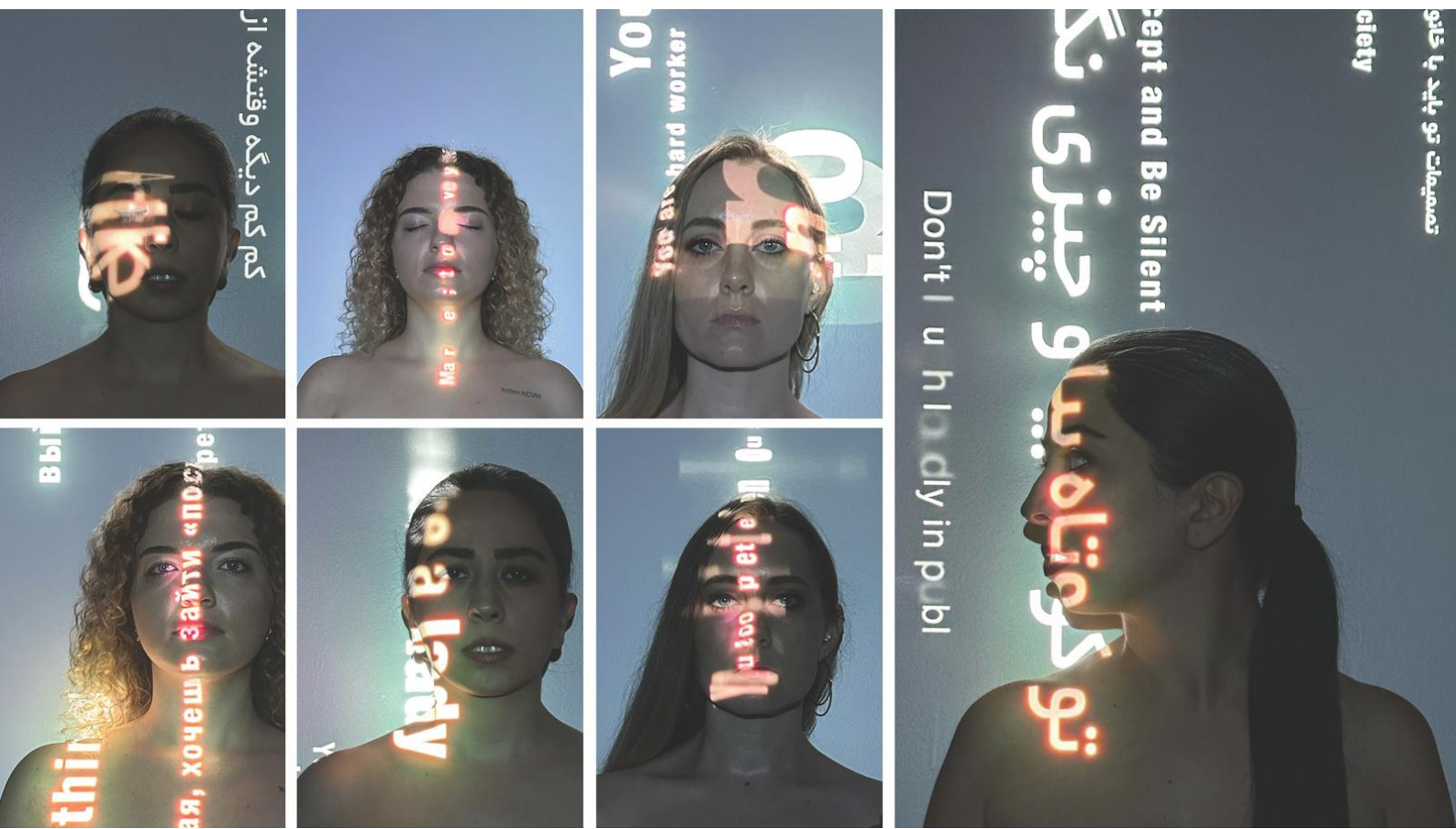


Mona Gandomkar | Hidden Voices

Artist Statement

In the intricate tapestry of human existence, the pursuit of empowerment is a universal aspiration, and self-awareness emerges as a guiding thread in this intricate weave. Self-awareness, essential for personal growth, acts as a compass through the complex terrain of societal expectations, often burdened with limiting stereotypes for women. By recognizing and understanding these expectations, women can dismantle societal shackles, armed with the clarity and knowledge necessary to challenge stereotypes and contribute to a more inclusive society. Within the complex interplay of societal norms and familial expectations, an unsettling narrative unfolds, frequently hidden beneath a veneer of societal approval. Societal expectations often prescribe a set of norms and stereotypes that, on the surface, may appear to be valuable components woven into the fabric of communities and families. However, for women, these seemingly harmless expectations often serve as disguised tools of censorship, impeding their ability to be authentic, pursue their aspirations, and express their emotions openly. This intricate interplay of societal norms, disguised as tradition and propriety, transforms into a suffocating force that obstructs women from embracing their true selves. In my project, Hidden Voices, I've chosen to portray a part of the stereotypes and societal pressures women encounter at different times. The norms may seem valuable at first glance, yet they reveal a different reality upon closer look. As a Middle Eastern woman, who has experienced and felt the weight of these pressures firsthand, I chose to focus my project on my own experiences. However, after talking with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, I learned similar experiences were happening for them, but with different words. This realization encouraged me to incorporate additional pieces from other's experiences. My project is a visual piece that begins with a 'positive' phrase that typically defines girls through their family and society's lens. This phrase forms the initial, surface-level image. However, behind this image, there's more. I've written down the less-heard sentences that echo these expectations. I made motion graphic and projected on girls, and recorded. I employ Artivive, an augmented reality platform, to engage my audience and create deeper connections with the work.

Mona Gandomkar | Hidden Voices



— Interview

Mikhailova Natalia

Your works beautifully capture the elegance and energy of ballet. What inspires you to focus on dance, particularly ballet, in your pastel works?

I have loved ballet since childhood. My mother used to tell me that when she first took me to a ballet performance at the age of two, I cried when it ended because I didn't want it to be over. I was fortunate to be born and live in the beautiful city of Saint Petersburg, where there is a unique opportunity to visit theaters and watch ballets by various authors. I believe pastel allows me to convey the lightness of the dance, its grace, flight, and movement, as well as the emotion and passion. What I particularly like about ballet is the way emotions are expressed



Mikhailova Natalia
Flight



through movement: how love, suffering, sorrow, and doom are conveyed without words.

Your background in both physics and art is quite unique. How does your scientific education influence your approach to creating art, if at all?

It just so happened that after school I chose to study physics, but there is also so much beauty and mystery in physics—the flight of particles through a collider, electron clouds. While studying physics, I became very interested in the topic of color, light, and the spectral characteristics of objects. As for scientific approaches, I try to read a lot about dry pastel techniques and artists. For example, I recently discovered the works of Mikhail Shemyakin done in dry pastel—they are exquisite, concise in plot, and brilliant in execution. But when I start to draw, all the science fades away, leaving only emotions.

You have studied the interiors of St. Petersburg theaters and portrayed them in pastel. What draws you to theater interiors, and how do they influence the emotional tone of your artworks?

Pastel is a very tactile material. There are pastel artists who draw while wearing gloves, but I prefer to work with my hands. It feels like when I

draw with pastel, I am actually touching the velvet of the seats, the fabric of the curtains, and the tulle of the ballerinas' tutus. Pastel allows me to convey textures, and in the interiors of St. Petersburg theaters, there is so much—wood, fabric, gold, crystal!

Pastel as a medium allows for rich texture and materiality. What challenges do you face when working with pastels, and what are some of your techniques for achieving the desired effects in your works?

Dry pastel is a special material. It has definite advantages—it's easy to layer, blend, convey texture, and can be used like both a pencil and an edge, creating different types of lines. But there are also challenges—its powdery nature, the impossibility of applying too many layers, its fragility, and, like watercolor, pastel doesn't forgive mistakes. I try to study different techniques, using blending, pastel pencils, fixatives, and primers. I really love the texture—pastel allows you to achieve a materiality effect, it's just magical! Many artists aim for the volume of the image, but pastel gives the feeling of the material that everything is made of.

Could you describe your process of preparing to create a work? Do you begin with sketches, or is your process more intuitive?



Mikhailova Natalia | Mozart



Mikhailova Natalia | Legs

Having an academic art education, I understand that creating quality work requires sketches, but it doesn't always happen that way. Due to my emotionality and phenomenal visual memory, I often draw without sketches. Sometimes the idea of a work takes over me, and I create several versions of the same subject, drawing until the concept of the painting is fully realized. Sometimes, I even need to take a break and start again.

How do you see the future of pastel art evolving, and how do you contribute to that evolution through your work and involvement in the National Union of Pastelists of Russia?

I am a member of the Union of Pastelists of Russia, participating in events and exhibitions. My work "Northern Bonaparte" received special recognition from the judge at the exhibition "Zone of Stability. 2023." I plan to present works with theater interiors in upcoming projects of the Union.

I believe pastel has a great future, as this technique combines graphic elements and allows for the conveyance of color. Currently, I am studying at the Saint Petersburg State Academy of Art and Industry named after A.L. Stieglitz, at the Faculty of Art Business. Studying the structure of the art market, including the domestic one, I understand that there is now a high demand for individuality in artists, their style, and for graphics. Pastel offers great opportunities for contemporary artists, and the technical characteristics of modern pastel and paper allow these possibilities to be fully realized.

My name is **Carlotta Aura**. I studied architecture and urban design at the Politecnico, first in Turin and then in Milan, where I graduated with an urban planning thesis related to the experience of walking and slow paths. The university gave me the opportunity to learn how to use different languages of representation, in particular digital ones; So in recent years I have started to use drawing alongside writing, even if since I was a child I have always wandered between these two worlds. I always thought they walked harmoniously. I think that architecture and poetry both represent human identity in their own way, one giving it space and time, the other allowing it to express itself. I have an idea of architecture as something that does not raise walls, but rather builds bridges. And I think that words do the same, connecting people from afar, making them alive and present, giving them a way to recognize themselves similar every time. And different every time. Sometimes the images do not know how to be silent, and they impose a sentence on me, they dictate a sign to me, and I become their voice. When images and words come together, they scream very loudly. They tell me things I didn't even know and they make me talk about them. They make me talk about others, they make me talk to others. And talk about this. Of the world I feel inside, of this time, to which only in this way sometimes I feel I can make sense of it.





Joan Pañell Fernández de Liencres is a self-taught artist from Barcelona, Spain, known for his vibrant and expressive mixed technique abstract paintings. Born in 1998, he has been painting since 2020. His art is characterized by the use of bright colors and dynamic brushstrokes, often combining abstract forms to convey deep emotions and personal experiences. Joan's work reflects a fusion of intuition and technique, often beginning with an emotional spark or thought and evolving through multiple layers. His inspirations include everyday life, emotions, and the interconnectedness of existence, alongside influences from artists like Cy Twombly.

Joan Pañell Fernández de Liencres | J2 | 2023





Joan Pañell Fernández de Liencres | T1 | 2023

Artist Statement

Joan Pañell Fernández de Liencres explores the intersection of emotion, memory, and the subconscious through the use of color, form, and texture. Fascinated by the way non-representational art allows viewers to project their own emotions and stories onto the work, he approaches painting with an intuitive and experimental process. Through layered compositions and dynamic brushstrokes, Joan seeks to evoke movement and transformation, capturing the fluid and ever-changing nature of personal experience and perception. Each piece becomes an invitation for reflection and emotional resonance.

— Interview

Daniel Brooks

Can you share more about the unfortunate experience that pushed you to start putting your art out there? How did it influence your creative process?

I can only share a small amount. I went through a mental breakdown last year that was becoming too overwhelming for me and those around me. All I can say is I lost some friends and colleagues due to my deep depression. I've always had a bit of a negative disposition towards myself, as if I didn't click with the rest of society. When you beat yourself up for almost 20 years it's hard to break the cycle. This unfortunate event made me realize I've been letting people walk over me, and



I haven't been standing up for myself. So I decided to pour my anger and anxiety out into these paintings while simultaneously painting an image of what it's like day in and day out living with depressive episodes.

Your work focuses on personal experiences with mental health. How do you translate those feelings into your artwork?

Mostly through color and textures. When painting "Red Fog" and "Due Punishment" I was focused heavily on these negative emotions in hopes that it would not only translate through brushstrokes and color, but also rid myself of those feelings therapeutically. With Red Fog the storm cloud represents the feeling I get from my deep emotional episodes I get on occasion. Negative thoughts, paranoia, and anxiety that I can rearrange in my head sparking disassociation and all sorts of issues.

What role does art play in managing your mental health? Has it become a therapeutic outlet for you?

Art has always been a joyful experience for me. I was always interested in art from a young age, and I'm fortunate enough to have some old highschool buddies that I can meet up with to work on art with. This most recent work has definitely been helpful. I do feel like the only path



Daniel Brooks | Due Punishment

forward is to be as open as possible with who I am and what I'm experiencing at all times. I can safely say that's not a philosophy I followed before last year.

You mention stigmas surrounding mental health. How do you address these stigmas through your art, and what impact do you hope to have on your audience?

The truth and feeling is in the eye of the beholder. I can only assume that sharing my experiences with mental health through the stories each painting expresses might widen their perception and awareness in the future. I know that I've experienced intense social anxiety and I've seen how it's experienced by others. It would be nice to open some eyes to these experiences in the case it saves others from being wrongly ridiculed for their anxieties.

Has your art led to new relationships or conversations around mental health that you didn't expect?

Not as of yet but I hope for it too. I'm still currently working on this series. I have had a career shift however, and I found something smaller and more tight knit. I will say my new found hopeful energies have led me to put myself more out there, and I consider myself



Daniel Brooks | Red Fog

very fortunate to get this opportunity. And I'm trying not to pass up future opportunities.

What emotions do you hope to evoke in viewers when they engage with your pieces?

Each piece comes with its own story and experiences. I hope these paintings can create a sense of the turmoil I've experienced and maybe shed light on things they've experienced within themselves or with friends and family. I get very personal in some of the artist statements for each piece, but within reason. I'm not trying to upset anyone either.

How has the journey of exploring your own struggles with anxiety and depression influenced the evolution of your style or themes?

Before this even in Art School I never had a style. I did a few projects that were different but never fully applied myself to a single focus. These last couple of years have been very tough on me mostly mentally but physically as well. Focusing my depressive emotions into design and color has become a fantastic way to bottle these things outside myself for once. And I guess I've finally hit the level where I'm no longer bothered by others knowing about my depression. This isn't over either, everyday is a struggle to push myself out of the house. It's extremely difficult still to find any meaningful romantic connection, but I don't see it as a negative anymore. I believe everything I've experienced has been experienced by other people many times over and it's only right that I express this so they don't feel alone.



Daniel Brooks | Castaway

Art has always been an integral part of my life. Since childhood, I've been drawn to the beauty and grace of ballet, the mystery of ancient Greek myths, and the intrigue of astrology. Reflecting my inner worlds through the realm of art, I began drawing at the age of 12. My first steps in this direction were modest, but even back then, my talents were recognized at school. My works were sent to exhibitions where they gained recognition at both the school and city levels. Over the years, my skills and technique improved. I continued learning, experimenting with different styles and themes. Gradually, my works became more profound and meaningful, reflecting my thoughts, feelings, and views of the world around me. Art became not just a hobby for me but a means of self-expression, a way to share my inner world with others. Today, at the age of 22, I continue creating paintings, striving to convey a piece of my soul with every brushstroke. My works reflect my love for beauty, my outlook on life, my dreams, and hopes. Each painting is not just an image on canvas, but a separate world filled with meaning and emotion. My paintings are my voice, my way of communicating with the world, my reflection in every detail.

— Arina Mikos



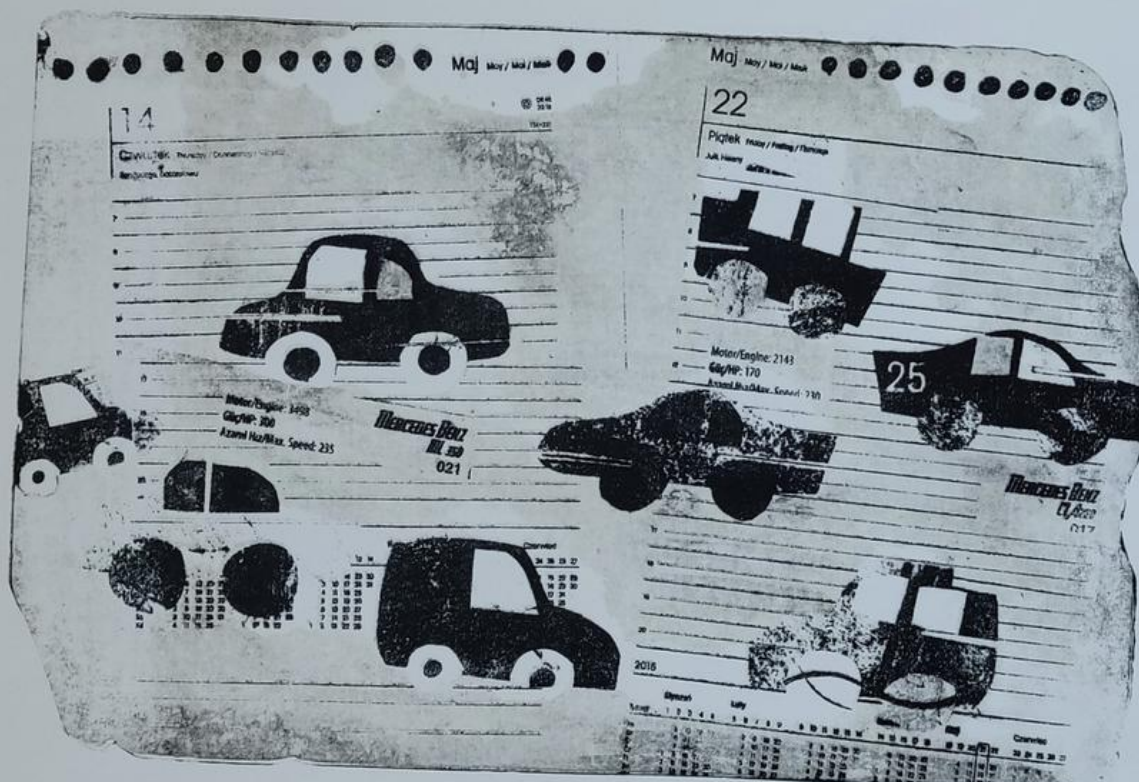
Arina Mikos | The flow of thought



I am a graduate of the University of Silesia in Katowice (branch in Cieszyn at the Faculty of Arts and Educational Sciences, majoring in Graphics). My specialization is Artistic Graphics. I feel most comfortable in the technique of lithography and other techniques of workshop graphics. I am a member of the KURANT scientific group at the Faculty of Arts and Educational Sciences in Cieszyn. My works have taken part in joint exhibitions, for example "Migrants", "InVisible Cities". In my free time I also do oil painting and I am learning to sew.

— Dominika Depa

Dominika Depa | Katalog | 2023





Yulia Yunik

Your work is known for its bold use of color and layering techniques. Can you tell us how you approach choosing the color palette for each piece?

Choosing colors is a very intuitive process for me. I usually start by focusing on the energy and mood I want to bring out in the piece. I love working with materials like epoxy resin and alcohol inks because they let me create rich layers and dynamic effects. Each color feels like a thread that weaves into the bigger picture, helping to set the tone and tell the story. I like to think of my colors as little bursts of energy that draw people in and make them feel something powerful.

What emotions or experiences inspire the dynamic and vibrant compositions in your artwork?

My paintings are a reflection of my personal journey and emotions. I'm deeply inspired by moments of transformation, overcoming challenges, and finding strength in unexpected places. Nature is a big influence, too. My studio is surrounded by beautiful rivers and forests, which bring a sense of calm and harmony into my work. And, of course, my Ukrainian heritage plays a huge role — it's filled with rich traditions and deep cultural roots that I weave into my art.

Your project 'The Spark of Color' seems to explore the moment of creative ignition. Can you describe what this 'spark' means to you personally as an artist?

For me, "The Spark of Color" is more than just a painting; it's a visual expression of the energy



Yulia Yunik | Love | 2023

that ignites dreams and ambitions. This piece symbolizes a powerful burst of emotions and creativity, created through a meditative process where I completely surrendered to the flow of inspiration. I abandoned all rules and limitations, letting the colors and textures guide me naturally. This experience was a true test of my own creative boundaries and an experiment in trusting the process without trying to control it. The result is a dynamic explosion of color and movement — much like fireworks lighting up the sky. The swirling patterns and vibrant hues represent the moment when ideas, emotions, and energy collide, sparking new beginnings and motivating action. I see "The Spark of Color" as an artwork that not only fills a space with vibrant energy but also serves as a reminder that each of us has the power to ignite our dreams and bring them to life. It's a call to embrace spontaneity, trust in the creative process, and move forward with courage and enthusiasm.

Acrylic and epoxy resin are at the core of your materials. What draws you to these particular mediums, and how do they contribute to your artistic expression?

I love using epoxy resin and acrylic because they offer so much flexibility and allow me to play with layers and transparency. Resin, in particular, creates this beautiful three-dimensional effect that makes my paintings feel alive. It lets me experiment and discover new textures and shapes. With each piece, I aim to keep a balance



between structure and flow, making the painting feel spontaneous and full of life.

You've exhibited internationally. How has exposure to different cultures influenced your work?

My biggest influence is definitely my home country, Ukraine. I've lived in Kyiv for over 20 years now, and it's such a vibrant city where traditions from all over the country come together. I'm also very inspired by my childhood in Crimea — it's a magical place with mountain rivers, the smell of steppe winds, and the taste of the salty sea. My paintings reflect the warmth of southern Ukraine's traditions and the beautiful folklore of the western regions. The spirit of freedom and love for our land is deeply rooted in everything I create.

My journey also took me to England, where I began living independently and truly found myself. I was lucky to grow up in such a rich cultural environment, and the British spirit definitely influenced me. Beyond that, I'm fascinated by many other places too. Asia and India have a special place in my heart — I love their philosophy of life and the deep spirituality I found there. Europe captivates me with its rich history and timeless elegance, while Latin America's vibrant energy and joyful spirit have influenced my work with a sense of lightness and positivity. All these experiences have shaped my style and helped me create a unique blend of cultures in my work.

In your artist statement, you mention using art as a tool for emotional and spiritual reflection. Can you share a specific moment when you felt that your artwork had a profound impact on someone's personal journey?

Yes, one time a client told me that one of my paintings helped him through a really tough time. He saw it as a symbol of strength and resilience, reminding him to hold on to hope even when things seemed dark. Hearing that made me realize how powerful art can be. It's more than just something beautiful to look at — it can really touch people's hearts and become a source of comfort and encouragement. That's the biggest compliment I could ever receive as an artist.

Your works are described as a balance between structure and spontaneity. How do you find harmony between these two forces during your creative process?

I start each piece with a basic structure in mind, but I let the details develop naturally. I usually meditate or do some breathing exercises before I begin, just to get in the right mindset and let my intuition lead the way. This way, I have a good mix of planning and freedom, which keeps the creative process exciting and open. I want my paintings to feel alive and full of movement, and balancing structure with spontaneity helps me achieve that.



Mariaceleste Arena lives and works in Sicily. She mainly painting and drawing fantastic and surreal subjects, combining traditional and digital techniques and mainly inspired by fantastic animals and the outsider art. She had exhibited and published in national and international exhibitions and art magazines.

Mariaceleste Arena | Fantastic elephants I | 2024





M. Arana

2024

Ana Pedrera, born in Cáceres, Spain in 1981, holds degrees in Hispanic Philology and in Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature. She blends her passion for visual arts with words through artistic mediums such as visual poetry and other artistic disciplines.

Artist Statement

The project aims to bring the viewer closer to various artistic disciplines.

Ana Pedrera | Mannequins | 2020



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— Interview

Erin Brockhouse

Your photography is described as ethereal and dreamy. Can you tell us more about what inspires this aesthetic and how nature plays a role in shaping your visual language?

Living a majority of my life in South Florida, I am surrounded by a unique diversity of flora and fauna. Growing up and to this day, my father is an avid plant collector and enthusiast. I grew to love and be inspired by nature due to his passion. Continuing my work, I hope to grow my knowledge of plants while drawing attention to their significance in our day to day life.

Nature is intrinsic to the human condition. What I love about nature is how inherently organic and raw it is. I draw inspiration from these qualities to create films and photos. This can be seen throughout my photography, speaking to the whimsical essence of life along with working on documentaries. Behind the camera, I am moved and empowered when capturing someone's true emotions especially from hearing their authentic stories.

You've recently developed a passion for analog photography, particularly 35mm. What excites you the most about working with film, and how does it differ from your previous digital work?

The most exciting aspect of analog photography is the anticipation and mystery. Particularly in



today's world where everything is about instant gratification. It was great to learn photography digitally to understand the technical side and then dive into more traditional methods for further experimentation. When I was in highschool and college, I shot a handful of rolls but became more inclined later on with a close friend's piqued interest.

There is something romantic about film stills, they feel velvety and tangible. I hope to expand my portfolio by working with 35mm for more staged portraits and still lifes, which I have initially been more comfortable pursuing in a digital format.

My analog and digital photography collages are quite similar, combining portraiture, flower close ups, along with other natural elements. My traditional photo collages differ by incorporating detail, playing with transparency and fluid shapes, and experimenting with asymmetrical compositions.

Your recent film about Eastern 401 was exhibited at the HistoryMiami Museum. What led you to tell this specific story, and what challenges did you face in the process of documenting it?

Growing up in Miami, I never knew about the

history of Eastern 401. As an adult, I was informed about this tragic aviation accident by one of the survivors, Ron Infantino. Listening to his story for the first time was disheartening and touching.

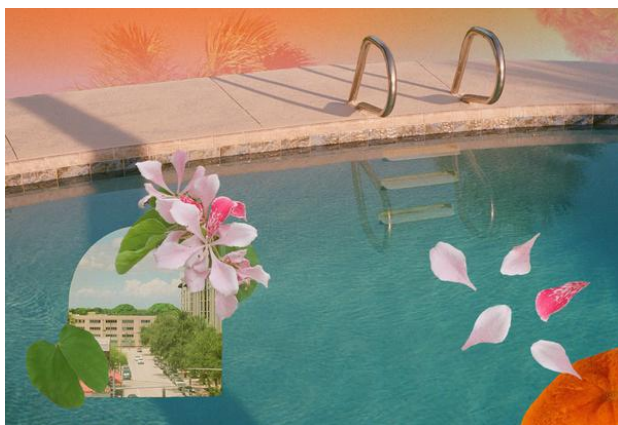
I became impassioned to tell his story along with Mercy Ruiz's, a survivor and flight attendant. There were no films released previously that focused on the survivors' perspective. The intent for creating "If You Can Hear My Voice, Don't Light a Match" was to help raise awareness for a potential large-scale memorial to be built and to allow the survivors to tell their story. In late 2022, a small permanent monument was erected in Miami Springs.

There were many hurdles for creating this film, including attempting to get in touch with survivors who were willing to tell their story. After encountering a traumatic event, many people are hesitant to interview and speak openly about their experience. And since this happened in the 1970s, many people have either passed away or moved away since the accident.

You mentioned that your films focus on social issues and give a voice to the voiceless. Can you talk about a project where this mission was particularly impactful for you?

In the future, I would love to work on more documentaries which involve social issues. It is principal to allow people to voice their stories of injustice and adversity, in order to plant the seeds of change.

The most impactful short documentary I directed and produced, in 2019, is entitled "Tension". This



short film is about experiencing Vaginismus, a condition that at the time was not discussed widely. As someone who struggled with this affliction, I felt it was important to educate people about this intimate subject matter as well as create a safe space to talk about it.

When I was first diagnosed, I was quite alone and ashamed. There was little to no mainstream media discussing women's sexual issues. Later on, I saw this as an opportunity to create a film that would help de-stigmatize Vaginismus. With this project, I hoped to heal myself through the process and to help others who experience similar medical conditions feel seen.

What role does experimentation play in your creative process, especially as you move between different mediums such as film and photography?

Sometimes unintentional, experimentation plays a key role in both my photography and filmmaking. As an artist, I am constantly learning from my mistakes and thinking of new mediums to practice with. Which allows for creativity to flow and to perceive things from a different angle.

In the documentary realm, you can conceptualize how a story will transcend but oftentimes it changes directions. For each film, I discover new ways to convey imagery pertaining to the story on screen. When creating "Tension," I played around with After Effects creating polished title transitions along with rough and textured moving illustrations. With the Eastern 401 project, I foraged for leaves, seeds, and flowers to create a collage with scanned newspaper clippings propped up on a lazy susan for motion. In the end, I featured the titles and illustrations for "Tension" but did not add the collaged footage for the final version of "If You Can Hear My Voice, Don't Light a Match." People never realize how many variations of a film could exist based on the editing. The original essence is there but it has become something new.

I would like to think my photography is the same way: ever changing and evolving. Possessing the curiosity to continue learning all that I can about digital and traditional methods of photography is essentially for my process of experimentation. There is so much I will never uncover about film and photography, I find that to be daunting but at the same time encouraging in a weird way.

You've said that your goal is to educate the public on "taboo" subjects. Are there any upcoming projects where you're tackling such topics? How do you balance sensitivity with the need to provoke thought?

At the moment, I have a couple ideas for short form documentaries. Some of these ideas do touch on sensitive and "taboo" subject matter. Possibilities for new subjects focus on a particular South Florida Wildlife Activist and International Political Issues.

Balancing sensitivity with imagery and interviews

can be quite hard to do in a respectful and tasteful way. I find it necessary to choose empathy, try to view the subject from the people who are affected most by it. There is a fine line to walk, capturing the sense of urgency or intense emotion through an unbiased perspective. While balancing the intensity of the subject matter with a positive outlook to help ease tension. In any trying situation, people should always have faith. The resilient force of human nature is the pursuit for a brighter future.

How has your background in cinema and film influenced your approach to photography, particularly your recent work with analog formats?

When studying film, I created many hand sketched and photo mock-up storyboards for narrative films. This reinforced the importance of composition and influenced a thorough approach to capturing still photos. When shooting with 35mm, I am more cautious and intentional with my still compositions since it is a limited format. Looking into the viewfinder, if the imagery doesn't speak to me, I will not capture the picture.

Although there are many differences between cinema and photography, there are plenty of similarities. Learning the significance of lighting, how it plays a prominent role in evoking emotion or setting the tone to portray a story whether it is in moving or still form.

Understanding lighting has given me an advantage for working with film. At times, it has been difficult comprehending the impact of color temperature and intensity of light for indoor staged shoots. Re-learning the process and technique in a new medium can be a difficult process but fun nonetheless.



Junnan Huang

Artist Statement

Clement Greenberg's concept of "anti-representation," which emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, challenges traditional representational art by asserting that art should transcend mimicking the real world. In Junnan Huang's work, this philosophy is manifested through the use of somber tones and blurred boundaries that emphasize the materiality of the medium over the depiction of external reality. Her paintings do not simply express personal emotions; they invite the viewer into a shared exploration of more profound human experiences.

Huang employs a metaphorical "mirror" to explore themes of self-reflection and acceptance, depicting complex emotional states like anxiety and sadness. This approach allows her to address how individuals confront their own inner turmoil and the challenges of acknowledging deep-seated trauma and illness. By focusing on the material properties of oil paint on canvas, she emphasizes the autonomy of her medium—its ability to stand alone as a subject of perception without the need for narrative or symbolism.

In a contemporary context where art often gravitates towards overt sentimentality and narrative, Huang's work maintains a focus on the intrinsic qualities of painting. She regards her canvas as a two-dimensional surface that captures the essence of the materials, engaging viewers with the texture, color, and composition of her work directly. This not only challenges conventional artistic methods but also enhances the viewer's engagement with the artwork as an object of direct experience.

In her piece "So What If I'm an Artist and I Still Have to Get to Work at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday in Shoes That Don't Fit Me?", Huang combines traditional Chinese art foundations with Western composition techniques. This piece incorporates the real object of a chair placed in front of the canvas, engaging viewers in a dialogue about the nature of art and its role in the world. Her use of the chair emphasizes its physical attributes without altering its inherent characteristics, reflecting on the materiality and spirituality of her artistic pursuit.

Huang's work, deeply rooted in both Western and Eastern aesthetics, uses simplified forms and traditional pigments to convey the spirit and inner vitality of her subjects, bridging personal experiences with broader cultural and existential themes. Her ability to resonate across cultural and spiritual divides reaffirms the potential of art to provide solace, stimulate reflection, and connect deeply with a wide audience.

Written by Xu Hanyin

Universiti Malaya

Academy of Malay Studies, Fine Arts



Junnan Huang | So What If I'm an Artist and I Still Have to Get to Work at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday in Shoes That Don't Fit Me?

— Interview

Ekaterina Addams

How did studying in Berlin and Weimar influence your creative process?

My studies in these cities took place during summer breaks while I was still studying in Russia. It was my first experience with contemporary European art and a departure from the strict limitations set by my institution in Saint Petersburg. In Berlin, I visited art exhibitions as part of the learning process, met renowned photographers in person, and learned about their work directly from them.

Perhaps the most important part of this experience was the opportunity to work on my own projects. For instance, in Berlin, every student presented their photo project, and in Weimar, we organized an entire exhibition of works created during the course.

This experience allowed me to explore different techniques, connect with people from various countries, and break free from my own internal constraints. It may not be as easy for artists from other countries to understand, but for me, this experience completely changed my perspective on art.

How do mysticism and nostalgia shape your work, and what draws you to these themes?

Mysticism has fascinated me since the beginning of my artistic journey, when I was still in school. At that time, I wasn't thinking about themes or meanings in my work; I just painted what I liked. This awareness came more recently, when I started reflecting on what my art is about and



how I want it to be perceived. It was a logical decision to focus on depersonalized characters, often depicting only eyes, hands, silhouettes, or objects. I like to leave room for viewers' interpretations.

Nostalgia initially emerged from my attempts to romanticize what surrounded me. My childhood and adolescence were spent among gray concrete buildings and gloomy people. As a teenager, I frequently traveled to Europe, where I saw a different, more appealing life. But when I moved to the Czech Republic, I realized I missed those familiar melancholic views, and they began to appear in my work.

Tell us about your experience studying video, multimedia, and performance in the Czech Republic and how it influenced your approach to art.

I ended up in this field by chance when I couldn't decide where to apply. Honestly, I chose it based on a friend's suggestion because the program name sounded interesting. It turned out to be the right choice, as students in this program can explore any art direction they like. On one hand, this freedom was great because I wasn't restricted to photography, painting, or objects. On the other hand, I still haven't been able to settle on one medium.

Overall, it was a valuable experience that significantly influenced my approach to art and taught me how to work on large projects.

What new techniques or directions are you currently exploring in your work?

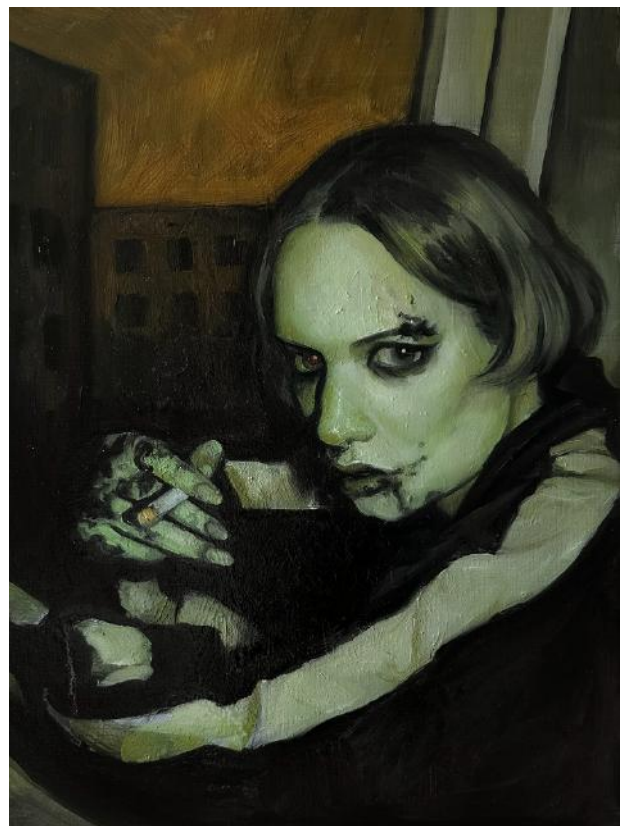
In August, I tried working with soft solder for the first time. Initially, I thought it would just be a new hobby, and I started making jewelry. But now, I've begun incorporating this technique into my works, creating frames for my paintings.

You work across various media—painting, photography, video art, and art objects. How do you decide which medium best expresses your ideas?

I have two approaches to this. In the first, I immediately envision a specific artwork in a certain medium, so there's no need to choose.

In the second case, it depends on the idea and my resources for realizing it. For example, I don't always have the necessary props, models, or locations for photography, so I might implement the idea through painting instead.

Your work often touches on personal and mystical themes. How do you maintain a connection with the audience while exploring



Ekaterina Addams | Night Talk | 2023

such introspective topics?

I usually share every stage of my work with close friends. We discuss how each of us interprets the final result and message of the work. This rarely influences the current project, but I enjoy noting what resonates with others and how their experiences align with mine.

When it comes to photography, I often have extensive discussions with the model about the final look of the shoot. Since these are usually non-commercial shoots, I choose the most suitable model, whose perspective doesn't interfere with my concept but enriches it.

How do you find a balance between exploring your inner world and external influences in your creative process?

I can't say I intentionally seek balance in this. Initially, ideas come from external influences, events, or something I've seen. Then I begin to analyze my emotions and why this particular thing caught my attention. Often, it may be something insignificant to others, like an old door I saw on a walk. I start wondering what might be behind it. While in reality, there's probably nothing interesting, art allows me to change that. In the end, the external and internal work together to create something new.

Ekaterina Addams | Inner Silence | 2023



Luiza Happi

In my work, I explore themes of self-identity, the search for one's true self, freedom, and self-expression, reflecting these ideas through minimalist abstract portraits and fragmented body forms. A central element in my paintings is the vibrant lime color — a symbol of life force and energy that flows through all my pieces, giving them a distinct sense of expression and vitality. My compositions often include profile portraits facing each other, along with delicate, elegant curves of body parts, emphasizing the fluidity and dynamism of forms. My work explores and deconstructs stereotypes related to the perception of femininity, the body, and social consciousness. I address themes such as feminism, hedonism, environmental protection, and inner psychological conflicts, inviting the viewer to reflect on their own perceptions and identity. I use mixed media, combining digital and physical techniques to emphasize fluidity and the interaction of different forms of art. This process reflects my concept of transformation and intuition in creative practice. I grew up in Tatarstan, a Muslim republic in Russia, and my works express a form of protest against the limitations and stereotypes embedded in traditional culture. My experience living in Moscow and later moving to the United States broadened my perception and opened new horizons for self-expression, allowing me to explore themes of freedom and identity more deeply. My goal is not only to create visually expressive works but also to raise important questions, offering a space for reflection on freedom, the environment, and equality. Every element of my work—from the choice of colors to the composition—reflects my thoughtful approach and my intention to convey visual ideas that are open to individual perception and interpretation.



Lauren Grixti

I am an Australian artist based in Melbourne (Naarm), working in a range of mediums from ink and watercolour illustrations to paper embroidery, bas-relief sculpture and mixed media.

Artist Statement

These works are inspired by vintage botanical illustrations and studies, and by the natural world, in particular native Australian flora. My watercolours focus on capturing vibrancy and colour. Conversely, by eliminating colour in my monochrome low relief sculptures, I aim to draw attention to the shape, texture and shadows created by the plants that can often be overlooked.





— Interview

Ahmed Tag Mohamed

Your work addresses themes such as oppression, identity, and belonging. How do you balance the documentary aspect of your work with the fictional and poetic elements?

I started my academic and professional life as a journalist, so documentation was the cornerstone of all my practices, and I enjoyed being vigilant of my surroundings. But at certain moments in my life, I fell into despair and to some extent, I gave up on reality. I quickly realised that what my senses experience could be a starting point, but life has no meaning unless I give it one, seeking objectivity and “bare truth” was so behind me at that stage. It might sound cliché, but life is like art; you make the most functional and the most aesthetic with what you have, and your interpretation is yours and yours only. We are the outcome of our context, but what we add to it, our brush stroke on life’s canvas, is who we are for real. So, My work starts from documentation and embeds it in every corner, but I always try to tweak and bend that documentation to build something different and more like how I perceive life at a certain point.

In 'Sock Inside-Out,' you explore the idea of self-redemption and cycles of birth and death. Could you explain how this theme emerged in your work and how it influences your approach to photography and video art?

I usually do not realise I am onto a project until I notice a pattern in the work I produce, whether it is written prose, poetry, film, photography or visual art. Sock Inside-Out emerged at a point where I was going through an internal journey of self-redefinition, and through that journey, I noticed a common theme in the things I have made, and it could be summed up in a single



notion: “It is a cycle within a cycle! Every time I fell in despair I feel dead, every time I pull myself up I feel resurrected”. I have a silly thought that my perception of life changes every four or five years, just like how blood and skin change with time.

I Remember...

When I thought I knew me
I was quite keen not to forget.

I Forget...

On which poker table I left myself...
Walking out to the world with an empty glass.

I Imagine...

I’m writing happy stories effortlessly, like a river’s purl cheering the boats.

I Want...

endless epiphanies...
A sweetheart...Home...
and...
diagnosable diseases.

*The Ode of Roam - Ahmed Tag M.
Sock Inside-Out, 2021*

You describe the project as a mythical ode. How do mythology and poetry influence your visual style, and what role do they play in shaping your narrative?

Most mythology revolves around a single notion: an unescapable predicament that every attempt to defy the prophecy only leads back to fulfilling it. And poetry, to me, is all about perceiving the dual nature of human feelings, light as feathers and heavy as mountains. These couple of thoughts shaped my narrative, especially in the

“Sock inside-out” project, towards the idea of faith as a moving power that kept humanity and myself moving. I believe that every person goes through a point in life where they think to themselves that they did all the right things by the book, but life is not giving them anything in return, and they don’t know what they can do better, So they only pray in different ways for a way out. These moments are what make mythology and poetry relevant, and these are usually the moments where people choose their faith and take a leap towards it.

Living in an oppressive, polarised region, you touch on feelings of alienation and lost identity. How do you convey these emotions visually in your work?

Usually, by searching for primal emotions like anger, fear, and love. I try to depict these emotions by noticing the moments when people are alone in a vast place or a group enjoying each other’s company. I never think while I’m doing it; I just make things. Later on, I realised that what I saw and turned into a work of art reflected my emotions at that particular moment. Nothing is intentional in my work process.

What does 'true diversity' mean to you, and how do you incorporate it into your art practice, especially in a world that seems increasingly homogenised?

I try to incorporate diversity in my work by embracing complexity in themes and mediums because the idea that an artwork should depict a clear single notion is, to me, a colonial and oppressive idea. I come from a melting-pot culture that has all sorts of colours and rhythms in its gut, and in the current world of “globalization,” I feel deprived of my own culture and singularity because someone somewhere made the entire world a replica economically, politically and culturally -even how we tell stories!- because it is for their best interest. True diversity is accepting that people are not a single definitive entity; they are full of paradoxes and contradictions, as is my work.

You mentioned that our generation often blames itself for not fitting into rigid societal structures. How does your art aim to challenge or subvert these structures?

By perceiving that structures are human-made and we can tweak them the way we want freely. Oppression’s optimum condition is when people oppress themselves with their own hand, and there is no better way to do that but to feel shameful, unworthy and afraid. The current world of consumption draws the idea of what is perfect and ideal, then tells us that we are not even close to that, so we need to keep doing what we are doing without imagining a different future or way of living. There is no need for





Bentham's panopticon as long as people feel they are always less and lacking no matter what they do and it is inevitable. My art is always concerned about alternating the common structures of narrative and storytelling as well as searching for new ways of perceiving life to find singularity, as I believe that when we give ourselves the right to question, tweak, and manipulate structures of thought and narrative, it is the way to feel liberated.

The concept of Sisyphus—finding joy in repetitive, seemingly futile tasks—appears in your statement. How do you relate this existential theme to the experiences you express through your project?

My project consists of cycles of narrative. It moves from hope to doubt and despair to confronting fears and then back again to hope for a new cycle to begin. We always say things like "History repeats itself" and "reinventing the wheel" naturally and commonly, which is true! Repetition is part of life's fabric, I believe. For a long time, I lived with contempt and a grudge towards repetition and its "futility". Then, while

listening to music someday, I realised something. Music, as universal language as it is, is made mainly of repetition of a certain melody. We enjoy music because it tweaks that repetition, offering safety and surprise simultaneously, and companies multiple repetitions over each other by the different instruments. In a way, it resembles life. Reinventing the wheel means revisiting our beliefs and perceptions. Sisyphus's daily chores, as they may seem repetitious, always have something new in each cycle, which could only be noticed by enjoying it and paying attention to details.

It takes us further ...
Faster and faster...
Faster than time.
Until it takes us back to the point...
Where we reinvent it.

*The Wheel, Ahmed Tag M.
Sock Inside-Out, 2022.*



Ekaterina Selezneva

No education. I am self-taught. I have always drawn, as long as I can remember. Art, paintings are what help me feel, express and experience emotions. Most often they reflect a certain period of life or some state, event in life.

Describe your art in three words: subjective. perception, immersion in feelings, flight of fantasy.
Your discipline: abstraction, mixed media, experimenting with directions.



Ekaterina Selezneva | Volcano | 2022



My name is **Amber Rose Manherz**. I was born in Philadelphia, lived most of my life so far in South Jersey and recently moved to Colorado Springs. I used to be a competitive gymnast but have recently dove into the world of Visual Art. I also have a passion for literature and writing, and love for people and life.

Artist Statement

I hope to explore the depths of my imagination and creativity. My mission is to find ways to use my work to make a difference in the world, whether in small or big ways.





— Interview

Zhenya Yudakov

Your work often engages with both text and images. How do you balance the roles of words and visuals in your art?

This question is valid if that balance exists in each specific work.

You've mentioned using Paint as a tool for digital drawings. What attracts you to this particular program, and how does it affect your creative process?

I started using Paint out of necessity (since it's hard to afford subscriptions to modern graphic editors). However, this program has many tools for artists to work with.

I think due to the simplicity of this program (compared to modern alternatives), its influence on my creative process is minimal.

Your portfolio includes works that explore complex themes, such as freedom and human emotions. How do these themes evolve in your art over time?

Here you are touching on complex concepts (specifically concepts) like freedom and emotions. The answer to this question would imply a deep understanding of these terms. For me, these are very complicated terms.

Many of your works contain a certain humor, warmth, or even irony. How important is humor in your creative expression?

It's very important. It's like Dostoevsky's books. When, after reading eight hundred pages, you come across the character of Kolya Krasotkin and



realize what a great sense of humor Dostoevsky had.

And later, you rewatch all the seasons of Futurama several times, where you find those moments too. I would like to express my gratitude to the creators of this animated series.

You have explored sculpture in addition to digital and traditional drawing. What challenges do you face when shifting between different mediums?

I am not currently engaged in sculpture because I moved from the countryside to the city. In the countryside, I had the opportunity to work with tools, and there was space in the yard. In the city, I rent a room and do not have a studio.

Can you share more about the meaning behind your work titled "Blue Bird. Milton Erickson (1901-1980)"?

Yes. In the drawing, you can see a surprised, confused, yet attentive bird resembling an owl. The title of the work references the person who developed neuro-linguistic programming in the 20th century.

Coding for alcohol addiction is a certain methodology that was developed or is still being

developed by someone, somewhere, somehow. Moderators openly state that this method helps bypass a person's critical thinking. The phrase "bypassing critical thinking" is a big compliment to this method. The person on whom this methodology is applied becomes vulnerable to the possibility of becoming a passive participant in mental experimentation.

The connection with the person is made through sound influence, and the knowledge of this connection is one-sided. Modern gadgets can very easily record and reproduce sounds at different levels of audibility.

It becomes critical because this influence can occur outside the walls of a special institution (if such institutions even exist). That is, potentially, any person can enter into symbiosis with wrongdoers while continuing to go about their daily activities without knowing it. The simplest example is a video camera. It's a lot if this is possible. Sound recording is very possible. That's also a lot. Sound reproduction is also possible, on different levels of audibility.

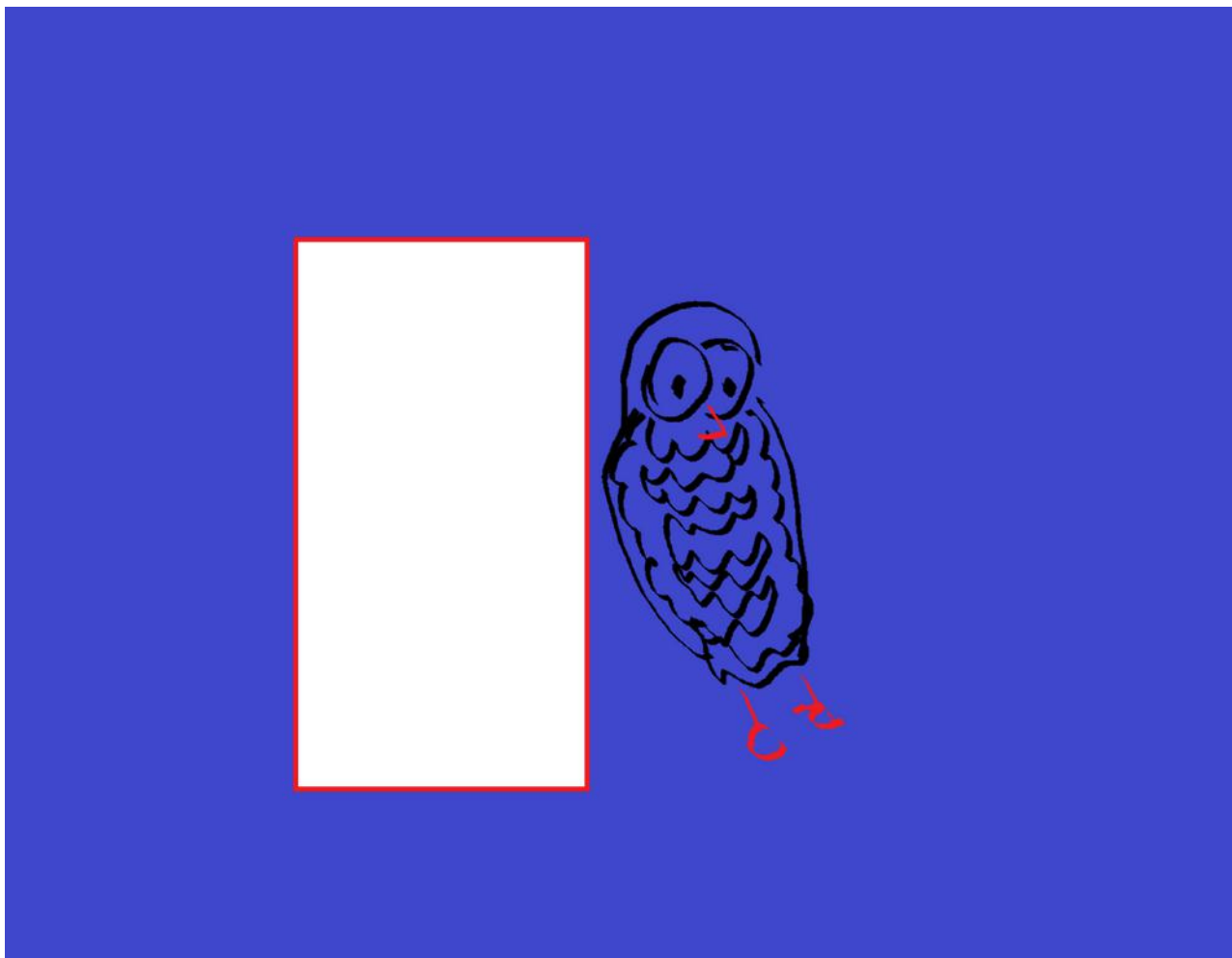
In the hands of wrongdoers, a person's speech in recorded form creates a rough matrix of their thinking style, outlining the shape of their internal voice. Even in the registration process, this matrix already represents harm by violating a person's right to privacy.

The registered form of speech becomes suitable for:

- a) registration
- b) critique
- c) interference

Interference, critique, and registration can occur during sleep and wakefulness. A person continuously engages in dialogue within their field of attention. They may repeat and replay interactions from their day, childhood, vacation...

Observing this dynamic, the moderator can manipulate the patient's imagined characters, the content of those characters' speech, voice tone, and gender choice. AI is capable of doing this now. It's being demonstrated now. It may have been capable for a while. And this can be done directly by operators, in different roles.



A person doesn't just speak in their voice; they also make music and do many other things in their imagination.

For instance, large language models and Chat GPT are considered generative AI. Generative AI is believed to be close to imagination in its properties, as the developers claim. There is also discriminative AI...

During sleep, a nearby mobile station, phone, or bug can record and reproduce sound.

However, surveillance of a person is illegal.

In your sculpture "Positive Pressure," you deal with the concept of pressure. What inspired this piece, and how does it relate to your other works?

I didn't understand how one could see tanks in Africa on TV.

I can explain why there are tanks in Russia. It's because of the confrontation between the T-34

and the Tiger.

But how can one see tanks in Africa?

I think that the responsibility of manufacturers extends as far as Egypt. No further.

I'm sure that the history of each piece of armored machinery can be traced. It's an interesting question.

I don't understand how a tank can drive across the savannah. It wouldn't go far or for long.

A tank is a weapon.

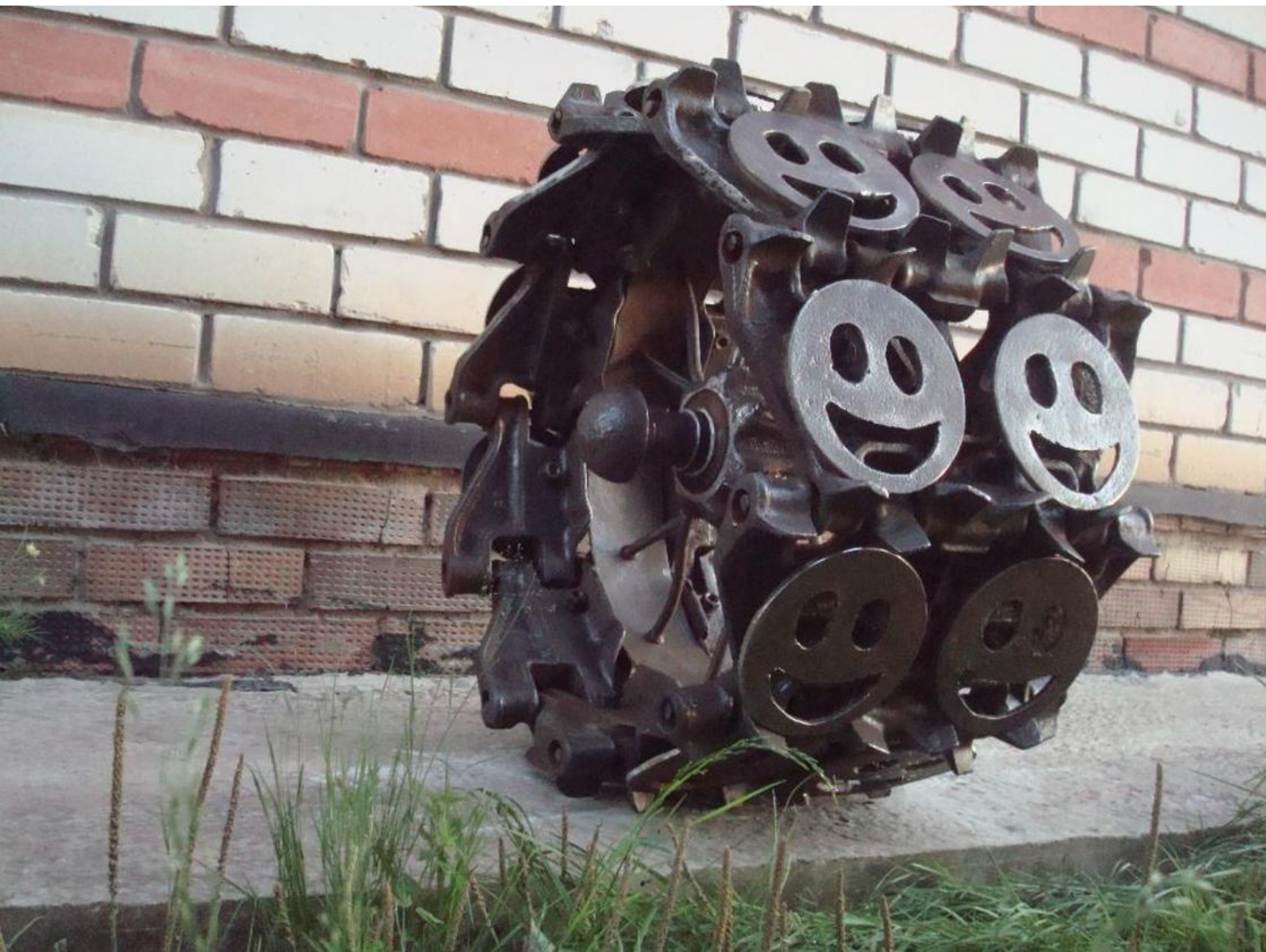
A tank in Russia represents the confrontation between the T-34 and the Tiger.

A tank in Africa from the T family raises interesting questions for specialists.

For Russia, the tank represents the T-34 vs. the Tiger. That's its history.

As for the history of those tanks seen in Africa, that's not an abstract question.

Zhenya Yudakov | Positive Pressure





Zhenya Yudakov | Abstract Sculpture



Zhenya Yudakov | Ursa Major and Ursa Minor

Christine Atuti

I am a 16-year-old artist and have been drawing all my life. My mediums include painting, collage, and illustration.



Antonio Tarantello

I am a Graphic Designer, an Abstract Digital Painter (using photoshop) and a 3d Level Designer for videogame, specialized in any kind of environment, using 3ds max to build 3d Words that once ready I put into a videogame using Unity3d. I had eyes surgery when I was young. I am fine now, somehow, even if with some every day difficulties. I love colors, my answer to my sight problems was to developpe my own art with a sense of bright colors and high contrast, even using 3d art inside virtual realities and real time apps like videogames.



Grazie per avermi scelto, ho rischiato la pelle.
Il segreto è chiedere permesso, e ti darei anche
la verginità, ecco, guarda, affare fatto.

**There isn't water between us, us,
let's watch a movie silently.**

Sto bevendo in anticipo, e come al solito, non funzionerà.
Siete accoglienti, ma preferisco i bicchieri di casa.

La tua fidanzata, immagino. Un bacio sulla fronte e siamo tutti di buon umore. La verità è che svegliarmi accanto a quel ciccione mi piaceva. Me ne pentirò, mi farà soffrire, non ho più fame di protezione. Non cambio versione di me stesso per compiacere: scelgo l'omissione piuttosto, anche se si tratta ancora di una difesa.

La povertà ha alterato il mio DNA. E chi ci crede? Ti spiego cos'è successo, se mi dai una seconda occasione: me la caverò alla grande. Ti rispondo, i poveri vogliono ancora sposarsi, mangiano quella roba, comprano dentiere economiche ai nonni, giocattoli tossici ai bimbi. E il genoma modificato si trasmette alle generazioni successive. Non vi guardo dall'oblio di un acquario, ci sono dentro anche io.

Non sono un uomo, non sono un bambino,
non sono un amante, non sono un giocatore,
non sono un figlio, non sono un padre.

**Whatever you want from me
I am not able to give you.**

Il simbolismo dei gesti, digli che l'ho sempre amato.
Sento cinguettii e dovrei essere a letto a rigirarmi
in angoscia per la tua assenza senza rimedi.

Piccolo. Non posso credere che non sei qui. Mi hai voluto bene nei tuoi richiami, non era altro che amore. Dormivo felice. Amarti era finalmente la cosa più semplice e spontanea che riuscissi a fare, sorprendendo me stesso e i miei parenti. Eri il mio bambino, la mia creatura: i tuoi vagiti, la mia gioia per il cuore. I tuoi passi, il momento più grande della mia vita. Tutto era così bello per me avendo te, tutto è così tremendo da quando ti ho toccato senza vita. Vorrei che il paradiso esistesse per incontrarti e abbracciarti, poter sentire la tua voce. Non ne esco vivo, immagino il tuo cuore fermarsi nella paura, o il tuo respiro venir meno, non riesco a immaginare cos'hai visto prima di andartene per sempre, come hai detto addio a questo mondo. Credo che tu abbia avuto terrore e io non ero con te, ti sei sentito solo, hai tremato: il tuo cuoricino che dovevo salvare non ha retto il peso delle cure.

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