

VISUAL ART JOURNAL

NO. 36

SEPTEMBER 2025



— *Intro*

Hello, dear reader,

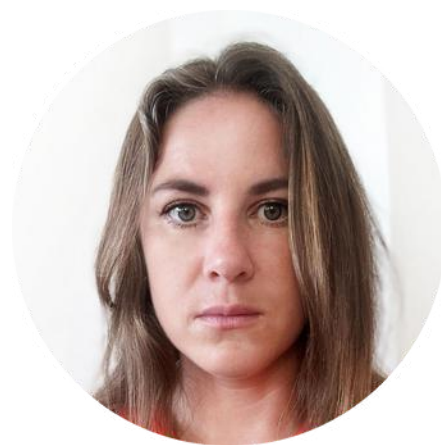
In your hands lies the 36th issue of our journal — a collection brimming with creativity, talent, and inspiration.

Within these pages, we have gathered artists from every corner of the globe, each expressing their thoughts in unique ways. The style or medium doesn't matter — whether it's two-dimensional, three-dimensional, or fully immersive. What matters is the artist's ability to reach into our hearts, stir our thoughts, and draw our attention to things that might otherwise slip by unnoticed.

You never know what exactly will captivate you in a particular work — why one installation makes you stop in your tracks while another goes unnoticed. For one pair of eyes, a new world opens up; for another, it may seem ordinary.

Either way, settle in and enjoy — ahead lies a boundless ocean of creative joy.

Happy reading!



Anna Gvozdeva

Curator of
Visual Art Journal

On the Front Cover:
Natalie Christensen
Open door

On the Back Cover:
SPLACES.STUDIO
Black Nidum



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

— Interview

Wen Wen Zhou

You moved from China to Australia at the age of 17. How did this transition influence your artistic vision and style?

My overseas study experience at a young age had a profound impact on my artistic vision. The concept of art education in Australia emphasizes innovation and freedom. I still remember one lesson: the teacher came into the classroom, turned off all the lights and started to play music. She told every student to close their eyes and listen to the music in the dark, which was a very soothing and beautiful violin concerto. She said something like “link



Wen Wen Zhou | The Watcher | 2025

the music and as you feel something, just draw it. Don't worry about whether the modeling is accurate or not, or whether the painting is right or not, just paint what you feel in your heart at that moment.”

The reason why I still remember that lesson after so many years is that the teacher was trying to tell us that art is deeply moving because it follows the most primitive and simple feelings of the artist's heart, and that we should follow these feelings to create, and not to be overly influenced and bound by external concepts. This idea has always permeated my entire art practice.

Your works have been shown in many countries and cultural contexts. How does exhibiting internationally impact the way you create and present your art?

I have been very fortunate to exhibit in the United States, the United Kingdom, China and Australia. I am very interested in how each country has its own unique geography and different cultural heritage. The world is huge, and it is interesting to meet people and things outside of the environment that I am familiar with. I am also interested in the exchange of ideas with artists from different cultural backgrounds, which often leads to a creative inspiration.

Several of your works were selected for Buddhist Association of China album covers. Can you tell us more about this collaboration and what it meant to you?

It was a very fortuitous collaboration. At that time, the Buddhist Association was preparing to publish a set of “The sound of ocean” music albums and they saw by chance a series of my paintings on ancient Chinese themes that I had created with the medium of Tempera.



Wen Wen Zhou | Are You Still There | 2024



They thought that the mood and artistic language conveyed by my paintings was suitable for the cover of the album, and so it was an instant match. As a practicing Buddhist, I find teachings of Buddhism such as living in the present moment and abiding in emptiness profound. I place the highest value on this spiritual pathway and in turn this influences my art.

How does your Chinese heritage and your life in Australia merge in your artistic expression?

Australia is a very ecologically and environmentally aware country. In my neighborhood, there are large forests, pastures, rivers and mountains. I often put down my brushes at sunset, go out of the studio and walk along the river. On these walks you can see rabbits, wombats, kangaroos and all sorts of beautiful birds roaming freely on the land. As I breathe the clean air and experience nature this becomes one of the most important sources of energy for me to concentrate on my work. Although I was raised in a traditional Chinese culture, the vastness of Australia's natural landscapes and relaxed society has had a significant impact on my worldview and artistic creation. For example in many of my works this influence can be seen through the combination of natural Australian elements and Buddhist concepts of stillness and living in presence.

Can you walk us through your creative process — from the first idea to the finished piece?

As soon as I have a preliminary image formed in my mind I start painting directly on the canvas, so I hardly ever

make small drafts. It's an interesting process because the final picture is often different from the initial thought. Each painting becomes a mysterious adventure. Often inspiration emerges as the picture evolves and this random fluidity is very appealing to me.

Do you see your art as a way to tell personal stories, or is it more about universal themes?

My art has always focused on the inner heart, the subconscious, dreams and the relationship between the individual and the world. My latest series, "I Like You to Be Still", (named after a poem by Neruda), explores the nature of life through anthropomorphic sculpture, architecture, nature and animals. In the twenty-first century, we live in a fast-paced era inundated with the explosion of global information. As such a large portion of each day is stolen by the internet and short videos. I hope that my art can provide a sanctuary in this chaos where the viewer can slow down, stop, think, and return to the most fundamental essence of our humanity - solitude, tranquility, and freedom.

How do you balance traditional artistic techniques with contemporary approaches in your practice?

I have always believed that the technique of painting serves the idea; it is the means, not the result.



Santa Fe artist **Kathleen Frank** travels throughout the American West, seeking inspiration for her landscape paintings. Using vibrant hues, she captures light and pattern in her search for logic within complex terrains.

Exhibitions include International Art Museum of America; Museum of Western Art; St. George Museum of Art; Northwest Montana History Museum; UNM Valencia; MonDak Heritage Center| Art & History Museum; WaterWorks Museum; Sahara West Gallery; La Posada de Santa Fe; and Jane Hamilton Fine Art. Press includes LandEspace Art Review, MVIBE, Art Reveal, Magazine 43 and Southwest Art. Art in Embassies/U.S. State Department selected her work for Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Project Statement

Having been an art teacher, woodcarver and a printmaker in my formative years, I emerged as a painter, joyously overwhelmed by color and searching for pattern. Color and pattern are everywhere, but the seeing and interpretation of them are different for each of us. Pattern in nature is primal to me – which fuels my desire to find a glimmer of logic in vastly complicated, confusing and tumbled landscapes. I do also seek out the vibrant hues in landscapes.

My oil paintings begin with a saturated red orange backdrop. This is overlaid with the main imagery, applied with distinct brushstrokes of brilliant color. Hints of the red background peek through like a woodcut, creating subtle impact without drawing attention away from the primary subjects.

Several times a year I travel throughout the Southwest, hiking and photographing vistas for future paintings. The goal is to catch the light and design in these scenes in all its strangeness and beauty. It is a lofty goal, but I find when the quest is shepherded with paint and brush it is a delightfully daunting adventure.

Kathleen Frank | Hidden Lake – Glacier | 2024





André Tatjes

You're a Ph.D. in Life Course Research with a background in criminology and statistics. How does that training shape the way you look for stories in everyday scenes?

Overall, my academic career taught me to see situations as a series of connected moments and not (always) like an isolated scene. In research, I've often focused on how supposedly small events accumulate over time to shape a person's whole life. Criminology and statistics on the other hand trained me to be sensible for more or less hidden patterns – in data and behavior. When I'm with my camera I try to bring that perspective to everyday scenes, landscapes or even architecture. I'm not just interested in the moment; I'm thinking about the story which could be connected to it. So it's about the "before" and "after", especially in street photography. In terms of statistics, outliers, e.g. "the unexpected", can be the most interesting part of a shot: unexpected situations, movements, forms or colors. Summing it up, I'm searching for the meaning beneath the surface asking for the bigger picture.

What first pulled you toward photography, and why keep it as a "hobby" rather than a profession?

My attraction to photography began with my younger me owning a mobile phone with the possibility to take acceptable photos, in terms of picture quality. It felt natural to capture different situations and moments with it. It felt okay for years



but somehow left me longing for more creative freedom. I understood that when I got my first real camera too many years later. Photography is my way to slow down, to stop time for a brief moment and to let a single situation catch your senses. I want to keep it as a hobby because a hobby, to me, means freedom. Without the pressure of any demands, deadlines or actual trends, I'm always free to explore what I want. I don't have to worry about selling something or making money with it. I can take any «creative risk» and just be curious without worrying about the final result. Keeping it as a hobby means keeping it creative.

Your statement says, "There is always more behind a shot than meets the eye." What "more" are you usually chasing?

It highly depends on which scene or motif I want to capture. Usually, I'm chasing a special layer of emotion or narrative depth. A single moment can be the beginning, the middle-part or the end of a hidden story – a story not directly present to me or the viewer's eye. Sometimes, the "more" can be personal to the subject or the object, so I never know. And the good thing is, I don't have to. In those moments it's about imagination. Everyone's fantasy tells a story which might be different to mine or the real one. Other times, it's all about the context. My academic work taught me that meaning often lies in what's not explicitly shown: in patterns or some kind of anomalies. In my shots I try to capture those unseen things – even if I'm not always successful with it :)

Do you go out with a concept in mind, or do you let chance guide you?

It depends on my mood and the setting, but more often I let chance guide me. Street life e.g. can't be planned or controlled in any way. You need to go with the flow. Maybe the time of the day or the light can be part of a concept, but not more; compelling moments are often unplanned. Sometimes I go out with a loose idea about some general concepts like capturing reflections after the rain or geometry



André Tatjes | Breakthrough | 2021



of buildings. These themes act as a filter for my attention. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't and that's okay. I'm searching for authenticity in my shots and not for an artificial replaceable motif. The shots of which I think being rewarding are the ones I didn't anticipate. That's what photography is about, at least for me.

How do Zurich and your German roots influence your visual language?

I grew up in a hardworking family where resources were often limited. This shaped how I look at the world around me and surely how I feel and think about photography. I learned to pay attention to small, maybe sometimes easily overlooked details. Being able to achieve the qualifications I have and building a life abroad is a contrast and luxury I'm always aware of, especially living in one of the cities with the highest quality of life. My background makes me see what lies beneath - effort, patience and sometimes struggle. I'm drawn to scenes where that hidden layer becomes visible. In that sense, my images are often influenced by the shift between where I started and where I am now.

Street photography involves people in public space. How do you think about ethics, consent, and respect when you press the shutter?

That's a wonderful question. In my opinion ethics in street photography are about more than just legality - it's about empathy. Foremost, every person is a human being and

shouldn't merely be seen as a compositional element. Before pressing the shutter it's important to ask yourself if the moment you are about to capture is respecting the person's dignity. Does it represent the person in an authentic way and could it cause harm in any way. Consent on the other hand is quite complex. You need to try reading body language and atmosphere very carefully. If someone appears uncomfortable, don't take the shot or delete it if you have already captured the moment. Sometimes it's better to approach people afterwards to explain what drew you to the scene and ask for permission to keep the shot. In my opinion, good street photography creates a balancing act between the subject's reality and the viewer's imagination.

Why do you choose black-and-white for some images and color for others? What story changes with that decision?

The decision between black-and-white or color is about directing the viewer's imagination and emotions. Black-and-white eliminates any distraction caused by vibrant colors. It's like reducing a shot to the essential. Black-and-white allows form, texture, light and shadow to take center stage. It makes a shot almost timeless, often more impressive than it could ever be when fully colored; it's more dramatic. Look at my shot "Empty Subway" and ask yourself how it would make you feel, if it would be colored? That's what it is about. Color on the other hand brings a different narrative with it. It's about a very specific atmosphere, mainly about warmth and vibrancy. If I may draw your attention to my shot "Breakthrough", the vibrant green jungle. It wouldn't be as interesting in black-and-white, I think; or look at the "Maestro", the Venetian glassblower. A hot, orange-glowing piece of glass draws you into the scene. You nearly feel the heat, the sweat on your forehead, just like the Maestro's. In black-and-white it wouldn't be like that at all. Overall, I don't have a fixed formula for choosing one over the other. My choice emerges from the moment I want to capture and by scrutinizing the shot afterwards. The decision as such is a result of different questions I ask myself: What is the emotional center of the shot? What is the story it tells, or what do I want it to tell? Do I need color or a black-and-white edit to deepen it? That's how my shots are being finalized most of the time.



Catherine Eaton Skinner (Seattle/Santa Fe) illuminates the balance of opposites, reflecting mankind's attempts at connection.

Publications include Magazine 43; Southwest Contemporary; MVICE; LandEscape Art Review; ART UP MI, Milan; and her monograph 108 (Radius Books).

40+ solo and group exhibitions: Pie Projects; Perry & Carlson; Waterworks Gallery; International Art Museum of America; Las Cruces Museums: Branigan Cultural Center; Summerlin Library/Performing Arts Center; Enterprise Library Gallery; Missouri 6-city traveling exhibition; Wilding Museum; Cape Cod Museum; Yellowstone Art Museum; and High Desert Museum.

Awards: U.S. Art in Embassies, Papua New Guinea and Tokyo, and Acclaimed Artists, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs.

Catherine Eaton Skinner | Remnants XII





Catherine Eaton Skinner | Remnants XIV

SPLACES. STUDIO

SPLACES.STUDIO brings together artists, scientists, and engineers. How do you build synergy between such diverse disciplines in your creative process?

Andy Shibanov:

Honestly, it sounds complex, but the answer is pretty straightforward: everyone on our team brings strong hard skills from their core domain whether it's programming, lighting design, engineering, or generative music. But what truly connects us is that each team member is also an



SPLACES.STUDIO | Saulux



SPLACES.STUDIO | Fluxate

artist — with a background in either fine arts or science-art. That's the sweet spot where magic happens.

My own roots are in directing and creative production for commercials, which means I've spent years navigating big, chaotic, multi-disciplinary teams from DOPs to animators to sound designers. It's second nature to me now. Working on large-scale, immersive science-art installations is not all that different just deeper, more layered, and more philosophically charged. At SPLACES.STUDIO, we don't just combine disciplines — we weave them together. Our approach is less about managing differences and more about finding a shared artistic language that's rooted in both scientific curiosity and aesthetic sensitivity. That's what allows us to co-create living, breathing systems where technology and nature can actually speak to one another.

Many of your works are immersive and interactive. What role does audience participation play in your vision of art?

Khristina Ots:

In our projects, we aim not just to represent



nature, but to create conditions where it can be experienced as an active presence. Public art, for us, is a tool for transforming familiar spaces and opening up new modes of attention — where people can feel differently. Many of our works take the form of public art because we believe it can act as a portal into a natural environment. We see the audience as an active element that helps to activate space and form a system of relationships within the environment. In this sense, our installations function as mediators between people and nature through technological art. Through sensory, immersive formats, we explore how art can become a space where nature speaks back to us. Participation, in this context, is not only about interaction, but about attunement — finding new ways to listen, to slow down, and to enter into a dialogue with the living world. We hope that this is a model that later can be expanded by our guests into a daily life practice.

How do you define “nature-driven technologies,” and how do they differ from conventional eco-design or biomimicry?

Khristina Ots:

Nature and technology are often treated as opposites — but in reality, they are deeply interconnected. Continuing to think of them as separate domains only reinforces a false divide. At SPLACES.STUDIO, we believe in thinking with nature, not just about it.

We define nature-driven technologies as systems that are guided by natural impulses — by rhythms, forces, data, and logic found in the natural world. Unlike conventional eco-design, which often aims to reduce harm within existing industrial paradigms, or biomimicry, which

imitates nature’s forms and functions, nature-driven technologies are co-developed with natural processes. They operate in sync with ecological systems rather than merely referencing them.

In our artistic practice, we use this approach to imagine alternative technological futures — ones where machines listen to forests, structures breathe with the wind, and data is derived from the behavior of physical laws. These speculative technologies aren’t just poetic; they also point toward real possibilities for rethinking sustainability in science, architecture, and industry.

In your work, AI is not just a tool but a collaborator. How do you determine the boundaries between human intention and machine contribution?

Andy Shibarov:

We work with AI in a lot of different ways, from machine learning models to LLMs, and yeah, most of the time it starts out as a tool. But honestly, it doesn’t stay just a tool for long. When



SPLACES.STUDIO | Nidum

you're using AI to analyze natural systems or help prototype interactive environments, at some point it starts offering things back: unexpected patterns, wild connections, stuff that sparks new ideas. That's when it starts to feel more like a creative partner.

We use LLMs, for example, to help us process data, debug, code smarter, or even brainstorm. It's like having another mind in the room, not a human one, but still surprisingly collaborative. It helps us move faster and go deeper without needing a 20-person team.

I wouldn't say we draw a clear boundary between human and machine roles. It's more like a conversation : we set the intention, the AI responds, and we riff on that. Sometimes it does something totally weird, and we lean into it. That's the exciting part. We're not outsourcing creativity, we're expanding it.

What was the most complex technical challenge you faced in creating a sculpture, and how did your interdisciplinary team solve it?

Andy Shibarov:

We've faced two equally complex technical challenges in our recent work, each in very different ways.

The first was our largest sculpture, Fluxate: a 7-meter-wide "Sun" made of 3,000 long bamboo rods, each carrying a 1-meter addressable LED strip. In total, it formed a 3-kilometer programmable light matrix mapped onto a spherical outdoor sculpture. It had to endure three months of harsh winter conditions: freezing temperatures, humidity, and temperature swings, without failure. We developed a system that pulls real-time solar

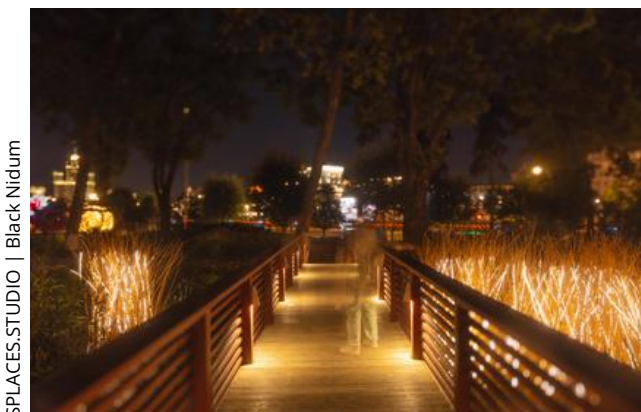


SPLACES.STUDIO | Black Nidum

activity data from satellite APIs and translates it into dynamic light and sound using TouchDesigner and Max/MSP. Managing thousands of synchronized LEDs in spherical geometry, outdoors, under those conditions: that was a first for us, and possibly for anyone. The second was our newest piece, data.relic: a half-ton travertine sculpture that's slowly eroded in real time by a closed-loop sandblasting system. It was our attempt to simulate geological weathering using a common industrial process. The challenge here was twofold: no one had used sandblasting as a method of sculpting stone for exhibition before, especially not in a continuous way; and the entire installation had to operate indoors, in a museum space, silently and safely, with zero sand leakage and full air/noise isolation. We engineered a sealed environment where sand constantly recirculates and reshapes the sculpture: autonomously, for a month.

Each challenge pushed us to invent new technical frameworks, combining software, mechanics, sculpture, and sound into something neither purely industrial nor purely artistic.

What emotional or intellectual response do you hope viewers experience when encountering your installations in public or



SPLACES.STUDIO | Black Nidum



gallery spaces?

Andy Shibarov:

What I truly enjoy is seeing people encounter our sculptures in two very different states: first, as a static physical form: quiet, unlit, almost like a traditional object; and then again, when the sculpture "activates" and transforms into something else entirely.

When the AI begins processing data, the light starts responding, music is generated by custom algorithms, and the audience realizes they can touch the piece, speak to it, or even affect it with their presence: the whole experience becomes alive, layered, and deeply interactive.

There's this beautiful moment of pleasant surprise that I see again and again: people smile, laugh, lean in with curiosity. It's like they're discovering that what seemed like a natural or even familiar object: something you might expect to see in a museum or a park: actually contains a hidden intelligence, a living system with meaning. That moment of wonder: when perception shifts and new layers unfold: is what we hope to create — emotionally rich, intellectually engaging, and sensorially unexpected.

You collaborate with specialists in fields like dendrology and ornithology. Can you share an example of how such collaboration enriched a

specific project?

Khristina Ots:

Art & science field gives us opportunity to seek out new artistic language. Collaboration with scientists is central to our practice at SPLACES.STUDIO, as it allows us to move beyond metaphor and into deep, research-based engagement with the natural world. In our Nidum series, for example, we worked closely with ornithologists to explore how we might access the *umwelt* of birds — their perceptual world, so different from our own. In the context of the Anthropocene, we believe that rethinking our relationship with nature is no longer optional; it's a necessity. But how can we begin to understand something governed by such radically different laws of perception and communication?

With the help of ornithologists, we studied archival recordings and scientific data about bird calls — particularly those of extinct or endangered species. This data became the foundation for an artistic system that attempts to restore and reimagine these lost voices. Our role as artists is to translate this knowledge into multisensory experiences — sculptural, sonic, and spatial — that invite the audience to connect emotionally and viscerally with the more-than-human world.

Sculptor **Mark Yale Harris** realized his true passion - stone carving - in the 1990s. In Santa Fe, he was mentored by Bill Prokopiou (Aleut) and Doug Hyde (Nez Perce). Harris' alabaster, marble, limestone and bronze works express the inherent duality in man's essence. Prior to this shift, Harris spent many successful years in the real estate/hotel business.

Harris has had 250+ (90+ solo) gallery, museum and international exhibitions. 120+ publications have featured his sculpture. Harris is represented by 18 galleries (US/UK) and has works in permanent collections in museums, various states' public art venues, upscale hotels and hospitals.

Project Statement

The purpose of my artwork is to invoke an awakening of the sensual. Stimulating a perceptual, internal, and intellectual response for the viewer: a visual that speaks to life's experiences. Creating symbols of universal connection underscores the relationship that one has to another and to nature.

Art conveys my nonverbal view of life. An ongoing portrayal of myself, my behavior, adventure, exploration, risk taking, and non-acceptance of convention and the status quo. Constantly in search of the new and different - I am fascinated with the unconventional. Life has a hard, aggressive side, as does much of my work, represented by rigid, angular lines. However, the soft side is also apparent, visible as curves and soft forms. Combining different elements, I bring forth a duality in the sculptures that I create.

Using the invaluable experience of the mentorship of Bill Prokopiou and Doug Hyde, along with my own vision, I have created an evolving body of work in alabaster, marble, limestone, and bronze. I was recently working on a commissioned piece and, while working, reflected on why I carve stone, a very primitive art form. The client had sent me a photo and specific dimensions. My process is to first draw it out dimensionally and then make a small clay model before beginning to sculpt.

Then I start my work, in this case on a block of white marble. I measure and measure, then cut, then measure and then cut again, then recheck my drawing - and repeat. Finally, hopefully having made no mistakes, the figure begins to emerge. It is a great feeling of accomplishment! It is that mental challenge that inspires me to carve in stone. I thoroughly enjoy the cerebral exertion and concentration that is crucial to bringing something out of the stone, something that you really cannot do with clay or any other medium.

Mark Yale Harris | Caught | 2024





Mark Yale Harris | Happy | 2022

— Interview

Frida Pini

You discovered digital art during a period of physical limitation. How did that unique circumstance shape your artistic voice?

The enforced period of rest and the associated suffering was the trigger for my art and my style. I was completely confined to bed for several months after each operation and completely immersed myself in my fantasy world. I painted for up to 14 hours a day and was thus able to escape the pain and the standstill.

I dealt intensively with my inner being and my emotions. Looking inward instead of outward helped me to discover my own diversity. My art became an



Frida Pini | Introvert



Photographer: Juliana Paulos

outlet to visualize my inner world and manifest it in pictures.

Suffering shaped my passion for my art. In German, this is even reflected in the word itself: "Leidenschaft" combines suffering and creation. My operation in March this year was certainly not the last, but I have learned to make the best of every situation. I believe it's important to live life in the present, not sometime in the future when supposedly "everything fits." Beauty can be found almost everywhere, you just have to look closely.

Many of your works reflect surreal and emotional intensity. What role does emotion play in your creative process?

Emotions play a central role for me. Almost all of my image ideas originate from or are inspired by a specific emotion. I am deeply interested in the topic of emotional diversity: the more emotional nuances we perceive, name, and explore, the richer and more stable our inner "ecosystem" becomes. This not only helps us to process negative feelings better, but also strengthens our emotional stability.

As an introvert, the pandemic therefore had a special significance for me. While many suffered from social isolation, I found the quieter, subdued atmosphere in Berlin to be a relief. Nature was able to recover. Small things like fewer people in stores or at the checkout meant that, because of the increased distance, there was no one breathing loudly down my neck or overwhelming me with perfume or sweat. That was actually positive for me. This experience gave rise to the work "Introvert": The seashell in it symbolizes



protection and retreat, a place where one is not overwhelmed. I only recently learned that I have autistic traits, which helps me understand why too many sensory impressions bother me so much. The same applies to "Out of Space," which arose from feelings of loneliness and "non-belonging", as well as to "Stranger." However, these works are not intended to encourage isolation, on the contrary, they are meant to give courage to all people who feel like outsiders.

In German, we say "merkwürdig" when we find something strange or weird, but it actually means "des merkens würdig" which means "worthy of note." Diversity, idiosyncrasies, and different perspectives are valuable. They enrich our coexistence, just as emotional diversity enriches our inner lives. Many who were considered outsiders in their youth (like myself) later develop into unique personalities, like a caterpillar that becomes a butterfly.

You often combine digital prints with physical materials like neon acrylics, gold leaf, and resin. What inspired this hybrid technique?

Some of my fine art prints are further developed by me into unique pieces. Post-processing adds depth, and with gold leaf or silver accents, I create a special brilliance that gives the image a precious quality. Strong colors play a central role and by adding accents with neon acrylic, I increase their intensity even further. Finally, resin creates a mirror-smooth surface that makes the work look very high-quality and special. I am currently experimenting with a variety of combinations of different materials to create new symbioses and emphasize the uniqueness of my work.

How do you choose your color palettes, which are often vibrant, iridescent, and dreamlike?

My color palettes are created from a mixture of observation, symbolism, and inner images. I like to draw inspiration from intense color combinations found in the animal world, such as those in the book "Color Inspiration" by Papier Tigre. For example, the dazzling contrasts of a three-colored parrotfish or the intense patterns of a gaudy clown crab. At the same time, the meaning of colors plays an important role for me. I am particularly drawn to purple: it stands for mystery and spirituality, but also for emancipation, equality, dignity, self-determination, and solidarity. Purple can also represent loneliness, the meanings of the color are very complex and contradictory, which fascinates me.

Strong, bright colors fascinate me because they make a work of art shine and give it something distinctive. Muted tones do not fit my idea of an eye-catcher. My lucid dreams and fantasy worlds also flow directly into my color choices. That's why I like to work at dusk or at night. In that special moment when reality merges into dreams, the most vivid color combinations emerge for me.

Your paintings seem to explore themes of power, femininity, and vulnerability. What do you hope viewers take away from your work?

With my art, I want to evoke emotions and make visible what is worth protecting. Recognizing different feelings simultaneously broadens our inner spectrum. I want to inspire people to look more inward and consciously engage with their own emotions. This is the key to better coexistence, to more consideration, tolerance, and also to standing up for the weak. People with high emotional diversity also experience negative feelings, but they feel less overwhelmed by them because they have learned to consciously reflect on them.

My work "Caged Heart" takes up this idea: it reflects society's expectations of women, how a woman should be, and the associated feeling of constriction. The heart is trapped in a golden cage, a symbol of the constraints that still determine how a woman should





be. The restrictive clothing considered feminine underscores this and leaves little room for individual ideas and needs. At the same time, the golden cage represents the apparent appreciation associated with these traditional ideas. Ideas that are still accepted today by both men and women as if they were "goldrichtig" in German, which literally means "right like gold", absolutely correct.

You've collaborated with musicians and are gaining media attention. How has your audience responded to your art so far?

The reactions have been consistently positive and often very diverse. My works are interpreted in different ways. Some see them as imaginative, nerdy, or feminist, while others emphasize the feminine side or the surreal elements, which allow for many different interpretations. I am particularly pleased with the feedback from artists and musicians whom I greatly admire and with some of whom I have already collaborated. Their encouragement is a great confirmation and motivation.

Do you see your art as a form of activism or a tool for social reflection?

Yes, definitely in some of my works. In "Animal Liberation," for example, I show pigs fighting back against their exploitation with the help of an animal rights activist and burning down the barn. With this image, I want to draw attention to the violence in the animal industry. Pigs are highly intelligent, smarter than dogs. But the ideology of carnism allows us to

distinguish between domestic and farm animals without questioning it. They are not commodities, but individual personalities whose lives are short and marked by pain and suffering. Many see sunlight for the first time on their way to the slaughterhouse. This image is intended to raise awareness of this fact. "Reverse Abusement I" also addresses this theme. In it, a horse defends itself against its exploiter. I rode horses as a child and participated in competitions, but I realized that it is a form of exploitation. The bit presses painfully into the sensitive palate in order to exert control. No horse wants to voluntarily carry a human being or serve as a piece of sports equipment. In my picture, the horse is a woman and the rider is a man. This symbolizes the power imbalance between the sexes.

This motif is continued in "Reverse Abusement II". The woman from "Caged Heart" is held here by a male bird in a golden cage. Once again, this is about oppression, but in reverse: the bird dominates the human, the oppressed fights back against exploitation and reverses the roles. The male bird dominates the woman in the cage, again hinting at the suppression of women's self-determination.

"Man Eater" shows a woman as a praying mantis about to eat a man depicted as a fly. A deliberate role reversal, similar to my work "Bloody Mary" from the series "Surreal Passion", in which a self-confident woman has a helpless man swimming in her cocktail glass, which she drinks while he drowns. With these works, I want to provoke, encourage reflection, and draw attention to injustices. My art is both an expression of my personal attitude and a mirror of social structures.



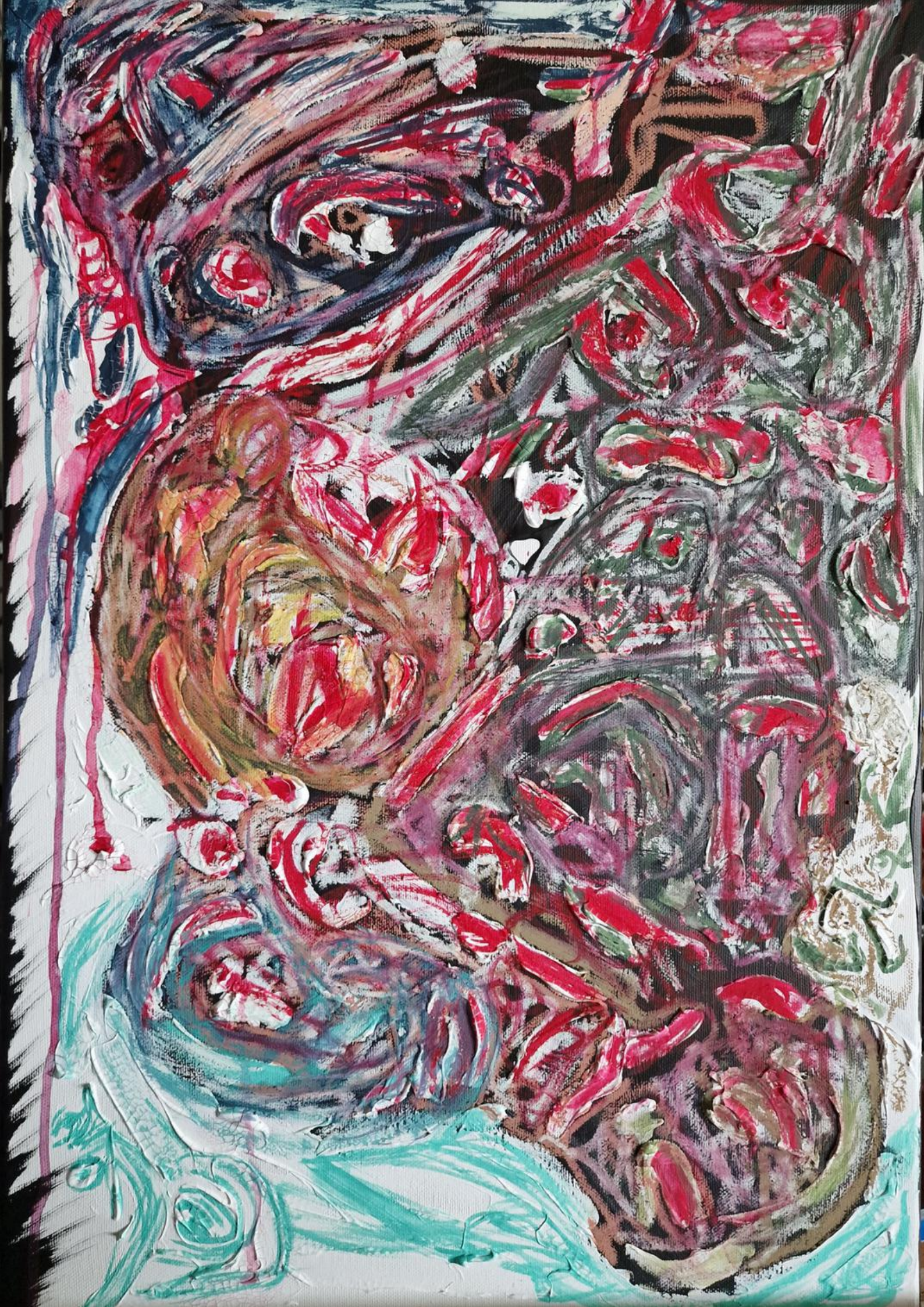


Fabian Kindermann (b. 1994) is a Vienna-based self-taught artist working in abstract and mixed media painting. His practice is rooted in intuition, layering, and subconscious observation, often shaped by pareidolia—the perception of hidden faces and forms within abstraction. Using acrylics, oil pastels, texture gels, and crackle medium, he creates works that blur the line between painting and drawing, accident and control. His paintings emerge as psychological cartographies, capturing fleeting states between chaos and structure. Kindermann's practice continues to expand as a form of psychological mapping—making the unspoken visible through material, gesture, and chance.

Project Statement

My work emerges from an intuitive process where gesture and chance guide the composition. Each painting begins without a plan, unfolding layer by layer as spirals, fragments, and hidden faces surface through pareidolia—as if they had always been embedded in the material. I explore the tension between chaos and order, dissolution and form. What starts as spontaneous mark-making evolves into psychological cartographies—abstract maps of inner states that resist closure. The paintings are not depictions of external subjects but manifestations of subconscious processes, ways of giving form to the unspoken. Working with acrylics, oil pastels, texture gels, and crackle medium, I allow the material to shape accidents, ruptures, and unexpected connections. Surfaces transform into layered archives of emotion: sometimes dense and overwhelming, sometimes fragile and fleeting. The resulting images remain deliberately unresolved. Faces dissolve into gestures, spirals collapse into fragments, yet meaning hovers in between. My paintings do not provide answers but open spaces of resonance—visual traces of reflection, collapse, or transformation. Ultimately, I see my practice as translation: turning psychological depth into abstract form, mapping the restless dialogue between control and release.





— Interview

Sneha Gindodiya

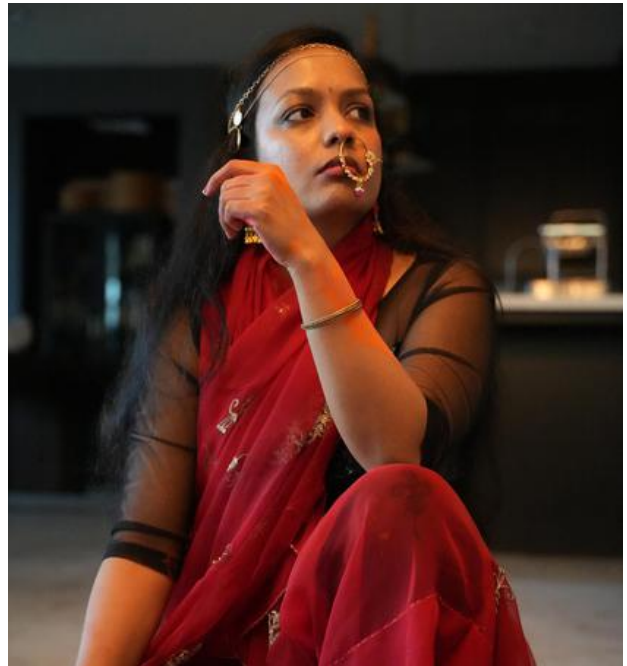
How has your journey from engineering to art shaped your current creative practice?

My journey from engineering to art has never been just about shifting careers; it's been about moving through different dimensions of myself—tangible and intangible. Aerospace engineering taught me structure, precision, and discipline, but over time I realized that numbers could not contain the emotions, questions, and stories I carried within. The transition into art was as much emotional, psychological, and spiritual as it was professional.

Art became the language through which I could finally honor my inner world—my observations, my sensitivity, my quiet strength. What began as a gradual call has now become a way of life, where I balance the methodical lens of an engineer with the freedom of an artist. In every piece, I see not just paint on canvas but echoes of my own evolution, layer by layer.



Sneha Gindodiya | Uns A Muhabbat | 2024



Growing up in Maharashtra and now living in California—how have these cultural environments influenced your work?

My journey spans many places, each leaving its own imprint on me. I was born in Maharashtra, spent my early years in Gujarat, studied in the hills of Nainital through high school, and later moved to South India for my first year of undergraduate studies before completing my degree in Chicago. An internship took me to Michigan, and now California has become home. Each environment brought something different—Maharashtra and Gujarat gave me a foundation in cultural richness, Nainital nurtured my sensitivity to nature and introspection, Chicago broadened my worldview, and California gave me the space and courage to embrace art fully.

Alongside these physical moves, I've also been traveling spiritually and psychologically. As an avid reader and someone deeply curious about people's life stories, I find myself drawn into inner worlds that are as influential as physical landscapes. These journeys—both lived and imagined—flow into my work, shaping narratives that are layered with heritage, human psychology, and universal emotion.

You describe yourself as a reserved and observant child. How does that early sensitivity continue to manifest in your art today?

My reserved nature, which once felt like quietness, has in fact become one of my greatest strengths as an artist. From a young age, I learned to notice what often goes unseen—the subtleties of expression, the way light shifts across a surface, or the emotions hidden between words. What others might overlook, I tend to hold onto and translate into my work. That sensitivity still guides my practice today. My paintings are built from these quiet observations, infused with details that encourage viewers to pause and look deeper. In many ways, what I once experienced as silence has become the very foundation of my artistic voice—a way of seeing and



celebrating the beauty in subtleties that most people pass by.

Tell us more about your fascination with Mughal paintings and how they inspire your style.

I've always been fascinated by how, in earlier times, artists and craftspeople developed such detailed processes without the advantages of modern technology—yet they created works of breathtaking beauty, refinement, and endurance. That quiet strength and dedication speaks to me deeply. It makes me pause and imagine the everyday lives of people in that era, how much patience and devotion went into every brushstroke, carving, or woven pattern. This is why I'm drawn to Persian and Mughal traditions—their rugs, textiles, and motifs carry not only visual richness but also layers of cultural memory and human resilience. In my own practice, I reinterpret that influence: intricate detailing, ornamental motifs, and layered textures find their way into my work, but always through a contemporary lens. These traditions don't just inspire my style; they remind me of the timeless human desire to create beauty that transcends its moment.

Femininity is a recurring theme in your portfolio. What aspects of womanhood do you aim to celebrate or explore in your art?

For me, exploring femininity through art has been deeply personal—more of a journey to discover and define what it means for me as a woman. The women in my work are not just symbolic figures; they often feel like extensions or fragments of myself. Each portrait carries layers of my own experiences, emotions, and quiet strength. I often return to the thought: "As I paint layer by layer, am I revealing myself?" That process of layering mirrors the unfolding of womanhood—its resilience, vulnerability, grace, and complexity. Through my art, I honor these multifaceted

dimensions, celebrating both the universality of feminine strength and the intimate truths of my own becoming.

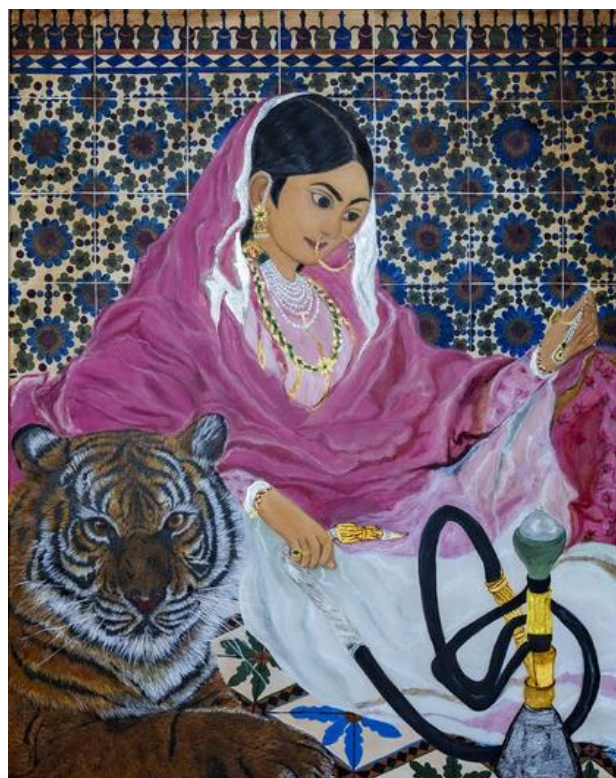
To what extent do people overlook beauty in their everyday lives, and how do you hope your work changes that?

I think people often take things—and even people—at face value, without pausing to look deeper, to truly know them at a soul level. Beauty isn't just in what meets the eye, it's in the quiet details, the emotions beneath the surface, and the layers of stories that shape someone or something. Too often, that depth goes unseen.

My work invites people to slow down and notice those subtleties. For example, in *Dharohar*, what first appears as a decorative rug dissolving into fragments is, on closer look, a meditation on cultural memory and resilience. In *Benazir*, the stillness of a figure carries a quiet strength, asking the viewer to sit with silence and feel its power. By layering details, patterns, and emotions, I hope to create spaces where people not only see beauty but also connect with it—beyond the surface, at a more soulful level.

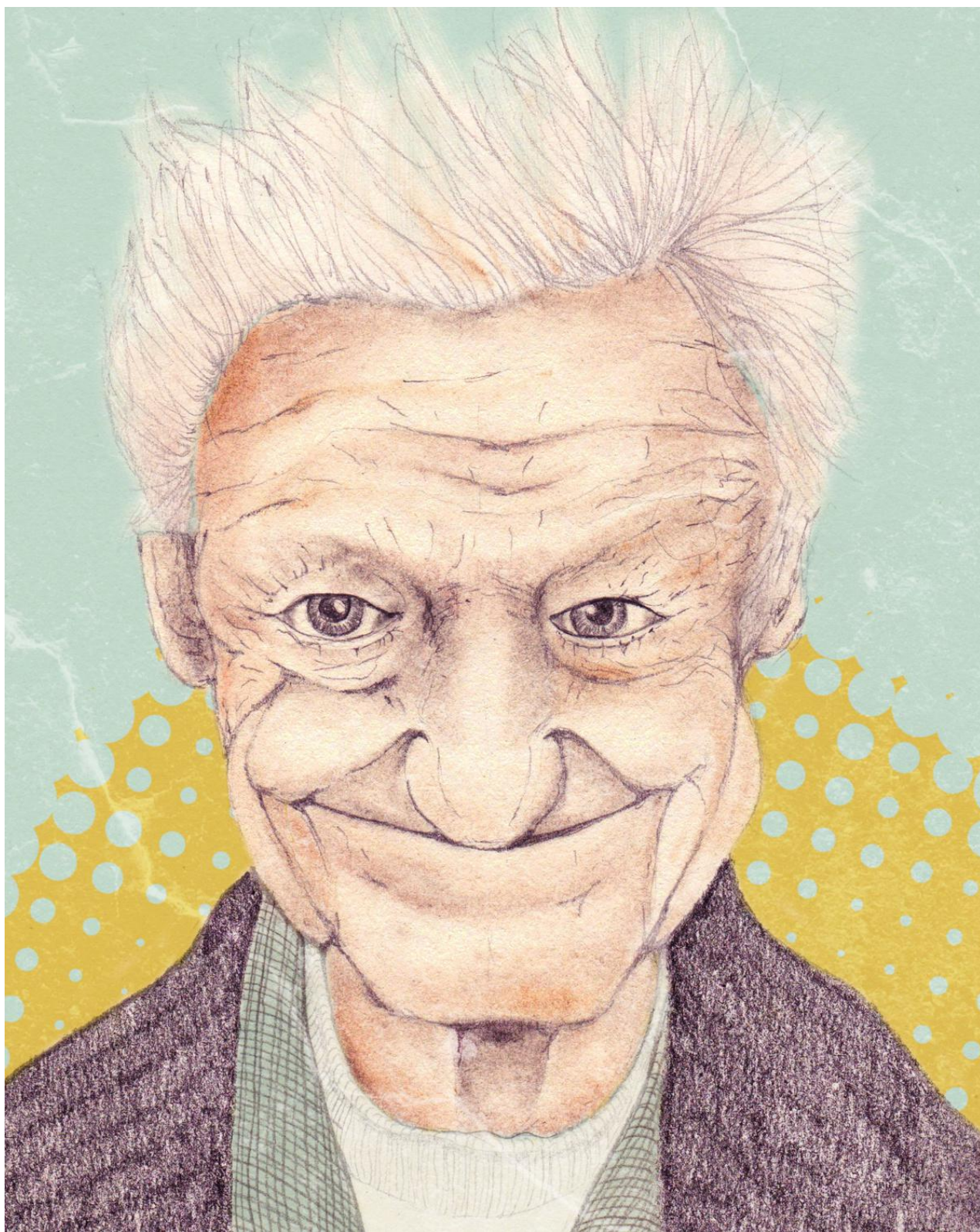
How do you see your role as an artist today—bridging cultures, preserving traditions, or creating something entirely new?

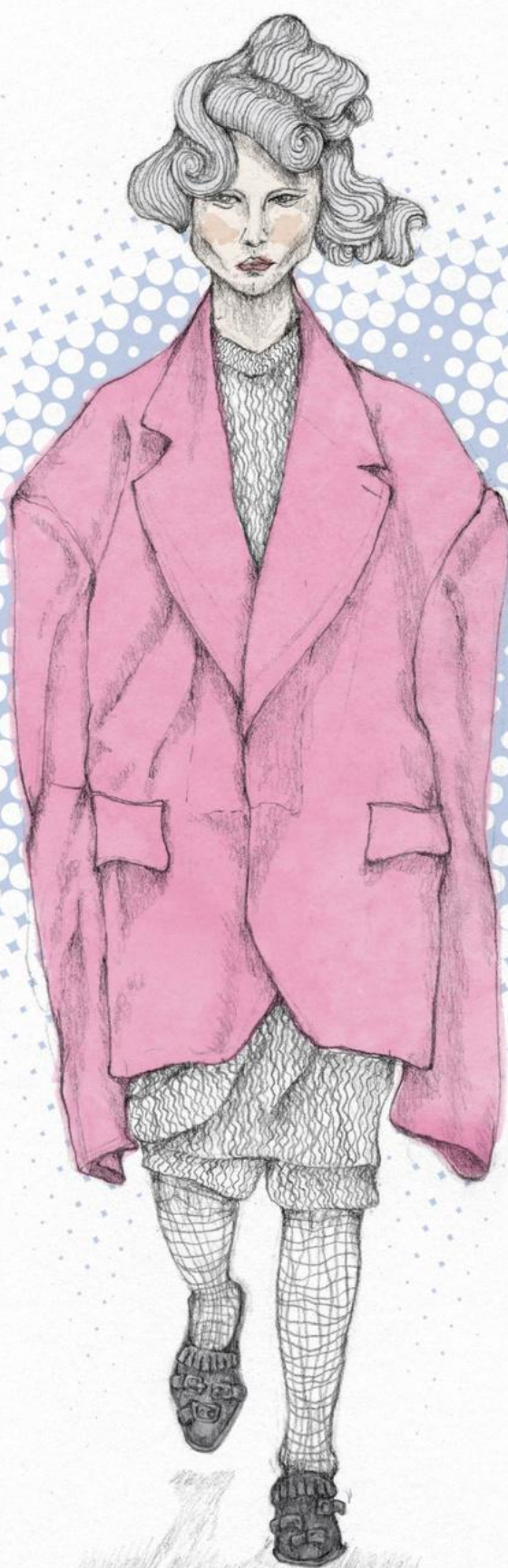
I see my role as an artist as a witness and storyteller of my own journey—bridging the spaces I've traversed, preserving fleeting moments, and creating new forms of understanding. My work is autobiographical, a layering of experiences, emotions, and places that have shaped me. Each piece is an exploration, a way of revealing who I am, piece by piece, through color, texture, and form. It is not just a reflection of the world I've seen, but a map of my inner world—intimate, evolving, and deeply personal—inviting others to connect, feel, and see the layers beneath the surface.



Camila Plate

Camila is a Swiss-Colombian designer, illustrator, and the founder of Atelier Kami, where creativity meets ecological and artistic action. Her work balances structured thinking with expressive visuals, crafting identities that feel both intuitive and deeply intentional. With a background in design and business management, she brings a rare mix of artistic sensitivity and strategic insight. Camila doesn't just design; she builds visual languages tailored to each project's DNA. She moves seamlessly between analog and digital techniques, always with a meticulous eye for detail. Grounded in environmental awareness and driven by a disciplined yet fluid creative process, her work stands at the intersection of aesthetics, ethics, and storytelling.





Yilin Zhang + Yixuan Liu



Your project “Almost Forgotten” begins with found objects and emotional fragments rather than traditional architectural plans. Can you tell us more about this unconventional starting point?

What began with found objects, things like pieces of timber, ragged fabric, discarded personal items, each already carrying a weight of time and a quiet narrative. Our inspiration was drawn from *The Art of Memory* which describes how spaces can be used to structure recollection, where shape can emerge from the raw arrangement of material, rather than from the planned abstraction. We tried to find clues to the atmosphere the architecture might hold from these sculptural elements: their scale, texture, and imperfections, etc. By physically composing these elements, we applied a methodology we have implemented across projects, one that merges curatorial sensitivity with spatial design, a combination rare in conventional architectural practice. In this way, the 'building' was not an object to be drawn, but an evolving assemblage of memory-charged pieces, slowly taking the



shape of a place.

How do you see the relationship between memory, absence, and architecture in your work?

We see memory and absence as inseparable. Therefore, absence is often where memory gathers its strength. In *Almost Forgotten*, absence is not a void to be filled, it is a condition to be formed. Architecture augments a memory like a photo frame: it does not create the memory, it simply gives it a boundary in which it can be held and perceived. A wall, a shadow, a threshold, or so on can alert someone to that which is no longer there, allowing traces, silences, and fragments to remain alive.

The visual language of your project is both raw and poetic. How did you approach balancing structure and emotion in the final form?

For us, structure and emotion are two parts of the same anatomy. The rawness (exposed



timber, fractured stone) isn't an aesthetic decision, but a way to keep construction honest and legible. This synthesis of rigorous detailing with emotional intent has become a signature in our work, recognized for resonating across both architectural and artistic audiences. The poetics happen when that integrity achieves rhythm: the line of structure gives rise to light, or a joint becomes a point of tension. Every decision was tested against one question: did it achieve the maximum level of emotional response while maintaining a degree of integrity? In the end, emotion does not make structure soft; it gives it meaning.

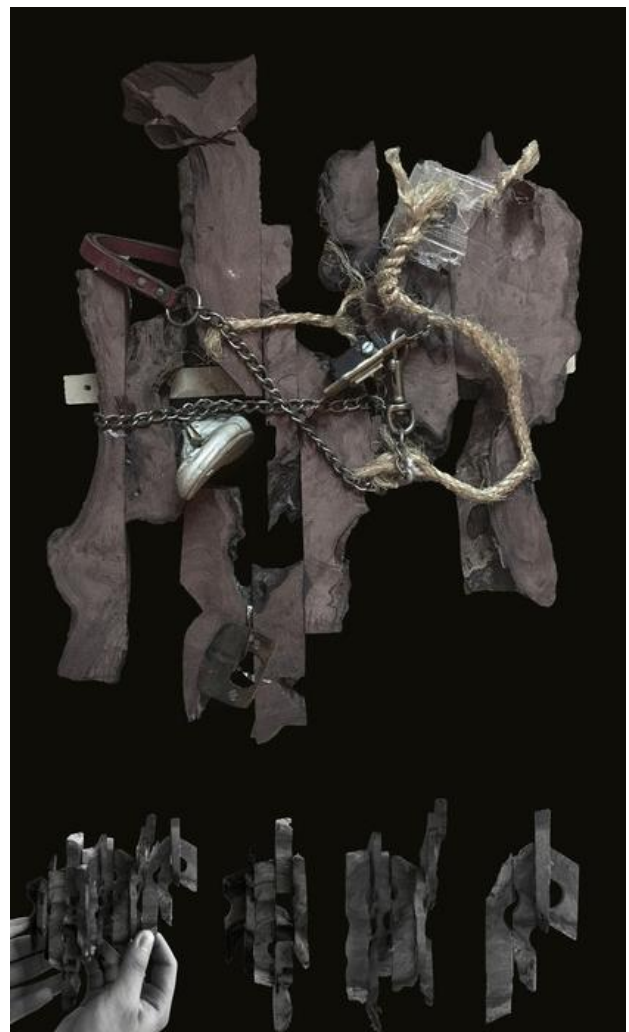
What role does materiality play in evoking emotional responses in your spaces?

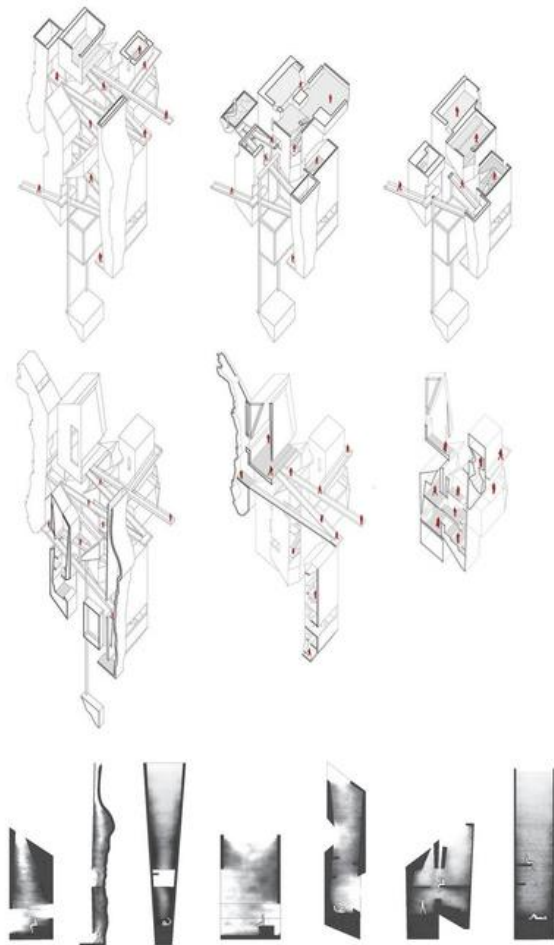
Our approach is based on Juhani Pallasmaa's thoughts on architecture in his book *The Eye of the Skin*, but has developed into a repeatable working method that we have used in many different contexts. In his book, he recalls a moment when a person has returned to an old home, and they touch the weathered, slightly warped wooden handle of the front door, and suddenly, all at once, he finds himself swimming in a sea of feelings, memories, and security. We

seek to make that moment deliberate. We see material not as a surface, but a vehicle of sensory memory. The textures of weathered wood, the thermal heft of stone, the cold slickness of metal, all of these are chosen, positioned and curated to re-evolve feelings that may have lain fallow for years. In *Almost Forgotten*, we showed that this methodology demonstrated how tactile qualities can exist as a structural part of architectural narrative, a strategy that is now being increasingly referred to in conversations with peers.

How does the process of designing in a cold, harsh landscape like the frozen gorge shape your spatial and artistic choices?

The frozen gorge calls for an architecture of humility. We could not compete with the scale, the silence, nor the severity of the landscape, so instead, we listened, a position that aligns with our practice of allowing site conditions to be co-authors of form. The cold attuned us to





threshold moments: the shift from biting wind to sheltered stillness, from blinding snowlight to shadowed interior. We articulated spaces to amplify these moments of transitions, allowing shelter to feel earned and light to feel rare. The approach we've taken here has since informed our design approaches for other extreme climates, and has been cited as an example of turning environmental constraints into primary determinants of spatial experience.

Can you describe how the artistic model evolved into the architectural design? Were there any discoveries along the way?

We started with the wood pieces that had no specific scale. They weren't models of architecture, they were sculptural explorations of mass, void and composition. As we moved toward architecture, we realized that form isn't simply a container, but a process of mediation of body, memory, and site. The voids (the gaps, or cuts, or emptiness) in the model became as

important as the solids. This shifted our view of form: in art, form can be an end in itself; in architecture, form is also an invitation, it frames movement, perception, and habitation. What we learned is that our most resonant spaces came not by adding more form to the design, but rather by allowing absence to be a part of the architecture.

Light and shadow seem to be key components in your project. How do you work with these elements to shape experience?

We treat light and shadow as temporal materials, always in motion, always reshaping the space. In our process, light is not applied uniformly; it is choreographed. Some spaces are deliberately kept dim, drawing the body inward and slowing perception; others are tuned to capture a brief, concentrated beam, making that instant feel monumental. Shadow also acts, it thickens space, softens edges, permits moments of stillness, etc. Achieving this orchestration requires technical fluency in structure, orientation, and material behavior, paired with an ability to choreograph them into an experiential sequence, a skill set that is relatively rare in the field but central to our practice.

How do you view the boundary between art and architecture, and how do you blur this boundary in your work? Why is this approach unique to the discipline of architecture?

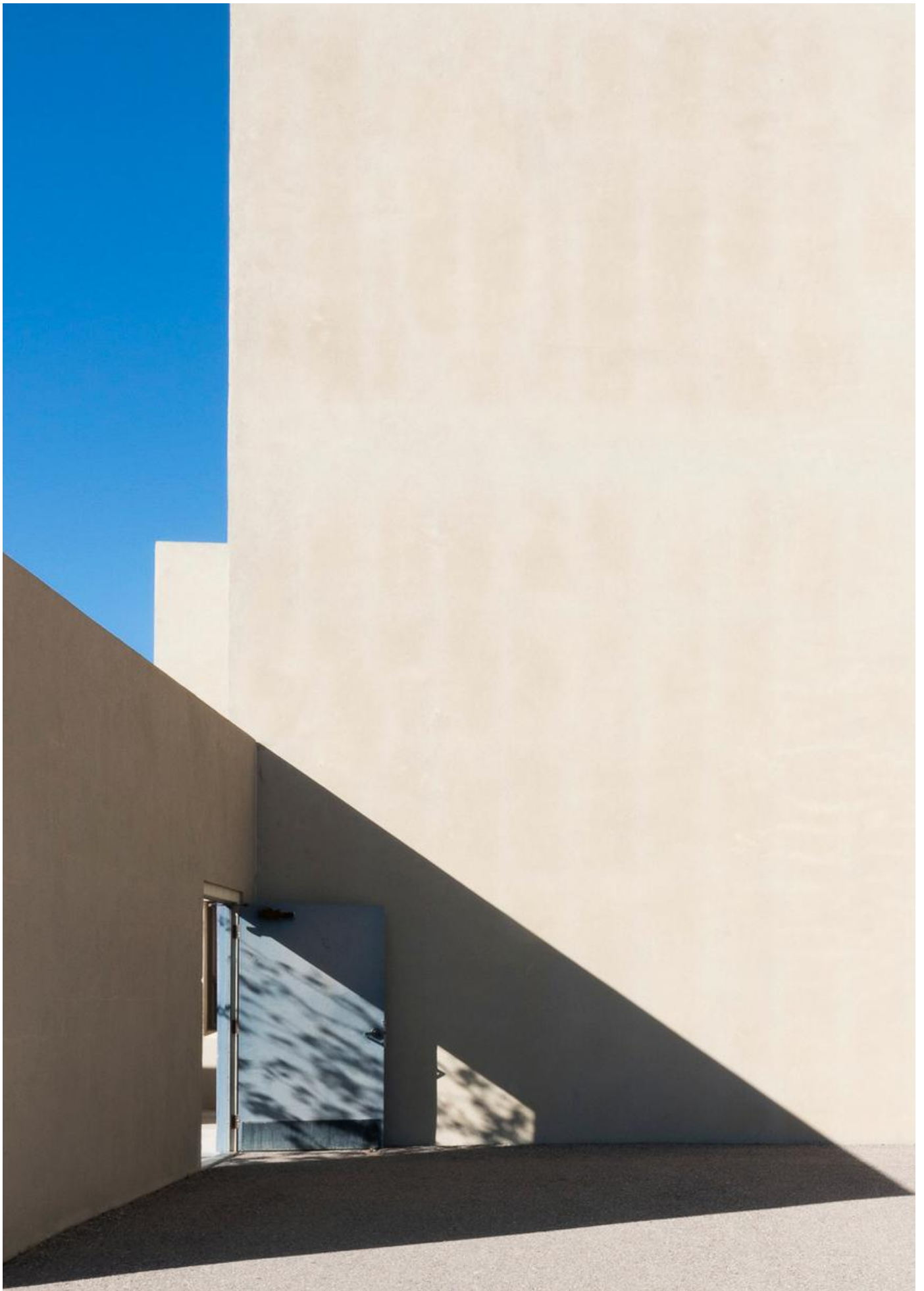
We see both art and architecture as open for interpretation, they invite the viewer or inhabitant to project meaning and complete the work in their own mind. The boundary between them often exists more in institutional categories than in practice. By beginning with artistic processes (collecting fragments, working through abstraction, composing atmospheres) we let architecture emerge as a spatial art form rather than a separate discipline. Our ability to sustain conceptual ambiguity while delivering technically precise spaces is one of the defining capabilities of our work, ensuring that inhabitation becomes a form of participation in the artwork rather than simply the use of a functional shell.



Award-winning photographer **Natalie Christensen's** focus is ordinary settings, seeking the sublime in color fields and shadow. Exhibited in U.S./international museums and galleries, honors include All About Photo 2024 Merit Award; UAE Embassy culture tour delegate; upcoming Artist-in-Residence Chateau d'Orquevaux, France; commissioned cover shoot Vladem Contemporary museum opening - Santa Fe New Mexican Special Edition, 2023; and New Mexico Purchase Initiative selection, New Mexico Arts / Department of Cultural Affairs, 2023. Books include Minimalism in Photography, cover/featured artist, teNeues, Düsseldorf, Germany and 007 – Natalie Christensen, Setanta Books, London. She has work in permanent collections and has been featured in art publications.



Natalie Christensen | Aberration



Natalie Christensen | Open door

— Interview

Jena Belle

You describe your work as “an ode to stillness and sensuality.” What does stillness mean to you in practice—on the canvas and in life?

For me, stillness is not the absence of movement, but a deep presence. On the canvas, it's the quiet space where shapes can breathe, where a gesture becomes eternal. In life, it's the ability to slow down, to notice the curve of a hand, the



sound of fruit being peeled, the way light lingers on a wall. Stillness is a form of intimacy—with myself, with the world, with beauty.

How did being self-taught shape your voice and your confidence as an artist?

Being self-taught gave me freedom. I never felt bound by rules or expectations; I learned to trust my instincts, to allow imperfection to lead me somewhere unexpected. Confidence came slowly, not from technique alone, but from realizing that my voice is valid precisely because it is mine, unfiltered. My path may look unconventional, but it has kept me honest and intuitive.

Your images often honor small rituals—peeling fruit, resting, listening. Which everyday ritual most often becomes a painting, and why?

Resting. I think of rest as sacred. In a world that celebrates constant productivity, I want to celebrate the pause—the moment of lying down, closing the eyes, exhaling. For me, it's not



Jena Belle | Inner Bloom | 2025



laziness but a sensual act of reclaiming time, of being fully human. That ritual becomes a painting again and again because it feels universal yet deeply personal.

Italy appears in your palette and atmosphere. What is “Italian” in your work—the light, the color, the tempo, the architecture?

For me, Italy is a state of soul as much as a place. It's in the golden light, the terracotta warmth, the languid rhythm of afternoons, the timeless geometry of arches and piazzas. When I paint, I try to capture not just the look of Italy but its tempo—the way life unfolds more slowly, with attention to beauty in the everyday.

Negative space and clean silhouettes carry a lot of emotion in your compositions. What's your process for editing a scene down to its essentials?

I always begin with more than I need—sketches, colors, forms. Then I start removing. Editing is an act of tenderness: asking, “What truly matters here? What carries the emotion?” I strip away until only the essence remains. Negative space is

as important as presence; it's the silence that makes the voice stronger.

Titles in your work are poetic. How do you find them, and have you ever changed a painting after finding its title?

Titles come like whispers. Sometimes a phrase appears before the painting, like a secret waiting to be revealed. Other times, the painting tells me its name at the very end. I have changed a painting after naming it—when a title uncovers another layer of meaning, I feel compelled to align the image with its newfound truth.

What responses from collectors or viewers have surprised you the most?

The most surprising responses are when people see themselves in the work in ways I never expected. Someone once told me that a figure reminded them of their mother resting after cooking, another saw in my still lifes a memory of childhood summers. I'm always moved by how a very personal gesture can become universal. That is the magic of art—it leaves space for others to enter and find their own stories.



Catalina Visinescu

Geologist with 2 years experience in oil and greening industries, another 2 years in entertainment and 1 year as a freelancer painter.

Project Statement

I use art as a way to speak properly about the things that sometimes overwhelms my day to day life and a muted color palette makes me feel more comfortable about the idea of being completely honest.



Cătălina Vişinescu | Frozen by the Rat Race | 2024



Cătălina Vişinescu | Me, With Myself and I | 2024



Cătălina Vişinescu | Help | 2024

— Interview

ZhuziQ

How did your journey in art begin, and what led you to embrace painting as your main medium?

My journey into art began quite unexpectedly at the age of 33. At that time, I had a career in IT consulting and had never even considered painting. One day I came across a box of soft pastels I had bought years earlier simply because they looked beautiful, though I had no idea how to use them. I finally decided to give them a try, and while my first attempt was a complete failure, I was absolutely mesmerized by the medium. That fascination led me to search for tutorials, and I stumbled upon the art school of Veronika Kalacheva. It opened an entirely new world to me. I started practicing, taking lessons, and to my own surprise, something began to work. I was so captivated that I devoted all my free time to drawing and learning.

My relationship with painting came a bit later, and in a rather unusual way. Initially, I focused on graphics and believed that restrained palettes and monochrome lines were what “serious art” should look like. Bright colors, which I secretly loved, felt to me almost childish and naïve, so I tried to suppress that side of myself. But over time, as I questioned what was truly mine in art, I began to allow myself to paint more freely—just as I felt in the moment. That’s when my



ZhuziQ | Icelandic Volcano | 2025



ZhuziQ | Dream Catchers

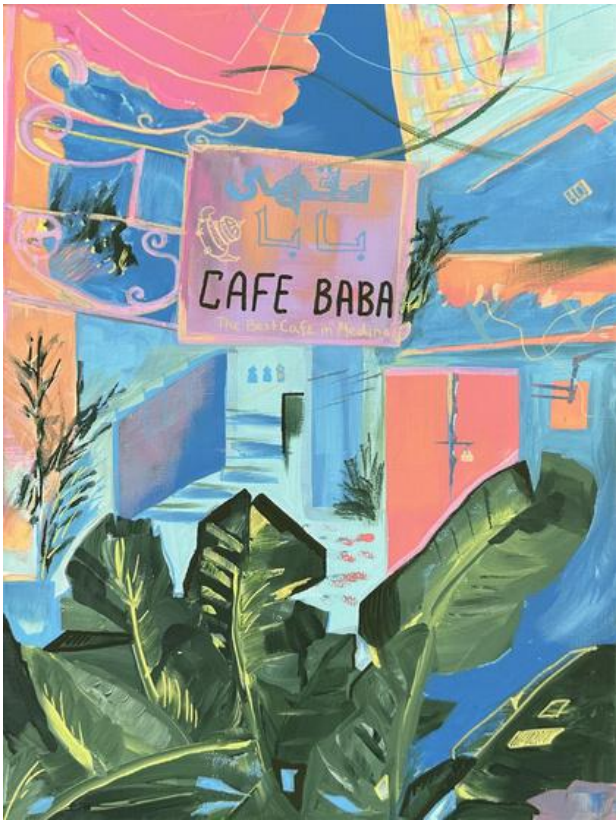
work naturally evolved into the vibrant, colorful style I create today. Looking back at my very first pieces, I realized that this love for bold color, composition, and expressive palettes was always there from the beginning. It just took me years of learning and unlearning to finally return to myself.

You mentioned that you started creating more intuitively when you allowed yourself to paint freely. Can you describe that moment of transition?

That transition happened at a time when I felt completely lost in my artistic identity. I kept asking myself: what is truly mine in art? I realized I needed to stop listening to both the inner and the outer critic and instead allow myself to create intuitively—painting what I felt in the moment, whatever impulse came through me. Of course, my rational mind resisted, telling me: “This is not how real artists work, this is wrong.” But instead of fighting that resistance, I decided to push it to the extreme. I went to an art store, bought the largest canvases I could find, and just started painting on them freely. And then something magical happened—suddenly, the works I created not only felt authentic to me but also resonated with others. After a few of those large canvases, even my critical mind quieted down and accepted: yes, this is possible. That’s when the real transformation took place.

Your works often deal with the idea of the “inner child.” What inspired you to explore this theme so deeply?

In recent years, I kept asking myself: why did I only start painting at the age of 33? What went wrong in my childhood that made me abandon drawing in the seventh grade, deciding it was “not for me,” that I “couldn’t draw,” and that it wasn’t serious anyway? After all, a child naturally explores the



world through creativity.

That question led me into psychology, and eventually I discovered transactional analysis. I realized that my inner parent had silenced and even abused my inner child with beliefs like: art isn't serious, artists starve, first you need a proper career, and only then can you afford to "play." So my inner child went quiet, hiding and waiting patiently until I reached that point in life when it was finally safe to speak again. At 33, I heard that voice by accident—and even then, I tried to silence it again, telling it how it "should" draw. Now, after all of this, I never want to lose that child's voice again. It has become the most authentic source of my creativity, and honoring it is at the core of my artistic journey.

Travel and meditation appear as recurring sources of inspiration in your work. Could you share an example of how one of your journeys or meditations shaped a specific painting?

One vivid example is my painting *Café Baba*, which was inspired by my trip to Morocco. I painted it in a single flow, without sketches or preparation, purely from inspiration. It's a small café in Tangier where Jim Jarmusch filmed *Only Lovers Left Alive*. For me, that place became a point where two personal dreams met—my childhood longing to visit Morocco and my love for Jarmusch's films. The experience of that journey left such a strong impression that it echoed in other works as well. For instance, in *The Dreamcatcher* I captured a fragment of life in a Moroccan medina, but also something on a more symbolic level: the feeling that the entire trip was like a dream, surreal and almost otherworldly.

Some of your works depict everyday spaces—cafés, kitchens, city suburbs—through very vibrant palettes. What draws you to these ordinary subjects?

For me, these everyday places are never just ordinary. Each of them holds a very personal meaning, a memory of a moment when my inner child felt happy and alive. When I paint them, I'm not simply depicting a space; I'm painting my inner memory and impressions. The vibrant palette is my way of allowing that moment of joy to come through on the canvas and to share the emotional truth behind it.

You say your art is also for millennials and older generations. What conversations do you hope your art sparks within this audience?

What I hope my art does for millennials and older generations is to encourage them to reconnect with their inner child and finally allow that voice to be heard. From my own experience, and from speaking with people of my generation, I've seen how many of us silence that child within. We end up imprisoning ourselves with social expectations, fears, and rigid beliefs. This often creates a vicious cycle: we keep doing what doesn't bring us joy, we lose energy and motivation, and as a result, we feel we no longer have the strength to start something that truly nourishes us. Through my paintings and my own story, I want to show that it's never too late to begin again. One of the most important acts of trust in my inner child was when I left my career at its peak. I had achieved everything I wanted in that field, and I realized that continuing only for money would mean lying to myself. So I walked away and started over as an artist. And I've seen how this inspired others—former colleagues, people who once worked under my leadership—some turned to music, others to spiritual practices, daring to follow their own dreams. That's the kind of conversation I hope my art sparks: a reminder that authentic joy is still possible, and that giving space to your inner child can transform your life, no matter your age.

Do you think contemporary art has the power to heal personal and collective traumas?

Yes, absolutely. I believe contemporary art has the power to heal because it no longer has boundaries—neither in mediums, nor in expressions, nor in styles. And only in such freedom can truth emerge, and truth is what heals. Even if that healing begins on a purely personal level, it inevitably extends outward. When one person finds healing through art, they become a source of support for others, even just within their closest circle. This sets off a chain reaction that, over time, can contribute to a much larger process of collective healing.



— Interview

Robert Mango

Your work often deconstructs and reconstructs the human form. What draws you to this process, and what does it reveal for you?

For me, it's inherent to my approach to explore everything I encounter, to take it apart, look for its origins, and then imagine where the artist has been. Like puzzle pieces that defy any apparent rhyme or reason, and even time and place, as the world becomes one fleeting passage through a collective consciousness that is never at rest. Often the figure becomes a self-portrait, but in disguise, set in a background whose symbolic meaning is as important as its visual beauty. The placement of that figure can feel arbitrary, as if he's buoyant, bobbing in a moving current, watching and remembering. Deconstructing and reconstructing the human form is a way to connect memory, invention, and history, and allows you to show not just the body, but the journey it carries through time.

Robert Mango | Harbinger | 2015



You mentioned that your work bridges classical traditions and contemporary American art. Can you elaborate on how these influences coexist in your practice?

My roots are in classical disciplines, including proportion, chiaroscuro, and draftsmanship—skills I acquired at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago between the ages of 15 and 17. But my sensibilities were shaped just as much by the raw, fearless methods of Rauschenberg, Rivers, Duchamp, and the Surrealists, as well as by the literary and cinematic worlds of Nietzsche, Fellini, and the Beat poets. Those worlds coexist in my work because I don't see them as opposite; the precision and permanence of the classical, and the improvisation and absurdity of the contemporary, are actually closely aligned. So in my studio, a figure built with all that classical training might be dropped into a Fellini-esque scene where anything can happen.

How do you develop the visual language in your pieces — is it intuitive, symbolic, or narrative-driven?

It's all of those at once. The intuition comes from years of running. I'd get whole images in my



head mid-stride, in that oxygen-debt zone where your conscious mind steps aside. Symbols just surface without me forcing them. And whether I plan it or not, a story starts to take shape once the pieces are down. I'm not looking to illustrate a fixed idea. I want to give form to something I've lived, felt, or half-remembered, and let it keep breathing.

There is a strong presence of surrealism and symbolism in your compositions. What role does the unconscious mind play in your creative process?

The unconscious is at the heart of everything I do. Since the late 1960s, I've cultivated ways to reach it like long-distance runs first thing in the morning, when dream imagery is still vivid, which has proven to be one of the most reliable ways. Duchamp, the Surrealists, and the Beats also taught me that the irrational and the symbolic can be more revealing than the literal. My role is to translate whatever rises into something that feels inevitable, even if its meaning defies explanation.

Do your figures represent specific characters, archetypes, or states of being? Or are they entirely abstracted expressions?

They can be all of those. In The Hero series, for instance, the figure is often an artist like me, refracted through archetypes like the warrior, the traveler, the witness. Even in my more abstracted pieces, there's an embedded identity. The figure becomes a kind of time traveler, moving through places that are part memory, part invention, and part symbolic stage.

Your artworks often feel theatrical, even mythological. Are there recurring themes or stories you return to?

The journey is a constant, whether physical, spiritual, or artistic. My work often stages encounters between past and present, reason and absurdity, strength and vulnerability. Certain figures, landscapes, and symbols return, but they're never fixed in place; they evolve like characters in a new production. There are no boundaries here, only the limits of imagination. My studio is a stage where the unconscious mind directs the performance.

What is your approach to color and texture — especially the vibrant, glossy forms layered over rough or architectural backgrounds?

Color and texture are structural in my work. I'm drawn to the tension between the refined and the raw. A glossy, vividly colored form can feel like an ideal or a memory polished over time; set it against a rough, architectural ground, and it gains weight and grit. Years of working fluently across different media have taught me to treat each surface like a character with its own personality. Layering them is like layering memory, dream, and observation. They may overlap, and interact, but they never fully merge.




Darya Romaniv

My name is Darya, and I create paintings and art panels for contemporary interiors. I gain tremendous joy from the entire process, from the very first spark of an idea to its realization. I love to experiment and combine different techniques, styles, materials, textures, and colors. I enjoy working with natural materials such as wood, seashells, genuine leather, stones, and feathers. In my projects, I often incorporate textured elements, using modeling paste, fabric, and plaster. I strive to make each work unique, with its own energy, character, and meaning, where the viewer can discover and feel something personal, and the interior acquires a special atmosphere and individuality.



Darya Romaniv | You and I | 2024

A black rectangular sign with a rough, textured surface is mounted on a light-colored wall. The sign is framed by a black border and has several sharp, metallic spikes protruding from its edges. A silver metal chain is attached to the top of the sign, forming a loop. In the center of the sign, the words "IT'S MY PRIVATE ZONE" are written in large, bold, blue 3D block letters.

**IT'S
MY
PRIVATE
ZONE**

Thomas Olze

Your series “Glider” is deeply influenced by the concept of ambiguity. How did reading Thomas Bauer’s essay shape your visual language?



Thomas Olze | Glider | 2025



Bauer's essay initially influenced my conceptual approach, and the abandonment of concrete pictorial content is due to it. Through the text, I found the courage and legitimacy to turn to a purely gestural, abstract painting that creates precisely this ambiguous pictorial space.

You mention listening to shoegaze music like My Bloody Valentine during your process. How do sound and music influence the textures and rhythm of your paintings?

Listening to shoegaze bands like MY BLOODY VALENTINE and LUSH gave rise to the many painterly layers and textures in my paintings, analogous to the sonic layers in this very music. Layers that are difficult to grasp in their entirety.

In your work, you deliberately layer contrasting gestures and surfaces. Do you see this as a metaphor for contemporary social or political tensions?

I see these different layers and painterly gestures first and foremost as an ambiguous metaspace . I see art as a tool and a form of thought. Art should teach us all to accept and endure the ambiguity of our world.

I therefore don't want to make direct political statements, as this would render the artistic work superfluous. A political or philosophical text would then be perfectly sufficient. Nevertheless, the recipient can and should read these works as metaphors.



How does your curatorial practice inform or challenge your work as a painter—and vice versa?

My curatorial practice and my own artistic work influence each other on a philosophical level. However, the development of exhibitions is much more focused on concrete themes and issues than my own artistic work, which is more ambiguous.

The “Surfaces / Exploration – Transit” series explores the interplay between gesture and geometry. How do you approach balance and tension between these elements?

The balance and tension between these pictorial elements arises very organically during the painting process and is based on aesthetic considerations.

Is ambiguity a political stance in your art, or more of a philosophical perspective?

Ambiguity in my art is primarily a philosophical perspective. This inevitably also leads to a political one. The widespread rejection of ambiguity, the expectation of clear answers about what is right and what is wrong, poses major problems in our societies and leads to intolerance.

What role does color play in creating emotional or perceptual complexity in your paintings?

Color is very important. It creates both, depth and dynamism. My color palette, which is sometimes very bright, is intended to reflect our exuberant times, which are often very challenging and overwhelming.

Joyce Melander is an artist fascinated by the constructed object. Using a variety of processes such as weaving, crochet, embroidery and sewing, the artist's intricately assembled sculptures carry traditional craft methods into the context of fine art. She incorporates a wide array of materials in her work, bringing wool, glass beads, textiles and wood veneers into a rich, almost musical, interplay of texture and rhythm.

Her work is held in numerous public collections throughout the country, and has been exhibited in numerous galleries and institutions, including June Kelly Gallery, New York; Salon de Mars, Paris, France; the Tennessee State Museum, Nashville; Aaron Payne Fine Art, Santa Fe, and many others.

Project Statement

I began my artistic career as a painter, working in a photorealistic style that juxtaposed three-dimensional subjects with a flattened background. That flatness served to isolate my subject matter, allowing me to focus on formal qualities rather than representational ones. Eventually, that emphasis on form alone became paramount for me, and I started experimenting with additional materials: fiber, beads, and wood. I had always admired the backs of my canvases, considering them beautiful textiles. Ultimately, I stitched through the canvas and recognized it was a warp. Through these experiments, I discovered I wasn't confined to a loom; I could make the work go in any direction I desired.

This break from realism provided a welcome chance to incorporate elements of sculpture and three-dimensionality into my work, serving as a vehicle for exploring different colors and textures. I live and work in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a place where the desert landscape and crisp, bright colors inevitably find their way into the palette and forms of my work.

Over the years, my curiosity has driven me to explore various media and techniques, ranging from paint to wool, from drawing to beading. Each medium has posed its own challenges. My commitment remains to examine each one with respect for the artisans and artists who have perfected their use in the past. The project becomes to integrate them all in a new and unique way.

The fine, delicate materials I work with help me grapple with life's magnitude by examining its minutiae. By paying attention to everything, to the details, I can extrapolate some wisdom that might apply to life's greater questions. Every gesture of the brush, every stitch, every inch of the canvas, every bead in the strand, every voice, every stroke of the pen—everything remembered and everything forgotten.

Joyce Melander | Alchemy | 2022





— Interview

Peiyang (Camille) Li

Growing up between Shenzhen, China, and New York City, as well as other cultural environments, how have these diverse contexts influenced your artistic language?

Growing up between Shenzhen and New York, while also being immersed in different cultural environments, has shaped not only my aesthetics but more importantly, my way of thinking as a creator. From Eastern culture, I learned the importance of awareness—understanding what audiences are curious about and how to extend the impact of my work by engaging with those interests. Western culture, on the other hand, taught me how to face criticism with balance, to embrace strengths while acknowledging limits, and to see how art can merge seamlessly with fields that seem unrelated at first glance. For instance, before my studies at Parsons, I never knew that conductive thread existed. That discovery opened my eyes to how textiles can extend beyond beauty—into technology, lighting, and even spatial experience.



Peiyang (Camille) Li | Nuclear Waste Mutant Creatures | 2025



You are both a textile designer and a professional astrology consultant. How do these two practices intersect and inform each other in your creative process?

In astrology consultations, clients often share what is currently shaping their mindset or emotions. Sometimes, these conversations spark unexpected creative directions. One of my textile projects, for example, was inspired by a client with whom I shared a significant Mars-Neptune aspect in our charts. Mars represents drive and agency—our ability to act and move forward—while Neptune symbolizes the subconscious, dreams, and hidden truths. Together, these energies pointed me toward a story about blurred morality and unseen struggle.

The project drew from a traditional dining ritual in a Japanese fishing village, where live seafood is injured, placed in a bowl, and left to struggle while diners find excitement in the spectacle. It made me question: Should such traditions continue? Where do we draw the ethical line? Through that work, astrology didn't just provide symbolism—it offered a framework to reflect on human behavior, power, and morality.

Your works combine crocheting, macrame, ruching, knitting, and even E-textiles. What draws you to exploring such a wide range of textile techniques?

My exposure to such a variety of textile practices began during my 2 degree studies at Parsons. I was fortunate to learn from professors and peers who each had unique specialties and were eager to exchange knowledge. At the same time, I was personally fascinated by craft techniques—passion really is the best teacher.

Another motivation is the urgency I feel as AI becomes more integrated into creative fields. While AI is efficient, it cannot fully replicate the tactile depth and layered process of textile-making. A garment that combines knitting and woven structures, for example, embodies complexities that a machine cannot yet generate. For me, preserving and



experimenting with traditional methods is also a way to ensure they don't fade into obscurity.

In your project *Memory Mental Bullying*, you integrated E-wire decoration with French Knot techniques. What challenges and discoveries did you encounter in merging traditional textile craft with technology?

The greatest challenge was to make the wires feel intentional—less like an intrusion, more like part of the fabric's story. French Knots, dense and rounded, disguised the wires so they appeared naturally embedded in the textile. With light glowing through the wires, the knots became a metaphor for resistance and the impulse to push back against unfair experience.

To me, the wires' bright, almost aggressive light symbolized my voice, while the darker yarns—black and burgundy—embodied conflict and mental manipulation from others. Juxtaposed together, they created a raw, striking tension. I discovered that technology, when woven thoughtfully, doesn't diminish craft; it intensifies the emotional impact.

Many of your works are inspired by stories collected during astrology consultations. Can you share an example where a client's story directly shaped a textile piece?

The project I described earlier—the Japanese dining ritual—remains the only work so far directly shaped by a client's astrological story. While not all of my projects originate from consultations, that particular experience highlighted how deeply personal narratives can translate into universal questions of ethics and empathy. Thank you for your understanding.

Which project has been the most personally transformative for you so far, and why?

Memory Mental Bullying has been the most transformative. It felt like the purest translation of inner conflict into form. Without sketches or hesitation, I immediately knew which elements to use—recycled nylon cords for their rough, reptilian tactility, oversized forms to evoke the suffocating weight of darkness, and a green-lit smiley face inside the installation to represent the "victor"—the oppressive, manipulative force that dominates by any means necessary. For me, the most impactful works are those that audiences grasp intuitively. This project's clarity and intensity made it both deeply personal and universally resonant.

Looking forward, are there specific social, environmental, or psychological issues you would like to further explore through textiles?

For instance, I was struck by a case I saw online: a mother documenting her daughter's daily life for short videos. At first, it seemed innocent—the child's charm attracted followers and sponsors, providing financial relief. But over time, the mother, motivated by profit, staged harmful scenarios—making her daughter fall, manipulating her height in photos, even forcing her to wear clothes too small to preserve an image of "childlike cuteness." To me, this reflected a disturbing cycle: her mother's limited educational background, the sudden access to wealth, and the erosion of ethical boundaries led to a dispute on the Internet about the mother.

I imagine expressing this through crocheting or knotting techniques—tangled threads symbolizing the distorted relationship, where nurturing is replaced by exploitation, and the child becomes more of a resource than a person.



M.(Marzenka) Kwintera, presence showcases her work as a photographer and art director, where she displays a visually compelling portfolio focused on themes like body positivity, human connection, and nature. Her distinctive style, often using natural light and predominantly black-and-white photography, creates an intimate, raw atmosphere in her images. She works closely with models, makeup artists, and stylists to bring out the unique qualities of her subjects, celebrating diversity and individuality. Her photography spans across fashion editorials and conceptual pieces, often intertwining personal and social narratives, such as challenging conventional beauty standards and emphasizing self-love. Her work also frequently touches on the deep connections between people and the natural world, portrayed through powerful metaphors in her projects. Marzena Kwintera's photography is widely recognized and has been featured in various international publications and art platforms.

Project Statement

My work is a visual narrative in which photography becomes a language of identity, embodiment, and community. I focus on portraying bodies that transcend normative beauty standards and binary gender divisions. Through styling, composition, and a deliberate use of light and color, I create spaces where subjectivity and diversity become visible and celebrated. At the core of my practice is the human being – presence, pride, and personal story. My photographs are a form of resistance against invisibility and an affirmation of life, of fashion as a tool of expression, and of the body as a site of meaning. This series balances between documentary and fiction – I construct a world that, although symbolic and crafted, speaks to real experience. I am interested in creating images that not only captivate with form, but also provoke reflection on who has the right to be seen.





— Interview

Carmen Samoila

Your Blueborne series uses botanical elements and light-sensitive emulsions. Can you walk us through your process of creating these pieces outdoors?

The Blueborne series begins with mixing the cyanotype formula, a union of iron compounds that, when exposed to UV light and washed in water, oxidize into the deep blue of Prussian pigment. I hand-coat BFK Rives fine art papers in a dimly lit studio, treating the emulsion not as a neutral ground but as paint itself. Brushstrokes form the first gestures of composition, so that each sheet carries a distinct rhythm before it ever meets the sun. Once dried, the papers are sealed in lightproof containers, awaiting their encounter with landscape.



Carmen Samoila | Blueborne Vestige | 2025



For Blueborne, these prepared sheets travelled with me from Alberta into the mountains of British Columbia. Along the way, I gathered botanicals—reeds, grasses, flowers, wind-fallen leaves—each bearing the trace of place and season. In makeshift outdoor studios, I arranged these forms in intuitive choreography, securing them beneath glass to hold them steady in shifting light. The exposures unfolded under the high-altitude sun of the Kootenays, where rain, wind, and passing clouds shaped the image as much as my hand. When the glass is lifted, the paper reveals a pale green impression that, once washed, transforms alchemically into the vivid Prussian blue of oxidized iron. I toned the works with coffee, softening the blue into a muted indigo more resonant with the landscapes themselves. Each piece dried in shaded open air, carrying subtle textures left by its environment. From beginning to end, the process remains tactile and elemental—brush, sun, water, plant, air—each print a singular record of its own making. I complete them with a cinnabar seal carved by hand, marking their vitality as part of Blueborne: a field record where material and place converge.

How does working in close connection with the natural landscape of Western Canada influence your practice?

The Western Canadian landscape is an active force in all of my work. The drifting skyline of the prairies, the boreal forests of the north, windswept passes of the Rockies, the temperate valleys and dry forests of the Okanagan, and the lush mists of the Kootenays each carry their own light, atmospheres, and rhythms—metaphors for the inner terrains I navigate. These vast expanses—the shifting shadows of mountains, the cool breath of alpine waters, the long northern glow through spruce and pine—sharpen my awareness of subtle transitions: the way light alters before and after a storm, how air grows heavier or thins at elevation, how stillness can vibrate with unseen movement. My origins in the prairie regions of southern Alberta, along with formative years in the forests of the Yukon and British Columbia, have left me with a lasting sense of belonging to the land. Now, at home in Calgary, a city whose energy and



community I share, I encounter the compression of urban life. Its pace, interruptions, and layers of daily maintenance can pull me away from the grounded attunement I find in nature. The city connects me to humankind; the land remains my muse, drawing me back to the earth and to myself. This interplay shapes all of my series—from Blueborne cyanotypes created in direct collaboration with wind, sun, and gathered botanicals, to oil landscapes where light and weather are distilled into gesture and tone. Whether working in cyanotype, photography, painting, or sculpture, the external landscape and its ecosystems—and their reflection within—draw me inward to a place of discovery. In wild terrain, solitude opens space for intuition to lead. In the city, structure offers its own pulse and counterpoint. My work moves between these worlds, navigating thresholds where outer and inner converge. Each piece becomes a tactile map of memory and the living world that holds us.

You mention following intuition and responding to what “stirs beneath the surface.” How do you know when a piece is complete?

Completion, for me, is a recognition—an internal shift when the work begins to breathe on its own. I enter the process listening for what is asking to be revealed, moving between action and pause. There is a call and response: the piece speaks through its form, gestures, textures, and tonal balance, and I answer in turn. What stirs beneath the surface is the essence I seek—that vibration where I feel in alignment with the nature of our place in the universe, connected to the whole rather than to fragments of humanity. When I began the Blueborne series, I created more than

thirty experimental cyanotypes at locations ranging from open prairie to mountain lakes and forest edges. In my eyes, twenty of them failed. Four, however, stood apart—exquisite in their cohesion, connected not only through visual language but also through the manner and conditions in which they were made. Formed in the same spirit—through aligned timing, intention, materials, and light—they carried a natural harmony in gesture and tone. These became the heart of Blueborne. Another six will join the series soon, forming an intimate companion within Blueborne—where turmeric emulsions converge with cyanotype chemistry to extend its field of light.

It is rare for a work to become more than image or object—to hold the exact atmosphere of its making, the unrepeatable alignment of place, gesture, and time. In those moments, the work holds its own force, becoming a singular record of its becoming.

This is the nature of experimental work: its lessons are revealed in process. In Blueborne and across all my media, I’ve found that the purest expression often arrives in the first energy and gesture—the moment when the feeling is most alive. As the process unfolds, surges of possibility can lead me to add or subtract, to push and pull, sometimes clouding that initial clarity. Yet even this has value—it teaches me to recognise when I’ve gone too far, and how to return to what is essential.

Knowing a piece is complete is both experience and intuition. It is a recognition of expression, felt as much as seen. My breath shifts, my hands still, and I simply stand before the work, aware of its energy settling. That threshold between making and letting go is as integral to the practice as the first gesture. Each completion is a quiet resolution—a pause before the next beginning.

Your statement speaks of “luminous shadows” and “thresholds unseen.” How do these metaphors translate visually in your work?

“Luminous shadows” and “thresholds unseen” name the spaces in my work where contrasts converge—light with dark, form with dissolution, the known brushing against the unknown. They describe a heightened state of perception: moments when what is visible meets what is not.

While these metaphors move across my painting and photography as well, in Blueborne they become especially tangible. “Luminous shadows” are carried in the indigo depths of cyanotype—the radiant darkness shaped by impressions of botanicals, fragments of glass, and shifting light. “Thresholds unseen” emerge in the process itself: those brief alignments of wind, light, and form during exposure, when the image is not yet visible but already forming. They also speak to the nature of liminal states—both in landscape and in self. A subtle radiance in darkness, the afterglow of a storm, a glimmering edge where structure dissolves. The line where horizon meets sky, the edge between land and water, or the tension before a choice is made. These are moments when stillness pulses with potential, when presence feels charged.

Together, these metaphors reflect the threshold nature of my practice: each piece a singular record of life-force, made in collaboration with the elements, holding the convergence between what is seen and what can only be sensed.

The use of coffee and pigment toning adds warmth to the

cyanotype palette. What led you to experiment with these techniques?

The use of coffee and pigment toning in Blueborne arose through both experimentation and necessity. The traditional Prussian blue of cyanotype is striking, but it did not reflect the atmospheres I encountered in the field. I was drawn instead to a more subdued palette—tones that feel weathered, muted, closer to indigo than to bright cyan. At its heart, cyanotype is an elemental dialogue of iron and light: a chemistry of oxidation and reduction, but also a metaphor—what light transforms, time and organic matter temper into permanence.

I first intensified the blues with hydrogen peroxide, then began toning with coffee, seeking greater depth and resonance. The warm grey of BFK Rives paper already softened the surface, but coffee introduced an added warmth and subtle unpredictability that felt true to the process itself. It drew the prints toward the dusky resonance of evening skies, the mineral shadows of stone, the felt atmosphere of place.

Toning became another layer of dialogue with the materials—an alchemy that embraces the imperfect, the weathered, the handmade. The chemistry shifts, the surface deepens, and the work carries both its origin in iron salts and its transformation through organic infusions.

As with ourselves, these changes reveal the work more truly: what endures, what dissolves, and what remains.

There is a strong sense of stillness and vitality in your work. Do you see your art as a meditative or healing practice—for yourself or for the viewer?

Walking in nature is often where the work begins—gathering botanicals, attuning to place, and entering into quiet conversation with the land itself. That attunement is meditative: centring, soothing, and alive with recognition. From there, stillness becomes both an entry point and a return. The work cannot be rushed—it asks me to wait on weather, on light, on time itself. That slowness draws me into a state of deep listening, where process becomes less about control and more about response. If a piece does not begin in meditation, the making itself becomes the meditation—a flow state, an elemental immersion.

I see the practice as a dialogue: between body and landscape, between the pulse of an inner terrain and the shifting conditions around me. Cyanotype especially insists on patience—the emulsion dries as it will, the sun moves as it pleases, shadows lengthen in their own time. To respond requires trust in what cannot be forced.

At its heart, my practice has always been a way to digest experience, to find light within shadow, and to use the act of creating as a form of healing. Each piece arises through this movement—from darkness toward illumination, from fragmentation toward coherence. In moments of stillness, something settles: the materials, the body, the mind. From that quiet, something new is born—work that has never existed before, yet carries the imprint of resilience and renewal.

Like Blueborne and all my work, the intention is not only originality but endurance: to create pieces that connect us to spirit, that hold the possibility of healing, and that speak across thresholds of time. If a viewer feels even a pause from the noise of the world—if they sense recognition of



Carmen Samoilă | Blueborne Penumbra | 2025

themselves in the work—then the process extends beyond myself. It becomes a shared threshold, a place where we can enter, breathe, and remember what endures.

How has your background in sculpture and painting informed your photographic and mixed media work?

My early grounding in sculpture taught me to think with the body—gesture in space, weight, vitality. That sense of physicality never left me; even in two dimensions I remain attuned to material as form, as structure, as something that shapes how the viewer feels it in their own body.

Painting, by contrast, trained me in atmosphere—how to hold space through colour, light, and the tension of surface. It gave me a way of listening to nuance, to transition, to the subtle charge between darkness and illumination.

As a sculptor, and earlier as a stained glass artist and jeweller, I often worked to the edge of what a material could withstand—chiselling stone, hardwoods, fossilised bone, and mammoth ivory to their limits, coaxing alloys, gemstones, and glass into vessels of distilled light—always seeking the moment when form transcends its raw material state. That impulse—to discover the hidden qualities of a medium—still lives in me. But in painting, mixed media, and photographic processes, I have learned a different discipline: to sense when a piece asks to stop just short of the edge, to recognise when the work itself becomes alive, whole, and resonant. Photography, and cyanotype especially, opens me in another direction: imprinting time itself. Unlike paint or stone, which can be shaped at will, photographic processes depend on duration. Every exposure is a record of passing time—light shifting, shadows lengthening, chemicals transforming. What



Carmen Samolla | Blueborne Lilt | 2025

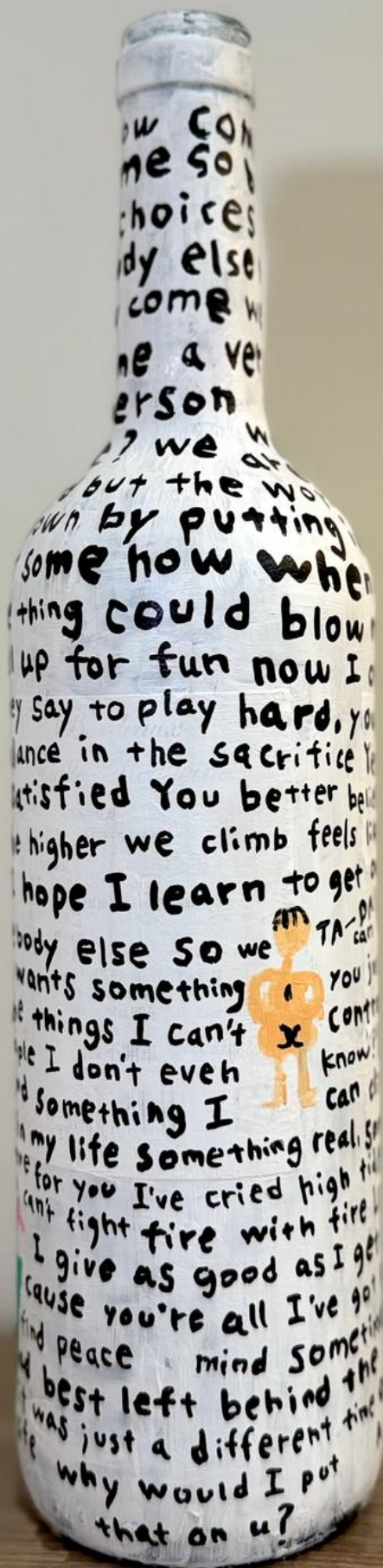
emerges is not only an image, but the trace of a singular instant—unrepeatable, elemental. Where carving and painting distil countless gestures into form, photography captures the imprint of time unfolding. These disciplines converse within me: sculpture grounds the

body, painting attunes perception, craft sharpens respect for limits, and photography records the fleeting passage of time. Together they form a continuum—matter, atmosphere, and duration—woven into how I approach mixed media practice today.

Lyla Liu is a visual artist with a Master's degree in Illustration and Visual Media from the University of the Arts London. Her art serves as a mirror to the inner world of modern life, using humor and everyday objects to explore how we navigate love, friendships, and daily challenges. Liu's work is divided into three core series, each using a common object to tell a unique story. In her "pop music scriptures," she finds a unique form of meditation, repetitively transcribing the lyrics of pop songs from artists like Adele and Billie Eilish onto wine bottles. This process of honest self-reflection is a recurring theme. Similarly, her "I Love My Job" series on coffee cups acts as a playful self-hypnosis, channeling the popular meme from *The Devil Wears Prada* to respond with a smirk to modern office culture and the idea that "the delulu is the solulu" (delusion is the solution). Her acrylic paintings present a sweet yet subversive twist. Using bright, "macaron-colored" palettes, Liu explores darker subjects like female struggles, body anxieties, and the absurdities of life with a touch of black humor. These vibrant canvases playfully subvert expectations, turning seemingly innocent objects into a commentary on our shared human experience. She finds humor in difficult situations, such as an inflatable doll becoming a perfect partner, or the feeling of being too large for your clothes becoming a metaphor for a new hire who finds it "so hard to fit in." Her work ultimately aims to provide a moment of recognition and comfort to anyone who has ever felt their inner world reflected in a pop song or a coffee cup.



Lyla Liu | If You Can't Fit In, Stand Out | 2025



— Interview

Ping Wang

Your work bridges traditional ceramics with interactive technology. What first inspired you to merge these mediums?



Ping Wang | Motherhood | 2025



Ping Wang | Axis Of The Body

The shift began during my exhibition *Meant to Held* at Powerhouse Arts, where I presented *Subliminal Echoes*—a sculptural installation combining visceral ceramic forms with light and sound. The project explored liminal states between emotional landscapes and physical space, with each form acting as a portal that responded to memory, trauma, and cultural fragmentation. For the first time, I integrated interactive elements—subtle motion, responsive lighting, and sound—which not only deepened viewer engagement but also marked a turning point in my practice: a growing curiosity about how technology could amplify the emotional and sensory dimensions of traditional craft. That curiosity deepened during my residency at Pioneer Works, where I developed the *Interdependent Frequencies* series—a continuation of this investigation into sensory perception, interactivity, and material resonance. This immersive installation explores the exchange between sound, motion, light, and sculptural form as a metaphor for the interdependence of body and soul. Composed of reassembled ceramic limbs, the work responds to viewer presence with sound and movement, activating an original audio composition blending bass, guzheng, and transformed everyday samples. Both bodily and mechanical, it reflects on thresholds—between motion and stillness, body and environment, sensation and perception.



Working across both institutions helped me see that technology could be more than a tool—it could become an extension of the medium, a way to give it breath, presence, and voice.

What are the challenges and rewards of working across so many mediums—ceramics, sculpture, painting, digital media?

The biggest challenge is that each medium has its own temperament, language, and limitations—but I'm naturally a patient person who enjoys digging deep into a process. This instinct started since middle school, I've made a birthday card for my mother every year, but it was never just a flat card. Over time, they evolved from paper cutouts to layered reliefs to small three-dimensional objects, as I instinctively used whatever materials I had to bring an image in my mind into physical form. That habit of working fluidly across materials became the foundation for my multidisciplinary practice.

I started with painting and drawing, then moved into printmaking, which shaped how I think in layers, repetition, and composition. Ceramics demands patience and a willingness to embrace unpredictability; sculpture requires structural problem-solving; painting is often more immediate and intuitive; and digital media asks for precision and an entirely different kind of logic. Moving between them means constantly shifting my mindset and technical approach. In return, I've gained a sense of freedom. Working across mediums allows me to choose the form that best serves the concept rather than forcing an idea into a single discipline. Ceramics has grounded me in material tactility, while digital media has opened up possibilities for interactivity, sound, and light. Together, these approaches allow me to create immersive environments where traditional craft and technology coexist—spaces that can be both intimate and expansive, tactile and ephemeral.

How did growing up in China and moving to New York influence your exploration of cultural identity in your art?

Growing up in China, I was surrounded by Eastern aesthetics, language systems, and implicit cultural codes—often embedded in everyday materials, gestures, and rituals. My





mother, a Chinese ink painter and collector of traditional furniture, filled our home with objects whose visual language had evolved over thousands of years. Lived with, touched, and internalized, they became part of my sensory memory.

After moving to New York, I found myself navigating a space where many of those references felt untranslatable or fragmented—yet there were also moments of connection. I carried an emotional rawness before I had the language to articulate these shifts. In my early printmaking, I began to subconsciously express that in-between state: starting with New York's iconic architecture, framing compositions with thin lines like portals, and inserting fragmented limbs that reached in or out of the frame. My practice lives in this in-betweenness. I often deconstruct the body, along with cultural symbols such as calligraphy characters, and repurpose forms from traditional furniture, architecture, or fashion. These elements are interwoven with symbols tied to diasporic

experience, creating a negotiation between systems—visual, linguistic, spatial. I'm not simply placing one culture into another; I'm working within the crevice where identities fracture, overlap, and evolve. This liminal space isn't just something I reflect on—it's where my work begins.

You often reference the human body in distorted or symbolic forms. What role does the body play in your storytelling?

The body, in my work, is both a site and a symbol—a vessel that carries memory, trauma, resilience, and transformation. I rarely depict it in full or in strict anatomical accuracy. Instead, I focus on fragments—legs, joints, hybrid limbs—often distorted or reassembled to convey psychological states. These forms act as stand-ins for lived experiences: instability, longing, rupture, and survival.

In recent works, like the *Interdependent Frequency* series, I've been particularly drawn to the leg, as it implies motion, direction, or collapse. A broken or mutated limb can suggest disorientation, but also adaptation. Many of my ceramic pieces appear vulnerable—off-balance, cracked, exposed—yet they hold weight. They endure. In that way, the body becomes a metaphor for navigating in-between spaces, especially in the context of migration, womanhood, and cultural dislocation. It is not just a body—it's a landscape, a memory container, a political structure.

How do memory and trauma manifest in your visual language?

For me, it's less about depicting specific events and more about translating emotional states into form, color, and gesture. Often, I work unconsciously—deconstructing, distorting, reshaping—until the material begins to echo the inner state. These states manifest as repetition, rupture, and residue—visual traces that suggest something has shifted, fractured, or been reassembled.

In ceramics, this might appear as cracks, uneven glazes, or surfaces that seem eroded by time. In installations, it can take the form of unstable structures, tangled threads, or sound that

interrupts and fades like a fleeting recollection. I see memory as fluid—constantly reshaped by the present—while trauma often leaves a sharper, more persistent imprint. This duality shapes my visual language: distortion to convey instability, layering to mimic the weight of accumulated experience, and fragmentation to reflect what is lost or altered in translation. Through these strategies, the work inhabits a space between preservation and transformation, where both memory and trauma can be felt rather than explained.

Your works feel both fragile and resilient. Is this duality intentional?

Yes and no. The unconscious and the intentional coexist in my practice. I rely on the unconscious—shaped by a heightened sensitivity to my surroundings—yet many of these unconscious choices are later distilled into intentional decisions. I enjoy working within this ambivalence, much like my natural affinity for ceramics—its visceral presence, the way it can hold both softness and hardness in the same state.

For me, “fragile” and “resilient” are not complete opposites. This coexistence gives my work dimensionality. Fragility feels like the psychological state of our time—sensitive, exposed, constantly adapting—while resilience is something deeply rooted, especially in women, like a strength embedded in the bones. By embedding these qualities into different materials, and allowing them to collide and interact, I can open new conversations through form, color, and texture.

Do you consider your art feminist in nature? If so, how do you express that through material and form?

My starting point is womanhood, and from there I explore identity and gender as fluid, shifting spaces. In my work, I reconstruct power dynamics to confront interwoven themes of resilience and transformation. I’m drawn to how the body is altered, staged, or adorned—through fingernails, high heels, piercings, and other elements of fashion and decoration. These objects can be sites of empowerment and self-

expression, yet they also carry histories of expectation and control.

I often exaggerate or reconfigure these forms: using only the shape and arrangement of nails without showing the entire hand, transforming a high heel or a human leg into the leg of a piece of furniture, or giving a glossy surface an unexpected weight. By shifting scale, material, and function, I challenge the neat boundaries of “feminine” and “ornamental,” opening them to conversations about strength, desire, and artifice.

These gestures are not about fixing identity in place, but about keeping it open—allowing resilience and vulnerability, performance and authenticity, to coexist. In this way, my feminism is less a declaration than a practice: using form, texture, and space to hold the complexity of how we inhabit our bodies. It’s about creating space for the body to be many things at once.



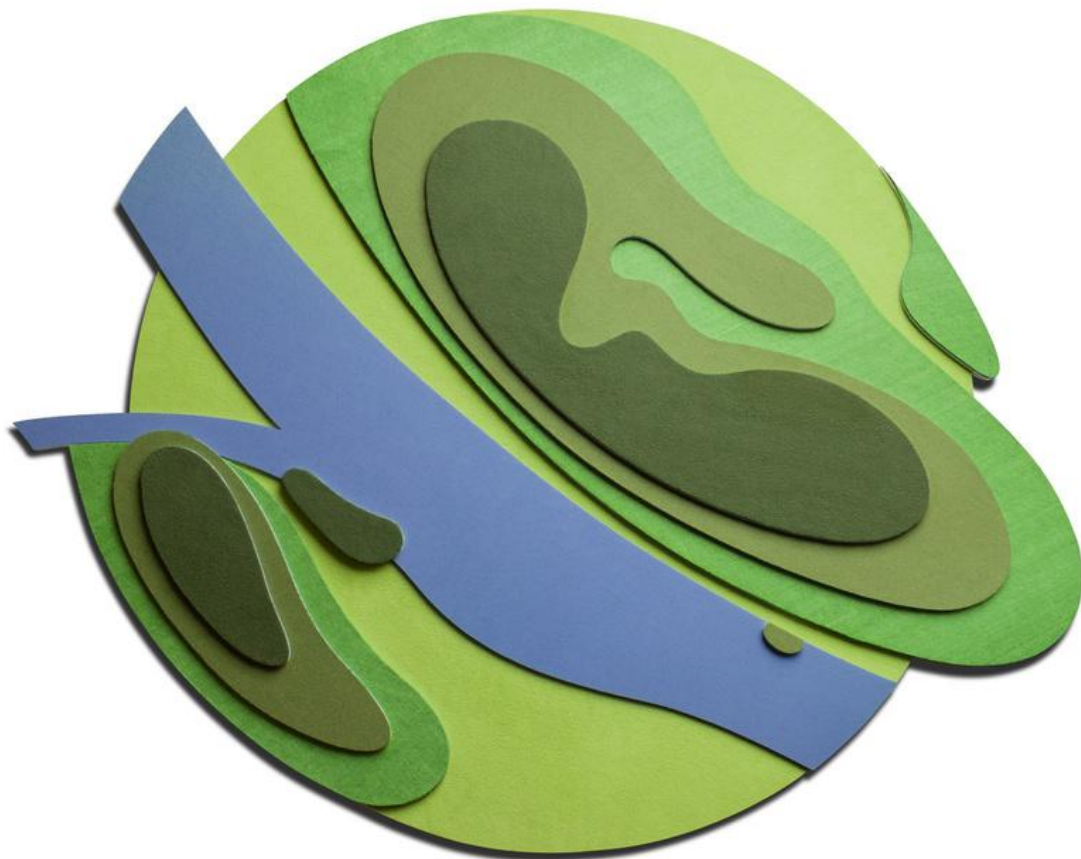
Ping Wang | Echoes

Gabrieliusmackevicius

I have studied graphic design and since then (2000) I participate in various creative projects, experiment with artistic expressions. I like to combine painting and relief objects. Text is usually a part of the visual work I make. It may be poetic story or a description of a situation that was put into painting in an abstract way. My works often stem from an inner feeling that I hope the viewer might also recognize within themselves. The subjects may seem like fragments of everyday life: simple scenes, domestic moments. But when felt deeply, they become meaningful. I'm drawn to those seemingly ordinary stories or situations that, when experienced from within, grow large and significant. I work with mixed media: paints, pencils, graphite, markers, textiles, and sometimes poetic text. I enjoy blending genres, and visually my works often balance between abstraction, sketch-like gestures, fauvist tones and also a touch of naive style. I create relief pieces using a personal technique: several cut out forms of plywood or plastic are layered with paint or fabric and assembled into irregular, textured objects meant to be hung on the wall. I have participated in several solo and group exhibitions.

Project Statement

"Weather forecast" is a body of work exploring our emotional and sensory relationship with nature: its signs, elements, and unpredictability. Instead of scientific measurement, these pieces attempt to "forecast" by feeling: watching clouds, listening to the wind, sensing tremors in the ground. Each work takes the form of a natural element: lightning, mountain, bubble, fish, diamond, shifting between childlike simplicity, meditative stillness, and playful absurdity.



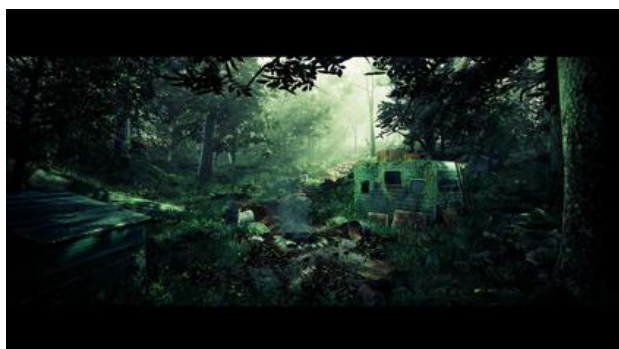


Gabrieliusmackevicius | Mountain of Lakes

Yuko Hwang

You started your creative journey with traditional fine art in Taipei. How has that classical training influenced your approach to 3D modeling and environment design?

Starting with traditional fine art in Taipei gave me a strong foundation in observation, composition, and an understanding of form, light, and texture. Spending years drawing and painting taught me patience and the importance of subtle details—skills that directly carry over into my 3D work. When I design environments or model assets, I approach them much like I would a canvas: considering balance, depth, and atmosphere. My classical training also ingrained in me a habit of storytelling through visual cues, which helps me infuse my 3D scenes with mood and narrative rather than just focusing on technical execution. Ultimately, that blend of traditional artistry and digital tools allows me to create worlds that feel both believable and emotionally engaging.



Yuko Hwang | Abandoned Campsite Daylight | 2022



Your work blends imaginative sci-fi worlds with realistic details. How do you balance the fantastical with the believable?

For me, the key to balancing the fantastical with the believable is grounding imagination in reality. Even in the most surreal sci-fi settings, I draw from real-world references—how materials age, how light behaves, how nature shapes its surroundings. These familiar details give viewers something to connect with, making the world feel plausible. Once that foundation is set, I can push the creative side—introducing unusual shapes, colors, or concepts—without losing immersion. It's a constant dialogue between creative freedom and visual logic, so the environments feel like they could truly exist somewhere, even if only in a distant galaxy.

How does storytelling influence your design decisions, especially when working on purely environmental scenes without visible characters?

Storytelling is at the heart of how I design, even when there are no characters present. I think of the environment itself as a silent narrator—every object, texture, and lighting choice can hint at what happened there or who might inhabit it. For example, the wear on a surface, the placement of props, or the way light filters through a space can all suggest a history or emotion. Without visible characters, these subtle cues become even more important because they invite the viewer to imagine the unseen story. My goal is for the scene to feel alive, as if someone just left moments ago or is about to arrive.

Many of your works have a cinematic feel. Do you draw inspiration from films or games when composing your scenes?

Absolutely. I often draw inspiration from both films and games, not only for their visual styles but also for how they use composition, pacing, and atmosphere to tell a story. Films teach me a lot about framing, lighting, and color grading—how a single shot can set a tone or evoke emotion. Games inspire me in a different way; they show how environments can be immersive and interactive, guiding the player's attention through visual cues. When I compose my own scenes, I try to blend those influences: the cinematic drama of film with the spatial storytelling of



games, so each environment feels like a frame from a larger narrative.

When working in Unreal Engine for professional film productions, what are some key differences compared to creating personal portfolio projects?

Working in Unreal Engine for professional film productions is very different from creating personal portfolio projects. In a production setting, everything has to serve the director's vision and meet strict deadlines, so there's a strong focus on efficiency, optimization, and collaboration. Assets are often created to fit seamlessly into a larger pipeline, meaning I have to follow specific technical requirements, naming conventions, and file structures. The work is also highly specialized—sometimes I'm responsible for just one part of a scene, and I need to ensure it integrates perfectly with others' work.

In personal projects, I have full creative freedom to experiment, push details as far as I want, and iterate until I'm satisfied. There's more room to take risks, explore different moods, and tell stories in my own way. Both approaches are valuable: professional work teaches discipline and teamwork, while personal projects allow me to explore my voice as an artist.

What role does lighting play in shaping the atmosphere of your environments? Could you share an example from your recent works?

Lighting is one of the most powerful tools for shaping the mood and storytelling of an environment. It not only reveals form and texture but also guides the viewer's eye and sets the emotional tone—whether it's warm and inviting, cold and mysterious, or tense and dramatic. I often think of lighting as the "final brushstroke" that

brings all the elements of a scene together.

For example, in my recent *Secrets of the Luminara* project, I crafted the lighting to feel like a moment suspended between stillness and revelation—soft, ambient tones mingling with precise highlights to shape both intimacy and tension. Cool, atmospheric blues washed over the scene, evoking an air of isolation and ancient mystery, while a warm shaft of sunlight pierced through from above, bathing the temple in a golden glow. This contrast not only guided the viewer's gaze but hinted at a hidden presence within, as if the structure itself guarded untold stories. Without that delicate interplay of light, the scene would have felt flat, losing the depth and narrative weight that brings it to life.

How do you see the future of 3D art evolving, especially for artists interested in merging realism with science fiction?

I think the future of 3D art, especially at the intersection of realism and science fiction, will be about creating worlds that feel both visionary and grounded in reality. As technology advances—particularly with real-time rendering, AI-assisted tools, and more physically accurate materials—artists will be able to push detail and believability even further, while still having the freedom to explore bold, imaginative ideas.

For those of us who love blending realism with sci-fi, this means we can design environments that feel truly lived-in, with textures, lighting, and atmospheres that make even the most alien settings relatable. I also see a growing demand for immersive storytelling in games, films, and VR experiences, which opens up new opportunities to craft worlds people can actually step into. The challenge will be to keep that human touch and narrative depth, so the technology serves the story rather than the other way around.

Iren Solo (Irina Solokhina) is a self-taught artist fascinated by abstraction, minimalism, and botanical painting. Since childhood, she loved to draw, but for a long time her life was connected to medicine, where she also found fulfillment and inspiration. However, over time, Irina realized that art is an essential part of her life and decided to devote more attention to it. She completed several courses on contemporary painting techniques, such as Sketching, Art-Botanica, and The Contemporary Artist. In her works, Irina uses acrylic, texture paste, gold leaf, and epoxy resin, combining multiple materials to create vibrant, multilayered paintings. Her artworks convey the energy of nature, its rhythm and breath. Botanical motifs and abstractions allow the viewer to see their own personal associations and meanings. For her, art is a way to share emotions and create works that inspire and fill with harmony.

Artist Statement

My art is born from impressions of nature, music, travel and encounters with new cultures. I strive to capture its breath and rhythm, to convey the beauty in its variability and fragility. To do this, I use acrylic with its brightness and emotionality, adding textured elements that create depth and a three-dimensional effect.

Today, portraits and abstract landscapes occupy a special place in my work. In portraits, I look for a reflection of a person's inner world, their moods and emotions. Abstract landscapes allow me to combine reality and imagination, turning natural images into metaphors.

My worldview was influenced by Russian masters - Vrubel, as well as avant-garde artists Malevich and Kandinsky, who opened new horizons for art as a language of emotions and philosophy.

For me, painting is not only self-expression, but also a dialogue with the viewer. It is important to me that my works inspire, awaken reflections and inner experiences. Through the harmony of form and color, I try to remind about the value of life, the beauty of nature and our deep connection with it.



Irina Solokhina | Daughter of the Rainbow

— Interview

Kalib Bryan

Your works often merge human silhouettes with elements of nature. What initially inspired you to explore this artistic approach?

I've always been fascinated by double exposures in film, photography, and illustrations. I love exploring the concepts of human portraits blended with natural



Kalib Bryan | Stella Luna

landscapes and nature itself. I love that these works convey a spiritual connection between the human and natural world. It inspires me to go out and explore something unique. Mainly in nature, but almost anything I see that inspires me. I connect with the energy of a place first. It's almost like I easily find different figures that speak to me and I capture them. Then I'll connect them with digitally painted portraits based off of people I see in my life, or in my dreams. To create something spiritual.

How has your education at the iPhone Photography School influenced your creative process?

I've always been drawn to photography, but never realized all the beautiful photos that can be taken with the iPhone. For the longest time I was a writer, but I was also an adventurer. I felt like I could convey a scene better through my iPhone than writing about it. Watching different courses about landscape, urban, and travel iPhone photography has pushed me to go out, explore, and experiment with different compositions of my own. It is the school that also introduced me to digital drawing and painting techniques if I wanted to enhance my photos into something otherworldly.

Can you walk us through the technical and artistic steps of creating one of your dreamscapes, from the first photo to the final artwork?

One of the works in my online gallery, 'Stella Luna' I



Kalib Bryan | When We Were Stars | 2025



started by going outside on a starry night and experimented with different shots that made the stars more prominent and used the silhouette trees as a frame. The shots were beautiful, but I wanted to make the photo more interesting, so I illustrated a star trail into the night sky. The photo made me think of a portrait of someone from another world. Or someone who once roamed the earth and became a watcher. So I digitally painted a closeup of a woman with dark hair, lunar blue eyes, and surrounded by a lunar glow. I had combined the two photos in photoshop and played around with the exposure until I got the right balance between the two images.

In your artist statement, you mention portraying “the beauty of solitude.” How do you translate such an emotional concept into visual form?

I've always been a solitary person. That's the way I see it in nature too. All living things are created with a different purpose. We are all born to walk a different path. It's fun to learn from different people, but so can exploring alone and creating alone. When you escape from the noise and crowds, you can discover more about yourself and the world. So when I go out on my own and find something beautiful that I've never seen in person before, it's like I've discovered a new world. Sometimes I will incorporate silhouettes into my own photos to convey that feeling a little more.

Many of your works combine photography with digital painting. How do you decide which elements remain photographic and which are digitally painted?

All of my portraits are digitally painted or illustrated and I will combine them with actual landscape,

abstract, or nature photos I took with my iPhone. Although, sometimes I will digitally illustrate another element into my iPhone photos to make them look more fantastical or mysterious. When I combine my portraits with my iPhone photos, it all depends on the color scheme, style, and lighting for me to decide which photos go together.

Nature plays a central role in your art. Are there specific landscapes or seasons that inspire you most?

I enjoy watching the changing of the seasons. I enjoy going to local forests and watch them change over the course of the seasons. Whether it's changing its shapes, colors, shadows, and the way it moves and adapts to natural conditions. I'm drawn to the movement of water such as waterfalls and seaside beaches. Nothing soothes my creative mind more than listening to the sound of water. It keeps flowing, as do we. But I'm also drawn to natural figures and scenery all over the world that I hope to experience one day.

You also work in animation projects as a background artist. How does this experience influence your fine art creations?

I recently finished an internship as a background artist for an animation adaptation of Clement C. Moore's story 'The Night Before Christmas'. Aside from photography, this experience has inspired me to digitally create backgrounds of my own. Create worlds of my own. While my main collection of art has to do with double exposures, as a dreamscape artist, being inspired by animation studios like Dreamworks and Disney, it is my goal to broaden my horizons and collaborate working on dreamy backgrounds for different animation projects one day.



Vanja Bajović

Born in Čačak in 1996. Graduated from the Gymnasium in Čačak. In 2019, she completed her undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Applied Arts in Belgrade in the class of full professor Gordana Petrović, department of Applied Arts; module Graphics and Books. She completed her master's studies at the same faculty in 2022 in the subject of Graphics. She is a second-year student of doctoral academic studies at the Faculty of Applied Arts in Belgrade.

Project Statement

Eating habits have changed. Through family stories related to the act of eating together, I try to draw attention to something we have lost as a society, and which was valuable...



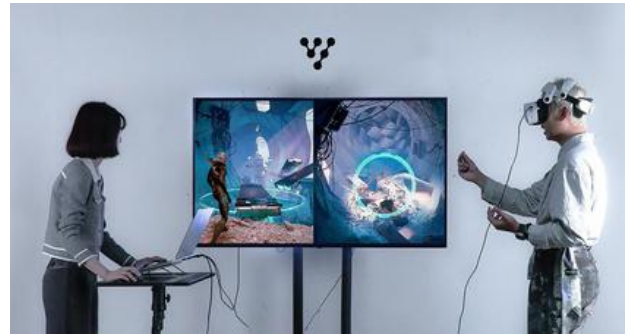


— Interview

Xiyan Chen

Your work bridges art, design, and technology in a very distinctive way. How do you approach blending these disciplines in a single project?

My process is greatly inspired by Neri Oxman's "Krebs Cycle of Creativity," which views art, design, science, and engineering not as separate fields, but as a continuous loop of intellectual energy. In my creative practice, art provides the conceptual framework and emotional depth, while design ensures that the interaction is intuitive and the experience is cohesive. Technology is the medium that makes the conceptual tangible, allowing me to build immersive worlds that wouldn't be possible otherwise. This cyclical process ensures that the



Xiyan Chen | Aftermath

work is not just technically innovative, but also conceptually rich and culturally relevant.

Many of your installations encourage audience participation. How do you see the role of the viewer evolving in digital and interactive art?

The role of the viewer is no longer passive; they are now an active collaborator. In my work, I've tried to design for a symbiotic relationship where the audience's actions and presence directly influence the narrative, form of the piece and events. This shift from spectator to participant makes the art an evolving, unique entity.

You've exhibited in places like the Saatchi Gallery and Ars Electronica. How do these different contexts influence the way you present your work?

At traditional galleries like the Saatchi Gallery, the focus is often on the conceptual and aesthetic qualities of the work. The presentation must be clean and deliberate, encouraging a contemplative experience. In contrast, exhibiting at festivals like Ars Electronica offers a more experimental environment. The audience is often more open to new forms of interaction. This allows me to focus on showcasing the innovative and experimental aspects of the work. I see these different venues as opportunities to highlight different facets of the same piece.

What role does narrative play in your VR environments, and how do you translate stories into spatial and sensory experiences?

Narrative in my VR environments is not linear; it's a living, breathing space. Instead of a traditional plot, I use narrative themes that are embedded



Xiyan Chen | Aftermath



within the environment. The viewer becomes an explorer, piecing together the story through their own movements and discoveries. I translate these stories into spatial experiences by using sound, light, and haptic feedback to evoke specific emotions and actions and guide the viewer's journey. The narrative is not only something you are told, but something you physically inhabit and discover.

Could you share more about the conceptual themes that connect your projects, such as “Aftermath” and your interactive installations?

The narrative in my VR work is less about a traditional plot and more about creating a spatial and sensory experience that communicates a core concept.

In *Aftermath*, the narrative is embedded in the game's asymmetrical design. The story of human creativity vs. AI control isn't spelled out; it's felt through the unequal power dynamics of the gameplay. The VR player's ability to subtly manipulate the environment is a direct translation of the AI's unseen influence, making the story a lived experience of power and agency.

With *MetaTouch*, the narrative is a sensory journey. The "tactile cabinet of curiosities" tells a story about the potential of touch in virtual spaces. The narrative is translated into a physical-virtual loop: a real-world touch on a module creates a specific visual and haptic response in the VR world. The story explores how sensory data can build a new kind of narrative language for empathy and connection.

Your practice spans the UK and China. How

does working across these two cultural contexts influence your artistic vision?

My work is influenced by core Eastern philosophical concepts like cause and effect, balance, and the interconnectedness of all things, which are woven into the very fabric of my installations. This is complemented by the traditional aesthetics and meditative qualities of Eastern art. In contrast, the UK's vibrant art scene, with its deep-rooted history, has instilled a strong focus on cultural inclusivity, accessibility, and a sustainable mindset in my work. This fusion allows me to create art that is both conceptually grounded in timeless Eastern thought and technically progressive, while also being accessible and environmentally conscious—a practice that reflects a balance of tradition and modernity.

What technical challenges have you faced when creating multisensory VR artworks, and how have you overcome them?

A primary technical challenge is achieving seamless synchronization between the physical and virtual worlds. In the case of *MetaTouch*, for instance, we had to ensure a user's touch instantly triggered a unified visual and auditory response in VR. To overcome this, we built a custom system. We developed sensor-equipped gloves to capture precise touch data and transmit it to Unity with minimal delay. This process involved extensive testing of various sensors, fine-tuning the hardware's structure, and optimizing the code to reduce latency. Ultimately, these efforts allowed us to create a unified experience where the physical and virtual worlds feel perfectly aligned.



Jim Woodson

Born in 1941 in Waco, Texas, Woodson grew up in a modest household where his father worked as a broom-maker and his mother as a school secretary. He was the first in his family to pursue higher education, and found inspiration through instructors such as Joe Farrell Hobbs to pursue a life in art-making. After completing his education at the University of Texas, Woodson moved to San Francisco during the "Summer of Love," immersing himself in the vibrant culture of the late 1960s. He held various jobs, including at the California Historical Society, but eventually returned to Texas to pursue a teaching position at his alma mater. In 1974, he joined the faculty at TCU's School of Art, beginning a teaching career that would span 39 years.

Throughout his career, Woodson's art evolved from spare landscapes influenced by his time in California to imaginative and complex compositions that often merged fantastical architectural forms with natural settings. His work is deeply inspired by the high desert terrain of Texas and New Mexico, particularly the area around Abiquiú, New Mexico, which he first visited in the late 1980s.

Enchanted by its transcendent beauty and mystical qualities, Woodson eventually built a home there and divided his time between Abiquiú and Fort Worth, Texas. The region's vivid colors, exposed geological layers and sense of timelessness became central themes in his paintings.

Jim Woodson | Desert Landscape with Slightly Surrounded Figures | 2025





Jim Woodson | Surrounded Animating Emergent | 2025

Anna Fors

How did your journey in photography begin, and what led you to specialize in black-and-white art-nude and fine art genres?

A love for photography was born through travel. My creative journey began in 2020 with training in travel photography, but I didn't see a future in that direction, as I wanted to be useful to people and bring them positive emotions. A course on the basics of photography by Ekaterina Orlova laid a strong foundation for further growth. I began exploring the genre of art nude and fell in



love with it wholeheartedly. After four years of working in this field, I went on to study fine art photography with Igor Brekhov. This training expanded the boundaries of my photographic perception and vision. I became interested in shooting in different styles, coming up with new ideas, and creating unusual images. That training, along with Nastya Spacey's course, greatly influenced my perspective on art nude photography as well.

What draws you to the aesthetic of black-and-white imagery, and how does it shape your storytelling?

I love the aesthetics of black-and-white photography with all my heart. Black-and-white images carry a special atmosphere and artistry. Color does not distract the viewer from the story, from the essence of the frame. I strive to make my works "timeless," to draw the viewer's attention and evoke different emotions.

"With black-and-white you can suggest, while color makes a bold statement. A suggestion can lead to many thoughts, but a statement demands certainty." — Paul Outerbridge

Many of your photographs capture vulnerability and intimacy. What emotions or narratives do you aim to evoke in your viewers?

I strive to make my photography a powerful tool for self-discovery, acceptance, and self-love—both for the model and the viewer. I want it to inspire a deeper perception of oneself and remind us of the importance of genuine, imperfect beauty. My wish is that the viewer can reconsider their ideas of beauty and recognize it in simplicity and naturalness, in the uniqueness of every person.



Anna Fors | Through the Lattice of Sunlight | 2025



How do you choose your subjects or models, and what is your approach to building trust and connection during a shoot?

I don't choose models. I am interested in photographing different people and different stories. I enjoy working with any body, parameters, or shapes. Every person is unique in their individuality. I like to see and show, through photography, the distinctiveness and special qualities of each person.

During the shoot, I communicate with the model sincerely, openly, and in a friendly way, offering compliments and showing the resulting shots. My photo sessions are easygoing and fun. I strive to ensure that the person leaves the shoot full of impressions and emotions from the process, looking forward with excitement to the unusual and interesting images we've created.

What role do natural settings or environments play in your visual language?

Natural locations offer countless unique moments that can be captured in photographs, conveying a particular atmosphere and emphasizing the connection between humans and nature. A human being is an inseparable part of nature. He is nature. The human body, like the bark of a tree, has its own unique texture, lines, and curves. I enjoy exploring the human body as a unique creation of the natural world and showing, through visual images, the deep bond between people and nature. I especially love shooting at the countryside dacha,

catching moments of rural life. Old wooden houses with lace-carved windows, fields, meadows, haystacks, forests, rivers — all of this creates the distinctive atmosphere of village life. Old furniture, the bathhouse, bicycles, carts, domestic animals (horses, chickens, geese) — all these details add authenticity.

Everyday locations allow me to capture daily life, convey the atmosphere of a specific place and time, and become an archive of moments, memories, and events.

How do you balance spontaneity with composition in your work?

I see beauty in random moments.

I observe light, shadows, human movements, the curves and lines of the body.

Spontaneity lies in the details.

I pay attention to textures, reflections, and unexpected angles.

I am not afraid to break the rules of composition and framing, and I enjoy experimenting in my art.

How has your artistic career evolved over the past five years? Which exhibitions, magazine publications, and photography competitions have been the most significant milestones on this journey for you?

My artistic practice changes and evolves with every new learning experience. I never stop learning from different photographers whose work resonates with me, trying myself in new directions, and expanding the boundaries of my photographic consciousness.

I felt a powerful breakthrough when I began participating in competitions and winning prizes, when I saw my works in print at photo exhibitions, and when magazine editors (Iconic, Dehazed, and others) began selecting my work.

The exhibition "Family: One World, a Million Stories" at GUM on Red Square in Moscow in May 2025 (organized by MFamilia) is a very significant event for me — a kind of culmination of my five years of experience in photography. It is an incredible feeling to realize that my work is being presented in the very heart of Russia! Also, in June, my work was part of the traveling showcase during NFT NYC 2025 in New York (organized by The Frame Society X Unfold Gallery). In November, my work will be featured at ImageNation Paris 2025.

Over the past year, I have won prizes and reached the finals in more than 10 photo contests and participated in more than 10 exhibitions.

Looking back, I realize that all my victories, diplomas, awards, and exhibitions are the result of my experience. What truly matters is becoming successful, recognized, and professional not only "among your own," but in the art world as a whole. Your art must be seen by the audience.

Participation in photo contests and exhibitions is not just an opportunity to show your work to a wider audience but also an important step toward professional growth and self-development.

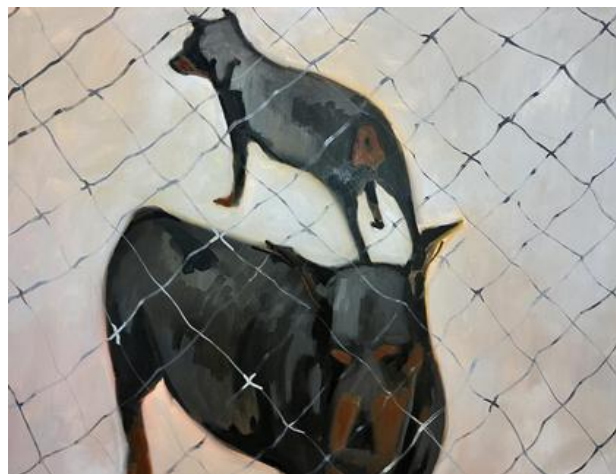
Marnie González Warren

What initially drew you to oil painting as your main medium, especially in the age of digital art?

My interest in oil painting lies not only in its visual qualities and processes, but also in its intimate, slow, and laborious nature. It contrasts the immediacy of visual culture by demanding time and effort and allowing me to create a space where time and the media scroll consumption is slowed, cementing memory whilst encouraging its reflection. Not to mention its eternal quality as a worshipful and time-consuming practice. To me, this commitment is almost an act of resistance: in its slowness and physicality, oil painting pushes back against the acceleration of digital culture and insists on a different kind of looking and meaning-making.

Your works often involve vibrant colors and layered compositions. How do you approach building these visual tensions?

Colour plays a central role in my practice. I begin paintings with fluorescent or very bright underpaintings, which hum beneath the surface and bleed through the layers. This creates an inner



Marnie González Warren | Dogs

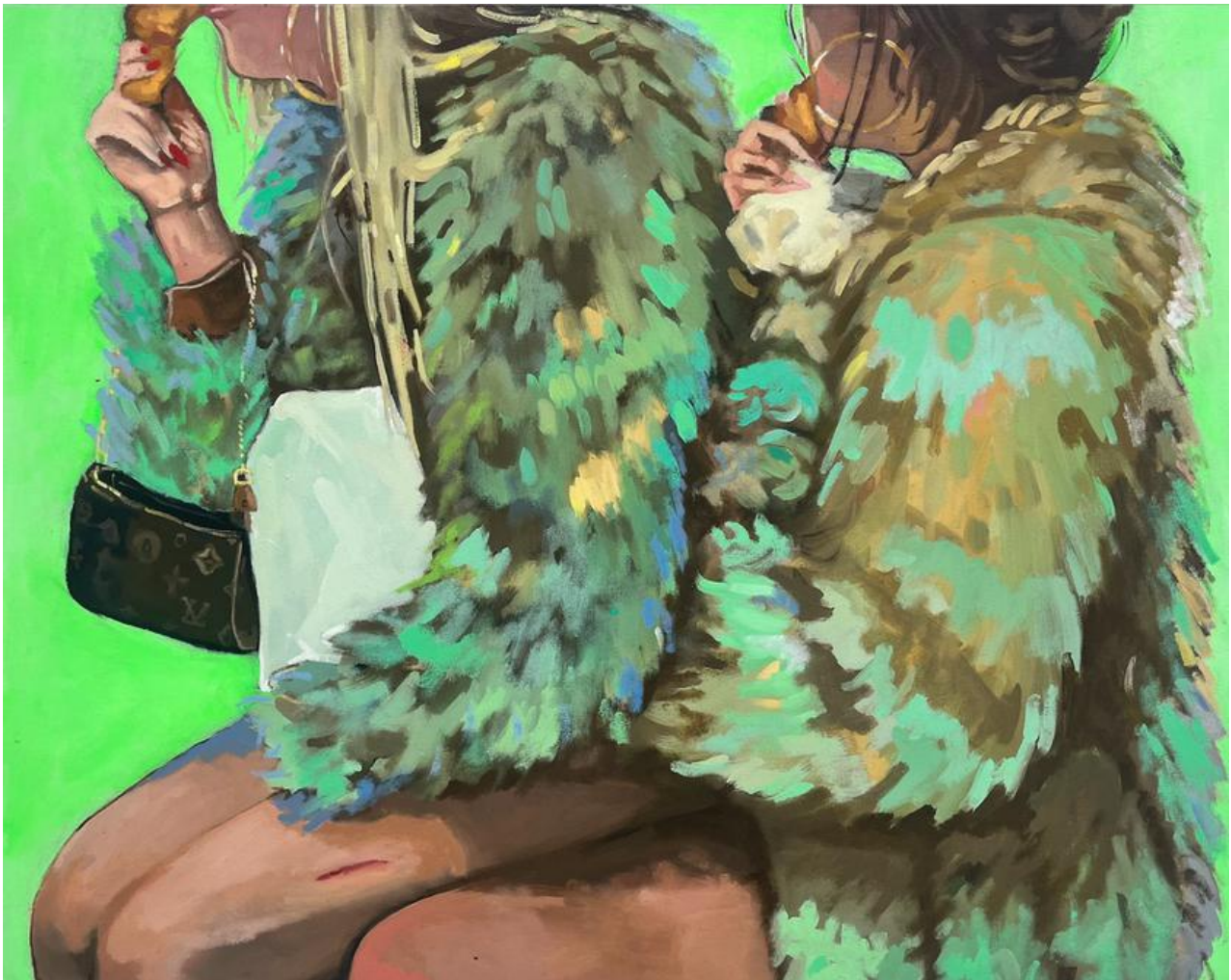
tension, a vibration, which shifts temperature and mirrors the saturation of media culture as they linger under the picture. On top of this base, I build layers to create harmony. The tension comes from what is revealed and what is withheld.

How do theories from Sontag, Barthes, or Debord directly influence your artistic decisions?

Because of my formation in art history, all the reading I do inevitably bleeds into my work. I'm informed by what I see, consume, and experience. Debord's *Society of Spectacle* (1967) has stuck with me since I first read it during my BA. His examination of the all-consuming pervasiveness of image in contemporary society and the idea that in modernity everything has become image has only become more relevant today. His connection between image, spectacle, and capital is central to what I'm exploring in painting: re-appropriating digital images, translating them into paint, and interrogating the role of the painter as image-maker. Meanwhile, Barthes' ideas on authorship, myth and meaning-making are important references in framing and reframing my work. And Sontag, particularly in her discussions of the tensions between photography, memory, and consumption, has shaped how I think about power dynamics and manipulation in visual culture. Her attitude has encouraged me to question how images function and the implicit systems.

What role does memory play in your paintings, and how do you convey its instability or fluidity?

Memory is always a fundamental factor. In my work it is presented as fragmented, and reconstructed. I source the imagery from a personal archive and then reconstruct them, cropping and manipulating the reference to build a new narrative tension. I use memory as a tool in a way, as it becomes entangled with meaning-making and tied with that of culture,



nostalgia, place, and in conversation with a social history. In a way, my paintings construct a time-line and a journal of my lived experience, so memory is inextricable, although played with and recontextualised.

Many of your paintings depict female figures within consumerist contexts. How do you balance critique with celebration?

As Barthes reminds us, artists often end up complicit with the very systems they critique. For me it is a reflection of my experience that marries together all of the emotions and contradictions in my own mind, where these frustrations coexist. They mold each other and are inseparable to me. I celebrate people, objects, and culture, but I also interrogate the structures and contexts that shape them. Nothing exists in a vacuum: all images and practices are formed by sociopolitical and cultural systems that have constructed them and thus our attitudes and experiences embrace much contradiction.

How does your Spanish influence, especially from Spanish Impressionists, shape your color palette and technique?

There's a raw honesty in Spanish painting that really stands out and is important to me. The attitude that it exudes and the rich, painterly, colour palette that so accurately captures atmosphere. From Goya to Sorolla and the important and rich contemporary scene in Spain now are all inspiring. I see myself in that tradition of drawing from heritage to embrace both cultural history and contemporary experience.

What emotion or reaction do you hope viewers experience when confronting your work?

I want the viewer to become an active participant, complicit in the work. The tensions exist not only within the image itself but also in the exchange between painting and viewer, who become active participants in meaning-making. My work is playful, seductive, and humorous, but it also leaves space for contradiction. I want people to relate to the work and resonate with it, drawn in by colour and surface, yet encouraged to reflect on what they're engaging with: the aesthetic façade of Western culture and the systems that shape how we look at images. The work holds space for ambiguity, contradiction, and desire and I hope that tension lingers after they've moved away.

My name is **Aohakath**. I am a freelance artist that currently lives in Romania, Europe. I studied fine arts at the local high school of arts. Even before studying art in a professional setting, I was drawn to it since early childhood. Painting, drawing and crafting were among my favourite hobbies in my spare time. Later on in life, I discovered my passion for writing novels and poetry, despite the fact that none of them were ever published. My current project involves writing and drawing a webcomic called "Back to Life" while having a small business of arts and crafts on the side.

Project Statement

A Temporary Farewell

What do you say to someone before taking your leave? "Good-bye", "Adios", "Sayonara", or do you simply bid farewell in your own way? But farewell doesn't mean "forever-gone." There may come times when we long to see the friends we used to play alongside in our childhood, or yearn for the touch of a lost lover we once held close in our adolescence, or simply even wish for nothing more than to see the smile of a kindred spirit whose time has come and gone. Inevitably, some goodbyes truly are forever. Yet other times, be it luck or destiny, the universe draws our lost companions back to us and gives us the chance to rekindle relationships long thought settled.

Falling leaves, scattered logs, and the auburn forest unveil a tapestry of warm colours. The wind carries a crisp whisper, announcing the first dance of the fleeting snowflakes... All of them tell the story of Sephora Olsen, a young girl who was adopted by a kindly elderly couple. Not long after she established her new path in life, Sephora managed to reunite with her old friends, Kurt and Tae Woo. Although the times they spent at the orphanage are but a memory of the past, their sibling-like relationship still remained unchanged. Through various adventures and shenanigans, Sephora and her friends manage to pass each year at the Osulf High School – a prestigious school dedicated to teaching its students the fine arts.

In this piece, the lines of the traditional sketch blend alongside the digital array of brushes. This technique was used in order to pay homage to the old school comic books. Though the times have changed and people tend to gravitate more towards the digital aspect, we should not forget our original roots. The piece is meant to illustrate a part of Sephora's childhood, a cherished memory that only those closest to her know of. This sequence first took place in 1973. Nine years later, in the present time of the story, many things have changed for these reunited acquaintances. Both in their material surroundings and their personal relationships as well. Sephora's departure was only temporary, as her journey was merely starting. Through traveling and self exploration someone can find their true self, but for that, sometimes we need to bid farewell to our previous life.

Nonetheless, I shall no longer spoil one of the narratives present in the web comic named "Back to Life" and its characters. It is currently available to read on Webtoon.



— Interview

KOMIYA (Julia Kovalchuk)

Your art blends traditional Asian techniques with modern interpretation. What draws you to this fusion?

It all started with discovering Chinese painting techniques when I attended a master class at a gallery. Then I went back again and again. Suddenly, I realized that all the complex drawing concepts I had developed during my youth in art school were not necessary. Everything could be expressed with a single line, a swift brushstroke—concise yet vibrant. Gradually, I became more immersed in it and spent several years painting landscapes, still lifes, fish, and birds, copying Chinese masters and creating my own compositions.



KOMIYA (Julia Kovalchuk) | Dipytych



After a while, I realized that I had developed my own expressions. I grew fond of certain techniques, such as gyotaku and suminagashi. The metaphorical language became a tool, allowing me to make statements indirectly, without being forceful. The beauty of allegories and metaphors, both in the image and in the textual (hieroglyphic) message, became multidimensional and captivating to me. Since I had spent several decades studying Asian cultures, this aesthetic became dominant in my art. This led to the combination of what we see in my paintings, which has now become my personal brand.

What does nature mean to you as an artist?

Nature is life, and we are part of this planetary life, and only pride makes us think otherwise. In modern society, it is common to separate humans from nature, which justifies a barbaric attitude toward the environment and blinds us to this pain. In my work, I do not want this separation between humans and nature. I hope that one day I will achieve such unity in my worldview, both as a human and as an artist.

You often combine images with text. How do you choose what to write?

What to write? – this is a question I rarely ask myself. The thought and message resonate initially, but I spend a lot of time reflecting on how exactly to write it. I carefully select the phrase, sometimes writing many phrases in different sizes and matching them with the painting. Everything matters – the choice of words, style, and language. In Japanese, the same phrase can be written in many ways, depending on the style and meaning that best suits the painting and reveals its essence. The statement and the image are equally important and fully support, complement, and reveal each other, or at least, I want to believe so.



How has your background in East Asian studies and ethnography influenced your visual language?

Ethnography, religion, and the East have always fascinated me. When I say always, I mean since my childhood, from the earliest memories I have. This interest has guided me for almost half a century now, and I believe it won't fade away. The stars wrote it into my destiny. Since this is my deep subconscious interest, it naturally manifests in my paintings. Born on an island in the Pacific Ocean, I consider myself a part of the region. I notice that I share many of the cultural codes of East Asian countries; I feel them, and they genuinely interest me, especially their aesthetics.

In addition to the East, I spent a long time studying Russian ethnography, particularly the imagery of sacred geometry on the carriers of traditional material culture. However, in Russia, this tradition has disappeared, leaving only shadows, while in India, it is alive. Since both Russia and India share the same archetypal geometric patterns, I often turn to materials on Indian ethnography, such as the tradition of drawing kolams, among many other things.

Do you consider your works to carry a philosophical or spiritual message?

My works are a continuation of the internal philosophical and psychological dilemmas that life presents to me. And since that is the case, they cannot be anything else. This is my

practice of presence: the gaze is directed at the familiar, but slightly shifted, as if searching for something hidden and finding it, or imagining it. It is difficult to assess objectively because we live in a half-imagined, constructed reality. The composition grows from an imprint, a print, a trace, an interaction with the material. I try to avoid heaviness in my works, choosing pastel shades and lightness, striving for transparency, allowing the work to "manifest" rather than being assembled by will. The composition is not constructed but rather dispersed in space, where each detail arises on its own—as a result of contact with the material, not my intention.

The prints of leaves, flowers, and fish are not decorative forms but independent participants in the artistic statement. They carry the living breath of the moment, its trace, its vibration. For me, color is an emotion that arises in the moment, while gray is the base, the neutral fabric of reality. Instead of final statements, I strive to leave an open space for the perception and personal conclusions of the viewer, inviting them to be surprised, sharing a discovery, and in a way asking — Do you feel this too? I hope I am not the only one who sees this, and I want to share my sense of enjoyment of the moment, of discovery, of beauty, with someone else.

I often use diptychs — because, like everyone else, I think in binary oppositions. But sometimes I really want to go beyond them, and I strive for a holistic perception of the world, where boundaries fade, and everything becomes part of a single movement.

What role does calligraphy play in your creative process?

I'm certainly not a calligrapher. I write like a child, but I don't aim to be skilled in calligraphy. I graduated with a degree in Japanese studies from university, and then I lived in Japan for a while as an exchange PhD student. I don't claim to be proficient in calligraphy or to have perfect knowledge of the language, but I deeply love both. What's important to me is expressing an idea with a phrase that most concisely conveys my thoughts, and the painting is just an illustration of that phrase. It's the phrase, its contemplation, that I spend a lot of time on—sometimes much longer than I spend painting the artwork itself. Sometimes the image in the painting is so expressive that the text becomes unnecessary, and in those cases, I intentionally avoid it. Even though it's not written, the text is still present, if you look closely at the work.

You use mineral pigments, ink, and gold foil. What attracts you to these materials?

Black ink can be as deep as the blackness of the night sky, or as light as a delicate wisp of smoke, yet it's the same material. It's like a person. Pigments are sometimes essential to evoke a person's feelings and emotions, to color a painting with mood. Gold leaf is important. The golden color has always been widely used in Asian aesthetics, and it's indispensable. It seems to give the painting a different dimension.

I also feel admiration and respect for the rice paper, washi. Sometimes it seems to me almost self-sufficient, so beautiful! It is my unconditional companion. I want to explore the possibilities of paper more deeply, the variety of its texture, inclusions, fibers, and colors. For each piece, I carefully choose the paper, and I have a favorite store in Beijing where I specifically go to buy it.

Maria Lukina

Artist, designer, and illustrator Maria Lukina (LUART) is a vivid representative of a new generation of artists, captivating the sophisticated viewer with her striking style and contrasting technique. Her work inspires with the vibrancy of color—fiery, blazing, and defining the semantic essence. The artist constantly experiments, working in a free search for form and color. Her artworks have been featured in solo and group exhibitions both in Russia and abroad, and are held in gallery collections as well as private collections. She is a regular participant in Russian and International competitions and festivals, and a winner of numerous awards, including 1st place in the Interior Painting category at the International Festival in Great Britain Golden Time Talent, 3rd place at the International Festival in Spain Dali's Mustache, among many others. She is also the author of the performance Tandem, created in a style that unites abstraction and sketching. Tandem is a technique characterized by speed, stylization, confidence, freedom, and even a touch of playful audacity.





— Interview

Xingyu Dai



I have always been interested in the small, often overlooked moments. I tend to avoid the noisy and obvious subjects. Paying attention to things that are often overlooked, and letting viewers pause with them undisturbed, feels to me like the best way to guide them back to their own memories.

Your work often explores the unspoken and the subtle. What first drew you to this quiet language of photography?



In your current series, the red umbrella becomes a central symbol. Why did you choose an umbrella, and what does the color red signify for you?

An umbrella is usually associated with people. When it stands alone, it feels like a trace left behind by someone who was once there. Red is bold and striking, but it is more than just a symbol of strength. It can represent warmth, love, danger, or loss. This mixture of emotions is exactly what I wanted to convey.

You describe the umbrella as a “visual tombstone.” How did this idea evolve during your creative process?



It was simply a mark of absence at the beginning. But as I photographed it in different settings, I suddenly thought of it like an old gravestone that remains in place while tall buildings rise around it. It became more of a witness. The term “visual tombstone” fits well, because it is quiet yet carries weight.

The settings in your images—fields, benches, forests—feel both ordinary and charged with emotion. How do you select your locations?

I looked for places that are simple enough to feel familiar, yet open enough to carry various emotions. The scenes I choose exist in many people’s memories, and I hope to create a dialogue with the viewers’ own recollections.

Your photographs suggest absence and presence simultaneously. Do you think photography is uniquely suited to explore such contradictions?

Yes. A photograph can capture a moment of “presence” while also pointing to “absence.” It freezes a moment, yet leaves space for imagination and memory to fill in the gaps, letting the viewer complete the picture. That tension is what makes photography so compelling.

How do memory and emotional residue influence your artistic process? Are there personal memories tied to this series?

I often recall past memories, not triggered by the night, but by moments that align with the past. For example, returning to my childhood home, hearing a familiar song, or smelling a known scent - these moments create a subtle tension between change and continuity. I am fascinated by it, and I try to capture that in this series.

There’s a strong sense of stillness and contemplation in your work. How do you create this atmosphere technically and emotionally?

Technically, I chose pure forest as the environment, filling the frame with only green and red, avoiding distraction from other colours. Emotionally, I took my time with each scene, letting each moment settle before I shot. I believe stillness comes from the state of the photographer. If you move slowly, the scene often carries the same calm.



Maya Shmeleva

I am drawn to people - their stories, their experiences. My work unfolds in symbols: I unravel emotions and narratives thread by thread, weaving them into visual form. My projects speak to the modern individual - often a woman - exploring emotional landscapes, boundaries, trauma, vulnerability, memory, choice, home, and our relationship with reality and the passage of personal time.

I melt glass using the lampwork technique, I am fascinated by glass and its properties, so most of my works contain glass elements complemented by other materials. Through glass, epoxy resin, canvas, collage, and found objects, I construct multidimensional visual narratives where symbols hold multiple, sometimes contradictory, meanings.

Recurring motifs from nature serve as metaphors, inviting viewers to uncover their own interpretations within the work.



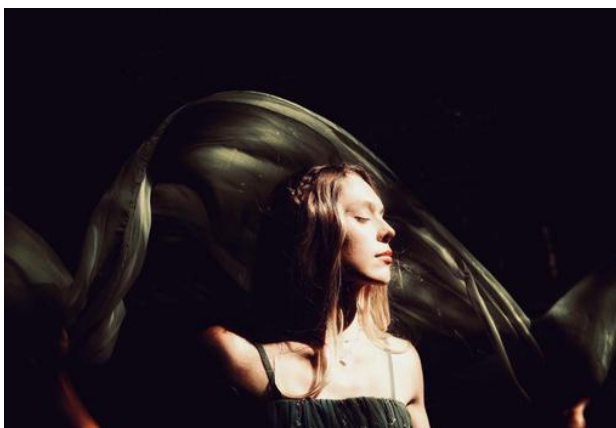
Maya Shmeleva | Flew from point A to point B | 2025



Felicia Varlotta

Your diagnosis of diplopia at a young age has clearly influenced your artistic vision. Can you describe how this layered perception continues to shape your cinematography today?

At its core, my experience with diplopia taught me to think outside the box and remain openminded. When the first couple years of your life you are seeing the world through a visually distorted lens, that perception becomes your “normal.” After corrective surgery, I’ll never forget the first day I could see clearly. I remember how drastic and striking that visual shift



was from what I had once accepted as reality. That awareness of multiple ways of seeing continues to shape my cinematography today. When I create visuals, I aim to think abstractly and push beyond conventional choices. I want each project to feel distinctive to the world within the confines of the story subject matter. Sometimes that means drawing inspiration from seemingly unconventional films or artwork and adapting those ideas to fit naturally within a new film’s context. Other times, I’ll experiment with filtration or practical effects to develop unique textures and visual intrigue to create a visual distinctiveness within my work. Ultimately, I strive to use these layered ways of seeing to create visuals that are innovative and help to amplify the emotions at the heart of the piece.

Many of your works incorporate surrealist elements and practical effects. What draws you to these techniques, and how do you decide when to use them?

One of the most surreal moments of my life was the day after surgery, when I saw “normally” for the first time. That experience profoundly shaped me and naturally drew me toward surrealist work. I’ve always been inspired by surrealist artists. Whether in painting, photography, or film’s like *Enter the Void* and TV shows like *The Twilight Zone*, which reveal deeper truths and understandings about reality through abstraction and dreamlike imagery. Additionally, earlier in my career, I studied short experimental films that used overlays, distortions, and unusual practical effects. Those visuals resonated with me because they mirrored aspects of how I once experienced the world. Today, I often incorporate similar techniques, using both modern and vintage practical filtration to craft imagery that feels strange, yet emotionally honest. For me, surrealism is not just a genre or style, it is a complex way of expressing hidden layers of perception and deeper meaning that exist within our reality.



How do you balance your personal artistic voice with the specific emotional tone or commercial demands of a client project?

I think the most important thing to remember with any client project is that it's ultimately about serving their vision. Adhering to the visual style of the company, brand, or individual is always the top priority. Because of that, I spend a great amount of time communicating with the director or a client to have a clear vision of their goals and then study multiple filtration and/camera technique, lenses, and visual approaches until I achieve a detailed portrait of the lasting visual impressions that the director wants the audience to experience.

However, when a project calls for more creative freedom, especially those that contain more dreamlike or surreal imagery, I'm able to lean more into my own artistic voice. In those cases, my personal style becomes a bigger part of the storytelling, but always in a way that aids to the story and supports the varied emotions of a piece.

You often explore themes of perspective, identity, and the fluid nature of reality. What personal experiences or philosophies inspire these recurring themes?

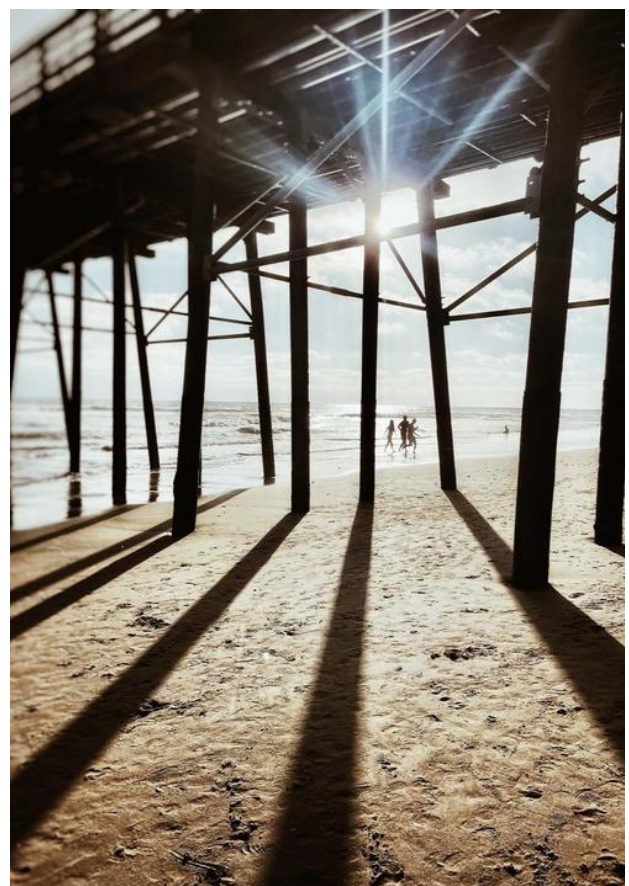
I believe perception and understanding are deeply subjective, varying greatly from person to person. The way someone recalls a memory, interprets color, or perceives shape and perspective is never identical, and I find that to be extremely fascinating. In my personal work, I often experiment with shadows, reflections, or double exposures as a way to explore this idea. To me, our perceptions are always shifting, reshaped by time and experience, and that fluidity feels inherently abstract. Time is in and of itself an abstraction. In addition, visuals of shadows might symbolize memories of the past, while reflections can represent the search for self-understanding in a more metaphysical sense. By creating surreal landscapes or layered imagery around my subjects, I aim to tap into the subconscious, creating a deeper blur in the line

between external reality and internal thought. This idea creates and invites viewers to question how they see themselves and the world around them. Ultimately, I hope that my work strikes deep emotions within the viewer and leaves them with powerful visions and feelings that are always memorable.

What role do dreams and memory play in your creative process when developing new visual concepts?

I've always had very vivid dreams that often feel inseparable from memory. I can recall many dreams with such clarity that it feels as if they have become part of my lived experience. When I develop new visual concepts, whether for narrative work or photography, I often draw from these dreams or memories within my life as they carry emotions that can't be fabricated and can be strongly felt and perceived.

I turn to these moments as a source of deeper authenticity, hoping to create a stronger emotional connection elicited from the work to the audience. Visually, I like to take places or moments that feel rooted in reality and stretch them into something more dreamlike through unusual lenses, filtration, or practical techniques. That way, when someone encounters the image, it feels both familiar and unfamiliar. This then invites the audience into re-imagining the work through their own unique experiences and memories.



— Interview

Kaitlyn Synan

Your work often explores the fleeting nature of emotions. Can you describe a recent emotional experience that inspired a specific piece?

The first piece that comes to mind is actually my most popular work, Mycelial Spirit. I painted it after a rough breakup last year. It depicts a woman with mushrooms growing across her face and head, bathed in pink and purple tones. Glowing golden spirals are behind her. She looks serene, completely unaware she is being consumed. At the time, I was repeating a pattern I'd seen in multiple relationships: letting my soul be eaten alive. I was constantly editing myself to be more palatable and easier to love, working endlessly for affection. I even stopped painting for a while. I told myself I



was content with that, but the truth is, I chose it because it felt familiar. Mycelial Spirit became my turning point. It was a promise to myself that the only thing I will ever allow to consume me so completely will be my art, as it always should have been.

How do you choose the color palettes for your paintings? Do they stem from intuition, symbolism, or specific moods?

Intuition and contrast play a huge role in the initial stages of my paintings. I enjoy working with complementary colors, particularly by layering them in creative and interesting ways. The saturation you can achieve is so much fun. I love the slow transformation from a dull, transparent blue to a fiery orange. That heightening intensity is really cool to witness. The process of painting just really mimics my personality. I go from long periods of dead quiet to passionately talking your ear off. It seems to fit.

Many of your works incorporate swirling, organic forms. What do these forms represent for you personally?



Kaitlyn Synan | Celestial Touch



I don't believe in coincidences. I think everything is insanely connected, in both subtle and obvious ways. If you go down the rabbit hole, it's really chaotic and interwoven. Every single action ripples to impact everything else, no matter how distantly related. These swirls are pretty consistent in my work. They are my little nod to the fact that, no matter how separate things seem, it really isn't. Art and math are incredibly different, down to the personality of the person participating, but both are ways of understanding and interpreting. Even science and journalism, which are completely opposite sides of the same 'I want to know' coin, constantly impact each other's understanding. Now we know you can apply math equations to paintings and see why they're aesthetically pleasing. Journalism is always asking why, and then science tries to find out.

You describe your practice as spiritual. Could you elaborate on how spirituality guides your creative process?

I see this lifetime as a temporary experience, one abundant in lessons and experiences, everything interconnected. The human experience is so unique, I think of it as a kind of soul school. For what? Who knows, but I know I've come to learn about people, places, and theories, just by the experience of living, but where's the place to learn about myself? How do I come to know myself as I do about math or history outside of lived experience? For me, that's when I'm painting.

How do you see the concept of impermanence reflected in your artistic technique or material choices?

In painting, or any act of creating, there is an element of destruction that is intertwined with the process. From the first swipe of colorful paint on a white canvas, to an accidental paintwater spill, and even placing your signature, adapting with change and accepting that nothing is truly concrete until the piece is finished, it comes with the creative territory. Then the compliment of working in acrylic, quick drying layers, constant remixing, or the facepalm when running out of a specific color when you know every store is closed. Evolving with the piece or medium is a fun and more chaotic aspect of being an artist.

Several of your paintings feel like portals into other dimensions. Are there recurring dreams, visions, or places that influence this aesthetic?

In a sense, my paintings result in an expression of how I generally experience the world, which is a huge contrast from the emotional processing that takes place at the start of my creative processes. My work carries emotional weight in the product, but I would say the bright and colorful nature of my work comes from my optimistic experience of the world. Not in a sense of denial and that nothing is wrong, but with faith in the work of others, and the work I put in myself, to create and live in a world I want to see, full of reflection, recalibration, and renewal.

"Finding the light in the darkness" is a recurring theme in your statement. How do you navigate this duality in your work?

I won't lie, it's tough. I paint when I'm processing something emotionally, usually something heavy. The canvas holds my raw thoughts and feelings, often the darker ones. When the piece is finished, it's light-filled and colorful, mirroring the way I feel after a painting session. In that sense, the work itself alchemizes the darkness into light, taking some of the duel out of the duality. My finished work also mirrors my optimism and bright vision, with a seriousness that I as a person don't carry. The biggest contrast in my work is between my work and me. In person, I'm bubbly, quirky, and rarely serious. I love dancing on weekends and striking up conversations with strangers. Whereas my work is deeply reflective and rich. It's a strange but satisfying experience discussing the emotional weight of my art while also being someone who laughs easily and finds the fun in most things. That tension keeps both my work and my life interesting.

Bilal Dafri

The Artistic Approach

My concept is rooted in the theme of migratory flows — illegal immigration across the Mediterranean — as well as the political and social conflicts within Algerian society. My artistic work is experimental, symbolizing issues of oil, power, and leadership.

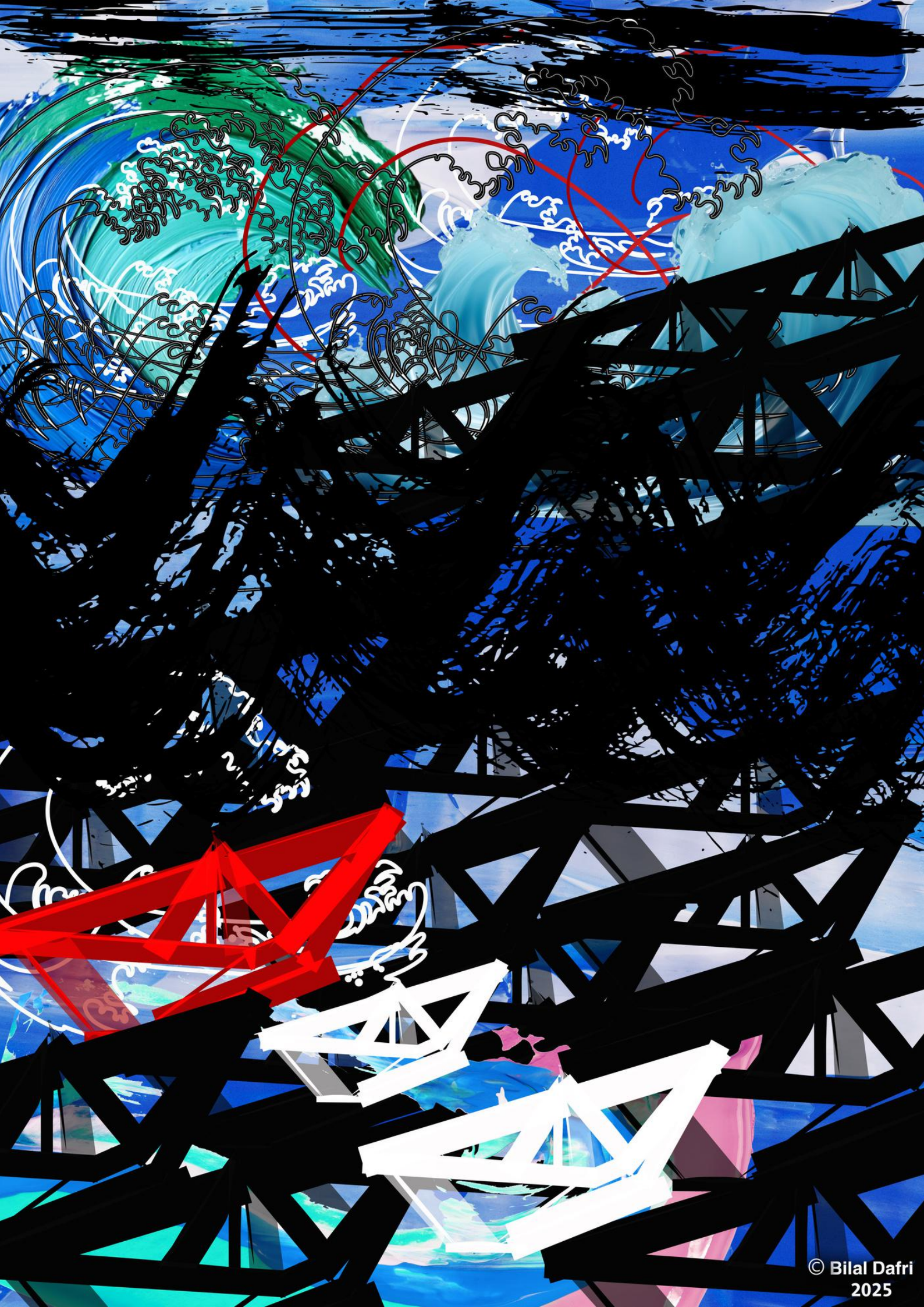
In developing my visual language, I draw inspiration from Vincent van Gogh, René Magritte, Japanese art, as well as American artists Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol. My approach combines sensitivity and social commitment, exploring themes that resonate deeply with the cultural and humanitarian challenges of our time.

At first, I worked with drawing and painting, later expanding my practice into photography, video art, installations, sculpture, digital painting, and collage. These mediums allow me to give meaning to my creations and to continually seek new forms of expression.

My art is fueled by personal experiences, observations of life, and a constant dream of freedom and change. This vision gives my work a distinctive specificity, where reality and imagination intertwine, enhancing both aesthetic and human impact. I strive to challenge traditions, question ideas, and propose new perspectives through my artistic experiments.

Over time, I have witnessed the development of my skills, which have shaped an artistic practice that carries a profound humanitarian message. I work with a vision of art as a universal language that fosters communication between people, revives emotions, and unites cultures.

The beauty of art is revealed in the details of my paintings, where authenticity and modernity come together, giving my work a unique character. Through my creations, I share my personal vision of the world, seeking to inspire both the public and fellow artists.



— Interview

Lauren Dowling

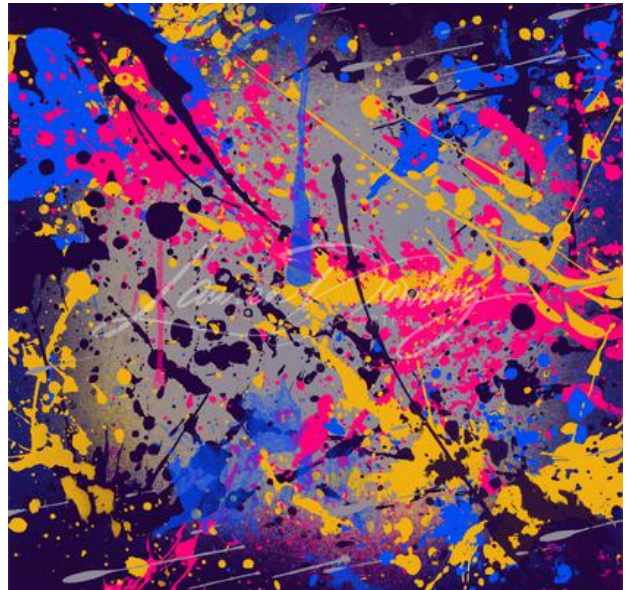
How does your personality-color Synesthesia influence your creative process?

My Synesthesia helps set the foundation of my creative process. It gives me a starting point—or starting color, I should say. From there, I am able to work emotion and personality into my art because of how each color makes me feel personally while maintaining the personality of the piece's subject.

The colors I perceive aren't just visual; they evoke memories, moods, and ideas that I channel into my work. For instance, a vibrant yellow can inspire a sense of joy and optimism, leading me to create pieces that reflect vitality and energy. In contrast, deeper hues like navy or burgundy might evoke introspection or melancholy, guiding my artistic expression in a different direction.



Lauren Dowling | Aidan | 2025



Lauren Dowling | Aidan | 2025

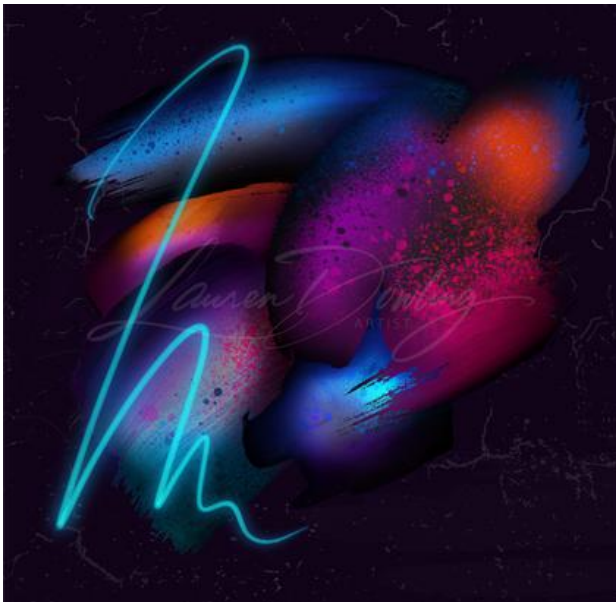
This unique interplay between color and emotion transforms my creative process into a deeply personal journey. Each brushstroke becomes more than just a mark on the canvas; it's infused with feelings that resonate with my own experiences. This dynamic not only enhances my work but also allows those who interact with it to connect on a more profound level. In essence, my Synesthesia acts as a bridge between my internal world and the external one, enriching the narrative that I aim to convey through my art.

Can you describe what it feels like to “see” someone’s personality in color?

For me, it provides a glimpse into their true nature. I often say that colors don't have inherent meanings, and it's not quite like reading someone's “aura.” However, certain color groups tend to share similar characteristics. For example, someone who resonates with vibrant reds might exude energy and passion, while those who lean towards calming blues could be more introspective and tranquil. Observing these colors can provide insights into how individuals interact with the world around them and express their emotions. It's fascinating to see how these colors influence their behaviors and relationships. This unique perspective allows me to connect with people on a deeper level, appreciating their nuances and complexities—almost as if I can communicate with them through the palette of their personality.

How do you decide on color combinations when creating a portrait based on someone’s personality?

When creating a portrait based on someone's personality, I take into account more than just their personal traits. I pay attention to color psychology, which can evoke specific emotions and associations. For example, warm colors like reds and oranges can convey energy and passion, while cooler tones like blues and greens can evoke calmness and serenity.



I also consider the individual's preferences and any meaningful experiences that could influence their color choices. Engaging with the subject, if possible, helps me understand what they feel represents them best. Ultimately, my goal is to create a harmonious balance that not only reflects their essence but also resonates with viewers, inviting them to connect with the artwork on a deeper level.

Are there specific emotions or personality traits that consistently trigger particular colors?

Certain color groups tend to exhibit similar characteristics. For example, people who are associated with the purple color group are often seen as friendly and comforting. Those who present themselves in bright red tend to make me feel safe, while deep, dark red can evoke feelings of nervousness and reservation. Individuals identified with green are usually very kind and intelligent, whereas those associated with blue often come across as loyal and introverted.

Ultimately, these correlations between color and emotion can vary significantly from person to person, but specific trends do emerge. Understanding these associations can enhance our awareness of how colors influence our perceptions and interactions with others.

When did you first discover you had Synesthesia, and how did it change your relationship with art?

I have experienced synesthesia since I was a child, but I didn't realize it was a neurological condition until a few years ago. I initially thought my brain was naturally inclined to see colors because I work as a graphic designer. However, I have since learned more about synesthesia and how it affects me.

Discovering that my perception differed from most people opened a new realm of creativity. This unique perspective enriches my work and helps me connect on a deeper level with my audience.

I've also found that sharing my synesthetic experiences

with others can foster meaningful conversations about perception and identity. It has become a bridge to connect with fellow artists and art lovers, sparking discussions about how we perceive the world differently. Ultimately, my synesthesia has transformed my relationship with art into a powerful tool for self-discovery and expression.

You often create in public or while traveling — what has been one of your most memorable experiences sharing art with a stranger?

One of my most memorable experiences sharing art with a stranger occurred during a flight to Denver to visit family. I was sitting next to a beautiful young woman, and I felt inspired to design a piece for her to pass the time during the flight.

Before we landed, I presented her with a Polaroid of the artwork I had created and explained that I have synesthesia, sharing with her the colors I associated with her. To my surprise, she turned out to be a successful female welder on her way to Texas for a major project. Getting to know a strong woman thriving in a male-dominated industry was the highlight of my flight, and she expressed her gratitude for the art I created for her.

How do people usually react when you present them with an artwork based on their personality color?

I've had nothing but positive experiences presenting this type of artwork to others. People are usually very interested in synesthesia, often not knowing what it is or what their personality color reveals about them. When they see the artwork, their eyes light up with curiosity and excitement. Many enjoy discussing their colors and the meanings behind them, sparking engaging conversations about personality traits and emotions. It's fascinating to see how this connection resonates with them, often leading to deeper reflections on their own experiences and identities. Overall, it becomes a positive and enlightening experience for everyone involved.



Firefly

The project emerges from a personal exploration of the path of self-formation, where the soul, being born into a body, encounters the pressure of the external world. The artist turns to a material they created—"stardust," a velvety substance symbolizing the primordial, dark, and incomprehensible energy from which all living things are born. The idea of the project revolves around inner choice, the search for authenticity, and the expression of oneself beyond imposed rules and expectations. The art object "Fruit" reflects this moment: it exists as a metaphor for personal choice, reminding us of the pressure of the outside world and the necessity of seeing oneself without masks or compromises.



Firefly | Fruit

— Interview

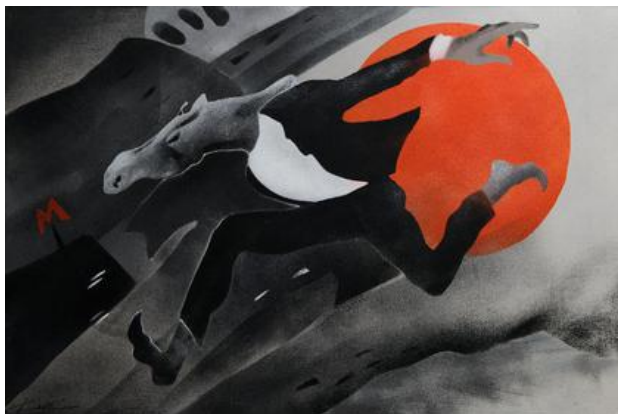
Svetlana Kupcova

Your series is titled “New Russian Fairy Tales.” What inspired you to reinterpret traditional folklore through a contemporary lens?

Look around—you’ll see that today we live in a world full of countless false idols, borrowed ideals, and invented realities. Aren’t these fairy tales of a sort? As we grow older, we begin to ask ourselves: “What do I want?”, “What is my happiness?”, “What do I want to be for others?” And often, in searching for answers, it’s easier for people to invent new fairy tales—adult ones. I want to highlight this transformation of the fairy tale, from childhood into adulthood. We are no longer children, but we often believe in phantoms without asking any questions. And I want to ask those questions through my paintings. Is a “strong woman” really the right role model for young girls? Does the endless chase for money surely lead to happiness? Is “personal growth” within the walls of large corporations truly growth?

Yes, fairy tales accompanied us in childhood. But think about it: they still exist today, only under different titles. If you’ve forgotten their plots, read them again and see—aren’t the fairy-tale characters still living among us, continuing their destinies in modern forms? Or perhaps you yourself have become one of those characters? How does it feel? Is everything okay? Speak with yourself about this through my paintings.

Many of your works evoke surreal and even dystopian feelings. What emotions do you hope to awaken in the viewer?



Svetlana Kupcova | The Little Humpbacked Horse



Any folklore — and Russian folklore even more so — balances on the edge between the outer, visible world we know and the otherworldly, hidden, dark one. As children we fear it, but as we grow older we begin to flaunt our acceptance of the reverse, shadow side of light as something natural. Remember telling scary stories around a campfire? Goosebumps! And yet, it was also a challenge to fear — I will not hide, I will not run, I am not afraid, I accept you, you are part of me.

What fascinates me about fairy tales is precisely this mirroring of growing up, of learning to accept light and darkness as inseparable allies. Stories told to children are invented by adults, and yet in these tales nothing is ever entirely smooth. I want to engage my viewer by asking, “Why is it so?” What wisdom are we trying to pass on? Perhaps it is an honest view of life — acknowledge the dark side, and you will see more light. In my paintings, I want to make these rules of the game explicit — to mirror the dark side, to render it visible rather than hidden. Yes, sometimes through anxiety, through fear, through confusion. It is important to me that my viewer be compelled to search for light, to extract it as the greatest treasure. Today, we all need this more than ever!

In your artistic statement, you raise the question of visible and invisible worlds. Which world feels more real to you when you create?

What a wonderful question! Think about it with me: which world is more important to you? Do you remember the wisdom: “the wolf you feed is the one that grows stronger”? It is the same with the visible outer world and the invisible inner world: at a certain point in life, for some people it is more important to seem, and for others — to be. But if we



feed one of our worlds excessively, the other begins to cry out from hunger and pain. That is when it is important to hear this cry, to pause, to respond.

This is what almost all of my paintings are about. I want them to speak with the viewer and even stir up memories of forgotten corners of the soul. Of course, in the creative process I myself embark on this journey. It is almost always challenging, but it allows me to feel life more vividly, even in the most ordinary and simple things.

The imagery in your works is powerful and symbolic. Could you share the meaning behind one specific image — for example, the red circle?

The red circle of “The Little Humpbacked Horse” is the elusive, unnoticed life left behind the back of a successful person, forever rushing at a frantic pace after fame and money. The person has forgotten themselves, turned into a driven horse. Each achieved goal gives birth to a new one, and the approval of others becomes more important than one’s own emotions. And so people run inside this damned wheel of the big city. Only they don’t have time to actually live.

How do you think modern society responds to strong, mythic female figures — like the woman who defeats the bear?

In the fairy tale Masha and the Bear, a little girl is opposed to a fierce beast. I see that today the girl has grown up and become stronger than the beast. She herself has become the bear. Do you see how this image of the woman-as-beast lives

on nowadays? Are all strong and brave women happy to see such a reflection of themselves in the mirror? Or are they trapped in this stereotype, forced to display it like an exhibit behind glass?

In my painting, the bear as a mask raises the question of women’s true strength. Do we really understand this power of ours? Or are we substituting it with false bravado?

You moved from the corporate world into art. How has that experience shaped your approach to storytelling and symbolism?

Big consulting is not only about business, as many often think. I work in change management. It is a large-scale engagement with people, the building of leadership models. For this, first of all, it is essential to feel people: to understand what drives them, what truly matters to them, how they establish their foundations. Secondly, it is important to talk to them about these things, helping to bring out the right strings of the soul. That is why the main character of most of my paintings is the human being and their inner struggle—whether it is a struggle against something or for something. This theme attracts me both in life and in my art.

The characters in your pieces seem caught in moments of tension, struggle, or transformation. Do you see your art as a form of personal or collective therapy?

Any art is a reflection of its time. Today is a time when people are increasingly searching for meaning in what they do, learning to see their true selves and the true selves of others. That’s wonderful! But can this path be traveled without struggle and transformation? And can it be traveled alone? I enjoy observing how people are more and more often trying to look into each other’s souls, to accept both the bright and dark sides as an inseparable whole, and to change one another. This is true therapy. I am happy to be part of it and to highlight inner tension as a force for the growth of a human into a HUMAN.



Georgia Turner

I'm a photographer based in Kent, England. I try to use my work to show real life scenarios in an artistic light. I mainly focus on Portraiture yet lean towards urban landscapes if it fits my message.

Project Statement

This image is one of many from a series: Who are we? The youth are our hope. They are our future; our legacy. Yet she seems symbolic of all the hope we have lost. Her face tells every story of our twisted reality. Her dark eyes whisper the great secrets of the world and her lips tell the vicious truths we hide behind our plastic smiles. I wanted this image to portray the lack of innocence our youth lack in this society. How they are exposed to such atrocities at such young ages whether it be in the media or in real life. Our children are our future leaders, our doctors, our politicians our next teachers. Who are we to expect them to raise the next generation to greatness if we strip them of their hope so young? Who are we to sleep at night whilst they worry about their next global panic. Our children were born visions of innocence. Not carriers of burden.



Georgia Turner | Elsie

— Interview

Alla Kechedzhan

You are a writer, artist, and educator — how do these roles influence each other in your creative process?

Goethe and Schilling's expression about architecture as frozen music is often quoted.

Alla Kechedzhan | Alpine Cedars At Dusk



Alla Kechedzhan | Munch's Woman

But few people remember that this is a paraphrase of the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos: "Painting is mute music, and poetry is speaking painting". In my case, painting is frozen or, on the contrary, revived literature.

For example, I write a prose poem about an alligator-like mountain and draw this mountain at the same time. It's hard to say for sure, but it seems that the words came first, or perhaps it was the oil painting of the sea that inspired the metaphor. Most of the seascapes, whether I'm on the Mediterranean coast in Tel Aviv or on the Black Sea coast in Varna, are actually the Azov Sea of my childhood, described in the "City Island" novella series published in the literary and artistic journal "Neva" in October 2024.

In one of my stories, "The Dry Land," I describe the state of nature in late August, when the cicadas have stopped singing, the trees are still lush green, and the dry grasses crackle beneath them, as if the earth and the sky had switched places. And then this ochre-golden color appears in every summer painting, in the same "House in Provence" (my free replica of Cézanne's painting of the same name). In 2024, in Varna, I wrote a thick book about the fates of modern women. In the summer of 2025, I created collective portraits of these women on my



canvases, inspired by Picasso, Modigliani, and Soutine. These are not imitations or even replicas, but rather hints.

As for my educational projects, for example, all the drawings for the book "Mathematics for Hopeless Humanists" were made with a glarus feather on the sand at the beach in Varna - a kind of cave painting. Shadows were used as diagonals and chords, and seaweed was used to explain multidimensional space.

In general, whatever I do, it's just countless acts of creativity, or acts of creation.

I have just returned from Varna, where about 30 paintings were created in a month.

One of the last paintings was very difficult for me - it was a test of inner freedom.

I made a landscape on a 27x43 laminated board. I ran out of canvases, and I found a piece of wood from a kitchen countertop. I really wanted to depict alpine cedars with their spreading branches. The painting is called "Alpine Cedars at Dusk". I painted two cedars in the garden of my house.

Then I realized that I have to add two more cedars on top of the house in the foreground, which would divide the space and potentially damage what I had already painted.

I took a deep breath and quickly painted two cross-shaped cedars across the entire canvas.

My art teacher, Irina Dragunskaya, praised my work as a beautiful and delicate painting.

Freedom, including freedom of expression, is always a big risk.

Many of your artworks are full of emotional and expressive energy. What usually inspires you to start a new painting?

Once I rewatched the film of the famous director Sergei Parajanov "The color of the pomegranate". I was literally taken aback by the kaleidoscope of

pictures that I wanted to stop.

I immediately grabbed a teaspoon instead of a master and from memory displayed a frame from the film - for about 40 minutes.

This canvas is like my eldest daughter Yulia, who graduated from Moscow State University, is well acquainted with the history of fine arts. They said that the picture looks like an icon and a tapestry at the same time.

It's not about the event, the event is only a trigger for the sensations.

I write the sensations with color, which create the shapes themselves.

Or over there. From my window, I can see a house without a roof. In my painting, it has been restored. In my world, a house can be drawn and lived in. By the way, this is the basis for the current popular visualization technique.

The painting "House with a Roof" (Varna, August 2025) is an example of the fact that in one of the many realities that exist continuously, without time, like in Borges' "Garden of Forking Paths," there is a house with a roof. It is simply a frame from a movie that not everyone sees.

I am inspired by anything that captures my attention and gives it volume and depth.

This can be seen in the semantics of color.

For example, Homer's sea is "wine-like," and the bulls are the same color. Wine represents power, brilliance, and turbulence.

I'm currently working on a Dali-inspired painting titled "The Chase," where the bulls are fleeing from a predatory beast that remains unseen.



In 2025 alone, you created around 200 works. What drives this incredible productivity?

I have already partially answered this question. If I were to put it succinctly, the answer would be a single phrase: The desire for creativity, because, as Boris Pasternak's son once said, "What is written precedes life," and Joseph Brodsky believed that poetry, in its broadest sense, is the essence of human existence. I always strive to glimpse the invisible, pushing aside the obvious as a mere veil, and this can only be achieved through the subtlest of nuances, hints, and insights. This is how I perceive life.

You have studied various techniques — from Arte Povera to Picasso-like styles. Which technique feels closest to your personal voice?

The technique depends on the mood first of all, and then on the materials.

For example, if I want to make a sketch while visiting someone, I always have charcoal, a pencil, a few pastels, and sometimes watercolors in my purse.

This is how I created the house of the famous poet and writer Mikushevich while waiting for my wife at a dacha in a picturesque area. The house is surrounded by centuries-old linden trees, and it has been standing for several centuries. I filled a cap with water and created a watercolor painting. It was like sending a message to my teacher, who is now in a better world.

I'm close to spontaneity, and I think impressionism and post-impressionism are the closest to me.

My teachers taught me "not to look at the great ones from the habit of looking up, but to enter into a dialogue with them."

For example, one of my projects in mathematics is called "My friend, Pythagoras."

So, in painting - there were free interpretations of the Red Room of Matisse, the Portrait of Van Gogh, the cubism of Picasso in several paintings or the Woman of Munch.

In May 2025, I sent three of my works to the "Dreams and Nightmares" exhibition at the Boomer Gallery in London. I must say that I have a mystical fear of some of my works (a joke).

The organizers of the exhibition asked me to evaluate the paintings, as galleries naturally seek to make money from the artists they exhibit.

I called an artist I know who is a regular participant in international exhibitions and asked him what price would be appropriate for the paintings. He



replied that each painting was worth at least 100,000 to 150,000 pounds. I thought it was a joke, but he seemed serious.

I signed the paintings and sent a letter with my short biography to Konstantin Kosmin, a London-based artist and art critic. To my surprise, two of the paintings were accepted for the exhibition at a price of 120,000 pounds each.

It's a pity that I didn't have a visa to visit Britain, and I had to obtain permission from the Ministry of Culture to export my work, which was a lengthy process. However, this experience convinced me that I needed to exhibit my work. By the way, one of the experts at the Boomer Gallery is the renowned art critic Tabish Khan. He is the editor of the visual arts section for Londonist magazine and a regular contributor to Culture Whisper. The opinions of art critics and artists with prestigious names are truly inspiring.

I am currently preparing a solo exhibition.

In your view, what is the role of paradox in both your writing and visual art?

The famous essayist and literary critic Sergey Prasolov said that in my novel "The Love Agent Against the Reptiloids," I combined reality and unreality in such a way that when you look at the surreal world in my characters' minds, you better understand reality.

By the way, Vladimir Mikushevich studied the nature of creativity and created the field of "creatiology." What comes to my mind is better than what comes out of my head.

My first paradoxes were co-authored with him. I wrote my flashes and insights based on his flashes. Currently, there are two volumes of "The Book of Paradoxes," each containing 500 insights. In my opinion, the combination of the incomprehensible, whether it is verbal or non-

verbal art, creates other worlds that are not fully understood, and the very process of encountering them makes the reader and viewer a co-creator of any work of art.

How do you see the relationship between intuition and structure in painting?

Once, the professor of the Moscow School of Painting, Sorokin, invited the student future famous Russian impressionist Konstantin Korovin to his dacha.

He could not manage to paint his dacha. Sorokin argued that first you have to make a drawing, the same logs, and then paint. Korovin said: it won't work out. There is no drawing! There is only color in the form. Korovin's "Contrasts and Spots" brought the landscape of his dacha to life, although it wasn't done the way he was taught.

What place do symbols and metaphors hold in your work — do they emerge spontaneously or are they deliberate?

I will answer this question with my diary entry, and it is better to call the answer "Overcoming metaphors".

From the diary of Alla Kechedzhan
May 9, 2025

It's a good thing that few people are interested in the history of paintings. Even the famous ones. Here is a T-shirt with an AR print - augmented reality, that is. The print features a painting by Vincent van Gogh called "The White House". The symbolism of this painting is not obvious to the layman, even if he knows from Wikipedia that the painting was painted 6 weeks before the artist's death, and it is not difficult to guess that his mental illness has progressed. Or, on the contrary, van Gogh's condition could be counterintuitively clear, like a day before a southern sunset. The other day I made a replica of Van Gogh's White House, which only vaguely resembles the great artist, but the composition and colors are partially recognizable. I made this picture during the exacerbation of a serious illness. The atmosphere in my painting is gloomy - the sky, the tiled roof and the fence are dirty, the cypresses, as a symbol of death, are in place, the gloomy passerby stands and does not look alive at all. I think I'm going to the wrong place. The painting was made with oil crayons on cardboard.

I don't have a single canvas at home. The paints are closed, the brushes are dried. Drawing with gouache on children's cardboard is the same as drying a herbarium on a clothesline - you'll end up with a crumpled sheet.

But I take the paints and draw what seems to be the same "White House," albeit in a childishly optimistic way, with light in every window, and the house takes off like Ellie's house from Kansas City. I understand that I'm destined to recover, even if it's only six weeks away».

However, as you know, beauty and understanding are in the eye of the beholder.

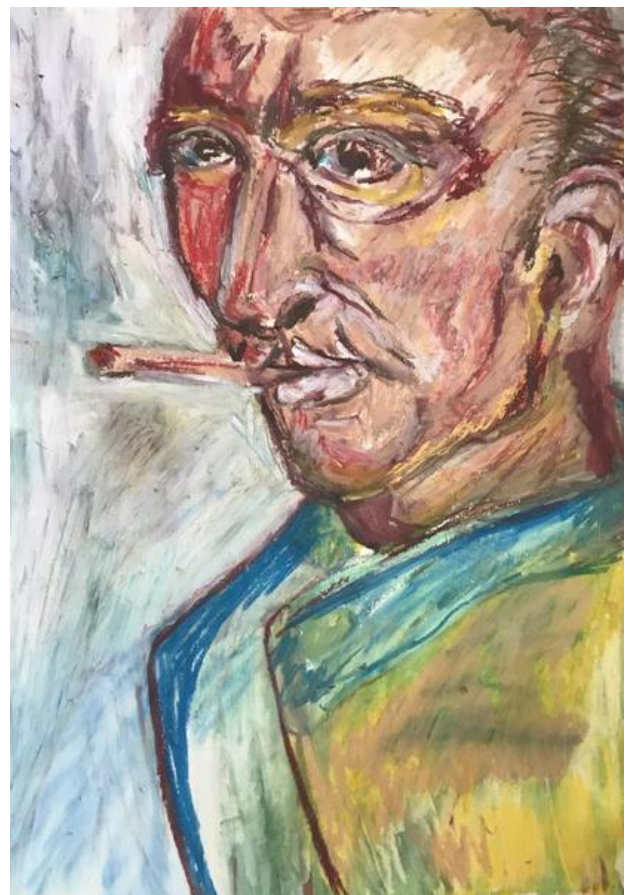
For example, I have a painting called "Where's Mom?"

It depicts two lost chicks searching for their mother. However, one of my social media followers said, These are people, not chicks.

This is the state of a modern person who is lost, terrified of uncertainty and the absence of a loved one, lacking support.

Like a chicken that doesn't know what to do: whether to hide in the grass, flee, or wait for trouble from the sky."

So, to answer your question, I would say that my metaphors are often intuitive. However, as mathematicians say, intuition is a calculation that we don't have time to fully comprehend.



Alla Kechedzhan | Portrait Of Van Gogh

My name is **Mohan Musa**, a visual artist originally from Sudan, with roots in the United Arab Emirates and the UK, now based in Melbourne, Australia. My journey back to art began in 2020 during the COVID lockdowns, when I rediscovered the creative process. The sense of calm and purpose it brought me made me realise that art was my true calling. I'm drawn to the arts for their power to connect and empower us, offering a space for self-expression and understanding. Over the past five years, I've explored various mediums, including fabric, canvas, and digital art. My work is deeply influenced by my grandmother, a medicine woman, and the traditions she passed down. I also find inspiration in rock art, ancient symbols, nature, and the vibrant textiles of Sudanese women's traditional attire. The bold, dynamic style of 80s Japanese anime, which I grew up watching, also plays a key role in my creative expression.

Moha Musa | Rebirth | 2024





Moha Musa | Orange Moon | 2024

Ashley Rose

The Veil of Astronomicon feels like a cosmic séance set to the rhythm of underground music. What first sparked the idea for this project?

Most of my art is inspired by people who've really meant something to me: friends, relationships, people I've loved in different ways. With this piece, I wanted to honor a friend who completely changed how I looked at the world. We used to talk a lot about music, especially David Bowie, and about space. He showed up in my life when I was going through a really tough time, unsure of who I was and where I was heading with my career. The title is my way of paying tribute to him, partly to one of his songs, and partly to that underground spirit we both have. Having someone who believed in me and accepted me fully during that moment really stuck with me. The song is called Astronomicon by Nim Vind, which is one of my favorite composed songs.

Your works are described as “alien transmissions riding a rock ‘n’ roll frequency.” How do you balance the cosmic sci-fi themes with the raw, gritty energy of punk culture?



I like the collision. Punk is raw, fast, and unapologetic. Sci-fi is limitless, weird, and beautiful all at once. Punk is dirty, loud, in-your-face, and sci-fi is infinite and strange. Goth brings the shadow and vibe. I don't really try to balance them. At the core, they're all about rebellion: against rules, against gravity, against whatever box the world tries to lock you in. At the end of the day it's unapologetic and against being told who you're supposed to be.

Music seems to guide your process almost like a ritual. Do you create while listening to specific tracks, and if so, what sounds shape your visual world?

Music has always been a part of my work. As far as tracks well when it comes to this:
Astronomicon by Nim Vind
Black Planet by The Sisters of Mercy Space
Oddity by David Bowie
Moonage Daydream by David Bowie
Not to Touch the Earth by The Doors
Genus Unknown By Blitzkid
Midnight by Koffin Kats
I'm sure there's more but those come to mind.

There's a strong layering of symbols — moons, eyes, sound waves, spectral silhouettes. Do these symbols carry personal meaning, or are they more universal



archetypes?

A little of both, honestly. Spiritually, the moon represents cycles, change, and reflection. I've always had a love for the moon, always shifting, always glowing, even when it's hidden. The moon changes constantly, just like how people can change. The eye is often seen as a "window to the soul," I'm a big believer in that! Eyes are the first thing I look at and notice about any person I meet. In a romantic sense that's what I go for. I create artwork with my soul not my heart and I love with my soul more than my heart. It impacts my artwork heavily. The sound waves are actually spirals but can be seen as waves. The silhouette is a stencil made from several recent photos of him. The drawing is a sketch I drew when he was in the beginning of his career, that I never sent him. I'm happy people really dig it and this is by far the art piece I love. This is the one I want people to remember I made.

You describe your art as both rebellion and ritual. What role does subculture — punk, goth, underground — play in shaping your artistic identity?

My art it's messy, it's ritual, it's me making my own space. It's like that cause that's who I am and have been. I grew up with that subculture. Honestly, subculture's just part of me. Well

rebellion, that's part of me too. I always asked questions growing up and I'm not a saint but I do try to be the best version of myself I can be everyday. I like to break rules, ignore trends, and make something that's just yours. All of that seeps into my work, shaping not just what I make, but how I approach it: as rebellion, as ritual, and as a way of carving out my own corner of the world.

Do you see yourself more as a visual artist, or as part of a broader music-and-art hybrid scene?

My visual art comes from the same place as the music I love. So yeah, I guess I'm a visual artist, but I'm also very much plugged into the broader music-and-art scene: punk, goth, alternative—it all mashes together, and I like keeping it that way.

Are there collaborations you dream of — with musicians, filmmakers, or other visual artists — that could expand your cosmic universe?

No expanding the cosmic universe, anytime soon. I am always open to hearing collaborations. I'm really just focused on my stuff right now, but I would love to do album covers for artists like AFI, She Wants Revenge, and some others.

Martyna Podanowska is a photographer and graphic designer whose practice explores the materiality of the image and the dialogue between photography and the physical world. She began her artistic journey with digital photography, but soon turned toward analog processes, drawn to the idea that a photograph should exist beyond the screen as a tangible object. Her work pushes the boundaries of photographic experimentation, particularly through the use of Polaroid lifts, which she transfers onto unexpected and often organic surfaces. By embedding images into natural and recycled materials—such as seashells, old roof tiles, or objects discovered during her walks—Podanowska creates works that are both fragile and enduring, ephemeral yet deeply rooted in the physical world. Through this approach, she challenges traditional notions of photography, transforming captured moments into unique, tactile artifacts that blur the line between image and object.





— Interview

Kristin Thomas



Can you tell us about the meaning behind the name God's Creation Designs?

I am a Christian and I believe that God is the Creator of everything. So, everything that I paint, design, or create is a representation of His creation. Every landscape, flower, prophetic painting, or textured piece represents His creation.

How does your faith influence your creative process?

Faith is the foundation of my creative process. I always say that Holy Spirit is my Creative Director, all my work is inspired

and empowered by the Him. Regarding my creative process, I am not the kind of artist that sits down and thinks of things that I might be interested in creating. Everything starts with a vision that God gives me. It can come through a worship song, a sermon, and through times of fasting and prayer. I am the vessel that He flows through. After receiving a vision or inspiration I create a reference and sketch the image on the canvas and then paint it. I do experience that internal tug of war that artists experience because I know that the painting will impact someone's life and I want God to be pleased. When I am learning how to use a new medium, I know that the inspiration, overwhelming desire, and the ability to learn and absorb everything that I can about the medium comes from God. I do not create anything without his grace, anointing and inspiration. I have been an artist for three years and in those 3 years I have painted or created something almost every day. That motivation comes from God and my desire to be the best artist that I can. I know through God that I have limitless possibilities, I just have to trust Him and put in the work.

Your works combine texture, sculpture, and vivid color—what led you to this multidimensional approach?

Holy Spirit! He makes art exciting. I recall seeing amazing works by well-established artist and praying an extremely specific prayer for God to give me my own style, my own technique, and color palette, and He answered my prayers. The multidimensional textures are created using a pulling or kissing canvas technique where textured paint is strategically placed on two canvases, I press them together to thoroughly distribute the paint and when they are pulled apart, they create the dramatic peaks and dimensions. This technique is not new in the art world, but it was new for me. I am attracted to vivid colors, and I use a heavy body fluorescent paint that glows in black light. Holy Spirit told me



Kristin Thomas | Renew Your Mind | 2025



that it will represent the light in darkness and 99% of my paintings glow in black light. I realized that my art should not just be for the soul and spirit but also for the senses. I was designing a piece for our church's art gallery made of rope. It was inspired by the logo of our church initiative called Hero Generations. The logo has bright beautiful colors and as I was preparing the rope I kept smelling fruit and I could not figure out where the smell was coming from. I smelled the rope and realized that the yellow rope was lemon scented! It made me laugh and that is when I realized that my art would ignite the senses. In the world art can be so exclusive and untouchable but my art is for the soul, spirit, and the senses.

Many of your pieces feature butterflies and flowers. What do these symbols represent for you?

Recently the theme of my work has been transformation, metamorphosis, and overflow. Most of the florals in my piece Garden of Becoming are succulents representing resilience and strength. Their ability to endure harsh conditions with minimal care is seen as a metaphor for human resilience in the face of adversity. In 112 butterflies another porcelain piece, transformation and overflow are themes.

How do you select the materials like gold leaf or mica flakes for each artwork?

The materials are usually selected based on how they are formed or created, and how they complement the project. Gold is refined by fire and in my work, it represents the result of that refining and the beauty of the transformation. Mica flakes form under intense heat and pressure, their layers splitting and catching light-much like a person whose trials strip away what is unnecessary, revealing hidden beauty and endurance. Each fracture becomes part of the shimmer, a reminder that growth and transformation often come through the breaking.

As a prophetic artist, do you receive spiritual inspiration for each piece? Can you share an example?

Yes, I have learned that art is spiritual or divinely inspired. It is obvious when an artist has gone through a traumatic or painful experience because it shows up in their work. Alternatively, you can see when art is inspired by God it evokes, peace, joy, awe and wonder and so much more. The awesome thing about prophetic painting is that I can fully trust God through the process. He knows me and He knows the person that will receive the painting. I do not have to know them personally I just have to be obedient to His leading. I find that the paintings usually draw the people that are meant to receive them.

My most recent prophetic painting is titled The Bride of Christ. I always ask the recipient if they are willing to share whatever message that they receive from the painting. This is her testimony: "I just remembered this! I had a dream last night that a group of women were talking to me about a wedding. I had no idea what the Lord was talking about this morning until I saw the painting. Looking at the painting now I realized God gave me the interpretation of my dream. The women were praying that I saw myself as His bride rather than who I was in my past. I'm supposed to be growing in my relationship with Him without looking back. This is a beautiful gift thank you." Every testimony that I receive from someone who has an encounter with God through my prophetic paintings confirms my purpose and God's calling on my life.

What message or transformation do you hope your viewers experience when engaging with your art?

I want them to know that God is real, that He loves them and that they were created for a purpose. I pray that God's will be done in each viewer and if applicable that they receive salvation, healing, deliverance, transformation and revelation of themselves and Him. I want them to know that God can use the gifts that He has given them if they are willing.



Sergei Kozintsev is a Moscow-based multidisciplinary artist and film director. Combining AI-assisted image-making, photography, and projection mapping, he builds poetic, research-driven series about memory and perception. His works have been shown internationally across festivals and planetariums; his film *Emergence (Proyavlenie)* won the Dreams award at the “Worlds of Tarkovsky” video-art festival, and *Ukrainian Lullaby* received the Grand Prix at GAMFF (Korea). Kozintsev develops dual-perception images and immersive mapping pieces, treating ornament as living organic matter and exploring kintsugi—assembling wholes from fragments. His visual language blends Art Nouveau plasticity, medieval illumination references, and optical illusion.

Project Statement

The Golden Series explores the idea of kintsugi applied to memory and perception. Each image begins with fragments—glass, ornament, traces of human figures—that are digitally fractured and then reassembled with luminous seams. Gold here is not about opulence, but about resilience: the cracks become the structure of meaning. Working with AI-assisted processes and hand compositing, I seek a living rhythm inside the form, as if the image were breathing. The works reflect on how wholeness is not achieved by erasing damage, but by allowing the seams to shine. They become metaphors of memory: fragile, broken, and yet gathered into new constellations of sense.

Sergei Kozintsev | Apostles of Dusk | 2025





Contents

Interviews

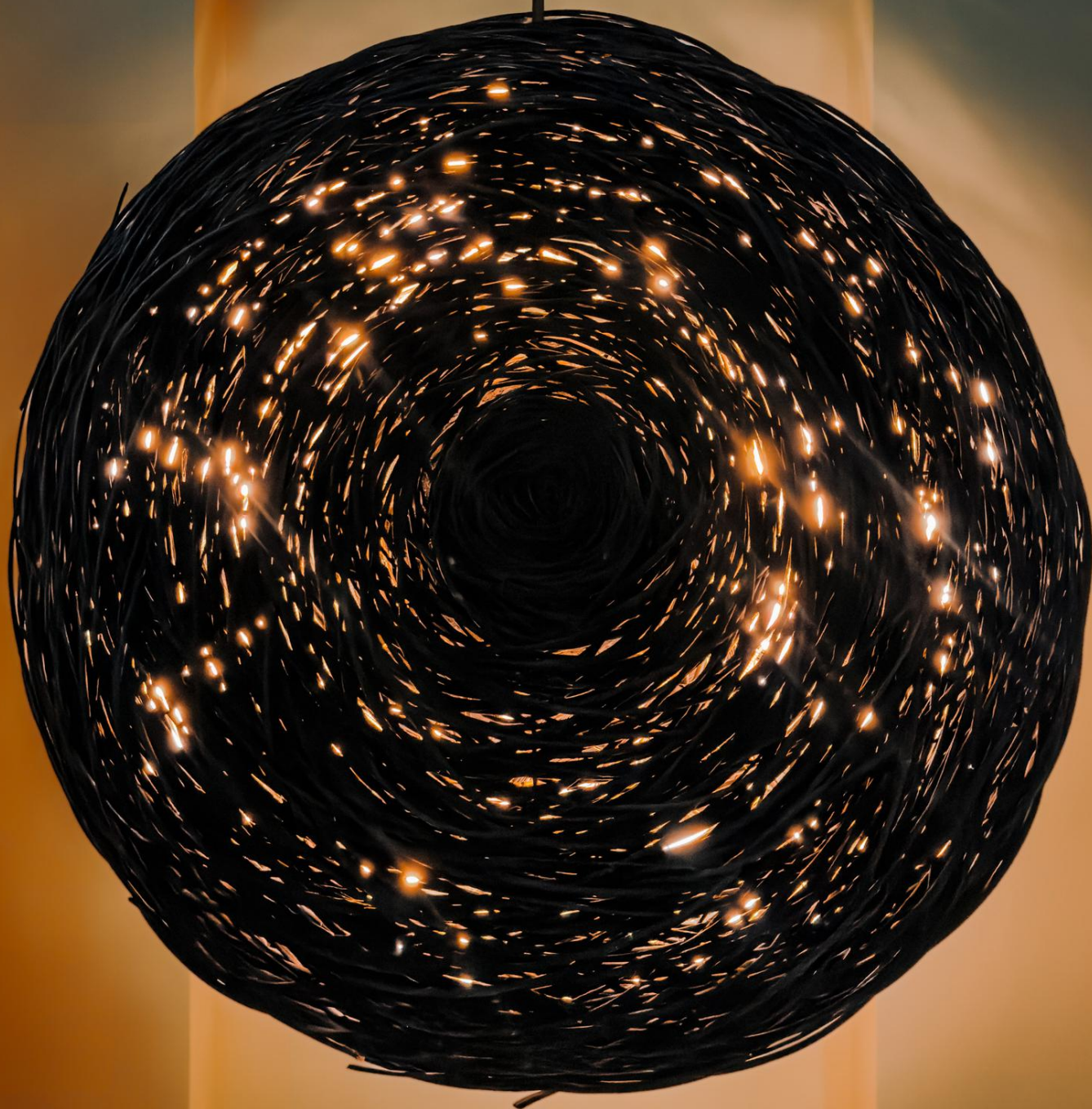
Wen Wen Zhou	4	Kalib Bryan	68
André Tatjes	8	Xiyan Chen	72
SPLACES. STUDIO	12	Anna Fors	76
Frida Pini	18	Marnie González Warren	78
Sneha Gindodiya	24	KOMIYA (Julia Kovalchuk)	82
Yilin Zhang + Yixuan Liu	28	Xingyu Dai	86
Jena Belle	34	Felicia Varlotta	90
ZhuziQ	38	Kaitlyn Synan	92
Robert Mango	40	Lauren Dowling	96
Thomas Olze	44	Svetlana Kupcova	100
Peiyang (Camille) Li	48	Alla Kechedzhan	104
Carmen Samoila	52	Ashley Rose	110
Ping Wang	58	Kristin Thomas	114
Yuko Hwang	64		

Featured artists

Kathleen Frank	6	Iren Solo	66
Catherine Eaton Skinner	10	Vanja Bajović	70
Mark Yale Harris	16	Jim Woodson	74
Fabian Kindermann	22	Anca Crisan	80
Camila Plate	26	Maria Lukina	84
Natalie Christensen	32	Maya Shmeleva	88
Cătălina Vişinescu	36	Bilal Dafri	94
Darya Romaniv	42	Firefly	98
Joyce Melander	46	Georgia Turner	102
M.(Marzenka) Kwintera	50	Mohan Musa	108
Lyla Liu	56	Martyna Podanowska	112
Gabrieliusmackevicius	62	Sergei Kozintsev	116



VISUAL ART JOURNAL



NO. 36

SEPTEMBER 2025