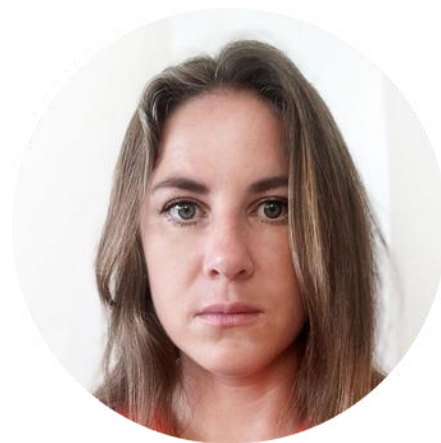


# VISUAL ART JOURNAL





# — Intro



**Anna Gvozdeva**

Curator of  
Visual Art Journal

Hello, dear reader!

It's hard to believe, but I'm welcoming you from the pages of our 30th issue. Over this time, we've met hundreds of artists working in a wide range of styles. They create what once seemed unimaginable and find beauty in the most unexpected places — inspiring both us and our readers.

The stories shared in our interviews never leave one indifferent. Through pain and joy, with or without support, artists continue to create and stay true to themselves.

Thank you for being with us. It's a great joy and honor — both for us as publishers and for the artists who help bring each issue to life. Enjoy reading!

*On the Front Cover:*

**Katarina Popović**

Porcelain cans installation  
2024

*On the Back Cover:*

**Xinyue Geng**



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

# Korvin Reich

**You describe your drawings as investigations of the mind. What sparked this conceptual focus in your artistic journey?**

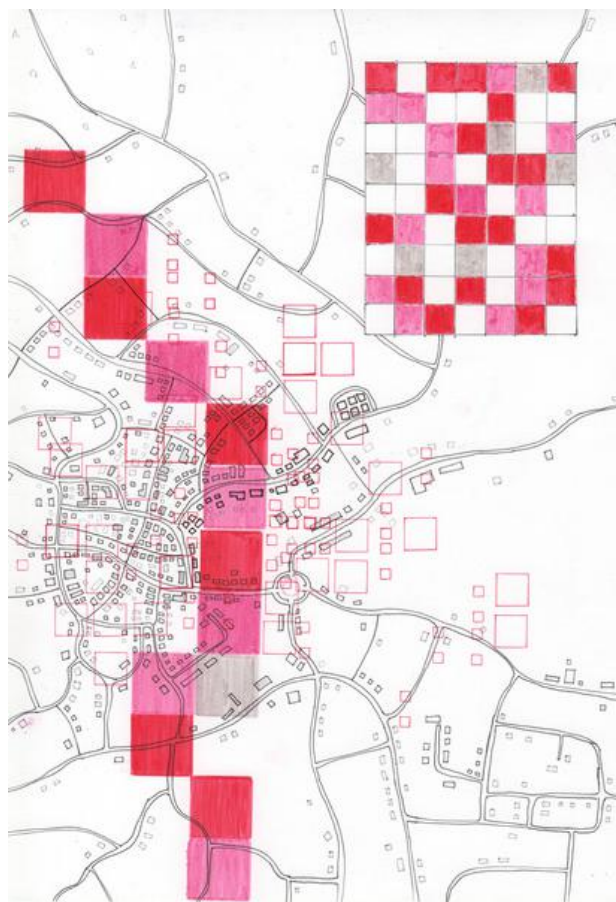
The investigation of the mind is one of humanity most important questions, I believe. How do I react to the world? How do I interact with it? Ultimately, it is always the confrontation with the finiteness that we encounter everywhere — and with death. And yet, humanity is still searching for happiness, for well-being. So how can this dilemma be resolved?

Over the centuries, art has become an independent discipline. Thus, it gives me the freedom to explore these important questions in their context. The focus on the mind is my anchor; drawing is a way to convey this outwardly. But this can only be conveyed “between the lines” or “between the characters,” and that’s a good thing.

The focus on the mind brings calm, and focus and calmness need strengthening in this day and age.

**Your work often blurs the line between hand-drawn and printed matter. Is this intentional? What do you hope viewers feel when they realize it’s all hand-drawn?**

This effect is certainly intended. The drawings invite a second look. The human being is the focus, not the computer or new media. People must not forget that. When viewers discover that the hand drawings are hand drawings, I often see happy surprise in their eyes. Beyond the signs and lines, the drawings convey something entirely different, something spiritual or something like an aura. I see that as something



Korvin Reich | Plan x 3 colors | 2023

very valuable. This makes people superior to the media and I want to remind them of this.

**Many of your works seem to involve mathematical or systematic elements—like “Project  $\pi$ ”. How does logic or science intersect with your intuitive process?**

Centuries ago, art and science formed a unity. I consider this relationship important. Science is not merely “cold-hearted” or “based solely on facts”; it thrives on intuition just as much as art.

The element of “beauty” is recognizable in both disciplines, for example, the beauty of a sequence of numbers like  $\pi$ . I would like to dare to engage with it directly in today’s art context, not just indirectly with its opposite or with its distortion into kitsch. It, too, has its laws, and in this it is closer to science than one might assume.

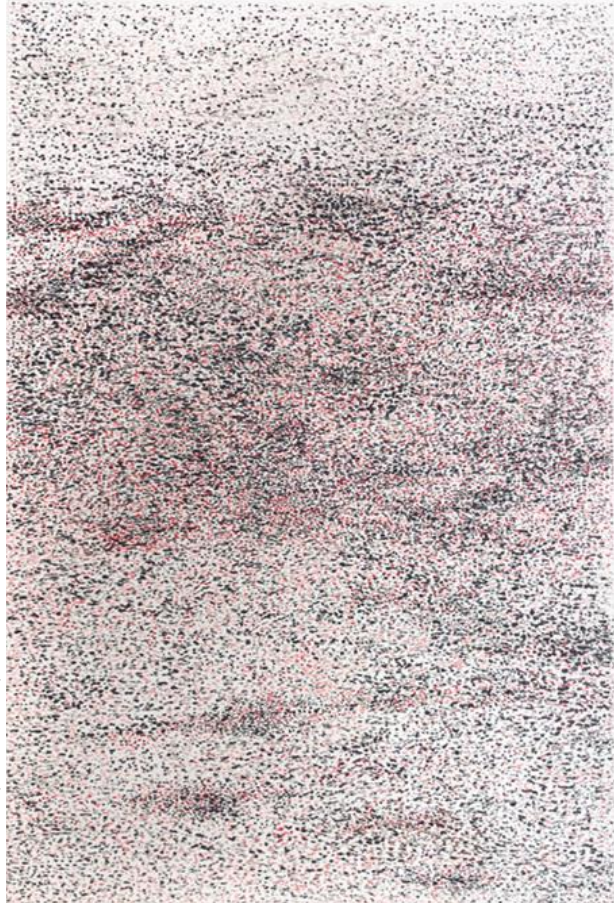
With the number  $\pi$  and its infinite sequence of numbers, one inevitably comes into contact with the theme of infinity. This cannot be represented on a sensory basis. Intuition, whether on the part of the artist or the viewer, is needed to make this dimension tangible in a work of art.

Another element is unpredictability, which appears equally in art and science. For example, in seemingly disordered systems. Art can contribute to the visual investigation of these disordered systems.

Each of them, art and science, have a shaky stand without the other.

I believe it’s especially important in our time that they are becoming closer again, as was the case, for example, with the septem artes liberales (the seven liberal arts) in antiquity.





**How did the collaboration with the ballet production “PI” come about? What was it like to see your drawings in motion on stage?**

I personally see numbers as colors; at least, my interest in this number or number sequences in general was awakened. As far as I could, I pursued mathematical phenomena and began to incorporate them into my artistic considerations. Even in the years before, I had always had an artistic connection to science. I asked the composer C. René Hirschfeld if he would be interested in exploring pi musically, which he then did.

Eventually, we came into contact with the choreographer Miro Magloire and his New York Chamber Ballet, and so the idea expanded into dance, and the joint project was born. For the composition “Pi – Sound of Infinity,” my drawings were projected onto the floor and onto dancers who danced Magloire’s choreography Pi. Performances were held in 2024 at the Kunstmuseum Magdeburg and in Berlin.

I created a film from the drawings, partly with the drawings in motion, which also formed the basis for the choreography, which I found to be very sensitive and very much in tune with my drawings, almost like an extension.

It was a truly beautiful experience for me to see the images projected at this scale in the space. The dancers wore uniform white leotards, so they too formed small, moving projection surfaces within the larger ones. You could walk around the stage, offering a new view from every side. Add to that this incredibly intense and richly sonorous composition – a complete work whose individual parts reinforced each other and thus transcended themselves.

**How do poetry and visual art interact in your creative practice? Do they influence one another?**

When I draw and when I write, I enter a space where I walk almost as if I were sleeping or breathing – something is happening, but you don’t know how. You don’t think about it

either. You wait.

I create from a ground from which something seems to grow of its own accord.

On this level, words and signs, but also images, even music, find their common ground.

I see words alongside their meaning like images, signs like a language that we may or may not understand. As in the visual level, language also has non-linear processes, fields of meaning that branch out as if into a space.

**Your drawings feel both fluid and precise. Could you walk us through your process—do you begin with a plan, or let the drawing evolve freely?**

Free, intuitive forms are combined with certain defined processes. When depicting these dynamic processes, unpredictable structures emerge that develop their own laws. The individual elements form higher-level structures that go beyond themselves. What happens in the end cannot be planned; surprise is always there, just like in real life. When I define these processes, it may take a few preliminary sketches before I start the artistic work.

Even when I work with free forms, I define that beforehand, so I plan not to plan anything. From the first free forms, the exact plan emerges, which I then define and then implement freely. It works hand in hand.

**Do you consider your art closer to abstraction or a form of visual science? Or do you reject such classifications altogether?**

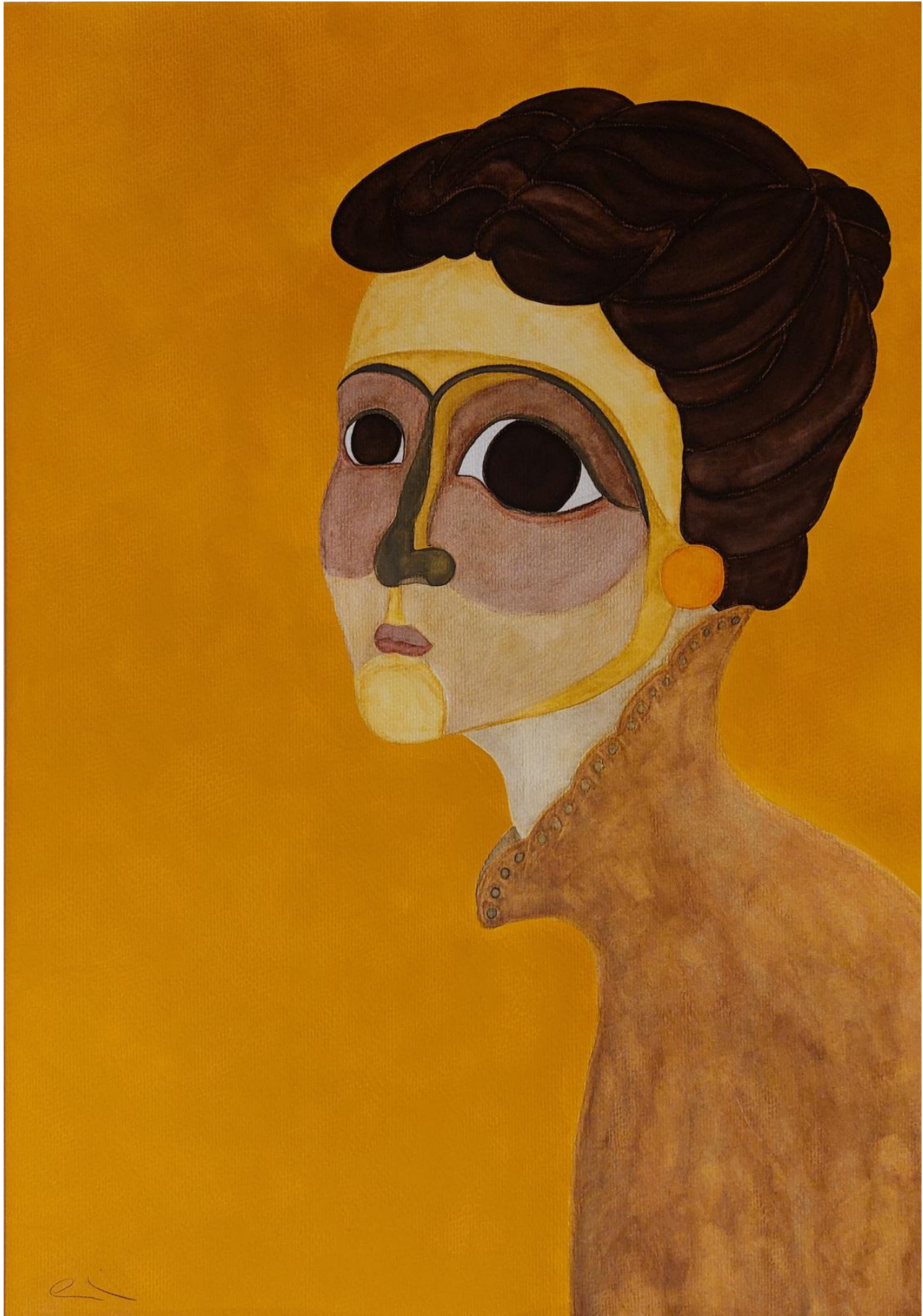
I think abstraction is a kind of visual science, and also an important component of the various sciences themselves. Details are omitted, or their common foundations are found, which are then examined separately, their relationships to one another, and their laws.

That’s a good question, because I really try to find such foundations or general modes of action in my drawings and bring them to fruition, which then naturally happens in a free, intuitive way.





**Francesca Cittadini** is a visual artist from Rome who explores portraiture through mixed media techniques, combining watercolors, water-soluble pastels, water-soluble markers, oil paints, and acrylics. Drawing for as long as she can remember, she has developed a way of deconstructing faces, bringing to life gazes that convey emotion with both delicacy and intensity. Her style blends chromatic sensitivity with elegant strokes, resulting in a personal and recognizable expressive language. The artwork "Edith" is currently on display at the Galleria Barattolo in Rome, Italy.







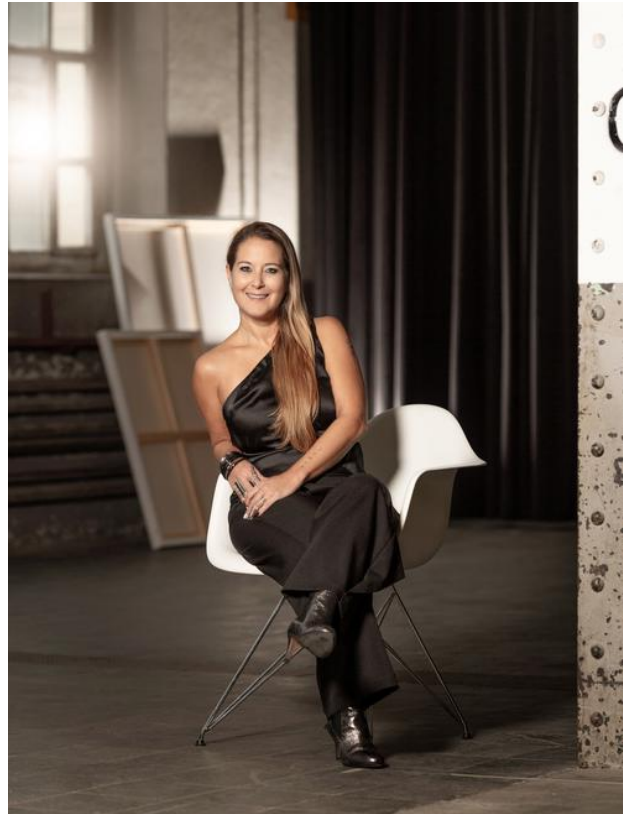
## — Interview

# Désirée von Allmen

**Your work is visually rich and almost sculptural. Can you describe the technique behind these layered, scale-like textures?**

My work emerges from a dialogue between intuition, materials, and deliberate composition. I use acrylic paints, my signature Wings technique, spray elements, and a variety of materials such as paper, textiles, and sand. By layering and manipulating these elements, I create relief-like, almost sculptural surfaces—especially evident in my Wings series, which evoke the image of feathers or wings. These structures invite viewers to explore the depth of each piece, offering a tactile, multifaceted visual experience. Every work is unique, infusing spaces with energy and atmosphere.

Désirée von Allmen | Black Wings | 2024



**You speak of a tension between control and letting go. How does this duality manifest in your creative process?**

This tension is at the heart of my artistic process. There are phases when I plan deliberately and guide the composition, but just as often, I allow myself to be led by the spontaneity of the moment and the dynamics of the materials. This interplay between control and surrender creates space for the unexpected and gives each work its distinctive character. It's within this balance that the greatest magic happens—the artwork develops its own rhythm.

**Many of your pieces have titles like *Black Wings*, *Night Sky Wings*, *Nile Wings*, *Magnolia Wings*. What does the motif of “wings” symbolize for you?**

For me, wings are a symbol of freedom, transformation, and new beginnings. They represent the courage to transcend boundaries and discover new horizons. Through my work, I invite viewers to recognize their own potential and embark on a journey of self-discovery—embracing each moment as an opportunity to reinvent themselves and see the unknown as a chance for growth.





**How have your past experiences—as a helicopter pilot and entrepreneur— influenced your approach to painting?**

Every stage of my life has broadened my perspective and shaped my art. The willingness to take new paths, accept responsibility, and face challenges is reflected in my creative process. It's about having the courage to embrace the unknown and remaining open to change. These experiences have strengthened my resilience and taught me to approach each new work with curiosity and determination.

**Texture plays a major role in your work. Do you see your pieces as inviting not just to be seen, but to be physically felt?**

My art is designed to engage more than just the eye. The multi-layered surfaces invite viewers to come closer, explore the depth of the textures, and immerse themselves in the complexity of each piece. This creates a dialogue between the artwork and the viewer, inspiring new perspectives and making each piece a focal point that shapes the atmosphere and character of a space.

**You mention transformation and overcoming boundaries as central themes. Can you share a personal moment that deeply influenced this focus?**

We all encounter challenges in life that push us to grow and take new directions. For me, it has always been essential to find the courage to question old patterns and embrace change. These experiences have reinforced my belief that growth and renewal are possible when we are willing to leave our comfort zones. This attitude shapes my art and is at the core of my message: everyone carries within them the power to transform.

**What role does intuition play in selecting your color palettes and compositions?**

Intuition is my constant companion. Colors, forms, and compositions often arise spontaneously—they reflect moods, thoughts, and the energy of the moment. I trust that working intuitively leads to the most authentic and vibrant pieces. This approach ensures that every painting is unique and full of expressive power.

## — Interview

# Alejandro Martín de Prado

**Your project merges photography and narrative. How did the idea of creating a “photo-comic” come to life?**

This photo-comic was actually an assignment for my Master degree at first, where our incredible teacher and photographer Laia Abril invited us to make a project where we had to write a text first and then accompany with photographs. Having written said text, the one you can read as the inner dialogue of the Prowler (that’s how I like to call the protagonist of the story), I came to the realization that the



theme would be very difficult to address in an original way only by documenting reality; it was a very big subject and I couldn’t just literally photograph the things I mention in the text. So I got the idea of showing not the present of those actions, but the consequences: this Prowler who reflected on how the end of civilization came to occur as we watch him roam the Earth for survival (and also meaning). Being a story so narrative, I felt the best way to show his journey was by creating these photos as panels from a comic-book; planning their disposition on the pages, the space they would hold in these pages and also the order in which we see them. It may seem an odd choice, but taking into account my love for comics, my way of approaching things as a screenwriter and the fact that I had to tell a story with my photos, the decision practically made itself.

**The post-apocalyptic tone in your series feels deeply personal. What specific events or emotions inspired this vision?**

At the moment of this project, the only thing I was capable of writing was something that had to do with the things that most frighten and worry me almost on a daily basis: the dichotomy between the problems we all face in our daily lives and the ones that are so much bigger than us, as well the environment where those are generated, which is the society where we all live in and that a lot of us have realized that it doesn’t have the best interest in our well being or in the Earth’s as a whole, which is, in the end, our home. The difficulties of finding a fair paid job or a fair priced apartment or the constant bombardment of media are things we should be conscious about in order to resist them but, at the same time, knowing that there are also people being slaughtered or exploited on a daily basis in other parts of the world like their lives don’t matter, such as the genocide in Palestine, leaves you with a feeling of guilt and despair for the world where we live in. So, honestly, this project is a





result of a mixed feeling of rage, being overwhelmed and the powerless feeling of seeing the future of the world being taken from us only because of greed.

**You use vibrant colors for some images and black-and-white for others. How do you decide which aesthetic fits each moment or message?**

The decision between the use of vibrant colors or the use of black and white in this project comes down to the purpose of those photos. The ones in color are for the present of this character, the world of our future and the story we follow, where nature has vibrant colors as a result of contamination and radiation, trying to mimic science fiction, while the black and white stills are more on the surrealist plane; how the character is feeling deep down, while he has to survive day after day. The same way as each one of us have our inner demons.

**What role does solitude play in your visual storytelling?**

As a photographer who realized his photos were somehow different than the “mainstream”, I came to the conclusion that I didn’t photograph people that much. Instead, I’d photograph silent places, because it’s the way my brain is wired; I’d rather be at places or give attention to the things that usually go unnoticed because of the peace they exude. So then, I think it has to do with how I relate to being alone, those moments when I create and express myself the most and feel at peace. But it’s not that I don’t enjoy company; in the photo-comic, solitude has another layer to it. The Prowler doesn’t have anyone else rather than himself, and knowing he doesn’t feel that well, that solitude is more like a prison than a way of feeling free. So, you know, I wanted to express that having a community and people to care about and that care about you it’s one of the most important pillars in our lives.

**In your statement, you mention resisting hate and ignorance. How do you think photography can serve as a tool for social change?**

For me, photography is one of the most useful tools for this. In this century it’s all around us and it can feel like there’s nothing new to show or see, but it’s that democratization of the image which can bring social change. Almost everyone

has a camera in their phone, they can show the world something that’s happening in their hometown with only a couple thousands inhabitants and not depend on the usual news media. What I find most beautiful about photography is it’s realism; no one can’t deny the evidence. Once something is photographed, it’s immortalised, and I believe it’s going to be something really important in the days to come in order to prevent that misplaced hate and avoidable ignorance.

**What challenges did you face while producing this series —technically, emotionally, or conceptually?**

This project was actually very experimental for me, so I had my fair share of challenges. Technically, I had to learn to use the timer in my camera, which wasn’t such a big challenge, but it was interesting trying to get myself in the exact position I had to be in, as I am the “actor” of the Prowler, and most of the time during the shootings I’d be alone (with the exception of two sequences where my girlfriend Camila and a friend, Javier, helped me).

That was rather funny, but the real challenge was emotionally. As I said before, my feelings during the making of the comic were mostly rage and powerlessness because of the theme it had, but it also worked as a way to channel all of that negativity and turn it into something special. It’s paradoxical that art mostly finds its origin in those feelings of discomfort, but it’s our way to express them and feel some relieve.

**Do you think your background in screenwriting influences the way you structure your photo-narratives?**

Of course, as I mentioned before in relation with the creation of this project, but also in a wider spread, like why I’m more interested in documentary photography more than any other style or genre: because it tells a story. Everytime I’m working on a new project and I see the photos I’ve taken, I’m thinking how to properly order them, how to arrange them in the page or pages, because each one of them tells something different and whatever they tell, the reader is influenced by the one prior and the one after. Order matters because each photo feels like a sentence and you want to write a paragraph which makes perfect sense; it’s a dialogue between each photo and the reader but you have to take into account what they have already seen and what they’re about to, just like writing a script.



## — Interview

# Svetlana Fenster

**To begin, what initially drew you to pastel as your main medium, especially given your background in IT?**

I love the question. I believe that creativity is a key quality developed by IT consulting specialists, so it is not a surprise that I transferred my ability to other spheres of my life.

Pastel wasn't my first medium, but when I first tried working with pastels, I instantly realized it was the perfect medium for me. It allows me to convey my



message most authentically. I'm still continually discovering new possibilities within this medium, exploring its capabilities, and sharing my findings with viewers.

**Your works reflect a quiet and meditative atmosphere. How do you translate emotions like silence or resilience into color and form?**

It's not a quick journey. Color is the most important part of this transformation. I typically spend a considerable amount of time applying color in layers, looking for a mix that reflects the quiet melody of the atmosphere. For the past two years, I have been working right on the coast, fully immersing myself in the purity of the marine environment. I strive for conciseness in my work to not lose that purity. There is a rhythm added to the color. It is important to me when my pieces do not speak loudly but breathe - calmly, deeply, and sincerely. When rhythm, lines, and color carry an inner power. This power is soft; it is rooted in timeless values. It fosters a sense of inner stability, helping us maintain our balance in a constantly changing world.

**In your statement, you describe the sea as a "silent rebellion." Could you expand on that idea—what is it rebelling against?**

We live in a world filled with constant noise—whether informational, physical, or virtual. When you find



Svetlana Fenster | Melting away | 2025





yourself on the shore in front of the vastness of the sea, you begin to realize that there is something more permanent and significant than your fleeting problems. The sea cleanses your mind, reconnects you with yourself, and allows you to view everything from a different perspective.

In this way, it represents a 'silent rebellion' against vanity, imposed rhythms, and constant control. The sea does not make noise with slogans or demand attention; it simply exists. In its freedom, in its eternal fluidity, it rejects everything artificial, contrived, and temporary. The sea reminds us that it is possible to live differently - without fuss, without fighting for likes, without the need to prove something all the time. It is a witness of another way of life: deep, calm, honest.

**You mention transforming chaos into clarity. How does that process unfold during your artistic creation?**

This transformation is primarily expressed through compositional techniques. I eliminate everything unnecessary in search of balance among forms, lines, and space. I try to make my works harmonious and the composition as plastic as possible. It is important to me that the viewer not only sees the visual image, but also feels an inner silence, that my works are a breath of fresh air, a movement from the inner noise to a state of clarity and peace.

**What role does eco-activism play in your creative**

**practice? Do you see your art as a form of ecological statement?**

Absolutely. For me, art is a quiet but powerful form of ecological reflection. Living on the island allows me to explore existence within natural limitations. This context deeply shapes my practice. I invite the viewer into a space of heightened awareness, cultivating sensitivity to space, silence, and the fragile balance of nature. I appeal to the viewer to preserve all elements that shape our reality, forming a unique perception of the relationship between human and environment. By revealing beauty in simplicity, balance and rhythm, I aim to awaken attention — because true care for nature begins with noticing.

**Your paintings evoke a sense of time being suspended. Is this intentional, and how do you use composition to achieve that?**

Yes, it's very intentional. Thank you for noticing it. My goal is to offer a space where time feels suspended — not stopped, but deepened — inviting the viewer to simply be, without urgency, in quiet observation. For me, a pause can be more expressive than sound itself. Through my art, I aim to convey a state in which the essence becomes suddenly audible. I strive to be a conduit for the silence from which the main idea begins to resonate.



**Lauren Jesson** is a Graphic Designer and Illustrator, and owner of JessonDesign, a graphic design and illustration studio based in New Mexico. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from New Mexico State in 2021, and started this design business shortly after, encompassing her passion for creativity. Her artwork varies in medium and style, leaving her pieces to always be individually unique. Along with selling her products and artwork at local markets and working on local commissions, Lauren has also had her work shown in multiple galleries, including an upcoming show in Madrid, Spain.

### *Project Statement*

The piece titled "What Is Soon?" explores the relationship between inward and outward pressures and expectations. Pressure to be further along than you are. Pressure to finish something at a certain time, or feeling the need to finish something by a certain age. Making yourself the promise you'll "do this before I die." It's the representation of expectations, and placing too much pressure onto yourself, without thinking about why you have the goals in the first place. It's meant to reflect the realization that you have time, and that you can also have kindness towards yourself.







## — Interview

# Vicky-May Giraud

**Your work often features powerful female figures with intense gazes. What do these characters represent for you?**

They're not just characters, they're confrontations. Each figure is a stand-in for the voices we suppress, the versions of ourselves we hide or silence. The gaze is never passive it's a mirror, a dare, a disruption. These women are power, rage, tenderness, survival but most of all, presence.

They demand to be seen the way we rarely allow ourselves to be seen.



**You describe your process as physical and obsessive. Can you tell us what a typical painting session looks like for you?**

It always starts with a sketch, just enough to map out the emotion. But once I hit the canvas, it becomes something else entirely. I paint standing, moving constantly, sometimes with my hands instead of brushes. It's messy, instinctive, and often obsessive. I lose track of time. The sketch is my entry point but what happens next is a collision between body, mood, and medium.

**How do you decide which medium to use acrylic, oil, charcoal, or digital for a particular piece?**

The medium chooses itself. I don't plan it. If the emotion is sharp and fast, I'll reach for acrylic. If it's heavier, slower, I'll use oil. Charcoal is for rawness. Digital lets me fragment and recompose. I move between them depending on what the feeling asks for, there's no rule, only urgency.

**The text integrated into your paintings adds a poetic and psychological layer. What role does language play in your visual work?**

Language is another texture, a wound, a whisper, a punchline. I use text not to explain the image but to add friction. Sometimes it clashes, sometimes it clarifies. I love the tension between what we see and





what we read. Words can echo or contradict the gaze. They invite the viewer into the noise behind the silence.

**You mentioned being drawn to contradiction, beauty and distortion, strength and vulnerability. How do you translate these tensions into your compositions?**

I lean into the clash. I don't try to resolve it. I want the viewer to feel both pulled in and unsettled. I might paint a beautiful face with fractured features. A powerful posture in a collapsing space. I'm interested in duality, how two truths can sit in the same body. That's where I believe real identity lives.

**Your figures are often styled in ways that suggest futuristic or mythological aesthetics. Are there specific inspirations behind this visual language?**

Yes, but they're more felt than referenced. I pull from mythology, fashion, symbolism, anything that carries weight and story. Sometimes my figures feel like goddesses or cyborgs or archetypes because I want them to exist outside time. They're not just portraits, they're manifestations of emotion, memory, rebellion. A myth I needed to invent because it didn't exist yet.

**How does your mixed heritage (French/Swedish) influence your perspective as an artist, if at all?**

It gives me a sense of in-betweenness, a cultural duality that mirrors the emotional ones I paint. French intensity meets Swedish stillness. I feel both rooted and displaced, which makes me gravitate toward themes of identity, perception, and what's beneath the surface. I think being mixed lets me slip between languages visually and emotionally without needing permission.

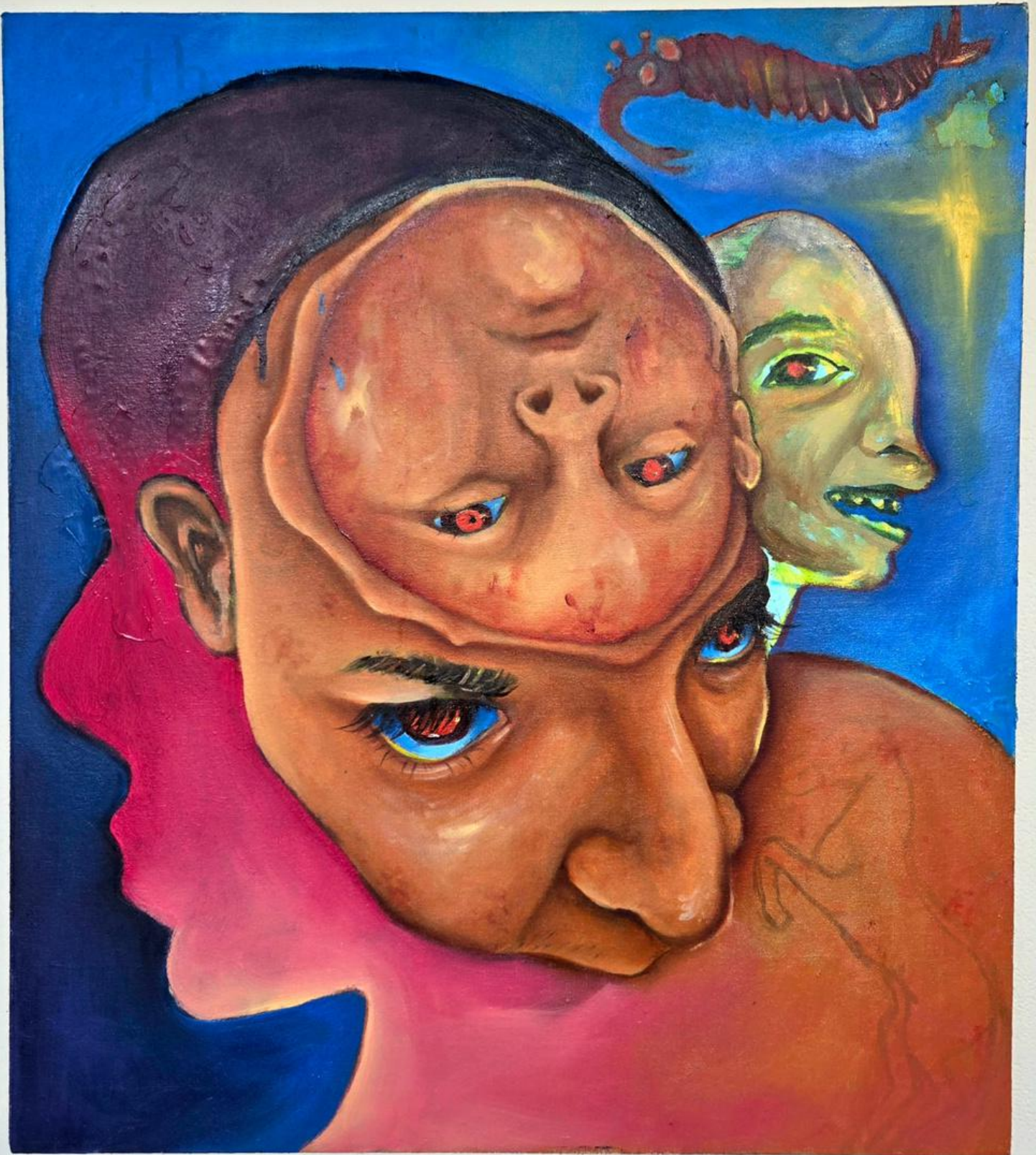


**Alex Herrera** is multimedia artist with a fondness for painting, printmaking, and playing pretend. Their work explores the intersections of childhood whimsy, queer identity, and viewing the self as multiple identities uniting as a whole through the process of art making. They recently finished their Bachelor of Fine Arts at the SUNY Purchase School of Art and Design.

*Project Statement*

I am a mixed media artist whose work explores the intersection of memory, childhood, queerness, and identity through the use of abstracted and anthropomorphic figures and the use of unconventional materials to build up the surfaces of my paintings.

Alex Herrera | Despite Everything | 2025







2/8

"On the road again"

A.H



# — Interview

## Katarina Popović

**Your art often centers on worn-out or destroyed objects. What drew you to this theme initially?**

It was simply the way I felt. I felt so demolished and didn't know how to start my career when studies were over, which is completely normal and that's what drew me to this theme. To start life outside the system in which you were trapped before means to let go of that past and build something new. To start over and make any change in life takes time and a lot of effort and sometimes it's even painful. And that's how my work became a bridge between the past and the future.

**Can you tell us more about the specific event or location that inspired your current series with porcelain cans?**

Here you can see two types of porcelain cans. Slightly deformed ones depict the inner landscape. When the harmony between me and people that I respect and care for



is disturbed I feel so sick. I simply wanted to show that unpleasant feeling from the stomach. Empty can completely white, with no brand, no text, crushed a little and left on a table alone for me was just that, that feeling transferred on an object, incredible.

Thin flat porcelain sculptures are made more spontaneous. I was walking to my studio which was located in an old paper factory building called Jugošped in Belgrade. That building had a huge parking lot, also it was a place where people were gathering and leaving trash behind, while cars were passing nonstop and crashing those leftovers. By looking at the floor I was impressed how a can can become thin like paper, so I collected a few. While transferring it to a porcelain I wanted to highlight the texture, without brands, without story, just pure material and its remains. But that work became a good base for storytelling painful stories not just personal, but more important collective ones which each one of us from the same country face daily and even for years.

It is normal for works of art to reflect the society we live in. Reality hurts sometimes, and it's even more painful having a country that you love so much, but cannot rely on it. Sadly, the people of Serbia live in a system that tramples on and humiliates its citizens by disrespecting both the living and the dead with continuous ongoing actions, as we are currently facing a major social crisis and threatening ecological catastrophe caused by corruption when the concrete canopy of the renovated main railway station in Novi Sad, Serbia on 1. November 2024. collapsed onto the busy pavement below killing 16 people and strategic lithium mining on our territory causing irreversible consequences for nature and domestic people. Faculties have been in blockades for more than six months now and all around the country are protests. Though this work was created before mentioned events it depicts the atmosphere we lived in for so long with these events as culmination and now the main question is are we going to lose everything and witness the total destruction of nature,



Katarina Popović | Porcelain cans installation | 2024



institutions, all the people and entire nation or this is just a turning point for the brighter future. Well... the time will tell the answers, but till then these objects will stay capturing the feelings of occupation, neglect, the power of disrespect and destruction that are shaping our bodies and souls in this kind of environment. I'm not the only one feeling the way I feel and that's certain. The repetition of the same motif shows the massive presence of this condition.

**Why did you choose porcelain as the material to recreate these crushed cans—objects typically seen as disposable?**

You probably heard this many times that clay remembers and has a memory, same is with our bodies, so I wanted to emphasize that. I wanted to make something like a long lasting graveyard of memories with dominant white color, so porcelain was a perfect fit. The mix of luxury material and the garbage as a motif is that confrontation I was looking for. White color in my previous work was present as a symbol of washout feelings and a lack of joy.

**How do you balance restoration and destruction in your creative practice, given your background in conservation?**

I never did conservation in my life, only studied it. In Poland I did great conservation work but as a student, never as a professional. So destruction is already there, having a skill and diploma but no chances to really work in the field you're really well prepared for is painful and discouraging. So conservation as my background is something only playing in my "background".

**What kind of emotional or social responses do you hope your installations evoke in viewers?**



Katarina Popović | Porcelain cans installation | 2024



Katarina Popović | Porcelain cans installation | 2024

I like to see various reactions. For me this represents something for someone else can be something completely different and that's the beauty of art. At my exhibitions I saw kids laughing, people curiously stopping by the gallery window, some even ended up crying. If you search more about this motif in porcelain you will find different artists doing similar, but in a different context, even recently I got one porcelain can straight from the flea market. When it comes to globally spread motifs the story and history of an object can be truly fascinating.

**How does your work comment on consumer culture and collective memory?**

I feel too small to comment on consumer's culture and its relation to collective memory, each system has its pros and cons, but not everything can be replaced and easily disposed of. Processing memories and materials takes time.

**Do you see your art as a form of preservation or a kind of visual archaeology?**

I wanted to address emotional responses to past circumstances that influence our future so much, maybe it's more kind of a visual archeology. Artworks are a reflection of a time, place and environment we live in so this can also be a preservation of ongoing times which are not so bright. If you just search online a little about the ecological challenges that my country is facing right now, there is a real chance that this work will become a souvenir of a country that once upon a time existed. Thin cans are a symbol of pressure, disrespect, staying in the same place for a long time with no movement, no chance, but waiting for more destruction. This work is simply embodiment of a strong personal feeling but it truly and unintentionally follows an ongoing situation in my country.

# Yanqing Pan

**How do you choose specific materials—like dust, orange peel powder, or wood—for each piece?**

I often feel that materials are not “chosen” but rather withdrawn first, then quietly invited back. Dust, orange peel powder, wood—these are things so humble they almost vanish from notice, swept away by daily life and by civilization’s urge to clean. Yet they carry a quiet sense of the sublime: they do not make noise, but they keep proving that time and decay persist. I use them because they have the courage to grow weak in the open, even to disappear. That very retreat is, for me, the most honest form of strength.

**You once said, “Working with decomposable materials is my way to explore what cannot be pinned down in words.” Could you share a moment when language failed you, and the work itself spoke more clearly?**

Yanqing Pan | Man from crowd (人从众效) | 2023



Yanqing Pan | L'autre qui n'est pas | 2025

Often, language is too sharp—it slices details apart. Once I tried to write about an apology I had never spoken out loud, but the more I wrote, the more distant it felt from the truth. Eventually, I buried that half-written page in damp soil. The paper softened, molded, dissolved, and even the ink faded away. In the end, only the smell of the earth remained. I feel that scent holds what no sentence could keep.

**Your work has been described as “traces, gestures, or interruptions—barely-there presences.” How do you maintain subtlety while still leaving a perceptible resonance in the gallery space?**

I rarely make my work speak loudly. I care more about whether people feel the air shift when they come close. I think of the gallery as a kind of skin—sometimes a faint smell, a sliver of light, or a glance caught at the corner of the eye can plant a quiet echo in someone’s mind. I trust the viewer’s body more than their attention. Especially nowadays, the first time a lot of works are seen by the audience is no longer because they are present, but often the first time is through the media, and the second time is in person. The second encounter is often nothing new, but just confirms what has been absorbed before. I try to explore what art becomes after being visualized



and reproduced, but at the same time I also pay attention to how to sense art.

**Growing up in Beijing, how did the city's rapid transformation shape your sensitivity to environmental and existential change?**

Living in Beijing, houses, alleyways, and street corners were constantly disappearing. Each demolition seemed to carry away familiar scents and sounds as well. It taught me a sense of instability early on, and helped me accept that change is the norm. I think that's why my work often carries a texture that is always ready to dissolve.

**You moved from illustration to fiber sculpture and installation. How has that evolution shaped the intentions behind your practice?**

Illustration first taught me to trust images instead of words, but the edges of the page still confined me. Working with fibers and installations opened things up: the work could breathe, age, and correct itself over time. Now I feel I'm building a condition rather than telling a complete story—I make a space where feeling happens on its own.

**Time and decay are collaborators in your work. Could you share a story of a piece that continued to change after being exhibited?**

Once, I made a faint trace on the floor using

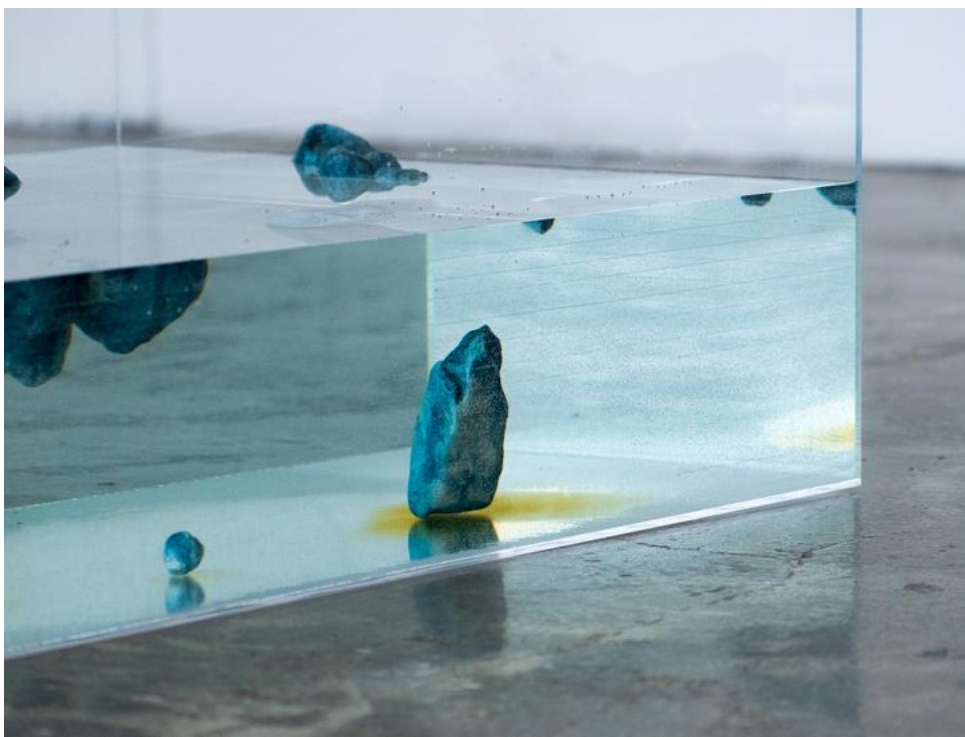


Yanqing Pan | Echoes of Drift | 2025

citrus powder. At first it looked clean, but during the show, people's footsteps and the air conditioning scattered it, mixing it with dust. Eventually, the cleaning staff wiped it away as if it were dirt. I loved that—it was the piece finding its own way to disappear, becoming the quietest yet longest-lasting part of the exhibition.

**You mention listening to materiality rather than controlling it. What does that creative dialogue feel like in the studio?**

I never start with an idea and then simply make a piece to match it. Instead, I stay with the material and pay attention to how it reacts—whether it resists, collapses, or slowly transforms on its own. It feels more like an ongoing negotiation than a plan. Sometimes what emerges surprises even me. The work grows out of this back-and-forth: my intentions meet the material's limits, and in that space, something unexpected becomes possible.



Yanqing Pan | Boundaries Dissolve in the Sea | 2024

## — Interview

# Celeste Dumonceaux Delahey



**You often paint skies and clouds with vibrant colors — what draws you to these elements of the prairie landscape?**

I enjoy using pure saturated paint colours but also mix colours to get a warm earthy tone, or dark blue grey for a stormy sky. I am definitely drawn to the bright blue of the sky, and greens, yellows, and blues of the various crops grown here.



**How has growing up on a farm influenced your artistic vision and connection to the land?**

I grew up on a Canadian prairie farm and spent my childhood helping my parents farm the croplands, planting and harvesting garden vegetables, and exploring creeks and pastures. We would often go for drives on a summer evening to 'check the crops', look for deer, owls, eagles, foxes and coyotes, and just enjoy the scenery. We lived in the southern part of Saskatchewan where there were many farms, big skies, gentle rolling hills, sloughs, and small lakes. I didn't realize how important growing up in this environment was until I started painting. I knew instinctively this was what I wanted to paint. I wanted to capture the beauty and serenity of our province to share it with others.

**Can you tell us about your process when starting a new painting — do you work from memory, photos, or plein air sketches?**

Generally I use my own photos, taken while travelling through the prairie provinces. However, I use other photos provided by my family or friends if they resonate with me. I will often change the horizon line, place a tree or road in a slightly different position, or use clouds to point to my focal area. I paint quickly once I begin a piece, immersing myself in the process and emotion of the painting.

**Your paintings depict a strong sense of peace and space. Is this an emotional intention, or a natural result of your environment?**





Painting to depict peace and space in the Prairies comes from my heart. I had a very happy childhood growing up on a beautiful farm, learning, working, and playing. I walked, cycled, drove grain trucks, snowmobiled and explored the natural places around me.

**How has your involvement with Mastrius and the Artists' Workshop painting group helped you grow as an artist?**

I joined the Mastrius program four years ago and it has been nothing but positive. The program employs over 200 mentors from which you can choose depending on the area of expertise you are interested in. I have grown incredibly in my art from the teachings of these mentors. Each one provides

different skills in areas of technique, critique, the business of art, psychology of creating, and much more.

The art group I meet weekly with, Artists' Workshop is a group of 10 women all creating and sharing, and providing critiques and suggestions for each other. We work together towards an annual show and sale providing another avenue for art sales.

**What is your favorite season to paint, and why?**

My favourite season to paint is summer for the lush greens, blue skies, brilliant sunsets, and blooming crops. But I also enjoy painting winter scenes, finding the subtle blues and purples and yellows in the snow, and the calm feeling of a blanket of snow over the land.



**Evgenia Killikh** – French visual artist, born in Moscow. Lives and works in the mountains. Graduated from the State Institute of Cinematography, the Higher Courses for Scriptwriters and Film directors. Since 2015, she has been working in commercial and documentary film production. Winner of international film festivals. Since 2020, she has been engaged in art photography and video art. Since 2023, she has been actively participating in art fairs, holding solo exhibitions. In 2024, she became a nominee and winner of the art residence Palazzo Ulmo, Taranto, Italy. Her works are in the international collections. The artist turns to the beauty of the surrounding space, capturing various states of nature and objects with the help of photography and collages.

#### *Project Statement*

The artist has been interested in the process of observation since she began studying documentary film production. The artist contemplates the silent state of nature, which, whether static (photographs, diptychs and collages) or dynamic (video art), say more than words. Using photo fragments, video editing and sound, combining reality and fantasy, the author creates new worlds into which she invites the viewer and provokes a conversation with oneself. By connecting identical photo fragments manually, the artist seems to build a bridge between the analogue and digital worlds. A striking example is the series "Letters from Heaven" - collages in the shape of a snowflake assembled from a single photograph of a flowering branches, then animated. The author's subtle and sensitive contemplation keeps the viewer at point O, at the point of balance, from where the individual investigation begins. "I am fascinated by the creation of new Universes and unique worlds. By the conversation between nature and a human being. Through water. Through trees. Through flowers. Through clouds. I reflect on living organisms that are capable, perhaps, of conveying thoughts and meanings. I observe the strength and fragility of nature. I am interested in the combination of the real and the fictional, in the search for a metaphor, a symbol, a form. As a director and cameraman, I was interested in telling real stories of people. Later, I decided to create my own stories related to the world around me. I am trying to find an answer to the eternal question: "How could I convey my feelings in the best way?" After all, feelings are the most essential thing. I listen to nature, and it often tells me something important. Since childhood, having been involved in photography, I used my camera to capture the moment of beauty. Since then, I continue to use photography to convey the impressions from the world around me. In search of an answer to my question - How could I convey my feelings in the best way? - I began to divide a series of moments into fragments. Then, using the fragments of photos, I began to create compositions. Deliberately moving away from a digital collage, I connected one fragment to another manually. This is how the first snowflakes from the petals of flowering plants appeared. This meditative technique of "multiplying" one fragment of an image and connecting the fragments into a new form formed the basis of my art. Over time, it became obvious for me that statics do not always allow me to convey a subtle and sensual story. The tools, that I had previously used in cinema, - video, sound, editing - came to my aid. Enlivening compositions with the help of video, selecting sound design and coming up with short scripts, I turned to creating video art. Today I make independent photos, diptychs, collage compositions from a fragment of one photo and animated stories out of my images. My method of observation, borrowed from cinematographic experience, allows me to carry on a conversation with the world around me and with the viewer. Gradually, I add new methods for a more accurate transmission of my feelings.



Eugenie Killikh | Net





Eugenie Killikh | Branches



# Dominique Philippe Bonnet

**What first drew you to photograph coastal landscapes during the off-season, rather than during their more vibrant summer months?**

What captivates me about photographing the coast outside the summer season is the dramatic shift in atmosphere that emerges when the liveliness fades. During the high season, beaches are filled with noise, movement, and colour—but once autumn sets in, a silence takes over, and the landscape is stripped down to its essential elements. That quiet, almost melancholic atmosphere offers a much deeper emotional and visual experience.

In the absence of people, I'm able to observe the lines, textures, and structures of the coast more clearly. The minimalism of the empty space allows me to compose in a more deliberate and expressive way. I'm especially drawn to the stillness and solitude of these moments—it's a time when the sea feels more introspective, and that emotional tone

Dominique Philippe Bonnet | OFF SEASON



aligns perfectly with my black and white aesthetic. So, the off-season is not a “lesser” time to photograph—on the contrary, it reveals a poetic and contemplative side of these places that we rarely take the time to see.

**Your artist's statement speaks of silence, memory, and introspection. Do you approach each shoot with a narrative in mind, or do you let the scene reveal itself to you?**

I don't begin with a fixed narrative in mind. For me, photography—especially in the context of OFF SEASON—is about being present and receptive to what the landscape offers in that moment. I walk through these deserted coastal spaces without expectations, letting the silence and atmosphere guide my eye. The introspective quality of the work comes from observation and patience. I let the scene unfold slowly, paying attention to subtle details: a long shadow cast by an abandoned structure, a single trace in the sand, the way the light changes as clouds move overhead. These elements often carry their own quiet story, and my role is to listen visually and translate that into composition. That said, over time, certain emotional threads emerge—nostalgia, solitude, the passage of time—and they begin to shape the way I see and frame future images. So while I don't plan a narrative in advance, I do remain deeply connected to the mood and themes that resonate throughout the series. It's a balance between intention and openness.

**Black and white photography plays a central role in this series. Can you describe what this choice unlocks for you emotionally and compositionally?**

Black and white allows me to distil the image down to its essential elements—light, shadow, form, and texture. In the context of OFF SEASON, this is especially powerful because





the absence of colour mirrors the emotional tone of the work: quiet, contemplative, and sometimes melancholic. Emotionally, black and white strips away distractions and allows the viewer to engage more directly with the mood of the scene. Compositionally, it sharpens my focus on structure and contrast. It's as if the image becomes more about presence and absence, light and void—mirroring the themes of the series itself.

Ultimately, black and white helps me express something more internal, more reflective. It's not just a stylistic choice—it's a language that fits the emotional landscape I'm trying to explore.

**The sense of absence in your images feels powerful. Do you see these spaces as abandoned, resting, or something else entirely?**

I don't see these spaces as abandoned—rather, I see them as resting. There's a quiet dignity in their temporary emptiness, a sense that they are simply pausing between two states of being. During the summer months, these places are full of energy and movement; in the off-season, they return to a more natural, introspective state. This period of rest reveals something essential about the landscape—its underlying structure, its raw beauty, and the traces left behind by human presence. The absence we perceive is not a void, but a space charged with memory. It's as if the beaches are breathing again, reclaiming their identity beyond the function of tourism.

For me, this resting state holds great emotional and visual potential. It invites a slower gaze and a deeper connection. The stillness isn't emptiness—it's presence in another form.

**What role does time play in your photography—not just in the seasonal sense, but in how long you observe or wait before capturing a moment?**

Time is at the very heart of my approach to photography, both in the broader seasonal rhythm and in the quiet act of observation. In OFF SEASON, the passage of time is everywhere: in the fading marks on the sand, the weathered surfaces of closed beach structures, or the long shadows cast by the low winter sun. These traces of time are part of the story I want to tell. But time also plays a crucial role in how I create the images themselves. I often spend long periods simply walking, watching, letting the environment speak to me. I rarely rush to press the shutter. I wait for a certain alignment—a shift in the light, a passing cloud, or the subtle moment when the composition feels complete.

This slow, deliberate pace mirrors the introspective nature of the work. It allows me to connect more deeply with the place and to become more attuned to its quiet transformations. I think that when you take time to really observe, the photograph becomes more than a document—it becomes a reflection of presence, patience, and emotional resonance.

**Your compositions often leave room for the viewer's imagination. How intentional is that "emptiness," and how do you decide what to leave out of the frame?**

The "emptiness" in my compositions is very intentional. I see it not as a lack, but as a space of possibility—a visual and emotional openness that invites the viewer in. By simplifying the scene and leaving out any unnecessary detail, I try to create images that are not overly descriptive, but suggestive. I carefully decide what to include and what to exclude based on the mood I want to convey. Often, it's what's not shown that gives the image its emotional weight. A single bench facing the sea, a distant horizon, or the shadow of a structure can be more evocative than a fully filled frame. It's a way of making space for memory, imagination, and reflection. This minimalist approach also aligns with the themes of OFF SEASON—solitude, transience, introspection. By reducing the image to its most essential elements, I hope to leave room for the viewer's own interpretation, emotions, and memories to take shape within that quiet space.

**How do you choose the specific locations for your photographs? Are there personal connections to these places, or is it purely visual interest?**

It's a mix of both. Sometimes I'm drawn to a location because of a personal connection—places I've visited over the years, where I've observed how the mood shifts dramatically between seasons. There's something moving about returning to a familiar beach and seeing it transformed by emptiness and time. That emotional layer adds depth to the way I photograph it. But often, it's also about visual potential. I look for places with strong, clean lines, interesting structures, and a certain spatial openness that lends itself to minimalist composition. Even if I don't know the location intimately, I'm drawn to how its geometry and atmosphere might respond to the off-season light.

Ultimately, whether it's a place I know well or one I've just discovered, I'm guided by a feeling—an intuitive sense that this landscape, in its temporary silence, has something to say.



### **Essam Alaa: A Visionary Painter of Human Emotion.**

Essam Alaa is an Egyptian artist whose work reflects a deep exploration of human existence, desire, and emotion. Through a distinctive approach that merges dream-like imagery with philosophical depth, he crafts paintings that invite viewers into a world where reality and imagination coexist.

Alaa's artistic philosophy centers on emotional intensity and visual storytelling. His paintings often depict solitary figures caught between movement and stillness, illustrating the fragile yet powerful nature of the human experience. He uses surreal compositions to activate subconscious reflection, encouraging viewers to interpret the unspoken narratives within his work.

#### **Artistic Themes & Approach**

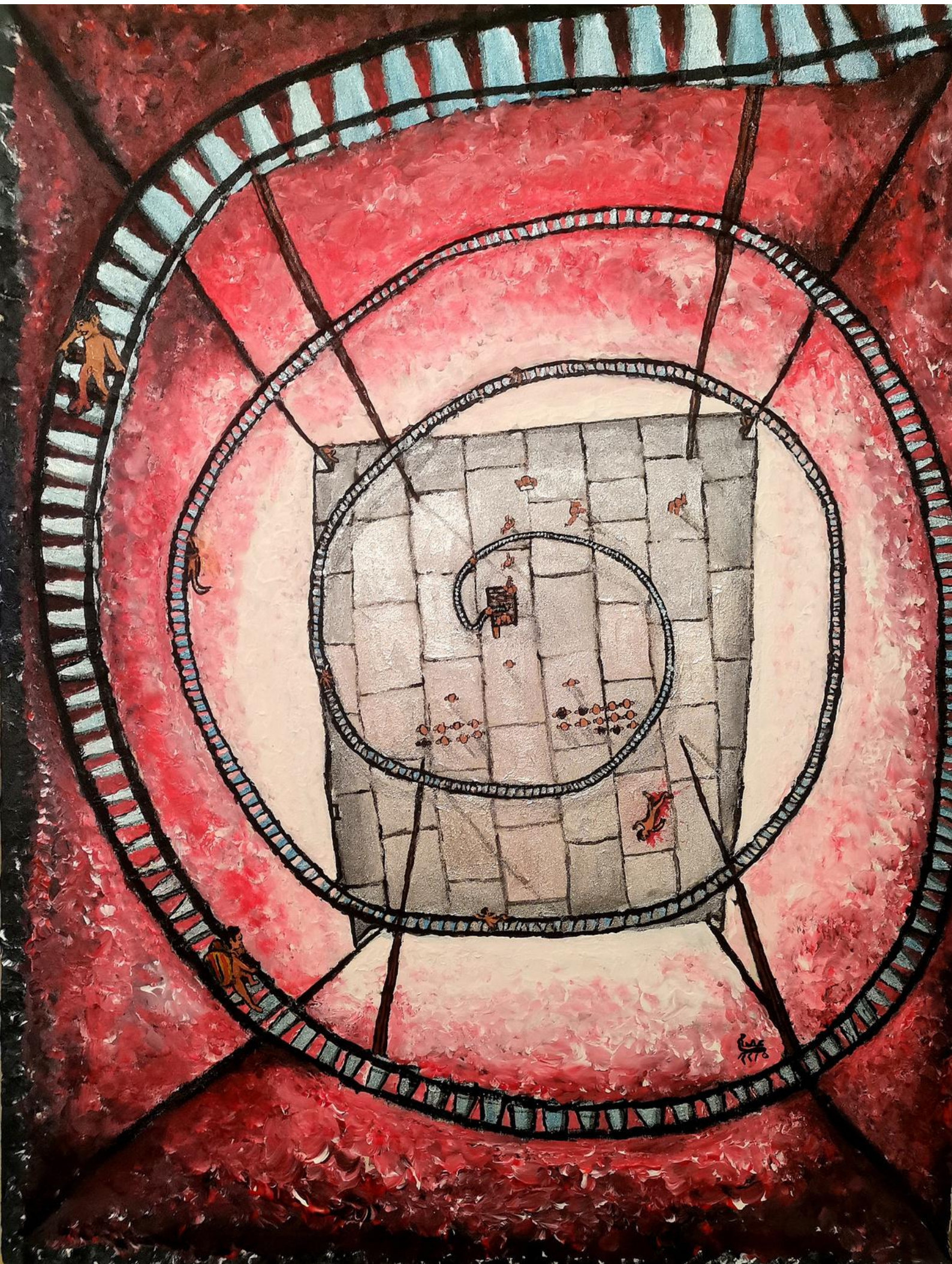
- **Dreamlike Narratives** – Alaa's works transport audiences into evocative, almost surreal landscapes, drawing on unconscious thought and memory.
- **Philosophical Reflections** – His paintings challenge perceptions of existence, solitude, and freedom, offering a deeply introspective artistic experience.
- **Color as Emotion** – Bright, explosive hues contrast with darker themes, symbolizing resilience and the enduring presence of hope.

With exhibitions spanning Egypt and beyond, Essam Alaa continues to shape a dialogue between personal introspection and artistic expression, blending tradition with contemporary vision.

Essam Alaa | The Game









## — Interview

# Claudine Hauke

**To begin, I'd love to ask about the heart of your recent series. Your statement 'Life is a Playground – Play It!' feels both liberating and profound. What sparked this idea, and how does it shape the way you approach your work and life today?**

We are all players in the game of life. It's a big, unpredictable game—you win, you lose, you make choices that shape the next step, and ultimately determine your path. What matters is being an active player: making smart decisions, jumping hurdles, investing wisely—whether in people, time, or creative energy. No risk, no gain—but I believe in calculated risks.

I often ask myself: What kind of player do I want to be? I've learned from mistakes, and like in any good game, I try to move forward to the next level each time. That mindset guides both my life and my work.



Claudine Hauke | The ground is lava and so are your worries | 2025



Losing loved ones, including my late husband, has shown me how fragile and fleeting life can be. There's no time to hesitate, no space for excuses. I've chosen to go for it—fully. That sense of urgency has made my life more fulfilling and has made my work bolder, more expressive, and emotionally resonant.

**Your works are rich with layered media—what does your typical painting session look like, and how do you know when a piece is “done”?**

To be honest, most of my painting sessions are quite chaotic. I've never had a fixed studio space—my life has involved a lot of moving, so I've painted in all sorts of places: leaning against a tree, in basements, garages—wherever I could set up. That means each time I work, I need to set up all my materials from scratch and clean up afterwards.

I usually listen to music while I paint. I work on relatively large canvases, and the process tends to get messy—there's a lot of movement, speed, and intuition involved. Especially with this recent series, there was a real sense of bustling energy. When I paint, it can feel almost like a trance; sometimes I'm not even sure how I arrived at the final result. Each piece in this colorful series went through at least three or four layers or sessions. At a certain point, I simply step back and look. I just know—it's something about composition, about balance. And when I feel that I've poured all my energy and emotion into the canvas, when I feel emptied in the best possible way—that's when it's done

**You've lived and worked on four continents. How have these varied cultural and environmental experiences shaped your artistic voice?**

Living in different cultures and environments has truly opened my eyes to many of the issues we face today—social, environmental, and political. Being immersed in





such diverse contexts made me more aware of how people respond to challenges and how they come together to improve life and support their communities.

These experiences deeply shaped how I approach my art. It became a tool not just for personal expression but also for raising awareness and sparking dialogue. I've learned to use my work to voice concerns and invite reflection—hopefully in a way that's constructive and inspiring.

**You were formally trained in photography but are a self-taught painter. How does your photographic eye influence your work on canvas?**

I trained as a photographer in the late '80s, back when everything was still analog—no digital shortcuts. That experience taught me to develop a strong sense of proportion, balance, and color composition. You had to be precise and really understand how to frame a moment or scene, because there was no instant preview or editing.

Those skills have stayed with me and continue to influence how I approach painting. Even though my style is abstract and expressive, my photographic eye helps me bring structure and intention to each composition. I think it gives my work a visual coherence—even amid the chaos—that traces back to my roots in photography.

**You're currently building the Lakritz Gallery & Art Garden in South Africa. What is your vision for this space?**

I live in a small coastal village in the Eastern Cape, South Africa—the country's poorest province. Unlike Cape Town or Johannesburg, where the art market is well-established, the rest of the country—especially

rural areas like ours—has very limited access to contemporary art. Art education and appreciation are often minimal, and there's a widespread lack of understanding about what contemporary art even is, from art students to the general public.

With the Lakritz Gallery & Art Garden, my vision is to change that—slowly but meaningfully. I've developed a vibrant event program that includes three group exhibitions featuring artists from three African countries. We host art talks for adults on a range of creative and thought-provoking topics, readings for children, and art dinners that turn art into a shared social experience.

We also produce the Lakritz Magazine, which explores cultural, social, and artistic themes from the region, helping to connect our local realities with broader conversations. The goal is to build a space for social interaction, education, and dialogue—a platform that sparks curiosity and exchange. And ultimately, I hope it will also help bring more visitors to our area, which would be a welcome boost for the local community and economy.

**Looking ahead, how do you hope your work will resonate with future audiences—and what do you want them to feel when they stand in front of your art?**

I hope my work can help sensitize people to certain topics—whether social, environmental, or emotional—and spark meaningful conversations or reflections. Ideally, it offers a space where someone might feel seen or understood, where they can connect with the emotions or concerns I've put into the piece.

By being open and honest in my work—by laying my emotions bare on the canvas—I want to create a sense of support and shared experience. If someone stands in front of my art and feels less alone in their thoughts or fears, then I've succeeded. It's about creating a connection, a dialogue—even across time.



## Julyssa M.T.

I'm Julyssa, a Texan artist currently on the path to my BFA in Studio Arts. Work-wise, I'm working on freelance commissions while I expand my storytelling and character development in my personal work. My aim is to sprinkle joy and whimsy through my creative works and I'm on the lookout for opportunities to bring my creativity to the table and make a meaningful impact.

### *Project Statement*

This piece is an interpretation of Judith Leyster's painting "A Boy and a Girl with a Cat and an Eel" and I have done my version with my brother, myself, and one of our cats. The context isn't too complex, just us outside of our house. What I did with the title "Two Fish and a Sinner" has to do with my brother and I being Pisces and if you look at the bottles hanging from the tree you may see the sign for Gemini. This is because we are twins and he is much larger than me in his proportions because he is the older twin (by one minute, mind you). And the cat, named Waffle, is the sinner because he's such a troublemaker. He is also done more close to reality compared to us to add to this. I chose the original painting as inspiration because the figures were much more expressive than I've seen in other historical paintings and I felt that it was a good representation of us and I greatly enjoyed the process.

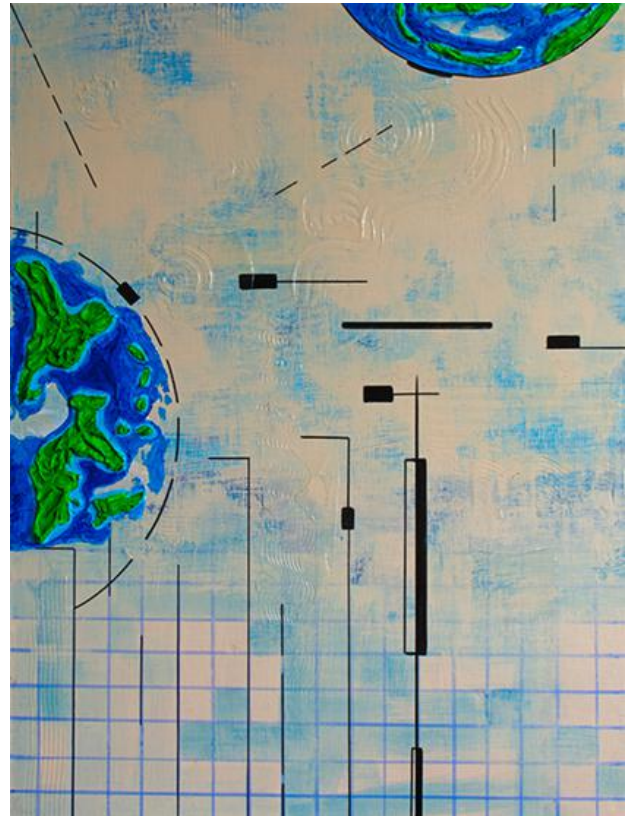






# — Interview

## Brittany C. Ellis



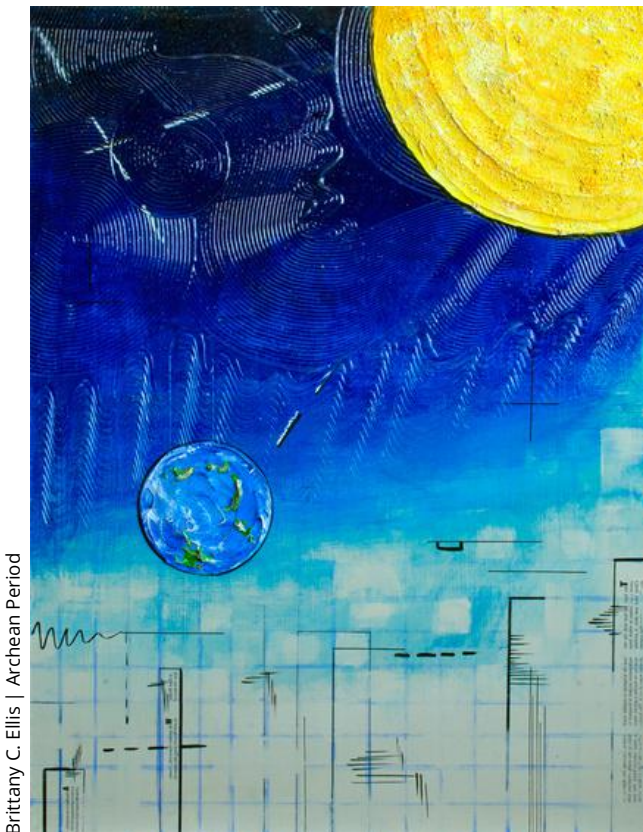
Brittany C. Ellis | Earth's Future

**Your work combines 2D and 3D elements with celestial themes. What first drew you to outer space as a subject of artistic exploration?**

As a child I wanted to be an astronaut. I would often visit the library in my elementary school and check out numerous books about the planets within our solar system. I wanted to be an astronaut to explore the rocks and minerals in outer space. Little did I know there was a completely different career designated to mineral research. I still planned to become a gemologist until 2008, when I decided to pursue a career in fine art with the intention of returning to gemology. As of now, I am four classes away from obtaining my gemology degree.

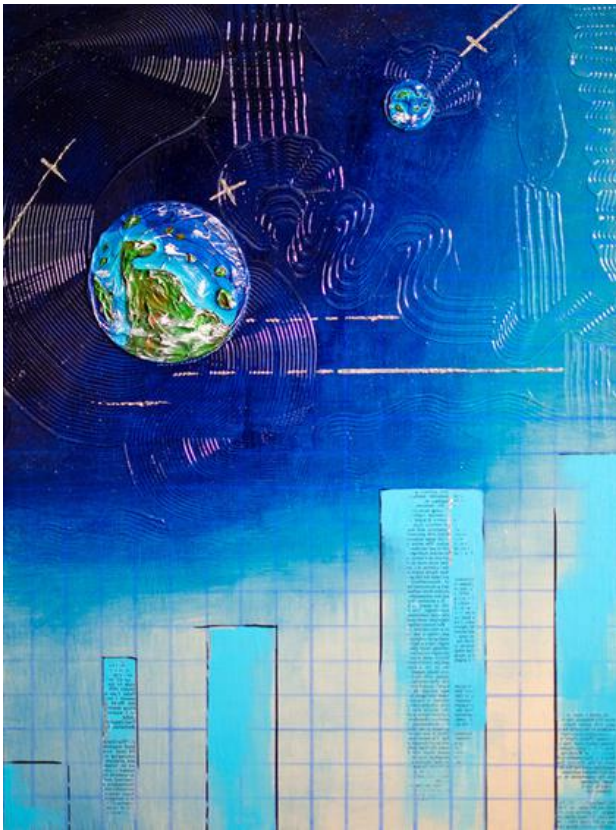
**You describe space as a “secret getaway” from childhood. How does this personal history shape your current artistic voice?**

Oddly enough, space and art can still be seen as my secret getaway from the trials and tribulations of adulthood. The natives within my artwork are often envisioned when I am zoning out in many daily situations or even are sparked by a statement said or an instance I witnessed. My paternal grandfather cultivated my imagination, asking me to imagine the reality we would enact for the day which became our fantasy world created through my imagination as a child.



Brittany C. Ellis | Archean Period





**The vertical format in your “Space to Earth” series is very striking. How does composition contribute to the feeling of transitioning between reality and imagination?**

Extending acrylic graph lines with text blocks replicate the evolutionary process of progression which fuse into a textured space background and 3D sculpted Earth. Using a vertical format simulates the feeling of transitioning from reality to daydreaming. Each painting's daydream is a peek into the past time of the Earth. - The materials and tools I use change with each composition but I average using 4 mediums and 6 different tools in each artwork to accomplish a desired effect. The common material I use includes acrylic, ink, paste, and various gel mediums. The unconventional embellishments I use charge with each composition. The addition of lights is a recent unconventional item I began using in my art.

**You reference the continental drift and historical stages of the Earth. Do you conduct scientific research as part of your creative process?**

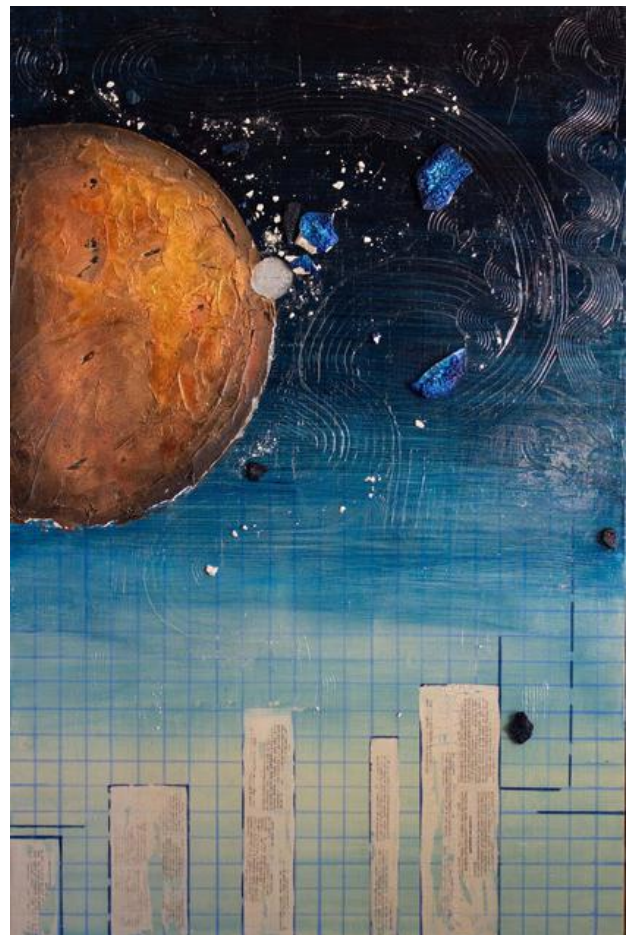
That is a good question. Essentially, all the artwork I produce requires scientific research in order to create a compelling and believable composition. Although all of my works are imaginative, they require an extensive amount of knowledge, both scientific and artistic. My favorite piece of information that I discovered for a painting was when I discovered that the principles of atmospheric perspective applying on Mars.

**What role does nostalgia play in your art? How do you think viewers respond to the childlike wonder embedded in your work?**

Nostalgia is a driving force in my artwork attached to my childhood. From an early age, I've always been an avid daydreamer, imagining I was somewhere other than where I was. An intriguing phrase or a simplistic word in a book would unlock the gateway that ignited my imagination. Often, I would zone out, becoming immersed in an imaginary world, observing an unraveling scene similar to watching the Magic School Bus. As a child, my grandfather encouraged these immersions, which led to them not only becoming a fun aspect of my childhood but helped me to utilize these immersions as defense mechanisms triggered by difficult experiences in school. Everything I experienced as a child formed the artist I've become today.

**How has your background in photography influenced your approach to painting and sculptural relief?**

My background in photography aids my artwork in a form and proportion sense. Although my artwork is composed of imagined compositions, I use objects from images I've captured. Photography is used to obtain photo reference.



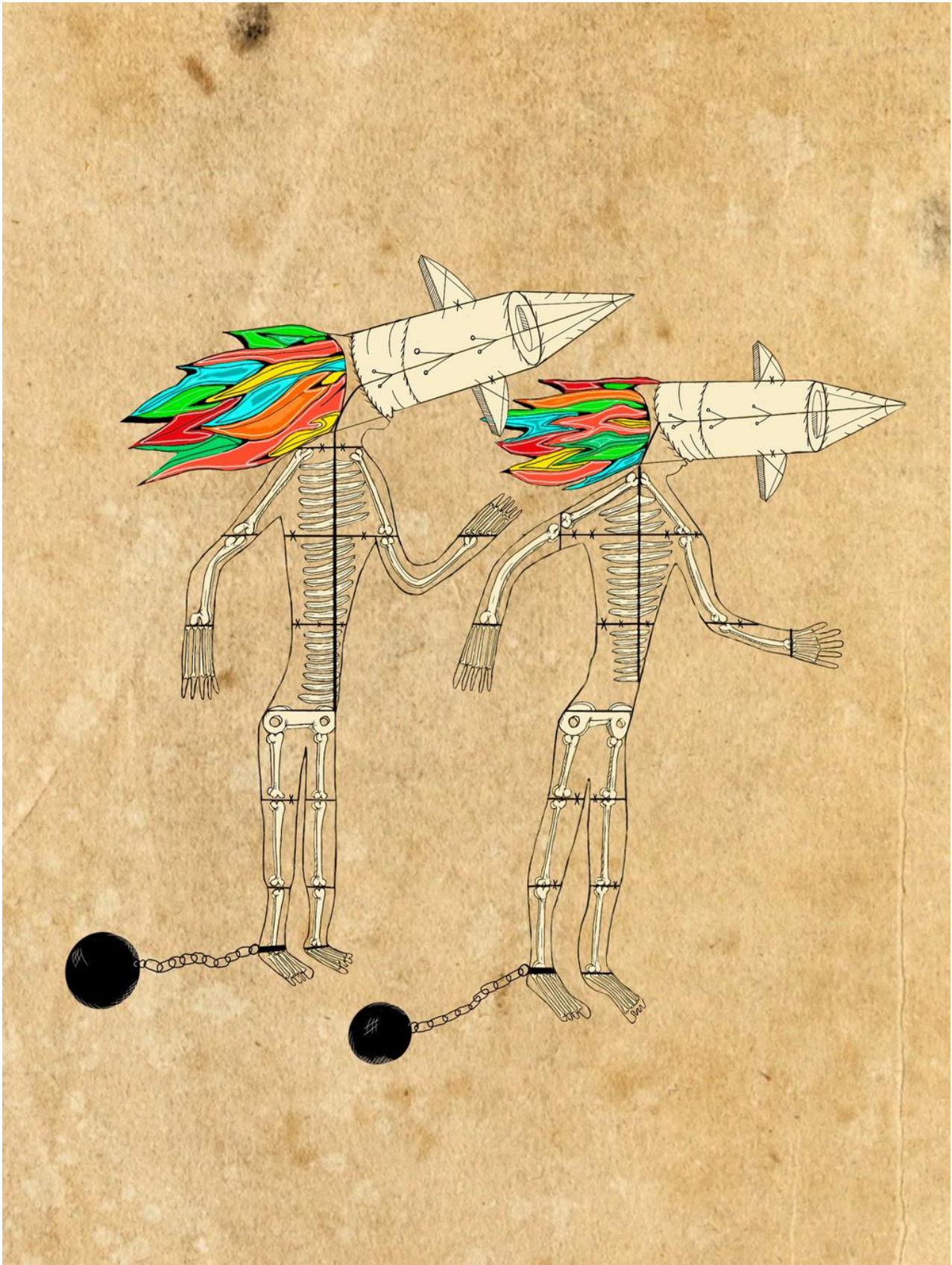


## Harold Coego Gonzalez

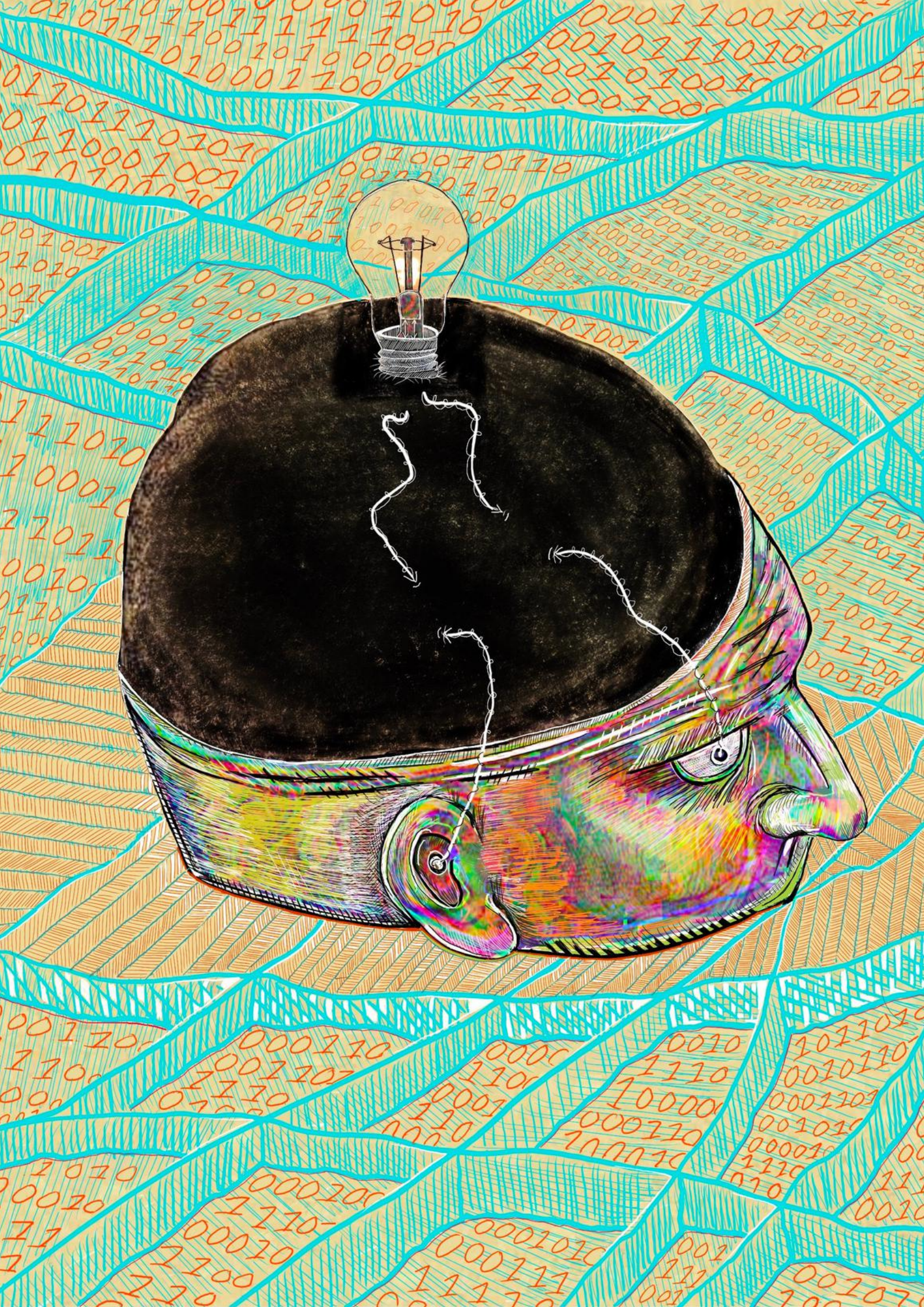
Cuban born living in Canada, work in theatre, film, art restoration and archeology, currently working as a sculptor in the film industry in Vancouver Canada, show my work in Canada, Cuba, the United States and Europe.

### *Project Statement*

These prints are meant to be vignettes of current events, from AI taking over human creativity to the resilience of the artist brain, to space travel and the inevitable gravity of regular people life.









## — Interview

# Xinyue Geng

**Your work merges parametric design and organic forms. How do you balance the technical and emotional aspects of digital creation?**

In my practice, emotion starts the process, and code becomes both a medium and a collaborator. I don't see technology as neutral—it can surprise, adapt, and even respond in unexpected ways. In *Digital Muse*, I experimented with stepping back, allowing a biologically inspired algorithm to take the lead and evolve on its own.

Parametric design offers structure and precision, but what brings the work to life is the unpredictability built into the system—the way forms shift and grow through iteration. That uncertainty gives the work a sense of vitality. For me, emotion and technology are



not in conflict—they're intertwined. This project is, in essence, an emotional resonance born from the dialogue between human intention and machine logic.

**Can you walk us through your typical creative process — from concept to final 3D-printed sculpture?**

My creative process usually begins with interdisciplinary research—for example, exploring connections between biology and spatial structures. I deconstruct and abstract the cellular behavior and the logic of natural systems, translating them into coordinates, vectors, signals, and algorithms. The system doesn't simply simulate organic forms; it encodes their inner complexity and dynamic mechanisms. The digital organism responds to disturbances, showing tendencies to move toward or away from stimuli.

By tracking the movement of cells and reconstructing them three-dimensionally over time, I generate a kind of pseudo-nature—driven by both precise control and programmed randomness. The final outcome, the 3D-printed sculpture, is a layered moment in the ongoing evolution of this digital organism through time and space. The work doesn't seek a stable narrative—it lingers in a state of collapse, where form is still in flux.

**What inspires your use of biological references like sponges and corals in "Digital Muse: Programming Nature"?**

I'm drawn to sponges and corals because, as some of the earliest multicellular organisms, they embody a form of life that is both ancient and elemental. Their



cellular systems give rise to modular, self-organizing spatial structures. Through the study of biological morphology, I became increasingly fascinated by how these organisms grow, adapt, and respond—through a decentralized logic of life. By abstracting and translating these silent biological systems into digital language, I am able to reimagine the very concept of life itself.

**Your pieces have a strong spatial presence. Do you view them more as sculptures or as architectural micro-environments?**

I think it depends on scale. At a physical scale, the works are closer to sculpture, but at a micro-spatial level, they behave more like architectural environments—they invite the body in, even if only imaginatively. Rather than defining them by category, I'm more interested in how they activate spatial perception.

**How does your background as an architect influence your digital art practice?**

My architectural background taught me to think in terms of spatial language—the interplay between solid and void, form and structure, body and space. Even when working with code and digital media, I approach each piece as a space to be experienced. That architectural mindset—sensitive to scale, atmosphere, and composition—continues to inform the way I speak through form.

**“Programming Nature” suggests both creation and**



**simulation. Do you see code as a generative life force?**

This is a profound question—and one that runs through much of my work. Is code a non-human, life-generating force? Can we create “life” through non-biological media? As biology continues to break life down into rules and mechanisms, I’ve become increasingly aware of the parallels between code and living systems. Certain simple life forms can be fully described by logic, thresholds, and feedback loops—they grow, mutate, and decay. From this perspective, code begins to exhibit a generative vitality: non-human, yet capable of emergence. What fascinates me about generative digital art is its ability to blur the boundary between synthetic constructs and natural realities. In *Digital Muse*, that very boundary becomes the question: when a form grows from code, does it count as life? Is it fiction—or an extension of nature? My work inhabits this ambiguous space—where digital matter begins to act like life itself.

**Your work raises ecological questions. Is it important to you that viewers reflect on environmental issues while experiencing your art?**

That depends on the viewer. My work is processual rather than didactic—it invites open interpretation. The work subtly contrasts digital coral reefs with their real-world counterparts that are vanishing. It’s less about offering answers and more about creating a provocation—one that asks what we lose, and what we fabricate, when nature collapses.

I hope to present my work in more dynamic and interactive forms in the future—making the generative process more visible, and opening space for multiple interpretations.



# — Interview

## Susan Hay

**After a successful design career, what inspired you to return to painting and watercolors specifically?**

It was actually during lockdown that I eventually picked up watercolours. I'd painted occasionally throughout my design career, but had lost the love for it when work and a busy career took over. But it was during covid, when I had my son, that I knew my mind needed something that would allow me to switch off. And, slowly and surely I began to remember my love of THE CREATIVE PROCESS and what being in that state of flow can bring. "During this tight, anxious time - during lockdown and new motherhood...the deep down calling of an artist started to shout...Each day, I'd have that nagging voice "pick up the paints Sue" and each day I'd ignore it - that voice got pretty loud though and eventually I listened " Why watercolours?...Well they'd always scared me - I'd always painted in a very representational way, trying to replicate what I saw in front of me and previously the thought of working with a medium that had a



Sue Hay | Natural Blooms | 2025

mind of its own just felt too much. Looking back it was watercolours because I needed to know that I could let go of control and that things wouldn't fall apart. In fact watercolours helped me realise that I didn't need to have a tight grip on what would happen.. I could sit back in flow and let the paints do their thing...realising that my whole world would still be there at the end.

**How has your background in branding and graphic design influenced your approach to fine art?**

Hugely I'm sure, but it's very much on a subconscious level really. I know that my natural eye for composition and order on the page has most certainly come from design and my love, understanding and appreciation of colour has found its way into my art works for sure. More than anything though I've let go of those old rules that come from the strictness of graphic design. I've embraced the joyful chaos that watercolours can bring and these days when I paint it's not from that tight, controlled approach. I paint more what I feel and what feels good. And I think that's definitely visible in my paintings - that freedom and love of nature.

**Your works are full of vibrant color and movement. What role does emotion or intuition play in your creative process?**

I've kind of touched on this above and I'm a little bit obsessed with what's called ' The State of Flow' . I've delved deeply into Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work, the psychologist who coined the term "flow state". And it



Sue Hay | Bloom | 2025





all fascinates me. I want to understand what we connect to when we're in that flow state and how to help others do the same. But, yes emotion is a key part of my painting these days. I've always had a love of nature and also a fascination with the Fibonacci sequence. I guess that also plays a big part in my design career too. But nowadays, my painting comes from that place of connection, of flow and of a selfish place of wanting to get more of that 'flow state'. I just hope that others see joy in my work too.

**You mention letting go of anxiety through painting. Could you describe how painting affects your mental and emotional state?**

It's the ultimate reason I even picked up the watercolour paints and began painting again. I've always had a busy mind, throughout my entire life. I guess it's having a creative brain, but my mind seems to have ideas left, right and center. I've been self employed since 2013 and with balancing a business and during lockdown - my mind needed something, just one thing to focus on - watercolours gave me exactly what I need at exactly the right time. The anxiety of balancing a million and one things in my mind disappeared instantly as soon as I picked up the brush and began painting. It was never about the image, it was about the process, the focus and the 'doing just one thing'. It eased my anxiety immediately. And over time, painting watercolours helped me to understand that I could let go of control, and things wouldn't fall apart. These days I have a small studio at

the bottom of my garden and I've just taken a studio space in Cardiff too. Which is exciting. But the most important journey I do every day is to find time. Is the 25 steps from my house to my studio.

Because it's during that short journey that I shed everything stressful in life - like layers of clothes. And as soon as I step inside my studio and pick up a brush - my anxiety eases and melts away. Watercolours saved my life - that may sound dramatic, but it's true. Now, my aim is to teach others how it can help them too. Help them to ease anxiety, to experience joy and to let go - if even just a little bit and to allow the focus to be on enjoying that state of 'Flow'.

**What does your typical creative routine look like? Do you follow a schedule or paint when inspiration strikes?**

Well, I still balance being a mum, a wife, a business owner, a friend and all of the other responsibilities that most of us have. But art and painting and returning to that place of connection and joy is way up at the top of my list. And when things get too much - art and painting is fundamentally one of my strategies to return to my core and my inner place of peace. Inspiration strikes all of the time, I only have to be in nature to feel inspired. Finding time to capture it on paper - that's the challenge.

**Nature seems to be a central theme in your work. What draws you to floral and botanical forms?**

It's strange isn't it...Wasn't it the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard who said: "Life only makes sense when you look backwards - but it has to be lived forwards" I choose to study Art & Biology for A level. Why - because I loved drawing and I loved nature and plants. I mentioned above that I've always had a fascination with botany and the Fibonacci Sequence. So, I guess my love of flora has always been there. I'm in awe most days that nature constantly creates, without judgement or question. It keeps creating patterns in randomness - it just does what it needs to do to survive. And the colours that nature gives us are just exquisite. How can you not be inspired by nature?

**How do you balance spontaneity and control when working with watercolors - a medium known for its unpredictability?**

Well, this is what I feel pulled me to watercolours originally. To understand that I could let go of control, within my art and within life too. But, that battle of letting go still happens with my painting. I've just learnt overtime, I guess that the more I lean into that state of 'flow' or 'letting go' that's when the perfect balance of imagination and order happens.



**Daniel Agra** is a Spanish artist of abstract and fine art photography. In the artistic field his work is defined as subjective, experimental and conceptual expressionist visual poetry, with a profound imaginative capacity and endowed with strong intuition. Defined by a resounding individual and experimental personal mark that allows him to mentally project a great deal of his compositions with a language and style full of symbolism. The defined perception and emotional depth of his work should be highlighted reflecting his interest in the subconscious, abandoned methods, dialogues and conventional and traditional photographic narratives which transcend their state to be symbolised in a deep analysis, to be recreated into a poetic frontier between the material and the spiritual, between man and the environments he inhabits, distinctive elements that emphasise the communicative character in his allegorical symbology and relative to the inner world, raising it to levels of evocative spirituality in transcendental and vindictive themes, on the existential importance of the individual in his creative freedom, a personal form of contemporary expression that does not bow to the established norms, an archetype through a vocabulary with meticulously selected images and iconographies. Over time, his works have achieved wide appreciation, recognition and international dissemination. The more than 50 awards and international honour mentions of photography that he has achieved during his career should be emphasised, he has shown his work and participated in exhibitions across various countries, as well as published in assorted media and international art guides. His work can be found in national and international museums, foundations and private art and photography collections. Cloudscapes (Project Statement) The stuff dreams are made of, they are the imaginary of the sky with its disfigured, tumultuous and scattered past, but to encompass them you have to look up and begin the journey to the place where the forms of the world are deposited, a canvas to see more beyond a limitless horizon, and thus magic makes an eternity out of nothing, forming an inseparable part of the reality of life, connecting the seemingly unconnected when kissed by light, desire and emotion change the world and possibilities become limitless, becoming the eye of the soul, making us infinitely more human.



Daniel Agra | Cloudscapes | 2025







## — Interview

# Giovanna Francesca Cowling

**Can you share a little about your creative process when starting a new drawing like this? How do you approach your initial sketches and composition?**

When I create, I need to be in a space where I can naturally operate. I love starting with intensity. Visuals just work in my head and I use my hand, the paper and my tools to try and translate that. It needs to be chaotic, messy. The pieces that have touched me are the ones I've done completely by heart. Practice is wonderful, going step 1, 2 and 3. But for me it's never just about that. For me, art is my one safe space where I can be intuitively fluid. When the process itself moves me more than the final picture. It's a messy affair and it doesn't really matter if no-one understands or appreciates it. It's cathartic to let go of perfection when exercising your passion.

**Can you describe the techniques you used in creating this drawing, and how did you decide on using willow charcoal for this work?**

Charcoal is the medium I connect with the most. It's a chance to capture life, a moment. It allows you to transport yourself to one simple task - to draw what's in front of you. Willow charcoal is extremely flexible and it allows space for trial and error. You can blend and smudge (as I have in this work) and if something isn't right immediately, unlike with some other mediums where it's a case of starting again,



adjustments can be made and de-tours can be taken to bring the artwork back to match the vision.

**Your drawing emphasises the intricate details of the jaguars. How do you approach capturing the essence and personality of the animals you portray?**

Onças are unique creatures, the South American jaguar is one of our ancestral guardians. They are extremely symbolic beings in my culture and I've always loved them.

Since I was little I have always loved drawing animals. There's infinite grace in nature. Feathers. Claws. Beaks. Eyes. Fur. It's all so distinctive and strong. Unique, blended. I try to capture that particularly with the animals I connect with.

Mama Yaguareté, "Mother-Jaguar", represents motherhood. A celebration of culture and ancestry. When creating this piece, I thought about all that has lived before me and my time. I see who I am now and I see the future too. It's ritualistic and it's repentant. It's motherhood. Perpetual, existing continuously long after I'm gone. Drawing Mama Yaguareté came naturally to me. My imperfect way of paying homage to ingenuity, and dear, unconditional love, shared between a mother and her cub.

Uniqueness and authenticity are extremely important to me and everything that is different and intriguing has my full attention. Depicting the natural world by



channeling emotions is how I connect with my creations. Range, distinctiveness, details & heart - our human psyche is naturally drawn to these elements. My art's purpose is to merge, and to move.

**What is the significance of the background in your piece? Does it hold deeper meaning beyond the jaguars themselves?**

Motherhood is a wild journey, and one you won't ever see full and clear. It's instinctive. You can't see in the dark. You can't see in the wilderness. It's all subjective. What's dark and wild to you is different to what's dark and wild to me. And that mystery is what I've tried to capture in the background of my piece. A transcendental, parental feeling. Feral by nature, wild by heart.

**Are there any specific themes or messages you aim to convey through your wildlife drawings?**

We're losing humanity. Considering populating other planets and casually travelling outer space for no good reason other than Ego. When I draw animals and wildlife, I am evoking beauty. Proclaiming an unspoken power. How special nature is. A true blessing to our sore, exhausted eyes. I try to channel that experience. Animals tell us a story of the intertwined times, the past, the present, and how important it is to preserve

our future here, on this planet.

**How do you see your work evolving in the future, and what direction do you hope to explore in your artistic practice?**

My intention is to go larger in scale. Large scale canvas. Keep exploring the monochromatic world of charcoal. Life is so full of colour. I'm so full of colour. Grey is my only compromise. Still, full of nuance. It's strange to try and put in words but I do have a strong bond with it. Not everything in life is black and white. Except my cats. One is black and the other is white.

**What role does nature play in your art, and how do you connect with the subjects you depict?**

Happiest when I am sun-bathing or swimming in warm waters, my Indigenous roots are definitely a fundamental aspect of my being and consequently, my art. Both my grandmothers were raised in nature and I was born and raised in the most genetically diversified country, the biggest melting pot in history: Brazil. It's inherited in me and all of us Pardos, the mixed people of Brazil.

My home country is endlessly beautiful and its roots are deep within me. Delving into my art, evoking nature and sentiment, it feels like I am somehow paying respect to those roots.



## Andrii Sahach

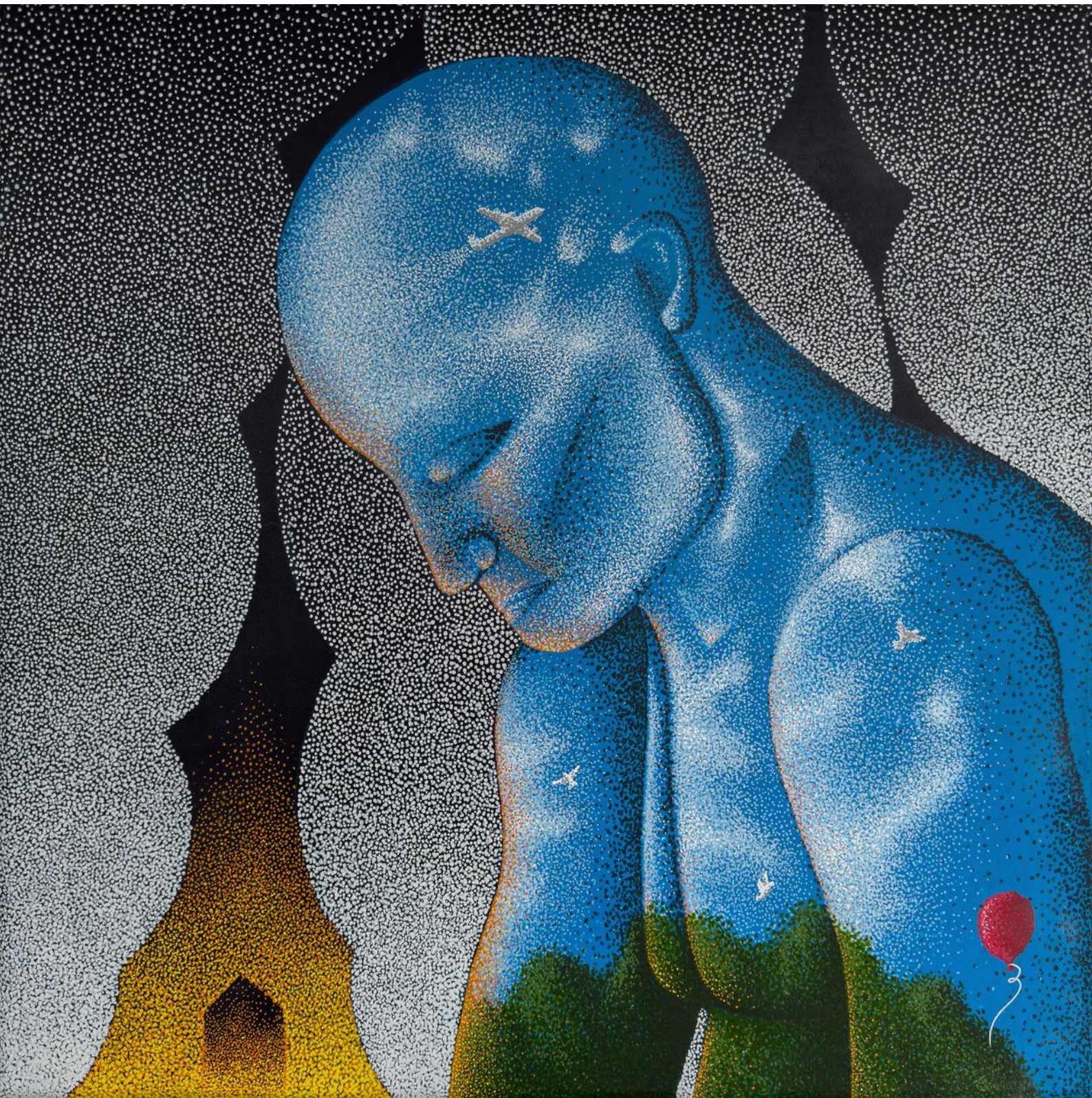
My name is Andrii. I'm 33 years old and I started painting in 2022. Since then, I've won art competitions, released popular postage stamps, designed coins for the National Bank of Ukraine, and collaborated with well-known brands. In 2024, I began working with acrylics on canvas. Through this medium, I plan to bring all my thoughts and ideas to life and share them with the public. Below are two of my works, presented separately and as a diptych.

### *Project Statement*

My style is a complicated and long story, but it all started when I read about photons, quantum physics, and the "observer effect." I was impressed by it. I won't explain it in detail; it's better to read about it and understand it for yourself. But if you imagine a photon as a point reflected on your retina, that's all that exists; everything else is in question. The essence of my approach to painting with dots is using imaginary "photons" in the form of dots of paint to show what I see in my head or what is happening there. This allows the "observer" to see it too.







Andrii Sahach | The mirror man



# — Interview

## Romi Myers

**Your work blends digital art, AR, and emotion. What inspired you to create the “My Emoijons” series?**

“My Emoijons” Series debuted during my very first art show in 2021. I wanted to create a series that would encourage my audience to detach themselves from any type of prejudice or preconceived notions, endemic to the human condition. But just as important, foster impartial critical thinking without the risk of being judged for having a different opinion since we all come from different backgrounds. I felt the emoji was a great way to express my thoughts in the most light hearted way possible.



Romi Myers | Mirrored | 2023



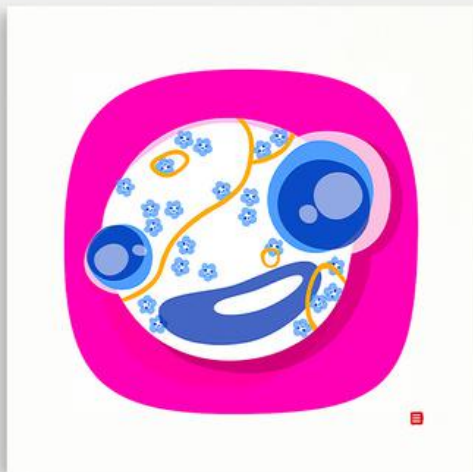
Much of my inspiration also stems from my upbringing between the US and Brazil, and my personal struggles with how there is so much emphasis placed on “labels”, particularly in the US. I was raised in a multicultural environment where labels were never a thing. So every art piece I create, serves as a reminder of my continuous desire to remind us all that life is about perspective, and where we come from.

**With your background in interior and aircraft design, how has that experience shaped your current artistic approach?**

Having worked on LEED Certified architectural projects, I learned a great deal about sustainability, and how the manipulation of spaces and lighting can evoke a mood or emotion. While having worked on commercial aircraft programs, I learned a more about the importance of human connection and cultural diversity while developing a sharp eye for highly detailed design, color, and texture. I take all these elements into consideration with every piece I create. While the artist in me frees me up to create and explore the “what ifs”, the designer in me keeps me focused on quality over quantity. Nowadays, I refer to my artist process as, “an organized form of chaos”. In terms of visual style, it was recently brought to my attention by a few folks that my body of work reminded them as if they, “were looking out an airplane window”. The thought had not crossed my mind until it was mentioned, so I guess my past design experience did, in fact, influence my body of work in more ways than others.

**You draw from Brazilian, Japanese, and Italian cultural**





### **influences. How do these roots manifest in your artworks?**

My body of work is unapologetically bold, colorful, and bubbly. I attribute these elements to my Brazilian and Japanese background. I have recently begun to introduce my own interpretation of Ukiyoe inspired techniques into my more recent body of work which I am very enamored with at the moment. As far as my Italian influence goes, all my pieces have a bit of a tongue-in-cheek title, intended to make people smile or ponder, but also reflect on my humorous interpretations to American slang that I did not grow up with.

### **The Superflat Movement seems to have had a strong impact on your style. What about this movement resonates most with you?**

There is a sense of innocence and playfulness tied to the Superflat Movement that taps deeply into my inner child. I have always been drawn to Saturday morning cartoons as well as Japanese SciFi cartoons from 1960's -1980's, where the animation was entirely created frame by frame, very flat, but at the same time very complex. I feel the blurred boundaries between traditional fine art, and pop culture found in the Superflat Movement helps provide a true glimpse to who I am, and how my mind functions.

### **You use Artivive to add augmented reality elements to your works. What role does technology play in your storytelling process?**

Technology has played a big role in my storytelling. Bringing my work to life with Artivive App allows art enthusiasts and collectors alike to tap into my subconscious, sort of speak. An additional glimpse into my inner most thoughts beyond a physical 2D art piece. I want people to be surprised and delighted, but also engage with the art piece. In doing so, the audience becomes part of the experience itself, and fosters human connection by encouraging sharing moments with others around.

### **Can you share more about your experience with**

### **synesthesia and how it influences your use of color and form?**

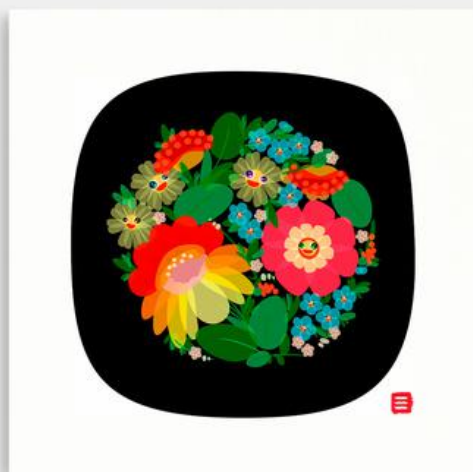
Believe it or not, I did not know I had synesthesia until about 18 years ago. I thought seeing numbers and letters in color was something everyone experienced. So it came as a huge surprise when someone suggested I research more about it. Having discovered this was not a common condition, I began to be more open about sharing and decided to introduce it into my body of work.

Nowadays, my synesthesia influences my body of work on many levels. I am a big fan of numerology, so I really enjoy implementing numbers into my art pieces in ways that resonate positive energy for anyone who collects my pieces. Another great example is when I began to place emphasis on "My Emojions" series. I kept seeing the number "222" everywhere, and coincidentally the number "2" in my mind's eye happens to be a golden yellow like the emojis found on most of my pieces.

### **What does sustainability mean to you as a digital artist, and how do you integrate it into your creative process?**

One of my main goals when I first began my artist journey was to find alternative ways to show my audience how contemporary art can be more sustainable. I have always loved and appreciated art on paper, a form of medium commonly found in Japanese traditional art, so I spent a significant amount of time searching for a medium that felt right for my body of work, beyond traditional paintings on canvas.

Going digital for the bulk of my initial concepts really appeased my need for saturated, flat colors, balanced by the rich texture of paper, with the additional paint finishes/sheens to create visual balance. This is why my originals and limited edition pieces are all produced onto fine art archival quality paper derived from bamboo, a commonly known rapidly renewable resource. I felt it was important element to my body of work in the unlikely event an art piece gets damaged at any point, the paper can be recycled, essentially closing its EOL [End of Lifecycle] loop. I also donate a portion of my sales toward planting trees for reforestation efforts mainly because I committed myself to being part of the solution.





## **Marta Briones**

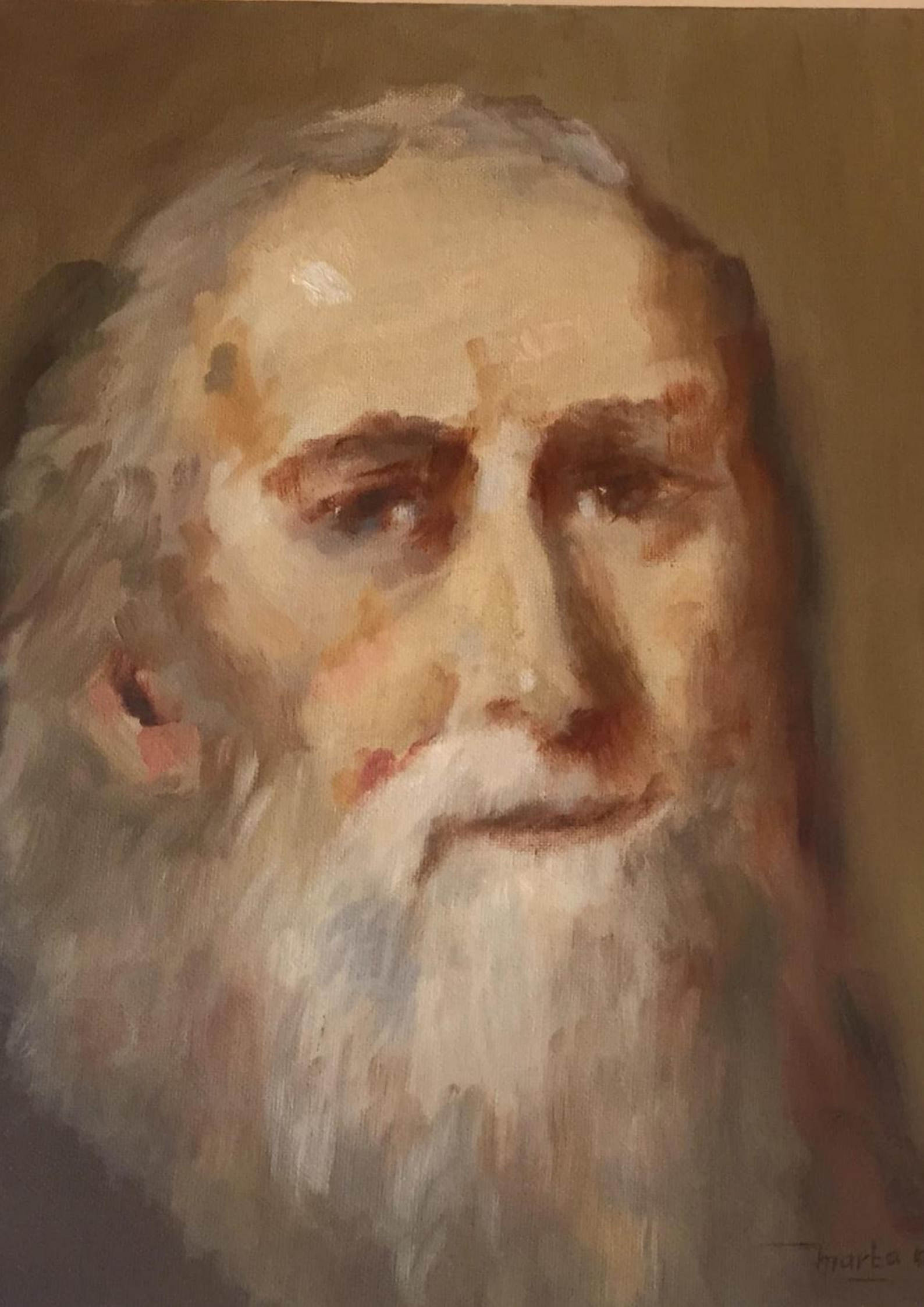
Oil painting artist based in Victoria, Australia. Moved from Chile to Australia in 1987 with husband and our son Julian. When little, I always liked drawing especially from comic books. I started to take classes once we settle in Australia, many short courses about painting and Visual Arts. I discovered oil and I fell in love. I have painting since then.

### *Project Statement*

Paint is the art of expressing yourself. I paint mainly with oil. My work is basically catching moments and everyday topics. I am an observant who takes photos to paint later under the serenity and tranquility of my studio.







martha

# Justine Ladaïque

**You mentioned a turning point in your creative journey — moving from fashion design to deeper artistic exploration. What triggered this transformation?**

Love. I'm actually writing a book about it (it will be called "Love without Feeling It") that describes how when you fall hard in love your perceptions of things can sometimes change. While I was at



university, we were taught ways to create a final garment. From finding inspiration to turn it into a silhouette. After two years of it, I felt stuck. Creatively. It was like always going back to the same outcome. Different inspirations but getting the same result. Over and over again. So I had to question myself. Why was I stuck and what went wrong "in the place where inspiration comes from"?

**How did your time in the South of France influence your artistic voice and visual language?**

Being isolated for two years in the middle of nowhere gives you space and freedom to experiment. There is no one to show your work to, no springboard, no one important. I was outside of any scenes, which was perfect for questioning my work and its direction.

**Your artworks seem to merge abstraction and emotion. Can you tell us more about your process of translating inner moods into visual forms?**

When I write or draw, I focus on a feeling. It's like a memory but then, I remember the exact emotion that was there at that time. I







concentrate on it. Then, I feel words when I write, forms when I draw or paint. I never think. It has to be 100% feelings. My head is shut off.

**What role does introspection or meditation play in your practice?**

I actually tried meditation. The aim was to stay still and focus on how we feel in our bodies. Trying not to focus on our thoughts. Quiet everything down, relax, and see what comes out. This is quite similar. Except that, I turn my intention into a feeling. It's a time where I remember something that moved me strong. I hold it until the Art piece is complete.

**Do you see your works as autobiographical in any way? Are specific memories or feelings tied to each piece?**

Exactly. As an artist, you live and feel. You constantly describe the world and society as you perceive it. I talk about my life because I had to make one with the emotions I felt. At first, I didn't understand them. It didn't make sense with the life I thought I was living. I was stuck in a dream

and love made me wake up. Going back to my past feelings helped me find the truth within my story.

**How do you decide when a piece is complete, especially when dealing with such intuitive and emotional content?**

I just don't feel like adding more. Nothing else comes from within. It's like what was strong became very subtle.

**As this series is described as your "first attempt at true expression," do you feel it marks a new chapter in your artistic evolution?**

Definitely. It's almost like my artistic obsessions before were something unconscious that would tickle me constantly. Now, I can directly face it and express it purely. Looking at it through its different angles. Instead of trying to understand it through questioning it. Now the art piece (and it's even stronger with words) speaks for itself. Then, I realized what truly happened. I consciously know what I'm expressing.

**Stelle Aviles** is an illustrator based in Baltimore. She studied Graphic Design at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and is currently working as a freelancer. Her illustrations are inspired by food, music and motorsport.

### *Project Statement*

My name is Stelle and I'm an aspiring illustrator with a love for music, travel and motorsport. I am particularly drawn to the stories that come from Formula 1 and aim to capture that emotion in my illustrations, whether it's the speed of the car or the elation after winning a race. I strive for adding vibrance to my work through bold colors, expressive lines and a great amount of detail that will have audiences looking closer for a better view. One of my biggest dreams is to work with a motorsport team and contribute to editorial pieces.







STELLE  
AVILES

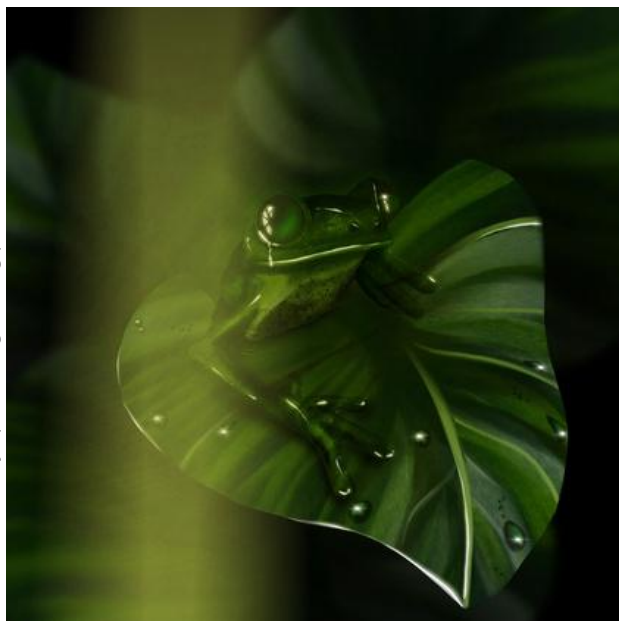
# Anastasia Dolinskaya

**Your work often reflects emotional depth and personal transformation. Can you share a moment in your life that profoundly influenced your artistic journey?**

There have been several moments in my life that forced me to pause, reevaluate everything, and start over — like karmic lessons arriving in waves. But the most profound shift came with the birth of my son.

He was born prematurely, and the doctors told me he wouldn't survive. They spoke calmly, even coldly — instructing me to prepare documents quickly so he could be buried as a person, not classified as biological waste. But he survived. And the doctors were stunned.

In that moment, I promised he would grow up to be an ordinary boy — and I put all of my own dreams on hold. For seven years, I worked constantly and devoted myself to his rehabilitation. That was my personal version of hell: by day, taking him from doctor to doctor, from therapy to therapy — and by night, working to pay for it all.



Anastasia Dolinskaya | Schrödinger's Frog | 2024



Anastasia Dolinskaya | Leonardo da Vinci at work | 2024

Eventually, I was diagnosed with severe depression. Something inside me broke — or maybe broke open. I started looking for a way to save myself. That's when I found drawing. Now my son is nine. And I can finally say that I did the work — both on him, and on myself. We made it. We're still making it.

**Many of your portraits feature symbolic figures like Frida Kahlo or Lao Tzu. How do you choose the subjects or archetypes you portray?**

I don't really choose them — they come to me when I'm ready to listen.

Each figure I draw is a reflection of something I'm experiencing at the time: a question I'm living through, a truth I'm trying to hold, a pain I haven't yet named. Frida came when I was grappling with identity and resilience. Lao Tzu arrived when I was exhausted by control and searching for softness. Ada Lovelace, Marie Curie — they appeared not just as icons, but as mirrors.

I don't paint them as historical figures — I paint them as companions in the inner work. Their voices find me when I need their strength, their paradoxes, or their wounds. It's less about admiration and more about resonance.

**You describe your process as intuitive and ritualistic. What does a typical creative session look like for you?**

I used to paint with oils — with my hands, palette knives, brushes — letting the color sink into my skin, feeling the texture of the canvas like a second heartbeat. But I'm a mother of three, and my last oil painting was smeared five times while drying... tiny fingers, big curiosity. So for now, I work mostly in ProCreate and Photoshop — until my youngest grows a little older and I can return to the mess and magic of oils.

My process is still deeply ritualistic, even in digital form. I light a candle. Sometimes I pull a tarot card. I choose a playlist that feels like the emotion I can't name yet. And then I draw — not from references, but from memory, from instinct, from dreams.





It's like summoning a spirit: I never know who will arrive, but I always recognize them when they do.

**Animals seem to play a recurring role in your work — from frogs to fawns. What symbolic meanings do they hold for you?**

They're all messengers from my childhood. I spent my summers in the forest with my grandmothers, surrounded by animals both wild and caught. I drew deer obsessively — I still keep those clumsy sketches from when I was four. We raised frogs from tadpoles in a bucket, kept lizards in a big pot filled with soil and grasshoppers, and once, I caught some carp from a pond and dug them a new home in our garden — and, naturally, got scolded for it. So yes, they're my patronuses. Each one carries a piece of childhood joy. When they show up in my work, it's not because I chose them — it's because they stayed with me. They remember the girl I was, and in a way, they protect the woman I became.

**Do you see your art as a form of healing? Has it helped you process personal experiences or emotions?**

Yes, absolutely. Art has been my lifeline through many dark and painful chapters — especially when I was facing my son's medical diagnoses and the heavy weight of uncertainty. It helped me accept that I did everything I could, even when it felt like the world was breaking around me. Art carries me through waves of depression that keep coming back, sometimes stronger than before.

When I was a little girl, I dreamed of becoming an artist. But I gave up on that dream under pressure from my family — the message was clear: "drawing is not a real job." For years, I buried that part of myself, focusing on survival and responsibilities. But now, with every painting I create, it feels like I'm reclaiming a lost part of my soul. It's more than just making art — it's a vital act of healing and self-reclamation. Through my work, I face my fears and doubts honestly, without sugarcoating, and find strength in vulnerability. Art has become my way to stand tall, to heal, and to say: "I am here. I am whole."

**You work in both digital and traditional media. How do you decide which medium to use for a particular concept?**

When time and space allow, I love to work with traditional media — oil paints, brushes, and palette knives — to physically feel the texture of the canvas and immerse myself fully in the sensory experience. There's something magical and grounding about getting my hands dirty and connecting directly with the material.

However, as a mother of several children, those moments of uninterrupted focus are rare. Most of the time, I turn to digital tools like Procreate or Photoshop. Digital media gives me the flexibility to create anywhere, anytime — between school runs, naps, and household chaos. It's a practical choice that allows my creative flow to keep moving, even when life is unpredictable.

In the end, the medium is a vessel for the story or emotion I want to express — and I let the needs of my life and the spirit of the concept guide me to the right tool.

**You mention painting at night when your inner voice is loudest. What role does solitude or silence play in your creative process?**

Night is a sacred silence — a rare stillness when the world finally quiets down. I live in a house surrounded by fields, and if I open the window at night, I hear the most incredible chorus of birds singing. With my iPad, I can even step outside into the garden under a star-studded sky and paint on the swings. In those moments, it feels as if a gentle blessing is placed upon my head, a quiet kiss from the universe.

Solitude and silence are not just conditions for creativity — they are a kind of sacred communion, where my inner voice speaks the loudest and the deepest truths come through. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my gratitude to the KuranoVa Gallery of Contemporary Art and its director, Valentina Evgenievna Kuranova, for their support and for seeing the spark in me. At a moment when I wanted to give up, Valentina said, "Don't betray your dream," and became my curator.



## Marie Decamp Visuals

I have a background in cinema and photography, and I've always evolved in the world of visual storytelling. My work explores themes of identity, femininity, and social representation through collage, photography, painting, and embroidery. Deeply connected to images, I use them as a language to express what words often cannot.

### *Project Statement*

Specializing in analog collage, I draw my raw material from fashion magazines, art history and photography books, which I combine with mixed techniques such as painting and embroidery. This hybrid approach tends to multiply perspectives tenfold, giving them a sense of depth. At the heart of my work lies a profound reflection on the female figure and identity. I explore and question its representations, playing with codes to propose a contemporary and personal reading of these timeless subjects. Each collage invites us to rethink and redefine the traditional roles and perceptions that surround them.









**Leni Smoragdova {\$M}** (b. 1984, Smolensk, Russia) is a multidisciplinary artist and the creator of Transaction Art, a conceptual universe exploring anonymity, identity, and the interplay of social phenomena. Born into a Jewish family and raised in Odessa, Smoragdova moved to London in 2004 to study at Central Saint Martins, where she began developing her unique artistic vision. Her work delves into the commercialization of art and the invisible forces that shape human interactions, often through the lens of collective authorship and anonymity. Leni Smoragdova {\$M} is not only the artist's original name but also, through Transaction Art, a collective identity for numerous anonymous participants. This duality seamlessly merges individual originality with the anonymity of those who choose to remain invisible, forming a distinctive brand. Anonymity is central to this concept, embodied in the term Hidden Faces.



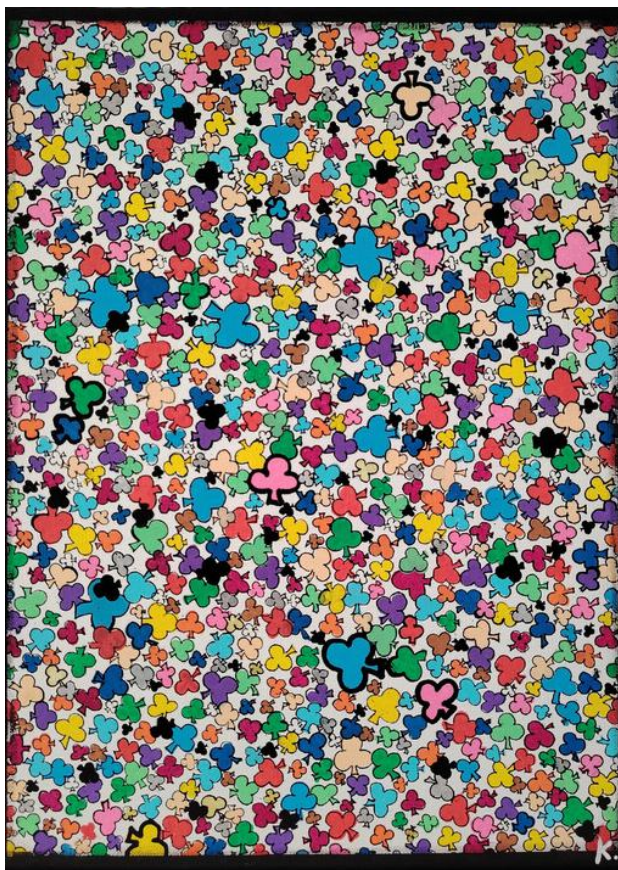






## — Interview

# Ophélie SIMONET aka KOA



**Your universe blends humor, pop culture, and '90s nostalgia. What part of your childhood or personal history has most influenced this joyful aesthetic?**

I grew up in the 1990s, surrounded by anime, flashy tracksuits, and rolls of bubblegum. It was a time that was both innocent and bold. I think my style comes from that—a childhood spent between VHS tapes, glitter pens, and dance music. When I paint, it's a bit like I'm still decorating my school notebooks with the energy of my 8-year-old self.

**You describe painting as your “dose of freedom” and your antidote to the monotony of daily life. What emotions do you most often channel when creating?**

Anger, without hesitation. Mixed with a genuine instinct of pride and courage. But also a sense of mischief and lightness. I paint to engage in a dialogue with the viewer, to offer a playful visual wink. There's sometimes melancholy, sometimes gentle rebellion, but always a desire to play.

**Does your synesthesia influence your artistic choices—especially your use of bright colors**





### and contrasts?

Yes, I think so. I have ordinal-linguistic synesthesia, which means that letters, numbers, and even musical notes have very specific personalities for me. Colors also have a distinct nature. So when I choose one, it's not just for aesthetic reasons—it's because of what it tells me, what it represents. This makes my contrasts and color palettes highly instinctive but also deeply symbolic.

**The TECKY collection features dachshunds in both playful and symbolic situations. Why this choice? What do these dogs represent for you?**

The dachshund is the perfect anti-hero: stubborn, unintentionally funny with its improbable body shape, and incredibly endearing. It's an outsider that couldn't care less about what others think and just does its own thing. For me, it represents unapologetic uniqueness, self-deprecating humor, and a kind of clumsy determination. And visually, it's super funky, isn't it? It's become my ideal mascot.

**Your work often plays with language, humor,**

**and visual puns. Do you see yourself more as a visual artist or a storyteller?**

Both—but with a paintbrush! I love it when someone smiles or pauses, trying to “understand” a piece. If it sparks a reaction, a connection, or a question, then I've succeeded. I also put a lot of time, care, and heart into writing the descriptions of my paintings. Each text acts as a kind of “solution,” always in reference to the world of games.

**In your series “Jeu de Couleurs,” you subvert the classic associations between colors and objects. What inspired this approach? And how do you choose your objects?**

I wanted to play with the way we associate certain colors with certain things—and especially to break those automatic reflexes. I choose objects or subjects that are easily recognizable, so I can twist them into visual symbols. But it's also important that the French wordplay can be used and understood. It's both a visual joke and a way of saying: “things are sometimes different from what we imagine.”

**You split your time between a “traditional” job and your artistic practice. Do these two worlds complement each other or conflict?**

They rub against each other more than they merge, but that tension fuels my creativity. My job imposes structure—a certain language, behavior, and way of operating. Painting is my breath of fresh air, my “playground,” my kingdom. One feeds the other: the contrast makes art essential.





**Logan Carter** is a freelancer and current animation student turned 3D Generalist. Her style is derived from the bright colors and shapes of 2000's media after realizing that it wasn't just nostalgia drawing her to it, but the bold and much more innovative designs. She has a variety of mediums such as 3D modelling and animations, digital and physical illustrations and motion media pieces. Her main residence is the United States, with a huge desire to travel.

### *Project Statement*

I'm Logan, a now-realized 3D Generalist who dabbles in every medium necessary. This year, one thing has been stagnant in my mind—the color, brightness, and artistry of late 20th to early 21st century design. I've taken the clouded nostalgia from my brain and translated it into intense, saturated pieces, all transferred between several digital software, and one is even animated on my portfolio. Each piece comes from carefully studying stylization and even some graphic design techniques. Doesn't it look familiar?

Logan Carter | Frutiger DJ







Logan Carter | Bakeneko



**Tina Toncarova**

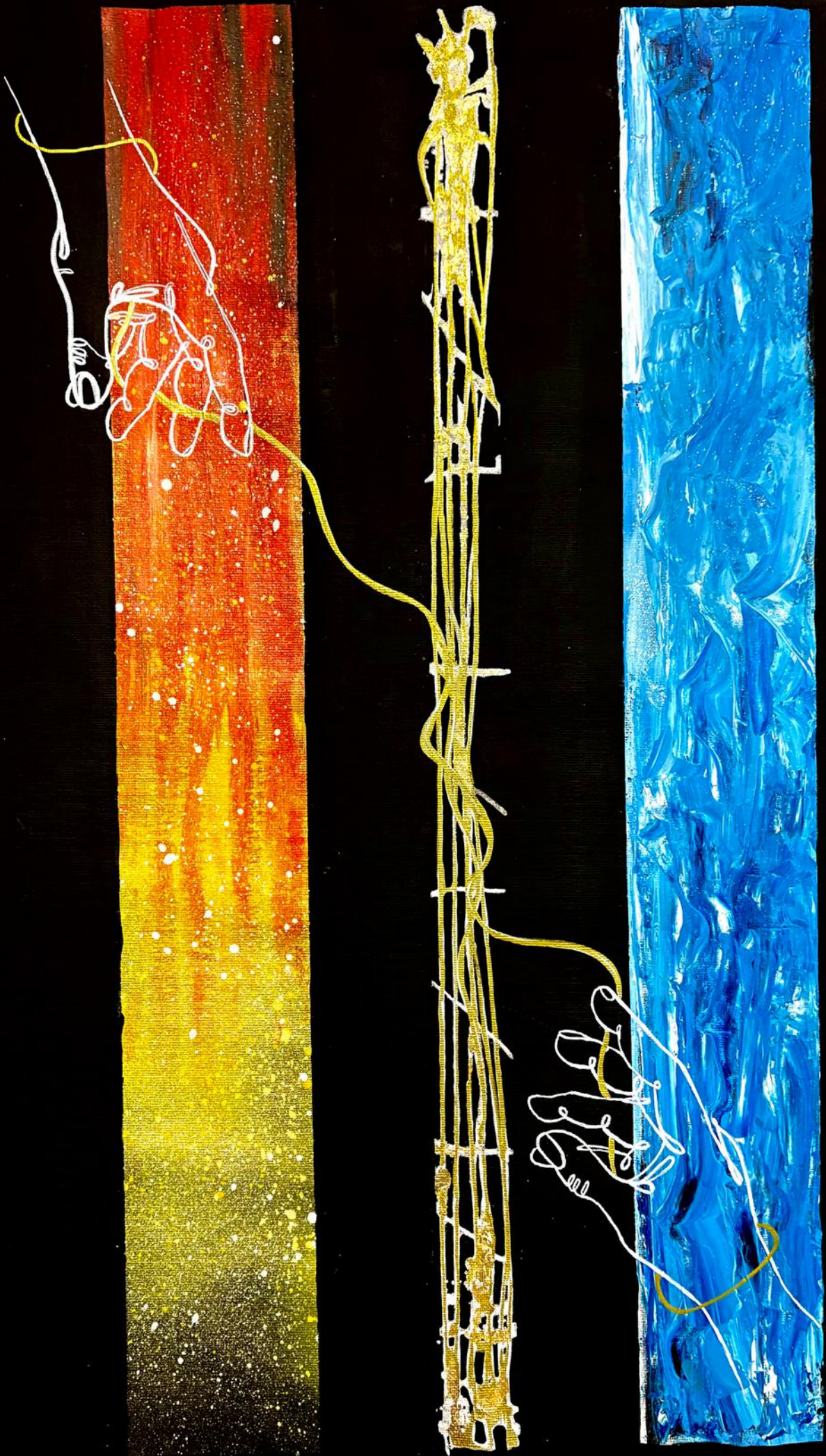
Since childhood, art has been my primary language. I wasn't guided through formal education or artistic mentorship. Instead, I followed my own path. I learned through self-reflection, inner growth, and quietly observing the world around me. Growing up, I had to find strength and support within myself, and creating became my most powerful form of expression and healing. Today I work mainly in line art, a style that has freed me from the weight of perfectionism. It allows me to express the essence of a feeling or story with just a few strokes. Gold leaf brings light, depth, and a sense of sacred value into my pieces. It stands in contrast to the simplicity of lines, yet together they create harmony. Both elements are essential to my work. I create from a place of authenticity, deep listening, and trust in what comes beyond rules or textbooks. For me, art is not a technique. It is a language of the soul.

***Project Statement***

I am an artist who sees art as a bridge between the outer world and the inner self. I primarily create intuitive line art drawings and paintings that blend delicacy, depth, and symbolic meaning with the brilliance of gilding and elements of digital art. I draw inspiration from emotions, spirituality, and the silence where true insights are born. In my work, I seek those moments when as I like to say "the veil between worlds is gently lifted." I believe that through creating art, I touch something greater than myself. I participate in exhibitions and projects that allow me to connect my artistic language with a deeper expression of the human experience. For me, creating is a way to listen and convey what words cannot express.







Tina 2025



# Karla King

## How has your Caribbean heritage shaped your artistic voice and themes?

I grew up in Jamaica, in a household where being an artist wasn't seen as a viable career. Not out of lack of passion, but because the creative industries back home can feel limiting, both in resources and recognition. So my artistic expression was something I nurtured quietly, starting with those six-tube acrylic sets and flimsy canvases you'd find at a local shop. That's where my love for painting began. My work is deeply influenced by where I come from.

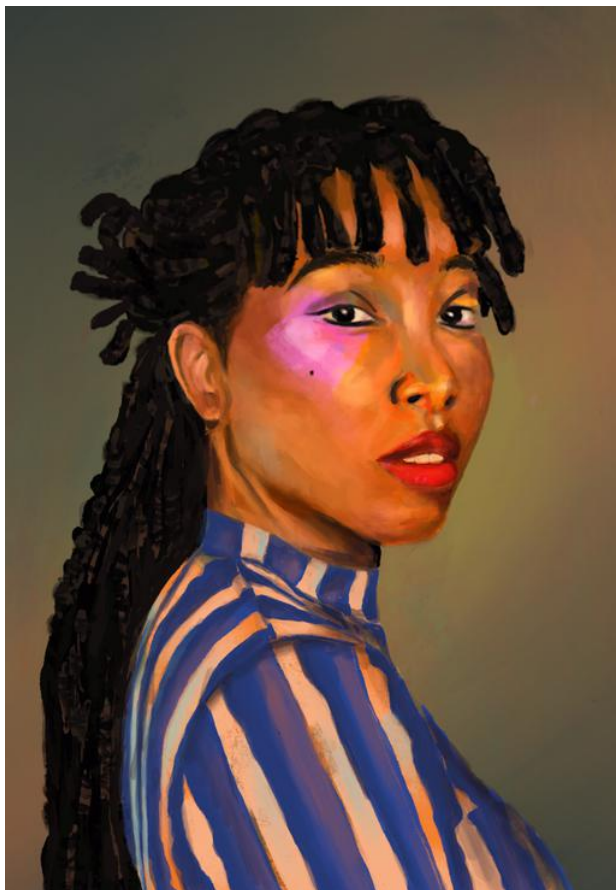


Being Jamaican isn't just about island pride, it's a lens through which I understand the world, and myself. It is the root of my voice and it shows up not only in the colors I use or the textures I play with, but in the stories I tell. I come from a lineage of proud, powerful women — descendants of the Maroons, led by Jamaica's first national heroine, Nanny. My family is woman-led: strong, independent, resilient. They embody a fierce independence that shaped me. The kind of strength that I both admire but also witnessed the cost that comes with it. How strength can turn into hyper-independence, the pressure to always be the doer, the fixer or the provider, and how resilience can wear you down. This duality is a constant thread throughout my paintings: the beauty and burden of strength, especially through the lens of womanhood.

## Can you describe your transition from Jamaica to the Netherlands and how it influenced your art?

Moving to the Netherlands was transformative, and at first, overwhelming. I wasn't prepared for the emotional weight of it all. I thought snow would be magical, but instead, I cried the first time I saw it. It hit me: I'm so far from home. The sky was low, the days were grey, and I didn't know how to exist in this new climate — culturally or emotionally.

I struggled to dress myself, to find rhythm in a lifestyle so different from what I knew. Layers of clothing felt like layers of identity being stripped away. I went from being outgoing and expressive to introverted and unsure. I didn't recognize myself — and that



Karla King | Tired (self portrait)





disconnection pushed me into an identity crisis. But art became my therapy. It gave me purpose, even when I couldn't quite articulate what I was feeling. Eventually, I found my way back to myself, not by returning to who I was, but by embracing who I was becoming. And in doing so, I found a voice in my art that I didn't know I had.

Eventually, I became protective of my newfound joy — my escape, my safe haven. And so I wasn't ready to make it public (which I did only in February 2025), because I didn't want to share the art without also telling the story behind it. But once I did, I realized that there was power in that vulnerability. People began sharing their own stories with me — of migration, mental health, loss, and rediscovery. It made me feel less alone, and more connected.

### **How do you balance digital and acrylic media in your work? Do you approach them differently?**

Acrylics were my first love. I love how forgiving they are—the fast drying time, the ability to layer and subtract, to move quickly and intuitively. They're part of how I learned to express myself and explore my capabilities as an artist.

Digital art, on the other hand, gave me the freedom I didn't always have growing up. In Jamaica, art supplies weren't always accessible—either they were unaffordable or just not available. So coming to Europe and discovering the sheer amount of tools,

mediums, and techniques at my fingertips was liberating. But working digitally, I can create anywhere, anytime, and push myself in ways I couldn't before. That said, my digital work is heavily inspired by my acrylic techniques. When I paint digitally, I approach it just like I would a canvas, applying layers, textures, and brushwork that mimic traditional painting. I even embrace imperfections intentionally, adding rawness and roughness to give it that tactile, handmade feeling. I want viewers to feel as if they're looking at something that could've been painted on linen or canvas, not something sterile or overly refined.

Interestingly, at exhibitions, people often can't tell which of my pieces are digital or acrylic at first glance—and I live for that moment of curiosity. I get reactions like, "Wait, is this painted or printed?" And that opens up a conversation about technique, medium, and intent. As a digital fine artist, I still treat my work with the same level of care as traditional pieces: I partner with reputable fine art makers in Amsterdam and print on premium paper, like Hahnemühle. My acrylics, meanwhile, live on canvas or linen—sometimes framed, sometimes bordered by the painting itself.

Ultimately, whether I choose digital or acrylic comes down to my emotional state or the intention behind the piece. Sometimes I need the physical interaction with paint and canvas; other times, I need the immediacy and flexibility that digital offers.

### **How does poetry influence your visual storytelling?**

Poetry gives my work voice, sometimes literally. While I



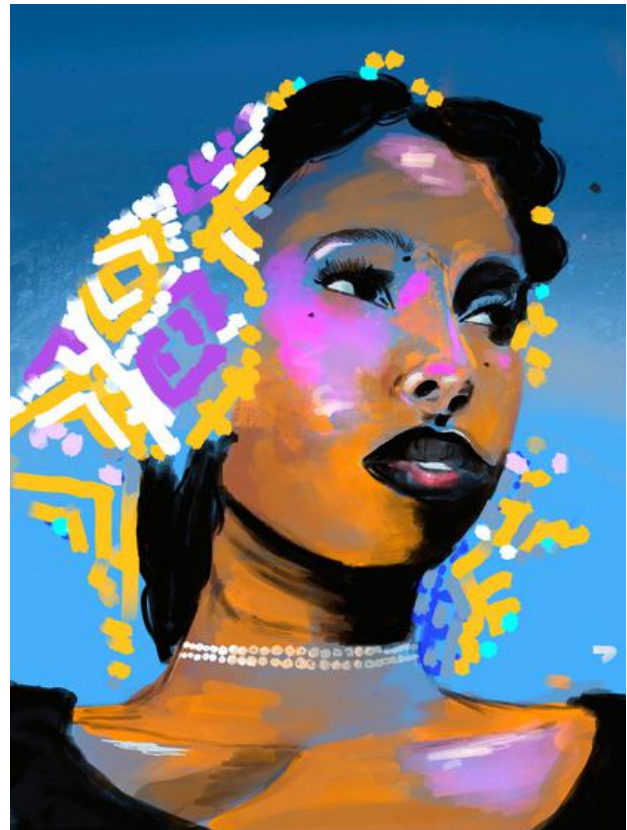


don't always feel confident calling myself a "poet," writing has become an important part of my creative process—sometimes before painting, sometimes during, and sometimes as a reflection afterward. Sometimes I write a poem before I start painting, as a way to clarify what I'm trying to say. Other times, the poem comes during or after the painting, as a reflection or reaction to what I've created. It's a very intuitive process with no strict order. I like to think of it as giving viewers a map to navigate the emotion behind the piece.

As someone who appreciates meaning and intention when viewing art, I want to offer that to my audience too. The poetry doesn't explain the work, but it enhances it. It deepens the story, adds a layer of intimacy, and helps bridge the emotional connection between creator and viewer.

### **What role does feminism play in your creative process and message?**

Feminism is central to my practice, not as a slogan, but as a lived experience. I was raised by women who did it all: led families, fixed problems, started movements. So for me, feminism is inherited. It's the lens through which I understand strength, resilience, and survival. But it's also about softness. The softness that's often denied or overlooked in women, especially Black Caribbean women. I create with that duality in mind: the toughness we show the world, and the tenderness we carry inside. My art aims to celebrate that balance



Karla King | Becoming

and to remind women (especially girls like me) that their stories matter.

There's something powerful about realizing your story isn't just yours. That your pain, your joy, your evolution is shared. Feminism, for me, is about making those hidden narratives visible, to inspire, to support, and to remind others (and myself) that we are allowed to take up space and dream big.

### **In what ways do you explore the emotional landscape of seasonal affective disorder in your pieces?**

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) has been one of the hardest, most transformative parts of my journey. I didn't know what it was when I first arrived in Europe, I just knew that the winters hit hard. It wasn't just the cold; it was the absence of light, the weight of the sky, the silence of isolation. During lockdown, I created my first digital painting, *She Breathes*. It features a girl in a face mask that captures the strange isolation of that time. That piece was born out of the emotional fog I was trying to navigate—the confusion, the surreal experience of existing in a space that didn't feel like mine. Later, I developed a series titled *Lost Content Souls*, focused on expat women dealing with seasonal depression, identity, and displacement in the Netherlands. I realized how common these feelings were, especially for people from the sun. But because they seem "expected," they often go unnoticed. Through painting, I wanted to say: "you're not alone, and we're here to support you." I don't paint SAD from



Karla King | You Think You Know





Karla King  
Comfort

the depths of it anymore. I paint from the other side, from a place of healing and hope. I want to show that there is light, there are ways to navigate it, and that awareness itself can be powerful. Sharing my story opened doors for others to share theirs. And through that, I found connection and recovery. Color, posture, brushstroke—every element in my work is intentional. I use these tools to evoke emotion, to invite conversation, and to offer healing. My goal

isn't just to make something beautiful. It's to make something felt. Something that connects across borders, cultures, and experiences. Whether I'm working with acrylic or pixels, my art is a reflection of all the layers I carry: my heritage, my struggles, my joy, and my hope. It's about showing up, imperfectly and honestly, and trusting that someone, somewhere, will feel seen in it.

And so I aim to translate her story... and mine.



**Leah Byck** was born in Manhattan, NY, grew up in Chappaqua, NY, and is a graduate student from Vermont College of Fine Arts. Leah is a certified K-12 art teacher with an MFA in visual art, has shown in a number of solo and group exhibitions and is a recipient of the Flora Brown Music scholarship for their years of study at Ithaca College as well as a recipient of the Center for Arts + Social Justice Fellowship Grant from the VCFA Center for Arts and Social Justice. Currently, Leah is working on new research, art projects and plans to continue showing art and perform in drag across NYC and abroad. Leah is a performance artist, a visual artist, as well as a percussionist and multi-instrumentalist musician that goes by the musician name Waring. Through a PhD program in visual art, Leah hopes to continue to incorporate drag and music studies into their future visual artwork and push the boundaries of what visual art is, as well as what music is and how these mediums all intertwine.

#### *Project Statement*

The art I create stems from my experiences and it is my way of communicating with the world. It provides insight into the multiple social justice movements in our political world such as racial justice, identity politics, disability justice and climate justice. As I grapple with my own intersectional identity and notions of truth, the artwork I create centers around all aspects of today's social injustices and the issues surrounding justice for marginalized communities. Although my main medium is painting, I continue to produce work through several other mediums, including video, printmaking, sculpture, ink/pencil drawing, music and performance. My projects are directly connected to community care, collective experiences and my own experiences in fighting for intersectional social justice movements across the United States and the world as I travel through different states and countries. At all times, the focus is to create safe spaces for individuals, communities and to create communities organized around intersectional perspectives. My communal interview research is how I've built on and continue to develop my studio practice and now correlates with intersecting social justice movements. My work is influenced by artists such as Kehinde Wiley, Mores McWrath and LJ Roberts, who challenge the notion of who and what is presented and represented in visual art.

Leah Byck | Jewish Identity







Leah Byck | Reciprocity



**Ami Dongchau** is a 2D visual artist from Houston, Texas. Raised near the Houston Museum District, she developed a deep love for art from an early age. As a child, her grandparents regaled her with Vietnamese legends and folk poems that inspired her interest in Asian history and art. Her practice explores themes of identity, memory, and cultural inheritance through a diasporic Vietnamese lens. Blending the human form with surreal and fantastical elements, her practice spans digital illustration in Photoshop to traditional media like acrylic and oil painting.

### *Project Statement*

"Year of the Cat" investigates the process of regrowth and rebuilding after the Vietnam War in addition to exhibiting a tradition of celebration and teamwork. The collage elements in the work constitutes a process of collection, paralleling the gathering of memories and experiences into a collective narrative. Yet the separate photos and text are still defined with red embroidery outline—individual memories are still defined.





Ami Dongchau | Year of the Cat



## — Interview

# Shua Copeland

**Your work often combines illustration and collage. How do you decide when a piece should be purely digital, hand-crafted, or a mix of both?**

Honestly, it really just depends on what feels right at the moment. Some days, I'll get lost on my iPad, sketching, illustrating just letting my mind wander and my hands follow. I could spend hours, even days, just creating whatever comes to me. No rules, no structure, just flow. But when I'm working with my hands building a collage piece or painting something physical it's the same spirit, just a different rhythm. Sometimes those pieces take me weeks. I'll sit with them, come back, change something, add a new layer. I don't rush it unless I feel like I have to. For me, it's all about speed and emotion, how fast the feeling hits and how fast I need to get it out. Some things I hold and mold, others I let loose immediately. Either way, everything I make is a reflection of where I'm at, right then and there.



Shua Copeland | Skywalkers



Shua Copeland | Space Children

**Many of your pieces explore the complexity of Black identity. What personal experiences most influence these themes in your art?**

It really started with my childhood just being surrounded by everything Black. The culture, the energy, the way my family carried themselves all of that shaped me. From the aesthetics to the style, to the way we talk and move it was all so natural but powerful. That Black identity wasn't something I had to search for, it was always right there, living around me. As I got older and started to tap into my own style and taste, I realized how much of that foundation I wanted to pour into my work. Whether I'm creating something light and playful or deep and layered, I want the spirit of where I come from to be felt. It's important for me to keep that identity strong in my craft because that's what makes it real. That's what makes it mine.

**The gold grills and expressive lips appear across several of your works. What do these recurring motifs symbolize for you?**

It symbolizes where I'm from down South, Atlanta, Georgia. That's where I first saw grills, shining in the sunlight like gold trophies. And anybody from the South knows that's our thing. It's more than just jewelry, it's a statement, a form of expression, a badge of pride. Grills tell you where somebody's from without them having to say a word.

I've been sitting on some pieces that speak to that culture, and I still want to bring it all together into a full collection. I'm calling it "GRILLZ & GLORY". I see it as a full installation of photography, collages, maybe even sound and video. I want to show the beauty, the story, and the shine behind it all. It's Southern. It's personal. And it's powerful.



**You've said that you create based on the question, "What would my 9-year-old self do?" — can you share a moment when that instinct shaped a specific piece?**

It's really every time I make a piece there's not one specific work that defines it for me. I don't overthink it. I just do. That's how it's always been. When I was around 9, I started experimenting with stuff, just trying things out. I was surrounded by music and art, and I was curious. I liked a lot of things at once drawing, sounds, textures so I kept creating from that place. Most of my pieces come from that same instinct. I move off energy. I don't always sit down with a deep concept or plan, I just let it happen. But when I do want to tap into something more emotional or meaningful, I know how to sit with it and really build that feeling into the work. But at the core, it's always been about the act of doing. Just letting it flow.

**Your art often feels deeply emotional, yet playful. How do you balance vulnerability with vibrancy?**

This is probably one of my favorite questions to answer, for real. I'll break it down like this. My vulnerability in art comes from the struggles I've been through and the silence I had to sit in during those trials. I've dealt with a lot internally, and instead of always talking about it, I try to let my work speak for me. So when I think of an artistic statement that shows up across a lot of my pieces it's tears. I draw a lot of tears. Not always in a sad way, but because that image stays with me. It's what comes to mind naturally, and to be honest, it just hits emotionally and aesthetically. It's powerful, and it carries weight. Now on the flip side, the playfulness in my work comes from the joy I get in making faces literally. I love drawing different variations of faces, giving them attitude, expression, or just letting them be weird and wild. That inspiration

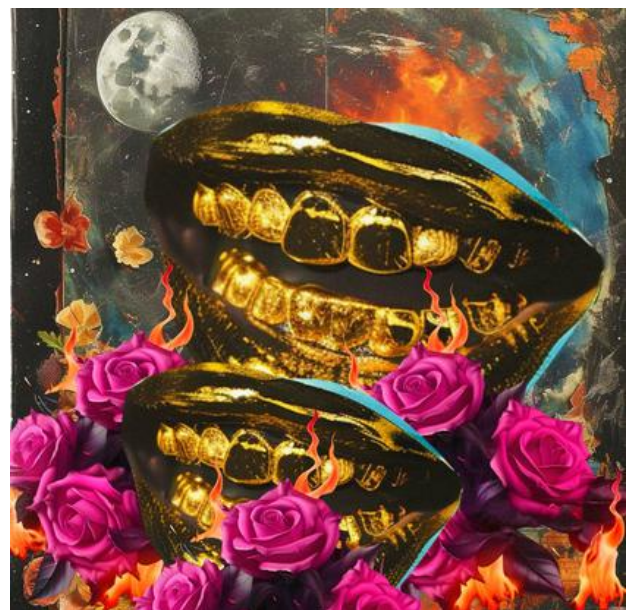
comes from everywhere: old Adult Swim shows I used to watch, random things I see while out in the streets, or just straight out of my imagination. It's like two sides of me living in the same body of work—one that feels deeply, and one that plays freely.

**Do you feel collage, as a medium, reflects how memory and identity are formed — layered, messy, and nonlinear?**

Yes, I do and that's exactly why I started doing collages. It's one of the only art forms where it feels like you can truly do whatever's in your mind. You can pull from different places, create something wild, something raw, something that doesn't even make sense at first but somehow, it still works. That freedom is what drew me in. And when people ask me, "Why collages?" I always tell 'em, because my brain is a collage. I'm layered. I got different moods, different thoughts, memories, dreams all stacked on top of each other. Sometimes I might seem all over the place, but if you take a step back and really look, I'm still put together. That's what collages is to me. It's messy and beautiful at the same time. Just like life.

**Many of your works feature mirrored or duplicated portraits. What draws you to this compositional choice?**

I just like doing multiple things at once. Sometimes, one portrait by itself doesn't hit the same spot; it doesn't give me enough room to say everything I want to say. I like layering, overlapping, bringing different elements together because that's how my mind works. It really just depends on how the piece is coming together. Some ideas need more than one face, more than one energy. I build based on the feeling, the flow. If it calls for more, I give it more. Simple as that.





**Alina Zhilina** was born in Moscow in 1995. She holds a degree in cultural studies. She is a photographer and video artist.

### *Project Statement*

The themes I work with in digital photography are subtle intersections and metaphors of the animate and inanimate, the visible and invisible, light and shadow. Staying away from direct, documentary storytelling, I notice everyday details in their clarity and simplicity. For me, photography coexists at the intersection of poetry and the photographic image, where a small number of words can convey much that remains always behind the scenes, in the field of the unspoken.

Alina Zhilina | ZERO | 2025







Alina Zhilina | ZERO | 2025

Alina Zhilina | ZERO | 2025





## Nikola Gocic

Scents of Arcadia Conceived in times of heightened repression, Scents of Arcadia may be viewed as my most rebellious series, its sensual, exuberant compositions defying not only the reactionary forces / conservative thought, but the very bleakness of life's realities, as well as the ever-growing miasma of death. Portraying mythologized entities / heralds of the subconscious mind, these lucid, omnierotic visions of often symbiotic bond between vegetation and flesh strive to cloud suicidal ideation, and through the eyes that pop up in peculiar places, peek into the observer's soul. An exploration of collages' painterly potential, they exist between flights of fancy, and deeply rooted fears, dissolving the latter in the ethereal vastness of the skies. Additional note: The titles of all 12 'chapters' form a sort of a prose poem. "Immortality lays eggs in a twisted lullaby of our birdless nest. Heaven may bleed and hell may freeze, but she will be here, tormenting me, reinventing me. Softer than distance, I reopen portals, and silence escapes. Everything (b)ends."









## — Interview

# Alpamys Yechshanov



Alpamys Yechshanov | ZeroTox Posters



Alpamys Yechshanov | ZeroTox Posters

**What inspired the concept behind “ZeroTox Sustainability Campaign”?**

ZeroTox was born when I spotted a plastic bag flattened on a NYC street, shaped like a squished apple. That image stuck with me—it perfectly symbolized the contradiction of “The Big Apple” turning into a “Big Polluter.” I wanted to turn that metaphor into a visual campaign that speaks to both the beauty and the danger surrounding urban life and waste.

**Why did you choose fruits and vegetables made of plastic bags as the central visual metaphor?**

Fruits and vegetables symbolize health, nature, and life—but when made of plastic, they become uncanny and unsettling. This tension was intentional. I wanted to provoke viewers into rethinking what we consume and discard, and how plastic has infiltrated even the most natural symbols.

**How do you balance activism and art in your**





### creative practice?

I believe art becomes more powerful when it carries a message. For me, activism is not separate from art—it gives it purpose. I strive to create visuals that are both aesthetically striking and conceptually urgent. Design can move people emotionally and intellectually at once, and I use that intersection to engage audiences in meaningful dialogue.

### What emotions or thoughts do you hope your viewers experience when seeing these posters?

I hope they feel a mix of discomfort, curiosity, and reflection. Discomfort at the distorted beauty of plastic produce, curiosity about what it represents, and reflection on their own role in environmental impact. The goal is not to shame, but to awaken.

### How do you envision the role of artists in addressing environmental crises like plastic pollution?

Artists are storytellers, and stories shape public consciousness. In a time of crisis, artists can amplify scientific data with human emotion, urgency, and imagination. We can bring abstract statistics to life, making them impossible to ignore.

### How do you see public awareness campaigns like this evolving in the future?

I think they'll become increasingly immersive—blending physical spaces with digital interaction. AR, AI, and real-time data visualization will play a larger role. But no matter the medium, emotional resonance and storytelling will remain key to impact.

### What message would you like to give young artists who want to create work with social impact?

Don't wait for permission. Use what you have, where you are, and speak from your truth. Social impact starts with a bold idea and the courage to share it, even if it feels small at first. Your voice matters—especially when it's rooted in authenticity.





**Jason Engelbart**, born in 1960, completed his studies from 1980 to 1984 at the ALSTERDAMM Art & Design Academy - SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS in Hamburg, Germany. During his studies, he was a student in Professor Lothar Walter's master class and earned his degree in art and design. After his graduation he has worked primarily as a Creative Director in design studios. 1989 he founded his own design agency DIE BOTSCHAFT, Hamburg | Berlin. At the end of 2009, Engelbart handed over the agency to his three managing partners and started his second career as a professional artist. Since 2010, Jason Engelbart has focused entirely on his artistic work. In the years that follow, he develops his own personal artistic signature. In 2011 Engelbart begins to experiment with the various tools of the Photoshop program. He thus lays the foundation for his abstract digital Neo Paintings. Engelbart lives and works in Hamburg, Germany. With his work cycle BAROQUE PASSION, he was represented at national and international exhibitions such as the Amory Art Week New York, Art Basel Miami and the Swiss Art Expo Zurich. Engelbart's work has been honored with numerous international awards.

#### *Project Statement*

In my artistic work as well as in my daily life, I am constantly seeking to push the boundaries of physical experience and inner consciousness. I am exploring this world on a spiritual level, seeking to move closer to the meaning that can only be found beyond the realms of our physical reality. My digital Neo Paintings do not follow any kind of predefined image or concept. Instead, I allow my intuition to guide me while I paint, channeling a sense of light and energy into vibrant and colorful movements. They appear to dissolve, only to immediately emerge once again. CYCLE BAROQUE PASSION | My digital paintings from the Baroque Passion series bridge the timeless and the contemporary. This series transforms the grandeur of historical frescoes into flowing, abstract compositions. Inspired by baroque masters like Johannes Zick and Guido Reni, I digitally layer, distort, and reinvent classical elements, creating swirling forms that radiate movement and light. These Neo Paintings merge historical opulence with modern abstraction, where colors shift like drifting clouds and light sculpts vast yet intimate spaces. At its core, these works explore presence, perception, and the emotional weight of the unseen-paintings that do not simply depict movement but seem to exist within it. NEO PAINTING TECHNIQUE | Throughout my professional career as an artist and designer, technology and its digital tools have always been central to my creative work. In terms of my digital neo paintings, working with Photoshop offers me precise control over the color moods of the individual areas of the image, empowering a fluid compositional process by removing and adding individual image layers. Within these layers, I also paint the color moods and their flowing forms, typically using simple digital tools like the paintbrush and 'smudge finger'. This is how the flowing formations and rhythmic imagery, characteristic of my work, are created.









## — Interview

# Hannah Kwafo

**Why did you choose to work with calabash and pyrography? What do you like most about this combination?**

I chose the calabash primarily due to its traditional significance and diverse usage as a household object in my country Ghana, and secondarily for its hemispheric nature that embodies the visual compositions of my drawings.

Pyrography was my most preferred drawing technique due to its ethereal outcome on the calabash, allowing both the drawings and the surface of the calabash to be visually viewed and appreciated by the audience. The most intriguing and interesting aspects for me are the act and art of burning the gourds symbolically, representing the Anthropocene - how the actions of mankind affect and permanently affect the



Hannah Kwafo | Sea hive | 2023

geo-biological forms of nature.

**The patterns in your work often feature aquatic life. Why water and marine ecology in particular? Do these creatures hold metaphorical meaning for you?**

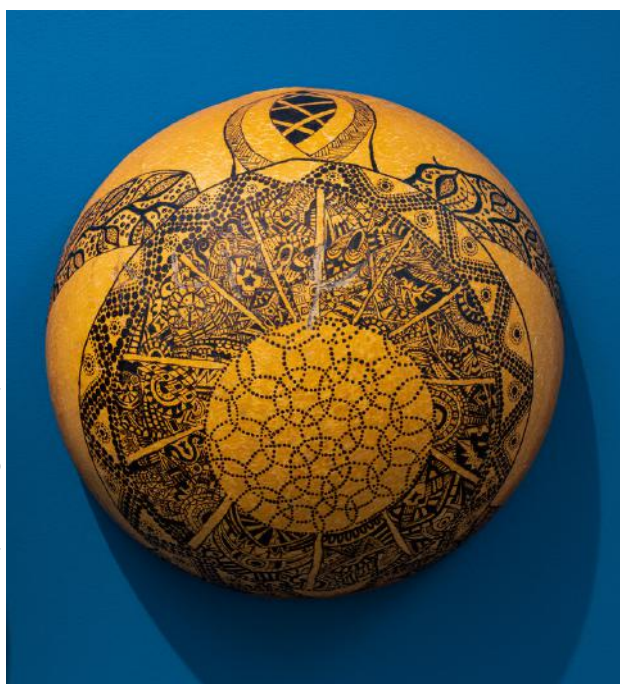
The marine and aquatic life were purposely the underlying theme due to my connection to the sea as an indigene of the coastal community named Sekondi in the Western Region of Ghana. Every creature is intricately drawn based on my interaction, perception and connection with it.

**In your net installation, what message are you sharing about people and nature?**

My net installation is a juxtaposition of nature in its abundance and the aftermath of nature due to hazardous human actions. In this work is my voice as a coastal indigene of how my once beautiful refreshing home, has been destroyed and lost due to destructive actions birthed from Capitalism.

**Living and studying in different countries, how has that changed or added to your artistic voice?**

Living and studying in different countries is greatly assisting me in deeply analysing the cognitive and visual lenses from different audiences with different cultural backgrounds. Thereby, challenging me to effectively learn how



Hannah Kwafo | Golden goddess | 2024



to communicate my artistic concepts to a unified level of understanding and reception.

**You've taught in Ghana and the U.S. How does teaching inspire your own art?**

As one who has interest in art and academia, with a great public speaking ability, teaching has taught me to have utmost confidence in my voice without any shadow of doubt and fear. It can be quite intimidating sometimes with a wave of inferiority, but I have learned to constantly challenge myself and bask in unwavering confidence.

**You call yourself an interdisciplinary artist.**

**Are there new materials or tools you want to try?**

I look forward to exploring ceramics and wood carving to give me much more mastery in creating excellent crafts in forms, shapes and textures.

**If you could team up with a scientist or environmentalist, what kind of art project would you like to do?**

If I could team with a scientist or environmentalist, I would like to work on huge interactive installations based on the human senses to immerse and indulge the audience.



**Jorrie Landis-Clinton** is a visual artist and painter currently based in Rochester, New York. She is an alumni of the State University of New York at New Paltz and creates pieces on the basis of mental health awareness as well as spirituality. Her most recent work is colorfully portrayed in a surrealist light, focusing on the anatomical details of the human body.

Jorrie Landis-Clinton | Why Would They | 2024









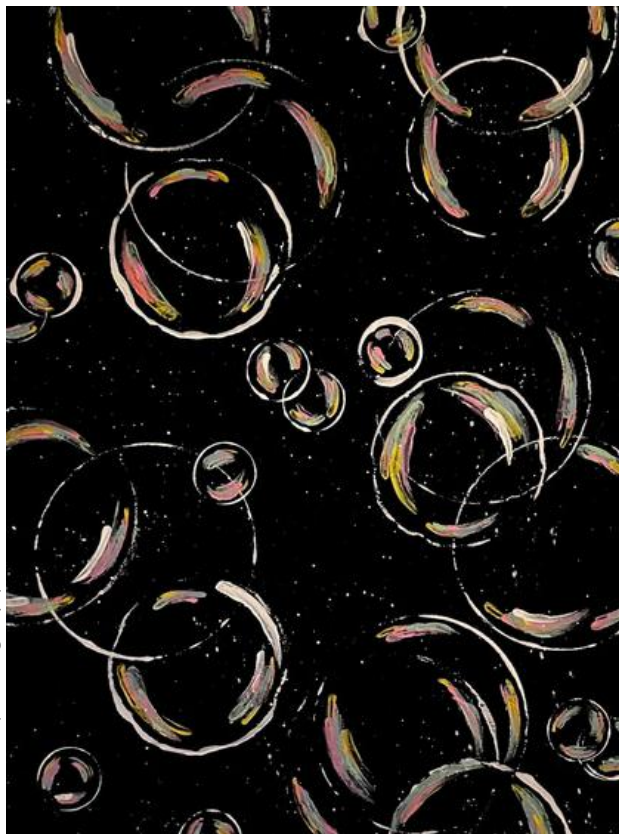
# — Interview

## Mansi Rawal

**You describe art as a continuation of logic through intuition. How do you balance structure and spontaneity in your creative process?**

I usually begin with a loose framework - a quick scribble on a sticky note, words, colors, or a guiding idea. Structure helps me start, but from there, I let intuition take the lead. It's not so much a tug-of-war between them, but more about knowing when each one is needed.

Some pieces, like 'Saṃsāra', began with a clear and intentional mapping of the stages of a soul's journey. Others, like 'Womanhood', found their emotional voice through letting go. The most spontaneous strokes often come from hours of quiet preparation. And when I find myself over-planning and the work starts to resist, that's my cue to step back and loosen my grip. I welcome instinct and missteps—they've often taught me the most. For me, it's a dialogue between the mind and the emotions. The balance is always shifting, but that's exactly what keeps the work honest and alive.



Mansi Rawal | Floating Pop | 2023



**Your practice blends storytelling, observation, and emotional depth. What usually sparks the beginning of a new piece — a thought, a feeling, or a visual impression?**

Observation and reflection work hand in hand for me. What I see outside often echoes something I'm processing within. From that moment of recognition, a story begins to unfold. A new piece usually starts with an emotion, a thought, or a memory, often something unresolved or quietly persistent. The initial spark might come from a conversation, a passing mood, or a moment of stillness.

That spark often grows into an image or a sentence, a fleeting gesture that stirs something deeper as I create. I remember once travelling by bus, with lush mountains on one side and the ocean on the other. In that moment, I felt how the bridge between our own inner depths and heights—between darkness and light—is often just a feeling along the journey, not something fixed or defined. It made me think about how we carry memories as we move through time. That experience became 'Beneath and Beyond'.

**How has living in different cultural contexts, like India and Germany, influenced your perspective as an artist and storyteller?**

Living in India and Germany has shaped the way I see, feel, and create in profound ways. I carry a deep-rooted sense of empathy, humility, and connection - values that comes from growing up in the Indian culture while In Germany, I've learned to value independence, clarity, and a sense of freedom that comes with responsibility. It's also where I



began to understand the strength in quiet reflection and the idea of detached attachment.

Both cultures, in their own ways, have taught me to explore not just different art forms, but different ways of expressing emotion, memory, and story. The contrasts between them don't feel like opposites anymore, but rather parts of a larger whole. My work often tries to hold that space, where differences can meet and something true and universal can emerge.

**You move across different styles and mediums with ease. Do you view versatility as a conscious choice or a natural evolution of your process?**

Versatility is mainly a natural evolution as I tend to follow the form that fits the feeling in that moment. I'm more interested in the truthfulness of process than in stylistic consistency. For me, versatility isn't about being scattered - it's a kind of attentiveness. It's about listening - to the material, to myself, and to what each idea truly needs to be expressed. Switching mediums helps me access different layers of thoughts and emotions - what I can't say with a brush, I might find in texture or line. Feeling the grain of paper or threads, the softness of pastels, the flow of watercolors or the density of acrylics, each medium stir something different within me. Sometimes, the medium knows what I'm feeling before I do.

**How do you define success or fulfillment in your artistic journey?**

I create to lose—time, noise, and sometimes even myself—but only to find something clearer and quieter in return. When it gets hard, what keeps me going is the freedom to simply express and connect, not impress. So, for me, fulfillment comes from making something that feels true. I find peace in the process and discover new spaces within myself. It helps me understand who I am, how I relate to

others, and how to move and uplift emotions - both mine and theirs.

Creating 'Simba' was a long journey—one that took years of dedication and reflection. Finishing it felt like reconnecting with a deeper part of myself. This piece embodies resilience, strength, and a meaningful bond that continues to inspire me. In its quiet way, Simba felt like success because it gave me peace.

And then there's 'Floating Pop', a piece that still makes my friends smile as they share memories of running home from school, making soap bubbles in the air—just like I did. That kind of connection via art, that shared memory, is its own kind of fulfillment.

**You also write poetry and quotes. How do writing and visual art inform or complement each other in your life?**

Writing and visual art are two languages of the same inner voice. When I can't find the right words, I paint. When the image won't come, I write. Painting offers silence; writing brings clarity. Together, they let me express what neither could carry alone. They hold space for both clarity and ambiguity — a meaning that is felt more than understood. Painting gives me room to feel without explanation, while writing helps me understand what I've felt. I paint when I'm inward and still; I write when something needs to move through me.

**What role does reflection or introspection play in your creative work?**

Reflection is the heartbeat of my process. Without it, I'm just producing—not truly creating. My work often begins after moments of silence or deep questioning. I need to sit with emotions, memories, or experiences long enough for them to take shape.

Introspection helps me move beyond the surface to uncover what's hidden or unresolved. It slows me down, encourages deeper questions, and brings a greater sense of presence and meaning to the work. For example, I didn't fully grasp what courage meant for someone broken yet standing strong until I painted 'Fragmented Drift'.





## Konstantin Aleksandrovich Parkhomenko

Born on January 1, 1984, in Luhansk. He graduated from the Luhansk College of Culture and Arts, the Mikhail Matusovsky Luhansk State Academy of Culture and Arts, and Taras Shevchenko Luhansk National University, specializing in Fine and Decorative Arts.

He works in genres such as landscape, still life, and narrative composition. After graduating from the Academy, he dedicated himself to painting, exploring various techniques, materials, and subjects. As a result of a long creative search, landscape painting became his primary and most beloved genre.

He worked as a lecturer of specialized subjects at the College of Technologies and Design of Taras Shevchenko Luhansk National University. He currently teaches specialized disciplines in the Department of Easel Painting at the Faculty of Fine and Decorative Arts of the Matusovsky Academy.

Parkhomenko has participated in 97 international, all-Russian, republican, city, and university-level art plein airs, symposiums, exhibitions, and competitions. In many of them, he has been recognized as a laureate. Notable events include:

"Russian Atlantis," "Yugorsk Academy," "Cultural Landscape," "Borisovka" (Russia);

"Flight of Thought," "City and Sea" (Latvia);

"Dialogue of Centuries 1812-2012" (Belarus);

"Connecting Shores" (Turkey);

"Żory Plein Air," "Kraków" (Poland);

"Art Studio Rudartsi" (Bulgaria).

Parkhomenko is the author of academic publications in domestic and international journals indexed in the Web of Science and included in the official list of the Higher Attestation Commission (VAK). His articles have been published in Kazakhstan, Moldova, Belarus, Costa Rica, Brazil, and Bulgaria.

He is a member of the Professional Union of Artists.

His solo exhibitions have been held in Luhansk, Krasny Luch, and Kyiv.

His works are in private collections and state museums in the Russian Federation and abroad.

Konstantin Aleksandrovich Parkhomenko | How much meaning there is in silence | 2024







Konstantin Aleksandrovich Parkhomenko | A business conversation | 2024



# — Interview

## Alauda

**You describe drawing as a vital necessity. Can you share what first prompted your return to art after your pause?**

I had lost all desire to live. My body was still there, but I wasn't. One day, I found a pencil. I didn't want to "draw" — I needed to express



Alauda Georges | Me, Myself and I | 2025

something, but not in words. Not just "I'm sad," but "This is what my sadness looks like." This shape, this blur, this silence — that's how I felt. The gesture of drawing anchored me. It didn't heal me, but it gave me something to hold onto. It gave me a voice when I had none.

**Many of your works explore themes of dissociation and fragmentation. What do these themes mean to you personally?**

These are not just themes — they are states I live in. I often say "I feel weird," but what I mean is: my mind is drifting, my spirit has left my body and I don't know where it's gone. Being there but no longer being there — it's part of my daily reality. These moments are both remnants of trauma and its living echoes. In my art, I try to make those invisible states visible.

**How does working in black and white help convey the emotional depth of your pieces?**

Black and white is more than a choice — it's a reflection of how I see the world. In my life, colors have disappeared. I'm stuck in all these shades of pain. Without color, everything



Alauda Georges | Fading Girl | 2025





becomes deeper. Every line, every shadow carries weight. It strips things down to their essence. There's no distraction. Just truth, and emotion in its rawest form.

**Can you tell us about a specific piece that was especially difficult — or healing — to create?**

Regarde-moi disparaître was both difficult and necessary. There's a gaze in it — an almost accusatory look that says: "Look what you did to me. Look where I am now." But behind that, there's also a timid, gentle look — a faint desire to exist. To be seen, maybe. The piece is about vanishing, but also about still being here, even if only barely. Creating it didn't save me, but it allowed something silent inside me to speak.

**Your work spans illustration, textiles, video, and drawing. How do these mediums interact in your creative process?**

Each medium is a different form of expression. Sometimes, I need to draw. Sometimes, I need to move, stitch, film, whisper. I let the emotion guide me. These disciplines are not separate —

they breathe together. They allow different facets of the same feeling to emerge. They're just different ways of saying the same unspeakable thing.

**How do you navigate the line between personal vulnerability and public sharing in your art?**

I share only what has already scarred over — never the open wound. But I create from a place of truth. My work isn't about asking for pity. It's about reaching those who feel the same. I want to tell them: You are not alone. If my drawings speak to you, then I want to honour your survival. I want to encourage your healing. I want to say: I see you.

**Silence, memory, and the body are recurring motifs. What role do they play in your visual storytelling?**

Silence is where the loudest screams hide. The body — fragile, fragmented — carries everything words can't say. My portraits often hold a veiled intimacy, a way of showing emotion without exposing everything. Memory, for me, is vast and unstable. Sometimes it protects, sometimes it destroys. Remembering can hurt. Forgetting can too. In my work, I explore that double edge.





## Pelage Myriam Jessica

Affected by an autoimmune disease, Myriam Jessica Pelage transforms painting and photography into a vibrant outlet. She fuses real, legal photographs with advanced software to weave dreamlike worlds that reflect her artistic soul. Her works evoke an immersive journey of introspection, exploring courage and inner peace. Through her creations, she invites us to ignite our own light, guiding us toward a personal ascension beyond the challenges of everyday life.

Pelage Myriam Jessica | The fusion between two parallel worlds at sunset + a poem | 2022









## — Interview

# Sophie Dezhao Jin

**Let's start with the concept behind *Absent Presence*. What inspired you to explore themes of memory, grief, and emotional residue in this project?**

Absent Presence began as a way for me to process trauma I couldn't articulate with words. It came from feelings of grief, emotional distance, and the lingering presence of someone I had lost but could still feel. At the time, I was reflecting on past connections and unresolved emotional turmoil. I became fascinated by



Sophie Dezhao | Absent Presence



Sophie Dezhao | Absent Presence

how certain memories leave behind a residue, like a scent or a shadow, that continues to live within the body long after someone is gone. It's like they leave a print on you, and no matter how far you try to run, you carry it forward. This project became a visual language for those internal and emotional "ghosts."

**Your photographs create a haunting atmosphere—some figures appear as if they're dissolving into the landscape. Can you talk about the techniques you used to achieve this effect?**

I work almost exclusively with in-camera double exposure on film, which involves layering two images directly onto a single frame without relying on post-production. It's a very intuitive but also intentional process—once the image is taken, there's no undoing it. I'm constantly adjusting exposure, light, and movement to create a sense of fading, merging, or dissolving, allowing the figure to blur into the environment. Sometimes, it takes more than ten attempts to achieve the ideal image. Those fading figures resemble the emotional state I'm trying to capture, when the self feels fragmented, fading, or absorbed by memory.

**The natural settings in your work play a significant role. How do forests and rocky coastlines relate to the emotional landscapes you're exploring?**

I naturally gravitate toward places that feel emotionally charged. Whenever I feel overwhelmed or





need space, I retreat into forests or along coastlines, places where I can be embraced by nature. These environments feel incredibly safe to me, even though they might seem wild or intimidating to others. For me, they comfort the emotional terrains I'm overcoming. There's something about being alone in nature that allows the body to be vulnerable, to surrender. These landscapes reflect the emotional atmosphere of the work.

**There's a strong feeling of solitude in your images. Are these self-portraits? And if so, how does embodying the subject help you process personal loss?**

Yes, many of the images are self-portraits. Working alone allows me to access something raw and unfiltered. Being both behind and in front of the camera creates an internal dialogue, an intimate, emotional loop. It's not always about capturing myself specifically, but rather using the body as a vessel for emotional translation. Through this process, I'm able to externalize what I feel in a way that's both grounding and empowering.

**What does the term "absent presence" mean to you personally and artistically?**

"Absent presence" began as a phrase I came up with to describe the feeling of something that's gone, but still lingers. It's the emotional weight of someone or something no longer physically present, yet still deeply felt. Personally, it refers to people I've lost, moments

that have passed, or versions of myself that no longer exist. Artistically, it's about capturing that fine feeling of what's visible and what's sensed but unseen. That space in between is what I'm always drawn to.

**You mention the idea of memory lingering in the body. How does this notion influence your artistic process and visual decisions?**

I believe our bodies carry memory in ways we don't always consciously understand, through posture, breath, or instinctive movements. When I photograph, I pay close attention to how the body reacts to space, how it folds or opens, how it holds tension or release. A turned back, a hug around myself, these subtle gestures can express things words never could. They shape how I compose and frame each shot. For me, memory becomes something physical and visible, not just emotional, but embodied.

**Can you share more about your transition from China to the United States? How has this shift influenced your creative expression?**

My transition from China to the United States feels almost like a blurred memory now. I moved when I was 13 for school, and everything shifted so quickly. That in-between space—the clash of cultures, languages, and emotional landscapes—has quietly shaped the way I see and create. My first stop in the U.S. was Georgia, where I attended a boarding school. Later, I moved to Boston for college, and eventually to Los Angeles, where I continue to grow both personally and artistically.





**Gustav Bengtsson** is a Swedish-Berlin-based film director, social anthropologist, and video artist who works at the intersection of research and art. Gustav has taught and conducted workshops at several universities and institutions, such as the Film School of Lillehammer, the University of East London, GlogauAIR Berlin, and Gothenburg University. He has worked as a director alongside Amanda Plummer, Ian Hart, and Jean-Marc Barr, and has had screenings at Canadian Screen Award qualifying, BAFTA qualifying, and Academy Award qualifying film festivals around the world.

### *Project Statement*

My work explores ideas about identity. This photo is part of a larger art book called 6dentity, an essay about sexuality and identity.





Gustav Bengtsson | Grillz



# — Interview

## Nike Kama

**You describe yourself as a naive artist. What does this term mean to you personally?**

I am not an academic artist. I don't have a formal art education. I rely solely on my inner feelings and intuition. I paint with my emotions, love, and soul. Words play a very important role for me. Often, it is the meaning behind words that inspires me.

**Your works are full of color and symbolism. Do specific colors or shapes have particular meanings in your paintings?**

Black plays a very important role in my work. I start with a



pencil sketch and then trace all the lines in black. Every line drawn on the canvas matters—if it's there, it was meant to be. I believe that nothing in life happens by accident; everything has meaning.

Black symbolizes the contrast between good and evil and serves as a kind of boundary that keeps colors from blending into chaos. It emphasizes their brightness, individuality, uniqueness, and hue—each color, emotion, and feeling is unique and sparkles like a diamond. The area covered by colorful paint always overcomes the black. This means that all changes in our life and soul are for the better.

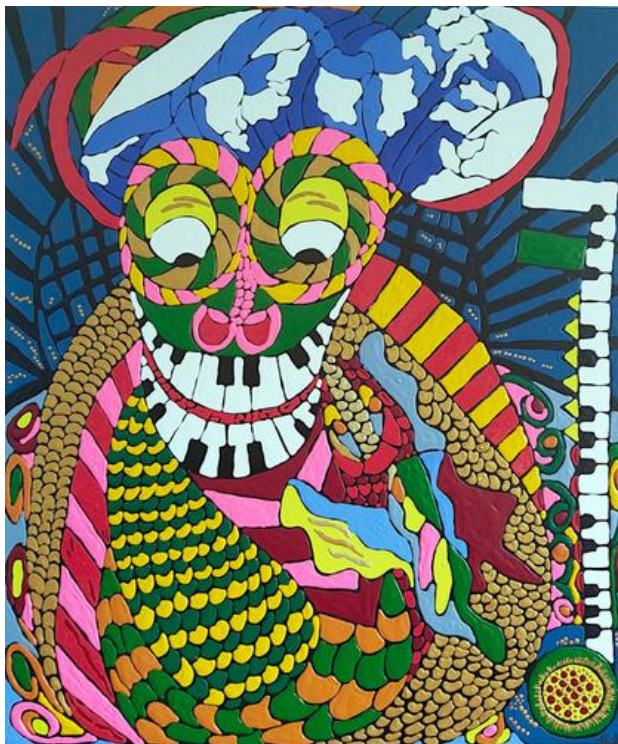
My interpretation of color is very simple. Green represents life. Red is fire. Yellow is always the sun and light. Blue is the sea and the sky.

I believe life shouldn't be complicated by unnecessary thoughts, doubts, or a search for the supernatural. Everything we need for happiness exists here and now.

**You mentioned that you only paint in a good mood and with pure thoughts. How do you prepare yourself before starting a new piece?**

Some images come to me in dreams—I see them as paintings. Others appear when I talk about love and emotions. These images emerge in my mind and are enriched by the meaning of words. I write them down immediately so they can fully take shape and reveal their beauty. They wait for their time.

This doesn't mean that a single image becomes a whole painting—no. It may only be a fragment of one.



Nike Kama | Immortality | 2025





What I love most is when a sudden flash of inspiration and a surge of emotion hit me, and I feel the urgent need to rush home and start creating. The work flows quickly—time and space disappear, everything feels like a fog, and there's no sense of reality.

Since the age of 12, I have practiced keeping my thoughts pure and not letting dirt into my soul. One cannot be "half-clean" or "a little pregnant." I believe all bad thoughts come either from the devil or from outside forces carried by the wind. I don't let them enter me. I believe we should bring beauty and love into the world—something that helps people live, protects them from evil, and warms their hearts. I can create at any time, but I need solitude and silence.

**Many of your paintings feature animals and fantasy creatures. What role do they play in your artistic universe?**

Each of us carries within a personal animal spirit that protects us or grants us its unique abilities—like in the Chinese zodiac or the beliefs of Indigenous peoples, where names might be Hawk Eye or Keen Ear. When I look at people, I can often see or feel the animal spirit that guards them. As for the fantastical creatures, my hand seems to draw them on its own—or I catch a glimpse of their silhouette on the canvas and simply trace it, later giving it form and depth. I love animals deeply. As a young child, I dreamed of becoming a veterinarian.

**Esotericism and symbolism are central to your practice. Can you share a symbol from your work that holds special personal power for you?**

As a child, I believed that if you chose an object and declared it your amulet or talisman, then placed it under the moonlight, sunlight, or an energy flow, it would charge with power and protect you. Unfortunately, these rituals don't really work.

I adore runes, and I believe in the power of words and the power of love. I'm convinced that love can be felt everywhere. All my paintings are created with immense love—they are charged with it.

Energy can only be infused during the act of creation. Nothing comes from nothing. My paintings are unique; I never copy them, because you can't recreate that specific time, feeling, emotion, or moment in which the original was made.

For me, the energy within a painting is incredibly important. I have a constant stream of images and ideas. My personal strength lies in love and soul. They are eternal.

**What do you hope viewers feel when they see your artworks?**

I want the viewer to feel happy, to return to their joyful, carefree childhood filled with love. I want people to smile and laugh wholeheartedly.

**You've exhibited your work in cities like Berlin, Paris, New York, and Tokyo. How has international exposure influenced your art?**

My first two paintings are now in museums, and negotiations are underway with two more. The paintings have found new homes. I'm receiving more invitations to participate in exhibitions.

My works are being published in catalogs for art collectors. I've started collaborating with a renowned organization that operates across three continents and manages art galleries as well as top concert venues for musicians worldwide.

My paintings were exhibited for three months in a museum in China. There are now more opportunities to contribute to charitable causes.

I'm glad that art knows no boundaries and is reaching more and more people.

Artistic prints of my paintings are in high demand.





# Unleashing the Spectacle: Ruonan Shen's Poetics of Drag and Domesticity

by Anna Gvozdeva

In *Unleashing Feminine Charm*, Ruonan Shen constructs a visual cosmos where gender is not fixed, but performed—an act of resistance and revelation. A London-based visual artist and photographer currently studying Interior Design at the University of the Arts London, Shen brings a spatial sensibility to her work that elevates her portraits beyond conventional drag documentation. Instead, they unfold as intricate visual performances that interrogate the roles we occupy—willingly or otherwise.



Ruonan Shen | Housewife

The series, set in domestic interiors, boudoirs, bedrooms, and cluttered dressing rooms, stages a contrast between theatrical femininity and mundane environments. In *Housewife*, for example, a drag performer lounges across a kitchen countertop in a sequined purple dress, exuding Old Hollywood glamour amid the fluorescent banalities of eggs, condiments, and plastic grocery bags. The tension is immediate and deliberate. By inserting high drag aesthetics into spaces associated with labor and confinement, Shen critiques heteronormative expectations while celebrating subversive beauty.

*On Stage* is equally commanding: a performer draped in electric pink organza explodes across a living room filled with personal memorabilia—lamps, jewelry, cultural relics. The subject commands attention like a deity in flight. The ruffled lotus-shaped bodice references traditional Chinese floral symbolism, while the gesture and scale harken back to the dramatic grandeur of Peking opera. In Shen's lens, femininity is not fragile—it's spectacular, defiant, and meticulously curated.



Ruonan Shen  
On Stage





Ruonan Shen | Under the Spotlight

Throughout the project, Shen resists easy binaries. *Under the Spotlight* situates a drag queen atop a bed, mouth open, eyes wild, limbs languid. The backdrop is chaotic—costumes strewn, wigs displaced, makeup scattered. Yet within this entropy, the subject radiates control, intention, and agency. This calculated mess underscores the labor behind performance and destabilizes the illusion of effortless beauty.



In perhaps the most audacious image, *Drama Queen*, a figure in a blood-red ruffled gown with a towering yellow wig snarls at the camera, posed amid a rack of pastel gowns. Here, Shen revels in parody and menace—a campy scream that challenges drag's commodification and reclaims its punk roots. The subject becomes monstrous and magnificent, collapsing the boundary between performer and character.

Ruonan Shen  
Drama Queen

Shen's approach draws from minimal aesthetics but indulges in maximalist emotion. The artist's staging is meticulous, her lighting artificial and stylized, evoking a sense of surreal tension. These images do not aim for realism; they reconstruct reality on the subjects' terms. "Photography," Shen writes, "is not documentation, but reconstruction." Each frame becomes a quiet rebellion—against societal expectation, against invisibility.

At the conceptual heart of the project is the quote attributed to Wu Zetian: "If you put a man in a woman's position, he will become a woman." Shen does not interpret this as literal transformation through costume, but rather as a provocation: what would happen if power, vulnerability, and care were truly universal? In portraying drag not as illusion but as incarnation, Shen illuminates femininity as an expansive, political, and deeply human space.

In a cultural context where Chinese drag remains both emerging and precarious, Shen's work is not merely celebratory—it's necessary. By centering the subjectivity of her performers and rendering them with dignity, sensuality, and theatrical wit, Ruonan Shen contributes to an urgent visual archive of queerness in transformation.



# Bernardica T Sculac Stern

**Your paintings are deeply inspired by music. How do you choose which compositions to translate into visual art?**

It starts with my love for a particular musical work. One of my favorites is *In the Steppes of Central Asia*, an orchestral work by the Russian composer Alexander Borodin. I even have favorite performances from listening to different orchestral interpretations. As such, it may not be a surprise that I had several visual iterations of this music. The first was a 5-part series of prints from copper-plate etchings done when I was a printmaking student at the Art Students League of New York (ASLNY); unfortunately, when the COVID pandemic closed the studios, I was forced to pivot to other techniques and materials. While re-conceiving the music as a painting, I created at least a dozen versions, although each had red and blue to depict the main musical themes, and earth-tones for the secondary theme. While this was the third painting (*Borodin's Steppes*) in my "Music as Paintings" series, it was actually the first musical work that I wanted to depict as visual art.

I now keep a running list of my most-loved music, along with notes about the visuals I want to depict, such as colors, shapes, mood, inspirational artistic styles, and so on.



**Can you describe your process when translating a piece of music into a painting? Where do you begin?**

Each painting in this series has a different inspiration. The first one completed is based on the choral work *If Ye Love Me* by English composer Thomas Tallis. I've performed it several times, and when rehearsing a piece over and over, it's not unusual for me to dream about it. However, with *If Ye Love Me*, I had a series of dreams that featured greens, sometimes with accents of yellow, gold, and orange. I took this as a sign that my subconscious wanted me to express this music visually and when I started to plan out the painting (which I titled, *Tallis' Comfort*), I decided to depict the voices and chords with oranges and use the green as a contrasting accent.

Regarding my painting *Pärt's Cantus*, the seeds of inspiration began 19 years ago when I was utterly transfixed while watching the breathtaking ballet *Kiss*, choreographed by Susan Marshall. The music for *Kiss* is a work by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt titled *Cantus in Memoriam of Benjamin Britten*. The whole production was so glorious that it haunts me to this day; I was compelled to purchase the music. When I started to plan the painting, I wanted to highlight not only components of the bittersweet beauty of the music, such as the chord progressions and bells in the orchestral score, but also my visualization of its effect on me.

The spark for the *Lauridsen's Mysterium* painting came from *O Magnum Mysterium*, a wonderful choral piece by the American composer Morten Lauridsen. I felt the meditative beauty of the music during each rehearsal of "O Magnum" with my chorus. I knew I wanted to evoke calm in the viewer. As such, I thought of curves and blending of blues and greens, and let muscle memory take over and trusted things would work out. It did; I was happy with the results.

**What role does emotion play in your creative process?**

Emotion is both my inspiration and product. I believe that artists are acutely aware of their emotions. Vincent Van Gogh





once wrote to his brother Theo of his passionate hope that people would someday look at his paintings and see -- really, truly see -- that "this man felt deeply."

All forms of art have tremendous power to make us feel big, huge emotions. Sometimes we don't even know why we're reacting in a particular way; for example, seemingly spontaneous crying. The culmination of experiences, education, and relationships have shaped each of us into unique individuals with unique points of view, including how we feel about things. Through my paintings, I'm depicting how a piece of music makes ME feel. Thoughts, planning, practice – these are the tools I'm using to realize my vision, but the vision itself is describing my emotions. I believe that my paintings are my unique contribution to art.

**You mention influences like Georgia O'Keefe, Alma Thomas, and Gustav Klimt. How do these inspirations manifest in your work?**

My artistic development is a mix of formal education as well as regular viewing of other artists' work. I walk through a gallery or museum to enjoy the beauty of the art, to be challenged by ideas being depicted, to be challenged to replicate a style or theme, and to learn about the techniques used in creating each piece.

I've drawn inspiration from Klimt's use of metallics such as his *Woman in Gold*, from Thomas' contrasting color combinations as seen in her abstract *Red Roses Sonata*, from O'Keefe's abstract studies, and many others. Inspirations include styles, color combinations, use of materials, subject matter, and innovations in craft.

I also find inspiration in thought and process from the work of Hilma af Klint: she let her spirituality guide her work and had the utmost confidence in it. She knew she was ahead of her time, and therefore took steps to ensure her work would be displayed at a time in the future when it would be appreciated differently.

**Have you ever collaborated with musicians while creating your music-inspired works?**

Not directly as of yet. As a singer I collaborate with musicians regularly in rehearsing for performances. Group rehearsals include active participation as well as "down-time" of quiet waiting while another part/instrument is focusing on a portion that doesn't involve my particular part. In these times,

my mind wanders. Inspiration can come in many ways and in different times, including these moments of focusing elsewhere. I feel that artists of all types use a combination of disciplined focus and detachment as a way of working through an artistic concept. I love that Albert Einstein would often turn to his violin as a way to calm his mind while working on a math problem. It's a great reminder that dedicated hard work needs to be balanced with mind-rest, so that inspiration has space to bloom.

**What do you hope the viewer feels or experiences when seeing your music paintings?**

I feel deeply when I listen to music, and my paintings are an expression of those feelings. I hope others feel deeply too: either because of the painting itself, or by listening to the music that inspired it. I spent a long time not sharing my art. It's not easy to put your heart out into the world where some may want to criticize and denigrate your creation. But when I realized others may find joy, then sharing became much easier. I know there will be some who don't like my paintings, but I still consider it progress that I got them to feel something when looking at them. Maybe their feelings will awaken their own creative desires; maybe they will feel compelled to share their own art.

**Do you approach painting differently when you're working from visual inspiration (like landscapes or flowers) compared to musical inspiration?**

Yes, it's a very different process for me.

Most of my work ranges in style from representational to impressionistic, and often with some sort of a visual starting point to which I'll add my own flair to realize. Working in expressionism has been challenging, but in the best of ways. My first printmaking class was at Parsons School of Design. In this class I created a linear abstract series, as well as a somewhat surreal series called *Love Everlasting*. My turning point into conceptual work was a painting celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC. The Met held an art challenge as part of this anniversary, though I did not submit in time. However, I'm so happy I created the painting because of what I learned from it. The process of thinking through and planning what I wanted to create, including several different versions, took months. It has become a sort of process-blueprint I now use to create my music-paintings.





**Yalecxa Estrada**, originally from Miami, Florida, is an emerging Latina artist who received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Tampa. She was recently accepted to the University of Florida and is planning to continue her studies for her master's degree. This young woman has more ambitious goals than the basics. She devoted herself to furthering her knowledge of sculpture and printmaking, ultimately pursuing a professor career. Acknowledging her dedication to her studies, she took on the role of a professor's assistant (TA) at the University of Tampa, working under Kendra Frorup, a former professor who has been a long-time mentor and played a significant role in shaping her into the artist she has become.

### *Project Statement*

I am a Latina interdisciplinary artist. I express my works by exploring various media in sculpture and printmaking, separately or combined. A core aspect of my art is reflected in my emotions and memories during my mixed life as an American and a Hispanic. From a young age, I believed that taking action was a powerful way to define who I am, but art defined me more. My process usually begins by setting objectives that clarify the purpose of the artwork. It helps both the audience and me to understand it better. Then, I decide whether specific materials must be used or if a combination of materials is appropriate. After planning, I create sketches to visualize how the materials will be shaped and formed, even though sometimes the original concept might be altered to create a better vision. My passionate interests in color theory, nostalgia, and insecurities drive the transformation of my works today. I encourage viewers to explore the nuances of the lenses of body language, experimental elements, and nature. My primary materials include sawdust, resin, metal, and inks, all perceived as part of two—or three-dimensional surfaces with challenging textures, structures, and colors. Ultimately, each artwork will always take new risks but will work in unworkable ways if you keep pushing them further.

Yalecxa Estrada | Imprefection | 2025







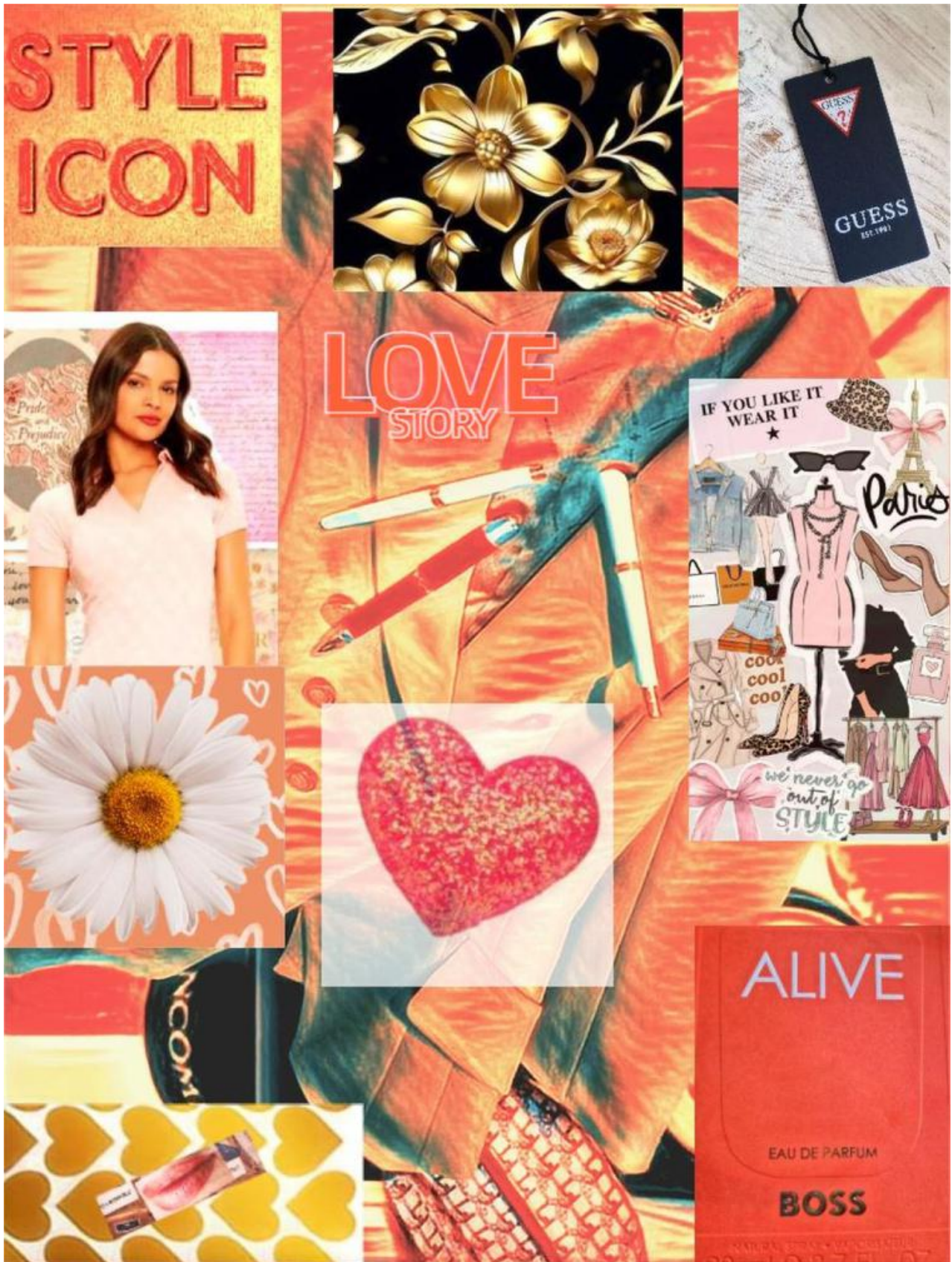


## Luce Creativa

I am an artist creating under the name Luce Creativa. My digital collages are a fusion of intuition, feminine energy, emotion, and fashion aesthetics. I create images that speak the language of the soul – they are filled with symbols, textures, and colors. Each collage tells a personal story: about strength, love, beauty, and freedom. I am inspired by words, art, design, and nature. Through my work, I aim to capture the fleeting – to extract poetry from everyday life and turn it into an image.







Kasia Heinze | Style Icon | 2025



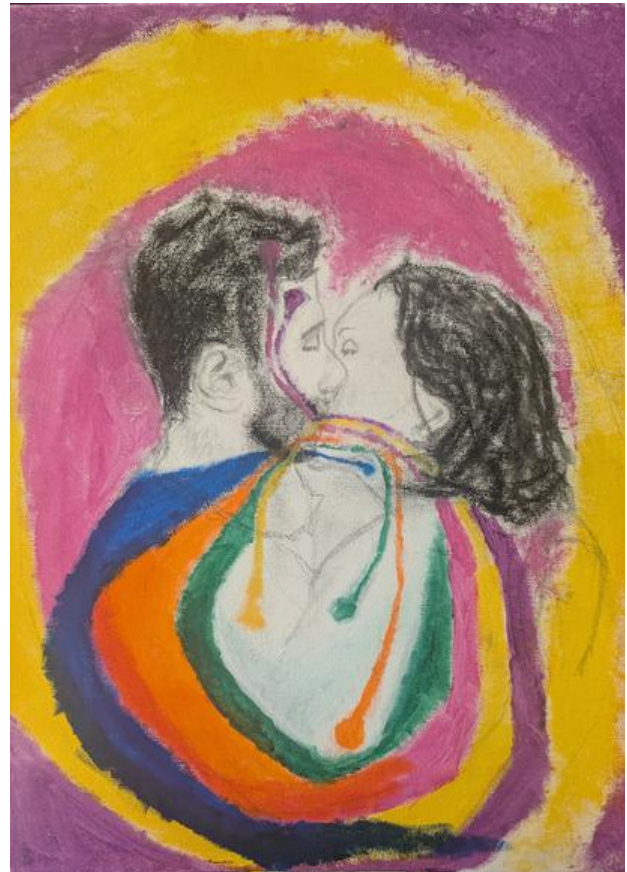
## — Interview

# Alexander Nathan

**Your background in engineering and interest in psychology are quite unique for a visual artist. How do these disciplines inform your creative process?**



Alexander Nathan | Part 5-Internal Projection Intuition Perception | 2025



Alexander Nathan | Part 7-Harmony of Inside Security and Outside Safety | 2025

My unconventional background serves as a way to tune-in to my creative process... informing me of my current "state..."

It allows me to hear my needs (to get in a creative space) and also be realistic of my current artistic capabilities...

I can only plan a piece, sketch the foundation, or lay out a piece when I am more in my "mind" state... but, it lacks flow and feeling...

I can only paint/feel a piece in my "body" state.. it lacks doubt, hesitation, and restraint

If I can't focus on planning a piece and I am also unable to paint/feel... It serves as a reminder to repair self connection.

When distractions are removed from my mind, I can focus on the senses in the body (sensory).

When I can focus on my senses, it is clear that it is safe to feel deeply again.

I am very hypersensitive (internally and externally); so, maintaining safety/security (and emotional well-being) are critical to being able to tune in to my creative/conceptual side.

If I did not have the technical/detail oriented/planner side, I do not think I would be able to get my mind to a secure space to allow my body to feel safe to create.

I also think the engineering side/psychology side





is a survival response to be able to be functional in the fast paced world.

I just leaned into it so hard that I made a day job out of it...

My current position requires me to create custom designs as standard products.

This has my conceptual/detail oriented mind constantly tripping over itself to complete any tasks...

I am currently a Consistency and Value Engineer by day (continuous improvement), I do mechanical design, electrical design, and controls (and software) engineering in the automation field... along with lots of hands on experience.. (not surprising that I wear many hats...)

...and the rest of the time I try to be an artist (has always been a dream; but, never received belief/support).

**Can you describe the concept of “Mind Body Felt Sense Art” in your own words? What role do perception and intuition play in experiencing your work?**

For describing the concept of mind/body felt sense art:

My interpretation is the Mind Feelings are visual while the Body Emotions are physical/sensory. Internally, Mind Feelings cause Body physical/sensory feelings (intuition creates a scene to perceive in).

An external scene/environment typically drives (Body) physical/sensory feelings

Externally the Mind Feelings can also be projected onto a scene/environment (when external/internal safety/security are maintained)

I have a few new collections in progress that serve to show the difference between Mind Feelings vs. Body Emotions:

Example Mind Feeling: Anxiety..interpreting a threat from a scene (applying your mind=intuition).. a scene example would be; floating in outer space with no hope/rescue.... there is no immediate threat because you are safe in the moment in your suit; however, when you interpret the threat of “no rescue/running out of air”, you create a mind feeling of Anxiety causing a body feeling of Panic (Fight/Flight) AFTER the threat is interpreted.

Example Body Feeling:

Fear...unpredictability/shock... the piece (scene) is covered/not visible until the viewer can be





immersed (by standing in the vantage point for perceiving the scene...no intuition/mind allowed). Example scene would be underwater (threat 1) with aggressive sharks (threat 2) blocking your escape route.

The immediate threat does not have to be interpreted and is a pure "fight/flight" scenario. These 2 pieces would show the differences between mind feeling and body emotion (Anxiety vs. Fear).

To answer the second part, what role does perception and intuition play...

Perception is the body's way of feeling based on your 5 senses... and the environment. It gives emotional/physical reactions.

Intuition is the mind's way of interpreting a feeling based on past experiences/or what you are receiving in your five senses/or your environment. It changes/influences the scene/environment to drive a "mind feeling" and a "body emotion"... The sensitivity level (example Fear vs. Anxiety), related to frequency of occurrences, influences how much you experience.

See emotional sensitivity page on [artbyalexandernathan.com](http://artbyalexandernathan.com)

**Several of your works seem to visualize internal emotional states. Do you consider them to be self-portraits in a psychological sense?**

The art is just one avenue, and just a means for sharing something that you cannot take a picture of (because it is an internal scene).

Or a means of a sharing my interpretation.

The internal scenes in the "healing connection collection" are a self portrait of what I experience during self-connection repair.

**In your "Healing Connection" series, what stages of emotional recovery or connection are you exploring? How do these evolve across the pieces?**

The pieces are a chronicle of healing self connection and then connections with others. I have to get into a safe space and a calm environment.

I typically use various sound frequencies playing loudly to help initiate the healing/frisson.

The first 6 pieces are my interpretation of healing self-connection, (or re-aligning mind/body).

Disassociated->Anxiety->Body Healing->Decision Point (Heal body or Mind Project)->Internal Projection->External Projection

The other 2 pieces are my interpretation of healing connection with others.

Internal/External Safety-> Internal/External Security

Through each of the 2 progressions the color intensity/mediums are stronger/more vibrant.

**What are some of the techniques or mediums you find most effective for representing the difference between emotions and feelings?**

I think every 2 pieces I have been switching mediums/combinations... It truly depends on the piece.

Right now for the body emotion collection... I am even experimenting with Ink, chalk, etc.

As far as technique wise, it depends on the piece again, it changes depending on what I am portraying.

For the external mind projection on a scene (the yoga scene)... I researched impressionism techniques on perception etc, and how they were able to depict feeling in a scene and have the viewer experience what they were perceiving. For that piece I used impressionism techniques in the base (one of the only paintings that is oil paint), and of course used all proper





materials/accessories/brushes/mixed my own colors... solely to create the base... the body feeling from the scene.

Then on top of that I applied oil pastels (not a typical medium) to create a type of “3D impressionism” (Intuition on top of perception), The mind feeling I experience when I interpret that scene.

You can also see how that scene makes me feel in my body if you ignore the oil pastels on top.

The oil paint brushstrokes follow impressionism techniques to help guide/call attention to certain aspects of the scene. True to the original style, it moves you visually around the piece... in 2D.

The oil pastels over are meant to create a 3D perspective of mind feeling and meant to “draw you in to the scene...” (as this is what I experienced)

**How do you approach the challenge of illustrating abstract internal states—like “intuition” or “safety”—without relying on recognizable imagery?**

I do not share this side of me in my personal life typically, this has been a new experience of sharing this side of me.

It’s very uncomfortable because I have been experiencing/doing this since I was little...and have not been in environments with like-minded people.

There is some comfort now...because we have the internet... and I am recently seeing alignment in terms of colors/experiences/visuals etc.

As an engineer... I think all of this is ridiculous...

But then, you can’t argue when interpretations are starting to become heavily aligned to what I experience..it becomes unexplainable.

But there is nothing wrong with believing something if it makes you feel good... to each their own... and this is my “weird thing”...

Plus, now we have nice words/surface level titles: Body Felt Sense, Projection, Frission... gives me more confidence to put this out there in hopes of helping others heal connection.

It has definitely been a slow process of expression.



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