

VISUAL ART JOURNAL



VISUALARTJOURNAL.COM

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— Intro

Hello dear reader,
You are holding the 23rd issue of our magazine, featuring artists from all corners of the globe.

This time, we invite you to reflect on whether there is still room for authenticity in a world deeply immersed in global and mass culture.

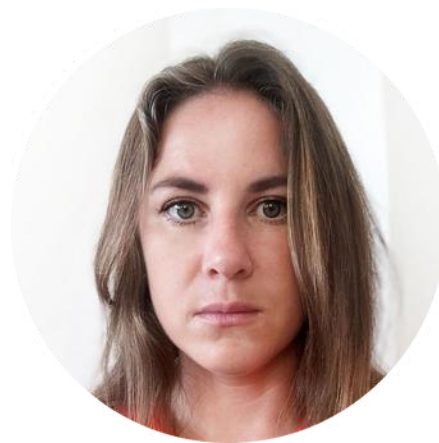
Most of us grow up within families, inheriting a cultural code. Some of us are even privileged to communicate with older generations and absorb their fading, undiluted experience of life before mass communication connected every part of the world. Today, when something happens on one end of the Earth, the other end hears about it almost instantly. Just fifty years ago, only major events managed to cross those distances.

Access to art has changed as well: through social media, we can discover the work of an artist from a small town—an artist who now has the power to influence far more people than ever before. It's becoming increasingly difficult to avoid the pull of global trends and preserve a unique creative path. This challenge lies not only in the subtle imprint left by everything we see but also in the pressure to adjust to the expectations of a worldwide audience.

Of course, public demand has always influenced creators. History is full of brilliant artists whose contemporaries failed to appreciate them. The difference now is that today's audience is the entire world—right here, right now, all at once.

That's why I believe it's more important than ever to support those who stay true to their vision, resisting all outside influence.

Ahead of you lie over 100 pages filled with art. Enjoy the read!



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

On the Front Cover:
Esposito Massimiliano
The Lightness Watched
You
2023

On the Back Cover:
Ioana-Dana Georgescu
Velocita
2025

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

— Interview

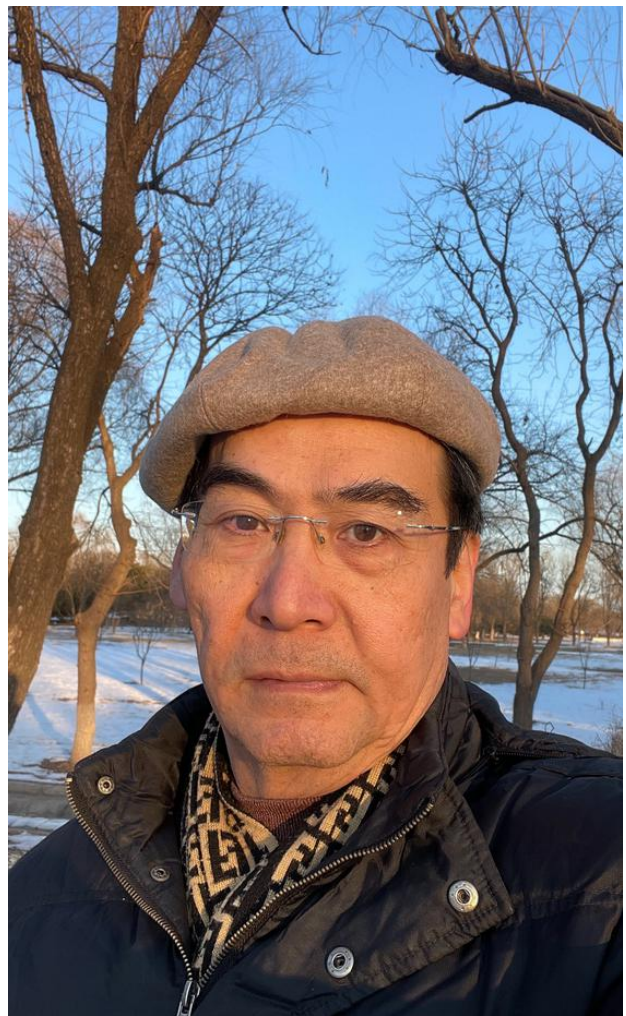
Ying Zhai

Your works often integrate traditional Chinese art with modern interpretations. Could you describe the process of blending these two elements in your paintings?

My motherland, China, boasts a 5,000-year historical civilization and splendid traditional culture. From childhood, I have cherished reading classical Chinese poetry and literary masterpieces, while also developing a deep appreciation for Peking Opera and Chinese calligraphy and painting. Decades of personal growth have deepened my passion for and understanding of traditional Chinese culture. As a contemporary artist living in the modern era, I naturally reinterpret these traditions through current perspectives and interpretations, particularly infused with strong personal subjectivity and preferences. Many of my artistic creations draw inspiration from traditional Chinese stories - this choice stems not only from my familiarity with these narratives, but more fundamentally from emotional resonance. These subjects inherently stimulate my creative sensitivity and interest, and over time have naturally evolved into an indispensable part of my artistic identity.

How does your background in fashion design and education influence your art practice, especially in terms of color and composition?

Though I teach at a fashion institute, my expertise does not lie in fashion design. My academic



foundation is rooted in painting, with professional practice focused on oil painting and illustration, and my teaching centers on fine arts. Nevertheless, decades immersed in the creative atmosphere of a fashion institution have subtly shaped my perspective. Elements such as garment color coordination and trend forecasting have become intellectual nourishment, enriching my artistic practice in meaningful ways. For instance, I consciously blend contemporary fashion aesthetics with traditional motifs in my creative work, crafting a distinctive visual hybridity that amplifies the richness and tension within my compositions. This intentional fusion of temporalities—modern and historical—has evolved into a defining characteristic of my art, setting it apart from others.

You have been involved in a variety of academic and professional associations. How do you balance your role as an educator with your own artistic practice?

My numerous academic honors stem from the publication of multiple scholarly monographs and personal art catalogues, active participation in significant artistic events, and the organization of several solo exhibitions that have garnered

notable public recognition. Serving dual roles as both an art creator and educator, I cherish these complementary vocations that grant me amphibious versatility within broader creative ecosystems. Artistic practice and pedagogy exist in mutually reinforcing synergy – while solitary creation allows me to metabolize life experiences through introspective combustion, teaching rejuvenates me through dynamic exchanges with youth, mentoring emerging talents in knowledge transmission and conceptual exploration. This perpetual oscillation between contemplative isolation and pedagogical vitality injects tensile energy into my artistic evolution, sustaining an organic cycle where pedagogical insights fuel creative breakthroughs and vice versa, ultimately forming an autopoietic system that perpetually revitalizes my artistic vitality.

How does Chinese culture and history inspire your art? Do you incorporate specific cultural references, and if so, how do you decide which elements to include in your work?

China's profound cultural legacy and accumulated wisdom have served as perennial wellsprings of artistic inspiration for me. Foundational aesthetic and philosophical principles such as "learning from nature while internalizing its essence," "capturing vital rhythmic resonance," "structural brushwork discipline," "harmonizing form and spirit," and "cosmic unity of heaven and humanity" have profoundly



Ying Zhai | Impression of Beijing opera



Ying Zhai | Zhongkui

guided my artistic practice. Traditional mythology, historical narratives, and cultural memories further constitute an inexhaustible creative repository. My particular fascination lies in interpreting ethnic minority customs and old Beijing's folk traditions - the vibrant street life and cultural particularities that pulse with authentic local character. My creative nourishment flows equally from Peking Opera's stylized visual language and Dunhuang murals' chromatic splendor. Their decorative compositions, flattened spatial treatments, and symbolic color palettes have organically permeated my creative process. Coupled with my habitual documentation of quotidian observations and emotional imprints, these diverse influences gradually synthesized into my distinctive artistic lexicon - a visual dialect that transmutes cultural inheritance through contemporary sensibilities, achieving what I perceive as an authentic personal aesthetic synthesis.

As a professor of painting, what advice do you give your students about developing their own unique style in painting?

As a painting professor, I consistently counsel students to remain steadfastly faithful to their authentic emotional truth, letting genuine perceptions guide their journey toward artistic transcendence. I advocate resisting trends and eschewing imitation, urging them to emulate the principled paths of China's Bada Shanren or the West's Van Gogh – artists who guarded their artistic integrity like sacred soil. The imperative lies in preserving one's creative sanctuary through

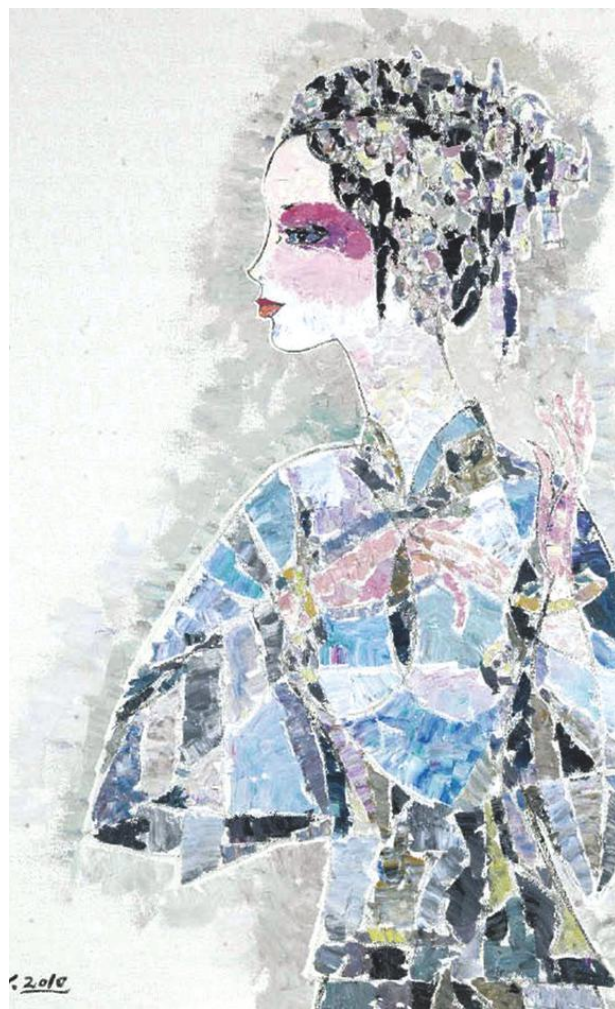
disciplined devotion, ultimately carving out their own distinctive artistic territories where personal vision and technical mastery converge into sovereign aesthetic realms. This philosophy of creative self-reliance forms the bedrock of my pedagogy, cultivating not mere technicians of the brush, but sovereign architects of visual meaning.

You've received recognition as an expert evaluator and a consultant for several art organizations. How do you see the future of Chinese art in a global context, and what role do you think contemporary Chinese artists will play?

Chinese art occupies a singular position in the global cultural landscape, standing as the quintessential representative of Eastern artistic civilization. This uniqueness arises from two cardinal factors. Firstly, China's vast and profound cultural-historical sedimentation spanning five millennia – particularly the philosophical continuum of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism – has nurtured an unbroken cultural lineage that breathes perpetual vitality into Chinese artistic expression. Secondly, contemporary China's rising global influence, paralleling its growing national strength, is elevating Chinese contemporary art to increasingly prominent international stature. Currently thriving within the historical context of China's Reform and Opening-Up era, contemporary Chinese artists are navigating a complex ecosystem shaped by clashing global art ideologies and diversified developmental trajectories. Embracing this challenge with characteristically open and inclusive mindset, Chinese contemporary art is progressively synthesizing global perspectives while retaining cultural authenticity. This dual engagement positions it not merely as a regional phenomenon, but as an indispensable pillar within the global art ecosystem – a dynamic force redefining cross-cultural artistic dialogue through works that simultaneously embody Chinese spiritual heritage and universal humanistic values.

Your work involves strong, vivid colors. Can you explain your choice of color palette and how it relates to the emotional impact you aim to evoke in your viewers?

The widespread recognition of chromatic mastery in my artistic works originates from rigorous foundational training in color studies during my formative years. Possessing innate chromatic sensitivity, I gravitated towards color theory courses as a student, developing dual fascinations with the mineral palette of Dunhuang murals and the luminous chromatics of Western Impressionism. My practice involved exhaustive plein-air color studies,



Ying Zhai | Lovesickness

systematically investigating both Western conditional color theory (analyzing environmental light effects) and traditional Chinese "categorical coloration" principles (symbolic hue classification). Decades of disciplined observation have honed acute color perception and cultivated refined aesthetic judgment, enabling sovereign command over chromatic expression.

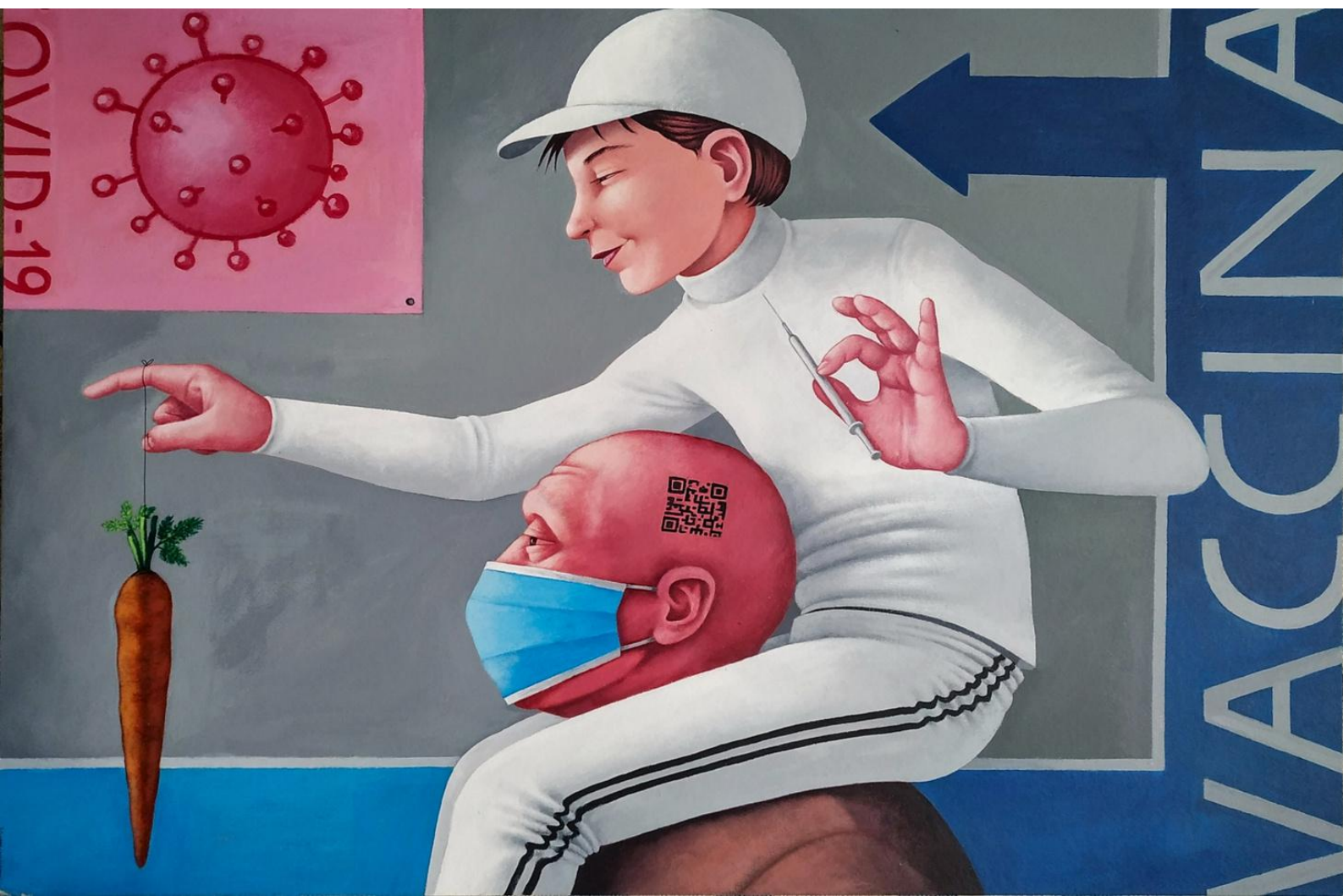
Complementing this chromatic expertise is my profound engagement with Chinese linear aesthetics. Through persistent daily sketch practice spanning years, I've mastered the rhythmic cadence and expressive nuance of ink linework. My approach synthesizes influences from traditional masters like Chen Hongshou's intricate brush idioms and Lin Fengmian's lyrical linearity, while assimilating Western innovations from Matisse's arabesque vitality to Picasso's structural line economy. This dual mastery of color orchestration and calligraphic line has evolved into my artistic signature - a synergistic visual language where chromatic resonance and linear dynamism interact as equal partners. These technical pillars, continuously refined through cross-cultural study and relentless practice, have been instrumental in shaping my mature artistic vision, allowing me to navigate diverse creative challenges with technical assurance and conceptual depth.



Ying Zhai | Old Door

Maximilian (Massimiliano Esposito) was born in Milan, Italy, on December 17, 1969. His early artworks represent dreamscapes populated with fantastic and mythological characters inspired by traditional European fables. In 1992, he discovered mural art and completed a series of commissions for private apartments and institutions in Milan which allowed him to express his talent for theatrical effects and perspectives. This phase reached its peak in 1994 when, aged 24, he headed to New York City. In the Big Apple, he came across a restaurant called "Trompe-l'oeil". Intrigued by the name of the establishment, he introduced himself to the owner, who promptly hired him to repaint the walls and ceiling of the restaurant. Later that year, he returned to Italy to begin a new chapter of his professional life, becoming a devoted practitioner of yoga, which he taught in Milan until 2012. Most recently, he has felt the urge to return to his artistic roots. Having moved to Paris to broaden his horizons, he devoted himself first to photography, then rediscovered the pleasure of drawing, illustration and painting.

Esposito Massimiliano | The Pied Piper | 2022





Esposito Massimiliano | The Lightness Watched You | 2023



Esposito Massimiliano | The Hero To The Letter | 2022

Takudzwa Chandiwana GRBSA

Born in Harare, Zimbabwe (1998), Takudzwa has lived in the UK from early childhood. She graduated with a BA in Fine Art from Birmingham City University in 2020, and an MA in Fine Art from Birmingham City University in 2021.

Takudzwa utilises various processes and media such as video, stitch, print, paint, and charcoal in her practice, in order to facilitate a constant dynamic of dismantling and a reconstruction of material and form which ultimately creates a space where meaning can be discovered. From the deconstruction of the figure through mark making, creating forms disjoined and unsettled against the monochromatic, still yet fleeting presence of the print, to the construction of a physical object that has a material presence and density.

Interwoven within Takudzwa's works are a reflection of personal histories, experiences, and cultural identity in relation to her relationship with the country she has resided in for a large portion of her life. At the centre of this is an ongoing interrogation of black femininity and how it's seen, defined, and validated within white spaces. It's within these spaces that violence often manifests itself as a key element in displacing black people and what identity means for them. By extension, unlearning and understanding the extended effects of European gender paradigms that are imposed onto black women, invalidating and erasing our own identities through the inflated value of the ideal.

Subsequently, Takudzwa incorporates an ethics of care within her practice as she focuses on healing. She sees taking time for care as a way to embrace and celebrate self, and a collective identity in order to redefine one's presence within different spaces.



— Interview

Flavia Luck

Can you share more about the inspiration behind your 'Hello 莎莎 (shasha)' series and how it relates to your personal experiences?

Sure. Hello 莎莎 (shasha) represents myself in those moments of vulnerability in which I feel closer to my inner child. I am from Argentina, but I moved to China a while ago, and most of the works that belongs to this series approached topics like loneliness, nostalgia and feelings alike that have arisen from this experience, but from a child perspective. It is a form of healing exercise in which I reflect about how the present impacts in the way I perceived reality and how it changes once I analyze it from an innocent perspective.

How do you approach the concept of nostalgia in your work, and what emotional response do you hope to evoke from viewers?

Nostalgia is a topic that I have been researching lately. The globalized world and the fast pace of life brings



along different forms of nostalgia that coexist. For example, the elders long for the past that will not come back and the younger people for the future that will not be. Both of them are related with the feeling of losing, particularly hope. In my work, “nostalgia” is portrayed as the moment in which the character realizes that something is no longer there, leading to change. And because it is showcase from the eyes and the heart of a child, it is a moment of discovery. Contrary to adult nostalgia, it is by discovering that they gain something and, by feeling likewise, it aids the nostalgia.

My work intends to emotionally emphasize with the viewers. It would be lovely if they could feel relief or understood while looking at my work.

Your work has a distinct use of colors and shapes to convey vulnerability and healing. How do you select the color palettes for each piece?

I am a fan of the Japanese kawaii (可愛い) aesthetic and most of my inspiration comes from it. Kawaii portrays vulnerability is such a sweet way that sometimes we got lost in it, and that is a feature I like to bring to my work. I am really fond of working with simple and organic shapes and persuasive color palettes, because that is how I see feelings in my mind.



Having said that, color is a key part in composition, particularly while working with simple shapes. The color provides a soul to the character and mood to the story. Therefore, the color selection is an strategic decision that involves a negotiation between how I see the final piece and what is really becoming of it.

**What role does character design play in your art?
How do you create characters that resonate with your audience?**

For me, character design is a space in which I can play whoever I want to be. It is where I detached myself from the idea of me and play to be "other(s)". Just like a role play, my characters can represent situations, emotions or even people I randomly meet. How do I create characters that resonate with my audience? That is a difficult question. In this experimental path of role playing, it is difficult to know beforehand whether the audience will engage or not with the character and its message. So I am always hoping for the best. Though I do address topics that I believe are representative for my audience, most of the time I do not know what is going to happen. But, I like the mystery. It keeps me motivated.

You combine game theory and cultural hybridization in your research. How do these concepts influence your artistic practice?

Indeed. We live in a ludic world. If we have a look around, almost every aspect of our live has been intersected by play. And globalization, like I stated before, is leading to culture exchange. It is part of our



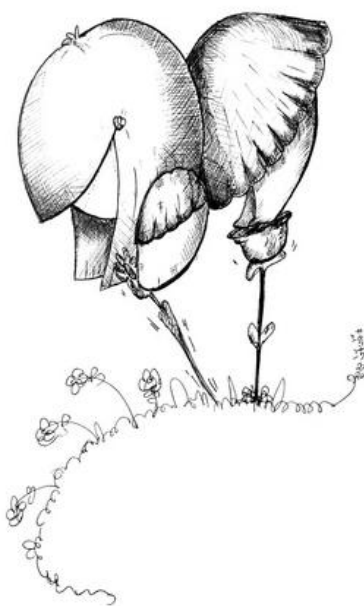
reality and of course, impacts not only the way we understand and relate to reality, but also art. The use of kawaii features in my work are a clear statement of how culture hybridizes: recalling an aesthetic style born in the latest '90s in Japan and reinterpreted through the eyes of an Argentinean. As regards game theory... well, we are always playing. And with character design, it is always a role play.

Can you describe the process of creating your mixed-technique pieces? How does this technique contribute to the overall impact of your work?

I mainly use traditional techniques, which are the ones that I learned while I was a child. I love painting with different brushes and experiment with acrylics and watercolors. For the last details I usually use color pencils and black markers. These techniques might look simple, but they let me incorporate a part of me on each trace I leave.

In your project, you mention the healing of the "child that lives inside of our hearts." How do you express this through the form and character of your art?

My characters embody innocence, sometimes resilience, and emotional complexity, balancing vulnerability with joy. Their expressions and postures often reflect a journey—whether curiosity, healing, or self-discovery—mirroring the emotional process of reconnecting with one's inner child. The narratives embedded in my work also encourage introspection and play, inviting the audience to engage with the piece not just visually but emotionally, fostering a sense of care for their own inner child.



Hanna Mia Faroghi

I am a senior at Lake Oswego High School and am very excited to graduate. In college, I am going to double major in art and biological science. While I am set on following the medicine pathway, I did not want to part with my creative side, so I decided to double major to further explore art and my own artistic voice. I gained my passion for art through visiting numerous museums throughout the world, as well as teaching myself how to draw, along with a couple of classes to keep me going. As I grew, I found a deeper appreciation for artists such as Renoir, Cézanne, and Gauguin. I observed different art styles as well to try to find which one was most suitable for me. I began to take art more seriously when I started my high school career. I took art classes every year, and by 11th grade, I had created a cohesive portfolio to submit to the College Board. During my time in high school, I experimented with not only different styles but also different techniques to better the compositions of my pieces.

Artist Statement

Last year, I found a passion for studying world architecture for my AP Art Sustained Investigation. I experimented with unfamiliar mediums, discovering combinations that truly reflected the feel of each structure. Initially, I used graphite, oil pastel, and ink, but using them never ignited the spark within me. I found my calling in mixing rigid charcoal and chalk lines over a flowy tempera background. Employing various mediums opened creative opportunities. I realized how each medium could add another texture: chalk imitates the feel of stucco, oil pastel adds vibrant colors, making the piece pop, and tempera creates a luscious sky that doesn't consume the piece but still enchants. Next, I discovered gouache and challenged myself-with a tiny paintbrush-to create moody paintings, playing with shading and space. Once I finished my Sustained Investigation, I transitioned from depicting architecture to painting food from different cultures such as dumplings, a Spanish breakfast plate, ramen, and cake. I let go of my perfectionist side and embraced flow and imperfection-which pushed me toward realism. In my senior year, I used oil paint for the first time. Previously, I stayed away from it because I believed it was only for the masters. After completing "Katsu Sando With Dirty Fries", I wanted to create a showstopper. I honed my skills for four months working on "Pass the Kimchi!", illustrating a glistening, dynamic dinner. Expanding my artistic abilities has been a constant. In doing so, I received a first-place award at the 2024 Clackamas Education Service District Regional Art Show and an honorable mention at the Lake Oswego Festival of the Arts Youth Exhibit. These achievements reflect my passion for art, and I will keep expanding my portfolio as well as improving my skills.



Hanna Faroghi | Katsu Sando With Dirty Fries | 2024



— Interview

Anna Bondar

Your artistic journey began with realism and has since evolved into a more expressive and abstract form. How has your approach to art changed since you first started, and what inspired this shift?

I always loved to paint with oil because of possibilities of this material, but I had to start with something classy to know basics, that gave me some technical freedom. While I practice with my arms, I was learning life, nature, psychology and philosophy and with time I saw that for new meanings I need new aesthetics that could talk deeply to the viewer.



Anna Bondar | Motherhood | 2025



You mention that your work reflects resilience and transformation. Can you share how your personal experiences, especially the displacement from Kyiv, have influenced your recent pieces?

My life was shared for 2 parts: before war/after beginning of war. On the moment when Russian missiles attacked my city Kiev I was pregnant. Hospitals where I had my care was also attacked.. so we had to move abroad and life changed forever. The only thing I could do is talk by my art. All the emotions with this sad and good expiriance mixed together to make something important to say. Now we r living in Spain. Energy of this country is full of kindness.

Nature seems to play an essential role in your artwork. How do you find inspiration from nature in your daily life, and how do you translate that into your paintings?

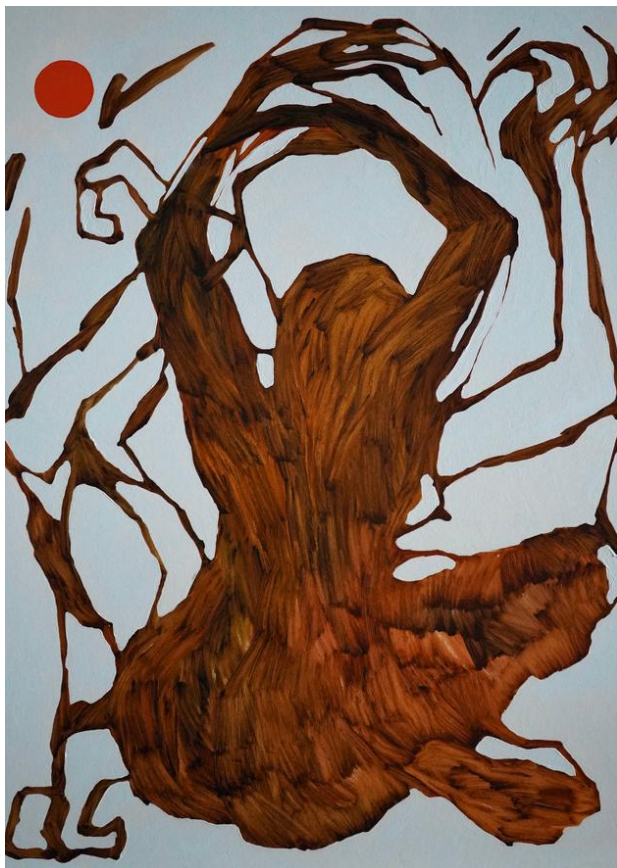
Nature is a good teacher for human. I spend many time with horses and see every day how magical can be connection between human and nature. That feels like a God. I learn what is similar between and sometimes I see that we r same construct with nature. For example a middle painting of leaf can have the same painting with wains on your arms. We have cycles of planet and cycles of body, specially time cycles. We are growing and recovering all the time. Also energy system is connected with us. People who r in this feeling of universe sometimes feel what other planet part feel. Specially people who pray a lot.

The connection between humanity, religion, and nature is a central theme in your work. How do you see these elements interwoven in your compositions, and why are they significant to you?

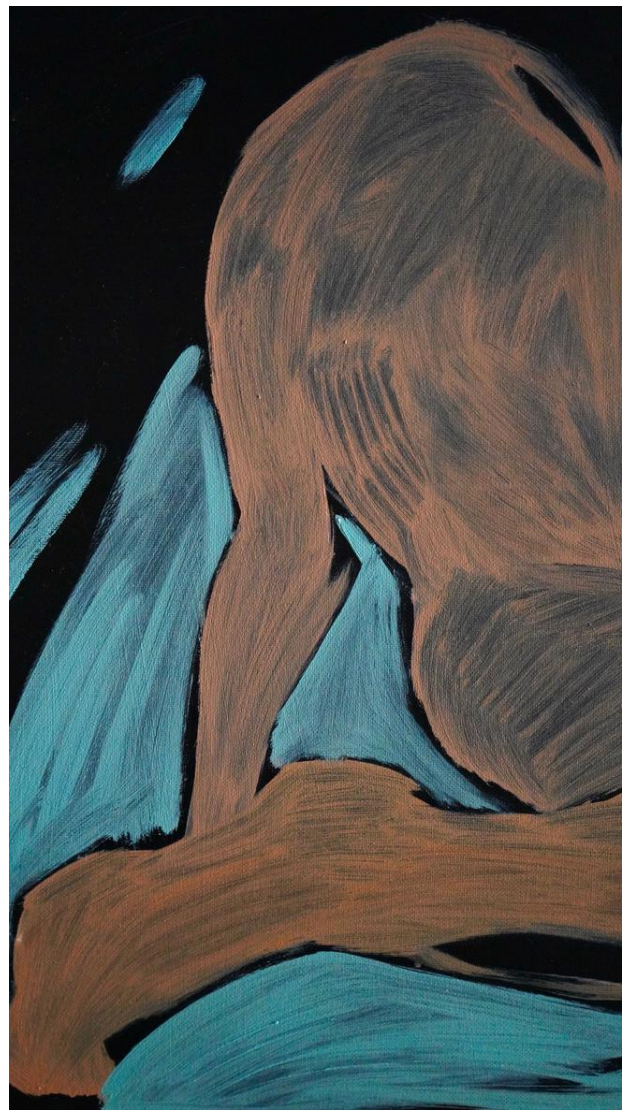
I see that world need love. Love is something that makes you more smart and realistic even more then sometimes good aducation. We r living in 2025 and we have Wikipedia and other things, but there is still so many people who support war and doing crime. That means that they r not connected to themselves, to inner God, that can tell them that life is short and so amazing, we r guest in this planet and we need to be grateful for this trip called Life. I'm trying to share new aesthetical ways to talk about it, and who knows, maybe one day it will work?

You use layers of texture to convey movement and energy in your paintings. Could you talk more about your process of creating these textures and how they enhance the emotional impact of your work?

I use different textures to associate it with energy. Energy has phisical power but it needs some space and light, sometimes it's bright or dark. As life situation, it can be sensitive to contrast, or sensitive to the close shadows. I always have my plan about what I will paint, but sometimes result is even better then was plan. This happens because my heart is the boss. Mind is just office worker in this process.



Anna Bondar | Growing woman | 2023



Anna Bondar | Ground turns to earth | 2023

Your works have been exhibited internationally. What has been one of the most rewarding experiences from these exhibitions, and how has the international audience responded to your work?

I can say that I'm very proud about all USA exhibitions that was organized by rych art lab exhibitions and first Ukrainian gallery that based in the city center in New York curretted by Maria Manuilenko. Also I had solo exhibition in Spain in amazing Isolina Arbulu gallery. I'm very proud of it.

As an artist who has found a new home in Spain, how has the environment and culture there influenced your creative process?

Yes, as I told before, I'm "energy person" and all my art was really connected to this unique place. Im living in Marbella, part of Spain with hot blood, warm heart, and collected all cultures and colors of the world. On this moment Marbella is very international but everybody feel and recreate this energy.

Born on April 22 1984, **IDG FORMA**, is an artist with a six years education in architecture at "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, one of the daughters of both architect parents. She has a background in applied arts beginning with 1995 when she took an after school in the capital of Romania, Bucharest. Her studies of applied arts continued for two years when she learned architecture drawing under renowned Romanian tutor Șerban Nițulescu. Presently she's juggling both her architecture career as well as her artistic one in painting, preparing her first ever exhibition show at the end of the year 2025.

Artist Statement

IDG FORMA stands for Romanian architect, born 1984, IOANA DANA GEORGESCU, who as of late took very seriously her more artistic side. IDG FORMA presently is concentrated on painting manually, touching mediums from watercolor to acrylics, ink, gouache, as well as dry chalk, charcoal and color pencils. IDG FORMA believes that color changes your mood and she cares deeply about bringing optimism and a ray of light through her works. Deeply impacted by the 2000 movie "Pay it forward" by female movie director Mimi Leder, she strives for an art that does good in the world and makes a difference, managing to bring people together, to be more kind to each other and help one another.

Ioana-Dana Georgescu | It's coming | 2025





— Interview

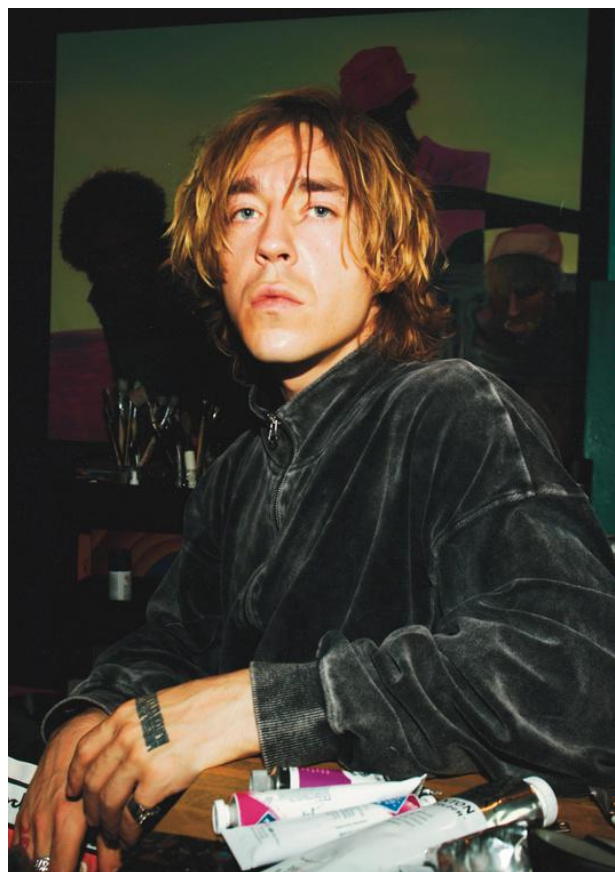
Vova Ostrovsky

Vladimir, your artistic journey began with a music project under the pseudonym Jezup. How did that transition from music to visual art come about, and how do the two forms of expression influence each other in your work?

While working on my music project in Moscow, I was fully immersed in the process. When I moved to Israel, I found myself in a completely new environment — without my usual instruments, but still with a iPad and hands eager to create. Character animation, especially in the form of music videos, naturally became the next step in my creative path. For me, drawing is not just a skill, but a way to feel, reflect, and find harmony within. Sketching — whether for music video ideas, storyboards, or simply for myself — has always been a form of therapy, a reflection of my inner rhythm. Over time, it evolved into a craft of its own.

Your art often appears to delve deep into personal and universal themes. Could you share some of the underlying concepts or emotions that inspire your pieces?

In my art, I often explore personal themes and emotions. Sometimes it's a romanticized melancholy of solitude, other times it's the stoic calmness of confronting an inner fire. And sometimes, it's just simple everyday scenes — like a group of young people gathered in a kitchen inside a Soviet-era apartment block, surrounded by identical buildings. In Russia, these kitchens have always been the heart of open and carefree gatherings, where people make



toasts and share drinks. For me, it's a direct reference to the cultural code I grew up with.

The way you use colors and create poster-style artworks suggests a certain energy or message. How do you decide on the color palette for each piece, and what do you hope to convey through these choices?

Since the early days when I was working with photography and video, I've always felt that color is one of the most essential tools for expressing mood and emotion. Color correction practically became my second nature. Later, as I began working with oil paints, I discovered glazing techniques — which, to my surprise, felt very similar to what I was already doing in digital media- similar to layering filters. In both cases, I aim to create a slightly surreal world through color, sometimes flat, sometimes deeper, depending on the atmosphere I want to evoke.

Your work seems to bridge different artistic realms. How do you see the relationship between your past music project and your current art practice? Are there any similarities in the creative process?

The connection between my visual art and music is tight. While working on album covers, I learned how to merge visual and sound worlds — where images and music become a continuation of one another. My

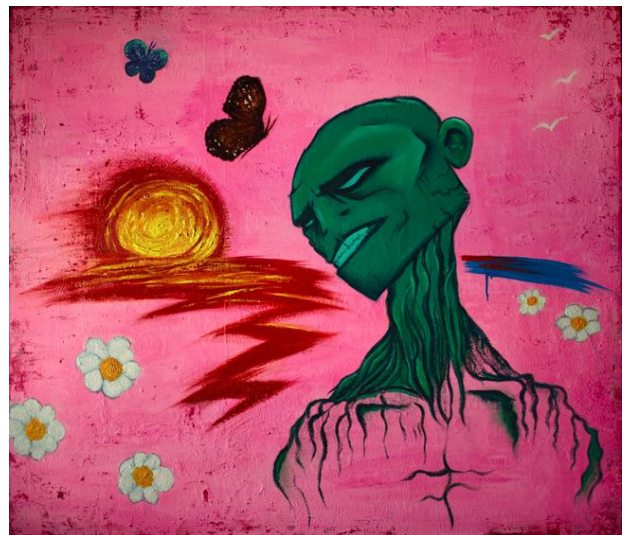
visual style actually began forming even before music, but it was music, together with drawing, that helped shape and structure it. The creative process is also similar in many ways. Sometimes, I approach brushstrokes much like playing guitar — especially in dirty blues, where a slide glides over the strings, creating accidental but lively overtones. It's about creating a space where I can let go of control and allow the process to breathe on its own. However, when it comes to characters, I work them out more carefully during the sketching stage on my iPad. Music constantly inspires me to search for new ways to express myself visually, and this organic fusion of the two worlds has become an essential part of my practice.

You've lived in various countries, including Russia, Bulgaria, and Israel. How have these cultural shifts influenced your art and the themes you explore?

Russia laid the foundation for my artistic language, but Israel was where I went through a transformation, bringing together all the experience I had accumulated. Later, after meeting my wife, I found myself in Bulgaria, where I was finally able to establish a steady process of creating oil paintings. It's hard to say that these countries changed the core of my art, but certain works definitely reference events and impressions from these places. For example, *Letter of a Repatriate* is filled with nostalgia for my homeland, while *Freelancer in Israel* depicts an artist calmly working as bombs explode outside the window — a direct reflection of my experience there. Bulgaria, for me, is always my muse — my wife — who endlessly inspires my work as well.

Your work has a certain abstract and surrealist quality. How do you balance the abstract with the figurative in your paintings? Is there a specific intention behind this approach?

I try to find a balance between abstraction and



figuration by focusing on what feels right rather than defining everything too much. I'm especially interested in the moment when a figure starts to dissolve into abstraction—it creates a sense of movement and fluidity. When creating characters, I sometimes exaggerate, exploring the human body through my own prism. As someone who has always loved sports, I have a deep admiration for the human form, but I like to distort it — stretching limbs, elongating skulls, leading the anatomy closer to something primal and ancient. I place my figures in dreamlike spaces, keeping details minimal so that color, brushwork, and texture do the storytelling. My goal is to keep things balanced, expressive, and alive while saying more with less.

You mention wanting to open up and deepen the universe of Jezup. How does your visual art serve as an extension of that universe, and what do you want viewers to experience or feel when interacting with your work?

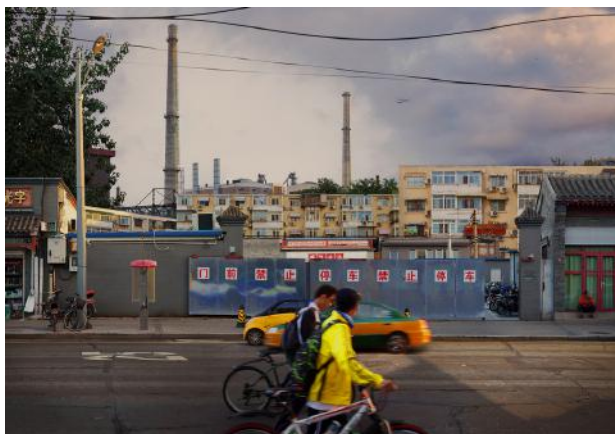
Today, the *Jezup* universe is already an established narrative style for me, where I bring together all of my accumulated experience and give life to my own visual language using oil paints. It's a space where I blend my love for artistic references with the cultural code of my generation — creating a space that establishes a connection between me and the viewer. With every new project, I continue exploring new horizons, diving into the subconscious and expressing it through intuitive images. I want viewers to see the human body from a new perspective — emphasizing its primitive, primal beauty. I want them to be immersed in a haze of nostalgic memories and fragments of early 2000s pop culture, transformed through the lens of retrospection. I hope they will also feel the atmosphere of my hometown — with its unique blend of eras and cultural contradictions — but through it all, they'll encounter universal elements of the human experience, that familiar sense of home that everyone can recognize in their own way.

— Interview

Chung Chak

Your work explores the interaction between humans and their environment, especially through the lens of cultural clashes and alienation. Could you elaborate on how your personal experiences influence your creative process?

Let's take my first series, *Displacement*, as an example. I started the project by taking "blind shots" of pedestrians walking in NYC. After printing these images in a relatively large size, I placed them into different locations within the city and photographed them again to create a final image. The project was centered around juxtapositions—displacing people from one location to another to highlight contrasts within the city they lived in. As I wandered the city with a stack of thirty to forty of these prints, I relied on spontaneous intuition to match an image with the street scene in front of me. In essence, I was relocating individuals across spaces to make a social statement about class dynamics. Looking back, this process was a reflection of my own experience as a foreigner in New York—leaving behind my roots and adapting to an unfamiliar environment. It created an odd yet telling sense of belonging, or lack thereof. A more recent example is my project *Fragments of Reality*. In this work, I was drawn to older parts of Beijing undergoing gentrification. I wondered how the relocated residents felt, and this resonated deeply with my childhood experience when the Hong Kong government moved my family from the city center to a remote area in the 1970s.



Chung Chak | Two boys | 2023



Chung Chak | Balloon sellers | 2023

Your photomontages often present multiple layers of meaning. How do you approach creating these complex compositions, and what role does conceptualizing play in your work?

Some of my works are more complex than others, depending on the depth of meaning I want to convey in a series. For example, my 2008–2014 series, *The Boxes*, is one of the most layered projects I've created. It reflects my perception of different places and cultures—some aspects drawn from personal experience, while others incorporate stereotypes that may carry negative connotations for some viewers. Because culture is inherently complex, I used a "controlled chaos" approach to subtly convey my critique. In my latest series, *Whispers in the Dark*, I explore the marginalization of Hong Kong society. To make my message more subtle and avoid overt offense, I incorporated complex layering techniques. Additionally, the visual density of the compositions reflects the overwhelming nature of Hong Kong's urban environment. When creating large-scale montages, I typically start by combining smaller images into segments, then integrating them in a way that feels intuitive yet structured—almost like solving a puzzle. Since each series consists of 15–20 images, I continuously refine the compositions to ensure cohesiveness. In many ways, my process feels like "painting with photo images."

You mentioned that you are inspired by the idea of the 'low-end population' as seen in Chinese media and your own experiences in Beijing. How do you believe the visual language of these murals and the social context they represent have influenced your work?

Having lived in both Chinese and American cultures, I've observed key differences in societal attitudes. Compared to Americans, Chinese people tend to be more accepting of authority and cooperative with their government. Even compared to my upbringing in Hong Kong, I noticed a

distinct contrast. It certainly has its historical root from the Chinese philosophy about social orders. When I first encountered Beijing's educational wall paintings, I found them humorous and beautifully crafted. However, I questioned their effectiveness. Over time, seeing them repeatedly made me realize they must serve a purpose—otherwise, they wouldn't persist for decades. Growing up in British-controlled Hong Kong, my education shaped a Westernized perspective on the relationship between individuals and society. Observing Beijing's residents, many of whom seemed content with the economic prosperity brought by the government, influenced the aesthetic of my work. As a result, my photomontages feature vibrant colors, soft lighting, and a utopian atmosphere—even when depicting neighborhoods set for demolition. I wanted to capture the beauty of these communities, despite their economic limitations.

In your series *The Walls* (now renamed *Fragments of Harmony*), you use layering to create harmony. Could you discuss the concept of "seams and inconsistencies" in your images and what you hope viewers take away from these visual contradictions?

Many critics have been amazed by how seamlessly my photomontages are composed—some don't realize they are montaged until I tell them. However, upon closer inspection, subtle inconsistencies emerge: shifts in perspective, variations in lighting, and slight color discrepancies.

These inconsistencies are intentional, and they are the direct result of the montage process. They symbolize the illusion of harmony within society—everything may appear cohesive at first glance, but deeper scrutiny reveals incontinence. My work reflects this tension, showing that the dominant narrative does not always represent every individual's voices.

As a street photographer, you thrive on discovering spontaneous inspirations. How do you balance the unpredictability of street photography with the more deliberate nature of your photomontage work?

I don't see them as separate. Even in my photomontages, spontaneous ideas arise and shape the development of both visuals and content. This creative spontaneity fuels



my process.

On the other hand, my street photography is not entirely impulsive—I always have an intention in mind. For example, I might wait at a street corner for minutes, anticipating the perfect moment when a passerby aligns with a specific billboard to reinforce a visual statement. Even in these moments of unpredictability, my choices are guided by experience and a conceptual framework.

Your work serves as both an homage to a specific neighborhood in Beijing and a reflection on the impermanence of urban spaces. How does this connection to place inform your artistic practice, and how does the destruction of this neighborhood impact the meaning of your work?

Our upbringing significantly shapes how we respond to new environments. I spent my first twenty years in a working-class neighborhood, where street vendors, cluttered markets, and communal gatherings were part of everyday life. My childhood memories are filled with images of old men playing chess in public parks at sunset, housewives hurrying through street markets, and the familiar aromas of home-cooked meals wafting through apartment windows.

Walking through Beijing's soon-to-be-demolished areas evoked these memories. The nostalgic warmth of my upbringing influenced my photomontages, which often feature soft lighting and a dreamlike quality. Although my family was not wealthy, our community was tightly knit and full of life. My work serves as a romantic reflection of that time.

Having exhibited your work internationally, what are some key reactions or insights you've received from audiences in different cultural contexts?

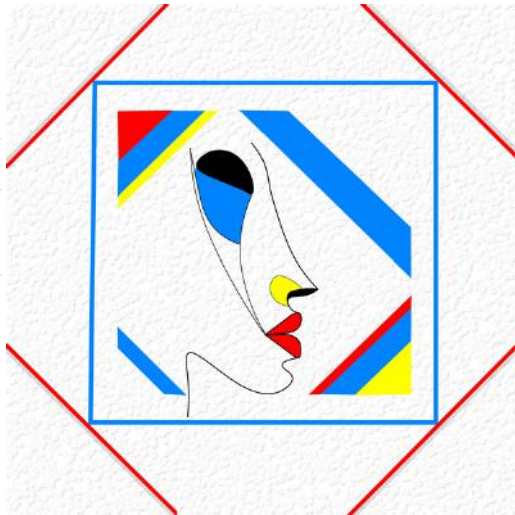
Most of my exhibitions have been in the U.S., with a few solo and group exhibitions in the U.K., Italy, and Spain. Since my formative years were spent in Hong Kong and my work often features locations outside the U.S., many American viewers perceive my art as "foreign." This leads to different interpretations—some find the unfamiliarity intriguing, while others struggle to connect. This is inevitable, and all artists must navigate the varying perspectives of their audiences.



Johan Van Dreven

It started with photography. When I was 13, I got a small camera from my grandfather, 2 possible apertures, 2 speeds, a roll of max 12 photos, those were the possibilities. In that same period, more than 60 years ago, a neighbor boy threw a piece of paper in a "water tank", and suddenly I saw an image appear there. I had become acquainted with the darkroom and was sold. It took until well into my 20s, but then I had my first own darkroom. There, in the darkroom, I made attempts at surrealist work and creating alienations. It was quite a feat to get that right. Sports, portraits and very occasionally nudity were the subjects that fascinated me in the analog era. I also did theater and stage photography. High school and abstract. It started for me with abstract work, long before the digital era, in high school. The drawing teacher gave me the space to experiment with surrealistic and colorful (abstract) landscapes. After my school days I had many other things on my mind, creativity bled to death. I destroyed all the work I had ever made from that period. In my 30s the digital age came and stimulated my imagination more than I could ever have imagined. The current (2024) digital abstract work consists of a lot of line play Where Mondriaan worked exclusively with straight lines, I like playful lines, the play of lines and shapes. In doing so, I do adhere to the restriction imposed by myself, only working with the 3 primary colors, both in abstract and figurative work.

Johan Van Dreven | Lockedup350 | 2025



Path to Digital Artist

Working digitally did not come naturally, courses taken, workshops followed, learned about art. Of course many hours spent, tinkering while it could have been easier, many mistakes made. The most fun was trying out a lot and using functions in Photoshop for which they were not intended. Playing, endlessly playing and discovering. Combine all that with all kinds of photos from my archive. Photos of very simple things like a fence, part of a tree, a cloud formation, etc. etc.. Inspiring were and are besides Mondriaan, Godin also Dali, Hundertwasser, Kadinsky, Jung and many others.

Dance & Moves.

I also became fascinated by photographing another art form, dance. Not only the classical form, ballet, but all other forms. Modern dance, hip hop with the different styles, jazz ballet, pole sports, acrobatics, they all passed by. The project Dance & Moves was born. All dance forms lent themselves perfectly to a combination with the trampoline and powder shoots. We did the latter in an empty church. As a result of the dance photography we followed a young acrobat, her big dream was and is to one day work at Cirque du Soleil. It was so inspiring that we published a book about this top athlete that year (Leven voor talent, ISBN 978-94-92959-19-5, price € 19.50). There are still a few copies of this book available and it is bilingual, NL and UK.

Figurative.

The figurative digital work originated from my photography. In the pre-digital (analogue) era it was a lot of portrait, sports photography and also nude. Lingerie and erotic photography were not my primary interest. Occasionally children's photography was also included. It was and is fun to play digitally, wanting to discover new paths, other possibilities to take editing further than just a beautiful portrait or a beautiful body. Looking for expressiveness, working with a double layer, telling a story, letting the viewer and the buyer find their own story in my work.

In my series (Naakt and Nude not naked) that expressiveness and the constant rediscovery come together very well. The nude is leading, because of the feminine lines, not because of an erotic appearance. With the posture, color and background I want to make the viewer think, what does the viewer see and experience. The nude is photographed against a white background, that background is first removed in the editing. Then the search for matching colors and backgrounds begins. Then that is digitally processed together into a whole, a search, again and again. That also makes every work different.

Naïve.

Here I actually distinguish 2 different elaborations for myself. Working on the basis of photo material and then editing and/or alienating it. There is often a hidden story in this work, here too it is up to the viewer what is seen. In addition, drawn figures, working with only the 3 primary colors. Just fun, beautiful colors, sometimes crazy shapes, the head often without hair and skull.

Minimalism and cubism

In the last period (2024) I have also been discovering minimalist and cubistic digital drawing, again only with 3 primary colors. For me these are very difficult forms in which I certainly still have to and want to develop myself. It will probably result in my own touch or even a mix. Portrait.

Portraits remain fascinating. Somewhere there is still a vague plan to make a series, sometimes it takes years before a plan becomes concrete, or not. I once attended a workshop by an American photographer. He had worked for an American great, who had the nickname "mr one-shot". This took place in the analog era. Very educational. There were 6 participants including me. There were 5 flash lamps with various attributes and 1 model. In the morning 1 session for everyone, then developing in the darkroom and in the afternoon 2 sessions for each participant. Develop and print at home, send the result for assessment. You had 15 minutes to set up the lights and instruct the model. There were requirements, you were not allowed to use a pose or lighting setting that had been used by someone else. And, you were only allowed to take 3-5 photos, of which three had to be good.

Female figures.

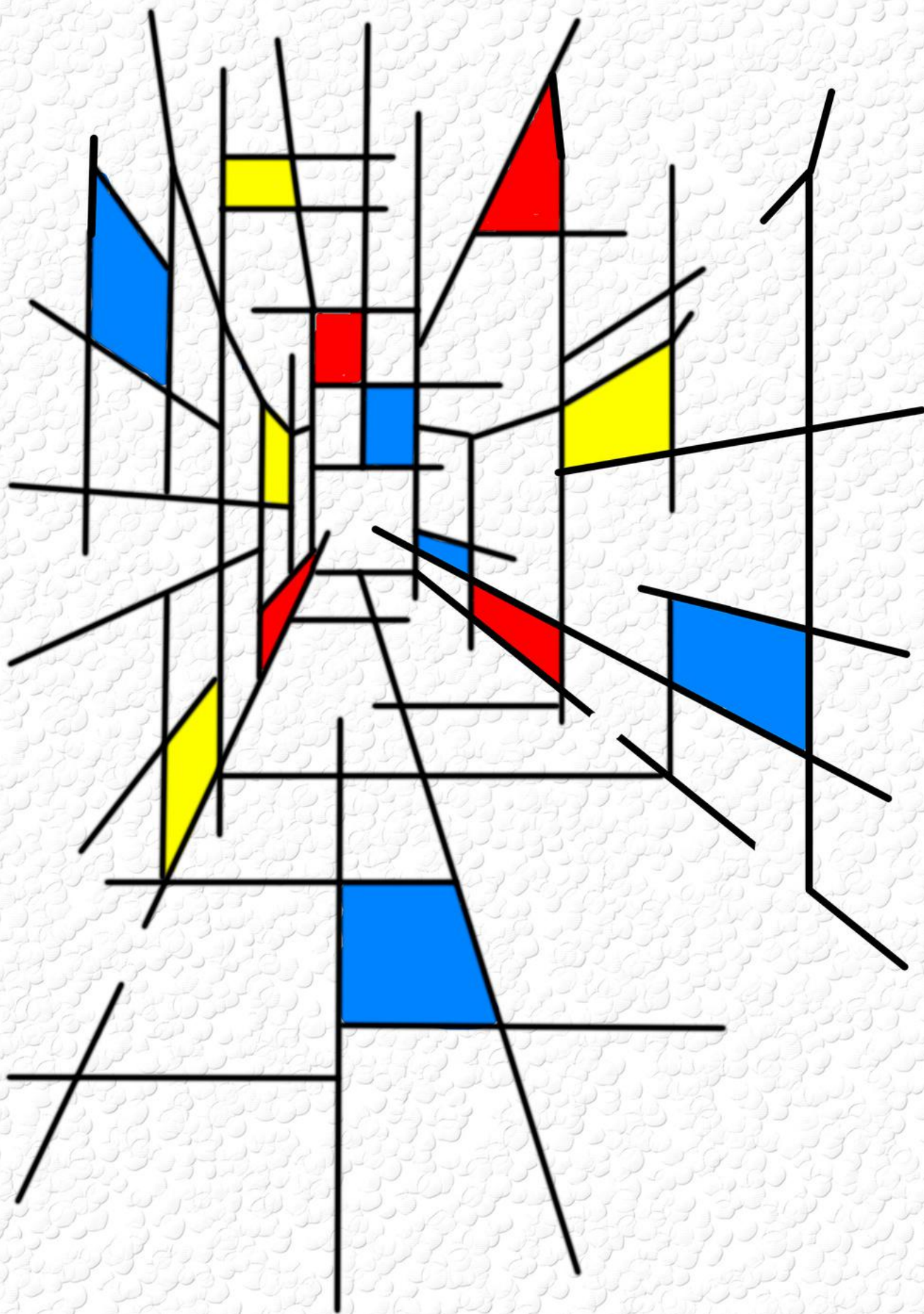
I am mainly talking about nudity. Sometimes in combination with body paint by a painter. Sometimes projection of flowers or other objects on nudity. Very often edited as a black and white photo. I find it fascinating to work with women who have complete confidence that we will create a beautiful series together. Such shoots are stripped of any sensuality, often last at least half a day and involve many beautiful conversations. The youngest ever was 15 years old (parental permission of course), the oldest was 63 years old. I have worked with some women for 10 years and with a few even longer.

The journey.

Over the past 25 years, the journey has led to countless exhibitions at home and abroad, at companies, hotels and galleries. I was not able to reach the top galleries, the midrange always charged higher contributions for marketing etc. (Affordable Art Amsterdam, Basel, Germany, England, galleries in Venice, Hamburg, Madrid, China, Belgium and the Netherlands). There were interesting offers from the USA, because of the very high costs (20 K and more) I did not dare to take that step. After corona, sales via the galleries almost completely collapsed despite all the marketing. It eventually made me decide to look for good and inspiring art fairs and markets for me, away from the galleries. N.B. None of my work is made with AI.

Artist Statement

I find it fascinating how people look at my work. My work hopefully inspires people to look at themselves and the world. Sometimes the work is just beautiful (or not) but often you can experience a message or story in it.



— Interview

Luca Lamperti

Can you tell us about the significance of your early experiences, particularly the challenges you faced growing up and how they influenced your art?

In my mind, there has always been curiosity and a desire to learn new things, and perhaps my visions and nightmares have helped me in some way, even though, at times, they mentally held me back. Having alien shapes imprinted in your mind pushes you to want to show them to the world, maybe just out of curiosity. I have this innate ability to learn anything quickly and experiment immediately afterward. For many people, it was seen as a waste of time, so I've always done things somewhat in the shadows. I created, and only a few people saw my work. When you're told for years that what you're doing is pointless, that you're wasting time, eventually, you start believing it and remain in your shell, waiting for someone to notice.

You mention that your work is a reflection of your "disease." Could you elaborate on how this vision manifests itself in your sculptures and the process of creating them?

I call it a disease because I can't stop creating things that don't exist in this world. My luck is that when I dream at night, I truly see these things, and it's



terrifying in a way because they are nightmares I've had since I was little. I mentally photograph them, and upon waking, I reproduce them. It's a dream that has lasted forever, as if I were watching a movie, and each time it continues from where I left off. All I do is show what I see.

How did meeting H.R. Giger impact your artistic journey, and in what ways do you see similarities between his work and your own?

My encounter with H.R. Giger was unexpected. I was at one of his exhibitions in Milan, and while I was looking at one of his paintings, he stood next to me and asked what I truly saw in that image. I replied with what it meant to me, and he said he had seen the same thing. I felt proud to have had the chance to communicate such a deep thought with him because, for me, he was the artist who inspired me! He was, and always will be, the master who pushed me to do what I do today. The only thing we have in common is that our creations always start from alien visions.

Your sculptures often combine metal and intricate details. How did your experiences with metalworking shape your artistic vision, and how does it inform your sculptures today?

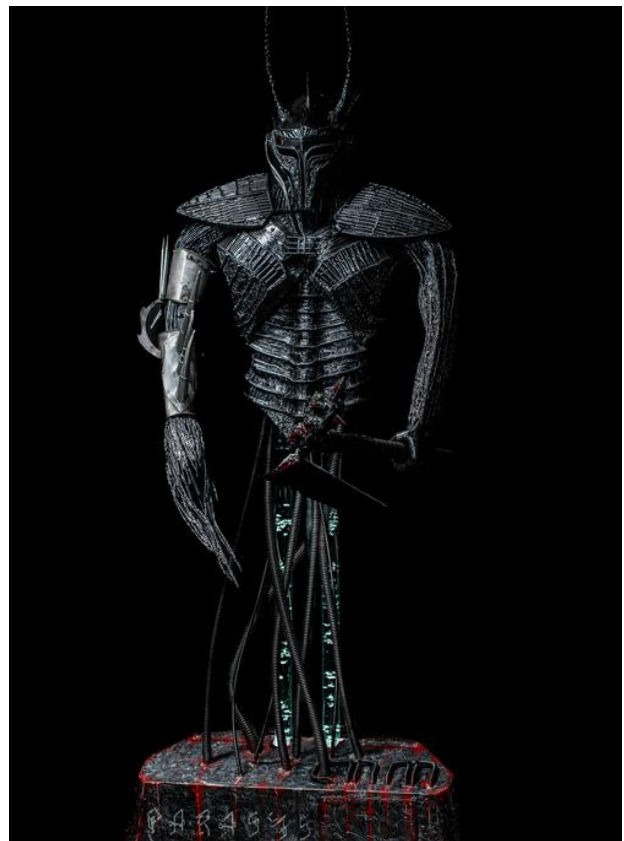
Metal is a difficult material to shape by hand, but it's solid and allows you to give strength to what you create. I've worked with it for as long as I can remember, teaching myself even welding. Over the years, it has allowed me to experiment with new shapes, as if it were a game. My works are not the result of specific research in the art world; I just create them, and I see it as a normal thing. I love proving to myself that even if something seems impossible, if you commit, you can achieve it! And I love complicating my life by making things longer and harder. For example, for the work called *Parasys*, I invested 730 hours of work to finish it.

You've mentioned a deep connection to alien shapes and creatures from your dreams. How do you translate these dreamlike visions into tangible works of art?

I've been dreaming of aliens since I was born, and they've become part of my being. I just reproduce what I see, perhaps adding details that were blurred in my mind. Sometimes, they are so real that I'm almost convinced these creatures really exist!



Luca Lamperti | Parasys-bassa



Luca Lamperti | Parasys-bassa

As a self-taught artist, how did you overcome the lack of formal education in the arts, and what advice would you give to other artists following a similar path?

Not having had a common artistic path and not having anyone teach me the basics to become an artist certainly made it more difficult and longer, but I believe that commitment and the desire to succeed in something will lead you to fulfill any wish. If you have a dream and don't try, it remains just a dream! My advice is to always try and not listen to anyone. Those who make art do it first for themselves, and you should never get discouraged if things don't go as they should. Every artist has a world that only they live in; the hard part is making others understand it.

Can you tell us more about the technical process behind your sculptures, particularly how you create such intricate details using metal?

My sculptures take shape starting from a metal skeleton, which is then covered with sheet metal and other elements. I use this technique as the base for the actual sculpture, which sometimes also includes wood or other materials such as polyester, and finally acrylics and LED lights. I don't pay much attention to how it's built; usually, when I start a sculpture, I already know how it will end. I've never made a sketch beforehand, drawing out the idea to develop. By dreaming of my creatures, I already have them imprinted in my mind, and I just shape them.

— Interview

Katerina Bim

Your work is deeply influenced by Christian art and theology. How has this background shaped your approach to visual storytelling?

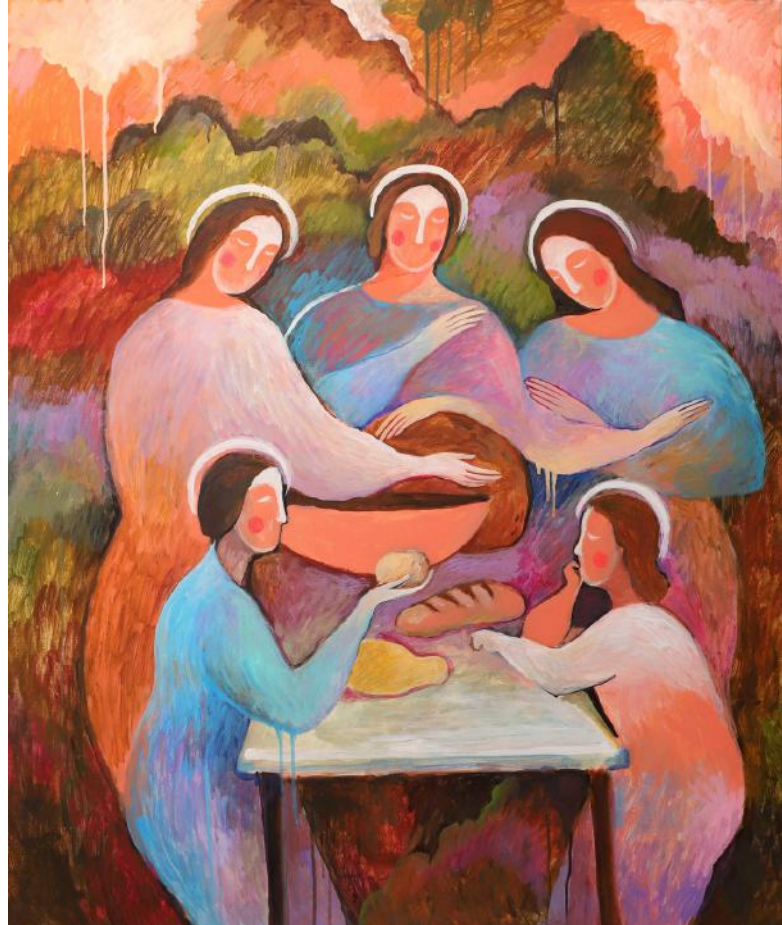
The meaning of visual images has always been important to me, and since my youth, I have seen symbolic meanings in various natural phenomena and events. By studying theology, philosophy, and psychology, I have accumulated a wealth of spiritual and allegorical symbols, which I strive to express through my thoughts, experiences, and hopes.

You mention the use of medieval and iconographic symbols in your work. How do these historical elements relate to contemporary themes in your art?

By using stylized references to icons and early Christian images, I explore how modern people perceive the spiritual world, as the search for God and the pursuit of happiness are eternal quests for people in any era. Since my background includes creating animated films and working in animation, the naive, somewhat childlike characters in my paintings combine iconographic simplicity with modern graphic stylization.



Katerina Bim | Feeding the birds



Katerina Bim
Agapa

You employ abstract elements and stylization in your pieces. How do you balance abstraction with the representation of human emotion and connection?

The abstract spots in my paintings are often created intuitively. Through drips of paint and random brush movements, I depict a kind of fractal branching, a cosmic pulsation of all living things. I connect these living lines to the naturalness and purity of the human soul, which comes into the world for happiness, joy, and light.

The theme of the "lost paradise" appears in your art as a quest for harmony. How do you convey this ideal world through your use of color and form?

In the search for happiness, self-realization, and one's calling, a person often mentally turns to the image of the lost paradise, where God reigns, Love prevails, and there are no wars or suffering. I enjoy depicting this harmonious, otherworldly world of God's kingdom, where the divisions of evil are overcome both within us and around us. While this may not be an achievable reality in our world, flashes and glimpses of this kingdom

occur in the lives of everyone who has experienced love and joy and can see beauty. Soft pastel colors, combined with earthy tones and bright neon flashes, help me express this connection between the heavenly and earthly, the unattainable and the embodied.

Your technique uses vibrant acrylics and a watercolor-like effect. How do you achieve this, and what does this effect bring to the spiritual themes you explore?

Acrylic paints diluted with water allow for quick layering, adding vibration and liveliness to the lines, and the texture of the canvas that shows through the paint creates a watercolor effect, emphasizing the elusive and intangible nature of the theme.

Can you explain the importance of relationships and unity in your paintings? How do the flowing colors and intertwined figures symbolize this?

The flowing color spots and smooth lines connect the figures and objects in my paintings with bonds of relationships, making them unified. In this peaceful communication, the



Katerina Bim
Lamb
2024



Katerina Bim
Angels of the Era
2024

characters seem to find completeness in existence. The gentle shades and the colors merging into one another also seem to connect the objects in the painting, highlighting the interconnectedness of all living things.

Your works often feature characters in moments of calm interaction. What role does this peaceful communication play in your exploration of spiritual fulfillment?

In today's fragmented world, invisible threads — connections of love and friendship, tenderness and care — are especially valuable. Truly, every person seeks the Other with a capital "O." Ultimately, this is the search for the God of Love. I try to capture this silence and depth of communication between loving beings, where even silence with one another enriches the experience, and when you look into the eyes of the beloved, you become yourself.

Sam Heydt (born April 20, 1986) is an American social practice and recycled media artist born/raised in New York City. She has lived/worked in Paris, Venice, Amsterdam, Athens, Buenos Aires, Sydney, Reykjavík, Udaipur, and Vienna. As a published author, producer, and lifelong social activist and environmentalist, Heydt has undertaken a range of altruistic, non-profit work and anchors her practice in advocacy. Through her unique manner of expression, she illustrates a world exploited beyond use and increasingly reduced to a bottom line. Esteemed as one of the pioneers of the recycled media movement, she works across different media- film, video, installation, photography, sculpture, sound, and text and employs a range of materials, often reinventing and trespassing their associative use. Marrying images of destruction with portrayals of the American Dream, her work confronts the disillusionment of our time with the ecological and existential nightmare it is responsible for. Heydt's work has been shown in galleries, museums, art fairs, and film festivals worldwide, and sits in the permanent collection of a number of museum including D.C.'s Smithsonian Museum and the State Hermitage Museum in Russia.

Artist Statement

The edge is closer than we think, but illusion won't free us from reality, even as the sustained narrative of tabloids becomes history and the myth of progress continues to perpetuate inequality. Globalization has moved forward unevenly and no-one can say where this "New Frontier" is leading us. As the natural world is liquidated and substituted with an artificial one, the social landscape becomes increasingly fractured and alienated. No longer in focus, all grand narratives dissipate in the space of post-history, as technological dependency diminishes the tangibility of our experiences. The medium has swallowed the message. For 50 years corporate power has been glorified, consumption championed and waste justified. Now we stand before a precarious future. The nature of the earnings that define late capitalism have incidentally raped us of nature itself. Our time is marked by mass extinction, diminishing resources, global pandemic and climate change. As the vices of the first world burden the third, the skeletons of old factories serve as caveats of growing inequality. The silent landscape betrays deafening symptom of a world exploited beyond use and increasingly reduced to a bottom line. Political dissidence is drowned out by the white noise and echo chambers of the media, as it sedates the social psyche with empty promises it proposes for the future it truncates. Through a myriad of mediums, Heydt presents an abstract proposition for a world on the periphery of history, one that not only appears haunted by the ghosts of the past, but built on it. Collapsing spacio-temporalities and abandoning the structural continuum within which reality resigns, her work juxtaposes, collides and disrupts logical relationships between occurrences through the convergence of geographically estranged events. Through adding and subtracting meaning by marrying images of destruction with portrayals born from the virtues of the American Dream, Heydt confronts the disillusionment of our time with the ecological and existential nightmare it is responsible for.



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— Interview

Uchenna Cecilia Dike

Your artistic journey is deeply intertwined with your studies in nursing. How do you feel that your academic background influences your approach to art, especially when it comes to recognizing patterns in both anatomy and abstract composition?

As a nurse in the making, I've learned to recognize patterns—whether in clinical rotations or theory—by connecting symptoms to underlying pathologies, linking function and form, and understanding the cascading consequences that arise from different clinical profiles. Nursing is a profession where understanding the why behind a physical or mental presentation can make the difference between life and death. That drive to understand the deeper mechanisms rather than just executing a task is central to how I approach both nursing and art. This analytical precision translates directly into my abstract art. Just as sharp clinical observation helps uncover hidden patterns in the body, the sharp intersecting lines in my compositions form a matrix where emotional states emerge. What may seem like isolated shapes or lines take on meaning when they converge—forming a visual language tied to emotion, colour, and expression. Through both art and nursing, I explore the underlying structure of what's seen and unseen, transforming fragmented elements into a cohesive whole.

Your work explores emotional states that spark transformation. Can you share more about how these emotions manifest in your artwork and the process through which they evolve on the canvas?

The emotions in my work manifest through the interplay between shapes, colours, and textures. A consistent element across my pieces is the presence of



a white or lighter border that frames the colourful, dimensional composition within it. This contrast between the formless and the formed creates a sense of structure and amplifies the vibrancy of the work. The border acts almost like a threshold—separating the contained emotional universe from the surrounding emptiness, which makes the artwork feel more alive and visually striking. The emotional impact also emerges through the glow of the composition itself. My work invites calm and patient contemplation; the more you engage with it, the more it reveals. Emotion evolves on the canvas as layers of texture and color are added, deepening the sense of depth and complexity. Each added layer transforms the piece, making it feel like a glimpse into a separate, contained universe—a window into an emotional landscape that takes shape and meaning over time.

The concept of Afrocentric patterns plays a significant role in your work. Could you tell us more about how your Nigerian Igbo heritage influences the shapes, textures, and overall themes of your art?

My Nigerian Igbo heritage doesn't yet fully influence the themes of my work—though I do plan to explore that more intentionally in the future. However, it undeniably shapes the forms and textures within my art. I've always been enthralled by Ankara fabrics—the traditional textiles with their bold patterns and vivid colour combinations. There's something captivating about how different shapes and forms come together to create a striking visual relationship. Each piece of Ankara fabric has its own personality, and I have a

growing collection at home that reflects this diversity. I think this influence shows up unconsciously in my work. Just as Ankara fabrics often feature the same motif in different colour variations—transforming the overall impact—I approach my abstract matrix in a similar way. The sharp lines that define my compositions form a structured base, but by changing the colours or altering the texture, I create entirely new emotional landscapes within that same framework.

When it comes to themes, my work tends to address more universal emotional experiences—ideas that can resonate across cultures, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. While the patterns and textures reflect my Igbo heritage, the emotional core of my work speaks to our shared experience on Earth, making it accessible and meaningful to people from different walks of life.

How do you view the intersection of art and science in your life? Does it shape your perception of the world and, in turn, your creative process?

The intersection of art and science in my life has been a relationship I've had to refine over time. Being in an accelerated nursing program, the demanding schedule initially made it difficult to balance both sides. When I wasn't creating, I often felt unfulfilled and creatively unproductive. Interestingly, even when focusing on science, I would naturally approach problem-solving creatively—designing colourful, artistic study guides and tools that my friends found helpful. That's when I realized that creativity wasn't limited to art—it was embedded in how I process and understand the world. Once I embraced that creative lens in both fields, the connection between art and science became more defined and enriching.

This intersection shapes how I see the world. I notice symmetry, patterns, and the inherent creativity in everyday life—even in the smallest, most mundane activities. It's made me realize that creativity is a fundamental reality; even those who don't consider themselves artists are constantly creating in their own way.

Art and science also intersect directly in my creative process. Though my approach to composition is intuitive, there's still a mathematical foundation beneath it. I'm aware of the ratios, the balance of size and proportion, and how adjusting those elements affects the overall structure and emotional impact of the piece. That subtle balance between intuition and precision reflects the deeper connection between artistic and scientific thinking in my life.

You mention that your process is intuitive, often not following a strict plan. Can you describe a specific instance where this intuitive approach led



to an unexpected or surprising outcome in your work?

In my triptych *Unrest*—which includes *In Disarray*, *Insurrection*, and *A King is Dead Today*—my process was deeply intuitive. It began as a simple sketch with a black pen and a ruler in my sketchbook, with no clear direction at first. I didn't fully understand where it was leading until much later.

During the COVID lockdown, I remember watching American news when the story of Ahmaud Arbery's killing broke. He was a young Black man, shot while jogging in Georgia by three men. That period was already marked by global uncertainty—a health crisis, isolation, and deep social division—and this tragedy was another devastating blow. I remember crying for him and his family, overwhelmed by the injustice and senselessness of his death. That was in February 2020. Months later, in July of that same year, I sketched what would eventually become the third piece of the triptych. It was only much later that I realized the connection—the piece was an emotional response to Ahmaud Arbery's killing, even though I hadn't set out to create it with that in mind. The final painting, completed on a wood panel in acrylic, reflects that moment of injustice. Symbols within the piece reference that tragedy, but the message extends beyond it—speaking to the broader reality of unjust and unlawful killings of young Black men, not only in the U.S. but also in Canada and globally.

That's why I say most of my pieces, if not all, represent emotional states that transcend specific events. They reflect universal experiences that can be applied to different backgrounds, cultures, and historical moments.

In your triptych *Unrest*, you address themes of global uncertainty and social issues. How do you hope your artwork communicates these themes to the viewer, and what kind of emotional response do you hope to evoke?

Unrest is a reflection of the turbulence we're experiencing—both collectively and individually. The triptych captures the chaos, the disconnection, and the underlying tension of a world that feels on the brink of transformation. Each panel speaks to a different facet of this unrest: one delves into personal strife, the inner turmoil of identity and emotional conflict; another explores the outward manifestations—war, politics, and societal discord; and the third brings a sense of hope, hinting at the possibility of change through introspection and collective action, although pain and frustration are felt.

Through this work, I aim to stir a complex emotional response from the viewer—one that evokes not only a sense of urgency but also reflection. I want the viewer to experience a raw, almost visceral reaction to the chaotic textures, distorted shapes, and shifting patterns that make up each scene. I use colour, fragmentation, and layered forms to reflect the emotional impact of social issues and personal crises, guiding the viewer through a narrative of discomfort and potential resolution.

Ultimately, I hope *Unrest* does more than communicate a message—it is an invitation to pause, to confront, and to question. I want viewers to feel the weight of the uncertainty we live in, but also to experience a sense of empowerment, as if they too are part of the change that must come. It's about engaging with that unrest, not just as an observer, but as an active participant in its unfolding.



Uchenna Cecilia Dike | *My Ray of Sunshine* | 2022-2024

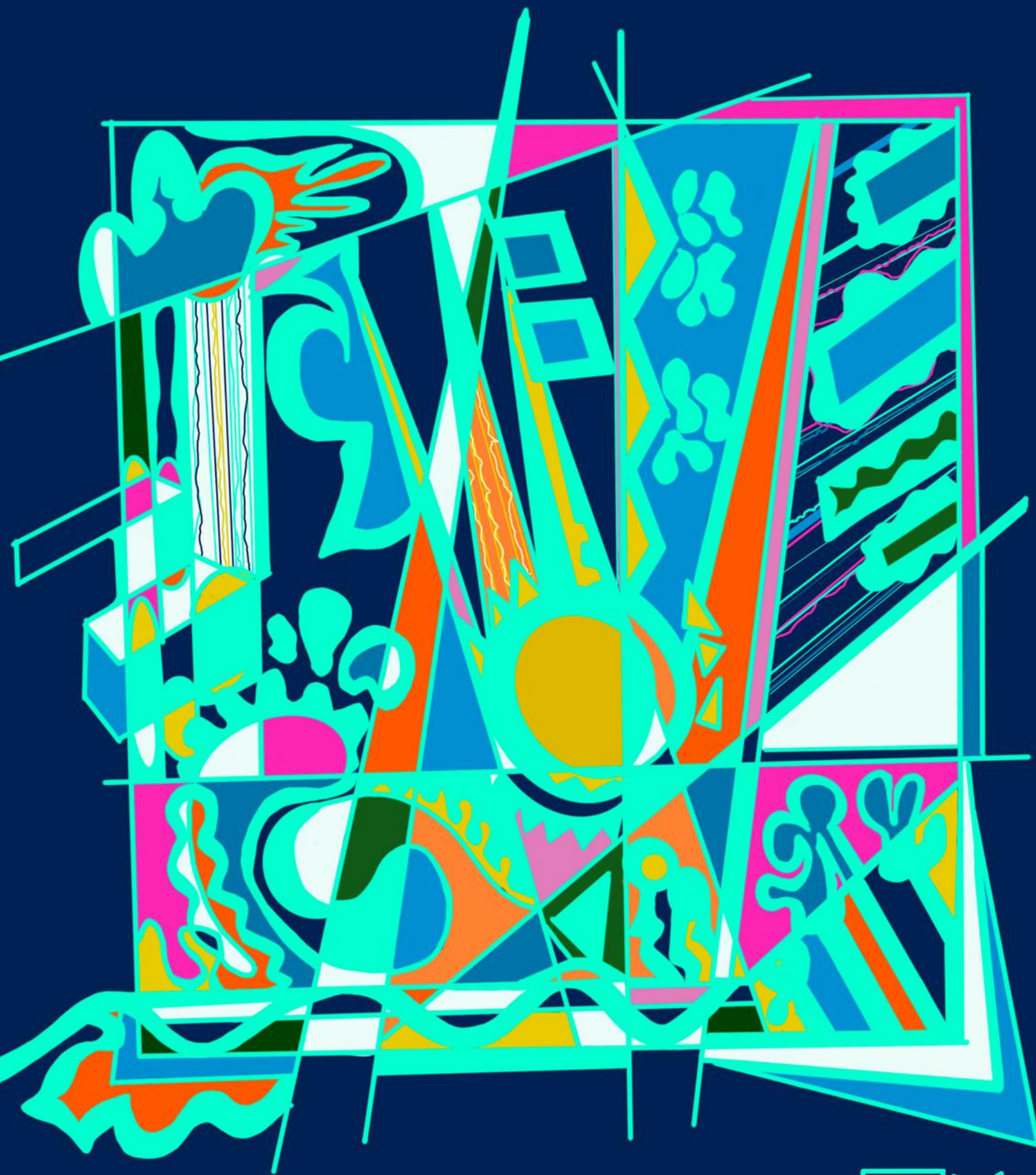


Uchenna Cecilia Dike | *In Disarray* | 2020-2025

Texture is an essential element of your work. Could you talk about how you experiment with texture, both in traditional media and digitally, and what kind of impact you want it to have on the viewer's experience?

Texture in my work is a reflection of the raw emotions and experiences I explore. It's an integral part of my artistic language, allowing me to add layers of meaning and depth. In traditional media, such as acrylic on canvas, I experiment with varying materials—gouache, Posca pens, and even fabric eventually—to build a tactile surface that almost invites the viewer to physically connect with the work. These textures are not just visual but physical, creating a sense of movement and energy. Each layer feels like a story unfolding, and the viewer can feel the struggle, the growth, or the calm that underpins the piece, depending on how the surface behaves.

Digitally, I approach texture with a similar fluidity. Though digital art is fairly new to me, I am learning to use tools that allow me to mimic organic patterns, blending digital brushes that replicate the brushstrokes or the layered effects I'd create on canvas. In the meantime, I play with line thickness within the colour blocks to add the desired dimension. For me, the texture serves as a bridge to understanding the emotional landscape I'm portraying. It encourages the viewer to pause, touch (through their eyes), and immerse themselves in the physicality of the emotions. Whether rough or smooth, every texture tells a story about the complexity of inner states, and I want the viewer to feel that energy radiating from the surface. Texture becomes a silent conversation between the viewer and the artwork, an invitation to explore the nuances of emotion through a purely sensory experience.



My name is **Jess Naish Lingley**. I am an artist, a romantic and a dreamer through and through. Growing up, I spent more time drawing in my lap than paying attention in class, but it was only when I finally took my first evening class in acrylic painting as a young adult, that I completely fell in love with the act of painting. This realization marked the beginning of a huge shift in my life to reorient everything around a dream of becoming a full-time artist. In 2012, I left my day job of tech support and moved provinces to attend an art school, where I got my Bachelor of Fine Art with a focus in painting. Currently, I live in my home province of New Brunswick with my husband and two cats, out in the rural countryside, which gives me plenty of space to dream and paint to my heart's content.

Artist Statement

My paintings are manifestations of how I seek lust for life. I explore notions of fantasy, adventure, and romance through daring brushwork and luscious colours. In the process of painting, I indulge in using intoxicating colour combinations, and invite in improvised brush strokes as a way of working with the unknown, which energizes my practice.





— Interview

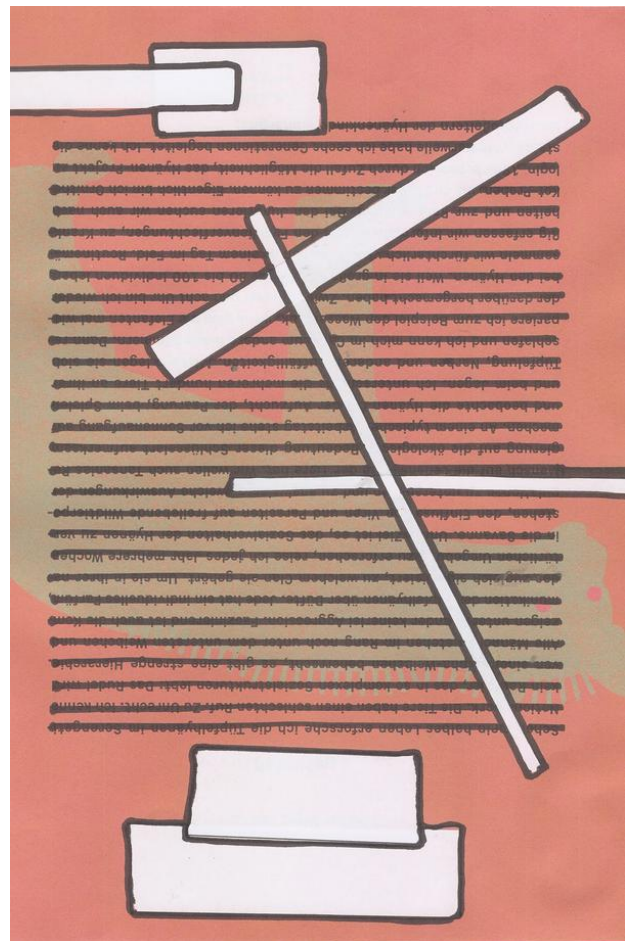
Oliver Orthuber

Your work revolves around the concepts of repetition and difference. How do these ideas influence your creative process and the final pieces?

Repetition and difference are the central principles of my work, shaping both my creative process and the final piece. In my series *_Copy Sample Remix – TGSW (Tearing Geometric Sticker Work)_*, I deliberately work with overpainting and transformation. I take an existing work as a starting point, highlight certain elements, cover or alter them, creating a tension between continuity and change.

This method leads to a process in which the old never completely disappears but continues to exist as a fragment, influencing the new composition. Repetition manifests in the ongoing engagement with existing structures, while difference emerges in the moment of transformation – in the revelation of new layers, in the chance occurrences that result from conscious and unconscious interventions.

The interplay between control and chance is essential to my approach. The deliberate act of tearing stickers or the random repetition of prints generates a raw, almost anarchic energy that keeps my work alive. Similar to collage or Dadaism, I use fragmentation and unpredictability as design elements, creating a kind of visual archaeology: each layer tells its own story, and the final piece becomes a palimpsest, merging different temporal and interpretative layers. Ultimately, my artistic process is open and experimental. There is no predetermined final outcome – the work evolves organically, responding to



Oliver Orthuber | Forschungspolitik | 2025

the material and existing structures. This unpredictability leads to qualitative leaps, breaks, and transitions, giving the artwork a dynamic presence. In this sense, my art is not linear or rational but rather multilayered, fragmented, and process-oriented – and this is precisely what makes it so compelling to me.

Can you describe the role of overpainting in your art? How do you decide which elements to alter and which to keep intact?

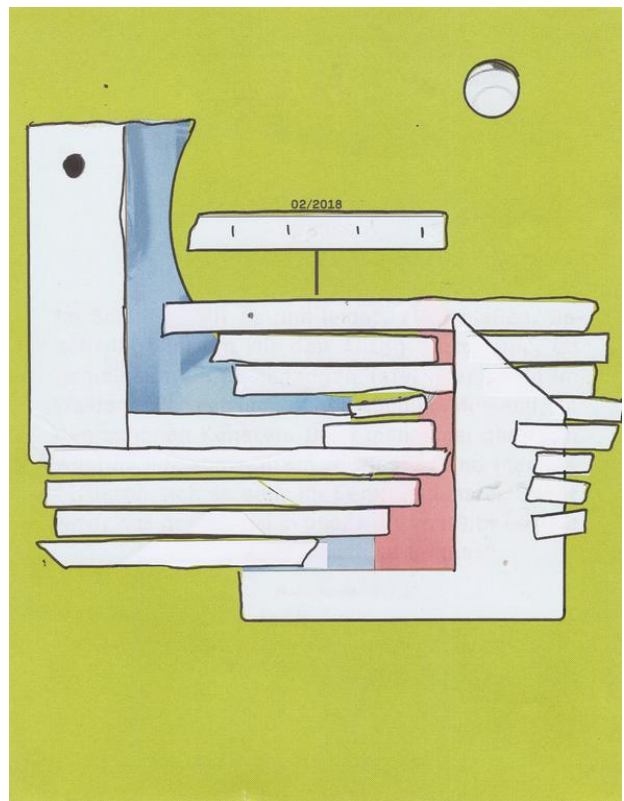
In my artistic practice, the tension between control and chance is essential. I consciously work with both forces, allowing them to interact in an open, experimental process. Control is evident in my deliberate selection of materials, composition, and intentional overpainting. Chance, on the other hand, emerges where I allow materials to develop independently—whether through the tearing of stickers, the layering of surfaces, or the intentional acceptance of spontaneous developments. In this way, my process echoes ***Guy Debord's concept of "Dérive"*, the act of drifting through urban space as a means of expanding perception. However, whereas Debord explored the city physically, my approach translates this drifting into a mental realm. My materials and techniques lead me through a creative labyrinth: I follow the traces of existing

structures, layers, and remnants without adhering to a fixed plan. The works emerge from a kind of mental wandering—an intuitive process that does not follow a linear path but moves in unexpected directions. This way of working resembles a form of visual archaeology, where each layer carries the traces of what came before, creating new levels of meaning. The combination of control and chance results in ruptures, transitions, and a dynamic energy that keeps my work alive. The final outcome remains open—serving as a unique document of a creative process unfolding between intention and surprise.

The use of stickers and tearing in your series creates an interesting interplay between control and chance. Can you elaborate on how this tension influences the way you create your art?

The deliberate use of stickers that I create myself, combined with the intentional act of tearing, generates a unique tension between control and chance—an essential aspect of my artistic practice. Interestingly, even the production of my stickers follows the principle of *Dérive*, an intuitive, process-driven form of drifting that embraces chance and spontaneous decisions. While I design and produce them myself, their final form and surface texture often emerge through unpredictable variations in the production process.

This approach continues throughout my work: Stickers initially represent precision—they have a defined shape and a smooth, controlled surface. However, by integrating them into my compositions and then



Oliver Orthuber | 02/2018 | 2024

transforming them through tearing or layering, I deliberately disrupt this order, allowing uncontrolled, organic structures to emerge.

This act of deconstruction is not a purely random gesture but a conscious intervention. Every tear, every lifted or concealed layer creates new visual dimensions and unexpected compositions. The interaction between my intentional gestures and the material's physical properties results in a dialogue between control and unpredictability.

This method recalls the aesthetics of *décollage*, where existing layers are stripped away or revealed to generate new meanings. At the same time, a visual tension emerges: the controlled placement of my self-made stickers—shaped by *Dérive* and chance—contrasts with the spontaneous, unpredictable forms created through tearing. As a result, each piece develops organically, oscillating between planned and accidental elements.

Through this experimentation with materiality and fragmentation, my work challenges traditional ideas of composition and completeness. The interplay of control and chance keeps the creative process alive—an open system in which new structures and meanings emerge from the fusion of precision, randomness, and unforeseen effects.

How do you see the concept of "visual archaeology" manifesting in your pieces? What do you hope viewers uncover when they look at the layers of your work?

The concept of "visual archaeology" manifests in my



Oliver Orthuber | Enorm schwierig ist ziemlich leicht | 2024

works through the layering and transformation of materials, where each new layer carries traces of the previous one. These layers act as remnants of the past, still visible yet redefined through acts of overpainting and fragmentation. For me, this constant layering and reinterpreting is an invitation not only to observe the artwork itself but also to discover the meanings that emerge through the dialogue between the layers.

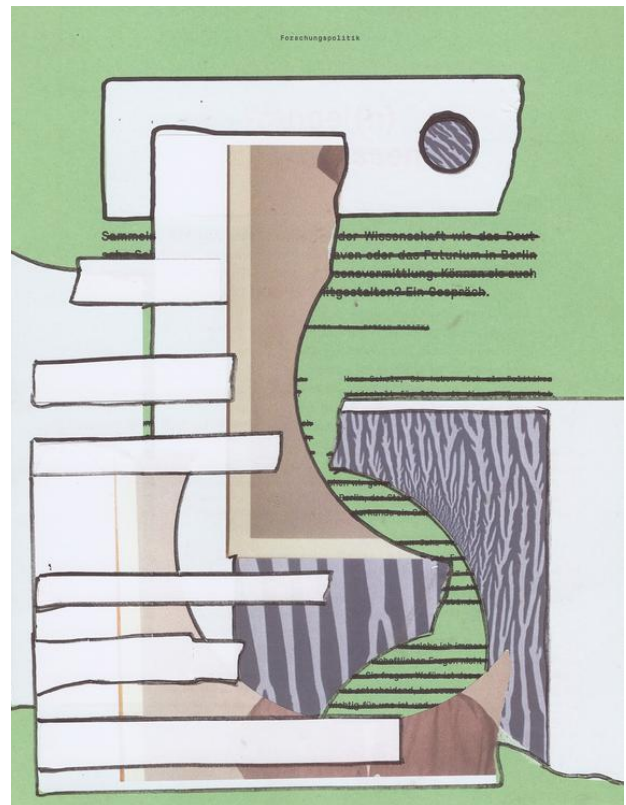
In a way, I see my works as an open, intertextual fabric that allows space for the discovery of connections between various ideas and themes. Inspired by Walter Benjamin's "Angel of History," who looks upon the ruins of the past while being propelled into the future, I invite the viewers to uncover their own associations—whether with other artistic movements, literary works, or philosophical concepts. Like the angel, who is carried through the storm of time, viewers can navigate through the layers of my work, discovering "ruins" of the past that take on new meanings in the context of the present.

The beauty of this intertextual approach is that each viewer enters the work with their own history, experiences, and cultural contexts. This allows for different personal connections to other artistic, literary, or philosophical themes to emerge. One person might be reminded of Guy Debord's *Dérive* and the open, aimless flow of time, while another might think of the fragmentations in James Joyce's literature or the visual destruction found in *Décollage* artists' works.

For me, it is essential that viewers uncover their own "layers" within the artwork—associations that are not explicitly given but arise through contemplation and interpretation. These intertextual discoveries offer not only a deeper engagement with the art but also a reflection on the complexity of memory, history, and perception. In this way, each piece becomes an open text, which can be read and decoded by every viewer in their own way. The layers become an invitation to continually find new perspectives and to discover a personal meaning within the work.

In your statement, you mention that the process of creating your work is open-ended. Can you talk more about the unpredictability of this approach and how it shapes the outcome?

Unpredictability is a central aspect of my creative process and plays a crucial role in the development of my works. By choosing an open-ended approach, I give the work the freedom to evolve in unforeseen directions. This means that when creating my pieces, I don't know exactly what the final result will look like. Instead, I trust that new ideas and formations will emerge during the process—both from the materials themselves and from the spontaneous interplay of



Oliver Orthuber | Forschungspolitik | 2023

action and chance.

The moment of unpredictability particularly arises through the use of materials that are partly shaped by randomness and uncontrollable processes. For example, the act of tearing stickers or overpainting is not something I can fully plan. The texture created by tearing, the behavior of paint on different layers—these are factors that I cannot completely control. This randomness brings an exciting dynamic to the work and leads to constant, unexplored transitions and visual surprises.

At the same time, I consciously avoid having a fixed end goal to allow space for this unpredictability. It's like an experiment where I play with the elements, putting them into new, unfamiliar relationships. This openness in the creative process, however, is not chaotic; it follows its own rhythm that emerges from the interaction between the materials and my actions. The result is never predetermined but unfolds in a continuous dialogue between the different layers and elements of the piece.

Unpredictability allows me to play with the idea of art as something alive and changing. It challenges the notion that art should be something static or finished. Instead, it becomes an open, dynamic process that is never truly "complete." Therefore, the outcome is never what I expected at the beginning but something that unfolds during the creative process, offering new perspectives both to me and hopefully to the viewers as well.

Dadaism and collage art seem to influence your approach. In what ways do you find these

movements relevant to your work today?

Dadaism and collage art are still highly relevant to me, as they offer concepts and approaches that align well with the dynamics of my own work. Both movements introduced a fundamental break with traditional forms and structures in art, emphasizing chance, irrationality, and playing with perception. These concepts resonate strongly in my creative process. Dadaism, with its rejection of established norms and its focus on chance and spontaneous interventions, particularly inspires me because it liberates art from rationality and shifts it into the realm of the absurd and uncontrollable. By using collage elements and consciously breaking patterns, I create space for a similar kind of boundary-pushing, where the development of the work is always unexpected and non-linear. My overpainting and layering of materials can be understood as a kind of visual collage, where different elements come together to generate a new, unexplored meaning.

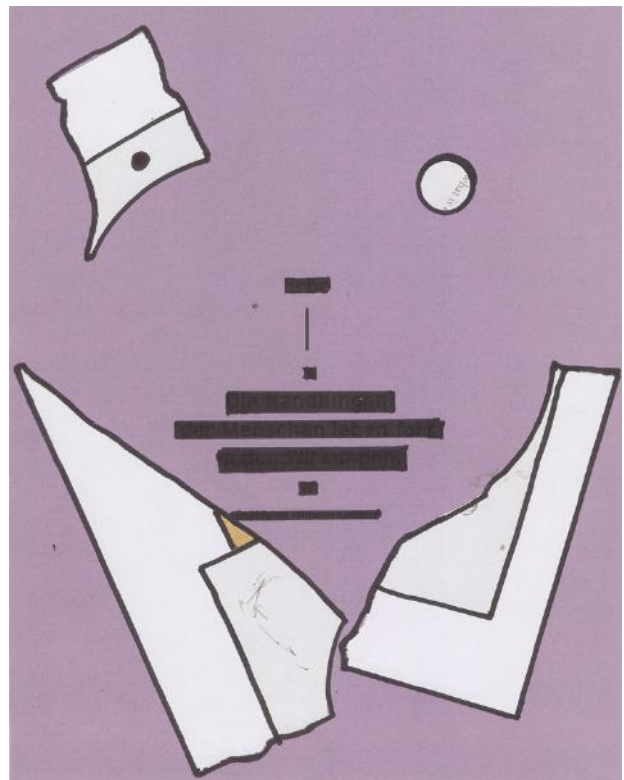
The influence of collage art is evident in my technique of combining and layering materials. The practice of joining disparate elements—whether by gluing, tearing, or overpainting—allows me to use fragmentation and contradiction to create a new, complex composition. Like in collage art, these breaks and combinations form a new image that may initially appear disjointed, but in its entirety, can find an unexpected harmony.

For me, Dadaism and collage art remain essential artistic tools that enable me to push the boundaries of traditional visual language and understand art as an open, dynamic process. These movements showed me that art doesn't necessarily have to be rational or coherent, but can develop deeper, often unexplored meanings through breaks, chance, and fragmentation. In this sense, I find their ideas still very relevant and inspiring for my work today.

How do you view the relationship between the materials you use (stickers, acrylic markers, paper) and the conceptual ideas behind your art?

The materials I use – self-made stickers, acrylic markers, and paper – are not just physical tools for me; they carry a conceptual significance that is deeply intertwined with the ideas behind my art. They serve as the "language" through which I express my concepts and thoughts, and each material has its own history and symbolism that I consciously incorporate into my work.

The self-made stickers are particularly important, as they bridge the gap between reproduction and individual creation. Being self-designed, they possess a



Oliver Orthuber | Meinst Du | 2024

personal, handcrafted character, which contrasts with industrially produced mass objects. At the same time, their use calls to mind Dadaism and collage art, where the transformation of everyday objects into artworks played a central role. The act of tearing, overpainting, and rearranging these stickers speaks to the shifting of meaning and opens up new perspectives. In my work, they symbolize the interaction between the existing and the newly emerging.

Acrylic markers and paper then come into play as more precise means to create shapes, lines, and structures. The acrylic marker allows me to work in a controlled, almost precise manner, while the paper provides a foundation where the various materials can unfold. For me, paper has an almost archaeological quality – it carries the traces of previous interventions and is constantly transformed as new layers are added. This creates a dynamic interplay between the materials.

Overall, I see the materials as parts of an open, ever-changing system that reflects the conceptual ideas of my work. They are both the carriers and the products of the creative process, where control, chance, and transformation merge. Each material brings its own energy and dynamics to the creation process, contributing to the development of a piece that communicates on multiple levels – both visually and conceptually. The self-made stickers are not just a material, but a concept in themselves, representing the open dialogue between the past, present, and future in my art.

— Interview

Lily Young

How do you decide which landscape or moment to capture when you're out shooting?

When I'm shooting, I often observe a lot and go with my guts. I look for moments when the light, sky and land (whether it be the sea, or the actual land) come together in a way that feels like they make one. Sometimes, they come together at sunset, or sunrise or when it's cloudy... I do not necessarily look for sunsets or sunrises but I try to capture moments that resonate with me visually.

Your project "The Skies Land" highlights the connection between the sky and the land. Can you talk about how you approach capturing that relationship visually?

Visually, in "The Skies Land," I pay attention to how both the sky and the land come together. Sometimes, I feel like they tell two different stories, or are in an argument (like in my picture of The Sunset) and sometimes I do feel like they tell a similar story (like in my picture, Moody, cloudy times). Either way, they interact with each other. In my opinion, the sky tends to convey a peaceful feeling, when the land provides structure. When capturing this relationship, I focus on how the sky frames the land and what visual dialogue they create together.

How do you believe the colors of the sky and land influence the mood of the viewer, and how do you choose to capture those moods in your photography?



Colors play a huge role in conveying emotions and therefore changing moods. A vibrant sky with warm tones like red and orange can feel energizing or dramatic, while light blue, and grey colours may convey a peaceful, or melancholic feeling. Similarly, the land's colors may help set the tone. I think about what emotions I want to evoke, choose my scenes and lighting accordingly, especially when I shoot on film. For instance, I might choose to go for a Kodak Gold 400 or Portra 800 for bright colours.

When viewing your work, viewers often imagine the context behind the picture. How important is it for you that your images tell a story, and how do you achieve that through photography?

I do think about storytelling when I capture moments. Every moment has a story, whether it be the passing of the day, or the changing of seasons. I try to spark curiosity in the viewer's eyes, to encourage them to imagine what might have happened before or after that moment. I achieve this through photography by playing with the colours and lights. Carefully choosing,

when to shoot and capture these moments (at dawn, or in broad daylight), matters a lot to me to tell the story I want to tell.

Do you find that different locations or times of day have an impact on the atmosphere and mood you wish to convey in your work? If so, how do you adjust your approach accordingly?

Oh, absolutely. Different locations and times of day offer different atmospheres and moods. The golden hour, with its warm, soft light, often creates a feeling of nostalgia. The broad daylight (around noon) often creates the feeling that we have the whole life ahead of us, that the day is nowhere near over. At night, the quiet and darkness can create a feeling of mystery. Depending on the location and the time, I always adapt; I change my aperture, choose my film accordingly, change the mode on my digital camera, etc.



Can you share how you feel your background in digital and film photography has shaped the way you perceive and capture landscapes?

Film photography taught me patience and the importance of appreciating each and every shot, even if they didn't come out the way I'd expected. As for digital photography, it has been the best way for me when I started photography to experiment different techniques and compositions. The flexibility it conveys, helped me explore all the different ways I could capture a moment. Thanks to the knowledge, I have been able to use one or the other to, either give the feeling that the photo could have been taken decades ago (with a film camera), or give the feeling that the flawlessness of the picture could make it look like a painting (with a digital camera).

What is your process when editing your photos? Do you try to retain the natural essence, or do you bring in your own interpretation through editing?

My editing process really depends on what I want people to see the most when looking at my photos. If it is landscape photography, I will most likely enhance the colours a bit. But I also might adjust the contrast and sharpness of the photo, depending on if I want to viewer to focus on the sky or the land. However I choose to edit the photos, I always make sure the pictures keep a certain authenticity.

Interview

Erica Zhan

Interviewer:
Anna Gvozdeva (curator)

Navigating the Intersections of Art and Capitalism: Erica Zhan's Critical Explorations



In the intricate landscape of contemporary art, Erica Zhan emerges as a distinctive voice, her art shaped by a keen sensitivity to the social dynamics of competition and consumerism. Through her nuanced explorations, Zhan critically addresses the commodification of human experiences and the emotional toll of societal expectations.

Born and raised in China, Erica Zhan was introduced early to a culture where academic and social accolades were often seen as zero-sum games. This competitive ethos deeply influenced her understanding of success and failure, themes that she carries into her artistic inquiries. As she transitioned into the global art scene, Zhan noted a troubling parallel between her early experiences and the competitive, often exclusionary structures within the professional art world. These structures prize visibility and commercial success, mirroring the societal pressures she experienced in her youth. Her art is a response to these pressures, offering both a critique and an alternative perspective on the values that dominate both Eastern and Western societies.

Erica Zhan's choice of mediums—performance art and video—allows her to manipulate familiar contexts in unfamiliar ways, thus inviting viewers to question the everyday competitions and transactions they often take for granted. In her critically acclaimed performance, *How to Become A Professional Artist*, Zhan turned the art gallery into a playground of absurdity where audience members could contribute to a mock-professional portfolio, satirizing the often arbitrary standards that define artistic success.



Erica Zhan | My Prescription Is A Long Confession | 2024



Erica Zhan | Teeth Gymnastics | 2024

Her video series, *Teeth Gymnastics*, mixes personal narrative with cultural critique. Here, Zhan uses her voiceover to reflect on her personal journey as an East Asian woman contending with conflicting societal norms about strength and femininity, juxtaposed with found footage that highlights broader cultural expectations.

In Zhan's practice, experimental writing is more than just a method of communication—it is a form of intellectual and emotional exploration. Her writings, often poetic and densely theoretical, serve as the backbone for projects that examine the rhetoric of advertising and the commodification inherent in global sporting events, as seen in her project *Whole Olympics Catalog*. Here, she reimagines the commercial language of sports advertisements, transforming it into a critique of how even the most communal and international events are packaged for

consumption.

In discussing the concept of 'nakedness', Zhan's work strips away the gloss and polish typical of professional art presentations, opting instead for a raw, unfiltered aesthetic that challenges the viewer's expectations of what art should be. This is evident in her installations, which often incorporate everyday materials and spontaneous interactions, forcing a confrontation with the underlying labor and emotional vulnerability hidden by professional facades.

The impact of various artist residencies on Erica Zhan's work cannot be understated. Her time at GlogauAIR, despite being an online engagement, and at the Ragdale Foundation allowed her to cultivate her ideas in environments that were intellectually stimulating and supportive. These experiences have not only broadened her artistic network but have also deepened her critical engagement with her own work, providing new insights and directions.

A significant challenge Zhan faces is the art world's replication of capitalist structures—its paradoxical position as both critic and participant in market-driven systems of value creation. Her work often confronts this head-on, using the art space itself as a site for critical intervention. By embedding irony and critique within her art, Zhan highlights and questions the production of artistic value, aiming to expose and dismantle the mechanisms through which art is commodified.

As Erica Zhan continues to evolve her practice, her works serve not only as reflections of her personal journey through contrasting cultural terrains but also as potent critiques of the broader social and economic systems that shape our experiences. By challenging the norms of the art world and its audiences, Zhan encourages a reevaluation of the ways in which art interacts with society, advocating for a more thoughtful and less commodified approach to artistic expression.

Erica Zhan's voice in contemporary art is a compelling call to view our interactions—both mundane and significant—through a lens that questions and challenges, making her a pivotal figure in the ongoing dialogue between art and society.

Erica Zhan | Teethgraphy | 2024



— Interview

Maria Koroleva

Can you tell us about your artistic journey and how your background in painting, drawing, and crafts influenced your current practice?

I've been drawing since early childhood, for as long as I can remember. I attended art school two to three times a week, so I never really doubted what I wanted to study. Though, at one point, I almost dropped out of university to become a marine animal trainer at the Moscow Zoo.

Still, I spent five wonderful years studying at the Moscow Pedagogical University, majoring in Fine Arts. I was lucky to learn from some of the best professors. University shaped all my core artistic skills. My favorite discipline has always been drawing, while my modest painting abilities are something I'd rather not boast about.

How did your experience in the exchange program at Shenyang Normal University in



China shape your artistic vision and techniques?

I ended up studying in China thanks to a mix of luck and sheer audacity. Sometime in my fourth year, I suddenly had the urge to study abroad, so one morning, I simply walked into the university's international office and asked about possible opportunities. They offered me China, and I immediately agreed—even though I had never been there before.

Shenyang University had an incredibly high level of both teachers and students. The Chinese work ethic amazed me, and I had to keep up. The program focused on drawing and traditional Chinese graphics (which was a stroke of luck for me!).

Studying in China truly expanded my perception of art and the world. Besides my studies, I practiced traditional martial arts and, of course, traveled across the country, making wonderful friends from all over the world.

You have a strong focus on animal imagery and mythical beings in your work. Could you explain the significance of these elements in your art?

I already mentioned my time working at the zoo. That's probably when my deep connection with animals first emerged. I spent a lot of time working with them and simply observing. Animal imagery has a profound impact on people, awakening something ancient and deeply rooted within us.



Maria Koroleva | Patriarchy | 2023

In your project statement, you mention the use of animal and mythical symbolism to explore complex ideas and emotions. Can you give us an example of how this symbolism manifests in one of your works?

A great example of how I use animal imagery and symbolism is my painting *Patriarchy*. It depicts a stag pierced by a sword. The stag is an ancient symbol of masculinity. In today's world, patriarchal ideas are not only being challenged but are also fading away. The sword piercing the stag's back symbolizes this shift—as if a physically weaker woman had to strike from behind to level the playing field. The stag is wounded but undeniably alive. The fire and gray ashes surrounding it represent our burning world, where old rules, traditions, and laws are being consumed by the flames.

How does tattooing influence your visual art? Do you find connections between these two creative outlets?

Tattooing is a very specific form of visual art, mainly because of its strict technical limitations. I've been a tattoo artist for over 12 years, and naturally, I've developed a kind of professional bias. Tattooing pushed me even further away from working with color and towards line work and graphics.

However, tattooing is also rich in psychology and symbolism. After so many years in the profession, I've honed my ability to read people's souls, as well as my knowledge of history, literature, and, of course, mythology.



Maria Koroleva | Magpies | 2025



Maria Koroleva | The Thunderance | 2024

Your works often evoke a deep emotional response. How do you approach creating a piece that balances both beauty and discomfort?

One of my main artistic goals is to evoke complex, mixed reactions in the viewer. A sense of confusion breaks familiar thought patterns, making people momentarily vulnerable and allowing them to see the work with fresh eyes. But for this to truly work, there needs to be a balance between something unsettling and something beautiful. The tension draws the viewer in, while the beauty keeps them engaged, creating a space where both discomfort and fascination exist together. This contrast opens the mind, helping me reach deeper and truly be heard.

You mentioned the importance of creating worlds and characters that engage viewers on a deep level. How do you make sure your work connects with the audience on such an emotional level?

That's a complicated question. I guess, a world created through art, along with the characters that inhabit it, must be complete and self-sufficient. Only then can it captivate the viewer and convey all the emotions and thoughts I want to express.

Magdalena Rakowska

I am an artist who has spent a lifetime refining my drawing and painting skills. I studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracov and work with various techniques, but I primarily focus on oil painting. My art is a constant exploration of finding the best way to capture emotion and expression.

Magdalena Rakowska | Cool | 2025





— Interview

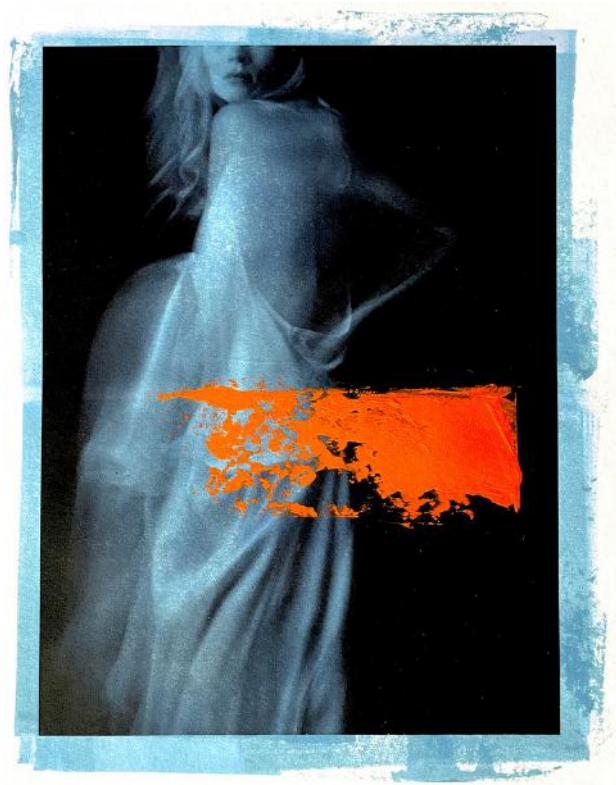
Michael Alan Coakes

Your works are often described as being rich with allure, balancing bold simplicity with dream-like mystery. What is the source of this allure, and how do you achieve that balance in your work?

I've always been attracted to bold images that manage to embody a sense of elegance. Images that leave a sense of mystery, often by omitting something via creative cropping of the subject or through a creative visual obstruction that leave the viewers "wanting more" or allow them to complete the image in their own mind.

You mentioned that you don't always view your work created with a camera as photography, as you might use other media like charcoal or paint. How does this perspective influence your creative process?

Most of my recent work IS photographic but my early work was done with graphite, charcoal or paint. That process of rendering or developing an image is the foundation of my process. In virtually all of the newer work, I sketch the images out in pencil or pen before even deciding who I want to work with as the model. Those sketches make it easy for me to foresee and make adjustments in my compositions. It helps me to better communicate my visual goals with the model as well. At that point the camera is just a tool to create a finished rendering of the concept in my sketches.



Michael Alan Coakes | Cool Flame

Growing up near Chicago, how did the local visual culture or visits to the Art Institute of Chicago shape your approach to art and your style?

I grew up in the late 60s and early 70s. Pop Art, Op Art and Psychedelic Art were in vogue in the popular culture of TV and music at the time. I was especially enthralled with the art common to the marketing of music scene of that time. Meanwhile, visits to the AIC included some of the Pop Art and Op Art but offered a bridge to the works of classic art masters from Monet and Renoir to Grant Wood and Edward Hopper. The diversity of what art and artistic expression could be seemed profound.

After a successful career in commercial art, you returned to fine art. What was the turning point that made you realize your true passion for fine art?

Working in the field of commercial art can be fun and rewarding in many ways. The sharing of ideas and collaborating with individuals can help expand your perceptions and sense of creative possibilities but it rarely gives you a platform for your own vision, voice and message. Fine art offers that and through that opportunity, a chance to connect with others and perhaps

make them feel a sense of being understood or touched emotionally.

Can you share more about your experiences in over 70 solo and group exhibitions? How have these experiences impacted the way you approach your art and interact with the art community?

The thing I found most surprising was the way having my art exhibited changed me so dramatically. I was, for most of my life, what would refer to as, a painful introvert. I found talking to anyone who wasn't a close friend, or to groups of people, scary and beyond uncomfortable.

Attending exhibits that my work was part of, whether solo or group shows, gave me an opportunity to ask people what their perceptions or questions about my work provoked. This sparked conversations and in short time I realized I'd become comfortable talking with strangers even. I'm still a relatively quiet and reserved personality but I've found some comfortable middle ground between being shy and gregarious.

You mention that the tools you use are less important than the work itself. Can you elaborate on this philosophy and how it influences your choice of medium for each project?

For me, having experience with a number of mediums and artistic tools allows me to choose



Michael Alan Coakes | Horizons About To Begin

which will best express the emotion that I'm trying to convey. For instance, some of my most recent work is a big departure from the work I've been doing for the last fifteen years.

I've been pondering the concept of "horizons" as a metaphor for something that's universally common in everyone's life. The idea that there's a goal or beginning or end of a chapter in our life, like a horizon looming out before us. But even when we reach that goal, there's still another horizon (or goal) out there to reach, to make the journey to. It could be a job, or a relationship, an educational degree or parenthood. It's an abstract idea and I think it's one that can represent some very emotional responses for a lot of people. For me the best tools to explore this concept is paint, brushes and palette knives, but those don't matter so much as the response the final piece of art provokes from the viewer.

Many of your subjects feel familiar yet vaguely unknown. How do you approach creating characters or scenes that evoke this feeling of familiarity without giving away too much?

More than "giving away too much", I think of it more as not defining things too much. For instance, if, as an artist, you portray a figure too specifically, maybe giving them too much of an element of identity, you're basically creating a portrait (it represents someone). But if you leave a sense of vagueness that figure can represent a feeling or a state of mind. Something the viewer can more easily relate to.



Michael Alan Coakes | Horizons A Tale Untold

— Interview

Jennifer Peart

Your work blends natural landscapes with graphic motifs and architectural elements. How do you approach the fusion of these seemingly different aspects in your paintings?

I see Earth's landscapes as living archives, layered with both human and ecological histories. In my work, I merge organic forms with structured, architectural elements, drawing inspiration from science fiction and retrofuturistic design to create visionary landscapes. Influenced by visionary fiction writers, I imagine worlds where built environments and natural systems exist in deep reciprocity. Portals, arches, and celestial motifs appear throughout my compositions as gateways to speculative futures - landscapes that feel both familiar and reimagined. These structures aren't imposed upon the land but emerge as part of its evolving story, suggesting thresholds between past and future, the earthly and the celestial, the seen and the possible.

The themes of balance, coexistence, and renewal are evident in your work. Could you elaborate on how these ideas inform your creative process?

I think about painting as a way to navigate relationships - the relationships between past and future, structure and wildness, decay and regeneration. My compositions often explore balance as a conversation between architectural elements and nature. I'm inspired by restoration and renewal, by the idea that landscapes are always in flux, shaped by both human imagination and nature's resilience. This manifests in my work as graphic motifs or planetary echoes embedded in thriving ecosystems, as well as built structures dissolving into lush forests. I believe that renewal is always possible. Our ingenuity and science-fueled imaginations can be harnessed to reclaim our roles as stewards of this extraordinary planet. We must re-remember that we are not separate from nature, but active participants in its unfolding story.



Your paintings are described as "portals of possibility." How do you envision the future through your art, and what kind of futures do you hope to convey to your audience?

I paint landscapes not just as they are, but as they could be. My work is a way of asking: What if we designed human infrastructure with deep reciprocity in mind? What if our built spaces honored and amplified the natural world instead of fragmenting it? I draw inspiration from science fiction, modern architecture, social activists' radical imagination, and ecological realities - visions of off-world habitats designed to preserve biodiversity, restored landscapes where past harm has been undone, urban architectural design that integrates permaculture farming, and transportation planning that includes wild animal and insect migration. Through speculative imagery, I layer possibilities and opportunities, inviting viewers to step into alternative visions of our future relationship with nature. Coexistence is not just a goal or utopian idea, but a return to a cultural practice. Indigenous peoples across the globe are the original stewards of this knowledge, having lived in balance with their environments for millennia. By reimagining our relationship with the land, my paintings offer a hopeful glimpse into futures where human innovation and ecological wisdom work in harmony rather than opposition.

How does your connection to nature influence your work? Are there specific natural landscapes or moments that inspire you in your creative journey?

My relationship with nature is at the core of my practice. I don't see myself as separate from the land I walk on and the water I swim in. When I'm in nature, preferably by a flowing body of water, I feel most whole, most in sync with the universe. I grew up in the rural Sierra Nevada

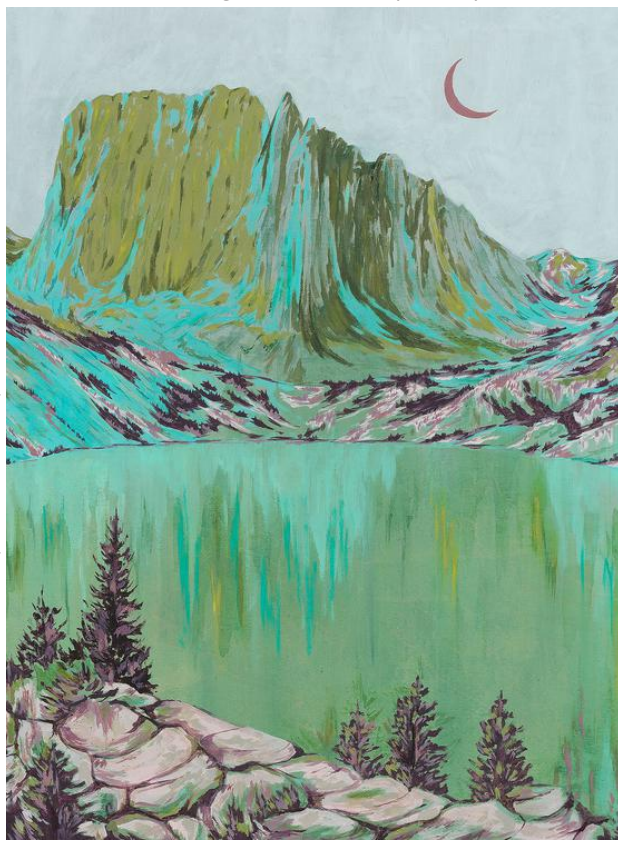
foothills of Northern California, where my family camped and hiked often, and those early experiences shaped my understanding of place. I have an early memory of drawing on a granite rock face with a charred stick and watching the rain wash it away. That imagery echoes in how I approach painting - as something both deeply sacred yet impermanent. Now, I seek out landscapes that hold layered histories - places where human presence and natural forces are entwined, where fate is at a tipping point, where past and future overlap.

Can you discuss how mid-century modern architecture and design have influenced your work, and how you integrate these references into your landscapes?

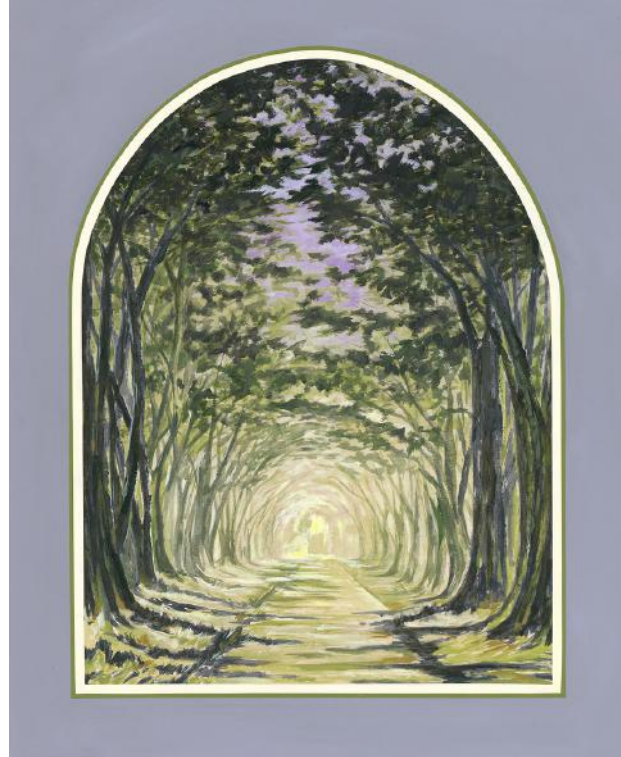
Mid-century modern and atomic-era design have always fascinated me - the clean lines, balanced color schemes, and the era's optimistic embrace of the future. There's a deep sense of hope embedded in the aesthetic, a belief that visual arts and architecture could shape the world or at least transform how we feel about it. Artists, architects, and designers of the time saw creativity as a means of progress, using form, color, and space to inspire a sense of possibility. In my paintings, I reference this optimism through geometric overlays, floating planes, color choices, and structural elements that echo modernist forms. But I also push these references into a speculative space, imagining how design might evolve in future landscapes - how it could become more adaptive, more symbiotic with nature, carrying that same spirit of hope into new, yet-to-be-imagined worlds.

What role do color palettes and spatial inversions play in your paintings? How do they contribute to the overall narrative of your pieces?

Color is a tool for both emotion and world-building in my work. I often use heightened or unexpected palettes to



Jennifer Peart | Pine Lake Prism | 2024



Jennifer Peart | Where Trees Touch Sky | 2024

shift perception - to suggest that these landscapes exist in a liminal space, somewhere between memory and possibility. I love my avocado and olive greens. Muted pinks or dusty roses are other favorites. But mostly, it's the interplay of unexpected colors that really pleases me. The spatial inversions, like flipping sky and ground or inserting translucent geometric shapes, are a way of reorienting the viewer, inviting them to step outside conventional perspectives. These techniques allude to the fluidity between past and future, natural and built, seen and unseen. They create invitations. Other times, they add a sense of movement - of landscapes that are alive and in transition, much like the real ecosystems I use as subject matter.

Your works seem to have a futuristic and speculative quality. How do science fiction and your interpretation of alternative realities inform your visual language?

Science fiction - particularly visionary fiction - expands the imagination, blending science, spirituality, and radical possibility to explore how we might shape a more just, interconnected future. It challenges us to imagine what's possible when we approach our present challenges with creativity, collaboration, and innovation. Rather than just depicting dystopias or idealized utopias, visionary fiction explores the evolving relationships between technology, nature, and society.

My paintings are deeply influenced by my reading habits. I read and re-read the works of Octavia Butler and Ursula K. Le Guin. Their ideas and world-building help me create paintings that aren't just about beautiful places or escapist worlds, but about hope - about asking, What if we designed a future where coexistence with nature is the norm? My love for these books, as well as fandoms like Star Trek and tabletop games such as Dungeons & Dragons, fuels my dreams for the world I will one day leave behind. My future visions are not perfect, but they are intentionally more attuned to the well-being of a living planet.

— Interview

Alice Finnerty

Can you tell us about your journey into painting and what drew you to oil painting in particular?

I started painting seriously in classes for young adults at the Art Students League. It was my first time working with oil paint and working from a model, and I immediately took to it. I was drawn to the way the paint blended on the canvas, the richness of the colors, and the slower, more flexible drying time compared to other mediums I had used. The process felt natural and engaging, and it quickly became something I wanted to continue exploring. Working with a slower drying medium allowed for more time to rework the composition and layer the colors with more precision and accuracy.

Your work often blends representation with abstraction. How do you approach finding that balance in your paintings?

In striving for a balance between representation and abstraction, I focus on how form, color, and composition interact in my work. I usually start with something loose yet tangible like a gestural suggestion of a figure, landscape, or an object and then I allow the painting process to guide me towards representing the form more accurately. Usually this means layering the paint to build up shapes and tonality changes. I try to use loose brushstrokes to capture the essence of my subject and the qualities that make them unique as opposed to striving for hyperrealism, yet as I layer the paint over time the subject itself becomes more representationally captured in the painting.



You mention studying at Wesleyan University and attending residencies. How have those experiences influenced your current practice?

Studying at Wesleyan University, particularly taking drawing classes there, helped me develop a strong foundation in observation and composition. Those classes encouraged me to think critically about form and space while also pushing me to experiment with different materials and approaches. That balance between structure and exploration has carried over into my painting practice, especially as I navigate the space between representation and abstraction.

This summer, I'll be attending two residencies at SVA in fine art contemporary practices and I'm excited to see how the experience will further shape my work. These residencies will provide the time, space and structure to immerse myself in painting without distractions. It will also be a great opportunity to gain insight into my work through critiques and engaging with other residency participants. The feedback and critiques from professors and other artists will be the most valuable part of the program, from my perspective.

I hope that my work gets pushed and that I get to explore more about painting.

Light and texture seem central to your work. Could you tell us more about how you use layered glazing and impasto techniques to create depth in your paintings?

Light and texture play a crucial role in my paintings, and I use both layered glazing and impasto techniques to create depth and atmosphere. Glazing allows me to build up transparent layers of color, creating subtle shifts in tone and luminosity that give the painting a sense of depth. This technique helps me capture light as the layers interact and create a glow that wouldn't be possible with a single application of paint.

In contrast, I use impasto to introduce texture and physicality to the surface. Thick brushstrokes or palette knife applications create areas of depth, drawing attention to certain parts of the painting and emphasizing certain unique attributes of my subjects.

You reference the works of Gerhard Richter and Alice Neel in your practice. How have their approaches to art influenced your own?

Each of these artists has influenced my approach to painting, but in very different ways. Richter's ability to move fluidly between representation and abstraction resonates with me—his blurred, layered surfaces and the way he allows chance to play a role in his process have encouraged me to venture into abstraction in my work.

Alice Neel, on the other hand, has impacted the way I approach the figure. Her portraits feel immediate and expressive, capturing not necessarily a precise likeness but a deeper psychological presence, social context, and the character of her subject. I admire her loose, confident brushwork and the way she allows color and line to remain raw and visible. By looking at both artists, I've found ways to balance representational work with spontaneity in my practice.

Your work seems to be deeply rooted in research, with regular visits to museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Frick. How does studying Renaissance and Baroque techniques inform your process today?

Studying Renaissance and Baroque techniques has had a significant influence on my approach to



Alice Finnerty | Brooklyn branch

painting, particularly in how I think about composition, light, and surface treatment.

Attending lectures about how masters achieved particular effects and visiting museums allows me to closely observe the ways these painters used layering, glazing, and chiaroscuro to create depth and drama. Seeing these works in person, rather than in reproductions, helps me understand the material qualities of the paint. Studying these paintings also influences my approach to composition and the layout of figures on the canvas.

How do you incorporate your studies of human emotion and perception into your portraiture and landscapes? Is there a particular emotional quality you aim to convey?

In both my portraiture and landscapes, I'm interested in capturing a sense of emotional presence—something that goes beyond representation and invites the viewer to engage on a more introspective level. My studies of human emotion and perception help me think about how subtle shifts in color, form, and composition can evoke certain moods or psychological states. In my portraits, I focus on gesture, expression, and the way paint itself can convey feeling. I often allow brushstrokes to remain visible, suggesting movement or the passage of time. This sense of imperfection and fluidity mirrors the complexity of human emotion.

Ewa Walkowska is a Polish-born and raised artist based in Turin, Italy. In 2024, she earned her bachelor's degree in Architecture from Politecnico di Torino. Though trained in architectural drawing, Ewa is primarily a self-taught figurative artist. Her background in architecture influences her sensitivity to perspective, space, and structure, which subtly weaves through her work. Over the years, her work has also been shaped by mentorship from local artists in Kraków and her own exploration of the human figure and emotional storytelling. Ewa's work has been recognized by the Young Master Scholarship, which she was awarded twice, in 2018 and 2022. During her residency in Munich, Germany, she developed a series of works that were later exhibited in Germany and Poland and accompanied by a published catalogue. In 2025, she was selected for the extended Longlist of the Jackson's Art Prize and received the "Emerging Virtuoso" award from Lumen Art Gallery, which included participation in their online exhibition. Her work was also featured in "Finale", an exhibition organized by Aedra Fine Arts. Ewa continues to develop her artistic voice, seeking new ways to tell stories through her paintings, always focusing on the emotional weight of simple, fleeting moments.

Artist Statement

Growing up, my country, Poland, was split due to different political views, frequent changes in major laws, inequality and marginalisation. All that influenced our daily lives. However, for me, these were also years of appreciating small things. I spent summers playing with other children in my grandma's garden, autumns making "salads" from leaves and dead insects, winters going to local hills to slide on sledges and springs putting our feet in a cold river when returning home from school. Through all that, I learned how to find beauty in the most ordinary moments and gained respect for the strength of the human spirit. In my art, I try to further this journey by capturing the essence of ordinary moments around me and showing the reality of life. By focusing on the simple, often overlooked aspects of everyday existence, I find meaning in the day-to-day. I celebrate the authenticity of every day and offer a perspective on life through my eyes, highlighting how important it is to cherish the normal life.





Ewa Walkowska | Girl with a cabbage | 2024

— Interview

Monique Veyt



You transitioned from a career in psychology and human resources to become a full-time artist. What was the driving force behind this major change in your life?

From an early age, I felt a deep longing to understand life more fully and to assist others with that knowledge. When it came time to choose a field of study, architecture crossed my mind, but my desire to delve into life's mysteries prevailed. Studying psychology at university seemed the logical step. After graduating from Ghent University (Belgium) I worked as a therapist and as a human resources manager. I was profoundly devoted to my work and to the people I was working with, and I'm convinced that in this capacity, I positively impacted many lives.

However, I felt it wasn't enough: I needed to dig deeper. I had to pursue what I had been longing for since childhood: a more comprehensive understanding of life. Simultaneously, I wanted to infuse more of 'myself' into my 'work'. Around the year 2000, I resigned from my executive position to give my life a new direction. My primary aim was to delve deeper into 'how life works', but soon, and quite unexpectedly, I started painting.... Much like Pablo Neruda's 'Poetry arrived in search of me' I can say that 'One day art, creating art myself, simply emerged from Within me.' It was an unexpected yet extremely fascinating turn, which I was eager to explore further.

Could I have known then that creating art would become my main occupation? That it would lead me to what I had been aspiring for so long, particularly a deeper understanding of life, of human life, human nature, and existence in general? That this would become my way of reaching out to people, gently and lovingly, saying 'look how beautiful you are, how many refined gifts you carry within, all warm, sweet and refined... Realize how capable all this makes you of bringing beautiful things into your life and the world? All this without being didactic or preachy, of course... the last thing I want is to be didactic or preachy...' "I am not a teacher, I just want to sing the colors of my Soul" I write somewhere. What I wish is simply to share what I feel Within.. and it seems that at birth, I brought with me some gifts to sense beauty, to picture it or put it into words in a way people love to connect with. Between the day I made the pivotal decision to resign from my executive position and now there has been a span of about 25 years during which I have lived in relative seclusion to research, develop, and refine my art further. I wasn't in a hurry to present my Art and Knowing to the world...Quality wines also start with a long ripening on the barrel don't they?

How does your background in psychology influence the way you create art, particularly in capturing the "inner beauty" of human nature?

I'll begin by describing the pivotal moment when I first realized 'that there was something': One day, I found myself sitting on the floor, surrounded by my initial creations that had spontaneously emerged from within. As I revisited them, titles began to form in my mind - 'Tenderness', 'Human Warmth', 'Unfolding', 'Bubbles of Warmth', 'Mercy'... This realization quieted me, as I sensed these titles represented characteristics we all carry within. 'Gifts' seemed a more fitting concept - gifts belonging to our Human Nature, inner gifts that shouldn't be ignored but recognized as a REALITY! You could call this my 'aha-moment'. 'The Beauty of Our Human Nature' would become my theme - a melody my heart had always been silently singing. (Despite sometimes painful experiences, I had maintained an unwavering belief in the fundamental beauty and goodness of humanity. On my website's 'Musings and Poetry' page, a piece titled 'The Fairy Girl' evokes this journey.)

As my work evolved, a fascinating phenomenon occurred: a cross-pollination between my artistic expressions and 'my' science, psychology. My creations seemed to point to deeper, often-overlooked realities of human nature and potential. Meanwhile, my scientific, inquiring mind provided curiosity and urged me to transcend the anecdotal, evaluating initial findings for their broader significance. The reactions of people to my first paintings also contributed to this process. I'm grateful for their input! Over the years, this cross-pollination has continued. My art has evolved, my eagerness to create beauty has become ever-present, and my insights into 'how life works' have broadened and deepened, thanks to my art.

How do I 'capture' our inner beauty and identify it as part of our human nature? This process is encapsulated in the poem at the top of my website's 'About' page: "Beauty is part of who I am. Beauty is part of who you are. Human warmth is part of who I am. Human warmth is part of who you are. A desire to unfold the beauty that I am carrying within me is part of who I am. A desire to unfold the beauty that you are carrying within you is part of who you are. Within me it is sweet and warm. Within you it is sweet and warm."

The first step is 'tuning into myself'. This ability to tune into oneself, to feel who one truly is, is a capability specific to our human nature. I've become familiar with this process. In these moments, I FEEL aspects of my inner beauty: I feel

beauty and understand it as part of who I am; I also feel deep human warmth, among other qualities. Moreover, I clearly feel a longing to bring these qualities into my life and the world. This longing is also part of our human nature, it is innate to it! At the same time I can sense that everyone else carries these gifts within themselves... Hence the words of my 'statement poem'. I can rely on this in-depth feeling. I've refined it over the years (yes, this requires practice, some courage, and especially inner honesty). This way, I've become a clear 'feeler', and.... 'knowing myself, I know others': feeling my own beauty and gifts, I know that others also possess them. It's that simple. If someone else were to write a similar poem, different traits and gifts might come to the fore, such as bravery and boldness, which are also part of the immense range of human inner possibilities, but which I possess to a lesser extent. For me, human warmth, sweetness, sensitivity, delicacy, and sensuality are more prominent and consequently often appear in my creations. Many people connect with these qualities.

Your work often emphasizes delicacy and sensitivity. How do you achieve these qualities in your pieces, and what role do they play in conveying the message of your art?

Delicacy and sensitivity are inherent qualities we all possess. They enrich our lives when we allow them to flourish, as do many other inner riches. Within me, these qualities are prominent; they're always in my feeling space. When I feel well, they're present. When I feel them, I experience joy, serenity, and benevolence. They must be among my 'core qualities,' which is why they manifest so frequently in my artistic expressions, be they paintings, writings, or photographs.

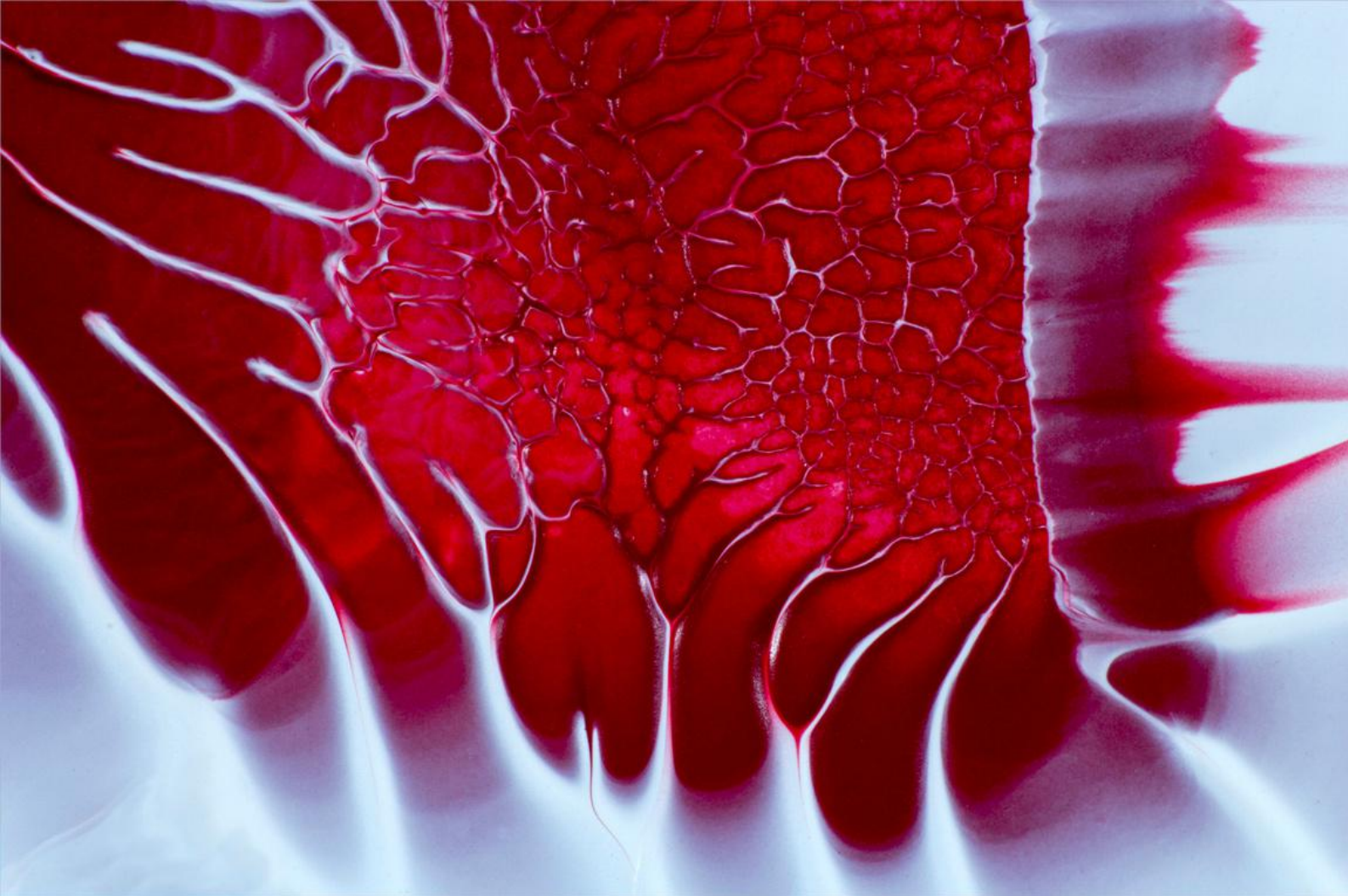
Therefore, I don't have to 'do' anything to infuse them into my pieces. My creations simply carry the energy of these qualities. These gifts, innate to our being and expressed in my creations, seem to resonate with many people. You could say that they mirror the beauty of sensitivity and delicacy that those individuals carry within themselves. It would be wonderful if people realized that the sensitivity and delicacy they perceive reflect their own beautiful essence. Isn't beauty in the eye of the beholder?

Could you describe the process behind one of your polyptychs or intimate installations? How do you approach these complex projects?

With pleasure. They're somewhat my 'pampered children'... It all begins with what I call 'my miniatures'. I enjoy painting small – very small. I marvel at the beauty that unfolds in the intimate space right before me, so to speak, 'between my arms', even 'between my hands'. I refer to these paintings as my 'miniatures' by analogy with the miniatures of the Middle Ages and surrounding centuries. Those miniatures 'illuminated' manuscripts and later books. I wish my 21st-century miniatures to illuminate our consciousness a bit... With these miniatures – or their larger siblings – I then create polyptychs and 'intimate art installations' suitable for both homes and more public spaces. The 'intimate art installations' comprise a number of related paintings, along with one or more magnifying glasses to explore the refined beauty initially concealed. Unexpected details, such as extremely fine lines, curls, and tiny craters, then become visible! This 'exploring activity' generates a sweet, relaxing, meditative, and contemplative state of being! Moreover, this process of hovering the magnifying glass over the miniature painting closely resembles the process of 'tuning into oneself'

Monique Veyt | Lovely nuances of purity | 2021





Monique Veyt | So many life veins | 2021

to feel one's own inner gifts and beauty, a central theme in both the wisdom I share and my artistic creations. 'Wonder' is what we feel when exploring what unveils beneath the magnifying glass. I can spend hours upon hours, repeatedly viewing and exploring these miniature paintings with a magnifying glass! Wonder opens the heart and mind... The same applies to the polyptychs, where I bring several related miniatures together. These polyptychs often evoke a sense of sacrality. They often feel like gems to me.

Your art includes diverse mediums, from glass/acrylic panels to macro photography. How do you decide which medium best conveys the message or emotion you want to express?

My creations consistently incorporate elements such as lightness, playfulness, purity, clarity, and sensuality, though the focus can vary slightly. In my polyptychs and intimate art installations, the emphasis is on the process of tuning into beauty, which is often overlooked at a superficial level. The viewer must actively engage: bringing devoted attention, handling a magnifying glass, and opening their mind and heart to wonder. These creations invite gentle interactions. As previously mentioned, the process of tuning into the painting to detect its beauty mirrors the process of tuning into oneself to uncover the somehow hidden inner beauty within the viewer. Here, the cross-pollination of my science and my art is at its strongest. It's also inherent to these formats that they contain an invitation to somehow broaden consciousness. In this sense, they hold a unique place in my art. I also utilize my gift for articulating feelings and sensations: I provide titles, subtly formulated yet deeply felt,

that can guide the viewer a bit in their own introspective process.

The other half of my creative expression – where I place my designs for glass and acrylic panels – is more purely 'art for art's sake' or 'beauty for beauty's sake'. I feel an eagerness to create beauty! This eagerness has become ever-present, and I seem to have an infinite inspiration for creating new images and forms. I entrust the production of the glass or acrylic panels or stained glass to specialists, but I love to deliver designs. In my mind's eye, I envision them in homes, public spaces, and even sacred ones. My wish is to 'let them radiate' space, color, purity, serenity, and peace... to transform a place into a serene and joyful sanctuary. Here, I have a more precise vision of the desired outcome, but the designs always carry aspects of what beauty means to me, such as lightness, purity, clarity, refined simplicity, and so on. I hope they can enhance or bring such energies to the spaces where they are integrated.

And oh, my macro photos and close-ups of flowers... All those lovely flowers everywhere! How much they mirror our beautiful gifts of purity, innocence, and refined sensuality! I love to tune into the sensual beauty of flowers! My favorites are white ones with a touch of color... Here too, I 'tune into' them and enjoy viewing them from different angles, always close, always intimate, and what I then capture is delicacy, purity, and sensuality. The heart then produces tones that soar high into the heavens! I show their beauty, their refined sensuality... Who wouldn't want such energy in their home? In their bedroom?

In this way, each of my mediums has its own technique, energy, and perhaps purpose. On my website, I categorize them according to what they represent in terms of gifts of

human beauty, but this classification serves mainly to provide some structure to the whole. So, don't worry too much about the classification!

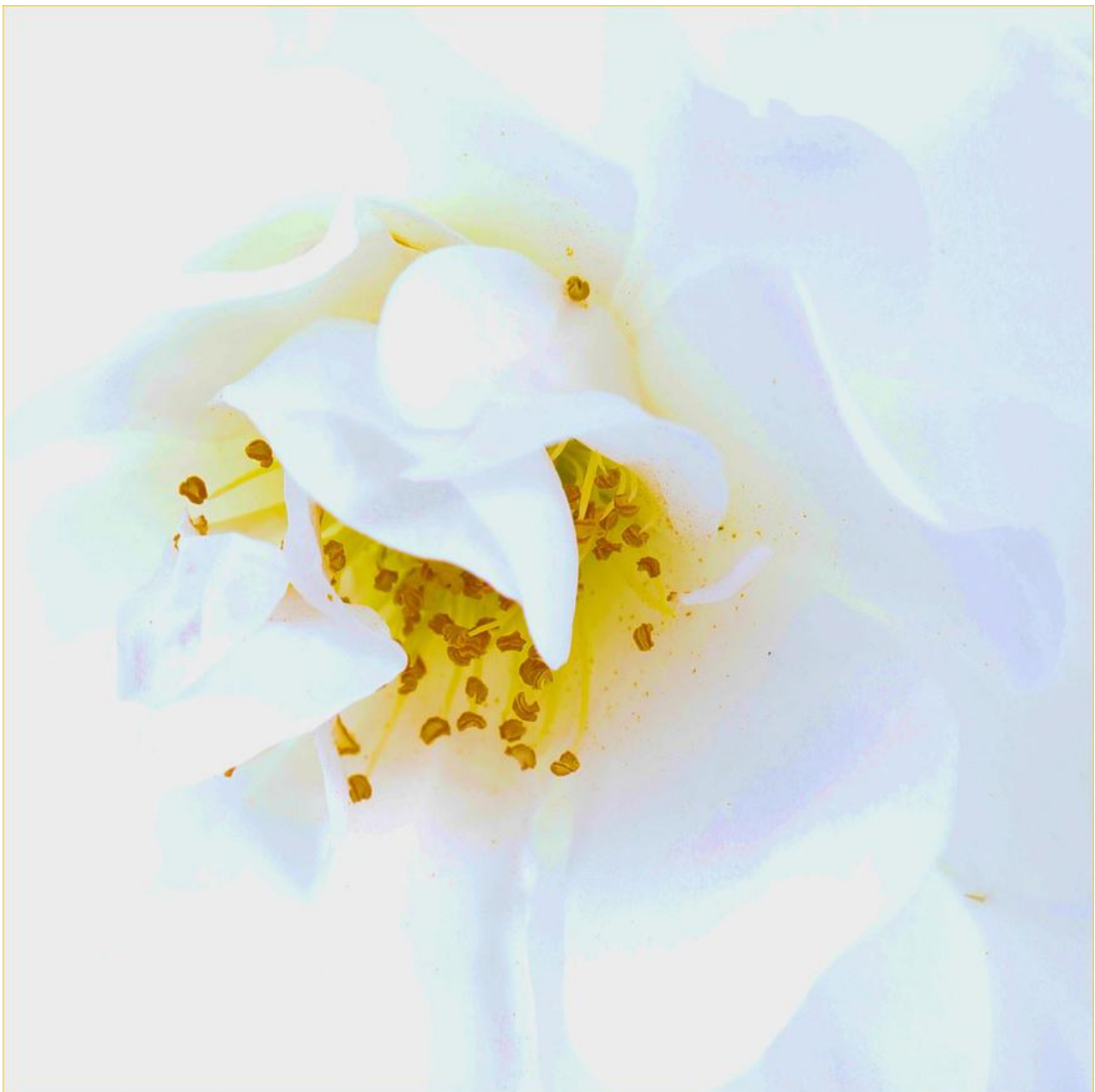
Perhaps you will ask yourself why I create only pieces that depict beauty? Do I have such a naïve view of life, ignoring the pain in people and in the world? I have tried to also picture the pain, but it doesn't work for me. The images that come out 'don't work' and my creativity shrinks to dead. Above and beyond: it seems to be my 'task' somehow and it is certainly my joy to shine a light on our inner beauty, gifts and capabilities and to point to a way out of pain and struggle... my small contribution to the world...

What does the concept of "connection while preserving everyone's individuality" mean to you, and how do you bring it to life through your artwork for families and organizations?

Connectedness with others is a beautiful thing, and this capacity is a human gift. However, above all, we remain individuals, with our unique inner riches and 'Soul Color,' as I love to call it. This must not be sacrificed. It is precisely the

differences in being that contribute to an interesting and flourishing family, organization, or community. To illuminate the 'coming together of both aspects' – connectedness and individuality – I offer a special art service called 'Beautiful Connections'. This involves creating a group of pieces, such as a series of paintings (it can also be an installation), that begins with a 'master' piece and then evolves by taking one or more aspects of that 'master' and incorporating new aspects (the uniqueness of that person or department) into each subsequent painting. All of this, of course, is done in my own style. Here, I bring my capacity for easily sensing people and situations, which adds depth to the experience and the art. As with every commissioned work, there is pleasant communication.

A note to finish: Of course, 'Atelier Monique Veyt' has an official postal address, but do you know where the real 'Atelier Monique Veyt' is? Indeed, it is Within me. It is there where every single creation originates...



Monique Veyt | Sensuality in White | 2017

I'm **Mostafa Seyyed Ebrahimi**—a passionate immersive artist and storyteller. Growing up in a deeply restrictive religious environment, I learned early about the weight of dogma. Instead of extinguishing my curiosity, that upbringing ignited a quiet rebellion in me. It instilled a drive to question and challenge any ideology that demands blind faith—be it religious, political, or cultural. I turned to art as both a refuge and a form of resistance, a way to push back against unexamined norms and express the truths I felt inside. My artistic philosophy is rooted in resisting imposed norms and asking difficult questions. I believe art should disturb complacency—it should spark dialogue and invite reflection. For this reason, I gravitate toward immersive media like virtual reality and interactive installations, which allow me to plunge viewers directly into the world of my ideas. When an audience can step inside an experience rather than just observe it, they are more likely to question their own assumptions. Through these immersive encounters, I aim to gently provoke thought and encourage people to re-examine and deconstruct the beliefs they take for granted. I often marry traditional techniques with contemporary technology to craft my work. A piece might begin as a pencil sketch or a line of poetry and then transform into a digital painting or a virtual reality experience. By bridging the ancient and the futuristic in this way, I strive to create art that is experiential, intellectual, and emotionally compelling. My background in design helps me give form to these visions, equipping me with the skills to build cohesive, interactive worlds. I use those skills only to serve the story and emotion of each project—never as the focus of the work. For me, art is a space without borders. I refuse to confine my practice to any single medium, culture, or technology. My work draws freely from my heritage and the contemporary world alike, finding its home in the spaces where East meets West, where the physical converges with the virtual, and where tradition intersects with innovation. In these intersections, I find the freedom to speak to universal human experiences while staying true to my own voice.

Project Statement

"Ooh, La La!" is an immersive XR art installation that reimagines the realm of play by combining traditional notions of "toy" with the charged symbolism of the sex-toy. At its core, this piece subverts societal norms through an interplay of humor, color, and sensory exploration. In doing so, it provokes questions about intimacy, identity, and how we navigate taboos surrounding sexuality. I was compelled to examine the way "sex-toy" as a term is simultaneously familiar and forbidden, and to explore how reframing it simply as a "toy" might radically shift our perceptions.





Mostafa S. Ebrahimi | Ooh La La

— Interview

Aiyana Ku

How does your upbringing in a country of nomads, influenced by various cultures, impact your creative process and the themes you explore in your art?

My background, shaped by the intersection of various cultural traditions, has a profound influence on my art. In my work, I explore themes of identity, memory, and emotion, seeking to understand how cultural codes shift and take on new meanings. I am inspired by the ideas of transition, freedom, and the constant search for self—this process is reflected in the layered nature of my compositions, the juxtaposition of diverse elements, and the contrast between tradition and modernity. Art, for me, is a way to reflect on my past and its impact on my present, bridging personal and collective experiences.

Your work blends classical techniques with digital and mixed media. Can you explain the role each of these media plays in your creative practice?



Aiyana Ku | Contemporary King | 2024



My artistic education provided me with a solid foundation in classical techniques, allowing me to work deeply with textures and materials. Digital technologies expand my creative horizons, enabling me to work with forms, colors, and layers without the constraints of physical space. Mixed media, for me, is the opportunity to blend the tactile nature of traditional art with the flexibility of digital tools, creating unique visual effects. Collage, as a new medium, opened up new possibilities for experimenting with compositions, texts, and colors, adding an element of unpredictability that makes each piece unique.

In your collage series, there seems to be an emphasis on emotions such as inner turmoil and introspection. How do you translate these complex feelings into visual language?

In my collages, I often explore deep emotions and themes related to my perception of the world, inner turmoil, and the search for self. Collage has become a way for me to express these feelings through the combination of randomly found elements. This became possible thanks to my sister Aiyari, who introduced me to various collage techniques and approaches, opening up a boundless world of possibilities and allowing me to dive deeper into this medium. With layering, fragmentation, and unexpected combinations of shapes, I create visual metaphors. The overlay of textures, contrasting colors, and sharp transitions help convey emotions, allowing the viewer to intuitively feel these states. Text in my works also plays an important role — it is connected to the image but doesn't offer definitive answers, leaving space for personal reflection.

You mention that art should not prescribe meaning. How do you encourage the viewer to engage with your work on a personal level without providing direct interpretations?

For me, it's important that the viewer feels free to interpret my work. I leave space for subjective perception, creating an atmosphere that encourages personal associations and reflections without providing clear answers. Instead of specific plots or explanations, I use a combination of visuals and text that evoke emotions and associations but leave open questions. Visual motifs, abstract forms, and symbols help establish a dialogue in which each viewer can find their own meaning. It's like an unfinished story, which every viewer can complete in their own way, depending on their feelings and perceptions.

How do you approach the act of creating a collage, and what does the process of layering and juxtaposing different elements represent to you?

For me, collage is a process in which the outcome cannot be fully controlled, and that's where its magic lies. Each time, I start by searching for elements, not knowing what images or forms they will ultimately create. This process is intuitive, like assembling a puzzle from unexpected pieces. Layering and juxtaposing elements is a way to work with memory, emotions, and cultural codes. I see it as a game of meanings, where chaos and harmony can coexist, and where unexpected combinations reveal new interpretations. Collage is about exploring randomness and possibility, where elements that weren't meant to connect find each other and create



Aiyana Ku | Crazier than any fiction | 2024

something new and unique.

What role do you think color plays in your work, especially when it comes to conveying the emotional undercurrent of your pieces?

Color plays an important role in my work as a tool for emotional impact. In collage, I have complete freedom to experiment with color, its combinations, and interactions. Color helps me set accents and direct the viewer's attention, as well as convey the emotional undercurrent of the piece. I love that in collage, I can combine unexpected color combinations that might seem incompatible in classical painting, creating unique visual effects and atmospheres.

How does your cultural heritage influence the symbolism and aesthetics in your work?

My cultural heritage deeply influences my visual language, especially in terms of the perception of space and time. In Kazakh culture, where traditions play an important role, I often explore how these elements can be reinterpreted in contemporary art. My works address relevant social issues that are sometimes taboo in my culture, such as the role of women, the importance of their place in society and the perception of their bodies. I use art as a means to engage with these questions, exploring them through visual images and metaphors. Additionally, I raise the theme of self-discovery and finding one's calling through experimentation and unconventional approaches, creating space for dialogue about personal and social issues that remain significant and important in contemporary Kazakh culture.



Aiyana Ku | Reflection on the importance | 2024

Sebastien Theraulaz

You mention that your work explores memory and temporality. Could you describe how your personal memories influence the themes and subjects of your creations?

Memory is central to my work, not as a nostalgic reflection, but as a material that can be broken down and reimagined. My personal experiences often serve as the starting point, but they are always transformed—reshaped by the passage of time, perception, and reinterpretation. Having lived in various cultural environments, I am especially interested in how recollections are influenced by place, individual stories, and collective history.

For instance, in my cyanotype series *Photos d'amis*, I explore the themes of presence and absence, using radiographs that evoke traces rather than fixed identities. My approach is never about preserving the past but embracing its fluidity—how it evolves, fades, and sometimes reemerges in unexpected forms.

In your project statement, you discuss mystification and the manipulation of perceptions of the past. Could you share an example of how you implement this concept in your work?



Sebastien Theraulaz | Smog

In my project *Volistalgie*, I explore mystification and the manipulation of past perceptions by creating collage photo prints that embrace unpredictability. I gather materials from random books, unbinding them and cutting them into fragments. These fragments, like lost memories, drift through an old neighborhood being overtaken by digital technology. I photograph these collages using vintage techniques, seeking to imbue new meaning into the images I've created. This approach encourages viewers to reconsider their assumptions about time, authenticity, and remembrance, as the collages evoke familiarity while remaining elusive, much like how memories constantly change.

How do you balance the tension between the real and the fictional in your art? What are some of the challenges you face in this process?

Balancing the tension between the real and the imagined is essential to my practice. I view this

interplay as a way to question our perceptions and the construction of meaning. My work often begins with concrete elements—found images, historical fragments, or personal stories—but these materials are then reworked, fragmented, or recontextualized to introduce ambiguity. This process creates a space where reality and fiction coexist, challenging the viewer to navigate between what feels familiar and what remains unclear.

One of the main challenges in this approach is maintaining a delicate balance: if the work leans too much toward the documentary, it risks becoming too literal; if it becomes too abstract, it may lose its connection to the real. I manage this by carefully choosing and juxtaposing elements—playing with layering, transparency, and surprising associations. Another challenge is the viewer's interpretation: I aim to leave space for ambiguity while ensuring that the work remains accessible and evocative, rather than overly obscure.

Ultimately, this tension keeps my practice dynamic—it allows for multiple interpretations and invites the audience to engage in their own process of memory and meaning-making.

Your works appear to evoke nostalgia. How do you think nostalgia plays a role in shaping the viewer's perception of your art?

Nostalgia is a powerful element in my work, but I approach it with a sense of ambivalence. Rather than simply provoking sentimental longing for the past, I use nostalgia as a tool to question how we form and reinterpret memories. For the viewer, nostalgia can act as an entry point, establishing an emotional connection. The aesthetic of aged textures, faded imagery, or historical references might evoke personal recollections or a sense of time passed. However, I also introduce disruptions—unexpected juxtapositions, altered compositions, or fragmented narratives—that prevent nostalgia from becoming purely comforting. Instead, it becomes something more intricate: a reflection on how memory is shaped, idealized, or even distorted over time.

By playing with this tension, I invite the viewer to critically examine their own perceptions of the past. Nostalgia in my work is not about



Sebastien Theraulaz | Agogir

recreating something lost, but about questioning why certain images or emotions trigger longing and how that longing influences our understanding of history, identity, and personal experience.

Can you tell us more about your transition from a career in creative direction to focusing on more introspective, personal art? How has this shift impacted your creative process?

My transition from creative direction to a more personal artistic practice was gradual and necessary. In my years as a creative director, I was constantly working within constraints—whether client expectations, branding guidelines, or commercial objectives. While this experience honed my ability to communicate visually and think conceptually, it also made me aware of the limitations of working in service of someone else's vision. I reached a point where I felt the need to reclaim a space where I could explore ideas freely, where ambiguity and open interpretation were not obstacles but essential qualities.

Shifting to a more introspective and experimental practice fundamentally altered my creative process. Rather than responding to external briefs, I now start from personal inquiries—questions about memory, perception, and time. My work has become more process-driven; I embrace accidents, chance, and the physicality of materials, whether through cyanotype, collage, or mixed media. There's also a shift in pace—whereas creative direction often demanded efficiency and clear outcomes, my

artistic process now allows for slowness, uncertainty, and reflection.

This transition has been liberating, but also challenging. Moving away from the structure of a commercial environment means navigating doubt and embracing risk. However, it has allowed me to forge a deeper connection with my work, enabling me to explore themes that feel essential rather than functional. In a way, it's a return to something more raw and instinctive—a space where I can question, deconstruct, and rebuild without predefined answers.

Your work seems to invite introspection. What do you hope your viewers take away from their experience with your art?

I see my work as an open-ended dialogue rather than a fixed statement. I don't aim to impose a single interpretation but rather to create a space where viewers can project their own thoughts, memories, and emotions. The layering, fragmentation, and interplay between presence and absence in my pieces are meant to slow down perception, encouraging a type of visual and mental wandering.

If there's something I hope viewers take away, it's a heightened awareness of how we construct meaning—how recollections shift, how images deceive, and how time alters perception. My work often plays with ambiguity, inviting the viewer to embrace uncertainty rather than seeking immediate clarity. In a world saturated with fast, direct imagery, I like the idea that art can serve as a pause—an invitation to observe, reflect, and perhaps even question one's own relationship to time and memory.

Ultimately, each person brings their own history and emotions to the experience, and that subjectivity is essential. If my work sparks an introspective moment, a sense of curiosity, or even a quiet unease, then I feel it has done its job.

You've mentioned that your art invites the viewer to revisit their own memories and emotions. Can you share how you evoke this in your pieces visually?

Visually, I work with elements that are both familiar and elusive—fragments that suggest a



Sebastian Theraulaz | Volistalgie

narrative without fully revealing it. I often use layering, transparency, and distressed textures to create a sense of time passing, of something partially erased or reconstructed. This invites the viewer to fill in the gaps with their own recollections and emotions, making the experience deeply personal.

In my collage work, for example, I use images from old books and vintage magazines, cutting and rearranging them in ways that feel both nostalgic and disjointed. By removing these fragments from their original context, I create compositions that suggest lost stories or memories on the verge of resurfacing. The gaps and overlaps encourage the viewer to make their own associations, much like how memory works—imperfect, selective, and shaped by emotion. In my cyanotypes and mixed-media pieces, I play with contrasts between presence and absence. Ghostly silhouettes, faded imprints, or traces of past imagery suggest something that was once there but is now distant or transformed. The use of deep blues, muted tones, and negative space enhances this sense of mystery, leaving room for personal interpretation.

Ultimately, I try to create a visual language that is not instructive but evocative—a space where the viewer can engage with their own past, their own emotions, and perhaps question the way they construct and hold onto memory.



I am **Katya Belova**, and I create with the goal of expressing that search, or the journey – for me, these concepts are of the same nature – are key in a person's life. Every day, I make a choice for which I am responsible, and that means I take a step forward.

I work in mixed media, using canvas, oil, and acrylic, because these materials are capable of conveying my inner emotional energy, the movement of my soul, the tension of my inner state from perceiving the world around me and myself in this world, here and now.

In my paintings, I depict a person or a part of the human body, which best reveals the thought embedded in the painting, such as a hand. Or animals, beautiful, perfect creatures, and through associations or allegories, I convey my idea.

In each of my paintings, I explore the theme of searching, which is meant to answer, first and foremost, my own questions. How can one create a comfortable environment to fulfill their purpose? How to create my own world in which I feel "like a fish in water"? How to calmly, without fear, persistently and purposefully move toward a goal? Sometimes, I manage to approach this state, and I feel a sense of joy and peace from finding and answering. For me, creativity is the opportunity to be in the moment. The brush helps me concentrate, reflect, analyze, connect, find balance, and gather the strength to organize the chaos of thoughts and sensations.

It's like conquering a peak, when a second wind opens inside you, and you feel alive, you feel that you're living, that your search is finally over.

But when the work on the painting is finished, I realize that this is just one side of many, just one facet, one step, one part of the whole, which cannot be grasped in several lifetimes, but something, I feel it, I will be able to find and understand while I create.

Katya Belova | Like a fish in water | 2024





— Interview

Jordan Smith

Your art journey seems to have taken many twists and turns. Can you share how your travels and time in the army influenced your artistic practice?

For sure. My journey hasn't been straightforward, but I don't regret a moment of it. I really wanted to travel and experience the world when I was younger; I never wanted to stay in one place. Traveling to Nepal and seeing the Himalayas for the first time was incredible. One morning, the clouds cleared, and I saw Manaslu in the distance. I think that was the first time I truly experienced real natural beauty. Then, somehow, I ended up in the military and spent most of my time overseas. Didn't see that one coming.

Now, my experiences of seeing the Himalayas and traveling the world have become a focal point in my work. When I was studying in Manchester, my art was quite minimal, and I tried to be clever. Now, I'm creating work that I enjoy, it feels more natural and not forced.

You mentioned recycling old materials in your work. How do you decide what materials to use, and why do you focus on repurposing everyday objects like birthday cards and exhibition flyers?

I just collect things I see on my travels. Then I come home and look at everything I have. From there, I dismantle what I've got, and the images



just start to layer up. I never have a fixed idea of what I'm going to do; the images just make themselves, really. One day, I realised I had a few years' worth of saved birthday cards, which usually just said, 'Dear Jord, happy birthday, love from....' So I started cutting them up too. Obviously, it's better for the environment, but I just think, why not use objects productively that would probably just be thrown away?

Mountains seem to be a recurring theme in your work. What is it about mountains that draws you in, and how do you make this subject fun and interesting?

I used to go hill walking with my dad when I was younger, and I just kept doing it. The first time I went to Scotland, I was taken aback by the landscape; I'm not really sure how it even exists. In the last few years, I've become pretty obsessed with the outdoors and climbing steep ridge lines. For me, there's nothing more captivating than driving into Eryri National Park and seeing Tryfan for the first time—it always looks like a dinosaur to me.

It's cool and contemporary to make art about big issues, but I just like mountains and how each

one is different, beautiful, and sometimes utterly terrifying.

How has your approach to collage evolved over the last couple of years, and how do you see it growing in the future?

I never used to collage; it just sort of happened. I used to draw and paint, mostly abstract work. About two years ago, I started making Christmas cards for people using an old magazine. I enjoyed the process of cutting up scraps to create something, a bit like the old TV program Scrapheap Challenge, and I just kept doing it since then.

I've been working on a small scale, but I'd like to experiment with working on a larger scale and see how that goes. In the meantime, I'm just enjoying making work again. I do think there's definitely a correlation between making abstract paintings and creating these collages; I just don't know how to describe it.

Your background in art school and collaborations with other artists like Jeremy Deller must have been influential. Can you tell us more about that experience and how it shaped your artistic identity?

Yes. I was just being myself, making small drawings, and one of them got selected to exhibit with a Turner Prize winner. The exhibition was focused on encouraging young people to vote, and it was pretty successful. In hindsight, I should have built on that momentum, but life



happened, and here I am. I never lost touch with the art world though; I was still visiting exhibitions, but I lost touch with making my own work. I felt a bit lost—maybe on standby.

What role do you think humour plays in your artwork, especially when dealing with such profound subjects like mountains?

I just enjoy artwork that has humour. It's great when you go to an exhibition and see something that makes you smile. I've been to a few shows recently where the work was, for example, a box in the middle of the floor with some sand on it. That doesn't really excite me. I try to be myself when making images, and the humour comes out naturally for me.

You're currently based in Singapore. How has the environment there influenced your latest works, and what can we expect from you next?

They have fancy materials. I was in Taipei a few weeks back, and the receipts there are brilliant. I'm now incorporating receipts into my work; they're a great material. In Singapore, everything is so polished. I started sketching the cityscape when I first arrived, but I realised I preferred the backstreets and the outskirts, where people were playing chess and having cigarettes. That was much more interesting to me. There's something honest about being rough around the edges and I think that translates into my own work.

Natalia Lobanova

In my works, I adhere to minimalism, using various mediums, working with color and volume as means of conveying the idea. The study of contemporary art has had a great influence on the development of my creativity.

Project statement

"Impulse" is a series of collages that explores the inner drive, which becomes a metaphor for the connection with childhood and inner freedom. At the core of the art is the exploration of the forces that provide energy for all living things on Earth, the power of human thought that drives action.





— Interview

Lexiong Ying

Your project "Life Wrapped in Passwords" explores the disorientation and frustration caused by digital authentication. Could you tell us about a specific moment or personal experience that inspired you to tackle this issue?

Most of my works are based on my observations and actual experiences in life, and this work is also no exception. It originated from a nightmare I had in London after my phone was stolen and robbed once, and I had to face the problem of having to re-download mobile apps and re-enter account names and passwords one by one. One of these times happened two days before the trip, and the situation was made worse because the original phone number could not be used, and I had forgotten some of the account passwords.

In this repeated cycle of downloading, logging in, entering passwords, and resetting passwords, I reflected on the relationship between our modern lives, technology, and verification methods and passwords, which inspired this project.

The Möbius strip is central to your work. Why did you choose it as the metaphor to represent the cyclical nature of password management, and how

Lexiong Ying | Möbius



does it reflect the psychological impact of password fatigue?

The Möbius strip seems to be the perfect metaphor for this project, as it is related to the structural features of the Möbius strip itself. It is a unity of opposites. It seems to have an inside and an outside, a top and a bottom. Still, it is just one continuous surface, symbolising the duality of opposites that are not really separate but rather an intermingled whole. This is similar to our current relationship with technology and the various means of authentication, including verification methods.

Technology was initially intended to make people's lives easier, but it is making things more complicated in practice. Authentication is supposed to safeguard our digital assets, but the increasingly complex authentication processes and ever-longer passwords are causing people to become overwhelmed. Often, people compromise the security of their passwords to make them easier to remember. This is a kind of 'Möbius'.

How do you balance your background in fashion design and data visualisation in your artistic practice? Do you find that these disciplines inform each other, and if so, how?

Studying fashion design was a secondary choice. I changed my major in college, and my first major had little to do with art and design. Since no visual communication-related courses were offered then, I switched to the fashion design department. So, when I later went on to do my master's degree, I didn't hesitate to choose a visual communication-related major.

However, studying fashion design also provided a lot of help for my future practice of art design. First, it cultivated my aesthetic sense, so in my later practice of visual communication and data visualisation, I pay great attention to the use of aesthetics in design. I am happy to make the audience feel happy and fascinated by my designs.

Second, the marketing-related courses in my original curriculum have given me a lot of knowledge about people's psychological and behavioural responses. This training has allowed me to navigate behind the data more efficiently and uncover untold stories in my later visualisation practice. This process is entirely humanistic. No matter what kind of design practice it is, it cannot be separated from trying to touch people's emotions, mental activities, and empathy.

Your work delves into the intersection of technology and human behavior. What do you believe is the most pressing issue in the digital age when it comes to our relationship with technology?

Here, I would like to talk about AI, and my attitude towards it is ambivalent. On the one hand, AI has been used extensively in my life and artistic practice, and it has provided good inspiration and solutions. Even when I am confused about life, conversations with ChatGPT often clear my mind and cheer me up. However, I cannot ignore the many negative effects. To give a practical example, compared to the basic



Lexiong Ying | Mobius

work that AI is replacing for countless ordinary people, I think AI is more suitable for work that involves high risks and can harm people's safety or health, such as working at heights or in extreme environments. At the same time, AI databases are also very vulnerable to being fed and contaminated with a lot of flawed and biased metadata. In addition, I have also read a report about the alarming reality behind AI content moderation. In fact, AI cannot automatically identify objectionable content such as violence, gore, and pornography 100% of the time, so manual moderation is still required. Many social media platforms outsource this work to companies in developing countries, so a large number of workers are forced to be exposed to extreme hatred, gore, and abuse for long periods. How can their physical and mental health be guaranteed?

Secondly, I am concerned about the overabundance of social media, which has completely changed people's behaviour patterns. The dopamine rush every 15 seconds is like drug addiction. It is becoming increasingly difficult to systematically learn a piece of knowledge. People want instant results and get rich overnight. As a result, many deformed industries have emerged, and many are anxious for more attention and likes.

In addition, I am also concerned about our data and privacy security, but this is already a bit of a commonplace. To quote a friend's summary, in this era, we have no privacy.

In short, I always believe that technology is neutral, and the crux of the matter is how humans use it. Obviously, in a materialistic society, technology has always been a double-edged sword; perhaps, one day, it will be a sword of Damocles.

Can you explain the process of gathering collective experiences and frustrations around password security? How did you approach the public inquiries aspect of your project?

To better understand the public's behaviour and psychology in using passwords and authentication methods, I launched a questionnaire survey called A Study of Password Use Behaviour, and the survey



Lexiong Ying | Mobius

feedback was quite positive. I received 341 responses from people from 20 countries and regions, using 11 languages and dialects.

The first part of my questionnaire was a demographic survey, asking questions such as the age, gender, education level, profession or industry of the respondents, which internet services they mainly use that require passwords, and which electronic products they have. Secondly, I investigated the respondents' password management behaviour, such as how they manage their passwords, their views on password management software, whether they have specifically learned how to manage passwords more effectively, and their awareness of the risk of password disclosure.

Next, I investigated people's habits of using essential accounts, such as how they construct and combine their passwords. This also revealed many interesting cultural phenomena behind passwords. For example, native Chinese speakers often create passwords using their names and birthdays. For non-native Chinese speakers, such as English and Spanish speakers, the meanings of passwords are more diverse, such as their favourite words, mottoes, and words related to family, celebrities, pets, etc.

Also, I investigated the practical problems people encounter when creating, using and managing passwords. More than half of the respondents said they had either had their passwords compromised or suspected that they had. More than 30% of the respondents said they used the same password for all their websites and app accounts. More than 40% of the respondents explicitly said they had difficulty remembering passwords, and nearly 30% said they found it easy to forget passwords.

At the same time, more than 80% of respondents believe that automatic account login makes it easier for them to forget their passwords, and they feel a definite sense of anxiety when the system forces them to change their passwords. Finally, nearly 40% of respondents said that they had shared their passwords with others to varying degrees.

Through your work, you aim to provoke reflection and offer reassurance. How do you hope your audience will feel after experiencing this project?

Overall, I hope that people, especially those suffering from anxiety about using passwords and even feeling at a loss for rapidly developing technology, can take some comfort in the message: Hey, you're not alone. Sometimes, things are a bit rough, but together, we're adapting to it patiently and slowly.

As a practitioner of fortunetelling, do you believe



Lexiong Ying | On display

that ancient wisdom has an impact on modern societal issues, like the one your project addresses? If so, in what way does it influence your work?

Humans have come a long way from ancient times to the present day, and each of us carries the genes and heritage of our ancestors. Ancient wisdom such as astrology in the West, the yin and yang geomancy theory in the East, and various spiritual healing methods still impact people today.

First, I am very willing to incorporate ancient wisdom's aesthetic elements or ideas into my creative practice. I once curated a brand design for an oriental-style hot spring based on meditation healing. In addition, in my fortune-telling business, I will first sort out the interviewee's numerological information, such as the astrological chart. I give a reading and then talk with them to find out more. When I find that the interviewee is too focused on a certain person or thing, I use the Taoist concept of yin and yang balance to advise the client.

In short, using these ancient wisdoms to practice in multiple dimensions in life is not only my way of working, but also my life philosophy.



— Interview

Bee

Your art seems to be deeply inspired by your surroundings in Phoenix. How does your local community influence your work and creative process?

Phoenix is a city that so desperately wants to become something grander. Things are happening that are engaging a sort of hunger within people, an itch has been brewing. Every artist wants to be the next person to be truly Arizonan and be known worldwide for their craft. They see that things are changing and they badly want to be part of it all but there is something that just will not allow it yet, it seems almost divine. The local arts community influences my work and creative process because it ignites this urge, this sort of justice within me to prove that we are special. I want to be part of this art boom by presenting my authentic self. I was born and raised in the heart of downtown Phoenix. I know what we are. We are a city of people that dutifully persists against the heat (both metaphorical and literal). Artists here have such a deep sense of longing that inspires me. Largely influenced by indigenous and Mexican culture, there is an iron sense of community in Arizona, a camaraderie. Being a first-generation Mexican-American queer woman, my art reflects a classical Mexican arts aesthetic which is influenced by my Phoenix environment. I paint by my window on one of the busiest streets and just listening to city life is enough to juice my painting session, there is always something going on. Phoenix is this vibrant, imperfect, desert of naive potential and resilience for both the good and the bad.



Surrealism and portraiture are significant themes in your work. How do these themes help you express your personal journey and emotions?

Surrealism and portraiture are so cool. Portraiture within fine arts is a skill check. You get to see the talent of an artist. I also have this habit of people watching and portraiture feeds this hobby of mine, just seeing an individual's nature is so funny. I like to see everyone's puzzle pieces, what makes them themselves. I have a good intuition with people, I can always predict what they are like. Which leads to surrealism. As much as I can get a good read on people, no one ever really knows anyone 100%. I have had an obsession with surrealist artists since college. The whole idea of these people engaging with their subconscious and putting it on display is just so bizarre. These truly wacky images that only their minds understand. Artists who are self-aware enough to genuinely explore their own psyche are so cool. The art they produce are like mystical artifacts to me. I want to explore this as well. I struggled with my emotions so much in my younger years and it became hard to build my identity. I had difficulty processing and identifying my emotions. Surrealism feels like my little key to understanding my own mind and what happens and why. Seeing it all visually is like a map. Surrealism is deeply personal to my artistic identity.

You've mentioned struggling with apathy in your developmental years. How has your art helped you process these feelings, and how does it inform the way you approach your creative process?

Yes, apathy is a close friend of mine. I have always been a good noodle. I was a quiet little girl, always did my homework and followed the rules. I just did not genuinely care for anyone. Not my friends nor my family members. I have always had to force myself to behave a certain way to regard social rules or because my mom taught me better but it has always been a conscious effort to stop my natural apathy. I always experimented with forms of art like writing, photography, theatre and such. Art has always helped me understand how other people feel. Observing how they dealt with their emotions helped me develop what it should look like within me. Heavy feelings were always so easy to understand, sadness and anger, but others like excitement or jealousy, even contentment were a little harder to truly feel or portray. My creative process is not even really a process. I get ideas for paintings very sporadically and then I get to it. I never have an exact image either. I never know what I am going to end up with or what it will look like. I learned to process my emotions in this way. I taught myself to recognize the patterns of a feeling and even if I do not understand it, I just let myself feel what I do and then figure it out later. With painting, I let myself start whatever idea and then figure out what it might mean



Bee | Esqueleto | 2024



Bee | And Me | 2025

or represent later too. I still wrestle with this apathy inside me every day but my art allows me to practice this physically rather than mentally, which is therapeutic and validating.

Your work combines vibrant colors and spontaneous shapes. What role does color play in your art, and how does it relate to your exploration of human emotion and identity?

Color is everything. I am a very superstitious person. I adapt the meanings of colors and numbers into everything. I heavily studied color theory before and playing with colors is very intuitive. I love color so much I cannot even explain it. Within my art, it is pleasing when colors harmonize and are easy on the eyes. I love building layers so a bright beautiful color can sit on top. Color mixing is so much fun! I love color matching and dissecting colors so much, I am so good at it! I think it does have to do with the way I handle emotion. I used to observe others and go "Okay, that is how you are supposed to be sad. Okay, that is how you show that you are amazed, got it." But obviously there is not just one way to show and process emotions, it was exhausting to me. Feelings are complicated. Color is so easy. I recognize the different colors it takes to make one and go at it. Even if I do not get it right the first time, trying again and again is meditative. It trained me to find the joy in trying again and again with understanding emotion. I love color as

much as I love molding my identity. I love changing my own colors and being somewhere new or building new habits or mannerisms. I love it. I never reject change, it is like seeing a rainbow; majestic and I yearn for the next time I see it.

How do the teachings of Surrealist masters like Frida Kahlo, Salvador Dalí, and Remedios Varo shape your artistic vision? Do you aim to build upon or re-interpret their influence in your own work?

First of all, art history is so cool. The teachings of the old masters shape my artistic vision by showing me what humans are capable of. Kahlo's and Varo's artistic eyes are something beyond inspiring. To be able to translate your experiences and worldviews in such dreamlike ways is astounding. Vulnerability is so, so difficult for me. I am a great performer. I can be extroverted, energetic, enthusiastic, whatever, but someone sitting me down and forcing me to be honest about anything, everything, is terrifying. They seem to do it so effortlessly and I would like to build to that! Dalí is one of those people who are so shamelessly themselves. No explanation nor debt, he is himself through and through. People like that put me in awe. When it comes to my artistic vision, I want to push myself to be just as free. There is just something still

hesitant in me. I do not aim to build upon their influence. I just think about them a lot and study their nature hoping I too can manifest my own rabbit hole. They are so authentically themselves, I cannot help but stare, learn and create.

As a self-described shy artist, what gave you the confidence to start calling yourself an artist and share your work with the world?

Not a what but a who. My best friend, my lover, Isaiah. Every single piece of art I made as a kid I ripped up, burned it, threw it away, anything to keep anyone from seeing it. It was almost compulsive. In college I accidentally took an oil painting class and it was uncomfortable to paint in front of others but learning oil was worth it. I made some stuff I was slightly proud of but never called myself an artist. It felt too official and imposterous. I went through my first real break-up during my last semester and stopped painting, shoving the passion somewhere out of sight. I met Isaiah May of 2022 and long story short we fell in love so much. He is this wildly creative person who thinks differently from anyone I have ever met, everyone says this about him! We talked about art and music a lot so eventually I showed him some stuff I had hiding around. He would accuse me of being an artist and I would just scoff. The more I saw how he channeled his own creativity and imagination, the more my hands would twitch. I started painting again and even found a job teaching at a local paint and sip business. To summarize, he just kept poking at me, telling me to get out there, create and be with the world. I love him too much to ignore him, plus he is so obnoxiously loud, so here I am.

You've shared a desire to foster empathy through your art. Can you elaborate on how you hope your work will impact the viewers and the art community?

Empathy seems very important. From what I have seen, empathy might be what fixes everything. All the kid shows are right, it really is all about love and friendship. When you create art that you want to share with others, you automatically contribute to a community. With that, if I create a community, I want it to foster empathy and have everyone learn from each other in hopes that the rest of the world will do this as well. I hope my work keeps evolving to be vulnerable and striking enough to be able to impact the viewers. Not for attention but to instill what the old masters instilled in me, a want to be vulnerable and authentically myself, a want to be so human and be open with others. I believe this will help fix things in the world. I hope my art fosters wonder and an itch for others to create as well.

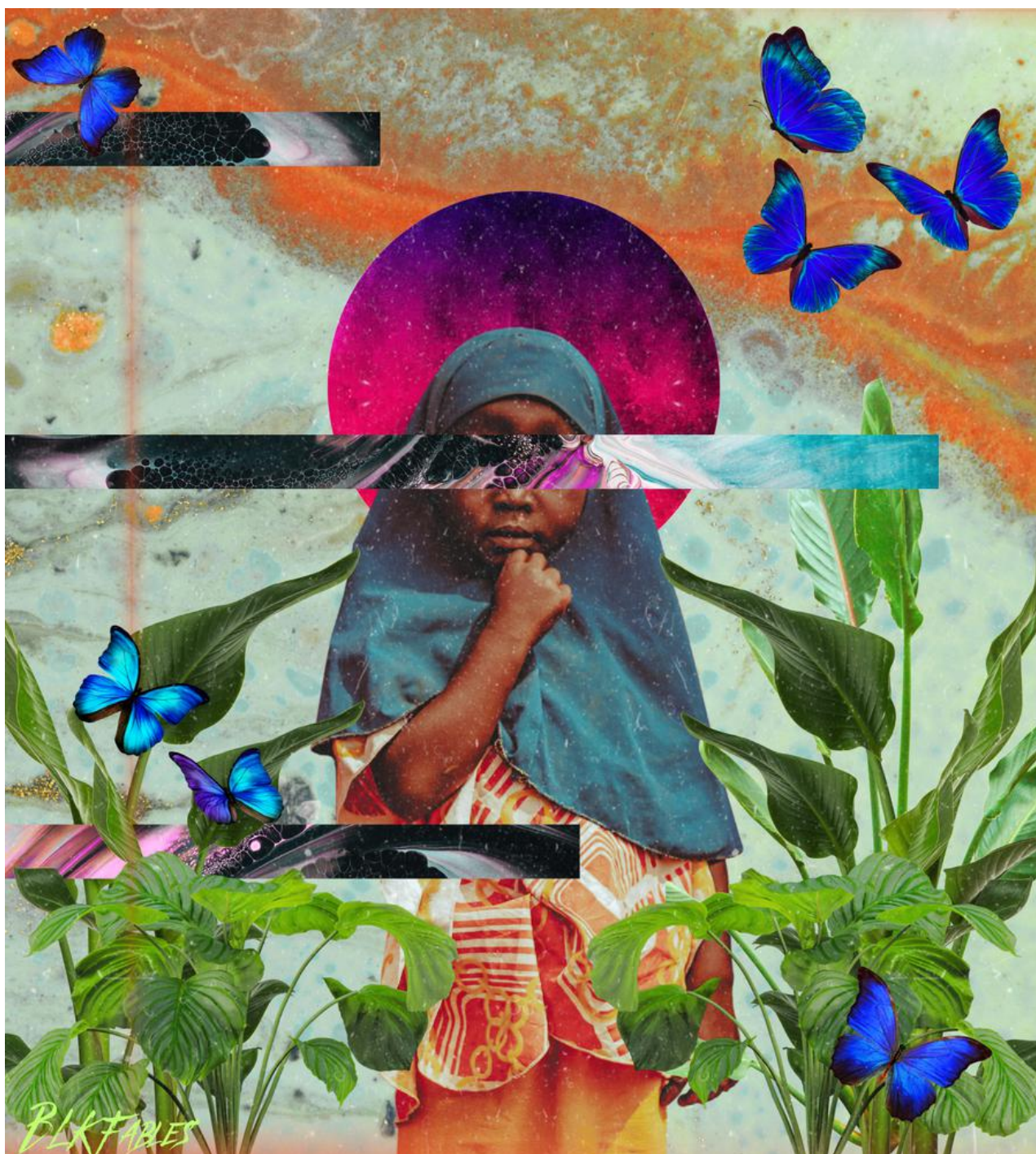


Bee | Alien Lover | 2024



Brynn Adams

Born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, now living in Los Angeles, California. I've always been an artist, only now instead of drawing on the walls when my mom wasn't looking, I make digital and sometimes traditional collages. My art has and always will celebrate Blackness in all of its complex and amazing beauty.



Brynn Adams | Girl | 2023



BLK FABLES

— Interview

Hsin Hwang

How did your background in printmaking at the Royal College of Art shape your current artistic approach across various mediums such as painting, textiles, and installations?

I perceive printmaking as a rhythm of repetition—a quiet incantation where each imprint is both an echo and a reinvention. This cyclical nature has shaped my approach across mediums, weaving its way into my paintings, textiles, and installations. Forms return like recurring dreams, altered yet familiar, layered like memories reshaped by time. In this process, I explore the space between permanence and impermanence, where each mark is a fragment of something continuously unfolding, as if the act of creation itself is a dialogue between past and present, presence and absence, always in flux yet eternally resonant.

Your work explores dream imagery and spirituality. Can you share how Jungian psychology influenced your understanding of the subconscious in your art?

Jungian psychology has shaped my understanding of the subconscious as a realm where personal and collective myths intertwine. His concepts of archetypes and the collective unconscious help me see dreams not as random images, but as symbolic narratives revealing deeper truths. In my work, I embrace dreamlike imagery, repetition, and symbolic motifs to access these hidden layers of the mind. Rather than depicting reality, I construct visual spaces where personal spirituality and collective memory converge, allowing intuition to guide both my creative process and the viewer's experience.



Hsin Hwang | Nothing can separate us | 2023

You incorporate elements from fairy tales and mysticism in your work. How do these influences help communicate the universal themes of transformation, healing, and spirituality?

Fairy tales and mysticism offer symbolic languages for transformation, healing, and spirituality. Both traditions use archetypes and allegories to navigate inner and collective metamorphosis. In my work, I reinterpret these motifs—rituals, trials, and supernatural encounters—as psychological and spiritual transitions, reflecting Jungian individuation. Mysticism, with its embrace of the unseen, deepens this exploration, offering a space for transcendence. Through dreamlike imagery and layered symbols, I create visual narratives that echo ancestral wisdom and personal introspection, inviting viewers to engage with their own inner myths and cycles of renewal.

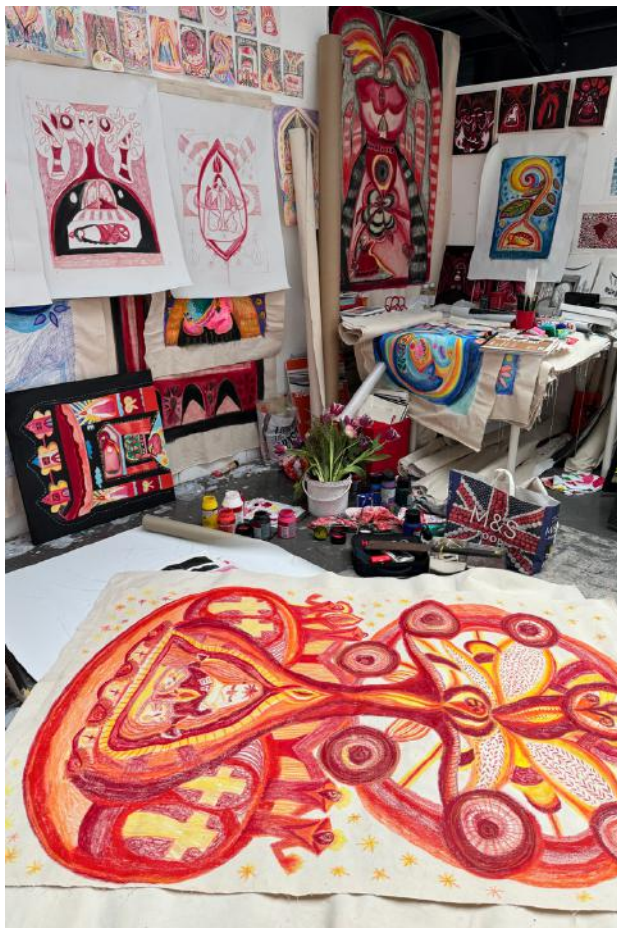
In your recent works, you've focused on reinterpreting Taiwan's indigenous and folk traditions. How do you balance respect for these traditions while making them relevant in contemporary art?

In my recent works, I reinterpret Taiwan's indigenous

and folk traditions by focusing on the imagery of Taiwan's Traditional Performance Troupes in my paintings. I preserve their core elements—such as vibrant colors and symbolic animals like oxen, lions, and white cranes—while reimagining them through my personal visual language. By studying their historical and spiritual meanings, I ensure that my reinterpretations remain rooted in respect and authenticity. At the same time, I adapt these symbols into contemporary compositions, allowing them to resonate beyond their original context and connect with broader themes of transformation, movement, and collective memory.

Your art often centers on female transformation and resilience. What inspired you to explore the evolving roles of women in myth and belief through your work?

Inspired by the female characters in fairy tales, I explore themes of strength, adaptability, and spiritual depth. Many heroines undergo profound transformation—through trials, exile, or self-discovery—reflecting resilience and growth. These narratives reveal shifting cultural perceptions of women, from passive figures to active agents of their own fate. Through painting and symbolism, I seek to illuminate their hidden power and reshape their journeys through a contemporary lens.



Hsin Hwang | Prayer in the spinning sun and the song of seashells | 2024

How do you think your cross-cultural exploration of spirituality has shaped the way your audience connects with your work, especially with themes like nature worship and ancestral wisdom?

By weaving together spiritual symbols from different cultures, I create a visual language that resonates across traditions. When I exhibited works inspired by Taiwan's Indigenous myths in London, many viewers recognized similar narratives from their own cultures. Themes like nature worship and ancestral wisdom tap into shared human experiences, bridging the past and present and making ancient beliefs relevant in contemporary contexts.

Can you elaborate on the significance of the vivid colors and symbolic elements you use in your art? What do they represent within the spiritual and mythological narratives you're creating?

My use of color is highly intuitive, influenced by Marc Chagall's paintings and Indigenous totems, both of which convey emotional and spiritual intensity. Many of my symbols correspond to natural elements or ancient magical sigils, acting as visual markers of transformation, protection, and unseen forces. Through these elements, I build a layered narrative that bridges folklore, belief, and personal mythology.

Lindsey Raye Perrault is a Fine Artist and Arts Educator based in Munich, Germany. Known for her ability to create captivating and immersive abstract scapes, her attention to details drives her creative process as she creates one-of-a-kind pieces of art. Taking pride in the artistic process, Lindsey Raye creates a variety of artworks, from abstracted forms, to mixed media, to realistic portraits, among other media. Her love for art is seen in her dedication to detail and commitment to craftsmanship. Creating is a part of her daily routine as she envelopes herself in the joy of the art making process. In addition to her studio practice, Lindsey Raye is also a licensed K-12 Arts Educator, with a Bachelors degree in Fine arts, a Masters Degree in Art Education, and some completed doctoral coursework in Art Education as well. As an art educator, her focus is on encouraging students to better understand themselves and the world around them through creation and exploration.

Artist Statement

Water brings life. It flows. It changes. It is never the same. As it is constantly flowing and moving, it is carrying with it memories and information from where it once was. As the light changes throughout the day, so does the water's appearance, its colors and its shapes. Layers upon layers of information to take in while the water moves freely along its course. This series of work is inspired by water, its colors, shapes, textures and its movements. I am captivated and mesmerized by water, and these works are meant to capture the feelings experienced while being in close proximity to water and internalizing its power. Some works are created from photographs taken on my travels, while others are inspired by memories. Other works are meant to explore the dichotomous relationship between the organic and geometric worlds by attempting to encapsulate the former within the latter.



Lindsey Raye Perrault | Pyrgaki Beach, Naxos, Greece | 2022-2023



Lindsey Raye Perrault | Moonlit Waterno 3 | 2025

— Interview

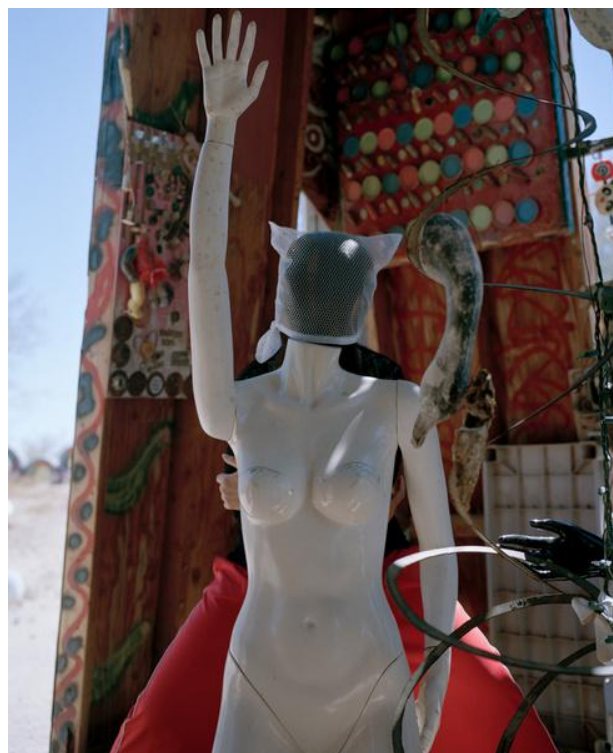
Vivian W.

Your work blends narrative and fine art photography in a way that evokes both the real and the surreal. How do you approach balancing these two aspects in your compositions?

I see reality and fantasy as two sides of the same coin, constantly informing each other. My approach involves carefully constructing scenes that feel both familiar and uncanny, using elements of performance, costume, and unexpected juxtapositions within the natural world. The desert, with its stark expanses and shifting light, provides a real, tactile setting, while elements of performance, costume, and carefully placed objects introduce a dreamlike quality. I want my images to feel like glimpses into a world that is familiar yet slightly askew—recognizable, but not entirely of this reality.

In your project *On Fantasy*, the desert landscape plays a significant role. Can you describe your relationship with this environment and why you chose it as the setting for your work?

The desert has been a backdrop to my life for as long as I can remember. I've driven through these terrains since I was young. I have a deep appreciation for its strange beauty and its ability to evoke both isolation and wonder. I was drawn to it as the setting for *On*



Vivian W. | *On Fantasy*

Fantasy because of its naturally surreal qualities—it's a space that already feels otherworldly. By using it as a stage, I wanted to amplify that sense of liminality, where time and reality seem suspended.

The idea of blending fantasy with reality is a core theme in your photography. How do you see the role of imagination in shaping our perception of the world?

Imagination is essential to how we interpret the world—it allows us to see beyond the literal and find deeper meaning in our surroundings. In my work, I use fantasy not as an escape but as a lens through which to reexamine reality. By layering dreamlike elements onto natural landscapes, I hope to encourage viewers to see the world around them with fresh eyes, to consider the ways in which perception is shaped by memory, myth, and personal experience.

Victorian tableaux vivants have influenced your work. How do you reinterpret this historical art form in your modern photographic practice?

Tableaux vivants were originally about theatrical storytelling—scenes frozen in time, rich with symbolism. I draw from that tradition but reinterpret it in a contemporary context, using photography to craft moments that feel simultaneously staged and spontaneous. Rather than recreating historical narratives, I focus on evoking emotion and mystery, constructing images that leave space for interpretation. The performances in my work are not rigidly choreographed but exist in a liminal space



Vivian W. | *On Fantasy*

Your work seems to push the boundaries of traditional staged photography. What challenges do you face when attempting to create a contemporary version of this genre?

Your photographs often evoke a sense of the uncanny. How do you cultivate that sense in your work, and what do you hope viewers take away from it?

In a world where images are consumed quickly, your work encourages contemplation. How do you hope your photography stands apart from the fast-paced nature of contemporary visual culture?

Sophia Herrington

Originally from Hamilton, Sophia Herrington is an interdisciplinary printmaker currently pursuing her BFAH at Queen's University in Kingston. Her work is deeply inspired by the natural world, particularly the themes of growth, transformation, and interconnectedness. She often incorporates symbols such as roots, plants, and leaves, exploring their metaphorical significance in both personal and universal narratives. Through traditional printmaking techniques, including stone lithography, copper plates, and silkscreen, Sophia creates detailed, layered works that reflect beliefs in the dynamic relationship between humans and nature. The process itself of carefully carving, layering, and printing, mirrors the cyclical nature of life and the natural world, allowing her to explore both the fragility and resilience inherent in all living things. Sophia's work is driven by a desire to tell stories; stories that examine how the environment shapes human experience and how, in turn, we influence the world around us. Each piece serves as an invitation to pause and reflect on the ways we are all connected, through both visible and unseen threads.

Project Statement

These are a collection of works from my undergraduate degree at Queen's University, located in Ontario, Canada. During my time in the BFAH program, I have been fortunate enough to experience many different mediums, and explore topics that I am interested in. I am currently in my fourth year at Queen's, and this year our courses consisted of thesis work. I enjoy combining methods of print to create something that represents my interest in the natural world and what it has to offer.

Sophia Herrington | The Path Beneath | 2024





Sophia Herrington | Childhood Memories | 2023

Boisson Didier

Born in 1966 in Lyon. Graduated from the Fine Arts School of Lyon in 1990. Practices both illustration and analog and digital collages. Founded a micro-enterprise in 2000 and works in illustration for the press, publishing, and advertising. My illustrations have appeared in magazines such as: 60 Million Consumers, Madame Figaro, Men's Health, Challenges, Les Échos, Capital, Expansion, Le Particulier...

Solo and group exhibitions: Lyon, Paris, Barcelona, London, New York.





— Interview

Kaitlyn Synan

Your work explores the fleeting nature of human emotion. How do you translate these transient feelings into visual forms and colors?

I'd like to think that the universe gives small hints and guidance in the smallest ways, and you just have to be observant enough to notice them. As I notice them, they seem to have an intrinsic connection that unfolds and becomes clearer as I live through the experience. The way I express them in painting is just the combination of the scene and how I reacted mentally and physically to the experience.

In your artist statement, you speak about finding light in darkness. Can you tell us more about the role of contrast and light in your work?

I love the intensity that contrast gives a piece or an object. I enjoy giving the smallest moments the loudest and most impactful voice possible, specifically through color. It's a really interesting dichotomy of



Kaitlyn Synan | Mycelial Spirit

light and shadow, where something delicate or fleeting can carry immense presence just by how it's illuminated. I think contrast isn't just about visual impact—it's about storytelling. Light reveals, but shadows give depth, and together, they create a tension that mirrors how we experience emotions, both physically and mentally. The way I use contrast is almost like a spotlight on the ephemeral, making sure those quiet, overlooked moments are seen and felt by the observer.

Each piece of yours seems to convey the beauty of impermanence. How do you approach creating something that celebrates something as ephemeral as emotion?

I choose to find joy in the small details of life. You can't win the lottery every day, but you can count on the little moments—good and bad—to be there. I think it's about choosing what to focus on. When you can navigate that with intention, you give the positive moments your attention and the difficult ones their space without letting them overshadow everything else. That's how I approach my work—capturing fleeting emotions, making space for them, and honoring their impermanence rather than resisting it.

You've mentioned that your work is a spiritual practice. How does your spiritual journey influence your creative process?

I've always been both a spiritual and artistic person—these have been my most natural outlets, my ways of coping and making sense of the world. They were practices I never grew tired of, always there for me,



Kaitlyn Synan | Connections

even in the hardest times. Over time, as I deepened my understanding of both separately—and as time went on, they started weaving together, like an intricate spiderweb of knowledge. That connection shaped how I see existence—just a speck on a rock, here momentarily, but able to create, feel, and experience. My art reflects that perspective—an appreciation for this awesome, temporary experience.

Your use of color and form seems deeply connected to the human experience. Do you draw from personal emotions and experiences when creating your pieces?

Oh, absolutely—I don't think I could help it if I tried. I'm not sure any artist can. Everything we create is an expression of experience, whether it's obvious or not. It's all we have.

How do you envision the relationship between your work and the viewer's emotions, especially since you emphasize the transient nature of experiences?

I get a lot of different responses to my work, which I love. I intentionally keep things somewhat ambiguous and let the viewer bring their personal meaning to it. Sometimes, someone sees something entirely different than what I intended, and that's one of the most interesting parts of the conversations I have about my work. Everyone interprets things in their own way, and it's incredible to have a front-row seat to that process.

Which specific piece of yours do you feel most embodies the idea of 'impermanence,' and why?

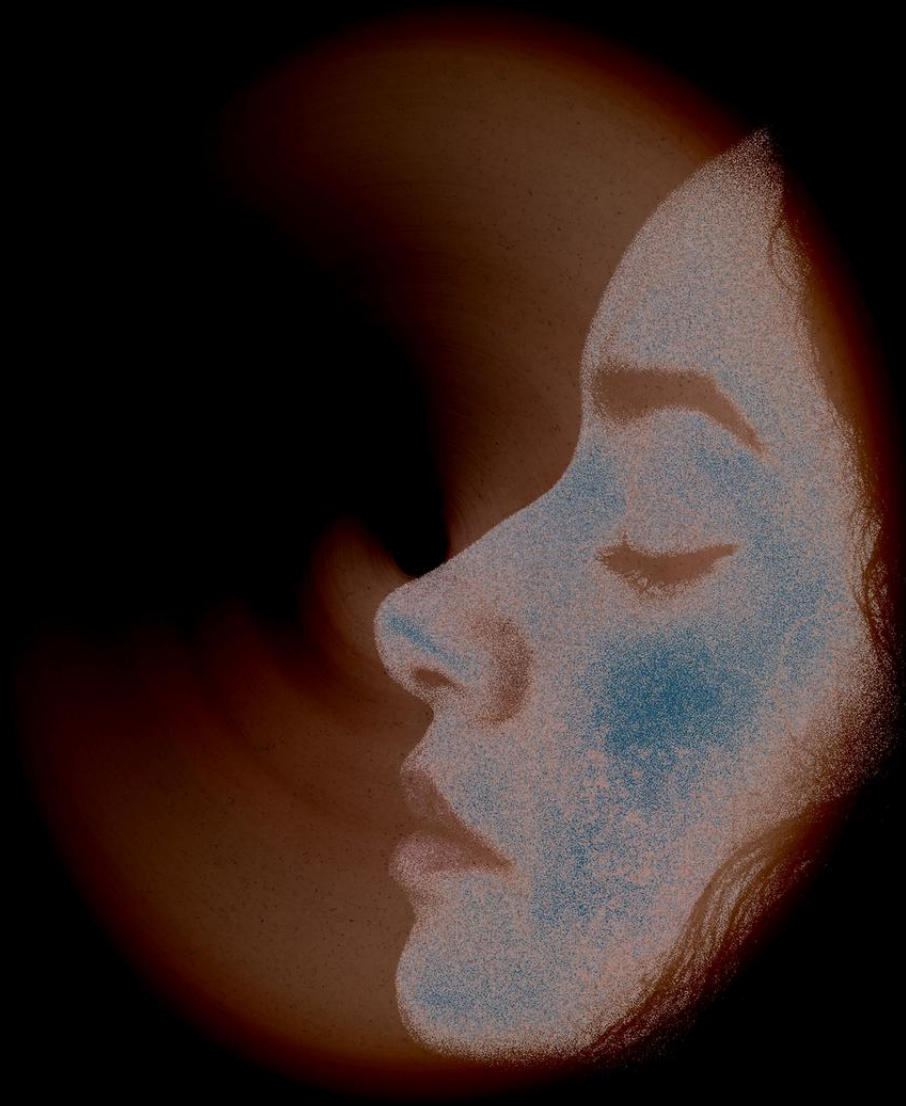
I feel like my piece Luminal Growth represents this idea best. The bubbles remind me of a lava lamp—I stared at them as a kid, zoning into their movements. They never looked the same way twice and never stood still. The vines in the background carry a similar energy; you never see the same plant from day to day. Even if you don't notice the changes as they happen, they're always evolving. That quiet, constant transformation is at the heart of impermanence.

Kaitlyn Synan | Celestial Touch



Olesia Shinkorenko is a visual artist originally from Russia, currently based in The Netherlands. With a background in fashion photography, she later shifted her focus toward conceptual and experimental art, exploring themes of identity, transformation, and introspection. She studied at the Tilburg Academy of Arts, specializing in Art, Communication, and Design. Over the years, her works have been exhibited in various galleries and published in art magazines, sometimes under a pseudonym. Her approach blends photography with digital and mixed-media techniques, creating thought-provoking, atmospheric compositions. Olesia's work has been showcased at The Holy Art Gallery (Amsterdam) and international art and fashion publications.

Olesia Shinkorenko | METAMORPHOSIS | 2025





— Interview

Alison Hirst Lebègue

You mentioned that art has always been a part of your life. How did the influence of your grandfather and great-grandfather shape your approach to art?

They were both major artists painting from clothes design to architectural pieces for private gardens and palaces, like gardens' gazebos. My great-grandfather, Henri Lusseau, also designed gardens and parts of some palaces in Lisbon, Portugal as both an engineer and a landscape architect. My father who is very proud of such art works has always hung some of their best works in our house, so I've been surrounded by them since I was born. And following a recent experiment of using stencils, my father gave me my grandfather's brushes since he also designed stencils. I feel very blessed to have them and to be using them now. They mainly used watercolours which is probably why I so much like this media too. Their use of watercolours was very soft, as opposed to mine which is more colourful, but they remain a great inspiration. They also taught me to look closely and study others' works of art, and that right from an early age. Hence my decision to study two years in History of Art in 1992.

Finally, their love for art was not just about creating—it was about observing the world with curiosity and finding beauty in everyday moments. This perspective stays with me to this day, influencing the way I approach each piece, whether through colour, texture, or composition. Their legacy instilled in me a deep appreciation for both tradition and innovation, allowing me to develop my own artistic voice while staying connected to the past.

You have a rich educational background in both fine arts and visual culture. How did these experiences inform your art practice and understanding of visual works?



Indeed, I've been in fine art since an early age see my Picasso at primary school!

I took private lessons during high school and chose a fine art baccalaureate. Then I entered the first year of the famous ENSAG Graphic Art School in Paris where I learnt with a profonde commitment all sorts of techniques from which my favourite ones were painting from plaster busts but also nudes, especially when in movement. I then turned to theory which is essential for me in order to progress in my art practice, by research and analyses of other major painters. So, I did a two-year university course in History of Art of which I especially remember the subject of Indian Art History which later on inspired me to travel to India and Nepal following the route of Buddha and discovering all the art and craftwork around his religious journey.

Finally, I ended my education with a Bachelor of Art in Visual Culture in Falmouth, UK... being bilingual from birth (my mother is English) made it easy to study this course and I graduated with a first a first-class degree and as a the major of my promotion. There I studied a lot of philosophy, reading Foucault but also Bakhtin and Levi-Strauss and finally a group of feminist scholars, including Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva. My major dissertation was titled: "THE DIALOGICAL DISCOURSES OF THE ABJECT: THE USES AND MEANS OF THE ABJECT IN WESTERN FEMININE FINE ART PRACTICES". I loved exploring these women's art works and trying to understand their practice, as well as my place as a woman in a patriarchal society. In this dissertation I insisted on the use of the body in art...

which later influenced me for my nudes but also for my women's portraits. Artists I studied included: Cindy Sherman, Helen Chadwick, Laura Godfrey-Isaacs but also Gilbert and George.

This education has widened my own practice and how to understand major artists' works. It has also motivated me to travel and visit museums across the world. I recently visited the permanent collection of Beaubourg centre in Paris (that was easy I live near Paris!) and was overwhelmed and inspired by the artists who worked as from 1905 till the 1990's. In the past, I have been to Barcelona, Venice, twice for the Biennale, Madrid, New York, Prague, Berlin, Amsterdam but also in a different style to Giverny's gardens. I also travel to London at least once a year and always pay a visit to the Tate Modern... the list of museums is rather long!

After a break from oil painting, you've made a remarkable return in 2024. What inspired you to go back to oil painting, and how has your approach evolved?

It was indeed a big challenge and that's why it took so long for me to get back in this art practice! It started in February 2024 after having been offered oil paints at Christmas, with at the time a WhatsApp group focusing on an art challenge with my mother. Part of this group, were a jury of four women friends launching the challenges and then voting for the best artworks. One of these challenges was to paint a starry night sky above a mountain. I suddenly knew I had to try oil for this challenge, which came to this result:

This challenge was then followed by a more floral one, and that was it I was back in oil painting after a stop in this practice of nearly 15 years! I had just finished a long series of landscapes using pastels and I was in the need of more details, hence being very happy in taking part in this floral challenge that after saw me painting a series of flowers and flowery fields. I then wanted texture which I mainly get using a palette knife in my practice. I was also inspired by Monet's House of Parliament but also Van Gogh and Miro, and as I said developing the use of a palette knife, which is a very difficult technique that is a big challenge for me but I love it!

I'm highly interested in adding texture to my paintings that's why I'm so keen on using a palette knife and oil paint instead of watercolours or acrylic – which I also use a lot though. I go through a lot of paint. I guess the floral theme is partly inspired by my visit many years ago to Monet's gardens in Giverny. Contrary to my major dissertation for my BA, I'm not inspired by contemporary art but more by the impressionists, cubism and figurative art dating of the early 20th century, before and after the two World Wars. The palette knife helps creating this thick texture to the artwork, getting close to sculpture which I tried back when I was in Paris art school using papier mâché or plaster on fish net. But coming back to my prolific art using oil again after such a long break is a real challenge and I pick up photos of flowers on the internet to get inspiration for the drawing which is the base of any painting, even if one finishes by creating a distortion of the original drawing like I end up doing when I apply the paint. And besides oil paint has a



smell what because of the use of turpentine. I used to love visiting artists' studios at Paris Ecole des Beaux-Arts on the way to my art school. Smelling spirits and observing. Now I do it on my little workshop at home. Music is also very important for the movements required to adding the paint to the canvas. It all depends on my mood of the day. I can paint listening to Vivaldi and the next minute to heavy metal music! It changes it all. I mean the outcome of the painting is so different. The only links are the use of colours and adding texture. But my body language will definitely be different. The only difficulty with oil is that you have to be patient to let it dry not like acrylic. So, it may take several days to finish an oil painting hence making several ones at the same time. I now have a record of about 50 oil paintings done over the past year.

You've worked with a variety of mediums, including watercolours, pastels, chalk, oil painting, and linocuts. How do you choose which medium to use for a specific theme?

I choose my medium based on the mood, texture sought, and depth I want to convey in each piece. Watercolours allow me to create fluid, dreamlike atmospheres, perfect for ethereal or emotional themes. When I want a richer, velvety softness, I turn to pastels, which bring warmth and the important results in blending the colours with my fingers. Oil painting gives me the ability to build layers and textures as I have already explained, making it ideal for pieces that require depth and bold expression,

especially with the use of the palette knife. Linocuts, with their strong contrasts and graphic quality, work well when I want to emphasize form and structure in a more dynamic, expressive way. Each medium has its own unique voice, and I love exploring how different techniques can enhance the story I want to tell.

I find that each theme or concept naturally calls for a specific medium, and I often feel the need to switch between them to keep my creative process prolific. Some ideas demand the fluidity and unpredictability of watercolours, while others need the rich, tactile quality of pastels or the depth of oil paint. Changing mediums allows me to explore different textures, contrasts, and moods—keeping my work fresh and allowing me to push boundaries. Each medium offers a new way to interpret an idea, and by shifting between them, I ensure that my work remains exciting, both for me and for the viewer.

In your watercolours work, you create a dreamlike world. Could you tell us more about the emotions or ideas that you hope viewers experience through your work?

In my watercolour work, I strive to create a dreamlike world that evokes a sense of wonder, nostalgia, and tranquillity. My goal is to invite viewers into a space where reality blends with imagination, allowing them to pause and immerse themselves in a moment of peace. Through soft, flowing colours and delicate transitions, I hope to convey emotions of introspection, and a touch of mystery, I indeed tend to call them "Abstract landscapes", that I highlight using Chinese black ink, which is originally a traditional, rich black ink used in calligraphy. I want each piece to feel like a fleeting memory or a forgotten dream, sparking personal interpretations and emotions unique to each viewer.

I also love working with strong-coloured inks because they add depth, energy, and contrast, allowing each piece to pulse with emotion and movement. These bold pigments help me shape surreal landscapes but also a whole series of vanities, that feel both immersive and evocative. I want viewers to experience a sense of wonder, as if stepping into a vivid dream where colours tell their own story. My goal is to spark emotions that result in exhilaration, inviting each person to find their own meaning in the interplay of light and colour.

Your landscapes and portraits often reflect personal themes or cultural influences. Can you talk about a specific landscape or portrait that has a special meaning to you?

The portrait of Frida Kahlo in oil paint is a very important one to me, not only because I love her



AERH Arts | Lylies | 2024

artwork but also because she was a beautiful woman, with fine traits and a colourful style which suits my use of colours.

It thus holds deep significance for me—not only because I deeply admire her artwork, but also because she embodies strength, resilience, and a unique artistic spirit that resonates with me. Her striking features, intense gaze, and vibrant, symbolic style align perfectly with my own use of bold colours and expressive brushwork. Through this portrait, I sought to convey not just her physical beauty, but also the depth of her emotions and her devotion throughout her life and art. In many ways, painting her felt like a tribute to the creative freedom that I strive for in all my works.

The Japanese prints you've created following your trip to Japan must have had a strong impact on you. How did the experience of visiting Japan shape your artwork?

Visiting Japan in 2015 was a profoundly inspiring experience that deeply influenced my artwork. Immersing myself in the country's rich artistic

traditions, from delicate ukiyo-e prints to the harmony of nature in Japanese aesthetics, made me see composition, colours, and detail in a new way. I was particularly drawn to the elegant simplicity and refined linework in traditional woodblock prints. One of the most captivating aspects of my trip was witnessing the beauty of cherry blossoms in full bloom. The delicate, fleeting nature inspired me to explore softness and details in my paintings.

Following this trip, I've found myself testing to incorporate more minimalism, delicate patterns, and a sense of tranquillity into my work, striving to capture the essence of what moved me so deeply in Japan. I painted about 21 artworks of details of the beauty of cherry blossoms in full bloom. In my cherry tree paintings, I focus on the contrast between the fragile blossoms and the dark, textured branches by using Chinese black ink and blending it to provide some light, emphasizing the poetic balance between strength and ephemerality. I also experiment with different techniques to reflect the movement of falling petals, using fluid brushstrokes and delicate colour transitions to evoke a sense of time passing.



— Interview

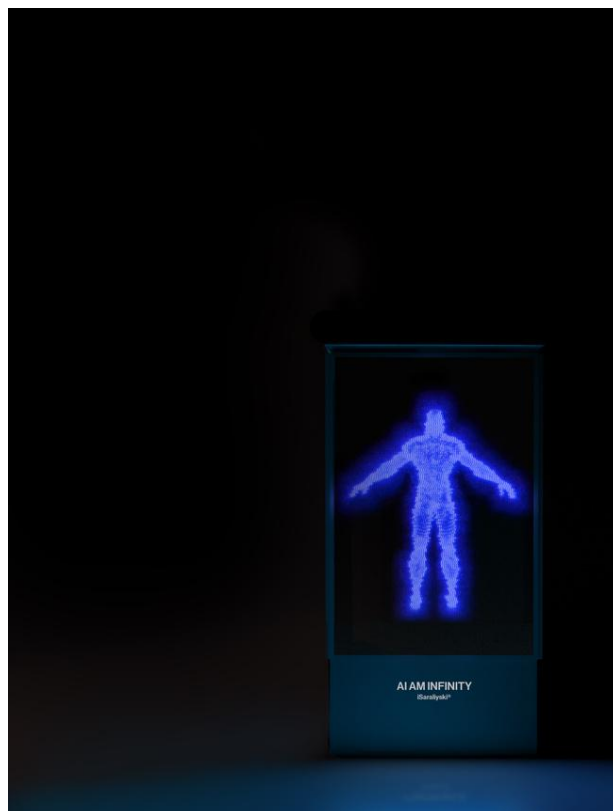
Ivaylo Saraliyski

Can you tell us more about the creative process behind "AI AM INFINITY" and how you approached the concept of merging human expression with artificial intelligence?

The process behind AI AM INFINITY began with a question rather than a concept: What happens when the human subconscious meets an algorithmic mirror? I set out to build a video installation that evolves continuously—a visual loop where form, light, and motion are driven by generative systems. Through layering and feedback, I created an environment that feels both synthetic and symbolic. The work blurs authorship—once the system begins to unfold, it starts to speak back. My role shifts from creator to curator, shaping a flow that's never quite fixed. The result is not a narrative, but a deeply immersive experience—a visual echo that keeps unfolding.

The installation seems to focus on the evolution of the relationship between humans and AI. What inspired you to explore this theme through your artwork?

Much of my work explores archetypal systems—like Tarot—which evolve over time but retain symbolic depth. AI, to me, is a new kind of mythology. It absorbs our data, habits, aesthetics—and gives something back, but transformed. I was inspired by this loop of reflection and mutation. AI AM INFINITY is an attempt to



Ivaylo Saraliyski | AI AM INFINITY

visualize that feedback spiral—not to resolve it, but to dwell inside it.

How do you think the merging of human intuition and computational power can reshape the future of art and creativity?

The fusion of intuition and computation creates a space that neither could reach alone. It's not just about speeding up creative processes—it's about accessing new forms of seeing and sensing. Artists have always explored thresholds. Now, we're exploring the edge where the human mind meets machine perception. I think the future of creativity lies in these liminal spaces.

In your project, you mention the continuous transformation of the piece. What do you hope viewers take away from this sense of fluidity and change?

I hope they enter a contemplative state—where time softens and perception opens. The looped nature of the video intentionally resists closure. There's no beginning, no resolution. Only a visual meditation on becoming. I want viewers to sense that they are not watching a fixed work, but witnessing a living system that reflects their own state of flux.

How does "AI AM INFINITY" challenge the boundaries between traditional art forms and digital technology?

By refusing to separate them. While rooted in digital creation, the work carries a strong visual symbolism and formal clarity reminiscent of traditional composition. As a video installation, it frames time through light and motion, but also occupies space like a sculptural presence. The glowing figure is central—shifting constantly between image and energy, presence and absence. This hybridity is the challenge—and the invitation.

Could you share some insights into the symbolism of the glowing figure in the installation and its connection to the broader themes of the work?

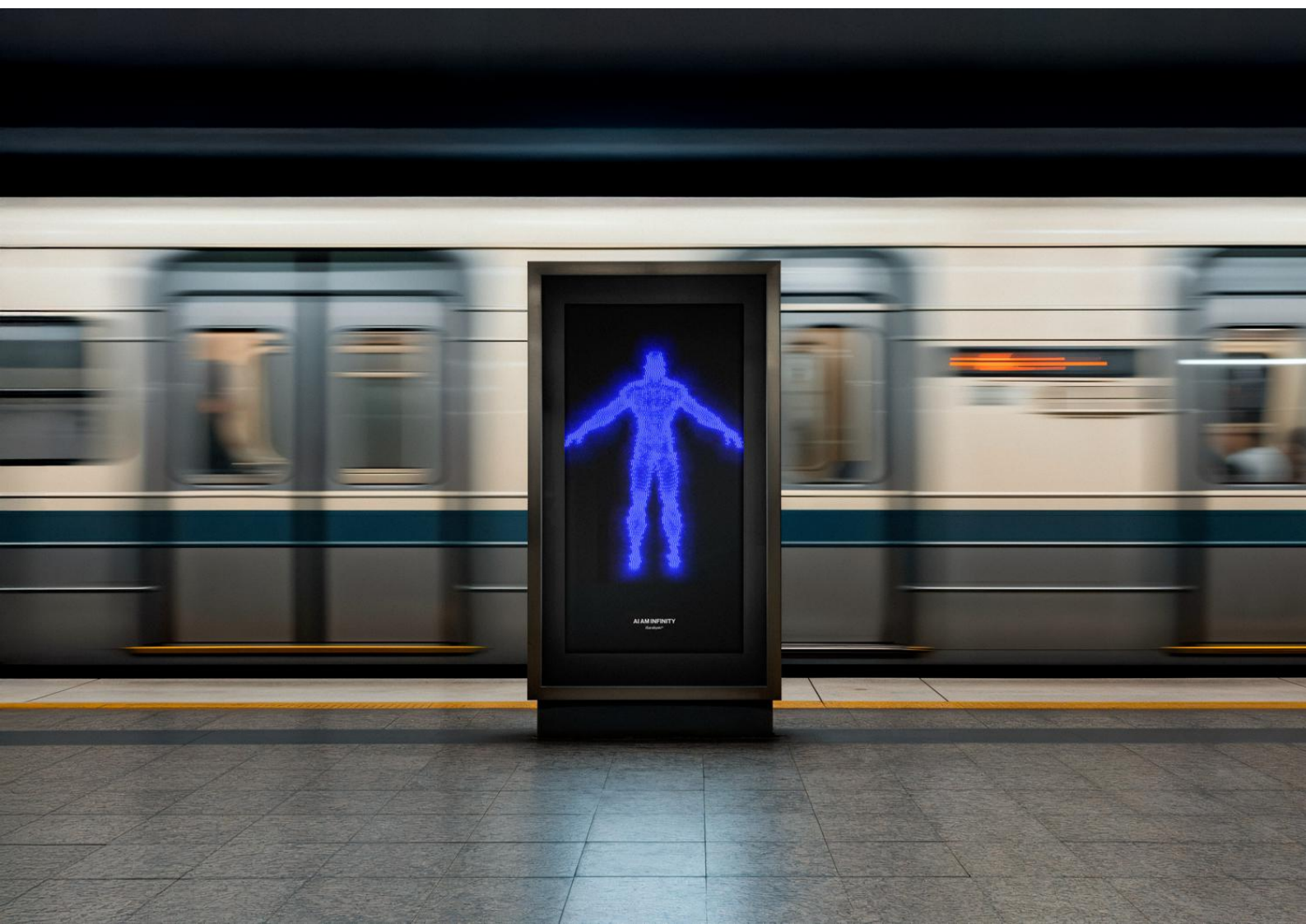
The glowing figure is a kind of transhuman vessel. It carries traces of the human body, yet it pulses with digital energy. Its movements are not fully natural, nor entirely artificial—they exist in

between. For me, it represents a liminal consciousness: something that is becoming, dissolving, and re-forming endlessly. It embodies the collapse of boundaries between flesh and code.

What role do you believe art plays in facilitating the dialogue between technology and humanity, especially as AI continues to evolve?

Art can't compete with the speed or scale of AI—but it doesn't need to. What art offers is intimacy, ambiguity, and resonance. It slows us down just enough to feel, question, and wonder. In that sense, it's not just a bridge between technology and humanity—it's a mirror and a compass. As AI evolves, we need art more than ever to help us stay emotionally and ethically attuned.

Ivaylo Saraliyski | AI AM INFINITY



Enrique Hernández García

I use abstraction as a means of expression, an artistic manifestation. Color and material as a self-sufficient language. I usually work with acrylic and watercolors, sometimes combining them with other materials such as oil pastels and creating mixed techniques. The technique resembles a free, almost spontaneous style, aiming to convey emotions and ideas without worrying about recognizable forms or traditional conventions. I have been dedicated to this for the last 10 years. A "old-school" artist, studying Applied Arts in the city of Seville, Spain, back in the 90s.

Artist Statement

An abstract artist. Bold and vibrant use of color. My work is characterized by splashes of color applied freely, creating a sense of movement and energy. Through its color palette and varied textures, I attempt to capture the emotions and imagination of the viewer. I play with texture, which adds an additional dimension to the work. Each piece is a testament to my passion and commitment to the craft, and it is evident that each brushstroke is influenced by intention and purpose.

Enrique Hernandez | Caos sereno | 2024





— Interview

Samantha Kinsey

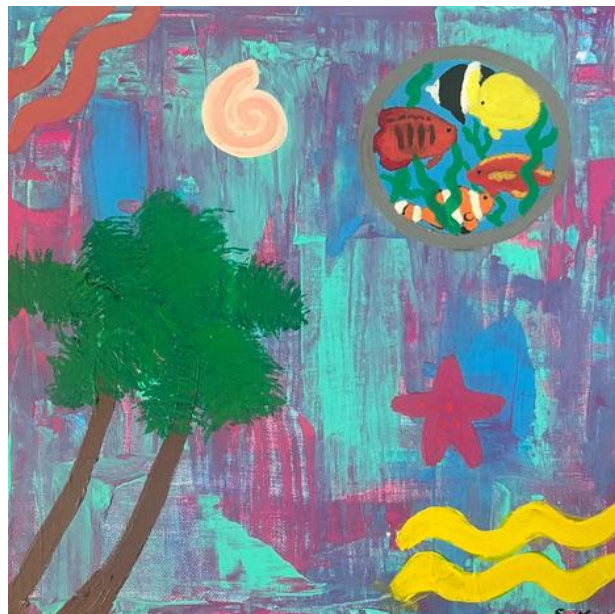
Can you tell us about your journey as an abstract and surrealism artist? What initially inspired you to explore these styles?

As an artist I'm constantly learning and trying out new techniques. My abstract pieces don't always have the same style because I don't like sticking to one style.

The internet inspired me to explore both surrealism and abstract. I stumbled upon pictures of surreal paintings online and it made me want to try it out because of its dream like aesthetic that makes me want to jump into the painting. I love doing abstract pieces because I don't have to overthink about the placement of figures or anything. I just go with the flow and see what the end result will be. My artwork is inspired by music, my dreams and surroundings. I try not to doubt myself when comparing my artwork to others who are in a higher artistic level than me. I have to remind myself that it's okay even if my artwork may not look professional because every artist is different and I'm still young so I'm still artistically growing.

In "Flying Free," the idea of freedom seems to emerge. Could you elaborate on how freedom is represented in your artwork?

Freedom is represented by the butterflies choosing to go their own ways - their paths. "Flying Free" is represented by the freedom to choose either one or multiple paths in life whether that may be in education, career, lifestyle, or maybe something simple like a different routine. Our



Samantha Kinsey | Tropical seasons

paths are often chosen by our parents or teachers and we feel restricted to stay on one path when we don't remind ourselves that we don't have to stay on one path forever and we are free to go into whatever direction we are drawn to. Having the freedom to go to different paths helps us grow mentally, psychically, and spiritually.

Your piece "Flying Free" incorporates mixed media such as magazine clippings and stickers. How do you choose your materials, and what do they bring to the meaning of the work?

I choose my materials based on the colors I'm going to use in my artwork. I would use fabric pieces in dark colored artworks and magazine clippings, paper, stickers in lighter colored pieces. These materials bring uniqueness and originality to the artwork.

How does living in Oceanside, California, influence your work? Do you feel your surroundings play a role in the themes and feelings expressed in your art?

My artwork is influenced by the landscapes of the parks and beach in Oceanside. I would take pictures and envision what I can do with it for example, I would take a picture of the beach and may use it in a surreal painting. My surroundings do play a role in my art such as whenever I go on

my walks in my neighborhood or in the park ideas will flow to me from seeing butterflies, flowers, wildlife or a sunset.

What message or feeling do you aim to convey through your abstract works?

I usually don't have a big deep meaning behind my abstract works. People are free to interpret my abstract work however they like. Sometimes an art piece is just nice to look at and bring vibrance into the space.

Do you have a specific process for creating a mixed-media piece? How do you begin and bring all the different elements together?

After I'm done painting or sketching out one part of the artwork, I'll place the materials on different areas of the canvas to see where it would fit best

before gluing it on the artwork. I'll try to have the materials, such as paper or magazine clippings, blend into the painting so it looks put well together by putting the material in watered down glue and smooth it on the canvas.

What do you find most challenging about working with surrealism and abstraction?

I tend to overthink a lot during the process. Even when I'm doing an abstract piece. I'm a perfectionist and want the artwork to be perfect but there's always trial and error. When it comes to surrealism I always tend to second guess myself with "is this really surrealism?" And "Am I doing this right?" I try to overcome these challenges but I do end up getting frustrated and taking a break but I then come back with a more relaxed and fresh mindset.

Samantha Kinsey | Flying free



Katarzyna Łukaszewicz is a multidisciplinary artist, graphic designer, and painter. She graduated with honors from the Władysław Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź, Poland. Her inspiration comes from the world around her—she believes that creativity can be drawn from everyday life, nature, the cosmos, remarkable people, and personal feelings and experiences. For her, the creative process is deeply rooted in energy, emotion, and experiences that stimulate the imagination and bring forth unique ideas. She works across various forms, including installations, sculptures, ready-made art, and painting. Each project is approached with a fresh perspective, with every detail carefully considered. She believes that every element—color, typography, composition, photograph, line, or stroke—carries its own power and message. By thoughtfully combining these elements, she creates memorable works that invite reflection and resonate with viewers. Since 2023, she has been a co-creator of the art collective IN-SIDE, actively collaborating with three other artists to develop collective artistic installations.

Sculpture "Masks and Mirror"

"Masks and Mirror" is a sculpture depicting a small, furry monster inside a cage - a symbol of the human mind, filled with limitations and inner struggles. The creature, blue with white horns, sits on a mirrored floor that reflects its defiant gesture - its tongue playfully sticking out. A mask falls over its forehead, while another is held in its hand, as if contemplating which face to adopt. The piece serves as a metaphor for the inner demons that reside within every person, symbolizing fears, weaknesses, and hidden emotions. The mirror emphasizes self-confrontation, while the creature's playful expression reveals the rebellious nature of that part of ourselves that we do not always manage to control. The metal cage represents both protection and restriction - a reminder of the strength of character required to tame our inner conflicts. The sculpture invites reflection on self-acceptance and the challenge of mastering the aspects of ourselves that can be destructive.

Katarzyna Łukaszewicz | Masks and Mirror | 2025



Sculpture "Finding the Inner Child"

The assemblage sculpture "Finding the Inner Child" takes the form of a wooden, double-winged altarpiece. At its center, emerging from a nest of delicate pink feathers, is a small doll - symbolizing childhood, innocence, and the pure essence of the self. The surrounding feathers emphasize the fragility and transience of this state while also evoking its warmth and dreamlike nature. On the doors of the altarpiece, to the left and right, two hemispheres of the brain are depicted against the backdrop of a map of an unknown city. This contrast suggests the tension between rationality and intuition, between the structured, mature mind and the free, childlike creativity. The map of a mysterious city may symbolize an inner journey - a path of self-exploration leading back to forgotten emotions and memories. "Finding the Inner Child" tells a story of reconnecting with the purest part of one's identity - the part that exists beyond social conventions, fears, and expectations. It is an invitation to reclaim the sensitivity, wonder, spontaneity, and authenticity of childhood. The wooden altarpiece, reminiscent of sacred objects, suggests that the inner child is something to be revered - something that requires protection and gentle care. The doll emerging from the feathers serves as a reminder that this part of us never truly disappears - it remains hidden, waiting to be rediscovered. The brain hemispheres indicate a balance between intellect and emotion, while the unknown city on the map may represent unexplored aspects of the psyche, awaiting discovery. This piece encourages reflection on how adulthood distances us from our original, untainted nature and highlights the importance of rediscovering the child within - a source of curiosity, joy, and creative energy.



— Interview

Joely Ramo

Can you tell us more about how your background in Kabbalah and Buddhism influences your artistic practice?

Our roots in Kabbalah stem from our upbringing in Judaism. Our family would participate in the general culture, ensuring that each holy day was experienced. We also went to Hebrew school for a large part of our childhood, which allowed us to understand the Torah on a deeper level and prepare us for our Bat Mitzvah. Though, strangely, the Kabbalah was only a brief moment in our younger education. It wasn't until we decided to do our own research in our later teens, that we truly uncovered our devotion. Around this same time, we began learning about Buddhism. Buddhism and Kabbalah share many ideas of existence. Both have an emphasis on interconnectivity and non-duality. These themes aligned with us, and continue to guide us. To be able to strip the illusion of separateness with the support of thousands of years of written and oral information was affirming. As we learned, our way of living became more kind and grateful. Each interaction with the world became sacred. The magic of life was present in every motion. Our art transformed to a mission, a mission to share the teachings of Kabbalah and Buddhism.



To help our collective be more aware of the fact that we are one. That pain and joy are one, light and dark are one, you and we are one. We'd like to enlighten all about the connection we share with each shape shifting atom, in effort to inspire the act of mitzvahs- that will help enable the messiah conscious. (a congruent consciousness that acts with total awareness, mindful of any and all).

How did you first get interested in collage as an art form, and how has your approach evolved over time?

We feel many do not realize their true start in a medium- the traditional known act of collage found us in our freshman year of collage. Though upon deeper understanding, we have been acting in ways of collage since our young childhood. Collage is the act of putting pieces

together- we would film-make and illustrate worlds, putting together pieces of imagery endlessly. This is the act of collage, collage can even go further back to our first time putting an outfit together. To emphasize again, putting together anything is collage. Though if we were to focus on the less nuanced understanding of this term- we would put note to- like said- our freshman year of college. Our school encouraged students to explore ways of art making. To develop relationships with mediums we may have never approached. We recall the day, sitting outside in the breath of fall as the hues of the world gave one last warm hug. We had scavenged for imagery moments before, sat in the grass, sketchbook open, and began to build a world. The placement felt guided by unknown forces, which we would later understand as our collaboration with nature. Intuitively, we cut, glued, and placed a narrative. As we pressed our last piece of paper onto the page- a fire fanned into flame. We became enthralled with the process of being able to connect parts of the world that many would assume have no connection. To be able to share information of how we experienced the world so directly. From then on, we endlessly experimented ways of collage, learning and learning techniques that allowed us to support our mission of raising awareness. Overtime, with the support of our community, time, and attention- we have been able to evolve our art practice to align directly with our spiritual practice. We ensure absolute flow of forms by the intentional layering and cutting of forms. Our resources for images, a



collection of 4 years (and still growing) of search, have amounted to a world of endlessly possibilities, interactions, and lives. We began to create a system of weaving, making the collage seem almost painterly how everything fits perfectly together. Our process of gluing has become ideal- flattening each image to the point that you'd be unsure if it even came from an alternative source. We will continue to evolve our practice, evolve our techniques, evolve our narrative scenes, evolve our pallets, evolve our forms, evolve our worlds, evolve our connections endlessly.

Your artist statement mentions the importance of interconnectivity and non-duality. Could you elaborate on how these concepts manifest in your work?

Interconnectivity and non-duality manifests in our work through the form of imagery. It is important to us to utilize all ways of living, all kinds of existence, all perspectives. To show that everything that does and doesn't exist is a part of being. By incorporating all these facets, we can help a wider audience notice themselves in our work and notice how they relate to all. We create narratives that highlight the process of suffering and enlightenment. The mud and lotus of life, the pain and joy that must be present to exist. Our connection of images becomes a teaching, an understanding of how we can be more aware of the world-our relation to one another, to everything and nothing.

You've described your collage process as a

collaboration with nature. Could you explain what this process looks like and how it feels to work in this way?

A collaboration with nature is a flow of pure intuition, guided by forces both known and unknown. As we have our intentions, ideas, and technique- nature has resources, materials, and chance. To create a collage, one made of found objects, you must trust that nature, life, will bring to you what you need. We have no control over what books will be present, what content will be open to us. We allow for this to be up to nature, and we find that this faith is giving and kind. As we collect content, we grab what aligns with our intentions. When it comes to organizing imagery, a dynamic dance begins where we listen keenly to where the image is calling to and where we feel the narrative flows. We go back and forth, swaying, swirling, until the collage finally comes together.

How do you select the imagery and materials for your collages? Is it a spontaneous process, or do you follow a certain theme?

Imagery and materials call out to us, they grab our attention amongst the sea of content. We believe these pieces are divinely aligned, that they are in tune with our intentions and feelings. The process of selecting is an intuitive motion, guided gently by our intentional spiritual practice. As previously mentioned, this is our collaboration with nature- it is a faith in chance. The universe continues to share content we need to help share our perspectives and teachings. We flip through endlessly arrays of books, magazines, and papers in respect to the traditional start of DADA. It is critical for us to scavenge for materials, using found objects of our world are essential to representing the metaphorical act of putting our universe back together in a more aware way.

In your view, how do collage pieces come together to create a "universe" or a cohesive whole?

As we place each image, in relation to others, a universe begins to breathe. Each piece is



interacting in a way- commenting, touching, and responding to each. Multiple narratives weave themselves together, notioning how a world is made of various perspectives and realities all connected into one. Upon their whole, this a singular cohesive experience, as one analyzes the present moments in the work, they are able to place themselves within the interactions. As we create more collages, more worlds, the universe expands- various life paths, dimensions, and realms are born and exist as a totality.

What role do you think art plays in connecting people to deeper, universal truths?

Art is a direct path for people to be connected to deeper, universal truths. Art is an experience that is felt beyond the context of personal experience and language. It is a way of recognizing interconnections, and understanding the bond of being a human. Art can be accessed globally, especially today thanks to the advancements of technology. Art was traditionally used to help people learn about their world without language or proper education. Buddhist teachings would be illustrated on massive pillars and then shared across Asia. Buddhism was able to expand itself and gain a collective because of this- helping humans to live a more aware and kind life. Art is still used in these ways- crossing countries and ideologies respectfully- sharing genuine compassion and how one can align with these values. To thus enhance the quality of life and death for all. Art is the connector, art is a vehicle for the universal truths of interconnectivity and non-duality.



— Interview

Yichen He

The combination of cyanotype art and color seems to be a defining feature in your work. Could you describe your process for incorporating this technique, and why you chose it to represent your themes?

When creating my work, I try to stretch my body by changing poses, thereby using my body as a medium to articulate the nuanced interplay of fluidity and hesitation that characterizes my inner world. This physical expression is deeply intertwined with my identity as a queer individual, serving as a reflection of my lived experience and the complexities of my existence. When I aim to capture the fluidity of life on canvas, I need to embrace methods that involve uncertainty. I believe cyanotype fits this perfectly, as it relies on sunlight and water to develop—both elements that are constantly changing. Thus, cyanotype not only meets but also enhances my artistic requirements, allowing me to create works that are deeply resonant with the themes of change, fluidity, and the exploration of identity.

Your artist statement references the tension between the subconscious and conscious in your work. How do you navigate this duality while creating, and how do you see it impacting the final artwork?

While creating, the subconscious brings raw emotions and intentions, while the conscious mind focuses on refining and structuring these elements. I often let intuition lead the way at first, and then use logic to adjust and refine the work later. This duality makes the work not only emotionally charged but also clearly expressed, ultimately presenting multiple layers of meaning that provoke thought and resonance in the viewer.

You have worked in both London and Shanghai, two very different cultural contexts. How have your experiences in these cities influenced your artistic approach and the themes you explore?

It's undeniable that these two cities share some common traits, such as their openness to both old and



new cultures. However, my experiences of living and working in these cities have made me aware of subtle yet significant differences between them. These differences have prompted deeper reflection and provided me with meaningful guidance. London's fusion of modern and historical art encouraged me to think worldwide and taught me to explore while honoring tradition. However, Shanghai's blend of the ancient elegance and the thriving diversity inspired my investigation of transformation, identity, and cultural hybridity, demonstrating to me the complexity of modernity and urbanization. How I see and make has been influenced by both locations.

Your current work explores the combination of cyanotype and digital art. Can you share your thoughts on the fusion of these two media and what it brings to your creative process?

Traditional cyanotype has a distinct texture and a sense of unpredictability, whereas digital art provides infinite accuracy and potential. Combining the two allows me to use digital technology to create more intricate compositions and color layers while maintaining the warmth and spontaneity of craftsmanship in my work. In addition to broadening my creative vocabulary, this union gives my work a more complex visual and emotional expression by

balancing tradition with contemporary.

Your work explores themes of identity, gender, and mobility. How do you approach these concepts when starting a new piece? Do they evolve as you work, or do you have a clear direction from the start?

When starting a new piece, I usually have a preliminary idea around themes like identity, gender, and fluidity, but these concepts tend to evolve during the creation process. I prefer to let the work 'grow' rather than follow a rigid path. Just as I said before, I would let intuition lead at first. This open attitude allows me to explore the multiple meanings of these complex themes more deeply and immersively, while also giving the work more fluidity and vitality. In the end, these pieces reflect both my initial thoughts and the new inspirations that emerged during the creative journey.

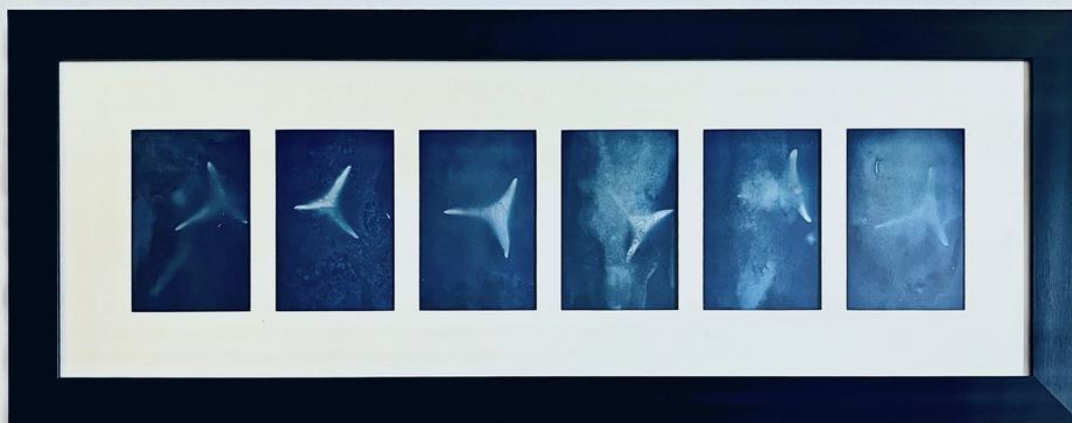
Could you tell us about a specific work in your portfolio that you feel deeply connected to? What was its inspiration, and what does it represent to you personally?

I took a nude self-portrait and bound my chest with rope. The act of 'binding' is not just a physical constraint but also a metaphor for the societal norms and gazes that confine me, or even symbolizing my inner self-imprisonment. I then created various effects for the image in Photoshop and printed it onto film. These films were then placed on cyanotype fabric, and after exposure to sunlight, they formed unique images. Meanwhile, I layered lace lingerie onto the fabric as a subtle suggestion and playful commentary, telling the story behind the photo in a cheeky way. This approach to creation is both a subversion of traditional portraiture and a complex exploration of identity, restraint, and freedom.



Your works have been selected for the Louvre International Art Exhibition and have received significant recognition. How has this affected your artistic journey and your approach to future projects?

It was a significant milestone for me for sure. It not only boosted my confidence in my artistic practice but also made me realize that my work can resonate on an international stage. This acknowledgment encourages me to explore new media and themes more boldly, while also placing greater emphasis on the depth and universality of my work. Moving forward, I hope to continue challenging myself and create pieces that reflect personal insights while engaging with a global audience.



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