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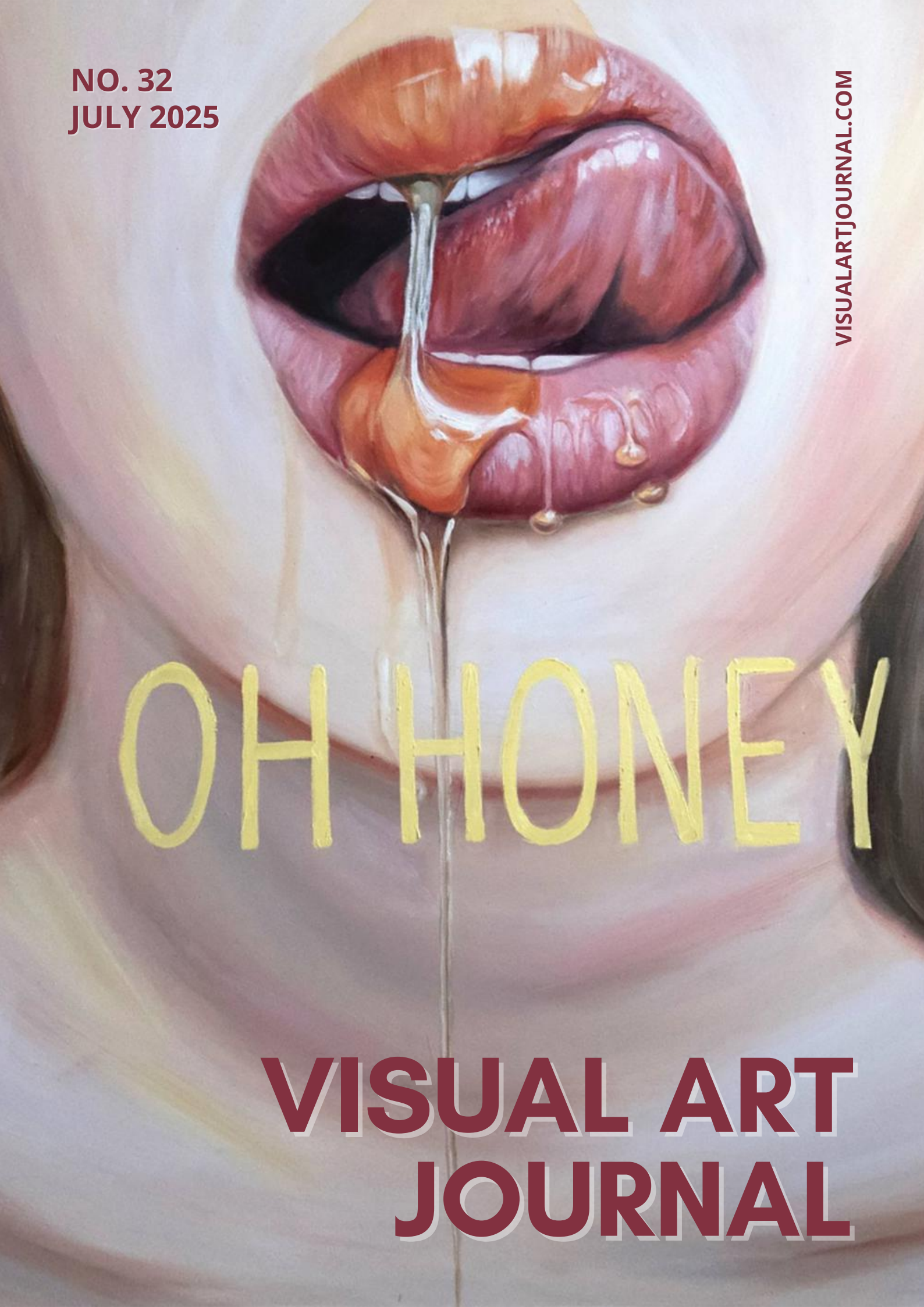

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

— *Intro*

Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

Hello, dear reader,

You are holding Issue 32 of our journal, warmed by the rays of the summer sun (at least if you're reading us from the Northern Hemisphere).

Today, I'd like to reflect on what it is that an artist captures: a fleeting moment or eternity. When looking at paintings or photographs, one often marvels at how skillfully the artist has managed to grasp a split second, an emotion, a particular light. How unique that moment was—the one that later found its interpretation on canvas.

At the same time, the line between a moment and eternity can sometimes blur. When observing people, nature, or the cosmos, we begin to realize that what we see might have happened before, and might resonate similarly with us and those who come after us. In this sense, what is depicted is not a second in time, but rather infinity—reflected and reverberating across the ages.

Today, as always, you are invited on an exciting journey into the world of creativity and into the lives of real, sensitive, and deeply feeling individuals.

Enjoy the read!

On the Front Cover:
Nataliia Karavan
Oh honey

On the Back Cover:
Holly_Wong
Deconstructed Quilt 1
2022

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

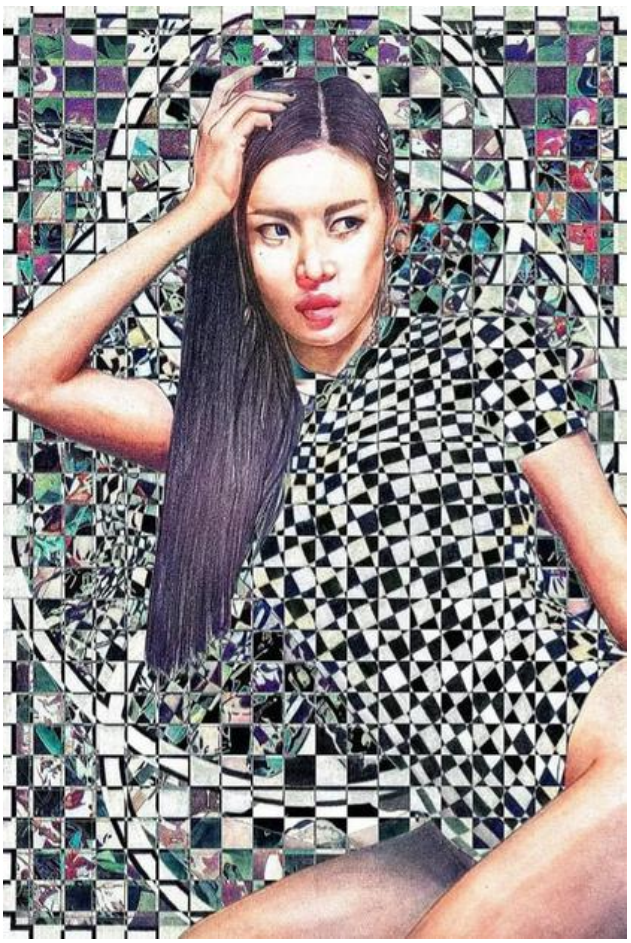
Marian Gayk: Outlines of a Forceful Trajectory

Born on 3 August 1987 in Moers, Germany, Marian Gayk has built an artistic career marked by rigorous training and sustained creative development. Her foray into the art world began in 2007, when she began her studies at the renowned Münster Academy of Art, where she remained until 2016.

For almost a decade, Gayk honed her visual language under the tutelage of renowned sculptor and teacher Henk Visch, becoming one of his most outstanding students. In 2013, this close pedagogical relationship culminated in her appointment as a master student (‘Meisterschülerin’) by Visch, a recognition reserved for those who demonstrate an outstanding artistic approach.

In 2015, she obtained the Academy's official certificate, followed by an additional year of master's studies (2015-2016), during which she further deepened her artistic and conceptual practice.

Since 2017, Marian Gayk has been working as a freelance artist, developing her work both in Germany and abroad. Her constantly evolving work reflects the intensity of her academic training and the freedom of an independent practice, establishing herself as a singular voice in European contemporary art.



Marian Gayk | Glance

Marian Gayk | Lee Eunha

Maksym Vasyliuk

Maksym Vasyliuk | Patterned Silence | 2025

What first drew you to architectural and interior photography?

Maksym Vasyliuk | Quiet Oak | 2025

It started with my obsession with spaces - clean lines, natural light, and how a room can feel completely different depending on the time of day. I've always noticed small details - how the shadow falls across a chair, how a window opens up the whole scene. Photography became a way to make those moments permanent. Over time, interiors became more than just a subject - they became a way to talk about calm, light, and perspective.

How does your European background influence the way you see and capture American spaces?

While developing my skills as a photographer in Ukraine or Asia, I constantly worked with fully furnished apartments that were filled with mixed design elements and a lived-in feel. This experience developed my skills from an early stage, teaching me to find structure in complexity, control light in real environments, and capture emotion without staging. In the United States, where homes are often empty, I continue to bring this sensitivity to my work, using light, composition and restraint to create atmosphere in even the quietest of spaces.

You describe your work as turning "spaces into emotion." Can you share an example of a photo where you felt that deeply?

Maksym Vasyliuk | Gold Thread Afternoon | 2025

There's one image I shot in a Manhattan apartment - just a simple corner: a chair, soft morning light, and the edge of a window frame. Nothing dramatic. But in that moment, it felt like the whole city was paused outside, and the space held its own breath. That frame stayed with me. It reminded me that emotion in photography doesn't come from what's there, but from how you see it - and how stillness can say more than design ever could.

How do you approach working with designers and real estate teams to capture their vision while still expressing your own style?

I start by listening - not just to what they say, but to what matters to them visually. Every designer or agent has a different focus: some care about light, others about layout or lifestyle. Once I understand their priorities, I build the shoot around that - but I always keep my eye on balance, atmosphere, and composition. My goal is to translate their intent through my perspective - so the image feels real, but also elevated.

What role does light play in your creative process?

Light is everything. It's the first thing I look for when I walk into a space - where it falls, how it shifts, what it touches. I don't force it. I wait, adjust, and let the space speak through it. Light gives structure emotion. It can make a cold room feel alive, or turn an ordinary wall into something quiet and cinematic. For me, light isn't just technical - it's the mood, the tension, the story.

Do you have a favorite project that challenged you and helped you grow as an artist?

One of the most challenging projects was shooting a minimalist penthouse with almost no furniture. At first, it felt like there was nothing to anchor the frame. But that emptiness forced me to slow down, to think more about light, texture, and proportion. I realized that even a bare space can hold emotion - if you know how to listen to it. That shoot changed the way I approach composition. It taught me to do more with less.

Your images often convey stillness and depth. Is that intentional? How do you achieve that atmosphere?

Yes, it's intentional - but not staged. I'm always looking for a certain quiet in the frame. That usually comes from light, balance, and what I choose to leave out. I try not to overload the image. Instead, I let the space breathe. I pay attention to tension in lines, the rhythm of negative space, and the way light slows everything down. Stillness, for me, isn't static - it's a kind of focus.

Maksym Vasyliuk | Light Oak Kitchen | 2025

Guzel Min

Project Statement
In my work, I explore the transience of our lives, which begins with a small seed and concludes with wilting and a return to the earth. I strive to capture the significance of each period — from seed to vibrant bloom, from the bright summer to the deep autumn. The end is merely a new beginning. Observing lotuses in various corners of Japan has prompted me to reflect on the influence of time and its connection to contemporary life. Lotuses emerged long before humanity graced the earth. Perhaps we are just guests among these beautiful creations. Are we doing enough to sustain the life around us? Do we truly understand it? Everyone has their own answer. The reverence for ancient plants reminds us how easily we forget the fragility of any life.

Sofia Argüello

Your background combines music, anthropology, and photography. How do these disciplines influence your current visual work?

In my creative work, each part of my background acts like a lens that allows me to see an idea, a place, or something that inspires me in a unique way. Music was one of my first gateways to creative and artistic expression. Since I was a child, it has allowed me to inhabit collective spaces, amplify what I had to offer in a group setting, and share knowledge through enjoyment. Today, it's still present in my daily life—in the sounds and styles I choose to accompany my breakfast or to work on a particular project. Anthropology's presence is less graphic but more encompassing. In my final years of study, I realized that one of the greatest lessons from this discipline, among many things, was observation—and the vigilance that comes with it. Without even noticing, I acquired a new pair of lenses to observe and inhabit different worlds. This influences every idea, my choice of format, the message, and how I bring it to life—but undoubtedly, it also shapes my way of living. Photography was a major discovery and the engine that opened the doors to creativity for me once again. After years of intellectual work and study, photography gave me back the process of creating and an invitation to curiosity, which now guides my visual work.

Sofia Argüello | Casa | 2025

What first drew you to photographing daily life in Turin?

Moving to a new city always invites me to look with eyes full of surprise and curiosity. I have been living outside Argentina, my home country, for three years now, and when I arrived in Turin, I began to understand that photographing my daily life in the city was my way of telling myself: You're here now. After a few months, while looking through my files, I began to find traces of a daily life in Turin that transforms with the changing seasons and with my growing familiarity with the space. Without a doubt, these photos show an everyday life—among many others that I inhabit.

Several of your images capture light and shadows in striking ways. What role does natural light play in your creative process?

I'd say natural light is at the core of my work. At this point in my career, my exploration with natural light encompasses both photography and working with cyanotype, a printmaking technique that uses UV light. I also find a connection between time and natural light that deeply inspires me. Being able to work with the passage of time,

Sofia Argüello | Encuentro | 2025

translated through the variables expressed by light, is one of the aspects that attracts and challenges me in my daily practice. On a personal level, I also love to travel and discover new places, to get closer to everyday life and the details that make each place unique. So, I believe light reflects the details that shape a place, and therefore, the photos I take are traces of my passage through that place at a given moment.

Many of your photographs evoke a sense of stillness and intimacy. Is that something you intentionally seek?

The intention to look closely and linger on details is part of my creative process, which I try to translate into the work itself. Intimacy is an invitation for the viewer to come closer and notice the details; it's about sharing the sensations of the process at a later stage, without losing its uniqueness.
On the other hand, photography has brought me closer to the practice of pausing, of ensuring that everyday occurrences don't go unnoticed, and of keeping my gaze attentive and curious. Sometimes, this simply means stopping and observing.

What stories or emotions are you hoping to communicate through this project?

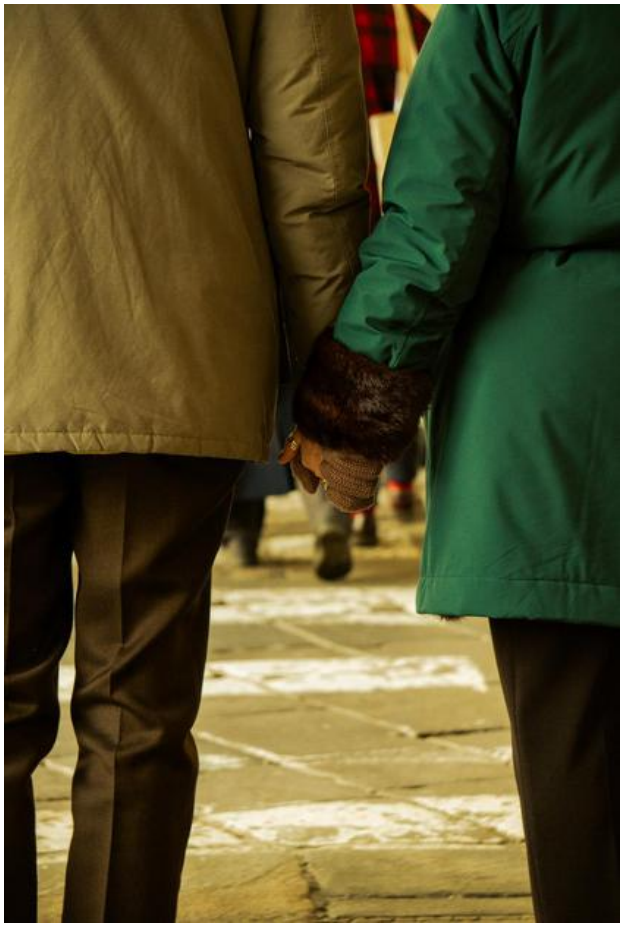
This project stems from an everyday record that seeks to appreciate daily happenings with presence and to convey the diversity of scenes we witness each day. It proposes a dialogue between intimate life and its exchange with the outside world, where natural light is the guide or focal point —a language expressed through shadows and brightness. Turin is a city I've known for a short time, and my daily life here keeps changing and taking new forms as time goes by. This project is a first version of that daily life, and the idea of giving it a title in the form of a question is my way of not taking anything around us for granted and of invoking the ephemeral and unpredictable nature of life.

How do you choose the subjects or locations for your photos?

This project emerged from an archival process in which the photos were taken in my home, my neighborhood, and during my early walks around the city. So, while there wasn't a deliberate decision before capturing the images, when building this narrative I made a selection that seeks to weave connections between intimate spaces and spaces of social interaction and encounter. For example, starting from my dining table and the shadow over my neighbor's backyard, then moving to my favorite street corner in the neighborhood and the reflection of a café in the heart of the city. In this way, I try to evoke spaces that were meaningful in my early everyday life, within a specific time and place—my home, its surroundings, and the first parts of the city I discovered.

Has your perspective on Turin changed since you began photographing it?

The practice of photographing the place I live in invites me to observe, to nurture curiosity about everything new, to make sense of what feels overwhelming at first, and to record an ephemeral present. Without a doubt, photographing my daily life in Turin has allowed me to perceive it differently and to observe how the passage of time shapes my gaze within the same city.



Sofia Argüello | Amor | 2025

Jorge Escalante Vinces

Born in Lima/Peru 70 years ago. Living in Milan-Italy since 1979.
Self-taught. Approached to the watercolor's practice in May 2020.
Has follow some lessons with Italian Watercolor Association masters of Milan (AIA).
In November 2024 himself has become a member of the AIA (Italian Watercolorists Association).
Has participated to several national exhibitions and international competitions.
Recently, his works have been selected in numerous exhibitions in Italy and abroad (IWS Nepal, IFAM Global Malaysia, IWS Poland, IWS Serbia, Aquarelle Pyrenees France, IW Grece, Aquareliege Belgium).

Jorge Escalante Vinces | Family Portrait | 2025

Jorge Escalante Vinces | Chills | 2025

Jorge Escalante Vinces | Thunderstorm | 2024

Samantha Lim

Can you tell us more about the moment that inspired you to start the Regrounded series?

I was mainly inspired to start the Regrounded series as a way to work through stress that had built up over the course of a long work season and semester. At the time, I was in a creative rut and felt like without taking some time for myself to ground, I wouldn't be able to create meaningful work. My mind was overwhelmed by the need for a reset, and that consumed my thoughts. Regrounded became both an opportunity to reconnect with myself and a way to make art from that process.

Samantha Lim | Regrounded | 2025

How do your Chinese and Mexican heritage influence your visual storytelling?

My heritage plays a huge role in the subject matter I choose. Aside from this series most of my work focuses on exploring familial ties and the bond between culture and personal identity. In the case of Regrounded, I did not consider my heritage as directly as I have in other works. That being said, it still becomes a subtle, subconscious reflection of the influence my heritage plays in my life.

You mention that each image represents a "safe space." How did you choose which moments or places to photograph?

To a certain extent, the process of choosing when and where to photograph was fairly intuitive. With such a strong urge to find peace I imagined where I could go to feel a little bit better and those became the spaces I photographed.

Samantha Lim | Regrounded | 2025

How did the emotional shift after your breakup affect your creative process during this project?

After my breakup I felt a sense of hopelessness. I mention this in my project statement but the experience forced me to reassess my "safe spaces" and deeply consider the idea of impermanence. It was odd because the stability I had been searching for throughout this process was suddenly shattered. I was heartbroken yet still in places that brought me comfort. Having to continue the series in such an emotionally complex space had a significant impact on my creative process. The breakup pushed me into a sort of survival mode where I found myself working in a methodical and mechanical way in order to complete the series and also move forward with my life. I think that the dissociation that occurred after the breakup shows through the work -- giving the images a haunting beauty and vulnerability shaped by the loss.

There's a quiet vulnerability in your photographs. How do you achieve that emotional intimacy with your subjects—or with yourself?

I think that emotional intimacy comes from a place of constantly reflecting on myself, my feelings, and where I am in the world. Vulnerability comes naturally to my work because with reflection comes vulnerability. This same mentality applies to working with my subjects. I have always been the type to put myself in the shoes of others which creates this sense of shared emotion that helps make each image feel more real and relatable. The images are then not just about me or them but a shared feeling that many of us can relate to.

What does the desert mean to you personally and artistically?

The desert is my home. I was born and raised in Tucson, Arizona and so for me, the desert brings a deep sense of comfort because of its familiarity. For those who didn't grow up with it, the desert might seem harsh and lifeless but to me, it's what gives me life. Moreover, the desert is also a major source of artistic inspiration. Being born here I connect my identity closely with the Sonoran Desert and its resilience and rigidness is something that mirrors my current state of being.

The self-timer cable is visible in some photos. Was that a deliberate choice to include yourself as part of the narrative?

The air shutter release in each image was a very intentional and symbolic choice. Regrounded centers around my personal safe spaces and the process of finding peace. From the beginning, it was important to me that I include myself in the images - not only because this series tells my personal story, but also as a way to reclaim a sense of self reliance during a time of distress from my breakup. While the cable release was necessary since my medium format camera lacks a self timer, it became increasingly important to me that I have autonomy over my process of regrounding. In the midst of uncertainty and loss of stability, the act of firing the shutter myself and having the cable visible became an assertion of control.

Samantha Lim | Regrounded | 2025

Eva Oleandr

Eva is a UK/Russia based emerging artist whose work serves as a portal to a reality bent through the prism of her imagination, creating new perspectives and narratives that invite viewers to question the conventional. Inspired by a profound love for nature and a deep engagement with philosophical concepts, Eva's surreal compositions are imbued with a mythical and symbolic resonance. Her pieces often feature elements of anatomy, fantastical creatures and ethereal figures seamlessly intertwined with natural elements reflecting her fascination with themes of transformation, the interconnectedness of all living things, and the sublime beauty found in both the seen and unseen worlds.

Originally from Sarapul, a small Russian town, Eva grew up exploring nature in all its captivating forms, which served as the ground for her earliest artistic expressions. Later Eva went to Fine Art School N3 where she learned all the basics of traditional, academic painting, drawing and sculpture. Seeking new horizons and perspectives, Eva subsequently moved to the UK, where she pursued and successfully graduated from Cardiff Metropolitan University in 2022 with a degree in illustration. This blend of cultures, traditional discipline and contemporary illustration techniques allows her to craft intricate, dreamlike visuals that resonate with a sense of wonder and introspection, taking viewers into a realm where the boundaries between reality and fantasy dissolve.

Eva Oleandr | Attachment | 2025


IX
IV
X
XII
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I
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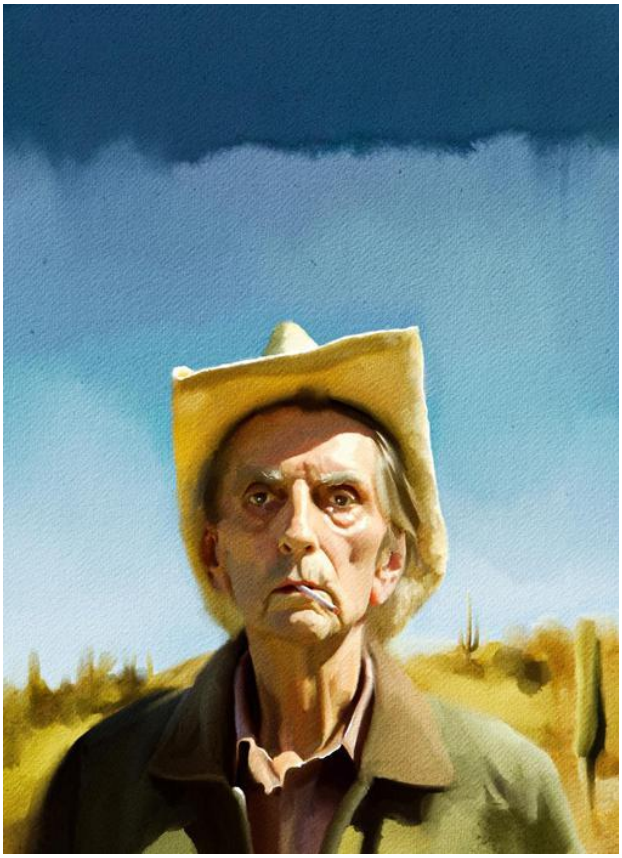
XI
VIII

Emma Shleyger

Your work often explores silence, identity, and memory. How did these themes become central to your artistic vision?

They emerged not through theory, but through experience personal, familial, historical. For me, art became a way to listen to what had been silenced, forgotten, or hidden. Silence is not merely the absence of sound; it is the space in which the inner voice begins to speak. Identity is not a constant it's a search. And memory is not an archive, but a living process. These themes are natural companions for an artist who works not just with surface, but with depth.

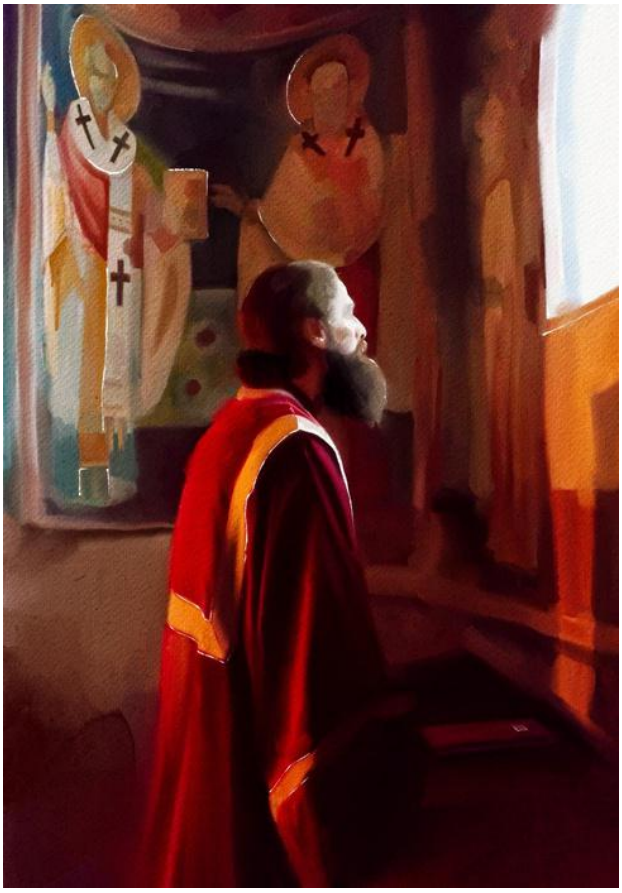


As both an artist and researcher, how do your academic pursuits inform your creative practice?

I believe that thinking and feeling are inseparable. Research helps me articulate my artistic intuitions more precisely, and to understand the broader contexts into which my work enters. Scholarship offers distance and clarity, while painting brings me back to presence and embodiment. This connection is especially meaningful when dealing with topics like visual memory, the philosophy of the image, or the sacred nature of form.

Can you describe the emotional or spiritual experience you aim to evoke in viewers of your portraits?

I'm not drawn to shock or provocation. What matters to me is evoking a sense of presence with another person, with oneself, or with something greater. In portraiture, I look for vulnerability and truth that threshold where a face ceases to be anatomy and becomes an interior landscape. Sometimes this evokes



stillness, sometimes a quiet unease, but always I seek a point of contact.

You've completed sacred icon commissions for a heritage church. How does working on religious art differ from your other practice?

Icon painting requires a distinct state both inward and technical. The artist's ego must step back to allow a different kind of image to emerge. In that sense, iconography is an act of humility, yet one that demands deep attention. In my studio work, I explore, question, search. In sacred art, I listen and follow. This experience transformed the way I think about form and time.

Many of your works carry a deep sense of stillness. How do you technically achieve this effect in your painting process?

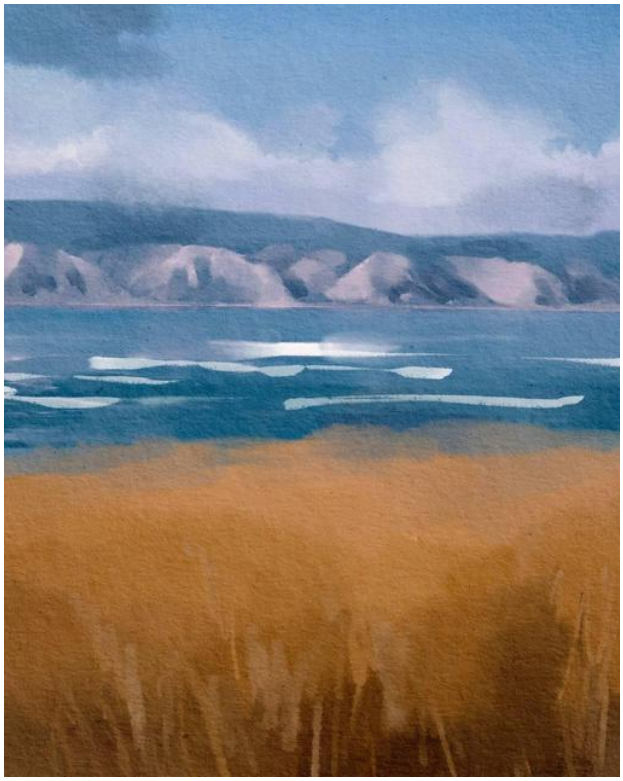
Through tempo and attentiveness. I work slowly, in layers, with long pauses between stages. Light is built as structure, not as an impression. I avoid harsh contrasts, favoring halftones, subtle transitions, the breath of form. Stillness doesn't come from frozen gesture but from the sense that time has expanded inside the painting like a slow inhale. It's technical, yes, but also intentional.

You are a member of several international art associations. How has this global network shaped your opportunities or collaborations?

It created space for dialogue. You see how artists from different cultures think, what they care about, what visual language they choose. It's not about "global success," but about being part of a living, thoughtful professional community. Through exhibitions, curatorial selections, and publications, I've found not just new opportunities, but a sense that my work resonates beyond local boundaries.

In a world of constant noise, how do you think art that "speaks quietly" can reach and move audiences?

I believe this kind of art is essential. Noise disorients, but quiet art anchors. It creates a space of attention, trust, and inwardness. It doesn't impose it remains. That's its strength. Perhaps this is my inner mission as an artist: to remind us of a different density of perception, of the depth we can only experience when we slow down.



Suzan Ibrahim is a renowned Sudanese artist, educator, and cultural advocate whose work delves into the realms of colour, folklore, and the preservation of Sudanese heritage. Born on February 12, 1974, in Khartoum, Sudan, Suzan has built a career marked by her deep commitment to visual art, education, and cultural storytelling.

Suzan holds a Ph.D. in Colour Art from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Sudan University of Science and Technology (2015). She also earned a Master's in Folklore and a Higher Diploma in Folklore from the Institute of African and Asian Studies at the University of Khartoum (2008 and 2002, respectively). She completed her bachelor's in fine arts at Sudan University of Science and Technology in 1997. This academic foundation has been pivotal in shaping her artistic practice, blending theoretical depth with cultural insight.

As an Assistant Professor and Chair of the Department of Art Education at the University of Khartoum since 2022, Suzan has been a key figure in shaping the next generation of artists. Her academic career also spans international teaching roles, including as a Lecturer at Shaqra University in Saudi Arabia (2012–2018) and the University of Juba in South Sudan (2001–2010). Through her work as an educator, Suzan has influenced the development of art education in the region.

In addition to her academic contributions, Suzan's early career includes experience as a Collaborative Decor Engineer at Sudan National TV (1999–2002), where she honed her skills in visual design and production. This role expanded her artistic practice beyond fine art, engaging her in the visual storytelling of television production.

Suzan's work has been showcased in numerous solo and group exhibitions both in Sudan and abroad. She has held solo exhibitions at venues such as the Khatim Adlan Centre in Khartoum (2012), Gallery Shams (2008), and the German Cultural Centre (2004). Her international exhibitions include participation in "Art in Transit" at the American University in Cairo (2024), "The Migrant Bird" at Suwailem Gallery, Cairo (2024), and "Empower Her" at the Museum of Civilization in Cairo (2024). Suzan's other notable exhibitions include "Memories of Resilience and Solidarity" at Fulk Gallery, Cairo (2023), and "Spirit Harmony" at the French Cultural Centre in Khartoum (2018).

An integral part of Suzan's career has been her role in art workshops, where she shares her knowledge and fosters artistic growth within the community. She has led workshops at the American University in Cairo (2023), University of Khartoum (2021), and SWORD Organization (2012), addressing topics such as watercolour techniques, child rights, and violence against women. Her involvement in environmental workshops, including those hosted by the Sudanese Environmental Protection Society (2004), reflects her belief in the transformative power of art to address social issues.

Suzan's artistic practice is characterized by a vibrant fusion of Sudanese cultural themes and contemporary techniques. Her work often incorporates traditional motifs with modern interpretations, resulting in visually compelling pieces that reflect her cultural heritage and artistic vision. Through her exhibitions, teaching, and community engagement, Suzan Ibrahim has become a leading figure in the Sudanese art scene, influencing both her peers and emerging artists.

Suzan's continued dedication to art and education ensures her legacy as both an artist and an educator will resonate for years to come, contributing significantly to the future of Sudanese art and its place on the global stage.

Artist Statement

My artistic practice functions as a form of visual inquiry—an exploration of inner states, memory, and perception. For me, art is a reflective process, a way of engaging with the complexities of personal experience and the broader human condition. Where language falls short, I turn to image, texture, and material to access emotional and psychological depth.

At the heart of my work lies a commitment to translating the intangible: fleeting sensations, emotional subtleties, and fragments of memory are rendered into visual form. Color is central to this process—not merely as an aesthetic or symbolic choice, but as a deeply personal, affective language. Guided by observation and introspection, my practice moves fluidly between what is seen, remembered, and felt.

My approach to painting is inherently experimental and process-driven. I often manipulate the surface of the canvas through scratching, layering, gestural marks, and the integration of mixed media. This physical engagement with materials produces rich textural compositions that dwell between abstraction and symbolism, offering space for open-ended interpretation.

Recurring themes in my work include explorations of femininity, memory, and the natural world, often approached through a semi-abstract lens. I examine the lives and inner worlds of women, their relationship to nature, and the cultural narratives that shape identity. In other instances, childhood memories surface—dreamlike, nostalgic, and spatially dislocated. Nature appears not as a literal depiction but as an emotional landscape, filtered through memory and shaped by intuitive response.

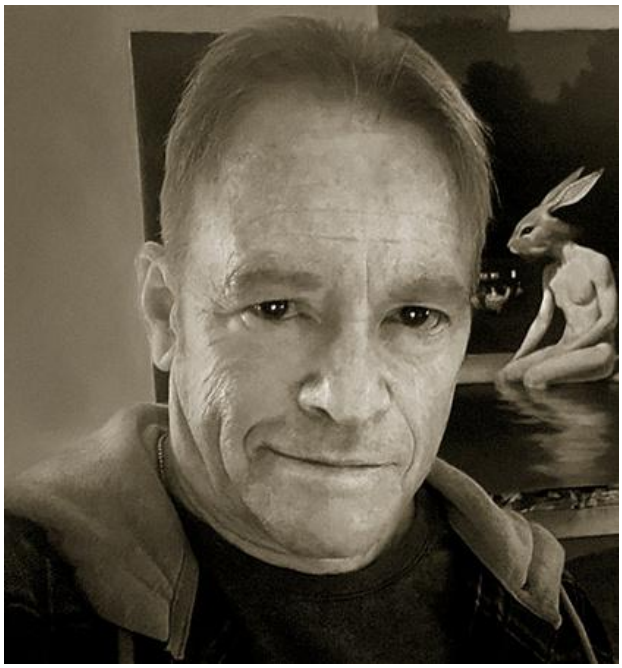
For me, memory is not a static archive but a dynamic, sensory force. It manifests in fragments—color, form, scent, gesture—and fuses instinctively with emotion. This informs my symbolic visual vocabulary and my preference for expressive, layered imagery that resists singular meaning. My work invites viewers to engage imaginatively, bringing their own associations to each piece.

Ultimately, my practice is rooted in an ongoing investigation of the human experience—how we relate to ourselves, to others, to nature, and to culture. Through a method that is both intuitive and conceptually rigorous, I construct visual spaces that speak to the complexity of identity, memory, and connection across personal and collective dimensions.

Dr. Suzan Ibrahim | Resilience | 2025

Dr. Suzan Ibrahim | Confusion | 2024

Kevin Kuenster



Your paintings often feature characters with exaggerated rabbit ears. Can you tell us how this motif originated and what it symbolizes for you?

The ears are not mere whimsy, but tender disruptions: symbolic of all the things we fail to hear, they remind us that beneath our polished exteriors, we're still just animals—overgrown with large brains, ears cocked, forever misreading the world's faint signals."

Kevin Kuenster | Dance Of Life

Many of your scenes blend domestic environments with surreal elements. How do you construct these visual narratives? Do you plan them fully, or do they evolve during the painting process?

My images evolve over a long process of experimentation. They take a lot of work. They are a slow unraveling of many dreams and obsessions. I've been drawn to surrealism since I first began drawing in high school, and my work undeniably carries echoes of the artists who showed me how to bend reality: the eerie stillness of Paul Delvaux's moonlit figures, Leonora Carrington and Dorothea Tanning's alchemical transformations, Balthus' charged figures, and Hieronymus Bosch's teeming, moral nightmares. These artists were masters at blurring the line between dreams and reality. Domestic spaces are often stages for the bizarre —where a tilted lampshade or a door left ajar twists familiarity into unease. I distort these familiar settings just enough to give them a kind of vertigo. The ordinary becomes a trapdoor to the surreal.

Animals appear frequently in your work, often as symbolic mirrors to human behavior.

Kevin Kuenster | The Fruits Of Deception

What inspires your choice of animals, and how do you see their role in your compositions?

My use of animals as symbols cuts deep—they're not just motifs, but silent witnesses to the violence and fragility of our world. To me their presence in my work feels like a gut-punch: a reminder that the natural world isn't just out there, but bleeding under our hands. The disaster isn't coming; it's already in the room with us, ears, fur, feathers, horns and all.

There is a clear psychological and emotional undercurrent in your art. Do personal memories or experiences play a role in your visual storytelling?

I believe that all good art has a psychological and emotional undercurrent. Some works harder to interpret than others. I suppose that my imagery might be confounding to some, but it is most definitely formed by everything that I have experienced in my life.

Your paintings seem to reflect both humor and melancholy. How do you strike this balance in your work?

I use humor to disarm despair, refusing to let the darkness have the last word. Kurt Vonnegut wrote, "Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion... I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward."

What role does color play in your storytelling? Many of your scenes have a theatrical, dreamlike palette.

Colors can be subconscious whispers. That's the magic of intuition: it bypasses the overthink and goes straight to the gut and that's the mystery that must stay intact, like a dream that refuses to be translated.

You've had a long career, including time in graphic design and fashion. How have those experiences influenced your approach to painting?

Commercial art trains us to solve problems for others; personal art is where you explore your own questions, then bury them in colors and lines like hidden treasures. To me it feels like joy. Late-blooming creativity has its own kind of magic. You're not making up for lost time—you're proving time was never the point.

Kevin Kuenster | Artistic Creature 3am

Valentina Pulvirenti
Visual artist, after university studies and experiences in the field of contemporary art between Italy and France, since 2015 she has been working on the organization and realization of exhibitions and cultural events that have, as their common thread, the use of contemporary art as a tool of conveying messages and stimulating reflections of social utilities. From 2015 to 2022 she collaborates as creative & art director for Palazzo Cafisi, Favara (Ag). Since 2017 she has been carrying out contemporary art installations with the dual objective of dealing with human issues and environmental emergencies. In 2018 she was the creator and artist of the exhibition “No Name” about the migrants’ journey, realized within Palermo’s Faculty of Architecture for the European Biennal of Contemporary Art Manifesta12. She currently also works with the analog collage technique.

Valentina Pulvirenti | NOWHERE SOMEWHERE | 2025

Gail Sarasohn

My paintings are modern and colorful. By using bright, happy and bold colors my paintings inspire happiness and are uplifting.

Your background includes textiles, fashion, and dinnerware design. How have these fields influenced your current painting practice?

My background in Textiles, Fashion and Dinnerware Design helped me to develop a good sense of color.

Your paintings are full of movement and color. What role does emotion play in your creative process?

Gail Sarasohn | Touched By The Sun's Last Rays

Can you describe what you feel when you are "in the zone" while painting?

When I paint I ignore everything around me and just concentrate on what I am painting.

Do you usually begin with a specific idea or emotion, or do you let the painting evolve organically?

When I paint I let the brushes lead the way, the painting evolves on its own.

What does the layering technique you use bring to your work emotionally and visually?

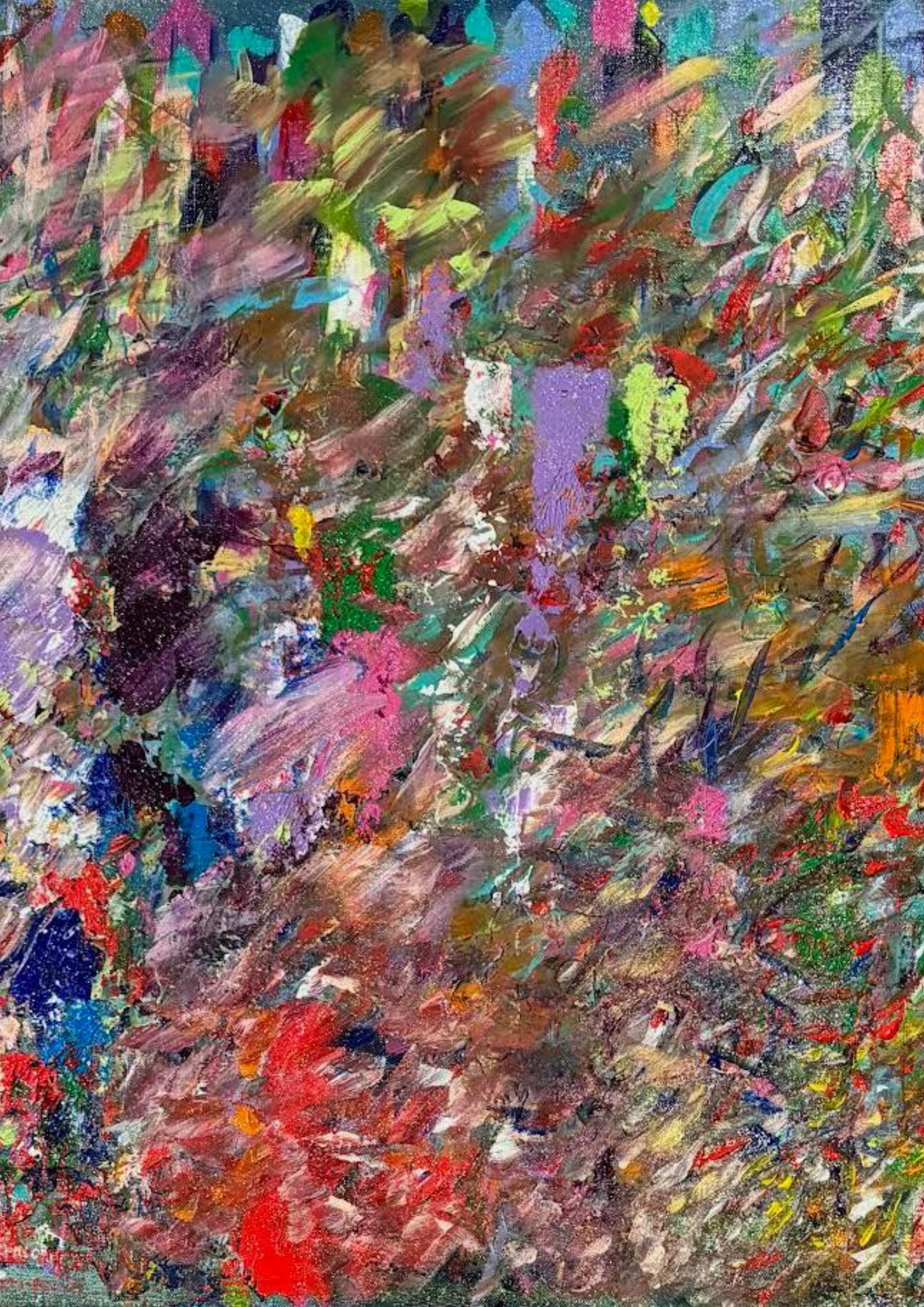
When I use a layering technique my colors blend into each other and create depth and unusual color combinations.

How do you choose your color palette for a piece? Is it intuitive or planned?

I use colors that I love and believe would work well together.

Do you see your abstract forms as reflections of nature, personal memories, or something else?

My abstract paintings are not a reflection of memories or nature. I just paint.



Elena Kiannu

Can you tell us about the inspiration behind the "Botanical Garden" collection? How did the pandemic influence its creation?

"Botanical Garden" is a vibrant tribute to nature's untamed beauty. Inspired by my travels, memories, and everyday moments, the series captures the dynamic interplay of plants and flowers in a world where chaos and harmony coexist.
Born during the solitude of the pandemic, Botanical Garden began as a creative refuge—an escape into lush, imagined landscapes where plants and trees that wouldn't normally grow together form a perfect, dreamlike harmony. Each piece is completed with details drawn from my imagination, blending memory and fantasy into a single canvas.

Your work beautifully captures the "harmonious disarray" of nature. How do you approach translating this natural chaos onto the canvas?

Elena Kiannu | Botanical Garden

Elena Kiannu | Botanical Garden

By spending time in nature and truly observing it, I try to slow down and connect with my surroundings—plants, trees, even the smallest weeds. This process becomes a kind of meditation, which later finds its reflection on the canvas.
In the rush of everyday life, it's easy to overlook nature's subtle beauty. Through my paintings, I aim to bring that beauty to the forefront—combining lush greenery with wild, unexpected elements. To me, this mix of the cultivated and the untamed is what creates true harmony.

How have your travels and daily encounters with nature shaped the themes and visuals in your artwork?

My travels have been an important source of inspiration for this collection. During the pandemic, when we were confined within our walls, I found myself revisiting past journeys through memory. In a way, painting became a form of time travel—allowing me to return to places I had once explored and bring fragments of those experiences into my imagined landscapes.

The "Botanical Garden" series has received significant recognition, including a piece showcased in Venice. How has this recognition impacted your artistic journey?

I'm deeply grateful for the recognition my work has received. I'm deeply grateful for the recognition my work has received. It has taught me to value my own artistic voice and helped me grow more confident in my style. Having my paintings exhibited not only in Venice, but also

Elena Kiannu | Haverwerf Mechelen

in Belgium and Finland, feels like a quiet affirmation that I'm on the right path. Each opportunity encourages me to keep exploring, evolving, and sharing my vision with others.

With around 30 paintings in the "Botanical Garden" series, what has been the most challenging and rewarding aspect of this project?

With such a long series, one of the biggest challenges has been staying fresh and continuing to surprise myself. I'm my own first critic, so I constantly push myself to go beyond repetition and find new energy in each piece. At the same time, that's also the most rewarding part—discovering unexpected combinations, new color stories, or a detail that brings the whole painting to life. It keeps the process alive and meaningful.

How do you hope viewers will feel or reflect upon when they experience your "Botanical Garden" series?

I think the first thing that captures the viewer's attention is the use of color. I carefully blend cheerful, calm, and sometimes nostalgic combinations to create a certain mood. The details in each painting invite people to pause and explore. I hope my flowers evoke personal memories—whether joyful or bittersweet—because flowers are often present during meaningful moments in life. They mark celebrations, goodbyes, and everything in between.

Are there any specific plants or flowers that you find yourself repeatedly drawn to in your work? If so, why?

When I started planning the Botanical Garden series, I wanted all the paintings to feel connected—not just through the theme, but also through a visual element that ties them together. That's why I chose to include eucalyptus in each background. It became a subtle, repeated motif that brings cohesion to the collection, while still allowing each piece to have its own unique atmosphere.

Weronika Tlałka (born September 8, 2000, Suwałki) is an artist based in Gdańsk, Poland. In June 2025, she graduated with a Master's degree from the Second Painting Studio at the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk, under the supervision of Prof. ASP dr hab. Krzysztof Polkowski, completing her five-year studies in the Faculty of Painting. Tlałka's artistic practice revolves around surrealist aesthetics. She draws inspiration from personal experiences, reflections on everyday life, dreams, interpersonal relationships, and mental and physical states. A recurring motif in her work is the eye, symbolizing observation and emotional intensity. The eye functions both formally and symbolically—as a medium for conveying internal states and as a tool for establishing a connection between the viewer and the artwork. Her fascination with horror literature, especially the works of H.P. Lovecraft, plays a significant role in her creative universe. Elements of mystery, unease, and elusive fear are prominent in her art, carrying both aesthetic and existential significance. Weronika Tlałka's paintings are an attempt to capture feelings that are difficult to articulate—balancing between beauty and fear, dream and reality. While each piece is rooted in her personal experiences, her intention is to open space for universal emotional resonance among viewers. Currently, she continues to develop her practice in Gdańsk, creating works full of tension, emotion, and ambiguity.

Project Statement
This paintings are part of My main diploma, entitled "Everything I see in my eyes. I just don't know if I want to" - a visual interpretation of emotional states. Although the starting point here is my personal experience, the intention is to open the space to the universal experiences of the recipients. I started each of the works with the thought: „this is about me", but I ended with the reflection: „this does not only happen to me". In addition, these paintings are also an attempt to express what shapes our lives and relationships with other people. I want the recipient to find a part of themselves in my paintings – their own emotions that they have experienced, even if they have never been named. My painting focuses primarily on difficult experiences and strong emotions. Although I also experienced happiness during this time, the mourning after the loss of my pet cast a strong shadow over the entire creative process – present in each of my works as a silent but significant emotional component. One of the key elements through which I try to convey emotional tensions is the human face – fragmented, distorted, hidden or exposed. However, the eye is at the centre of my search – symbolic and anatomical at the same time. I believe that it is the eyes, as the mirror of the soul, that allow us to read what cannot be masked by facial expressions. Their deformations and multiplications become a tool in my paintings to strengthen the message and show the multidimensionality of experiences.

Weronika Tlałka | Who Will I See in the Mirror Today | 2024

Juleah Claar

Can you tell us about the moment you decided to return to photography after your corporate career?

In 2012, shortly after the birth of our first child, I left my corporate job. I knew I wanted to return to something more creative eventually, but at the time, I stepped fully into motherhood. Life was full, and my identity shifted, as it does for so many new parents.

By 2016, with two young children in tow, our family relocated to Switzerland for my husband's job. I suddenly found myself in a completely unfamiliar environment—new language, new culture, no extended support system. It was disorienting. To stay connected with loved ones back home, I began taking casual photos on my phone, capturing small glimpses of our new life abroad.

Juleah Claar | Meadow Daydream | 2022

Something unexpected happened. Friends and family began commenting on my images, saying I had "an eye" for detail or that I captured moments others might overlook. I brushed off the compliments at first. But the feedback kept coming. That Christmas in 2016, I bought my first digital camera. At first, I used it casually, capturing Swiss landscapes and city life. I had started an Instagram account after moving abroad that I never posted to, but then I began sharing more intentionally. The day I made my account public at the end of 2017, one of my photos was picked up by a Zurich tourism website. Then it happened again... and again. Soon, my images were being regularly featured by local social media platforms. That external validation gave me the confidence to take photography more seriously.

By 2018, I craved more technical knowledge and enrolled in an 10-month advanced study photography course. It was my first formal training since high school, when I had learned to shoot and develop film in a darkroom.

Then in 2021, I found myself drawn back to film photography (which I hadn't touched in 25 years). After years of honing my skills with digital, I was looking for a new creative challenge—something more tactile, more unpredictable. Film offered exactly that. I've always been attracted to imperfection, and film embraces it beautifully. The grain, the softness, the mood it evokes—it all feels more like storytelling than image-making.

What began as a way to document a new chapter of life

Juleah Claar | Nature Reclaims | 2022

gradually evolved into a deeper creative practice. Photography, especially through the lens of film, has become more than a hobby; it's a way of seeing, feeling, and connecting—with the world around me, and with myself.

How has your background in anthropology influenced the way you observe and capture everyday life?

I bounced around nearly every major in college before stumbling into an introductory anthropology course. From the first few lectures, I was hooked—drawn in by the desire to understand how people live, interact, and make meaning within their environments. That curiosity never left me. Even today, cultural festivals often move me to tears. There's something deeply human about shared rituals and traditions, and I think that emotional response traces directly back to my anthropology roots. That foundation has profoundly shaped the way I see the world—and how I photograph it. Anthropology teaches you to slow down, to observe without immediately interpreting, and to pay attention to the stories unfolding in everyday life. Whether I'm capturing a quiet city street, a centuries-old Swiss tradition in the Alps, or the rhythm of daily routines, I'm always looking for those subtle moments that say something about people and place. Photography has become a natural extension of that mindset. It allows me to document life as it truly is: unscripted, nuanced, and layered. I'm not just chasing beautiful images; I'm chasing meaning. Often, it's the smallest details—a gesture, a texture, a glance, a shadow that tell the most powerful stories.

What drew you to the technique of film double exposure?

Double exposure on film felt like a natural evolution in my creative process. I had already returned to film because I was craving something less controlled and more experimental than digital photography. With double exposures, that sense of unpredictability is amplified—and that's exactly what draws me in.

There's a kind of magic in layering two moments into a single frame. It challenges how we see and interpret an image. Sometimes the results are planned, but often they're completely accidental. And more often than not, those surprises end up being the most compelling. It's a technique that forces you to let go of perfection and lean into intuition and chance.

I often shoot with expired film and older cameras with light leaks, which add an extra layer of unpredictability. The way colors shift, fade, or intensify over time creates textures and tones that digital photography simply can't replicate. It's a celebration of imperfection in the most beautiful way.

I would say double exposure echoes my background in anthropology. It's about layering context and meaning, seeing how two seemingly separate things can coexist in one space and form something new. It invites the viewer to slow down and search for connections—to look between the layers. That sense of storytelling is what

Juleah Claar | Solitude In Bloom | 2022

keeps me coming back to it. And honestly, it's just a really fun and creative outlet.

How do you choose which images to combine in your "Film Fusion" project?

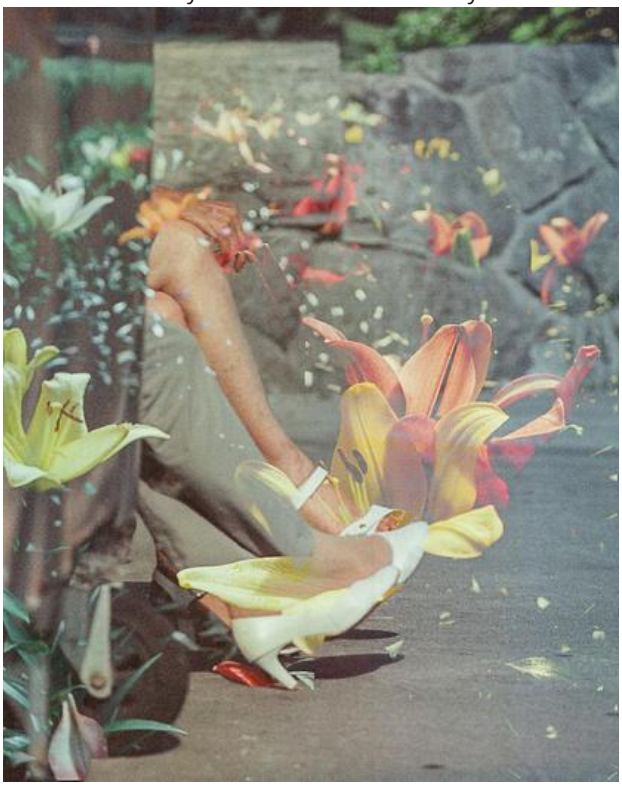
Film Fusion is rooted in the idea of visual storytelling through unexpected combinations. I usually begin with a feeling or theme I want to explore—something atmospheric, surreal, emotional, or connected to a sense of place. From there, I sift through my film archive, looking for frames that might complement that mood—whether through light, color, texture, subject matter, or tone.

I'm especially drawn to pairings that create contrast or tension. That might mean blending a natural landscape with stark urban architecture, or layering a quiet portrait over the chaos of a street scene. I often experiment with multiple combinations, playing with different overlays until something clicks. Many of those experiments never make it past the cutting room floor, but the process itself is part of the fun.

The images I ultimately choose aren't about technical perfection—they're about evoking a feeling. Sometimes the result is dreamy and poetic, other times a little disorienting or strange. That's the heart of Film Fusion for me: letting go of control, embracing imperfection, and discovering something new in the overlap.

Many of your photos explore contrast and ambiguity —what role does emotion play in your compositions?

Emotion plays a central role in how I approach and select images. I'm often drawn to scenes that feel a little offbeat, quiet, or in-between—moments that aren't overtly dramatic but carry an emotional undertone you can't



Juleah Claar | Steps Through Summer | 2022

Juleah Claar | Sylvia | 2022

quite name. That sense of ambiguity is something I intentionally lean into.

Contrast is one of the tools I use to bring those emotions to the surface—whether it's light and shadow, stillness and motion, or solitude and connection. Sometimes two images that feel emotionally neutral on their own, when layered together, suddenly spark something unexpected. That juxtaposition can create tension or tenderness—or both—and often evokes a deeper emotional reaction than either image would alone.

I don't go into a shot trying to capture a specific feeling. Instead, I pay attention to the mood of a scene and trust my instincts. It's less about telling a clear story and more about creating space for interpretation. I want viewers to bring their own experiences and emotions to the image. In that sense, emotion isn't just something I try to capture —it's something I try to evoke. Whether through composition, color, or layering in my Film Fusion work, I want each image to carry a kind of emotional texture: subtle, layered, and lasting.

Do you approach photographing people differently from photographing nature or architecture?

Yes, definitely. Each subject calls for a different way of seeing—but my approach is always grounded in observation and spontaneity.

When I photograph people, especially in street photography, I shoot candidly. I don't interact or intervene—I'm trying to capture something genuine and unposed without disrupting the moment. It's quick and instinctive. I take a lot of frames, knowing that the moment I'm after might only last a second. I'm watching for subtle gestures or interactions that feel real and human.

When I'm photographing architecture or street scenes

without people, my mindset shifts. I'm still working intuitively, but now I'm focused more on composition—on how light moves across a wall, how shadows fall, how colors and lines come together in the frame. It's less about timing and more about how the elements relate visually.
Nature photography allows me to slow down. It's the one time I feel like I can take a breath. I still shoot instinctively, but there's more space to be present—to notice texture, light, and quiet details. I'm drawn to calm, often minimal scenes in nature—where feeling replaces action.
So yes, my approach changes depending on the subject—but in every case, I'm looking for something honest, something quietly striking, and often something unexpected.

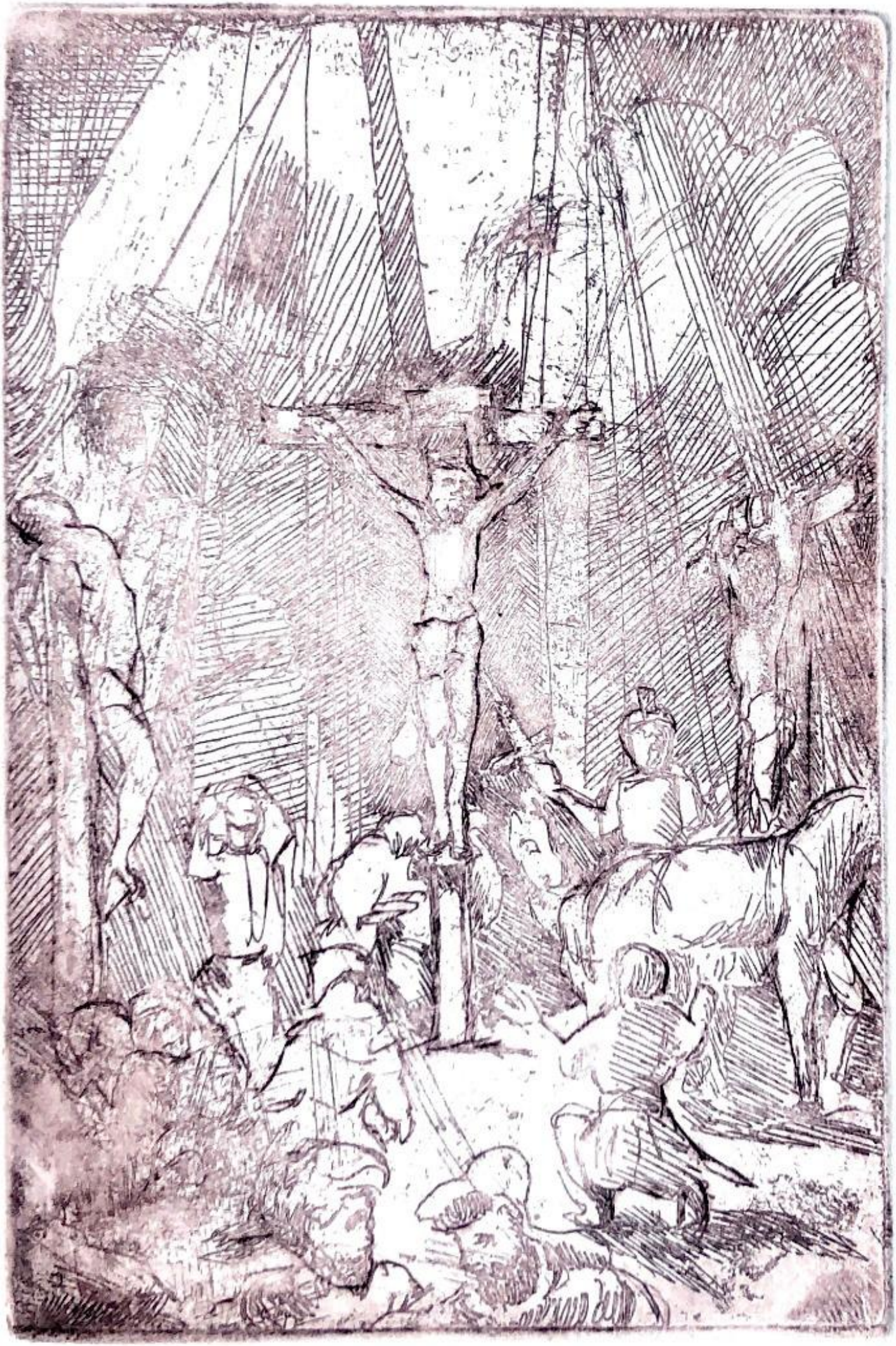
Can you share a story behind one of the photographs in this series?

One image that stands out to me is titled Solitude in Bloom. It's a double exposure that combines two very different moments—brought together purely by chance, but somehow speaking the same emotional language.
The first frame shows an older man sitting quietly on a bench in one of Zurich's busiest squares. All around him, people were snapping photos, enjoying the sunshine, and taking in the lively energy of spring. And yet, he remained still—completely present, watching birds circle the fountain and observing the world unfold around him. There was something quietly powerful about his calm in the middle of all that motion.
The second frame is a close-up of wildflowers I photographed during a walk with my dog. It was one of those unexpectedly beautiful afternoons—the sky an intense, saturated blue, made even more vivid by the 20-year-old expired film I was using. The colors came out surreal, dreamlike.
When these two frames overlapped, they created something I hadn't planned: a visual meditation on stillness, solitude and the bloom of life around us. What I love is that these images were taken exactly 20 rolls apart—no connection in time or space, and yet they speak to each other so clearly.
That's the beauty of film double exposure. I never pre-plan the pairings. The meaning often reveals itself only after the fact, in ways I couldn't have anticipated. It's unpredictable, and often deeply personal—like finding a story you didn't know you were telling.

Juleah Claar | Petals And Sky | 2022

Maria Pignatelli (born in Lisbon in 2003), holds a Bachelor's in Painting at the Faculty of Fine-Arts of the University of Lisbon and has participated in various collective exhibitions. In 2024, Maria was a resident artist at the printmaking studios in the Diferença Gallery (Lisbon) and spent the last month of february as an intern at the Michael Woolworth Atelier (Paris). Additionally, she worked as the assistant to the portuguese painter Mafalda Oliveira Martins (MOM), as well as a teacher of Visual Education to 5th and 6th graders at the São Tomás Private School (Lisbon). Maria is interested in many different artistic pursuits, and her work can be described as multidisciplinary. She works predominantly with printmaking, various painting techniques, and, most recently, glass and stained-glass paint.

Maria Pignatelli | Written by Light | 2025



Holly Wong

Your work explores themes of healing and resilience. Can you tell us about a personal experience that shaped this focus?

When I was growing up, I witnessed many acts of violence, and my environment was chaotic and impoverished. Traumatic memory has been a shaping factor in my life, and I have struggled for years to make sense of what happened to me and the people that I loved. With the death of my mother and both of my brothers to substance use related disorders, it has caused me to value life deeply. My artwork is my way to repair and reclaim my history. While I can't change the past, art making helps me to live more fully in the presence of today.

Holly Wong | Deconstructed Quilt | 2022

Many of your fiber installations incorporate light and transparency. What draws you to these materials, and how do they relate to the idea of the "permeable separation between the living and the dead"?

The use of LED strip lighting and transparent fabric comes from my experiences with my husband's Chinese culture and the practice of honoring and remembering those who have passed on. There are beautiful burial customs that involve layering fabrics on the deceased, a different color of fabric from each family member. My transparent fabrics are my layers over my mother's memory. The LED light is reminiscent to me of lighting candles or incense and the notion that when someone dies, they are not gone. They are on another plane and

Holly Wong | Deconstructed Quilt | 2022

so the use of transparent fabrics is important in the work. It also comes from my experience of Buddhism and the refusal of absolutes.

You mentioned using medical and crime scene imagery as a basis for your collages. How do you approach working with such emotionally charged sources?

It is frankly difficult to look at these images, but I am drawn to them because I sometimes had to clean up the residue of violence as a child. I still have flashbacks about the blood at times, especially when I am working with fluid paint. Looking at crime scene photos and converting the images into layered organic complexity in my paintings then becomes cathartic for me. It helps me to release my grief in some way, by facing it in proxy through reviewing and painting or drawing these images.

Your artworks feel both fragile and powerful. How do you balance delicacy and strength in your compositions?

I feel that our strength in part comes from our willingness to be vulnerable and honest. I use ephemeral materials that are often layered to make a stronger whole. I am drawn to fragile materials, crafted together, whether woven, layered or sewn, ultimately being more powerful than their separateness. It is a delicate balance indeed because at the end of the day, I want the work to stand on its own and be durable, so there is a high level of attentiveness when I make the work. I pay close attention to how the materials interact and what they do over time.

Do you see your installations as spiritual spaces or meditative environments? How do you want viewers to feel when they encounter your work?

Yes, my ultimate goal is for my work to feel like a spiritual space or meditative environment. I want to invite people into the work, to come as they are, and to have an environment of color and flow to sit with their emotions. Modern life so rarely offers space or respite, and I do hope the work can offer that to my viewers.

You've exhibited in over 100 shows and received several prestigious grants. How have these recognitions influenced your artistic direction and confidence?

Earlier in my career, I really lacked self-confidence as happens with many artists. It was really a problem because it is hard to make your most ambitious work when you don't believe it will ever matter to anyone. That said, the more I exhibited, the less precious and fearful I was about each show. I saw that the work evolved each time and this slowly built my confidence. The grants were extremely validating but most importantly, it's an inside job. You have to believe in the work to get through the tough times.

How does living in San Francisco shape your art practice, both visually and conceptually?

The sheer natural beauty of the San Francisco region figures into my work; especially the aquatic and botanical elements that often appear in my collage paintings. The quality of the sunlight here and the dry climate also intensifies my color choice. It's really inspiring. San Francisco has also always been known as a place of artistic experimentation. Not so much a commercial art center per se, but a place where you can make your work and be yourself. That has meant a lot to me. If you aren't afraid to fail, your learning is much deeper.

Kevin Zhang

How did your background in programming and visual effects influence your approach to photography?

Actually, for the majority of my photography history it didn't influence me much.
I started photography at age 9 or so, at a stupidly young age. My dad got me into it. Looking back I was never a prodigy, I don't like the photos I've taken for the first 8 years of my photography. As the saying goes, the first ten thousand photos you take are your worst, but it was a hundred thousand for me.
I started programming in middle school, but half way through high school I swapped coding for film. Film was my main thing for the next few years, all the way through the end of college. It was photography and coding that helped me grow in film pretty fast; most of the technical shenanigans for photography carry to film well, and programming helped with movie visual effects just because a lot of the concepts are similar.
Fast forward to that 2023 puxi cafe, and panorama has me hooked into photography again. All that film and

Can you tell us about the moment you first realized panorama photography could be your primary focus?

I was back home in Shanghai after college graduation in 2023. During an afternoon with my dad we were at this really high up cafe in puxi which had a terrific view of the bund. I didn't have a wide enough lens at the time, so I figured I could try to take a bunch of photos and stitch them into a panorama.
That was my first panorama, which turned out rather well, so I decided to do more.
Not a particularly grand story, unfortunately.

Kevin Zhang | Top

Kevin Zhang | Top

vfx experience flips over to helping me with panos. A lot of the workflows for good panos and the mindset you need to have for them are the exact same for vfx and film. In VFX for example, working a week on a 5 second shot is pretty common. Most photographers would scoff at taking days to produce one panorama image, but I was already used to it.
It's a very long winded way to say that all of my skillsets helped build other skillsets in a cyclical manner.

What draws you to urban landscapes and city density as your main subject?

I believe it's because I'm an introvert and that I like complicated stuff. I like the sort of images where you can spend hours looking at every single detail in a where's Waldo manner. For city density, vfx and film editing are both very solitary jobs if you work on them freelance. An image of a dense city is a well populated one. I often set my own images as my desktop wallpaper to remind myself that I'm not too lonely in this world.

How do you navigate the technical challenges of panorama photography, especially with moving elements like people or light?

You just have to try a looooooooot. If a photo walk with 300 shutter attempts nets you 20 good photos, for panorama you're going to have to take at least thousands a day. After you gain some experience with it you develop your own techniques, and you kind of have to since panoramas are a very underdeveloped field. I have like 5 camera grip methods I've found that make handheld panoramas more reliable (I rarely ever use a tripod), and I've learned a lot more about how to follow people and light for a more reliable image. There's still far more stuff I haven't discovered yet I'm sure, it'll just take a billion photos to get there.

You've mentioned your love for clarity and high resolution — do you see your work more as documentation or interpretation?

Gosh that's a great question, I have no idea. It's a bit like documentation because all of my stuff is candid, but you can also argue it's like interpretation because the images go far beyond human eyesight in angle of view and resolution.
I'd say that it's a bit of both, but I'd lean more towards interpretation because reality is sometimes boring and high resolution images can make reality more interesting.

In what ways have both your experience with dyslexia and your early exposure to technology and anime shaped the way you approach visual creativity today?

When you're told as a kid that you're dyslexic, it imprints on you. All your peers are reading and drawing, but your teachers say you'd suck at both, so you'd find something else to do. Naturally I went full on for computers. I played many hours of flash games as a kid and tried to memorize all the intricacies in Windows XP and iOS. I watched many hours of YouTube videos on technology and a lot of cartoons and anime. At a certain point there was a visual portal of sorts in my head that I could always pull visual ideas from. It was like a never ending Cartoon Network stream but just for myself.
There's a part of me that wonders if where I am now is actually due to dyslexia or being raised as a dyslexic. I do think dyslexia has given me a lot of visual talents; I can't write or express thoughts on graphical art in writing but I sure can feel it in my bones. That aforementioned CN stream has certainly given me an endless amount of ideas and stories to think about. But the nurture part of dyslexia made me look at digital screens for the majority of my youth, and perhaps had a bigger impact. All those tech videos taught me how to solve very difficult problems after I got older (like panoramas). All that media probably impacted most of my color tastes and aesthetics. I don't think I'll ever be sick of a good, vibrant color palette. That has to come from anime somehow.
I wish I could speak more succinctly about this; I question my brain all the time. I feel my own creative work already serves as an outlet for my thoughts on art and technology far better than words can express. Panorama photography is just one part of it.

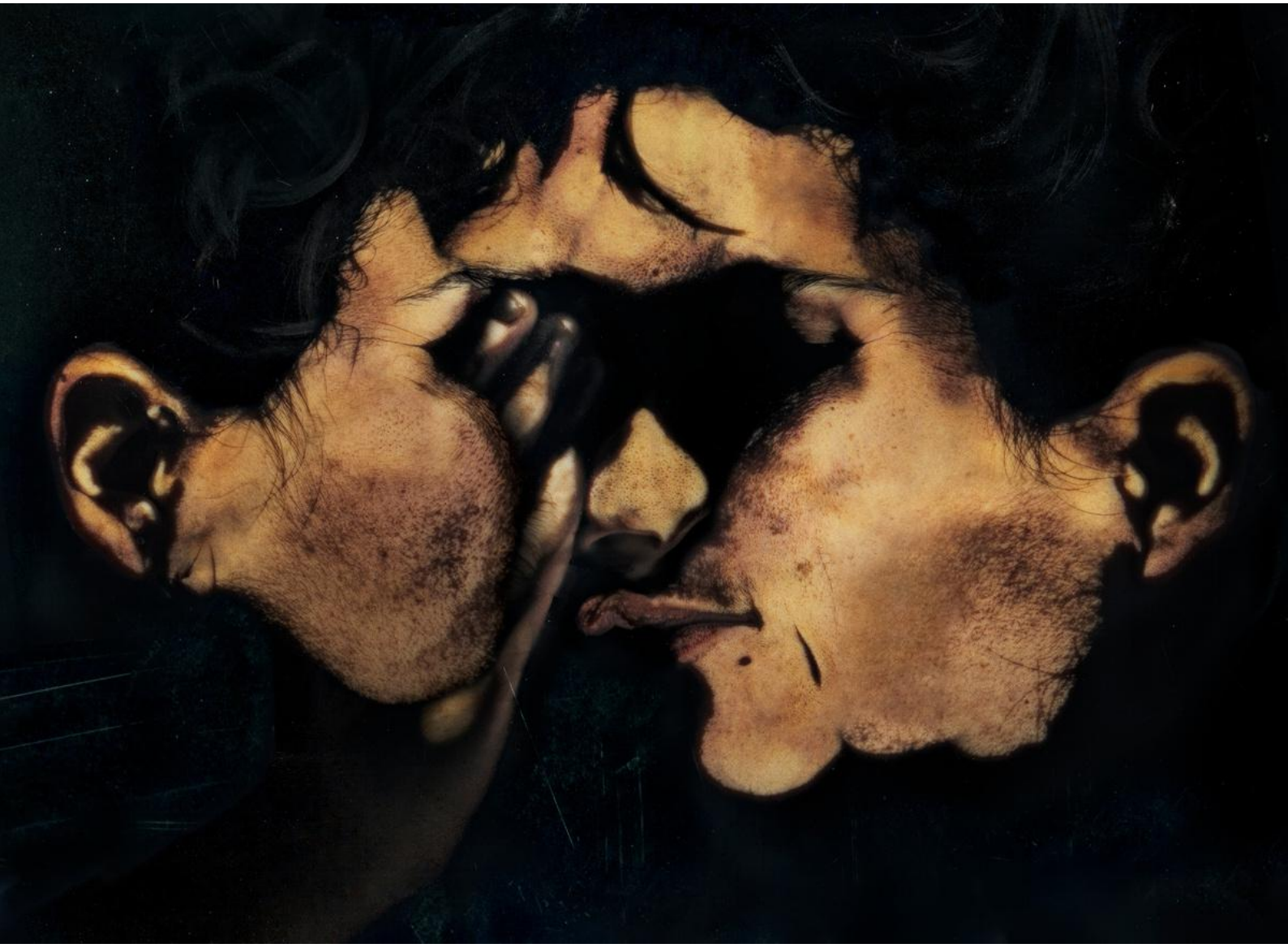
Born in Paris, **Éric Lafargue** grew up between Europe, North Africa, and the Indian Ocean. This multicultural background deeply shaped his artistic vision and sensitivity. While studying at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Toulouse, he encountered the engaged photographer Jean Dieuzaide, whose influence helped forge his understanding of photography as both a visual and critical language. His professional career began in 1986 when he was spotted by designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, who commissioned him for his first fashion reportage. From the outset, Lafargue navigated a dual path: on one side, commissioned work in fashion and advertising—financially necessary, yet often questioned—and on the other, a personal artistic pursuit centered on a subject that has always driven him: the human being in the face of societal norms. Straddling the line between visual activism and observational distance, Lafargue has developed a unique photographic language enriched by diverse artistic influences. His work questions both individual and collective identity, with the human being at the heart of his approach. His portfolio includes bold photo essays on sensitive issues such as drug use and prostitution, alongside more conventional series published in the press. In 2014, he won the "Photographs of the Year" award in the Fashion & Beauty category and was nominated for the GoSee Awards (International Fashion category). Since 2016, he has also worked in film as a director of photography and artistic director. Beyond genres and formats, Éric Lafargue uses the image as a tool for social inquiry, inviting reflection on what is seen—and what remains hidden.

Project Statement
Formol – Memory Corpus In this series, I explore how the body leaves a trace — not through representation, but through imprint. It does not reveal itself; it vanishes into the surface. What remains is not a portrait, not an identity, but a sensitive hollow. A form suspended between appearance and disappearance. Each image is the result of an experimental device I designed, inspired by fiber optic principles. This machine captures only the areas in direct contact with the surface. Where there is no touch, there is no image. It is not light that reveals, but pressure. The photograph becomes a tactile cartography — an image by contact. The bodies appear as if archived in a sensitive material. They evoke anatomical molds, posthumous relics, or fragments of a vanished ritual. The bodily referent is there, but blurred, fragmented, spectral. Time becomes uncertain: past and future coexist within these forms. These images do not document — they invoke. They emerge somewhere between the biological and the abstract, between intimacy and archaeology. They are imprints of memory, affective negatives, fading presences.

Eric Lafargue | Alexzndre

Eric Lafargue | Emma

Eric Lafargue | Alizée



ChengLong Zhang

Your project "Burning North" explores the relationship between individuals and urban space. What first inspired you to start this long-term project in Beijing?

I first came to Beijing in 2006, when I moved here from Shenyang in Northeast China to attend university. Although both Shenyang and Beijing are located in the north, the two cities have different characters. Shenyang is an industrial city with a strong sense of modern industry, while Beijing has a more simple and quiet ancient charm, with many places bearing historical traces. Beijing has a very convenient transportation system, featuring the earliest urban subway in China and a vast transportation hub. My initial impression was that it was a large city with a huge population and full of vitality. The journey from the train station to my university took over an hour. At that time, my school was outside the Fifth Ring Road, which was still a suburb. Such a long commute gave me a physical "dizziness" that I had never experienced before.

Before starting the "Burning North" project, I had been living in Beijing for nearly ten years. These ten years were crucial for my personal growth and also a period of rapid change for the city. More and more people moved into the city, bringing their ideals and aspirations to strive here. The city, like an organism, kept expanding and growing. People were changing the city, and the city was shaping its inhabitants. In the face of such rapid changes, how should individuals position themselves in the era, and what changes have we undergone? These thoughts began to emerge in my mind.
Around 2016, I happened to come across the photography book "Once" by German film director Wim Wenders. This book is Wenders' philosophical reflection on photography, memory, travel, and "moments". He combines film and still photography to tell a captivating story. The book records the roads and street scenes along the way, the people met during the journey, and the inquiries about the past and the present through photos and words. It builds an image world in the flow of physical space, which is consistent with the spirit of the project I wanted to create.
In 2017, I started this photography project. I felt that a rapidly changing era was coming to an end, and many changes had occurred around me. I thought I should do something. At first, I took the city as a field for investigation, observing and recording ordinary people like me who lived here, presenting it in a documentary form. However, I soon realized that the framework of film was too restrictive for capturing this grand and fluid urban narrative. The script text preceding the images would solidify the vivid images. When I looked at the photos taken for scouting locations for the film, I realized that photos might offer a more free space for expression.
Creating a connection through photography might lead to a different kind of expression, which gave me some inspiration. Photography is a direct and rapid medium. It doesn't require a large production team and allows me to create anytime and anywhere at a relatively low cost. More importantly, photos can present highly personal expressions in an instinctive way, which aligns with my desire to try something new. At the same time, it would also benefit my film creation. Gradually, I gave up shooting documentaries and focused on this photo series. As the shooting progressed, I was convinced that these photos should become an independent and powerful project

You mentioned a dynamic balance between passive

observation and active intervention. Can you describe how you approach this balance while shooting?

The photographic practice of this project revolves around the delicate balance between "passive observation" and "active intervention". "Passive observation" means that the camera first becomes a calm and restrained onlooker. This way of seeing is inspired by the aesthetics of "Direct Cinema" and "Cinéma Vérité" in the late 1950s. I try my best not to disturb the subjects, allowing the lens to quietly wait and capture those genuine moments hidden in daily life and the most original, unadorned states of people. I always believe that truth does not lie in grand narratives but is hidden in people's daily behaviors and emotions - those accidental and impromptu moments often get closer to the essence of reality, embracing the accidental and the spontaneous.
"Active intervention", on the other hand, is another path to deeper truth. This approach continues the viewpoint of "Cinéma Vérité": the presence of the creator, even if it's just limited interaction, is enough to open up a structural reality. I will actively choose a certain moment, a certain person, or a certain space to enter. Sometimes it's triggered by intuition, and sometimes it's a premonition of what's about to happen. My intervention is not to hide, but precisely through my presence, to trigger, evoke, and break a certain mood and atmosphere. This behavior is more like "triggering" or "sculpting" a moment, making it more expressive and directional.
What I pursue is not just the surface of events, but to make the photos present a sense of documentary while carrying my thoughts and intentions. The two are not opposed but rather a fluid, mutually penetrating relationship. They alternately act in my works, re-generating a reality belonging to the image between documentation and construction.
I remember during one of my shoots, I came across a person. It was a place I often visited, and this person was also frequently seen there. But before that day, I had never thought of taking his picture. That day, he seemed to have changed. My intuition told me that I could get a good shot of him today. I observed him for a long time, and he eventually noticed my presence. I deliberately kept a certain distance from him so that he would ignore me. After half an hour, he made a gesture. I rushed forward and snapped a photo. Since then, I have never seen him there again.

Your images feel cinematic and emotionally charged. How has your background in filmmaking influenced your photographic style?

Your observation is very accurate. My photography style is related to my educational background, especially my experiences in drama performance and film production. I was interested in art when I was in junior high school. At the age of sixteen, I studied drama performance at an art high school in Shenyang. The three years of drama study set my life goal. At that time, I performed and read some of Shakespeare's plays and Chinese classical dramas. The core of drama performance is to express complex human emotions and inner conflicts on stage through the language, body, and expressions of the actors. Observing life is a compulsory course for every actor. This experience trained my sensitivity and insight into people. Although I didn't become an actor in the end, the three years of stage performance training became the foundation of my future creation.
Later, I was admitted to the School of Photography and Television of Communication University of China. Although it was a photography major, we had a lot of film director courses. During this period, I watched about two thousand domestic and foreign films and some literary works, mainly Chinese short stories and novellas. I think these learning experiences broadened my artistic vision. The background of film production helped me unify the narrative rhythm of my photos, the way of editing photos, and influenced my way of observing and capturing the world. When I started this project, it was very natural for me to incorporate the narrative thinking of films and organize the sequence of photos in a story-like way. However, static photography is not the same as film. Photos have their own system. First, I must follow this system, and then my personal experience. From the perspective of photography itself, it is a static image. Compared with the flowing real world, in a static image, space is zero and time is infinite. This means that if a photo lacks vivid content, it can easily become boring. It needs to attract the viewer's eyes and stand up to repeated scrutiny. So I often think about whether it is possible to capture photos with emotional content to achieve this. This is actually rooted in my background in drama performance and film production. Expressing real or private human emotions in images, I think such images are touching and can touch people's hearts.

How do you choose your subjects or scenes in the city? Are they spontaneous encounters or planned explorations?

This is a result of a combination of chance and planning. The underlying logic is based on "photogenicity". This might sound a bit theoretical, but simply put, it refers to certain subjects and scenes that inherently possess a certain quality that makes them particularly eye-catching under the lens, and they naturally have an appeal in the frame. Based on this principle, I wander around the city, keeping myself highly present and having a clear mind in the face of complex environments, receiving information from daily life with an open attitude. If photography is an adventure, this is the way I can encounter more interesting souls. Sometimes I also actively ask if I can take a photo. This photo may not be suitable for this project, but it might offer me another perspective or be used in a new project. Capturing fleeting moments is one of the charming traits of the medium of photography. The modern Chinese poet Xu Zhimo wrote a

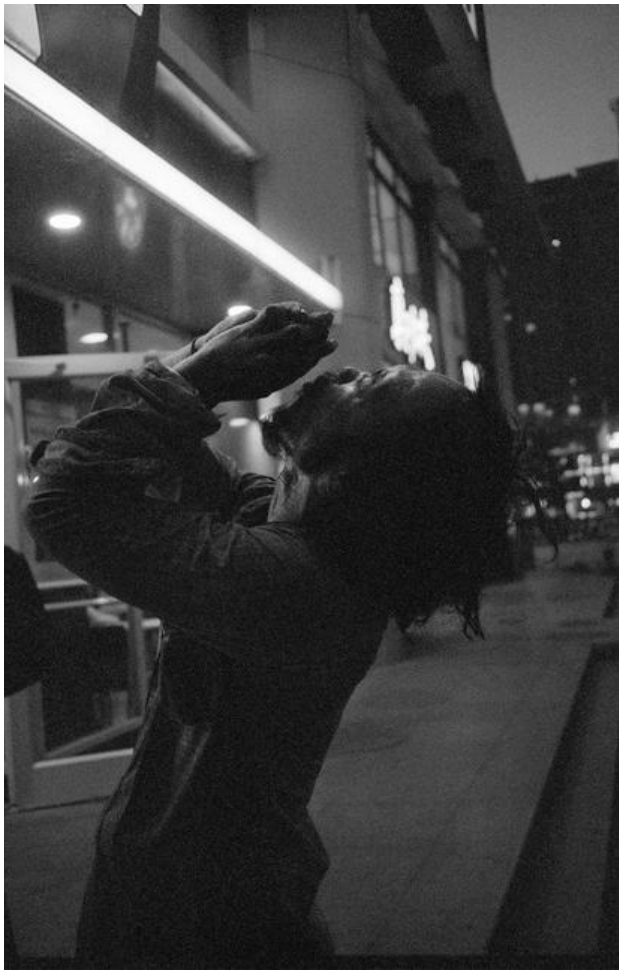
poem called “Casual Encounter”.
I am but a cloud in the sky,
Casting a fleeting shadow on the heart of your still water.
You need not be surprised,
Nor should you rejoice —
In an instant, I will vanish without a trace.
If you and I meet upon the dark sea,
You have your direction, and I have mine.
It’s fine if you remember,
But better if you forget
The light we exchanged in that moment of meeting!
This poem expresses the contingency and transience of human encounters, reflecting through the span of a hundred years on a certain predicament in modern interpersonal relationships.
Meanwhile, “Burning North” as a long-term photography project spanning several years, the initial idea has been constantly evolving. A single approach is not enough to make it more profound. It requires purposeful and strategic exploration in both form and content, which is also an important part of the project. However, no matter what ideas and plans I have, they must be feasible. That is to say, I must complete my project within the framework of the characteristics of Beijing. There are some differences in the human and urban landscapes of different areas in Beijing. I will consciously choose subjects or revisit certain scenes based on the theme of the project and my pursuit of visual style. To improve efficiency, I usually plan my route for the day in advance; once I arrive at the planned area, no matter how the situation is, I will not change the area, because this means spending more time and energy on the road. During the project’s progress, I constantly ask myself new questions. The accumulation of these visual elements can constantly reconstruct my original ideas. Some are deepened, some deviate from the theme, and they all expand the boundaries of the project in various forms. Eventually, through these images, a deep interactive relationship between me and the city is gradually established.

What role does weather or time of day play in shaping the emotional atmosphere of your photographs?

For the time of day, I hope it is not merely a background in my images, but can enhance the emotional impact of the photos in a creative way. Beijing is a fast-paced city, and people’s living and working times have their regularity. During the day, I choose to shoot when people are traveling the most, during the morning and evening rush hours. People are in a hurry then, and this creates a sense of urbanity in the photos. On the other hand, in my black-and-white works, the specific time of day is usually not emphasized. It becomes an internalized, unobtrusive presence. This stems from my understanding of the abstract and symbolic nature of black-and-white photos. They strip away the specific colors of the real world, and the time in the photos no longer points to a precise physical moment. It tends to be presented in an emotional and philosophical way, visually echoing the inner sense of time of the subject. At the same time, time is a very important fulcrum in all art forms. In my photos, it connects the narrative and emotional flow. At the end of the French film “The 400 Blows”, the image of the boy running towards the sea suddenly freezes, and the film ends. The boy seems to be trapped forever on the beach, frozen in time. The frozen image here disrupts the continuity of the image but generates meaning and has some philosophical implications. Static images have an eternal quality. When people are frozen at a certain point in time to become a photo, this moment becomes symbolic, pointing to the continuous and cyclical state of human existence.
Weather is also an important emotional symbol in photos. In our life experience, different weather can affect people’s moods. It is a projection of psychological states and can add a mysterious atmosphere to the photos. Just like the documentary “Rain” directed by Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens in 1929, a sudden downpour changed the spatial appearance of Amsterdam. The city instantly became strange. Weather became the protagonist in a film, with such great power that it cannot be ignored as an important element. I hope that rainy or snowy weather in my photos can create a surreal feeling and stimulate the energy of the characters or scenes in the picture.

Some of your photos have a sense of solitude or quiet intensity. Are you consciously drawn to these moods, or do they emerge naturally in your work?

The tone of this project may stem from my personal life experiences and long-term observations of urban life. I spent almost my entire life from birth to adulthood in cities, and cities have shaped a part of me. As an only child, I often spent my childhood and adolescence alone, getting used to observing the things around me and always being curious about what others take for granted. So subconsciously, I am drawn to those who are immersed in their own worlds. At certain moments, these people seem more like they are lost



in their own time. Chinese emotions are often calm and reserved, which perhaps explains why my photos give a sense of serenity. People often wear social masks, and behind this serenity lies the subtle and multi-layered relationship between modern people and cities in an Eastern context.

In the city where I live, interactions in public spaces are far less intense than those in classic street photography. People are more like a group of individuals with similar traits, bustling about in the city. In a metropolis like Beijing with a population of over 20 million, countless people come and go with their dreams and worries. When I focus my lens on specific individuals and see the developed photos, I do feel a sense of loneliness. This might be a common portrayal of the relationship between individuals and cities in the process of modern urbanization. We enjoy the conveniences of the city, but at the same time, the rapid development of the information age is changing the way people communicate. This is not my personal visual diary. I need to maintain sufficient patience to reveal the complexity of life. These photos are not just about Beijing; they are universal, reflecting the alienation and loneliness that exist in every city around the world.

Therefore, I hope that the photos can engage in a dialogue with the viewers, allowing them to interpret freely. When the interpretation goes beyond my original intention and resonates in the hearts of different viewers, evoking their unique feelings, the vitality of the photos truly comes to life.

What does "the other side of reality" mean to you, and how does photography help you reach it?

Reality usually refers to what we see in our daily lives, the physical world that we can perceive, and it is the common experience we share in the same time and space dimension. However, for me, the other side of reality is a deeper and more essential state hidden beneath the surface of our daily lives. It concerns the truth of life and the ancient and sacred things.

We live in a multi-dimensional parallel world. Time and space confine us to a certain corner of the earth, and we are shaped by what we see around us. But in the vast universe, there are so many unknown things. I no longer just chase after what is clearly visible, but rather, when certain secrets come, I can recognize them.

The world rushes past before my eyes, and nothing can be explained. Photography helps me retain some fragments. I want to construct a world through images, a world that is both familiar and strange, a world with things that can be recognized without thinking and clues that can trigger thoughts and imagination, a world with emotions that can be confirmed and poetic feelings that are hard to describe. This world is both old and new. I invite the audience to enter and hope they can see and feel all of this.

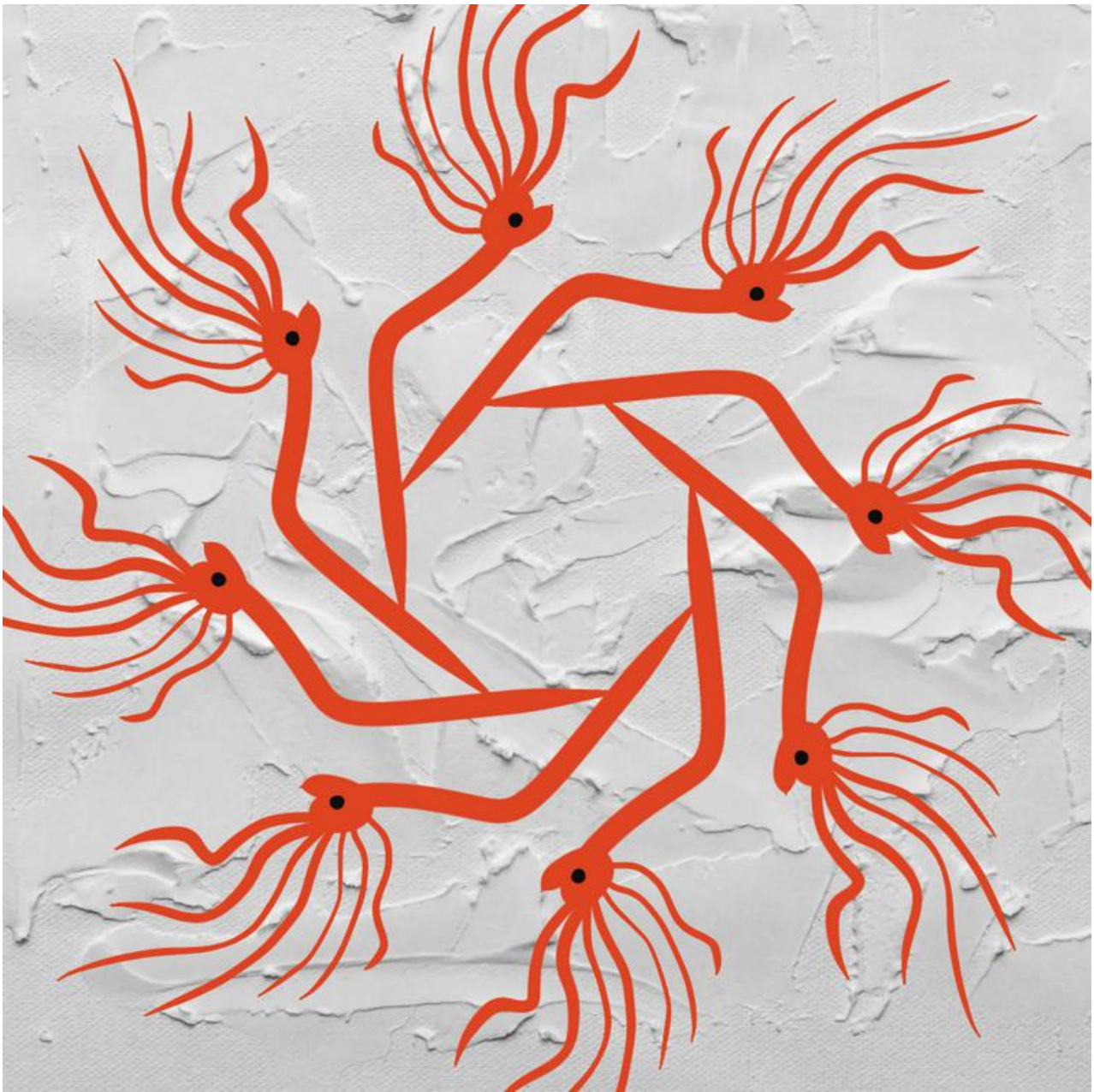
When I was 17 years old, I performed on stage for the first time. When I entered a role and began a story, the feeling of entering another time and space was so wonderful. So many people were watching me from below the stage, and I was looking at them. These two times and spaces were isolated from each other yet intertwined. Reality was turning its face here.

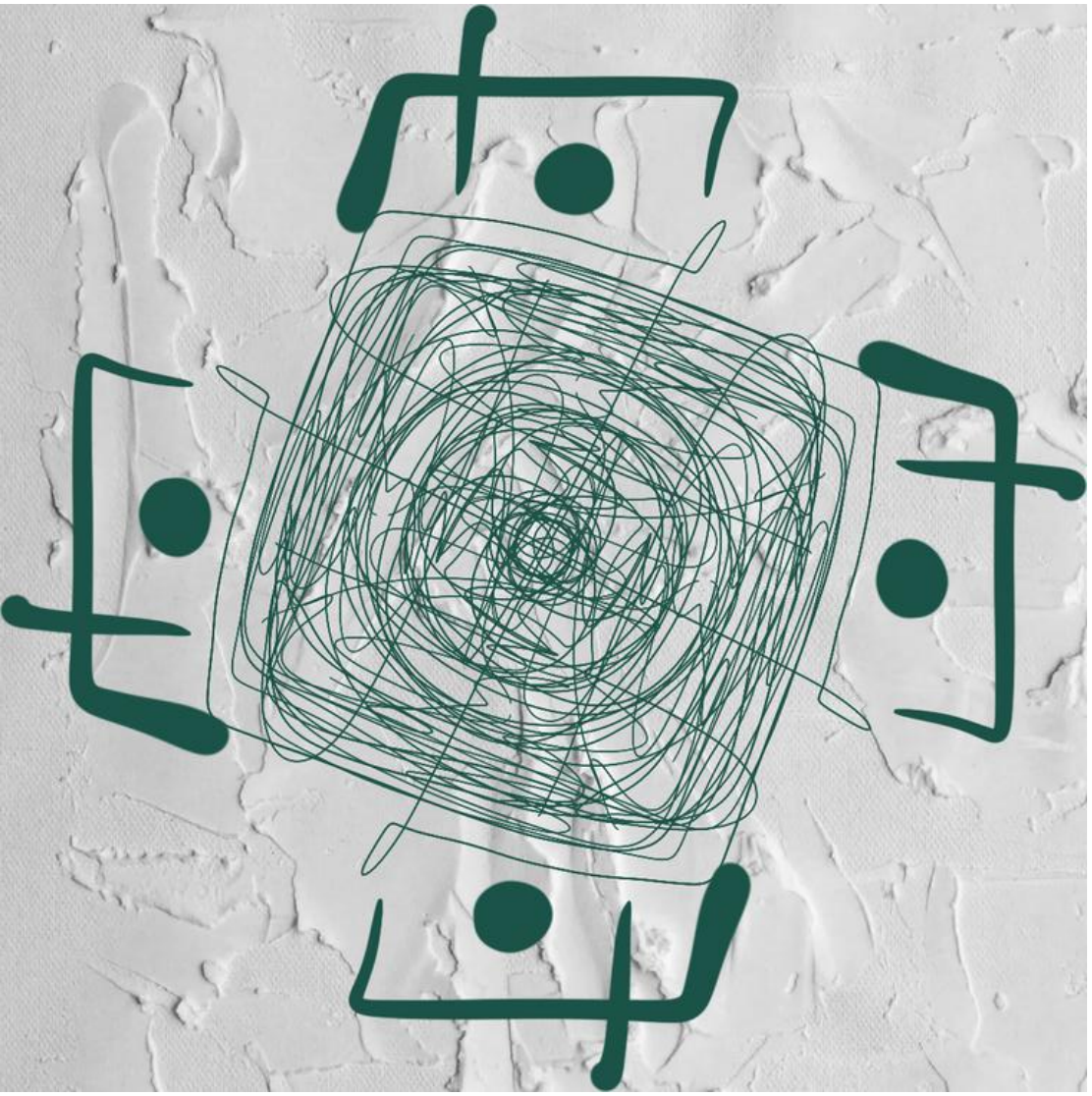
Many years later, whenever I walk through the city, I still feel that "dizziness". Perhaps it is the physical memory of my exhaustion and the uncertainty of the future when I stand at a certain place in the vast world. I have become accustomed to its existence. Even though it might leave me one day, I am still grateful. It reminds me in a unique way of the limitations and smallness of being human, and life will eventually push me towards another beginning. Arriving is not the end; it is life's call for me to explore the unknown world again.

My name is **Farnaz Ferdows**, and I'm a self-taught artist. I believe that art has an important impact on everyone's lives, and my aim is to create art pieces that, in a simple way, inspire wonder, provoke thought, and encourage positivity to our world.

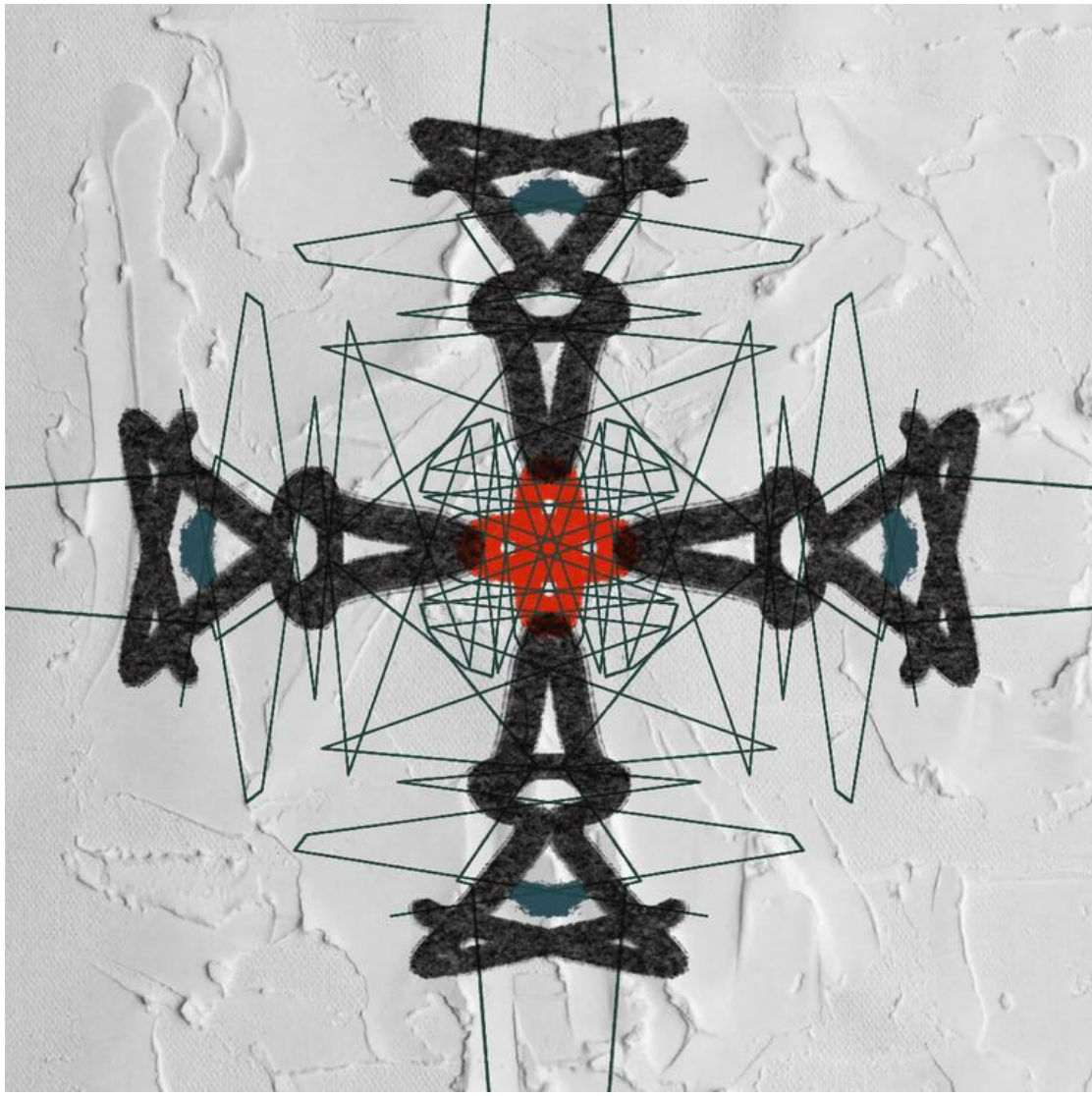
Project Statement
'Networks Within'
In this series, I explore the invisible threads that connect us-emotionally, mentally, instinctively. Each piece represents a different kind of connection: from instinctual response to societal entanglement, from inner chaos to collective intention.
Inspired by fiber art and its language of interweaving, I use minimal colors and abstract, symbolic forms to suggest energy, rhythm, and tension. The textured white background evokes raw canvas-untouched, silent, yet full of potential for imprint.
This body of work is my way of asking: how deeply are we entangled, and which of these connections are we truly aware of?

Farnaz Ferdows | Collective Mind | 2025





Farnaz Ferdows | Spiral Of Instinct | 2025



Farnaz Ferdows | Entangled Voices | 2025

Ernesto José Fernández Arias

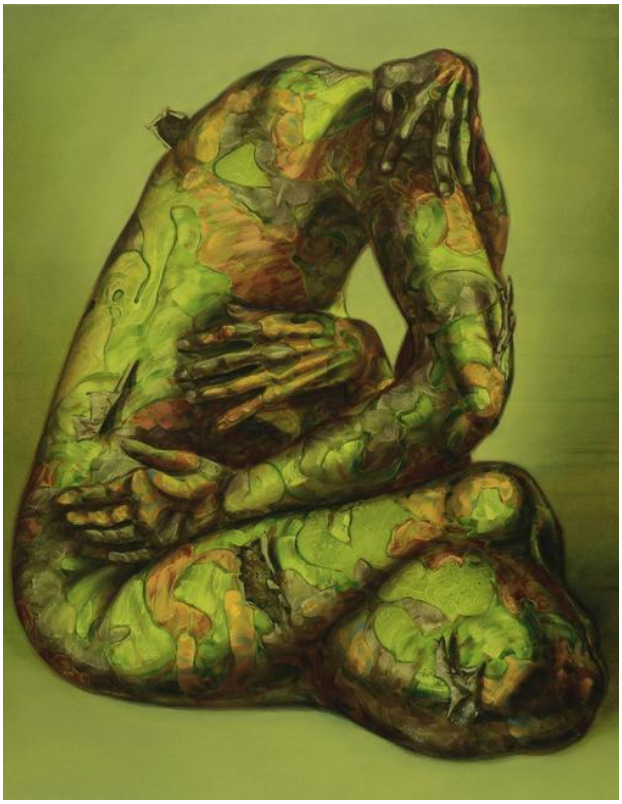
Your work explores the intersection of the human body and nature. What originally drew you to this theme?

My interest in the intersection between the human body and nature began to take shape about seven years ago, although now I understand it as something that had been silently forming since my first experiences of the world. I was born and raised in Havana, Cuba, a place where nature is not a distant landscape, but a constant, almost physical presence. The tropical environment in which I grew up, full of lush vegetation, warm humidity and vibrant colors, deeply shaped the way I perceive the world. From an early age, it was surrounded by trees, fruitful plants, changing light and the textures of the natural world. That environment taught me to look closely, to observe how living beings relate to each other, how everything is connected.

But the conscious articulation of this connection between the human body and nature began later, when he was completely immersed in the study of painting. At that time, I was amazed by Lucian Freud's work. His way of approaching the human figure, his raw and visceral treatment of the flesh, fascinated me. There was something deeply honest in the way he painted bodies, without idealization, without filters, just the weight, the folds, the temperature of the skin represented through thick brushes. It made me want to understand the body as a painting theme, not only as anatomy, but as territory.

Then, one afternoon in the middle of a Cuban summer, something changed. I was in the backyard of my family home, picking fruit from a guava tree. I remember it vividly because it was one of those moments in which the worldly suddenly reveals something extraordinary. As I reached for the fruit, I noticed the bark of the tree: its surface was marked by subtle gradients of color: pinkbeige, warm reds, greenish grays and almost bluish tones. What caught my attention was how similar those tones were to human skin. Not only in color, but in texture, in its organic unpredictability. That bark felt like flesh, worn, alive, layered.

Ernesto José Fernández Arias | Heart shape



Ernesto José Fernández Arias | Green Shape

That visual echo stayed with me. I realized that the body and the tree were not so different. Both carry memory on their surfaces. Both grow, heal, adapt. Both can be read as maps. That was the beginning of what has since become a central axis of my work: exploring the body not as an entity separated from nature, but as something that belongs to it, reflects it and is shaped by it.

Over time, this idea expanded. I began to see the human body as a landscape, something to be navigated, explored and interpreted. I became more and more interested in how the skin, for example, could resemble the cortex, how the veins reflected the root systems, how the anatomical structures could evoke geological formations. My paintings are not anatomical studies in a scientific sense; rather, they are attempts to merge the sensory language of the body with that of the natural world.

In this process, color became essential. I began to experiment with the tones found in natural materials (earth, clay, stone, wood) and integrate them into my palette for the human figure. I wanted the flesh of my paintings to feel porous, vegetable, like something that could belong both to the forest floor and to the inside of a body. I often paint without clearly defined contours, letting the shapes dissolve to each other, imitating how in nature nothing is really separate. This ambiguity, the space between, is where I find the most meaning.

Looking back, I think that moment with the guava tree marked the beginning of a visual and philosophical journey. One that has led me to see painting not only as a means of representation, but as a way of understanding the self in relation to the living world. In my work, I try to create images that evoke that original feeling, that moment of silent recognition when you realize that the bark of a tree and your own skin speak the same language.

So, although the subject of body and nature may seem formal at first glance, for me it is also spiritual, emotional and intuitive. It's about returning to something essential: to a stillness that allows us to see the connections that we often overlook. Through painting, I try to make those connections visible, slow down perception and offer a space where the viewer can also experience that sense of belonging: to the body, to the earth and everything else.

How has your training at San Alejandro influenced your artistic voice and visual language?

My training at the San Alejandro National Academy of Fine Arts was a key stage in the construction of my artistic identity. I entered when I was very young, just in the middle of adolescence, and that deeply marked the way I began to think about art. It was a period of discovery, of opening the eyes to a much wider universe than I had imagined until then. San Alejandro is not only a school of painting: it is a space where multiple artistic languages are addressed. There I had the opportunity to explore engraving, sculpture, digital art, video art, performance, illustration... That range of media not only allowed me to develop technical skills in different disciplines, but, above all, to expand my creative thinking. I learned to look at art as a constantly expanding field, where the important thing is not the medium itself, but what you want to communicate through it.

Although I finally chose the path of painting, it was thanks to that formative diversity that I was able to consolidate a freer, intuitive and more experimental way of working. I understood that visual language is something that is built with time, with experience, with trial and error. San Alejandro gave me the tools to go through that process with depth and commitment, and above all he gave me an environment in which art is lived intensely, from the technical but also from the emotional and the collective.

Without a doubt, that stage gave me the foundations to understand that being an artist is not only knowing how to do, but also knowing how to think, feel and connect with your environment from a personal perspective.

You often use anatomical forms fused with natural textures. Do these elements carry symbolic meanings for you?

Yes, definitely. In my work, both anatomical forms and natural textures not only function as formal or aesthetic resources, but are deeply loaded with symbolic meanings. I am interested in the human body as a territory where drives, emotions, bonds are manifested... and at the same time I am interested in nature as a living space that breathes, transforms, is fertilized and dies. Between both dimensions - the human and the plant - I find connections that are visual, but also symbolic, sensual, even spiritual.

One of the themes that my work goes through is that of sexuality and love, not from the explicit, but from a more intuitive and ambiguous sensitivity. In my hugs paintings, for example, there is an intention to represent the body in its most vulnerable and connected state: the gesture of the hug as a physical act, but also as a form of containment, fusion, desire. I am interested in representing the body not only as an object, but as an emotional subject, as an affective space where essential things of human experience occur.

Sexuality, fertility, desire, love, are themes that I find both in the body and in nature. It moves me to think about how a flower opens, how a fruit is born, how a root spreads, and how those images can dialogue with organs, folds, skin, veins.

Ernesto José Fernández Arias | Embrace

Sometimes those elements appear in my paintings directly, and other times they are more hidden, but they are always present in the way I build the pictorial matter.
I am also interested in the symbolic from the way in which the painting itself behaves: how the oil flows, how it mixes, how it creates textures that recall the wet, the living, what beats. There is a sensuality in the act of painting that is also transferred to the visual result. I like that my paintings can generate physical sensations in the viewer, that invite not only to look, but to feel. In that sense, the symbolic is not only in the content, but in the very experience of painting as a body.
On the other hand, I feel that both the human body and nature are spaces of creation, of origin. Both are fertile, both generate life. In them, processes occur that are beyond our control but that deeply shape us. Painting these connections is also, for me, a way of meditating on the link between the intimate and the universal, between the personal and the archetypal. Thus, the body and nature become languages that I use to talk about desire, love, birth, death, the constant transformation of all living things.

How do you approach the process of building your dense and tactile oil surfaces?

My process with oil painting is fundamentally based on layered work. For me, the construction of the image is not something immediate or spontaneous in the sense of a unique gesture, but it arises through a slow, cumulative development, almost like a growing organism. I am very interested in that slowness, that time that is needed for matter to find its shape, its thickness, its weight.
I understand oil as a deeply sensitive medium, which allows me to work with a plastic richness that manifests itself in the superposition. By painting by layers, I can control and at the same time discover what happens between one application and the next. That way of working allows me to achieve greater depth in the pictorial surface, and also capture with more fidelity and sensitivity the plant textures that fascinate me so much.
I am very inspired by the observation of barks, roots, lichens, organic structures that generate an almost tactile attraction. I do not seek to imitate them directly, but I do seek to translate their complexity, their visual and material density, into pictorial language. To achieve this, the layers allow me to model the shape from the inside, making the color not flat, but has body, volume and life. I work with glazing, fillings, transparencies and density contrasts, always trying to make the paint not only represent, but to embody.
There is also something important in the type of energy that this process requires. Painting like this forces me to be in constant dialogue with the work. Each layer is a decision, but also an opening to what may arise. Sometimes I completely cover an area that I had already worked on, other times I hint at what is underneath. That game between what is revealed and what is hidden is part of the construction of the visual language I seek.
The feeling of volume is essential for me. I'm not so interested in realism as in the physical presence of the image. I want the painting to feel alive, to have weight, to invite you to look closely, to stop. That materiality seems to me fundamental to reinforce the connection between the body and the plant, which is one of the main lines of my work. Just as a bark has layers that tell its story, my paintings also contain traces of the process, remains of time and the decisions that have given rise to the final image.
In short, painting in layers allows me to build a rich, complex and open surface. A surface that is not only looked at, but inhabited.

Your works evoke both sensuality and ambiguity. What emotions or reactions do you hope to awaken in the viewer?

Ernesto José Fernández Arias | Embrace

Ernesto José Fernández Arias | Butterfly

What interests me most when creating a work is to generate a sensory and introspective experience in those who observe it. I do not seek for the viewer to understand something specific or reach a closed interpretation; quite the opposite: I aspire to open a space where he can feel invited to look carefully, to let himself be emotionally affected by what he sees, and, above all, to connect with his own inner universe.
The ambiguity in my works is not accidental, it is a resource that allows me to escape from the literal and let the image breathe. I'm interested in suggesting, not imposing. That the forms can be both skin and bark, both flesh and root. This lack of visual certainties can generate in the viewer a feeling of bewilderment at first, but also of attraction. I like to think that my works are located on that threshold between the recognizable and the indefinite, where perception becomes more active and more intimate.
As for sensuality, I think it is present not only in the content - the bodies, the hugs, the body textures - but also in the way I apply the painting, in the subject itself. The oil, with its density and fluidity, allows me to build surfaces that invite to be traveled with the gaze almost as if they were felt. That tactile dimension of the painting seems essential to me, because it links the viewer with the work from the body, not just from the mind.
In short, I am interested in causing a pause. That whoever approaches one of my works can remain silent for a moment, let himself be touched, and perhaps discover something that he did not know was inside him.

Do you see your work as part of a broader discourse about the relationship between humanity and the environment?

Yes, definitely. Although my work starts from an intimate exploration of the body and the sensory experience, I also understand it as part of a broader conversation about our relationship with the natural environment. I am interested in showing that the human body is not separated from nature, but is part of it, reflects it and continues it. By merging plant textures with body shapes, I try to break that division that we often establish between the human and the natural.
I believe that recovering that connection is essential, especially at a time when the link with the environment is in crisis. Through painting, I try to remember that we are living matter, that we share rhythms, weaknesses and cycles with everything that surrounds us. My works are not a direct denunciation or an ecological manifesto, but they do contain a look that seeks to awaken sensitivity towards the organic, the essential, the shared.
Painting bodies that merge with the earth, with the bark or with the roots, is also a way of imagining new ways of inhabiting the world. A world where humanity and environment are not in conflict, but in communion.

How has living in Andalusia influenced your creative process or subject matter?

My experience living in Andalusia, and more broadly in Spain - including stages in Madrid and the Balearic Islands - has been deeply transformative both on a personal and artistic level. Emigrating is undoubtedly a complex experience. It is a constant challenge: to adapt, to observe with new eyes, to rebuild one's own place in the world. But it is also an invaluable opportunity to grow, broaden the look and enrich the thought.
Living in different places has allowed me to know different realities, understand other ways of inhabiting the body, the earth, time. I have discovered that the character of a place is expressed not only in its landscapes, but also in its rhythms, in its silences, in the way people link. All that inevitably filters into my work.
Andalusia, in particular, with its warm light, its rooted traditions and its close relationship with the natural, has offered me a fertile space to continue exploring the organic from a new perspective. The migratory experience has also made me more receptive, more attentive to the subtleties of the environment, and has taught me to trust more intuition and the ability to adapt - key elements in my creative process.
Painting from another territory is also painting from another me. A self that changes, that adapts, but that does not forget its roots.

Ernesto José Fernández Arias | Yellow Shape

Gilles Petit-Gats

Photographing the in-between moments

Gilles Petit-Gats | The Linen, the Seagull and the Virgin | 2025

Gilles Petit-Gats | Angel of the Shores | 2025

Gilles Petit-Gats | Floating Laundry | 2025

Nataliia Karavan

Your artist statement emphasizes "Soft Power: Femininity, Freedom, and Bloom." What inspired this theme, and how does it manifest across your body of work?

This theme grew out of my personal journey as a woman and an artist navigating change, migration, and self-expression. I believe in the quiet, transformative strength of softness—a kind of power that isn't aggressive but resilient. "Femininity, Freedom, and Bloom" reflects my belief that vulnerability and sensuality can coexist with independence and inner strength. This message weaves through all of my work, from the titles to the textures and colors.

In pieces like "Small Boobs Big Dreams" and "Oh Honey," you challenge conventional beauty standards. What reactions or reflections do you hope these bold

Nataliia Karavan | Your Cinderella

statements provoke in your viewers?

I want viewers to pause and reflect on how deeply societal standards shape our self-worth. These works are cheeky, playful, and direct, but beneath that, they're rooted in deeper questions about what it means to take up space as a woman—physically, emotionally, and creatively. I hope they inspire confidence and encourage others, especially women, to embrace the fullness of who they are.

Your technique incorporates oil, acrylic, resin, and spray paint in layered compositions. How do these materials contribute to the emotional intensity and dimensionality of your work?

Each material brings a different energy and texture. Oil gives richness and depth, acrylic offers spontaneity, resin creates a luminous finish, and spray paint introduces raw, unexpected marks. The layering process mirrors emotional complexity—just like us, the paintings hold softness and strength, clarity and chaos. The more you look, the more you discover.

You've lived, studied, and taught in London, China, and now Vancouver, after relocating from Ukraine. How have these diverse cultural experiences influenced your artistic voice and perspective?

When I moved from Ukraine, I didn't just change cities—I changed as a person. Studying in London taught me how to build a solid artistic foundation and develop conceptual ideas. Teaching in China pushed me to communicate

Natalilia Karavan | Oh honey

through creativity across language barriers. Now in Vancouver, I'm finally painting from a place that feels like healing. My art carries all those stories.

Can you share a pivotal moment in your career when color or movement helped you break through creatively or emotionally?

One of the most profound moments in my creative journey happened during a deep meditation—a past life regression session. In that altered state, I saw a clear and vivid image: a series of abstract paintings filled with light, golden tones, and delicate textures. The works I saw were radiant, soft, and full of warmth—almost as if they were breathing. It felt like a glimpse into something I had once created or was meant to bring into existence.

That vision stayed with me long after the session ended. I couldn't stop thinking about those glowing, abstract forms. It felt less like an idea and more like a memory—a message. That's when I decided to create a new collection based on what I saw. I will begin working on this abstract series soon. It will be filled with light colors, soft layers, and golden textures inspired directly by that experience.

This vision marked a creative breakthrough. It reminded me that my art doesn't just come from thought—it comes from memory, intuition, and something beyond this lifetime. The new collection will be a translation of that moment, brought to life through golden tones, movement, and light.

Your work often celebrates the sensual and playful aspects of femininity, yet also explores resilience and self-discovery. How do you navigate this duality in your art?

To me, they're not opposites—they're deeply connected. Femininity isn't only about softness or aesthetics; it also carries the weight of survival, rebirth, and resistance. My art plays with this duality through color choices, layered materials, and recurring symbols like flowers, body shapes, and handwritten phrases. There's humor and lightness, but also depth and emotional honesty.

Spontaneity is central to your process. How do you approach knowing when a piece is truly finished?

For me, finishing a painting isn't a logical decision—it's a feeling. Because my process is so intuitive and layered, I have to sense when the energy of the work is balanced. I often step back, observe, and wait for that quiet moment when nothing feels forced and the painting holds its own presence. That's when I know it's done. Sometimes it happens quickly, and other times it takes weeks or even months of adding, scraping, and reworking. But I've learned to trust that moment when the piece no longer needs me—it feels whole, like it's breathing on its own. That's the beauty of spontaneity: it teaches you to listen, not just act.

Natalilia Karavan | Floral Lagoon

Hanna Gelwix

I have been a practicing fine artist for the past 10 years, and in 2023 I earned my bachelor's degree in fine studio art from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I have a passion for all visual art forms - but my main concentrations are within photography and printmaking. I am currently based in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Project Statement

My work explores the intersection of memory, material, and process, using printmaking and photography to examine themes of presence and impermanence. I am drawn to tactile and experimental approaches, allowing the physicality of each medium to shape the narrative of my work. Through printmaking, I embrace repetition and variation, finding beauty in the unexpected textures and marks that emerge from the process. My photography, both digital and film-based, captures fleeting moments, emphasizing the subtle interplay between light, space, and emotion. Since 2018, I have been documenting the different phases of my life through an ongoing self-portrait series, using photography as a means of introspection and personal storytelling. This series continues to evolve, reflecting shifts in identity, environment, and time. A selection of my digital and film photography pieces can be viewed on my website (hannagelwix.com). I have exhibited my work in spaces in North Carolina, such as Greensboro Project Space, Northside District, and Peel Gallery. Whether through delicate prints or evocative photography, my work seeks to engage the viewer in a quiet dialogue—one that invites the viewer to sit and reflect with the piece.

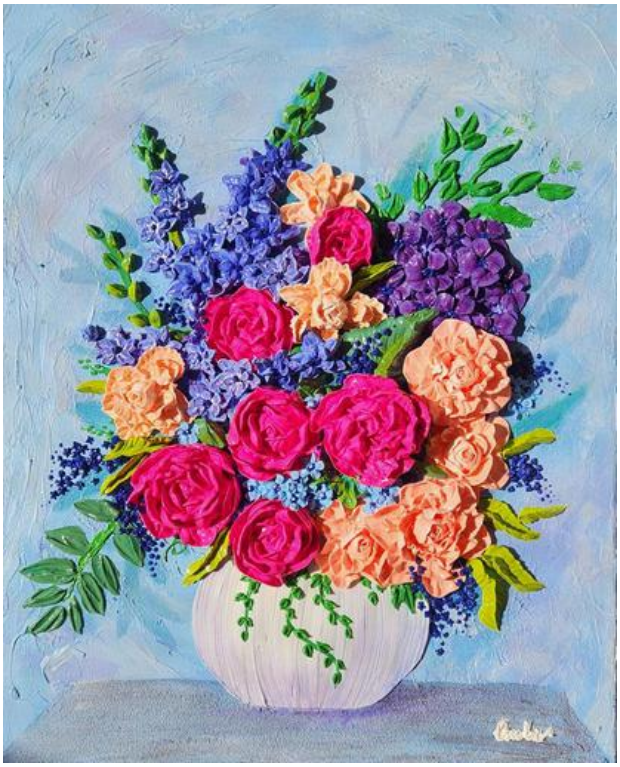
Hanna Gelwix | Under Wraps | 2025

Hanna Gelwix | Spindletree | 2025

Amber Wenger

Your journey into art began after a life-changing accident in 2020. How did that experience influence your creative awakening?

I had just gone from working full time, to being on my couch. I was depressed and so very BORED! To pass the time I began watching art tutorials on youtube. One day after watching impasto painting tutorials, I felt inspired and thought "Wow, I would love to try that!!!"



Amber Wenger | Generosity

As I began playing with textured paint I noticed how delightful the creative process was for me. After watching a few tutorials I was flooded with ideas of my own and they simply wouldn't stop pouring in. It felt like I had just opened a portal to the plane where ideas are born. To this day I am constantly filled with more creative ideas than I could possibly bring to life.

Many of your works are incredibly tactile and vibrant. What drew you to the technique of 3D textured painting?

My type of painting is new, exciting, and I am creating my own process as I go along. I am completely obsessed with creating art that interacts with people's emotions. I find that my work often stimulates a sense of wonder and astonishment in viewers. I really love that I get to create something that people have never seen before.
My art is an attempt to capture my essence and inspire playfulness, warmth, and freedom. I adore novelty and boldness and I find this technique expresses my personality beautifully.

How did your upbringing in a conservative Mennonite home shape your perception of creativity and beauty?

I was always taught that hard work is the only valuable thing a person can offer. I lived a life of endless chores, cooking large meals, cleaning, and mountains of laundry. I was taught that pleasure (especially the pleasure of women), was sinful. Creativity centered on beauty was actively suppressed. Women were not allowed to wear any makeup, paint their nails, or cut their hair. Beauty was supposed to come from inside according to the cult leaders and that meant being obedient, prayerful, and of course submissive.
Luckily for me, I have been rebellious since a young age and made life quite difficult for my parents ever since I asked them to explain why it was important that we did things a certain way. I was often told, "this is the way we've always done it and that's how we will continue to do it". I have been questioning belief systems, (especially religious ones) ever since.

You mention using cake decorating tools in your artwork. Could you tell us more about how that technique came about?

Amber Wenger | Floral Whimsy

I have always adored flowers and when I first saw a video where an artist used a piping tip to apply paint to the canvas I was hooked. Justin Gaffrey, the creator of the 3D paint I so adore, was sharing some of his techniques on youtube and I was completely in awe. I knew I wanted to make opulent paintings that literally leap beyond the canvas. I have the desire to create works of art that feel untamed and a little bit wild.
Using piping tips makes me feel expansive and lighthearted in a way I haven't felt in anything else. Making sculptural paintings has changed my life in ways I can't even put into words. I hope my art is able to communicate the concepts my mind cannot fully express at this time.

What role does beauty play in your life today, and how has your relationship with it evolved?

I have lived most of my life inside a cult that insists beauty is on the inside and demands obedient followers. I was never invited to look inward or have a perspective of my own. Eventually there was a breaking point and my father demanded that I join the cult or be shunned. I chose the path of freedom and began to investigate what mattered to me. After many years of moving inward and processing everything I find, I have developed a perspective that belongs to me and me alone. My opinions now reflect myself and my lived experiences and that is my greatest accomplishment.
I have chosen to become the opposite of what that cult taught me, by placing great value on my experience of pleasure. In a world that values productivity and laborious techniques I am choosing to go against the grain and create from pleasure and play. In each piece I imbue my essence, my empowerment, and my bravery so that everyone standing in front of my art can tap into that frequency and find more wholeness within themselves.

Moving from the U.S. to Italy and now Japan—how have these cultural changes influenced your artistic process?

I am loving these questions! Thank you!
When I first moved to Italy I still had that strong need to be productive, I was haunted by the feeling of never doing enough. This was one of those traumatic gifts from my upbringing and it ran deep. While living by the Mediterranean I became hyper aware of the traits people living there possessed. They were so happy to make time to relax, drink delicious wines, take slow sumptuous dinners, and of course relax by the water. I absorbed a lot of these traits and while I'm still ambitious, I have been able to deepen my ability to relax and take in life and that means so very much to me! Now I am able to pour more pleasure into my work than ever before. My art has become more potent as a result of my time in Italy.
In Japan I have been met with this desire to ask for more bold expression of myself. That seems easy breezy lemon squeezy, until you're a fat foreigner who loves wearing bright pink in a country that is filled with people who don't express their true selves! Since I am no stranger to being ostracized, the stares and attention don't distress me very much however it still takes a choice of bravery to attract so much attention. What I think is so valuable in this case is; I am reminded that in some ways I was still holding my breath waiting for some invisible force to validate my ideas and give me permission to express myself. Boldness is expressing yourself even when you don't know how you will be received and that is scary but powerful. Since living in Tokyo I have found more vulnerability and this has changed how I share my artwork with the world. Now I feel more comfortable sharing my authenticity without the promise of acceptance.

Your brand "Lemon and Sunshine" evokes brightness and joy. How does the name reflect your artistic philosophy?

The color yellow, lemons, and the sun, bring feelings of great joy in me. My work feels energetic and playful in a way that the sun and lemons do. I have been in sadness and despair and I realize that many people in the world know darkness as well. I want to leave the world a brighter, warmer place.
It is my desire that the work that has brought me healing will bring healing to those who seek comfort. While my work can be enjoyed by all, I create for women and children who are dreaming of a better future. Choosing to be an artist has been such a profound spiritual experience for me, so another way I share my perspective is on youtube where I teach people how to create art and encourage women to be empowered, opinionated and free!

Amber Wenger | Dream

My name is **Octavia Walker**, but I also go by Tay or Nyx. I am from Northern Virginia and am an upcoming Fall 2025 senior Studio Art major at Virginia State University (VSU). I specialize in conceptual mixed-media art, exploring themes of culture, identity, symbolism, storytelling, and worldbuilding. My vivid imagination and personal experiences as a Black neurodivergent individual inspire my work, which incorporates various mediums, ranging from digital art, graphite, etc.

Project Statement
Error 404 is an on going series highlights my own experiences of being a neurodivergence individual with chronic health issues.

Octavia Walker | Expression of time

Octavia Walker | The Raven

Elias Franziskus Grüner

Your work often explores the relationship between the physical and the transcendental. What draws you to this theme?

My decision to become an artist is based on a transcendental experience. In the summer of 2019, I threw myself, with all my belongings, onto my knees and stood on the street, letting life guide me as I hitchhiked. I was ready to circumnavigate the world, heading west – I noted down the seasons of the winds for the Atlantic and Pacific, and was prepared to travel around the globe until I would eventually return to Vienna. My hope was that either life would answer the question I couldn't formulate, or I would find myself back in Vienna after a few years and would have to figure out what to do next. Luckily for me, I ended up in Lisbon after about six months and decided (irrationally) to stay there and buy an old Peugeot that took three minutes to warm up before the engine was ready to go.

Fate brought me to L.V., who sat with me day and night in a park for three weeks to discuss all my questions about existence. As a result, there was a moment of insight. I saw life, I was life. This experience was so significant that I immediately returned to Vienna and realized: I must make an impact through art!

Art was already my own before that. I lived in the spirit of antiquity and breathed the scent of the old Florentine studios. My spirit was to be found there, but it was pure romanticism in childhood. I hardly thought that this was a way to live my life. However, this one experience was so profound that I simply negated everything that was thrown in my way (and there was quite a lot). Negation is the wrong term, because those confrontations brought me to the point of my existential being. It echoed inside my ears, a fundamental tone of trust, and I followed it without hesitation.

What is your personal interpretation of the "non-

dualistic state," and how do you guide the viewer toward experiencing it?

Some time ago, I wrote a short text entitled „SPACE. TIME and I".

$$S \cup T = F$$
$$F \subseteq I$$
$$F \in I$$
$$I \in F$$
$$F \neq I$$[1]

The dualistic state consists of form. Matter that is bound to space and time. A form has a clear boundary, otherwise it loses its definition as a form. Therefore, every form is bound to a dualistic state: to define a form, one must set boundaries for when the form ends. Therefore, there is form and there is ¬form. Two states of existence.
We can start with the premise of a house. Standing with your nose against the façade, there is no legitimate way to understand that it is a form. Therefore, you have to take a step back and walk around the house to fully understand its form, its boundaries. Only then can you say what form you are looking at.
This applies to all forms. Not only to material forms, but especially to mental constructs. Everything we call mind. In order to grasp the respective state of mind, the observer must distance themselves far enough to be able to perceive the thought completely. Only then are they able to comprehend this thought. Now we come to emotions, ideas and concepts. All these forms are constructs that we can observe.
If we follow this type of perception, our entire collected earthly life soon stands before us.

[1] S = space; T = time; F = form; I = I (personal pronoun - being)

Only from the perspective that sees all forms of our existence, do we have the opportunity to call a way of seeing our own, which is the true self. It is the perception of itself. We have analysed all forms and we ourselves are none of them. We are now one with the universe.
The backbone of existence is based solely on understanding that forms change playfully before us. The basic substance must be grasped from which these plays can be perceived. That is being, that is truth.

In the MANIFESTUS series, you use preserved animal bodies and metals like gold and brass. What is the symbolic significance behind these materials?

„MANIFESTUS" („manus" = „hand" and „facere" = „to make") is derived from G.F. Hegel's lecture on „Aesthetics". To summarize in simple terms, Hegel writes: an artist has only the material world at his disposal. Through his elevated spirit, he collects materials and arranges them in such a way that when the object is exhibited, only the material confronts the viewer. The viewer, however, receives the elevated spirit that has been enclosed in this process and transcends the object.
I move in this language of art and also want to create clarity. How can we simplify this intellectual capacity? Well, we take the body, the physical, the vulnerable, the transitory, and create an exposition. We remove the filter organs (kidneys, liver, intestines, lungs, etc.) from the organism and supplement them with the true self. In art history, gold has always been the image of God. (Since my finances do not allow me to buy gold in large quantities, I use brass, which is visually very similar to gold). Thus, the brass now penetrates the body, burns the skin and melts through the organs and muscles. Without restraint, it flows out of the body, causing discomfort, and completes its journey without being stopped.
The gold is therefore not bound to the body. The body is not steadfast, but the molten metal is. It paves its way, free from what the corpus presents. Accordingly, the question should be raised: what is truly permanent and what is transient? Through deep introspection, the observer should realize that he carries both a transient and an eternal part within himself. Is it possible for him to uncover the eternal, or does he remain trapped in his fear of change?

How did your project CLOUDS evolve, and what does the cloud symbolize in your work?

In 2023, I was invited to participate in the IN SITU FESTIVAL. I had a great plan for a church to depict the apocalyptic flood through paintings. However, this

could not be realized, so I had to reorganize myself. I came across the ornithological museum at Palazzo Montesano and was certain that I had to exhibit there. I had sketches of derivations from my MANIFESTUS series, and there I realized one of them for the first time. I collected sticks from around the village and drove through the countryside to get some unprocessed wool.
The exhibition was a great success, and while I was doing a spontaneous performance, Sergio Poggianalla entered the room and was fascinated by my work. Later that evening, we had a great conversation, and he invited me to install the clouds at METS (Museo etnografico Trentino San Michele), Italy's largest folklore museum in an 18th-century monastery. Not only that, but the other two major museums were also part of this exhibition: „SHAMANS. Communicating to the invisible" with MART (Museo di arte moderna e contemperoranea di Trento) and MUSE (Museo delle Scienze di Trento).
The birth of my clouds was established!
The cloud does not just remain between earth and sky, but also oscillates – as an object – between phenomenon and ether. The ease with which the mass moves between transcendence and worldliness is reason enough to include it as a symbol in my art. Goethe, Humboldt and other scholars have already dealt with the curiosity of the cloud. At the beginning of the 19th century, Luke Howard was the first to publish a scientific categorization of the four main types of clouds: cirrus, cumulus and stratus. Out of affection and emotion, Goethe wrote poems about these types of clouds, thus paying homage to Howard. He himself was rebuked when he wanted to begin his own observations before Howard's cloud studies. They said: Goethe is a man of letters, not a scientist!
Clouds also appear in the New Testament, when God leads the Israelites out of the Egyptian desert by day in a pillar of clouds. When Moses climbs Mount Sinai, God appears as a cloud and hands him the Ten Commandments. And in 1 Kings 8, 10-12, God appears as a cloud and fills the temple.
Clouds are something we encounter almost every day. Every time we see them, we should think of the eternal, which tries to reveal itself to us.

Your works reference both ancient mythology and modern existential questions. How do you balance these dimensions?

In my world, it is not a stretch at all. It is the most natural thing to do. I worked as the private main archivist for Dr. Otmar Rychlik and he indoctrinated me in various forms. For one, the artist has to be successful. Rethinking and reorganizing my art many times, to the point of self destruction, I wanted to pursue an eternal search. God bless, that it came to me quite early.
As an artist one has to study art history, anthropology, philosophy, religion and psychology. An artist is a doctor. He reviews the society and every individual and formulates a medicine. Only with great understanding, a long lasting Œvre is manageable. The longevity of art is based on the fundamentals it is based on. There are certain questions that sentient beings asked themselves, derived from time. They are ever lasting, fundamental questions. The great soul understands these questions for his time and menages to convey them. This is all. There isn't much more to it. So I see the same in Heraklit, Platon, Homer, von Bingen, Luther, Alighieri, Da Vinci, Michelangelo, the Flemish, Buxtehude, J.S. Bach, Goethe, Hölderlin, Schiller, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, Mozart, Malechevit, Rothko, Nitsch, Rainer, Beuys, Brus, Richter, etc... countless human beings, giving their life for the greater good

Could you tell us about the performative aspect of

your work, especially the trance rituals you engage in?

The shamanistic performances, are less based on the „EDDA“ (even though „Perchta“ stems from this), but a christian immersion. I myself, sink to the bottom of being, and resonate in such a way, that the spectator can harmonize with me. Every person has their own time and space, so for a big group, it takes quite some effort and time to tune everyone to the same note. However, once done: people start hugging strangers and feel love. This is when I know, my performance is over.

Nature plays a central role in your practice — from bees and falcons to minerals and wool. What role does ecology play in your artistic philosophy?

Yes, and this is quite essential! I am fully aware of the contrast, that I am creating. It is forcefully so!
The artistic landscape in Vienna is flooded by screaming colors and inorganic materials. However, materials inhabit a great influence.
For instance: my „COLORFUL STONES“ series is based on Adalbert Stifter. I collected six types of stones, which he used as titles in his book: „Colorful Stones“. I collected them, made them to pigment by hand and painted my first large commission (still hanging in the SERVUS restaurant in Vienna, 1010). Once I crushed rock crystals, blue lightnings started to emerge. I become more eager to find out the reason. I dwelled into lithotherapy and made the connection to quantum physics. Dr. König, through his studies found that: photons have two potentialities. One is in the elctromagnatic field and one is in the electrostatic field. the foremost is able to be measured by instruments. The second is merely theory (string theory), but shows to be practicable by Zeilinger's theory of „Verschränkung“.
To say: photons have the potentiality to form photon clusters (memory) and by which they can enhance vitality of a cell. Interesting enough, through experimentation, certain stones (foremost quartz stones and finally diamonds), showed the most efficient way to vitalize human cells.
Now the explanation is as follows: Our universe is made up by a lot of atoms. To get the the bottom, scientists have dissected light. What we can say, is that around the stem of a Photon, Electrons spring around. Now, depending on the conductivity of the cell (the material) the more electrons are free to roam about. 1937 the Kilian couple invented the Kilian Photography, in which they put certain currents of electricity to an object, to see how many electrons will turn to gas and collide with the air. The more electrons are being set free, the more conductive an object is. To reason, the more flying around electrons a cell has, the more potent it is. Comparing now a cell before a 10 minute exposure to a cell after a 10 minute exposure of direct diamond, the cell shows an increasingly higher conductivity. meaning the cell has become more vital.
Even in ancient Egypt lithotherapy was practiced. No wonder why the Egypt's were able to master the art of mummification or building the pyramids. There was a great understanding of life and the usage thereof.

Layla Chartier, BFA from University of Cincinnati DAAP, is a printmaker based in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her work is heavily inspired by her childhood memories, experiences, and religious and moral beliefs. Using printmaking and beading, Layla creates graphic and lively depictions of her passions. Layla has exhibited in galleries such as the Contemporary Art Center, Chidlaw Gallery, and the Tabula Rasa in Cincinnati, OH.

Project Statement
"Childhood Self Portrait"
2025, beading on found fabric, overall dimensions: 16 in * 13.5 in & beaded figure dimensions: 10.25 in * 5 in.
I create artworks that use historically rich techniques - like printmaking and beading – blended with modern happenings. I depict my memories from childhood, current political world events, and my religious beliefs. My practice is an echo of who I am as a person, with everything I create being something I am passionate about. Printmaking's history in protest and its versatility sets the tone in my work by giving a historical context from the medium and providing the graphic nature my work desires. My work uses ink, fabric, and beads, offering glimpses into my mind and heart. Beading's tedious nature adds a level of depth and beauty to my work. My beading is my attempt to give life and volume to my subject matter. The treatment of the surface (i.e. printing on fabric versus paper) ties into the tone of my work. Using fabric as a matrix, I attempt to impose the feeling of hijab through printing onto the fabric.

Layla Chartier | Childhood Self-Portrait

Layla Chartier | Childhood Self-Portrait

Michael Lemon

Your photographs are rich in color and layered storytelling. How do you approach composing a frame in the streets?

Lighting, lighting, lighting. For me, all of the framing, layering, and rules of composition are irrelevant if the lighting is not good. So, I'm always chasing the light first and foremost. I love images that have multiple layers or that are compartmentalized. It allows you to break the image up into multiple stories, so I'm always looking for layers or ways to frame within the frame. In building depth, I tend to work from the background first, to middle and then foreground. Sometimes all three layers already exist, and you just need to position yourself to frame

Michael Lemon | Call For Coffee

Michael Lemon | Dirty Cars

them. More often you need to build the layers. In this case I search for a good background, a place that is not too cluttered and allows the subject to stand out. I then start framing the background, deciding what to include, looking for clarity and avoiding tangents. I previsualize where I want my main subject to be and then wait for the middle and foreground elements to come into frame. I can spend hours in front of a good background, waiting for the right subject to complete the frame.

You mention being influenced by painters like Francis Bacon and Edward Hopper. In what ways do these influences show up in your photography?

Being inspired and compared to other photographers is inevitable, so I try to garner a greater influence from traditional painters. I'm greatly inspired by Francis Bacon's use of vibrant and intense primary colors, juxtaposed with muted cooler colors. This contrast builds depth. Also, his spatial use of color to compartmentalize a subject or separate it from the background. With Hopper, I have always admired his compositions, his ability to transform a mundane everyday scene into a stunning graphic image. I have spent a great deal of time studying his use of leading lines, of dark and light, and his ability to flatten a plane while still creating depth.

After a long career in advertising, what was the most difficult or liberating part about transitioning to photography full-time?

I think the most difficult part for me has been deciding what subject matter to photograph, to find a long-term project that I can immerse myself in. With advertising, there was always a client-based project that you were shooting for. For now, I'm just shooting random street photography with zero direction. As great as it may sound to have the freedom to shoot whatever you like, I do find it challenging. I want to create images that have more meaning than random snapshots. I'm not there yet. Liberating, that is an understatement. For myself there is no greater feeling than when I'm on the street with my Leica in hand and I'm seeing the world frame by frame.

Many of your photos capture fleeting, almost accidental moments. How do you train your eye to

Michael Lemon | Divine Shadow

catch these?

I go back to the adage of " Luck is when preparation meets opportunity ". It's all about putting yourself in the right spot for when the opportunity or decisive moment happens. For example, the Holy Cola image was taken in a cemetery. As I was leaving the cemetery, I noticed a Coca Cola truck down the street doing deliveries. Being a one-way street, I knew the truck would have to pass by me, so I precomposed the image and waited for the truck. It goes back to how I compose images by starting with a good background and waiting for the elements to complete the image. Beyond that, it really is about being aware of your surroundings and what"could" happen. Another example, in Latin America, people are very passionate and greet each other with hugs or hardy handshakes. Knowing this, you can anticipate a meaningful moment that makes a great image. On the technical side, my camera is always set using a zone focus range, so I don't miss a shot and I'm always looking down the street to see what's coming.

Color seems to be a central theme in your work. How do you use it as a narrative tool?

I started shooting long before digital photography and shot mostly on Kodachrome, which is known for its vibrant and saturated colors. This is probably why color is such a large part of my work. Color photography is so often used to capture the world precisely as it is. I want to push color to a point where the viewer questions if the image is real. I use light and shadow, strong blocks of color to guide the viewer towards the subject. I do very little postproduction work to the images, I'm very adamant that I stay true to what could have been achieved with film.

You've lived and worked in diverse locations like Asia and Mexico. How have these environments shaped your visual language?

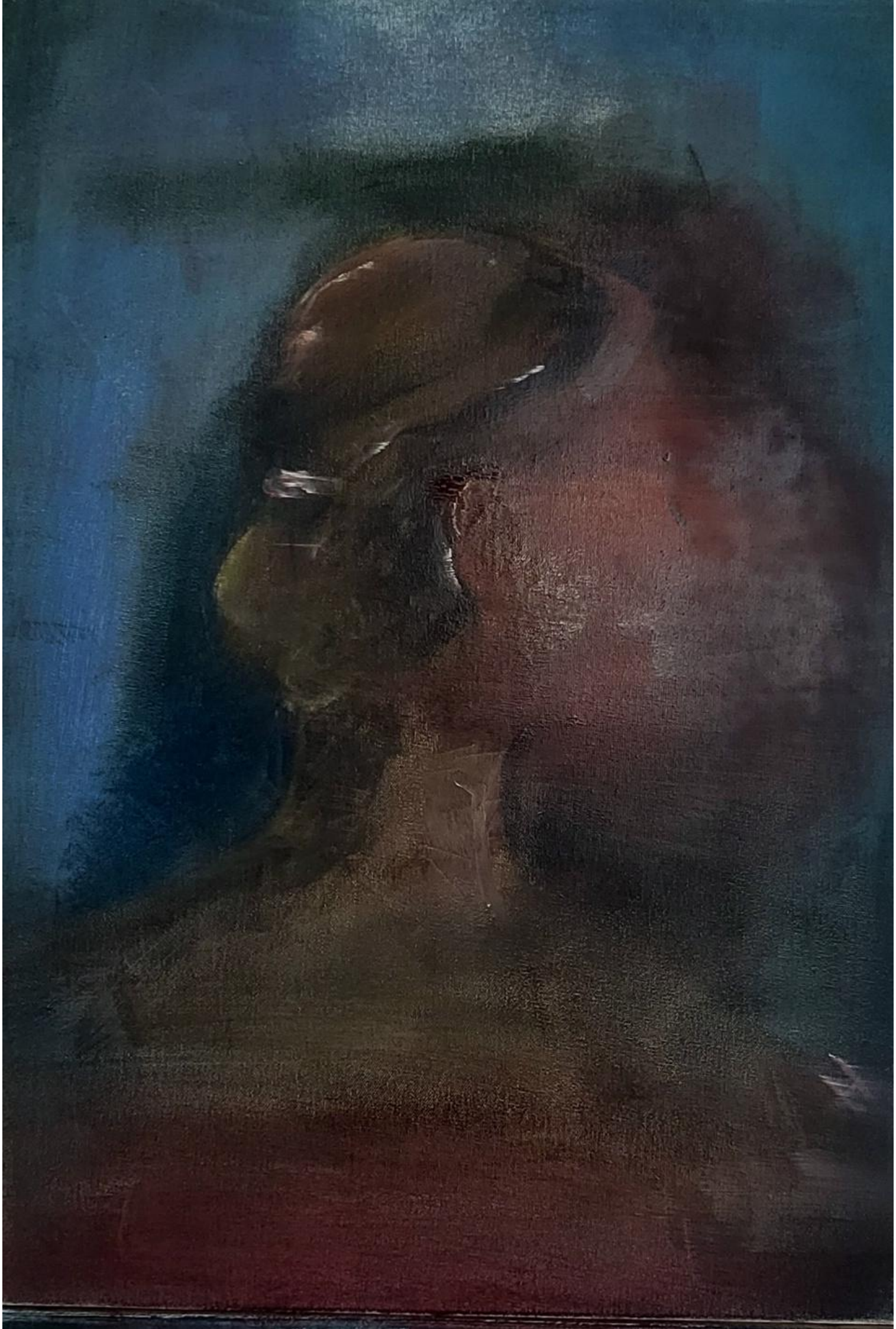
Visually, being tropical, light and color are embedded in the cultures of Asia and Latin America. With such searing light, strong shadows and vibrant colors, I see things in an almost graphical design sense. I break compositions down into graphic elements and shapes. Both locations are densely populated and congested. This can be both good and bad for a photographer. On the upside, there is always chaos and something to shoot, on the downside scenes can be too busy with too much clutter. It shapes how you frame images, what you include or leave out. It also shapes how you interact with people.

You say your photos are evidence that you were 'aware of a moment in time.' Do you see photography more as documentation or personal expression?

I don't see the difference, or perhaps they go hand in hand. As photographers we document what we see. I would say, for the most part we have no control over how a scene unfolds, unless of course we are interacting with the subject. What we do have control over is how we create the image, how we choose to express what we see through composition and framing, color and lighting. No matter how hard a photographer tries to simply document a scene, it will always be their personal expression of the scene.

Hande Uzun is a visual artist whose work explores the intersection of emotion, psychology, and perception. Based in Samsun, Turkey and originally from Tokat, Uzun has developed a refined practice in oil painting and charcoal drawing. Her artworks are known for their symbolic language and conceptual depth—often addressing themes such as freedom, inner conflict, identity, and the psychological effects of confinement. Exhibited internationally and featured on platforms like ARTMO, Uzun's pieces resonate with diverse audiences through their raw emotional power and intellectual nuance. Her creative journey is deeply informed by her academic interest in neuroscience and visual cognition, which fuels her curiosity about how art impacts the brain and evokes empathy across cultures. In addition to her studio work, she has contributed to visual design projects, including branding for Ay Cruise. Her interdisciplinary approach reflects a commitment to art as both a visual and psychological experience—one that bridges aesthetics with science, emotion, and social awareness, including themes related to gender equality and women's rights.

Hande Uzun | Look | 2025



Hande Uzun | Silence | 2025

KUKI GO (Rubén Alejandro Gómez)

Your journey began with two rolls of tape. Do you remember the very first piece you created—and what made you continue?

Yes, I remember it clearly. It was during a slow moment in my life, and I happened to have two rolls of tape on hand, one neon and one black. I started experimenting on my apartment wall, just playing with lines and contrast. That first piece wasn't anything grand, but it sparked something. The simplicity of tape as a material, combined with how immediate and graphic it could be, felt powerful. It wasn't planned or polished, it was pure improvisation. That freedom, the directness of the medium, and how quickly it transformed the space kept me going. From there, it moved to the streets. I realized I could take this accessible material and start conversations in public space. It became a way to draw people in, reshape their surroundings for a moment, and then vanish, like a visual interruption in their daily routine.

How has your background in graphic design and event production influenced your Tape Art installations?

It's influenced everything, honestly. Graphic design taught me how to work with composition, balance, and color in a clear, intentional way. I'm always thinking about how the eye moves through space, how lines guide attention, and how contrast can create depth or energy. That training really sharpened my visual instincts. Event production added a different layer. It gave me a sense of how people move through environments, how to build an experience, not just an image. I approach each tape installation like a temporary event. I think about flow, timing, and how people will encounter the work. The logistics, the improvisation under pressure, the quick setups, that all comes from the event world.
So in a way, my art is a mix of both: a visual composition that's also a live, in the moment experience.

Many of your works play with optical illusions and perspective. What role does geometry and spatial rhythm play in your artistic process?

Geometry is at the core of how I build my installations. I'm drawn to sharp lines, angles, and repetition because they create a kind of rhythm that feels alive when placed in public space. When you're working with tape, every decision is intentional, every line has weight and direction. I use that to trick the eye a little, to suggest depth where there isn't any, or to make flat surfaces feel like they're shifting.
Spatial rhythm comes from paying attention to the architecture and flow around me. I look at the cracks in the pavement, the corners of buildings, the way people walk

KUKI GO (Rubén Alejandro Gómez) | Kuki Go Winter Fest | 2020

through a space. That informs how I lay down the tape. I'm not just decorating, I'm responding to the environment, creating visual echoes or disruptions that interact with how people move and see. It's a kind of silent choreography between the space, the tape, and the viewer.

You've collaborated with many NYC-based organizations. How do these partnerships shape your creative vision?

These partnerships have pushed me to grow in ways I didn't expect. Working with city organizations means stepping outside of the studio mindset and thinking about community, accessibility, and real world impact. It's not just about making something that looks good, it's about creating something that fits a specific place, time, and purpose.
Each collaboration brings its own set of constraints, but I see that as part of the creative process. Whether it's working with the Department of Transportation on a plaza activation or being part of a neighborhood open street event, I'm always asking: Who is this for? How will people engage with it? Those questions shift my vision from being purely personal to something more collective. And honestly, it's in those public, unpredictable settings that the work comes alive. The partnerships keep me rooted in the city and remind me why I'm doing this, to make art that connects.

What does "tactical urbanism" mean to you personally—and how does it redefine the role of the artist in the public realm?

To me, tactical urbanism is about claiming space, even temporarily, and asking people to look at their surroundings differently. It's small-scale, low-cost, and fast, but it can change the way a street feels or functions, even just for a day. That immediacy resonates with my work. Tape is temporary too, but that doesn't make it less impactful. In fact, I think the ephemeral nature of it is what gives it energy.
As an artist, tactical urbanism shifts my role from creator to instigator. I'm not just making something to be looked at, I'm inserting something into a shared space and inviting people to interact, react, or reimagine what's possible there. It's art that lives in public, that responds to the city instead of sitting apart from it. That's the kind of work I want to keep doing, where creativity becomes a tool for presence, play, and public dialogue.

How do you choose the specific locations and surfaces for your tape installations?

Most of the time, the locations are designated by the client. I usually apply through open calls for artists, sometimes from city programs like the Department of Transportation or cultural organizations, and other times from storefronts, business improvement districts, or private commissions. So the site is often part of the brief, and I work within that context. That said, once I know the location, I still approach it with a street-level sensitivity. I walk the space, pay attention to how people move through it, how light hits the ground, where the cracks are. I look for ways the tape can respond to the architecture or surface, highlight what's already there, or create a sense of visual interruption. Even within those given parameters, there's a lot of room to make the space feel surprising and alive.

What reactions or interactions from the public have impacted you the most during a street installation?

The ones that stay with me are always the unexpected moments, like when a kid starts inventing their own games using the tape lines, turning the piece into something interactive and playful. Or the time a child looked at what I was doing and started using tape in a completely different way, crackling it to create curves and more realistic shapes. That shift in interpretation, especially from kids, is really powerful. They see things differently, and sometimes they show me a new possibility I hadn't even considered.
One of the most memorable moments was during an installation on Avenue B in NYC, where we taped a whole block. A kid who lived nearby spent the entire day with us, helping out, asking questions, and coming up with his own ideas. He was totally immersed. At the end of the day, he said it was the best day of his life. That kind of feedback is everything, to reminds me that this work, even when temporary, can leave a lasting impression.
I've also had people stop and ask questions, offer help, or just sit nearby and watch. One person told me they went home and started experimenting with tape themselves. It's those small exchanges that turn a public installation into a shared experience. The tape might only be there for a few hours, but the interaction, the connection, that's what really lasts.

Kerstin Kary is a visual artist who has often been inspired by music, song lyrics and concerts for various projects - be it costume design, textile printing or painting.
After completing a degree in costume design at HAW Hamburg, she studied fine art at Massey University in Wellington, New Zealand, specialising in painting.

Music runs like a common thread through various projects. For the series all you pretty gigs, the artist records every concert she attends in drawings. This has led to collaborations with Berlin bands such as Wichswut and Depeche Mode.
The artist also explores the painted world of nocturnal animals in her Nachtgestalten series. For #wyawftmtdewylsg, she draws from popular culture, social media and the daily news, while All the Boos you ever wanted stems from the desire to hide from a world where visibility is everything.
The artist also repeatedly takes on current topics. Like for the series Who's afraid of Reading Girls (2018). The series is dedicated to 110 Nigerian schoolgirls who were abducted by Bodo Haram in early 2018.
Kary lives and works in Berlin.

Project Statement
Girls Will Be Girls - portraits of punk

A portrait series of women who shaped punk and beyond.

I started the series in 2017, out of anger. I was disappointed by the little progress, by myself for thinking we were further, by people in my bubble probably mostly considering themselves even feminists and not even realising how they are part of the problem. Supporting women rights isn't just letting them do what they want while sitting on the sofa, it means actively supporting them like get your ass up and think about the differences for real.
With the portraits, I want people to see them as I do -as strong and courageous. They are not just musicians, they changed the world for us.

Kerstin Kary | Siouxsie mask | 2024

Kerstin Kary | Siouxie Justine GWBG | 2024

Geraldine Leahy

What initially drew you to focus on the coastal landscape and environmental themes in your work?

I initially worked as a primary teacher and I always particularly enjoyed teaching (and learning) about the natural world. Much later I returned to education to study for a degree in art. In the earlier stages of my studies, I found myself drawn to depicting landscapes and natural, organic forms. I was also very interested in ideas around palimpsests, both in historical/archaeological terms and also as a technique in contemporary art. When I had to work on a parallel project of my own choosing, I decided to investigate one of my local beaches where several severe weather events had resulted in a significant loss of sand dunes due to coastal erosion. Working with this subject, I could incorporate both my interest in the natural world and that of palimpsestic notions of layering, erasing, concealing and revealing.
Then, in the final two years of my degree, I returned to this subject for my Major Project. Regular visits to the beach revealed a surfeit of natural and manmade debris, resulting from the subsidence of both the sand dunes and several coastal dwellings. I was intrigued by how these materials were entangled, sometimes to the point where it was difficult to differentiate between them. Having read Jane Bennett's Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things (2010), I realised that this debris possessed a kind of energy - a vibrancy that can inform both the artist and the viewer about the catastrophic state of much of the coastal environment. I was inspired to harness this vitality in my work.

Geraldine Leahy | Plastic Dispersion | 2024

Can you describe your process of collecting materials from the shoreline? Are there any specific criteria you use when choosing what to include?

When visiting the beach, I look out for materials that are suitable for monoprinting. These have to be fairly small and flat, so lengths of plastic and rope are particularly suitable and are (unfortunately, in environmental terms) extremely plentiful. I mostly collect manmade debris, but occasionally will pick up natural items such as small amounts of detached dune grasses or seaweeds that are lying around, making sure not to pull anything out of the fragile sand dunes.
While it is not possible to monoprint larger objects, I nevertheless record them in photographs and drawings. These larger materials also have an influence on my work, even though I am not using them directly in the creation of the paintings. Recalling Jane Bennett's ideas about the dynamic force that is inherent in ordinary objects, (Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things (2010), I regard these larger items as vibrant materials that exist on the sand, a constant reminder of the damage that has been done to the environment. These materials are in a continual state of flux at the mercy of the weather and will no doubt have shifted or disappeared when I next visit the beach, so it is important to record them when they are there.

Your paintings blend monoprinting with acrylic and

Geraldine Leahy | Landscape Formed By Plastic | 2023

gouache – what role does layering play in your work both visually and conceptually?

Both layering and erasing are very important in my work. The initial layer usually consists of a neutral coat of paint, often applied with a roller and with patches partially erased. Erasure is important because it signifies the wearing away of the coastline due to erosion. The monoprint comes next, where I visually embed pieces of debris, such as strands of plastic, into the painting surface. I like the unpredictability of this layer because it represents the precarious state of the environment, where things happen that we can't always exactly predict, understand or know how to respond to. Subsequent layers in acrylic and gouache involve my responses to these initial layers, where I decide what aspects of the painting to develop, what to erase or hide and what to reveal.
So, visually, the layering recreates a sense of the entrenching of the entangled materials in the sand and the erasing signifies the wearing away of the dunes, sometimes resulting in the emergence of other deeply embedded debris. Conceptually, the technique represents mankind's continual onslaught on the environment, where human-induced climate change is adversely affecting our coastline.

Many of your forms appear abstract but evoke manmade debris. How do you navigate the balance between abstraction and environmental commentary?

My found materials possess the ability to mutate into interesting forms. Throughout the monoprinting and painting processes, manmade items adopt natural characteristics. This mutation seems to me to be a confirmation of the entanglement of natural and manmade materials and is an indication of the disastrous effect mankind has had on the coastal environment.
All abstract art invites close examination and analysis. The viewer looks for meaning in the title of the piece or in the context, forms, textures and colours. For example, one of my paintings is titled, Manufactured Seahorse (Found Rope). While not a completely straightforward statement, this is nevertheless a helpful clue as to what the piece is about. In terms of the context of the painting, the environment and climate change will hopefully come to mind. So it is possible to produce abstract art that can effectively comment on environmental concerns. By producing art that is attractive and intriguing, I hope to entice the viewer to really want to look at each piece and discover the meaning and intention behind it.

What has been the most striking or disturbing item you've found on the beach and how did it influence your work?

On one of my earlier visits to the beach I came across an unusual sight – a large piece of corroded metal shaped like a creature's clenched jaw, entangled with a discarded orange knitted garment and fragments of seaweed. It looked like a strange sea creature lying on the sand. I was fascinated by both the entanglement and the mutability of these materials, which had transformed from ordinary objects into what seemed like a sinister portent of environmental disaster. This same sense of accidental mutability exists in my paintings, where manmade debris often adopts organic characteristics throughout the monoprinting and painting processes.

How do you see your work functioning within the conversation around climate change and ecological awareness?

There are a great many artists today who have become activists for our endangered planet. They are highlighting various aspects of the problems we face, from rising sea levels to the proliferation of plastic in our rivers and oceans. Their approaches are varied, and the work they produce can range from the visually beautiful (e.g., Ellen Alt's (b.1954) depictions of melting glacial ice) to utterly shocking (e.g., Chris Jordan's (b.1963) photographs of albatrosses who have died from ingesting plastics).
Not every viewer wants to look at provocative artwork. Some might even be discouraged completely from engaging with work that is ugly or unpleasant. For this reason, I take a subtle approach to highlighting environmental concerns. By creating intriguing, often attractive pieces, I aim to entice the viewer into a deeper reflection of their place in the natural world. The viewer has to look carefully to see what is going on in my work, reflecting on both the title and the appearance of each piece. I hope that the time they spend doing this will encourage them to become more ecologically aware and to consider how they might change their behaviour in favour of the environment. Awareness and understanding of the problem have to come first, and then, hopefully, action.

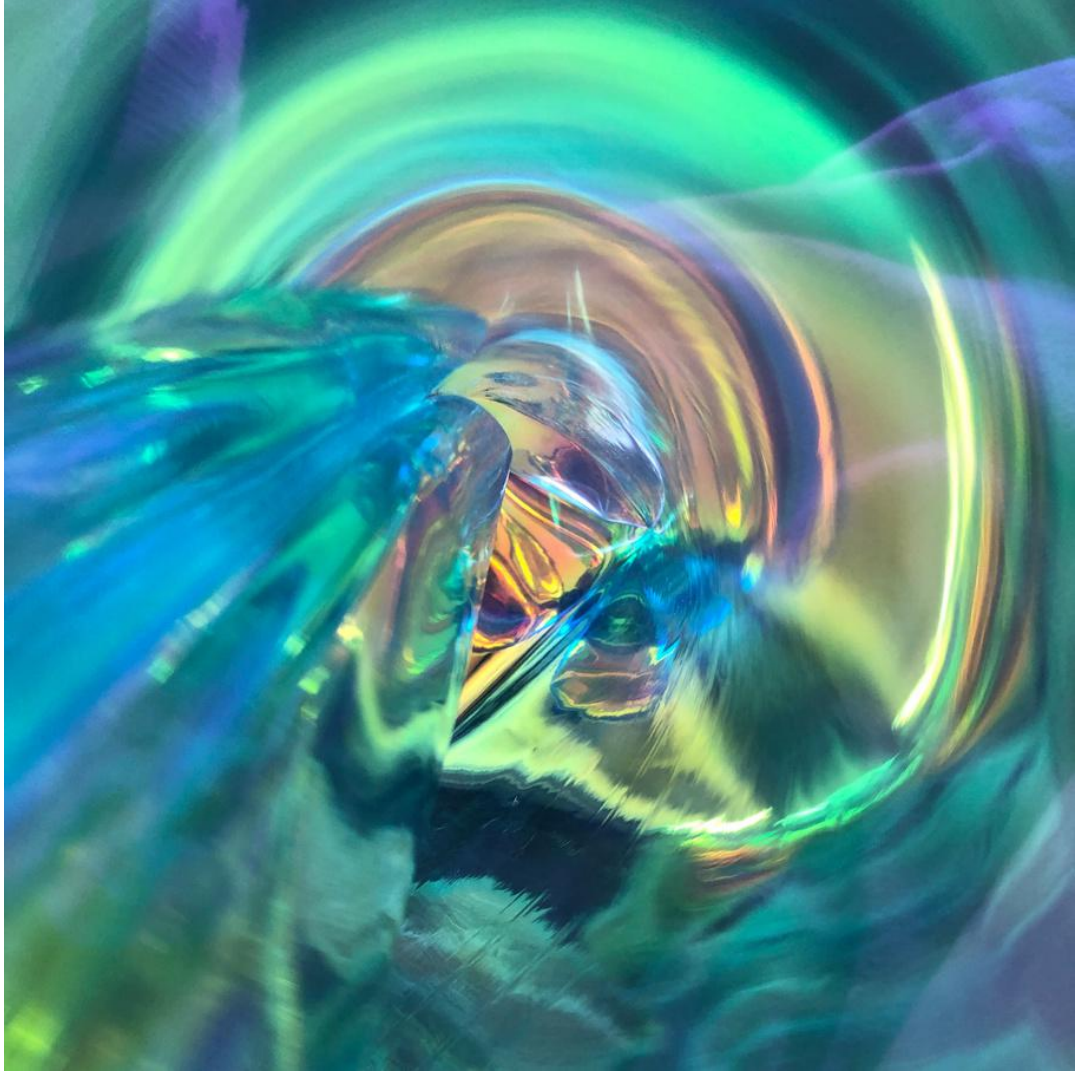
How important is it for you that viewers understand the environmental urgency behind your work?

At this critical moment in time, it is essential that we all work together for a more sustainable world. Therefore, it is very important for me that viewers come to an understanding of what my work is about. My subtle, abstract approach means that they might have to work a bit harder to understand the paintings. However, I hope that the attractiveness of the work will entice viewers to give the paintings the time they need to reveal themselves and will also remind them that our world is a beautiful place that needs our care and attention. Hopefully, then, viewers will come to an understanding of what the work is about and turn awareness into action.

Maxi Tabea
Maxi Tabea is a Berlin-based artist working with photography and light. She holds degrees in Spatial Strategies and Architectural Lighting Design, where she first began exploring how light can transform spaces and emotional perception. This fascination continues to shape her practice. Her photographic works explore the transient nature of light and its atmospheric impact. Through analog techniques, she captures unrepeatable light phenomena formed through nuances in brightness, color and the interaction of light with surfaces and space - without any digital manipulation. Her images evoke quiet, poetic spaces that invite individual interpretation. Maxi Tabea's works have been shown in exhibitions, installations and live performance settings. She currently lives and works in Berlin.

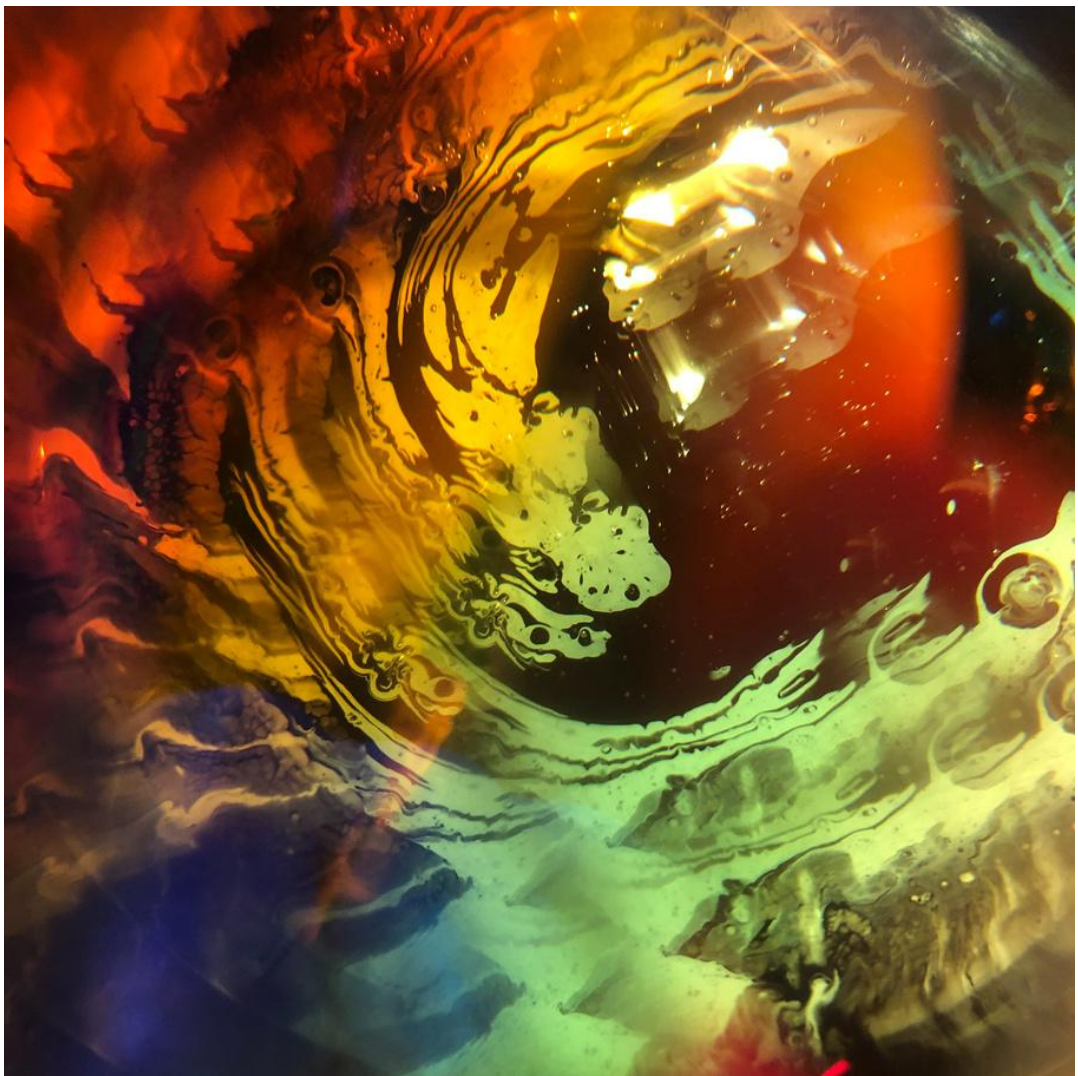
Project Statement
Maxi Tabea - Atmospheric Light Photography In my artistic work, I explore the medium of light in all its facets and atmospheric effects. By combining light sources, colors, and materials, I create abstract, mood-driven scenarios. I experiment with reflection, refraction and scattering of natural and artificial to reveal its dynamic, living nature. These fleeting, unique light moments are captured with my camera – without any digital editing. The techniques behind my images remain invisible to the viewer. Instead, the ephemeral quality of light and its emotional impact take center stage, opening up space for personal interpretation and individual visions. Light is more than just a design element. It shapes space, creates atmosphere, and influences how we feel and perceive. Often overlooked in daily life, it quietly shapes our experience. With my work, I aim to make the essential power and subtle aesthetic of light visible.

Maxi Tabea | Abalone | 2024



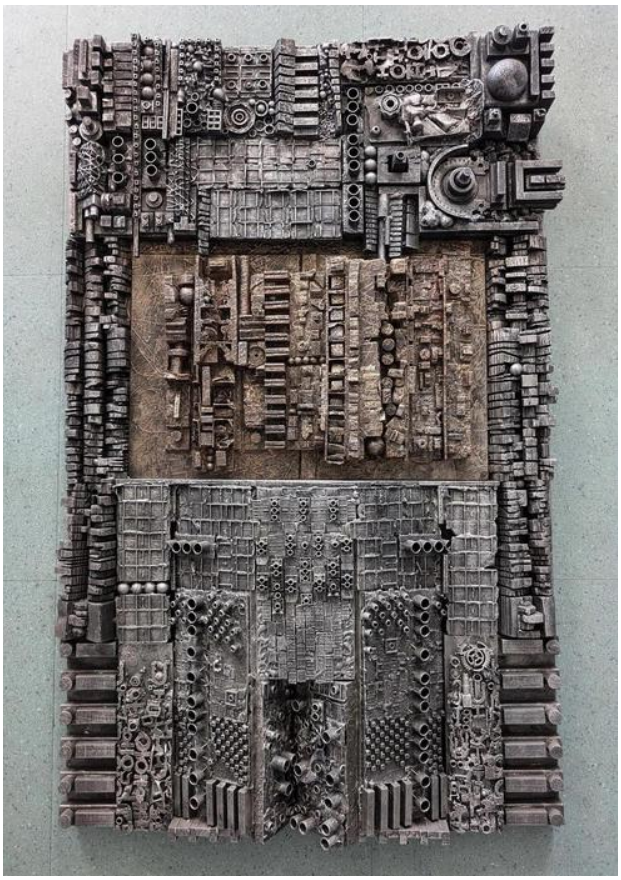
Maxi Tabea | Alcedo | 2022

Maxi Tabea | Lizard | 2022



— *Interview*

Damien Berdichevsky



You describe your work as a "dialog with materials." Can you elaborate on what this dialogue feels like during your creative process?

Materials and media are entities, so this dialogue with materials consist of being receptive to any sort of possibles and odds and ends, then the real action begins. It is very possible to associate sections of the work to other parts, from another times, constructions and deconstruction, even destructions, welcome the accidental, the chance and the involuntary.
From moving things around like taking paint out of a tube, place it on the canvas and move it around with a brush or any other device to moving heavier objects. This are movements but also gestures.
Free thinking or free association, all that occurs in my mind, related or not to the moment of working, For instance, contrasts of forms, colors textures, sounds, emotions, and contradictory ideas, antagonist forces coming together.
I think of me as an abstract expressionist, or abstract lyricist, I don't need to go after any subject that is external; a whole infinite universe is inside of ourselves. This is very exciting but also terrifying because by choosing this way of working we are confronting the unknown all the time. This interaction with materials is pure dialogue, and as such, many time we don't quite understand it.

How do you decide when a piece is finished—especially if your process is improvisational and non-conceptual?

I think a work is finished when what you have created radiates such a presence that seems like it always existed; even before it was created.

Many of your works seem to explore texture and form deeply. What role does tactility play in your artistic process?

In most of my work, either of image, volume and mass or sound and lyricism the roll that the tactile plays is dominant, it establish character and presence, and spirit, or mood. For me basically the most important qualities that brings a work to life.

Can you talk about your attraction to found objects? Is there a moment of recognition when you know an object belongs in your work?

Yes, there is indeed a moment of recognition, it is a form of insight. It is very exciting because it is a surprising appearance. It feels like the thing was waiting for you. Something destined to meet you. But also could be that you find something that will bring great effort and struggle because the point is to make it disappear onto itself in order to create something that was always there but unseen. You make it visible and tactile by a slow and intense process.

Your life spans several cultures—Argentina, Brazil, the U.S.—do you feel these geographies influence your aesthetics unconsciously?

Most of my influences comes from memories of childhood, or dreams, objects and landscapes I see in dreams, but again, everything is very abstract, tactile, very sensorial, sensual, haunting. I don't see how my work of painting, sculpture or music represent any culture in particular but rather a form of the same perception of the world that caught my attention as a child.

Things like sounds, textures, sensuality and the aural forces surrounding a certain thing, that is what for me makes something to be what it is.

What is the significance of silence or emptiness in your compositions?

Most of those silences and emptiness are either moments of reflection, pause and replenish or intentional gaps to connect with the spirit or the mood of the thing in question.

You deliberately avoid symbolism and meaning, yet viewers might still find narrative or emotion. How do you feel about people interpreting your work this way?

By avoiding symbolism and meaning I connect to the real. The real naturally rejects symbolism and any form of representation or conceptualization.
The real stands by itself. In our illusory world nothing is actually real because it is composed and signified by language, and language is a system of symbols used for description and for expressing desires. It is a infinite chain of things pointing to other things, they are meanings meaning other meanings, it never ends.
We are trapped in this loop of infinite signification, but that's language and that is cool because it allow us to communicate but it is also frustrating when we try to appeal to real feelings and emotions, words are not enough. It is only the real that stands by itself because it rejects symbols.
The real refuses to be represented. So by avoiding conceptualism I let the material, the energetic, to have a presence; this is my goal and through the process I make it happens. Think of the work of art of indigenous tribes or the abstraction of very young children. It seems so fantastic because it is real.
For me it is also a way to invoke the unconscious, the unnamed. The unnamed is real because it refuses to have a name, it demands to be experienced.

Alice Ricchini is a visual artist and sociologist, born in Omegna and currently based in Genoa, Italy. She studied painting at the Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti in Genoa and holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Verona. Combining visual language with sociological insight, her work moves between intimate evocation and a broader inquiry into collective experience. She is currently developing a painting-based research project on impermanence and transience, where the pictorial surface becomes a site of memory.

Project Statement
"Iconographies of impermanence" is a triptych that reflects on transience through the interplay between organic form and symbolic matter. White flowers, suspended in a timeless space, evoke both purity and vulnerability, fixing in place what is meant to vanish. The dense, tactile painting technique enhances the physicality of the gesture, turning the image into a surface of memory. The gold background, luminous and still, recalls the tradition of the icon and introduces a liturgical dimension that contrasts with the fragility of the floral form. The work becomes a threshold for silent contemplation, where gold is not mere background but a mental space: time halts, and the ephemeral is rendered eternal. In this apparent stillness, the viewer is invited to recognize the layered complexity of living and dying.

Alice Ricchini | Ephemeral I | 2025

Alice Ricchini | Ephemeral III | 2025

Alice Ricchini | Ephemeral II | 2025

Veronica McLaren

Your photography often captures solitary trees against vast landscapes. What draws you to this subject?

I would say that I am drawn to any subject that sparks my creativity. It just so happens that certain locations contain solitary trees with vast landscapes. An object, person, or landscape may have a certain appeal to me if it is in the right light, angle, etc. and can jumpstart that creative energy.

Veronica McLaren | Reflect

How do the locations you choose influence the emotional tone of your work?

Many of the locations I visit are cemeteries, graveyards, cultural, and historical institutions. My spouse is a public historian, so we visit these locations frequently. This may explain why some of my photography includes solitary trees against vast landscapes. All of these locations evoke a sense of reflection and nostalgia; I try to capture the environment in that fleeting moment which may never be recreated again.

Your images seem to blend realism with a quiet sense of poetry. How do you achieve this balance?

This is a tricky question to answer. I believe the locations I visit are part of the reason for this balance, given the emotions that they potentially evoke. It's also partially subjective - my perception of the location and surroundings and what it evokes in me influences how I capture the images and how I potentially edit it later on. In all of my images, I try to make a connection with viewers, stir emotions and contemplation, and shift perspectives.

What role does light and shadow play in your

Veronica McLaren | Conimicut Tree

creative process?

In my "Art of the 20th Century" undergraduate class (many years ago!), I learned about various art movements that piqued my interest, including German Expressionism, the Art Deco movement, and abstract expressionism. I also learned about the artistic technique of chiaroscuro, the dichotomy of light versus dark, which fascinated me. I was also introduced to the film Metropolis (1927) which solidified my love for Art Deco, German Expressionism, and chiaroscuro. Each one of these helped influence how light and shadow play into my creative process, creating a dramatic and visual effect or a form of distortion in some cases.

Can you share your typical process—from discovering a location to final editing?

The locations are chosen ahead of time, usually with the primary purpose of historical research. Once we are there, I will go off on my own to capture video and images, both for the historical research and for my own artistic purpose. I will use three methods to capture images - my mobile phone, my iPad, and an action camera. Once the images are captured, I will review the images for usability, and use a digital painting software to edit photographs as needed.

Is there a particular place or environment you return to repeatedly for inspiration?

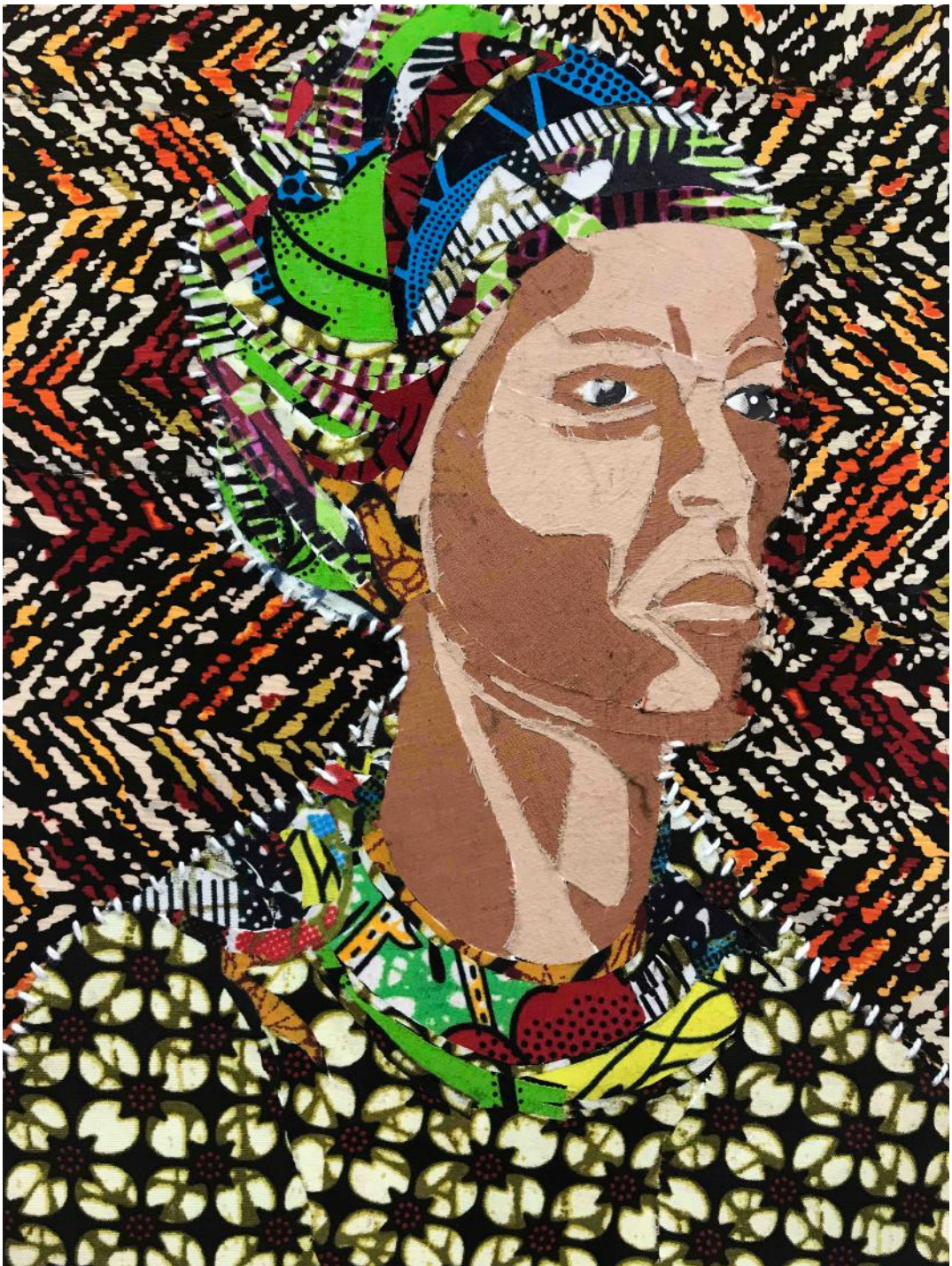
My favorite places for inspiration are Salem, Massachusetts and Benefit Street in Providence, Rhode Island. Another place that I know will be a favorite inspirational, recurring place that I recently visited is Essex, Connecticut.

How has your personal connection to nature shaped your artistic journey?

Since my early teenage years, I have always enjoyed the environment of wandering graveyards and cemeteries. This has only grown over the years as I learned and respected the historical and cultural significance of these points of interest, in addition to historical and cultural institutions that may be attached to them. It only seems reasonable to want to capture these locations and share my enjoyment with others.

Lawrence Kyere was born in Ghana, Akim Oda. He received his BFA in Fashion Design and Textile Education from the University of Education Winneba, Ghana in 2021. He moves to the United States of America in august 2023, where he is currently in his second year pursuing Master of Fine Art, studio arts in Textiles at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Kyere goal for graduate school is to become a fiber artist, who through his creations will foster a dialogue between the past and the present, Kyere works explore the connections of heritage, identity, and memory through the re-imagining of vintage studio portraiture, centering West African and African American subjects. Lawrence has exhibited most of his pieces in galleries and museums like, The Red Gate gallery in saint Louis USA, Missouri History Museum saint Louis USA, SIUE Noise box gallery USA, Facing Race National Conference in Missouri.

Project Statement
This body of work is an act of reclamation and reconnection. It honors the quiet power of everyday people whose legacies have been overlooked, while fostering a dialogue between past and present. Studio portraiture played a significant role in shaping the visual identity and narrative of West African and African Americans in the America, particularly during the 19th and 20th centuries. They utilized portraits to emphasize identity, document history, and challenge racist stereotypes. My work explores the connections of heritage, identity, and memory through vintage studio portraits, centering West African and African American subjects. By revisiting the aesthetics of early 20th-century studio photography, I seek to celebrate the dignity, style, and individuality of Black diaspora communities. Drawing inspiration from archival images, oral histories, and material cultures, I reconstruct staged studio scenes that blend historical respect with contemporary attitudes. Each piece employs thorough attention to detail including backdrops that evoke the decorative patterns of West African textiles, spiritual symbolism, indigenous hairstyles, an afro comb, which is a symbol of Black pride, the figures are painted to evoke different emotions through poses that reflect both the formality of traditional portraiture and the flexibility of contemporary Black expression.



Lawrence Kyere | Abolitionist | 2023

Lawrence Kyere | The Hidden Beauty

Samantha Cherotich Kirui

Growing up, I never felt I had the space to fully grow into my womanhood--nor did I know where my identity belonged. So, I chose to shrink. It felt easier to take up less space, to soften myself into silence. The more I did, the quieter my voice became.

Tradition was heavily enforced in my upbringing--traditions shaped by and for the patriarchy. When you're repeatedly told, in words and in practice, that your value is lesser because you're not a man, you start to believe it. I did. But even after internalizing that belief and living within its confines, I reached a breaking point. I asked myself: Did I do enough to be accepted into a system that was never built for me?

The answer to that question lives in my art.

She--my work--is feminine because she can be. Not as a sign of weakness, but as a declaration of power. She is bold. She does not dim her light to be palatable. She is the lamp on a table that lights up the room, the beacon on a hill seen from far and wide. The old lie was that there was no more room for her voice. But she stands anyway, strong and sovereign, grounded in unspoken feminine confidence.

You describe your creative process as emotional excavation. Can you walk us through how a piece typically begins for you?

Certainly. When I start a piece, I usually begin with uncertainty, but I always lay a strong foundation. I tone the canvas and draw a cross over it. That part is sacred to me. It's how I draw strength from my faith in Christ. It reminds me that whatever the outcome, all is well. That grounding allows me to let go.

I don't like to box myself into one idea too early. The original concept often shifts as I paint, which gives me space to explore and feel more deeply. Sometimes, I feel everything so

Your art speaks powerfully about identity and womanhood. How has your personal experience shaped the themes you explore?

Samantha Cherotich Kirui | Nairobi | 2023

clearly that the image almost paints itself. Other times, like when I lost a close friend, I felt nothing and everything all at once. That's when the abstract takes over--when words can't do the emotion justice. The canvas becomes a gallery to hold what I can't say out loud.
So, in that way, every piece becomes a kind of emotional excavation: digging through the mess of feeling until something honest comes to the surface.

You often work with found and unconventional materials. How do you choose them, and what do they symbolize for you?

Working with found and unconventional materials started out of necessity. I didn't always have access to canvas or traditional supplies, but I had what others overlooked: materials full of possibility. What some saw as waste, I saw as raw potential.
One of my favourite pieces was painted on a wooden panel that had long decayed. The artwork underneath was over 50 years old, faded, and worn by time. But instead of discarding it, I chose to work with it, to let its history live on through something new. That felt meaningful to me.
This way of working is something I've inherited, it runs in my family, the ability to give new life to what's been forgotten. Using found materials feels like an act of transformation. It's about seeing beauty where others might not, and trusting that anything can be made new again.

Your work feels both intimate and political. Do you see your art as a form of activism?

Yes, I do see my art as a form of activism, though not always in the traditional sense. For me, activism doesn't have to be loud or didactic, it can also be intimate, symbolic, and deeply personal. One of my paintings, Caught Red-Handed, explores society's hold on women's body image. It's a piece that visualizes how external expectations--whether through beauty standards, media, or cultural norms--can shape how women see and treat themselves.
While the work comes from a personal place, it inevitably speaks to broader issues about autonomy, shame, visibility, and control. That's where the political enters: in choosing to expose and question those systems through my practice. I think there's power in creating something that doesn't just reflect the world, but gently pushes back at it. So yes, my art is a form of activism, because it insists on presence, on beauty outside control, and on telling stories that might otherwise remain unspoken.

Many of your figures carry surreal or symbolic features, like glowing eyes or floral transformations. What role does symbolism play in your work?

Symbolism plays a huge role in my work. It allows me to communicate meaning visually, without overcrowding the piece with overly literal messages. For example, the painting with the floral transformation was inspired by the verse Isaiah 61:3 ... "to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes." The hands in that piece are covered in copper foil, symbolizing fire. Not just any fire, but one that can be destructive when held too long. Still, through God's grace, even the ashes become beauty. Like a phoenix, we rise; reborn, transformed.
Symbolism helps carry that weight. It leaves space for interpretation, while still holding intention. As for the glowing eyes--that one's simple. I paint the eyes based on my mood. Sometimes soft, sometimes fierce. But always honest.

As a self-taught artist, how have you found your voice outside traditional academic frameworks?

Being self-taught has given me the freedom to explore without limitations. I never had to follow a specific style or method, so I've been able to find my own way through experimenting, making mistakes, and figuring things out as I go. I actually studied industrial and mechanical engineering at university, so I'm familiar with academic structure just not in art. From that, I learned how to build systems, how to stay disciplined, and how to problem-solve, and I apply that to how I work creatively.
Finding my voice has been a process of trial and error. Every piece teaches me something new--whether it's a technical skill, how to be more patient, or how to trust myself more. And over time, that learning builds confidence. The more confident I've become, the more clearly my voice shows up in the work.

You speak about tradition and rebellion coexisting in your work. How do you balance these forces?

I believe that in order to preserve tradition, you sometimes have to rebel against the parts of it that caused harm. It's a process of unlearning, letting go of what no longer serves you in order to protect what still holds meaning. There's so much I love about tradition. But if I had followed every rule exactly as my culture expected, I wouldn't be who I am today.
For me, tradition and rebellion can coexist. Not because I want to reshape tradition, but because I want to carry it forward with clarity--honouring the beauty in it, while refusing to inherit the parts that diminish me.

Samantha Cherotich Kirui | You Can Touch My Hair | 2024

Karpocheva Julia

What are my works and my art about? My paintings are a true fairy tale. I'm not afraid to experiment with techniques, executions, and subjects, because feelings and vision can be conveyed in any way - the main thing is to have imagination and determination. I'm inspired by our surrounding world - we don't notice so much in everyday life, yet beauty is right in front of us. The surrounding world is not only an inspiration, but also a source of references for new subjects and motifs. What makes my paintings unique? I'll leave this question open and suggest you find the answer in my works.RetryClaude can make mistakes. Please double-check responses.

Karpocheva Julia | A Surgeon's Routine | 2025

Karpocheva Julia | Spring Tale | 2025

Gerline Fourie

I've always been fascinated by how the body functions, how intricate, fragile, and mysterious it is. When I began studying art, I realized that the visual language of medical illustration offered a way to express that fascination with precision and intimacy. It wasn't just about anatomy; it was about the body as a site of meaning, memory, and sometimes discomfort. Merging fine art with medical illustration allows me to explore these themes in a deeply personal and material way.

Your work merges fine art with medical illustration. What initially drew you to this intersection?

Gerline Fourie | Eyebrooch | 2025

How did your early experiences with anatomy influence your visual language today?

I grew up in a family of hunters, so I was exposed to anatomy in a very raw, physical way from an early age. I remember being both disturbed and fascinated by the process of skinning or cleaning an animal, how you could peel back the surface and suddenly see the inner structures that made life possible. It wasn't clinical, it was messy, immediate, and very real. That shaped how I think about the body today, not just as a biological system but as something intimate and fragile. I was also exposed to the Body Worlds exhibitions in high school, where there was this exciting mix of science and spectacle. You'd see preserved organs, taxidermy, anatomical models, objects are meant to teach, but that also carried a certain theatricality. All of that filtered into my visual language: a mix of curiosity, reverence, and an impulse to look closer, even when it feels uncomfortable.

Your use of repeated eye imagery is striking. What emotional or symbolic resonance do eyes hold for you?

The symbolism is quite literal for me. The eye represents learning, seeing, and understanding; especially as someone who learns visually. In art

Gerline Fourie | Framed Eye | 2025

school, so much of my education came from watching: watching demos, watching how materials behave, watching others work. The eye, as a motif, becomes a stand-in for that process. It's about perception, but also surveillance, vulnerability, and the tension between being the observer and the observed.

In pieces like My Monocle and Framed Eye, there's a mix of beauty and discomfort. Do you aim to provoke a visceral reaction in the viewer?

Yes, absolutely. I think beauty and discomfort are deeply connected, they often coexist in ways that are hard to untangle. There's something compelling about that tension, something you can't look away from. I crave that same response in my own work. Even if the viewer doesn't understand it or necessarily enjoy it, I want them to feel something in their gut. I want the work to linger, to haunt a little.

How do you choose which materials—ceramics, embroidery, metal—to use for a specific piece?

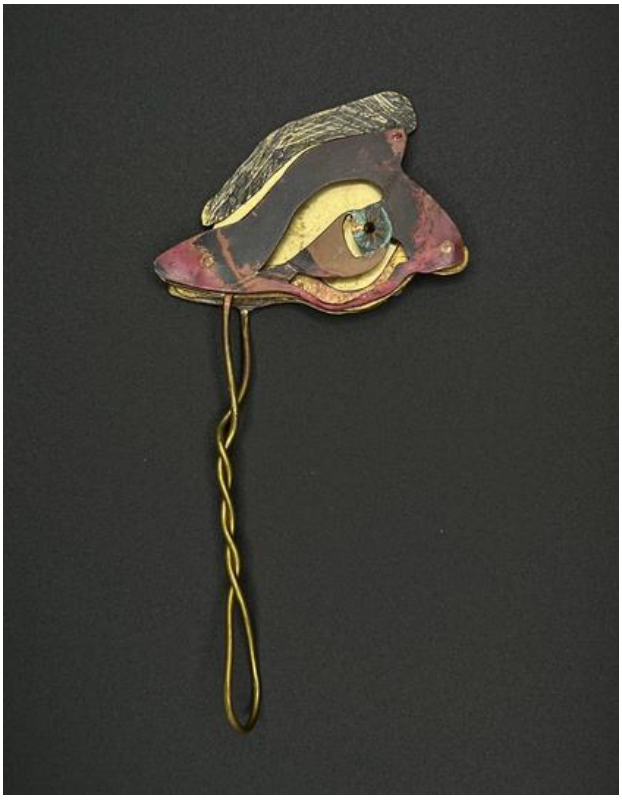
Honestly, I feel like the piece chooses the material. Once I find a reference image (usually from a medical or anatomical textbooks) it almost speaks to me. It asks to be transformed, to exist beyond the page. Sometimes it wants the delicacy of thread, the weight of clay, or the cold sharpness of metal. Studio access also plays a role asduring undergrad I was fortunate to work in spaces that allowed me to experiment widely. That access deeply shaped the way I think about materiality.

What do you see as the main challenge in positioning educational or utilitarian imagery within the realm of fine art?

The main challenge is perception, people often separate "useful" images from "expressive" ones. Medical illustrations are traditionally seen as functional, not emotional or interpretive. But I see immense potential in recontextualizing that kind of imagery, taking something meant to explain and turning it into something that evokes. It's about expanding the boundaries of what fine art can be, and who gets to decide that.

Your process involves repetition and obsessive detail. What drives this approach?

I think it starts with the materials, I get completely hooked. Once I learn how to manipulate a medium I enjoy, I want to keep pushing it, keep seeing what else it can do. That repetitive, almost meditative process mirrors how I engage with anatomy: the more I study, the more I realize how little I know. The human body offers endless complexity, and repetition becomes a way to both understand it and honor it.



Gerline Fourie | My Monocle | 2025

Fran Weinberg

Is it possible to revisit the same themes, explore the same questions, or use the same language time and again? Each piece, each exploration, becomes a vital part of a larger mosaic — meaningful only when viewed in perspective. What unites all my works, what transforms single voices into a choir, is simply myself and my evolving interests. Memory, personal stories, language, identity, history, and the connection to place are the most prominent threads running through my practice. The compass guiding my creative journey is always in motion: time feels fluid, space knows no boundaries, and people are never truly islands.

Berlin-based multidisciplinary artist, born and raised in the shadow of Italy's Apennine mountains. Political scientist by training, art lover in all its forms and explorer by vocation. You can find me hiking in the woods, on a train winding through Central and Eastern Europe, attending a whirling workshop or at a talk about magic realism or Arabic music. These are just a few of the many identities that shape who I am. Fran Weinberg.

Project Statement

It could be a place you visited for the very first time, one connected to your past, or even somewhere you return to regularly. Yet, all these places share something in common: they hold a fleeting glimpse of happiness. It's as if this emotion could be externalized and anchored in a physical location. Devoid of negative associations, these are the places where you might imagine yourself, at last, truly "at home."

Elements from real cities — drawn from a personal archive of printed maps and vivid memories — are blended together into an imaginary map. These fragments are rearranged on paper, forming a new geography that is both random and deeply emotional. Ultimately, these envisioned landscapes are first and foremost representations of inner spaces.

Fran Weinberg | Life is Elsewhere I | 2018

Jayden Fallis

Jayden Fallis | Garden | 2025

Your work often includes symbolic and surreal elements. What role does symbolism play in your creative process?

Symbolism plays a big role in my process. I enjoy creating a story or narrative in my paintings and symbolism is a tool for creating a mood or moment. It is a universal language but yet our personal experiences change the implications of an object or animal.

Jayden Fallis | Lunch | 2025

You mentioned that your art explores human relationships and connection. Can you share a personal experience that inspired one of your pieces?

The Sound of Clementine is a piece I made about music. I am a drummer so I made this to incapsulate the feeling of playing in a band and creating or learning a song. Every person having their own weight in the project, choosing to work together to create something feels magical.

How do you choose the visual metaphors you use —like food, limbs, or natural elements?

My art usually starts off as a poem I have written or something I have read and the ideas sprout from there. I often write about memories or the relationship between my physical body and nature and how it nurtures me through food and many other ways.

Several of your works feature disjointed or floating body parts. What do these fragmented forms represent for you?

I think it stems from me being indecisive. I struggled with changing my idea constantly and then I decided I

Jayden Fallis | Sound Of Citrus | 2024

did not have to finish painting the figure if I want to move on to something else. This resulted into a style a I really like, I think it resembles dimensions or a place between consciousness and unconsciousness.

What does your painting process look like? Do you plan your compositions in detail or allow spontaneity?

Most of my ideas for compositions come to me as I am falling asleep so I keep a book in my bed that I scribble in to then refine in the morning. Once I start painting though the composition usually changes, the more I look at it I think of new ideas.

Your work often balances tenderness with discomfort. Is this contrast intentional?

It begun unconsciously but I have recently started to nurture that part of my art style. I enjoy the Alice in Wonderland type of energy that it has. Since a lot of my art is inspired by memories I think that contrast between tenderness and discomfort happens naturally in life, so it only makes sense that it translates onto the canvas.

Who are some artists or movements that influence your practice?

Some visual artists that I love are Rae Klein and of course Frida Kahlo. Rae Klein balances space and detail so well, I admire her use of colour and texture really one of the best artists of our time. Frida Kahlo mastered surrealism in a way that I do not believe can be recreated, her art is so poetic which I aspire to obtain. As for writers who inspire me, Toni Morrison writes so beautifully and creates such complex stories that fascinate me.

Gosia Koniniec
My name is Gosia, I'm from Poland, I'm 24 years old, and I’m a graphic artist. I’m self-taught, and my journey with graphic design began during my art studies, which I had to interrupt for personal reasons. However, art stayed with me, and I started developing my passion by exploring and eventually finding my own style. I create graphics in Photoshop, layering and playing with textures to produce psychedelic images meant to evoke unease—yet the longer you look, the more intriguing they become. My work is characterized by vibrant colors, psychedelia, and attention to detail. I’ve had an exhibition in Kraków and have taken part in several collaborations featuring my artwork.

Gosia Koniniec | Monkey girl


COSIA KONINIEC

Jiaqi Pan

You emphasize collaboration over traditional portraiture. Can you describe how you guide or share authorship with your subjects?

Collaborative portraiture differs from traditional portraiture in that the outcome is unknown from the very beginning. Each time I approach a stranger and ask if they're willing to be photographed and open to becoming part of an art project, I'm already engaging in a kind of creative risk. It may sound simple, but it's actually quite difficult, because a refusal often means the mental image I had already begun constructing instantly collapses. But when someone says yes, I know that a certain degree of authorship shifts back to me as the photographer.

Jiaqi Pan | Easy Job, It'S Ok, Ok For Now

My requests are minimal: I ask the subject to assume a relaxed posture, ideally in a space they're familiar with, and to maintain a neutral expression, which is referred to as "deadpan photography." I've noticed that even those who seem assertive or performative when I first approach them tend to withdraw those traits, consciously or unconsciously, in front of the camera. No one has ever said something like, "I think I'd look better this way," or "Can you shoot me from this angle?" There seems to be an unspoken agreement that they are handing over control to me.
This dynamic is also what prompted another project of mine, 27, where I intentionally reversed the roles. I became the subject, and invited strangers to draw my portrait. In that context, I relinquished control entirely as they decided how I looked, what posture I had, how I would be represented. So, whether I'm directing the process or giving up all authorship, my practice tends to move in one clear direction at a time. It's never about compromise, it's about the clarity of authorship, whether claimed or surrendered.

Many of your photographs explore themes of gender, race, and class. How do you approach these topics visually and conceptually?

Thank you for the thoughtful observation. My work does engage with themes of gender, race, and class, but I don't approach these subjects with the intent to "speak out" or define anything through imagery.

Jiaqi Pan | Arby S, Birmingham

Rather than expressing a position, I'm more interested in how structural forces quietly manifest in everyday life, especially in environments that are often overlooked.

For example, in my Drive-Thru series, which I photographed in Southern U.S. cities, I noticed that the vast majority of workers I encountered at drive-thru windows were low-income African American women. This wasn't a coincidence, nor was it something I deliberately sought out. Their presence wasn't staged or symbolic, it simply reflected a reality shaped by structural inequality. It's a reality that's been there so long, and is so normalized, that people have stopped noticing it.

Visually, I work with a restrained, non-invasive camera language. I avoid emotional cues and theatrical framing. The subjects look directly into the camera, unembellished and uncommodified. The image isn't meant to provide answers, but to function as a space of questioning. I want viewers to confront the subtle tensions and invisible forces that shape what they see.

How do you maintain the balance between emotional distance and intimacy when working with your subjects?

I do think carefully about how to maintain a balance between emotional distance and intimacy when working with my subjects. It's a delicate line, and once it is crossed, it can compromise the core principles that guide my practice.

Before the shoot, I avoid unnecessary small talk. I've always believed that photography is a purposeful act, and too much casual conversation can dilute both professionalism and sincerity. I don't aim to become friends with my subjects, nor do I actively seek to learn their personal stories. What I aim to capture is a state of presence rather than a narrative or an explanation. This approach tends to create a quiet sense of trust while also establishing a clear boundary between us. Of course, that trust doesn't appear out of nowhere. I take care to explain each project in detail and respond to any concerns they may have. For example, when I was working on the Drive-Thru series, the question I got most often was, "Are you a journalist? Will this be published in a newspaper? Will you write something bad about me?" I completely understood their hesitation, especially considering that we had only just met. But in those few minutes of interaction, there has to be a form of intimacy, one that allows them to feel safe, to let their guard down. It's a very brief but carefully held equilibrium.

During the shoot, I'm also intentional about avoiding overly emotional visual strategies, such as dramatic lighting or extreme close-ups. I tend to favor restrained, stable compositions that present the subject in a calm, neutral space. This helps prevent my own emotions from interfering with the image and gives the viewer more space to construct their own emotional relationship with the work.

Your "Drive-Thru" series and "Temporary Family" series reflect different types of relationships and spaces. How do these settings inform your exploration of identity?

My projects Drive-Thru and Temporary Family reflect two very different kinds of spaces and relationships, and together they have shaped how I think about the construction of identity.

Drive-Thru was created in a public space where the subjects are in a position of being observed. The individuals I photographed, mostly African American women working low-wage jobs at drive-thru windows, occupy roles that are shaped by race, gender, and class. The window frames not only serve as a physical boundary but also as a metaphorical one, highlighting how social structures can enclose and define individuals. In this project, identity appears as something assigned from the outside, dictated by systems and environments beyond one's control.

In contrast, Temporary Family marked the first time I stepped out of the role of observer and entered the private sphere, building intimate, imagined

Jiaqi Pan | 27 Series

relationships with strangers. I invited families to adopt me as a temporary family member, to name me, and to create a fictional identity for me within their household. Although the identity they gave me was entirely constructed, through the act of photography it acquired a sense of reality, as if it had existed. This experience made me more aware that identity isn't just imposed; it can also be negotiated, performed, and imagined within relationships and through images.
Together, these two projects reflect the dual nature of identity in my work: on one hand, how it is shaped and constrained by external structures, and on the other, how it can be fluid, relational, and co-created.

What role does repetition or seriality play in your work, particularly in series where subjects appear in similar poses or compositions?

Repetition and seriality play a central role in my work, not to create visual uniformity, but to establish a structural mode of seeing.
In most of my projects, each subject appears in a similar pose and composition. However, this formal repetition serves to highlight subtle differences, such as gestures of tension or ease, nuances in facial expression, details in clothing, or the degree of spatial confinement. The uniformity in form does not erase individuality; rather, it draws attention to each subject's specificity and implicitly raises a question: why does the same demographic appear in these frames again and again? What structural forces are at work behind this repetition?
At the same time, repetition functions as a conceptual strategy that challenges the traditional aesthetics of the "decisive moment" in photography. I'm not interested in capturing emotional peaks or narrative climaxes. Instead, I prefer a systematic, restrained visual language that invites viewers to look across images, not just into them, encouraging them to think relationally, to compare, and to ask questions.
This approach is, in some ways, reminiscent of the typological method employed by Bernd and Hilla Becher, who used repetition to reveal formal structures and regional variation. What might seem mundane at first became a field of difference. While their subjects were water towers and factories, mine are individuals whose bodies and expressions register the pressures of social systems. If the Bechers' typologies were about mapping the structural evolution of objects, my work asks how structural forces act upon people. I used a similar visual discipline to create a kind of taxonomy, one that reveals human complexity, constraint, and resilience within frames that may appear uniform at first glance.

How do you select your subjects, and what qualities make you feel a connection or curiosity toward someone?

For me, it's a process of mutual selection. I don't choose my subjects because they are "attractive" or

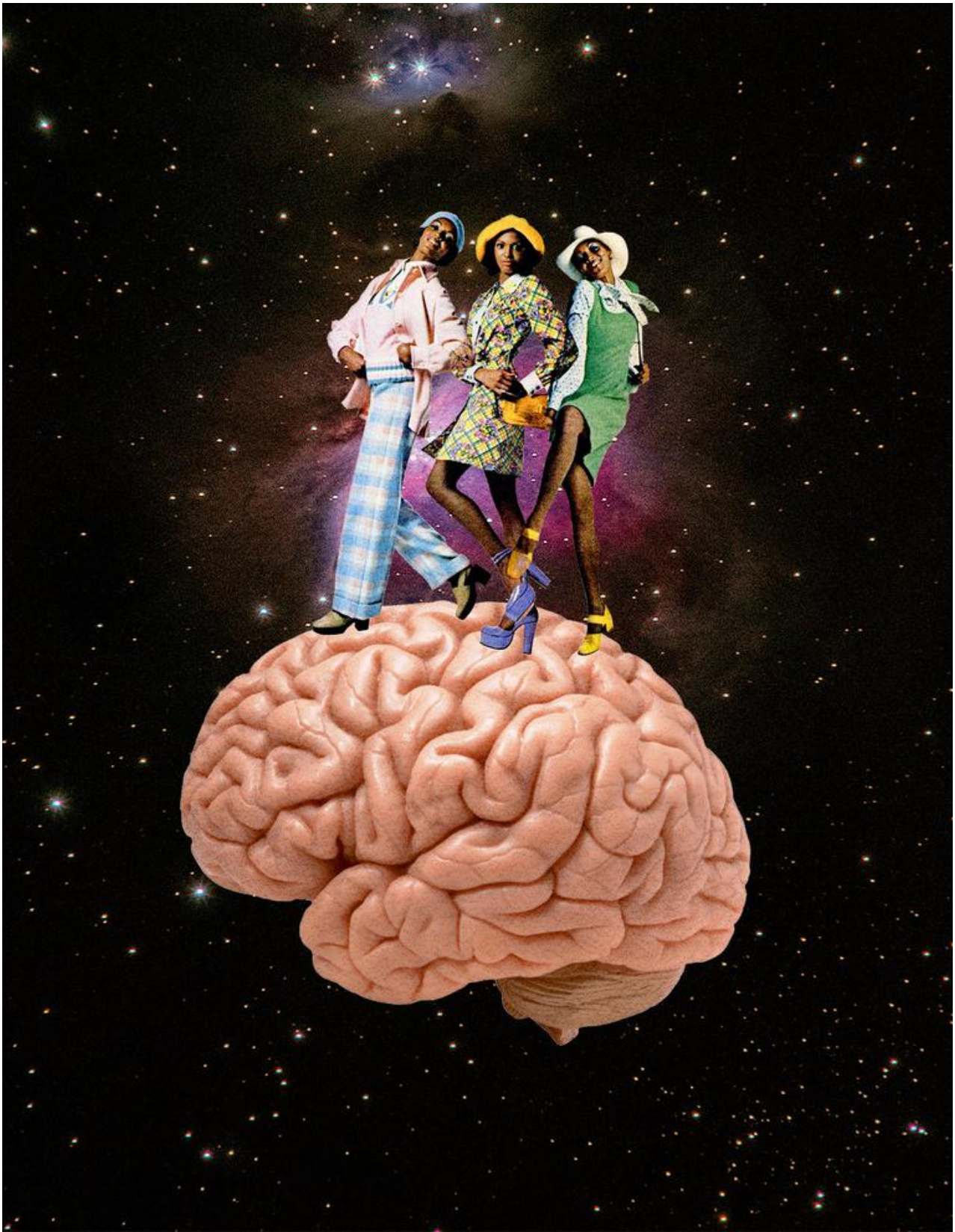
Jiaqi Pan | Dq, Northport

“distinctive.” More often, it’s a certain tension or dissonance between the person and their surroundings that catches my attention, something that is difficult to articulate but impossible to ignore. At the same time, my subjects are also choosing me. Since my work always involves “collaboration” with strangers, this brings us back to the question of shifting authorship. When I extend the invitation to be photographed, their response is itself a form of judgment. As they observe me and decide whether or not to engage, certain aspects of who I am may spark their willingness to respond. While I initiate the process, its realization ultimately depends on a shared sense of trust and mutual acceptance.
I am deeply fascinated by these fleeting and provisional connections, and my work reflects a continuous inquiry into how such relationships momentarily take form.

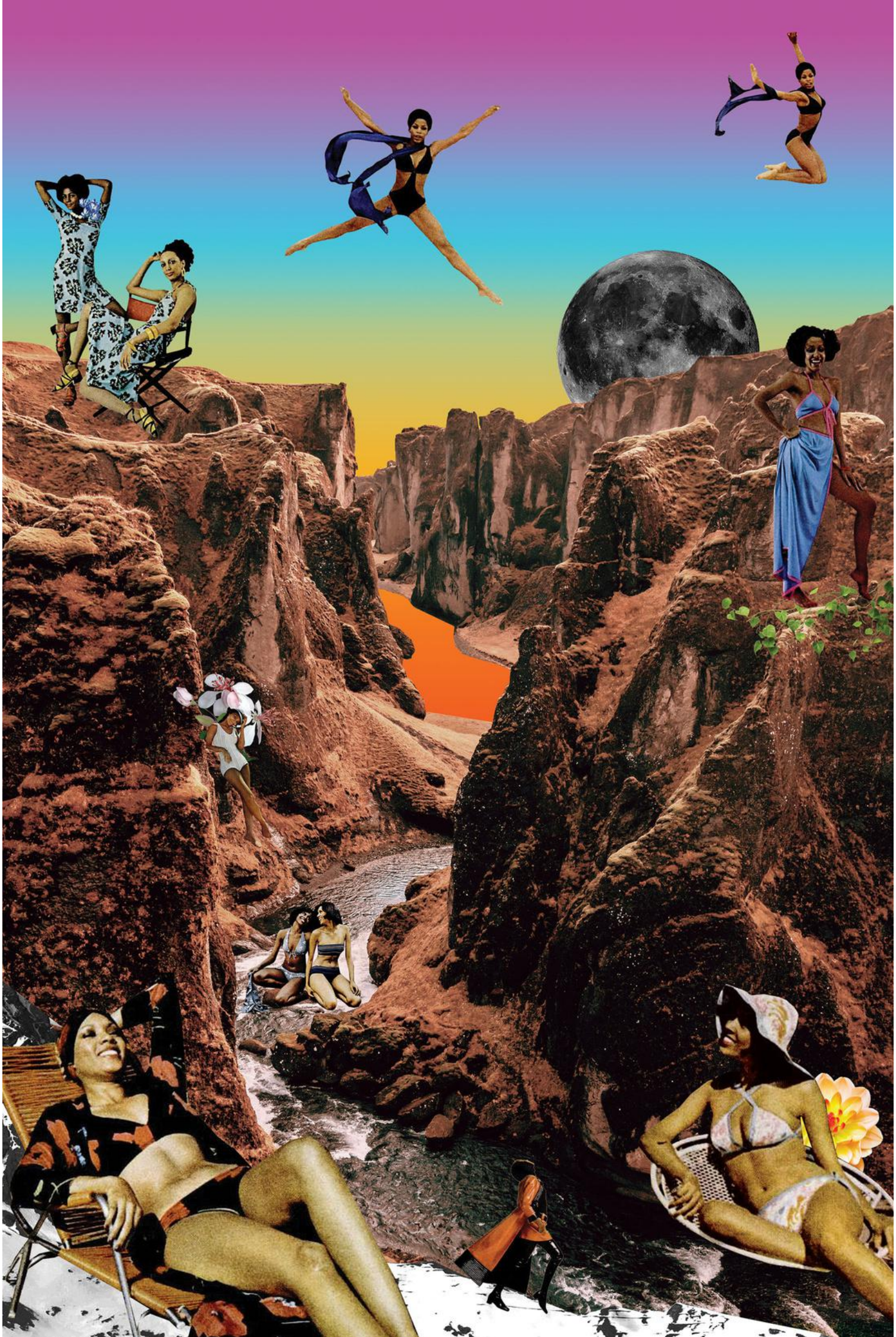
Can you share a moment during a shoot when something unexpected or serendipitous shifted the direction of the project?

Certainly. One moment that unexpectedly shifted the direction of my Passport Photos project occurred while I was shopping at a pharmacy store. At the time my concept was simple: I took a self-portrait and invited others to edit it into what they believed a “proper” passport photo should look like.
But that day, I noticed a long line at the photo counter, where people were waiting for passport photos due to a new travel ID policy in Philadelphia. The process was mechanical, and most people looked dissatisfied with their images. That moment shifted my focus: I became more interested in how people perceive and negotiate their own image under standardized systems. I stopped photographing myself and began setting up temporary photo booths in public spaces, modeled after the pharmacy store setups. People could take unlimited photos, view them instantly, and decide when they had arrived at an image they truly accepted.
What began as a project centered on how others manipulate my identity gradually evolved into an exploration of self-recognition, authorship, and personal agency, examining how individuals reclaim control over their image within the rigid protocols of institutional photography.

Brittney Francis (b. 1997, Bronx, NY) is a Graphic Designer and Collage Artist whose work examines themes of Black womanhood, love, and grief through a retro-inspired aesthetic. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design with minors in Art History and Spanish from SUNY Purchase in 2019. In 2024, she completed an artist residency with BronxArtSpace on Governors Island. Her work has been featured in exhibitions across Texas, Brooklyn, and online in 2025. Francis' work is sincere, nostalgic and witty, creating thought-provoking visual compositions.



Brittney Francis | In My Head | 2023

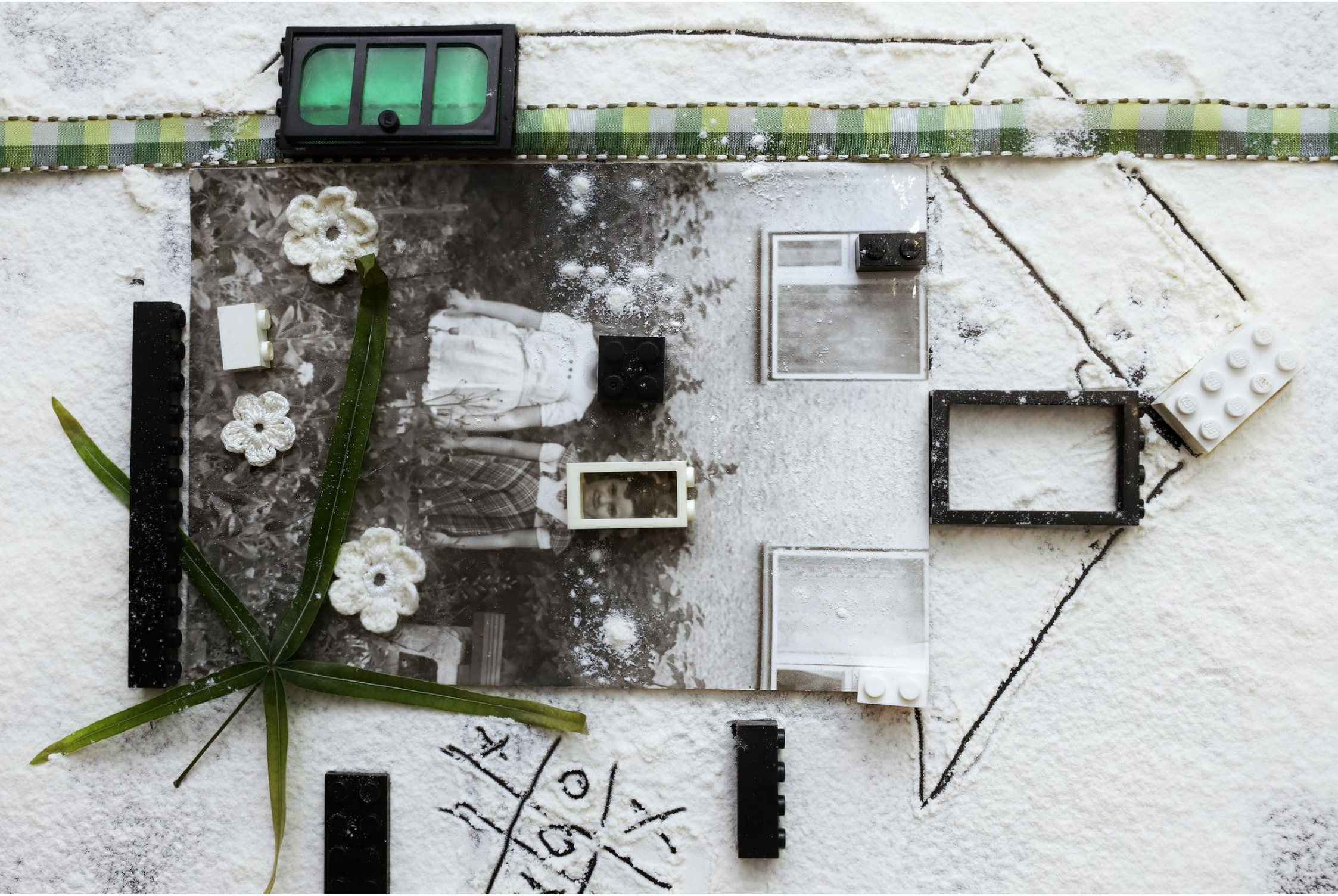


Brittney Francis | Canyon | 2023

Tatyana Mazok

Project Statement
Memory gaps are my therapy for recovering happy childhood memories. In my memory, childhood did not look happy, first of all in my head came up episodes with negative events: an evil kindergarten teacher pours milk soup behind a cigar, my father cornered on peas, the school teacher punishes and me off the list as a pioneer, how I was cheated and didn't get a lottery ticket... It was not very clear to me what to do with good "gaps in memory", and I turned to the work of scientists. Researchers believe that both children's and adults' memories are selective about what is stored in them, and also that childhood memories do not completely disappear from our brains. And you can get them back by looking at your childhood photos, returning to the places of childhood, finding toys from childhood, books. Liven up memories with associations.
Photography has always helped shape my perception of the world, and when I had our very modest small family photo archive in my hands, I immersed myself in shaping the history of my childhood. As I go into the dive, I intervene in archival images using materials that can be found at home and on the street: beads, threads, drawing pens, designer, flowers, buttons, sand. This is how I awaken my inner child, immerse myself in that time, explore the amount of memory, confronting familiar things. I reconstruct happy moments of everyday life.
The goal of the project is to fill the void. Returning to my memories, I fill the blanks of my story, mysteriously empty home pages and restore my integrity.

Mazok Tatyana | Memory gaps | 2025



Mazok Tatyana | Memory gaps | 2025

Abdelrahman Abdallah, also known as Shangal Hassan, is a versatile artist, designer, sculptor, and professor within the College of Fine and Applied Art, specifically the sculpture department, at the Sudan University of Science and Technology (SUST). Shangal's artistic journey began In Eldammar, Sudan, in the year 1960, culminating in his graduation from the Faculty of Art in 1985. Over the course of his career, he has showcased his creative talents through a multitude of exhibitions held in various countries, including Sudan, Ethiopia, England, and Russia, both independently and collaboratively. Shangal notably earned the first prize for his exceptional design proposal in the forthcoming implementation of the Human Rights Memorial Monument, which will be situated prominently in front of the Africa Union Building. His passion lies in the rekindling of Sudan's ancient civilizations heritage, with a particular emphasis on Meroitic sculpture. This fervent commitment to preserving and celebrating Sudan's rich history has made Shangal a prominent figure in the field of fine arts. Furthermore, Shangal has served in the capacity of Dean at the Faculty of Fine & Applied Arts at the Sudan University of Science and Technology, further solidifying his status as a distinguished academic and practitioner in the arts. A significant portion of Shangal's career has been dedicated to fostering cultural and artistic ties between Sudan and Ethiopia. His unwavering dedication in this regard has rendered him a figure in the vibrant East-African art scene. Shangal's remarkable artistic creations have found homes in both official and private collections, attesting to the widespread recognition and appreciation of his work, which extends beyond national borders. Recently, Shangal has agreed to collaborate with the Shibir Nilotic Gallery of Modern African Art (Berlin/Germany) as the Head of Academic Art.

Project Statement
My recent series of paintings is a meticulous exploration of spatial dimensions. These works extend my ongoing project, Human Spaces, which examines the complexities of war and its impact on human environments. Through these creations, I seek to offer viewers a unique opportunity to engage with the paintings in a way that aligns with their personal interpretations, evoking the underlying virtues within. Do individuals truly immerse themselves in these spaces? Much of my recent work involves experimentation, particularly in the reconfiguration of abstract forms. I aim to reinterpret the concept of space from a fresh perspective, drawing inspiration from diverse schools of thought—similar to the collaborative nature of academic committees. However, my artistic vision remains distinct, reshaping these forms through a synthesis of various theories and a dynamic interplay of colors, all intricately connected to the concept of space. Additionally, I strive to redefine the language associated with the human form, whether from a legal or psychological standpoint. I invite you to engage with my work from a unique perspective—one that embodies hope, the potential for confrontation, and an amplification of these forces. As artists, we distinguish ourselves from conventional business practices, driven by a singular vision and a deconstructive approach. Must we rigidly adhere to established elements, or can we reconfigure them—perhaps with the freedom and playfulness of a child? Can we shape them to resonate with our sensibilities, providing psychological fulfillment and tranquility? This creative process carries a profound psychological message, whether expressed visually or through written form. This journey has been a long-standing exploration of what I refer to as human space—a realm liberated from rigid boundaries, where time flows freely and meaning is continuously redefined.

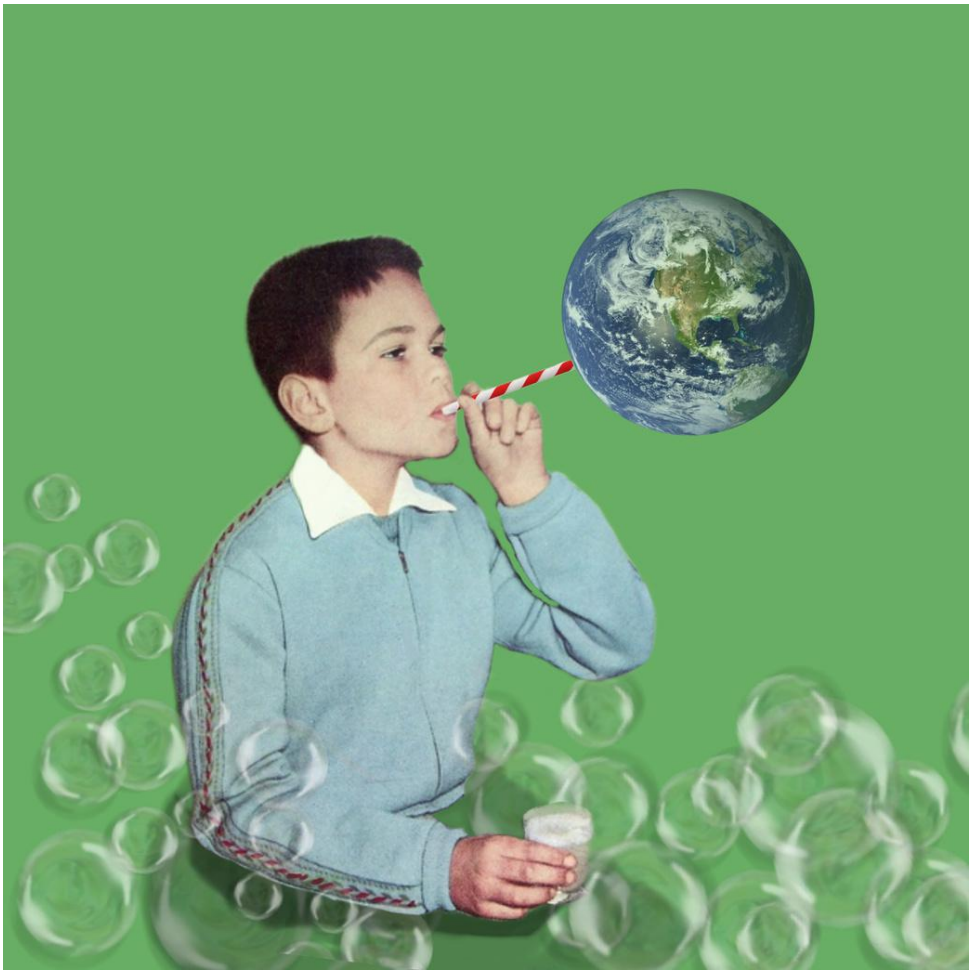
Dr. Shangal Hassan | Human Spaces | 2024

Dr. Shangal Hassan | A traveler, a woman and a bird in my town | 2023

Dr. Shangal Hassan | We, the Nile and the Night | 2023

Daniela Ciriello, born in Bari, is a photographer and author committed to promoting the Apulian region and raising awareness on social issues. Trained at the F. Project School of Photography and Cinematography, she made her debut in 2009 with the work "L'immenso della Mente", which won a national literature and theater award. Her photography explores the beauty of Puglia, women's condition, autism, and social hardship, always through a poetic and thoughtful lens. She has developed several notable photographic and exhibition projects, including: "Masserie e Borghi" (2012), "Simpaticamente Autistico", "Donna in O-ggetto" (2015), "Tasselli in Macchia Arsa" (2016), "Volti Invisibili" (2018), "L'Io Velato" (2021). Her work has been exhibited in Italy and abroad, including Parma, Bologna, Krasnodar (Russia), and Lishui (China). She has received various awards such as the "Fiorino d'Argento" at the 2022 Premio Firenze and the Gaetano Montanaro Award. She is co-author of the book "Un granello di colpa" (2017) on domestic violence, and co-editor of "Chiara Samugheo, un'amazzone della fotografia". In 2023, she co-created the installation event "Al di là del limite" in Bari, and in 2024, she took part in the AutArtFestival in Rome with a project focused on autism.

Project Statement
I am a creative who began her expressive journey through photography, using the camera as a tool to explore and highlight the world around me. My early projects focused on social themes, with a keen eye for reality and its most authentic nuances. After an important introspective journey, I felt the need to give voice to a freer, more ironic and imaginative vision, composing images that draw from our collective memory and transform it into original, colorful, and light-hearted forms. In my work, I enjoy using vibrant colors to create images that have an immediate impact on the viewer. Each creation is the result of research and experimentation, aimed at finding the subjects that best express my ironic and playful spirit. Through my work, I seek to offer new perspectives from which to view the world, sharing borderless horizons animated by beauty, wonder, and a desire for connection.



Daniela Ciriello | Earth soap bubble | 2025

Daniela Ciriello | Mountain Surreal | 2025

Boriana Marinova - GermanistikArt

Translator and paper quilling artist, book cover designer. Participation in national and international exhibitions.

Boriana Marinova | Phoenix | 2023

Emilija Savić, also known as EmzEm3, is a multidisciplinary artist from Bosnia and Herzegovina who has expressed her creativity through various forms of art—painting, sculpture, illustration, stage design, and architecture. She began her artistic journey at the Paleta painting workshop in her hometown of Zvornik and later studied Scene Architecture, Technique, and Design in Novi Sad, Serbia, where she began shaping her unique visual language. After moving to the United States, she shifted her focus to painting, illustration, and animation. EmzEm3 was born out of a need for color, a fusion of the incompatible, and an escape from the grayness of the war-torn country where she was born and raised. Her work is inspired by the daily process of questioning and embracing her traumas and identity, as well as her deep love for animals and nature.

Project Statement
My work is a continuous conversation with the self—a layered exploration of trauma, identity, memory, and the unspoken emotional landscapes inherited through generations. Born and raised in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I carry with me both visible and invisible histories. Art became my language before I fully understood my voice. It allowed me to translate silence into color, grief into gesture, and fragmentation into form. Through painting, illustration, and animation, I explore the tension between what is remembered and what has been forgotten, both personally and collectively. I often return to childhood imagery, sacred fragments of nature, and the inner worlds we construct to survive external chaos. These motifs are built to hold stories that were once too heavy to carry aloud. As EmzEm3, I create as a form of survival, celebration, and reconnection with myself, with others, and with the ancestral threads woven through my being. Art, to me, it is a process of remembering, undoing, and becoming. It is a bridge between what was endured and what can be transformed.

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