VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM

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— *Intro*

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Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello dear reader,

You are holding the 53rd issue of our magazine. As always, we have done our best to fill it with beauty and meaning.

This time, we would like to reflect on the importance of support within the creative community - on how recognition from a professional in your field can sometimes mean even more than praise from loved ones and close friends. How important it is to let go of envy toward another person's talent and instead share in the joy and admiration inspired by their work.

We have had the opportunity to meet many artists, and I can see how some of them manage to gather like-minded people around them. This, without doubt, becomes a powerful motivation to continue creating. I truly want to believe that there will be more and more creators who support one another.

For our part, our team is also trying to create this kind of atmosphere and space - a place for self-expression, for meeting others, and for finding a new audience not only among art lovers, but also among active members of the creative field.

So make yourself comfortable - ahead of you are new names and creativity without borders!

On the Front Cover:
Dinara Aristo
In the fields of flowers
2020

On the Back Cover:
Olga Kölsch
The Fragility of Rose

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

Olga Kölsch

Olga Kölsch | Fjord in Autumn | 2025

Your watercolor works are known for their transparency and fluidity. How did you develop this distinctive visual language?

Olga Kölsch | Delicate Iris

I was inspired by the X-ray photography of Steven Meyers and started wondering whether it would be possible to recreate a similar transparent feeling with watercolor. Somehow, it just clicked and resonated with me.
My passion for this technique started from very practical reasons. Back then I had two little kids, which means I often need to stop everything and go to them. This layered technique is very timing-friendly—you can paint one petal, take a break, then come back and paint another one, and so on.
Later, I tried to push it further and see how far I could go with layers — how many petals I could paint distinctly, and what else instead of flowers I could paint.

In your paintings, flowers often appear both delicate and structured. What draws you to this balance between control and spontaneity?

My serious watercolor journey started with botanical illustrations, which gave me confidence in technique and a good understanding of flower structure. Nevertheless, I always had a feeling that it wasn't exactly my thing, and I was searching for something more expressionist and freehand. This transparent technique became a kind of bridge between two worlds.
Everything keeps changing. Even within this transparent technique, I am gradually moving toward a more loose and spontaneous approach. Some years ago I was very precise with water control and tried to prevent all "accidents" like cauliflower blooms or uneven washes. Now I mostly trust watercolor to do its job and really enjoy the textures we love watercolor for.

Olga Kölsch | The Fragility of Rose

Could you describe your process when building layered transparent compositions? How do you decide when a work is complete?

Sometimes I start with a fluid wet-in-wet background and try to incorporate a flower into what the background suggests. I like to experiment with different types of backgrounds—color blocks, fluid washes, textures. I usually do a very simple draft drawing, and adjust the painting along the way. Sometimes it ends up very differently from what I had in mind.
Finishing a work at the right moment is still one of my challenges. I have a tendency to "improve" things. There is a good German word, Verschlimmbesserung—improving something to the point where it becomes worse—and sometimes it's difficult for me to stop.
What helps me is to take a break, take a cup of coffee, for example, and then look at the work with fresh eyes or through the camera.
I also like to finish a painting in one day, if possible, becauseon the next day I will likely have a different mood, different energy which would't work on the painting from the day before.

How does teaching influence your own artistic practice? Do your students ever change the way you approach painting?

Teaching is a great pleasure for me—I truly enjoy it, especially the communication with students and seeing what they are working on and their challenges.
Students often ask unexpected questions. For example: "Can I paint this transparent flower on a dark background?"—and that led me to experiment more with backgrounds. Or: "Can we apply this technique to something else?"—which inspired me to paint landscapes in a similar way.

Your work often feels both minimal and emotionally rich. How do you achieve this sense of depth with such light visual elements?

Within one painting, I usually use a minimal palette. To be fair, I don't have a strictly limited palette overall, I like having a wide choice of paints. But within a single work I prefer to use one to three colors.
Many of my paintings are close to monochrome, which allows me to focus on value contrast. That is probably what brings the emotional depth.

How has living in Norway influenced your artistic vision, especially in terms of light, atmosphere, and nature?

Norway has incredibly beautiful nature. The light is very subtle and delicate—if we speak in painting terms, it is slightly desaturated and diluted.
Living here has made me very sensitive to these nuances of light and atmosphere, but also to sudden, dramatic shifts in color. Most of the time the palette is quiet—soft greys and muted tones—but then the sky can suddenly explode into something intense and almost unreal. If you look at Edvard Much's "The Scream" and think the colors are exaggerated, they are actually not. These dramatic sunsets are quite common here.
This contrast has shaped the way I paint: I work in a delicate, softway, always leaving space for unexpected brightness and moments of intensity—just as nature does here.

What advice would you give to artists who want to develop their own unique style in watercolor?

It's nothing new—you need to paint a lot and allow yourself to paint different subjects, in different ways.There's no shortcut, unfortunately.
Sooner or later, you'll start noticing patterns—certain colors you keep using, techniques that feel natural, subjects you don't get tired of. Your style is a bit like your handwriting: it's always unique, whether you try to control it or not. But it only reveals itself after a fair amount of searching, testing, failed attempts, and quite a few piles of painted paper.
And what else can happen—once you think you've "found" your style, don't get too comfortable. It's perfectly fine to turn 180 degrees and try out a completely different direction. Your style shouldn't dictate what you do; it should follow your inner feeling.
For example, right now I'm very drawn to painting portraits. It's something quite new for me, and honestly, a bit intimidating. But stepping away from the familiar path feels necessary as I have to respond to that call.

Colleen Bennett

As a sensitive kid my mom promoted my natural artistic interest as a way to express myself and it became one of my great joys. As I got older, this love never faded and eventually I went to the University of the Arts in Philadelphia to study art earning a BFA in illustration. I use many different mediums in my work, including, watercolor, pen, acrylics, and mixed-media collage. I believe that working in a single medium is restrictive to my artistic process. Each medium manifests in its own individual style.

Project Statement
I began creating as a way to have a conversation with myself. My mind works visually predominantly and I struggled to articulate in words what I was thinking or feeling. Through making things I attempt to cement myself in the here and now, and to understand or explain myself. The result is not always a cohesive body of work, shown in my range of subject and medium. I like making beautiful images with elements that are slightly off, whether the subject matter or color palettes; mirroring my experience being a person who is somehow always a little off the mark.

Colleen Bennett | Conversation | 2024

Colleen Bennett | Chandler Collage | 2019

Interview

Volha Naruta-Johnson

Your work explores the psychological dimensions of contemporary womanhood. What personal experiences most strongly shaped this focus?

I didn't choose this theme — I lived it.
For years, through my work in psychology and my own life as a woman, a wife, and a mother, I kept encountering the same quiet tension: the gap between who we are expected to be and who we actually are.
There is a moment many women recognize — when you realize you've been performing roles so well that you've lost contact with your own truth. My work begins exactly there.
Painting became the place where I could stop being "correct" and start being real.

In your series Being a Woman, you address tensions between societal expectations and inner identity. How do you translate these abstract conflicts into visual form?

Volha Naruta-Johnson | Inner Space | 2025

I translate tension through the body.
The body doesn't lie — even when the face is calm. So I work with posture, pressure, repetition of gestures. Hands pulling, holding, reaching. Figures stretched between directions.
I'm not illustrating an idea. I'm reconstructing a feeling.
Color becomes emotional temperature. Composition becomes psychological pressure. And texture holds memory — almost like the surface remembers what the person cannot say.

Many of your paintings feature intense emotional states and almost theatrical compositions. How has your background as a performing artist influenced your painting practice?

I spent more than ten years on stage as a singer, and that experience shaped everything I do now.
On stage, I learned that the voice never exists on its own — it moves through the body. And only when the body is involved, when it is open, tense, trembling, alive — the voice can truly reach people. Nothing is separate.
I always carried a desire to go beyond singing — to create something more immersive, almost like staging emotions themselves. I was drawn to the idea of building theatrical scenes through songs, and later through images. Around the same time, I was studying psychosomatics and working with metaphorical cards, which deepened my understanding of how the inner world expresses itself through symbols and the body.
The body never lies.
It supports, it resists, it freezes, it screams — but it always tells the truth.
That's why the body became the central language in my work.

Volha Naruta-Johnson | Mom I became you after all | 2026

In my paintings, I don't try to explain emotion — I construct a moment where it becomes visible. A gesture, a tension, a position that holds something unspoken.
The theatrical quality comes from that same instinct: to bring everything to a point of presence. Not narrative, not sequence — but a single, concentrated moment where the inner state is undeniable.
There is often stillness in my work, but it is not calm.
It is the stillness of something that is being held — right before it shifts, breaks, or transforms.

The use of saturated color and surface is very striking in your work. What role do materiality and surface play in conveying emotion?

I am drawn to surfaces where oil dissolves into the canvas or wood, leaving almost no visible brushstrokes. For me, excessive painterly marks can distract from the emotional experience.
Even when the subject carries intensity — grief, tension, inner conflict — I want the surface to remain visually gentle. I want the painting to feel safe to be next to it. Not invasive, not overwhelming, but inviting.
Color, however, carries the emotional weight.
I use saturated tones not to decorate, but to hold and transmit inner states. Red, for example, often appears as something deeply human — it can be warmth, lineage, pain, or life itself. Darker tones create containment, a sense of inner space, while muted neutrals allow the viewer to stay present without being overwhelmed.
Color becomes a quiet language of emotion — one that can be felt before it is understood.
This is important because I work with the theme of women's inner lives. And I believe women must be approached with care. Life has already asked a lot of us. Many women, especially those shaped by Eastern European culture, carry deep layers of endurance and unspoken emotional history.
In the Being a Woman series, I don't want the material to add pressure. I want it to hold space.
I do have another direction in my practice — textural painting — where I use heavy materials, creating 3d effect. But there I explore very different states.
Here, restraint is intentional. Smoothness becomes a form of respect. It allows the emotional depth to be experienced without resistance — while color carries what cannot be said.

In some works, we see fragmentation of identity — masks, reflections, or distorted figures. What does this fragmentation represent for you?

Fragmentation is not brokenness — it is awareness.
It is the moment when a woman realizes she is not one identity, but many. Daughter, mother, partner, self — and they do not always align.
Masks appear where we adapt to survive. Distortion appears where truth begins to press through those roles.
I'm not interested in exposing the mask for drama. I'm interested in what happens after — when a person begins to recognize herself again. How the pain shaped you after all, because it always does.

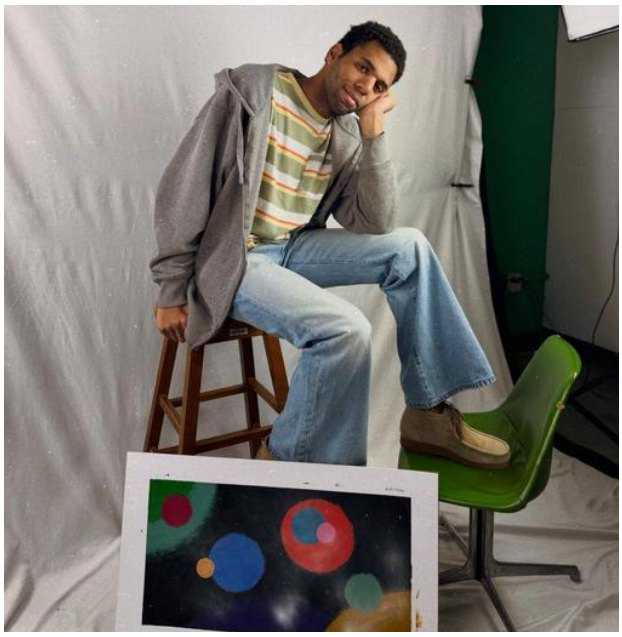
How has your international background — from Belarus to California — influenced your artistic voice and perspective?

I started traveling when I was 17, and since then I've been to more than 40 countries. In many of them, I didn't just visit — I lived, observed, and became part of everyday life, even if only for a while.
Through these experiences, I met so many people — different cultures, languages, personalities, ways of living. But over time, I realized something very simple and very profound: despite all the differences, we are all moving through the same inner stages of becoming.
The same questions. The same pain. The same longing to be seen, to be understood, to be loved. In a way, it feels like we share one soul.
But California became something more than just another place I lived — it became my home as a painter. It is here, when I moved to California in 2025, that I began painting seriously, and it completely transformed my life.
There is a certain openness here — a culture of support, creative communities, and a genuine love for life that I felt immediately. Being surrounded by people who create, share, and celebrate expression gave me permission to fully step into my own voice.
In a very short time, this environment allowed me not only to grow, but to become visible as an artist.
And yet, everything I experienced before continues to live in my work. I don't see women as defined by geography or culture. I see shared emotional landscapes — expressed in different languages, but rooted in the same human experience.
That's why my work is not about a specific place. It is about recognition.

You mention painting as a space of recognition and reflection. What do you hope viewers recognize within themselves when they encounter your work?

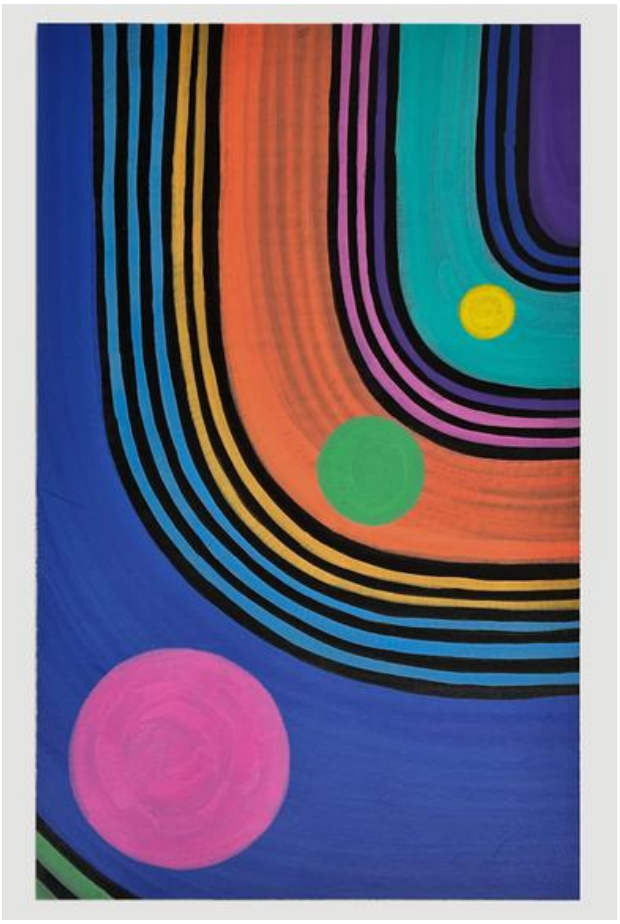
I don't want them to simply understand the work.
I want them to feel seen by it.
To stand in front of a painting and recognize something they have never been able to say out loud.
If a woman feels less alone in her inner experience — even for a moment — then the work has already done what it was meant to do.

D.J. Horton



Your work explores gravity, space, and time - how did these concepts first become central to your artistic practice?

I've always been drawn towards the pursuit of things that lie just outside of full human understanding. Concepts like gravity and time aren't just intellectually addressed in my work; they are meant to be experienced. When I place an orb to look as if it's 'floating,' I'm inviting the viewer into a state of weightlessness while offering a moment to reflect on how grounded they are by comparison. For me, time is the landscape where these symbols ultimately find their place, and the viewer can nest themselves within it as-well.



D.J. Horton | One Accord | 2026

You describe your process as intuitive and guided by an internal pull. How do you balance instinct with control while painting?

Most of my pieces begin with pure intuition, just getting that initial spark onto the canvas. The 'internal pull' happens as the work develops its own narrative that I have to mindfully listen to. Balance is achieved when my intent and the piece's own 'voice' find a common ground. It's less like a solo performance and more akin to a great conversation with a like-minded individual.

Many of your compositions suggest movement and flow - do you see your paintings as capturing a moment or an ongoing process?

I see my pieces as snapshots of moments that exist only for a specific window of time. When I experience these 'visions,' they often manifest as scenes that happen in the blink of an eye which hints towards my tendency to make them first person. I want the viewers eyes to be the active participant. If a recurring image suggests a narrative is forming, I'll pursue it through a series, creating until that specific energy is exhausted and the story has been fully told.

How does your cultural background as an Afro-Native American artist influence your visual language and themes?

D.J. Horton | Refresh of Nephesh | 2026

My cultural background is something deeply personal to me. I believe that, at this early stage of my career, my artistic ability is encoded with ancestral language that I have not even begun being able to tap into or see. To honor and preserve it, I want how it shows up in my work to remain in that sacred realm of unintentional markings until I'm able to harness it naturally at will. I'm observing its emergence mindfully because I never want to sensationalize it or use it to push my career. It's part of who I am, and who I am is embedded and reflected within my work.

Your work reflects a tension between order and freedom. How do you navigate this balance within a single piece?

These two themes are used as a tool to draw attention to the messages in my art. Order gives the eye something familiar to resonate with, freedom allows the viewer to drift autonomously. I never want to "force feed" my viewers or just give them the narrative, a lot of my pieces require time to sit with. The tension itself serves as the backbone for the entire composition.

How do the influences of artists like Kandinsky, Miró, Matisse, and Hilma af Klint manifest in your work today?

These are the artists that I feel like pushed the limits of human perception and interpretation as it pertains to the world of abstraction. Kandinsky (my personal favorite) created a landscape of visual language that just transcends many states of consciousness to understand. Hilma, a pioneering visionary amongst women, often spoke in sacred rhythms that took time and patience to piece together. That's how I want my work to be; something that reaches far into the future of humanity and meets the viewers where they are at while viewing it.

As a young artist balancing family life, how does fatherhood shape your creative perspective?

This question is beautifully written. Being a father to my daughter has taught me so many things. I think the most important thing though, is the ability to adapt. During the creative process, things are changing all the time, a stroke may not land like intended, a color may not fit what was envisioned, a concept may not scale accurately; these factors require adaptations in order to create something meaningful and beautiful. With fatherhood, there are many times where I mess up; I miss a wake window, I'm not able to burp her or I accidentally scratch her while changing her diaper (ugh I hate that) and so many other things that just require instinctual adjustments to meet her needs or remedy the problem. This is a skill that I've had to hone in on a primal level, and one that's seamlessly translated into refining my work.

D.J. Horton | Transitions | 2026

Interview

Anika Reichert

Your work explores the influence of formal and informal social structures - how do these concepts first translate into a visual starting point on the canvas?

Anika Reichert | Pressure Marks I - Entangled | 2026

My work begins with a conceptual framework that translates directly into a visual structure on the canvas. I define three core elements from the start: an open white space as a field of action, a colored area representing the individual and its emotional state, and black lines that stand for formal and informal social structures.
Within this framework, the process remains intuitive. I build the colored form through layers, partially covering and extending it until it reaches a state that feels right. The lines are introduced later, when I consider how these structures interact with the individual in that specific moment and how both influence and shape each other.
In the series Pressure Marks, the central piece (Pressure Marks II – Exposed) was the starting point. It represents a moment in which the individual becomes aware of these structures, begins to resist them, and claims its own space. The conflict becomes visible, both sides asserting their presence.
From this state, I developed the other works in the series. I wondered what comes before this moment of confrontation and what follows after it. These states were then translated into visual form.
While the work is conceptually grounded, it is also connected to lived experience. Pressure from external and internal expectations is something many people recognize. At a certain point, it can become restrictive or even oppressive. What interests me is the moment of awareness within that pressure and the process of finding a way out of it.

In your Pressure Marks series, tension seems central. How do you recognize when a composition holds enough tension without resolving it?

Anika Reichert | Pressure Marks II - Exposed | 2026

Tension is something I recognize intuitively. There is no fixed point at which it is achieved. It is more a sense of balance that either holds or collapses.
Sometimes I push a composition too far, for example by adding too many structural lines. In those moments, I begin to work against that excess, often by covering parts of it with white until the image regains a sense of tension that feels right.
Each painting develops over a longer period of time. I take breaks, return to the work, observe it and make adjustments. This process of distancing and re-entering is essential for recognizing when the composition still holds tension without resolving it.
It is also important to me that the works within a series remain in dialogue with each other. I often look at them together and make further changes, adding or reducing elements until the overall balance of the series feels coherent.

Your use of line feels both structural and disruptive - how do you approach the balance between control and spontaneity in these elements?

I approach line as both a controlled and intuitive element. Some lines are placed deliberately. These tend to be more structured and can be read as formal structures.
Other lines, especially the more fluid and curved ones, emerge intuitively. In these moments, I allow my hand to move more freely without fully controlling the outcome. These lines can be understood as informal structures.
Formal structures refer to defined and often codified frameworks such as laws or institutional rules. Informal ones are more flexible and less visible, emerging through relationships, unspoken expectations or emotional dynamics within a group.
The balance between control and spontaneity reflects the relationship between these two types. One imposes order, the other moves more freely, yet both shape the space of the individual at the same time.

The concentrated color zones suggest a kind of inner presence - can you describe how you develop these areas during your process?

The colored areas are developed intuitively. They emerge through a process of layering, covering and extending the surface until a certain presence becomes visible.
I work with glazes and partial overpainting, allowing the form to shift and condense over time. Rather than defining it in advance, I respond to what is already there and adjust it until it feels internally coherent. Color itself carries meaning. In the Pressure Marks series, the orange area suggests a state of alertness or tension within the individual.
At the same time, these areas are not fixed representations, but states that build up gradually through the process. The color and form may also reflect something of my own condition while painting.

How does your background in sociology continue to shape your artistic decisions today?

My background in sociology allows me to reflect on experiences and place them within a broader theoretical context. This understanding shapes how I translate them into a visual language.
Rather than illustrating specific situations, I am interested in underlying structures and dynamics, and how they become visible through form, space and interaction within the image.

You mention that you are not illustrating emotion but translating it - what does that translation process look like in practice?

I don't approach emotion as something to be illustrated directly. Instead, I begin by situating it within an experience and then reflecting on it in a broader theoretical context. From there, the translation happens through my visual language. The emotional state becomes a colored form, while structures appear as lines that interact with it. Rather than depicting a specific feeling, I am interested in how it takes shape within a system and how it becomes visible through relationships within the image.

Do you see your works as reflections of specific social conditions, or as more universal psychological states?

I don't draw a strict line between the two. My work focuses on the individual and its relation to surrounding structures, which connects to sociological ways of thinking on a more intimate level.
At the same time, I often begin with a personal experience that includes emotional states. These experiences are then reflected on and placed within a broader theoretical context. In that sense, the works move between specific social conditions and more universal psychological states. They are not meant to separate these dimensions, but to show how they are intertwined.

Agnaldo Burgos

Agnaldo [b. 1959, Brazil] has been drawing for as long as he can remember, once filling notebooks with sketches of ships, planes, and racing cars. At that time, art education and drawing were integral parts of the public school curriculum through high school. He later studied Literature at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Minas Gerais), where he developed a particular interest in Art History. In the early 1980s, Agnaldo began working with oil painting and participated in several local group exhibitions. He currently lives and works in Cabo Frio, Rio de Janeiro. His recent work reflects a technical maturity refined by decades of observation, resulting in pieces that celebrate the tradition of painting through a renewed and personal lens.

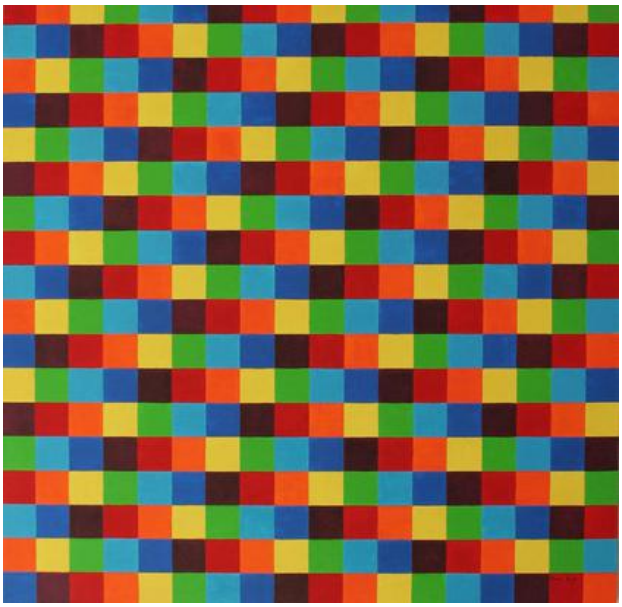
Agnaldo Burgos | Sketch Charcoalon Canvas | 2024

Agnaldo Burgos | Setting Moon | 2026

Dinara Aristo

Your work often balances between figurative landscape and abstraction. How do you decide where that boundary lies in each painting?

The boundary between my figurative landscapes and abstraction is primarily defined by a need for a different kind of creative freedom. After immersing myself for three to five months in a detailed landscape painting inspired by the Urals, I often feel a profound drive to switch focus. While my landscapes are about exploring the external, visual world, my abstract work delves into the internal realm of feelings and emotions. This abstraction is far from spontaneous; I meticulously develop concepts through sketching, often drawing inspiration from mundane observations like car headlights in a rainy traffic jam or a fallen leaf in a puddle. The choice simply comes down to which 'world'—external or internal—I am most inclined to explore and translate onto canvas at that moment.



Dinara Aristo | Symphony of Rainbow | 2025

Nature plays a central role in your art. What draws you most to the landscapes of the Ural region?

It is its incredible environmental diversity, which I've truly appreciated through comparison. Over the past seven years of extensive travel across Russia, I've seen many magnificent places, yet I always return to the Urals as the ultimate synthesis of natural elements. It's rare to find a place where ancient mountains, rivers, lakes, and dense forests coexist so harmoniously. The landscape is incredibly dynamic; traveling just 200-300 kilometers in any direction from Chelyabinsk reveals a completely different ecosystem and visual character. This richness of forms—from the rugged peaks to the delicate local flora—provides me with an infinite palette. For an artist, the Urals are not just a home, but a vast, living laboratory of inspiration.

You mention that nature is like a "temple" for you. How do you translate this spiritual connection into visual language?

For me, nature is a restorative temple, a necessary escape from the industrial density and urban noise of city life. In the quiet of the forest or by a lake, I move from the 'hustle and bustle' into a meditative state where I can finally hear my own thoughts. This spiritual recharge is what I aim to translate into my visual language. I don't just paint trees, I paint the silence and the energy I feel there. After a weekend in nature, I return to the city 'fully charged,' and I want my canvases to hold that same power. I see my work as a portal or a gentle

Dinara Aristo | In the fields of flowers | 2020

reminder for the viewer: even in our busy lives, we must find the way back to the natural world to find ourselves.

Many of your paintings explore transitional states of nature - before a storm, seasonal shifts, fleeting light. Why are these moments important to you?

I am drawn to transitional moments in nature because these are the states that truly speak to my soul and my artistic journey. It's not just about capturing a beautiful scene, it's about perceiving the very pulse of life. My eye is trained to notice these subtle shifts: the movement of air, the play of light, the slow unfolding of seasons. I can spend a long time observing a single blade of grass or a swaying stalk of grain. These are not static moments, they are alive with change, with energy. This dynamism makes me feel intensely alive. It's this sense of constant, complex transformation, rather than a frozen image, that I strive to convey in my art, reminding viewers that life, like nature, is a perpetual dance of becoming.

Your use of color is very distinctive, sometimes almost "stained-glass-like". How did this approach to color develop?

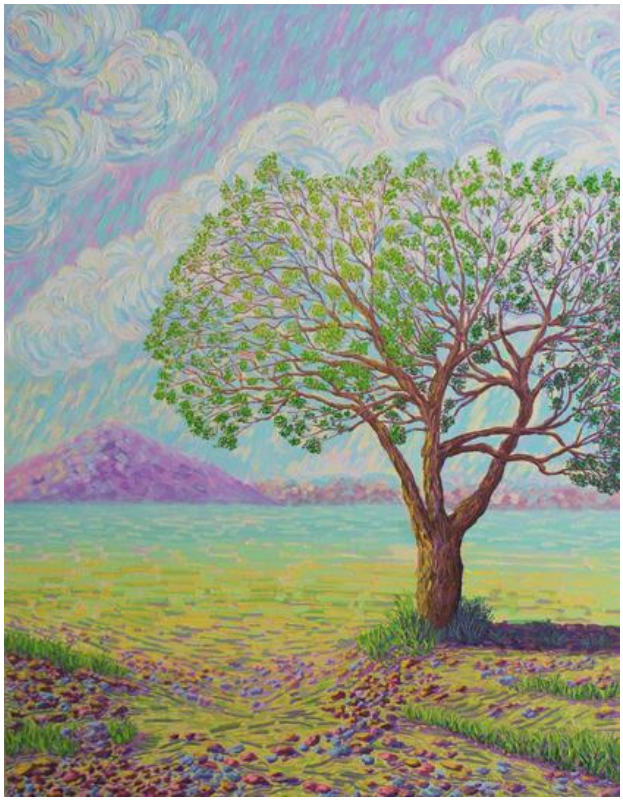
The inspiration for my unique color approach, reminiscent of stained glass, directly stems from observing how light filters through the vibrant panels in cathedrals. It struck me that just as those windows depict sacred narratives, my canvas could serve as a 'window' to the sacredness of nature itself—which I consider my ultimate temple. This visual language wasn't accidental; it evolved through disciplined practice, countless experiments, and meticulous work on preliminary sketches. My studies, particularly the abstract painting course at MoMA in 2024, provided me with the tools to systemize this intuitive connection, transforming an initial concept into a deliberate artistic technique where color and light combine to evoke a profound, almost spiritual, experience of nature.

How has your international education and participation in global exhibitions influenced your artistic perspective?

Engaging with the international art scene—through education and exhibitions—has been profoundly influential. It's broadened my understanding of contemporary artistic practices and the immense creative freedom available today. Most importantly, it's validated my own artistic path and instilled a deep sense of confidence. While I stay aware of global artistic currents, my primary commitment is to cultivating a unique, independent style. This exposure has liberated me, reinforcing my belief that I am developing a distinct voice that resonates authentically. It's about finding my place within the global conversation while remaining true to my individual vision.

What would you like viewers to feel or reflect on when they engage with your work?

My deepest wish is for viewers to find a moment of respite and reconnection when they encounter my art. In our fast-paced, often overwhelming urban lives, I want my paintings to serve as a visual sanctuary. Whether it's the tranquility evoked by a serene landscape or the sheer joy from a vibrant, abstract piece, I aim to offer a brief escape—a chance to switch off the noise and tune into one's inner emotional landscape. I hope my work inspires positivity, lightness, and a sense of freedom. For the discerning eye, I also hope they appreciate the deliberate application of color, the texture, and the interplay of brushwork and palette knife that breathes life into each piece. Ultimately, I want my art to be a luminous reminder of nature's enduring power to restore and uplift us.



Dinara Aristo | Breath of Spring | 2025

Sokthea Chan is a Cambodian American artist that resides in Sacramento, California. As a recent graduate from California State University-Sacramento in Spring of 2025, he holds a Master of Fine Arts degree focusing in painting, drawing, and installation. During the passing of one his beloved parents at a young age, he has used art to recreate cultural folklore and mythologies stories through abstraction of what his father used to share with him. He is an educator teaching art to high school students in the surrounding community for the past ten years while continuing his own art practice. Sokthea has exhibited his works in many parts of California, New York, and Washington and continues to challenge what can be seen as art in the contemporary world today using uncommon materials and experimental methodologies in his large scale installation works.

Project Statement
My work speaks to themes revolving around memory, time, identity, and the state of being. Curiosity is the driving force of my work as I continue to ask new questions, leading me to discoveries in my practice that take me to the least unexpected places. I find many inspirations drawn from the natural world, Buddhist philosophy, and Khmer mythology from my diasporic roots. I believe living is only temporary while as humans we are only here for a short span of time and sharing our discoveries with one another will unravel more of the unknown and mysteries of the world. Through the playfulness of automatic drawing, abstraction, choice of bold colors, ambiguity, patterns, and dense layering of materials in my large-installation works, I hope to offer the viewer the consciousness of being present, discoveries within their surroundings, and the human experience of daily life.

Nadezhda Nemchinova

Your background combines cultural studies, psychology, and art therapy. How do these disciplines influence your artistic practice today?

Cultural studies analyze the past—both general trends and local phenomena—examining the patterns and interconnections of events that have already taken place. In my artistic practice, this serves as a foundation and an inexhaustible source for reinterpreting contemporary realities. Psychology, and particularly its art-therapeutic dimension, represents the moment of "now," with its emotions, sensations, contradictions, and sometimes absurd situations. It is a way of focusing attention on the calm, the familiar, and the small details that make us who we are and shape our identity. In my paintings, I try to capture this "now," which, like a lens, brings into focus a certain emotion, environment, life, and destiny.

Nadezhda Nemchinova | The sun

Your series "Say Hello to Life" explores sensitivity and emotional connection. What inspired you to focus on this theme?

The idea of sensitivity and connection is inspired by a personal story. I am the mother of a child with autism, and communication in all its alternative forms has been lived and deeply felt by me over a long period of my life — my daughter is now 23 years old. From complete withdrawal into oneself to moments of immediate responsiveness and acceptance — all these gradations are inherent in each of us. But for me, every step of sensitivity and every form of contact is a memory of overcoming, of a small victory of life over non-life.

Many of your works seem to reflect a childlike perception of the world. Why is reconnecting with this perspective important to you?

A childlike perspective is the most sincere and genuine thing one can find within oneself. For me, returning to it is important as a way to clear away the artificial and renew my reactions and impressions. Curiosity and emotional openness, unconventional ways of seeing, boundless energy and enthusiasm, openness to the world, and spontaneity — these are qualities that belong both to childhood and to creativity.

Nadezhda Nemchinova | Wisp

You often explore the idea of an introvert expressing emotions outwardly. How does this duality manifest in your paintings?

Introversion is characterized by reliance on self-respect and self-approval. It is self-sufficiency elevated to an absolute. It is a painting created in solitude with oneself. It is a frame that may appear white and austere to some, telling the world: "Stay there while I remain here." It is glass that is almost invisible, yet present; painted mountains that seem alive, yet remain painted.
Extraversion, by contrast, is a need for respect and approval from others. It is the desire to show the painting to people, to express oneself, to transcend the frame—to fold space so that the frame no longer confines, to open the window latch, to extend a hand, to meet another's gaze.
For an introvert, these actions disrupt their foundations and challenge their essence, yet this is precisely what makes them valuable—they bring the introvert closer to the world, making them more human, more connected. The introvert does not become an extravert; these are subtle signs that not everyone is able to notice. But that is exactly their value—the true uniqueness of the moment.
In my paintings, I try to capture this duality: "here and there," "looking inward and meeting the gaze," "within the frame and beyond it," "the subtlety of a layer and the roughness of a brushstroke," "the expression of emotion and the withdrawal from it," "the eternal and the fleeting."

Animals and nature frequently appear as characters offering connection or support. What role do they play in your symbolic language?

I resonate with panpsychism. For me, the idea that nature—and all its individual manifestations—is animated means that animals, plants, houses, and objects possess character and history. It is possible to sense the movement within them, their desires, and their unconscious, deeper layers.
Images of animals allow us to focus attention on a specific trait of character or a quality of contact, making intuitively clear what lies beneath the layers of meaning that often accompany depictions of people. When we perceive a human figure, we inevitably begin by identifying gender, age, attractiveness, condition, and social attributes—and only afterward do we arrive at emotions and the nature of connection. When looking at a donkey or a dog, we bypass these conventions, unless they are deliberately emphasized by the artist. No one asks themselves about the gender or age of a young ostrich or a dog, whether the donkey is beautiful, or what social status a dragonfly might have. They immediately offer a form of contact, like children playing in a sandbox. They do not ask whether you are rich or poor, but reach toward the essence itself—toward what lies beyond the social façade and mask, toward the viewer's true "self."
There is no symbolic labeling such as "a donkey means stupidity." This particular donkey is playful, lively, a bit mischievous. Another donkey might be gloomy, withdrawn, and hurt. As Vladimir Mayakovsky once wrote: "...each of us is, in our own way, a horse."

Your paintings often carry multiple layers of meaning—playful on the surface but deeper underneath. How do you balance lightness and complexity?

These are very valuable things to me: humor, joy, a genuine smile, and the ability to gently look deeper and reflect or talk about something intimate. I'm very happy when I manage to combine these. It doesn't always work.

When viewers engage with your work, what kind of emotional or psychological experience do you hope they have?

I would like viewers to safely encounter something deep and gentle within themselves, in their inner world. Paintings have a remarkable ability to convey emotions and states over a long time. I have tried to infuse them with openness and acceptance, love and inner stillness. It is an invitation into a resourceful state — where you are seen, supported, treated with care and tenderness, understood, given emotional warmth, and awaited.

JoAnn Lieberman has experienced a multitude of iterations as an artist in her 40+ year career, exploring design, Color, fiber, fabric, paint and fashion. She studied fine art at the School of Visual Arts in NYC, Textile Design at Parsons School of Design and the Fashion at Fashion Institute of Technology. She entered the fashion industry as a textile print designer in NYC and Los Angeles, for such companies as Oleg Cassini Men; Carole Little in Los Angeles, Liz Claiborne in NYC as well as various art studios acting as a stylist and studio manager.
She has always been drawn to the interplay of colors, textures and patterns, especially when they are melded together into a mixed compilation which is evident in the diverse work she has created over the years. Her her pastel drawings, watercolor collages and mixed media works are a testament to the constant search for creative gratification and have garnered awards in galleries throughout the US.
Currently, with her amassed and rich assortment of original and vintage printed patterns she channels this extensive experience and vast collection into creating mixed media collages. These collages are more than just an amalgamation of different materials; they are a sometimes-chaotic juxtaposition of elements within her varied subjects; a fusion of traditional surface pattern design within contemporary figurative forms. In each collage, Ms Lieberman strives to create a dialogue between the different components allowing the printed patterns to interact with the subject in unexpected ways. As an artist, she finds inspiration in the vibrancy of city life especially the richness of different cultures experienced through her travels or of the simplicity of people watching . Through her art, viewers are invited to join her on this pathway, exploring the intricate landscapes of these images and to discover the narratives potentially hidden within them. As she continues to evolve and grow as an artist she looks forward to the many more stories that are yet to be told, the patterns yet to be created and the collages that utilize them, yet to be brought to life.

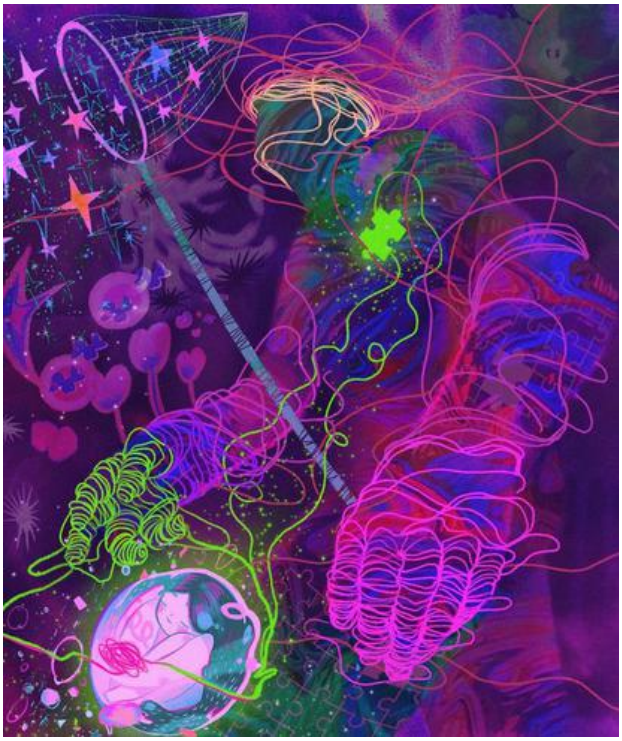
Project Statement
I am a former surface pattern designer for 40+ years, within the fashion industry, turned figurative collage artist. I currently utilize print and pattern amassed over my career within my images of street vendors and musicians, travelers or everyday people, focusing on the simplicity of humanity, it's stillness, serenity, repose and the absence of anxiety and apprehension; just the simple joy of 'being', which coincides with this late phase of my life.

JoAnn Lieberman | Barcelona Bus Stop | 2023

JoAnn Lieberman | Cafe Pause | 2026

Yana Wander

Your works create immersive, almost cosmic environments. How do you construct these inner worlds, and where do they originate from?



Yana Wander | Fathers love | 2023

The fantastical spaces in my works are the result of my desire to explore the boundaries of perception and imagination. These worlds emerge from a wish to combine emotions, ideas, and fantasies into visual images that evoke a sense of traveling into unknown realms of consciousness. I often allow my thoughts and associations to flow freely, and it is these streams that form the foundation of my spaces. I use vivid colors, dynamic lines, and unusual shapes to enhance the feeling of magic and cosmic depth — I want the viewer to feel as if they have entered another, almost unreal world without any boundaries.
For me, it is important that my works stimulate imagination and help to go beyond привычного, allowing one to look at the world from a different perspective.

Color plays a powerful role in your compositions. How do you choose your palette, and what emotional or symbolic meaning does it carry?

In my works, I strive to convey the inseparable connection between humans, the cosmos, and nature, to create a mystical, dreamy, and enigmatic atmosphere. That is why I use a palette of purple, blue, green, and magenta tones. At the same time, I always create my paintings with a strong emotional charge, which makes the colors intensely saturated and vivid. These almost unreal shades evoke a sense of a magical and fantastical world ruled by emotions and visual metaphors.
This palette allows the viewer to immerse themselves in a world of fantasy, magic, dreams, and spiritual exploration.

Yana Wander | Spring | 2023

For me, it is important to invite the viewer to look inward, to connect with their intuition and feel the harmony between the earthly and the cosmic.

Many of your figures appear to be in transformation or dissolution. What does this process represent in your artistic language?

A central theme in my work is the feeling of the ephemeral nature of everything. That is why the semi-transparent moving forms in my paintings blur, disappear, and shimmer like drifting shadows in time and space, traveling between the past and the future. They are merely wanderers in this elusive universe. The world I create can dissolve or vanish at any moment, like a dream.
My works capture a fleeting moment on the boundary between illusion and reality. The inner and outer worlds exist in a subtle, intangible space that is constantly in motion and transformation, and we can only briefly grasp their connection in a single moment — a moment of great value where beauty resides.

Your background is in graphic art and book design. How has this academic training shaped your approach to digital painting?

My academic education in graphic art and book design has become a strong foundation and support in my creative practice. It taught me to pay close attention to composition, balance, and detail, and helped develop a sense of harmony and order in imagery. This knowledge allows me to structure my ideas and make my works more thoughtful and profound. When I transitioned to digital painting, these skills proved to be extremely important — they help me navigate the limitless possibilities of digital tools and make conscious artistic choices. Academic training provides both confidence and freedom. The more knowledge you have, the more paths are open to you. Your mind stores countless techniques and approaches that help bring ideas to life.

That is why I believe classical education is a foundation that gives confidence and allows for free experimentation and discovery of new forms of expression in the digital medium.

You work across various mediums, from fashion to illustration. How does your artistic identity adapt between these different formats?

Working across different fields — from fashion to illustration — my artistic identity adapts slightly to each format while preserving its essence. For example, when creating prints for clothing, I aim to maintain a vivid, expressive energy and recognizable style, because clothing is a medium that reflects a person and their taste. It is important that the image is not only visually appealing but also easily perceived, refined, and contemporary. In illustration, I can explore more details, deeper narratives, and more complex accents.
In every case, I strive to preserve my artistic individuality and worldview, simply adapting it to the conditions of each medium. For me, it is important that the essence of my work and the character of my style remain recognizable across all formats, while different mediums allow me to expand these boundaries and discover new ways of expression.

There is a strong sense of dream logic and surreal narrative in your works. Do your ideas come from dreams, personal experiences, or constructed concepts?

My paintings are like an intuitive puzzle. When I begin a work, I do not know what the final result will be. I start with a certain image or motif in my mind, often connected to observations of the world or personal experiences. During the creative process, one image gives rise to another — memories and ideas appear like flashes, and I immediately transfer them onto the canvas.
When I paint, I fully trust my subconscious, which brings forth the necessary details from the depths of my soul and memory. Miraculously, these elements transform into metaphorical images and find their place within the composition.
Creating a work becomes a journey whose branches and outcome genuinely surprise me. Piece by piece, I assemble a unique whole, where every element matters. My main task is to connect these fragments of meaning into a unified, harmonious universe where everything merges into a sense of wholeness and beauty.

What role does digital technology play in your creative freedom compared to traditional media?

Digital technologies give me incredible creative freedom. They allow me to experiment with forms, colors, and textures more quickly and flexibly than traditional methods. I can instantly bring ideas to life, modify and expand them in real time, and play with scale and movement — all of which opens new horizons for visual exploration.
Thanks to technology, I can create complex, unusual, multi-layered spaces and worlds that would be very difficult to achieve manually.
Of course, traditional media are also very important, as they connect us with tactile experience and allow us to fully feel materials. However, for me, the digital world is a space for fully realizing imagination and experimentation, where I can implement the boldest ideas without limitations.

Gina McCulloch

I am an abstract artist working with fluid acrylic pours to interpret and express the raw energy and natural beauty of nature all around me. Every painting begins without a fixed plan, only a feeling. As the paint moves, blends, and settles, unexpected forms emerge. This intuitive process is what makes each piece truly one of a kind. I am inspired by textures, nature, movement, and emotion. I let the medium speak for itself.
I don’t control the outcome. The medium is unpredictable and spontaneous.
Working with fluid acrylics means embracing unpredictability. I guide the flow, blend colours instinctively, and allow natural textures to form. What results is always unique, shaped by intention, but never forced.
This freedom to create in an instinctive, organic way is what keeps my work alive and evolving. It allows me to enjoy the creative process where flowing paint and colours are manipulated into desired designs.
The paintings arrest your attention and interest, arousing your curiosity.

Gina McCulloch | Deviation

Gina McCulloch | Backbone

Vera Nosko

You describe clay as a material that carries memory. How does this idea influence the way you shape and finish your ceramic objects?

If I speak as a practitioner, for me this is not a metaphor — clay truly "remembers" everything that has happened to it. Every touch, the pressure of a finger, pauses in the process, even the mood at the moment of shaping — all of this is recorded in its structure. Sometimes it is visible quite literally (in lines, deformations, tensions), and sometimes it appears later — during drying or already in the kiln. That is why I do not work like a sculptor who "imposes" a form, but rather as someone entering into a dialogue with the material.

How this affects the process:

Forming

I do not aim for a "clean" form right away. It is important for me to let the clay go through its stages: kneading, resting, and renewed intervention. If you rush the process, tension remains in its memory, and the piece later "takes revenge": it cracks, warps, or breaks.

Traces of the hands

I often leave marks of fingers, slip, and tools. This is not "unfinished work," but an honest record of the process. To erase them would be to erase part of the object's history.

Pauses

Pauses are essential. Clay "absorbs" form over time. If you continue working without stopping, you may destroy the internal structure that has already begun to form.

Drying and firing

At this stage, memory reveals itself most strongly. All hidden tensions become visible. That is why

Vera Nosko | Women

Vera Nosko | Neural Connection Object 3 | 2025

I dry pieces slowly and attentively — it is almost like accompanying them, rather than simply waiting.
Completion
I do not strive for perfect symmetry or sterility. For me, a finished object is one in which its "biography" is preserved, not just its appearance.
Ultimately, when you perceive clay as a material with memory, you stop fighting for control and begin to work with attention and respect. And, paradoxically, this is precisely when forms become more alive and convincing.

Your work often balances tradition and contemporary thinking. Which historical art references most strongly shape your current sculptural language?

This sense of balance does not arise on its own — it grows out of very specific "encounters" with tradition, which over time cease to be quotations and become an internal language.
I wouldn't say that I borrow images directly. Rather, I am shaped by the principles of thinking that stand behind them. The strongest influence on me has been the Japanese tradition — especially what is associated with wabi-sabi.
It is not simply the "beauty of imperfection," as it is often described, but an acceptance of time as a co-author.
From this comes:
a respect for chance
a willingness to preserve deformation if it feels "alive"
an attention to the surface as a trace of process, rather than decoration
At the same time, my visual language is formed not only through ceramics, but also through painting. I am inspired by artists such as Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Vasily Polenov, and Willem de Kooning.
This influence operates more on the level of sensation: gesture, rhythm, the relationship to form and presence. And through clay, through the hands, all of this transforms into my objects — not as quotation, but as lived experience.

The project "Neural Connection" compares clay to a neuron. When did this metaphor first emerge for you, and how did it evolve into a physical form?

The metaphor did not emerge instantly — rather, it gradually "assembled" itself from my experience of working with the material. Over more than fifteen years in ceramics, I increasingly found myself feeling that clay behaves like a living system: it responds, remembers, and transmits tension from one point to another.
At a certain moment, this aligned with my interest

Vera Nosko | Neural Connection Object 1 | 2025

in perception and internal connections — and that is when the image of the neuron became very precise for me. Not as an illustration, but as a way of thinking about form. A neuron is not simply an object; it is a structure that exists through connections, impulses, and interactions.
As both an entrepreneur and an artist, I am used to building processes — and in this sense, "Neural Connection" also became a reflection on systems: how contact is formed, how energy is transmitted, and where disruptions occur.
In the plastic form, this manifested quite naturally. I began working with elongated, branching forms, where the focus is not the center, but the lines of connection themselves. The objects became more extended, sometimes fragile, with a sense of inner movement.
At the same time, I did not aim to literally replicate a neuron. It was important for me to preserve the feeling of a living, slightly unstable structure — one that can change, respond, and extend beyond the limits of its own form.
Ultimately, this metaphor ceased to be merely an image and became a method of working: I think of each object not as a finished piece, but as part of a larger field of connections.

Many of your sculptures appear both fragile and structured at the same time. How do you consciously work with this tension between vulnerability and stability?

Vera Nosko | Two women by the water

Vera Nosko | Red vase

This tension, for me, is one of the key states of form. It is important that the object is not entirely "confident" in itself, that it retains a sense of vulnerability, even if it is physically stable.
Perhaps this is largely connected to experience—both personal and professional. Over the years, I have come to understand that true stability is rarely rigid. It is more often flexible, capable of withstanding internal tensions without breaking.
In ceramics, this operates on several levels. On one hand, there is the purely technical aspect: balance of mass, wall thickness, distribution of weight. I clearly understand where the form must "hold" and where I can allow for risk.
But the intuitive process is no less important. I often deliberately leave elements that appear fragile—elongated lines, thin connections, uneven edges. They create a sense of limit, as if the form exists in a state between stability and possible disintegration.
As an artist, I likely know this condition well from within. And it is important for me to convey it through the material: when an object is not perfect, not fully fixed, yet continues to exist and hold itself together.
In the end, this is not about contrast for effect, but about an honest state—where strength and vulnerability do not contradict each other, but coexist simultaneously.

Vera Nosko | White vase

How does your background in graphic design influence your sense of rhythm, line, and structure in three-dimensional ceramic forms?

My education in graphic design gave me a very clear sense of structure and rhythm even before I began working with volume.
I still think of form as composition: where there are pauses, where the accents lie, where the tension of the line exists. The only difference is that instead of a flat surface, I now work with space.
Line remains a key tool for me — even in ceramics. The edge of a form, a curve, a transition — I perceive all of these as a continuation of a graphic gesture. In this sense, I've been influenced by artists such as Edgar Degas and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec — in their work, the line is alive, not decorative, but form-defining.
From design also comes an understanding of rhythm: repetition, disruption, pause. I often construct objects so that the viewer's gaze "moves" across the form, as it would across a page or a poster.
And perhaps most importantly, there is discipline. Design taught me to recognize when a form is overloaded and when it lacks air. That's why even in my most свободных, gestural works, there is always an underlying structure to rely on.

The thin ceramic walls and open lattice structures require precision and risk. How do you approach failure or unpredictability in your creative process?

I perceive error not as a failure, but as part of the process — sometimes even as its most honest moment.
When working with thin walls and open structures, it's impossible to fully control the result. And if you try to keep everything "within bounds," the form becomes lifeless. That's why it's important for me to leave space for unpredictability.
Of course, there is professional precision — an understanding of the material, the stages of drying and firing. This is the foundation; without it, risk turns into chaos. But within that foundation, I allow deviations: sometimes the form may shift, sometimes an edge may turn out differently than planned.
Often, it is precisely in these moments that true expressiveness emerges — something that could never have been conceived in advance.
I focus more on ensuring that an error does not destroy the logic of the object, but instead becomes its continuation. Then it ceases to be an error and becomes part of the form's "memory" — something that makes it alive and unique.

Many viewers describe your sculptures as meditative or introspective. What kind of emotional or intellectual response do you hope to awaken in the viewer?

I resonate with this way of reading, but I don't aim to impose any specific feeling on the viewer. Rather, what matters to me is creating a state in which a person can slow down a little and remain alone with their perception.
If we speak about response, I would like there to be a sense of inner quiet and concentration—when attention shifts from the external to more subtle things: rhythm, the breathing of form, pauses.
Intellectually, I am interested in the idea of connections—how we perceive the whole through fragments, how the gaze "moves" across an object and completes it. But I don't insist on this as a necessary interpretation.
Perhaps what is most important to me is that the viewer experiences a sense of personal contact—not even with an idea, but with a state. When the object is not so much "explained" as it is lived through.

Truong Tung Chinh is a digital design lecturer based in Vietnam, specializing in digital animation and illustration. His work explores a distinctive visual language influenced by abstraction and surrealism, often combining unconventional forms, expressive compositions, and bold use of color to convey personal and imaginative narratives.

Project Statement
Catch the Fish depicts a cat chasing a fish that has grown legs. The idea is approached in a simple, humorous manner, focusing on a very direct form of desire: the cat wants to catch the fish. However, once the fish can “run,” the chase becomes endless — lightly suggesting how the more we want something, the harder it can be to grasp.
Visually, the artist employs a personal illustration style featuring vibrant colors, deliberately distorted forms, and a slightly surreal. The result is a lively and playful image that maintains a strong sense of absurdity.

Chinh Truong | Catch the Fish

— *Interview*

Carla Gia

Your work revolves around the idea of duality. How did this concept first emerge in your practice?

Duality never emerged as a concept; it's something I embody. It doesn't belong to a specific moment, but to years of self-inquiry and personal exploration... Through that process, I understood I didn't have to fight my contradictions, but integrate them. For a long time, I felt the obligation to choose, to define myself as one thing, rejecting and hiding the other. But I'm not one thing. I'm both spiritual and rational, soft and sharp. I am that paradox: a balanced contradiction. And my work is born from that coexistence.

Even visually, it was always there. Black and white was not an aesthetic decision, but a natural consequence of who I am.

You speak about balance between control and chaos - how do you personally navigate this tension while painting?

I don't try to resolve it. I move within that tension, my way of channelling what I carry within. There are moments where the gesture leads, and others where I intervene with precision. The balance comes from knowing when to stop. Control, for me, is not about domination, but awareness. Chaos is not the absence of structure: it's movement. The work exists exactly at that point where both are still present, in a constant state of balance between mind, heart, and soul.

Why do you choose to work primarily in black and white? What does this limitation allow you to express?

Black and white is not a choice: it's a language. It's my balance and a reflection of how I live in alignment. It removes everything unnecessary: There is no place to hide. It forces the work back to its essence: contrast, tension, presence. What may seem like a limitation is clarity.

Your paintings feel both spontaneous and intentional. How do intuition and structure

coexist in your process?

Being honest and completely exposed in the process can sometimes be a struggle, especially when I feel afraid of what might emerge, or of what I'm feeling and don't want to express.
My creative process doesn't start when I'm in front of the canvas. It begins internally; something I need to process and come to understand over time, through drawing, writing, meditation... through silence and solitude.
Intuition without a state of awareness becomes noise. And that noise can take over the work if it's not held with a certain level of clarity.
Structure, for me, is about knowing when to intervene and when to let go. Both coexist in a constant dialogue.

How has living between Barcelona and the UAE influenced your perception of contrast and duality?

Living abroad allowed me to experience duality more intensely and consciously. Stepping away from what was familiar created space: to observe, to grow, and to go deeper within. The contrast between cultures, spaces, and atmospheres; the light, the air, the way each place is felt, heightened my awareness of difference, but also of balance. Through that process, my perception of duality became clearer and more defined.

How do you want viewers to emotionally or physically experience your paintings?

For me, all emotions are valid: they are part of being human.
I've explored pain and love, fear and freedom, uncertainty and certainty, serenity and power. They all belong to the same spectrum. I aim to create a space where something real can surface. Whatever the viewer feels is part of the experience.

You describe your work as a dialogue rather than decoration - what kind of conversation are you hoping to initiate?

Sometimes the most meaningful conversations don't need words. I believe true art lies in making people question themselves. What I hope is that the viewer enters that same balanced contradiction, and finds their own reflected back.
The dialogue happens internally and continues long after the viewer leaves.

BOZZ - Fabio Bozza
Bozz, born Fabio Bozza, is a self-taught artist from a small town in southern Lazio, raised in Rome.
From his late adolescence, he began exploring artistic research, initially through photography, which he later set aside to pursue a broader and more personal path driven by a constant urge to experiment.
His visual language draws from pop culture, everyday life, and the generational icons of the 1990s and 2000s, shaping an imagery that weaves together collective memory and individual experience.
At the core of his work lies the urgency to restore value to life, rescuing it from the banality of the everyday. His works can be seen as attempts to give form to the anxieties of an entire generation, transforming them into images that open up space for reflection and possibility.
A tension toward renewal runs through the work, where childhood imagery operates as a threshold between nostalgia and projection into the future.

Project Statement
I define myself as a Concrete Pop Sculptor, working within the contemporary landscape through a synthesis of urban sculpture, pop language, and post-street practice.
My work is grounded in the transformation of matter into a visual and narrative device, inhabiting a hybrid territory where physical construction meets iconographic imagination.
I primarily work with plaster, self-produced casts, wall-based surfaces, and construction materials, combined with original stencils, spray paint, acrylics, and freehand interventions. These materials are not neutral choices, they carry the weight of lived environments, allowing the work to retain a raw, tactile connection to the urban fabric.
Stencil, developed through layered chiaroscuro, allows me to introduce human figures that often merge with three-dimensional elements such as anatomical fragments, objects, toys, and musical instruments. This process creates a tension between flat image and sculptural presence, between representation and intrusion into space.
Surfaces are further activated through textual inserts and sharp, declarative phrases, opening the visual field into a discursive dimension where image and language interact and challenge one another.
My material-driven aesthetic, rooted in a brutalist sensibility, is infused with references to the visual culture of the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s. The result is a layered iconographic system that weaves together collective memory and contemporary codes.
At the core of my research is the construction of a language capable of holding together personal experience and social tension. Image, matter, and text coexist as interdependent elements, not merely to document the urban context, but to reinterpret it as a critical and constructive space.
The themes I address include conflict, inequality, systemic violence, and collective responsibility, in dialogue with values such as the protection of the individual, the role of family, and a forward-looking vision of society.
My generation, now raising the adults of tomorrow, bears the responsibility of cultivating a strong social awareness and employing contemporary tools to ensure these messages reach future generations. At the same time, a subtle sense of nostalgia persists, a quiet pull toward a symbolic past that evokes the memory of a more serene and unguarded childhood.

Bozz | Be Kind | 2024

Bozz | Punk Girl | 2024

Natalia Yuresko-Bilous

Your artistic journey began in a historic town by the Dniester River. How did this environment shape your early perception of art and beauty?

I lived in a historic town, a truly picturesque place that deeply inspired my creativity. Its main landmark is a fortress over 2,500 years old. Surrounded by water, yachts, small boats, and tourists, and of course the Black Sea, it is a place full of life and atmosphere.

You have worked as both an artist and a teacher for many years. How does teaching influence your own creative process?

Working as a teacher has been an invaluable experience for me — a constant process of growth, reflection, and self-development. My artistic journey has also been shaped by the people I've worked with; sharing my knowledge and experience while connecting with each individual has, in turn, influenced my own vision and creative direction.

Your works range from delicate watercolor florals to expressive oil paintings and portraits. How do you choose the medium for each subject?

I enjoy working across different genres and techniques, allowing myself the freedom to explore and evolve.

Natalia Yuresko-Bilous | Crocuses | 2026

Natalia Yuresko-Bilous | Old Town Nessebar | 2026

Moving to the United States in 2022 was a major turning point. How did this transition affect your artistic voice?

The year 2022 became a turning point — not only for me, but for many. Moving to the United States opened a completely new world, a different way of seeing and understanding life. Rather than breaking me, it gave me a greater sense of "flight" — a deeper freedom to create and express myself through art.

Many of your exhibitions in the U.S. were highly successful, with numerous works sold. How do you balance artistic integrity with audience expectations?

As I exhibit my work, I believe that success comes through God's grace.

After years in the U.S., you moved to the Black Sea coast in Bulgaria. What new inspirations have you discovered there?

After moving to Bulgaria, my primary source of inspiration became the Black Sea. With the experience I have gained, I understand that wherever you are in the world, it is important to remain true to yourself and to share what has been given to you from above.

Shengjie Jiang

Your work often focuses on quiet, intimate objects. How do you choose the subjects that become carriers of memory in your paintings?

Sometimes, in a fleeting moment, I feel a quiet sense of emotional fulfillment and find myself wishing that time might linger there a little longer. Though such moments inevitably soften and dissolve, returning to similar scenes or objects can evoke that same tenderness toward the present. Even if the feeling no longer carries its original intensity, the ability to revisit it remains quietly satisfying.

I think once some objects exist around me, we begin to share something with each other. The time we spend together becomes a space where it slowly absorbs my emotions, layer by layer. Because of this, they become the subjects in my paintings. In a way, they speak for me, expressing emotions that I can't fully put into words myself.

You describe home as something fragmented and transient. How has this idea evolved through your moves between different cities and countries?

Relocating between different cities and countries occurred quite naturally for me, often as a result of pursuing my education and reaching different stages of it. At the time of each move, I didn't consciously think about the idea of home. Instead, what I experienced most strongly was a sense of loss, an awareness that I would not return to the same place, and the need to part with objects that could not be carried with me.
Over time, I have come to understand these relocations as moments of disconnection from past memories, a feeling that resonates with themes of homesickness often depicted in films and literature, for instance, Eat Drink Man Woman by Ang Lee.

Shengjie Jiang | Sourness | 2025

Through these associations, I have gradually developed a deeper awareness of this emotional state.

Many of your paintings evoke a sense of stillness and subtle melancholy. How do you translate emotional states like longing or bitterness into visual form?

I wish to translate my own understanding of these emotional states into the work. For instance, a cup in one of my paintings may have been broken at some point, and what remains is my attempt to reconstruct its wholeness through memory. For me, it is no longer a cup, but a vessel that carries traces of a particular period marked by bitterness. I am also drawn to slightly dimmed tonalities, which often resonate with a more universal sense of solitude.

Objects in your work seem both ordinary and deeply symbolic. Do they come from personal experience, or are they constructed memories?

They all come from my personal experiences and memories. Everything unfolds quite naturally, I find myself returning to these moments again and again, reflecting and lingering on them.
However, I also recognize that these are ultimately personal, subjective memories, and my emotions and sensibilities inevitably shape their accuracy.

Your compositions often feel cropped or partially obscured. What role does absence play in your paintings?

think absence functions as a way to suggest that there is always something unfolding beyond the visible surface. Even when only a corner of a room is shown, the imagination extends outward along Idiagonal lines, diffusing into the surrounding space, until the rest of the scene begins to take shape in the mind. The people in the room come and go, crowds move back and forth, hurried and fleeting, yet the objects remain. What surrounds them cannot be fully known, they seem to bear witness to what has occurred, but unable to articulate it.

How does your experience of displacement influence your relationship with time in your practice?

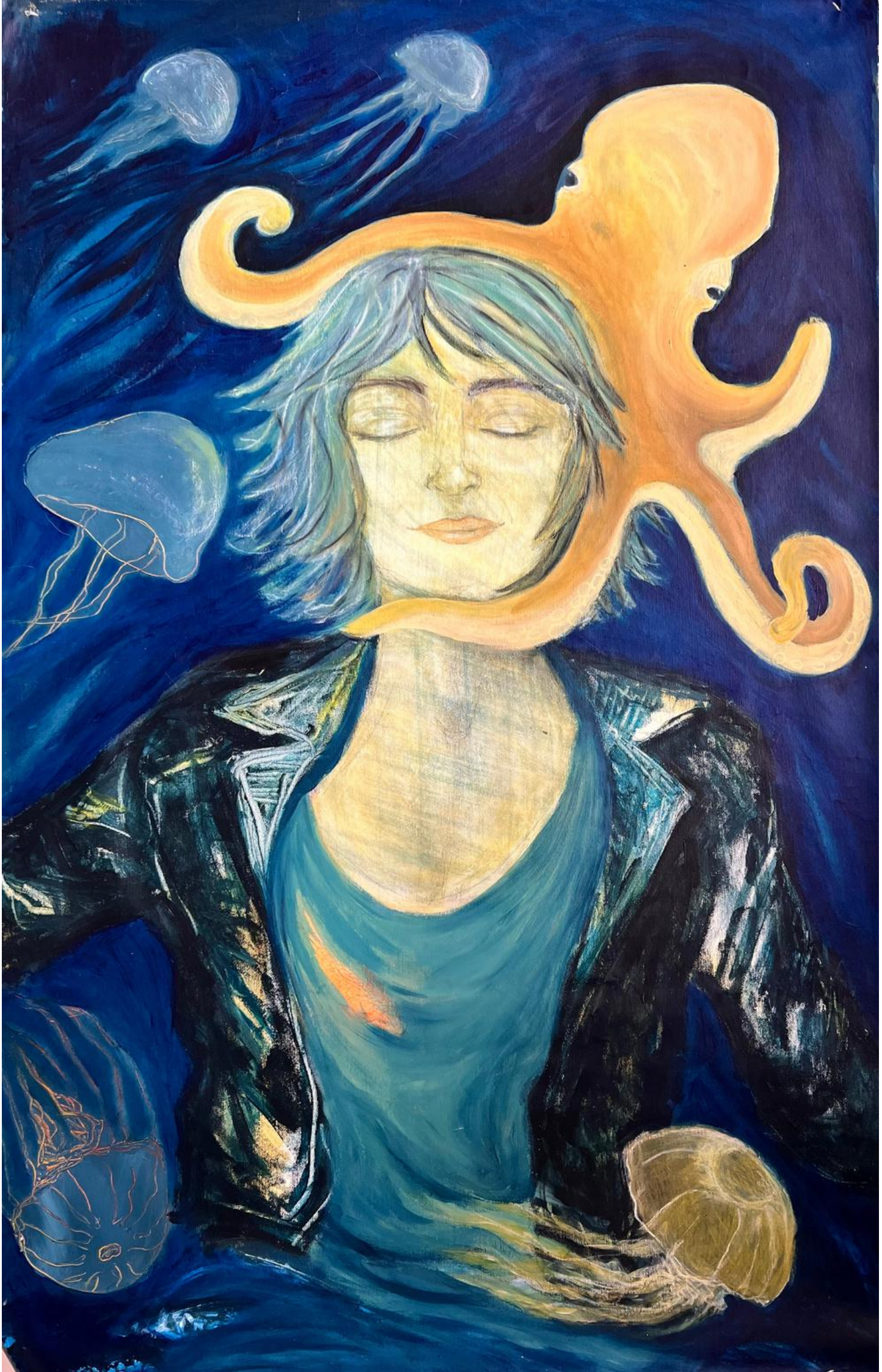
In general, time is often understood as being divided into the past, present, and future. My practice is primarily oriented toward the past, though it inevitably carries traces of my present emotional state. I believe that it is precisely my past experiences that have led me to focus so closely on what has already passed.
As the number of tangible things I am able to hold onto becomes smaller, I find myself wanting to hold onto them more tightly.

Do you see your paintings as acts of preservation, or do they also acknowledge the impossibility of truly holding onto the past?

I see my paintings as reflections of emotions and thoughts that cannot be fully expressed in words. I don't want to accept that the past can't be truly held onto, yet I recognize that this is a reality I am reluctant to articulate, and my paintings bear witness to this tension. They become a kind of passage, connecting what I genuinely feel with what I choose not to articulate.

Jeel Romijn

I am Jeel Romijn, a visual artist living and working in the Netherlands. I did my bachelor Visual Arts at the academie of arts in Utrecht. In addition to my work as a teacher, I have always traveled extensively and worked abroad. The impressions of other cultures, landscapes, music, and traditional art have influenced my view of the world.
I reflect this world of experience in my work.
As an artist, I am not tied to a specific medium, but my style varies from period to period. Currently, I paint primarily with acrylics, although I sometimes use pencil or chalk alongside them. In my paintings as on my pictures I love using colour. To explore the working of different combinations and giving meaning to a colour.
I grew up with in a creative family. Drawing and learning to look closely I ‘ve learned from my father.
Additionally, I enjoy drawing and photography, allowing myself to be inspired by these for my next painting. Most of the time my work is about nature and our relation with it. I give animals and plants that catch my attention a platform by giving them a place on the canvas. I deeply feel that we need to care more about our planet.
For example, these paintings telling the story we have to listen to nature and try to Connect again with animails, like these birds, before they fade away. Fade away in our daily live and dissappear due to extinction. Thats why the pink freshwater dolphin is painted almost transparant. The citygirl, dressed in Chanel and carrying a Birkin bag, is about the duality I feel. About living in a materialistic world (I do love fashion) and the need to give back to nature. Not all my work has such a deep meaning. I love walking and being outside in the nature, making pictures and when I ‘m back in my studio I have a lot of inspiration of making a painting with just a poetic atmosphere.



Daniella Fishburne

Your series "Echoes of Her" explores the relationship between mother and daughter. How did this project begin, and what personal moment or realization sparked its creation?

The project began from a quiet realization rather than a single defining moment. I started noticing subtle gestures, expressions, and emotional patterns in my daughter that felt deeply familiar—almost like watching fragments of myself reappear in another time. That recognition created both intimacy and distance, and I wanted to explore that tension. "Echoes of Her" became a way of tracing those reflections, of asking where one identity ends and another begins.

Daniella Fishburne | Echoes of Her | 2026

The idea of identity appears fluid in your work. How do you see identity evolving between generations, especially within such an intimate bond?

I see identity as something that is continuously shaped through proximity, memory, and inheritance—both conscious and unconscious. Between mother and daughter, this evolution feels especially layered. There are shared traits and learned behaviors, but also resistance and divergence. What interests me is that identity isn't passed down in a fixed way—it shifts, mutates, and continually redefines itself over time. In that sense, each generation is both a continuation and a reimagining.

You transitioned from digital manipulation to in-camera double exposure. What motivated this shift, and how did it change your creative process?

I felt a need to slow down and relinquish control. Digital manipulation allowed for precision, but it also

Daniella Fishburne | Echoes of Her | 2026

created a sense of detachment from the experience itself. In-camera double exposure introduced uncertainty and required a more intuitive approach, making the process feel more immediate and personal. Decisions had to be made in real time, and I had to accept imperfections. That shift brought a sense of honesty and vulnerability that feels more aligned with where I am in my life now.

Double exposure often creates a sense of fragmentation and layering. What does this visual language allow you to express that a single image cannot?

Double exposure allows me to hold multiple emotional states within a single frame. It creates space for presence and memory, self and reflection, past and present to exist simultaneously. A single image often fixates on a singular moment, while layering disrupts that sense of stability. It reflects how we actually experience identity—not as something fixed, but as something overlapping, fluid, and at times contradictory.

Charleston appears as a recurring presence in your work. How does the city function conceptually within the series—as memory, origin, or something else?

Charleston is almost like a quiet witness within the series, existing as both a physical environment and an emotional landscape shaped by memory and history. It carries a sense of origin, especially in relation to my daughter, as it is where she was born and where much of her childhood will unfold. The places we grow up often shape who we become, and I wanted to acknowledge that influence as part of her identity. In this way, the city becomes a container for these layered experiences, grounding the work's exploration of identity in something tangible.

Your images often feel quiet and contemplative. What role does silence or stillness play in your storytelling?

Silence is essential. It creates space for ambiguity and introspection, allowing the viewer to enter the image rather than be directed by it. Stillness, in particular, holds tension—it suggests that something has happened or is about to happen, without explicitly revealing it. I'm interested in those in-between moments where meaning isn't fixed but felt.

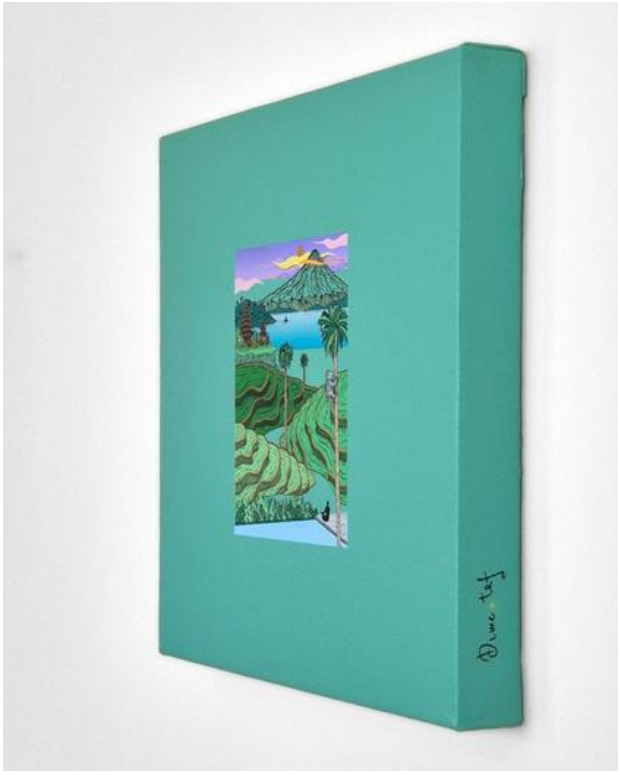
How do you approach directing or interacting with your daughter during shoots, and how much of the process is spontaneous versus intentional?

The process is a balance between structure and openness. I often begin with a loose idea or visual framework, but I leave space for spontaneity. Working with my daughter requires sensitivity—there's a trust and emotional awareness that guides the interaction. Some of the most meaningful moments emerge unexpectedly, so I try not to over-direct. It's less about controlling the image and more about creating conditions where something authentic can surface.

Daniella Fishburne | Echoes of Her | 2026

Dimitar Triffonov (Dime.trf)

Working at the intersection of painting and graphic precision, the artist develops a distinct visual language defined by rhythm, structure, and a quiet intensity. His works translate lived experiences - from remote landscapes to the disciplined movement of the human body - into layered, stylized compositions that invite both distance and intimacy. In his debut series, Places Worth Skip Blinking, environments are not simply depicted but distilled into moments of heightened awareness, where time slows and perception sharpens. Through a meticulous process combining acrylic, ink, textured mediums, and metallic accents, he constructs immersive surfaces that unfold gradually, revealing micro-worlds within seemingly calm compositions. Balancing personal memory with universal presence, his practice explores the relationship between human and environment - not as opposition, but as a continuous, evolving dialogue.



Dimitar Triffonov (Dime.trf) | Terraces | 2026

Your series "Places Worth Skip Blinking" captures very specific moments and atmospheres. What made these particular places stay with you so deeply?

Over the past few years, I've had the opportunity to travel through different places and cultures, each leaving its own kind of impression. Among them, Baa Atoll in the Maldives, Wadi Rum in Jordan, and Ubud in Bali stayed with me in a particularly strong way. They are completely different environments, yet all of them gave me the same rare and almost unexplainable feeling of being exactly where I was meant to be, with the right people, at the right moment. I remember that afternoon in the Maldives, sitting in front of the endless blue, when

Dimitar Triffonov (Dime.trf) | Desert | 2026

my friend Elina suddenly said, “I feel like we don’t have enough time to take it all in. I just don’t wanna blink.” At the time, it was simply a fleeting thought, but years later I realized it had quietly marked the beginning of this series.

I don’t know if I will ever return to these places, and most likely not in the same way. That is why I felt the need to translate them into paintings, to preserve them in a form I can return to. The canvas becomes a way of holding onto that moment, of revisiting it beyond time and circumstance.

These places have stayed with me not as geographical locations, but as states of awareness. They are moments in which time seems to expand, distractions fall away, and what remains is a heightened sense of presence - light, rhythm, and structure that imprint themselves more deeply than the image itself.

I am not interested in literal representation. What I try to access is that precise instant when perception sharpens, the moment you look and instinctively resist blinking, afraid to interrupt it. The title of the series emerged directly from that experience.

The works are, in essence, reconstructed memories. They are filtered, reduced, and carefully reorganized to preserve what felt essential rather than what was visibly there. Each piece becomes a projection of how a place was internalized and carried forward.

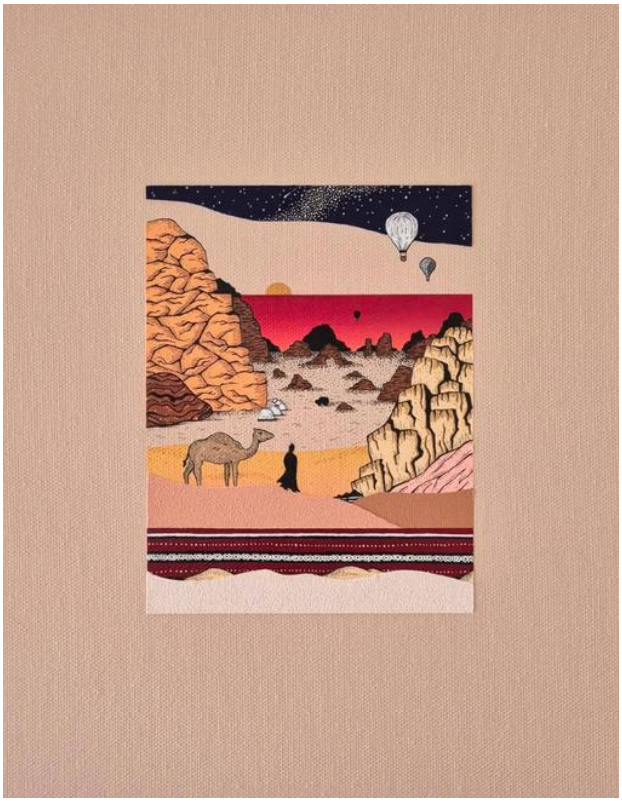
At the moment, I am allowing myself the time to discover the next place that will be translated onto canvas, so the series can continue to evolve.

You mention a strong connection to coastal environments. How does this influence differ when you approach works like Desert or Terraces?

My connection to coastal environments is intuitive. They carry a sense of continuity, rhythm, and breath that strongly resonates with me. At the same time, I was never interested in approaching this influence in a purely literal or descriptive way. In Atoll, this relationship is direct and immersive, as water fully defines the space. In Desert, it becomes more subtle, yet conceptually present. The landscape of Wadi Rum holds traces of ancient coastal zones, shallow seas, and river deltas. What appears today as arid and monumental was once shaped by water, which creates a quiet but essential counterpoint between two environments that seem opposite, yet remain deeply connected through time.

This way of thinking is also informed by a broader, almost universal idea, articulated as early as Heraclitus - that nature exists in a constant state of transformation. Everything flows, everything shifts. What was once water becomes land, and what was once land may become water again. This perspective allows me to approach these places not as fixed images, but as moments within an ongoing process.

Terraces introduces another layer, where human intervention becomes visible. Water is no longer



Dimitar Triffonov (Dime.trf) | Desert | 2026

Dimitar Triffonov (Dime.trf) | Atoll | 2026

expansive, but structured and guided, transformed into rhythm and repetition. Through this shift, the coastal element in my work expands into a reflection on transformation itself, on how environments evolve while still carrying the memory of what they once were.
Ultimately, the coastal influence in my work is less about geography and more about an underlying rhythm that connects seemingly distant environments.

Your works invite the viewer to come closer and discover micro-worlds. At what moment did this idea become central to your practice?

There was a moment when I realized I was no longer interested in creating images that reveal themselves instantly. I wanted the work to hold attention and require time, to unfold gradually. This led me to develop a layered visual language built on detail, extending vertically and in depth. The micro-elements such as dots, lines, textures are not decorative additions, but structural components. They create an internal rhythm that becomes visible only through proximity.
There is also a personal aspect to this approach. My tendency toward precision and control, something close to perfectionism, finds a constructive outlet in this process. The act of building these intricate surfaces becomes a way of staying within the work, of extending the moment.

From a distance, the compositions appear calm and resolved. Up close, they reveal density and movement. That shift in perception is essential, it transforms the viewer from observer into participant in the search for the hidden and the meditative.

Can you describe your process of translating travel photographs into these layered, stylized compositions?

Photography serves as an initial anchor - a way to retain the authenticity of light and color as it existed in a specific moment. However, it is never the final reference. The gallery on my phone often becomes the starting point for selecting colors, forms, and organizing space, and the fact that I use personal photographs - in which, by the way, I am not good at all - adds for me an additional sense of value and responsibility toward myself.
From there, the process becomes one of transformation. I reduce, reorganize, and reconstruct the image. My practice exists between painting and drawing. Acrylic establishes the base, ink defines structure and precision, textured mediums introduce physical depth, and metallic accents add a responsive layer of light that shifts with the viewer's position.
Rather than relying on traditional perspective, I build depth through layering, repetition, and controlled visual movement across the surface. The

Dimitar Triffonov (Dime.trf) | Atoll | 2026

Dimitar Triffonov (Dime.trf) | Desert | 2026

goal is not to recreate a place, but to construct a spatial experience, something that can be entered rather than simply observed.

There is a balance between calm, almost meditative scenes and highly detailed textures. How do you approach this contrast?

This balance is central to my work. I am interested in the tension between stillness and intensity, between what appears quiet and what reveals complexity over time.
From a distance, the works carry a sense of calm, almost suspended in time. As the viewer moves closer, a dense internal structure begins to emerge, layers of detail, repetition, and subtle movement. I am drawn to that sense of a "pulse" beneath the surface.
This idea of counterpoint extends beyond texture. It is also present in the way I approach subject matter, from the human figure as a central, dynamic presence in my Medley series, which is the second series I am working on in parallel, to the reduced, almost silhouette-like presence of the human within the landscape in Places Worth Skip Blinking. These two directions are different, yet they operate within the same underlying logic.

Your works feel both intimate and expansive at the same time. Is this duality something you consciously aim for?

Yes, this duality is intentional. The intimacy comes from the level of detail and from the personal nature of the imagery. These works are rooted in lived experiences, in places and moments that have left a lasting impression.
The sense of expansiveness emerges from the way space is constructed, through rhythm, repetition, and the suggestion that the composition continues beyond its physical limits.
I am particularly interested in this threshold, how a relatively small format can hold a sense of vastness, and how the viewer can transition from looking at an image to feeling immersed within it.

As this is your debut official series, what did you discover about your artistic identity during its creation?

This series allowed me to clearly recognize the foundation of my practice. I understood that my work is built on counterpoint, between human presence and environment, movement and stillness, detail and totality.
I also became more aware that I am not seeking to document, but to interpret. Everything I create passes through a personal filter shaped by my travels, the environments that have left a strong imprint, and my ongoing engagement with swimming, which naturally led to the development of my following series, Medley, where the human body becomes a central subject explored in parallel.
Places Worth Skip Blinking is not a closed series. It continues to evolve as I look for moments across different geographies that carry the same intensity of presence.
Ultimately, I realized that my focus is not a fixed stylistic definition, but a consistent visual language, one that remains grounded in how I construct space, rhythm, and presence, regardless of subject or location.

Dimitar Triffonov (Dime.trf) | Terraces | 2026

Zoe Sou Eat

Your personal story is deeply connected to themes of identity and belonging. How does your background influence your artistic practice today?

It plays a huge role in my artwork. I have always struggled with identity issues and belonging. I am still on my personal journey. Through my project and my artwork, I process and heal my past wounds.

You mention that "home is not where you were born or raised, but where your loved ones are". How is this idea reflected in your works?

Yes, I am a child of adoption, but I have never felt more loved by someone like my parents and the children from the orphanage. I have spent two weeks in the orphanage where I spent my first year. The children taught me a great deal about love and community. The piece miracle shows that love is abundant. It is made by them and reflects that family is more than just blood.

Many of your pieces are created on clothing. Why did you choose garments as your main medium, and what do they symbolize for you?

I tell stories through my clothes.
Like most of us, we carry our stories with us. Especially traumatic experiences, we wear them like a badge of honor. It is a beautiful realization and comparison to know that we carry our

experiences with us, but they do not define us, and we can also shed them like clothes.

Your works include drawings, symbols, and texts that feel very personal and raw. Are these elements based on real memories, imagined narratives, or both?

Yes, they are based on real stories. Every picture is related to an event that happened in someone's life. Some of these happened in the past. Some of the images are the reality of the individual's personal life.

How did your recent trip to Cambodia shape or transform your project? Did it change your perception of your roots?

The project is dedicated to the Cambodian community.
When I grew up, I experienced bullying because of my Asian appearance. As a child, I could not resonate with my roots. Visiting my homeland and the community helped me to reconnect with the culture, which really opened a new door for me.

Growing up as the only girl with darker skin in a small Austrian village must have been a unique experience. How has this shaped your voice as an artist?

As I described before, it totally shaped my voice as an artist. Due to my experience, I can resonate with a lot of people who have dealt with similar experiences. My experiences, the good and the bad, made me the artist that I am today.

What would you like viewers to feel or reflect on when they encounter your work for the first time?

My artwork should make those feel seen who are not- those who have suffered, neglected, or forgotten from our society.

Irina Ponomarenko
Self-taught artist. I experiment with techniques, materials, and styles.
In my works, I use acrylic and oil, as well as various materials such as fabric and texture paste. I draw inspiration from nature, people, and abstraction. I strive to convey the depth of emotions through a painterly interpretation of reality, continuously refining my skills with each new piece.

Paulina Krzemieniecka

Your work combines elements of fashion design and painting - how do these two practices influence each other in your creative process?

Paulina Krzemieniecka | Borderline

I have a very specific style, both in terms of fashion and painting. At some point I realised that if I want to fully express myself I need to start making my own clothes and making fully original paintings (I started my painting journey by doing portraits and other forms that, in my opinion, didn't require as much creativity). As I evolved in both of those art forms, I came up with the idea to combine them as I loved doing photoshoots with my paintings. Now I find myself matching my two beloved crafts to create one of a kind scenery that connects fashion with paintings. I usually start with paintings as they take longer than sewing but I also improvise a lot with both.

Your art often explores dark and unsettling imagery. What draws you to this aesthetic?

I've recently heard that people with anxiety love horror movies because they can experience fear in a controlled environment and I think that's the reason I evolved in this direction. Of course my mental health plays a part, It's a way for me to put all the disturbing thoughts into art instead of acting out. I love all things gruesome and creepy as far as art goes. I often take my friends to old cemeteries and find myself being the only one that's not scared, I really love that feeling since it's usually the other way around. People think it's weird but those things bring me comfort for some reason.

You describe your art as a way of coping with mental health challenges. When did you first realize that art could serve this role for you?

Paulina Krzemieniecka | S____ d__ on zombie island

When I was younger my paintings were mostly focused on portraits, I loved to paint my favourite musical artists, back then it was mostly a way to relieve stress. Painting and crafts in general are my favourite ways to relax. I also struggle with depressive episodes and art was the only thing that could force me to get out of bed sometimes. The biggest step was definitely starting to paint my own complex original ideas. I immediately realised that this is the way I can show people how I feel about things, I think it was the best thing I've ever done for my art.

Some of your works reflect personal experiences with BPD and anxiety. How do you decide what to share and what to keep private?

I'm currently conflicted about this very thing- I'm finishing a new painting but it's extremely personal and kinda brutal to be honest. It's hard because I know my tolerance for this imagery is very high, knowing that my loved ones see my art and think about how I felt making it breaks my heart. But I also hate taboo- I grew up in a tiny conservative town in Poland and I might have been one of the first people in my generation to be fully open about my mental health and therapy. It's important to talk about these things because so many people are afraid to. Sometimes it's hard to decide what crosses the line but then I remember all of my favourite paintings are very gruesome and I go back to painting.

The theatrical elements in your paintings - such as masks, curtains, and staged compositions - feel very intentional. What do they symbolize for you?

I've always loved a good mystery and art that forces you to read into details. Sometimes I put meaning into specific items and sometimes it's purely for aesthetics. I also have a brief background in theatre so it comes easy to explore themes such as life being a performance.

What kind of emotional response do you hope your audience experiences when viewing your work?

I think there is a small group of people thet truly gets all of my art without much explaining and it's mostly those who share my mental disorders, I got so much positive feedback on my painting "Borderline" from people that heavily relate with my issues so I truly hope that it gives them comfort knowing they are not alone in their struggles. I also get the opinion that my art is too moody or dark, sometimes even scary but I honestly take it as a compliment.

Has sharing your work publicly changed your relationship with your mental health?

Definitely. Knowing that people can relate has also been a great experience for me and made me feel way less isolated in my mental states. These types of disorders make you feel like no one will ever understand but as it turns out art can be helpful for both sides involved - the artists and the recipients. I think it helps build community and it's truly amazing.

Paulina Krzemieniecka | Judgement day

Interview

Melita Nikolaou

Your work often merges portraiture with floral elements. How did this visual language develop in your practice?

My interest in combining portraiture with florals developed quite organically. It all began when I entered and won a body makeup competition themed “Festivities of life.” I chose to represent “spring,” painting the entire body with flowers, butterflies, leaves and a head full of blooming forms. That experience marked a turning point in my practice, as it was the first time I explored how the human figure and natural elements could merge to tell a deeper story.
I’ve always been drawn to the emotional weight of the human face, but often felt there was something unspoken, something internal that couldn’t be fully expressed through expression alone. Flowers became a natural extension of that inner world.
Over time, they evolved from purely decorative elements into a visual language, one that carries emotion, memory and symbolism alongside the figure, allowing me to express what words or expressions sometimes cannot.

Flowers in your painting feel deeply symbolic. What do they represent for you on a personal and emotional level?

For me, flowers carry a quiet duality, they’re both fragile and resilient, fleeting but intensely present. On a personal level, they represent emotional states that are difficult to articulate directly: love, grief, tenderness, and even silence. I’m interested in how something so delicate can hold so much weight, and how its impermanence mirrors human experience.

In “My Promise”, the gesture of holding a ribbon-bound flower feels very intimate. How did this concept originate?

That piece came from thinking about the physicality of promises, how we try to give form to something intangible. The ribbon binding the flower suggests care, intention, and a kind of containment, while holding it close to the body makes the gesture feel private, almost like a quiet vow.
That idea became deeply personal for me. After my mother suffered a stroke that left her unable to speak,swallow, or move, I made a promise to care for her. It wasn’t something spoken pubicly, but it carried immense weight.
In that sense, the gesture in My Promise reflects a lived experience. It’s about devotion, but also fragility, how love and responsibility can feel both strong and delicate at once. I wanted it to feel intimate, something held close rather than declared.

You explore themes of impermanence and emotional preservation. Do you see painting as a way to resist time?

I think painting sits in an interesting space between holding on and letting go. It can’t stop time, but it can create a pause, a moment where something is held, observed, and preserved in a different way.
For me, that impulse comes from a desire to hold onto things that feel like they’re slipping away, whether that’s a feeling, a memory, or a presence. It’s less about resisting time and more about acknowledging its passage while trying to honour what might otherwise disappear.

Your background as a makeup artist seems to influence your sensitivity to skin and detail. How does this past experience shape your painting process?

Working as a makeup artist taught me how to really look at

Melita Nikolaou | My Promise | 2026

skin, its texture, translucency, and the subtle shifts in tone that give it life. That sensitivity definately carries into my painting.
It also shaped my patience and attention to detail, as well as my understanding of how small changes can alter the emotional reading of a face. I actually still use makeup brushes in my painting process, which creates a direct connection between the two practices.
In a way, that experience changed how I see people, I became more attuned to quiet nuances, which now feels central to how I approach painting.

Your brushwork often feels atmospheric and in motion. Do you approach painting intuitively, or do you plan compositions in advance?

It's a balance of both intuition and planning. I usually start with a loose plan or structure, especially for composition, but leave space for the painting to evolve as I work. I often draw inspiration from flowers in my own garden, which adds a personal and temporal element, capturing something that is constantly changing and fleeting. The movement in the brushwork comes from responding in the moment, allowing each mark to shift and develop rather than trying to control every outcome. Using softer tools like makeup brushes encourages that kind of blurred, fluid, responsive movement, creating a more atmospheric and tactile surface.

The figures in your work appear introspective and emotionally contained. Are they based on real people, or are they more symbolic?

Mostly, my figures begin with real people as references, which gives them presence and specificity. As I paint, I continue to focus on capturing emotions and subtle gestures, allowing the figure to become more of a vessel for broader feelings rather than a fixed likeness. For me, it's not about exact resemblance, but about the emotions and presence a figure can hold.

Aleksa Bolpačić (2002) is a fifth-year student of Integrated Academic Studies in Architecture (IASA) at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade. He has been actively engaged in teaching as a teaching assistant in Architectural Design and studio courses under the mentorship of ass. S. Dedić, Dr. S. Zlatković, and Dr. Snežana Vesnić, as well as in Architectural Philosophy.
He participated in the 19th International Architecture Biennale (ENKOR), the 46th PRE-SALON, and the 47th and 48th Architecture Salon, along with workshops and exhibitions in Serbia and abroad (Denmark, Greece). His work extends into the field of art through interdisciplinary spatial practices.
His research focuses on space as a process exploring relations between perception, imagination, and affect through a synthesis of theory and experimental methods. He investigates ephemerality, spectacle, boundary, and excess as operative principles, positioning architecture as an open-ended system shaped through context and time.

Project Statement
Ephemerality is not disappearance, but a precise moment of emergence, when a "concept" come into its most autonomous and potent form. It is the threshold at which space detaches from stable view and becomes event and/or relation. Within the concept gains independence from form, operating as a self-sustaining that persists through transformation rather than permanence.

Sharon Dunlap

Your work is deeply inspired by nature and architecture - can you describe how you translate these observations into abstract compositions?

Having grown up in Florida, I spent a lot of time at the beach and always found it to be very calm and beautiful. These times provided much of the inspiration for compositions based on the sea and the atmosphere. The changing conditions caused by the weather also added to the various themes used in many of my paintings.

Sharon Dunlap | Downdraft | 2023

Color plays a central role in your paintings. How do you approach color selection and blending directly on the canvas?

Blue is the central element of many of my paintings. I then select another cool color and at least one warm color to form the rest of the color scheme. Occasionally I break away from blue as the main color and use the color wheel to develop a different approach. Most of my color blending is done directly on the canvas rather than on a palette. This way I can observe the impact of the blending on the overall composition.

Many of your works evoke movement and atmosphere. What techniques do you use to create this sense of flow and energy?

I like to keep the acrylics open on the canvas as it is essential to successfully blend colors. Spritzing with water and using a damp towel helps to soften the edges and is instrumental to creating a sense of motion.

Can you walk us through your creative process from the initial idea to the finished painting?

I begin by selecting a color scheme. At this point I may

Sharon Dunlap | Awakening | 2024

or may not have a specific composition in mind, so I simply start applying paint to the canvas. I build up layers, saving areas that I like, and blending over others. Frequently, I step back from the easel, observing the work from a distance looking for balance and cohesiveness. This also helps me see the flow that is developing on the canvas. This process continues as the theme gradually emerges. When I get to the point where there are no longer any adjustments needed, I know that the painting is finished.

Do you begin with a clear vision, or does the composition evolve organically as you work?

The majority of my paintings are a reaction to the paint as I apply it to the canvas. However, there are some that begin from a specific design or composition though even these will change as the painting process continues.

Your paintings often feel immersive, almost like landscapes or environments. Are you aiming to recreate specific places or emotional states?

I try to capture the feeling of an area rather than recreating a specific location. In many of my paintings, I imagine how it might feel to be in a specific situation or location and capture that emotion on the canvas.

What advice would you give to emerging artists who are exploring abstract painting?

You must paint from the heart and paint what fulfills your artistic needs. While abstract painting may not be for everyone, you must always be true to yourself.

Zuzana Sickova

Your work combines text and image in a very distinctive way. When did you first realize that writing could become a central visual element in your paintings?

Zuzana Sickova | Spring | 2025

This fascination of using text in paintings started in France. I was influenced by the study of the Middle Ages and especially its illuminated manuscripts during my university studies in Clermont-Ferrand in France in 2002 where I obtained valuable material for my thesis “Depiction of the creation of the world according to the book of Genesis “. I created The Graphic Series “Seven days of creation” by dry-point engrave. And later, when I was writing my doctoral thesis about Lettrism in post-graduate studies Didactics of Visual Art where I was also focused on text and image. Image and text in the interference of French culture on Slovak fine arts of the present. My objective was Comparison and analysis of the artistic direction of Lettrism in French and Slovak painting today for better orientation of students and teachers of art education in the era of multiculturalism.

You often use biblical texts in your work. What draws you specifically to these words, and how do they influence the emotional tone of your paintings?

I am writing phrases or just a single word from Bible, sometimes by repeating the same word or I copy the

Zuzana Sickova | Beach | 2025

entire text. Using text in my paintings is not a rule that I follow strictly. During the painting process I meditate about text I scrape out in acryl. Biblical text doesn't influence the emotional tone; it is more about the used colours. My handwriting text arises in wet acryl paint which is drying quickly. Sometimes it's a race against time which force me to be fast and concentrated.

The process of scraping layers of acrylic to reveal handwritten text is very physical and meditative. Can you describe what you experience during this process?

The first step is the foundation of one colour like a base. Then I am searching for the right solution of the strategy of arrangement of colour and shape for each of the painting because every painting has his own story, own way of formation. ...
Like a child I loved colouring books. I can compare my painting to creating and colouring the books which quiet my mind.
The research of the right shape is based on creating the fragments which represents my inner world, my thought bubbles. The fragments are isolated, alone but with invisible harmonic connection with others.

You don't use sketches before painting. How do you navigate composition and balance directly on the canvas?

It is through inner vision; I see in spirit. I called it „ personal revelation ". I focused on details, on accuracy of depiction, on purity of expression. I am seeking peace and flow. I realize that the outside world reflects our inside by mirroring. I try to eliminate tension and create the harmony.

Nature and your personal photographs play an important role in your inspiration. What do you look for when capturing images during your walks?

I take inspiration from my own photos taken during my long walk in nature. In the beginning there is a searching of the beauty of creation around me. I try to capture the atmosphere of joy and freedom and the instant moment. It is also special quest for the atmosphere where the light reveals the essence of created things around me. And in the end, there is analysis of the right composition, where shape, light and colour are in harmony. There photos are just basis for the painting, in the following process of creation they no longer play a role.

Working on multiple paintings simultaneously and in different spaces is quite unique. How does this shifting perspective shape your final works?

It allows me to take a distance from them and change the point of view, or to find the solution. This spatial variation helps me to think more about the painted canvases. So, every day by looking at them it helps me to see what needs to be changed or added. I return to some painting day by day, to another ones I come back after months and I work on some of them for a year, until suddenly it's "it".

You compare your process to that of a medieval monk or embroidery. Do you see your work as a form of ritual or devotion?

It is a thin line approaching devotion, but it is rather a depiction and revelation then ritual. I try to depict beauty of created world according to the biblical affirmation (John 1:1) and to connect spirituality with visualization and creativity.

Zuzana Sickova | Fruit Bowl | 2025

Vanessa Del Bel

Your artistic journey began after 25 years in the corporate world. What was the turning point that led you to fully embrace art?

The turning point came after a period of burnout, coupled with the death of my father. These events made me deeply reassess my life and my priorities. It was at that moment that I decided to seek what was most true within myself—and I found in art that path of expression, meaning, and reconnection.

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

My background in psychology profoundly influences how I construct my portraits and visual narratives. For me, the gaze is the true window to the soul—it is through it that I seek to reveal emotional layers, unspoken stories, and the most intimate essence of each woman I portray.
There is also a very strong movement of reconnection with my femininity and with our ancestry. When painting, I access memories, strengths, and sensitivities that transcend generations, bringing to the surface a more intuitive, wise, welcoming, and, at the same time, powerful dimension.
Furthermore, I have a genuine commitment to the diversity and plurality of the feminine. My art seeks to represent different experiences, bodies, identities, and stories, broadening the perspective on what it means to be a woman and valuing this multiplicity in all its richness.

The gaze in your portraits is very powerful and direct. What role does eye contact play in your work?

There's a layer where I identify with each archetype of woman I paint. It's this sensitivity that permeates my art. I seek to express shared experiences, feminine issues, memories, and ancestries through the gaze, creating a space for recognition and connection. Thus, each portrait not only shows a face but reveals a presence—alive, complex, and profoundly human.
For me, the gaze is one of the most powerful elements in revealing the soul of each woman portrayed. It's more than an anatomical detail. When I'm painting eyes, I create a bridge between my inner world and the observer.
The direction of the gaze, its intensity, the light reflected in

the eyes, and even small asymmetries can suggest strength, vulnerability, introspection, freedom, sadness, or resistance. It is at this point that the painting ceases to be merely an image and becomes an emotional narrative.

You explore femininity in its many dimensions. How do you approach representing such a wide spectrum of identities and experiences?

In exploring femininity in its multiple dimensions, I seek to draw upon a deeper and more symbolic understanding of the feminine. I see each woman I paint not only as an individual, but as the expression of archetypal forces that traverse the unconscious—such as the wild woman, the healer, the mother, the elder, the lover, the creator.
These archetypes help me access more universal layers of the feminine experience, while respecting the uniqueness of each story. In my process, it's not about fitting women into fixed categories, but about allowing these energies to reveal themselves intuitively, often coexisting within the same figure.
I also bring a keen eye to the diversity and plurality of feminine experiences, understanding that each body, each identity, and each trajectory carries its own narratives. Painting then becomes a space for listening and expression—where the visible and the invisible meet—and where different ways of being a woman can exist with power, depth, and truth.

Your works combine elements of figurative art, expressionism, and impressionism. How do you balance these different styles within a single piece?

I am still in the process of properly integrating figurative elements with a more impressionistic aspect in my work. It's a path of experimentation, listening, and discovery within painting itself.
For now, I've been exploring my impressionistic side more in floral works, where I allow myself a looser approach, with free brushstrokes, focusing on light, colors, and the feeling of the moment. In figurative work, especially portraits, I still maintain a more structured construction, very connected to expression and narrative.
Gradually, you will seek points of convergence between these two universes—letting intuition guide how and when these styles can intersect within the same piece.

Your art emphasizes inclusion and recognition rather than conventional beauty. How do audiences usually respond to this message?

In Brazil, we still face many challenging aspects, such as structural sexism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, among others. These issues permeate how bodies and identities are seen, valued—or often made invisible.
Within this context, my art emerges as a space of resistance and affirmation. I seek to highlight the importance of all people being respected and legitimized in their pluralities and diversities, beyond beauty standards. The audience's reaction is often very touching. Many people feel seen, recognized, and welcomed in the works. It is common for them to identify with the narratives and express a deep emotional connection, precisely because they perceive that there is a perspective that validates their existence in a sensitive and truthful way.

Having exhibited internationally, how do different cultural contexts influence the interpretation of your work?

Having exhibited internationally, I realize that different cultural contexts greatly influence how my work is interpreted—and this greatly enriches the experience of my art.
In some places, the interpretation focuses more on the aesthetic and emotional aspects of the portraits, the use of color, and the power of the gaze. In other contexts, the issues I raise—such as identity, belonging, diversity, and the feminine—are perceived in a more political and social way.
Even so, something that touches me is realizing that, regardless of culture, there is a universal connection with humanity. The gaze, the emotions, and the narratives that emerge from the works cross borders. Each audience interprets them from their own references, but many recognize themselves in the experiences portrayed.
I see this as a dialogue: my art carries my experiences, my culture, and my intentions, but it gains new layers of meaning from the perspective of others. And it is in this encounter that it expands.

Isabelle Morency
Creative since childhood, I explored various mediums before discovering my passion for photography. The rigor and organization essential to my administrative career now bring structure and sensitivity to my artistic approach.
As a passionate photographer, I explore light, textures, and lines to tell stories through images.
Inspired as much by city streets as by the details of nature, I seek those moments where colors vibrate, contrasts are expressed, and emotion emerges. Through my images, I invite the viewer to slow down, observe, and rediscover the world with fresh eyes.

Project Statement
As an emerging Fine Art Photography artist, I love playing with light, textures, and colors.

Isabelle Morency | Empty Street

Isabelle Morency | Pop Up Windows

Interview

WirSindKunst

Dual Flow Art didn't begin as a defined concept.
We had always created alongside each other, but on separate surfaces.
Over time, we became aware that our approaches were fundamentally different.
Not only in style, but in how we perceive space, color, and movement within an image.
That difference made us curious. At first we didn't aim to combine our approaches. We wanted to understand what would happen if both ways of seeing were brought into the same space. So we began working on a single canvas.
What followed was not a fusion, but an interaction. Our approaches didn't blend, they responded to each other, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes interrupting.
This intuitive experiment evolved into a structured method, including timed intervals of 7 to 10 minutes that force a regular exchange of control.

Your practice is built around "Dual Flow Art". How did this concept originate, and how has it evolved over time?

WirSindKunst | Diamond

How do you navigate authorship when both of you are continuously intervening in the same work?

Authorship, in our work, is not something we assign or preserve. From the moment we start working on the same surface, every decision becomes vulnerable to change.
Nothing is protected and each element introduced by one can be altered, interrupted, or completely transformed by the other.
Because of this, authorship cannot be traced in a linear way, but rather dissolves into the process itself. The work doesn't belong to either of us. It belongs to what happens between us.

WirSindKunst | Eye

Can you describe a moment in your process where tension between your two perspectives led to an unexpected breakthrough?

Breakthroughs in our process rarely come from agreement.
There are moments where one of us introduces something intuitively, but cannot fully develop it because the timer forces a switch.
Over the next two or three cycles, this idea may remain untouched. The other works elsewhere in the image, allowing it to exist. Then, in a later cycle, it gets interrupted.
There is often a brief moment where one of us hesitates. Not because something is wrong, but because the image has shifted beyond what we expected.
But instead of restoring what was there, we continue to use the shift to create something new. By allowing these abrupt and unexpected changes, we reach a breakthrough that could not have been planned.

How does the interaction between neurotypical and neurodivergent perception shape the final visual outcome?

Our work is shaped by two fundamentally different ways of perceiving. One moves through impulse, intensity, and rapid associations. The other through structure, orientation, and compositional clarity.
These differences influence how we see space, how we use color, and how we respond to what is already present. Because of this, the image develops through two distinct logics operating at the same time.
Our work shows that these perspectives do not need to be aligned to coexist.
The canvas becomes a space where these different systems become visible in how they operate. Instead of existing side by side, they actively interact.
Through this interaction, something emerges that neither system could produce independently. In that sense, the work also reflects a broader question of how different ways of thinking are perceived, valued, and allowed to exist.

Your works often feel dense and layered. Do you begin with any structure, or does the composition emerge entirely through interaction?

There is always a starting point, but never a fixed outcome. Each of us can introduce a separate main anchor without knowing whether it will remain in the final work.
The anchor serves as an initial orientation, not as a plan. From there, the composition develops through interaction, but not randomly.
We work in timed intervals of 7 to 10 minutes and then switch, regardless of whether something feels finished. This interruption is essential. It prevents control from stabilizing and keeps the image in motion.
Structure can appear, but it is never final. It is continuously altered, questioned, and redefined. The density of our work emerges from this repeated interruption.

In your statement, you describe your work as "confrontation" rather than collaboration. Could you elaborate on what confrontation means in your artistic dialogue?

When we speak of confrontation, we don't mean conflict in a negative sense. We mean the active engagement with what the other introduces.
Instead of preserving elements or avoiding interference, we respond directly. We question, interrupt, and build from what is already there.
Confrontation means allowing difference to remain present and effective within the work. It is not about agreement. It is about working through divergence.

What do you hope viewers perceive or feel when encountering the tension and complexity within your works?

We don't aim to define what viewers should feel. What we are interested in is how they perceive the work.
Our images contain tension, density, and shifting structures.
They don't offer a single, stable reading. Viewers may search for order or direction, only to encounter disruption and confrontation within the image.
That moment matters. Because it reflects how perception itself works.
Not fixed, but constantly adjusting. This is where the work becomes active. It challenges, disrupts, and expands perception.

WirSindKunst | Fight

Bilal Dafri is an Algerian visual artist and graphic designer born in 1988 in Guelma. His work explores themes of migration, political conflict, and social issues in Algerian society, particularly the realities of illegal immigration across the Mediterranean.

Project Statement
My concept is inspired by migratory flows, that is to say, illegal immigration across the Mediterranean and the political and social conflicts within Algerian society. My work symbolizes the problems and conflicts linked to oil and the leaders of the Consumable style, inspired by Vincent Van Gogh, René Magritte, Surrealist and Japanese art, as well as the American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol My artistic approach combines sensitivity and commitment, exploring themes that resonate with the social and cultural issues of our time.
My art is conceptual and experimental. Initially, I used several mediums, such as drawing, then painting. I have developed my techniques through photography, video, installations, sculpture, digital painting, and collage to give meaning to my works and future projects. I seek creativity.
I draw my inspiration from my experiences and my observations of life, as well as from my dream of freedom and change, which gives my paintings a great artistic specificity. Touches of realism and imagination shine through in my visual works, thus reinforcing their aesthetic and human impact. Artistic experiments that challenge traditions and manipulate ideas in innovative ways.
I have seen my artistic development transform into a creation carrying a profound humanitarian message. My artistic vision fosters communication between human beings, because its capacity to rekindle emotions and unify cultures is manifested through the language of art.
Artistic beauty shines through in the details of my paintings, combining authenticity and modernity, giving my artistic production a unique character. I present my paintings which reflect my own vision of the world and inspire the public and artists.

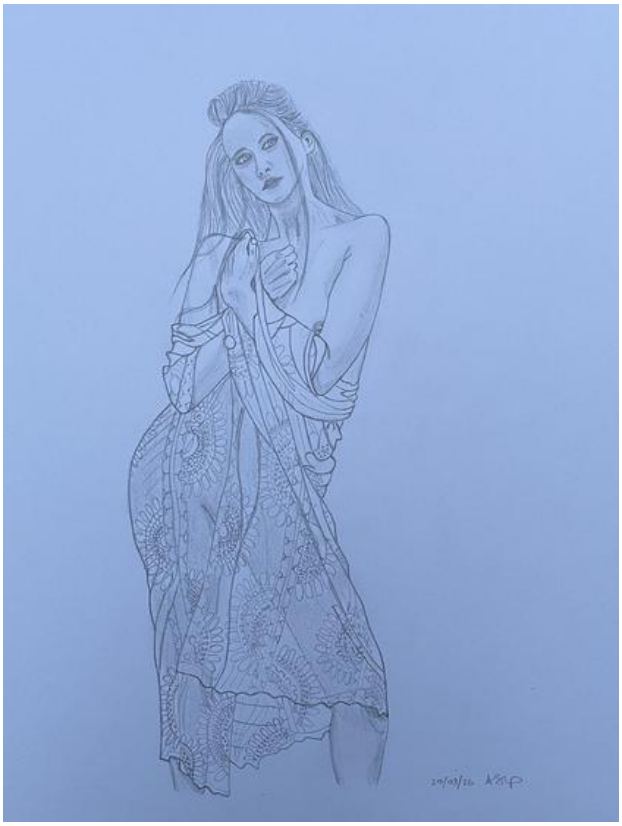
Bilal Dafri | 2025

Bilal Dafri
© 2026

Clarkson Black

Your work focuses on the female form - what initially drew you to this subject, and how has your perception of it evolved over time?

The female form has always held a hypnotic fascination for me. Originally I was captivated by its aesthetic complexity as captured in some of my earlier work. Focused very much on the elegant beauty and wonder of the female form, my work celebrated the visual impact on the viewer, something to be looked at and admired, like many of the classic pieces.
However, my perception has evolved over time, to combine this more classical 'male gaze' form of expression, with the two way narrative power of the female form. I find my later works portraying the female form through this more contemporary lens, as a thinking, feeling being, with a rich inner landscape to explore, rather than a simple passive spectacle.
I love to engage with the muses I draw where I can and learn more about them as individuals - their experiences, their memories, their hopes and dreams. I find this enables me to bring a much richer feeling and emotion to each pencil stroke, and allow my art to become a living breathing expression of an individual, capturing their story.
In some of my more recent work for example, the female subjects are looking back directly at the viewer, claiming space as their own and asserting their presence as a declaration rather than just an ornament.



Clarkson Black | Draped in Memories | 2026

You emphasize the relationship between the body and fabric. What fascinates you most about this interaction?

If I could sum up this fascination, it lies in the tension between the hidden and the revealed. The interaction between skin and fabric creating a sensory map of the body, without needing to show everything, never static but always in dialogue with one another.
Three elements fascinate me most. Firstly, sculpting through motion. Unlike a rigid stone statue, the female form breathes and moves. Fabric acts as a second skin that reveals the architecture of the body one moment, and completely masks it the next. I love how a heavy curtain can impose a new shape, while a gentle silk surrenders to the curves and detail beneath.
Secondly, the language of the fabric. I find there is a psychological depth to how fabric falls over a body. Tight, structured fabrics like a bikini or lingerie signal protection or power, while loose, fluid fabric, like a draping cotton sheet or an evening dress suggest vulnerability or grace. The way a fabric pools at the hips or clings to the small of the back tells a story of the person's presence in that space.
Thirdly, tactile intimacy. There is something deeply personal about the way fabric interacts with skin. The contrast

Clarkson Black | Dreamlover | 2026

between the softness of the body and the texture of the material—whether it's the rigidity of rope or the sensuality of lace - creates a sensory experience that defines how a woman feels in her own silhouette in that moment. Essentially, I see fabric not just as a covering, but as a medium for expression that allows the body to be both a canvas and the artist simultaneously. It is a dialogue of shadow and light played out in the fold of a waist or the sweep of a hip.
For example in my piece 'Draped in Memories', Jasz has her face slightly tilted, gazing into the distance, with her hands clutched to her chest, as if searching to recall memories she holds dear. The contrast of the creases and folds, and the detailed patterns in the cloth as it drapes and flows across the curves of her naked body, then build on this and conjure a picture of vulnerable memories, experiences which make her complete.
'A silhouette in morning light,
Draped in folds of quiet white.
No silk, unclothed, yet covered skin,
Drawing her back to where memories begin.
A breath of laughter, long ago,
A tear that fell as soft as snow.
She wraps the memories in the sheet,
And makes this moment silently complete.'

Your drawings often combine realism with selective color accents. How do you decide where and when to introduce color?

My first drawings were mostly graphite pencil drawings, however after a while I wanted to see how introducing a single colour accent would shift the focus of the drawing and highlight a specific feature. By stripping away use of a full palette, a single colour emphasises the raw structural and emotional elements of the female form, creating a sense of importance or clarity. It is very much now a deliberate choice for my work, to guide the viewer's experience.

I did try more than one colour, but I found that a single colour allowed me to concentrate on the play of light and shadow within that colour. Without the distraction of multiple colours, the viewer's eye is led by the composition, lines, and textures of the body or fabric. It becomes the emotional heartbeat of the drawing.
So for me, the introduction of a single colour can act like a mood anchor. For example the red I introduce to Elizabeth's evening dress in 'Falling Grace' signifies passion and danger as she lets her dress fall from her body. It creates a lyrical symphony, an intimate moment filled with potential energy, where time slows and the viewer is invited to narrate the next chapter of the story.

As a self-taught artist, how did you develop your technical skills in draftsmanship?

I think I'd best describe my artistic style as realism based. That style emerges from some limited graduate training in technical draftsmanship, which I have been able to hone and sharpen into the self taught artistic style you see in my work today.
The precision required for pencil drawings of the female form has been very much trial and error, a continuing learning journey of mastering anatomical landmarks of the female form, a keen observation of my muse and pencil mileage on the page.
Using high-contrast photographic references to see how light breaks across the skin and where fabric creates tension points, is a nod to my engineering background.

Your works capture both vulnerability and strength. How do you approach balancing these emotional states in your figures?

In my works, I find balancing vulnerability and strength is a

Clarkson Black | Falling Grace | 2026

little like a technical dance between the architecture of the body and the use of light, shade and accent colour.
Strength often comes from the internal structure of the body. Even in a quiet or seated position, showing the tension in a shoulder blade or the firm planting of a foot suggests a body capable of action. Vulnerability, conversely, I find in the exposure of soft points—the curve of the neck, the underside of the wrist, or a slight slump in the spine that suggests a moment of submission.
Fabric is the ultimate tool for this balance though. A body might be standing in a powerful, defiant stance but the way thin fabric clings to the skin or breaks across the ribs reveals the fragile vulnerable reality of the human frame. The cloth or material acts as both a shield and a storyteller.
By keeping the drawing minimalist without too much background the viewer is forced to sit with these contradictions. There is no background noise—just the raw honesty of the female form.
This contrasting vulnerability and strength can be seen in my drawing 'Freedom'. When Rosie asked me to draw one of her Shibari (rope) photos, I didn't fully appreciate the contrast of the intricate calculated discipline of the cord, with the delicate organic fluidity of her body. It was a joy to capture the detail in the cord and do justice to the intimacy of geometry, where her body is cherished through the discipline of the line. Even though bound, the drawing speaks to me of freedom, freedom of expression, freedom to explore, freedom to be.
'Sturdy strands in a careful line,
Where strength and softness intertwine.
Patterns woven with steady grace,
Finding peace in a quiet space.
No silk to shield, no cloth to hide,
Just skin and cord, with nowhere to slide.
Each intricate knot a point of rest,
A rhythmic weight against her chest.
The cord is the mountain, majestic and still,
Her skin the river, bending at will.
In this marriage of textures, the story is spun:
Where roughness and softness finally become one.'

Clarkson Black | Glamour Nights | 2026

Many of your compositions feel intimate and quiet. What kind of atmosphere or emotional response do you hope to evoke in the viewer?

My goal is to create a space for stillness and introspection and I hope my work achieves that. By using a single pencil and a limited colour palette, I hope the noise of the world is stripped away, leaving only the viewer and the subject in a shared, private moment.
By keeping the compositions minimalist and leaving much of the paper white, I think the drawings feel light. I hope this breathability encourages the viewer to slow down and become lost in the moment. The silence of the paper reflects the silence of the pose, evoking a sense of peace or melancholy in a fast paced world.
I want the viewer to feel like they've stumbled upon a quiet, unobserved second, a moment caught in time - someone adjusting their clothes, lost in thought, or simply breathing. I hope this creates a sense of empathy rather than voyeurism; you aren't just looking at a body, you are witnessing a person's internal state, sharing an intimate moment.
In my drawing 'Unbridled Happiness' my focus was capturing the intricacy of Alexia's sumptuous lingerie - the delicate lace detail, the mesh shaping, the warm orange colour, all capture a sense of quiet intimate happiness.
'A vision in orange, soft as a sigh,
Lace like a whisper, catching the eye.
With every movement, a delicate tease,
Floating like petals on a warm spring breeze.
Mesh and satin, light and fine,
In a delicate, shimmering, pink design.
She moves with a grace so quiet and deep,
A promise of secrets the night will keep.'
Ultimately, I want the viewer to leave celebrating a small moment in life, feeling energised, having just shared a deep, wordless conversation with the figure on the page.

How important is observation from life versus working from references in your process?

For the majority of drawings, I take my general observations from life and combine that with the practical necessity of reference photos to achieve my unique blend of fabric and body.
I was privileged to be invited to photograph one of my muses recently before using one of the photographs as a reference to draw. This allowed me to soak in the energy of the individual. The subtle tremors, confidence, breathing and shifts in body weight that allowed the fabric to float across her body. These tiny, organic movements allowed me to experience and learn the honesty of the interaction of her body with the fabric.
High-resolution references aid the micro-detailing of a single colour accent or the specific grain of the pencil. A photograph allows me to zoom in on the complex tension points where skin meets cloth, ensuring my work maximises the realism while embracing my creative flare.
Ultimately, life gives the drawing its spirit, while references provides the precision needed for that quiet confident finished piece.


01/03/26 ASP

Alexandra Efimova is a French artist of Russian origin. Born in Bryansk, she lived and studied in St. Petersburg from 2012, where she graduated from the Ilia Repin Academy of Fine Arts as a painter.
During her training, she participated in several European artistic residencies and presented four solo exhibitions, as well as several collective projects in the Czech Republic, Spain, Portugal, Estonia and the United States.
Since 2017, Alexandra has also been working as a heritage restorer in Europe, specializing in mural painting, relief, sculpture and decoration, while accompanying young artists in their projects.
At the beginning of her career, she turned to surrealism, but her installation in France led her to deepen the themes of female identity and the migratory experience, exploring the freedom of choice and the independent voice of the woman artist.
Currently, she is developing a series of self-portraits in which she tells her personal story through painting and sculpture — two visually different practices but in inner harmony.
She lives and works in Normandy, France.

Project Statement
In the project Impossibility of Fixation, I explore the gradual displacement of identity within a prolonged state of instability. The focus of this work is not a specific event or personal narrative, but a condition of duration — a state in which an individual is forced to adapt without the possibility of maintaining distance from their environment.
I use self-portraiture not as a form of self-representation, but as a method of observation. The repeated image of the same face allows me to register not likeness, but change — subtle, cumulative, and often resistant to direct articulation. Within this project, the face loses its function as a portrait and becomes a surface on which the effects of time, context, and internal tension are inscribed.
The project consists of painting, sculptural portraits, and plaster masks, each representing a different attempt to fix a stable image. In the paintings, color does not serve a decorative purpose; it functions as an active environment that gradually displaces form and undermines its coherence. Facial features shift, dissolve, or deform, resisting any attempt at stabilization.
In the sculptural works, the face acquires material weight and density. Resembling stone or petrified matter, the forms retain traces of pressure and damage. Here, identity is not presented as an image, but as an object subjected to external forces — fractured, distorted, yet persistent. The plaster masks, taken from the same face, are never identical, emphasizing the impossibility of producing a stable imprint even through direct physical contact with the form.
The project does not aim to illustrate specific emotions or biographical episodes. Instead, it addresses a moment in which personal experience exceeds the private realm and acquires a universal dimension. Impossibility of Fixation reflects a condition familiar to many: the erosion of stable reference points, the blurring of boundaries between the internal and the external, and the attempt to preserve coherence within a constantly shifting context.
In this project, fixation is always provisional. Any form — image, volume, or cast — registers only a trace of an ongoing process rather than its conclusion. Identity remains in motion, resisting definitive definition.

Alexandra Efimova | Self-Knowledge | 2026

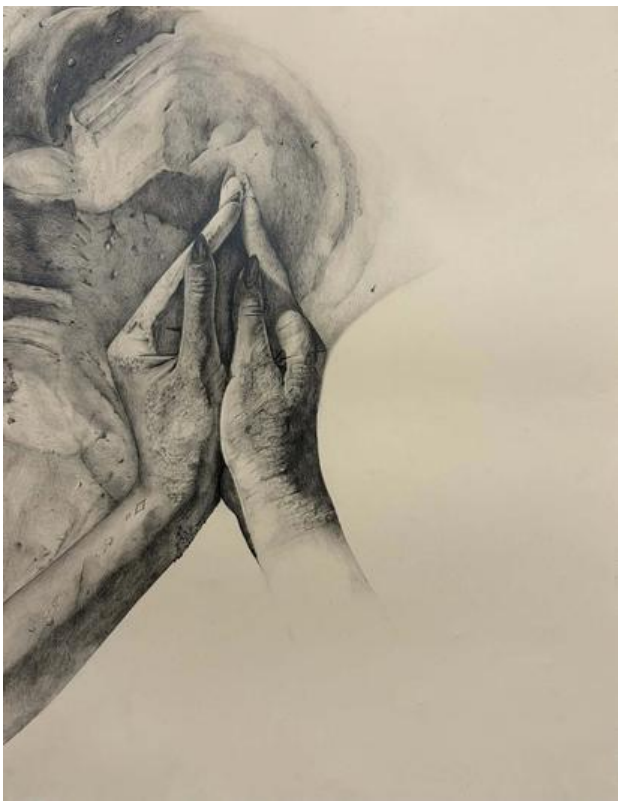
Alexandra Efimova | Playing with Light Series | 2026

Interview

Leda Thanassa

Your work seems deeply introspective and rooted in the subconscious. How do you begin translating something so intangible into a visual form?

My work has always been a reflection of my thoughts and emotions. Some of my ideas even come to me in my dreams, which is when the subconscious mind is at its most active. At times, many different ideas come to me at once and I need to organize them. I start by writing them all down, which makes it easier to understand and visualize them. Sometimes, my ideas come in the form of poems, or memories, so putting them on paper allows me to process these emotions and turn them into visual form.



You mention exploring both the light and dark parts of yourself - how do you balance vulnerability and control in your artistic process?

My artistic process is very connected to my emotions. The darker pieces that I have created were at times when I, myself was feeling upset or angry or stressed. It is almost like keeping a diary, but instead of writing my feelings down, I am expressing them through my art.
Every single piece I have done is vulnerable in its own way. It shows a part of my real self, whether it is “light” or “dark”. The control plays a part, in the way these emotions are expressed. For instance, I might choose to work more realistically and focus all my feelings, on something tangible, such as the human body. In this way, I combine vulnerability and control in my works.

The human body plays a central role in your works. What draws you to this subject, and how do you approach representing it?

I have always been fascinated by the human body. Every single part of it, whether it´s the hands, or the belly or even the nose, can express emotion. It´s incredible how something tangible can be the bridge to the intangible.
I choose to work with mostly female bodies, because it pains me to see the female body being sexualised. I try to

provoke this idea by showing the body in its purest form; naked. I often use my own body as reference, emphasizing the skin imperfections, because, for me, they are the most interesting.

Many of your drawings combine delicate rendering with raw, almost violent textures. What role do materials and surface play in your storytelling?

For the past year I´ve been working with sand. Having grown up in Cyprus (an island in eastern Mediterranean), the sea plays a huge role in my life, and I wanted to commemorate that. The sand in itself, is a naturally indelicate material. How many times have you showered after going to the beach and wondered how a human body can carry such a huge amount of sand? That´s why it made more sense to me, to let it take its own form on my works, guiding it as little as possible.
Placing the sand on top of very detailed work, creates an interesting contrast between the delicate and the indelicate, which is vital in my work. It reflects the chaos and order which exists in every single one of us. Our human nature is defined by a tension between contrasting forces.
Therefore, the texture of the sand in my works has different meanings. It is paying homage to my culture and life on an island, but it also showcases the idea of opposing forces.

How have your experiences studying in Vienna, Athens, and London influenced your artistic language?

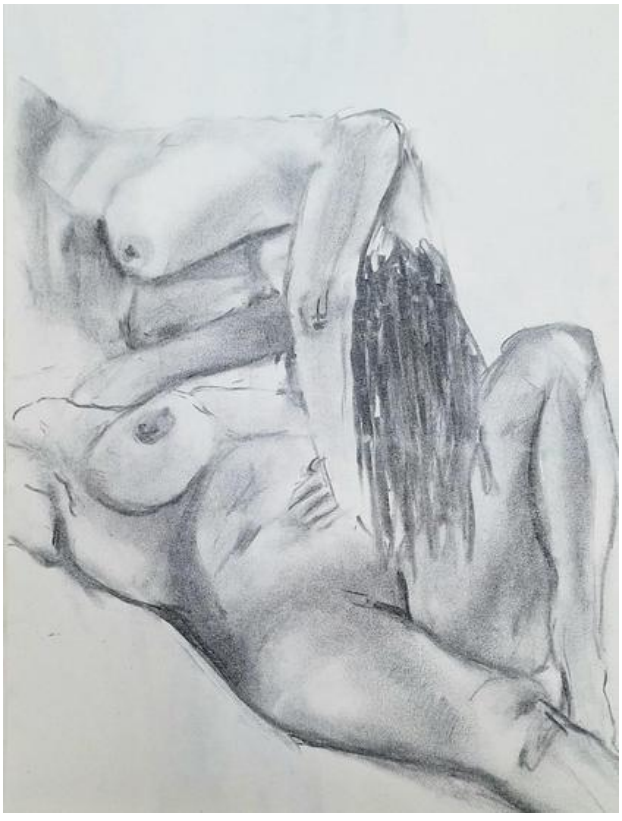
It was significant for me to experience living in different countries and draw inspiration from different cultures. Having had many different professors and classmates has offered me great conversations and valuable insights.
I also realised how different people have very different perceptions of art. In one university my art was considered more conservative, whereas in another, it was considered more modern. Being open to different opinions and criticism has made me more open-minded and resilient. It made me realise that being true with ourselves and our art matters the most, for any artist.

Do you see your work as autobiographical, or does it extend beyond your personal experience?

To a big extent my work is autobiographical, as it is an extension of myself. At times, it also becomes political and a way to express my beliefs. It is very important for me to speak up about female struggles and inequalities, as well as peace in a world of conflict, and this have always been focal points in my work.

Are there particular artists, movements, or philosophies that have influenced your approach?

My Cypriot and Greek culture have been big influences in my art. I draw a lot of inspiration from Greek mythology. For example, my latest work (“emersion”) is heavily inspired by the ancient Greek goddess Aphrodite, who was born from sea foam and rose from the water, in a shell. This idea of rebirth has been central in my latest works.
Another inspiration was the exhibition of Muntean and Rosenblum at the Albertina in 2023. Their incredible pencil works are one of the reasons I chose to work more with pencil.



Enrica Ridolfi

Your background is in architecture. How has architectural thinking influenced the way you construct photographic images and visual narratives?

Architecture has given me a way of seeing based on spaces, distances, proportions, and structures. It taught me to observe both emptiness and fullness

Enrica Ridolfi | After the show | 2024

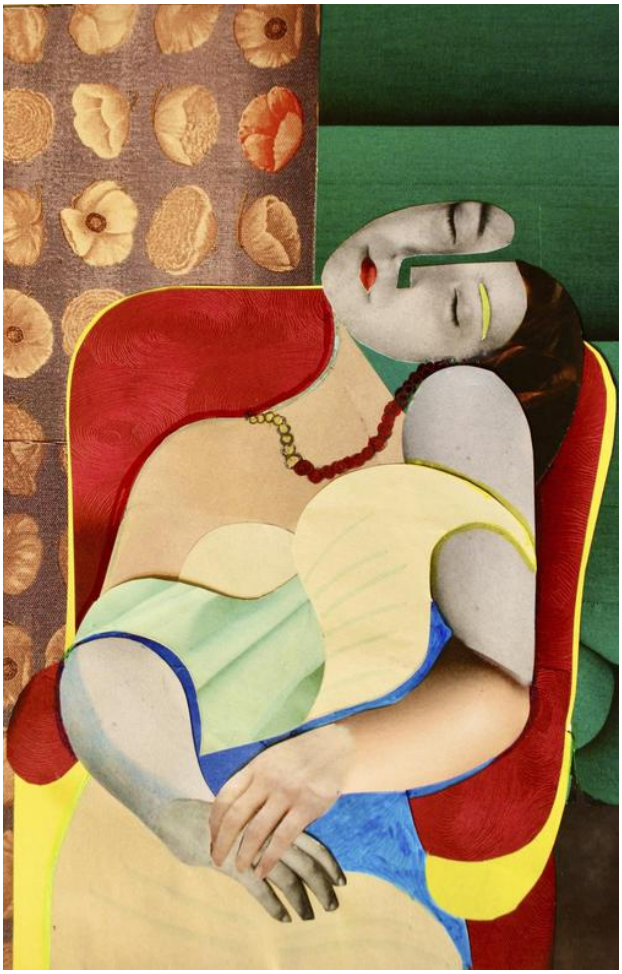
— what holds a scene together and what makes it unstable. Visual storytelling develops in a similar way, by trying to create a sequence of images that guide the viewer's gaze and build an experience. My long experience in teaching has also influenced my approach to photography, refining my critical ability and leading me to constantly question images — especially my own—in search of coherence and meaning.

Many of your works seem carefully staged, almost theatrical. What role does staging play in your creative process?

Staging is a way to slow down. It helps me distance myself from the constant flow of images and allows me to create an intimate space where I can shape emotions, gestures, and atmospheres that often remain indistinct. Building a scene is not just about control but about attention: by adding, removing, and arranging elements, I try to create conditions where something unexpected can also emerge.

You often work on the boundary between reality and fiction. What attracts you to this in-between space?

It is an unstable space and therefore very fertile. I am drawn to it because it closely resembles how memory and imagination work: reality is always filtered through what we remember, desire, or fear. Working between reality and fiction allows me to be sincere without being explicit, to tell stories without over-explaining. It is like dreaming, where anything can happen.



Enrica Ridolfi | Elena's dream | 2023

Your photography spans street, portrait, still life, and conceptual imagery. How do you decide which visual language best suits a particular idea?

I rarely start from a genre and I don't decide immediately. Some images require the immediacy and unpredictability of the street, while others need silence and control, construction, and are created in the studio, like still lifes. For example, when I create a portrait, it is not a spontaneous shot but carefully planned beforehand: I start from both a technical and emotional idea. At the center is my daughter, my only model, who with patience and trust becomes the absolute protagonist. Each project finds its own language along the way through attempts and reconsiderations.

Alongside photography, you experiment with analog collage and different materials. What does working with physical materials add to your artistic practice?

Working manually with different materials is stimulating for me; there is a physical contact that changes everything and makes the work more intimate. Cutting an image, gluing it, damaging it, and recomposing it through irreversible gestures introduces vulnerability and error. In this way, images can layer and remain imperfect—and perhaps for that reason, more alive. It is very different from doing it digitally. Combining different materials and images also has a playful aspect for me: it breaks the rules of photography and enters the realm of pure experimentation. At the moment, this is what interests me most.

Florence is a city rich in art history. How does living there influence your work - or do you consciously try to distance yourself from its visual legacy?

Living in Florence means confronting every day a very strong idea of beauty and perfection—a constant presence that cannot be ignored. Rather than distancing myself from it, I try to move within it while staying on the margins, focusing on less celebrated places, transitional spaces, in search of quieter and more intimate atmospheres.

When viewers encounter your work, what kind of experience or reflection do you hope it invites?

I would like them to feel slightly disoriented but comfortable, like when something is not immediately understood but still feels strangely familiar. If an image manages to create a moment of attention—becoming a place where one can pause, even just for an instant—that is already enough for me. It means the work has found its meaning.

Enrica Ridolfi | Not yet | 2024

Interview

Najla Bdeir

To me, art is a form of self-expression and design is a form of communication. Most of my artwork and design projects are rooted in personal experiences – nothing I create is accidental. Over time, I've developed a keen eye for finding meaning in even the most ordinary moments, allowing me to build deeper narratives from things we often take for granted. This perspective guides my process, ensuring that every color, form, and composition serves a purpose and contributes to a larger story.

Your work often feels very personal and narrative-driven. How do your own memories and experiences shape your artistic process?

In "Bless This Mess", you revisit your infancy through a self-portrait. What was it like to translate such an early and distant memory into a large-scale work?

"Bless This Mess" is inspired by my early childhood days, a time defined by creativity and a very uninhibited sense of self. Growing up, I was often taught to color between the lines, but time taught me that coloring outside the lines can be much more fun, and that is where expression truly happens. To create this piece, I revisited my early artwork from preschool and kindergarten – work that is characterized as messy and unfiltered – and I translated that work into a large-scale self portrait.
What made this work meaningful was the ability to turn something distant and almost intangible into something physical and intentional. Looking back, this piece reconnects me with a childhood dream of pursuing art, but now through a more professional and skilled lens.

The theme of "wide eyes" connected to your name is very poetic. How does identity influence your artistic language?

Identity is definitely central in influencing my artistic language. Growing up in a relatively homogenous environment, I became more aware of the importance of embracing and understanding my identity from a young

Najla Bdeir | Cold Hands, Warm Heart

age.
The theme of “wide eyes” is directly connected to my name, Najla, and reflects a way of seeing the world with openness and curiousity. In that sense, my work is not only about expression, but also about exploring my identity.

You work across multiple mediums - graphic design, sculpture, textiles, and drawing. How do you decide which medium best suits an idea?

The concept always leads the medium. I begin with the message I want to convey and then choose the form that can express it most effectively. Each medium offers something different - graphic design allows for clarity and structure, while textiles offer tactile and spatial depth. There is always an intentional connection between the idea and material. For example, in “For the 0 of Tennis”, I used clay to build the sculpture, referencing the material of tennis court grounds. That relationship between concept and medium is what gives the work its meaning and depth.

In "For the 0 of Tennis", you transform a personal observation into a sculptural piece. How important is family and everyday life as a source of inspiration for you?

In many ways, art and design are about obeserving and reinterpreting ordinary moments, whether they come from family interactions or daily experiences. “For the 0 of Tennis” showcases one of those experiences, where a simple, personal observation becomes something more permanent, noticeable, and reflective through art.

"Cold Hands, Warm Heart" brings together contrasting elements like warmth and cold. Are you generally interested in dualities in your work?

Dulaities aren’t necessarily my starting point, but they can naturally appear as I explore and reinterpert daily moments. The basis of my work is intention, and through that process, contrasts, irony, and juxtaposition begin to reveal themselves.
“Cold Hands, Warm Heart” reflects this through a very personal contradiction – my love for ice cream, and my lactose intolerance. Ice cream represents happiness, while the hote water bottle represents comfort, yet the two exist in opposition.
Using yarn to build this piece then adds another layer to this duality. It’s a warm, soft material, which contrasts with the coldness of ice cream. Altogether, these dualities and the juxtaposition strengthens the message, making the experience feel more personal, relatable, and visually impactful.

Many of your works evoke a sense of comfort and nostalgia. Is creating emotional connection with the viewer important to you?

Creating an emotional connection with the viewer is important, and it is also a natural result of my work. Because my work is inspired by everyday moments, it carries a sense of familiarity that viewers can resonate with in their own way. That sense of connection and comort isn’t forced, but instead comes from the authenticity of the work.

Najla Bdeir | For the 0 of Tennis

Daria Kaminska
I am a Ukrainian artist currently based in Arizona, USA.
I work primarily with paper, creating intricate handcrafted pop-up artworks, greeting cards, and art objects.
My artistic background is rooted in traditional fine arts, with a degree in visual arts and education.
My work explores the connection between form, movement, and emotion through tactile, three-dimensional compositions. I focus on craftsmanship and detail, combining traditional techniques with a contemporary artistic vision.
Through my art, I aim to create pieces that evoke curiosity, interaction, and a sense of wonder.

Project Statement
My work is centered around the idea of transforming paper into immersive, living forms.
I am fascinated by how something flat and simple can become dynamic and expressive through structure and movement.
Each piece is carefully handcrafted, reflecting a slow and intentional creative process. I value the physical connection between the artist and the material, which is why I choose to work with my hands rather than digital tools.
Inspired by nature, imagination, and the emotional states of a person, my artworks invite the viewer to look closer, to explore, and to rediscover a sense of childlike wonder.

Daria Kaminska | Becoming

Daria Kaminska | Silence Carved in Stone

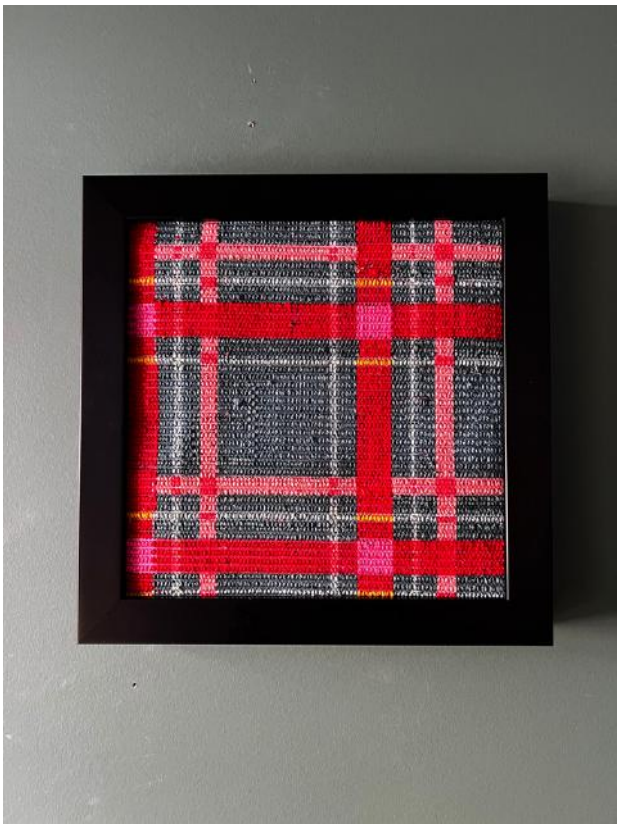
Daria Kaminska | Seeing

Anna Novakov

Anna Novakov | Sibra

Your practice bridges textile work and olfactory installations. How do you approach translating something as intangible as scent into a visual and tactile form?

I think of scent as something that already has a structure—it moves, diffuses, lingers, disappears. My approach is to find material equivalents for those behaviors. Textile becomes a kind of container or skin: it can absorb, hold, and release fragrance over time. Stitching, repetition, and pattern allow me to give form to something otherwise formless. I'm not trying to illustrate scent so much as create conditions where it can be encountered physically—where the viewer senses it through proximity, duration, and touch.



You often work with hand needlework traditions rooted in your Serbian heritage. What does this connection to ancestral craft mean within a contemporary art context?

Working with hand needlework connects me to a lineage of women whose labor was often intimate, functional, and unrecognized as art. In a contemporary context, I see this as both a continuation and a recontextualization. The act of stitching becomes a conceptual gesture—it carries memory, time, and discipline, but also speaks to systems of care and survival. I'm interested in how these inherited techniques can operate within contemporary art without losing their specificity, while also challenging hierarchies between craft and fine art.

Many of your works explore memory and diaspora. How do personal and collective memories intersect in your creative process?

Anna Novakov | Sibra

My work exists at the intersection of personal memory and collective history. I often begin with something intimate—a phrase, a scent, a domestic object—but it inevitably opens onto broader cultural narratives. Diaspora creates a condition where memory is fragmented, displaced, sometimes reconstructed. I'm drawn to that instability. In my process, I allow different layers of memory to coexist, even contradict one another, so the work becomes less about preservation and more about negotiation.

Having grown up between Yugoslavia and California, how have these contrasting cultural and political environments shaped your artistic perspective?

Moving between those environments shaped my awareness of contrast—political, cultural, emotional. Yugoslavia was marked by a sense of shared history and later rupture, while California felt expansive but also dislocated. That tension between belonging and estrangement continues to inform my work. I think it made me attentive to what is carried across borders—not just objects, but habits, smells, gestures—and how identity is formed through those accumulations.

Scent plays a central role in your work. Can you describe how fragrance functions as a narrative or archival tool in your installations?

Scent operates as a kind of invisible archive. It can hold memory in a way that is immediate and involuntary. In my installations, fragrance doesn't just accompany the work—it activates it. It can suggest a place, a body, a moment in time without needing to represent it visually. I'm interested in how scent can function as a narrative that unfolds differently for each viewer, depending on their own associations. It resists fixation, which makes it a powerful archival tool for experiences that are otherwise difficult to document.

You have an extensive background as a writer and art historian. How does your theoretical knowledge influence your studio practice?

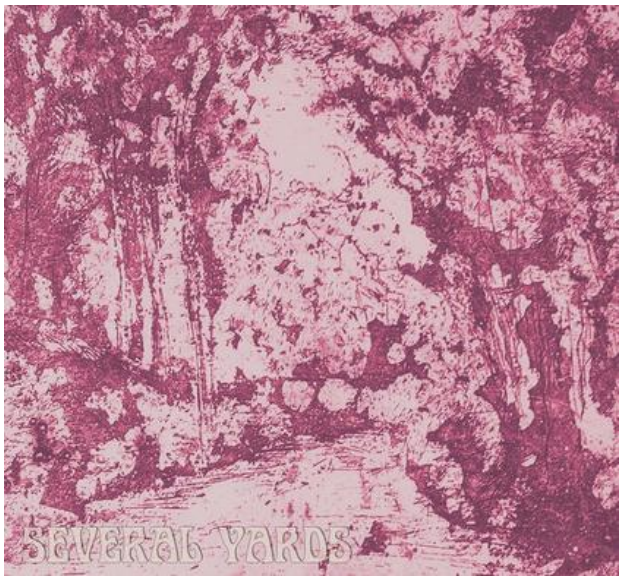
My background in writing and art history gives me a framework, but it's not something I try to impose on the work. Instead, it operates more like a parallel structure. I think through references, histories, and theories, but in the studio, those ideas often become material or sensory. Writing has also made me attentive to language—its rhythms, its gaps—which translates into how I construct installations. There's always a negotiation between what can be articulated and what must remain experiential.

What role does storytelling play in your work, and what kind of emotional or sensory experience do you hope to evoke in the viewer?

Storytelling in my work is rarely linear. It's more about fragments, atmospheres, and traces. I want the viewer to enter the work rather than decode it —to feel their way through it. Ideally, the experience is both sensory and emotional: something that lingers, like a scent does, even after they leave. I'm interested in creating a space where recognition and ambiguity coexist, where the viewer can locate themselves within the work while also encountering something unfamiliar.

Anna Novakov | Sibra

Sister Annie



Sister Annie | Several Yards Album Cover | 2021

Your work combines historical printmaking techniques with contemporary music culture. How did this intersection first emerge in your practice?

I used to be a designer for music projects long before I became a printmaker or studied graphic design. In fact, it was my ongoing work in the music field that shaped me as an artist. Between 2015 and 2017, I lived in my friends' rehearsal studio, organising events, festivals, rehearsals, and band tours. During that time, I also drew most of the posters myself to save money. Not many original drawings from that period have survived. In 2019, I began a Foundation course where, among other disciplines, we were introduced to printmaking, first and foremost, drypoint on plastic. To be honest, I found it challenging, time-consuming, and frankly frustrating. This pushed me to start researching alternative printmaking methods, which is how I came across etching. My first copper plate was made at home with no practical experience, relying only on a few instructions from an obscure 1960s book. Somehow, it turned out exactly right: a deep, clean open-bite etching of St. Margaret of Antioch from Liber Chronicarum. Most importantly, it was faster than scratching into plastic plates for days. From there, I began to explore the process more seriously, learning new techniques and attending open workshops. Looking further back, I suppose my interest in historical imagery traces all the way to childhood fascination by King Arthur's Tales and the late 70s animated Lord of the Rings films my parents introduced me to.

Sister Annie | The Collision | 2022

What draws you specifically to medieval and Renaissance visual language, and how do you reinterpret it in a modern context?

It is the sense of mysticism and wonder that draws me in. In earlier times, when natural events, laws of physics, the universe, and human physiology lacked clear explanation, the mind filled those gaps with fantasy and fairytale-like narratives like medieval stories of giants, dragons, and other mythic creatures. Equally important is the craft element. In periods when everything was hand-drawn, typeset, and painted, objects carried a more human presence and are marked by small imperfections of age, something like Western interpretation of wabi-sabi. In my own work, I try to preserve this sense of craft, often referencing folk tales and following visual canons of Renaissance era. We already have seen few medieval revivals, such as Arts and Crafts movement and the 1970s rediscovery of mythic and fantasy aesthetics. I believe another revival is overdue, particularly in the context of AI imagery and contemporary fashion trends already flirting with chainmail and knight-core. Yet we live in a world of constant visual flow at our fingertips, and in such a fast paced environment, my work has found its most natural place within contemporary music. Music is a vivid, fluid art form, leaving much space for this kind of imagery across a wide range of genres. If it still plays, it stays.

You often reference mysticism and hermetic philosophy - how do these ideas shape your visual narratives?

I am strongly drawn to metaphor and symbolic language, both in literature and visual art. This is reflected in my interest in alchemical imagery and in the poetry of Milton, where meaning often operates on layered, allegorical levels. For me, the language of symbols allows multiple strata of meaning to exist at once, often carried by a few carefully placed accents or details. I use this density, as it lets an image hold ambiguity, memory, and resonance without resolving itself too quickly. The process of creation itself feels inherently mystical, where inner states and outer forms mirror one another. In making, there is a sense of stepping outside the constraints of ordinary time and physical logic, entering a spiritual and intuitive space. Rhythm is central to

this, just as it structures music, it also governs visual harmony, repetition, and pauses within an image. Like much spiritual art, my work isn't seeking to provoke, impress, or assert an argument - it's here to remind of interconnectedness of things around, to spark reflection, memories, and search for inner light. It quietly arrives to recall the childhood sense of wonder, to be felt and heard in the Nous (the divine mind within). Our path is, indeed, a spiral of trials and errors, leading to reunion with ourselves, with the prima materia of lived experience, with the silence between the wind chimes.

Can you describe your process when working with traditional techniques like etching or relief printing? What role does materiality play for you?

A lot of my printmaking process is rooted in sensory interaction. In many ways, it echoes the medieval idea of ars, a labour-intensive transformation of material. I value the physical effort that goes into making, for me, that tangible engagement is part of what gives the work its weight and presence. I mostly work with copper, partially because it is the most accessible material, but also because I associate it with a certain warmth. This year I'm planning to experiment with steel, which I'm particularly drawn to - there's something compelling about its historical use in swords and armour. I don't work in gloves, unlike many printmakers, because it creates a distance between myself and the material. Direct contact is important to me so my hands are always stained with ink. At the same time, while I can be quite meticulous and exacting in technical processes, I always leave space for unpredictability and experiment. For example, one of the "Crescent Moon" illustrations was my first attempt at sugarlift. I mixed the solution myself, which introduced a number of unexpected artefacts into the plate. Once the plate is submerged in the etching bath, I no longer try to fully control the outcome, instead I allow it to open up and develop on its own terms. It becomes a kind of improvisation within a classical framework.

Your poster designs for music events have a very distinct identity. How do you translate sound or musical atmosphere into visual form?

As music is built on patterns, rhythms, and pauses, my posters follow a similar structural logic. I tend to work with vivid, concentrated colour, whiplash lines, and gothic typefaces, elements carrying both movement and intensity. I got into progressive and psychedelic music fairly early in my teenage years. Between 2016 and 2019, I ran a community dedicated to progressive music reviews, and at some point it became a personal mission to support emerging bands within the genre, often free of charge, and help shape it into something closer to a unified countercultural force. This led me to study posters from the 1960s and 1970s, their visual language and production methods, which I then began introducing into my friends' bands. We used to call that atmosphere psychedelic underground, or jokingly, hippie metal. Later, this interest developed into my degree essay, which focused on psychedelic and occult imagery in music illustration from that period. For me, it is always about striking a balance between the progressive flow and richness of arrangement, and a heavier, rougher underlying structure that recalls the rawness of rock music. This is why many of my designs revolve around themes of life and death, nature and mysticism. For instance, the Musical Tree cassette design centres on the unity of three arts - music, visual art, and poetry - brought together under the tree of life. The figures are shown harvesting its fruits among iris flowers, traditionally associated with hope and wisdom. Inside the gatefold, repeated image of a blackbird as a subtle reference to the guitarist who introduced me to the band - his surname is Blackbird. As a progressive band in the most classical sense with strong conceptual foundation, they lend themselves naturally to allegorical imagery.

The influence of 19th-century book illustration is very present in your work. Are there particular artists or publications that inspire you?

Kay Nielsen's West of the Sun, East of the Moon has long been one of my most cherished fairytales. As a child, I was equally captivated by Arthur Rackham's King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Last summer, during a trip to Hay on Wye, I finally came across an original 1917 edition.

How does working within the underground music community influence your artistic direction and collaborations?

Through this work, I've met my closest friends and long-term collaborators. The underground music scene has always been a space of connection for me, I regularly attend festivals and events, meet new people, and many of those encounters naturally evolve into shared projects, bands, or long-term creative partnerships. I first met my sound engineer and co-founder of Devil's Well Records around twelve years ago. Since then, we've worked together on numerous events and releases. Whenever a band approaches me for design, I often bring him into the conversation if they might also need support with studio production or live recording. It's a collaborative network that tends to grow organically. I find a constant source of inspiration within the underground music community. When working with bands, I aim to translate their sound, atmosphere, and underlying ideas into a visual language that feels true to them. That process often leads me into new areas of research. For instance, my recent interest in sacred geometry, antique mechanical constructions, and early machinery has been shaped largely by an album cover I'm currently developing for TIME (The Invisible Machine Engine), a project that calls for a more structural, symbolic, almost cosmological approach to image-making.

Sister Annie | High Rise | 2019

Iftimiu Tudor

Hello everybody!! I'm a 22 year old photographer that really wants to thrive in this domain. I love nature, people and abstract. I'm eager to make new friends and explore the world, all while i capture my thoughts through photography.

Cheers!

Tudor Iftimiu |Truth | 2026

Tudor Iftimiu | Just Sweethearts | 2026

Tudor Iftimiu |Liminal Space | 2026

Elguja Berishvili

Elguja Berishvili | Florist | 2026

This is an interesting process. I'd like to mention that balancing is directly connected to the strong internal feelings. And although I very much love contrasts (when something is difficult, it can be at the same time great kindness and joy), yet most of my works can be devoted to either heaviness or lightness.
At some point I can experience the alterations of the opposite emotions vibrantly, because they are completing and expressing better when close to each other. So, I pursue the idea of reflecting this balance point.

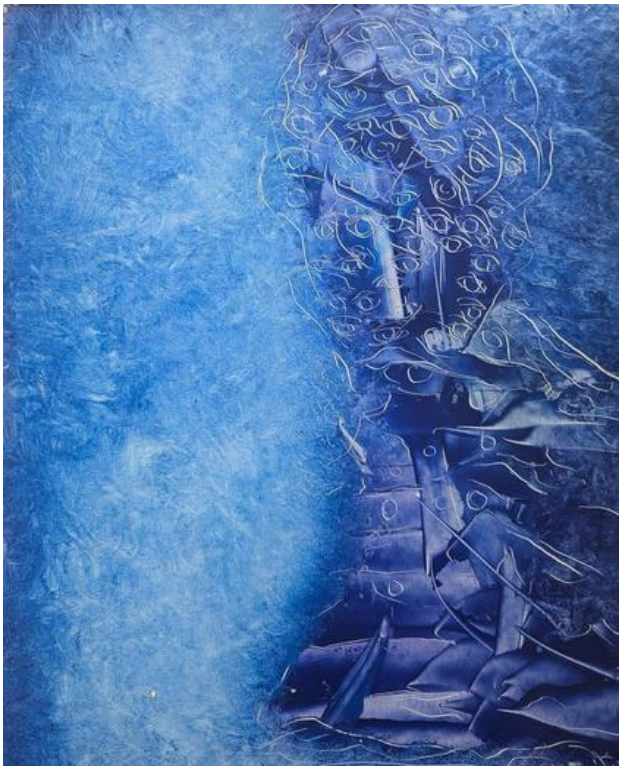
How did your studies in literature and philosophy influence your artistic language and symbolism?

Literature and philosophy do not contradict, but complement each other, and creative work combines both. Then you transfer the emotion of a specific thought or story that has passed through you to paper or canvas.
It inspires the spiritual growth, therefore you must be constantly naturally focused on self-enrichment, which is essential for creation.

Many of your works feel deeply introspective

Your work explores both great sadness and great happiness - how do you balance these emotional extremes in your paintings?

Elguja Berishvili | An ascetic lighting a fire | 2026



Elguja Berishvili | The ancestors are watching us | 2026

and almost meditative - what role does inner reflection play in your creative process?

The reflected world is a great teacher for a specific individual who is inclined towards self-observation. The creative process is almost the same for me, in absolute silence and concentration, emotions arise and I reveal something new in the form of paintings, you could say that this is like self-healing, and this inner observer helps you to better see yourself in all this and this moment absolutely brings me to life.

Can you describe how a painting begins for you - from the first idea to the final image?

This is a breath-taking point, as in most of the cases I have no specific plan what I am about to paint or in what form, it just naturally goes with the flow that starts pouring out me. However, nothing is created that I would not have spent time and time again thinking and my subconscious has not processed it. So, I can very suddenly totally change the form of an idea which I had in mind initially into an even more unexpected thought that I felt. 😊

Your compositions often include solitary figures - what do these figures represent in your work?

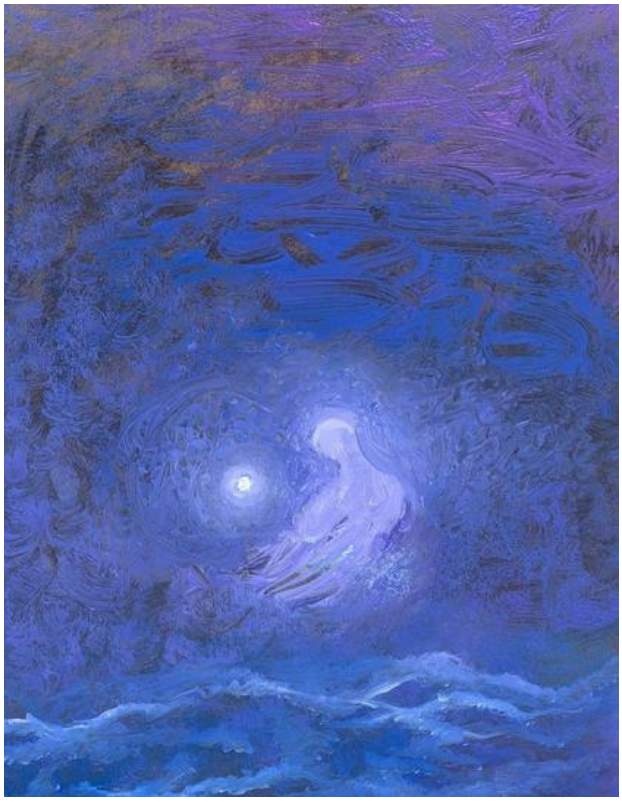
The figures are “forms of various states” that a person feels and goes through throughout his life, while the solitary figures are about self-observation, “that precious solitude” that a person needs so much to pay attention to his own existence and find out who he is in his own solitary silence.

There is a strong sense of texture and materiality in your paintings - how important is the physical surface in expressing your ideas?

I think that this is very important that the visual (painting) is accompanied by words, so that to bring the viewer closer to the emotion and make it more tangible. Words also have their own powerful magic, especially when they come together well with a painting.

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

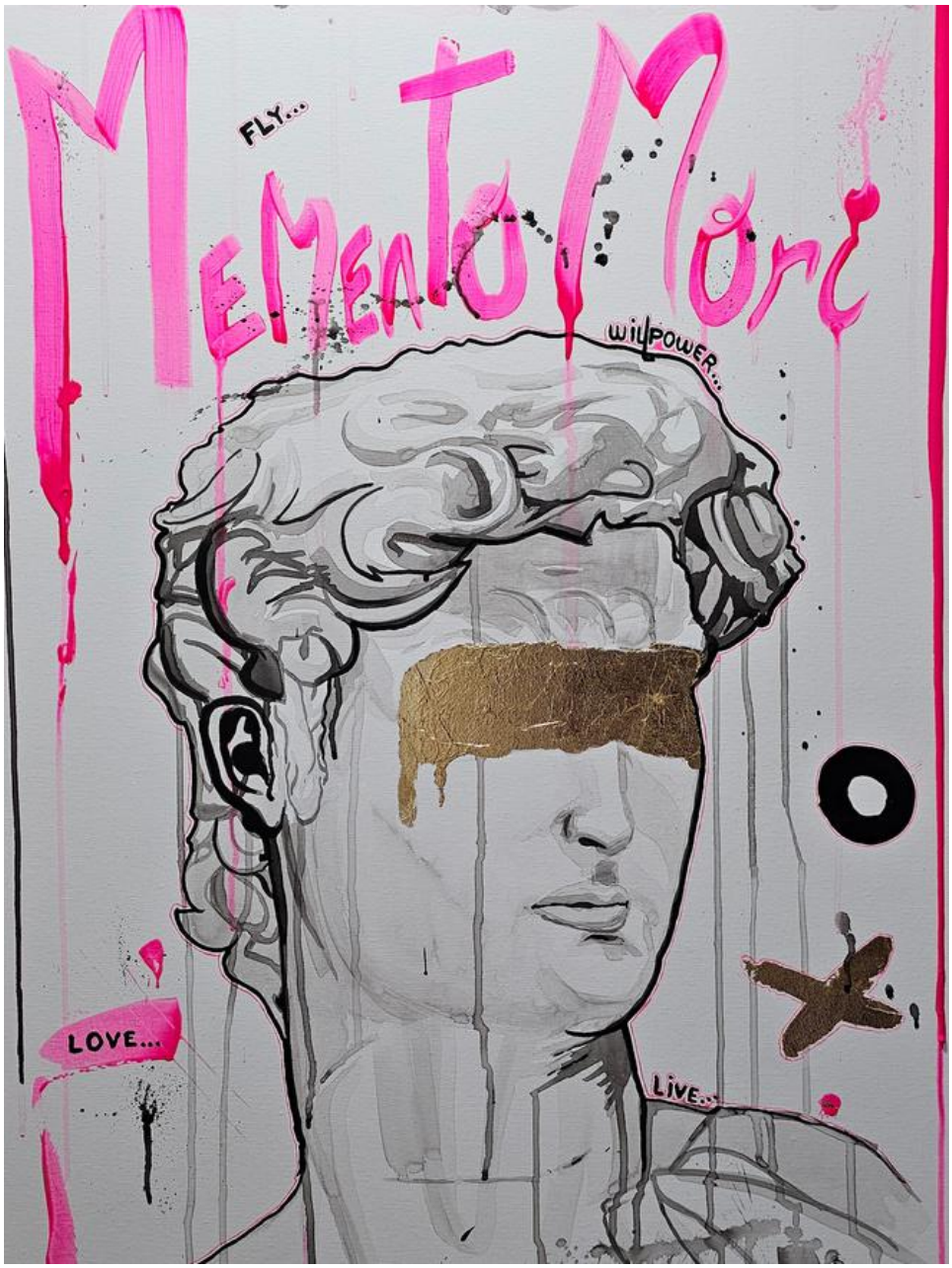
I think that these will be the viewers’ individual feelings, but I want my work to evoke in them that warm feeling of the light of the soul that is remembered and deeply stored in each of them.



Elguja Berishvili | Before beginning to sound into matter | 2026

Vazk_uez Art is an international contemporary visual artist based in Miami, whose work explores the tension between control and chaos through a refined and emotionally driven visual language. His practice centers on themes of identity, silence, and internal conflict, expressed through bold compositions and a distinctive aesthetic.
Since beginning his artistic career in 2024, Vazk_uez has rapidly built a self-made trajectory, gaining recognition without institutional backing. His work has been featured in multiple international art publications, including Artells Magazine, NOVA Art Journal, BeauxArts Magazine, and Art & Vision USA, among others, as well as in local newspapers, and in exhibitions that continue to expand his presence across the contemporary art scene. He has also been selected as a finalist in an international exhibition, further reinforcing the growing recognition of his work.
Working primarily with acrylic on canvas and digital mediums, he creates original, one-of-one pieces that emphasize authenticity and collector value. His artistic philosophy, “Elegance in Chaos,” defines a body of work where imperfection, structure, and emotion coexist with intention.

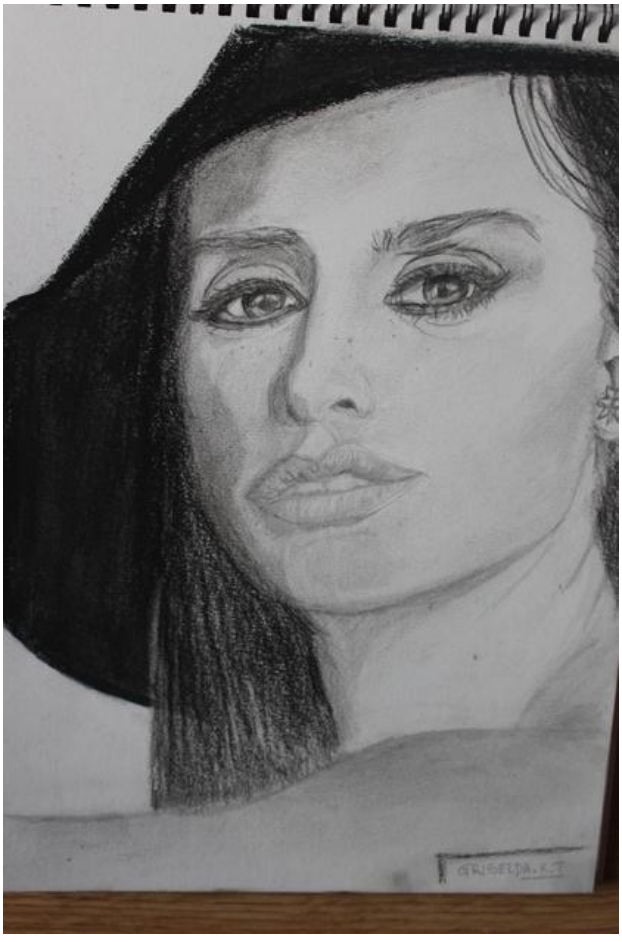
Project Statement
My work emerges from the tension between control and chaos, a space where structure begins to fracture, yet meaning still holds. I am drawn to what is not immediately visible: silence, internal conflict, and the emotional weight carried beneath the surface.
Each piece is an exploration of identity and restraint, where I allow imperfection to exist with intention rather than correction. I do not aim to explain, but to evoke, creating compositions that invite reflection rather than resolution.
“Elegance in Chaos” defines my approach: a balance between discipline and disruption, where raw emotion is shaped into something precise, yet never fully contained.
I am not interested in fitting into a narrative.
I am here to build one.



Griselda Rivilla Tort

Your work focuses on capturing the "soul" through portraiture. How do you define this concept in your artistic practice?

I strive to capture the soul by focusing intensely on the facial expression, centering my practice on the emotion conveyed through the eyes. For me, the gaze is the window to the internal 'beat' of the subject.



Griselda Rivilla Tort | Penélope Cruz Mediterranean Light

Black and white play a central role in your work. What does this limitation allow you to reveal that color cannot?

There is a profound beauty in the simplicity of a pencil and a notebook. Stripping away color allows the essence of the form and the truth of the emotion to surface without distractions.

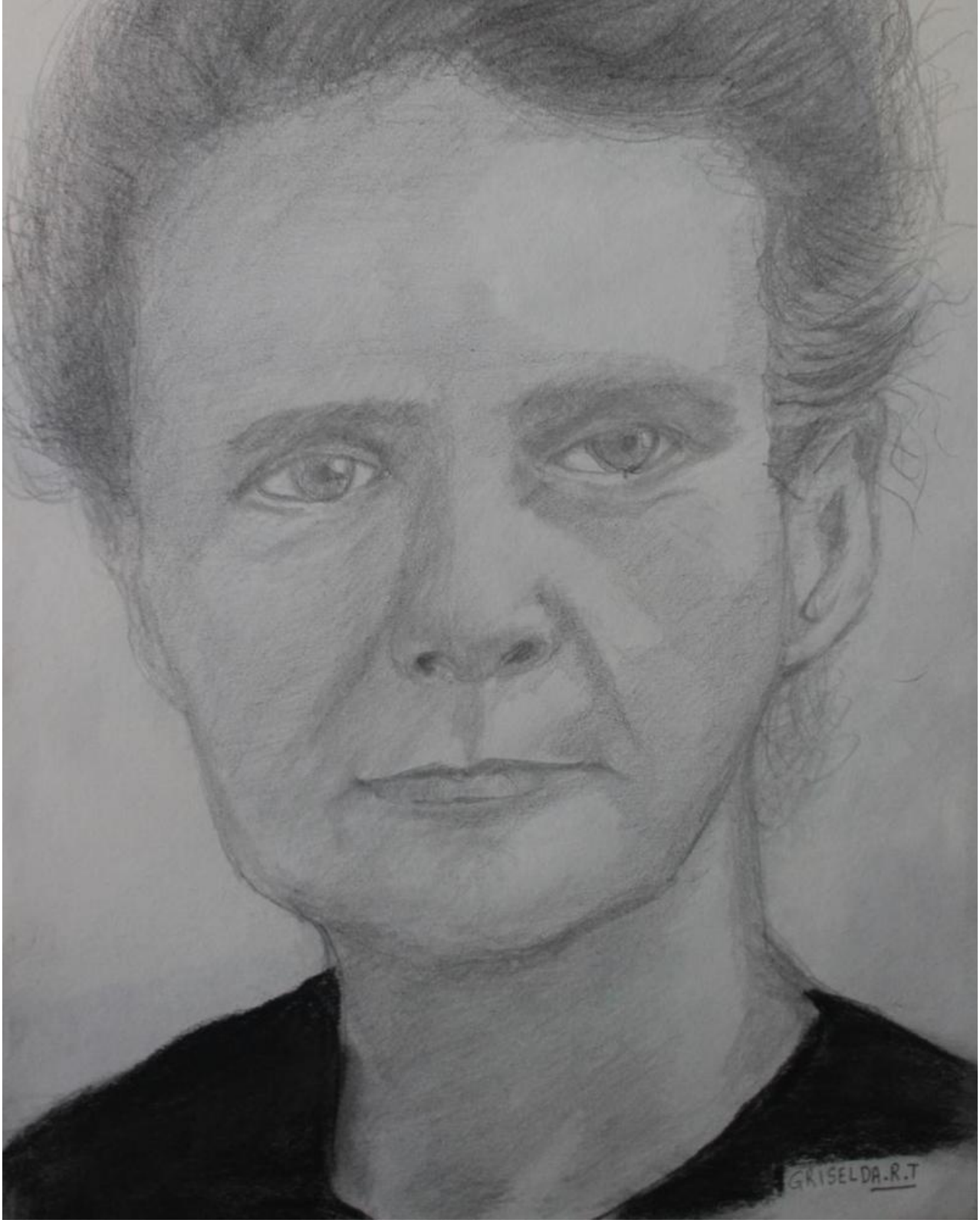
Many of your portraits convey strong emotional intensity. How do you approach building this emotional connection with your subjects?

I am usually drawn to specific photographs that captivate me—either through a haunting gaze or a powerful composition. My process starts with that spark of connection; I don't just draw a face, I translate the feeling that captured me in the first place.

In your opinion, what makes a portrait "truthful"? Is it likeness, emotion, or something beyond both?

Physical likeness is secondary to me. A 'true' portrait is one where the gaze isn't flat—it has life. If the viewer feels a pulse behind the eyes, then the portrait is truthful, regardless of technical perfection.

Presenting your work in Times Square creates a



Griselda Rivilla Tort | Marie Curie The Light of Science

contrast between silence and visual noise. What kind of viewer reaction do you hope to evoke in this environment?

In a place defined by visual noise, frantic movement, and neon colors, I want to create a pocket of stillness. I hope to grab the viewer's attention through the 'silent power' of my black and white works, offering a moment of quiet reflection amidst the chaos.

Some of your portraits depict well-known figures, while others feel more intimate and anonymous. How does your approach differ between these subjects?

I approach every subject with the same reverence, whether they are a public icon, a stranger, or a family member. My goal is universal: to capture the soul and the specific emotional state of that unique moment.

The gaze is a recurring and powerful element in your work. What role do the eyes play in communicating meaning and emotion?

I have always been fascinated by what eyes say when words are absent. The way they transmit energy and their natural brilliance is a constant source of inspiration. The gaze is the language I use to communicate without borders.

Lia Popa

Your background spans music, architecture, and medicine - how do these disciplines influence your artistic practice?

I started with piano from an early age, which helped me to develop my inclination for simplicity and composition. Art is a form of communication, creativity and introspection. To be authentic you have to get to know the historical background and the social context of a piece of art. I believe that Architecture broaden my knowledge in aesthetics by developing concepts according with the new technologies. Being my main subject, Medicine expanded my horizons. Therefore, my artistic practice resumes interpretation of the every day life and it includes a balanced chromatic as well as mixed techniques.

How does your experience as a pianist shape your sense of rhythm, composition, or flow in your drawings?

My experience as a pianist helped me to be patient and to pay attention to rhythm form and details. To imagine a concept before applying it and to be able to listen.

In your floral works, what draws you to abstract interpretation rather than strict realism?

Flowers are like pieces of art. They are beautiful and they bring calm. Moving from Romania to Vienna was an amazing journey. I had the idea of reinterpreting flowers in an unusual way.

Can you describe your process when creating a piece - do you begin with a concept, emotion, or visual reference?

When I create a piece, I usually take a walk into a museum or a Library or I study another piece of art. I try to focus mainly on the History of Art of the 21st century and I search for visual references. I like to make connections between literary subjects and visual art and to analyze a trait, such as generosity, humor, or intuition.

Your works balance softness and structure - do you see this as connected to your architectural training?

In Architecture school I was taught to let my imagination run free and to make everything beautiful. I learned techniques of drawing, for example technical draw, acrylic, watercolor, charcoal or illustration.

How does your medical profession influence your perception of the human body and form in your drawings?

Being my main domain, Anatomy has splendor and beautifulness. The human body is very complex.

Do you see your artistic practice as a contrast to your scientific career, or as something complementary?

I see my artistic practice as a contrast to my scientific occupation. The everyday life is a great source of developing new concepts and to share a colorful palette in music or in visual art.

Lia Popa | Angel of light | 2025

Lia Popa | Amethyst Flora | 2026

Vlasta Črčinovič Krofič

All the knowledge I gained during my studies in law and economics, as well as during my professional career and life experiences, has shaped me and broadened my perspective on society and what happens within it.
Through the creative process, various areas of my knowledge often intertwine, allowing me to richly interpret themes and motifs. It is precisely this interdisciplinarity that gives me the opportunity to combine analytical thinking, sensitivity to social changes, and aesthetic value in my work.
Painting offers me a unique way of expression and a sense of freedom – with a few strokes and layers of paint, I can depict great stories. Since I am a writer, I often put them into words and/or, conversely, enhance a story with illustration.

Your background combines economics and fine arts. How do these two fields influence each other in your artistic thinking and creative process?

Vlasta Črčinovič Krofič | The voice inside me | 2026

You began dedicating yourself fully to art after retirement. How did this transition reshape your identity as an artist?

In life, I have "played" different roles. My current role as an artist fulfills me more than any other life role has. I feel free. On the path to this freedom, I have realized that it is precisely the creative process that requires the most courage – being honest with myself and with my work is the highest value for me. Sometimes, in art, I find myself as a traveler exploring the unknown, but it is precisely this feeling of uncertainty that gives me the strength to constantly test my limits and seek new ways of expression. I strive to leave a part of myself in each of my creations, as I believe that honesty in expression also resonates with others.

Your works often feature rich textures and layered materials like sand or sawdust. What draws you to these tactile elements?

Natural materials: sand, sawdust, as well as waste material, are common companions of my paintings. The elements I

Vlasta Črčinovič Krofič | Mirroring | 2025

incorporate into my works are not merely components of the composition, but carriers of messages and symbols. By observing simple sawdust or a grain of sand, we can discover the interconnection between nature and human creation. Every detail, even the most ordinary, can, in the right context, become a messenger of change, a reminder of responsibility, or even an inspiration for the future. In this way, the paintings gain an additional meaning that goes beyond mere visual experience and invites reflection on our decisions and impact on the world around us.

Many of your paintings evoke inner emotional landscapes. How do you approach translating internal experiences into visual form?

Thoughts and emotions can be expressed with line, color, and surface. Depending on my mood, a picture emerges spontaneously, without me paying particular attention to its form or the process of its creation. Often, I choose colors intuitively, guided only by the feelings I carry within me. Lines can be gentle or sharp, depending on the depth of emotions, while surfaces sometimes emphasize a sense of space or anxiety. Each of my pictures reflects the moment in which I created it and the unique energy it sparked. Sometimes I see it in dreams before it finds its place on the artistic medium, because it is a reflection of a story I experienced or recreated during an event that moved me so much that I had to translate it into the visual language.

The use of abstract structures and fragmented lines appears frequently in your work. What role does structure play in your compositions?

The structure has a strong expressive power, and that of various elements such as personal emotions. It is a reflection of the "weight" of life, an attitude toward social events, toward well-being, as well as toward living and non-living nature. Art reflects the state of society. This is an endless game of possibilities and opportunities. My thoughts and feelings materialize.
During creation, I pause and listen to the language of materials, which themselves dictate the flow of the image – the roughness of stone brings a sense of solidity, while fragile sawdust signals the beginning of something new, a cycle of decay and growth. Packaging, once intended solely for protection and transport, in the artistic process gains new life and an elevated role: it becomes a bearer of messages about responsibility and coexistence with nature. I intertwine all of this with color and line to offer observers a space for reflection on the continuous transformation of the world.

In pieces like the ones presented, there is a strong contrast between chaos and control. Is this tension intentional?

Despite apparent chaos, order prevails in my paintings. In every jumble, I find a sequence, a meaning, a boundary of the story told by colors, shapes, drawn lines, and the materials used. My abstractions are not the result of conscious work, but an unconscious search for balance among all the visual elements and materials employed.
My creation is often connected to inner experiences and personal reflections, which I transform into a visual language. Each painting is a reflection of my thoughts and feelings at a particular moment, giving it a unique atmosphere and character. That is why my paintings are full of hidden meanings that each viewer can understand in their own way. Each painting is like a dialogue that I have with myself, but at the same time I offer it to others so they can seek their own meanings and emotions in it. It is this unpredictability of responses that inspires me and drives me forward, as I repeatedly prove that art is not only a reflection but also a source of new possibilities for self-exploration and conversation with the audience.
An anecdote:
In 2025, I exhibited abstract paintings at an exhibition entitled 'Dream Catcher'. Visitors to the exhibition connect with a painting when they find something of their own in it. At this exhibition, a man stopped in front of one of my paintings and found exactly that – my story – within it. It was incredible. I felt as if he had completely exposed me, as if he had read my mind.

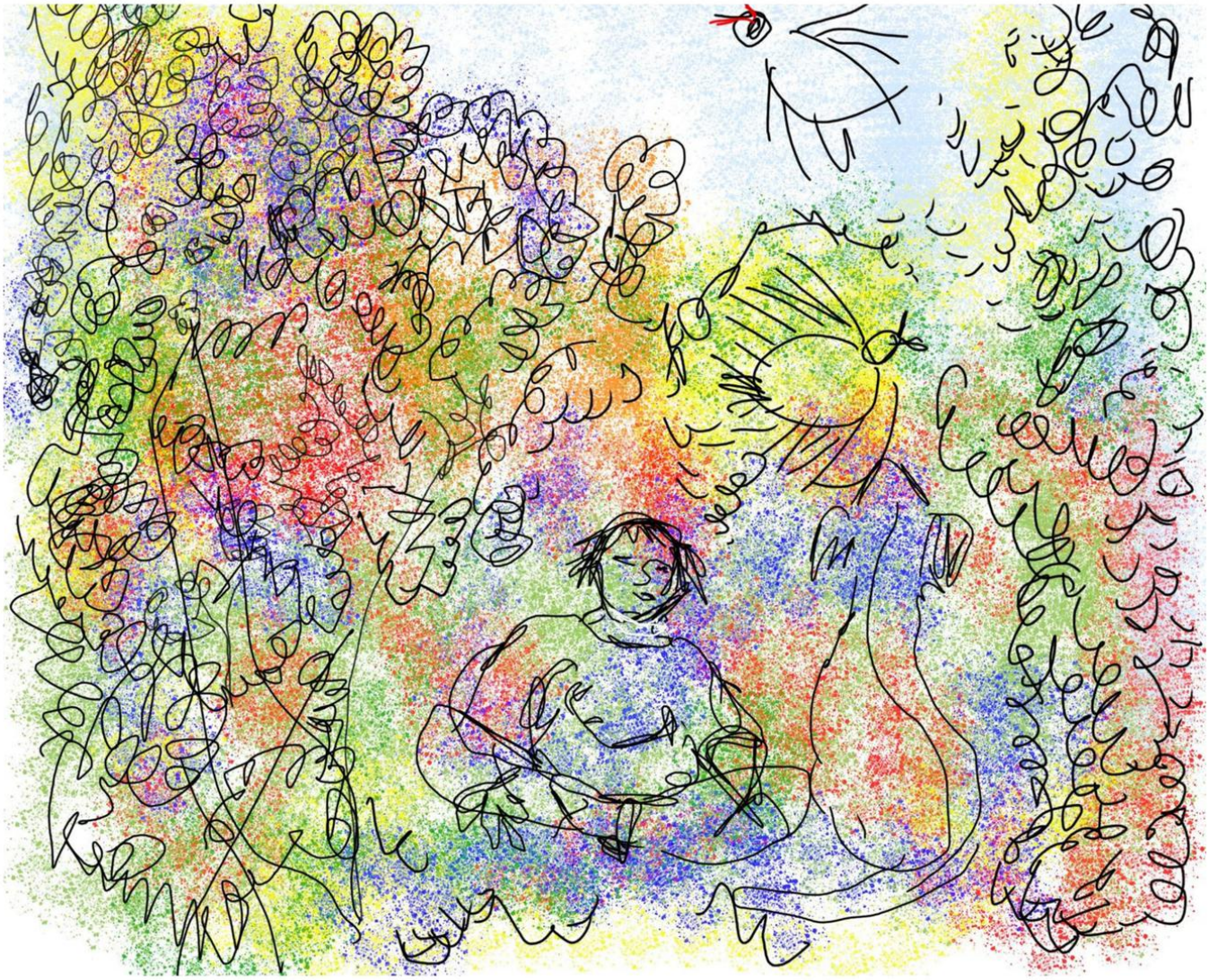
As a member of international art groups, how has collaboration or community shaped your artistic development?

Participation in international artistic circles is certainly reflected in my artistic expression. When in contact with artists coming from different cultural backgrounds, you unconsciously absorb what has moved you, what has caught your attention, what is interesting, different, unusual, beautiful, fresh...
In this way, my artistic expression constantly transforms, as it is exposed to dialogue between various artistic approaches and techniques. This very diversity stimulates creativity and opens new paths of exploration, where every influence is just a small pebble in the mosaic of personal artistic identity. Often these experiences encourage thinking beyond established boundaries, which is particularly valuable in art.

Eva Hartman

Born in Sweden. Exhibitions in Israel where I live and abroad. Visual storyteller; whimsical, using a few lines to express a situation and feelings.

Project Statement
I am trying to convey feelings and situations with a few lines. I use ink pens,acrylic felt pens, watercolors, watersoluble pencils. In my digital drawings I attemp to achieve similar effects.



Leah Larisa Bunshaft - Dizlarka

Your project "Fragile Beginnings" is rooted in your own experience of late and complicated pregnancy. At what moment did you realize that this personal journey needed to become an art project?

I think the realization came gradually. At first, I was simply trying to cope with what I was going through. It was an intense and often overwhelming experience, both physically and emotionally. At some point I noticed that I was already thinking in images, translating sensations into visual metaphors. The moment I understood that these feelings were too complex to remain private, and that they resonate with so many other women, I knew it had to become a project.

Leah Larisa Bunshaft - Dizlarka | Soft Echo | 2025

Many of your works combine soft, domestic, or intimate materials with harsh visual symbols. How do you choose the materials that best convey the emotional tension between strength and fragility?

Materials come to me through association. I start from a feeling or an idea, and then I look for a physical form that already carries a similar emotional charge. Soft materials like textiles or baby clothing hold warmth, care, and intimacy. Concrete, glass, or sharp elements bring weight, tension, and even violence. When they are combined, they begin to speak to each other. This contrast allows me to express how fragile and strong we can be at the same time.

Your biography includes childhood trauma, migration, and dramatic changes of cultural environments. How do these personal histories inform the emotional landscape of "Fragile Beginnings"?

They shape it deeply, even when not directly visible. Growing up in unstable environments and moving between countries created a constant feeling of uncertainty and vulnerability. This sense of instability is something I carry with me, and it naturally enters my work. In "Fragile Beginnings," the creation of new life exists alongside this awareness of how fragile and unpredictable the world can be. This realisation wasn't

Leah Larisa Bunshaft - Dizlarka | Not Mine Anymore | 2025

some kind of philosophical abstraction... For me, it was very real, because this project was taking shape during two conflicts (between Russia and Ukraine, and between Israel and Gaza), and it had a direct impact on our family, as it affected both me and my relatives.

Motherhood is often idealized, yet your project acknowledges its complexity - fear, loss, transformation. What emotions were the most difficult for you to translate into visual language?

Ambivalence was the most difficult. The coexistence of opposite emotions at the same time. Love and fear, tenderness and exhaustion, joy and a sense of loss. It is hard to represent something that is not one feeling but many conflicting ones. I was trying to find forms that could hold this tension without simplifying it. And perhaps also a sense of hopelessness and endlessness. At times, in her desire to care for her child, a mother simply exhausts herself and ends up in a difficult state. These are very trying moments that are hard to explain to someone who hasn't been through the experience.

In several pieces you integrate objects associated with care - pacifiers, baby clothes, swaddles. What role do these physical artifacts play in preserving memory and shaping narrative?

These objects are carriers of memory. They are deeply personal but also universally recognizable. When I use them in my work, they bring real life into the piece. They hold traces of touch, time, and everyday rituals. They help me build a narrative that is both intimate and shared, something that others can emotionally connect to.

You often work across painting, collage, sculpture, textiles, and mixed media. How do you decide which medium a particular story or emotion requires?

The idea always comes first. Then I ask myself what form can express it most honestly. Some emotions need physical presence and weight, so they become sculpture or installation. Others are more about flow, rhythm, or fragmentation, and they find their way into drawing or photography. I see each medium as a language, and I choose the one that can say what I need without losing complexity.

Your pieces explore both individual vulnerability and collective female experience. In what ways did conversations with other women influence the development of the project?

They were essential. Hearing other women's stories made me realize how shared these experiences are, even though they are often kept private. These conversations expanded the project beyond my own story. They added layers, voices, and perspectives. In a way, the project became a space where many experiences could exist together. I have already presented the project in an online exhibition on Artsy, but I continue searching for the right curator and physical space to realize it as a solo show. Although this work is deeply personal and intimate, I feel a strong need to share it with a wider audience. I hope it can offer support and recognition to women, and also open a space of understanding for those who have not lived this experience themselves but wish to come closer to it.

Leah Larisa Bunshaft - Dizlarka | Game on | 2023

My name is **Natalia.**
I graduated from the P. P. Romanov Art College and from the Saint Petersburg State University of Industrial Technologies and Design, Institute of Decorative and Applied Arts.

Project Statement
I created a painting of a girl in a traditional Even costume. The Evens are a small indigenous people of the North.

Danika Adams

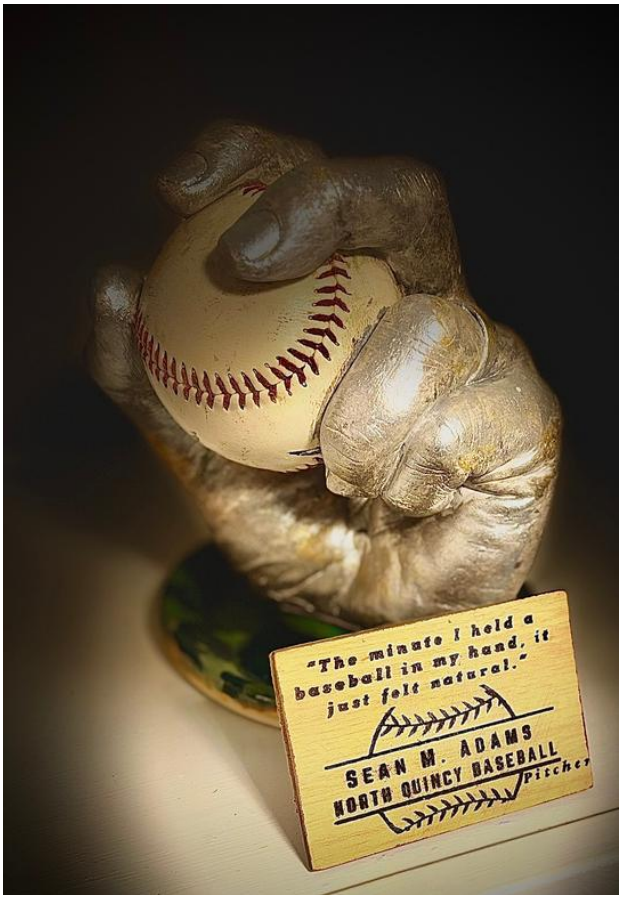
My definition of gold is subjective. One person's gold- precious moments, memories, pieces of themselves- may not be another's, which makes "gold" personal.
My work is unique to myself and to anyone I mold and cast. I like to think each piece has a "gold "signature, which is the narrative and emotion behind the physical art.. I feel the gold is something beneath the skin, beyond the sculpture, within the soul if the piece. The gold is the story that makes it art, not the material.
I don't always realize it at the time; sometimes I just start shaping, and it's what I feel in that moment, the closure or peace I need. My torment, insecurity, love, depression, pain, joy, and philosophies inject themselves into the veins of my work and morph into a shape with emotion and voice.

Your work speaks about capturing "the gold of the present". How do you personally define this "gold", and how do you recognize it in a moment?

Lifecasting preserves the human body with striking realism. What draws you to this technique as a primary medium?

Lifecasting has a double meaning to me:
First, the obvious process of casting parts and freezing them in time is beautiful, physically.
Frost said, "Nothing gold can stay."But with this, it can.
More importantly, lifecasting is a metaphor or a symbol of the gold or the ray of light behind each piece casting and pulsing through the surface, giving it a heartbeat, a life.
The realism lies in both the physical surface and also in the story of why it was chosen to become art.
I started molding and casting the human body when I learned one of my dearest friends had breast cancer and opted for a double mastectomy. I offered to mold her chest so that she could keep that part of her in some form. It was painted gold because she cherished this part of her femininity and had a valuable story to share. She convinced me to dive into this type of art, and so I did.

Many of your works isolate fragments of the body rather than presenting it as a whole. What does fragmentation mean in your artistic language?



The word esemplastic comes to mind when I think of the language and the marriage of my art and poetry. The word is defined as “the ability to shape diverse elements, ideas, or concepts into a unified whole; a powerful unifying imagination or creative vision that harmonizes disparate parts.”
I appreciate that the word isolate was chosen for this question because that is part of how I had felt for years and, as a writer and artist, still do sometimes. I was once completely shattered, but not broken (if that makes sense). I had to work very hard to find and put myself back together after a few traumatizing events Life had thrown at me. I always leaned on writing to survive mentally. Sketching,, drawing, or painting were never my strong suits,, unlike my mother and brother (their discipline and talents are incredible).When I recently discovered this medium, I connected with it as it is a creative avenue in which I can visually express the emotions and stories I need to voice.
I began experimenting on my own body parts in the art studio my husband built for me in between writing poetry and a novel. This developed into taking these pieces of myself and combining them with the tornado of words that spin inside my mind. I created this bizarre thematic collection, a marriage of my words and sculptures, which shares a story of being shattered and feeling puzzled with the “why” something can break you and the “how” to pick up pieces of yourself then become whole again.I discovered a warped beauty and a humble pride in the fragmenting, isolation, and “re-piecing” of oneself.I appreciate the symbolism in the art:. You can display yourself anyway you want knowing every piece of a person holds a valuable truth and a strength we sometimes don’t realize.

You combine sculpture with text, poetry, and narrative. Which comes first in your process - the image or the words?

Oddly enough, neither the words nor the visuals come first. I think the art is the result of static web of emotions I carry that merge the narrative and the poetry and the visuals simultaneously.

Your pieces often feel both intimate and confrontational. How do you balance vulnerability and tension in your work?

Thank you- I am humbled for this to be noted in my work. I always found these two elements the pulse of art, for it is not art without a message and a reaction to it.
Ironically, Accidentally and naturally is my answer.
The intimacy is unquestionably a product of my emotions. Vulnerability is frightening, but it is also beautiful. There is a respect in sharing the “ugly” and exposing weakness and flaws, especially to the world. But there is value for the artist to expose this and for the audience to understand or relate to it.
I think any confrontation reflected in art or literature is in the eye of the beholder. My philosophies and perspectives unravel as I createI , and I would not expect everyone to agree or understand. But making a statement through art that has a voice, emphasizes a message, and sparks emotion fosters critical thinking. As teacher, mother, and artist, I find this to be of great value as well. .
Art is not art, in my opinion, without some confrontation or intimacy.

How does your work change when it is created as a commissioned piece (for families or athletes) versus conceptual artwork?

Creating a piece for others is based what they want in the “surface” of the piece. However, I hope that my signature of any creation (the narrative and the emotion behind it) shines through as well. With my own work, a lot of it is based on personal experiences. Many of my favorite pieces were, I have to admit, mistakes and accidents formed into the art you see now. And that is where the simultaneous marriage of words and visual elements evolve.

What do you hope remains with the viewer after encountering your work - an image, a feeling, or a question?

I hope that the viewers left with questions and curiosity, and an introspective need to reflect on themselves or the world around them. I hope that they are left with an interpretation, even if it’s not the story I intended. I think art should not be a one-dimensional experience, but I believe it should be a personal multifaceted rabbit hole, reflection-upon- reflection-upon-reflection (Escher-like) conundrum of an experience that drives them to continue thinking and questioning. A little bit of a shock factor is important as well because that is what brings to light the voice behind it all. I want my audience to connect with it, wonder about it, be angry with it, be inspired by it, and be puzzled until they find it a piece of their own lives, even if just for a few moments.

Jo-Ann Fredericks is a master's student in Architecture at the University of Johannesburg whose thesis explores Johannesburg's spatial scars, remnants of political, social, and historical forces embedded in the city's built form. She brings a broad and varied background to her work, with experience ranging from social housing and small-scale residential design to adaptive reuse projects. Her professional portfolio includes competition entries and government-led initiatives that engage the intersections of policy, history, and the built environment. This practical foundation informs her current visual practice, where architectural thinking, material layering, and spatial narrative come together to reimagine the city's most contested spaces. During her master's year, she focuses on the political remnants of architecture and their impact on society, seeking ways to reimagine and remedy these legacies. Through surrealism and collage, Jo-Ann crafts narratives that navigate the tension between aspiration and structural restraint, offering both critique and possibility within Johannesburg's contested urban landscapes.

Project Statement

Kamva's Journey: Between Restraint and Aspiration

The characters in this work originate from Isaac Zavale's painting of the MTN Noord Taxi Rank in Johannesburg's CBD, with Kamva's narrative born from collective assumptions within the artist's creative circle. Set in 1990, during apartheid, the story follows his movement through contentious spaces, encounters with equally contentious figures, and moments of dissociation along the way.

Kamva's world begins in the dense single-story homes of Tembisa, where closeness fosters both community and confinement. Just beyond lies the economic hub, its double-story buildings watched over by officials. In this space, Kamva feels the weight of expectation and the constant gaze of authority.

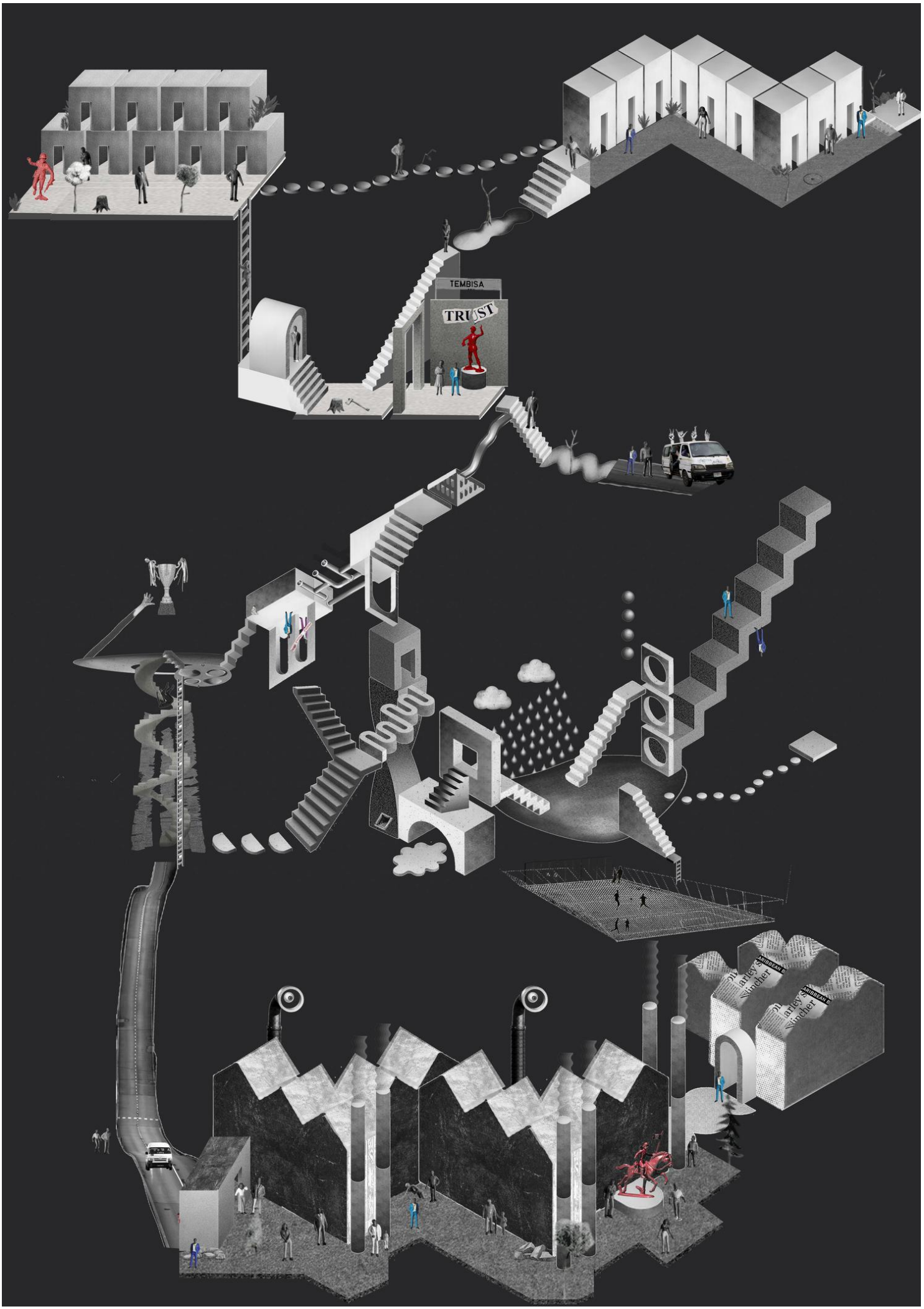
When he steps into the dreamscape, reality bends. Rain falls upward, gravity shifts, and staircases lead to nowhere. This surreal realm mirrors his inner conflict, a push and pull between the freedom he longs for and the forces that keep him tethered. It is a space of both flight and limitation, offering glimpses of escape without release.

Johannesburg's towering CBD heightens the sense of control. His school, though a place of structure, is locked behind its own barriers. The soccer field becomes a brief sanctuary where ambition feels possible, yet even here, progress requires persistence against both physical and unseen obstacles.

Returning to the dreamscape, Kamva confronts his reflection. His suit, once vibrant with promise, now holds a deeper purple, touched by the pressures he cannot ignore. The blurred line between who he is and who he is expected to be forces him to question the stability of his identity. By day's end, the grey-purple of his suit speaks of fatigue and the toll of expectation. Still, he moves forward, searching for meaning, chasing his dreams, and holding on to himself in a world intent on defining him

Methodology

This visual narrative combines hand-crafted and digital collage, elements of copper plate printing, and surrealist interventions. Collages build layered, three-dimensional perspectives, drawing the viewer into both the physical and psychological spaces Kamva inhabits. Digital manipulation allows for precise control of saturation, using colour shifts to signify emotional transitions and to contrast the fluidity of the dreamscape with the rigidity of the Central Business District. Surrealist elements bend reality, distorting scale, perspective, and gravity to reveal the tension between freedom and control. Through these techniques, the work invites viewers to navigate Kamva's world as both a tangible environment and a state of mind.



Jo-Ann Fredericks | Kamva's Journey

Daniel Roberts

Daniel Roberts | Step Four Cover

Just through feeling. Intuition. When I start the making process of my magazines, I try to just have a honest conversation with myself about what I'm feeling, what emotions are going through my body and mind. Once I do that, and have a steady understanding of myself, it just feels like the work follows. When I'm happy, inherently my work just follows that without me having to do or think anything in particular. I try to not overcomplicate the process.

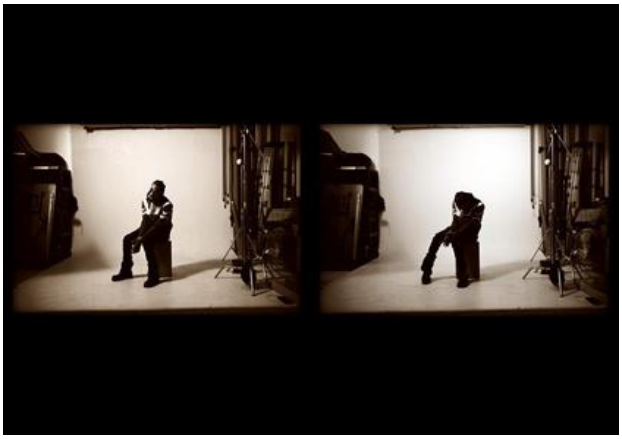
In STEP FOUR, you explore the idea of starting over. What does 'starting over' mean to you personally at this stage of your life?

It means following what I love, no matter what. I've always since I could remember had a strong passion towards creating art. It's never not been a part of my life. And as I grew older, graphic design became the main hobby for me. Once I started college, me and my friend D'Andre picked up photography as an additional hobby. I loved it, and still have such an admiration for that time in my life. But right now, and starting with Step Four, I wanted to bring back my focus on graphic design work, but also bring in new skills and hobbies, such as directing, videography and video editing. To me, art is so free flowing. An artist can never stay in one box, and should be allowed to swap between crafts as freely as they like. But in the eyes of the world, and getting work, jobs etc. that's not the case. It's like starting over. Those were the feelings I got when pursuing these new interests. It was like " Okay you did really well in photography, but let's take those achievements away, who are you now?".

The magazine combines photography, 3D animation, poetry, and illustration. How do you approach blending these disciplines into one cohesive narrative?

A big part of it would be through a mutual understanding of

Your work is rooted in expressing personal emotions without explicitly naming them. How do you decide when a piece successfully communicates a feeling without words?



Daniel Roberts | Combine

Daniel Roberts | Nat photograph

the task at hand. I collaborate a lot with various different artists and people on these magazines, and I'm so grateful for them all! But what I like to do is if I am mixing all of these elements into a cohesive narrative, I like to try and put them into my shoes as much as possible, but still giving them the freedom to be their own artist. I would usually send people a page of just my thoughts and feelings at the time, a colour scheme to stick towards, show them pages already done for the magazine, any films, videos, books etc. I was into it at the time. Then usually it all connects and works out. If the work is all made with the same intention, then it doesn't matter what the medium is, it'll be cohesive.

Your visual language leans toward noir aesthetics. What draws you to darkness, grit, and horror as tools for storytelling?

I love making people feel uncomfortable through art. I love horror films and love how they can make me and so many others feel uncomfortable! At the time of making this magazine, I was watching a lot of new horror films and was making art inspired by that. The feeling of starting over is also quite uncomfortable, so merging the two was natural as there was a common ground. The magazine quickly became a noir, horror film inspired piece.

How has British culture specifically influenced your artistic voice and the atmosphere in your work?

It's influenced every aspect of my work, and will do for the rest of my life! I am not shy to show the fact that I love the UK. I love London. I loved Queen Elizabeth. It's hard to say exactly what being from London has done to my work, but growing up here is such a special thing and stays with you forever. It's hard to describe, and I don't think anyone who didn't grow up here would get it. I've never visited a place like this before. London will always come with me in everything I do.

The images feel cinematic and staged, almost like fragments of a larger film. Do you think in sequences when creating your work?

Yes 100%. It's a very particular process. I'm super intentional with what makes the cut and what doesn't. For Step Four I made around 200-300 images for the magazine. Then I had to whittle it down all the way to 60. So in a sense it's similar to how films will shoot hours and hours of footage, but the film will be 1hr30mins. You have to do everything that comes to mind, then cut it into precise sequences that still tell the narrative you need.

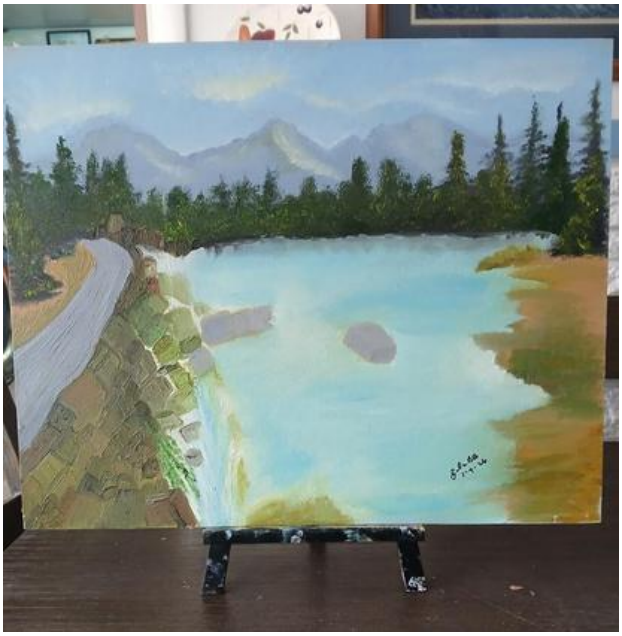
What challenges did you face while creating STEP FOUR, and how did they shape the final result?

There were so many challenges while creating this zine. I feel like I have never worked so hard in my life on a project before. I was so dedicated to creating such a new experience that I had to learn softwares from scratch. I had to learn how to draw again. I had to learn to paint. It was a long process. Also, stripping colour away from my work was a challenge. I usually love to tell stories with colour, but then I was at a point where I wanted to scrap that, and now my biggest weapon is gone. It took time to understand how to portray a constant flowing narrative that didn't feel restricted due to its colour limitations. Every page had to feel unique, but also only had three colours. It was hard. Finding that middle ground was humbling. All of it leads to a great experience.

Zoe Bird

Can you tell us about your early encounter with art and how it shaped your creative path?

When I was about 5 years old, an older girl named Pearly Mae was drawing on a piece of paper, and I wanted to know how she did it. After she showed me, I started drawing. My first drawing at school was an impressive map of America.



You mentioned that art has been a way to escape what does this "escape" mean to you today?

The "escape," means away from stress. It helps me to escape the pressure of this life, a world away from all the noise, it quiets your mind from the news, social media, and even family issues. I'm in a world of relaxation and creativity.

Your Geisha painting is based on an original piece.How do you approach transforming someone else's work into your own artistic vision?

My sister-in-law who gave me the frame with the Trellis and quotes inside of it wonder if I could use this. I wasn't really like it at first until I took it out of the frame. It almost looked like the Trellis had been transformed on the cardboard, and the quotes were a transformed as well, still this the artist name was on it. I took her original Skelton of the Trellis and made them my own by painting flowers on it, and made some of the leaves bigger. The vines were already perfect on the canvas, it needed something more. I painted over the quotes, still thinking what will I do with this. I thought about Painting a 19th Century woman which would have been fitting in a garden as I kept pondering about it, I came up with the idea of a Geisha girl.

What inspired you to focus on the Geisha figure, what does she represent personally?

When I thought about the Geisha it took me back to the movie Shogun, Crouching Tiger-The Geisha and Madam. I like the way they look and the Kyoto they wear, looking like comfort robes. I guess in a small way of three of my Asia Acquaintance are of Chinese descend and each year I'm invited to the Chinese New Year. I do recognize colors and beauty of it, and not a part of the Chinese culture. Japanese

culture tea, music, dance serving in Kyoto, and the Geisha is written with Chines characters. The profession originated in Japan. I didn't know this. I learned to separate the connecting of medieval terms and concentrate on the traditional Japanese culture, embodying elegance, discipline and refined artistic skill.

You kept the original artist's name alongside your-own what is your perspective or authorship and artistic reinterpretation?

I saw the artist as an artist who wanted to create something, but maybe had conflicting thought on what to do with those lovely trellis, and decided to put an inspiration quote instead of a picture and frame it, so I enhance what I thought she was thinking of what she could have done there, and made her dream of the trellis come alive in a garden with a beauty woman enjoying it. I allowed myself to supersede her vision and finishing the art piece. My creation of a lovely garden filled with peace and harmony with a beauty geisha girl. I left traces of the artist behind with or Skelton trellis, and her name as the original artist of the trellis; by painting flowers on the trellis, and greenery behind the girl, which hides the beautiful quotes had written.

What do you hope viewers feel or reflect on when they see your work?

I hope they will see a world that the astronaut saw as they went to the dark side of the moon in awes. A sense of people, a beautiful spiritual creation that man did not create, and it goes beyond our understanding. We all live on this one planet, we all are connected even we think we are not, we all are a part of this big beautiful creation-one world. We all want Peace. We all want to be love. The commonality we share is that we all are human.

Valentin Metelev

Born in the Kirov region in 1956, he is a graduate of the Vyatka Art College named after A.A. Rylov. He is a contemporary artist working in abstract painting and installations. His solo exhibitions have been held in the Kirov and Moscow regions, and his works are also held in private collections in Russia and abroad.

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