MARCH 2026
NO. 50
VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

— *Intro*

Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello Dear Reader,

You are holding the 50th issue of our magazine, and it is truly gratifying to see that it continues to captivate its audience while allowing us to keep working toward giving as many artists as possible the visibility they deserve.

In this issue, we have once again brought together works in a wide range of styles, highlighting the diversity of artistic tools available for expressing ideas and emotions. Whether through photography or bold abstract brushstrokes, each work conveys a message and captures a distinct mood that resonates with the viewer. There is something deeply universal in this experience - something that allows us all to connect through a shared love of art.

As always, more than 100 pages await you, filled with art from every corner of the world.

Enjoy the reading!

On the Front Cover:
Kübra Köprülüoğlu Aşanlı
Frida Kahlo

On the Back Cover:
Yasen Ivanov
Desert Silhouette
2025

ISSN 3051-2352
9 773051 235004

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

Inna Chesniuk

Your works balance botanical accuracy with emotional and poetic expression. How do you personally define this balance in your practice?

Personally, I prefer not to draw an object that doesn't have any idea or reference behind it. Because I truly believe there is a story behind each interesting project and drawing is a good tool to get visualized what is hidden behind. Not to sound self-praising when it comes to picking up a drawing object I almost always see it either in the shape of a recognizable creature, or as a reference to different notions that appeal to people's emotions. For instance, in the particular shape of petals, directions of branches or leaves I can spot the concept of love, friendship, or them conducting some social message, i.e. visualization of human loneliness inside urban jungle, teamwork, coupling and so on. Or a plant that visibly resembles a facial expression, movement or action. Or an existing animal or insect, or even mythological creature. But botanical or animalistic accuracy is crucial, since my drawing technique is realistic and detailed, there is no room for a mistake here.

Inna Chesniuk | Dogrose heart | 2025

You often focus on imperfections, textures, and complex plant structures. What attracts you to these "non-ideal" details in nature?

I believe my dedication to focusing on "non-ideal' detail in nature has been shaped by the impact of Japanese beauty appreciation , since one of my majors at university was Japanese culture, art and literature. As you probably know, such an approach is deeply rooted in a worldview that emphasizes harmony, imperfection and impermanence. The idea is to find beauty in its fleeting, natural state. Moreover, I treat these visual imperfections not as disadvantage but as potential to reveal the character of an object. Everybody is able to appreciate a visually ideal object, it is easy to spot and to work with. But sometimes it happens there is no spice in that pure beauty, no character behind. Yeah it is nice, beautiful, might even be perfect and easy to like but, at the same time, plain and dull. This hidden complexity is what I'm usually focused on, and it makes me satisfied and happy when I can achieve the concept.

You work with colored pencils, pastel pencils, soft pastels, and mixed media. How do you decide which medium best suits a particular subject or story?

I have been constantly experimenting with different mediums, pigments and drawing surfaces. Some experiments have been quite successful, some not as such. But this practical knowledge usually helps to distinguish which medium to use or which paper to give the preference to, because both your drawing experience and your intuition predict the outcome. Also, the particular choice of medium

depends much on the drawing task given. For example, if I need to depict a highly detailed small scaled botanical object I know in advance I will need non-abrasive smooth paper and this or that set of pencils, because only this set of tools gives the needed visual representation. On occasion there had been no similar drawing experience, but you can still somehow feel the medium to choose, sort of subconscious choice.

Many of your works feel almost like portraits of plants. Do you approach botanical subjects in a similar way to portraying living characters?

Yes, of course. After having chosen the object I usually do pedantic and detailed research on the plant, study its structure, dimensions, characteristics, because it is always outstanding accuracy and recognizability that matters. Botanical accuracy is a key element of professional presentation, your representation must be accurate, consistent and technically sound.

Humor appears subtly in your art, even when the subject is fragile or melancholic. Why is humor important to you in botanical and wildlife art?

I highly appreciate a good sense of humor in all spheres of life, it is no doubt an essential life skill. Basically, it is a huge emotional, cognitive and social resource that helps individuals navigate the complexities of life. I believe it stirs non-liner thinking, mirroring cognitive processes of creative thinking. Adding a subtle pinch of humor into art I think helps to build an emotional bond of a spectator and a drawn story told. All our memories of something good or bad happened are mostly about emotions, no matter if they are positive or negative. So, a drawing that has a line of humor implemented becomes sort of an intelligent companion, like a good book,

Inna Chesniuk | Malus Paradise | 2025

who doesn't judge you but tells a story you might find touching and appealing to your inner world.

Your practice combines scientific accuracy with storytelling. How much research goes into a single artwork before you begin drawing?

I would say it mostly happens vice versa, the way an artwork lines up with the story. Sometimes I have a subject I am thinking about, or a situation/ case that had had an impact on me, not having the concrete idea of visual representation. And then I suddenly bump into a plant, an animal or insect, or even a still life scene, and get a strike – this is it! This is exactly what I have been thinking about, have read or watched. And you dress your idea up in a visual realistic object. Or sometimes it happens in totally the opposite way – you spot the object and it clicks ang brings up a line of memories, emotions or background information, and you know exactly what kind of story you are going to tell. But, if there is a custom artwork related to a particular topic, I usually do thorough research to get acquainted with it as much as I can, to see it from different angles.

What do you hope viewers feel or discover when they spend time with your artworks?

I genuinely hope my art can draw people's attention towards nature's beauty and uniqueness, bringing up good personal memories and positive emotions. Some people might like technical skills, some might admire creativity or meticulousness that lies behind each work performed, some get surprised when they discover the artworks are human made drawings. Quite often I hear feedback that my art inspired people to start drawing with pencils, and it makes me really happy, because being able to create or comprehend art enriches you significantly, makes you kinder, wiser and more thoughtful.

Inna Chesniuk | Dried lotus seedpods | 2025

Edmundo Sanz-Gadea

A little bit of history... (very brief)
After spending several years at the Madrid School of Architecture, I began working in advertising in 1988... as an illustrator and art director. Subsequently, I developed my professional career in design, direct marketing, and advertising agencies as a creative and art director. Since 2001, I have broadened my scope of work to include the virtual and internet world. However, my greatest passion has always been painting, a facet I have combined with my work as a designer.
Currently, I dedicate all my time, enthusiasm, and effort to painting. Each painting is, for me, a new world in which to experiment with techniques, colors, textures...

Edmundo Sanz-Gadea | Mechanical Lesson (Havana)

Edmundo Sanz-Gadea | Cabo de Huertas

Edmundo Sanz-Gadea | If You Want, Tomorrow Can Be a Better Day

Yucen Liu

Yucen Liu | Assertized Life

Your practice often describes survival as a "protocolized" and "executable" process. What first led you to approach life through the lens of systems and infrastructures rather than individual narratives?

I wouldn't say my work is purely macro or systemic. Rather, I use a series of works to conduct thought experiments — to explore what might happen if the world we inhabit operated under entirely different conditions. In those speculative environments, how would the stories, individuals, and spiritual questions explored by literary traditions and contemporary cultural practitioners transform? To stage such experiments, I need to construct a framework — a scenario, a world-view — within which these possibilities can unfold. My works often function as fragments of that exploration. Some propositions may feel unstable or even unresolved, but they represent stages in the development of these imagined systems. Through this process, I aim to open alternative perspectives rather than to fix a singular narrative.

In your statement, you mention weakening individual subjectivity while foregrounding systems as agents of judgment and maintenance. Do you see this as a critique, a reflection, or an inevitable condition of contemporary life?

Yucen Liu | Gothitic

As I mentioned earlier, my intention is not to impose a critique, but to explore possibilities that extend beyond immediate reality. I prefer to leave the authority of judgment to the viewer. My role is to construct and present a condition — one that may reflect aspects of contemporary life to varying degrees. Whether it functions as critique, reflection, or inevitability depends on how the audience connects the presented system to their own lived experience.

Medical technologies and life-support devices appear repeatedly in your work. Is your engagement with these systems primarily conceptual, personal, or both?

My engagement with medical technologies operates on both conceptual and personal levels. Conceptually, these systems represent structured mechanisms of care, control, and survival — frameworks that regulate bodies and define thresholds of life. At the same time, my interest is shaped by lived observations and experiences, both within my immediate surroundings and in broader social contexts. These encounters inevitably inform the way I approach such materials, allowing the work to move between abstraction and embodied reality.

In Meterial (2023), you combine Western medical equipment with residues of traditional Chinese medicine that entered your own body. How does this merging of personal bodily history and institutional apparatus shape the meaning of the work?

In Meterial, the merging of Western medical apparatus with

Yucen Liu | Candle system

residues of traditional Chinese medicine that once entered my own body collapses the distance between the institutional and the intimate. The work turns medical systems into something deeply personal—no longer abstract structures of authority, but materials that have physically passed through me.
By solidifying over 1,000 doses of herbal residues into a geological base, I treat my body as an archive. The institutional apparatus becomes a vertical, almost surgical presence, while the sedimented medicine below acts as a record of lived vulnerability. The sculpture therefore stages a tension: between control and submission, visibility and internal experience, system and memory. In this way, the work is not only about medical anxiety, but about reclaiming agency—transforming the clinical gaze into a material language rooted in my own bodily history.

Many of your works resemble prototypes or research devices. Do you see yourself more as an artist, a researcher, or an engineer of critical systems?

I see myself primarily as an artist and a researcher.
The works may resemble prototypes or research devices, but they are not designed to solve problems in a technical sense. Instead, they function as speculative structures — ways of testing ideas, questioning systems, and examining how bodies, memories, and institutions interact.My practice is research-driven in the sense that it involves investigation, material experimentation, and conceptual framing. However, the outcome is not data or efficiency, but experience and reflection. I'm interested in constructing situations where critical thinking can be felt physically and emotionally.So while there is a structural or systemic logic in the work, it ultimately remains grounded in artistic inquiry rather than engineering.

How does studying at University of the Arts London influence your research-based methodology and system-oriented thinking?

In my journey, the influence was not only from UAL as an institution, but also from the city and the broader social environment in which it exists. Before coming to UAL, my training was rooted in relatively traditional approaches to form and visual construction. At UAL, although my course was largely design-based, it encouraged me to move beyond formal concerns and instead ground my practice in questions and systematic thinking. What shifted most significantly was not simply how to propose a question, but why I should propose it in the first place — and what kind of question is truly worth asking. That emphasis on critical positioning and structural inquiry played an important role in shaping my research-oriented and system-based methodology.

Your work often evokes anxiety, control, and vulnerability. Do you aim for an emotional response from viewers, or are you more interested in cognitive reflection?

I don't deny that emotion is present in the work. Many of the forms and materials I choose inevitably carry a certain intensity, which can trigger visceral responses. However, at the origin of each project, my motivation tends to be conceptual and investigative rather than emotional. I am interested in constructing frameworks of inquiry. That said, I increasingly see emotional resonance as an extension of the work — a way for it to unfold beyond its conceptual structure. Moving forward, I would like to explore more deliberately how emotional response can coexist with, and even deepen, cognitive reflection within my practice.

Yucen Liu | Meterial

Mariia Leonenko

I have loved art since childhood — painting, reading, dancing, and playing music. Although I hold two Master's degrees in architecture, creative expression has always been central to who I am. Guitar reflects my inner emotions, drawing translates my thoughts into images, and writing allows me to share them openly.
I work across different materials and techniques, but I am increasingly focused on mixed media — especially combining digital photography with drawing to create layered compositions. I am fascinated by capturing real, unfiltered moments through the camera and then reinterpreting them through line, colour, and texture. This dialogue between reality and imagination allows me to reshape what is seen and reveal what is felt.
For me, art is a way of connection — a quiet reminder to slow down, notice details, and rediscover inner strength.

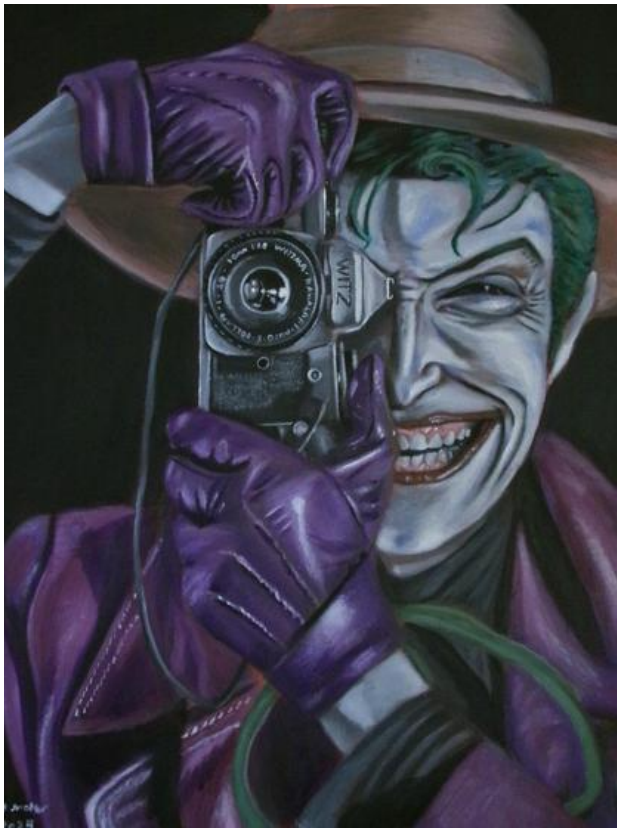
Project Statement
This project explores how we look — and what we truly see.
Through the combination of digital photography and drawing, I investigate what captures our attention first: the overall image or the subtle details hidden within it. Do we, as viewers, genuinely observe the complexity of a moment, a person, or a place? Or do we stop at the surface, satisfied with the general impression?
By layering drawn elements onto photographs, I intentionally disrupt the hierarchy of perception. Certain details are emphasised, others obscured. Lines may guide the eye toward overlooked fragments; textures may question what is central and what is peripheral. The work becomes a visual experiment — a way of testing how attention shifts and whether we are willing to slow down enough to notice.
A second question within this research concerns understanding. Can a single image — whether a photograph or a drawing — fully communicate the complexity of personality or atmosphere? Or does true understanding require accumulation: fragments, annotations, repetitions, collages, and multiple perspectives? Perhaps identity and place cannot be reduced to one frame, but must be constructed from layered information, much like memory itself.
Through mixed media compositions, I aim to reveal how perception operates — not only visually, but psychologically. The viewer becomes an active participant, deciding what to focus on, what to ignore, and how much effort to invest in seeing beyond the obvious.
This project does not provide answers. Instead, it invites reflection on attention, complexity, and the quiet details that shape meaning.

Mariia Leonenko | Chernihiv | 2026

Mariia Leonenko | In the Faces of 120+ | 2025

Amos Monks

You describe yourself as a self-taught painter. How has this independent path shaped your artistic identity?



Being self-taught has shaped my artistic identity in a fundamental way. It forced me to rely on instinct and persistence rather than a prescribed method. I had to learn difficult lessons on my own — through trial, error, and a lot of failed attempts — but that process helped me find a voice that feels genuinely mine.
While being self-taught certainly comes with challenges, it also gave me something invaluable: clarity. I know that I make art because I truly love it, not because I was following a structured path or academic expectation.

You mentioned being inspired by comic book artists and Michelangelo as a child. Do you still feel those influences in your current oil paintings?

Yes, though less obviously. Comic books shaped my sense of drama and composition, and Michelangelo gave me an appreciation for anatomy and expressive form. Even if the influence isn't visible on the surface, it's part of my foundation.

Your works often combine surreal, fantastical, and sometimes dark elements.

What attracts you to these themes?

I'm drawn to the surreal because it allows me to explore something human in an indirect way. I like finding vulnerability or emotion within something strange or unsettling.

Many of your portraits have a cinematic intensity and psychological depth. What do you look for when capturing a face?

I'm especially drawn to faces that are difficult to fully read — where you're not entirely sure what's happening behind the eyes. That ambiguity creates tension and invites the viewer to engage more actively with the painting.
Of course, there are exceptions. Sometimes I am going for something very straightforward, but generally I'm interested in character. I look for subtlety — small shifts in expression that suggest an inner world rather than clearly explaining it. I like the idea that a face can hold contradictions: strength and vulnerability, calm and unrest, all at once.

The transition from pencil and pastels to oil painting is significant. What did oils allow you to express that other mediums could not?

Oil paint gives me flexibility — I can rework, remove, or build layers until it feels right. That freedom gives me confidence and allows me to take on more complex subjects with depth and atmosphere.
Knowing that I can rework an area allows me to take greater risks and tackle more complex compositions.

Some of your paintings reference pop culture and iconic characters. How do you reinterpret them through your personal vision?

Sometimes not at all, sometimes it really is a straight forward adaptation.
Other times I (try to) reinterpret them in a way that feels personal rather than nostalgic. It becomes less about the character's public identity and more about their internal state — or even what they represent emotionally.

Your early dream was to create comic books. Do you still see storytelling as central to your art today?

I think of each painting as a single frame from a larger narrative — like a still from a film. Something has happened before this moment, and something will happen after, but the viewer is only given one fragment.

Jessica Ziegler is a New York City based artist whose work centers on uncovering and celebrating the often-overlooked details of the cityscape, transforming mundane views and details into sources of beauty and wonder.

Growing up in a family of artists, she was imbued with a profound appreciation for color, light, form, and structure -- all of which inform her work today. She left a career in technology in 2016 to become a professional artist and studied drawing and painting at the New York Academy of Art, 92NY, and the Art Students League

Her award-winning work has been shown in numerous juried exhibits in The United States, including recent exhibits at the Dacia Gallery, Atlantic Gallery, Salmagundi Gallery and Equity Galleries in New York City. She is a member of the New York Artists Equity Association, the Hudson River Art Collective, and is a Signature Member of the National Association of Women Artists.

Jessica Ziegler | Purple Leaves and Railing | 2024

Jessica Ziegler | Sunlit Leaves and Railing | 2026

Nadezhda Vlasova

Your background includes both restoration and art history. How have these disciplines influenced your own artistic language?

Both fields greatly broaden one's horizons and technical toolkit, allowing for confident work across different media. Art history sharpens visual awareness, provides abundant inspiration, and enhances one's engagement with symbols, imagery, meaning, and the quality of visual language. Restoration, on the other hand, helps to deeply understand the techniques of painting and drawing. It allows you to study in minute detail the methods of the artists whose works you restore — the colors they used, the grounds and canvases they worked on, whether they applied an imprimatura and what kind. No one has the opportunity to examine a painting as thoroughly as a restorer does — not even art historians — because a restorer literally works with all the layers of the artwork.

Nadezhda Vlasova | White Still Life In The Rays Of Dawn | 2026

Having worked for many years as a museum restorer, did close contact with masterpieces change the way you perceive painting and composition?

Yes, absolutely! Beyond what I mentioned about technique, museum restoration means a very deep immersion "in the environment." Just as someone who works in an office spends most of their day there, I went to work in a museum. All my colleagues were restorers and art historians. Everything I saw around me was art, and everything we discussed in one way or another revolved around art. It truly gets "under your skin."

Your works depict everyday scenes — a still life, a puddle, a quiet house by the river. What draws you to ordinary reality as a subject?

Unexpected perspectives. We often perceive life as "ordinary" and gray. But it is not! For example, the still life presented here was originally entirely white — white dishes, white books, a white background, and white drapery. It was a study setup for one of my students. But

Nadezhda Vlasova | Female Figure | 2026

when I came into the studio at dawn, I saw how it was flooded with the rising sun, and I immediately painted a study from which this final work later emerged. There is no white color in the painting at all. Everything is rendered in yellows, oranges, blues, and violets.
Or take the floating house on the river. That day was foggy; I was walking my dog and suddenly had the feeling that I was standing at the edge of the universe, and beyond the riverbank there was nothing — emptiness. I took several photographs that I plan to turn into a series of paintings called "At the Edge of the World." This piece is the first in the series. I believe people often fail to notice how astonishing the world around them is. They try to escape into virtual reality or psychedelia, when all they need to do is look around.

The statement "Life is more interesting!" suggests a deep curiosity about the world. What kinds of moments do you feel are most worth capturing in paint?

Oh, it can be absolutely anything! Even a drop of water on a bottle can sparkle like a diamond. The question is not about the moment itself, but about how you look at it.

Your paintings balance realism with a subtle sense of mood and poetry. How important is atmosphere compared to accuracy?

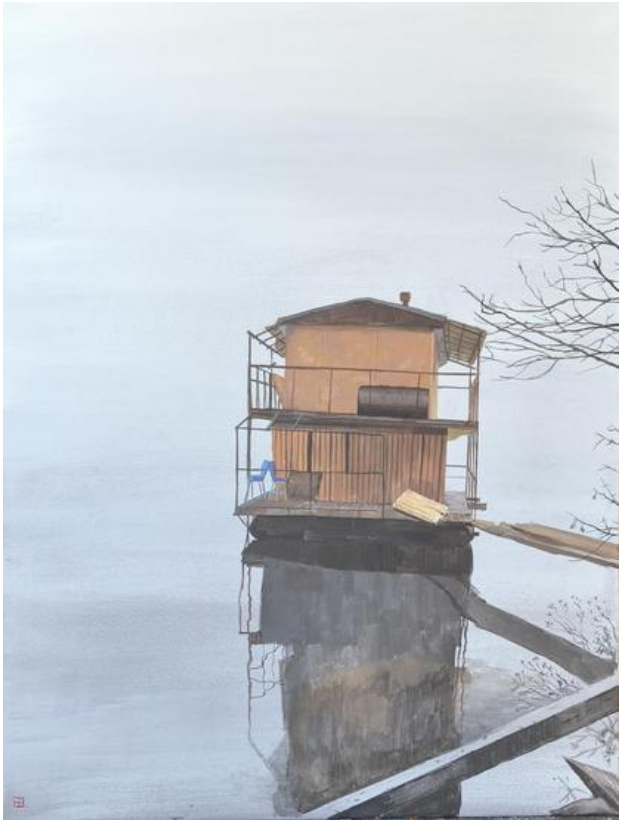
That's a good question! Probably atmosphere is slightly more important. After all, an artist is not a documentarian; they should create a somewhat altered reality. I adore the Dutch and German Renaissance — Memling, Dürer, Jan van Eyck. Their approach feels very close to me. They depicted everyday life while making it ideal at the same time. If it was a teapot, it was polished to a shine without a single dent; if it was fabric, it was richly textured with beautiful folds. I also strive to idealize a real moment while keeping it recognizable.

Color plays a powerful role in your work — from luminous warm interiors to muted foggy landscapes. How do you approach building a color palette?

Each time I build it specifically for the piece. Color strongly conveys mood — it's psychology — so it's important to decide from the start what message I want to communicate. Will it be melancholy, joy, or a burst of energy? The chosen palette depends on that intention.

As a teacher of drawing, painting, and composition, does teaching influence your own creative process?

Oh yes, absolutely! Over the years of teaching, I have realized that education — especially in art — is a never-ending process. I continue to study regularly myself. There are so many media, techniques, and approaches today that it makes no sense to remain focused on just one for a lifetime.
I also learn from my students — discipline, determination, and new ideas. There is an old joke: "I explained the topic to my students for so long that I finally understood it myself." It's very true. By explaining repeatedly, in different ways, demonstrating, studying books, and keeping up with new trends, you gain a much deeper understanding of your subject. In my view, that is what distinguishes a good teacher from a bad one.



Nadezhda Vlasova | Fog On The River | 2025

I'm **Abigail Cariño**, an illustrator and artist based in the Mexican Caribbean.
My practice spans artistic, editorial, and commercial projects.
Integrating the language of the female body with the tropical atmosphere of my everyday life.

Abigail Cariño | With Dressing

ブルネット

YO SOLO QUIERO REMAR Y LLEGAR HASTA DONDE ESTÁS TÚ

Abigail Cariño | Summer August

Kübra Köprülüoğlu Aşanlı

While studying at the Faculty of Fine Arts, I noticed that art history classes barely mentioned female artists. I didn't dwell on this issue much at the time, but I remember it weighing heavily on me. Over the years, I have become increasingly aware of the invisibility of women's labor in various fields. I am a woman myself, and when asked about my profession, I describe myself as a designer and an artist. Yet, in this century, the press and society still refer to us as "female artists." This in itself is a form of othering. No male artist is called a "male artist"; they are simply called "artists," whereas we are presented as exceptions with these labels. I began creating these portraits to challenge this discouraging message and tell women that they can simply be artists.

Your project "Invisible Icons" focuses on women artists who were marginalized in art history. What initially inspired you to begin this series, and how did you select the figures you portray?

Kübra Köprülüoğlu Aşanlı | Eileen Agar

Many of your portraits balance realism with symbolic or contemporary elements. How do you decide which visual language best represents each historical figure?

Before I begin painting an artist, I first rediscover her. I read about her life, I read her words, interviews, and also see her works or listen to them. After this process, I enter a phase where I begin to work intuitively based on the impressions left on me by my research. Sometimes an artist's style or visual world accompanies my portraits, and sometimes my own conception and imagination regarding that artist's emotional state comes into play. Frida's portrait is an example of this. We generally see pain in Frida's own works and photographs taken of her. Yet, when I painted her, I saw a hopeful and slightly mischievous sparkle in her eyes. My own imaginary and conceptual world intersects with reality within these portraits, becoming intertwined. When deciding on the visual world, it is the emotions that remain with me at the end of this research process that guide me in how to

Kübra Köprülüoğlu Aşanlı | Frida Kahlo

construct a visual language and world in the painting. That is why all the portraits have their own unique visual world.

As someone with a background in graphic design and ecological practice, how have these disciplines influenced your approach to portraiture?

Graphic design remains an integral part of my life, and it is a field that I continue to pursue professionally. Consequently, traces of graphic design can be discerned across numerous layers of my visual world, from my perception of color and my color choices to the balance of the compositions I create and my occasional incorporation of text into my work. Ecological practices have also influenced my artistic narrative process in a conceptual sense. From an ecological perspective, we strive to create a world where all living beings are united and the whole benefits —where no one is superior to another. The subjects I choose also contribute to this vision. While my Invisible Icons series focuses on gender equality, my other series, Wisdom Keepers, features portraits of women from indigenous communities and has been in progress for two years. I aim to express the value of their ancient knowledge and inspire viewers to pursue it. All of my subjects stem from my ecological practical experience, and my visual style stems from my background in graphic design.

Your work explores identity, memory, and ecological belonging. How do these themes intersect within the "Invisible Icons" series?

The fact that female artists are still not sufficiently visible in the narrative of art history, and that in the past they were often seen more as muses than artists, relegated to the shadows of the men they were with or loved, or deliberately kept there, is actually a political issue. These unfortunate perspectives, ingrained in our collective memory as women, manifest themselves to varying degrees in different parts of the world in the century we live in. While female identity is ignored in some regions, in other regions that claim to be developed, it continues to be subtly ignored and pushed into the background through functional sanctions such as wage inequality. Therefore, when you delve deeper, you can observe an approach in the Invisible Icons series that involves rebellion, disrupting the established order, making identity visible, and creating a memory in the process. In fact, this is a meticulously woven series. As the portraits and faces multiply over time, I will have created a whole that carries a powerful meaning.

What kind of research process do you undertake before creating a portrait of a historical artist?

It's a kind of tracking process. Books, texts, critical essays, interviews, personal letters if I can find them, following their works, watching any documentaries or films made about them. Researching, reading, watching everything I can find, and listening to any audio recordings if available. When listening to their voices, I'm actually talking about a deep listening state where I pay attention not only to what they say but also to their tone of voice, their emphasis, their silences. All these research fragments are already beginning to build something in my heart and mind.

By revisiting overlooked women artists, you engage with questions of gender and historical narrative. What do you hope contemporary audiences will reconsider about women's place in art history?

I actually have two different aims. The first is for viewers, art critics and historians to look at the issue more objectively and to place these women, who are artists, in their rightful place in art history without othering them as female artists. My second aim is to show that creating an environment where contemporary artists are not marginalised for being women, where they are not expected to produce only feminist art, and where they can be free in their modes of expression, is a form of self-assertion, and to inspire them to see so many artists and think, 'I can do that too.' We don't actually need anyone's approval to show that we are not lesser artists because we are women, or even because we are mothers. We just need to keep creating and insistently declare our presence. I want these portraits to give courage to all women and girls to say this. We are not few. Let them see this.

Your work has been exhibited internationally. How have different cultural contexts shaped the reception of this project?

As I mentioned earlier, women's place varies across different regions, but given that feminist actions are still being organised worldwide, it is clear that we have not yet achieved a global balance in terms of gender equality. Consequently, my work is generally described by viewers as compelling. However, I can also say that I have the longest conversations about the works at exhibitions with women. Because an individual who has not experienced this inequality communicates with the work from a place of intellectual understanding, whereas a woman who has experienced this injustice in different areas of her life, even if she is not an artist, communicates with it from what she feels in her heart.

Franchesca Swartzberg

Franchesca Art is a Colombian artist and artistic decorator, founder of the Neo-Virtualism movement, whose work examines the tension between human presence and hyper-digital culture. Born in Bogotá and shaped by a screen-free childhood grounded in nature and sensory experience, she has developed a visual language that questions how technology reshapes perception, emotion, and identity.
Her practice spans painting, sculptural interventions using mobile phones, and hybrid works that integrate augmented and digital layers, creating multisensory pieces that function as both aesthetic objects and social signals. Through her recent collections, she explores themes such as digital dependency, loss of ancestral wisdom, attention fragmentation, and the search for inner signal in an algorithmic world.
Exhibited across Europe and the United States, her work positions art as a conscious counter-gesture: not a rejection of technology, but a critical dialogue with it. Franchesca Art's invite viewers to pause, reflect, and reconnect with what remains essentially human within an accelerated virtual era.

Project Statement
My work explores the intersection between artificial intelligence and human emotion in the era of hyper-digitalization. I use AI as both medium and collaborator, questioning authorship, identity, and perception in a world increasingly mediated by algorithms.
Through layered digital compositions, I construct visual narratives that reflect the tension between technological acceleration and intimate memory. My practice examines how beauty, vulnerability, and distortion coexist within synthetic systems.
Rather than resisting technology, I integrate it as an extension of artistic consciousness transforming code into contemporary poetry.

Franchesca Swartzberg | 2026


WI-FI
Lost Wisdom

Interview

Anahita Darabbeigi (Anna Darab)

Your recent series Battleborn revolves around animal combat, especially the confrontation between lioness and dragon. What does this battle symbolize for you on a personal and cultural level?

My latest body of works, Battleborn series, have been focused on animal combat imagery, specially the battle between lion and dragon. The idea came from seeing a vast variety of animal combats in Iranian visual arts of any kind in every era, in museums, books and even on Qajari buildings all around Tehran. I have been dwelling on this concept for a few years now in my works; it is fair to say that they have become more and more personal gradually. I may use some kind of symbolism, but I do not believe the battle to be of good and evil, there is more to it, has different layers and reads.
This particular motif comes from ancient times; some of its earliest examples are engraved on the beautiful stoneware of Jiroft civilization in Iran. The battle between lions and other animals such as bulls, snakes, other felines, gazelles, and also mythical creatures like dragons, Qilin and Simorgh are depicted in many mediums and forms in nearly each and every era in Iran's art history. This just fascinates me, showing how relatable and flexible the concept actually is.

I am trying to render my own interpretation of what interested me formally, I am asking myself: Is this ancient visual motif still capable of expression? There are a lot of battles going on in the world right now.

Many of your works depict lionesses rather than lions. How did the Woman, Life, Freedom movement influence this transformation in your imagery?

This visual allegory stuck with me for many reasons throughout the last couple of years; one being the Woman Life Freedom movement (2022) in Iran. At the time, I was pursuing a master of art program at University of Tehran. It hit me in the face: the violence I witnessed there, the harassments I experienced as a female student and above all, the oppression and killing of protesters all around the country. All this profoundly transformed and reshaped my visual world.
Little by little I got attached to this concept; lions turned into lionesses in my works since that movement, before which I was working on imaginary landscapes (Dusk and Dawn series) and later on Trees of Tehran, as my subject matter. The social uprising and our hope for change, resonated with my art history research and my everlasting search for a new visual language and structure.
In other words, the familiar patterns became a bridge between past and present, allowing traditional forms to comment on contemporary experiences, emotions, and political realities, while somehow maintaining their symbolic resonance.

Persian miniatures and carpets play an important role in your visual language. How do you transform these traditional structures and motifs into a contemporary painterly expression?

Throughout my overall art practice, I have always been experimenting with ways of depicting dreams, imaginary atmospheres and visions which led me to non-western visual

perspectives and new image structures. As I was developing the combat with different materials and mediums, the visual structure became bolder with flat and bright colors and sometimes a multiple angel perspective found in Persian miniatures and carpets.
Persian carpets are the main key to understand my images; their visual language is something other than an image we are used to. Narrative, geometry and symbolic decorations along with their color palettes and bold outlines affected my vision entirely. I tried to use a local visual structure for a traditional Iranian motif, in a way that would no longer be considered traditional art. I transform the visual world of Persian carpets into a contemporary language by reimagining their motifs and structures within my paintings.

Your compositions often present multiple perspectives simultaneously. What role does this spatial complexity play in the narrative of conflict?

In Battleborn, each composition does not depict a single battle from multiple angles but rather layers many battles within the same visual space, much like the dense, intricate narratives found in Persian carpets or miniatures. There is no single perspective; instead, the viewer navigates a field of simultaneous actions, collisions, and encounters. This multiplicity mirrors the complexity of conflict itself, suggesting that struggle is never linear or singular, but a constellation of forces interacting at once, like the revolution itself.

Violence, struggle, and transformation appear as recurring themes. Do you see the battle as destructive, regenerative, or both?

The title Battleborn reflects this duality: born to battle and born from battle, simultaneously. The imagery embodies both destruction and regeneration. The animal combats portray the raw force and violence of conflict, yet the repetition and patterns echo survival, adaptation, and transformation. I tried to create a space where destruction and renewal coexist, emphasizing that struggle is inseparable from growth, and creation cannot happen without endeavor.

You experimented with many media before settling on large oil paintings and paper-mâché sculptures. What did each material teach you about the subject of combat?

When this battle idea became serious for me, I started with trying every material and medium: embroidery, drawing, printmaking, ceramics, paper-mache, oil painting and artist books. I even experimented with reverse glass painting, a popular technique in Qajar era in Iran.
I started with drawing and then embroidery, because the oppressions followed by Jina Amini's death and the protests have left me in shock for a while. I could not paint, so I decided to sew my drawings as a way of coping; something maybe every woman has used as a form of expression.
As the time went by and I could find myself again, I made lots of monoprints and some experimental sculptures. After about two years I ended up making larger oil paintings and more enhanced paper-mache sculptures. At first I was trying to get to know the forms of entangled animals, then I chose larger canvases to be able to engage more deeply with space and arrangements of figures in the composition. I believe in a way, I am still painting landscapes, with a more visibly invented imagery and a stronger contextual and contemporary approach related to the things I witnessed and experienced.

How does living and working in Tehran shape your artistic practice and the themes you explore?

Had I not been in Tehran at the dawn of that social movement, I would not be working on this series so passionately even now. Everything makes sense in light of what happened in Iran and the courage of the oppressed women and men.

Anahita Darabbeigi | Lion Dragon Combat no.1 | 2025

Yasen Ivanov

Yasen is a contemporary artist based in Sofia, with a practice rooted in identity, dedication, and transformation. Pursuing fine art studies from an early age, with a degree in Traditional Printmaking and a professional career in Illustration and Graphic Design, he returned to his artistic roots, merging conceptual exploration with a meticulous attention to detail to shape a style that reflects his personal perspective. Drawing inspiration from everyday life, travel, and inner reflection, Yasen explores different themes throughout his collections. Known for two distinct styles, realistic concepts set against minimal backgrounds, and expressive, colorful paintings that bridge the gap between realism and abstraction. He has presented his work in solo and collective exhibitions in Sofia, Rome, and London.

Project Statement

For his latest works, Yasen turns to primal instinct and raw presence, drawing animals as symbols of strength, vulnerability, and survival. Moving away from narrative detail, he focuses on form, tension, and movement, distilling each figure into bold silhouettes and layered shapes. In these works, Yasen explores the untamed within the structured, using animals as vessels for exploring power, identity, and the subconscious.

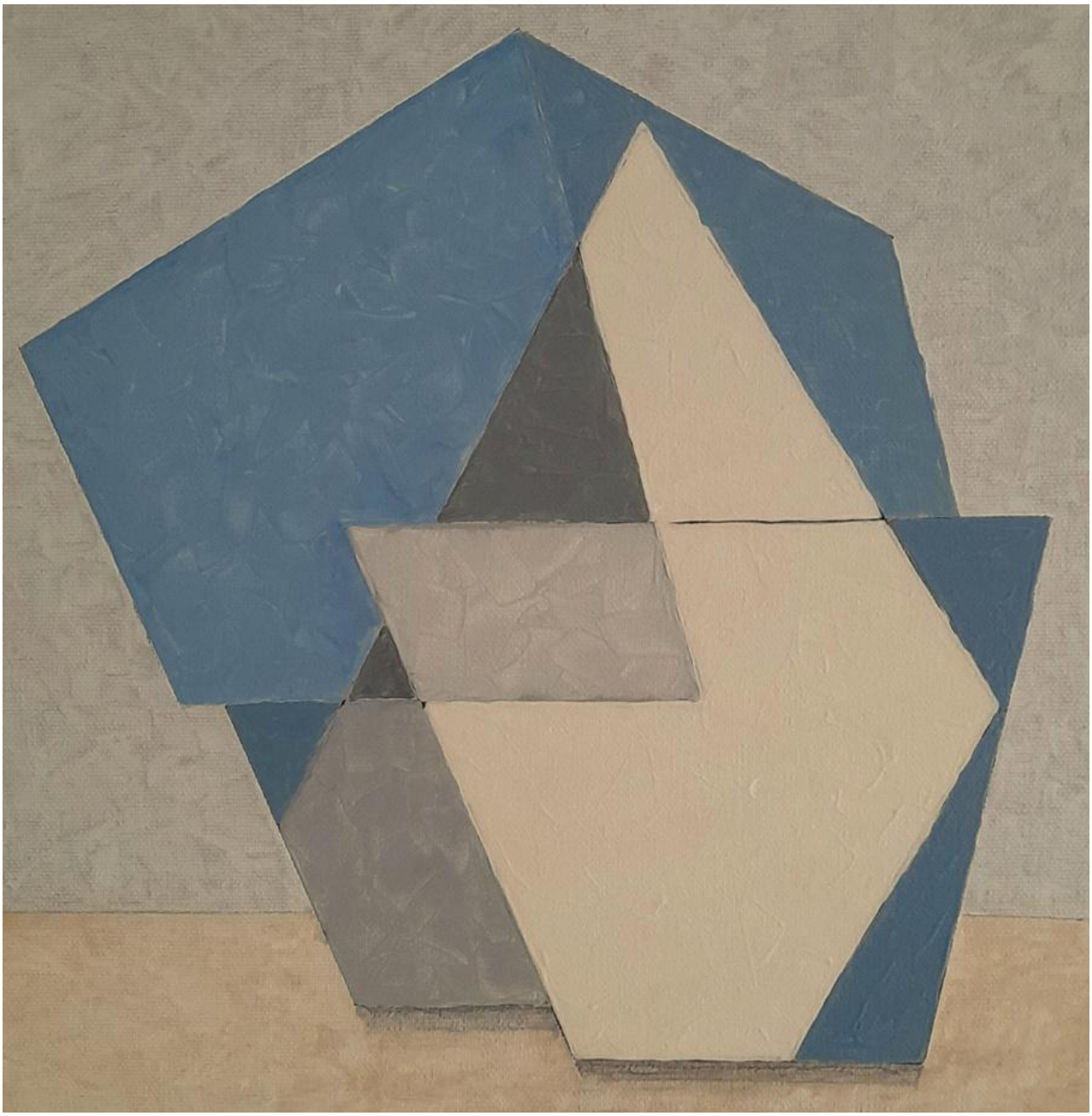
Yasen Ivanov | Curiosity | 2026

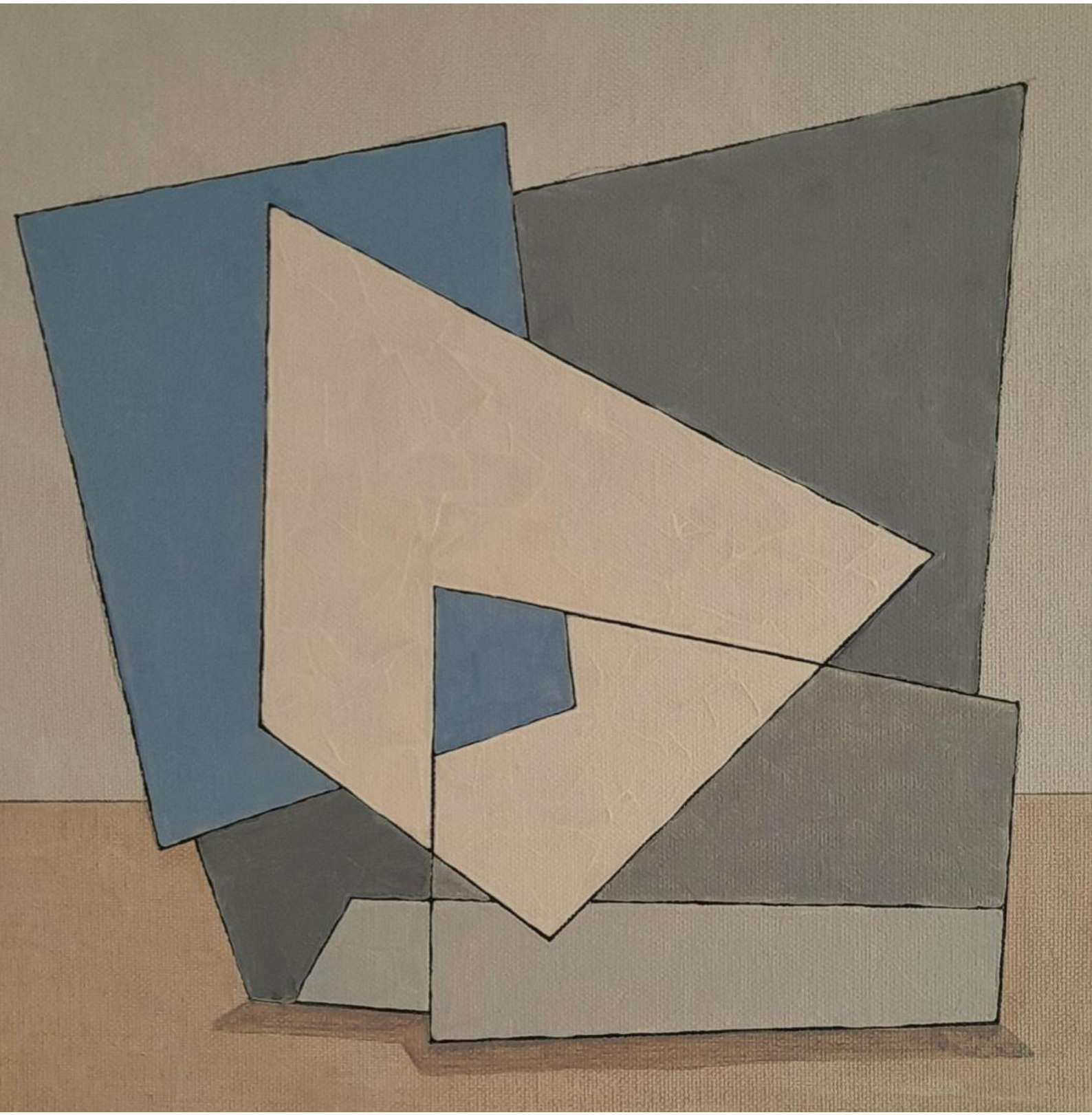
Yasen Ivanov | Gathering | 2026

John van Brakel artist/painter who works and lives in the city of The Hague in the Netherlands. His route to abstraction wasn't rushed. He started in realism, then explored Cubism. Geometry stuck. It gave hem a language he could keep using without repeating himself.

Project Statement
A painting doesn't needto say more than what it shows.
I consider my paintings are just like experiments.

John van Brakel | GC-A30





John van Brakel | GC-A31

Marcus Frost

The Crimson Eden embraces a strong 90s anime aesthetic. What draws you to that era visually and emotionally, and how do you reinterpret it for a contemporary audience?

The 90s anime aesthetic carries a luminous nostalgia for me, it was an era where bold colors, exaggerated emotions, and cinematic framing transformed animation into a language of feeling. That decade taught me that animation could be more than entertainment; at its most powerful, it becomes a lifeline, stories that remind us we are not alone, images that give hope in moments of despair, and worlds that inspire resilience when reality feels overwhelming.
For today's audience, I reinterpret that spirit through modern techniques: digital fluidity that creates seamless motion, layered symbolism that speaks to diverse cultural contexts, and references that bridge East and West. In this way, the essence of the 90s becomes not just retro, but timeless, honoring the past while opening new doors of connection in the present.

Marcus Frost | PIN UP Dahlia

Your work blends retro-futurism with themes of human resilience. What does resilience mean to you in the context of a world dominated by machines and artificial intelligence?

Resilience, to me, is the ability to preserve our humanity in a world shaped by machines and artificial intelligence. It is not resistance, but adaptation with empathy and imagination. Retro-futurism allows me to show that even as technology advances, resilience is the art of finding hope, meaning, and connection, reminding us that stories and creativity can save lives by keeping the human spirit alive.

The character of Genesis seems central to the story's moral and technological conflict. What does she symbolize within the narrative?

Genesis embodies the central tension of the narrative: the fragile balance between technological ambition and human morality. It symbolizes the birth of possibility, the spark of creation that can either illuminate or consume. In it, resilience and vulnerability coexist: it is both a reflection of humanity's yearning for transcendence and a warning of what happens when progress loses sight of compassion.

Marcus Frost | Portada novela grafica

In the story, Genesis is a computer virus that represents the moral compass in a world dominated by machines. It is a reminder that technology must serve life, not replace it. Its presence challenges the characters to confront whether innovation can coexist with empathy, and whether resilience means adapting to the machinery or preserving the essence of what makes us human. In this way, Genesis is not just a character: it is a symbol of choice, of the paths we open when deciding how to shape the future.

You have a background as a military instructor and professional photographer. How have those experiences shaped your approach to storytelling, composition, and discipline in your creative process?

My background as a military instructor gave me discipline and structure, but also the lesson of perseverance, of moving forward even when everything feels uphill. Photography, in turn, taught me to see the world in frames, to capture emotion through composition and light. Together, these experiences shaped my creative process: disciplined yet sensitive, precise yet resonant, allowing each work to be both carefully constructed and emotionally alive.

Your visual language references masters like Frank Frazetta, Esteban Maroto, and José "Pepe" González. Which specific lessons or techniques from these artists have most influenced your work?

From Frank Frazetta, I learned the power of dynamism and atmosphere: how movement and shadow can carry the weight of entire worlds. Esteban Maroto taught me the elegance of line, how intricate details and fluid composition can transform a page into a symphony. José 'Pepe' González revealed the emotional clarity of character design, capturing vulnerability and sensuality with precision.
Japanese masters also shaped my vision: Masamune Shirow taught me to fuse technology and philosophy into storytelling, Satoshi Urushihara inspired me with his delicate yet powerful depiction of the human form, and Kenichi Sonoda demonstrated how style and narrative can merge in vibrant, kinetic worlds.
Together, these influences gave me a visual language that combines intensity, refinement, and futurism. I strive to reinterpret their lessons through current tools, so that their techniques continue to resonate with today's audiences.

The story presents a world where governments have fallen and corporations' rule. Do you see this narrative as speculative fiction, social commentary, or a warning?

It's a warning for society and the world we live in today. Speculative fiction gives me the freedom to imagine governments collapsing and corporations rising to power, but beneath that vision lies a reflection of our current reality.
By presenting this world, the story warns us about the dangers of allowing profit to replace empathy and responsibility. It reminds us that resilience must be collective and that, if we ignore these signs, we risk losing the very structures that protect our humanity. In that sense, the narrative is not just a dystopia: it's a reflection and a warning, urging us to act before fiction becomes reality.

You plan to develop an animated short film based on the graphic novel. What challenges and opportunities do you foresee in translating your static illustrations into motion?

Translating static illustrations into motion is both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge lies in preserving the emotional weight of each frame, what was once a single, carefully composed image must now flow seamlessly into movement without losing its intensity. Timing, rhythm, and continuity become as important as composition, demanding discipline and precision.
The opportunity, however, is immense. Animation allows me to expand the emotional resonance of the graphic novel: gestures can breathe, silence can stretch, and symbolism can unfold across time. Motion gives new life to resilience, turning still images into experiences that audiences can feel in their bodies. In this way, the short film becomes not just an adaptation, but an evolution. An invitation to inhabit the world more deeply.

Justyna Senchyk is a Ukrainian artist, born in 1991. She received her education at the Lviv Professional College of Decorative and Applied Arts named after Ivan Trush. Then at the Lviv National Academy of Arts. Her works have been presented at group exhibitions both in Ukraine and abroad, drawing attention to modern textile art and folk traditions in new forms.
Since 2013, Justyna has participated in international projects, triennials and exhibitions of artistic textiles in Lviv, Hlynany, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Lutsk, as well as in the Biennale in Krosno, Poland. The artist's works are in the public collection of the Polish museum Muzeum Rzemiosla w Krosnie.
My art is a space for experimentation and combining traditional techniques with modern forms. And also, to some extent, a trace of personal experiences on the events of our time. I have always admired how fabric is able to convey emotion. In every knot, in every thread - time, attention to detail and my inner story.
It is important to me that the viewer feels this connection - with nature, culture and their own feelings. Through my works, I strive to revive interest in textile art and show that it can be modern, relevant.

Project Statement
In the works I presented, the tapestry is like a map of the creation of the world, where each thread is a sign of harmony. But in times of war, this harmony is broken, the ornament becomes broken, like a destroyed house, a lost city. The present brings chaos into harmony - like an invasion, destruction. In these tapestries, I wanted to show how, through fabric, art recreates the struggle of light and shadow, that even in chaos, a crumb of structure remains, a thread that leads back to life. In woven ornaments, the pulse of time is felt, when the balance of the world is destroyed, but the thread of creation remains. This thread becomes a sign of hope. And that even in chaos, art preserves structure, memory and power of regeneration.

Yustyna Senchyk | On Fire | 2024

Yustyna Senchyk | City in Embrace | 2025

Chenell Turner

As a self-taught artist, how has your independent learning shaped your artistic voice compared to formal training?

The beauty of my independent learning, is that I have the ability to freely create with my heart. I don't find myself having a hard time navigating the additions or corrections that my paintings need, because I don't look at them from a formal standpoint. My artwork is meant to be free and sometimes formality constricts freedom.

Chenell Turner | Fire Starter | 2026

Your works combine vibrant colors with deeply emotional themes. How do you balance joy, pain, and introspection within a single piece?

I focus on whatever feeing is bigger in the moment that I start a piece. If I am feeling more joy, the colors are brighter and bolder and vice versa, the more pain I feel in the moment, the colors are darker. This allows me to understand narrative of the piece, no matter how many times I go back to it.

Many of your paintings include tactile elements such as embellishments and layered textures. What role does material experimentation play in your creative process?

To me, material experimentation is fun, it makes the paintings pop and it adds a physical element to the piece. For some of my pieces they do have their meanings and for other paintings, I just wanted to add something more and fun to the piece.

Several works suggest themes of healing, transformation, or rebirth. Is art a therapeutic practice for you?

Art is an extremely therapeutic practice for me.

Chenell Turner | Freakwencie | 2025

In my experience with it, traditional therapy can be an unmanageable expense, and it does not provide me with the outlet that I need in the moment. I have a busy brain and big feelings, and I am the kind of person who need a productive outlet. Creating art grants, me the ability to work, think through, and understand my issues. Additionally, the sense of pride that I feel and the release that I've earned once a piece is done, is beautifully rewarding.

How has your artistic journey over the past four years changed the way you see yourself and the world around you?

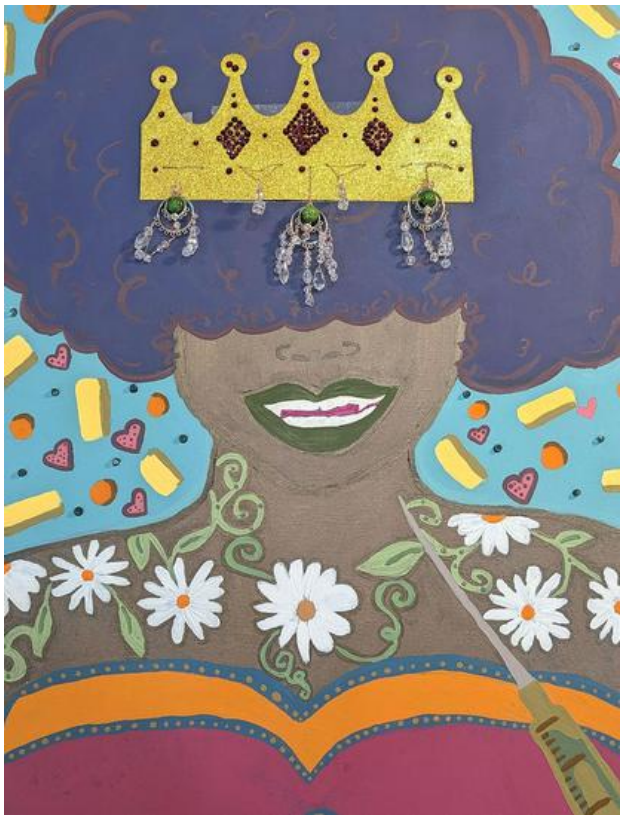
Four years ago, there were still parts of myself that I was not comfortable with anyone seeing or experiencing. Which is why, the first two years I focused mostly on fluid art paintings, I was still able to receive the release of a completed painting, and I was able to work out how I was feeling in a semi ambiguous manner. Through my artwork I have gained more freedom for myself. The freedom from my own persecution and critique, the freedom to paint however I want to paint, and the freedom to express myself completely. In turn, this newfound freedom has given me the ability to see the world around me in a clarifying lense, which helps to make things not seem so big and scary.

How does your environment in Baltimore influence your artistic perspective, if at all?

Despite the outside reputation that Baltimore has, as a Baltimore Native, I cannot envision having any other foundation than what my city has given me. I have learned some of my hardest lessons and received some of biggest blessings here in Baltimore. There is so much beauty and charm in this city and the influence that it has on my art is evident. Whether it is the soft intensity or the depth and realness of some of my pieces, they echo the personality that this city has molded in me. I will forever be thankful and in debt to my Charm City.

If viewers could take away only one feeling or message from your work, what would you hope it to be?

My message would be, you only live one life, don't be afraid to be yourself and never let your comfortability keep you from achieving your dreams.



Chenell Turner | Daily Dose Of Joy | 2026

B.Paterson_sculpture
Briony Paterson is a 26-year-old sculptor born in England and raised in France. A fashion school graduate turned ceramicist, she began her journey with clay in 2023 under her mother's tutelage. Her work focuses on animal figures defined by charisma, often utilizing the ancient Raku technique to achieve striking finishes. Influenced by her Scottish and Zimbabwean roots, Briony creates expressive wildlife sculptures that resonate with international flair.

Project Statement
Sculpting is, for me, a return to elemental roots. Trained by my mother in 2023, I work with clay to bring the animal world into a tactile, three-dimensional space. My practice is deeply influenced by my dual upbringing in England and France, as well as my Scottish and South African (Zimbabwean) roots, resulting in a global perspective on wildlife and form.
Using Raku firing, I allow fire and smoke to dictate the final character of each sculpture. This process highlights the movement and 'soul' of the animals I create, ensuring that no two pieces are ever the same. By combining the precision I learned in fashion school with the organic unpredictability of clay, I create animal portraits that are as much about spirit and charisma as they are about medium.

Nomadic Icons: Xiao Ge's Sonic Landscapes

Nomadic Icons: Xiao Ge's Sonic Landscapes

Fitzrovia Gallery in London showcases multimedia artist Xiao Ge's solo exhibition The Nomadic Icons. Through moving images and illustrations, Xiao Ge builds a visual space suspended between psychedelic experience and digital landscapes, offering an profound contemplation on contemporary identity fluidity and cultural migration.

Within East Asian cultural traditions, Buddhist statues have long symbolised stability and permanence, placed within fixed spatial structures to uphold faith and spiritual order. In Xiao Ge's visual narratives, however, these images have detached from their established positions, entering virtual realms and psychological landscapes. Sacred figures once static are reorganised within digital environments, transforming into emblems of spiritual migration.

The Installation view of 'Xiao Ge: The Nomadic Icons' in London

Xiao Ge's artistic practice consistently explores the complex interplay between perception, consciousness, and cultural belonging. Within these visual fields, symbolic architectural structures, religious imagery, and digital spaces interweave to form pictorial compositions that possess both tangible reality and spiritual resonance. As audiences navigate these layered spaces, they have chances to recognise that identity is not a static entity but a dynamic process of continuous generation within memory, language, and cultural transformation. Emotions and memories from cross-cultural experiences, often beyond-cultural experiences, often remain elusive in the ambiguous grey zone between expression and silence. Through the manipulation of spatial displacement, temporal delay, and perceptual instability, Xiao Ge transforms these intangible experiences into structural tensions within the imagery, enabling viewers to sense experiences of spiritual resonance that lie deep within contemporary life.

The Installation view of 'Xiao Ge: The Nomadic Icons' in London

In The Nomadic Icons, sacred imagery transcends religious symbolism to become metaphors for contemporary psyches. Dislodged from traditional spiritual niches and transplanted into digital environments, these images now embody a perpetually drifting existence. Through this symbolic displacement, the artist reveals a deeper question: as social structures and cultural boundaries undergo constant reconfiguration, the spiritual coordinates of the individual likewise shift.

The Installation view of 'Xiao Ge: The Nomadic Icons' in London

This exhibition is curated by London-based independent curator Fang Liu (Summer). Fang Liu's curatorial practice has long focused on the intersection of contemporary art, cultural studies, and spatial narratives, exploring through an interdisciplinary lens how art responds to contemporary social and cultural experiences. In The Nomadic Icons, imagery, symbols and spatial structures are reconfigured into an open visual framework, inviting viewers to contemplate the relationship between identity, memory and belonging through a contemplative and sustained viewing experience.

Tro Robinson

Self taught artist

Project Statement
My art adventures began with sculpture and painting, leading to a blending of these mediums. My Cut Paper Paintings are influenced by the process that Matisse called “carving into color.”
Greatly inspired by music and movement, my work is a visual feeling of the natural rhythms of the coast.
Colors, shapes, and movement are my music and dance, reflecting the place where land, sea, and sky meet.
Creating coastal rhythms, with color and a smile.

Lisa Bryant creates detailed animal portraits in graphite, ink, colored pencil, and watercolor. Her work explores intimacy, presence, and the emotional resonance of animals in both wild and domestic settings.

Through meticulous layering and precise mark-making, Bryant captures texture and tone with striking clarity — from the piercing gaze of a tiger to the quiet comfort of a resting dog. Her compositions often employ close cropping and controlled contrast, drawing viewers into moments of stillness and connection.

Working primarily on paper, Bryant balances technical discipline with emotional sensitivity, allowing each subject to emerge not simply as an image, but as an individual presence. Her practice reflects a deep attentiveness to light, anatomy, and atmosphere, creating portraits that feel immediate and contemplative.

Project Statement

Animals are central to my practice because they invite a different kind of looking — slower, quieter, and more intentional. Whether drawing the intensity of an animal's gaze or the softness of a dog resting at home, I approach each subject as an individual presence rather than a symbol.

My process is rooted in patience. Using graphite, ink, colored pencil, and watercolor, I build each piece through layers — developing depth, texture, and contrast gradually. I am especially drawn to close perspectives and intimate compositions, where a viewer cannot remain distant from the subject.

In wildlife studies, such as A Close Up of a Tiger's Eye, I focus on power and awareness contained within a single gaze. In domestic scenes like A Quiet Evening Inside and Golden Afternoon at Home, I explore comfort, familiarity, and shared space.

Across mediums, my goal is to create moments of stillness — invitations to pause and truly see the animals that live alongside us or beyond us. Through detail and tonal sensitivity, I aim to honor their individuality and emotional depth.

Lisa Bryant | A Quiet Evening Inside | 2025

Lisa Bryant | An Unbroken Gaze | 2024

Nanuka Darsalia

I am a Georgian artist based in Tbilisi, currently completing BA in Fine Art (Painting) at the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts. My work is rooted in the exploration of inherited memory, subconscious imagery, and the quiet psychological landscapes that shape personal identity—themes that have come to define my practice.

From a young age, I was drawn to drawing the world around me, not simply to illustrate it, but as a way to think, feel, and process life. Yet I did not pursue it fully at first. For nine years, I devoted myself to Georgian folk dancing, a passion that connected me deeply to the traditions, costumes, and cultural history of different regions. Although physically and mentally demanding, dancing shaped my sense of identity. Even after stepping away, I continued to return to drawing dancers, costumes, and conceptual pieces inspired by that world, keeping a quiet connection to my early love of image-making.

After exploring other professional interests, I returned to painting, facing the challenge of preparing for the entrance exam despite years without drawing or painting regularly. Committing fully to the process, I discovered a practice that allowed me to express myself authentically and honestly, combining instinct, reflection, and observation.

This exploration led to my recent series, Inherited Dreams, in which I investigate the invisible threads passed down through generations—gestures, memories, fears, desires, and emotions that shape who we are, often without our direct experience. The series is both a personal investigation and a meditation on collective consciousness, where inherited experience becomes visible through painting. Through this work, I have developed a voice that is deeply personal yet quite universal, creating spaces for reflection, memory, and the emotional resonance of what we carry from the past.

Project Statement

My recent series, Inherited Dreams, made me realize something essential: even though humans are fundamentally different—even no two sets of fingerprints are alike—what unites us is heritage. Beyond physical resemblance, we inherit emotions, gestures, mannerisms, thoughts, memories, and experiences. We don't need to have lived them ourselves to feel them in a very real way. In this series, I explore the invisible continuum of consciousness passed down through generations—fragments of memory, fear, desire, and intuition that transcend the individual and emerge in new forms.

These works suggest that we are not alone in dreaming. Our unconscious carries ancestral experiences, half-remembered stories, and dormant emotions transmitted through gestures, silence, and inheritance. Each painting becomes a portal between the self and the inherited psyche, between personal subconscious and collective memory.

In this work, I am not painting a figure, but the vibration of a presence that has survived the erosion of time. It serves as a visual inquiry into the series' core question: What do we remember that we never personally experienced? The glowing, ephemeral form is caught in a dense haze, representing the "half-remembered story"—a recognition of feelings from a history I never lived.

The raw, unearthed texture of the surface explores how ancestral emotion is transformed within us, manifesting here as a flicker of intuition within the personal psyche. I used muted earth tones against a central, luminous gold to depict the invisible continuum of those who came before us, their dormant desires and fears refusing to be buried by silence.

Ultimately, this piece asks: Can a painting recover what language has lost over generations? It is a study of endurance and the "uncomfortable truth" of carrying a lineage. By capturing the friction of a self that refuses to be flattened or simplified, the painting becomes a portal. It is a physical manifesto of the psychological weight we carry—a moment where the skin becomes a site of resistance and the act of appearing through the fog becomes a defiant performance of existence.

The series explores questions that continue to guide me:

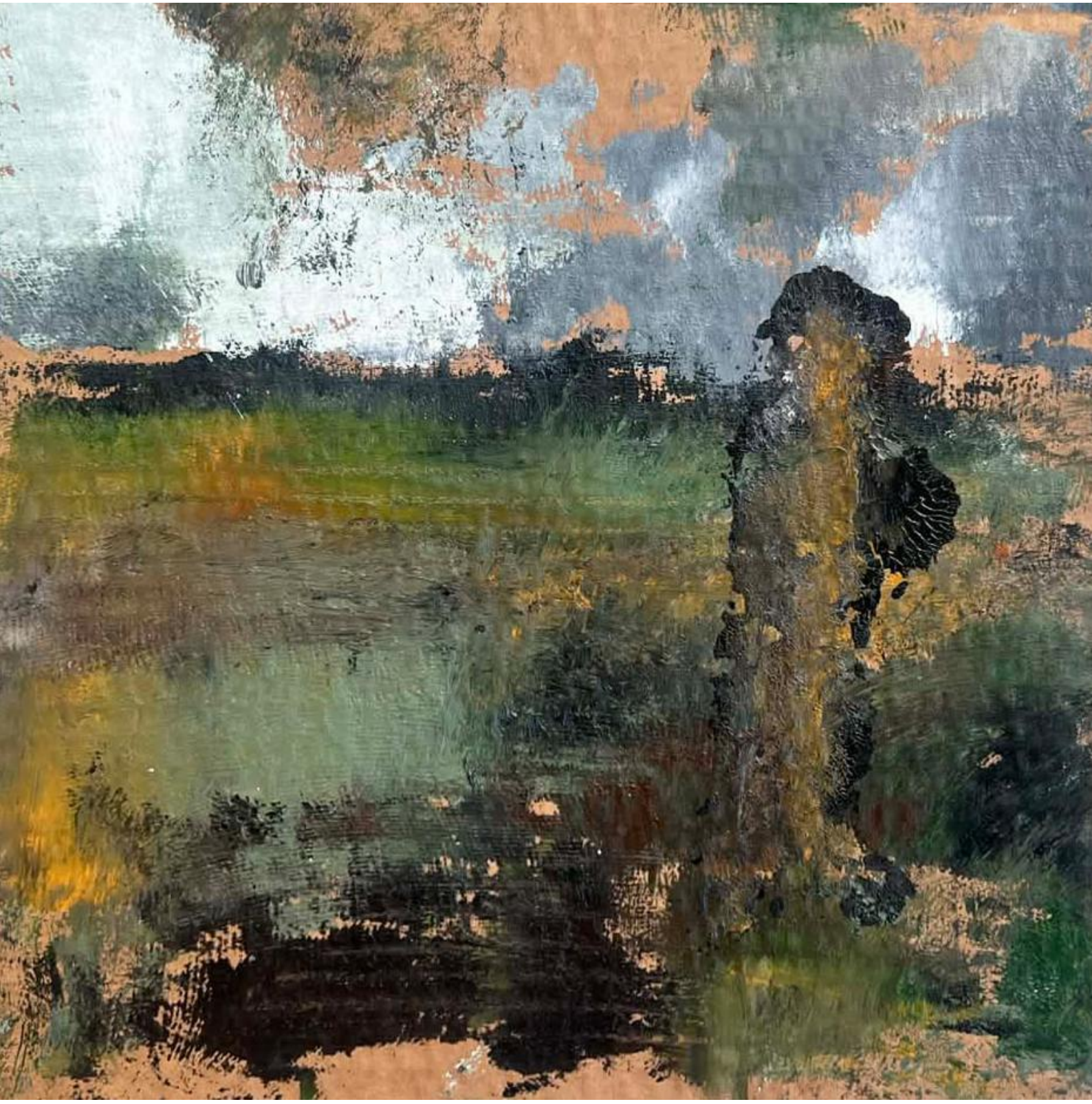
What do we remember that we have never experienced?

How do our ancestors' emotions live on in us?

Can painting restore what language has lost over the generations?

I don't expect viewers to fully "understand" my work. I hope they feel it, even if that feeling is fragmented or uneasy. My goal is not to provide answers, but to create a space where personal and ancestral memory can coexist, where emotions can be felt, and where the invisible threads that connect us across time might be sensed.

Nanuka Darsalia | Inherited Dreams | 2026



Nanuka Darsalia | Inherited Dreams | 2026

Brigitte B Burckhardt

Brigitte began with photography at a young age inspired by her grandfather. In her twenties she travelled the globe and discovered her passion for landscape and street photography, be it colour or BnW. Today she is also experimenting with abstract approaches.

Her photography has been exhibited physically and virtually in the UK, the US, the EU, Switzerland, Canada, Japan and more. It has been published in international art magazines, books and with distinguished by awards.

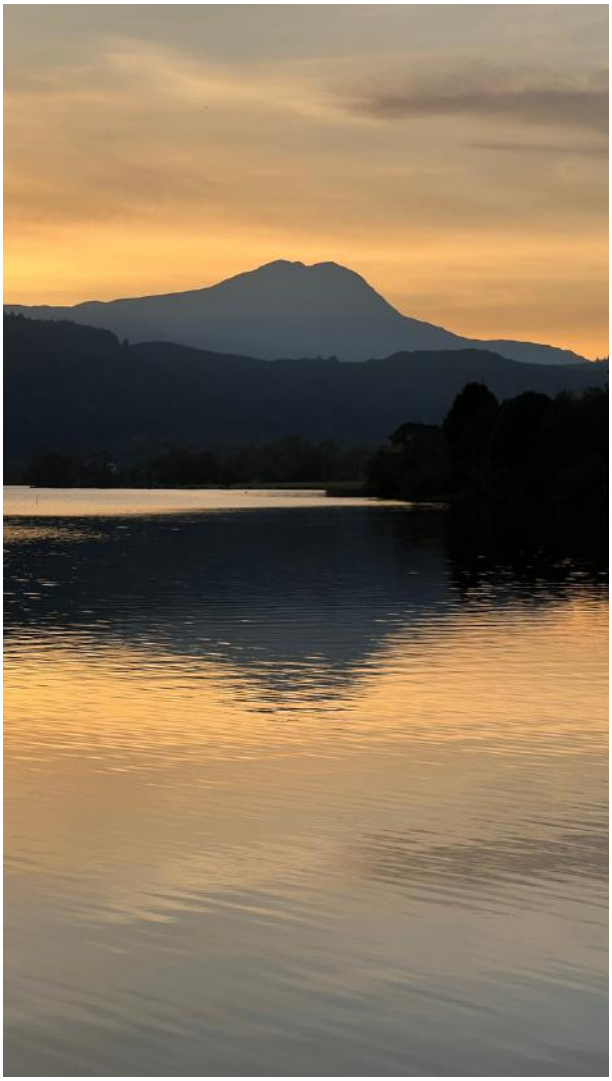
Currently she is working on three long term projects, the aim is to have them published.

Project Statement

For this open call I chose three BnW photographs taken in summer at a beach and three landscapes taken in Scotland last autumn. It is representative of my current work.

Being creative is a drive and before I go out for a photoshoot I put myself in an almost meditative state allowing me to be taken in by my subjects, my environment. When my eyes, my heart and soul are at one I might have come up with some good work that tells a story. I hope to convey it to the viewer.

Brigitte B Burckhardt | Golden Hour



Brigitte B Burckhardt | At Dusk

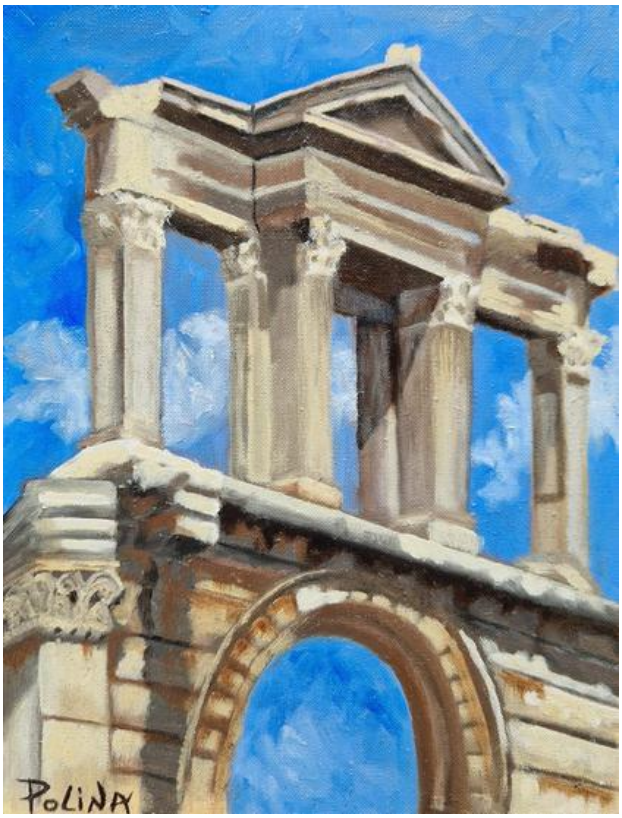
Brigitte B Burckhardt | Looking Out

Brigitte B Burckhardt | Lovers

Polina Gasparovica

Your background combines academic art history and hands-on painting practice. How do these two dimensions of your work inform and challenge each other?

I started painting with oils during my first year of bachelor's, and I started by copying artworks of famous painters, like Vincent van Gogh, Jan van Eyck, Gustav Klimt, John Singer Sargent, etc. All these copies that I made are still in my room and often remind me of how much I learned as an artist from copying them.



Polina Gasparovica | Arch of Hadrian | 2025

I enjoyed connecting my artistic practice with an academic one. I would feel particularly inspired when, after copying a painting, I could later write a research paper on the same painting for a university assignment. This way, I could study it in depth from a visual perspective as an artist and from a theoretical perspective as an art historian. Even drawing a small sketch of a painting makes you study it very carefully and pay attention to details that otherwise could be overlooked.

You mention a strong engagement with the Renaissance, the Dutch Golden Age, Art Nouveau, and Impressionism. In what ways do these periods manifest in your current paintings?

In general, these movements inspire me a lot. Art Nouveau always intrigued me with its flower and nature motifs. I studied Impressionist painters a lot, both as part of my university program and out of personal interest. I think many of my paintings have an Impressionistic touch.
Dutch Golden Age still-life paintings give me a very special feeling of calmness. It feels like the whole world is put on pause, and you can endlessly trace the details of flowers, fruits, and other objects. For example, Adriaen Coorte's "Still Life with Wild Strawberries" is one that I especially prefer and, by the way, also made a copy of. I think I would like my paintings to give the same feeling of calmness to the viewer.

Your works often depict quiet moments - a winter forest, a birdhouse, an animal portrait, architectural fragments. What draws you to these seemingly simple subjects?

These are often painted using my own pictures as a reference, and they not only represent the object that is depicted but also capture the moment when it happened. I have certain memories associated with these moments, and this way I can remember them. It

Polina Gasparovica | Arctic Fox Jumping | 2025

is also a reminder for me to look for beauty in nature and in surrounding objects, as well as to appreciate what I have. For example, I love spending time in my family's summer house, so I did two paintings dedicated to this place. Also, it is a reminder to find happiness in simple, small moments.

As an art historian trained in archival research, do you approach your own paintings as documents of observation, memory, or atmosphere?

I think it is a combination of all of them. My paintings are documents of memory, as I usually associate certain moments and events with them. They are documents of observation, because I like to find beauty in ordinary moments and depict them in my paintings. Even something small that could have been easily overlooked. They are also documents of atmosphere, and I seek a calm and kind atmosphere in my latest paintings.

The natural world plays a significant role in your work - from birch forests to wildlife. How do you balance realism with painterly interpretation in these scenes?

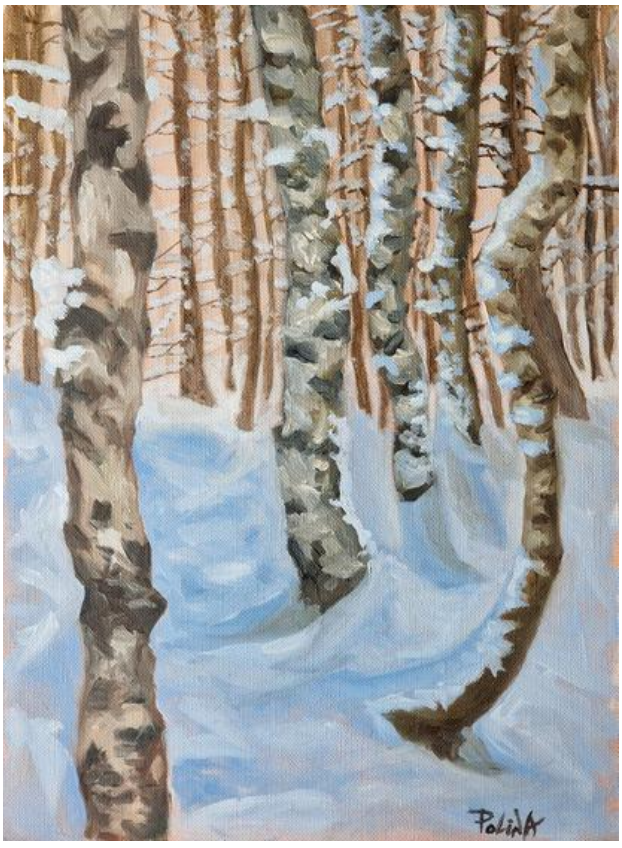
I seek the balance of paintings looking realistic but also with a hint of dreamy and fairy tale atmosphere. Some paintings are painted rather impressionistically, while others I spent hours on, working through every detail. I am always imagining the feeling that I want a painting to give and I aim to express it.

What role does attentive observation play in your creative process? Do you paint primarily from life, photographs, or imagination?

Primarily, I paint from my own photographs. My phone gallery is filled with pictures of places, nature, and interesting details, which all potentially could be turned into paintings. Often, I just see something and immediately think of it as a painting, so I take a picture. Sometimes I start painting the next day, sometimes it takes a year for me to find a photo again, to be impressed by its beauty, and get an urge to create and turn it into a painting.
Speaking about attentive observation, I often like to look at the light and the shadows in daily life situations and try to think about how I would paint them. For example, I can look at the light going through the leaves of a tree or the light reflecting on the snow and study the colors carefully, thinking about how I would turn it into a painting.

As someone deeply engaged with art history, how do you avoid becoming overly influenced by the past while still honoring it?

I honor the art of the past deeply, and I think it can teach me a lot, both as an artist and an art historian. At the same time, I aim to create something that is my own and represents who I am.

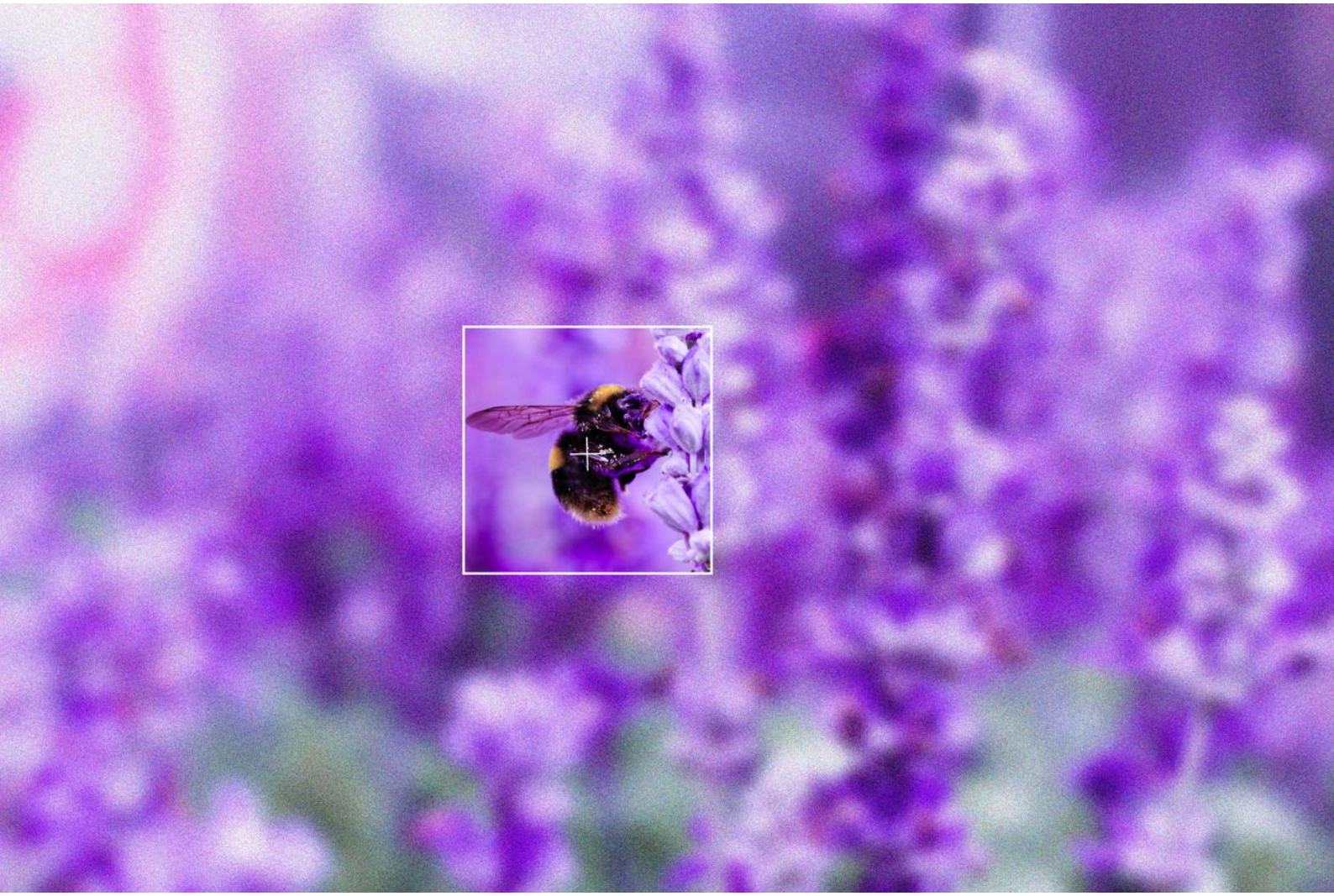


Polina Gasparovica | Birch Trees | 2024

Déy Roper is a UK-based nature photographer. Her work is deeply personal, shaped by her experience as a blind photographer. She is drawn to capturing moments and details that may one day be inaccessible to her, as well as the small elements of the natural world that are often overlooked. Through her photography she aim to capture the small unseens and make them seen through her eyes.

Project Statement
This project is my first look into experimental editing. I wanted to play with motion, distortion, colour, and selective focus. The images were born from curiosity rather than hidden meanings. I wanted to showcase the beauty you can create with editing different techniques and transforming the flowers into something completely new whilst also letting the work speak for itself.

Déy Roper | Focus on Healing | 2025



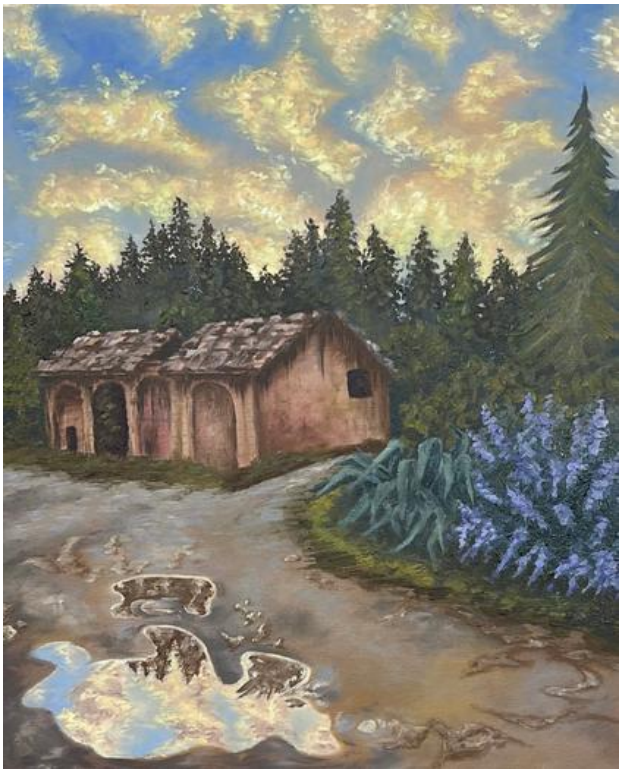
Déy Roper | Interior Light | 2026

Déy Roper | Steady in Motion | 2026

Alana Palomo

Your work often revolves around light, renewal, and emotional healing. When did you first realize that art could become a personal tool for processing emotion?

During the pandemic, I was completing my International Baccalaureate in high school back home in El Salvador, and it felt like everything around me was collapsing at once. There were fires, floods, earthquakes, gang violence, the pandemic itself, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Me Too movement — so many global and local crises unfolding simultaneously. It felt overwhelming, almost paralyzing. That's when I created Paralizante. I collected clippings of every mention of covid and the pandemic in the newspaper for a year, and then layered them around two figures with a huge age gap, showing how suffocating it all felt to everyone regardless of age. How headlines and fear can surround and immobilize us. I realized then that art wasn't just something I enjoyed doing; it was something that allowed me to process chaos and generate awareness at the same time. It helped me transform anxiety into dialogue.



Alana Palomo | Darkest of moments

That impulse never left. You can see it evolve in From Ashes, where butterflies emerge from wildfire, unsure whether they are being consumed or reborn. In Il Avivamiento, gold leaf & imagery symbolize renewal and spiritual rebirth after rupture or rock bottom. In The Art of Giving, love becomes an act of quiet devotion, even when the world feels unstable. In Darkest of Moments, a stranded horrible day in Tuscany turns into a meditation on hope, light appearing exactly when you least expect it. Or in bollente, where emotional turmoil becomes visible through aggressive brushwork, yet the figure remains present and resilient, embodying strength through the chaos.

You frequently work with heavy texture and layered surfaces. What does the physical act of layering and building texture allow you to express that flat imagery cannot?

Texture allows me to embed the feeling and complexity of memory physically into the work.
In Soy Salvadoreña, there are literal coffee grains still attached to the surface, alongside newspaper collage from La Prensa Gráfica. Coffee is part of our culture, our economy, our daily rituals. I didn't want to just paint it, I wanted it to exist materially on the canvas. The same goes for the newspaper. These aren't just references; they are artifacts.
In The Conundrum of Industrialization, I used scraps of denim, printed words on fabric, layered them over newspaper, and sketched a city skyline before unifying it with

Alana Palomo | Conundrum of Industralization

acrylic paint and the human figure. The frayed edges of the jeans reflect urban development's roughness and wear. The fabric text adds another voice. I was also intentionally trying to reduce waste, using materials I already had lying around. That desire to recycle and repurpose materials is what led me to experiment with bubble wrap and forks as tools. Instead of discarding them, I used them to create mark-making that feels raw and imperfect.
Flat imagery can be beautiful, but texture carries evidence. It carries time. It carries pressure. It carries the weight of what has happened. Not to mention the human mind, personality, trauma and way of thinking is complex and multi-layered, just like my way of painting.

As a multidisciplinary artist working across painting, design, collage, and functional objects, how do these different mediums influence one another in your practice?

They are constantly influencing each other. I believe that if someone truly connects with my work and desires to have it in their space, to make their troubles feel lighter, to feel joy, to feel completeness, they should be able to do that. That belief prompted me to create art across a wide variety of sizes and price points. From original paintings to smaller wooden works, prints, coasters, and tote bags, I want art to be accessible.
Functional objects also come from my cultural upbringing. In El Salvador, artists paint on anything, furniture, objects, walls... creating beauty in everyday life. That deeply influenced me. I want my art to live with people, not just in galleries. Functional objects remind me that art can be intimate and daily, not distant.

Your background includes both fine art and graphic design. How has design thinking shaped the way you approach storytelling in your paintings?

Graphic design trained me to think before I paint. I almost always use Photoshop to plan my compositions digitally before turning to the canvas. I experiment with layout, placement, and color combinations beforehand so that when I approach the canvas, I already understand the structure. That planning allows me to take more confident emotional risks in the painting itself while still maintaining a structural balance to its composition. Design also taught me hierarchy, balance, and visual pacing, how the eye moves across a surface. Even in chaotic works like Enough, there is structure underneath the emotion.
Beyond composition, graphic design gave me marketing skills, like social media, video editing and website creation. These have helped me build my practice independently. But the influence goes both ways. My painting and illustration practice deeply inform my graphic design work. I often create custom illustrated imagery for posters, patterns, and branding projects, making each design personal and specific to that client or event. The two disciplines are constantly interlinked, each giving voice to the other.

How do your roots in El Salvador and your life in Chicago inform your visual language, even when cultural references are not explicit?

My passion for landscapes is directly connected to El Salvador. My comfort zone was always the views I had back home; beaches, sand beneath my feet, waves breaking on the shore, birds at sunrise or city views from atop a volcano. Those landscapes felt like safety. When I moved away, I began painting them as a way to carry them with me.
Even in works like Darkest of Moments or other landscapes painted abroad, there is always a longing embedded in them. I paint places to preserve them, to escape gloominess, to hold onto beauty.
El Salvador's art culture is also deeply colorful and emotional. There's boldness in expression and a tradition of painting on any surface imaginable. That spirit shows in my work, the saturation of color, the willingness to use unconventional materials, the desire to make art functional and alive in daily spaces.
Chicago introduced me to industrial textures and contemporary gallery culture. El Salvador gave me emotional intensity and warmth. Florence gave me reverence for gold leaf and classical light. All of these places live in my visual language.

What do you hope viewers feel — or carry with them — after encountering your work?

I hope they feel relief. Joy. Tranquility. When someone looks at a landscape I've painted, I want them to remember a moment in their own life that was effortlessly beautiful, even if everything else around them feels lost. I want the painting to become something they can return to when they need to feel lighter. And when they look at the tension and mess in my more textured works, I hope they see that their own mess can also be beautiful. That struggle and waiting are not meaningless. That sticking through hard times is worth it. If my work can remind someone that renewal is possible, that light exists even in chaos, then it has done its job.

Irena Ocepek is an illustrator and visual artist from Ljubljana, Slovenia. After several years of study in drawing and painting, she continued to pursue visual communications at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana. Her professional practice integrates various disciplines, including fine art, illustration, comics, and design.
Her work is fundamentally driven by an engagement with narrative and the exploration of the human emotive landscape. By utilizing symbolism to navigate the subconscious and the unspoken, she creates a dialogue between conceptual depth and visual storytelling. Her contributions to the field have been recognized with several awards, her work has been exhibited internationally and featured in publications on design, illustration, and contemporary comics.

Project Statement
These artworks were created in an artist residency in Kubed, a Slovenian Istrian village and the home of Istrian bard, poet and priest Alojz Kocjančič, known as "Kubejski", who dedicated his life to protecting the identity of the Istrian people. He wrote about the struggles of ordinary people, Istria's landscape, and its spirit—but most notably about Šavrinka, a historical and cultural symbol of Istrian women who traversed vast distances across Istria, collecting eggs and carrying them north to sell in the port town of Trieste. More than a mere livelihood, this trade defined their identity, demonstrating unwavering determination and adaptability in the face of economic hardship. While the practice itself has ceased, the Šavrinka remains an enduring historical and cultural symbol of the Istrian feminine spirit.
Illustrations also draw on Istrian legends and fables surrounding the creation of the region's rivers and landscape, further exploring its rich cultural heritage. The work "Be Water! Said the Fairy" is inspired by a folk tale recorded by writer Rafael Vidali, in which fairy sisters, guardians of the Istrian karst, watch as one of them strikes a rock with her magic wand to call the river Rižana into being in a barren, stony terrain where life is scarce and water is absent. Through a simple command and an act of force, water bursts from the rock, transforming the landscape and foreshadowing both nourishment and future hardship for the people who will depend on it. This piece translates the mythical birth of the river Rižana into a visual meditation on origin, transformation, and the ambivalent nature of blessing in a fragile environment.

Irena Ocepek | Šavrinka | 2024

Irena Ocepek | “Be Water!” Said the Fairy | 2024

Johannes van den Bussche

In your statement, you speak about the "space between 0 and 1". How did this concept first emerge in your practice, and how do you translate such an abstract idea into visual form?

The idea of the "space between 0 and 1" emerges from an experience of inner attention. In this attention, it becomes clear that mental concepts – including the idea of a fixed self – are constructions. They structure our lived reality and function as such in everyday life, yet they are not identical with what precedes them. Behind these constructions, fields of awareness open up that can be experienced but not clearly named. In such moments, fixed positions and identities begin to dissolve or at least become permeable. Oppositions lose their rigidity, and what once appeared clearly defined reveals itself as fluid.

Zero and one stand for fixation, decision, and coding. What interests me, however, is the state before that fixation – the moment in which meaning has not yet solidified, in which perception has not yet been fully translated into language.

My work does not attempt to illustrate this space directly. Instead, it seeks to operate from within it. The images move in fields of tension between form and dissolution, structure and openness, assertion and suspension.

The "space between 0 and 1" is therefore not a theoretical model but a practice – a state of perception prior to naming and fixation, from which form, meaning, and identity arise in the first place.

Your works reference both indigenous tattoo traditions and digital systems like circuit boards and grids. How do you navigate the tension between ancient embodied knowledge and contemporary technological structures?

While reflecting on ideas like 0 and 1, black and white, I became interested in how human beings encode identity. Across history, people have translated their sense of self, their belonging, their context — whether tribe, territory or culture — into signs. These signs are then carried outward: in cave paintings, in tribal tattoos, in symbolic markings, and today in digital icons, avatars or emojis.

At its most basic level, coding is a distinction between presence and absence, mark and non-mark. Binary code reduces this to 0 and 1, black and white. At some point, I realized that many traditional tattoo structures operate in a similar way: information is created through the relationship between tattooed skin and

untouched skin — between positive and negative space.
This parallel fascinated me. The historical contexts change, the technologies change, but the underlying human impulse remains constant: the need to encode identity, to externalize belonging, to transmit meaning. Bringing organic, archaic visual systems into dialogue with contemporary technological structures is therefore not about contrast for its own sake. It is about continuity. The tools evolve, but the act of encoding the self persists.
In my work, grids and circuit-like structures do not oppose indigenous forms; they mirror them. Both are systems of inscription. Both are ways of organizing information. By placing them next to each other, I explore how identity is constructed, carried and transmitted across time.

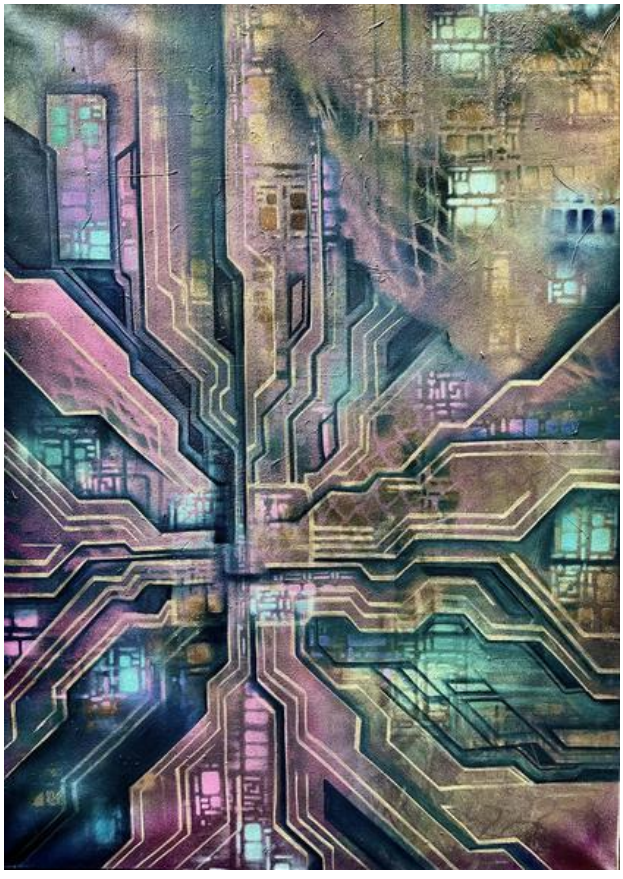
As both a painter and a tattooist, how does working directly on the human body influence your approach to painting on canvas?

Working on the human body fundamentally changes how one understands form, space and consequence. Skin is not a neutral surface. It moves, ages, breathes and carries history. Every line must respond to anatomy, to tension, to gravity. Decisions cannot be undone easily; they require precision and commitment.

This awareness carries over into my painting. Even on canvas, I do not treat the surface as flat or abstract. I approach it as something embodied — as a field with internal structure. Anatomical knowledge influences composition, layering and rhythm. Forms are rarely isolated; they relate to an implied body, even when the body is not explicitly depicted.
Tattooing also sharpens sensitivity to negative space. On skin, untouched areas are as important as inked ones. That understanding translates directly into my use of voids, interruptions and spatial breaks in painting.
Finally, tattooing involves responsibility. The image becomes part of someone's identity. This creates a discipline of intention. In painting, I allow more freedom, but the sense of commitment to the mark remains. Every gesture carries weight.
For me, canvas and skin are not separate worlds. They are different contexts for the same investigation: how form inhabits space and becomes part of lived experience.

The circular compositions in several works resemble mandalas or mechanical systems. Do you see them as spiritual diagrams, technological blueprints, or something beyond those categories?

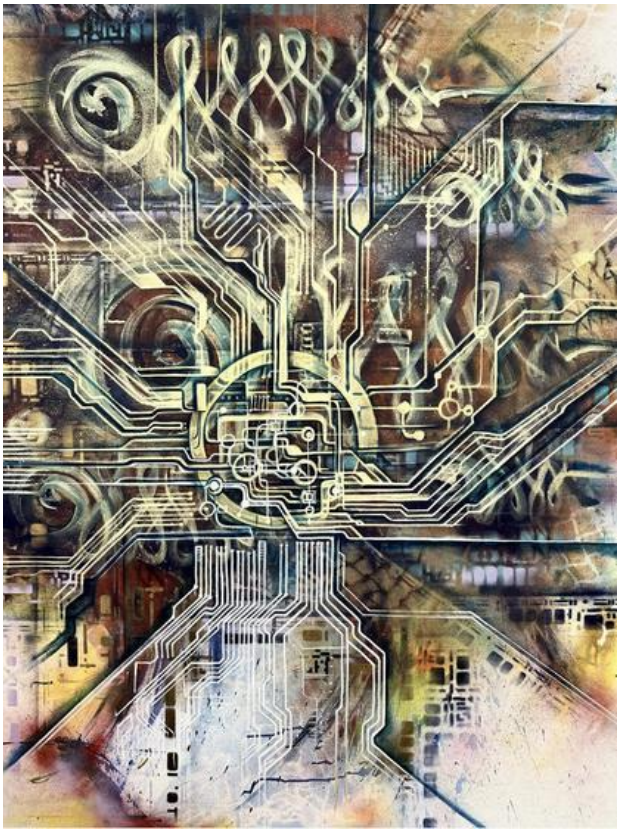
I understand why they are associated with mandalas or mechanical systems. Circular structures naturally suggest order, repetition and internal coherence. They



can evoke spiritual diagrams, but they can also resemble engineered systems or technical schematics. For me, they are neither strictly spiritual nor purely technological. They function as organizing structures. The circle allows elements to relate to one another without hierarchy. It creates a field in which tension can rotate rather than collapse.
Historically, circular forms have been used to map cosmologies, belief systems and metaphysical ideas. In contemporary culture, circular systems also appear in machinery, data visualization and network structures. I am interested in this overlap. The same geometry can carry very different meanings depending on context.
In my work, the circular compositions are not illustrations of doctrine or technology. They are frameworks for concentration. They hold movement and repetition while allowing rupture and deviation. If they resemble mandalas or mechanical systems, it is because both are attempts to give structure to complexity.
What matters to me is not the category, but the function: the circle as a container for energy, information and transformation.

Repetition and precision are central to your visual language. Is this process meditative, analytical, or somewhere in between?

It is both, but not in a romantic sense. Repetition creates rhythm, and rhythm can stabilize attention. In that way, the process has a meditative quality. It narrows focus and reduces distraction.



At the same time, precision requires analysis. Proportion, alignment and structural coherence are not accidental. They demand calculation and constant evaluation. Especially when working with grids, anatomical references or layered systems, decisions must be measured.
For me, the interesting point lies where these two modes intersect. Repetition becomes a tool for concentration, while precision prevents the work from dissolving into pure intuition. The analytical aspect anchors the process; the repetitive aspect deepens it.
I do not see meditation and analysis as opposites. In practice, they operate simultaneously. Attention becomes sharper through repetition, and structure becomes more alive through sustained focus.
The work emerges from that balance — disciplined, but not rigid; concentrated, but not detached.

You describe your paintings as “visual interfaces”. What kind of experience do you hope the viewer has when engaging with them?

When I describe my paintings as “visual interfaces,” I do not mean that they deliver a fixed message. An interface is not content; it is a threshold. It is a point of contact between systems.
I hope the viewer experiences a shift in perception rather than a clear narrative. Ideally, there is a moment of suspension — a pause in which interpretation has not yet fully settled. The work should not explain itself immediately. It should create a field that invites attention rather than consumption.

An interface also implies participation. The image is not complete without the viewer's projection, memory and internal associations. The tensions within the work — between structure and dissolution, organic and constructed elements — are mirrored in the viewer's own perceptual process.
I am not aiming for comfort or for confusion. What interests me is intensity of presence. If the viewer becomes more aware of their own act of looking — of how meaning forms and stabilizes — then the interface is functioning.
The painting does not provide answers. It offers a space in which perception becomes visible to itself.

How has living and working in Hamburg shaped your artistic perspective, especially in relation to global cultural coding?

Being born and raised in Hamburg provided a strong foundation for my artistic development. The city carries a dense historical and cultural depth, and many of the themes that later became central to my work were already present in my early environment.
As a child, my father took me to the Museum of Ethnology in Hamburg, where I encountered Māori meeting houses and other cultural artifacts firsthand. I remember being deeply fascinated by these spaces and forms. At the Museum of Hamburg History, I was equally captivated by the display of the skull attributed to the pirate Klaus Störtebeker. These early experiences exposed me to both global cultural narratives and the strong maritime history of the city.
Hamburg itself has a significant tattoo heritage. Christian Warlich, one of the first professional tattooists in Germany, established his registered business here. Herbert Hoffmann also shaped the city's tattoo culture. My own professional path began here in 1999. From Hamburg, I started traveling as a tattooist, following a tradition of departure that is deeply embedded in the city's port history.
These travels, including two years in New Zealand, allowed me to work closely with Māori artists, carvers and tattooists. The exchange was formative. My connection to Māori forms is not stylistic appropriation; it is rooted in lived experience and personal relationships. Tattooing became a way to engage with different visual languages and cultural systems directly.
Over time, these encounters — local history, global travel, traditional tattoo structures and contemporary systems — began to converge. What has emerged is not a quotation of specific cultures, but a visual language shaped by movement, exchange and long-term immersion.
Hamburg shaped me through depth and departure: a city grounded in history, yet always oriented outward. That tension continues to inform my work.

AlessAlicia

Aleksandra is a contemporary oil painter based in Cracow, Poland. With a background in architecture, she brings a sense of structure and precision to her surreal compositions. At university, she often felt limited by how creativity was defined, which only made her more determined to paint and express herself freely.
Aleksandra began her artistic journey by sharing her paintings on social media, feeling anxious about that first post. However, the response was so unexpectedly warm and welcoming that it gave her the courage to continue connecting directly with collectors and building a dedicated audience. After being noticed by an art curator and receiving professional guidance, she is now taking her first steps toward an institutional path.
Her goal is simple: to make art that speaks when words aren't enough, and to give people a moment of comfort, while also fighting her own battle.

Project Statement
My work explores mental health through symbolic imagery, shaped by my own experiences with depression and anxiety. Each piece is highly detailed and meticulously crafted, reflecting my complex thought process and fascination with layered meaning.

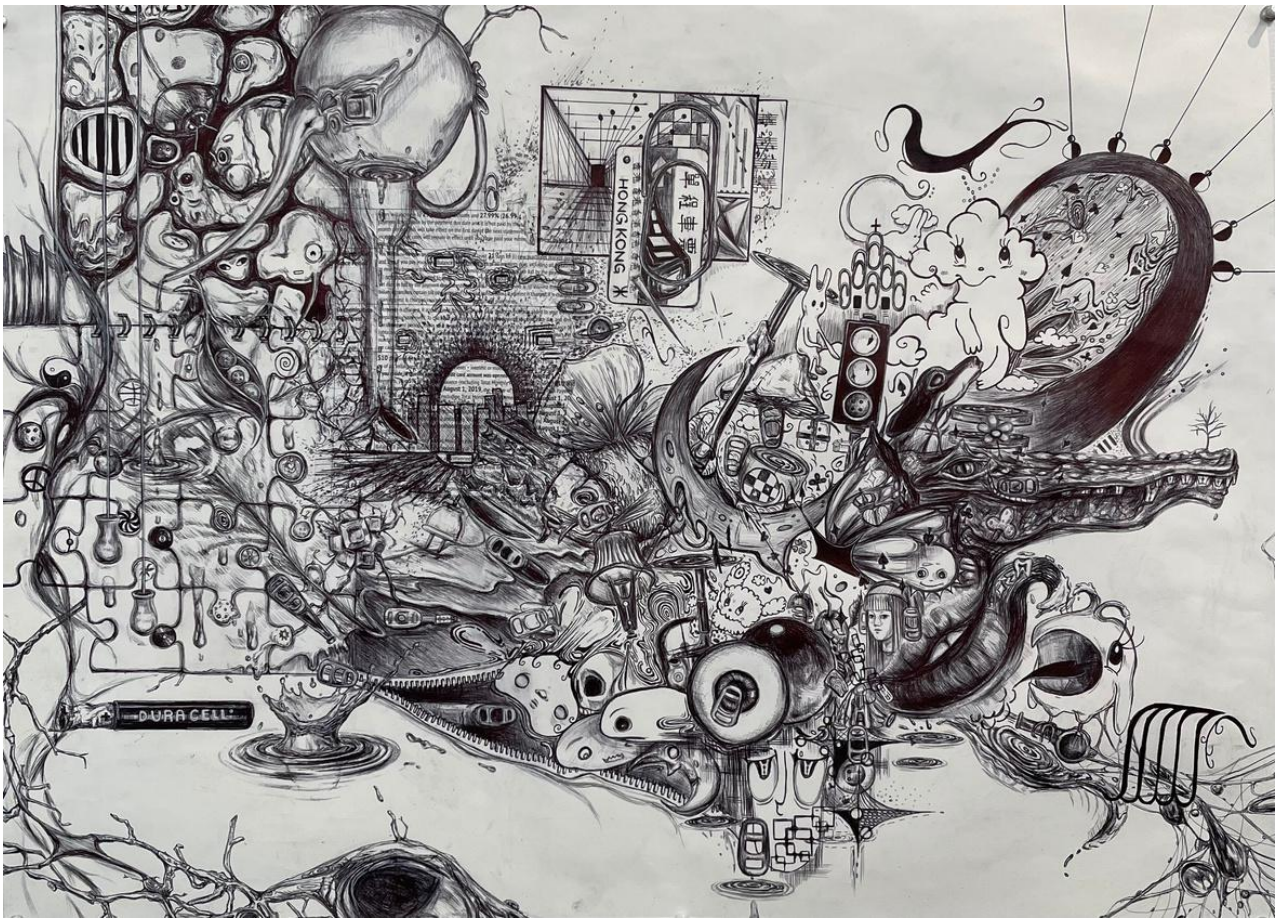
AlessAlicia | Let It Hurt

AlessAlicia | Healing

Lok Yiu Janice Lee

Janice Lee is a Hong Kong–born artist currently based in Vancouver and a second-year Visual Arts student at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Trained in highly realistic painting and drawing during her sixteen years in Hong Kong, her practice has since expanded toward interdisciplinary experimentation following her move to Canada in 2022. Since 2021, she has used her artistic practice to navigate mental health challenges and to explore complex ideas of self. Her work resists fixed stylistic boundaries, prioritizing instinct, material inquiry, and experimental approaches to form.

Project Statement
My practice explores the complex and shifting nature of self. Through painting and mixed media, I investigate how identity is shaped by memory, experience, and contradiction. I see art as a means of reflection and communication space where uncertainty, emotion, and inner conflict can be translated into visual form.
My creative process is intuitive and experience-driven. Each work begins with a personal moment or feeling that I wish to understand more deeply. I often start with
realistic drawing or observation, using familiar objects or figures as an entry point into a psychological narrative. From this structured beginning, the process gradually becomes more experimental as I allow instinct to guide the work's direction.
Trained in Hong Kong in highly realistic drawing and painting, I developed strong technical skills rooted in precision and accuracy. While this foundation shaped my discipline, it also limited my creative freedom. Moving to Canada transformed my understanding of art, allowing me to embrace intuition, experimentation, and expression beyond strict realism.
In my mixed media practice, I layer materials, textures, and imagery to reflect the fragmented and evolving nature of inner experience. I do not plan an outcome in advance; instead, the artwork develops organically through continuous response and adjustment.
Mistakes and unexpected results are welcomed as part of the process, often leading the work toward more honest and expressive forms.
Rather than committing to a single medium or style, I remain open to exploration and change. My work reflects an ongoing journey of self-discovery—one that values vulnerability, curiosity, and growth. Through experimentation and material exploration, I translate personal experiences into visual language, continuing to question, understand, and redefine who I am.



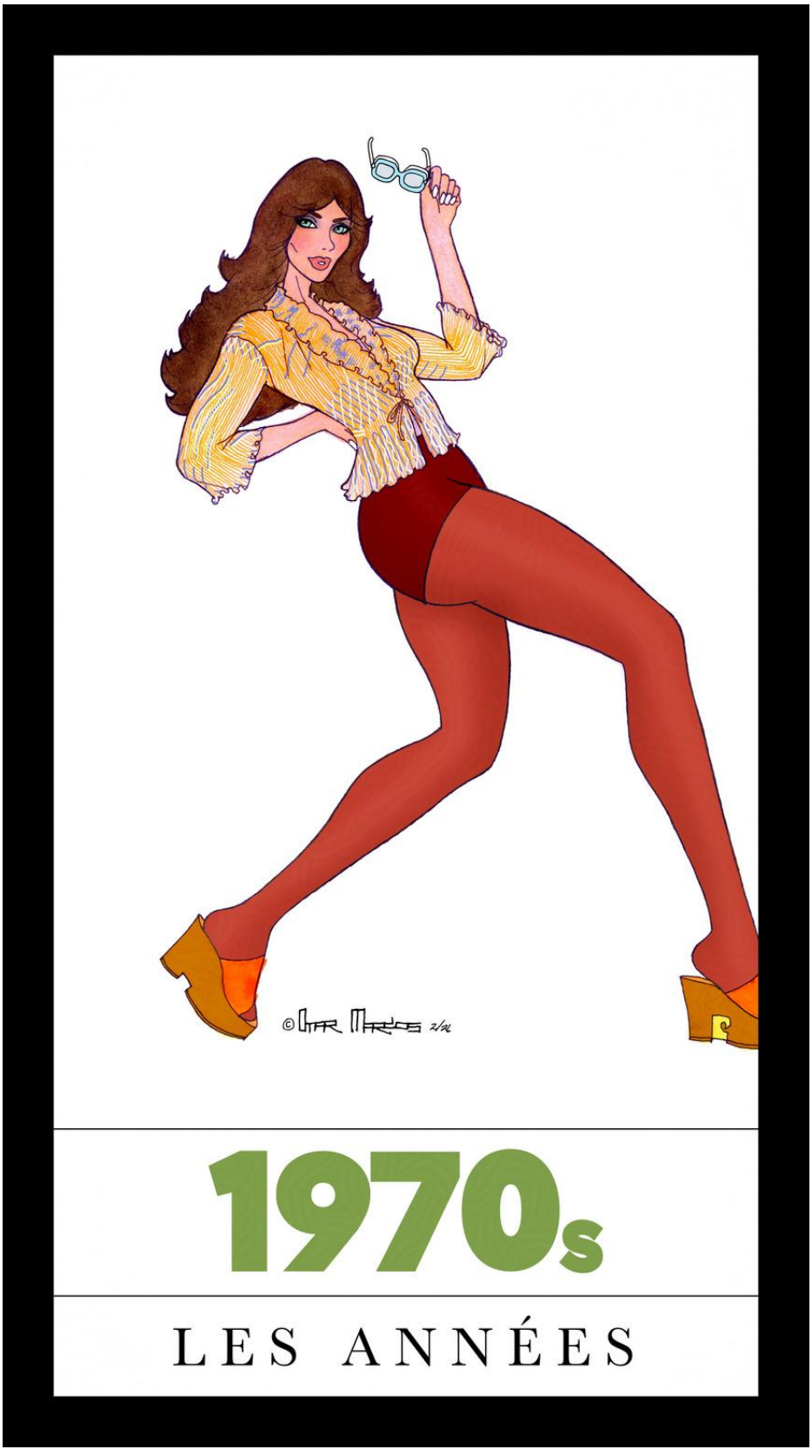
Layan Raed is a Bahraini multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores surrealism, cosmic symbolism, and emotional narrative. Working across digital and traditional mediums, her work draws from astronomy, science fiction, and psychological themes to create vibrant and immersive visual compositions.
Her artistic language often merges celestial elements with subtle references to landscape and place, reflecting an ongoing dialogue between personal identity and the broader universe. Through expressive color and dreamlike imagery, her work investigates memory, transformation, and the emotional landscapes that shape human experience.
Layan works under the artistic identity Magnanimous by Layan, a practice rooted in the idea of art as an expansive and limitless creative space. Her work has been featured in regional publications including Gulf Daily News, Gulf Weekly, Woman This Month, and The Daily Tribune. She was also nominated for Woman of the Year 2024 in the Arts & Design category.
She continues to develop visual narratives that bridge cosmic imagination with contemporary storytelling.

Artist Statement
My work explores the relationship between inner emotion and the vastness of the universe. Through vibrant colors, surreal compositions, and cosmic imagery, I create visual worlds that reflect psychological states, memory, and identity. Astronomy has always been a central source of inspiration for me. The idea that when we look at the stars we are actually looking into the past deeply influences how I approach storytelling in my art.
I often merge celestial elements with symbols of my homeland, Bahrain, creating a dialogue between the personal and the universal. Planets, galaxies, and infinite skies appear alongside familiar landscapes, forming dreamlike environments where time, emotion, and place intersect.
My process is intuitive and expressive. I use color and movement to translate feelings that are often difficult to articulate into visual form. Many of my works reflect themes of healing, transformation, and self-discovery, turning personal experiences into cosmic narratives.
Ultimately, my art invites viewers to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the sense of wonder that exists both within ourselves and in the universe around us.

Omar Marcos graduated with a degree in graphic design, yet his interests also extend to various other artistic fields including photography, illustration, and fine art. As such, he attempts to bring his bold, graphic look to every creative endeavor he partakes in.

Project Statement
Les Années (The Decades) is an ongoing series celebrating the intersections between fashion & art, depicting designs of a past decade using artistic styles, color palettes, and typography evocative of that period.

Omar Marcos | Les Annees 1970 | 2023

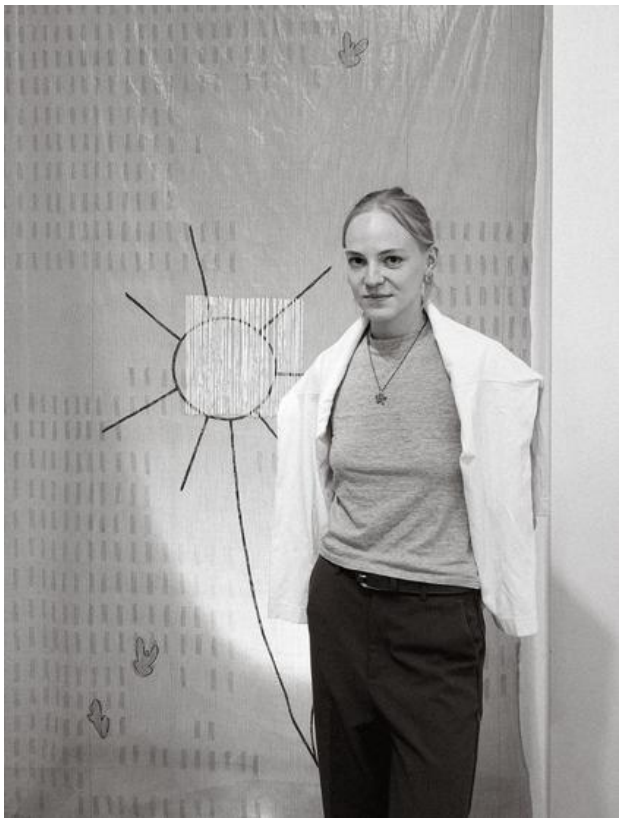


1990s

LES ANNÉES

Omar Marcos | Les Annees 1990 | 2026

Natalia Semenova



Your practice moves between intimate, wall-based textile works and large-scale public or site-specific installations. How do you decide which format a particular idea requires?

I believe each idea has its own image; colour, material, size, texture and placement serve its unfolding. When an idea first appears, the image can be indistinct, while sometimes particular fragments reveal themselves immediately. When I work with the urban environment I often start from the site itself — its history and the personal memories it awakens in me. Scale affects composition and the viewer's perception in different ways: a large format defines the environment and creates a sense of scale and significance, while smaller works demand close inspection and attention to detail. I am drawn to the contrast that occurs when a large form, on closer inspection, is made up of finer parts, such as embroidery.

Natalia Semenova | Tracing-thoughts | 2023

Weaving is central to your practice, both materially and conceptually. What does the act of weaving give you that other media cannot?

Tactility and manual labour; variability — weaving can be both a flat image and a volumetric object. I look for interactions between weaving and other materials, for example paper and graphics. The sequence of making is also important: whereas painting and drawing are built up in layers and often allow for corrections — erasing, scraping or painting over — in weaving the work proceeds "from the bottom up": the design is considered in advance and is gradually formed row by row with threads. Corrections are practically impossible. I appreciate this impossibility of "rewinding" as a concept. Sometimes I have to accept an error made long ago and unnoticed, or invest a great deal of time to correct it — there is something very life-like in that.

You often describe weaving as a meditative process. How does repetition and manual labor shape your relationship to time while working?

Natalia Semenova | Memories-in-coral | 2025

The sense of duration I experience in weaving is important to me: it grounds and redirects focus to the process itself, emphasising the significance of sequential effort. I would like to convey this sense of duration and its importance to viewers. Physical, moral and temporal investments become visible — and perhaps even measurable — in weaving through the number of threads and stitches.

The theme of waiting appears as a key concept in your work. Is this state rooted more in personal experience or in observing social and urban environments?

These are interconnected. To some extent the theme comes from personal experience, but personal experience is always formed within a social context. I grew up in the 2000s in a small Russian town where there was a constant expectation of change: "any moment something will happen, and then everything will be different." There was also a personal, childhood expectation to grow up, to change myself and to change the world. Today the culture still focuses on results and "key" moments; with time you realise that what matters often happens in the movement between those points — you learn to slow down and to value the process.

Construction netting plays an important role in your installations. What attracted you to this material, and how did it become a symbol of unfinished transformation in your work?

Construction netting is an alien object that sharply contrasts with its surroundings due to its colour, texture and synthetic nature. Although the green colour might have been intended to mimic nature, in practice it works differently. The netting carries a persistent association with repair work: its function is fencing and safety. We cannot see what happens inside; the process of change is hidden from view, yet we are aware of it.

Your public interventions often exist outside institutional frameworks. What freedoms or challenges does working in urban space bring compared to gallery or museum contexts?

In fact, I prefer to cooperate with institutions or at least to intrude gently into the urban fabric. For example, the project Wallpaper was carried out under the supervision of the Committee for State Control, Use and Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments of Saint Petersburg. Working in the city requires complex coordination: the aim is to introduce art without affecting the integrity of the architecture — no drilling or painting of facades. In this respect construction netting and embroidery are convenient: netting is constantly present in the city and allows transformations without touching buildings, while embroidery weaves neatly into fences and textures, is easy to untangle and disappear, and yet alters the site's image and meanings. This soft intrusion and the contrast between a coarse material and delicate work attract me.

Your work suggests an alternative way of engaging with change, focusing on transition rather than outcome. Do you see this as a form of resistance to contemporary instability?

In a sense — yes. Attention to process and to intermediate states offers an alternative to a culture oriented toward quick results and "highlight" moments. An emphasised focus on transition is a way to build a more resilient attitude to change and to resist fixation on instantaneous successes.

Natalia Semenova | Tracing-thoughts | 2023

Mirjana Belegiski

In my artistic expression, I primarily use acrylic paints, with a strong emphasis on texture and layering. Through portraits of women and animals, I explore emotion, character, and the subtle expressions of the inner world, striving for each piece to carry a personal story and a powerful visual impact.
I do not express creativity only on canvas — as a preschool teacher, I bring it into my daily work with children, encouraging imagination, emotional development, and freedom of expression from an early age. I believe that art has a profound educational and humanistic role, and that a love for creation should be nurtured from the earliest years.
I actively participate in artistic and humanitarian projects, presenting my work through exhibitions and social media, continuously building and refining my distinctive artistic voice.

Cara Lee Wade

Your project Memory is a Whisper is rooted in personal loss. At what moment did grief transform into a creative ritual for you?

I originally started making these photographs when both of my grandmothers were diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in the same year. It wasn't until after they passed from Alzheimer's related complications, again in the same year, that I realized that this work was transitioning into more than just a personal form of art therapy. A few months prior, for my first tenure track job, I moved 1000 miles from home and for the first time in my life so from my people. I think this familial solitude was the catalyst for feeling like I needed to retain memory on a deeper level. The scope widened and research became a much larger part of my creative process. It was also when I started having less direct proximity access to the actual objects of memory. This meant that the hunt for “treasures" became part of my ritual as well. I've always considered myself to be a process driven artist, meaning that the steps taken getting to the creation of the piece of art are as important as the making of the art and these process phases started being much more of an investment in the work.

You describe yourself as both a witness and a vessel for the women who came before you. How do you navigate this dual role in your self-portraiture?

This is a great question, thank you. I think I navigate this in two ways. One, is that I have to constantly remember that these are not really photographs of me, Cara Lee Wade. I am making photographs of an amalgamation of a woman, a spirit formed of words, sounds, smells and all things that cannot be represented in a photograph. She is a woman who has characteristics of me because I share traits with and resemble my Momma, my Granny, my Gram, and all the Greats I never met. When I'm photographing my neck, I'm photographing a recessive gene feature like my Momma. If my knees are included in an image, I'm sharing the Osteoarthritis that I inherited, less thrilled about that one.Second, I am telling these stories in a way that makes the imagery performative. By keeping a small part of myself as an outsider, looking into a past I’ll never fully know, I am presenting the photographs as still frame tableaus which allow me to be an invested but slightly unreliable narrator. Unreliable, because the stories do stray. Unintentional fabrication, due to loss of details and going back to the original content of the work, loss of memory, allowing for small windows of inaccuracy in the storytelling.

Many of your images feel suspended between presence and absence. How do you intentionally construct this tension visually?

Thank you, that is a conscious choice because I feel that it is a visual representation of the oblivion of lost memories and

those just out of reach. There have been many occasions when I'm trying to remember the history of an object or the story of a location or a dress or an apron and I just can't find the words. My camera also helps create the visual tension. It has a controllable tilt shift which allows for the choice of a very shallow and narrow plane of focus which can make the viewer feel a little like they're in a dream world. This feeling is essential to my work; it lives in nostalgia but also, in a smaller sense, the unsettled tension I think you are referring to.

Objects appear to carry emotional weight in your photographs - teacups, dresses, domestic interiors. How do you choose which artifacts become part of an image?

Objects do carry emotional weight in these images, very heavily in fact. Sometimes the objects actually do belong to a woman in my family, my grandmother, an aunt, my momma. These objects have stories inside them, and I build the images around the memory that the object contains. Often the objects are replicas or substitutions, and I find them in antique stores, junk shops, or thrift stores. I will walk around an antique store and see a little piece of history and it's almost like a jolt of electricity and I'm suddenly propelled back to a moment of childhood or back to some anecdote and almost instantly an image begins to form in my head. I have so very awkwardly stood in the middle of an antique store booth conceptualizing on numerous occasions, like a weird statue, clutching something like a rusty sifter, blocking some other customers path. I once spent weeks looking for a 1980s issue of a TV Guide because I needed a coffee cup to sit on top of it for the piece, Immeasurable Distances, and I searched and I searched and I searched and eventually found one; it had Elvis on it. Ironically, in the photograph you can't tell that it's a TV Guide, It could have been anything, but in my mind, it was paramount that the coffee cup sat on a TV Guide.

The use of a 1947 4x5 Graflex Press camera is a deliberate choice. What does working with this camera offer conceptually and emotionally that digital photography does not?

I appreciate that you used the word emotionally in your question, emotionally digital photography leaves me cold. While I teach digital photography (and have for almost 25 years) and I understand and respect all of its wonderful traits, analog photography and a 4x5 camera speaks to me as a process driven artist.
My choice to use Graflex Press Camera comes down to two things - a little bit of practicality in that it is self-housed so that it is portable in a way that many view cameras are not and when I was in graduate school and a poor student, pinching all my pennies, I got a really good deal on this camera and now I'm very emotionally attached to this camera and continue to use it. It is almost eighty years old and still works like a dream, although I have purchased close to a dozen vintage self-timers as they do not seem to have been nearly as well constructed.
Emotionally, the experience of making a photograph is very different from digital photography. The Graflex is heavy. It takes time to set up, getting under the dark cloth, adjusting the bellows, the tilt shift, the super fine focusing, seeing the image upside down on the ground glass. The film is a bit precious. It is expensive, no rapid fire clicking. I typically take no more than 12 images per scene, so I photograph with intent. It is all so intimate. I have to pause and embrace the slowness, something I do not do in most aspects of my life.

Alzheimer's disease reshapes memory and identity. How has witnessing this transformation influenced your understanding of photography as a medium of preservation?

Photography has always been a medium of preservation for me. The idea that a seemingly blank piece of white paper submerged into trays of seemingly clear chemicals under a red light produce an image and that piece of paper can last forever is nothing short of magic. Photographs do freeze a moment in time forever, look at world history since the mid-1800s, but life does go on and that photograph will become a future lie – people are born, age and die, cities build and crumble, conflicts win and lose... One of the things at the heart of this work is bringing those lies back to life in a truth that doesn't call false to the past but suspends the narrative in a way that respects the ancestry while spinning new yarns.

Your images feel tactile and archival. How important is materiality - the print, the edition, the physical object - to the meaning of your work?

The materiality is essential to the work. A couple of times over the years, the paper I used has been discontinued and I have been utterly devastated. Change is hard, but I adapt. The edition size has stayed at 25 to keep the work precious. Recently, I have been thinking about the physical object, and the next phase of the project is going to include actual objects. The objects have grown increasingly more important in the work and then some images I've taken myself out altogether and let the object be the storyteller. Late last year, my sister found an old Betty Crocker recipe box that belonged to our Gram. She was looking for a pecan pie recipe. Tucked in with the printed recipes, we found a bunch of handwritten ones...we found five different pecan pie recipes among them. I was drawn to the recipes that had handwritten little anecdotal notes in them (like Bob liked it better with a little ice cream on the side). I have isolated all of the recipes with notes from the box and have been searching vintage, antique, and junk shops for aprons. My intent is to print the recipes on the aprons and then starch them so that they are free standing object elements to complement the wall hanging photographs.

Giacomo Viegas de Sousa

Based in Western Germany, the 30-year-old artist has developed an independent artistic practice since 2018. Working across collage and painting, the work engages with visual material drawn from everyday environments, particularly advertising imagery and found color surfaces. Elements used in the compositions are sometimes photographed and later reassembled, bringing together analog and digital processes. Alongside careful consideration of composition and format, chance is not only allowed but deliberately provoked as a generative force within the work.

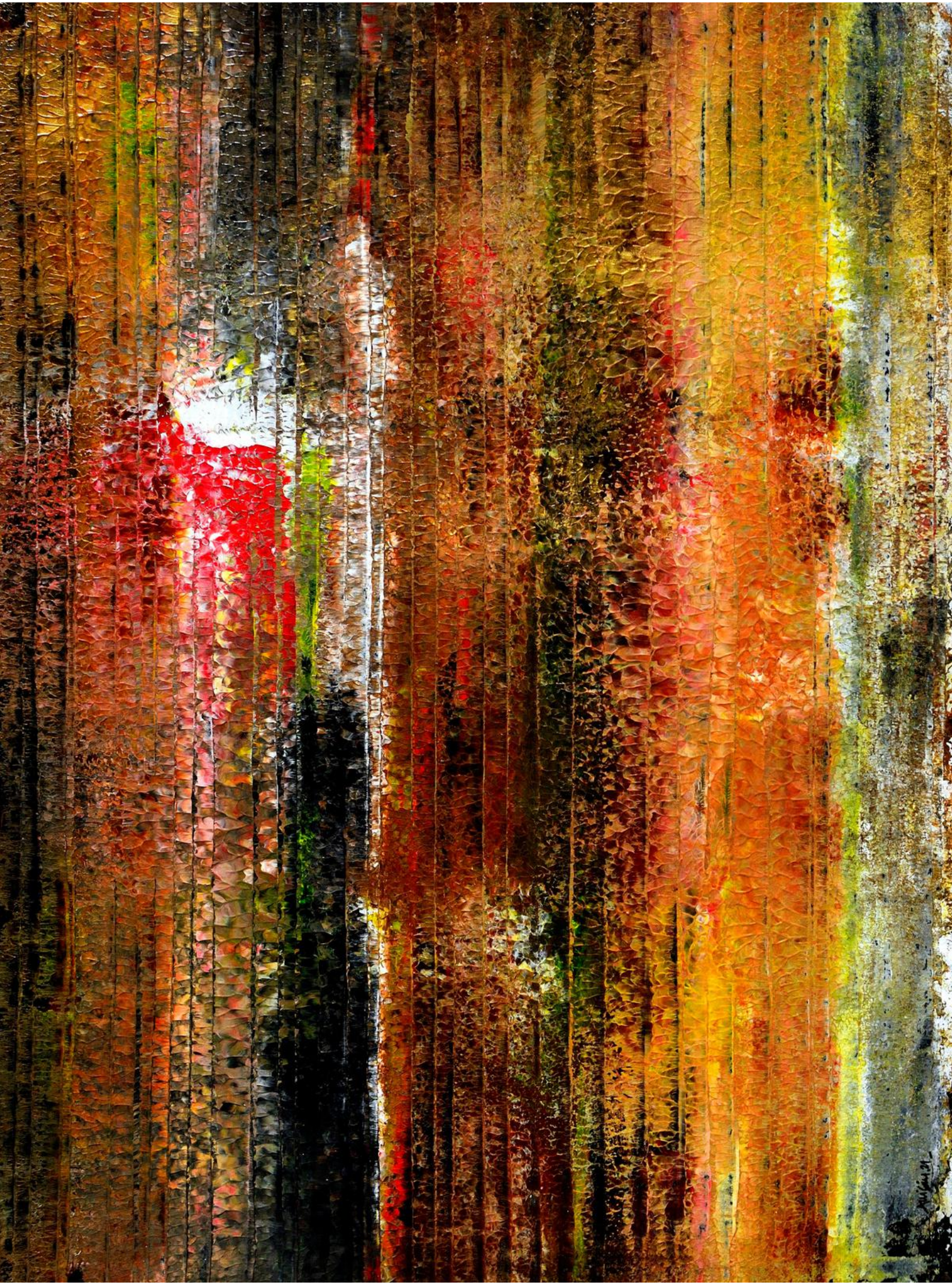
Project Statement
I am deeply inspired by the imagery and icons of the Renaissance, as well as greek and roman myths. At the same time, I work with 1980s and 90s advertising material from old magazines. By combining these contrasting elements, I place them in a new tension, provoking with bold contours, contradictions and unusual forms. My work is often deeply emotional, personal, sometimes political, and pushes viewers toward reflection.

Giacomo Viegas de Sousa | Seeing Blind | 2024

Giacomo Viegas de Sousa | Anna Girasole | 2025

Alexandru Crișan (b. Bucharest, Romania 1978) is a visual artist interested in the existential complementarity of objective and nonobjective forms of expression. As far as the latter is to be unpacked, his “counter-professional” career in photography began in 2008; his paintings stand, for almost three decades, as the most intimate, borderline atavistic, acts of divulgence. Assuming that taxonomy is of any consequence, he is partial to fine-art photography and Abstract Expressionism. Crișan’s works have been presented in over a dozen international exhibitions, have been published in over 50 peer-reviewed magazines, have received over 500 international awards and nominations, and are part of several privately owned collections and art galleries.

Project Statement
[Q#5]- QUIRITATIO
acrylic painting on handmade paper, 70 x 52cm, 2020
[Q#5] “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” It was the novelty and the sterility of a mid-Quarantine. It was, indeed, Dickensian in its unravelling, reeking of imaginary, unsavory characters and cautionary tales… ‘twas a true “tale of two cities”: one outside my window, vacant, pointless, yet alluring like never before; the other one, a jailbird inside my head, since my abode seemed breached by a myriad of emotions running amok. Between those two incongruous threads of reality– the impetuousness of a quiritatio, a cry for help that seemed marooned between TV sound bites and online angst, between térébenthine fetor and home-cooked meals eroticism. It all converged towards the acrylic exorcism that, upon your gaze, may break down the fourth wall of pandemic rigmarole.



Alexandru Crișan | [Q#5]- QUIRITATIO

Polina Skrypnikova

Your works describe a single hour in the life of a child named N. Why did you choose this compressed timeframe, and what does it allow you to reveal about memory and perception?

An hour is a moment that can contain everything: anticipation and completion, brightness and shadow. It is a unit of time that can be held and measured. An hour repeats itself, yet it is never the same — just like the memories we return to again and again. Something is rediscovered, something is lost forever. For the main character, however, this is simply everyday life in which he grows and learns. Memory has not yet divided the world into “important” and “unimportant.” Everything is equal, everything matters, and perhaps only someday will it echo in his memory. It was important for me to show how many details can be seen in what seems like an ordinary situation. One only has to pause — and the miraculous reveals itself within the simple.

Dave Behm | Into the wild Lion | 2026

The contrast between the vivid mother and the monochrome grandmother is striking. What emotional or symbolic roles do these figures play in the narrative?

Mother is an escape from greyness. She clings to fading youth, to brightness, as if it were salvation. In public she is chaos and confidence, perpetual motion. It seems she fears nothing. But behind the door of her room, anxiety only intensifies — her tone becomes muted, hope is excluded. She lives in constant tension between who she wants to appear to be and what she fears losing.
Grandmother is calm after the storm. She has long erased external chaos from her life, forgiven everyone, and blames no one. Her monochrome is a double symbol: on one hand, outward serenity; on the other, a quiet premonition of the end. Colors have lost their significance for her, as have other people, their opinions, and conversations. She already stands on the other side — the place Mother has not yet dared to look toward.
Between them is the child. He does not yet know that these two worlds are incompatible — and that is his freedom. His role is that of an independent observer.

In your paintings, familiar interiors feel unstable — full of silence, tension, and ambiguity. How do you construct this psychological atmosphere through color and form?

I believe the sense of anxiety is rooted in broken, trembling lines and the disruption of integrity. A work that appears conditionally stable gradually begins to vibrate and fill with unexpectedly emerging brushstrokes — sharp and unpredictable. Charcoal appears within tempera, light areas break into drips and stains. They burst in uninvited, destroy the structure, and undermine “perfection.” For example, in the work float01, anxiety is expressed not through the character but through the background — the space that the “mother” is unable to control.

Childlike imagination appears through fantastical animals and bright colors. How do you balance innocence with the underlying sense of anxiety in these scenes?

Childlike imagination is not an escape from reality but a way of living through it. A child draws blue cows with wings and pink horses with horns not because the world is beautiful,

Polina Skrypnikova | Float

but because fantasy is a way to tame chaos — to transform fear into color and anxiety into form. Naivety here is neither stupidity nor ignorance; it is a mechanism of survival.
Yet anxiety still seeps in. It does not shout — it seeps. Into the background. Into the trembling line. Into a color that becomes too bright to be sincere. I do not oppose naivety to anxiety — I show how one is born from the other. The brighter the fantasy, the clearer the shadow. The more naive the image, the more evident what it is trying to escape.

You work in both painting and ceramics. What ideas can only be expressed in clay, and what must remain on canvas?

For me, painting is an inner monologue. It is the moment when you project emotion into emptiness and fully control its path. The canvas tolerates doubt: you can paint over it, redo it, begin again. Time here is subordinate — it can be erased. For this reason, in painting I explore anxiety as an intrusion; the blank surface is a space for reflection.
Ceramics, on the other hand, is a dialogue. No matter how well you know a person, you cannot predict their response. The same is true of clay: however precisely you plan the form, the material always answers in its own way. That is its beauty — and its risk. You can never be one hundred percent certain of the result. Therefore, in ceramics anxiety is not an intrusion but the structure of the material itself. You cannot erase it — only accept it and interact with it.

Your statement mentions unpredictability — especially in the firing process. How do you collaborate with chance, and when do you intervene to maintain control?

I do not fight chance — I negotiate with it. There are moments where control is necessary. The form of the object, wall thickness, decoration — these are my words in the dialogue. I define the boundaries, set the direction, embed the intention.
But then there is a point where I let go. The glaze is applied, the work is placed in the kiln. I know how a particular composition behaves at a given temperature, but I can never predict exactly whether a crack will appear or how colors will merge — and I do not want to know. Chance, for me, is not an obstacle but a co-author. It brings in what I could never invent myself. Sometimes it is precisely chance that transforms a technically correct object into a living one.
When do I intervene? Only if I see that chance is destroying the concept rather than enriching it. But most often I let it speak. That is the essence: to accept what cannot be controlled. This is also close to what I address in the series about the child N. Adults try to control everything — yet the world still breaks in. One can only learn to listen to it.

Your work navigates between anxiety and naïve joy. Do you see these states as opposites, or as inseparable parts of human experience?

Naïve joy without anxiety is naivety in the worst sense — blindness, a refusal to see. Anxiety without joy is paralysis, fear that immobilizes. Together, however, they create wholeness — the very wholeness we lose as we grow up. We learn to separate: this is joy, it may be shown; this is anxiety, it must be hidden. We build partitions within ourselves so as not to go mad, and fail to notice that the more partitions there are, the less truth remains.
Child N has not yet built these walls. For him, a purple bird and his mother's table are not in conflict — they are the same world. He draws bright animals because he can, while still feeling tension he cannot yet name. His naivety does not deny anxiety — it contains it. That is its strength.
My task as an artist is to return to this state — not to childhood itself, but to that capacity to contain. So that joy is not an escape from reality, and anxiety does not destroy the ability to feel joy. So that both states may exist side by side — without shame, without fear, without division.

Polina Skrypnikova | Float

Pamela Torres (AKA Madam Melva) is a happily married emerging artist currently living in New Port Richey, Florida. A Monmouth University graduate formerly from New Jersey, Pam has participated in various exhibits primarily in Carrollwood, Tampa and St. Petersburg. Rather than paint, Pam developed a knack for creating eye-popping illustrations by juxtaposing soft pastels with colored pencil, marker, and even liquid paper.
In 2023, she was selected as a finalist in two Women in Art contests, "Wild and Free" hosted by the Blue Space Gallery, and two Art-Collide shows themed "Life, Death & Love" and "Beautiful | Grotesque." Between 2023 and 2024, Pam successfully had her art shown to wider audiences once on Influx Gallery's website and multiple times by the Pearview Gallery.
She also earned Special Recognition on Light Space & Time's 13th "All Women" show, where 720 artists from all over the world competed.
From December 1st, 2025 to February 1st, 2026, Pamela's very first solo exhibit titled "Grace in the Grotesque" was unleashed on the Sommer Haus online gallery, exposing 10 of her best and most bizarre artworks to a wider audience.

Project Statement
Regardless of subject matter, I want my body of work to consist of conversation pieces, images that spectators will talk about and remember long after leaving the room.

Pam Torres | Gorgon Wound | 2024

Pam Torres | Cruelty | 2025

Sílvia Bassas

Sílvia Bassas | Am I cute | 2026

Your project is rooted in everyday moments with your two cats, Pinda and Kaas. What made you realize that these small, domestic scenes were worth turning into a long-term artistic project?

From the beginning, I never consciously decided to turn these scenes into a long-term artistic project. It happened in a very organic way. Adopting Pinda and Kaas after never having lived with animals before opened up an entirely new space of attention in my daily life.
Understanding them is not about languages in the human sense but about paying attention to their rituals, habits, small gestures, and unexpected positions to fall asleep. Drawing became a way of processing that observation and holding on to fleeting moments that might otherwise pass unnoticed.
Over time, I realised that these simple domestic scenes can carry a subtle beauty. They are modest, everyday moments, yet they contain intimacy, tenderness and sometimes a quiet strangeness.

Sílvia Bassas | Beauty sleep | 2026

You work from spontaneous photographs and then translate them into digital line drawings. What do you decide to keep, and what do you intentionally leave out during this transformation?

When I translate a spontaneous photograph into a digital line drawing, my primary focus is always the cat's presence — its silhouette, posture, and gesture. The body position often carries the emotional core of the scene, so I try to preserve that essence above all else. The surrounding space becomes secondary. In most cases, I intentionally remove background elements to avoid visual noise and allow the figure to breathe, although occasionally I include wider spaces when they meaningfully contribute to the atmosphere.
For instance, I do not reproduce the patterns of their fur, even though one is an orange cat, and the other is a black-and-white tuxedo cat. Instead, I draw them as clean silhouettes. What I choose to emphasise are subtle expressive features — the whiskers and vibrissae sensory hair. Interestingly, because their physical differences are reduced, identification shifts from appearance to personality. Friends who know them sometimes try to guess which cat I've

Sílvia Bassas | Catch some zzzs | 2026

illustrated based solely on the gesture or posture, associating certain movements with their character.

Your illustrations use a single line colour on a block-colour background. How did you arrive at this visual language, and what does this limitation give you as an artist?

The decision to use a single line colour against a block colour background was key in developing a consistent visual language for my illustrations. It was a conscious choice, closely tied to the project's focus on simple, everyday moments; two tones are enough to convey the mood.
Working within this limitation presents both challenges and opportunities. The contrast between the line and background must be carefully considered — often a dark background with a light line, or vice versa — which requires a thoughtful selection of complementary colours. Finding combinations that feel distinct for each illustration can be surprisingly difficult, especially when creating a series for platforms like Instagram, where I want every piece to have its own personality.
At the same time, this constraint encourages experimentation. I can explore thematic "colour capsules," creating mini-collections where a few harmonised tones unify multiple illustrations, while still allowing each drawing to retain individuality.

Cats are often associated with comfort, routine, and stillness. What do Pinda and Kaas reveal to you about time, rest, and everyday rituals?

Observing Pinda and Kaas has made me more aware of the natural rhythm of daily life — something that is often overlooked in our busy, constantly stimulated world. Their simple routines — stretching in the sun, pausing for a nap, circling a favourite spot before settling down — remind me that stillness and rest are not idle, but essential and intentional. Watching them has made me more attentive to subtle changes in light, movement, and mood, and inspired me to reflect on how we, too, can find meaning and calm in the small, repeated acts of everyday life.

Many of your works feel calm, intimate, and almost meditative. Is this atmosphere something you consciously aim for, or does it emerge naturally from the process?

I do agree that the illustrations often feel calm and intimate; it arises quite naturally from the cats inhabiting the space differently. Interestingly, when I've tried illustrating some of the dogs I have in the family, the energy immediately felt different: — more dynamic, more outward. So rather than aiming for a meditative atmosphere, I would say it arises as a natural consequence of observing the cats closely and translating their gestures through a reduced and minimal visual language.

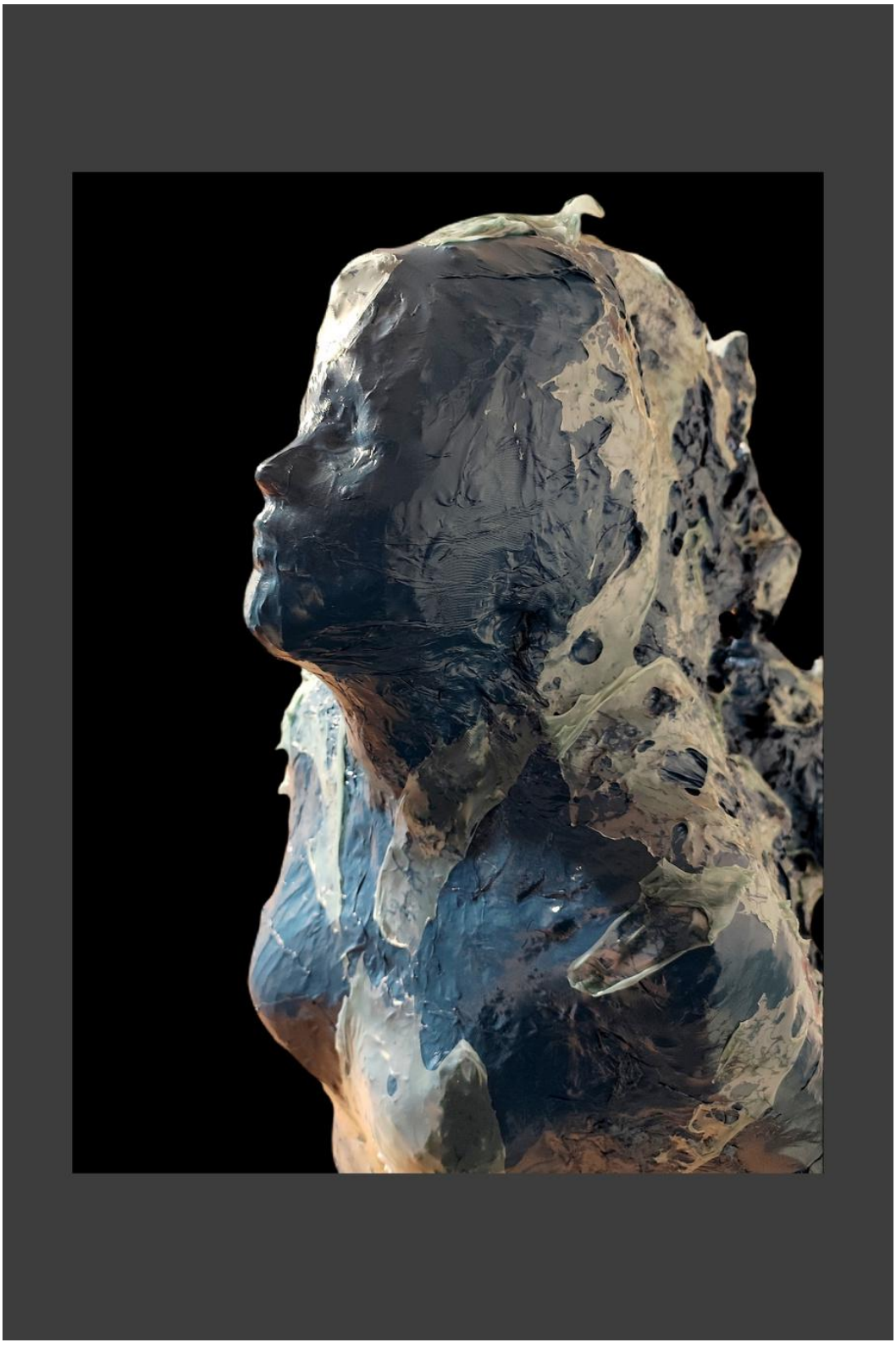
How do viewers usually react to your work? Do they recognize their own everyday moments in these scenes?

Most of the feedback I receive so far comes from friends and people who know Pinda and Kaas personally, so there is often an element of recognition and affection in their reactions. They enjoy identifying specific gestures or attitudes that they have witnessed themselves, which creates a sense of shared intimacy. People who live with cats tend to respond in a particularly personal way. They often recognize similar gestures in their own daily routine and project their own experiences onto the drawings.
Viewers mention that the project has a clear and coherent visual identity, and that the aesthetic feels aligned with what I am trying to represent. That consistency seems to strengthen the emotional impact of the scenes.

What role does art play in your life right now, and how do you imagine this practice evolving in the future?

Right now, art occupies a very personal and exploratory space in my life. This project began without a specific ambition or long-term plan; it started as a spontaneous creative practice that I currently share mainly through Instagram. In that sense, it remains something close to a hobby — a space of freedom and experimentation alongside my professional path.
At the same time, I feel that the project is gradually opening new possibilities. I am exploring ways to materialise the illustrations beyond the digital format — perhaps as prints or small decorative pieces that can inhabit other people's homes, echoing the domestic intimacy that inspired them. I have also received suggestions about developing a children's storybook or short illustrated narratives based on these characters, which I find both surprising and inspiring.
For now, I see this practice as a process of learning and refinement. I am interested in letting it evolve organically, while remaining attentive to opportunities that feel coherent with its essence.

Devid Biscontini is a visual artist whose research focuses on sculpture as a process of transformation of matter and the human figure.
Through the use of plastic layering, membranes, and gestural interventions, he investigates the body as an unstable presence, suspended between emergence and dissolution.
His works explore the relationship between vulnerability, identity, and the memory of making, favoring surfaces marked by tension, compression, and traces of action.
The work is part of a contemporary dialogue between figuration and abstraction, where form does not represent the body but records its evolution.
He lives and works in Italy, developing exhibition projects in which matter becomes a critical space of perception and experience.



Varsha Khatri

Once immersed in the fast-paced world of IT, Varsha discovered her true calling in art after moving to Dubai. What began as a lifelong passion evolved into a full-time artistic journey in 2018, and by 2021 she was professionally exhibiting her work across the city.

A self-taught artist, she works primarily with acrylics, textured mediums, and gold leaf, creating vibrant compositions inspired by culture, nature, and the beauty found in everyday moments. Her art radiates positivity and connection, inviting viewers to pause, feel, and carry a sense of joy into their spaces.

For Varsha, art is not just expression — it is connection.

Project Statement

Art, for me, is a celebration of life and connection. Through layers of color, texture, and mixed media, I translate emotions, memories, and everyday moments into visual stories. I am drawn to bold, radiant hues and tactile surfaces, often using acrylics and texture paste to create depth and movement.

My work is inspired by culture, nature, and the quiet beauty that surrounds us but often goes unnoticed. Each piece is created intuitively, allowing the process to guide me. My intention is simple: to spread positivity, spark curiosity, and leave the viewer with a sense of joy — the same joy I experience while creating.

Varsha Khatri | Enlightenment | 2023

Varsha Khatri | Celebration | 2023

Interview

MM

Your statement questions whether we are living life itself or merely its interface. How does this idea shape your visual language and artistic decisions?

For many of us, interactions now only take place through screens. It is from this situation that the question arises «Are we dealing with life or with its interface?» Human interactions are increasingly biased by the technology they use to subsist. Therefore, my works act in harmony with the sensory shift that characterises the relationships between «absent» interlocutors.

MM | Sovrammostro | 2022

This idea shapes my visual language to such an extent that, on the reverse side of the canvas, a painting is sealed, whose reproduction materialises the obverse side. Back to back, interconnected but unrevealed to each other, these two distinct phases of the creative process reflect our detachment from the world beyond its projections.

The trilobite appears as a recurring emblem in your work. What does this prehistoric creature symbolize for you in relation to authenticity and time?

From this basic living being, multiple, more complex organisms may have developed. I therefore observe a transitional creature, which synthesises questions of authenticity and inauthenticity, related to the genesis of creation and the unfolding of future possibilities. From front to back, the trilobite is composed of three lobes (head-thorax-tail). This fossil thus symbolises a temporal trinity (between past, present and future) converging the beginning and the end at the same point. In this, it is the emblem of my technical process! But also, from the depths of human evolution, the trilobite reminds me that our species is merely the snapshot of a sequence of everything that happens and inevitably transforms, or even disappears.

Your process combines manual drawing, photocopying, digital colouring, and printing. How do you perceive the relationship between the original and the reproduced in your practice?

I submit most of my drawings and paintings to serial

MM | Trilopentras | 2022

transfer and enlargement operations that mystify the relationship between what serves as the basis for a work and its outcome. In the series of spontaneous drawings «Le Petit Bestiaire» for example, the handwork (ink on paper, oil pastels, grattage) is gradually lost during photocopying and other digital treatments, only to reappear, highlighted, in a one-off print on canvas, which I commission from a leading European laboratory in this field. In this perspective, the original and the reproduced become one and the same misunderstanding, subordinated to the sacralisation of the facsimile.

Many of your works are described as « joker pieces ». What role does irony and playfulness occupy within your critical reflection on contemporary society?

The idea of play, or at least the intention to play, supports my entire artistic approach. Irony and playfulness, however, have a primordial role in my «joker pieces». In Europe, monarchs often had their own court jester, the only person who could mock the sovereign without consequence. Contemporary society and its oligarchs deserve much criticism, but the prevailing gloom and the taboos of «political correctness» nip even witty remarks in the bud, pushing people towards self-censorship. Joker pieces thus grant a certain diplomatic immunity to contents that, through allegory, deliver a bold message.

Your background includes philosophy and intellectual property work. How have thinkers like Kant, Nietzsche, or Schopenhauer influenced your artistic vision?

It is more my philosophy that includes my background than the contrary. In fact, my former job in the field of intellectual property is reflected in my modus operandi. In short, to build my artistic vision, Kant provided the conceptual scaffolding, Schopenhauer the mortar (i.e., being and being a representation are one and the same for the subject), and Nietzsche the hammer (to strike the idols)!

You often blur the boundaries between authenticity and inauthenticity. Do you believe originality still exists in the digital age?

Nowadays, authenticity is something (when it exists as a thing) that we believe we can buy with a few clicks, or at the supermarket, under the «Organic» sticker for example (even nature has become a label)! Public opinion shifts with the posts of designated influencers, and people without intellectual or moral benchmarks embrace ever-changing dogmas, as if downloading updates. Proselytism is rampant.
In the digital age, originality comes from thinking with your own head, managing to maintain the integrity needed to be what you love.

After a forced interruption of your artistic career, you are now returning to a new cycle of creations. Has this pause transformed your perspective on art and productivity?

Not too much. In my new cycle of creations, I maintain the rhetoric and the pop aspect of the first one, where analytical reflection and sensory enjoyment coexist without clashing. Apparently, I'm not the only one who appreciates this blend, which, however, will be available in new forms. Only my approach to productivity has really changed, since I am opening myself up to other pictorial methods, which are more difficult to master and slower to implement.

MM | Scène Tutélaire | 2022

My name is **Beata Smutniak**, I live and create in Cracow, Poland. I'm a financial analyst, who's passion is painting. I work mainly with watercolor and acrylics. Through my art I explore the subject of human world seen through the eyes of our pets, as well as importance and value of their companionship in our lives and culture. My creative process often begins with an amateur picture of my pets, which inspires me to paint their personified image, sometimes with classical art motives.

Beata Smutniak | Wizards | 2025

Beata Smutniak | Bark | 2025

Bronka Nowicka

Your practice moves fluidly between literature, visual art, performance, and installation. How do you understand the relationship between word and imagein your work?

Bronka Nowicka | LiTEAture | 2025

I feel I am an interdisciplinary creator and I take responsibility for this classification, keeping in mind what the Latin word inter means. I undertake creative efforts between visual arts and literature. Borderlines – a difficult and fascinating terrain – are my conscious choice. In the past, when I called myself an interdisciplinary creator, I felt like an emigrant forced to earn a passport to a specific discipline. Today – when art and its accompanying didactics are open to hybridity – I can create and teach freely in the common area of disciplines that are dear to me. I am pleased to work as a lecturer at a place that is favourable for interdisciplinarity – the Department of Painting at the Art Faculty of Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa. This is a place where the potential of creative freedom uninhibited by rigid boundaries of domains and media is understood and appreciated. I can be in my element.

You asked about words and images. Combining them into image-words and word-images is organic to me. Scientists (eg. Benjamin Bergen) have described the connection between language and images. They have called it embodied simulation. When you read the following sentence written by me: a bear is crawling in the snow, how do you decode the meaning reduced to graphic signs? The visual centre in your brain activates – you just see a bear crawling in the snow. Other sensory centres also get mobilised to work: the centre responsible for hearing – perhaps snow scrunches in your mind; for smell – the ozonic, frosty fragrance of ice may be reaching you; for touch – you are feeling, as if by your own skin, the friction of the bear's belly against the white surface. This is how embodied simulation works. Language is a system of encoded images (and sounds, movements, scents, gustatory sensations) that – when decoded by the mind – create a multisensory, state-of-the-art, and – simultaneously – the oldest and cheapest cinema that offers films of all genres – inner projections of images activated

Bronka Nowicka | LiTEAture | 2025

under the influence of words. When I introduce language into the area of visual art activity, I basically remain in the domain of imaging; a word is a kind of image.

In LiTEAture – the title of the work is a wordplay between literature and tea – texts put on used teabags come from extensive documentation of tea-related conversations. They contain not only the names of fellow-tea-drinkers but also their personal insights, thoughts attempting to encompass the complexity of existence. Some have a poetic character: Things have roots, people see stems. / A soaking sugar cube, what a spectacle! / Mountains on Venus – eight thousanders, they're there as much as we're here, can you imagine? Others recount everyday life with colloquial language: How can you drink bitter tea, my child? / My dog doesn't know the taste of tea. / Mira died of COVID, she had it twice, and it was the second time. Imprints in the collage also contain details about the date, place and circumstances of the tea meeting: in the garden, in the kitchen, in the room, on the go, on Tuesday. The text on each teabag can be seen as closed and separate, but one can also seek semantic sequences forming between neighbouring bags. I composed numerous parts of the collage in such a way that neighbouring text would combine into associative wholes. The collage with word fragments complements the canvas-collages with photographic effigies of people with whom I have drunk tea. A peculiar archive comes into being: the portrait of a human being, their name, the time and place of drinking tea, a documented snippet of a conversation or a monologue.

In LiTEAture, you use used teabags as both material and metaphor. What does tea represent for you - memory, ritual, intimacy, time?

You brew it and all things – besides the tea itself – seem unimportant. Tea ensures docking in the here and now. It roots you in the present moment. I drink and suddenly I realise that I am sipping the taste from my fellow-tea-drinker, I am taking small sips (from) someone who is enjoying the infusion with me. In fact this is what it's all about – about Others, Other People. Some time ago I dried my first used teabag and I used its paper as a notebook: I wrote down the date of the meeting. It was the same instinct that makes you put flowers between book pages. The conversation over tea was good so I kept the bag as a souvenir. I liked the materiality of the drying bag, its colour, wrinkles, stains. I thought: perhaps I will create a document of meetings and events based on tea mummies? The preparation period ensued.I dried the teabags. I removed the leaves. Inside, I put photographs of people with whom I sipped the infusion. I love it: I cut the teabag open, I scoop out the dry used tea leaves, I clean the inside with a flat makeup brush, I put the photograph inside. Sometimes I slightly shorten the string attached to the sachet. During the preparations it smells of bergamot, caramel, hibiscus, lemon grass, fig opuntia. Since my hands have learnt the sequence of the movements by heart, I don't have to focus on these activities. My hands are busy, my thoughts are free. I look at the faces shown in the photographs. It kick-starts chains of memories, just like the fragrance of teas. Scents affect the limbic system – responsible for emotions and memory. I look at photographs of my father, mother, aunts, grandmas, great-grandparents, friends. I reminisce. Sometimes thoughts cease. I lean over the table. A cone of black, greenish, rust-coloured or brown dried tea leaves forms on the table top. I am simply present.

The installation invites viewers to touch, smell, sit, and even alter the work. Why was it important for you to abandon the traditional "do not touch" rule of exhibition spaces?

I have presented the installation in run-down, historic interiors of the Artistic Book Museum in Łódź. The collages were laid out on old tables. I risked having the works destroyed by encouraging the guests to take a seat directly at them, on ancient chairs. During the vernissage, a traditional Japanese tea ceremony took place. The gathered people drank it at the tables,

Bronka Nowicka | LiTEAture | 2025

Bronka Nowicka | LiTEAture | 2025

putting the bowls on collages-tablecloths. I didn't fear the works would be damaged because my willingness to create an atmosphere of community was stronger than my anxiety over damaging the delicate materiality of the collages. I didn't worry that some of the teas would spill over the work. In fact, it did happen. The liquid dried and turned into a rusty stain that naturally integrated with the rest of the composition. The stain pleased me. Thanks to such interferences the documentary character of my work strengthens. Each consecutive exposition leads to a change in the creation – it bears a human trait. The works also deteriorate on their own: teabags dry, wrinkle, fade or darken, in this way the work reflects memory where something withers or gains power like a stubborn reminiscence.

The possibility of touching the works physically is important to me also due to the availability of visual art for visually impaired people. I deal with the accessibility of art by organising workshops for people who are blind or partially sighted and by creating audio-descriptions of paintings. When I work as a curator or co-curator of exhibitions presenting other artists' works, I encourage the creators to create works that can be touched, smelled, and even eaten because I believe that the possibility of having multisensory contact with art can deepen the way it's experienced by eliminating the barrier of shame connected with the lack of intellectual readiness for the reception of the works. The possibility of touching an artistic creation has an encouraging effect on most contemporary viewers, it evokes in them a deeper interest in the work.

The painter and curator Artur Wawrzkiewicz and I have recently organised the exhibition Można dotknąć! ("You may touch!"), which presented the works by students of the abovementioned Art Faculty. There was a hyperrealistic work showing a double portrait of the student-artist's parents. It was made from sand paper and was entitled Szorstcy ("The Abrasives") which referred both to the psychological layer, the parents' characters, and to the material itself. Viewers could look at the faces of Mr and Mrs Abrasive and simultaneously touch these faces, which grazed the finger pads in an unpleasant way. In the exposition there were also casts of the grandpa's glasses made of colourful kissel that the author associated with her childhood. Visitors to the exhibition could also eat part of the glasses, which took them to the realm of the creator's memories by means of their own taste buds. In the exhibition there was also a punchbag covered with canvas and filled with small bags full of paint. When people hit the punchbag, the small bags hidden under the canvas burst open, the paint spilled on the surface, and colourful stains appeared on the canvas. Aggression turned into a creative act, the impact transformed into the aesthetic power of a multicolour stain. I value such activities because not only do they affect multiple senses at the same time, but they also stimulate symbolic and metaphoric thinking that I consider the essence of art.

Many of the faces in the installation appear faded, almost dissolving into the tea stains. Is this fragility intentional? How do you think about disappearance and preservation?

Portrait photographs show through the thin paper of the used teabags. Thanks to this effect the effigy obtains sienna and umber stains, characteristic of daguerrotype, sepia or heavily aged photographs. A post-tea-bag stuffed with a photo doesn't only become a document of a real meeting, but instantly takes on

Bronka Nowicka | LiTEAture | 2025

the qualities of an old paper artefact: it's wrinkled, close to wearing through here and there, yellowed, rusty. Combining a teabag dyed by tea on its own, and a black-and-white photograph (a full face portrait), gives an immediate effect that otherwise would need the passage of time or an archaic photographic process. When I began my work on the installation, what attracted me was precisely this face showing through the filter paper: not fully clear, although recognisable, somewhat aged, pushed through time by one gesture. The effect of this instant shift, dislocating from a point a few days ago to a point in the distant past determined that a seemingly absurd gesture performed at the kitchen counter (sliding a photo inside a teabag) transformed into an artistic project in which I repeated this original gesture several thousand times.
Someone's face fades in a photo, yet it may remain sharp in memory. Or the other way round: something may fade in memory and preserve well as matter. Relations between disappearing and retaining / keeping / preserving generate dramatic and dramaturgic tension.

You describe the work as "tea archaeology". Could you elaborate on this idea of excavating memory?

One part of the installation is a performative object. The basic element of this object is a large piece of fabric with a printed text composed by me. The text is

Bronka Nowicka | LiTEAture | 2025

Bronka Nowicka | LiTEAture | 2025

styled as a myth and concerns memory, which is compared to an archaeological excavation. The fabric with the text is covered by a thick layer of dried tea leaves. By means of brushes (an archaeologist's tool) viewers of the installation retrieve pieces of the text from under the tea: words, sentences and longer fragments, as they are dug out and excavated, form meanings. Some viewers-archaeologists, including children who can't follow the text yet, use the dried tea leaves to create their own drawings, similar to those from Nazca.

The installation accepts and even welcomes its own transformation through human traces. How do you relate to impermanence in art?

Impermanence is organic. In nature and in art. It's an obvious process whose outcome is not an end but change.

If LiTEAture were a short story rather than an installation, what would its opening sentence be today?

Your question makes me smile because such a short story has already been written. This is the one that is excavated from under the dried tea. I wrote it under the influence of associations between memory and earth, and between earth and dried tea leaves that resemble black earth. The title of the story is Terra Memoria. Its opening sentences are the following: A long time ago every image of a thing existing in memory could be exchanged for the thing's body because memories stored in the mind were similarly stored in the earth and achieved the concreteness of matter. What a human being remembered would immediately develop in the subsoil: within it accumulated layers of tangible manifestations of objects, phenomena, animals and people. All the living had their own fields in Memoria, which was a plain and bore nothing but embodiments of the past...

Ombre Explore is a visual artist working with drawing and mixed media. Her work explores quiet moments, emotions, and everyday poetry through simple, intimate scenes. She is interested in human and animal connections, creating images that feel gentle, personal, and sincere.

Karen Schaschwary Brinker

Your work transforms everyday papers - school worksheets, packaging, and mail - into vibrant compositions. What draws you to these humble materials, and how do they shape the emotional tone of your pieces?

Karen Schaschwary Brinker | Process Collage

At first, I was drawn to these materials simply because they were the most available. Worksheets, packaging, and mail cover my dining room and coffee tables, my school desk, and even find their way to my bedside table and between the fibers of my living room rug! This ephemera is a loud and persistent part of my visual life. It is easy to ignore or become desensitized to such things, but my urge to create pushed me to notice them more closely and to question how they might function within my artmaking. As a teacher and a mother, finding time (and energy) to run to the craft store can feel impossible. If I want to create, I need to look at what is already around me. These everyday materials, once overlooked, became both my medium and my solution.
The emotional tone becomes maternal, experimental, and domestic. My art can sometimes appear to be like a junk journal entry, documenting and layering specific moments.

Suminagashi (water marbling) plays a central role in your practice. What fascinates you about this technique, and how does the element of chance influence your creative decisions?

I've always been drawn to artforms that carry an organic, unpredictable quality. I took many ceramics classes as an undergraduate student for that reason.

Karen Schaschwary Brinker | Woven Words | 2025

That same sensibility is what draws me to suminagashi, the ancient Japanese practice of water marbling.

There's something inherently powerful about water. We all know the experience of sitting at the edge of a lake or ocean and watching waves roll in. I grew up swimming in lakes, and water has always felt almost spiritual to me. It taps into something instinctual and deeply human. Working with ink on water carries that same quiet intensity. The surface looks still, but it is alive and responsive.

I'll admit I'm a bit obsessed with artistic processes, sometimes to the point of neglecting the finished product. Creating in a fluid, intuitive way simply feels good. My first encounter with this kind of movement-based abstraction was through pour painting, which is adjacent to suminagashi. I was working with a group of preteens, and we poured layers of colorful liquid onto cardboard, watching the paint pool, separate, and merge on its own terms. I was just as enthralled as they were. The act of observing what the material "decided" to do felt collaborative rather than directive. Eventually, I discovered suminagashi and ordered inks and rice paper to experiment with at home. There isn't an abundance of accessible information about the practice, its history is layered and, at times, deliberately guarded, so much of my understanding has come through trial, error, and close observation.

I'm fascinated by how subtle shifts in ink density, breath, or paper type completely transform the result. The meaning of the work changes with those shifts: bright, energetic marbling layered over a school worksheet can highlight playful moments in my son's writing, while muted tones read as contemplative or solemn.

Chance plays a central role in my creative decisions, not as chaos, but as partnership. I introduce the materials, but I don't fully control them. That same openness carries into my collage practice. I rarely begin with a rigid plan. Instead, I let color relationships, textures, and fragments suggest their own connections. I've learned that overthinking in the moment tends to kill my motivation.

Perhaps that ease comes from years of making art with children. When you create with kids every day, you learn to trust experimentation. Those neural pathways are well worn in my brain. The spontaneity that suminagashi demands feels less like risk and more like returning to something deeply familiar, a practice of paying attention and allowing the material to speak.

As both a mother and an elementary art teacher, how do these roles intersect with your studio practice? Do classroom experiences directly inspire specific works?

It's all braided together. Art is life is motherhood is teacherhood, etc. I came to understand this more

Karen Schaschwary Brinker | Ernie | 2024

clearly through the work of Jorge Lucero and his book Teacher as Artist in Residence. His powerful perspective felt like permission to think of all I do as some type of art or creative work.
My work looks more broadly at the beauty and chaos of teacher-Mom life. The overlapping responsibilities, the noise, the tenderness, the constant negotiation of time and attention. From a distance, the collages can read as layered compositions of color and movement. But up close, each fragment carries a precise memory. I can point to a mark and tell you that a mom friend from summer camp gave me those paint markers, or a friend from college mailed me a stack of carefully chosen stickers from her job at a posh stationery store in Chicago. The practice cursive worksheet came home the same day my oldest finished his class' read aloud chapter book. A looping doodle was rescued from my classroom recycling bin. (I ask my sons and students for their permission to use their discarded papers in my art.)
These fragments hold exchanges, conversations, milestones, and small gestures of care. When I collage them together, I'm not just arranging shapes, I'm layering moments. The work becomes a record, a way to document the emotional texture or vibe of a particular season in my life.

Many of your collages balance chaos with careful composition. How do you know when a piece has reached equilibrium?

This is a great question. I'm not sure I have a definitive answer yet. I suspect most artists would admit that knowing when a work is finished often feels like an educated guess. Sometimes the ending is circumstantial. For example, I'm tired, there's a deadline, or I've simply run out of time, money, or materials. Other times, I sense that any additional mark-making begins to dilute the meaning rather than deepen it. The composition starts to feel overworked, and restraint becomes the final gesture.
Occasionally, maybe one out of every ten works for me, there's something closer to a spiritual clarity. A quiet but unmistakable moment of recognition of "Yes, that's it!" Nothing too dramatic happens, but the artwork feels internally resolved. Like further intervention would feel intrusive.

Karen Schaschwary Brinker | Zip Zap

Karen Schaschwary Brinker | Orange Boom | 2025

Your work often incorporates fragments of text and handwriting. What role does language - spoken or written - play in your visual storytelling?

The text I include in my work often serves as a focal point that draws the viewer in. Just like water, writing or words tend to draw us in. Sometimes it functions purely as an engaging visual pattern; other times, I use it to emphasize or amplify the meaning of the piece. For example, I recently printed a concentric design over a dictionary page that reads "ripple" and used a cursive E worksheet to guide the flow and shape of the other cut pieces in a collage. In my collage Heartstrings, I layered a dictionary segment about hearts with the cursive words "zoom" and "zap," reflecting the electric energy of love.

Karen Schaschwary Brinker | E3E | 2025

Sustainability and repurposing are central to your work. Do you see your practice as a form of environmental or cultural commentary?

I often think about the relationship between art and environmentalism. It genuinely pains me to throw away dried-out plastic markers and broken crayons almost every day. I believe a great deal of art can be made from materials that already exist, and artists of all kinds should consider that. I follow a Suminagashi artist, Jeppe K. Ringsted, who creates work using puddles from around the world and is very intentional about using natural inks that won't harm the environment. I plan for my next inks to be of that kind. I say this while fully aware that artists are not the primary drivers of environmental damage. Still, artists help shape consumer culture, and we can play a role in nudging it toward sustainability.

I also think artists should embrace imperfection, especially in the age of AI. I've noticed a growing tendency to leave in mistakes and to share or explain the process more transparently, almost as a way of proving that a human hand was involved. As a teacher, I see students constantly battling impossible standards and perfectionism, so I deeply value this shift toward finding meaning in imperfection.

Culturally, my work also reflects what it feels like to be a mother and a teacher, whether society is ready to hear that or not. I'm regularly rejected by galleries, and I sometimes wonder if my aesthetic is considered too feminine or too child-like. Teachers, who are often women, understand how undervalued we are in the United States. Society often wants us to be small, to just be of service, and not take up any additional space. I also recognize that my work isn't highly polished, and that may be part of it. It's pushing me to consider where I want my art to exist in the world. I suppose the luxury of having a day job is there isn't significant financial pressure to appeal to anyone but myself.

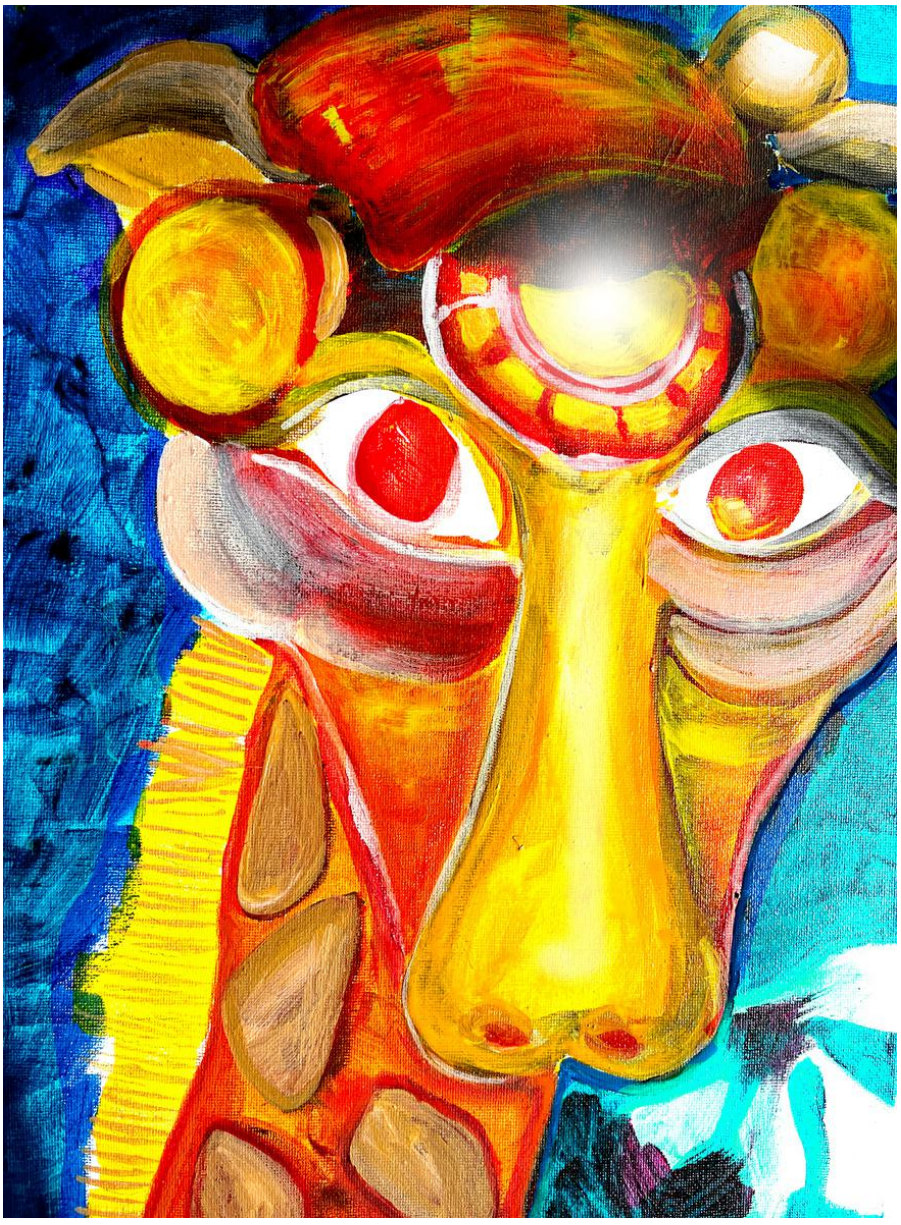
What have your students taught you about creativity that has changed the way you approach your own art?

My students, along with my own two children, constantly remind me how joyful artmaking can, and should, be. They also show me, in endless ways, that we are all always learning and growing, which feels like a tremendous gift. I laugh when a student with challenging behaviors produces the most astonishing work. My teacher friends and I talk about this all the time: you try to be frustrated with the child, but then you look at what they've created and are swept up in awe (and curiosity about where it even came from). I'm always fascinated by what the children around me notice, from rocks on the ground to the way I enter the room, and it inspires me to be a more careful observer. Lastly, children are remarkably resilient (generally speaking), and they remind us not to take life too seriously. If you mess up, you just get up and try again.

Karen Schaschwary Brinker | KRSB Heartstring

Artlysee
Born in Hong Kong, Elyse's artistic journey spans multiple cultures and creative environments, from five formative years in Singapore to a workshop in Florence and an artist residency in Barcelona. These experiences have shaped her understanding of resilience and cross cultural connection, informing both her artistic and therapeutic perspectives.
As an art therapist and artist, she explores the therapeutic potential of Chinese ink, oil paint, pastels, watercolor, and mixed media. Her practice investigates how art can spark dialogue, reflection, and emotional connection, offering viewers a sense of understanding and shared experience. Her works have been selected for exhibitions in the United Kingdom and Japan, and her international collaborations continue to expand the role of art beyond clinical settings. Through her practice, she is committed to fostering self care and mental wellness within the community.

Project Statement
Moving from city to city has brought moments of unsettlement. These transitions have become opportunities for me to process complex emotions and reconsider how I respond to change, challenges, and uncertainties in life. Meeting diverse people—and witnessing how individuals enter and leave our lives—has led me to reframe the theme of separation. At the same time, the Japanese concept 一期一会 (ichigo ichie) reminds me that each encounter is unique and unrepeatable, helping me to view these transitions as fluid, ever-changing experiences rather than losses.
In recent years, portraiture has become a grounding practice, allowing me to connect deeply with the present moment and with the person before me. Through careful observation—both rational and aesthetic—I approach each portrait as a space for reflecting on interpersonal relationships. Every artwork becomes a trace of my journey, an exploration of identity, and a celebration of individual uniqueness.
My artistic style is liberating and fluid, moving between realism and perception while holding the emotional undercurrents embedded within each portrait. Calming brushstrokes create a sense of depth and solitude, offering viewers a visually pleasing experience and a moment of restored calm amid surrounding chaos.



Tak Yin Lam | Mirroring Giraffe | 2023

Tak Yin Lam | Silence | 2025

Alexandra Mot

Moving to Los Angeles at such a young age was a big step. How did this relocation shape you both personally and creatively?

This decision shaped the trajectory of my creative career as well as my personal life. I made the decision to move from Hungary to the US in high school and I kept working towards this goal until I achieved it. To be honest I couldn't have gotten here if it wasn't for the support of my parents: this journey requires a lot of sacrifices, both financially and emotionally. They believed in me and provided me the opportunity for a better life and the chance to get into the fashion industry. This move made me who I am today, all the challenges I had to get through and still have in front of me, made me stronger and required me to mature faster. I had to become more independent from the moment I took my first flight alone to LAX. Although I'm still learning how to ask for help from others, becoming more independent has helped me tremendously in this big city. I have my long-term boyfriend to depend on as well, we met in Hungary and I moved here a bit after him.

I can say the education I got both out of school and my internship is a great foundation I can build on and I'm forever grateful for it. I know I couldn't have received it elsewhere. Moving here and meeting the people I did felt like it was meant to be, to end up in LA was destiny. All the things Los Angeles has to offer to a designer, like the Fashion District, contractors and small manufacturing, gives possibility for small scale production that is amazing for students starting out like me. We have the entertainment industry at the heart of this city and these paths opened my eyes to what could be achieved here.

Crochet became a form of escape and art therapy for you during a difficult period. How does emotion influence your creative process today?

I found crochet at the right time. It was gaining a lot of popularity during Covid and I'd see all these beautiful pieces made by young people like me, I realized there's a whole new community forming out of it. I tried a little in Hungary but my first actual piece was made for my boyfriend, a plushie for his birthday. It was as simple as that feeling some people can't shake off: that I can make and learn anything if I set my mind to it! So I went to this tiny shoebox sized sewing supply store, asked the lady for the yarn and hook and got to work. After my little plushie piece, I didn't touch crochet for around half a year, but burning out from sewing for my college classes made me interested in creating clothing with a totally different technique.
After a hard day, sitting down with my hook, yarn and a cup of tea, it just melted away all my worries. It's hard to describe, but crocheting felt like meditating for the first time in my life, it shut out all the noises, doubts and anxieties in my head.
I think it helped me not make these things for anyone's approval, but for my own joy. As a high-achiever from a young age, anything I did had to measure-up to a certain level or it was a waste of time and I felt worthless. My grades and later on my sewing projects had to be so perfect I often forgot why I was working so hard and didn't celebrate my achievements. I had no idea how to relax or to enrich my soul after I've done the work I had to. Finding out how happy and relaxed crochet made me feel definitely helped my mental health and I don't know how I'd survive without it now. Being so far away from my family and best friends I made in Hungary was also very challenging, it took a long time to transition and live in the present for me. My biggest escape was crochet during this time and I still do it on a regular basis. I started to gain skill in it without even realizing and I learned by myself, there were no professors to judge my work, only me. This made me so much prouder of my garments than what I made for college classes.
Emotions still play a big part of my work, I usually pour all my joy, anger, frustrations or moody periods into my work. Creating is like therapy for me.

You often reference Victorian fashion alongside 80s post-punk and goth subcultures. What draws you to these specific eras and aesthetics?

The journey of finding my style is quite interesting because I wasn't exposed to much of it as a child. I would call my hometown plain and boring in terms of fashion and self-expression through clothing, so it was something else that pulled me in. As a little kid I collected Barbie dolls like every other little girl, but then a new doll line came along in the late 2000s, Monster High. These fashion dolls were inspired by famous monsters from horror movies and it was a gateway for me into this world. Extravagant accessories, complicated high heels and outfits, they all mesmerized me. It started my love for the genre when I first started watching horror movies at 13, these dolls made me interested in fashion, especially alternative fashion and it brought a whole new obsession to my life. I would sketch out 6-8 outfits with heels per page in my small sketchbook, during most of my free time. My grandmother would help me create the outfits

Alexandra Mot | Szn Of The Witch | 2024

for the dolls for me and that was my first introduction to sewing.
Then I got my first smart phone when I was a preteen and I got to research more. I started listening to rock music and discovered alternative subcultures. I didn't have the courage or the clothes to dress like that in high school so my style took a long time to bloom.
I only really started dressing gothic and alternative when I moved here, I started to gain confidence and get out of my shell more and more. Even though dressing in all-black isn't easy in the hot weather LA has most of the year, seeing everyone confidently dressing the way they want to and no one batting an eye made me follow suit. Unlike in Hungary, where there's a lot more judgment from strangers on the street or family, employers, establishments, etc.
I was falling in love with goth rock music during my college years, like The Cure, Sisters of Mercy and Siouxsie and the Banshees. This interest led me to Victorian fashion, as it shares elements with gothic fashion. The Victorian era also gave us classic gothic horror books and dealt with darker topics like mourning openly, which intrigued me. The gothic subculture basically started from this era's literature so it's like going back to the roots of the movement. I adore Victorian fashion now, notably the corsetry, the meticulous details and the big puffy sleeves. It provides endless inspiration to bring a touch of that era into modern, wearable alternative clothing.

Your spider-web crochet designs feel symbolic. What does the spider web represent to you personally and artistically?

Most of my friends growing up would say that I was a "city girl", meaning I wasn't around nature too much, but it was quite the opposite for me. Yes we lived in a small apartment in the town centre with my family, but my dad's workplace which he owned also had a backyard garden kind of separated off from the business. It has a wooden cabin and I'd spend all my summers there growing up. I distinctly remember watering the plants during the sunset every day and between two thuja trees, spiderwebs would form. The water from the hose would sprinkle on them and the water droplets formed little crystals on the webs. It was truly beautiful and I would wait for the spider to come out, sometimes I caught it wrapping up its next dinner in the form of an unlucky fly, bee, or small mantis. I was very spooked by insects and spiders when I was little, but being close to nature made me respect them more and fear them less. Not having many poisonous and deadly spiders and animals out in the wild in Hungary helped a ton, of course!
Observing the spiderweb, they were such precise and delicate creations in nature but never quite perfect. Some lines got longer or uneven and that was the beauty in it, all of them were different but made with the same technique. To me the spiderweb design reminds me of home, the beauty in something that some people might consider scary or spooky and how I can create gorgeous things without the pressure to be perfect.

You mentioned feeling frustrated with sewing and patternmaking early on. How did embracing crochet change your relationship with perfectionism?

When I started to feel the pressure from school, perfectionism and tight constraints on projects made me look for a different way of making clothing. It felt great learning a new skill, don't get me wrong, but I was learning how to sew the basics and not practicing the design process or how to creatively express myself. Long commuting on the public transport (I was used to getting to places in 10-15 minutes in the town I grew up in) and classes during the week made me feel exhausted and I felt I was losing my spark a bit. Perfectionism freezes you, makes you indecisive and robs you of energy to just sit down and do things. Starting was always the hardest for me. Once I'm actually in the zone, I do hours of work at a time, I'm not the type to take breaks really.
In crochet, repetition was easy to follow, and if I missed one little stitch or made a mistake that didn't throw off the next rows I learned to let it go. I didn't have the heart to undo 2-3 hours of work at a time because I noticed something small too late. I would improvise on the patterns more and add my tweaks here and there. For me, creating a garment out of yarn, basically making up the textile as I go was revolutionary. The process is so different, it just clicked in my brain. Another bonus is the convenience: I can pick up a crochet project anywhere in the house and work on it, I'm not tied to a table and chair

the same way as sewing. I can take the project on the go, work on it on public transport for 2 hours, which I usually did while getting home from my classes.
Now I'm less of a perfectionist in sewing, which doesn't mean to ditch precision in patternmaking, cutting, nor sewing. It just means to get rid of the mental block for me, that everything had to be planned out beforehand and to get anxious if a problem came up. I also realized how important your tools are as a beginner and learning on the "wrong" sewing machine can make someone turn away from it. As I get to used different machines, home and industrial alike, I realized I was working against my machine and not with it. Getting the right sewing machine, thread and needle made my life so much easier with sewing, so I'm planning on getting back to it as well and to combine sewing and crochet in my pieces moving forward.

Sustainability and upcycling play an important role in your work. How do these values influence your design decisions?

These values first started when my mom would take me thrifting growing up, both for economic and ethical reasons. I would find the most unique pieces that only I had, which made my little fashionista heart so happy, as there were very few stores in town so most people dressed the same.
Our college program would talk about sustainability, where I participated in upcycling challenges as well. Knowing how polluting the fashion industry is, I think it's important to have sustainability in mind in our design processes. I think sourcing for upcycling is the easy part, I accumulated way too much already, so the bags are stashed away in my closet. The harder part is figuring out how to fit bits and pieces into existing pattern pieces, to cut it up to smaller pieces or if you can find a big enough piece for this panel? And to coordinate the sourced materials so it looks cohesive in color story, textures, and fabric weight as well.
I like patchwork design and denim and I aim to use these techniques in gothic fashion. Just like crochet, it's a smaller niche.

How does living in Los Angeles influence your work compared to your time in Hungary?

I was very young in Hungary when I started learning about sewing and fashion, I was just trying to find my style and voice. The fashion industry is so small and the market is tight, not a lot of people have the budget to get clothing from independent or designer brands, most people buy fast fashion there and aren't really interested in anything outside of a certain style. Therefore I had very little that could influence me there, I would watch fashion shows online and learn about established designers and brands, but I felt limited. If I wanted to source fabrics the thrift was great for upcycling, but we only had maybe 2 fabric stores, one was on the brink of closing. I would have had to live in Budapest, our capital to really start experimenting with my style.
Moving to LA and seeing the Fabric district, I was like a kid in a candy store. The world opened up before my eyes and I could see that there's so much I can find out here. My mentor from my internship also taught me about fabrics as I had next to no knowledge about it. He showed me the best spots, how to bargain and get creative with trimmings, I have to thank him a lot. To this day I get overly excited when I get to go shopping for materials downtown.
I also developed my taste and interest in gothic, post-punk and Victorian fashion while living here. The fashion history classes taught me the basics of historical fashion, which I throughoutly enjoyed. But my internship was very influential for learning about the LA punk and goth scene in the 80s, because my mentor lived through it all and influenced him greatly. He makes mostly menswear, but his style is steeped in dark 60s looks (think the Doors and Foghat), gothic aesthetics and Victorian jackets and pants. This mentorship was a match made in Heaven between him and me. I met him through one of my classes and I'm forever grateful for this experience. After learning from him, I'm more inspired than ever to start translating my taste into modern, wearable art pieces.

Tara Shree

Born and raised in London, Tara Shree is an emerging visual artist working primarily in painting, with occasional exploration into installation. She graduated with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art from ual Chelsea College of Arts, where her practice evolved through an intuitive, process driven exploration of the interplay between material, surface and paint. Her practice is rooted in an ongoing, physical process of transformation, where each painting evolves alongside her. Through this process, she navigates what lies beneath societal masks and physical appearances, revealing insights that shape both her thinking and making. As a recent graduate she is thinking about her role as an artist beyond the studio, as a catalyst for social, political dialogue and change. Her practice strives to seek evolving dialogue, open to new ideas, perspectives and ways of seeing.

Tara Shree | The Playing Child

Kangminji

You describe anxiety as something that surrounds a complete human being. How did this idea emerge in your personal experience?

Yes, this view comes from my personal experience. When I was a child, an event made me realize how much uncertainty in relationships can create anxiety. That experience led me to reflect on the relationships I have formed throughout my life, from childhood to the present. I felt happiness while building connections with people, but at the same time I worried because I was too happy. Eventually, I realized that anxiety was always waiting for me, and that many people around me live with similar feelings.

In what ways does living in a large city influence the emotions and themes in your paintings?

Large cities are densely populated, which means constant contact with people. After moving from a small town to a big city, I met many different kinds of people and encountered many forms of anxiety. The more diverse these forms were, the broader the themes I wanted to express in my work became.

You mentioned painting as a response to questions that arise while surviving life. What kinds of questions do you explore most often?

These questions mainly arise from pain. I reflect on the suffering I experience in my life. I try to understand why I am in pain at a given moment and what that pain is causing within me.

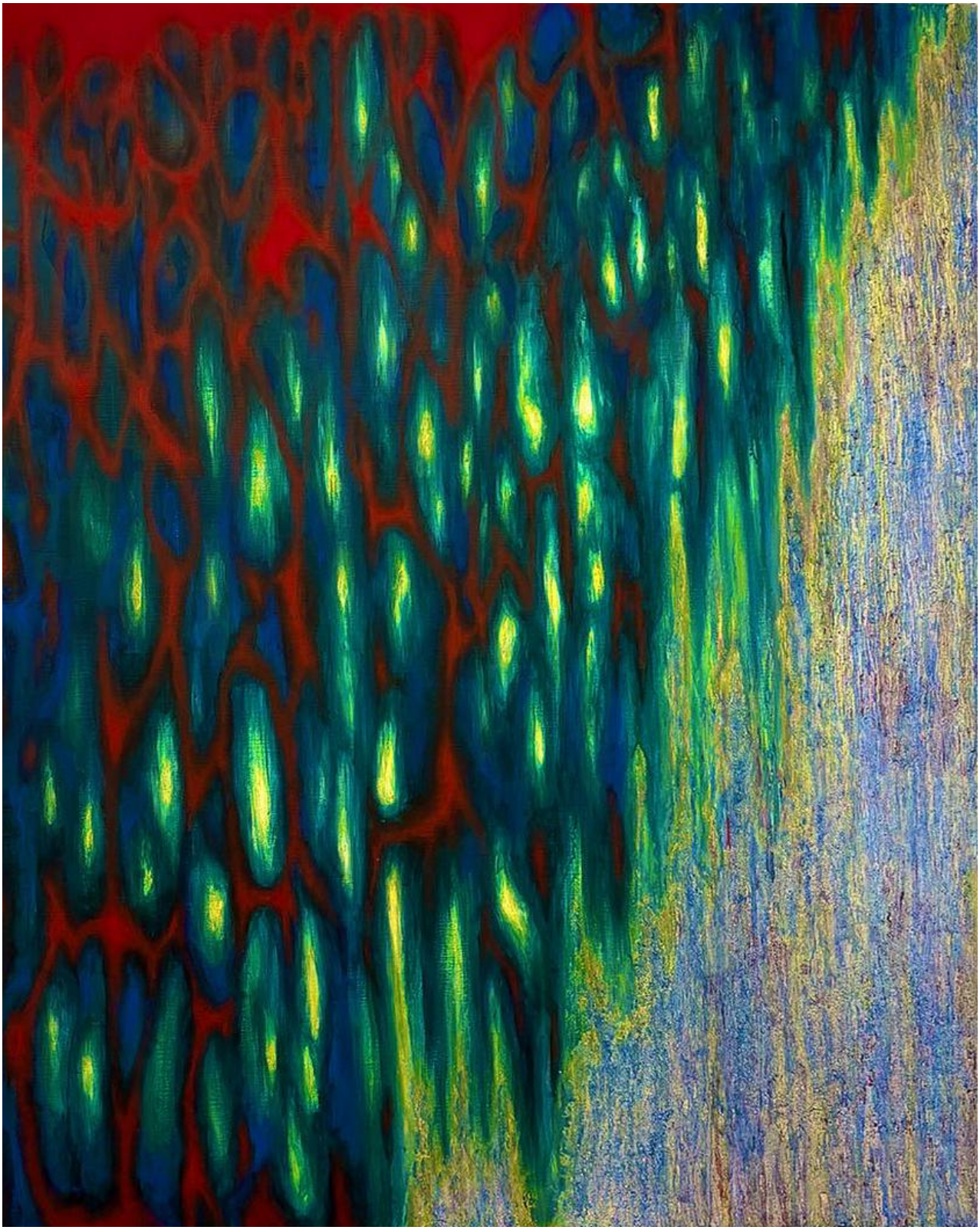
How do social relationships shape your sense of anxiety and empathy, as reflected in your work?

In social relationships, I both love and dislike people at the same time. I often feel overwhelmed by the anxiety created by these emotional fluctuations. Through painting, I express all the emotions that stem from this anxiety. It feels as if I draw in order to release or resolve these feelings.

How has studying visual arts in college changed or refined your artistic voice?

I see university as a step toward presenting my work more effectively to others. During my studies, I have learned how to communicate what I want to express more clearly and how to apply these methods to my practice.

Are there particular artists, movements, or cultural influences that have shaped your



Kangminji | Living trees

approach to painting?

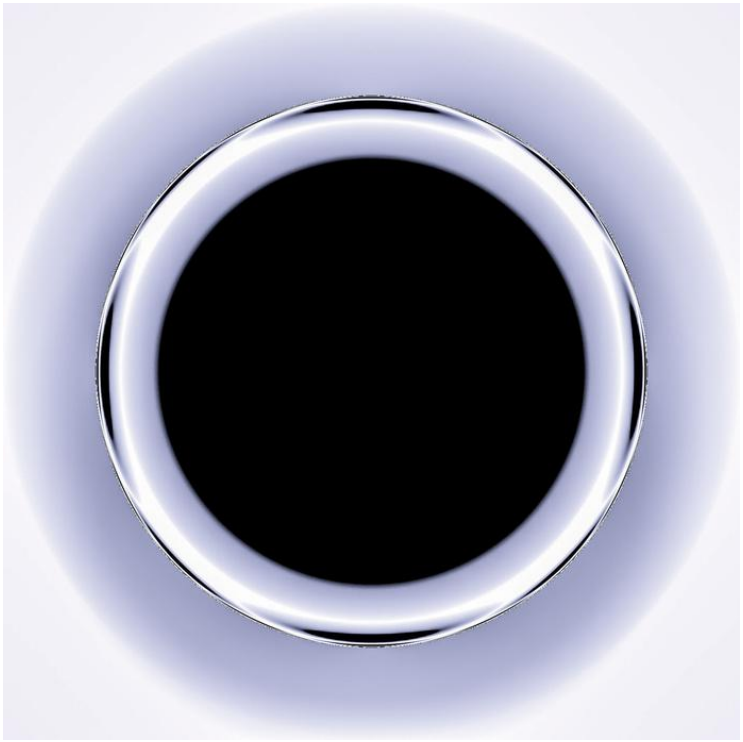
I admire and respect the work of Alberto Giacometti. I feel that the pain I often explore in my own work exists as a vital force in his art.

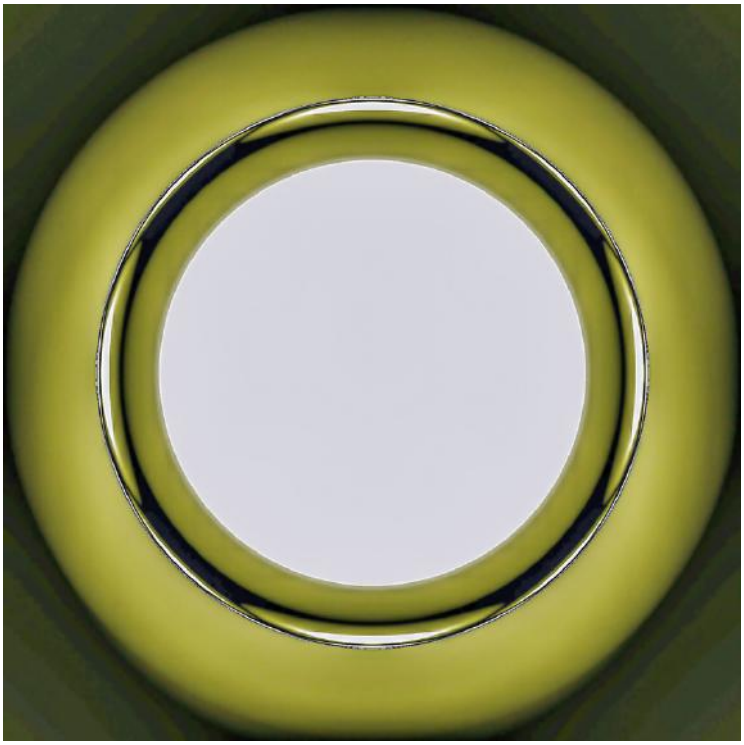
What do you hope viewers feel or reflect on when they encounter your paintings?

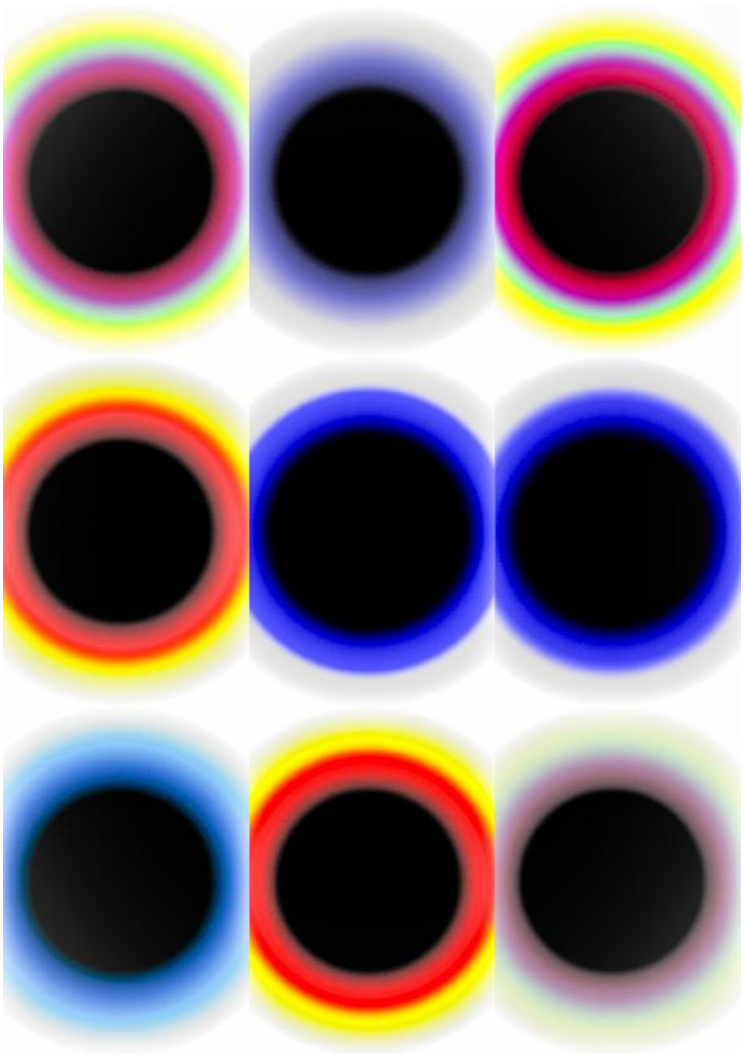
I hope viewers will feel comfort and empathy. Just as I sublimate the anxiety and pain I have experienced in my life through painting, I hope the audience can use my work as a medium to process and relieve their own pain.

Interdisciplinary visual artist **Reggie Davis** Creative Wellness through Art Practice focuses on enhancing equitable environmental wellness through Constructing the Sacred in Space and Place through Art. Anchoring cultural, spiritual values and community-relationships to the land. Sacralization as process Art and a vehicle for spiritual transcendence to facilitate social bonding. Reggie Davis inherited an Artist activism mindset as a child of the 60's Civil Rights Movement and coinciding Black Arts Movement in the San Francisco Bay Area. Growing up in a community of black activists, artist, and intellectuals. Among sit-ins, marches, pickets and parades. Swallowed up in the outpouring of creative activity of visual artists, writers, poets, musicians. And colored by the designs, hairstyles, fashion, themes, and rhythms of Pan Africanism. Reggie was growing as exponentially as the movements he was embodying. Emerging as a-living testimony of Blackness, and a voice to the many and varied expressions of black creativity. At the same time dealing with racism, bigotry and prejudice. The arts nor suburbia kept us inculcated. They would each leave an indelible mark. On a childhood of otherwise fond memories. Carefree but vigilant. Happy go-lucky, but knowing of de facto segregation.Reminded by generations of ancestry "we're very American, considering the fact that our ethnicity was born on American soil. Indigenous to this country. We were "created" here and are truly of native soil Engaging in the arts freed Reggie from the constraints placed on his behavior and thinking due to methodical and systematic racism. A creativity and 'revolution' in black thinking started in the 60s evolving with the reality of civil rights. The black consciousness inside him stood up and started walking him boldly into youth and through adulthood. Along the west coast through the 60's and 70's. With progressive parents that allowed him to explore his talents. Within a community Incorporating elements of philosophy, sociopolitical activism, and creative integrity into conversations and processes of art-making while forging a black identity around social protest, artistic achievement, unity, freedom of expression. Fundamental artistic expression would center on the amplification of a multitude of voices, reinforced , contradicted, and expanding choreographed paradigms of black life through art. Embracing a wide array of formal approaches, revealing the inherent Blackness of the work. Soon his artistic expression will task social activism through an environmental art lens. That still focused on the Black body politic and wellness; finding home and providing revelation and activation through new media and video art instillations. As Du Bois articulated wellness could not be reconciled within the environment it was created. But needed a space for integrated wholeness. Collective, community and environmental wellness. Which meant confronting environmental racism. A lingering effect of exploitative racism. Reggie approaches through innovative sustainability solutions. By exploration into Afro-indigenous cultural, spiritual knowledge systems and life-ways that under-lie the adaptations and syncretism of these culture groups in creating and sustaining environments through the Idealization of Totemic Art. For Reggie the 70's 80's and 90's was a time of challenges and opportunity. Change and progress. Social problems and strengths. Art was put on hold for a mainstreamed American education. But returned during high school in dance, drama, music, and visual art.University led to majors and degrees in psychology and art history along with minors in studio art and classes in alternative, new media, industrial art and design. In graduate school social work joined more studies in new media arts, especially digital and video lead to an MSW and 17 year career in social work using the arts in social work interventions and community programming. Reggie continues to hone is artist skills through adult education and distant learning at The San Francisco Arts Institute, The College of the Arts in Berkeley, California. And the San Francisco School of Integral Studies. He continues to showcase his multidisciplinary work at various local, national and international exhibitions, galleries, film festivals and publications. Including site specific health and wellness centers.

Artist Statement
As a multidisciplinary artist of color with a practice that focuses on health and well-being my projects are a intergrated mix of sustainable found object, assemblage, new media, installation art and design with an integrative spirituality orientation that delineates an array of spiritual practices, psychology and contemplative education allowing me to create artworks that become physical expressions of a spiritual aesthetic. Crossovers can be found in art hybrids combining new media with traditional art using non-traditional materials such as a series of open framework found object figuratives crafted from reclaimed tire cables that viewers activate with their own iconography. Afro-Indigenous totemic sculptures crafted from felled urban street trees as part of The San Francisco Department of Public Works, Planning and Forestry Creative Reuse of Urban Wood Program. Recent video works commissioned by The Mangalam Research Center for Buddhist studies. present aspects of the spiritual, in video art Installations serving as points of focus for mindfulness and meditative practices. Utilizing technology to translocate traditional art into interactive, immersive, embodied imagery. Integrated into a transformative experience immersive design systems installation framework. With several of my animations becoming official selections at various national and international film festivals. The Phillip K. Dick film festival in New York City, and Los Angeles. And the Colortape International Film Festival, Australia. I've recently been the recipient of several grants From the San Francisco Arts Commission. Funding a video art project. A color affirmative animated telling of the black experience through a visual narrative that's a a mix of 60's comic and street art aesthetics. A film providing a visceral commentary on the psychological impact of racism. As well, a Senior Cohort Grant from The African American Cultural Center funding that will be used for the creation of several Afro-indigenous hybrid totems. Commemorations on ancestry, and histories, that explore both the aesthetic qualities of totemic sculpture, as well as the symbolic, narrative, and trans-cultural borrowing of Afro indigenous motifs.







Tim Clarke

Tim Clarke | A Good deed in a naughty world. Kirsty Besterman as Portia

Your portraits originate from live theatrical performances rather than studio sittings. How does the immediacy of theatre change the way you observe and interpret a subject?

Drawing dancers with special needs in movement was pivotal to my maturity as an artist. I drew their whole body, sometimes in group situations. From this experience I understood how my drawing transformed in the most positive of ways by addressing movement.
Having been a Shakespeare's Globe groundling for years and having drawn a local street or the theatre on each visit so there was really nothing nearby outside the Globe to draw, I thought I would draw inside. Initially I drew the whole body, like my dancers, but quickly altered that profitable habit to concentrate on faces. By drawing actresses' faces when they were moving, I found the most wonderful surprises constantly occurring where human expression was exemplified through the 'natural' distortions created by drawing at speed which surpassed by far studio sittings. Drawing moving actresses opened boundless interpretation of character without repartition. I discovered drawing faces in movement gave me a constant unique quality to each individual face suggesting endless depth and the mystery of human nature. That's what I wanted.

Tim Clarke | Rose Wardlaw as Harriet Stubbs with roses | 2021

In transforming quick observational drawings into oil portraits, what do you choose to preserve and what do you intentionally alter?

The powerful base of these oil portraits is the rapid drawings done at the globe Theatre. These are vital and instrumental to the success of these portraits. Back home I look very carefully at my Globe drawings and then draw them again, trying to keep their essence. I look for coherency, vitality, uniqueness and subtle emotional expression. Some are too wild to use but often I am surprised to have made a successful oil painting from a very unlikely and unpromising drawing.
Sometimes a portrait may need more than one attempt, several have taken up to six attempts. When I slip away from the original Globe drawing, that's when my oil work goes awry. In cases like this I return to the original Globe drawing to remind me of the line and composition made then. It is that unique line giving aliveness, spontaneity and vitality, transferred to the canvas that I believe gives my portraits a unique quality. Most of my drawing done at the Globe is useful and only needs tidying up.

Tim Clarke | Helen Schlesinger as Gertrude in Hamlet

Theatre is ephemeral, yet painting is permanent. How do you translate a fleeting moment on stage into something timeless on canvas?

I accept the human search for meaning is paramount to our wellbeing. “Out, out brief candle! Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing”. So Macbeth reflects upon learning of Lady MacBeth’s death. I believe our hour comes from God, source, all that is, the Creator, signifying everything. Everything is connected to everything else, so any one thing can express the whole. That is what I am looking to express in each portrait.
Our lives lived in time are ephemeral, but spiritual time, as best I understand, is eternal now. I try to freeze a snippet of ephemeral time into the eternal now with this spiritual awareness, that connects everything, including all time in a permanent instant.

Shakespeare’s female characters often navigate power, vulnerability, and resistance. Which of these qualities most compels you as a painter?

I am drawn to the power Shakespeare gives his female characters. Inspired by his example I make my female portraits powerful, whatever emotion they are expressing. I want to make them powerful in all ways, so they can express vulnerability and still be powerful. I feel there is no end to the power of females.

Your portraits often crop or fragment the figure in unexpected ways. How do you decide what to reveal and what to withhold?

The unusual and unexpected ways in which my portraits are fragmented comes from the live drawings done at the Globe. This is part of their beauty. It is the surprising forms that deeply attract me by giving a unique representation of the boundless nature of human character. They are dancing not with their bodies but with their faces. If I can make my oil portraits convincing, I will follow any fragmentation that my Globe drawings reveal.

The faces in your paintings feel psychologically charged, sometimes tense or introspective. Are you painting the character, the actress or something beyond both?

Sometimes I title my portraits with a quote from Shakespeare or name this actress playing this role. I am responding to the uniqueness of the actress performing Shakespeare’s unique female characters in my drawing and painting using both as a platform to express and celebrate my respect and admiration for all women. I want their internal feelings and thoughts to emerge on their faces charged with the fullness of being an individual connected to and containing all that is. The eye colour in my portraits is the eye colour of the actress concerned.

By focusing exclusively on women in this ongoing series, do you see the collection as a political gesture, a poetic one, or both?

In my first two plays I drew both genders. My first oil portrait was of Portia titled “A good deed in a naughty world”, quoting her in The Merchant of Venice. I quickly understood I could make a significant statement by painting only women. This allows me to express my love and admiration for women and contend with the gross mistreatment, belittling and abuse of women by men for too long. I feel only when the colossal gifts of women are respected by men will peace on Earth reign. By painting only women in my Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre series, I strongly feel I am creating my own ‘good deed in a naughty world’.

Tim Clarke | Kirsty Bushell as Juliet lowering her masquerade ball mask

Izhak Volokita is an Israeli author and visual artist.
Volokita holds a BA in Logistics and an MPH in Disaster Management. While his academic background focuses on emergency management, he is widely recognized in the literary world under his pen name, I.V. Olokita.
Literary Career:
As an author, Olokita specializes in prose and short stories. His works have been translated into English and have garnered several literary awards.
Visual Arts:
In recent years, Volokita has expanded his creative horizons into the world of fine arts. His paintings introduce a fresh perspective, blending realism and sarcasm within a semi-abstract framework. His visual style challenges the viewer by juxtaposing literal representation with cynical commentary.
Izhak is 49 years old, married with two children, and resides in Israel.

Project Statement
My work exists in the deliberate tension between the structured world of logic and the fragmented reality of human emotion. Coming from a background in disaster management, I am fascinated by the moment where order dissolves, where the familiar becomes distorted, and the "emergency" of the human soul takes over.
In this series, I explore themes of temporal decay and existential stillness. Whether through the internal mechanics of a grandfather clock or the hollow gaze of a figure, I seek to capture the "scream" that remains unheard. My paintings transition between semi-abstract geometries and gritty realism, using a palette that oscillates between somber earth tones and sudden, jarring bursts of color.
I view my art as a form of cynical commentary. By juxtaposing literal objects with surreal distortions, I invite the viewer to question the stability of their own surroundings. For me, a painting is not just an image; it is an investigation into the irony of existence, where beauty and sarcasm, vulnerability and resilience, all occupy the same canvas.

Izhak Volokita | If Only I Could Scream | 2026

Izhak Volokita | Time | 2026

Contents

Interviews

Featured artists

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

NO. 50

MARCH 2026